

KEITH ROCKA KNITTEL
LOS ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST

1.

The Los Angeles National Forest (a short drive in any direction) is fiction.

In 1958, David Tallichet founded Specialty Restaurants Corporation. His company's first projects were two Polynesian themed restaurants, Reef in Long Beach, California, and Castaway in Glendale, California. These restaurants signaled the birth of the theme restaurant – restaurants where the focus on a concept and décor was more important than the food.

In the theme restaurant, time spirals on a horizontal axis. The present is represented by a version of a past – in some cases a version of a past that never existed. Time neither progresses nor regresses, nor stops in place. A phenomenal time expanding outward and back on its self, infinitely perpendicular to “real” time.

Tallichet designed, financed and built more than one hundred restaurants across the United States, including the Proud Bird near Los Angeles International Airport, and 94th Aero Squadron near Van Nuys Airport. Both restaurants drew on Tallichet's experience as an Air Force pilot during World War II in their aviation influenced themes and designs.

*History is the aesthetic
Reliquary is the meaning
Action is the reason*

2.

On Los Angeles National Forest freeways trucks drop ladders and mattresses.

“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”

-The Wilderness Act of 1964

3.

Nothing is as natural as the Los Angeles National Forest, and nothing ever will be.

-or-

Palm trees lean and beckon in the Los Angeles National Forest.

In Stanley Kramer's 1963 film *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, characters dash across Southern California in search of a treasure located in Santa Rosita State Park near the Mexican border. The characters are told the treasure – \$350,000 from a tuna factory robbery – can be found under “a big ‘W’” in the park.

Santa Rosita State Park is actually a private estate known as Portuguese Point, located in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, near Los Angeles. Rancho Palos Verdes is on the Palos Verdes Peninsula at the south end of Santa Monica Bay. Once an island off the coast of Los Angeles, Palos Verdes became a peninsula when the space between the island and the mainland filled with deposits from nearby mountain ranges.

Portuguese Point is in the Portuguese Bend section of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, the largest area of natural vegetation remaining on the peninsula. Most of the area is geologically unstable and is unsuitable for building because Portuguese Bend is slowly sliding into the Pacific Ocean.

The “big ‘W’” in Santa Rosita State Park was four palm trees, the left and right trees leaning outward, the two middle palm trees forming an “X.” All that remains of the original “big ‘W’” is one diagonal stump, viewable from nearby Abalone Cove Shoreline Park.

Harry Snyder, founder of the fast-food chain In 'N' Out Burger claimed It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World as one of his favorite movies, and the "big 'W'" factors heavily into the burger chain's corporate identity. A crossed palm tree motif can be found on the company's signage, promotional materials, and collectable items. Some of the chain's 281 locations have palm trees outside manipulated to form a big X. These crossed palm trees act as both a crest representative of an idealized Southern California beach and an x-marks-the-spot allusion to hidden treasure (and a secret menu).

The palm tree is non-native and purely ornamental in Los Angeles, most arriving in the early 20th century in an attempt at making the Southern California coast a Western Mediterranean equivalent. Palm trees planted during Hollywood's golden age are nearing the end of their natural life spans. Drought and the arrival of the red palm weevil (native to tropical Asia) fare poorly for newer trees. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has decided not to replace dying or dead palm trees with new ones, and has rather opted for native, drought-tolerant, shade-producing trees, marking perhaps the end of the palm tree's reign in L.A.



DOUBLEXELBUOD
(animal style)

4.

There is a parking lot in the Los Angeles National Forest with yellow and white lines as cues of restraint.

“We Call It Brown. They Call It ‘Weekend in the Country.’”

By Katharine Q. Seelye, The New York Times

If you heard the words “Tempest,” “Turbulence,” and “Tornado Watch,” you might head for the basement — fast.

Paint manufacturers want you to head for the living room.

In a redoubled effort to capture consumers’ attention in this sputtering economic recovery, some paint companies are hoping to distinguish their brands with names that tell a story, summon a memory or evoke an emotion — even a dark one — as long as they result in a sale. What they do not do is reveal the color.

“For a long time we had to connect the color name with the general color reference,” said Sue Kim, the color trend and forecast specialist for the Valspar paint company. “But now,” Ms. Kim added, “we’re exploring color names that are a representation of your lifestyle.”

Thus, Valspar, which once featured “Apricot 1” through “Apricot 6,” now offers “Weekend in the Country,” a name that might put you in mind of an idyllic getaway or a Stephen Sondheim tune but that will not convey a specific hue. (For the record, it is the color of mud — perhaps not such a great weekend after all.)

Sherwin-Williams offers “Synergy.” From Ace Paint comes “Hey There!” Benjamin Moore has “Old World Romance,” all names that give new meaning to the term colorblind.

“Color names are marketing tools, meaning they help sell paint,” said Lyne Castonguay, merchandising vice president for paint at The Home Depot.

With home sales depressed, there is new urgency to that mission. The fortunes of interior paints (“architectural coatings,” in industry lingo) are tied to the housing market. Paint sales tumbled when the housing bubble burst, and while they edged up 6.7 percent last year over the previous year, they have not rebounded to the peak level of more than \$9 billion in 2007.

Even with a fresh coat of creativity — like fanciful names — sales could slow again, as more housing remains stalled in foreclosure, new construction sags, and consumers face higher paint prices because of the rising costs of raw materials.

“Emotional color names in neutral shades and color combos are crucial for successful home sales,” Ms. Castonguay said, citing as examples Home Depot’s Behr Collection names like “Quietude,” “Rejuvenate,” and “Cozy Cottage.”

Pete Appezzato, 36, who works in sales, was surveying the staggering number of paint chips at a Home Depot the other day. Many, he thought, are “just weird,” but he was not impervious to the appeal of names. He first bought “Crème Brûlée,” a Martha Stewart color, because he liked the sound. But after trying it in his kitchen, he was not happy, and he painted over the room.

After his fourth try, he settled on colors that sounded decidedly upscale: “Prestige” for the walls and, for inside the cabinets, “Polished Leather.” He found that “Polished Leather” actually looked polished, and said happily that it reminded him of a leather bag he once owned.

5.

*[Non native] palm trees
line the 110 Freeway
in layers toward
each horizon.*

At dusk they look half in flight.

*A black explosion
on a pink field*

A grey explosion on a purple one.

In morning light they sway.

*In morning light they lean
to the South*

in the direction the wind normally blows.

*Their lean is the weight of a thousand lifetimes-
the way that rocks and glass get smoother in the sea
or the way a canyon was once
a river.*

*Balanced on a stem in reverse gravity
the tops sink to the sky.*

*But mostly they look like kites
barely aloft in a light breeze.*

*One change in the wind's direction and they will spiral down-
ward*

*crashing into houses, streets, and lawns
into strip malls and donut shops
into dead dogs on the side of the road
into sideways shopping carts and
chain-link fences*

into stadiums and courthouses

*into early morning bars and
weed shops*

*and into five dollar clothing stores where
headless mannequins wear dresses made from
one dollar fabrics.*

