

Botticelli Notes

Botticelli (real name Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi), born 1445, died in May 1510. He lived in Florence all his life apart from a few months spent in Rome. His nickname, Botticelli, is derived from the nickname of his older brother Giovanni who was known as Botticello because of his barrel-like figure - or perhaps because he ran a wine shop.

THE PAINTINGS:

In his early career, Botticelli was apprenticed to Fra Filippo Lippi, a leading Florentine painter.

Virgin and Child with an Angel, 1464-67 (compare this painting with Virgin and Child with Two Angels, 1460-65 by Fra Filippo Lippi)

Madonna and Child with St John the Baptist, 1468

Madonna Della Loggia, 1467

Around 1467 or 1468 Botticelli may have joined the workshop of the Pollaiuolo Brothers

Fortitude, 1470

This painting is one of a set of seven panels representing the Virtues, intended for the Palazzo della Signoria in Florence. The other six were made by Piero del Pollaiuolo, possibly with some assistance from his brother Antonio.

By 1470 Botticello probably began setting up his own workshop. In 1472 he took on his first apprentice, Filippo Lippi, the son of his previous master.

Discovery of the Body of Holofernes, 1470

Return of Judith to Bethulia, 1472

These two paintings illustrate the Biblical story of Judith and Holofernes.

San Sebastian, 1474 (Compare with The Martyrdom of St Sebastian by Antonio della Pollaiuolo)

Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo Medici, 1474-75

Adoration of the Magi, 1476

St Augustine in his Study, 1480

The Sistine Chapel frescoes:

The Trials of Moses, 1481-82

The Temptations of Christ, 1481

Primavera, 1482

The Bardi Altarpiece (The Madonna and Child Enthroned) 1484

The Birth of Venus, c.1485

Venus and Mars, 1485

Madonna of the Pomegranate, 1487 (the inside of the pomegranate resembles cardiac anatomy)

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Portrait of Dante, 1481 and Illustrations for Divine Comedy, 1480-1500

From about 1480 to 1500 (roughly a 20-year period) Botticelli made illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy.

Cestello Annunciation, 1489-90

In 1490 Savonarola arrived in Florence and preached against the Medici family and excesses of luxury, resulting in "the bonfire of the vanities". Botticelli fell under his influence.

The Holy Trinity, 1491 (compare with The Holy Trinity, 1426-28 by Masaccio)

Calumny of Apelles, 1496-97

This allegorical painting was based on the description of a lost ancient painting by the Greek artist, Apelles, who was unjustly slandered and after being proven innocent, painted a picture entitled 'Calumny'. Botticelli was able to read a description of it and carefully reproduced the details in this painting.

Mystical Nativity, 1500

Mystical Crucifixion, 1500

Botticelli did produce more paintings in what would be the last ten years of his life, but they were mostly of a religious nature and they never achieved the recognition that his work from the Medici period had enjoyed.

Simonetta Vespucci is thought to be the model for many of Botticelli's paintings. She was born in Genoa and married Marco Vespucci of Florence when she was 16. Marco was the cousin of Amerigo Vespucci and the family lived in the same district at Botticelli. Simonetta was known as La Bella Simonetta. There are suggestions that Botticelli had fallen in love with her. He is supposed to have said that when he died he wished to be buried at her feet.

She died in 1476 at the age of 21, maybe of tuberculosis or perhaps a tumour.

Botticelli died in May 1510 (34 years later) and was buried with his family in the Church of Ognissanti. This had been his parish church all his life and where he'd been baptised. It was also the parish church of the Vespucci family.