Science Meets Myth Meets Hubris in Vincent Broquaire's New Drawings and Videos

For the rest of December and into the end of January, a section of the floor of XPO Gallery will be covered with cushions, on which visitors are encouraged to lie down—the better to see the constellation projected onto the gallery's ceiling and, curiously, the little human figures walking among the stars, along the black lines that connect them. This absorbing piece is in the company of those that make up "Cosmogology," an exhibition of a new body of drawings and video installations by Vincent Broquaire. These are accompanied by an aural piece by fellow artist Paul Souviron, featuring various invented and actual sounds, including those of deep space recorded by NASA and of natural disasters—a fitting accompaniment for Broquaire's distinctive, sparely rendered, ink-on-paper drawings, through which he presents the story of the origins and development of the universe, and explores our persistent urge to write ourselves into it.

The exhibition's title is a neologism formed from the combination of two words: "cosmogony," referring to a theory of the origin and evolution of the universe, which can be based on myth, legend, and religious beliefs, and "cosmology," the astrophysical study of the history, structure, and dynamics of the universe. As this hybrid word suggests, the story of the unfolding of the universe that Broquaire presents in his art is one in which myth, science, man, and nature meet—as in his projected constellation. Rather than presenting an undisturbed sky, he shows the stars ordered into constellations, a human construct through which we aim to make sense of the ungraspable infinity of space and comfort ourselves, perhaps, with the illusion that we can contain or even tame this vastness by mapping it. The animated figures walking busily between these star points resemble factory workers checking on the functioning of the cogs in their great machine. But nature is not a machine, as Broquaire reminds us in work filled with dwarfed human figures wielding their tiny tools to shape a universe governed by its own laws.

Karen Kedmey for Artsy, 2015