

Bringing Milan to You

Caroma Insights into Design Trends from the Salone del Mobile, Milan 2016





55 Years



David Giorgio,
Caroma Design Team Manager,
shares the major trends in this
report.

This year marked the 55th edition of the Salone del Mobile which is viewed as the most important design event on the global calendar and is the largest trade fair of its kind. Manufacturers from across the globe showcased their latest designs and products, and it is seen as the place where global trends are born.

Salone del Mobile attracted 310,000 visitors in 2016 from all over the world.

The Salone incorporates 6 exhibitions:

- Salone del Mobile (Furniture)
- Salone del Complemento D'Arredo (Furnishings and Accessories)
- EuroCucina (Kitchen)
- Salone Bagno (Bathroom)
- Salone Satellite (Emerging Designers)
- FTK - Future Technology in the Kitchen (Appliances)

Due to its sheer size, trends relating to colour, form, design, and material were presented en masse and could be clearly identified.

The quality of the products on display and the displays themselves were executed to a very high level and are inspirational as well as aspirational.

The Caroma Research and Development team were there to experience the Salone del Mobile. A number of trends were identified that specifically related to bathroom and kitchen product design.

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Thinner



Thin edges were one of the mega trends identified in 2016. This language was common theme in both product and spatial design.

We first identified this trend in 2014, but it has been adopted en masse at the latest Milan fair. Designs were increasingly refined with even thinner edges becoming more prevalent.

In 2014, thin edge basins were displayed with much interest for the first time, though limited to those manufacturers who had developed new materials that allowed these designs to be executed. In 2016, the number of sanitaryware manufacturers releasing thin edge basins had multiplied significantly, as new casting techniques have allowed the more traditional vitreous china and fire clay materials to be utilised to produce thin edge designs.

The trend has been most visibly applied to tapware and accessories where the adoption of stainless steel as a mainstream material has let to many designs produced from plate and thin tube.

Furniture design also showed a trend towards the thinner theme.



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Texture



The second of the mega trends related to use of materials with highly textured surfaces.

Timber laminates, both natural and synthetic were very popular. Where used, it was coarsely textured with strong grains.

In tapware, while metallics remained popular, some metallic introduced texture into their surfaces. Other tapware examples introduced the use of concrete into the design.

Engineered stones with strong textures to simulate natural materials rather than having smooth surfaces are being used. Some extend to wrap over the front of kitchen bench-tops to continue the textured finish hence making the texture a feature, more so than the material. Machined marble tiles were also incorporated into designs, with many showcasing coarsely cut patterns.

Textured splashbacks including pressed metal were evident in kitchens and with the inclusion of lighting achieve a dramatic effect.

The utilisation of thick weave fabrics in furniture and textiles was evident. This extended to more unusual applications such as fabric being used on the exterior of bathtubs

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Spaces were seen to be more simplistic with an absence of unnecessary detail, in some cases incorporating the use of exposed supports. While minimalistic, spatial design was not necessarily cold and stark. Materials were used to add warmth as they are character-filled offering a new richness and tactility to the simple surfaces and geometric shapes.

Minimalism is applying itself in unique applications such as the integration of basins and sinks into bathroom and kitchen countertops to create a seamless, uninterrupted surface appearance.

Kitchen appliances such as scales, burners and induction elements are embedded into the underside of stone countertops. In the cases such as burners, the only evidence of the presence of the burner was a small digital display built into the countertop, as traditional hotplates are not visible.

Minimalism is also being manifested through unity of design and an integration of living area design elements into bathroom design. Baths are integrated into furniture, and common materials and finishes are used across individual elements in the bathroom space.

'New' Minimalism



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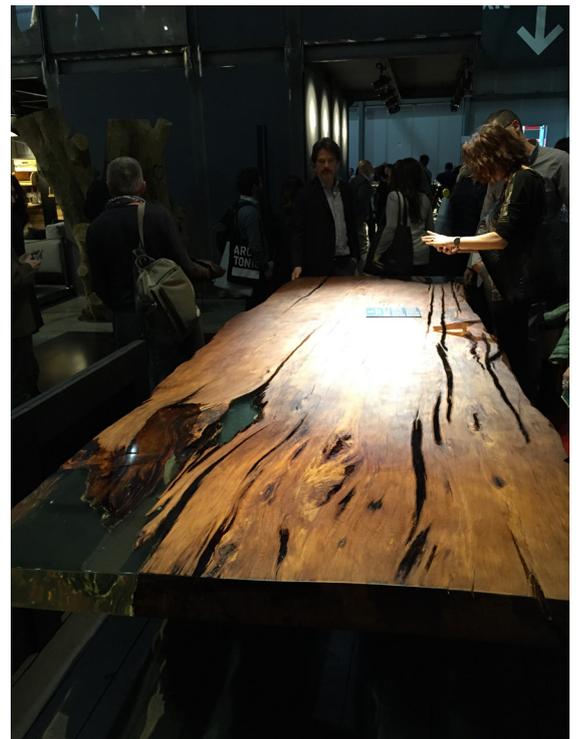
Organic

Material and colour palettes were showing a clear and more authentic connection to nature and the material origins.

Diversity is celebrated and timber grains and stone veins were featured with minimal processing of the raw material which added individuality to product and furniture design. The open-pore timber finish is being utilised across all timber surfaces.

Stone though smooth was not over polished and cracks in materials such as travertine not necessarily hidden, and are being used as a feature. Taps were seen to be made from pebbles, and shrouded toilets were showcased using a timber as a shroud material.

The organic trend is reinforced by a general lack of technology and electronics, or any form of over complication in the assembly or function of these products.



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There was a move away from concealing personal effects, and replacing with open or modular storage solutions in both bathroom and kitchen designs. This allows the opportunity for colour and personal style to be introduced and displayed through objects and accessories and also changed according to differing colour trends over time. Accessories are becoming infinitely more customisable to allow for multiple uses depending on the needs of the customer.

Examples of open storage were demonstrated through concepts such as incorporating flexible shelving on bathroom walls or moveable towel ladders, built in shelving with bathtubs for books or bathroom accessories.

Kitchens feature various degrees of open cabinetry or shelving creating a somewhat theatrical feel. Functional features such as dish drying racks, and wine bottle chillers are more visible and were being displayed behind transparent doors.

A greater sympathy in design is apparent for products that can be utilised by users regardless of age and ability. A deeper exploration of colour and material allowed for broader and safer exercising of bathroom tasks. Timber grab-rails, and polyurethane basins were clear examples of this growing awareness of the benefits of creating more universal welcoming spaces and alleviating institutional perception.

Storage and Accessories



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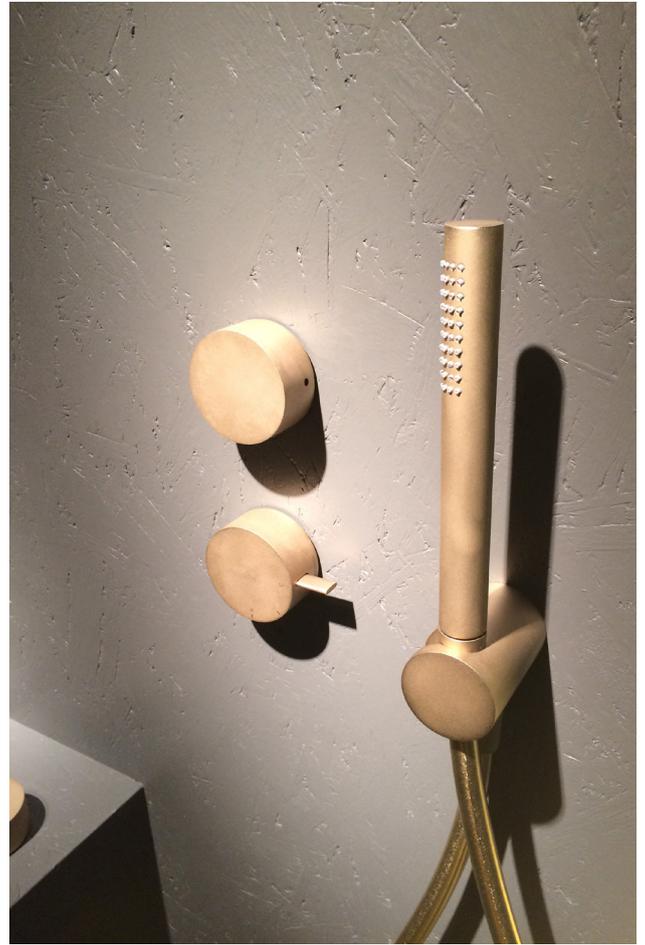
Stainless Steel



Stainless steel in tapware grew exponentially in popularity because of its lead free properties.

As this material is harder to machine than brass and generally available in sheet, plate and pipe formats, it is driving both the design and finish of the products utilising it. Also, given it has more structural strength than brass, small thinner sections are able to be used for the manufacture of fittings and accessories, leading to thinner and more geometrical tapware designs.

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Colours

The 3 main colour palettes being used were:

- “Neutrals” and greys
- “Dusty Romantics” (like pale pastel pink and green hues - similar to Dulux Bio Fragility)
- “Moody Royals” (rich deep blue, burgundy, brown and green hues - similar to Dulux Infinite Worlds)

In the bathroom space, the vitreous china colour palette is more restrained, and was more limited to neutrals, beige’s and matte white.

The tapware colour palette was more diverse. Many more metallic colours and surface finishes were being offered. Alongside the traditional brightly polished chrome, gold and copper, the finish range was widened to now include brushed and passivated finishes.

Painted tapware colours, were consolidated, with black being the only remnant of the massive colour exploration of just a few years ago. While black tapware was still present, is being replaced by dark metallics such as gun-metal grey and carbon/tungsten.



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Refinement

An over-arching observation throughout the Salone is that design has become more refined, considered and measured.

Subtle integration of functionality and detail without adding complexity through components or technology.

The quality of materials and finishes, as well as an increasing level of detailed execution in both design and production of kitchen and bathroom products has added a new level of sophistication to these spaces.



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