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San Francisco Social Diary



The California Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum (1924), was a gift from the Spreckels, the sugar family.

SAN FRANCISCO SOCIAL DIARY

by Jeanne Lawrence

This spring in San Francisco, the charitable, cultural, and social events seemed to go on nonstop.

The Legion of Honor Museum

After all my friends raved about “Pulp Fashion,” the **Isabelle de Borchgrave** show at the Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum, I couldn’t wait to see it.

Denise Hale and I got lucky: Couture collector **Tatiana Sorokko** volunteered to take us on a tour. “I know every dress in detail,” she said. And she did.

A former Parisian top model, Tatiana had a show of her couture collection at the Phoenix Art museum called *Extending the Runway: Tatiana Sorokko Style*. She is also a contributing editor at *Harper’s Bazaar*.

The show was the first U.S. overview of de Borchgrave’s oeuvre. The talented Belgian artist works in paper, crafting three-dimensional masterpieces.

“My work is a confluence of influences—paper, painting, sculptor, textiles, costume, illusion and trompe l’oeil,” she says.

Many of her creations were clearly inspired by iconic European paintings such as **Botticelli’s Primavera**. Others suggest the sumptuous fabrics, elaborate trim and ornate jewels worn by historical figures including the **Medicis, Elizabeth I, Madame de Pompadour, Empress Eugénie**, and **Marie Antoinette**.

Her work is so tactile it invites a response. “I’ve never wanted to touch something so much in my life,” said Denise, but the guard was watching.



The Museum is a replica of the of the Palais de la Légion d’Honneur in Paris.



The Legion of Honor is situated atop the cliffs in Lincoln Park, with incredible ocean views.



There is a lovely café with an outdoor garden where visitors were basking in the sunshine.



Jeanne Lawrence, Tatiana Sorokko, Denise Hale, and curator Martin Chapman enjoyed lunch in the bright and sunny museum café.



The Pulp Fashion exhibit has over 60 pieces that include recreations of gowns worn by Elizabeth I and Marie-Antoinette to haute-couture designers such as Worth, Dior, and Chanel.



One of de Isabella Borchgrave's exquisite historic costumes, sculpted out of paper mâché.



We posed Russian-born model Tatiana Sorokko in front of the painting, *Russian Bride's Attire*, 1877, by Russian artist Konstantin Makovsky.



Clockwise from above: The gowns were inspired from well-known paintings; the room “In White” showcases the purity of craftsmanship with dresses devoid of color; The Medici era display with the rich gowns of the era with lace, velvets, and pearls.



An entire Fortuny room was created under a feather-light paper tent.



An imaginary closet with Fortuny's famed pleated and draped gowns.

The Salon Doré at the Legion of Honor



We were joined for lunch by **Martin Chapman**, the curator of European Decorative Art and Sculpture, who gave us a preview of how he's renovating the Museum's 18th-century French Salon Doré.

Incredibly, the room contains what Martin referred to as "the holy Grail" -- an original sofa that belonged to Marie Antoinette.

Martin hopes to restore the original carved wood boiserie panels (once installed in the Hotel d'Humieres in Paris), and reinstate the architectural integrity of the room by installing a parquet floor that was customary in the 18th century.

If you're Francophile or lover of decorative arts who wishes to contribute to the process, Martin is ready to embrace you!



In the Salon Dore, the boiserie or wood paneling is from the Hotel d'Humieres in Paris.



Curator Martin Chapman gave us an insider's tour of the French 18th Salon.



French Commode, 1773, by Martin Carlin, crafted of Ebony, Japanese Lacquer veneer, and gilt-bronze mounts.



Another view of the Salon Dore.



Chapman explains that the *Canapé a la turc* (sofa) was commissioned in 1779 by Jacques Gondoin by Queen Marie Antoinette for her Versailles apartment.

Serge Sorokko Gallery Opening

After thirty years, **Serge Sorokko** moved his eponymous gallery to a new and larger space at 55 Geary Street, with **Isabelle de Borchgrave's** "Recent Paintings and Sculptures" as his inaugural show. What a coup!

"I commissioned her show after I saw her work in Venice at the Museo Fortuny," said Sorokko, who convinced the artist to come to our city concurrent with her show at the Legion of Honor Museum.



The Serge Sorokko Gallery inaugural show: Isabelle de Borchgrave, "Recent Paintings and Sculptures."

It was his wife Tatiana—fashion expert—who gave Denise and me our wonderful tour of the Museum exhibit. She told us that she was stunned when she first learned that de Borchgrave had exhibited only at museums and had never sold work through a gallery.

On display at the gallery were colorful objets d'art the artist had created out of intricately manipulated paper. "I'd never seen anything like what she does," Serge said. "And in these dire times, it's nice to look at happy colors."

The majority of pieces had been snapped up by local fashionistas by the end of

opening night.



The newly inaugurated space was packed with well-wishers and art lovers.

Friends, artists, collectors stopped by to celebrate, meet the artist, and sip Casa Dragones Tequila, so smooth that it's been dubbed "the sipping tequila." The company was co-founded by **Bertha Gonzalez Nieves** and **Bob Pitman**, a founder of MTV.

So many toasts were made that at one point Tatiana exclaimed, "This is turning into a Russian party!"



Artist Countess Isabelle de Borchgrave, Serge Sorokko, and Tatiana Sorokko.



Dennita Sewell (Curator of Fashion Design at Phoenix Art Museum), Tatiana Sorokko, and David Nash.



Consul General of Belgium, Dame Rita Bral, and Edward Miller.



Sonya Molodetskaya and former Mayor Willie Brown. Max Boyer Glynn and David Glynn.



Denise Hale, Martin Chapman, Dede Wilsey, (President of the Fine Arts Museum), and Suzy Dominik.



Erin Cowan and Shannon Bavaro.



Catherine Malandrino and Marlene Conetta.



Jeanne Lawrence, Maria Manetti Farrow, Martin Chapman, and Denise Hale.



Luba Troyanovsky, Serge Sorokko, and Tatiana Sorokko.



Catherine Malandrino and Marlene Conetta.



Maria Manetti Farrow, Daniel Diaz,
and Tatiana Sorokko.



Steve Reeder and Melissa Wagner.



Works of Isabella de Borchgrave.



Memoirs of the evenings.



As we left for dinner, I noticed another type of art across the street.

A Private Dinner Honoring the Artist

Afterwards, friends and I rushed off to a private dinner party in honor of de Borchgrave in SoMa (South of Market), the San Francisco equivalent of Manhattan's SoHo.

As it was St. Patrick's Day, we passed seven police cars giving sobriety tests to people about to cross the bridge. My driver—who will remain unnamed—sighed, “ I wish they'd stopped me tonight. For once, I didn't have a single drink!”

The party was held at the loft of designer **Ken Fulk** and **Kurt Wooten**. In their eclectically decorated loft, last year they the much-talked-about blast of a masquerade birthday party for **Denise Hale**.



A private dinner afterwards was held at designer Ken Fulk and Kurt Wooton SoMa loft. The lion (not real, of course), greeted us at the front door.

Looking around at the huge, three-story loft, **Isabella de Borchgrave** said, “In my Belgium studio I don't have such space.” Well, who does?

Seated on banquettes or at the long dining table in the open kitchen, we dined home-style on splendid Italian food. Serge toasted Isabella. “When I saw her work in Venice three years ago I found it ‘glaringly original,’” he said, adding that he was proud to have her show.

It was near midnight when I slipped out, but Denise Hale and **Dede Wilsey** (President of the Fine Arts Museum) were still in lively conversation with the artist.



The exotic three-story loft with its open kitchen, had plenty of room for guests.



A view from the outdoor terrace that overlooks the city skyline.



Bertha González Nieves, the CEO and co-founder of Casa Dragones tequila, Catherine Malandrino, Ursula Damani, and Marlene Conetta flew in from New York.



Collector Suzy Dominik and Tatiana Sorokko.



Artist Countess de Borchgrave thanks her hosts Serge and Tatiana Sorokko.



Jeanne Lawrence and Claudia Ross.



Marlene Conetta, Ursula Damani, and David Nash.



Countess and Count de Borchgrave.



The view of the church across the street.

The Child Abuse Prevention Center (CAPC) Luncheon

One of the things I love about living on Nob Hill is its convenience. I had only to walk across the street to the Fairmont Hotel, where the 14th Annual Child Abuse Prevention Center (CAPC) luncheon took place.

The 450 guests overflowed the Venetian Room and spilled over into the Fountain Room. I was surprised to see that nearly half the attendees were men, unusual for a charity luncheon and a sign that this is a really compelling issue.

Welcoming the crowd, emcee **Cheryl Jennings** (co-anchor for ABC7/KGO0TV) recalled that when she got involved in the charity, child abuse “wasn’t talked about.” But she saw its horrible effects, “and I had to do something about it.”



The Fairmont Hotel sits atop Nob Hill, one of the many hills of San Francisco.

CAPC Executive Director **Katie Albright**, the daughter of former Secretary of State **Madeleine Albright** and a former member of the District Attorney's office, found her passion in this cause. Many women have told her, "I don't know what I would have done if CAPC did not exist."

The CAPC facility on Waller Street offers a protective community where children are offered food, shelter, and psychological support. Each year, in a city where 6,000 child abuse cases are reported annually, its 24/7 TALK hotline handles 18,000 calls.

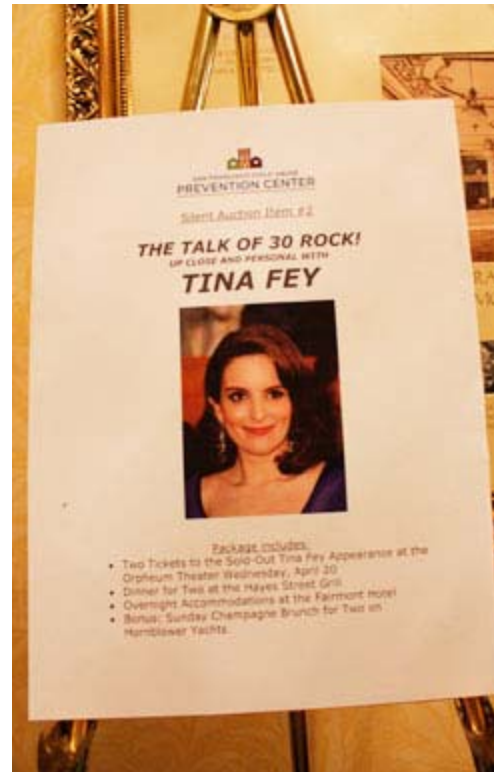
The keynote speaker, **Dr. Harvey Karp**, challenged the myth that babies need quiet. Since there's constant rocking and noise (like a vacuum cleaner) in the womb, he explained, to a baby, being in a quiet room is like being locked in a closet.



The historic Fairmont Hotel's newly renovated lobby.

An assistant professor of pediatrics at the USC School of Medicine, Karp is the author of *Happiest Baby on the Block*. Dr. Karp showed a video illustrating techniques for calming a crying baby in 20 seconds. These are helpful in preventing child abuse, since crying is the prime trigger for causing shaken-baby syndrome and postpartum depression.

Board Chair **Chris Keane** introduced honoree **Dr. Moses Grossman**, a pioneer in the field of child abuse. Now a professor emeritus at UCSF, where he spent 40 years, he established the Child Abuse Council and TALK line in the late 60s. "It's better to prevent abuse than deal with the aftermath," he said.



Honorary Director Linda Cannon looking at auction items: tickets to the Tina Fey show and the Ellen DeGeneres Show.

Oh, no, I thought, when after lunch yet another auction was introduced. But this one was quick, lively, and fun, and everyone could participate. Thanks to a clever bidding structure, you could participate whether you were bidding \$5,000 or \$100.

Proof that people consider this cause so important: The luncheon raised \$316,650, up a whopping 25% from last year's event.



Kathy Baxter, Dr. Moses Grossman, and his sister Deborah Grossman Garber.



Joel Goodrich, Gail Glasser, and Jorge Maumer.



Keynote Speaker Dr. Harvey Karp and Katie Albright. Jeanne Lawrence and Linda Canon.



Board Member Robert R. Callan, Jr., with parents Bob and Barbara Callan, and his brother Jeff Callan.



Anchor Cheryl Jennings and Exec Director Katie Albright.



Heather Rodriguez, luncheon co-chair.



Jane Wolf and Lisa Spinali (standing) with Victoria Raiser and Helen Raiser.



Exec Director Katie Albright and Jo-Ann Rose Host Committee Auxiliary Member.



Shannon Cronan and Cheri Spolin.



Michela Alioto-Pier (in front), Karim Tahawi, Patrick Mead, and Elizabeth Tahawi.



Seated Nancy Dionne, Mette Qvistaard and Julia Ledyard with Roy and Patty Shimek, long-time supporters.



The Napa Valley auctioneer family Rely Pio Roda with son Richard and daughter Gina were outstanding.



Volunteers Yolande Heller and Carrie Northrop.

Déjà Vu in the Venetian Room

Many of us at the luncheon reminisced about the Venetian Room's glory days. From 1947 to 1989, it was one of America's great supper clubs, like the Café Carlyle in New York that was home to **Bobby Short** for 36 years.

Tony Bennett was among the many stars who appeared at the Venetian. It was there that in 1961 he introduced his signature song, "I Left My Heart in San Francisco."



The Venetian Room was once the famous supper club where show business legends such as Leona Horn, Tony Bennett, Marlene Dietrich (I was in the audience), Bobby Short, and Joel Grey performed.

“It was the most chic place, not a tourist spot,” said **Linda Cannon**, a CAPC co-founder. “Now it seems that only Las Vegas can afford such performers,” she lamented.

The Venetian Room is just one of Nob Hill’s attractions. After lunch, I walked around the block and was again reminded why I love living here. It is home to three luxury hotels (where I can eat, go to the gym, and grab a taxi), Grace Cathedral, the lovely Huntington Park, and the cable cars; and Chinatown and Little Italy are just a five-minute walk—downhill!



After lunch, I strolled in little known garden at the Fairmont Hotel.



I meandered around my Nob Hill neighborhood. Once tycoon James Flood lived in this house that is now home to the exclusive Pacific-Union Club.



The French Gothic Grace Cathedral has an indoor and outdoor labyrinth for meditation modeled after France's Chartres Cathedral.



Huntington Park forms the heart of Nob Hill and is a lovely spot to sun, read, walk the dogs, or swing in the children's playground.



The "Fountain of the Tortoises," a replica of one in Rome. The Nob Hill Association funded its restoration.

MUSEUM OF CRAFT AND FOLK ART

The Museum of Craft and Folk Art (MOCFA) recently honored philanthropists **Dorothy Saxe** and her late husband **George Saxe** with a luncheon called Crafted 2011. Board Member **Linda Zider** invited me as her guest.

A jewel of a museum formerly at Fort Mason by the Bay, MOCFA recently moved to the more central Yerba Buena Lane. Connecting Mission and Market Street, the alley is also home to the Jewish Contemporary Museum.

On a sunny day at the Four Seasons Hotel, luncheon guests were greeted by the Event Chair **Toby Rose**, a museum board member and founder of the SF Fall Antiques show, and the museum's Executive Director **Jennifer McCabe**.



Museum of Craft and Folk Art (MOCFA).

Young Board chair **Erin McClure** praised the Saxes for being “an inspiration. Your passion and commitment are the greatest gifts.”

The Saxes began collecting studio glass or glass sculpture after a visit to the Corning Glass Museum in upstate New York and went on to acquire works in ceramic, wood,

fiber, and metal.

In two decades, they amassed one of the country's leading collections of contemporary craft and were included in *Art and Antiques* magazine's list of the top ten U.S. collectors.



Gertrud Parker, founder of MOCFA with Cissie Swig, honorary chair of event.

They have gifted the **Dorothy and George Saxe** Collection of Contemporary Craft to San Francisco's de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park. It includes works by **Robert Arneson, Dale Chihuly, Viola Frey, Sam Maloof, Manuel Neri, Peter Voulkos, and Beatrice Wood.**

Cissie Swig, honorary chair of the luncheon, praised the Saxes as "loyal and civic-minded philanthropists." Their home, she said, was filled not only with objects but also with friends, many of whom were artists, and how the couple integrated their art with their daily home life.



View of Market Street from the Four Season Hotel balcony.



Another view of the historic buildings from the hotel.

Dorothy Saxe said she'd left her notes at home, "so "I'm going to wing it"—and she did, brilliantly. She joshed that she's considered "the most expensive friend" in her crowd, since she inspired so many others to become collectors, too.

Dorothy acknowledged the generosity of her children. Offered anything from the collection, they asked her to give the most important pieces to the museum first. When she conveyed thanks from herself and on behalf of her late husband, many of us were moved to tears.



Director Jennifer McCabe with curator Natasha Boas.



Phyllis Moldaw, Toby Rose, and Roz Mervin.



Son Loren Saxe, grandson Aaron Saxe, daughter-in-law Shelley Saxe, Dorothy Saxe, and daughter Ellen Saliman.



Gretchen Kimball and Marianne Peterson.



Andrea Sandvig and Marcie Levine.



Curator Tim Burgard (Fine Arts Museum)
with artist
June Schwarcz.



Jeanne Lawrence, Shelby de Quesada, Ken Paige and Linda Zider.



Maribelle Leavitt and Lucia Eames.



Curator Natasha Boas, Llisa Demetrios, and Lucia Eames.



Linda Elliott Zider with parents Don and Jan Elliott.



Steve Leavitt, Connie Wolf, and Dara Soloman.



Director Jennifer McCabe, Tom DiMaria (Director, Creative Growth Art Center, Oakland), and Lisa Demetrios.



An evening event at the Museum of Craft and Folk Art.



MOCFA has a wonderful shop of crafts.



All ages participated.



A festive night.

Photographs by **Jeanne Lawrence, Drew Altizer, Tom Gibbons.**

*Urbanite Jeanne Lawrence reports on lifestyle and travel from her homes in San Francisco, Shanghai, and New York, and wherever else she finds a good story.

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