

CRISS ANGEL. Believe

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL.

SET DESIGN AND PROJECTIONS

"Architecture establishes a close link between structure, space and human beings amalgamating several disciplines to create a live show."

– Ray Winkler, Set Designer

The Luxor Theatre is configured in a classical proscenium layout. Early in the creation process director Serge Denoncourt decided he wanted a traditional theatrical approach to the show that would be very far from a Vegas pastiche.

The sets and the illusions are intrinsically intertwined. To be successful, magic illusions must establish and control a host of details, including color, texture, lighting and reflectivity of the materials.

Set Design

"The challenge was to incorporate magic and illusions into the set elements," says set designer Ray Winkler. "It was interesting to learn about the techniques of illusion. Criss Angel has to put in considerable effort to transcend the technical constraints and present his magic with apparent simplicity."

The various environments in the show are created from a broad range of approaches and types of sets, the scenic moments run the gamut from highly elaborate to extremely spartan. Jeanette Farmer's lighting plays a key role not only in the composition of the acts and scenes, but also in creating the mood and atmosphere of a faraway world. "Through lighting, we challenge the senses of viewers by showing them that we have nothing to hide," says Jeanette. "Then we totally destabilize them by making the impossible happen right before their eyes."

"You might describe the overall atmosphere of the show as dark, twisted, somewhat sinister and a little threatening," says set designer Ray Winkler. "We wanted to destabilize the public. For example, the proscenium frame is richly decorated and full of detail you assume is associated with traditional theatre decor. When you look more closely, you realize that its meaning has been subverted and that the subject matter is not as cute and innocent as it might seem at first sight."

Projections

According to projections designer Francis Laporte, the central concept of the projections in this show is to play with audience perceptions and create a kind of dialogue between the real and the virtual. Thus, the projections help shape the various environments of the show with a Gothic and Victorian flavor. The mysterious mixes with the grandiose, the bizarre with the sublime.

Francis created a Victorian world around Criss Angel that is strange, but with an ultra-chic side to it too, reminiscent of the world of Tim Burton and Terry Gilliam, with

shades of the postmodern and a certain timelessness. His projections are designed to transform the entire atmosphere on stage by changing the image on the backdrop at the click of a switch. They help define the scene, to create the many moods of the show and support the many jumps in time throughout the story.

"Sometimes I give a certain situation greater dimension by multiplying the elements of the story," says Francis. "For example, for the cascade of poppies I created a vast field of poppies on a virtual turquoise sky. My ultimate goal is to give dimensions of perspective and depth. Sometimes I'm aiming for a passage from the virtual to the real, sometimes a passage from the real to the virtual – and at moments like that the projections are closely linked to the work of Criss Angel."

Francis Laporte's objective was not to create confined spaces, but broad environments like the sky or a field or a forest. That is why he opted for composite 3-D images, noting that he was constantly concerned that the technology should never project anything that looked fake or artificial.

Some facts

Projections

- We use 20 Christie Roadster S+20k projectors
- We project onto two seamless screens
- The upstage screen is 30 feet x 60 feet (rear projection only)
- The downstage screen is 20 feet x 32 feet (front and rear projection)
- There are two manually operated projectors on custom pedestals with custom joystick controls much like a camera for the zoom and focus.
- The creation of the Gold Frame involved the talents of 30 sculptors, moldmakers and painters over a period of three months.
- There are seven rabbit characters on the carved gold frame, the largest, the center clock rabbit, measures 10'00" x 10'06".
- The Gold Frame contains automations, special effects and lighting.
- There are humorous references to magic and illusion in the sculpture of the frame with motifs of rabbits and saw blades replacing the traditional egg and dart architectural molding, as well as bunnies in straitjackets on the plinths.
- The crumbling architectural proscenium facade opening is 60' x 35' with layers of wallpaper, brick, plaster, rubble, vines and remnants of architecture.
- There are over 8000 linear feet of laser cut vines (made of synthetic material) in three different patterns on the proscenium and the blue patina wall.