



Bernini's Beloved: A Portrait of Costanza Piccolomini

Sarah McPhee

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With lips slightly parted and eyes fixed on a point in the distance, a breathtaking marble portrait of Costanza Piccolomini appears alive. Carved by Gianlorenzo Bernini in 1636–37 for his own pleasure, the portrait of Costanza is one of his most captivating works, but until now little has been known about its subject.

For centuries Costanza was identified only as Bernini's mistress, who later incited his rage by betraying him for his brother. Author Sarah McPhee corrects and expands this story in her remarkable biography of a sculpture and its subject. *Bernini's Beloved* sets the bust and Costanza's own life—her childhood and noble name, her marriage, affair, fall from grace, and recovery—against the backdrop of Baroque Rome. Beautifully illustrated and written, this fascinating story expands our understanding of the woman whose intelligence and passion served as inspiration for Bernini's celebrated sculpture, and who courageously forged a life for herself in the decades following its creation.

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