en lignende måte, ved å be oss om å tenke over hva vi gjør med norskekysten og det større klimaet som omgir kunsten i form av et overveldende landskap.

Det er selvsagt ingenting nytt i at kunstnere forsøker å vekke oppmerksomhet rundt hvordan vi misbruker miljøet. For å nevne ett eksempel tok bauhaus-designeren Herbert Beyer for seg utmagring av miljøet i det berømte verket *Grass Mound* i Aspen i USA i 1955. Han ble fulgt av en rekke miljøkunstnere, så som Robert Smithson med *Asphalt Rundown* fra 1969 og *Partially Buried Woodshed* fra 1970. Noen miljøkunstnere har også forsøkt å forbedre miljøet de arbeidet med, ved å øke det biologiske mangfoldet og rense vannet, som for eksempel i Patricia Johansons *Fair Park Lagoon* (1981–86) eller Viet Ngos *Devil's Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant* (1990). Til sammenligning er ikke Freuchens miljøagenda like opplagt som Ngos vannverk, men allikevel ligner den underliggende agendaen.

Rekken med brukne søyler er bestilt av Nasjonale turistveger, som er en seksjon av Statens vegvesen. Deres mål er å skape turisme gjennom bedre og mer interessante opplevelser langs veien. I sin kunst setter Freuchen spørsmålstegn ved bilturismekulturen og Norges oljedrevne økonomi. Som subversivt kunstverk fortjener det både beundring og refleksjon.

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Art in the Anthropocene

Global warming is now at the forefront of public debate, along with a host of related environmental concerns. Indeed, humans are changing the face of the earth so dramatically that geologists use the word 'anthropocene' to describe a new planetary epoch formed by human impact. Artists have increasingly begun reflecting on how to engage in the climate debates about the degradation of our shared environment. Jan Freuchen's *Columna Transatlantica* may belong within this new school of environmental art.

The Atlantic Ocean Road in Møre and Romsdal is an icon of Norwegian road engineering. Roughly eight kilometers of its meandering through, over and across islets gives tourists a sense of traveling at the very edge of the world, with the stunning mountain coast line on the one side and the waste ocean on the other. The locals care less about the spectacle. For them the road has more to do with getting easier access to all the amenities of a modern society. For the country the road has a larger meaning as a political symbol of connecting the nation.

The Atlantic Ocean Road is also facilitating communication for the petroleum industry in the region. At the heart of this business is the natural gas field The Long Serpent (Ormen Lange) in the North Sea, which has a landing place for its pipes at Nyhamna in the southern proximity of the Atlantic Ocean Road. It's a large processing facility and a major local employer.

Columna Translantica is situated next to the Atlantic Ocean Road and in the immediacy of Nyhamna. It invites tourists and locals alike to reflect on what's

happening to the environment they visit or live in, as its snake-like shape evokes both The Long Serpent name and Atlantic Ocean Road.

After parking their cars, the viewers are guided down a path from which they will discover a chain of broken columns in the landscape. It is as if they have found a ruin of some ancient Greek temple structure. Since that is obviously not the case, they are forced to reflect on what the ruins could be from. The broken chain of columns creates a sense of mystery and bewilderment. They evoke an end to whatever they are supposed to represent.

If we are to believe climatologists (and why shouldn't we?), the islets which the Atlantic Ocean Road meanders through will face an ocean rising at least one meter within the century, along with more frequent hurricanes due to warmer weather. Freuchen's artwork is a dystopian reflection on this outlook, with the broken chain of columns representing the future of the Atlantic Ocean Road and the destiny of Nyhamna. It's a depiction of the Atlantic Ocean Road as a classical 'temple' of modernity lying scattered on the ground. At the same time it serves as a representation of what The Long Serpent soon will be. The artwork is like a bad omen, a ruin reflecting human hubris.

At first sight one may think of Freuchen's artwork as a piece of landscape art, as in the Romantic image of a Greek ruin or sculpture in a garden. Seen in this way, nature becomes a backdrop for beautiful or intriguing sculptures. This is a dominant way of organizing art, such as in the famous Vigeland Park in Oslo, where sculptures are placed in an attractive park. Environmental art in the anthropocene is very different. Here the entire environment, including the depth of the ocean and the atmosphere around us, is reflected in the art piece. The scenic landscape is gone. Instead, art tends to mirror a world in which everything is touched by pollution. For those accustomed to think about the environment only as pristine nature, Freuchen's broken columns may look like foreign objects. From the point of view of the anthropocene, however, they belong within a larger debate on how to respond to global warming.

The visitor will first discover a string of columns submerged in water as if ocean levels have already risen. The effect is similar to a piece by the British graffiti artist Banksy, who, frustrated with the lack of results at the Copenhagen climate negotiations back in 2009, tagged in bright red 'I DON'T BELIEVE IN

~~GLOBAL WARMING~~' at Regent's Canal in Camden, north London, with the words 'global warming' disappearing below the canal water. It has gained the status of an iconic climate artwork, inspiring artists and activists alike. One of them was the London-based artist Isaac Cordal, who placed partly submerged diplomat looking miniature male figures under water on a street in Berlin. 'Follow the leaders' was its ironic title. Freuchen is following suit by giving us an artistic vision of what Møre and Romsdal's tomorrow will look like if we continue to live in denial. The tiny Pacific nation of Tuvalu created a similar effect at the 2015 art biennale in Venice, forcing the visitor to wade in the pavillion of a nation in danger of being washed away by rising sea levels. Global warming is coming, and our feet will get wet is a common theme among these anthropocene artists.

On continuing walking, the viewer may follow the broken columns in the terrain. What first comes to mind is the work of Richard Long, who also combines walking and art experience, using material found on his way to create pieces expressing mobility, lightness and freedom. Yet unlike Long, Freuchen places foreign machine-made objects along his path, creating an opposite dystopian effect.

The columns are made of marble, which is a crystallization of mostly calcium, carbon and oxygen. This choice of material can be understood as a comment on the oil industry's various attempts to fashion themselves as environmentally friendly by inventing and using carbon capture and storage technologies (so-called CCS techs). The use of marble makes the columns into a piece of CCS art, with a geological time horizon. The artwork may lie and store its carbon for hundreds of millions of years, by then totally submerged in the ocean due to sea rise, as a ruin from a long-gone anthropocene epoch.

Freuchen has placed the broken chain of columns in an environment of grass, moss, and rock. This natural setting is an intrinsic part of his artwork, as it would have lost its meaning had it been placed in, say, a gallery or a museum. In doing so, he is part of a larger trend of artists using the environment to question the way we engage (or should not engage!) the natural world. The Finnish environmental artist Jonna Pohjalainen, for example, has placed giant color pencils in a field, forcing us to reflect on the way we 'color' the environment – and the environment us. Similarly, the American artist Michael McGillis in *Between Now and Then* placed masses of gleaming glass bottles in cracks of rocks, making our pollution look like glowing

lava. *Columna Translantica* has a similar effect – or *affect* to be more precise – on its viewers in asking us to think about what we are doing to the Norwegian coastline and the larger climate that surrounds the art in the form of breathtaking horizons.

There is, of course, nothing new in artists trying to raise awareness about the way we mistreat the environment. The Bauhaus designer Herbert Bayer, for one, addressed environmental depletion in his famous *Grass Mound* built in the American town of Aspen in 1955. A serious of environmental artists followed suit, such as with as Robert Smithson's *Asphalt Rundown* from 1969 and *Partially Buried Woodshed* from 1970. Some environmental artists would also try to better the environment they worked with by improving its biodiversity and rinsing its water, such as in Patricia Johanson's *Fair Park Lagoon* (1981–86) or as in Viet Ngo's *Devil's Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant* (1990). In comparison, Freuchen's environmental agenda is not as obvious as Ngo's treatment plant, yet the underlying agenda seems similar.

The string of broken columns has been commissioned by National Tourist Roads in Norway, a subsidiary of Norwegian Public Roads financed by the State. Its aim is to generate tourism through better and more interesting road experiences. Freuchen is in his art questioning the culture of car tourism and Norway's petroleum driven economy. As a subversive piece of art it's worthy of both admiration and reflection.