

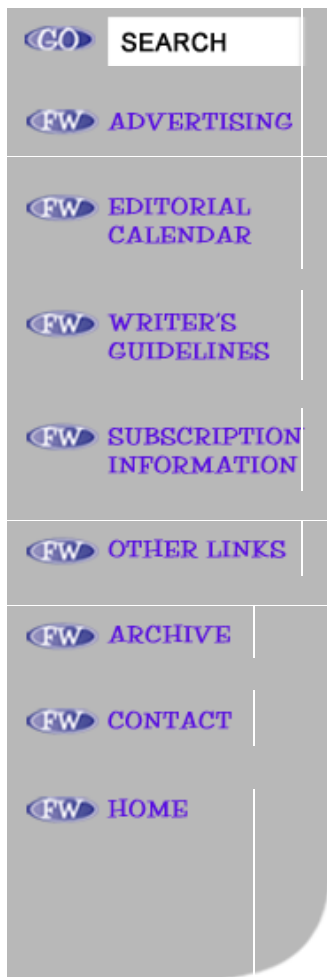
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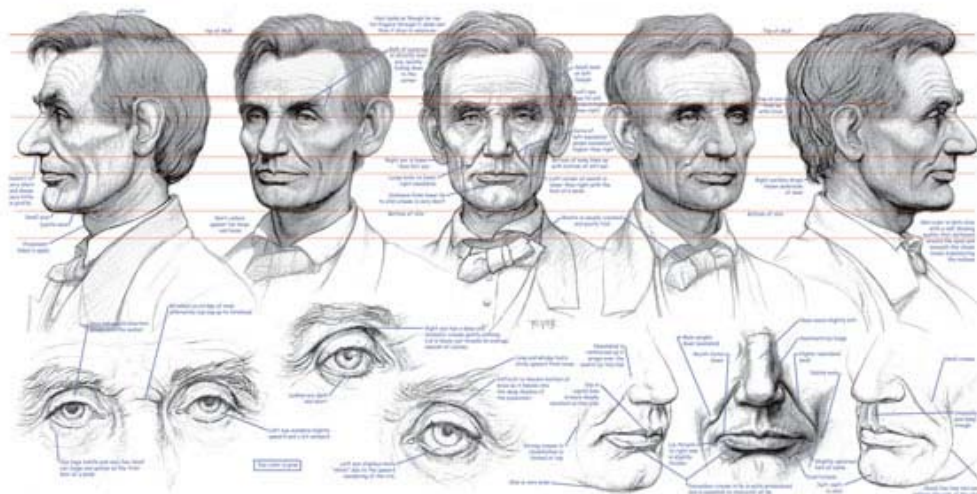
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# *It's Showtime, Mr. President*



***Scott Ault of BRC Imagination Arts—which conceptualized and executed the new Lincoln Museum—breaks down the new facility into its constituent parts, and sheds some light on the modern museum experience.***

At the new Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, visitors will experience a mix of dramatic storytelling, high-tech lighting, audio and video projections, and a new take on a centuries-old magic illusion, all from Abraham Lincoln's point of view.

Picture this: Visitors will begin their experience in an immersive themed-gallery setting, where they witness Lincoln presenting the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. They will then proceed through an Emancipation Proclamation "Illusion Corridor," where they will face a barrage of impassioned

appeals and threats from the politicians, protesters, and petitioners Lincoln faced while he weighed whether or not to issue his final, official declaration. Inside the corridor, a theatrical "infinity effect" surrounds visitors with a "forest" of architectural columns that appear to extend indefinitely into the distance. Between these columns, guests see a succession of ghostlike faces, each appearing momentarily to make a case for or against the Emancipation Proclamation before fading into the background. No visitor will be able to walk through the corridor without developing some understanding of the weight of the moment and the



**The technical staff hard at work during the creation of the museum's "ghosts," which bring vignettes to life**

imprint it left on Lincoln's character and the soul of America.

This insightful exhibit space is just one aspect of the full historical adventure visitors will experience at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, which is currently under construction in Springfield, Illinois.

This breakthrough project will bring education, storytelling, and entertainment technology together in an innovative way, paving the way for a new generation of interactive museums.

### Change Is Good

Back when there were no televisions, no video games, no Internet, no transoceanic jetliners, and no modern theme parks, the Renaissance-inspired "cabinet of curiosities" had impact. People were truly awed by viewing a static, glass-enclosed display of dead stuff in a box, since it made them feel more closely connected to faraway places and long-ago events they had only heard about by word of mouth or, later, read about in books. Today's museum visitors live in a different world.



Actors playing Abe and Mary take a break during shooting.

The current leisure marketplace is rich with opportunities for those seeking an enjoyable day out. Museums must offer something new and compelling to compete with

theme parks, urban entertainment centers, and other destinations vying for visitors' attention. Museums are also facing stiff competition from in-home sources of entertainment, as it's getting increasingly difficult to "unplug" people from their video game systems, Internet connections, and home theaters and inspire them to set foot outside in the first place.

Add to this the fact that we live in a wired world amid technology and media that permeate our homes, our cars, our classrooms, and our businesses. Through the Internet, we have around-the-clock access to the encyclopedic details of any topic, event, or major historical figure. When we go to a museum, we expect something different, something we can't get at home.

In our wired world, we have also grown accustomed to learning through technology. Some recent studies go so far as to suggest that life in the Digital Age is actually changing the way our brains receive and process information. So it's not just that we like to learn through technology; it's possible that we are becoming physiologically "wired" to do so.

Finally, as Joseph Pine and James Gilmore attest to in their book *The Experience Economy*, today's audiences don't want to be passive observers that watch from afar; they want to be an integral part of their surroundings. The "just look, don't touch" tenet that has defined museums for so long is quickly becoming the museum world's equivalent of the Berlin Wall of the late 1980s—a divisive, artificial construction inevitably destined for collapse.

### The New Generation

So now the challenge for museums is to enhance the experience, but still deliver the hard facts of history in such a way that visitors will remember and want to come back for more.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is part of a new generation of educational experiences that hope to raise the bar for other museums.

Make no mistake, this is going to be a real museum on a significant order, with authentic historical artifacts and serious scholarship. Some of the most important documents in the history of America will be on display here, including an original Gettysburg Address, handwritten by Lincoln himself, a signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, and a handwritten excerpt from Lincoln's second inaugural address.

The museum will also showcase the country's largest collection of pre-presidential Lincoln papers, memorabilia, and personal effects such as Lincoln's gloves, duster, and shaving mirror, as well as Mary Todd Lincoln's music box. Additionally, visitors can have faith in the accuracy of the information; the project is backed by a team of more than 15 scholars and historians—including some of the world's foremost authorities on Lincoln's life and presidency.

But what remains is the challenge that all educational institutions face: providing new ways for visitors to connect with, and enjoy, factual content. To this end, the museum hired Burbank, Calif.'s BRC Imagination Arts to design and produce the museum's visitor experience.

BRC collaborated closely with the museum's board of trustees, directors, and content advisers along the way to execute a project that entertains and employs the latest in technology.

Here are just a few highlights...

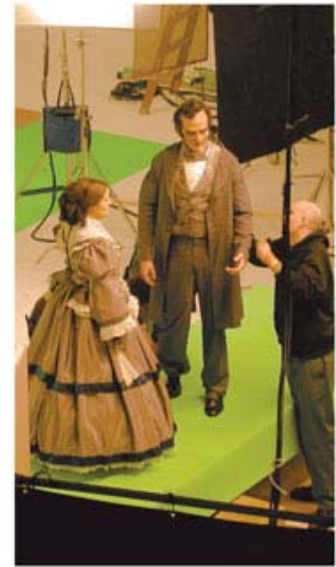
### **The Journey**

The heart of the museum is a walk-through adventure into the life and presidency of Abraham Lincoln.

The adventure begins in Lincoln's boyhood cabin in Indiana, and then follows a path through Lincoln's youth, his election as president, his entire presidency, and his untimely demise, when his life and presidency were cut short that fateful night at Ford's Theatre. Along the way, theatrical sets, scenic treatments, special effects lighting and audio, and other entertainment-world technologies plunge visitors into re-creations of telling moments in Lincoln's own personal journey through life.

"The Journey" includes 47 lifelike figures portraying Lincoln and a few key people who influenced him, for better or worse. These haunting figures are certain to elicit a double take, in part, because of their authentic-looking hair and eyes, and the high-tech silicone skin, which gives depth to the figures' features. But even more compelling are their candid expressions and postures and the telling emotions they portray. Throughout the museum, a tremendous effort is made to humanize Lincoln, so visitors can see past the images that have defined him in popular culture. The figures were all made by LifeFormations, of Bowling Green, Ohio.

"The Journey" also includes some surprising moments when media formats from contemporary, everyday life provide a conduit through which today's audiences can connect to history. Case in point is the area depicting "The Campaign of 1860." To learn about the platforms Lincoln and his opposing candidates ran on as they competed for the presidency, visitors watch a series of contemporary-styled "TV campaign ads" presented on large video monitors. Instead of just reading a description of each candidate's position on the issues of the day, visitors experience them in a format they are well familiar with and understand. It's an approach David Sousa, author of the book *How the Brain Learns*, might describe as "Velcro Learning." To help visitors retain and derive meaning from the historical

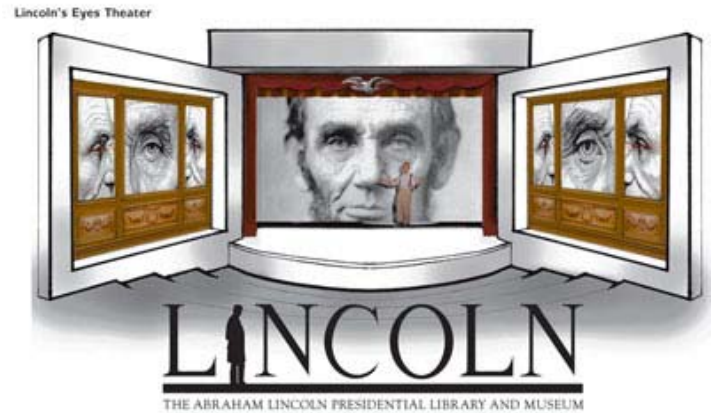


Green screen of special effects production.

information they are receiving, the information is presented in a way that makes it attach securely to what visitors already know and the current understanding they have of the world.

### Lincoln's Eyes

The museum also features two major theatrical presentations that punctuate the visitor experience with magic and drama. "Lincoln's Eyes," provides an emotional inroad into Lincoln's character and a visceral look at the events and people that shaped his life and his presidency. This "magic theater" show provides a dramatic overview of the complete Lincoln story told at the museum. In so doing, it creates an emotional context for the more detailed explorations of particular aspects of Lincoln's life encountered elsewhere in the visitor experience.



The show opens with an artist in his studio, painting a portrait of Lincoln. As the artist begins to hone in on Lincoln's eyes, his masterpiece is stalled. It has been said by artists throughout the ages that the eyes open a window into the soul, and in portraying them, you capture the essence of a person.

This idea sends the artist and the entire audience on a journey to revisit the character-shaping people, places, times, and events in Lincoln's life. Multilayered projection surfaces, three-dimensional audio, high-tech theatrical lighting, movable scenic elements, and a host of in-theater effects—such as smoke, heat, and floor rumblers—deliver a real "you are there" experience. The theater's sophisticated rigging system was designed and produced by the Syracuse, New York-based firm J.R. Clancy, which boasts an impressive roster of clients that includes the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the American Museum of Natural History in New York, Disney Cruise Ships, and Cirque du Soleil.

### Ghosts of the Library


The museum's second anchor show, "Ghosts of the Library," creates magic out of the curatorial process itself. This BRC-patented Holavision® effects presentation takes visitors into a re-creation of the library's archives, where they meet a curator currently at work studying some of the key artifacts in the institution's collection. The role of the curator is played by a live actor on stage, and the artifacts and library setting are high-fidelity reproductions provided by Scenic View, Inc., a Chicago-based creator of themed atmospheres and scenic elements.



The ghost of Abraham Lincoln

As the actor describes the role of the curator by unlocking the fascinating stories each artifact holds, the objects magically come to life. Through mystifying visual illusions, ghostly images emanate from the objects, filling the library with brief story vignettes—Abraham and Mary grieving the loss of their 11-year-old son, a Civil War battle taking place, and Lincoln reading the Gettysburg Address. This ghost-inhabited theater includes a state-of-the-art show control system that handles all the lighting, audio, and visual effects with the touch of a button. The imagery was generated by Stan Winston Studios, a world-renowned creator of characters for the movie and television industry.



While the museum boasts extraordinary, cutting-edge technology, it would be nothing without a story to tell. And those stories aren't limited to the theatrical presentations. Throughout the entire museum, "story" is the hook that draws visitors in and captures their emotions. Behind every experience in the museum, and underlying every technology, and every presentation technique involved, there is a powerful story. 



Special effects animation story boards