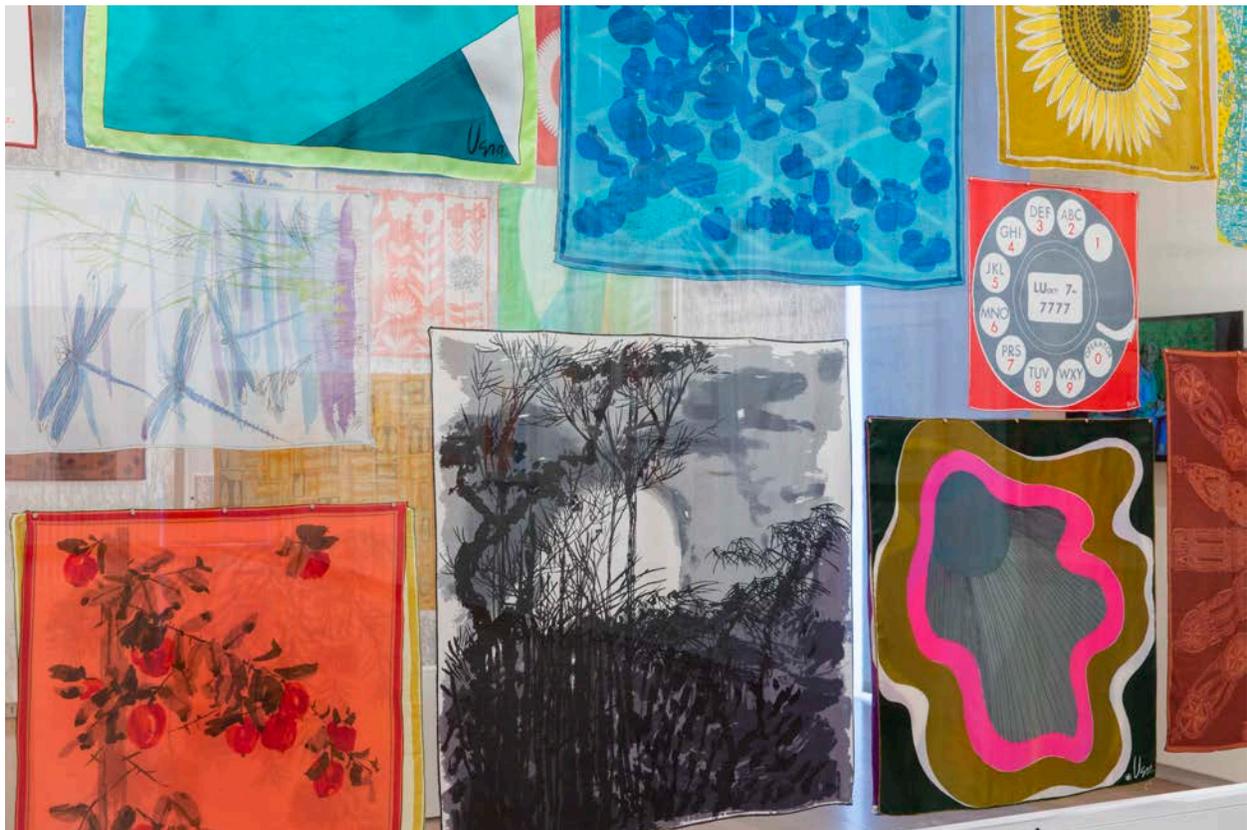




museum of arts and design

**MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN EXHIBITION CELEBRATES WORK
OF ARTIST, DESIGNER, AND ENTREPRENEUR VERA NEUMANN**

Vera Paints a Scarf: The Art and Design of Vera Neumann
August 8, 2019 – January 26, 2020



Installation view of *Vera Paints a Scarf*. Photo: Jenna Bascom.

NEW YORK, NY (August 8, 2019) – The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) presents *Vera Paints a Scarf: The Art and Life of Vera Neumann*, the first museum exhibition to comprehensively examine the career of American artist and designer **Vera Neumann** (1907-1993). On view from August 8, 2019 through January 26, 2020, the exhibition spotlights one of the most successful female design entrepreneurs of the 20th century, and tells the story of an originator of the American lifestyle brand through more than 200 works—from a selection of Neumann’s paintings, the source of her whimsical design motifs, to her signature scarves, fashions, textiles, and table linens signed with a cursive “Vera” and stamped with a ladybug.

“Created in a fresh, modern style that combined simple yet expressive lines with a vivid palette, Vera’s distinctive designs, ranging from the nature inspired to the abstract, struck a chord with

women consumers at mid-century and beyond, driving her popular and commercial success,” said **Elissa Auther**, Windgate Research and Collections Curator at MAD. “Vera firmly believed that fine art should be accessible to all, and that this goal could be realized by injecting good design at an affordable price point into everyday life.”

Following her graduation in 1928 from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art with a fine arts degree in painting, Neumann went on to study at Manhattan’s Traphagen School of Design. There she was introduced to the idea of a career in design that bridged the fine and commercial arts. Inspired by the Bauhaus philosophy, which encouraged the union of art, craft, and industry, Neumann and her business partner and husband, **George Neumann**, launched Vera Industries in 1942 with reproductions of her artworks silkscreened onto napkins and placemats.

Sections of the exhibition highlight Neumann’s biography and the history of the company she helmed from 1942 until her death in 1993; the fine art that fueled her designs, painted using the East Asian *sumi-e* technique; the scarf, a hallmark accessory of the company, produced in an array of sizes, shapes, fabrics, and color ways; the company’s use of clever marketing, especially the “Vera Paints...” tagline that associated Neumann’s work as a designer with her identity as a fine artist; promotional materials inspired by her international travels; samples of the label’s sportswear range, including its first foray into fashion with the 1957 “Jollytop;” and the coordinated patterns of tablecloths, napkins, placemats, and tablewares that enlivened everyday dining.

Vera Industries, built on the foundation of her joyful and inventive aesthetic, democratic design ethos, fusion of craft and mass production, and ingenious marketing strategies, remains a relevant business model today. During the fifty active years of Neumann’s enterprise, she maintained close control over every aspect of product development and manufacture, trademarked her name, copyrighted some 8,000 designs, and grossed more than \$100 million in retail sales revenue.

Programs and events at the Museum related to *Vera Paints a Scarf* will extend the exhibition content, and includes a series of exclusive, private tours led by special guest docents, beginning on August 16 with comedian and downtown New York icon **Murray Hill** and a Design Happy Hour with a September 18 workshop led by artist, designer, and educator **Karen Fuchs**, inspired by Neumann’s botanical textiles.

In partnership with Bard Graduate Center, MAD will host The Rational Dress Society’s *History of Counter Fashion*, an immersive presentation combining a slide lecture, music, and models wearing examples of historical counter-fashion from the sans-culottes of revolutionary France to the Italian Tute Bianche of the 1990s. A panel discussion about Vera Neumann’s career and legacy, moderated by the host of the Design Matters podcast **Debbie Millman**, will be held on November 23.

Vera: The Life and Art of an Icon, a 208-page tome written by **Susan Seid** with design journalist and editor **Jen Renzi** accompanies the exhibition. The book’s pages are filled with the designer’s original sketches and paintings, personal and commercial photographs, marketing materials, and contemporary photographs by **Steven Meckler**.

EXHIBITON CREDITS

Vera Paints a Scarf: The Art and Design of Vera Neumann is curated by Elissa Auther, MAD’s Windgate Research and Collections Curator with the support of Curatorial Assistant Alida Jekabson. Additional support was provided by Rachael Schwabe and George Tiger Liu.

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

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