
Functionality meets Beauty

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In 2010 I introduced my idea of a “Minimal Loom for Card Weaving” in the Spring issue of TWIST. The front piece consisted of two C-clamps and a pencil. The more advanced version had a drawer handle mounted on a piece of padded wood. A chair on the other side of the table served as back beam.

I used this setup for many projects and encouraged others to build their own front piece. Students liked the concept but few of them had woodworking skills. You cannot always count on having a chair with a high back available.



Minimal Loom, 2010 (right and far right)

What I wanted was a practical workshop loom. While maintaining the simplicity and functionality, I needed a loom that was complete and appealing. Now, five years later, I present a better loom.

Last year I started looking for somebody who would take on the task of building my card weaving loom. After some failed attempts to find a manufacturer I contacted Don Betterley [DB] whose Ravenstail looms had earned him much praise in the Santa Cruz Handweavers Guild. To my surprise he built the first prototype of my front piece on the day I contacted him.

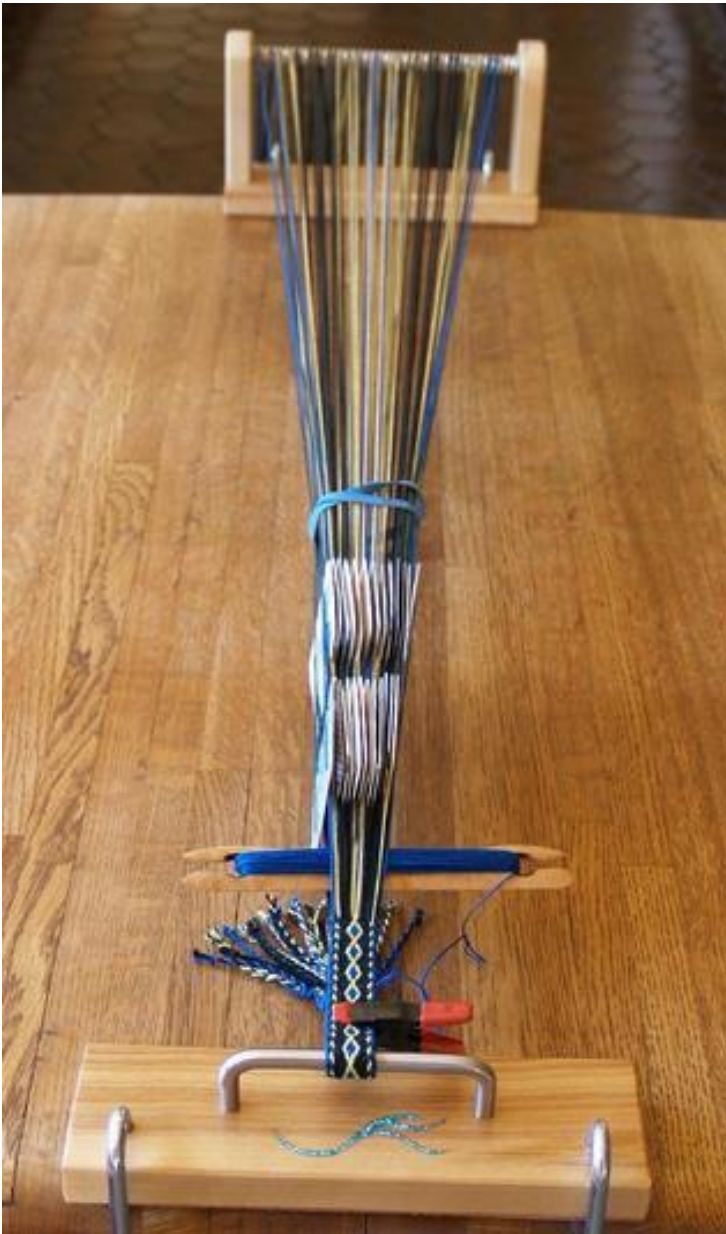
I realized very quickly that I had found a talented designer. He went on to replace the big C-clamp of my setup with an elegant clamping mechanism using J-bolts. The underside of the loom has a 3 mm thick layer of cork and flat wooden blocks that go under the lip of the table. No screws stick out anywhere. It is safe to use the loom at the finest dining table. To protect the weaver's legs the ends of the J-bolts are covered with squishy plastic caps.



Better Loom, 2015

I wanted to have portable looms that I can take with me when I teach away from home. I needed compactness. I needed a back beam and I needed a warp spreader.

Don got to work. The moment I saw his prototype, a strong smooth spring mounted on a smooth dowel, I knew we had the solution. How come I had not thought of this five years earlier?



Better Loom, 2015 (above and below)



Now the design was complete and it was time to select components and materials. Red birch hardwood was chosen for the bases, poplar for the posts, springs from a special vendor.

But wait, there is one more thing. The beauty is not only in the superb workmanship. Don decorates his work with an imaginative sky blue inlay made of turquoise from a special vendor. As Alice Schlein says: “The turquoise inlay doesn't make the weaving better, but it does put a smile on the weaver's face.” [AS]

I consider myself lucky to have found a great designer, woodworker and artisan in Don. It makes me happy to know that card weaving just got a bit more manageable. My students sit comfortably, don't fight twist buildup or uneven tension, and can concentrate on weaving beautiful patterns. More images and information can be found on my website [GP]. Several weavers have posted pictures and reports in their blogs, there is an article on CNCHnet [JN] and a discussion on Ravelry [RA].

References

[GP] - www.theloomybin.com

[DB] - [betloom \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:betloom@gmail.com)

[AS] - weaverly.typepad.com/weaverly/2015/01/a-better-loom.html

[JN] - www.cnch.org/cnchnet/spring-2015/12288-2/

[RA] - www.ravelry.com/discuss/tablet-weaving/3131082/1-25 - New Tablet Loom

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