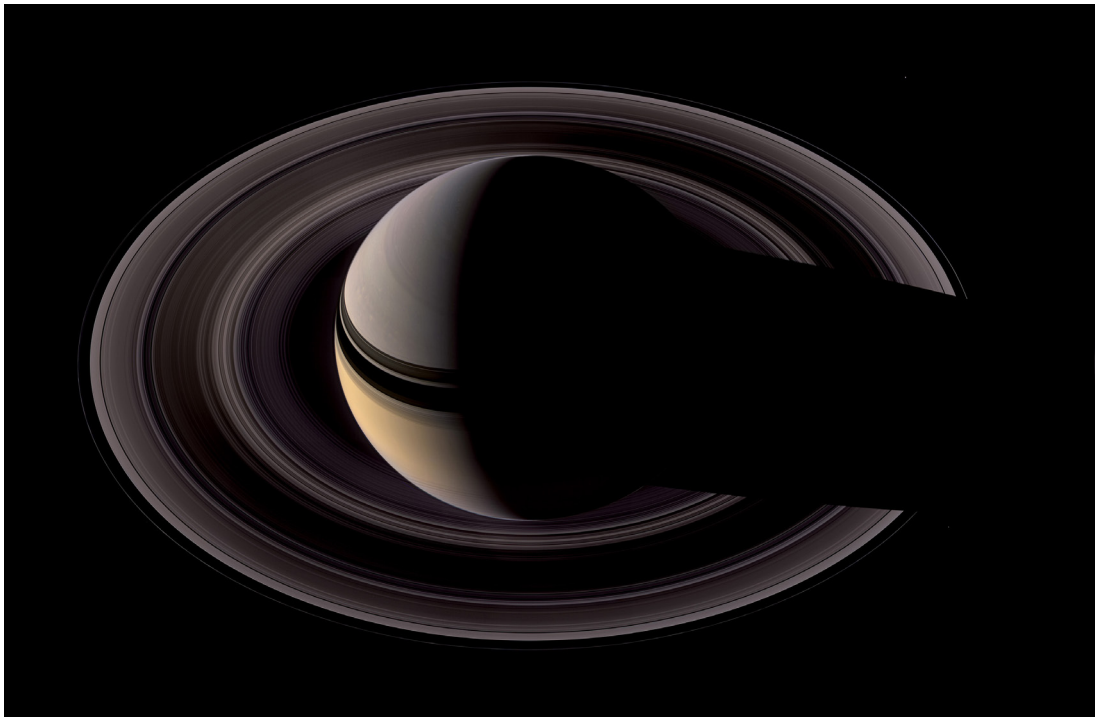


THE DAILY BEAST

Issac Asimov or Carl Sagan?

The Daily Pic: Michael Benson's planetary art hovers between sci-fi and astronomy.

By: Blake Gopnik / February 11, 2013



Northern View of Saturn and the Darker Side of the Rings, Cassini, May 9, 2007, 2012

This is Michael Benson's "Northern View of Saturn and the Darker Side of the Rings" based on data collected from the Cassini spacecraft on May 9, 2007. It is now on view at Hasted Kraeutler Gallery in New York. You could say that Benson's spacey images are too eye-catching for their own good – like a painting you'd see on the cover of an old sci-fi novel. But what interests me is the idea that, while these images purport to show the solar system "as it really is", it seems that there's a fair amount of artifice and number-crunching involved in making them look that way. In that sense, they are indeed as close to a sci-fi painting as to the sunset you shot on your last vacation. The more cliched they are in their picturesqueness, the more obvious that becomes, and the more questions get raised about what pictures can show.