

NUS is new home of Prvacki sculpture

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A PIECE of Sky by Romanian-born artist Delia Prvacki will find a home at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) campus after sitting for many years in her garden.

Its exact location will be revealed later, says Ms Prvacki, but her decision to donate the work has to do with the fact that she wants to find permanent homes for her art pieces and also because NUS is a suitable setting for it.

"I never do sculpture that is decorative. I know I can do beautiful work, but it's not a big deal to make shapes that look nice. That's nothing to me. In that sense, I was particular about who I donated my work to," she says.

NUS was the choice recipient because of its intellectual and vibrant environment, plus she wanted the university's students to be drawn to and challenged by *A Piece of Sky*.

The sculpture was first created in 1999, when Ms Prvacki – born in Romania in 1950, and who came to Singapore in 1992 and together with her artist husband, became a citizen in 2002 – was commissioned to make a work celebrating the Millennium, at

Sculpture Square at Middle Road. The commission came just as she was starting a new series at the time, influenced by the sky and the sun.

"It was suitable for the theme, I thought," she explains, adding that she also handmade 2,000 blades of grass to symbolise the growth of nature for the installation.

For her to create a site-specific work for the one big room at Sculpture Square was a chance for her to scale her works to the space. "It was a seminal point in my art-making career, I think, as it challenged my scope and my scale, and it was when I started thinking of making much bigger pieces than I had done before," Ms Prvacki explains.

She personally hand-shapes all her works, and it was the same for this one, transporting it to the factory only when it was time to apply the fibreglass cement and the blue stain.

"The sculpture and the process signalled a turning point. It was a work that helped me understand better what I could do and how to use material in order to generate this 'space of mind' for contemplation and remembrance," she adds, of the work's significance in her career.



A Piece of Sky was exhibited at Sculpture Square for six months, and then three years later, it was also exhibited at the concourse of The Esplanade.

"But it's not a work that's easily moved around because it weighs about 300kg. So because of that, it's been sitting in my garden all these years," she says.

Ms Prvacki's donation, which included selected sculptural and textile

art pieces, saw her being named a Friend at the recent Patron of Heritage Awards 2014 last week.

The National Heritage Board honoured 69 individuals and organisations, amounting to S\$8.5 million, for donations of artefacts, cash and in-kind sponsorships for 2014.

Out of the 69, 18 were named Friends for their contributions valued from S\$50,000 to S\$149,999.

As to how Ms Prvacki decided to

bequeath *A Piece of Sky* to NUS, she pointed out how she's worked with the university since 2005. That was the years she was commissioned to make a 110 square metre ceramic mural called *Odyssey 2005* to celebrate the university's centennial.

Then, six years back, she also took part in a group show, after which she donated her sculptures to the NUS museum.

"So we've built up a relationship

based on trust and respect which is quintessential," she adds.

Now, Ms Prvacki is working on another monumental project for an MRT station, which will involve thousands of volunteers, she reckons, by the time she's done.

It's a huge project, and indeed, she attributes *A Piece of Sky* as having started her on that journey of monumentality.



Artist Delia Prvacki, receiving a Patron of Heritage award from Minister of Culture, Community and Youth, Lawrence Wong for donating her work, a "Piece of Sky" (left) to the National University of Singapore.

PHOTOS: NHB