

EXHIBITION REVIEW:

The Reopening of the Pharmacy Museum National History Museum of Transylvania



The National History Museum of Transylvania was elated to announce for the 15th of January 2024 the reopening of the Pharmacy Museum, a treasure trove of medical and pharmaceutical history. After undergoing renovations, on the Day of National Culture, the museum received visitors in the new and expanded exhibition.

The Pharmacy Museum, situated in the iconic Hintz House, contains an impressive collection of over 7000 authentic objects. These artefacts range from pharmaceutical vessels, old remedies and medicines, valued books and manuscripts, to vintage medical apparatuses and tell the story of the evolution of pharmacy and medicine in Transylvania. The viewers are invited to explore the evolution of attitudes towards health and disease over the centuries, while the Museum, with its steady mission of research and dissemination, keeps and showcases a rare and highly specialized heritage, and is also a location representative of Cluj-Napoca, a formerly very important medical and pharmaceutical center in Romania. The collection was also recently published during a research project and the 7-volume catalogue is wholly available online (in English).¹

The history of the location, the Hintz House, is fascinating in itself. The first public pharmacy in Cluj was opened around 1550 in one of the now-demolished buildings surrounding the Saint Michael parish church, this then became a private

¹ PHARMATRANS. *All Things Apothecary in 16th–20th-century Transylvania. The Pharmacy Collection in Cluj-Napoca* (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Mega, 2023), vol. 1-7, available at <https://pharmatrans.mnit.ro/catalog/>.



enterprise and moved to this current location nearly two centuries later. The Mauksch and then Hintz pharmacies were open here for another 200 years. In 1949 the pharmacy was nationalized and since 1954 the building has hosted the Pharmacy Museum instead. Recently renovated, the edifice is a historical monument that reveals a unique architectural mosaic from Roman ruins to Medieval foundations, and later reconstructions. The internal structure of the pharmacy and the role of each chamber can be partially retraced. Initially, the *officina*, meaning the pharmacy's store, was located in a room decorated with Baroque paintings and was later moved to the hall which opens towards the square. The former *officina* was converted into a study, thus becoming the administrative heart of the business. On the ground floor, the pharmacy had a laboratory and a deposit which was exclusively accessible to the pharmacists and their assistants. The basement was used for the storage of liquids and those substances that were sensitive to changes in temperature, while the attic was dedicated to drying medicinal plants. As for the living quarters, the family of the pharmacy's owner occupied the most prestigious apartment on the first floor which overlooked the square.

The museum provides a variety of methods of exploration including free audio guides (in Romanian and English through a mobile app which is also available outside the museum), informative brochures (available in three languages: Romanian, English, and Hungarian), and the specialized guidance of a curator. There is also a new bilingual website (Romanian and English), a YouTube channel and a Facebook page.

The National History Museum of Transylvania invites all those passionate about history, medicine, and pharmacy to discover this unique cultural space and to enrich themselves with the information the Museum of Pharmacy provides. Shortly this invitation will be extended to demonstrations and interactive workshops where curious folk of all ages under the supervision of curators will be able to prepare perfumes, medicinal soaps, candles, ink, the Love Elixir, and other potions.

Translated from Romanian by Voica Pușcașiu

Audioguide: <https://muzeulfarmaciei.muzeon.app/>

Website: <https://muzeulfarmaciei.mnit.ro/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeTKReQcaSTWTyS-T8ztCGQ>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/colectiefarmacluj/>

Ana-Maria GRUIA

National History Museum of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email: ana.gruia@gmail.com