

Weta Workshop Experience

On Friday 27th November, Joyce Shankar-Kay (TENZ council), Andrea Graham, Michele Peddie and Ruth Henschel were given the opportunity to represent TENZ to visit Weta Workshop. Here is a snippet of their day:

“In November I was given the opportunity to attend Weta Workshop with Joyce Shankar-Kay and two other wonderful teachers from TENZ. A fantastic opportunity to network and collaborate with other like-minded teachers.

As soon as we arrived the conversations started... ”this could be exciting to use”, “I hadn’t thought about that”, “wouldn’t the students enjoy this”. Being able to see the thinking behind and construction details of all of the Weta costumes was inspiring.

When we entered the workshop we came across a lovely gentleman, Warren Beaton, a special effects expert, playing with tin foil. This is something that funnily enough I had already been looking at as a cheap sculpture or quick functional modelling alternative for the students. To see it being used at Weta has made this feel like an ‘authentic’ opportunity for students to engage with. Needless to say, I took many photographs of his work. I began to think about adapting this approach. Students could use cheap items like cardboard to make basic shapes and then using the tin foil to build over the top. Ideas began to flow. We began to think. Students could join a bird to a branch, make tin foil blocks to create a wall etc. A tip shared was using a cheap glue gun with the cooler glue. Smooth the foil with the back of a spoon or create hair with a fork. I look forward to experimenting with this medium and writing a resource that teachers can use within the classroom.”

Michele Peddie, Rotorua High Schools





“On Friday I was lucky enough to be part of a group that visited the Weta Cave courtesy of TENZ. The tour included Weta workshop and the miniature sets for the Thunderbirds Are Go series. It was this set that I found the most interesting. This was mostly because watching the introduction immediately took me back to eating fish and chips on a Saturday night while watching Thunderbirds. It was also very interesting to see the way they used different materials to make the sets. Best of all - to see the very stylish mid-century modern Tracey house up close, complete with pool that slid away to launch Thunderbird 3! Fantastic!!!

We were told that at Weta there is a rubbish skip that is never emptied. This is because it is a gold mine of materials for making mock ups, sets and props. The skip is the starting point for many objects that are made at Weta.

If you look closely you can see the sets for Thunderbirds are made from many found materials. One set was made from disembowelled computers, bic razors and lemon squeezers. It was interesting to see how you can take an everyday object, such as the lemon squeezer, put it in a new setting and paint it, to become something completely different. This is a great example for our students looking at sustainability or just general care for the environment that many objects have a 2nd or 3rd lease on life and can be used in many different ways. It would be great for students to mine the schools' skip as a starting point for their mock ups or their projects. Thanks to Joyce and TENZ for a fun and interesting day out.”

Andrea Graham, St Catherine's College

“I couldn't believe it when I was told I was invited by TENZ to visit the WETA workshop. The other teachers were a great and diverse group and it was brilliant to hear from the different viewpoints when we met later to go over the day's event.

I was particularly interested in the use of found materials as a way to portray sustainable practice as a designer. Model making is part of our design process and it was so interesting to have it presented as a filmmaker's tool, especially in contrast to making 'hero' models that would be later used to manufacture multiple props.

The set for 'Thunderbirds are Go' was perfect for demonstrating the use of found materials as pictured below. Totally believable scaled sets were displayed for us. So believable that it wasn't until particulars of the sets were explained that it became clear we were looking at motherboards, lemon squeezers etc. I had seen episodes of both the original series as well as the new, so it was great to see the step-up in modelling the settings, yet the acknowledgement of original material use.”

Ruth Henschel, Wellington Girls College

**TENZ would like to organise further events for our members similar to the Weta workshop event.
We would welcome your ideas for 2021
<https://tenz.org.nz/contact>**