In Conversation with Tom Hammick @ Glasgow Print Studio

Sanctuary

10th October - 29th November 2025

Edward Wells

Tom Hammick at the opening night of *Sanctuary* at Glasgow Print Studio

Tom Hammick's suavity is immediate. Dressed in a Canadian tuxedo, he gestures toward one of his recent prints: *Garden in a Time of Loss I* & *II*. The audience at Glasgow Print Studios encircles the diptych— two silhouettes of the artist and his partner surveying a sea of kaleidoscopic flowers. His bespectacled eyes light up discussing his self-portrait: "I've put on four stone," he notes wryly. The audience responds with warm laughter. Hammick's understated charm proves as magnetic as his artwork.

> “As an artist I feel in part I want to somehow obliquely tell the story of one’s time on Earth. As the title of this complex woodcut suggests, with the backdrop of our political system running away from decisions that take responsibility now to avert the worst outcomes of climate catastrophe, I have tried to make an image that celebrates the reseeding of Earth at an individual level.”

Garden in a Time of Loss I & II, 2023
144.5 × 110 cm
EV of 20

Towards Dusk, Munkerup, 2025
121.5 × 174.5 cm
EV of 6

Wanderers (and a Dark House in the Woods), 2025
161 × 122 cm
EV of 10

Amongst Katherine Jones's monotypes and Ian Chamberlin's intaglio, Hammick's work commands attention through sheer chromatic intensity and physical presence. This new exhibition *Sanctuary* on Trongate presents fourteen of his recent prints, each dominated by Hammick's signature cerulean nocturnes populated with solitary Rückenfiguren. These figures—backs turned, survey effervescent landscapes—invite viewers into contemplative sanctuaries which feel familiar and distant simultaneously.

In *Towards Dusk, Munkerup*, Hammick repurposes the figural blocks from his double portrait, unifying them in mythic contemplation. Two silhouettes confront a coastal threshold; between them and the horizon, phosphorescent yellow rocks punctuate a pink shoreline, while the composition fractures into stratified bands of blue: sky, sea, and beach. Hammick embraces the rawness of the woodblock; its grain overlays the saturated horizontal registers with scintillating currents of colour. Sky and sea become indistinguishable through shared texture; the entire image pulses with woodgrain vitality. The effect is primordial: a bulbous sun sets across an Edenic landscape. The scene is less a representation of place than an evocation of elemental forces. Hammick's technique makes the medium inseparable from meaning: these figures don't merely observe nature; they're caught within its restless, generative energy.

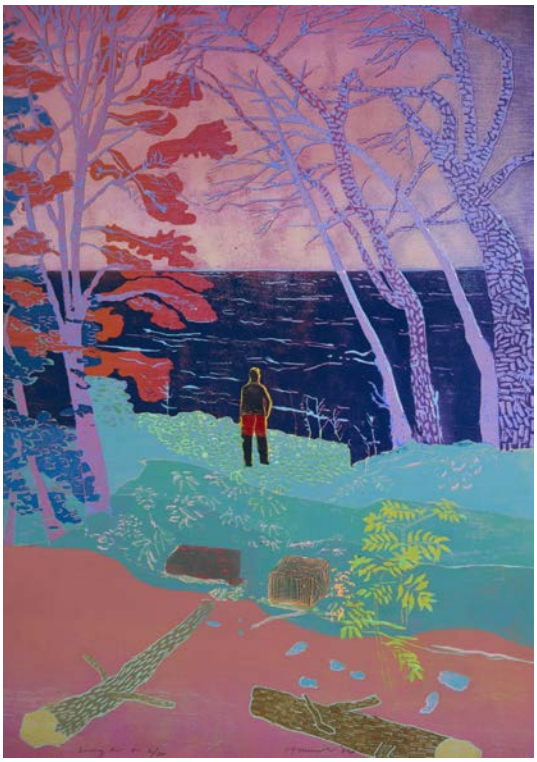
Hammick engages the unquiet present with equal intensity. With two fingers raised at Trump and his anthropogenic MAGA movement, Hammick's work interrogates our relationship with our most important sanctuary: Earth. A central question haunts these works: what constitutes home, and where can it be found? He seamlessly links his hot off the press *Wanderers (and a Dark House in the Woods)* to the ongoing politicisation of immigration and destruction of Gaza city. This image —seemingly a family of four traipsing toward a cabin retreat—becomes a subtle provocation of migration and refugees.

In an era of environmental anxiety, populist politics and digital saturation, Hammick's analog prints insist on slowness and patience, the viewer must submit to their meditative rhythm. For Hammick, it is through democracy and communion with nature which offer any hope of renewal. In Northern European Romantic fashion, Hammick recites the poem *All Nature Has a Feeling* by John Clare; an ode to nature's impermanence. Alongside Hammick's work, the sentience of the landscape becomes palpable; and our responsibility to Earth's cornucopia is elegiac:

Powdermills, 2025
62 × 46 cm
EV of 25

All nature has a feeling: woods, fields, brooks
Are life eternal: and in silence they
Speak happiness beyond the reach of books;
There's nothing mortal in them; their decay
Is the green life of change; to pass away
And come again in blooms revivified.
Its birth was heaven, eternal is its stay,
And with the sun and moon shall still abide
Beneath their day and night and heaven wide.

Flower Field Night, 2025
32 × 49 cm
EV of 25



Living Air, 2024
95 × 68 cm
EV of 20

In his smaller prints, namely *Powdermills* and *Flower Field Night* Hammick's floral arrangements and leaf markings are overwhelmingly abundant. Lamentation suffuses these landscapes, often synthesised in solitary figures against the consuming collectiveness of nature. With reference to Philip Larkin's *The Trees*, Hammick reads the landscapes' greenery as a form of grief. This tension between human mortality and nature's cyclical renewal complicates any simple harmony between figure and landscape. This push and pull, between figures and their environs is best observed in his *Living Air*, a banked solitary figure entangled within nature's complex. Here, the detritus foreground of dead-wood and stumps pave way for cell-like trees and polka-dot foliage. Hammick's anti-naturalistic use of violets and pinks position the figure within a primordial soup; a malleable, viscous scene which oozes rebirth and renewal. This enmeshed scene is straight from Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the constant battle of variability, growth and reproduction produced by laws acting around us. This symbiosis extends to Hammick's Friedrich-esque figure surveying the sea, preoccupied with the corporeality of blurring the distinctions between the self and nature.

Fraught with mediated angst for the natural world, Hammick's sanctuaries hint at the possibility of protection and regrowth. Returning to his *Garden in a Time of Loss I* & *II* Hammick becomes the sower and nurturer of a flower meadow; the budding garden remains indifferent to his actions, yet shadowed by his presence. As viewers, it is our own shadows cast onto these prints. The message is profoundly personal yet decisively clear; tend to your garden.

Night Gardener Etching, 2025
24 × 19.5 cm
EV of 25

In the printing room at Glasgow Print Studio

Hammick indicts neglectful bureaucrats—all of them men. He charges them, Trump included, with "cutting off our limbs". The biosphere's fragility and the microcosm's precarity become immediate, palpable threats. This violation of the environment, subordinated by contemporary politics, distracts from natures' wonderment and possibility for renewal. As Hammick insists, through personal retreat, familial scenes and kaleidoscopic colour his work ultimately grapples with love and loss of the landscape; admitting that life is full of pain and beauty simultaneously.

Hammick's practice of reduction woodcut remains democratic; the medium serves as a hymn to cohesion in its application of multiple wood blocks, technicians and inks. It is through this collective practice in which Hammick can cope with "each existential crisis, either specific or universal, that seems to rear up on a daily basis". For those unfamiliar with printmaking, the rhythmic sounds of the printing press, aromas of inks and acetones, and tactile processes of rolling and cutting excite a sensuous meditation. As if composing notes into melody, the medium itself has lyrical quality. We retreat into Hammick's own sanctuary—the studio. It's a race against time as Hammick produces a sequence of quick studies to be transferred onto copperplate. His recent line drawings are afloat with figures on canoes coursing a turbulent river. Throughout our conversation his quick pencil marks rap the drawing board like a piston. He lends the transferred plate to a technician before dextrously inking and feeding it through a press. Editions of these intaglio studies will soon find their way into the Glasgow Print Studio catalogue, hopefully to stimulate the charity's coffers, before being entered into their elaborate archive.

Hammick's *Sanctuary* arrives at a moment when the concept itself feels endangered—by political instability, environmental crisis, digital fragmentation. Yet these prints refuse despair. In their slow, bodily making, and their insistence on contemplative viewing, they model an alternative: sanctuary as practice, not place. As Hammick returns to the studio, continuing his democratic collaboration with wood, ink, and technicians, his work suggests that tending one's garden —literal or metaphorical—might be the most radical act available. The question isn't whether we can find sanctuary, but whether we're willing to create it.

Sanctuary runs 10th October - 29th November 2025