

The Lowenfeld World Technique



By Dr Margaret Lowenfeld

It is a welcome sign of the life of the ideas embodied in this technique that other workers we now experimenting with modifications of it. This memorandum is called the Lowenfeld World Technique in order to make clear that it is with the original and basic technique that we are here concerned.

Basic Concept- The purpose of the World apparatus is to provide the maker with tools of a multi-dimensional 'language': an essential and unique quality of which is the power to facilitate expression of concepts and of inner experience which are outside the framework of even 'phantastic' drawing and modelling, although no special skill in the maker is demanded.

The Tools

The Tray: This can be either of metal, or of wood with a metal lining, painted blue inside. The inside dimensions should be 75cm. x 52cm. with a depth of 7cm. It is essential that the tray be waterproof. It has been found important in this technique, as in the Lowenfeld Mosaic test to provide an arbitrary boundary which focusses the attention and limits the output of the maker at any one session.

NB: In certain countries it has become customary to provide for children's' use what is termed a 'sand box' and this is sometimes used as the tray for a World basis. It is usually however both too large and too deep for satisfactory use in the technique.

The tray should be placed on a table of a height suitable for the maker and of a size slightly larger than the tray, thus providing a space on which objects may be placed during the construction of a World.

Sand: This should be of medium coarseness and it is valuable if possible to have sand of two colours and two grades of coarseness. The tray should be presented with the sand roughly even, the quantity being sufficient to half fill the tray. Facilities should be provided to make possible the use of more or less sand.

Wooden spoons, shovels etc. should be available.

Water: This should be available, preferably in two cans or jugs small enough to prevent accidental flooding.

Amorphous Material: A box of amorphous objects should always be available and should contain bricks, rubber tubes of various lengths and widths, funnels, small shallow tins (for making ponds etc.), coloured stick and slats etc.

The Cabinet for World Objects: This should be of convenient size for children to use and preferably composed of a large number of shallow drawers which can be clearly labelled according to the contents of each drawer, and which only reveal their contents when separately drawn out, thus making it impossible for an overwhelming

variety of objects to be visible simultaneously. With this proviso, it is hardly possible to have too large a variety of objects in the World cabinet, since individual variations and subtleties of experience constantly impel subjects to demand specific objects.

World Objects: Detailed list follows: pp. 3-7

The collection of World Objects should be as complete and as varied as possible, but as the worker using the technique is usually dependent for the supply of his material upon the retail shops of the country in which the work is being carried out, the detail of each class of material inevitably changes from time to time as new objects appear on the market and older models disappear. It is therefore important (a) that the basic classifications of the material should be clearly grasped so that the relative values, in relation to the rest, of different objects commercially produced, can be correctly assessed, and (b) that a constant watch be kept on retail shops so that missing categories can be supplied as and when they become available. Broken and partly damaged objects are valuable and should be kept.

Standardisation: It is having often been suggested that accuracy of assessment and interpretation of Worlds and the comparison of Worlds collected by different workers, would be assisted by the issue of a standardised collection of objects. To carry this out, however, would be to place the emphasis upon an unessential rather than the essential aspect of Worlds. Like Mosaic Designs, Worlds are analysed and classified according to their essential characteristics and not in reference to a standard range of objects. The essential in a World is what is represented, and the exact tools used are of secondary importance. For example, a World in which parallel armies are ranged against each other without a battle taking place, would carry the same basic significance whether 10 or 20 Indians, cowboys, or soldiers of any king appear on each side.

In this respect the analysis of a World resembles the precis or summary of a number of articles on the same subject. Provided that the fundamental arguments are the same, one precis will cover them all, even though the originals are as various as books, newspaper articles, or scientific papers.

Record

A very real difficulty in the use of the World Technique is that of making records. In making a record the essential question to be considered is the purpose to which the record will be put – e.g. whether made for the use of the maker alone (who can then develop and get used to his own recording method), or for discussion with others, whether reviewing a single or a series of Worlds for scientific investigation and research. In any case the recording method must ensure:-

- a. An adequate representation in minimum time of any World, suitable for filing with the case sheet
- b. That the form of record will recall the structure to the eye when being reviewed
- c. The possibility of later reconstruction for demonstration purposes etc

It has been my experience that a diagrammatic drawing is the most satisfactory recording method which makes possible and equal emphasis on all objects wherever their position in the tray. An elaborate perspective drawing, even if practically possible, is not necessary for the record of Worlds for clinical use, nor is it desirable, as too much emphasis may appear to be given to the objects in the foreground; this drawback also applies to photography, which has been extensively experimented with, and which can be made satisfactory with certain precautions.

Catalogue of World Objects

Objects	Common Symbol Value
Old men (usually supplied in sitting position without difference between rural and urban)	Grandfather 'wise old man'; the 'loup garoux'; old age' retirement from active life' rest; calm
Rural Farmers- (i.e. men of obvious middle age, usually stout and comfortable looking)	Father: the 'generative' male; (the opposite to the city male); authority, possessiveness
Rural Labourers- with animals or with farm tools, etc	Fertility; 'mucking around'; contact with living things.
City civilians	Father; teacher; authority; 'men' in general (as seen by girls); 'youth', excitement; activity
Youths- youths, scouts- hikers etc. on 'motor bicycles' etc.	Brothers; schoolmates; the self; 'boys' in general (as seen by girls); 'youth'; excitement; activity
Men in specific occupations:	
Clergy and priests	Religion' morality, authority; panache; ritual
'Splendid people' men in historical costumes	History, splendour; social position; glory
Doctor and stretcher bearers, ambulance men	Accidents; illnesses; mutilation; rescue; repair operations; knowledge
Teachers in gowns	'School'; authority, knowledge; fear, admiration
Policemen	Significance varies in different countries. In Britain" reliability, helpfulness, irresistible; authority, the way to prison
Fireman	Rescue and danger; excitement
Postman	Human contacts etc.; friendliness; helpfulness; travelling
Road menders	Destruction and repair; physical labour
City Technicians – (garage men, telephone menders etc.)	Fascination of specialised skills; adventure; 'being grown up' etc.
Diver	The man who journeys into the depths, the unknown; treasure seeker, etc.

Burglars and robbers	'Goodies' and 'baddies'; attack; theft, excitement
Cook, miller, etc., station masters, porters, barbers, people on a station	The 'real' world as contrasted with the 'interior world'.

Children

Children of all ages, standing and sitting.	The self; siblings; 'school fellows' 'mothering', gangs
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Human beings (contd)

Entertainers

Circus people, including acrobats, clowns, ring-maser, the band, lady-on-horse (including performing animals	Fun' adults being 'ridiculous'; grotesquerie' permitted clowning' excitement; physical skill
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Phantasy Figures

Witch; wizard; dwarfs; giant (men on stilts)
Knights in armour (mounted and on foot)
'Space-men'

Miscellaneous

Toreador and bull fighter; Vikings, Robin hood etc	Splendour; gallantry; adventure; rebellion.
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NB: These will depend entirely upon what is current in the country

Animals

Domestic Animals

Cows and calves- sheep and lambs	Maternity; protection; the family
Bulls and rams	Frightening/friendly masculinity
Horses and foals (riding and farm horses)	Work; the family; force; freedom and adventure
Donkey	Nice; silly; friendly animal
Goat	Maleness; aggressiveness; the unpleasant
Pigs, sows, piglets	Grossness; greed; permitted dirt; motherhood

Cocks, hens, chicks, etc.	Mothering (fertility); food.
Angry geese and turkeys	Aggressive, frightening
Swans	Dignity, purity; beauty; frightening
Rabbits- wild and tame	Timorousness; freedom; going in and out of holes; pets
Dogs (of many varieties large and small)	Pets; guards; friendly/frightening
Cats and kittens	Pets; wildness; independence; aggression

Wild Animals, fierce

Lion	Noble; fierceness; accountable.
Tigers; panther; leopards; hyenas; jackals; foxes; etc.	Savage fierceness; untameable, unaccountable
Bears	Frightening; huge; (occasionally friendly)
Hippopotamus	Very large; very dirty; 'sloshy' and nice; chthonic
Rhinoceros	Very large; chthonic; fierce
Bison	Mainly huge, strong and wild.
Gorillas	The fierce male; horrible
Snake and pythons	Sexuality, etc.
Crocodiles	The attacking forces of the unconscious

Birds

Eagle and Vulture	Attack from above; 'impitoyable'.
Stork	Significance depends on the culture
Penguins	Comic; mock-humans

Wild Animals, other

Elephant	Maleness, particularly in reference to the trunk; overpowering but not hostile; occasionally wild.
Giraffe	The supercilious adult; the detached observer
Kangaroo	Speed; maternity.
Camels	Strangeness; romance; endurance
Monkeys	Playfulness; romance; endurance
Deer	Timidity; flight
Hares	Composite, archetypal; hunted; 'mad;
Lizard	Timidity; speed
Tortoise and Turtle; fish	Denizens of the unconscious
Sea lions; seals	

Miscellaneous

Owls; squirrels; doves; pigeons, etc.

Phantasy Animals

Mickey Mouse or any anthropomorphic animal from current fiction, films.	According to the culture. (Forces of the past and the unconscious)
Dragon	
Pre-historic animals	
'Space' animals	

Countryside

Trees (these are obtainable in various material such as metal, wood, etc., in all sizes; (small ones should be sufficient in quantity to create wood and jungles)

Large Western trees (oaks, elms, etc., with foliage).

Large Eastern trees (palms, etc.).

Conifers

Dead trees or ones without branches; logs (important)

Phantasy trees, Xmas trees, flowering trees, etc.

Bushes & Hedges, flowers, (garden ornaments) Grass (flat pieces of green)

Fences, Bridges, Gates, etc.

Rural fences, with and without gates, bridges

Metal railing for Zoo etc., turnstiles

Railway bridges and other

House

Ordinary houses in various size (country and town); churches; school; hospital; prison; public buildings as post office, etc.

Shops (market stalls

Manor house, castle

Burnt-out or bombed houses

Tents.

There should be sufficient houses in number and variation, to lay out villages, streets, towns

Furniture, farm and garden equipment, etc.

Interior and exterior furniture

a) School: Desks, blackboard, children fitting into the desks etc.

b) Cafes: Tea gardens: small tables, chairs, benches

c) House: Furniture of any sort of suitable size, including fires

d) Hygiene: lavatories, baths, vacuum cleaner

e) Food: any reproduction of food of suitable size

f) Garden: Wheel barrows, spades, forks, rakes, watering cans, garden roller, a number of ladders of different sizes

- g) Farm: Drinking troughs, haystacks, beehives, pigeon cotes, hen coops, dog kennels, etc.
- h) Wells: (very important)
- i) Children's playground equipment; fairs

Transport

Road Transport

Mechanical

There should be single examples of the following:

Fire engine (complete with the usual additional equipment current in the country

Police car; ambulance; break-down van, dust cart, caravan

A number of the following, in various sizes if possible:-

Buses and coaches

Delivery vans; furniture removal vans (if possible one with back which opens

Milk and petrol lorries, etc

Ordinary passenger cars; racing cars

Lorries covered and uncovered, tip-up lorries

Motor-bicycles, with and without side-cars

Non-mechanical

Horse-drawn vehicles of all sorts and size, including,

Gypsy caravan, wedding carriage

Hay cart; milk cart; coal cart; ice cream cart; etc.

West American stage coach; golden state coach

Travelling circus carts (cages), bicycles and tandems

Road Signs etc

Petrol pumps, road lamps, traffic lights; telephone poles

Road signs of all sorts, mile stones

Telephone boxes; police boxes, newspaper kiosks

Farm and Road implements etc.

Tractors, mechanised farm and road-making implements, bulldozers, steam rollers

Military Road Transport

Tanks, armoured cars, jeeps, mobile guns

Caterpillar transports, military transport lorries

Railway Transport

Steam and electric passenger trains, goods trains including coal wagons, transport of liquid in bulk, open wagons which can be filled.

Levels crossings, signal boxes, railway signals, stations (if possible)

Air Transport

Aeroplanes of all sizes, military and civilian, including flying boats

Rockets

Sea Transport

Ships should include the following types:-

Naval vessels of all available kinds including submarines

Large liners (in England conveniently called the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth)

Small steamers, sailing boats, rowing boats, Red Indian canoes

(NB: All of the first two categories will be of metal so cannot float; it is therefore important to have a number of boats which will float)

Lighthouses

Miscellaneous

- 1) Broken toys of all kinds (mutilated objects; part objects are of great importance and should always be available)
- 2) At every period there become available commercial objects of passing interest (for instance in a current film or event) which are worth adding to the collection
- 3) From time to time special objects become available from foreign countries which are valuable for giving a feeling of 'otherness'
- 4) Gallows, scarecrows, appear occasionally and are useful
- 5) Grotesque and gross objects of all kinds

General Principles of the Technique

The effectiveness of the Lowenfeld World technique depends absolutely upon the mode of administration. (This statement does not in any way invalidate the fact that the plasticity and variety of the World apparatus makes it suitable for use with other techniques but is intended only to make clear the fact that the type of results described by myself are only attainable thorough use of the appropriate mode of administration).

Mode of Administration

The essential fact about the Lowenfeld World Technique is that stated on P.1. of this memorandum: i.e. that the materials of the technique are designed to provide the maker with a new medium of expression. As this medium is both visual and plastic and moreover a large proportion of the items of which it is composed have a conventional as well as symbolic value, it is essential that the maker grasp the general purpose of the materials to which he is introduced and be prepared to regard them freshly, and to make independent use of them.

As an introduction to the material a technique called 'Picture Thinking' is used, by which the attention of the subject is drawn to the fact that both in ordinary language and in general usage (metaphor and simile, advertisements, political cartoons, comic strips etc.), ideas of all types are conveyed by means of pictures (actual or verbal), and that many of these, although often, as in advertisements, intended to convey serious meaning and to induce practical action, are expressed in

fantastic form. It is then suggested to the patient that he make use of any part of the materials that appear to him appropriate, in any way that he choose. It is furthermore explained to him that what he does is significant both to him and to his therapists, that it will be recorded, and discussed with him with completed.

Discussion

As the Lowenfeld World Technique is a scientific instrument it is of the greatest importance that the each meaning to the patient of each object he employs be ascertained by the therapist. This does not in any way hinder the therapist's adding other meaning gathered from his wider experience and knowledge, to the significances described by the patient, but that does prevent the attribution by the therapist to the objects used by the patient, of a significance opposite to that intended by him. (For example, a cannon in World No.28 of the Demonstration indicated to the maker friendliness and cheerfulness and had no relation to aggression

It is important that the exact position on the tray of each objects or moulding of the sand be noted, as in the sequence of Worlds these positions will tend to be repeated, and it is often only through examination of the series of objects or mouldings that occupy the same positions on the tray that the significance of the original symbols becomes clear.

Direct interpretation (according to any of the recognised schools of psycho-metaphysical thought) is rarely given, but instead the attention of the patient is drawn to the internal connections of the objects etc, used, and the relation between the distribution and use of these in a sequence or Worlds and the mode in which the interior structure of the patient's personality and his particular problems are represented by these means.

Interaction Between Patient and World

Experience with the L.W.T. will show that the making of a world is a psychic experience for the patient, the significance of which lies as much in the emotional effect upon the patient of the presentation that grows upon the tray as in the detailed construction of the World when completed. Careful note should therefore be taken of the effect of its construction upon the patient, changes in expression, facial colour, speed of movement, exclamations etc., as well as the verbal comments made by the patient, the story told but him etc., and recorded with the world.