John Grade builds a soaring sculpture from the remains of a 1897 schooner

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Artist John Grade is repurposing the century-old Douglas fir salvaged from the sailing ship Wawona into a 65-foot tall sculpture for MOHAI's new location on South Lake Union. He and his assistants have been working for six-months on the 250 panels that will form the piece.

The three-masted sailing ship Wawona that was launched in 1897 and will return to South Lake Union again, but this time as a 65-foot tall sculpture by artist John Grade to be installed in MOHAI's new digs on South Lake Union.

Grade and his assistants have been working six-months on reshaping and repurposing the century-old Douglas fir from the Wawona, (only wood below the water line was used and salvageable).

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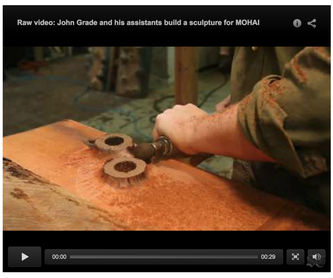

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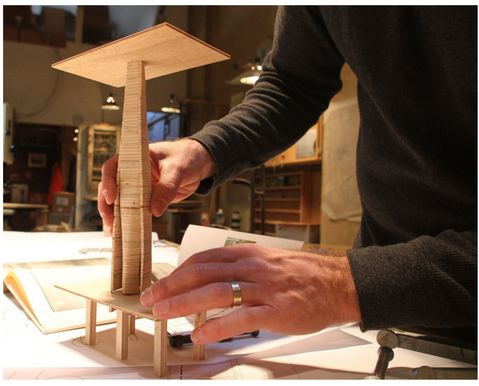
John Grade and his assistants transform wood salvaged from the schooner Wawona into a sculpture for the new Museum of History & Industry on South Lake Union.

In its prime, the 165-foot Wawona carried lumber from Washington State ports to California. Later it was a codfish carrier. The decaying landmark was dismantled in 2009.

In the sculpture there will be about 250 panels rising from "sea-to-sky," punching through the floor and the ceiling with enough space for people with wheelchairs to see the inside of the piece.



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This is a model of the sculpture John Grade is doing for MOHAI's new location. Visitors will be able to walk inside the form and it will also accommodate a wheelchair.

Visitors can touch the piece and see how the "grain flows like water around the knots" says Grade (pronounced GRAAH-dey).

The finished sculpture will weigh about 11,000-pounds.

Installation begins in late September and early October.

See more photos, read more about John Grade and watch a video profile of Grade.

Alan Berner

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