

Thought-provoking art installation Welcome2Flatland by [sharmilla ganesan](#)



Welcome2Flatland, a public art installation at Publika, Solaris Dutamas, by arts company TerryandTheCuz.

Technology meets art in a public art installation that grapples with some important themes.

Public art installations require a delicate balancing act, with accessibility on one side and artistic merit on the other. After all, placing one's work in a public space means it needs to attract and appeal to anyone and everyone, while also engaging them on a deeper level.

Welcome2Flatland by arts company TerryandTheCuz (in collaboration with Australian company The Rubix Cube) is a public art installation that manages to do this quite successfully, thanks to its high level of interactivity and, dare I say, even fun.

With a motion-activated wall of light bulbs, sound-activated coloured lights, and surprises around each corner, it seems to take its inspiration at least in part from a funhouse – the children running around shouting at walls and waving their arms were certainly a testament to this.

Those paying attention, however, will notice that *Welcome2Flatland* is more disturbing than entertaining, which is natural when you consider the source material: the 1884 satirical novella *Flatland* by Edwin A. Abbott, which is set in a flat world inhabited by geometric shapes indoctrinated to think their world is all there is.



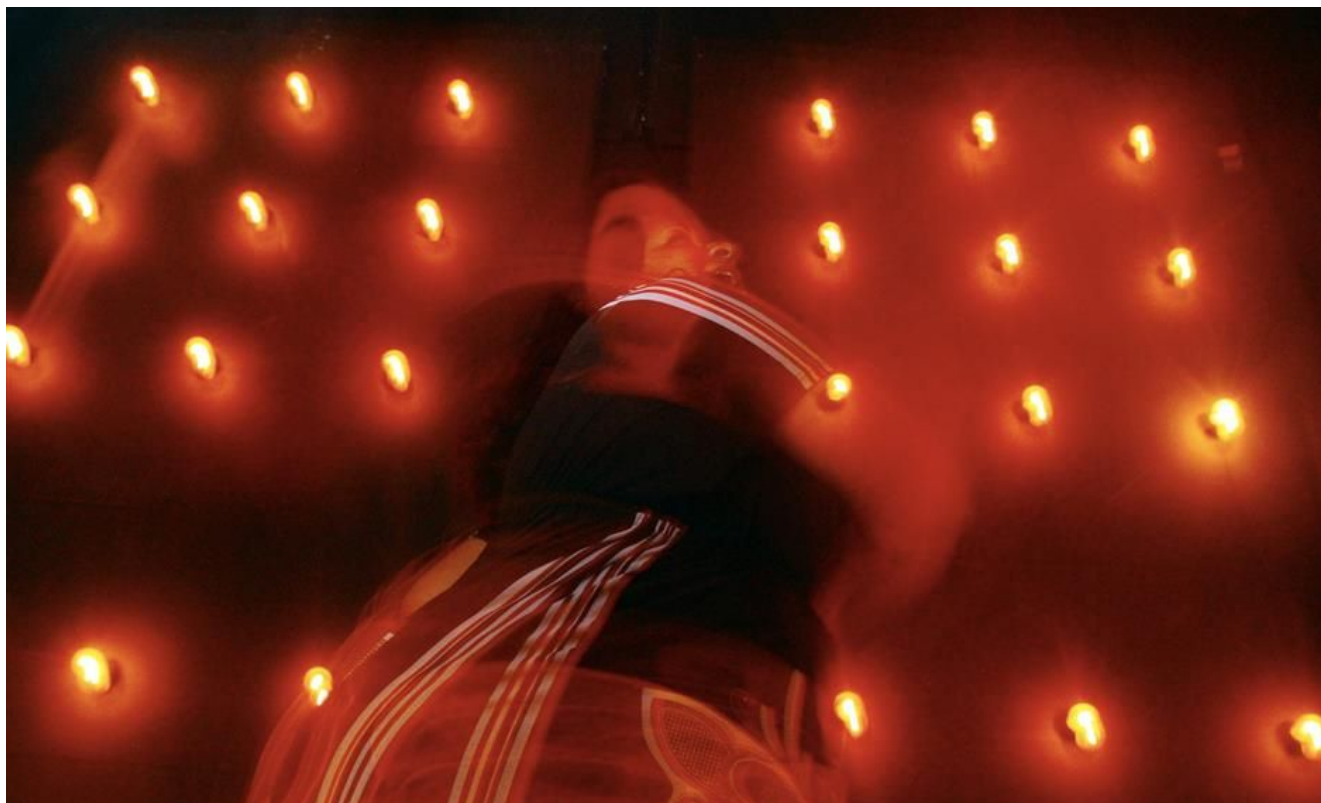
The crux of the story is a “square” discovering the existence of other dimensions, and how those in power deal with the voices of dissent that follow.

TerryandTheCuz co-founder The Cuz (as he prefers to be known) says such accessibility is very important to them.

“This was an opportunity for us to display our work to a range of audience that we would never be able to otherwise. The incorporation of technology into our work has always been our forte, and in the case of *Welcome2Flatland*, we’ve done a lot with light and sound. These elements really attract people, and if you can design things around them cleverly enough, you’ve really got something,” he says.

Seeking out collaborations with German technical planning outfit Klee, local projection artistes MotioFixo and Epson for their projection solutions, therefore, helped give the installation that cutting-edge feel they sought.

Coming from a performing arts background (their previous projects include *My Lingam Speaks*, *Klue,Doh!* and *The Bee Project*), TerryandTheCuz’s foray into visual arts was unplanned.



While working on contemporary dance show *Flatland: An Adaptation In Dance*, they were invited to be a part of arts and music festival Urbanscapes, which led to them developing an arts installation based on the same novel. This caught the attention of the Youth and Sports Ministry, and the installation was re-imagined for the Festival Belia Putrajaya last year.

Now, at the request of Publika in Kuala Lumpur, they are presenting the most fully-realised version of *Welcome2Flatland*.

“There has been a real evolution in what happens with the installation from the first to this one. The shift has really been from a passive installation that people walked through to an active one, where you can not only interact with the work, but your responses actually affect and become a part of it,” The Cuz explains.

Indeed, *Welcome2Flatland* (happening till Dec 28) is best experienced with an open mind, trying and absorbing all the various aspects of it as you walk through. Dealing with issues of social hierarchies, authoritarian regimes, surveillance and control of information, the novel remains very relevant today, but prior knowledge of the book isn't necessary.

And while the creators have placed explanations on the book at various points, these aren't essential to understanding the themes of the installation – in fact, the overly-wordy text sometimes anchors the work to the novel too much instead of simply allowing it to speak for itself.

The installation evokes the issues and emotions of the novel by creating a visual, experiential interpretation of its major themes, with five distinct sections – This World, Chromatic Sedition, Enlightenment, Hall Of Dissenters and Police State – each using different techniques and technology.