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Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

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# Ronald Reagan goes 3D as a **hologram** at his presidential museum

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SIMI VALLEY, Calif. -- He may not exactly be tanned, rested and ready, but the Gipper is back.

Those who miss Ronald Reagan's sunny optimism in these troubled times have a chance to hear from the 40th president himself as a three-dimensional holographic image at his library and museum.

The \$1.5-million exhibit is the first of its kind among the nation's presidential libraries, said Executive Director John Heubusch.

"As technology has evolved, we wanted to go from 2D to 3D," said Heubusch. "We want to bring the visitor even closer to Ronald Reagan."

Visitors to the museum will be ushered into a room where they can get up close and personal with Reagan. After viewing a short film, curtains open and a 3D version of Reagan appears on stage in one of three scenes -- no glasses required.

He is either speaking from the back on a train during a 1984 whistlestop tour, in his horse riding attire at his California ranch or from the Oval Office after stepping off Marine One, the presidential helicopter.

The goal, above all, was realism, according to library and museum officials.

"It's like being in the room with the president," Heubusch said.

The museum, perched on a Simi Valley, California, hilltop offering stunning views, bills itself as the nation's most visited presidential library and museum. Dedicated in 1991, two years after Reagan left office, it was last revamped in 2011. It attracts 400,000 a year, plus those who come for events, from book signing to the occasional Republican presidential debate.

Over the years, the museum has added new exhibits like the Reagan-era Air Force One. Heubusch said there is a constant search to find ways to stay fresh.

The holographic exhibit was four years in the making, taking advantage of advances in **hologram** technology that has recently allowed the images of live people to be beamed to events around the world. As for dead people, they're showing up, too, but the process of having them make an appearance is more complicated.

In the case of Reagan, the transformation into a 3D holograph involved hiring an actor who had the right size and mannerisms. After none could be found with similar facial features, the museum commissioned a sculpture of Reagan's head just for video purposes.

The head, which now eerily resides in a bookcase in a cabinet, was scanned from all angles using multiple cameras. Then the image was transferred to the top of the body. The most difficult part, Heubusch said, was getting his mouth movements to conform exactly to Reagan's words, drawn from speeches and interviews. It was done through the kind of post-production magic used in Hollywood.

To do it all, the museum commissioned **Hologram** USA of Beverly Hills, California, which has specialized in the technique for entertainment and corporate events. There was, for instance, the time the company beamed a holographic image of Tupac Shakur into the Coachella music festival.

Bringing a walking, talking Reagan back as a continuing exhibit, however, "was, by far, the most important **hologram** we've done," said David Nussbaum, a senior vice

president for **Hologram** USA. "This is a museum piece."

He said the team kept pushing for more realism, with Heubusch offering pointers. "When we said it looked great, John said it could be greater," Nussbaum said.

In one suggestion, Heubusch asked that Reagan be able to point to a sign on his desk in the Oval Office scene. The sign said there's no limit to what can be accomplished if one doesn't care who gets the credit. Heubusch got his way.

Heubusch sounds satisfied with the finished product. He said the exhibit will set the stage for the walk through the museum.

After all, Reagan's nickname was The Great Communicator. Now the former president's holographic self gets to do the talking.