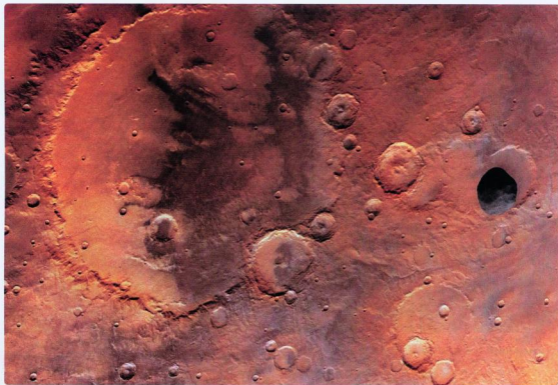


# REPORTS

• BEYOND: VISIONS OF THE INTERPLANETARY SPACE PROBES



Phobos, the larger and innermost of Mars's two moons, was photographed over the Herschel Crater by Viking Orbiter 1 on September 26, 1977. Only 16 miles in diameter, it is one of the smaller moons in the solar system.

## FARSIGHTED

While working on a forthcoming documentary feature, *More Places Forever*, which he describes as a "global road movie," filmmaker Michael Benson found time to complete an eye-opening cinematic art book for Harry N. Abrams. Titled *Beyond: Visions of the Interplanetary Probes*, it is one of the most detailed and aesthetically compelling looks at the solar system ever published. Benson spent several years researching the images that pack the book, which, at 11.5 x 11.5 inches, is both large-format and luxuriously long, with 320 pages of stunning color and black-and-white photographs, including essays by Benson, science-fiction legend Arthur C. Clarke and writer Lawrence Weschler.

Benson, best known in independent film circles for his award-winning 1996 documentary *Predictions of Fire*, says that one of his main goals was to capture something of the tremendous scale and sweep of the vistas that NASA space probes have photographed since the early days of space exploration in the '60s.

"I still can't believe that some of the pictures I found — which were frequently lost among tens of thousands of others in the Voyager and Viking archives — aren't as well-known as that famous Apollo 'Earthrise over the Moon' shot," Benson added, referring to two NASA deep-space missions launched in the 1970s. "I think

they are just as capable of changing our sense of our situation in the universe. When I spotted certain Viking shots of the Martian moon Phobos suspended over the deserts of the Red Planet, or Voyager images of Jupiter's bizarre moon Europa hanging over that planet's immense spinning storm systems, I could scarcely believe my luck."

Finding them was only the beginning, however. What followed was months of image processing using contemporary digital tools. The results are extraordinarily clear and vivid. "There were many times I stopped and had to gasp," remarks noted photographer Joel Meyerowitz about the book.

Space experts agree. "Michael Benson has done a superb job of capturing the solar system's alien beauty, seen through the eyes of our most intrepid robotic explorers," says Andrew Chaikin, author of arguably the best history of the Apollo missions, *A Man on the Moon*. "I'm envious — but even more, I'm glad he did it." It may be space prophet Clarke who puts it best in his foreword to *Beyond*: "These images serve as a spectacular reaffirmation that we are privileged to live in the greatest age of exploration the world has ever known."

For more on *Beyond* — and on Benson's film work — see [www.kinetikpictures.com](http://www.kinetikpictures.com). — Steve Gallagher

