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**MARGARET LOWENFELD**

**TRUST**

**1996**



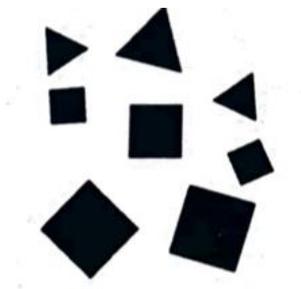
THE DR MARGARET LOWENFELD TRUST,  
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CHARITY REG NO. 270287

## KEEPING LOWENFELD'S WORK ACCESSIBLE

The Trust has put some of its resources into ensuring that Dr Lowenfeld's books remain in print and that the equipment needed to practise her techniques is available. In the 1980s the Trust funded a Lowenfeld Research Fellow at Cambridge University, one outcome of which was the publication of *Lowenfeld's Selected Paper: with a critical biographical introduction* by the Research Fellow, Dr Cathy Urwin.

The Library and Archives of the Institute of Child Psychology are housed with Trust support in Dr Martin Richard's Family Research Centre, also at Cambridge.



**DR MARGARET LOWENFELD (1890—1973)** was a paediatrician who became a pioneer of child psychology and psychotherapy. Her interest in how children grow and develop and think began when, recently qualified as a doctor, she was involved in relief work in her ancestral Poland after the First World War and wondered what enabled some children to survive and flourish despite their traumatic experiences. Early in her career she engaged in medical research (in childhood rheumatism and breast-feeding), and she retained a strong belief in the need for research and evaluation in whatever field she was engaged.

Her outstanding contributions sprang from her recognition that play is an important activity in children's development and that language is often an unsatisfactory medium for children to express their experiences. She consequently invented non-verbal techniques that enabled them to convey their thoughts and feelings without resort to words. The **Lowenfeld World Technique** uses trays filled with sand and collections of toy animals, people, vehicles, buildings, etc to enable children to portray their inner worlds. **Lowenfeld**

**Mosaics** uses differently shaped and coloured tiles to produce a powerful diagnostic and therapeutic instrument; they have also proved useful in comparative studies of children from different cultures. **Lowenfeld Kaleidoblocs** is a psychological test. **Lowenfeld Poleidoblocs** was devised to teach young children fundamental mathematical principles and are widely used in primary schools in Britain; though most of Lowenfeld's work was with emotionally disturbed children, she also understood very well how ordinary children learn. Underpinning these inventions are Lowenfeld's own original theories quite distinct from those of Freud and Klein, about the driving forces of children's behaviour.

In the late 1920s Dr Lowenfeld established one of the first child guidance clinics in Britain in Notting Hill, London. This she developed into the Institute for Child Psychology (ICP) which trained child psychotherapists in her theories and techniques while continuing to be the local child guidance centre funded eventually by the National Health Service. This gave its students a unique experience of the practicalities of the child guidance field. Although the Institute closed a few years after her death, ICP-trained child psychotherapists consequently still form a significant element in the NHS.

After her death, the Margaret Lowenfeld Trust was set up to continue her work and to disseminate knowledge about the techniques that she pioneered.



## **ENSURING THE SUPPLY OF LOWENFELD-TRAINED PROFESSIONALS**

Because Lowenfeld's theories and treatment methods are significantly different from those of Freud, Adler, Jung, or Klein, they are ignored (indeed one could say, anathematised) by the existing training centres for child psychotherapists and, where her techniques (such as sand trays) are used, her contribution is not acknowledged. So the Trust has not been able to look to them for help in securing the continued availability of professionals trained to use Lowenfeld techniques. This has become a matter of great

urgency, because the number of therapists trained at the Institute of Child Psychology (and consequently potentially able to train others) is dwindling, it being nearly 20 years since the Institute closed.

Once again Cambridge University has provided a home. When the new Department of Developmental Psychiatry was established under Professor Ian Goodyer under the same roof as a centre for child and adolescent care, the Trust underwrote the cost of providing a Lowenfeld Seminar Room fully equipped with sand trays, toys, and Mosaic sets.

More importantly, the Trust decided to commit its limited capital resources to funding a series of one-year in-service training courses to equip practising professionals with Lowenfeld techniques. A Lowenfeld-trained child psychotherapist with 25 years' experience was invited to become a part-time teaching fellow in Professor Goodyer's department and to run the courses.

The third of these one-year courses has now been completed. They have demonstrated that a wide range of professionals who work with children (child psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, social workers, mental health nurses, speech and language therapists, hospital play specialists, to name only some) find Lowenfeld's methods and techniques extremely useful and effective additions to their armoury of skills.

These pilot courses have demonstrated that Lowenfeld's methods and ideas still have a lot to contribute to the relief of children in distress in a wide range of settings. What is needed now is to establish a training course that will be more rigorous and lead to an accredited qualification (and eventually a masters degree). The Trust is currently discussing this development with Homerton College, Cambridge which has recently established a Department of Health Studies. What is certain is that wherever such a course may be established, the pump priming costs will be beyond The Margaret Lowenfeld Trust's limited and diminishing resources. So an urgent priority is to find other trusts and foundations to join in supporting this very much needed revival of Margaret Lowenfeld's original and pioneering methods of helping unhappy and distressed children.

## **CONTINUING LOWENFELD'S CONCERN FOR RESEARCH**

During Lowenfeld's life a number of anthropologists, such as Margaret Mead, Theodora Abel, and Rhoda Metraux, were enthusiastic about the potential of her Mosaic Test as a tool of cross-cultural research and published a number of studies using it. In recent years the Trust supported the costs for a study of the Mosaic responses of children of Chinese descent acculturated to varying degrees into Western societies, from children of families living in mainland China, through first generation immigrant families in London, to second and third generation families in San Francisco.

Currently the Trust is supporting a research project at Homerton College to study the way in which Lowenfeld Poleidoblocs is being used in primary schools to teach basic mathematical concepts.

Again the impending exhaustion of the Trust's resources mean that additional funders must be found if the many promising lines of research that are part of Lowenfeld's legacy are to be explored, in particular her wish that the efficacy of her own and other methods of psychological treatment should be evaluated.

### **TRUSTEES IN 1996**

DR H. Beric Wright (CHAIR)

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