

## CARL LOCHER

1851–1915

### 82. *Fishermen Coming Ashore, Hornbæk,* *a preparatory work for an unknown composition*

*(Fiskerne kommer i land, forarbejde til en ukendt komposition)*

Oil on canvas, 16¼ x 25¼ in. (41 x 64 cm)

PROVENANCE: Kunsthallen, Auction 421, 1991, lot 93, ill. (described as *Fiskerne vender hjem*).

LITERATURE: (On the artists' colony in Hornbæk): Kai Flor, *Hornbæk*, Copenhagen 1940; *Mona Faye, Hornbæk i kunsten*, Marienlyst Slot, Elsinore 1997.

Although Carl Locher mainly painted the sea, he also took an interest in figure painting at times. This compositional sketch was clearly painted at Hornbæk, a small fishing village on the north coast of Zealand, just over 10 kilometres (6¼ miles) from Elsinore and Kronborg, today a popular and fashionable holiday resort. From the broad, white sandy beach there is a view of Kullen in Sweden, an interesting sight to Danish eyes as this peninsula is distinguished by cliffs, which in Denmark are found only in Bornholm.

Hornbæk was discovered by artists about 1830, when the Golden Age painters were gradually beginning to take an interest in the fishing population, though they never devoted the same interest to them as to the rural population. In the 1870s, Hornbæk was visited by so many painters that people began to talk of an artists' colony. It became a meeting place for marine painters such as C.F. Sørensen (1818–1879), Holger Drachmann (1846–1908), and Carl Locher and the figure painters Kristian Zahrtmann (1843–1917), Viggo Johansen (1851–1935), P. S. Krøyer, the brothers Frants Henningsen (1850–1908) and Erik Henningsen (1855–1930), as well as two who today are virtually unknown, Bernhard Middelboe (1850–1931) and Holger Roed (1846–1874), the son of Professor Jørgen Roed (1808–1888). It was during this period that Johansen painted his first major genre pictures, including *Mother and Son*, which ensured him success at Charlotten-



FIG. A P. S. KRØYER

*Morning at Hornbæk, The Fishermen Coming Ashore, 1875*

*(Morgen ved Hornbæk, fiskerne kommer i land)*

Oil on canvas, 40½ x 63⅓ in. (102.7 x 161.5 cm)

Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen

borg. In 1875, before going to France, Krøyer painted the ambitious figure composition *Morning at Hornbæk, The Fishermen Coming Ashore* (Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen).

Locher's sketch appears to have been painted on the same stretch of coast but in the afternoon light. The profile of Kullen forms the background, and the wooden constructions jutting out into the water from the shore are seen in many other pictures from Hornbæk. Holger Roed also drew this place. A large group of fishermen are coming ashore, dragging boats up onto the beach, as was necessary



before the harbor was built. If we look at the lighting and the dynamics between the groups of fishermen, Locher's work is of a quite different and more dramatic character than Krøyer's (see Figure A). In terms of time, it could coincide with the days when Locher's impressions from Bonnat's school in Paris were fresh in his memory and reflect his experience of seeing Delacroix's and Géricault's grandiose figure compositions in the Louvre. That would date the sketch to the 1880s, when Locher was a permanent resident in Hornbæk.

We do not know the finished composition that resulted from this sketch, but the sketch invites a broader interpretation. Is the aim to portray seamen who have been saved and are being carried ashore? Among other things, Locher was familiar from Skagen with rescues and shipping disasters, and he knew Michael Ancher's work. Hornbæk was famous for one rescue that C. W. Eckersberg had used as a motif in 1806. In 1774, a group of five fishermen and laborers rescued the skipper from an English ship, the last surviving member of the crew. This deed was remembered in Ove Malling's *Store og gode Handlinger (Great and Good Deeds)*, published in 1777 and later translated into several languages including English; the book inspired poet Johannes Ewald to write his play *Fiskerne (The Fisherfolk)* in 1779.

E.F.