

**Predella** journal of visual arts, n°34, 2014 - [www.predella.it](http://www.predella.it)

**Direzione scientifica e proprietà** / *Scholarly Editors-in-Chief and owners:*

**Gerardo de Simone, Emanuele Pellegrini** - [predella@predella.it](mailto:predella@predella.it)

***Predella** pubblica ogni anno due numeri online e due numeri monografici a stampa / **Predella** publishes two online issues and two monographic print issues each year*

*Tutti gli articoli sono sottoposti alla peer-review anonima / All articles are subject to anonymous peer-review*

**Direttore scientifico aggiunto** / *Scholarly Associate Editor:* Fabio Marcelli

**Comitato scientifico** / *Editorial Advisory Board:*

Diane Bodart, Maria Luisa Catoni, Annamaria Ducci, Linda Pisani, Riccardo Venturi

**Coordinatore della redazione** / *Editorial Coordinator:* Stefano de Ponti

**Impaginazione** / *Layout:* Stefano de Ponti, Lucio Mondini

**Predella** journal of visual arts - ISSN 1827-8655

*The purpose of this article is to bring to the notice of the public a Belgian noble collection of Italian Old Master drawings, which was acquired in Italy around 1800 by Baron de Presle. The existence of this collection was discovered when Petra Boekstal was asked to study a small group of drawings. With an old Italian inventory more drawings were found, including a 140 drawings by Giovan Battista Tempesti. The article explains the history of the collection and illustrates a few examples in it.*

At the beginning of this year (2014) an acquaintance asked me to make a study of his small collection of Italian drawings. Although I read Art History at Amsterdam and Leuven universities, my present occupation is in the domain of architectural research; but as challenges are the spice of life, I thought it would be of interest to study this collection, but had no idea what to expect.

The collection was bought by the present owner in 1997 from the Comtesse Henriette d'Oultremont of Duras (Sint-Truiden, Belgium), her husband Comte Réne de Liederkerke, the marriage without issue. The aristocratic provenance of the collection seemed promising and became more exciting as time passed and supplementary information on the background of this collection came to light. While studying the collection my eye was caught by various notes and old registration numbers on the back of the drawings.

As I considered it somewhat difficult to make any remarks about the authenticity, attributions and dates of the drawings, it seemed more sensible to seek the advice of a specialist in the field of Italian drawings and so I contacted an old friend, Roland de Lathuy, now director of Christies in Brussels. M. de Lathuy looked with interest at the collection and remembered that in 1985 Christies in London had sold a collection which belonged to another member of the d'Oultremont family, with the auction catalogue noting: «The following drawings are from a collection that was evidently formed in Tuscany in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and many bear inscriptions similar to those associated with such collectors as Baldinucci and Gabburri»<sup>1</sup>.

The works sold at Christies were introduced by a family friend and, due to a

happy set of circumstances, after 29 years M. De Lathuy brought me into contact with this gentleman, who showed me the four catalogues of the sales which took place in 1985 and 1986. The Comte Eugène d'Oultremont sold his drawings in order to pay for the restoration of a new roof for his country house. The family friend informed me of various aspects of the former collection and also showed me a copy of an old document in Italian (fig. 1), a list of 234 drawings, all numbered 1-234 and most with an attribution, preceded by the introductory statement:

Catalogo dei Disegni, Acquarelli, Pastelli, et di alcuni Quadretti a Olio, appartenenti, al Sig. Barone di Presler che sono stati tolti dalle loro Cornici, e riposti nelle tre cartelle nuove, segnate di N° 1, 2, e 3 marcati, con i numeri corrispondenti a quelli segnati nelle Cornici, Salva Quadri, e Cristalli rispettivi.<sup>2</sup>

The works of art were taken out their frames and were placed in three new portfolio's numbered 1, 2 and 3 and the numbers corresponded with the numbers on the drawings.

In this list the drawings are attributed to a number of artists, including: «Michelangiolo», «Del Guercino», «Veronese», «Guido Reni», «Raffael», «Ludovico Caracci», «Del Barrocci», «Di Ciro Ferri», «Di Andrea de Sarto», «Di Pietro da Cortona»; also less well known artists, for example the two Pisa artists «Di Gio: Batta Tempesti and «Saverio Salvioni», and a few well known foreign names: «Di Van Oort», «Di Rubens», «Di Vandyck», «Di Grebber» (pupil of Rubens), «Di Bloemaert» and «di Vandermuler».

In the small collection that I have been asked to study the drawings were mostly marked with old inventory numbers, and the next step was to check these numbers with those on the original Italian inventory. Of 38 drawings 36 are on the list, two prints by Saverio Salvioni without numbers, but other works by this 18<sup>th</sup> century artist are on the list. Also remarkable are the four Italian annotations on one of the Salvioni prints (fig. 2), with below «A imitazione dell Originale presso il Nobile Sig.r Conte Ferretti De Presle», in the left hand corner «Raffaello inv: e dis<sup>o</sup>», in the right hand corner «Saverio Salvioni incise» and down the left hand margin of the print «...Imitazione del tocco in penna originale esistente presso il No[bil] SIG[Nor]E CO.Ferreti de presle».

In the small collection I am studying, as well as this print, there is also a drawing with the inventory number 183 (fig. 3) on the list attributed to «Raffaello da Urbino». Below the drawing but on the mount there are three annotations: «Raphaello» and «disegno originale di Raffaello», but both of them are not visible

due to a third annotation which has been pasted over them, «Disegno originale di Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino». Recently an old master drawings specialist attributed this work to Timoteo Viti (1469-1523) who worked in the atelier of Raphael. Three other versions of this early work by Raphael are known: in the British Museum (inv. No 1909,1020.1), but with one person less depicted, also the quality of this work significantly less refined and less detailed; in the Musée de Beaux-Arts, Lille, and a third but unpublished in the Belle Arti in Perugia. The attributions of these drawings vary from one authority to another, one believing it to be the work of Raphael, others Viti.

The Saverio Salvioni (1755-1833) print brings the annotation «A imitazione dell Originale presso il Nobile Sig.r Conte Ferretti De Presle», which is the second reference to the collector Baron de Presle Conte Ferretti. From the d'Oultremont family tree it is seen that Comtesse Marie-Françoise de Ferretti married Gabriel-Amour de Lierneux de Presle, and their son Théodore Xavier de Lierneux Baron de Presle (1747-1822) married the Comtesse Isabelle d'Oultremont 13 June 1784, thus explaining the connection between the de Ferretti, Presle and d'Oultremont families, and how the collection of drawings came to Belgium.

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE OLD INVENTORY

Due to the old Italian inventory it is possible to give the collection a more definite pedigree, and it has become obvious that the small collection of drawings I am now researching was part of the much larger collection (234) of which 93 were sold in 1985. The fact that the name of the owner Baron di Presle was mentioned in combination with the fuller title Conte de Ferretti on the print of Salvioni opened new perspectives for further research.

#### BARON DE PRESLE CONTE DE FERRETTI IN ITALY

In the publication *Settecento Pisano. Pittura e scultura a Pisa nel secolo XVIII*, the following observations were written about Fiorenzo Preisler: «originario di Liegi, protettore di Giovan Battista Tempesti, possedeva una notevole collezione di dipinti – tra essi alcuni fiamminghi e olandesi – ma soprattutto una ricca biblioteca, radunata con la cura e l'orientamento dell'intellettuale éclairé»<sup>3</sup>. According to this book the Baron came originally from Liege and possessed a well-known collection of drawings and an excellent library. He was also a patron and a "protector" of Giovan Battista Tempesti<sup>4</sup>.

Because the name Presle is so dominant in this history, I searched for this name and found an estate (country seat) called Presles in the south of Belgian. I contacted the owner and was surprised to hear that it was the residence of Comte d'Oul-

tremont and that the father of the present Comte sold the collection of drawings in 1985 in London. The son was most interested to hear of my research into his ancestors, and shortly afterwards we met, and in the meanwhile the Comte had traced more information about the collection and had located more drawings.

The quantity of drawings was surprising, especially the 140 Tempesti sketches, designs and drawings, of which thirteen had an old inventory number; and thus these could also be traced back to the Italian list of Baron de Presle<sup>5</sup>.

The Château de Presles collection is carefully kept in a drawer, but nothing much until now was known about the provenance of these drawings, but I remembered that the family friend who had helped the father sell his collection at Christie's had spoken of two collections. One part was mainly of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian drawings and the other predominantly of drawings by the 18<sup>th</sup> century artist Giovanni Battista Tempesti<sup>6</sup>.

The family friend believed that Tempesti had played a major role in the decoration of the house of Baron de Presle in Italy<sup>7</sup>, but until recently we were not sure where this house was, yet I had evidence that it may have been in the area of Perugia.

When the present Comte d'Oultremont showed me around his Château, he pointed out a number of aquarelles of a house in Italy (fig. 4) with the subtitle: «vue du village et Palais de Brufa appartenant a Mons. le Baron Theodore Delierneux de Presle Comte de Feretti», more proof of a house of the Baron in that area. The aquarelles were painted by Vincent Oldani in 1804 and by that time Fiorenzo had died 12 years earlier. The village of Brufa is near Perugia, about 248 km from Pisa.

There is an interesting letter (fig. 5) dated 2 May 1786 in the Château de Presles also indicating an address in Perouse, that is Perugia. The letter was written in French by Professor Becker of Dresden, and seemed to be a proposal for an exchange of drawings between the collectors, Baron de Presle to receive the following drawings:

1. le dessin promis de Franz Floris, et le meilleur que je possédé, parce que vous l'aimez tant
2. La Saint famille de Rubens, un dessin precieux
3. un beau dessin de van Oort, le maitre de Rubens
4. un dessin de Van der Meulen
5. un dessin de Bloemaert
6. un dessin de Vandijk, tres-...., mais mal conservé
7. un desin de Quellinus, écolier de Rubens
8. un dessin de Grebber, écolier de Rubens — tous veritable originaux.

And in return Professor Becker hoped to receive an original drawing by Andrea del Sarto or a Michelangelo, or a Guido Reni, Pierre De Cortone, a Cignani, a Veronese, a Titien (sic Titian) or a Carracci. From this letter we learn that the collection of Baron de Presle was apparently already known to the German professor in 1786, obviously a collector himself. The professor asked the Baron to send the drawings for the proposed exchange to le Comte de Hohenwart in Florence, who would then hand them over to Professor Becker. Due to this letter we can establish that some part of the collection of Baron de Presle already existed in 1786. It is also interesting that seven of the eight artists mentioned in the letter can be traced on the Italian list, but we can't be certain that the works referred to in this letter are the same as no idea of the subjects is given. We do notice «Francesco Florij» (Franz Floris) as number 92, «Rubens» number 39, «Van Oort» number 9, «VanderMuler» number 211, «Bloemaert» number 195, «Vandijck» number 51, «Quellinus» not recognized on the list and «Grebber» indicated under number 159. There seem to be too many coincidences in this story and so we have to accept them as based on the truth.

In the meantime I contacted Stefano Renzoni who wrote his PhD thesis on Tempesti<sup>8</sup> and lives in Pisa. He was excited to hear of the new discovery and I decided it would be sensible to go to Pisa, to get a better idea of the history of the town and of Tempesti who lived and worked in the city. I am grateful to Stefano Renzoni who told me of a document in the Pisa city archive, a codicil to the will of Fiorenzo de Presle. I therefore made all the necessary arrangement to see this original document<sup>9</sup>. The codicil underlined the friendship between Giovan Battista Tempesti and Fiorenzo Baron de Presle. Fiorenzo died on 11 June 1792 and left Tempesti an annuity, and gave his gold watch to Saverio Salvioni, another Pisan artist of whom there are prints and a watercolour in the two Belgian collections I am discussing here. In one of the last paragraphs of the codicil we read that Fiorenzo's collection of drawings will be left to his brother Teodoro («A Teodoro, suo fratello, tutti i suoi quadri e disegni»). The will now preserved in the city archives at Florence is more detailed:

E finalmente per riscontro del sincero attacco, che ha sempre avuto, e che ha per il signor Teodoro suo amatissimo fratello, a questo lasciò, e lascia tutti i suoi quadri, e disegni, raccomandandoli in particolar modo e pregandolo a voler quelli conservare per poter con tal mezzo aver sempre presente la memoria di esso signore Disponibile, perché così.<sup>10</sup>

The testament in Florence is much longer than the codicil in Pisa and stresses the friendship between Fiorenzo de Presle and a number of Pisan noblemen such as Balì Angiolo Roncioni and Cavaliere Girolamo Roncioni, and the artists Tempesti and Salvioni.

We have learnt now that the collection of drawings was left to his brother in 1792, but we do not know if this already included the many Tempesti works, as the Pisan painter died twelve years later in 1804. As some of the Tempesti rough sketches seem to be but atelier drafts, and since there were 33<sup>11</sup> on the Italian list but there are still 140 in the Château de Presles collection, it is possible that the brother Teodoro who was then most probably living in Brufa (near Perugia) acquired other works by Tempesti, possibly all that was left in his atelier, following the artist's death in 1804.

#### THE LARGEST KNOWN COLLECTION OF DRAWINGS BY GIOVANNI BATTISTA TEMPESTI?

It is most probable that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the collection of drawings including the early Italian works and the Tempesti collection came to Belgium when Théodore Xavier de Lierneux, Baron de Presle (1747-1822), returned home<sup>12</sup>. The present Tempesti collection is no longer complete as nineteen drawings were sold in 1985 to the Louvre<sup>13</sup> and four works were auctioned in the Christie's sale of April 1986. There are also two drawings by Tempesti in the small collection of drawings that I was asked to make a study of in Belgium. One drawing in red chalk and black ink inscribed «Di Gio. Batt.a Tempesti Disegno originale d'un quadro dipinto da Gio. Tempesti alla chiesa di S.a Marta à Pisa» was a design (fig. 6) for the oil painting that still hangs in the same church. The second drawing was identified as the *Last Supper*, the design of which can now be attributed to Tempesti (fig. 7). This is a relatively important drawing as Renzoni believes that Tempesti won the first prize with this work at the Academy of Rome in 1758.

Thirty three drawings of Tempesti are listed in the Italian inventory, of which we can now identify nine in the Château de Presles collection, including five large studies of nudes, which were doubtless made while the artist was studying in Rome.

Tempesti specialists confirm that this is the largest known collection of drawings by Tempesti, even the Uffizi in Florence has only four or five, and the Soprintendenza di Pisa probably seven. It is remarkable that this collection has been in the same family for over 220 years, and secondly there are so many designs available that new ideas about the work and development of Tempesti's career could be developed in the near future. There are signed drawings and a number with notes referring to the buildings for which they were intended, for example some of the major palazzos in Pisa and for a fresco for the private chapel of the archbishopric (fig. 8). Furthermore there are sketches for paintings for the Santa Caterina and San Domenico church in Pisa, such as the «Pensiero del Quadro a Olio di Giovanni Tempesti nella Chiesa di S. Caterina di Pisa» (fig. 9), the «Prima

macchia della morte della B. Chiara dipinta a Olio del predetto in S. Domenico» (fig. 10) and «Pensiero del Quadro a Olio Dipinto da Giovanni Tempesti nella Chiesa di S. Domenico di Pisa» (fig. 11). It is obvious for anybody wishing to know more about the life and work of Tempesti that this large unknown collection will play an important role in the further understanding of the work and career of the Pisan artist Tempesti.

- 1 *Important Old Master Drawings Architectural and Decorative Drawings*, 11-13 December 1985. The second auction of *Fine Old Master Drawings* took place on 8 April 1986, the third on 1 July 1986 and the fourth on 9 December 1986.
- 2 In English this can be translated as: «This is a collection of drawings, aquarelles, pastels and some oil paintings belonging to Baron de Presler». The family name Presler is also spelt Presles, but the old Italian spelling Presle is kept by the family nowadays, the name and the nearby villa Presles with a final "s".
- 3 R.P. Ciardi, *Collezionisti e mercanti*, in *Settecento Pisano. Pittura e scultura a Pisa nel secolo XVIII*, a cura di R.P. Ciardi, Pisa 1990, p. 27.
- 4 Two drawings by Tempesti were in the small collection I studied.
- 5 Of the thirteen in old inventory nine were by Tempesti.
- 6 The friend had not told me anything about the whereabouts of this collection and it was a complete coincidence that I came across the Tempesti drawings.
- 7 Recently Stefano Renzoni discovered that Fiorenzo was living at the Lungarno Pacinotti in the neighbourhood of the church Santa Maria dei Galletti (Archivio Storico Diocesano). Apparently he lived on the first floor 1787-1789, and in 1791 he returned there with two of his servants.
- 8 S. Renzoni, *Giovanni Battista Tempesti pittore pisano del Settecento*, tesi di dottorato, Università di Pisa, ciclo XXIV, a. a. 2011-2012.
- 9 Archivio di Stato di Pisa, *Gabella dei Contratti*, 278, cc. 152-53 (notaio Raffaello Tortolini).
- 10 Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASFI), *Notarile Moderno, Protocolli, notaio Raffaello Tortolini*, 27857-27866, anno 1792, testamento. Stefano Renzoni was so kind to look for this document and help with the Italian transcription.
- 11 There are still 9 drawings with the old inventory numbers on the Tempesti collection in the Château de Presles.
- 12 In the Château de Presles there is a custom document from Geneve to Strasbourg of 13 September 1804. The merchandise in the carriage has been described as some paintings and drawings and it was carried by citizen De Lierneux.
- 13 <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr/> , numbers RF 41141-RF 41155.



Catalogo dei Disegni, Acquarelli, Pastelli, e di alcuni Quadretti a Olio, appartenenti al Sig.<sup>o</sup> Barone di Presler, che sono stati tolti dalle loro Cornici, e riportati nelle tre cartelle nuove, segnate di N<sup>o</sup> 1, 2, e 3, marcati, con i numeri corrispondenti a quelli segnati nelle Cornici, Salva quadri, e Cristalli rispettivi. —

1 <sup>o</sup> . Dell'empoli. —	10. Di Colidoro da Caravaggio. —
2. Di Pietro da Cortona, dipinto nella Chiesa nuova di Roma. —	11. Di Ciro Ferri. —
3. Di Taddeo Zuccheri. —	12. Di Anonimo Autore. —
4. Dell'Albano. —	13. Di Michelangelo Buonarroti Abbozzo del Cristo della Minerva di Roma.
5. Di Gio: Battà Tempesti. —	14. Di Paolo Veronese. —
6. Di Colidoro da Caravaggio, dipinto nel Lambert del Vaticano. —	15. Del Correggio. —
7. Di Cherubino Alberti. —	16. Di Gio: Battà Tempesti. —
8. Di Michelangelo da Caravaggio. —	17. Di Gio: Battà Tempesti. —
9. Di Van Oort. —	18. Di Gio: Battà Tempesti. —

Fig. 1: Old Italian list of the 234 drawings, collection Lierneux de Presle



Fig. 2: Print by Saverio Salvioni showing St Benedict and four nuns, seated at a table, one of the nuns standing reading from a book. Private Belgian collection



Fig. 3: In the past attributed to Raphael and recently ascribed to Timoteo Viti, depicting St Benedict and four nuns, seated at a table, one of the nuns standing reading from a book. Private Belgian collection



Fig. 4: Copy of a watercolour of a house in Italy with the subtitle: «vue du village et Palais de Brufa appartenant a Mons. le Baron Theodore Delierneux de Presle Comte de Feretti», collection Lierneux de Presle

Dresde, ce 2 Mai, 1786.

Monsieur

Je n'avois pas oublié les promesses de Vous envoyer le dessein de Franz Floris, mais il m'a manqué l'occasion, et je ne voudrois pas envoyer des dessein par la poste. Je comptois sur le départ d'un jeune artiste sieur Wirsich, de grands talents, mais son départ s'est tardé de 9<sup>e</sup> automne passé jusqu'à présent.

Par cette occasion je Vous envoie, au moins jusqu'à Florence,

- 1) le dessein promis de Franz Floris, et le meilleur que je possède, pourvu que Vous l'aimez tant.
- 2) la sainte famille de Rubens, un dessein précieux.
- 3) un beau dessein de van Oort, le maître de Rubens.
- 4) un dessein de Van der Meulen.
- 5) un dessein de Bloemart.
- 6) un dessein de Vandyck, très-rare, mais mal conservé.
- 7) un dessein de Quellinus, élève de Rubens.
- 8) un dessein de Gribber, élève de Rubens — tous véritables originaux.

Pour les sept autres je Vous <sup>puis</sup> très-humblement de m'envoyer la Madonne de André del Sarto, un véritable Original de Michel-Ange, de Guido Reni, de Pierre de Costona, de Carlo Cignani, de Paul Veronese, de Tizien, ou quelque chose d'Annibal ou Louis Carraochi. Si Vous m'envoyiez le Crucifix de Mich. Angelo, je Vous enverrois un autre fois quelque chose de beau en revanche. Sans ces dessein je Vous prie très-humblement d'envoyer à Mr. le Comte de Hohenwart à Florence, qui aura bientôt une occasion de me les remettre. En general je Vous promets d'être reconnaissant, si Vous m'envoyez de beaux originaux comme je ne doute pas.

Plén d'estime et de considération gai l'honneur d'être

Monsieur

Voté  
très-humble et très-obéissant  
serviteur  
Becker  
Professeur à Dresde.

Je Vous prie, de faire mille complimens  
à Mr. le Professeur Stop.

Fig. 5a: Letter dated 2 May 1786, collection Lierneux de Presle

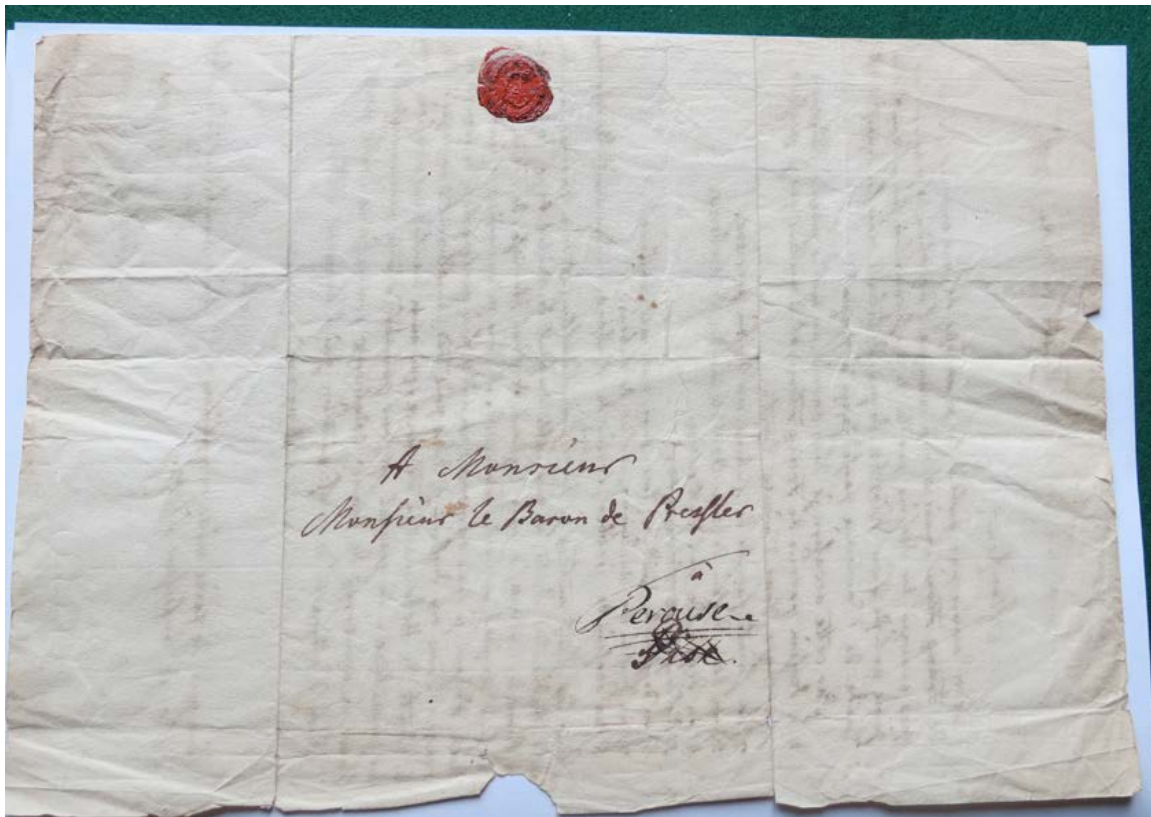


Fig. 5b: Envelop indicating an address in Perouse (Perugia), collection Lierneux de Presle



Fig. 6: GIOVANNI BATTISTA TEMPESTI, «Di Gio. Batta Tempesti Disegno originale d'un quadro dipinto da gio. Tempesti alla chiesa di S.a Marta à Pisa», Private Belgian collection



Fig. 7: GIOVANNI BATTISTA TEMPESTI, *The Last Supper*, Private Belgian collection





Fig. 8: GIOVANNI BATTISTA TEMPESTI, «Dipinto a fresco da Gio: Tempesti nella Cappella domestica dell'Arcivescovado», collection Lierneux de Presle



Fig. 9: GIOVANNI BATTISTA TEMPESTI, «Pensiero del Quadro a Olio di Giovanni Tempesti nella Chiesa di S.ta Caterina di Pisa», collection Lierneux de Presle



Fig. 10: GIOVANNI BATTISTA TEMPESTI, «Prima Macchia della morte della B.a Chiara dipinta a olio dal suddetto in S. Domenico», drawing collection Lierneux de Presle



Fig. 11: GIOVANNI BATTISTA TEMPESTI, «Pensiero del Quadro a Olio Dipinto da Giovanni Tempesti nella Chiesa di S. Domenico di Pisa», collection Lierneux de Presle

