




EYE / PEOPLE

# Argentinian Abstract Artist Ruben Alterio Makes His London Debut

The Paris-based artist's arrival at Osborne Studio Gallery is proof that cross-channel alliances are going strong.

By [Samantha Conti](#) on March 22, 2019



 Cabaret La Banane Bleue by Ruben Alterio who is making his London debut at Osborne Studio Gallery.  
Courtesy

**SHAPE SHIFTING:** As Brexit grinds ahead with all of its cross-channel animosity and anxiety, Londoners continue to throw open their arms to foreign talent, and business. Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has said from the start that, Brexit or not, London is open for business, and Osborne Studio Gallery Belgravia has turned those words into action.

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A top gallery known worldwide for its sporting paintings and bronzes, Osborne has changed gears this month and invited the Argentinian-born, Paris-based artist Ruben Alterio to show of his abstract works — new and old — in the space on Motcomb Street, not far from Knightsbridge.

The show, which runs until April 4, features Alterio's moody works made with broad, sensual sweeps and warm earth tones, such as russet, corn, indigo and teal. There is a rowboat and water inspired by a muddy river in the artist's hometown of Buenos Aires; rounded elephant-like shapes and an oyster resembling a large, kohl-rimmed eye. A big brush stroke of dark sky hangs over a minuscule cityscape while a structure resembling a naïf beach tent looks as if it was cut from colored paper.



**Riachuelo** by Ruben Alterio, who is making his London debut at Osborne Studio Gallery. Courtesy

The dapper, 70-year-old Alterio, who dresses a little like Charles Baudelaire, with his cravat, dark jacket and waistcoat, works from his north-facing studio in Paris' Quartier Pigalle. It's the same building where Pierre-Auguste Renoir painted. (The late Impressionist was on the first floor, while Alterio is on the fourth.)

Alterio said his strokes and shapes are inspired by calligraphy and sculpture, and that he wants to “eliminate the extraneous, and concentrate on very simple things, shapes and patterns,” whether they are bears, rowboats, bananas, murky rivers or storm clouds.



The artist describes some of his work as a “dream in a dream in a dream,” and said he loves the freedom that abstraction gives him.

There is great whimsy to his work, as in the painting, “Cabaret La Banane Bleue,” a blue hammock-like shape on a black and olive background, which, to him, looks like a banana — and an old-fashioned cabaret sign.

Alterio refuses to view art as something that’s linear, one reason why the works on show are a mix of new and old.

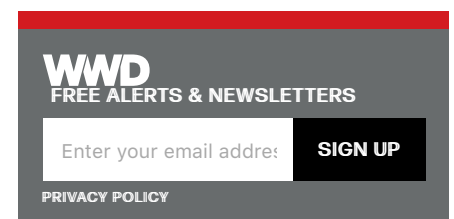
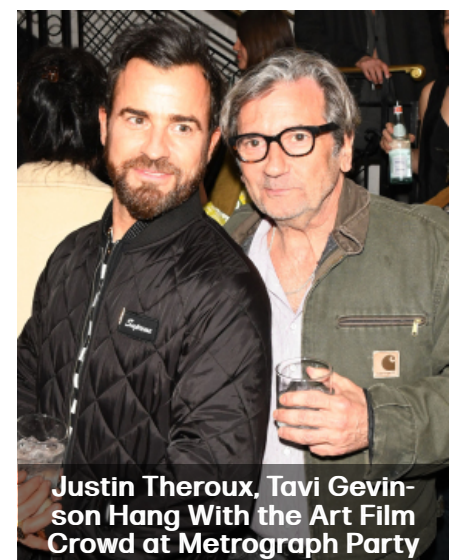
“I believe art is atemporal. Whether it was painted in Lascaux or by Picasso, art is art. Art is contemporary, it’s Da Vinci, it’s in Egypt, and it’s in nature. An artist sees art everywhere,” said Alterio, whose father also painted and who began studying at Buenos Aires School of Fine Arts when he was 13 years old.



**Projecto Royan** by Ruben Alterio, who is making his London debut at Osborne Studio Gallery. Courtesy

In addition to painting, he has designed theater sets and costumes, worked with Prosper Assouline and on retail-related projects. In the late Nineties, Neiman Marcus chose Alterio to illustrate its fall Art of Fashion campaign. He painted abstract interpretations of fashions by 36 brands and designers including Gucci, Escada and Ann Demeulemeester.

His private and corporate collectors include Neiman Marcus, Jean Louis Scherrer, Champagne Tattinger, Maison Assouline, designer Junko Shimada and the advertising magnate Pierre Callegari. Although Alterio has been showing in galleries across



Europe, South America and the Middle East for decades, he only made his U.S. debut in 2017 at T Gallery in Southampton, New York.

**Projecto Brooklyn by Ruben Alterio, who is making his London debut at Osborne Studio Gallery.**

Geoffrey Hughes, director of Osborne Studio Gallery, said he likes taking a detour from the gallery's usual route every once in a while, and added he couldn't resist "the physicalities and shapes" of Alterio's works, which range in price from 4,000 pounds to 8,000 pounds.

Hughes originally met the artist through Laurence Bet-Mansour, the French-born founder of Art in Style, a company that represents Latin American artists and is based in London, a city that's getting on with business.

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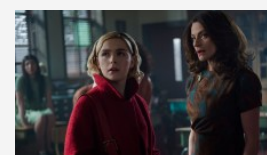
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