

FEDERICO ZUCCARI'S INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE

If nothing else, what set Federico Zuccari apart from his more gifted and shorter lived brother Taddeo were his presumptions and pretensions. An artist/gentleman of the grand manner toward the end of his life, Federico had absorbed numerous models for his grandiloquent deportment during his travels to Flanders, England, and Spain. Needless to say, his work for several Papal patrons only enhanced his *arriviste* sense of place within the upper strata of society. While his brother seemed to live only for his painterly art, Federico had the time, inclination, and money to pursue more ennobling identities as art theorist, academician and patron. The missing component of the persona of artist/gentleman in his case was the call to undertake an architectural commission like his illustrious predecessors Raphael, Giulio Romano, and Michelangelo. His only apparent involvement in architectural matters focussed on his own residences and studios in Rome and Florence.¹ He was, however, drawn to two dimensional architectural illusion as a number of his drawings demonstrate.

There is little to suggest that architecture was a field in which Federico had any initial interest, aptitude, or training. His early fresco commissions, exterior, as at the house of Tizio da Spoleto on the Piazza S. Eustachio in Rome; and

¹ The complete history of the Roman palace and its decorations are found in Werner Körte, *Der Palazzo Zuccari in Rom*, Leipzig 1935, and Kristina Herrmann-Fiore, "Die Fresken Federico Zuccaris in seinem Römischen Künstlerhaus," *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 18 (1979), pp.36-112. Few drawings for this project survive but an elevation of the wall with the garden entrance with its great monster mouthed portal and windows is found in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. 3426-228), illustrated in Peter Ward-Jackson, *Italian Drawings: Volume One, 14th-16th Centuries*, Department of Prints and Drawings, Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1979, pp.194-5, no.425.



1. House of Tizio da Spoleto. Rome, Piazza S. Eustachio

interior, as at the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, both display a general disregard for a building's mass and articulation (figs. 1, 2). His 'Vision of Saint Eustace' for the façade of Tizio's house, dating from 1558–59, is benignly oblivious of the structure that supports it, treating it like an easel for the support of the painting. This is curious given the fact that the artists who most influenced him in this regard, his brother and Polidoro da Caravaggio, had in general a greater understanding of the harmony between a building and its decorative frescoes.

At Caprarola in 1566, Federico was satisfied to delegate the organization of the decorated ceilings to talented *stuccatore* such as Antenore Ridolfi, who submitted to the artist organizational sketches such as those up until recently in the collections of the British Rail Pension Fund and Timothy Clifford.² In fact, it is altogether likely that the still relatively young and inexperienced Federico learned a good deal about ceiling decoration from such designs and designers. Domestic fresco decoration, not easel or altarpiece painting, was Federico's training ground, and his first paintings were illusionistic *quadri riportati* for palace commissions originally conferred on his brother. Therefore, he paid particular attention to the lessons learned from other artists at Caprarola.³

No significant architectural impressions seem to emerge in Federico's art until around the mid-1570s, and I would suggest that it took the experience of decorating the interior of the great cupola of S. Maria del Fiore in Florence during the years 1575–79 before Federico was drawn into the solving of architectonic visual problems in two dimensions. In a drawing in the collection of Christ Church Oxford from around 1575, Federico comes to terms with a proposed decorative plan for the lower story of the Florentine Duomo's interior (fig. 3).⁴ Here we see how he honors the architectural integrity of the structure as he attempts to incorporate his painted decorations. Of interest is the rigorous symmetry the artist exercises. The enframed composition between the arches receives its inspiration from Luca Signorelli's fres-



2. Federico Zuccari, *God Creating the Sun and the Moon*. Caprarola, chapel of the Villa Farnese

coes at Orvieto, works that by this time Federico had studied carefully in that Umbrian hill town.

A series of drawings and some paintings after the 1570s demonstrate Federico Zuccari's greater interest in architectural problems and, on occasion, allow him the liberty of conceiving certain fantasy buildings. These compositions can be divided into several different categories: 1) fictive architectural aspects of interior decorative programs; 2) chapel, catafalque, and tabernacle decorations; and 3) recognizable buildings and their mutations.

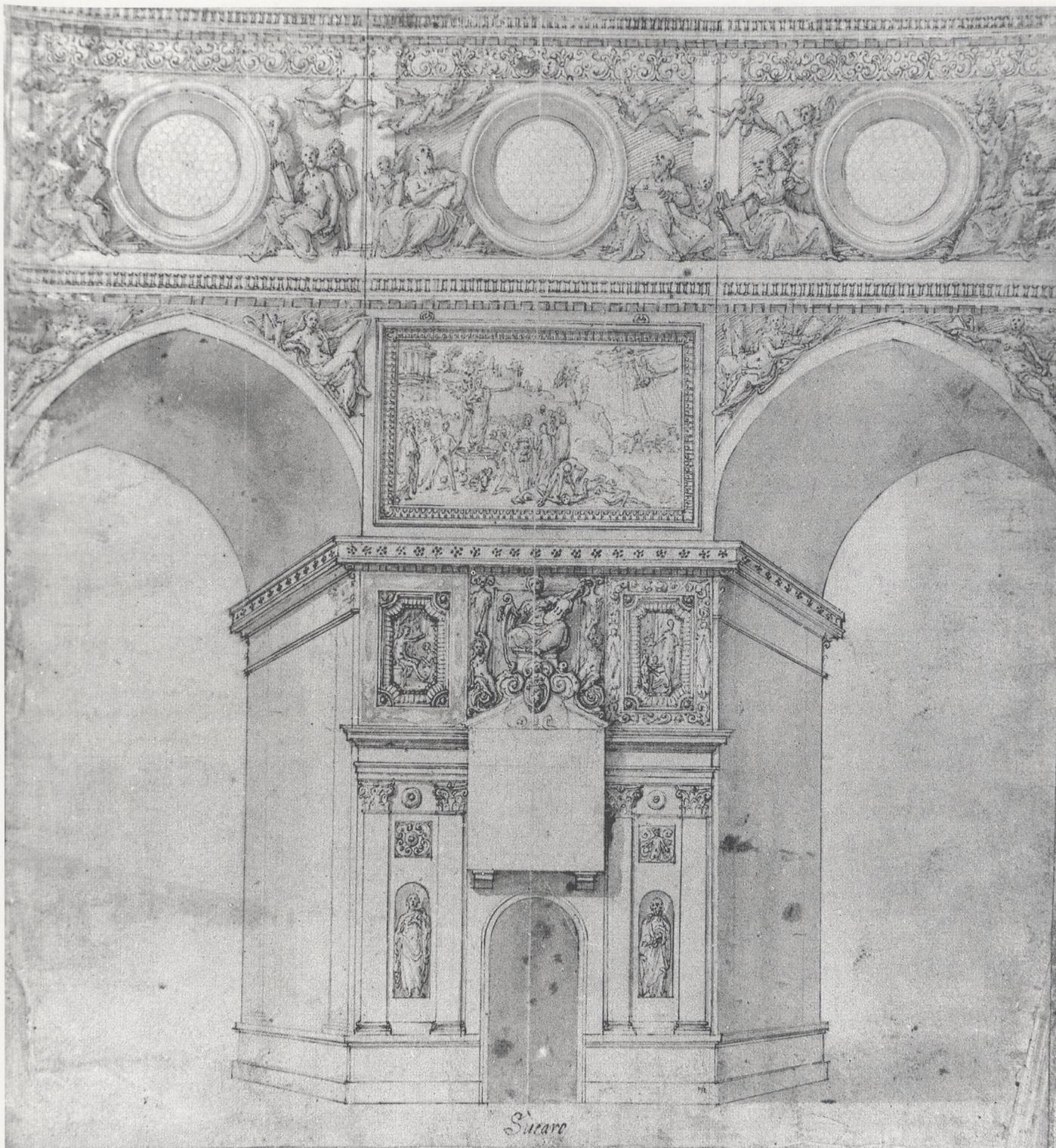
After Federico's involvement in the decorations for both the Palazzo Farnese in Rome and the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, he became more confident in his abilities to transform the plane of a wall in an existing building into a complex layering of receding engaged columns, arches, and moldings, as in his fresco for the Oratorio del Gonfalone of 1573 or the frescoes in the church of S. Caterina dei Funari dating to 1570–73, the latter best illustrated owing to the poor condition of the paintings themselves by a preliminary drawing (figs. 4, 5).⁵ Such efforts would further develop into elaborate projects that break down the solidity of the plane of the wall, such as that represented in a drawing formerly

² Formerly known as "Giovanni Antinori," Antenore Ridolfi was recently identified by Bonita Cleri in the catalogue *Per Taddeo e Federico Zuccari nelle Marche*, Sant' Angelo in Vado 1993, pp. 101–5. He is known by signatures on the two extant drawings, the former British Rail drawing (sold Sotheby's New York, 11 January 1990, lot 23, and now owned by a French investment house) dated 20 September 1566 and the former Clifford drawing (sold Sotheby's London, 29–30 June 1989, lot 43) dated 1567.

³ Federico was completely without prejudice in his omnivorous ingestion of the work of other artists, both past and present. He extensively copied the work of others when he traveled. Surviving copies, almost always in chalk, after the following artists have been identified: Giulio Romano, Titian, Tintoretto, Palma Giovane, Correggio, Signorelli, Holbein, and other Netherlandish masters.

⁴ Pen and brown ink with brown wash over red chalk, 518x480 mm, inv. 1389.

⁵ Pen and brown ink with brown wash, heightened with white over red chalk on faded blue paper, 290x407 mm, collection of Mr. and Mrs. David Tobey, New York.



3. Federico Zuccari, *Design for Interior Decorations of Florentine Cathedral*. Oxford, Christ Church

on the London art market now in the collection of the Institut Néerlandais, Paris (fig. 6).⁶ The drawing, whose function has not yet been determined, was designed to decorate the

⁶ Sold Christie's London 23 November 1971, lot 76. Pen and ink with brown wash over black chalk, 316 x 517 mm, inv. 1972 - T.68.

long wall of a salon or gallery spanning the distance between and beyond two doorways. Fictive columns, niches, and bases support – and are inhabited by – numerous sculptural and presumably living figures standing, talking, and gesturing. These figures lead the viewer through more columns to a loggia where a group has gathered before a pope whose



4. Federico Zuccari, *Flagellation of Christ*. Rome, Oratorio del Gonfalone

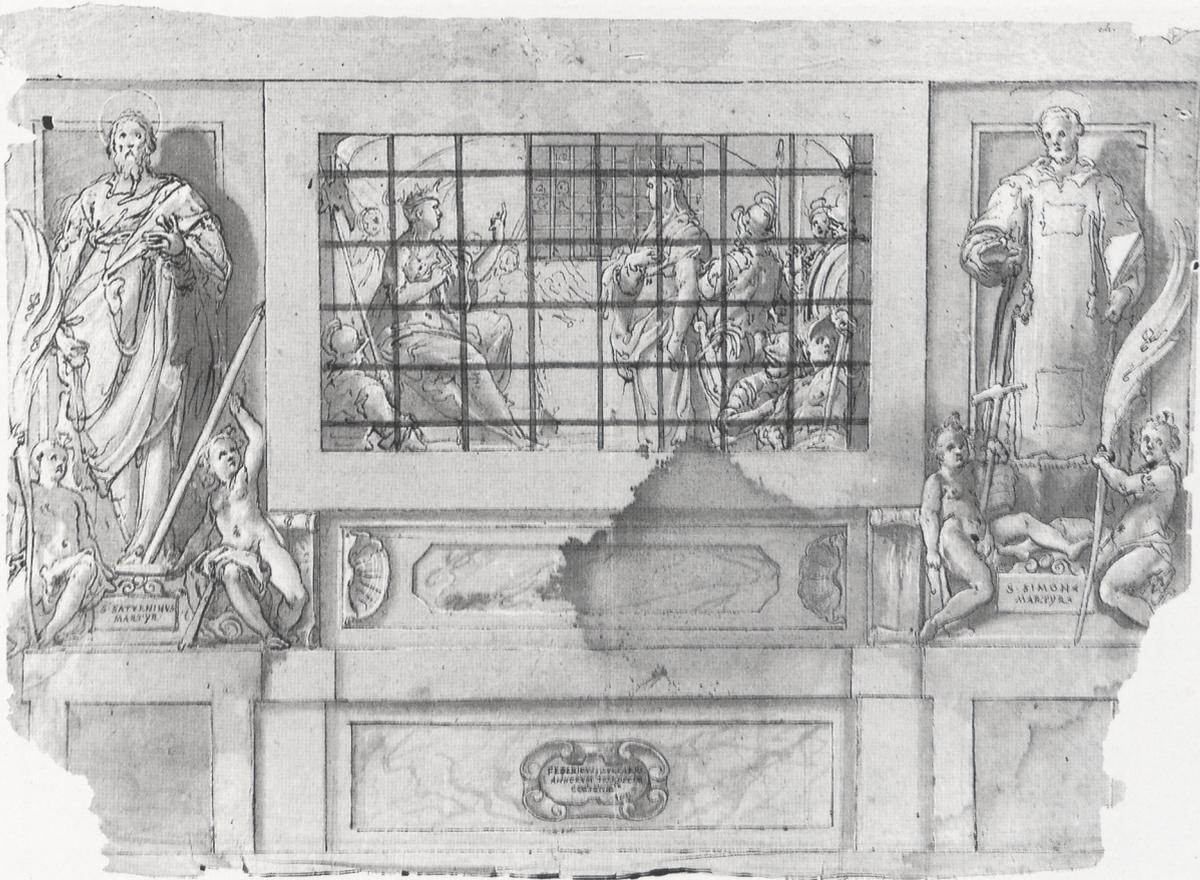
foot is being kissed by a robed supplicant, a scene reminiscent of Federico's great painting of the 'Submission of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa before Pope Alexander III', painted for the Sala del Gran Consiglio in the Palazzo Ducale, Venice in 1582. Beyond is a view of a cityscape dominated by a circular temple and the façade of a basilica, suggesting Rome rather than Venice as the location of this act of obedience. Both the style of the drawing and the relationship to the Venetian commission suggest a date in the 1580s.

A final example of the elaborate *faux* architectural wall decoration has recently been identified by Julian Kliemann in his paper published in this volume. This is the painted

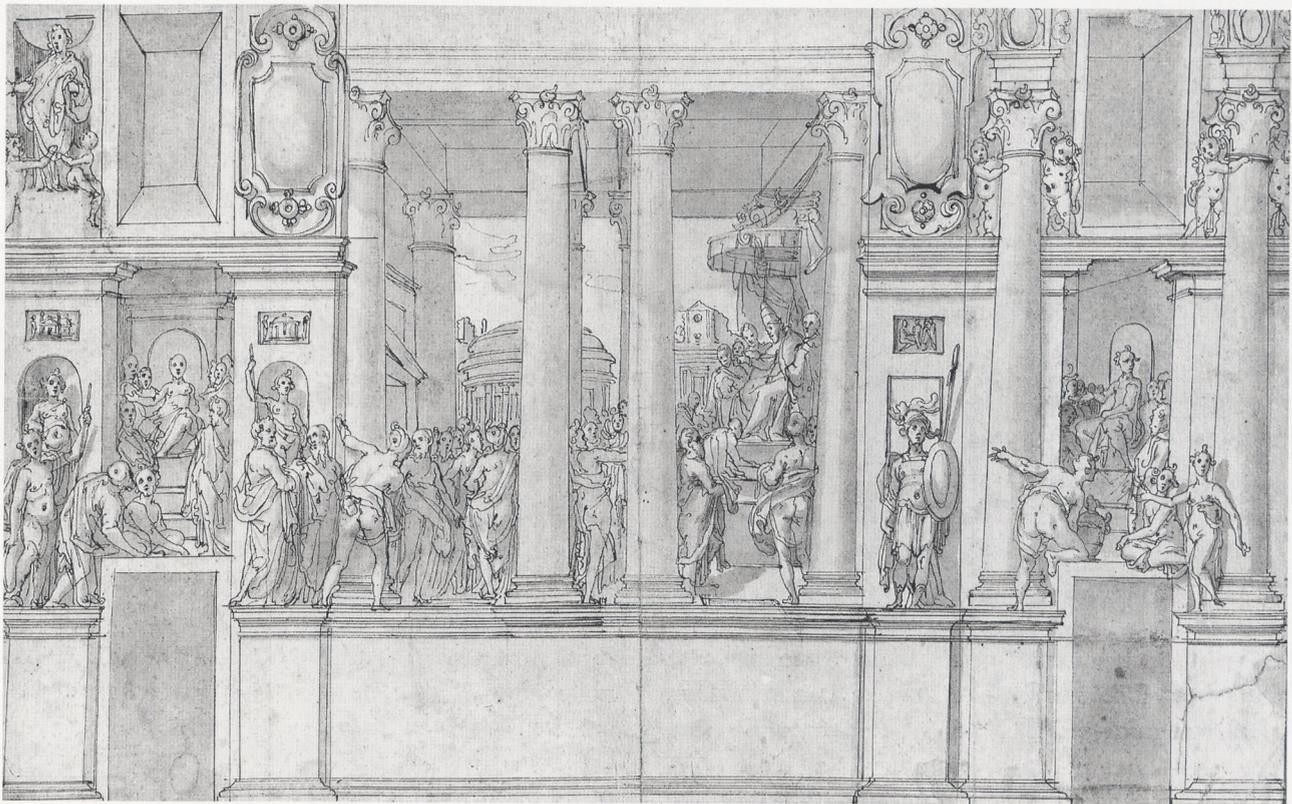
equestrian monument commissioned of Federico in 1605–6 by Carlo Emanuele I to decorate the 'Galleria grande' in Turin, a work destroyed by fire in 1659.⁷ There exists in an English private collection a two-sided drawing offering compositional solutions for a long wall monument between windows on the *recto* and an end-wall *sopraporta* solution on the *verso* (figs. 7, 8).⁸ Again, Federico employs a system

⁷ Kliemann, in this volume, pp. 317–346.

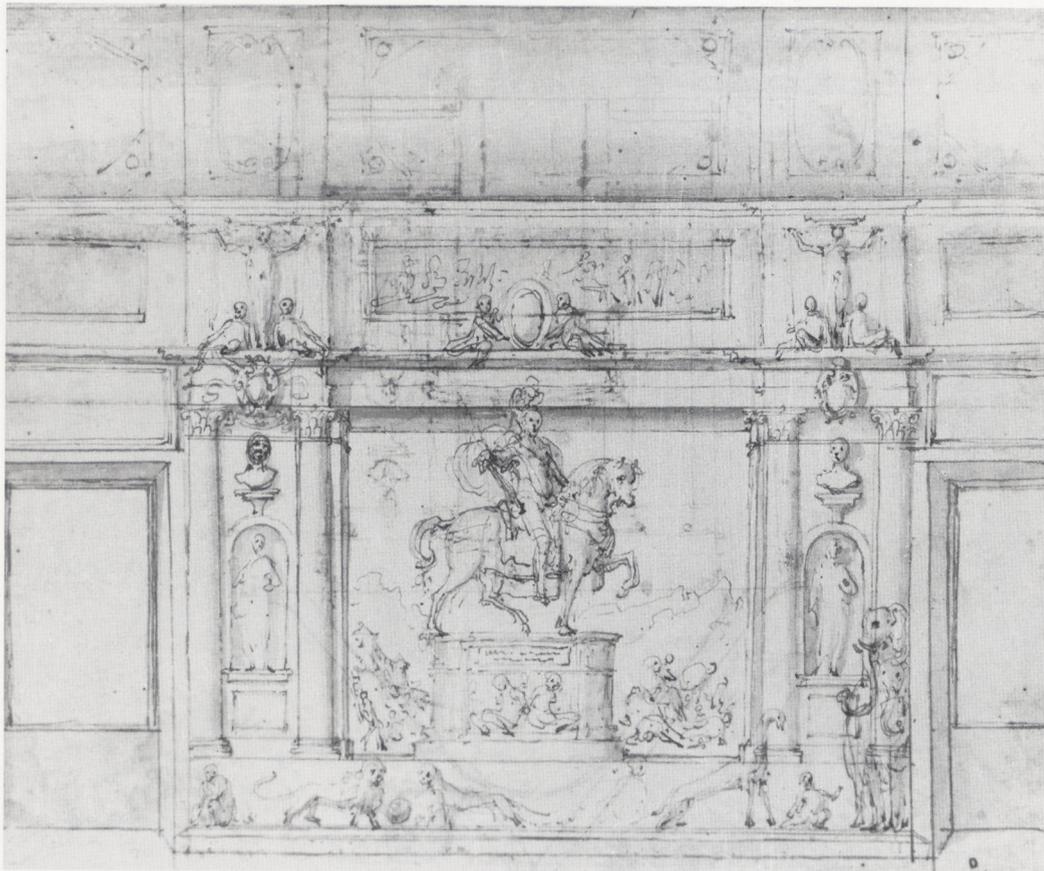
⁸ Pen and brown ink with brown wash, 240x285 mm. A drawing likely related to the details of this project is that found in Notre Dame, Indiana, see E. James Mundy, *Renaissance into Baroque. Master Drawings by the Zuccari, 1550–1600*, Milwaukee 1989, no. 91, pp. 270–72.



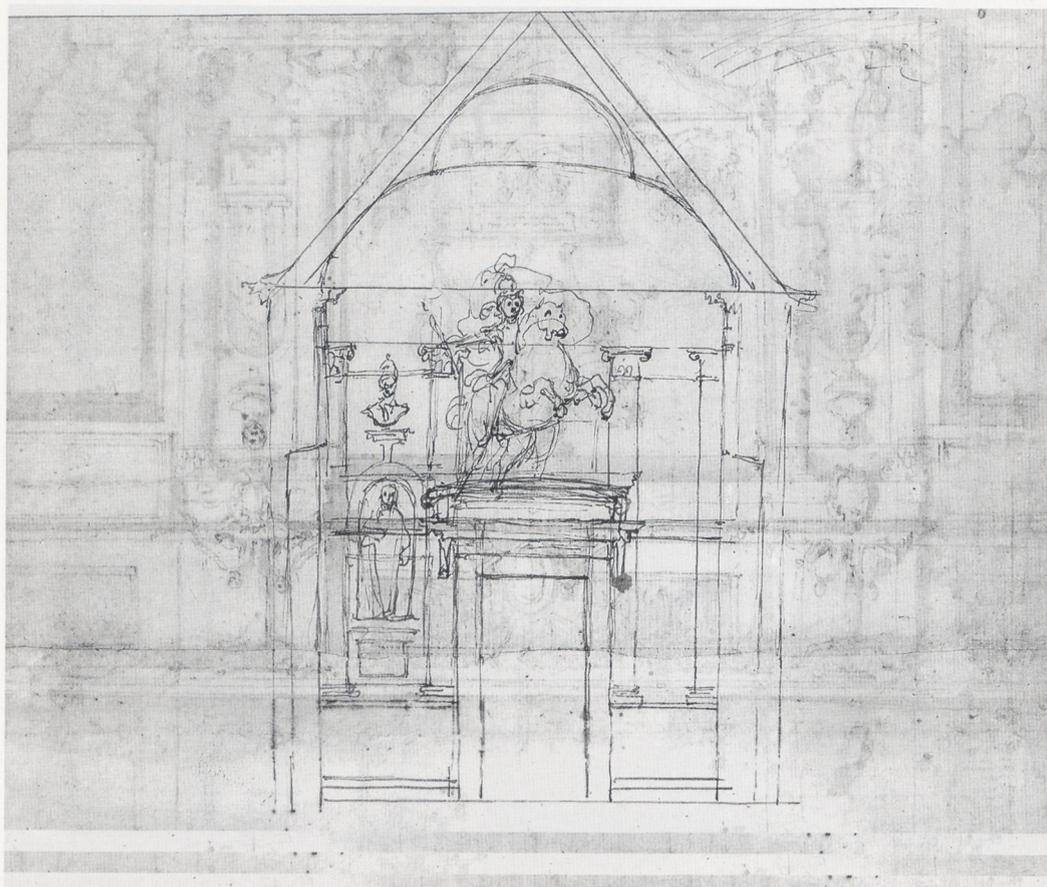
5. Federico Zuccari, *Saint Catherine in Prison Converting the Empress Faustina*.
New York, collection of Mr. and Mrs. David Tobey



6. Federico Zuccari, *Design for a Wall Decoration*. Paris, Institut Néerlandais

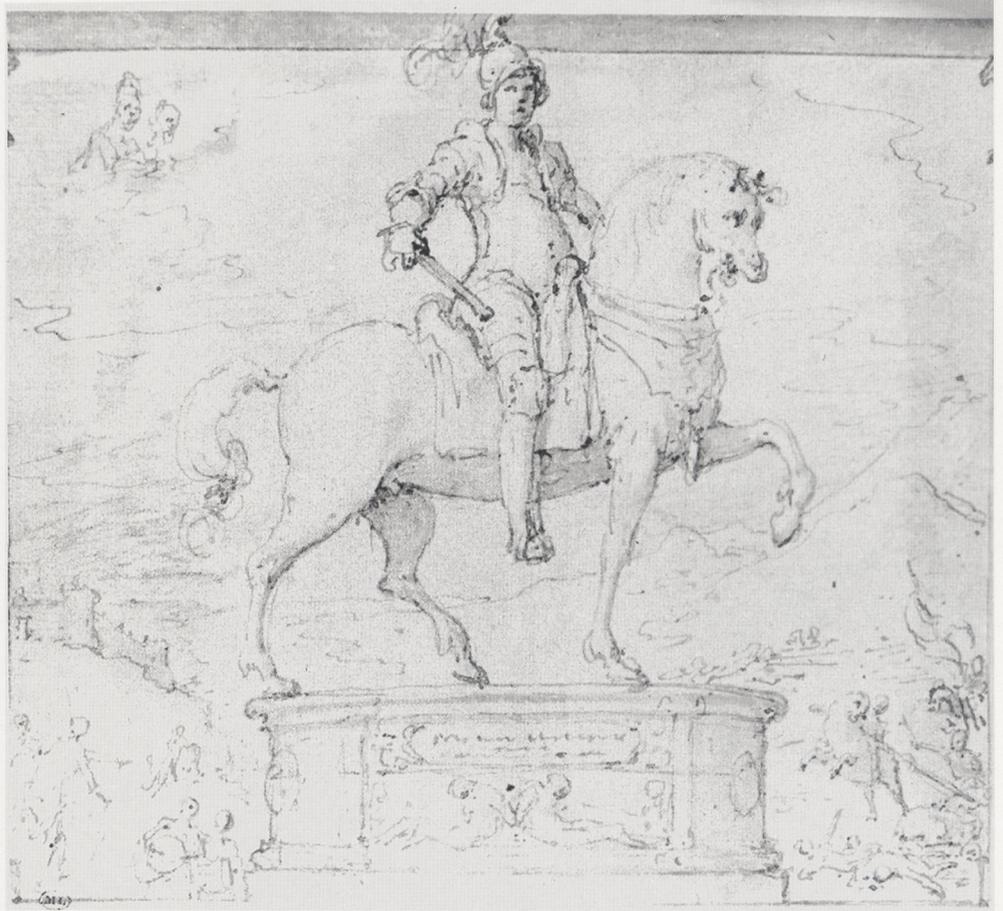


7. Federico Zuccari,
Design for an
Equestrian Wall
Decoration. Private
collection



8. Federico Zuccari,
Design for an
Equestrian Endwall
Decoration. Private
collection

9. Federico Zuccari,
Design for an Equestrian
Wall Decoration.
Louvre, Paris



of painted false architectural details, including columns, niches, friezes, etc., with false sculpture in the form of busts, niche figures, and caryatids to supplement the main simulated sculpture of the mounted figure, a hybrid of Paolo Uccello's 'John Hawkwood' in Florence and Andrea del Verrocchio's 'Colleoni Monument' in Venice, both works well-known to Federico at the end of his life. The *verso* offers a much more energetic equestrian figure, not placed on a sculptural cenotaph, but rather strongly foreshortened, rearing, and animated as if to lunge into the viewer's space. A third drawing undoubtedly related to the Turin project is in the Louvre (fig. 9).⁹ In this less lively sketch, Federico concentrates on the definition of the mounted figure.

Before leaving the category of fictive architectural interiors, one needs to consider a partial ceiling design in Munich replete with mythological and allegorical *quadri riportati* displaying the arms of Pope Pius V and those of Cardinal Michele Bonelli, created cardinal by Pius in the year 1566 (fig. 10).¹⁰ The purpose of the drawing might

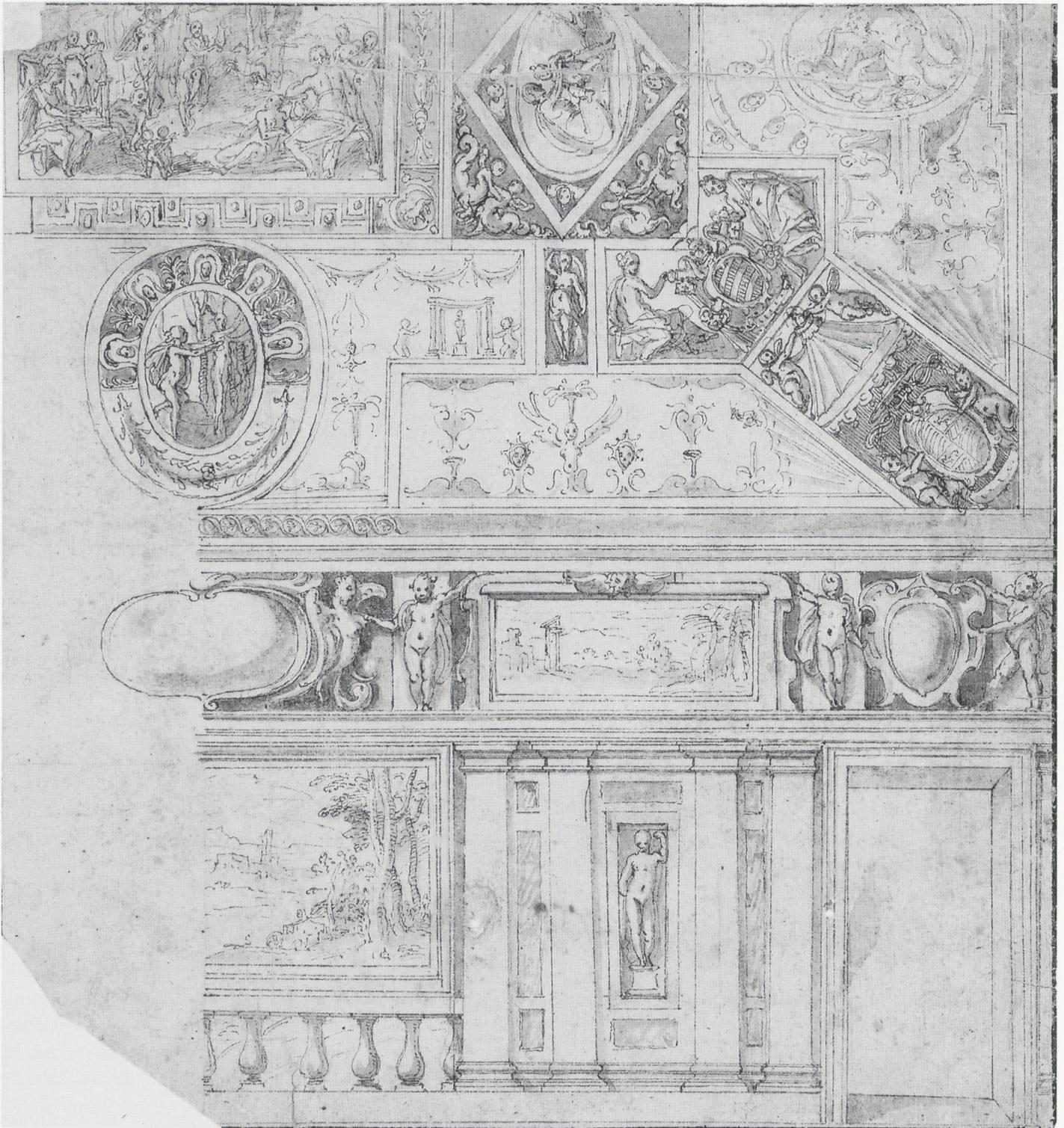
have been to provide a design for a refurbished room in Bonelli's residence after his elevation to the cardinalate but prior to the construction of the Palazzo Bonelli in 1585. Whatever the case, the drawing is a complex set of multiple overlapping planes incorporating Apollonian myths – Parnassus, Apollo and Daphne, and Apollo's chariot – *grotteschi*, and landscapes. Related drawings to this project have been discussed elsewhere.¹¹ The Bonelli commission in general works from the lessons Federico learned while engaged in the decorations at Caprarola, where similar overlapping visual illusions were employed. Federico's talents at breaking illusionistically through architectural interiors would finally reach perfection in the decorations for the Palazzo Zuccari between 1593–1600.

At various times in his career, Federico Zuccari was called upon to define interiors of existing churches with designs for chapels, tabernacle altars, and other religious spaces. Two examples will suffice here. The first is a classicized tabernacle altar complete with an opening for an altar-piece of eight-and-one-half by five measured *palmi*, according to the inscription on the drawing, or roughly 1.9 by

⁹ Pen and brown ink with brown wash over some red chalk, 155x168mm, inv. 12073.

¹⁰ Pen and brown ink with brown wash over black chalk, 276x263mm, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, inv. 34025.

¹¹ Mundy (see note 8), pp. 160–63.



10. Federico Zuccari, *Ceiling Design*. Munich, *Staatliche Graphische Sammlung*

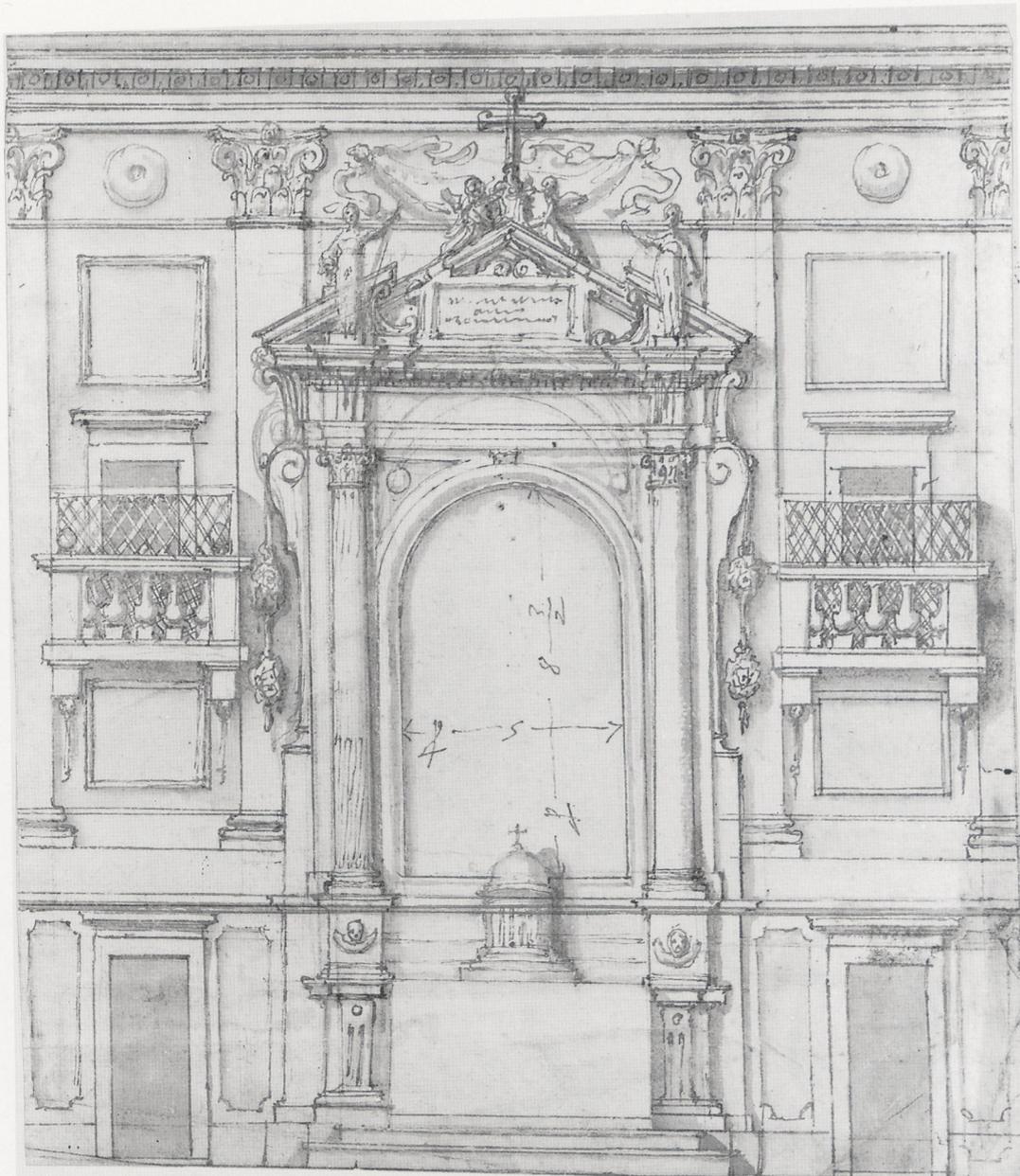
1.1 meters (fig. 11).¹² The shape of the intended altarpiece is a common one, and its proportions are in keeping with at

least four such paintings executed by Federico, one in S. Lorenzo in Damaso, Rome; a pair for the cathedral at Orvieto; and the fourth, the rejected Bolognese altarpiece of the 'Procession of Saint Gregory', the painting that ignited the 'Porta Virtutis' controversy.

The second design is that for a temporary apparatus for the Pauline Chapel at the Vatican commissioned by Pope

¹² Pen and brown ink with brown wash, 278 x 245 mm. Sold Christie's London 11 December 1970, lot 2, bought by Yvonne van Bunzl, see her exhibition catalogue of March, 1971, no. 56, present whereabouts unknown.

11. Federico Zuccari,
Design for a Tabernacle.
London, formerly art
market



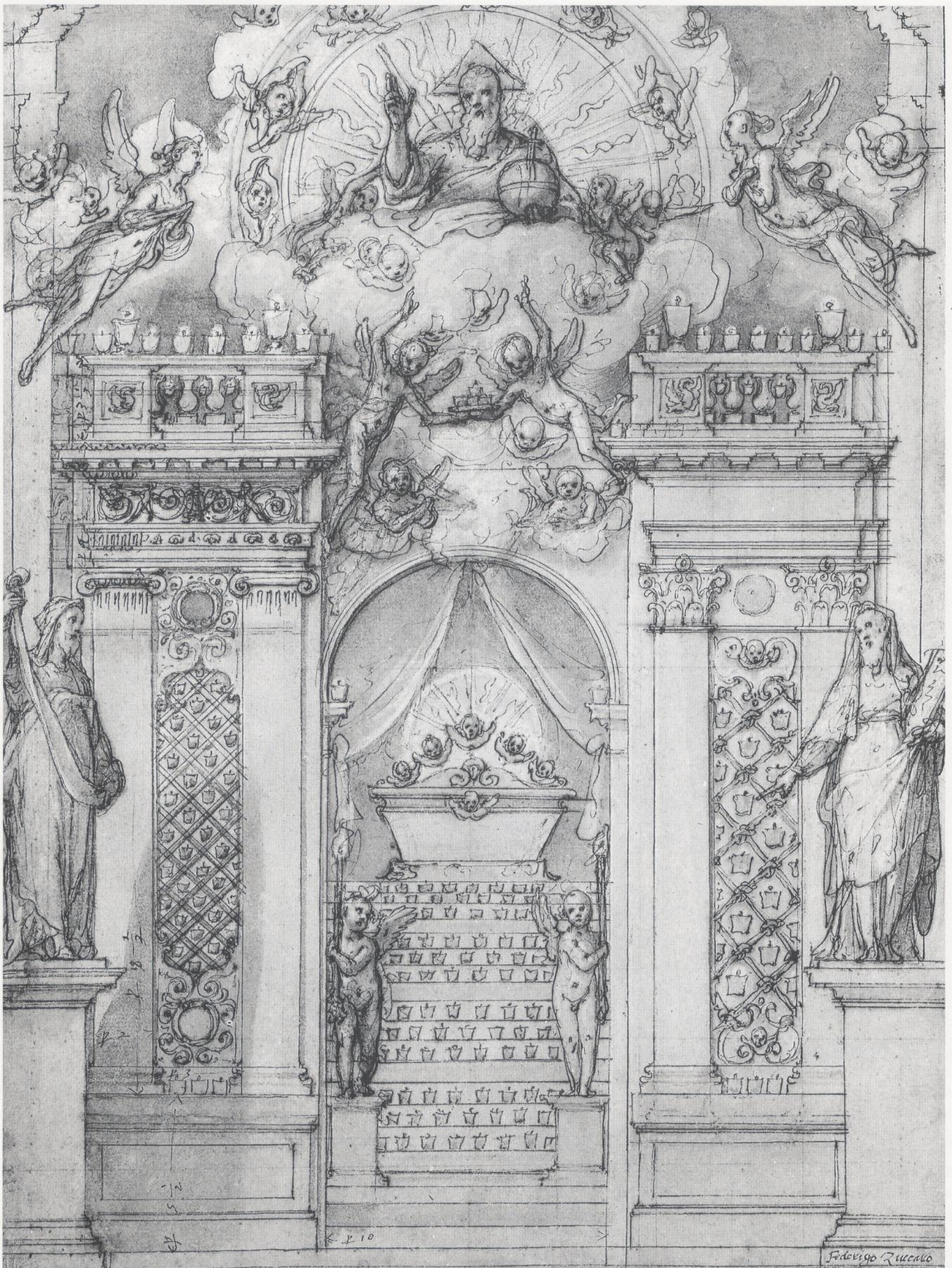
Gregory XIII (fig. 12).¹³ In his design, Federico has offered two decorative options for the patron, one, on the left, with Doric pilasters, an ornamented frieze, and narrow lattice-work decorated with candles; and one on the right with

Corinthian pilasters, an unornamented frieze, and a wide lattice of candles. This drawing, like the previously mentioned altar, is annotated with measurements in *palmi* in the same hand. It is also signed by the artist in ink in the lower right corner.

¹³ Pen and brown ink with brown wash, heightened with white, 389x285mm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. 1993.120. The precise purpose of the structure is the subject of a forthcoming article by Margaret Kuntz. John Gere concluded in his entry for the drawing in the sales catalogue of the Zuccari drawings from the British Rail Collection, Sotheby's New York, 11 January 1990, lot 39, that the design was for a *quarantore*, a vigil of forty hours prayer, designed for the Pauline Chapel during the papacy of Gregory XIII on either side of the balustrades. Two additional highly finished drawings for the final appearance of the Pauline Chapel altarpiece are in the collections of the Albertina, Vienna, inv. 14214, and the Städelches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, inv. I 16/Z.

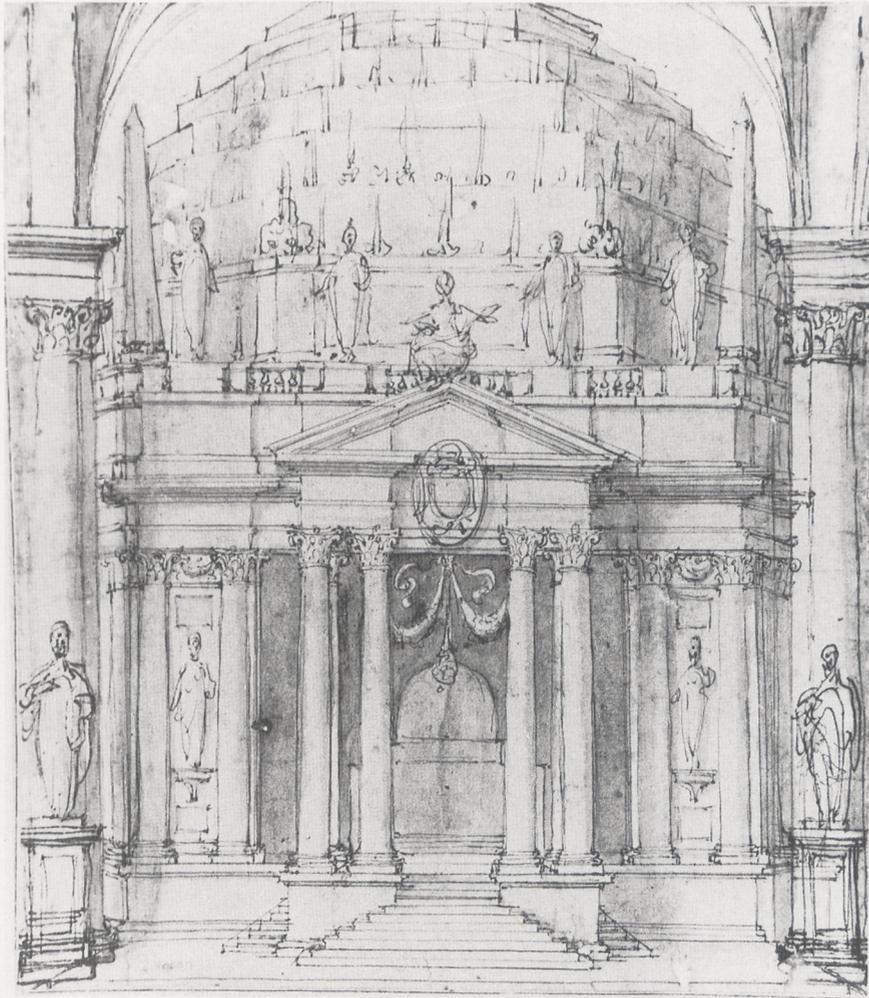
Federico designed at least one commemorative catafalque in his career. A drawing, formerly on the London art market, gave the artist the opportunity to apply his architectural design skills to this ephemeral structure (fig. 13).¹⁴ One might be more accurate in assigning this to the category of stage or festival designs owing to its impermanence. Dating an architectural drawing on the basis of style alone is risky, but I would suggest, on that basis, that it is a late drawing

¹⁴ Sold Sotheby's 8 December 1972, lot 19. Pen and black ink and grey wash, over traces of black chalk, 248x212mm.

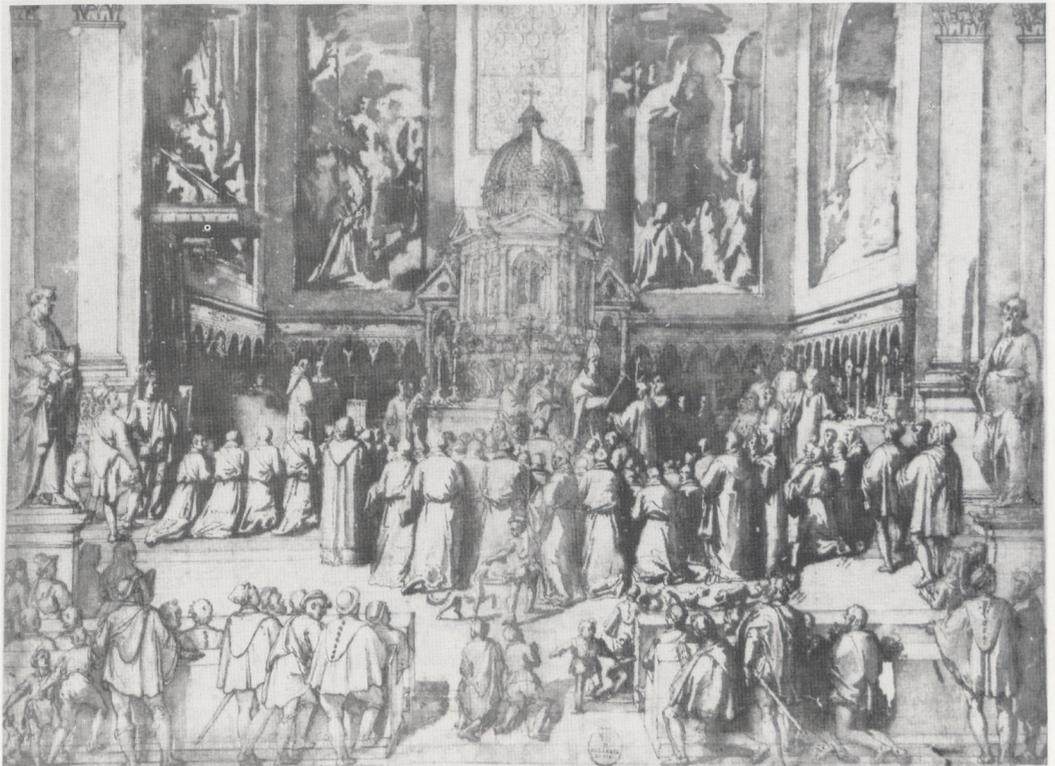


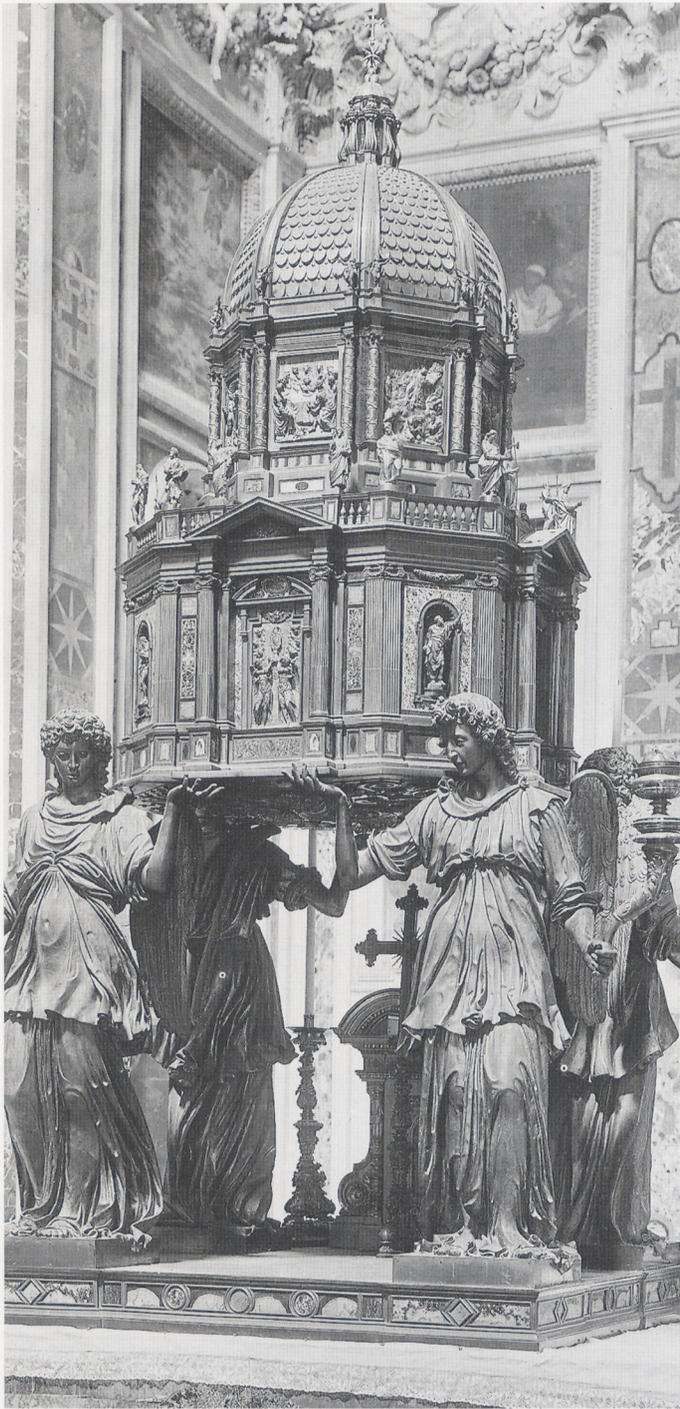
12. Federico Zuccari, Design for a Temporary Structure in the Pauline Chapel. New York, Metropolitan Museum

13. Federico Zuccari,
Design for a Catafalque. London,
formerly art market



14. Federico Zuccari,
The Celebration of a High Mass.
Florence, Uffizi





15. Domenico Fontana and Bastiano Torrigiano, *Tabernacle*. Rome, S. Maria Maggiore

in Federico's career, perhaps around the year 1600. Its design is loosely based on the catafalque designed for Pope Sixtus V by Domenico Fontana in 1591 as details such as the type of stairs, paired columns, and decorative obelisks suggest.¹⁵ Rather than designing a dome based on St. Peter's,

¹⁵ See Maurizio Fagiolo Dell'Arco, *L'effimero barocco: strutture della festa nella Roma del '600*, Rome 1977, pp. 3–13.

Federico instead invents a terraced Pantheon-style dome. This catafalque was designed to commemorate the passing of a cardinal, judging from the hat fastened above the portal. It gives every impression of being centrally planned, as do other fictive buildings that appear in Federico's art.

Around 1580, again judging stylistically, Federico recorded a High Mass being celebrated before a massive tabernacle in what is probably a Roman church (fig. 14).¹⁶ The presiding bishop is on the epistle side of the altar, meaning that he can be doing only one of three things – filling the censor, standing at the lavabo, or reading the epistle. The third case seems the most likely. The tabernacle is a centrally planned structure with a hexagonal ribbed dome surmounting a series of, presumably six, niched porticos with simple enclosed pediments. All of this rests on a ring of substantial volutes. Tabernacles reflected the stronger emphasis on the Eucharist placed by the first Council of Trent. For example, San Carlo Borromeo included a short section on tabernacles in his *Instructiones fabricae et suppellectilis ecclesiasticae* published in Milan in 1577.¹⁷ In 1580, though, there were actually very few massive architectural tabernacles in Rome. Among the earliest is that designed by Girolamo da Carpi in 1552 for the church of S. Maria in Aracoeli.¹⁸ A tabernacle which exerted perhaps even greater influence on Federico was that erected in the Sistine Chapel of S. Maria Maggiore on Christmas Day, 1589 (fig. 15). Thought to be designed as well by Domenico Fontana and executed by the Bolognese sculptor, Bastiano Torrigiano and the Sicilian Lodovico del Duca, this grand object was certain to have attracted much attention at its unveiling.¹⁹ The visual dominance of the similar object in the Uffizi drawing is echoed by a second drawing by Federico recently on the art market with Artemis Fine Arts Ltd., London (fig. 16).²⁰ This portrayal of 'The Betrothal of the Virgin and the Miracle of Joseph's Rod', takes place before a massive tabernacle of a variety very similar to that in the Uffizi drawing, both tabernacles

¹⁶ Pen and brown ink with brown wash over traces of red and black chalk, 426 x 566 mm, Florence, Uffizi, inv. 11032.

¹⁷ I would like to thank my colleagues John Varriano and Frederick McGinness for their sharing their knowledge of liturgy and the evolution of the tabernacle form.

¹⁸ Now in the Museo di Roma. Another important early tabernacle of this sort is in S. Giovanni in Laterano, designed in 1588 by Pompeo Targone and Curzio Vanni; see Jack Freiberg, *The Lateran in 1600. Christian Concord in Counter-Reformation Rome*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 139–42.

¹⁹ Steven F. Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome. The Sistine and Pauline Chapels in S. Maria Maggiore*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 46–49.

²⁰ Pen and brown ink with brown wash over black chalk, incised for transfer, 333 x 272 mm, presently with Artemis Fine Arts Ltd., London.



16. Federico Zuccari, *Betrothal of the Virgin and the Miracle of Joseph's Rod*. London, art market



17. Federico Zuccari, *Christ Raising the Child of the Widow of Nain*. Orvieto, Cathedral

serving as free interpretations of the one in the Sistine Chapel.

Why should Federico Zuccari at this particular late stage in his career be concerned with aspects of liturgical decoration that were so recently introduced on the scene? Such involvement with ephemeral and other quasi-architectural adornments recommended by the Counter-Reformation theorists is perfectly in keeping with Federico's primary artistic goals when it came to religious imagery. Federico, unlike his brother, was greatly affected by the rulings of the Council of Trent. The application of post-Tridentine precepts is an important element in Federico's development as an artist and should not be overlooked. Either out of fervent belief or opportunistic pragmatism, Federico clung to Counter-Reformation artistic dictates after 1570.²¹

²¹ For a survey of this question, see Mundy (see note 8), pp. 18–22.



18. Jacob Matham after Federico Zuccari, *Christ Raising the Child of the Widow of Nain*. New York, Metropolitan Museum

In the Uffizi drawing it is possible that Federico is representing an actual place. In the Artemis drawing he is not. His interest in such centrally planned *tempietti* goes back to at least the late 1560s. He translates the tabernacle form into the impressive building he invents and locates in the background of the painting, 'Christ Healing the Child of the Widow of Nain', originally set up in a chapel in the cathedral at Orvieto (fig. 17). The painting was commissioned in 1568, and Federico portrays there, through the doorway and porticulis, a fascinating Roman fantasy square including a small flat domed temple on the left, a grand colonnaded porch surmounted by sculpture on the right and, in

the center, a church whose single entrance resembles a Roman triumphal arch. It is flanked by giant Doric columns, a balustrade decorated with urns, and a presumably octagonal dome resting on a high drum. The appearance is that of a fully grown tabernacle based, in part, on the drum and dome of the Florentine cathedral.

Jacob Matham, when he copied the painting or its preliminary drawing in an engraving, critiqued this building thoroughly, changing many aspects from the number of sides of the dome, to the size of the columns, to the type of order used, to substituting the urns on the balustrade with figural sculpture. In addition, the round lantern is altered to a hexagonal one, and the placement of the oculus windows in the attic, changes as does their number (fig. 18). It is subject to debate exactly how much Federico's design for the Orvieto painting was owed to existing buildings. The possible allusion to the Florentine Duomo is part of the ques-

tion, but also it is how he arrived at illustrating a freestanding square church with an octagonal dome on a high drum. In 1568, the only extant building of that kind was S. Maria di Loreto in Rome, a building that might have made a subliminal impression on the artist. Or, another solution might have been that he was basing his idea on a tabernacle structure such as that in S. Maria in Aracoeli, apparently a rare object of fascination to the artist in the post-Tridentine period.

Given Federico Zuccari's long and varied career, it is, perhaps, inevitable that his interests should have intersected periodically with issues of an architectural nature. For our peripatetic artist it seems that, were he seriously inclined to pursue an architectural project, mitigating events would inevitably conspire to move him on to the next city and painting commission before his interest in architecture could be realized in more than the materials of pen, ink, and chalk.

Photo credits: Anderson 15; Florence, Uffizi 14; London, Christie's (Cooper) 5, 6, 11; London, Prudence Cumming 7, 8, 16; Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung 10; New York, Metropolitan Museum 12, 18;

Oxford, Christ Church 3; Paris, Louvre 9; Rome, Ist. Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione 2, 4, 17.