

ELLE DECOR

Living
Outdoors

Exotic Rooms
Palm Beach Cool
Party Tips

Summer
Romance



JUNE/JULY
1998 \$3.95

The 10 Chicest Cocktail Tables

Timothy Whealon and Robin Bell raise a glass to tables that add style as well as substance to the living room

Photography by Pierre Chanteau
Produced by Alison Hall



Designers Robin Bell and Timothy Whealon try out Oscar de la Renta's Black Lacquer cocktail table for size. See Resources

If you're so inclined, you could divide the pantheon of furniture into two camps. There are pieces we buy for their solid, practical virtues—sofas, dining tables, desks—and then there are those where style is primary—side chairs, consoles, étagères. One piece falls squarely in the middle of these two camps, making it hard to know whether to give preference to style or substance when you're shopping for one.

It seems fitting that the piece in question—the cocktail table—should so often take its place in the middle of the room as well. According to

designers Robin Bell of McMillen, known for her updated uptown look, and elegant modernist Timothy Whealon, the table needs to be both a room's focal point and its workhorse, displaying plenty of personality while performing beautifully. The considerations are many: Is it the right height? Will it be easy to maneuver around? Do you want one with an extra shelf? Does it complement your other furniture? Are its proportions graceful? Resolve these issues, then sit back and toast the fruits of your labor—they're not called cocktail tables for nothing. ▶



1 MACAU COCKTAIL TABLE BY DENNIS & LEEN

"Elegantly done," says Bell, "You could use this almost anywhere—in a minimalist loft or with antique pieces in a traditional room. And the finish is like patinated bronze." Whealon agrees: "It has clean lines, great size and scale, and the Asian references are subtle but lovely." Length: 59"; height: 18"; depth: 20"; material: solid walnut in Macau finish (available in other sizes and finishes); delivery: 12–14 weeks; price: \$4,770



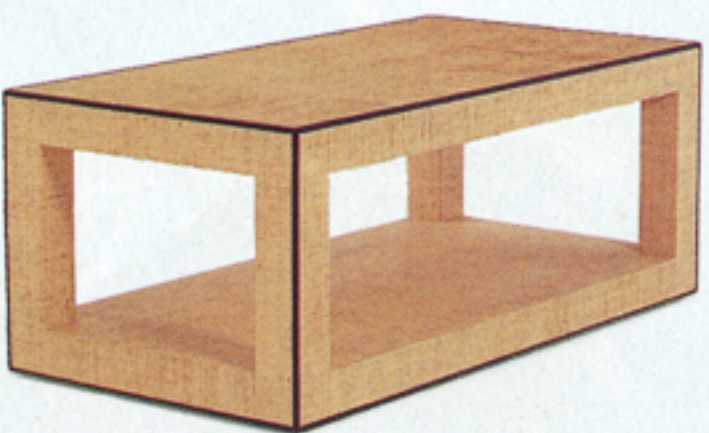
2 JONATHAN COCKTAIL TABLE BY OLY

"I just love this one," proclaims Whealon. "The top is all Hollywood glamour, while the base has a tough kind of urban cool. The proportions are refined, and the price is fantastic." Bell concurs. "Completely classic, yet with personality of its own," she says. "And it's indestructible." Length: 44"; height: 18"; depth: 24"; material: metal frame in antiqued-silver finish with antiqued-mirror top (available in other finishes); delivery: immediate; price: \$1,350



3 FRET COCKTAIL TABLE BY SUZANNE B. ALLEN

"Diana Vreeland said every room needs something red and something Oriental, so here you go," says Bell. "It's a good value, and a nice size. But it's definitely a dramatic look." Whealon likes its details. "There's a hint of modeling in the finish," he adds. "But I'm not sure about that vivid red—I'd opt for black." Length: 44"; height: 17"; depth: 25"; material: white maple in distressed-lacquer finish (available in black); delivery: immediate to 4 weeks; price: \$2,625



4 LAURENCE COCKTAIL TABLE BY LORELY

"Cubic and chic," raves Whealon. "The texture of the grass cloth offset by the leather is so interesting. And the dual surfaces make it practical." Bell also admires its stylish utility. "The leather-reinforced corners are sturdy for kids and won't show wear," she says. "And it can be used in a traditional or contemporary setting." Length: 44"; height: 17.5"; depth: 23"; material: wood covered in grass cloth with leather piping (available in other fabrics and leathers); delivery: 12 weeks; price: \$5,900



5 LESS COCKTAIL TABLE BY JEAN NOUVEL FOR MOLTENI & C FROM FORMAT

"Its grand scale makes this one a winner," says Bell. "You'll need plenty of room, as it's surprisingly substantial." Whealon agrees: "I'm so drawn to this table. In spite of how spare and lean it is, I would mix it with 18th-century pieces." Length: 63"; height: 14"; depth: 31"; material: sheet-metal frame with iron legs in lacquer finish (available in other sizes and colors); delivery: 12–16 weeks; price: \$3,845



6 B&W 4120 COCKTAIL TABLE BY CASAMILANO FROM PROPERTY

"The ultimate bachelor-pad table," jokes Bell. "It screams out for a cool, sleek room. But not with kids—you don't want the top getting scuffed up." Bachelor Whealon is even more enthusiastic. "The scale is just right," he says. "And the smoked-mirror top enhances the ultramodern design." Diameter: 47"; height: 16"; material: stainless-steel base with smoked-mirror top on lacquered MDF (available in a smaller size); delivery: 12–16 weeks; price: \$2,070



7 SCULPTURED COCKTAIL TABLE BY VLADIMIR KAGAN FROM RALPH PUCCI

"The organic shape is sublime," proclaims Whealon. "The contrast of wood and glass gives it a really airy feeling, so it's ideal for a tight space." Bell was also disarmed: "Look closely, it's beautifully made. The wood base and glass top are perfectly sculpted. It's a work of art that's useful, too." Length: 59"; height: 16"; depth: 30"; material: walnut base in satin-lacquer finish with glass top; delivery: 12 weeks; price: \$5,446



8 BLACK LACQUER COCKTAIL TABLE BY OSCAR DE LA RENTA FOR CENTURY

"Classic Louis XVI glamour," declares Whealon. "The details are what make it—the brass trim, the sabot feet. It would be hard to put anywhere other than a formal interior, though." Bell agrees: "Its square shape is unique, the quality is evident, and it's very well priced." Length: 40"; height: 18"; depth: 40"; material: metal base with maple top in lacquer finish; delivery: 6–8 weeks; price: \$2,840



9 CROSS COCKTAIL TABLE FROM WHITE ON WHITE

"Pound for pound, the perfect beach-house table," says Bell. "Put this in a room with a couple of sofas, and just add sunshine! You could even sit on pillows and use it as an ad hoc dining table." Whealon likes its virtuosity: "The chalky finish and different references—Swedish, classical, neo-Colonial—mean it can work with any number of styles." Length: 39.5"; height: 20"; depth: 39.5"; material: pine-and-beech frame in white finish; delivery: 12–14 weeks; price: \$1,000



10 NORTH SHORE COCKTAIL TABLE BY DURALEE

"A good party table," says Whealon. "It's tall, wide, and sturdy enough to handle a lot of trays and drinks—and the shelf is useful to stow books and magazines. I'd rather see it in black, however." Bell admires it, too: "It has graceful lines, and it's very practical." Length: 48"; height: 20"; depth: 24"; material: solid maple frame in mahogany finish (available in a larger size and other finishes); delivery: 4–6 weeks; price: \$2,020