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Big gallery, small budget

Lanier Graham grabs the
attention of local museum
curators without large funds

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The Oakland Tribune

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Great big gallery shows on an itty bitty budget

WITHIN months of taking on the job of curator and director of the California State University, Hayward Art Gallery, Lanier Graham had the attention of local museum curators.

Graham was hired last summer to teach art history and to run the gallery, a 2,500-square-foot space inside the Arts & Education Building. His debut as the new curator was in October 1998.

Instead of mounting a show of work by students, teachers or a local artist, Graham finagled a show of work by internationally known painter Masami Teraoka, a controversial Chinese artist known for work that deals with issues such as sexuality and politics.

ARTS BIOGRAPHIC

Lanier Graham curator

The payback: More people came to the exhibition than for any other in the history of the gallery.

Graham, who spent the first three decades of his career working as a curator for the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, took the job at Hayward primarily so he could return to teaching. But he also plans to turn the Cal State Art Gallery into one of the top

places to see art in the Bay Area.

His next show, "Andy Warhol and Social Consciousness: Another Side of Pop Art," is set to open Jan. 19.

Graham, 55, lives in Brentwood with his wife, Gloria, who teaches elementary school.

Tell me about your vision for the Cal State Art Gallery.

My job was to put the Hayward gallery on the map. My question was how to do that on a micro-mini budget. The reality is that it requires a lot of energy, enthusiasm and imagination. And connections. Realistically, I figure it is possible to do one world-class show a year. This year it's Warhol.

Who picks up the tab for putting on a show of this caliber?

Well, a lot of the work comes from private collectors. You don't usually pay for that kind of loan. It has more to do with connections and word of mouth. Security costs and transporting the art are expensive, but the university budget pays for that.

Why did you decide to do an exhibition of Andy Warhol's work?

I knew Andy. Not well, but well enough to know there was another side to him that people didn't know about. Not many people know he was a regular church-goer. Secretly, of course. Not many people know that he fed the homeless regularly. Secretly, I got to know Warhol when I worked at MOMA. Because of that job, Campbell's

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