FAU to Host ‘The Last Word: Our Favorite Colophons’ from Artists’ Books at Wimberly Library

BOCA RATON, Fla. (June 24, 2015) — The tradition of reading the last page of a book before reading the book is being celebrated at Florida Atlantic University where the Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center will host “The Last Word: Our Favorite Colophons,” an exhibition of some of the best colophons in books and broadsides collected during the center’s 15-year history, now through Sunday, Sept. 6 at the Wimberly Library, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton campus.

The exhibition, which is free and open to the public, features 43 artists’ books and 21 broadsides whose colophons, or last pages, run the gamut from the historic and classic to the whimsical and brilliant. Some in the exhibition are shaped with text, while others feature hand numbering, exquisite signatures, illustrative text and such found objects as a coat check ticket.

Simple colophons displaying an artist’s signature with a number and edition size are outnumbered in this intriguing exhibition. Take “The Katherine Project” by artist Kati Van Aernum whose colophon clearly spells out who made the book. She composed an image of a katydid solely with the word katidid. Get it? She’s telling you that her name is Kati and she made the book.

“How to Transition on Sixty-Three Cents a Day” by filmmaker Lee Krist, features a collection of printed postcards that he wrote to his mother about his transition from a woman to a man, housed with other ephemera inside a movie film canister. A printed label is attached on the inside back of the canister is his colophon.

“Dalmatian Fixation,” an artists’ book about dogs, is numbered with an engraved dog tag in a colophon that is shaped like a dog’s head. “Tag” by artist Mark Wagner has the most extensive colophon, its own book paired with the artists’ book. Both books feature sewn, painted and drawn garment labels, embroidered patches and linen cloth.

“Reading a colophon is like having a conversation with an artist,” said John Cutrone, director of the Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center and the exhibition’s curator. “Colophons explain more about what was inside the artist’s mind when the book was made or give details about how the book was made. They give wonderful insights that one wouldn’t be privy to were it not for the colophon.”

That is why those viewing the exhibition will know that Fort Lauderdale artist Dorothy Simpson Krause’s colophon for her artists’ book “Little Red: A Cautionary Tale for Girls of All Ages,” was inspired by a Little Red Riding Hood doll that she owned as a child.
Some rare books from FAU Libraries’ Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America collection in the exhibition trace the history of colophons. One, a book by Paolo Ramusio that was published in Venice in 1604, shows one of the earliest colophons. After that, colophons fell out of favor and weren’t revived with any great enthusiasm, according to Cutrone, until the start of the fine press movement in the late 19th century.

“With the rise of interest in the fine craft of bookmaking, we see a revival of interest in process and in making things well. The colophon is back into being as a way of describing this process, recording it,” said Cutrone. “This continues to this day in limited edition books and artists’ books like the ones on display here.”

The exhibition can be viewed from the Wimberly Library’s atrium lobby and on the third floor east in the lobby outside of the Jaffe Center for Book Arts and inside of the book arts gallery at the Jaffe Center. 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 on the exhibition or on the Jaffe Center for Book Arts, visit www.library.fau.edu/depts/spc/jaffecenter/exhibitions

Photo Captions
Colophon1jpg: Artist Debra Weir uses found objects, such as this coat/room check ticket to number her books as her colophon.
Colophon2jpg: Artist Kati Van Aernum’s colophon is a katydid created with the words katidid.
Colophon3jpg: Filmmaker Lee Krist’s colophon is a printed label affixed to the inside of an old movie film canister, which is filled with printed postcards and other ephemera.

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About Florida Atlantic University:
Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University, with an annual economic impact of $6.3 billion, serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students at sites throughout its six-county service region in southeast Florida. FAU’s world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering and Computer Science, the Graduate College, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. FAU is ranked as a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The University is placing special focus on the rapid development of critical areas that form the basis of its strategic plan: Healthy aging, biotech, coastal and marine issues, neuroscience, regenerative medicine, informatics, lifespan and the environment. These areas provide opportunities for faculty and students to build upon FAU’s existing strengths in research and scholarship. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.