

# It's as If Home's Decor Had Signature of Vera And a Ladybug Symbol

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CROTON, N. Y.—The dining room ell, with the table set for lunch, was distraction enough: the stone floor and severe wooden table a background for a sunny harmony of oranges and yellows in the flowers, the napkins, the placemats. Even the hostess wore yellow—a printed pants suit strewn with poppies and touches of wildflowers.

Suddenly a little insect appeared and crawled across the hostess's orange linen placemat. "My goodness!" she cried. "It's a ladybug."

There was a momentary silence at the table, and then an amused and slightly startled burble of comment. For the hostess was Vera, the textile designer. And the symbol that appears in the corner of everything she produces, alongside her boldly scrawled name, is a ladybug. It was fitting that the dining room scene should have been

underscored by Vera's orange-spotted good luck symbol. For the room is as personal and colorful and lively as any of the more deliberate designs she has been producing for better than a quarter of a century.

And so it is with every corner of her house. It is as if she cannot hang a bird-house in a tree or fill a vase with flowers or set a bowl on a shelf, or place a chair next to a sculpture without having those square inches of lightly filled space fall into an arrangement that enchants the eye and bears her signature . . . in the air.

## A Modest Beginning

Vera Neumann lives in a one-level glass and wood house that fits snugly into a wooded hillside above the Hudson River. Its spare geometry of boxes and planes acts as a kind of frame for Vera's arrangements. Marcel Breuer, who was the architect, clearly understood.

When Vera and her late husband, George, had the house built 16 years ago, their fortunes were beginning to rise. Mr. Neumann, a businessman who escaped from Vienna with his parents in the thirties, had been her partner from the beginning.

And the beginning was modest enough. She had a tiny studio in Manhattan ("a little smaller than my present dining room") with just about enough room to do some silk-screening on a kitchen table. They took in a friend, Werner Hamm—who is still Vera's partner—

and each put \$1,000 into the business.

It started with linen table mats and then, when they couldn't get the fabric because of postwar scarcities, Vera turned to scarves—"because there was plenty of parachute silk."

Today, her designs sell in 20,000 stores throughout the world. She has always signed her work. "Because they were always paintings first

that were then transferred to other things," she explained. The ladybug was just for good luck.

She lives now with her two adopted children, John, 19, who wants to be a painter, and Evelyn, 17, who is interested in animal husbandry. Not surprisingly, most of the bedspreads, draperies, and table and bath linens in her home are Vera designs. But, perhaps surprisingly, she does

not design especially for herself, but takes things from existing lines.

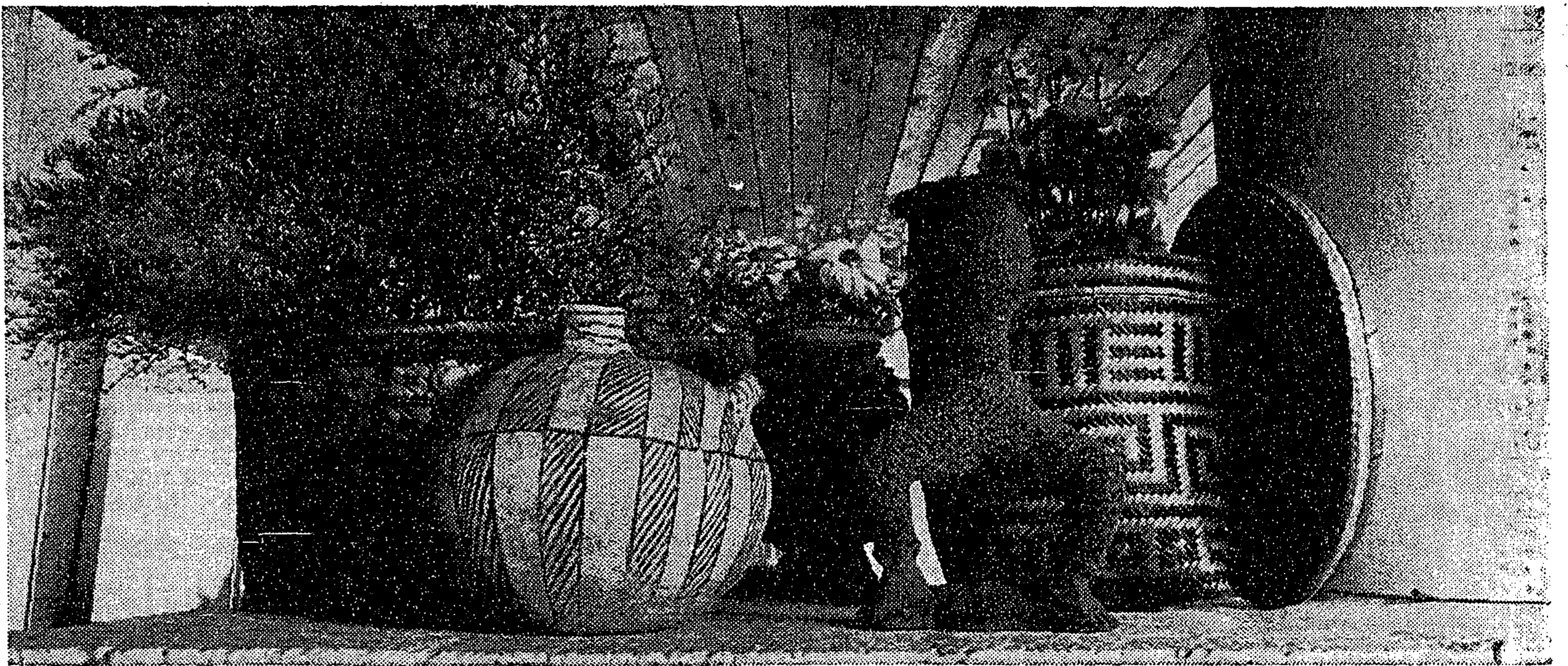
"I had to buy that in Macy's," she said, pointing to one of her designs—a purple flowered comforter—in her daughter's bedroom. "It was just the simplest way to get it."

This has been a year of awards for Vera. Last week she was honored at the Smithsonian Institution in an

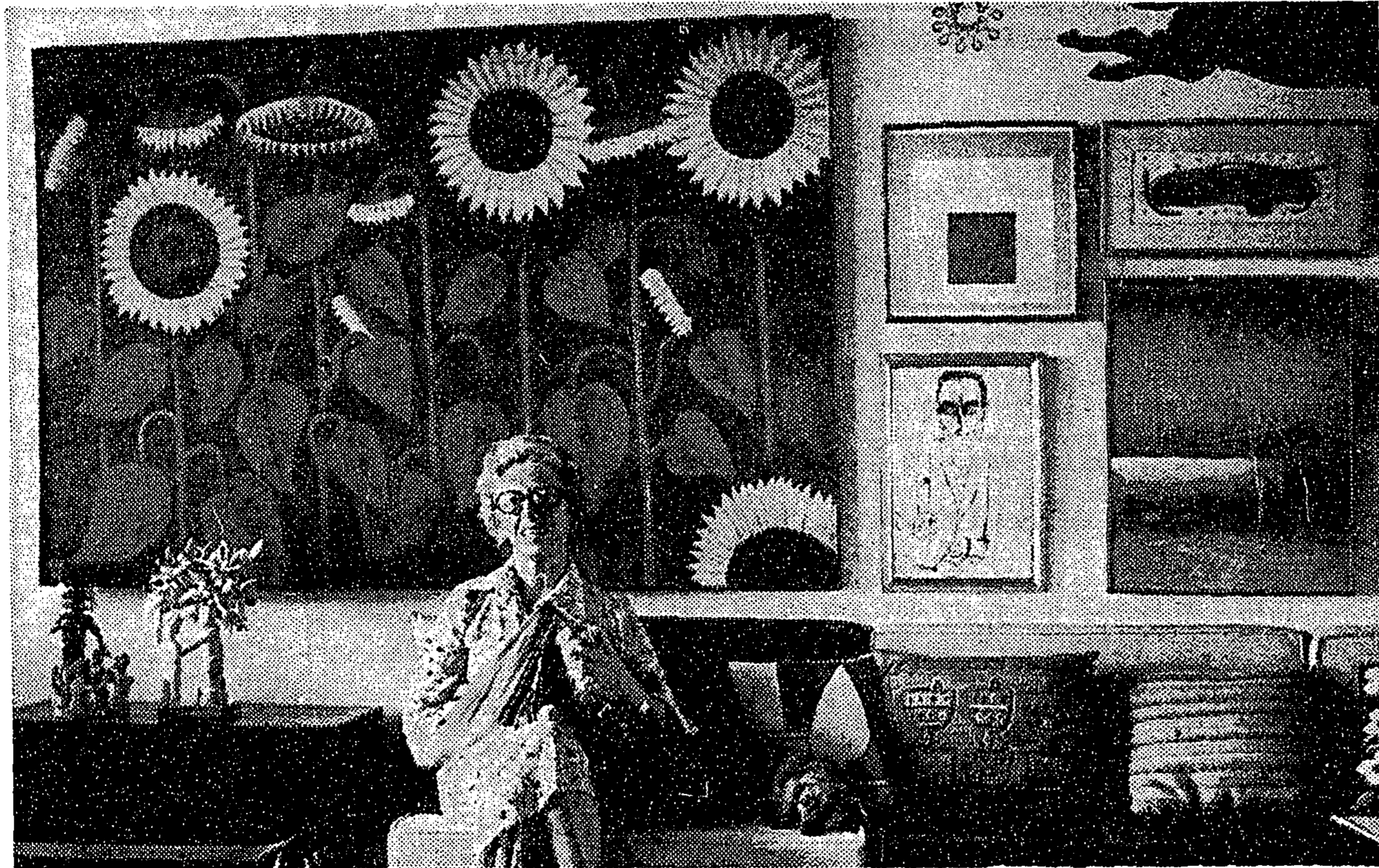
evening's program called, "Vera: the Renaissance Woman."

And indeed, there is almost nothing she hasn't designed—clothing, accessories, lingerie, bed and table linens, needlepoint and posters.

Is there anything else she wants to try? Well, she thought she'd like to do painting for its own sake, she said. "And one day soon, I'd like to go to China."



Almost everything in the home of Vera, the textile designer—whether an arrangement of accessories, the placement of furniture, the contrast of textures or the hanging of paintings—becomes design. Above, a casual cluster of geometric pots and baskets, with flowers; left, Vera in a floral print sits beneath a painting of sunflowers; below, furniture, architectural elements and paintings all work together to form a precise pattern in her dining room.



Photographs for The New York Times by BILL ALLER

