



The Birth of Venus

Sandro Botticelli

ca. 1482

Tempera on canvas

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510) was a Florentine painter. Almost all of Botticelli's life was spent in Florence. His genre of painting was based around mythological ideals and also religious subject matter.

Botticelli painted in a highly personal style characterized by elegant execution, a sense of melancholy, and a strong emphasis on line; details appear as sumptuous still life's. His paintings like The Birth of Venus, were a great impact on the Humanist art movement. Humanism was a belief in human effort rather than religion, showing emphasis on education and the expansion of knowledge; focusing especially on classical antiquity.¹

The Birth of Venus shows Venus riding upon a giant cockle shell, intently this focuses our attention directly towards her. Other figures in the painting include Zephyrus (the west wind) and the nymph Pomona. The painting is a mythological narrative which illustrates the birth of Venus, goddess of love.² The narrative has given us the explanation that "Zephyrus (the west wind) blows Venus, born of the sea foam and carried on a cockle shell, to her sacred island, Cyprus. There, the nymph Pomana runs to meet her

¹ Christin J. Mamiya, & Fred S. Kleiner. (2005). *Gardners Art Through The Ages, Twelfth Edition*. USA: Wadsworth / Thompson learning.

² Alison Cole. (1994). *The Renaissance*. London: Dorling Kindersley Limited.

with a brocaded mantle.”³ Botticelli has achieved a sense of movement in the painting; Zephyrus’ gusts catch the brocaded mantle in undulation, carrying also the perfumed rose petals that swiftly fall upon the whitecaps.

The Birth of Venus was painted in ca.1482 and has been exhibited at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence. This painting was intended to be one of Botticelli’s most famous artworks painted for the Medici. The Medici were enthusiastic art collectors of the humanist art movement during the Renaissance. This painting can also be considered a relevant work of art, and the rebirth of the ancient ideal of beauty in the early Renaissance.

The Birth of Venus is a work measuring approximately 5’ 8” x 9’ 1”. This was a tempera painting on canvas.

[310 words]

³ Christin J. Mamiya, & Fred S. Kleiner. (2005). *Gardners Art Through The Ages, Twelfth Edition*. USA: Wadsworth / Thompson learning.