

Weather

Closely linked to the seasons, different types of weather can be explored within an abstract context; wind, rain, snow, ice with all the associated visual, tactile and aural clues you can give to reinforce that experience. Alternatively it can be linked to seasonal and/or geographical activities; autumn, harvest-time, a May Queen ceremony, Bonfire Night, being on a beach or crossing the tundra. The following examples have been used within a workshop context;

Sunshine - this can be achieved by using bright, yellowy orange light to create the illusion of a hot, sunny day. If lights are available this is straightforward but covering windows with a thin light material like gauze can also create the desired effect. In addition to the light you can support the idea of sunshine with the following:

- Presenting a slow sunrise or sunset provides a visually arresting event and emphasises the contrast of moving from darkness to light, or vice-versa. If complimented with a wind gong for example, the event becomes magical and powerful.
- Using costume can reinforce the hot, sunny day theme, for example wearing sunhats or caps or massaging with suntan cream (check for sensitive skin).
- Choosing a location that is associated with sunshine will provide activities to explore i.e. a sandy beach, sunny Spain, a summer flowering garden. Include creatures also associated with summer, maybe bees and butterflies, and the experience is complete.

Wind - a totally multisensory experience; it can be heard, felt and even seen as it moves cloths or streamers around the space. Creating an awareness of wind is easy:

- Windmills are great for helping people to understand that, although wind can't itself be seen, its effect can be seen and felt, not only by themselves, but on objects around them.
- Handheld fans can create localised wind and Chinese windfans add wonderful movement opportunities, filling a whole space.
- Hanging white organza around a space and rippling or gently wafting them, not only enables participants to create the feel of moving air themselves, as the cloths swirl and flutter, but also demonstrates the effect of wind, as on a washing line.
- Using electric fans to create wind offers numerous options: it can be felt on parts of the body and blowing hair, it can make streamers dance and turn tissue paper, petals, bubbles or leaves into swirling riots of colour, it can make windmills spin and even blow bubbles. If you sing into the front of an electric fan, it gives the sound a vibrato quality.
- Billowing a parachute can create a windstorm, as it is rippled overhead and brought down with gusto
- Wind sound effects add realism and dynamics to the overall effect.

Rain - often heard before it is seen, rain can be replicated by using a variety of instruments. Even the simple tapping on a soundboard or tambour can give the effect of rain dripping and falling. Ways of reinforcing the idea of rain include:

- Using rainsticks, ocean drums and anklung, which are all prime candidates for creating rain sounds.
- Playing mbiras (thumb pianos) on soundboards, tables or trays gives sound and also acoustically amplified vibrations for clients to feel.
- Vocal sounds can also be used repetitively, drip, drip, pitter, patter etc, and there are many songs about rain if your participants like to sing and vocalise! Using a combination of related sounds at the same time will also create an ever changing soundscape.
- As always, using costume adds another dimension when exploring this topic - rainhats, wellies, cheap, coloured plastic ponchos for example.
- Hanging blue/green bead, fringed or stripped plastic curtains can be used to indicate sheets of rain falling and are greatly enjoyed by participants as they touch and pass through them, encouraging movement.
- Clear water gels look and feel exactly like raindrops and catch the light beautifully. They also behave like rain when dropped and go dancing across the space or over boards. They can be rolled down clear plastic corrugated sheets, but be careful to catch them at the bottom!

- Umbrellas are an obvious resource when exploring 'rain'. They are good for sheltering beneath, listening to the sound of rain pattering on them, sharing shelters, encouraging movement, spinning and twirling. For an enhanced effect, tape stripped plastic or silver space blanket around the edge of transparent umbrellas. These look and sound like flurries of rain when shaken and twirled.

Ice - Exploring ice can be done in a variety of ways, giving totally different experiences, though a good starting point is to give bowls of actual ice-cubes for people to feel on fingers and toes.... Brrrr! Alternatively the clear/blue plastic variety could be used as these won't melt. Some other ideas:

- Think about costume - furry or woolly bobble hats and scarves can give a variety of tactile experiences.
- Mirrors can be used to create the reflective surface of ice, to slide over, to roll gels/balls over or to see yourself and others in.
- Icebergs can be made from layering stretchwrap over a white pipe frame. These have the translucent quality of ice and could be lit from inside for added effect. Alternatively, building icebergs and igloos with empty white boxes is great fun and provides a cooperative activity which many enjoy.
- Hanging chimes and metallic sounds seem to echo the icy wastelands of the tundra.
- Including an appropriate character i.e. The Snow Queen, in your iceworld can add another dimension to the experience.
- The use of furs, blankets and rugs to keep warm in this environment allows the creation of a safe place and further exploration of textures.
- Ice-pops provide an icy treat to taste, though many prefer them to melt before eating.

Snow - A favourite element in which to immerse oneself! So much fun, with many cheap resources available in the shops around December. Costume and furs are a must in this environment.

- A soft, safe, snowy landscape can easily be created with cheap double quilts strewn across the floor, perhaps covered with white kingsize sheets for easy washing. This enticing giant bed of snow draws even the most reluctant to the floor, where participants can explore crawling, rolling and playing together.
- Kapok material provides another snowy resource. You can use mosquito net 'tents' to contain large quantities of it, within which clients can bury themselves, enjoy the soft fluffiness or just rest.
- Snowballs can be replicated with white balloons, polystyrene balls of varying sizes and ping-pong balls. They are all light and will not harm others when thrown, or smash when dropped. Have some fun!
- Snowflakes hanging from bare branches around a space can enhance a snowy forest and help create a snow scene. They can be made in the old fashioned way, by snipping folded circles of white paper, or you could use doilies, or snow shapes easily found in pound shops around Christmas.
- For snow you can use polystyrene chips, a cheap packaging resource, which when dropped from a height, float to the ground like snowflakes. There are many kinds of decorative snow available. The powdery snow feels amazing when offered in large quantities and contained in a large plastic tray. Snow can also be bought in the form of snow blankets, which glitter and sparkle in the light. Snow globes are also fascinating objects to enjoy.
- Snow tube lights, when hung in trees are another way of enhancing the space and reinforcing the theme.
- Try using a mirror ball to send white snow swirling around the space like a blizzard.
- Travelling over snow provides another activity - perhaps riding a sledge, playing bells and singing as you go, or simply skating over a mirror lake, but take care and help each other. Frozen icy surfaces are beautifully made using sheets of stretchwrap taped to the floor.

Links

Umbrellas (Prop)
Parachute (Prop)
Beach (Activities)

Workshops - Rainforest, Spirit of the Wind, Trubloff Pt 1, Head in the clouds, Snow Dome

Videos

Rainforest Rain

Rainforest Rainstick

Group fans

Wind machine

Wind silk

Clouds

Vibraphone in the Clouds