"There is more of an emphasis on angels around the holidays, but in my life, angels are not just something I think about around this time of year," says Grants Pass artist Katherine Bird. "I believe there is something about angels that we can't explain. I'm just drawn to pulling them out from within."

For the fourth year in a row, Bird's angel art is appearing in the Southern Oregon Artists Resource Angels Show, held this year Dec. 3 through Jan. 2 at the Art Presence Art Center, 206 N. Fifth St., in Jacksonville. A virtual tour of the show is available online as well.

"I think it is just a unique look at the winged, halued beings," says Anne Brooke Hawkins, gallery director.

Bird says she first learned of the Angels Show on a visit to Jacksonville's GoodBean Coffee, the cafe where the exhibit originated. This year, her watercolor painting "Angels on High" graces the promotional materials for the event. And her "Angels on High 2" will be featured in the exhibit.

"It's fun and exciting to see all the different expressions of angels," she says of the annual event, adding that she also enjoys meeting the other participating artists.

"I can't speak for others, but I believe that angels have a way of taking you to a deeper level," says Bird. "I am a practicing Catholic, and angels are an important part of my prayer life."

Bird says she begins her angel paintings — as she does all her work — by looking at her palette and experimenting with colors. "It's almost like I'm playing at the beginning," she explains. "Then I start focusing on what I see."

She says she enjoys using transparent and metallic watercolors — golds, silvers, coppers and whites — and that those hues lend themselves naturally to angels. Her "Angels on High" painting also features gold leaf on the angel's aura.

"It might be my Hispanic heritage or my culture, but I am drawn to gold and whites. And I love playing with metallics," Bird says.

Art and life intermingle for Bird, who has a studio in her Grants Pass home and paints every day. Prior to the pandemic, she says she often had a painting partner, with the two of them working together on her large kitchen table.

"I used to have more of a regular schedule before COVID," she explains. "Now, I guess you could say I am more of a spontaneous painter rather than a scheduled painter."

She says she likes to work on several paintings at the same time, making changes and adjustments in stages.

How does she know when a painting is finished? Bird laughs before responding. "It's easy to overwork things, but sometimes I'll see technical errors," she says. "Or I just don't feel comfortable with the way something looks. I also like to put my work on the easel and see how different light affects it."

A native of Los Angeles, Bird moved to Southern Oregon in the early 1970s. She credits her first art instructor, the late Ruth Eckstein, for giving her the confidence to pursue watercolor painting.

"I didn't even know how to draw before I met Ruth," says Bird, who went on after private lessons with Eckstein to get her two-year degree in art from Rogue Community College.

"Ruth told me I was a natural watercolorist. I never really knew what she meant, but I never forgot it."

In addition to the spiritual inspiration that prompts her angel paintings, Bird looks to the natural world for her subject matter, including plants and flowers and human faces. She says the intriguing watercolor faces she paints just come to her. "I never know what's going to come about when I begin painting a face," she explains.

Bird also has worked with other art forms to achieve her abstract style, including Japanese woodblock printing, oils, pen and pencil, collage and sculpture. Prints of her watercolor paintings are available on greeting cards sold at Gallery One, 2288 SW G St., in Grants Pass and at Artists & Gardener, 130 S. Third St., in Jacksonville.

To view some of Bird's work online, visit katherinenebirdart.com.

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