

# Welcome Home

Donations to the Foundation of  
the Centre Albert Anker

30.05.2026 — 25.10.2026

The Albert Anker-Haus Ins Foundation, established in 1994, is the sole proprietor of the Centre Albert Anker. It owns the entire collection, including the historic residential building with the artist's studio, and its primary purpose is to preserve it. The collection has grown over the years: although acquisitions are excluded by the statutes, the Foundation has been able to accept numerous significant donations. Around 140 objects have been added since the Foundation was established. These primarily include artistic works such as paintings, drawings, and watercolors, but also sketchbooks, Anker's self-made notebooks, the "Carnets", as well as historical objects, such as a so-called „Anker-Kanne“, the characteristic coffee pot that Anker depicted multiple times in his still lifes.

The original foundation collection consists of the estate of the artist and his descendants, including all works and objects that had remained in the Anker House over generations. After Anker's death in 1910, the artistic estate was divided among his children and gradually sold off in part over time. His daughter Marie Quinche-Anker (1872 - 1950), followed by her daughter Charlotte Quinche (1894 - 1973), continued to maintain the house. After Charlotte's death in 1973, Lidia Brefin-Urban (1914 - 1990) of the Basel branch of the family took over the property. Matthias Brefin (\*1943) and Rosette Brefin-Wyss (1940 - 2004) ultimately initiated the establishment of the foundation.

A large portion of the new arrivals added to the collection over the past three decades had originally been part of Anker's artistic estate in 1910 and, through donations, have in a sense returned home. The exhibition presents a selection of these donated works, grouped thematically and complemented by objects from the foundation's original holdings, thereby reintegrating them into the collection as a whole.

The act of donating is both a gesture of generosity and an expression of responsibility toward the public, making cultural heritage accessible and available for use. The works are available for research and educational purposes and can be professionally preserved for future generations. In this sense, the exhibition is also intended as a tribute to the act of giving.

# 1 Ins and around the house

Albert Anker painted what was immediately around him. His interiors were mostly created in his own home. Studies of domestic interiors or “snapshots” of everyday family life, such as the sketch-like scene with Anna Anker (1835 – 1917) in the salon (No. 1.1), are numerous in Anker’s work. He likely drew them on the spot. Anker often worked with preliminary sketches in pencil or pen, which served as guides. In watercolors, they often remain visible due to the translucent paint (No. 1.2).

Anker’s beloved, unmarried aunt and godmother, Anna Maria (1798 – 1873), ran the household of her widowed brother until the end of her life. The room known as the “chambre de la tante” in the historic residence still serves as a reminder of her today. Anker captured it in his ink drawing (No. 1.3), which was returned to Ins as a donation. Anker spent most of his life in Ins and in the rural Bernese Seeland—a

setting that inspired many of his landscape motifs. As a genre painter, he mostly worked in his studio, where he developed lifelike, nature-oriented depictions. Occasionally he took his easel outside to sketch and paint directly on site, as in the oil sketch *Waldrand* (No. 1.4), painted in the Impressionist style. This work is particularly noteworthy because Anker generally distinguished himself from the Impressionists—the “hommes chics”, as he called them in a 1874 letter to his wife Anna—through his pictorial language. Yet not without a certain wistfulness. In a 1888 letter to his artist friend Auguste Bachelin (1830 – 1890), he confessed: “I sometimes deeply regret not having apprenticed with a landscape painter.”

# 2 On the Road in the Emmental—Gotthelf Illustrations 1889 – 1899

After some initial hesitation, Anker signed a contract in 1891 with the publisher Frédéric Zahn (1857 – 1919) to illustrate the deluxe edition of Gotthelf’s stories. Between 1889 and 1899, Anker made repeated trips to the Emmental in search of subjects for his illustrations. The edition was published in two parts and nine volumes between 1894 and 1904. Anker found the work on the illustrations laborious, as he resented collaborating with the businessman Zahn, who not only gave precise instructions but also set strict deadlines. In a letter dated January 4, 1897, to his friend Albert de Meuron (1823 – 1897), Anker lamented: “This dreadful Zahn has me in his clutches. He’s going to squeeze me dry like a lemon.” Anker was also occasionally dissatisfied with the execution of his illustrations, as the woodcuts failed to adequately capture the subtleties of the original drawings. For the elaborately designed deluxe edition, Anker produced a total of over 220 illustrations. After he closed his studio in Paris in 1890 and stopped selling paintings through the art dealer Goupil, the Gotthelf illustrations provided him with a steady income. Despite his antipathy toward Zahn, the commission earned him good money, which is why he continued to illustrate Zahn’s publications in 1899. For example, for *Swiss History Told for the People* by Johannes Sutz.

The sketches, drawings, and studies that Anker produced in preparation for the commission reflect his precise working method and document his intensive engagement with the Emmental region. At the same time, they offer a glimpse of the landscape of that era and the characteristic Emmental farmhouses. The ink drawing *In der Rauchküche* (No. 2.1) was

donated to the foundation in 2022. It is a preliminary sketch for the print template used to illustrate *Hansjoggeli der Erbvetter*. Using precise hatching techniques, Anker approached the later woodcut engraving, the result of which can be seen on p. 193. Most of Anker’s drawings were translated into printing plates by the Paris-based wood engraver Frédéric Florian (1858 – 1926). The ink drawing was particularly suitable as a preliminary sketch because it most closely resembles the final print.

Anker provided 82 illustrations for Gotthelf’s novel *Die Käserei in der Vehfreude*. A task that must have demanded a great deal of him. In a letter to his friend, the architect Edouard Davinet (1839 – 1922), dated November 9, 1893, he described the summer during which he worked on the illustrations as “the most miserable of his life.” The ink drawing (No. 2.2), recently received as a donation, is a study for the illustration on p. 404 and one of the few depictions of an Emmental house from 1792. A more detailed version of the motif is held at the Kunstmuseum Solothurn.

The illustration for the book cover of *Uli der Knecht* and *Uli der Pächter* by Hans Bachmann (1852 – 1912) must have appealed to Albert Anker. In his “Carnet” No. 20, (No. 2.3), which the Foundation received as a donation, he traced it in 1895.

# 3 Rosina Probst

Rosina Probst (1845 – 1926), who was born in Ins, was portrayed by Anker twice at the age of 18. “Hanslirööseli”, as she was called, is said to have been a particularly pretty young woman; this is also recorded in the notes of *Albert Anker. Sein Dorf und seine Modelle* by Fritz Probst (1881 – 1968), published in 1954 by his daughter Marguerite Janson. In it, the long-time Inser teacher recounts, among other things, the anecdote about the

second portrait, (No. 3.1), on display here. Hans Probst, Rosina’s father and innkeeper of the Rebstock Inn in Ins, had wanted to purchase this painting from Anker as a dowry for his daughter’s wedding to Jakob Kästli, a master builder from Münchenbuchsee. But Anker declined, saying that Probst could not afford the painting anyway—and without further ado, he himself presented it to the bride and groom as a wedding gift.

For many years, the portrait hung in the farmhouse parlor of the house in Münchenbuchsee. The Kästlis were proud to own a genuine Anker painting. In 1926, shortly before her death, the now 80-year-old Rosina handwrote her will on the back of the frame: "I wish to remain in my home. Mother." In 1952, the descendants drew up a corresponding agreement stating that "[...] this painting shall remain at the house at Kreuzgasse 126 as long as it is inhabited by a direct descendant. If this is no longer the case, it shall be handed over to the Kunstmuseum Bern as a loan from the Kästli family of Münchenbuchsee, to be held in trust and kept in suitable storage." Everybody signed. Nevertheless, the work was sold in 2004. Rosina Probst's descendants filed a lawsuit, and the seller was convicted of

embezzlement in 2006 by the Burgdorf High Court. However, reclaiming the painting was ruled out due to the buyers' good faith. It was not until some 20 years later that the descendants succeeded in reacquiring the work at an auction. They donated it to the Centre Albert Anker in 2025. The first portrait of Rosina Probst is housed at the Musée d'art et d'histoire in Geneva. In addition, several years ago the foundation was able to accept as a gift the unique earrings featuring golden mice, which Rosina Probst wears in both of her portraits, from a great-granddaughter of the subject (No. 3.2).

## 4 Artist friends

A moment seen from two perspectives: During a visit by Anker's longtime friend, the French painter Auguste Alexandre Hirsch (1833 - 1912), the 5- or 6-year-old Louise sat for both artists, with a cat on her lap. The works document the slightly differing viewing angles: While Anker sits facing his young daughter head-on (No. 4.1), Hirsch sees her in three-quarter profile (No. 4.2), much as illustrated in the pencil drawing of an academic model (No. 4.3). Both works remained in Anker's studio; he was able to complete his painting on a sheet of metal, while Hirsch's remained an unfinished sketch.

Anker's collection includes a self-portrait by Hirsch (No. 4.4). It is not possible to say with certainty when Hirsch gave him the work. The well-dressed man, who looks at us with large blue eyes, appears to be significantly younger, however. It is possible that Hirsch painted it during their joint training

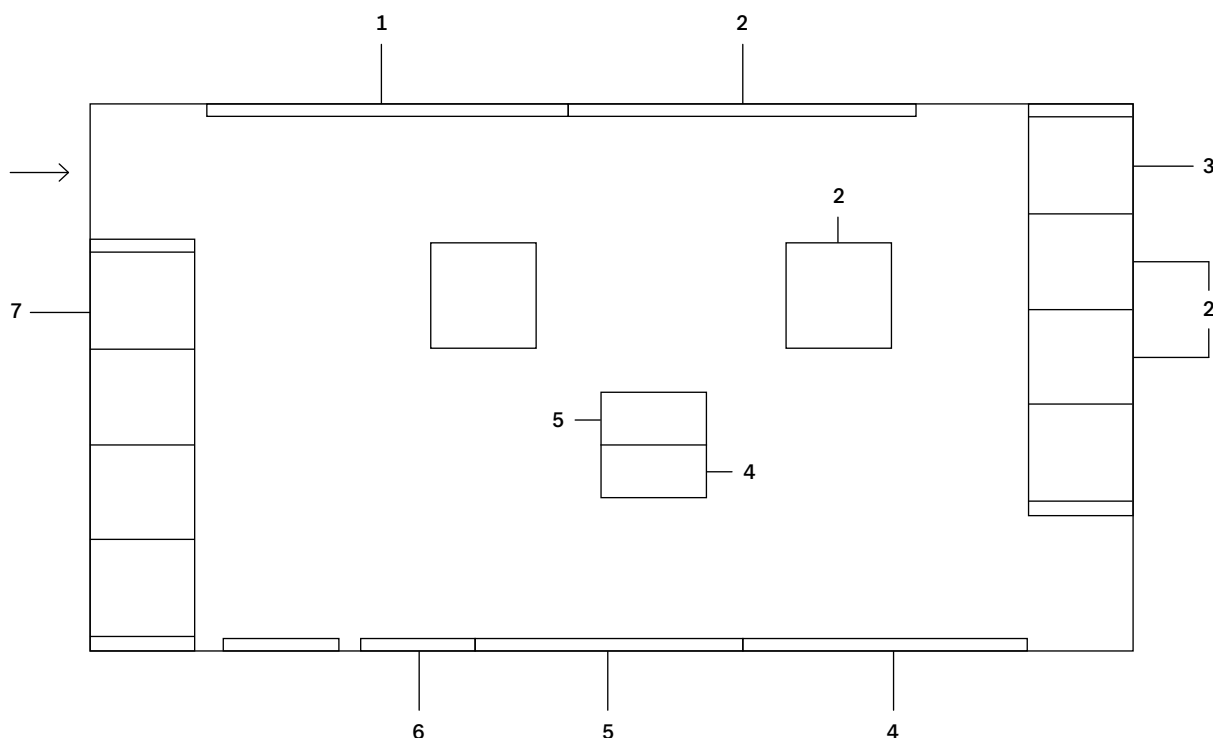
under Charles Gleyre (1806 - 1874) and gave it to Anker upon completing their studies.

François Ehrmann's (1833 - 1910) large drawing (No. 4.5) illustrates how one might imagine Anker. Ehrmann also studied under Gleyre and was a close friend of Anker and Hirsch.

Who exactly created the drawing of the two students sketching from a model (No. 4.3) at the Leipzig Academy of Fine Arts is currently still the subject of further research.

However, like Ehrmann's drawing, it is part of the original collection and likely comes from Anker's estate. Moreover, it fits so well into this thematic ensemble that we decided to include it in the exhibition nonetheless.

### Object Group Overview



## 5 Louise, Louise, Louise

Albert Anker portrayed his firstborn daughter Louise (1865 – 1954) countless times. Painted in oil, classically set against a dark background, such as *Louise Anker mit Katze* (No. 4.1) or *Bildnis Louise Anker* (No. 5.1); sketched in a playful manner in small pen-and-ink drawings, (No. 5.2); or rendered in a detailed charcoal drawing on a large sheet of paper (No. 5.3). Each of these works captures the artist's paternal gaze upon Louise at a specific point in her life and reveals different facets of her personality.

In *Louise Anker mit Brosche* (No. 5.4), she is about five to ten years old, wearing middle-class clothing and her hair braided into a plait. The eponymous brooch draws the eye through its strikingly placed dark contrast. Louise seems lost in thought. She is not looking at us; instead, her gaze is directed downward to the left and beyond the edge of the picture. The drawing captivates with its cohesive composition and the contrast between the detailed sections around the face and the

sketchy lines thrown onto the page, which merely hint at Louise's clothing.

Another portrait, (No. 5.5), shows her a little older, as a strikingly beautiful young woman, probably around 18 years old. The work has been treated with a flat application of lime paint in the background and features a conspicuous crack running right through Louise's face. According to an anecdotal family tradition, Anker is said to have shown the drawing to a friend, who remarked that it was "flatté", meaning embellished. Anker, who was always plagued by self-doubt, is said to have torn up the drawing in disappointment. Louise herself, however, retrieved the sheet from the wastebasket and kept it. Fortunately, it has survived. The young woman gazes out of the picture with alert eyes, open and curious.

Both sheets were passed down through several generations in the family and were returned to Ins as a gift.

## 6 Study Anna Anker-Rüfli

As often as Anker depicted his children, drawings or even paintings of his wife Anna are rare. This was hardly due to a lack of affection for her. The correspondence between Anna and Albert documents a trusting and close relationship. Apparently, it was Anna who did not want to pose. According to family accounts, she felt uncomfortable being immortalized in her husband's art. However, this female head study (No. 6.1) is

indeed of Anna, as confirmed by a note on the back of the sheet written by her granddaughter Elisabeth Oser, who is depicted here by Anker as an 8-year-old girl in (No. 6.2).

The sheet entered the Centre Albert Anker collection as a bequest.

## 7 Maurice Playing Pick-Up Sticks

In the 1880s, Anker increasingly offered watercolors and meticulously executed charcoal drawings for sale in order to meet the growing demand from private buyers who could not afford oil paintings. Among these works is the watercolor *Beim Stäbchenspiel* (No. 7.1). Anker dated and signed it, which generally indicates an intention to sell. However, the work does not appear in his meticulously kept "Livre de vente", the notebook in which he recorded all sales with the subject, amount, and recipient. He may have given it away. Acquired in 2025 as a donation from the heirs of Sibylle Peyer-Meyer into the collection of the Centre Albert Anker, the work originates from the family of the artist Carl Theodor Meyer-Basel (1860 – 1932). Anker and Meyer apparently met on several occasions in Munich and Paris and may even have exchanged works. Anker's estate includes a landscape painting that is very likely attributable to Meyer-Basel. It hangs in the "Salle à manger" of the historic apartment. A relevant reference in Anker's notes has yet to be found.

Anker's children, Maurice and Cécile, sit at the table in the Anker-Stube salon, focused and engrossed in their game. Maurice (1874 – 1931) is eleven years old at this time. The year before, his father had handed him a map he had drawn himself, titled *Der Weg von Ins nach Oberburg*, and sent him on his way. From today's perspective, it is unthinkable that the presumably very lively boy should have hiked alone to the boarding school in Oberburg near Burgdorf, which his parents had chosen for his education. Whether the charcoal drawing of the boy (No. 7.2) sketching by the light of an oil lamp also depicts Maurice is doubtful given the date (1895). However, Anker often drew from memory as well; the resemblance between the two is striking and is confirmed by the title of the drawing, which has been passed down in the family and entered the collection as a bequest from Hans Brefin.