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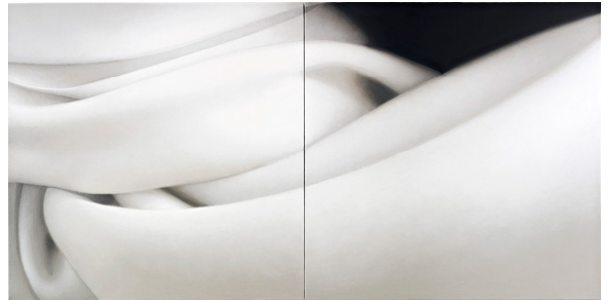
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PRESS RELEASE

# ALISON WATT

## *Hiding in Full View*

5 November 2011 - 28 January 2012



In the spring of last year Alison Watt was commissioned by the Uffizi Gallery in Florence to make a work for their celebrated collection of self-portraits by women artists. This was an unusual commission, not least because it came nearly 15 years after Watt had last painted the human figure. Since relinquishing the figure in 1997 she has edged towards abstraction, painting swathes of fabric suggestive of both a human presence and absence. This way of working culminated in her solo exhibition *Phantom*, at the National Gallery in London in the summer of 2008.

The request from the Uffizi instigated a new way of thinking for Watt. Her preceding series of paintings had looked to the old masters – especially to Ingres, and in the National Gallery show, to Zurbaran – but the request to re-visit the idea of a self-portrait turned Watt's attention to a small photograph by the American artist Francesca Woodman (1958-1981)

*“I have thought a lot about the nature of self portraiture, there has always been an element of it in my paintings. From the very beginning when I would stand in front of a mirror and paint myself obsessively, to the more subtle representations of self which are present in the work now. Much of my work is about the transformation of an object into an idea, and in the process of painting the work for the Uffizi I found myself looking closely at the photographs of Francesca Woodman. One of the many things I found fascinating about Woodman's work is her use of the object in her self-portraits, and how the two elements of self and object often merge. If it was possible to create a painting that was difficult to identify and at the same time incredibly intimate, that was what I wanted to do”. [Alison Watt 2010]*

Watt titled her 'self portrait' *Angel* after the title of a Woodman photograph, and in the autumn of 2010 the two artists' work hung side by side in the Uffizi's exhibition *Autoritratto*. Since then Watt has continued to look to Woodman's work, taking indirect inspiration from the almost hypnotic imagery of Woodman's intense and dreamlike tableaux. This has resulted in a new series of paintings, to be unveiled at Ingleby Gallery this November.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an artist's book published by Ingleby Gallery and made in collaboration with the poet Don Paterson, featuring a new poem written in response to the work of both Watt and Woodman.

**Notes for editors:**

**Alison Watt** was born in Greenock in 1965 and studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1983-88. From 2006 until 2008 she was Associate Artist at the National Gallery, London and was awarded an OBE in the same year. Museum exhibitions include *Fold* at Edinburgh's Fruitmarket Gallery in 1997, *Shift* at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh in 2000, and *Phantom* at the National Gallery, London in 2008.

**Francesca Woodman** was born in Denver, Colorado, in 1958 and lived most of her brief life in New York. Having made her first photograph aged 13, she took her own life in 1981 at the age of 22, leaving behind an astonishingly mature and influential body of work. A major survey of her life's work will open at the San Francisco Museum of Fine Art on 5<sup>th</sup> November this year, before travelling to the Guggenheim Museum, New York in the spring of 2012.

**Don Paterson** was born in Dundee in 1963. His poetry has won many awards, including the Forward Prize for best first collection, the Whitbread Poetry Prize, the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Award and the T.S.Eliot Prize. Most recently his collection *Rain* won the 2009 Forward prize. He received an OBE in 2008 and the Queen's Medal for Poetry in 2010.5

Ingleby Gallery was founded in Edinburgh in 1998 and, now situated in an old warehouse building at the back of the city's main train station, is Scotland's largest private gallery. The gallery presents an ambitious programme of exhibitions and off-site projects representing artists of international standing whilst also introducing and supporting artists at an earlier stage of their career.

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Images: (Overleaf) Alison Watt, *Angel*, 2010 [collection of the Uffizi Gallery]  
Francesca Woodman, *Angel Series*, Rome, 1977