

Large Print Guide & Sensory Map

Modern Life:

The LS Lowry Collection

LS Lowry 1887 – 1976

A Life of Drawing

Sensory Map Key:

Visitor Route

Noise and Sound

Bright Lights

Touch Objects

Lower Lighting

Seating

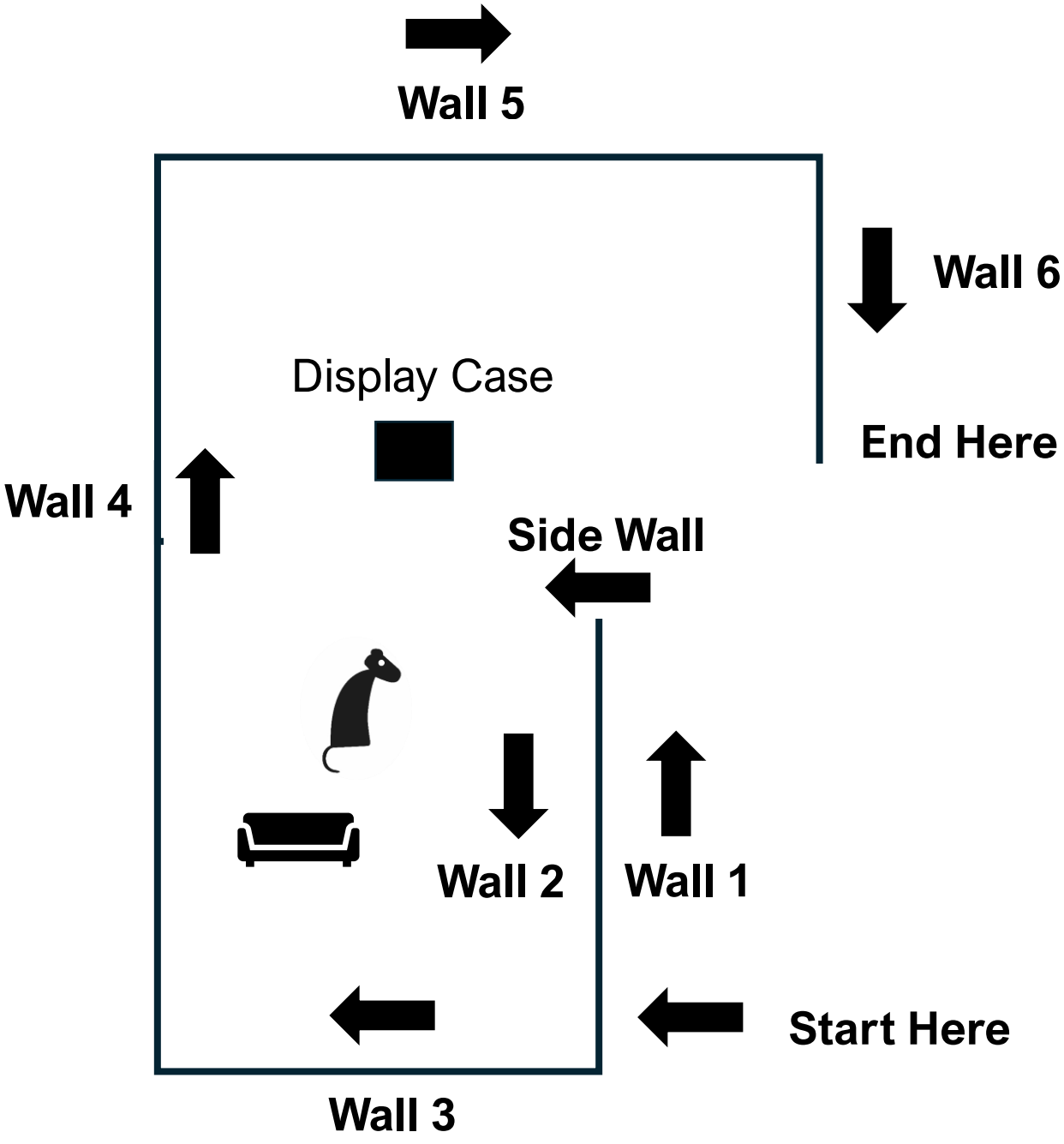
Scent

Interactive Jack the Dog Trail – please touch!

Map

LS Lowry 1887 – 1976

A Life of Drawing



Wall 1

LS Lowry 1887-1976

During his long career, LS Lowry saw enormous change, not only in Manchester and Salford but in small details of daily life, from what people wore, to where they lived and how they spent their time. His skill, in observing the world around him, was to extract what was timeless and relevant to us all so that his pictures - of sea and land, city and people - still connect with us today.

Throughout his life, although he had many friends, Lowry also described periods of loneliness, saying, 'Had I not been lonely I would not have seen what I did.' In his studio (or workroom as he preferred to call it) he liked solitude, listening to his favourite

music while he painted. Although he spent little on home comforts in his Mottram-in-Longdendale house, he was a regular theatregoer, attended opera and ballet at the Royal Opera House in London and frequently visited the Edinburgh International Festival. After he retired, he collected drawings by Pre-Raphaelite artists, particularly Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He did not drink or smoke, he never drove a car and when he eventually had a telephone installed in his home, it was for outgoing calls only. In some ways he was, as he said, 'a simple man' but his personality and art are as complex as the individuals who inspired his work.

By 1952, when he retired from his job as rent collector and clerk at the Pall Mall Property Company, where he had worked since 1909, Lowry was one of Britain’s best known artists. His popularity continues today and the range and

complexity of his work has become increasingly understood and appreciated.

Self Portrait, 1925

Oil on board

Lowry's self-portrait was painted when the artist was 37. He later recalled, 'I had a great tussle with it, and when it was done said "Never again, thank you."

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Elizabeth Lowry (the artist's mother), about 1920

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

Robert Lowry (the artist's father), about 1919

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

Figure in Bed, undated

This quickly sketched image may depict Elizabeth Lowry, the artist's mother, who was 'bedfast' for the last seven years of her life.

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Side Wall

LS Lowry by Sir Quentin Blake, 2025

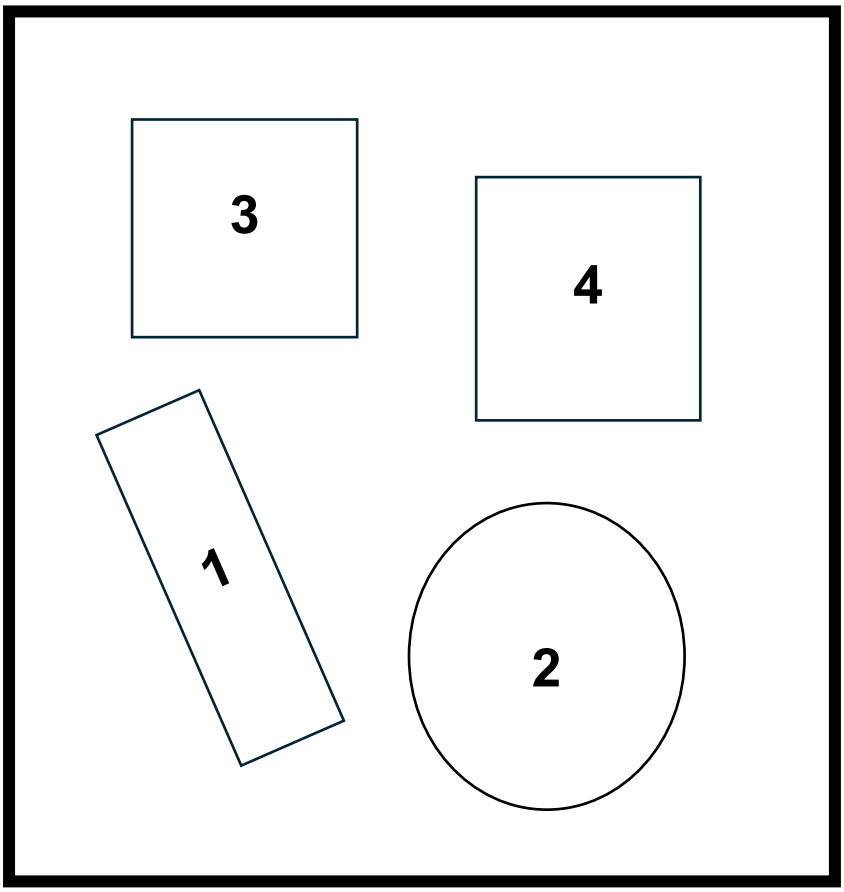
Pen, Indian ink and grey watercolour wash on paper

Drawn by Sir Quentin Blake specially for Lowry to coincide with the exhibition ‘Quentin Blake and Me’ in 2025 which included over 100 original works by Blake.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Donated by Sir Quentin Blake

Display Case



1. Painting tools
2. Hat
3. Bag
4. Palette

Paintbrushes and other items belonging to LS Lowry. The longest palette knife is a worn domestic knife used by Lowry for painting.
The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Peter Hull

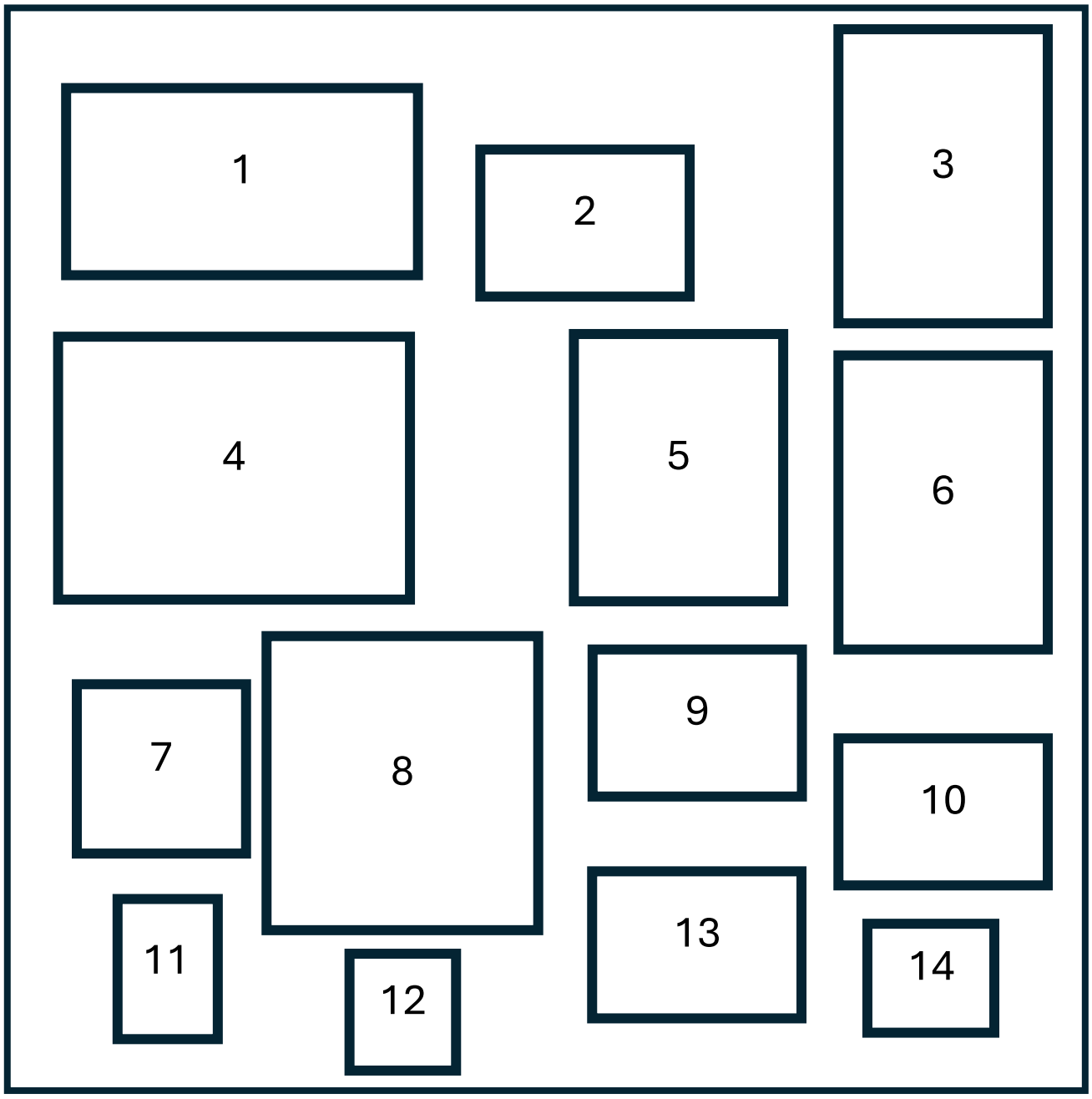
Hat belonging to LS Lowry and given by him to the grandchildren of his housekeeper, Mrs Swindells.
The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Louise Webster
: adopted by Keith Ellis

Rent collecting bag, owned by LS Lowry and engraved on the clasp ‘LS Lowry, Pall Mall Property Co., Brown Street, Manchester.’

On loan from a private collection

Wall 2



LEFT TO RIGHT

All the Lowry Collection, Salford unless otherwise stated

TOP ROW

1.

A Doctor’s Waiting Room, about 1920

Oil on board

Although Lowry does not show us people at work inside factories and mills, he does depict domestic interiors alongside other spaces ranging from hospital waiting rooms to auction houses and occasionally offices or boardrooms with meetings in progress.

2.

An Old Farm, 1943

Oil on board

Early in his career Lowry painted some of the local farms within walking distance of his home in Pendlebury. The location of this later subject is not known but may still be based on local sites. Although as a young man he painted outdoors, by this time his oils were painted at home in his workroom. He continued to make numerous drawing outdoors, but disliked the inconvenience of carrying his oil paints around.

3.

Frank Jopling Fletcher, 1919

Oil on canvas

The sitter was the younger brother of one of Lowry's colleagues at the Pall Mall Property Company, and the same age as Lowry. A photographer, who had studied at Manchester School of Art, Frank often went to concerts with Lowry or to the theatre. The two men also went for long hikes in the Pennines, recorded in some of Frank's photographs.

SECOND ROW

4.

Group of Dogs, 1966

Black felt tip pen on paper

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

5.

Woman in a Chair, 1921 and 1956

Oil on board

Lowry described painting this portrait from life in 1921 but repainting the background of the picture in 1956. The sitter’s identity is not recorded.

6.

The Tower, 1926

Pencil on paper

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

THIRD ROW

7.

St Mary’s Church, Swinton, 1960

Oil on canvas

St Mary’s stood at the corner of Swinton Hall Road, opposite Victoria Park, and is shown here with Albion Mill on the right. Lowry painted the church on many occasions. The church spire was demolished following damage sustained during an air-raid in the Second World War.

8.

Woman with a Handbag, about 1969

Oil on board

Lowry’s later pictures were a surprise to an audience more familiar with his industrial scenes. The Stone Gallery in Newcastle, where he exhibited several times in the 1960s, described showing these works as ‘almost like starting from scratch with an unknown painter.’

Purchased from the artist’s Estate in 1981 with the assistance of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund

9.

Still Life, about 1906

Oil on canvas

‘I think I did my first painting about 1906, it's in the Art Gallery at Salford.’ As well as attending evening classes in life drawing, Lowry took private lessons in painting. This picture was probably painted while studying with William Fitz, an American artist living in Manchester. Salford Museum and Art Gallery’s collection includes some examples of Fitz's work.

10.

Group of Fantasy Figures with Hills and Water, undated

Pencil on paper

In Lowry's most surreal late drawings, animals and humans morph into each other, creating strange hybrid creatures which seem to co-exist quite happily. The art critic, Eric Newton, described one of Lowry's drawings as being

'… peopled with a race of sub-human black and grey beings and a sprinkling of sub-canine pets.'

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

BOTTOM ROW

11.

Landscape, about 1912

Oil on canvas

12.

Four Figures, about 1965

Oil on board

Lowry’s later, small oil paintings often show groups of figures against a white ground. Occasionally a horizontal line running across the foreground hints at the edge of a pavement. There is no other architectural detail to provide a setting and the relationship between the characters is often ambiguous.

Purchased from the artist’s Estate in 1981 with the assistance of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund

13.

Regent Street, Lytham, 1922

Oil on board

One of several works bequeathed by Lowry to Salford Museum and Art Gallery this view looks inland from the Fylde coast near Lytham St Annes where, along with North Wales, Lowry spent holidays with his parents for many years.

14.

Swinton Moss, 1922

Oil on board

Wall 3

An Artist, about 1955

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Photograph of LS Lowry by Clive Arrowsmith

In 1966, Clive Arrowsmith, now best known as a fashion and portrait photographer, was commissioned by *Nova* magazine to photograph LS Lowry. Over two days Lowry was photographed in his house - The Elms, in Mottram-in-Longdendale - on the streets of Salford and at Salford Museum & Art Gallery.

The Little Dog, 1950

Oil on board

On loan from Georgia Watt

Wall 4

Figures on a Cart, 1961

Ballpoint pen and pencil on the reverse of an envelope

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Eccles Town Hall, Railway Station and Groups of Figures, 1961 and 1963

Pencil on paper and biro on paper

Frank Mullineux, Keeper of Monks Hall museum in Eccles, asked Lowry to draw the Town Hall and railway station for the museum's collection. He brought a sketch pad for Lowry to make preliminary drawings on the spot, into which Lowry also added sketches of people passing by at the time. A few years later, Lowry also drew a picture of Millineux's daughter Helen, signing it 'F Lowry Esq', declaring it to be by his (non-existent) brother and that she now had the only work in the world by Fred Lowry.

The finished drawings of the Town Hall and railway station are shown here alongside Lowry's sketches,

including two given by Frank Millineux to a friend and recently gifted to The Lowry Collection.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

The Cart, 1953

Oil on board

On loan from a private collection

The Irish Cart, 1959

Pencil on paper

On loan from Michael Watt

Wall 5

Yachts, 1959

Watercolour on paper

Lowry experimented with watercolour briefly in the 1950s. He continued to be curious about trying new materials late in his career, including felt tip pen and biro.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

Going to Work, 1959

Watercolour on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

Figures in a Street, 1970

Oil on panel

On loan from a private collection

Teenagers, about 1965

Oil on board

The Lowry Collection, Salford

The Cripples, 1949

Oil on canvas

According to Lowry, ‘The thing about painting is there should be no sentiment’. In his view there was a very fine line ‘between extreme grief and extreme laughter’. Painted only a few years after the end of the Second World War the characters in The Cripples range from scarred war veterans to those marked simply by social deprivation. Lowry said he had seen all of these people at one time or another. Some were well known characters around Manchester.

The language and definitions of disability have changed significantly since this work was painted. The term ‘cripple’, used to identify someone with a physical disability, was commonly used for many years in the twentieth century without the negative or offensive connotations it holds today.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

TOP

Two People, 1962

Oil on board

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

Man Eating a Sandwich, 1961

Pencil on paper

On loan from a private collection

Sunday Afternoon, 1969

Lithograph

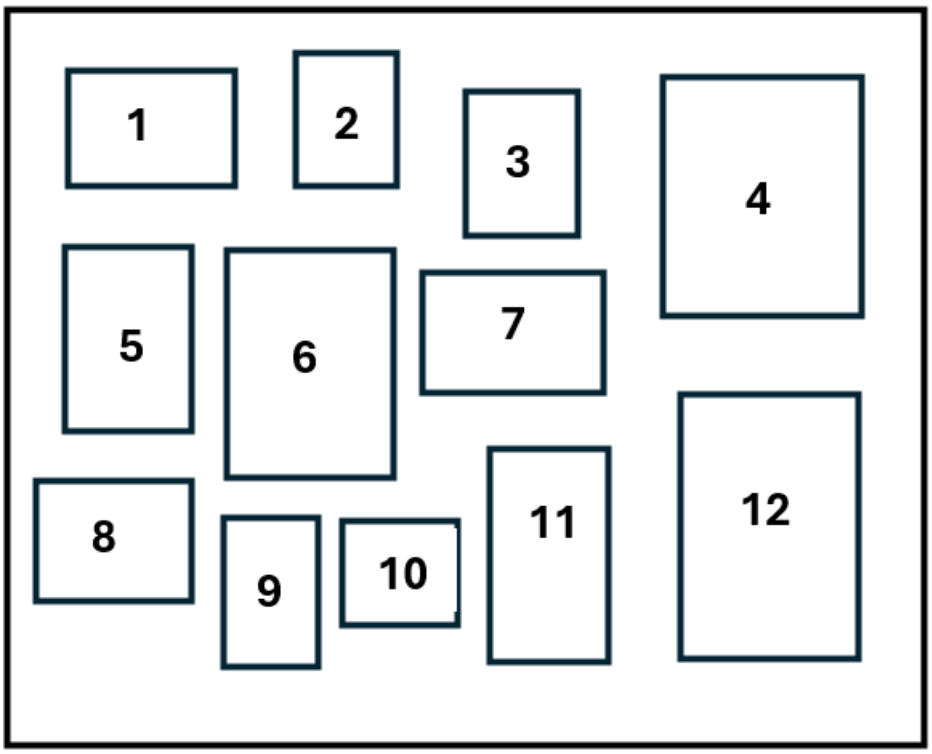
The Lowry Collection, Salford

High Street, Burton, 1960

Pencil on paper

On loan from a private collection

Wall 6



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.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

All the Lowry Collection, Salford unless otherwise stated.

TOP ROW

1.

Wet Earth, Swinton, 1920

Pastel on paper

2.

My Hat, 1970

Pencil on paper

3.

Girl with Bows in a Corset and Petticoat, undated

Pencil on paper

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

4.

Head of a Woman in a Feathered Hat, undated

Pencil on paper

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

MIDDLE ROW

5.

Postcard of the Bass Rock and Study for the Bass Rock, undated

Pencil and black ink on paper

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

6.

Nude from the Antique, around 1911

Pencil on paper

7.

Landscape with House, 1952

Watercolour on paper

BOTTOM ROW

8.

Two Men and a Cat, 1973

Pencil on paper

9.

Untitled (A Mill), about 1960

Ballpoint pen on the reverse of a Royal Academy invitation

10.

Small Crowd, undated

Pencil on paper

11.

Sketch of a Stately Home, abut 1930

Pencil on paper

12.

Drawing from the Antique by Adolphe Valette (1876-1942), undated

Charcoal on paper