Public access description

This watercolour is a copy made by Emilio Costantini (Florence 1842-1926), an art dealer and painter, after the Primavera (c. 1478) by Sandro Botticelli (1444/5-1510). It was realised for the Arundel Society, founded in 1848 with the intention of promoting the knowledge of art through the publication of reproductions of works of art. The Arundel Society popularised Renaissance art, especially Italian, echoing an increasing interest for ‘primitives’ in those years.

The painting is one of the most famous by Botticelli, along with the Birth of Venus, both at the Uffizi, Florence. The painting could be read as the representation of the contemporary colloquial poetry of love. On the other hand, the Primavera could symbolise the Neo – Platonic philosophy of love, pure and non-carnal. In spite of the popularity of Primitives such as Fra Angelico (1395/1400-1455) or Ghirlandaio (1448/9-1494), Botticelli did not become a well-known painter until the 1870s.

Descriptive line
Watercolour, copy after La Primavera, Sandro Botticelli in the Uffizi (Florence), Emilio Costantini, Arundel Society watercolour, 19th century

Physical description
Watercolour showing six female figures and two male, along with a putto above the figure in the middle. The males are at the edges of the composition. The one on the right, Zephyrus, chases the woman next to him, Flora. She turns into the woman handling flowers, the Spring. Venus, in the middle wears a white and red dress. On the left the Three Graces dance. The man on the left in red robe, Mercury, rases his hand. The scene is set in a garden with trees and flowers.

Dimensions
Width: 826 mm, Height: 532 mm.

Museum number
E.34-1995

Object history note
Acquired in 1995 from the National Gallery of London.
Watercolour copy made for the Arundel Society and published as chromolithographs (E.553-1888 and E.553A-1888) in 1888 by Wilhelm Greve.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O205977/copy-after-la-primavera-sandro-watercolour-botticelli-sandro/