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HEMA

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For the remarkable use of form and color in different retail concepts (from product packaging to publicity, the layout of shops to the design and organization of the website) of the department store.

The 2004 Sikkens Prize was awarded to the HEMA as an example of a large department store which devotes constant attention to the color and design of a broad range of articles for everyday use, intended for the general public. Because of its company strategy with a respectable tradition in which the development, research and provision of articles with a contemporary design, good quality and low prices have priority, the HEMA still provides an unusual and significant contribution to everyday culture in the Netherlands today.

Because of its use of a moderate modernist design and its use of color, both in its own brand articles and in the large-scale campaigns of (re)styling the packaging, to the layout of the stores, the HEMA has developed a strategy which makes it possible to respond to the constantly changing trends, preferences and demands of a varied consumer public, without setting a trend itself.

Since 1926, the company history of the HEMA has been characterized by a number of far-reaching changes in management, product development, marketing, range and above all styling, in which design and color have had an important role. In the HEMA, color serves as both an unremarkable and determining element of the store and company formula, which is always modern without having a consciously modern, let alone fashionable image. While primary colors and a businesslike, non-decorative design originally symbolized good quality and a low price, a more careful use of color, form and materials was adopted in the 1980s in order to ensure the visual identity of a range composed in a diverse way of “basics” and trendy design articles with a neutral taste.

From the late 1990s, the HEMA once again worked on large-scale restyling and on a presentation concept in which everything, from the packaging of the smallest article to the layout of the stores, was modified and renewed. The almost eighty year long tradition of the use of primary colors and simple designs was not abandoned, but was given a different function – above all, a spatial and

logistical function – in the changing company formula. Under pressure of the dynamics of market conditions in the retail sector, the HEMA introduced a logistical reorganization and developed an integrated retail system with which the culture of the client and consumer were more clearly revealed in the total organization of the company. The changes in the electronic environment in the company also thoroughly changed the image of the HEMA in the external world and for the client. New presentation concepts were developed for its department stores in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Amersfoort, in which the relationship with graphic elements, photography and color played a logistic role in the communication between the client, the space (in the store) and the range.

As a result of the remarkable use of form and color in different retail concepts – from product packaging to publicity, the layout of the stores to the design and organization of the website, the HEMA has increased the public quality of its commercial services as a large department store and in this way also underlines the cultural and social dimension of shopping and consumerism.