

The fear which greets the question, *'What is the authority of architecture?'* rises mainly from the fear of architectural tyranny. From this over-ruling fear of tyranny, popular discourse has run from the notion of authority into the relativist world of total equality. In this realm all are equally binding, nothing is particularly binding. The notion of authority is anathema. However, within this realm nothing is either valuable, worthy, meaningful or beautiful. The fear which has driven architecture into this realm of calculated insanity has driven it into silence. There is nothing to say of anything anymore. Everything is alright. No one may be criticized for not being any better than they are, "even more okay". The silence that has settled over the profession is deafening. The lack of thought and value-fear masquerading as intellectual tolerance is pathetic. The inability to ask questions of any real value; *What is good? What is true? What is architecture?* and *What is its authority?* is tragic. The moral indignancy with which these questions are now greeted is oppressive.

Kevin Dancy



We had already come to the conclusion that if all architecture was equally 'good', then obviously it was equally 'bad', but we felt entrapped within the Present, paranoid of the Past, skeptical about the Future. We knew that by asking for an answer to the question, *What is the authority of architecture?* that only the most audacious would reply. The question was and remains ambiguous. Authority by its very definition is ambiguous; authority by power or authority by knowledge. The question can only raise even more questions that ask for even more answers. The 'answers' that follow, in the context of the magazine converse; converse with each other, with others absent from the pages, with history, and beg for your participation. Some texts see eye to eye, some simply disagree - this is the nature and more importantly, the dynamics of conversation. However, not once did we feel that we were leading *The Fifth Column* back into precisely what we wanted to and have to leave behind; this relativist debris of post-modern culture. Not that we have left, but simply that we have begun, and the point of departure is the point of re-establishing the fundamental conversation that the profession and the institutions are increasingly avoiding.