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The Daphnic Fate of Camerarius, or: Sweden's first printed Emblem Book revealed in Olof Rudbeck the Younger's Botanical Dissertation (1686)

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The lecture focusses on the lavishly illustrated dissertation on plant propagation which Olof Rudbeck the Younger defended at Uppsala in 1686. Drawing on the model of Joachim Camerarius's 'Emblematum centuriae quattuor', this aspiring Swedish naturalist fashioned his Neo-Latin treatise in the tradition of the Central European emblem book, which soon became a mirror for contemporary natural sciences after its emergence in the 16th century. At that time, scholars such as Camerarius seized on both ancient and contemporary descriptions of plants and animals and their characteristics for emblematic compositions. By adopting emblems creatively from different kingdoms of nature, Rudbeck now employed Camerarius to visually introduce the chapters of his treatise and to present his long elaborations on plant physiology as vantage points into moral-philosophic contemplations. Embedding this rare case of reception from the North in its wider context, I will discuss how Rudbeck not only produced what can now be revealed as Sweden's first printed emblem book, but also seized on the visual advantages of this model to successfully dedicate his dissertation to the Swedish queen.