

Press release



Black vigil to memory of the animal

Martyrs of Berger Blanc:

For immediate release

The Tremblay administration sticks its nose up to the defenders of animals.

Ottawa - May 19, 2012. On April 19th, SPA Canada infiltrated Montreal's City Hall with a piece by sculpture artist Tony Fortin in order to protest the apathy of the Tremblay administration with regards to the management of public pounds. The gift marked the first anniversary of the Radio-Canada broadcast of the horrific scenes captured by the *Enquête* program during which an investigator from SPA Canada infiltrated Berger Blanc and discovered its cruel practices. While the unusual form of the press conference made it the object of high surveillance, the actual security measures proved futile under the flashing lights of the cameras, and the sculpture's delivery went according to plan - a plan which beforehand had admittedly seemed a little risky. The work of art, worth at least \$5000, is entitled *Gerald Ironhands (Gérald aux mains de fer)*: an amalgam of wood and iron depicts the powerlessness of those who find themselves without a voice, at the mercy of cold political decisions motivated by unsustainable economic interests. The sculptor's gracious gift was removed from view Friday April 20th, the city thus breaking the conditions stipulated by the organizers. The work is currently located in the basement of the building, despite the fact that the donation was conditional on the work being permanently exposed in the location specified by the organization on April 19th. A verbal agreement, observed by witnesses, with Ariane Lareau, press attachée for the mayor's Cabinet, stipulated that they contact SPA and the artist himself before removing the sculpture, which they failed to do. This negligence demonstrates a flagrant lack of respect towards visual artists, and shows how the city persists in completely ignoring the demands of the opponents of animal cruelty. Through this action, SPA aimed to foster discussion and offer a place for people to contemplate the significance of the horrors perpetrated at Berger Blanc.

According to Gabriel Villeneuve, campaign director for SPA Canada, such a gesture illustrates the indifference of the Tremblay administration towards the 25 000 animals that are pointlessly tortured and killed every year at Berger Blanc. Their indifference is made even clearer by the fact that the piece was not very threatening in its original place of exposition and indicated no direct connection with Berger Blanc. "Keeping the work in exposition in the entrance hall would have made much less noise," he added, in a mocking tone. He continued that "the Tremblay administration shows very alarming signs of disrespect towards citizens with compassion for animals and demonstrates just how little the animal cruelty perpetrated at Berger Blanc matters to them."

SPA Canada views this act as an insult to all defenders of animal rights and invites the population to join the ranks of indignation, by dressing in black for a vigil in front of Montreal's City Hall. The purpose of the action is to demand that the symbolic work be returned to view, and ultimately to call for the establishment of a public pound in Montreal. Activists dressed in mourning attire will be carrying candles and white roses in the area that SPA Canada

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had designated, last April 19th, as a gathering- place for people to commemorate the animal martyrs of Berger Blanc.

The organization urges all citizens outraged by the removal of the *Gerald Ironhands* sculpture to come express their anger and their grief on this solemn occasion, **Saturday, May 19th 2012**, in front of Montreal's City Hall, **275 Notre-Dame Est**.

In addition, SPA Canada urges as many people as possible to participate in a telephone “storm” on **Wednesday, May 16th, from 9 am to 4 pm**. The point is to telephone the Tremblay administration *en masse* in order to demand that it recognize its own apathy by re-exposing the work of art, now become a symbolic monument to the memory of the animal martyrs of Berger Blanc.

Vigil action:

Goals: - Demand the re-exposition of the sculpture *Gerald Ironhands*.
-The establishment of a public pound in Montreal.

Where: Montreal City Hall, **275 Notre-Dame Est**.

When: **Saturday, May 19th 2012 at 4pm**.

Operation Telephone Storm:

Goals: - Demand the re-exposition of the sculpture *Gerald Ironhands*.
-Increase the pressure to counter the apathy and inaction of the city of Montreal with regards to the Berger Blanc file.

When: **Wednesday, May 30th 2012, from 9am to 4pm**.

How: The details on the operation as well as strategically selected telephone numbers are available at www.facebook/spacanada in the *events* section.

SPA Canada will be happy to grant media interviews.

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