

Of Elephants and Floods of Lava ESP_026461_2080



This observation highlights terrain that looks like an elephant. This is a good example of the phenomena "pareidolia," where we see things (such as animals) that aren't really there. Actually, this image covers the margin of a lava flow in Elysium Planitia, the youngest flood-lava province on Mars. Flood lavas cover extensive areas, and were once thought to be emplaced extremely rapidly, like a flood of water.

The HIRISE camera onboard the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter is the most powerful one of its kind ever sent to another planet. Its high resolution allows us to see Mars like never before, and helps other missions choose a safe spot to land for future exploration. Thousands of images are available online at: uahirise.org.