



In 1999, after 20 years together, Norton lost her husband to lung cancer. While he was sick, she stopped painting to care for him, and after he died she took more time away from her work to think. This was not only a turning point in her life, but also a defining moment in her career. It was then that she had an epiphany that sculpting was the language in which she expressed herself best.

"I had to reorganize my life. I took a look at my career with fresh eyes and I realized that my paintings had such a strong element of sculpture in them," she says. "In fact, people that had seen my paintings before actually remembered them as sculptures."

A three-day workshop at the Somerset Art Association in Bedminster solidified her decision to pursue sculpting. In 2003, Norton won an international competition to build a Sept. 11 memorial in Montgomery County, Pa. The government commissioned \$100,000 of county and private money to honor the eleven county residents and thousands of others who lost their lives on that day. Norton was chosen among 30 finalists to create the memorial

using a rusted I-beam from the North Tower of the World Trade Center. She designed a 20-foot bronze sculpture with two 8-foot hands raising the twisted piece of metal into the sky. The work stands on the plaza of the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, Pa. with these words that Norton wrote inscribed below the date: "The many who died; the many who fought to save others. Memories never die."

"It's one thing to grieve on a personal level, but it's another thing to be chosen to give a voice to the collective experience and sorrow," says Norton, adding, "I feel grateful every time I think about it."

Moving through the exhibit hall at the Morris Museum, the viewer is taken not only by the magnitude of her pieces, but the message each sculpture conveys. Norton is fascinated by the expression of longing, which she believes is the most powerful emotion, and that intensity is reflected in many of her sculptures.

"Longing is very complex," she says. "People think of longing as melancholy, but I think of longing as an emotional entity that moves you

from where you are to a better place. Without longing, you will not have aspirations."

Her latest piece, "No Beginning is Simple," stands in the middle of the room. It consists of two bronze, oversized hands barely touching at the fingertips, with one hand appearing to be suspended in the air. Norton says creating a sensation of floating makes the piece more dynamic.

"It's very dramatic. It's like the first time you meet someone, you have the same potential to separate as you do to connect. You get the sensation that something isn't stable, that it's not permanent. It's like life."

Norton has lived in Bedminster since 1986 and is now remarried. For years she maintained studios both here and in London, but she now does much of her work in the studio on her property. When asked about living in Bedminster, she says she loves the open space the best.

"Space, like time, is a luxury," she explains. "When you leave the highway and enter the area, you see the greenery and dirt roads and you have the feeling that nothing bad can happen to you here." ■