

The concept:

**A Line in outer space
Visible from earth
With the naked eye
At clear nights**

It was created in 1984 ten years before the internet revolution started.

I saw the computer as an external brain in which work would be done and implement this as a concept.

Materialization did not stand in the first place. Technical feasibility was important to me. To make my concept known worldwide I sent out press releases to all the news agencies at that time. It was before the internet era. Christo was the first to send me a letter sending in a message offering his help.

The Eiffel Tower reacted immediately with a competition. I did a proposal. The first newspaper reports appeared soon.

The NRC of 15 January 1987 published an article about the concept of Visual Artist Martin Sjardijn (1947).

Below a translation of the Dutch text in English:

**Birthday project for the Eiffel Tower
Panta Rhei: art in space by Maarten de Kroon for NRC 15-01-1987**

When the eyes are used to the darkness, we see the starry sky, clear and rich. A flashing light appears on the horizon. Slowly it creeps up. The stars are shifting -- the spectator travels. The point of light grows and changes into a line, a plane. With a speed of about 10,000 km per hour, we approach 'the thing' that is growing. It is a gigantic mirror, square and divided into eight times eight planes, 50 by 50 meters. The traveler turns with the floating chessboard for a while and has to hold on to his seatback from all that round-top tolls. The confrontation with the first work of art in space is an experience of the first order and its creator, when he sees his creation again, can barely suppress a cry of joy. Admittedly, he is afraid of heights, would never want to fly, let alone at a speed of 10,000 kilometers per hour, 800 kilometers away from the earth -- but still. With a jolt on the keyboard of the 'Digistar', Omniversum astronomer W. Bijleveld disables the computer that has just given us a space journey. The astronomer's own jargon is used to talk a little more about it. The creator of the artwork, Martin Sjardijn, also knows how to deal with things like the 'sun-synchronous orbit' and the 'conjunctions' with the planet Venus that will make its space mirror. Art in space? It can be done, but it has to be done.

Christo

Almost two years ago Martin Sjardijn sent out an interesting press release:

'A Line in outer space is visible with the naked eye'. The Bureau for Visual Arts had rejected his plan for a line of highly reflective grit in space. The reactions of scientists and artists such as Christo to his press release strengthened the artist in his conviction that he was on the right track. The line was replaced by a space mirror, and that idea was tested for its feasibility and participated in the competition for the Eiffel Tower's birthday project. Unfortunately, the jury preferred a project by a group of French people that included a circle of light around the earth. Sjardijn thought it was a kind of 'party lighting' and finds it self-evidently unfortunate that he hasn't won but in the meantime, he hasn't been sitting still. In fact, after months of hard work, together with experts from Delft University of Technology and the astronomer Bijleveld from Omniversum, his plan has already become reality. Thanks to the advanced computer of Omniversum, the space mirror exists. He could join one of the Ariane flights to be placed in an orbit around the earth. The orbit around earth is 110 minutes and because the mirror rotates around its own axis it could be seen by man on earth as a kind of blinking star. The costs are about five million guilders (excluding launch) and there are already interested sponsors.

Sjardijn doesn't like to compare himself to Da Vinci, he does think that the contemporary artist is very far from science. 'What', he rhetorically asks, 'is more obvious in the age of modern technology and space travel than to go into space with art. Nowhere is there more space than in space. Over the centuries, art and science have inspired each other. But when you talk about art in space, you often encounter resistance from artists.'

During a symposium on art in space last year, it turned out that the artists present were extremely reluctant. They even warned Sjardijn. And before you knew it, they would shoot gigantic billboards into space. 'Coke is it!'

Did Sjardijn want that on his conscience? 'I thought it was the artist's job to comment on society. And why not make use of modern technology.' He is fond of painting, but to what extent can you react today, in the century of Einstein, Starwars, and Wubbo Ockels. The four-dimensional reality within a measured plane that is called painting has to deal with two dimensions (plus a third illusory). That was too limited for Sjardijn.

Wrinkly point

Sjardijn's 'designs for the electro-digital space' are on display in the Haags Gemeentemuseum. The three cubes floating in the space (in red, yellow and blue) illustrate his fascination for four-dimensional space. Following in the footsteps of Heraclitus says Sjardijn: Panta Rhei -- everything flows, everything changes. The mirror of the room fits in with that thought. A winking point that constantly moves and changes, depending on the position of the viewer. And, of course, it shows our world its portrait. The transimulative path I walk has incredible potential', says Sjardijn. The difference with conceptual art is that this work of art already exists on the computer. It is actually achievable. Now it all seems far away and futuristic, in fact, I am just as primitive in exploring the limits of our possibilities as the former artist who made his first petroglyphs. In my opinion, this is also the essence of art: it has to create, explore and push back frontiers. I allow anyone to continue painting, personally, I think that is too flat, too close and too limited to react to my time.

Whether and when the space mirror is launched depends on the interest of possible sponsors. Who knows, it might fit within the one-percent-regulation of the Dutch government. Personally, Sjardijn better sees a work of art in space than all those war satellites. and he suspects that 'the

children of our children' feel the same way because they would rather see art in a space better than Reagan's space shield. About extraterrestrial visitors in the future not to preach.

The exhibition 'Designing for the electro-digital' space could have been seen in Kunst Museum Den Haag (former Haags Gemeentemuseum) in 1987.