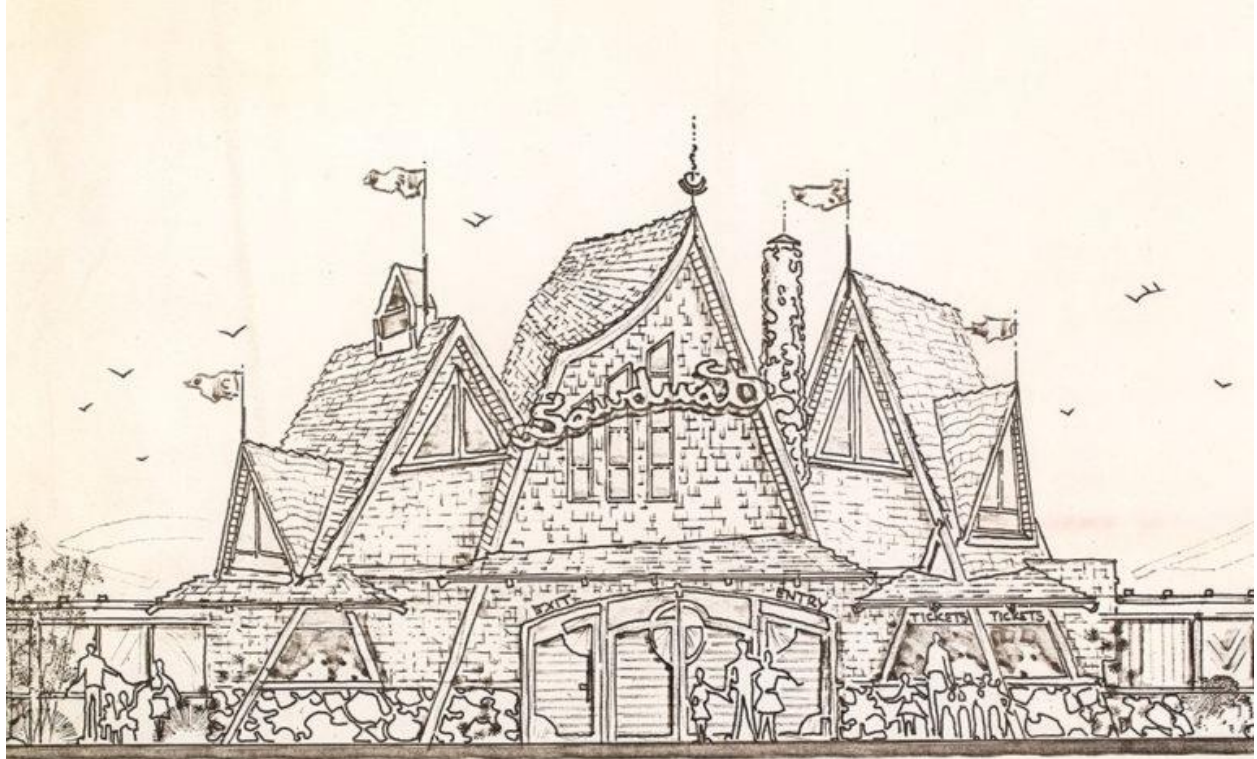


Laguna's Art Festival Facade Features Iconic Local Architecture

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Sawdust Art Festival Facade Rendering

Of the three Laguna Beach summer art festivals, including Festival of Arts and Art-A-Fair, the Sawdust Art Festival is often considered the most idiosyncratic. Its grounds and DIY-style architecture is entertainingly eclectic with some artists and exhibitors still proudly flying the freak flag as veterans of the hippie movement. What regular visitors may not realize, however, is that the festival's distinctive façade features architectural styles that mirror and appropriate historic homes from around town.

The genesis of the facade occurred in 1987 when the Sawdust's board determined that the festival needed a permanent exterior and entrance to replace the temporary rough-hewn one that was rebuilt every year. They asked local designers to submit plans. Jim Lashley, a Laguna Beach architect, had been observing the city's unusual and often quirky buildings for decades. His design included local homes as models for the festival's main edifice and for its adjoining west and east structures. The Sawdust board was intrigued by his plans, and chose him to create the new facade.

Lashley modeled the festival's main entrance on an unusual structure called "The Witch's House" on Wave Street in north Laguna. Designed and built in the late 1920s by Los Angeles architect Vernon Barker, the home is on the National Register of Historic Places. Lashley explains that when this house was built, Laguna had no building department and no codes, enabling architects to design eccentric residences with little oversight.

Today the Sawdust's main entrance and the Witch's House are like mirror images, with each structure featuring steep, soaring gables facing in different directions, irregular shake shingles and oddly shaped windows, with some broad and others tall and narrow, along with angled doors. Both also contain fanciful, fairytale inspired stone chimneys.

The Sawdust's west facade, to the right of the main entrance, is even more eclectic. The design was based on a vintage home on High Drive, which was built with natural rock. Lashley's design includes an arched doorway and window and a silo-type tower or chimney. Intricate, colorful tiles by local ceramic artist Marlo Bartels border the arched doorway and the window that divides the lower stone work from the upper wooden walls.



Sawdust Art Festival Facade

For the facade's east section, Lashley selected a Cotswold-style design and included stucco walls, a large central chimney, simulated thatched roofs and steep arched gables. The inspiration for this section is a home on Virginia Park Drive near Laguna 's high school. To the right of this section, a low-slung facade, made primarily of wood, features pitched roofs and square symmetrical windows. It was inspired by the American Craftsman style of architecture, specifically by a residence on the corner of Carmelita and Pearl Streets in Laguna Beach.

Lashley also designed a classic craftsman style building on the Sawdust grounds. Known as Healy House, it features extensive use of wood, an open interior and broad window seats, and is used for a variety of community events throughout the year.

Jim Lashley explains that with his father in the military, he "grew up observing all kinds of cultures and buildings." He studied architecture at USC, and soon after designed a home in Laguna Beach for a former college roommate. The architect fell in love with the city, especially with its vernacular, hand-made homes, and moved there after college graduation in the late 1950s. He soon began designing and remodeling houses all over the city, often working in the craftsman style.

When visiting the festival, look for a plaque near the main entrance that honors Lashley. He is also a Sawdust Art Festival exhibitor, displaying his ceramic vases and small art objects in booth 425.

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