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### Gigantic 'Heart' formation on Mars

From: Stig Agermose <[stig.agermose@get2net.dk](mailto:stig.agermose@get2net.dk)>  
 Date: Sat, 19 Jun 1999 01:26:23  
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 Subject: Gigantic 'Heart' formation on Mars

Source: Discovery News Brief, June 18, 1999,

<http://www.discovery.com/news/briefs/brief5.html?ct=376acff3>

Go to the site to see NASA's photo!

Stig

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>From Mars, With Love

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The Mars Global Surveyor has received a love letter from the Red Planet, as new images reveal a gigantic "Heart" formation stretched across the Martian surface.

New images released Thursday by NASA show a distinctly heart-shaped pit on the Martian surface. The "Heart" on Mars is the latest addition to a growing list of fanciful features spotted on the Red Planet's surface.

The most famous of all, of course, is the "Face" on Mars, a rock formation resembling a human face that was first photographed by the Viking spacecraft in the 1970s. The picture spawned ongoing speculation that extraterrestrials built the Face.

More recently, cameras from the Global Surveyor also revealed a "Happy Face" on Mars, a 134-mile-wide crater bearing a striking resemblance to the well-known happy face icon. This jolly formation was discovered during the first day of the Global Surveyor's mapping mission in March.

The Martian valentine was formed when a straight-walled trough, called a graben in geological terms, collapsed, according to a NASA press release.

Graben form along fault lines as bedrock terrain expands, says NASA. The features typically form as tectonic forces move the ground apart, or when the ground is uplifted by molten rock from deep within the planet shooting up toward the Martian surface, NASA says.

At its widest, the Martian "Heart" stretches about 1.4 miles across. Ground controllers trained the Global Surveyor's camera on the formation to examine the relationship between a lava flow and the graben and pits that cut across the flow, disrupting its path.

The graben, pit, and lava flow are located on the east flank of

the Alba Patera volcano in northern Tharsis, a volcanic region of Mars, NASA says.

By Discovery News Brief

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Picture: NASA

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