



Left: The Manhattan living area of Fort Street Studio's Janis Provisor and Brad Davis. On the cover: Luigi Caiola and Sean McGill's Hamptons kitchen. "Good, Better, Best," page 206. Photography by Pieter Ester-sohn; styled by Lili Abir Regen.

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Facing page: Brad Davis and Janis Provisor of Fort Street Studio in their Tribeca loft. This page: Provisor's 1992 painting *Heart Stop* is displayed in the living room above rattan side chairs with cushions covered in a Jim Thompson fabric; the Polder sofa is by Hella Jongerius for Vitra; the cocktail table is vintage, and the Karl rug is by Fort Street Studio. See Resources.



THE PERFECT BLEND

MIDCENTURY-MODERN FURNISHINGS
MEET CHINESE ANTIQUES IN
THE LOFT OF ARTISTS JANIS PROVISOR AND BRAD DAVIS

TEXT BY DAN SHAW · PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM WALDRON

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Choosing a piece of art to match a room's color scheme has always been considered gauche. But to painters Janis Provisor and Brad Davis, it is perfectly acceptable for art to dictate one's decoration. In fact, what inspired the look of the couple's Tribeca loft is a 13-foot-long, four-panel work called *Heart Stop* that Provisor created in 1992, when they were both represented by gallerist Holly Solomon. "Everything evolved from that," Davis says of the painting, a lyrical combination of foggy stripes and pentimento layers. "It set the tone. We chose strong colors and offset them with neutrals."

Their loft is of the pre-hedge-fund variety, with exposed pipes and a freight elevator that opens into the apartment, though the owners usually take the

stairs. A previous resident skimmed the walls with shimmering Venetian plaster and left niches that reveal the underlying sandblasted brick. "That was done for pacing," Davis explains, "so this doesn't feel like one big open space."

He and his wife settled here in 2002, following a nine-year sojourn in China, where they founded Fort Street Studio, a manufacturer of hand-knotted wild-silk rugs admired by Madonna and Elton John. (If that isn't enough, Provisor also makes bold jewels dripping with amber, gold beads, freshwater pearls, and chunky aquamarines.)

"We left the United States with four suitcases and returned with a 40-foot container," says Davis of the resulting great haul of China—pottery, furniture,



The dining area features a bronze table by Paul Evans and Gio Ponti chairs; sandblasted brick provides a humble backdrop for artwork by Jared Bark, Elliott Greene, Lois Lane, and Wilson Shieh and a collection of German and American ceramics. Facing page, from top: A Moroso sofa, David Weeks sconce for Ralph Pucci International, and photograph by Patricia Blanchet in the media area; the silk shag rug is by Fort Street Studio. In the living room, a wood-and-wire sculpture by James Surfs, a Carlo Hauner rosewood cabinet, glass vases by Jared Davis, and a 19th-century Kurdish Tulu carpet. See Resources.



and textiles. Nevertheless they still needed a few items to pull the loft together, such as Hella Jongerius's cartoonish Polder sofa by Vitra. The Pee-wee Herman-like piece proved integral to the vast space, functioning as a dividing line between the entrance and living area. "It's witty, it's green, and we are green people," Provisor says, proudly adding that she and her husband were the first people to order the sofa from Vitra. "Now you see it everywhere," she notes. Thoughtful shopping is a shared passion for the couple. "Looking at things is one of our favorite activities," Provisor explains. "The first time we went to Hong Kong, in 1983, Brad and I probably went to every single store on the island before buying something. We wanted to educate ourselves. We like the hunt."

A decade later the pair moved to China with their son, Alec, then six, thinking "we'd hang out and make art" for a year, says Provisor. They headed to Hangzhou—the capital of famously picturesque Zhejiang province has been a major cultural center





for centuries—but discovered it had no international school at the time. So they relocated to Hong Kong and put down roots. "We were fascinated by the country and the possibilities," Davis says. "We felt we could do anything, which we never felt in America." And soon they began producing silk carpets with abstract designs derived from their own watercolors.

"Brad and I thought there was a market for something that was painterly yet not a painting," Provisor observes. It took nearly three years to master the weaving of their designs and six more before they became proficient in marketing, distribution, sales, and invoices; Alec ended up fluent in Mandarin in the meantime. Eventually the artists realized they had to open a showroom in Manhattan. That way the company could mature to the point where they would be able to return to their respective easels and hire other people to oversee the nuts-and-bolts side of Fort Street Studio.

The couple's booming business naturally has found its way into the loft's decor too. Rolled across the floor of the living area is a large carpet whose pattern is a loose grid of curvaceous squares and rectangles

recalling bold but faded tribal cloth. In addition to defining the space, it provides a mellow counterpoint to an assortment of modern and vintage furnishings, from a 1950s cocktail table to 18th-century Chinese sewing stools to '60s German pottery. Arresting juxtapositions abound. A twiggly wall sculpture by Texas artist James Surls branches above blown-glass vases by Provisor's stepson, Jared Davis; Gio Ponti chairs, elegant as gazelles, flank a weighty bronze dining table by Paul Evans.

Another of Fort Street's velvety carpets, this one dyed the palest shade of coral, stretches across the master bedroom. Here a series of metaphorical watercolors of classical figures by Chinese artist Wilson Shieh is displayed amid vintage furniture by George Nelson and Heywood-Wakefield and a low chair designed by Davis. That unexpected meeting of cultures handily illustrates the loft's enthusiastic embrace of East and West and its well-traveled residents' seat-of-the-pants approach to life. "We did not plan any of this," says Provisor, noting that some friends in the art world thought she and her husband were out of their minds to go into rugs. "Sometimes serendipity takes you places you don't expect." ■

Framed watercolors on silk by Wilson Shieh are the focal point of the master bedroom; the nightstand is vintage George Nelson, and the Grass-cloth silk carpet is by Fort Street Studio. Facing page, from left: Provisor's etching *Foreigner* hangs above a 1920s Chinese ginger jar, an 18th-century woodcarving, and jewelry of her own design. A desk and chests by George Nelson in Alec's room with works by, from left, Ed Ruscha, Linda Girvin, and Brad Davis; the chair is by Thonet, the Nesso lamp is by Artemide, and the silk carpet is by Fort Street Studio. See Resources.

