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Valerie Pasquiou and Timothy Corrigan with étagères by Anthropologie, left, and Hellman-Chang. See Resources.



The Top 10 Étagères

Designers Timothy Corrigan and Valerie Pasquiou evaluate how these sculptural yet practical shelving units truly stack up

Text by Laura Regensdorf · Photography by Joshua McHugh · Produced by Quy Nguyen

In 19th-century Europe, middle-class tastes for figurines, objets d'art, and curios gave rise to a new type of furniture ideal for displaying them: the étagère, a French-named piece with open shelves. (English Victorians fittingly called it a whatnot.)

Designer Valerie Pasquiou, who grew up in France, remembers them as grandmotherly pieces filled with trinkets: "They were awful!" Since then, étagères have evolved, with equal attention to function and high style, she says, ranging from the utilitarian (great

for bathrooms) to the architecturally impressive. A large one can fill an entire wall to grand effect, she points out. "Others can float in a room as a divider."

Decorator Timothy Corrigan agrees the pieces are versatile. "I use étagères all over the house," he says. "One never has enough surfaces to put things on." While the self-proclaimed "bookaholic" devotes plenty of shelf space to reading material, he always mixes in objects and sculpture. "Then it becomes an interesting focal point, not just a place to store books." ▷

THE EXPERTS

TIMOTHY CORRIGAN

With offices in Los Angeles and Paris, this designer creates comfortable spaces suffused with old-world elegance. His new tabletop collections with Royal Limoges are due next year. timothy-corrigan.com

VALERIE PASQUIOU

After starting in production design on the West Coast, the French-born decorator brought her eclectic style to interiors; she now works out of New York and Paris. vpinteriors.com