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LOS ANGELES

**MUNGO THOMSON:  
EINSTEIN #1**

MARGO LEAVIN GALLERY

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For the past ten years, Mungo Thomson has been working in a style that might be termed "subtractionism." Early in his career, he became known for *The Collected Live Recordings of Bob Dylan 1963-1995* (1999), for which he removed Dylan's music and left only the enraptured and sometimes restless swell of the crowd. In a follow-up titled *The American Desert (for Chuck Jones)* (2002), a 34-minute video of classic Warner Bros. cartoon footage is digitally altered to eliminate all traces of Wile E. Coyote and Road Runner. Thomson's latest offering is *Einstein #1*, a self-published limited-edition comic book that similarly removes the protagonists and dramatic device. From his personal archive of comics collected between 1975 and 2007, Thomson appropriated pages from works by about 40 different authors and inked them onto bristol board layouts, omitting the speech bubbles and characters that drive plot. In their stead are empty spacecraft, unpopulated control rooms, demolished cities, abandoned lairs, and cosmic expanses of stars, planets, and meteors that tell a somewhat de-evolutionary story of their own. In an adjacent room, an oral history of *Blade Runner's* legendarily troubled seven-year production is narrated not by the cast and crew, but by a computer-generated voice that assumes the quirky presence of a low-rent HAL. Together with the comics, it's a constellation of depopulated stories of creation and destruction that make sly references to the myth of artistic genius but don't quite add up. —STACEY ALLAN

