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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **NEON hands back the former Public Tobacco Factory to the Hellenic Parliament, as a new, state-of-the-art cultural centre located in the heart of the city**

After three years of residence at the former Public Tobacco Factory on Lenorman Street, and the successful organisation of two internationally-acclaimed contemporary art exhibitions, NEON delivers to the Hellenic Parliament a new, renovated, nationally and internationally recognised building to serve as a new centre of contemporary culture.

NEON's collaboration with the Hellenic Parliament, which began in 2020, is an outstanding example of a public-private partnership, which here led to the major renovation of the iconic Lenorman Street building, and its subsequent operation as a leading hub of the city's cultural life. The iconic 6,500 m<sup>2</sup> former Public Tobacco Factory building has been transformed into a new, state-of-the-art cultural space of high aesthetic and functional value where people can come together and exchange ideas.

This collaboration reflects NEON's philosophy of bringing people closer to contemporary art, exhibited in historical and cultural spaces within the urban fabric with the aim of improving the life of citizens. During NEON's 10-years of activity, the organisation has collaborated with both public and private institutions, and utilised emblematic spaces and venues that often remain untouched by the cultural sphere, bringing them to the forefront of cultural activity and reinforcing their relationship with local communities.

The new cultural hub of the former Public Tobacco Factory is the outcome of a substantial renovation and upgrading of the building's infrastructure, at a cost of 1.4 million euros, funded entirely by NEON and its founder Dimitris Daskalopoulos. The aim has been to preserve the building and its legacy, while opening a new chapter as a contemporary, accessible cultural centre.

Since its renovation, the venue has hosted two major contemporary art exhibitions with international appeal and free admission. In 2021, within the framework of the celebration of the 200 years since the Greek War of Independence, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, *Portals* aspired to portray a new timely reality with the participation of 59 artists from 27 countries and 15 new commissions. Another exhibition, entitled *Dream On*, was held in 2022 with 18 large-scale installations by Greek and international artists, as well as a newly commissioned work. These works are part of the D.Daskalopoulos Collection Gift donated to major British, US and Greek museums for their permanent collections.

For two years, this emblematic building – re-established as a cultural centre and providing new social capital for the city – hosted important artworks by contemporary artists as well as international representatives of the world of culture, politics, economy and social affairs. All of the above contributed to the emergence of Athens as one of the important metropolises of art today. In total, 96,000 people visited both exhibitions.

The building is now managed by the Hellenic Parliament.

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## 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 firm 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 has carried out significant infrastructural work in the spaces in which it has organised exhibitions, with the aim of substantially upgrading these spaces for their benefit and further use. These spaces include the former Public Tobacco Factory, the Athens Conservatoire, the National Observatory, and the Archaeological Museum of Mykonos.

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.