

Canadian **Architect**

Prix de Rome/Timber/Earnings



remains of earlier buildings... The Palatine holds valuable lessons for me, for it suggests a way of moving beyond the simple myth of confronting the land as an equal which has marked our colonial period of building in Canada. Gravity and light are primary references for the Palatine, but these orienting forces become unstable in the synthetic complex of the hill. From natural light and solid earth, the architecture of the Palatine moves toward the aetrial illumination, emanations of hollow ground and ultimately to an interwoven body with its own substance and gravity."

When Beesley journeyed to Rome in 1995, the Palatine did indeed become the locus of his ruminations. His *Palatine Burial* was the artist-architect's impressive response to a recent excavation in which had been found the remains of a baby, apparently sacrificed and buried at the foot of the Palatine. "The sacrifice," wrote Beesley in *SDJ (Surface Design Journal)*, Spring 1999, "was for propitiation, protecting the boundary of the city. Making

sacred. A *mundus*, a little world offered instead of the world around. The project," he continued, "involved construction of a textile cover used for reburial of the archaeological site."

"What material could be adequate for covering there?" Beesley's extraordinarily beautiful and reverent solution—virtually a matrix of what might be termed the *chthonian baroque*—was a dense "anatomy of transparent vessels cushioned by sprung tenons and terminated by serrated hollow needles to puncture and drain. "Each of these protozoan links was thin and meager, but by linking and clumping together they made mass and thickness. At first a bare lattice work controlled by the geometry of its elements, then increasingly formless and growing darker as it ingested decomposing matter. Thicker and fertile enveloping the wire implants and making a complete turf. The cover was finally dense, redolent with growth. And within this vital new earth, a convulsion glimmered—a poise telegraphing through from the sprung armature deep within."

Below: one of the transparent vessels cushioned by sprung tenons with hollow needles that formed the matrix of Philip Beesley's *Palatine Burial*, 1996. The project involved the construction of a textile cover for the reburial of an archaeological site at the foot of the Palatine containing the remains of a baby, apparently sacrificed. Bottom: a drawing of the lattice-work as it becomes covered over.

