

Birth of Venus



Sevasti Skourti

General info...

- Creator: Alessandro Botticelli
- Date of creation: 1484-1486
- Original title: La nascita di Venere
- Location: Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy



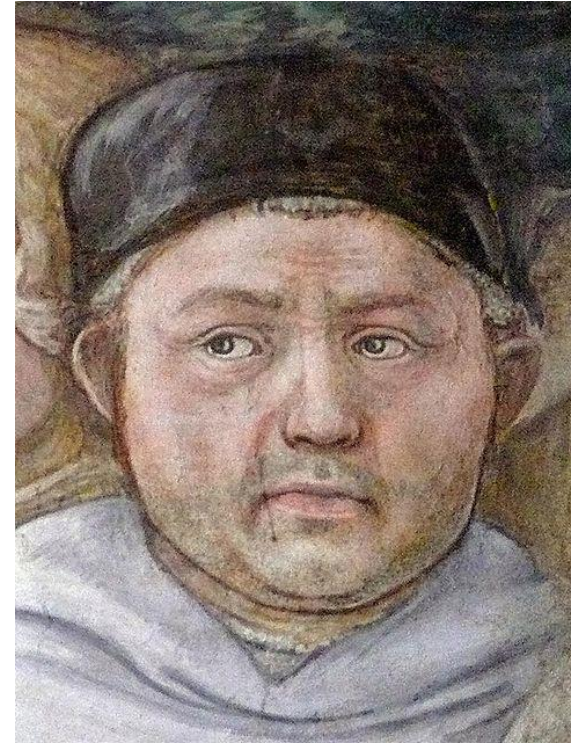
About Alessandro Botticelli...

- Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, or just Sandro, Botticelli was born in Florence in Borgo Ognissanti. He was born between 1444 and 1446 and died in May 1510. He was one of the leading Italian artists that worked during the Early Renaissance period. He worked as a goldsmith in his early life and was an apprentice to Fra Filippo Lippi.
- Botticelli was one of the most esteemed artists in Italy. His graceful pictures of the Madonna and Child, his altarpieces and his life-size mythological paintings, such as 'Venus and Mars', were immensely popular in his lifetime.



About Alessandro Botticelli...

- From around 1461 or 1462 Botticelli was apprenticed to Fra Filippo Lippi, one of the leading Florentine painters and a favorite of the Medici. It was from Lippi that Botticelli learned how to create intimate compositions with beautiful, melancholic figures drawn with clear contours and only slight contrasts of light and shadow.



A Brief Socio-Historical Overview...

- The Birth of Venus painting was created during the 1400s, which was a period in European history that saw a lot of cultural and economic changes. Notable changes that took place during this time included the ending of feudalism, which changed the European economic and social landscape. This was a transitional period from the Middle Ages and art styles progressed from Byzantine to Romanesque and then Gothic.



About the painting...

- The Birth of Venus painting is one of the most famous mythological paintings from the Early Renaissance period. Although Sandro Botticelli was not as popular as other artists from the Renaissance, such as Leonardo da Vinci or Michelangelo, he still contributed one of the most beautiful and sensory-enriching paintings of the goddess Venus.



About the painting...

- What is the meaning of the painting?
- Known as the “Birth of Venus”, the composition actually shows the goddess of love and beauty arriving on land, on the island of Cyprus, born of the sea spray and blown there by the winds, Zephyr and, perhaps, Aura. The goddess is standing on a giant scallop shell, as pure and as perfect as a pearl. She is met by a young woman, who is sometimes identified as one of the Graces or as the Hora of spring, and who holds out a cloak covered in flowers. Even the roses, blown in by the wind are a reminder of spring.



About the painting...

- According to the traditional account, after Venus was born, she rode on a seashell and sea foam to the island of Cythera. In the painting, Venus is prominently depicted in the center, born out of the foam as she rides to shore. On the left, the figure of Zephyrus carries the nymph Chloris (alternatively identified as “Aura”) as he blows the wind to guide Venus.



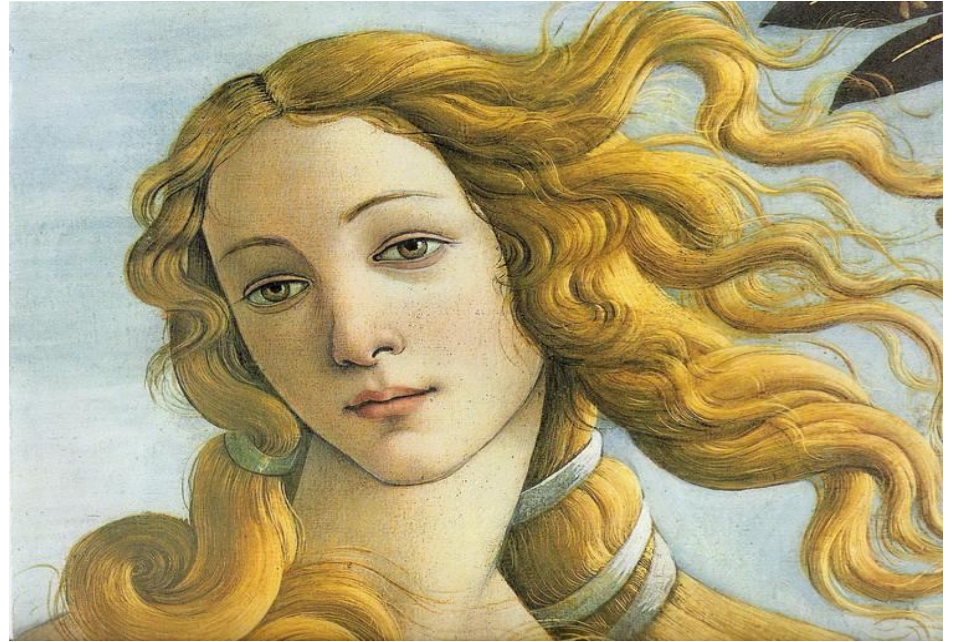
About the painting...



- On shore, a figure who has been identified as Pomona, or as the goddess of Spring, waits for Venus with mantle in hand. The mantle billows in the wind from Zephyrus' mouth.

Artist's technique...

- Botticelli paid much attention to her hair and hairstyle, which reflected his interest in the way women wore their long hair in the late fifteenth century.
- He gave Venus an idealized face which is remarkably free of blemishes, and beautifully shaded her face to distinguish a lighter side and a more shaded side.



Artist's technique...

- Botticelli used the tempera painting technique, which consists of combining color pigments with a water-soluble medium diluted with a binding medium, which was usually egg yolk.
- Botticelli used softer more earthy color tones set complimentary to the other, for example, the red drapery to the right and the green and blue from the drapery of the two figures to the left. Venus herself is portrayed in the lighter skin tones directly linked with her being a symbol of beauty and perfection.

