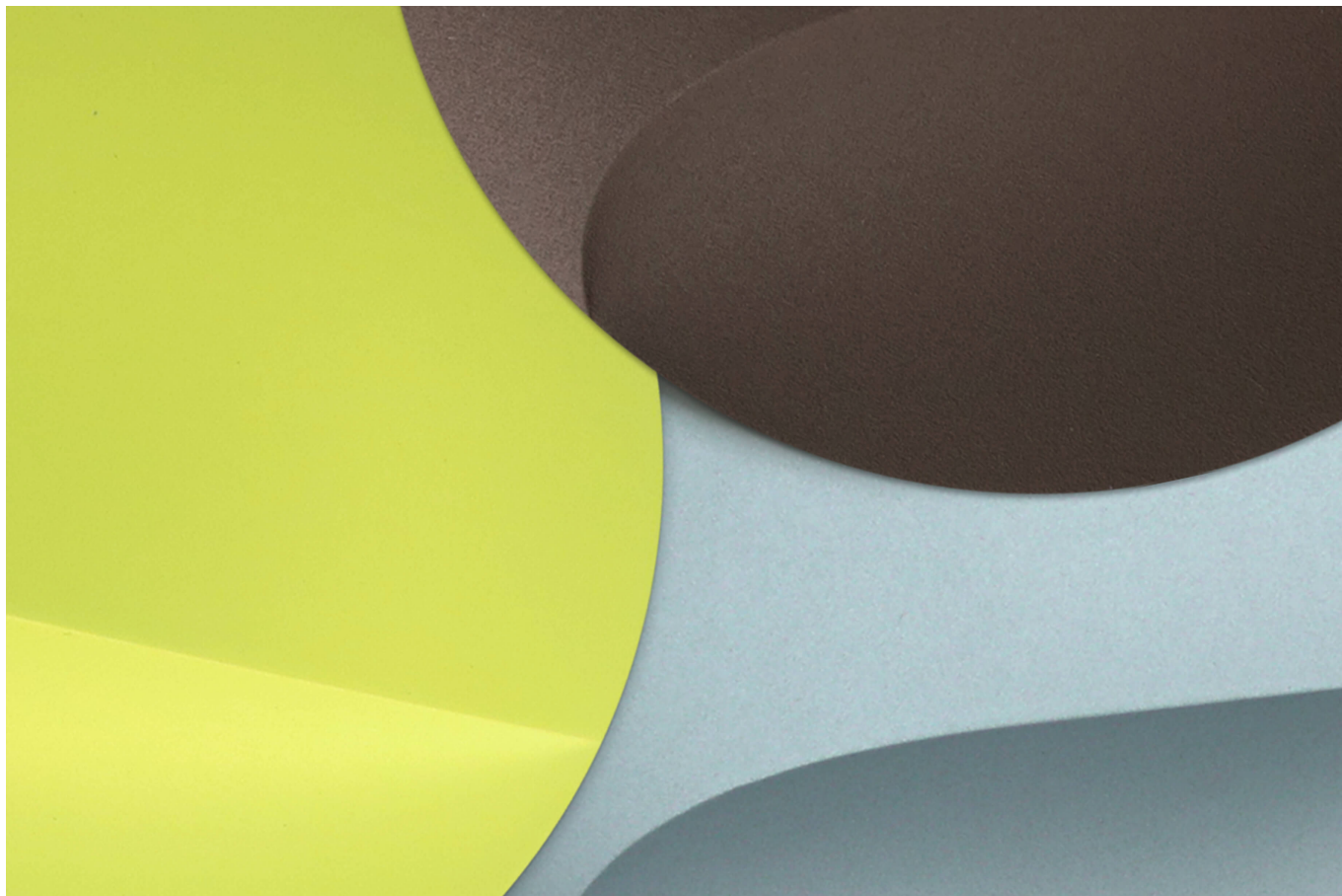


Mankiewicz turns design trends into intention with Colors of the Year

This is a special feature from the February 2026 [Pre-AIX/Middle East Report issue](#) of *PAX Tech*, on [page 30](#).



The 2026 Colors of the Year are Tree House, Ice Water and Sour

As airlines pursue the latest design trends for aircraft interiors, global paint manufacturer [Mankiewicz](#) is making it clear that an impactful design trend should not be short-lived—on the contrary, it is based in reality and has the potential for longevity.

The supplier practices this by responding to ever-evolving political, social and technological changes in the world by announcing “Colors of the Year” annually. For 2026, the hues are Tree House, Ice Water and Sour.

A reflection of global dynamics



Nina Karsten, Head of Design, Mankiewicz

As Nina Karsten, Head of Design, Mankiewicz, tells *PAX Tech*, design trends are no coincidence. They are a direct reflection of the world around us.

“With several years of experience in trends, you learn how colors change over time and how they are classified socially,” she explains.

Karsten says the Mankiewicz team looks at current issues, such as political or social changes with global impact or upcoming events, for cues. Then, they compare those findings with reality.

“What colors did we see at trade fairs? How were the colors combined, what atmosphere did they create and what textures appeared in the context of these colors? We discuss all these questions together as a team and then jointly develop the concept for the Colors of the Year,” she reveals.

With the 2026 Colors of the Year, resilience continues to be a key theme. In this sense, Tree House, Ice Water and Sour are concerned with consistency, clarity and joy.

As for how these color themes reflect current social dynamics, Karsten says, “The world has looked much more peaceful in the past, prosperity seemed less threatened and climate change was not an issue. Now there is a lot at stake and this is noticeable in many places around the world.”

She notes that this is not the first time resilience is being mentioned in this context; the word has been appearing in trend research for years.

“But what does resilience mean in real life? Tree House, Ice Water and Sour tackle this question and highlight the sometimes positive sides of change and reorientation,” Karsten explains.

Translating trends to cabin interiors



An impactful design trend is based in reality and has the potential for longevity

As Mankiewicz brings these color trends to the aircraft cabin, Karsten emphasizes that incorporating Colors of the Year can be part of a timeless cabin interior design, since color trends in aviation, unlike the fashion world, generally do not have an expiration date.

“Surfaces painted with Mankiewicz paints are meant to last for a long period of time. That is also one of the sustainable advantages of paint: painted surfaces look clean and fresh for years. Our team is therefore always looking for colors that are clearly on trend but also work very well over a long period of time,” she explains.

The timeliness comes from the classic yet contemporary bluish silver and subtle brown tones of this year’s Tree House and Ice Water. Karsten calls Sour more “unconventional,” noting it is the kind of accent that can refresh and enhance a design.

“This year’s colors are very well suited to cabin interiors and can be translated by the airlines and aircraft operators to freely individualize BFE parts and components according to their preferences and branding,” she says.

Designing for longevity

With demand for sustainable products comes an expectation that a surface will appeal to many people over a long period. According to Karsten, sustainability can also bring new materials into the conversation, influencing the design of other colors and surfaces.

“Apart from the topic of sustainability, I expect color development to move toward interesting and finely tuned nuances,” she says of her predictions for the next five years. “I expect more striking colors to continue to be used as accent colors in the future.”

To align with emerging passenger expectations for emotional comfort and a sensory experience inflight, she recommends confidence-inspiring, subtle materials and calm, durable colors that people enjoy spending time with. Karsten says design teams and airline decision makers can look to the automotive sector as a source of inspiration.

“In this field too, more and more emphasis is being placed on quality of stay alongside high standards of function and comfort. I can well imagine that there are many clever thoughts and ideas to be found here that can also be transferred to larger format means of transport with a view to future design,” she concludes.