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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stephen Antonakos: Earlier Work

November 5 – December 18, 2026

Reception: Thursday, November 5th from 6:00-8:00 PM

This exhibition starts with examples of the earliest 2-D Sewages and 3-D Assemblages from the 1960s made mostly from fabrics and wood forms found here and there. In these abstract and colorful compositions, we can sense already Antonakos's essential, life-long concept of *real things in real spaces.*

After serving in the Army, he established his first studio in NYC's garment district, where he happened to find an excellent sewing machine. "It's what you do with what you have," he said; and dynamic lines of colorful stitching animate many early works.

One important small work is centered on a few dried flowers rising from a black ground and surrounded by activated blue space. Gently and clearly, it reveals his deep Orthodox belief.



Stephen Antonakos, *Untitled Sewlage*, 1958, Mixed media, 20 x18.25 x 4 inches.

The Pillows of the early 1960s, and especially the Pillow Drawings, already demonstrate "Matissean" spatial ambiguities of form and ground that continued through later decades of drawings.

Throughout these works, and always, the placement of material forms in space is definitive.

A mid-1970s Direct Neon is likewise defined by the architecture and the space of its site. It is impossible to separate light and space.

Regarding the Package Projects begun in the 1970s, Antonakos said, "I place my work in space. I place the Packages in time as well." The trio here exemplifies the duality of knowing and not knowing the contents of these enigmatic presences.

The timing of this exhibition at the close of the artist's Centennial Year is intended as an opportunity to experience the relevance of the earlier handmade work to his later, better-known neon work of greater scale and placement around the world.

On November 1st, the Centennial of artists's birth, Mayor Zohran Mamdani awarded Stephen Antonakos the City of New York's official **Citation**, in recognition of his long history of Public Work here and worldwide. It was presented by Sergio Pardo López, Director of Public Art, NYC Department of Culture.

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Stephen Antonakos was born in the small Greek village of Agios Nikolaos and came to New York with his family in 1930. In the late 1940s, after returning from the US Army, he established his first studio in New York's fur district. From the early 1960s he worked in studios in SoHo.

Since 1958, Antonakos's work has been seen in hundreds of solo and group shows in New York, around the USA, Europe, and Japan. For almost every exhibition, he created new work. *Stephen Antonakos: A Retrospective*, curated by Katerina Koskina and organized by the J.F. Costopoulos Foundation, was presented December 2007- March 2008 at the Benaki Museum Pireos, Athens. Its major catalogue has essays by five art historians. This *Retrospective,* curated by Robert S. Mattison, was seen in 2008 at the Allentown Art Museum, Allentown PA. Irving Sandler's comprehensive monograph *Antonakos* was published in 1999. Large-scale neon installations were exhibited at the Fort Worth Art Museum, 1974; documenta 6, 1977; the Sao Paulo Bienale, 1987; Artec '89, Nagoya, Japan, 1989; the XLVII Venice Biennale, 1997; the Aeschyleia Festival in Elefsina, 2011 and documenta 14, 2017. Major neons were also exhibited at several Whitney Biennials starting in 1966; and in such institutions as the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands; the Loeb Student Center, NYU, NYC, 1967; the Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, MO, 1968; the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, MI,1974; the San Francisco Museum of Art, 1974; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, 1974; the Lowe Art Museum, Miami, 1980; the Washington Project for the Arts, Wash. DC, 1981; Creative Time, NYC, 1981; the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1982; the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris, 1983; the La Jolla MCA,1984; the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis U., Waltham, MA, 1986 and 2000; Artec89, Nagoya, Japan; the National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Athens, 1992; Harvard's Carpenter Center, 1992-93; the Fortress of St. George, Rhodes,1993; P.S.1 Center for Contemporary Art, 1999; the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA,1999; the Neuberger Museum, SUNY, Purchase, NY, 2000 and 2018; the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, 2001; Lafayette College, Easton, PA, 2004; the Kydoniefs Foundation, Andros, Greece, 2004; the Chapel of St. George, Mystras, Greece, 2004; the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation, Athens, 2011; the Grand Palais, Paris, 2013; Industry City, Brooklyn, 2013; and the Hainan Biennale, Hainan, China, 2021.

Major solo museum shows include *Collages and Assemblages*, Miami MoMA, Miami, Fl, 1964; *Pillows*, Contemp. Art Mus., Houston, TX, 1971; *Neons*, Allen Priebe Art Gallery, Wisconsin State Univ., Oshkosh, WI, 1971; California Show, Fresno State College Art Gallery, Fresno, CA, 1972, *Ten Outdoor Neons*, Fort Worth Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX, 1974; *Recent Drawings and Sculpture*, Albright Knox Art Gall., Buffalo, NY, 1974; *Three Neon Walls*, Lowe Art Museum, Miami, Fl., 1980; *Neons for Nevers*, Maison de Culture de Nevers, Nevers, France, 1983; *The Room*, the Art Institute of Boston, Boston, MA, 1996*; Inner Light*, Smith College MoA, Northampton, MA; 1997; *Meditation Room*, Samuel P. Harn MoA, Gainesville, Fl, 1997; *Public Work and Praise*, State MoCA, Thessaloniki, 2000; *Time Boxes 2000*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis Univ., Waltham, MA, 2000; *Proscenium*, the Neuberger Museum, SUNY, Purchase, 2000 and 2018; *Journey*, Macedonian MoMA, Thessaloniki, 2003; *Silent Chapel*, Onassis Cultural Center, NYC, 2003 – 4; S.A.: *Three Spaces/Four Directions*, Lafayette College, Easton, PA, 2004; *Remembrance, Chapel of St. George*, Mystras, Greece, 2004; *Five Decades of Drawing*, Graduate Center, CUNY, NYC, 2005; *The Room Chapel*, Allentown MoA, Allentown, PA, 2018-2020; and *Light: S.A. and the Russian Avant-Garde*, MOMus Museum Alex Mylona, Athens, 2020.

Antonakos made over fifty Public Works including *Red Neon Circle Fragments on a Blue Wall*, 1978, Dayton, OH; *Incomplete Circles and Squares, Red Neon*, Hampshire College, Amherst, Ma, 1978; *Incomplete Red Neon Square on Exterior Corner (for Chris D'Arcangelo)* Univ. of Mass., Amherst, MA, 1979; *Four Walls for the Hartsfield Int'l. Airport*, Atlanta, GA, 1980; *Neon for 42nd Street*, NYC, 1981; *Neon for the Bagley Wright Theater*, Seattle, WA, 1983; *Neons for the Tacoma Dome*, Tacoma, WA, 1984; *Neon for the La Jolla MCA*, La

Jolla, CA, 1984; *Neon for the 14th District Police Station*, Chicago, IL, 1986; *Neons for Exchange Place*, Jersey City, NJ, 1989; *Neon for the 59th Street Marine Transfer Station*, NYC, 1990; *Neons for Pershing Square*, Los Angeles, CA, 1991; *Neons for the Stadtsparkasse*, Cologne, 1993*; Neons for Tachikawa*, Japan, 1994; *Blue Room*, Public Library, San Antonio, TX, 1995; *Neon for Granpark*, Tokyo, Japan, 1996; *Neon Lintel*, Neuberger Museum of Art, SUNY, Purchase, NY; *Neons for Reading Power Plant*, Tel Aviv, 1998-99; *Procession*, Ambelokipi Metro, Athens, 2000; *Tria*, Macedonian MCA, Thessaloniki, 2002; *Six Incomplete Circles*, Bari, Italy, 2004; *Two Entrances*, Athena Atrium, Odessa, 2004*; Orrizonte, Airport of Puglia*, Bari, 2005; *Welcome*, Univ of Dijon, France, 2006; and *Recurrence*, Hellenic American Union, Athens; 2007.

Antonakos's work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art; the Whitney Museum of American Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Morgan Library and Museum; the New York University Art Collection; The National Gallery of Art; The Menil Collection Houston, TX; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Dallas Museum of Art; the Smith College Museum of Art; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum, Hartford, CT; the Parrish Museum of Art, Southampton, NY; the National MCA, Athens; the State MCA, Thessaloniki; the Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens; The Alpha Bank Collection, Athens; the Alexander S. Onassis Collection, Athens; and the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris.

Antonakos received the Prize for Art from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2009) and Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Neuberger Museum, Purchase, NY (2000), the National Academy Museum (2011) and the Greek America Foundation (2011).

In the fall of 2023, Rizzoli Electa published *Stephen Antonakos: Neon and Geometry*, a major new monograph on the artist's career designed by Henk van Assen. It features comprehensive new scholarship by David Ebony.

Stephen Antonakos: Earlier Work will be on view from November 5 – December 18, 2026. A reception will be held on Thursday, November 5th from 6:00-8:00 PM. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. For additional information and/or visual materials, please contact the gallery at (212) 750-0949 or by email at info@booksteinprojects.com.

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