





*The Textile Eye on Artisans*

# TRADE CRAFT

***On a farm in rural Vermont, Justin Squizzero hand-weaves textiles that parallel the rough-hewn beauty and reserved traditionalism of his New England state.***

The threads of history run deeply throughout every aspect of Justin Squizzero's work and life, coming together in a richly layered tapestry. As the founder of The Burroughs Garret, he crafts handwoven historic reproductions and textiles inspired by the past – all on antique hand looms. Harking back to a time when utilitarian objects were fully handcrafted, Squizzero's functional textiles connect the material, the maker and the user across time.

In 2015, Squizzero purchased the Burroughs-Hebb-McClintock farm, built by William Burroughs circa 1810. The house came with nearly 200 years' worth of the former owners' possessions, but the real treasure trove was to be found in the garret (part of the house tucked under the roof) in the form of reeds, warping bars, a loom, and even broken parts of a flax wheel. The Burroughs girls spun and wove linen in this very room; hence, the name The Burroughs Garret.

Today, he lives and works on the farm with his husband Andrew, a flock of Border Leicester



## THE BURROUGHS GARRET

Est. 2017  
Newbury, Vermont, USA

**What they create**  
Handwoven Jacquard Textiles

**Market level**  
Luxury/Artisanal

**Who they sell to**  
Interior Designers, Museums, End Consumers

**Where to find**  
Online, Day in the Life Gallery





sheep, Berkshire hogs, heirloom poultry and a quarter-acre kitchen garden. Plying his trade in this historic setting, Squizzero's work is influenced by the memories of previous occupants of the farm who did the very same work in the very same space two centuries ago. "Through corporeal objects we connect with people and place in bonds that are subtle, but deep. Flax, wool, cotton, silk are all composed of nothing except the soil, plants, and bodies that made them," he explains. "Each vagary of the season leaves its unique mark, forever tying the fiber to the time and place that made it. This matter matters, it's as distinct and diverse as a fingerprint. It's textile terror."

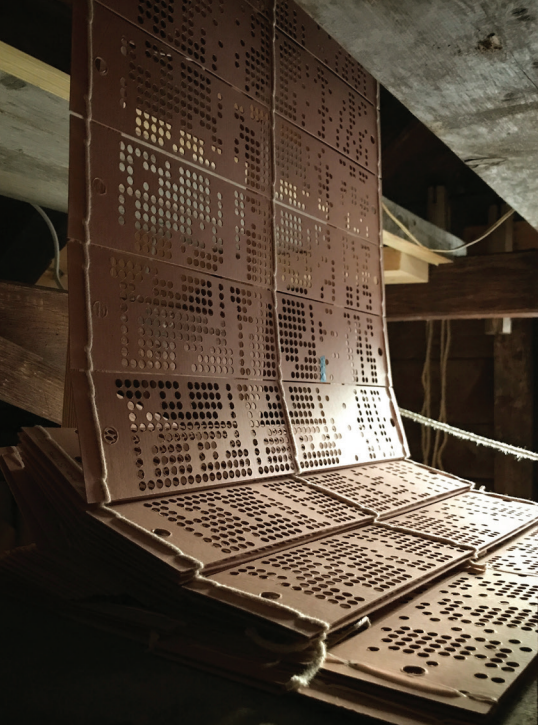
Squizzero apprenticed under Kate Smith and Norman Kennedy of The Marshfield School of Weaving in Marshfield, Vermont, but he also had a very influential mentor in early childhood. His grandmother was an accomplished dyer, spinner, and weaver, and it was from her that he became introduced to the handcraft that would become his life's work.

Alongside custom-commissioned textiles, he sells directly to the consumer on his website. However, he doesn't debut seasonal collections, introducing a new design only when it becomes compelling enough that he feels a need to see it in the world.

Fascinated by figured weaving, Squizzero mastered the complex technique and is currently the only handweaver of figured coverlets in the United States, which he produces on an 1860's British Jacquard machine that is the most significant tool in his workshop. To that end, his latest design, a figured coverlet made on the Jacquard machine, embodies what he feels to be most important about his work.

The Agriculture & Manufactures coverlet is based on antiques woven between 1822 and 1840 (only 126 originals are still in existence today) by various unknown weavers. "While the motto, 'Agriculture & Manufactures are the Foundation of Our Independence,' had a nationalistic sentiment in the 19th century, it





encapsulates the mix of farming and weaving that give me an independence from the 9-to-5, consumeristic, throwaway culture of America today,” he says. “Just like the weavers who last wove these coverlets 180 years ago, I don’t approach my work from the standpoint of an artist creating new designs, but as a tradesman working within a traditional framework of folk design.”

In order to aid communities that have traditionally been shut out of craft in America, a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the Agriculture & Manufactures coverlets will go to a local project. “It includes an artist residency, land trust, and series of events that invite BIPOC to be in community with each other, their creativity, and nature—the essence of what the coverlet’s 200-year-old motto means to me.”

Currently, Squizzero is researching handweaving technology and techniques in America from 1750-1850. As he notes, there was a deep well of knowledge developed over centuries that was forgotten with the

advent of the power loom. “That knowledge has great importance to those who study historic textiles, but also handweavers today, and rebuilding a connection to that past is a major force behind my work.”

In terms of his creative process, he describes himself as process-oriented. “I think of what I do as 10% manufacturing and 90% performance art,” he explains. “For me, the fabrics are a vehicle for engaging with these old tools and practicing traditional techniques that date back to at least the 14th century.”

Connecting to the past and the people before remains at the heart of his trade craft; his daily work repertoire involves using tools passed down by his grandmother. “Working with them is a constant reminder of her, and of the ways in which objects and tradition will long outlast those of us who embody them during our lives,” he concludes. “We are both beneficiaries and benefactors in a long line of people who transform fiber into fabric.”





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