

# The New York Times

## Art in Review

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### Hugh Steers

*Richard Anderson Fine Arts  
453 West 17th Street  
Chelsea  
Through Jan. 17*

Though a young artist associated with new themes — AIDS and the forthright expression of gay experiences — Hugh Steers was an old-fashioned humanist. In a style that calls to mind American painters of the 1920's and 30's like Reginald Marsh, Thomas Hart Benton or Edward Hopper, but with his own rather ham-fisted touch, Steers painted narratives redolent of grief, despair and, at times, mordant humor.

Looking at his pictures, you feel that Steers, who died of AIDS in 1995 at age 32, knew all too well what he was painting about. In one small study in which a naked man sits on an examining table while two doctors consider him from across the room, he pictures the gap between vulnerability and dispassionate professionalism.

In a larger canvas, "The Break," a man slouches in an armchair, a basin of water at his feet, pausing from his ministrations to a sick man, whom we see in a mirror lying on a bed. Set in a bleak, empty room and painted in dark browns and greens, the picture exudes spiritual exhaustion. On a more upbeat note, there's the portrait of "Hospital Man," a patient in a baby-doll gown and white high-heeled platform shoes who personifies the will to live.

KEN JOHNSON