# Stephen Antonakos

## ANTONAKOS REVISITED

October 15 – November 21, 2026

### Athens

Marking the centenary of Stephen Antonakos's birth (1926–2013), CITRONNE Gallery presents 'ANTONAKOS REVISITED', featuring works from 1974 to 2003.

The title 'REVISITED' does not suggest a retrospective. More than half a century separates us from the earliest work in the exhibition. Historical distance does not alter the works themselves, but it inevitably changes the way we read them.

Antonakos arrived in New York in 1930 at the age of four. His artistic practice developed in the post-war American metropolis, during a period of profound urban, social and economic transformation. Neon was already an integral part of the city, closely associated with commercial signage, advertising and the emerging culture of consumption. Antonakos often referred to the neon signs of 42nd Street and Broadway. In his own work, however, he detached neon from its commercial function as signage. Language and commercial messaging disappear; neon becomes line, colour and material, in direct relation to space and architecture.

In the Direct Neons, the wall, the corner and the architectural aspects of the space become integral parts of the work. Incomplete Red Neon Square No. 1 (1974), presented in this exhibition, belongs to this pivotal period. The composition remains deliberately open. Through incomplete geometry, Antonakos allowed the form to remain open. The square is recognisable without being fully presented; the missing part is completed mentally. He described

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such works as “more open to the viewer”. The work therefore does not end at its physical boundaries, but is rather completed through the relationship between form, space and viewer.

For Antonakos, drawings were not preparatory studies, but autonomous works in their own right. In Untitled Drawing MA#2 (Berlin) (1980), JA#71 (1980) and M#1 (1987), all executed on Plastivellum, luminosity emerges through the relationship between material, colour, line and surface.

Saint Katherine (1992) was presented in the Chapel of the Saints in Rhodes, a project Antonakos himself regarded as a turning point, when spiritual and Byzantine references already present in his work came more clearly to the fore. Together with Kathisma (2003), the two panels reveal different expressions of the spiritual dimension of his work: in Saint Katherine the reference is specific and named, while in Kathisma it is conveyed more through the experience of light and space.

From the Direct Neons to the drawings and panels, economy of means and incompleteness remain fundamental to Antonakos’s visual language. His well-known formulation, “real things in real spaces”, encapsulates his insistence on the immediate presence of the work and the viewer within the same space.

‘ANTONAKOS REVISITED’ carries particular resonance today. In 1974, Antonakos was working with a material closely associated with the commercial culture of the American metropolis, detaching it from the functions of signage and message. In 2026, we live within an incessant flow of screens, images, words and data. At a time marked by successive crises and competing certainties, Antonakos’s rigorous abstraction — and his sustained attention to line, space and the direct experience of seeing — takes on a different intensity.

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