

## A Deeper Look At Life Holly Graybill and Ron Rudnicki

By Maeve Carmichael

Photos by Steve Rodgers

Holly Graybill and Ron Rudnicki have made their home, much like their work, an expression of who they are and what they believe should be important in life. They met years ago while traveling at the same time in Peru; they married there a year ago. Now they live and work together, with their cat and two dogs, in their home in East Freetown, MA.

"The whole story of this house starts with Ron and this piece of land," says Graybill, motioning to their vibrant and eclectically decorated home. Rudnicki, her husband, a sculptor and landscape artist, discovered this property ten years ago. It is nestled off of a quiet and unassuming road. It had been passed on by others because of a large outcrop of rock in the back yard. What those had seen as an inconvenience and a flaw in the land, Rudnicki envisioned as a beautiful project. "He saw that and it just captivated his heart," she says.

He began building the home by himself on the land; he started and completed the foundation in the fall and by January just the trim and kitchen cabinets were left.

The house is like no other. One thing that makes it different is the bamboo ceiling that he created. "He designed and built this house with the concept of making the house whole with nature. He did that by bringing the outside inside. He wanted you to feel when you're inside that you're outside."

Sunlight is invited into their home with glass doors, large windows and skylights. Rudnicki's design allows one

"The Nest."





to, if they could get high enough, see directly through the house *via* skylights. A picture-lined staircase leads to the second level of the home which includes their bedroom and office. The doors to the bedroom are ancient temple doors from China opening and enabling the sun or moonlight to enter through a skylight.

When Holly moved in years after the house was first built, although structurally complete, it was bare on the inside. "I said, 'No more white,'" notes Graybill, a decorative artist.

She went to work painting and integrating art from around the world into their home. She has traveled extensively and brings back treasures from different cultures. Part of this nomadic gathering is a result of her father's influence, who after serving in WWII, returned to Japan to live and work as an artist, writer and missionary.

"That was my first toy from my father," says Graybill. She takes a large turtle shell off the wall. It is over one hundred and fifty years old. "When I was born in Okinawa, my father was on a trek. Most fathers bring back rattles," she says laughing.

"My goal here was to have a home that reflects our passion for travel and the art of other people and the inspiration of nature and our passion for each other."

Holly transitions her eye for art and her ability to make a home both welcoming and functional into her job. She is an adept faux painter and mural designer, and her clients bring her from Palm Beach to New York, the south coast of New England and of course Boston, to have her special touch incorporated into their houses.

"My palate is full with all the dreams and passions of my clients," she says. She recognizes that people have different opinions about what their home should be like and she works with that, making suggestions and bouncing ideas back and forth with her clients. She has done a variety of things with clients' interiors; painted columns to appear marble, customized murals, and painted specialized faux finishes of wood, gold-leaf, stone and bas-relief plaster in both contemporary and old world looks.

While Holly has a knack for the interior, Ron's true gift is working directly with nature. His stone sculptures, carefully and patiently thought out and not always quickly visible to a casual passerby, are gathering fame in exhibits. Some of these are the DeCordova museum and the "Rock On" exhibit at the New England Wild Flower Society's Garden in the Woods.

He put himself through school while doing construction. He learned not only the trade, but used his creativity to enhance the basics. His goal is to see life and then "translate it into stone," as he describes it.

Inside their home is an example of the care he takes to make his artistic vision true. He let a maple tree cure for five years before enveloping it in bronze and copper. It stands, unsuspecting yet magnificent, in their living room.

Outside is a stream entirely of rock, complete with a curve that seems as though nature put it there. Rather than water flowing through the stream, however, Ron carved deposits into the tops of carefully chosen stone and filled



Detail of basin in dry stream.



Pedestal water basin.





them with water. This was created to honor his late father.

Thirty types of bamboo also grow in their yard, brought in from different places. A gathering of rock with slate is partially hidden in their yard. Moss fills the inlays that Rudnicki created. When the slate is polished and the sun reflects on it, it shines. There is also a pond and stream he created filled with Koi and goldfish. One fish, nicknamed "Jaws",

in particular is fond of Graybill, and will often swim right up to her.

Rudnicki's art changes along with nature, depending on the sun, rain, and snow. At his home it is expansive, flowing throughout the yard and in the house. It can appear to be something as simple as a rock resting on grass. Upon closer inspection though, you can see that the shape has been masterfully determined, and that water tunnels through to other stones. "He loves to see what happens when nature takes over," says Graybill. "Ours is an ever-changing environment."

Rudnicki, sought after for his ability to expertly manipulate stone, is a busy man. "I have five bodies of work going on at the same time," he says. His work studio is full of the smaller-scale projects he has developed; an easier way for him to see how the final large products will play out.

A visit to their home is refreshing, an escape from the rigors of the modern day world, and an opportunity to take a closer and deeper look at life. At the same time it is carefree and attractive. It is easy to see why the pair is requested to contribute their work to the lifestyles and museums of so many people.

Visit the website for contact info: [ronrudnickisculptor.com](http://ronrudnickisculptor.com).



Waterbasin and windowed rockery titled "Passage."

