The Art List: Stories on the Skin,
Art Aquatic

This week: educational ink

By Colleen Doherty
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STUDENT BODY ART
Z. McCarthy-Koppisch will show photos she has taken of the tattoos of 56 Florida Atlantic University students as part of Stories on the Skin: Tattoo Culture at FAU, a project dreamed up by Arthur Jaffe, the founder of Jaffe Center for Book Arts in FAU's Wimberly Library on the Boca Raton Campus. After noticing all the tattooed students making their way around campus, Jaffe considered how many of the inked bodies were like the one-of-a-kind books collected at his center. Each one, he says, tells a story.

This long-term project is a collaboration between the Jaffe Center, Karen Leader, an assistant professor in the Department of Visual Arts and Art History, and FAU Libraries senior designer McCarthy-Koppisch. Its goal is to collect and preserve the students' stories in photographs, film and literature.

The project launched last fall when 1,147 FAU students participated in a survey about tattoos, answering as many as 70 questions each about themselves, their feelings about tattoos and, in most cases, their own tatts. Students were given an opportunity to be photographed and filmed and tell the stories behind their tattoos during a Show Us Your Tattoos campaign held on FAU's Boca Raton campus. Some students also submitted written stories for a literary project.

McCarthy-Koppisch, who's been taking photographs since she was old enough to sneak into New York's famed CBGB, began photographing students' tattoos for archival purposes. In the process, she captured other symbols of student life, including the cell phones hanging from pockets, the heavy books and backpacks, bottled water and bicycles. The photographs are now part of an exhibition that will open 1-4 p.m. Saturday (with a 30-minute presentation by Leader and McCarthy-Koppisch starting at 1:30 p.m.) and run through Aug. 10 on the ground floor of S.E. Wimberly Library at FAU, 777 Glades Road, in Boca Raton.

The opening will take place during Time Flies When You're Having Fun, an open house that will take place on the library's ground floor and the third-floor Jaffe Center for Book Arts. Time Flies will honor Jaffe, who recently turned 90, received an Honorary Doctorate of humane Letters from FAU and announced that he will retire. But he will continue helping to bring to fruition Stories on the Skin and his next project, an automobile-books show. The open house will include tours, chats with Jaffe, letterpress demonstrations and the Miami Poetry Collective's Poem Depot. For a price visitors set themselves, a member of the collective will write a poem based on the topic of the visitor's choice on a manual typewriter.

A larger feature on Stories on the Skin will appear in next week's City Link. Visit Storiesontheskin.org.