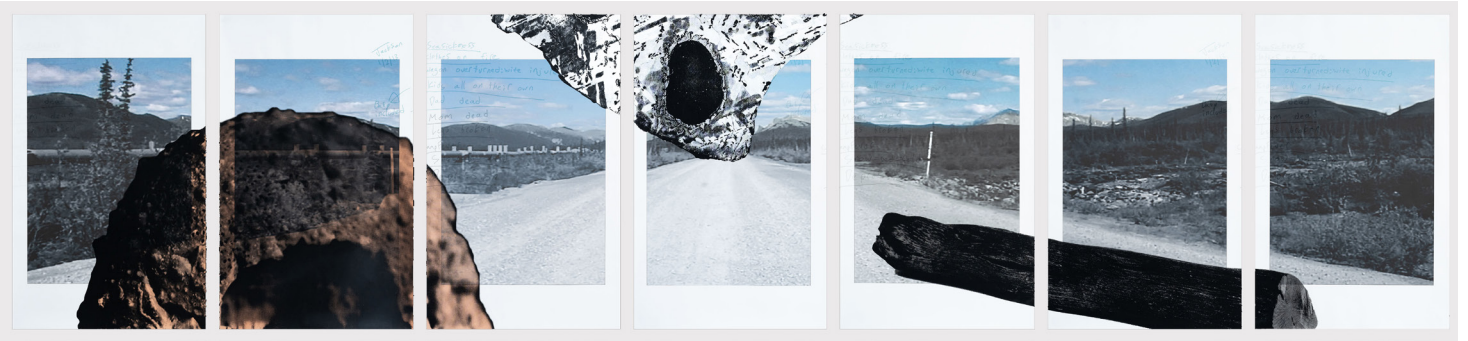


PROOF

MICHAEL JOO | ISLAND PRESS NEW EDITIONS 2024

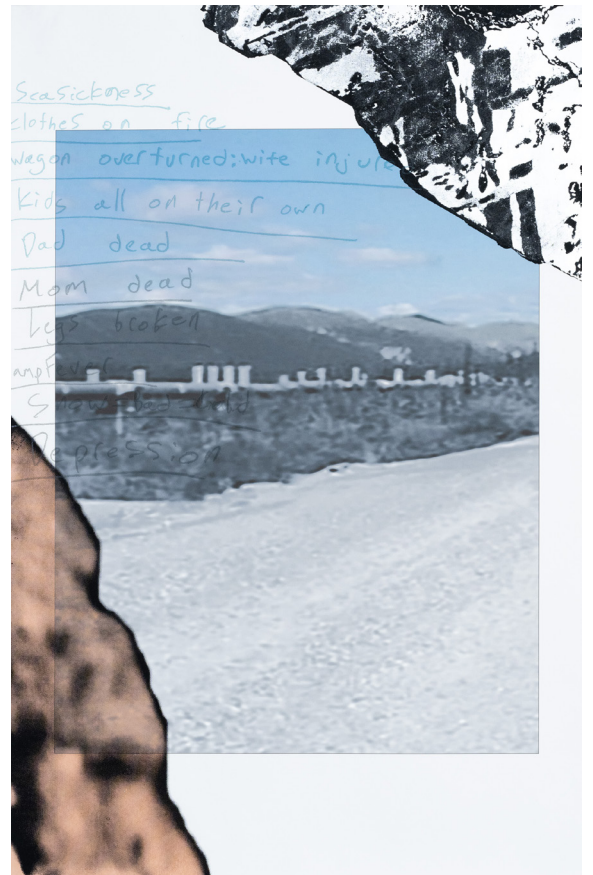


Above: *Noospheric (Trans-Alaska JWJ)*, 2024. Archival inkjet, silkscreen, and intaglio on Coventry Rag paper. 7-panel print, 40 x 26 inches each. Edition of 4.

In the early twentieth century, thinkers like Russian geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky and French priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin popularized the use of the term “noosphere” to refer to the idea that human consciousness represents the pinnacle of evolutionary development. This concept, which casts humanity’s impact on the environment in a utopian light, comes under scrutiny in Michael Joo’s single edition print *Noospheric (Trans-Alaska JWJ)* (2024), created during his 2020 residency at Island Press.

Drawing from his background in seed science and penchant for technological experimentation, Joo works in media such as printmaking, photography, sculpture, and performance to contend with existential threats to humanity, the traces we leave on our surroundings, and the horizons where imagination takes the reins from science. *Noospheric*, the first installment in a thematically linked multimedia series, is 14-foot-long seven-panel print made using ink that contains pulverized trilobite fossils he collected while performing in the United Arab Emirates and carbonized wood from Wakayama, Japan. The artwork’s layers include an archival inkjet print of a panoramic photograph of an empty Alaskan road, where he, in another performance, walked against the flow of an oil pipeline. Superimposed on this substrate are silkscreen depictions of meteorites and wood. Additionally, snippets from his seven-year-old son’s notes on a book about orphans on the Oregon Trail appear in embossed and printed intaglio, intimating a father-son dialogue.

The specimens of scientific discovery and written language superimposed on the landscape slyly question the notion of evolutionary progress. The foreshortening of the white gravel road and the transfixing void in the hovering meteorite cast a sense of stasis and doubt over the vista. The ominous writing in the sky, as it were—“Dad dead / Mom dead / Legs broken / Camp fever”—reminds us of the legacy we’re bequeathing to future generations: a world addled by climate change, economic precarity, and geopolitical turmoil. Just as when he crawled across the Bonneville Salt Flats as part of his performance *Salt Transfer Cycle* (1993–94),



Joo confronts the human-altered landscape's subtle hostilities, but he does so in *Noospheric* not by centering a single human body and its exertions but by aggregating traces of collective thought and labor.

The realization of *Noospheric* during and after Joo's Island Press residency provides a salient metaphor for inheritance and knowledge transmission. The four-year process, completed by multiple successive cohorts in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, parallels the kind of intergenerational collaboration found in Joo's previous work *Saltation, Traction, Precipitate* (2018), a delegated performance for which he invited children living around the DMZ to play tangt-tah-mok-ki—a game that involves flicking pebbles across the ground to mark “territory”—inside the military-occupied zone between North and South Korea. A sculpture was then created based on amalgamated scans of the rocks the children launched. Like that sculpture, *Noospheric* is a record of durational action, social contact, instruction, and learning. With luck, that's how our stint on this planet may be remembered as well.

By Jenny Wu, US Associate Editor of ArtReview



Pictured above: Artist, Michael Joo with Island Press director, Lisa Bulawsky, pinning up an early proof of the seven-panel print, *Noospheric* (Trans-Alaska JWWJ).



ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Born into a family of research scientists, Joo was immersed in academia from an early age and initially pursued a degree in science before switching to the fine arts, gaining his BFA from Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, and his MFA from the Yale School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut. Engaging with a variety of arts media ranging from painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture, Joo explores ideas related to symbols and abstraction, the past and present, and the human and natural. Joo's works are held in numerous public collections around the world, including the Brooklyn Museum, the Denver Art Museum, Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Guggenheim Museum, Harvard Art Museums, Savannah College of Art and Design, the Israel Museum, Moderna Museet Stockholm, UCLA Hammer Museum, Walker Art Center.

Island Press is a research-based printmaking workshop and publisher committed to education and innovation in contemporary print editions and artist projects. Visiting artists work side by side with the master printer and students in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. The result is high-quality print editions of technical complexity created in a unique setting where artists and students share skill sets and ideas.

Island Press is project-driven and collaborative, tapping into the place where the artist's creative research intersects with the all of the possibilities of the print studio. Recent artist projects include editions with Radcliffe Bailey, Chakaia Booker, Squeak Carnwath, Willie Cole,

Henrik Drescher, Chris Duncan, Tom Friedman, Ann Hamilton, Trenton Doyle Hancock, David Humphrey, Nina Katchadourian, Shaun O'Dell, Dario Robleto, Lisa Sanditz, Beverly Semmes, James Siena, Duane Slick, and Paula Wilson.

Island Press was founded in 1978. Past visiting artists include Hung Liu, Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith, Joyce Scott, Juan Sanchez, Nick Cave, and many other great artists.

DIRECTOR Lisa Bulawsky | **MASTER PRINTER** Tom Reed

MORE INFORMATION

<https://samfoxschool.wustl.edu/island-press> | islandpress@wustl.edu | 314.935.8051