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Painter Jonas Wood turns Arata Isozaki's MOCA exterior into building-sized art canvas

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Artist Jonas Wood stands before his rising mural at the Museum of Contemporary Art on Grand Avenue. (Christina House / For The Times)

The building that Japanese architect Arata Isozaki designed for the Museum of Contemporary Art on Grand Avenue is known for its quieter qualities: the sunken levels and the demure, red sandstone facade. That facade is now getting a makeover courtesy of painter Jonas Wood. Wood, a Los Angeles painter known for his brightly hued portraits and still-lives that play with blocky layers of color, is in the process of covering the museum's 5,400 square-foot facade with a vinyl reproduction of his painting "Still Life With Two Owls" from 2014.

"It's going to be pretty exuberant," he says, as he observes a team of workers moving a set of industrial lifts into place. "As the light shifts, it'll get a great light on it. The colors will really come to life."

The vinyls adhere to the museum's surface without damaging it. In roughly a year, they will be removed to make way for a piece by another artist. The idea, says a spokesperson from MOCA, is to feature work by a rotating selection of artists on the museum's exterior.

"It's a cool opportunity to have a Los Angeles artist share an image," says Wood, "and perhaps get some more people to come to the museum."



A rendering of Jonas Wood's "Still Life with Two Owls (MOCA)" in downtown Los Angeles. (MOCA Los Angeles)

Like a lot of Wood's still lifes, the image for the museum — officially titled "Still Life With Two Owls (MOCA)" — features long-running themes in his work. There are the depictions of ceramics, which often capture pieces created by ceramist Shio Kusaka (who happens to be the painter's wife). And there are the plants, which Wood often repaints from one canvas to the next.

"They are like recurring characters," he says. "I make a ton of still lifes and repeat them."

The work isn't his first large-scale piece. Wood has completed a building-sized mural for LAXart and did a billboard adjacent to New York's High Line park in 2014.

Installation at MOCA is expected to be complete by Thursday.