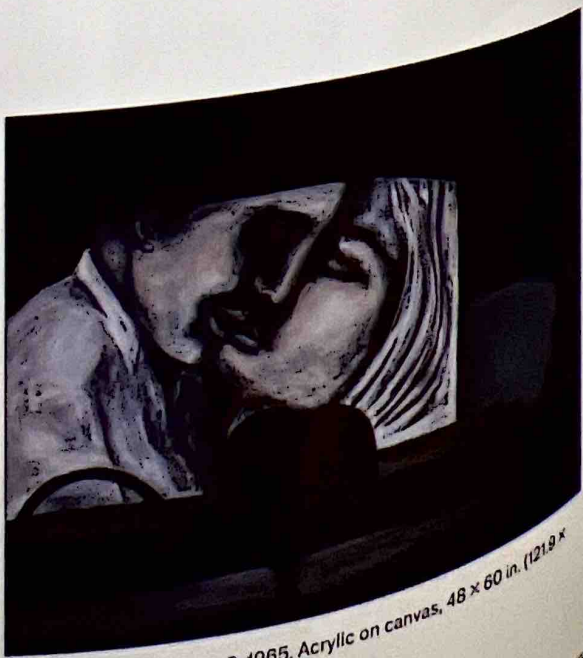


A few months later, in early summer, Oldenburg makes the political horror-comedy film *Birth of the Flag* (1965) with Lucas Samaras, Carolee Schneemann, and Stan VanDerBeek.

1965 • Driving at night, Mel Casas (1929–2014) is surprised by the sight of a drive-in movie screen in the distance, and it inspires him to begin his series of *Humanscape* paintings, each a rectangular screen-like image contrasted with a counter-drama in the foreground. The series, which will come to total 153 paintings made between 1965 and 1989, addresses sex, race, class, art, and every topic the artist can think of. In a statement for his 1976 exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Casas will explain: "HUMAN SCAPES: Visual Conundrums, images are manipulated to create contradictory visual questions. A riddle whose answer depends [on] or refers to a pun and has only a conjectural answer. Contradictory visual perceptions are visualized more readily simultaneously. Interpretation of the imagery takes place at different levels but only one can be verified at a given moment. The conundrum plays with our cultural concepts, with our cultural vision."

Casas had been born and raised in El Paso, Texas. He is awarded a Purple Heart for his service in the Korean War, and after returning to the United States, he attends Texas Western College and the University of the Americas in



Mel Casas, *Humanscape 2*, 1965. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 60 in. (121.9 x 152.4 cm)

Mexico City, from which he receives a master of fine arts in 1958. Casas works in San Antonio his entire career, teaching for three decades at San Antonio College, broaching topics of specific interest to the Chicano community, which he defines:

We are truly outsiders. To me being an outsider is the next thing to being an artist. I think we are lucky to be born outsiders. The other thing, you think because you eat tortillas or you think in Spanish or in the Mexican tradition that this identifies you. I don't think it's quite true. You find us using certain materials in our work, Liquitex, canvas, stretcher boards, no *usamos bastidores* or *manta*. So we are a mixture. So there is no sense in trying to say that we are a pure this or that. We are entirely different. We're neither Mexicans nor Anglos. We are in between.