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# if walls could give

By Anne Marie Ashley

**F**or those of you familiar with the art that Anne Neilson has created, most notably her Angel series, to walk into her eponymous gallery in SouthPark may leave you surprised and thoroughly enchanted. Surprised because *her* artwork dances in the shadows and enchanted because, with a team of incredible women at the helm, Anne Neilson Fine Art is simultaneously sophisticated, approachable, and full of heart.

“Our purpose is to give back through art,” Anne Neilson says. “I want our gallery to be known as a lighthouse.” With donations totaling more than \$250,000 to date already gifted to different non-profits through portions of their monthly sales, Neilson’s purpose is easily attained. Though Neilson’s angels are always available (albeit inventory fluctuates depending on how much time Neilson can spend in her on-site studio), they reside in the background of her gallery. This, in itself, poetically mirrors her mission: to showcase others while quietly giving herself – an angel of sorts.

Moving from her smaller South End space to a more visible, much larger space in SouthPark has allowed the gallery to grow in size and numbers. The four women responsible for running the day-to-day are equally knowledgeable, gracious, and original in their roles.

Koren Ayers, the gallery manager, hails from New York, where she spent a decade merchandising some of America’s most well-known brands like Liz Claiborne, Sigrid Olsen, and Federated Department Stores to name a few. When she made the transition to Charlotte, Ayers began designing extraordinary closets and storage spaces (think Carrie Bradshaw-style) for local clients. Joining Anne Neilson Fine Art was an easy decision – she is following her true passion for fine art and interiors while also giving back to her community. “Surrounding yourself with beautiful things and beautiful people make it easy to come to work each day,” Ayers explains.

Neilson’s gallery represents more than forty-five global artists – some established and others just emerging – all of whom

need a voice and a forum to showcase their stunning and inspiring work. With a wide range of media and exhibitions that rotate every four to six weeks, curator Anna Elliott must continuously update her knowledge and enthusiasm for the latest offerings. It is her voice, after all, that the artists are using to highlight their work.

“As the curator, I work with artists on a daily basis, and I enjoy both the rewards and the challenges involved in finding new talent and planning creative, thought-provoking exhibitions,” Elliott says.

Elliott is more than capable, with four years of experience as a fine art underwriter in New York and more recently, earning her master degree in fine and decorative art from Sotheby’s Institute. “My goal is to highlight the diverse talents of our many artists and share their gift with the Charlotte community and beyond.”







The staff makes it easy for clients – both residential and corporate – to find just the right piece of art. They offer expertise for residential art placement and provide corporate curation as well. Corporate relations manager, Leslie Culbertson, has an art history degree and has earned her stripes working for both Sotheby’s and The Mint Museum. In addition, she served as chair of the acquisitions committee for the Mint Museum Auxiliary and is a former board member of the McColl Center for Art + Innovation.

The full-service gallery can work with clients on custom framing and installation as well. Behind the scenes, Jen Panaro, the gallery’s graphic designer, creates all the marketing, signage, and interest-inducing emails that bring people out in droves to check out exhibitions and special events throughout the year.

Yes, this team of women create the energy you feel upon entering the gallery. It’s their passion to create an environment where clients and public alike can feel at ease viewing, learning, casually perusing, and appreciating artwork. “Some people are intimidated by galleries,” Neilson says. “We want you to feel comfortable coming in here, whether you’re dressed up or in your yoga clothes.” In the end, the way Anne Neilson runs her gallery is how she views life – surround yourself with people you love and trust and everyone can give back beautiful things to this world.◆



Come in the Anne Neilson Fine Art Gallery and meet the women that make it all work. Explore the latest exhibition or even take a peek at Anne Neilson’s angels. Visit the space in SouthPark at 532 Governor Morrison Street, Suite C-110 or for more information, call 704-496-9181.