

INFORMARE.

**MILAN
DESIGN WEEK**

SALONE DEL MOBILE

2026

INTRO

This year, Milan presented a more fluid and layered approach to design, defined by contrast and convergence. Boundaries between home and workplace, natural and industrial, soft and structured began to dissolve, reflecting the changing nature of how we live and work. At the fair, this was expressed through material tension, hybrid furniture typologies, and increasingly experiential stand design. Across the city, installations moved beyond product into atmosphere and lifestyle, where brands created environments that were not just seen, but inhabited.

From tactile material exploration and multisensory environments to the merging of function and context, designers and brands embraced a more open-ended and adaptive approach. Rather than defining fixed categories or solutions, Milan Design Week 2026 highlighted a shift toward flexibility, narrative, and immersion, positioning design not just as an object or outcome, but as an evolving system shaped by behaviour, experience, and change.

As a global meeting point for ideas, people, and practices, Milan once again offered a lens into the future of design, one that is less about resolution, and more about possibility.

**Functional
Convergence of
Home and Office**

**Contrast-Driven
Design**

**Material
Transparency and
Tactility**

**Nature as an
Embedded Design
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TRENDS

Functional Convergence of Home & Office

The convergence of home and office emerged as a defining theme at Milan Design Week and Salone Del Mobile 2026, signalling a shift beyond aesthetic crossover into true functional integration. Where previous years saw the workplace adopting the comfort and visual language of domestic spaces, this year marked a reversal, with furniture increasingly designed to function efficiently across both environments.

Across the fair, this was clear in the prevalence of lounge chairs, sofas, and soft seating that felt equally suited to residential interiors and office breakout spaces, blurring the distinction between contract and domestic furniture. This shift was pushed further by brands such as OGO, who presented office furniture capable of transforming into leisure objects, including pool floats, highlighting a more literal and playful interpretation of multi-context design.

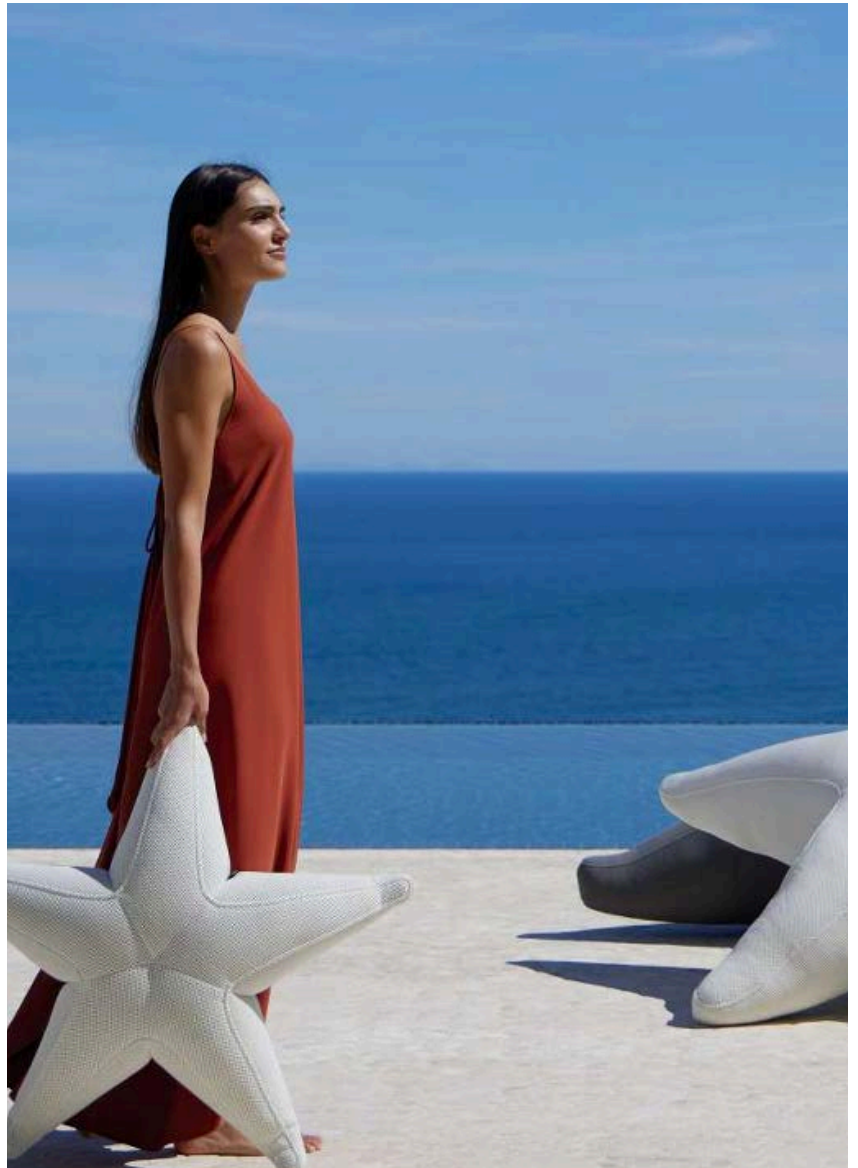
Rather than designing for specific rooms or fixed categories, brands are responding to behaviours, creating flexible, multi-purpose objects that adapt to changing needs. This evolution reflects the growing reality of hybrid lifestyles, where working, living, and relaxing increasingly overlap, highlighting a broader transformation in design, one that prioritises versatility in a constantly shifting environment.

OGO

OGO presented a playful yet thought-provoking exploration of hybrid living at Milan Design Week/Salone Del Mobile 2026, challenging traditional ideas of how and where furniture should exist. Their showcase centered on the fluid relationship between work and leisure, offering pieces that can move between environments rather than being confined to a single context.

A key highlight was their collection of office furniture designed to transform into pool floats, blurring the boundary between productivity and relaxation in an unexpected way. This gesture not only introduced a sense of humour, but also underscored a deeper shift in design thinking, where objects are no longer defined by a fixed function or setting.

By merging workplace typologies with leisure-driven outcomes, OGO reflects the evolving nature of contemporary lifestyles, where the distinction between professional and personal space continues to dissolve. Their work captures a broader movement across the fair, positioning furniture as adaptable, multi-functional, and responsive to the increasingly fluid ways in which people live and work.



Kartell

Kartell presented a workplace installation that subtly reinforced the convergence of home and office through both spatial design and product curation. Set within a fully white, maze-like structure, the stand guided visitors through a series of controlled, architectural pathways before revealing moments of colour, materiality, and softer furnishings within hidden alcoves.

Within these spaces, products were styled alongside artwork and warmer, more domestic palettes, including terracotta tones and natural hues, creating an environment that felt closer to a curated gallery, rather than a traditional office setting. This blending of gallery, home, and workplace references challenged the expectation of how office furniture should be presented and experienced.

By embedding softer, more residential qualities into a structured workplace framework, Kartell demonstrated how the boundaries between environments are becoming increasingly fluid. The installation reflected a wider shift across the fair, where office design is no longer purely functional, but informed by the emotional and aesthetic qualities of the home.



Contrast-Driven Design

Across Milan Design Week and Salone Del Mobile fair this year, designers were deliberately pairing opposing materials, forms, and finishes to create tension and visual interest. Rather than striving for harmony, many brands embraced contradiction combining soft and hard, natural and industrial, and organic and geometric elements within the same pieces and environments.

Across the fair, this was evident in the dominance of chrome and highly polished metals set against muted, earthy palettes and tactile materials. Seen particularly in The International Bathroom Exhibition, sculptural bathroom pieces, including basins and toilets, combined sharp, futuristic geometries with soft, almost organic forms. Textured surfaces from smooth finishes to spiky, biomimetic elements introduced a more sensory layer of contrast. Installations such as the snow cabin and wellness spaces further pushed this idea, placing extreme environmental conditions within controlled, highly designed interiors.

This theme extended into the city, where contrast became more immersive and conceptual. USM in collaboration with Snohetta's installation juxtaposed its rigid modular system with soft, cloud-like forms and experimental materials, while Kohler's terracotta-rich environment balanced natural textures and planting with structured, geometric elements and crafted details. Together, these examples reflect a broader shift in design thinking, where opposition is intentionally maintained as a tool for creating depth.

USM x Snøhetta's 'Renaissance of the Real'

Contrast-driven design was powerfully articulated through USM's collaboration with Snøhetta, "A Renaissance of the Real", presented in the city of Milan. The installation provided a clear juxtaposition between USM's rigid, modular system and a surrounding landscape of soft, cloud-like forms, creating a striking dialogue between industrial precision and organic fluidity.

As visitors moved through the space, this contrast became both visual and physical, with structured metal frameworks set against atmospheric materials that were soft and weightless. The introduction of felt surfaces and experimental textures further disrupted the brand's traditionally hard-edged identity, pushing the boundaries of how modular systems can be perceived and experienced.

Rather than resolving these opposing qualities, the installation sustained the tension between them, using contrast as a central narrative device. In doing so, it exemplified a wider shift across Milan Design Week, where designers are embracing duality, not as something to be balanced, but as a means of creating richer, more layered design experiences.



Himolla

Contrast-driven design was also seen throughout Himolla's presentation, where opposing materials, textures, and finishes were deliberately combined to create a visually striking display. Smooth leather seating with studded, spiked detailing, introduced a purposeful tension between refined surfaces and more rugged, industrial accents.

This interplay was further developed through the juxtaposition of natural wood stools with more expressive pieces, including leopard print fur chairs. The contrast between the understated warmth of timber and the bold, playful character of the patterned upholstery created a dynamic dialogue between restraint and excess.

By bringing together these conflicting material languages within a single setting, Himolla demonstrated how contrast can be used to heighten visual interest and challenge conventional ideas of cohesion. The installation showed how designers are increasingly embracing difference and opposition as a means of creating more engaging and memorable environments.



Experience and Environment-Led Design

In this year's edition of the show, there was a clear shift away from traditional product display, and more towards the creation of immersive, environment-led experiences. Rather than focusing solely on individual pieces, brands prioritised how spaces were felt—using sound, scent, materiality, and spatial sequencing to create a more engaging and memorable encounter.

Across the fair, this was evident in installations such as the snow cabin and ice bath experiences, where visitors were invited into controlled, sensory environments that went far beyond static display. Arper's stand reinforced this approach through the use of nature soundscapes, tactile material samples, and a distinct ambient scent, creating a fully layered sensory experience.

Established & Sons contributed to the “atmosphere over object” trend by shifting focus away from individual furniture pieces and towards the overall spatial experience of display. Rather than presenting chairs as standalone products, they were arranged in an upward-angled, sculptural formation that created a unique experience for users visiting the exhibition, providing a different outlook on viewing the pieces of furniture.

In the city, this shift became even more pronounced. Kohler's Flamingo Estate Bar House introduced coffee, music, and social interaction to create a hospitality-driven environment. Together, these examples highlight that the success of a design is increasingly defined not by the object itself, but by the atmosphere and experience it creates.

Arper's '(Re)Connecting'

Arper exemplified experiential design through an installation that prioritised sensory experience over product display. The space was shaped by a carefully orchestrated environment of sound, light, and movement. Birdsong played throughout the installation, creating a natural acoustic layer that softened the perception of the space, while a dedicated area introduced live orchestral music, adding a structured and emotional rhythm to the experience.

Lighting was used to further define the atmosphere, with shadows cast by suspended and placed objects forming shifting spatial compositions across the stand. These changing light conditions transformed the environment throughout the day, making the experience feel dynamic and immersive. Together, these elements positioned Arper's installation as a fully sensory environment, where furniture existed as part of a broader atmospheric composition rather than as the central focus.

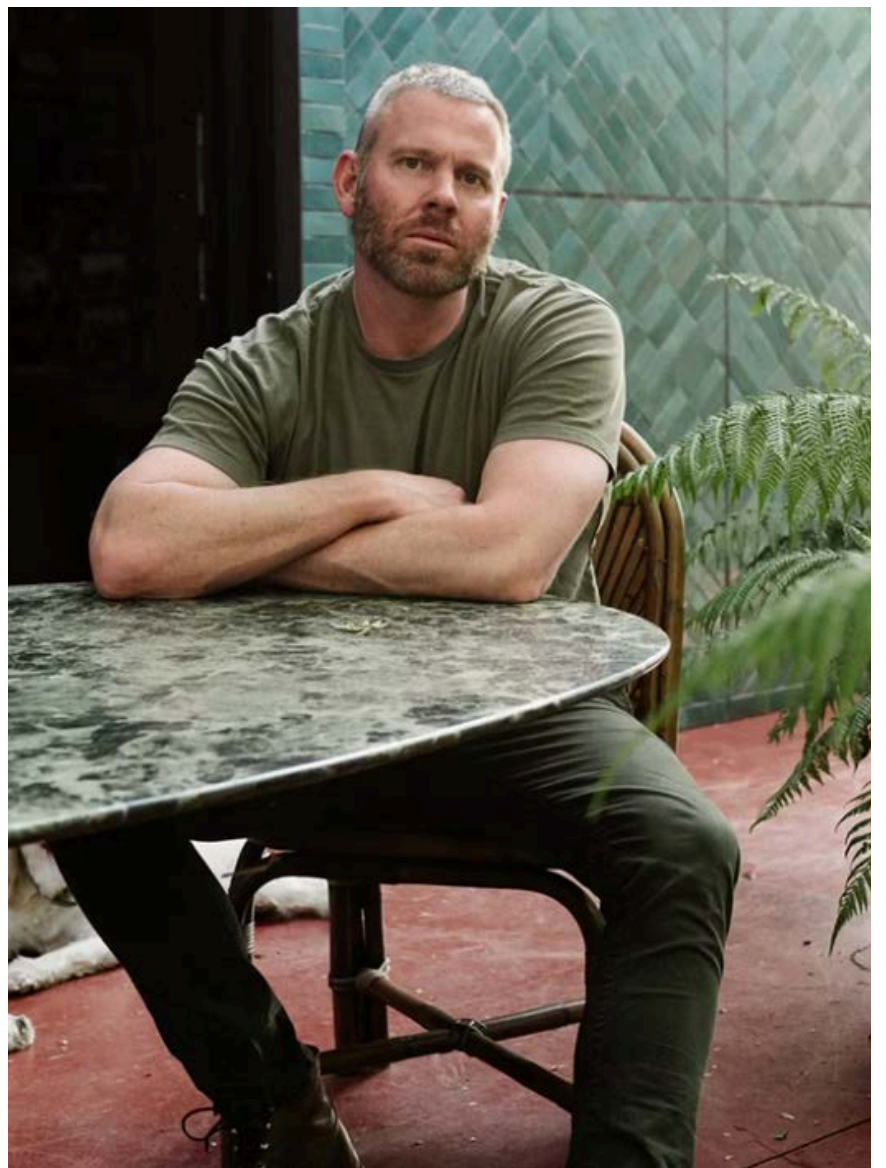
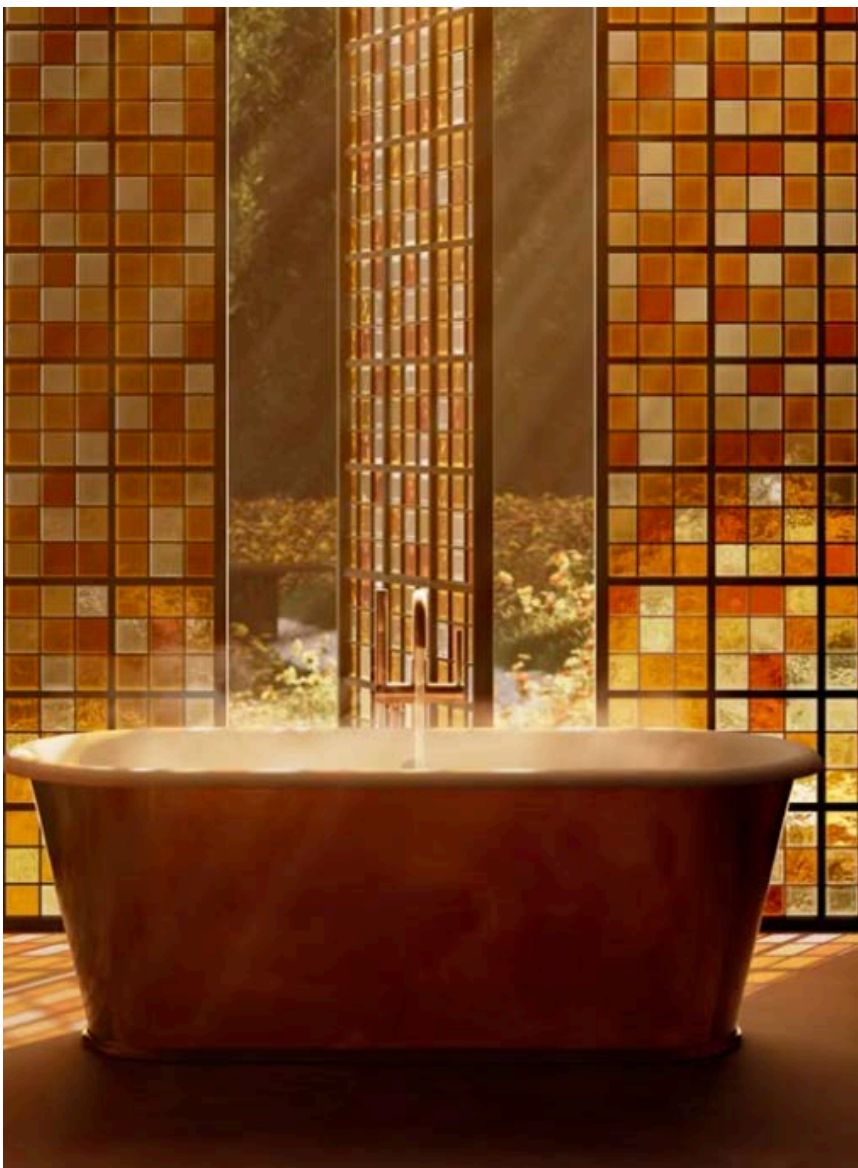
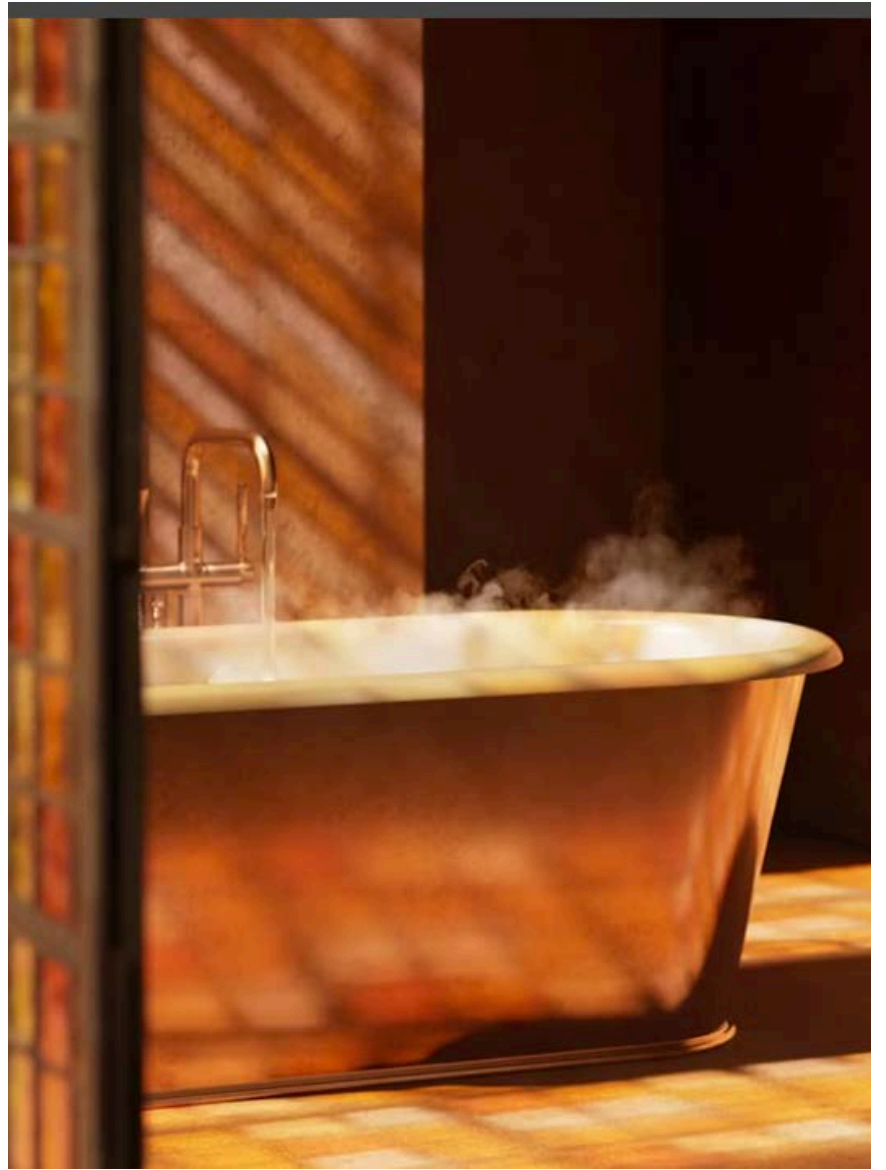


Kohler's 'Flamingo Bar'

Kohler's Flamingo Estate Bar House shifted the focus away from individual products and towards the creation of a fully immersive environment. Rather than presenting bathroom or interior pieces in a conventional showroom context, the installation was staged as a social, hospitality-led space that was positioned outdoors around terracotta materials, planting, and layered natural textures.

The experience was further defined through sensory and social elements, including the presence of a coffee bar, music, and a live DJ, which transformed the installation into an active, evolving environment rather than a static display. These elements worked together to build a strong sense of place and mood.

By prioritising lifestyle, sound, and material environment, Kohler demonstrated how design can extend beyond object presentation, and into experiential storytelling, that aligns closely with a wider shift across Milan Design Week and Salone Del Mobile 2026, presenting that consumers want and need a much more extensive experience to be engaged.



Material Transparency and Tactility

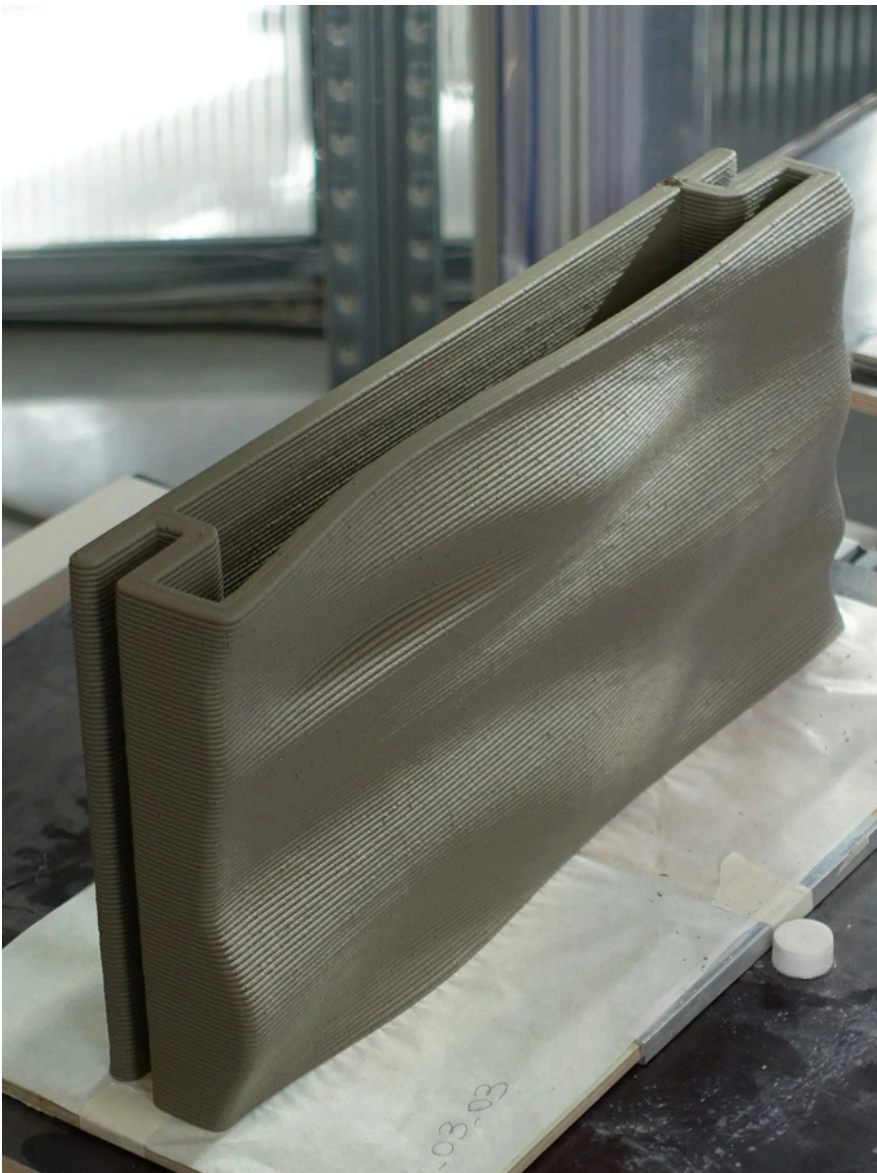
It was clear that designers were increasingly focusing on how materials are understood, touched, and experienced rather than simply seen. Across the fair and in the city, there was an obvious shift towards revealing the internal logic of products and encouraging direct physical interaction with raw and semi-processed materials. This was particularly seen at Salone Satellite, where young designers were eager to display their processes as well as the result.

Tactility played an increasingly important role in shaping experience, with surfaces ranging from soft foams to more spiky, biomimetic textures encouraging direct touch and sensory engagement. Rather than presenting finished objects as untouchable products, designers placed emphasis on material honesty and accessibility. This trend highlights a shift from surface-level appreciation to deeper material understanding, where transparency and touch become central to how design is communicated.

IOUS

IOUS contributed to the theme of material transparency and tactility through an installation that foregrounded the physical properties and construction of materials rather than presenting them as finished, static objects. The exhibition encouraged close interaction, allowing visitors to engage directly with surfaces and material samples that revealed texture, weight, and composition in an immediate way.

Rather than concealing process, IOUS emphasised openness in making, highlighting how materials behave and respond when handled. This focus on direct sensory engagement positioned the installation within a wider shift at Milan Design Week and Salone Del Mobile 2026, where understanding design increasingly comes through touch and material exploration rather than purely visual presentation.



Jungerkühn

Jungerkühn explored material transparency and tactility through a similarly process-led approach, presenting work that emphasised construction, layering, and material honesty.

Their exhibition highlighted the internal logic of objects, exposing how different components come together rather than concealing them within a finished surface.

Visitors were encouraged to read the pieces through both sight and touch, with tactile finishes and exposed structural elements making the production process legible within the design itself. This approach reinforced how designers are increasingly prioritising material understanding as a key part of the visitor experience.



Nature as an Embedded Design Language

Nature as an embedded design language seen around the fair and city marked a shift away from the superficial use of greenery, and more towards a more integrated and conceptual approach. Rather than treating plants and natural elements as decorative additions, designers incorporated them into the core of spatial and product design, using natural materials, forms, and systems as fundamental building blocks.

Across both the fair and the city, this was expressed through the use of earthy palettes, raw materials such as wood, stone, and terracotta, and biomimetic forms that draw directly from natural structures and organisms. Installations moved beyond placing plants within a space, instead constructing entire environments where landscape, object, and architecture were all closely linked.

This pattern reflected that nature is no longer referenced at a surface level, but embedded into the logic and experience of a project. By integrating natural principles into both form and function, designers are creating more cohesive and meaningful environments that respond to a growing desire for connection to the natural world.

Morpho's 'Tomorrowland'

Morpho's "Tomorrowland" installation gave an extremely suited example of nature as an embedded design language, where the environment was constructed as an immersive ecosystem rather than a decorative backdrop. The stand featured a landscape of terracotta tones, sand, wood, and dense planting, including cacti, creating a setting that felt more like an inhabitable terrain than a conventional exhibition space.

Natural references extended beyond the environment into the design of the furniture itself, with insect-inspired forms and biomimetic detailing applied across pieces, reinforcing a deeper connection between object and setting. This integration blurred the boundary between product and landscape, allowing the entire installation to function as a unified, nature-led composition.

Morpho demonstrated a shift away from the more superficial use of greenery, instead using a more holistic interpretation of nature. The installation reflected that nature does not need to be just applied as decoration, but used as a fundamental framework for design thinking and experience.

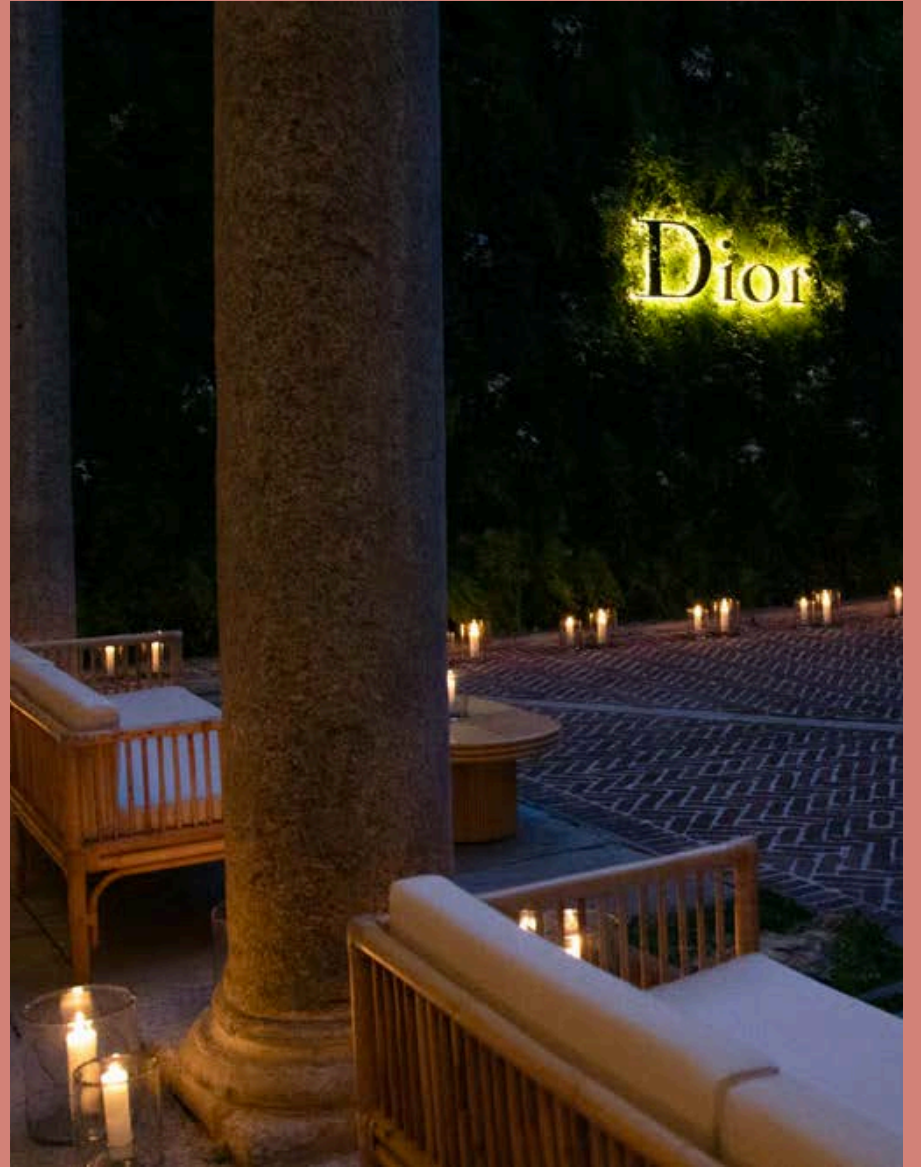


Dior X Noé

The Dior x Noé installation offered a highly immersive example of nature as an embedded design language, transforming an entire room into a woven, living landscape. Walls and ceilings were covered with intricately crafted flowers, insects, and plant forms, creating a continuous environment where nature was not added to the space, but fully constructed within it. Hand-woven trees extended this idea, introducing scale and depth while reinforcing the sense of being enveloped within a natural ecosystem.

This integration was further developed through lighting, with lamps designed to mimic natural phenomena such as water ripples, casting fluid, organic patterns across the space. These elements worked together to create a layered, multisensory environment where material, form, and light all referenced natural systems.

By embedding nature into every surface and detail, the installation moved beyond decorative greenery towards a fully realised, nature-led spatial language. It reflects a broader direction at Milan Design Week 2026, where designers are using nature not as an aesthetic reference, but as a foundational framework for immersive and expressive design.



**Arrivederci al
prossimo anno!**

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