



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

The Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture
School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology
AHAN7024: HEAVENLY DISCOURSES

Week 4: Sky Myths

A Case Study in Venus

Darrelyn Gunzburg
Tutor: Heavenly Discourses

AIM

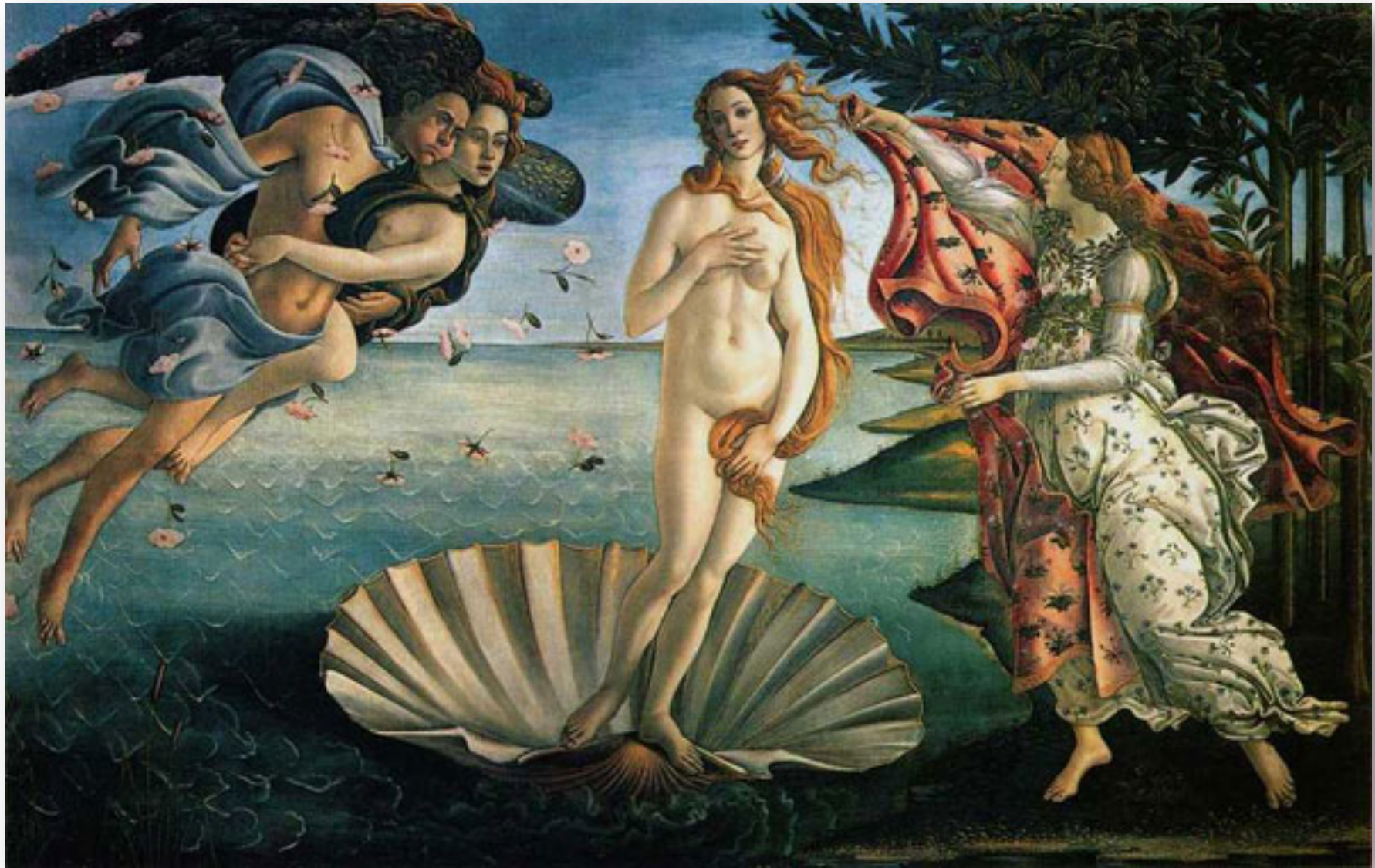
- To consider how sky myths (primary source material) have been translated into images (primary source material) and to examine how that has been achieved (text to image/materials/commission/context) and why.
- To find and locate appropriate secondary source material to allow you to gain perspective on the sky myths and images.
- To learn the skills of close reading and close observation, via academic comparison.

Note: When using images please be aware of how to caption them:

Name of artist (birth-death),
Title of artwork (year painted).
Medium.
Size, if available.
Where the artwork is held now.

Where to find images of artworks:

ARTstor and reputable online Museums and Galleries.



Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510).
The Birth of Venus (1482-1485).
Painting on canvas.
Uffizi Gallery Museum, Florence, Italy.

Birth of Aphrodite – born of sea foam

The most common version of the birth of Aphrodite describes her born in sea-foam from the castrated genitals of the sky-god Ouranos.

Hesiod. 'Works and Days, Theogony, and the Shield of Heracles.' In *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, edited by Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. Inc., 2006.

'Ouranos (the Sky) came, bringing on night and longing for love, and he lay about Gaia (the Earth) spreading himself full upon her. Then the son [Kronos] from his ambush stretched forth his left hand and in his right took the great long sickle with jagged teeth, and swiftly lopped off his own father's members and cast them away to fall behind him . . . and so soon as he had cut off the members with flint and cast them from the land into the surging sea, they were swept away over the main a long time: **and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it there grew a maiden.** First she drew near holy Kythera, and from there, afterwards, she came to sea-girt Kypros, and came **forth an awful and lovely goddess**, and grass grew up about her beneath her shapely feet. Her gods and men call Aphrodite, and Aphrogeneia (the foam-born) because she grew amid the foam, and well-crowned (*eustephanos*) Kythereia because she reached Kythera, and Kyprogenes because she was born in billowy Kypros, and Philommedes (Genital-Loving) because sprang from the members. **And with her went Eros (Love), and comely Himeros (Desire) followed her at her birth at the first and as she went into the assembly of the gods.** This honour she has from the beginning, and this is the portion allotted to her amongst men and undying gods, the whisperings of maidens and smiles and deceits with sweet delight and love and graciousness.'

Birth of Aphrodite – born of sea foam

To Aphrodite , 6:1-17. In: Rieu, Diane. *The Homeric Hymns: A Translation, with Introduction and Notes*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004, p.290.

‘To Sea-set Kypros the moist breath of the western wind (Zephyros) wafted her [Aphrodite] over the waves of the loud-moaning sea in soft foam, and there the gold-filleted Horai (Seasons) welcomed her joyously. They clothed her with heavenly garments: on her head they put a fine, well-wrought crown of gold, and in her pierced ears they hung ornaments of orichalc and precious gold, and adorned her with golden necklaces over her soft neck and snow-white breasts, jewels which the gold-filleted Horai wear themselves whenever they go to their father's house to join the lovely dances of the gods. And when they had fully decked her, they brought her to the gods, who welcomed her when they saw her, giving her their hands. Each one of them prayed that he might lead her home to be his wedded wife, so greatly were they amazed at the beauty of violet-crowned Kythereia.’

Birth of Aphrodite – born of sea foam

The Anacreontea, Fragment 57 Greek Lyric: Anacreon - Anacreontea, - Choral Lyric from Olympis to Alcman Vol.2. (Loeb Classical Library No. 143), translated and edited by David A. Campbell, 1989.

‘[Aphrodite] **roaming over the waves like sea-lettuce, moving her soft-skinned body in her voyage over the white calm sea, she pulls the breakers along her path.** Above her rosy breast and below her soft neck a great wave divides her skin. In the midst of the furrow, like a lily wound among violets, Kypris shines out from the calm sea. Over the silver on dancing dolphins ride guileful Eros and laughing Himeros (Desire), and the chorus of bow-backed fish plunging in the waves sports with Paphia where she swims.’



Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889)
The Birth of Venus (1865).
Oil on canvas. 130 x 225 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

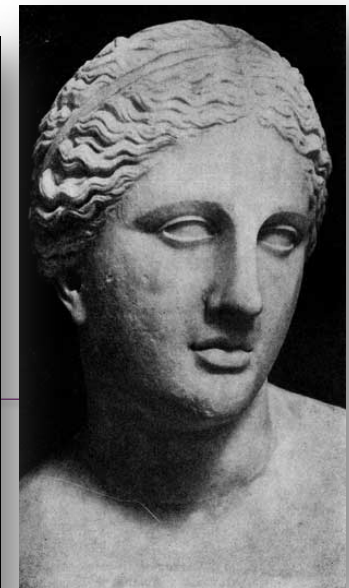
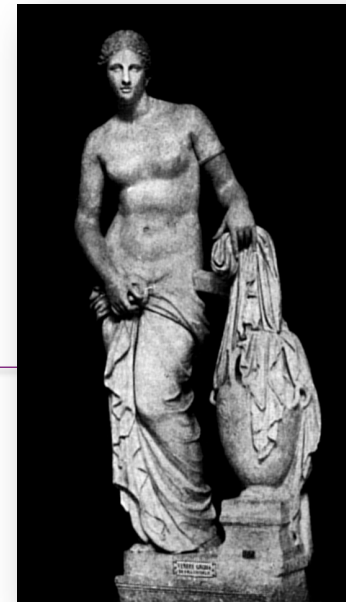
Everyone knows that Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of feminine beauty, sex-appeal, and love. She was that already in Homer's *Iliad*, while in the *Odyssey* her name stands simply for 'sexual love'. And in 458 BCE the playwright Aeschylus employed the name of Aphrodite to denote 'beauty, charm, and grace (*Agamemnon* 19)....

Marcovich, Miroslav. 'From Ishtar to Aphrodite.' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30, no. 2 (1996): 43.

No other Greek goddess was sculpted so frequently as Aphrodite displaying her consummate beauty....

During the 4th century B.C. Praxiteles sculpted at least two famous Aphrodites, one half-naked (as in a Roman copy from Aries, now in the Louvre), the other nude. The latter was the most famous statue of the goddess in antiquity and was commissioned by the city of Cnidus between 364 and 361 B.C. Praxiteles's Cnidian Aphrodite was a perfect figure ronde. One of her attributes is a certain shyness (as can be seen in the best extant copy, the *Venus Colonna*, at the Vatican; LIMC391), which explains her name *Venus pudica* ("The bashful or shamefaced Aphrodite"). It will become evident, however, that Praxiteles did not invent the *Venus pudica* type; it had a long history.

Marcovich, Miroslav. 'From Ishtar to Aphrodite.' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30, no. 2 (1996): 44.





Venus Felix (The Toilet of Venus)

Marble.

Roman variant of a work by Praxiteles

Copy of a Greek original of 2nd century BCE.

Height: 214 cm.

Museo Pio-Clementino, Vatican City, Italy.

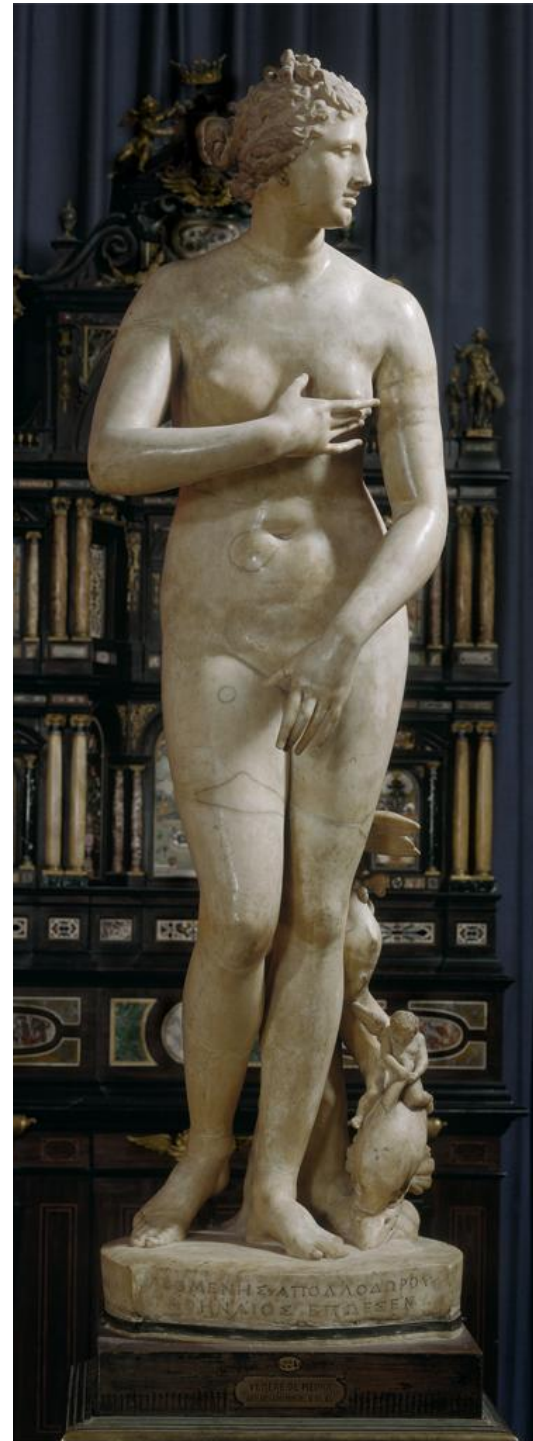
Aphrodite (Medici Venus)

Marble.

Copy of a Greek original of 2nd century BCE.

Height: 1.53 m.

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.



Venus (c.2nd century BCE)
Greek, Marble
Museo nazionale di Napoli.

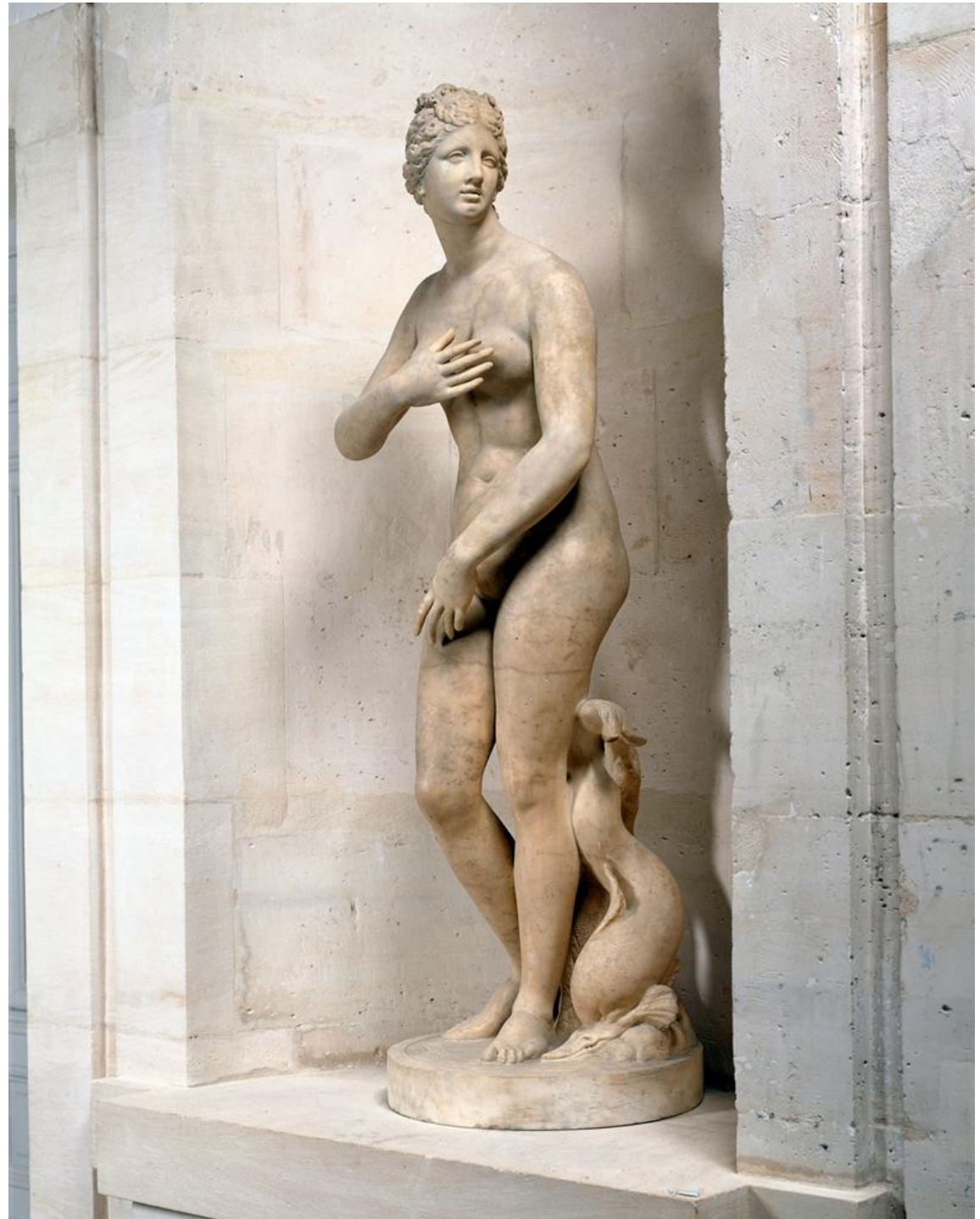


Torso of Aphrodite (1st century CE)
Marble.
Copy of a Greek original c.360.
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.



Jean-Jacques Clérion (1637-1714)
Medici Venus (1666-1673)
Marble. 163 cm.

Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon,
Versailles, France.



After Giambologna (c. 1460-1528)
Astronomy (Venus Urania) (early 17th C)
Bronze. 39.7 cm high.
Chateau de Versailles, France.

‘Les Bronzes de la Couronne’ comprise bronze sculptures
mainly collected by and presented to Louis XIV. This is no.
66 of the original royal inventory.



Antico (c.1460-1528)

Venus Felix (c.1500)

Bronze with gilding on wooden base inlaid with coins

Height: 32 cm.

From the collection of Isabella d'Este.

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria





Diego Velázquez (1599-1660)
The Toilet of Venus (1647-1651)
Oil on Canvas
122.5 x 177 cm
The National Gallery, London

Jim Dine (b.1935)
Trembling for Color (Venus)
Sculpture painted bronze, 1990
63.25 cm x 24.75 x 18.25 including base.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA, USA.





Winged Nike of Samothrace
Parian marble, c.190 BCE?
Found in Samothrace in 1863.
Height: 3.28 m (10'9")

Jim Dine (b.1935)
Trembling for Color (Venus)
Sculpture painted bronze, 1990
63.25 cm x 24.75 x 18.25 including base.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA, USA.



MARS AND VENUS

[167] ...“Even the Sun that rules the world was captive made of Love. My theme shall be a love-song of the Sun. 'Tis said the Lord of Day, whose wakeful eye beholds at once whatever may transpire, witnessed the loves of Mars and Venus. Grieved to know the wrong, he called the son of Juno, Vulcan, and gave full knowledge of the deed, showing how Mars and Venus shamed his love, as they defiled his bed. Vulcan amazed,—the nimble-thoughted Vulcan lost his wits, so that he dropped the work his right hand held. But turning from all else at once he set to file out chains of brass, delicate, fine, from which to fashion nets invisible, filmy of mesh and airy as the thread of insect-web, that from the rafter swings.—Implicit woven that they yielded soft the slightest movement or the gentlest touch, with cunning skill he drew them round the bed where they were sure to dally. Presently appeared the faithless wife, and on the couch lay down to languish with her paramour.—**Meshed in the chains they could not thence arise, nor could they else but lie in strict embrace,—cunningly thus entrapped by Vulcan's wit.—At once the Lemnian cuckold opened wide the folding ivory doors and called the Gods,—to witness. There they lay disgraced and bound. I wot were many of the lighter Gods who wished themselves in like disgraceful bonds.—The Gods were moved to laughter: and the tale was long most noted in the courts of Heaven.**

The purpose of this discussion, however, is to demonstrate... that Aphrodite was not a Greek native but an immigrant from Lebanon and Syria. She was not born from the blue Aegean Sea but instead crossed that sea on her way from Phoenicia to Greece. The immigrant goddess crossed the sea riding either on a seashell (LIMC 1188) or on a ram (LIMC972), as a decent and graceful Morning Star (Phosphoros) is supposed to do (of course, her veil and her ram have definite astral connotations).

Marcovich, Miroslav. 'From Ishtar to Aphrodite.' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30, no. 2 (1996): 45.



Maerten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)
Venus and Mars Ensnared by Vulcan (c.1540). Oil on oak.
Current dimensions: 96cm x 99 cm.
About 70 cm of the original panel was trimmed from the bottom)
.Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria



Ares casts a spear at a Gigante from his chariot, driven by the goddess Aphrodite, while Eros aims his bow.
Attributed to the the Suessula Painter (c.400 - 390 BCE)
Attic Red Figure Amphora
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

The 'Queen of the Night' Relief
Old Babylonian, 1800-1750 BCE.
Height: 49.5 cm
Thickness: 4.8 cm (max)
From southern Iraq.
Room 56, British Museum.

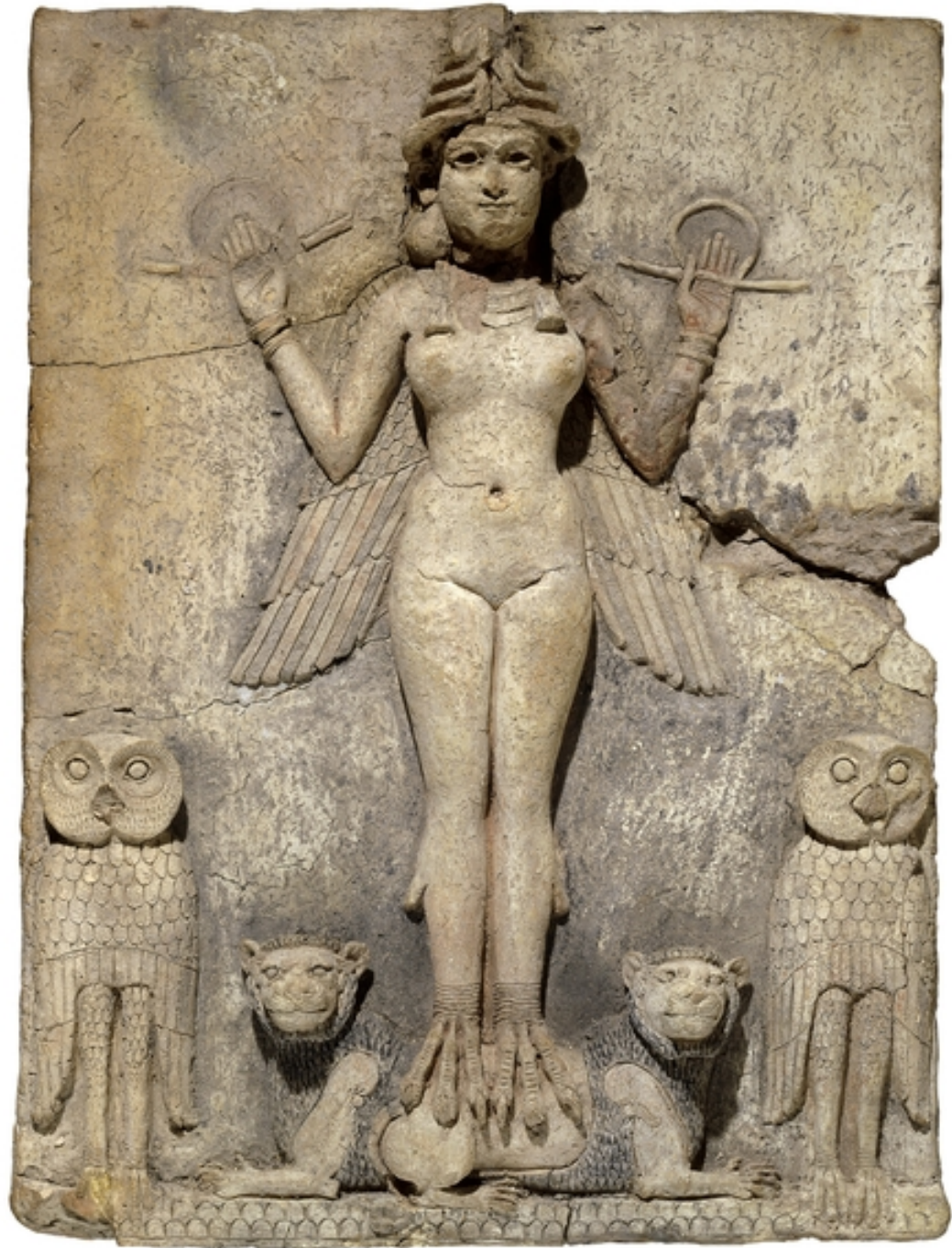




Image of the plaque 'restored' to how it would have looked before painting and reconstruction of original painting added.

These images were created using Photoshop by Mark Timson of the British Museum's New Media Unit, with the guidance of Dominique Collon, curator in the Department of the Ancient Near East.



Green garnet cylinder seal showing Ishtar.
Neo-Assyrian, 720-700 BCE.
Height: 4.3 cm. Diameter: 1.8 cm
From Mesopotamia. Room 56: British Museum.



Gravettian culture. Paleolithic .
Venus of Willendorf
c. 30,000 – 25,000 BCE
Limestone.
Height. 11 cm

Now in Naturhistorisches
Museum, Vienna, Austria.



Venus of Lespugue
c. 25,000 – 18,000 BCE
Ivory tusk
Height: 15 cm

Discovered in 1922 in the Rideaux cave of Lespugue
(Haute-Garonne) in the foothills of the Pyrenees.

Now in Musée de l'homme.



Magdalenian culture.
Venus of Laussel
c. 20,000 – 18,000 BCE
Limestone, red ochre relief
Height. 43 cm

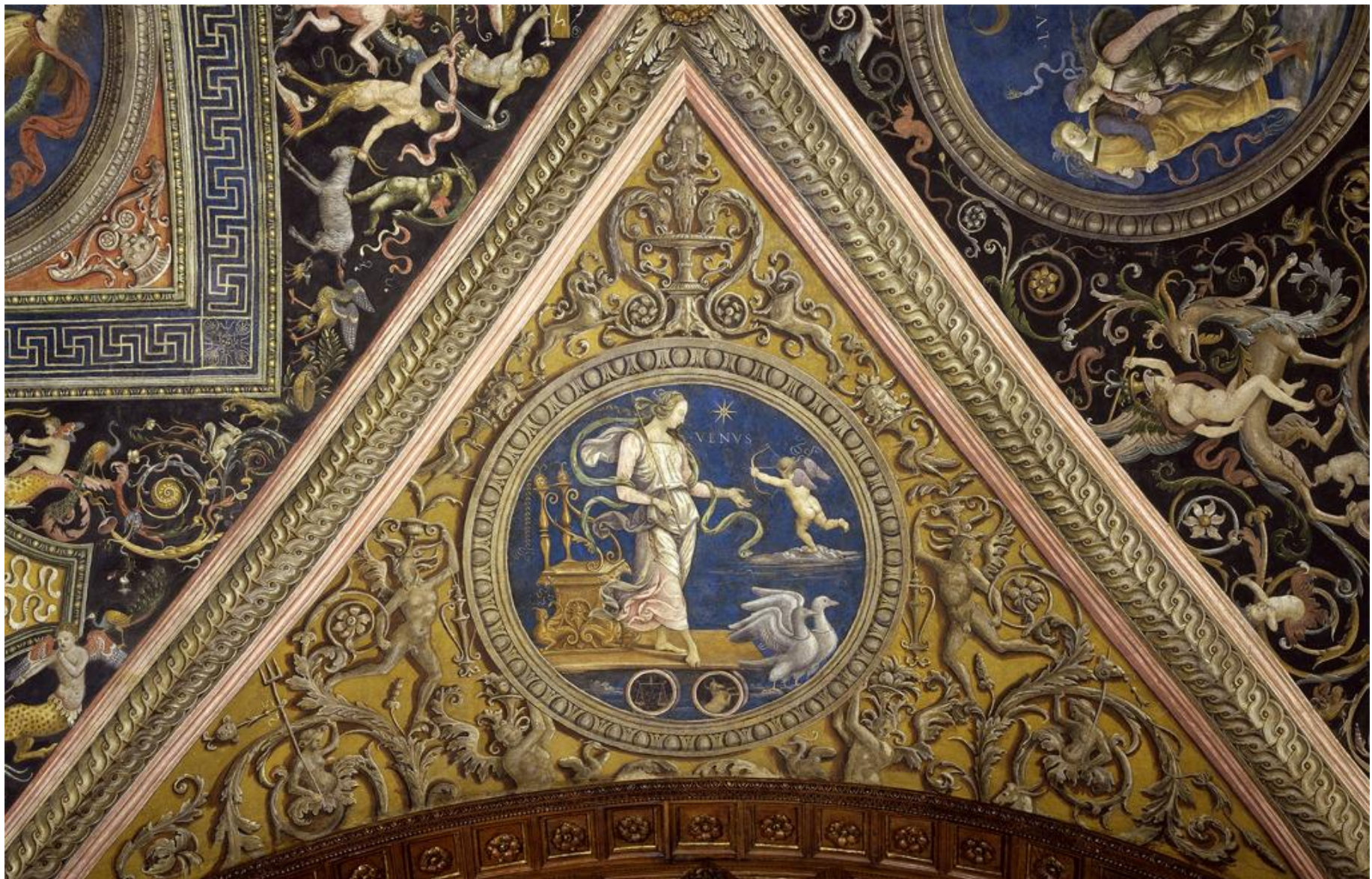
Discovered in 1911 carved into the wall
of a limestone rock shelter (named Laussel)
in the Dordogne not far from Lascaux.

Now in Musée d'Aquitaine de la ville de Bordeaux.





Attributed to the workshop of Andrea Pisano, after 1343
Planet Venus
Panel from the campanile, Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence



Pietro Perugino (1446-1523)
Venus (1498-1500). Fresco. Ceiling vaulting.
Collegio del Cambio, Perugia, Italy

Marten de Vos (1532-1603),
Venus (1585)

[Venus with Cupid in chariot
pulled by 2 birds, above
landscape with cities and scenes
of figures embracing, fighting,
playing music, and drinking;
engraved Latin text; "M. de Vos
figu"]

24.5 x 24.9 cm

Harry Ransom Humanities
Research Center, The University
of Texas at Austin.



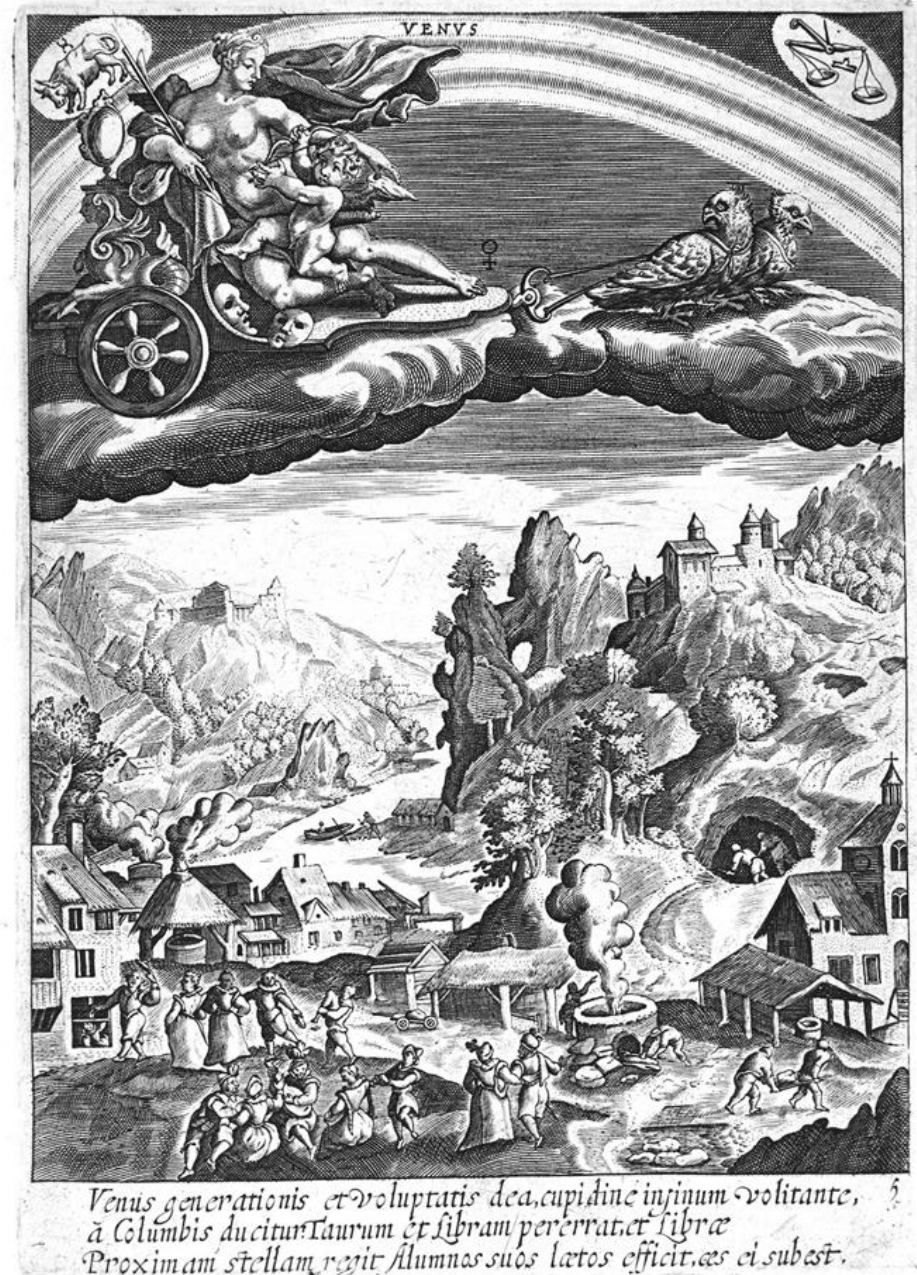
REGIONES
Aethiopia, Albia, Aegyptus, Arabia, Deserta, Libania,
Lycia, Sardinia, Syria, Thule, Trochilus,
CIVITATES
Aethiopia, Aegyptus, Arabia, Libania,
Lycia, Sardinia, Syria, Thule, Trochilus

Si secunda Venus cunctarum femina rerum
Populice, equatque ius to suo pondere Libere,
Dum ferus à Duce Taurus cornicibus haret,
Arua tenet Thebana, Raptio vicinaq; Cypro

Litora, palmiferos Arabas, terraq; ferentes
Delicias, variisq; novis radicis odores.
Laudis amore avidas mentes dat, corpora tanta
Et gracies calamos, modulatasq; Terebinthos.

REGIONES
Asia, Cyrena, Persia, Phoenicia, Libania, Lycia,
Sardinia, Syria, Thule, Trochilus, Aegyptus,
CIVITATES
Asia, Cyrena, Persia, Phoenicia, Libania, Lycia,
Sardinia, Syria, Thule, Trochilus, Aegyptus

Henri Le Roy (1579–c.1620)
 Venus riding with Cupid in a chariot
 drawn by falcons, flanked by the zodiac
 signs of Taurus and Libra, above a
 peaceful village with couples courting
 and dancing
 Engraving (c.1609)
 The Warburg Institute Library





Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510).
Venus and The Graces Offer Presents to a Young Girl (c.1483)
[possibly Giovanni degli Albizzi]
Fresco. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



European folding fan, 1855-1865

Mother of pearl, metallic, paper.

27.3 cm

Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at the
Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Reverse (*left*) central scene depicting Venus in
a chariot pulled by swans and Roman soldiers
offering gifts on pillows.



Etienne-Maurice Falconet (1716-1791)

Venus of the Doves

Marble.

75.1 x 71.3 x 45.7

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Venus and Cupid Astride a Sea Monster (c.1580)

Italian or German pendant
Gold, enamel, rubies and pearl
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.





Giovanni di Paolo
(1395-1482)

Triumph of Venus (1421)

Wedding casket, 14 cm x 29 cm

Painting on wood

Musée du Louvre

Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (Il Sodoma)
(1477-1549)
*Venus terrestre with Eros and Venus
celeste with Anteros and two cupids*
called *The Allegory of Love*
Tondo painting, c.1508
Musée du Louvre



Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879)
*Venus Chiding Cupid Depriving Him
of His Wings*
Photograph (1872)
Albumen print
34.5 cm x 27 cm
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.



Methodology

- Select your first primary source – the two artworks.
Note the parameters under which they have been created.
- Select your second primary source – the Babylonian or classical texts upon which they have been based.
- Locate appropriate secondary source material – articles, as well as Museum/Gallery catalogue material - to allow you to gain perspective on the sky myths and images.
- How has the artist utilized the text to create the image?
 - For whom was the artwork created?
 - Why is the artist using that particular part of the myth?
 - How has the text been translated into imagery?
 - Why has he have chosen that medium?
- Compare and contrast... What does this say about how people thought about the sky?

REFERENCES

Albenda, Pauline. 'The "Queen of the Night" Plaque: A Revisit.' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125, no. 2 (2005): 171-190.

Marcovich, Miroslav. 'From Ishtar to Aphrodite.' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30, no. 2 (1996): 43-59.

Marshack, A. 1972. *The Roots of Civilization: the Cognitive Beginning of Man's First Art, Symbol and Notation*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Yates, Frances A. 'Queen Elizabeth as Astraea.' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 10 (1947): 27-82.