Decentralizing the Creative Process: Asim Waqif

Asim Waqif: It was a really open-ended project. And because I had no pressure from the client, I would just try whatever I wanted, and whatever the team wanted. And out of that, of course there was hierarchy – some things worked and some things didn't work. So maybe 40-50% of the things we tried we discarded – we didn't use it.

Of the idol itself, I was not so experienced with human forms and animal forms. I actually invited an origami artist from Vietnam to make the idol out of origami paper. Also a mural artist who I invited to do some imagery.

This is actually the entrance we put in – you can see there are lights at the floor for steps. At all places we had vibration sensors and weight sensors, so counting the number of people who are going in and how frequently they are going in. So the system is very integrated, so if there are very few people, it is very reactive – small things yield large results. There is a lot of variation in the number of people. In the evening sometimes there are hundreds of thousands of people – queues of thousands of people standing to go in, and we have to look at the number of people going in. When there is that kind of a rush, we didn't want the sensors to become triggered too often, as then the overall system would become harder to trigger. Fewer people, it would be easier to trigger.

These are some details of the ceiling. I am just playing with very simple lighting – all yellow lights, which I did on my own.

This is my team – it was my most satisfying project in terms of teamwork. You know the hierarchy that is there in most creative fields. The creative industry is a bit strange in that the designers and architect are sitting on this high pedestal and giving out these ideas of how things should be designed, while the person who is making it has pressure is with the contract and so innovation takes a backseat onsite. There could be exceptions, but generally speaking I find the designer is very far from the end user and fabricator. While if you look at vernacular practice, there is a very close link between the maker, the designer, the fabricator, the user – they are all in the same group, doing things for each other. So there is a very different understanding of how things should be made and how things should be used.