

## Whitney Museum of American Art Acquires Mel Casas's *Humanscape 56*



Mel Casas, *Humanscape 56 (San Antonio Circus)*, 1969, Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 96 in., 182.9 x 243.8 cm  
Purchased with funds from the Katherine Schmidt Shubert Purchase Fund

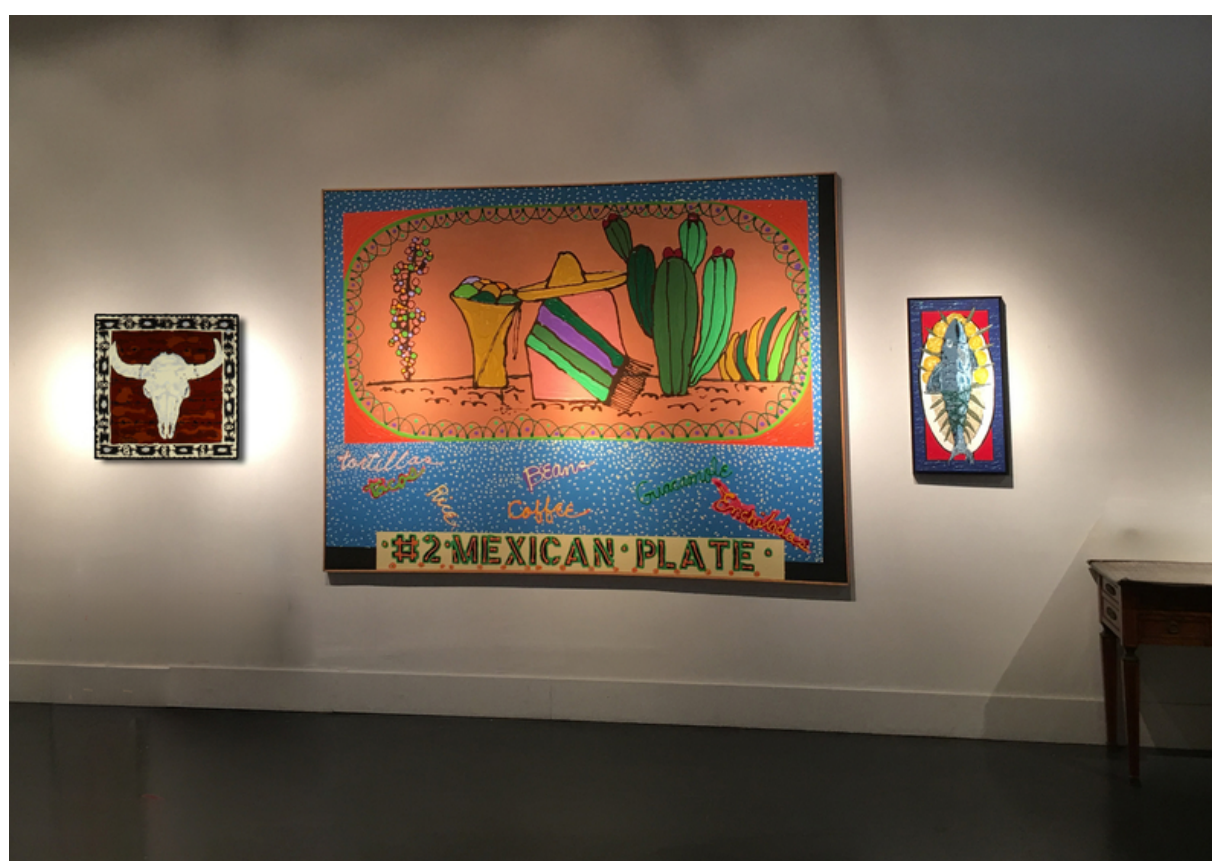
Ruiz-Healy Art is pleased to announce that The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, New York, has acquired a 1969 acrylic on canvas painting by Mel Casas, *Humanscape 56 (San Antonio Circus)*, part of Casas's *Humanscape* series. We congratulate the Mel Casas Family Trust on this important acquisition. We especially thank Dan Nadel, the Steven and Ann Ames Curator of Drawings and Prints at the Whitney Museum of American Art, for his leadership in selecting Casas's work.

As Patricia Ruiz-Healy comments, "I am so pleased to have facilitated the inclusion of Casas's work in the exhibition and the acquisition of a major and historic painting by Mel Casas by the Whitney Museum of American Art." In 2017, Ruiz-Healy Art presented a solo exhibition, *Mel Casas: Iconic Reality*, accompanied by a catalogue featuring an essay by scholar Carlos Francisco Jackson.



Gallery president and director, Patricia Ruiz-Healy, Ph.D. at the opening of The Whitney Museum of American Art *Sixties Surreal* exhibition

*San Antonio Circus* was most recently exhibited in *Sixties Surreal* (September 2025-January 2026) at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The exhibition was realized through the scholarly leadership of a curatorial team directed by Dan Nadel, alongside Associate Curator Laura Phipps, Scott Rothkopf, the Alice Pratt Brown Director, and Curator Elisabeth Sussman, with essential contributions from Senior Curatorial Assistant Kelly Long and Curatorial Project Assistant Rowan Diaz-Toth. *Sixties Surreal* is an ambitious, scholarly reappraisal of American art from 1958 to 1972, encompassing the work of more than 100 artists. This revisionist survey looks beyond now-canonical movements to focus instead on the era's most fundamental, if underrecognized, aesthetic current—an efflorescence of psychosexual, fantastical, and revolutionary tendencies, undergirded by the imprint of historical Surrealism and its broad dissemination.



Installation view, *Mel Casas: Iconic Reality*, Ruiz-Healy Art, San Antonio, October 18 - November 25, 2017

Mel Casas (1929-2014) was born in El Paso, Texas, and received his BA from Texas Western University and an MFA from the University of the Americas in Mexico. Like many Mexican Americans from this generation, Casas was able to attend college with support from the GI Bill after serving in the Korean War. Casas was professor emeritus at San Antonio College, where he taught for 29 years before retiring as chairman of the art department in 1990. His most iconic series began in 1965 with *Humanscape 1* and concluded in 1989 with *Humanscape 150*. In regard to the future of Chicano art, Casas is quoted in the landmark exhibition, *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation* (CARA), as saying that his wishes were to make "Chicano art relevant to everyone." Casas constructed a diagram outlining his vision to balance the "national art criteria" with Chicano Art and Regional Art in an attempt to make Chicano art more accessible.



Celia Alvarez Muñoz, *Mel Casas, Semejantes Personajes/Significant Personages Series*, 2002, Digital Holgas, 14 x 35 in., 35.6 x 88.9 cm, edition of 5

Casas was an artist of national and international renown. He was also an educator and co-founder of the San Antonio Artist Collective *Con Safo*—considered by many to be one of the most significant Chicano Art groups of the 60s and 70s, at a time when Chicano art was not being shown in mainstream venues. His broad and impactful practice of challenging borders that create metaphorical, physical, and ideological divergences. Casas' practice was rooted in the Chicano ethos of social justice, bridging the cultural, political, and economic divides that define the borderlands. Casas has been written about as a Chicano artist, yet his practice predated the emergence of the Chicano Movement. By the time of the UFW Delano Grape Boycott of 1965 and the Mexican American student protests at schools in Texas and California between 1967 and 1969, Casas had been practicing as a professional artist and painter for almost a decade. Between 1958 and 1965, Casas participated in numerous solo, 2-person, and group exhibitions at local community arts spaces, galleries, and museums in Texas and Mexico. In this regard, the Chicano Movement did not give rise to Casas' artistic practice. Rather, his cultural work supported and coincided with the emergence of a broad civil rights movement.

Ruiz-Healy Art  
74 East 79th Street, 2D  
New York, NY 10075  
646-833-7709  
info@ruizhealyart.com

Wednesday to Friday from 11 AM - 5 PM and by appointment

Ruiz-Healy Art  
201-A E Olmos Drive  
San Antonio, TX 78212  
210-804-2219  
info@ruizhealyart.com

Wednesday to Saturday from 11 AM - 4 PM and by appointment

