

CRISS ANGEL.  
**Believe**  
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL.

## PUPPETS, MASKS AND PROPS

*"Everything on the stage is charged with magic. So given that we are doing a magic show, we knew that everything, starting with the classic magic show elements: the hat, the chair, the stool, and so on, would be under constant scrutiny."*

— Michael Curry, Props and Puppets Designer

The lines between puppets, masks, props, costumes and scenery are not always clearly defined. A mask may blend with a makeup design or a costume. A puppet may be more like a costume than a marionette or it could be big enough to be on the scale of the scenery.

### Puppets

There are many puppets in the show, including costume hybrid devices worn by the performers, playing characters that have just come out of the coma into which Criss Angel has been plunged.

Many of the puppet characters are animals, and many of them are rabbits – and they come in all shapes, sizes and personalities. Some are cute and adorable, others more threatening and evil. "This gallery of phantasmagorical characters puts forward odd, quirky and avant-garde concepts that we would probably expect to see in a contemporary opera or a fantasy film festival," says Michael Curry.

- At the top of the show, six hidden puppeteers make body parts come together to form the "burnt Criss" puppet.
- There are three rabbits with human performers inside: one small, one medium and one that stands upside down on its ears.
- There are also rats, moles, birds and sinister giants that are built from human bodies – a hybrid of the performer's body and the creature.
- The rabbit that delivers the pre-show announcements is equipped with 11 servos: He is completely robotic and is linked to the theatre's sound system.
- There are five other robotic and computer-controlled puppets.
- An electronic tornado is unleashed at one point in the show that is considered part prop, part puppet, part set design – and all illusion.
- There is a huge robotic flower that delivers the aerialist playing the part of Kayala.

- In an amazing scene there is a downpour of poppies.
- There are smoke machines and lighting devices built into many of the puppets.
- The puppets utilize many space age materials such as carbon fiber composites and various super lightweight structures.

### **Masks**

There are many masks in the show. Masks have the ability to sharpen the characters and keep them present.

- While they primarily help to establish character, some of them may be involved in the illusions: During one scene there are 15 versions of Kayala, all created using the masked face.
- Lightweight materials make it possible for the dancers to perform wearing masks that extend two feet in front of them.

### **Props:**

Kinetics are a major feature of the set design and the props, which are integral to the illusions, blend not only with the set design but the lighting and projections too.

- The chainsaw that cuts Criss in half has a real blade and has smoke billowing out of it. It is operated by a flying performer.
- The Birth Machine and the War Machine are two of the major contraptions: they are not static objects, they move, they spin, they roll, they catch fire, they transform, so they are regarded as somewhere between props and puppets.
- Props and magic have always been strong partners
- The sheer precision of the trick props have been a wonderful challenge.