

FORMATION

“Knowledge is laughable when attributed to a human being” (Sun Ra, alien musician, philosopher and prophet of Afrofuturism)

Sun Ra favoured mystery (“my story”) over history (“his story”). For him, past and future can not be distilled into discrete unities and vision stands above empirical knowledge as the ground upon which artistic endeavors are to be formed. When immersing ourselves in his world, we can go beyond the dichotomies of rational modernity - worn out notions of high vs. low culture or even space and time coordinates - and find precious potentialities for a theatrical departure.

Departing from representational hermeneutics is the most exciting task we can take on, even if (sometimes I think - only if!) the destination is unknown. If we respond to Ra’s call and forget the urge for understanding, which still haunts us like an uncanny ghost, we remember to stop making sense. In our data obsessed cultural age, it just takes a little wordplay, embracing a paradox and taking the “in” out; as interiority becomes surface, information becomes formation.

The word has of course it’s militant association, which for those of us traumatized by unfortunate years in the scouts, creates some agitation. But when we’re agitated or ambivalent about something, not fully convinced but tempted, when desire pushes us to make fools of ourselves, that’s when we’re at risk, and something interesting starts to happen. As the tedious content vs. form discussion refuses to die, focusing on formation (rather than “formalism”, which resonates purist image making), can give us another horizon: an argument for the richness of formative articulations, for the generous and generative grounds that nourish emergence. Formation as a theatrical principle is about coming together, about seductive compositions, about opaque textures, about pop songs and performative traditions; It encourages us to take our senses seriously and let go of interpretive “aboutness”.

OK ladies now let’s get in Formation.