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## Natalya Laskis: Interview

by [HUNTER BRAITHWAITE](#) on Mar 6, 2012 • 9:11 am  
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Natalya Laskis was raised in Miami and studied painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art. [Shortness of Breath](#), an exhibition of her new paintings will open on Saturday, March 10th at the new Locust Projects space.

**These are much bigger.**

Yeah, at first it was more intimidating of course, but I decided that it was more about the image. I would pick an image and blow it up. I work from photographs, either my own or ones from the internet. With these large scale paintings, I've actually focused closer, so the edges don't edge.

**You're totally swallowed up by the compositions, as opposed to your earlier work, which was primarily landscape, and from a distance.**

Those were also centered. These are more portraits of myself.

**You paint them with brooms?**

I paint them with brooms, with mops...those sponge mops.

**Like a swifter?**

Haha, yeah, like a swifter. I'm using commercial materials. With the small paintings, I was using large brushes. So when I went bigger, the tools had to get bigger.

**These paintings are flip between representation and abstraction.**

I want to represent abstract feelings through situations, through objects. Through the process of painting. The painting of the Jawbreaker in the show was a breakthrough for me. I've always been involved in the academics of representation, but now I'm playing pretty heavily on the relationship between representation and nonobjectivity.

**The jawbreaker is a nice painting. And how it's placed in your studio makes it look like the eye of a storm, with all the more frenetic compositions radiating outwards. It also is the most non-representational painting in the set. Supposing that they are the two sides of the same coin. Which is more primary, representation or abstraction?**

Oh my god...my interpretation of this is trying to get loose and capture the energy between those two things. I have to experience that flux.



Source Material, 2011

**One of favorite things about your earlier work was how you took these super American themes of the outdoors, adventure, manifest destiny, whatever, and then painted them with Sargent's bravado. But the actual content was totally pathetic. It's not a yacht, it's a jetski that people are having sex on. Do you see the same forces at work with the new paintings, which are more psychological?**

I'm not rich. I talk about what I've experienced, and I'm familiar with the working class. I think this started when I was attacked by a mountain lion at age 5.

### **...Only in Florida**

This crazy hippie friend of my dad's had a mountain lion as a pet, and he was showing it off to us. The cat was chained in the front yard. My mother bends down, coaxing me to get closer to it. I end up dead center in front of this cat, eye to eye. Then suddenly the wind picks up my dress and the cat lunges for it. He locked on to my knee. Turns out they were playing with fabric earlier on. The next day I went to school with a huge bandage and nobody believed me.



Natalya Laskis, *Ghost Date*, Oil on Panel, 2012

**How are these small paintings different from the larger ones?**

The small ones are more about the narrative. With the smaller scale, I put more information in them. The larger ones are about the process of painting, the application of paint.

**The big ones don't really give away much. They arrest you the second before you realize what's happening. They have an apprehensive quality of...awkwardness.**

Yeah, the one with the girl being fed. The viewer looks at the painting, but the viewer could also be the man feeding the girl.

**Is this current style a resting point for you?**

My next show is going to be called "What is Love?" There will be figures lost in translations of Americana. Nudes on La-z-boys.