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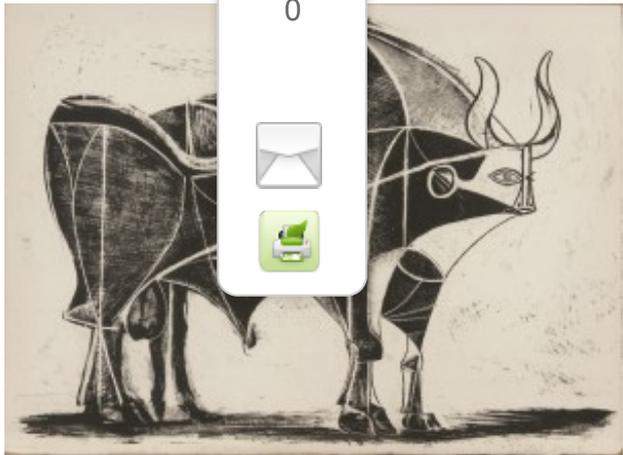
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## Picasso: As Seen Through His Prints

Posted by [Wai L](#) on Sunday, June 23, 2013 · [Leave A Comment](#)

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The image shows a social media-style post for a print by Pablo Picasso titled 'The Bull'. The post includes a search bar, a title, a post date, and social media interaction buttons (Like, Tweet). A vertical overlay menu is positioned over the post, showing a comment count of 1, a Like button, a comment count of 0, a Tweet button, and another comment count of 0. Below the menu is an email icon and a print icon. The background of the post is a black and white linocut print of a bull, rendered in Picasso's characteristic cubist style with bold lines and geometric shapes.

Picasso's "The Bull". Photo credit: Succession Picasso 2013

Picasso had repeatedly said that "it is not sufficient to know an artist's works – it is also necessary to know when he did them, why, how, under what circumstances... I want to leave to posterity a documentation that will be as complete as possible."

While the world has seen much of Picasso's paintings and has equally as expansively expounded on what we can make of the artist through them, significantly less has been attempted with his prints.

And that is not for a severe lack of fervour from this famous French-based artist in this area of art: Picasso inspirationally created more than 18000 definitive engravings. His exquisite linocuts exceeded 3000 in number while his intense lithographs shot beyond the 6000 mark! Little wonder that he has been credited with reviving print making as an art form in France.

So it is indeed our great fortune that the Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI) has gamely teamed up with

SingTel to bring to Singapore 48 prints that this Spanish-by-birth artist had energetically created in the later years of his life.

Thus, offering us the invaluable opportunity to carefully study them to gain deeper and greater insight into Picasso's treasured sources of motivation and his creative artistic process, as well as some aspects of his personal life.

His lithographs on "The Bull" (1945) and "Two Nude Women" (1946) showed Picasso's dexterity to draw not only on zinc plates, but also on stone. His level of expertise is even greater demonstrated by him being able to create a whole series of distinctly differing states on the same subject matter on just one stone or plate!

Additionally, he did that through an artistically innovative approach: one that tremendously astonished his printers – "he (had) finished where normally, he ought to have started"!

You see, while renown artists the world over begin with a skeletal sketch of a basic frame from which to build a complex composition, Picasso ingeniously commenced by creating an extremely detailed and ultra realistic rendition of his energetically majestic bull and loving sublime "Two Nude Women". Then this adept man proceeded, through a series of deliberate steps, to tenderly evolve both viral animal and ethereal women into absolutely abstract forms.

Fortunately, we are able to study this dramatic transformation process in stage by stage detail as Picasso kept for himself a print of each juncture of his creative process. This solid evidence blows away any presumptuous assumptions we may have that his fondness for constantly working with the non-representational is that he could not compose a picture in an accurate form.

His artistic genius is further demonstrated with his "Tete a la coiffe" (1947), which he first painted in oils on canvas. After which he immediately proceeded to successfully capture the exact essence of its non-figurative composition on a zinc plate to transform his pleasantly captured oils into a lithograph in cheeky tones of ash-like black and white.

Picasso was equally adept at using just one printing block to create linocuts of his vibrantly multi-hued or skillfully variedly toned "Woman with a Hat" (1962) and that which is framed within his "El Greco's Portrait of a Man with a Spanish Collar" (1962).

This is undoubtedly an extremely rare gift as most professional print makers find it immensely easier, and so infinitely preferable, to carve out a separate printing block for each shade that needs printing.

The single printing block used to create these 2 delicately beautiful linocuts have been preserved as evidence of this rare aptitude of his. Accordingly, you can actually see that what has been left not carved out of these blocks bear little resemblance to what gets printed at each point – each crucially needed to build up to their finalized prints.

Studying the 2 printing blocks and the prints of "The Bull" reveals yet another aptitude of Picasso's. In this case, they show his ability to draw and carve in reverse – that is as a mirror image of his subject matter. That way, his carefully inked artworks are truly identical in facing to the real model he was imaginatively capturing.

You will also find that all 48 prints exhibited at STPI do not bear Picasso's infamous signature as they are works the artist had earnestly wanted to possessively keep. This he had the wonderful liberty to do after World War II – that is after his success as an artist, with numerous artworks that had been fervently acquired by museums and private collectors. The wealth that automatically arose from his immense global fame permitted him to sign, at will, only those works he intended for sale.

From them we also catch insightful glimpses of what fuelled Picasso's continued creative spirit: "The Bull" harks back to his days growing up in Spain when he frequently followed his father to watch the bull fights.

Picasso loved its Spanish symbolism of strength and virility and often saw it as a self portrait – perhaps he was thinking of his immeasurable popularity with countless beautiful women.

At the same time, he was very much moved by artworks he loved, like the Spanish Renaissance artist, El Greco's self portrait. This Picasso transformed into his abstracted "El Greco's Portrait of a Man with a Spanish Collar". Then there is Matisse's art: its strong influence can be clearly seen in the way he abstractly re-created the seated feminine figure in "Two Nude Women".

In this adorable lithograph, the woman he had seated in the foreground is Francoise Gilot, the new love interest in Picasso's life and she had successfully usurped his fading affections for Dora Maar, the woman reclining in this print's background. Gilot also lovingly inspired him to pay homage to her with "Tete a la coiffe".

That Picasso loved to artistically capture the women in his life can also be seen in his "Woman with a Hat", which are semi-abstract prints of Jacqueline Roque, his second wife. That she was also his wife and last long-time live-in lover till his death is equally significant – Picasso's prints of her are always affectionately rendered.

As are his prints on Gilot. And that may well be because she was the only woman who had walked away from him; perhaps leaving him no time to fall out of love with her!

Catch these rare glimpses of Picasso yourself at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute at 41 Robertson Quay, Singapore 238236. This special exhibition on his precious prints runs from 26 June to 24 August this year.

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