

Sample Paper #1

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Details of Renaissance Paintings (Sandro Botticelli, Birth of Venus, 1482) (1984) by
Andy Warhol
acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen

Viewed at Arkansas Arts Center Andy Warhol exhibition (October 28, 2008)

A Modern Venus

Andy Warhol's piece titled *Details of Renaissance Paintings (Sandro Botticelli, Birth of Venus, 1482)* represents the face of the goddess Venus. This piece was made in 1984 as a depiction of the face of Venus from the earlier painting *The Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli that was completed in 1482. The piece's present location is the Arkansas Arts Center, and its original location is the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The piece is acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, and it can only be seen from one side because it is hanging on the wall.

The work is a colorful representation of the face of the goddess Venus as depicted earlier in *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli. However, Warhol uses more colors in his work. Venus's face and neck are pink while her hair is black, red, orange, and yellow. In contrast, the background is a solid light blue color. In *Details of Renaissance Paintings*, Venus's face and hair are emphasized and the dominant elements are her hair because of the warm colors and her gaze.

Warhol uses implied lines to direct viewers' eyes around the artwork. The implied lines are the strands of Venus's hair that direct viewers' eyes to the right bottom, middle, and top because the strands are going in each of these directions. One bundle of

hair goes down to the bottom of the piece on the left side close to her face. This bundle of hair brings some direction to the left side, but not a lot because the left side is mostly empty. However, this emptiness is balanced asymmetrically by Venus's gaze toward the bottom left corner and the light color used in the empty space. The light color of the empty space is visually light; therefore, it does not have as much weight as the darker, warmer colors of Venus's face and hair. This visual lightness along with Venus' gaze is strong enough to balance the multitude of hair and part of a flower on the right side.

This artwork is composed of shapes because it is two-dimensional. Most of the shapes are formed by lines and shifts in color. For example, Venus's red hair is formed by a shift from the blue background and her pink upper body. Lines outlining her hair in certain places also give form to the shape of her hair. Therefore, both lines and shift in color are used together in some places and separate in other places to create the shapes in the artwork.

In this piece, the light source is not seen. However, the light source is to the left of the artwork because Warhol uses a light yellow color on top of the pink color that is already present on the left side of Venus's face which makes it seem like a glow is cast upon her face. Warhol's use of warm colors for Venus, her hair, and the plant in the top right corner contrasts with the light blue background. These warm colors make her stand out from the background. Also, the warm colors against a calming blue background give Venus an ethereal quality.

Warhol's use of colors also creates unity and variety. His use of warm colors throughout the piece and his use of one solid-colored background create unity in the artwork. However, the contrast between warm colors and the cool color create variety.

The flower in the top right corner also creates variety because it is not a part of Venus, who is the focus. The flower is the only other thing in the artwork besides Venus which makes the viewer question its purpose.

The placement of Venus's hair and the curves of her hair create a sense of motion. One bundle of her hair is at the bottom of the artwork. Another few bundles are in the middle and are slightly separated. Another bundle of hair is at the top of the artwork. All of these bundles are curvy to suggest movement as if her hair is being blown gently by the wind.

Warhol's use of colors gives Venus a modern look instead of the traditional white color used in *The Birth of Venus* that symbolized purity. The pink color used for her body makes Venus seem bold and strong, not just beautiful, as a female goddess should be. Warhol further shows this by only depicting her face down to her shoulders and not including her breasts and other sensual parts that are included in *The Birth of Venus*. Through his use of color, Warhol created a different symbol of boldness and strength for Venus instead of the traditional symbol of beauty. This boldness and strength coincides with the role of women in modern society because women today are taught that they can accomplish anything and everything while being independent.