

Diseased trunk of felled Brighton 'Preston Twins' Elm tree given new life

MERIDIAN | BRIGHTON | BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITY COU...

FALLEN TREE |  Monday 10 May 2021, 5:39pm

- **Video report from ITV News Meridian's Tom Savvides**

The diseased trunk of one of the felled "Preston Twins" Elm trees is being moved from its temporary storage location of Waterhall Sports Field to a 'Secret Garden'.

It will be sculpted into a magnificent work of art and eventually returned to rest beside its former 'twin' in Preston Park.

Until 2019, the last of their kind, they stood together, having avoided contamination by Elm Disease under the care of Brighton & Hove City Council. The city is host to the National Elm Collection, with approximately 17,000 elm trees in Brighton & Hove.



The trunk was transported to a new location where it will be turned into a sculpture.

Credit: ITV News Meridian

A storm in 2017 exposed a hollow trunk in one of the 'twins', and thereafter the disease spread within. In 2019, the Council had no option but to fell the tree.

17,000

Elm trees in Brighton & Hove

The stem was transported to Waterhall Sports Ground for temporary storage, prior to being either burnt or repurposed.

Acclaimed sculptor, Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, was then approached. She de-barks and chars dead elm trees then uses gold to convert them into sculptures. Many visitors will have seen her gilded elm at [Nymans garden](#).

- Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, Sculptor



Sculptor, Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, says: "I'm hoping that it will be almost like a jewel, something very special".

"This is why I usually use gold in my work, it's almost like elevating something very beautiful. But also the gold picks up light, texture and patterns"

Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, Sculptor

Given the size of the tree Elpida will be working on, her usual studio space wasn't suitable to work from. She approached Gavin Henderson, Chair of the **Secret Garden Kemp Town**, for which she is already creating a new piece for a major exhibition in Spring 2022.

This unique garden is spacious, enclosed and secure, and Gavin was happy for Elpida to work on the elm here.

The sculpture will be completed in time for next year's exhibition, where it will be an exciting addition. Once this show has ended, it is intended that the piece will go directly to Preston Park and be laid to rest beside its 'twin'.
