 DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11486504

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The Word and the Work: (Dis/Con)junctions and Other Encounters with Change

By way of an introduction, I want to allow the assigned word to do at least some of the work. If words have economic value apart from their contexts, *change*, unlike *and* (which was the assigned word in *Khōrein* Nos. 1 and 2), is expensive. Whether deployed as noun or verb, there are high administrative costs. This word is not conjunctive. It breaks conjunctions in its insistence on restless and unpredictable work that takes time to unfold. It requires research into histories, speculative thinking, stochastic predictions, future and past scenarios. Even if we chose to stabilize it as merely change in a purse or pocket, one cares nothing about it as a piece of metal or paper. We see it more as a potentiality for spending. Change in the pocket, as with many technologies, is like a source of power (however small) waiting to be plugged in.

The word *and* would also seem to stabilize the relation between architecture and philosophy, whereas *change* disrupts this relation. The essays in this issue contend with disruptions, chiefly in architectural contexts that make both overt and subtle uses of philosophy, theory, and historiography. It seems not only interesting but right to first approach *change* as a force or a *tour de force*, as one of the essayists, Anna Neimark, would have it. Even if change is beneficial, which it often is, it seems to begin with a disruption of some kind, however small.

Aaron White writes, in the beginning of his historical run-up of architectural confrontations with *change* in this issue, "in the beginning [of nature, life, ideas, things] was the change." White's essay, which tries to honor the urgency that the pressure of change often demands, frequently returns to the word "parallel" in order to attach visits to different epochs to Lucretius's *clinamen* (the swerving of atoms that creates the

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world). Theorists throughout architectural history, White argues, feeling the pressure of change, consistently (although not always) resort to theories that ground and codify architecture, resisting change and classifying stature. The concept of beauty is one of the actors in these attempts.

White's essay helps reveal seminal dilemmas associated with bringing architecture into the aura of *change*. One of these dilemmas is architecture's loyalty to two conflicting concepts: design on the one hand and material practice and construction on the other. Both of these concepts are at work in the discipline as well as the practice. The first, design, which is associated with theory, ideas, plans, precedents and a multitude of other influences, as Anna Neimark notes in her sharp and specific essay about pedagogy and buildings, moves forward toward both intended and unintended *change*. The second, material construction, falls back. Neimark uses the construction of a fort, where walls are built to weather attacks and interiors are built to house, in a domestic fashion, those who are not fighting, the rear-guard. This set-up is what she calls "the geometric abstractions of war." The resistant rear-guard in architectural training and work is the "how" of the work rather than the "what" of the work. Materialization resists change but must accommodate it. And, as Vitruvius is said to have said, not only to accommodate but also to produce "delight," which is embedded in the design.

I will address "delight" shortly but want first to note Manfredo di Robilant's essay, which addresses the mechanics and technologies that inevitably become embedded in architectural design and building. That this embedding comes from outside, rather than inside, architecture's domain is relevant to di Robilant's not uncommon argument that architecture's hubristic beliefs about its influence are mistaken. Linking architecture and allied technologies has always fostered competition about origins of disciplines and practices and this essay thus enriches, in various ways, the conflict between design and construction by bringing significant changes in technological inventions and innovations into play. One could say, in relation to change as a force, that there is no question that we are in the midst of technological force-fields. At the same time, while the boundaries of "architecture domains" are perhaps more porous than implied, architecture is a discipline as well as a practice, which differentiates (in relation to technology) its approach to design and building, invention and innovation.

Delight, more agile than beauty, opens other doors to dynamic and disruptive design and a resistant, grounded building. Mark Rakatansky's

essay, which argues for the historiographic possibility (to architectural historians in particular) of there being more than one architectural antiquity, takes us on the path to an alternative antiquity. An antiquity in which Vitruvius is challenged by significant tendencies in the Renaissance toward architectural hybridity and monstrosities based on new interpretations of archaeological discoveries of ancient Rome. One of the greatest monstrosities is the failure of architecture's belief that a building's structure should be legible. Hybridity muddles the places where delight, redefined as grotesques, might land. Changing originary sources of classical architecture from static and statuesque columns to ornate and pagan elements disturbs a history that has acted as a spine in architecture's understanding of its past. Such a change reaches deeply into social systems of all kinds.

While the disruption of our theories of antiquity, paradigmatic shifts that often seem to happen behind our backs, the enormous expense of realizing design, as well as matters of ordering and disordering, moving and stasis, stability and chaos, are unavoidable in architecture's confrontation with *change,* there is also the crucial force, noted in Lucretius's swerving, of *poiēsis*, generative development. Lisa Haber-Thomson's essay, which is about the peculiarity of architectural metaphors in legal narratives, argues that architecture can catalyze changes in law. One would imagine that law's job—English common law in Haber-Thomson's case—is to tame or at least restrain serendipitous change. And so it tries to do. Yet to do so, as Haber-Thomson points out, it frequently appeals to architectural metaphors. It uses these metaphors as illustrative tools that vivify "perceived dangers [...] [in] underlying proposed changes in law." Common law, unlike civil law, is based on precedents. Precedents build up over time and become a "big house with many rooms," as one judge in the latter part of the twentieth century remarked. "Though law is still often seen as a text-based discipline," Haber-Thomson writes, "architecture appears to be a longstanding part of the furniture of the mind in English legal thought." The dilemma that faces common law is how to codify and idealize legal systems while allowing for interpretations of the law that correspond to one's own time. An instance of change as an interpretation of law that appealed to architecture for its digression from normative practices was Bentham's panopticon, which catalyzed, as Haber-Thomson notes, the shift in "legal practices of imprisonment." It bears noting that reliance on precedents, codifying iconic styles, and interpreting and changing to remain relevant to one's own time also applies to the discipline and practices of architecture and philosophy. It seems, as well, that change, even

well-planned change, almost always encounters, in its enactment, serendipitous elements. The "change-order" routinely used in construction, mentioned by Aaron White, is at least one piece of evidence of the wilderness we enter when change is in motion.

At least two of the essays diverge from definitions of change that we are most prone to follow. The first is Spyros Papapetros who locates, in a meticulous analysis of Gottfried Semper's *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts, or, Practical Aesthetic*, an absence of "change-as-a-shift" in favor of change as "a form of oscillating constancy." The force of precedents is again felt here, as is the potential of cyclical change, a return of the same that can never exactly recreate the same, thus making it a quasi-change. Papapetros, whose essay looks at change through the lens or apparatus of *interchange*, finds, in Semper's work, definitions of "theory" as motifs or types that overlap with "history" as raw or prepared material; an overlapping that cannot be sorted out. This overlapping poses, again, a difficulty not unlike the Ur-problem of design vs. building. But the upshot, in Papapetros' analysis, is not to finalize this separation with a "vs." or virgule, but to keep change as a non-linear oscillating constancy.

The second is Sanford Kwinter's essay, which does not speak directly to architecture but presents theories of perception and apprehension in relation to that which is perceived and apprehended. This essay changes the register of inquiry into the word *change*. It poses the problem about what change "reveals" in relation to our metabolic construction of the universe through our cognitive system of perception and apprehension. Kwinter writes, "[f]or in our inner and outer world, salience is what change reveals [...]." Perception by humans and other species means not only to select things from a plethora of possible things but also to apprehend these things in order to construct a milieu within which to organize life. In selecting and apprehending this or that thing, Kwinter writes, we have not "gained a product" but an "enhancement of potential." We better understand "how [...] information, form, or pattern is activated in the world." The things we select are what Gregory Bateson called "the difference that makes the difference," and the word "potential" includes "domains of the mind," evolutionary theory, the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics, and other systemic territories.

I will end my introduction here, in the midst of these provocations and crossing thoughts. We, as architects, historians, and/or philosophers, perceivers and apprehenders, have experimented with this slippery word, *change*, and, to some degree, found contexts within which to track its

operations. I only recently learned that the word *khōrein*, which is a verb "related to *khōra* or *khōros*, means to go forward and be in flux, but also make room for another." The "going forward" is here in more than one way, and the "in flux" too, but who or what the "another" would be I leave to the founders of this creative and rigorous journal.