In his critical writings, Lessing describes bourgeois theatre as a “family painting, in which one immediately feels at home”, because every spectator seems to recognize some relative on stage. This feeling at home suggests an immediate identification with the represented which ignores the act of representation and transfers the idea of the “natural”, which at the time is associated with the bourgeois nuclear family, to the aesthetics of theatre. The naturalization of representation in the 18th century is closely linked to the idea of the heterosexual, bourgeois family, linked together by ‘natural’ bonds, and thus also to the naturalization of gender identities.

At the beginning of the 21st century, kinship is not longer seen as a natural reflection of biological facts, but as a practice, a “kind of doing” (Butler). Family is performed in everyday life – how about the representation of family in contemporary theatre and performance? Is there a connection between the denaturalization of theatre aesthetics and the denaturalization of the family? In what ways are non-biological concepts of kinship performed on stage? I would like to look into these questions, drawing on examples such as Vegard Vinge/Ida Müller, René Pollesch, Gob Squad and She She Pop.