

Everything I Envisioned Came True (“Tudo que Inventei Aconteceu”) — Flávia Junqueira

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“Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast!” Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*

For her most recent project, Flávia Junqueira chose New York as the setting for an investigation into the power of imagination. In “Everything I Envisioned Came True,” the artist addresses our capacity to invent, create, and stage. The title admits multiple readings, reflecting her own creative process: on the one hand, to invent is to fabricate what does not exist; on the other, invention has a magical dimension, revealing an enchantment that was already there. It is within this paradox that the meditation takes shape: does what has been invented become part of the real? Can fiction turn out to be more plausible than reality?

Her images result from many layers: planning, research, waiting, hundreds of shots, post-production, and minute adjustments. What the artist presents is staged photography, a tradition that gained momentum throughout the 1970s with artists such as Jeff Wall and Cindy Sherman, and later with students of the German duo Bernd and Hilla Becher, including Candida Höfer and Andreas Gursky. For Junqueira, the photographic image arrives already constructed, framed, and edited before reaching the viewer. As the historian Mia Fineman puts it, “the old adage that the ‘camera never lies’ was always photography’s ultimate fiction.”

Over the course of a month in early 2026, as part of a partnership between her two galleries, Unix in New York and Zipper in São Paulo, the artist photographed iconic sites across the city. At Bethesda Terrace in Central Park, balloons and bubbles converse with the tiles of the arched ceiling, originally made for floors, following a logic of inversion. At the 1959 Alice in Wonderland sculpture, designed for children

to climb on, we encounter the childlike gaze that lies at the foundation of her theatricality: in English, the same word, *play*, can mean both a theatrical performance and the act of playing.

In the empty, dirty subway station, toy horses on the platform seem to have escaped from an amusement park, stirring nostalgia and the fears we carry within us. The Bryant Park carousel and Jane's Carousel, the artist's favorite places in New York, appear without intervention. In the first Bryant Park image, we see the carousel from the front, open, during the day; in the second, we see it from behind, already closed, at night. Unlike most of her works, this unstaged record reveals that reality, too, can be fabulous. The artist is drawn to the ride's apparent purposelessness: "you go around and around and never get anywhere," a cyclical movement that may affirm another way of thinking.

Junqueira does not consider herself a photographer. Her work as an artist is closer to that of a set designer or an art director. She and her team arrive at the locations before dawn, wait for the site to empty out, wait for the ideal light, and compose the image while also incorporating what is already there. Even in staged photography, it is not possible to choose *everything*, a word that also appears in the title "as a reference to the absolute way children think, innocently assuming that they can do everything," says the artist. Junqueira knows the limits, but she also believes that dreaming is a way of bringing things into being. She cites the phrase attributed to Walt Disney: "If you can dream it, you can do it."

In a way, her practice also depends on a succession of *decisive moments*. Each soap bubble was captured at a perfect, precise instant: many real moments make up this invented image.

Our pact with make-believe seems to have a set beginning and end. The book closes, the theater curtain falls, the carousel slows to a stop. But something resists that rhythm: when the play is over, the enchantment does not disappear. As the artist suggests, "magic is not an interval that opens and closes, but a way of looking, always lying in wait for anyone willing to see".