

an architectural tree-tise

by
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Thesis statement

Tree planting in Singapore is a political impetus. The national narrative of the Garden City has turned the tree into an aestheticized object that instantly appears in our parks and gardens. But trees are cultural metonyms in our landscape, tied to people, stories and sites that offer alternative narratives and histories of Singapore. Drawing on the work of artist Robert Zhao, "Singapore, Very Old Tree", the thesis challenges current perceptions of tree planting beyond mere beautification to become a commentary on the nation's cultural memory and complex relationship with trees.

The thesis is an architectural compendium constructed around forty specific trees in Singapore. It performs as an island wide museum of trees that uncovers and speculates latent spatial relations between the trees and its surroundings, bringing them to the foreground. The compendium of architecture – from botanical research centers to towers to infrastructures – will engage the trees differently, allowing us to experience and discover the significance, quirks and characteristics of specific trees. In doing so, the thesis raises questions and observations about the trees which have been forgotten, renewing our relationship to trees in the landscape.





16 June 1963: Lee Kuan Yew plants first Mempat tree at Farrer Circus

Tree-Planting Day to keep the city clean, green

SINGAPORE, Fri.
THE Government has decided to have an annual Tree-Planting Day as part of the plan to develop Singapore into a garden city.
 The decision, they will tell on Monday, is a timely one.
 On this 11th anniversary of independence, led by Chief Minister Lee Kuan Yew, the Government will announce today at the Istana, Singapore, that it will hold an annual tree-planting day to help maintain the green and beautiful city.
 The idea is to get the people to take part and share the responsibility for their own gardens and the city as a whole.
 The Government is organising a public programme for the day.
 "Part of the project, an estimated 40 million, are made this year for the Government to plant and maintain. The Government will also make it a habit to plant trees from the trees when they are planted."
 Mr. Ho said.
 Trees and shrubs for planting on Tree-Planting Day can be bought at the Public Works Department. The ministry has also indicated that booklets for those interested in planting trees and shrubs in their own gardens.
 They are available at the ministry building, in Maxwell Road, and the District Office.
Greater risk
 TOKYO, Fri.—The outbreak of a new case of cholera in Singapore has caused a greater risk of a major epidemic, the Government says today.

"This will help maintain the citizens' interests and efforts at keeping Singapore green and beautiful."

- Parliament Secretary Ho Cheng Soon



5 November 1971, Page 15, The Straits Times: Fruit tree planting operation goes underway in schools

SINGAPORE'S GREENING HISTORY (1945-PRESENT)

Tree planting and landscape exercise by Park Department and Public Works Department

1945

1955 Major planting scheme outside urban core

1955

Partial internal self-government (1955-59)

Full internal self-government (1959-63)

1959 Lee Kuan Yew becomes first Prime Minister of Singapore

1963 Launch of Tree Planting Campaign

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew plants his first tree

1965

1965 Singapore gains independence

1967 Launch of Garden City Programme

1971 Launch of Annual Tree Planting Day

Parks and Recreation Department

1974 Planting

POLITICAL EVENTS



National Tree Planting Day flower stamps issued on 8th November 1980

These nurseries serve as a park to residents here

IT WAS with great interest that I read the article published in The Sunday Times on 'The Nursery, Nurseries and Plants to Develop Singapore' by Mr. G. S. I would like to mention that many of the present day nurseries situated along Changi Road (between Dayland Road and Hill Road). Due to their location, these nurseries have been serving the gardening needs of the residents in the area. They are the nurseries of the late Mr. G. S. I would like to mention that many of the present day nurseries situated along Changi Road (between Dayland Road and Hill Road). Due to their location, these nurseries have been serving the gardening needs of the residents in the area. They are the nurseries of the late Mr. G. S.

Some residents even take their children to the park and come together with their family to get their gardening supplies and to watch the birds that fly over the trees. It is through the law that these nurseries get their plants, trees, seedlings and gardening accessories.

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25 October 1980, Page 19, The Straits Times

A million trees to be planted in this year's drive

AN ALL-time record number of trees are to be planted this year under Singapore's ambitious plan to make the island Asia's greenest garden city. More than a million plants are likely to take root this year compared to 750,000 planted by the Parks and Recreation Department last year, 504,000 in 1976 and 400,000 in 1975. The department stepped up the establishment of plant nurseries in the past 10 years to meet the increasing demand for plants. It is now considering expanding the Pasir Panjang nursery. The department's other nurseries are in Woodleigh Park, Sembawang, Ulu Pandan, Malim Road and Poyu Road. The nurseries not only provide bigger and better quality plants but also new species of ornamental plants for government departments and institutions.

10 April 1978, Page 6 The Straits Times



'Captain Green' in 1990s



PM Goh Chok Tong and former Minister for the Environment Teo Chee Hean, at the launch of Clean and Green Week at Marine Drive Garden on 3 November 1996.

2005 Launch of Community nationwide gardening

1975 Government runs nurseries all over Singapore

1977 Political leaders led the campaign to plant a total of 33,300 new trees and shrubs sold at half-price at government sales centre at Dunearn and Dempsey

1981 Changi International Airport opens, Changi nursery closes

1985 Primary Production Department (PPD) goes abroad to explore the possibility of introducing new species of fruit trees locally

1988 Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) introduced

1990 Goh Chok Tong becomes second Prime Minister of Singapore

1990 Launch of Clean and Green Week

1991 Tree Conservation Areas gazetted

1992 Trees were planted in 69 constituencies

1995 Nparks' Mission evolves From Garden City to City in a Garden

1998 PRD was renamed the National Parks Board (Nparks)

2001 Religious organisations were roped in to spread the word about green issues

2002 National Parks Board begins encouraging vertical greening

2002 National Environment Agency formed

2004 Lee Hsien Loong becomes third Prime Minister of Singapore

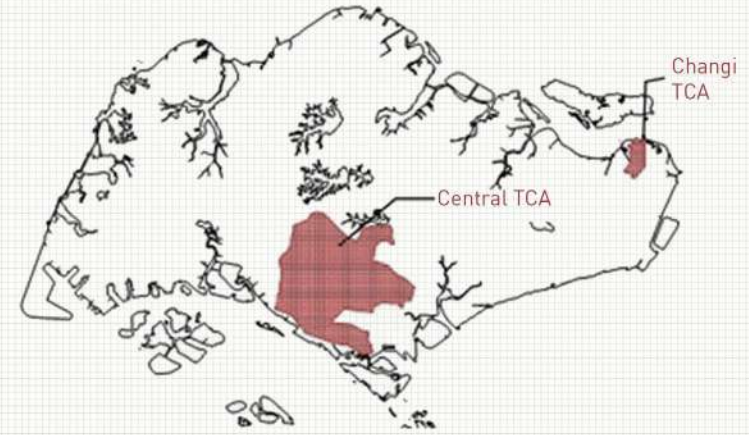


14 November 2016: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong planting tropical mangrove trees on specially designed floating turfs of soil in the Punggol Reservoir. This is the first time trees are being planted here using this method.

Tree Conservation Areas (Since 1991)

Two green spaces in the South Central and Eastern parts of Singapore were gazetted as Tree Conservation Areas (TCAs) on 2 August 1991 to control indiscriminate felling of mature trees. These areas were selected for the large extent of greenery and natural heritage that are worth conserving. This vegetation, some of which are 50–100 years old, beautifies the environment with lush foliage and shaded canopies.

Developers and private property owners who wish to fell any mature tree with a girth of more than one metre have to seek written approval from the Commissioner of Parks & Recreation. This is required even if no developmental works are in progress on-site.





Heritage Trees (Since 2001)

The Heritage Tree Scheme advocates the conservation of Singapore's mature trees. In support of this initiative, the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) established the Heritage Trees Fund then to kick-start a conservation programme that safeguards and promotes appreciation of our natural heritage. The programme now includes initiatives such as the installation of lightning conductors, interpretive signage and the setting up of a nomination scheme for the community.



Qualifying criteria for a tree to be endorsed as a Heritage Tree includes:

-  a girth (trunk circumference) of more than five metres; and/or
-  botanical, social, historical, cultural and/or aesthetic value.

Heritage Roads (Since 2001)

The Heritage Road Scheme aims to conserve the scenic and significant tree-lined roads of Singapore. To preserve the unique tree-scapes, a green buffer of 10 metres on both sides of the Heritage Road is enforced and the removal of trees or plants is prohibited. The preservation of Heritage Roads adds an element of permanence to the landscape and ultimately contributes to Singapore's sense of identity, history and continuity.



n Bloom
movement

PRESENT

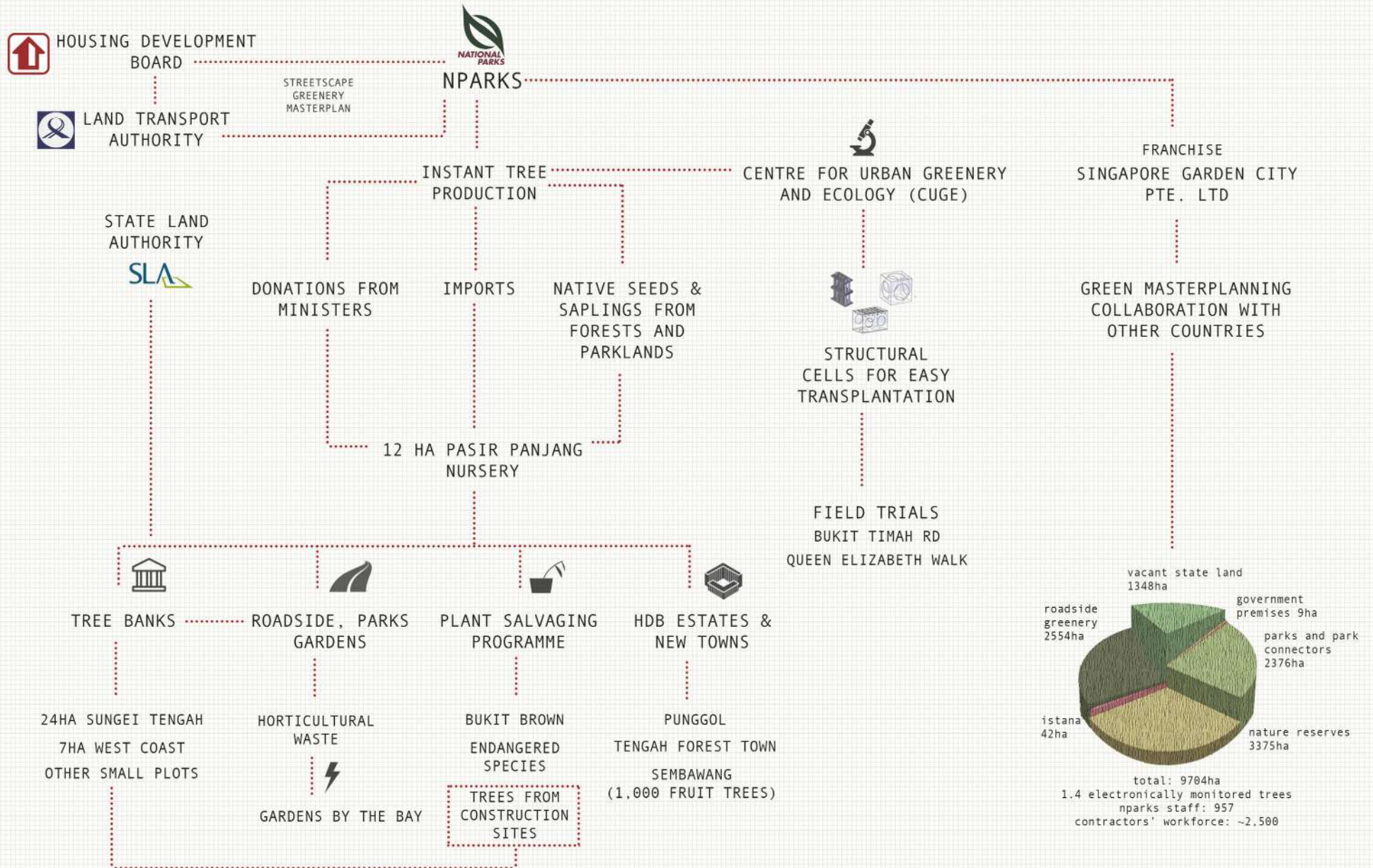
2011

NParks launches a public engagement exercise to encourage public contribution of ideas

2015

me
ore

Instant Tree Industry



National Nurseries & Tree Banks



of trees grown by nurseries





pasir panjang nursery



PASIR PANJANG NURSERY

At the heart of operations for Singapore's City in a Garden vision is the Pasir Panjang Nursery (PPN), located adjacent to HortPark. It is the only remaining nursery in Singapore that is run by the government. Currently, there are plans underway to expand the nursery into a horticultural centre.

Set up in the 1970s, the 12-hectare Pasir Panjang Nursery supplies close to 200,000 plants a year to green up Singapore's roads and parks. It is also responsible for developing optimum propagation techniques for various plant species of ornamental, horticultural or economical value. The Nursery plays a key role in the propagation and conservation of native plant species by reintroducing our native biodiversity to Singapore's urban areas.

The Pasir Panjang Nursery houses over 3,000 species of trees, palms, shrubs, groundcover, herbs, fruit trees and aquatic plants. In recent years, it is also focused on the propagation and introduction of fruit trees and shrubs to our parks and community gardens. This includes unique cultivars of papaya, mango and durian, as shown below. Some of these will be introduced in the park and green spaces within the upcoming Sembawang Sports and Community Hub (SSCH), when it is ready. Sembawang was historically a kampung, with small plantations and fruit trees, and Sembawang residents can look forward to seeing fruit trees at the Hub that reflect Sembawang's past.



SUNGEI TENGAH TREE BANK

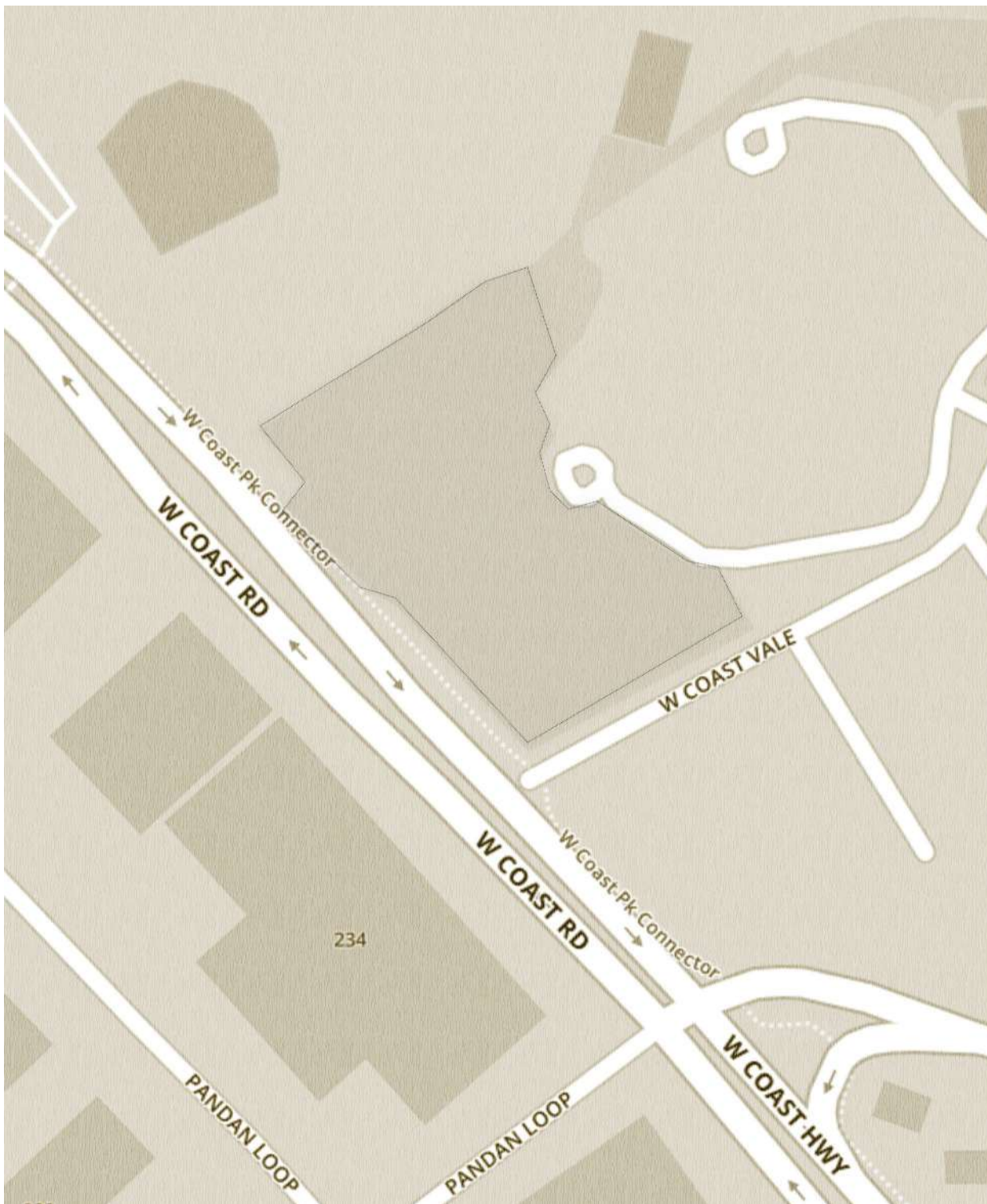
The National Parks Board (NParks) and Singapore Land Authority (SLA) tapping on each other's resources and expertise have embarked on their biggest tree-banks project since 2008. Four sites in Sungei Tengah and the West Coast area are being used to nurture young trees to meet future demands for landscaping in Singapore. These trees will liven up Singapore's streetscape and add more than a touch of greenery in upcoming significant NParks projects such as Gardens by the Bay, the Streetscape Greenery Masterplan and new park developments.

SLA is known for its role as the central land bank of Singapore's 14,000 hectares of State land. It is now also the tree bank of some 11,000 trees planted on four State land sites. There are 3 sites in Sungei Tengah and 1 in West Coast. The Sungei Tengah (Lorong Pasu) sites measure a total of 24 ha.

Several factors go into site selection, such as accessibility, size, location and the suitability of the ground for tree banks. More than two months of planning, sourcing and surveying work were done before the project was implemented in June 2007.

The 11,000 trees that have been planted so far comprises 72 different species of trees, with 75% being species found in the region. The tree banks also serve as temporary holding areas for trees salvaged from various sites before they are transplanted in other parts of Singapore.





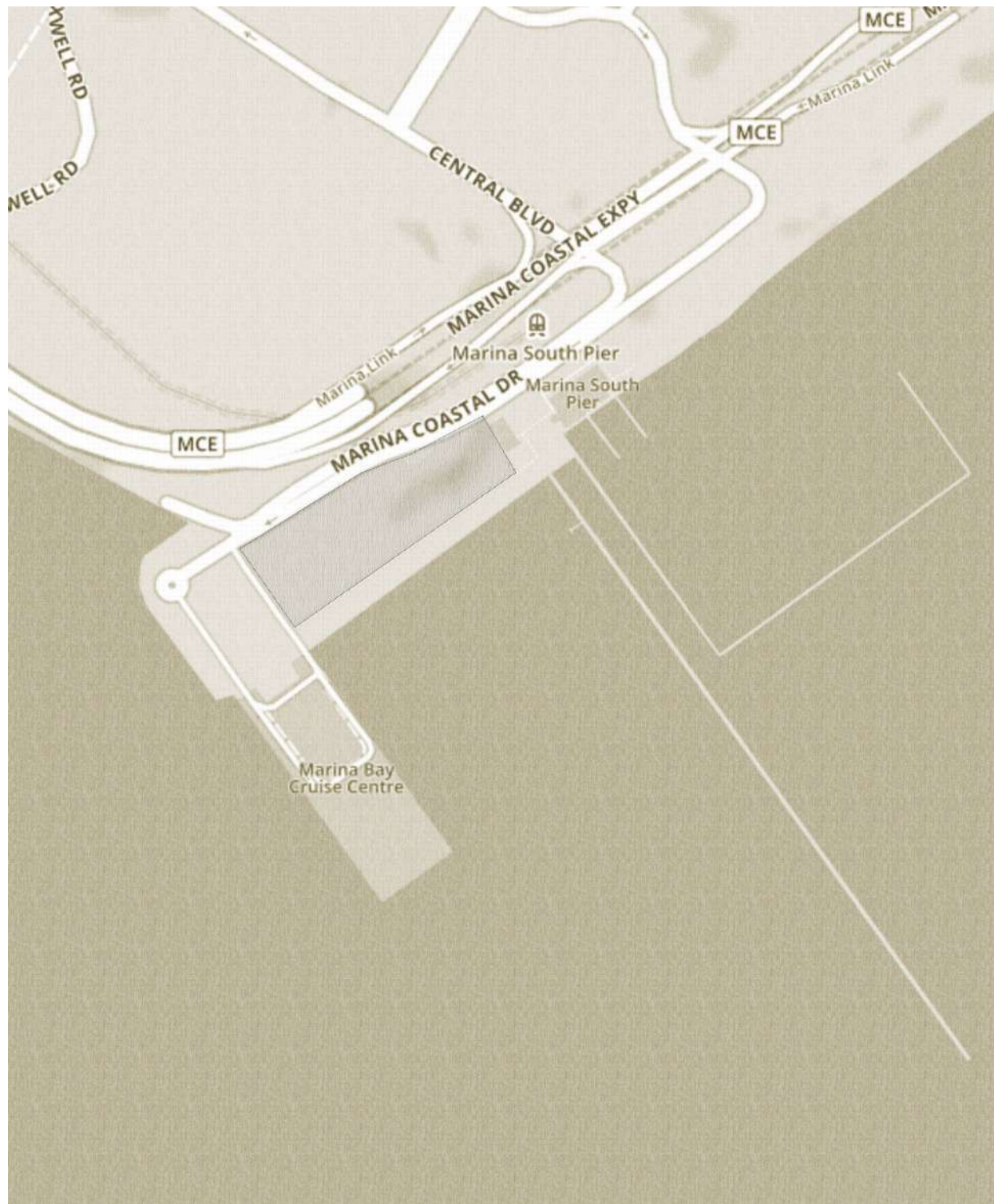
WEST COAST TREE BANK

The West Coast site provides 7ha of tree-bank space.

SLA's Deputy Director of Land Asset Management Services, Mr Lewis Koh, said: "This joint initiative by SLA and NParks to create tree banks effectively optimises the use of vacant State land, and provides a long-term supply of trees for landscaping needs in Singapore. Our State lands are beautified aesthetically and this enhances the value of our land as green lungs for the community. We will continue to identify and study sites with the potential for tree banks on more State land."

NParks Director of Streetscape, Mr Simon Longman, said: SLA has shown great spirit of collaboration as a fellow government agency to help NParks in our overall efforts to make Singapore a City in a Garden. The tree banks allow us to pre-grow quality trees, and provide lush greenery and better shade at a faster rate. We are also able to make available trees of more diverse species. Many of these tree species are native to the forests of this region. By planting them in various parts of Singapore, we are introducing a greater biodiverse mix of trees in urban areas and enhancing our natural heritage.

To maximise the land space at the current sites and simplify inventory process of the stocks, NParks planted the trees plantation-style using a patented system of root control bag from the United States which will ease the transplanting process in about 3 to 5 years time. The bags help contain the root structure of the plants, making harvesting easier and quicker.



MARINA COASTAL DRIVE TREE BANK

Some 1,000 banking executives took part in a tree-planting exercise organised by the Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) on 7 September 2013.

Staff from around 30 banks and financial institutions planted 230 trees at a National Parks Board (NParks) "tree bank" along Marina Coastal Drive.

ABS said in a statement that the exercise is part of the banking and financial sector's commitment to the environment. It raised \$160,000 for the Garden City Fund, a registered charity established by NParks.

The event is also one of a series of ABS activities to commemorate its 40th anniversary, by planting 400 trees costing \$400 each. The Marina Coastal Drive tree bank could accommodate only 230 trees, so the rest of the trees will be planted at another location.





lorong pasu tree bank



marina coastal drive tree bank



NParks & SLA Create More Than 30ha of Space for Tree Banks

15 Apr 2008

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Inter-agency project sees more than 11,000 trees nurtured on State land for future use

15 April 2008 In a few years time, Singaporeans passing along Sungei Tengah and West Coast would be treated to a visual spectacle of lush, green young trees sprawling across more than 30 hectares of State land.

The National Parks Board (NParks) and Singapore Land Authority (SLA) tapping on each other's resources and expertise have embarked on their biggest tree-banks project. Four sites in Sungei Tengah and the West Coast area are being used to nurture young trees to meet future demands for landscaping in Singapore. These trees will live up Singapore's streetscape and add more than a touch of greenery in upcoming significant NParks projects such as Gardens by the Bay, the Streetscape Greenery Masterplan and new park developments.

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Several factors go into site selection, such as accessibility, size, location and the suitability of the ground for tree banks. More than two months of planning, sourcing and surveying work were done before the project was implemented in June 2007.

The 11,000 trees that have been planted so far comprises 72 different species of trees, with 75% being species found in the region. The tree banks also serve as temporary holding areas for trees salvaged from various sites before they are transplanted in other parts of Singapore.

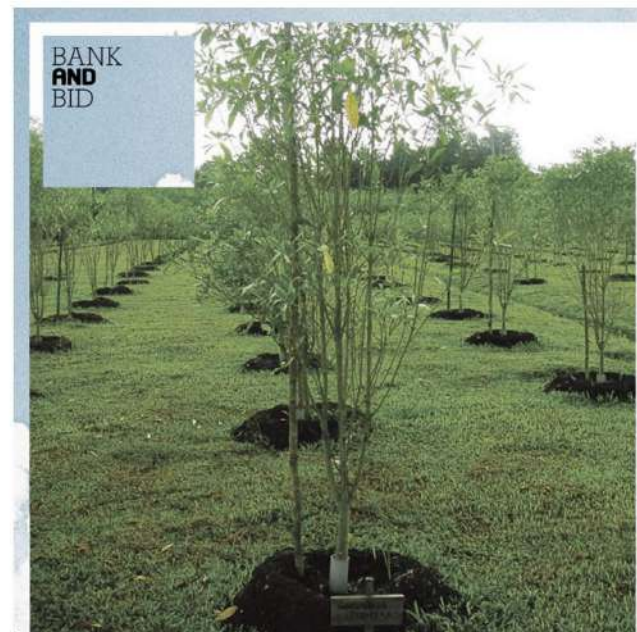
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- End -

LAND newsletter by State Land Authority (Jan-Mar '08)



SLA AND NPARKS CREATE MORE THAN 30HA OF SPACE FOR TREE-BANKING

By Low Chiew Long

Passers-by along Sungei Tengah and West Coast would have witnessed a curious sight of thousands of tree pods sprawled across more than 30 hectares (ha) of State land. No, these are not alien crop circles, but rather the biggest ever tree banks project taken on by SLA and National Parks Board (NParks).

SLA is known for its role as the central land bank of Singapore's 14,000 ha of State land. It is now also the treebank of some 11,000 trees planted on four State land sites in Sungei Tengah and West Coast. Several factors go into site selection. Amongst them are accessibility, size, security, location and the suitability of the ground for tree-banking. The size of the project meant that ample space was required.

More than 11,000 trees have been planted on these sites so far. These are made up of 72 different species of trees, chosen to increase the bio-diversity of trees in Singapore.

The tree banks are also temporary holding areas for trees salvaged from various sites before they are transplanted in other parts of Singapore.

SLA's Deputy Director of Land Asset Management Services, Lewis Koh said "This joint initiative by SLA and NParks to create tree banks effectively optimises the use of vacant State land, and provides a long-term supply of trees for landscaping needs in Singapore. Our State lands are beautified aesthetically and this enhances the value of our land as green lungs for the community. We will continue to identify and study sites with the potential for tree banks on more State land."

The tree banks project is just one way that SLA optimises the use of State land. SLA has also opened up 284 casual community and recreational sites for public use all over the island, and released sites for NParks' Community in Bloom programme. **L**



SLA CASUAL COMMUNITY & RECREATIONAL SITES

Since 2003, the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) has been opening up State land to the public for casual community and recreational use. Some of these fields are designated as interim green spaces or tree banks. This initiative was mooted by Senior Minister of State for Law & Home Affairs and President of the Football Association of Singapore (FAS), Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee. Today, about 284 State fields are available for public use.

A tree-bute to Lee Kuan Yew

LYDIA LAM tracks down the trees Singapore's first prime minister planted that are still standing today



WHEN: Dec 14, 1953
WHAT: Flame of the Forest
WHERE: Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital



WHEN: Nov 4, 1984
WHAT: Jambu ayer
WHERE: The Pinnacle @Duxton*



WHEN: Nov 7, 1983
WHAT: Weeping ru
WHERE: Block 16, Telok Blangah Crescent



WHEN: Nov 5, 1995
WHAT: Kelat paya
WHERE: Block 133, Jalan Bukit Merah



WHEN: Nov 2, 1980
WHAT: Senegal mahogany
WHERE: Singapore Botanic Gardens



WHEN: Dec 12, 1971
WHAT: Yellow flame tree
WHERE: Tanjung Pagar Community Centre



WHEN: Nov 1, 1981
WHAT: Mango tree
WHERE: Block 1, Everton Park



WHEN: Nov 3, 1985
WHAT: Chiku tree (centre)
WHERE: Block 110, Spottiswoode Park



WHEN: June 6, 1976
WHAT: Angsana
WHERE: Tiong Bahru Examinations Centre



WHEN: Nov 7, 1982
WHAT: Broad-leaved mahogany
WHERE: Duxton Plain Park



WHEN: Nov 2, 1980
WHAT: Tombus
WHERE: Between Blocks 104 and 107, Spottiswoode Park



WHEN: Nov 6, 1983
WHAT: Chittagong wood
WHERE: Duxton Plain Park

WHEN: Nov 2, 1986
WHAT: Rain tree
WHERE: Gardens by the Bay



WHEN: Nov 1, 1987
WHAT: Melubog
WHERE: NParks headquarters*



WHEN: Nov 4, 1990
WHAT: Dwarf coconut
WHERE: Block 108, Spottiswoode Park



WHEN: Nov 3, 1996
WHAT: Foftail palm
WHERE: Community amphitheatre at Spottiswoode Park Estate



WHEN: Nov 2, 1997
WHAT: Weeping ru
WHERE: Block 99, Commonwealth Crescent



WHEN: Nov 8, 1998
WHAT: Carpentaria palm
WHERE: Block 150A, Mei Chin Road



WHEN: Nov 8, 1999
WHAT: Chiku tree
WHERE: Block 69, Redhill Close



WHEN: Nov 5, 2000
WHAT: Brazilian ironwood
WHERE: Everton Park



WHEN: Nov 3, 2002
WHAT: Trumpet tree
WHERE: Block 162, Bukit Merah Town Centre



WHEN: Nov 2, 2003
WHAT: Common pulai
WHERE: Block 105, Jalan Bukit Merah



WHEN: Nov 7, 2004
WHAT: Cengal pasir
WHERE: Block 106, Henderson Road



WHEN: Nov 6, 2005
WHAT: Black olive
WHERE: Block 48, Strathmore Avenue



WHEN: Nov 5, 2006
WHAT: Golden chain tree
WHERE: Spottiswoode Park near Block 104



WHEN: Nov 11, 2007
WHAT: Batoko plum
WHERE: Block 63, Strathmore Avenue



WHEN: Nov 9, 2008
WHAT: Australian flame tree
WHERE: The Pinnacle @Duxton



WHEN: Nov 2, 2009
WHAT: Malayn crape myrtle
WHERE: Block 53, Henderson Road



WHEN: Nov 13, 2010
WHAT: Kayu arang
WHERE: Block 27A, Jalan Membina



WHEN: Nov 5, 2011
WHAT: Bintangor bumut
WHERE: Block 188, Holland Drive



WHEN: Nov 4, 2012
WHAT: Chinese olive
WHERE: Block 52, Havelock Road



WHEN: June 16, 2013
WHAT: Rain tree
WHERE: Holland Village Park



WHEN: Nov 2, 2014
WHAT: Sea teak
WHERE: Block 123, Bukit Merah View

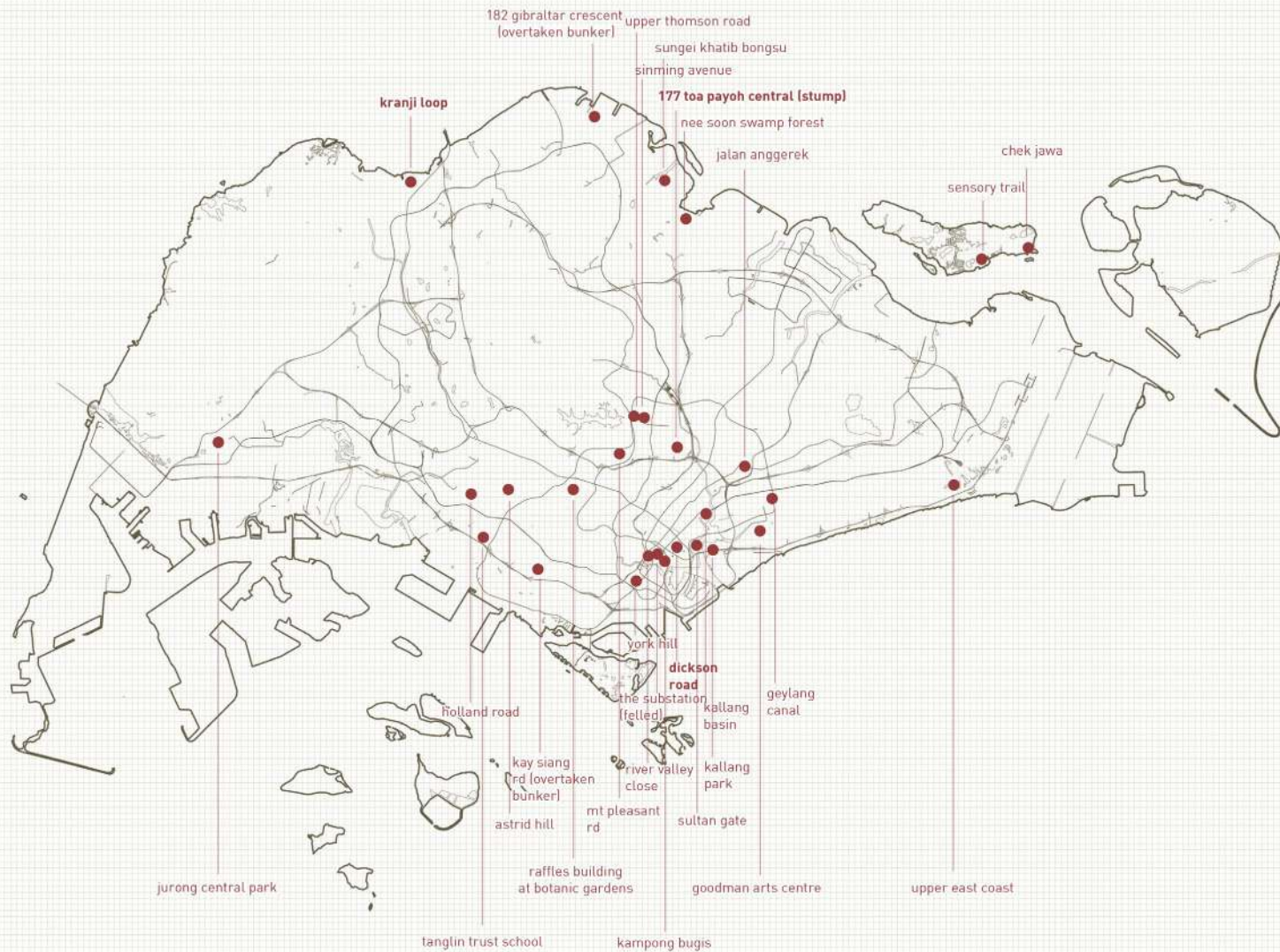
Click to Zoom

Have you spotted other trees planted by Mr. Lee? Write in to myp@sph.com.sg and tell us.

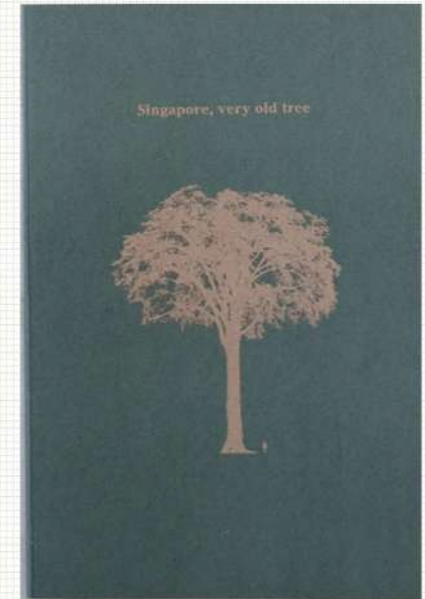
*Transplanted

PHOTOS: LYDIA LAM (THIS PAGE), PHOTOS: PHOTOS.COM, PHOTOS: NATIONAL PARKS BOARD, COURTESY: PHOTOS.COM

Trees and its people



remaining banyan trees in singapore - an extension of robert zhao's map



SINGAPORE, VERY OLD TREE

Robert Zhao's project explores the tension between the general and the specific that is characteristic of the discourse of nature in Singapore. The familiar macro view in our national narrative is that we are a Garden City, with tree-lined roads, parks and reserves that are synonymous with the Singapore landscape. This is because since the 1960s, former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew set out a vision to cover the island with plants. The Garden City image has since fostered a sense of civic pride and a sense of belonging. But this image is ultimately an impersonal one of anonymous trees and gardeners. It is telling that the process of planting trees and shrubs is called "greening", an abstract act of colouring, rather than the actual nitty gritty process of digging, planting and watering. The project takes the micro view, boiling down the generic sense of green-friendly national identity down to individual connections.

Trees of Interest in Singapore

(and where to find them)

www.yallatree.com

1 Seraya Tree
Small forest tree endemic to Sumatra
Age: ~100 years
Height: ~6m

2 Former Jiu Long Si Temple Bodhi Tree
Age: ~120 years
Height: ~15m

3 Angsana Tree
Shorea robusta
Age: ~100 years
Height: ~25m

4 Tallest Jelutong Tree
Cordia alliodora
Height: ~22m

5 Marsh Palm
Areca forest plant
Age: ~100 years

6 Garden of Fame
Lathyrus teran
Largest tree of Garden of Fame

7 Changi Scepter Tree
Cordia alliodora
Age: ~14 years

8 Ordeal Tree
Cordia alliodora
Largest tree in Garden of Fame

9 Rubber Tree
Hevea brasiliensis
Age: ~100 years
Height: ~15m

10 Palm Tree
Coccothrinax palm
Age: ~100 years
Height: ~15m

11 Damar Hitam Gagah
Cordia alliodora
Age: ~100 years
Height: ~15m

12 Seraya Tree
Small forest tree endemic to Sumatra
Age: ~100 years
Height: ~6m

13 Former Jiu Long Si Temple Bodhi Tree
Age: ~120 years
Height: ~15m

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Cordia alliodora
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Trees of Interest in Singapore

(and where to find them)

1 Seraya Tree
An ancient 100-year-old tree with primary forest tree in Seraya. It is the only tree of the Seraya forest in Singapore.

2 Former Jiu Long Si Temple Bodhi Tree
Probably one of the oldest and largest trees in Singapore. This specimen was planted about 120 years ago by monks from Sri Lanka in the 19th century. It is a variety of Ficus religiosa. The tree was damaged by a lightning strike in 1998. The tree was replanted in 2000 to mark the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Ficus religiosa.

3 Angsana Tree
Known as the tree with the largest girth in Singapore, this specimen stands near the entrance to Changi Park. It is a variety of Shorea robusta. It is believed to be planted by the British when the military installation was established in 1824. It is over 100 years old.

4 Tallest Jelutong Tree
This tree is the tallest specimen of the Jelutong tree in Singapore. It is a variety of Cordia alliodora. It is located in the Central Catchment area near the Seraya forest.

5 Marsh Palm
This tree is the tallest specimen of the Marsh Palm tree in Singapore. It is a variety of Areca forest plant. It is located in the Seraya forest.

6 Garden of Fame
In the 1970s, 21 foreign dignitaries including Queen Elizabeth II and King George VI visited Singapore. The tree was planted in their honor. It is a variety of Lathyrus teran.

7 Changi Scepter Tree
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Cordia alliodora. It is located in the Seraya forest.

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This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Cordia alliodora. It is located in the Seraya forest.

19 Rubber Tree
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Hevea brasiliensis. It is located in the Seraya forest.

20 Palm Tree
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Coccothrinax palm. It is located in the Seraya forest.

21 Damar Hitam Gagah
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Cordia alliodora. It is located in the Seraya forest.

22 Seraya Tree
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Cordia alliodora. It is located in the Seraya forest.

23 Former Jiu Long Si Temple Bodhi Tree
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Ficus religiosa. It is located in the Seraya forest.

24 Angsana Tree
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Shorea robusta. It is located in the Seraya forest.

25 Tallest Jelutong Tree
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Cordia alliodora. It is located in the Seraya forest.

26 Marsh Palm
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Areca forest plant. It is located in the Seraya forest.

27 Garden of Fame
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Lathyrus teran. It is located in the Seraya forest.

28 Ordeal Tree
This is a commemorative tree that marks the 100th anniversary of the tree. It is a variety of Cordia alliodora. It is located in the Seraya forest.

29 Rubber Tree
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30 Palm Tree
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31 Damar Hitam Gagah
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32 Seraya Tree
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The content is provided by the Singapore National Parks Department. It is a part of the Singapore National Parks Department's efforts to conserve and protect the natural heritage of Singapore.

Capturing old trees and their stories

Twenty years ago, odd-job labourer Ramanathan, who goes by one name, saved a mangosteen sapling from bulldozers near Old Kallang Airport.

Mr Ramanathan, now 70, replanted it in the same area and has been spending time with it every day, sometimes sleeping in its shade overnight.

His story is one of those told in the project, Singapore, Very Old Tree, by local artist and photographer Robert Zhao.

The collection of 30 photographs features old trees around Singapore, as well as the people whose lives they have taken root in.

Seventeen of the photos appear as lightboxes in an exhibition at the foot of the National Museum of Singapore's glass rotunda. The other 13 photos are not displayed.

Zhao, 33, had not worked with trees before this, but was inspired to branch out into this area by a 1904 postcard from the National Archive of a huge tree with a person, tiny in comparison, standing in its shade.

"It occurred to me that if that tree is still around today, it could be 100 or even 200 years old," he says.

"Our landscape changes so fast, but these trees remain. They are silent witnesses to the history of Singapore."

For about a year, he trekked all over Singapore with his wife, arts journalist Adeline Chia, also 33, looking not just for old trees, but also people who were able to tell their stories.

This was no easy task. They would sometimes have to stake out a tree of interest for two to three weeks before they could find somebody with knowledge of its history.

More often than not, they hit dead ends.

"I would see trees so old, so big and magnificent, that I knew they had some wonderful story to tell," he says. But he would be unable to find any human connection.



Singapore. Old Tree showcases photos by artist Robert Zhao (left) of trees around Singapore, the people whose lives have taken root in them. ST PHOTO: SOO LIAW

Despite this, he persevered in gathering the stories of trees. Some notable trees he photographed include the "Seletar Wedding Tree", a casuarina in Seletar Reservoir. Couples would queue on weekends to take bridal shots with it.

Another is the Monkey God Tree in Jurong West, an African mahogany that had part of its bark scraped off in a car accident, revealing what looks like the outlines of two monkeys on its trunk. People would come from all over Singapore to pray at the tree for good luck and lottery wins.

Zhao himself was caught up in the story of one of these trees, when he watched the massive banyan tree behind The Substation get uprooted in 2014 to make way for the construction of a new Singapore Management University building.

"They thought it would take them one day, but it took them four," he recalls. "Bats were flying out of it when they were trimming it down."

When parts of the banyan had to be cut away, old bricks from the former National Library were found among its roots.

Zhao photographed the tree later

in transition, as it sat in a nursery waiting to be transplanted to a location not yet known.

Were he a tree himself, he would be a banyan, he says. "It is wild and uncontrollable, yet it has learnt to thrive well in the city."

Through his work, he hopes to explore the ways in which urban planting impacts individuals. "How does being a green city really affect Singaporeans?"

"We grow and we cut, we grow and we cut - it's part of the way our landscape is. I want to find the trees - and the stories - that remain."

Our landscape changes so fast, but these trees remain. They are silent witnesses to the history of Singapore.



HOME-GROWN PHOTOGRAPHER ROBERT ZHAO

The tree amigos: S'poreans and their fave trees in photo show

Singapore, Very Old Tree features 30 trees from all over the country

BY MAYO MARTIN
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 (PAGE 1 OF 1) - PAGINATE

SINGAPORE — A man who goes into the forest of Bukit Panjang to pick wild durian every night when the trees are in season. A group of people who go to Ang Mo Kio Park every day to meditate around a rubber tree. A man who would end his training sessions for IPPT runs at a certain Bodhi tree at the Bidadari Cemetery.

Singaporeans' special relationship with trees is the subject of an ongoing exhibition at the National Library Building titled Singapore, Very Old Tree.

A Singapore Memory Project spearheaded by artist Zhao Renhui and writer Adeline Chia, the exhibition comprises 30 images, in lightbox and postcard formats, of people posing with their favourite tree.

The title was taken from the caption of a vintage Singapore postcard (Zhao is an avid collector) and the exhibition's black and white images were hand-tinted by illustrator-friend Sokkuan Tye as a nod to the look of the old postcards.

"The general impetus for this project was that we love trees and feel that people don't look attentively and lovingly enough at these ubiquitous features of our landscape. Although people know Singapore as a Garden City, the image is ultimately an impersonal one of anonymous trees and gardeners," explained Chia.

Over six months, the couple and their small team searched for fellow tree-lovers who had unique personal connections to specific trees, tapping into social media, blogs and organisations like the National Parks Board (NParks) and Nature Society (Singapore). Some folks from the latter group, such as Tony O'Dempsey and Goh Si Guim, would have a ready story for them, said Chia. Other times, it was the tree that came first, particularly those that already have a well-known history, such as The Substation's famous old Malayan Banyan tree and the tree at Tanglin Trust School, which had been saved from being cut down by a student protest.

"Other times, we just did a lot of driving around and looking. That was how we found Mr Ramanathan under his mangosteen tree in Kallang Basin," said Chia. The tree had grown from a sapling that the 70-year-old odd-job labourer had taken when the parent tree was bulldozed to clear land in the Old Kallang Airport area 20 years ago.

Their tree project took them all over the island, to some unusual places. They had followed people into the wilder areas of Upper Thomson in search of a lost orchard called the Han Rambutan Orchard where artists and intellectuals, such as Chinese artist Xu Beihong, hung out.

The rubber tree in Ang Mo Kio Park was a particularly memorable tree for Chia. "I enjoyed speaking to the group of people who would walk around it as part of a meditation exercise to 'absorb' the energy from the tree. Their path is so well-trod that there is a circle of dead grass around that tree. I really wanted to join in but they said I didn't have the requisite training, which was some eight-day Buddhist workshop," she said.

For artist Zhao, the tree that proved hardest to shoot was the famous one behind The Substation. "It wasn't technically a banyan tree anymore. During this project, the tree was being transplanted to make way for the new SMU building. I felt that transplanting a tree was a very nice but complicated gesture. The transplantation of trees in Singapore provides a compelling picture of how we try to negotiate nature and history in the face of development."

In some ways, there was a sense of urgency in doing the show. "Some of them are getting cut down but there are a lot of stories of people who go out of their way to help save trees," said Chia, citing artist Jacquelyn Soo, who had started a petition to save the banyan tree at Goodman Arts Centre, which had been in danger of being cut down due to road expansion. But at the same time, she added: "Some of these trees are so majestic and old and will outlast all of us. That's one of the reasons why we have chosen to show them in their full glory with wide lens, with the human figure being very tiny." It was an idea that had come about after the couple went on a road trip through California's redwood forests last year.

Incidentally, the exhibition comes at a time when there are efforts to plant trees around the civic district, such as a mature rain tree in front of the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall and, soon, the transplanting of five new Angsana trees into the Esplanade Park.

"It totally makes sense," said Chia. "I had a friend from Lisbon who visited (our) exhibition, and looking at the pictures he said Singapore's greenery was amazing and truly out of this world. He then said the biggest public square in Lisbon had no trees. It was unthinkable to me. No trees? What were they going to do at noon? Burn? Go blind from the glare? To us hardened Singaporeans, we're driving past lush roads and tree-lined estates and bushy overhead bridges and not seeing how beautiful and green the city is."

Singapore, Very Old Tree runs until May 28, 10am to 9pm, Level 10 Promenade, National Library Building. Free admission. A talk on the exhibition will be held on May 16, 2pm, Level 1, Visitors' Briefing Room, where the exhibition's book and postcard set will also be launched.



The Substation's Malayan Banyan, now in a holding pen after it was removed to give way to the construction of a new SMU building, as part of the Singapore, Very Old Tree exhibition. Photo: Zhao Renhui/Sokkuan Tye.



Malayan Banyan in Astrid Hill with student Tanvi Gupta, as part of the Singapore, Very Old Tree exhibition. Photo: Zhao Renhui/Sokkuan Tye.



Tua Pek Gong Temple tree in Ang Mo Kio Ave 5, with the president of the temple committee, Liu Yong Jiang, as part of the Singapore, Very Old Tree exhibition. Photo: Zhao Renhui/Sokkuan Tye.



Bamboo grove in Commonwealth Drive, where retirees Tan Nam Siong and Chua Joo Hong would hang out, as part of the Singapore, Very Old Tree exhibition. Photo: Zhao Renhui/Sokkuan Tye.



Alstonia Pneumatophora in the Nee Soon swamp forest with amateur conservationist and activist Tony O'Dempsey, as part of the Singapore, Very Old Tree exhibition. Photo: Zhao Renhui/Sokkuan Tye.

Bryna Singh

THE STRAITS TIMES

Monday, May 18, 2015



Some of the many trees in the Garden City that is Singapore have hidden stories of people who tended them, benefited from them, worked under them, slept under them or loved them. An ongoing exhibition at the National Library captures these tales and relationships between Singaporeans and their special trees.

Singapore, Very Old Tree is spearheaded by freelance writer Adeline Chia and artist Robert Zhao, both 32, who worked with two researchers from last December to unearth these individuals and their stories.

Ms Chia says: "Although people know Singapore as a Garden City, the image is ultimately an impersonal one of anonymous trees and gardeners. We want to give these gardeners faces and names."

They trawled through local nature blogs and National Parks Board (NParks) publications, and approached NParks for contacts of tree lovers and community gardeners. The team also went through newspaper archives for tree-related stories, tapped on their networks of friends and put out calls on social media.

Three months later, they had a list of about 80 trees, from which they picked 30 for the project.

Some of them are majestic old specimens, such as the angasana near the entrance of the Shangri-La Rasa Sentosa Resort. It is believed to have been planted in the 1880s by the British when the artillery battalion was stationed on the island, then known as Pulau Blakang Mati. With a girth of 10.2m, it is also the biggest angasana tree here. It has been cared for by gardener Mohd Yusri Abdullah for more than 20 years.

Other trees involved dramatic rescues and student activism, such as the Malayan Banyans next to the Goodman Arts Centre and at the Tanglin Trust School. Both were saved following calls by ex-students for their preservation.

Many other stories feature "humble and relatively young trees, never quite imperilled", says Ms Chia. "But we included them because they meant something to someone." Cobbler Goh Cheng Lam, 70, is fond of a Bodhi tree in Sungei Road, under which he has been operating for the past five years. Apart from giving him shade, it is also where his friends and regular customers hang out.

A home-grown rambutan tree reminds nature lover Goh Yue Yun, 57, of her late mother who planted it. "My late mother used to fertilise the tree with her diluted urine," she says. Ms Chia and Mr Zhao say some of the challenges they encountered in their project include pinning down the trees' ages and getting full views of the trees in photographs.

On the trees' ages, Ms Chia says: "We needed to rely on recollection by witnesses, look at old pictures to see if the trees were there before or compare a specimen of similar size with a known age."

Mr Zhao says most of the images were difficult to capture because the trees are "just too big". "Even with a wide-angle lens, I had to stand pretty far back."

He took the black-and-white pictures with the trees seen in full and the humans tiny to emphasise the contrast in scale. His illustrator-friend Sokkuan Tye hand-tinted the images in vintage-postcard style.

The project, mostly funded by the Singapore Memory Project's irememberSG Fund as part of the SG50 celebrations, also consists of a publication - a booklet of stories, a set of 30 postcards of the exhibited images and a map showing about 20 interesting trees in Singapore. The publication will be sold only a year from now as part of the irememberSG funding agreement.

Mr Zhao says: "The work is about spending a little more time considering something that is ubiquitous in the Singapore landscape. While we celebrate Singapore's Golden Jubilee, it is important to remember that some trees on our island easily surpass 100 years."

brynasim@sph.com.sg

Do you have an old tree that means something to you? E-mail stliffe@sph.com.sg

Irresistible draw of durian trees

At least twice a year, Mr Teo Teah On, 66, dons a construction helmet, construction boots, a long-sleeved shirt and pants, and heads into the Bukit Panjang forest at night to search for durians.

Alone, he sets off at 9pm from his flat along Jelapang Road in Bukit Panjang and treks about 3km into the jungle.

All he carries are a gunny sack for the durians, a torchlight and a wooden stick to fend off wild boars and snakes.

He has no fear, only immense enthusiasm for the potential loot out there.

"Once I know durian season is here, I just need to go out and pick the durians. I can't sleep knowing that they are lying there, waiting for me," he says with a laugh.

Mr Teo, a father of two who runs a carpentry business, has been doing this for seven years now. It all began when he was exercising in his neighbourhood and came close to the fringe of the forest.

He saw people emerging from it with gunny sacks filled to the brim with the thorny, pungent fruit.

As he is a lover of the fruit and a believer in durians that are picked from trees growing in the wild ("they don't have added fertilisers or chemicals"), his interest was immediately piqued.

The durian pickers he met told him there were about 100 durian trees scattered throughout the wilderness.

Previously, he would buy durians from one of his friends who picked them from the forests here.

Since he started collecting the fruit himself, he has been watching the durian season like a hawk.

He says the trees usually flower twice a year and the fruit falls about 100 days after that. Older trees between 60 and 70 years old can bear up to 200 fruits each time, while younger trees around 30 years old bear about 50 fruits each.

How does he know these things?

"I just do," says Mr Teo, who adds that once you start tracking these things and talking to people, you will learn.

"Walking in and out of the forest is a good workout. You will sweat a lot."

He saw the durian trees flowering in March this year, so he estimates the fruit fall to be in July.

He says poor weather conditions last year meant no fruit for the pickers, so they are all hoping for a good harvest this year.

It is unclear who has authority over the part of the forest where these durian trees grow. Under National Parks Board guidelines, it is illegal to pick up fallen fruit in places under its purview.

But the four other pickers Mr Teo usually hangs out with pick durians for personal consumption and not to sell. There is no competition among them either.

"We are all friends," says Mr Teo. "We meet in the forest, sit down for a chat, pick the durians, chat some more and then we head home."

There is no particular durian tree that they seek out because every tree's fruit has a slightly different taste, he says.

The sizes of the durians in the Bukit Panjang forest and the colour of their flesh vary, says Mr Teo.

But the trophy durians are those picked from a self-dubbed "XO Tree", a name referring to a popular variety of durians famous for its slightly alcoholic aftertaste.

"You can't tell which tree this is. You know only after you've eaten the fruit," he says.

On each trip, he usually collects up to 20 durians, weighing about 10kg.

Once home, he and his wife, Mrs Teo Cheng Hway, 58, set about opening the shells and getting the flesh packed into air-tight boxes, before tucking them away in the freezer. Stored this way, the fruit can last for up to six months, says Mr Teo.

Some boxes are refrigerated and consumed within days.

"I will complain that there's no space to put anything else and about the slight odour for those few months," says Mrs Teo, who helps her husband with his business. "But I like to eat durians and since the ones my husband brings back are the only ones I eat, I just have to deal with it."

The saga of childhood memories

A saga tree in Mount Emily park holds special childhood memories for Ms Kong Yin Ying, 19.

Ms Kong, who is waiting to enter university, recalls competing with her older brother Jun Yin, 20, to find odd-shaped and odd-coloured saga seeds. This was years ago when the siblings were four and five years old respectively.

They were then attending Mount Emily Kindergarten and the tree was right behind it.

"The tree was enormous to me then. It towered above me and its roots were many and large," says Ms Kong.

(continued)

Bryna Singh

THE STRAITS TIMES

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But its presence did not intimidate the siblings, who would run towards it after school.

"We dug around the tree's roots with our bare hands, competing to see who would find the oddball saga seeds first," she says.

"We were not interested in the normal red ones. We were keen only on those that either had flat edges or had orange-yellow hues."

Whoever found one would call out to the other and they would gaze at the strangely formed seed with a mixture of curiosity and wonder. They would usually leave the seed behind, though.

Explains Ms Kong: "What made things exciting was the process of searching for the seeds, rather than keeping them."

She believes there are only a handful of "really cool ones" that she has stashed away "somewhere at home".

After their kindergarten days, she and her brother pretty much stopped going to the tree, except once when they were in primary school because they happened to be in the area. So for nearly 10 years, Ms Kong had not seen the tree. This year, she has re-visited the tree twice as part of the Singapore, Very Old Tree project, and says it reminded her of a "simple, fun part" of her life.

"As my brother and I dug for the seeds, we were sharing moments together. Life was not complicated then. No sibling rivalry, just quiet companionship," she says. Today, the Pat's Schoolhouse branch in Mount Emily stands in place of the siblings' kindergarten.

Principal Melina Quek, 53, says her teachers are familiar with the tree. Its large canopy provides shade for the children when they organise outdoor picnics or classes. But the little ones are not allowed to root about for saga seeds.

"Children are curious and we don't want them to put the seeds into their mouths or stuff them up their noses," says Ms Quek.

Ms Kong, on the other hand, has no qualms about taking her children there in future to do what she did.

"If this tree remains, I'll definitely come here with my kids. Being unafraid of nature and all its dirty aspects is an important part of being a child," she says.

A favourite of bridal couples

Once there was a tree and engaged couples loved the tree. Some days, these couples would come and take their wedding photos there. And they were happy.

Photographer George Wong, 37, was introduced to this casuarina tree at Upper Seletar Reservoir by a couple about 10 years ago.

They had told him that this tree was one of their dating spots and wanted it captured in their wedding photos.

When he saw the tree, Mr Wong was struck by its beauty. "It has a nice shape and is exactly between two benches. The background - the reservoir - is also clean, so the various elements make for a good picture."

Over the years, he says, word spread about the thriving casuarina to the extent that it has been called "the wedding tree". Since his first shot there, he says he has snapped more than 100 couples at the tree.

It is such a popular site that he recalls waiting 30 minutes one weekend because several couples were waiting to have their pictures taken there.

"Everyone is on a tight schedule, so among the photographers, we'll usually just signal to one another and say something like, 'Bro, I'm next, yeah?'" says Mr Wong.

Another photographer, Mr Seah Yu Hsin, 43, is also aware of this "wedding tree". He first came across the tree during a run around the reservoir about eight years ago and says he made a "mental capture" of its potential for a photo shoot.

A few months later, a couple told him that they wanted an outdoor location for their pre-wedding photo shoot that had natural elements. He recommended the spot to them and has been shooting couples there since.

"Whether you take the pictures by day or by night, they always look good," he says.

According to him, the tree's prominence spread thanks to social media because people are quick to post their pre-wedding pictures online.

One of the couples he shot in 2009 found out about the tree that way.

Bank executive Cassandra Cheok, 35, recalls seeing other couples' pictures with the tree online. While the tree holds no significance to her, she says she found it "very elegant and photogenic". Together with her then-fiance and their golden retriever, she had her pre-wedding pictures taken there.

"It was the first and only time I'd been there," she says. So, for years, the tree gave marrying couples a spot for a beautiful photo and the couples were happy. But not really. Some couples insist on not having their pictures taken there, says Mr Seah. "They will tell me that everyone goes there now," he explains.

Over the years, the wedding tree has witnessed much change. Mr Wong recalls there used to be a playground a short distance away from the tree which was also a photo-worthy spot, but that is no more.

Also nearby is a little stone path that leads into the water. That area has since been barricaded, possibly because the steps are worn and unsafe.

But the area near the tree is still a good spot for relaxing and photo taking.

Muses Mr Wong: "Things around the tree have changed, but it has stayed the same."

And the tree seems happy.

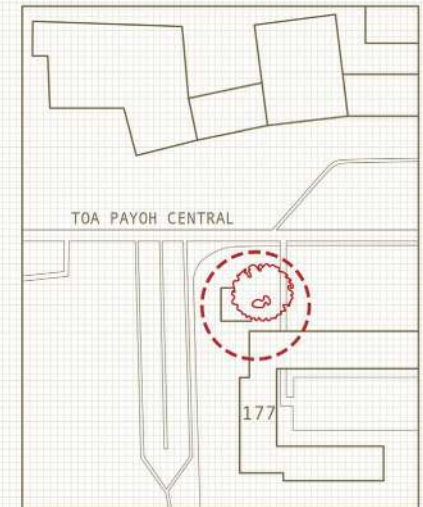
THE STRAITS TIMES

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Trees and its people

SCALE 1 : 75

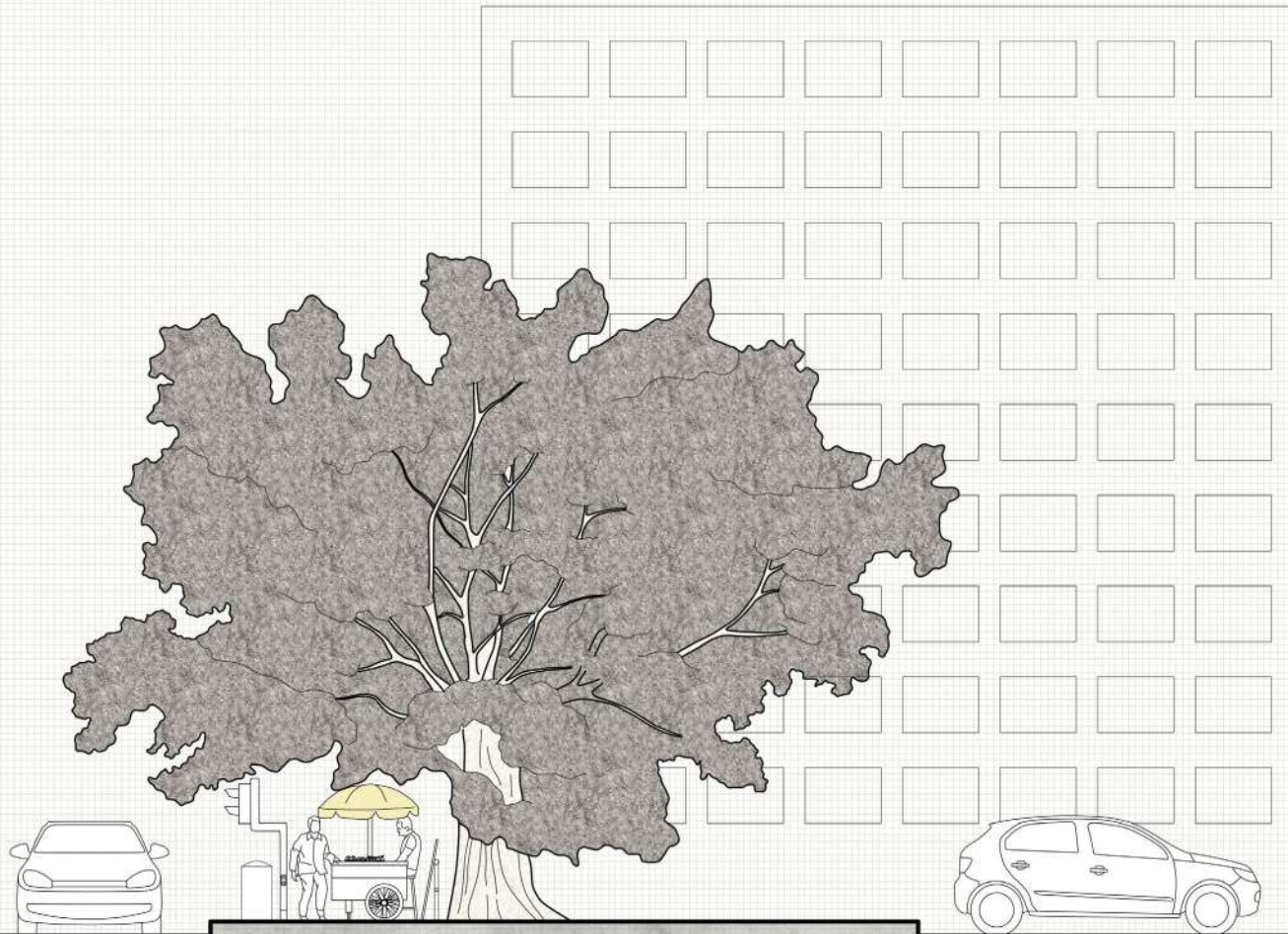


TOA PAYOH BANYAN TREE TEMPLE

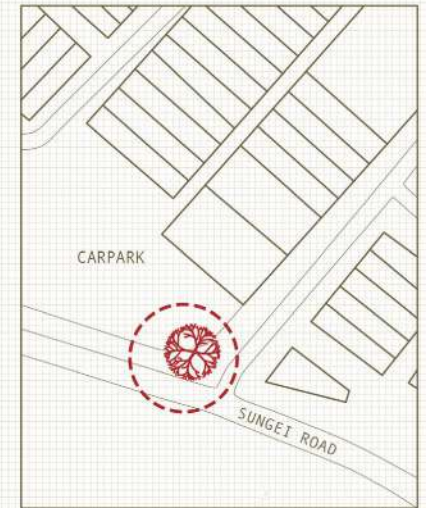
More than 100 years old, this banyan tree housing the Ci Ern Ge shrine predates the development of Toa Payoh New Town in the 1960s. Several attempts at removing the tree for urban development failed, so the authorities left it alone in the end. Unfortunately, the tree fell during a heavy thunderstorm in September 2013, and what's left standing is at half its original height.

Locals believe that a spirit stands guard over the tree and protects the residents of the area. Over the years, the shrine has attracted hoards of believers and non-believers alike, to come and pay their respects to the "Goddess of Mercy", whose statue resides in the shrine.

Trees and its people



SCALE 1 : 75



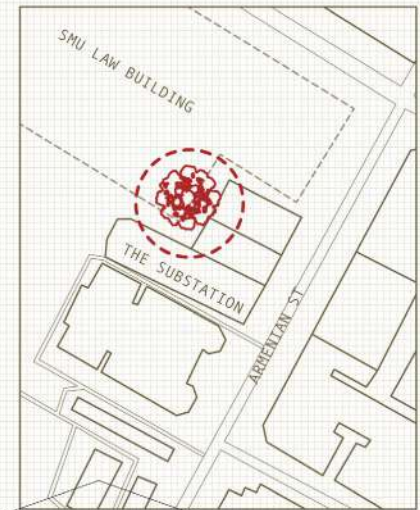
SUNGEI ROAD COBBLER

Mr Goh Cheng Lam has worked as a cobbler for more than 50 years, moving around the Sungei Road area and usually operating from under a tree. All his tools are in a cart attached to his bicycle, which he rides from his home in Boon Keng. He has been at this Bodhi tree for the past five years, earning \$20 to \$100 a day from loyal customers.

He says that although this is a "nameless tree", he is still very fond of it. "There aren't any big snakes and nobody important died here," he adds. "But the tree's been a great help to me."

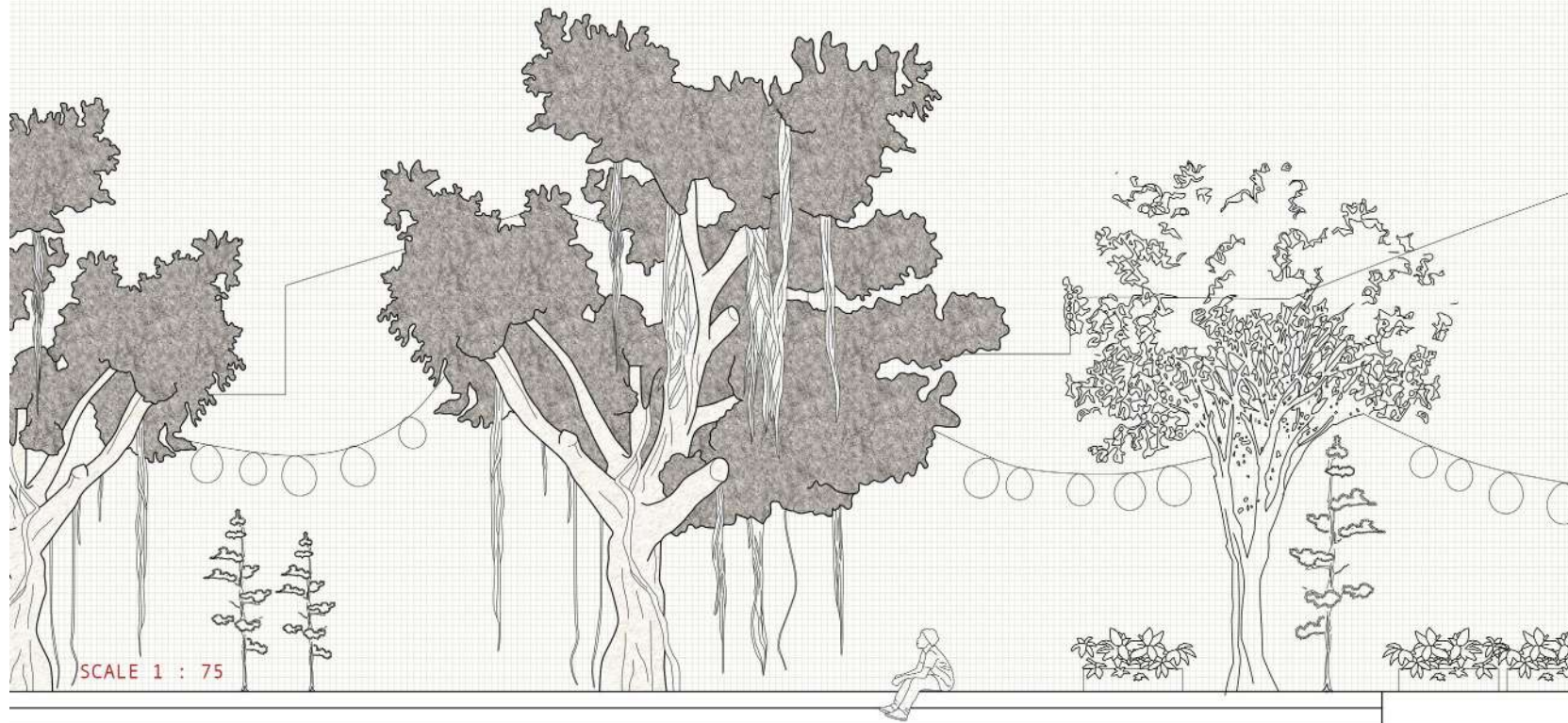
Other people who share the shade is a cleaner, who takes afternoon naps there after lunch, as well as Mr Goh's friends and regulars.

Trees and its people



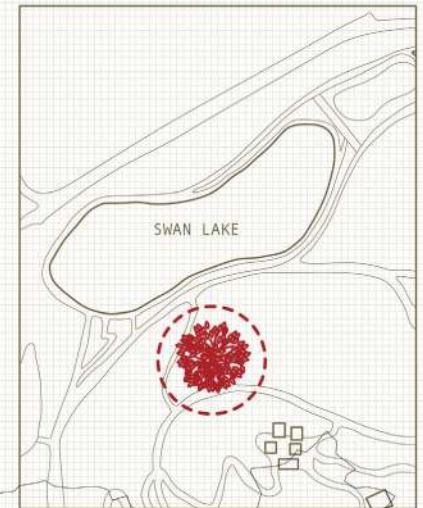
THE SUBSTATION BANYAN

Behind the Substation, there used to be a massive Banyan tree. Over the years, it had borne witness to many of the changes to the art centre, as well as larger changes in its surrounding landscape, such as the demolition of the National Library that used to be right beside it. In 2015, to make way for the new building for the Singapore Management University, the tree was transplanted to a yet-to-be-decided location. The tree was there before the Substation, which was founded in 1990 by Kuo Pao Kun. He fought to get the garden next door as well, not only to expand the activity space of the art centre but to preserve the connection between art and nature. The tree now awaits at a site in Neo Tiew.



SCALE 1 : 75

Trees and its people



TEMBUSU AT BOTANIC GARDENS

This 30m tall Tembusu is probably as old as the Gardens. Distinctive to Singapore (it is also featured on the back of our S\$5 note), The Heritage Tree's popularity meant that extra measures were needed to help protect it. The iconic tree was fenced in 2013 to alleviate soil compaction (a result of heavy human traffic) and minimise damage to the roots. In 2014, In a collaboration between arborists and engineers, experts from the National Parks Board (NParks) and Singapore Technologies Kinetics Ltd (ST Kinetics), the land systems arm of ST Engineering, worked together to develop a dynamic support system to serve as a prop for the lateral limb of the iconic Tembusu tree.

SCALE 1 : 75



Fatal Singapore tree fall prompts questions

14 February 2017 | Asia

Share



The giant Tembusu was listed as an official heritage tree

The death of a woman in Singapore after a 270-year-old tree fell on her in the Botanic Gardens has left many shocked and saddened. With the authorities still investigating, many in the "garden city" are asking how this could have happened.

'It sounded like thunder'

Eyewitnesses in the Botanic Gardens on 11 February told The Straits Times newspaper that they first heard a "cracking sound".

"It sounded like thunder," said 29-year-old Jonathan Ang.

Seconds later, the 40m (131ft) tree crashed to the ground near the garden's outdoor stage, pinning Radhika Angara, a 38-year-old Indian national and Mastercard executive, underneath.



The accident took the life of a 38-year-old woman from India

Filipino Lisa Salcedo Arcamo shared on Facebook that she saw "ambulances and medical aid workers rushing down to help those who were trapped".

Mrs Angara died, while her husband and their one-year-old twins were injured, along with a 26-year-old Singaporean woman.

"It saddens me to know that such young babies lost their mother after what seemed to be a beautiful family outing," wrote **Stefanie Suhashini** in a comment on Facebook.

The concert, due to take place on the stage, was cancelled and the area cordoned off.

The huge tree belonged to the Tembusu species and as a listed heritage tree was subjected to inspections twice a year.

It was last checked in September 2016 and was found to be healthy, said Leong Chee Chiew, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation at Singapore's National Parks Board (NParks).

"This includes checks on the root collar, anchoring roots, crown, trunk and signs of soil movement. The tree was also protected by a lightning conductor and fenced off to prevent compaction of its root zone by visitors," Mr Leong said in a statement to BBC News.

What are Tembusu trees?



- Native to Singapore, the large evergreens can grow up to 40m tall.
- Their trunks have a distinctive dark brown fissured bark, it has light green leaves and bears fragrant white flowers.
- They also bear tiny red berries that take at least three months to ripen.
- A Tembusu tree features on Singapore's \$5 note.

NParks said it has "a systematic regime of inspection checks" and deploys more than 500 certified arborists.

"To adapt to the increasingly unpredictable and severe weather conditions, we have also stepped up our inspections and have been taking measures to improve the general health of our trees," Mr Leong said.

He said the department's priority now was to help Mrs Angara, her family and the other injured woman. He would not speculate on the cause while investigations are under way.

'This looks bad for Singapore'

Singapore, the "garden city", is famously safe, but accidents involving trees, especially the many planted along **roads and highways**, are not uncommon.

In another incident on Saturday, a woman was seriously injured when a tree fell in a car park, crushing the window of a parked lorry.

The accidents have unsettled Singaporeans and on social media, many have been demanding answers.

"What's happening? This looks really bad for Singapore. We have trains that are breaking [down], roads that are flooding and now our trees that are falling," said **Jonus Jun** on Facebook.



Singapore prides itself on its greenery and a world-class "garden city" image

Others raised concerns about the safety of such huge trees.

"Are the trees here even safe anymore? Is there a way to check if tree roots are weakening?" said **Robert Rldzuandowski**.

"We can't get rid of all the trees in Singapore but surely there must be a way to improve the checks to prevent such tragic mishaps from happening again."

"Shouldn't trees have their roots planted deeper into the ground for better stability? Looks like this tree was only a few feet into the ground," said another user.

'Nature is unpredictable'

Experts have said the Botanic Garden incident was not "straight-forward".

"Tembusu trees are good and hardy and grow in the toughest of conditions but just because this one was very old doesn't mean it was not dangerous," Goh Mia Chen vice-president of the **Singapore Arboriculture Society**, told the BBC.

"Structural failure is something to note. There could have been external factors involved like strong wind, termites and fungal infections too."



A massive clean-up operation was started to remove debris from the fallen Tembusu tree

"Here was a robust tree that was well-managed and regularly checked," said Shawn Kaihekulani Yamauchi Lum, a tropical rainforest ecologist and senior lecturer at the Nanyang Technological University's Asian School of the Environment. He has worked with NParks closely in the past.

"Trees like this one are very well-adapted to dealing with their surroundings, like extraordinarily strong bursts of winds and wet weather," he said.

"This was not a species known to be weak or associated with tree fall."



Officials from Singapore's NParks board are currently investigating the cause of the fall

While Mr Lum has not visited the site to look at the fallen tree yet, he said he'd been told the root system looked to have been in good condition.

"This is what makes it so perplexing and challenging to work out. You can do everything possible to minimise the risks of accidents but nature is unpredictable," he said.

"Due diligence had been done. Officials in Singapore know their trees and have a profound sense of responsibility to understand that this is nature and therefore has a certain unpredictability about it."

Reporting by the BBC's Heather Chen in Singapore.

url:
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38952894>



Jalan Jati: The Migrant Ecologies Project

Lucy Davis

Jalan Jati or 'Teak Road' is an interdisciplinary project, in collaboration with DoubleHelix Tracking Technologies, which traces the historic, genetic, material and poetic journeys of a 1950s teak bed, found in a Singapore karang guni junk store, back to a location in Southeast Asia where the original teak tree may have grown. DNA samples are tested and matched to certify that timber purchased by consumers across the world comes from legal plantation as opposed to illegal rainforest sources. Preliminary investigations suggested a potential match between a DNA sample from the bed and teak trees in Muna Island of Southeast Sulawesi. Members of the Migrant Ecologies team journeyed to the scant remains of century-year-old teak plantations on the island, and have recreated an 'ecology' of inter-dependent biological, social and magic-realist stories, traced out from the grain of this one teak bed. The artistic media employed in this project are photography, stop-motion animation and woodprint collage. Both the stop-motion imagery and the collage are constructed from woodprints of the original teak bed. Jalan Jati is part of an ongoing inquiry into human relationships to trees, forests and forest products in Southeast Asia—explored in terms of materials, metaphors, magic, ecological resources, and historical agency under the auspices of the Migrant Ecologies Project. - www.migrantecologies.org



Ranjang Jati: The Teak Bed that Got Four Humans from Singapore to Travel to Muna Island, Southeast Sulawesi and Back Again, 2009–2015, Wilton Close, Singapore. Photographed by Shannon Lee Castleman 2009. Black & White Photograph on hand made Japanese paper 85 x 60cm. 1st edition of 5 prints Date: 2012



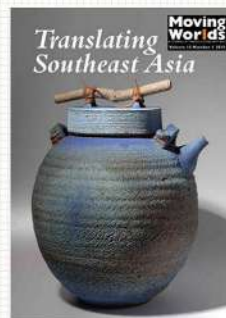
When you get closer to the heart you may find cracks. Stories of Wood from the Migrant Ecologies Project. Exhibition catalogue. Editor: Kenneth Tay. Publisher National University of Singapore Museum. Contributors: Ahmad Mashadi, Lucy Davis, Kenneth Tay, Jason Wee, Mustafa Shabbir, Sandy Yeo, NUS Museum July 2014. 50 pages



I am Like the Karang Guni of Teak. Artist's Book. Conceptualised by Lucy Davis. Edited by Jason Wee and Kenneth Tay. Text by Lucy Davis. Photography by Lucy Davis & Ya Ting Kee. Publisher National University of Singapore Museum. 2014. 36 pages.



'In the Company of Trees' Lucy Davis, In Giovanni Alois ed. 'ANTENNAE, Journal of Nature in Visual Culture', Issue 17 Why Look At Plants? UK (2011) Pp 43-62



'Multiple Arborealities: Tracing Tales of Teak', Lucy Davis, in Chew Shirley ed. 'Translating Southeast Asia', Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writings, Leeds UK 15: 1 (2015), pp. 15-33



'PHOTOGRAPHIES OF TREES', Ho Rui An, in Giovanni Alois ed. 'ANTENNAE Journal of Nature in Visual Culture', Issue 36 Responsible Futures? UK (2016), pp. 64-80



I am Like the Karung Guni of Teak: Tales from An Island After a Timber Boom

Lucy Davis and Kee Ya Ting



2014
Lucy Davis
Reproduction of a photo of timber merchant Simon Oei as a child in the 1970's standing in the grounds of P. Bork A/S International, Kranji, where his father Allen Oei was employed. Reproduced in prints of one of the last logs from Burma to be imported to Singapore after 31 March 2013 log export ban. Collage on Paper. 220cm x 150cm. Photography by Norman Ng.

TIMBER BOOM 1970s-80s

TIMBER AS SUNSET INDUSTRY

1965: Allen Oei leaves school to work for the Singapore government timber board for three years.

1966-1998: Suharto regime in Indonesia.

1971: Allen Oei's first trip to Pontianak, Indonesia to grade logs.

"The first time I was in the forest I cried."- Allen Oei

1971: Simon Oei is born to Allen Oei.

1970-1979: Allen Oei works for Danish timber trader, P Bork Company.

"My job was becoming more difficult and I was getting into more trouble with more and more rejects, because I couldn't control the quality anymore. The good logs were less, the forests are going deeper and deeper."- Allen Oei

1980: Allen Oei sets up his first family timber trading company, Linggua Trading Company Pte. Ltd.

1980s: Indonesia stops export of whole logs, only allowing processed square logs. Allen Oei sells excess wastage to US penknife maker.

Late 1970s: Singapore government relocated all the sawmills and timber factories to Sungei Kadut in an industrial-zoning exercise.

Late 1970s: Singapore government plans to convert remaining forest reserves in Sungei Kadut into industrial estates.

Late 1980s-1990: Allen Oei leverages on connections in Burma to act as advisor to Singapore businessman Tony Chew of Asia Resources.

1990s: Slowdown of timber industry.

Late 1990s: Indonesian government allows private individuals to cut teak. In 1996, Simon Oei becomes teacher for some 30 local factories.

2000: Simon Oei leaves his job in IT programming to join his father's timber business. All wood stocks in Singapore.

2001: Simon Oei, with his father Allen Oei, set up Nature Wood, a timber supplier company.

2013: Burmese government bans export of whole logs from country.

Present (2016): Wood stocks in Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia.

"...We Chinese, believe in five elements. Metal, wood, earth and air. I believe that wood, no matter how many generations down the road will be still an element that we need... And therefore, even though they say it is a "sunset industry", I carry on." - Simon Oei



Wood grading in Pontianak, Indonesia, 1971-1972



Distribution of Timber Industries in Singapore in 1970

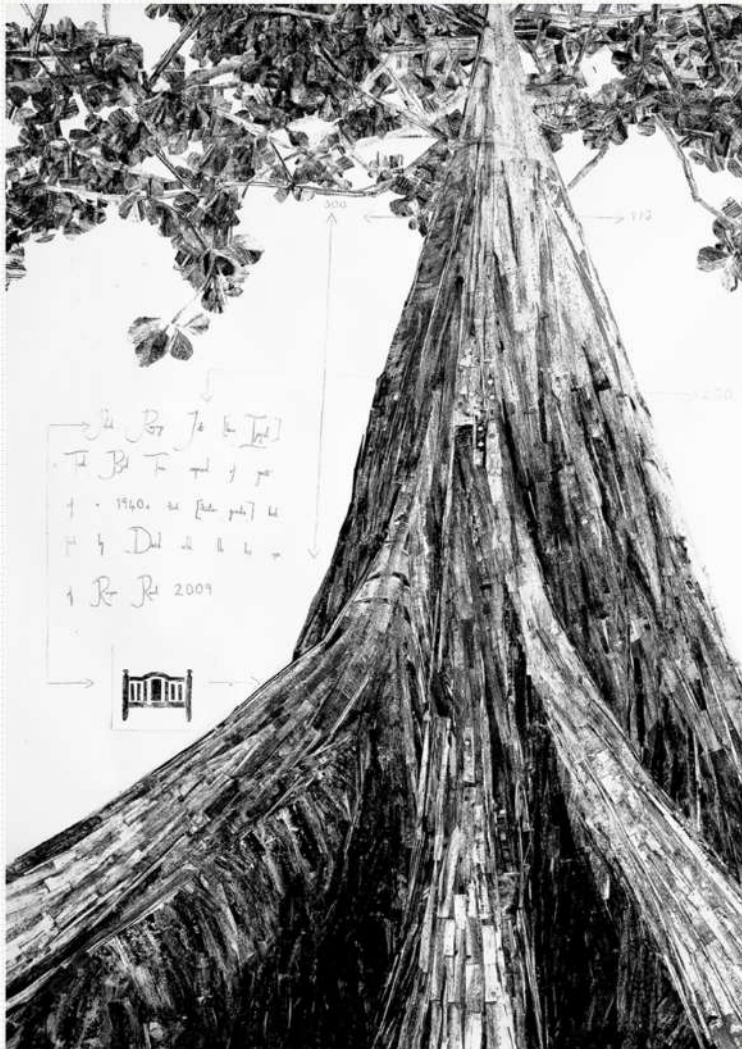


The Straits Times, 18 May 1975, Page 24



“When You Get Closer to the Heart, You May Find Cracks...” Stories of Wood

Lucy Davis, Ahmad Mashadi, Kenneth Tay, Jason Wee, Sandy Yeo



Pokok Ranjang Jati (Teak Bed Tree)

2012

Lucy Davis

Woodprint collage of a 1930's teak bed found in Singapore.

Collage on Paper.

240 cm x 150 cm.

Photograph by Kee Ya Ting

Thinking the Ecology in Migrant Ecologies

Jason Wee

“Migrant Ecologies” - the conjunction of two nouns - suggests a material subject in circulation within a given territory or economy, and the overlapping ecologies that hold that material as its axial constituent.

This reading emphasizes the migratory material in those ecologies, but a second reading is also possible, with a shift in our attentive pressure to the second term in that phrase. **Migrant** now describes the ecologies troubled and unmoored by our transactions and choices, transposed across geographical sites and regulatory boundaries wherever the consequences of the transactions and choices unfold.

Rather than a play for fuzzy ambiguity, Davis' project acknowledges a truism that bears restating, that sometimes simple solutions do not exist for complex problems.

Davis avails to us the pleasure of other affects, opening the possibility of affiliations between unanticipated peers and allies, even those deemed too ironic, wild or negative before.

Touch Wood: Some Reflections on Researching the Timber Industry in Singapore

Sandy Yeo

Singapore was among the first countries in Asia to enter the timber and sawmill trade despite not having a timber producing forest. Despite the significance of the timber industry to Singapore's economy, its long history remains unfamiliar to young people. The unfavourable working conditions - having to work in dusty areas, under the scorching sun, loud noises - have deterred many locals from working in this industry.

Today, the industry is coming under further threat as a result of redevelopment. Businesses located in JTC-owned factories in the Sungei Kadut, Yew Tee and Kranji areas may have to relocate. On a global level, demand for hardwood timber is growing steadily especially in Asia. Yet hardwood timber plantations have not been established at anywhere near a scale large enough to meet this growing demand.

Sungei Kadut is a neglected part of Singapore's history whose everyday usage involves only a certain group of people and transient workers.

“...it is not the land, the space or the environment on which actions happen - it is the mark, sensations, qualities, that enable a territory to appear, that enable us to see what earth, or space, or environment, or ecology, is.” - Jason Wee



A dukun or wood spirit doctor can tell by touch, which end is the 'crown' end of the wood/tree and which end is the root.

“...industrial estates do not have the charm of Tiong Bahru or Joo Chiat; they bespeak of harsher realities where the human body is continuously subjected to the harsh materials and temporal rhythms of the industries. These are harder to render nostalgic by way of a soft-focus Instagram filter.” - Lucy Davis



Old circular saw machinery at Allen & Simon Oei's Nature Wood Warehouse at 31 Sungei Kadut Street 4.



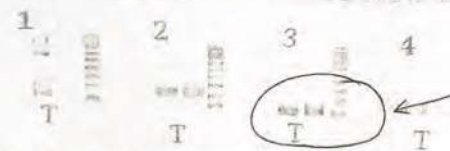
Multiple Arborealities: Tracing Tales of Teak

Lucy Davis

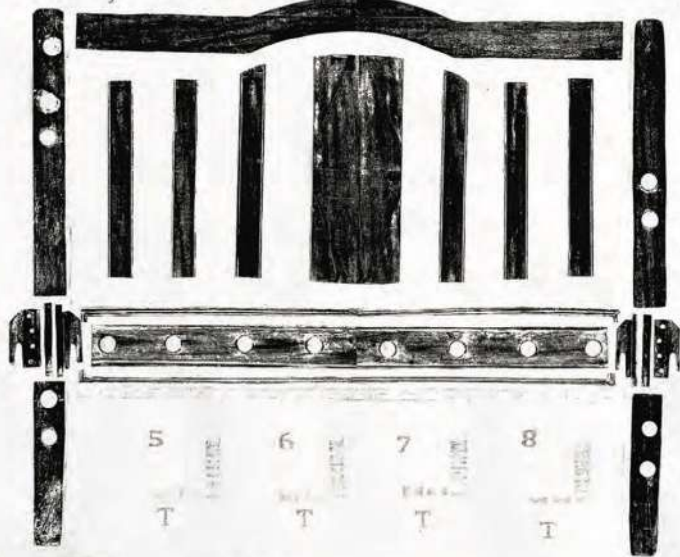
The DNA profile of your sample was a closer match with the profile of South Sulawesi teak than the profiles of teak from Burma, Laos, Thailand and India ...

Singapore July 2010.

South Sulawesi teak



... Hence it can be said with a good degree of confidence that your sample originated from South Sulawesi ...



... came the reply from the plant geneticist ...

'The DNA profile from your sample was a closer match with the profile of South Sulawesi teak than the profiles of teak from Burma, Laos, Thailand and India. Hence it can be said with a good deal of confidence that your sample originated from South Sulawesi ...' came the reply from the plant geneticist.

Ranjang Jati woodprint of a 1940s-1950s teak bed found in a Singapore junk store, made on paper. 240 cm x 150 cm 2013

Fascination with mid-twentieth century Malayan modern woodcut

Davis believed that she could work through the micro-gestures of the Malayan modern woodcut movement in a contemporary macro-ecological context of 'cuttings of wood' or regional deforestation.

Tracing migrations

Inspired by the 'nocturnal economy' of Little India, where objects are collected at night and trolleyed to a central recycling point, Davis started collecting discarded pieces of wood. Cell tests were conducted to discern which tree species her objects derived. This sparked a series of pilgrimages to living tree specimens in the Singapore Botanic Gardens and the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve.

Collage reconstructions

Davis started translating speculative stories of plant migration into art practice. She started converting her discarded timber into woodblocks in spirit of 1950s-60s. However, she developed an emotional connection with the wood and could not bear to carve factual/fictive migration stories into their grain. She developed her own woodprint-collage method, where she first executes a 'natural history' print of original tree. Following which, she cuts and pastes pieces of the print into its furniture form. The result is an expression of Davis's tracing of a tangible object to an imagined tree, and the tree to its migrant forest products.



2010 grant to extract DNA from teak bed

Davis received a grant to extract DNA from a teak bed that she had scavenged from a junk shop, and travel to wherever the DNA suggested the timber originated. Together with her research team, Davis travelled to the scant remains of the teak plantations on Muna Island, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. She investigated several micro-ecologies. Teak historically has the same impact as contemporary palm oil. In the past, teak seeds were gifts from Javan royalty to King of Muna and severe penalties were imposed upon those caught smuggling. This changed when the Dutch cultivated teak intensively. The 1950s-1980s were the timber boom years, where demand greatly exceeded supply. Sawmills lined the harbour of the main town, Raha.

Davis' fieldwork presented significant tensions. Firstly, contemporary artists like to think they can critique modern orders of things, including science. Secondly, she was interested in teasing out multiple stories of wood, an endeavour contrasting with the definitive ambit and ecological utility of DNA certification.

Recasting micro-gestures

Halfway through our fieldwork, photographer Shannon Castleman discovers 'tree-wounds' - a moment whereby micro-gestures of Muna islanders came together with my initial interest in recasting the modern woodcut in a contemporary ecological context. Prohibited from harvesting *konservasi* forests, villagers would make cuts in the trees over a period of time on the side not facing the road until the tree eventually died. The tree was then removed as it is understood to have fallen on its own.

Teak Translations

A final work for the 2014 exhibition attempted to translate that fragile exo-skeleton of *bakau* scaffolding in Lee Kee Boon's *Nanyang University* woodblock into a room-size installation piece. The installation contained shadow puppet interpretations of modern woodcut works. This room of shadows, slowly animated by swinging light- pendulums, was intended to conjure half-built, still-breathing dreams of wood which seep into each other.



BANYAN BATTLES WITH TEAK, MAGIC BATTLES WITH SCIENCE
Charcoal and woodprint collage from a teak bed on paper, 2012



Instructions Not Included

Dennis Tan



In 2015, Dennis Tan was hosted by a family in Kebau, Riau Islands of Indonesia where he honed skills in the construction of the traditional Kolek sailboat. There are no plans for building the boat and his first attempt failed as both sides of the boat have to be perfectly symmetrical.



Tan's attempts to reconstruct the Kolek investigates ideas of self-organisation and the transmission of skills and knowledge through generations of oral history in the Riau Archipelago and how this enables the continuity of cultural communities.

"The Keban guys came to help me - they're Indonesians but they are not boat-builders. It just happened to be that they live in the area where these boats are sailed. It's like saying that as a Singaporean I would know how to make chicken rice. No. Maybe I have better understanding of the taste because I am more familiar with it but that doesn't mean I definitely know how to cook it. It's similar to these guys who helped me - I found out that they didn't know how to build boats. They just saw the boats everyday, they've sailed them, they've **cultural memory** of it. But it didn't mean they've built boats. So when they came to help me build the boat, they were also just discovering how to do so. Everyone I spoke to from Keban claimed that nobody knew how to build the boat, though there must be one or two living masters of boatmaking. But I never got to find out who these masters are."

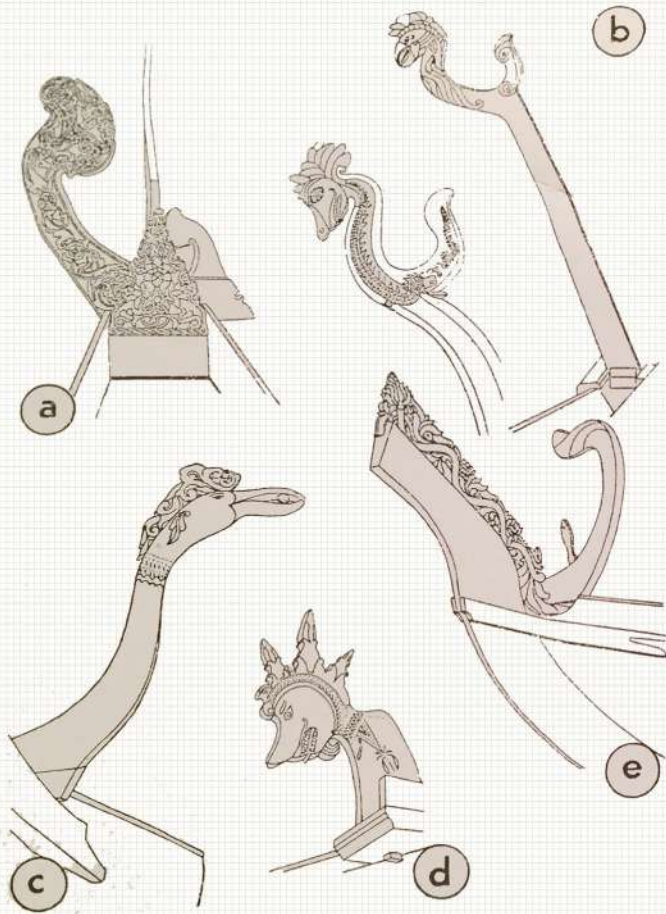
- Dennis Tan, 2016



Sketch of kolek with sail



Study on regional koleks



Malay koleks (made in chengal)

Typical decorated fittings from boats on the East Coast of Malaya, not drawn to scale. (a) the bangau or spar-rest on a Perahu Buatan Barat. (b) two examples of stern bangay on Perahu Payang, at Kuala Trengganu. (c) bangau on a Kolek Kueh at Kemasek. (d) bow spar-rest from a Perahu Payang. (e) typical stem-head and bangau of a Gelibat, from an example in Mersing.



Line profiles of the ten major patterns of fishing boats built by the Malays on the east coast, north of the Sedili River: in each case the bow is towards the left of the page, and the horizontal line represents the water level with the gear and normal complement of men on board. The sizes are those of the forms most commonly employed.



Kolek Buatan Barat



Kolek Lichang (Perahu Kolek)



Kolek Kueh



The Tree That Fell

Robert Zhao Ren Hui



The artist spent nine months sanding down each piece of trunk manually with sand paper. This pile of sawdust came from 200kg of wood.

The artist sanding down the trunks for How To Make A Tree Disappear As Nature Intended II (2015)



The Substation Banyan Tree awaiting translocation. (2014)
210cm x 140cm, Lightbox



How To Make A Tree Disappear As Nature Intended II (2015)
4.25m x 0.6m x 1.55m
Vitrine, Substation banyan tree root, powderpost beetles, powder



"I started thinking about the idea of disappearance in nature, and how long, without intervention, a tree takes to disappear. As an experiment, I started sanding all the wood down manually to see how long I can reduce it to dust. It took me nine months. Meanwhile, I know that the large Banyan tree will be transplanted in a few years time. It takes forever for a tree to disappear in the forest, but in Singapore, we can grow a 30-metre tree in just a few days. It is almost a miracle.

Slow disappearances and instant trees: Time is warped in the tree world in Singapore. - Robert Zhao Ren Hui

The artist salvaged this long root from the Substation Banyan tree that was taken away to be transplanted. The inside of this branch is slowly being eaten by the larva of powderpost beetles, which spend months or years inside reducing the wood to fine powder. Their presence is only apparent when they emerge as adults, leaving behind pinhole-sized openings, often called "shot holes". If conditions are right, female beetles may lay their eggs and re-infest the wood, continuing the cycle for generations, and reducing the wood to a pile of dust.



Singapore, Very Old Tree

Robert Zhao Ren Hui



Bamboo Grove at Commonwealth Drive



Angsana Tree at SOTA



大树下 Tua Pek Gong temple

The artist's catalogue of trees in Singapore and their anecdotes

"Trees are living, breathing markers of history. They are silent witnesses to larger changes in the national landscape, as well as participants in the stories of the people who have come to love and care for them. The trees in our collection are of different ages. Some of them, such as the *Alstonia pneumatophora* so beloved by one of our interviewees Mr Tony O'Dempsey, are old native species. Some have been around long before Sir Stamford Raffles sailed into the harbour in 1819, when Singapore was mostly a freshwater swamp forest."

"In choosing the presentation of the images in Singapore, very old tree, [the artist] was influenced by vintage postcards showing the natural scenes of Singapore. Many of them featured pictures of plantations and local crops, such as rubber, banana and coconut, and have been hand-tinted according to the fashions of the time. The layer of colour added to otherwise black-and-white photographs communicates a nostalgic sense of painstaking endeavour, drawing on a long artistic lineage of how nature has been aestheticised, communicated and shared as artefacts. And so [the artist] found it fitting to reference this visual tradition in the treatment of our own images."

In years to come, it is hoped that these postcards would make their way in the wider world and do their work of telling a story of Singapore's trees and their keepers. It is a valiant story of a people who tended to trees, worked under them, slept under them, prayed to them, cried over them, saved them from being cut down, or failed to do so, and most importantly, loved them." - Robert Zhao



The Bizarre Honour

Robert Zhao Ren Hui



Document Ref: 001-004-390
09 December 2016



THE BIZARRE HONOUR

I am pleased to announce that we have finally secured the site for the Museum. As one of Singapore's most important natural history societies, I have long felt we needed an actual location. It's high time our collection gets the space it deserves.

The aforementioned space is: 2 stories; 2000 square feet with garden and backyard; located in a quiet but central environment; well ventilated and lots of natural sunlight; pleasant neighbours.

This is the first time the organisation is opening its doors to the public. Our eclectic collection spans a wide range of objects and research to do with Singapore's natural history. With artefacts from colonial times to the present, it includes archive photos, geographical material, historical documents, taxidermy, animal traps and souvenirs, tropical field equipment, measuring apparatus and original inventions.

One of the highlights is a mobile expedition unit belonging to a missing member of our society. He had lived in the forested areas of Singapore for three years, gathering information for an unspecified research project. He disappeared in 2001. Only his tricycle, to which his survival unit and field equipment were attached, was found in Mandai jungle.

There are other ghosts in The Bizarre Honour. Such as those of tilapias, a living remnant from World War II, when the Japanese introduced these freshwater fish to Singapore waters from Java. That is why the local name for tilapias is "Japanese fish" or "Java fish". There are also ghosts of tigers, which used to roam our forests less than 200 years ago, with the last wild one killed in Choa Chu Kang in 1930.

I look forward to your continued support as we embark on this new, exciting chapter.

Note The Bizarre Honour chronicles the contentious relationship between this island and its human inhabitants, from Singapore's time as a colony to city-state. The show is a special project by OHI Open House and is part of Singapore Art Week 2017.

The Bizarre Honour blurs the line between art and history through their curation of everyday objects within the unusual museum. Without any form of context or explanation, viewers are spurred to think about how each object interacts with the space and other surrounding objects. Perhaps this is one of the aims of the exhibition—to explore forgotten memories embedded in the spaces we inhabit; The Bizarre Honour a prized collection of personal thoughts and relationships. - Fiona Chong, <http://arthop.co/editorials/preserving-transient-echoes-review-bizarre-honour-oh-open-house>



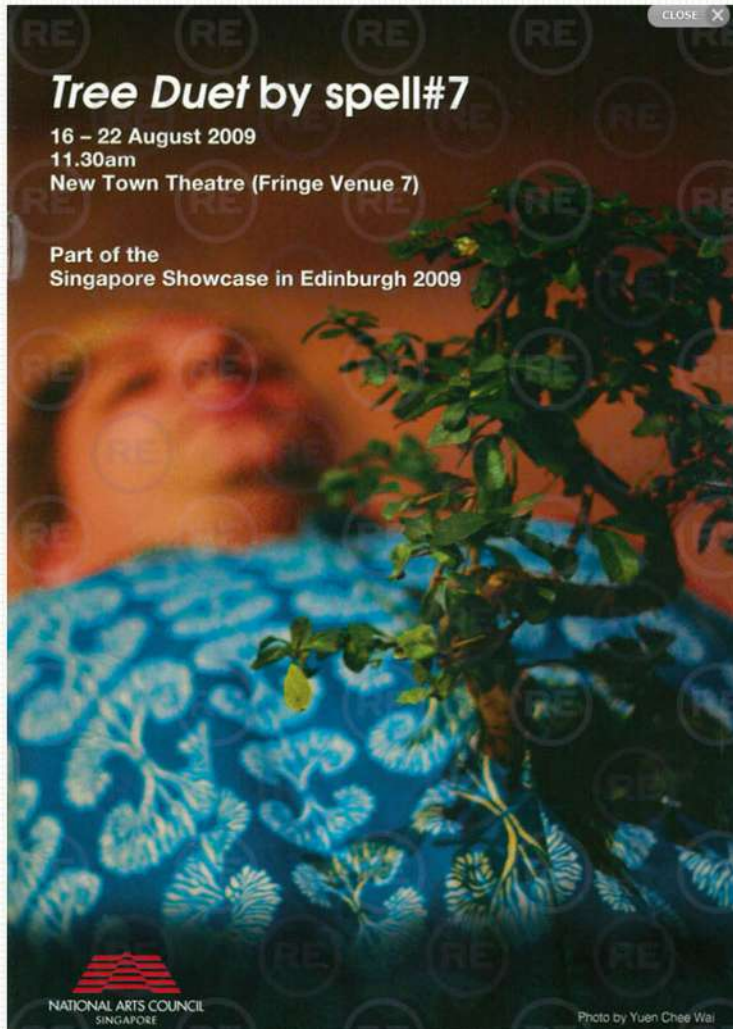
OH! Open House, known for their site-specific exhibitions that redefine everyday space through art, presents The Bizarre Honour, which sees the transformation of one of these ordinary two-storey terrace houses into a wondrous museum of natural history. Its pop-up against the backdrop of formal institutions such as the National Gallery of Singapore and the Singapore Art Museum inevitably catalyses the question: what features do we look for in deeming a museum an actual museum? Is it the branding, the inescapable text and labels, and the grandeur of architecture? - Fiona Chong, <http://arthop.co/editorials/preserving-transient-echoes-review-bizarre-honour-oh-open-house>



Remnant of a banyan tree at Kallang Basin



🎵 **Tree Duet (2007-2009) by spell#7**
Kaylene Tan and Paul Ray



"Over the following years Tree Duet (2007-9) was presented in different theatres and different countries to different kinds of people. It grew in length and complexity, each new version enfolding previous iterations. Paul published a version of the script in an academic book, and the art historian Lucy Davis built a sensitive scholarly article around the project. She knows best:

There are recurring stories of people and trees: politicians and trees, children playing around trees, dances with trees, historic individuals and trees, ancestors and trees. These stories are told and retold in layers, which resound through the gentle density of the piece. A considerable amount of water is consumed from plastic bottles by both performers. Most of the materials used in the production are tree products: a piano, a harpsichord, a broom, rubber balls (a reference to the Malayan rubber industry and included in a story of Henry 'Mad' Ridley, self-styled rubber seed evangelist who was appointed Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens in 1888), a book of plays by the revered 'father' of Singapore theatre Kuo Pao Kun, handwritten notes for a eulogy to Rae's grandmother, and a temple woodblock percussion instrument. And then there were 100 Singapore five-dollar bills, which are green and although no longer made of paper, bear the image of a Singapore 'Heritage' tembusu tree.

In the play, monologues by Paul Rae – which skirt around the conventions of a performance lecture – alternate with physical and spoken interventions by Kaylene Tan, which complicate Rae's prolixity. At one point she says, 'You talk a lot' and the audience laughs. During my second and third viewings, I found myself zoning in and out of Rae's sequences of recurring stories – and instead drifted with other rhythms within the piece: the poignant but independently demanding temporalities of Toru Takemitsu's Rain Tree Sketches I and II and 'Rain Dreaming'; the earnest and somewhat wooden 'tree dance' that Tan and Rae return to (Tan assuredly, Rae haplessly); the sound of the temple woodblock; the sound of breath; the sound of wind; the sound of the sweeping of leaves on a temple floor (Davis 2011: 45)."

Source:
<http://www.performanceparadigm.net/index.php/journal/article/viewFile/119/119>

Tree Duet is a meditative performance about our continuing entanglement with trees. Accompanied by pianist Shane Thio, performers Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan combine an intricately interwoven set of stories and reportage with actions and gestures to create a theatrical ecology of sounds, words and images.

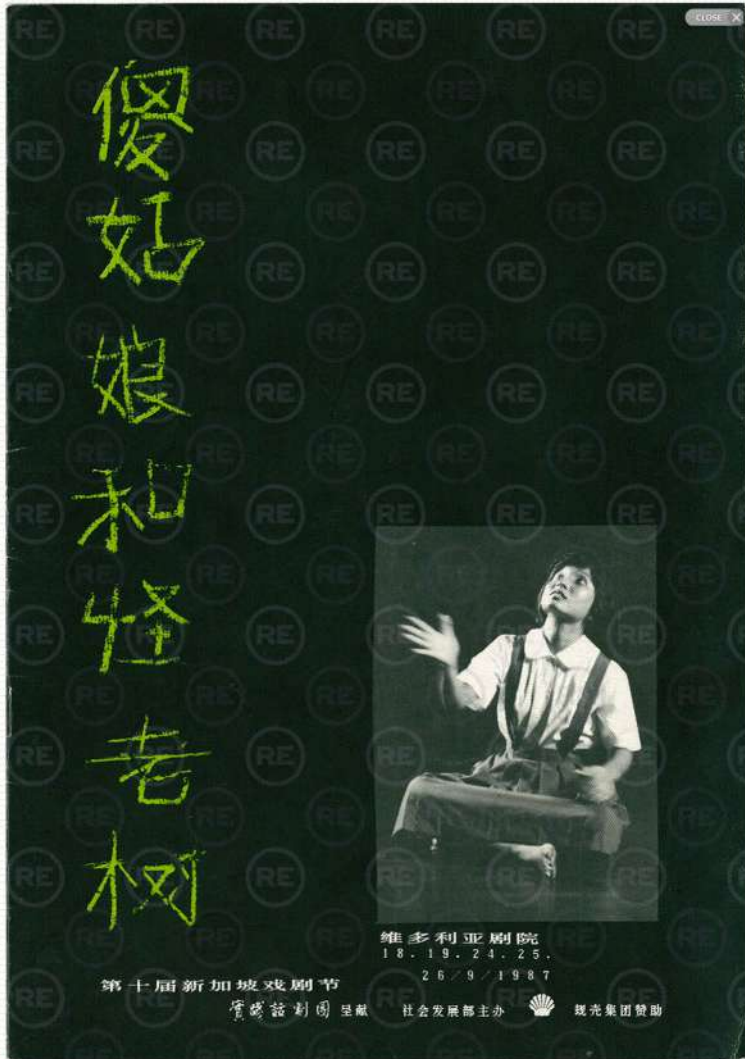
Eco-performance minus the moralising, Tree Duet encompasses everything from the history of the Malayan rubber industry to carbon offsetting, the music of Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu to the 100 year old Bodhi tree at a soon-to-be-demolished Buddhist temple in Singapore.

In exploring how some of the slow mysteries of tree-time persist in the fast-paced life of a global city, Rae and Tan invent some tree-lore for the 21st Century, and apply it to the vexed relationship between our all too human obsessions with nature, power and death.

Tree Duet was nominated for Best Original Script in the 2008 Life! Theatre Awards. Earlier versions were presented at the Substation's Septfest 2007, Wild Rice's Singapore Theatre Festival '08 and the National University of Singapore's NUS Arts Festival 2009.

The Silly Little Girl and The Funny Old Tree (1987)

Kuo Pao Kun



1987 programme

The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree is a play written by renowned Singaporean theatre practitioner Kuo Pao Kun in 1987. The play tells of the story about a strange attachment that a girl develops with an old, funny-looking tree in her school. However, development and construction plans by the adults for that area threaten to put an end to this friendship. Despite exhausting all means, the girl fails to protect the tree from the construction cranes. In a rapidly transforming society, how do we respond to the changes and dissolution of our culture and environment?



1989 postcard



1991 programme



1989 programme

In 2012, guest Director Fu Hong Zheng tweaked the story to have the Old Tree symbolise the elderly in today's society. Through the dialectic engagement between the older and the younger generations, the play extensively draws out magical yet realistic scenes in the juxtaposition of several themes: indifference versus passion, brutality versus tenderness, inertia versus determination, the intangible versus the tangible, and more.

Tree / House

Paul Rae and Ho Tzu Nyen

OCBC Singapore Theatre Festival 08
6 - 24 AUGUST 2008

spell#7 & Ho Tzu Nyen in association with WILD RICE presents

PAUL RAE & HO TZU NYEN'S
Tree / House

directed by Paul Rae & Ho Tzu Nyen
7, 8 & 9 August 2008 * Drama Centre Black Box

UNIVERSAL RESOURCE LOCATOR
www.singaporetheatrefestival.com

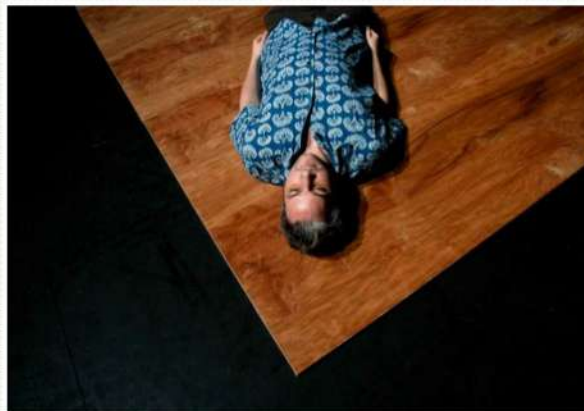
WILD RICE
HO TZU NYEN
7
Ho Tzu Nyen



Tree Duet explores our continuing entanglement with trees by presenting a theatrical meditation on the things they make us think and do. An eco-performance minus the moralizing, spell #7's Paul Rae and Kaylene Tan, reinvent tree-lore for the 21st century.

House of Memory is a quirky performance lecture by visual artist and film-maker Ho Tzu Nyen. Beginning with the destruction of his childhood home, Tzu Nyen plunders the history of twentieth century cinema, from the arthouse to the action-packed, in search of his memories – with increasingly explosive results.

Tree Duet (Campbell version) was presented at Live Arts Bangkok in August 2007. Tree Duet (Ridley version) and House of Memory were first presented as works in progress by The Substation during SeptFest 2007. Tree Duet was nominated for the Life! Best Original Script Award in 2008.



Tree Duet includes extracts from The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree by Kuo Pao Kun, and Eclairs sur l'au-dela by Olivier Messiaen. It closes with Rain Tree Sketch II: In Memoriam Olivier Messiaen by Toru Takemitsu.



"Tree Duet started as a set of stories, actions and readings in Bangkok in August 2007 with the following anecdote:

At the end of Duets 2, there was a kind of coup de theatre, where I walked over to this corner of the stage, and lifted up a trap-door to reveal the top of a beautiful tree growing up, as if it were growing out of the stage.

I spoke to it for a while, then I sat down here and the lights went down.

But even as the audience began to applaud, I knew that although the show had ended, it wasn't finished. It was the tree. You can't just put a tree on stage and expect it to do what you want it to do. I'm not saying trees have their own agendas – but they are their own things."

Where do your memories live?

Tree/House is a two-part performance about how we remember in a city of forgetting. First a tree, then a house, provide the starting points for an exercise in modern storytelling, which weaves objects, images and anecdotes together into a provocative and poignant remembrance of things present.

Tree gifts can be fascinating

New Nation, 19 December 1974, Page 32

Dignitaries are often seen planting trees on auspicious occasions.

But you are probably not too concerned over that little ceremony nor too impressed if that one-metre high tree were to shoot up to 100 metres over the years. That is, unless you are directly involved in the event — which is hardly ever.

However, this need not be so. You could be that very person shovelling in earth as a final touch to the tree planting ceremony—in your friend's garden.

All you need to do is to call over at the Plant and Fertilisers Sale Centre, a unit of the Parks and Recreation Division, at the Floral Mile, Dunearn Road (located opposite Equatorial Hotel), and buy your friend a tree for his garden.

You could possibly arrange for him to do all the groundwork (sometimes lightly referred to as "dirty work") such as digging up the ground, transferring the tree from the pot to the ground and shovelling in the earth until the last spadeful — and that's when you ceremoniously step in to round off the event. Perhaps you could even use a watering can to add a touch of class to the occasion.

Of course you must know your friend well enough for him not to have the urge to report you to one of the head-shrinker institutions around the place.

Just tell him your sudden unaccountable passion to be a dignitary. He may nod his head in understanding sympathy, and go along with the scheme.

Anything to please a friend should be his attitude—for, after all, you are buying him a present.

In this Yuletide season, you may wish to get your friend a conifer to act as a Christmas tree.

Currently, the one-metre Norfolk Island

Pines (*Araucaria excelsa*) could be bought for \$15. This is a symmetrical tree, with horizontal

branches, which reaches a height of 30 metres when fully grown.

The Blue Juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* var Blue) of approximately similar height is also priced at \$15 per plant. This is the dense pyramidal tree with fine bluish-green leaves. It grows to a maximum height of about 12 metres.

Ornamental trees which could be bought at \$1 (they come in polythene bags) include the Flame of the Forest (*Delonix regia*), the common local tree with large scarlet flowers and an umbrella-shaped crown, Rain Tree (*Enterolobium saman*), with wide spreading crown, and the Yellow Flame (*Pelt-*

phorum pterocarpum) with its characteristic brilliant yellow flowers.

Fruit trees could be bought for your friend's garden also.

The grafted chiku costs \$3 per plant. Others include: Grafted durian (\$5), jackfruit (\$1), grafted guava (\$5), papaya (40 cents), pomelo (\$4), grafted rambutan (\$3.50), soursop (\$1), grafted starfruit (\$4), Lemon (\$2), grafted mango (\$5), mangosteen (\$1.50), grafted mandarin orange (\$5), dwarf coconut (\$3) and passion fruit (50 cents).

Instruction on planting and maintenance of

fruit trees is provided by the Primary Production Department of the Ministry of National Development. Such instruction is contained in a booklet which is available at the Plant and Fertilisers Sale Centre.

It covers such subjects as site requirements, preparations for planting, field planting, watering, manuring, pest control, and horticultural pruning. Fertiliser guide to some species of fruit trees is given as an ad-

pendix.

For instance, in horticultural pruning, it tells the home gardener that undesirable new shoots may arise from the rootstock of all grafted plants because of the removal of the stem above the point of union of the bud or scion.

It states: "These new shoots should be removed as soon as they appear to enable the scion to grow into a healthy one."

But perhaps your friend may not wish to turn his garden into a park with towering trees to overshadow his beautiful home. If this be so, there are shrubs, climbers, foliage plants, hedge plants and orchids available to cater to his requirements.

Cape Honeysuckle (*Tecomaria capensis*) which originates in South Africa can be bought for \$1 per plant in a polythene bag. This is a low-growing

shrub which makes an excellent informal hedge when planted close together. It sprawls thickly and produces masses of very brilliant orange-scarlet flowers against a background of dense, dark green leaflets.

The individual flowers resemble small trumpets and grow in loose upright inflorescences at the tips of the branches. It is seldom attacked by pests or diseased.

The Pentas group of shrubs (*Pentas coccinea*, *Pentas carnea*, and *Pentas Ceylon Hybrid*) has small tubular five-petaled flowers in terminal clusters with softly hairy leaves and stems.

The *Pentas coccinea* has bright red flowers in large clusters; the *Pentas carnea* has light mauve flowers in smaller cluster with a white variety; and the *Pentas Ceylon Hybrid* has deep mauve flowers. *Pentas* flowers last for several days and may be used for floral arrangements. Each type costs \$1 per plant.

A well-known graceful shrub of medium size is

the Oleander (*Nerium oleander*). The flowers are produced in large clusters at the ends of branches and are salviform, consisting of five lobes with a slight spiral twist.

Single as well as double varieties exist which are coloured white, various shades of pink or deep red. The plant also cost \$1 per polythene bag.

Fresh stocks of orchids are put out for sale every

Monday and Thursday, and prices are determined according to the demand, availability, size and types of the orchid seedlings or cuttings.

The Bamboo Orchid or Kinta Weed (*Arundina graminifolia*) is a medium-size ground orchid

found in open shrub land in Singapore. It has slender erect stems bearing narrow grass-like leaves.

The flowers are dainty and attractive, coloured mauve or white with light purple and yellow markings on the lip. In the garden, these orchids grow quite easily, and are best grown in beds and in quantity.

The Primary Production Department has also formulated four types of fertilisers for trees, flowering plants and fruit trees. These fertilisers are simple to use and are suitable for application at regular intervals to provide useful nutrients to plants. The ingredients used for the mixtures are highly concentrated, easily soluble, and would act quickly when applied to the soil around the plant.

Methods of application for these fertilisers are also given by the department. For instance, they can be applied by scattering the fertilisers around the plant or digging two or three holes each about 7.5 cm to 10 cm (about three to four inches) in diameter deep around the plant, and putting in the fertilisers before covering up with the soil.

The fertilisers are graded for trees, foliage plants, young fruit trees, flowering plants and mature fruit trees and cost \$1.50 per bag of 4.5 kg. For planting holes, trenches and beds, untreated sludge is sold at 40 cents per 22.5 kg per bag and dry/treated sludge at 50 cents per 9.0 kg bag.

Armed with all this information, it should be an easy matter for you to decide on whether to get your friend a present for his garden this Christmas.

Paya Lebar banyan tree 'lives on'

The Sunday Times, 25 December 2016

Saplings nurtured from tree that had to make way for development

Janice Heng

When Mr Eric Wong, 60, was growing up in Geylang Serai, a lone banyan tree in a field served as a local landmark. "That field was a playground for young people then. If you wanted to play football with friends, you could just meet near the tree," said Mr Wong, now chairman of the Geylang Serai Citizens' Consultative Committee.

Decades later, the tree stood 15m high, with a spreading crown about 20m across. But late last year, it made way for a new development near Paya Lebar MRT station.

Yet, developer Lendlease is helping the tree live on - in a way. Stem cuttings taken from it have been nurtured into saplings and will be given to local organisations such as schools or community clubs.

"We want the saplings to continue being part of Paya Lebar," said Mr Simon Wild, Lendlease's head of sustainability for Asia, who came up with the idea of propagating the tree. The best sapling will also be planted in the 3.9ha development site near the train station.

The tree's majestic size and local

prominence - "It's used a lot for shade, especially on weekends" - prompted the idea, said Mr Wild.

"We wanted to preserve the bloodline of the tree, which was too big and too old to survive any changes on site."

The site is for the upcoming Paya Lebar Quarter, a mixed retail, commercial and residential project.

As part of the tender conditions, an existing canal had to be widened - but the tree was in the way. The team looked at changing the canal's path or relocating the tree, but neither would ensure its survival, added Mr Wild.

As banyan trees are common here, the National Parks Board was not consulted in the decision. The saplings will be distributed around 2018. Until then, Lendlease staff - including Mr Wild - are helping to care for some of them.

Lendlease senior development manager and bonsai enthusiast Turner Canning is aiming to turn

TOO BIG, TOO OLD TO MOVE

We wanted to preserve the bloodline of the tree, which was too big and too old to survive any changes on site.



MRSIMON WILD, Lendlease's head of sustainability for Asia.

his sapling into a bonsai banyan.

"Creating a variant of the traditional outdoor banyan tree may influence others to bring 'manageable' trees into their homes and small gardens," he said.

Mr Wong called the effort "a good gesture on Lendlease's part".

"If we (grassroots organisations) receive a sapling, we will definitely find a place to grow it," he added.

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Mr Wild is one of the Lendlease staff caring for the saplings, which have been nurtured from stem cuttings taken from the original iconic tree (above). His daughter Eleri, 11, and son Joseph, five, are also helping to care for the sapling.

PHOTOS: LENDLEASE

He turned Tanglin hotel's rooftop into lush garden

The 76-year-old transforms barren spot at Hotel Jen Tanglin into oasis of fruit trees

Samantha Boh

On a roof four storeys above ground lies an Eden, unknown to many, close to the busy Orchard Road belt.

There, over 10 types of fruit trees grow, including guava, papaya, chiku and banana, nurtured from saplings by their keeper, Mr Lim Chin Tee.

Over the last four years, Mr Lim, or Uncle Lim as he is affectionately known, has transformed Hotel Jen Tanglin Singapore's rooftop, a usually forgotten spot of a building, into a sweet-smelling garden.

On most days, a peek into the 83.15 sq m space in the Cuscaden Road hotel – slightly smaller than an HDB four-room flat – would find the 76-year-old stooped over, tending to his oasis.

With his gardening shears and other tools in hand, he snips away wayward branches and tugs on stubborn weeds, or piles food waste like leftover rice, coffee grounds and egg shells into the soil to fertilise the plants.

He starts work at 9am and often stays till 3pm or 4pm. "It's not like I get overtime pay. Sometimes, it's because there is so much to do, and other times, I just forget the time because it is so relaxing," he said.

It would seem reasonable for a man his age to retire from work but Mr Lim said he does not want to be idle at home.

He read that it is important to stay active into old age to prevent chronic illnesses from developing. He feels that gardening helps to keep his body fit and his mind sharp.

His first brush with gardening came in 1954 when he was just 14 years old.

A friend gave his family two mango trees, which they planted at the front and back of their house. They



Mr Lim shows off some fruits of his labour. There are over 10 types of fruit trees, nurtured from saplings, by the gardener.

flowered and bore fruit.

That was the start of a lifelong passion. After he left school, he began supervising gardeners at the former Mandai Orchid Gardens and working in the gardens of private homes.

He decided to get certification when then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew declared in 1967 that he would transform Singapore into a garden city.

Mr Lim completed a six-month gardening course at the Singapore Botanic Gardens in 1970 and has earned his keep as a gardener since then, working at hotels on weekends and private homes on weekdays.

It was a former employer, the general manager of the predecessor of the Hotel Jen Tanglin Singapore, who got Mr Lim his current job.

Mr Juergen Doerr was moving to the Philippines and was worried that the man who tended his home garden would be out of a job.

So he tasked the head chef of what was then the Trader's Hotel to make sure that Mr Lim got a job in the hotel. In 2012, the role of a gardener was created for him.

"He is a good man. He pitied me because he was worried I wouldn't have a job," said Mr Lim.

Trader's Hotel was rebranded as Hotel Jen Tanglin Singapore in September 2014, and today, Mr Lim is the gardener of its Spice Garden.

He gets waste from the hotel's kitchens and turns it into compost for his garden, and offers the fruit he grows to hotel staff.

The garden is, today, open to the public and visitors are welcome to visit to see the fruits or have a chat with Mr Lim.

"When it comes to the Spice Garden at Hotel Jen Tanglin Singapore, there is no one more passionate or enthusiastic than Uncle Lim," said Ms Juliana Jauw, the hotel's assistant communications manager.

"Uncle Lim has inspired us with his knowledge and wisdom. We intend to use the Spice Garden as an educational hub to pass on his teachings to the next generation of staff, guests and members of the public."

When asked what he hopes to grow in future, Mr Lim said his biggest wish is to have a mango tree just like the one in his childhood home.

But he wavers.

"Okay, maybe a durian tree as well, it's hard to decide. I like them all," he said.

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The Straits Times, 8 December 2016, Home, B10



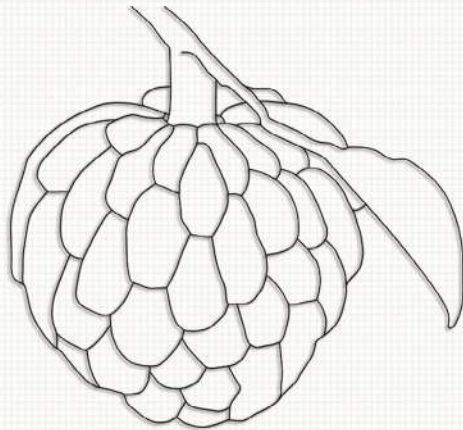
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LIVING CLASSROOM

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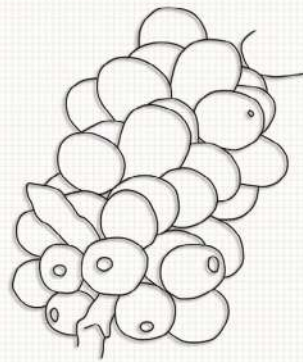


MS JULIANA JAUW, Hotel Jen Tanglin Singapore's assistant communications manager, on Mr Lim, the hotel's gardener.



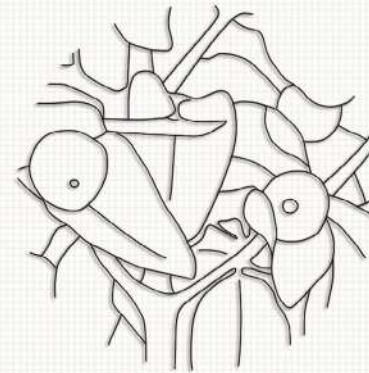
Custard Apple Tree

The custard apple tree is a small, evergreen tree with an open irregular crown shape. The round fruit it bears might have a knobby surface but its flesh is sweet and juicy.



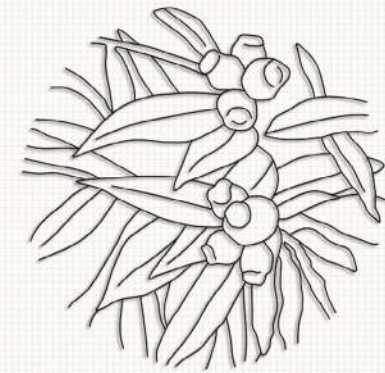
Coffee Tree

The coffee tree gains its name from its oval, glossy fruit which ripens to a dark red. The seeds from its fruit are used to make coffee.



Seashore Mangosteen Tree

The seashore mangosteen tree has fruit that ripens to a bright rose-red with an apple-like scent. It is commonly grown in the street, parks and gardens as its dense crown provides good shade on sunny days.

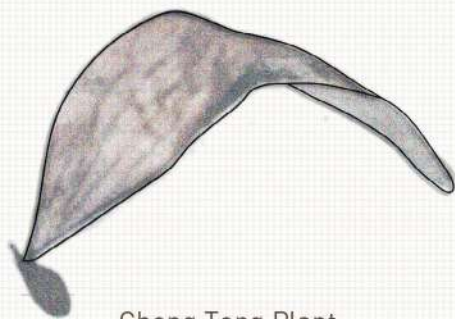


Rose Apple Tree

The rose apple tree is a small, evergreen tree with fruit which, when eaten fresh, tastes sweet and smells of rosewater. Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan presented a sapling of this tree to the nursery from his own garden yesterday.

Going fruity in the community

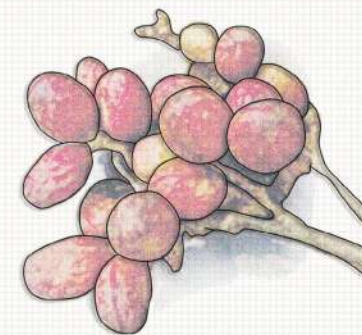
The Straits Times, 12 August 2016, original photos by Nparks



Cheng Teng Plant

The cheng teng plant is a native tree that can grow up to 45m tall and gains its name due to its fruit which can range from green to yellow to brown, with boat-shaped wings. The flesh of its fruit is soaked in water to achieve a jelly-like texture commonly used in popular local dessert - cheng teng.

The Pasir Panjang nursery, which has provided the lush trees and shrubs along Singapore's roads and parks the past four decades, has been turning its attention to supplying fruit trees and shrubs - including durian, mango and papaya - to parks and community gardens, including one at the upcoming Sembawang Sports and Community Hub.



Hairless Rambutan

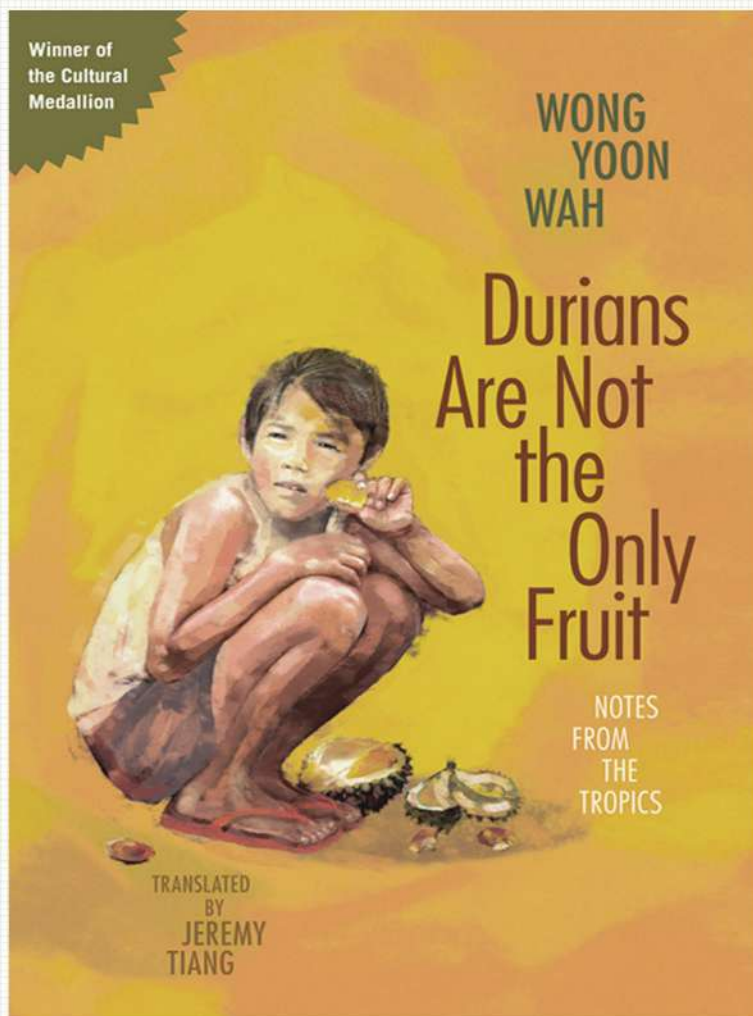
As the name suggests, the hairless rambutan tree is a relative of the common rambutan tree but the fruit that it bears is completely hairless. When ripe, its fruit is red and slightly warty on the surface. Although smaller and almost oval in shape when compared to its cousin, the common rambutan, the two taste similar.



Durians are not the only fruit

Wong Yoon Wah

Translated by Jeremy Tiang



Wong's essays construe subjects ranging from 'The Queen and the Concubine' (mangosteen and rambutan), "Cathedrals of the Tropics" (the rain tree) and 'The Oldest Rubber Tree'. There are elements in the environment that yield **fresh images, symbols and metaphors** and some of the vagaries connected with how established, customary practices metamorphose, acquire new names and acceptance. The world of Wong's childhood is undeniably smaller, but he understood every square inch of it.

Chinese fascination with the durian began with Zheng He's voyages in the 1400s- unquestionably smelly, yet a "fruit of the first rank". As nations strove to be strong and stable, 'Nature as nurture' metamorphosed into 'Nature as cash'. That meant ever efficient means of exploitation. She has been invaded, ravaged, cut down, dug, levelled, blown open, destroyed, despite a growing movement to save her, to help redress the over-emphasis on the bottom line mentality. The Nature that Wong and his generation lived close to became increasingly parcelled, methodised. Texts like *Durians Are Not The Only Fruit* recount 'Nature as nurture', **in a context of migrant history and coming to terms with the colonials and national hopes**, re-construction and construction, are especially valuable as analysing the resulting complexity yields fresh ideas, definitions and paradigms relevant to various other areas of study.



The New Village

Wong Yoon Wah
translated by Ho Lian Geok and
Ng Yi-Sheng
Singapore: Epigram Books, 2013.

Wong's childhood and adolescence were spent in turbulent times: the Japanese Occupation and the Malayan Emergency, the armed struggle mounted by the MCP. Their histories generated a significant part of the substance of his poetry, organised under the six parts of *The New Village*. The poems depict life in Malaya's tropical rainforest and a British colony – revolving around objects such as a plant issued with an Identity Card when he turned 12, or a hand grenade lying among fruits in a basket.



My Journey of Return

Wong Yoon Wah
Taipei: Xindi Culture, 2010



Flavour of Durian

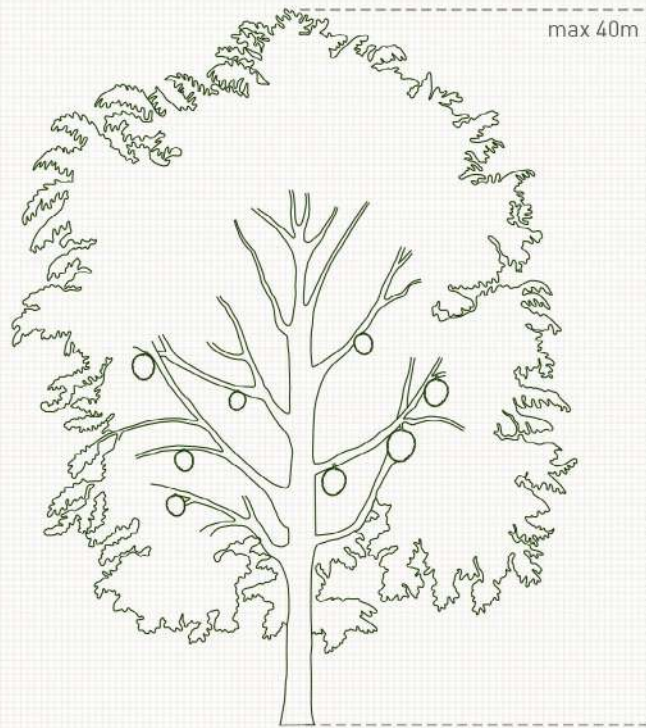
Wong Yoon Wah
Taiwan: Eryu Wenhua, 2003, 160
pages.

Wong the third generation of Chinese immigrants, was born in Malaysia. Currently, he is the Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences Institute of the University of Hong Kong and the Chairman of the Singapore Writers' Association. His works include "Inside and Outside Collection", "Rubber Tree", "Nanyang Local Collection", "Landscape Poetry", "Wang Runhua Anthology", "Wang Runhua Collection", "Global Village Myth", "Tropical Rainforest and Colonies" and so on.



Merlion, Durian, Dredge and Rubber Tree: Essays on Chinese Literature and Culture in Malaysia and Singapore

Wong Yoon Wah
Wenshizhe Publishing House, 2007



durian tree
'king'

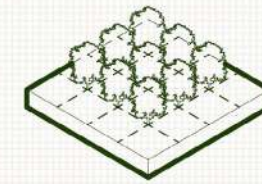
A thorny hero defeating illness and infestation,
 A true king of the forest fruits.
 No harm if his armour's unappealing,
 Weakness and warmth have the same smell.
 In the world, men brag of eating giant dates
 While beauties crumble spring onions with smiles.
 We pawn our possessions, live for a moment's pleasure
 And addicted to the durian, we do not fear poverty.

Poem by Pan Shou

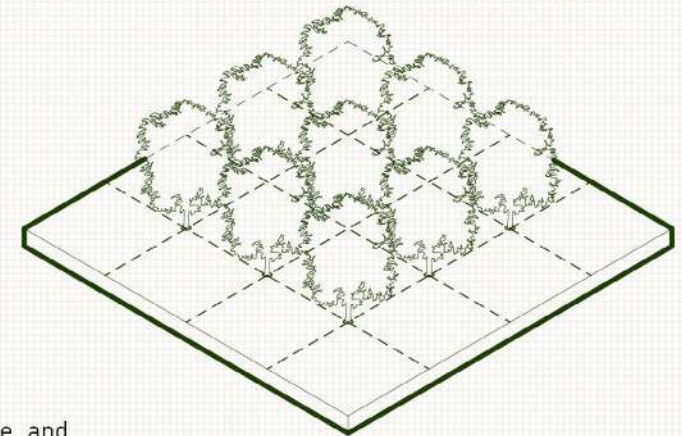
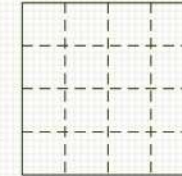
"The durian is the pettiest tree, fruit wrenched from it by human hands will taste neither sweet nor fragrant when eaten... it will suffer injury, and forever only produce half ripe durians."



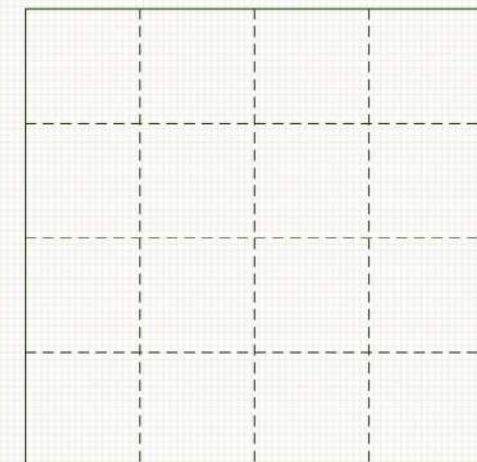
"The durian is a tropical deciduous tree, and probably originates from the Malaysian peninsula and Borneo. At present, the fruit's production is greatest in Malaysia and Thailand. Grown from a seed, it takes nine years for a tree to reach maturity and bear fruit. The tree grows straight up and can reach a height of more than thirty metres. Apart from the coconut, it may be the tallest tropical tree, and also the longest-lived - an ordinary tree can still produce flowers and fruit in its fiftieth or sixtieth year. Standing beneath one of these giants, I am made deeply aware of my own insignificance."



young tree: 6m x 6m



mature tree: 16m x 16m



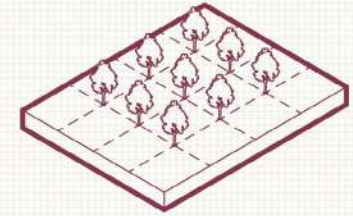


mangosteen tree
'queen'

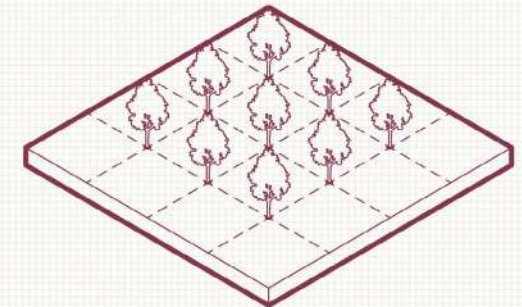
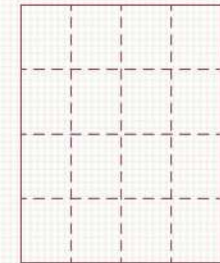
"The durian, mangosteen and rambutan fruit bi-annually, once in the middle of the year and once at the end. I believe the king always turns up on fruit stands first, followed by the mangosteen, with the concubine making a delayed appearance. Every year at this time, many streets in Singapore and country roads in Malaysia sprout temporary stalls laden with gigantic mud-yellow durians, purplish-red mangosteens, and dainty, brightly coloured rambutans, traditionally displayed according to their place in the hierarchy... The rambutan really seems as if it's been relegated to a minor palace. The prices they command are commensurate with their status."



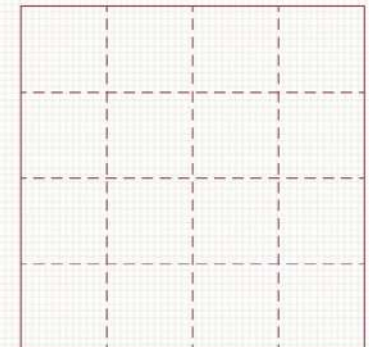
"The mangosteen's defeat of the rambutan in the battle for the throne is due, besides its worth, bearing and majesty, to its wondrously compatible marriage to the durian. The durian is hearty, with an aroma that assaults the nose and a painful sweetness, while the mangosteen is cooling, with a delicate, clean flavour... The bright red inner shell, holding the snow-white meat, makes the whole look irresistibly appetising. No wonder the British traveller Anna Forbes wrote that 'if there were more of this fruit on the earth, there would be need for neither churches nor jails, for there would be no sin.'"

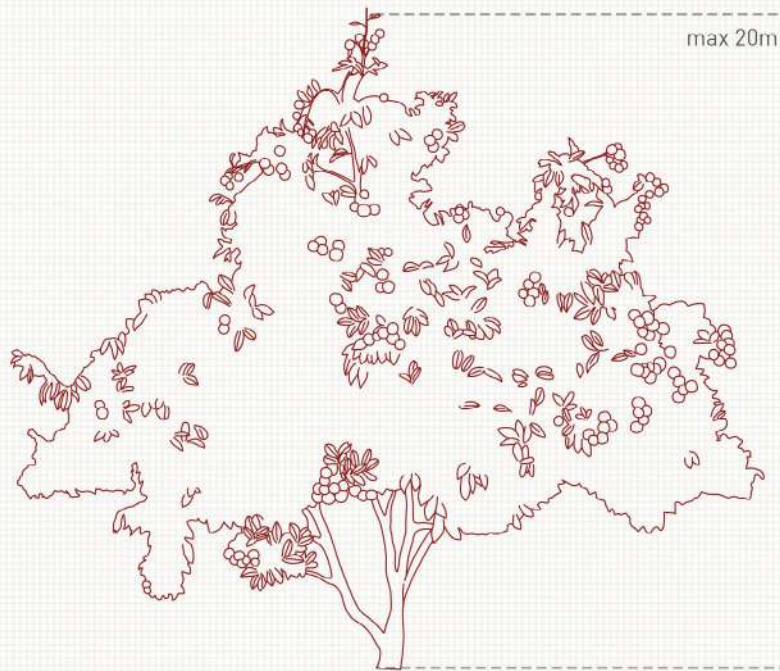


young tree: 7m x 9m



mature tree: 12m x 12m



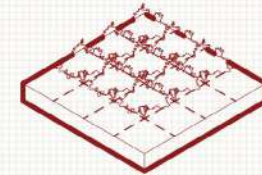


rambutan tree
'concubine'

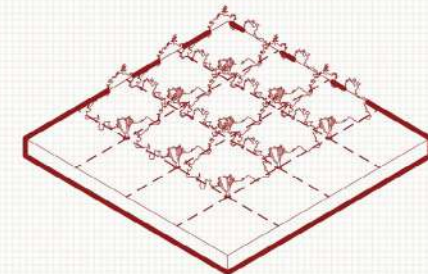
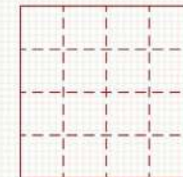


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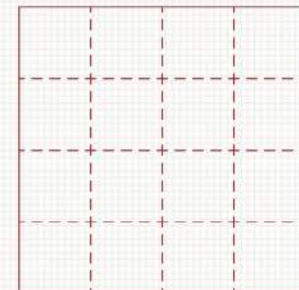
"If we set off by car from Singapore, following the expressway up the West Coast of the Malaysian peninsula, sailing through a green sea of rubber trees, we'd see scattered Malay houses on stilts, half-hidden amongst the luxuriant foliage of fruit trees. The tallest is usually the durian tree, with the mangosteen or rambutan leaning in its shade. They love the equator's abundant sunlight, and the damp and rain of the tropical rainforest. Rural folk plant these trees, then simply wait for the day they can enjoy their shade and fruit, never needing to think about fertilising them."



young tree: 6m x 6m



mature tree: 10m x 10m





banana tree



young tree: 3m x 3m



mature tree: 3.6m x 3.6m



“At Chinese New Year, I returned to Singapore and Malaysia where, whether at the MRT station, the fruit market, or just by the roadside, bananas were everywhere, and at low prices too. Twenty of them could be had for a dollar. Malaysia’s bananas come in many varieties - at least twenty-eight, each with a different flavour and texture. Places that regularly sell the fruit usually feature at least ten varieties, the shapes and colours varying as much as their insides.”

“When I’m away, I miss the bananas of Singapore and Malaysia - the true Kingdom of Bananas. Banana trees are a frequent sight in gardens there, whether cultivated or wild. When I was young, a river passed in front of my family’s home, and opposite us was a hectare-large banana plantation, where several varieties were grown. When we felt like a banana, we were bound to find a ripe one somewhere across the river. Banana theft was rare at this time, since most households had a tree - only the birds could be accused of stealing them.”



papaya tree

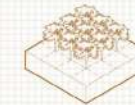


"Throughout the jungle regions of Southeast Asia, on either side of every road, you can see the green silhouettes of tropical fruit trees. Whether in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia or the Philippines, there are more than twenty common varieties: the chiku, soursop, jackfruit, starfruit, papaya, lime, durian, mangosteen, langsung, duku, mango, rambutan, guava, jambu, banana, pineapple, pomelo, and so on. In kampung areas, fruit has an intimate relationship with people's daily lives, and is often used as medicine or in cooking, not to mention as a source of income. In the afternoon when temperatures are at their highest, villagers enjoy sitting under fruit trees outside their homes, chatting or napping."

"In these regions, not only are there many species of fruit, but each comes in a great number of varieties. The banana, say, as eaten in Singapore and Malaysia, has more than ten variations in colour, size, shape and taste. No wonder Nanyang is regarded as a fruit paradise.."

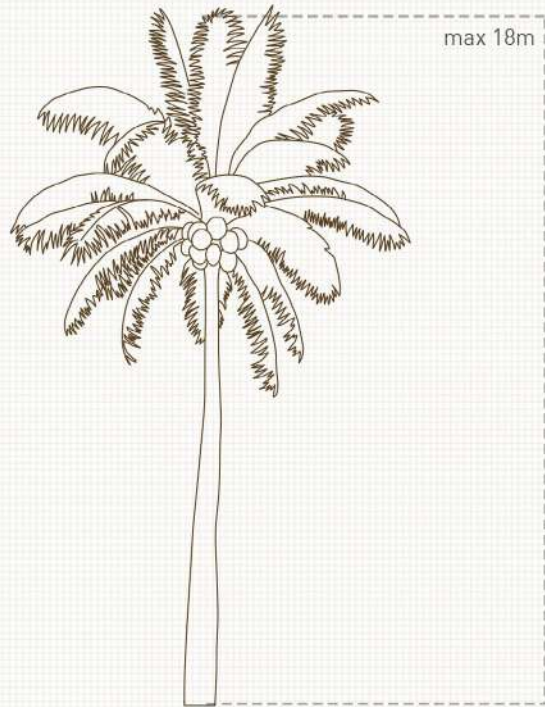


young tree: 1.5m x 1.5m



mature tree: 3m x 3m



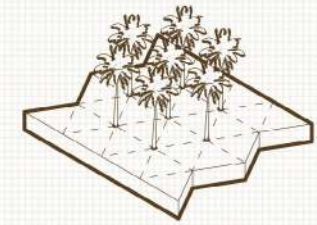


coconut tree

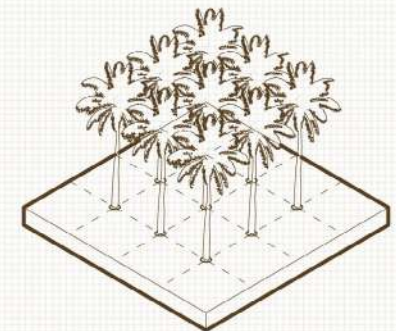
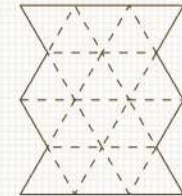


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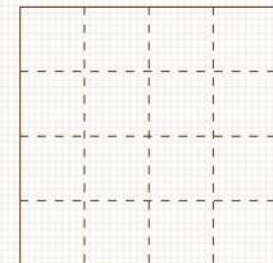
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young tree: 7.6m x 7.6m



mature tree: 9m x 9m



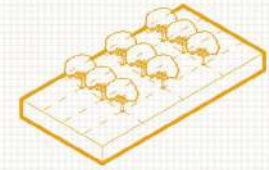


mango tree

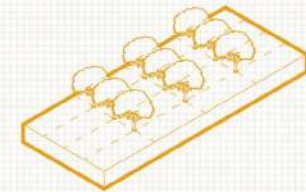
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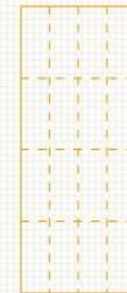
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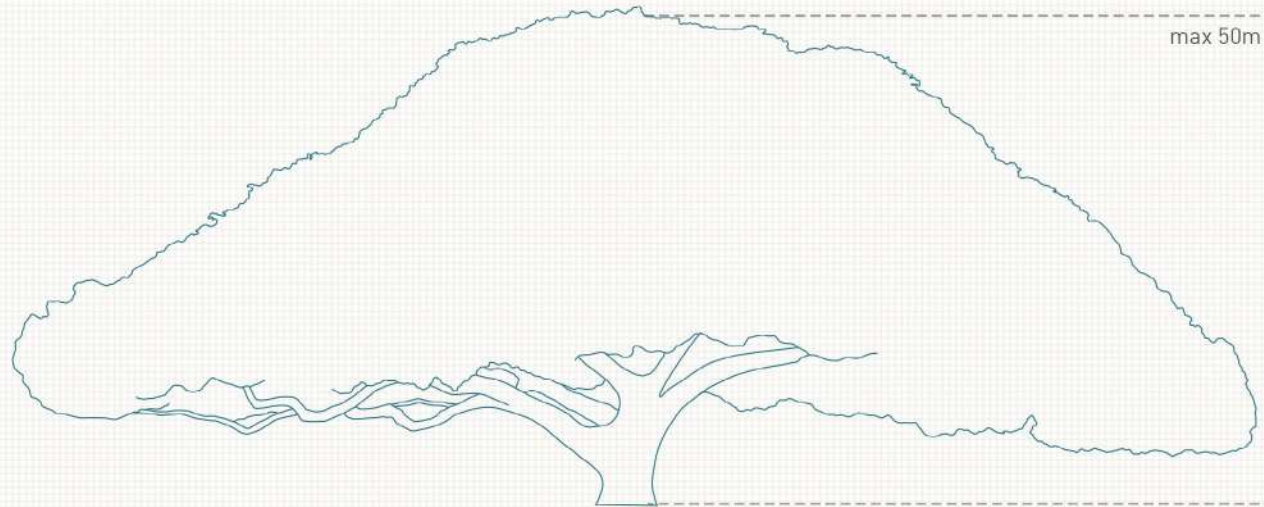


young tree: 4m x 8m



mature tree: 4m x 10m

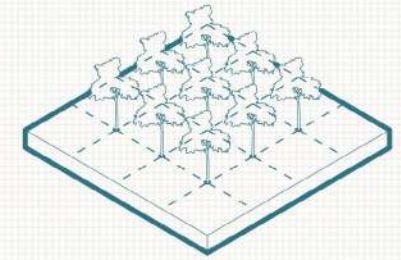




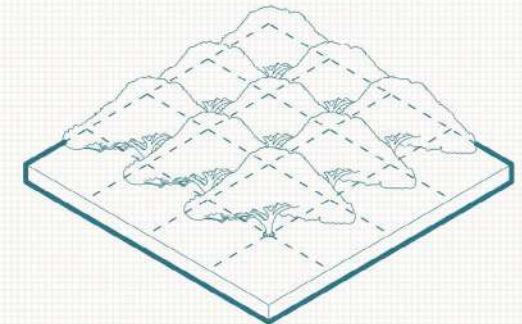
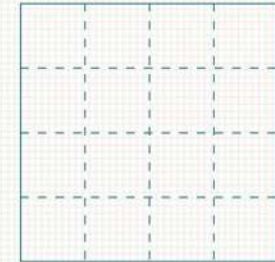
rain tree
'cathedral of the tropics'

"Singapore was once an island of tropical rainforests, a paradise of vegetation. Today, plants continue to grow abundantly here. Living in this botanical heaven, my greatest pleasure lies in observing the characters and lives of these plants, and listening to their conversations with birds and the weather. Amongst these many trees, my favourite is the rain tree- the best representative of our ecology, the symbiosis between the people of Nanyang and their environment. When travelling to Europe, ancient cathedrals are considered a must-see- a symbol of the age-old history and culture of the European people. To me, rain trees are the cathedrals of the tropics. In every rain tree, you can find the beliefs, the lifestyles, even the legends and dreams of our people."

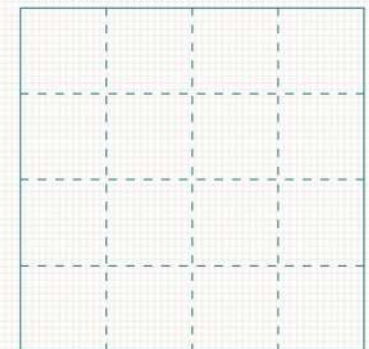
"Whenever I pick visiting friends at the airport, I always take care to introduce the rain trees standing tall on either side of the expressway as we drive down the wide boulevard leading to the city. Each crown of leaves expands in all directions, its lush design looking for all the world like an enormous green umbrella, providing shade from the harsh sun overhead, and shelter when an unexpected cloud suddenly lets loose its cargo of rain."

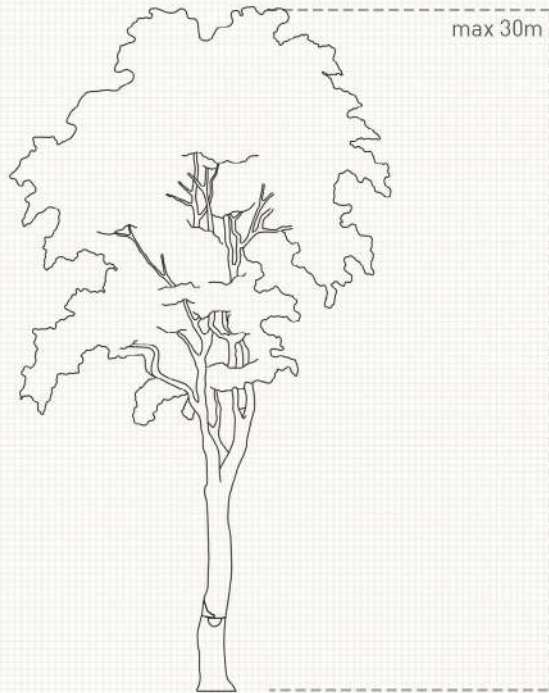


young tree: 9m x 9m



mature tree: 12m x 12m





'daily-bleeding rubber trees'

"Like a rubber tree, my grandfather was brought to Singapore by the British, and at around the same time too. He then discovered he was extremely suited to life amongst the hills of the tropics and not only set down roots, but began to bear fruit too. My father, in his turn, was more like a second-generation rubber tree, one born and raised here who'd made his peace with the climate, a native of the land rather than a transplant."

As a child, I too was like a rubber tree, a third-generation native of Perak's Kinta district... Not only do rubber trees provide jobs for rural dwellers and bring great wealth to plantation owners, they also add a hint of golden autumn to the Malaysian landscape. yet this imported autumn is even hotter than summer."

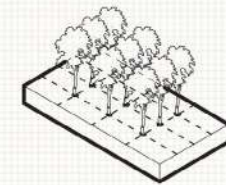


"As a child, I had to walk through two or three miles of rubber trees every day to get to my primary school. Rubber seeds littered the ground. A fruit would often explode right above me, propelling a seed the size of my thumb into my head or torso..."

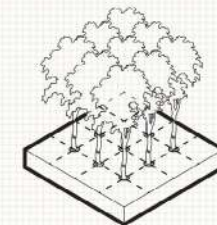
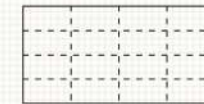
Standing beneath this historical tree, I began to feel close to rubber trees again, even nostalgic. Once more I thought emotionally of the rubber trees of Yunnan Garden, now long dead. They brought to us civilisation and economic prosperity, but once we entered the contemporary era, they gradually vanished from our land."

"I still remember clearly our large kitchen, which had a large space beneath the stove that held a week's worth of wood. Before cooking, we'd use a ball of rubber strands as a firestarter, then around it pile the rubber tree wood, which caught light easily."

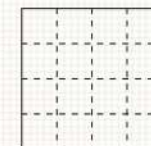
Rubber tree wood burns silently, with no crackling at all, and although it caught fire easily, it smoulders for a long time, leaving very little ash behind. You could say that this tree really does live and die for the sake of rural folk."

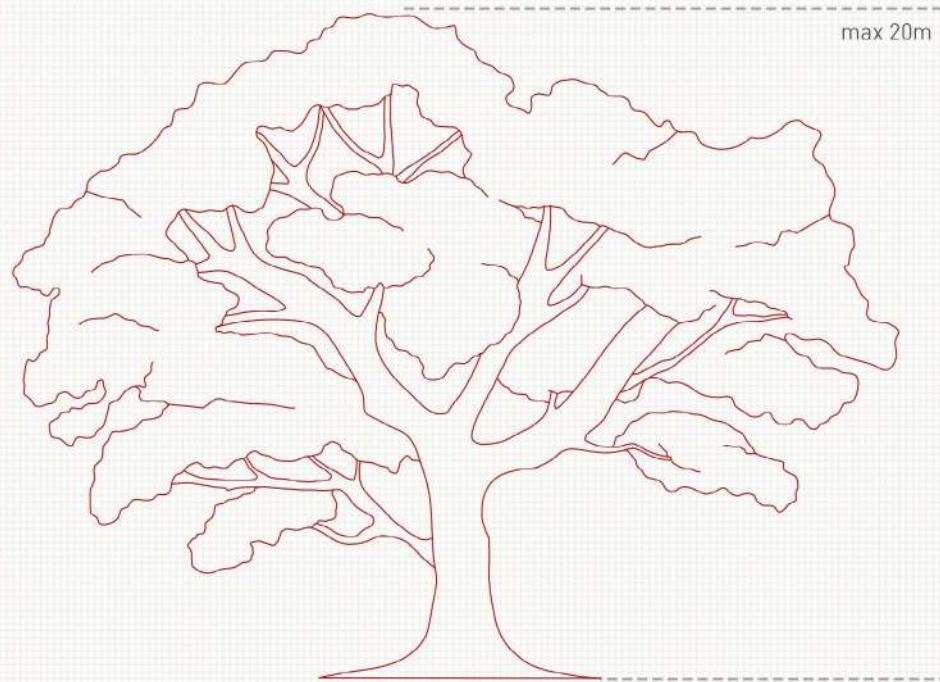


young tree: 6.7m x 3.4m

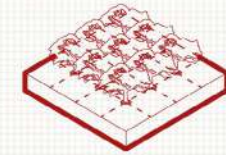


mature tree: 4.9m x 4.9m

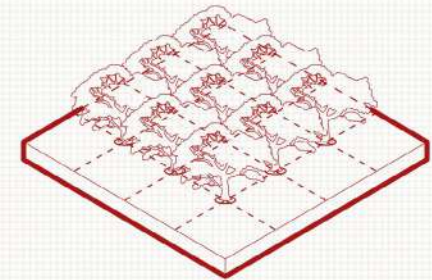
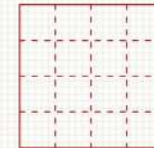




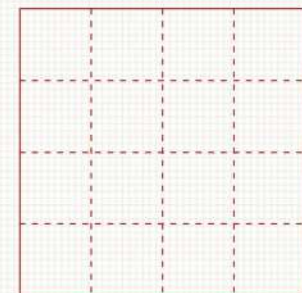
saga trees



young tree: 5m x 5m



mature tree: 10m x 10m

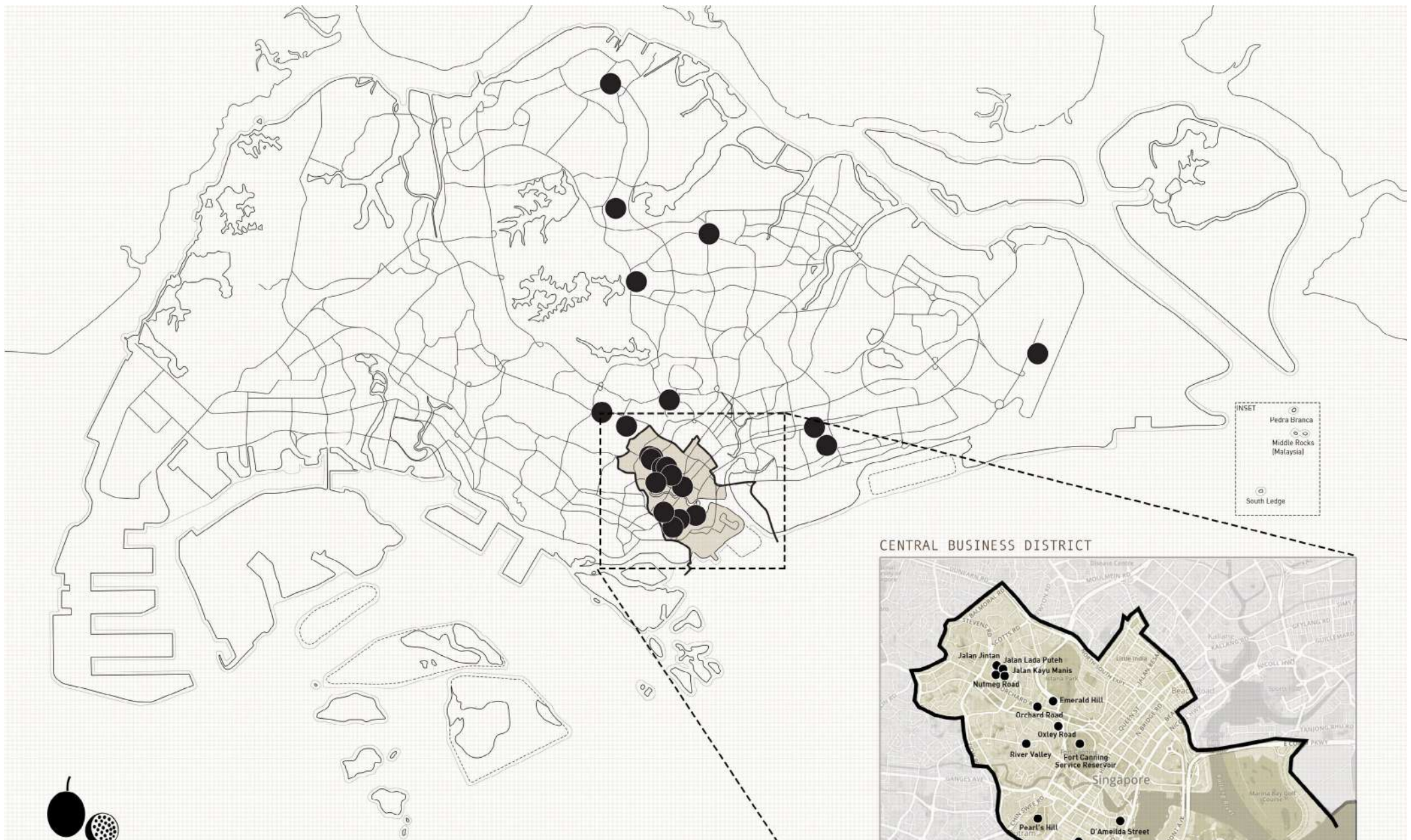


"In Yunnan Garden, moisture enjoyed climbing up the corner of the walls, like a creeping plants. Anything facing away from the sun, newly painted not six months ago, would become streaked and scarred. Anything made of metal quickly grew rusty. All of these were humidity's tactics for getting notices. But what I loved watching most, was it progress up the saga trees.

The Malaysia saga trees were Yunnan Garden's great symbol, growing on either side of the road all the way up the hill, shading every building, unable to produce the usual red seeds. Originally of the same genus as the mimosa, this species evolved into a vast tree..."

"As for their age, you could tell when a saga tree reached its tenth year, because apart from its thick trunk and lustrous canopy, moisture would have infiltrated its body long enough to breed ferns along its torso. Only after living in Yunnan Garden did I know that humidity could also manifest itself as a beautiful plant..."

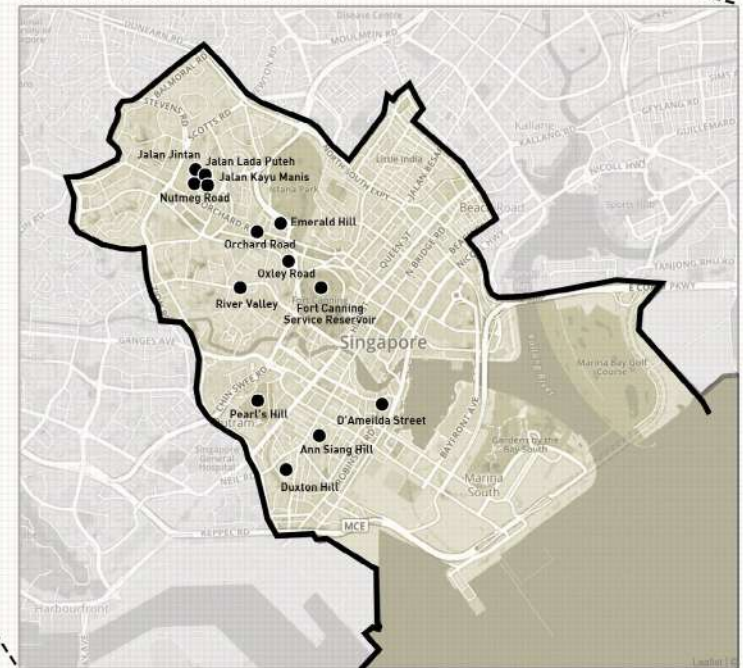
Staghorn ferns, with their conjoined leaves, resemble drooping antlers. From a distance, they look like an antelope's lowered head. I love these ferns and wish I could scoop them up with a knife, roots and all, and move them to my living room as decorative plants."



OLD PLANTATIONS AND FRUIT ORCHARDS

Singapore's historical relationship with fruits and spices has been well documented since the arrival of the British in 1819. Cultures of the East and the West came together to trade in Singapore, developing the island's interest in growing its own fruit and spices. Anyone familiar with Singapore's sophisticated modern landscape may be surprised to imagine that not so long ago, fruit and spice plantations covered the island. Fort Canning Hill, in particular, was Singapore's first Botanical and Experimental garden started by Sir Stamford Raffles.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



Journey of a tembusu

For more than 50 years, a tembusu tree stood at Bidadari Cemetery, growing to about 13m in height and 2.5m in girth.

But in 2015, it had to move as its original site was making way for a new housing estate.

National Parks Board experts decided that the tembusu tree was worth saving due to its age, and because its good health made it suitable for transplanting.

A year before the move, they carefully dug a trench around the tree's main root area to prepare it for transplantation.

Branches were pruned to make the tree easier to move and manage water loss. The trench was then filled with sand and the tree was given extra structural support using stakes and guy-lines.

In April 2015, a lorry crane transported the tree 500m away to a holding area near Mount Vernon Columbarium.



The tree being taken on a lorry crane to a holding area, part of which will be converted into the future Bidadari Park. PHOTO: NPARKS

The 3.5ha area, which is closed to the public, is home to some 160 trees – including mango, angasana and cassia fistula – that were salvaged from the Bidadari area.

Part of it will eventually be converted into a public park. While some of the salvaged trees will be replanted in other neighbour-

hoods, others are there to stay, such as the tembusu tree.

An HDB spokesman said: "We will create a new Bidadari Park and we are identifying the trees worth preserving. Trees which are not healthy or pose a danger to the public, such as storm-vulnerable species, will be replaced so that

they do not pose a danger to the public.

"We will add more trees to create the park. Those trees within Bidadari identified as safe for keeping will be transplanted into the future Bidadari Park."

Toh Wen Li

The Sunday Times, 19 March 2017



NParks streetscape group director Oh Cheow Sheng with a transplanted mango tree at the Bidadari holding area. While most of the trees to be removed will end up as material for mulching, biofuel and recycling, a small proportion will be salvaged. These trees are often relocated to a holding site before they are replanted elsewhere. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

REPLACING LOST TREES

Keeping the city green

About 10,000 to 13,000 trees in Singapore could be removed over the next 15 years to make way for urban developments. NParks plans to replace all these trees at least one-for-one.



NOTE: These developments, while not a comprehensive list, also include 700km of cycling paths and 200km of sheltered walkways. SUNDAY TIMES GRAPHICS

Even more trees may be planted than the ones removed to make way for transport and housing projects

Toh Wen Li

Over the next 15 years, 10,000 to 13,000 trees in Singapore could be removed to make way for transport and housing projects – an ongoing trade-off between nature and development.

But the National Parks Board (NParks) is taking steps to mitigate against the possible impact, it tells The Sunday Times.

All the affected trees will be replaced at least one-for-one, it said, adding that it is likely even more trees will be planted in their place.

The 10,000 to 13,000 range is a "working figure" based on development projects in the pipeline, to help it plan how many trees it needs to replant in advance, the statutory board noted.

Singapore has about seven million trees, of which six million – along streets as well as in parks, state lands and nature reserves – are in areas managed by NParks.

The Sunday Times understands that some developments that will affect trees are the North-South Expressway, Thomson-East Coast Line and Jurong Region Line.

There are also works such as the Jurong Lake Gardens project, expansion of Changi Airport and upcoming

housing estates in Bidadari, Tengah and Tampines North.

NParks' deputy chief executive Leong Chee Chiew told The Sunday Times that because Singapore is not just a city but also a country, this leads to "intense land-use demands". "We need to work a lot harder and smarter than other cities. As an agency, we work very closely, collaboratively with other agencies to anticipate what are some possible disruptions."

By working with agencies like the Land Transport Authority (LTA) "very early on" in the planning stage, NParks can, say, evaluate if plans could be modified to save certain trees. For example, it could work with LTA on modifying the alignment of a road.

"We have the advantage of being able to plan way ahead of time," he said. But he noted that development projects could change over time so the projection may not reflect what will happen in the next 15 years.

To the best of his knowledge, Dr Leong said no heritage trees will be affected by the planned developments. But he was unable to offer more details on the age or range of species of the trees that will be affected, saying it is still too early to tell.

While most of the trees to be removed will be used for mulching and biofuel or be recycled, a small proportion will be salvaged – often transplanted to a holding site before being replanted elsewhere.

Whether or not a tree is salvaged depends on factors such as historical significance, size and species.

"The size of a tree determines how likely it is to survive the transplantation – larger trees have a more extensive root system, which makes them more likely to suffer damage when moved. Some species are also more suited to transplantation."

In recent years, NParks has been moving towards a system of replanting where different plant species are grown in layers, mimicking a forest biodiversity. There has also been a push to grow more native species.

The replanting will depend on the site and could involve shrubs, saplings, semi-mature trees and mature trees.

NParks has been planting 40,000 trees every year since 2015. In parks and for replacement, trees for replanting are largely obtained from tree banks, home to more than 11,000 trees, and Pooi Fung Nursery which has 200,000 plants.

NParks said it can nurture 700 to 800 trees that are at least 3m tall for replacement each year.

Lum said the loss of older trees might be "jarring" at first.

"The character of the area will change if big trees are cleared and replaced by things not as majestic."

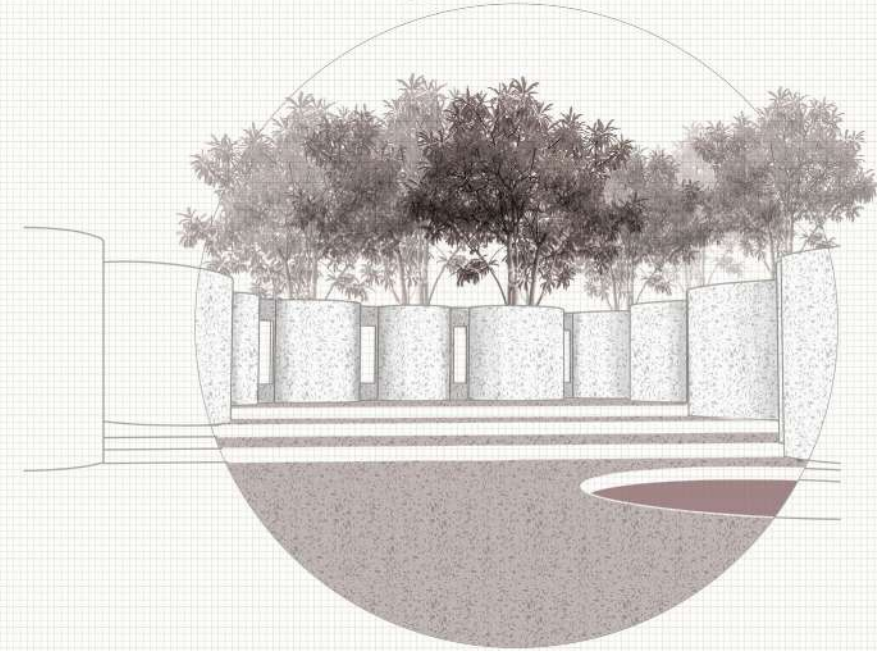
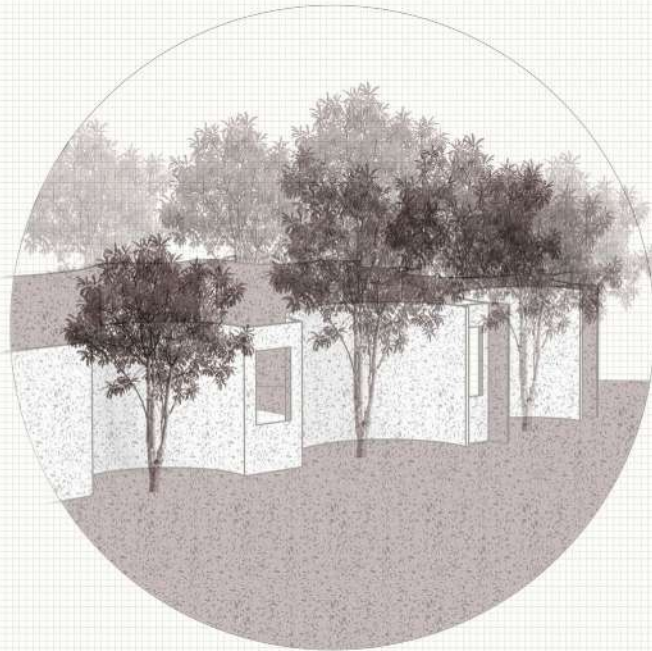
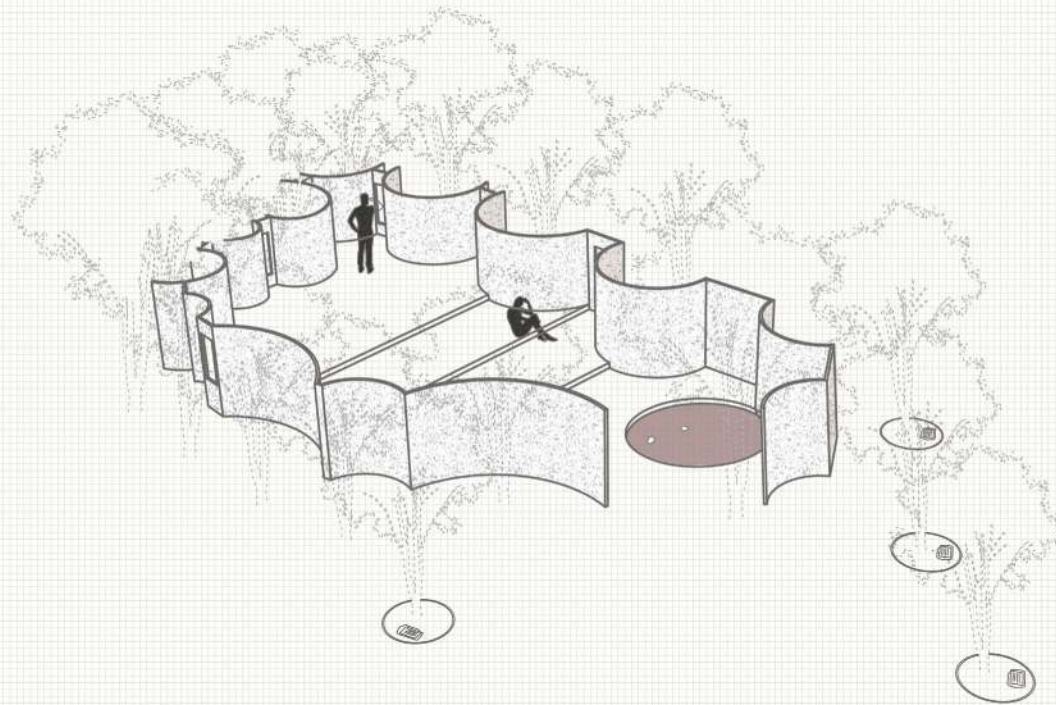
But Dr Lum added: "It's quite a good opportunity as well, to rethink greenery from a whole landscape scale... (as) a more seamless integration of roadsides and parks with the

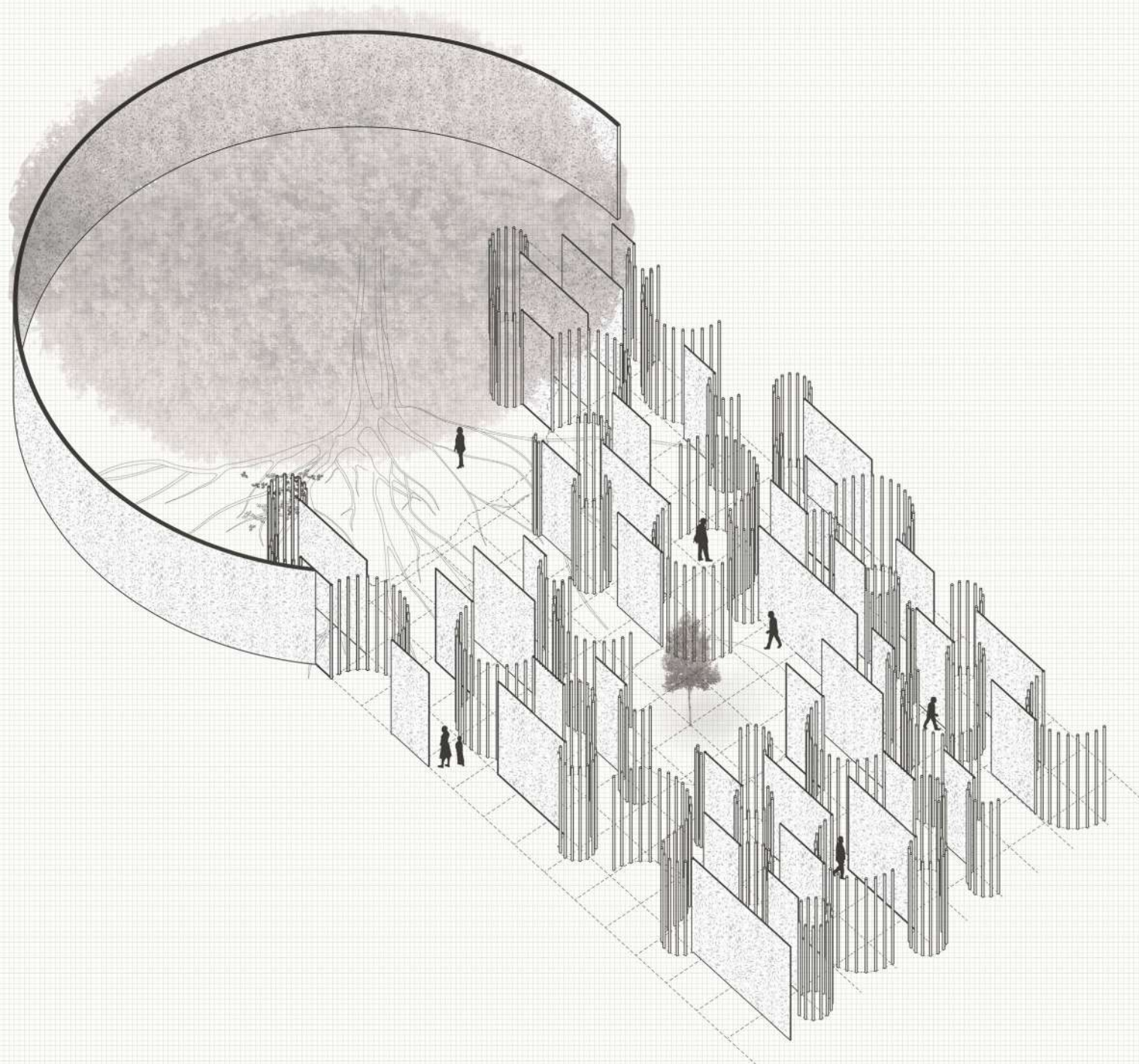
tion of roadsides and parks with the various developments will affect any endangered tree species although the Bidadari area, a haven for migratory bird species, might suffer an ecological impact when trees are removed."

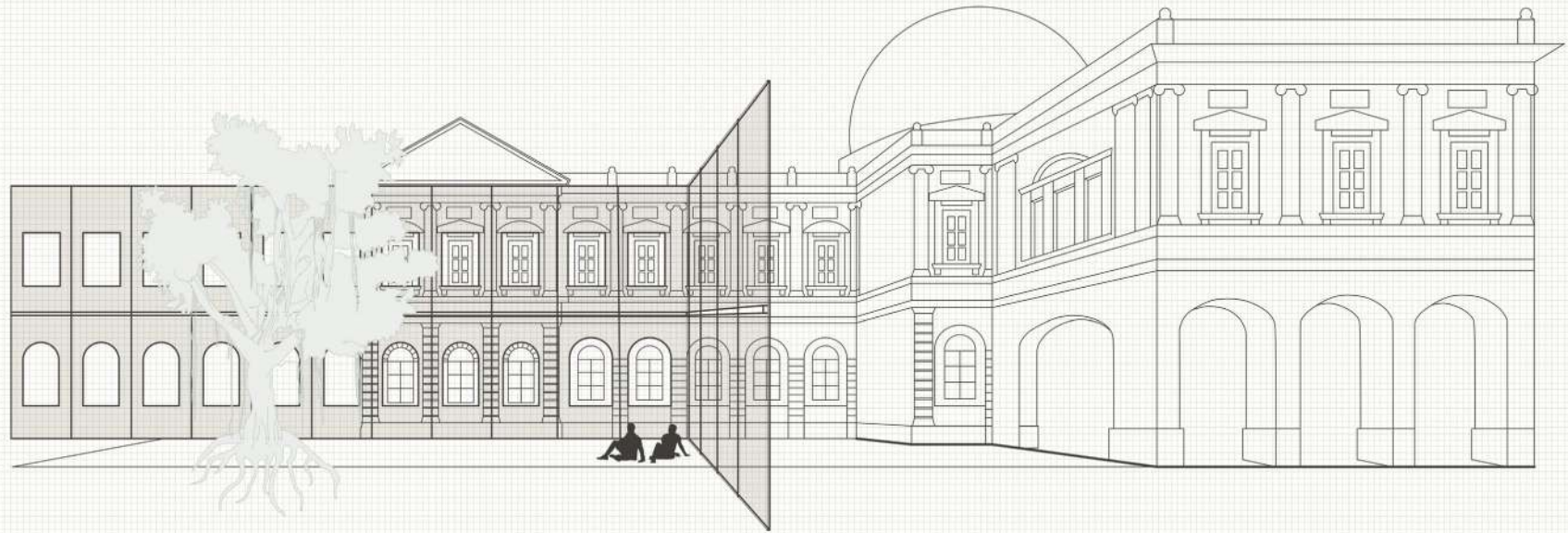
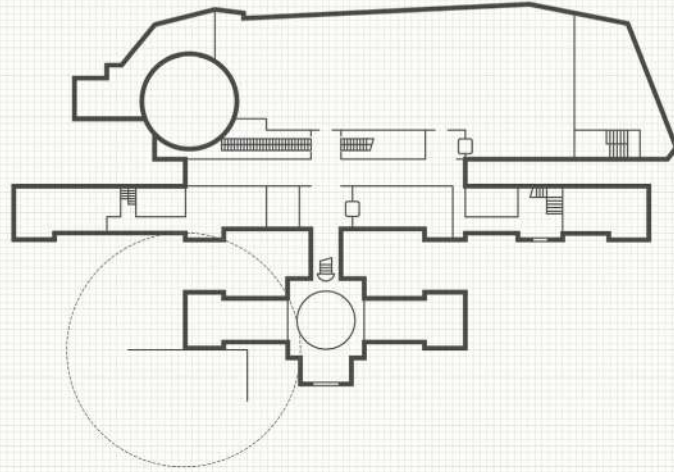
Mr William Lam, former president of the Singapore Institute of Planners, and now the International Federation for Housing and Planning's ambassador for South-east Asia, said: "Removing 10,000 to 13,000 is a small percentage compared to the total greenery (in Singapore)." "As such, it has no significant impact on the current good balance between urban development and greenery."

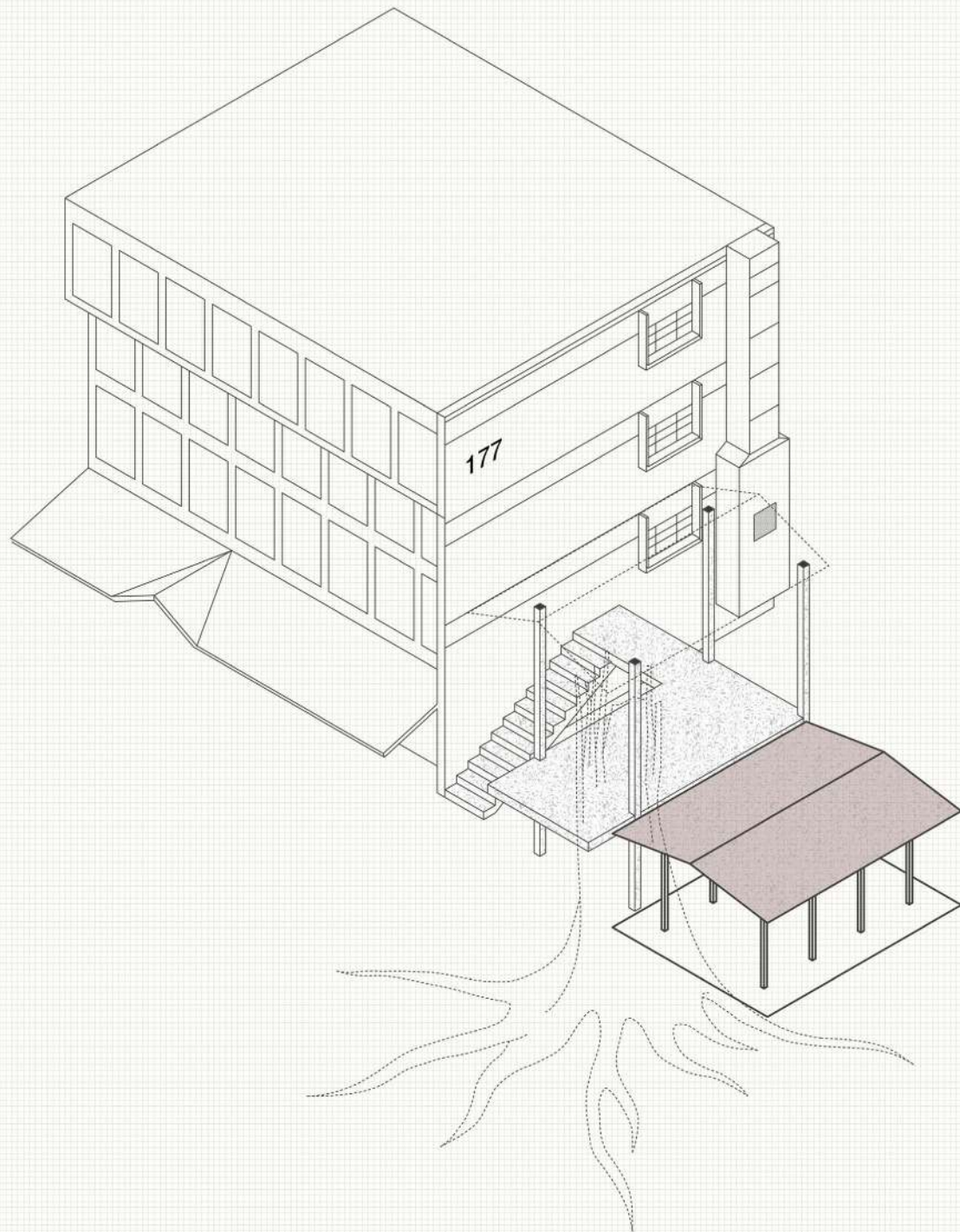
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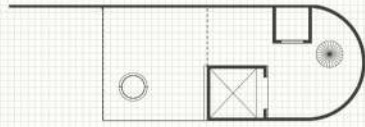
Nature Society president Shawn Tohwenli@sph.com.sg



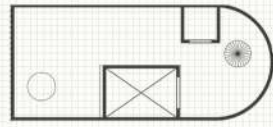




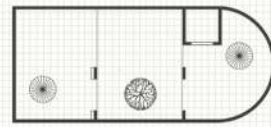




storey 1



basement 1



basement 2

