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Ritual Fire at Virtual Stonehenge

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This poster paper presents the creation and testing of ritual fires at a virtual Stonehenge site. This interdisciplinary research project drew together expertise from subject areas including 3D modelling, animation, digital arts, music technology and ethnography to begin to reconstruct and visualise the stone circle and Stonehenge site using traditional archive data methods combined with contemporary digital tools and technologies. The researchers are providing collaborative evidence of their methods to demonstrate how virtual models can be used to see, think, interpret and analyse monuments, ritual sites and their uses. The animation accompanying this poster can be viewed on Youtube which demonstrates how a phenomenological and experiential exploration of a site, might provide archaeologists, historians and heritage visitors with non-destructive interactive experiences and new interpretative possibilities for visitors.

The main focus of this paper is to show ongoing research on adding physical environmental effects in particular fire to begin to reconstruct representations of ritual practice at Stonehenge. The researchers ask what can be learned by researchers being involved in virtual reconstructions, what insights can be gained by exploring a reconstructed site virtually. The research investigates the advantages and difficulties of an interdisciplinary approach for the project being carried out within a creative arts context rather than within archaeology. The importance of the collaborative relationships between professionals from Art, 3D Design, and Music technology become increasingly apparent as the project evolves accumulating the data which has begun to shape the discussion within a theoretical framework.

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