

The background is a dense, repeating pattern of ornate golden relief carvings. The designs include various figures, possibly saints or historical figures, in dynamic poses, set within circular and rectangular frames. The overall aesthetic is classical and highly detailed.

CIE

LONDON

Consummate Interior Expertise

MILANO 2026



Milano 2026

The 2026 edition of Salone del Mobile reinforced its position as the leading centrepiece of the global design calendar. Its reputation amongst design professionals is unsurpassed, making it the self-proclaimed 'dynamic laboratory' for experimentation and exchange. It is here that emerging ideas and prototypes begin to be explored, scrutinised and offered to a discerning audience.

Creativity, vision, sustainability and emotional resonance remain central to the language of exhibiting brands. This year's Eurocucina /FTK – Technology for the Kitchen was a chance to assess whether key brands felt the exhibition at held Fiera Milano Rho was still relevant, or whether to follow the examples of the prestigious brands and invest in lavish Brera district installations. In short, the Eurocucina/FTK hall remained a huge draw to an eager audience, generating huge queues for the well-known brands.

The CIE focus took elements from the Brera district and combined this with some clear trend indicators from the Salone. The kitchen's status as a hybrid that allows seamless integration with living, dining and outdoor kitchens was emphasised and reinforced. This gave exhibitors free reign to explore with depth of material, flexibility of layout and personalisation. In a world of unpredictability this manifested itself as soft, comfort inducing curves to your personal space as a place you can truly feel you are at home, a place of solace and protection.

We review some of the key kitchen takehomes here:



Soft Geometry

One of the biggest kitchen design languages spoken at Salone was the reinforcement of the soft geometry trend. Traditional rectangular and circular shapes were distorted and stretched to provide a sculptural soft and approachable feel to layouts. Circles became ovals, sharp angles transformed into softened forms that invited touch and feel to create a response within the user, evoking calm and serenity. Door edges, traditionally with tight radiuses were softened further.

This extended into all areas of the home. Sofas became 'cocoon like' and oversized, hugely cushioned and oversized to promote a human response. Comfort was visually expressed making it feel human, warmer and alive.










Presence at Villa Necchi
Campiglio was not an
installation to observe,
but a state to enter.

Gaggenau 'Presence' at Villa Necchi

Gaggenau's 'Presence' was hosted within the gardens of Villa Necchi Campiglio. This inspirational installation explored the subtle dialogue between space, object, and human perception. Rather than announcing itself, the installation invited a heightened awareness from its audience where materials, light, and silence converged to shape a deeply sensory encounter.

It demonstrated effectively how presence is not only physical but experiential: an atmosphere felt rather than seen. The scene was set by guiding the audience into a sequence of moments that prioritised intuition, tactility, and the quiet power of refined design.

Gaggenau architects illustrated through the installation how texture, lighting and space triggered feeling. It set the tone for the Salone and the wider Design week and saw the theme of sensory experience illustrated through many design concepts, asking for an emotional response from the user to heighten their interaction with the product.

A photograph of a modern building entrance. On the left is a large glass door reflecting the outdoors. In the center is a wall of light-colored square tiles with the word 'PRESENCE' in a simple, sans-serif font. To the right is a black vertical panel with the word 'GAGGENAU' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The scene is brightly lit, and some green leaves are visible at the top of the frame.

PRESENCE

GAGGENAU

GAGGENAU







Comfort & Protection

An extension of the soft geometry trend was demonstrated through furniture installations and modules deliberately designing to provoke a sensory response. Huge bulbous seating modules that had rounded, almost inflated forms, gave a visual expression of comfort. In a world of disquiet and conflict this appeared to be furniture design that promoted a sense of 'place' and 'home'. The furniture forms offered a sense of protection that served to cocoon the recipient keeping them grounded and silenced from the 'noise' of an unpredictable world.







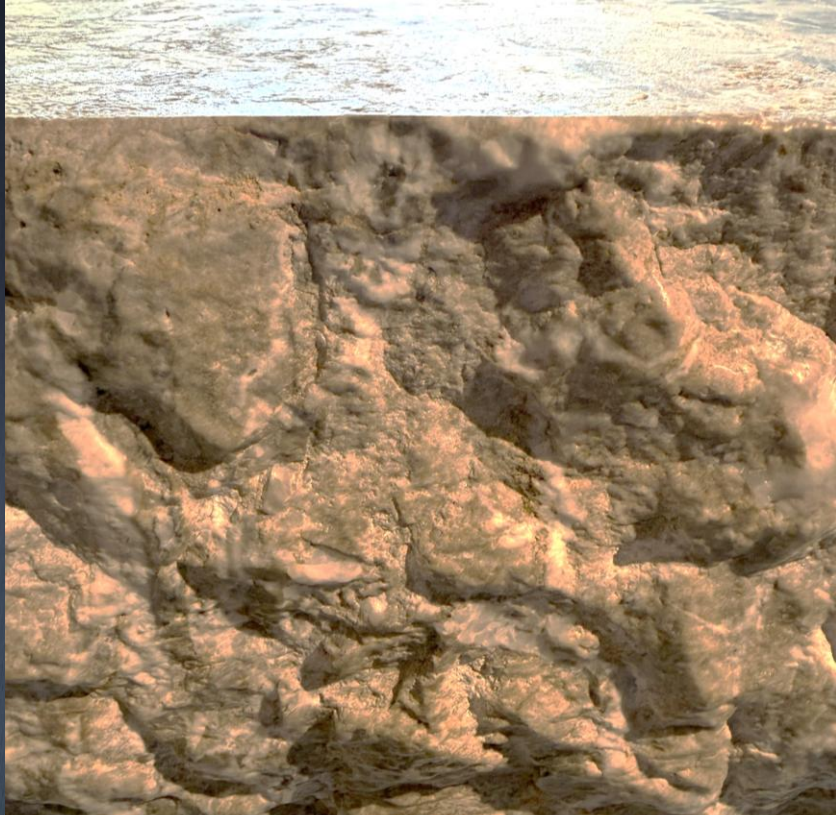


Tone & Texture

Texture was used to emotive effect. In the kitchens it invited the user to touch and feel, and to add dramatic contrast. Textured rough concretes next to highly finished or sculptured solid wood, fluted cabinetry, heavily grained or mixed planked detailing to tall cabinetry. All added to a sense of theatre, however all cleverly designed to deliberately not feel harsh but to evoke emotion and connectivity to natural forms.

Calming and muted palettes in a mixture of finishes ensured that neutrals were not cold and minimalist, but instead tactile and soft. Alongside warm neutrals were soft powered tones, used to great effect with Kartell. This brought some refreshment without being overbearing or too harsh.

Confident primary tones were also in abundance but similarly used with control. With these examples colour was used as a mood setter, often used tied to material and craftsmanship. The good examples of this were great at creating depth and identity to provoke an emotive response.







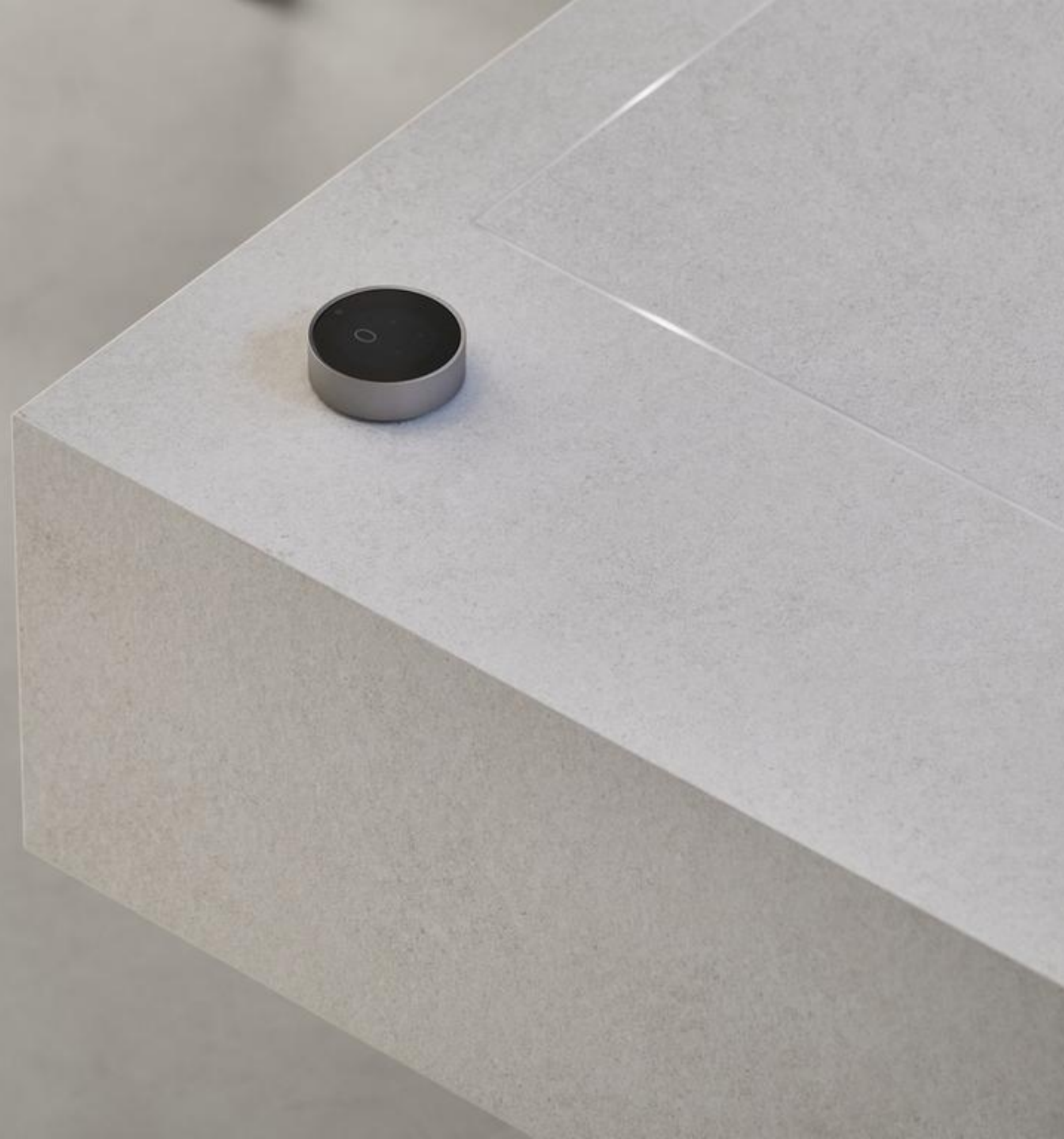


V-ZUG

Palazzo Bovara was the backdrop for V-ZUG in collaboration with Elle Décor, where the audience was treated to a minimalist installation '...in which everything is exactly what it is, and visitors are guided by their senses' Within this closed-door setting, the sensory unfolded through a sequence of gestures: gastronomic tastings by Andrea Tortora, a private tour of the exhibition curated by Piero Lissoni, and a moment of shared reflection among guests with an enlightening discussion around what makes 'a home'. Rather than spectacle, the experience emphasised slowness and attention, where taste, conversation, and space intertwined. It reinforced V-ZUG's broader philosophy, one where design does not impose, but quietly frames the conditions for presence to emerge through experience itself.

Table Rituals, a conceptual installation designed by architect and designer Elisa Ossino, was presented at V-Zug's intimate Brera showroom. This expanded on the sensory experience where the kitchen island was centre stage and simultaneously a cooking zone. The newly released V-ZUG CookTop V6000 Integra featuring invisible induction demonstrated a vision for the future of the kitchen where appliances disappear entirely into the architecture of the home.







The Art of Play

Play was packaged as a luxury experience at Salone, and this could represent the explosion of the bar trend within our homes. Highly crafted pool tables, gym equipment that historically would be bulky and away from the living environment were designed specifically to sit in the main living space. Gym equipment was exquisitely finished in leather and highly polished marbles.

In terms of the kitchen spaces, tables doubled up as table tennis or shuffleboards and became tools for social connection. Homes that supported hosting and shared activity could be seen as a reaction to digital fatigue, however maybe more of reflection of 'feel good' objects that invite interaction, laughter and play. Appliance manufacturers have seen this as an avenue for wine fridges, drinks fridges and dispensers and demonstrated this application in tandem with bespoke furniture manufacturers show how leisure and wellness become a fundamental consideration to design interiors.









Invisible Tech

The fluidity of space within our homes, and the kitchen being the head of this ecosystem, saw appliance manufacturers investigate how island worktops become a multifunctional space and not a typical 'working zone'. Worktops serve as traditional areas of preparation, dining and cooking, and then repurpose themselves as an uninterrupted piece of furniture. The aesthetic is unashamedly minimalist essentially making the material the centre stage.

There was a crossover with this type of technology with other industries, notably seamless LED integration, circadian lighting and gesture-based controls. Could this be another representation of a reaction against 'tech-clutter' where designers consider clean and calm spaces? There appeared to be several roomsets where the technology was effortless. Luxury was determined by the correct ambient temperature, music without speakers, lighting at the correct temperature with the ultimate aim to make the spaces simpler and the user increasingly connected with their surroundings.

Miele expanded on this further with the With the CulinaryCoach, a new AI-powered assistant within the Miele app. The assistant provides tailored recommendations, answers preparation-related questions and transfers the appropriate settings directly to connected appliances.

If the thought of an app was too much, then Moley Robotics demonstrated how you could experience the future of cooking without lifting a finger demonstrating how their robotic kitchen is able to replicate the skills and techniques of world leading chefs with remarkable accuracy.

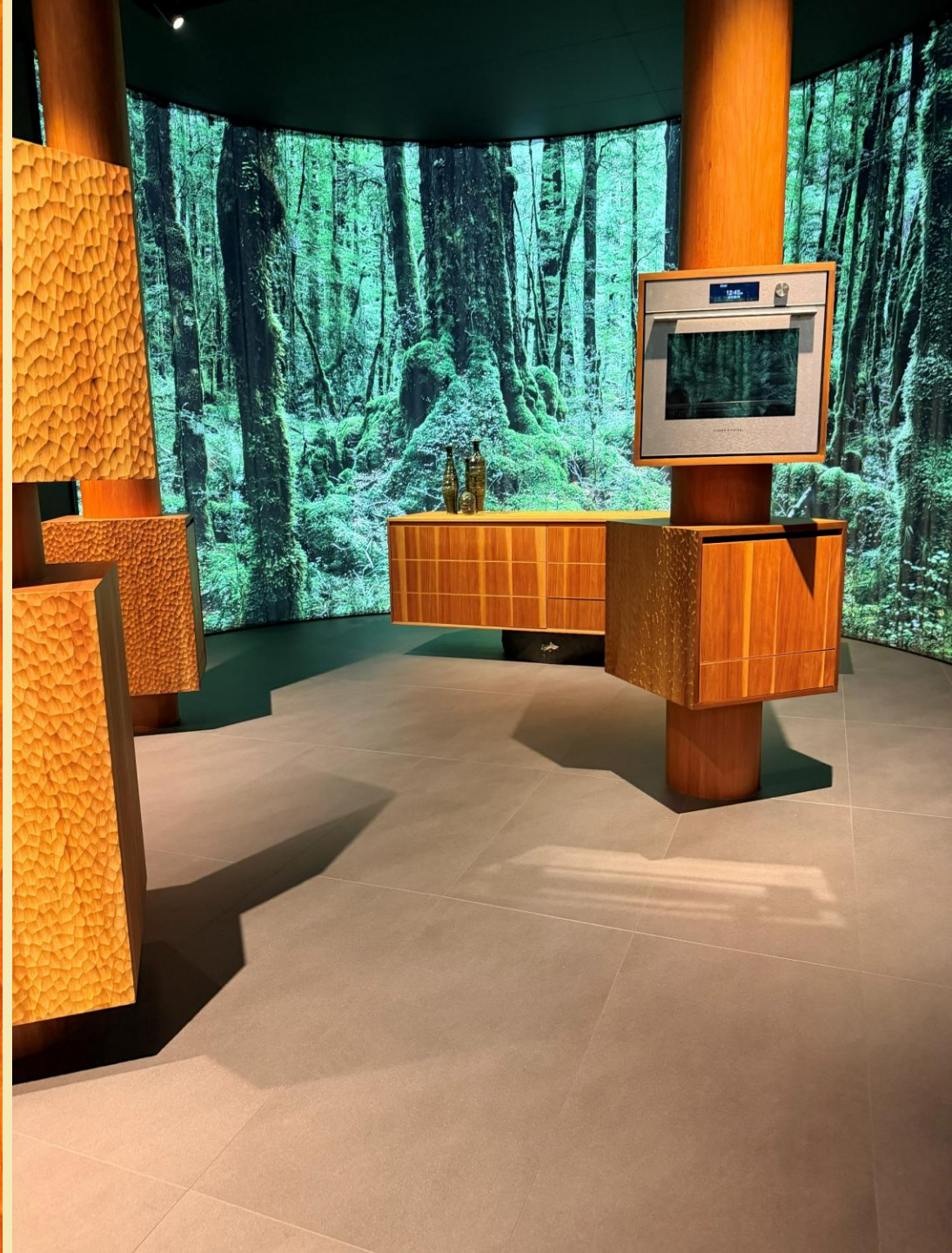


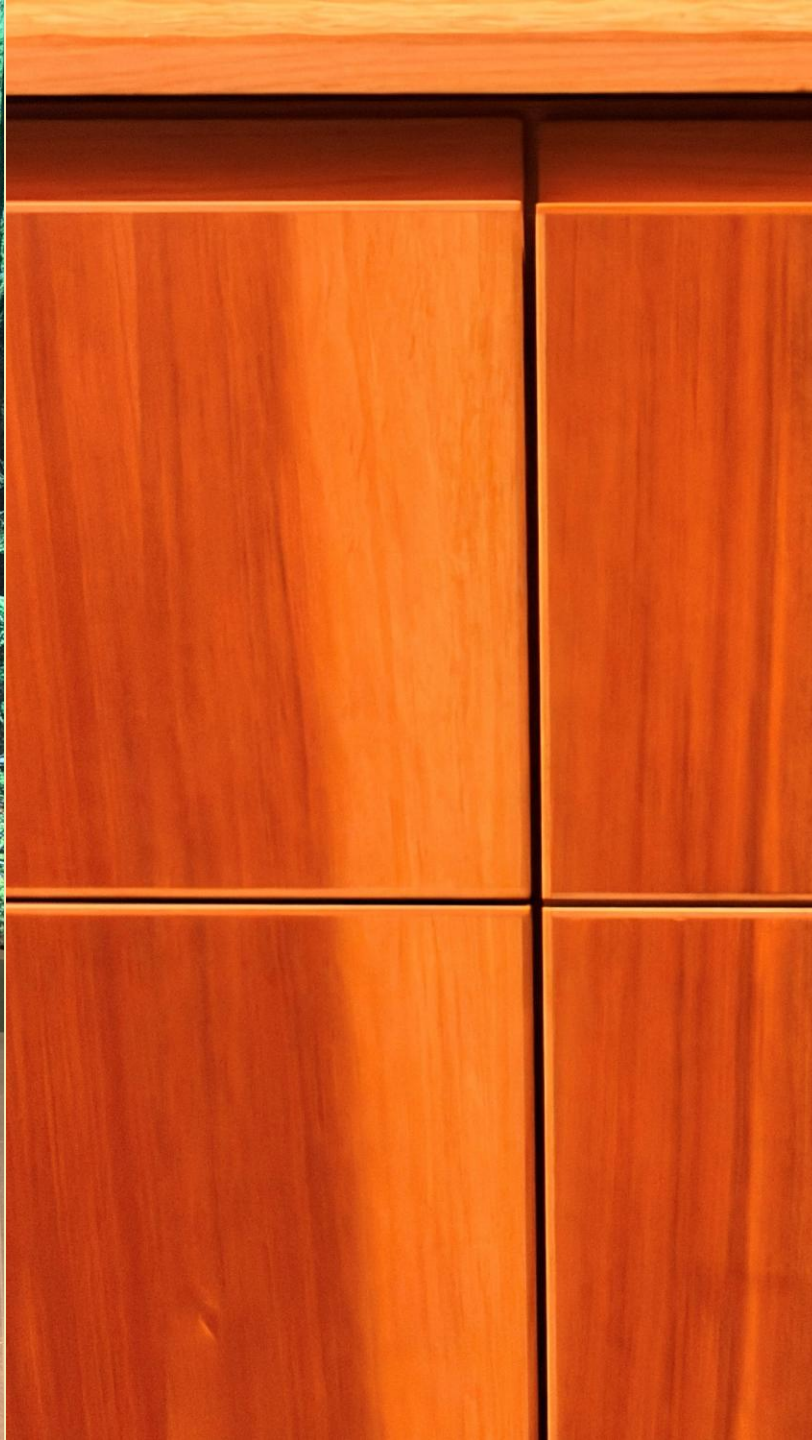


Fisher & Paykel

The Fisher & Paykel installation, Nature-Ritual, transported visitors from the ferocity of the fair into a New Zealand forest. Visitors were greeted with a kawakawa tea ritual which immediately drew the attention towards touch, scent and sound. The sensory experience appealed to all the senses; nature's bird song, textured tōtara wood sitting alongside volcanic basalt inviting touch, and invigorating scents produced by the ginger and kawakawa tea. The ceremonial procession through the kitchen process grounded the product with reconnection, redefining the kitchen not as a functional zone, but as a site of lived, sensory experience.

There was some great innovation from the products. 762mm ovens (not yet available in the UK) dishdrawer and Cooldrawers that could be adapted to suit user requirements, and new fabric care innovations debuted at Milan with the Minimal style fabric care cabinet.

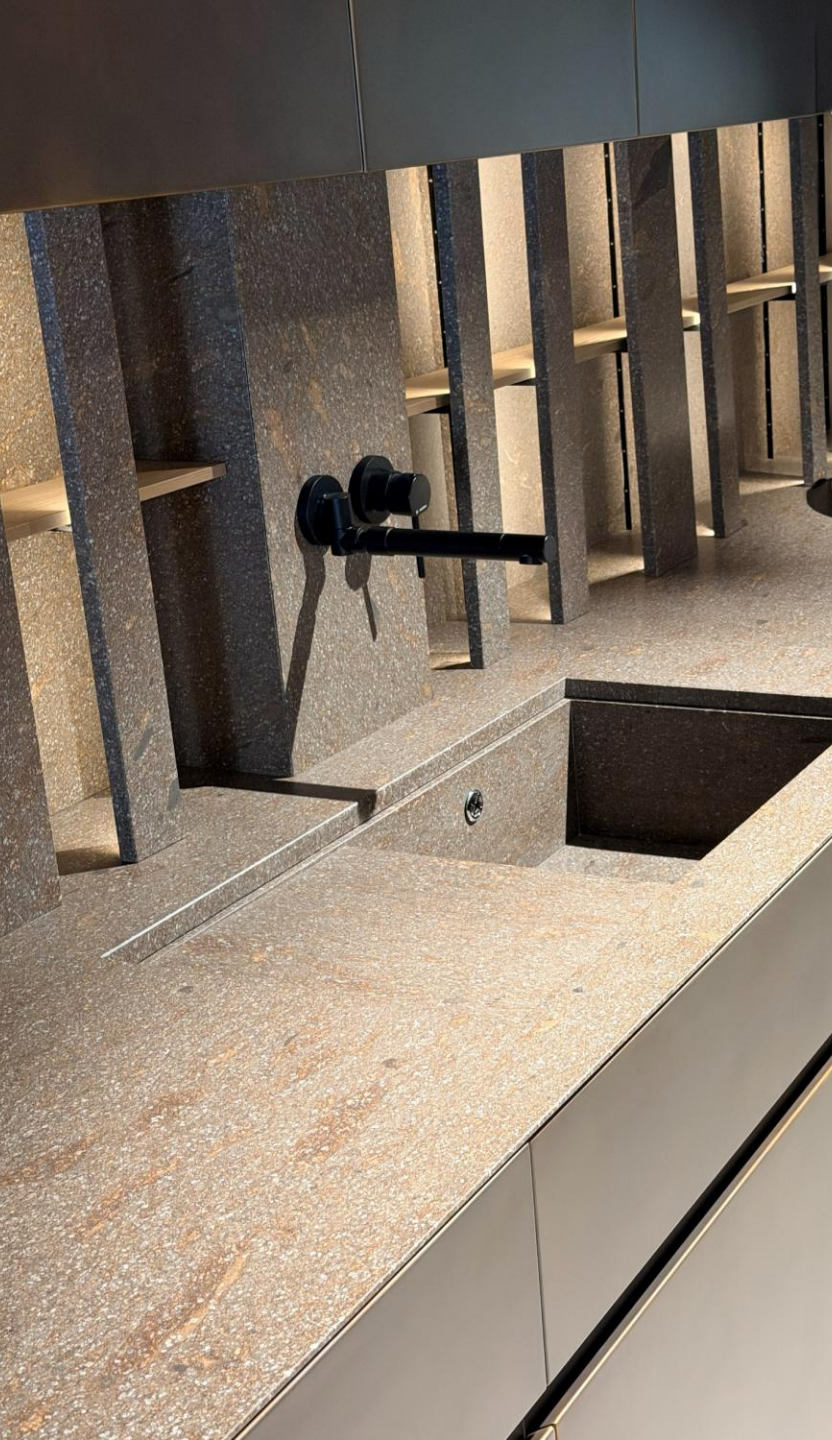




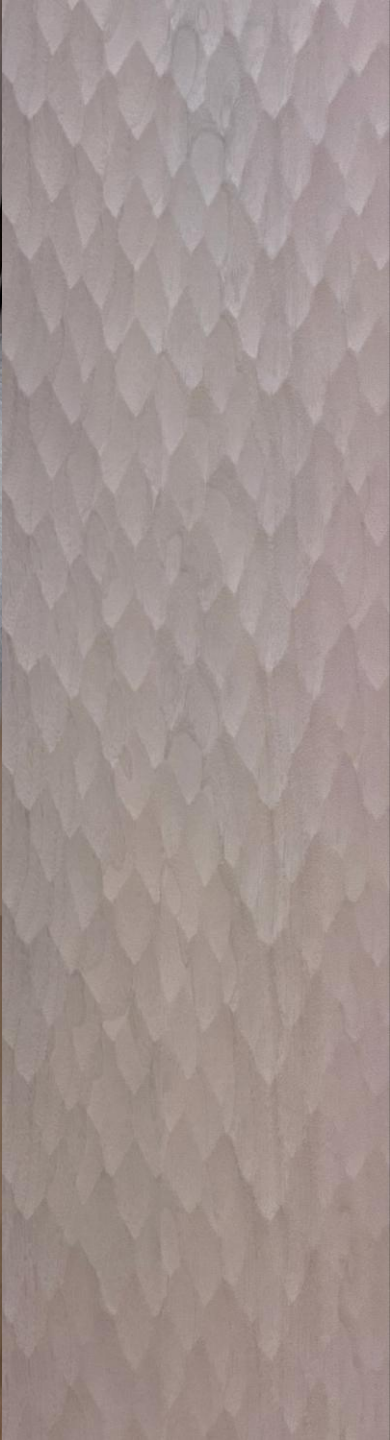


Sink Profiling

You would be hard pressed to find a stainless-steel sink at Salone, unless it formed part of a stainless-steel worktop. The focus instead was how detailing, shaping and matching material elevated the kitchen design from 'the ordinary' into an architectural statement. The sink as an object almost disappeared. It was hidden or carefully considered as part of the stone aesthetic with soft radius', minimal joints and no visual breaks from the main design. This reduced the visual noise of the design supporting the kitchens changing role as a living space, focusing on its transition into the dining and adjacent areas. In taking this approach, the traditional 'zoning' is eliminated and instead becomes a single adaptive surface that supports cooking, hosting, and living without visual hierarchy.







Conclusions

If previous editions of Salone celebrated statement and spectacle, 2026 marks a more subversive shift toward restraint. The most compelling work was not the loudest, but the most controlled. This was manifested in spaces that revealed themselves slowly, privileging atmosphere over immediacy.

Across Milan, design appeared to be recalibrating. The visual noise of recent years that came in the way of bold gestures, overt luxury, technological showmanship, gave way to something more measured and introspective. In its place: softness, tactility and a deliberate blurring of boundaries between object, architecture and experience.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the kitchen. Once a site of precision and performance, it has been quietly redefined as an ambiguous, multi-layered environment. It is no longer a room, but a condition. One that accommodates cooking, hosting, working and retreat without hierarchy. Function dissolves into feeling.

Formally, this manifested in the rise of soft geometry: stretched curves, eased edges and volumes that appear almost inflated. These gestures are not merely aesthetic, instead they signal a deeper cultural undercurrent. In an increasingly unstable world, design is responding with spaces that feel protective, intuitive and emotionally attuned.

Materiality reinforced this shift. Surfaces invited touch; contrasts were rich but never jarring. Craft replaced decoration, and detail became a means of slowing the experience down. Even colour, whether muted or saturated, was handled with a sense of control, acting as a quiet agent of mood rather than a visual demand.

Technology, meanwhile, has entered a new phase of maturity. Its success is now defined by how little it announces itself. Appliances disappear, interfaces dissolve, and environments respond almost imperceptibly to the user. The result is a form of ambient intelligence that is present, but never dominant.

What Salone 2026 ultimately reveals is a design culture moving away from performance and toward presence. Less concerned with how things look, and more with how they feel over time. It is a subtle but significant shift, and one that suggests the future of design lies not in adding more, but in refining what remains.



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