Wall Calendars Published by the Kraków Museum of Pharmacy

Zbigniew Bela (Kraków, Poland)

Wall calendars published by the Kraków Museum of Pharmacy are of educational nature: formally attractive, they show various aspects of ancient pharmacy, thus popularising the history of pharmacy as a branch of the history of science. Each calendar begins with an introduction, which discusses its theme. The remaining twelve pages are calendar pages proper.

The Museum has been designing and publishing the calendars since 2006. The first one is entitled The Jagiellonian University Museum of Pharmacy in Kraków. Its front cover shows a reproduction of the chalk drawing of Hygieia by the Polish artist Piotr Stachiewicz, on display in the Museum. The calendar is comprised of 12 short monographs concerning 12 exhibits, such as a capsule for gilding pills, The Apothecary by Józef Chełmoński, a jar of cantharides, or an original portion of theriac from Spezieria della Madonna, which in the 17th century was located at the Campo Santo Bartolomeo in Venice.

Front cover of the 2006 calendar

The February card devoted to a capsule for gilding pills.
The May card devoted to a jar of cantharides.
The October card devoted to an original portion of theriac from Spezieria della Madonna in Venice.

To give a taste of the calendar’s contents, here is the monograph on Józef Chelmoński’s paintings *The Apothecary*:

"Józef Chelmoński was an eminent Polish landscape and genre painter, notable for his virtuosity in depicting mood (for example *Indian Summer* or *Cranes*) and movement (for example *A Four-in-Hand*), as well as his love of horse subjects. It was *A Four-in-Hand* that started his great career: the painting was bought in Paris by a certain American multimillionaire, which sparked off international interest in Chelmoński’s work."
Józef Chełmoński, *Indian Summer*

Józef Chełmoński, *Cranes*
The Apothecary, which dates back to 1891, was created in Kuklówka – a village in central Poland, where in 1890 Chełmoński bought a plot of ground with a small wooden house. There he worked the land, kept horses and hounds, and, of course, painted pictures.

The painting shows the interior of a 19th c provincial pharmacy with two figures: the apothecary and a sickly old woman. The Apothecary, now in the collection of a Kraków art connoisseur, is a watercolour and gouache on cardboard.”
The 2007 calendar is entitled *Codex Vindobonensis (AD 512)*. The introduction includes information on the Codex Vindobonensis and its history, on Dioscorides and the contents of his *De Materia Medica*, and, finally, the significance of the work for the history of medicine and pharmacy.

The monographs from the codex used in the calendar are of such plants as woolly distaff thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*), Iris (*Iris germanica*), nut grass (*Cyperus rotundus*), sarsaparilla (*Smilax aspera*) and Chinese lantern (*Physalis Alkekengi*).
The July page, for example, is devoted to Chinese lantern and shows a reproduction of the original Greek monograph from the Vienna codex, the month’s calendar and a Polish translation of the monograph, whose English version reads:

“Chinese Lantern has leaves which look like those of Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara* L.), except that they are slightly broader. When fully grown, the stems bend downward. The bubble-like fruits produce smooth round yellow seeds. The plant is used to make wreaths. As far as its properties are concerned, it can be compared to Bittersweet, the only difference being that bittersweet fruit is poisonous. A decoction of Chinese Lantern seed has diuretic properties and cures jaundice – which is then dried in the shade – can be extracted from Chinese lantern as well as from bittersweet. Both plants have similar properties.”

The theme of the 2008 calendar is the famous herbal by Elizabeth Blackwell. This is how the introduction to the calendar begins: “Both the story of the creation of this herbal and Elizabeth Blackwell’s and her husband Alexander’s biographies could well provide a basis for a romantic adventure novel.” And the last fragment of the introduction reads: “On top of that, Alexander got involved in a plot against the King of Sweden, which was to place the Duke of Cumberland on the Swedish throne. The plot was uncovered and Alexander, charged with high treason, was sentenced to death. The execution took place on 9 August 1747. As in other dramatic moments of his life, Alexander’s sense of humour did not leave him: his head on the
block, he apologised to the executioner and the onlookers that he might place the head not on the proper side, but he had never been in a situation like that before, so he did not know which side was the proper one. Meanwhile, Elizabeth, unaware of what had happened, was on board a ship to Sweden to finally reconnect with her husband.”
The March page devoted to wake robin
The November page devoted to narrow-leaved plantain
The October page devoted to red poppy
The August page devoted to German iris
The texts, also made in copperplate, consist of English plant names, morphological and medicinal descriptions, and foreign language name equivalents (in Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, German, and Dutch).

The 2009 calendar, entitled *Pre-War Medicine Advertisements*, shows advertisements for such preparations as Biophytol, Novalgin, Petrogen, Kruschen Salts, Resil and Peristaltin.

Left: Front cover of the 2009 calendar
Right: “Organic phosphorus preparations promote vitality, strengthen the organism, and speed up recovery.”
Left: “As a pain reliever, Novalgin can well be used instead of morphine.”
Right: “Kruschen Salts counteract rheumatic pains and obesity.”

Left: “Expectorant and disinfectant – to be used in acute and chronic conditions of respiratory organs.”
Right: “Relieves constipation, especially when chronic, counteracts peritonitis and stimulates catharsis in cases of poisoning.”
At the back of each calendar there is editorial information, and on the back cover miniatures of all the calendar pages are printed.
The topic of the Museum’s 2010 calendar is the apothecary tradition of preparing medicinal wines.

Left: The initial page of Arnald de Villanova’s treatise Liber de Vinis. The first words read: “Incipit Liber de vinis. Laudamus vinum de bona vite ad conficiendum vina medicinalis.” (“Here begins the Book of Wines. Praise be to wine from a good vine from which medicinal wines are made.”)

Right: Pages from Arnald de Villanova’s treatise Liber de Vinis, which includes such formulas as Vinum ad memoriam reparanda (“Wine that improves memory”), Vinum ysopi virtutem habet diurecticam... (“Hyssop wine that has diuretic properties...”) and Vinum confortans omnia membra (“Wine that strengthens all the members of the body”).

VINUM CASCARAE SAGRADAE.
Vinum Rhamni Purshianae.
Wino kaskarowe.

Extracti fluidi Cascarae Sagradae examarati 500
Vini Malaga detannisati 500
Odgoryczony wyciąg kaskarowy wyparowuje się do pozostałości 200 cz., rozpuszczona w winie malaga pozbawionem taniny i po 8-10 dniach przesącza.