



PRESS RELEASE

From a Marie Curie research project of the Ca' Foscari Department of Humanities PAPER GARDENS: PRINTED XVI CENTURY HERBARIA AND ARTISTIC CONTEMPORARY CREATIONS INSPIRED BY MEDICINAL VIRTUES OF PLANTS. THE EXHIBITION AT THE MARCIANA NATIONAL LIBRARY OF VENICE

**On display manuscript and dried herbaria, intensively researched and annotated
printed herbaria, recipe books compiled for personal use, letters**

Gardens and Medicinal Virtues, Health and Beauty between Past and Present

Curated by Sabrina Minuzzi

Saturday, 11 February 2023 - Sunday, 2 April 2023

Monumental Rooms of the Marciana National Library, Venice

Opening hours: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m

Access through the Correr Museum - Napoleonic Wing, St. Mark's Square

The exhibition "Gardens and Medicinal Virtues, Health and Beauty between Past and Present" will be open to the public from Saturday, 11 February to Sunday, 2 April 2023, in the Monumental Rooms of the Marciana National Library, Venice.

A collaboration between the Ca' Foscari Department of Humanities and the Marciana National Library, the exhibition is curated by Sabrina Minuzzi (Ca' Foscari) and it represents the conclusion of her research project "MAT-MED in Transit. The Transforming Knowledge of Healing Plants" (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship (Global), G.A. 844886).

PREVIEW FOR THE PRESS: Friday, 10 February 2023 at 11:00 a.m.

VERNISSAGE: Friday, 10 February 2023 at 5:00 p.m. (invite only)

For more information please contact b-marc.stampa@cultura.gov.it

Website: <https://bibliotecanazionalemarciana.cultura.gov.it/mostre/giardini-e-virtu-medicinali-salute-e-bellezza-tra-passato-e-presente>

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The Exhibition

GARDENS AND MEDICINAL VIRTUES, Health and Beauty between Past and Present

The exhibition aims to reflect on the evolution of the relationship between the individual and nature. The question it seeks to answer, across the items on display, is: can we learn something from our ancient relationship with nature that will enable us to build a better future?

In the past, many gardens were above all a resource for human health. In fact, plants and herbs, together with some animal and mineral substances, constituted the raw material for the composition of medicinal remedies. The three natural kingdoms were the *materia medica*, and herbs were the *materia medica par excellence*.

Doctors, apothecaries, but also ordinary people were driven by enthusiasm for the discovery of new plants and new therapeutic properties of known plants. Some of them cultivated their own botanical gardens, even in the narrow spaces of Venice.

We know them today through the paper gardens they left behind: manuscript and dried herbaria, intensively researched and annotated printed herbaria, recipe books compiled for personal use, letters, and so forth.

The course of this exhibition follows with remarkable examples of the use of ancient medical knowledge: in the development of new medicines (the Aboca display cases); in the artisanal production of an herbal bitter developed from born from a 17th-century antidote (the Orvietano); in artistic creations inspired by the beauty of the *materia medica* —but never separate from its scientific value— expressed on paper and linen.

The exhibition concludes with a board game which has been devised today and which is a collage of ancient illustrations —The Garden of Magical Plants— with the aim of re-introducing us to the medicinal (and other) virtues of nature.

The exhibition can be **visited for free** on **Sunday, 5 March**, thanks to a special initiative by the Italian Ministry of Culture. Visitors can access through the historical entry of the Marciana National Library

(Libreria Sansoviniana, Piazzetta San Marco n. 13/a) Opening hours: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., last entry at 4:00 p.m.. For more information, please contact b-marc.stampa@cultura.gov.it