



## Foreword

Of all celestial bodies within reach or view, as far as we can see, out to the edge, the most wonderful and marvelous and mysterious is turning out to be our own planet Earth. There is nothing to match it anywhere, not yet anyway.

—Lewis Thomas

Sixty years ago, with the launch of Explorer 1, NASA made its first observations of Earth from space. Fifty years ago, astronauts left Earth orbit for the first time and looked back at our “blue marble.” All of these years later, as we send spacecraft and point our telescopes past the outer edges of the solar system, as we study our planetary neighbors and our Sun in exquisite detail, there remains much to see and explore at home.

We are still just getting to know Earth through the tools of science. For centuries, painters, poets, philosophers, and photographers have sought to teach us something about our home through their art.