

Art | Basel

Explore 120 years of exceptional art in Art Basel's Online Viewing Rooms

Accompanying the fair, they are teeming with treasures, from the early 1900s to today

By Elliot Albrecht

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Artworks are invaluable markers of history, coded with the events, social dynamics, and cultural shifts of their era. In Art Basel's *Online Viewing Rooms (OVRs)*, which open to the public on June 14 and run concurrently to the upcoming Basel fair, galleries are presenting a rich array of works across geographies and time periods – from early 1900s Germany to present-day Ghana. To celebrate this artistic cornucopia, we shed light on one OVR work per decade, starting in 1901 and ending in 2023.

Hugh Steers, *High-Heeled Embrace* (1989) **Presented by Alexander Gray Associates, London**

During the height of the AIDS epidemic, when love and death were too often linked, American painter **Hugh Steers** was making deeply poignant works about compassion, care, and loss. *High-Heeled Embrace* (1989) captures a tender and complex moment between two men; in a simple bedroom, a man wraps his arms around his lover from behind. The embracer is wearing heels – shoes which, to the artist, symbolized the empowerment and precarity of queer life at the time. Through the subjects' troubled expressions and melancholy body language, the painting conveys the complexities of love during the era.



Hugh Steers, *High-Heeled Embrace*, 1989. Courtesy of Alexander Gray Associates