Making knowledge visible was one of the great Renaissance endeavors. Some of the period's most characteristic products were born out of the conviction that concepts could be systematically turned into images — and that such images could be organized into a visual language, more profound and universal than discursive logic. Egyptian hieroglyphs and dream visions, in their graphic exuberance, were considered typical vehicles of this advanced mode of communication. The desire to emulate their symbolic density is reflected both in literature and in art, often in ways that challenge common distinctions between visual and verbal communication. In this course you will be introduced to an assortment of works representative of such interplay between text and image: emblem books, dream books and dream-centered works, hieroglyphic inventions and studies, collections of proverbs, iconology manuals, etc. Among the books examined are some widely considered as the finest examples of design in the history of printing. Early modern and recent theory of emblems will also be discussed. As a present-day counterpart of Renaissance emblems, the course will conclude with a survey of corporate logos and Russian criminal tattoos.

M 3:30PM-6:10PM — Casa Italiana, Library