

For Immediate Release
Monday, 2 August 2010

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

Contact: Hannah Schmidt +44 (0) 207 389 2964

hschmidt@christies.com

CHRISTIE'S ANNOUNCE LANDMARK LOWRY SALE:

21 Works from the Private Collection of Selwyn Demmy

Estimated to Realise in Excess of £5million



London - Christie's announce the landmark sale of 21 works by the iconic British artist Laurence Stephen Lowry, R.A. (1887-1976) to be offered at auction on Thursday 11 November 2010 from the private collection of Selwyn Demmy (b. 1932), renowned bookmaking magnate, boxing organiser and club owner. Only the very best collections illustrate, as this one does, the true breadth and depth of a single artist's oeuvre. Comprising drawings and paintings which span the 1920s to the 1960s, this Lowry collection is the most important and extensive to be offered at auction in recent memory, as it celebrates not only the artist's world renowned industrial cityscapes, but his landscapes, seascapes and explorations of architecture. They are at times intense, often humorous and playful, many bustling with life and others distinctly quiet and poetic in tone. Each work reflects the different dynamics of line, colour, composition and subject explored and skillfully depicted by Lowry; an artist who captured the many aspects of the 'human condition' with a remarkable honesty and power which resonates across age groups.

Highlights within the diverse and significant works offered are led by *The Playground*, 1945 (estimate: £500,000-700,000) illustrated top left, as well as three paintings which are offered alongside their highly finished accompanying studies in pencil, including *The Steps, Irk Place*, 1928 (estimate for the oil: £400,000-600,000 and the study: £60,000-80,000). With estimates ranging from £10,000 to £700,000, the collection is expected to realise in excess of £5million.

Selwyn Demmy: *"I was born around the corner from L.S. Lowry, in Cheetham Hill, and am a Salford man born and bred. For me, the works of Lowry have a very powerful personal resonance as they capture the heart and soul of the people and landscape which I have loved and lived in all my life. This collection of 21 paintings and drawings has brought me huge pleasure over the years. Art is not my only passion however and, as many know, I have been committed to improving the lives of destitute animals for many years. It is now time for these wonderful art works to bring joy, contemplation and friendship to new homes, whilst I focus my full attention on the animals which, like the famous and beloved stick dogs that scamper throughout Lowry's paintings, bring me great happiness."*

Philip Harley Director, Head of 20th Century British & Irish Art, Christies London and Rachel Hilderley, Christie's International Specialist and Director, 20th Century British Art: *"Christie's is delighted to be entrusted with this highly important collection which spans five decades of the artist's output and offers the most extensive overview of Lowry's work ever to come to auction. From early landscape drawings to extensive panoramas, Lowry's interest in every aspect of his beloved Northern landscape and coastline is represented here, and this landmark sale is an opportunity for both experienced and new collectors to benefit from Selwyn Demmy's informed and passionate vision."*

The son of Gus Demmy, a bookmaker of Polish descent who was one of the great pioneers of racecourse betting, Selwyn Demmy's lifelong career – in contrast with the path of a lawyer which his father had initially mapped out – was clearly in his blood. A remarkable businessman and entrepreneur, Selwyn built up the first chain of 75 Demmy bookmaker shops over 20 years, selling to Ladbrokes in 1982 and briefly retiring to Monte Carlo where he became restless without his work and returned to England to carry on. He sold his next venture Demmy Racing to the Stanley Leisure group in 1993 and then six years after founding his third chain, comprising 37 shops, sold out to Fred and Peter Done in 1999.

A well-known figure around Manchester, Selwyn also ran a thriving boxing operation with his father, staging fights at Belle Vue, the Free Trade Hall, Liverpool Stadium and bringing title fights into the Odeon Cinema, Manchester. Selwyn's circle of friends began to include the rich and famous (*George Best, Selwyn, Alan Ball and Gus Demmy at the Alan Rudkin v. Walter McGowan Fight 13 May 1968, illustrated right*). He frequented a Manchester nightclub owned by Tony Gordon, the manager of the pop star Lulu; in 1968 Selwyn bought the club with his brother Harvey and the legend of *Blinkers* was born. For the next ten years it was the place to be and the guest list ranged from Mick Jagger, The Who and Tom Jones, to Lulu and Michael Parkinson. Norman Thelwell designed the logo and did many cartoons and drawings for the monthly *Blinkers' Newsletter*.



Selwyn began to collect art by Lowry in the early 1990s when the footballer Gary Owen, who won the Under 21 UEFA European Championship having scored two goals against Germany in 1982, suggested that he should buy Lowrys. The collection began with two pencil drawings: the very early, rather intriguing *House on Botany, Clifton, 1926* (estimate: £15,000-20,000) illustrated left and a looser, vigorously executed landscape *Parton, Cumberland, 1956* which demonstrates Lowry's power of capturing so much in so few lines (estimate: £15,000-20,000). These acquisitions were quickly followed by Selwyn's longstanding favourite painting in the collection and one of the stars of the sale *The Playground, 1945* (estimate: £500,000-700,000).

The Playground is a superb panoramic cityscape with enormous charm, illustrated right. The 1930s and 1940s are recognised as the greatest period in Lowry's oeuvre, when his vision was strongest. This canvas, from 1945, is bustling with life and, as with the best of Lowry's paintings, presents the viewer with a multiple of shared and private moments, with numerous smaller vignettes in front of, surrounding and beyond the central focus of the children's slide. The playground's fence in the foreground is a characteristic motif; many of Lowry's works have a barrier in the foreground, in the form of railings or posts, which have been suggested as representing Lowry's own loneliness: slightly removed from, and unable to become part of, the world around him. The bandstand in the left of the middle-ground anticipates the wonder of the Daisy Nook fairground, which Lowry depicted the following year. There is a lightness to the palette which contrasts the darker works of the earlier 1940s and the beautiful balance and dynamic of this composition with the painterly figures, joyous children playing and distant industrial cityscape make this substantial painting (18 ¼ x 24 ½ inches) very significant.





Selwyn particularly likes pictures with a story and has taken great pleasure over the years from the fact that he could drive to various locations and see aspects of the Lowry paintings in his collection, which are invariably composite scenes. *The Steps, Irk Place, 1928* (estimate: £400,000-600,000) illustrated left, is certainly one of the stars of the collection and 'Irk Place' still exists, behind Victoria Station in Manchester, though the actual name is Irk Street. Lowry worked in this area as a rent collector and regularly came into contact with the characters depicted. This is one of three paintings in the sale which is offered alongside a highly finished accompanying drawing and, as with each of the three 'pairs', the study (estimate: £60,000-80,000) illustrated right, demonstrates Lowry's artistic licence; adding-in and taking-out a wide array of details from figures to windows and chimneys. The pleasure of looking at the two works side by side is enormous as one can play a gratifying game of spot the difference whilst gaining insight into Lowry's style. It is very rare to have such a finished drawing to accompany an oil by Lowry.

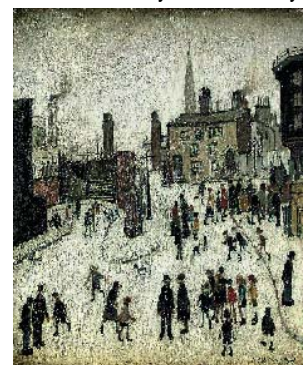


The perspective in both works is superb. The artist uses the composition of the gable ends of the buildings and their darker shaded tones to draw the viewer through the scene, pulling them past the numerous 'moments', up the steps and to the busy scene of the playground and St. Michael and All Angels beyond – both locations which are the subject of works in their own right. It has been noted that this painting may have been in response to the accusation that Lowry 'only' painted industrial panoramas. This is a charge which Lowry went on to counter throughout his rich and varied career which, though not known by many, is highlighted when viewing the 21 works in this monumental collection together.



A passionate and engaged collector, Selwyn is very proud to have the outstanding pencil studies for specific paintings and the other examples from the collection are *St. Michael and All Angels, Angel Meadow, Manchester, 1941* (estimate: £400,000-600,000) illustrated below right and the study from 1931 illustrated left (estimate: £60,000-80,000), as well as *The Ferry, South Shields, 1967* (estimate: £150,000-250,000) and study from 1963 (estimate: £15,000-20,000). The beautiful study for *St. Michael and All Angels, illustrated left*, was drawn the year after Lowry's critically acclaimed first one-man-show at the Round House in Manchester. The statuesque church was later demolished

and Lowry replaced it in his painting with an array of industrial imagery, illustrated right. The curving street which is dominant in both versions is a characteristic motif in many of his works. The location, though considerably altered, still exists. The oil for *The Ferry* is relatively 'true' to the drawing, though the monumental nature of the water and the boat are emphasised in the painting, in which the barrier has been removed and both the water and the boat meet the viewer straight on.



Lowry had a fascination with the sea and upon retiring in the 1950s he began to spend more time in the North East of England, often staying at the Seaburn Hotel in Sunderland, not far from South Shields. Lowry's seascapes, a theme which many do not realise was one of his passions, are sublimely beautiful as illustrated by the honey-coloured hues and beautiful dappled light captured in his painterly *Yachts at Lytham, 1950* (estimate: £250,000-350,000), illustrated page one top right. In relation to Lowry's industrial cityscapes, his mother, Elizabeth, is known to have complained to her son "Isn't it bad enough having to

live among it without you bringing it into the house," to which Lowry responded "what would you like me to paint, Mother?" and she stated "Little yachts at Lytham." Lowry also used the subject of the sea to examine the human condition, sometimes reflecting the insignificance of man and the isolation of human existence, which could be seen to fit the tone of the very dramatic, minimalist and monochrome *Seascape*, 1962 (estimate: £150,000-250,000), *illustrated right*. The juxtaposition of negative and positive space, with the sea and horizon fusing into infinity, results in a poetic and contemplative work which many may not recognise as being by Lowry's hand.



Other fascinating works which reflect the diverse array of Lowry's interests and styles include his early drawings: the smudged skies and enchanting architectural study *A curved house, Mangersbury*, 1930 (estimate: £25,000-35,000), *illustrated page one top centre*, and his pure, rather traditional landscape *An Ancient Road*, 1930 (estimate: £10,000-15,000).



In contrast, Lowry's powerful *River scene; Wasteland*, 1935 (estimate: £200,000-300,000) captures the intensity of Northern industrialisation which he is known for, though without the dominance of his celebrated figures busily engaged in daily life, *illustrated left*. Factories are relegated into the background in *An Open Space*, 1968 (estimate: £250,000-350,000) which is thronging with whimsical activity, such as the twins with a football in the bottom left whose shorts are implied through the bare rather than painted canvas, as are the knees of the girl to their left.

Further 'moments' from daily life are brought alive in *Street Scene*, 1958 (estimate: £300,000-500,000) which again features the curving focal street, a central building and episodes such as a mother running with a pram in the middle-ground, *illustrated right*; a central building is again the motif of *Street Scene* 1953 (estimate: £200,000-300,000), which features a man leaning against a wall similar to the subject matter of the celebrated work *Man lying on a wall*, 1957 (The Lowry, Salford) which also appears to have the same church spire in the background. A scarcer scattering of people are captured in the unusual



Street in North Leach, 1947 (estimate: £250,000-350,000), whilst the life enhancing pastel *A street with figures and dogs*, 1955 (estimate: £60,000-80,000) *illustrated left*, features not one but five of his famous dogs. Selwyn finds particular amusement in Lowry's dogs. The artist's good friend, Doctor Laing had a five-legged mongrel which he named "Jesus." Laing would often take his pet on hospital visits, bringing amusement to the inmates of Ashton Infirmary.

The two final and significant works from the collection include *Pit Tragedy*, 1955 (estimate: £150,000-250,000), a subject that Lowry first depicted in the 1920s, in which the large figures are physically part of a group, though each moves alone as though isolated by personal grief. *Study for the Steps, Maryport*, 1956 (estimate: £80,000-120,000) *illustrated right*, is striking, with the zigzagging steps and lone figure who appears to be in limbo - neither going towards the steps, nor away from them - perhaps reflecting the unknown which lies ahead in both directions.



NOTES TO EDITORS:

Sale dates and public viewing:

20th Century British & Irish Art including The Selwyn Demmy Collection of Works by L.S. Lowry

Viewing: Sunday 7 November – Wednesday 10 November: Christie's London, 8 King Street, St. James', London, SW1Y 6QT

Sale: Thursday 11 November 2010: Christie's London, 8 King Street, St. James', London, SW1Y 6QT

Christie's and L.S. Lowry

- Since June 2006 Christie's have sold 96 works by the artist realising in excess of £24.3 million
- Christie's holds the world auction record price for L.S. Lowry, with *Good Friday, Daisy Nook*, 1946, which sold for £3,772,000 in 2007; this is the highest price ever paid in the 20th Century British Art category.
- Between 2006 and 2010, to date, Christie's has 65% market share for works by L.S. Lowry sold at auction.

About Lowry:

L.S. Lowry, R.A. (1887-1976) was a curious character, working a '9 to 5' job with Pall Mall Property Company in Manchester until his retirement in 1952, and painted only in his spare time. Despite this restraint, he was hugely successful even within his lifetime; the Manchester City Art Gallery purchased *An Accident* in 1930, he was signed up to the Lefevre Gallery in London in 1939, elected an R.A. in 1962 and by 1967, the General Post Office issued a stamp reproducing one of his paintings. Lowry had been appointed official artist at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. He went on to turn down an O.B.E., a C.B.E., a C.H. (twice) and a knighthood on the grounds that he saw little point in receiving awards after the death of his mother.

About Selwyn Demmy:

For more biographical information about Selwyn Demmy please contact Hannah Schmidt, Christie's Press Office on +44 (0) 207 389 2964/ hschmidt@christies.com

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2009 that totalled £2.1 billion/\$3.3 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 53 offices in 30 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.