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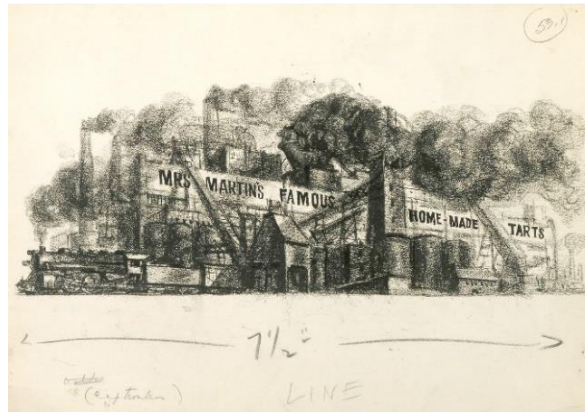
REGINALD MARSH

(1898-1954)

Mrs. Martin's Famous Homemade Tarts, c. 1933

crayon on paper

10 x 14 inches



Provenance

The Artist

Senator William Benton (and thence by descent)

Forum Gallery, New York

Note

Reginald Marsh was an American painter of social realist scenes, most notably depicting New York City life during the 1920s and 1930s. His subjects included crowded Coney Island beach scenes, bawdy vaudeville and burlesque nightclubs, and fashionable women or jobless men walking the streets of Union Square and down on the Bowery. Although he was defined as a second-generation Ashcan School artist, it is the Depression-era work of Reginald Marsh which is best remembered and admired.

Born in Paris in 1898, Marsh left with his family at the age of two and was raised in Nutley, New Jersey. His paternal grandfather had made a fortune in the meat packing business and the family had wealth. In 1920, Marsh graduated from Yale University and worked as a freelance illustrator where he sketched vaudeville and burlesque performers for a regular *New York Daily News* feature and was one of the first cartoonists for *The New Yorker* when they began publishing in 1925. He also contributed illustrations to *Harper's Bazaar*, *Esquire*, *Fortune*, *Life*, *Vanity Fair*, and the American Marxist journal, *New Masses*. His desire to learn how to paint led Marsh to continue his education at the Art Students League of New York where he studied with John Sloan, George Luks, and Kenneth Miller Hays.

While exploring Europe to study works of the Old Masters like Titian, Tintoretto, Rubens and Delacroix, Marsh met his contemporary Thomas Hart Benton in France whose social realism and painterly style also became an inspiration. Marsh developed his own modern day style and subject matter and didn't shy away from depicting gritty urban life.

The regionalist painter John Steuart Curry (1897-1946) described Marsh's attraction to New York: "It is the glistening, fabulous city, woven on the warp of a hundred foreign cities, multicolored with races and kinds and creeds, its people molded by its influence yet paradoxically individualized by its bigness; it is this magic, fascinating city that Reggie loves and paints."¹

Reginald Marsh was granted his first solo exhibition at the Whitney Studio Club in 1924 and over the next three decades was featured in numerous group and solo exhibitions, including 15 one-man shows at the Frank K.M. Rehn Gallery. Marsh participated in the New Deal's federal art program, painting two murals in Washington, D.C. and a series of frescoes in New York. During World War II he served as an artist correspondent for *Life* magazine and traveled to Brazil to sketch the troops. From 1935, Marsh taught at the Art Students League and the Philadelphia's Moore Institute, where he served as head of the paintings department. In 1945, Marsh published *Anatomy for Artists*.

Works by Reginald Marsh are represented in many public institutions, including the Art Institute of Chicago (IL), Brooklyn Museum (NY), Chrysler Museum (VA), Detroit Institute of Arts (MI), Minneapolis Institute of Art (MN), Smithsonian American Art Museum (DC), Terra Foundation for American Art (IL), and the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY).

¹ John Steuart Curry, "New Yorker," *Democrat* 13, no. 4 (1943): 15-16.