



Johanna Breiding: "Magic Hour" (3-channel still: Dean Spade, Julie Tolentino, Taisha Paggitt).

## Epitaph for Family

GELARE KHOSHGOZARAN on October 2, 2015 at 6:43 AM

When I was about four years old I embarked on a serious search for my "real" parents. Between the ages of three and five I left the house a few times without telling anybody and quite successfully bought bread and explored the neighborhood. By that age, I had watched enough cartoons with orphan animal protagonists in pursuit of their real families to be convinced that I was just one of them: *Hutch the Honeybee*, *Banner the Orphan Squirrel*, *Chobin the Star Child*, et al. This was at a time when the destabilization of the Iranian family due to the war, while mourned by the children and families affected by it, was justified in the spirit of martyrdom. The same media of television that celebrated the brave men and women fighting for their country also provided a globalized mirror of their pain and suffering. The loss of hundreds of thousands and the pain of millions of people were reflected in the non-planetary world of watercolor cartoons where the protagonists were androgynous, gender-queer animals, insects and extraterrestrial creatures fighting demons in a life-long search for their mother or family.

I could not identify any visible resemblance between me and either one of my parents or older brother. Noticing the lack of familial resemblance led me to the conclusion that, just like my role models in those cartoons, one day I would have to leave home looking for my real family in the world. That convincing thought put me in a relation to the world that I had not imagined or experienced before – the relation of a kid to the world outside of the protection and mediation of the family, home, language or geography. Without the family, the world would become bigger than the neighborhood, the sovereign under attack and planetary life. That was my first epitaph for family living – as a kid in a world set up for average adult height – as an experiment in altitude. I came to realize that I could exist beyond my "role" in the family. And that was my epitaph for childhood, an essentially relational existence to the grown-up, the non-child, the "whole."

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Johanna Breiding's recent exhibition *Epitaph for Family* at Human Resources was a timely show for anyone interested in queer politics and discourse. Only a few months after the publication of Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* and following the supreme court's declaring gay marriage legal in all 50 states in the U.S., *Epitaph for Family* is an invitation to contemplation, listening and dialog about the institution and its undoings.

Inspired by personal narrative and past trauma of loss and mourning, *Epitaph for Family* brought nine self-identified queer voices in the gallery to talk about their experiences of family making. In *Magic Hour*, stories of migration, foster family and interracial adoption interweave to comment on and complement each other in this context. Taking its inspirations from seminal works by queer theorists such as José Esteban Muñoz, Sara Ahmed and Eve Sedgwick and artist and writer Hito

### TWEETS

"Ways of Learning could perhaps be viewed not as an exhibition, but through its events as a curriculum." @tom\_cl\_rk...  
<https://t.co/cF7Mwwl0u4>  
@temporaryreview - 1 week ago

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