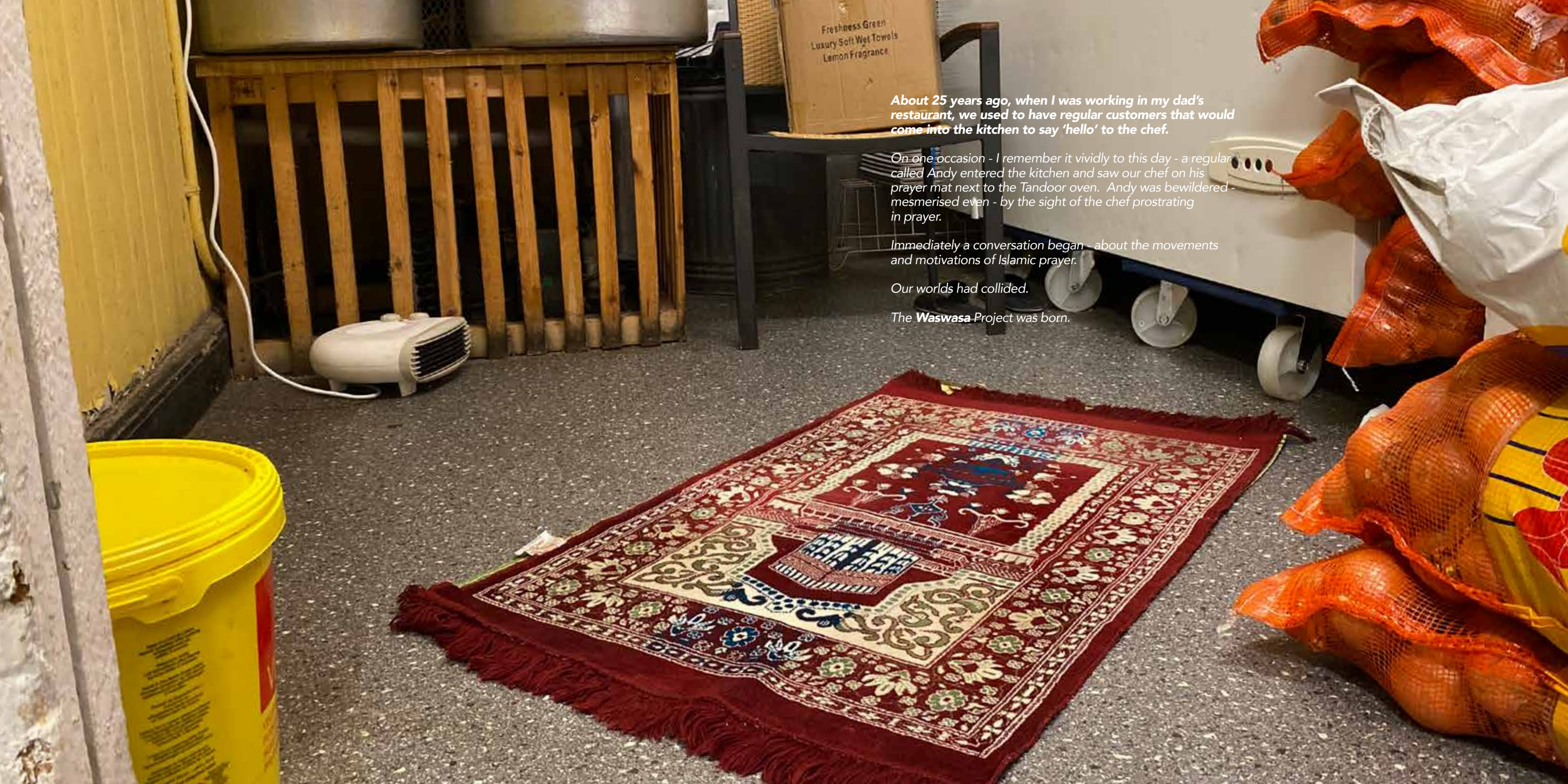


WAS WASA





About 25 years ago, when I was working in my dad's restaurant, we used to have regular customers that would come into the kitchen to say 'hello' to the chef.

On one occasion - I remember it vividly to this day - a regular called Andy entered the kitchen and saw our chef on his prayer mat next to the Tandoor oven. Andy was bewildered - mesmerised even - by the sight of the chef prostrating in prayer.

Immediately a conversation began - about the movements and motivations of Islamic prayer.

Our worlds had collided.

*The **Waswasa** Project was born.*



As the daily distractions of modern society consume us, many seek out the elusive 'flow state' - through meditation, sport, music, art - or worship.

Can we draw parallels between acts of personal faith and our quest to achieve a higher state of focus?

Are they one and the same?

... I seek refuge in The Lord ...

... from the mischief of the evil whisperer ...

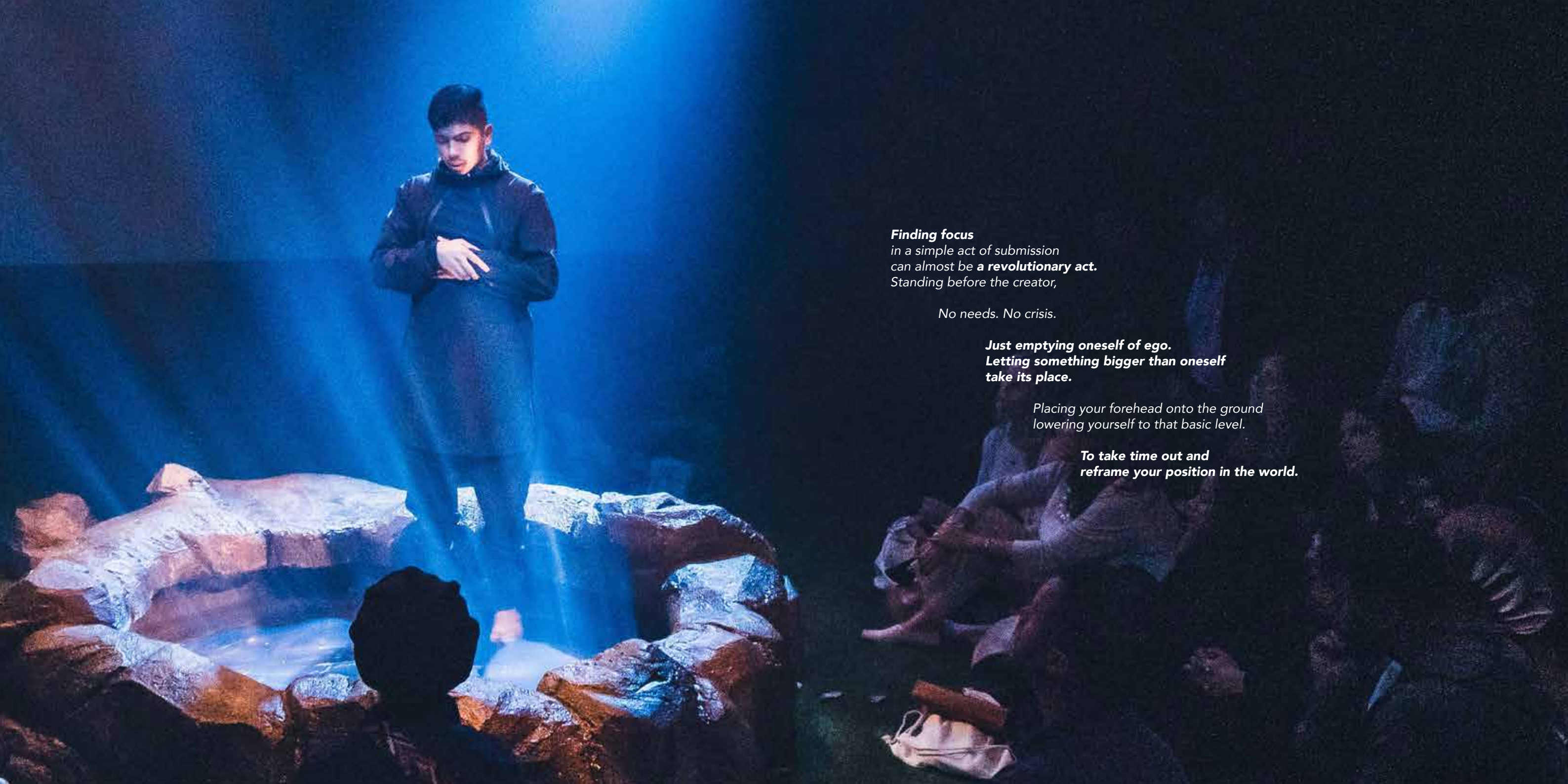
*... **who whispers into the hearts of mankind** ...*

Qur'an 114:1-6



In Islam, the term Waswasa (Arabic وسوس) refers to "whispers," and is most often used to refer to doubts and temptations. It is commonly believed that Satan and his minions tempt Muslims to sin and weaken their faith through doubt.





Finding focus

in a simple act of submission
can almost be **a revolutionary act.**
Standing before the creator,

No needs. No crisis.

**Just emptying oneself of ego.
Letting something bigger than oneself
take its place.**

Placing your forehead onto the ground
lowering yourself to that basic level.

**To take time out and
reframe your position in the world.**

The prayer mat. This bit of carpet.
Textile made by humans. Manufactured by hand.
Takes our limbs 5 times a day.
Forehead. Fingers. Knees and toes. Knees and toes.

My mums prayer mat - got worn out so much.
Where her forehead used to land, and her palms -
Literally there were holes in those places.
I wish I kept that prayer mat.
They say that people who have a dark
mark on their foreheads are blessed.
All that prostrating, head onto the floor.
That's how the holes appear.

Everyone has these prayer mats folded away nicely.
People take them to work.
Fold them out on top of the carpet.
Some people just pray straight onto carpet, say 'no need'.
But I like the prayer mat -
The softness of it when your head goes down.

**Gives me comfort -
An almost 'out of this world' kind of comfort.**





The physical act of prayer now extends beyond religious spaces to our parks and city-squares; it spills over into the everyday world. It is even visible in sports arenas with athletes, such as the footballer Mo Salah, prostrating to the ground or raising hands to the sky in moments of triumph.

Waswasa is a combination of live performances as well as filmed sequences. A number of films were shot in locations that included an Indian Restaurant, a warehouse and a motorway service station. We also filmed in locations around the world for the **The Global Call** film.

Filmed in 2020 we sent out camera-crew to capture reciters of the traditional Muslim call to prayer, **Adhan**, set against the backdrops of six global cities: New York, Birmingham, Kuala Lumpur, Melbourne, Cardiff, Cape Town and Toronto.

WATCH THE
GLOBAL CALL FILM





WATCH THE PRAYER
MAT EVENT FILM



Prayers are usually a private matter - between ourselves and our maker - they are hidden from public view.

When we scribe our personal thoughts and ideas for others to visualise, something extraordinary happens.

Waswasa gave an opportunity for the Birmingham Muslim community to share their hopes, dreams and visions. Over a period of a few months in our studio, we collected these thoughts onto hundreds of painted prayer mats - which were installed in the prayer mat tunnel at the entrance of the Waswasa exhibition.

Never before had the community shared such intimate thoughts and feelings for others to see.



During the development phase of Waswasa, partner organisation Guildhall Live Events [Guildhall School of Music & Drama] invited us to use the impressive extended-reality screens from IMAG.

This high tech platform allowed us to tell the story of prayer, by immersing our actors in alternate 3D modelled realities - such as the Cave of Hira, where the Qur'an was first revealed.

**WATCH THE
EXTENDED
REALITIES FILM**





Hamza Ali

"Waswasa is where the epic meets the everyday. It may speak to you, challenge you, surprise you. It may feel like home or completely alien. Come along and experience Waswasa and you'll find out for yourself."

Hamza's work innovatively integrates physical performance with musical and textual scores. Since completing his MA in Movement from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

Recent credits include projects at the Barbican and Camden People's Theatre, as well as movement direction and teaching as a National Youth Theatre associate artist.



Mustafa Chaudhry

"Waswasa brings together so creative facets; live performance, voice-over work, multimedia, cinematography, physical interaction with an audience, this is such an exciting show for me. When people visit an exhibition they're stimulated by what's on offer, but combining this with a performance - as in Waswasa - is so different."

Mustafa is an actor and performer who trained at Rose Bruford College and the National Youth Theatre. He toured nationally, in a lead role in Lung Theatre's Amnesty Award-winning Play 'Trojan Horse'.

Mohammed Ali

A street-artist who empowers people, Ali's work often celebrates community narratives of faith and migration. For nearly two decades, he has created murals, art installations, live performances and film projects encouraging people to look objectively into each others lives.

Through immersive theatrical events, he has enabled inspirational and transformative experiences for disparate audiences the world over; From the streets of New York, Amsterdam, London, Cape Town and Melbourne, to performances in The Vatican.

His work serves as a bridge; aiming to reunite communities that have, in recent times, become increasingly polarised and divided along lines of culture, faith and ethnicity.

In 2008 Ali established Soul City Arts, a creative organisation embedded firmly in his beloved home city of Birmingham, yet working nationally and internationally. He is also an educator and speaker; often advocating on the power of art in healing and growth.





BIRMINGHAM 2022 FESTIVAL
PRESENTS

WASWASA

The Team

Matt Reeves works extensively in feature film, television and theatre, Matt brings all of his experience through digital illustration, scenic painting and production design to Waswasa. Matt has worked closely with Mohammed for over a decade.

Rajpal Pardesi is a senior arts professional with a highly successful background in Dance, Theatre, Music and Festivals spanning 25 years. He joined Soul City Arts at a pivotal stage for the organisation and played a key role in the Birmingham 2022 Festival Commission, Waswasa.

Hassan Mahamdallie is a playwright and director. He is a former Director of the Muslim Institute, he is senior editor on its journal Critical Muslim. Hassan is the founder of theatre company Dervish Productions whose new play Quiet Rebels tours nationwide this autumn, which also has been supported by Mohammed Ali with its film content

Anna Watkins is a choreographer, director and movement director. She has toured her company Watkins Dance Company across the UK & Internationally. Anna is humbled and excited to be working with Soul City Arts on 'Waswasa' as Movement Director.

Helga Henry is a skilled leader of groups, event host and speaker, Helga is a specialist in bringing strategy to life by building communication skills and confidence. She provides essential support to Soul City Arts as a board member and development consultant.

Jack Baggott has a wealth of experience in the world of theatre, spanning sound design and composition, alongside an ability to compose, mix and master music.

Simon Bond is now a freelance lighting designer after many years at Birmingham Repertory Theatre. He has previously worked with Soul City Arts on the 'Writing on the Wall' show in 2009 at the The REP.

Jonathan Samuels designed and managed several permanent installations of technical infrastructure in theatres, schools, event spaces and churches. His career spans many years as a creative Lighting Designer, Production Manager, Trainer and Technician.

Manpreet Darroch is a radio host and youth engagement and communications specialist, Manpreet designs and develops artistic programmes that explore arts and social justice. He has been a key team member of Soul City Arts for over a decade.

James Hodkinson is a Reader in German Studies at the University of Warwick. His research specialism is Islam in European history and culture. He works at connecting academia meaningfully with society through arts and outreach programmes. James has been a key partner in developing Waswasa, especially in preparation for a tour in Australia.

Artistic Director & Creator

Mohammed Ali

Cast

Hamza Ali

Mustafa Chaudhry

Production Team

Art & Production Design | Matt Reeves

Executive Director | Rajpal Pardesi

Director | Hassan Mahamdallie

Movement Director | Anna Watkins

Marketing & Comms | Manpreet Darroch

Production Manager | Jonathan Samuels

Lighting Designer | Simon Bond

Production Consultant | Stuart Leech

Production Advancing | Milorad Zakula

Sound Designer | Clive Meldrum

Stage Manager | Laura Stone

Assistant Stage Manager | Shuayb Zaman

Lighting Assistant | Luis Callendar

CAD Designer | Ebrahim Nazier

Set Build | Seedbed Studios

Fabricators | Floating Traders

Scenic Painter | Graham Kershaw

Production Assistant | Max Reeves

Production Assistant | Finn Reeves

Commissioned By

The Birmingham 2022 Festival

In Association With

The Birmingham Hippodrome

Guildhall Live Events

Guildhall School of Music & Drama

University of Birmingham

University of Warwick

Film Team

Lead Video | Salshan Cinematography

Video Support | Salman H

Film Support | John Bradburn

Editing | Mohammed Ali

Musical Team

Lead Composer | Jack Baggott [UK]

Music Support | Shoummo Saha [Bangladesh]

Vocalist | Ilyas Mao [Canada]

Vocalist | Muadh Dzulkefly [Malaysia]

Vocalist | Faisal Salah [London]

Community Engagement

Sofia Ayub

Hikmah Muhammad

Zobia Arif

Rashid Campbell

Shale Ahmed

Marketing & PR Support

Jack Arts

Build Hollywood

Dee McCourt [Borkowski]

Radio XL

Islam Channel

Catering

Munayam Khan [Raja Monkey]

Thanks

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

AMAL

Green Lane Mosque

Dilshad Restaurant

Latif's Cash & Carry

Helga Henry

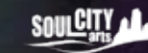
Ishaac Mohammed

Rashid Campbell


Councillor Waseem Zaffar

Jonnie Turpie

IMAG



Guildhall Live Events



The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said:

“Whoever does not thank people... has not thanked Allah.”

Sunan Abi Dawud 4811 (English Translation) Book 42, Hadith 4793

Giving Thanks

We appreciate all of those who helped to make Waswasa happen. It is a dream made reality with the help of our team and the entire community.

We wish to thank the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games for supporting **Waswasa** and sharing the vision. Special thanks to Martin Green and Raidene Carter for their early and ongoing support.

The University of Birmingham, University of Warwick, and Guildhall School of Music & Drama have also offered invaluable support. We truly appreciate the opportunity to welcome these academic powerhouses into our world, and look forward to building with them in the future.

Our new studio and production base in the heart of Sparkbrook was made possible with the support of Birmingham City Council, in particular the efforts of Councillor Waseem Zaffar. Beyond the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, our space will continue to serve the community, bringing arts to the people every day.

To conclude we wish to thank the community that gathered weekly and offered their prayers to us - We appreciate your generosity in sharing these personal dreams and reflections.

Waswasa was made for the community. The voice of the community is the foundation of this show, and more broadly, at the very heart of what we do at Soul City Arts. Our approach places people at the top of everything we do: valuing, respecting and honouring the community.

Thank you,

Jazak Allahu Khayran - May God reward you with goodness

Mohammed Ali

Artist & Founder of Soul City Arts



Growing up in Britain, a son of Bangladeshi migrants, I'd forever be 'code-switching.'

By day, you play footie with mates at school and eat your greens in the dinner hall. After school you're in the mosque learning Arabic to read the Qur'an, and eating curry at home.

Many of those of my generation - born in the UK, but with roots thousands of miles away - understand what I'm talking about: You leave your culture and your faith outside the school gates, and just do your best to blend in with everyone else.

Somehow we were just expected to work things out by ourselves. Generally it worked. We came out of our close-knit communities and entered school, university, the workplace... peoples of differing cultures and faiths... Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish... we got along; observing with curiosity one another's differences from afar.

Then negative incidents around the world began to change things. Communities became more and more segregated. Neighbours became strangers.

We became nervous to say things to one another out of fear of causing offense. Very rarely were there safe spaces for us to ask those burning questions. Society just didn't have places where such conversations could take place.

This is why **Waswasa** is so important. It brings important questions to the fore... questions that usually go unasked and unanswered.

Through art, we are able to say the un-sayable. Through art, stories that were previously inaccessible and unheard, are now told in novel ways, in new venues, to untouched audiences. Through art, Islamic prayer can be demystified, expanded, dissected... and narratives that were misappropriated or misrepresented, will be reclaimed.

Mohammed Ali
Creator & Artistic Director
Waswasa



WATCH THE
WASWASA
LAUNCH FILM

