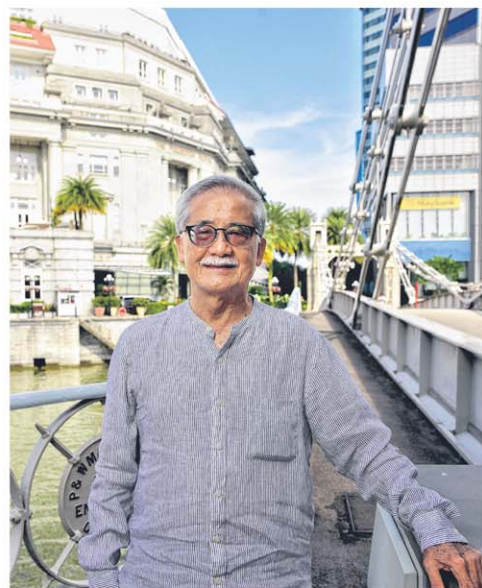




Above: A painting depicting Chinatown in the olden days, by veteran watercolourist Harry Chin Chun Wah (below left). Below right: SPH head of corporate communications Chin Soo Fang (in red dress) receiving the Patron of Heritage award from Minister Grace Fu on behalf of the organisation. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF NUS MUSEUM, DESMOND WEE



Veteran artist among 74 donors honoured at Patron of Heritage awards

Nabilah Said

Watercolourist Harry Chin Chun Wah, 76, donated 19 of his art pieces to the National University of Singapore (NUS) Museum last year, but never thought he would be recognised for his contribution.

"I didn't know that the museum nominated me for the award, so I am happy and surprised. I am glad to receive it," said the veteran artist.

He is one of 74 individual and corporate donors to Singapore's heritage scene who were celebrated at the Patron of Heritage Awards 2016, organised by the National Heritage Board (NHB) and held at the Asian Civilisations Museum yesterday.

His works comprise sketches and watercolours of scenes of old Singapore – such as Chinatown and Clifford Pier – which he did in the 1960s and 70s.

"These works are special to me. I wanted to give them to the NUS Museum so that maybe the younger generation can know more about the history of Singapore from looking at them," said the first-time donor to a heritage institution.

Contributions to heritage causes dropped by about half from 2015 to

last year, but the NHB said that is because of the bumper crop of donations that came in when Singapore celebrated its 50th year of independence.

Last year's donations amounted to \$8.13 million in cash and kind, down from \$16 million given by 104 donors in 2015.

An NHB spokesman described 2015 as an "exceptional year" with "an outpouring of contributions towards the heritage cause".

"Support for the heritage sector has been constant and continuous," the spokesman added.

The annual Patron of Heritage Awards was started in 2006 with the aim of promoting heritage philanthropy in Singapore by honouring those who make significant contributions to the sector.

NHB chief executive Chang Hwee Nee said at the ceremony that the gifts from the board's patrons help it to create an "ideal museum" experience for the public.

"The stories they tell, or help to tell, add layers and depth to the various narratives, and enable us to further the museum and heritage experience for our visitors," she said.

Mr Chin is one of 42 first-time donors in 2016. He received the

Friend of Heritage award, which recognises donations in cash, kind or material amounting to between \$50,000 and \$149,999.

Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) was recognised as a Patron of Heritage, an award given for donations in cash, kind or material valued between \$1 million and just under \$2 million. This was for waiving the copyright fees for images used for the NHB's various initiatives, such as its heritage trails.

There was also an anonymous donor who received the Distinguished Patron award, which recognises donations of \$2 million and above.

The awards were given out by Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu, who expressed her appreciation to the donors for helping to "create a sustainable heritage landscape".

"Your contributions are important to our nation-building efforts in fostering our national identity, our national pride, as well as building a more caring and cohesive society," she said.

"You have contributed towards making Singapore a more vibrant and better home for all."

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