Herbert Hoover

PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY ★ MUSEUM

"Meet the Hoovers" Interactive

July 22nd, 2025

BRC

Presented to

HOOVER PRESIDENTIAL FOUNDATION

Ph: +1 319 643 5301

Website: https://hooverpresidentialfoundation.org/

127 W. Main St. P.O. Box 696, West Branch, IA 52358

USA

MUNDI MCCARTY

Ph: +1 319 321 8010

Email: MMcarty@HooverPF.org

SHELLY MOTT

Ph: +1 319 331 7141

Email: SMott@HooverPF.org

Presented by

BRC IMAGINATION ARTS

Ph: +1 818 841 8084

Website: brcweb.com

3400 W. Olive Ave, Ste. 220

Burbank, CA 91505

USA

WADE DANIELSON

Project Producer

Ph: +1 323 252 5000

Email: wdanielson@brcweb.com

Los Angles CA

The Opportunity

How often have you wished that you could talk to a historical figure that you admire, wondering what he or she would say about a difficult decision they had to make, or even just to satisfy your curiosity about a favorite food?

Recent advances in interactive technology offer us the opportunity to invite visitors to the revitalized Herbert Hoover Presidential Library & Museum with the promise that they will journey through Herbert and Lou's lives, and then have a once-in-a-lifetime, "only here" chance to have a real-time conversation with the Hoovers.

The following presentation outlines how this technology has been used authentically in other successful, reputable, historical museums and how it could bring Bert and Lou to life in a special and unexpected way in West Branch, IA.

Technology Overview

Benchmark Examples

Interactive technology allowing museum-goers to converse and engage with historical figures is proving to be an effective and attractive method of engagement.

The following four benchmark examples are best in class in the current museum world.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum, WWII Museum, and Japanese American Museum build off of interviews recorded with living people.

The Salvador Dalí Museum generated an AI experience that brings the Dalí to life using interviews, quotes, and existing archival footage of the artist. This is the closest 1:1 example of the methodology that we intend to use for Bert and Lou Hoover.

Benchmark Examples
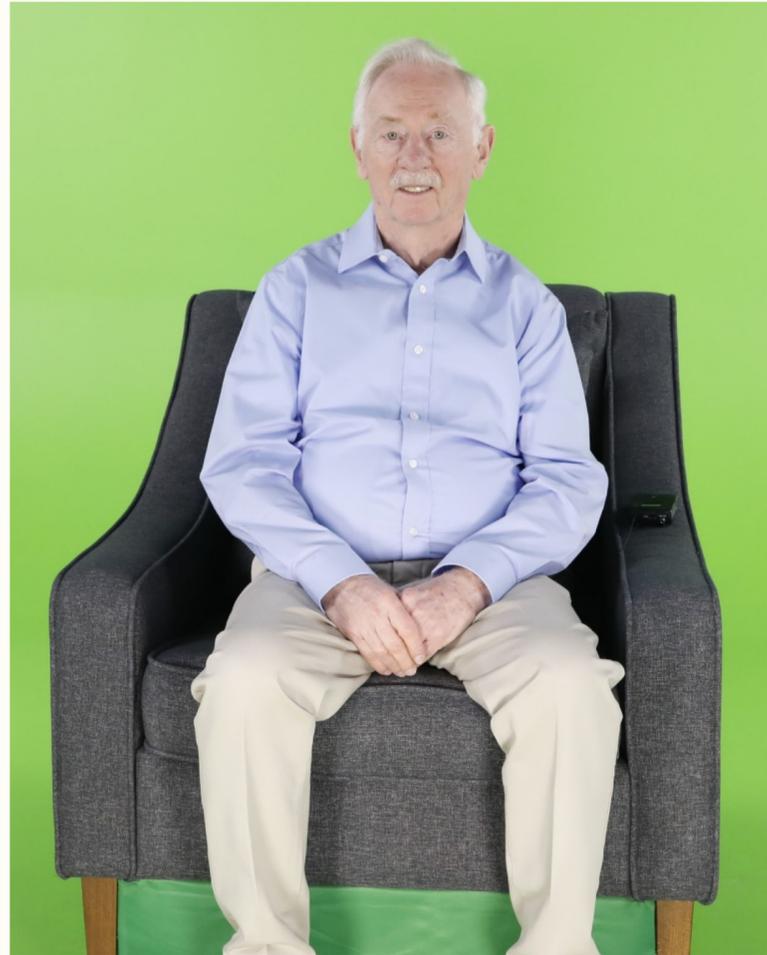
ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

Dimensions in Testimony records and displays testimony in a way that will preserve dialogue between Holocaust survivors and learners far into the future. This groundbreaking exhibit gives you the rare change to engage in one-on-one conversations with survivors.

Dimensions in Testimony enables people to ask questions that prompt real-time responses from pre-recorded video interviews with Holocaust survivors and other witnesses to genocide. The pioneering project integrates advanced filming techniques, specialized display technologies and next generation natural language processing to create an interactive biography. Now and far into the future, museum-goers, students and others can have conversational interactions with these eyewitnesses to history to learn from those who were there.

NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

"Voice From the Front" helps visitors connect with the WWII generation in a high-tech yet personal way.

Using cutting-edge technology and interactive video displays, Voices from the Front allows guests to hold conversations with more than a dozen interviewees. The effect, made possible through artificial intelligence, will be truly immersive, as visitors will be able to personally engage with veterans, Home Front workers, and other witnesses to the war after they are no longer with us to share their firsthand stories. Voices from the Front will put real faces to history, offering unique and intimate perspectives and bridging the gap between generations.

Bendmark Examples

SALVADOR DALÍ MUSEUM

Dalí Lives opened on what would have been Dalí's 115th birthday, allowing visitors to interact with an engaging, AI-generated life-like Salvador Dalí on a series of screens throughout the Museum.

The Museum began this immersive project by collecting and sharing hundreds of interviews, quotes, and existing archival footage from the prolific artist. The team used these extensive materials to train an AI algorithm to "learn" aspects of Dalí's face, then looked for an actor with the same general physical characteristics of Dalí's body. The AI then generates a version of Dalí's likeness to match the actor's face and expressions. To educate visitors while engaging with "Dalí Lives," the Museum used authentic writings from Dalí himself – coupled with dynamic present-day messages – reenacted by the actor.

JAPANESE AMERICAN MUSEUM

"The Interactive StoryFile of Lawson Iichiro Sakai" uses groundbreaking storytelling technology to give visitors a realistic experience of engaging with World War II American veteran Lawson Iichiro Sakai. Using an AI algorithm, visitors at are able to have a conversation with Lawson, asking him about his life experiences, passions, family, or even his favorite foods.

More than 1,000 questions were asked of Sakai over five days of filming using capture technology with 27 different cameras for a 360-degree view. This special filming technique will allow the video to be projected as a holographic exhibit in the future. Currently, the Sakai JANM exhibition is presented on a life-sized screen.

How It Works

The interactive technology used in the four benchmark examples is based on a database of inputs: in the case of The Illinois Holocaust Museum, WWII Museum, and Japanese American Museum these inputs come directly from extensive interviews conducted and recorded from multiple angles with media and vocal recordings. The systems use AI learning to "listen" to visitors' questions and generate the most logical answer from the pre-recorded database of responses.

The Salvador Dalí Museum's system relies upon a wealth of inputs from Dalí's writings, interviews, and recordings. In this case, the system uses AI learning to "learn" how Dalí would most likely respond, compile a response from the vast database of inputs, and uses an AI-generated voice based on Dalí's actual voice to respond to guests conversationally.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HHPLM

Our intention is to use a closed-loop style system that includes a database of up to 1,500 authentic, approved responses taken directly from the Hoovers' writings, speeches, and words. When a guest asks a question, the AI system parses the question and then then sifts the databank of responses to offer the one that is most relevant. This experience will not rely on generative AI; conversations will be controlled so that they cannot evolve beyond information in the database. We intend to simply use AI as a tool to collate and organize sources, and then match questions to answers.

DIMENSIONS IN TESTIMONY
RECORDING SESSION

"Meet the Hoovers"

What We'll Create

As guests enter the final gallery, Uncommon Iowans, they will come face to face with lifesize renderings of Bert and Lou Hoover. As they reflect on the Hoovers' impact and legacy in this space, and after they've experienced the full story of the Hoovers' lives, they will have the opportunity to participate in a personalized chat with Bert or Lou. A guest would step up to a screen, select which Hoover they'd like to meet, and ask a question. Through voice recognition and natural language processing, the immersive character will dynamically respond in casual conversation, offering up answers drawn from the Hoovers' own words and writings. The interaction will feel seamless and natural, with thought-provoking, emotional engagement at its core. It's not just a "wow" moment for the museum, but a rich opportunity for guests to reflect on their visit in a deeply personal way.
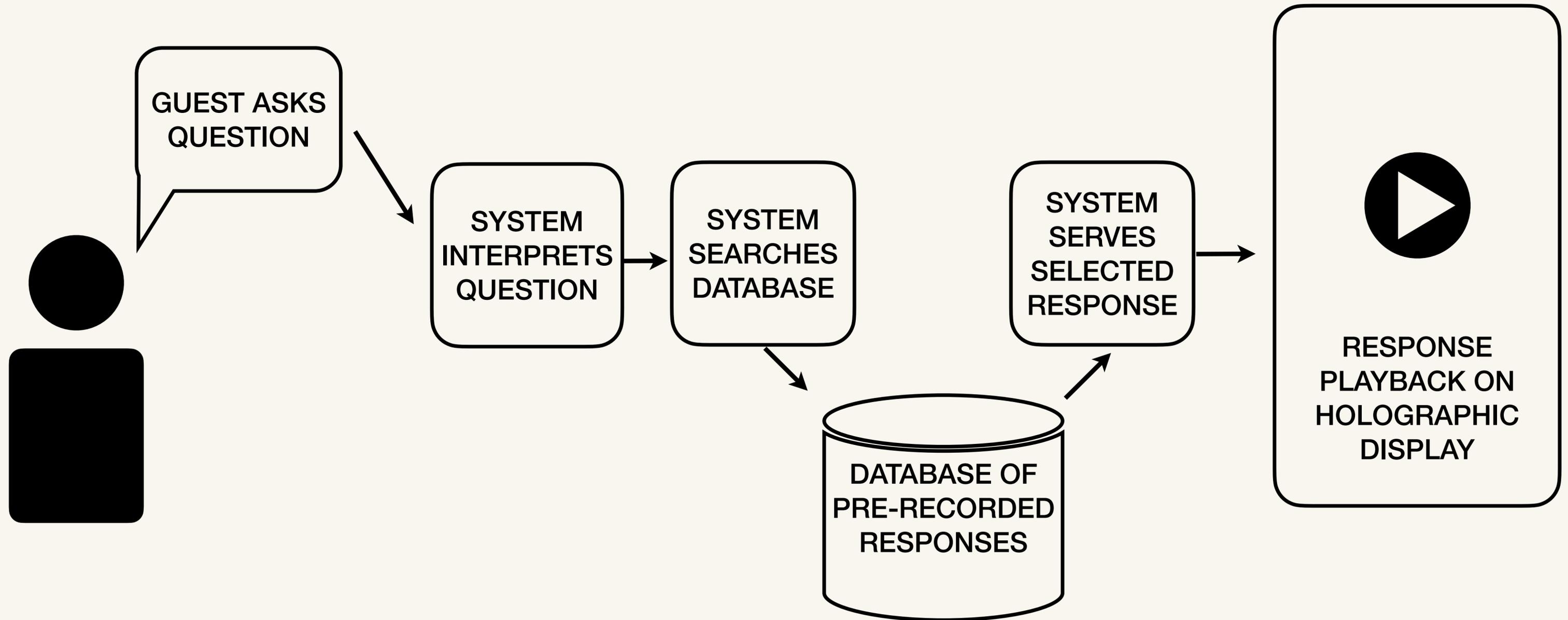
"For Peace Alone
Do I Ring"

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LEADERSHIP

"Leadership is not about
power or titles, but about
empowering others to
reach their full potential."

-Lou Henry Hoover

IMPACT

"The measure of our
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we achieve for ourselves,
but in what we do for others."

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SERVICE

"Being a politician is a
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Being a public servant
is a noble one."

-Herbert Hoover

PEACE

"Peace is n...
the council...
treatis...

-He...

Interactive Flowchart

GUEST ASKS QUESTION

SYSTEM INTERPRETS QUESTION

SYSTEM SEARCHES DATABASE

DATABASE OF PRE-RECORDED RESPONSES

SYSTEM SERVES SELECTED RESPONSE

RESPONSE PLAYBACK ON HOLOGRAPHIC DISPLAY

Bringing the Hoovers to Life

Drawing from film and historic images, we will create stylized representations of the Hoovers that blend realism with 3D animated computer graphics. This ensures that we produce realistic figures, while also allowing the flexibility to incorporate movement, facial expressions, and mannerisms that simulate natural interactions. We'll work closely with the museum and all stakeholders to strike an appropriate balance as we refine how to best depict the Hoovers.

WORK-IN-PROGRESS AI GENERATED REALISTIC PORTRAIT

Digital Depiction Opportunities
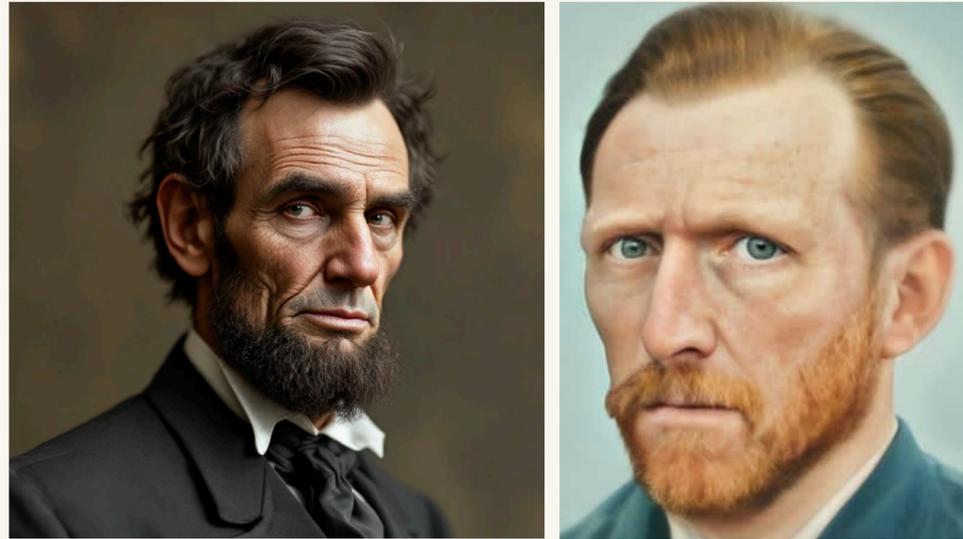
AI GENERATED REALISTIC PORTRAIT

Using a realistic depiction of the Hoovers helps to bring them to life in a vibrant way which will be incredibly captivating to visitors. We see them in realistic color with high resolution details that film photography of the past was unable to capture.

This hyper-realistic look may become dated overtime as technology continues to develop and evolve. At the moment, it provides the most detailed and vivid depiction of our figures.

PAINTERLY PORTRAIT

A painterly aesthetic brings fun and playfulness to the interaction. It gives the depictions a colorful and animated feel which is not as bound by reality. We see an sample of this painting style with Lou's memorial portrait in the Post-Presidency. gallery. The style is classic, familiar, and more forgiving with precise details, especially over the long term.

This artistic style may help the visuals to remain "fresh" by not following current technical aesthetic trends. By being less realistic, this style may feel historical and distant to today's guests.

STYLIZED HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Drawing from existing photography, the Hoovers could come to life through stylized animation, color, and texture. This style is more in-line with the silhouettes used throughout the museum experience. This depiction gives the distinct feel of interacting with a historical character, like a photograph that comes to life. The feel of speaking to Bert and Lou through time may feel more authentic for guests as they see the Hoovers represented more in the style of the time in which they lived.

Voicing the Hoovers

ACTOR VOICED

Recorded responses from an actor may bring more warmth, character, and realism to the interaction. This approach may not sound as exactly true to life.

COMPUTER VOICED

Using recordings of Bert and Lou's voices, technology can adopt their exact voice quality though it may lack in some of the natural flow and inflection of natural human spoken words.

Crafting Meaningful Interactions

We will draw conversational information from approved sources so that every response is grounded in factual information from the Hoovers. We'll use the pool of resources to build a database of approximately 1,500 pre-recorded responses that address the visitor questions most likely to be asked. AI tools will facilitate the interaction, "listening" to visitor questions and then delivering the most appropriate, pre-vetted response in real time. We'll include responses that cover every possible scenario (including prompting visitors to ask a different question if needed) to ensure that conversations remain grounded in the Hoovers' experience and within our defined database of information.

Ultimately, no matter what question a visitor asks, the representations of Bert and Lou will respond authentically and fluidly as if in conversation, encouraging guests to engage naturally.

DIMENSIONS IN TESTIMONY
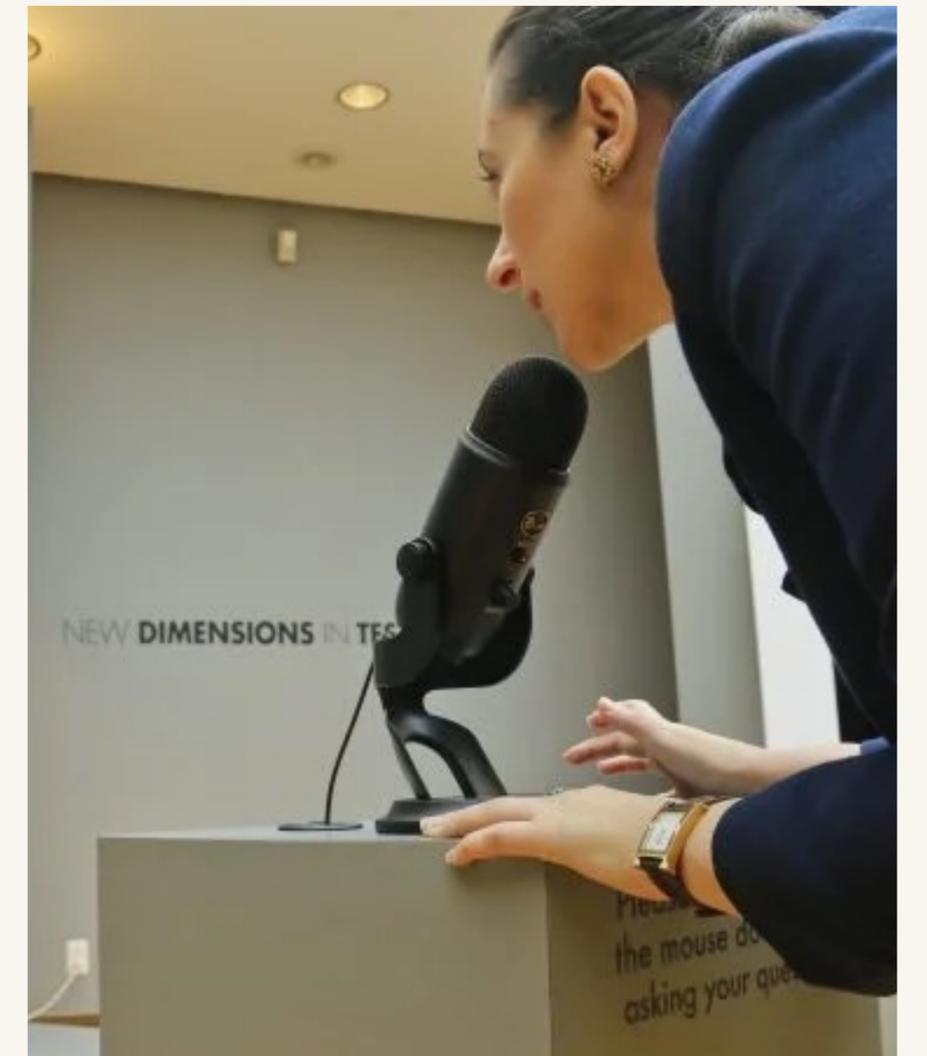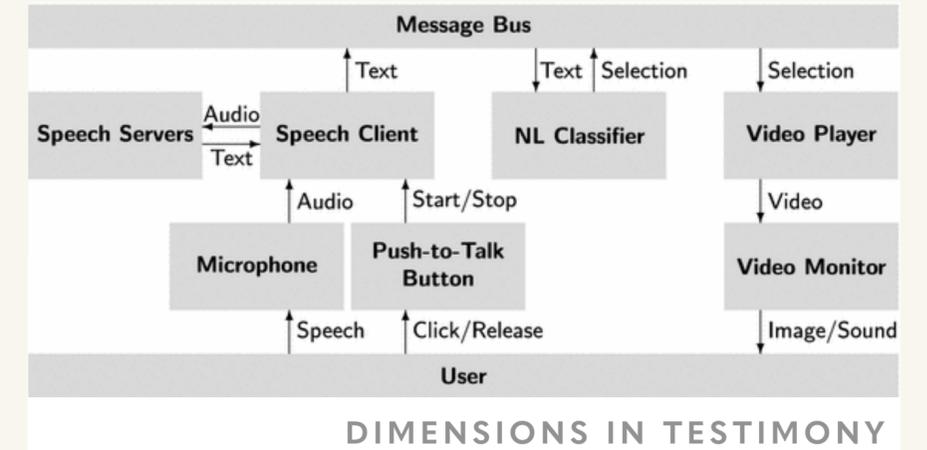
How We'll Do It

We recommend creating 3D modeled figures on a flat screen, rather than holograms. This more cost-effective approach ensures that the technology "wow" doesn't overpower the personal interaction that guests will have. New technologies such as Google Beam allow for realistic, screen-based 3D modeling that creates immersion, and we're confident that we can design characters who feel natural and authentic without veering into gimmicks.

True, dynamic, full-color holograms that project mid-air (not on glass or smoke) are still mostly experimental or lab-scale technologies. Real holograms require high-powered lasers, precise optics, and massive data processing to render realistic 3D images in real-time. This is incredibly costly and still in R&D. What is typically marketed as "holograms" (like Hatsune Miku concerts or Tupac at Coachella) are usually projection on fog or mist, AR displays, or Pepper's Ghost illusions utilizing proprietary fabrics or glass. The lighting conditions for these effects need incredibly specific and purposeful, no ambient light can be emitting around the space.

GOOGLE BEAM

DALÍ LIVES

NEW DIMENSIONS IN TESTIMONY
DIMENSIONS IN TESTIMONY

"For Peace Alone
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-Her...

Process & ROM Budgets

Process

STEP 01

Discovery

We'll undertake a period of discovery to assess the best approach to visualizing the Hoovers, taking into consideration design treatment, voice and tone, length of the experience, its location in the gallery, and so on. We will also work closely with museum stakeholders to assess the questions that are most likely to be asked and the sources that will be used to synthesize answers. This phase ensures that we thoroughly assess all aspects of the experience and address potential challenges as we hone in on the most appropriate design and interaction.

STEP 02

Prototyping

In this phase, we will test our character designs and iterate as needed. We'll build in plenty of time to refine the visual characters and the question-and-answer interactions. This allows us to make informed decisions as we finalize all aspects of the experience. This phase is critical to ensuring a seamless and natural guest experience, and museum stakeholders will have the opportunity to participate in this process every step of the way.

STEP 03

Production & Launch

Once designs have been tested and approved, we will build out the front- and back-end software for the database and 3D models. During the installation phase, we'll do significant onsite testing to ensure that all technology is working properly. We'll also provide an operational manual that will enable the museum staff to confidently manage and maintain the experience moving forward.

Interactive Exhibit Schedule

PHASE ONE

Prototyping   6-8 weeks

Play Testing   5-7 weeks

PHASE TWO

Full Design   8-10 weeks

Fabrication   7-9 weeks

Installation   4-6 weeks

TOTAL PROJECT TIME*   30-40 weeks

(~7.5 - 10 months)

*From initial payment to the vendor

# Connecting the Past & the Future

We are committed to creating a robust interaction that enables guests to connect directly and emotionally with the Hoovers, and we look forward to realizing this groundbreaking museum experience.

Ultimately, we'll leave guests with a deeper understanding of these two passionate leaders, inspired to follow in their footsteps and serve their own communities today.
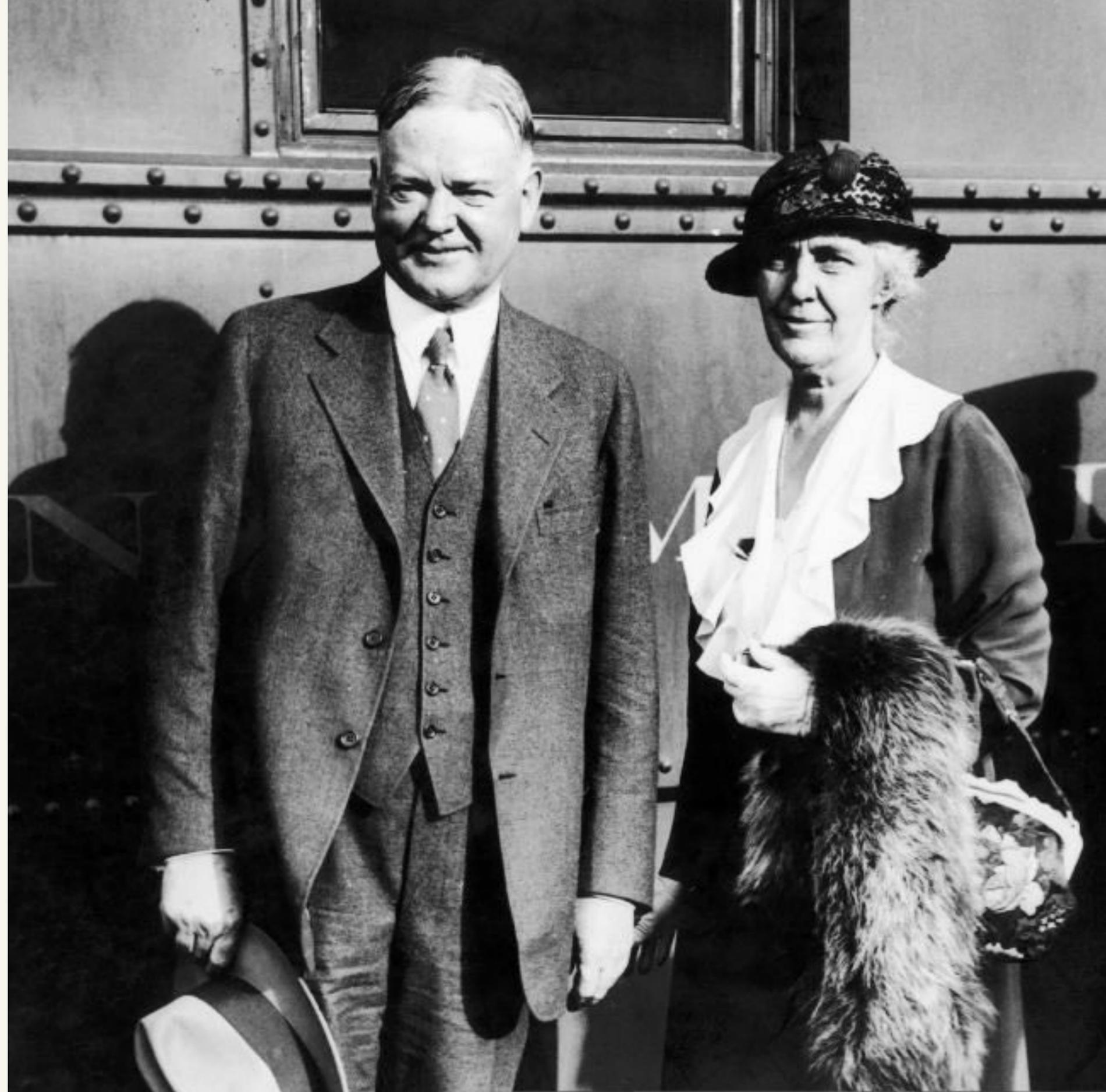
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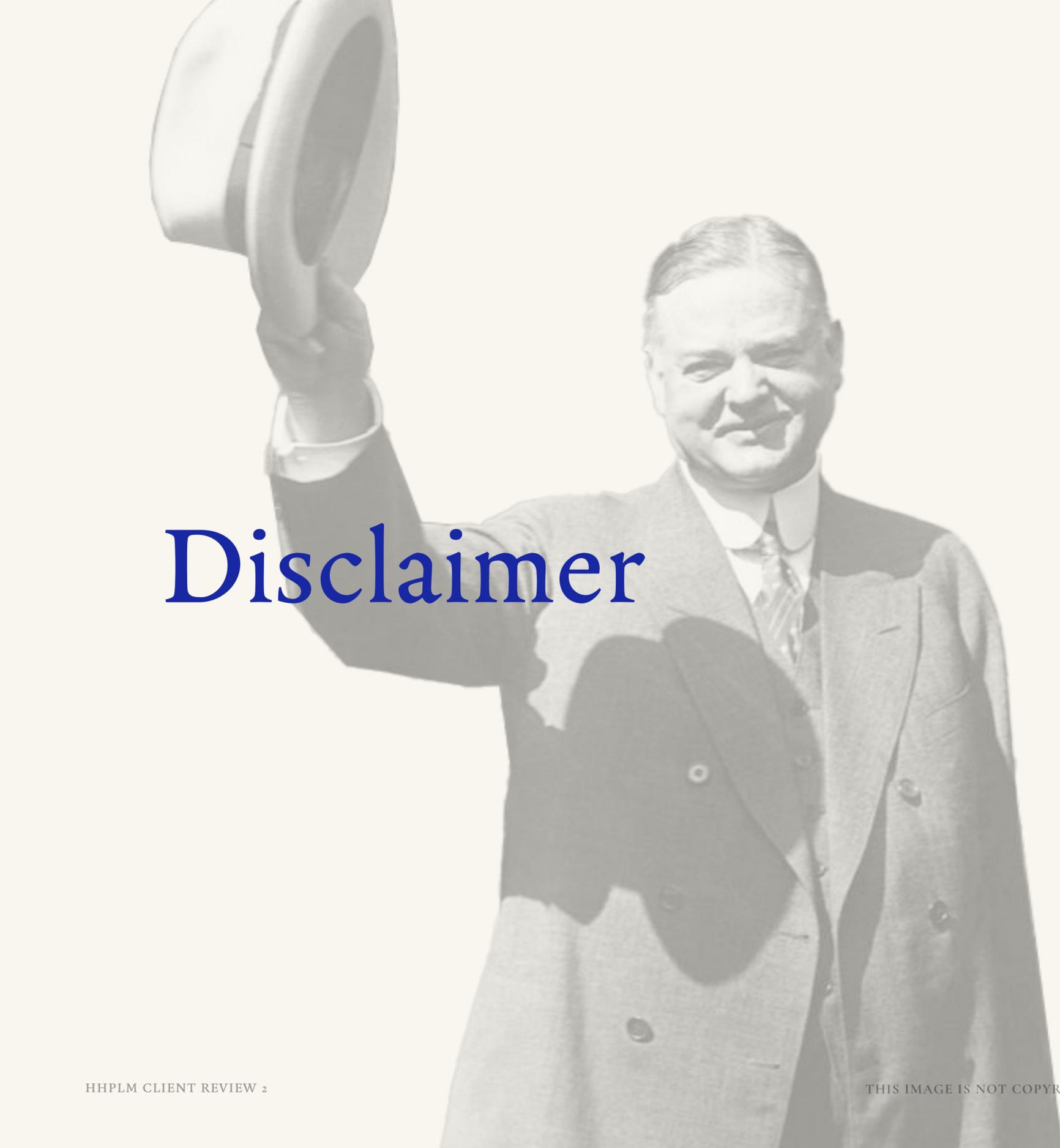
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