

HOME AND DÉCOR

TRENDS 2026

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Perfectly IMPERFECT

Expect interiors that focus on feeling rather than strictly following trends in 2026, writes **Trisha Harinath**



The Giorgio Collection features pieces that bring mood and timeless elegance, KARE Johannesburg.



Exquisite, sumptuous fabrics in an interplay of texture and tone offer a rich, sensory experience, OLALA Interiors.

With interiors, the goal in 2026 is to use the overarching trends as inspiration but interpret them to suit you. Leanne Van Niekerk, creative director at LVN Interiors, believes that in 2026, there will be a move away from "perfectly finished" interiors towards spaces that feel real – tactile, personal and softly layered. For her, "modern organic meets quiet luxury" will provide inspiration for the year. "Think natural materials, sculptured furniture and a tonal palette that feels calm but not cold."

FIND YOUR INSPIRATION

Whether you are after something bold and out there or prefer a more understated, softer look, the trends for 2026 allow for all tastes. "2026 is all about quiet confidence. We are moving away from trend-chasing and towards a deeply personal, curated aesthetic that blends form, feeling and functionality. The 2026 interior is layered, lived-in and luxe – without shouting about it," says Vinette Diab Nicholls, owner and head designer at Giava Interiors. She adds that it is no longer about a look, but rather about a lifestyle. "One where your home reflects who you are, how you live and what you love."

TOP TIP

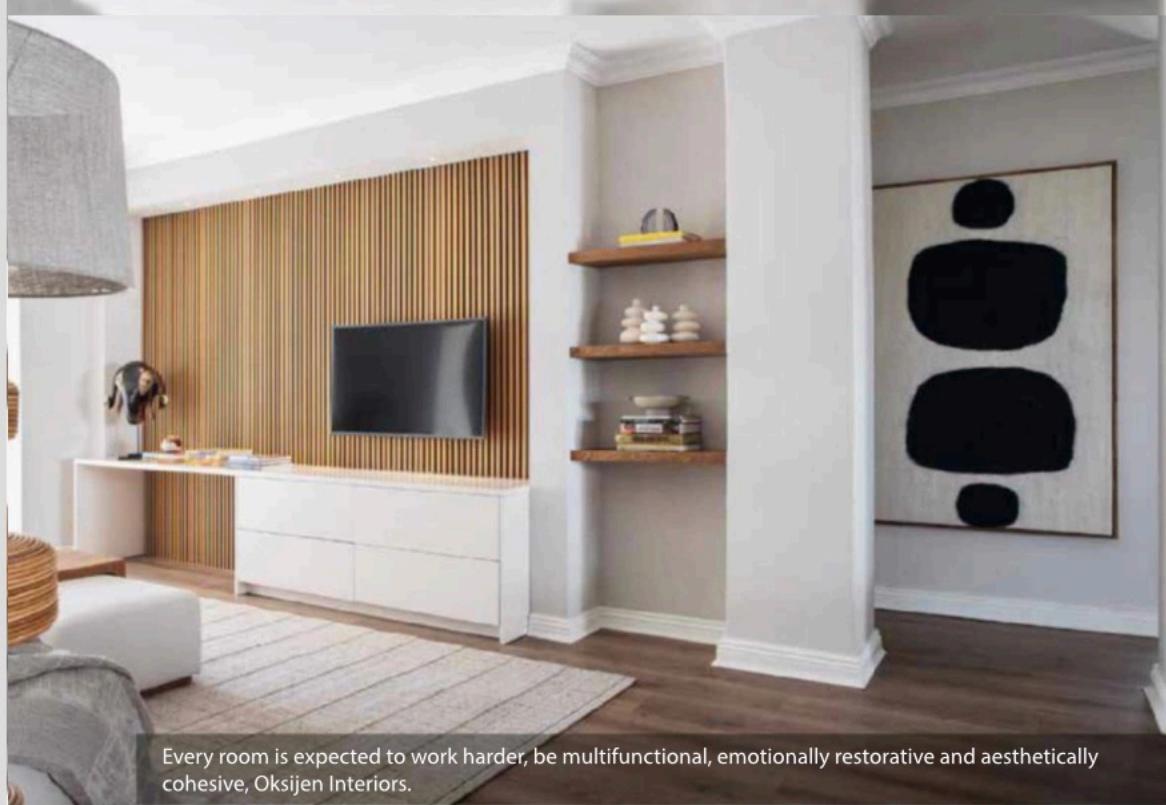
"Don't chase trends, interpret them. A timeless home is one that evolves with you. Focus on atmosphere, not abundance. Light, space and texture will always outlast any trend cycle." – **Lisa Swart, Oksijen Interiors**

Britta McMeekin, design manager at OLALA Interiors, mentions "tech-integrated warmth" and "crafted heritage modern" as two trends to look out for. "Smart homes will become softer with technology serving as an invisible concierge. Technology will be quietly woven behind natural materials, creating environments where innovation and refinement coexist with effortless ease." On crafted heritage modern design, artisanal influences will remain strong, she advises. "Expect global craft traditions reimagined in contemporary silhouettes, especially in textiles and decorative objects." For Wanda-Michelle Hadlow-Millar, creative and managing executive at VÉRELÜXE Interior Design, 2026 will be defined by quiet luxury, sculptural minimalism and sensory sophistication. "Interiors will evolve into curated sanctuaries – layered, intentional and emotionally intelligent. Expect a shift towards spaces that honour presence, legacy and poetic restraint."

Oksijen Interiors' founder Lisa Swart mentions interiors that feel grounded, soulful and globally inspired. She calls it "slow luxury", adding, "we will be seeing a blend of Mediterranean minimalism, African modernism and quiet organic design. Spaces will be less about trends and more about emotional connection with homes that feel collected, imperfect and full of texture".

THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM

To illustrate how the trends next year will be open to interpretation, fall anywhere within the spectrum and vary from person to person, owner of KARE Johannesburg, Karin Cawthorne, believes 2026 will be the year of "more". "Cold minimalism is out; colour drenching is in. Liveable luxury and moody colour palettes will be the order of day. A resurgence of >



Every room is expected to work harder, be multifunctional, emotionally restorative and aesthetically cohesive, Oksijen Interiors.



Concave fluted cladding and stone detailing create quiet sophistication, LVN Interiors.

1960s influence will be seen with curved furniture and earthy colours as well as a greater focus on wellness movements and natural light," she adds.

Finally, moving more towards bold and striking design, Bulelwa Jordan-Tati, founder of Urban Blend Interiors, highlights maximalism as taking centre stage. "As we spend more time in our homes, we are craving interiors that feel personal, expressive and intentionally curated. We are likely to see more rich textures, soulful art and distinctive furniture that reflects the individual behind the design. Expect to see handcrafted and collected pieces, strong colour moments and interiors that feel deeply rooted in personal narrative."

"Interior designers will prioritise calming palettes, cocoon-like textures, acoustic control, biophilic principles, multisensory lighting and ergonomic flow."

– Britta McMeekin

MATERIALITY AT THE HEART OF DESIGN

There will be a strong focus on materials in 2026 as interiors provide a tactile and textured experience. "Dark wood, sustainable materials like linen and wool, clay, stone and terracotta accents will add a warm and



Soft forms and tonal layering define quiet luxury, LVN Interiors.



The Chalet Soul Sideboard is the ideal textured piece, KARE Johannesburg.



Quiet luxury lives in the details – sculptural lighting, fluted finishes, curated layers of tonal green, rust and off-white, Giava Interiors.



This serene vignette captures the essence of 2026's biggest interior shift – a return to meaningful simplicity, Giava Interiors.

organic feel to our interior spaces. Vintage materials like velvet and chrome will be making a comeback as well," mentions Cawthorne.

Diab Nicholls points to reeded and smoked glass that will soften the edges and create a sense of light play, while UV-protected and stain-resistant fabrics will be ideal for sunny lounges and homes with kids, pets and all of life's chaos. "Curved joinery and custom

detailing will also be growing in interest, as they give pieces a considered and bespoke finish."

Hadlow-Miller points to brushed metals (champagne, gold, bronze), ceramic composites and architectural vinyl such as Reatec as rising in prominence. She says products like "PET felt acoustic panels and CNC cut into patterns will cocoon spaces with elegance and silence. Ceilings will become expressive surfaces – treated with sculptural panels and soft lighting to dampen the noise of modern life".

Raw, honest and tactile materials will dominate, says Swart. Think plasters, textured limewash, handwoven textiles, timber in its true form and artisanal ceramics. "There's also a growing love for composite surfaces that mimic nature, paired with warm metals like bronze or aged brass." >

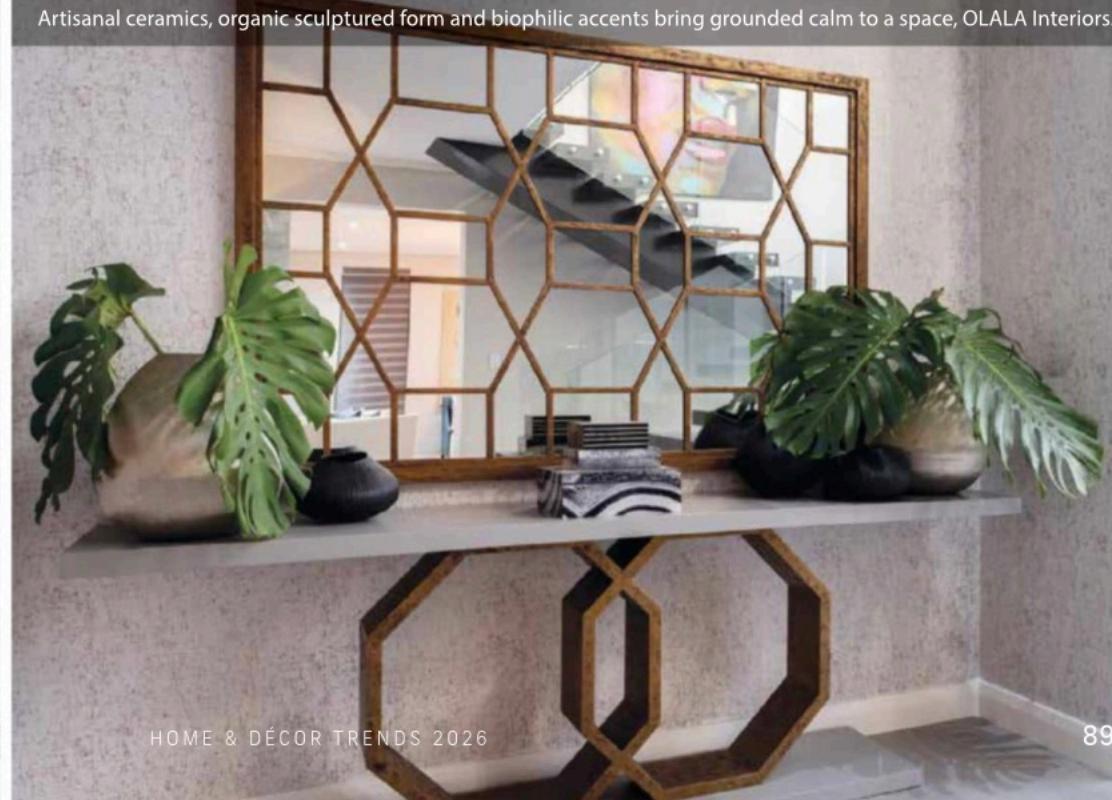
GOOD TO KNOW

"There is a return of ritual. Interiors will be designed not just for function, but also for rhythm, reflection and emotional resonance." – **Wanda-Michelle Hadlow-Miller, VÉRELÜXE Interior Design**

The Pendant Lamp Supernova and Swivel Armchair Janno Beige, KARE Johannesburg.



Artisanal ceramics, organic sculptured form and biophilic accents bring grounded calm to a space, OLALA Interiors.





The Swivel Armchair Peppo Bloom White offers high-end comfort, KARE Johannesburg.



Curved silhouettes bring comfort and balance to modern interiors, LVN Interiors.

On material selection, Jordan-Tati explains that it is no longer just about the type of material, but the journey behind it. "Craftsmanship, texture and the art of reuse are becoming central to design. People are drawn to finishes that feel honest and lived in, materials that evolve gracefully over time while reflecting a sense of care for both craft and the environment."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Looking at the overall trends or design inspiration for 2026, there are two key takeaways. Van Niekerk refers to "humanised minimalism", which she says is something we all crave. "We've done sterile minimalism. Now it's about simplicity with warmth and soul. Clean lines, yes, but softened with texture, mood lighting and handcrafted details. Homes in 2026 will feel calmer, but also deeply personal – more about the people who live there than the things that fill them."

"Sensory sanctuaries" is how McMeekin defines interiors that are purposely designed to support mental wellbeing, emotional recovery and sensory balance. "Several cultural and lifestyle shifts are converging to fuel this movement based on an increasing awareness of mental wellness, a desire to counter digital fatigue and the continuous hybrid lifestyle. Interior designers will prioritise calming palettes, cocoon-like textures, acoustic control, biophilic principles, multisensory lighting and ergonomic flow." ■

With thanks to Giava Interiors, KARE Johannesburg, LVN Interiors, Oksijen Interiors, OLALA Interiors, Urban Blend Interiors, and VÉRELÜXE Interior Design

TAKE IT SLOW

"We will see a return to slow decorating – layering rooms over time, adding character through experience and resisting the urge to finish a space too quickly."

– Vinette Diab Nicholls, Giava Interiors

"A resurgence of 1960s influence will be seen with curved furniture and earthy colours as well as a greater focus on wellness movements and natural light."

– Karin Cawthorne

GET THE LOOK

Follow the tips below to get the 2026 look:

- "Every item you use should earn its place, whether it is functional, beautiful or sentimental." – **Vinette Diab Nicholls, Giava Interiors**
- "Focus on rich, nature-inspired colours, curves and round-shaped furniture, artisanal and handcrafted pieces." – **Karin Cawthorne, KARE Johannesburg**
- "Take what resonates and make it yours. If it still feels right in five years, it's timeless – not trendy." – **Leanne Van Niekerk, LVN Interiors**
- "Invest in craftsmanship and let imperfections show. The most on-trend interiors in 2026 will be the ones that feel deeply personal." – **Lisa Swart, Oksijen Interiors**
- "Prioritise tactile depth. Focus on layering textures – stone, wood, textiles and matt metals with a calm and cohesive theme." – **Britta McMeekin, OLALA Interiors**
- "Colour outside the lines. Let your interiors be bold, personal and unapologetically you." – **Bulelwa Jordan-Tati, Urban Blend Interiors**
- "Design for silence and sensuality using materials that absorb sound, reflect light softly and invite presence." – **Wanda-Michelle Hadlow-Miller, VÉRELÜXE Interior Design**