



**LS Lowry: Modern**

**Life**

**A Life of Drawing**

**Large Print Guide**

## **A Life of Drawing**

As a child, LS Lowry remembered 'always sketching and doing little bits of drawings'. Much as he loved oil paints, his favourite medium was soft graphite pencil. Over the course of his career he also used chalks, charcoal, pastels, felt tip pen, biro and watercolour.

For over 20 years, from 1905, Lowry attended evening classes in drawing, first at Manchester Municipal School of Art and then at Salford School of Art. This was a traditional training: students began with anatomical studies, then drew plaster casts of antique sculptures (to study the effects of light and shade) and, when they had reached the required standard in these disciplines, they joined the life drawing class. When Lowry did not have the life class model in front of him his figures were more stylised and he decided to embrace this, leading to the distinctive, recognisable figure style he is identified with today.

Many of Lowry's sketches were made on scraps of paper he had to hand at the time – envelopes, private view invitation cards or even bank statements. Some are such brief notes of what he has seen that it can be hard to decipher what they represent but they offer a fascinating insight into his working methods.

# Drawing from the Antique, 1909

Pencil on paper

On loan from a private collection

## Drawing from the Antique, 1909

Pencil on paper

When Lowry attended art classes, drawing from plaster casts was an essential part of the training. Art schools had collections of copies of antique marble sculptures for this purpose. Lowry recalled, 'I took Preparatory Antique, Light and Shade, and then, after a time, the Antique Class, and when they thought I was sufficiently advanced in Antique I went into the Life Class.'

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## Nude from the Antique, around 1911

Pencil on paper

Lowry used pencil to draw this statue of *Germanicus* whereas Valette's version is in charcoal. Otherwise, Lowry's drawing follows his teacher's example very closely. Valette liked to work alongside his students, correcting and commenting on their sketches.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

## Nude from the Antique by Adolphe Valette, undated

Charcoal on paper

This drawing is the only work in The Lowry Collection not by LS Lowry. It shows the work of Lowry's teacher alongside identical subject matter by his pupil.

When Valette arrived in Manchester, in 1904, he enrolled as a student at Manchester Municipal School of Art but his skill as a draughtsman was swiftly recognised and he was invited to apply for the post of Master of Painting and Drawing. He taught the life drawing class Lowry attended for many years: '... he gave me the feeling that life drawing was a very wonderful thing... I had not seen drawings like these before...and they helped me very much. They were great stimulants.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

## Seated Male Nude, about 1914

Pencil on paper

This drawing is inscribed '8 hours' showing how long it took to complete as a student exercise. The drawing to the right, *Leaning Girl in a Shift Dress*, is inscribed '5 mins', showing what could be achieved in a shorter period of time. It frustrated Lowry's that many people thought he was self-taught: 'I'm sick of it ... I did the life drawing for twelve solid years.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Leaning Girl in a Shift Dress, undated

Pencil on paper

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry



TOP

## Head of a Girl (life model), undated

Pencil on paper

Although Lowry kept many of his early life drawings he did not necessarily look after them carefully. This drawing has been torn along the bottom, creased and spattered with red paint. Focussing on head and shoulders, Lowry has captured something of the sitter's individuality in a detailed study.

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BOTTOM

## Reclining Nude (facing left), about 1906

Pencil on paper

In contrast with the drawing above, this full-length nude is completed in outline with only the main areas of light and shade blocked in. Lowry because he believed that, 'long years of drawing the figure is the only thing that matters. If you can draw the life, you can draw anything.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

## Studies of Muscular Figures, undated

Pencil on paper

As well as life drawings, Lowry covered sheets of paper with figure studies. These included sketches of fellow students or characters seen on the street. This constant observation of people and places became a lifelong habit.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

## Anatomical Studies, about 1919-20

Coloured pencil and pencil on paper

Two pages from a group of anatomical studies originally bound together in a notebook and made by Lowry as a student. Lowry kept this notebook throughout his life. Studying anatomy ensured students understood, for example, how the limbs were connected to the body, what happened when a figure moved and how weight was distributed in numerous poses.

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## Girl with Bows, about 1973

Crayon and pencil on paper

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## Girl with Bows in a Corset and Petticoat, undated

Pencil on paper

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BOTTOM

## Girl with Bows with her Head to One Side, Undated

## Girl in Bows with High Heels, undated

Pencil on paper

Lowry's 'mannequin' drawings were found after his death. They depict women in an exaggerated, restrictive version of a ballet costume. The female form is elongated by tight bodices, breasts are pushed up and exposed and huge collars or bows force the figures' heads into uncomfortable positions. These are probably private drawings, not intended for exhibition, though many of them, like *Girl with Bows in a Corset and Petticoat*, are highly finished.

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## Figures outside a Cotton Mill, 1922

Pencil on paper

Lowry's early drawings of industrial scenes include figures which are drawn in outline, sometimes in exaggerated walking or running poses in an attempt to add a sense of movement. He recalled being 'worried at first, because when I drew from life they looked alive, and when I drew them out of my head they didn't.'

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## The Spinners' Arms, about 1920

Pencil on paper

Eventually Lowry decided to make his figures '... half unreal. Had I drawn them as they are, it would not have looked like a vision. It would have been anybody's view of Manchester.' His mature figure style has become instantly recognisable. Looking back, he said, 'I couldn't have done them without my academic training.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

## Minimal Drawing of a Girl, 1966

Pencil on paper

This sketch is inscribed 'LS Lowry Carlisle 2 April 1966', recording exactly where and when it was made. The girl is little more than a single pencil line, making her one of Lowry's most abstract human figures, but her stooped pose is captured convincingly. The drawing was probably made when Lowry visited his friends the Reverend Geoffrey Bennett and his wife Alice, who moved to Carlisle in the spring of 1966. On the back of the drawing Geoffrey has written, 'Minimal drawing of a girl drawn especially for Alice Bennett.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted in memory of Shirley Bennett, niece of Geoffrey and Alice Bennett who were close friends of Mr Lowry's for 50 years

## St Simon's Church, about 1927

Pencil on the reverse of a torn manila envelope

## A Street Scene (St Simon's Church), 1928 and 1927

Oil on board and pencil on paper

Lowry's first sketches were often made on scraps of paper he had to hand in his pocket. Not all of them developed into larger, finished works but these three pictures show a clear path from first impressions to final oil painting.

The first drawing was made at his father's suggestion: 'You'll really have to go and see St Simon's Church, it's your cup of tea and it's going to come down very soon.' The church was demolished only a few months after Lowry made this study on site.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

## Great Ancoats Street, Manchester, 1930

Pencil on paper

In this drawing an unremarkable street becomes a classic Lowry scene. Using his favourite medium (a soft graphite pencil) Lowry has also employed some of his favourite techniques: working over areas repeatedly to create a rich, velvety tone and smudging marks with his finger to create smoke or highlights.

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## Sketch of Stately Home, about 1930

Pencil on paper

Lowry's initial sketches often reveal changes of mind and alterations. Here his first attempt at capturing the building, and the long avenue leading to it, have been scored through as unsatisfactory and a second drawing started on the lower page. The location may be Grantley Hall near Ripon, North Yorkshire

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BOTTOM

## A Sketch of the Thames from Whitehall Court, undated

Pencil and coloured pencil on paper

Some of Lowry's sketches made on the spot are quickly annotated with notes about colour and the detail of buildings. These acted as useful reminders when he referred to the drawing again in his workroom. In this drawing he has also noted details of the structure of the bridge for future reference.

On loan from a private collection



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## Eccles Railway Station, 1963

Blue ballpoint pen and pencil on paper

## Study for Eccles Town Hall, 1963

Black ballpoint pen on paper

Lowry's first sketches of a location are often so minimal that they record little more than the basic outline of the shape of a building. This is the case in his drawing of Eccles Railway Station. The view of the town hall has additional details of windows and the main door but still captures little more than the basic shape.

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BOTTOM

## Sketch for Eccles Railway Station, 1963

Ballpoint pen on paper

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Eccles Town Hall, 1963

Pencil on paper

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Adopt a Lowry: adopted to commemorate the ruby wedding anniversary of The Lowry's Silver Patrons, David and Veronica Yates

BOTTOM

Eccles Railway Station, 1963

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

## Postcard of the Bass Rock

### Study for the Bass Rock, undated

Pencil and black ink on paper

Lowry made numerous drawings on the spot but he also often used postcards or photographs to help in his work. Friends regularly sent postcards of landmarks around the country, which might interest him, or took photographs as he did not own a camera himself.

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

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## Landscape with House, 1952

Watercolour on paper

By his own estimation, Lowry painted only a few watercolours, most of them landscapes. All of them date from the 1950s when he borrowed a set of watercolour paints from a friend. He did not use this medium for long, deciding that watercolours ‘... don’t really suit me [they] dry too quickly.’

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

## Wet Earth, Swinton, 1920

Pastel on paper

Lowry made two pencil drawings of Wet Earth Colliery, one of several coal mines within walking distance of his home in Pendlebury, along with this colour version in pastel. Like watercolour, it was medium he used only rarely: ‘You can’t get weight in pastels ... Pastel is too fluid. Pastel is a thing you can play about with and you can’t with oil.’

The Lowry Collection, Salford

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## Canterbury, undated

Chalk on paper

Drawn on brown paper, Lowry's elevated view of rooftops in Canterbury, with the cathedral looming in the distance, is loosely sketched using black and white chinks. Working with chalk seems to have encouraged Lowry to draw rapidly, using short, brisk marks to capture the scene.

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BOTTOM

## Garlinge, Kent, 1912

Chalk on paper

Using pale green tinted paper, Lowry has left the foreground of this drawing almost empty, suggesting an expanse of grass. Similarly, he has blocked in only the outline of the trees' shapes above the tree trunks, this lack of detail helping to suggest a dense mass of green leaves.

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

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## Untitled (Group of Dogs), 1966

Felt tip pen on notepaper from The Dragon Hotel, Swansea

When felt tip and ballpoint pens became widely available later in Lowry's life, he made use of them in his drawings. This example has retained its original colour but the composition of the ink in other felt tip pens he used has caused the drawings to change colour over the years so that they now appear brown or green, rather than black.

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

BOTTOM

## Group of Figures, 1966

Ballpoint pen on the reverse of a menu from the De Moorcock Inn, Waddington, Clitheroe, dated 8 May 1966

According to friends, Lowry got rid of unwanted callers by saying he wasn't the artist, he was his brother, Fred. When dining with his friend, Frank Mullineux, and Frank's family, Lowry doodled on the back of the menu. Signing it 'F Lowry' he gave it to Frank's daughter saying, 'Lots of people have an LS Lowry, nobody has a Fred Lowry.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

## Untitled (A Mill), about 1960

Black ballpoint pen on paper

Although this sketch appears to have been drawn quickly, the shapes of the mill, its windows, and the crowds of people moving in front of it are clear. Although by the 1950s Lowry claimed to be tired of painting and drawing the industrial scene, he never gave up this subject matter completely.

The Lowry Collection, Salford