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Brian J. McCarthy and Bernie de Le Cuona with ottomans by, from left, Smilow Furniture, Dmitriy & Co., and John Robshaw for Cisco Brothers. See Resources.

THE TOP 10 OTTOMANS

Designers Bernie de Le Cuona and Brian J. McCarthy get the lowdown on these multipurpose pieces that have an impact far greater than their size

It would be a mistake to think of the ottoman as nothing more than a lowly footstool. Produced in a wide array of shapes, sizes, and materials, it's the ultimate go-anywhere, do-anything piece. An ottoman can serve as a side table, a cushy cocktail table, or a playful extra seating element for parties.

"It's the most usable, versatile piece of furniture," says textile designer Bernie de Le Cuona, adding that the ottoman, which gets its name from a deeply cushioned low seat found in Turkey, can

work in any room of the house. "You could have one bedside, to place a lamp and a cup of coffee on," she says. "I even have ottomans in my bathroom."

Designer Brian J. McCarthy sometimes uses ottomans as improvised pedestals. "I make these little tablescapes on them, and it creates another layer in a room," he says. Larger ottomans, he adds, support multifaceted relaxation—yes, you can put your feet up, but "you can also place a tray on it and serve drinks." ▶

THE EXPERTS

BERNIE DE LE CUONA

With her U.K.-based company, the South African-born designer creates fine linen fabrics, many with opulent paisley patterns, as well as luxe velvets and cashmeres. delecuona.co.uk

BRIAN J. MCCARTHY

Known for elegant and eclectic interiors, the New York-based designer is at work on a range of homes around the world, from Texas to Switzerland. His first book, *Luminous Interiors*, is out this month. bjmnc.com

TEXT BY TIM McKEOUGH / PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID A. LAND / PRODUCED BY ORLI BEN-DOR



1 / UPHOLSTERED BENCH BY WEST ELM

"This piece is very California—it's airy, fresh, and fun," says Bernie de Le Cuona. "You could use it in a guest room, at the end of the bed, or in a small living room, in front of the sofa." Brian J. McCarthy admires the turned wood legs and the flame-ikat-pattern upholstery. "It's handsome and youthful," he says. "It has a great height, and it's very comfortable." 45" w. x 19" h. x 17" d.; \$299; westelm.com



2 / MANDRAGUE POUF BY FERRUCCIO LAVIANI FOR MOLteni

"People always wonder how to work color into a room," says McCarthy. "This gives you the opportunity to punctuate a space with a color and shape that can go with anything." For de Le Cuona, that flexibility is an invitation to buy more than one. "I would like to see it used in multiples," she says, "scattered around." Available in other fabrics and leathers. 20" w. x 15" h. x 20" d.; \$1,174; molteni.it



3 / PUCCI OTTOMAN BY CHRISTOPHER GUY

"This would be great at a dressing table," de Le Cuona says. "With its ball feet, it has an Art Deco feel. It's quite glamorous, like movie stars of old." McCarthy appreciates its unexpected form. "Its ovoid shape makes it more of a sculptural piece, but the ball feet means it also has a sense of levity to it." Available in other fabrics. 25" w. x 17" h. x 17" d.; \$2,129; christopherguy.com



4 / REST POUF BY ANDERSEN & VOLL FOR MUUTO

"I could see this in a lodge in the mountains," says de Le Cuona. "It's a fun piece—you could put your ski boots on while sitting on it." McCarthy likes its no-fuss cushioning. "I love the plain texture and the lack of detailing," he says. "It's just a pillow sitting on a platform. I'm a real slouch, and this is soft but firm." Other fabrics are available. 39" w. x 17" h. x 32" d.; \$1,195; designwithinreach.com



5 / RLO 44 WOVEN RUSH OTTOMAN BY SMILOW FURNITURE

"This takes me back to my childhood, to the Danish modern of the 1960s," says McCarthy. The firm top makes an ideal seat, he adds. "You don't have to work to get out of it." De Le Cuona loves the combination of woven rush and sleek wood. "It's pretty, very stylish and urban. I could see it in New York or London." 23" w. x 15" h. x 23" d.; \$1,500; regenerationfurniture.com

The opinions featured are those of ELLE DECOR's guest experts and do not necessarily represent those of the editors. All measurements and prices are approximate.



6 / CHESTERFIELD OTTOMAN BY CANVAS

This piece "does it all," says McCarthy. "It would be great in a large seating group, with the dual purpose of ottoman and cocktail table. And stylistically, it can go with anything." An ottoman this substantial calls for a large room, says de Le Cuona. "It certainly makes a huge statement, a stunning focal point." Available in other sizes and fabrics. 48" w. x 14" h. x 48" d.; \$1,600; canvashomestore.com



7 / FJORD STONE BY PATRICIA URQUIOLA FOR MOROSO

"I love the pairing of wool bouclé for the sides and leather for the top," says McCarthy. "The teardrop shape is so specific, it takes on real presence." Because of its lack of feet, he adds, "it appears to float." De Le Cuona praises the construction. "It has lovely detailing," she says. "It would work well in a young person's living room, providing a shot of color in an otherwise white or neutral room." Other sizes and fabrics are available. 30" w. x 14" h. x 22" d.; \$1,220; morosousa.com



8 / ALEXANDER OTTOMAN BY STUDIO VAN DEN AKKER

With its shaggy seat upholstered in Tibetan lamb, this piece "has a sense of humor," says de Le Cuona, noting that the open steel base keeps the overall design look light and airy. "It's free-form, it's movement, it's sculpture, it's tactile," says McCarthy, who praises its versatility and sex appeal. "It makes you want to sit on it, just because of the nature of the material." Also available in a plain fabric. 24" dia. x 20" h.; \$2,000; studiovandenakker.com



9 / BRUGGE MINI BY DMITRIY & CO.

"This little guy is so elegant, isn't he?" says de Le Cuona, applauding the piece's hand-crafted details. "I love the decorative nails and the rounded leg." McCarthy suggests that one or two could be stowed beneath a console and piled with books or used as extra seating for guests: "The design is so simple that it allows for flexibility." Available in other sizes and fabrics. 15" w. x 14" h. x 15" d.; \$1,100; dmitriyco.com



10 / DIGGI OTTOMAN BY JOHN ROBshaw FOR CISCO BROTHERS

With its exotic block-printed linen upholstery and playful scalloped edges, this ottoman "would be perfect for a casual weekend house," says de Le Cuona. "I could also see it in a breakfast room." McCarthy likes its generous size. "Two people could lounge on it and have a tête-à-tête," he says, "or four could have a gossip fest." Other fabrics are available. 48" w. x 18" h. x 48" d.; \$2,325; johnrobshaw.com

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