

From the experience of “PLANT” and “PYRGY” EU Projects onwards: interdisciplinary link of medicinal plant science with history and art

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The iconography of medicinal and aromatic plant in art masterpieces can be an interesting contribution to the ethnobotanical knowledge related to the historic period when the artefact was produced. Along herbarium specimens, sometimes misrepresenting the morphological characters, the images inside artistic expressions not meant for scientific purposes, and often related to complex symbolic meanings, are of interest also from the botanical and the pharmaceutical point of view. Within the work of the EU project “Plants in European Masterpieces (PLANT)” we considered 100 species of ethnobotanical interest into 25 paintings and frescoes of XVI century in the Genoese museums or in other museums but having Genoa as a subject. Part of the dissemination activities of the EU project “Strategia d’impresa in settori di nicchia per l’economia agroindustriale del Mediterraneo (PYRGI)” were devoted to the comparative study of a Genoese collection of pharmacy jars, pharmacy recipes of pharmacopoeias used in the past in Liguria, and aromatic and medicinal plants of the Ligurian area. For both projects a relational database ad hoc developed, having specific tables for all the three main sections of study (art, botany and pharmaceutical and ethnobotanical knowledge), was produced. These databases were the backbones of the PLANT desktop application and of the web site for PYRGI respectively. The hyperlink trees allow the user to navigate among reconstructions of ancient recipes, the botanical information and the related masterpiece. The ongoing research is focused on other paintings of the Genoese collections of the Musei di Strada Nuova. The painting *I santi Sebastiano, Giovanni Battista e Francesco; Madonna con il Bambino e Angeli* (1502-1503) by Filippino Lippi, is of particular relevance, with 43 entities; 36 of which are herbaceous species. 18 taxa are clearly identifiable, belonging to Pteridophytes (2 taxa) and Angiosperm Dicotyledons (16 taxa).