

MICHAEL ANCHER

1849–1927

II. *The Old Garden House, summer 1914*

(*Det gamle Havehus, sommer 1914*)

Oil on canvas, 18½ x 26⅔ in. (47 x 68 cm)

Signed with initials and dated lower right: MA 14

PROVENANCE: Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 454, 1983, lot 24 (described as: *Fra kunstnerens have på Skagen, sommer*)

LITERATURE ON THE MOTIF: Alba Schwartz, *Skagen før og nu*, I-II, Copenhagen 1912–13; Sys Hartmann (ed.), *Huse i Skagen*, Vol. 2, *Kappelborg og Østerby*, Skagen Kommune og Fredningsstyrelsen, Copenhagen 1982; Elisabeth Fabritius, *Michael Anchers ungdom, 1865–80*, Skagen 1992.

A Skagen house amidst all the profusion of summer flowers in brilliant sunshine was a motif that was likely to engage Michael Ancher, especially in the latter part of his life. The lush flowers are typical of Skagen, for roses grow well in sandy soil. They are enhanced by the trees in the background, the height and fullness of which are rare in Skagen. The love radiated by the picture becomes more understandable when we know that the charming, skewed wing not only had a special significance for Michael Ancher himself, but also played a role in the history of Skagen. This is where the artist lodged when he came to Skagen for the first time in 1874, because the building served as the Brøndum hostelry as well as the Brøndum family home that summer. (The original hostelry had burned down, but was soon rebuilt.)

When Michael Ancher married Anna Brøndum in 1880, the section of the building to the left was fitted out for them, and during the first years of their happy marriage they lived behind the windows seen in the picture. In a painting of the sitting room from 1883, called *Dagens arbejde bedømmes* (*Judging the Day's Work*), in Statens Museum for Kunst, they have portrayed each other discussing a painting on the easel. And it was in one of the doors in this house that Michael Ancher also painted a full-length portrait of Anna while she was expecting Helga. Shortly afterward their daughter was born here, and the entire colony of Scandinavian artists came to offer their congratulations.

In 1884, the Anchers bought another old house situated only a few minutes' walk away at Markvej 2, now the museum called The Michael and Anna Ancher House. The "old garden house" became once again a kind of annex to the Brøndum hotel. The garden house, the hotel and all its equipment were left to Skagens Museum in 1932 as a bequest from Anna Ancher's brother, Degn Brøndum, who then owned the hotel.

This painting shows the south face of the old garden house, which like the gabled ends, is built of brick. The whitewashed cornice with its concave moulding is no longer visible. The north side of the building, on the other hand, is covered by boards painted red. In 1941 and later, the house was restored by the architect Viggo Steen Møller (1897–1990) to house the changing exhibitions of modern art in the Skagens Museum, such as one held by Michael and Anna's only daughter, Helga Ancher, in 1953. The house is still used today for exhibitions.

E. F.