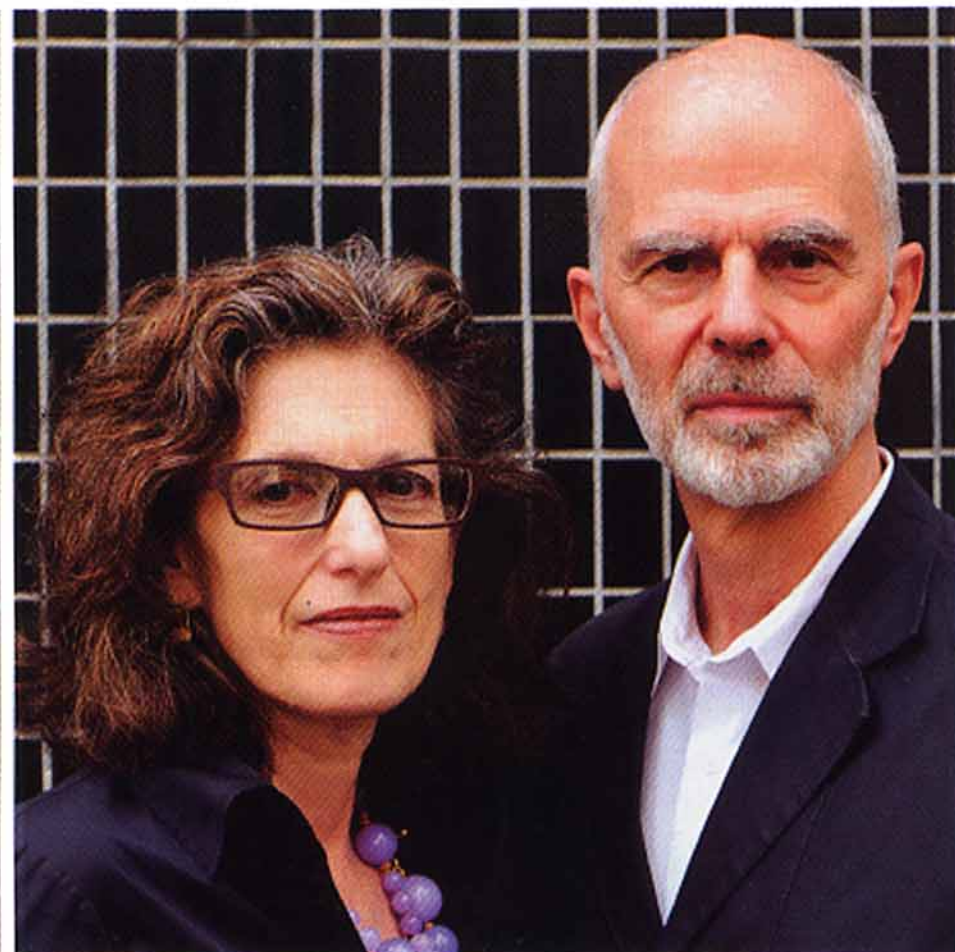


Business of design

From artists to designers and entrepreneurs, the founders of Fort Street Studio are certain of one thing — silk carpets are about human craftsmanship, not machines

TEXT: TERESA CHOW PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF FORT STREET STUDIO



Regardless of whether Brad Davis and Janis Provisor are regarded as artists, designers or entrepreneurs, their profiles as both painters and the founders of Fort Street Studio — which specialises in the making of hand-knotted silk carpets — fit the pigeonholes well. While the business world is open to all comers, launching your own business is usually viewed as an easier task for those born to be a commercial diplomat than for artists, thanks to the inherent need to compromise in order to succeed in the world of commerce.

Determined to seek adventure and new life experiences in China back in 1993, Davis and Provisor moved from the city of New York to Hangzhou with their six-year-old son. During that year, exploring the fascinating yet alien land

resulted in many discoveries, one of which was the silk industry. "Towards the end of that year, I asked Janis if she would like to make a carpet for our loft in New York... that turned out to be the beginning of our business," says Davis.

In creating their own first carpet, the couple decided to stick to what they were good at — watercolour painting. "This carpet was for ourselves, not for business. We were just practising art. But to be able to produce that very carpet with the level of quality so that it looked like a watercolour painting took us almost two-and-a-half years," says Provisor.

Since then, they have been involved in the making of silk carpets, prioritising both the refined texture of silk and the traditional craftsmanship

involved. "By the time this happened, our lives changed," she says. However, according to Davis, although the technique of silk-making had amazed them, none of the designs they saw interested them. "They weren't contemporary but traditional, in that they were of bright colours, hard edges and mostly of raw design. They were nothing that we like, but the quality was good."

Coming from the position as artists, the couple felt that anything was possible, Provisor says: "In the beginning, it was very difficult for us. But as time went on, we found it was interesting as it created challenges. We as the designers want to do something that was high design, which crosses the boundary between function and art, and for which we can draw upon our world as artists."

Today, with a manufacturing plant in China and showrooms in Hong Kong and the US, Fort Street Studio's collections have grown in stature and popularity among both architects and interior designers. By insisting on following the traditional method of making carpets by hand, the couple believes it is the personal meaning a carpet creates counts the most — rather like the difference between haute couture and ready-to-wear fashion.

"There are certainly computer-weaving techniques in Europe that could produce watercolour designs, but there's always the gap in producing the natural, hand-made feel," Davis says. "There were craftsmen in China who tried to cut out all the flaws from the hand-made silk carpets to make them solid and smooth; however, those are the natural flaws that we want for our carpets."

創意營商

從藝術家化身成為設計師及企業家，Fort Street Studio的創辦人都抱緊一個大原則：推崇比機械生產更有人情味的手編絲綢地毯。

撰文：TERESA CHOW 攝影：由FORT STREET STUDIO提供

有人認為Brad Davis及Janis Provisor是藝術家，也有人覺得他們是設計師或企業家。不過，他們身為Fort Street Studio手編絲綢地毯生產商創辦人及畫家的身份，都是無可置疑的。商業世界的大門似乎為所有人而打開，尤其是天生的商業奇才，他們總比藝術家長袖善舞，更能夠運籌帷幄，在商界打響名堂。

一九九三年，Brad和Janis希望到中國闖一闖，於是帶著當時只有六歲大的兒子，從家鄉美國紐約移居到中國的杭州。那一年，他們在異鄉發現了很多新奇的事物，當中一個令他們神往的，便是絲綢製作。Brad說：「那一年我們的異鄉生活接近尾聲時，我問Janis是否為我們紐約的家做一塊絲綢地毯作紀念，從此開始了我們的絲絨地毯生意。」

Brad和Janis選擇他們最擅長的水彩畫作圖案，製作他們的首張地毯。Janis說：「這塊地毯是自用的，並非出售，因為我們當時只志在練習畫工。可是我們花了兩年半的時間，才將地毯上的水彩畫做得栩栩如生。」

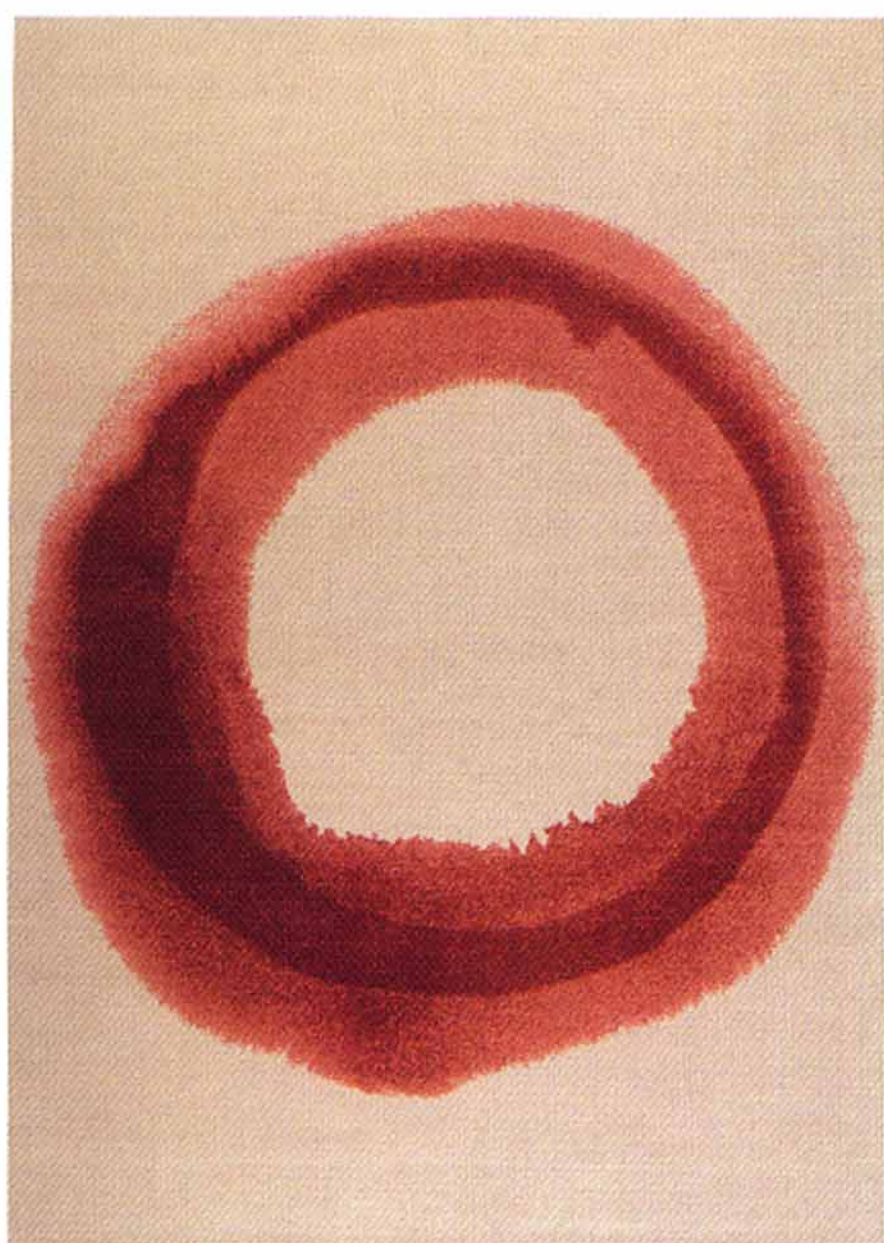
自此，他們便投入製作絲綢地毯。他們的地毯，既講究絲綢的質感，亦注重傳統的手工

藝術。她續說：「當這一切開始時，我們的生命便開始改變。」Brad認為雖然杭州的絲綢工藝令他們嘆為觀止，可是設計圖案就不合他們的口味，他說：「那些地毯都是傳統的圖案，鮮艷奪目卻粗糙。雖然手工一流，卻沒有我們想要的現代設計。」

身為藝術家的他們，認為什麼事都是有可能的。Janis說：「最初是很困難的。當時問一天一天過去，我們便發掘出不少樂趣與挑戰。我們既然是品牌的設計師，當然希望生產品質高的地毯，結合實用與美感，這亦是藝術家必須達到的要求。」

今天，Fort Street Studio不但在中國設有生產線，香港及美國均設有陳列室，出產的地毯深受建築師及室內設計師的喜愛。堅守傳統製作絲綢地毯的手藝，Brad和Janis確信添上個人風格才最具意義，就像高級訂造時裝及便服的分別。

Brad續說：「當然在歐洲已有電腦合成的編織技術，同樣可以製作水彩圖案地毯，但跟天然手編的感覺差天共地。中國有一些工匠試圖把絲綢地毯的粗糙磨平，我們卻堅持要保留，因為這種天然的瑕疵才是最真實的。」



top A simple circular brushstroke conjures up the serene feeling of a Zen painting below, clockwise from left The outline of a daisy is simply and vividly drawn through a very subtle abstract of painted wash • Fort Street Studio's showroom in Los Angeles in the US • Fort Street Studio's latest design features subtlety in colour transition, a higher knot count from 120 to 150 knots per line and soumak weaving in metallic threads opposite page from left An idiosyncratic grid of interlocking shapes puts order into the subdued, smokey background in the Segment pattern • Janis Provisor and Brad Davis

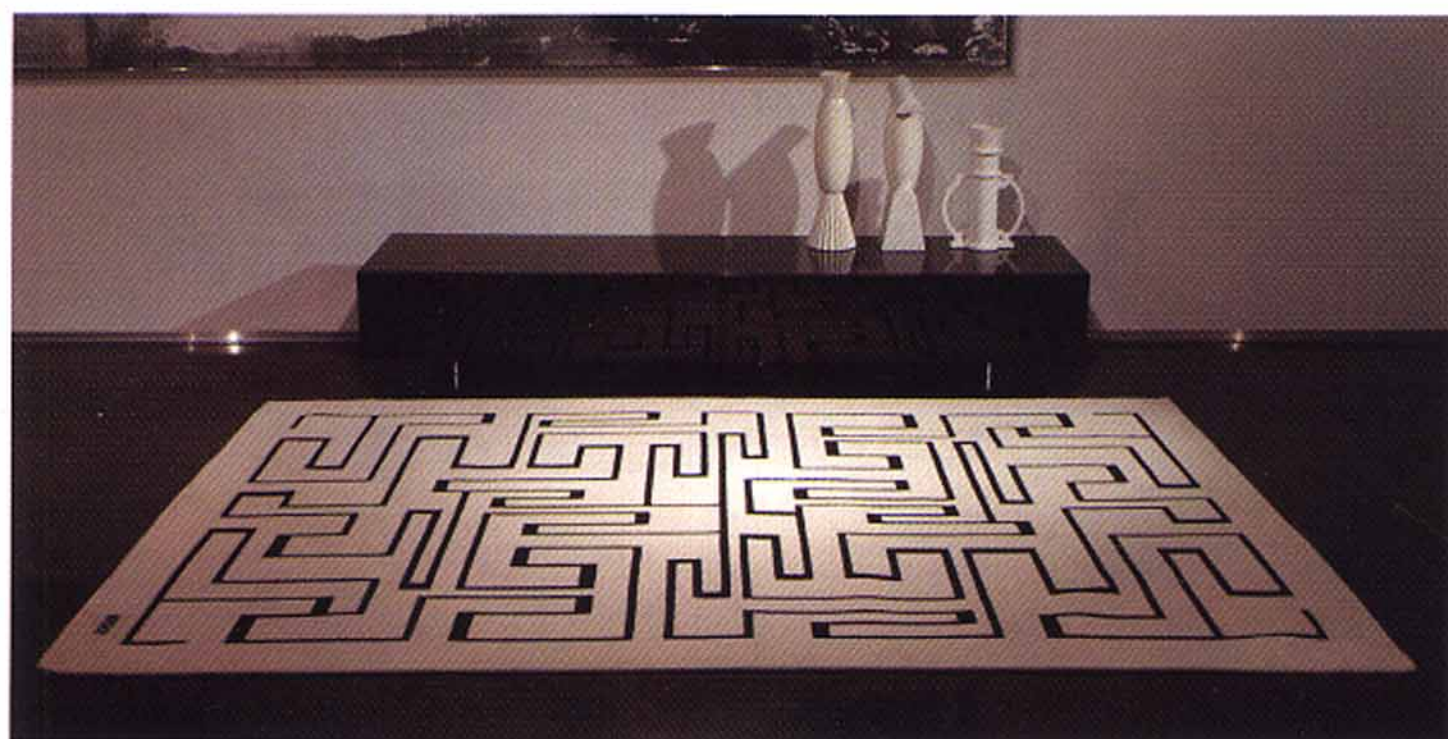


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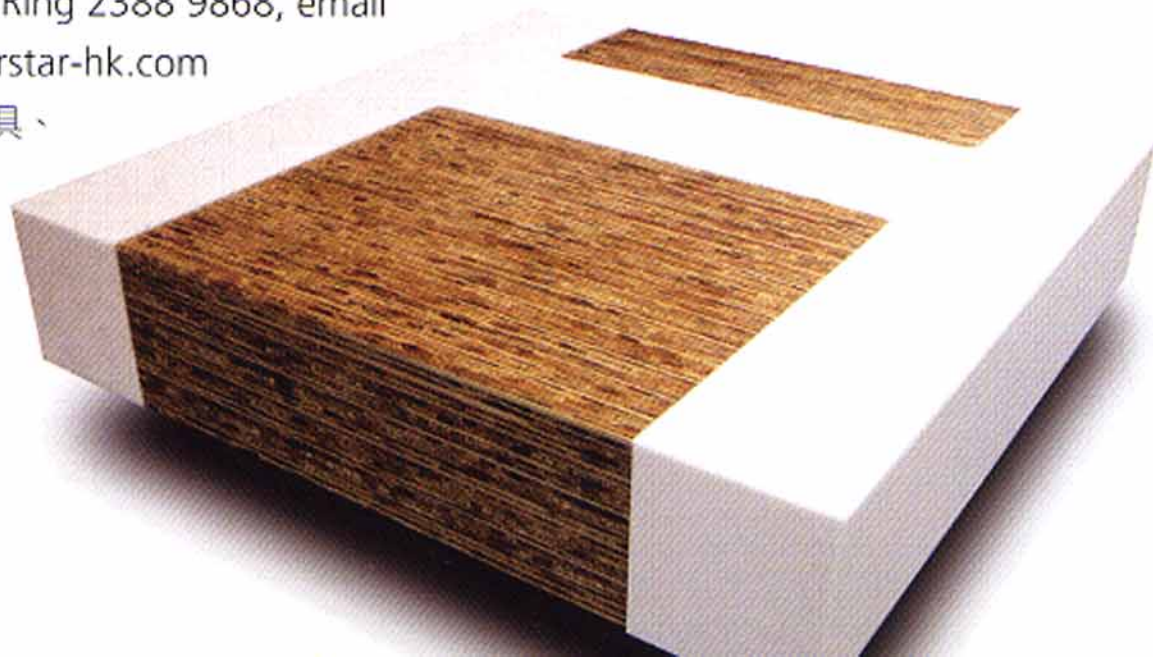


Steirer Parkett

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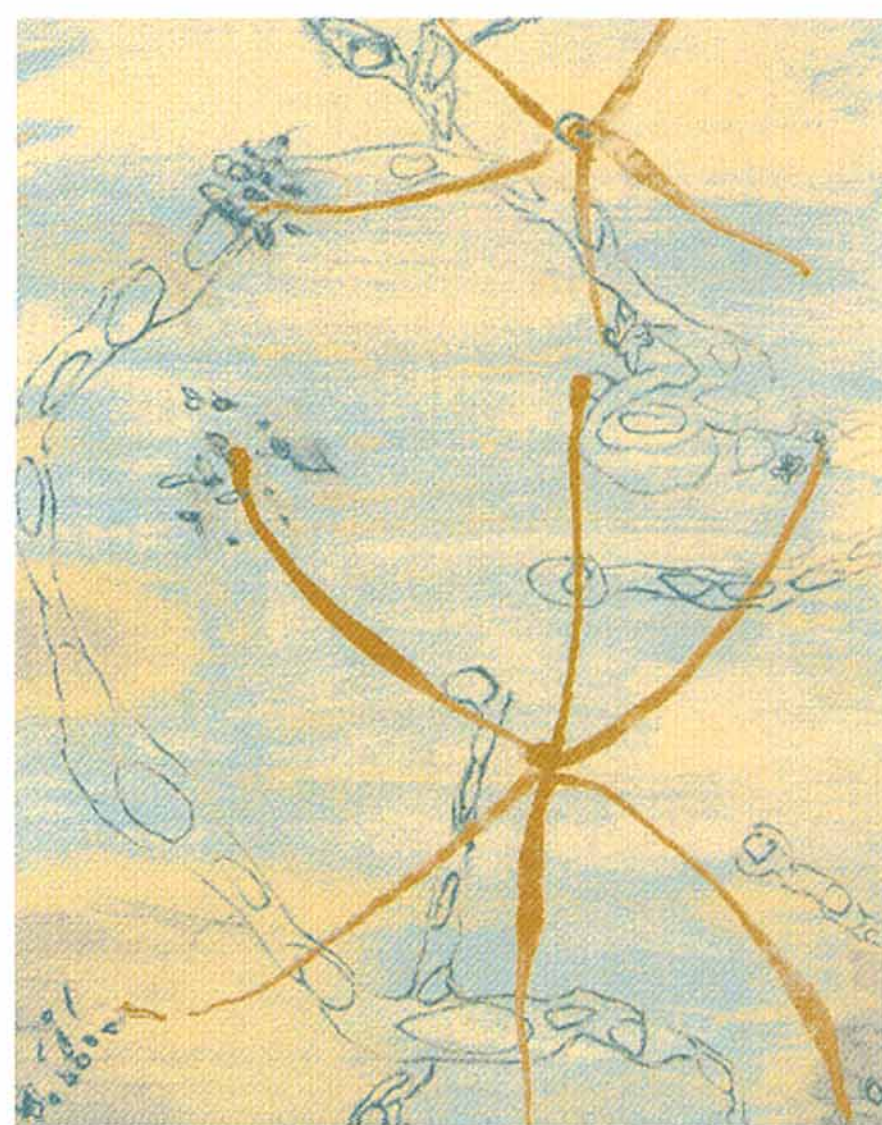
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Superstar的Kirei Board是木材代用品，適合傢俱、細工傢具、櫥櫃及室內裝修。採用回收的蜀黍管子及不含甲醛的黏合劑，輕便、耐用、環保。詳情可親臨新蒲崗六合街8號六合工業大廈20樓A室Super Star Co Ltd、致電2388 9868、電郵info@superstar-hk.com或瀏覽www.superstar-hk.com



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The Vivienne Westwood for Cole & Son wallpapers are all based on signature designs from her fashion collections, such as the iconic Squiggle print from the autumn-winter 81/82 Pirate collection, and the more recent Cut-Out Lace from the spring-summer 07 I am Expensiv collection. For more information, visit Altfield Interiors at 1102-3, Nine Queen's Road, Central. Ring 2524 4867 or see www.altfield.com.hk
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Fort Street Studio

Fort Street Studio's Twig Light are silk rugs featuring watercolour illustrations of underwater plant life and starfish, with close-ups of seed pods and twigs, evoking the abstract whimsy of nature without a specific reference. For more information, visit Fort Street Studio at Suite 305, 3/F Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay. Ring 2889 5150 or email info-hk@fortstreetstudio.com
Fort Street Studio的Twig Light絲質地毯猶如一幅幅漂亮圖畫，水底植物、海星、蓮蓬及蓮梗的水彩圖案，呈現自然世界的抽象美感。詳情可親臨鯪魚涌華蘭路20號華蘭中心3樓305室Fort Street Studio、致電2889 5150或電郵info-hk@fortstreetstudio.com