



'THEIR GIANT PROBLEM,' 30" BY 40"
OIL ON CANVAS, 2012

THE POP SURREALISM OF MARK ROGERS

Eugene artist opens The New Ending, a dark and delightfully twisted show at Jameson's

Oil painter Mark Rogers has been taking a lot of vitamins lately, and he doesn't know how he feels about it. His ambivalence towards vitamins, and medicine in general, is illustrated in his latest painting, "Take Your Medicine." The oil panel features, in the words of the artist, "This old guy with these fucked-up bat wings giving medicine to these prairie dogs ... I was thinking he was kind of like an angel but a bad angel." The effect is at once unsettling and comical.

With his masterful marriage of figurative technique and uncanny content — like a modern-day Max Ernst — it's hard to believe that Rogers has only been painting for four years and that he is mostly self-taught. "I can't handle art classes," he says. "I think I've dropped out of every single art class I've ever taken in my life." His interest in the arts began with drawing monsters as a kid and continued on through his admiration for the somber religious imagery of Early Netherlandish painter Gerard David, the imaginative-realism of *Dinotopia* illustrator James Gurney and the fantasy-erotica scenes of contemporary painter Boris Vallejo. Rogers would eventually like to illustrate for publications and do a show at the Roq La Rue Gallery, Seattle's pop-surrealism mecca.

"Take Your Medicine" is one of nine paintings on display in his show *The New Ending* at Jameson's through Feb. 28 (Rogers has been a bartender there for seven years). The title is a play on "a new beginning," a phrase that Rogers says he heard all too often in the aftermath of his divorce a year ago. The piece that exemplifies this notion best is also the exhibit's showstopper. "The Out With the Old," the largest painting in the show (48" by 36"), combines the imagery of "There was an Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe" with a young woman in a yellow dress whose piercing gaze almost distracts from the fact that she is pouring what seems to be blood out of a coffee mug. Did I mention she's in a graveyard? Joined by two menacing human-sized house cats? The result is much more Brothers Grimm meets *Pet Sematary* than nursery rhyme.

And that's what Rogers does best in his pop-surrealism paintings; he employs banal, everyday situations — like taking vitamins, purchasing furniture or even divorce — and makes them whimsical and grotesque like a fairytale nightmare. "I take something really normal in my life and then the idea gets way out of control," Rogers says, adding with a laugh, "I listen to a lot of fantasy novels on tape and heavy metal." ■

The New Ending runs through Thursday, Feb. 28, at Jameson's, 115 W. Broadway.



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