

ABOUT: CELESTIAL VISITATIONS

Celestial Visitations paintings (1987-8), like the immediately preceding *Alchemy* series, feature androgynous figures, but now the figures all have wings and all but one are headless. The impetus for winged angels came from my reading of Adin Steinsaltz's book ***The Thirteen Petalled Rose*** about Cabala (*Kabbalah*), the largely esoteric theological system that deals with the relationships between man, Torah, the Commandments, and God.

The only painting with a head, **The Angel of Deliverance**, I completed a few hours before my mother died. In early March during our last visit together, it became apparent that she was close to the end of her life. I told her, "For the past six months the figures that I have been painting all sprouted wings." I hadn't known why I was painting angels, but I began to understand while we were talking. I told her, "My paintings are to help you go to heaven when you are ready."

I explained that in Jewish mysticism there is a legend that every time we do a *mitzvah* (good deed) in this world, we create an angel in the next. I said, "Mother, you have done so many good deeds in your lifetime imagine how many angels you have created to help take you to heaven. When you are ready, all you have to do is put up your hands like this and say, 'I'm ready, take me', and all the angels that we both have created will help you to heaven."

She liked the idea but said she was in no rush!

I flew home, went to my studio, and worked until 3 a.m., completing the painting. The next morning my sister woke me with a telephoned report that our mother had died. My sister said our mother's nurse recounted that, when Mom awoke early that morning, she was very tranquil. Outstretching her arms she said, "I'm ready Beth's angels; take me," and then she died peacefully.

Some might think I painted my mother's death mask prior to her death.



Celestial Visitations#5 (The Angel of Deliverance),
ID #196, acrylic, quartz crystals, gold & silver leaf, mica,
broken mirror, amethyst, azurite, chrysocolla, and mixed
media on canvas,
72" x 60" (1.83m x 1.52m), 1988