



News Release

Botticelli Reimagined: major exhibition opens at the V&A

Sponsored by Societe Generale

5 March – 3 July 2016

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Covering 500 years of art history and including over 50 great works by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), making it the largest exhibition of Botticelli paintings and drawings ever held in the UK, *Botticelli Reimagined* opens at the V&A on 5 March. This major new exhibition explores, for the first time, the variety of ways artists and designers from the Pre-Raphaelites to the present have responded to the artistic legacy of Botticelli. Including painting, fashion, film, drawing, photography, tapestry, sculpture and print, the exhibition also features works by artists as diverse as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, René Magritte, Elsa Schiaparelli, Andy Warhol and Cindy Sherman.

Botticelli is now recognised as one of the greatest artists of all time. His celebrated images are firmly embedded in the public consciousness and his influence permeates art, design, fashion and film. However, although lauded in his lifetime, Botticelli was largely forgotten for more than 300 years until his work was progressively rediscovered in the 19th century.

Botticelli Reimagined is divided into three major sections:

Global, Modern, Contemporary shows how Botticelli's imagery attained its present level of acclaim. This section is permeated by the influence of *The Birth of Venus*, which cannot leave the Uffizi Gallery, Florence. Andy Warhol's *Details of Renaissance Paintings (Sandro Botticelli, Birth of Venus, 1482)* (1984) transforms the face and flowing hair of Botticelli's icon in his signature bold palette while Yin Xin's *Venus After Botticelli* (2008) reinterprets Venus with Asian features; and Botticelli's composition informs David LaChapelle's saturated and artificial *Rebirth of Venus* (2009). A dress and trouser suit of fragmented details from *The Birth of Venus* from Dolce & Gabbana's 1993 collection are shown with two Elsa Schiaparelli evening dresses (1938) ornamented with embroidered foliage, inspired by *Pallas and the Centaur*. Botticelli's influence on film includes the scene of Ursula Andress emerging from the sea clasping a conch shell from *Dr No* (1962) and an excerpt from Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) with Uma Thurman. Resembling the large-scale frescoes he studied in Italy, Bill Viola's *The Path*, from *Going forth by Day* (2002) is a digital image cycle inspired by a Botticelli composition. In *5th surgery performance - Operation opera* (1994) the French artist ORLAN appears

having plastic surgery to resemble Botticelli's Venus, in a performance series rewriting Western art through her own body. This section also includes René Magritte's surreal *Le bouquet tout fait* (1957) and key works by Maurice Denis, Antonio Donghi and Robert Rauschenberg.

Rediscovery traces the impact of Botticelli's art on the Pre-Raphaelite circle during the mid-19th century. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Ruskin and Edward Burne-Jones all acquired works by Botticelli, and his aesthetic was reinterpreted in Rossetti's *La Ghirlandata* (1873) and Burne-Jones' *The Mill: Girls Dancing to Music by a River* (1870-82). The Florentine master's celebrated *Primavera* haunts this section, as is shown by William Morris' *The Orchard* (1890), a tapestry depicting medieval ladies in a bountiful setting, Evelyn De Morgan's *Flora* (1894) illustrating the nymph of flowers, and the only surviving film of Isadora Duncan dancing (c.1900). Copies of *The Birth of Venus* by Edgar Degas and Gustave Moreau (1859) as well as Etienne Azambre's *Two Women copying Botticelli's fresco of Venus and the Graces* (1894) demonstrate the vogue for copying his work. Botticelli's European influence is manifest in major paintings by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Arnold Böcklin and Giulio Aristide Sartorio.

Botticelli in his Own Time shows that Botticelli was both a supremely skilled artist *and* a designer of genius who ran a highly successful workshop. Exhibits include his only signed and dated painting *The Mystic Nativity* (1500), three portraits supposedly of the legendary beauty Simonetta Vespucci, and the exquisitely detailed *Pallas and the Centaur* (1482), travelling to London for the first time. A number of variations on the Virgin and Child theme in different formats illustrate Botticelli's creativity as a designer, while his skill as a draughtsman is evident in a spectacular group of drawings including five of his lyrical illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The show closes with two monumental full-length paintings of Venus, reprising the heroine of *The Birth of Venus*, and also features the V&A's *Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli* (c. 1470-5), formerly owned by Rossetti and restored especially for this exhibition.

Martin Roth, Director of the V&A, said: "Sandro Botticelli is one of the greatest artists of the Renaissance and 500 years after his death his celebrated imagery has come full circle to represent a contemporary ideal of beauty. This ambitious exhibition considers his legacy and shows how and why it has suffused into our collective visual memory. The V&A's renowned collections and expertise provide the broader context for understanding Botticelli as a design phenomenon and we are delighted to partner with Gemäldegalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin on this exhibition, to trace the resurgence of his reputation."

Michael Eissenhauer, Director General of Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, said: "While the early-19th century revival of interest in Botticelli was still in its infancy, Berlin's Gemäldegalerie already held an impressive number of works by the master and significantly shaped their renaissance in the decades to come. Today our Botticelli collection of eight paintings and 86 drawings ranks as one of the most important outside Italy, and we are delighted to have hosted the first stage of our joint exhibition to such great acclaim."

Ian Fisher, UK Country Head, Societe Generale, said: “*It was Botticelli’s sense of innovation, one of the core values for Societe Generale Group, which inspired us to be lead sponsor of this exhibition. Our sponsorship is part of a decade-long relationship with the V&A and goes hand-in-hand with our long-term support for the arts, dating back 150 years. As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Societe Generale Collection and our commitment to championing contemporary art, we are delighted to partner with the V&A on this exhibition exploring how artists and designers have reinterpreted Botticelli from the mid-19th century to the present day.*”

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

- Admission £15 (concessions available). V&A Members go free. Advance booking is advised – this can be done in person at the V&A; online at vam.ac.uk/botticelli; or by calling 0800 912 6961 (booking fee applies).
- The V&A exhibition is co-curated by Mark Evans, Senior Paintings Curator at the V&A, and Ana Debenedetti, Curator of Paintings at the V&A
- The exhibition is organised by the V&A and the Gemäldegalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. A version of the exhibition opened first in Berlin from 24 September 2015 – 24 January 2016
- Exhibition design for *Botticelli Reimagined* is by Duncan McCauley www.duncanmccauley.com
- To accompany the exhibition, the V&A has published *Botticelli Reimagined* edited by Mark Evans and Stefan Weppelmann (£40, hardback)

Corporate support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition sponsor Societe Generale.

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About Gemäldegalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

The Gemäldegalerie displays one of the world’s most significant collections of European paintings from the 13th to 18th centuries. Masterpieces from all epochs of art history, including works by van Eyck, Brueghel, Dürer, Raphael, Titian, Caravaggio, Rubens, Rembrandt and Vermeer are exhibited here. www.smb.museum

For further PRESS information about the exhibition, please contact Elizabeth Barrett or Nina Sandhaus in the V&A press office on 020 7942 2502 or email l.barrett@vam.ac.uk / n.sandhaus@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>

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