Brittany Baldwin review

by MFA 1 Professional Studies

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*Halberstadt South by South-East* is a work by Brittany Baldwin not included in the exhibition Tairseach/Threshold but on view in the artist’s studio. The work comprises of a delicate paper structure reminiscent of an aeroplane wing, covered in bird feathers. It is a work of biomimicry connecting her love of the natural world and her family history of aviation. The meaning of its mechanical form becomes clear as we read the artists statement explaining this history and the subtle sloping aerodynamic surface she has created.

The work has a delicacy and light handed fragility but is also strong in its presence and position on the wall. The work is installed perpendicular to the wall and forms a shelf-like protrusion. This creates a nurturingquality of care and delicacy as it shelters, like a canopy. The feeling of lightness in the piece flows through the form, the structure and choice of materials. The manner in which she handles the gradient of the feathers follows patterns of nature, and her choice of tone is strategic as dark feathers cascade into white to meet the white wall.

While the piece references anthropological displays of bird anatomies in natural history museums, there is also a relation to contemporary artists such as Dorothy Cross who often uses found organic objects from nature. The wing, made of wax and feathers is like a 21st Century version of the mythological story of Icarus who chanced flight and failed.

The delicacy of memory and references to the artists familial history navigate us through the work. It would be a pleasure to view this work as part of a series, as a bird doesn't fly on one wing.