Tapestry Blogs: Web Based Community

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My weblog came into being in August 2006. I was seeking a source of self-motivation as I started on my journey to become a full time artist. A fledgling weaver, I had recently left my nursing career, knew no other fiber artists, and had no clue that ATA existed. I was alone and yearning for inspiration. Interestingly, journaling with pen and paper had never been a successful endeavor for me, but blogging immediately felt different. At first, I thought the blog would just be a place to document my weaving activities, but it quickly, and naturally, encompassed and reflected the parts of my life that profoundly affect who I am as an artist and person, capturing my thoughts and contemplations about where I live and what I create, effectively revealing the implicit synergy therein. My blog has unexpectedly evolved to become an important part of who I am as an artist, extending through cyberspace far beyond my studio walls, or the gallery walls on which my tapestries may be displayed. Although I weave alone in my studio, I am now connected to many other weavers in a growing, dynamic tapestry weaving blog community that includes both authors and readers.

After establishing my blog, I felt that I was alone in the blogosphere. I had a strong desire to find blogs written by other tapestry weavers. A few non-artist visitors that I did not personally know had left comments on my first posts, but even though I had been searching far and wide, I couldn’t find another tapestry weaving blog. I had my blog plugged into Internet search engines and blog search engines. Its web address was on my business cards and in my email signature. If I had regular readers, they were not leaving comments on my posts, so I had
no idea they had visited. Slowly, events unfolded that started the connection process. In the beginning of 2007, I took an “Inspirations in Tapestry” workshop in Tucson. One of the teachers was Barbara Heller and she told the class about Kathe Todd-Hooker’s tapestry e-list. I later became a list member, and in a post to the list I included my blog web address. Other list members commented in subsequent posts that they had visited my blog, so I related my tale of searching, but not finding, other tapestry blogs. Several quick responses gave me links to other tapestry weaver’s blogs, among them Marilyn Rea-Menzies, Meabh Warburton, and Sue Lawty. Like the opening of virtual floodgates, another result of this discussion was the creation and appearance of several new blogs, those of Kathy Spoering, Debbie Herd, and Tommye McClure Scanlin. Seemingly out of the blue, after months of blogging alone, my microcosm was abruptly expanded into a global tapestry blog community. New blogs by other tapestry artists continue to appear. There are so many now that a reader may have difficulty choosing favorites to follow. Some of my newer favorites are written by Jan Austin, Rebecca Mezoff, and Kathe Todd-Hooker. All a reader has to do now to find a multitude of tapestry weaving blogs is visit one blog and follow the links to find, and visit, other tapestry blogs.

The beauty of blogs is that they are as simple, or as technical, as the author wishes, and most are free. If a person knows how to compose an email with photos and text attachments, they can create a blog. Blog hosting entities have made it extremely easy to get started with ready-made templates. All a prospective blogger has to do is create a free account, dream up a blog name, choose a template, and start writing posts. Interactive lists of links can be created to take readers to similar blogs, pertinent resources, and organizations. For authors who enjoy delving into the more technical side of blog configuration, blog technology continues to evolve with all sorts of tools, gadgets, and widgets, ranging from slide shows to animated links. One of the newest blog features is static pages. These are used for content that is usually found on regular websites. This latest upgrade led me to the realization that I could mesh my blog and website into a sublime oneness... it seemed to me a bit backwards that I was paying an annual fee for a website that hangs out in cyberspace as a relatively inert object while I was using a very basic, free blog service that had become an integral element of my artistic repertoire. In an avant-garde move, I recently subscribed to a premium blog service and did not renew my website. Blog and website are now one.
The community of tapestry weaving bloggers I am part of is everything I had hoped for when I first envisioned the types of connections that could be made via blogging. These are connections which cannot be made through static photographs in a book or on a website, but only through the living, breathing, informally written words and succession of fresh visual images that are possible through blogging. We see and share each other’s work in real time: the designing stages, the weaving, the unweaving, the cutting off, the finishing and the exhibiting. We see and share techniques and materials, ask questions and offer encouragement and advice. We see and share the varied environments where we live and weave, the happy and sometimes sad events in our lives, our inspirations and stalled motivations, where we have been and where we are going and our personal thoughts and ponderings about life and art. Each blog is a reflection of the artist’s individuality and offers a tantalizing view through the studio door. What we see through those open doors gives us deeper insight into understanding the hidden experiences woven into our work.