

Our Life

There was an article in *The West Australian* newspaper recently called *Perth needs more than beauty to stand tall*, written by a thinker in residence, called Charles Landry¹. He writes about Perth and what it might need to become a truly creative city. Having the highest number of millionaires per capita and the lowest rate of giving amongst capital cities in Australia makes one wonder what people believe in, where they want to invest their earnings and for what benefit.

The current source of all this money is of course the resources boom.

Landry's article is a plea for vision and for investment in various forms of capital: creative, intellectual, human and environmental amongst others.

After reading this article I had an unexpected illumination: I realised that a very large percentage of the collective vision of this state is actually directed underground, to the current source of all the wealth. It is difficult for those that are dizzy with power and wealth to actually shift this vision to the spaces that surround them on the surface of the earth.

It is hardly a coincidence that as soon as the water stops falling from the sky, this collective vision looks to a subterranean solution, such as tapping the Yarragadee Aquifer, located underneath vegetation of great bio-diversity value and beauty.

Gregory was an Australia Council
Synapse art and science resident
at CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems
in Floreat for his project Grain of
Night that was exhibited at IASKA
in Kellerberrin in 2006

By Gregory Pryor, Feb 2007
<http://www.anat.org.au/blog/grainofnight/>

as Ants

The hard, clear light of day seems too confronting to contemplate an 'action plan of the surface' or resurrection, reconstruction and revegetation.

After spending time working in the wheatbelt last year, the thin film of earth which separates above and below ground came to represent an enormous and fragile membrane to me. We have long spoken off the loss of topsoil in such large swathes of cleared land, but now we must also begin to expect an equally despairing loss of bottomsoil...where am I going to walk? This metaphoric membrane is our own terrestrial version of the increasingly thin polar ice. If we fall through, where will we go?

There is a unique plant endemic to Western Australia that has mastered living in this membrane. It is the rare underground orchid, *Rhizanthella gardneri*. It grows underground, but when it flowers, the flower head cautiously breaks through the topsoil membrane and presents its tiny flowers to pollinators in the permanent twilight environment of the leaf litter. This is the same inbetween zone that we may need to learn how to transform into a sustainable and resilient living space, otherwise we should begin to prepare for our life as ants

¹ Landry, C. *Perth Needs More than Beauty to Stand Tall*, pp 16-17, *The West Australian*, February 10 2007

Artist: Gregory Pryor, *Hakea Recurva*

