

Conditions

#106, 195 St Patrick St, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2Y8

ROB KULISEK

12 Variations, 2023

Video. 7 min, 49 sec

Edition of 3 + 1 AP

Bonny Poon / Conditions is proud to present Rob Kulisek's debut short film. In a hallucinatory liminal crack between real and staged, *12 Variations* decodes the virtuosic realm of classical music through the internal struggles of a gifted pianist on the brink of graduating from an elite musical conservatory.

This pseudo-biopic stars the artist, DJ, and “the Michelangelo of Parisian club kids,” Paul-Alexandre Islas, or simply, Urami. “I do what I wanna do when I wanna do it”—in this pithy line, our starlet nails the essence of what it means to bleed and permeate one's existence with resistance. Who is Paul-Alexandre Islas, aka Urami? No one and everyone. “You thought I was an elf? but I'm a troll.”

In *12 Variations*, Islas plays a fictive version of himself. Amidst rented interiors with pianos, the camera follows his uneven staccato performance. Kulisek's frenzied cuts are interspersed with longer, uncomfortable takes. Cold sweat anointing his face, Islas stutters over his lines. Has he forgotten them, or do we witness a deeper onscreen struggle? Our eyes lightly consume the actor's physiological torment. It's a space where life is both celebrated and utterly abject—Schrödinger's cat, neither dead nor alive—but *both*. Landing on this plane of boundless possibility, Kulisek captures a fleeting image and homage to our elusive friend, collaborator, and muse.

Rob Kulisek is an artist and photographer based in Paris. His work is marked by sensual, suggestive, and largely physical imagery. Capturing the high frequencies of bodies and interferences within group dynamics, his style is profoundly vibrant and contemplative. Whether in the form of exhibitions, collaborative works, experimental magazines, music labels, or installations, he plays with rigid categories to espouse soft, flexible forms. Part of a generation of artists questioning porosities between art photography and fashion photography—and shifting their commercial and aesthetic stakes—his pictures are nurtured by subcultures that emerged mostly in the 90's and the 00's in the indie-fashion photographic field. A large part of his practice is infused with anti-fashion, grunge, queer, and porn-chic.