

ARTFORUM

“A. R. Hopwood: False Memory Archive”

FREUD MUSEUM

20 Maresfield Gardens

June 11–August 3

CARROLL / FLETCHER

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June 6–July 12

This installation of “A. R. Hopwood: False Memory Archive” at two sites—the Carroll/Fletcher Project Space and the Freud Museum—is the most recent event in artist Alasdair Hopwood’s ongoing exploration of the malleability of memory. Hopwood has been particularly interested in the research of psychologist Elizabeth Loftus, who since the 1970s has conducted experiments showing that with narrative prompting, subjects will testify to memories of events that never occurred.

In the hands of A. R. Hopwood—Alasdair Hopwood’s alter ego, a dry mischief-maker who operates via faxed contracts—the unreliability of memory creates an absurd universe in which a hired clairvoyant writes a subject’s past, fictions might be facts, and at a satellite of the exhibition at the Freud Museum, the father of psychoanalysis plays an apt host to the mischief. The works in the show result from Hopwood’s collaborations with various people, including psychologists. In *Hot Air*, 2013, Hopwood displays the photographic prompts created by psychologist Kimberley Wade of Warwick University for an experiment. The photographs themselves are typical of the visual material in the exhibition in their accidental absurdity: Tiny, imperfectly cut out people, often out of scale, clearly taken from family portraits and miscellaneous snapshots, have been shoddily glued into identical postcard-sized pictures of a hot-air-balloon basket floating into the air. The silliness turns sinister when one realizes that even these crummy, doctored pictures successfully implanted false memories of something as extraordinary as a balloon ride in the experimental subjects who viewed them. As if to repair the damage done to faith in photographic evidence, Hopwood sent Wade on a real balloon ride, strapping around her neck a camera designed for amnesiacs that takes a picture every thirty seconds.

In Wade’s case, the psychologist comes out from behind the one-way mirror of the laboratory, and as Hopwood recedes behind his contract-faxing alter ego, the line between a psychologist’s props and an artist’s productions appears as thin as the one between recall and imagination.

— *Julia Langbein*



View of “A.R. Hopwood: False Memory Archive,” 2014.