

THE·GRID

INTERACTIVE FIELD EMISSION DISPLAY

David Turner (dwt27@cl.cam.ac.uk)

Adam Greig (ag611@eng.cam.ac.uk)

Summary

THE·GRID is an art/engineering installation consisting a grid of poles illuminated by white LED strips. Interactivity is provided through a computer vision system utilising a night vision camera. Applications include a virtual maze and interactive display patterns. Primary requirements are a $14\text{m} \times 18\text{m}$ area of unlit ground and access to mains power (approx 1.5kW peak).

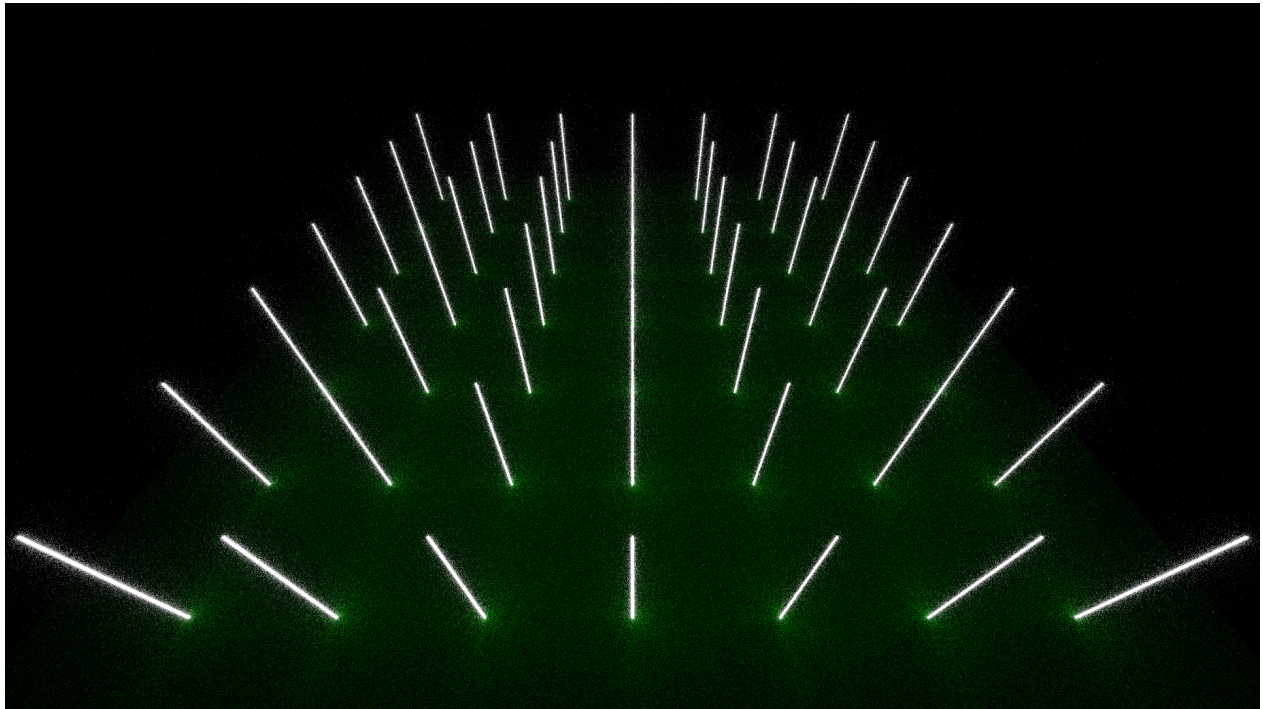


Figure 1: A computer graphics simulation of THE·GRID.

1 Design

1.1 Layout

THE·GRID would occupy a space of approximately $18\text{m} \times 14\text{m}$. Of this, $12\text{m} \times 12\text{m}$ is the grid itself, consisting of a 7×7 grid of poles with 2m spacing. A backstage area holds the power and control tent as well as the camera mast.

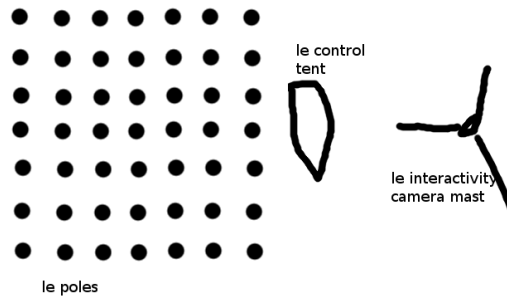


Figure 2: Plan schematic

1.2 Structural

Each pole will protrude 2.5m from the ground. The total length is 3m, with 50cm being inserted into the ground. The poles are constructed from $\frac{3}{4}'' \times \frac{3}{4}'' \times \frac{1}{16}''$ aluminium angle section. See Appendix A for detailed drawings.

The interactivity camera will be mounted 8m above the ground on a 10m fishing pole, guyed for rigidity.

1.3 Electrical and Electronics

1.3.1 Cabling

Each LED strip will consume around 2A when active. The wiring for one strip will consist of twin core cable carrying power and return between the strip and the control tent. Additionally, a coaxial connection will run from the interactivity camera to the control tent.

All cabling inside THE·GRID will be buried slightly below ground to avoid a trip hazard.

1.3.2 Switching

Each LED strip will be controlled using a BD679 Darlington pair as a driver. The drivers will be switched by six 8-output shift registers, themselves controlled by the CPU.

1.3.3 Power

The maximum power consumption of THE·GRID will be 100A. This will be provided by four 550W ATX power supplies, each rated for 32A on the +12V rail.

1.4 Software and Control

A laptop in the control tent will generate display patterns and handle interactivity. It will transmit lighting data via a serial link to an Arduino. Upon receiving each frame, the Arduino will clock the data into the shift registers, then activate the output latch.

A night vision enabled camera (with separate IR floodlight) mounted on a mast in the backstage area senses movement and tracks the location of people inside THE·GRID. This information is used for interactive applications and patterns.

2 Applications

2.1 AMAZE

AMAZE is an interactive, virtual maze. In this mode, when a user enters THE·GRID, a maze is randomly generated. Squares the user can travel to are lit, while squares representing walls are dark. AMAZE monitors the user's progress and knows if the user completes the maze, or cheats! The twist is that AMAZE only lights the user's square and adjacent squares—the user cannot see ahead and can only explore passages by travelling them!

A variation on this is two-player AMAZE. Two players can simultaneously traverse different (and overlapping) mazes, competing for time.

2.2 Interactive Patterns

A number of interactive patterns will produce interesting visual effects based on the movement of people in THE·GRID, inspired by fluid disturbance and flow.

2.3 Non-interactive Patterns

For times when no users are directly interacting with THE·GRID, non-interactive patterns will display pre-programmed effects resembling waves, stars and sparks.

3 Risk Assessment

3.1 Mechanical

THE·GRID is an interactive exhibit designed for people to walk around. It is also active after sunset. This leads to a number of risks due to people walking around and through a structure in low lighting. However, it is anticipated that there is a minimal risk of injury. As poles are embedded in soft ground and are constructed from thin aluminium section, it is anticipated that there is no serious risk of injury should somebody walk into a pole.

Poles will be 2.5m (8 foot 2 inches) tall, so there should be no risk of impalement or eye injury.

In the very unlikely case of a pole falling on a person, the pole's light weight (around 500g) should mean there is minimal possibility for injury.

With people walking around the installation in low light, there would be a significant trip hazard were any cabling or guy-wires exposed. For this reason, all cabling inside THE·GRID itself will be buried below the surface of the ground. If the cable cannot be buried, it could be run overhead between the top of the poles. Again, this is high enough that it should be impossible to walk into.

The backstage area will contain cabling running at ground level alongside other hazards, and so will be off limits.

3.2 Electrical

All mains electronics will be contained within the control tent and power is distributed through THE·GRID at 12V DC. The control tent will be waterproof, and all exposed cabling, connections and electronics will be waterproof. The low voltage combined with RCD protection means there is a minimal risk of electricution.

THE·GRID itself will not contain any flammable materials, so there is no risk of fire. In the unlikely event of a fire in the control tent, the hazard would be limited to the off-limits backstage area.

3.3 Other

In the event of a nearby thunder storm, the exposed metal poles could attract lightning strikes (although they are likely negligible compared to the main NOC radio mast). If there is a significant chance of a thunder storm, THE·GRID will be disconnected from the mains supply and placed off limits for the duration of the storm.

There is a risk that individuals with photo-sensitive epilepsy could be affected by THE·GRID. We will have to investigate further how to minimize this risk, whether this be through appropriate warning signage or avoiding problematic patterns such as flashing.

A Engineering Drawings

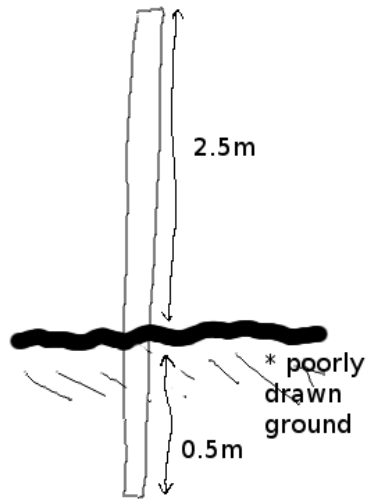


Figure 3: Side view of a single pole

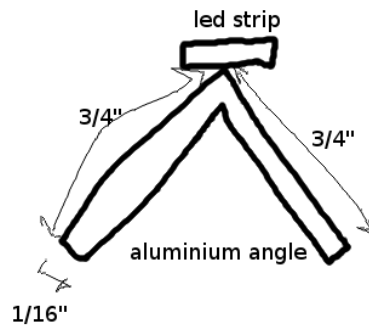


Figure 4: Top view of a single pole with LED strip