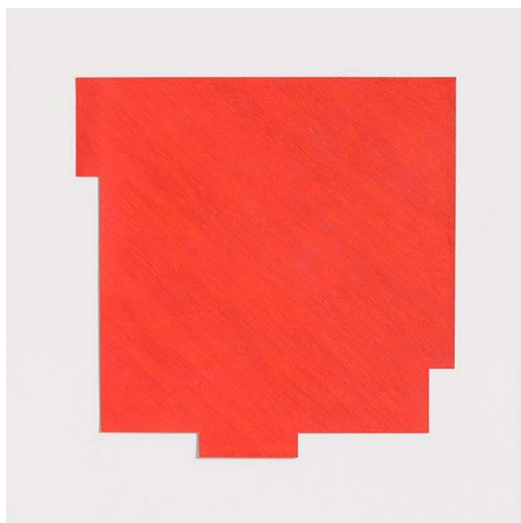


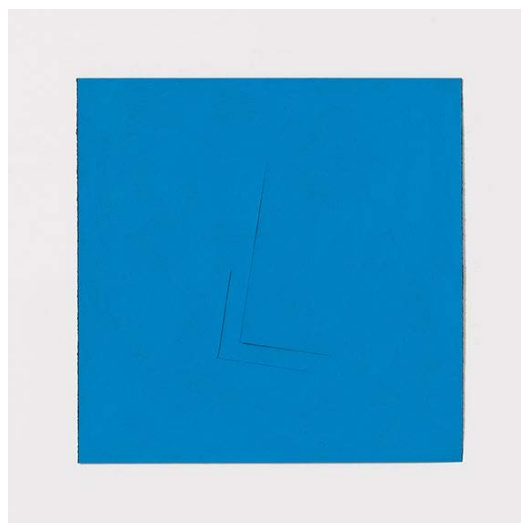
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Antonakos: 1977-1978, Cuts and a Wall

February 19 – March 21, 2015



Stephen Antonakos, *Untitled Cut, AP#7, 1977*, China marker on paper with cut edges, 15 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches.



Stephen Antonakos, *Untitled Cut, JU#2, 1978*, China marker on black paper with cuts, 17 x 17 inches.

Lori Bookstein Fine Art is pleased to announce an exhibition of Cuts on paper and a neon Wall by Stephen Antonakos (1926-2013). This is the artist's fourth solo show with the gallery.

The Cuts, 1977-1978

In the summer of 2014 a brilliant group of previously unknown drawings — Cuts — were found in storage. Each surface was thickly covered all over with Antonakos's characteristic "back-and-forth" color hatching — in deep tones of blue and green, a few red, and one yellow. On some, severe incomplete circles were then cut through the surface; on others, incomplete squares. From still others, incomplete squares were cut from the edges. Each one is marked with the month and year, showing the speed and intensity — apparently the urgency — he felt in covering the surfaces so actively, so more-than-completely. The discovery of this distinct early series adds a lush, concrete chapter to the already rich story of Antonakos's Cuts from 1977 and 1978. (Antonakos continued with Cuts steadily through 2012 in the forms of drawings, collages, and Artist's Books — on a range of papers and vellums and gold-leaf on Mylar.)

This exhibition includes Cuts of radically different approaches. One series of only two large white sheets has narrow lines cut out and backed with colored paper. A group of five has cuts and colored or black geometric forms that re-define the white spaces. A third, powerful, group of black squares has a different angle every time — every one a "stopper" from an artist known for light and space. Still more variations include bright blue squares on black papers and crackling, cut, white or red sheets layered over black. Finally, from 1978, there are the grand, serene, almost sculptural double-whites.

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In Antonakos's Cuts it is rare to see a form removed and placed somewhere else — as in Matisse's eternally grand, colorful, and sensuous Cut-Outs. Nor did Antonakos's Cuts effect anything like the “curl back” of Fontana's elegant singular or repetitive slashes on canvas. With Antonakos we may envision the cut in the surface, the “completed” circle or square it suggests, and even the surface before the cut — perhaps a kind of a multiple-time experience.

“Four Blue Incomplete Neon Circles,” 1977

This early Wall was made for a breakthrough exhibition in Greece in 1977. By good luck, the key wall in Gallery II has just the correct proportions for it. This is one of the artist's most serene works, even with its dynamic possibility of viewers completing the blue incomplete circles in their minds.

Antonakos's Walls — like all of his work — start with the consideration of “where” — a place's specific scale, proportions, and architectural function. The first work titled a Wall is from 1970; the last is from 2008. Some are chromatically intense and formally dramatic, others move more calmly. On some, the linear neons extend past the edges or project into the viewer's space. A few cover two or three related wall surfaces or go around interior or exterior corners. Others might be categorized as Rooms. Like all the neon work, the Walls are intended to engage and enliven their surrounding spaces — the spaces that contain the viewer.

Viewers may remember seeing the 1978 “Blue Incomplete Circle on a Blue and Red Wall” last season in Phong Bui's important “Come Together: Surviving Sandy, Year 1” mega-show in Industry City, Brooklyn. That work's two-colored field and its intensely focused neon form contrast greatly with this Wall's softer color and the gentle, rhythmic overlapping of its potentially-complete blue circles.

Stephen Antonakos's work with neon since 1960 has lent the medium new perceptual and formal meanings in hundreds of gallery and museum exhibitions first in New York and then internationally. His use of spare, complete and incomplete geometric forms has ranged from direct 3-dimensional interior installations to painted Canvases, Walls, the well known back-lit Panels with painted or gold-leaf surfaces, and the Rooms and Chapels. Throughout, he has conceived work in relation to its site — its scale, proportions, and character — and to the space that it shares with the viewer. He called his art, “real things in real spaces,” intending it to be seen without reference to anything outside the immediate visual and kinetic experience. Starting in the 1970s he installed over 50 large-scale Public Works with the same concerns plus the inevitably broader engagement of space and natural light outdoors. Colored pencil drawings on paper and vellum, often in series, have been an equally rich practice since the 1950s, as have his various approaches to collage. He has also made conceptual Packages, small-edition Artist's Books, reliefs of white wood and silver, prints, and — since 2011 — several series of framed and 3-dimensional gold leaf works. There have been over 100 one-person shows — almost all of new work — including a 50-year retrospective seen in Athens and the US in 2007-8.

Antonakos: 1977-1978, Cuts and a Wall will be on view from February 19 – March 21, 2015. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, February 19th from 6-8 pm. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:30 am to 6:00 pm. For additional information and/or visual materials, please contact Joseph Bunge at (212) 750-0949 or by email at joseph@loribooksteinfineart.com.