The Cinematic Genesis of the Mel Casas Humanscape, 1965–1967

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Abstract: *The 153 paintings that San Antonio–based artist Mel Casas calls Humanscapes were inspired by a glimpse of a drive-in movie screen. This article treats the first three years of work on this series, a period in which the artist referenced cinematic settings and audiences while registering aspects of the sexual revolution. Marshall McLuhan's Mechanical Bride (1951) deeply influenced the analysis of media imagery and technology that is evident in these paintings. In addition to contemporary cultural influences, the early phase of the Humanscape series also drew on the same artistic influences, namely surrealism and Dada, that shaped the work of other pop artists. By the end of 1967, Casas included parts of signs within his paintings. These signs led to freestanding, independent texts that doubled as subtitles. By juxtaposing punning texts and images, Casas broke from the explicit cinematic setting. Interviews with Casas and statements by the artist assist in discerning the inner logic of this remarkable series.*

A single quasi-surreal experience in early 1965 led Mel Casas to create 153 large acrylic paintings between May 1965 and March 1989.[1] As Casas drove up San Pedro Avenue toward Highway 410 in San Antonio, Texas, he witnessed what appeared to be a bizarre interaction between a film image projected onto a distant drive-in movie screen and aspects of the urban landscape in his immediate vicinity. A gigantic, on-screen head of a woman was conversing with someone who was out of the picture. Since Casas could not hear any sound, the woman's moving mouth appeared to be "munching" on trees in the foreground (Casas 2008; Quirarte 1973, 81).[2] This startling juxtaposition of divergent planes of quotidian urban life struck the artist as surreal. For the next twenty-four years, Casas responded by juxtaposing slices of everyday life with images derived from film, television, advertising, and other forms of mass media and popular culture. As the artist notes, the point was not to duplicate what he had seen, but

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rather to "utilize the incongruous world that I was looking at, and make it work for painting" (Casas 2008). He gave the name Humanscape to this remarkable, highly varied cycle.[3]

Except for the first three paintings, every Humanscape features a large image in the upper section of the painting that is the functional equivalent of the distant view of the San Pedro drive-in screen that Casas beheld in the spring of 1965.[4] I refer to this component as the screen image. It is usually curved, like a drive-in movie screen. Within the Humanscape series, one can identify distinct phases or periods of intense concentration and exploration of particular themes. Nearly all of the Humanscapes Casas painted in the first two years explicitly reproduce the cinematic experience: Humanscapes 2–5 and 14 feature drive-in theaters, while Humanscapes 7–11 and 15–39 depict theater interiors; the smaller screens of Humanscapes 12 and 13 suggest television.[5]

In these early paintings, Casas typically situated one or more small images of spectators in the foreground. These spectators grew in stature, and by the late summer of 1967, these spectatorial scenarios became increasingly improbable. From 1967 through early 1970, concluding with *Humanscape 61 (Union Gap)*, Casas emphasized what he calls "socio-sexual works." He began making paintings with politically explicit themes in early 1968 and concentrated on this subject matter from 1970 through 1975.[6] From 1975 through 1981 Casas frequently analyzed aesthetics, the art market, and the art world at large. Beginning in April 1982 with *Humanscape 114 (S.W. Image)*, the final thirty-six Humanscapes all treat Southwestern themes, images, and clichés.

This article examines the cinematic paintings, which reflect the impact of media technology and the awakening of the sexual revolution. Two texts in particular provide insights into these paintings: an artist's statement by Casas (1968) and Marshall McLuhan's *Mechanical Bride* (1951), which exerted a deep influence on the artist.[7] These texts are supplemented by other literature on Casas and by statements the artist made to the author in interviews. In the works under discussion here, Casas was more of an observer—however sardonic—than a critic. This distinction is thrown into relief when we compare his statements to early feminist protests and critiques.

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These early Humanscapes have a critical logic: they directly address the power of dominant media images. Cinema, television, and other mass media shape and form their viewing subjects. These subjects and social groups are further reflected in new generations of media images that are themselves transformed by the viewing experiences of their audience. Media image and viewing subject become locked in an infinitely reflective embrace. But unlike the fixed positions reflected in halls of mirrors, each transformed image has the potential to give rise to another transformed image. Rather than creating images of simple and unchanging conformity or creating wildly divergent transformations, cinema and the media produce conforming transformations, according to Casas. The early Humanscapes were experimental paintings created without a preconceived program, though they were guided by a McLuhanesque logic. In fact, if his initial idea was "too clear," Casas did not proceed with the painting. The artist acknowledges that the significance of individual paintings, and the series as a whole, was only evident in retrospect.

Pop Goes the Art: Blondness, Blankness, Whiteness, Comic Strips, American Beauties, and the Barbie Doll Ideal

This section provides a context for Casas (b. 1929) by comparing and contrasting his paintings to selected aspects of the work of pop artists Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Tom Wesselmann. Since the term *pop* encompasses art that depicts consumer objects, it is an appropriate category for this phase of the Humanscape cycle. When he began the Humanscapes, Casas's immediate frame of reference was surrealism. The pioneering English pop artists treated here drew on Dada and surrealism before pop existed as a fine art category. In the United States, artists had to contend with the enormous prestige of abstract expressionism, which triumphalist critics promoted as the summit and end-point of artistic evolution. The most influential American predecessors of pop were Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) and Jasper Johns (b. 1930), who are often categorized as neo-Dadaists.

English Pop

English pop art's point of origin is often traced to Eduardo Paolozzi's (1924–2005) lecture "Bunk!," delivered to a meeting of the Independent Group (IG) in London in 1952. He projected makeshift collages that

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were intended as study images, including *I Was a Rich Man's Plaything* (1947).[8] Like that work, IG member Richard Hamilton's (b. 1922) collage *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?* (1956) is a compendium of American media and consumer images that prefigures several subsequent strains of pop art.[9] A party girl/stripper is paired with a body builder. They function as Adam and Eve in a "consumer's paradise" (Stonard 2007, 60). English pop responded to high-tech ads for products emanating from the United States (Taylor 2004, 160). IG member Reyner Banham recalls the "horrors and deprivations of a six year war" that preceded this barrage (Stonard 2007, 615). According to Jean-Paul Stonard, Hamilton's *Just what is it . . .* "also reflects the disquiet of its time, marked by the end of Empire and the dawn of the Nuclear Age" (60).

Dada and surrealism provided a frame of reference for Paolozzi and Hamilton. Their subversive exploration of popular culture was also informed by McLuhan's *Mechanical Bride*, which David Robbins (1990, 59) calls "the chief resource for the IG's analysis of ads." Casas proceeded from the same artistic and analytic premises—though his paintings were intended as fine art from the beginning.

Andy Warhol and Marilyn Monroe: Blondness and Privilege

Most of the major American pop artists were employed as commercial artists. But unlike their predecessors, they "applied the conventions of commercial art to fine art" (Goldman 1992, 10). Andy Warhol (1928–87) has been described as "the first American artist to whose career publicity was truly intrinsic" (Hughes 1982). In their quest for celebrity, Warhol and cinema icon Marilyn Monroe, whom he famously painted, both became artificial blondes. Ruth Adams posits Monroe's blonde hair as "a synecdoche for her whiteness in general": blond hair is a guarantor of "purity" that makes it difficult for a mixed-race person to "pass" as white, "hence its emblematic appeal to the Nazis" (2004, 91, 92). Richard Dyer terms "platinum (peroxide) blondness" the "ultimate sign of whiteness" (1986, 43). Blondness serves to equate the white woman with value itself: blond hair is "visually rhymed" with silver, gold, and jewelry (43).[10] In film, "idealized white women are bathed in and permeated with light. . . . They glow" (Dyer 1997, 122). Dyer points out that blond hair in particular can be lit to provide an "effulgent dazzle" (124), a photographic divine radiance akin to a gold leaf halo in an oil painting.[11] Thus women inhabit the cinematic light and men "yearn towards it" (134–35).

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Warhol forsook the avant-garde for Studio 54 and high-society portraiture. Adams argues that this repositioning enabled a realization of his "commodity logic" (2004, 94). Robert Hughes, on the other hand, describes Warhol's desperate desire for celebrity as a "grotesque parody of the Madonna–fixations" of his Catholic youth (1982).

Warhol revered, imitated, and identified with a particular blond icon. He also courted celebrity and power. Casas is his polar opposite: his blonde women serve as hegemonic emblems. Casas was indifferent to the art market, and his views on social issues were inimical to success in conservative San Antonio.

Warhol's public persona and artistic practices were far removed from the heavy-drinking, brawling, big brushstroke–wielding abstract expressionists. Hughes laments that Warhol does not fit the modernist mold: "What had become of the belief, dear to modernism, that the power and cathartic necessity of art flowed from the unconscious, through the knotwork of dream, memory, and desire, into the realized image?" (1982). This description fits the Humanscapes perfectly. And like the abstract expressionists, Casas was influenced by popular versions of psychology that were a legacy of surrealism.

Lichtenstein

From 1961 to 1965 Roy Lichtenstein (1923–97) appropriated and transformed images from war and romance comics. Since Lichtenstein emulated the Benday dot printing technique utilized by comic books, his paintings have the "look" of comic book images (see Boime 1968–69; Lobel 2002; Whiting 1992). Lichtenstein simplifies, clarifies, and refines each tableau. By distilling a comic's narrative into a single telling, climactic frame, Lichtenstein intensifies the emotion and drama (Collins 2003). Bradford Collins argues that Lichtenstein's subjects held deep personal meanings for the artist: the war paintings were an outlet for his feelings during extended divorce proceedings, while the romance paintings, which were "simultaneously ridiculing and embracing their subjects," reflected his search for love (75). Despondency is writ large, concentrated into an icon of suffering.

Lichtenstein's blondes suffer miserably or defer to a suitably WASP-ish, smugly insouciant male (which Collins reads as the artist's alter ego). Casas's blonde females, by contrast, are either vaguely menacing icons or disembodied, distant symbols.

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Rosenquist

James Rosenquist (b. 1933) rejected the dominant period style: "Abstract Expressionism had become this corny-looking habit. The drip had become cliché, and every student across the country was being taught to splash" (quoted in Goldman 1992, 12). Though he didn't know what kind of artwork he would make, Rosenquist resolved to "start using imagery again, to paint specific things that couldn't be confused with something else" (12). Rosenquist's experience as a sign painter from 1957 to 1960 gave him the technical means to paint in a realistic style on a large scale (see Goldman 1985, 21–22; 1992, 10–15). Casas, who had previously worked as an abstract artist, similarly resolved to make a new kind of representational art. Since he lacked an alternative representational practice, Casas's art evolved much more slowly than Rosenquist's.

Rosenquist's work was not merely imitative: his habitual cropping and collaging demonstrates his fealty to the surrealist principle of disruption. His clashing imagery was also a response to the effects of the electronic media and the sheer speed of modern, mechanized life. Collector Robert Scull, who was puzzled by a painting that included partial images of a television, a Spam sandwich, and a woman's face, pressed Rosenquist for an explanation of *The Light That Won't Fail II* (1961). The artist replied, "Man, this is our new religion—the cathode-ray tube—and the painting *is* the explanation" (Scull 1968, 282). Rosenquist posited a model for the electronic media whose speed, force, and impact made conventional painting look old-fashioned: "this invisible screen that's a couple of feet in front of our mind and our senses" (quoted in Walsh 2004, 3). Technology had implications for Rosenquist: "how can I make my mark, my 'x' on the wall . . . when someone is jumping in a rocket ship and exploring outer space?" (Adcock 1991, 98). Rosenquist responded with fragmentary samples of technological overload. Casas's Humanscape screens, by contrast, have symbolic, hypnotically static images, to which he eventually juxtaposes phrases and additional images.

The end of empire/nuclear age "disquiet" that Stonard perceived in Hamilton's *Just what is it* becomes a holocaust in Rosenquist's monumental *F-111* (1965). Hughes (1986) says it captures the "apocalyptic tone" reflected in rock lyrics and "sums up Rosenquist's vision of America as an Eden compromised by its own violence." Rosenquist visited the theme park Six Flags Over Texas, where he witnessed a silver bomber on the grass. This bomber-out-to-pasture signified the wasteful obsolescence of the military-industrial complex. In *F-111* the horrific bomber (whose DayGlo

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orange-red symbolizes radioactivity) mixes with a gigantic Firestone tire, a sponge cake with six flags, light bulbs, and Rosenquist's signature bed of spaghetti. One prominent segment features a girl whom Lucy Lippard describes as "a grotesque blond child under an immense phallic hair dryer of gleaming metal that also suggests a rocket head and speed as well as the nose of the plane itself" (1965). The child has a key function within the painting: she arguably represents innocence (her naïve smile is eerie in this atomic context). At the same time, she embodies the racial ideal of the country: as the Vietnam War escalated, this painting became associated with antiwar sentiment and with the indiscriminate bombing of people of color. As *New York Times* critic John Russell put it: "some little girls could live high off the hog because some other little girls were going to be burned alive" (quoted in Litt 1991). The ambiguous dryer implicates the girl in the military-industrial complex, whose demands shortchanged America's youth. Rosenquist stated, "I couldn't understand why the government wasn't building hospitals and schools instead of warplanes that would immediately become obsolete" (Bancroft 2003, 126). He explained the painting several ways. The F-111 was "flying through the flak of consumer society to question the collusion between the Vietnam death machine, consumerism, the media, and advertising" (Rosenquist and Dalton 2009, 158). The tire could represent a "crown"; or "the plane itself could be a giant birthday cake lying on a truck for a parade" (Rosenquist 1965, 598).

Casas and Rosenquist share political commitment. They also employ juxtapositions that confer oblique meanings that are often difficult to interpret.

Wesselmann

Tom Wesselmann's (1931–2004) Great American Nude series (1961–73) offers an obvious precedent and parallel for Casas's work. Warhol drained detail and emotion from his appropriated glamour shot of Monroe; Lichtenstein discussed his works in a purely formal context, as if subject matter were inconsequential. By contrast, Wesselmann's nudes, often mixed with consumer objects, carry a remarkable sexual charge. Though it has been argued that the Great American Nude series relates to key events during the sexual revolution (McCarthy 1990), Wesselmann states that it was a response to his happy relationship with a particular model (whom he married), inflected by the Western painting tradition (Wesselmann 1984;

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Wilmerding 2008, 27). Casas, by contrast, made it a priority to mirror social trends and aspects of the sexual revolution.

Barbie and the Blond Cultural Ideal

Casas scrutinized the cultural ideal of beauty, which he refers to as the Barbie doll ideal. He utilized one of these dolls in his acceptance speech when he was named Artist of the Year by the San Antonio Art League:

> I undressed a little doll for them, too. . . . Barbie dolls are basically sex machines and baby machines, and that was the ultimate, and if you were lucky and you were blonde and blue-eyed, you were even more in, so you were guaranteed for life . . . It hit home like I never thought it would. Anyway, the ladies got together again and they found out that they had taken the vote on the wrong day. So they informed me that they had reconvened and because of the problem they had to have another vote and they had voted again and I just didn't make it the second time. (1996)

Casas does not recall when this took place (1996, 2008), but it must have been in December 1967, when the award for 1968 would have been presented.[12]

On September 7, 1968, approximately nine months after Casas bared Barbie during his three-day reign as Artist of the Year, feminists staged a protest at the Miss America contest in Atlantic City, New Jersey, deploying an oversized, hinged "puppet" Miss America. One of the protest placards arguably referenced Barbie: "I am not somebody's pet, toy, or mascot" (Zeisler 2008, 50).[13] The protestors issued a statement titled "No More Miss America," written by Robin Morgan and bearing the organizational signature of the New York Radical Women. One of its ten planks was titled "Miss America as Military Death Mascot," in reference to the beauty queen's obligatory "cheerleader-tour of American troops abroad" (Morgan 1968).

Casas points out that the media unceasingly promote a racially exclusive cultural ideal: "The concept of American beauty is not only physical beauty, it's also racial beauty. We are bombarded by this constantly on T.V." (Quirarte 1973, 133).[14] In Casas's view, whiteness and beauty confer value. The "No More Miss America!" statement also objected to racial exclusivity. Plank two, "Racism with Roses," noted the absence of a black finalist (the winner of a state pageant) or of an overall titlist of Alaskan, American Indian, Hawaiian, Mexican, or Puerto Rican descent (Baxandall and Gordon 2001, 185).[15]

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The Barbie doll was based on Bild Lilli, a German doll for adults inspired by a ribald cartoon (Gerber 2009, 9–11, 13–15, 137–38; Lord 1994, 25–31; Oppenheimer 2009, 17–18, 28–35, 71, 197). Lilli has been described as a "three-dimensional pinup . . . an ice-blond, pixie-nosed specimen of an Aryan ideal" (Lord 1994, 8) and an "erotic Deutschland dominatrix" (Oppenheimer 2009, 18). Ruth Handler, creator of the Barbie doll, told the *New York Times* in 1977, "Every little girl needed a doll through which to project herself into her dream of her future. . . . So I gave it beautiful breasts" (Kershaw 2002). Barbie doll "biographer" M. G. Lord calls it "a toy designed by women for women to teach women what—for better or worse—is expected of them by society" (1994, 8). Susan Gilman begins a book chapter with this condemnation: "For decades, Barbie has remained torpedo-titted, open-mouthed, tippy-toed and vagina-less in her cellophane coffin—and ever since I was little, she has threatened me" (2003, 14). Gilman notes the many ethnic groups that do not fit the Barbie mold. She concludes that the dolls "ultimately succeed where Hitler failed: They instill in legions of little girls a preference for blond hair, blue eyes and delicate features . . . In the cult of the blond, Barbies are a cornerstone" (17). Handler's son Ken was also concerned about the negative effects that the Barbie and Ken dolls had with respect to materialism, ethnicity, body image, and sexuality (Gerber 2009, 235; Lord 1994, 196–99; Oppenheimer 2009, 79; Spindler 1995). He did not provide them to his own children.

Casas (1972) calls attention to the "udder American-mammiferous obsession."[16] (He ignores the Twiggy/waif ideal.) Casas identifies the "Barbie doll" ideal as blonde, blue-eyed, svelte, and buxom. It is commonly accepted that if the Barbie doll were blown up to human scale (approximately 5 feet, 6 inches), its proportions would be "outlandish": "Imagine Anna Nicole Smith's breasts, suspended above Kate Moss' waist (after a fast) all resting comfortably on Cheryl Miller's frame (after a mid-life growth spurt)" (Jervis 1997).[17] Kevin Norton and his colleagues (1996) hold that a life-sized Barbie would be thinner; nonetheless, they estimate that less than one in 100,000 women (18–35 years old) would have this body shape.[18] Lord notes that the Barbie doll is *generically* Anglo-Saxon, like "the teenage 'dolls' created by the movie industry . . . actresses from whom conspicuous ethnicity had been purged; who weren't even Presbyterian or Methodist, but generic Protestants who embodied a phantasmatic, impossible 'American' ideal" (1994, 158). Similarly, the blonde women in Casas's paintings are intended as phantasmatic, impossible ideals.

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One should emphasize that Barbie dolls have substantial effects because they function in cultural systems that have long rewarded whiteness and penalized darkness. Prejudices have been enforced by centuries of religious symbolism and racial discrimination, from the genocide of indigenous peoples to slavery, miscegenation laws, and de facto and de jure segregation. For Casas, the doll is a symbol that also possesses efficacy, but its powers derive largely from the overwhelming and long-standing social forces that it serves to represent.

The Birth of the Humanscape: The Cinematic Paradigm

The first Humanscapes were explicit explorations of the powerful effects of the cinematic experience. "I use the black of the movie house (anonymity) and the persistence of vision (the projected image) to probe into the most compulsive mysteries of its effects," explains Casas in an artist's statement (1968).[19] Many of the first thirty-two Humanscapes (through June 1967) were painted in medium formats (around 4 x 5 feet). Almost half of these paintings (Humanscapes 2, 8–12, 14, and 18–25) feature ghostly, featureless, mannequinlike audience members of drive-ins or traditional movie theaters who also function as surrogates for the viewers of the paintings. These shadowy beings foregrounded the artist's interest in voyeurism: "I so divide the picture plane of my paintings so as to force the spectator into the role of 'voyeur' thus acquiring an identity through participation. The effect is a kind of sacred conversation, an invitation to participate in what could be a pornographic fantasy" (Casas 1968). Fascinated with connotations, denotations, and etymologies of Latin-based languages, Casas is keenly aware that the word *voyeur* carries sexually loaded—if not perverse—connotations in English, even though it derives from neutral French and Latin words for looking.[20] Similarly, sacred conversation also refers to *sacra conversazione*, a depiction of the Madonna and Child in the presence of saints that become popular in the Italian Renaissance. Thus the spectators of Casas's (possibly) pornographic goddesses are likened to saints in an altarpiece. In his word choice, Casas teasingly traverses the sacred and the profane, the perverse and the quotidian.

Casas says he used the title "Humanscape" followed by a number in order to emphasize seriality and anonymity (Bennett 1989). McLuhan, writing in 1951, had posited anonymity as a defining characteristic of the media that create the experience of modern life. He called the newspaper a collective "'book' of industrial man, an Arabian Night's entertainment in

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which a thousand and one astonishing tales are being told by an anonymous narrator to an anonymous audience" (3).

The drive-in movie theater is a peculiarly American institution that was enabled by car culture and the availability of cheap land (Sanders and Sanders 2000, 2003; Segrave 1992). Initially promoted as a family experience, it became notorious as a venue for dating couples who could use their automobiles as ambulant boudoirs. Casas referred to this phenomenon when he characterized the drive-in as "a place for sexual experience, there on the seat of your chariot, with your girlfriend" (Goddard 1988). Two of Casas's first Humanscapes serve to encapsulate his views of the relationship between cinema and society. In *Humanscape 2* (1965), a drive-in couple embraces, in apparent monkey-see, monkey-do emulation of the couple in the screen image (fig. 1). The next painting, *Humanscape 3* (1965),

Figure 1. Mel Casas, Humanscape 2, *June 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 48 × 60 inches. Collection of the artist.*

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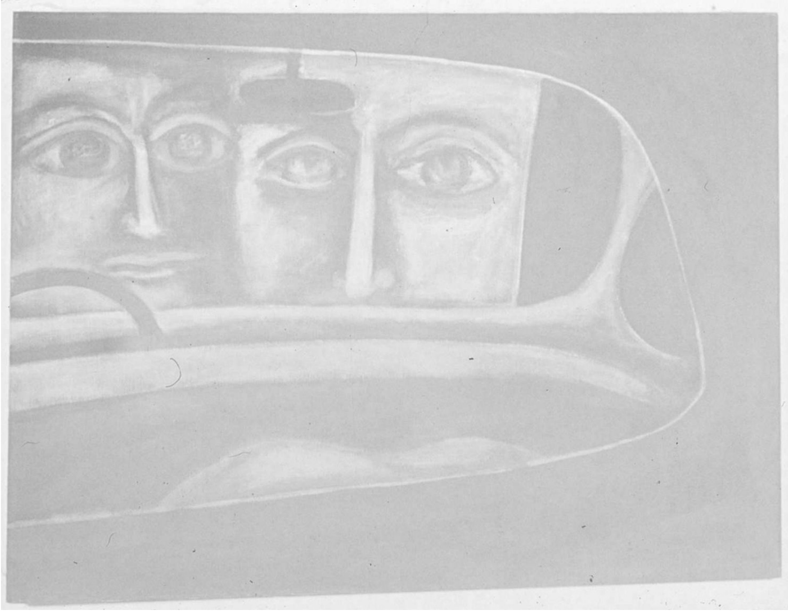

Figure 2. Mel Casas, Humanscape 3, *July 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 36 × 48 inches. Destroyed by the artist on December 28, 1970.*

depicts a sequential image: we glimpse a horizontal form that is presumably a reclining couple in the back seat of the car (fig. 2). The latter work features an apparent viewer/subject reversal: the two faces in the screen image appear to be voyeurs who are actively spying on the cinema patrons. Casas maintains that the relationship between cinema and society is one of mutual influence: "We learn our morals, our values and our behavior from what is reflected in the cinema. The cinema makes our behavior legitimate and vice versa. It created the 'New Morality'" (2008). The exchange is reciprocal: we look at the cinema, and the cinema looks back at us. This look is anything but neutral, for cinema simultaneously exerts and reflects a normative cultural gaze.

Casas (1968) provides an explanation for the in-the-picture spectators that populate his early Humanscapes. He says these mannequinlike surrogates function as "somnambulistic actors in a video space environment that projects sex-anxiety as a protection against non-being." This analysis parallels that of McLuhan, who famously argued that the advertising and entertainment industries sought to "manipulate, exploit, [and] control" the "collective public mind . . . to keep everybody in the helpless state

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engendered by prolonged mental rutting" (1951, v). McLuhan holds that the ultimate goal of these media manipulators is to "impose their collective dreams on that inner stage" (97). Casas (1968) views this manipulation as the hallmark of the age: "Indoctrination through the use of the projected image . . . is the trend of our time." Sexuality is privileged and heightened: erotic images are deployed in an "attempt to convey a transcendental experience." The negative consequences are anxiety, fragmentation, "overemphasized sexuality," and "willing menticide."[21] Not only do the media brainwash their audience, they also make that audience *want* to be brainwashed.

Casas (1986) argues that by looking at a painting, the audience accepts the artist's proffered invitation. Moreover, he believes they are transformed by that experience: "It is too difficult a task to witness and not react to the transformation of an audience from one world to another subliminally and without critical awareness." Casas's use of the term "audience" is deliberately ambiguous: it refers to the viewers of the picture as well as to the audience within it (2008). The Humanscape audience is made up of voyeurs who are "interfering in something private, at the same time that they are viewing the pictures" (1968).[22] Though Casas conflates the two sets of viewers, who experience an analogous spectacle, he prods *his* audience to engage in a self-aware mode of spectatorship. Casas argues that the "fantasy machine" (understood here primarily as cinema and secondarily as other image media) "projects a world of external calm and interior crisis. The audience looks at a situation and is simultaneously in it and living it" (Casas 1968).[23] Casas painted increasingly large works so that the projected images would seem, in his words, "more real than reality" (Goddard 1988), which is essentially the definition of the word *surreal*. Finally, the machine "makes knowledgeable [i.e., conscious] automatons of its willing audience[,] offering them a kaleidoscope of life in techniques of mass coercion–mass seduction" (Casas 1968). This McLuhanesque pronouncement is paralleled in his work: by 1967, the seductiveness of consumer society and the allure of its novel products become important themes.

Rather than representing a "personal" or individual reality, Casas aims to capture the "collective reality" of contemporary society (1968), though he is both witness to and participant in this collective experience. Each of these Humanscapes is a cultural document as well as an autonomous work of art.

The most singular of the early Humanscapes can be loosely described as minimalist pop metaphysical paintings: they eerily combine aspects of

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these divergent schools of art. The small, somnambulistic actors who "view" the enormous cinematic images in the early Humanscapes recall Giorgio de Chirico's (1888–1978) mannequins, though they tend to have an even more ghostly or ethereal existence or presence.[24] Blonde women appear on the screen as large, cropped images. In several of the earliest Humanscapes, notably 3, 9, and 14, Casas's fragmented blonde women possess an aggressive, malevolently intensive gaze that is antithetical to the blankness, passivity, or melodramatic despair found in those depicted by Warhol and Lichtenstein. They do not represent a particular star or celebrity, nor do they conform to precedents in film or painting. Unlike Warhol's "vulnerable" Marilyn Monroe or Lichtenstein's weeping woman, Casas's blondes are representatives of hegemonic power. Whether isolated in dramatic close-up or conveyed through a single synecdochic detail, Casas's blonde women carry a unique symbolic charge: they represent, he says, an exclusionary "American ideal" (Quirarte 1973, 133). Eva Cockcroft holds that Casas's media-inspired close-ups of blonde women call "attention to the unreality and horror of these images" (1988, 220).

In several later works, including 26, 29–32, 34, 35, 37, 42, and 46, the tables are turned, and a variety of female body parts (all of them headless) are displayed, often for a male spectator. Casas presents images of a cultural standard that is set for females. Men look at them. So, too, do women. If anything, women are even more attentive, since they take cues on fashion, hairstyling, and makeup from these media images. Many men are probably not aware of how elaborate the processes of grooming and applying makeup can be.

Some paintings, notably 8, 13, 22, 24, 27, 28, 38, 46, 52, and 55 feature heads of females who are presumably experiencing sexual pleasure. Whether passive, aggressive, or ecstatic, these body parts function as emblematically abstract totems (or as synecdochic tokens for them). These glamorized women—or fetishistic fragments of women—are more psychologically intense and forceful than characteristic pop art images. If pop art is "cold," the Humanscapes are "hot." In their various dispositions, the women in them fit McLuhan's description of "Maxfactorized, streamlined, synthetic blondes" who are "at once abstract and exciting" (1951, 96). Casas points out that most blondes are not natural blondes (2008).[25]

Rather than emulate the bold comic book colors found in the work of his pop contemporaries, Casas rendered his earliest Humanscapes in virtual grisaille, with subtle color accents. In these explorations of novel thematic terrain, Casas avoided "the interference of color" (2008).[26] Since

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his preceding works were colorful abstract paintings, Casas feared falling back into his old habits. His reduction of color facilitated the development of a radically different type of painting. In the process, the images of glitzy glamour that Casas encountered in the popular media were transformed into psychologically intense, somewhat blurry dreamscapes. *Humanscape* 9 (December 1965) features a gigantic female blue eye that looks down on three implicitly male cinema patrons (fig. 3). In the Hollywood cinema, by contrast, male eyes exerted powerful, aggressive, and sometimes perversely threatening gazes, while female eyes were often frightened, distraught, or dead (quintessential examples of all of these "looks" are featured in Hitchcock's *Psycho*). *Humanscape 14* (May 1966, illustrated in Quirarte 1973, 81) replicates what might be called the Humanscape primal scene: Casas's automotive encounter with the cinematic image on San Pedro Avenue. A lone mannequin looks out the front window of his car. Two enormous eyes and a swath of blonde hair engulf his field of vision. He seems to be caught

Figure 3. Mel Casas, Humanscape 9*, December 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 36 × 48 inches. Destroyed by the artist on December 28, 1970.*

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in a visual cross fire: while the viewer of the painting must peer through the man's rear window, the monolithic cinematic fragment of the staring woman fills the front window of his car. In *Humanscape 22* (December 1966, illustrated in Quirarte 1973, 82), a trio of nebulous mannequins in a theater peer at an upside-down fragment of a woman's small nose and large, open mouth. Jacinto Quirarte notes the "menacing" quality of her "gaping" mouth (83). These paintings dramatize the power of commercial images and the dominance of social ideals of beauty: fetishistic fragments of women seem to dominate, hypnotize, diminish, and control their captive spectators.

Humanscape 15 (August 1966) features a large male and female who embrace on screen (fig. 4). Six couples in the audience—all with identical clothing, hair, and features—replicate this action. A lone male wears the obligatory striped shirt, but has no female companion with whom to embrace on cue. Chon A. Noriega refers to this as "heterosexual couple formation" (2007, 8; 2008, 32–33).

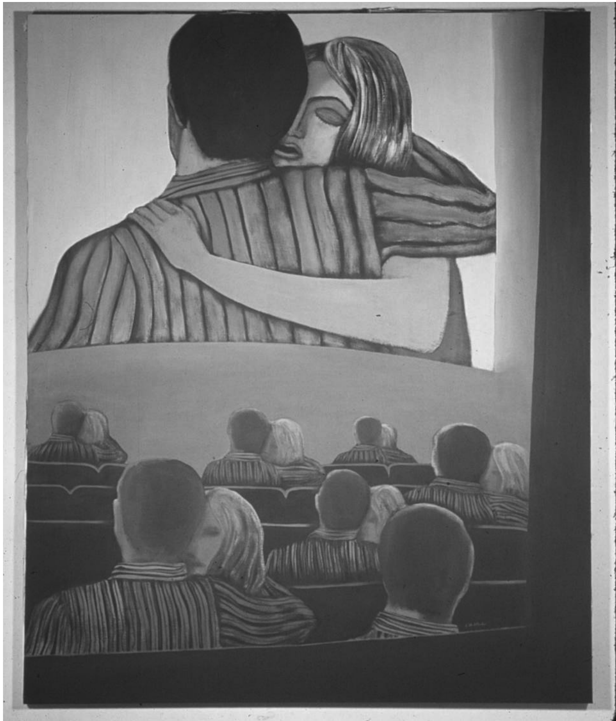

Figure 4. Mel Casas, Humanscape 15*, August 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 60 × 72 inches. Collection of the artist.*

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We can characterize the mannequin figures as homunculi or quasi-embryonic subjects who are transformed and completed by the act of viewing: they are *dummies* in every sense of the word. Their participation in mass media is quite literally formative. *Humanscape 17* (September 1966) makes this point in ironic fashion: a woman's smiling lips fill a theater screen (fig. 5). To the right of this image, a solitary woman faces out of the painting. Her face is a featureless blank, except for a mouth that replicates the on-screen image. Thus Casas confers new meaning on the artistic topos of the almost-featureless female face.[27]

Breaking Out of the Theater, and the Birth of the Subtitle

In late 1967, Casas depicted signs or portions of signs in the foregrounds of five transitional paintings: "EXIT" (*Humanscape 35*, September 1967); "[EX]IT" (*Humanscape 36*, October 1967); "ENTRAN[CE]" (*Humanscape 37*, October 1967); "EMERGE[NCY EXIT]" (*Humanscape 38*, November 1967); and "LADIES" (*Humanscape 39*, December 1967).[28] The signs function as commentaries within these five paintings. They inspired the pithy texts situated in the lower portion (usually the center) of each subsequent Humanscape, beginning with *Humanscape 40 (Game)* (January 1968). These ironic epigrams function as virtual subtitles. They generate visual/verbal puns and double—or multiple—entendres. This tripartite structure (text, foreground image, and screen image) is used to "subvert

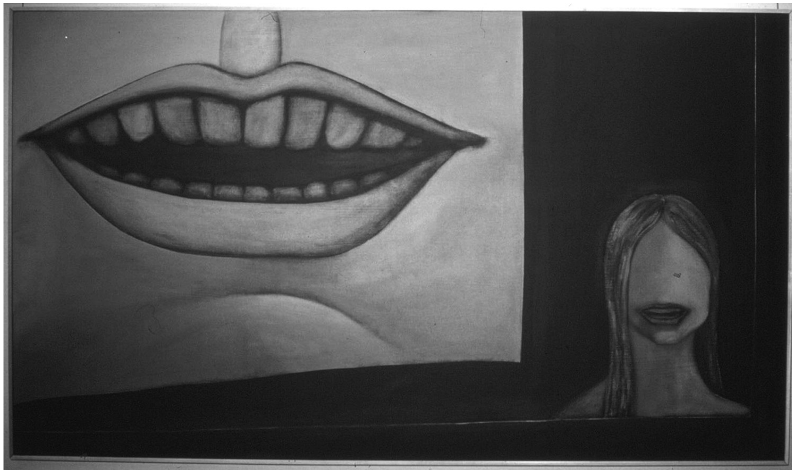

Figure 5. Mel Casas, Humanscape 17, *September 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 40 × 70 inches. Destroyed by the artist on December 28, 1970.*

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and deconstruct the hierarchical and metaphorical content of the words, images, and styles he employs" (Hickey 1988a, 30).[29] Critic David Hickey grounds his analysis in the semiotic theory of Charles Morris, which holds that all sign systems have designative, appraisive, and prescriptive components (6–7). Hickey argues that the Humanscapes are "urgently concerned with the business of laying bare these subliminal *appraisive* and *prescriptive* cultural undertones of apparently neutral designative terms and images, and with offering some healing insight to the neurotic symptoms generated by alien and antique cultural images and stereotypes" (8).

The inception of a linguistic component was accompanied by several other progressive developments that served to defuse the explicit cinematic setting of the early Humanscapes. The nebulous, amorphously formed spectators within the picture gradually became whole. *Humanscape 20* (November 1966) features eleven women in a cinema audience who view an on-screen image of a woman with hair; all eleven spectating women possess hair. *Humanscape 26* (February 1967) features a completely formed male audience member (he has eyes, a nose, lips, one visible ear, and hair). The spectators that had been passive, spectral automatons in the early Humanscapes gradually became fleshed-out actors on their own stage. They are progressively endowed with color, substance, and volition. Their attention is increasingly turned toward the viewer of the painting rather than toward the screen image within the painting. Ultimately, they vie with the cinema image as a depiction of the "real."

Several of Casas's early Humanscapes reflect a Dream Factory/image duplicator relationship between the screen image and the audience. The big on-screen eyes reference technologies of Orwellian surveillance and convey an implicit authoritarian imperative to conform. These works are consistent with McLuhan's analysis of the phenomenon of the chorus line. McLuhan viewed it as a grimly robotic product of an assembly line mentality: "a group of tall, cold, glittering, mechanical dolls" (1951, 118).[30] Casas addressed media replication and the culturally ideal female form.

Ultimately, the paintings with female body parts led to an examination of aspects of the sexual revolution. Instead of absolute uniformity, Casas chronicled a degree of variety that one might find in a mod fashion show: stylistically congruent miniskirts, boots, gloves, sunglasses, earrings, and so on. The new sexual mores were accompanied by new products, which functioned to signal allegiance to the new values and new social relationships. In the mid-1960s, fashions emanated from London, the "capital of pop," where "tweedy conservatism and austerity" gave way to

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"technicolor lifestyles" enabled by synthetics that "literally shaped 'pop' style and fashion" (Handley 2000, 99). The long-standing class system had been challenged and "'working class' attitudes and accents acquired a social and fashion cachet" (99). Significantly, "for the first time the word 'culture' was prefixed with 'mass,' 'popular' and 'youth'" (99). Having left their collective theater seats, the youthful and vigorous audiences within the Humanscape paintings don the latest fashions in order to "vogue" for the delectation of the Humanscape spectators. Nonetheless, they retain an aspect of the mechanical in their evocation of the fashion runway, in their conventionalized gestures, and in their similitude. The Humanscapes from this period warrant comparison with *Blowup* (1966), Michelangelo Antonioni's (1912–2007) landmark film that is ostensibly about a jaded swinging London photographer who is modeled on David Bailey (b. 1938). After presenting the mod fashion world as a realm of slick, alienating hollow surfaces, this philosophical and semiotically profound film calls into question the mechanisms of photography, of film, and ultimately of perception itself.[31]

Humanscape 33 (July 1967) features eight stylish women and three men; none of them look at the screen. This turning away from the screen (usually toward the viewer of the picture) is also something the female figures do in Humanscapes 31, 34, 35, 36, and 38. Casas explains that this turning away is a "refusal to acknowledge that they are being seen. But at the same time, it is an acknowledgement of the sexual power of the image that is being screened" (2008). *Humanscape 34* (August 1967) features a screen image with a partial view of four dancing women who wear miniskirts (fig. 6). The six women in the foreground of the painting engage in a joyous dance that celebrates their release from puritanical mores and drab, restrictive fashions and bland colors.[32] Fashion designer Rudi Gernreich noted that the "sweet and innocent" look had been supplanted by "a wild, consciously sexy look" (Packard 1968, 60). According to Casas, the painting addresses "a cultural opening . . . a rebellion of women and the acceptance of their being in charge of their own sexuality" (2008). The lone male in the far left foreground stands for the male spectator, for whom, in part, the women perform.

As the first of the Humanscapes with a sign, *Humanscape 35* (September 1967) is a crucial transitional painting (fig. 7). The screen image consists of a reclining nude woman, shown from her breasts to her pubic area.[33] It is a depiction of a woman with whom Casas had a passionate sexual relationship. The image is a private vision made public: the "pornographic

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Figure 6. Mel Casas, Humanscape 34, *August 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 72 × 96 inches. Collection of the artist.*

Figure 7. Mel Casas, Humanscape 35, *September 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 72 × 96 inches. Collection of the artist.*

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fantasy" that rendered the Humanscape audience voyeurs (Casas 1968). While a solitary male in the picture's foreground looks at the female nude, seven women look in different directions—none of them at the screen image. According to the artist, "All these women are potentially the screen image." That is to say, they are all potentially a naked lover. These women do not look at the screen because they refuse to acknowledge their own "lustful feelings." Casas says the exit sign might signify a refusal to engage in traditional forms of sexual commitment. At the same time that this painting celebrates sexual freedom, it also chronicles tensions and conflicts within the "new, liberated generation of women" (Casas 2008).

The lengthiest published assessment of Casas's Humanscapes is the highly analytic study by Hickey (1988a, 1988b; the two essays are virtually identical). It takes the border as a point of emphasis. Casas was born in El Paso, Texas, located at the conjunction of Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico.[34] He spent most of his professional career in San Antonio, Texas, which, given the state's vast geography, is considered to be part of the border region. *Humanscape 35* is a centerpiece of Hickey's argument. He notes the identification of the American landscape with "a recumbent, fertile white woman" and argues that a trail between her legs and breasts implies "passage with overtones of ritual rebirth" (1988a, 30). Having begun his analysis with this painting, Hickey fails to ground this portion of the series within a cinematic/sexual revolution context. He instead reads it as a political work. Hickey concludes that *Humanscape 35* likely represents El Paso and that the "dispossessed dark-skinned people loitering" in the foreground dramatize the daunting challenges of immigration (30). Though Hickey's torso-as-landscape reading is an intriguing secondary interpretation, the foreground figures do not look like immigrants.[35] Nor do they appear to be ethnic or economically disadvantaged. Like the other figures in the foreground of Humanscapes from this period, they are colored by the reflected light of the screen images: their skin is more blue than brown.

Hickey's interpretation of *Humanscape 35* highlights the challenges of reading Casas's work. The artist has always been reluctant to explain his paintings. Casas realizes that interpretations must be speculative and involve self-projection on the part of viewers of his work.[36] He doesn't care whether viewers can fathom his intentions and concerns, though he thinks they should. His position is that if the meanings of his paintings were transparent, he would be a mere illustrator. Casas paints what he wants to paint and challenges the viewer to make his or her own interpretations, for better or worse (2008).

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Figure 8. Mel Casas, Humanscape 36, *October 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 72 × 96 inches. Collection of the artist.*

The next transitional work is *Humanscape 36* (October 1967), whose "it" is left over from the exit sign in the preceding painting (fig. 8). A monumental ear in the screen image dominates the painting. Casas chose this motif because he was particularly attracted to the formal complexity of the ear's structure, and because the ear is an erogenous zone. No reference to the Incarnation (the miraculous conception of Jesus) was intended. The circular earrings on the monumental ear and on the ears of the foreground women serve to call further attention to them. The next transitional work, *Humanscape 37* (October 1967), bears the first six letters of the word "entrance" (fig. 9). Casas must have savored the ambiguity of this word: it could signify an opening that one can enter or something that captivates or puts into a trance. These letters also spell out the plural imperative form of the Spanish word for enter (*entran*).

The screen image consists of a woman's bare legs and a portion of a miniskirt. It seemingly influences the three disembodied pairs of female legs in the foreground. Two pairs of legs could potentially belong to patrons seated in the first row of a cinema—if they were lying on their seats and raising their legs in the air. The third pair of legs on the left floats ambiguously in space: its left knee eclipses the lower left portion of the screen.

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Figure 9. Mel Casas, Humanscape 37, *October 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 72 × 96 inches. Collection of the artist.*

McLuhan uses "legs on a pedestal," a Gotham Hosiery Company slogan, to reference the intertwining of sex and technology. Casas also makes frequent use of this expression. McLuhan reproduces a Gotham ad with a pair of nylon-clad legs (cut off at the thigh) shod in stiletto heels atop a classical column (1951, 100).[37] Contemporary nylon and pantyhose commercials also featured bizarrely disembodied legs, which this painting seems to mimic.[38] While many modern advertisements explicitly reference surrealism, it should be noted that surrealist artists initially drew inspiration from advertisements and window displays in which objects were sundered from their "normal" context.

Even before miniskirts existed, McLuhan argued that legs, like breasts, had become self-tailored "display objects like the grill work on a car" and "date-baited power levers for the management of the male audience" (1951, 98). The advent of the miniskirt exponentially increased the degree to which legs were exposed. In Casas's view, miniskirts were liberating: they enabled women "to have sex wherever they want" (2008). He holds that boots likewise emphasize thighs and facilitate sexual attraction and access.[39] Pantyhose advertisements emphasized freedom—presumably of movement, but with an unmistakable implication of sexual freedom.

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The word *emerge* appears in the lower right of *Humanscape 38* (November 1967). The screen image features the top portion of a female head with tousled hair and dramatically oversized eyes and eyelashes.[40] The latter feature gives expression to heightened sexual desire. The women in the foreground below all have long, windblown hair, which Casas views as an emblem of social rebellion and sexual liberation. The long, flowing hair—in conjunction with "emerge"—serves to signal "a coming out." Previously, sexually promiscuous women were isolated and stigmatized, unlike men, who were celebrated for their prowess. In the late 1960s, however, "when young women began doing it in numbers, they could not be denied. They took the power" (Casas 2008). In this painting, their long, billowing heads of hair serve as banners of defiance and independence.

Humanscape 39 (December 1967) strikes a dramatically different note (fig. 10). The screen image consists of a young woman's head and part of her back. She lies on a leopard skin, which suggests exotic luxury and raw, animal sexuality.[41] Her back bears a "USDA Choice" shield stamp, such as that which appears on federally inspected meat. This image parallels one that was used in the feminist protest against the 1968 Miss America beauty pageant in Atlantic City.[42] Casas characterizes the woman in this painting as "a little Barbie Doll, a trophy wealthy people can afford to buy" (2008).

Figure 10. Mel Casas, Humanscape 39, *December 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 72 × 96 inches. Collection of the artist.*

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(This painting was completed the month Casas gave his Barbie speech.) The woman is a "choice" example of "what beauty is and what beauty is worth" (2008). This parallels Naomi Wolf's (1991) conception of beauty as currency. The Barbie doll provides girls with formative, long-term exposure to "cheerleader notions of beauty" and conditions them to expect pink Porsches from their boyfriends (Rosenberg 1997).

Six women stand before the screen image. Some look at the screen, some look away. Unlike the foreground figures in the previous five paintings, these women appear to be intimidated. Their faces and bodies are covered. Motion is arrested. They are locked in furtive, inaccessible concentration because they are comparing themselves to the image on the screen. Casas explains their situation: "They're trying to find their own place, their own needs. They don't know where they stand in relation to them" (2008).

While many women had broken free of restrictive sexual mores by the end of 1967, they were not liberated from intense social pressure to conform to standards of beauty. The first plank of the "No More Miss America" statement of 1968 was "The Degrading Mindless-Boob-Girlie Symbol." It noted:

> The Pageant contestants epitomize the roles we are all forced to play as women. The parade down the runway blares the metaphor of the 4-H Club county fair, where the nervous animals are judged for teeth, fleece, etc., and where the best "Specimen" gets the blue ribbon. So are women in our society forced daily to compete for male approval, enslaved by ludicrous "beauty" standards we ourselves are conditioned to take seriously. (Morgan 1968)

One protestor rented a sheep, which was crowned "Miss America" and paraded down the Atlantic City boardwalk. This stratagem was inspired by the Yippies, who had nominated a pig as a Democratic Party presidential candidate the previous week in Chicago (Dicker 2008, 83; Echols 2002, 76; Rosenberg 2008, 193). Vance Packard observed, "Girls vary enormously . . . and yet in the United States all are expected to become sirens and sex objects" (1968, 61).

Wolf (1991) argues that a momentous social transformation had taken place: a public interest in female virginity and virtuous domesticity shifted to an interest in beauty. "Beauty work" supplanted "housework." Taste-making mechanisms had less control over annual fashions. Ideals of beauty became more dominant. The fashions of the day revealed more of the body, placing additional pressure on women by accentuating or exposing perceived flaws. Wolf draws this conclusion:

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> The more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us . . . in terms of how we feel about ourselves physically, we may actually be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers. (1991, 10)[43]

While the "ladies" sign in *Humanscape 39* presumably stands for the restroom within the cinema in this painting, it is also meant to address the women who are situated in the foreground of the painting, as well as the women who view the painting. Casas notes that social expectations were in a state of flux: "

> We didn't know what 'ladies' were. There was a commonly used expression: 'Ladies don't do this.' In the end we all do what we need to do for whatever reasons. The ladies sign puts pressure on the spectator. Now they know what 'prime beef' is, the standard, and so do the women in the painting. (2008)

Casas made several notable aesthetic choices in this painting. The woman's head in the screen image is perfectly perpendicular to her back. The chin and back are parallel to one another. Since the neck that should connect these two body parts is not visible, the head and back could be parts of an already butchered body. The uncanny relation of head to body heightens Casas's message. In the lower center of the painting, the central woman consists of nothing more than largely undifferentiated hair. Since this form almost pushes against the apex of the bottom of the curved screen, it evokes a phallic male presence or "pressure" against the screen itself. Since the ladies sign is situated at the extreme right of the painting, it seemingly points to the future, given the Western convention of reading from left to right. Thus one could conclude that the confusing fallout of the sexual revolution will continue.

Conclusion

By late 1967, the foreground figures that had begun as nebulous cinema spectators had become autonomous beings. The foreground figures in the five transitional paintings discussed above are sufficiently independent of the background screen image that the signs within these paintings help establish a theatrical setting. These signs lead directly to the aphoristic captions (whose block letters derive from signs) in subsequent works, which need autonomous foreground figures to operate in conjunction with the large screen image. Liberated from their seats, the figures are not

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compelled to heed the screen's implicit command to view it. They have come to possess as much color, substance, and detail as the figures on the screen. The enhanced color and texture enable Casas to depict vivid period images. Thus the signs that had helped establish a cinematic context in the transitional works ironically led to disengagement from a cinematic setting by short-circuiting the audience/screen model of the early Humanscapes. At the same time, they enabled increasingly complex juxtapositions of objects and figures that led to the tripartite schema of screen image, foreground image, and text. *Humanscape 40 (Game)* (January 1968) is the first painting in the cycle to have a caption/subtitle (fig. 11).

Though subsequent Humanscapes eschew the explicit locale of the drive-in or the traditional movie theater, they nonetheless reference the cinema in their proportions, in their scale, and in the large, isolated screenlike image in the upper portion of the paintings. After using the 6 x 8 foot format in *Humanscape 33* (July 1967), Casas utilized it for the rest of the series because it best "expressed the ratio of cinema to the real world" (2008). Thus began one of the most remarkable painting cycles in the history of American art.

Figure 11. Mel Casas, Humanscape 40 (Game), *January 1968. Acrylic on canvas, 72 × 96 inches. Collection of the artist.*

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Notes

1. The artist destroyed numbers 1, 3–12, 14–21, 26, and 27 between December 28, 1970, and May 28, 1981.

2. Since he was driving in a high-traffic area, Casas did not have an opportunity to see anything else. Thus the statement that the woman appeared to be eating buildings (Cortez 2002, 37) is inaccurate.

3. This article, which explores the genesis of this series, is the first segment in a five-part study of the Humanscapes. The third segment, "Getting the Big Picture: Political Themes in the Humanscapes of Mel Casas," will appear in *Born of Resistance: Cara a Cara Encounters with Chicana/o Visual Culture*, edited by Víctor A. Sorell and Scott L. Baugh, forthcoming from the University of Arizona Press.

4. Paintings a, b, and c were made before the artist began numbering the series. They feature rectangular framing devices behind embryonic figures. *Humanscape 1* has a nude woman in the foreground with a blank, screenlike image in the background.

5. Noriega (2007, 8; 2008, 32–33) treats the cinematic genesis of the Humanscape series, as do Quirarte (1973, 80–85) and Utterback (1968). Also see Quirarte (1970, 9; 1988, 65) and Cockcroft (1988, 220) for brief mentions.

6. While Casas holds that all paintings are political to some degree, the paintings I refer to as political treat subjects such as war, the United Farm Workers, and Nixon-era politics.

7. In this seminal work, McLuhan (1951) treated film posters, advertising, and comics in relation to technologies of power and media manipulation. He also used aphoristic phrases (boxed off with a line) that parallel the subtitles in Casas's later Humanscapes.

8. For pop and its antecedents, see Livingstone (1990). Massey (1995) thinks the IG's role in the evolution of pop is overstated.

9. Foster (2003) provides online zoomable images of *I Was a Rich Man's Plaything* and several Hamilton works referenced in this article.

10. In *Big Hair*, Grant McCracken constructs a periodic table of blondness that extends from bombshell to platinum (Adams 2004, 93).

11. Dyer (1997) argues that European notions of self were fundamentally shaped by Christianity (15), particularly by the "gentilising and whitening of Christ" (68). Whiteness became a "moral symbol" because it was associated with sunshine and light, and thus with sanctity itself (68).

12. Nineteen sixty-eight is the only year for which the Art League website does not list an Artist of the Year (http://www.saalm.org/artists.html#annual_artist_exhibition). Quirarte (1973, 134), who doesn't mention the Barbie incident, says Casas was selected for the award, "but only for three days because they had made a mistake. The selection was withdrawn because of ideological and aesthetic conflicts." Before the presentation, he reports, an Art League representative said to Casas, "Isn't it nice to have a Mexican American artist of the year when we're having so much trouble in the [Rio Grande] Valley?" (134). (Casas would have been the first Spanish-surnamed recipient of the award.) By "trouble," the representative was

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probably referring to the violence associated with the United Farm Workers strike in Starr County, south of San Antonio, in 1967 (see Bailey 2011).

13. Toy is a probable reference to the Barbie doll. Pet refers to *Penthouse* magazine's Pet of the Month. Mascot is a reference to Miss America. On the Miss America protest, also see Dicker (2008, 83–84, 103), Echols (2002, 75–77), Hamisch (2001), Morgan (1968; 1977, 62–67; 1992, 21–29), and Rosen (2006, 159–61).

14. Ethnic viewers perceived implicit messages. As bell hooks notes: "When most black people in the United States first had the opportunity to look at film and television, they did so fully aware that mass media was a system of knowledge and power reproducing and maintaining white supremacy" (2002, 95).

15. The organizers of the Miss America protest were concerned with race, which was rarely a priority within the feminist movement. At an unnamed conference in August 1968, feminists considered contacting Kathleen Cleaver, communications secretary of the Black Panther party, for names of black women to invite to a future conference. As one participant put it, "I didn't want to go to a conference and hear a black militant woman tell me she is more oppressed and what am I going to do about it." Contact was not made, and "women's liberation lost a valuable opportunity for interracial dialogue" (Dicker 2008, 82).

16. Germaine Greer argues that aspects of male domination, including excessive concern about body image, cause something akin to female castration, producing what she calls the Female Eunuch. Her powerful analysis of body image, originally published in 1970, included this about breasts: "A full bosom is actually a millstone around a woman's neck . . . Her breasts are only to be admired for as long as they show no signs of function: once darkened, stretched or withered they are objects of revulsion. They are not parts of a person, but lures slung around the neck, to be kneaded and twisted like magic putty, or mumbled and mouthed like lolly ices" (2008, 39). Wallace (2001, 209) observes that Greer prioritized sexual revolution over women's revolution. She terms Greer's work "arguably *the* book of the television age" (174) and notes its "popular impact" despite its marginalization within the women's movement (160–61).

17. Projected measurements commonly echo Jervis's description: "39-21-33" (Kershaw 2002); "38-18-34" (Rosenberg 1997); "39-18-33" (Ewalt 2009; Ewalt altered a photograph to depict those dimensions). Mattel's reconfiguration of the doll's proportions, announced in 1997, did not spring from "a sudden recognition that young girls might learn some false lessons from her absurd proportions, or out of contrition for years of pretending that Barbie doesn't have the cultural effect that so many people believe she does. Nope; they're doing it because Barbie's big bustline is outdated. If you don't count porn and 'Baywatch', there's not a lot of call for the 38-18-24 look right now" (Jervis 1997).

18. Norton et al. (1996, 291–93) put the life-size Barbie's "extremely unrealistic" measurements at 32.4-16-28.6. The sixteen-inch waist is about ten inches slimmer than the waists on sample groups of anorexics and models. These authors speculate that the 2:1 chest-to-waist ratio (to which they say people are highly attuned) causes the misperception that the doll is extremely buxom.

19. Casas here makes punning allusions to his own work. He painted on a black ground. Persistence of vision refers to a then-current explanation of how still

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images convey the illusion of motion in film. In his use of this term, Casas implies that persistence and vision are essential components of his work. Quirarte (1973, 83) quotes part of Casas's 1968 statement and alludes to other portions of it. Casas must have written this statement by September 1966, when Kincaid (1966) quotes and paraphrases it extensively. She cites the statement as a "premise" on which his ongoing series of seventeen Humanscape paintings is based. Kincaid also mentions plans for a one-man show at Mexico City's Casa de la Paz, slated for November 1966. It is presumably for this exhibition—which never happened—that Casas wrote the statement.

20. "Voyeurism" remains the legal term for "Peeping Tom" offenses in statutes (Posner and Silbough 1998, 233).

21. Merriam-Webster defines menticide as "a systematic and intentional undermining of a person's conscious mind: brainwashing" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/menticide).

22. Casas's use of the term voyeurism preceded Mulvey's (1975, 1981) influential and controversial essays that addressed voyeurism and spectatorship. As noted above, Casas's interest in the term was partly a fascination with connotations. Films that analogized the cinema spectator and the voyeur—such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) and *Psycho* (1960)—played a part in shaping his concept of the spectator as voyeur. So, too, did his experience as a drive-in theater patron: passion plays were taking place in the automobiles all around him. Ultimately, his ironic and playful observations are far removed from the theories of spectatorship that emerged in the 1970s, which were systematically and minutely tethered to particular linguistic and psychoanalytic theories. Mulvey (1987) subsequently recognized that the structuralist binary oppositions that served as her primary analytic tools limited the utility of her argument.

23. When he wrote this statement in the mid-1960s, Casas saw significant differences between cinema and television, which he now attributes to television's relative novelty at the time. He characterized cinema as "restrictive, conservative, ascetic" and patriarchal, while television was "permissive, progressive, hedonistic" and represented a matriarchal cultural evolution (1968). Casas now views cinema and television as similar entities that have evolved together (2008).

24. While Casas admired de Chirico's work, he did not emulate it consciously. Casas's in-the-picture viewers function analogously to de Chirico's mannequins, who are also human surrogates. *Humanscape 4* seems to reference de Chirico explicitly, especially the discordant planes in the foreground and the human shadow emerging from behind the curved drive-in screen. This shadow is strikingly reminiscent of the one in de Chirico's *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street* (1914).

25. If, at the time of McLuhan's book, hair dying was often viewed as the domain of actresses and prostitutes, Twitchell (2001, 118) estimates that half of women between thirteen and seventy years of age currently dye their hair.

26. Minimalists commonly used this phrase.

27. In his Great American Nude series, Wesselmann frequently eliminated facial features except for his model's mouth. Three paintings by Hamilton provided a precedent for Wesselmann: *Hommage à Chrysler Corporation* (1957); *Hers Is a Lush Situation* (1958), whose title was lifted from a Buick ad (Livingstone 1990,

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37); and *$he* (1958–60), which, according to Livingstone, "conflates the allure of woman and the lure of money with a blunt frankness that no ad-man would have dared voice" (37). A small expressionistic painting by Willem de Kooning (1904–97) titled *Woman* (1950) was the ultimate precedent for these works: the artist collaged a woman's smiling mouth (clipped from a Camel cigarette ad) onto the head (see Hopps et al. 2003, 26).

28. Noriega (2007, 16, n. 5; 2008, 45, n. 32) notes that the signs in Humanscapes 37–39 "provide diagetic titles" in the cinema foreground spaces.

29. Utterback (1968) recognizes that the "pictorial rectangles" are not clearly "film projections, nor are they precisely billboards. . . . They relate as much to the 'thought' balloons of comic strips, because they seem to be the imaginings of the individuals beneath them; but, if so, they are visions with special power over their originators and indeed seem to prompt their activities. . . . Yet the true source of control in these paintings may well be words." Beginning in 1975, a number of Humanscapes do not have foreground figures, though they often have drips or patterns that relate to the screen image.

30. McLuhan repeats Cecil B. DeMille's quip that starlets looked like "they were stamped out of a mint like silver dollars" and "should be numbered instead of named" (1951, 96).

31. *Blowup* was based on the 1959 short story "Las babas del diablo" (The Drool of the Devil) by Julio Cortázar (1914–84). *Blowup* presents a highly subversive and critical view of technology.

32. Packard, whose dust jacket calls him "one of the most astute observers of the contemporary scene," notes "new modes of dancing in the late 1960s . . . To fast music the young ladies by millions were performing modulated bumps and grinds before their male escorts" (1968, 58). When the music was slow, couples embraced "pelvis-to-pelvis" and "swayed, somewhat as in the act of intercourse" (58). Packard also raised the alarm about toga parties (youngsters wearing only sheets!) and pajama parties (couples rolling on mattresses between songs!).

33. When Casas made this painting, films with frontal nudity were not widely available in the United States. *Blowup* was the first mainstream film to show even a glimpse of female pubic hair (but if you blinked or saw a censored version, you missed it). For a history of nudity and sex in cinema, see Dirks (2011). Nineteen sixty-nine was a landmark year: the Swedish film *I Am Curious (Yellow)* caused a sensation after its ban was overturned, and the U.S. Supreme Court in *Stanley v. Georgia* ruled that private citizens could keep pornographic films in their homes (Allyn 2000, 128–30). Pornographic theaters did not proliferate until the success of *Deep Throat* in 1972 (234–35).

34. The multiethnic environment of El Paso was formative. Casas's father, who spoke seven languages, interacted with people from all walks of life. The visually and linguistically inventive pachuco culture, which was disseminated in the United States through El Paso, also served as a vital stimulus for Casas's work. Harithas credits Casas with "Pachuco logic, barrio humor and a piercing intellectual approach" (1976). Casas frequently contrasts the defiant attitude of Chicanos in El Paso to the passive, "submissive," or "colonized" state of mind he encountered in San Antonio (Casas 1996, 2008; Garza 1987; Goddard 1988).

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35. Since surrealism is a point of reference for the entire series, a more pertinent prototype is André Masson's *Terre érotique* (ca. 1955), a surreal copy of Courbet's *Origin of the World* (1866) that Jacques Lacan commissioned as a sliding panel to conceal Courbet's original (des Cars 2008, 378–82). Nor is Hickey correct that this painting "titled" the series: the designation Humanscape was conceived at an earlier stage, around 1965 (Casas 2008).

36. The works treated in this article were deeply personal: the artist was his own ideal spectator. The political Humanscapes were more intelligible to a broad viewership, since they addressed the issues of the day. The Humanscapes that treated art, on the other hand, would only make sense to viewers with a substantial knowledge of modern art. The Southwestern clichés were aimed at an audience familiar with Southwestern imagery and culture.

37. Freud addressed foot and shoe fetishism in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, first published in 1905. In a footnote added in 1910, he declared: "The shoe or slipper is a corresponding symbol of the female genitals" (Freud 2000, 21, n. 1). Symbolically, one might argue that the Gotham ad placed the mysterious female genitalia on a column.

38. For examples, see Archives of Advertising (2001). Pantyhose advertising heated up in 1969 with the Hanes mass-market launch. At that time, no single manufacturer had more than 4 percent of the market (Pincas and Loiseau 2008, 183). For a study of nylon and DuPont, see Ndiaye (2006). Handley argues that attitudes toward science and technology determine how synthetics are perceived: "after the heady moonstruck excitement of the sixties came the technologically troubled seventies, when man-made fibres slid rapidly into fashion oblivion"; the recent "reinfatuation" with technology has resulted in products like bulletproof "Kevlar" miniskirts (2000, 9).

39. For the history of the go-go boot, see Cox (2008, 136).

40. Greer decried the inconveniences of wigs and other hirsute artifices: "I'm sick of peering at the world through false eyelashes, so everything I see is mixed with a shadow of bought hairs" (2008, 70).

41. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud declared: "no doubt the part played by fur as a fetish owes its origin to an association with the hair of the *mons Veneris*" (2000, 21).

42. A Texas Cattlemen' poster, displayed by one of the protesters, featured a nude woman in a cowboy hat whose body was sectioned and labeled as cuts of meat. Its slogan was "Break the Dull Steak Habit." An accompanying placard stated, "Welcome to the Miss America Cattle Auction." Another sign said, "If You Want Meat, Go to the Butcher." See "The Miss America Protest: 1968," *Redstockings* (http://www.redstockings.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=103). See also Dicker (2008, 83).

43. Wolf (1991, 14–15) says the technical ability to reproduce and distribute photographs was a prerequisite for the "beauty myth." As James (1991) points out, Wolf overemphasizes the influence of women's magazines and largely ignores television, film, and videos.

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