

# Shedding Ultraviolet Light on Asteroid (16) Psyche with the Hubble Space Telescope

Tracy M. Becker, Ph.D.

Planetary Scientist

Group Leader - Remote Sensing Observers ([rso.space.swri.edu](https://rso.space.swri.edu))

Department of Space Research

Southwest Research Institute

San Antonio, Texas



Email: [tbecker@swri.edu](mailto:tbecker@swri.edu)

Personal website: [tracybecker.space](https://tracybecker.space)

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**The Team:** Nathaniel Cunningham (Nebraska Wesleyan Univ.); Pippa Molyneux (SwRI); Lori Feaga (Univ. of Maryland); Kurt D. Retherford (SwRI); Lorenz Roth (KTH Royal Institute of Technology); Zoe A. Landsman (Florida Space Institute / Univ. of Central Florida); Emma Peavler (UCLA / Univ. of Texas – Austin); Lindy Elkins-Tanton (Arizona State Univ.); Jan-Erik Walhund (Swedish Institute of Space Physics)

# What is so interesting about (16) Psyche?

Thought to be primarily composed of metallic iron and nickel

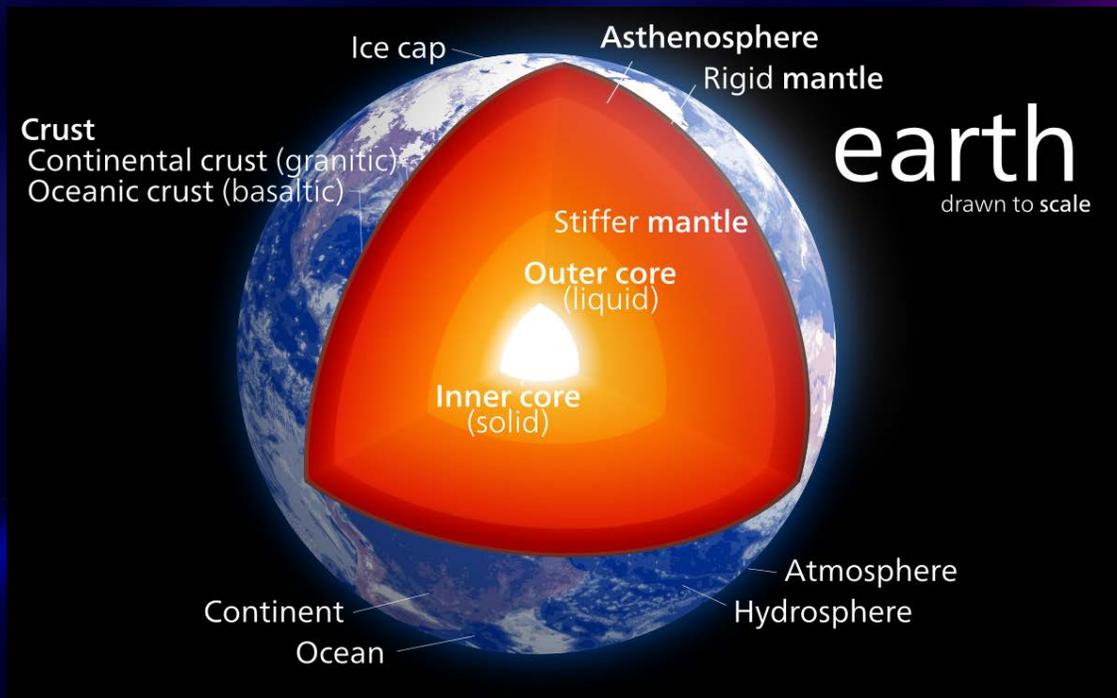


Credit: ASU/Peter Rubin

Very bright radar reflections from the Arecibo Observatory imply highly metallic

Shepard et al. 2016

# What is so interesting about (16) Psyche?



Credit: Don Davis (SwRI)

# A window into the core of planets



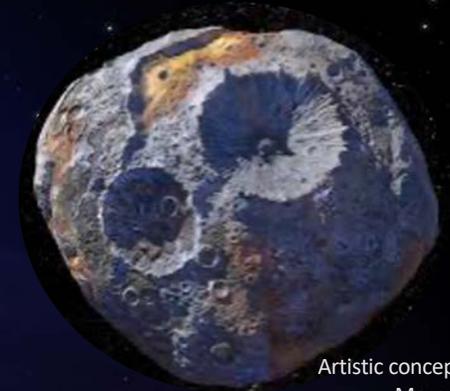
Photo credit: Mashable India

# Psyche: Mission to a Metal World

NASA mission launch date: 2022

- Explore a new type of world: Not rock, not ice, but metal!
- Newer evidence for a higher percentage of rock
- But: no UV instrument on board!

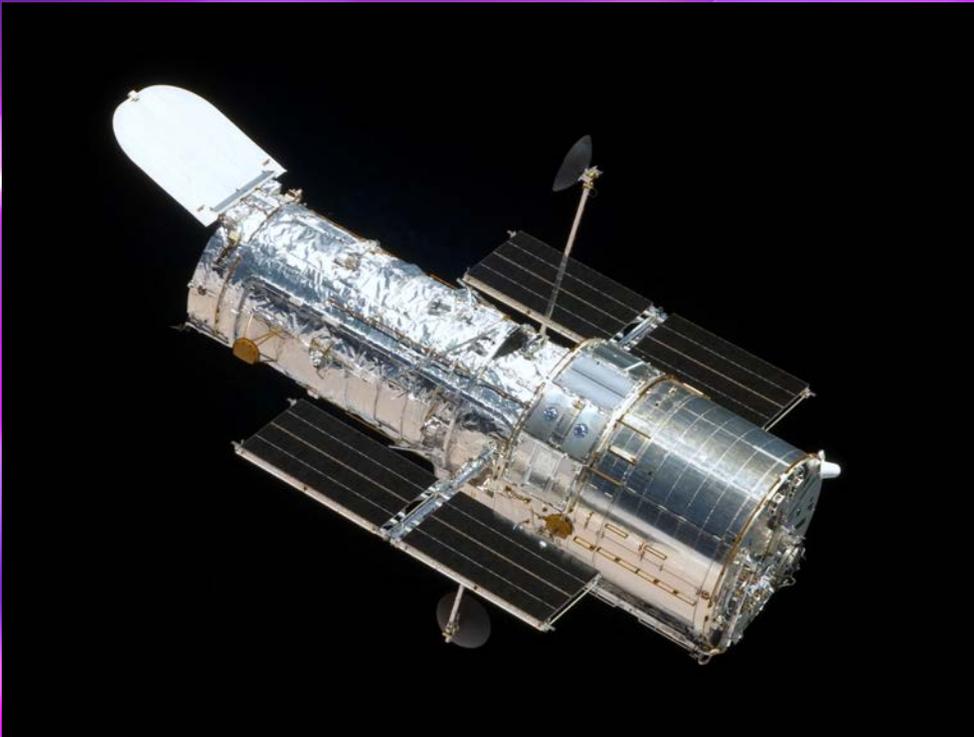
*So many discoveries to be expected!*



Artistic concept credit:  
Maxar/ASU/P.  
Rubin/NASA/JPL-Caltech

Please Note: I am *not* a part  
of this NASA mission!

# Our Research



- Ultraviolet observations from the Hubble Space Telescope
  - These can only be done from space!
  - Deeper into the UV than before!
- Goals:
  - Learn more about its composition
  - Look for “processing” of the surface

# Is it metallic?

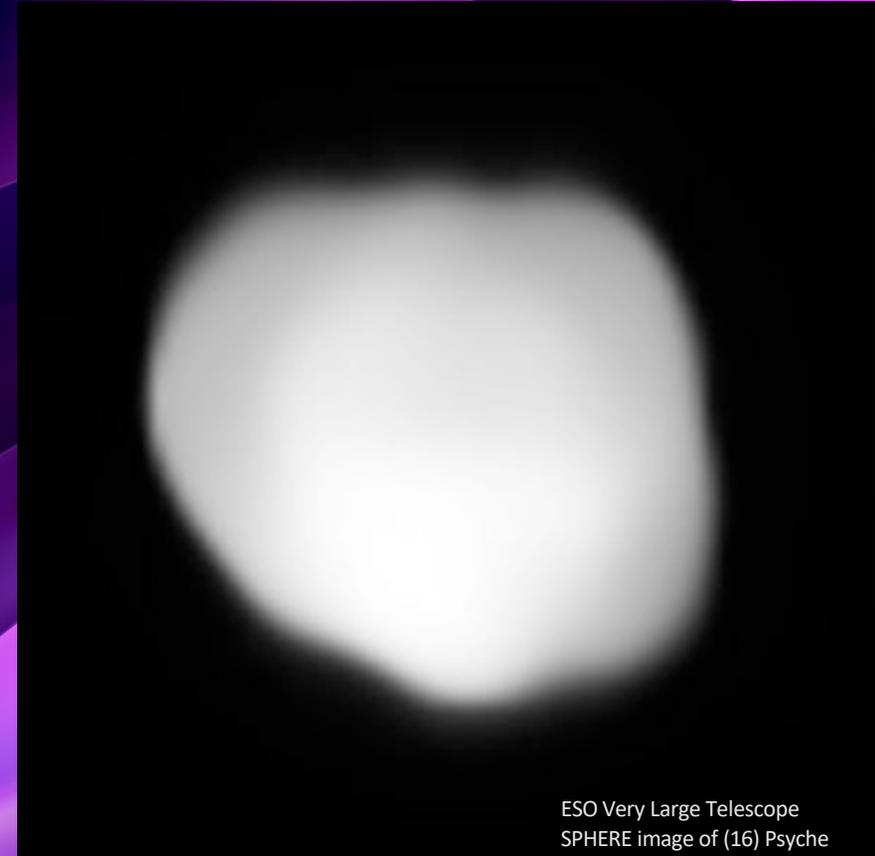
- Our results show that the way Psyche reflects UV light is very similar to the way iron reflects light



Caveat: Our computer modelling efforts show you only need to sprinkle a little bit of iron on the surface to make it appear that way!

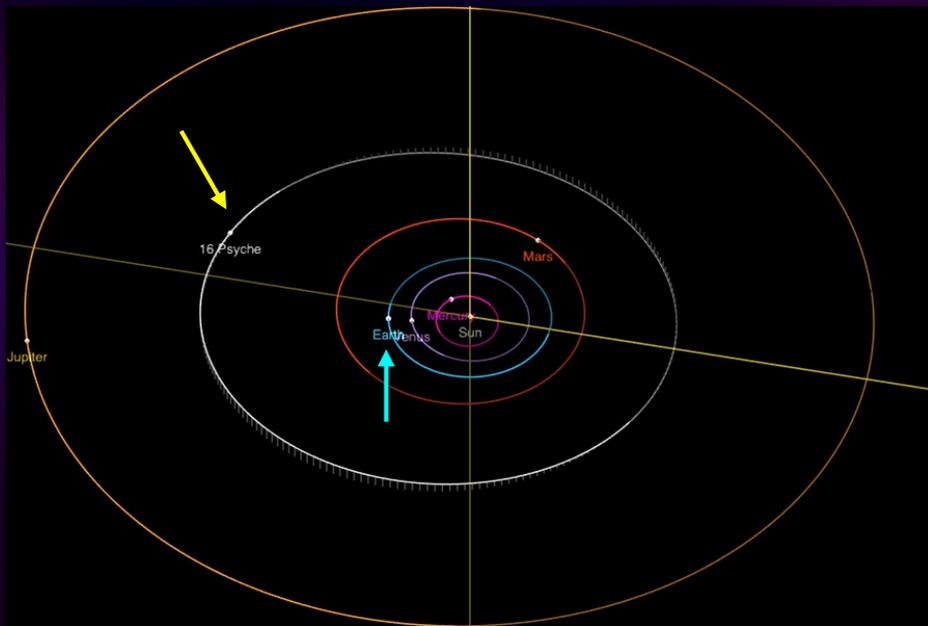
- We detected reflectance features in the UV that could be signs of oxidation of iron

This is the first time these signatures have been detected in the UV!



ESO Very Large Telescope  
SPHERE image of (16) Psyche

# Has it been processed?

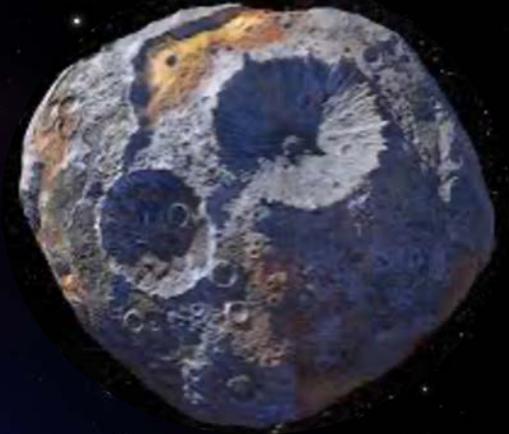


- Deep into the UV, the asteroid appears to brighten!
- We detected reflectance features in the UV that could be signs of oxidation of iron – *This is the first time these signs have been detected in the UV if true!*

Orientation of Psyche & Earth when observed by the Hubble Space Telescope  
Image Credit: JPL Horizons

# Key Takeaways

- Shedding “new light” on the asteroid (16) Psyche: these observations go deeper into the UV than any previous observations of this asteroid
- Psyche reflects UV light in a way that is similar to how iron reflects light
- First UV signs of possible oxidation on an asteroid
- (16) Psyche brightens in the deep UV – likely indicates processing of the surface through by the solar wind



Artistic concept credit:  
Maxar/ASU/P.  
Rubin/NASA/JPL-Caltech

## Contact Info:

Tracy M. Becker

Southwest Research Institute

Email: [tbecker@swri.edu](mailto:tbecker@swri.edu)

Website: [Tracybecker.space](http://Tracybecker.space)