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VICE



ART | By [i-D Staff](#) | 19 January 2020, 10:00pm

Kenturah Davis: "Success for me is more personal than professional"

The visual artist shares with Rihanna how she keeps moving forward.

This story originally appeared in i-D's 'Rihannazine' Special Edition, no. 01, 2020. [Order your copy here](#). For this one-off project, Rihanna put a series of questions to the women shaping culture today, and invited them to share their visions for 2020.

Can you introduce yourself?

My name is Kenturah Davis, and I'm a [visual artist](#).

Can you define success?

Success for me is more personal than professional. It's about some stage of growth. So I'd say perhaps my biggest successes are the moments when I've felt like I've found my voice, even if that's meant abandoning what I thought was important, and finding a new path.

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What do you consider to be your biggest failure?

I would say that failure is hard for me to think through, because it sounds finite. With everything I do I try and think about what I can learn from it, whether I made a mistake or not.

As we're heading into 2020, what are you taking with you into this year, and what are you leaving behind in 2019?

I am taking my fanny pack, and I'm taking shea butter because it's cold and I need to stay moisturised. Something I'm leaving behind is indecisiveness. I want to be more committed to the ideas I have, and just go for it without doubting myself.

If you could ask Rihanna one question, what would it be?

I would say to her: think of an experience you had that was really strange or mysterious, that you found difficult to describe. If you could invent a new word to describe that experience, what would that be?



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Kenturah's 2020 manifesto

Lately, I've been thinking and reading a lot about the concept of time. For all the ways that it seems to move in a linear and uncomplicated flow from the past to the present to the future, I'm fascinated by its many contradictions and complex possibilities (like multiple universes). Time insists on entangling itself with what came before and whatever comes next. Since I have not yet figured out how to harness it for an adventurous life of time travel, I'm inclined to think seriously about how to make the most of the time I have now.

As we lean into this new decade, I am encouraged to see how self-care is surfacing as a priority in many people's lives. Carving out temporal space to read some fiction, to prepare a meal with a friend, to go for a walk along the beach, to linger in front of an artwork at a museum, to meditate, to reflect, are all opportunities to resist the demand and expectation that the work we do should always have calculable results. Often, I find that the most valuable work I do involves breaking fast-paced routines to savour the moments that can prime me for noticing something new. I hope in these next 10 years that we can each pursue a life full of discovery. In that pursuit, there's the grand possibility of abandoning the conventions that set limitations on our activities, distort the truth and thwart our imagination. Let's continue to defy the terms of our environment that try to enforce false hierarchies around our hair, our skin, our bodies, our histories. I am grateful that such an important thinker and writer as Toni Morrison left us with powerful work that illuminates the potential to create our own narratives. I offer you her words, which remain perpetually apposite:

"You don't have to accept those media labels. You need not settle for any defining category. You don't have to be merely a taxpayer, or a red state, or a blue state, or a consumer, or a minority, or a majority... Although you will never fully know or successfully manipulate the characters who surface or disrupt your plot, you can respect the ones who do by paying them close attention and doing them justice. The theme you choose may change or simply elude you, but being your own story means you can always choose the tone. It also means that you can invent the language to say who you are and what you mean. But then, I am a teller of stories and therefore an optimist, a believer in the ethical bend of the human heart, a believer in the mind's disgust with fraud and its appetite for truth, a believer in the ferocity of beauty. So, from my point of view, which is that of a storyteller, I see your life as already artful, waiting, just waiting and ready for you to make it art." *Toni Morrison, Wellesley College commencement speech. 2004*

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Credits

Photography Mario Sorrenti

Styling Alastair McKimm

Hair Duffy at Streeters.

Make-up Kanako Takase at Streeters.

Nail technician Alicia Torello at The Wall Group using Chanel.

Set design Jack Flanagan at The Wall Group.

Colourist Lena Ott for Suite Caroline.

Lighting technician Lars Beaulieu.

Photography assistance Kotaro Kawashima, Javier Villegas and Jared Zagha.

Digital technician Johnny Vicari.

Styling assistance Madison Matusich and Milton Dixon.

Hair assistance Lukas Tralmer, Juli Akaneya and Allie J.

Make-up assistance Kuma and Tomoyo Shionome.



Set design assistance Colin Walker and Joe Arai.

Production Katie Fash.

Production coordinator Layla Némajanski.

Production assistance Fujio Emura.

Casting director Samuel Ellis Scheinman for DMCASTING.

Casting assistance Cicek Brown for DMCASTING.

