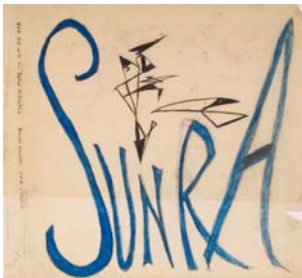




INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE



Top and bottom: James Bryant, sketch for record covers, never used, 1963. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library. Sun Ra, cover design, *Art Forms of Dimensions Tomorrow*, 1965. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library.

PATHWAYS TO UNKNOWN WORLDS: SUN RA, EL SATURN & CHICAGO'S AFRO-FUTURIST UNDERGROUND, 1954-1968

APRIL 24–AUGUST 2, 2009

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 6-8PM

EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH WITH CURATOR JOHN CORBETT: THURSDAY,
APRIL 23, 5PM, *ICA MEMBERS ONLY*

PHILADELPHIA, PA

Jazz pioneer, bandleader, mystic, philosopher, and consummate Afro-Futurist, Sun Ra, (born Herman Poole Blount 1914, Birmingham, Alabama, died 1993) and his personal mythology have grown increasingly relevant to a broad range of artists and communities. "Pathways to Unknown Worlds: Sun Ra, El Saturn & Chicago's Afro-Futurist Underground, 1954-1968" presents a collection of paintings, drawings, prints, manuscripts, ephemera, and video produced by and about Ra and his associates--much of it previously unseen. This exhibition, on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art April 24-August 2, 2009 in the second floor gallery, examines how Ra and his dynamic, continually-evolving ensemble, the Philadelphia-based Arkestra, crafted both their otherworldly image and fiercely independent approach to self-production.

Highlights of the exhibition include original drawings for their 1960's albums *Art Forms of Dimensions Tomorrow* and *Other Planes of There*, and five newly discovered typed and annotated broadsheets. Until recently, only one such broadsheet was known to exist - the one that Ra gave saxophonist John Coltrane in 1956. The show will also include the unpublished manuscript, *The Magic Lie*, a book of Ra's poetry, which has become influential in the nascent Black Islamic movement. In addition to these documents, the film *Spaceways*, by Edward English, will be on view. The film documents Ra and his Arkestra (a deliberate re-spelling of "orchestra"), in 1968, as they prepare to perform at Carnegie Hall.

Early in his career, Sun Ra spent virtually all of his time and energy on Chicago's south side, identifying with broader struggles for black power and identity, and saw his music as a key element in that struggle. As well as Sun Ra's connection to the incipient grass-roots Afro-Futurist movement in Chicago, he also has a connection to Philadelphia. In 1968, Sun Ra brought the Arkestra to Philadelphia, where his band mate Marshall Allen inherited a house on Morton Street in Germantown. The house served as band headquarters until Sun Ra's death in 1993. The Arkestra continues to perform under the leadership of Marshall Allen, who still resides at the Germantown house.

CONTACT

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*checklist and images available upon request.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ICA is located at:
118 South 36th Street at the
University of Pennsylvania

ICA is open to the public from 12pm to 8pm on Wednesday through Friday and from 11am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Admission is FREE everyday.
Free admission to the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania for the public is sponsored by Glenn R. Fuhrman (W87/WG88) Fund.

For more information, call 215-898-7108/5911, or visit www.icaphila.org.

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Founded in 1963, the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania is a leader in the presentation and documentation of contemporary art. Through exhibitions, commissions, educational programs, and publications, ICA invites the public to share in the experience, interpretation and understanding of the work of established and emerging artists.

Long admired among fans of progressive jazz, Ra and his personal mythology have grown increasingly relevant and influential to a broad range of artists and communities. His music touched on the entire history of jazz, but he was also a pioneer of electronic and space music, and free improvisation.

Sun Ra developed a complicated persona of cosmic philosophies and lyrical poetry that made him a pioneer of Afro-futurism (a term coined by cultural critic Mark Dery in his 1994 essay "Black to the Future.")

"Pathways to Unknown Worlds" is curated by John Corbett, Anthony Elms and Terri Kapsalis for the Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago and is coordinated at the ICA by Whitney Lauder Curatorial Fellow Stamatina Gregory. This exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue. \$25

RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

The Sun Ra Arkestra under the direction of Marshall Allen
Wednesday, July 1, 8PM

Lecture by John Szwed, author of *Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra*
Wednesday, July 8, 7PM

Double feature: curated by Jesse Pires
Wednesday, July 15, TBD

An evening of performance curated by King Britt
Wednesday, July 22, 7PM

An evening of performance presented by Ars Nova Workshop
Wednesday, July 29, 7PM

ICA acknowledges generous funding support from the Leadership Circle: Robert Kirkpatrick & John Wind; Meredith & Bryan Verona; Fury Design Inc.; Marguerite Rodgers, Ltd.; Alec Rubin and Phillip Chambers/Clorox Company; Jill & Sheldon Bonovitz; Ellen & Stephen Burbank; Mrs. Emily Chen Carrera & Mr. Christopher J. Carrera; Thomas Callan & Martin McNamara; Anthony B. Creamer III; Barbara & David Farley; Jennifer Rice and Michael Forman; Glenn Fuhrman; Gabriele W. Lee; Marketing Audit Inc.; Carol Klein & Lawrence Spitz; Suzanne & Jeffrey Koopman; Paul H. Pincus; Karen & Howard Weiner; Vardina & Yoram Wind. Additional funding has been provided by The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Dietrich Foundation, Inc., the Overseers Board for the Institute of Contemporary Art, friends and members of ICA, and the University of Pennsylvania. We also appreciate generous support from the Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation for educational public related programs.

ALL PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE VISIT THE ICA WEBSITE, WWW.ICAPHILA.ORG, FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PROGRAMS IN CONJUNCTION WITH PATHWAYS TO UNKNOWN WORLDS: SUN RA, EL SATURN & CHICAGO'S AFRO-FUTURIST UNDERGROUND, 1954-1968.