

OUT & ABOUT By Carolyn Zinko



Joy Venturini Bianchi (left) and Kimberly Bakker chat at the show.



Wolfgang Puck and Gelila Assefa.



James Galanos was joined by friends, family and former clients at the opening at the Serge Sorokko Gallery.



Yetunde Schuhmann at the event.

Fashion designer James Galanos raises the curtain on a new career



Nad Mobley holds his dog, Miss B., as she gets acquainted with David Jones at the reception of Galanos' constructivist collages.

Getting the shy and reclusive retired fashion designer James Galanos to put his newest work on public display was almost like getting a turtle to climb out of its shell. "This is too much!" Galanos declared after a recent whirlwind four days in San Francisco, where he was wined and dined at lunches and dinners with the likes of fellow designer Ralph Rucci, social engineer Denise Hale and glamour-puss Vanessa Getty to mark the occasion of his first gallery show, "James Galanos: Photography," at the Serge Sorokko Gallery.

But Galanos chatted away amiably on opening night with more than 100 guests — former clients actress Dixie Carter, Rosemary Stack and Wolfgang Puck's fiancée, Gelila Assefa; family (his nephew, Stamatis Burpulis, of New Jersey); and friends — as well as people he'd never met — who orbited the diminutive designer and his work as if they were planets circling a magnetic sun.

In the 60 abstract designs, composed from colored paper, shadow and colored light and printed on watercolor paper, veteran Fine Arts Museums curator Robert Flynn

Johnson saw shades of the Bauhaus and Russian Constructivist movements, and a continuation of Galanos' elegant, colorful clothing design. "These works have a look, a signature, and he had that with his clothes," Johnson said. "A lot of people don't have a first act. He's got a second act in a completely different artistic field."

Galanos' most prominent client, Nancy Reagan, couldn't be there in person, but she sent a letter hand-delivered by mutual friend David Jones from Southern California, whose distinctive backhand read, in part, "A

quick note to wish you good luck on your opening — not that you'll need it."

She seemed to be right. Several of the prints, priced at \$6,500 to \$8,500, sold that night; other customers were mulling the boxed sets of 10 iris prints at \$15,000 each; and Johnson announced that the Fine Arts Museums would be acquiring a Galanos piece for its permanent collection.

Galanos' success was no surprise to Serge Sorokko. "When you are a genius, a master," he said, "you just can't help yourself."