

Pairs with Franz Marc, *Die grossen blauen Pferde (The Large Blue Horses)*, 1911

[[Optional Description copy]] Why is this painting so important to the history and identity of the Walker Art Center? Archivist Jill Vuchetich tells the story of how this painting arrived in Minneapolis.

[[Transcript]]

I'm Jill Vuchetich, and I'm the Archivist and Head of the Library and Archives at the Walker Art Center.

So Franz Marc's "Blue Horses"—The Large Blue Horses—is actually the first work of the Walker Art Center permanent collection. And that is because, prior to the acquisition of the Blue Horses in 1942, the Walker Art Center's primary collection was of our founder, T.B. Walker. And his collection was primarily 18th and 19th century work, just extremely different than this.

And when the Walker Art Galleries, which is what it was known as during T.B. Walker's lifetime, turned into the Walker Art Center in 1940, it got a very different focus. So the Walker Art Center became a meeting place, a place for people to come in and enjoy art, but also to take classes, to have all kinds of educational opportunities, as well as experience other events. And T.B. Walker's family, his children and his grandchildren, who were primarily involved with the gallery by that point—well, they became collectors in their own right and they had a very different direction of where they were collecting work.

When our very first collections curator, J. LeRoy Davidson, saw this work in 1939 in Milwaukee, he said to Hudson Walker, who was T.B. Walker's grandson and also a gallery dealer in his own right, that this work was for sale, and we should get it. And Hudson Walker then went to his aunt Susan [laughs]... And so this painting being the first one to come to the Walker Art Center was because of a chain of events: that the curator talked to the grandson, and the grandson talked to his aunt, and she said, "Yes! Let's get it." And she approved of the acquisition and it came to Minneapolis.

And the other neat thing about that story is that it was such a big deal when it came to Minneapolis. Everyone wanted to see it. It was really a big draw and that sparked the change of the Art Center, collection-wise, from this pretty typical industrialist collection of older works, to kind of this vibrant new art center where things were happening, and the whole art-loving Minneapolis community just embraced it from the get-go.