

The birth of venus

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F. The Birth of Venus was created on canvas with the use of tempera paint. Botticelli would hand grind a material that changes according to the light that it reflects, also known as pigment. The powdered pigments are traditionally mixed with egg yolk which dries quickly and stays firmly in place (Saitzyk, 245). During the Renaissance, fabric such as canvas were used instead of the popular wooden panel. As tempera is a durable paint, canvas is a durable fabric made of flax or cotton. In addition to painting, canvas is used to make items such as sails and tents which require stability and resilience (Saitzyk, 135). G. Alessandro Filippi's, also known as Sandro Botticelli's, youth remains a historical mystery. A common story is that he was in poor health through his early childhood and then went on to be trained as a goldsmith until his twenties when he began to paint. We do know, however, that Botticelli apprenticed in the workshop of an artist by the name of Filippo Lippi. In 1467, he was left by his master in Florence and apparently joined artistic careers with Verrocchio (Angelis, 3). After returning to his family for a short period of time, as indicated by tax records, Botticelli continued his career with the support of the Medici family, one of the most powerful families in Florence, Italy. He left Florence in 1480 to help decorate the Sistine Chapel in Rome with some of his art which only the most famous painters of that time were invited to do. In 1482, Botticelli returned to Florence and shortly after painted the Birth of Venus (Angelis, 4).

PART III - ANALYSIS OF THE SITE AND ART OBJECT A. Even though I would love to visit and view the Birth of Venus in person, it is located in the Uffizi Gallery in Italy which makes it difficult. However, the Uffizi Gallery has constructed a virtual gallery which allows individuals like myself to view the masterpieces it holds

from afar. I actually did not find the gallery first, I didn't even know where the Birth of Venus was located until searching online. Therefore, I chose this painting first and then went on a web search for its home. The Uffizi Gallery website consists of a complete catalogue of the pieces it holds which can be searched for alphabetically or by artist. The site is very easily navigated by a first time visitor and even has directions on how to go about navigating through the site. Also, as opposed to other sites, once you click on the piece's title you are given a good amount of information on the piece and a complete image. Overall, the site was a good source of information and a simple guide to the actual gallery.

B. The story of Venus's birth in Roman mythology is exactly what I see in Botticelli's painting. There are several stories of her birth, but the one that I was told was that of the battle between Uranus and his son. During the battle, Uranus was castrated and his genitals had fallen into the sea. From the waves, Venus was born, blown to shore by the wind God Zephyr and clothed by the goddess of the Seasons. This painting depicts that allegorical content and it also symbolizes the birth of beauty and love. There is a calm elegance of Venus's movement as she is blown to shore with her masses of hair entangling her. This painting seems to shut out everything, but beauty. The curves of the lines shape Venus's body to contribute to her supple beauty while the horizontal and vertical lines of the sea and the trees add depth to the painting. The color and light of the Birth of Venus aid the most in showing her beauty and telling the painting's story. Most of the painting is engulfed in light which gives off a light mood. The corners of the painting are more dark and shadowed which diverts the viewer's focus to Venus in the center. The light allows the viewer

to focus on the symbol of beauty more than her surroundings. The bright colors that are used also give off a calm and tranquil mood and direct focus. Venus's skin is painted brightly and more white than the other people next to her to show her purity and beauty. The painting also emits a sense of movement. The hints of white used in the blues of the sea create a rippling effect under Venus which add to the white breath coming out of Zephyr's mouth and to the orange tones being blown about in Venus's hair. C. The first thing that attracted me to Botticelli's painting's was the colors that he used. The bright tones would attract anyone's eye. Ever since I had seen the Birth of Venus, I had wanted to get her face tattooed on me. I know Venus is the roman goddess of beauty and love, but before going ahead and permanently putting her face on my body, I wanted to know a little more about the painting and it's creator. D. 1.) Botticelli used tempera paint on canvas to compose the Birth of Venus. Tempera paint is said to have been used since the ancient Egyptians. It is composed of eggs which have been around since as long as anyone can remember and mixed with pigments which could come from plants, minerals and animals (Saitzyk, 245). Canvas is also make from a plant called hemp and has been made since the 1200s (Saitzyk, 145). 2.) I believe that this painting could have been painted one hundred years before it's time, maybe even two or three hundred. The stories of roman mythology have been around since ancient Rome. They were stories of their Gods and what they believed in. Clearly, Botticelli used the story of Venus's birth which came from Roman mythology as a basis for his painting. The only thing that would have effected the painting would have been the time period in which he painted it. However, the story remains the

same today as it was then, in several similar versions therefore the subject matter would have been the same. 3.) In the 1470s, Sandro Botticelli was a member of the Medici circle during the renaissance. To Botticelli and the others involved with the Medicean circle, the Renaissance was a time of hope and aspiration, achievement and victory under the leadership of Cosimo de Medici. When Cosimo's son, Piero, took charge, bankruptcy and debt consumed their lives. When the Medici family had gradually been eliminated and executed, the hope and aspirations of the residents of Florence began to diminish (Bishop, 190). Within the next decade, a monk named Savonarola began to extinguish all that the Florentine Renaissance had come to represent. He was against the Pagan-like beauty, culture and love of nature that he thought society was draped in. After Lorenzo de Medici's death, Savonarola rose to power and had ordered much of the Renaissance art to be destroyed. He was shortly defeated, but his puritanical message had an impact on many, including Botticelli. He had changed his artistic style to accommodate the new rules and incorporated things that he wouldn't usually include in his art such as images of devils (Letts, 63). 4.) The Renaissance was the period of rebirth and rejuvenation in the 1400s. Classical beauty was idolized and Venus is the symbol of classical beauty. Botticelli depicts the rebirth that the Renaissance was all about by showing the goddess of beauty being born a full-grown woman from the sea. The Florentine Renaissance represented beauty and the love of nature which Botticelli showed by choosing Venus as his muse. 5.) Visual artists capture history, display beliefs, and pay tributes. In each piece of art there lies a piece of history. Goya painted war while Fragonard painted the rise of

literacy, both huge parts of history. Also, beliefs from religions to political beliefs are demonstrated by artists such as Da Vinci and Jean-Antoine Houdon. Also, great individuals throughout history are paid tribute to in painting and sculpture. Without visual art society would suffer. Every future comes from a past and without these pieces of art our pasts would have huge gaps.

PART IV - OVERALL PERSONAL REACTION AND COMPARISON

A. I was first introduced to Botticelli in my senior year of high school and from the moment I saw his work, I thought that his paintings radiated with color and symbolism. The Birth of Venus to me symbolizes the birth of beauty and love, Venus being the Goddess of both. Beauty and love are two things that I think our society today could not live without. Love does not just have to be that between two companions, love is evident everywhere. It is in every family, every friendship, careers, and hobbies. In addition to love, beauty is found almost everywhere. Beauty to me is what keeps people motivated. Artists see beauty in their masterpieces, parents see beauty in their children's faces and I see beauty when I go over the bridge to work every morning. Without these things, each day would matter a little less. Botticelli perfectly captures the brilliance that is found within Venus, the symbol of love and beauty.

B. The aspect of the Birth of Venus that I enjoyed the most was the historical aspect. I had read of the Medicean circle and of Savonarola, but I had not known that Botticelli had been directly involved. It was interesting to see that he had been supported by many and unlike some artists, was famous while he was alive. It was a great honor for Botticelli to be able to contribute his artistic ability in decorating the Sistine Chapel. Not many artists can hold a candle to that honor. I did not like, however, that

information on Botticelli's childhood was sparse. Much of the information that historians did acquire was from tax records and made it possible to reveal when Botticelli was at home with his family or elsewhere. It would have been interesting to know whether or not he showed artistic talent in his earlier years or to know what exactly he was ill from. C. Tiziano Vecellio, also known as Titian, like Botticelli, created several paintings of the roman goddess Venus. His painting titled Venus and Cupid is an oil on canvas, while Botticelli painted with tempera paint. Titian's Venus, as opposed to Botticelli's, is painted in a relaxed pose lying down while in the Birth of Venus she floats across water standing in a half shell. As she floats, her face looks very serene and tranquil like she has not a care in the world which gives the viewer a sense of ease and calmness. Titian's Venus looks toward Cupid with a worried look on her face and it almost looks as if she is being comforted by him. The absence of light and dark shades of color used in Titian's piece also adds to the solemn mood that the painting emits. Botticelli's painting has light coming from all angles to highlight the bright colors while the only light in Titian's piece seems to be on Venus's skin. Botticelli uses straight horizontal and vertical lines which give off a sense of structure and help to define the space and depth. The diagonal lines used by Titian, aid in the dark mood his painting produces and creates a sense of tension, but it does also help to define the depth of the painting. Both artists used their lines to illustrate the depth in the background. In the Birth of Venus, one can see how far the shore land stretches on and the sea seems to go on even farther. Titian's lines show the hills and trees out in the distance through the window. In addition to the similarities in depth perception, both artists us their lines to

shape the figures of the women. The curvy and rounded figure that was so attractive then is properly demonstrated by both artists. PART V - WORKS CITED Angelis, Rita de. Botticelli: Every Painting. Rizzoli Publications. New York. 1980. Bishop, Philip E. Adventures in the Human Spirit: Fifth Edition. Prentice Hall Inc. New Jersey. 2007. Letts, Rosa Maria. The Renaissance. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1981. Saitzyk, Steven L. Art Hardware: The Definitive Guide to Artists Materials. Watson-Guption Publications. New York. 1987.