

Automatic Moving presents

THE MISCONCEIVED

a film by **James N. Kienitz Wilkins**



2026 // United States of America // English // 88 Minutes

WORLD PREMIERE | HARBOUR SECTION

Festival Screenings:

Saturday, January 31, 9:15PM CET | ****WORLD PREMIERE**** – Pathé 3
Monday, February 2, 11:45AM CET | Public Screening 2 – LantarenVenster 3
Thursday, February 5, 5:30PM CET | Public Screening 3 – Cinerama 6

Press Materials:

tinyurl.com/misconceivedfilm

Publicity

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LOGLINE

A failed filmmaker turned carpenter is hired by his estranged college buddy, now a successful sculptor renovating the vacation home of his dreams.

FILMMAKER STATEMENT | James N. Kienitz Wilkins

THE MISCONCEIVED is an experimental 3D-rendered feature and social satire developed from a screenplay co-written by Robin Schavoir and me, James Kienitz Wilkins, the director and principal renderer of the rather technically complex project. It is a thematic follow-up (yet not sequel) to our previous collaboration, THE PLAGIARISTS (2019).

Structurally, THE MISCONCEIVED is a chamber piece shot almost entirely in close-ups within a half-renovated farmhouse where a mystery of irresponsibility and theft unfolds over weeks and months. The movie depicts only “working hours” in an effort to explore the fragile, porous boundaries between employment and personal life.

Formally, the world and cinematography were built in the 3D video game engine, Unreal Engine. As a hybrid between 3D animation and “indie” film, THE MISCONCEIVED takes full advantage of the new ability to shoot in virtual worlds utilizing motion capture, facial capture, and a marketplace of 3D architectural and character models to create an uncanny mirror to contemporary society (notably, not using generative AI), and produce a truly independent, feature-length movie no traditional film companies were willing to support. In many ways, the movie is an argument for and against its right to exist.

PRODUCER STATEMENT | Joey Frank

THE MISCONCEIVED is a totally constructed movie about an artist accidentally employing an old friend while constructing a house. At times, the plot feels uncomfortably “too real,” yet the entire film has been made in a video game engine called “unreal.” James N. Kienitz Wilkins in THE MISCONCEIVED (2026), makes structural films that bring a smile to me when I step back and see them as a whole object. Remodeling and home renovation are part of the humor, with mundane frustrations feeling all the more absurd rendered as digital building materials.

My personal rough and ready recap of James N. Kienitz Wilkins’ catalog starts with a film called TESTER (2015). In a program of experimental films, I asked myself, “what am I looking at?” The footage was a mysterious single shot of a store where even more mysterious men came and left. The audio was a hardboiled Neo-noir narration of James’ voice as director, detective, and maybe stooge on the run. Afterwards, I found out that James had been researching certain video cameras on eBay to purchase for his

then-upcoming feature *THE PLAGIARISTS*. One of the cameras he purchased had a tape in it, a tape that had apparently been used to test the camera and then left on while the camera was placed down on the counter filming the shop. That thirty minutes of accidental footage was a portal and an object, and became the subject of *TESTER* under a dense narration written and performed by Wilkins. The narration is totally compelling, as is the narration for other award-decorated shorter films like *THIS ACTION LIES* (2018) and *INDEFINITE PITCH* (2016), but they are structural films because they can be understood in a simply reduced structural way.

Just to write a little more on his catalog, understanding *TESTER* provides a window into other films like *REPUBLIC* (2017) where the visual is a single gradient that goes from black to white, spending most of the time as gray. As a feature film with such a simple gesture, I thought it was cool that it found an audience, here is a link to the trailer and an article that accompanied it streaming on Mubi. *STILL FILM* (2022) is similar to *TESTER* in that it arose from an eBay purchase of a 35mm film slide carousel portfolio of a Hollywood set photographer from the 1990s. Each slide is a part of a familiar major motion picture but also likely a never-before-seen image used for internal use as part of a film production. I saw *STILL FILM* at BAM a few years ago and being inside of a movie theater itself felt like it completed the sculpture of the film.

I want this writing to be more about *THE MISCONCEIVED* than anything else, but I think we might as well discuss *THE PLAGIARISTS* (2019) which serves as sort of prequel in that both films have the same character Tyler at different places in his life, and both are co-written by Robin Schavoir. Part of the compelling energy in *THE PLAGIARISTS* was the honest and also funny aspirational energy of cinematographer/filmmaker Tyler, talking about wanting to use the same type of vintage video camera that *THE PLAGIARISTS* was shot on. There's another deep found object in this film, a passage from Karl Knausgård's novel *My Struggle*. Without getting lost in that text or some of the characters are filmed separately, did not meet each other in real life, yet are seamlessly incorporated into conversations with each other, I want to just flag that *THE PLAGIARISTS* was a proper low-budget indie film, but as a structural artwork it also had to be reified by functioning successfully as a low-budget indie film, play in festivals like Berlin and New Directors, finding a streaming platform. In that sense the film was the dream of its protagonist Tyler, his mundane life turned into a movie without him knowing it.

THE MISCONCEIVED is a film about labor, construction both of the movie itself and the digital 3D-rendered house within the film. The characters are rendered through a sort of digital puppetry, real accomplished downtown NY theater actors in motion capture suits. When I write that the film has been laboriously constructed by James N. Kienitz Wilkins in the software, I mean that instead of hiring animator hotshots (like he did to capture the mo-cap itself) or students or even people on the other side of the world who were already versed in the software, he taught himself how to make the film. *THE MISCONCEIVED* seems full of restraint in a medium with infinite options but it also has the DIY energy of someone picking through infinite options to make exact the level of

detail of their want and ability. In this way, the production of THE MISCONCEIVED provides an alternative to AI. One person brings the world into existence but through laboring in the software instead of prompting an LLM to generate the rest.

The film asks the question of why make a feature film in today, and whether it's Tyler's personal circumstance after art school or Mikey's townie-ness that make their dreams of filmmaking more unlikely in today's cinema landscape or theirs shares in the storied perennial plight of filmmaker wannabes. THE MISCONCEIVED relishes in the mundane details of building the house in an un-alive world, where the physics of computer sawdust and artificial daylight timed into the digital weather in upstate New York. There's a real sense of Art in the noise, both the plot and the misconceived object of the film itself.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

JAMES N. KIENTITZ WILKINS | Director, Co-Writer

James N. Kienitz Wilkins is a filmmaker, artist and writer based in New York City. His work has screened widely with premieres at film festivals including TIFF, Berlinale, NYFF, Locarno, Rotterdam, CPH:DOX, ND/NF, Viennale, MoMA Doc Fortnight, and beyond. In 2017, he was included in the Whitney Biennial. Retrospectives of his work have been presented at RIDM (Montreal, 2017) and Metrograph Cinema (NYC, 2024). Features include STILL FILM (2023), THE PLAGIARISTS (2019), THE REPUBLIC (2017), COMMON CARRIER (2017), PUBLIC HEARING (2012). His writing has appeared in Filmmaker Magazine, Triple Canopy, the Brooklyn Rail, and MUBI Notebook.

ROBIN SCHAVOIR | Co-Writer, Motion Capture Performer

Robin Schavoir is a writer and director based in upstate New York. He co-wrote and co-directed THE PLAGIARISTS, which premiered at the Berlinale and screened at New Directors/New Films; it is currently streaming via Metrograph. His other writing credits include THE REPUBLIC (2017), which premiered on MUBI. He recently premiered his first play, THE JAG, and is currently finishing production on his second feature film, FROGS.

EMILY DAVIS | Producer, Assistant Director, Motion Capture Performer

Emily Davis is an actor, producer and writer based in New York City and Dallas, Texas. This is her third collaboration with filmmaker James N. Kienitz Wilkins. Their films have screened at the Berlinale, DMZ Docs, MoMA's Doc Fortnight, New Directors/New Films, Viennale, and more. She is a graduate of NYU, where she studied theater and neurolinguistics. Her writing has been developed with the support of The Listowel International Playwriting Residency and the NYC-based Mercury Store. As a producing partner of the critically acclaimed theater company, Half Straddle, with whom she has made original work for 15 years, she produced and starred in the celebrated Broadway

docudrama *IS THIS A ROOM*, for which she received a Lucille Lortel Award, an Obie Award, and a Drama Desk Award for her performance.

JOEY FRANK | Executive Producer

Joey Frank is an artist living and working in Brooklyn, NY. He produced and assistant directed the documentary feature, *MANDA BALA (SEND A BULLET)*, which was awarded Grand Jury prize at Sundance 2007, and for which he received the Cinema Eye Award in 2008. He has directed several music videos including “Me and Michael” & “Nothing to Declare” for MGMT, and “A Given Thing” for Weyes Blood.

PETER BURR | Motion Capture Engineer, Co-Producer

Peter Burr is an artist who transforms complex computational systems into emotional, sensory experiences through large-scale immersive environments. Previously, Burr worked under the alias Hooliganship and founded the video label Cartune Xprez. His experimental animation practice has been recognized by a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Creative Capital Grant, and a Sundance New Frontier Fellowship, and presented at the Museum of Modern Art, the Barbican Centre, Documenta 14, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Centre Pompidou.

PAUL DALLAS | Co-Producer, Voice of “Kirby”

Paul Dallas is a Canadian-American writer and filmmaker based in Brooklyn. He co-wrote the HBO docu-drama *REALITY*, which won a 2023 Peabody Award. His film producing credits include the documentaries *HALSTON* (CNN Films/Amazon), the 2023 NAACP Image Award winner *INVISIBLE BEAUTY* (Magnolia Pictures)—both of which premiered at Sundance. He also produced the acclaimed indie comedy *THE PLAGIARISTS* (New Directors/New Films). His directorial debut comedy/drama *CLEAN ME* premiered at the 2024 New/Next Film Festival. His writing on film has appeared in *Artforum*, *BOMB*, *Extra Extra Magazine*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, the *Village Voice*, and elsewhere.

EMILE KLEIN | Sound Designer

Emile Klein works in sound and image. His collaborations with journalists and filmmakers have been presented by institutions including MoMA, NYFF, Locarno, Visions Du Reel, the Biggs Museum, NPR, Radiophrenia. A UnionDocs Colab alumnus, his projects have been covered by publications including the *NYTimes*, the *New Yorker*, *Vice*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, *Mother Jones*, and *GQ*. He resides in California.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

JESSE WAKEMAN | Voice and Body of “Tobin”

Jesse Wakeman is a New York based filmmaker and actor whose work has played at SXSW, New Directors/New Films, Rooftop Film Festival, AFI, and the Locarno International Film Festival. He is the co-creator, writer and star of the Roughhouse-produced 2016 feature, DONALD CRIED. He was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award in 2016. Jesse was the Director of Photography on the 2021 award winning feature documentary, WHO WE ARE: A CHRONICLE OF RACISM IN AMERICA and is currently in production with the same team on the documentary series, ANOTHER COUNTRY. He is the co-writer of the award winning narrative feature BRUCE!!!. He has shown films at The Fridman Gallery, MOCADA, The Invisible Dog, Anthology Film Archives, The Neiman Gallery, and The Fischer Landau Center for Art. He holds an MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University.

JOHN MAGARY | Voice of “Tyler”

John Magary grew up in Dallas, Texas. He has written and directed a number of films, among them THE SECOND LINE (Sundance, SXSW), THE BIG TRIM (featured on the Criterion Channel), and his debut feature film THE MEND, which played at festivals around the world, including SXSW, Entrevues Belfort (Jury Award), Torino, and IndieLisboa. For THE MEND, John received a Gotham nomination for the Bingham Ray Breakthrough Director Award and an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best First Screenplay. A critically acclaimed editor, John worked on FIT MODEL (dir. Myna Joseph, NYFF), LOVE AFTER LOVE (dir. Russell Harbaugh, Tribeca), and two films directed by Nathan Silver, THIRST STREET (Tribeca) and BETWEEN THE TEMPLES (Sundance, Berlin). He has received support from the Jerome Foundation, the Film at Lincoln Center NYFF Artists Academy, and the Sundance Directors and Screenwriters Labs.

JESS BARBAGALLO | Voice and Body of “Mikey”, Body of “Thelonious”

Jess Barbagallo is a theater artist and poet based in New York City. Works include: GREY-EYED DOGS (Dixon Place - Mondo Cane commission), KAREN DAVIS DOES THE CLUB, ETC. (LaMama ETC, Brooklyn Arts Exchange), GOOD YEAR FOR HUNTERS (New Ohio Ice Factor Festival), MY OLD MAN AND OTHER STORIES (Dixon Place), BEACHES IN WINTER (NYU - Experimental Theater Wing), WEEKEND AT BARRY’S/LESBIAN LIGHTHOUSE (Abrons Art Center - commission), ANALOG INTIMACY (Prelude ‘23 - Park Avenue Armory Artist Studio), THE PUZZLERS + THE PUZZLERS 2: BLACK BOX (The Exponential Festival), LAUGHING IN LOS ANGELES (Adult Film/Luv Story Bar), and CEMETERY SOUP (Adult Film/The Brick). Directing credits include PONY (Portland Theater Festival), IT’S THAT TIME OF THE MONTH (Soho Rep, Obie Award - Special Citation), THE LAST PODCAST ON EARTH (The Tank), and ANTIGONICK (Big Dance Theater/Austin Peat State University). Jess has recently performed in Agnes Borinsky’s THE TREES, Amanda Horowitz’s BAD STARS, Jerry Liebllich’s THE BARBARIANS, Jordan Baum’s 21ST CENTURY PRINCESS, and Ben Gassman’s ADULT RELATIONSHIPS. Additionally, he has collaborated on performance works created by Tania Bruguera,

Andrea Geyer, Tina Satter/Half Straddle, Theater of 2HC and its Dyke Division, Big Dance Theater, the Goat Exchange, and the Builders Association. Film credits include: *The Misconceived* (dir. James N. Kienitz Wilkins) and *Sleep Training* (dir. Sunita Prasad).

RACHEL LIN | Voice and Body of “Gwen”

Rachel Lin is a Brooklyn-based actor and writer. She appeared on season 2 of *LAW & ORDER: ORGANIZED CRIME*, as the franchise's first East Asian detective, Victoria Cho. Other TV: *BLACK CAKE* (Hulu), *BULL* (CBS), *POSE* (F/X). Her short film, *GREAT LISTENER*, screened at the Asian American International Film Festival, and the Brooklyn and Phoenix Film Festivals. Her solo show, *DEAR JOHN*, will be playing at HERE Arts Center, NYC, March 2026.

CALLIE HERNANDEZ | Voice of “Lexy”

Callie Hernandez is an actor, writer and filmmaker. She is known for her performances in Ridley Scott's *ALIEN: COVENANT*, Damien Chazelle's *LA LA LAND*, A24's *UNDER THE SILVER LAKE*, HBO Max's *THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT*, and Pete Ohs' *JETHICA*. She can currently be seen in Rachel Sennott's *I LOVE LA* and Albert Birney's *OBEX*. In 2023, she founded an in-house film studio which yielded feature films *INVENTION* (2025), for which she won a Pardo for Best Performance at Locarno 2024, and Pete Ohs' *THE TRUE BEAUTY OF BEING BITTEN BY A TICK* (2026). She is currently working on her upcoming feature, *UNTITLED EROTICA* (2026).

J. DIXON BYRNE | Voice of “Widgey”

J. Dixon Byrne is an award winning SAG/AFTRA actor, author, producer, and film advisor. An early member of The Villanova Theater Group, and student at HB Studios, New York, he has performed in a variety of local and New York City stages, multiple TV commercials and has appeared in over forty films. His work has appeared at Berlinale, Cannes, The Whitney Biennial in New York, The Tate Modern in London, Sundance, and various festivals worldwide, and can be seen on Amazon Prime, iTunes, Memory Channel, MUBI, The Criterion Channel, and Tubi. He was executive producer for Lodge Kerrigan's groundbreaking first feature, *CLEAN, SHAVEN*, as well as *RESENTMENT (OBRAZA)*, by award winning writer/director, Gleb Osatinski, which premiered at Berlinale 2024 and won The Mark Braunstein Award for Best Narrative Short at the 2024 Woodstock Film Festival.

THEODORE BOULOUKOS | Voice of “Thelonious”

Theodore Bouloukos is a New York-based actor whose international performance work encompasses principal roles in independent narrative cinema, experimental theatre, and project collaborations with numerous visual artists working in video, voice, painting, sculpture, photography, live performance and tableaux vivants. He is a member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA.

NILE HARRIS | Voice of “Orinoco”

Nile Harris is a performer and director of live art. He’s done a few things (currently, Whitney Biennial 2026), and hopes to do a few more, God willing.

LUCY WALTERS | Voice and Body of “Caitlin”

Lucy Walters can be seen in the upcoming films, CAPSIZED opposite Lily Rabe; THE SNARE, opposite Cassady McClincy Zhang; and THE ARBORIST, starring as the titular role. Other films include Neil LaBute’s HOUSE OF DARKNESS, and Tribeca Audience Award Winning, HERE ALONE. She was a series regular for three seasons on the Starz TV show, POWER, and for three seasons on Epix’s GET SHORTY. Raised in Texas, she lives in Brooklyn with her partner and son.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

VOICE PERFORMERS

Jesse Wakeman	Tobin
John Magary	Tyler
Jess Barbagallo	Mikey
J. Dixon Byrne	Widgey
Rachel Lin	Gwen
Callie Hernandez	Lexi
Theodore Bouloukos	Thelonious
Paul Dallas	Artist 1/Kirby
Nile Harris	Artist 2/Ori
Lucy Walters	Caitlin
Eugene Wasserman	Hulking Man

MOTION CAPTURE PERFORMERS

Emily Davis	Widgey/Tyler/Lexi/Kirby/Cyberpunk
Robin Schavoir	Tyler/Widgey/Ori/Hulking Man
Jess Barbagallo	Mikey/Thelonious
Jesse Wakeman	Tobin
Rachel Lin	Gwen
Lucy Walters	Caitlin

Director James N. Kienitz Wilkins

Writers Robin Schavoir

James N. Kienitz Wilkins

Executive Producer	Joey Frank
Co-Producers	Peter Burr, Paul Dallas
Assistant Director	Emily Davis
Cinematography	James N. Kienitz Wilkins
Editing/Color	James N. Kienitz Wilkins
Sound Design	Emile Klein
Dialogue Recording	Eugene Wasserman
Music	Pond5.com (Full credits in movie)
Motion Capture Lead	Matt Romein
Motion Capture Engineer	Peter Burr
Lead 3D Artist	Bini Park
Character Design	James N. Kienitz Wilkins Robin Schavoir Matt Romein
Landscape Design	James N. Kienitz Wilkins Robin Schavoir Umar Jamshed
Modeling/Rigging	Aamir Sultan, Alina Platova Sabbir Hossain
Motion Graphics Consultant	Brent Chesaneck
Pre-Production Assistant	Nazli Saatcioglu
Stock 3D Assets (Authors)	Full credits in movie
YouTube Tutorials (Users)	Full credits in movie
Legal	Film Arts Legal, PLLC

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