



ANGELS, ART, & ANNE NEILSON

How a fine art gallery doubles as a community lighthouse.

words LIZA CARRASQUILLO *photos* JAMEY PRICE



ANNE NEILSON IS A NAME THAT CREATES SOMETHING OF A BUZZ IN Charlotte, particularly among members of Charlotte's vibrant art community and the city's dedicated philanthropists. After all, Anne Neilson is the creator of the Angel Series, a nationally-known collection of oil paintings depicting colorful and rapturous angels.

Neilson created the series in 2013 after taking a break from her pottery business, Herring Designs, to spend more time with

her family. She has since expanded her series into a full line of products related to her angels, including coffee table books, journals, prints, Christmas cards, and candles. Simultaneously, she opened Anne Neilson Fine Art, which now inhabits a 5,200 square foot gallery space in Charlotte's SouthPark area.

There, Neilson hosts emerging and established artists who use a variety of mediums and styles. In fact, the gallery has represented over 40 local, national, and international artists who

Neilson and her team members discover via extensive travel and research. Over the gallery's lifespan, there has been something for every type of art aficionado, from photographs by Dean West, to figure work by Bonnie Goldberg, to paint and charcoal from Craig Hawkins, to ceramics from Tomoo Kitamura.

The breadth of styles exhibited is due in part to the incredibly competent and accomplished team backing Anne Neilson. Gallery director Cassandra Richardson, gallery coordinator Logan Sutton, corporate relations manager Leslie Culbertson, and graphic designer Jen Panaro work together to curate rotating exhibitions, direct programming, and provide seamless customer service. Each team member lends their own unique artistic tastes and experiences to the gallery, culminating in a diverse array of exhibits.

Anne Neilson Fine Art is driven as much by Neilson's passion for art as her interest in people. In fact, at times she sees art and humans as uncannily similar: "We start as a blank canvas and as we go through trials and tribulations we add color and texture," she says.

Anne Neilson is particularly interested in finding ways she can be of service to other people. Inspired by Ron Hall, a longtime friend of Neilson's and author of the book *Same Kind of Different as Me*, Neilson was determined to use her gallery as a mechanism for giving back to her communities and aiding the Charlotte homeless population. Anne Neilson Fine Art regularly partners with nonprofits, donating a portion of art sales to support their mission.



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Integral to both Hall and Neilson's work is an ardent Christian faith. Neilson credits her faith and her determination to surrender to her God with how she ended up on her current path of artistry and philanthropy. Like her angel paintings, which Neilson views as a reflection of her faith, her gallery is another expression of her religious convictions as they merge with color and light.

"What I like to say is that ANFA serves as a 'lighthouse' for our community and beyond by giving back through art," says Neilson.

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