Large Print Guide & Sensory Map

Modern Life:

The LS Lowry Collection

City Lives

Sensory Map Key:

 Visitor Route

 Noise and Sound

 Bright Lights

 Touch Objects

 Lower Lighting

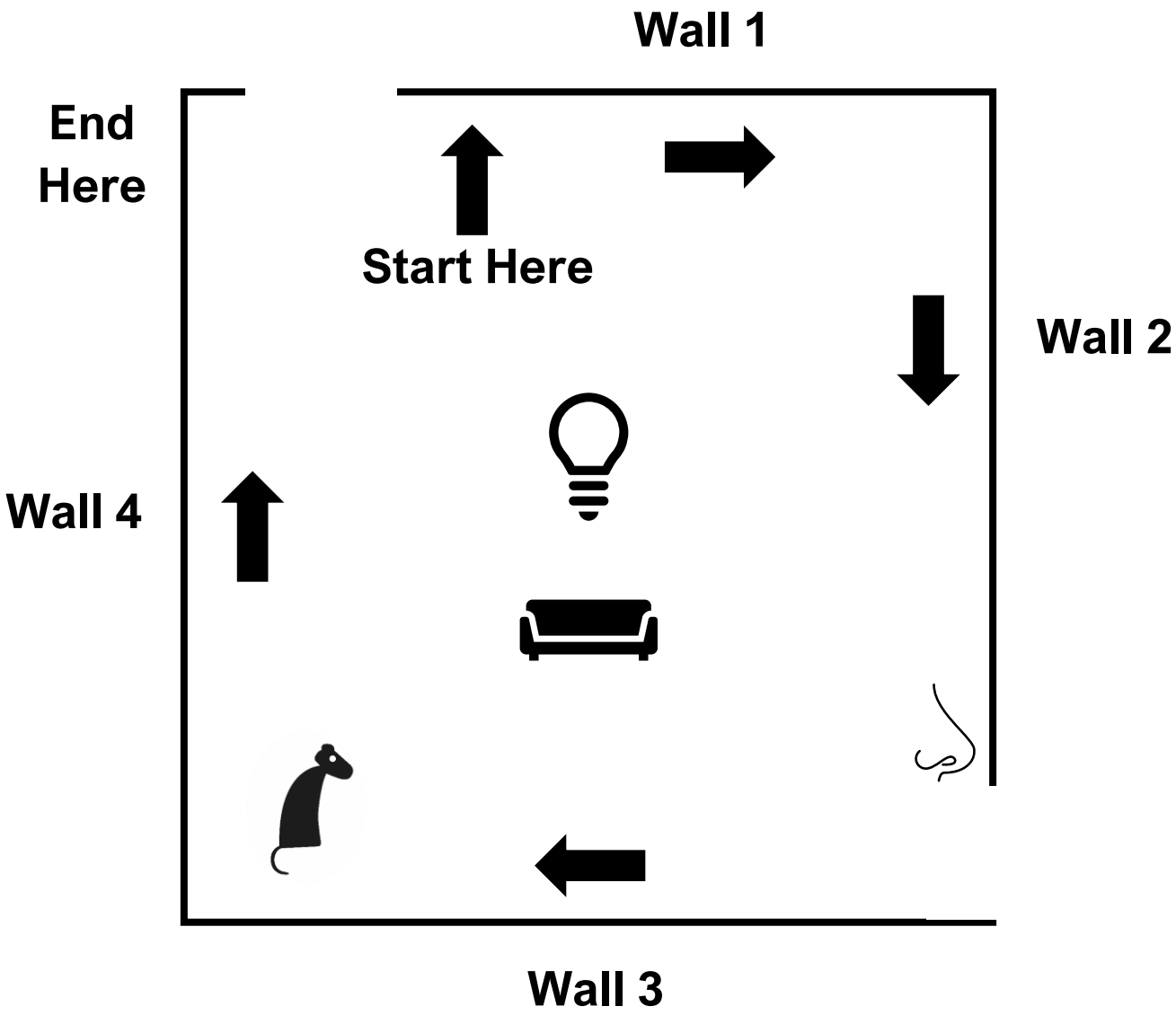
 Seating

 Scent

 Interactive Jack the Dog Trail – please touch!

Map

City Lives



Wall 1

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.'

Recreation of LS Lowry's Coming from the Mill (1930) by Edwin Bowes, 2002

Soon after Lowry opened in 2000, paintings conservator, Edwin Bowes, was commissioned to recreate one of LS Lowry's best-known works – Coming from the Mill – to demonstrate Lowry's working methods and the materials he used. His research was based on the artist's own words, photographs, film of LS Lowry working and scientific research into Lowry's paintings. Bowes was filmed gradually building up an accurate copy following Lowry's own methods and, as far as possible, using the same paints (Lowry's favourite zinc white, is no longer produced due to its toxic high lead content). While Coming from the Mill is away on loan, Bowes' recreation is shown here, alongside an extract from the original programme.

Please do not touch the painting.

The film lasts just over five minutes.

The Birthplace of David Lloyd-George, 1958

Oil on canvas

David Lloyd-George has been described as ‘the most famous Welshman ever born in Manchester’. He was one of the main driving forces behind the creation of the welfare state and campaigned for progressive causes until his death in 1945.

The house where he was born was a ‘two-up, two-down’ on a street in Chorlton-on-Medlock, similar to hundreds of others in Manchester and Salford. In this painting it gains importance from its previous resident, but the care with which Lowry paints the brick, stone and slate, with no figures to distract our attention, also gives this simple home greater status.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by HM Government and allocated to The Lowry Collection 2020.

Crowther Street, Stockport, 1934

Pencil on paper

Crowther Street still exists and was once at the heart of a busy, central area of Stockport.

Steps are a recurring image in Lowry's work and the steep, wide steps here, curving round between the terraced houses on either side, attracted his interest. He made several drawings, and a painting, of this scene.

On loan from a private collection

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

TOP

Oldfield Road Dwellings, 1929

Pencil on paper

The dwellings were built in 1893 by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company and demolished around 1970. They contained sixty properties. One end of the building was rounded, the other rectangular and a high wall ran around the top creating a roof yard.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

BOTTOM

Rear of Property on Bolton Road, Pendlebury, about 1930

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Wall 2

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

Blitzed Site, 1942

Oil on canvas

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adolphe Valette (1876-1942)

The Irwell, 1913

Oil on hessian

Born in France, Adolphe Valette came to Manchester in 1905. He enrolled as a student at Manchester Municipal School of Art but was soon appointed Master of Painting and Drawing. LS Lowry attended Valette's evening life drawing classes for several years and was inspired by his first-hand knowledge of French art.

Valette became fascinated by Manchester's buildings, waterways and canals. In his 'Manchester-scapes' (such as 'The Irwell') he depicts the city's outlines emerging through rain and smog to create atmospheric urban landscapes.

On loan from a private collection

TOP

The Fire, 1942

Oil on panel

This unusual picture may depict wartime damage, inspired by the Manchester Blitz in 1940/41. Lowry may however have started the painting years earlier in 1930, simply depicting a mill or factory fire. Many details have been created using deep score marks in the paint surface, probably with the handle of a paintbrush.

On loan from a private collection

BOTTOM

Industrial Landscape, 1936

Oil on canvas

Although this is an imagined scene, Lowry's starting point for his subject was an ironworks site located between Hindley and Ince-in-Makerfield, to the east of Wigan, now demolished.

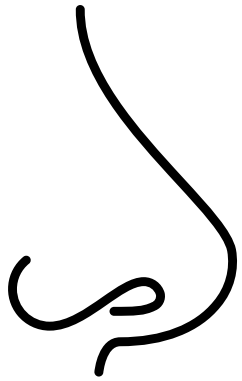
On loan from a private collection

Industrial Landscape, Wigan, 1925

Oil on canvas

Industrial Landscape, Wigan is painted in the darker tones of Lowry's early works. His later pictures are all painted on a white ground – a layer of white paint used to cover the whole canvas before any other colours are added. This pale ground helps to give Lowry's paintings their distinctive appearance.

On loan from a private collection



What do you think LS Lowry's cityscape would have smelt like?

Lift lid to smell

Rain; Coal; Crowds; Smoke; Grime; Wood; Wet; Damp Clothes; Factory; Brick; Steel; Tobacco; Soot; Machinery; Steam; Crowds; Wet; Industrial; Brick; Steel; Smoke; Grime; Tobacco; Wood; Warm Hearths; Chimneys; Smog; Wet; Damp Clothes; Water; Mildew; Rain; Coal; People.

Lowry Cityscape, 2024

Scent

Open this box to smell what it might have been like to walk through one of Lowry's industrial paintings. Does the smell change the way you experience the artwork? Do you notice the buildings, the chimneys, the people in more detail? Can you imagine being transported to Salford around 1910-1950?

Scent design by Tasha Marks | AVM Curiosities

In collaboration with Lowry

Wall 3

View from the Window of the Royal Technical College, Salford, 1924

Pencil on paper

Lowry was able to draw the views 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) looking towards the centre of Salford.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Peel Park, Salford, 1927

Oil on plywood

The portico of the Royal Museum and Public Library (now Salford Museum & Art Gallery) still stands but he view beyond is blocked today by Salford University's Maxwell Building. Lowry had a lifelong association with the art gallery. He visited regularly and formed close relationships with its curators over the years.

The Lowry Collection, Salford.

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

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

Study of a Football Match, undated

Pencil on paper

Like many of Lowry’s early drawings, kept for many years in his home, this industrial scene with a football match in the foreground shows considerable wear and tear with two corners lost completely. The players and spectators are dominated by the industrial landscape around them.

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Going to the Match, 1953

Oil on canvas

Going to the Match shows Burnden Park, the original home of Bolton Wanderers Football Club, painted in the year the club played in the Cup Final.

For many employees at the time, the working week finished on Saturday at 2:00PM. Kick off at 3.00PM gave enough time to get to the game. Lowry's main interest was in the spectators, making their way there or involved in events happening on the fringes of the crowd. He rarely depicts a football match in progress.

You can enjoy our free Going to the Match immersive experience in Lowry 360. Ask a team member for information.

Going to the Match was acquired thanks to a generous gift from Law Family Charitable Foundation.

TOP

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

BOTTOM

Study for Flowers in a Window, 1945

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Purchased with the assistance of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, The Art Fund, The Heritage Lottery Fund and the Friends of the Salford Museums

Flowers in a Window, 1956

Oil on canvas

Unlike David Lloyd-George's birthplace, this property has no famous connections, but Lowry gives the building importance in this unusual close-up view where a terraced house window becomes the sole subject of the painting.

Robert Roberts, who published his memoirs of growing up in Salford in 'A Ragged Schooling: Growing Up in the Classic Slum', explained what a window could reveal about a resident: '… the full drape, if possible in lace, being a necessity for any family with pretensions to class. No one scorned the clean modest half curtain, but a newspaper across the panes showed all too clearly that still another household had been forced to hoist the grey flag of poverty'.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Hyde Town Hall, 1960

Oil on board

On loan from a private collection

Wall 4

Group of People, 1959

Watercolour on paper

In the late 1950s, Lowry experimented with watercolour but completed only a few paintings. ‘Watercolours I’ve used only occasionally. They don’t really suit me … dry too quickly, They’re not flexible enough. I like a medium you can work into, over a period of time’.

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 this is what I see – and what I have to paint’.

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

Francis Terrace, Salford, 1956

Francis Terace 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

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

St John’s Church, Deansgate, 1928

Pencil on paper

Built in 1769, St John’s was demolished in 1931. St John’s Gardens now occupies the site. Lowry made several drawings of the church and one oil painting

On loan from a private collection.

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

Pendlebury Scene, 1931

Pencil on paper

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Man Lying on a Wall, 1957

Oil on canvas

‘People … refuse to believe me when I tell them I saw a man dressed just like that, doing just that, from the top of a bus… It was the umbrella propped against the wall which caught my eye and prompted the picture… The chap was well-dressed and obviously enjoying the smoke and his rest.’

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Adopt a Lowry: adopted by Judi Denbigh to commemorate her lovely husband Paul (1949-2022), whose favourite artist was LS Lowry. He liked this painting the most, and their home is strewn with many items depicting it. Enjoy the painting just as he did.

Chronology

Wall 2

1887

Laurence Stephen Lowry is born 1 November in Stretford, Greater Manchester, to Robert and Elizabeth. He is an only child.

1889

The family moves to Longsight in Manchester.

1898

A further move is made to Victoria Park Manchester, a private residential estate.

1903-07

Works as a clerk for Thomas Aldred and Son (Chartered Accountants) in Manchester.

1905

Starts attending evening classes at Manchester Municipal School of Art, progressing to the life drawing class taught by Adolphe Valette.

1907

Works as a claims clerk for the General Accident, Fire and Life Assurance Corporation until made redundant in 1910.

1909

The Lowry family moves to 117 Station Road, Pendlebury, Salford, an industrial suburb.

Wall 3

1910

Lowry is employed as rent collector and clerk for the Pall Mall Property Company Ltd in Brown Street, Manchester.

1915

Starts attending evening life drawing classes at Salford School of Art. One of his teachers is Bernard Taylor, art critic for the Manchester Guardian newspaper.

1919

The annual Manchester Academy of Fine Arts exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery features three works by Lowry.

1921

Exhibits in an architect's office in Manchester. A review in the Manchester Guardian singles him out as someone who 'may make a real contribution to art.'

1930

An Accident 1926 is purchased by Manchester Art Gallery. A solo exhibition in Manchester of drawings of the Ancoats area of the city sells out. Invited to become an art critic for the Manchester Guardian but turns this down.

1931

Listed in Edouard-Joseph's French *Dictionnaire Biographique des Artistes Contemporains 1910-1930* (described as a specialist in industrial street scenes) after exhibiting several times at the Paris Salon.

1932

Lowry’s father dies suddenly of pneumonia. There are debts to be paid off. His mother takes to her bed. Lowry’s work is exhibited in the Royal Academy’s Summer Exhibition in London.

1934

Elected a member of the Manchester Academy and the Royal Society of British Artists.

1936

A Street Scene (St Simon’s Church) 1928 is purchased by Salford Museum & Art Gallery.

Wall 4

1939

In January Lowry has his first solo London exhibition at Alex Reid and Lefevre. In October his mother dies.

1943

Appointed an official war artist.

1948

Leaves Pendlebury and settles at ‘The Elms’ in Mottram-in-Longdendale.

1952

Retires from the Pall Mall Property Company.

1953

Going to the Match wins the painting prize in the Football Association's 'Football and the Fine Arts' competition.

1962

Elected a Royal Academician.

1964

The Hallé Orchestra celebrates Lowry's 77th birthday with a concert in his honour.

1965

Receives the Freedom of the City of Salford.

1975

Receives honorary Doctorates of Literature from the University of Salford and the University of Liverpool.

1976

Admitted to hospital following a stroke, Lowry dies of pneumonia on 23 February.

In September the Royal Academy mounts a major retrospective of his work, which attracts more than 150,000 visitors.