

Botticelli and Florence: The Creation of a Renaissance Enigma

Botticelli's works are nowadays seen to be synonymous with the Renaissance. Indeed works such as *The Birth of Venus* and the *Primavera* are seen as the epitome of Renaissance art with their antique subjects.

However, the life of Botticelli is one that has never really fitted comfortably into art history's cannon of Renaissance art, because while his works are extraordinarily beautiful to look at, conversely his works have always been difficult to explain. These enigmatic works such as: *The 'Calumny of Apelles'*, *The Birth of Venus*, the *Primavera* and the *Mystic Nativity* continue to this day to fuel debate regarding their true meaning. Not only because of their complex allegorical meaning, but also because from painting to painting his works seem to randomly choose to conform and not conform to Renaissance ideals of painting such as mathematical perspective.

In this lecture I will be looking at the Botticelli's early life and works and his training and influence under the early Renaissance master Fra Filippo Lippi. I will also be looking at the long and prolific life an artist unique in his approach to the Renaissance aesthetic, whose rapid rise and allegiances among the Florentine nobility in particular the Medici, which would put him at the heart of the city's politics, literature and religion.

I will also look at Botticelli's unusual approach to anatomical structure and his supposed love for, or obsession with the woman called Simonetta Vespucci that seems to appear in so many of his most well-known works. And at the end of this lecture I will explore how did this artist that practised the very latest techniques in Renaissance painting early on in his career come to personify the ideal of the Renaissance artist. Finally, I will seek to explain why by the end of his life his work fell from favour, only to be miraculously revived to the reputation that he still has to this very day of a unique Renaissance Enigma.

General Bibliography:

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