

## PRESS RELEASE

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### ***Is this art?* NEON's EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME A collaboration with the Hellenic Children's Museum**

NEON's educational programme *Is this Art?*, an innovative approach to the art education of young people, is the first programme of its kind to be held in Greece. The programme was co-designed and implemented in collaboration with the Hellenic Children's Museum, and over the past six years has addressed more than 16,200 middle school students.

NEON was created thanks to the deep conviction of its founder that contemporary artistic creation can awaken and motivate. In this context, education constitutes a key pillar in NEON's work, in order to cultivate the relationship between young people and contemporary art and to activate forms of communication, participation and social consciousness.

*Is this Art?* is designed with the needs and interests of adolescents in mind, and utilises the dynamics of art to promote their relationship with culture through school. It is addressed to middle school students, with the aim of bringing them into contact with a variety of forms of contemporary art and some of its most important creators.

Its implementation is based on a digital platform that combines short videos with information about contemporary art and its most important movements, as well as the life and work of important artists. An accompanying educational package contains educational games and tactile materials that strengthen students' relationship with art. The Hellenic Children's Museum and NEON collaborated with artist Katerina Zacharopoulou for the academic curation of the programme.

The programme's material highlights work by major artists who have redefined the way we look and define art today, such as Marina Abramović, Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, Louise Bourgeois, Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, Martin Kippenberger, William Kentridge, Mario Merz, and Jannis Kounellis. In the near future, the material will be enriched with more artists, presenting different forms of cultural traditions.

The programme is developed over two consecutive meetings in each class. Upon its completion, students play the role of the artist, carrying out group and collaborative activities, and presenting their own visual events.

The activities in the classrooms, carried out by the Hellenic Children's Museum educators, create the conditions for students to interact with art in an experiential way, with tangible results. Its starting point is the pedagogical framework that contributes to the development of the children's abilities, to the provision of ways of approaching and interpreting works of art, and to the understanding of modern social parameters through the perspective of art.

The words of a girl from the 2nd Middle School of Haidari are compelling: "*Art is limitless because imagination is limitless.*"

From the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year, *Is this Art?* was enthusiastically welcomed by students and teachers alike. It has received the approval of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, renewed each year. To date, 913 programmes have been implemented in 131 schools in the Attica Region and in one school in the Region of Central Greece, in which 16,240 high school students and 961 teachers have participated. This year, the programme continues as usual, following the measures for masks and social distancing as set by the Ministry of Education. At the same time, in the context of the NEON exhibition programme, educational activities within exhibition venues are being developed for schools.

In the words of **Elina Kountouri**, Director of NEON, *"We are addressing young people, 15-year-old adolescents, who have a point of view and an inquiring and subversive approach to life. They are at the age at which they are envisioning and planning their future. That is why we ask the question 'Is this Art?', a question which expresses the democratic spirit of contemporary art, that is liberatingly open to interpretations. By coming into contact with contemporary art, young people are faced with a different approach, with contemporary reflection and the production of ideas that art places on the issues of each era. We are investing in this educational programme because we believe that culture breeds progress and development. We thank the Hellenic Children's Museum and all the contributors who make our vision a reality."*

**Zabel Mouratian**, President of the Board of Directors of the Hellenic Children's Museum, noted that *"We feel that the question 'Is this Art?' has found adolescents to be the most ingenious interlocutors. This innovative programme has paved the way for students' imagination, expression, creativity and critical thinking. It has formed a trend that is expressed by the fervent wish of teachers for their students to have this experience. We are proud of the imprint it leaves on Greek schools! We thank NEON for its trust and cooperation, and for its dynamism, which brings contemporary art into schools"*.

#### NOTES TO EDITORS

**NEON** is a non-profit organisation that works to bring contemporary culture closer to everyone. It is committed to broadening the appreciation, understanding and creation of contemporary art in Greece and to the belief that this is a key tool for growth and development. NEON, founded in 2013 by collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, breaks with the convention that limits the contemporary art foundation of a collector to a single place.

NEON's space is the city. It acts on a multitude of initiatives, spaces and civic and social contexts. It seeks to expose the ability contemporary art has to stimulate, inspire and affect the individual and society at large. NEON constructively collaborates with cultural institutions and supports the programmes of public and private institutions to enhance increased access and inventive interaction with contemporary art. [www.neon.org.gr](http://www.neon.org.gr)

The **Hellenic Children's Museum (HCM)** is a non-profit public welfare organisation, legally established in Athens, Greece, in 1987 by a group of young professionals.

Its purpose is to help children develop all aspects of their personality in order to become citizens who respect their own individuality and to obtain a social conscience.

The purpose addresses all children, without exception, families, school communities and everyone who is interested in the multilateral development of children or is directly or indirectly related to children.

The HCM accomplishes the goals set out in its mission statements through the operation of the Children's Museum, educational programmes for children and adults, advisory programmes, the volunteer programme and the development of educational material. Educational activities constitute the core function of the HCM since its establishment. They are the result of multidisciplinary cooperation and are based on contemporary pedagogical learning methods. They are designed according to the developmental characteristics of each age group, the possibilities and limitations of the place that they are being implemented as well as the school curriculum.

Established in 1994, the HCM has since then, in collaboration with the Municipality of Athens, operated the first Children's Museum in Greece, which today is housed within the Athens Conservatoire Building.

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