

Sandro Botticelli

1445 - 1510
Italian Painter



Self-portrait



The Virgin and Child with Saint John and an Angel about 1490. Tempera on wood



Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo the Elder, 1474



One of the few fully coloured pages of the [Divine Comedy Illustrated by Botticelli](#), illustrating canto XVIII in the eighth circle of Hell. Dante and Virgil descending through the ten chasms of the circle via a ridge.

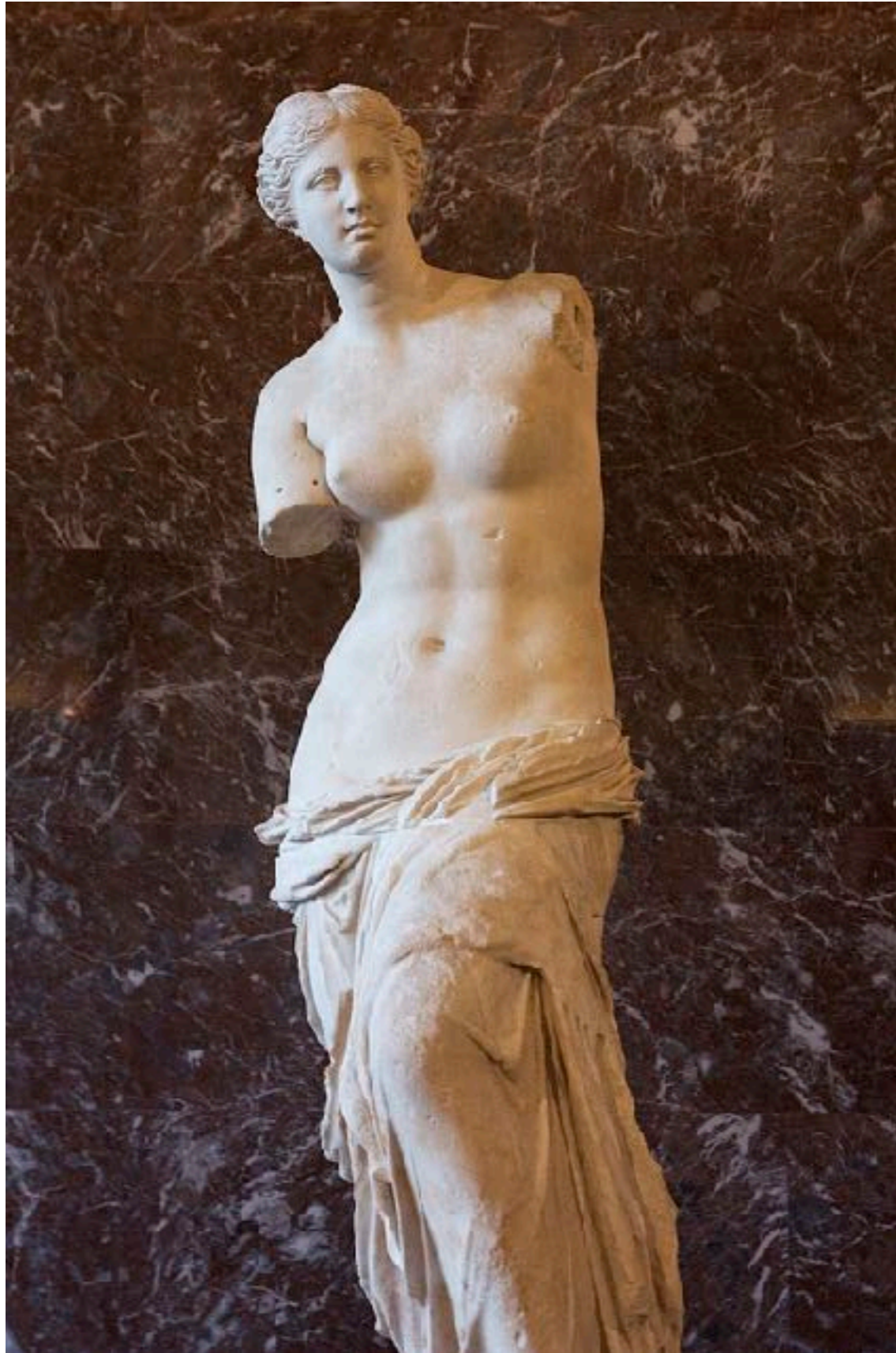
Study of myths from the ancient Greeks and Romans

Mythological subjects of the 1480s

The Renaissance humanism also awoke in man a love of learning and "a true love for books....[where] humanists built book collections and university libraries developed." Humanists believed that the individual encompassed "body, mind, and soul" and learning was very much a part of edifying all aspect of the human. This love of and for learning would lead to a demand in the printed word, which in turn drove the invention of Gutenberg's printing press.



Venus and Mars, c 1485



The Venus de Milo, sculpted by Alexandros of Antioch c. 130 BCE.



Venus is the Roman goddess of love and beauty.
Her Greek counterpart is **Aphrodite**.

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.

<https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/birth-of-venus>



The Birth of Venus (c. 1484–1486).

Tempera on canvas



Primavera (Italian pronunciation: [prima've:ra], meaning “Spring”),
Sometimes titled ‘Allegory of Spring’ late 1470s or early 1480s

This painting, usually known as the Primavera [or 'Spring'] shows nine figures from classic mythology advancing over a flowery lawn in a grove of orange and laurel trees. In the foreground, to the right, Zephyrus embraces a nymph named Chloris before taking her; she is then portrayed after her transformation into Flora, the spring goddess. The centre of the painting is dominated by the goddess of love and beauty, Venus, chastely dressed and set slightly back from the others, and by a blindfolded Cupid, firing his arrow of love.





On the left, the three Graces, minor goddesses with virtues like those of Venus, are shown dancing in a circle. The composition is closed by Mercury, messenger of the Gods, recognisable from his helmet and winged sandals, as he touches a cloud with his staff.



the **God Mercury**, recognisable by his sandals and his staff, “the caduceus” with which he is dispersing the clouds.
He’s the **divine messenger**, a mediator between man and gods.





Although the complex meaning of the composition remains a mystery, the painting is a celebration of love, peace, and prosperity. The dark colour of the vegetation is in part due to the ageing process of the original pigment, but is lightened by the abundance of fruits and flowers. At least 138 species of different plants have been identified, all accurately portrayed by Botticelli, perhaps using herbaria. The attention to detail confirms the artist's commitment to this piece, which is also evident in the sheer skill with which the paint has been applied

Glossary

Renaissance art is the painting, sculpture and decorative arts of the period of European history, emerging as a distinct style in Italy in about 1400, in parallel with developments which occurred in [philosophy](#), [literature](#), [music](#), [science](#) and [technology](#). Renaissance (meaning "rebirth")

A tondo (plural "tondi" or "tondos") is a Renaissance term for a circular work of art, either a painting or a sculpture. The word derives from the Italian rotondo, "round."

A panel painting is a painting made on a flat panel made of wood, either a single piece, or a number of pieces joined together.

Tempera (Italian: [[tempera](#)]), also known as **egg tempera**, is a permanent, fast-drying painting medium consisting of coloured [pigments](#) mixed with a water-soluble [binder](#) medium, usually glutinous material such as egg [yolk](#).

Myth is a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.

spalliera (Plural: spalliere) is a decorated backboard mounted on a wall, often behind a cassone (a wooden chest used for storage), or as a headboard to a bed. It is usually made out of wood and embellished with decorative aspects such as intricate carving or painting, and is gilded as well

Allegory: a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

Useful links:

<https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/botticelli-spring>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pzFEZwmDBc>

Activities:



Study of the Flowing gestures in Tondo Style.
Using a template (like a saucepan lid) draw a circle. Take a small detail of the flowing fabrics from the Painting 'Primavera' and create an abstract painting.



Create an Allegory of Spring in Tondo Style.
Using a template (like a saucepan lid) draw a circle. Imagine Springtime. Using paint or coloured pens and pencils to illustrate this as a picture.