

The Margaret Lowenfeld Trust

Dr Margaret Lowenfeld (1890-1973) was a pioneer of child psychology and psychotherapy. Her lifelong interest in the growth and development of children began soon after she qualified at the Royal Free Hospital, worked at the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children and did post-war relief work in Poland where her Polish father had an estate.

Much of her work and thinking were based on the use of non-verbal techniques which she developed for children to play 'therapeutically' but which could also be used analytically. The best known of these are the Lowenfeld Mosaic Test (LMT). And the Lowenfeld World Technique (LWT). Poleidoblocs and Kaleidoblocs were later added and all are still available and widely used.

Her work centred around the Institute of Child Psychology in Bayswater, London. Here children seen and treated at a training programme and recognised diploma operated until the clinic closed about three years about her death. I.C.P. students are still active in several countries.

After the 1st war, Dr Lowenfeld established a close relationship with Margaret Mead who used the LMT as a tool in her cross cultural anthropological studies.

Following Dr Lowenfeld's death, it was decided to set up a small charitable trust to continue her work, develop the techniques and relate them to today's thinking about the problems of child growth, development and therapy. In this respect, it is interesting that the LWT is shown to have an increasing application to family psychotherapy.

With the I.C.P. closed because the local health authority withdrew its support as part of the government's retrenchment programme, an I.C.P. trust was formed with identical aims to those of the Lowenfeld Trust. In 1983 after legal arrangements had been agreed and completed, the two trusts were amalgamated. The aim is to extend

and update by research the original work and to promote interest in and used of the techniques.

The first action of the Lowenfeld Trust was to collect all the available material and information, both here and in the USA. A largely complete manuscript – to be a companion to her classics ‘Play in Childhood’ and a book on mosaics – was edited by John Hood-Williams and the late Ville Andersen, with an introduction by Margaret Mead, was printed and published by the Trust.

It was soon possible facilitate visits by John Hood-Williams to the west coast of America where there is now growing use of mosaics and what is there called sand play therapy. Currently there is also renewed interest in New York area by Professor Perticone and Dr Tembeckjian on the use of mosaics in projective techniques. A wide ranging book by these two will be published this year and the mosaics will be manufactured and distributed from New York.

The main thrust of the Trust’s limited resources has, however, gone into establishment of Lowenfeld Research Fellowship. This is within Professor John Davies’ Department of Paediatrics in the Cambridge University Medical School and in association with Dr Martin Richards’ Child Care and Development Group.

Dr Cathy Unwin, PhD was elected research fellow and apart from the research work, she has contributed to teaching and seminars at the University. In order to be better able to do this work, Urwin decided and the Trustees agreed that it would be sensible to train and qualify as a child psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic in London. If resources permit, it is hoped that before long the Unit will continue research, teaching and child psychotherapy, for which there is a need in Cambridge.

Dr Urwin, has completed the editing of Dr. Lowenfeld’s collected papers and has written an introduction relating her original and wide ranging ideas to modern needs and theories. This book, supported by the Trust, will be published by Free Association Books Ltd in 1987.

The trust supports an annual Lowenfeld seminar at Cambridge which is multi-disciplinary and combines research and therapy. In 1985 the main speaker was Mrs M Davies who talked about the work of Winnicott in relation to Dr Lowenfeld and this year it will be Dr R Metraux, a long time a closely associated of Margaret Mead.

We also maintain the availability of LMT sets, the World Technique book and Poleidoblocs and Kaleidoblocs through E J Arnold Ltd. Order forms are available.

The original trustees included Margaret Mead, Dr Dermot McCarthy, Miss Ville Andersen and Dr Kate MacSorley, all of whom have sadly died in the last ten years. Currently the trustees are: Dr H Beric Wright (chairman), Professor J A Davies, Dr M Richards, Mrs Helen Bender, Mr J Hood-Williams and Mrs T Woodcock.

Footnote

Right from the start the trustees decided to do as much as they could with the limited capital available and not to be dependent only on income. This means that unless we can raise further funds, we are a self-limited fund. The success of the Cambridge fellowship has convinced us that this was the right decision, but we are living on capital and without further support our activities will be inevitable curtailed with the next 2-3 years.