

News of the arts

Margaret Atwood at Canada House

A "literary day" in honour of distinguished Canadian author Margaret Atwood was held at Canada House in London April 18, organized by the Cultural Affairs Section, the Information Section and the Post Library.

The event coincided with the publication of *Surfacing*, her new book, by British publisher Virago Ltd. Two other British publishers were also involved: Corgi Books (Transworld publishers), who are publishing Atwood's *Lady Cracle* in paperback on June 22, and André Deutsch, who published a hardback edition of the same book in 1974, and are planning to publish her short stories soon. Deutsch is also negotiating the publication of Atwood's new novel *Life Before Man*.

During the day, a book-signing session at Canada House Gallery was open to the public, with copies of *Surfacing* and *Lady Cracle* on sale by the publishers. A luncheon and reception was hosted by High Commissioner Paul Martin and, later Ms. Atwood at a poetry and literary evening, read from her works before an invited audience. Dr. Rosemary Sullivan of the University of Toronto introduced the author, who also answered questions following the readings.

The author

Margaret Atwood has produced a remarkable body of work and acquired a large



Margaret Atwood meets the public at Canada House in London.

North American following in the 13 years since her first book *The Circle Game* was published.

She was born in Ottawa in 1939 and has subsequently lived in Northern Quebec, Toronto, Vancouver, Cambridge, Mass., Montreal, Edmonton, England, France and Italy. She lives on a working farm north of Toronto. At present she is spending a year in Edinburgh.

Margaret Atwood has achieved eminence as a poet, a novelist and a critic.

She is the author of six collections of poetry, three novels, and of *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, a brilliant study that illuminates the persistent victim theme in Canadian literature. She is probably the most discussed and widely read writer in Canada.

Her work appears in translation in Italy, France, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain and, most recently, Germany, where *Surfacing* appears this spring as *Der Lange Traum*.

Most artists have other jobs

A survey released on May 11 shows that three out of every four artists in Canada take second jobs.

Statistics Canada, the federal agency responsible for the survey, also found that 80 per cent of the country's artists were earning less than \$5,000 a year in direct art sales.

The survey, concluded in February 1978, covered approximately one third of the 3,500 artists in Canada.

Its main findings were:

- Approximately 60 per cent of all artists were male.
- Almost half live in Ontario, but the Atlantic provinces had a higher percentage of the country's artists than their population would suggest, and Quebec had a smaller artist-to-population ratio

than the national average.

- Of those with additional employment, more than half reported art-related jobs, especially teaching art.
- Two thirds of those with outside jobs worked part-time.
- Half of these artists had jobs in art-related fields, mainly teaching.
- Only 20 per cent of artists reported incomes of \$5,000 or more from selling their work.

Commissions too high

- The most frequent complaint about their working environment was that dealer commissions were too high. The second major deterrent they reported was the high cost of imported materials and equipment.
- Only one in seven artists is self-taught. About 25 per cent had a university degree

or college diploma in applied or performing arts.

- When asked to choose the most important factor for the improvement of visual art, the largest proportion (37 per cent) chose improved public education and appreciation for the arts.

Arts brief

Les Grands Ballets canadiens have signed a two-year contract with Columbia Artists Management, to tour the United States for ten weeks starting next February and eight weeks the year after. It is the only Canadian dance company to be signed with the U.S. firm. The company, which may repeat last year's tour of South America, is going to Europe this summer for the first time since 1974.