

The Search for an Identity:

The Merging of the Past and Present to Form a Future in Italian Culture

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Table of Contents:

Prospectus- page 3

Chapter 1- A Broken Past: The Merging of Many Cultures- page 4

Chapter 2- A Rocky Present: The Incorporation of the Renaissance in the Present- page 7

Museums: Telling the History of Italy- page 11

The Idea of Ideal Beauty: *Birth of Venus*- page 13

A Strong (Male) Symbol: *David*- page 26

Chapter 3- The Grand Tour: A Twenty- First Century Italy and Its Tourism Industry- page 32

Chapter 4- Conclusion: An Unsure Idea of the Future Italy- page 34

Acknowledgements- page 39

Bibliography- page 40

Prospectus

A country is often defined by its national identity and how it expresses the history of its cultural characteristics. For a majority of its history, the Italian peninsula was a land that was separated by multiple dukedoms and republics that were also marked by war and violence. When Italy became a unified nation in 1861 it struggled to bring its unique cities together under one government and culture. This type of unification had already been progressing throughout much of Europe, whereas Italy was just starting to forge a unified national identity. In order to form a true national identity that was a representation of the whole of the nation, Italy would need to find something that would nationalize their cultural history as opposed to attributing cultural characteristics to individual regions that make up the country. Focusing on Botticelli's painting, *Birth of Venus*, and Michelangelo's sculpture, *David*, I plan to show how the national identity of Italy is constructed and presented externally to demonstrate its artistic heritage. I will show how art museums and popular media are similar in their use of Renaissance art to project the image of a unified Italian culture, as opposed to isolated regions with different local identities. By exploring the use of iconic images, we can see how museums within Italy create a popular appeal to project a unified culture to other nations and cultures. This thesis will give prime examples of how Renaissance art is used around the world to promote Italy's tourism industry. It will address how the history of the Italian nation is used to fabricate Italy's current identity through the display of historically iconic works of art. How the replication and imitation of the *Birth of Venus* and *David* are iconic examples of Italian culture that stems from the use of low-art and imitations to draw in tourism to see the original, high-art is a Renaissance setting.

1. A Broken Past: The Merging of Many Cultures

A country is often defined by its national identity and how it expresses the history of its cultural characteristics. For a majority of its history, the Italian peninsula was a land that was separated by multiple dukedoms and republics that were also marked by war and violence. The term "Italy" or "Italian" in most of its history was only used when in opposition to foreign powers or when stating their superiority to other nations or cultures and as geological reference.¹ When Italy became a unified nation in 1861 it struggled to bring its unique cities together under one government and culture to form its unified identity.² This type of unification had already been progressing throughout much of Europe, so in order to form a true national identity that was a representation of the whole of the nation, Italy needed to find its unifying factor. The unification process forced the historically un-unified Italy to lose its identity as separate republics and forced it to develop a new identity as a one entity:

Giovanni Giolitti, the ablest prime minister since Cavour, understood the logic of protecting 'beautiful national legends': Italians needed to believe they shared a common glory and a common destiny. Giolitti's point engenders sympathy.

Nations need traditions, however distant and mythical...³

Italy would need to find something that would outwardly project an image of unity through its cultural characteristics. An identity, however, is often difficult to define, especially with a

¹ Silvana Patriarca, "Indolence and Regeneration: Tropes and Tensions of Risorgimento Patriotism," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (2005): 380-384, accessed January 21, 2017, doi:10.1086/531319.

² Complete unification would occur until 1871 when Rome, the surrounding province, and Venice would be added, but 1861 is still considered the official unification year.

³ David Gilmour, *The Pursuit of Italy: A History of a Land, Its Regions and Their Peoples* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 258.

history as eclectic and diverse as Italy's. Most nations want to avoid advertising war or unrest as their history and culture, so this new identity would have to stem from something that elevated Italy in a peaceful way while simultaneously leaving a lasting impression on history. Lynne Walhout Hinojosa focuses on Renaissance art as a way to represent nationalism through culture: "...culture as an abstract noun refers to artistic and intellectual activities. A cultural history in this sense traces the development of art forms and intellectual thought through history."⁴

How are Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Michelangelo's *David* used in reproductions and imitations to promote the Italian national identity in a way that contributes to the tourism industry? By focusing on these iconic works of art within the public arena, I plan to show how Italy has attempted to forge a national identity through its artistic heritage.⁵ Through the use of art from the Renaissance, museums and modern Italian society has worked to create a unified culture. This thesis will demonstrate how modern day Italy has placed Renaissance works of art at the center of its cultural heritage. It will address how the history of the nation influences its current identity in the display and use of historical works of art that have become iconic figures in the representation of Italy. Sandro Botticelli's painting, the *Birth of Venus*, is a welcoming and feminine figure in art history, while Michelangelo's infamous sculpture, *David*, has served as powerful and masculine symbol. What makes these works so iconic to Italian culture and identity? Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote in his book *De Officiis* of the role of the male and female figure: "There are two orders of beauty: in the one, loveliness predominates; in the other,

⁴ Lynne Walhout Hinojosa, *Renaissance, English Cultural Nationalism, and Modernism, 1860-1920* (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 7-6.

⁵ It is to be noted that there are many factors, ideas, and works of art that contribute to the identity of Italy not just these works of art, but this thesis focuses on the influences of Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Michelangelo's *David* to that national identity.

dignity; of these, we ought to regard loveliness as the attribute of woman, and dignity as the attribute of man."⁶ Cicero's thought of the ideal man and woman suggests how Italy uses Venus and David as symbols of their cultural and national identity in their display. Images that originated in Italy of the ideal female and male, forge the perception of Italian Renaissance art as the key cultural aspect to its national identity through these iconic works of art by promoting the tourism industry and compelling travelers to seek out these original, national symbols.

Renaissance art has produced iconic images that highlight Italy and its identity as it embodies the genius of the Italian natives and their ancestors. In his book, *Christ to Coke: How Image Becomes Icon*, Martin Kemp goes back and forth on what exactly makes an image iconic and finally settles on this definition:

An iconic image is one that has achieved wholly exceptional levels of widespread recognizability and has come to carry a rich series of varied associations for very large numbers of people across time and cultures, such that it has to a greater or lesser degree transgressed the parameter of its initial making, function, context, and meaning.⁷

While it helps to create a modern, unified identity, art from the Renaissance has also helped to tell the history of Italy as it acts as a story book, or even a looking glass into what the nation once was and potentially could become. The history of a nation is like a fingerprint, it is what makes a nation unique and distinguished them from other nations.

⁶ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (London: W. Heinemann, 1961), XXXVI. 130.

⁷ Martin Kemp, *Christ to Coke: How Image Becomes Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Having recently celebrated their 150th anniversary of unification, Italy is still officially a unified nation, in terms of their government and borders. In order to be a successfully unified nation, Italy has needed to find a unifying factor that projects an image of a strong nation who is an irreplaceable world power. Art is one of the most iconic aspects of Italy that draws in tourism and contributes to the nation's economy. With Italian Renaissance seen as the pinnacle of western civilization, it serves as a stable base for Italy's cultural identity to develop into its national identity. Advertisement and tourism, including monuments and museums, have developed as Italy's best opportunity to encourage a unified image and attempt to bring the nation together under one cultural umbrella. The art produced in Italy, particularly from the Renaissance, is what forms the Italian brand and creates a sense of identity that unifies them as a nation- state.

2. A Rocky Present: The Incorporation of the Renaissance in the Present

Today Italy is seen as a food, fashion, and culture capitol of the world. That is the image that Italy projects to the world to convince it that Italy is a unified nation. A nation is nothing if not its culture, and in order to be unified, Italy would have to find its cultural roots. There is without a doubt that artistic and intellectual movements have developed out of Italy that most certainly recant the history behind Italian culture. Tourists visit Italy for the sole purpose of seeing its history, to learn from it, and see what Renaissance culture was like all as a way to experience Italian culture. This idea of the Italian culture is often expressed through the Italian Renaissance art displayed in its museums because of the art's historical significance to the country. In 2013 Italy was the third most visited nation in Europe, and the fifth worldwide. This high influx of

tourism was specifically generated from its "art cities."⁸ Viewing artwork by the Grand Masters of Italy is the highlight of a tourist's travels, and Italy uses this attraction to say that when you view these works of art, you view Italian culture, and therefore Italy.

Italy, with the help of the Medici family in Florence, would become the center of culture and art that would assist in forming the identity of Italy. While it was divided in many ways, the Renaissance brought the nation together in other aspects:

In addition to giving birth to culture, the Renaissance is also narrated in nineteenth-century cultural history-writing as the historical period in which both modernity and nations originated. The Italian Renaissance as a period concept unified a nation space (Italy) and a period of time (roughly 1300-1600) and was seen to mark the originating era of European nations and Western modernity.⁹

To keep this projection in the twentieth and twenty-first century, Italy would need to draw in tourism by displaying itself and having that image of Italy as the birthplace of the Renaissance spread throughout the world. When a business advertises itself on bulletins or commercials it will highlight its best characteristic in a way that convinces customers that they are the best company to go to for that specific purpose. To convince the world that it is indeed a unified nation, Italy has done the same thing to paint itself as the best place to see and experience historic works of art, especially from the Renaissance. UNESCO World Heritage has helped to

⁸ C. Bremmer and M. Grant, "Top 100 City Destinations Ranking-Analyst Insight," Euromonitor International, 2014, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2014/01/euromonitor-internationals-top-city-destinations-ranking.html>.

⁹ Hinojosa, 5-6.

protect and preserve natural and cultural locations and objects around the world that are "...considered to be of outstanding value to humanity."¹⁰ Of the 814 cultural locations listed on the UNESCO website, 47 are located in Italy, which is more than other country in the world. Culture is what drives, and glues, Italy together as a nation, and is a highly-valued commodity that is protected by UNESCO. While the majority of locations on the UNESCO World Heritage site are either an architectural or a natural phenomenon, the entire city of Florence is a heritage site, which helps to keep the city frozen in the time of the Renaissance. The art and buildings within the city are of such significant value not just to the nation, but to the world that is under the protection of UNESCO.

Reproduction is one of the most effective and ground breaking tools that Italy could have utilized to spread their image of unity. Now a days, people do not have to travel to New York to see the Statue of Liberty, or Egypt to see the pyramids. All one needs to do is open their computer, or pull out their phone, and Google a work of art to see it. It allows for a work of art that hangs in gallery to simultaneously travel the world and enter millions of homes while staying safely in its museum setting. Beyond being in multiple places at once, images can take on any shape and size. They can be displayed as a life-size poster, a makeup bag, or a wallpaper on a laptop. Almost as if it is a magic trick, a work of art can appear anywhere at the type of a key and be studied and viewed by thousands of people at the same time. It also allows for these iconic images to provide inspiration for other artists and communities. The Pre-

¹⁰ "World Heritage," UNESCO World Heritage Centre, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>.

Raphaelite, Oscar Wilde, even famously said that, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness."

In theory, reproduction is a phenomenal way to see works of art around the world. Yet, no matter how many reproductions there are of a work of art, nothing can compare to seeing it in its place of creation. In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproductions*, Walter Benjamin discusses the important role of reproduction, but also the significance of seeing the original work of art in where they originated from:

Around 1900 technical reproduction had reached a standard that not only permitted it to reproduce all transmitted works of art and thus to cause the most profound change in their impact upon the public; it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes... Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership.¹¹

Museums use reproductions on their website to enhance a tourist's interest in seeing certain works of art, in person. Approximately 50% of museum website viewer's purpose for visiting that particular museum's website is to plan their visit.¹² An art museum will highlight its most

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York City, NY: Schocken Books, 1969), 3.

¹² "Visitor Motivation in Online Museum Audiences," INTK, accessed January 20, 2017, <http://www.intk.com/en/ideas/visitor-motivation-in-online-museum-audiences>.

popular works of art to develop an interest for visitors, which then entices them to visit the museum and see their works of art in their appropriate setting.

Museums: Telling the History of Italy

The earliest museums began as collections of odd artifacts that wealthy elite collected in their travels throughout the world and would display in their homes for other elite to view. These were *Wundekammers*, or cabinets of curiosity, which would pave the way for the collecting and displaying artifacts to become a way of culture heritage.¹³ Over the decades and centuries, museums have shifted away from being just a way to display artifacts to serving as both an economic and political link to a nation or civilization. Museums have become a location of historically aesthetic "temples" to display the cultural heritage of nation. Albert William Levi analyzes the role of art museums in today's society and comes to this conclusion:

...a museum really is: a presentation of works of art in their naked individuality, a temple of pure aesthetic experience, a virtual embodiment of the idea of *the art museum as an exclusive assembly of nothing but masterpieces*... The concept of the art museum as an exclusive assemblage of nothing but masterpieces invites an interpretation of pure aesthetic contemplation, of a consideration of the work of art for its own sake.¹⁴

¹³ Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (London: House of Stratus, 2001).

¹⁴ Albert William Levi, "The Art Museum as an Agency of Culture," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 19, no. 2 (1985): 33, accessed March 5, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3332462>.

While art created during the time of the Renaissance was not made purely for the sake of art, but rather to serve a greater purpose, they have morphed into historical artifacts that are used for the sake of aesthetic beauty. Art museums in Italy serve as story books of its past that highlight the culturally significant characteristics of the nation. The Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy houses the many works of art that were owned and collected by the Medici family. Originally the Uffizi was a building of offices, built by Giorgio Vasari beginning in 1581, for the banking family under Cosimo I de' Medici.¹⁵ As an art museum, it was officially opened to the public in 1765 as one of the first art museums in the world. Thanks to a *Patto di famiglia* that Anna Maria Luisa negotiated, as the last surviving member of the Medici family, all the works owned and commissioned by the Medici were gifted to the city of Florence when she died.¹⁶ Her reasoning behind bequeathing her family's collection of art to Florence were so, "... they would remain as decorations for the State, for the utility of the Public and to attract the curiosity of Foreigners."¹⁷ Because of her foresight, the Uffizi is now one of the largest and most well-known museums in the world that accentuates the beauty of Italian Renaissance art and history. In 2015 alone, the Uffizi Gallery had 3.4 million visitors that resulted in a ticket revenue of 17.3 million euros (\$19.2 million), which made it the most profitable museum in Italy.¹⁸

¹⁵ "History of Uffizi Gallery," Uffizi Gallery, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.uffizi.com/history-uffizi-gallery.asp>.

¹⁶ Andrea Claudio Galluzzo and Marisa Cancilleri, "Il Dono a Firenze di Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici," *Fiorentini nel Mondo*, accessed December 05, 2016, <http://www.fiorentininelmondo.it/it/home/543-il-dono-a-firenze-di-anna-maria-luisa-de-medici.html>.

¹⁷ "History of the Uffizi Gallery," Uffizi.org: Guide to Uffizi Gallery Museum, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.uffizi.org/museum/history/>.

¹⁸ Rachel Donadio, "Shaking Up Italy's Most Popular Museum," *The New York Times*, August 17, 2016, , accessed March 1, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/21/arts/design/taming-the-uffizi-gallery.html>.

Today the Uffizi houses one of the most iconic works of art that tourists travel thousands of miles to see from the Renaissance: Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. Due to the fact that the Uffizi is one of the top tourist attractions in Italy, in high tourist season it can have over a four-hour wait time.¹⁹ Visitors flock from the far corners of the world just to get a brief glimpse of the beautiful figure of Venus arriving on the sea shores. Being the equivalent of the Greek Goddess Aphrodite, Venus is the most beautiful goddess with the power of love. The painting itself has a plethora of meanings and a beautiful allegorical aspect to the antiquity tale of the coming of Venus. Placed opposite Botticelli's other world renowned painting *Primavera*, the *Birth of Venus* is a statement piece among the works housed in the museum and practically demands attention. While it is strategically placed so that visitors don't skim by and miss any other important works of art, or rush through so that it is the only work of art they see, it is definitely the most highlighted and anticipated work of art in the gallery. Gift shops around Italy have everything from makeup bag to magnets to notebooks covered in the angelic face of Botticelli's Venus. These kitsch products are commonly seen in the gift shops of Italy, and other museum's gift shops around the world, to serve as souvenirs and reminders of what tourists have seen during their trip.²⁰ The replicas provide a material object that reminds them of the works of art they've seen even though they serve no purpose other than being that physical reminder.

¹⁹ Musement Team, "How to Make the Most of Your Visit to the Uffizi Gallery," Musement, June 18, 2014, accessed January 06, 2017, <https://www.musement.com/us/travel-tips/how-to-make-the-most-of-your-visit-to-the-uffizi-gallery-1-38/>.

²⁰ Edward Allington, "Venus a Go Go, To Go," in *Sculpture and Its Reproductions*, by Anthony Hughes and Erich Ranfft (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 155-158.

The Idea of Ideal Beauty: *Birth of Venus*

The *Birth of Venus* (Figure 1) is one of the most famous and iconic works of art from the fifteenth century, and was commissioned by the family who were patrons of nearly all the work to come from Florence during this time, the Medici's. Though unclear, it is thought to have been commissioned between about 1482 and 1485,²¹ and many speculations have been made about what exactly the piece was commissioned for, but in today's art world it is a representation of the ideal beauty. Many paintings during this time were done on wood panel, but the *Birth of Venus* is actually tempera on canvas. Canvas was a much cheaper material, and warped less in humid climates, and therefore used for paintings made for personal purposes and would be shown in non-official locations and utilized only for personal viewing.²² It is ironic that now this painting is one of the most publicized, and viewed, works of art in the world. The *Birth of Venus* was a private work of art that was housed in the grand ducal villa of Castello in Tuscany, just outside of Florence, until 1815, just before the official unification of Italy, when it was then placed in the Uffizi Gallery.²³ This resurfacing of the work of art would serve as a significant contribution to the image of Italy.

²¹ Uffizi.org

²² Jane C. Long, "Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus' as Wedding Painting," *Aurora: The Journal of the History of Art* IX (November 1, 2008): 2-5, accessed February 25, 2017, ISSN: 1527652X.

²³ Michael Levey, *Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England*, (Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 23, no. 3/4, 1960) 291-306, <http://www.jstor.org/colorado.idm.oclc.org/stable/750597>.



**Figure 1: *Birth of Venus*
Sandro Botticelli, c. 1482
Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy**

Using a figure from antiquity in a pose that will come to mystify historians, Botticelli creates a groundbreaking production that would be admired by tourists in future decades. Botticelli was never completely committed to naturalism and rarely used the new style of perspective, so with a simple background, the viewer is forced to pay attention to the four figures in the foreground: Zephyrus, Aura, Pomona, and of course Venus. Zephyrus blows a wind of flowers, while entwined with the nymph Aura, to guide the goddess to mainland where Pomona, the goddess of Spring, awaits Venus with a robe to clothe her on the mainland. The figure of Venus is situated, modestly covering herself, in a popular stance of Renaissance art, the *contrapposto*, and slightly tilts her head creating an S-shape with her body. This is perhaps what has most

intrigued art historians through the years; her almost awkward pose that makes it look as though she is about to fall over, and her obvious nakedness. The naked, human form was highly unpopular during the middle ages, but would later morph into one of her most significant attributes as a symbol of beauty, and humanism, in the Renaissance.²⁴

Botticelli was an inventor of the ideal beauty and, with this painting, has influenced the image of women and beauty, even to this day. The unmistakable face of this Venus can be seen throughout Italy, and Europe, as the posterchild of Italian wonders and the Renaissance ideal of female beauty. Museums, like the Uffizi, use this stereotype to their advantage to advertise the beauty and success of the nation. With the rebirth of antiquity, artist of the Renaissance embraced the idea of humanism through symmetry and proportions as representations of this idea of perfection. The fair, naked form of Venus in Botticelli's painting is a representation of the Renaissance's perfect female form that is thin, pale, and curvy. The visage she creates is feminine, ethereal, and near to perfection creating this fantasy that would be admired to this day. Her figure is the epitome of femininity and life as she herself is coming into this world. Many of Botticelli's works art were not rediscovered in the art world until the mid-nineteenth century, right around the same time as the unification of Italy, by the Pre- Raphaelites. This group of artists had a fetish- like obsession with Botticelli, and would play a key role in helping to spread his popularity throughout the rest of Europe.²⁵

²⁴ J. Burke, "Nakedness and Other Peoples: Rethinking the Italian Renaissance Nude," *Art History* 36, no. 3 (September 2013): 714- 739, accessed February 25, 2017, doi:10.1111/1467-8365.12029.

²⁵ Giuliana Pieri, "The Critical Reception of Pre-Raphaelitism in Italy, 1878-1910," *The Modern Language Review* 99, no. 2 (April 2004): 367- 370, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/stable/3738751>.

The idea of the ideal beauty has changed drastically, or been perceived differently by cultures around the world. The image of the ideal beauty has changed throughout the centuries and continents, and the tall, skinny, and tan vision of today's ideal beauty is completely opposite of the Italian Renaissance ideal beauty displayed in this painting.²⁶ Yet, the *Birth of Venus* is one image that people, and Italians, use as their model for the *bella figura* and creates inspiration that also demonstrates the modern ideal beauty.²⁷ The painting has been used in reproductions for consumer companies, and as inspiration for other artists during the past 150 years. These reproductions and inspirations are a projection of what the ideal female should be, as it was in the Renaissance. In 2016, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England put on an exhibition titled *Botticelli Reimagined*, with a focus on his *Birth of Venus*, where the premise of the exhibit was on the idea that his work was a basis for the ideal:

In his lifetime, Botticelli's goddess of love in the *Birth of Venus* (1482-5) had already acquire the autonomous life as a replicable image, which in our own day makes it an endless quotable metaphor for youth and beauty, the chic and exclusive, or even art itself.²⁸

This painting has been reproduced by many other artists and companies as an example of the ideal beauty. Ana Debenetti, Curator of Paintings, Prints and Drawings at the Victoria and Albert Museum, noted in the *Botticelli Reimagined* exhibition that: "In the twentieth century Botticelli's composition became one of the most celebrated and frequently copied, reproduced

²⁶ Alene Dawson, "What is Beauty and Who Has It?," CNN, June 29, 2011, accessed February 10, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/LIVING/06/29/global.beauty.culture/>.

²⁷ Beppe Severgnini and Giles Watson, *La Bella Figura: A Field Guide to the Italian Mind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2007), 73-75.

²⁸ Mark Evans et al., *Botticelli Reimagined*, 2016, Exhibition Guide, V&A Publishing, London.

and reinterpreted paintings in the world."²⁹ In reference to the *Birth of Venus*, this idea of reproduction makes people think of the original work and draws them to visit and see the work in its current gallery space. Botticelli has therefore created a name brand that people desire and want to experience for themselves in its original time and place,³⁰ as if it is a focus of a pilgrimage.

By creating the ideal form of the female figure, Botticelli created a brand name, almost



**Figure 2: *Naissance de Vénus*
William Bouguereau, c. 1879
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France**

exclusive to Italy, that also went on to inspire many other artists. William- Adolphe Bouguereau was a nineteenth century French artist who focused on the female form in his paintings. In 1879 he created his own version of the birth of Venus that eerily resembles Botticelli's that was made nearly 400 years before Bouguereau.³¹ This nineteenth century *Naissance de Vénus* (Birth of Venus, Figure 2) resembles its predecessor by highlighting a nude female figure that is riding onto the shores in an S-shape, contrapposto pose on top of seashell. She lightly grasps here wavy, long hair as a couple to her side embraces one another. As a

successful artist, Bouguereau could not have painted this work at a more key time, as its

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Reference back to Benjamin's *Mechanical Reproduction*.

³¹ "Naissance de Vénus," Musée d'Orsay: non traduit, February 16, 2009, accessed March 2, 2017, http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&psz=5&lnum=&nnumid=16649.

completion was only a short 18 years after the unification of Italy and soon after the rediscover of Botticelli and his, *Birth of Venus*. It is common for artists to travel to Italy to first learn, then grasp their individual inspiration from the Italian Grand Masters, and by imitating Botticelli, Bouguereau did just that.³² Bouguereau was not the first to imitate the *Birth of Venus*, but he would provide a link to Italian culture in a critical time of Italy's unification. In 1851 Bouguereau won the coveted Prix de Rome where he was then able to live in the Medici Villa and travel throughout Italy and study the art of the masters for the next 3 years.³³ The copies of famous works he made during his extensive stay in Italy would go on to inspire his commission for the studio work of *Naissance de Vénus*.

In more recent work, there are still signs of Botticelli's influence on other artists from around the world. World famous Spanish surrealist, Salvador Dalí created an immortalized pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City titled *Dreams of Venus*.³⁴ Dalí was the grand master of surrealism during the time between the Great Depression and World War II, so it would make sense that he would draw inspiration from another Grand Master. Dalí's pavilion, titled the *Dreams of Venus*, provided an escape into a world of beauty that was represented by the image of the *Birth of Venus*.³⁵ Several reproductions of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* were scattered throughout the interior of the pavilion, as were nearly naked females that swam and

³² Jenna Marie Newberry, "Venus Anadyomene: The Mythical Symbolism from Antiquity to the 19th Century" (Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 2011), 24.

³³ "William A. Bouguereau (1825 - 1905)," Rehs Galleris, Inc., accessed January 28, 2017, http://www.rehs.com/william_a_bouguereau.html.

³⁴ "Salvador Dalí. Dream of Venus," Dali Theatre- Museum, 2000, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://www.salvador-dali.org/en/museums/dali-theatre-museum-in-figueres/exhibitions/3/salvador-dali-dream-of-venus>.

³⁵ "Salvador Dalí: Dreams of Venus," Queens Museum, 2003, accessed February 01, 2017, <http://www.queensmuseum.org/2015/11/salvador-dali-dream-of-venus>.

posed in several areas of the pavilion as a performance coordinated by Dalí. Femininity was a prevalent theme in the pavilion that was displayed through the reproductions on Botticelli's Venus and the scantily clad women that mirrored the mythological goddess of love. This brought visitors back to the idea of mythology and the image of the female body, looking to the past even though the World's Fair was meant to look to the future.³⁶

Dalí created an exhibition that encompassed Cicero's idea that a woman's key attribute is loveliness. He placed a reproduction of Botticelli's Venus on the entrance to the pavilion, but inside the surreal pavilion was his imagination's representation of the ideal female form that still stemmed from inspiration of the *Birth of Venus*.

Dalí's idea of the ideal beauty was an inspiration from a work of art made hundreds of years before he was even born, by none other than an Italian

Renaissance artist. This inspiration provided many striking similarities between the Dalí's pavilion and Botticelli's painting. One is the nudity of female figures in both works that create a sense of femininity and eroticism. Another connection is the role of water and the sea, as many of Dalí's performers were swimmers in tanks, and the arrival of Venus from the sea in

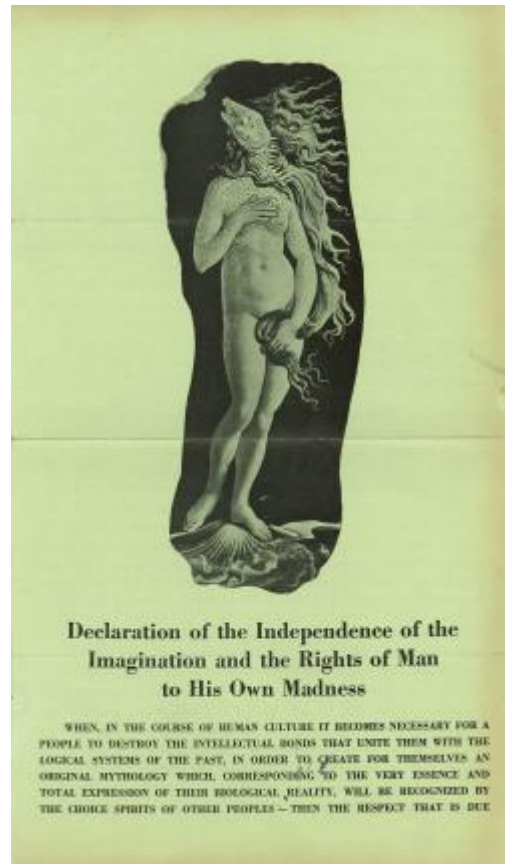


Figure 3: Declaration of the Independence of the Imagination and the Rights of Man to His Own Madness
Salvador Dalí, c. 1939

³⁶ salvador-dali.org

Botticelli's painting. Another is seen through seashells, as Dalí also used shells and coral as motifs throughout his pavilion.³⁷ While Dalí's version of the ideal beauty through the figure of Venus was most certainly a surreal representation, could we also not say that Botticelli's Venus was a surreal image from his imagination, only his was realized in the humanism style of the Renaissance? I suggest that the ideal beauty, whether through a Renaissance Grand Master or a twentieth century surrealist, serves as an inspiration for iconic works of art. This inspiration is a building block for the culture of Italy that molds its identity as the birthplace of art's perfect representation of the ideal female form.

Unfortunately for Dalí, not all his ideas and concepts for the pavilion were not approved by all members of the fair and the pavilion was slightly altered.³⁸ On the day of the pavilion opening, he released a cloud of pamphlets that displayed his true perception of the Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. In Dalí's version, Venus's face is covered by the head of a fish, continuing Dalí's style in surrealism while still paying homage to Botticelli. This pamphlet was entitled *Declaration of the Independence of the Imagination and the Rights of Man to His Own Madness* (Figure 3) in protest to Walter D. Teague, who oversaw the supervisions of the exhibit, and his alterations to Dalí's vision.³⁹

Fashion is another iconic attribute of Italy as it is home to one of the fashion capitols of the world. In their 1993 Spring collection, Dolce & Gabbana designed a statement collection that used reproductions of the image of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* patched together into several

³⁷ salvador-dali.org

³⁸ Many of Salvador Dalí's original concepts and plans of the pavilion were considered to be too promiscuous and were asked to be toned down, but Dalí was still the main architect and overseer of the pavilion's construction.

³⁹ *Gala- Salvador Dalí Foundation*.

outfits worn by Amazonian women (Figure 4).⁴⁰ Considered the inventors of the Mediterranean style, Dolce & Gabbana draws their inspiration from the past, especially their Italian heritage, to



Figure 4: Image from Dolce & Gabbana Spring 1993 fashion show

make a future that can be traced back to the "heterogeneous world of the Mediterranean."⁴¹ As a professor of Fashion Theory and Design at the University of Bologna in Italy, Simona Segre Reinach expresses her thoughts on the role of an image expressed by a culture: "The elements of Italian culture are reinforced through their meticulous attention to their image..."⁴² When Dolce & Gabbana used the image of the *Birth of Venus* in their spring collection it was a reflection on not just the company, but the culture of Italy as the designer is Italian and they used an iconic Italian image to present themselves. While these outfits and collections may not

have contributed directly to the tourism industry of Italy, it did reiterate the projection that the *Birth of Venus* is a brand name as an iconic image of the ideal woman that is a part of Italian culture, and therefore the national identity of Italy.

Inspired by both the work of art, and the Dolce & Gabbana 1993 Spring collection, Lady Gaga, the famous pop-artist, used both forms of the painting for their iconic representations in

⁴⁰ Simona Segre Reinach, "Dolce & Gabbana Brand History," LoveToKnow, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://fashion-history.lovetoknow.com/fashion-clothing-industry/fashion-designers/dolce-gabbana-brand-history>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

2014. Her album *ARTPOP* was released in November of 2014, which has a single titled *Venus* that references Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. The cover of her album subtly incorporates the famous painting (Figure 5), that was designed by famous contemporary artist Jeff Koons,⁴³ referencing Lady Gaga as the image of Venus as she displays herself in a similarly vulnerable position as the Roman goddess, but morphs herself into a more promiscuous pose.⁴⁴ To advertise her upcoming album, and single, Lady Gaga was also photographed wearing one of the dresses from Dolce & Gabbana's 1993 Spring collection (Figure 6). The image of the *Birth of Venus* served as a muse for the pop icon as the painting was an icon for the feminine ideal that inspired the image that Lady Gaga hoped to project in her new album.⁴⁵

⁴³ "ARTPOP – Lady Gaga," Jeff Koons Artwork, 2013, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://www.jeffkoons.com/artwork/projects/artpop-%E2%80%93-lady-gaga>.

⁴⁴ Michael Cragg, "Lady Gaga: Five Things We Can Learn from Her Artpop Album Cover," *The Guardian*, October 08, 2013, accessed March 3, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/oct/08/lady-gaga-artpop-album-cover>.

⁴⁵ Brenna Ehrlich, "Lady Gaga's ARTPOP Cover: Artist Jeff Koons Explains What It All Means," *MTV News*, November 08, 2013, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://www.mtv.com/news/1717125/lady-gaga-artpop-album-art-jeff-koons/>.



**Figure 5: *Artpop* album cover
Lady Gaga c. 2014**



**Figure 6: Lady Gaga seen wearing
Dolce & Gabbana 1993 *Birth of
Venus* dress**

When it comes to the use of symbolism behind the *Birth of Venus* it can be used in many interpretations. Though Reebok was founded in the UK, its headquarters are now located in the United State, where in 2008, Reebok used the idea of the *Birth of Venus* to advertise their sports products. In place of Venus, there is a woman running on the sidewalk that appears to be blown along by the figures of Zephyrus and Aura (Figure 7). By becoming Venus, the woman is represented as the ideal form for a woman working out, in Reebok attire.

By using Botticelli's painting to highlight their brand and workout gear, Reebok suggests that the ideal woman who works out, wears their clothes. The ideal female form that is represented in the curvy, naked figure of Venus is now replaced by a woman running in Reebok gear. However, knowing that Venus is the true figure of this painting, the thought that Venus is still the ideal form and she comes from Italy, makes her a brand name of her own that represents Italy.



**Figure 7: Reebok Ad
McGarrybowen Ad Agency
c. 2008**

The mysterious figure of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* has held sway over the beauty industry and the Italian culture for decades. Her feminine curves and shy nakedness advertise the ideal beauty of what a woman should embody. The idea that she comes from, and resides in, Italy suggests that the ideal female form comes from Italy and its culture. Venus is used as a symbol of Italian culture as the ideal feminine form that incites curiosity. Imitations and reproductions of the *Birth of Venus* plant this seed of curiosity that draws in the mass amount of tourism to the Uffizi and therefore the country of Italy. As a soft, feminine figure that draws in tourism in a welcoming manner, Venus ultimately forms the idea that Italy is a lovely⁴⁶ and beautiful place to see and experience. Italy uses this image of the ideal female that is represented through

⁴⁶ Reference to Cicero's idea that attribute of a woman is loveliness.

Venus to form a unified culture that they can present to the world. Botticelli's Venus has served as the epitome of female perfection and has gone on to inspire not just other artists, but brands as she is a brand name herself. The idealism that the *Birth of Venus* presents is the warmth and genius that Italy wants to project as a way to draw in tourists to feed their tourism industry.

A Strong (Male) Symbol: *David*

The biblical myth of David and Goliath is well known throughout the world by Christians and intellectuals alike. A town, in danger of the wrath of the giant Goliath, and the only person willing to stand up and defend its people was the much smaller, and considered weaker, David. Ultimately, with wit and strategy, David was able to defeat Goliath and protect his people. Florence, a small city much like the figure of David, has used the iconography of David overcoming his enemy as their own symbol of strength for centuries. Perhaps, one of the most well-known depictions of this Biblical hero is that of Michelangelo's marble sculpture, *David* (Figure 7). Originally commissioned by the Opera del Duomo for the Cathedral of Florence, Michelangelo began his



**Figure 7: *David*
Michelangelo c. 1501- 1504
Accademia Gallery, Florence, Italy**

marble giant in 1501 and would complete it in 1504.⁴⁷ Upon its completion *David* was thought to be too perfect to sit high up on the cathedral so it was placed in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, the seat of political power in Florence, in the Piazza della Signoria where it would serve a greater purpose. Charles Seymour, Jr. elaborates on the idea of *David* and how he has served as a powerful symbol for centuries:

To the generic symbolic content of civic freedom which is to be found repeatedly in the Davids of Florentine sculpture and painting of the Quattrocento, this particular David introduced specific meanings and allusions of its own, peculiar to its period... Michelangelo's colossus of Florence was intended as inspiration for a new and heroic generation of citizens. The huge man of marble was designed by its artist to be a force in the creation of a new age.⁴⁸

Michelangelo was the man to turn the rough stony, marble into flesh that would become the symbol of perfection around the world. In 1865 Florence was made the capitol of the newly unified Italy, but only for the next five years.⁴⁹ The use of David as a symbol was strong and by trying to show their strength and determination as a unified nation, the newly formed government of Italy wanted to adopt the symbol of David. John T. Paoletti explains this ideology in the introduction to his book exploring the identity of *David*:

The beginnings of our modern fascination with the *David* began in the late 1860's when Florence hoped that it would become the permanent capital of a

⁴⁷ "Michelangelo's David: Admire World's Greatest Sculpture at Accademia Gallery," Guide to Accademia Gallery, accessed January 02, 2017, <http://www.accademia.org/explore-museum/artworks/michelangelos-david/>.

⁴⁸ Charles Seymour, Jr., *Michelangelo's David: A Search for Identity* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), 45, 55.

⁴⁹ Jo Linsdell, "Florence As A Capital City 1865-1870," *The Florentine*, June 29, 2005, accessed January 07, 2017, <http://www.theflorentine.net/art-culture/2005/06/florence-as-a-capital-city-1865-1870/>.

united republic of Italy; the statue's genius as a symbol for republican Florentines at the beginning of the sixteenth century made it an appropriate historical symbol for the emerging new country.⁵⁰

This perfect figure of a man, who historically was small in size, was reimaged into this large, 17-foot-tall, marble sculpture that is recognizable, and replicated, around the world. Historically, David was always depicted after he defeated Goliath, standing over his severed head in victory.⁵¹ Michelangelo instead chose to depict the moment in which David is contemplating how he should take down the giant of Goliath, as he lightly holds on to his sling and looks in the direction of where Goliath waits for battle. This key moment of thought is what makes Michelangelo's *David* so iconic and a groundbreaking contribution to Italian society.

Upon the unification of Italy, the perfection of David's symbolism of liberty and freedom was ideal for the new republic, so in 1873, shortly after the Risorgimento, to preserve the original work, the sculpture was moved to the Accademia Gallery in Florence.⁵² An exact replica was placed in the original location where tourists can still view the giant in situ. In 2010 the famous sculpture entered a custody battle between the city of Florence and the nation state of Italy. The Italian government wanted to move the iconic work of art to Rome, the capital, but the sculpture contributes a significant £8 million from 1.5 million tourists a year for Florence.⁵³ Because it has served as such a powerful symbol of strength for the city since it was an

⁵⁰ John T. Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David: Florentine History and Civic Identity* (New York City, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015)1-2.

⁵¹ Accademia.org

⁵² Accademia.org

⁵³ Nick Pisa in Rome, "Florence vs Italy: Michelangelo's David at Center of Ownership Row," *The Telegraph*, August 16, 2010, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/7946627/Florence-vs-Italy-Michelangelos-David-at-centre-of-ownership-row.html>.

independent duchy, the Florence City Council has fought to keep the giant within the city so that it can continue to contribute to the tourism industry and representation of the city. Though Florence did not remain the capital of unified Italy, the Italian government still desires to use the symbol of *David* as a source for national identity. Today, similar replicas can be seen around the world in many different settings. Within Italy replicas can be found throughout the nation as well as Europe paying tribute to the strong male figure. Similarly, replicas are found on nearly every continent from North America to Asia.

In Europe, one can find replicas of *David* in many locations, and even throughout Italy. Florence has the replica not only in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, but a bronze one in Piazzale Michelangelo as well. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England has not only paid homage to Botticelli, but has also gives homage to the infamous *David*. An exact plaster replica was gifted to Queen Victoria in 1857 by the Tuscan Duke Leopold II, and in 1873 it was moved to the Architectural Courts, later renamed Cast Courts, where it has since been used as a way to provide an education for art students.⁵⁴ However, because the indecent nakedness of *David* offended the women of the court, a removable fig leaf was created so as not to offend the ladies.⁵⁵ On Tripadvisor.com reviews rave by the hundreds about the replica inside the Cast Court as a great way for those who may never get the opportunity to visit Florence. While many of the reviews do say positive things about the replica, the reviews also mention that nothing can compare to seeing the actual work of art in its original time and space: Anastasia P. from

⁵⁴ "David: Michelangelo," V&A Search the Collections, accessed March 02, 2017, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O39861/david-plaster-cast-michelangelo/>.

⁵⁵ Web Team, "David's Fig Leaf," Victoria and Albert Museum, Online Museum, September 05, 2013, accessed March 19, 2017, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/d/davids-fig-leaf/>.

London, "Absolutely wonderful replica. Magnificent museum but in a much better display in Florence." Hany G. from Bakersfield, California comments, "I came across the *David* statue from Michelangelo and after taking tens of thousands of pictures, I found out it is a replica and was disappointed." For those who have been to Florence to the original work felt that the replica came up short like user Swmalon: "Having been to Florence, Rome, Venice, etc, it was even more unimpressive to see replicas of so many works (statue of *David*, for instance) that I've actually seen the original of." Or even people like Machiel G. from Utrecht, The Netherlands claims, "I especially recommend the hall with the replicas of famous sculptures such as *David* of Michelangelo... However, the knowledge that they're not genuine generally tones your excitement down."⁵⁶ As a symbol of Florence, Italy has a monopoly on the expectations of *David* so that when it is viewed anywhere but Italy, it is not up to standards. The replica in the Victoria and Albert Museum is in a room that contains many other statues and statue replicas, but the Accademia Gallery makes sure to highlight the original *David* is a grand gallery space that separates it from other works on display in the museum.⁵⁷

Within the United States there are many replicas, but the most popularly placed one is in Buffalo, New York. Originally the bronze replica was made in 1900 by Angeles & Sons and purchased by Andrew Langdon at the Paris Exposition to be gifted to the City of Buffalo Historical Society.⁵⁸ In December 2003 the replica was finally placed in Delaware Park on top of

⁵⁶ "Victoria and Albert Museum (London, England): Top Tips Before You Go," Trip Advisor, accessed March 21, 2017, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g186338-d187556-Reviews-V_A_Victoria_and_Albert_Museum-London_England.html/BackUrl.

⁵⁷ Accademia.org

⁵⁸ "Buffalo Arts Commission: David," City of Buffalo, accessed March 04, 2017, http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/files/1_2_1/public%20art%20website/web%20pages/David.html.

a granite base. Unlike the nearly identical replica in the Victoria and Albert Museum, for many this replica falls short of the wonder that the original can present. Placed in a similar fashion as the original, it is located in a public, outdoor space so that tourists can easily view the replica. Reviews for this work on trip advisor are not nearly as positive as the Victoria and Albert Museum's: Donna F. on September 26, 2016 says, "Beautiful replica. Other sculptures to see in Delaware Park, very impressive, but worth seeing and visiting the existing artwork." Another review by Fenizia M. in a review titled "Not Italy" from January 14, 2016, she says, "Although I can appreciate the idea of bringing a classic reproduction to a local crowd this one falls short."⁵⁹ Though not as popular of a replica to visit, the base in Buffalo still pays tribute to the original with an inscription dedicated to Michelangelo and *David* in Florence.

Similar to the way Reebok used the *Birth of Venus* to highlight that the perfect female wears Reebok gear, Levi's Strauss & Company has taken Michelangelo's *David* and placed him in their jeans to send the same message. As a symbol of the perfect man, to place him in their jeans, Levi's has taken the initiative to say that only the best of the best wear Levi's, and that is why *David*, the perfect man, is wearing our jeans. By having an image of the iconically naked *David* wearing a pair of Levi jeans (Figure 9) suggests that a true man, that is strong and capable, would also wear Levi jeans if they hope to be as strong and capable as *David*. The suggestion presented is that *David* is the perfect male figure and is seen wearing jeans, but not just any jeans. *David* is wearing Levi's jeans, so if you want to imitate the ideal male, then you

⁵⁹ "Replica of Statue of David (Buffalo, NY): Top Tips Before You Go," Trip Advisor, accessed March 19, 2017, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60974-d7011313-Reviews-Replica_of_Statue_of_David-Buffalo_New_York.html#REVIEWS.

too should wear Levi's jeans. The viewer obviously knows that Levi's jeans were not actually placed on the sculpture, but the idea has been placed in consumer's minds that this is the perfect male and he is wearing this brand of jeans. In Mark A. Runco and Steven R. Pritzker's *Encyclopedia of Creativity* include an article by V.M. Patrick and H. Hagtvedt titled *Advertising with Art: Creative Visuals* and explain the effects of advertisement: "Advertising has been defined as a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future."⁶⁰ Both *David* and the *Birth of Venus* have influenced this idea in presenting the ideal male and female form in advertisement to project themselves as the face of Italian culture and their national identity.

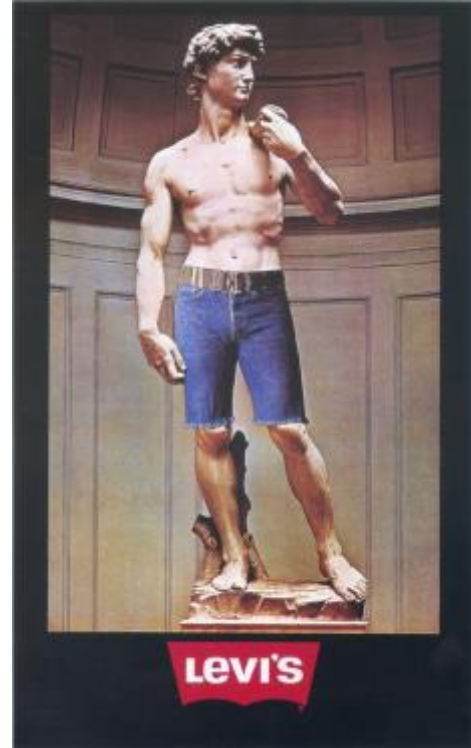


Figure 9: Levi's Strauss & Company Jeans Ad c. 2000

3. The Grand Tour: A Twenty- First Century Italy and Its Tourism Industry

It could be noted that the vision of what Anna Maria Luisa had of Florence when it inherited her family's heritage was adopted by the rest of Italy. Keeping iconic works of art within the Italian borders would be utilized by the public, while simultaneously drawing in foreigners.

⁶⁰ V. M. Patrick and H. Hagtvedt, "Advertising with Art: Creative Visuals," in *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, by Mark A. Runco and Steven R. Pritzker (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2011).

Tourism accounts for such a large portion of Italy's economy, and it comes, in large portion, from the museums and churches that display these famous works of art. Italy can be viewed as the birthplace of tourism. The concept of tourism began in the seventeenth century when nobleman, usually from England, would travel through much of Europe with Italy as their ultimate destination. From the start of tourism to modern day tourism, not much has changed in terms of highly desired cities to visit. This grand journey through the countries and cities of Europe was known as the Grand Tour.

The main goal of the traveling Englishman on his Grand Tour was to study cultures and become well rounded in worldly knowledge. By traveling to Italy, intellectuals were given the opportunity to see and learn about ancient cultures, such as the Romans and Greeks. With the reintroduction of ancient figures, such as Venus and David, artists were also creating the perfect environment for foreign intellectuals to come and learn from the vibrant, so called Italian, culture that originated in the antiquity.

For modern day intellectuals, there is a similar journey that allows students to travel and learn from other cultures. Today it is known as study abroad, and even though it goes by a different name, the concept is still the same. Usually done while in college, students travel to a foreign country to immerse themselves in that chosen culture and learn from the society. According to Go Abroad, a popular study abroad company, Europe remains the number one study abroad continent, and Italy was voted the top country to study abroad in for 2017.⁶¹

⁶¹ Julia Zaremba, "Top 10 Study Abroad Destinations for 2017," GoAbroad.com, April 16, 2016, accessed January 04, 2017, <https://www.goabroad.com/articles/study-abroad/top-10-study-abroad-destinations-for-2017>.

While Englishman of the 17th and 18th century went to study ancient Rome, many students go to Italy today to study the Renaissance.

4. Conclusion: An Unsure Idea of the Future Italy

Tourism is one of the main pillars that supports the Italian economy by displaying iconic works of art like Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Michelangelo's *David*. More than that, tourism is 11.8 percent (171 billion euros) of the national GDP and 12.8 percent of jobs, which means tourism provides approximately 3.1 million jobs throughout the nation.⁶² The creative imagination of the Renaissance is the perfect tool to advertise to foreigners and travelers to get them to visit Italy and see for themselves these mystic works of art. Beaches and other outdoor attractions are extremely seasonal, but the Uffizi or the Accademia can be visited year-round to see these iconic works of art. In the European Union's Article 30, there is mention of "national treasures" which refers to culturally and historically important works of art, architecture and archaeology, which does not allow these works to leave their nation for extended periods of time, usually no longer than 12 to 18 months.⁶³ Majority of art works, including the *Birth of Venus* and *David*, by law are not allowed to leave the country permanently or for extended periods of time, therefore creating a monopoly on these iconic works of art and ultimately forces tourists to come directly to the site where the art is housed.

⁶² "The Italian Economy," Farnesina: Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, accessed February 3, 2017, http://www.esteri.it/mae/en/ministero/servizi/benvenuti_in_italia/conoscere_italia/economia.html.

⁶³ Barbara T. Hoffman, *Art and Cultural Heritage: Law, Policy and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

After four years of Italy's unification in 1865, the artistic city of Florence was the capitol for the next five years, where both the *Birth of Venus* and *David* are located.⁶⁴ Florence epitomized the image that Italy wanted to project as a culture and build its national identity from. As the birthplace of the Renaissance, and the home of many iconic works of art from this time period, it is still the cultural capital of Italian society. To accommodate the 15 to 20 thousand members of the government Florence went through extensive urbanization in preparation for it to become the capital, and with it came a massive increase in the city's population.⁶⁵ The glory of the city, however, rests in its Renaissance charm and the fact that it is frozen in time. Tourists don't visit the city to see modern buildings, but rather to walk along the cobblestones and view its historic sites, and of course iconic works of art. The city embodies the identity that Italy would want to spread throughout the nation as a historically and culturally significant center, and uses the tourism industry as a way to spread this ideal image of their cultural and national identity.

The *Birth of Venus* and *David* are the representations of Italian culture, its past and serves as the poster children for the glory of Italy. It also serves as an advertisement that Italy is united under one culture that is demonstrated through key works of art from the Renaissance. The national identity that Italy attempts to embody comes from the iconic period of the Renaissance as it was large step in society towards modernity and would go on to influence other European nations and cultures. These works have been canonized as the epitome of

⁶⁴ In 1865 Florence replaced the city of Turin as the capitol for its cultural significance to Italy. It also to be re-emphasized that Rome would not become a part of the unified Italy until 1871 which is when it would then replace Florence as the capitol for its greater ability to house larger numbers of residents.

⁶⁵ Jo Linsdell, *The Florentine*.

perfection that is represented through the culture that they present, as the bases for Italian culture.

Venus is highlighted as the ideal female form that was brought back to life from antiquity during the Renaissance by many Grand Masters, such as Botticelli. The replications and imitations that have been inspired by Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* have been used since its rediscovery, just before Italy's unification, to still demonstrate the ideal female form. From advertisement companies to other artists to celebrities, Botticelli's Venus can be seen everywhere. Her foreign presence has provided a foothold for Italy to present itself as the center of high culture, and to truly experience this phenomenon, one would have to travel to Italy to see the original work in person. The image that Botticelli's Venus provides for society today is the idea of the ideal beauty, which originates and resides in Italy, that also creates a brand name of beauty in Italian culture. *Birth of Venus'* brand name is the projection of Italy's national identity as it forms an image that this work of art, from the Renaissance, is ideal and may be replicated, but to experience the original, true beauty, one would have to go to the city of Florence to experience it.

The symbolism of David and what he represents for Florence, is a projection that Italy has attempted to adopt for the whole of the nation. By advertising that the work belongs to the nation- state, not just Florence, Italy has worked to create this projection of unity and freedom. The battle between the city of Florence and the nation- state of Italy over the ownership of this iconic work of art shows that the symbolism behind the figure of David is a national symbol that Italy wants to embody. A symbol of strength, freedom, and intelligence, *David* is the identity of a nation that Italy wants others to view it as. Replicas are erected around the world to project a

similar image of strength that appears to have been imitated from its original home of Florence and Italy. The replicas of *David* around the world further emphasize his perfection and his role as the ideal man in Italian culture and its history. His prominent role in history provides a strong brand that many other nations and companies want to emanate. As a powerful icon, *David* has served as a way for others, especially Italy, to project themselves to the world as a strong, powerful and intelligent entity, much like David was when defeating Goliath.

While the city of Florence is most certainly seen as a cultural capital of the world, it would not be too far-fetched to say that perhaps it is also the pseudo-capital of Italy. As the birth place of the Renaissance, and home to these two iconic works of art, Florence encompasses the ideal image of Italy and its culture in the way that it represents and displays Italy's past. There is still a large divide between the many cities and regions of Italy, especially the north from the south, as the north draws in a majority of the tourism within Italy.⁶⁶ Florence is therefore the cultural capitol of the nation of Italy, and culture serves as a leading attribute of Italy's national identity. Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Michelangelo's *David* serve as the perfect female and male representatives of Italian culture in their significance to the history of the nation- state. By having both on display in historical museums of Florence sends the idea to tourists that the time and space in which these works of art belong is Renaissance Florence and to experience that, one would have to travel directly to the city. While internally the nation is still very much decentralized, through the use of the tourism industry, Italy is slowly working to piece the people and culture of Italy together through a common history that is represented

⁶⁶ Eurostats News Release, "GDP Per Capita in the EU in 2011: Seven Capital Regions Among the Ten Most Prosperous," Advertisement, Regional GDP, February 27, 2014.

by these iconic works of art. The national identity of Italy is expressed through the ideal female form in the *Birth of Venus* and the ideal male form of *David*. With Florence serving as the pseudo- capital, the national identity of Italy is forming through the idea of Florentine Renaissance and its projection throughout the rest of the world.

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