

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®



International Headquarters

Cirque du Soleil's International Headquarters (IHQ), located in Montreal, is the unique world-class creative laboratory where creators from all disciplines and hailing from the four corners of the world gather to 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.

INSIDE THE IHQ – THE CREATION STUDIO

Since 1997, all Cirque du Soleil shows have been created at the international headquarters also called the Creation Studio. The Studio is a full-fledged creation, innovation and training laboratory which provides a great deal of flexibility to the creative teams working on various Cirque projects.

Artists training

Upon being hired by Cirque du Soleil, performers come to the Studio at the International Headquarters in Montreal for a few weeks or months of preliminary training before joining a show. The majority of the artists undergo artistic and acrobatic training while at the Creation Studio.

Performers come from a variety of backgrounds, including artistic and acrobatic gymnastics, tumbling, acrosport, swimming, diving, dance, singing, music and, of course, circus arts. Some fifty nationalities are represented among Cirque du Soleil artists.

To supervise performer training programs, the Studio employs close to one hundred trainers from around the world. These trainers specialize in such fields as dance, theatre, singing, and

acrobatics. In addition to these coaches and trainers, an interdisciplinary team of highly qualified specialists is made available to each artist, ensuring his physical and psychological well-being. The presence of these experts helps create a controlled and safe environment.

The training rooms

In addition to a physical fitness training room, the Studio houses various acrobatic and artistic training rooms to address the various training needs of the artists.

Three acrobatic training studios:

- Studio A/B: a 1,425m² acrobatic training studio that is 23m high. The room is equipped with a technical “trampoline” 18 m above the ground from which acrobatic and technical equipment can be safely hung. The trampoline is made of 38 km of woven metal cabling;
- Studio C: a 720m² acrobatic training studio that’s also 23m high, adjacent to the first room;
- Studio E: a 785m² acrobatic training studio containing a pit filled with 25,000 Styrofoam cubes (instead of a traditional net), a trampoline and a fast track.

One artistic training studio:

- Studio D: a 361m² dance studio divided into four small all-purpose rooms;

INSIDE THE IHQ – THE ATELIERS

Costumes and their props needed for the various Cirque du Soleil shows are created in Montreal, in the production workshops (ateliers) 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, textile design and a workshop for costume props and special effects.

Approximately 300 artisans are employed in the workshops making some 16,000 or so items (hats, shoes, dresses, bodysuits, etc.) required for Cirque’s shows. It takes close to 50 kilometres of fabric just to make the costumes, 80% of it is processed and dyed right in the shop by the textile design team.

INSIDE THE IHQ – 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.

THE LANDSCAPING

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.

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 15 years after the organization was created, a true "circus arts village" took shape around the perimeter of the Saint-Michel Environmental Complex. TOHU has become 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.

About *Cirque du Soleil* international headquarters:

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

Inauguration: Feb. 1997 (the Studio), Jan. 2001 (the Ateliers), May 2007 (Le Mât)

Total area of main buildings: 387,500 square feet

Area of grounds: 807,293 square feet

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