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MULTIPLE-CHOICE

"Stacking tables look great, as long as they're all together," says Smyth. "The only time to spread them around is when you're having a party and you need extra places for drinks and the like."



ON THE MOVE

"I like this one because it's so portable," says Smyth. "You can pick it up with all your stuff on it—phone, agenda, notes, etcetera—and move it to another room." De Cabrol isn't so sure: "I like an occasional table that's heavy and sturdy; I don't want it to move. When you put something heavy on a flimsy table, you worry."

the 10 most useful

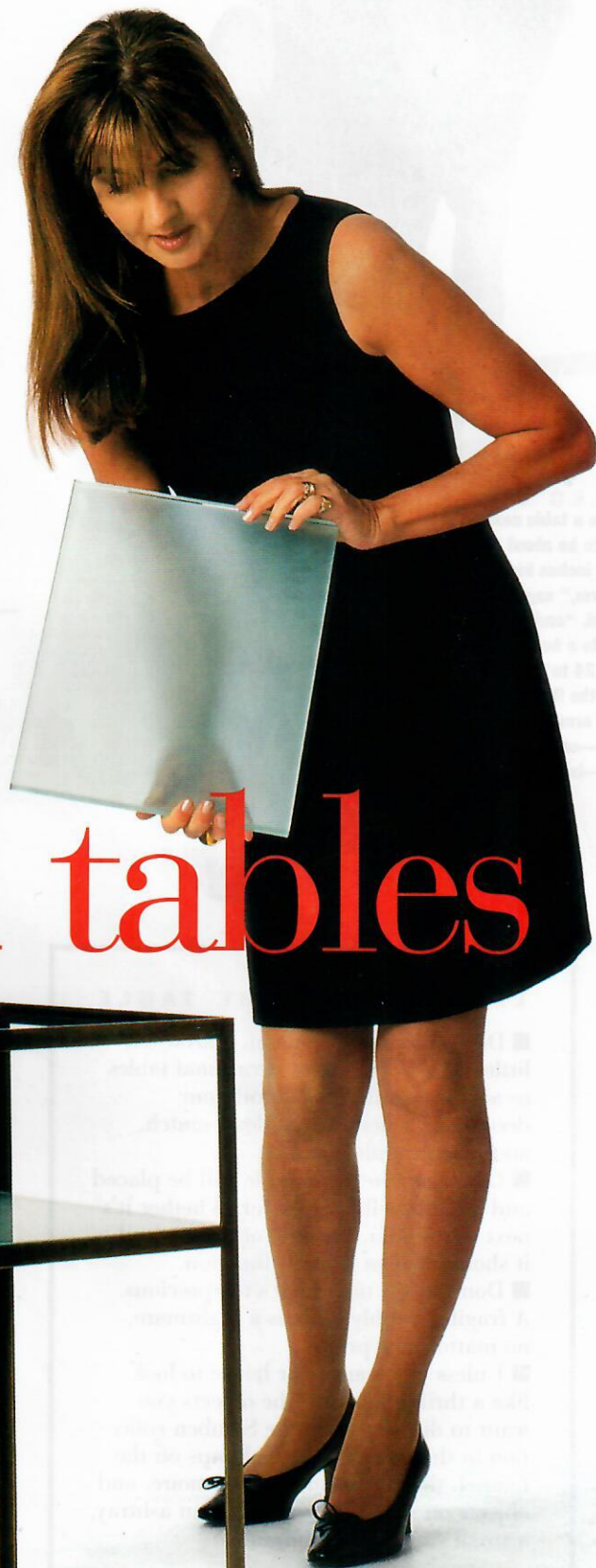
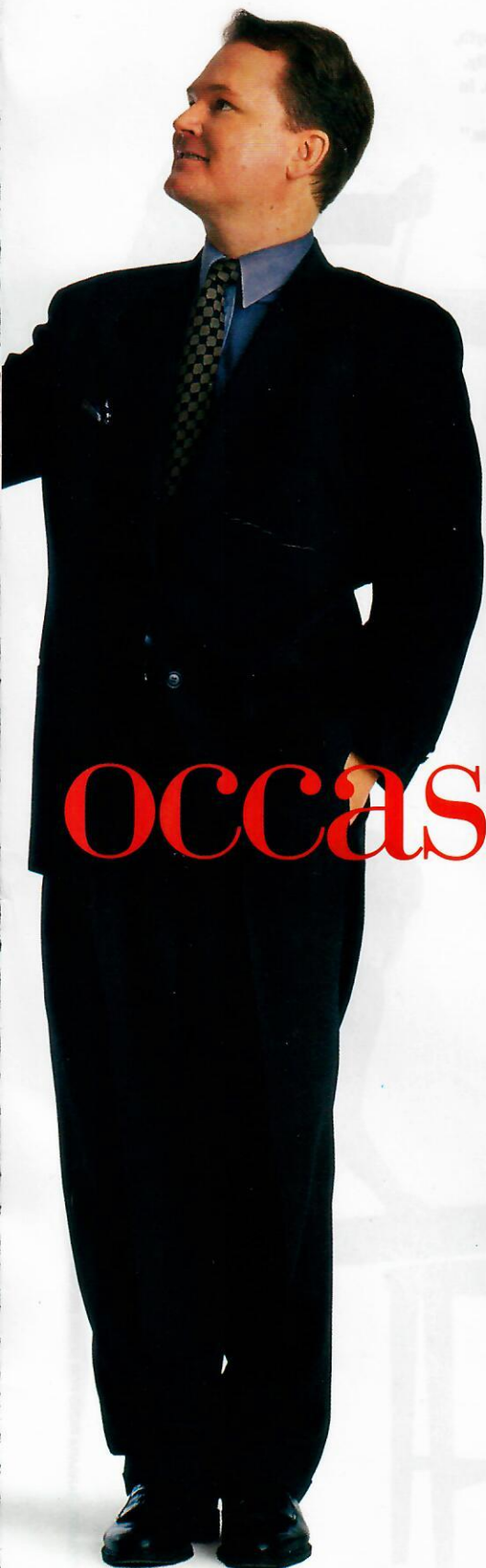
They may not look handy, but they'll see plenty of action. Decorators **Milly de Cabrol** and **Matthew Smyth** judge ten small miracles that get the job done



LOOKING GOOD

"When you've got a good-looking table like this one, it's a shame to clutter it up with accessories," says de Cabrol. "Even though it has a shelf, the feeling is more aesthetic than practical. If you have a lot of objects to display or things you need next to your bed, go for something less sleek."

occasional tables





A LEG UP

"I like a table next to a sofa to be about two to three inches higher than the arm," says de Cabrol, "and even higher next to a bed—anywhere from 24 to 30 inches from the floor. But next to an armchair, a little table—say, 16 inches high—is the best."

LAYING IT ON THE TABLE

- Do you like wood, metal, marble—a little of each? Think of occasional tables as accessories that polish off your decorating scheme. Mix, don't match, and avoid trendoid pieces.
- Consider where the table will be placed and what it will be used for. Whether it's next to the sofa, the bed, or the bathtub, it should have a distinct function.
- Don't buy a table that's too precious. A fragile, wobbly table is a nightmare, no matter how pretty.
- Unless you want your house to look like a thrift shop, edit the objects you want to display. Keep the Steuben collection in the breakfront, the lamps on the mantel, the television in the armoire, and objects on the table—a phone, an ashtray, a small vase—to a minimum.

SOLID-STATE

"Books and vases can be heavy," says Smyth, "making a wobbly, top-heavy table a liability. This one has four solid legs and feels firm. In general, the squatter, the better, though I wouldn't use it as an impromptu stepladder."



TRAY CHIC

"Tray-top occasional tables are hard to find," says de Cabrol, "but it's worth the hunt if you like the English look. They're more versatile than other tables: you can use the tray to serve drinks, pass hors d'oeuvres, or carry books."



THE TOP TEN: HOW THEY RATE

1



SAARINEN END TABLE BY KNOLL

"It's a 20th-century classic," says Smyth. "The scale and the height are great, the marble is beautiful, and it's sturdy and well priced. It could be hard to mix with other styles, though." De Cabrol agrees: "I love it. It would be a lot of fun in the kitchen, with a funky black telephone on it, or in the bathroom."

Height: 20"; diameter: 20"; weight: 28 lbs.; material: marble and aluminum; delivery: 17 weeks; price: \$473

2



MICHAEL TABLE FROM DENNIS MILLER ASSOCIATES

"This I adore," de Cabrol says. "It's the perfect tub table, for all your bath things and cosmetics and a phone to call your lover." Smyth likes the height but feels it would work better "next to a bed or a sofa."

Height: 22"; width: 11"; depth: 15"; weight: 50 lbs.; material: brass and frosted glass; delivery: 8-10 weeks; price: \$1,250

3



OFFERING SIDE TABLE FROM COCONUT COMPANY

"The vertical slats give this table a real texture and lighten it up at the same time," says Smyth. "It's a big table, one that should be used in a large library or a country house." De Cabrol gives it top marks: "You can mix it with any style, and it's lightweight and easy to move."

Height: 24"; diameter: 20"; weight: 15 lbs.; material: bamboo and spun reed; delivery: immediate; price: \$475

4



AALTO NESTING TABLES FROM ICF

"This table, which comes in a set of three, is my favorite," says Smyth. "It's well made and nicely finished, and perfect next to a bed or a sofa." De Cabrol is less enthused. "This look was very 'in' last year," she says, "but the light finish is a little hard to work with."

(medium table) Height: 21"; width: 23"; depth: 17"; weight: 18 lbs.; material: birch; delivery: 3-4 weeks; price: \$980 for a set of three tables

5



METAL SIDE TABLE FROM AD HOC SOFTWARES

"It's minimal, it's hip, and it's great next to a bed because it has a lot of surface area," says de Cabrol. "But I would mix it with something old-fashioned, like an upholstered headboard." Smyth agrees. "You might outgrow it," he says, "but it's functional and good-looking."

Height: 20"; width: 20"; depth: 20"; weight: 25 lbs.; material: carbon steel; delivery: immediate (10-12 weeks if custom-sized); price: \$160

TELEPHONE TABLE BY MARIETTE HIMES GOMEZ ASSOCIATES

"I love the lines and the construction—it's very straightforward," says Smyth. "It can mix with traditional or contemporary styles. And in a pinch it could double as a small coffee table." De Cabrol points out one rub: "It's almost too beautiful. You might be afraid of marring it or cluttering it up."

Height: 21"; width: 21"; depth: 14"; weight: 25 lbs.; material: mahogany; delivery: 2 weeks; price: \$1,500

6



7



FAUX BAMBOO OCCASIONAL TABLE BY CURREY & COMPANY

"This would work next to anything—a bed, a desk, a small sofa, an armchair," says de Cabrol. Adds Smyth: "You can put it in a game room, a sewing room, even a bathroom. And it's light enough that you can carry it easily and use it every day."

Height: 22"; width: 14"; depth: 20"; weight: 10 lbs.; material: rattan; delivery: immediate or up to 6 weeks; price: \$215

8



BAMBOO TEAK LAMP TABLE FROM ABC CARPET & HOME

"This table is very chic," says de Cabrol. "It has an exotic touch, yet the proportions are almost classical. It would look divine topped with a marvelous pot of flowers, a beautiful vase, and a stack of racy bestsellers. And the height is just right next to an armchair."

Height: 21"; width: 20"; depth: 20"; weight: 20 lbs.; material: teak and bamboo; delivery: immediate; price: \$195

9



QUINN TRAY TABLE BY KERRY JOYCE AT HOLLY HUNT

"This is so nicely finished, both the tray and the table," says Smyth, "and it's high enough to serve drinks from. It's the most elegant one of the lot." De Cabrol concurs: "It's modern yet traditional, very English. I see it with a big old telephone and a solid ashtray—what else do you need?"

Height: 24"; diameter: 17"; weight: 15 lbs.; material: mahogany; delivery: 6-8 weeks; price: \$2,062

10



LEGG'S END TABLE BY ROBERT GEORG FROM PORTICO HOME

"This table is like a piece of sculpture—or a big piece of jewelry," says de Cabrol. "And I love the hammered brass legs. It works next to an armchair or on its own as an accent piece." Smyth points out a handy feature: "The top of the table reflects whatever you put on it, so you get to see your favorite objects twice."

Height: 22"; diameter: 16"; weight: 20 lbs.; material: copper; delivery: 8-10 weeks; price: \$440

All measurements, delivery times, and prices are approximate. For details see Resources.