

# PHOTO ELYSEE

**PRESS RELEASE**

**DEBI CORNWALL  
WINNER OF THE PRIX ELYSÉE  
2023 WITH THE SUPPORT OF  
PARMIGIANI FLEURIER**

Debi Cornwall, *Casualty*. Camp Roberts Historical Museum.  
Camp Roberts, California, 2018, from the series *Model  
Citizens* © Debi Cornwall / Prix Elysée

**PHOTO ELYSÉE AND PARMIGIANI FLEURIER ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE IDENTITY OF THE WINNER OF PRIX ELYSÉE 2023: THE PHOTOGRAPHER DEBI CORNWALL, WAS SELECTED BY AN INTERNATIONAL JURY OF EXPERTS, AMONGST THE EIGHT NOMINATED PROJECTS. HER CURRENT SERIES, ENTITLED *MODEL CITIZENS*, WILL BE ON DISPLAY AT PHOTO ELYSÉE FROM JUNE 30 TO OCTOBER 1, 2023.**

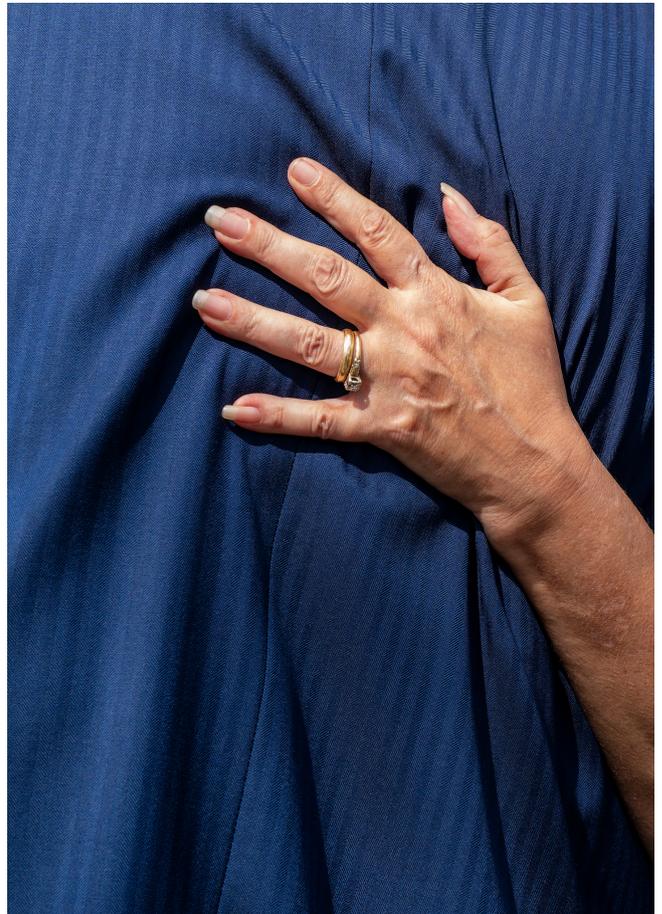
American-born and New York-based photographer Debi Cornwall is the winner of the Prix Elysée 2023. Her ongoing series, *Model Citizens*, will be on display at Photo Elysée throughout the summer. Politically and intellectually engaged, Debi Cornwall's photographs explore the line between reality and fiction, truth and fake news, and question the function of photography as evidence. The Prix Elysée's endowment of CHF 80,000 allows the artist to complete her research and publish a book.

Selected among the nominees of this edition, Vincen Beeckman (Belgium), Siân Davey (United Kingdom), Nicolai Howalt (Denmark), Khashayar Javanmardi (Iran), Alice Mann (South Africa), Gloria Oyarzabal (Spain) and Virginie Rebetez (Switzerland), *"Debi Cornwall's work is in line with current events, underlines the jury, and is an important contribution that is timely, given the effect of fake news in our societies. Through her research, the artist questions the blurred line between truth and fiction. The project, which is both a political and intellectual commitment, points to the urgency and necessity of questioning photography as a proof. The impact of fake news is not limited to the United States - the artist is telling a local story that talks about global issues. We are convinced that with the Prix Elysée, Debi Cornwall will reach a new and wider audience and that the prize will help increase her visibility in Europe."*

The international jury was composed of Chiara Badelli Nonino, independent curator and visual editor, Milan; Lewis Chaplin, co-founder of Loose Joints Publishing, Marseille-London; Felix Hoffmann, artistic director of FOTO ARSENAL, Vienna; Fiona Roger, curator of Women in Photography, Parasol Foundation, Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Christoph Wiesner, director of Les Rencontres de la photographie, Arles; Michel Parmigiani, founder of Parmigiani Fleurier, and Nathalie Herschdorfer, president of the jury and director of Photo Elysée.

**A special mention**

Interested by his project *See the Caspian*, the jury also awarded a special mention to Khashayar Javanmardi to encourage him to continue his ambitious exploration of Iran.



Debi Cornwall, *The Embrace 2*. "Save America" Rally. Miami, Florida, from the series *Model Citizens* © Debi Cornwall / Prix Elysée



Debi Cornwall, *Number One*. "Save America" Rally. Youngstown, Ohio, from the series *Model Citizens* © Debi Cornwall / Prix Elysée



Debi Cornwall, *Interview*. "Save America" Rally. Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, from the series *Model Citizens* © Debi Cornwall / Prix Elysée

### Debi Cornwall's biography

Debi Cornwall is a conceptual documentary artist who has focused on her career as an artist since 2014 after practicing for twelve years as a civil rights attorney. Employing absurdity and dark humor, she excavates invisible systems by layering still and moving images with testimony and archival material. Her books *Welcome to Camp America : Inside Guantánamo Bay* and *Necessary Fictions* (Radius Book, 2017 and 2020) have received numerous awards.

### Debi Cornwall's project

*"After a career in civil-rights law, I came back to photography looking to illuminate hidden truths. What I have found in excavating American society – from the 'War on Terror' prisons of United States Naval Station in Guantánamo Bay (Cuba), to military training sites and beyond – is a complicated ecosystem: institutions that stage-manage reality for public consumption, and a public increasingly willing to consume. My work seeks to understand and illuminate these powerful political, corporate, and social forces. Photographs can be evidence, yes, but evidence of what? My project, Model Citizens, examines the staging of reality and the performance of citizenship in the United States, a militarized country whose citizens cannot agree on what is true. I started this inquiry in my second book, Necessary Fictions (Radius Books, 2020) by photographing military wargames. Now I'm casting a wider net, making photographs more elliptically related to my topic, from institutional staging and roleplay to the performances we play out communally, consciously or not. In museums, exhibitions, trade fairs, non-military training sites including the 'U.S. Border Patrol Academy', and everyday life, I make photographs designed to invite inquiry: how are fictions deployed, commodified, and embraced, alternately preparing us for and distracting us from the realities of citizenship in a society undergoing perpetual violent crisis?"*

### Prix Elysée. An international photography prize

The Prix Elysée is one of the most prestigious photography awards. It is awarded every two years following an international call for entries, without theme or age limit, and is dedicated to photographers in the middle of their career. The Prix Elysée allows to finance an ambitious and unpublished project, and to publish it as a book. After a first stage, eight artists are nominated and each receives CHF 5,000 to start a new project. An international jury meets in Lausanne to choose the winning project from the eight nominees. The winner then has one year to finalize his or her project and publish it. Offering support and financial means to photographers is as important as preserving their heritage for future generations. It is in a shared commitment to encourage creativity and the creation of new works that Photo Elysée and Parmigiani Fleurier have been associated since 2014 for the Prix Elysée.

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Portrait of Debi Cornwall © Sally Stage



Debi Cornwall, *Judgement Scenario 2. U.S. Border Patrol Academy. Artesia, New Mexico, from the series Model Citizens* © Debi Cornwall / Prix Elysée



Covers of the books of the eight nominees 2023, published by Photo Elysée and realized by Ramon Pez © Gloria Oyarzabal © Debi Cornwall © Alice Mann © Sian Davey © Nicolai Howalt © Khashayar Javanmardi © Vincen Beekman © Virginie Rebetez / Prix Elysée

