

PAINTED MEMORIES

A selection of historical paint references

By Peter Walters

To celebrate International Women's Day, March 8, my March 2005 Painted Memories will reproduce coatings related items that reflect the changing roles of females in our industry.

I commenced my full time career in the Paint Industry by obtaining a position as a Technical Officer with Dulux New Zealand Ltd in Panmure at the beginning of 1975. Irrespective of my qualifications, experience or ability, this position would not have been offered to me if I had been a member of the female gender.

Fellow female chemistry graduates from my final undergraduate year, comprising around 20% of our Stage 3 classes, were expected to teach, or accept a comparatively menial job in industry until such time as they were married. Industrial Chemistry was considered too dirty or macho for "members of the fairer sex". Besides, as the Personnel Officer at Dulux at the time said to me, "Graduates are employed with the expectation that they will move into executive and managerial positions within the company". To him it went without saying that such positions were the exclusive domain of males.

In my youthful zeal, fresh out of the revolutionary hotbed of Auckland University, I was astounded at this blatant discrimination. Reflecting the changing attitude in our society the Human Rights Act was passed in 1977 outlawing such discrimination, hence my interest when the first of the following two advertisements was published in the Auckland Star on Saturday 24 February 1979. As can be seen from the second of those advertisements, published Monday 26 February 1979, watchdogs were out to correct any breaches of The Human Rights Act. I did wonder at the time which class of graduate fell outside the groupings of "Male or Female" that Dulux felt it necessary to explicitly state that they were only interested in Male or Female graduates.

DULUX
24/2/79
MALE GRADUATES
BSc—MSc
CHEMISTRY

We are looking for male graduates who have just completed their degree.

The company is a subsidiary of ICI and is the largest paint manufacturing company in New Zealand.

There are two manufacturing plants in Auckland and Wellington.

The positions available are in our Auckland plant in either of our two laboratories.

The nature of work would cover:

- (a) Development of paints, e.g.
Automotive
2. Industrial
3. House paints
4. Maintenance coatings
5. Powder paints.

- (b) Costing formulations.
- (c) Testing of raw materials.
- (d) Testing of paint during manufacture and finished product.
- (e) Computer: Utilization of stored information.
- (f) Specifications and testing of paint durability.
- (g) Extension of knowledge and expertise by working with long-service and highly qualified paint chemists.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES: Enthusiasm and aptitude and the ability to work with people can lead to management promotion in fields such as technical production, sales, marketing, computer systems.

Salaries are paid according to degree or qualifications.

For further information write or phone
PERSONNEL OFFICER,
DULUX NEW ZEALAND LTD,
P.O. BOX 1009, Auckland.
PHONE 577-159.424692

DULUX
26/2/79
MALE OR FEMALE GRADUATES
BSc—MSc
CHEMISTRY

We are looking for graduates who have just completed their degree.

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Personnel Officer,
DULUX NEW ZEALAND LTD,
P.O. Box 1009, Auckland
Phone 577-159

My recollection is that OCCA at the time had only one female member, a chemist working for an ink manufacturer.

I understand the frustration of female chemists in the incredulity they are sometimes received by customers. Particularly the older generation of male customer who, when having a problem with their finish, do not take kindly to having the errors of their ways pointed out by an uppity female. After all they have been painting successfully for 30 years, and what would a woman know?

Marketing Departments will tell you how difficult it is to market a product which does not gel with the product or brand's perception in the marketplace. Office temp agencies have real difficulties placing male office workers in what is regarded as a "female role". If your profession does not match the popular image held for members of that profession, expect resistance, incredulity and surprise.

At the time there was one area in which females were preferred in the marketing of paint, namely "sex sells". To illustrate reproduced are three Taubmans colour cards from 1969;



These cards already illustrate the changing perception of male and female roles in society, no longer do we see the helpless character as portrayed by Fay Wray in the 1932 version of King Kong, these women are more like the strong and assertive Emma Peel character portrayed by Diana Rigg in the cult 1960's British TV series "The Avengers".

Female colleagues, have patience with the older generation, both male and female. Females have been employed in your role for only 26 years, therefore you will need to allow another 25 years before this gender bias dies out as this older generation departs the workforce or this mortal coil.