

*Not just a woman,
but an unique immortal goddess,
for God instilled in her
all that was good in Nature (...)*

*(Rime in vita e in morte
dell'ill. S. Livia Colonna, 1555)*

*(...) those temples were already
built and dedicated to fragile and
corruptible women, like daughters
of Adam and of their first mother Eve,
sinners, miserable and mortal (...)*

*(GIOVANNI GIOVENALE ANCINA,
Il tempio armonico
della Beatissima Vergine, 1599)*

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Museo petrarchesco piccolomineo
9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Thursday also 3 p.m. - 7 p.m.
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Free admission

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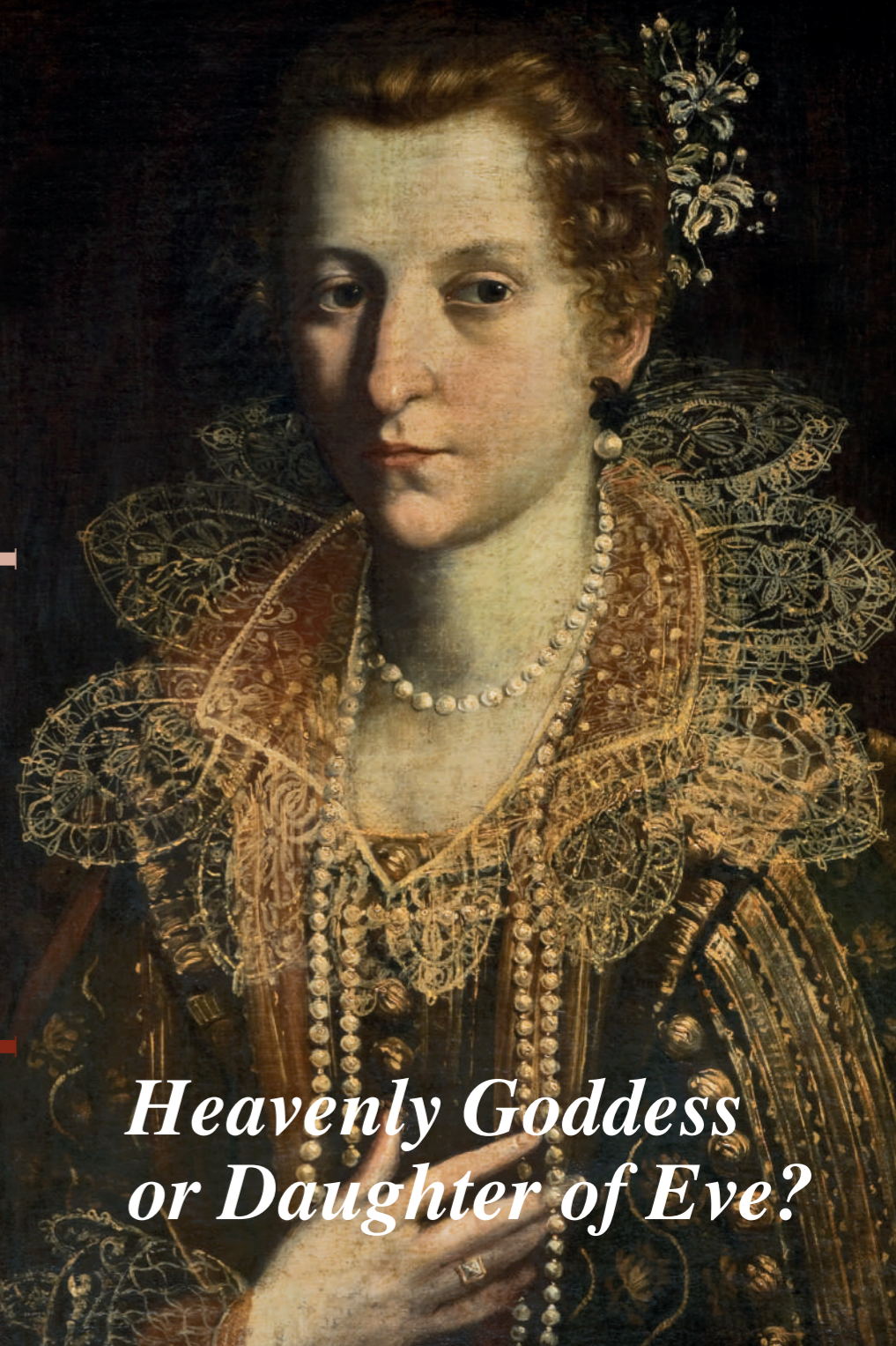
Saturday at 11 a.m.
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Information and reservations:

Tel. 0039/0406758184
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museo petrarchesco piccolomineo



*Heavenly Goddess
or Daughter of Eve?*

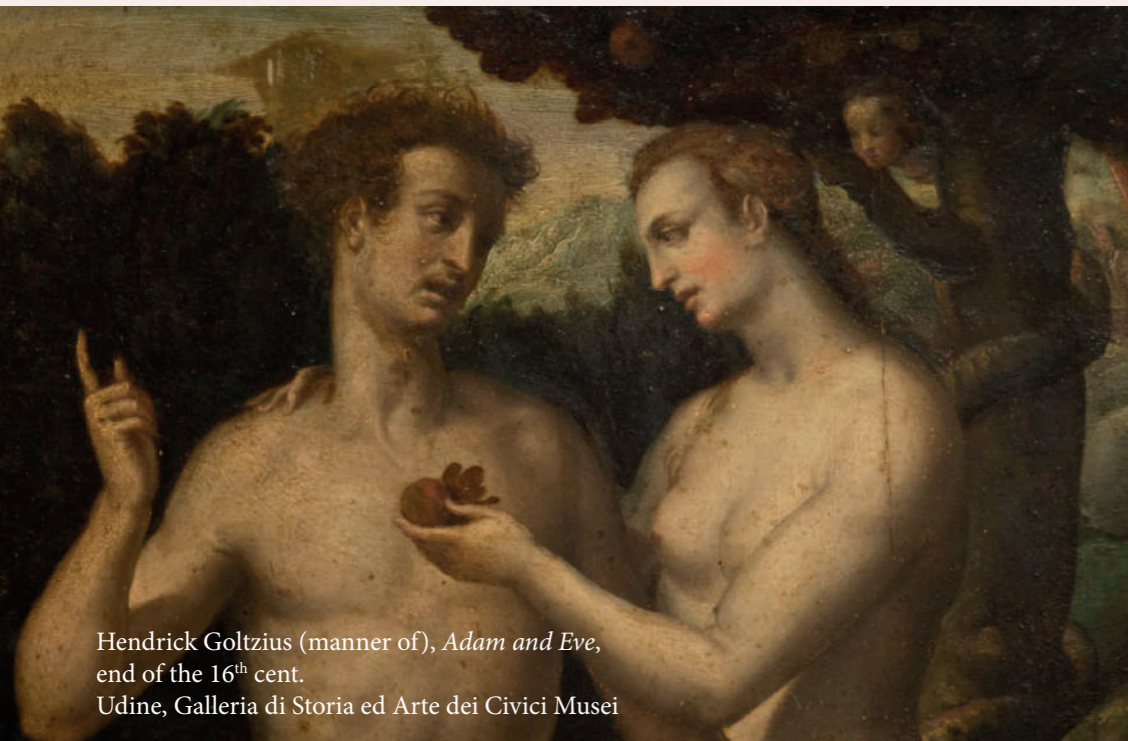
Heavenly Goddess or Daughter of Eve?

The Woman in Italian Culture between the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation

Edited by Maiko Favaro and Alessandra Sirugo

Trieste, Museo petrarchesco piccolomineo
via Madonna del mare, 13 (3rd Floor)

21 October 2017 - 21 April 2018



Hendrick Goltzius (manner of), *Adam and Eve*,
end of the 16th cent.
Udine, Galleria di Storia ed Arte dei Civici Musei

Lavinia Fontana Zappi, *Portrait of a gentlewoman*,
second half of the 16th cent.
Udine, Galleria di Storia ed Arte dei Civici Musei

Did women have a Renaissance?

The Museo petrarchesco piccolomineo replies to this question with the rare sixteenth-century printed editions of the “Hortis” Civic Library - all described in the on-line catalogue <https://www.biblioest.it> -, and with some paintings, engravings, sculptures and costumes, expressions of femininity of the 16th and 17th century, from museums in Friuli Venezia Giulia.

The exhibition is conceived and curated by Maiko Favaro, who with this scientific work completes in Trieste the project with which he won the “Marie Skłodowska-Curie” fellowship of the European Commission in 2015 (Horizon 2020 programme). The preparation of the exhibition integrates the research activity in which he has been engaged for two years at the “Freie Universität” in Berlin.

The exhibition presents cultured women with a strong personality who emerge as interlocutors in the literary dialogues of the period, such as Emilia Pio in the *Cortegiano* by Baldassarre Castiglione, Franceschina Baffo in the *Raverta* by Giuseppe Betussi and Isabella Bentivoglio in the *Discorsi* by Annibale Romei. In the sixteenth century, a woman could achieve social recognition not only as a wife, mother or nun, but also as a writer. Vittoria Colonna, Veronica Gambara, Isabella di Morra, Tullia d’Aragona, Laura Terracina, Laura Battiferri, Gaspara Stampa and Lucrezia Marinelli are some of the most well-known names in a female literary spring that started from Petrarchan tradition, allowing the expression of their sentiments and emotions even outside the private environment.

A number of important painters also emerged: we can mention the talented Sofonisba Anguissola, by whom we admire a copy of the “Portrait of a nun” attributed to Emilia di Spilimbergo, or the refined Fontana Zappi, painter of the “Portrait of a Gentlewoman”. In the scientific field there were experts in natural remedies, such as Camilla Erculiani, a pharmacist in Padua. It became fashionable to discuss the excellence of women, with the aim of demonstrating that the female sex is not inferior to the male. Collections of poetry which exalted the gentlewomen of the period as “heavenly goddesses” were published (sometimes such collections were imagined as “temples of rhymes”).

In the age of Counter-Reformation, Angelica, who made *Orlando furioso* by preferring Medoro to him, became the protagonist of *Angelica innamorata* by

Vincenzo Brusantini, in which she was cast under a spell that made her fall in love with every man she met without being loved in return.

Torquato Tasso adopted a moralistic tone in describing the marital bond in the episode of Olindo and Sofronia in *La Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581).

Between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, as the Renaissance faded into the Baroque, a misogynistic attitude became more frequent in literary production.

This climate also affected feminine involvement in the cultural field: after 1610/1620, fewer women were active in the literary environment.

Rather than a “heavenly goddess”, the woman was often considered a “daughter of Eve”.

She could be redeemed by identifying herself with the Virgin Mary, the “new



Pier Francesco Mola detto il Ticinese (attr.), *Mary Magdalene*,
17th cent.
Trieste, Civico Museo Morpurgo

Eve” who atoned for the guilt of her ancient ancestor by giving birth to Christ, the Saviour of humanity.

The Marian cult was particularly strong in Italy during the Counter-Reformation.

Especially after the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, there was a great devotion to the Madonna of the Rosary, referred to in the *Rosario* by Luis Granada (1573).

Saints like Mary Magdalene often featured in paintings and literary compositions as exemplary models.