

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®

IRIS

A JOURNEY THROUGH
THE WORLD OF CINEMA™

COSTUMES

Cut! Print! Sew!

In a brilliant tribute to cinema, the costumes in IRIS are the result of a visual exploration of a broad range of themes connected with the invention of cinema: the taking of pictures and the recording and transmitting of sound and light.

Designer Philippe Guillotel conducted extensive research into the history of cinema to devise concepts which some 250 artisans brought to life in the costume workshop at Cirque du Soleil. It took him three years of intensive research to complete the project.

He searched the Musée des arts et métiers in Paris – where you can find everything from the first chronophotographic gun to the earliest sound projector – from top to bottom. He also screened innumerable films including the works of Alfred Hitchcock, Charlie Chaplin and Georges Méliès, as well as the first films made with Thomas Edison's pioneering cinema inventions.

The costumes he designed let IRIS follow the major stages in the evolution of color in film, from black and white and sepia, through Technicolor and colorization to the deliberately saturated colors of films like *Dick Tracy*.

Giving Substance to the Machinery of Cinema

The symbiosis between the costumes and the technical inventions of cinema is particularly striking in the half-human/half machine 'hybrid' characters. One of these creatures wears a skirt reminiscent of the praxinoscope, one of the first animation devices. Based on the stroboscopic effect, this costume illustrates the decomposition of movement. The circular structure of the skirt reveals – through slots as it rotates – two boxers in action.

Philippe Guillotel created unusual costumes for a wide range of hybrid characters:

- Two "camera men" whose costumes include a camera mounted on their head or chest.
- A "sound man" wearing a large carbon fiber cone.

- A "screen man" whose costume conceals a 135 sq. ft. screen that comes out of his stomach.
- A character whose costume is inspired by the first sound equipment used to detect the sound of bombs in war.

Some of these costumes have a useful function in the show, such as the two hybrids fitted with cameras that capture the action on stage.

"I'm a devoted fan of Jules Verne's universe with all its mechanical gears and rivets," says Philippe Guillotel. "When I see an old wood and brass camera I immediately want to make a costume. And I want everyone who sees the IRIS costumes to immediately think of one word: cinema."

Material Benefits

Philippe Guillotel usually singles out five or six materials per show which he uses in every possible way. For IRIS, these included soft Lycra which can be made to look woolly or glossy, silk stretch nylon, which drapes well and can be printed with reflective designs, and natural cottons and linens.

For Philippe, the fabric is less important than the body of the artist. "You can imagine the best costume of the world, but if the dancer or acrobat doesn't wear it well, the effect will be lost," he says. "The IRIS dancers have magnificent bodies, and it is this beauty that I have tried to emphasize."

That is certainly the case with the acrobats whose costumes were inspired by corsets that were fashionable in the early 20th century, plus a little nod to Roman times. Even though he used a lot of leather for the corsets, Philippe relied mainly on modern fabrics and high-tech materials such as carbon fiber for their protrusions – for reasons of flexibility, comfort and lightness.

Focus on Costumes

- The influence of *Dick Tracy* is front and center in the number that pays tribute to gangster movies. The artists who leap up and down the buildings from trampolines hidden in the stage floor are wearing bright red, yellow and blue tartan suits.
- In the Aerial Ballet number the costumes of the bungee-jumping "diamond women" are studded with nearly one million Swarovski crystals. In the air, the artists themselves are not as visible as the brilliance of the stones, which give their bodies a smooth and bright look.
- The costumes worn by the Icarian Games "Kiriki" characters are an evocation of costumes in the films of Georges Méliès.
- Some costumes pay tribute to various professions and crafts associated with cinema, including screenwriters, makeup artists, cinematographers, carpenters, decorators, painters, electricians and lighting designers.