

# THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

A maverick to the core, Ivan Terestchenko takes an unorthodox approach to both leisure and work. Witness his latest 'holiday' on a Tyrrhenian island, where he hurled himself headlong into creativity, rather than a hammock. The friends he literally made there – quasi-classical figures that populate his paintings and pottery – are now on their way to Pierre Passebon's acclaimed gallery in Paris. Meanwhile, back home in Tuscany, the *Wol* stalwart gives us a peek inside his studio and subconscious

By [Ivan Shaw](#)  
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Artist and long-time *Wol* contributing photographer [Ivan Terestchenko](#) did not spend his last summer holidays on a chaise longue with a good book or lying by a body of water indulging in lethargic contentment. Rather, leaving his home in the [Chianti](#) region of Italy, he headed for the small island of Giannutri, which lies just off the coast of Tuscany in the Tyrrhenian Sea, and arrived feeling 'fuelled by a large roll of beautiful paper that I had brought with me'.

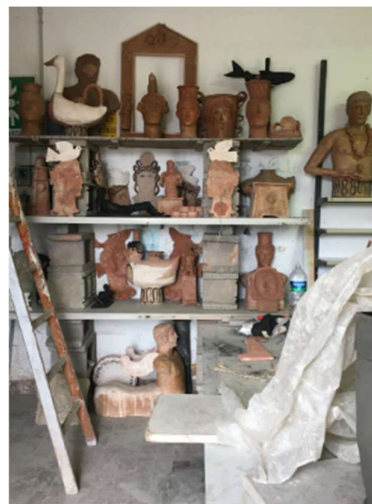
This wasn't Terestchenko's first time visiting Giannutri by any stretch. Each time he arrives, he says, 'I am instantly struck by its [Mediterranean charm](#); it triggers a deep sense of joy and lightness that I simply cannot resist, nor resist putting it on paper.' But this trip proved to be markedly different.

‘What unfolded was entirely unplanned – the work emerged almost as if from a trance. Everything I wanted to convey, yet could never predict or imagine, began to flow with an effortless freedom.’

The paintings that emanated from Terestchenko’s excursion make up a central component of his latest exhibition, *Aqua Astra Anima* (‘Water, Stars, Soul’), at Pierre Passebon’s Galerie du Passage in Paris, which opens this month. This is the artist’s third exhibition at the gallery and one that reflects his broad, deeply personal creative process. Terestchenko is not only an extremely accomplished painter, photographer and ceramicist, but also sculpts and even produced a lamp, mirror and a large terracotta of a triton riding a dolphin for the exhibition.

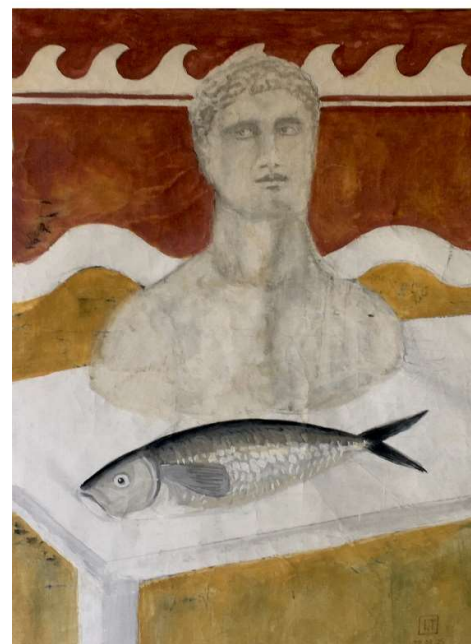


I probe Terestchenko about his process and he is quick to point out that no matter the form that he is working in, ‘the original idea is always an imaginary drawing and the root of my inspiration remains the same across every medium’. As the things unfolds, he revels in what he refers to as the ‘fail’ in the plan for the work; it’s the deviation from his original intention that is most exciting and ‘the most authentic part of the work’. He doesn’t expect to have his original inspiration realised because ‘I don’t seek to be reassured; I wish to be surprised’.



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When not on holiday, Terestchenko is busy creating work in his studio in the Tuscan hills. He finds the ‘ancient civilised landscape’ to be both grounding and inspiring. ‘The gentle rhythm of the vineyards and olive groves punctuated here and there by a majestic palazzo is a constant source of awe.’ Although the surrounding landscape reverberates with beauty, he is adamant about his need for an unadorned studio space. ‘There is nothing pretty about it. It is plainly, even astutely, functional – which for me is a prerequisite for true work.’ Moreover, he believes in having a deep divide between where he lives and where he works: ‘There is no relationship between my studio and my home. It is vital to maintain that distance, so one doesn’t fall into the temptation of creating something merely decorative.’





When not working, Terestchenko loves swimming in the sea. In his early twenties, ‘with my first pocket money, I would head to Greece during summer. The sheer bliss of the shimmering sea as I island-hopped from Crete to the Cyclades left me with an everlasting sense of mystical wonder.’ Not surprisingly, fish (often at play with tritons) have a prominent role throughout the exhibition, from the plates to the lamp, screen and paintings. For the artist, fish ‘embody a certain minimalist elegance in their existence that I find endlessly surprising. They appear to glide through the water without bearing “the whips and scorns of time”.’ One might say the same about Terestchenko himself.

***Ivan Terestchenko, ‘Aqua, Astra, Anima’ at Galerie du Passage in Paris from 18 March – 25 April. Visit [galeriedupassage.com](http://galeriedupassage.com)***