

Great balls of ire as art tackles warming - Ben Cubby, SMH 4 December 2007



"IF YOU keep sweeping things under the rug, then one day you'll trip over the lump," is artist Shane Dunn's take on climate change. "That's my old grandmother's saying and I think it sums up the climate situation very well, really."

For a new exhibition exploring global warming, 40 Sydney artists were each given a large sphere - a plastic beach ball covered with papier mache - to turn into 3-D art installations. Some used paint; others went wild with plastic forks, spinifex grass and cut-up atlases. But one theme unites the works in the *Fragile Planet* exhibition: no matter how green we think we are, a greedy culture of conspicuous consumption can never be compatible with a cleaner world.

"I think with climate change it comes down to a very 'kitchen table' approach," said Dunn, who covered his globe with shimmering black feathers to allude to the frailty of the Earth's ecosystems. "Why should we be sitting around and complaining about what the Government's doing, if the UN does this or Kyoto does that, when we can do something ourselves?"

The writer David Malouf, who will open the show tonight, agrees. "I think climate change is an area where we will do well to leave it to the scientists, but the best thing we can do is something practical, like not having a car, or not having air-conditioning."

Ten per cent of the show's profits will be donated to the Australian Conservation Foundation.

"In a way, climate change is the new black," Monica Richter, sustainability programs manager at the Australian Conservation Foundation, said. "We're seeing this more and more, where people from all across society, not just scientists, are talking about climate change because it affects everyone."

The 40 climate change spheres are now hung in NG Art Gallery, a converted Gothic-revival church in Chippendale.

Fragile Planet opens tonight and runs until December 22