2020 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Manifesto di Rivolta Femminile (Manifesto of Feminine Revolt). Written by Carla Lonzi, Elvira Banotti and Carla Accardi, this declaration of intent was posted on the exterior walls of urban buildings in selected Italian cities in July 1970. The text was the final outcome of the first meetings that brought together in Rome women with a shared enthusiasm for the burgeoning international feminist movement. The manifesto – which echoed the tone, modes, and foundational practice of many art avant-garde groups – sanctioned the birth of Italian feminism.

It is based on this premise that Palinsesti decided to dedicate a double issue to women’s art and criticism in postwar Italy. Our title “Ma il genio chi è?” (“Yet Who is the Genius?”) is borrowed from a homonymous 1970s article by artist Cloti Ricciardi, showing parallelisms with the writings of American art historian Linda Nochlin. Our volumes recognize that women who worked in the second half of the twentieth century continued to be marginalized – in art historical studies, exhibitions, as well as public and private collections – because of the enduring idea of the “creative genius” at the practical and ontological levels.

In today’s Italian context, this paradigm is indeed still valued and predominant, and applies to the figure of both the artist and the critic: mainstream narratives of artistic movements continue to be reduced to canons – art historical or contemporary, for that matter – that revolve around a few protagonists, usually not including women.

With the goal of collecting an inclusive range of contributions that expand beyond established thematic and methodological limits, our double issue casts a large net. Cross-references and threads connect the accepted essays, which were selected through a double-blind peer review process.

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The second volume of our double issue will continue to explore themes like domesticity, intimacy, sexuality, separatism, and artistic expression, while introducing additional threads. Overall, the essays included in the two issues of "Ma il Genio Chi È?" ("Yet, Who is the Genius?") challenge schematic ideological stances, to mirror the multifacted complexity of women’s identity and art production in postwar in Italy.

Reference: