Laurence Stephen Lowry
By John Ainsley

Lowry was born on the 1st November, 1887. The Lowry in Salford, Manchester is a celebration of his life. His inimitable style is instantly recognizable and has been much copied. During his lifetime he painted and drew perhaps 2000-3000 pieces. Harold Wilson offered him a knighthood and used The Pond as his official Christmas card in 1964. The postage stamp, Coming out of School was the highest value stamp of a series depicting great British artists in 1967. In 1977 Michael Coleman and Brian Burke wrote the hit single Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs. Lowry died at the age of 88 in 1976, just months before a retrospective exhibition opened at the Royal Academy. It broke all attendance records for a twentieth century artist. Lowry’s success came late in life. His enduring preoccupation in his final years was about ‘whether his art would last. “Will I live” he asked, over and over again, like the art of the pre Raphaelites he collected and loved.’ This quote and more can be found at www.thelowry.com

Now 40 years on since Lowry’s death there can be no doubt. In the year August 2005 to July 2006, Hislop’s Art Sales Index, 2007 Edition, records 25 oils which fetched a total of £3,782,000 hammer at auction, an average of £151,280. During the same period 42 works on paper totalled £488,500 hammer at an average of £11,600, whilst the best of limited edition prints brought anything between £2,300 and £15,000 hammer at an average of about £5,000. Lowry originals are of course out of reach of most of us. Only nine are illustrated here, 3 being the lowest value oil at £14,500 hammer. This a mere 6.75 x 5.5 inches. Note the height of a painting always precedes its width. Works on paper commence at £13,500 hammer at 4 to £1,800 at 9. The most famous of these is at 8. The fold line down the left is the clue that this hastily worked drawing was constructed in pencil on the reverse of a Senior Service cigarette packet. Lowry was travelling in a taxi in Berwick and gave the drawing to the driver. Images 10 to 36 are all prints, a specialised area of collecting. As our series on prints has shown there are different kinds. Limited edition runs can be as little as say 75 or as high perhaps as 750 or 850 but this in itself does not determine value. Going to the Match fetched £5,000, £5,400 and £6,300 in recent times, this a colour print with a limited edition of 300. The Viaduct, Salford one of only 75 at 19 x 24 inches fetched £2,300 in 2006 and a cream black lithograph, Northern Town at the same size and one of 75 made £2,600 hammer six months earlier. The most expensive print was Saturday Morning at only 8 x 7 inches with signed and dated provenance for 1965, in pencil, which sold at Bonham’s in March 2006 for £15,000 hammer.

Every few months I receive an ‘urgent’ call from a reader who has spotted an original, signed Lowry when viewing an auction and is seeking advice! Needless to say these are never genuine. You cannot win the lottery at auction but you can, with knowledge buy and make shrewd investments if the market favours you. If the subject interests you then study L. S. Lowry and view as many as possible of his works. Study the subject of prints very carefully and then study Lowry in particular. Study the market until you are familiar with the values of Lowry prints and you are confident that you have a good idea of how much a particular Lowry print will fetch if it appears on the market. Whilst learning you may still want to buy. This is part of the learning experience. Ensure you take...


This is a Lowry sample from our Gold Services at www.antiques-info.co.uk. The database contains 100,000 images from all categories.


Gorringes, Lewes. Apr 05. HP: £300. ABP: £352.

Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Apr 06. HP: £900. ABP: £1,058.

Hartleys, Ilkley. Apr 06. HP: £600. ABP: £705.

Leamington Spa. Sep 04. HP: £600. ABP: £705.


Andrew Hartley, Ilkley. Apr 06. HP: £840. ABP: £972.

