

# SEAN KELLY

Buck, Louisa. "Uncanny photography at Parasol Unit, tree peeing and porn at the National Gallery, plus the rest of this week's top London shows," *The Art Newspaper*, May 14, 2016.

## THE ART NEWSPAPER

### **Uncanny photography at Parasol Unit, tree peeing and porn at the National Gallery, plus the rest of this week's top London shows**

Magical Surfaces: the Uncanny in Contemporary Photography, Parasol Unit (until 19 June)

The Freudian notion of the "uncanny"—which the great man described in 1919 as "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar"—is now a well stomped-upon creative territory, especially in the realm of photography. But this generation-spanning seven-artist show confirms that even in our jaded post-Freudian image-overloaded era, we can still be treated to a disquietingly *unheimlich frisson*.

All-American 1970s normality is subtly and sometimes dramatically subverted in the subconscious tweaks provided by Joel Sternfeld's crisply deadpan and tragicomic real-life scenarios, or in the eerily empty Americana vistas of the artist-photographer Stephen Shore. But by far the most chilling clash of familiar/unfamiliar comes from David Claerbout's extraordinary 2015 reconstruction of a 3D Elvis, digitally conjured out of a vintage photo showing the young, pre-fame King, wearing just a pair of shorts and relaxing at home with friends and family. Not only does the resulting animation flesh out the figures by disquietingly placing them in real space, but the way in which the camera also intimately and excruciatingly scrutinizes every inch of this most famous of bodies causes one's own flesh to creep in sympathy.