

Bored of Venus

- talking back to Botticelli and the sexualisation of culture.

Blown along by the wind and powerless even to clothe herself without help, Botticelli's Venus is the soft porn of her day. Her blank face expresses no inconvenient personality to disrupt our fantasies, and her body adapts to the requirements of the composition without reference to what is anatomically possible.

In our sexualised culture most of us have been there to some degree. We are likely to have experience of being perceived (or perceiving ourselves) as an object of desire, a product without autonomy except for that required to optimise ourselves to the preferences of the beholder. We may also have tried the role of the connoisseur of desirable objects, sampling and comparing the merits of others without paying much attention to how they feel about the process, thus denying ourselves the opportunity for genuine relationship.

Hopefully we grow out of these limited roles and into the more interesting open ended possibilities of meeting one another as persons.

"'Sin, young man, is when you treat people as things.
Including yourself. That's what sin is.'
'Oh, I'm sure there are worse crimes -'
'But they starts with thinking about people as things...'"⁵

Venus grew up. Bored with being the embodiment of our fantasies, she's got dressed and taken the weight off her feet. She's smiling at something, but she won't tell you what. Her thoughts, like her body, are her own.

It's rather a kitsch piece of work, but then so is Botticelli's original.