



Peter Arno: The Mad, Mad World of The New Yorker's Greatest Cartoonist

Michael Maslin

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The incredible, wild life of Peter Arno, the fabled cartoonist whose racy satire and bold visuals became the unforgiving mirror of his times and the foundation of the *New Yorker* cartoon.

In the summer of 1925, *The New Yorker* was struggling to survive its first year in print. They took a chance on a young, indecorous cartoonist who was about to give up his career as an artist. His name was Peter Arno, and his witty social commentary, blush-inducing content, and compositional mastery brought a cosmopolitan edge to the magazine's pages—a vitality that would soon cement *The New Yorker* as one of the world's most celebrated publications.

Alongside *New Yorker* luminaries such as E.B. White, James Thurber, and founding editor Harold Ross, Arno is one of the select few who made the magazine the cultural touchstone it is today. In this intimate biography of one of *The New Yorker's* first geniuses, Michael Maslin dives into Arno's rocky relationship with the magazine, his fiery marriage to the columnist Lois Long, and his tabloid-cover altercations involving pistols, fists, and barely-legal debutantes. Maslin invites us inside the Roaring Twenties' cultural swirl known as Café Society, in which Arno was an insider and observant outsider, both fascinated and repulsed by America's swelling concept of “celebrity.”

Through a nuanced constellation of Arno's most defining experiences and escapades that inspired his work in the pages of *The New Yorker*, Maslin explores the formative years of the publication and its iconic cartoon tradition. In tandem, he traces the shifting gradations of Arno's brushstrokes and characters over the decades—all in light of the cultural upheavals that informed Arno's sardonic humor.

In this first-ever portrait of America's seminal cartoonist, we finally come eye-to-eye with the irreverent spirit at the core of the *New Yorker* cartoon—a genre in itself—and leave with no doubt as to how and why this genre came to be embraced by the masses as a timeless reflection of ourselves.

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