

# Lifestyles

People, places and issues

The Times

Sunday, May 16, 1993

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# REVISITING CHICAGO'S city within a city

## MUSEUM LOOKS INTO FUTURE

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As you walk to the right side of a black wall frame, a dim light arises. Inside the frame is a mysterious figure resembling Count Dracula. He is sleeping in a coffin, eerily shrouded in an orange mist. This cannot be a picture because your eyes tell you it is three-dimensional.

It must be a wax figure. But as you walk from left to right you notice that Dracula has heard your steps. His hypnotic eyes flash and fix on yours. Another step to the right and the vampire has leapt from his coffin, fangs fixed, ready to sink them into your neck.

But another step to the right and he has vanished.

Unlike most vampires who cannot survive in the light, this holographic image of Dracula cannot exist without the light.

Dracula is just one of more than 100 holograms at Chicago's Museum of Holography. The museum, 1134 W. Washington Blvd., was founded in 1976 by Loren Billings (who is also the executive director) and is one of a few such museums in the world.

The technology required to create three-dimensional images on a two-dimensional surface is still in its infancy, according to Billings.

"Peeking into this museum is like peeking into the 21st century," she

said. "It's like photography was 175 years ago. It is an important change in visual communications."

Holography was invented by Dr. Dennis Gabor in 1948, but his early work remained unrefined until the 1960s when lasers were created.

"A hologram is actually a recording of light waves reflecting from an object illuminated by laser light that forms a three-dimensional image of the object," Billings said.

If the concept seems confusing, the museum offers guided tours for individuals or groups. Billings said they welcome school children of all ages each week and she explains to them how it all works and how it is



Photo courtesy Museum of Holography

The Museum of Holography displays more than 100 holograms, three-dimensional images on two-dimensional surfaces.