

LUHRING  
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CHELSEA

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**Buck Ellison**

*Little Brother*

March 17 – April 29, 2023

Opening reception: Thursday, March 16, 6-8pm

Luhring Augustine is proud to present *Little Brother*, a solo exhibition of works by Los Angeles-based artist Buck Ellison. On view in the gallery's Chelsea location from March 17 through April 29, the exhibition includes photography, film, and a new wallpaper installation. The artist will participate in two lectures during the course of the exhibition: the first will be April 25 at Princeton University's Efron Center for the Study of America in conversation with Dr. Shamus Khan, Willard Thorp Professor of Sociology and American Studies, and the second will be April 27 at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.

Ellison's practice produces a deep network of inquiry into how whiteness and privilege are sustained and broadcast. The six photographs and the film that comprise *Little Brother* were made between 2017 and 2022; in them, Ellison imagines Erik Prince, founder of the private security firm Blackwater, as he might have appeared on his Wyoming ranch in 2003, the year the firm received its first U.S. contracts to engage in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ellison carefully staged every piece in this project—hiring actors, sourcing props, researching filming locations—and combed through tax filings, transcripts of congressional hearings, military contracting price lists, as well as Prince's autobiography in order to create this meticulous portrait. For the presentation at Luhring Augustine, Ellison also produced the new, hand-silkscreened wallpaper. The design is an expansion of his exploration into the world of his subject; inspired by Prince's often-cited assertion that his plan for Afghanistan was modeled after the British East India Company, the motifs in Ellison's wallpaper examine that company's introduction of opium into China in the 1830s. A reader published by the artist accompanies *Little Brother* and will be available for visitors at the gallery; in his text for this book, Ellison notes:

*Erik Prince is often touted in the media as a war criminal, as a political shadow figure, even as a monster, especially following Blackwater's massacre of seventeen Iraqi civilians in 2007. I'm interested in what happens when a viewer is forced to get close to a snake in the grass. If the camera allows us to desire, or to be curious, or to feel empathy.*

*I tried earnestly to understand someone whose actions make my stomach turn. I wanted to know what he likes to eat (Powerbars), his favorite song ("At Last"), and his favorite books (too numerous to list). I wanted to try to look at him with tenderness. This became my strategy for making these works. Not to forgive, but to claw towards precision and understanding with a gentle heart.*

Buck Ellison was born in San Francisco in 1987 and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. He received BAs in both German Literature and Visual Arts from Columbia University, New York in 2010, and an MFA from the Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, Germany in 2014. Recent exhibitions include the *16th Biennale de Lyon: manifesto of fragility*, Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, 2022; *Whitney Biennial 2022: Quiet as It's Kept*, The Whitney Museum of American Art; *Made in L.A. 2020: a version*, The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, Pasadena, 2021; and *Antarctica*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, 2018. Upcoming projects include a solo exhibition at Barbati Gallery in Venice in September 2023. Ellison has been profiled in *Aperture*, *ArtForum*, *Art Review*, *The British Journal of Photography*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*. His work is included in the permanent collections of the Aïshti Foundation, Beirut; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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