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# HOME

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## MAKING IT

A closer look at craftsmanship

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## WEAVING CREATIVITY

FORT STREET STUDIO



BY TAMSIN BRADSHAW

While Brad Davis and Janis Provisor are all for technology, they also appreciate the value of mistakes. "Technology only functions when it's uniform," says Brad, who founded hand-knotted carpet company Fort Street Studio with Janis Provisor in 1996. "Creativity functions on blind alleys and mistakes and things you never would have thought about – if you're open to it."

He should know: both Brad and his partner in business and life, Janis, are artists who fell into carpet making by chance after visiting China. "We came in at a point when the Chinese carpet industry was on the verge of failure," says Janis. "China's carpet makers were dedicated to that machine feel. But it's all those hand-feel qualities that make carpets so special," Brad adds.

Janis and Brad decided to "put the hand back in handmade," so they rallied the weavers and dyers of Jiangsu province to create carpets that conveyed the delicate beauty of watercolour paintings, learning about the possibilities and limitations of silk weaving as they went.

Most silk comes from silkworms that eat mulberry leaves, but wild silk from Jiangsu – known as Dandong silk – comes from the cocoons of silkworms that eat the leaves of oak trees. As a result, the extracted yarns take on a yellow tinge. "It's therefore a big challenge to get certain colours, like greys, certain cool beiges – and blues, which turn green," says Janis. She and Brad work with one producer who painstakingly sifts through hundreds of cocoons to find ones that are lighter than the others in order to create a super-white thread for Fort Street Studio's carpets. Like the dyeing process, weaving requires skill and meticulous care as it's all done by hand.

The stunning new creations will be ready for the world to see in autumn this year. "We're working with fine yarns; we're mixing techniques in one carpet," says Brad. "We're doing things that have never been done before." This, no doubt, is where the joy of craftsmanship lies – and it's what gives Fort Street Studio's carpets their soul. //

### PLUSH PILES

Partners Janis and Brad; finishing and trimming by hand; Squeeze carpets in soft pink and cream; a pile of wool in preparation on a carpet loom; yarn crop in a subdued shade of lilac

### 完美質感

伴侶Janis和Brad；人手修飾和剪裁；柔和粉紅和忌廉色的Squeeze地墊；地墊織布機上大批羊毛正準備就緒；淡紫色絲球







對科技無任歡迎的Brad Davis和Janis Provisor同時也非常欣賞錯誤的價值。「科技只能在一致相同的情況下才能運作。」於1996年與Janis Provisor成立手織地墊公司Fort Street Studio的Brad說道：「創意卻能在暗巷、錯誤和意想不到的事物中出現——如你願意持開放態度的話。」

這點他理應非常清楚：Brad和Janis既為生意夥伴也是愛侶，二人到訪中國後偶爾投進製作地墊界。「那時候中國的地墊界已走到頹敗的邊緣。」Janis表示：「為口奔馳已是約定俗成——鐵飯碗嘛。」Brad補充：「中國地墊製作家喜愛機械感，但卻是那些手造的質素才能令地墊更顯獨特。」

Janis和Brad熱衷「帶回手製感覺」，故此走到江蘇的織布和染布工地製作地墊，滲透出精緻的水彩畫美態，學習絲綢織造的可能和限制。

大部分絲綢均來自吃桑葉的蠶，但江蘇的野絲綢——又稱丹東絲——卻來自吃橡樹葉的蠶，故此能拉出淡淡的黃色效果。Janis指：「要造到灰色、特定米黃色和藍色等也非常困難，往往也會變綠。」她和Brad與製作人抽絲剝繭發現比其他淺色的蠶囊，並以之為Fort Street Studio製作超白線地墊。

對Brad和Janis來說，在絲線上巧妙融入水彩畫最重要是調較出精確的色彩，而且要持之以恆。難怪Janis把染房工人全都稱作「真英雄」。中國的染房工人以滾筒製作，不停攪動絲線確保色彩能均勻一致，溫度監測也是調出完美色彩的關鍵。

織造與染色過物一樣需要高技巧和仔細用心，畢竟一切也要是人手製作。如此一來也加添困難挑戰——Fort Street Studio的織造工人年事已高而且屆乎退休年齡，現只餘下少部分人擁有同等的高超技術。Janis說：「中國的年輕人們搬到城市居住，織造工人的孩子又要繼續升學——我們的確四面受阻。」

為解決問題，她和Brad現正與一系列小織造工作室合作，擴展他們的地墊製作至尼泊爾、印度和泰國，並以羊毛和絲製作。

新創作將於本年秋天面世。「我們以精緻絲線製作，在同一地墊上混合多種技術。」Brad表示：「我們正做著從未做過的事。」這無疑正是樂趣所在——同樣也是Fort Street Studio地墊的靈魂精髓。//

