

TOM HAMMICK

WALL, WINDOW, WORLD

9 September - 10 October 2015

Press Lunch: 8 September 12-2 PM

Private View: 12 September 2-4 PM

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Flowers Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition by Tom Hammick, marking the artist's first solo show at the Kingsland Road gallery. The exhibition highlights his dual working practices of painting and printmaking, and features new works made in response to a year-long residency at English National Opera (ENO), the first initiative of its kind for the opera company.

Wall, Window, World explores the mysterious nature of existence through otherworldly and dreamlike landscapes.

With an emotive handling of colour, Hammick creates psychologically charged spaces in which figures, alone or in groups, are cast adrift. Playing out uncertain narratives, his characters anxiously occupy private worlds, facing away from the viewer, or seemingly lost in reverie.

In *Pavilion*, 2013, a lone figure stares into the empty windows of a building at night, surrounded by swathes of midnight blue, a sea of unnaturally green lawn and kaleidoscopic trees. The standing figure appears to dissolve into the scene; untethered by gravity, the weightlessness of her form reveals the fragility of human life.



Continuous Present, Dona Isabel in the Forest, 2015, Oil on Canvas, 38.9 x 46.5 cm

A sense of detachment from reality throughout the paintings is caused in part by what Julian Bell describes in his recent book *Tom Hammick: Wall, Window, World*, as "an underswell of magenta that tingles like an after-image beneath the eyelid", invoking lingering memories of the state between waking and dreams. This device also draws upon the influences of contemporary media, inviting comparison to filmic glare or the fizz of screen static.

While linked to a Romantic tradition of painting, searching for poetic meaning through the awe-inspiring power of nature, Hammick's paintings share sensibilities with contemporary narrative forms, summoning the uneasy atmosphere of a crime thriller, or the dystopian suburban nightmares of J.G. Ballard. Recurring motifs of isolated human dwellings (forest cabins, modernist houses, studios or compounds) appear to withhold an internal drama behind their flattened planes and opaque windows. The suggestion of hidden narrative throughout his work is described by Julian Bell as a longing to "show the not being shown"; that by excluding the viewer from the action, they might discover the truth of its meaning.

The exhibition coincides with the end of a year spent as ENO's first Artist in Residence, from which Hammick has developed a suite of prints and a number of new paintings. Working in response to his experience of the opera, Hammick has synthesized the music and drama with a personal narrative, drawing also from his wider experience of the world around him.

Continuous Present, Dona Isabel in the Forest, 2015 takes inspiration from Peter Sellars' production of *The Indian Queen*, picturing the confrontation between cultures from a feminine perspective. In its depiction of corruption and human violence, the painting calls to mind the power of the imagination to restore inner hope. *Violetta II*, 2015 is one of several paintings made in response to *La Traviata*, Verdi's tale of feminine sacrifice. Despite her vulnerability, Hammick depicts the strength of his female protagonist through the solidity of her stance, the columns of her legs echoed within the supporting brace of the tree to her side. In common with many of Hammick's solitary characters, she represents our common anxieties and desires, finding strength to face the ultimate questions of our place in the world.

The exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive new monograph: *Tom Hammick: Wall, Window, World* by artist and writer Julian Bell, and published by Lund Humphries; the first book to survey the work of Tom Hammick. Informed by the author's sustained contact with Hammick over many years, Julian Bell explores in depth the artist's working processes, imagery and career to date, setting Hammick's art within the context of contemporary debates about painting while relating it to the two-centuries-old Romantic tradition.

It is also available as a Special Edition incorporating the three-part colour etching *Fallout*, 2014, packaged with the book in a slipcase, both print and slipcase created by the artist specially for this publication in an edition of 60.

For further information and images please contact Hannah Hughes - Hannah@flowersgallery.com / 0207 920 7777

ABOUT TOM HAMMICK

Tom Hammick (b.1963) is a British artist based in East Sussex and London. He is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art, Painting and Printmaking at the University of Brighton, and a Visiting Lecturer of Fine Art at University of Ulster, and Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD University). He has work in many major public and corporate collections including the British Museum (Collection of Prints and Drawings), Victoria and Albert Museum, Bibliotheque Nationale de France (Collection of Prints and Drawings), Deutsche Bank, Yale Centre for British Art, and The Library of Congress, Washington DC.



Violetta II, 2015, Oil on canvas,
198 x 152.5 cm



Fallout, 2014, Oil on canvas, 183 x 305 cm



Outskirts (Day), 2015, Woodcut, 121 x 158 cm



Pavilion, 2013, Oil on linen, 167.5 x 198 cm

NOTES TO EDITORS

English National Opera (ENO) is the UK's leading producer of world-class opera, sung in English. Working with the very best talent from across the arts and creative industries, ENO creates distinctive, highly theatrical productions and stage more new work and contemporary opera than any other UK opera company. ENO productions are seen by audiences across the world thanks to partnerships with its most celebrated opera houses and cinema transmissions by ENO Screen.

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