

More French Randing Variations: Blocks, Zigzags, & Floats

*This is the 24th in a series of articles researched as part of
NBO's Basketry Terminology Research Project*

This article concludes our series about French randing. As we kept digging for examples, analyzing baskets, and looking at weave structures from different perspectives, we were a bit amazed by all the variations that could be classified under "French randing". The names we've chosen for the types presented in this article are mostly descriptive, based on the visual appearance of the weave: French-randed block weave; zigzag French randing; and French randing with floats. For more background information, review our previous basketry terminology articles, "Herringbone French Randing" (*NBO Quarterly Review*, Fall 2011) and "English Randing and French Randing" (*NBO Quarterly Review*, Spring 2011), where we discussed basic French randing, twill French randing, right-slant and left-slant French randing, the use of color with French randing, and the more complex Herringbone French Randing.

Plate 1: Family Treasure, Willow Baby Basket

The dominant side weave of this willow basket is French-randed block weave. The piece has served as a baby basket for many generations in the family of Joanna Schanz (12 Feb 2012). It is believed that the basket came from Europe in the 1840's when Amana colony people settled in upper state NY (now part of Buffalo). The warps on this basket have been doubled which adds strength to the block weave. A row of 3/1 four-rod wale is worked over the doubled warps below and above the block-woven section. Above this waling, the pair of warps are divided and crossed in an open-worked section. The warps are regrouped for the top waled section below the border.

Photography by Joanna E Schanz





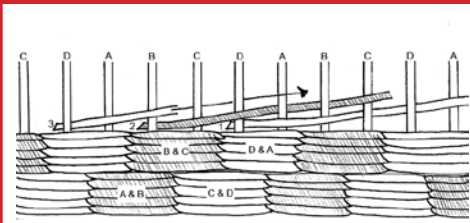
Plate 2: Log Basket In White And Buff Willow

Maker: Sally Goymer

The different colored blocks moving upward diagonally to the right are a major design feature for this basket woven in white and buff willow. The color sequencing for the side-weaving technique, 2/2 French-randed block weave, is illustrated in Figure 1. This image appears in *The Complete Book of Basketry Techniques* by Sue Gabriel and Sally Goymer (London: David & Charles, 1991, p. 91). Reproduced with permission.

Photography by Ben Braster

FIGURE 1: FRENCH-RANDED BLOCK WEAVE (2/2)



Blocks

An interesting variation on French randing is **block weave**, a textural weave structure where the weavers are worked over and under groups of warps and densely packed (covering the warps) creating visual “blocks”. All the examples we have seen are willow and have over-two blocks (the weavers skip over two warps and then under two warps to create the pattern). While it’s possible to have only one section of block weave, it is more common to have multiple sections. The blocks of one layer offset the blocks of the previous section; like a mason building a brick wall. The alternation stabilizes the side weaving, and adds to the design element especially when color is introduced. Block weave is used as a side weave and is often combined with other weaves as seen in Plate 1: “Family Treasure: Willow Baby Basket”.

French-Randed block weave 2/2 requires half the number of weavers as warps and the total number of warps must be divisible by four. Weavers are begun in alternate spaces and each weaver is worked in an over-two/under-two stroke one row at a time. Packing the weavers tightly not only enhances the visual appearance, but also gives a stronger over-all structure. The addition of color makes the blocks more visible and adds to the design possibilities. We have chosen to illustrate the technique with two colors of weavers in order to more clearly show the structure of the weave and represent one of the design possibilities. This particular sequence of coloration produces blocks that move upward diagonally to the right, as seen on Sally Goymer’s basket “Log Basket In White And Buff Willow” (Plate 2). The technique is illustrated in *Figure 1: French-Randed Block Weave (2/2)*. To show that the total number of warps is a multiple of four, we have labeled them: A B C D, A B C D, etc. The bottom layer of blocks has been created by working the dark weavers over Warps A & B and under Warps C & D. The next layer of blocks offsets the first layer with the dark weavers worked over Warps B & C and under Warps D & A. The third layer of blocks shows the working method for creating the 2/2 block French randing. As with other right-slant French randings, all the weavers are worked left-to-right and successive weavers are added to the left. Because the weavers are so densely packed, the upward slant of the weave structure is not noticeable. Notice that the weavers in this third layer are also worked over or under warp groups AB and CD, just like the first layer of blocks. In our illustration the end of the first weaver (light colored) is anchored behind Warp D, and has been worked to the right in the over-two/under-two stroke. The second weaver (dark colored) was started two warps to the left, anchored behind Warp B, and worked to the right with the same o2/u2 stroke. Only Warps B and D are the starting points for the weavers for

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Plate 3: A Little Tradition

Maker: Jo Campbell-Amsler

Material: Smoked willow, white willow, and found root with stone

Dimensions: 10" H x 14"W

Techniques: Stake & Strand techniques of 3-rod wale, 4-rod wale, 2/2 French-randed block weave.

Jo Campbell-Amsler draws on traditional techniques, but adds non-traditional elements in this work of art. The use of light and dark weavers and alternation of colors that create the arrow pattern in the 2/2 block-woven sections add interesting design elements to the piece.

Photography by Jo Campbell-Amsler



Plate 4: English-Randed Block Woven Basket

Maker: Susan Dirsa

As shown on this willow basket, when the weaving is densely packed, the English-randed block weave looks quite similar to French-randed block weave.

Photography by Flo Hoppe

this block layer. The third weaver is also started two warps to the left (also behind a warp D) and will be worked to the right as indicated (going over warps A & B and under Warps C & D).

After completion of the first row, the weaving is rapped down and the second row of over-two/under-two French Randing is continued in sequence, one weaver at a time. When the entire section is completed and packed tightly, the completed blocks will be one color to the outside and the opposite color on the obverse surface. In our illustration, the alternation of light and dark has been switched in order to keep the over-all block pattern building upward diagonally. Jo Campbell-Amsler has reversed the coloration sequence to create the arrow block pattern in her basket titled "A Little Tradition" featured in Plate 3. The

use of color greatly expands the design possibilities for block weave. Christoph Will illustrates many different two-color design variations for block weave, what is translated as "full willow cube weave", used by German basketmakers (Will [1978] 1985,p.47) and also shows some willow back-carrying baskets with this weave structure (p.123).

Block weave can also be created with English randing and will have a similar appearance. See Susan Dirsa's willow basket (Plate 4). **With English-randed block weave**, each weaver is worked individually from butt-to-tip with the over-two/under-two stroke before the next weaver is inserted. Subsequent weavers are added to the right and also worked left to right as illustrated in *Figure 2: English-randed block weave (2/2)*.

Zigzags

Zigzag French randing is a decorative open-worked weave structure where the slant of the basic (1/1) French randing reverses with each row of weaving. The back and forth movements led to our choice for the technique's name "Zigzag", but other terminology is known including: "French Lace" (Schanz, 2 Feb. 2012), and "Zamba" (Burns 1998, p.31). Joanna Schanz's basket "French Lace" (Plates 5a & 5b) is a stunning example with this weave structure. Doubling the weavers (double-slewing) enhances the decorative effect.

We have illustrated the working method in *Figure 3: Double-Slewed Zigzag French Randing*. In our illustration there is a single row of right-slant over-2/under-1 twill French randing (worked with dark weavers), which sets a foundation for



Plate 5a and 5b (detail): French Lace

Maker: Joanna E. Schanz.

Material: Buff willow and barked willow

Dimensions: 8" x 11" x 8" side height.

The decorative feature of this basket is the open-worked section of double-slewed zigzag basic French randing. The side-weaving techniques are as follows: the lower section (unpeeled willow) is worked tip-to-butt in an over-two/under-one twill French randing (also known as "mock wale") ending on the outside. A single row of four-rod wale (2/2) tops that French-randed section. Then, in peeled willow, is a single row of over-2/under-1 twill French randing that transitions into double-slewed zigzag basic (1/1) French randing. The zigzag French-randed section is capped by two rows of four-rod wale (2/2), just below the top border.

Photography by Joanna E. Schanz

FIGURE 2: ENGLISH-RANDED BLOCK WEAVE (2/2)

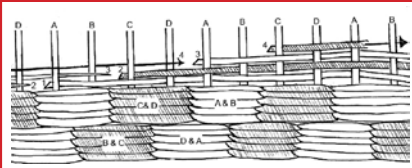


FIGURE 3: DOUBLE-SLEWED ZIGZAG FRENCH RANDED



Figure 3a:

Beginning the Double-Slewed Basic (1/1) Right-Slant French Randing

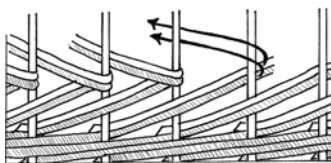


Figure 3b:

Reversing the Weavers To Work Left-Slant Basic (1/1) French Randing

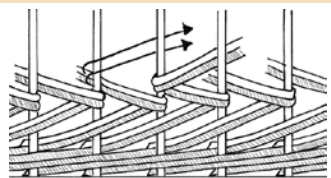


Figure 3c:

Reversing the Weavers To Work Right-Slant Basic (1/1) French Randing

the double-slewed zigzag weave. The addition of the second set of weavers (light colored) begins with the second right-slant row as illustrated in *Figure 3a: Beginning the Double-Slewed Basic (1/1) Right-Slant French Randing*. The over-one/under-one weaving stroke is left-to-right, while the progression of active weavers for this right-slant row is right-to-left. Although we do not show the ends of the weavers, please realize that the ends of all weavers exit to the outside of the basket after working their over-1/under-1 stroke. Upon completion of the right-slant row, the slant is reversed as illustrated in *Figure 3b: Reversing the Weavers To Work Left-Slant Basic (1/1) French Randing*. Each pair of weavers turns tightly around a warp as they begin the over-one/under-one stroke upward to the left. Progression of weavers for every left-slant row is left-to-right. The direction and slant changes again with the next row as illustrated in *Figure 3c: Reversing the Weavers To Work Right-Slant Basic (1/1) French Randing*.

Floats

French randing can also be embellished with "floats". Floats are structural or non-structural materials which, for some portion of their length, are unattached to a basket body and "float" over a basket's side weaving, adding a decorative element (Law and Taylor, 1991, p. 264). The movement of the weavers creates all the floats that we are presenting in this article.

One of the simplest decorative French randing finishing techniques is **French randing ending with diagonal floats**. Basic (over-1/under-1) French randing is a good solid foundation for the floats, and if that section is also started with a single row of over-two/under-one twill French randing, it is easier to hide the ends of the diagonal end-floats. The visual appearance will change depending on the warp spacing, the height of the French-randed section and the distance spanned before the ends are tucked. For right-slant French randing, the further to the right, the longer the float will be and the more slant to the diagonal. (A left-slant French randing can also be finished with floats). We have chosen to illustrate the technique with "over-two floats". When the desired height to the French-randed section has been reached, each weaver is laid down diagonally over the previously woven basic French randing (covering two warps to the right) and its end tucked into the weaving and behind the next warp at the bottom of the French-randed section. See *Figure 4: Basic (1/1) French Randing Ending With Diagonal Over-Two Floats*.

French randing with crossed floats is achieved by crossing the diagonal end-floats of one French-randed section with the diagonal beginning-floats of the next French-randed section. These floats also can be worked over any number of warps and the angle of the crossing and visual appearance changes depending upon the selected working methods. We have illustrated the technique with

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Plate 6: Willow Basket With Crossed Floats

The side of this basket of unknown origin is woven with three sections of French-randing. The weavers of the mid-section begin with an over-3/under-1 stroke and then transition to basic (1/1) French randing and end with over-two diagonal floats. The weavers of the upper section start with over-two diagonal floats that cross the floats of the mid-section and are worked under one warp above the crossing. A single row of 3/1 twill French randing is also worked in this upper section, which nicely borders the decorative mid-section.

Photography by Flo Hoppe

FIGURE 4: BASIC (1/1) FRENCH RANDING ENDING WITH DIAGONAL OVER-TWO FLOATS

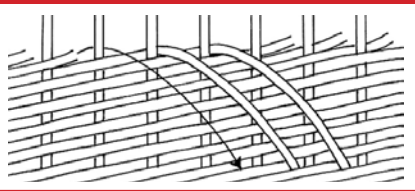
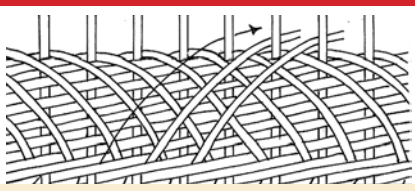


FIGURE 5: FRENCH RANDING WITH CROSSING OVER-TWO FLOATS



over-two floats for both the lower and upper French-randed sections. See *Figure 5: French Randing With Crossing Over-Two Floats*. Notice how the ends of the weavers of the upper French-randed section are slipped into the weaving and anchored behind warps at the base of the basic French-randed section beneath it. The upper weavers are worked upward diagonally to the right, floating over two warps (and the woven basic randing) and crossing on top of the diagonal floats of the mid-section before going under one warp above. This same float-crossing technique created the decorative French-randed midsection of the “Willow Basket with Crossed Floats” featured in Plate 6.

We conclude this article with a more complex French-randed float technique, **bordered French randing**, a technique where the ends of the weavers of a French-randed section are interwoven in a “floating” decorative edge. The downward and upward movements are reminiscent of two-step techniques for working warp ends to create simple borders at a basket’s rim.

Creating this ornamental bordered-edge on a French-randed section is a two-step process with each step worked from left-to-right, but each successive weaver is to the right. (Which is different than the basic right-slant French randing). We have illustrated a simple decorative edging that is worked over basic 1/1 French randing in *Figure 6: Bordered French Randing*. It begins with working the first weaver upward, crossing over Warp A, and then turning it downward and going under Warp B and the unworked ends of the next two weavers, Weaver 2 and Weaver 3, as illustrated in Figure 6a. It exits angling diagonally to the right - floating on top of the already woven basic French randing. In *Figure 6b: Continuing the First Step of Bordered French Randing*, Weaver 2 has already been worked with a similar over/under movement, but it also crossed over the turned-down Weaver 1 in its over-one stroke, before it went under Warp C and was angled downward under Weavers 3 & 4. Notice that as the weaving progresses, starting with Weaver 3, the weaver crosses over the next warp (Warp C) and also the two previously turned-down floating

FIGURE 6: BORDERED FRENCH RANDING

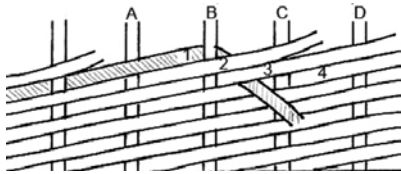


Figure 6a:

Beginning Bordered French Randing

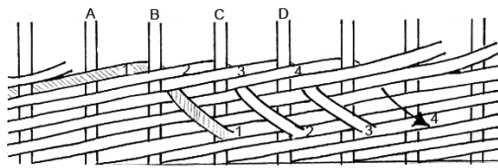


Figure 6b:

Continuing the First Step of Bordered French Randing

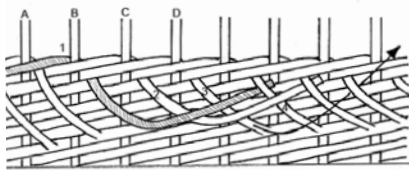


Figure 6c:

Step Two: Completing the Bordered French Randing

weavers which are on either side of this warp (Weaver 1 & Weaver 2), before it makes the turn and is worked downward under the next warp (Warp D) and the next two unworked weavers (Weaver 4 & Weaver 5). [That movement is shown completed for Weaver 3.] The pathway for Weaver 4 is marked with the arrow. Upon the completion of this first step, all weavers come out diagonally to the outside of the basket and there it a narrow scalloped edge at the top of the French-randed section.

The decorative “floating border” is created with the second step, illustrated in *Figure 6c: Completing the Bordered French Randing*. Each floating diagonal weaver is worked horizontally to the right OVER the next two downward-slanting floating weavers and then turned UP and worked under the third weaver. As illustrated: shaded Weaver 1 crosses horizontally over diagonally-floating Weaver 2 and Weaver 3 and then is worked UP and under diagonally-floating Weaver 4. Weaver 2 is worked with the same over-2 (crossing over Weavers 3 & 4) and up under Weaver 5. The pathway for Weaver 3 is shown with an arrow crossing over Weavers 4 & 5 ending up under Weaver 6. When this step is finished for all the weavers, the ends are trimmed and the “floating border” is complete. This is the working method that was used for the basket featured in Plate 7: “Chinese-Inspired Rattan Basket with Bordered French Randing”.

We hope that these descriptions of some of the decorative French randing techniques will serve as inspiration and broaden the understanding of some of the working methods used by basketmakers around the world. We welcome suggestions and photos for possible use in future articles. We wish to thank Joanna Schanz for her assistance with this article. Our next basketry terminology article will investigate more variations on randing weaves.



Plate 7: Chinese-Inspired Rattan Basket with Bordered French Randing

Maker: Flo Hoppe

The major design feature of this basket is French-randed side weave with the decorative floating border worked in dyed flat-oval reed. Natural round reed in three-rod wale is twined below and above the French-randed section which begins with o2/u1 twill French randing that transitions to basic (1/1) French randing, and then has a single row of o3/u1 twill French randing. Above that row are two rows of basic French randing that form the foundation for the floating border

Photography by Flo Hoppe

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