

Inverted gold tree from the Great Storm installed in garden



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A GOLD coloured chestnut tree that was felled during the Great Storm of 1987 is the latest addition to an award-winning garden.

Brighton-based artist Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva stripped back the sweet chestnut's bark, sculpted it into an elegant column before gilding it with 23.5ct gold leaf.

It now sits pride of place in the National Trust's Nymans near Handcross.

Chloe Bradbrooke, Nymans lead ranger, said: "I work with trees every day in their many varied forms and they are beautiful in their own right, but it's exciting to see one so transformed".

Elpida works with sculpture, video and sound but steers clear of traditional sculptural materials.

In particular she is inspired by items with no inherent value, such as foodstuffs and organic materials and turns everyday objects into things of beauty.

The tree she has used for the piece, called Rapture, was blown down in the storm of 1987, which swept across the South East.

She said the piece aims to explore the fragility of nature, the effect of time passing and how the past and present can combine to regenerate and evolve.

Over four months she stripped back the bark and sculpted it into her chosen shape.

She then covered it with 23.5ct gold leaf.

Heavy lifting machinery was used to invert the tree and it now stand on the hillside at Nymans, where the low winter sunlight reflects off the gold leaf.

She said: "I'm grateful for the opportunity Nymans has provided to realise this work which acts as a striking beacon for nature."

She has exhibited extensively, creating numerous commissions nationally and internationally in gallery spaces, museums and in public spaces.

Recently she presented a piece called Haruspex which was commissioned by the Vatican for the Venice Biennale 2015.

She has also had works in Brighton's Fabrica Gallery, Pied à Terre in London, Gloucester Cathedral and the Towner Gallery in Eastbourne.

Rapture will be at Nymans until February 28.