

PRESS RELEASE

NEON Concludes with Final Year of Programming

After 14 years of cultural impact in Greece and internationally, the non-profit organisation will conclude its activities with a final project on the Acropolis Hill at the Old Acropolis Museum, Athens



(L-R: Adrián Villar Rojas, *The Theater of Disappearance*, 2017 | NEON at the National Observatory of Athens, Hill of the Nymphs | Photography © Panos Kokkinias; *Portals*, 2021 | NEON + Hellenic Parliament | Photography © Oak Taylor Smith; Maria Loizidou, *A Transfer* | NEON City Project 2015. NEON at Kerameikos Archaeological site and Museum | Photography © Panos Kokkinias)

(Athens, Greece) 20 April 2026: Since 2012 NEON has worked to bring contemporary culture closer to all, fostering the appreciation, understanding, and creation of contemporary art in Greece. Guided by the belief of founder Dimitris Daskalopoulos that art can move and inspire individuals and communities alike, it was conceived as a catalyst for social change rather than a fixed institution. NEON embeds artworks and artistic practice within everyday urban life to foster coexistence, connection, and dialogue.

Using the city as its space NEON has pioneered an innovative model of practice and exhibition across diverse spaces and contexts. Over the past 14 years, led throughout by its director Elina Kountouri, it has helped open new pathways for contemporary art in Greece, activating public spaces, strengthening collaboration between the public and private sectors, and encouraging institutions and audiences alike to engage with art in meaningful ways.

Between 2012 and 2026 NEON has presented 44 exhibitions across 34 different locations, spanning museums, archaeological and historic sites, and public urban spaces. Its programme has brought together 274 artists and 25 curators, including 73 newly commissioned works by 56 Greek artists and a further 32 by 19 international artists. Over this period its exhibitions have welcomed more than 584,690 visitors, reflecting a sustained and growing engagement with contemporary art.

After 14 years of activity, having fulfilled its cultural and social mission, NEON will present its final project *Michael Rakowitz & Ancient Cultures*, a trilogy of exhibitions by Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz, presented in collaboration with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, the Acropolis Museum, and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Athens.

The first part, *Allspice | Michael Rakowitz & Ancient Cultures*, opened in May 2025 at the Acropolis Museum. It brought together contemporary works by Rakowitz and ancient artefacts from the University of Chicago's Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures and the Thanos N. Zintilis Collection of Cypriot Antiquities. In October 2025 the second chapter, the artist's 2018 sculpture *Lamassu of Nineveh*, was installed in the outdoor garden of the Acropolis Museum, on its west wing overlooking Mitseon Street, where it will remain on view until October 2026.

The trilogy will conclude with **a new commission at the Old Acropolis Museum on the Acropolis Hill, marking the first presentation of contemporary art at this historic site, and coinciding with the museum's reopening in the second half of 2026 following extensive restoration after 19 years of closure since 2007.** The final chapter will explore stories of diaspora and how objects from diverse historical, geographical, and archaeological contexts come together to form layered narratives.

NEON'S LEGACY: LANDMARK CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONTEMPORARY ENGAGEMENT WITH HISTORIC SITES

NEON's groundbreaking partnerships with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and archaeological bodies, nurtured through open exchange, mutual trust, and professionalism, have redefined the public's engagement with historic and archaeological sites, bringing them to forefront of cultural life. These collaborations have helped lay the groundwork for the future coexistence of cultural heritage and contemporary creation, reinforcing the idea of art as a continuum.

NEON has worked closely with the Ministry of Culture and public bodies to curate and present 17 contemporary art exhibitions in archaeological and historic sites across Greece, offering new perspectives on cultural heritage through the lens of contemporary art. As part of this initiative NEON has donated contemporary artworks to the archaeological sites where they were first exhibited. These will now remain on permanent display in collaboration with the Ephorates of Antiquities:

- *RULE II* (2019) by British artist Antony Gormley, donated to the island of Delos in 2025, is the first contemporary artwork ever to be permanently installed in an archaeological site in Greece.
- *Prologue 1 & Prologue 2* (2015) by Cypriot artist Maria Loizidou donated to the Kerameikos Museum.

A landmark project was the **investment of €1.4 million in renovating the 6,500 sqm of the former Public Tobacco Factory building** to create a contemporary cultural centre subsequently delivered to the Hellenic Parliament in 2023. In addition, NEON **renovated and established an art space at the Athens Conservatoire**, carrying out infrastructure, construction, and renovation works in 2016. 12 additional Greek institutions and organisations now have new equipment and facilities as a result of exhibitions hosted in their venues in collaboration with NEON.

NEON has collaborated with artists to produce ambitious new commissions as well as presentations in solo and group exhibitions including Marina Abramović, Igshaan Adams, El Anatsui, Lynda Benglis, Anastasia Douka, Antony Gormley, Michael Landy, Glenn Ligon, Teresa Margolles, Nikos Navridis, Duro Olowu, Maria Papadimitriou, Rena Pappaspyrou, Gala Porras-Kim, Stefania Strouza, Adrián Villar Rojas, Danh Võ.

From 2014 to 2025 the **NEON City Project** initiative activated numerous historical, archaeological and public locations through contemporary art, fostering deeper dialogue between art, urban environments and civic life. These new site-specific commissions were by Greek artists Alexandros Tzannis (2025), Iris Touliatou (2024), Dionisis Kavallieratos (2020), Panos Kokkinias (2019), Andreas Lolis (2018), Kostis Velonis (2017), Zafos Xagoraris (2016), Maria Loizidou (2015) and Aemilia Papaphilippou (2014).

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

A central part of NEON's activity has been its educational programmes and initiatives supporting emerging artists and strengthening partner institutions. To date NEON has **invested €6 million in grants and scholarships, infrastructure and institutional support**.

The educational programme 'Is This Art?', in collaboration with the Hellenic Children's Museum, was **the first programme in public schools to focus on contemporary art**. Through 1,000 programmes delivered in person across 161 public and private schools in Attica and Evia, and online in schools in Attica, Piraeus, Drama, Lemnos, and Brussels, it reached over 20,000 students and 1,400 teachers. In addition, over 21,000 students, teachers, parents, university students, professional groups and other audiences have participated in over 1,000 guided tours and educational programmes held across all NEON exhibitions. More than 1,000 teachers have been trained through the 'Educate the Educator' programme in Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, and Volos.

Through its annual Grants Programme, NEON has supported 259 independent initiatives benefiting approximately 2,500 artists. Of these funded projects, 155 were realized in Athens, 81 in other regions of Greece; many toured internationally and 23 had their first presentation abroad. NEON's Scholarships Programme has assisted 75 emerging arts professionals and students in pursuing postgraduate and doctoral studies. In addition, NEON has provided 91 scholarships to 75 emerging art practitioners and students, enabling them to complete their postgraduate and doctoral studies, and building a strong network of professionals who contribute their expertise to the international artistic community.

From 2012 to 2020, the **NEON Curatorial Exchange, in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery**, established a network of 210 emerging curators and professionals, strengthening artistic connections between Greece and the United Kingdom.

From 2013 to 2020, NEON was the **sole donor to Outset.Greece, the Greek chapter of the Outset Contemporary Art Fund**. Outset.Greece supported 69 initiatives—including exhibitions, new artistic productions, and educational activities—distributing €490,000 amongst 891 individuals.

From 2013 to 2017 an annual donation of €50,000 enabled the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST) to buy artworks from international art fairs to enrich their national collection. Through the **NEON Fund for EMST** the organisation donated €250,000 and the museum acquired 25 new works.

ARCHIVAL: RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

NEON has consistently documented its exhibitions, initiatives, and collaborations, providing a comprehensive record of their conception and development in **28 illustrated catalogues**. Contributions by writers, researchers, curators, and artists offer expanded perspectives on each project and encourage ongoing dialogue and critical reflection.

NEON's website will remain active providing a comprehensive online archive of all past projects and publications, and catalogues will be distributed to libraries and cultural institutions internationally.

During 14 extraordinary years NEON has strengthened Greece's cultural ecosystem. It has worked with a range of cultural stakeholders on a variety of initiatives which include establishing new museums and institutions. These collective efforts have positioned Athens and Greece as key international destinations for artists and audiences alike. The knowledge, networks, and infrastructure established by NEON will continue to benefit the cultural landscape, ensuring that contemporary art remains active and accessible.

END

NOTES TO EDITORS

Dimitris Daskalopoulos, Founder

NEON is an initiative of Dimitris Daskalopoulos who has been active for over three decades in the field of philanthropy with a particular focus on contemporary art. His aim has been to disseminate its messages to the widest possible audience, based on the belief that art can inspire, unite, and act as a catalyst for change.

In 2022, a major body of 350 important contemporary artworks were donated by the D.Daskalopoulos Collection to four museums (EMST/ National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens, Tate, and jointly to Guggenheim and MCA Chicago).

He is also funding the development of the new Arts Building at Athens College. The D.Daskalopoulos Arts Building, set to open in June 2027, will strengthen artistic education and operate as an educational centre, with its exhibition and gallery space open to the wider community.

NEON

[Website](#) | [Instagram](#)

International Press Inquiries

Melissa Emery | SUTTON

T: +44 (0)20 7183 3577

E: melissa@suttoncomms.com