



Blooploop Innovation Awards 2021

Submission Supporting Material



Wētā Workshop: Unleashed: A Fantastical Film Fx Experience – Opened Dec 2020

Explore worlds of horror, sci-fi and fantasy in the making.

For over 25 years Wētā Workshop has applied its craftsmanship to blockbuster films including *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies, *Avatar*, *Blade Runner 2049*, and most recently, *Mulan*. The Academy Award®-winning design and physical effects facility is also a producer of consumer products and interactive projects, and creator of immersive location-based experiences.

In the heart of New Zealand's largest city Wētā Workshop opened a new immersive visitor attraction that forms part of SkyCity's evolving Federal Street entertainment precinct, Auckland's premier entertainment destination. SkyCity is home to the landmark Sky Tower, two hotels, a casino, live theatre and over 20 bars and restaurants.

“We’ve created this experience with the distinct desire to unleash people’s aspirations to make cool stuff”

– Richard Taylor – Co-founder/CEO Wētā Workshop

Wētā Workshop Unleashed is a wildly imaginative and immersive experience that invites guests of all ages, from the curious to the creative, family friendly to thrill seekers on a guided journey into a fantastical film effects facility.

Part film set, part creative workshop, one fantastical experience.

Key Info

Style: Hosted experience

Hours: 9am – 6pm (hours vary depending on season)

Duration: 90mins (departures every 20 minutes)

25 guests per departure

Key features

- 90-minute guided experience
- Themed environments
- Immersive HORROR, FANTASY and SCI-FI story worlds
- Unique sweeping cinematic soundtrack
- Animatronic creatures
- Physical and digital interactives
- Hyper-realistic sculpted giants and characters
- Horror House experience
- Multimedia shows
- Creator and Makers spaces
- Prosthetics, make up, miniatures, creature effects, concept design, film scripts, and much more.....
- Unique Educational “HOW TO DESIGN, BUILD, MAKE” video content and graphic panels
- Pop culture retail-tainment store (the Wētā Cave)
- 500sq meters of fully themed event space for live performance, concerts, award & cocktail evenings, gala dinners and parties
- Conference room for workshops, meetings, hands-on school group experiences





THE VISITOR JOURNEY

On level 3 of SkyCity's entertainment precinct our visitors are welcomed by a giant mural that represents what Wētā Workshop Unleashed stands for – the explosion of creativity and imagination. Opposite, the main entrance to the experience is chained shut – as the backstory goes, a creature has escaped inside the film fx workshop. Guests have to be snuck in through the service entrance and are pulsed into a storage room lined with boxes and crates labelled with Wētā Workshop's previous projects.

A secret door leads visitors to the Vault of Dreams, which holds small, medium, and big ideas where guests discover that we are working on three movies, a horror movie, a fantasy film, and a sci-fi epic.

Because we want this concept to be as authentic as possible for our visitors, we have fully developed these imagined films: we've written the scripts, we've storyboarded them, and we have gone through the complete world-building and design process just like we have for our blockbuster movies.

Guests move into the 1970's Axminster-style workshop reception where they meet the co-founder of Wētā Workshop, Richard Taylor, and Jeff, our head of security, wannabe comedian, and brilliantly-realised animatronic creature. Visitors find out that the crew are on a break and they are free to explore the fantastical workshop.

The animatronics and prosthetics department are working on the horror movie "Fauna". Cluttered workspaces are filled with animatronic puppetry, sculpting, painting, molding, casting and prosthetic applications. Script notes, director's briefs, and concept designs for this low-budget 1980's style horror movie illustrate how our ideas are being developed for the film.

Guests can perform an autopsy on a dead creature prepared for its set debut, interact with a giant hydraulic creature animatronic, find out how film blood is made and how prosthetics are applied to an actor. They sit in front of a digital interactive make-up mirror and have creature

prosthetics and make-up applied by bodiless hands that appear in the mirror. Visitors who dare may enter into the claustrophobic abattoir Horror film set and squeeze through the creature's lair where something emerges from the shadows to frighten guests.

Emerging from the scare space, guests transition into a moonlit garden framed by cherry blossom and the sound of chirping crickets. Visitors are led "down the garden path" to the heart of the exhibition, the Artists' Design Studio, a peaceful haven that shows the process of fantasy world building through the imaginations of concept artists. They are free to explore, opening drawers full of concept art, looking at walls covered in costume designs and character sketches next to worktops full of sculptured maquettes and models. A 1:1 model of a sleeping artist sits dreaming – this is a space where the creative process is fully unpacked, showing how a fantasy world is being designed for the epic movie "Age of the Ever-Clan".

Discombobulation begins as a giant eye appears at the window. Size and scale are not what they seem, and now we are miniatures ourselves walking on the artist's desk amongst over-sized sculpting tools and a giant clay creature, where an eight-times-life-sized hyper-realistic human replica artist (now awake) looks down at us.

Stepping through a curtain, our visitors find themselves in a canyon and realize they have entered the fantasy world that the artist was imagining for the movie. Beneath them is a resin river, above them a towering fantasy castle. Visitors have arrived on a miniatures film set where a shot of this castle is required for the movie capturing the dawn of a new day on the eve of battle.

The canyon divides two warring factions. On one side the carnivorous Meat Horde encampment where weapons are being prepared, fires crackle and a king sits on his throne of bones. On the other side is the peace-loving Herbivore castle built with exacting detail, with delicate architecture and glowing stained-glass windows, where tiny silhouettes of courtiers move within.





Visitors can sit in the director's chair watching the Director of Photography's monitor that shows a BTS video of how this fantasy miniature castle environment was designed and built by Wētā Workshop artists and technicians.

We believe there's a maker in everybody and we invite visitors to explore our Maker's Space full of interactive activities that replicate the manufacturing divisions of our workshop. Visitors can design their own creatures, sculpt with plasticene and create figures and faces using nothing more than tinfoil and a teaspoon, grab photo-opportunities on the great throne, and even recreate their favourite fight scenes with our safe foam swords.

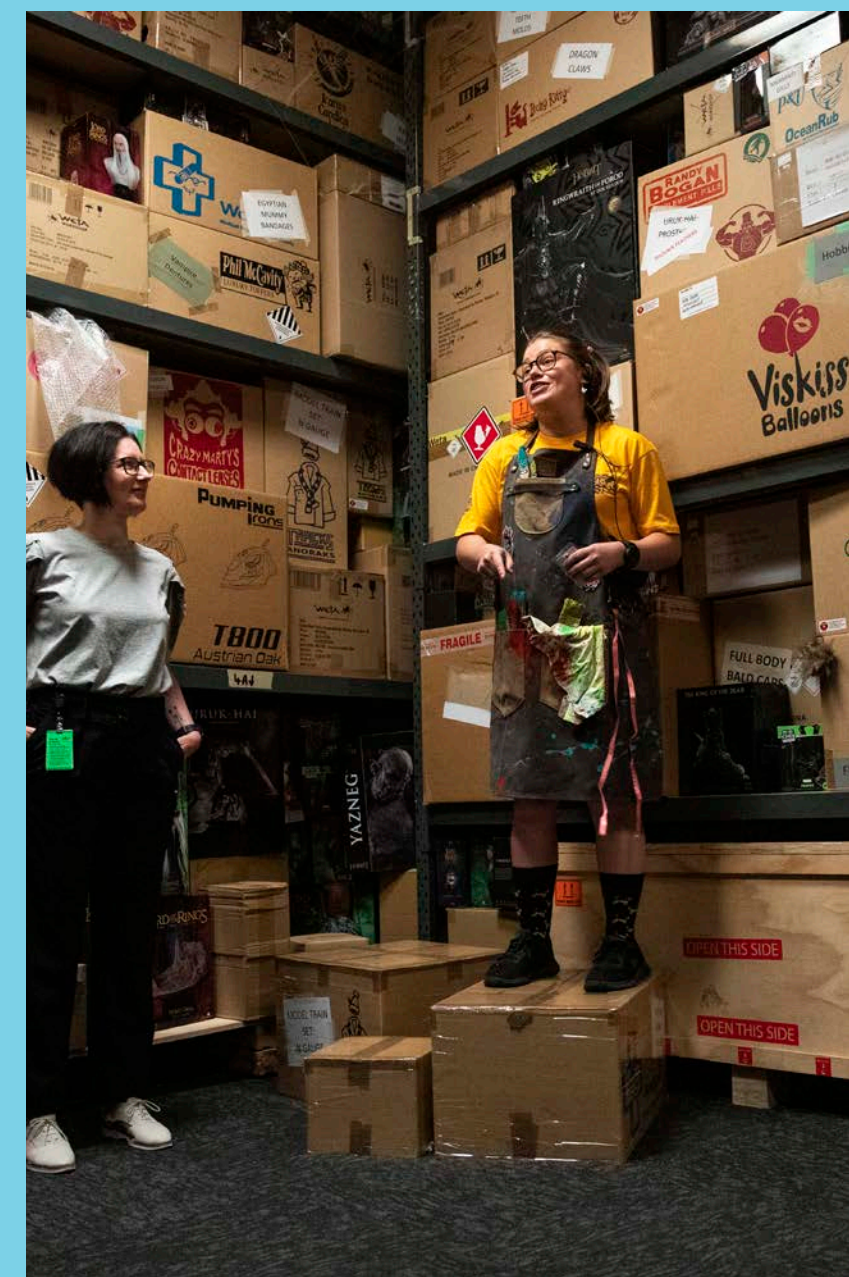
How-to videos show how our craftspeople make real swords and armour, and animated whiteboards take guests through the process of creating creatures and building worlds. Visitors are invited to video all of the content and take these learnings back home with them to continue their own fantasy world-building creator journey.

In our third and final act of the experience the tour guide notes that it's time to walk on to a film set of a Science Fiction Adventure movie, *Origins*. Walking past the Art department's design boards, maquettes and models showcasing the design of the movie, guests discover the trapped remnants of an alien race, a gigantic robot encased in lava and a supposedly dead spaceship trapped in the rocks above their heads.

Projected light plays across the stage and a stunning light display with an epic sci-fi soundtrack begins. The gigantic robot comes back to life and the climax of the film unfolds in a multimedia show that immerses the visitors in atmospheric sci-fi wonder.

As the multimedia show concludes, Jeff the security guard that we met in reception appears on the giant screen below the spaceship. Around him, all of Wētā Workshop's artists and technicians hurry back to work department by department and bid farewell to all of our guests encouraging them to Unleash their creative lunacy upon the world. Roll credits.

Guests exit the experience and are guided towards the Wētā Cave Experience Store.





THE WĒTĀ CAVE

The Wētā Cave Experience Store offers a breadth of experience beyond the merchandise. The showcase of cinematic creativity continues, in amongst collectibles featuring exacting details, high-end prop replicas, and pop culture products, visitors can also see authentic film artefacts up close, all crafted by Wētā Workshop artisans and sculptors.

Video featurettes show imagination and technical skills capturing the passion and detail that go into making the incredible artworks that are displayed around the Wētā Cave. Throughout the space, screen displays show “behind-the-scenes featurettes” of the movies Wētā Workshop has worked on over the years. Watching these provides an insight into the process of making imaginary worlds a reality and movie magic in the making.

For us, the Wētā Cave is embedded in a future of experiential retail that offers a multi-faceted experience where visitors can fuel their curiosity, become part of a creative community, and learn more about a New Zealand company that believes deeply in the power of imagination, creativity and making.





“We’ve invented three original film concepts from the genres that we love – horror, fantasy and sci-fi – to showcase how physical effects and props are imagined and then created for the movies. Guests who come to Wētā Workshop Unleashed will see all the effects we have created for these films, as if they were about to go into production.”

- Tania Rodger – Co Founder Wētā Workshop



VISITOR TESTIMONIALS

“This is world class - an opportunity to see how fx teams add their indelible touches to films.

Wētā have outdone themselves with this interactive approach to creativity.

A truly family approach with something for everyone - even dad can walk away smiling from having his repertoire of dad jokes expanded.”

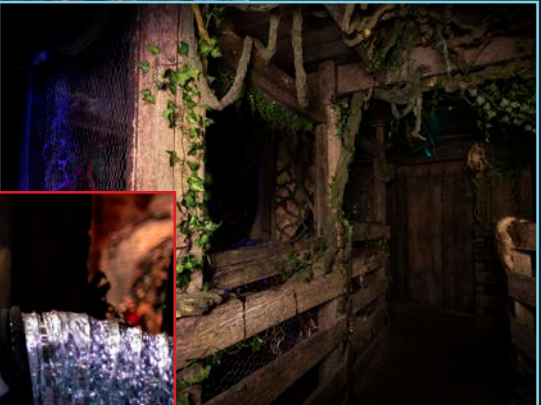
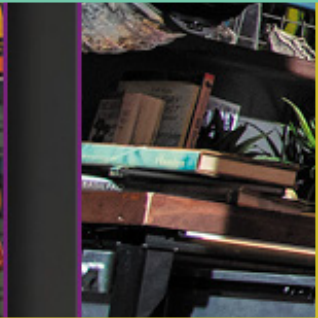
“We loved feeling like we were being immersed in the creative process for multiple films. Definitely do NOT miss this! Especially if you are a LOTR fan, or a sci-fi/fantasy film nerd!”

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS





ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



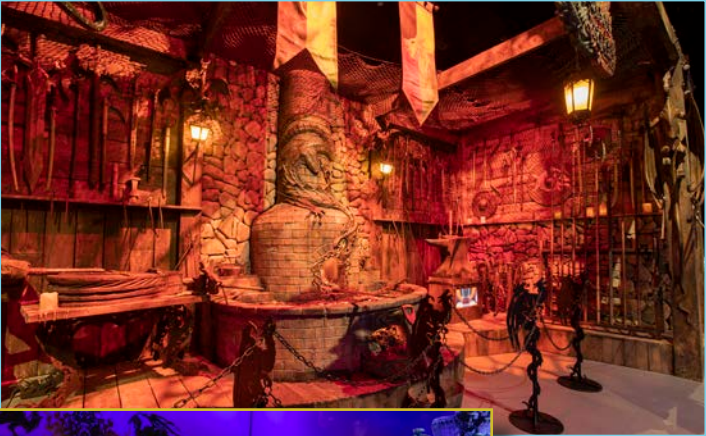
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



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ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



VISITOR TESTIMONIALS

“One of the most exciting attractions in Auckland ... the Dinosaur movie sounds and looks so bloody awesome.”

“What have I just seen? Looking at the models and movie sets from upcoming movies, it's so inspiring that we plan to take a youth group on the Wellington tour, to show them the potential career pathways in the entertainment creativity world.”



ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



VISITOR TESTIMONIALS

“Easily the best attraction I’ve been to in NZ and I’ve spent my whole life here!

It was a wonderful experience, comparable to the Warner Bros (Harry Potter) Studio Tour in London though on a smaller scale. I only wish we had more time in each of the rooms as there was so much to see and do.

I’m already planning my next visit.”



PRESS COVERAGE

Weta Workshop Unleashed draws in more than 25,000 visitors since December opening

Kendall Hutt · 12:48, Feb 08 2021



Weta Workshop has been unleashed in Auckland. The tourist attraction opened on December 15.

Stuff - Wētā Workshop Unleashed draws in more than 25,000 visitors since December opening
<https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/124164013/Wētā-workshop-unleashed-draws-in-more-than-25000-visitors-since-december-opening>



BROOK SABIN

Stuff - Wētā Workshop Unleashed: Inside Auckland's best new attraction
<https://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/experiences/family-holidays/300359066/Wētā-workshop-unleashed-inside-aucklands-best-new-attraction>



Seven Sharp - Sneak peek at Weta Workshops Unleashed exhibition
Monday 14 Dec 2020

Seven Sharp was given a tour by Sir Richard Taylor.



Seven Sharp - Sneak peek at Wētā Workshop's Unleashed
<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/seven-sharp/clips/sneak-peek-at-Wētā-workshops-unleashed-exhibition>

VISITOR TESTIMONIALS

“A must see - Wētā nailed it! This was so much fun! Well worth every cent. The whole family (2x adults, Miss 9yrs and Mr 7yrs) loved every minute. There is so much to see and do. We enjoyed creating stuff and seeing a behind the scenes environment. The staff were super friendly and very entertaining. Would highly recommend going.”

“Amazing experience! The kids loved it. It was theatrical right from the start. ... My 10 and 12 yr olds are still buzzing from it and it's inspired a career in the youngest!”

“If you are interested in makeup, artwork, theater, movies, or any other media art form, this is a great place to get overwhelmed during your 90 minute tour with information and inspiration!”



VISITOR TESTIMONIALS

*“AMAZING experience. Highly recommend.
My kids (11 and 10) loved every minute.*

*Such awesome displays and our guide
“Gabatron” was amusing, helpful and so much
fun. There’s lots of hands on stuff and I can’t
really explain the sculptures etc you have to
CHECK IT OUT FOR YOURSELF.”*

*“What an amazing experience!!
This Wētā display offers you a hands on,
touch and try everything experience
that encapsulates the ideas, designs,
making of props and costumes, set
design, prosthetics, robotics, and
facial recognition software, involved
in the production of sci-fi and
fantasy films.”*

AWARD QUESTIONS

How has your company's idea, product, service, or strategy altered the landscape in the experience economy?

"We would like to think we have. Our Lord of the Rings exhibition travelled the world and broke attendance records wherever it opened. Our immersive Gallipoli: The Scale of our War experience at our national museum has been open for six years, and the equivalent of three quarters of the New Zealand population has visited it. It has significantly deepened understanding of the stories of the men and women who served in this campaign, and has had a profound impact on many of our visitors, leaving them emotionally moved and even crying. We have created the largest immersive museum in China, celebrating the incredible subject of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The client gave us complete creative freedom, and we designed the building as well as creating and manufacturing the ground-breaking exhibits. This unique museum engenders a better understanding for the people of China in this critically important subject. We have also co-designed and built and installed much of the key hero scenic elements that make up the experience for the 2020 Dubai Expo Mobility Pavilion, inviting guests to walk through an unfolding immersive narrative of Human Mobility.

Wētā Workshop: Unleashed is the result of a career-long desire to celebrate and educate as many New Zealanders as possible with our love of the creative process. So many people lose their creative aspirations in their youth and we feel that re-igniting this interest in people is offering them a vital component in a more fulfilled and happy life. It is truly uplifting to see how many of our visitors so respond so warmly and

enthusiastically to this message. We have now introducing an educational program for secondary school children built around the creative inspirations of the Unleashed experience. "

Explain how your company is a disruptor in the immersive entertainment industry?

"We create exciting, original, and memorable experiences that leave a lasting impression on our visitors, and deliver to our clients an entirely original product. I believe our LBEs in our own New Zealand are having a very positive impact on those that visit, giving our country something that is significantly original and exciting for our guests. This has resonated right up to a governmental level and we have become a much loved destination – especially during these difficult times due to Covid."

Explain how your company's idea is bringing the guest/user from spectator to participant?

"Although our guests arrive not knowing what they are going to encounter, they are quickly plunged in to a unique and crazy walk-through experience that takes them in to a fantastical film FX workshop. They can try their hand at sculpture, drawing and armour making, and learn how swords, chainmail, leather costuming and large and small models are made for the film industry.

Without doubt our guests transition very quickly from just being a spectator to find themselves woven in to the story and participating in the creation of the props and performances within the horror, sci-fi and fantasy films that we are making. "



Richard Taylor
Design & Effects Supervisor / CEO,
Wētā Workshop

What will you do with the prize money if you received this award?

"We would use the money to develop the educational offering at Weta Workshop: Unleashed, developing the content and really pushing the quality of our course material for the students."







Ngā mihi nui, thank you!