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When a duck is a world traveler

It's certainly newsworthy when a baby's plastic bathtub takes a trip across oceans. It might be even more stunning if the baby was in it, of course. But for Brazilian photographer **Cibele Vieira**, now working out of a **Bushwick** loft, the bathtub in question is meant more as a metaphor, and less as a vehicle for travel. "The original duck was a bathtub for my baby, which I painted in gold and put in the East River. So now the duck has been to Brazil, Philadelphia, and all over New York State," said Vieira, with plans to have it travel to Europe and beyond. The installation is called, "Chasing the Golden Duck", and it is emblematic of people's hopes, as the humble origin of an inflated duck is transformed by its newly golden aura. When she floated the kiddie pool-like 'duck' into the water under the **Williamsburg Bridge** for the first time, passersby became instantly curious about this rather odd object. "People saw me taking photos, and suddenly, everyone wanted to have their picture taken with the duck!" said Vieira. The more people became enamored by her whimsical creation, the more inspired Vieira became about extending the project from **performance art**, to **photography**, and finally, to create an installation of hundreds, then thousands, of photos. "I have over 800

photos right now, and hopefully one day I'll have 10,000 photos," said Vieira. And indeed, hundreds of photos adorn her small working loft, rising up from one wall, across the ceiling, and then cascading down the opposite wall, where they spread out and cover nearly the entire available wall space.

But, as Chico Marx once famously asked his brother **Groucho**, "**Why a duck?**" "Everything's precious in life," said Vieira. "In **art** or in life, we always think the fancy thing is the expensive thing. But actually, it is just an inflatable duck, painted gold. There's nothing inside!" She smiles at the thought. "In America right now, everybody's chasing, chasing, chasing, the future," she continues. "But in the end, who are we really? And what makes us happy in life?" Some might argue that we never really find out the answer to that question until it is almost too late, until our dreams have been nearly extinguished, our hopes perilously doused. But "Chasing the Golden Duck" drives home the idea that we must conquer our grasping ways, and not live unfulfilled lives. It radiates a certain child-like quality, an image of a naked little tyke, splashing happily in the water, unaware of the turmoil and complexities just outside of her little world. One can visualize the little girl, hanging on to the duck's golden neck, pulled by random currents to explore continents, and, in the end, her own life, and the lives of those around her. Vieira's subtle work demands that we explore, and that, ultimately, we cherish the exploration that is our daily lives, hopes, and dreams.

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