

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®



International Headquarters

Cirque du Soleil's International Headquarters (IHQ), located in Montreal, is the unique world-class creative laboratory where the finest creators on the planet collaborate on various creative projects. Because of its role as a catalyst in bringing talent together, Cirque du Soleil is able to continually renew itself.

General information

The IHQ is located in Montreal's Saint-Michel district, (one of the most sensitive neighbourhoods in Canada), adjacent to the former Miron quarry and the Montreal waste sorting and disposal centre. Construction of the IHQ was part of a major urban development project, the Saint-Michel Environmental Complex, in which Cirque du Soleil represents the cultural pole.

The landscaping at IHQ is highly original. Constantly in motion with seasons, the look of the vegetables garden and other gardens evolve just like the company. In addition to shrubs, apple trees and rosebushes, the gardeners also sowed a vegetable garden in front of the building, complete with various vegetables and herbs. Of course the harvest goes to prepare meals at the cafeteria, and any surplus is given to staff.

The Studio

In addition to office space, this part of the IHQ contains three acrobatic training rooms, a dance studio, a studio-theatre, and a fitness training room. Before joining a show, all artists hired by Cirque du Soleil must come to Montreal for a preparatory training session which may last anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. As well as training artists, the Studio Department in Montreal is responsible for developing new equipment and new acrobatic disciplines for all of the organization's projects. Research is constantly being carried out by an experienced team composed primarily of coaches and riggers. When needed, the Creation Studio team calls on engineers and other specialists from leading industries to help it fulfill its research and development mandate.

The Ateliers

All costumes and their props needed for the various Cirque du Soleil shows are created in Montreal, in the production workshops at IHQ. Specialists of every description (including master shoemakers, milliners, textile experts, sewers, lace makers, carpenters, etc.) devote their painstaking labour to making all of the items needed for the shows.

The second IHQ building, called the Workshops, was inaugurated in early 2001. In addition to office space, it houses the production workshops: a large costume shop that includes sewing and fitting rooms as well as space for shoemaking, hat making, and textile design, a workshop for props and special effects, and a set prototyping workshop.

Almost 400 artisans are employed in the workshops, where they are kept busy making more than 25,000 or so items (hats, shoes, dresses, swimwear, etc.) required for Cirque's twenty shows in 2009. It takes close to 130 kilometres of fabric just to make the costumes, 80% of it is processed and dyed right in the shop by the textile design team.

Le Mât

In 2007, *Cirque du Soleil* added a third wing to its international headquarters, to quell a pressing need for more administrative space. The expansion, dubbed Le Mât (the mast), houses eight floors of uniquely-designed office spaces and relaxation areas conducive to inspiration. The building is equipped with a rainwater collection system, which will recover enough water for one part of the complex to function independently.

Artists residence

Since the summer of 2003, Cirque du Soleil's International Headquarters complex has included a residence to house artists who are in Montreal for short periods for their acrobatic and artistic training. The building was designed as part of the development of "TOHU," the circus arts complex in which Cirque du Soleil is a partner.

TOHU

TOHU is the name of the circus arts complex and the non-profit organization behind it. The organization was created in November 1999 through the initiative of En Piste (the umbrella organization for circus arts professionals, organizations, and institutions in Quebec), Montreal's International Circus School, and Cirque du Soleil.

TOHU's main mission is to make Montreal an international circus arts capital, but the organization has broadened its mission over time to include environmental and community components: to actively participate in the revitalization of the Saint-Michel Environmental Complex (the second largest urban landfill site in North America) and to contribute to the cultural, social and economic development of the Saint-Michel neighborhood in Montreal.

More than nine years after the organization was created, a true "circus arts village" took shape around the perimeter of the Saint-Michel Environmental Complex. TOHU will be one of the world's foremost hubs for circus arts training, creation, production, and performance. Tohu is sure to make its mark, both for its infrastructure and for its international profile.

Facts about Cirque du Soleil international headquarters:

Architects: Dan S. Hanganu (the Studio), Éric Gauthier (the Ateliers and Le Mât)

Inauguration: February 1997 (the Studio), January 2001 (the Ateliers) and May 2007 (Le Mât)

Total area of main buildings: 36,600 square metres

Area of grounds: 75,000 square metres

Address: 8400, chosen to echo 1984, the year of Cirque du Soleil's creation