

News of the arts

Newfoundland hooked and poked mats displayed



A partial view of *The Steve Hamilton mat*, maker unknown (c. 1940).

An exhibition of 60 hooked and poked mats from Newfoundland and Labrador, entitled *The Fabric of Their Lives*, was on view recently at the Canada House Gallery in London, England.

The exhibition comprised a selection of mats produced in this region of Canada during the last 70 years. Recent works in the exhibition demonstrated that this craft form continues to flourish and designs ranged from bold, realistic images to vividly multi-coloured abstract or geometric patterns. A lively use of colour is a particular feature of mats from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Colleen Lynch, who organized the exhibition for the Art Gallery of Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland, was in London for the opening and lectured on her researches into the subject of hooked and poked mats in Canada.

Hooked and poked mats are described in a catalogue by Ms. Lynch as follows: "In Newfoundland and Labrador today women make two kinds of mats, the well-known hooked mat and the almost unknown shaggy style of mat usually called a poked mat.... Although used as hearth rugs in Britain, in Newfoundland poked mats were used primarily to wipe off muddied and snowy boots before entering the house. They were constantly wet, therefore rotted easily, and were fre-

quently disposed of after a season or two of use.... Poked mat designs are usually quite simple, possibly as much a reflection upon the short life span of the mat as it is a limitation imposed by the technique...."



A partial view of mat by Flo Baikie, *North West River, Labrador* (c. 1965).

Canada-Switzerland literary prize

Swiss writer Alice Rivaz was chosen recently as the first winner of the new Canada-Switzerland Literary Prize, sponsored jointly by the Canada Council and the Swiss Fondation Pro Helvetia.

The prize, worth \$2,500, has been awarded for Madame Rivaz's recent novel, *Jette ton pain*.

Born in 1901 in Rovray, Switzerland, Alice Rivaz has had a long and productive literary career. Her first novel, *Nuages dans la main*, appeared in 1940. Since then, she has published several novels, collections of short stories, and a brief poetic work based on her life, (*Comptez vos jours*, 1966). In 1975 she won the City of Geneva's Grand Prize for literature for her complete works.

Canadian jury

The Canadian jury which chose Madame Rivaz as this year's prize winner included: Gilles Archambault, novelist and head of cultural programming for Radio-Canada; Monique Bosco, novelist and professor of literature at the Université de Montréal; Henri-Dominique Paratte, professor of literature at Acadia University and editor of the journal *Etudes romandes*; Jean-Marie Poupart, novelist and professor of literature at the CEGEP St-Jean in Montreal; and Naïm Kattan, who presided at the jury as representative of the Canada Council.

The Canada-Switzerland Literary Prize, established last year, is intended to honour Swiss and Canadian writers for works published in French during the preceding eight years. Poetry, fiction, drama and non-fiction are eligible. Next year the prize will be presented to a Canadian writer.

Musical heritage recorded

The Canadian Music Heritage Collection, based in Toronto, is embarking on a project designed to record and preserve Canadian folk music.

Budget for the first year of operation is \$440,000.

Spokeswoman Sylvia Tyson said the organization will produce up to 20 high-quality recordings each year until the objectives of the series have been met. They will distribute them to libraries, schools and individuals.