



STICKS & STONES

THE DESIGNS OF LEW FRENCH

FRENCH • SHAW

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALISON SHAW



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## THE DESIGNS OF LEW FRENCH

OVER THE PAST thirty-five years, master stonemason, designer, and artist Lew French has been commissioned by architects and clients to design and build visual and functional elements using stone and natural materials. With an extensive portfolio of both indoor and outdoor installations unique by their refined aesthetic styles, his work is now considered singular for its quality, beauty, and one-of-a-kind designs.

To build a fireplace or a sculptural wall in a landscape, French gathers hundreds of variously shaped stones, as well as several other types of organic materials, including driftwood, to create his designs. His trademark style is to select compatible pieces that fit together naturally, altering individual stones only as necessary, believing that the natural shapes of the materials should dictate the design. The resulting creations are awe-inspiring.

Alison Shaw's exquisite photography reveals the breathtaking beauty of French's creations, whether they are small sculptures, walls in a landscape, or French's own retreat home in the mountain rainforest of Brazil.



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Outdoor fireplaces seem to grow more and more popular. A great feature of this space is that it has a retractable screen system to enclose the area on those buggy summer nights. Woven driftwood sticks make the arched mantel.





## MIDDLE ROAD FARM

The clients owned a 40-acre farm with a restored, historically correct farmhouse dating from the early eighteenth century. They wanted to add a guesthouse and pool with more modern, open spaces that would be complementary to the traditional farm setting.

It was a complicated landscape, with hundreds of feet of dry-stack stone walls making terraces for planting beds. The space for the new house and swimming pool site had to be carved out of a 7-foot hillside. As the landscape designer, I had to think of not only the visual aspects of the design but also, more importantly, the technical challenges that could affect the plan. In this case, the issue was runoff from rain and snow. The water was draining naturally to where the new proposed house and pool would go. So in my overall grade plan I had to use earthen berms, French drains, and stone walls, and I had to re-grade certain areas to redirect the water.





Three antique well covers from farms in New England become part of a water sculpture for a national software company located outside of Boston. The water tank itself is 8 feet wide by 80 feet long. As you walk through the building's interior corridor, you pass the five distinct stone placements. The huge central well cover has its own pumping system to create the splashing waterfall. Reflections on the water's surface are constantly changing, following the movements of the sun and clouds.



LEW FRENCH is a master stonemason and artist who has been inducted into the New England Design Hall of Fame. He is also the author of *Stone by Design: The Artistry of Lew French* (2005). His designs and work have been featured by top national publications, including *Architectural Digest*, *Fine Homebuilding*, and the *New York Times*. CBS *Sunday Morning* also did a segment on Lew's creations. He lives in Massachusetts with his family.

To see more of his work, check his website at [www.lewfrenchstone.com](http://www.lewfrenchstone.com). He can be contacted at [lew\\_french\\_stone@yahoo.com](mailto:lew_french_stone@yahoo.com).

ALISON SHAW is a fine art and editorial photographer who works and teaches on Martha's Vineyard. Nineteen books feature her work, including *Stone by Design: The Artistry of Lew French*. More of Alison's work can be viewed at [www.alisonshaw.com](http://www.alisonshaw.com).