

Political vandalism at Exploramer!

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Translation from French: translation bureau, Government of Canada

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Published on August 4, 2009 at 14:54

On August 2, visitors to Exploramer in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts alerted officials that the photographs in the exhibition “Phoque la controverse” had been damaged. Sandra Gauthier, Director General of the discovery centre that focuses on the St. Lawrence, immediately realized that the photographs slashed in broad daylight was the work of animal rights activists.

The exhibition of photographs by Raoul Jomphe, a director who hails from the North Shore and who defends the seal hunt and directed the documentary “Phoques - le film,” is displayed in Exploramer’s Exhibition Hall. Jomphe took the photographs while shooting the documentary on the seal hunt, which made headlines in the spring of 2006.

Ms. Gauthier said there were over 200 visitors to the museum on August 2. The perpetrators were therefore able to escape notice and get away scot-free. The Sûreté du Québec was called to the scene, where they could only survey the damage.

Ms. Gauthier said it wasn’t the first time that Jomphe’s exhibition had come under fire. “Some people have told us they were disappointed that an exhibition defending

the seal hunt was presented in a centre dedicated to the biodiversity of the St. Lawrence. Others were outraged and told us so, while some simply refused to see it. A Greenpeace activist wrote in our guestbook that she found the exhibition scandalous, even though the author pointedly makes clear at the very beginning of the exhibition that he seeks to “pay tribute to our hunters.””

Despite these strong reactions, Ms. Gauthier says she has absolutely no problem with Jomphe’s exhibition. “The seal hunt is no worse than the moose hunt or lobster trapping. Animal rights activists have created this cause out of nothing.”

Ms. Gauthier doesn’t mince words when it comes to the activists. She argues that they act in bad faith when they talk about baby seals. “It’s absolutely false to say that hunters kill baby seals. The whitecoat hunt was banned years ago.”

Jomphe not surprised

The exhibition’s author is in no way surprised that animal rights activists damaged his photographs. “It just shows how frustrated they are and how they are willing to resort to extremist means, which is totally disrespectful.” Jomphe and Exploramer have agreed to maintain the exhibition as is, in its damaged state, believing that it effectively captures the cause’s extremism.

“Phoque la controverse” continues until October 12.

@credit: Patrick Bourgeois

@bv: Sandra Gauthier says the vandalism is the work of animal rights activists.

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