



truth in decorating

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## The 10 Most Elegant Étagères

Susan Forristal and Steven Gambrel take stock of the latest freestanding shelves to see how they stack up

Text by Julie V. Iovine • Photography by William A. Boyd Jr. • Produced by Alison Hall

The very word sounds so continental, so suave, so Marie Antoinette at La Petit Trianon. But what exactly is an étagère? In French, it simply means shelf. And for such a ubiquitous and posable piece, it actually doesn't have much of a historic pedigree. The great American dryeries of fine furnishings, Edith Wharton and Elsie de Wolfe, had barely a word to say about these open-sided shelves. There is no "correct" way to use them, but that only makes them more liberating and versatile. They seem to come in every size and style (the images on

the next page are not to scale), so be sure to measure where you're considering placing one, whether it's in the dining room to showcase a collection of objects, to store stacks of towels in a guest bath, or as a gallery to flank a doorway. Susan Forristal, an interior decorator who likes furniture with strong, graphic shapes, and Steven Gambrel, a designer with a penchant for elegance unadorned with strong color, size up ELLE DECOR's selection of étagères that can stretch space and add a dash of concentrated style like no other piece of furniture. >

Designer Steven Gambrel and Susan Forristal measure the merits of étagères by Council, left, and Binky, the Resource.



**1 ÉTAGÈRE BY JOHN BLACK FOR COUNCIL**  
"This is my favorite. The construction is so fine it looks custom made. In a bold color, it could add a real hit of energy." Forristal also likes its sturdiness, but sees it more in a supporting role. "I'd put one on either side of a door and paint them the color of the walls to add architectural interest." **Height: 79.5"; width: 32"; depth: 18"; material: maple in oyster finish with brass drawer pull; delivery: 10-12 weeks; price: \$2,660**



**2 ANGLED ÉTAGÈRE FROM THE MIXING BOARD COLLECTION BY BAKER**  
"An industrial as a pendant," says Gambrel. "A pair would look amazing in a dining room with stacks of plates that contrast with the dark wood." Forristal adds it is more fabric. "It's low & clean-lined with lines. To me, it's just English country house." **Height: 60"; width: 30"; depth: 14"; material: solid beech or light European oak; front and back materials available; delivery: 10-12 weeks; price: \$1,795**



**3 TALESAI ÉTAGÈRE BY BERNSIA**  
"This one may be Forristal's favorite. But if you can live with the Asian look, it is one you have to see. It comes with a perfect hit of energy. It's a bold color, it could add a real hit of energy." Forristal also likes its sturdiness, but sees it more in a supporting role. "I'd put one on either side of a door and paint them the color of the walls to add architectural interest." **Height: 79.5"; width: 32"; depth: 18"; material: maple in oyster finish with brass drawer pull; delivery: 10-12 weeks; price: \$2,660**



**4 BILLY BALL INSPIRED BY CAROLE GR.**  
"The notion of art," declares Forristal. "It's not intended to be a functional piece. It's a decorative piece." Gambrel agrees. "Clearly what I love is the design and scale. The 100-year-old piece is a real hit of energy." **Height: 79.5"; width: 32"; depth: 18"; material: solid beech or light European oak; front and back materials available; delivery: 10-12 weeks; price: \$1,795**



**1 ÉTAGÈRE BY JOHN BLACK FOR COUNCIL**  
"Nice spirit!" exclaims Gambrel. "The construction is so fine it looks custom made. In a bold color, it could add a real hit of energy." Forristal also likes its sturdiness, but sees it more in a supporting role. "I'd put one on either side of a door and paint them the color of the walls to add architectural interest," she says. **Height: 79.5"; width: 32"; depth: 18"; material: maple in oyster finish (other finishes available) with brass drawer pull; delivery: 10-12 weeks; price: \$2,660**

**5 GEMINI ÉTAGÈRE BY BINKY**  
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Council

Modern masters of fine furnishings.

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