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Art review: The Mystery of Picasso's Creative Process: The Art of Printmaking | 4/5

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BY BRUCE QUEK - 28 JUNE

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A large part of the draw, perhaps, is the fact that these works have never been exhibited in Asia before, and each work represents a rare look at some facet of Picasso's work. Coming straight from the archives of his son, Claude, the works on show include several series of prints (along with the plates used to print them) accompanied by a single painting. Interestingly, few of them are signed or numbered, as the artist was not in the habit of signing or numbering pieces he didn't plan to sell. There's also a series of photographs by David Douglas Duncan, a pioneering photojournalist and close friend of Picasso.

The show's title explains it: Each series of prints offers some insight into Picasso's creative process. In *The Bull*, he successively re-worked an image of a bull, starting from a fairly naturalistic treatment and gradually reducing it to a collection of sinuous lines. *Two Nude Women*, on the other hand, also begins naturalistically, but presents a more additive take on the process of abstraction. If anything, for those less familiar with abstract art, it's an eye-opening look at how artists can abstract their subjects.

Woman With Hat and *El Greco's Portrait Of A Man With Spanish Collar* are both linocuts, and present the artist's innovative technique of successively carving the same block of linoleum to print in multiple colours (or fine shades of grey) rather than the conventional technique of having separate blocks of linoleum for each colour, a method which frustrated Picasso with its slowness.

David Douglas Duncan's photographs continue the overall theme of finding different perspectives of Picasso. The friendship between the two men meant that no other photographer had the same level of access to the artist's life and work, offering us a candid

look at the man behind the art. Amazingly, their friendship flourished despite the lack of fluency in a common language between the two of them.

Again, as the show's title might suggest, it's not unusual for an aura of mystery to build up around a figure as significant as Picasso — for myths and exaggerations to obscure the man and his work. In a welcome breath of fresh air, this show offers us a rare look behind the scenes, at intriguing, intimate, and engaging perspectives on the life and work of Pablo Picasso.

The Mystery Of Picasso's Creative Process runs until Aug 24, 10am to 6pm, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, 41 Robertson Quay. Closed on Sundays. Mondays by appointment only. Free admission.