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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." ▶

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

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. bjminc.com