

ICONIC VIRTUALITY

Uluru, the World Heritage-listed site in central Australia has been a spiritual icon for the indigenous people of the island continent for over 60,000 years and a focus for white man's tourism for a mere 160 years. It is a formidable sandstone mass, 9 kilometres around and emerges ominously from the flat desert plains with equal parts majesty and menace.

As a matter of respect for the spiritual sensibilities of the original 'owners' of the land, they prefer that tourists do not attempt the climb "The Rock" but despite this, thousands of tourists each year continue to desecrate this most sacred of Aboriginal sites. Local information literature states: *"The climb is not prohibited, but we prefer that, as a guest on Anangu land, you will choose to respect our law and culture by not climbing."*

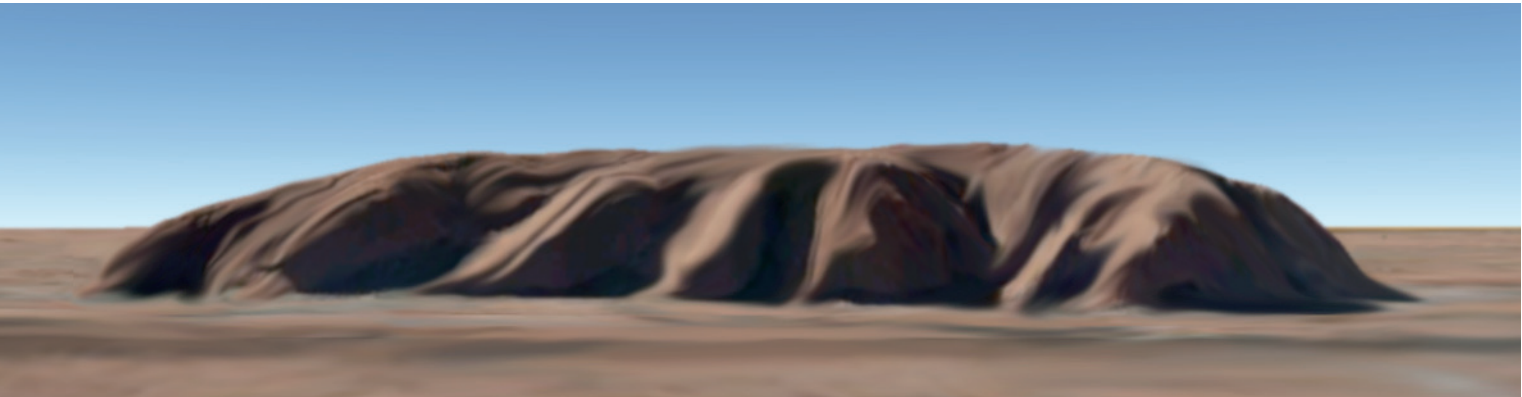


A proposal is offered for a solution to the problem of the over-popularization of this iconic monolith and that is to virtually cause it to disappear. If the massive rock formation is not readily visible from any approachable direction, the continued desecration of this precious spiritual site may begin to wane and its sanctification may begin to be restored.

It is proposed that a triangular glass wall be constructed to encompass the immediate realm of the rock massif. This monumental glass edifice will be composed of polycarbonate electrochromic material that, with the introduction of a significant electrical charge to the embedded metal hydrides within the glass, will cause a transition that creates a reflective face instead of a light absorbent, by switching between a transparent state when they are off to a reflective state when a voltage is applied.

Consequently from sunrise to sunset the enormous rock will be rendered virtually invisible. The resultant reflected image that is seen will be that of the surrounding landscape which is consistently flat and of low-lying vegetation, emulating the view to the opposite horizon.

The electrical charge required for the operation is sourced from an additional lamination of photovoltaic emulsion on the surface of the glass. The required voltage to cause the switch from a transparent to a reflective surface is relatively insignificant in respect to

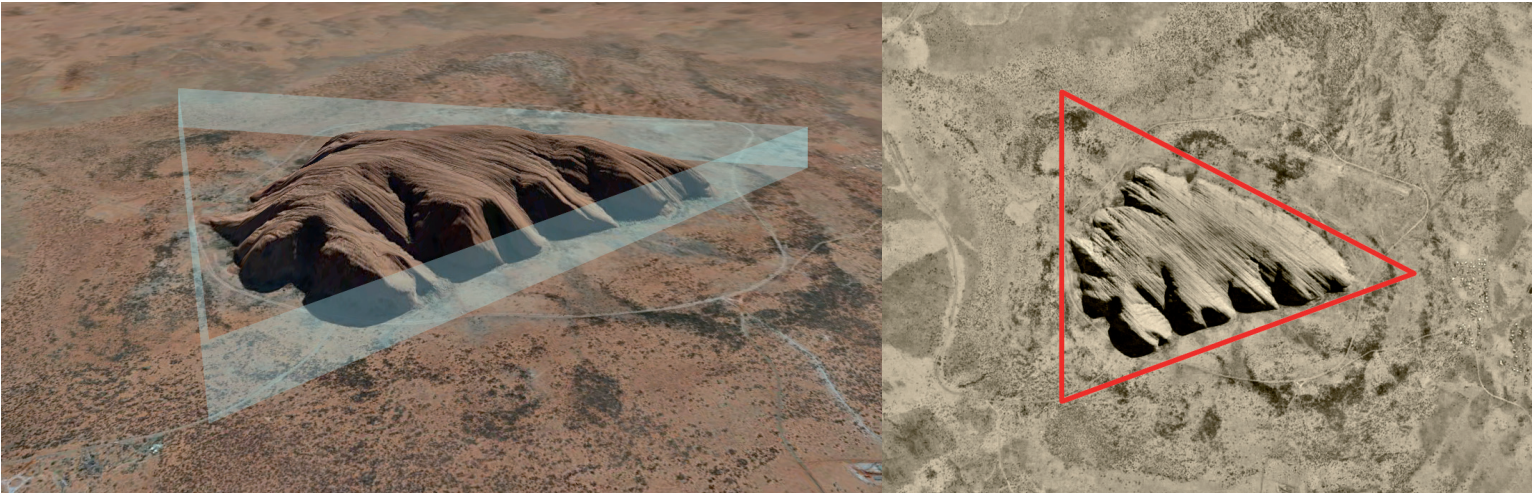


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the scale of the total surface area, for once the switch is performed, it remains in that state until the ambient light diminishes considerably at dusk and it returns to its original transparency.

The triangular configuration is designed to minimise the frequency of multi-facet aspect relationship to the viewer. The length of each wall is approximately 3000 metres long and stands to a height of 350 metres. Its substructure is composed of prefabricated high-performance concrete modules. A hybrid between architectural precast concrete and panelized light-gauge cold-formed steel framing, they resist distortion from extreme temperatures and are resistant to high velocity crosswind activity.

The project is as yet unrealized for various reasons of practicality and commitment to funding by the local government and territorial authorities. There are also fundamental concerns with the flow-on affect to Central Australian tourism and the associated commercial franchises within the greater Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park area.

It is hoped that the sheer impracticality of this project will raise the consciousness of those parties who allow, through apathy and disassociation, the continued degradation and disintegration of the culture of Australia's traditional owners.

