

Recognize That Painting? It May Be Your Vera Scarf

By ENID NEMY

THE Emile Walters Galleries are hung with abstract art this week and if it seems familiar to many, there's good reason. Women have been wearing replicas of the bold geometric and primitive flora and fauna paintings for a quarter of a century.

The exhibit has 50 of Vera Neumann's favorite designs; there are almost 10,000 others at her studio in Ossining, N.Y. For Mrs. Neumann, who started her career as a freelance artist, has built her reputation as Vera, the designer of prints that go into scarves, sportswear and table linens.

'Works of Art'

"They have a feeling of today's graphics," said Marvin Traub, president of Bloomingdale's, who was one of the guests at the champagne preview held last night. "They are works of art in color and design." Among the guests were executives of some of the 10,000 stores in the United States and Canada that carry the Vera designs, including Randolph Stambaugh, president of B. Altman & Co., and Melvin Dawley, president of Lord & Taylor, and a cross-section of women who have won the fashions over the years.

"I always wore the blouses and the little triangle clipped scarves at rehearsals," said

Dame Alicia Markova, who retired recently after six years as director of ballet at the Metropolitan Opera. "I've been wearing Vera's things for 15 years, and this is the first time I've met her." She autographed a color photograph (in a blouse by Vera) for the designer.

Mrs. Martin Gabel (Arlene Francis) said she had been planning to wear her ladybug pin, a Vera trademark, but

that she had left it in the country.

"Oh well, I think there are enough Vera things around tonight anyway," she said looking at the walls of color.

The vernissage took the place of a traditional 25th anniversary party.

"We thought we'd do something useful," Vera said.

For the small, blond artist-designer, the "something useful" is the Fashion Institute

of Technology, which will benefit from the sale of a limited edition of silk screen prints and an unlimited edition of a poster print.

There are four designs in the silk screen prints, each in an edition of 100 and each to be sold at \$100 at the gallery. The choice includes two abstract versions of the sun ("I'm a sun fiend because I'm a Leo"), a circle in a square combining raw shades of yel-

low, red, orange and purple and an interlocked double-arch in green, blue, red, yellow and white. Each is hand-signed and numbered.

One of the most recent (1968) designs, a burst of primary colors intersected with a white V (what do you think that stands for?" Vera asked) was chosen for the poster, which will sell for \$10.

A graduate of the Trap-

hagen School and Cooper Union, Vera's original foray into the business world came in 1945 when she and her late husband, who had been in advertising, decided to pool their talents and their resources. Together with F. Werner Hamm, a friend, they started a company whose first product was place mats.

"We're still delivering those place mats," she said, "We only had a few thousand dollars and that doesn't give you much room for maneuvering."

Components of Success

The use of abstract design in print and the juxtaposition of strong, unrelated colors, both before they became commonplace in fashion, contributed to the company's growth. It now employs 25 artists, a sportswear designer with five assistants and has gone into men's as well as women's fashions, with an annual volume estimated at \$14-million.

Vera designs will soon be on bed linens (for Burlington) and in jigsaw puzzles (Springbok). Other negotiations are under way for such items as gift wrapping paper and party paper ware.

The exhibition, mounted on gauze panels designed by Ken Duncan, will remain at the Galleries (121 East 57 Street) through Saturday. Admission is free.



The New York Times (by Jack Manning)

Among guests at preview of exhibition of designs by Vera, second from left, were Randolph Stambaugh, president of B. Altman & Co., Dame Alicia Markova and Marvin Taub, president of Bloomingdale's.