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DATEBOOK

SECTION



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Fashion frenzy this week, with San Francisco's figurative guest book filled with fanciful signatures of fashionistas and designers.

Ralph Rucci, here to open a boutique in Neiman Marcus, was feted by the store, by his muse **Tatiana Sorokko** (the job description includes inspiring the clothes and wearing them), his art dealer, **Serge Sorokko**, who sold seven of his collages of paper and cloth on opening night, and his admiring customer, **Denise Hale**. Among the guests — congratulating Rucci and/or attending Academy of Art festivities that honored **Azzedine Alaia** and **Carla Sozzani** — were **James Galanos**, who was **Nancy Reagan's** designer of choice, **Suzy Menkes** of the International Herald Tribune, **Glenda Bailey**, editor of Harper's Bazaar, and **Boaz Mazor**, whose main task here was selling **Oscar de la Renta** gowns fit for the big de Young opening in October. There were lunches and dinners and receptions, and I didn't hear of a single food fight.

One of my favorite moments came Wednesday night, before a dinner in Farallon's upstairs salon, hosted by **Christine Suppes** of Fashionlines.com. While Alaia had been much feted, he doesn't speak English, and the social responsibility of constantly smiling to accept congratulations was heavy. He looked happy, but not exactly at ease. But when Tatiana Sorokko arrived wearing one of his dresses (dramatic black and red faille), he noticed that the double bows on the sashes were awry. It was as though he'd been a dancer and the music had begun; his body relaxed and he reached up to her waist, his hands working gently and softly, the set smile giving way to a look of intent purpose. Here was a man doing what he knew how to do.