



# All Over Coffee

*Paul Madonna , Andrew Sean Greer (Foreword)*

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*All Over Coffee* blends the timing of comics with the depth of poetry. Artist and writer Paul Madonna has fused art, literature, and comics by pairing timeless cityscapes with philosophical musings and poignant stories in masterfully rendered ink-wash drawings that surpass the art of Ben Katchor in elegance and architectural detail. His work has been compared to “a meeting of the tone of Edward Gorey, the uniqueness of Chris Ware, and the artfulness of Raymond Pettibon.”

Quirky, whimsical, and often profound, *All Over Coffee*’s stunning imagery and thoughtful writing combine to create a conceptual world, both dreamlike and familiar. This selection will delight anyone who has ever lived in or visited San Francisco—or dreamed of doing so—with its original, off-the-beaten-path view of the city and its inhabitants.

**Paul Madonna** moved to San Francisco and began to self-publish comics after graduating from Carnegie Mellon University’s fine arts program and an internship at *MAD* magazine. In 2002 he launched his incredibly popular website, [www.paulmadonna.com](http://www.paulmadonna.com), posting a new cartoon each week. In 2004 the *San Francisco Chronicle* and SFGate.com picked up his strip “All Over Coffee,” which continues to appear weekly.

## All Over Coffee Details

Date : Published April 1st 2007 by City Lights Publishers

ISBN : 9780872864566

Author : Paul Madonna , Andrew Sean Greer (Foreword)

Format : Hardcover 176 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Art, Graphic Novels, Nonfiction

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# From Reader Review All Over Coffee for online ebook

## Beverly says

"I don't get superheroes," she says, "if you could see through everything you'd see nothing at all." (p.19)

We've all thought these kinds of things and Madonna has actually written them all down, alongside his beautiful pen and ink wash drawings. A great coffee table book!

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## Susan Eubank says

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- Did the exegesis at the end help you like the book more? Why? Why not?
  - Did the book help you like San Francisco more? Why? Why not?
  - What did you like best about the book? Least?
  - Did you think you understood what he was up to as you read through the strips? Why? Why not?
  - What did y
- 

## Matthias Ferber says

This is a strange, beautiful book that I hardly know how to describe. It's a collection of what for lack of a better term I have to call comic strips that ran in the *San Francisco Chronicle* between 2003 and 2006. Each consists of one or two illustrated panels and some text that often has no apparent connection to the artwork. The illustrations are lovely sepia-toned pen-and-ink drawings of scenes from San Francisco (or, in a couple of cases and without explanation, Paris); they might depict a familiar landmark, or an off-kilter view out the window of a café, or a building glimpsed between two others; some are hyperrealistic and others wildly distorted. There are no people — the presence of humanity in *All Over Coffee* is restricted to the accompanying text, which is even more enigmatic than the drawings, taking the forms of aphorisms, snippets of dialogue, or weird little modern k?ans, which are usually mysterious, often desolate, sometimes funny, and very rarely not there at all.

It all adds up to something I can't say I really understand but I was completely taken by it anyway. The sheer beauty of the artwork has a lot to do with that; these strange, barren renderings capture something of what originally captured me about San Francisco. In fact I bought it almost entirely on impulse based on the cover art, a gorgeous view over Russian Hill out to Alcatraz and Angel Island. I'm not regretting it.

(Best of all, *All Over Coffee* is still running in the *Chronicle*, and fully archived on SFGate.)

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## Laura Fingal-Surma says

i try to avoid buying books on impulse since i have at least 30 in my shopping cart on amazon, but i walked by *all over coffee* in borders, and the pictures drew me in. it was one of two books autographed by the author

that i purchased on a whim that day (thankfully the other was from a smaller neighborhood bookstore). i had high hopes and figured i would buy a large scale print of one of the drawings. execution, however, falls short of concept, and i found the stories interesting but not particularly engaging--not the types of stories that might have many layers of additional meaning when i pick the book back up. the art is captivating, but i am surprised that no particular image or images emerged as my favorite(s), other than the one stretched across the inside cover. the drawings appear to be complex, but i still can't find one i would necessarily want to look at every day. overall, i enjoy the sense of place that the book communicates, but it's not the magical little piece of san francisco i wanted it to be and that i would gift to those who mean the most to me and should love the city like i do.

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### **Sanae says**

I almost never rate books 5/5, to best make use of the full rating range.

This book is a series of short descriptions - overheard conversations? people in the coffee shop? - with a backdrop of drawings of San Francisco. It's strangely haunting. I spent a lot of time exploring the city alone when I first moved here and it really captures that very nonspecific feeling, the sense that there are a million worlds around you that you will only get a glimpse of.

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### **Devon says**

Awesome snippets of conversation paired with beautiful drawings of San Francisco.

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### **Kathleen says**

Paul Madonna rocks! His drawings are excellent and his words are quite often very inspiring and thought-provoking, which are two things I prize highly :) I borrowed this book from the library and read all the works and also the short auto-biography at the back (which is really a valuable and interesting part of the book and I highly suggest everybody make sure to read it-- he talks about his creative process and how he came to be a comic-strip artist for the SF Chronicle. It was also really interesting to read the mixed reviews he got and some of the difficulties he had to overcome. Artists should look at this, it's always helpful to hear up-and-down success stories).

I copied out several of these comics to stick on my wall. I only saw Paul Madonna's work in the actual SF Chronicle like once or maybe twice before, but those times definitely stayed in my mind and I got really excited to see a compendium.

I don't like \*all\* of his comics to the same degree, but of course not all can be jems, and he's said that he's not as enthused by all of his comics to the same level either.

I'm sure lots of other people will have already said this, but I really think his work captures something uncanny about San Francisco, and even his unique way of showing contemplative landscapes and haphazard scenes, the kind you are likely to view by accident over the ordinary course of traversing in the city, and combining those scenes with dialog coming from somewhere/when else. This kind of reflects how thoughts invade sight in a way. I think he also captures something of the character of San Francisco life: thoughtful, at times melancholy, often finding itself at the cross-hairs of many clashing thoughts, experiences and histories.

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## **jack says**

all over coffee is a visual love-letter to the beautiful city of san francisco. alongside highly vivid and dramatic, yet simplistic and bold, drawings of SF's landscapes, architectures, and skylines, are notes...jottings...literal impressions also written by paul madonna himself. visually, the attention to detail for every drawing really WOW'd me. for the drawings alone, it's worth the purchase. as a new resident of SF, all over coffee provided me with a much better...a more personal... and sentimental viewpoint & understanding of a city i admittedly know very little about and am eager to learn more of. ...forget lonely planet... and to hell with tourist maps. all over coffee is the most perfect guidebook and first introduction to SF you'll ever need as a newcomer.

thanks for the present. i really loved it :)

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## **Sasha says**

I picked up this gem at the City Lights Bookstore while attending a 3-day workshop in San Fran. I had snuck away from my tour group and had wandered through Chinatown and alleys spray-painted with Tupac-faced dragons to get to CLB. Once there, I rummaged through some Ferlinghetti tomes and stared at old pictures of Ginsberg before I spotted this book on a rickety display by the register and coughed up nearly \$35 impulsive dollars. I had to lug it all the way back through Chinatown to the bus, and it was heavy and cumbersome to manage that while eating dragon's breath, but now that I've had the chance to crack it open, I can say with all confidence it was worth it. I had been searching for something more substantial than a postcard to remember San Fran by (mostly because I'm deathly afraid of earthquakes and probably won't be back). Paul Madonna really captures the foggy, zany spirit of the place and its locals - some vignettes are heart-warming, some heart-breaking, all relatable. Some are like entire journal entries, others as short as a haiku, but they linger pleasantly, like the taste of Earl Grey after breakfast, and I savored them. Definitely a coffee table book that deserves the light of day.

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## **Thomas says**

I think this book, All Over Coffee, a compendium of Paul Madonna's sketches and musings, would be most enjoyable if you like his work. Frankly, as a longtime reader of the San Francisco Chronicle, I always looked forward to his spidery ink drawings that took little nooks and crannies of the City, held them up close, and were accompanied with pithy, witty, and sometimes downright sad (and also sometimes a little kooky) quotes of unseen characters who habituated these environs he so painstakingly put to his pad. Sometimes hokey, sometimes insightful, sometimes beautiful -- but never dull; I'd like to think of Madonna as the unofficial cartographer of San Francisco's psyche. It's a wonderful art book; but I think it's more a slice of the soul of the City. Very well put-together mural of a City that exists half in and half out of the shadows of everybody's imagination. Check it out ...

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## **Kristen Northrup says**

He's like a west coast Maira Kalman, which is a good thing. These pieces originally ran in the newspaper, one at a time, so they tend to be very self-contained and it's better to space out the reading over time to keep them from all mushing together. Although I really like how he draws buildings, San Francisco ends up not very attractive. Maybe it's just the sort of grimy color wash. Trees and clouds, on the rare occasions where they appear, don't look quite right, although they improved significantly towards the end (the strips are chronological). The text is a nice series of little moments. I'm glad he put his explanation of the process in the back of the book instead of in the front, leaving you to make your own impressions first. Particularly liked the one on Emil (?) Hopper and the xkcd-esque one about whether the devil is self-aware. I understand how making it a horizontal book with pages you turn up rather than to the left makes for neater shelving, but it was still a pain to flip through that way.

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## **kristy says**

love his work. a tad overwhelming to read straight through, so i know i didn't appreciate all the drawings the way i'd like to.

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## **Andy Karlson says**

This would have been an easy 5 stars were it not for the at times unbearable pretentiousness of the texts that accompany the drawings. But I get ahead of myself.

This is a collection of a comic strip that appears in the San Francisco Chronicle. Each strip consists of a jaw-droppingly gorgeous pen-and-ink drawing of a building or park or view from different parts of the city, paired with a snippet of dialogue written in the style of overheard conversation. There's the rub.

Madonna (the author/artist) is a stellar artist, with an amazing command of line and clarity of composition. His drawings showcase a San Francisco absent of non-vegetable life (there might be a few birds in there--can't remember), a city stripped to the bones of its infrastructure, eerily luminous and completely haunting. And his invented conversations, all occurring, we presume, over coffee, are for the most part really bad. Pretentious. Obvious. Precious. Worst of all, boring. He would have done so much better to just follow the conceit of the work and actually capture real conversations, which always have the potential to be weirder than any imaginative fancy.

That said, I gripe because it's hard to do anything else with my jaw this close to the floor. These are amazing drawings, presented beautifully by City Light Books--this is one of those books you buy just because you fall so deeply in love with the very feel of its cover and pages. Even some of the captions are interesting, even good.

I bought this book as a present for my Dad's 59th birthday, with a caveat: "I'm afraid the book might be a little pretentious, but I loved its drawings too much to pass up. Ah well." Dad responded: "Thank you for the dandy birthday book. Back in the day, everything was that pretentious, so it felt just right, and they are nice pictures. I especially liked the distortions of painted lady houses."

This is one of the most beautiful books I've seen in years, and if you can tolerate pretentiousness that felt comfortable to a child of the '60s, I can't recommend it highly enough.

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## **Jill says**

We didn't get the San Francisco Chronicle when we lived in the Bay Area, so I did not see these drawings of San Francisco by pen and ink master Paul Madonna back then, but have just discovered him now, via his Album series of balsa airplanes. <http://www.kqed.org/arts/visualarts/a...>

Paul Madonna is also classified under graphic novels by some, though, as one reviewer says: he "deconstructs storytelling." The language is sparse, but elegant and visual. This excerpt explains: <http://www.escapeintolife.com/artist-...> I am also reminded of some of the work of Chris Van Allsburg, both in the delicacy of the line-work, and in the idea of an artist who can both write and draw their stories.

Last but not least, I found this mini graphic novel 'Darwin's Kitchen,' on his blog site; it is a literally "graphic" story, surprisingly violent given the players involved. <http://therumpus.net/2011/08/darwins-...>

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## **City Lights Booksellers & Publishers says**

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"I can't believe how Paul Madonna can make you feel so mighty to be human at one moment, and then so completely humbled the next. This is my favorite poetry book of the year." – Beth Lisick, author of *Everybody Into the Pool*

"The architecture of residential San Francisco is about detail, willful eccentricity, an almost rococo approach to line, and a steadfast devotion to art for its own sake, beauty as its own reward. Paul Madonna's work gives itself fully to all of these notions, and to the city as a whole, and in doing so reminds us why, block by block and view by view, this is one of the most beautiful cities in the world." – Dave Eggers, author of *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* and *What is the What*

“Paul Madonna does amazing work, very precise but loose. He puts a lot of thought into waiting for just the right moment to stop looking around. These strips are a reminder to stop now and then and admire a corner of a room, a window or a rooftop. There are lovely details everywhere, at any time, no matter where you live.” – Tony Millionaire, author of Maakies

"Paul Madonna's collection All Over Coffee evocatively demonstrates the evolution of his eponymous San Francisco Chronicle strip. The juxtaposition of floating scraps of overheard, disconnected conversations and masterful pen and ink drawings of San Francisco, the city he lovingly documents, reminds us of the serendipity of city life, its physicality and atmosphere, its unanticipated discoveries, its random intersections, its coincidences and ironies. Madonna opens a window into the specificity of place, time and circumstance, providing an articulate perspective and critique of where and how we live." – Cathy Jensen Simon, Principal, SMWM Architects

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