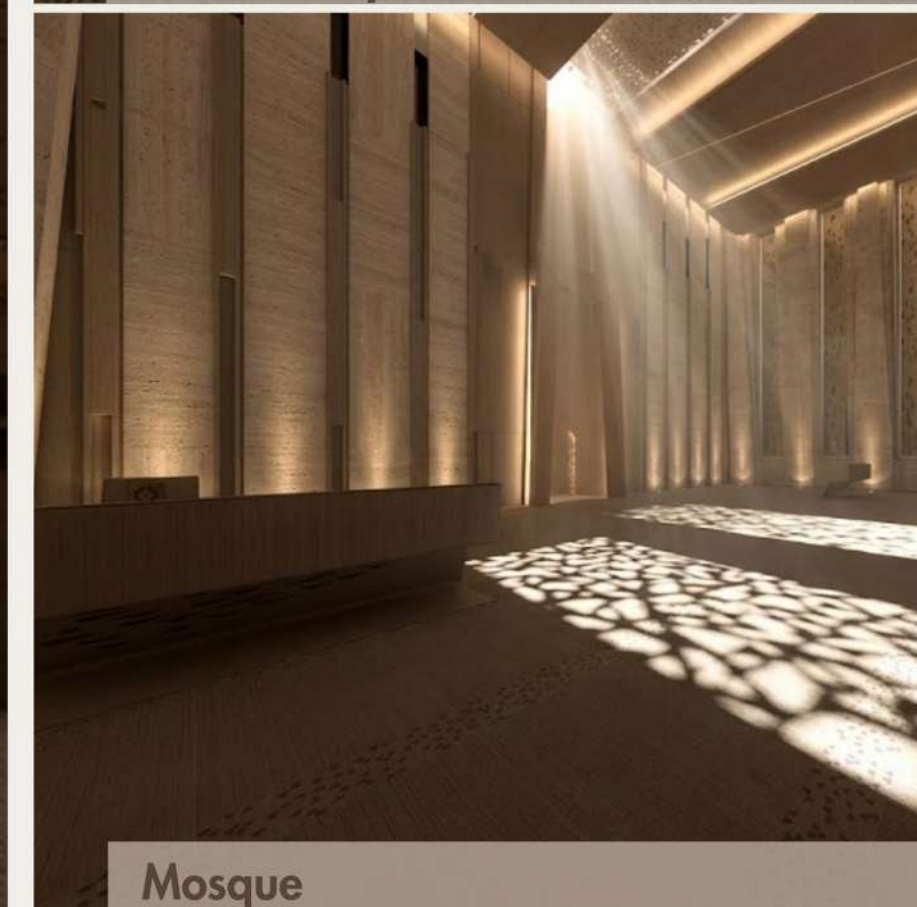




Female Prayer Mezzanine (First Floor)



Mosque



المنارة | AL MANARAH

A Contemporary Mosque as a Center for Worship, Learning, and Community

INTRODUCTION

- This project investigates the transition of the mosque from an ancient social space into a ritualized institution and argues for a new style of interior design: mosques as modern community hubs, retaining its ritual place among us as a space of dialogue, connection, of growth in knowledge together by means of engaging "spaces" being set in spirit the diwanah, a social courtyard and multifunctional learning rooms, beside a mosaic of togetherness how we think.

JUSTIFICATION

- This project was chosen to respond to the growing detachment between people and mosques in modern urban life. In many cities, mosques no longer function as centers for social or educational interaction.
- The concept aligns with Saudi Vision 2030's focus on community development, cultural identity, and wellbeing.
- It addresses contemporary challenges such as loss of identity, lack of reflective spaces, and the need for sustainable, inclusive community centers rooted in Islamic principles.

USERS

- Residents (families, youth, elderly)
- Students of Quran circles and community learners
- Visitors attending lectures or workshops

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

SOCIAL GOALS

- Encourage dialogue, fostering sense of belonging and shared identity, particularly among different generations.
- Provide safe, non-commercial spaces for community engagement, leverage deep social structures of a visited space.
- Support intergenerational modes of interaction.

SPATIAL GOALS

- Create diwanah "rooms" with an authentic "atmosphere".
- Develop flexible "learning" rooms that accommodate for both tradition and form, the modern classroom.
- Develop a shared "knowledge" courtyard suited for social gatherings outdoors.
- Place the "mezzanine" as a symbolic and functional core of the community.

SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

- The project is organized as a sequential journey from public to sacred.
- A welcoming Public Plaza forms the main entrance and anchors community access.
- The Social Space (Diwan) acts as the central core, integrating classrooms, workshops, and study spaces around a shared open court.
- The Knowledge Courtyard serves as the educational core, integrating classrooms, workshops, and study spaces around a shared open court.
- The journey culminates in the Sacred Core, where the prayer hall, women's hall, and ablution areas align with the qibla axis.
- Spatial thresholds and courtyards create a gradient of privacy and guide users through each zone.
- The framework supports the mosque's expanded role as a place for community interaction, learning, and spiritual reflection.

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF THE MOSQUE

Historically, mosques in the Muslim World played the roles of worship and education, governance and law, conflict resolution, and social institutions. In Saudi Arabia, these mosques were closely connected to the majlis/diwanah tradition forming a social ecosystem of sun, courtyard, trees in the shade, a night rest near door where the public would discuss, converse, tell stories, and collectively practice social communion.

DIWAN / DIWANIYAH CULTURE

The diwan is the principal Gulf/Arab cultural space of social gathering that is necessary to invite guests to exchange experiences and stories, conduct negotiations, and establish consensus. Some emotional features include low seating, carpets, warm lighting, and social roastery coffee, etc.

It is this space that is culturally potent and emotionally centering that we must aim to re-introduce to our mosque typology.

RESEARCH-BACKED EVIDENCE ON THE LOSS OF THE MOSQUE-AS-DIWAN ROLE

- Recent scholarship suggests that mosques can regain their social relevance by incorporating diwanah-style social and learning environments into their architectural design, thereby reinvigorating the mosque once again as a community anchor (Ryffelt, 2022).
- In modern urban contexts, the mosque has gradually shifted from a community-centered institution to a predominantly multifunctional space, leading to the loss of informal social interaction and learning environments (Ryffelt, 2022).
- Within the Saudi Arabian context, contemporary mosques no longer operate as neighborhood social hubs, despite their historical role in fostering community cohesiveness and everyday social presence (AlFares, 2018).
- AlFares (2018) attributes this loss in Saudi Arabia to post-war urban development, car-oriented planning, and the separation of social life from religious architecture, which reduced the mosque's role as a diwanah-like space.
- The decline of the mosque's social function is not theological, but rather architectural and programmatic, as many modern mosques lack spaces that support dialogue, learning, and community gathering beyond prayer (Pleasant, 2016; Ryffelt, 2022).

Urbanization Under Mosque's Social Role

Urbanization leads to the loss of social interaction and learning environments.

SITE PRELIMINARY STUDY

Proposed Site: King Salman Park, Riyadh

- Justification: King Salman Park is one of the largest urban parks globally and a flagship Vision 2030 project. It is designed as a cultural, recreational, and social condenser for Riyadh, attracting diverse users throughout the day.

Urban Context & Surroundings

- Immediate Context: Museums, cultural pavilions, performance venues, sports and recreational facilities, cafes, walking trails, shaded places.
- Urban Character: Open, green, horizontal landscape, strong pedestrian dominance, visual connectivity with the main built mass.

Accessibility & Movement

- Public Access: Primary access from park walkways, continuous pedestrian flow (families, joggers, tourists, students).
- Vehicular Access: Peripheral roads only, drop-off zones possible but no visual dominance of cars.
- Public Transport: Future metro/bus integration (Vision 2030 planning).

Cultural & Symbolic Value

- King Salman Park represents: National renewal, Cultural openness, Evolving Saudi identity.

SITE ANALYSIS

Sun Path & Solar Exposure:

- The site experiences intense solar radiation, especially from the south and west.
- East and west facades are exposed to harsh low-angle sunlight.
- Design implications: Maximize large openings on east and west facades, use shading devices, deep overhangs, louvers, or screens, orient main interior spaces to benefit from controlled daylight rather than direct sun.
- Proper orientation helps balance daylight while preventing overheating.

Climate Classification:

- Riyadh falls under a hot and climate.
- This climate is defined by: Extremely hot summers, Low humidity, Large temperature differences between day and night.
- According to Building Site Conditions principles, hot and climates require strategies that reduce solar heat gain and create cooler microclimates.

Wind:

- Prevailing winds in Riyadh are generally north-northwest, stronger in the afternoon.
- Wind comes dust and sand, which affects air quality.
- Design implications: Controlled openings instead of fully exposed facades, use courtyards or semi-enclosed spaces to allow filtered natural ventilation, avoid placing air intakes near pedestrian or service zones.

Oblique Direction:

- Qibla Angle: 243.88°

CONCEPT & INSPIRATION

Al-Manarah reinterprets the mosque as a place where worship, knowledge, and contemplation coexist, reviving its historic role as a center for spiritual reflection, remembrance (dhikr), and learning. Guided by the symbolism of light as a source of guidance, the design uses natural light, spatial transitions, and quiet courtyards to create a journey from the public realm toward spaces of stillness and prayer. Rooted in the principles of Najdi architectural heritage, such as inward-oriented courtyards, shaded passages, and simple, grounded forms, the mosque reimagines these elements in a contemporary language. Located within King Salman Park, the project becomes a calm spiritual anchor in the landscape, offering a place where visitors can gather, reflect, and reconnect with faith and knowledge.

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

DESIGN TRANSLATION

Form & Geometry

- Straight, disciplined lines and angular geometries inspired by traditional Najdi architecture.
- Clear edges and structured forms create a sense of order, stability, and spatial clarity.
- Repetitive linear patterns and triangular compositions guide movement with rhythm and architectural direction.

Light Strategy

- Diffused natural daylight
- Soft lighting gradients that enhance tranquility
- Even distribution of light to support focus and contemplation

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

CIRCULATION ANALYSIS

- Knowledge Circulation → Library, Hologram, and Classes
- Sacred / Prayer Circulation → Main Prayer Hall
- Social Circulation → Majlis and Cafe
- Female Circulation → Female Zones

MOSQUE HISTORY BENCHMARK TABLE

Benchmark Phase	Time Period	Role of the Mosque	Spatial Characteristics	Built / Real Examples	Project Visual	Key Takeaway for Project
Early Islamic Mosque	7th Century	Worship, learning, consultation, social gathering	Open prayer space, courtyard-based, flexible use	Prophet's Mosque (6th phase)		Mosque functioned as a social and civic street
Traditional Islamic City	Pre-modern era	Worship + education + community interaction	Courtyards, fountains, adjacent majlis spaces	Al-Azhar Mosque		Mosque acted as an educational and social anchor
Modern Mosque Typology	20th Century	Primarily ritual worship	Monumental prayer halls, rigid zoning	Typical neighborhood mosques (Saudi / Gulf cities)		Loss of social and civic functions
Contemporary Reinterpretation	Late 20th - 21st Century	Worship + learning + limited community use	Clear zoning, courtyards, educational spaces	Samaritan Mosque		Reconstruction of spatial journey and reflection
Community-Oriented Mosques	21st Century	Worship + community + learning	Campus-like layout, social and learning zones	Nora Mosque & Community Center		Mosque as an active community hub
Large-Scale Hybrid Complexes	21st Century	Worship + culture + education	Monumental core with supporting facilities	Camelia Mosque Complex		Programmatic integration at a city scale

BRAND IDENTITY AND CUSTOM PIECES

UNIVERSAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

1. Entry Navigation

- Clear access entrance
- Clear walking direction
- Comfortable distance waiting
- Clear area for reflection

2. Prayer Experience

- Clear lighting and natural comfort
- Shaded entrance paths
- Accessible distance waiting
- Clear walking direction
- Clear signage for waiting
- Accessible distance waiting
- Clear signage

3. Gender-Specific Spaces

- Men's:
 - Clear study areas
 - Access to books and knowledge
 - Flexible learning zones
 - Clear signage
- Women's:
 - Clear zoning, courtyards, educational spaces
 - Clear walking direction
 - Accessible distance waiting
 - Clear signage for waiting
 - Accessible distance waiting
 - Clear signage

4. Social Interaction

- Public interaction
- Comfortable women's prayer spaces
- Learning zones for children
- Clear signage
- Clear walking direction
- Women's prayer area with good visibility
- Clear signage for Quran learning
- Clear signage

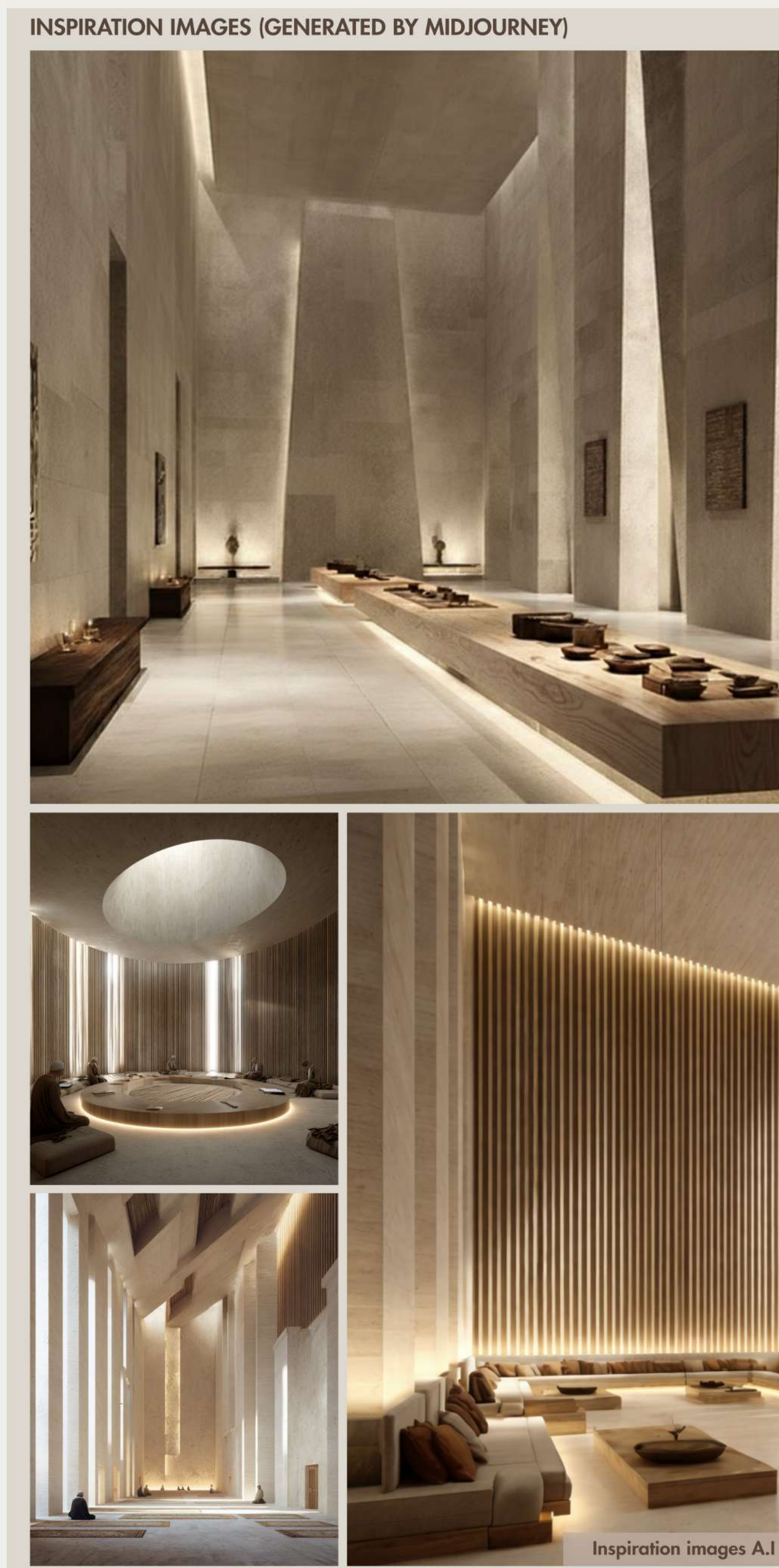
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
- 4 QUALITY EDUCATION
- 11 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
- 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
- 13 CLIMATE ACTION

KING SALMAN URBAN CHARTER

- AUTHENTICITY: Contemporary interpretation of Najdi architecture, Saudi identity integrated into modern design.
- HUMAN SCALE: Comfortable and emotionally engaging spaces, User-centered spatial experience.
- CONTINUITY: Connecting heritage with contemporary architecture.
- ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY: Sustainable materials, Natural lighting and passive strategies.
- QUALITY OF LIFE: Supporting spiritual and social well-being.

MATERIAL CALLOUTS



APPLIED ACOUSTIC STRATEGY

Applied Acoustic Treatment / Sound System	Function	Purpose in the Mosque
Micro-perforated Acoustic Panels	Sound absorption	Reduce reverberation and improve speech intelligibility in the main prayer hall.
Parametric Diffusive Ceiling	Sound diffusion	Break sound reflections and prevent local echoes.
Acoustic Carpet + Underlay	Mid-frequency absorption	Absorb reflected sound and reduce footstep noise.
Beam-Speaking Speakers	Directed sound distribution	Deliver clear sound directly to worshippers while minimizing echo.
HYAC Silencers	Noise control	Reduce background mechanical noise levels.
Double Wall System (STC 55+)	Sound insulation	Prevent sound transmission between the majlis and prayer spaces.
Acoustic Doors with Seals	Acoustic isolation	Minimize sound leakage through openings.
Textured Najdi Walls	Sound diffusion	Scatter reflected sound while preserving the Saudi aesthetic.
Controlled Water Features	Ambient sound balancing	Reduce harsh reflections and create a calming acoustic atmosphere.
Dynamic Occupancy Mapping (AI DSP)	Adaptive sound optimization	Automatically adjust sound levels based on occupancy density.

MOOD BOARD

Guided Light

Organic Najdi Contemporary

Material Palette

- Light stone and mineral finishes
- Soft brushed concrete
- Warm-toned indirect lighting
- Perforated surfaces to diffuse light

Materials are selected for their ability to absorb, reflect, and soften light, reinforcing calm and spatial depth.

BUBBLE DIAGRAM

USED ORNAMENTS

AL MANARAH — PROMO VIDEO

USED ORNAMENTS

AL MANARAH — PROMO VIDEO