

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 shoemaking, textile design, lace-making, wig-making, patternmaking, costume-making and millinery. The Costume workshop has approximately 300 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 Cirque du Soleil shows:

Renée April	ZED
François Barbeau	<i>Dralion et Wintuk</i>
Kym Barrett	<i>TOTEM et TORUK – Le premier envol</i>
Giovanna Buzzi	LUZIA
Stefano Canulli	<i>Viva ELVIS</i>
Méridith Caron	CRISS ANGEL <i>Believe et Amaluna</i>
Zaldy Goco	<i>Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL , Michael Jackson ONE et VOLTA</i>
Philippe Guillotel	<i>The Beatles LOVE, IRIS, Kurios – Cabinet de curiosités et PARAMOUR</i>
Alan Hranitelj	Zarkana
Eiko Ishioka	<i>Varekai</i>
James Lavoie	JOYÀ
Dominique Lemieux	<i>Fascination, Saltimbanco, Mystère, Alegría, Quidam, «O», La Nouba, Corteo, ZAIA, Banana Shpeel et SeptiMo Dia</i>
Thierry Mugler	Zumanity
Michel Robidas	DELIRIUM
Marie-Chantale Vaillancourt	KÀ et KOOZA
Liz Vandal	OVO

Research and development serving designers

Research and development plays a big role in costume design. Cirque du Soleil is constantly on the lookout for new materials or products that are likely to stimulate the imagination of 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 the 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 2016, the Costume workshop has produced some 14 000 pieces (bodysuits, hats, wigs, dresses, pants, shoes, etc.) and used close to 30 kilometres of fabric from around the world. 92% 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), direct application (hand-painted fabric) and sublimation (a process in which an image is changed from a solid into a gas then transferred onto material).

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, precise measurements of each of the artist's heads are taken by a portable scanner and the milliners build the hats with the help of 3D prints obtained with these figures.

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. Approximately 1,200 pairs of shoes will be produced by the Workshop this year.

With the need to dress 1,300 artists appearing in *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, 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 give the impression that there is an insect invasion going on.
- 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 KÅ. 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 some of our big tops to perfection.
- The Crystal Man is a recurring character in the show TOTEM who represents the life force. His (literally) dazzling costume is entirely covered in small mirrors and crystals to create a ball of energy when he comes down from the sky in a beam of pure white light. The glittering mobile mosaic is made up of about 4,000 mirrors of three different sizes and 155 crystals on a stretch velvet leotard.
- In *Zarkana*, the lead singer, who plays three of the four mutants characters, had her entire body, together with the harness she wears throughout the show, scanned with 225 precise measurements. The data were used to produce a cast that minimized the need for in-person costume fittings.

- In *Amaluna*, Queen Prospera wears a large golden mantle composed of four rectangles on which are printed in sublimation the cover image of GAIA, the book of photographs taken in space by Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté. It shows a majestic cloud system captured at a distance of 350 km above the earth's surface.
- The material of the trench coats worn by the “Smooth Criminal” characters in *Michael Jackson ONE* looks like silk. It is made of a high-end French fabric woven from a plastic material that gives the costume a liquid shine. When the rhythmic gymnasts do cartwheels, their coat seem to hang in the air, emphasizing their graceful, swirling motions.
- To make the Accordion Man’s attire from *KURIOS – Cabinet of Curiosities*, the costume-maker spent an entire week sewing inside the costume!
- To create the Master of Water character in *JOYÀ*, the coral effect on the hand-balancing artist’s costume gives the impression that her body has gradually been taken over by sea whips and other types of coral. It is the result of a long and arduous process of hand sewing pieces of fabric to create textures that could well be found in the natural world.
- The flowers of the Tawkami costumes in *TORUK – The First Flight* require 437 yards of fabric and 120 fishing rods.
- One of the singer’s dresses in *LUZIA* is fit with 98 white, individually programmed flowers, each one equipped with a small motor. When the flowers open their petals, they reveal their red interior, thus triggering the metamorphosis. The dress weighs a whopping 9 kg.
- For *PARAMOUR*, 80% of the costumes are made with sublimated fabrics, which means that more than 1000 yards had to go through the sublimation process.