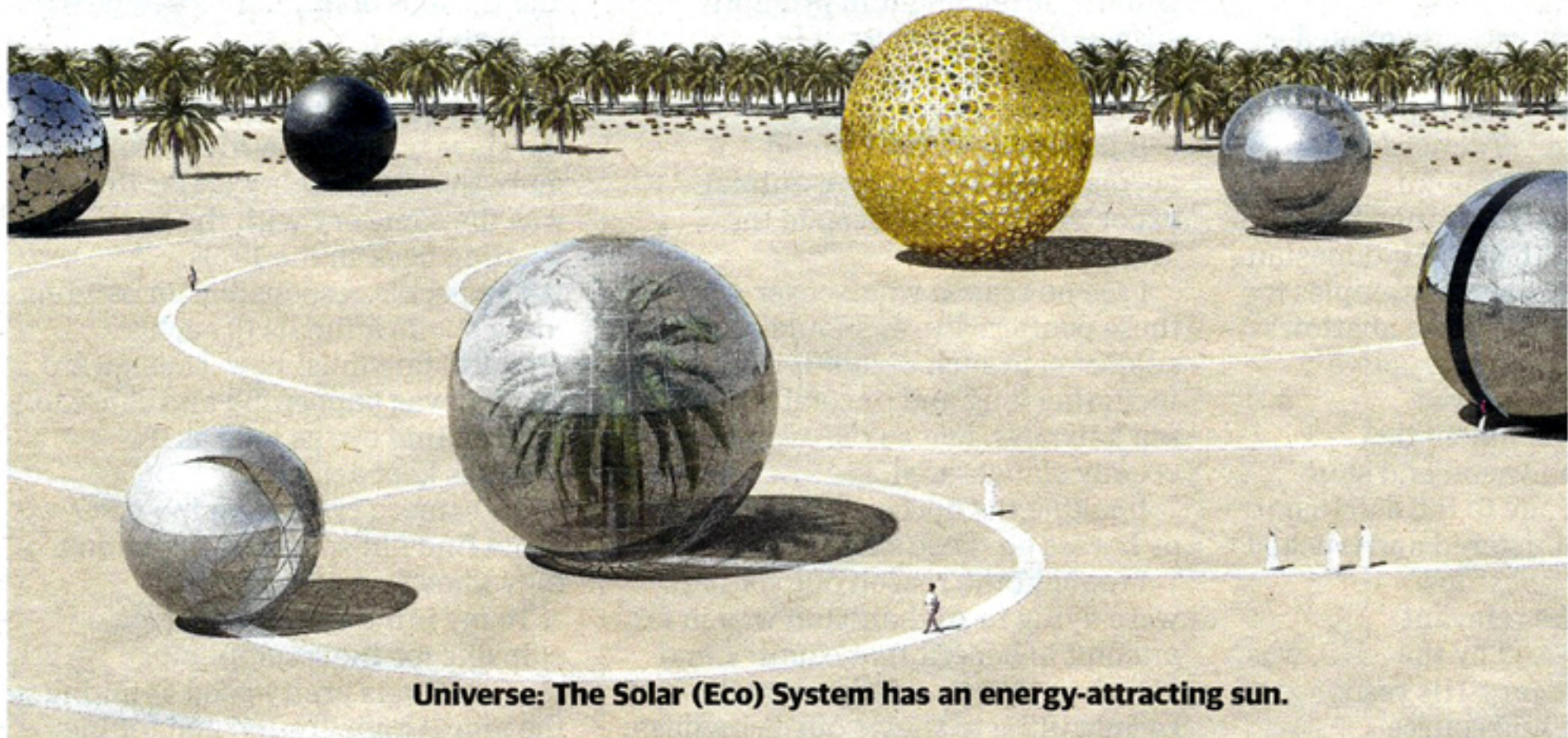


# Art flicks the switch



Universe: The Solar (Eco) System has an energy-attracting sun.

WA is bidding to host a contest for power-producing art works, reports **Lindsay McPhee**

**W**e know art can fuel our imagination, but imagine a world where it powered our homes and helped tackle climate change.

That is exactly what architect Robert Ferry and artist Elizabeth Monoian had in mind last year when they launched an international design competition that has captured the world's imagination.

And in 2013, they hope to bring it to Perth.

First held in the United Arab Emirates last year and slated for New York next year, the Land Art Generator Initiative challenges artists, architects, engineers and scientists to design big land art installations for specific locations that also generate enough clean energy to power several thousand homes.

The designs must be aesthetically pleasing and practical, challenge the public's

perception of clean energy production and workable in the real world.

Forget wind farms; last year's competition attracted 500 entries from 40 different countries and produced some incredible proposals, including a pyramid that harnesses the sun and glows softly in the dark, thousands of shining spheres and tall, swaying stalks that extract power from the wind.

From the desert in Abu Dhabi to a giant regenerated landfill site in New York, the event organiser's now have their sights on Perth's Heirisson Island as the third location.

Jude van der Merwe, director of WA artists' foundation Artsource, which would partner with LAGI, has been instrumental in driving the push for Perth.

She has drawn up a proposal for the Heirisson Island Sculpture Park Board to consider and if successful, hopes to raise the estimated \$350,000 it will take to host LAGI — an amount she believes is a small price to pay for the international attention it will attract.

"An opportunity to make something ecologically sound and sustainable and for artists and engineers and designers from around the world to consider that site is a fantastic

prospect," she said. "The ideas last year were amazing; there were some extraordinary technical innovations and it is a great opportunity for technology that maybe isn't at commercial application stage — something you can do on six or 10 acres, not on hundreds.

"Heirisson Island has an enormous amount of cultural significance for indigenous people and that is a crucial consideration. It has amazing views of the city and a fantastic sense of quiet and peace."

The timing is spot-on, with the Heirisson Island Sculpture Park project gathering pace. Last month the City of Perth committed to a \$1.64 million footpath to the island and there are serious talks on what works the park should incorporate.

Although the winning project does not come with a guaranteed commission, there is increasing international interest in art as a solution to the growing energy crisis.

Ferry and Monoian are confident good designs from LAGI will be adopted all over the world, in line with their aim to produce works that inspire and educate, create sustainable communities and work in harmony with their surroundings.