



Maaïke Schoorel
Flooded Playground
April 30 – May 25, 2024

Mendes Wood DM is delighted to announce the debut solo exhibition of Dutch artist Maaïke Schoorel in New York. Titled *Flooded Playground*, the exhibition features a collection of new oil paintings. Painterly, bold, and symphonic yet delicate and wistful, Maaïke Schoorel's paintings defy categorization. They reside outside the binary of abstract and figurative representation, referencing a wide swath of art history - from the rich tradition of Dutch and Flemish still-life and portrait painting to contemporary photography. Together, they pose questions about what defines “the artistic moment” and whether it remains a crucial concern in terms of “image-making.”

Schoorel paints after capturing her subjects - whether they be people, places, or both - with her camera. However, Schoorel's methodology and the impulses behind her compositional choices add layers of complexity to her work that challenge our traditionally held views of what painting should look like and what it should be about. “I am not looking for the perfect romantic image to paint,” Schoorel explains, “instead, I try to immortalize marginal, off-beat moments that connect me to the spiritual in everyday life.”

Many of the titles of Schoorel's works exemplify this idea - *Pim at Breakfast*, *Family Portrait*, and *Toothbrushes*. The initial photographs from which each of these paintings was made are not formally set up – the elements contained are not arranged to create the kind of compositional harmony that we would traditionally expect to see in portraiture and still-life. Instead, they are off-center, cropped, unbalanced at times. They celebrate the mundane, the everyday, the way in which life happens un-staged all around us; they sublimate these moments into something timeless and eternal by way of oil paint. *Flooded Playground*, for instance, is an apt example: “The photograph I took was not of a happy playground full of children playing, but of a flooded and empty playground after a storm,” Schoorel says.

Schoorel's unfastened and emotive style pushes this further, forcing the viewer to truly pause and visually engage with the canvas, to decipher the architectures and compositions that lie hidden behind the delicate layers of her minimal brushstrokes and the occasional incorporation of stencil, stickers, and gold leaf. In Schoorel's words “It's still-life, but life is not still. Our perceptions change, and so do our eyes.”

On the occasion of the opening, the artist will be presenting a new publication, *Unsung Eve*, which documents Schoorel's exhibition at one of the oldest museums in the Netherlands, the Willet-Holthuysen House, with contributions from Zippora Elders, Dr. Rachel Esner, Diana Campbell, and Dr. Margriet Schavemakers.

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