

Blog Tech

Elaine Duncan

<http://www.elaineduncan.com/>



Be Here Now
Elaine Duncan

Several years ago, my son Ian suggested that I create a website to promote my weaving classes. I agreed, and he hosted, designed and updated my website for me. As Ian became busier with his own work, he had less time for my website. During this period, I became more computer literate, had quit my day job and began weaving more. It seemed a natural transition that I should take more control of my website. Ian searched the internet and found a blog service that met his criteria: industry standard, plug-ins, very popular and easy to use with a free version. He still hosts my website, but now I am able to upload photos, input information and create pages pertinent to my business.

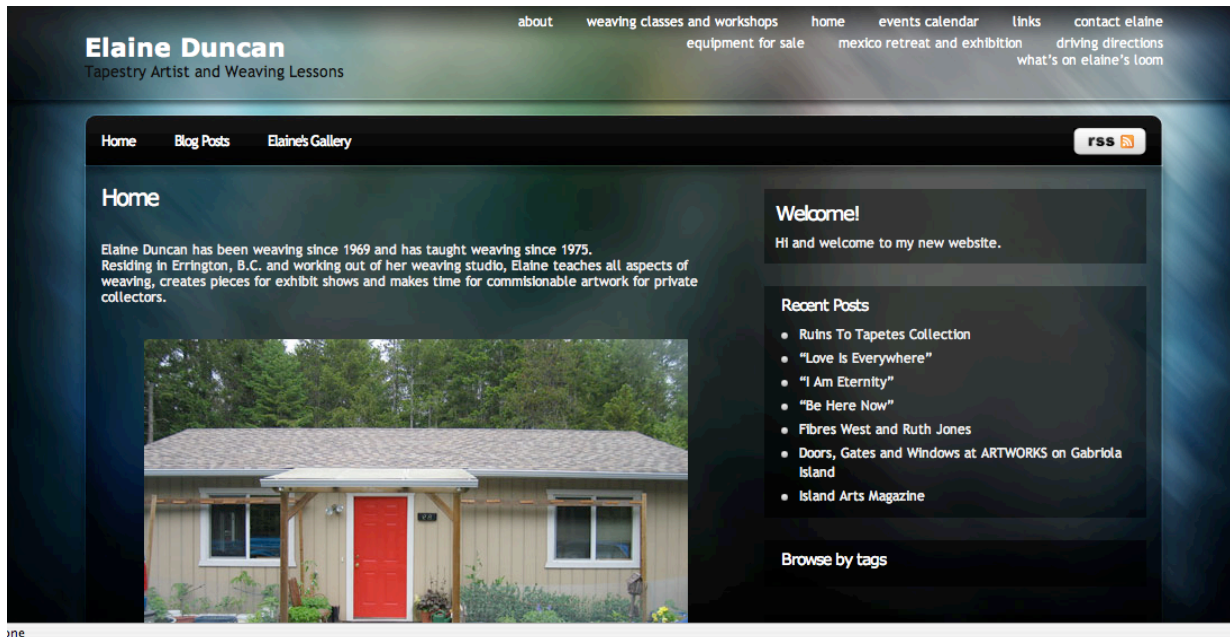
The blog software I use is freely distributed at www.wordpress.org. It requires only a basic knowledge of websites. For those who want an even easier option they offer a hosted service at their sister website, www.wordpress.com. At the time of writing this article, Wordpress had 215,252 bloggers, 161,068 new posts and 43,401,975 words for that day. All you need is an email address to get started. You can download Wordpress on your own at no charge.

I teach weaving classes and find it very easy to refer my students to my website and blog for the latest information. I have included directions to my home/studio and contact information. My website is also an opportunity to promote lectures, workshops, fibre events and gatherings hosted by other organizations. My goal is to build the website to be a resource for the fibre/weaving/tapestry world.



The Cock Crows Night and Day
Elaine Duncan

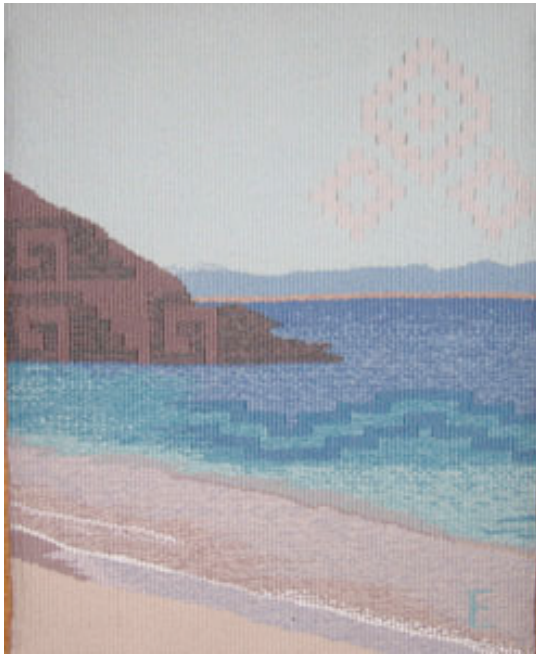
Some of the headings that I use on my site are: Home; About Me; Course/Class Schedules; Links; and Coming Events. However, a major part of my website is my blog. It is set up so that the most recent post is the first one you read. The posts are titled by date and topic. To read earlier posts, you scroll down. I was encouraged to write a blog because I was told that it would attract more visitors to my website and, therefore, increase my site's visibility. When you use keywords in your blog and make tags of them, anyone searching the internet using those keywords will find their way to your site. With Wordpress I can track the number of visitors to my site, where the visits come from, which posts are most visited and which search engines are sending people to my blog.



Elaine Duncan's weblog

At first I found it difficult to keep my blog updated on a regular basis. I do not write on a pre-determined schedule, but rather when I am motivated by an event or circumstance, for example, an artist lecture given by Ruth Jones, or an exhibition of tapestries at a local art gallery. I may write often or not at all for several weeks. I love to include photos of the events that I cover on my blog. Tapestry weavers are visual people and like to see images of tapestries, people, places, etc. You know that old saying... "a picture is worth a thousand words." I try to keep my blog focused on tapestry but occasionally things come up in my personal life that relate to tapestry, for example, a trip or an event, and so I write about them. I feel that the blog should be informal, personalized and based on actual experiences that I have had. It allows the viewer/reader an insight into the blogger's personality and life.

I get a lot of positive feedback through a "contact form" on my website and when I talk directly with people. It feels good to know that I have an audience that appreciates what I am putting on the Internet.



Coastal Rhythms
Elaine Duncan

Because my blog is part of my website, I am able to promote it: verbally to students and friends; on my business card; as a link on other websites and blogs; through the Canadian Tapestry Network newsletter; and in the American Tapestry Alliance membership booklet. It also shows up if someone uses specific keywords in their Internet search engines. The more tags you use when you build your blog entries, the more often your site will show up in people's searches. A good example of this is the ATA exhibition, *Connections: Small Format International Exhibition*. Mary Lane suggested monitoring the promotion of this show using Google Alerts. Once a day, I receive an email from Google if the show is promoted on a website or

blog. Not only did I hear that the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles was promoting the exhibition, I also saw that Kathy Spoering and Jan Austin mentioned it on their blogs.

My blog is my journal. I can look back and see where I have been, what I have been doing and often, how I felt on that day. I carefully select what I say and I must be respectful of the people I mention in my blog. I usually ask permission to use a photo and I give credit to the artist or weaver. Politics, the economy and religion are areas I will not tread in my blog.

I have a hard time promoting myself. I have an easy time talking to the world about other tapestry weavers' work and experiences, but about myself—no way! I have found that my website and blog allow me to crawl out of my comfort zone and expose my inner being with a large safety net which I can control. The experience has been good for me.

I am constantly making plans to add pages to my blog that I think might be of interest to fellow weavers. Maybe by the time you read this, I will have added a section on books. There are two things I find tapestry weavers have in common: an appreciation for food



Ruins to Tapetes II
Elaine Duncan

and an appreciation for literature. Over the past years I have accumulated a wonderful book list that other tapestry weavers have suggested. My blog could be a way to share this list with others.

Weaving tapestry is a slow and solitary art. By creating a blog, and by reading other people's blogs, I don't feel so alone. A window has opened that allows me to see what they are seeing, feel their emotions and excitement at cutting off a new tapestry, or understand how they create a design or birth a new idea. It is a great tool for sharing our tapestry life experiences.