

Press Release

Alison Watt

The Sun Never Knew How Wonderful It Was

17 March – 07 May 2016

Private view:

Wednesday 16 March, 6–8pm



For further details and images
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Parafin is delighted to announce an exhibition of new work by the important Scottish painter Alison Watt (b.1965). It will be her first exhibition in London since her residency and solo show at the National Gallery in 2008.

The starting point for Watt's new work is an extended engagement with a masterwork by Peter Paul Rubens, *Venus Frigida* (1614), in the collection of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp. The painting was included in *Rubens and His Legacy* at the Royal Academy of Arts in early 2015, where Watt had the opportunity to study it. Rubens' inspiration for the figure of Venus was a marble statue he had seen in Rome, and his extraordinary transposition of cold inert stone into voluptuous living flesh is a source of ongoing fascination for Watt. Watt says: 'Making a painting often comes from looking at a painting. Sometimes when I look at a truly great painting, I can't help but be affected by it and something will come from that experience. The formal qualities of my work, those proportions which have always been satisfying and made sense to me, come from years of looking at paintings, particularly Old Master paintings. The past remains current and looking in this way is something which is central to my understanding of my own work.'

She describes the way of working that these new paintings embody as a process in which the familiar becomes something new and strange: 'In the process of making a painting, things happen which you can't quite explain, small details become memorialised and what was familiar is unfamiliar. The image you thought you knew begins to move away from you until it becomes less about what you see and more about what lies inside, what you can only sense, feel or imagine.'

In new paintings such as *Venus* (2015), *Slip* (2015) or *Moor* (2015), the human figure is seemingly absent but it is strongly implied. The resulting paintings of swathes of fabric are both sensuous and analytical, meditative and powerfully animated, and psychologically charged.

Widely regarded as one of the leading British painters working today, Alison Watt first came to public attention in 1987 when she won the National Portrait Gallery's prestigious annual award while still a student at Glasgow School of Art. She subsequently became well known for her paintings of figures, often female nudes, before beginning, in the late 1990s, to focus on the fabric which had previously served as backdrops or props for her figures. Since then Watt's paintings have continued to negotiate a position close to abstraction while remaining firmly rooted in her studies of drapery, light, the human form and her committed engagement with Old Master paintings and sculpture.

Editor's Notes

Alison Watt

Alison Watt's work has been exhibited internationally and is held in many important public and private collections around the world. She has had solo exhibitions at major institutions including the National Gallery, London, and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. Her work is currently included in *I Am Here! From Rembrandt to the Selfie* at the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, which will tour to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon (as *Autoportraits*) and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (as *Facing The World: Self-Portraits from Rembrandt to Ai Weiwei*) in 2016. Important recent group exhibitions include *Defining Beauty*, British Museum (2015), *Reality: Modern & Contemporary British Painting* at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (2014-15) and *Autoritratto*, Uffizi Gallery (2010). In 2006-08 Watt was Associate Artist at The National Gallery in London. Works from her residency were shown in her landmark solo exhibition, *Phantom*, at the National Gallery in 2008 and Watt was awarded an OBE in the same year. In 2014, as part of the *GENERATION* programme of exhibitions celebrating recent Scottish art, a retrospective exhibition of Watt's paintings was held at Perth Museum and Art Gallery, and a solo display was presented at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. Watt's work is included in many important collections including the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, the British Council Collection, London, the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, Southampton City Art Gallery, and the Uffizi in Florence.

Editor's Notes

Parafin

Parafin was launched in September 2014 by former Haunch of Venison London directors Ben Tufnell and Matt Watkins, and the founder of London gallery Master Piper, Nicholas Rhodes.

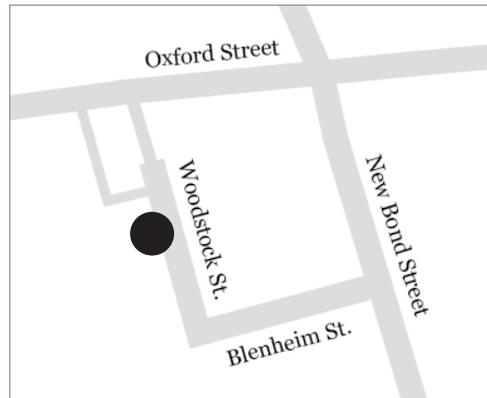
Located at 18 Woodstock Street, just off New Bond Street, Parafin represents a broad selection of contemporary artists from emerging names to established international figures.

Gallery artists

Fernando Casasepere	Nathan Coley
Tim Head	Nancy Holt
Hynek Martinec	Enrique Martínez Celaya
Justin Mortimer	Katie Paterson
Hiraki Sawa	Michelle Stuart
Alison Watt	Hugo Wilson
Uwe Wittwer	

Woodstock Street, Mayfair

Woodstock Street is located on the northern edge of Mayfair, London, between New Bond Street (via Blenheim Street) and Oxford Street. Parafin is situated near to the historic tiled Art Deco façade of auction house Bonhams.



Opening Hours

Tuesday–Friday, 10–6
Saturday, 12–5
Or by appointment