

上/水星から見た日の出。下/海王星の衛星
トリトン。吹き続ける強風に、噴出する液体
窒素が真横になびく。向かいには青い海王星。

Top: Sunrise on Mercury / Bottom: The
Geysers of Triton - The surface of Mercury
could theoretically allow for human
habitation. Not so Saturn or Jupiter, which
have no surface to land on.



宇宙の歩き方。

Sojourner of the Visible

スペースアーティストのロン・ミラーは、まるで見てきたかのように宇宙を描く。水星から見上げるまぶしい日の出といい、火星のゴツゴツした地面といい、その描写は見る者の五感を刺激する。“宇宙の旅行ガイド”、そんな呼び名もふさわしい彼の絵は天文学的にきわめて正確だ。というのも彼はニュースウィークやナショナル ジオグラフィックの表紙をしばしば飾るアーティストである一方、国際宇宙大学の教員、また国際宇宙飛行士学会会員の肩書を持つ天体のエキスパートなのだから。スミソニアン航空宇宙博物館のプラネタリウムでアートディレクターを務めた後、作家に転向。50作もの著作を発表、SF賞の最高峰・ヒューゴー賞に輝いたほどの“宇宙通”である。専門知識を買われ、『デューン』ほか数々のSF映画で監修も任された。

水星の絵（左ページ/上）には人の姿が。太陽に最も近い天体だから一瞬で溶けるのでは？ とロンに尋ねると「水星には大気がないため、極端な高温にはならない。むしろ遠くても二酸化炭素で覆われた金星の方が、温室効果で500度近くまで上がる」との即答が返ってきた。そして、もし宇宙旅行が実現すれば火星に行ってみたいと語る。「気体や流体で構成された土星や木星と違い、火星には地面があるのでこの足で踏みしめられるし、その驚異的な地形たるや……！ 例えばこの絵（右上）は火星のマリネリス峡谷だが、左奥に見える山はエヴェレストよりもはるかに高い。このように、ニューヨーク～ロサンゼルス間にあたる距離も一望できるのだよ。想像できるかい？」

地球もそうだが、航空写真で遠くから眺めると、実際に降り立って地上の営みを体験するのは大違い。……と聞けば、すぐさま宇宙に出かけたくなくなってしまふ。星への憧憬と深い洞察に溢れたこのイラストで、まずは旅気分を味わってみようではないか。

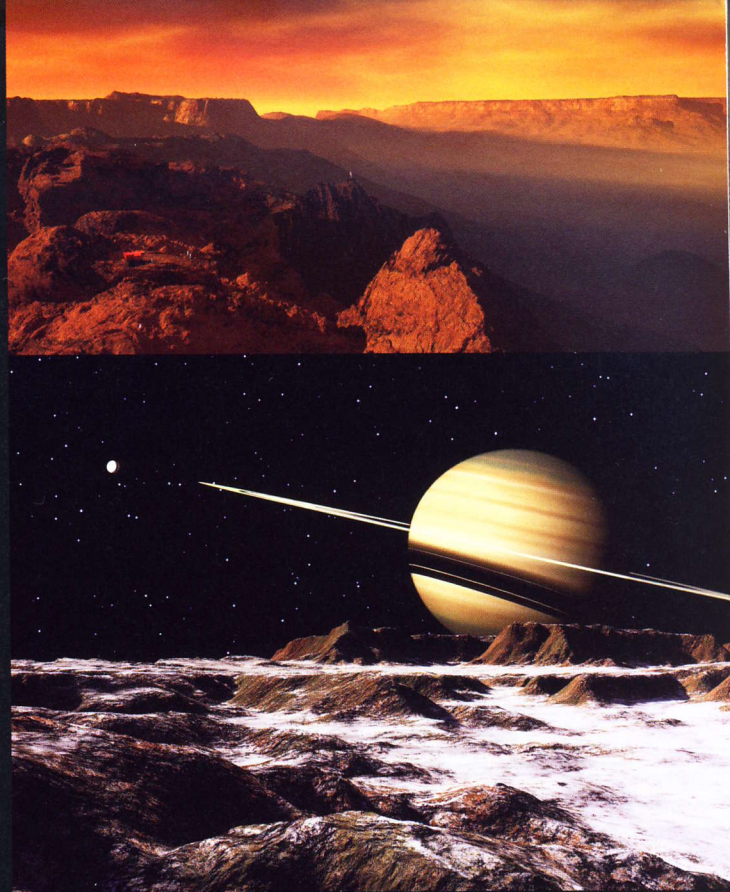


We all know that witnessing the previously unseen, as when we travel to new places, is a primal source of exhilaration. There's satisfaction in verifying through sensation what we've anticipated, and we begin doing it even as small children. Who hasn't gotten in trouble for trying to sneak a peek at something hidden, and what makes us burn so to look at things we're told we can't?

Most likely it's that, even if we don't comprehend what we've caught a furtive glimpse of, to snatch a look at the reality we know exists behind any veil is ultimately an act of freedom, a conquest. Ron Miller offers a long, close look at realities that we can't likely ever see in our lifetime. That he applies his expansive intellect to making his images meticulously faithful to the most advanced scientific understanding only serves to amp up the thrill factor.

The artist is a recognized authority on early space flight, his list of awards and accolades lengthier than these pages allow. He's a member of numerous international astronomical societies, and most significantly a Life Member and Fellow of the International Association of Astronomical Artists, a select group that confers its own imprimatur of authority. Anyone can claim their art depicts the surface of Mercury, the IAAA comprises individuals who have researched the known facts of the subject to the fullest extent possible, and they've no place for pretenders.

Mr. Miller spent years working as a commercial artist after graduating college in Ohio, quietly indulging his love of astronomy and aeronautics along with a deep devotion to the speculative fiction of Jules Verne that first fired his imagination (he would later publish new translations of several of Verne's works, and serve as advisor on the author to Disney). Preferring to be paid to do what he loved, on learning that the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum was developing a planetarium in 1971, he made the case to them that



写真上/火星にて。中/土星の第14衛星レアから土星を望む。下/木星の巨大な渦・赤斑。この中に地球が2、3個すっぽり収まる。左端の白い現象は雷だ。<http://www.black-cat-studios.com>

Top to bottom: Mariner Valley, Mars; Saturn as seen from Rhea; Jupiter's Red Spot. Mr. Miller previously worked solely in acrylic. Now much of the work is done on computer, with detailing completed by hand in hard media.

they'd need a credentialed "space artist", a position they hadn't considered. He'd never again have to devote his talent to any other subject. Of his many honors one of the best known came in 1991, when he was commissioned by the U.S. Postal Service to design a series of commemorative stamps on space exploration.

Mr. Miller has authored some three dozen volumes, including novels in several speculative genres and the Hugo Award-winning "The Art of Chesley Bonestell", a survey of space art's putative patriarch. But though he says he enjoys writing, he avers that for sheer impact, the visual portrayal of other spheres eclipses the written word. Asked what planet he'd visit if he could, he unhesitatingly responds with Mars, for its simply "uncanny" landscape. The red planet's allure is heightened by the fact that first, unlike Jupiter and Saturn there's an actual landscape that one can set foot upon, and second, Mars' relatively hospitable environment offers the promise of contemplation, the pastime of all devoted travelers. Venus may be closer to Earth, but when one sets out to gaze upon the vista, "it'd be a race to see if you'd be crushed, fried, or melted first". Indeed, the serene air of contemplation that infuses Ron Miller's views tempers the gargantuan sense of scale that is his everyday vocabulary. His depiction of the perpetual storm that swirls on Jupiter looks like it kicks up a ruckus. Then one learns that in fact it is large enough to consume our entire planet twice, and that the lightning that descends from it, which can be seen from Earth, could easily vaporize a terrestrial city. In the way that interplanetary vessels use a planet's gravitational force to slingshot forward, Ron Miller combines imagination with reason and a passion for research to propel us beyond the painted plane, on to the ineffable satisfaction of discovery.

