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Vera Neumann, the artist and designer, holding a scarf she created.

Vera, 84, Artist and Designer Famed for Her Signature Scarves

By WOLFGANG SAXON

Vera, the artist and designer whose name has been emblazoned on brightly printed scarves, bed and table linens, draperies and sportswear for nearly 50 years, died on Tuesday at Phelps Memorial Hospital in North Tarrytown, N.Y. She was 84 and lived in Ossining, N.Y.

The cause was cardiac arrest after surgery, said Tom Costello, a friend and business associate.

Vera Neumann, who used only her first name professionally, was a painter whose work was exhibited in many countries, and her designs typically began as paintings. For motifs, she preferred flowers, leaves, ferns, grass, vegetables, the sun and ladybugs. A "ladybug means good luck in every language," she said.

She introduced the first signature scarf in the late 1940's. Another trend she started was to offer collections saluting the countries she visited in her frequent travels, including Brazil, Denmark, Finland, India and Portugal.

A Taste for Purity

Vera's style could be realistic or abstract. Her penchant for purity could mean a scarf or place mat printed in one color at a time when other designers might have used a dozen.

"If you have too many colors," she explained, "you could easily get tied

down to just one color scheme that can't be changed." A shy, private person, she did not like to make speeches. "Color is the language I speak best," she said.

Vera was born in Stamford, Conn., and took night classes at Cooper Union, which honored her with its Outstanding Alumna Award. She was a designer of children's furniture and murals when she met and married George Neumann. They and a third partner, F. Werner Hamm, each risked \$1,000 in 1946 to start a business. Its first order, from B. Altman, was for three place mats, made of parachute silk and hand-delivered by Mr. Hamm.

The enterprise prospered. By 1977, Vera designs were sold in more than 1,200 stores, with sales of more than \$100 million. The company had been bought 10 years earlier for \$5 million by Manhattan Industries and has been a division of Salant Corporation since 1988. Vera Companies — Scarves by Vera and Linens by Vera — has showrooms on Fifth Avenue, and Vera herself continued to supply designs until several months ago.

Vera's husband died in 1960. She is survived by her daughter, Evelyn Fyler of Ossining; her son, John Neumann of Carmel, N.Y., and four grandchildren.