

Sandro Botticelli (c. 1445-1510)

Sandro Botticelli was actually born Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi, but acquired the last name Botticelli from the nickname “botticello”, which means “small wine cask”. Botticelli began his career painting frescoes for churches and cathedrals in Florence as the apprentice of Fra Filippo Lippi. Filippo was often commissioned by the Medici family, and Botticelli spent almost his entire life working for them and their allies. In 1481, he was commissioned by the Pope to paint frescoes on the walls of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. This was the only time he worked outside of Florence.

Between 1478-1490, he produced his most famous works featuring predominantly Venus and other mythological subjects common in Neoplatonism philosophy. After the 1490s, the Medici family was expelled from Florence and Botticelli fell out of favor. His work could not compare to the aesthetic of Michelangelo and Raphael who were popular at the time. He died on May 17, 1510 as a very poor and depressed man.