

# Humanities 3

## I. The Italian Renaissance



Botticelli, Venus and Mars, 1483

# Scope of Course

- Development of Western art, politics, literature, religion, philosophy and science in different periods (Renaissance, Reformation, Early Modern) and places
- Interaction among topics: religion, politics, art, science
- The “big questions” that underlie these topics:
  - What are we? (human nature)
  - Who are we? (political and religious identity)
  - What can we know (religion, philosophy, science)
  - What can we say? (literature, religion, science)

## Lecture 2

# Florence and the Renaissance

# Outline

- Meanings of “Renaissance”
- Developments in the Visual Arts
- Florence under the Medici
- The Art of Botticelli



# Meanings of “Renaissance”

- Roughly, the period spanning the 14th through 16th centuries
- Literally “rebirth” (of literature, visual arts, philosophy)
- Recovery of classical texts and ideals
- Emphasis on the perfection and divinity of man

# Literature

- Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy* (1304-21)
- Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), *Canzoniere* (1304-1374)
- Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (1348-53)
- Marsilio Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* (1433-99)

# Developments in the Visual Arts

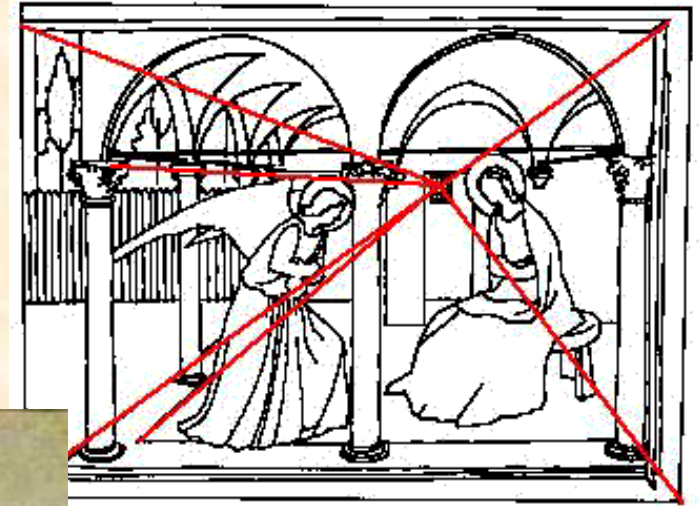
- Greater realism and naturalism, especially in the depiction of the human body and human emotions
- Invention of perspective
- Introduction of secular themes, especially classical myths
- Changing social function of art



Giotto, *Madonna and  
Child Enthroned*, c.  
1295-97



Fra Angelico, *Annunciation*, c.  
1425





Masaccio, frescoes  
Brancacci Chapel  
Santa Maria del Carmine, 1424-28

Masaccio, *Baptism of the Neophytes*



Masaccio,  
*Expulsion from  
the Garden of  
Eden*



Donatello, *David*,  
1444-46



Piero della Francesca, *The Flagellation*, c.  
1469





Leonardo da Vinci, *The Annunciation*, c.  
1472-1475

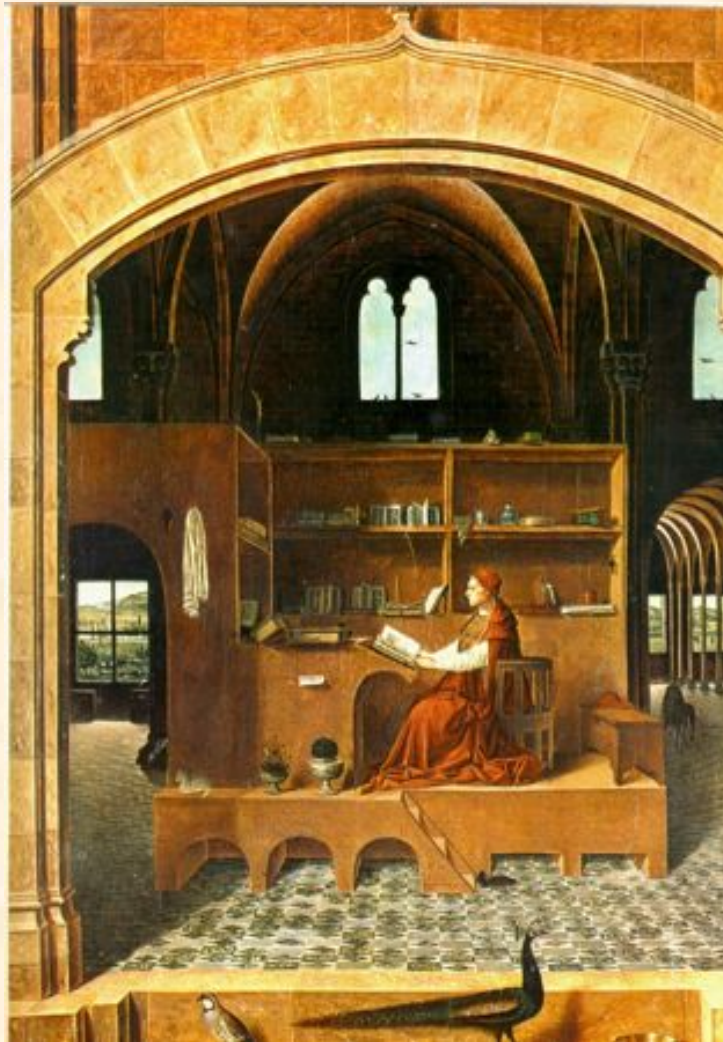




Fra Angelico,  
c. 1425

Leonardo  
c. 1472-75





Antonello da Messina  
*St. Jerome in His Study*, c.  
1460



Leonardo, *St. Jerome*,  
c. 1480

Michelangelo,  
*Pieta*,  
1498-99



Michelangelo,  
*David*,  
c. 1501





Michelangelo, "The Creation"  
from ceiling of Sistine Chapel, 1512

Piero di  
Cosimo

*Vulcan  
and  
Aeolus,*  
c.1495-  
1510



Piero di Cosimo, *The Discovery of Honey*, c. 1505-10



# The Florentine Republic

- The Republic of Florence was a city-state centered on the city of Florence
- The republic was founded in 1115, when the Florentine people rebelled against the nobility that had previously ruled them.
- The republic was ruled by a council, known as the *signoria*. The *signoria* was chosen by the *gonfaloniere* (titular ruler of the city), who was elected every two months by Florentine guild members.



# Florence under the Medici (1434-1492)

- 1434 Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464) returns from exile and becomes ruler of Florence (*pater patriae*); gradually erodes its republican constitution
- 1464 Cosimo succeeded by his son Piero
- 1469 Piero succeeded by his son Lorenzo (“Lorenzo the Magnificent”), aged 20, who continues Cosimo’s patronage of the arts and learning
- 1475 Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510) begins a series of paintings under the patronage of the Medici family

Botticelli,  
*Adoration of  
the Magi*,  
1475





Botticelli,  
*Giuliano de' Medici*  
c. 1476-77



*Portrait of a Woman*  
(Simonetta Vespucci?)  
c. 1476-80

- 1478 Pope Sixtus IV is part of a plot (the Pazzi conspiracy) to overthrow the Medici. Lorenzo escapes assassination attempt, but his brother Guiliano is killed.
- 1479 Lorenzo excommunicated by Sixtus; armies of the pope and king of Naples move against Florence. Sixtus excommunicated by Tuscan bishops. Parties reconcile the following year.
- 1492 Death of Lorenzo

# Botticelli's Allegorical Paintings

- Give meaning to contemporary events through the illustration of myths
- Symbolize ideals of virtue and human perfection



Botticelli, *Primavera*, c. 1482

# Part One

- Venus, the goddess of love and marriage, reigns in her garden, a place of eternal springtime.
- With her is her son, Cupid, and his father Mercury, who guards the entrance to the garden and deflects the dark clouds.
- Venus's attendants, the Graces, are virgins, symbols of purity, one of whom is about to be struck by Cupid's arrow.

## Part Two

- According to another myth, the nymph Chloris is carried off by Zephyr, whereupon she is transformed into the goddess Flora.
- The two figures at the far right of *Primavera* represent a time prior to the appearance of Flora, who has the poise and maturity of a married woman. (Is she also pregnant?)



Mercury Graces Cupid/Venus Flora Chloris Zephyr



## Part Three

- *Primavera* was commissioned from Botticelli by Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici (grandson of the brother of Cosimo) to commemorate his marriage to Semiramide d'Appiano in May 1482.
- It is meant to convey the idea that love leads to a happy and fruitful marriage.

*Pallas and the Centaur, 1482*





*Venus and Mars, 1483*



Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, c. 1485