

# Rural beginnings

OSCAR award-winner Richard Taylor's rural beginnings meant he didn't know the film industry existed until he was 17.

"I didn't see a video until I was 21 years old. I had no materials so I had to dig mud on the back of the farm and would sculpt creatures. It's right there in your fingertips."

Taylor made sculptures out of margarine for buffets in restaurants. Sculptures in *Heavenly Creatures* were made of margarine before he discovered plasticine.

Students from schools in Marton, Rotorua, Wanaka, Gisborne, Huntly and Palmerston North had the opportunity to question Taylor, head of visual effects and creatures for *Lord of the Rings*, through a live video-conferencing network organised by Te Papa last week. They presented work and ideas from projects related to his movie and TV work.

Taylor urged students to "soldier on" and be enthusiastic about pursuing a career in the arts.

"People immediately think you have to be talented but when we're employing people we look for passion, enthusiasm and dedication. You will be knocked back time and time again but success in life is getting up and doing it again."

From the age of 11 he wanted to pursue a career in the arts.

Taylor sees an artistic influence in every career opportunity but he says he

didn't think there was a future in the arts when he was growing up.

"There is a need for more young New Zealanders to follow a career in the arts.

"I'm not a gifted artist like some of the guys I see – through hard work you can do a good job.

"We want to discover other new talent in New Zealand so they can come and join us and push the craft further each year. The hardest thing was finding the skills in New Zealand to make a production. We had 148 people and only 28 had ever worked in film or TV before so we found people from schools just like yours and trained them up.

"It's an extremely competitive world but you have to go after what you want, to pursue your career," he says.

He encouraged students to pursue a polytech design degree over fine arts.

Taylor said polytech provided the right skills to pursue a special effects film industry career. He studied at Wellington Polytech.

"Pursue fine arts if you want to sculpt or paint but to pursue other needs through art go to design school 'cos you learn practical skills of artwork.

"Both avenues are good but they don't both as easily come to the end career of this here (working on *Lord of the Rings* as a designer)."



Boys and their toys – *Lord of the Rings* Oscar winner Richard Taylor and art director Gino Acevedo inspire school students.

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