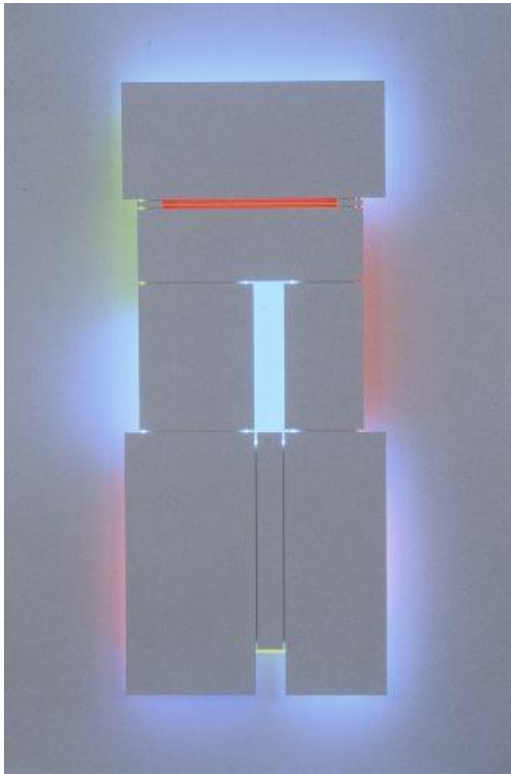


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Stephen Antonakos



Stephen Antonakos, *Voyage*, 1999, White paint on Versacel and neon, 84 x 36 x 5 inches

This exhibition of more than 30 years' work revealed Stephen Antonakos as an artist willing to skirt the very edge of nothingness and—as seen in some of the pieces here—go to elaborate lengths to do so. The best works in this show, titled simply "Antonakos: Whites," were the large-scale wall reliefs in foam board and neon tubing, bearing such titles as *Departure* (2007), *Arrival* (2008), and *Voyage* (1999). The last is the earliest and best resolved of the pieces. This not-quite-symmetrical stack of rectangles achieves the most enigmatic of color sensations. The sequence of fluorescent colors—blue, pink, blue again, deeper pink, brighter blue, and apple green—that illuminates the perimeters of the shapes transmutes their white surfaces into a kind of darkness. The effect is quite striking.

The other pieces here were much smaller in size and, unfortunately, in impact as well. A number of the "Unfilled Wood Reliefs" from the '80s were, at their best, suggestive of a particularly buoyant sort of constructivism, although they often looked like overly elaborate book covers. Also included here were a couple of attractive cut-paper pieces, and seven examples from the artist's "Winter Series" (2008-9). Antonakos calls these "crumples."

They consist of single sheets of paper or polyethylene film scrunched up and then imperfectly flattened out again for framing. It was difficult to grasp the significance of these pieces beyond noting the irregularity of their appearance and the chance method of their production. Their inclusion almost undermined our appreciation of his better work here, which is indeed strangely compelling.

—Robert Ayers