

THE ART NEWSPAPER

Exhibitions **Controversies** **News** **USA**

Art coming out of Gitmo to go on show this autumn

Work by three artists brings public attention to conditions in the controversial military prison camp in Cuba

By Julia Halperin. Web only

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Steve Mumford's watercolours of Guantanamo Bay will be on view at Postmasters in October. Above, 5/16/13, *Restraining chair for force feeding, Detainee hospital, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba*

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Art inspired by the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base will appear throughout the US this fall. On 5 October, Steve Mumford's drawings of the Guantanamo grounds will go on show at Postmasters Gallery in Tribeca (through 9 November). Also in October, a [book of drawings](#) by the base's only resident courtroom sketch artist, Janet Hamlin, is scheduled for publication by Fantagraphics Books. This week, the artist Molly Crabapple, who recently returned from her second trip to Guantanamo, [published online](#) her drawings of some of the 35 detainees who are currently engaged in a hunger strike.

Artists play a unique role in chronicling the on-going detention of 164 men at the controversial Cuban military base, which was established after the 9/11 attacks in New York to house those suspected of terrorist crimes. Because photography is prohibited in the prison's courtroom as well as in various parts of the facility, drawing is often the only way to visually communicate the reality of Guantanamo to the public. Mumford, Hamlin and Crabapple's drawings and watercolours depict disused interrogation huts, detainee recreation areas and even the restraining chair used to force-feed hunger strikers.

Capturing the goings-on at Guantanamo poses substantial challenges. Military officials [prohibit artists and journalists from speaking to prisoners](#) and must approve any visual media produced on the island, according to Mumford and Crabapple. "Trying to piece together the life of a Guantanamo detainee involves staring into the bureaucratic unknown," Crabapple wrote in an essay for Creative Time Reports. Her portraits of the hunger strikers are based on Red Cross photographs provided to her by the detainees' lawyers rather than in-person sittings.

Mumford, who travelled to Guantanamo in February and May 2013 to cover the trial of Abd al Rahim al Nashiri, the alleged bomber of the USS Cole, similarly was forbidden from seeing—let alone drawing—any of the detainees. "I drew everything associated with the prisoners but the prisoners themselves," he wrote in an essay about the series, which will accompany the cover story of *Harper's* magazine in October. "I even drew a dim hallway echoing with the strains of an early morning call to prayer, as the prisoners crouched in their cells a few feet away, but behind thick steel doors... The subject of my Gitmo drawings is the very thing never pictured."

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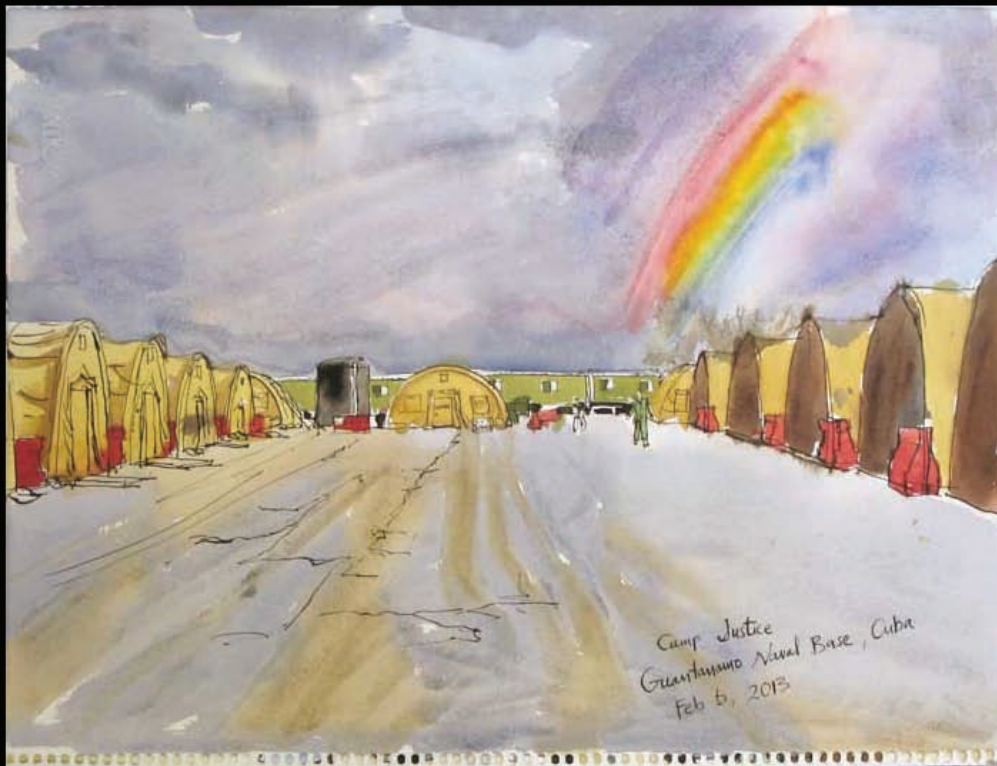


Image 1 of 12

Steve Mumford's drawings of the Guantanamo grounds will go on show at Postmasters Gallery in Tribeca next month. Above, 2/6/13, *Camp Justice, Guantanamo Naval Base, Cuba*



Image 2 of 12

Steve Mumford, 2/6/13, *Camp X-Ray, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba*

Image 3 of 12

Steve Mumford, 2/4/13, *Pretrial hearing for Abd al Rahim al Nashiri, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba*

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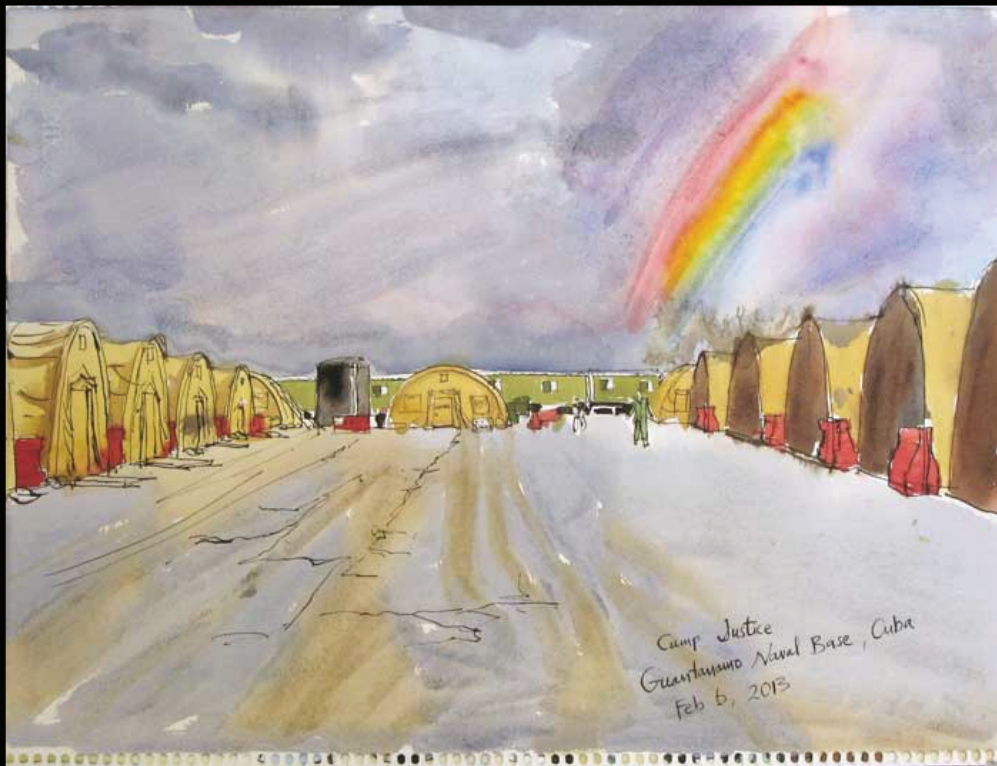


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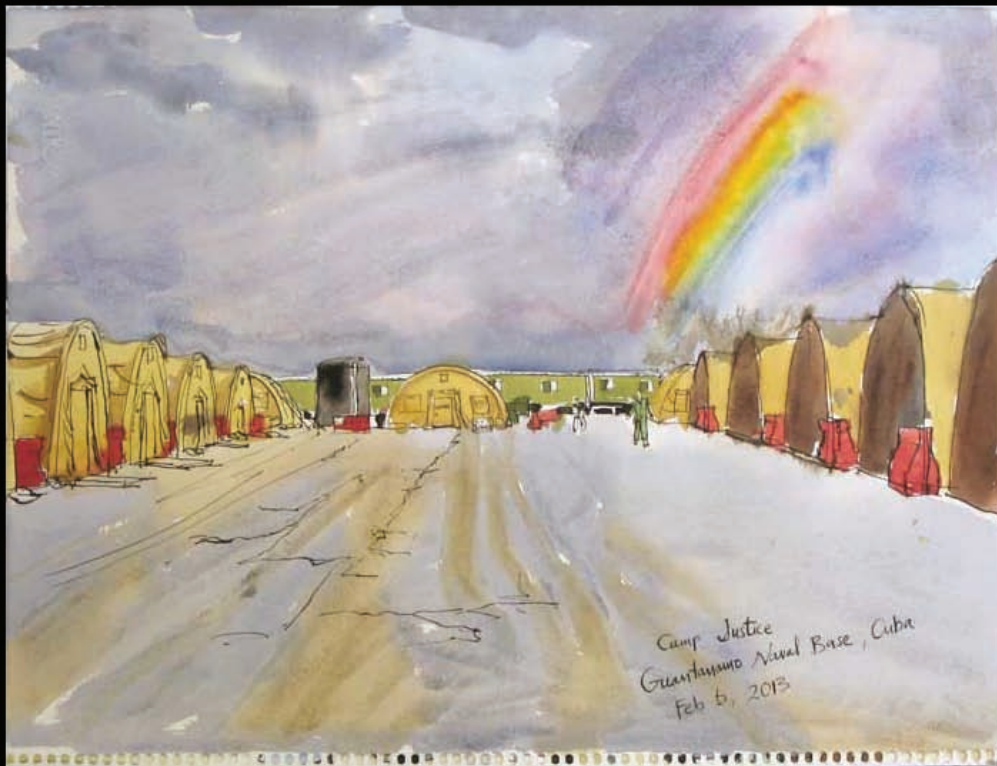


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