



When designing new bedsheets for Burlington Mills, Vera worked on the floor to get space to swish brushes around and get the free abstract feeling she wanted.

The best artistic job in all New York

probably belongs to a
5 foot 3, brownish-blond

haired woman known around the world by her first name, Vera. She spends half her time in distant places soaking up local culture and the rest of it converting what she saw into those familiar tablecloths, placemats, blouses, scarves, shirts, ties, picture puzzles, rugs, luggage, wall hangings and now, bed linens.

ALL OF US LUCKY enough to rest our weary bones on a Vera-designed bedsheet also should know that it is a work of art registered in the Library of Congress, as are all Vera designs.

When not in Denmark, India, or Bolivia, Vera [Mrs. Neumann] works in her studio in Ossining, N. Y., just

10 minutes from hearth and family—17-year-old John, 15-year-old Evelyn, four dogs, and two cats—and with a Jaguar XKE to transport her.

"Mostly people think of me as that crazy American," she explained. "I arrive in a country loaded with sketch books, brushes, and camera. I mosey around picking up all sorts of artifacts. From Japan, I brought back 15 tiny paper dolls. The proprietor couldn't imagine why I wanted so many, but there they are," she said, pointing to a blouse in her new fall collection. It was an abstract Japanese print with paper dolls lined up across the bodice.

"I TRY not to make things too specific. That design over there is a Japanese temple. No woman wants to walk around knowing she's wearing a Japanese temple for a blouse. But when it comes to designing sheets you can be as specific and as abstract as you like. When I went to the Burlington Mills, I thought, 'O now, here we go, something will have to be sacrificed because we're working with sheets and requirements, obviously, would be different than those for making a blouse.' But

when the printer would say that this design is impossible, the mill man would say, 'work it out.'

"What I'm really concerned with are standards," Vera added.

IT WAS hard to reconcile all this determination coming from a soft-spoken woman who, on the surface, would seem more predisposed to dabbling in art than to being the head of a gigantic corporation that capitalizes on her talent. Vera's firm, Printex, now is owned by the Manhattan company, a conglomerate which has four department stores among its holdings.

"I'm on the board of directors," she said proudly. "Of course, there are responsibilities. You can't say, 'I'm tired, I don't feel like working anymore.' We have 500 families to whom we are responsible. I do have 25 artists and an art director to help, so I'm not alone."

She looked up and smiled. "It's a far cry from my first hand-screened print done on the kitchen table 25 years ago."

Katherine Pedell Kantor