

# a house built for **one**

AS SEEN IN  
**DESIGN**  
new england



Architect Frank Riepe creates the consummate haven for furniture designer Nan Quick in Jaffrey, New Hampshire

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ARCHITECTURE BY BUILDING ARTS

**C**REATE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL EACH DAY. THAT WAS NAN Quick's mantra when she faced a personal and professional crossroads a few years ago. As she moved out of the 300-year-old converted cider mill that she shared with her now ex-husband in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, and slowly backed away from a decades-long career as a publishing consultant, she felt a stirring toward a new purpose. Her efforts began with realizing a lifelong goal of designing and building a house.

"I knew what I wanted, but I couldn't put it together," says Quick, who graduated from Massachusetts College of Art with a degree in architecture — but never pursued the discipline professionally. "I wanted a small house that felt huge, elegant without pretension."

Working with architect Frank Warner Riepe, she got exactly that in the form of a window-filled white clapboard house perched on a 3-acre Jaffrey hillside with panoramic garden views. On a rainy day, the house is reminiscent of an ark slicing through fog; on a sunny day, it soars skyward like an ecclesiastical meetinghouse. It's spacious yet snug, somewhere between New England vernacular and Tuscan villa.

Quick first saw Riepe's work while visiting her sister's home, where he had designed an addition. Upon touring his own home in Sudbury, Massachusetts, Quick knew

**THE FRONT ENTRY** was designed to give a hint at the rich wood tones of the interior spaces beyond. Nan Quick's red "Lorenzo" loveseat and side table brighten the house's white clapboard exterior. A generous window seat (**RIGHT**) is a favorite sleeping spot on hot summer nights.



THE EXTERIOR OF the house offers a graphic repeat of windows. Nan Quick describes architect Frank Warner Riepe (pictured below in the kitchen with Quick) as “quietly observant.” The cabinets are Baltic birch plywood faced with stainless steel.



THE REPEAT OF long stacked with square windows was inspired by a drawing Quick's grandfather did of Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon at Versailles. Quick hung the drawing above the granite hearth in the great room. The painted fabric shoji screens offer privacy for the bedroom.

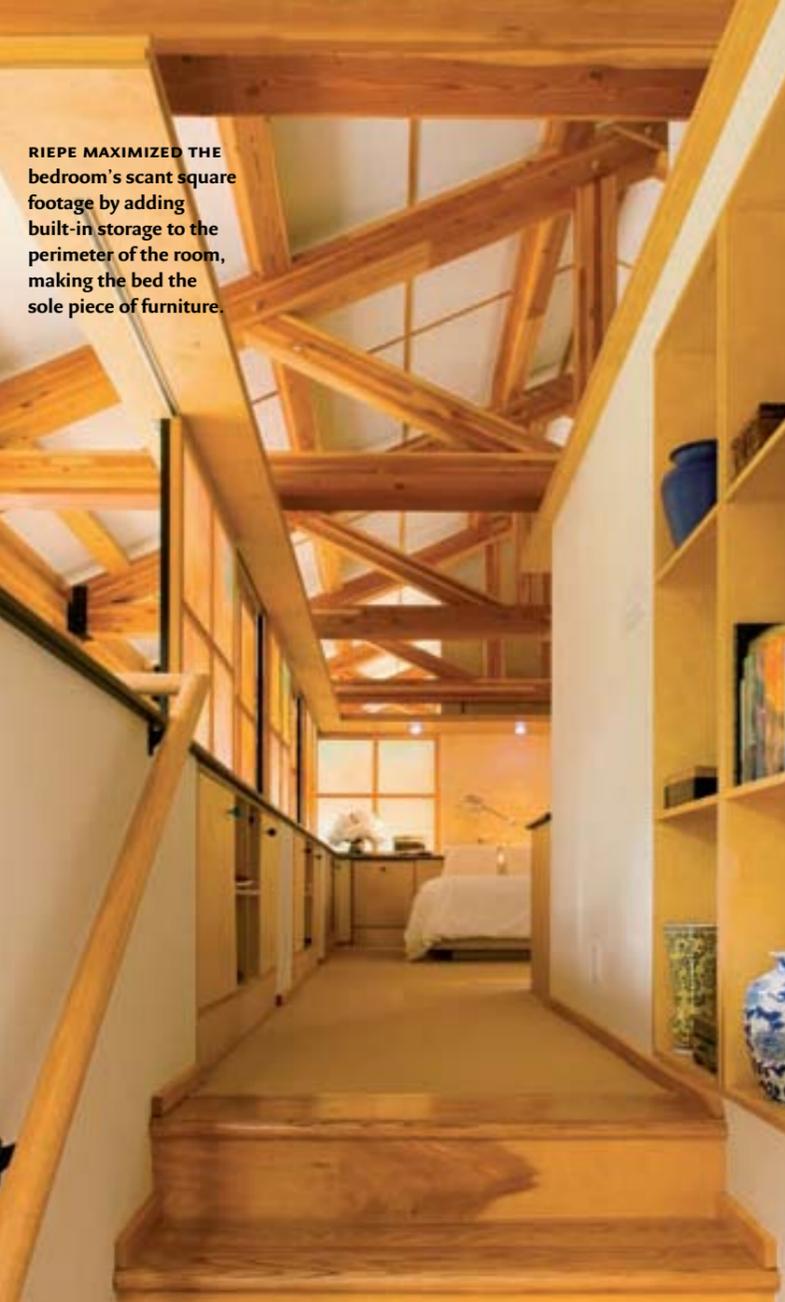


instantly that he “got it.” She sent the architect a few collages she had made using cutouts from shelter magazines and some hand-drawn flashcards her architect grandfather made in the early 1900s while studying at Princeton University, along with a letter that outlined her predilection for Beaux Arts architecture, multitudes of squares (“I have this thing about squares — Renaissance ones, not medieval,” she says), and simple materials. Her final edict? “Make me a house I can’t break.”

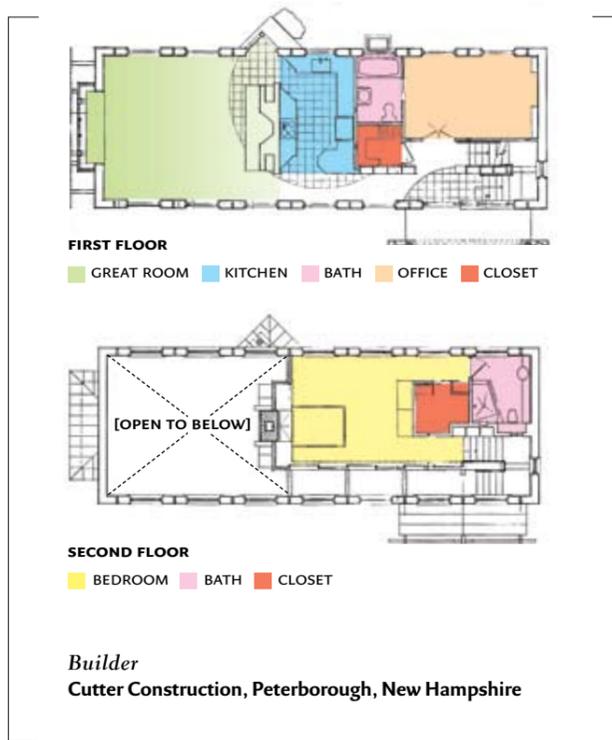
“Nan is a classicist, but unlike some, she’s not mired in the past,” says Riepe from his Sudbury-based architecture studio Building Arts. “She brought examples of very modern spaces with industrial materials and bold articulation.”

A few letters were exchanged and then a survey taken of Quick’s most important possessions, and the two did not communicate for a month. Quick traveled to Italy (another scratch on her bucket list) to soak up the region’s architecture. The trip proved inspirational, sparking her next professional venture, designing hand-built wrought-iron garden furniture.

When Quick returned, Riepe presented a program for a 1,000-square-foot timber frame dwelling. It met all of Quick’s specifications, including a loftlike second-story bedroom secluded from the main floor by rolling



RIEPE MAXIMIZED THE bedroom's scant square footage by adding built-in storage to the perimeter of the room, making the bed the sole piece of furniture.



**DESIGN DECISIONS**  
*Iron Works*

Inspired by classical architecture during a trip to Italy, Nan Quick sketched an outdoor furniture collection. The heirloom-quality pieces are handmade by a father-son metalsmithing team in Colrain, Massachusetts, and can be

customized in any powder-coated color, including basic black, like the Art Deco-inspired "Tiara" chair pictured above. Although a passion for gardening informs her work, Quick heads to Italy for new ideas — including a recent Palladio-focused tour with architect Frank Riepe and his family.

shoji screens, a smartly appointed kitchen made of sturdy materials such as Carrara marble and stainless steel, two full baths, an office, a generous window seat for sleeping on hot summer nights, and windows galore.

"Frank aligned the house just like Palladio," says Quick. His skillful placement referenced more than his client's aesthetics. The harsh storms that breeze through nearby Mount Monadnock year-round deserved equal consideration. The house's 12-inch-thick walls are super-insulated, and the building is sited so that it doesn't take the wind and weather head-on. The exterior framing of the 8-foot-high double-hung windows (which nearly touch the floor on the ground level) is rot-resistant mahogany, chosen for winter days when the snow stacks several feet high.

But on summer days, the walls of windows flood the space with light. For a fluorescent effect in the great room, where she spends most of her time, Quick painted the ceiling pale cotton candy pink and faced the interior chimney in brown-toned crimson Indiana limestone stucco. Quick's



AN AVID GARDENER, Quick makes the most of the 3-acre site, which includes a small pond and a terrace set up here for candlelit alfresco dining. Plans for the landscape include replicating a 12,000-daffodil bed from the formal gardens of her previous home in Jaffrey.

artist aunt Audrey Sochor of Medford, Oregon, created the fabric panels for the shoji screens that shield the bedroom, which were inspired by the heavenly skies of Italian master painter Tiepolo. The luminous effect is akin to a ceremonial Japanese teahouse.

"I often referred to the house as a little temple on the hill, particularly as viewed from a distance as you approach it from the road," says Riepe. "The sacred — if it is there, and that was not my intention — might come from quietude and symmetry and honesty of expression."

In the entry, a circle of tiled slate leads to the curvilinear kitchen floor of the same material. Kevin Cutter of Cutter Construction in Peterborough, New Hampshire, built the house, and Quick points to the Baltic birch plywood kitchen cabinets he custom-built as an example of his fine execution of Riepe's design. In keeping with the minimalist look, the layered wood on the cut edge serves as the finish.

"Steel and stone are rugged yet decorative materials that establish their

own vocabulary and complement the natural environment," says Riepe. Pointing to the steel porch overhang, he adds, "Still, the design is as delicate as an umbrella, which is all it needs to be."

With Riepe in Massachusetts, Quick served as the autodidact site manager during the yearlong build-out. Meanwhile, she found metalsmiths in Colrain, Massachusetts, to manufacture her garden furniture, and by the time the house was complete, her company, QDG Designs, had taken off. Mentions in *Metropolitan Home* and *The New York Times* soon followed.

She works from her home office and continues to be delighted by Riepe's thoughtful inclusions, such as nooks inside the mantel for matches and wood and the way each window frames a specific garden view. "It was the first time I functioned as one of the creative people," says Quick of working with Riepe and overseeing the construction process. "And I learned that the joy of making is just that — the making." ■

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