BOCA RATON, Fla. (March 2, 2016) — The Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts at Florida Atlantic University is currently hosting “Wanderlust: The Life and Work of Artist John Eric Broaddus,” an exhibition of extraordinary art left by the pioneering book maker and costume designer who died of AIDS in 1990, through Monday, April 3 at the Wimberly Library, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton campus.

The exhibition features a range of one-of-a-kind artists’ books made by hand, postal art, rubber stamps, a painting, film negatives, limited edition photocopy work, self-portraits and a sundry of photographs of the artist in some of the flamboyant hats and costumes that he created.

Broaddus, a self-taught artist, worked in such mediums as acrylic, wood, vinyl, glass and plastic to produce artists’ books, including their bindings, from scratch. Bright colors, sparkling glitter and markers were some of his trademarks that he used to transform his creations from simple works into amazing objects.

“The art that John Eric Broaddus made is nothing short of genius,” said John Cutrone, director of the Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts, one of the nation’s most prominent centers for books handmade by artists. “Most of Broaddus’ books are one-of-a-kind and made in an era long before the book form had even a suggestion of acceptance within the art world. We call this rich genre ‘artists’ books today, but when Broaddus was working in the form, he was forging new territory.”

A product of the fun-loving 1960s, Broaddus was raised in Detroit and moved to New York City in his early 20s. Vibrant and outlandish, Broaddus fell in love with the city and the lifestyle of the artistic and gay communities that flourished in Greenwich Village on the west
side of lower Manhattan. He was known for the one-of-a kind costumes that he created and wore out on New York streets and to iconic places like Studio 54 and Crisco Disco, as well as to the annual Village Halloween Parade in New York. For income, he decorated store window displays, but his passion was art.

“His books have been called ‘theatrical spaces,’ which is an apt description considering his fascination with costume design and performance,” said Cutrone. “Turning the pages of a Broaddus book is a movement through space, like passing through numerous worlds. His books are not just objects, they are events.”

The extraordinary community of artists and performers in New York that Broaddus was a part of was hit hard by the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Broaddus was 47 when he died of the disease.

The exhibition captures a shift in Broaddus’ animated work after he was diagnosed and coming to grips with his fears as nearly his entire community was being wiped out by the disease. “Campanile,” the masterpiece on display on library’s first floor and many of Broaddus’ later works are devoid of color. “Sphinx and the Bird of Paradise,” one of Broaddus’ rare edition books was left unfinished. He didn’t get a chance to complete the last few cutouts.

A Levi’s canvas jacket that Broaddus painted and wore regularly hangs in one display case. The pockets of the jacket include a black ball point pen, 11 pieces of turquoise paper cut to business card size and a $49.54 receipt from Pearl’s Paint on Canal Street dated March 25, 1989.

Cutrone is on a mission to ensure that Broaddus and his contribution to the movement of artists’ books are remembered. The Wanderlust exhibition follows a 2010 display of Broaddus’ work that Cutrone curated at the Jaffe Center. With the Jaffe Center’s current exhibition, Cutrone wanted to show more of Broaddus’ backstory.

To complement the exhibition, the Jaffe Center has reproduced and released one of Broaddus’ 1976 diaries that gives insight into his life as an artist and as a gay man. Proceeds from the $75 commemorative diaries will benefit the Jaffe Center.

The “Wanderlust: The Life and Work of Artist John Eric Broaddus” exhibition was created from the private collection of Fort Lauderdale resident Arthur J. Williams, a retired New York film editor who was one of Broaddus’ close friends from 1969 until his death. Williams, also a friend of the Jaffe Center, donated a collection of 425 wildly colorful and interactive pop-up books to the center in 2011.
“Eric was an incredible individual and artist, but it goes beyond that,” said Williams. “To me, he was an engineer. In looking at the design of his books, the cutouts, how one fits into the other, it is mind boggling that this was a normal brain at work. He was a genius.”

The Wanderlust exhibition can be viewed during library hours, which can be found at [www.library.fau.edu/geninfo/hours.htm?boca](http://www.library.fau.edu/geninfo/hours.htm?boca) or by calling 561-297-3770. For the portion of the exhibition found inside the Jaffe Center, hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visitors can park in the metered spaces in the library lot at a cost of $1 per hour. The metered system accepts cash and credit cards. For more information, visit [www.jaffecollection.org](http://www.jaffecollection.org).

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**Photo Captions**


[Wanderlust2jpg](#): Mail art, a Valentine’s Day card that John E. Broaddus created and mailed to Arthur Williams in 1985.

[Wanderlust3jpg](#): “Sphinx and the Bird of Paradise,” one of John Eric Broaddus’ rare edition books, was left unfinished when he died.