

NEWS

from the Worcester Art Museum

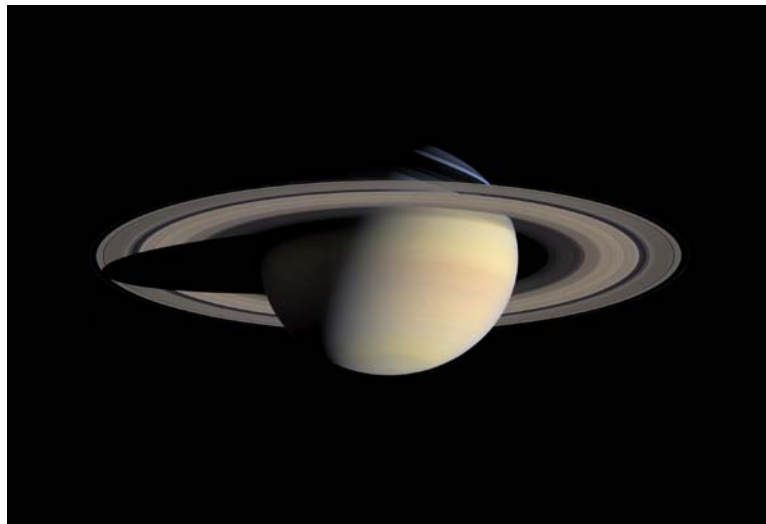
55 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609-3196
Telephone 508.799.4406, Fax 508.798.5646

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT: Allison Berkeley
Manager of Marketing and Public Relations
allisonberkeley@worchesterart.org
508.799.4406 x3073

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM TO HOST AN OUT OF THIS WORLD EXHIBIT FROM SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Rare photographs of the solar system on display during exhibit's national tour



Saturn Source: Cassini, October 6, 2004

In 2004, Cassini captured images that were assembled into the most detailed view of Saturn ever seen.

In this image, the planet casts an oblong shadow over its rings.

Credit: NASA/JPL/Space Science Institute/Michael Benson, Kinetikon Pictures

WORCESTER, Mass. (March 12, 2009) – The views of the solar system that one can see while standing here on Earth are often impressive, if not mind-blowing. But from the inner solar system to its outer reaches, the closer and more detailed views of Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and the other planets that have been achieved during the Space Age show unparalleled beauty and visions difficult to fathom. This otherworldly view, collected during 40 years of robotic space missions and then processed into breathtaking images, is the subject of the new Smithsonian traveling exhibition *Beyond: Visions of Planetary Landscapes*. The exhibit paints a rarely seen and mesmerizing portrait of our solar system's diverse worlds and their moons.

Beyond features 35 large-scale (ranging from 3 feet to 5 feet in width) framed prints containing 59 individual photographs, all digitally processed by artist Michael Benson. The exhibition opens at the Worcester Art Museum in Worcester, Massachusetts on March 29. *Beyond* will remain on view through May 24 before continuing on a 14-city national tour through 2011.

The exhibit's astonishing views of the solar system's planets and their moons come primarily from NASA and European Space Agency missions. Benson mines planetary databases for his source material; then, using various techniques, including a mosaic or collage process, he pulls together the images to create seamless photographs of unprecedented clarity and realism. Throughout the process, Benson strives to stay true to the natural and breathtaking reality of space.

"My goal was to locate, digitally process and print some of the most extraordinary sights ever captured," Benson said. "I view the photographic legacy of these missions as being a chapter in the history of photography."

While humans have not set foot on any other planet and have not visited any satellite except Earth's moon, robot creations have traveled to nearly every planet in the solar system, even landing on such varied surfaces as those of Mars, Venus and Saturn's moon Titan. Through the photographs and data these probes send back to Earth, viewers can soar to the borderlands of the solar system without leaving the safety and comfort of this planet.

Beyond shows that familiar geological formations and the atmospheric disturbances that take place on Earth also can be found on neighboring planets: the erupting volcanoes of Sicily find their counterpart in the lava eruptions of Jupiter's moon Io; the moon's deep craters are displayed alongside the "cantaloupe" terrain of Neptune's moon Triton; the stormy clouds of Greenland can be seen alongside the "dust devils" of Mars.

The exhibition is divided into several sections, including the Inner Solar System, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The show's compositions include rare pictures of the sand dunes on Mars, storms on Neptune and the fiery eruptions of the sun.

Beyond: Visions of Planetary Landscapes was created by Michael Benson and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). The exhibition is accompanied by Benson's award-winning book *Beyond: Visions of the Interplanetary Probes* (Abrams, 2003), which includes a forward by science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke.

Michael Benson is a journalist and award-winning filmmaker ("Predictions of Fire," 1995). His journalism has been published in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic* and *The Washington Post*, among many other publications. He recently relocated from Ljubljana, Slovenia, to New York City.

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 50 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play.

Beyond: Visions of Planetary Landscapes was organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.

The Worcester presentation is generously sponsored by Cole Contracting.

Related Events

April Tour of the Month

An Infinite Frontier: A Brief Look at the Sky, Heavens, Planets and Outer Space in Art
Wednesday, April 15, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Saturday April 18, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
FREE with Museum Admission

From the beginnings of human history, people have been trying to figure out what makes the skies, the heavens and universe tick. Join Museum Docent Mark Lynch as he leads a tour through the Museum of artworks that look UP.

April Third Thursday

Docent-led tour of *Beyond* and LIVE Music by Matt Shwachman
Thursday, April 16, 5:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
FREE for Members, \$10 nonmembers

The Museum is open late the third Thursday of every month until 8pm. In April, enjoy a tour of our out-of-this-world exhibition *Beyond: Visions of Planetary Landscapes* and listen to the

ethereal sounds of local musician Matt Shwachman. Always great company, wine tastings and a cash bar.

Be sure to check-out our website for up-to-date event and exhibition listings at www.worcesterart.org.

Located on Salisbury St., in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Worcester Art Museum opened in 1898 and is one of America's most respected art museums. The Museum is world-renowned for its 35,000-piece collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings and new media. For more information, visit www.worcesterart.org.

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