

Tristan Hoare

PARAFIN

# ALISON WATT

## A KIND OF LONGING

Tristan Hoare in collaboration with Parafin



Alison Watt, Capra (2021). Oil on canvas, 78 x 78 cm

### EXHIBITION

3<sup>RD</sup> FEB - 10<sup>TH</sup> MAR 2023

TUES - SAT, 11AM - 6PM

TRISTAN HOARE  
6 FITZROY SQUARE  
LONDON W1T 5DX

# ALISON WATT

## A KIND OF LONGING

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In a unique collaboration, Tristan Hoare and Parafin are delighted to announce an exhibition of new work by Alison Watt. *A Kind of Longing* continues Watt's ongoing engagement with the practice of the celebrated eighteenth-century Scottish portrait painter Allan Ramsay (1713-84), first showcased in her acclaimed exhibition, *A Portrait Without Likeness*, at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh in 2021. As the architect Robert Adam was part of Ramsay's circle (and sat for a portrait by Ramsay in 1755), Watt expressed a wish to show her new paintings in an Adam interior. This created an opportunity for a special collaboration between Parafin and Tristan Hoare, as our gallery is housed in a Grade I listed Georgian house in Fitzroy Square, which was designed by Robert Adam just before his death in 1792. The building was completed by Adam's brothers James and William in 1798.

Speaking of the opportunity to show her work in a Robert Adam designed interior, Alison Watt said: "Ramsay was a painter but he was also a writer and a thinker. His friends included some of the great philosophers, painters and architects of his age, Robert Adam among them. Ramsay was known for his love of engaging in lively conversation with his sitters, because for him, conversation was central to his understanding of them. I'd like to imagine that some of those conversations may have taken place in rooms much like those at 6 Fitzroy Square. Perhaps in the very house itself ..."

Watt's new paintings originate in the artist's continuing fascination with Ramsay's portraits and the drawings and sketchbooks from his extensive archive held by the National Galleries of Scotland, to which she was granted special access. In this new body of work, one can observe how the subtle shifts in tone and colour are influenced by Ramsay's own palette. Watt, best known for her paintings of fabric and drapery, has long been an admirer of Ramsay's portraits of women, in particular the intensely personal images of his first and second wives, Anne Bayne (d. 1743) and Margaret Lindsay of Evelick (1726-82) respectively. Taking objects that appear in Ramsay's portraits and drawings – including books, a cabbage leaf, lacework, feathers and roses – as signs or symbols of aspects of the sitter's life and character, Watt's new paintings are neither portraits nor still lifes, but instead extraordinary hybrids of both genres.

Speaking of the opportunity to work with Watt, Tristan said: "I have long been an admirer of Alison's painting and I am delighted to collaborate on this exhibition with Parafin, in which the conceptual and aesthetic synergy between the artworks and the 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture will be evident."

Parafin founders Ben and Matt comment on the chance to collaborate with Tristan: "We're always looking for ways to collaborate with friends and colleagues. In the current moment, it feels good to share resources and opportunities. It's an honour to work with Tristan and his team to bring this remarkable group of paintings to London and fulfil Alison's vision for her work."

*A Kind of Longing* takes its title from an essay by art historian Dr Tom Normand, who contributed to the exhibition catalogue of *A Portrait Without Likeness* at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 2021. Normand notes that "the physical presence of [Watt's subjects], resting within their neutral and uncertain ground, is disconcerting. They appear to speak to a connection that is lost, or only half-remembered. A kind of longing." The exhibition will continue until 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 6 Fitzroy Square.

## About the Artist

Widely regarded as one of the leading British painters working today, **ALISON WATT** (b. 1965, Greenock) first came to public attention in 1987 when she won the National Portrait Gallery's prestigious annual award while still a student at the Glasgow School of Art. Watt 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 prop for her compositions. 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.

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 has been exhibited internationally and at major institutions, including recent solo exhibition *Alison Watt: A Portrait Without Likeness* at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (2021) and *Alison Watt: A Shadow on the Blind* at Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal (2018/19). Recent group exhibitions include *The Conference of The Birds* at Tristan Hoare Gallery, London (2022), *The Forest* at Parafin, London (2021), *Facing The World: Self-Portraits from Rembrandt to Ai Weiwei* at the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon and Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh (2015), *Defining Beauty* at the British Museum, London (2015), *Reality: Modern & Contemporary British Painting*, at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (2014-15) and *Autoritratto* at the Uffizi Gallery, Florence (2010).

Watt's work is held in many important public and private collections around the world, including the National Portrait Gallery in London, the National Galleries of Scotland, the Arts Council Collection, the British Council Collection, the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, Southampton City Art Gallery, the US Embassy, in London, and the Uffizi in Florence.

## About the Galleries

**PARAFIN** was founded by Ben Tufnell and Matt Watkins in 2014. The gallery represents emerging artists such as Aimee Parrott, Indre Serpytyte and Fred Sorrell as well as major figures including Alison Watt, Nathan Coley, Tim Head, Hamish Fulton and Nancy Holt.

The gallery is active in initiating and supporting offsite projects by the artists it works with and maintains a publishing programme. Parafin regularly exhibits at international art fairs including Frieze Masters, London and The Armory Show, New York.

**TRISTAN HOARE**, founded in 2009, is a multi-layered gallery focusing on young and established artists working in a variety of mediums, such as ceramics, glass, painting and drawing, as well as photography. The gallery represents emerging artists such as Sydney Albertini, Kaori Tatebayashi, Paolo Colombo and Nicolas Lefebvre, as well as more established figures such as Alessandro Twombly, Flavie Audi and Taizo Kuroda.

Each year the gallery curates an ambitious exhibition with an overarching theme. *Geometrica* (2018), *Botanica* (2019), *Folds* (2021) and *The Conference of the Birds* (2022) enabled collaborations with a range of artists and galleries, combining works from the BC to the present day. The gallery is located in an original Georgian townhouse at 6 Fitzroy Square.

**6 FITZROY SQUARE** is a Grade I listed Georgian townhouse designed by Robert Adam just before his death in 1792 and completed by Adam's brothers James and William in 1798. The building was intended to provide residences for aristocratic families of the time, which is reflected in its lavish proportions, Portland stone frontage and detailed exterior and interior plasterwork, visible to this day.

Notable residents of Fitzroy Square have included Sir Charles Eastlake, the first director of the National Gallery (no. 7), James Abbott McNeill Whistler (no. 8), George Bernard Shaw, Virginia Woolf (no. 29), Ford Maddox Brown (no. 37) and housed Roger Fry's Omega Workshops from 1913 to 1919 (no. 33).

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