



**LS Lowry: Modern
Life
City Lives
Large Print Guide**

City Lives

Workers streaming into, or out of, mills have become classic Lowry images. He loved watching people - outside factories, at fairgrounds, football matches or busy markets. As clerk and rent collector for the Pall Mall Property Company, Lowry visited tenants in some of the poorer districts of Manchester. Along with parts of neighbouring Salford, these areas provided much inspiration for his work. Wherever he travelled, he was drawn to similar places: '... alas my recreation seems to have developed into drifting amongst all the back streets etc I can come across.'

While some Salford scenes are reasonably accurate depictions of specific locations, most of Lowry's industrial scenes are invented, bringing together real and imagined details to create sprawling composite urban landscapes. The people within them often seem ground down by what he described as 'the battle of life', meaning their everyday struggle to cope and survive in the world. In his later work individuals are often plucked from the crowd and highlighted in small, enigmatic groups or as single figures. 'All my people are lonely. Crowds are the most lonely thing of all. Everyone is a stranger to everyone else.'

Coming from the Mill, 1930

Oil on canvas

In a letter to Salford Museum & Art Gallery Lowry wrote, 'It gives me great pleasure that Salford have bought this picture - for I have always thought it was my most characteristic mill scene.'

The painting is based on an earlier pastel drawing Lowry made in about 1917 which was one of his first composite industrial scenes. As with all of Lowry's best known works *Coming from the Mill* is very carefully constructed, the figures leading the viewer's eye from scene to scene within the painting.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

The Tower, 1926

Pencil on paper

Lowry made a number of drawings of the older, quiet corners of Salford in the 1920s. Despite their apparent accuracy, he rearranged some of the views, in some instances adding structures that did not exist, such as the tower shown here.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

Francis Terrace, Salford, 1956

Pencil on paper

Francis Terrace was built in the 1850s. Like some other streets in Salford it was flagged, self-contained and overlooked the street below. The terrace was demolished in 1959.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Ariane Herrick

Market Scene, Northern Town, 1939

Oil on canvas

This view is based on Pendlebury Market, close to the artist's home. A classic Lowry crowd scene, it shows people at their leisure rather than travelling to and from work. Mostly women, the characters engage with the stallholders rather than with each other. Everyone is absorbed in their own activities and only a handful of individuals look out directly at the viewer.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Industrial Landscape, 1953

Oil on canvas

Lowry's industrial scenes rarely depict specific locations. His large panoramic views are composites, part real and part imagined. Some features recur, for example the distinctive shape of particular church spires or of Stockport viaduct. The overall impression is of a vast blighted landscape dominated by smoking chimneys and flooded land and populated by tiny figures.

'Most of my land and townscape is composite ... Made up; part real, and part imaginary ... bits and pieces of my home locality. I don't even know I'm putting them in, They just crop up on their own, like things do in dreams.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford, purchased with the assistance of the V&A

Purchase Grant Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and The Art Fund

Punch and Judy, 1943

Oil on canvas

Lowry places the Punch and Judy booth in the background of his composition but the red and white striped cloth is so distinctive that the focus of the crowd's interest is easily identified. Andras Kalman, Lowry's friend and gallery owner, commented '... it's odd putting the theme to the side, but then perhaps that's why it's called a 'sideshow!'.

On loan from a private Liechtenstein Collection

TOP

The Flat Iron Market, about 1925

Pencil and chalk on paper

The triangular plot of land on which the market stood gave the location its name. Although the market closed in 1939, Sacred Trinity Church, at the centre, and the building on the right, formerly a police station, still stand.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Simon Pedley and Nancy Kelsall

BOTTOM

Newtown Mill and Bowling Green, about 1928

Pencil on paper

Newtown Mill was very close to Lowry's home on Station Road in Pendlebury: 'All my material was on my doorstep.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Judith Rose

The Lake, 1937

Oil on canvas

Lowry's most desolate industrial landscapes are bleak scenes of flooded devastation where human figures are dwarfed by their surroundings. Although individual buildings are sometimes recognisable from local landmarks, these are imagined scenes, combining mills, collieries, church spires and smoking chimneys in a composite, panoramic view. The stagnant 'lake' of water at the centre of the view derives from images of the River Irwell which frequently flooded in winter.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

The Steps, Peel Park, Salford, 1930

Pencil on paper

Peel Park is one of the most important locations in Lowry's work and a subject he returned to repeatedly in the 1920s. 'From the start I have been very fond of this view and have put it in many paintings. You know that I never paint on the spot, but look for a long time, make drawings and think.' The park was Salford's largest green space, and a focal point for the city's residents, especially on Sundays and holidays.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

View of Peel Park, looking towards the Steps,
about 1927

BOTTOM

View of the Steps from Peel Park up to the Art
Gallery, about 1927

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: *View of the Steps from Peel Park up to the Art Gallery* adopted for Edward Stephenson whose grandpa Allan Cownie exhibited his work at Salford Museum and Art Gallery, seen in Lowry's drawing. Welcome to Manchester Edward.

Peel Park, Salford, 1927

Oil on plywood

The portico of the Royal Museum and Public Library (now Salford Museum & Art Gallery) still stands but the view beyond is blocked today by Salford University's Maxwell Building.

Lowry had a lifelong association with the gallery. He visited regularly and formed close relationships with its curators over the years.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

Peel Park, Salford, about 1927

BOTTOM

Peel Park sketch, 1919

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

Bandstand, Peel Park, 1928

Oil on board

The bandstand, built in 1902 and demolished in 1965, was a central feature of Peel Park and appealed to Lowry as it was a focal point for crowds to gather.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

Bandstand, Peel Park, 1924

Pencil on paper

In contrast to the bird's-eye view of the park he drew in the following year (also on display) in this work Lowry has moved down into the park and become one of the bystanders. The day is cold and wintry and Lowry makes as much of a feature of the bare spiky tree branches as he does of the bandstand itself, its pointed roof echoing their shape and balancing out the composition.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Neil Schofield

Sunday Afternoon, 1957

Oil on canvas

Thirty years after making most of his sketches of Peel Park, Lowry returned to the subject with *Sunday Afternoon*. The park has become the inspiration for a vast landscape. Although it was bordered by industrial buildings along the banks of the River Irwell and crowded terraced housing, the architectural backdrop in the painting is imagined. The scene is packed with activity as visitors come and go, gather in groups around the speakers or simply lie down for a rest.

Lowry painted only around 13 pictures on this large scale, including *Bargoed* and *Industrial Landscape* in The Lowry Collection. Until it sold in March 2024, *Sunday Afternoon* had not been seen in public since 1967, when it last changed ownership.

On loan from a private collection

TOP

Bandstand, Peel Park, Salford, 1925

Pencil on paper

The high viewpoint in this drawing, sketched from the window of the Royal Technical College, allows the extent of Peel Park to spread out before the viewer. In the foreground are the greenhouses, in the distance the sprawling smoky city, but in this moment almost everyone we see has their full attention on the music. On the outer edges of the circle people come and go, pausing for a moment to watch and listen. The crowd becomes gradually thicker, but forms an orderly line around the dancers, caught up in the music. At the centre is the tiny figure of the conductor, arms aloft, enthusiastically leading the band.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

Large Crowd of People in the Vicinity of a Bandstand, about 1925

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

The Terrace, Peel Park, Salford, 1927

Pencil on paper

The terrace was a formal feature at the rear of Salford Art Gallery. It survives, but has been altered considerably.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

Peel Park sketch, 1920

BOTTOM

Peel Park sketch, 1920

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

View from the Window of the Royal Technical College, Salford, looking towards Manchester, 1924

Black chalk and pencil on paper

This view shows the rear of Salford Museum & Art Gallery, the terrace above Peel Park and, in the background, St Simon's Church and the factories along the River Irwell. Lowry was able to draw from the Technical College windows when he was attending Salford School of Art, located on the upper floors of the building. This view is taken from the balcony of the Art School (now the Peel Building of the University of Salford). Almost entirely drawn in chalk there is one small pencil addition – the tiny dog walking along the terrace.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

A Fight, about 1935

Oil on canvas

Lowry apparently witnessed this scene outside a lodging house in Manchester. 'What fascinates me is ... the atmosphere of tension when something has happened ... Where there's a quarrel there's always a crowd ... it's a great draw. A quarrel or a body.' In this case, the fight is more humorous than violent as one man pulls the other's hat down over his eyes and the two small dogs in the foreground eye each other suspiciously.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

St Stephen's Church, Salford, 1957

Pencil on paper

Churches recur frequently in Lowry's work, often forming an abrupt end to a street. Despite being a potential focal point for a crowd to gather, their doors are always closed and no one goes in or out. In this example the church is further isolated by the railings all around it. The passers-by cross the road without giving the building a second glance.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

North James Henry Street, Salford, 1956

Pencil on paper

Based on a sketch made on the spot in spring 1956, this drawing is one of several Lowry made recording areas in Salford before they were cleared of their old properties and rebuilt.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Mill Scene, 1965

Oil on canvas

'I dislike them myself ... yet as soon as I start, what happens? Pitiful-looking people throng around gloomy factories with smoking chimneys. I stare at the blank canvas and that is what I see – and what I have to paint.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Pit Tragedy, 1919

Oil on canvas

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Lowry's early industrial scenes were painted in dark, subdued colours. He showed one example to Bernard Taylor, his tutor at Salford School of Art (also the art critic for the *Manchester Guardian*). Taylor declared that the ground (or base colour on which everything else was painted) was so dark, the figures were hard to see. 'I was very annoyed', Lowry recalled, 'I went home and I did two pictures of dark figures on an absolutely white ground ... and he said, "That's right."' Almost all of Lowry's subsequent oils were painted on a pure white ground. *Pit Tragedy* was formerly in the collection of Lowry's friend the Reverend Geoffrey Bennett.

Adopt a Lowry: adopted in memory of Shirley Bennett, niece of Mr Bennett who was a close friend of Mr Lowry for 50 years.

Bargoed, 1965

Oil on canvas

Lowry was introduced to the South Wales mining valleys by his friend and collector, Monty Bloom. Their visits to the area reawakened Lowry's interest in industrial subjects. The rugged landscape and densely packed coal mining towns, clinging to the sides of the steep valleys, inspired a small number of late works. *Bargoed* was painted when Lowry was in his seventies.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

The Lodging House, 1921

Pastel on paper

One of Lowry's earliest exhibitions in Manchester was at the city centre offices of an architect, Rowland Thomasson, in 1921. He exhibited eight works, including *The Lodging House*, none of which sold. After the exhibition closed this picture became his first sale. 'It was to a friend of my father's ... He gave me £5 for it.' It seems likely that this buyer was Thomas Aldred, for whom Lowry had previously worked, as the bequest of the drawing to Salford Art Gallery years later came from one of Thomas's relatives.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Rob & Helen Foster

Mill Scene, 1953

Oil on canvas

One of Lowry's classic later mill scenes, this industrial landscape includes figures which are more sketchily painted than in his early work. They still hurry away from the building at the end of the day in the same way that they did in *Coming from the Mill* 1930 (also on display), painted over 20 years earlier.

On loan from a private Liechtenstein Collection

TOP

Christ Church, Salford, 1956

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Christ Church first attracted Lowry's attention in the 1920s. Thirty years later this drawing was made after the building had been declared unsafe. The church was demolished 18 months later.

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Jo & Ralph Atkinson

BOTTOM

Houses in Broughton, 1937

Pencil on paper

The children in Lowry's drawing play on a patch of uneven ground, surrounded by terraced housing, bare winter trees and derelict outhouses. Higher Broughton was one of the areas Lowry visited each week on his rent collecting rounds.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Pete Morley

Seated Man in a Flat Cap, undated

Pencil on paper

This drawing was probably made from a posed model in the life drawing class Lowry attended. He later used it as the basis for an oil painting dated 1937 and titled *Unemployed*.

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Father and Two Sons, 1950

Oil on canvas

This triple portrait is one of Lowry's most striking compositions. The father, and the son in the red bow tie, meet the viewer's gaze with a mixture of wariness, defeat and resentment. The second son seems more distracted and disengaged. The low position of the figures on the canvas emphasises their drooping shoulders and adds to their air of dejection.

The figure of the father bears a resemblance to William Henry Shephard who was related to Lowry by marriage. It has been suggested that the sons are therefore Lowry's cousins Bertie and Billie Shephard. When Lowry had his first London exhibition Bertie wrote, 'It is good to think that some of the nice people get a little recognition.'

On loan from a private Liechtenstein Collection

Discord, 1943

Oil on board

Lowry would have been familiar with how people lived from his regular rent collection rounds but he never pretended that he shared their experiences. This glimpse of home life is an imagined scene. The relationship between the members of the family is ambiguous. Only the two children on the right seem to interact with each other; the others seem self-contained and detached.

The Lowry Collection, Salford.

Purchased with the help of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and The Art Fund

TOP

Man Eating a Sandwich, 1961

Pencil on paper

On loan from a private collection

BOTTOM

A Beggar, about 1965

Oil on board

'This could happen to any of us if we were faced with a crisis. I feel certain all of them had a crisis of some sort, which they weren't quite proof against. ... I wonder about them. And when you talk to them ... they're very interesting people.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Man on a Park Bench, about 1965

Pencil on card

In Bristol, about 1961

Ballpoint pen on paper

Lowry never shows the inside of the mills and factories where his crowds of workers spent their days but, particularly in his later works, he focuses on individuals, often down on their luck or homeless. 'I feel more strongly about these people than I ever did about the industrial scene ... There but for the grace of God go I.'

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Spotted Dog, 1963

Black ballpoint pen on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Angie and Anthony McCarthy