An important aspect of the exhibition is the process of collecting, selecting and possibly “translating” childhood memories into visual form, thus creating a singular portrait of the person to whom the memory belongs. Drawn from an evolving collection of memones from friends of Neuenschwander’s same generation who grew up in Brazil, this ongoing project is fueled by collaboration via letters, videos, drawings, photographs, and texts both long and short that are not present in the exhibition but contextually relevant to Neuenschwander’s project. Blurring the idea of authorship engendered by these exchanges, the artist reinterprets memory through a process of formalization that involves varying levels of intervention. Resulting artworks in the exhibition include a pile of confetti like a bed of Flamboyant tree leaves, the scent of gasoline remembered from car trips to the beach, and a series of paintings based on Chico Buarque LP album covers—Buarque was one of the most influential artists in 1970s Brazil. In keeping with the formal qualities of Neuenschwander’s oeuvre and her engagement with deeply layered references to cultural and art history, each work translates a complex narrative into a condensed and abstracted composition, such as L. D. [Accident]’s street scene rendered in volumetric shapes and M.G.G. (Banco Imobiliário/Monopoly)’s board game realized as a hand sewn tapestry of elemental colors and forms. This collection of portraits coalesces to produce a poetic landscape of a specific moment in Brazilian history, helping us to reflect on the role of memory in our contemporary society in which the conventional ways of storytelling and transmission are no longer valid and inventing new forms of narrative is crucial in order to define both individual and collective identity.

In addition to works that function as portraits, Neuenschwander also presents works more generally related to psychoanalysis, a field in which a key aspect is the reconstruction of childhood’s earliest memories, from the most trivial to the most traumatic. In this context, what is defined as memory can be borrowed, invented, remembered, and (perhaps most importantly) repressed. Neuenschwander engages with concepts of childhood memory and fear in the photographic series Fear of Fear (Dengue Fever), a series of photographs taken with a pinhole camera depicting a person dressed in the guise of a dengue mosquito traveling through the streets of the artist’s hometown, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Recalling carnival costumes worn in Brazilian villages, the image of the mosquito may inspire dread as Brazil currently combats a sharp rise in dengue fever cases due to people hoarding water (the insects’ breeding ground) in the wake of a severe drought in the south eastern part of the country. Traveling through Belo Horizonte’s tourist sites, parks and peripheral neighborhoods, the images might recall the well-known figure of the flâneur and suggest the pervasive and inescapable nature of paranoid and persecutory feelings when danger seems to lurk everywhere.

Upstairs continues the exploration of psychoanalysis, childhood, and memory with works such as the film Erotisme and the participatory installation self-misunderstanding. A richly layered work, Erotisme is based on an entry in a Surrealist encyclopedia attributed to George Bataille but also draws upon recurring themes in Neuenschwander’s practice such as challenges presented by language and communication. Autobiographical in nature, self-misunderstanding relates to a previous work by Neuenschwander entitled misunderstanding in which an egg’s shape is altered by the refraction of its image as it sits in a cup of water. Connected to literary, poetic, and artistic references to the egg in Brazilian culture, self-misunderstanding is a life-sized investigation of reflective distortions, revealing the abstract nature of memory and language as translated into visual form.