A tree cut from a bed

From pictures carved on her teak bed, artist Lucy Davis made prints on paper to create collages

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Artist Lucy Davis' new show was inspired by a humble teak bed. She had bought it from a furniture shop in Rangoon Road but it was not intended for sleeping on.

Instead, she carved pictures into its sides and then made prints on paper from the markings.

She also captured on paper the woodgrain and the outlines of the nuts and bolts that hold the bed together.

After shredding the paper to pieces, she made large collages of famous natural historians, a tree and a view of Singapore.

The show, titled Together Again (Wood: Cut), is on at The Substation Gallery until Nov 22.

It is a continuation of her show in May at the Post-Museum in Little India, where she traced the roots of everyday wooden objects using DNA testing.

The new show has the same spirit of inquiry into the memories of ordinary wooden objects and a gentle ecological message.

Davis, 39, a British artist and an assistant professor at Nanyang Technological University's School of Art, Design and Media, says she let her imagination take flight with this exhibition, weaving in historical figures who have studied and colonised nature.

There are portraits of William Farquhar, the first British Resident and Commandant of Singapore, who commissioned a collection of paintings of animals, birds, fish, insects, reptiles and plants.

In her work, he is portrayed with a black-handed gibbon hanging from a tree – an iconic image from his collection.

There is also a portrait of Alfred Russel Wallace, the famous British naturalist who journeyed through South-east Asia collecting specimens.

The bearded man rests his leg on a wooden chair, and behind him, a gigantic tree threatens to overwhelm him.

An Indonesian paper and pulp tycoon, Mr Eka Cipta Wijaya, whose companies felled forests to make paper, is also portrayed with a tiger in the background.

One of his business ventures allegedly cut an illegal road in the Kampar Peninsula in Indonesia, through the last remaining habitat of the endangered Sumatran tiger.

One disturbing work sees Davis in bed with all the characters in the other prints, working on her laptop.

She says she is not spared from ecological guilt.

"I love wood. I think it's a wonderful living material. But this involves chopping down trees," the Singapore permanent resident says.

Next year, she will test the DNA of the wood in the bed and trace it back to its origins, documenting the people and animals she encounters along the way.

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Next year, Lucy Davis will use DNA testing to trace the wood in her bed to the teak tree, which she portrays in her work titled Pokok Ranjhang Jati, which means teak bed tree in Malay.

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