

Paul Morin brings Chinese art to his studio

By Constance Scrafield

A surprise call came just before New Year's Eve from a friend, inviting Paul Morin to come to China for eight months, promising, "All you have to do is create art."

In the meantime, he would be exposed to a wide spectrum of a vast world of art.

Tomorrow, Friday, July 26, at the Paul Morin Gallery, 19741 Main St., Alton Village, the Paul Morin Gallery will open with his new show, China in the Year of the Dragon.

In a telephone conversation with Mr. Morin, he mentioned, "I had been to China 33 years ago for my children's books and had great experiences there. I went back three years later and that was great too."

While Mr. Morin really wanted to go for eight months, he could not close his gallery for that long, so he decided to go for two months.

He said, "I told them what I wanted to do and they accepted my proposal."

It took six weeks to go through protocol, as he was not a tourist but going as a cultural exchange.

When Paul Morin arrived in Jingdezhen, there was a big flat for him, next to a large studio. This was a multi-cultural exchange, as he told us.

Jingdezhen is a city virtually synonymous with porcelain, the capital of porcelain from 1000 CE.

By the mid-1600s, Chinese potters made porcelain to ship to the West. Eventually, it was sold all over the world.

"When I went, there were 33 artists from around the world. I didn't know programs like this existed," he said.

His friend knew his work and his hosts paid for everything. The artist is free. All he has to do is art. It was really new and challenging.

"In two months, I did as much work as I would normally do in six," he said.

They are building a huge art museum and making a new tourist centre in Jingdezhen.

The character on his poster is a 30,000-year-old dragon, originally scratched on an oracle bone as a tiny image. So, Mr. Morin made a large image of the tiny dragon on his poster.

Numbers and dragons follow him: there were 33 artists in Jingdezhen; he went to China 33 years ago and has been there three times. His children's book was about a dragon and this is the Year of the Dragon.

Their stipulation was they kept 30 per cent of what the artists created and so, Mr. Morin made three of everything and brought two back.

"The people are great and there is a different attitude about things," he related, "I dropped a \$50 bill (equivalent) and someone found it and gave it to me. In the rural areas you discover everything can be done differently."

It has taken two months to get his container with all his work here but it all arrived safe and sound.

I documented everything, he said, Culinary, everything. I took great footage of 2,000-year-old villages with a drone. I created in paint, music, video and ceramics. I am having an exhibition of these works on Friday.

On Friday, there will be an art/video talk on this exciting program. Refreshments will be available. This event will take place at the Paul Morin Gallery, 19741 Main St., Alton Village. It is free of charge.