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Gamboni, Dario Libero

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3: Stillbilder fra *Audi R8 Spyder Tackles Norway's Atlantic Road*, film, 2011, 3.42.

4: Jan Freuchen, collage fra serien *Lord Jim in Anatolia* series, 2008
[reprodusert på s. 47 i *Retreat Center*]

5: Thomas Cole, *Roman Campagna (Ruins of Aqueducts in the Campagna di Roma)*, 1843. Olje på lerret, 32½ × 42 tommer. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum, Hartford, Connecticut. Photo: Allen Phillips/Wadsworth Atheneum.

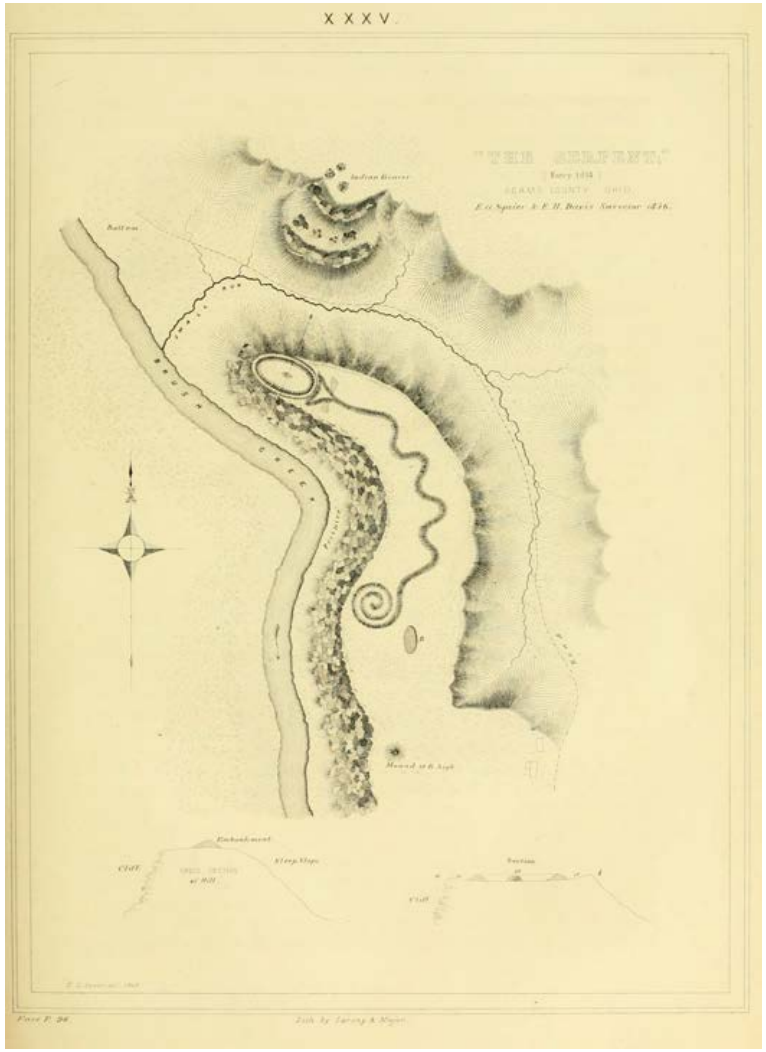
6: Olaus Magnus, *Carta Marina*, 1539, detalj med sjøuhyre som angriper et skip, og Moskstraumen som Karybdis.

7: *Laokoon og sønnene hans*, ca. 40–30 f.Kr. Marmor, høyde 208 cm.
Museo Pio-Clementino, Roma.

8: Salvador Dalí, *Erindringens bestandighet*, 1931. Olje på lerret, 24,1 × 33 cm.
Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Digital image © 2015, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

9: Jan Freuchen, tegning over *Columna Transatlantica*, 2015.

10: Johan Thomas Lundbye, *Efterårslandskab. Hankehøj ved Vallekilde*, 1847.
Olje på lerret, 36,2 × 43,2 cm. Den Hirschsprungske Samling, København.



11: Serpent Mound, plansje XXXV i Ephraim George Squier og Edwin Hamilton Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, Washington D.C., Smithsonian Institution, 1848.

12: Skjematisk fremstilling av den undersjøiske installasjonen ved gassfeltet Ormen Lange, 2014.

13: Ouroboros, detail from a page of alchemical symbols in the early Greek manuscript Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra, c. 100 CE.

DARIO GAMBONI
Professor of Art History at the University of Geneva

Ut Columna Translatio

Ruins in the Future Perfect [1]

In 1812, John Soane wrote a curious text entitled *Crude Hints towards an History of My House*.[2] In these ruminations, which remained a draft, he adopted the persona of an archaeologist and discussed various hypotheses regarding the nature and function of ruins excavated on the north side of Lincoln Inn's Fields in London. According to various authors, he summarized, the building could have been a Roman temple dedicated to Jupiter or Vesta, a 'convent of Nuns', 'the residence of some Magician' or 'a place of sepulture', and two statues of caryatides, which had supported the roof, 'might have been brought from Greece into this Country and here placed for ornament'. Soane himself speculated that it could also have been an artist's house and that the collection it contained 'might have been for the advancement of Architectural knowledge by making the young Students in that noble & useful Art who had no means of visiting Greece and Italy some better idea of ancient Works than would be conveyed through the medium of drawings or prints'.[3]

At this juncture, Soane had demolished No. 13 Lincoln Inn's Fields and was rebuilding it as his residence. The editor of his manuscript, Helen Dorey, observes that the place was therefore 'a demolition site evolving into a completed building rather than […] a finished building mouldering into ruin', as Soane imagined by projecting himself into the future. He would continue to cultivate this double temporal movement, of collecting the past into the present and of figuring the present as past, as when he asked his collaborator Joseph Michael Gandy to represent the Bank of England, his neoclassical masterpiece, as a field of ruins (Fig 1).

From Antiquity to the Atlantic Road

Jan Freuchen's *Columna Transatlantica* is more of a stretch, since it lies further away from Massalia (Marseille), whence Phyteas set out to explore the *Ultima Thule* in the fourth century BCE, and well beyond Hadrian's Wall (Fig. 2) and the Limes Germanicus, the northern limits of the Roman Empire. Given the current availability of classical models and their lack of paradigmatic value for practising architects, it is also improbable that this 'column' was meant to instruct local students 'in that noble & useful Art'. But it is a site-specific work, meant for the place where it is to be seen, and thus part of a movement that, from the 1960s onwards, has given new life to what the French theorist Quatremère de Quincy – a contemporary of Soane – called the *destination* of art, condemning the 'uprooting' of ancient works and the production of new ones for museums and the market.[4]

Since the early days of 'earthworks' and 'land art', site-specificity, defined at first by artists searching for a way out of the gallery, has become institutionalized, and it has been embraced by what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett terms 'destination culture', a tourism economy laying emphasis on personal experience, immediacy and 'hereness', the unique character of irreplaceable sites.[5] The National Tourist Routes program, launched in the mid-1990s by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration, aims at making the country 'more attractive for tourists travelling through Norway by road', as Jan Andresen, the project manager, explained in the catalogue of *Detour*, a travelling exhibition about the architecture and design commissioned for the eighteen stretches of roads selected.[6] This program is in continuity with the encouragement of motorized tourism that began in the early twentieth century, leading to more or less coordinated programs of 'scenic roads' in Europe and North America, and it wishes to develop the road network 'in a more tourist-friendly direction' by providing infrastructure such as stopping points, platforms and viewing ramps.

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aristocrats who practised the Grand Tour travelled to places made famous by literary tradition and brought back not only pictures of the sites, but also antiques for their collections. Early twenty-first-century tourists collect (and send) photographs and bring back the memory of 'valuable experiences', on which the Norwegian government bases explicitly its tourism strategy.[7] The National Tourist Routes provide motorized visitors with 'change

and variation from travel along main transport routes', inviting them to peripheral parts of the network marked by a 'positive interplay between the road and the unique landscape'.[8] The program ambitions not merely to display and reveal, but also to 'create locations along the route', and to 'give the location a name and a character'.[9] 'In order to emphasise the distinctive features of each roadway, the routes need to be spiced up with different contents', as Andresen put it, and the architectural expression needs to be 'bold and daring'.[10]

The added 'contents' can refer to local history, as in Peter Zumthor's and Louise Bourgeois's *Memorial in Memory of the Victims of the Witch Trials in Vardø, Varanger*.[11] But the landscape itself, even in places where no human intervention may be seen, is a cultural phenomenon, permeated with history and memory, bringing to mind paintings such as Harald Sohlberg's *Winter Night in Rondane* (1913–1914, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo), to which the rest area built in Strømbu by Carl-Viggo Hømebakk pays homage.[12] The emphasis on landscape and the human bond with nature can claim a lineage going back at least to nineteenth-century 'national romanticism' in Norway, and site-specificity echoes defining features of Nordic architecture and architectural theory, such as Christian Norberg-Schulz's notion of *locus*.[13] Moreover, roads are works of architecture as well as engineering, and the Transatlantic Ocean Road, an 8.3-kilometre-long section of County Road 64 selected to be part of the National Tourist Routes, was hailed 'Norwegian Construction of the Century' when completed in 1989, becoming promptly a favourite site for automotive commercials (Fig. 3).

The Column as Metaphor

In an illustrated presentation of his project, Jan Freuchen has given hints towards an understanding of *Columna Transatlantica*.[14] These hints do not, as in Soane's case, take the form of hypotheses about an allegedly ancient artefact, and they do not claim that its ambiguity results from decay and the passage of time. Instead, they are defined as 'associations', suggested to the author by his 'sculptural work'; he writes that they are 'many and often contradictory, but collectively question the artificial separation between human actions and endeavours and "natural" history'.

The first of these associations is with 'a broken Greek column', an object and symbol that Freuchen had already used in *Lord Jim in Anatolia*, a series of collages

in which he replaced the pictures from a 1950s illustrated version of Joseph Conrad's eponymous novel with photographs of ancient ruins (Fig. 4). This substitution points to an analogy between the column and the human body, familiar from architectural theory since the time of Vitruvius and made explicit in caryatids. The iterative quality of its rows of columns reappears, in a more haphazard fashion, in the forty elements of *Columna Transatlantica*, and Freuchen mentions the fact that Thomas Cole's painting of the Aqua Claudia aqueduct near Rome (Fig. 5) was one of his 'reference images' for the sculpture.[15]

Another association is with 'the vertebrae of a huge (mythical) marine creature', which a photograph, in Freuchen's presentation, shows lying in the sand. The phrase 'vertebral column' bears witness to a connection – based on similarities of structure and function – between this association and the former one. In Greek mythology, Deucalion and Pyrrha, the only mortals to survive the deluge sent by Zeus against the corrupt mankind of the Bronze Age, repopulated the earth by casting over their shoulders the 'bones of Mother Earth', that is stones – which turned on the ground into men and women.[16] As for sea monsters, they abound in Norse mythology and were not solely based on fantasy, as the Whale Hall of the Bergen Natural History Museum demonstrates. The *Carta Maritima*, commissioned in the sixteenth century by the archbishop of Sweden, Olaus Magnus, includes the depiction of a giant serpent-like monster crushing a ship off the coast of Norway (Fig. 6). Further north, it shows another ship descending into the fatal whirl of the Lofoten maelstrom, which the map identifies as Charybdis, one of the two sea monsters guarding the Strait of Messina, thus bringing together the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, as well as Greek and Norse mythologies.

Among Freuchen's reference images is also to be found the first-century BCE sculptural group of Laocoön (Fig. 7), in which the two great sea-serpents attacking the Trojan priest of Apollo and his sons resemble a series of discrete segments, like the elements of *Columna Transatlantica*, because of the way in which they wrap their coils around the agonizing bodies and of the damaged state of the statue.

'Decadent Ornament'

The Laocoön group is a Hellenistic work (or the early Imperial copy of one), but Freuchen's sculpture lies much further away from the Classical ideal and can be seen

as mock classical. It looks not only like a ruined column but also like a mellowed one, its drums of uneven size and shape scattered like oversized macaroni over a length of ninety meters. Freuchen describes their sharp profile as 'spaghetti-like' and compares the 'ornamental character of the sculpture' to 'whipped cream from a cream dispenser, from a futile attempt to decorate and beautify the pristine landscape of Vevang'. While drawing equally on the culinary register, this is a more ironic definition of the artist's contribution than Andresen's notion of 'spicing up' the route. It also distinguishes the work from the other realisations of the National Tourist Routes program. The viewing platform of Hømebakk's rest area in Strømbu has curving walls, and the plan of Reiulf Ramstad's parking, rest and service facilities in Selvika, Havøysund, bears a whimsical resemblance to a great snake, but most constructions speak in the Modernist idiom, with a stronger or weaker Nordic accent depending on each case.

The ancestry of Freuchen's *Columna Transatlantica*, on the other hand, appear located in Surrealism, Pop Art, postmodern and deconstructivist architecture. One can think, for example, of the liquefying watches in Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* (Fig. 8), of the 'soft' enlarged everyday objects (many of them edible in origin) in Claes Oldenburg's and Coosje van Bruggen's mock monuments, of the crumbling façades of the Best Products retail stores designed by the 'Sculpture in the Environment' (SITE) architecture firm, and of Vlado Miluniç and Frank Gehry's *Fred and Ginger* house in Prague. Freuchen himself speaks of a 'decadent ornament', using a term that – in its usual sense of embellishing addition – emphasises the dependence of the work upon, and its relation to, the site itself.

From the Visible to the Invisible

Freuchen designed the arrangement of the elements, after visiting the site repeatedly and studying its rocky, uneven terrain, so as to suggest a random walking path.[17] Their erratic character recalls deposits of glacial moraines, left behind by the great northern ice sheet when it melted about ten thousand years ago. The meandering pattern is another instance of the 'free' or 'desire line' that, in many previous works and above all in drawings, Freuchen let interact and fight with a 'restrained constructivism' (Fig. 9).[18] The invitation to walk from one element to the next fits the logic of the National Tourist Routes, allowing the tourists to explore

the topography of the site by foot after leaving the main transport routes for smaller winding roads. The experience of connecting spatially the scattered elements constitutes a mental whole, suggestive of a 'huge marine creature' similar to the yellow and green snake, cut alive into twenty sections by an axe, that the narrator of Victor Hugo's poem 'Les Tronçons du Serpent' encounters on a shore, recognizing in the animal's agony an image of his own soul, struck to the core by the death of his beloved Albaydé.[19] The Atlantic Road itself, with its arching bridges (Fig. 10), is suggestive of a giant serpent.

Death is also present nearby, in the form of burial mounds that one could easily mistake for natural features of the terrain. The excavation of Bronze Age burial mounds contributed to 'national romanticism' and, in northern landscape painting, their depiction often implies the evocation of ancestors' spirits, suggested by clouds in Johan Thomas Lundbye's painting of Hankehøj near Vallekilde, in Denmark (Fig. 11).[20] One of the best-known prehistoric constructions of this type worldwide, the Great Serpent Mound in south-western Ohio – now dated around 1000 CE and attributed to the Fort Ancient culture – inspired an equally famous modern 'earthwork', Robert Smithson's 1970 *Spiral Jetty* in the Great Salt Lake, Utah.[21]

Paths, according to the early nineteenth-century German landscape architect Peter Joseph Lenné, are 'mute guides'. Freuchen's presentation text describes the itinerary formed by his forty pieces of marble as follows: 'From its beginnings in a fertile and sheltered pond, *Columna Transatlantica* meanders towards the rough barren cliffs along the restless sea.' The pond plays the role of a diminutive Loch Ness, out of which truncated parts of the monster emerge. At the end of the walk, the visitor enjoys a panoramic view of the landscape and the ocean. This view does not extend below the surface, yet Freuchen mentions an underwater element: 'About 100 km from the coast of the Atlantic Road, the gas field Ormen Lange is situated on the ocean floor. Here, gas is extracted and transported in large tubes onto the mainland."

Freuchen also mentions 'a transatlantic transportation or communication cable' among *Columna Transatlantica's* 'associations'. Its cylindrical shape is indeed related formally to the pipelines (Fig. 12) transporting the natural gas from the seabed to the onshore process terminal at Nyhamna, further to the southwest, and from there to Easington in England, some 1200 kilometres across the Atlantic.[22] Ormen

Lange means 'long serpent' and the gas field, inaugurated in 2007, takes its name from that of a celebrated Viking longship belonging to Olaf Tryggvason, a tenth-century king of Norway. Tryggvason himself is said to have derived his ship from that of a pagan king whom he had killed by means of an iron pipe and a snake for refusing to convert to Christianity.[23]

In *Detour*, Karl-Otto Ellefsen observes that, while offshore oil installations were an achievement that changed profoundly Norwegian society, they were 'never conceptualised as national symbols of engineering or architectural monuments.'[24] Indirectly, by way of association, Freuchen's stranded 'marine creature' draws attention to the invisible presence of its underwater relatives, the 'long serpents' transporting sources of energy and wealth from the bottom of the sea.

Circle, Spirals and Knots

Since the 1970s, the extraction of petroleum and natural gas from wells in the North Sea has transformed the Norwegian economy, providing the country with its chief exports and resources. The resulting prosperity is a condition, among other things, of artistic investments such as the National Tourist Routes program. This has not escaped Jan Freuchen, who wrote of *Columna Transatlantica*: 'The work consists of hard, white fossil material in contrast to the soft, black oil that provides the economic and cultural backdrop for its completion.'

Marble – the 'white fossil material'– is here related and contrasted not with gas, but with oil, because current transportation depends mostly on petroleum. Motorized tourism, motivated by 'the best of Norwegian nature' and by 'daring' architecture, therefore contributes inevitably to the environmental changes that threaten these very cultural and 'natural icons'. Freuchen was bound to be aware of this paradox. In 2006, he had published a paraphrase of Ed Ruscha's 1963 book *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, entitled *Internal Combustion*, in which he reproduced photographs of collapsed service stations. This evocation of the demise of an architectural type standing for the oil-dependent economy was accompanied by a pithy summary of the causal chain surrounding fossil energy, entitled 'The Carbon Web':

'From the upper strata of the Earth's crust decayed remains of prehistoric marine animals and terrestrial plants are dug up and released into the atmosphere via carbon-fuelled machines, causing temperatures to rise and hurricanes to destroy the

functional buildings along the paved roads of distilled crude oil between the cities.'[25]

This evocation of entropy – a subject that had also fascinated Smithson – suggests that the 'natural gift' of gas and oil is dangerous, like the wooden horse left by the Greeks on the Trojan shore, against which Laocoön had warned his compatriots, so that, when he was killed by the sea serpents, they assumed he had been punished by the gods and brought the horse into their city. For the ancient world, the destruction of Troy and its ruins symbolized the mortality of human societies, a breeding ground of tragic and elegiac broken columns[26].

Freuchen associates the opacity and unfathomability of the ocean with a sense of cosmic threat. In an earlier text, 'Amorphous Beings', he wrote that 'the Antarctic is the fontanelle of the earth, where a fragile membrane conceals an ancient, alien Pandora's box.'[27] The causal dynamic described in 'The Carbon Web' can be visualized as a downward spiral, both cyclical and progressing towards a catastrophic end, like the Lofoten maelstrom swallowing a ship in Olaus Magnus's *Carta Maritima*. Is there a way out of this vicious circle? According to thinkers like Bruno Latour, finding such a way requires one to realize that natural phenomena and human actions are inextricably intertwined, that their separation – to quote Freuchen again – is 'artificial'.[28]

A final, visual association of *Columna Transatlantica* is with an image of Ouroboros (Fig. 13), the serpent eating its own tail, inscribed with the phrase 'En to pan' ('All is one'). In his 1841 short story 'A Descent into the Maelström', Edgar Allan Poe narrated the tale of a fisherman who finds a way out of the great Lofoten maelstrom by observing the relative speed at which objects of different shapes are aspired into the abyss, and this fiction is being used as a model for an investigation into the current ecological crisis, both locally and globally.[29] Without any didacticism, *Columna Transatlantica* points to the relation of 'natural' gas to man-made ruins, and it suggests the existence of a connection between all links of this chain, be they 'natural' or 'human'. Better than the spiral, an image suited to visualize this interdependence is the knot, well known from ancient Nordic ornament and adopted for its logo by the National Tourist Routes in Norway.

1. See Philippe Junod, 'Ruines anticipées ou l'histoire au futur antérieur', in *L'Homme face à son histoire. Cours général public 1982–1983*, Lausanne, Payot, 1983, p. 23–47.
2. See Helen Dorey, *Visions of Ruin: Architectural Fantasies & Designs for Garden Follies*, London, Soane Gallery, 1999, p. 53–78.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
4. See Quatremère de Quincy, *Letters to Miranda and Canova on the Abduction of Antiquities from Rome and Athens*, trans. Chris Miller and David Gilks, introduction by Dominique Poulot, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2012 ; D. Gamboni, 'Independent of Time and Place': On the Rise and Decline of a Modernist Ideal", in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, ed., *Time and Space: The Geohistory of Art*, Williston, VT, Ashgate, 2005, p. 173–201.
5. See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998, p. 7 and passim.
6. Nina Berre and Hege Lysholm, eds., *DETOUR: Architecture and Design along 18 National Tourist Roads in Norway*, Oslo, Statens vegvesen, Nasjonale Turistveger, 2010, p. 11.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 5 ('Foreword' by the Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and the Minister of Transport and Communications Magnhild Meltveit Kleppa).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 9 ('Introduction' by the Director General of the Norwegian Public Roads Administration Terje Moe Gustavsen).
9. Karl-Otto Ellefsen, 'Detoured Infrastructure. The Architecture of the National Tourist Routes', in *ibid.*, p. 17–27 (p. 20).
10. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
11. See *DETOUR, op. cit.*, p. 28-31 ; Reidun Laura Andreassen and Liv Helene Willumsen, eds., Steilneset Memorial: Art – Architecture –History, Stamsund, Orkana, 2014.
12. See *DETOUR, op. cit.*, p. 204–209.
13. See Ellefsen, 'Detoured Infrastructure, art. cit., p. 21–23; Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Modern Norwegian Architecture*, Oslo, Norwegian University Press, 1986; Pauline Gjoesteen, *Le jeune Christian Norberg-Schulz. Esquisse de biographie intellectuelle*, Genève, Institut d'architecture de l' Université de Genève, 2002.
14. Jan Freuchen, *Columna Transatlantica*, 2015.
15. Jan Freuchen, email of 5 June 2015 to the author.
16. *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, London et al., Hamlyn, 1968, p. 93–95.
17. Jan Freuchen, email of 5 June 2015 to the author.
18. *Idem*. See Jan Freuchen, *Retreat Center*, Oslo, Lord Jim Publishing, 2010, p. 5–10.
19. Victor Hugo, 'Les tronçons du serpent', in *Les Orientales*, Paris, Gosselin, 1829.
20. This visualization is made explicit in an 1846 study for the painting (private collection) reproduced in Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen and Gertrud Oelsner, *Miroirs du ciel. Variations sur le ciel dans peinture danoise 1770–1880*, exhibition catalogue, Odense, Odense Bys Museer, 2002, p. 142 pl. 31.
21. See Robert Hobbs, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*, Ithaca NY/London, Cornell University Press, 1981, p. 35.
22. See Anders Solheim, *Ormen Lange: An Integrated Study for Safe Field Development in the Storegga Submarine Slide Area*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2005; Petter Bryn, Marek E. Jasinski and Fredrik Søreide, Ormen Lange: Pipelines and Shipwrecks, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 2007.
23. See Oddr Snorrason, *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, trans. and ed. Theodore Murdock Andersson, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2003 ; Sverre Bagge, 'The Making of a Missionary King: The Medieval Accounts of Olaf Tryggvason and the Conversion of Norway', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 105, 2006, no. 4, p. 486–448.
24. Ellefsen, 'Detoured Infrastructure, art. cit., p. 24.
25. Jan Freuchen, *Internal Combustion (Twentysix Gasoline Stations)*, Berlin, 2006, unpaginated.
26. See Alain Schnapp, *Ruines. Essai de perspective comparée*, Dijon, Presses du réel, 2015.
27. Jan Freuchen, *Retreat Center*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
28. See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1993.
29. *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, New York, Random House, 1938, p. 127–140. For the ongoing artistic project 'MALSTRØM 68N', by Aurélien Gamboni and Sandrine Teixido, see *Weather Permitting: b9® Bienal do Mercosul*, exhibition catalogue,Porto Alegre, 2013 ; http://ag-archives.net/en/investigations_maelstrom; and https://malstrom68n.wordpress.com.