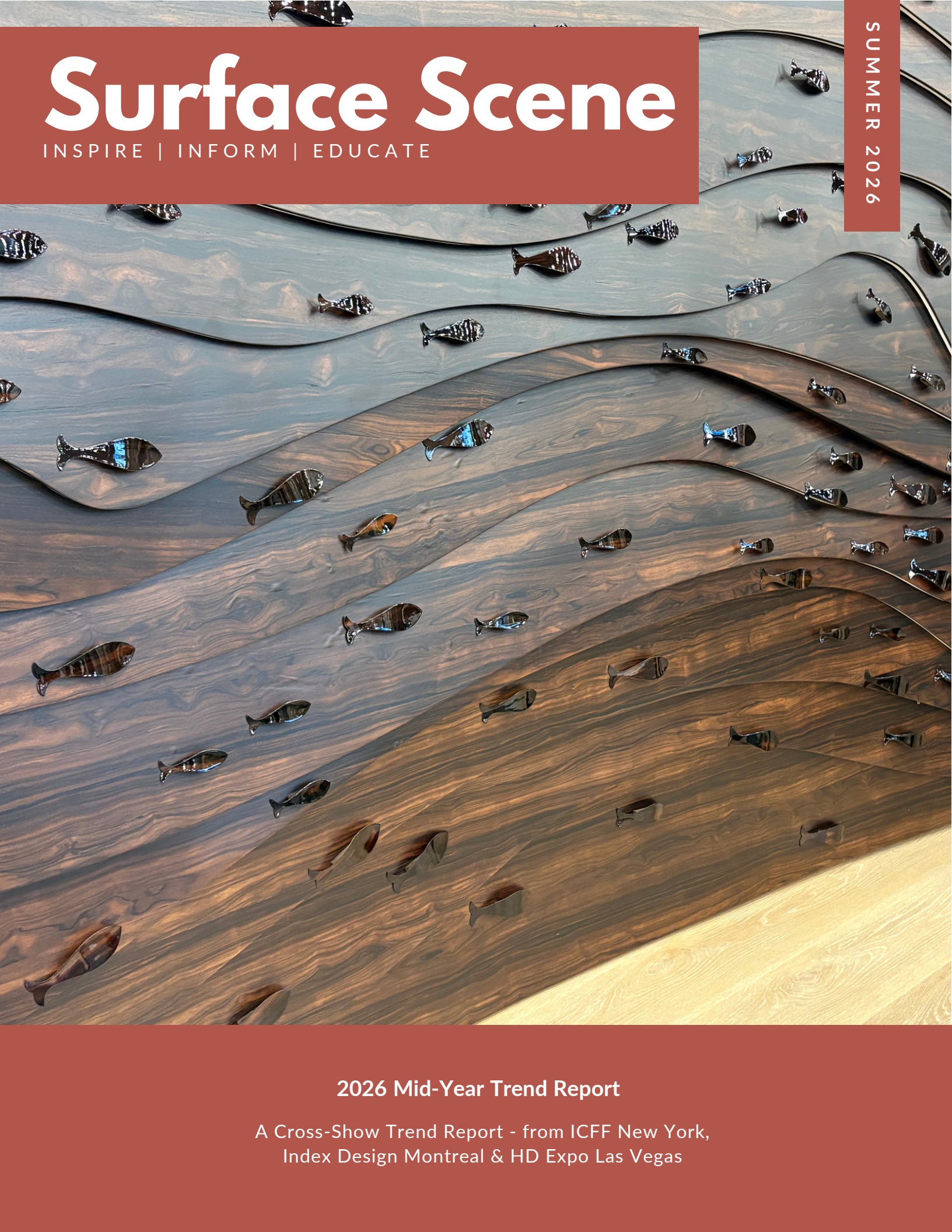




Surface Scene

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SUMMER 2026

2026 Mid-Year Trend Report

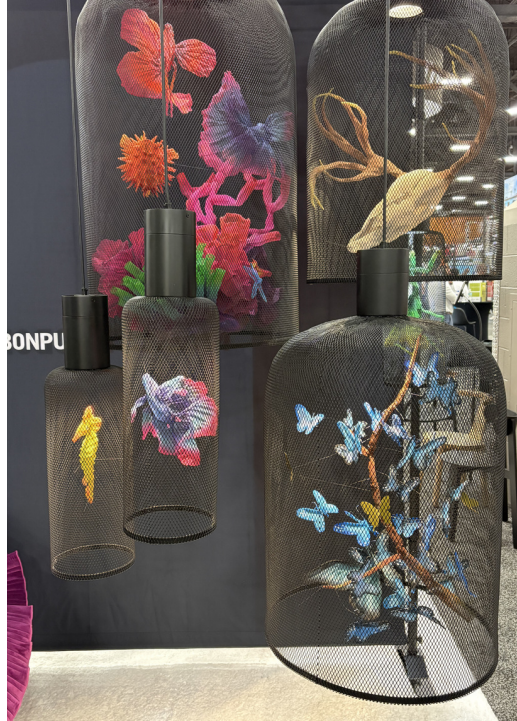
A Cross-Show Trend Report - from ICFF New York,
Index Design Montreal & HD Expo Las Vegas



2026 Mid-Year Trend Recap

As the 2026 design season unfolds - three major shows HD Expo, Index Design Montreal, and ICFF collectively reveal a decisive shift in the interior landscape. Across continents and categories, designers are embracing warmth, tactility, and architectural clarity, moving away from high-gloss spectacle and toward spaces that feel grounded, sensory, and emotionally intelligent.

Rather than chasing reinvention, this year embraces a more grounded, grown-in design sensibility that isn't overly soft, craft that feels current rather than nostalgic, and modernism that stays warm instead of cold. The following overview highlights the key ideas influencing interiors across hospitality, residential, workplace, and blended spaces.



HOSPITALITY DESIGN AT HD EXPO

HD Expo 2026 marked a confident shift in hospitality design. This year's event showcased a warmer, more tactile perspective of the built environment, emphasizing the use of authentic materials. Throughout the exhibition, designers embraced grounded palettes, refined curves, and mixed-material constructions that evoke a sense of elevation while remaining deeply human.

CORE COLOR TRENDS

Distinctive palettes were used throughout HD, focusing on warm neutrals such as oat, sand, mushroom, and soft taupe, supported by earthy mid-tones including terracotta, clay, cinnamon, and muted umber.

Other palettes focused on secondary colors such as rich ink blues, blue-greens, charred bronze, darkened metals, and subtle hints of rust or oxblood. By minimizing the use of primary colors, which are often bright and glossy, the trending colors at the show were used to stabilize spaces rather than energize them.





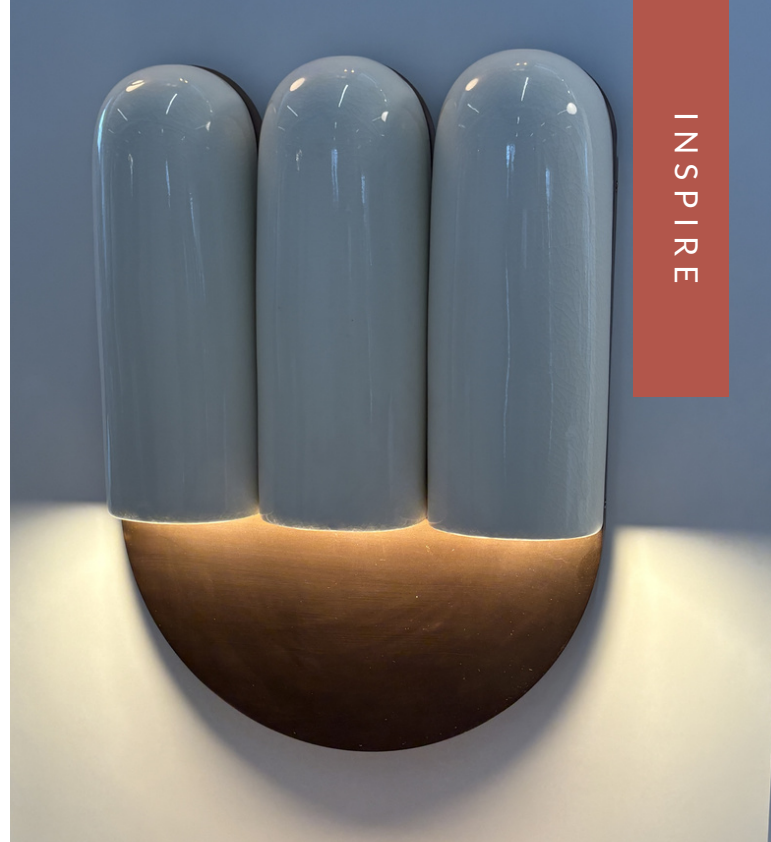
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SHAPE AND FORM LANGUAGE

HD Expo also showed a high use of rounded elements, beautifully showcased through a variety of stunning designs. This style embodies a gentle yet restrained aesthetic, characterized by smooth shapes such as curved chair backs, organic-shaped partitions, and rounded edges. Materials like soft upholstery and natural woods further enhance the inviting nature of these designs, creating a harmonious blend of form and function. The color palette, often consisting of muted tones and earthy shades, complements the organic shapes, fostering a sense of tranquility and balance in any space. This trend not only highlights a move towards more human-centric design but also reflects a broader cultural shift towards environments that nurture well-being and relaxation that prioritize both aesthetics and comfort.





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INDEX DESIGN MONTREAL

Index Design Montreal is one of Canada's leading design showcases, bringing together the best of contemporary furniture, interiors, materials, and product innovation from Quebec, Canada, and Europe. The event serves as a bridge between North American and European design and showcasing how contemporary makers interpret form, material, and spatial sensitivity in ways that feel both global and distinctly Montreal.

After the warm, hospitality-focused direction showcased at HD Expo, the design dialogue transitions to Montreal, where the same themes of tactility and material authenticity adopt a more sophisticated, Euro-modern aesthetic. While HD Expo delved into comfort of creativity in color schemes and organic shapes on a commercial scale, Index Design Montreal refines these concepts into subtler, more architectural forms. This transition feels seamless: moving from the inviting warmth suited for hospitality to Montreal's serene, crafted, and design-centric restraint. Key elements include tactility, craftsmanship, and moderation. The finishes predominantly feature matte and natural textures, with joinery often exposed and elegantly refined rather than hidden away.





DISCOVERY AT ICFF

ICFF is North America's leading platform for contemporary furniture and design, bringing together global brands, emerging studios, and material innovators. The International Contemporary Furniture Fair is held in New York, spotlighting new forms, fresh material approaches, and the evolving language of modern interiors. It's a place where designers explore what's next: new wood stories, grounded silhouettes, and texture-rich surfaces that shape the future of contemporary spaces.

DUAL-LANE WOOD TONES

The design landscape is clearly shifting towards wood expressions that exude warmth and richness. Features such as deep engravings, low-sheen finishes, and visible grain are now taking precedence over the light and white Scandinavian Oaks that once reigned supreme. These inviting tones and textured surfaces evoke a sense of authenticity and comfort, reflecting a growing preference for materials that feel genuine, handcrafted, and grounded. Designers are increasingly embracing woods that showcase their natural character, with subtle imperfections, open grain, and hand-finished touches creating spaces that feel lived in, welcoming, and emotionally resonant.

SOFTLY MASSED FORMS

This emphasis on comfort extends directly into the evolution of form. Silhouettes like rounded edges, pillowy contours, and grounded proportions are becoming the new standard. What once leaned light and minimal is now gaining substance and presence. These fuller shapes pair naturally with the richer wood story, which both trends work together to create interiors that feel warm, approachable, and deeply human. The combination of textured woods and substantial soft forms signals a shift toward environments that prioritize emotional ease, sensory depth, and a more holistic expression of comfort.

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TRANSFORMATIVE USE OF MATERIALS

At ICFF, materials transcended their role as mere finishes, becoming powerful tools for expression. Designers approached color, texture, and construction techniques as if they were graphic elements.



Shag transformed from just a textile into a costume that embodied movement and personality. At the same time, pixelated patterns found new life in upholstery, and patchwork evolved into an elegant, luxurious collage, all of which illustrated how material behavior can tell a story.

The key takeaway is not to replicate these exact designs but to grasp the underlying principles. ICFF demonstrated that enhanced tactility, bold color blocking, visible assembly, and collage-like layering can be adapted into scalable surface strategies. It's about harnessing materials in expressive ways that result in dynamic interiors that do not depend on loud shapes or high-contrast color schemes.





2026 DESIGN DIRECTION

Across all three shows, a unified design language emerged. One that prioritizes warmth, tactility, and material honesty over visual noise or trend-driven novelty. The industry is clearly moving toward interiors that feel grounded, emotionally intelligent, and deeply human. Whether expressed through hospitality-ready warmth at HD Expo, Euro-modern restraint in Montreal, or expressive material play at ICFF, the throughline is unmistakable: comfort, craft, and sensory depth are shaping the next era of design.

Warm wood tones and textured surfaces are replacing the pale, ultra-smooth finishes of past years. Designers are embracing visible grain, matte treatments, and deeper engravings that highlight natural character and craftsmanship.

This richer wood story pairs seamlessly with the evolution of form, which includes soft silhouettes, rounded edges, and grounded proportions. Color follows the same ethos: softened neutrals, controlled saturation, and accents used as punctuation rather than spectacle.

From intricately woven crafts and expertly shaped stone to collage-style upholstery and visible assembly, designers are incorporating construction and texture into their visual language. Across all three exhibitions, a clear message emerges: design is evolving towards a warmer, more tactile modernism that harmonizes architectural clarity with human comfort and innovation with a sense of restraint.

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