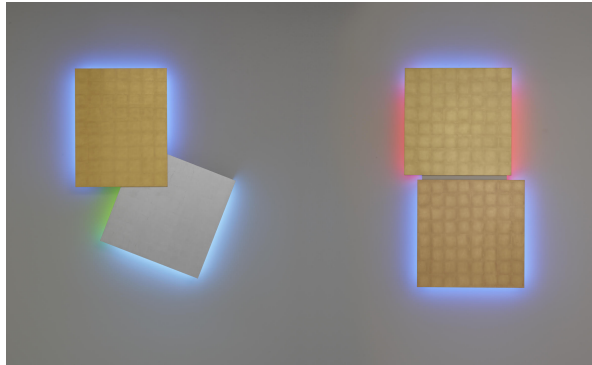


*STEPHEN ANTONAKOS: LATE LIGHT - GOLD WORK 2010 – 2013*

Opening Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 5:30 – 7:30 PM - through January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020



This focused exhibition presents three distinct uses of gold in Antonakos's late work: Neon Panels, drawings, and a model for a Chapel. All confirm the artist's essential engagement with both placement and time.

The gallery's main wall holds two of his most intense late Neon Panels, *Archangels Michael and Gabriel*, 2012 and *Saints Cosmas and Damian*, 2010. They are related in scale and form, but worlds apart in affect. We do not see neon tubes here, only their soft auras of color glowing around the rectangles' edges. The geometry is planar; the light is spatial. The Panels were begun in the mid-1980s and, with many sensitive variations of surface and surround, continued to the very end. One might expect the gold-leafed planes to dominate and the embracing clouds of color to serve as modifiers – like nouns and adjectives. But no: far from a competition for dominance, the dialog between the elements yields a harmonious unity that activates the space they share with the viewer. Irving Sandler said of Antonakos,

“Essentially a classicist in the Constructivist tradition, he has revealed the poetry of neon.”

Matisse said the characteristic of modern art is to participate in our life. All of Antonakos's work is centered on the viewer's experience of real things in real spaces. He felt that a work exists only once it is felt, received, by the viewer – visually, mentally, kinetically. Light is not static. In a site with natural light, when the day darkens, the gold-leafed surfaces will seem darker and the neon glows increasingly intense and expansive. But the flat planes, even when dim, exert their positions as the only areas the colored glows do not penetrate.

The Neon Panels are intense manifestations of Antonakos's relationship to the world past and present. They do not depict specific figures but their titles acknowledge people, events, and places of sacrifice or consequence meaningful to the artist's ongoing inner life. Beneath their formality we sense the Panels' sources in a constant impulse for unity and compassion. The theme of remembrance is woven throughout.

The second group of work in the exhibition is the gold leaf drawings begun in 2011: the flat, cut *Continuations* and the crumpled *Terrains*. Through the decades Antonakos made drawings with cuts, cut-outs, tears, pleats, layers and crumples. One focus here is gold leaf's range of specific tones and surfaces and of course their reflections – which may allow even the flat “Continuations” to be considered 3-D. These drawings seem more like objects than images: sculptures in frames.

The model of the Chapel here is one of Antonakos's most radical: purely geometric and one of the few with a prominent cross positioned outside the architecture. The few clear glass panes on its vertical wall will admit an irregular pattern of light inside. In contrast, the red light that the sun casts on the floor through the diagonal wall's red glass pane will move dependably from west to east over the course of the day — a clear engagement with the passage of time.

The Chapels were started in the late 1980s. Many have been exhibited in full scale in temporary exhibitions here, in Greece and Europe. They range from concepts for large Greek Orthodox churches that could be consecrated to small personal meditation spaces. Their spatial geometries evolved from and through his history of indoor and outdoor Neon Rooms and perhaps also from his childhood memories of a small village in Greece: the red sunrise each morning over the distant mountains and his experience inside the small chapel there:

"Being inside it was like being plunged deep inside my own feelings...  
I felt more myself there than anywhere else."

Throughout the decades of working, Antonakos's rigorous formalism is complemented and expanded by his deep-rooted connection to the living world all around us, today and back through time.

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*Please join us also on Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM for the Hellenic-American Cultural Foundation's presentation of STEPHEN ANTONAKOS: A MODERNIST'S BYZANTIUM, at The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Ave. The dialogue between **Helen Evans**, Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator for Byzantine Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and **Robert Storr**, artist, curator, and writer, will be preceded by **Idith Meshulam Korman** playing Nikos Skalkottas's Piano Pieces.*

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