



ANDY REMENTER

INTERVIEW BY KRISTIN FARR PORTRAIT BY CLAUDIA ZALLA

ANDY REMENTER IS *OUR* INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY. What stood out most in conversation was the revelation that, upon seeing his work, people often assume he's from across the Pond, though he's American, proving that regional styles are fading into obsolescence. While the Internet blurs the lines of geographically-based influences among artists and has broadened the pool of inspiration, Andy Rementer also soaks up the vibes of many cities and works alongside an international community of artists, representing what it means to have a globally relevant style. He creates super vibrant imagery that speaks a universal language.

Rementer doesn't readily reveal his secrets, but it always takes some digging when you're talking to an ace. His oeuvre includes exhibits around the world, high-profile illustration work, painting, animation, comics, and a new, collectible sculpture edition, the *People Blocks*. Like all of his characters, this cast is well-dressed and conveys a subtle, genuine sense of emotion and attitude.

Kristin Farr: Tell me about the process of making your *People Blocks*. Were they inspired by games or toys from childhood? And why do they have French names?

Andy Rementer: I made the People Blocks together with the Belgian company Case Studyo. They make beautiful three-dimensional objects, especially in porcelain and bronze, but we decided to do something in wood. We wanted to go beyond a stand-alone object, so we came up with this stackable/interchangeable concept. I was inspired by classic and vintage stacking toys, as well as toys from the avant-garde. The names are inspired by French new wave film characters that I admire very much.

Can you describe one of them?

Antoine Doinel, a recurring fictional character in Truffaut's movies, has long been a favorite of mine. He's very driven, but torn and listless too. Throughout the films, we see his struggles with love and life issues. He's a very interesting character who also serves as an alter ego for the director.

I saw the animated teaser for your new comic *Going West*. What's it about?

Going West is the third comic in a series created for *Apartamento* magazine. It's a collaboration with Margherita Urbani, and features the main character, Mathieu, a design-obsessed mouse with a lot of problems with love. In *Going West*, he travels to Los Angeles with the intention of meeting someone special who hasn't returned his love. On a recent trip to LA, we scouted for iconic locations to use as the backdrop for the story.

The comic is the longest and most in-depth narrative work I've ever done. To celebrate its release, we worked with an animator and sound designer to give the story another

dimension. I love what happens when motion is applied to my characters and visual world. It's something I am looking forward to pursuing further. Keep an eye on *Apartamento* to see how the story continues.

Tell me about your collaborations with Margherita.

How does your partnership work and how did you meet?

We are partners in both work and life. She is creative as well, and we met through work in Italy. Very early on, we collaborated on personal projects. And through the years, she has been a constant source of ideas and creative direction for my work. Our current and most direct collaboration is the ongoing comic story in *Apartamento*. We develop and write the stories together, and while I draw it, she plays a key role in setting the mood and color palette. We are really tuned into each other creatively, so it's an almost effortless collaboration.

Tell me more about your time in Italy.

For two years I was at Fabbrica in Treviso, Italy. It's a creative collective under Benetton with talented people from all over the world. The approach was to communicate with evocative (and provocative) images in a powerful and direct way. During that time, I began to develop my visual language and started to discover my voice in my art.

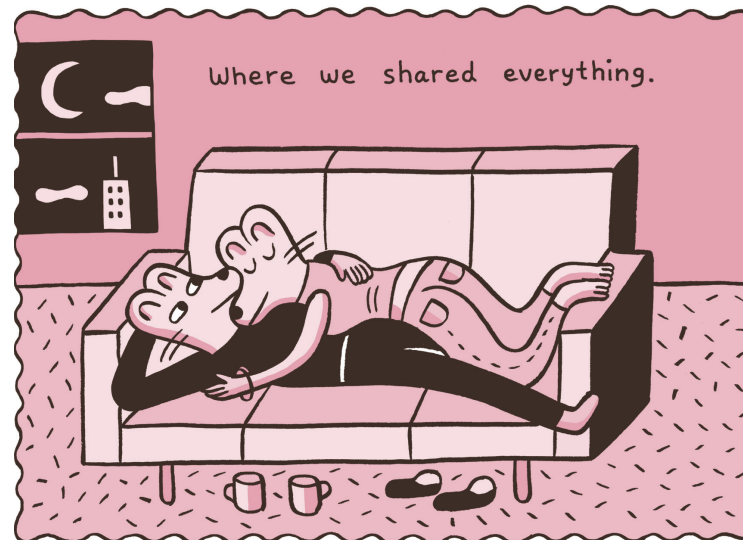
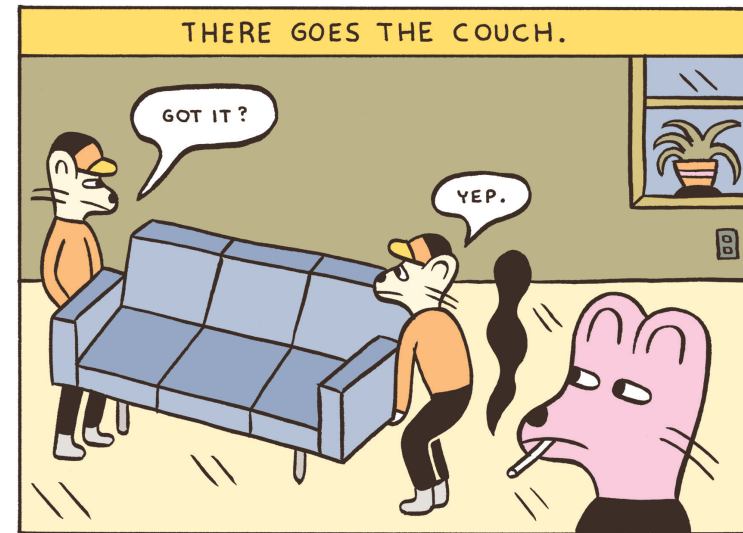
One of the biggest perks was living within arm's reach of the best art in the world, and living so close to Venice allowed me spend a lot of time there. There's something sad, romantic and gritty about that city that is very inspiring.

What's the inspiration behind your *Medieval Minute* comic videos on Instagram?

I'm inspired by the artwork, manuscripts and music of that time. I often draw Medieval characters in my sketchbook and thought it would be fun to expand on their ordinary life. There are timeless problems and feelings that must have existed then too: *Medieval Minute* is my attempt to remind us of that.

Is it true that your characters are often insecure?

There is a sense of insecurity in many of my characters, and



I guess it has become a constant thread in my work. I take a lot of inspiration from living in the city and the urban environment, and perhaps I see insecurity as a result of people being forced into living their lives too close to one another.

The idea of a character that is a little unsure and introverted is intriguing to me. It brings a sense of mystery and, overall, I am more drawn to anti-heroes.

Are the scenarios in your paintings based on real life?

I can't help but place scenarios, moments or objects from real life into my paintings. It also helps balance my invented characters in a way. I love taking reference pictures of architectural details and just ordinary city stuff, and working it into an image. More challenging is to translate intangible feelings into my art, but it's something that pushes me forward.

How long have you been painting, and what was it like moving from drawing to painting?

I'm very happy with the latest series of paintings from my show, *I Wish I Knew*. There was a narrative quality that tied the pieces together and added another dimension.

With painting, my characters have started to take on new volumes, and I also enjoy working in a larger scale. Storytelling tends to be easier with drawings and comics, but it's more of a challenge to reduce that into a single painted image. At the same time, it's very exciting.

What do you like about drawing animal heads on human bodies?

I like the effect it can have, especially with comics. I'm sure Scott McCloud can explain it better, but it creates a detachment for the reader. You focus less on looking at a human, and so it frees you up to put this character into different situations. It also allows you to better identify with the character. And it's just more funny.

left
Panels from *She's Taking Everything* comic story
for *Apartamento* magazine
By Andy Rementer & Margherita Urbani
2012

right
Bike girl
Acrylic on canvas
36" x 48"
2012



PERHAPS I SEE
INSECURITY AS A RESULT
OF PEOPLE BEING
FORCED INTO LIVING
THEIR LIVES TOO CLOSE
TO ONE ANOTHER

How do you hope people will feel when they see your work?
I hope the viewer is left with mixed feelings. In my work, there is usually an element of playfulness on the surface, yet there is also a thread of sadness and melancholy.

Why do you think you're drawn to moody stories?
I like melancholy because it has something to do with time and being alone. As an artist, I spend a lot of time on my own with my thoughts, so it's easy to relate to. Personally, I'm not a very melancholic person, but it's a universal emotion that I like to explore in my art. In the comic world, I love how Chris Ware has mastered the application of this feeling.

Describe an image you've made that looks happy but has a sad subtext.
My comic stories for *Apartamento* naturally have this effect in both story and style. Also, in my recent painting series, there is an implied emotion juxtaposed with bright colors and vibrant patterns.

How does being color blind affect your work?
I have a red/green deficiency that is very common in men. It translates into me having difficulties distinguishing between muted colors. I suppose this is why I'm drawn towards a brighter color palette and a focus on contrast.

What are some symbols or objects that you can't escape, or that you love using in your work?
Besides people, I like to draw overlooked, everyday objects such as doors, coffee cups, books, shoes and hats. I also like drawing trash on the street, but in an organized way.

Recently, I started to incorporate alphabets and signs from other languages in my paintings to create layers in the familiar urban environment.

Have you worked as a sign painter, or do you just enjoy making hand-painted signs?
I studied brush lettering and typography but never worked as a sign painter. I grew up in an historic seaside town where there are hand-painted signs just about everywhere, and I am now enamored with them. There is something timeless about faded, handmade lettering, and I feel that feeds into my work.



Where was this historic seaside town, and what were some other early influences that stuck with you?
I'm from the town of Cape May, New Jersey. Growing up, I mainly mimicked my older brother who was gifted at drawing. He was really into comic books while I never really was; so instead of reading them, I'd just copy his drawings of super heroes, which probably resulted in some rather strange depictions of Spiderman.

Calvin and Hobbes comics and Bruce Blitz videos were also influential to my creative beginnings.

left
Banana Man
Ink on paper
18" x 24"
2012

right
Get Real
Ink on paper
14" x 17"
2012





Do you think your work is particularly regional? Are there other artists locally or elsewhere that you think your work has a relationship with?

Based on my work, a lot of people think I live in the UK or somewhere in Europe. This may be a result of me being inspired by European artists and designers. Also, having spent two years living in Italy and being surrounded by creatives from all over the world, I believe I developed an international sensibility, rather than conforming to a look of a certain location.

From Tadanori Yokoo to Giotto, there are so many artists I wish my work could have a dialogue with.

Does the work of R. Crumb and Jean-Luc Godard resonate with you?

Robert Crumb has been a huge inspiration to me. It was a real breakthrough when I discovered that you could express yourself through drawing, something he does better than anybody. I love his critical tone and sense of—sometimes explicit—observation. Godard is great but I'm a bigger Truffaut fan. His films strike a perfect balance of being approachable and yet terribly sad.

Do you think about nostalgia and memory in your work?

Yes, especially in my comic series for *Apartamento*, there is a real sense of longing and nostalgia there. In my paintings, I try to layer captured moments, feelings, and architecture that, for me, gives a sense of place and history.

What kinds of things do you get off your chest through art?

The great thing about making art and drawing is that you can use it as a vehicle for venting or coping with something. My sketchbook is the place to quickly get everything out on paper. Comics and narrative work are where I try to develop that material.

What issues or topics do you find yourself venting about?

I used to make a weekly comic called *Techno Tuesday* where I purely vented my frustrations about technology and society. It served as a direct form of getting things off my chest. At the time, I was horrified by the way people seemed to blindly accept any gadget that was thrown at them.

In general, writing and storytelling have helped me cope with personal experiences.

What do you need to feel comfortable in life?

Art supplies, coffee and a city.

Which city?

I definitely have my favorites, London and Venice being very high on the list. I also love the timelessness of New York—there's something about it that makes it the quintessential city. I really want to visit Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo soon. I know they will blow my mind.

Do you pay a lot of attention to how people style themselves?



I love people watching. This is even more fascinating when traveling and you start to see people's different individual styles. If I can't take a quick pic or draw someone with a great outfit, I'll make a mental note and draw it later.

In what cities have you seen the most admirable fashions?

I admire the sense of personal style that people seem to effortlessly exude in cities like London and Milan. Of course fashion capitals like New York and Paris are also interesting for this.

Is drawing female characters any more challenging than drawing male characters?

Whether I'm channeling Robert Crumb or not, I like to draw a robust female form. Even in life drawing classes in University, I enjoyed Junoesque women models the most. You see this obsession in many artists from Picasso, Gauguin, Renoir... just look at the Venus of Willendorf.

What projects are you working on now?

I'm currently working on new paintings for shows in NYC and Seoul this year. Expect the *People Blocks* project to grow in the near future, so keep an eye on that. In addition, I am working on scripts for shorts and other animations, in between the ongoing *Apartamento* comic series.

What is your ultimate dream creation?

Feature-length film.



For more information about Andy Rementer, visit andyrementer.com

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previous spread left
The Kiss
Acrylic on canvas
36" x 48"
2012

previous spread right
Pizza Girl
Ink on paper
18" x 24"
2012

above
Couple
Gouache on board
30" x 40"
2012

right
Friends Poster
4 color offset print
16" x 21"

