

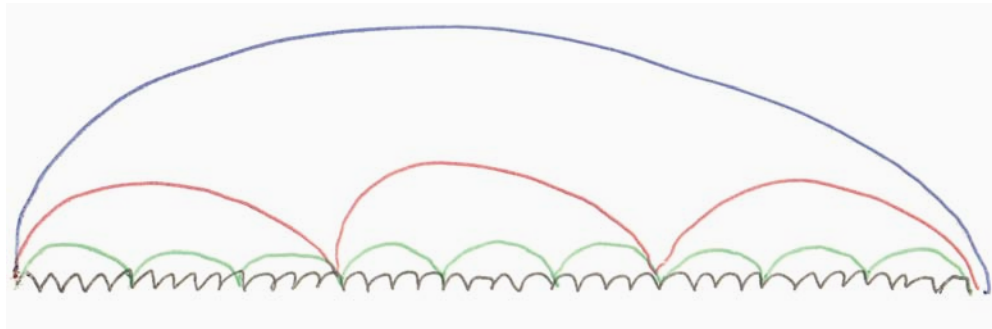
For media information or high-res images please contact:

Joen Madonna
Paul Madonna Studio
joen@paulmadonna.com
(415) 609-5636

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DRAWING TO SUPPORT A WRITING HABIT

PAUL MADONNA'S TRAJECTORY OF WORDS AND PICTURES

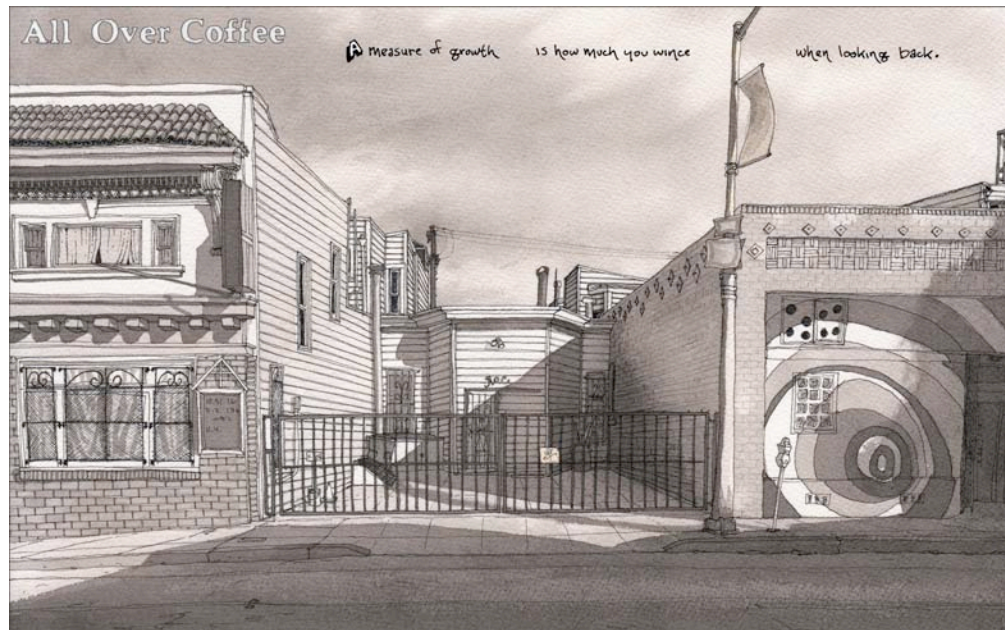


**Recurring Cycles, Series and Themes
In the Drawings and Writings of Paul Madonna**

San Francisco, CA March 2010 – Words and pictures are equally important in the artwork of one of San Francisco’s favorite artists, Paul Madonna. A meticulous artist with a background in Fine Arts from Carnegie Mellon University, and focuses as diverse as painting to fiction, Madonna’s work including *All Over Coffee*, *Small Potatoes*, and *Album* is driven by semantics, focusing on words first, and then pairing them with beautifully rendered pen and ink drawings.

Inspired by all forms of media, from art to poetry, to film and music, Madonna’s first love is with creators and publications that blur the line between art, comics and literature. His shelves are lined with books from Raymond Pettibon to Ayn Rand, Edward Hopper to Jenny Holzer, as well as collections of historic maps to the complete strips of Calvin and Hobbes.

Following graduation from art school in 1994, Madonna chose to work only with materials that could fit into his backpack so that he could “make art anywhere, anytime, with no excuses.” Always writing and always drawing, self made books became the easiest way to get his work out of his hands and into those of others, an integral part of his philosophy of art making. Leaving stacks of these books for free in cafes and other public places led to Bay Area exposure and gallery shows of the original drawings, and eventually led to meeting his wife. After more than a decade of making comics as art, Madonna inverted his approach, and began presenting art and literature in the form of comics.



AOC #288 Paul Madonna, 2005

Drawing on site from a portable stool, Madonna uses pen and ink to create moody and timeless drawings of cityscapes for his enigmatic series, *All Over Coffee*. From his hometown of San Francisco, to Paris, Rome, New York, Beijing, Buenos Aires and Bangkok he renders scenes without people or cars, depicting life instead through disembodied stories, quips, or fictional overheard conversations. Featured weekly in the *San Francisco Chronicle* since 2004 *All Over Coffee* has proven to be a new take on the traditional comic strip. *Entertainment Weekly* describes *All Over Coffee* as “A comic strip with no characters, plot, or comedy — just exquisitely observed, fine-lined drawings...captioned with bittersweet fragments of dialogue.”

Language, context and nuance, are all tools wielded by Madonna to infuse both his drawings and writing with a sublime and lasting impression. “The combination of text and image complete an experience,” Madonna says, “I want people to enter one way, then exit another.” Madonna, who prefers working in series or themes, cycles between at least four projects at any time, feeling that the time spent on one project is also the necessary time away from another to offer fresh insight on return.

Three of Madonna’s series are weekly, which provoked him to create his newest work, a yearly publication titled *Album*. Wanting to work on a different timetable, Madonna says, “I have my weeklies, then I had my book collections which covered three years. I needed something in between.” *Album* is based on the idea of drawings as songs, and the first issue, released in November 2009, is a collection of large drawings of 1970s and 80s childhood-era toys with bits of text that emerged during each period of drawing. This conscious choice of time as a component in Madonna’s work, and that each facet focuses on visuals conjoined with language, not only captures the viewer’s senses on a multiplicity of perpetually renewed levels, but defines the characteristics of this thoughtful, productive and meticulous artist, giving us a glimpse into what proves to be a life long career of expression.

Aside from personal endeavors, Madonna has worked with the San Francisco-based organization 826 Valencia to make a Literary Map of San Francisco, and the National Parks Conservancy to create an iconic image of the Warming Hut and Golden Gate Bridge. Madonna frequently lectures throughout the Bay Area including at California College of the Arts, University of San Francisco, Cartoon Art Museum, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and exhibits original works 3-5 times a year, including the pen and ink drawings from his popular *All Over Coffee* strip, in galleries, cafes and museums.

In April 2011, San Francisco book publisher City Lights will release a second collection of *All Over Coffee* entitled *Everything Is Its Own Reward*. This stunning new collection, a testament to the artist and storyteller's careful observation of both the external and internal worlds, outdoes the masterful performance of his first book, *All Over Coffee*, offering an even richer catalogue of pen-and-ink cityscapes, short stories, conversations and thoughts. In 2007 City Lights released the first collection of *All Over Coffee*, which is currently in its fifth printing and remains in their top twenty sellers. Madonna also maintains a thriving print business of his *All Over Coffee* work through a partnership with the Bay Area print house Electric Works, who also published a limited edition folio of Madonna's ten-panel graphic short, *Out of the Grapevine* in 2007. Madonna's work has been included in a variety of publications, including the 2008 release of *An Illustrated Life*, edited by Danny Gregory, and Eric Maisel's *A Writer's San Francisco*. He is also a regular contributor to the *Believer* magazine.



From Album, 2009

In November 2009, Electric Works print house and gallery debuted the first issue of Madonna's annual publication, *Album*, along with a solo exhibit of the original drawings. Just as Madonna redefines art, comics and literature, his new series redefines the typical process of creating a body of work for a show. The book was the focus and final product, with the art hung on the walls serving as a catalog of the process, documenting various phases and evolutions of the work over the past year.

Ever the curious traveler, Madonna is currently working on a writing and drawing project that took him to China, Japan and Thailand in 2010. In the past year he also visited Buenos Aires and Egypt, for his art strip, *All Over Coffee*.

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