

## Children and the elements

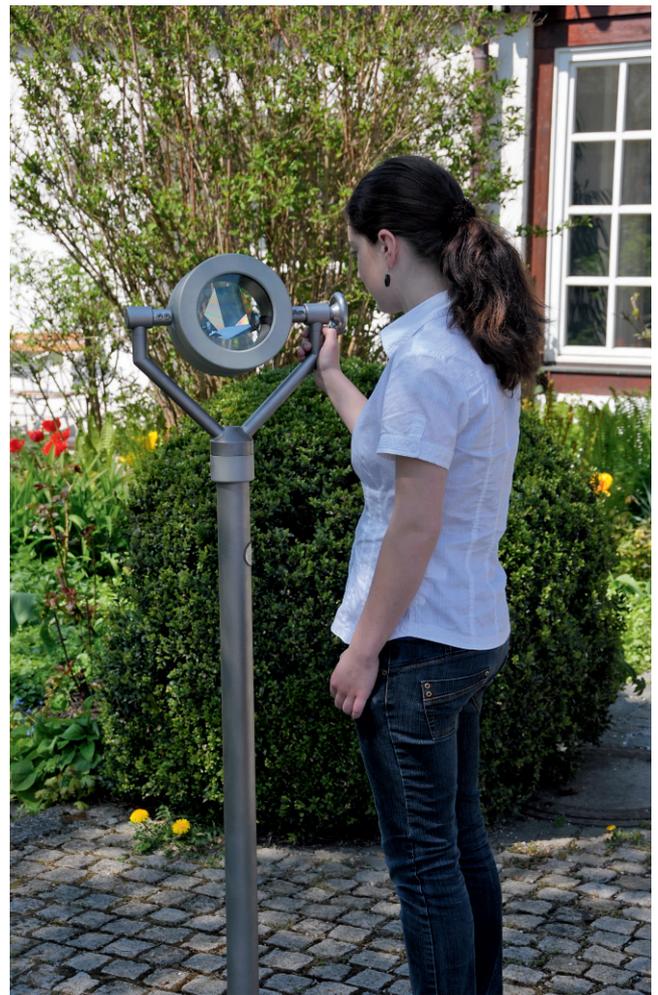
Given the opportunity, healthy children are willing to try out all kinds of things. This great quality makes them open to all aspects of life. In order to participate in everything on offer, they first need a stable foundation out of which they can operate.

Alongside many other aspects, the contact with the four elements, fire, water, air and earth and, according to Chinese knowledge also wood and metal, represent essential building blocks of life. All of creation is made up of these elements but can also be said to generate them. The elements are unified in every mineral, every plant, in animals and in people. They work together holistically and are the basis of our life.

For children, as people with their full potential still intact, the conscious or unconscious contact with the elements is an essential part of life. Because play is what principally determines a child's sense of self, play spaces, play opportunities and play offers should be designed in such a way that the elements can be experienced.

Using the example of water makes this concern particularly clear. The earth, our living environment, is three-quarters covered by water; people themselves are made up of 75 % of this element. This means water, in all its manifestations and effects, is of utmost importance and should be made accessible to children as a field of experience. They want to play with it, touch it and observe it. And children should also have the possibility of digging in the earth and building with sand.

They need the experience of the lofty heights, the swinging and climbing and they also need to experience the element of fire. This is not easy to achieve in public play spaces. Its origins however can be experienced, worked with and explored in the form of light games. This has the effect of strengthening mankind's relationship to their roots.



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