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Getting stuffed for art's sake

Santa Monica foundation's backers feast on eateries' finest

By Hunter Drohojowska

If you thought Santa Monica was all beach and no culture, take another look. The Santa Monica Arts Foundation raised a bundle last Tuesday night as 350 art supporters paid \$100 each to nosh on the delicacies of the city's best restaurants.

Under the leadership of art collectors/ restaurateurs Michael McCarty, George Rosenthal and Henry Korn, 13 eateries competed for compliments and contented oohs and aahs. Michel's served a mouth-watering pork tenderloin; Les Anges came up with caviar and sauteed green onions in cream atop a plump fresh oyster; Rebecca's provided authentic, hearty tacos; Valentino won hearts with ravioli; and 72 Market Street's desserts had people standing in line. Gillilands, Camelions, Chinois on Main, Wave and the West Beach Cafe were equally tasty. Only Scratch seemed a little out of the spirit, serving gray lumps of sausage on hard rolls.

The party was held on the pier behind Santa Monica's beautifully restored carousel. Despite a broken foot, McCarty greeted nearly every

guest at the door with theatrical enthusiasm. Rosenthal explained that the foundation was formed as a fund-raising branch of the Santa Monica Arts Commission. The money raised will sponsor public art projects for the natural-elements sculpture park along the beach.

The first will be Carl Cheng's "Santa Monica Art Tool," an 8-foot-wide concrete roller that imbeds the city plan into the sand. The next will be Doug Hollis' wind harp beach chairs.

"This city has a commitment to public access and public art," said Rosenthal.

Among the guests demonstrating their support were Tommy Chong, Anders Holmquist, Joanna Cassidy with Jim Bolden, Peter and Elizabeth Goulds, Kimberly Davis, James Corcoran, Roy and Carol Doumani, Paul Michael Glaser with wife Elizabeth, Marvin and Lee Zeidler, and Weston Neff.

Neff, curator of photography at the J. Paul Getty Museum, nibbled at a selection of apple tarts, flan and cakes. He said with a satisfied sigh, "This is the most imaginative benefit I've attended in the two years I've lived here."

Hunter Drohojowska writes regularly about art for the Herald.