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Features

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Finding Inspiration at the Home Show

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Every March, Chicago's McCormick Place hosts The Inspired Home Show, which the event organizers (the International Housewares Association) boast is "the world's leading home and housewares show." It's worth sitting in traffic and heading into the best city in the world to see how the housewares and décor industry incorporates our products into theirs.



Yes, there's a lot of cookware, stemware, cutlery and kitchen gadgets featured (and more things to drink out of than you can shake a straw at). But there were also some interesting finds this year—a couple I think our IGC friends would find especially interesting. **GP**

Grant Howard had lovely glass canisters and serving ware with sunflowers.



Blue Sky had cactus plant mugs and a slew of pet-related products, including bowls and dishes—for you and your pet!



I stopped at Tag's booth because I saw a little figurine of a cat stretching and thought, "Hey, I just saw those at Wallace's Garden Center last week!" Steve Johnson, who helps Tag with their marketing, told me they know Wallace's well and sell to many garden centers around the country. They not only had figurines, but trinket dishes inspired by flowers, plants and pets.

I LOVED these bowls and cups from Widgeteer, which have real dried flowers molded inside the plastic.



Conimar Group had complete table settings with flowers, including more sunflowers.



The Rationale for Cloud Dancer

As in previous years, Executive Director of the Pantone Color Institute Leatrice "Lee" Eiseman gave a talk about color trends. This year, her presentation theme was "Sense-Abilities—The Most Directional Color & Design Trends." I think of her as the Anna Wintour of color trends and really enjoy her talks.

Lee started her session with: "It's not just the trend, but what's behind it." She tied in color trends with the five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing) and it can be argued that many of the recent Pantone Colors of the Year cover multiple senses.

Lee said she saw Peach Fuzz, the 2024 Color of the Year, used in what she calls "integration in memorable and unexpected ways"—in a variety of textures in clothing and apparel, for instance as a cozy fleece peach blanket. Last year's Mocha Mousse was "a color you could literally taste," said Lee.

And the Color of the Year for 2026, Cloud Dancer, is "something to quiet all the white noise. It's a hushed whisper in a noisy world."
As with Mocha Mousse, there were a lot of, ahem, opinions … about the choice of Cloud Dancer. Some people told Lee that "white is not a color." But she bristles at that.

"White evokes a presence. It's a clean slate—especially with what's going on around us."
Lee said white is the best color for contrast, and 95% of consumers say color is the number one reason they buy a product, so "presentation and color is key."

She showed many examples of white used in multiple ways, from clothing to housewares. White is classic and timeless, and can be used anytime, anywhere, with anything.

She waved off not wearing white after Labor Day as "an old concept." And that we should pay attention to what fashion designers are creating—which right now is a lot of flowy white clothing.

"Fashion always points the finger on where we are going," said Lee.

And in home décor, white is "a stable, dependable choice" in quilting and porcelain, linens and marble, which "expresses purity."
Lee also talked about something a bit closer to home: foliage and greenery. Not everyone has easy access to nature, so they're always looking for it in home décor, even if it's a floral pattern on a dish or leaves on wallpaper.

> “The key to bringing it all together is color,” she said. **GP**