

## *Video Transcript*

### **Title:**

Alison Watt | Absent Presence

### **Summary:**

Scottish artist Alison Watt first came to prominence when, while still a student, she won a competition run by the National Portrait Gallery, London. She is best known for her paintings of figures – often female nudes, in rooms filled with light. These led on to a series of paintings looking at the properties of fabric. In this short film, originally produced in 2014, the artist talks about her work: her need to paint, spending a decade with life models, and the connection between the human body and folds of fabric.

### **Duration:**

02:04

## *Transcript*

### *Alison Watt*

Some of my earliest memories are of painting. I have no memory of ever wanting to do anything else other than paint. And for me it is something that's vocational, you know – something that I have to do. I paint almost every day, and it's an emotional experience for me. I wouldn't even describe it as a job. It's just a way of being. It's something which is – can be frustrating, and something which doesn't often give you a lot of happiness, but when it does bring you satisfaction it's exquisite. From the mid-80s for a period of about ten years, I worked every day with a life model. And that was something that I did deliberately – I wanted to immerse myself in that and study the human figure. And what that actually led to was me moving away from working directly from life. The paintings I was making were much more about what I was thinking, rather than just what I was seeing. Although in these paintings the body is not explicitly represented, it's still echoed in the landscape of the cloth. So for me the paintings are about an absent presence – you are taking away something, in this instance the fabric from its original narrative, which is normally used as a support for the figure.

Looking, for me, is something which is as big a part, if not a bigger part, of painting than painting itself. It almost overrides everything.



Most artists spend a great deal of their life editing the world and contemplating it. And for me it's a way of trying to work out where you fit in, and trying to make some sort of order of the chaos of what's around you.