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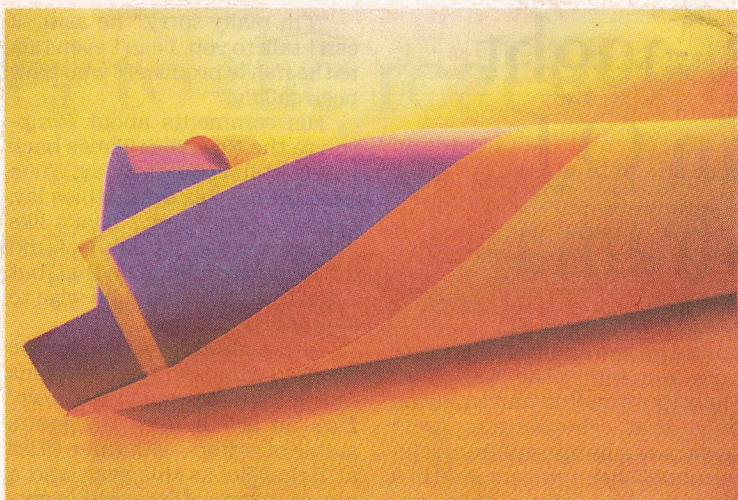
IN L.A.: YSL's Stefano Pilati with pal Liz Goldwyn.

Galanos creations of a different sort

The recent collision of designer superstars was just part of the convergence. From James' marvel of construction at LACMA to the cocoon-like gowns in Viktor & Rolf's Russian Doll collection at the "Skin and Bones" exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art downtown, rarely has there been so much fabulous fashion on display at one time in one city. Taken together, the exhibits showcase some of the most radical, boundary-pushing designs from the last 50 years.

The LACMA exhibit features mostly Japanese and European designers but also turns the spotlight on hometown legends Rudi Gernreich (a to-die-for red knit dress), Gilbert Adrian (a very Hollywood heroine hour-glass-shaped worsted wool suit) and James Galanos (a chunky, beaded lace overdress layered over a bodysuit).

Galanos' impeccable tailoring and hand beading earned him fiercely loyal clients, including Rosalind Russell, Dorothy Lamour, Diana Ross and, most famously, Nancy Reagan. He retired from fashion in 1998, after



JAMES GALANOS

FASHION TO PHOTOS: "It's intuitive," James Galanos says of his photographic work, which has been shown in San Francisco.

LACMA devoted an entire show to his career, and now nurtures his creative side with photography, some of which is about to find its way into a museum as well.

Galanos, 82, creates mirror-image landscapes, as well as abstract compositions. He uses ribbons, paper and fabric cutouts that look as if they could be scraps from the floor of his old studio on Sepulveda Boulevard. Now he does most of his work on his kitchen counter, but still with the same keen eye to color combinations, shadow and light.

In September, he mounted his first photography exhibit at the Serge Sorokko Gallery in San Francisco, with more than 40 works, many of which have already been purchased. Dixie Carter, Wolfgang Puck, Denise Hale and others turned out to fete the designer-turned-artist, while Robert Flynn Johnson of the Achenbach Foundation at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco is selecting a photograph to include in the museum's permanent collection.

"It's intuitive," Galanos said on a sunny afternoon at his stucco house in West Hollywood, where the black granite floors are shined to perfection.

Tatiana Sorokko agrees. A couture enthusiast and former model who runs the gallery with

her husband, Serge, she says of Galanos: "His tools are still the same, but the product is altogether different. I fell in love with these photographs as much as I fell in love with my first Galanos gown."

The Sorokkos learned of Galanos' new hobby through Ralph Rucci, another fashion designer who crossed into fine art, and exhibited his work at the Serge Sorokko Gallery. And to hear Galanos tell it, Rucci is just about the only designer working today who has earned his respect.

"Let's face it, we are living in an age of vulgarity." Even in the tony shops near his house, the clothes "look like rags," Galanos says. "In my day, you couldn't give them away."