

ARTS & EVENTS

"The Last Viking" at Conner Contemporary

To July 25

By [Maura Judkis](#)

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Something about the fabled Little Bunny Foo Foo—the rabbit who went on a field-mouse killing spree—was always a little...off. Same goes for Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater, the cruel gourd jailer of his spouse, and the farmer's wife, mutilator of the hapless Three Blind Mice. Fairy tales and nursery rhymes have always been full of whimsical horror, a fact [Nathaniel Rogers](#) delights in pointing out at Conner Contemporary. His paintings in "The Last Viking" depict classic characters like Humpty Dumpty, Jack Be Nimble and Little Jack Horner as sociopaths playing with fire, wreaking havoc, and indulging in prescription pills. The faces of the nursery characters, set in contemporary society, are illuminated by small acts of arson. To twist the knife, Rogers paints in an illustrative manner that, if not for his interpretation of the subject matter, would charm any children's-books editor. Through Rogers, we realize that the rhymes we teach our preschoolers aren't so innocent after all. Even those that aren't sinister are the butt of cruel jokes—a blindfolded Little Bo Peep will search in vain for her lost sheep forever, as they're a part of the wallpaper behind her. Especially apparent, though, is a collective senselessness in the already nonsensical rhymes. Rogers' storybook characters act as if they are children with a magnifying glass at an ant mound—causing harm merely to sate their own curiosities.



THE EXHIBITION IS ON VIEW FROM 11 A.M. TO 5 P.M. WEDNESDAY–SATURDAY, TO JULY 25, AT [CONNER CONTEMPORARY](#), 1358–60 FLORIDA AVE. NE. FREE. (202) 588-8750