

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®



Costume Workshop

All Cirque du Soleil costumes are custom-made and the majority are produced at the Costume workshop at the International Headquarters (IHQ). The workshop, the only one of its kind in North America, employs specialists in fields as varied as shoemaking, textile design, lace-making, wig-making, patternmaking, costume-making and millinery. In total, the Costume workshop has almost 400 full-time employees.

Renowned Designers

To create its costumes, Cirque du Soleil employs the talents of designers renowned both in Canada and abroad. Here is the list of designers who have signed costumes for all of our shows in performance throughout 2009:

Renée April
ZED

François Barbeau
Dralion and *Wintuk*

Méridith Caron
CRISS ANGEL Believe

Philippe Guillotel
LOVE

Eiko Ishioka
Varekai

Dominique Lemieux
Saltimbanco, *Mystère*, *Alegría*,
Quidam, «O», *La Nouba*, *Corfeo*,
and ZAIA

Thierry Mugler
ZUMANITY

Michel Robidas
DELIRIUM

Marie-Chantale Vaillancourt
KÀ and KOOZA

Liz Vandal
OVO

Research and development serving designers

Research and development plays a big role in costume design. We are constantly on the lookout for new materials or products that are likely to stimulate the imagination of our costume designers. Working with the Workshop's teams of specialists (patternmakers, textile designers, dyers, costume makers, etc.), they produce the designs they have imagined for their show.

There are many aspects to research and development:

- The various existing technologies are of interest to our specialists, who study the possibility of applying them to costume designing. Certain materials, called starting materials, are used as is, while others are transformed to give texture to a costume, create a special effect or even an illusion. Materials used for dentistry, plumbing, aviation or even water sports may be found in the components of one costume or another.
- A technological watch is performed on certain types of products (batteries, adhesives, miniature lights, etc.) in order to see how these various elements can be incorporated into a costume and what effect they would have on the weight or maintenance of the costume, for example.

The production of costumes

In 2009, the Costume workshop will produce more than 25 000 pieces. Each year, Costume workshop artisans use close to 130 kilometres of fabric from around the world. 80% of all fabrics are treated and dyed in-house by the artisans of the textile design team. To dye fabric, various techniques are used, such as bath-dyeing, silk-screening (a stencil-based printing process done through a silk screen made), and direct application (hand-painted fabric).

Hats can be seen in every Cirque du Soleil show and are a key part of the costumes. Like the costumes, they are custom-designed and made in the workshop. To do this, the milliners mould and build the hats on plaster models of the artists' heads. When artists arrive at Cirque du Soleil, they must have a mould made of their head.

Versatility is key in the work of a props person. *Cirque du Soleil's* team of props people must know how to sculpt, weld, paint, mould, sew and saw, be familiar with such fields as mechanics, electronics and plumbing, demonstrate ingenuity and especially have an artistic approach to all projects.

A wig-making team is also part of the Costume workshop. These artisans master "ventilation," one of the longest and most arduous wig-making techniques, which involves building the wig one hair at the time onto a base using a hook.

Shoes are hand-and custom-made for all artists by the artisans of the Shoe Workshop. The leather pieces are dyed, trimmed and assembled on location. Brand new sports or dance shoes are sometimes altered to meet the specific needs of a costume. On average, nearly 3,000 pairs of shoes are produced by the Workshop every year.

With the need to dress more than 1,000 artists appearing in 20 *Cirque du Soleil* shows in performance, and costume doubles also required for each, we estimate that nearly 4,500 costumes are found on all show locations every night. Numerous costume replacements for one show or another are made with great care and attention to detail by the Workshop artisans.

Some interesting facts :

- Moleskin is the type of Lycra most used at Cirque du Soleil.
- Among the materials most commonly used in making and designing costume accessories are an array of composite materials such as silicone, latex, plastics, fabrics, leathers, foams and urethane.
- In OVO which is inspired by insects, the dragonfly's wings are evoked by pants made of veined lace, and the mosquito's stinger by a 'Mohawk' of fine red stems. The ten crickets have detachable legs that break away from their bodies, which gives the impression that there is an insect invasion going on.
- Before proceeding with making a costume, the artisans spend thirty minutes with each artist to take some one hundred measurements, from head to toe. A new system for taking specific measurements in just 30 seconds will be used by our artisans.
- The Bungee costumes used in *Mystère* each have over 2,000 hand-glued sequins.
- The wig that takes the longest time to make is the one worn by the Diana character in KÀ. It takes more than four weeks to make such a complex piece. It requires the implementation of two cones on the top and then it is fully ventilated, hair by hair. The wig is then carefully cut and styled. It is renewed four times a year.
- The Workshop artisans created a continuous spiral effect for the Trickster costume in KOOZA. The same line starts at the hat, goes through the jacket and ends at the shoes. As a result, it echoes the image of a big top to perfection.
- For ZAIA, the Workshop artisans used the technique of sublimation to dye fabrics. This technique consists in setting the image in the webbing of the fabric, thus considerably expanding the colour range.
- In the show *CRISS ANGEL BeLIEve*, the letters "JDS" are embroidered in the collar of the coats of the magician Criss Angel. They are far too small and subtle to ever be seen by the audience, but they mean a great deal to Criss because they are his beloved late father's initials.