

Japanese get a chance to chat up Cleopatra with DVD-powered mannequin

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TOKYO, June 22 (AFP) - Fantasies about chatting up legendary figures have come closer to reality in Japan where researchers have developed a mannequin with a built-in projector that can resemble a face of one's choice.

The life-size, made-to-order "Chatty" is a mannequin with a face that is an empty screen until turned on to play DVD images from inside the body. If one is in the mood for conversation, sound can come from a separate speaker.

"It is a device that can show a person's face, looks and mouth movements," said the developer, Ishikawa Optics and Arts Corp. of Tokyo. "It forms realistic images as if he or she were really talking to you."

Company president Jun Ishikawa said he wanted to produce historical figures such as ancient Egyptian queen Cleopatra.

The firm has yet to commercialize Chatty, which it hopes will draw a market at theme parks and showrooms.

The DVD images will be filmed inside a studio if the model is a real person. For imaginary characters -- or much older ones such as Cleopatra -- the company will use computer graphics.

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