

# Fossils Bones and Stones: The Art Show that Sings of Stories

**By Riley Murphy**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Local Artist Paul Morin's newest show at the Paul Morin Gallery brings together artists from all walks of life, each with a story to tell, to showcase their work in "Fossils, Bones and Stones."

The show features various forms of mixed media, from 12 different artists, all representing the theme in new and engaging ways.

Looking on, you'll see unique artworks exploring fossils, bones, and stones, alongside artifacts from around the world.

For Morin, this theme is not just the theme of his newest show, but a thread that's run through his whole life.

From the age of six, discovering fossils in the gravel in his backyard in Quebec, to his travels in China, Australia, Mexico, and more, he's always been fascinated with the world of fossils, bones and stones.

But what really sparked his inspiration was a piece that now stands in the gallery today.

Morin believes that fossils could not only be shown and enjoyed in museums, but also be appreciated as art fixtures.

And so, he purchased "Starfish Fossil", a piece 220 million years old.

"I bought that," Morin says, gesturing to the millions-of-years-old fossil, "not knowing what I was going to do with it. I didn't know that a person could buy something like that, I thought only museums could."

Working next to it, he says, the energy inspired him to truly bring this gallery, which had been a piece of his mind for so long, to life.

"This just keeps on bringing me back to the fascination I have of this story, and so it just came into my head while I was painting one day, as music might, I just kept on seeing this "fossils, bones and stones," says Morin.

Walking around the gallery, attendees can take in everything from ceramics to tools to fossils to photography, acrylic, light boxes, and more, each created by an artist with an inspiration.

Even Morin himself can tell bits and pieces of a story about each piece displayed in his gallery.

"It sings," he says.

Morin was used to solo shows, but the more he thought about the show's theme, the more he realized it would be more interesting to bring in other artists.

Seeing group shows in the past, he remarks that the energy is amazing, and he wanted to replicate that himself.

An opening reception was held last Saturday, where artists and community members alike gathered around to take in the gallery.

"To see the crowd and the face of the artists on Saturday night, how everyone was thriving on this enthusiasm and it was growing, that's more than I can do in a solo show, and it's more than anyone can do in a solo show because we don't have the individual reach

that the collective reach has," explains Morin.

Each member, upon leaving, told Morin that the gallery's energy was amazing.

Part of this, he believes, is due to the history of the gallery's location.

In 2015, Morin purchased the historic Alton Town Hall, which had also served as a church.

After thousands of hours of repairs, he revitalized the space, but believes some of the good energy from those years still carries over.

It also carries over into his work.

In one of the pieces in his show, *The Rapture*, Morin uses the fossils and bones of swallows he found during renovations of the historic building.

Morin believes that art galleries can be reinvented to be more than just the norm.

He sees the show as more than just somewhere that feels like both a museum and an art gallery, but also a hands-on learning experience.

Morin says he feels very lucky to have been celebrated in his career as much as he has, going around the world talking about his work.

"Not that that ever loses a luster, but as one matures in their career, it's also nice to use that to fan the fire for a little bit," he says, remembering all those gathered around for the opening reception.

When he was standing on the stage in the gallery, looking at all of his friends, and other artists, Morin said it was a "pinch me moment."

A large part of the show he hopes that will come across is the interactivity of it.

"I'm bringing together sound, vision, hope, all of these things, so that it's an interactive learning environment just to come to the gallery and see art," explains Morin.

"The word 'art gallery' is intimidating, but I really would rather it to be thought of as an explore, conversation place," says Morin. "I want people to know this is a gallery to see and experience."

The community is invited to see and experience the gallery for themselves during its run until April 26 at the Paul Morin Gallery in Alton.