

Artist Peggy Bacon Dips Her Brush In Laughter

By ADELAIDE KERR

Peggy Bacon is one artist who had the nerve to drop her most famous technique at the height of its career.

For years her caricatures of big shots were famous. So were the descriptions which accompanied them. Caricatures and descriptions like those in her famous book collection "Off With Their Heads." . . . "Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia—Little, hard, licorice candy type. No drone, No giant." . . . "Sinclair Lewis—A country store type." . . . "Rexford Tugwell—A nice head master. Probably smells of Violette-deparme." America rocked with laughter.

Then, suddenly Peggy Bacon stopped her caricatures.

Reason?

"I couldn't stand getting under people's skins," she told me in her New York studio apartment. "The caricatures made them smart so. Now I have veered away from them completely."

But Peggy Bacon has not veered away from black and white—or from laughs. At the drawing board set in one corner of her library-drawing room, she now whips out dry points and lithographic crayons as laugh provoking, or ironic, as her caricatures. Too-fat women and too-thin men at the beach—"The Beauties of Nature." A woman and a real estate agent inspecting a run-down seaside cottage—"Three Hundred Dollars a Season." A bath house filled with women donning unflattering bathing suits—"The Awful Truth."

Some of Miss Bacon's work is hung in the country's leading museums—the Metropolitan, the Whitney, the Carnegie Institute of Fine Arts as well as the museums of Baltimore, Brooklyn and Los Angeles. It also appears in a number of books, including her own—"Animosities," "Terrible Nuisance" and "Catcalls." She likewise is famous as an illustrator of other books, among them "With Malice Toward None" and an edition of "Tom Sawyer." In 1934 she won a Guggenheim Fellowship and used it to complete "Off With Their Heads." She has taught in a number of leading art schools and now teaches two days a week at the Corcoran Art School in Washington.

"In my classes I have soldiers, sailors and government employes—and they are doing wonderful work," she said. "American people have been maligned as far as their interest and ability in art is concerned. Europe told them so long that they were only interested in the dollar that they believed it. But far from being a nation of money grubbers, Americans reach out for culture. They are inclined to self education, to improving their minds and talents. Art talent is rife here. I expect great things."

Peggy Bacon is an attractive woman. Her creamy skin is smooth and unlined as a girl's, her hair is brown, her eyes grey. She has a gusty sense of humor and a lively ringing laugh.

She was born in Ridgetfield, Conn., the daughter of two artists, and from childhood expected to be an artist herself. She traveled widely in Europe and studied six

years at the Art Students' League in New York. Then came her marriage to artist Alexander Brook. Two children were born of the union: Alexander, now in the Navy, and Belinda, who has an OWI job in Washington.

The Brooks were divorced several years ago and Peggy Bacon now makes her home in a little apartment on East 13th street, New York. She is one artist whose production does not lag. She works like a whirlwind. Makes quantities of sketches from life and files them all. When she gets an idea for a picture, she drawn her characters from "real life" sketches.

For fun Miss Bacon likes little dinners, dancing and Russian bank. She says she has lived her life virtually without exercise. But she has recently taken to one sport—horseracing. Friends dragged her to the races at Pimlico. She put two dollars on Gallant Witch, an unknown, which won the race and paid eight to one. Nothing Peggy Bacon has achieved in art ever gave her more satisfaction than that.

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