

Description of The Lowenfeld World Technique, 1954

By 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 multidimensional 'language': an essential and unique quality of which is the answer to facilitate expression of concepts and of inner experience which are outside the framework of even 'phantastic' drawing and modelling, although no special skill 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 approximately 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 focuses the attention and limits the output of the maker at only 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 among, 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 sticks 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 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 mind 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 has 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 sweets. The essential in a flash is what is represented, and the met tools used are of secondary importance. For example, a World in which parallel armies are ranged against each, other without battle taking place, would carry the same basic significance whether 10 or 20 Indians, cowboys, or soldiers of any kind may appear on each side.

In this respect the analysis of a World resembles the précis or summary of a number of articles on the same subject. Provided that the fundamental arguments are the same, one précis 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 with the maker, for comparing, for instance, categories of Worlds for scientific investigation and research. In any case the recording 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 an 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 photo which has been extensively experimented with, and which can be made satisfactory with certain precautions.

Catalogue of World Objects

Objects	Common Symbol Value
Human Beings	
Civilians	
Men	
Old men (usually supplied in sitting position without difference between rural and urban)	Grandfather: 'the 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; protection or strangeness
Youths	Brothers; schoolmates; the self; 'boys' in general (as seen by girls); 'youth'; excitement; activity
Men in Specific Occupations Clergy and priests – bishops, the Pope, etc. 'Splendid People' men in historical costumes Doctor and stretcher bears, ambulance	Religion; morality; authority; panache; ritual History; splendour; social position; glory Accidents; illnesses; mutilation; rescue; repair operations; knowledge

Teachers in gowns	<p>'School'; authority; knowledge; fear; admiration</p> <p>Significance varies in different countries. In Britain: reliability, helplessness, irresistible; authority, the way to prison.</p> <p>Rescue and danger; excitement</p> <p>Human contacts etc.; friendliness; helpfulness; travelling</p> <p>Destruction and repair; physical labour</p> <p>Fascination of specialised skills; adventure; 'being grown up' etc.</p> <p>The man who journeys into the depths, the unknown; treasure seeker, etc.</p> <p>'Goodies' and 'baddies'; attack; theft; excitement.</p> <p>The 'real' world as contrasted with the 'interior world'</p>
Policemen	
Firemen	
Postmen	
Road menders	
City Technicians – (garage men, telephone menders etc.)	
Diver	
Burglars and Robbers	
Cook, miller, etc., station masters, porters, barbers, people on a station	

Children	
Children of all ages, standing and sitting	The self; siblings; school fellows; 'mothering'; gangs.

Women	
General	Grandmother; 'witch'; old age, retirement; helplessness
Old women (usually supplied in sitting positions)	
Middle-Aged farm women with or without animals	'Mother'; 'fertility'; protection care; 'the provider'; femaleness.
Middle-aged women in city clothes	Mother; teacher authority; 'adults'; sisters' women in general
Women with prams	Mothers; nurse
Girls - hikers	'Self'; sisters; school friends; adventure; holidays
Specific Occupations	For Britain: Queen Elizabeth

Queen – (Unfortunately a ‘fairy tale’ queen is not obtainable so a lady in court dress is usually used instead)	Femininity; wealth; luxury; glory; loveliness; social position; history. Illness (positive & negative value); care; authority; strangeness School; authority; knowledge; convention Frightening authority; morality; convention The self-dancing; being looked at; being admired ‘Milk’; ‘mother’; farming; care of animals
‘Splendid People’ i.e. figures in historic dress	
Hospital nurse	
Teacher in gown	
Policewomen	
Dancer	
Milkmaids – (standing & sitting)	

General Comment

The selection of types and of numbers of each type should be so arranged as to make possible the presentation of ordinary families, schools etc. For instance, it is essential to have duplicates of a number of items, for twins, for different aspects of the self etc. The group termed ‘people in specific occupations’ will be found to vary greatly as one or another occupation catches the public eye and models become available. The number of figures in each class is, in general, quite immaterial, although some children will search continually for some specific figure.

Armed Forces

Soldiers in modern uniform Airmen Sailors Red-cross ambulance; stretcher-bearers, wounded men Guardsmen in full dress; mounted soldiers; bands	Aggression/defence; war; fear; excitement; adventure Wounds; mutilation rescue; safety Processions; glory; display; panache; celebrations
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Women	
Women in service uniform (varying according to countries)	Pride/fear; authority; war.
Red-cross nurses	Outside accidents/rescue; care; dependability

Romantic and Symbolic Combat Figures	
(These will vary according to the country. Those given are common in England)	
Cowboys; Red Indians; Africans; Zulus	Good and bad forces – adventure; drama; ingenuity; 'savages'

People of Other Faces	
Chinese; Arab; Eskimo, etc.	The stranger; the out-group; the 'not-me'

Entertainers	
Circus people, including acrobats, clowns, ring-master, the band, lady-on-horse (including performing animals)	Fun; adults being 'ridiculous'; grotesquery; permitted clowning; excitement; physical skill

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

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

Animals	
Wild Animals , other	

Elephant	Maleness, particularly in reference to the trunk; overpowering but not hostile; occasionally wild.
Giraffe	The supercilious adults; 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.	
Dragon	According to the culture.
Pre-historic animals	(Forces of the past and the unconscious)
'Space' animals	

Countryside
Trees
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 or without gates, bridges
Metal railing for Zoo etc., turnstiles

Railway bridges and others

Houses

Ordinary houses in various sizes (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: Wheelbarrows, 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; 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:-

Bees 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 sizes, including:

Gypsy caravan; wedding carriage.

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

West-American stagecoach; 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, milestones.

Telephone boxes; newspaper kiosks.

Farm and Road Implements etc.

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

Military Road Transport

Tanks; armoured cars; jeeps; mobile guns.

Caterpillar transports; military transport lorries

Railway Transport

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

Transport of liquid in bulk, open wagons which can be filled.

Level 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 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 or all kinds (mutilated objects; part objects are of great importance and should always be available).
- 2) At every period there becomes 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

The 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 through use of the appropriate mode of administration).

Mode of Administration

The essential fact that 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 conventional as well as a 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 chooses. It is furthermore explained to him that what he does is significant both to him and to his therapist, that it will be recorded, and discussed with him when completed.

Discussion

As the Lowenfeld World Technique is a scientific instrument it is of the greatest importance that the exact meaning to the patient of each object he employs be ascertained to the therapist. This does not in any way hinder the therapist's adding other meanings gathered by the patient but 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 object or moulding of the sand be noted, as in a 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 of 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 of the verbal comments made by the patient, the story told by him etc., and recorded with the World.