

LUBOV

break

Take a Break with Gallery Owner Francisco Correa Cordero

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We met Francisco Correa Cordero when we went to the opening night of Jenna Westra's Parts of Some Quartet, Fruits at his TriBeCa gallery, Lubov. Approximately three seconds after meeting him, Kiana and I were silently eye-communicating about the best way to ask him if he would be interested in a full length interview.

A week later, we sat down with him at Humblefish, just a few blocks from Lubov, to talk about his path to gallery ownership and life. Though he came to New York as a photography student at SVA, Cordero realized that there was something he'd rather be doing. "I started working in galleries and I was just loving so much working with artists, rather than making artwork. It just felt much more gratifying than making my own work."

When we asked him about the journey that brought him to Lubov, Cordero thinks for a moment and then tells us, "I just tried to take a break from work and tried to do my own thing. So I came up with an idea and I pitched it to a gallery called Apexart which is actually just a block away! And they loved it. They liked it and I was like, that's amazing! My girlfriend and I actually organized it together... and it was a huge success.

"And so I started working in galleries and I thought, I kind of wanted to do that again, you know sometimes you have these periods of time of work and sometimes it's just not working for you. And I was having a moment like that and I thought, I had some idea and I was like what if I pitch it to some space, to some gallery, and see if they want to do it. I was also thinking maybe that first



Photo by Natalie Yang

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time was just chance. I was like would I be able to do it again? Was it really luck or was the proposal actually interesting and appealing to them?”

After pitching and running a few more projects, Cordero began to feel like this might become an addiction, “When doing these things, it ends, and I’m already looking forward to the next thing. It’s sort of addictive. So that’s probably how I started. I was doing one and I was like well maybe I can do another one, I can go on to the next project. So now that that thing was over, I was like I have to do something else. I started coming up with some ideas and I came up with one, I was kind of obsessed with this exhibition idea.



Photo by Kiana Toossi

“I pitched it to a bunch of places, nobody wanted to do it, galleries, artist-run spaces, alternative arts organizations, nobody wanted it to host it and so I was like spending hours researching who else could do it. Basically looking up spaces in New York and Brooklyn that could accommodate a show. I was just doing so much research that one night I had a dream that I was doing the project but in a hotel room. There was artwork under the bed, in the closet, in the television.”

It was then that he found the intimate space that would become Lubov, just a few minutes walk from his office, “I found that tiny space, and like I was saying, I work just a block away and I thought this is just so convenient and I can be just open on the weekends and if someone wants to make an appointment I can just step out for ‘lunch,’ or I’m gonna get some coffee I’ll be right back!”

He signed a six-month lease and immediately went to work.

“I finally found an artist, a friend that I had met many many years ago, like in 2010, and this was in 2016 and I hadn’t talked to this person since, maybe just liking each other’s Facebook posts. That was our only interaction in like 5 years and he lived in Chicago and I really liked his work so I called him and I was like do you wanna do a show here, I just signed the lease for this tiny room and he was having anything going on, he had just graduated from an MFA program at the School of Art Institute and he was totally down and he drove his work in a van from Chicago! It took him like a week because he couldn’t find a van large enough. He’s a painter and everything was in crates and there was a huge wooden box for each one. He drove and a week later he was here and

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we were hanging his work.”

Since that first show, Cordero feels that he’s been able to keep the energy and the environment pretty much unchanged. “It hasn’t changed at all. It’s still zero budget. At one point, I started hiring someone that could be there during weekdays because I could only be there on weekends because I was working so at one point I decided that I should have someone to be there when I’m not, just to give the opportunity for writers and critics to stop by, besides the weekends. And that helped a lot. I mean people are slowly starting to find out about it. But very slowly. Like at first no one was coming except for my friends, and they were just coming because I had left over beer from the opening but I still appreciated their coming. It started feeling like a little community around the space.

“This is the 11th exhibition. So I normally just do one artist per show like a solo exhibition. Except for the winter when it’s the coldest months, I try to do a group show because I feel like that’s going to bring more people in, otherwise nobody’s going to want to come. I feel like every artist will bring their own groups of friends and the community, because when it’s really cold, no one wants to leave the house. So that proved to be a good strategy, so I have a winter group show instead of a summer group show which is what people normally do.



Photo by Natalie Yang

“Also the space is so awkward and small that I like when artists utilize that. So if you saw in some of my previous shows, they kind of engage with the space. I’ve had artists that paint murals on them, I had someone who did cloudscales on the walls. I like artists that want to utilize the space and want to transform it.”

Even though Lubov began as a way to take a break from his day job, Cordero admits that it can sometimes feel like work. “It doesn’t feel like work work because it’s not a burde in

that sense, and because I love it, but I do wake up sometimes and think what, did I get myself into! Just because I don’t have weekends anymore. It’s starting to be a lot to handle.

“At this point to me it feels like I’m putting my entire paycheck towards the space so that’s why I’m like broke all the time...and yeah, I can’t just sleep in anymore. For some reason I thought that hours on the weekends [should be] 10-6. Most galleries were open on the weekend from noon to 6...My thinking was that if I’m open, people will come earlier! I’d have an advantage.”

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The sentiment that Kiana and I first connected with in the crowded gallery, the opening night of Parts of Some Quartet, Fruits, was Cordero's tireless work ethic, and his tendency to relax by making more work for himself. When we asked him how he takes a break from everything, even Lubov he says, "I don't think I have time! I have no time. Cooking, eating? Stress eating? I thought before I was doing this, I felt like I was maybe spending money on eating out and things like that and I feel like [now] I'm using my resources and my time better. I feel like if I wasn't doing this, I would just be going out everyday. There's some days where I'm at work and I just had to leave and get a drink. It feels better. It feels like I'm doing something for the artists also... because I feel like the best I can do for the artists is give them the shows and the exposure, try to sell some of the work so the artist can make some money, or get some press. I feel like those are the three main things I could do for the artist. So that's what takes most of my time mostly."

Francisco Correa Cordero is the owner of Lubov, a gallery in the Tribeca neighborhood of New York City.

<https://breakjournal.com/culture/2018/4/29/take-a-break-with-gallery-owner-francisco-correa-cordero>

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