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Felled heritage tree is now art for all to see

By [Sarah Ng](#)

NATURE lover N Sivasothi was the one who saw the trunk of the 150-year-old Hopea sangal tree, felled illegally, being loaded onto a lorry and taken away in November 2002.

Yesterday, he was one of the many who witnessed the trunk, which has been turned into nine pieces of artwork, find a home at the Singapore Zoo.

The tree, located in a tree conservation area on state land in Changi, was cut down without official permission by DTZ-Debenham Tie Leung Property Management Services.

The company was fined \$8,000 and paid \$76,035 to the state as compensation for the loss of the heritage tree.



Reviving heritage: The sculptors celebrating the installation

Now, placed outside the Restaurants in the Wild at the zoo, the salvaged logs have been transformed into artwork by nine sculptors from the Sculpture Society.

They reflect the tree's long history and Singapore's different faces over 150 years.

Mr Sivasothi, a research officer at the National University of Singapore's Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, and part of the working group for the tree, told Streets: "We are very happy that the logs have found a permanent home at the zoo."

The zoo sponsored the transportation of the logs, their preservation, installation, maintenance and the production of education materials. It is also working with the Nature Society to conduct public talks on tree conservation.

The project, including a Sculpture Symposium, was sponsored by the Lee Foundation and the National Arts Council, which donated a total sum of \$12,500.

Yesterday, a seedling of the tree, collected by the Nature Society before it was felled, was handed to the zoo.

Said Dr Ho Yew Kee, deputy chief executive officer of the Wildlife Reserves Singapore, the parent company of the zoo: "With the planting of the seedling, we hope that over the next 150 years, the Hopea sangal tree will grow to its majestic height of 35m, giving future generations the opportunity to appreciate a live Hopea sangal tree."

The species of the tree, with a girth of 4m, was thought to be extinct in Singapore until its discovery in September 2002.