Going by the book

Unique book art displayed at 2 FAU locations in Boca

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If you visit the Ritter Art Gallery at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, you can see a book of glass that tells a story of the distant past.

But it’s just one of many beauties and oddities on display as a showcase of the ways a book’s design can be as fascinating as the stories told within it.

FAU’s Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters is hosting an exhibition of more than 200 examples of book art spread between two galleries.

“Out of the Book: Selections from the Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts” features limited-edition books from a collection that has expanded to more than 6,000 such examples. It’s free to the public and will run in the Ritter Art Gallery through Oct. 31 and the Schmidt Center Gallery through Nov. 17.

There’s the “Ghost Diary” in the Ritter Art Gallery, a rare book made of glass. The book, created by Maureen Cummins, is based on a letter a former Revolutionary War officer wrote to his children on the fifth anniversary of his wife’s death.

The book, one of 25 copies, features pages of glass that contain the letter from Col. Jonathan Rhea and photo negatives from the late 19th and early 20th century.

“It’s a very haunting book,” said John Cutrone, a book artist who helps curate the collection and helped organize the exhibition.

There’s “Propagation Hazard” on display in the Schmidt Center Gallery, a book that novelist, poet and playwright William S. Burroughs had a hand in designing.

The books come from a collection donated by Delray Beach resident Arthur Jaffe in 1998. Jaffe gave the university 2,000 examples of book art initially, but the collection now has thrice that amount. The collection is kept in FAU’s S.E. Wimberly Library; this is the first time the university has featured the items in an exhibition in its galleries.

“I come from a big family, and I’m the only one with this passion,” Jaffe said. “My father was constantly reading.”

Jaffe, 89, said his father read tales of President Abraham Lincoln and heroics during his childhood, and he still watches over and adds to the university’s book art collection, which he estimates to be worth $1.5 million to $2 million.

For more information, visit www.fau.edu/galleries or call 561-297-2966.