

A photograph of a man, Justin Squizzero, weaving on a large wooden loom in his attic. The room is dimly lit, with light streaming in from windows in the background. The loom is a complex wooden structure with many threads. The man is wearing a dark shirt and is focused on his work. The attic has a high, vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams. There are various items hanging from the ceiling and on shelves in the background.

# WHERE

Justin Squizzero has found

# TIME

the perfect place

# STANDS

to weave his magic

# STILL

Words [Sara-Ella Ozbek](#)

Photography [Heather McClintock](#)

Squizzero weaving  
in his attic.





When Justin Squizzero came across the early nineteenth-century farmhouse in northern Vermont that he now calls home, it was not quite falling down, but almost. Having belonged to only two families over two hundred years, his acquisition would be the first in a century. For a textile weaver as traditional as Squizzero, to find a home so rich in history feels like a winking nod to Carl Jung's theory that one's house is a mirror of one's self. Squizzero's craft — and by extension, his life — is a hark back to an era long gone.

When he moved into this slice of old rural Vermont, there was only a cat he named Trifosa, who came with the house. Today, he resides there with his husband, explaining him as, "a more recent acquisition." The pair live almost as conscientiously as the first inhabitants of the house might have done, heating it with wood and growing their fruit and vegetables in the expansive garden. They've even retained trash from the nineteenth century, which Squizzero views as cool and his husband views as, well, trash. But the true time-machine effect is thanks to the gargantuan horizontal loom punctuating Squizzero's studio. It is identical to those you see in medieval art. "They haven't changed because they work so well," he explains. At that loom, he weaves textiles that are inspired by the past.

Squizzero grew up in Rhode Island where America's industrial sector first emerged. His earliest memories involve his grandmother working with wool in various states, and trips

to the local museums showcasing textile production. From a young age, he was in awe of the machinery and, when he was fifteen, received the very loom that he still uses. Unusually, his teenage rebellion came in the form of overfocussing. He recalls finding comfort in the tedious, repetitive nature of what would eventually become his craft. With a keen interest in history, Squizzero began his career at the Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts, but always felt an urge to work more dexterously. Weaving then became the perfect solution to earning a living creatively whilst utilizing his rich and impressive knowledge of history.

A long period of Squizzero's training was dedicated to nurturing an understanding of the material he was working with. He shows great interest in the mechanical side of weaving, possessing a desire to understand exactly *how* it works. He talks about the specifics of textiles with touching intrigue and even disbelief, musing over the fact that the thread is so delicate, the yarn so fragile, yet enormous pieces of cast iron and wood can rapidly transform these materials into fabric. "It's mind-blowing that it all doesn't just shred and fall apart!" he adds. Understanding the subtleties of how to get material to respond to the weaving process is something that he believes he will be learning until the day he dies.

But, for now, his work has been transformed by the 19th-century Jacquard head that he fitted to his loom just as the pandemic began. This device has allowed him to create the coverlets that are now at the heart of his business. Previ-

The true time-machine effect is thanks to the gargantuan horizontal loom punctuating Squizzero's studio. It is identical to those you see in medieval art. "They haven't changed because they work so well."

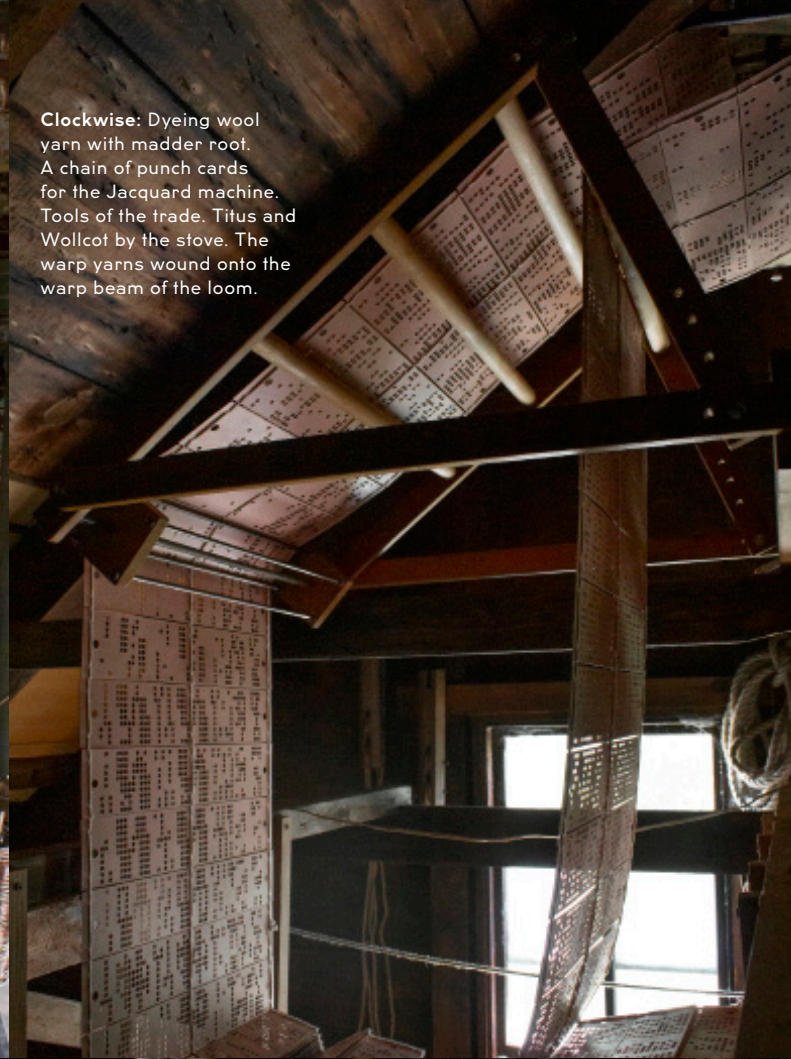


**Opposite page:** Weaving a Rose & Stars coverlet design by 19th-century weaver John Campbell. **This page:** In the good company of Wolcott, the collie, while reeling wool yarn into skeins for dyeing.





Clockwise: Dyeing wool yarn with madder root. A chain of punch cards for the Jacquard machine. Tools of the trade. Titus and Wollcot by the stove. The warp yarns wound onto the warp beam of the loom.



ously, he had worked largely on commissions, producing yardage of fabric to become part of a finished product. Now, he can create and sell that product himself. His latest design is an adaptation of a coverlet that was first woven in 1822, which he bought at an auction to study. In this design, he saw an Indian influence indicative of the cross-cultural mash up that was happening in United Kingdom and, by extension, America. The borders are lined with American patriotic motifs and Masonic imagery, which he describes as “bizarre and weird,” and the corners bear the motto “Agriculture and Manufacturers are the Foundation of Our Independence.” Rather than producing a piece of historical re-enactment, Squizzero is interested in creating a piece that says something about what it is to live in 2021. But he also maintains that it is the way in which these objects are made that gives them the desirability factor: the same way that fabric has been woven for centuries. The finished product, he feels, is somewhat secondary to that.

Indeed, traditional weavers of today are the links in a historical chain, connecting the past to the present and even the future — given that these pieces are fit to be passed on for years to come. Certainly, Squizzero is attracted to the ways in which he can create connections to those whom he will never meet, by sitting at the same looms that they have and engaging in the craft in his own way — though practices of weaving have remained similar for centuries — albeit in a very different world. The way he sees it, this journey does not stop with him but extends to the buyer. By purchasing his textiles, they are keeping the craft alive and thus sustaining the art of the old world.

Despite his fascination with history, Squizzero does not feel he’s been born into the wrong era. For one thing, he’s an unlikely fan of Instagram, drawing much creative inspiration from hours of scrolling. Instagram has also made it possible for him to seek out the small community of people who do what he does, no matter where they are in the world, a privilege that is certainly only applicable to this day and age. He finds it a comfort to be able to reach those who can offer advice when things go wrong, given that so much knowledge, skill and demand has been lost over the years, as technology has changed.

Of course, he admits that there is much about the material world of the past that we lack in the present. Like many of us, he despairs over the abundance of materials that are not meant to last, like plastic and glue, and feels that our world lacks some integrity. But ultimately, he values his role in carrying the craft of weaving into the present day. And despite longing for a time when everything was solid wood, he humorously concludes, “Dentistry is great. So is not having smallpox.” ■

*Sara-Ella Ozbek is the London based author of The High Moments and Nothing I Wouldn't Do, published by Simon & Schuster. Her work has appeared in The Independent, Tatler, Because, Suitcase, and House Notes. @saraellaozbek*  
*Photographer Heather McClintock was raised next door to Squizzero. Her family used to own his house. @heathermcclintock*



Below: This pattern made by, and named after, the previous owner of Squizzero's Jacquard equipment; Roy Orr's Zanesville.

