

Pablo Picasso

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Pablo Ruiz Picasso was born October 25, 1881 in Málaga, Spain to Don José Ruiz Blasco and Doña Maria Picasso y López. Don José, a painter and teacher at the School of Fine Arts and Crafts and a curator of a local museum. Pablo begins to draw and paint at the age of 7 and completes his earliest painting *Picador* in 1890. During this time Pablo studies under his father, who allows him to do detailing finishes on his own paintings. Don José enrolls Pablo into the Barcelona School of Fine Arts in La Coruña at the age of 15.

In the early 1900s Picasso had moved to Paris from Barcelona and began producing works that were suffused in blue, this was effective in conveying a somber tone this was called the "Blue Period". The suicide of Picasso's friend Casagemas triggered these depressing works, which makes this period sentimental but it is important to keep in mind that Picasso was still in his late teens and away from home for the first time living a very poor life. During this period he painted *The Frugal Repast* which he turned into an etching in 1904. The image is of a couple in a café, showing the solitude of blindness. The visual contact the female makes with the viewer in this piece emphasizes the blindness of her companion. Also the full frontality of the figures in this picture is characteristic of the blue period. The hunched shoulders show poverty and an element of Spanish character into the composition, by having the bodies facing the

viewer but with heads turned. This way we see their profiles as a bullfighter would with a bull, this Spanish style turns a sad or pitiful situation into a determined and self-reliant one.

Picasso lived during a time of much political upheaval and war, which he was greatly opposed to. Ideologically Picasso supported the Republicans who promoted democracy and new growth, not necessarily the U.S. Republicans, he believed in growth of the people by having a government where the people were not dictated upon. His work reflected his anti-war sentiments heavily and some viewed him with mistrust. Another important thing that happened during this time was the introduction of Cubism which he was one the founding leaders of that movement.

In 1934 Picasso created *Blind Minotaur Guided by a Little Girl in the Night*, of aquatint, drypoint and scraper. This was one of four prints created for the Vollard Suite (a book by Hans Bolliger). A common theme is present in this image; the little girl guiding with no fear, the beast Minotaur. It also is a great use of how aquatint can enhance an images tonality. Aquatint is used as a technique where the plate is covered with a porous ground through which acid bites many tiny marks in the metal. If an area is to be completely white, that part of the plate is coated with varnish or hard ground. The tones produced resemble those of a wash drawing. It is often used in combination with other types of etching to create great dark and light spaces.

Picasso etched the *Dream and Lie of Franco* in 1937 and writes an accompanying poem to go along with the comic style image. This etching was on two plates that he divided into nine different scenes, the image is read right to left due to reversal in the printing process. First to note the image brings in the bull which Picasso commonly uses

in his works, because of his childhood fascination with bullfights. The story that is told in this etching is about Francisco Franco a Spanish dictator that Picasso despised because of his tyranny during the Spanish Civil War in 1931. The Fascist general Franco is depicted as a grinning monster devouring the innards of his horse that he just killed. The next two scenes he is in combat with an angry bull (symbolizing Spain). The last four scenes were added later when the Basque town of Guernica was bombed, this led to him painting the famous mural *Guernica* in protest to the atrocity. Three of the last four scenes deal with Picasso's contempt and hatred for Franco. The original idea was to sell the whole print with the poem (which was designed to ridicule Franco). This idea was abandoned and the images (at that point 18) were cut up and sold individually, with the profits going to support the Spanish Republic and those who were affected by Franco.

David and Bathsheba was a series of four stages of lithography he produced in 1947-1949 based off of the painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder (a German artist known for his woodcuts and paintings, 1472-1553). The story is a biblical one about King David of Israel who was infatuated with Bathsheba (the wife of Uriah the Hittite). David commits adultery with Bathsheba while Uriah is away with the army and she conceives. In an attempt to cover it up he sends for Uriah to come see his wife, but Uriah does not sleep with Bathsheba. So David sends Uriah to battle and instructs the commanders to leave him in battle where Uriah dies. David then marries Bathsheba and they have their son. The prophet Nathan speaks out against David, so David repents his sins. God kills his son as punishment for adultery. The image shows the impending romance of David and Bathsheba and he gazes down on her. Each of the four stages of the images directs your eyes to different aspects that show Picasso's graphic abilities.

In 1952 Picasso created eight stages of a lithograph called *Balzac*. One of which is the frontispiece for an edition of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, five years later the eight lithographs are published by Michel Leiris in *Balzacs en bas de casse et Picassos en majuscule*. The images were of Honore de Balzac (1799-1850), a novelist who studied jurisprudence (theory and philosophy of law). Balzac was thought of as the father of Realism in European literature. He was a journalist who contributed to political and artistic reviews.

The last two images mentioned were done with lithography, which is a planographic process where an image is drawn onto a stone with an oil-based medium. Then an application of an acid emulsified with gum arabic, which creates a salty layer around the image that seeps into the pores of the stone. Lithographic turpentine is then applied to remove the greasy image leaving the salt layer that holds the skeleton of the image.

When printing the stone is kept wet with water which is attracted to the salty layer, while the ink is repelled by the water and stays on the image area. The stone and paper are then run through a press, this image can be produced in bulk and when done the stone can be sanded down to erase the image.

For about 20 months Picasso stopped painting for personal reasons and started expressing himself in more graphic art and poetry. *Minotaure*, etching and scraper; exhibits such a melodramatic charade of the soul that it can't be described. The minotaur, the girl with flowers and the ladder on the left are all prevalent in earlier works. In 1937 a nightmare comic strip and a mural painting follow this composition.

Picasso discovered linocuts from a local painter Hidalgo Arnère, which Picasso found to be a much faster process than the lithograph because he didn't have to wait for

some else to print them. This is important to note because Picasso was the type of person who did not have the patience for printing processes. The relief print process inspired Picasso, yet he preferred using intaglio technique. During this period he made *Still Life with Glass under the Lamp*, linocut; 1962. Making this print Picasso discovered the reduction method, where you can see he printed from lightest to darkest: yellow, red, green, and then black.

Bull done Dec. 5, 1945 - Jan. 17, 1946 in Paris. This is 11 states of lithography of a bull (a common image used in his work), with one being done in watercolor, gouache, and India ink on cardboard. As explained before, the lithography process allows the artist to create many different states of the same image that is what Picasso explored with the *Bull*.

Picasso was known for his relations with many women despite being married. The next two images are portraits of two of his lovers he had taken. *Woman in an Armchair No.1* (3RD state after transfer) is a lithograph done in 1949. Picasso printed 27 states of this image of his lover Françoise Gilot wearing an embroidered coat Picasso gave her. He emphasizes her sexuality by making circles for her breasts.

Visage (meaning face), a lithograph as well done in 1928. It is believed that this is a picture of his lover Marie-Thérèse Walter. Which was made for André Level's publication *Picasso*. The importance of this image is the attention to detail and how realistic he could be and also his ability to be so versatile with lithography.

Picasso dabbled in a variety of media, most people know him for his paintings and his cubist qualities. This paper was to help explain how he used printmaking as another medium. He was a quirky man who observed and created based on what was

going on around him. He lived during a time when war was prevalent and witnessed great suffering. He made it as an artist in his lifetime which is a huge accomplishment. His works vary drastically in theme, format and medium but one thing is always present and that is his spirit and energy that you can see in his work. Picasso died April 8, 1973.