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Gyun Hur, "To hold gently," 2020. (Photo by Walter Wlodarczyk)

Artadia's 'When We Were Twenty-Five.' shares lessons learned by artists

CINQUE HICKS × SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

Brooklyn-based Artadia has been making grants to artists for 25 years. A new book details a few things the artists have learned over the years.

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Sample pages of *When We Were Twenty-Five.* (Book images courtesy of Artadia)

When an organization turns 25, it becomes old enough that some of those who represent the organization were barely born when the organization was new. Such is the case with the Brooklyn-based grantmaking organization Artadia and Atlanta-based José Ibarra Rizo (born 1992), one of the artist awardees who contributed to Artadia's 25-year anniversary publication *When We Were Twenty-Five.* (The dot is part of the title.) Slightly older are two other artists — printmaker and installation artist Jessica Caldas and multimedia artist Gyun Hur — whose words are also featured in the volume.

All three — along with other artists such as Nick Cave and Travis Somerville — answered the question: “Knowing what you know now, what advice would you offer your 25-year-old self?”

Artadia has been making prestigious, unrestricted grants to visual artists since 1999. Seven U.S. cities currently make up its program area: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area. Atlanta became an Artadia city in 2009 with grantees Tristan Al-Haddad, Don Cooper, Ruth Dusseault, Fahamu Pecou, Jerry Siegel, Larry Walker and Angela West. Since then, a total of 39 awards have been made to Atlanta-based artists among the 412 grantees.

WHEN WE WERE TWENTY-FIVE.

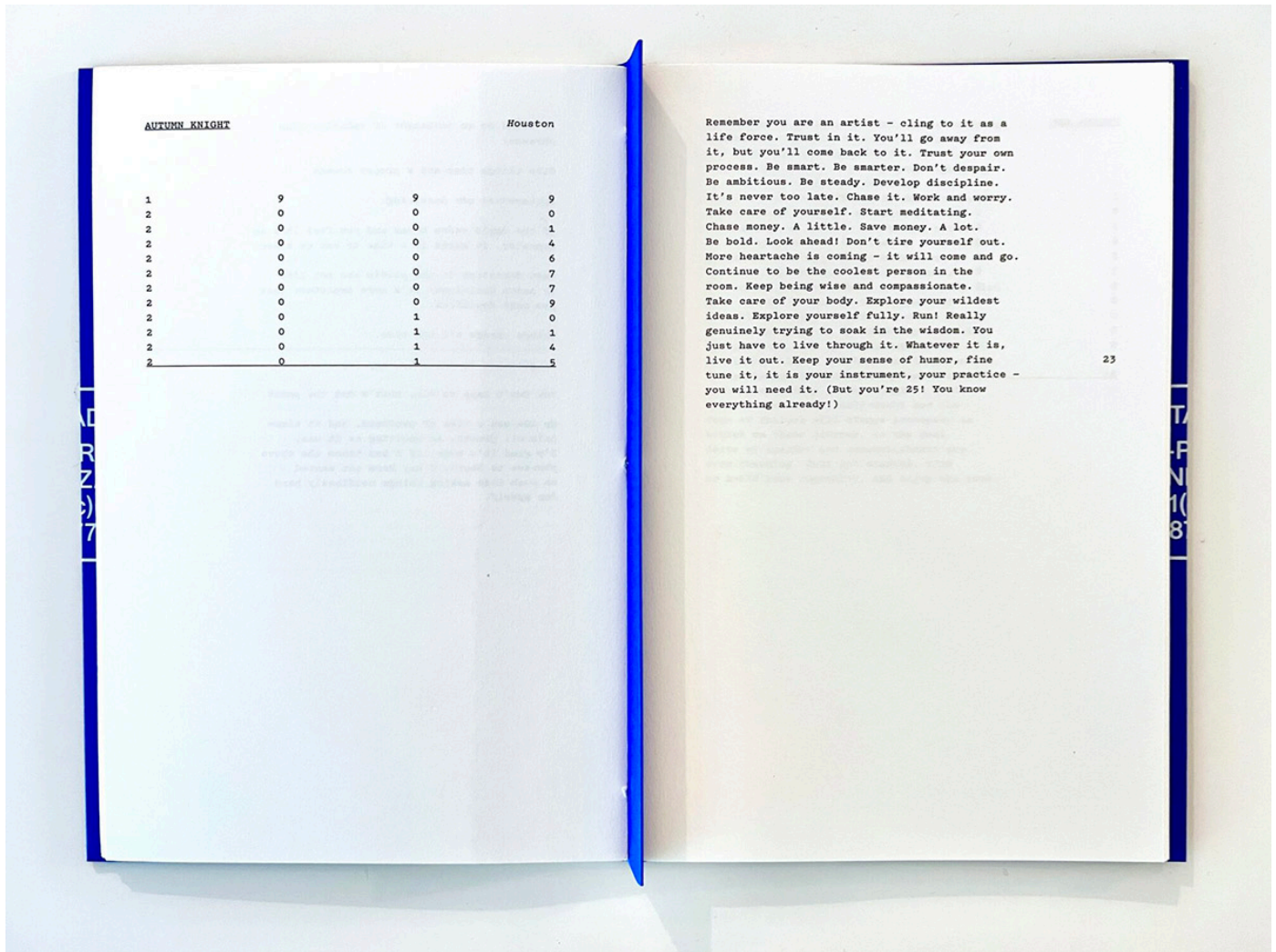
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Designed by Hamish Smyth, *When We Were Twenty-Five.* features the words of Caldas, Hur and Rizo, explaining what the years have taught each one.

Gyun Hur (2011)



Gyun Hur, I wouldn't know any other way, 2020. (Photo by David Andrako)

Look up the definition of the following words for your future reference:

Agency

Boundaries

Intentions

Literacy

Liberation



Gyun Hur, Loving Deeply In Suppleness, 2019. (Photo by Crystal Jin Kim)

Learn about tax deduction, 1099s, and index funds as soon as you can.

Acupuncture and Korean saunas have proven to be particularly healing for your body. You may not have enough money to do this right now, but you will one day. Trust me.

You are 25. It is okay if you mess up. ~~You will make mistakes many more times—on relationships, life decisions, career moves, and who knows what. Life will be gracious and you will do better over time.~~

Correction: There is no such thing as mistakes. You are just trying to figure it out. Let's give bountiful grace for this journey of yours.

Your future self is proud of you – the resilience and love that you continue to hold in the midst of all that you have gone through, all that you do not know, all that you wrestle with, all that you desire. I am holding you.

What a miracle that you are still here.

José Ibarra Rizo (2022)



José Ibarra Rizo. (Photo by Erica Carrillo; all images courtesy of Artadia unless otherwise noted)

The most valuable advice I would offer my 25-year-old self is to wholeheartedly commit to the work, embracing the process that involves experimentation and failure. It is through these experiences that we lay the foundation for a fulfilling art practice. I would also stress the significance of articulating the purpose of my work with clarity and conciseness. Developing a clear language not only communicates the essence of one's practice but also reflects a deep understanding – something challenging for any emerging artist.

Additionally, I'd encourage my younger self not to wait for opportunities but to actively seek them, fearlessly confronting the possibility of rejection. Resilience in the face of rejection is critical, as it is through these

challenges that one builds the character necessary to thrive as an artist. Having this proactive and resilient mindset would ultimately pave the way for a more enriching and successful artistic journey.



José Ibarra Rizo, Sk8ers, 2021.



José Ibarra Rizo, Limbeth & Karim, 2021.



José Ibarra Rizo, Mario's Garden, 2021.

Jessica Caldas (2023)



Jessica Caldas. (Photo by Brandon Barr)

To me at twenty-five: although it is true your enthusiasm and eagerness will eventually pay off, it is when you learn that slowness, consistency, and time spent meandering through your ideas will ultimately serve your work, your health, and your body that you really get better. The hustle may keep you full for a while, but that fullness will eventually wear you out and weigh you down. Keep the joy you derive from constant work in balance with the needs your body has, and through that balance spend more time with each of your ideas, pushing and exploring them fully. Like friends, more time spent with ideas only brings you closer to knowing and understanding them wholly.



Jessica Caldas, The Endeavor Funeral Procession, 2021.



Jessica Caldas, The Endeavor, 2021.



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