



# Laura Knight

## A Working Life

Helen Valentine

Annette Wickham

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- Dame Laura Knight RA's drawings from the Royal Academy's collection confirm her exceptional gift for capturing life's multiplicity and movement
- This new study accompanies an exhibition in the RA's Tennant Gallery in the autumn of 2019

*"From painting nudes at a time when it was forbidden to sleeping among the troops in both world wars, the vitality of her work makes her still strikingly relevant."* – **Lara Feigel, Guardian**

Dame Laura Knight RA (1877-1970) was the first female member to be elected to the Royal Academy of Arts, submitting *Dawn*, her now famous painting of two female nudes, as her Diploma Work in 1936. In 1965 the Academy's major retrospective of her work recognised her importance in British art. This autumn an exhibition of Knight's drawings opens at the RA. Drawing was a key part of her practice, and allowed her to capture at speed her various subjects, which include travellers, circus performers, boxers, ballet dancers and ice skaters. Drawing allowed her to capture with immediacy the exuberant life of her models, as well as being a vital recording tool when she witnessed one of the most important events of the twentieth century: the Nuremberg trials. In this new publication on the artist, Annette Wickham and Helen Valentine present the Academy's holdings of her drawings with an in-depth analysis focused on three key subjects within her work: the nude, the working woman and country life.

**Helen Valentine** is Senior Curator at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. **Annette Wickham** is Curator of Works on Paper at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Her previous books include *A Royal Academy A to Z* (2018) and *'He Has Been Here and Fired a Gun': Turner, Constable and the Royal Academy* (2019).