

Just call me angel of the morning

By SARA LOTT

Cynthia Smith Stibolt's angels are faceless, energetic, dynamic beings. She captures them an instant before they change form, which happens in the twinkling of an eye.

Stibolt's exhibition, *The Angelic World*, opens today at the Santuario de Guadalupe with a reception from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

Fresh, lively and full of motion with rainbow strokes of pastel watercolors, highlighted in gold, the angels seem capable of darting off the paper and inhabiting the room.

"Sometimes my paintings come like an avalanche and I do 20 paintings in two or three weeks," Stibolt said. "My work does not involve going out in the studio every day and painting. My inspiration comes in waves. It's like the ocean with the tide coming in and going out."

Originally from Connecticut, Stibolt has been living and working in Santa Fe since 1982. Her studio, built according to principles of sacred geometry, has greatly accelerated and enhanced her work.

"My painting really took off after the studio was built," Stibolt said. She paints under a skylight that she calls a doorway, or interface, between dimensions.

Once a traditional landscape painter and a self-proclaimed practical mystic, Stibolt didn't consciously set out to paint angels.

"I thought it was audacious that I might actually be in touch with other dimensional beings," she said. "I found it preposterous and embarrassing yet it was only from a spiritual perspective that I could get a handle on what I was doing."

"I must be clear, joyful and open in order to create these angelic forms," said Stibolt, who paints to Brazilian jazz.

"The past associations of spirituality with darkness, heaviness, doom, gloom and guilt are giving way to a newer experience of freedom, abundance and pleasure," she said.

Stibolt believes that mainstream consciousness is now able to accept the existence of angels.

"We are coming into an era where we can work in cooperation with angels, seriously," she said.

"The most important thing is that they're here to help and are revealing themselves to

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Untitled water color by Cynthia Stibolt

more and more people. Dare to believe it, you've got nothing to lose!"

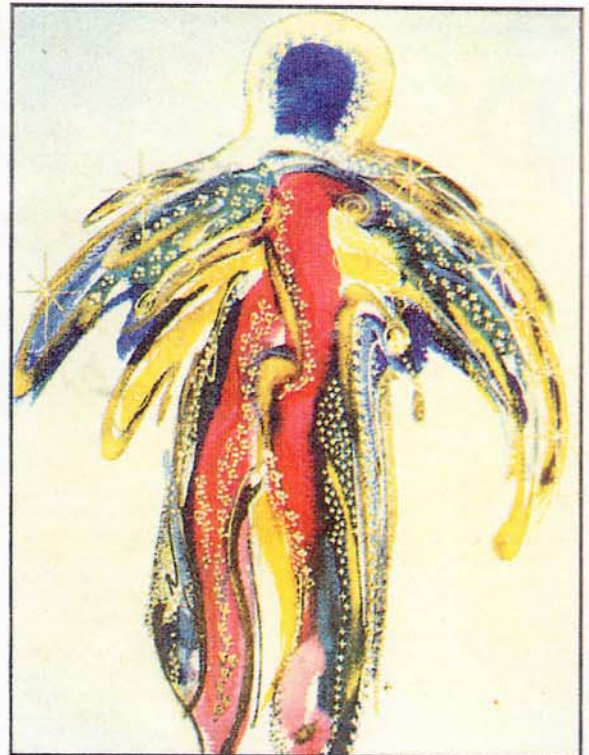
"They all have a presence and they're all different," Stibolt said about the angels in her paintings. Some are clearly either male or female. Others appear in groups or in pairs. Some are humorous and clown like while others are austere and profound, resem-

them as beings of light.

"They garb themselves in color so they can be seen by humans but they are really pure light," said Stibolt.

Stibolt's paintings are spontaneous and electric. She uses flowing, Japanese-style brush strokes to create motion. "My latest angels are all dancing," she said.

The paintings evoke a dis-



Untitled water color

"Purchasers of my paintings say that the angels serve as reminders," she said. "They are true helpers who can be called upon in times of crisis to guide us through our dilemmas."

"Having an angel painting on the wall can bring this other dimensional awareness into consciousness and remind us that we are not alone," Stibolt said.

Her paintings offer us an invitation to incorporate this presence into our daily lives.

Framed in gold and containing ancient gold Hebrew symbols within them, Stibolt's angels are classics. Delicate, self-contained and hopeful, they appear as graceful splashes of color: pink, chartreuse, lime green and orange.

"When I paint, my hand must move quickly," Stibolt said. "I paint horizontally and deliberately try to scramble my brain when working so my ego won't get in the way."

In this manner Stibolt paints abstractly and the angelic form is not visible to her until she is finished with a piece and then turns it right side up.

"I always keep fresh flowers in my studio," Stibolt said, "because the angels like them."

To me they're saying, 'How about having a good time?' They want me to do my work with joy."

Stibolt doesn't advertise or promote her work.

"People just find me," she said. "Making the journey out to my studio is like a pilgrimage that calls for commitment because I live on such a nasty road."

"People usually go straight to the piece they want without hesitation," Stibolt said. "The angels seem to speak personally to individuals or resonate to certain desired feelings."

Paintings evoking healing of the heart, protection or a sense of family all were purchased on the spot by clients who felt emotionally that the painting was meant for them.

Stibolt's work continues to evolve as does her perception. Her paintings are getting bigger. "In reality the angels are 9 feet tall," she said. "Soon I'll be painting them as big as doors. I can't wait!"



Untitled water color

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”

—Cynthia Smith Stibolt

bling icons.

Throughout history angles have been the subject of paintings, sculpture and poetry. Fray Angelico painted angels in Florence in the early 1400s.

"I am working with a new vision of angels," Stibolt said. "The stereotype of old Victorian-style angels is being replaced by a new perception of

tinct, other-worldly quality, mysterious yet familiar, like a left over image from a dream fragment. Her work has evolved from wispy suggestive images of figures with wings into stark, bold, strong and direct pictures.

Stibolt's work is more than just aesthetically pleasing.

DETAILS

Who: Cynthia Smith Stibolt
What: The Angelic World
When: 5:30 - 8 p.m. today
Where: Santuario de Guadalupe