

LARGE PRINT GUIDE

L.S. LOWRY

THE ART AND THE ARTIST

FACES AND FIGURES

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TEXT PANEL

FACES AND FIGURES

‘I cannot make people look cheerful.’

In his early career Lowry painted occasional portraits of friends. By the late 1930s he was producing imagined portraits in which the figure stares disconcertingly out at the viewer. These, he claimed, ‘were all based on myself...I was trying to make them as grim as possible.’

His best known portrait is probably *Portrait of Ann*. Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1957 it caused a stir among viewers more used to his industrial scenes. Although ‘Ann’ appears in many guises throughout Lowry’s career no one is certain who she was, or indeed if she was a real or imagined figure in Lowry’s life.

In drawings made towards the end of his life - and probably never intended for exhibition - figures

transform into surreal animals or ghost-like shapes. In the 'mannequin' drawings discovered after his death female figures appear forced into costumes which constrain and reveal their bodies, decorated with huge 'feminine' bows and layers of net reminiscent of exaggerated ballet tutus.

Figures on a Cart 1961

Pencil and biro on the back of an envelope

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Two Heads 1965

Oil on board

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Portrait of a Man 1920

Pencil on paper

Lowry's 'office heads' were drawings of his work colleagues at the Pall Mall Property Company or visitors to the office. Made in pencil they vary from lifelike portraits to caricatured studies.

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Girl in Bows in a Formal Interior, undated

Oil on board

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Girl in Bows in a Corset and petticoat, undated

Pencil on paper

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Girl with Bows in a Black Tutu, undated

Oil on board

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Girl being held up by her shoulders, undated

Oil on board

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

The Group, 1970

Black felt tip pen and pencil on paper

The device of a single line running across the foreground appears in many of Lowry's works, suggesting the kerb of a pavement. Here a mixture of caricatured humans, animal-like forms and shapeless creatures gather, all shrouded in black.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

A Beggar, about 1965

Oil on board

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Four Figures, about 1965

Oil on board

The Lowry Collection, Salford

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.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Two Heads, undated

Oil on board

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Gentleman Looking at Something, 1960

Oil on board

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Group of Fantasy Figures by the Seashore, 1970

Pencil on paper

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Head of a Boy, 1962

Oil on canvas

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Portrait of a Girl with Short White Socks, 1960

Oil on board

In this full-length version of 'Ann' her features are indistinct but her long, black plait is clearly visible.

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Portrait of Ann, 1957

Oil on board

According to Lowry this work was the first portrait he had painted in nearly thirty years.

Lowry described the sitter as aged 25, from Leeds and 'the daughter of some people who have been very good to me.' He also described her as his godchild Ann Hilder (or Helder). Despite extensive research, no one has yet been able to confirm the identity of Ann. It is possible she was an imaginary figure based on the young friends he knew, although those who heard him speak of her never doubted her existence.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Figures Talking, undated

Oil on board- On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

The Haunt, 1969

Oil on board

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

People with Dogs, about 1965

Oil on board

Lowry produced many small oil paintings at this time which show single figures or small group against a white ground. The subject matter is often enigmatic. Here it is difficult to tell if the child is simply wary of the cats and dogs or if the two adults in black are a more sinister presence.

The Lowry Collection, Salford

Girl Seen from the Front and Girl Seen from the Back, 1964

Oil on canvas

This child with long hair is one of the characters in Luigi Pirandello's 1925 play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

Lowry recalled it was '...the only time in my life I have been strongly influenced by a play. I went to see it nine times. By the third visit I had become interested in the child with the long hair. By the fourth I thought: 'I'm gone, I'm gone – I'm bats about this child.' ...The visual aspect of those characters fascinated me... Years before I had seen *Hindle Wakes* by Stanley Houghton and that was an influence; but this play was different...it mesmerised me.'

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Children Walking up Steps, undated

Oil on board

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

Teenagers, about 1965

Oil on board

Teenagers wearing mini skirts and chatting in the street were a new subject for Lowry in the 1960s. He has emphasised their skirts by painting them especially short and elongating the girls' legs.

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

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. I couldn’t resist doing him as a subject.’

Lowry has added his own initials on the man’s briefcase.

Lowry insisted that the characters he depicted were all people he had seen, ‘Who are they Sir? They are my friends and neighbours... They are all outside, every one of them – even the dogs!’

The Lowry Collection, Salford

The Railway Steps, Ramsbottom 1945

Pencil on paper

This drawing, and the watercolour below, were originally owned by Percy Warburton, one of Lowry's tutors at Salford School of Art. Lowry liked him as a tutor 'because he let me get on with it' and over time the two men became good friends. After Warburton's death in 1969 Lowry wrote to his daughter, 'I had known your father since the Salford School of Art days. That must have been about 45 years ago. It has been a great shock to me.'

On loan from a private collection

Figure Study with Dogs undated

Watercolour on paper

Lowry was a regular visitor to the Warburtons' home in Bolton, on one occasion borrowing a box of watercolours from Percy's daughter to try them out. This watercolour and the drawing above were gifts from Lowry to his friend. Warburton, a respected artist, went on to become Head of the School of Art in Bury and persuaded Lowry to become President of the Bury Art Society. Lowry agreed to this on the condition that 'he did not have to talk'.

On loan from a private collection

Man in a Trilby, 1960

On loan from the Estate of LS Lowry

LIGHTBOX TEXT PANEL

The Cripples 1949

Oil on canvas

According to Lowry, 'The thing about painting is there should be no sentiment. 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 and some were well known characters around Manchester.

The Lowry Collection, Salford