



# NEON

Athens, 6 October 2022

## PRESS RELEASE

### **NEON – Greek Embassy in London**

**Exhibition *Doomed companions, unsubstantial shades***

**Curator: Akis Kokkinos, NEON Scholarship recipient**

**Hellenic Residence, London**

**7 October – 12 November 2022**

NEON, in collaboration with the Embassy of Greece in London, presents the exhibition *Doomed companions, unsubstantial shades* at the Hellenic Residence in London. The exhibition, curated by Akis Kokkinos, NEON Scholarship recipient, brings together the legacy of Nobel laureate Greek poet and diplomat Giorgos Seferis with the work of twelve Greek-speaking contemporary artists.

Most of the young artists are members of the NEON alumni community as beneficiaries of Postgraduate and Doctoral scholarships. Since its establishment, NEON has introduced a scholarship program to support creativity and artistic innovation, as well as to facilitate access to knowledge, research and production for contemporary creators. Akis Kokkinos, curator of the exhibition, as well as artists Ellie Antoniou, Irini Bachlitzanaki, Amanda Kyritsopoulou, Stefania Strouza and Antrea Tzourovits are NEON alumni.

*Doomed Companions, unsubstantial shades* wholeheartedly embraces the topic of diaspora, and aspires to establish a connection between the experiences, the worldview and the work of Giorgos Seferis and the works of contemporary artists who share a common language and migratory experiences. It touches the politics, codes and forms of language, unfolds the concept of the "divided self" and engages with historical geopolitical events and their aftermaths – translating Seferis's cosmology into the complex grammars of contemporary culture.

The exhibition's title arises from Seferis' poem *Solidarity* featured in his poetry collection *Logbook I* (1940). Artists echo the eminent poet's ideology of a national identity which is formed on linguistic and cultural ties rather than racial theories and resist any monolithic and homogeneous representation. They set forth alternative futures based on collectivity, alliances and interdependency, while defying systemic failures.

The exhibition extends to the ground floor and the first floor of the Hellenic Residence. In between Seferis' office, which remains untouched until today, the sitting room, the corridors, the dining room and the reception area, contemporary art works are incorporated into the existing architectural and decorative environment.

The exhibition presents 18 works in a variety of media - including historically significant works – produced by Irini Bachlitzanaki, Savvas Christodoulides, Nikos Kessanlis, Karolina Krasouli, Amanda Kyritsopoulou, Stathis Logothetis, Maro Michalakakos, Erica Scourti, Stefania Strouza, Antrea Tzourovits, as well as two new commissions to Ellie Antoniou and Yorgos Petrou.

These include historically significant works from the D.Daskalopoulos Collection, which are part of the [D.Daskalopoulos Collection Gift to 4 museums in 3 countries over 2 continents](#) (Tate, EMST and Guggenheim and MCA Chicago jointly).

As his Excellency Mr **Ioannis E. Raptakis**, Ambassador of Greece to the UK said *"It is with great pleasure that we welcome the group exhibition *Doomed companions, unsubstantial shades* in the 'house of Seferis', the Hellenic Residence. The exhibition is the offspring of NEON's artists creativity and inspiration whom we wholeheartedly thank. Moreover, I would like to extend my sincere*

*gratitude to Mr Dimitris Daskalopoulos, founder of NEON for his invaluable contribution to culture. The Residence is an illustrious building, a landmark for the Greek community in the United Kingdom, a venue for political, economic and cultural events, as well as a meeting place for the Greek and British societies. In its premises we have hosted piano and music concerts, dance performances, lectures, receptions, dinners, screenings, meetings of Prime Ministers and Ministers and all kinds of events. This is the first time we will host such an important exhibition; an exhibition open to the public, which, along with the exhibits, our visitors will have the opportunity to discover a piece of the history of Greece in the UK: The home where Giorgos Seferis lived and the office where he worked from 1957 to 1962 when he served as Ambassador of Greece to the UK, the piano where Mikis Theodorakis performed in 1961 and the commemorative plaque placed by the English Heritage in 2000 to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the Nobel Prize laureate Giorgos Seferis".*

According to Mr **Dimitris Daskalopoulos**, founder of NEON, "NEON exhibition to be presented in a historic building with the valuable cooperation of the Embassy of Greece in London, was designed relying on the work of young contemporary artists, some of whom we have supported in their professional artistic journey. Since its genesis, NEON has consciously focused on supporting young artists and contemporary creation through a targeted scholarship program. In 10 years, a large community of people has been formed; people who via the contribution of NEON gained access to knowledge, evolved and connected with each other through artistic creation. This exhibition promotes the excellent work of young contemporary artists and makes us very proud that they can stand on the international artistic stage expressing their creativity and pioneering ideas."

As **Akis Kokkinos**, curator of the exhibition, notes "At a time where the aftermaths of Brexit resonate within the arts and education sectors, creating thresholds to new streams of European creative forces to enter and live in the UK, *Doomed companions, unsubstantial shades* celebrates the polyphony of contemporary diasporic culture while allowing us to re-imagine new ways of belonging."

**NEON – Greek Embassy in London**

**Exhibition *Doomed companions, unsubstantial shades***

**Curator: Akis Kokkinos, NEON scholarship recipient**

**Hellenic Residence, London**

**7 October – 12 November 2022**

Opening hours:

Thursday-Friday: 18.00-21.00

Saturday: 11:00-14:00

Free Entrance

Reservation required via [neon.org.gr](http://neon.org.gr)

Visitors must show a valid ID or other official photo identification document (driver's license, passport) upon entry.

For more information, please visit [neon.org.gr](http://neon.org.gr)

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Hellenic Residence

The building at 51 Upper Brook Street was given to the Greek state by Helena Schilizzi-Venizelos, at a time when Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos was in London for lengthy periods during the negotiations for the Treaty of Sevres which followed the First World War. Situated in one of the most central parts of London, in Mayfair, the building was constructed in 1731 by the architect R. G. Hammond, who was responsible for a number of other buildings in the area, owned by the Duke of Westminster. During the period 1731-1920 it had served as the residence of members of the House of Lords and distinguished judges. It was fully renovated in 1905. Since 1920 it is the Official Residence of the Greek Ambassador. During the years 1920 to 1975 the Chancery was also housed there. The original design has been preserved, including the office used by George Seferis. In 2000, to mark the poet's 100th anniversary, a commemorative Blue Plaque was placed by the English Heritage.

The poet, essayist, journalist and novelist **Giorgos Seferis** (1900-1971) is considered as one of the most important Greek writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Smyrna, George Seferiadis studied law in Paris and served as a professional diplomat, retiring as Ambassador in London. His home and office were located in the Hellenic Residence, 51 Upper Brook Street. Alongside his public life, he developed a special lyrical voice with the literary pseudonym Seferis, exploring the poetic potential of the Demotic Greek language through the recurring themes of refugees and nostalgia for the homeland. In 1963, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature, while the explanatory statement honored him as the worthiest representative "of Greece today".<sup>1</sup>

**NEON** is a nonprofit organization 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. Through its educational programs, NEON has granted 100 scholarships to students and has supported 1.400 artists. NEON constructively collaborates with cultural institutions and supports the programs of public and private institutions to enhance increased access and inventive interaction with contemporary art.

### International Press Inquiries

Melissa Emery | SUTTON

T: +44 (0)20 7183 3577 E: [melissa@suttoncomms.com](mailto:melissa@suttoncomms.com)

<sup>1</sup> Roderick Beaton, 2003, *Giorgos Seferis: Waiting for the Angel: A Biography* (Yale University Press)