

# San Francisco Chronicle

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At a reception before the Friday night ceremonies in which French Consul General **Frédéric Desagneaux** made art gallery owner and collector **Serge Sorokko** a Chevalier des Arts et Lettres (bestowing a kind of cultural knighthood), I saw **Ghislain d'Humieres**, assistant director of the de Young for its opening, clink champagne glasses with **Pam Kramlich**, a major benefactor of SFMOMA. "To your museum," she said. "To yours," he answered.

It's a heady time for art lovers around here, and the gathered friends of Serge and **Tatiana Sorokko** included **Mark Leno**; Mayor **Gavin Newsom** and **Kimberly Guilfoyle Newsom**; San Francisco Film Commission chief **Stefanie Coyote** and **Peter Coyote**; **Paul Pelosi**; **Barbara George**, member of the California Arts Council and its former chief; **Ron George**, chief of the California Supreme Court; and designers **Ralph Rucci** and **James Galanos** (Tatiana Sorokko writes for Harper's Bazaar and is a former model). Previous winners of this honor include **Michael Tilson Thomas**, **Danielle Steel**, **Carey Perloff** and **Roxanne Mesina Captor**.

"You have succeeded in your art gallery in creating an environment where France, Europe and America have met," Desagneaux told the Russian-born art dealer, "creating a dialogue and offering a unique opportunity to many French artists." Peter Coyote praised his friend Sorokko, who

had immigrated to the United States from Russia almost 30 years ago, as a man who arrived from Russia with "an image of a life that he wanted to live," and had managed to inhabit that vision. "He's an artist who happens to sell art for a living. What a wonderful irony."

After receiving a medal and three kisses from the consul general, Sorokko quoted **Dostoyevsky**: "Beauty will save the world." The sentiment was oft repeated during a lavish dinner at Campton Place later, with levels of passion that intensified with each glass of wine consumed by the toasters.

P.S. This party was elegant, sumptuous and extravagant — and bravo to that — but there's more to art in San Francisco. Chatted with Leno, whom I'd seen the night before at a 40th anniversary party for the community arts organization the Performing Arts Workshop. California is 50th in all the states in terms of funding for the arts, he said. A bill he'd proposed that would have funded arts groups by adding a tax of something like 10 cents to every \$10 spent on a movie ticket was voted down in the state Legislature.