

Andy's Agenda

Warhol? In Hayward?

Strange as it sounds, a small yet thoughtful survey of socially inflected works by the crown prince of pop lurks high in the Hayward Hills on the Cal State campus. The brainchild of Lanier Graham, curator of the University Art Gallery, "Andy Warhol & Social

when it was de rigueur for avant-garde artists to be card-carrying atheists (a poster of Warhol's iconic *Gold Marilyn* finds the starlet's disembodied head floating against a gold ground like a latter-day Byzantine saint). Another is that the man responsible for elevating the lowly Campbell Soup can into the

softly in the background, a colorful Warholmania artmart dubbed "The Warhol Store" sets the stage for Graham's contention that "There was more to Warhol than commerce, glitz, and glamour." *Birmingham Race Riot* (1964), a stark black-and-white screenprint that coolly captures the

Civil Rights Movement heating up, freeze-frames a police dog on a frighteningly short leash lunging at an African-American demonstrator. Nearby, all that glitters isn't gold in the poignant *Jacqueline Kennedy III* (1965). This haunting screenprint finds the former First Lady dissolving into a chic yet chilly blue fog in the aftermath of JFK's assassination.

BLOODY CHAIR

In 1968, the same year Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were gunned down, Warhol himself nearly lost his life to a would-be assassin's bullet fired by crazed writer Valerie Solanas, founder of SCUM—the Society for Cutting Up Men. Warhol's art lost much of its edge after that. If the ten-paneled *Electric Chair*

(1971) on view doesn't quite pack the punch of Warhol's vintage mid-'60s take on societally sanctioned executions, it's a ghostly and ghostly post-psychedelic electric acid elegy. Collectively rendered like "negative image" X rays in suitably shocking clashes of color (e.g., lurid yellow on pink), one pulpy red panel mimicking an abstract expressionist's bold gestural brushstrokes is almost literally awash in blood. On a somewhat lighter—if undeniably barbed—note, *Vote McGovern* (1972) shows where Warhol's political affinities lay: A positively reptilian "Tricky Dick" Nixon mugs disingenuously with a green forehead, blue nose, and yellow teeth (you definitely wouldn't want to buy a used car from this man).



Reality through a silkscreen: Lanier Graham with assistant curator M. Claudia Willis

Consciousness: Another Side of Pop" reveals Warhol (1928-87) to be more than a media-savvy popster who courted fame and celebrity.

Graham, 55, came to know Warhol during his own tenure as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the mid-'60s. "Of course I expected him to be egocentric, silly, and superficial. But I found him to be very quiet, modest, and self-effacing," Graham says. "There hasn't been a whole lot of social consciousness in Pop Art—only self-expression. Warhol had this other side that no one knew or talked about. I thought it would be worthwhile presenting this other side."

One dirty little secret is that Warhol attended church religiously at a time

realm of high art and cultural icon fed the New York homeless anonymously.

DISASTER FACTORY

At some point in the early '60s, Warhol mused that maybe everything wasn't so fabulous, after all. While injecting wry commentary about the numbing power of the mass media's desensitizing blitzkrieg into his seemingly frivolous Campbell Soup cans, Brillo boxes, and celebrity portraits immortalizing the likes of Liz, Marilyn, and Elvis, Warhol was simultaneously churning out more ominous subjects chronicling myriad American deaths and disasters: car crashes, electric chairs, atom bombs, suicides, race riots, et al.

As A&E's Warhol *Biography* warbles

ANDY WARHOL & SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS: ANOTHER SIDE OF POP ART. Through March 2 at University Art Gallery, Cal State Hayward, 25800 Carlos Bee Blvd. Tuesday through Thursday, noon to 4 p.m.; Saturday, noon to 3 p.m. 510-885-3299. Free.