

# PITZHANGER

MANOR & GALLERY

Press Release

For Immediate Release: 13 February 2025

## ***Alison Watt: From Light* at Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery — New paintings respond to the life and work of architect Sir John Soane**

5 March – 15 June 2025 (extended)

Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, Ealing Green, London W5 5EQ



Alison Watt, *Parker*, 2024, oil on canvas, 80×78cm

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**Ealing, London:** From 5 March, Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery will host a major new exhibition by painter Alison Watt, marking her first major public gallery exhibition in London since 2008.

*From Light* will include 18 new paintings created specifically for Pitzhanger. The title reflects the centrality of light in both Watt's work and that of Sir John Soane, the architect of Pitzhanger, in harnessing light to shape space and create atmosphere. For Watt, light is the 'very substance of painting', while for Soane, it defined the architecture of Pitzhanger.

Watt has long-drawn inspiration from historical painting, especially artists Allan Ramsay (1713–1784), Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) and Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664). In *From Light*, she shifts her attention to the objects that formed Soane's world — his collection, his fascination with historical figures, and his preoccupation with themes of mortality and memorialisation.

*Le Ciel* is a painting Watt created for Pitzhanger's Eating Room, where Soane once entertained guests. Depicting a white rose in bud with partially diseased leaves, *Le Ciel* engages with Soane's broader vision of integrating nature into his home, from the Library with its delicate trellises and vines to the hand-painted wallpaper of birds and flowers in the Upper Drawing Room.

A new series of three paintings of Oliver Cromwell's death mask are inspired by a cast in Soane's collection<sup>1</sup>. Soane originally believed the mask to be that of the mutineering sea captain Richard Parker, but it was later identified as being of Cromwell. Watt's multiple interpretations recall Van Dyck's *Triple Portrait of Charles I*, referencing the layered nature of representation, power, and legacy in historical portraiture. Watt often depicts the same object from multiple angles, to reveal subtly different facets of its character.

Watt's series of five rose paintings — *Shaken, Heart, The Day After, Watch, Scar* — displayed in Pitzhanger Gallery meditate on the rose as a symbol of beauty, innocence, and transience — but also of decline and decay. The motif of the fading rose has long been used in art history to represent the fleeting nature of life. Here, Watt's treatment of the rose dovetails with Soane's preoccupation with death and remembrance, alluding to the personal disappointments and health issues which ultimately led to the Soane family leaving behind the dream of Pitzhanger.

In addition to the play of light and space, the exhibition is an exploration of the relationship between the artist's studio and the museum and the way in which specific objects act as guiding lights — enduring personal points of remembrance and stimulus behind an artist's work. Watt has selected treasured objects from her Edinburgh studio that serve as daily sources of inspiration, which will be displayed in Soane's Breakfast Room, including early paintings, gifts from fellow artists, and found objects imbued with personal significance. Among them is a goat's skull from her late father's collection, an object he once used as inspiration in his studio, and another skull is a gift from sculptor

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<sup>1</sup> Death mask of Oliver Cromwell, M461. (1836). London, UK: Sir John Soane's Museum Collection.  
<https://collections.soane.org/object-m461>

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Kenny Hunter. Many of these objects represent personal friendships, underscoring the importance of relationships in the lives and practices of both Watt and Soane.

Alison Watt said: *“Pitzhanger had a great personal significance for Sir John Soane. It is a house that tells us something not only of his intellectual life, but also his emotional one — a place that once held his hopes and aspirations. In its own way, a form of biography. Soane was an artist, who created an art object in which to display art. Like a painting, light is part of the very substance of this house.”*

Clare Gough, Director of Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, said: *“We are delighted to be working with Alison Watt in this major public exhibition. Watt’s exploration of light beautifully echoes Soane’s use of shadows and reflection as an architectural tool. The extraordinary body of new works, that demand quiet contemplation, will create a fascinating dialogue with Soane’s designs.”*

## Exhibition Events

### **Press View— Tuesday 4 March 2025, 10am–12pm**

Art critics and press contacts are invited to an exclusive preview. Alison Watt and Clare Gough will be available for interviews. RSVP to [press@pitzhanger.org.uk](mailto:press@pitzhanger.org.uk).

### **Thursday Late: Slow Looking— Thursday 6 March 2025, 5–8pm**

A special evening of after-hours access, inviting visitors to slow down and connect with Watt’s works. The events include a slow looking session with Dr. Aleksandra Igdalova.

### **In Conversation: Alison Watt and Clare Gough—Thursday 3 April 2025**

A discussion between Alison Watt and Pitzhanger’s director Clare Gough, exploring Watt’s artistic practice and her engagement with Sir John Soane’s architectural vision.

### **In Conversation: Alison Watt and Aimee Ng, Curator of The Frick Collection, New York—Thursday 22 May 2025**

A discussion of Alison Watt as an artist and the development of her career.

For more information, visit [pitzhanger.org.uk/alison-watt](https://pitzhanger.org.uk/alison-watt)

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## Listing Information

**Alison Watt: *From Light***

Date: 5 March – 15 June 2025 (extended)

### Artist

Alison Watt

### Supported by

Lévy Gorvy Dayan

### Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery

Address: Ealing Green, London W5 5EQ

8-minute walk from Ealing Broadway Station (Elizabeth, Central, District Lines & National Rail)

### Opening hours:

Wednesday to Sunday 10am–5pm, including Bank Holidays (First Thursday of the Month: 10am–8pm)

### Admission:

£12 Standard / £6 Students / FREE Under 16

FREE for Members

Pay-what-you-can for Ealing Borough residents every first Thursday of the month 5–8pm, and every Sunday 10am–noon

The admission ticket includes visit to Sir John Soane's historic house.

## Notes to Editors

## About Alison Watt

Alison Watt OBE FRSE RSA (born 1965) first gained national attention while still a student at the Glasgow School of Art, winning the annual John Player Portrait Award in 1987 (subsequently, the BP Portrait Award), presented by the National Portrait Gallery, London. Watt became the youngest artist to hold a solo exhibition at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in 2000. She was appointed the youngest Associate Artist at the National Gallery, London (2006–2008) and presented an exhibition, *Phantom*, in 2008. Watt's work is held in numerous public collections, including the Arts Council Collection, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, the National Portrait Gallery, London, the British Council Collection, and the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence. Solo exhibitions were mounted by institutions such as the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (2021–2022), Abbot Hall Museum & Art Gallery (2018–2019), Perth Museum & Art Gallery (2014), the National Gallery, London (2008), and the Dulwich Picture Gallery (2002). Alison Watt is represented by Lévy Gorvy Dayan.

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### About Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery

Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, built 1800–1804, is the historic country home of one of the most remarkable English architects, Sir John Soane. Pitzhanger’s mission is to promote Soane’s legacy, inspiring visitors with art, architecture, and design and nurturing creativity for all. The museum celebrates not only Soane’s lasting influence as a designer, but also combines his architecture with a programme of ambitious contemporary art exhibitions across the house and contemporary gallery. Pitzhanger runs an extensive learning outreach and events programme. Pitzhanger reopened in spring 2019 following a major £12-million conservation and restoration project to return the Manor to Soane’s original design, with support from NLHF, ACE, Ealing Council, and other generous donors.

### About Sir John Soane

Sir John Soane (1753–1837) was one of Britain’s most visionary architects, and one of the very few of his time to have come from a working-class background. His buildings are celebrated for their idiosyncratic take on the neoclassical style and mastery of natural light. Soane bought Pitzhanger in 1800. He demolished most of the existing manor house apart from the Dance Wing and from 1800 to 1804, designed and built a new house as his country estate sitting in 28 acres of parkland. The legacy of Soane’s distinctive buildings, teachings, and collections has influenced generations of artists, architects, and designers.

### Sharing with you selected highlights from our exciting programme of new exhibitions in 2025

| Artist  | Date                                 | Description   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b><i>J’Accuse...!</i><br/>Sculptures by<br/>Nicole Farhi</b> | 19 March – 22<br>June 2025           | A series of small busts focussing on victims of miscarriages of justice across the world.   |
| <b>Perminder Kaur</b>   | June –<br>September<br>2025          | A solo exhibition, in Pitzhanger Gallery, of Perminder Kaur’s colourful sculptures that incorporate a language of toys and clothes from childhood, creating installations that are both inviting and disquieting. |
| <b>Prem Sahib</b>   | June –<br>September<br>2025          | A solo exhibition in the manor house by Prem Sahib, featuring works that explore the intersection of public and private spaces through pared down sculptural interventions.                                       |
| <b>Howard Hodgkin</b>   | September<br>2025 – February<br>2026 | A retrospective showcasing the vibrant and emotionally charged print practice of Howard Hodgkin, depicting moments and memories through bold, abstract forms.   |

#### Current Exhibitions:

- *Antoni Malinowski and H el ene Binet: Pigments and Photons*



Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery Trust  
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Charity Registration: 1152434      Company Registration: 08278049



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- *Language of the Physical: Katherine Gili Sculpture*
- *Matt Small: Pride of England*

These three exhibitions remain on view at Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery.

## Image Sheet

Please download high-resolution images from [the Press Kit](#).



Alison Watt, *The Day After (detail)*, 2023. Oil on canvas, 80×78cm

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Alison Watt, *Le Ciel*, 2025. Oil on canvas,  
182.9x121.9cm



Alison Watt, *Dream*, 2024, oil on canvas,  
80x87cm.



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Front façade of Pitzhanger Manor. © Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery. Photo by Andy Stagg