

ARKTURA · INTERNAL DESIGN INTELLIGENCE

NEOCON 2026 DESIGN TREND DISPATCH

From the Show Floor to Your Next Specification

June 2026 | John Johnston, Director of Product Development & Marketing | For Internal Teams, Product Reps & Design Clients



FROM THE SHOW FLOOR

A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

The Merchandise Mart had a singular energy this year. It was the kind of energy that's hard to quantify but impossible to ignore. Walking those floors across three days—through its booths, showrooms, and immersive experience centers—I kept returning to a single word: **intention**. Every material choice, every ceiling detail, every carefully engineered acoustic surface felt deliberate. Purposeful.

This dispatch is my attempt to translate three days of sensory overload into actionable intelligence—for our internal design team, for our product representatives in the field, and for the architects and interior designers who are already asking us what we saw and what it means for their next project. Consider this your insider's briefing from someone who spent an embarrassing amount of time studying ceiling systems and getting lost in felt walls.

"Acoustics is no longer background infrastructure. Integrated lighting-acoustic systems are the new hero product category. Warm, textural, dimensional surfaces have fully replaced cold modernism."

John Johnston

DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING

THE SHORT VERSION

THREE SIGNALS THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

01 — ACOUSTICS GOES CENTERSTAGE

Acoustic solutions have graduated from commodity to centerpiece. Acoustic wellness has arrived and it demands to be designed—not tucked away.

02 — LIGHT + ACOUSTIC = ONE SYSTEM

Integrated lighting-acoustic systems are the new hero product category. The distinction between luminaire and acoustic component is dissolving.

03 — WARM TEXTURE REPLACES COLD MINIMALISM

Arkтура's portfolio—SoftGrid®, SoundForm®, integrated lighting, Vapor®—sits at the center of everything the industry is gravitating toward.

ARKTURA DIDN'T JUST ATTEND NEOCON 2026. WE SAW OUR DIRECTION REFLECTED BACK AT US ACROSS THE FLOOR.

EIGHT MACRO- TRENDS

Across the show, eight consistent macro-trends emerged—not as isolated observations, but as a unified directional signal from the entire industry*. These are not fashion moments. They are architectural and material shifts that will define commercial interiors for the next five years.

*This trend report features design observations from across the NeoCon show floor. Images include both Arktura products and trend examples from other exhibitors. Where manufacturer information is available, it is credited; unattributed images represent notable design directions observed at the show.

WHAT WE SAW & WHY IT MATTERS

01 Organic Geometry

Bulged, capsule & lozenge forms floor-to-ceiling

03 Dimensional Surfaces

Three-dimensional texture as the new flat

05 Human-Centric Design

The commute has to be worth it

07 Lighting Integration

The architecture of light — acoustic + luminaire converge

+ Best of NeoCon awards analysis & color direction for specification

02 Soft Geometry Interrupting Regularity

Fillets, softened edges & circles in the grid

04 Material Warmth & Color Intelligence

Warm earth tones, sustainable materials & color-tunable light

06 Retro Design Revival

Art Deco & Memphis return

08 Award Spotlight: SoundForm®

Dimensional Design— acoustic panels take centerstage across every category

01 ORGANIC GEOMETRY — BULGED FORMS FROM FLOOR TO CEILING

The grid didn't disappear at NeoCon 2026. It softened, swelled, and traveled from the floor all the way to the ceiling.

TREND SPOTLIGHT · 01

THE BULGED GEOMETRY: HUMANE GRID

If one formal language unified the show floor, it was organic geometry—shapes that read as soft and natural yet never abandon the discipline of the grid. The dominant motif was the **bulged geometry**: the rectilinear grid softened and swollen outward, its corners pushed into gentle curves rather than dissolved entirely. Capsule and lozenge silhouettes appeared everywhere, almost always paired with circles.

Most strikingly, these forms migrated continuously from floor to wall to ceiling, treating an entire room as one cohesive geometric field rather than a set of disconnected planes. This was not the freeform blob organicism of a decade ago; it was **geometry made humane**.

Bulged forms became architectural elements—wall reliefs, ceiling compositions, partition profiles, and built-in enclosures. Collaboration enclosures and conversation chairs no longer read as upholstered boxes dropped into a plan but as sculptural architecture, adopting the same organic-yet-geometric vocabulary that defined the rest of the room.

Arktura angle: Solutions Studio® exists precisely to make these bulged, capsule, and circle-and-grid forms buildable. SoftGrid® can carry the language overhead.



TREND SPOTLIGHT · 02

SOFT GEOMETRY INTERRUPTING REGULARITY

Where the grid meets the curve. Two interrelated expressions that defined 2026 geometry: the filleted edge at fingertip level and the circle in the overhead grid. Together they give commercial interiors their softer, more human spatial character.



PART I

FILLETS & SOFTENED EDGES

Look closely at almost any product on the floor and you found the same detail: the **fillet**. Generous, rounded transitions replaced sharp arrises on virtually every edge—the corners of casegoods, the meeting of seat and arm, the perimeter of tabletops, and the returns on ceiling baffles and acoustic panels.

The fillet did quiet but relentless work all show long, signaling approachability, tactility, and a softer, more human posture toward the user. Where an earlier era prized the crisp, knife-edge minimalism of the machined object, 2026 prizes the radius—**edges you want to run a hand along**.

Overhead, the same instinct appeared as softened panel returns and rounded baffle profiles that eliminate the hard shadow lines of earlier systems.



PART II

CIRCLES IN THE GRID

The ceiling earned its title as the fifth wall through a specific compositional move: **round objects interspersed within a regular grid**. Circular pendant lights, disc-shaped acoustic absorbers, and round diffusers were set deliberately against orthogonal baffle and tile grids.

The effect was neither pure grid nor pure scatter, but a composed tension between the two that kept the eye moving across the plane—turning ceilings into designed, rhythmic fields rather than uniform backdrops.

Arktura's SoftGrid® is built to frame exactly this kind of disciplined grid while accommodating the round lights and acoustic absorbers that are meant to break it. This is our natural territory.

DIMENSIONAL SURFACES

THREE-DIMENSIONAL TEXTURE AS THE NEW FLAT

If there was one material trend that appeared in nearly every booth across the show—regardless of category, brand, or price point—it was the decisive rejection of flat surfaces. Fluted and ribbed textures dominated: vertical ribbing in PET felt, MDF, and solid surfaces creating linear rhythm and shadow play.

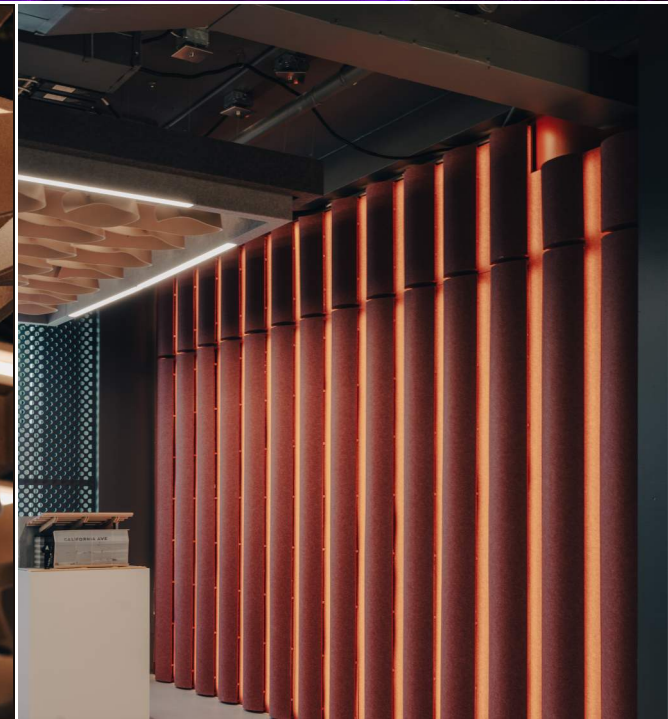
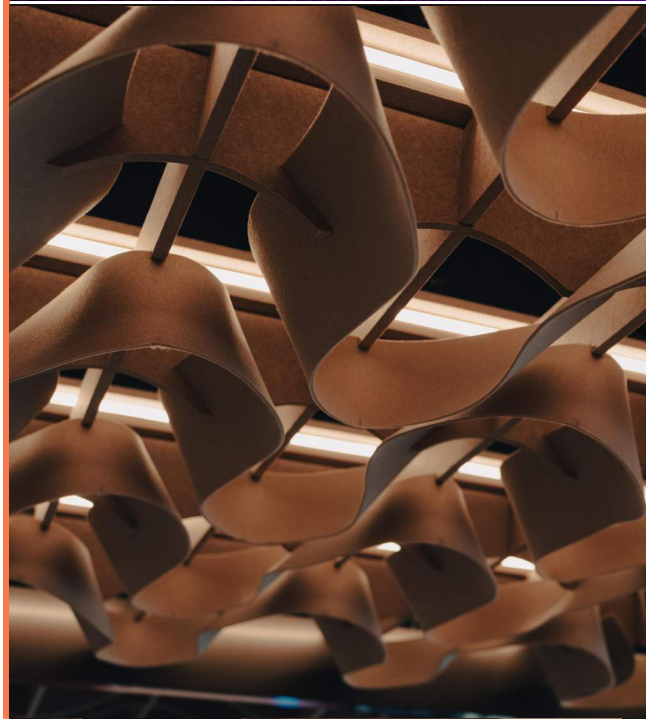
Woven and braided textures added handcrafted warmth across furniture and lighting alike. **Parametric, algorithm-driven wave patterns** in felt walls demonstrated what advanced manufacturing capability looks like as a design statement. Perforated metal screens served double duty as architectural entrance features and functional acoustic diffusers.

The physical, tactile surface has replaced the printed or applied graphic as the primary tool of spatial identity. Just as telling was the geometry beneath all that texture. Organic forms were pervasive, but they stayed rooted in geometrics—think “bulged geometries,” the grid softened and swollen rather than abandoned.

Key material hierarchy: Fluted/Ribbed → Woven/Braided → Parametric/Wave → Perforated → Pressed/Sustainable. Surfaces that absorb light rather than reflect it. Surfaces you want to touch.



Image from Turf Design's Showroom



TREND SPOTLIGHT · 04

MATERIAL WARMTH & COLOR INTELLIGENCE

Two inseparable signals: the materials got warmer and more tactile, and the colors reflected that warmth—while programmable light unlocked infinite color variation from the same neutral surface. Matte over gloss. Warmth over cool. Texture over pattern.



PART I

MATERIAL WARMTH & SUSTAINABILITY

Cool minimalism continued its retreat. Warm beige, taupe, mushroom gray, and natural wood tones defined 80–90% of booth designs. Brands have moved beyond recycled-content percentages: **EPDs, take-back programs, and bio-based materials** (flax, sugarcane, mycelium) are now the conversation.

Light oak and ash appeared on flooring, slat walls, furniture, and ceiling baffles. Bouclé dominated upholstery. Matte black metal framed everything. The material vocabulary of 2026 is warm, soft, tactile, and responsible—simultaneously.

EPDS

BIO-MATERIALS

BOUCLÉ



PART II

COLOR INTELLIGENCE

The 2026 palette made a decisive break from cool gray. **Terracotta, rust, cognac brown, deep maroon** anchored feature walls. Muted botanicals—sage, olive, dusty blue—replaced brighter greens. Dusty rose and mauve emerged as the new warm neutral.

Most interesting: several brands played with **colored light as a color modulator**—RGBW systems transforming a single neutral felt surface across infinite aesthetic scenarios. Turf's yellow-walled experience pod made this tangible: space as mood, not just material.



Terracotta



Sage



Dusty Rose



HUMAN-CENTRIC DESIGN

THE COMMUTE HAS TO BE WORTH IT

The industry has a new north star, and it can be expressed in a single question: **Is this space worth showing up for?** Research from Gensler confirms that the new metric for real estate value is "connection, not capacity."

At NeoCon, this translated into showrooms designed as immersive sensory journeys rather than static product displays. The concept of "**workspitality**"—hospitality-level comfort and sensory richness applied to workplace design—was everywhere. High-backed privacy seating created micro-environments for focus work.

Collaboration enclosures and conversation chairs began to feel like architectural elements rather than upholstered boxes, taking on the same organic-yet-geometric language—bulged forms, capsule silhouettes, filleted edges—that ran through the rest of the show.

Acoustic pods—now a familiar, expected fixture at NeoCon rather than a novelty—offered complete auditory refuge within open plans. **Neuro-inclusive design**, supporting different cognitive needs within a single spatial ecosystem, emerged as a genuine discipline rather than a buzzword. Every element of the best-designed spaces was calibrated to serve the whole person.

"The new metric for real estate value is connection, not capacity. Design must earn the commute."



TREND SPOTLIGHT • 06

RETRO DESIGN REVIVAL

ART DECO & MEMPHIS RETURN

A clear stylistic undercurrent ran beneath the warm minimalism of the show: the return of historical decorative movements, reinterpreted for the contract market.

Art Deco resurfaced in stepped forms, fluted geometry, and symmetrical ornament, while the **Memphis Group's** playful 1980s vocabulary—bold geometric shapes, unexpected color pairings, and graphic exuberance—reappeared with surprising frequency.

The revival showed up most visibly in light fixtures, where geometric ornament and stepped silhouettes gave luminaires real personality, but it extended well beyond lighting into wall decoration, patterned surfaces, and the styling props that dressed the most memorable booths.

After a decade of restraint, **ornament and playfulness are cautiously, deliberately back**—evidence that the market is ready for spaces with character and narrative, not just calm. The industry has rediscovered that decoration, when it carries meaning and craft, is not weakness—it is depth.



07 LIGHTING INTEGRATION — WHERE ARCHITECTURE MEETS LUMINANCE

The debut of Illuminate at NeoCon was itself a signal. Acoustic + luminaire have become one category. Arktura's SoundForm® is its proof.

TREND SPOTLIGHT • 07

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LIGHT

The debut of Illuminate at NeoCon—a dedicated show-within-a-show for architectural lighting—was itself the clearest possible signal: light is no longer a utility. It is architecture. The dominant trend: **seamless integration of LED systems with acoustic baffles and ceiling planes**, creating unified architectural surfaces where the distinction between luminaire and acoustic component simply disappears.

Wall-grazing techniques accentuated dimensional surfaces through shadow play—turning a textured wall into a dramatic, shifting composition as light moved across it.

Color-tunable RGBW systems allowed entire spaces to shift mood, season, and energy without touching a single surface material. The most forward-looking installations used circadian-calibrated systems to support human biological rhythms at a product level.

Wireform furniture found its natural counterpoint here: as furniture frames pared down to slender, drawn-in-space wireforms, lighting systems expanded to encompass entire ceiling planes. Softness above, line below—the warmth trend is not about heaviness, but about the thoughtful pairing of generous comfort with the most economical possible structure. Both movements show an industry perfecting the art of editing.

Arktura's SoundForm® sits at the exact center of this story—a dual Best of NeoCon winner in both Lighting and Acoustics. The converged category is real, and we helped define it.

LED + ACOUSTIC RGBW SYSTEMS CIRCADIAN LIGHTING WALL-GRAZING SOUNDFORM

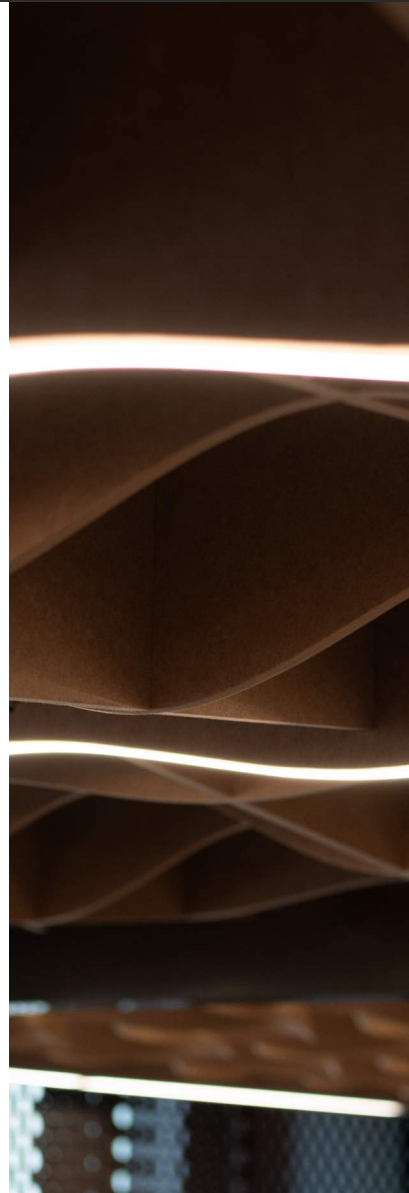


Image from Turf Design's Showroom

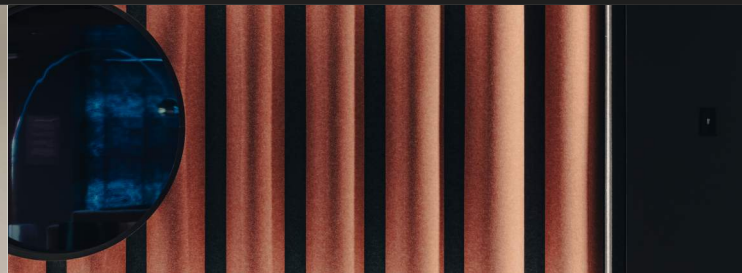


BEST OF COMPETITION

Cognetic Technology™

KI — KIAURA COLLECTION

A gravity-responsive, multi-axis motion seating system that intuitively responds to the user. The most human story on the floor —born from a designer's personal struggle with chronic back pain.



GOLD + SILVER

SoundForm®

ARKTURA

Gold: Lighting — Decorative Sconces & Silver: Acoustics — A dual-category win that validates the converged category of acoustic lighting. One product: sculptural fixture, acoustic device, and architectural element.



GOLD + SUSTAINABILITY

Truchet

IMPACT ACOUSTIC AG

Surfacing Materials. Dual recognition of aesthetic innovation and circular design. Beautiful and responsible is now the requirement, not the differentiator.



GOLD AWARD

Cushion

TURF DESIGN

Acoustics & Privacy: Panels/Partitions. Our AWI sibling brand pushing acoustic panels as primary architectural elements—validating the shared category direction.

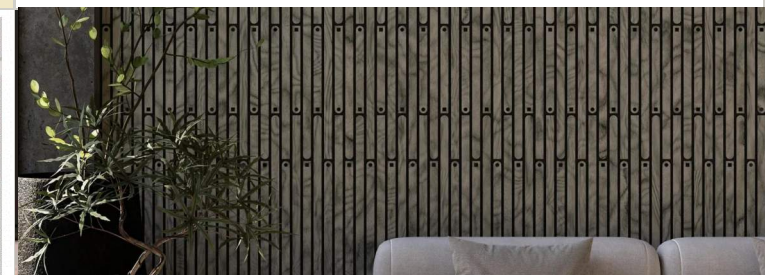


GOLD AWARD

SkyView™ Tile

BIOS LIGHTING

Architectural Lighting. Circadian functionality openly communicated through design.



GOLD AWARD

ALMA Collection

WVH

Wall Treatments. Dimensional, tactile wall systems continue to earn top recognition. The market rewards texture. Also: Mohawk Group's Nike Grind flooring proves circular sustainability at scale.

SOUND FORM®

Gold: Lighting — Decorative Sconces

Silver: Acoustics & Privacy — Acoustic Solutions

This dual-category win is not a footnote. This is validation, from the industry's most respected peer-reviewed awards program, that our strategic direction is exactly right. SoundForm® is a single product that solves multiple design challenges at once: it is a sculptural light fixture, a high-performance acoustic device, and a beautiful architectural element.

The fact that it won in two separate categories—lighting and acoustics—is more than a talking point. It is evidence that the converged category of acoustic lighting is real, and that Arktura is helping to shape it.

GOLD

Lighting: Decorative Sconces

SILVER

Acoustics & Privacy: Solutions



SHOW FLOOR INTELLIGENCE

FURNITURE & FINISHES: THE BROADER CONTRACT LANDSCAPE

The furniture and finishes story at NeoCon 2026 is inseparable from the materials story. The show's most successful exhibitors understood that furniture is no longer evaluated in isolation—it is evaluated as part of a **spatial system**.

SEATING & SOFT GOODS

Bouclé, woven fabrics, and textured upholstery dominated across every seating category. The "quiet luxury" aesthetic—warm, refined, tactile but never ostentatious—set the tone. High-backed seating as architectural privacy tool was pervasive: sofas and chairs with sound-absorbing backs creating micro-environments that function as both furniture and acoustic infrastructure. DEDON showcased the high end of woven craft with cocooning outdoor forms that influenced indoor applications throughout the show. Notably, **wireform furniture frames**—chair and table legs reduced to the thinnest possible drawn-in-space wireforms—contrasted deliberately against the plush surfaces they supported. Softness above, line below: generous comfort with the most economical possible structure, lending even heavily upholstered pieces a light, almost sketched quality.

SURFACE MATERIALS & FINISHES

Large-format stone-look panels with minimized grout lines created clean, monolithic wall surfaces. Gradient and ombré color transitions across single wall planes offered depth without pattern complexity. Wood slat cladding systems provided biophilic warmth and acoustic diffusion simultaneously—a best-of-both-worlds surface treatment that specifiers are reaching for consistently. Ceramic and porcelain tiles in rich earth tones appeared in feature applications.

KEY SURFACE SHIFTS

- Matte over gloss
- Warmth over cool
- Texture over pattern
- Curves over angles
- Integration over isolation

DOMINANT MATERIALS

- PET felt (recycled content)
- Natural oak / ash wood
- Bouclé & woven fabrics
- Matte black metal frames
- Cork accent surfaces

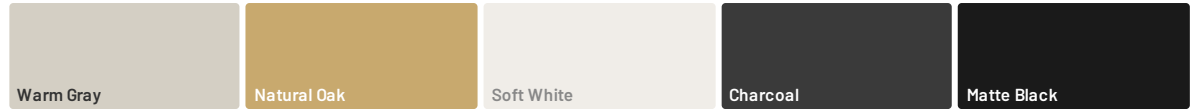
"The key finish shift: matte over gloss, warmth over cool, texture over pattern. Surfaces that absorb light. Surfaces you want to touch."

COLOR DIRECTION FOR SPECIFICATION

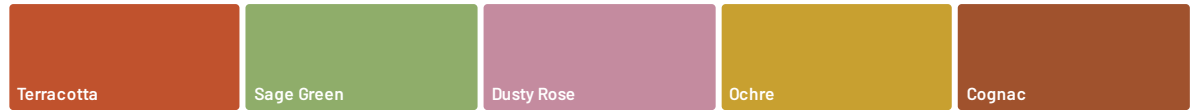
For those making finish specifications in the coming year, here is the aggregate color intelligence from the NeoCon 2026 show floor—distilled from hundreds of booths, hundreds of products, and the industry's most revealing annual marketplace.

"The warm neutrals carry the room. The earth tones define the moment. The jewel tones make the memory."

CORE PALETTE — CARRY THE ROOM



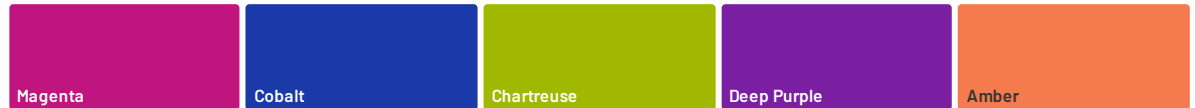
FIRST-TIER ACCENTS — DEFINE THE MOMENT



SECOND-TIER ACCENTS — BUILD THE DEPTH



STATEMENT COLORS — MAKE THE MEMORY (USE SPARINGLY VIA LIGHT)



KEY INSIGHT: *The most sophisticated color story isn't painted — it's projected through programmable RGBW light. One neutral installation, infinite moods.*

WE DIDN'T JUST ATTEND NEOCON— WE SAW OUR DIRECTION.

Arktura's portfolio—SoftGrid®, SoundForm®, our integrated lighting systems, Solutions Studio®, Vapor®—sits at the center of everything the industry is gravitating toward. The show validated every strategic direction we have been building. The category of acoustic lighting is real. The demand for integrated, dimensional, warm systems is not a trend—it is a permanent shift.

Use this dispatch. Share it with your clients. Let it shape your next specification conversation. The industry told us exactly where it is going. We are already there.

