

## INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the United States Embassy in Djibouti. The ART in Embassies exhibition you see here was made possible by a donation to the State Department by former Ambassador William Benton. My wife Susan and I chose famed American painter Reginald Marsh's watercolor scenes of New York Harbor and Long Island for our art exhibition because of their "gull's-eye" realism. Several appear to be studies for his famous murals, like those in the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in New York. Unpolished, their raw lines convey the energy of light houses, ships, and docks; they depict the trade that propelled prosperity for the City, the Empire State, and our nation.

Djibouti has a billion dollars' worth of privately-funded construction projects underway. Its new port, free zone, and destination hotel are open for business. With a modern banking sector, and a currency pegged to the dollar (since 1949), Djibouti is a financial safe haven with some 650 million dollars in dollar-denominated deposits. A democratic, religiously tolerant, Muslim country, it is committed to free markets, the fight against terror, and peaceful resolution of regional disputes.

Djibouti's vision and strategic location give it a strong chance for success. With a dose of Marsh-like, New-York City energy, Djibouti's private-sector-fueled growth may light the way for Africa's troubled Horn. Djibouti's small economy, like Marsh's "tug-boat," may push its larger neighbors in the right direction.

Marsh's impressive New York City skyline shows how fast and far that great port developed. The fact that Marsh was able to keep painting during our Great Depression as a Works Progress Administration artist, reminds us of the time when so many Americans – like those living in countries around the world today – needed "a leg up, not a hand out." We are just glad the WPA helped to keep a paintbrush in Marsh's hand.

I wish to extend my thanks to Embassy Djibouti's GSO staff for installing the exhibition, and to the whole Embassy Team for their help filling this house with their friends, family members, and official visitors. As each new visitor looks, for the first time, at these paintings of old New York, they bring to life memories of that great port and hopes that Djibouti may follow its course.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Stuart Symington".

Ambassador W. Stuart Symington

*Djibouti  
May 2007*

## REGINALD MARSH (1898-1954)

The drawings and paintings of Reginald Marsh convey the energy of city life in the early years of the twentieth century. From happy crowds at amusement parks like Coney Island to derelicts in the Bowery, his work captures the flavor of life in New York City in the 1920s and 1930s. Marsh is regarded as an American Scene painter, one of a number of American artists who portrayed specific regions of the country in a realistic style.

The son of the artists Fred Dana Marsh and Alice Randall, Marsh was born in Paris, France, but the family settled in New Jersey when he was two. After graduating from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, in 1920, he studied at the Art Students League in New York City during the 1920s, and also worked as an illustrator for the *New York Daily News*, the *New York Herald*, *Esquire*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. He was one of the original staff members of *The New Yorker* magazine. From 1925 to 1926 he studied in Paris, and after his return to New York City resumed classes at the Art Students League.

Unlike the social realists, Marsh created art that was not of vigorous protest; rather he cast a knowing eye on urban life, which he depicted with gentle satire. The vitality of the city fascinated him. In prints as well as paintings he portrayed subways, nightclubs, and everyday street scenes in a style that reflected his admiration for European old master artists such as Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). Because of his strong predilection for line, Marsh preferred egg tempura and watercolor. He produced few oil paintings, but enjoyed several mural commissions. Marsh died in Dorset, Vermont.

Upon Marsh's death, his former classmate and friend, Senator William Benton (1900-1973) purchased a half interest in Marsh's Estate – his artwork, in order to help financially the artist's widow. In 1972, the Art Museum at the University of Connecticut in Storrs officially became The William Benton Museum of Art, to honor the former United States Senator from Connecticut and University of Connecticut Trustee. Shortly after the honor was bestowed, Senator Benton died, but not before giving the Museum a selection from his large collection of works by Reginald Marsh. Through the generosity of the Senator's family and the artist's wife, the Benton Museum now possesses one of the most complete collections of Reginald Marsh's works on paper.

[www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov)

[www.butlerart.com/pc\\_book/pages/reginald\\_marsh\\_1898.htm](http://www.butlerart.com/pc_book/pages/reginald_marsh_1898.htm)

[www.udel.edu/art/Faculty/Norsky/RMarsh.htm](http://www.udel.edu/art/Faculty/Norsky/RMarsh.htm)

[www.benton.uconn.edu/history.htm](http://www.benton.uconn.edu/history.htm)



**SS WASHINGTON**, undated. Watercolor, 14 x 20 in. (35,6 x 50,8 cm)



**BOAT**, 1935. Watercolor, 14 x 20 in. (35,6 x 50,8 cm)





**RMS QUEEN MARY**, 1936, Watercolor, 20 x 26 in. (50,8 x 66 cm)



**SHELTER ISLAND**, 1936  
Watercolor, 14 x 20 in. (35,6 x 50,8 cm)



**MAN STANDING ON FRONT DECK OF TUGBOAT**, undated  
Watercolor, 25 ¾ x 30 ½ in. (65,4 x 77,5 cm)



**LIGHTHOUSE IN BAY**, undated  
Watercolor, 12 x 18 ½ inc. (30,5 x 47 cm)

All pictures courtesy of the ART in Embassies Program, Washington, D.C.; Gift of William Benton

## THE ART IN EMBASSIES PROGRAM



Founded in 1964, the U.S. Department of State ART in Embassies Program is a unique blend of art and diplomacy. Through exhibitions with diverse themes and content, ART presents more than 3,500 original works of art by U.S. citizens in a variety of media and styles. They are obtained through loan from sources that include museums, galleries, corporations, artists, and private collectors, and displayed in the public rooms of some 180 U.S. Embassy residences and diplomatic missions worldwide.

The ART exhibitions are a source of great pride to U.S. ambassadors, assisting them to reach the host country's educational, cultural, business, and diplomatic communities. In viewing the exhibitions, the thousands of guests who visit U.S. Embassy residences each year have the opportunity to learn about our nation – its history, customs, values, and aspirations – by experiencing American art firsthand. Detailed information about the Program may be obtained by accessing the ART web site, <http://aiep.state.gov>. It functions as an interactive global museum featuring on-line versions of all current exhibitions.

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ART in Embassies Exhibition



**UNITED STATES EMBASSY DJIBOUTI**

Republic of Djibouti