

# NEW YORK OBSERVER

## He Never Signed a Work: Hugh Auchincloss Steers

By Jeffrey Hogrefe 12/08/97

If Hugh Steers had lived longer, he might have become the next Lucien Freud. That, it seems, was the consensus of a group of Chelsea art lovers and family members of the late artist, who died of AIDS in 1995 at the age of 33. They had gathered at the Richard Anderson Fine Arts gallery on the evening of Nov. 22 for the first show of the artist's work since his death. It is also the debut show at the relocated gallery.

In loaded paintings that centered on figures drawn with the facility of a Renaissance artist, Steers, like Mr. Freud, used flesh in deeply personal ways. In Steers' case, the figures have to do with his male sexual preference and fascination with the accouterments of downtown drag culture.

"I just hope that Hugh doesn't get pigeonholed as a gay AIDS artist," said Burr Steers, the artist's brother and one of the co-heirs of the estate. Mr. Steers is a Hollywood-based movie actor whose next role is as a "door Nazi" in *The Last Days of Disco*, Wit Stillman's film about Studio 54 that opens next summer. "I play the guy at the door who tells people they can't come into the place," he said. Their mother Nina Auchincloss Straight was the stepsister of the late Jacqueline Onassis and half-sister of Gore Vidal. Mr. Steers pointed out, though, that his brother consciously refused to trade on his family's name.

"Several dealers wanted him to go as Hugh Auchincloss Steers. That's his full name. He refused. He would threaten to wound you," said Mr. Steers. "I really admired that. He lived the artist's life on Avenue B. He could have painted horses and debutantes and made a lot of dough up in Newport selling stuff to our relatives."