



A Good Yarn 編織傳奇

Fort Street Studio has come full circle with a return to Hong Kong and its Wong Chuk Hang head office

情繫香港的地毯藝術 | Text : Rebecca Lo | Photo : Fort Street Studio |

American artists Brad Davis and Janis Provisor have a soft place in their hearts for Hong Kong. It was where they first set up their business, Fort Street Studio, in 1996 after they began working with Chinese weavers that allowed their painterly ideas to come to life through hand knotted wild silk rugs. Hong Kong was where they began distributing carpets that caught an international audience's attention while raising their son. Although they returned to New York to expand, Asia's tug was persistent and beguiling.

"We were coming to Hong Kong a few times each year anyway," notes Davis. "But we weren't really aware how the city had changed. We were crossing the street in Sheung Wan one day and decided: why not move back? We were opening a showroom here — we should be here. We had so many

new products. And Hong Kong is an easy base to travel to Nepal, India and China in comparison to New York."

Fort Street Studio produces one-of-a-kind rugs using high grade, Himalayan wool and wild silk from western China. Their work has more in common with art than textiles, as the couple design from everyday inspirations that get translated into a two-dimensional image on a hand knotted carpet. "We recognise that hand knotting takes a long time," says Provisor. "A rug can take four to six months for weavers to tie each individual knot. As a result, [they] do not have the same structure as tufted ones. Many Hong Kong designers leave the carpet to the very end of a project, and the culture here is mostly tufted carpets. We are not the same animal. We don't work with colour poms; we work in a more artistic way."

曾經與中國織布商合作，將繪畫元素融入人手編織絲綢地毯的美國藝術家Brad Davis和Janis Provisor，始終對香港情有獨鍾。1996年，他們在香港創立第一間公司—Fort Street Studio。他們在香港發行的地毯系列更揚威海外。雖然他們後來回到紐約發展，但對亞洲的感情並沒有因此而減退。

Davis告訴我們：「雖然我們每年都會來香港幾次，卻沒有認真留意到這個城市的改變。有一天，我們經過上環，突然想起其實我們也可以回來香港發展。我們曾經在這裡開設過陳列室，而且我們又有這麼多新產品，若要前往尼泊爾、印度和中國，香港絕對比紐約方便，所以我們決定回到這裡。」

Fort Street Studio採用高級的喜馬拉雅羊毛及中國西部的野生蠶絲，製作出獨一無二的地毯。夫妻二人經常從日常生活中取得設計靈感，並把設計概念轉化為平面圖像，



While Davis works with the factories to translate their ideas into patterns, Provisor concentrates on painting. "He's the tech guy," she says with a smile. "We collaborate with architects and designers on specific versions of their ideas," adds Davis. "We're the owners, designers and artists," says Provisor. "That's our background. We're problem solvers." For inspiration, the couple takes design trips to recharge. "Last summer, we rented a house in Ubud for five weeks," notes Davis. "We worked every day; we had two studios and a swimming pool. We usually dealt with emails for the first hour or two, then locked up our devices and worked on designs until around 6pm. Of course, we'll take a dip in the pool every once in while!" This summer, the couple rented a 1,000 square foot apartment in Umbria with a garden that provided colourful inspiration.

As their products are mostly hand knotted, Fort Street Studio carpets are rolled for transport and storage. Davis and Provisor wanted a studio that would also work as a showroom and shipping warehouse. "Hong Kong's physical and insane financial constraints meant that we looked everywhere for the right

space," says Provisor. "We previously never had a showroom that worked with the quality of our brand. We considered the Pedder Building at one point, but the space was too restricted." They eventually found a bright, south facing space in One Island South and launched their 5,000-square foot showroom last year. The couple is now considering leasing a separate studio where they can duck out to concentrate on new designs, leaving the showroom for the business side of things.

Fort Street Studio carpets have primarily enhanced luxury residences such as Hermes Maison. In recent years, Davis and Provisor expanded to include boutique hotels, chairmen's private offices and exclusive reception areas. They prefer to be on board early in a project, so that they can customise rugs to suite their application — whether it's a higher traffic dining area or a children's bedroom that requires increased durability. "People come to us for innovation, and our goal is to always push boundaries and explore new ideas," says Davis. "It's also more fun; otherwise, we never would have stopped painting." ◆

展現在手編織的地毯上，與其說他們的產品是一件紡織品，倒不如說是一件藝術品。Provisor指：「我們都知道人手編織需要更多的製作時間，一張全人手編織的地毯就需要四至六個月的時間來完成，而每張地毯的構圖和結構都是獨一無二的。很多香港設計師都會把地毯安排在最後的設計環節，而香港家居普遍採用簇絨地毯，這一點與我們的理念大相逕庭，我們不強調產品構圖的色彩，反而更著重產品的藝術性。」

工作上，Davis與廠家洽商，把設計概念轉化為圖案，Provisor則專注於繪圖。Provisor笑說：「他是一個才華橫溢的技術人員。我們會與建築師和設計師合作，把他們的獨特構思呈現在我們的產品上。我們既是本店的創辦人，又是設計師和藝術家，更是問題的解決者。」為了獲得更多創作靈感，夫妻二人間中會周遊列國，參考別人的設計，並順道休息一下。Davis憶述：「去年夏天，我們在印尼烏布租了一間房子，那裡有兩個工作室和一個游泳池。我們在那裡住了五個星期，每天都在努力工作。我們每天會先用一至兩個小時處理電子郵件，然後便會關掉所有電子設備，只專注於我們的設計工作，直至黃昏。當然，每隔一段時間，我們會到泳池暢游一番！」今年夏天，他們在溫布里亞租了一間連花園的1,000平方呎公寓，那個花園更成為了他們豐富的靈感來源。

由於Fort Street Studio的產品大多是由人手編織，因此通常會捲起儲存及運送。Davis和Provisor希望有一個同時具備陳列室和貨運倉庫功能的工作室。Provisor坦言：「香港的地理環境和瘋狂的租金意味著我們要四出搜尋合適的地方。我們從未有過一個陳列室，能襯托出我們的品牌質素。我們曾經考慮把工作室設於畢打行，但由於空間太過有限，我們唯有另覓更合適的地方。」最終，他們去年於One Island South租用了一個5,000平方呎的單位作為陳列室。他們正考慮租用一個獨立的單位作為工作室，專注於設計新產品，至於陳列室則用作業務相關事項。

Fort Street Studio的地毯原先的服務對象是豪宅客戶，如Hermes Maison。近年，Davis和Provisor的產品系列更擴展至精品酒店、主席辦公室和高級接待處等範疇。他們比較喜歡在早期階段參與設計，藉此為客人度身訂造合適的地毯，不論是於使用率較高的飯廳，還是講求耐用的兒童睡房，皆應有盡有。Davis指出：「客人來到我們這裡，希望尋找一些創新的產品，而我們的目標也是要突破界限，探索新思維。這個過程帶給我們歡樂，這亦是我們永遠不會停止繪畫的原因。」◆