

CI VUOLE PAZIENZA

Panel 1 | The Early Years

Andrea Pazienza was born in San Benedetto Del Tronto, in the Italian province of Ascoli Piceno, on 23 May 1956. His mother, Giuliana Di Cretico, taught technical education while his father, Enrico, taught drawing and was also a talented watercolourist. He spent his childhood in the province of Foggia, both in his father's hometown of San Severo and in San Menaio, a tourist resort on the nearby Gargano promontory, together with his siblings Michele and Mariella. He started drawing at a very early age, before he even learned to talk, and he never stopped. The drawings Andrea produced as a child have been

looked after carefully by the family, and they reveal some extremely unconventional perspectives, shapes, movements, and daring angles.

After attending primary and middle school in San Severo, he moved to Pescara while still very young to study at the “Giuseppe Misticoni” secondary school for artistic studies. Here, as well as making friends with the local artist Tanino Liberatore, he met and spent time with Sandro Visca and Albano Paolinelli, who were both teachers and artists. Together with his new acquaintances and gallery owner Peppino D’Emilio, he co-founded the art collective “*Convergenze*” and began to exhibit his works in collective and national exhibitions. The works he produced were mostly in a 70 x 100 cm format and he employed various techniques. The felt-tip pen was particularly prevalent, resulting

in works that were almost like large comic strips full of quotations and packed with biographical, political, and social elements, testimony to his interest in the artistic avant-garde of the twentieth century, Pop Art, as well as illustrations and advertising graphics.

“Pazienza was a painter who was well-suited to comics due to his need to narrate not only with images but also with words, and also because of the speed with which he could express his creativity. As he shied away from all forms of stable application” (Enrico Fraccacreta, poet and writer, childhood friend, taken from an interview edited by Antonello Vigliaroli, March 2003).

Panel 2 | Bologna

By 1974 Andrea had finished high school and he moved to Bologna, enrolling in a degree course in Drama, Art and Music studies (D.A.M.S.). His professors include the likes of Umberto Eco, Furio Colombo and Gianni Celati. Those were the most intense years of the Student Movement. Although he was not a member of any political group, he sided with the creative wing of the Movement, quickly becoming one of the key voices within the youth scene at the time.

“He embraced ‘77 with sincerity, but he also realised that ‘77 was a little tiger he could ride. The artist hides, plays, contradicts himself, loves to present himself under different guises, behind different shields, in order to defend

himself..." (Enrico Fraccacreta, poet and writer, childhood friend, from an interview edited by Antonello Vigliaroli, March 2003)

These were tumultuous years marked by great cultural and social ferment: protests, demonstrations, changes that were hoped for and, to some extent, never happened. Years of experimentation, shaped in part by the arrival of new drugs, some of which were unknown, such as heroin that ended up trapping many young people in the web of addiction, including Andrea. In this period, his artistic interests shifted from painting to comics, a more immediate means of communication that allowed him to tell his peers about what was happening in Bologna and the foremost Italian university towns.

“I started drawing because it was inevitable. I started drawing because I had to narrate what I saw, otherwise I would most probably have been a painter.”
(Andrea Pazienza, from an interview edited by Valerio Cucchi Peretti, March 1982)

In 1977, together with Stefano Tamburini, Tanino Liberatore, Filippo Scòzzari and Massimo Mattioli, he contributed to the independent underground magazine *Cannibale*, named after a French Dada magazine of the 1920s, *Le Cannibal*, for which he produced some short stories, often featuring hilarious linguistic inventions, such as *“Why does Goofy look like he’s stoned?”* and *“Prixicel!!!”*.

Panel 3 | Pentothal

In April 1977 the first instalment of “*The Extraordinary Adventures of Pentothal*” was published in the magazine *Alter Alter*, edited by Milano Libri as a supplement to the monthly *Linus*, run at the time by Oreste Del Buono, an Italian writer, journalist, literary critic and scriptwriter. This work marked Andrea’s professional debut in the world of Italian comics, it describes a surreal journey interweaving reality and dreams, truth and hallucination, in a discontinuous and fragmentary narrative in which the protagonist is Andrea himself under the alias Pentothal, a name that is a reference or even homage to the truth serum injected by Diabolik into the people whose identity he wants to assume. A few days before Pentothal debuted, a police bullet had killed a student called

Francesco Lo Russo in Bologna, provoking lengthy clashes on the streets which became out-and-out urban guerrilla warfare: Andrea provided an account of what was happening almost live. It was a resounding success, and at only 21 years of age he rapidly became someone an entire generation looked to. The adventures of Pentothal were drawn in instalments up to July 1981, without the protagonist's pursuits reaching an actual conclusion, after which the instalments were published together in a single album by Milano Libri in March 1982. Thanks to this histrionic character, Andrea managed to establish his place in the comic strip tradition, which he proceeded to renew from within, describing his generation in a dramatic way, often using parody, depicting and narrating that mix of conflicting sentiments that characterises

historical periods which lack clarity and security. From a graphic point of view, he was capable of varying signs and styles all the time, even within the same strip, just using a few drawing tools. In the same magazine, Andrea published the stories “*Armi*” and “*Alle...op!*” in 1977.

Panel 4 | Il Male and Pertini the Partisan

From September 1978 until 1981 Andrea collaborated with the weekly satirical magazine *Il Male*, published in Rome. This was one of the most important Italian magazines and it engaged actively in politics by means of ruthless, denigrating satire; it was edited first by Pino Zac and then by Vincino, until its closure in 1982. He drew numerous cartoons, short stories, illustrations and covers for the magazine. His sharp satire was never

predicable or trivial, he focused more on customs and society than politics, which he admitted he was not that fond of. The only politician that was spared was Sandro Pertini, President of the Italian Republic from 1978 to 1985. He was the hero of a series of cartoons and covers: the one depicting Pertini feeling sorry for the kidnapping of Fabrizio De Andrè and Dori Ghezzi by the group *Anonima Sarda* earned the author and part of the editorial staff an invitation to the President's residence, the Quirinale, in September 1979. After this, Andrea began drawing a series of self-contained strips in which he was the protagonist together with the President, and together they had hilarious partisan adventures in the most disparate Italian locations. The volume "*Pertini*" was first published in 1983 by Primo Carnera Edizioni and also contained

a comic strip account of Pertini's journey as a child in search of the evils of republican Italy, grappling with the filth of Italian politics. In April 1980, in the same magazine, he began the series "*Il Partigiano*" (The Partisan), a story in which the main character, i.e., Andrea himself, gets fully kitted out to face a fictitious resistance movement on the Gargano promontory. In the same year, he made the poster for the film "*La città delle donne*" (The City of Women) by the great film director Federico Fellini.

Panel 5 | Frigidaire

In 1980, together with his friends from *Cannibale*, and with the journalist Vincenzo Sparagna in the role of editor, Andrea founded *Frigidaire*, a groundbreaking initiative in the genre at

the time, which was destined to leave a deep, indelible mark on the world of comics and on Italian culture. It was a complete communications project, drawing together comics, art, satire, literature, politics, journalistic reportage and music. A unique, polyphonic work that, in addition to the core founders, benefited from the flair of a great many other contributors who joined in and took turns over the years: cartoonists, artists, writers, photographers, journalists, etc. *Frigidaire* confronts reality problematically and interprets its own counter nature with a totally new approach and with original content. Tamburini's highly original contributions were the graphics and layout of the magazine.

“...the magazine has its own direction that has established itself above everything else. It has its own graphic presence, its singular readability, a well-defined layout [...] and now it is irreplaceable, and I stress that we and only we could ever surpass it should we decide to do something different” (Andrea Pazienza, from an interview edited by Luca Boschi, *Image* n°1, October 1983).

On the pages of this highly successful magazine, Pazienza invents one of his most successful characters, the one that best represents the generational disenchantment and malice that typified the 1980s: the cynical and ruthless Massimo Zanardi.

Panel 6 | Zanardi

In issue n.5 of *Frigidaire* that came out in March 1981, Paziienza published “*Giallo scolastico*”, an immoral story set in a high school in Bologna, full of twists and turns, where troublemakers star as the undisputed (anti)heros. This is the first time that his readers meet Massimo Zanardi, a student who has had to retake numerous school years, he carries out his criminal escapades with the complicity of his faithful companions, the handsome and narcissistic Roberto Colasanti, known as Colas, and Sergio Petrilli, known as Pietra, who is cowardly and clumsy.

“...The character’s actions are utterly despicable and deserve no indulgence nor understanding. He is simply someone to be avoided, the kind of person no one ever hopes to meet...” (Francesca Alinovi, *Frontiere d'immagini*, from the catalogue

Registrazioni di frequenze, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, 1982)

A controversial character who spawned much discussion and disagreement among both readers and sector insiders, Zanardi was, nonetheless, also greatly loved and very popular. Paziienza continued to publish Zanardi's adventures over the years in both *Frigidaire* ("Verde matematico", "Notte di Carnevale", "Pacco") and in other magazines such as *Alter Alter*, *Comic Art* and *Corto Maltese* ("Lupi", "La prima delle tre", "Cuore di mamma", "Cenerentola 1987", "La logica del fast food", "Zanardi medievale", "Zanardi at the war", "Zanna ma la vecchiezza è una Roma", etc.); his escapades were set in various places that Paziienza was fond of, like the Gargano promontory and Pescara, alternatively he

travelled through time to the Middle Ages or the trenches in the First World War.

“Zanardi is everyone’s guilty conscience, he is that schoolmate or spiteful childhood friend who humiliated us in every possible way. He is the person we hated the most but whom we most wanted to resemble, the one we were most inspired by.”
(Andrea Pazienza, from an interview edited by Thomas Martinelli, Pisa, 1981)

Panel 7 | Aficionados & other stories

In 1981 Andrea published *“Aficionados”* with Primo Carnera Edizioni, this was an ironic tale of the adventures of the crew of an Italian tank lost in the Algerian desert during World War II. The following year he published the story *“Sogno”* in the

magazine *Linus*, while in 1983 he started publishing in the magazines *Orient Express*, *Corto Maltese* and *Comic Art*, as well as in *Alter Alter*, producing stories such as “*Il segno di una resa invincibile*” and “*Finzioni*”, written by his childhood friend Marcello D’Angelo, or “*Detective Mama*”. In the meantime, he continued to exhibit frenetically: in 1982, he took part in the “*Registrazione di Frequenza*” exhibition organised by Francesca Alinovi at the Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna in Bologna, which hosted Andrea’s works together with the *Valvoline* group, which included Igort, Marcello Jori, Massimo Mattioli, Giorgio Carpinteri, Daniele Brolli and Jerry Kramsky. The following year he exhibited at the Nuages gallery in Milan and, together with Altan and Pablo Echaurren, in the exhibition “*Nuvole a go-go*” at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in

Rome. In 1984, among countless collaborations, he drew "*Piccola guida ragionata al (o del?) West*" and "*Shishna Pragma*" in Corto Maltese, "*Pasqua*" and "*Don Pepe*" in *Alter Alter*.

Panel 8 | Andrea and Music

Andrea's relationship with music was very special. Those who were lucky enough to observe him while he was drawing say that music always accompanied him when he worked. Especially Italian music. During his years in Bologna, he made friends with and followed various bands that enlivened the alternative music scene at the time, such as Gaz Nevada or Skiantos. He regularly attended the festival of Italian singer-songwriters "Premio Tenco", which is still held today in Sanremo, there Andrea made friends with

the great Italian singer-songwriters, such as Guccini, Vecchioni and Dalla, the same ones he listened to while working. Over the course of his artistic career, he illustrated numerous record covers and oversaw several design projects for Italian singer-songwriters, including: “*Passpartù*” by Premiata Forneria Marconi (Zoo Records, 1978), “*Robinson*” by Roberto Vecchioni (Polygram, 1980), “*Montecristo*” by Roberto Vecchioni (Polygram, 1980), “*Hollywood Hollywood*” by Roberto Vecchioni (CGD, 1982), “*Antipatici antipode*” by Claudio Lolli (EMI, 1983), “*Il grande sogno*” by Roberto Vecchioni (CGD, 1984), “*Cuori di Pace*” by Amedeo Minghi (RCA, 1986), “*Black out!!!*” and “*S.O.S. Brothers*” by Enzo Avitabile (Costa Est Music/EMI, 1986).

Panel 9 | Montepulciano & Marina

In 1984, Andrea left the city of Bologna and moved to Montepulciano, a delightful village nestling in the Tuscan hills near Siena. Here the peace and quiet helped him let go of his daily addiction to heroin. Mauro Paganelli's publishing house Editori del Grifo is based there, and Andrea embarked on a fruitful professional relationship as well as a deep personal friendship with Paganelli. Then in 1985 he met Marina Comandini, a young illustrator from Rome, who moved with him to Tuscany to a house in the countryside. Andrea began a new phase in his life with Marina, a period of serenity and great creativity, surrounded by nature. They married in 1986 in the temple of San Biagio in Montepulciano. The comic strip story of their honeymoon in Bali in the summer of 1986 ended up in the pages of the magazine *A.V.A.J.* with Andrea's

drawings and Marina's colours. This professional collaboration continued on many other occasions, like for the beautiful "*Favole*" (Fables), drawn for the birth of Mauro Paganelli's son Lorenzo in 1986 and published in the following years by several publishing houses.

Panel 10 | Pompeo

"It was a sunny morning in 1984 in Ascona, Switzerland, when I saw the first ten pages of Pompeo, [...] they were [...] an outline of a story that Andrea Paziienza had begun to draft with the courage and tenacity of someone who knows he is facing one of the most dramatic problems of our times. Paziienza had decided to entrust the whirlwind of emotions, doubts, turmoil and nightmares that cluttered his

brain to a black felt-tip pen and some sheets of squared paper” (Vincenzo Mollica, Preface to *Pompeo* Editori del Grifo, 1987)

In 1985, Andrea began publishing the story *Pompeo*, which was first serialised in *Alter Alter*, and then once it was complete in 1987 it was published in a single volume by Editori del Grifo with the title “*Pompeo - Fino all’Estremo*”. A true masterpiece, packed with quotations and symbolism, Andrea’s finest literary work. It is a harsh and dramatic tale, more written than drawn, in which the artist lays himself bare as never before; the character overlaps with the author, who opens himself completely to his readers, tackling the tragic issue of heroin addiction and death without any qualms, and with extreme passion and lyricism.

Pompeo is a young cartoonist and teacher of the art of comics with existential and sentimental problems as well as substance addiction. It tells a tale that is both very intimate and that of an entire generation.

“Here heroine is what alcohol or war or something else would have been in other eras. Going beyond its immediacy, Pompeo offers parallel readings that are layered like a mille-feuille [...] The real strength of the book is not in the boldness and harshness of its pages, although these reveal the courage of someone who always puts himself in the position of having nothing to lose, its strength is in the poignant sweetness and gentle progression of its words, and in the richness of its numerous neologisms”

(Marina Comandini Paziienza, from *Un mucchio di quaderni* in *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompeo*, Fandango Libri, 2011)

One of the first great Italian examples of the graphic novel, *Pompeo* remains to this day a much celebrated, topical, highly appreciated, and reinterpreted work, thanks in part to the many readings, theatrical adaptations and staged productions, among which there are those by the writer Stefano Benni and by the dancer and choreographer Giorgio Rossi's company *Sosta Palmizi*.

Panel 11 | The Mural in Naples

On 2 May 1987, in one of the pavilions of the Ente Autonomo Mostra d'Oltremare during the 4th edition of the Naples Comics Festival, Andrea created a seven

by three metre mural depicting a battle between men, horses, lions, vultures and much more in front of a crowd of fans and admirers. Using black paint and a sponge brush, with swift and confident gestures, Paziienza gave an unforgettable performance on the huge white wall, painting an extraordinary composition of horsemen and ferocious beasts without any preparatory drawings, this epic clash was completed rapidly and has only survived thanks to Luigi Bontà Polito's video footage taken at the time. In 2010, the poor structural conditions of the wall on which it was painted were assessed and it was decided that the work had to be removed, this was carried out under the direction of the architect Marisa Zuccaro. It remained visible to the public for a few years in the Latin America

pavilion of the Mostra d'Oltremare, but today the work not inaccessible or usable.

Panel 12 | Astarte & other stories

Between 1985 and 1986 he published the story "*The Legend of Italianino Liberatore*" in the magazines *Frizzer* and *Tempi Supplementari*. The album "*Tormenta*" was published in 1985 by Milano Libri Editore. From 1985 to 1988 Andrea, in addition to collaborating with Lega Ambiente by producing short stories and various illustrations of animals later brought together in the volume "*Bestiario*" (Editori del Grifo, 1992), he also drew cartoons and short stories for the satirical magazines *Tango*, an insert in the newspaper *l'Unità* directed by Sergio Staino, and *Zut*, directed by Vincino.

Among the many stories he produced in this period, it is worth mentioning “*Il perché delle anatre*”, drawn for the volume “*I diritti umani*” in 1986, “*Una estate*” (Tango, 1987), “*Campofame*” (Comic Art, 1987), based on the poem of the same name by Robinson Jeffers, “*Sotto il cielo del Brasil*”, published in 1988 in *A.V.A.J.*, the name being made up of the initials of its founders: Angese, Vincino, Andrea Pazienza and Jacopo Fo. Pazienza’s last comic strip story that remained unfinished due to his sudden, tragic death in 1988 was the first and only instalment of “*Storia di Astarte*” (Comic Art, 1988), a historical comic strip the protagonist of which is Astarte, a molossus war dog used by Hannibal during the Second Punic War, which appears to the author in a dream to tell him its story. Proof of the high degree

of maturity achieved by the author in both drawing and narration.

Panel 13 | That wretched June ...

Extravagant and over-the-top in both his private and artistic life, on the night between 15 and 16 June 1988 Andrea died suddenly at his home in Montepulciano, killed by heroin. After the funeral in the temple of San Biagio in Montepulciano, a second one was held in San Severo, his father Enrico's hometown, where Andrea is still buried. During that time, Andrea and his father had been organising their first exhibition together in Peschici, on their beloved Gargano promontory. The exhibition opened anyway on 21 July of the same year. Almost thirty-five years have now passed

since that fateful June and, instead of fading into oblivion as has happened to so many gifted artists in all fields, Andrea has constantly remained at the centre of debate and attention, both of those who work in the comics/art sector and also in the Italian cultural landscape as a whole. It is impossible to summarise the staggering quantity of works and collaborations Paz achieved in his lifetime: theatre posters and set designs, cinema posters, teaching at the Zio Feininger school in Bologna or in Umbria at Jacopo Fo's Free University of Alcatraz, advertisements, design objects and so much more. Thirty-two years of life of which only eleven years were spent working, that are worth a hundred, a thousand.

*“...and be thankful you have me, and I am a multitude” (Andrea Paziienza, from *Le straordinarie avventure di Pentothal*, Alter Alter, 1977)*

Panel 14 & 15 | How others see him

“Paziienza came into my office late one afternoon (towards the end of 1975 I’d say) and showed me his stories. I leafed through them quickly, just enough to realise that the young man had talent. I phoned Del Buono in front of him and asked if I could send him a young illustrator. That’s how the story began”

Umberto Eco, from *La bustina di Minerva* in *L'Espresso* of 10 May 1992

“In life, and now in death, Andrea Paziienza managed to represent the destiny, the abstractions, the madness,

the genius, the wretchedness of a generation that we will only summarily call that of Bologna '77"

Pier Vittorio Tondelli, from *Un weekend postmoderno: cronache degli anni Ottanta* (Bompiani, Milan, 1990)

"It was Pier Vittorio Tondelli who introduced me to Andrea Pazienza, a precocious champion of an acid, stoned world. In the introduction to a volume about Andrea Pazienza himself, Pier Vittorio called him the James Joyce of comics. [...] I have always trusted Pier Vittorio Tondelli, especially when he spoke to me about those who, like him, sang of a world full of anxiety and rejection, of freedom and self-destruction".

Fernanda Pivano, introduction to the volume *Jacques Prévert* (Fandango Libri, Rome, 2009)

“Pazienza was the greatest Italian cartoonist, the one who above all others expressed the unease of those years. He was unreliable and elusive like all brilliant artists, and he was always the protagonist of his drawings, the comic strip was always about him. Like Hitchcock always appearing in his own films. And then he always nailed it”.

Roberto Vecchioni, from the volume *La musica che gira intorno* (Edizioni Di, Castiglione del Lago, 2007)

“Andrea was akin to all ages; he could be elderly and a young child, a woman and a man, an animal or a ballpoint pen. He was eclectic and also very handsome: his eyes were alight with the joy of living. He was the originator of a great school that never

had a prize pupil, because he was inimitable, unique in his talent”.

Roberto Benigni, from the degree thesis *“Andrea Pazienza. Protagonista del Fumetto negli anni Settanta-Ottanta”* by Antonello Vigliaroli (University of Parma, Academic Year 2004/2005)

“Pazienza narrates unresolved conflicts, ideational magma, those contaminations which capture the most genuine and bubbling childhood of a Peter Pan, a Puer Aeternus, together with the aching maturity of a skillful, seasoned creator, so cultured and experienced as to seem old in the end, as if these initial achievements already contained a whole journey, fully worthy in their stentorian concentration of being considered the product of a highly industrious life”.

Antonio Faeti, from *Alle spalle di Zanardi*, in *I tesori e le isole* (La Nuova Italia, Florence, 1986)

“Paz has walked beside us over the years. He was the epitome of simplicity and talent, an inexhaustible mine of dreams and ideas. Now that he is gone, there is something missing from “youth” culture or from comics. Something is missing from Italian culture as a whole: it lacks an innovator, it lacks a poet for these years”.

Stefano Benni, from *il Manifesto* of 17 June 1988

“Storia di Astarte is a beautiful dream, Andrea Pazienza’s last. An unfinished work. It is a classic dream, one of those where when you wake up you’re at the centre of the universe, as if you had been part of the story and your role had been

an active one [...] The experiments he had conducted in previous years, pushing himself from one extreme to the other of the expressive capabilities of the language of comics, have been put back together naturally and perfectly in Storia di Astarte. There are no flaws, there is nothing manneristic, there are none of those mistakes which those who would try their hand at classic storytelling after him would commit [...] his panels are natural, even when they are just blobs of ink".

Roberto Saviano, introduction to the volume *Astarte* (Fandango Libri, Rome, 2010)

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Texts by **Antonello Vigliaroli**

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