

**NEIL GOLDBERG**  
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## ARTS&LETTERS

### Weaving Dreams of Mom and Dad

#### Museums

By DANIEL KUNITZ  
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"Love and Loss," a trilogy of videos by Neil Goldberg, currently at the Jewish Museum, constitutes, in a sense, several chapters of autobiography, spoken in the third person. Or persons, as the characters in these pieces — which require only 17 minutes of total viewing time — are Goldberg's parents.

The videos proceed with lulling simplicity. Indeed, the three works employ such a meager repertoire of means that one doubts that any one of them, seen alone, would make much of an impact. As a trilogy, though, they form an elegiac and ultimately beautiful document of familial love.

They do not begin auspiciously. In "My Parents Read Dreams I've Had About Them" (1998), each of Goldberg's parents do just that, reading from handwritten sheets of paper bearing descriptions of dreams in which one or another appears. But other people's dreams are among the most boring fillers of literature and art one might be forced to endure.

Goldberg's parents, to their credit, seem almost to recognize this fact. Goldberg's mother, Shirley, wears a striped shirt buttoned to the collar, her silver hair blown out to helmet-like proportions, her nugget-sized earrings gleaming, her librarian's glasses attached to their chain and perched on the bridge of her nose. She reads — fluently, yet impersonally, as though she's not terribly happy about having to do it — about a dream the artist had about, among other things, a party for him during which he flirts with a boy while in line for the bathroom. She gives the moment no special emphasis, yet we, the audience, learn Goldberg is probably gay. What else might we learn from these dreams? Later in the video, Shirley reads dreams in which Goldberg has a baby, imposes on the baby's mother 20-odd rules for carrying the child, then worries about seeming officious.

Goldberg's father, wearing a yellow golf shirt, his thinning hair gray, looks like a typical middleclass grandfather, though he, like the mother, appears to be well educated. He, too, reads fluently, first of a dream in which he owns a personal EKG machine, which prompts Goldberg to consider that he's not ready for his father to die. Or, Goldberg decides, he is ready, if his father needs to die. Goldberg's father then reads of dream in which Goldberg looks out across a great distance at his father, who is perched high up in a building; and then of yet another dream concerning Goldberg's father and death. The dreams are not independently interesting, but as they accumulate one realizes they establish a narrative: Goldberg's sexual orientation wobbles when he thinks of his mother, and he conjures death when thinking of his father.