

Rock-and-shock-'em art

COCA exhibit is bound to be an eye-opener, to say the least

■ "Feminists and Misogynists Together at Last," images of sex and sexism by 40 artists from across the nation. Sponsored by the Center on Contemporary Art at 1516 Second Ave. Opening from 7 p.m. to midnight today. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and until 8 p.m. Thursday.

by Deloris Tarzan
Times art critic

Prepare to be offended by Center On Contemporary Art's new show, and to stand in line for it.

Get ready for revulsion if you attend tonight's opening. Clint Ruin will smash pigs' heads with a sledgehammer. Stand well back if you don't want to get splattered.

Ruin, in case you're lucky enough not to have heard of him, calls his act "Scraping Foetus off the Wheel." He works solo with backing tapes, a fifth of vodka and a fog machine. COCA's season director Larry Reid says, "It's not really music; it's noise with a beat."

Lydia Lunch will perform at the opening, too. A former punk musician who headed Teenage Jesus and the Jerks, Lunch does spoken-word performances. Some call it poetry.

Lunch's 20-minute film, "The Right Side of My Brain," will kick off COCA's panel discussion "Porn in the U.S.A." at 3 p.m. Sunday. In the film, she gets beaten up and engages in sex acts likely to get the discussion off to a flaming start.

"I don't like this film myself, but I think it's art," explains Reid. "I don't know what the point of the movie is — some sort of universal female fantasy of being raped and hurt."

These I-can-be-more-shocking-than-you antics are the tongue-in-cheek fluff surrounding COCA's new exhibition, "Feminists and Misogynists Together at Last." Think of it as New York come to Seattle, and if violence amuses you, you'll love the show.

It gives new meaning to figurative art. Think kicks to the groin preserved on canvas. In New York, artists have to try harder to shock.

Reid defends the 40-artist show by saying, "Seattle is a hotbed of feminist ideology, and that feminist sensibility is rarely challenged. We have an odd urban environment, because



Clint Ruin's act, "Scraping Foetus off the Wheel," depends heavily on 'noise with a beat.'

Peter Anderson

we're sheltered from the problems of violence that face a lot of other areas. It's too easy for people here not to deal with those issues.

"Northwest art historically has been very pretty, very spiritual. That was important in its time, and now there are more important issues to deal with. We're making cruise missiles in Kent, and we have a base for nuclear submarines. We're right in the thick of things, and we tend to ignore the important political considerations that go with that."

"Art is a very powerful weapon. I've set up this year's COCA program to grab the Northwest sensibility by the throat and wake

people up to the political atmosphere of fear and insecurity that grips the rest of the country."

Reid is a longtime champion of radical art. He began the Rosco Louie Gallery in 1978 — a quick success as a haven for the punk subculture. Too successful to suit Reid. He liked heading a group of renegade artists, but when Rosco Louie became absorbed into the existing gallery system, he felt the political issues had become trivialized, and shut down the operation.

"I opened the Graven Image Gallery a year later, after I paid my debts and ate for a while," he said. It quickly became so trendy that openings were mobbed — an

irony because Reid wanted badly to remain outside the mainstream. He closed it last year.

He was a perfect choice to be COCA's director this year — radical but organized, and full of ideas. He planned this year's COCA programs to be deliberately offensive.

"Some of the art's real good, and some is real bad, but it's all provocative," he says. "It grabs you by the hair and shakes you around a little bit."

Even the show's location is calculated to contribute to the effect. It's borrowed space on Second Avenue between Pike and Pine Streets — a rundown area,

and the part of Seattle that most resembles seedy parts of New York.

It's practice for Reid. He plans to open a gallery in New York, in the sleazy area of 42nd Street near Times Square next June.

Meanwhile, if you'd like to be offended this evening without standing in line, it's the perfect time to join COCA. Members walk right in.

And you can choose to view it all as play.

"I don't want people to take this too seriously," Reid said. "It's a joke. Like happenings in the 1960s. It's supposed to be important, but it's also fun."