

STEVEN  
KASHER  
GALLERY

PDN PHOTO  
OF THE DAY  
WELCOME TO CAMP AMERICA

October 30, 2017



In 2014 and 2015, Debi Cornwall made three highly-controlled trips to the U.S. Naval Station at Cuba's Guantánamo Bay, home since 2002 to detainees from the War on Terror. The images she made there are on view until December 22 in "Welcome to Camp America, Inside Guantánamo Bay," a show at Steven Kasher Gallery in New York City. They are also featured in Cornwall's new book, *Welcome to Camp America*, published by Radius. The show presents 29 large-scale photos made on the base and in countries around the world where Cornwall photographed former detainees. Also included in the show are previously classified documents.

The images come from three smaller series, which focus on the unsettling juxtapositions of the camp. "Gitmo at Home, Gitmo at Play" includes images of the carefully regulated comforts provided to both prisoners and guards. These range from a cell outfitted with a prayer rug and an arrow painted on the floor, pointing prisoners in the direction of Mecca, to a kiddie pool that is home to a giant toy turtle, presumably meant for guards and their families. (Some of the images were

STEVEN  
KASHER  
GALLERY

made with a digital camera, but others, including these, were made from large-format negatives that Cornwall “hand developed on site under watch of military escorts,” the image captions note.) “Gitmo on Sale” presents images of items available for purchase in the Gitmo gift shop, which include a Fidel Castro bobblehead figure, who stands on a boom box, and child’s t-shirt that reads “I Love Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.” The images in “Beyond Gitmo” depict 14 men who were held as terrorists but later released. Like all the people in the series, the men turn their backs to the camera or cover their faces, but the captions tell their stories. One shows an Algerian man, Djamel, who was held for nearly 12 years and released in 2013, with no charges filed. In the image, he looks out over red-tiled buildings in Algeria. In a statement, Cornwall says, “My goal in making this work was to invite people to look at Guantánamo again after almost 16 years. Most of us have stopped looking.”