

InFOCUS

39 GO GEO

Solid blocks of color in seemingly random placement create this stunning abstract 'city' in by Zollanvari. The glitch effect creates a sense of three-dimensionality, while extensive use of abrash generates palpable textures.

Metropolis 3, Glitch Gabbehs Collection, SoFarSoNear Studio Milan for Zollanvari
zollanvari.com



Brooklyn Heights, NYC residence featuring a custom hand-tufted matka silk and wool rug; interior designer Emma Montgomery/CMI Designer Mengting Shen.

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Creative Matters
Managing Partners
Ali McMurter (left)
and Ana Cunningham



creative MATTERS TAKES IT 2.0

BY CECILE CORRAL, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

New leadership duo seizes the reins and steers the custom carpet company to new heights

Building on the legacy of its founder Carol Sebert, artfully established and proudly Canadian custom carpet house Creative Matters is kicking off the new year by rolling out a broader path grounded in the company's roots but strategically positioned to command new opportunities that lie ahead—both in North America and across the pond.

On this, its 35th anniversary, Creative Matters has much to celebrate—past,

present and future—with two new leaders at the helm who together bring decades of career experience and honed expertise in design as well as a shared outlook to grow the firm with sustainability at its center.

RUG INSIDER spoke with Managing Partners Ana Cunningham and Ali McMurter, who were promoted to their joint leadership roles in early September upon their predecessor's pursuit of her "next chapter".

"Carol [Sebert] doesn't call it her retirement. Rather, she has stepped away to pursue other creative endeavors," they said. "She is on her next chapter."

This year marks Cunningham's 25th anniversary with the firm. Hired as a designer in 1999, she quickly moved up to Creative Director—a role she held until 2017, when she was named a vice president and partner.

McMurter joined Creative Matters in 2006 as a designer and steadily climbed the ranks to a people and project management role until 2017 when she, too, was promoted to vice president and partner.

Now, barely six months into their new titles, Cunningham and McMurter are well underway in their multifaceted plans to take Creative Matters to the next level.

“As the new leaders, we are focused on elevating our service, backed by our very talented team, to ensure we meet the demand at the highest level of quality,” said McMurter.

That effort includes promoting Creative Matters’ portfolio and raising the firm’s profile, noted Cunningham.

// Sustainability is not new to Creative Matters. It’s been at our core for decades. //

“One of the best things we’ve done since becoming managing partners is aligning with a public relations company to help us become more active in the media to build brand awareness and visibility,” she explained. “We’re being more diligent about sharing what we do and our plans, and most importantly, our sustainability focus.”

That includes Creative Matters’ recently released and first-ever Sustainability Report, which was published in Summer 2023.

“Sustainability is not new to Creative Matters. It’s been at our core for decades,” explained Cunningham. “But this new and special report encapsulates well what we’ve been doing for years and what we plan to do in the future.”

Added McMurter: “It’s our way of sharing with the industry our commitment to people and the planet, presented in an easy-to-digest way.”

Presented across 13 well-appointed pages, the report outlines Creative Matters’ dedication to sustainable and environmental practices and products, fair trade alignment, and corporate social responsibility.

This endeavor includes a focus on designing and producing ethically-made rugs of the highest quality natural materials, namely wool. It’s Creative Matters’ fiber of choice for most of its products—from its custom projects for hotels, offices, retail spaces and homes to its 14 rug collections—as it offers a bevy of inherent benefits: durability, soft touch, sound absorbing, hypoallergenic, resistance to stains and flames, water repellency, easy care and, importantly, compostability.

Creative Matters carefully selects and sources its wool from near and far—domestically as well as New Zealand, Afghanistan, India, and the mountainous regions of Tibet.

As the report notes, a boost in sustainable options has widened access to the production of hand-tufted and woven Axminster 100-percent wool rugs with cotton warp and jute backing.

Other sustainable fibers the company applies to its products include: PET (made from recycled plastic bottles); Econyl, made from reclaimed fishing nets; Tencel; cotton; and linen. For future use, Creative Matters is exploring the viability of nettle and hemp.

“We are also excited about a fully compostable Axminster carpet that has just arrived on the market,” Cunningham said.

After much research, collaborative design and thoughtful development, Creative Matters has come up with an industry first poised to revolutionize commercial rug production: a 100-percent biodegradable woven Axminster rug collection.

Trademarked “EcoAx”, this woven Axminster carpet’s production method makes it possible for the product to biodegrade in a little over 12 months in a landfill, compared to the more



McMurter and Cunningham reviewing the company’s new EcoAx product.

Private residence in Zurich
Switzerland with Birds design
custom living room rug in
100-percent wool hand tufted in
Thailand; Photography by
Valentina Verdesca



than 50 years it would take a traditional woven Axminster carpet — which is typically constructed of an 80-percent wool and 20-percent nylon blend—to compost.

“Our clients have been asking for this kind of sustainable product, and EcoAx is a perfect example of how we are aligning on our sustainability objectives and goals,” McMurter said.

In addition to the introduction of this innovative construction, Creative Matters employs other eco-minded measures amid production. The design team intentionally creates Axminster rug patterns that minimize waste during manufacturing. Also, excess yarns discarded during production are repurposed to create samples. And all handmade rugs are custom crafted to size, which further reduces waste.

Acknowledging the prowess of its in-house team, Creative Matters also credits its industry partners with helping it pursue and successfully realize its eco-initiatives.

Among the firm’s longest-standing alliances is with Label STEP—the fair trade, non-profit organization committed to the wellbeing of

// Our business in Europe has been steadily growing ... which is why we need to have a permanent home there. //

weavers and workers in the handmade carpet industry. Label STEP oversees Creative Matters’ carpet production in Nepal, India and Afghanistan. And since 2017, Sebert has served as an ambassador of the organization “for her tireless commitment to promoting fair trade practices in the carpet industry.”

Cunningham continued: “We were Label STEP’s first North American licensee, back in 2010. We’ve grown a lot with them, and it’s been lovely to be their partner all of these years. They do a lot of workshops and collaborations with manufacturers and designers, like us, to ensure their fair trade promise.”

The firm also partners with a variety of other industry organizations, among them: International Wool and

Textile Association; Textile Exchange; Sustainable Furnishings Council; and Habitat for Humanity.

In another major move in the works for early 2024, Creative Matters is in the midst of opening a new office in Brussels after a successful run with a satellite operation for the past few years.

“Our business in Europe has been steadily growing, getting bigger and bigger by the minute, which is why we need to have a permanent home there,” Cunningham said. “We’re growing our team on the ground at this new office to address our European clientele, including very high-end retail brands for which we do private label.”

Additionally and more broadly—both here at home in North America and overseas, Creative Matters is equally focused on expanding its collaborative efforts with artists, designers and other creatives for exclusive capsule collections targeting the upstairs market, McMurter noted.

creativemattersinc.com

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