

Modern art from the suburbs

By EVE JOHNSON

With Poco-Rococo we will get a chance to show what we can do in the place where our art was created. We are always having to go to the city to become known. I think we all feel excited that the city is coming to the suburbs.— Jodi Apel in the students' statement accompanying Poco-Rococo.

POCO-ROCCOCO is a group art exhibition in a former furniture store just outside Woodward's on the lower level of Coquitlam Centre Mall. The artists are 60 students from Port Coquitlam Senior Secondary and 25 Vancouver artists including Ian Wallace, Sherry Grauer, Marcia Pitch, I. Braineater, Georgiana Chappell and Jeff Wall.

They were brought together by Ken Lum, who runs the Or Gallery in Vancouver and by three Port Coquitlam art teachers: Myra Eadie, Lorne Whorley and Tuk Caldwell.

The teachers had already established a tradition of yearly shows of unframed student works in the mall concourse. Lum was interested in a group show, and liked the idea that "instead of having kids come to the city, we'd be having the city go to the suburbs."

The artists donated \$515. The school gave \$200; Coquitlam Centre Mall offered the store rent-free; and a local framer donated frames for the students' work.

Lum chose the artists partly on the basis of connections with suburbia. "Probably 50 per cent came from the suburbs," he says.

There were other criteria: "I wanted to include Ray Alton because his dinosaur painting has a relation to high school art. In high school there was always somebody drawing dinosaurs.

"But mostly the aim was to show that modern art is alive and is being done, not just in New York, but in Burnaby, Port Moody, Coquitlam."

The result is a lively and interesting show, a little too lively, in fact, for any sense of unity to emerge. The walls are crisscrossed, and in each former furniture showroom the art competes with the wallpaper.

Curiously enough there's no sense of a generation gap. I. Braineater's painting might have been created by one of the students; Poco student Tracey Fell's Atomic Tan is a statement on nuclear annihilation