

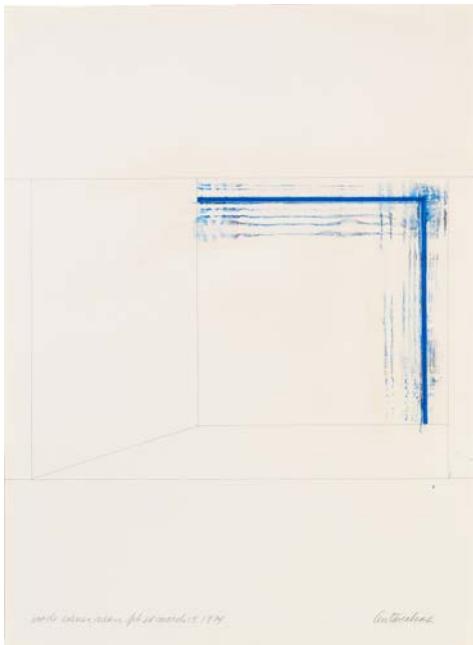
# THE DRAWING ROOM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8 – May 9, 2016

STEPHEN ANTONAKOS  
Neons & Drawings, 1970s



*Inside Corner Neon* February 28 – March 15 1974  
graphite, colored pencil, Krylon on paper, 30 x 22 in



*On the Floor Corner Blue Square Neon*, 1974, neon, 36 x 36 in  
Photograph by Alexander Marsh, New York

The Drawing Room is pleased to present six iconic neon wall sculptures and ten related drawings by **Stephen Antonakos** (1926-2013) in the gallery's fourth solo exhibition of the artist's work. Renowned for his pioneering use of neon as well as a distinctive body of drawings that parallel his sculptural explorations, Antonakos' practice expanded the language of form, materiality and the intangible in luminous abstractions that are at once rigorous and ebullient. All of the works on view date between 1973 and 1977, spanning a pivotal period in the artist's six-decade career.

Beginning in the 1960s, Antonakos recognized that neon would be his central medium, describing it once as "a controlled paradise". He promptly developed a vocabulary of spare and luminous geometric forms that would subsequently inform his interior and exterior installations, painted canvases, back-lit panels and commissioned rooms, chapels and public works. In all of these contexts, and also in his drawings, the artist's precise placement of radiant circular and rectilinear forms addresses the surrounding architectural environment and engages the viewer's kinetic sense. Whether the site is a sheet of paper, a wall or a room, the physical elements within an Antonakos work are always situated to relate to each other, to the work as a whole, and to the space around them.

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Each of the six neon sculptures featured in this show hovers on the surface of a different wall, generating ambient volumes of blue or red light from the most minimal of means. Through Antonakos' intervention, an essentially linear medium – electrically charged gas contained by glass tubes – articulates complete and incomplete geometrical shapes on a flat plane whilst creating transient spatial ambiguities that emerge and recede over time. In *On the Floor Corner Blue Neon Square* (1974), a 36-inch neon abuts the floor and the left-hand edge of a floating wall to mesmerizing effect. Nearby, a 12 x 12 inch right angle in classic red neon is placed one foot from the top and side edges of the wall, engaging the viewer's mind to complete the fragmented rectilinear form. In two other neon works from 1975 and 1977, overlapping arcs of colored light form lyrical and rhythmic compositions.

Antonakos approached the drawings in this exhibition with a disciplined economy of means akin to his sculptural works in neon from the same period. Extending the drawing technique he had developed a decade earlier to simulate the effect of emanating light on our perception, he first used graphite lines to set the architectural stage on each sheet of paper. Then, with a combination of colored pencil and sprayed fixative he added the glowing geometric forms that inhabit each virtual space. Seen on the wall, these colored pencil compositions reverberate in the gallery space, engaging the site beyond the page - a dynamic they share with their neon sculptural counterparts.

Born in 1926 in the small Greek village of Agios Nikolaos, Stephen Antonakos moved to New York with his family in 1930. He established his first studio in the garment district in the late 1940s after serving in the US Army, and from the early 1960s on, he worked in studios in Soho.

Stephen Antonakos has been the subject of more than 100 one-person exhibitions including a fifty-year retrospective with venues at the Benaki Museum in Athens and Pennsylvania's Allentown Art Museum. He created more than fifty public works in the United States, Europe and Japan that are documented in numerous monographs and exhibition catalogues. His work is represented in major collections worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the High Museum, the Wadsworth Atheneum and the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens. In 2011, his 17,000-square-meter indoor/outdoor installation, *The Search*, was presented in Elefsina, Greece; in that same year he received Lifetime Achievement Awards from both the National Academy and the Greek America Foundation. In 2013, his work was included in *Luminous! Dynamic! Space and Vision in Art from the Present to 1913* at The Grand Palais in Paris. *Hanging Neon*, the 1965 sculpture presented at the Grand Palais, was acquired by the Dallas Museum of Art and is currently on view.

[www.drawingroom-gallery.com](http://www.drawingroom-gallery.com)

Gallery Hours: Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10-5; Sunday 11-5

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