

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAGUNA ART-A-FAIR

In 1967, as the tide moved away from Representational art in Southern California, traditionalists found it more and more difficult to retain exhibitor space in the single largest local art festival of the day, the renowned Festival of Arts. Determined, however, to show their work and calling themselves "The Sawdust Festival" due to their unusual ground covering, they hung their paintings on fences on Glenneyre Street at Park Avenue in Laguna Beach, creating such a hit with the public they were required to search for a larger venue for the next year. A vacant lot on North Coast Highway was chosen and The Laguna Beach Fine Arts Association was formed.

In those first two years all artwork was juried, and exhibitors were required to be residents of Laguna Beach, but toward the end of the second season there was growing unrest between members who wanted a traditional, juried show and those who preferred a looser, less structured venue. When it became clear the two factions would not be resolving their differences, the latter group moved up the canyon with their unique ground covering, and became what is well known today as the Sawdust Art Festival. While still without any permanent home, the remaining members soon found their identity in their own name change, and became the Art-A-Fair. But the growing pains didn't stop there.

The festival now had new challenges to face: handling sales, creating publicity and drawing fresh artwork all became uphill battles to keep their financial heads above water as they found their way through the morass of summer artist exhibitions. 1972 found Art-A-Fair's hard-won efforts so successful another move was ordained, but again finding a good home wasn't easy. When a large property adjacent to the Hotel Laguna became available the festival doubled its size to 110 artists, and in 1973 the show was touted as the leading showcase of traditional art in Orange County.

A couple moves later Art-A-Fair finally found its forever home and in 1988 moved to 777 Laguna Canyon Road, closer to the downtown area of Laguna Beach, and in the heart of the festival district. A juried show, Laguna Art-A-Fair is unique among the local shows in that it does not restrict residency, thereby drawing artists from an unlimited geographic area; presently there are approximately 120 exhibiting members.

Through the years many diligent artists have volunteered their time and energy to guide Laguna Art-A-Fair's progress and growth into one of the most outstanding fine art shows in Southern California. Understandably, a special camaraderie has developed and is enjoyed by all LAAF exhibitors working together to build and run this special show. Through the efforts of committed members, a supportive board of directors and quality jurors Laguna Art-A-Fair has set and maintained a standard of excellence that is respected by the local art community, enjoyed by local residents and visitors alike, and recognized nationwide. This show is proud to include many award-winning artists and highly talented emerging artists.