

# Angels bridge two worlds for artist

By JAN LYNN

Angels are intermediaries between two dimensions who bring light and wisdom to humanity in the work of artist Cynthia Smith Stibolt.

An exhibit of her work, *The Angelic World*, opens today at the Santuario de Guadalupe with a reception from 5 to 8 p.m.

Angels have inspired artists for centuries as symbols of the unseen world. In Stibolt's artistic conception, they are appearing in new forms.

Their emergence and evolution are the thematic content of Stibolt's expression.

She began doing preliminary drawings of angels in West Simsbury, Conn., where she had maintained a studio since 1973.

Their appearance was a surprise to the artist who had been predominantly a contemporary landscape watercolorist since her art career began in 1969.

She said the angel figures started taking on more distinct shape from the elemental shapes she'd first created after a move to New Mexico in 1982.

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## Angel

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the winged raven, the demiurge of creation in the mythology of the Tlingit Indians of Northwest America, or the Kachina of the southwestern Hopi.

In many of Stibolt's images, the protective wings seem to be sheltering something within, conjuring the traditional stereotype of the "guardian angel."

A later work, for example, shows the presence of protective spirits forming a flowing circle around a feminine figure with a smaller figure contained within her.

Above the heads of the outer forms are strange, hieroglyphic characters that Stibolt calls angelic script.

She came across it in a book

She acknowledges the Southwestern landscape subtly influenced the change in the content of her paintings.

"After moving to New Mexico, I didn't paint for four years," Stibolt said. "The land intimidated me, and I felt like an ant."

Then the vastness of the landscape began to take on new significance.

"It's like looking into the third or fourth dimension," she said. "There's the foreground, the middle ground, the background, and beyond."

The element of an unseen dimension inspired her to build a studio attached to her home west of Santa Fe based on the principles of sacred geometry.

The circumference of an outer circle intersects at the center of the square, light filled room where Stibolt works directly under a skylight, enhancing her inner receptivity to connect with an infinite, creative source, she said.

She said that since working in the studio, where she is surrounded by an array of her celestial figures, her angelic beings began to emerge with startling rapidity.

She exhibited her early works, which she called *The New Angel*

### CLOSE-UP

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

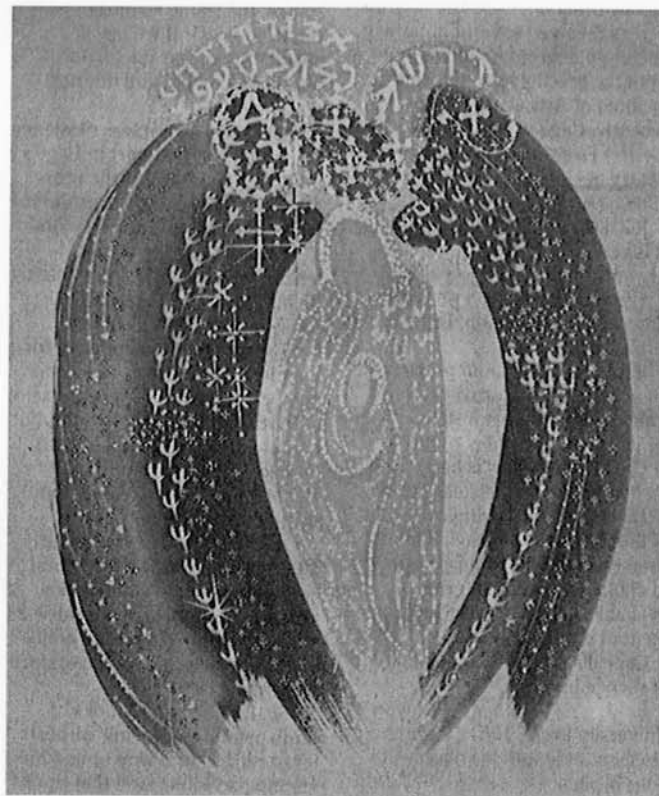
*Series*, in her studio in 1987. Like her early sketches, these figures became precursors for a more evolved form in her later work.

Executed in watercolor and ink, the early angels are done in abstractions of soft pastels, pinks, blues and pale greens, and appear in groups in counsel or conversation with one another.

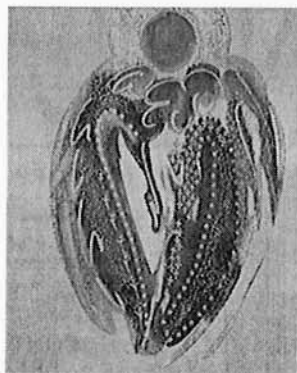
Some of the figures appear to be ancient Chinese or Tibetan sages, wearing long, flowing robes, or obis, that lend them a stately and regal presence.

Others have a resplendent, jeweled plumage suggesting spirit birds from various Indian mythologies that endow animals with supernatural qualities such as

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Angels by Cynthia Smith Stibolt are on view at the Santuario



Untitled Angel by Cynthia Smith Stibolt

she found in Florence, Italy, while doing research on angels a few years after she started painting them.

Resembling ancient Hebrew or Chaldean letters, the script was found on Chinese oracle bone writings that predated the use of characters.

During her stay in Florence, she also went to the convent of San Marco, where she viewed the paintings of angels done by 15th-century religious artist Fray Angelico.

Details such as the tilt of the head of the Madonna, the form and color of the old paintings bore a striking resemblance to the new series of paintings Stibolt had recently begun.

When she returned, instead of the pale pastels, the lines and the color of her angelic figures were bolder, stronger and deeper hued, resembling rich gemstones.

She said the angels were be-

coming more visible, as if they'd stepped through the veil that separated them from perception by the ordinary senses.

She also began to use shimmering golds and silvers, crowning the angels with coronas and bright stars that appeared as energy vortices in the womb and heart space of her figures, a suggestion that her beings were bringing messages of inspiration and love for humanity.

A single form replaced the groupings of angels, an indication of a purer form of energy, Stibolt said. The many became one, more fully realized than her earlier figures.

In one painting, a figure appears to bow in order to enter into the protective wings of the guardian spirit.

In a later painting, the figure emerges in an explosion of color with a corona that suggests an empowerment has occurred with the merging of the human and the divine.

These later figures are confident and splendid as they emerge fully revealing their true identity.

The final evolutionary stage of Stibolt's later figures shows the single beings replicating themselves into other forms that Stibolt suggests may be divine ideas or thought forms.

Stibolt paints her angels without faces, explaining that they are beings of light without egos. It is their essence, she said, that she is trying to express through her painting.