1. [On Approaching Paintings in the Studio Context]

There are many different ways into painting. When I visited Maaike Schoorel's new studio in Amsterdam to look at the new series of paintings discussed in this text, a remark by the French art historian Daniel Arasse felt particularly apt: "one sees nothing," or rather, "nothing is seen." This is because the full perception of a painting cannot be reduced to a reproduction. And in Maaike's case, as with so many other great painters, even when standing before the canvas, the work does not reveal itself, it does not immediately offer itself; it requires time, lingering, searching.

The Dutch artist's trajectory has been marked by constancy and by an ever-renewed pursuit of subjects of pictorial interest. At its core, however, the questions and concerns that guide her practice are the classical themes that have long preoccupied other painters.

Gaining access to the magical and in some ways restricted circle of the studio offers entry into the arcana of the workshop – that which comes before the moment a painting is deemed finished: the studies, the preparation, the artefacts, the photographs, the construction of the scene, the small stories that underlie the paintings.

The silent and unspoken pact is that one should not reveal too much in writing, should not put everything into words or lean on adjectives. What, then, remains?

2. [On the Silence of Voices Within Painting]

What remains, perhaps, is silence. Yes, painting lives, deafeningly, in a world of silence. Schoorel's painting is a time capsule that travels across eras and moments in search of archetypes of intimacy. These are moments that, throughout human history, have become fixed through repetition (a *pathosformel*): moments of pause, moments of introspection and reflection that the flow of history does not record. Minute and intimate gestures, posed or dissolved into everyday life, not necessarily formalised – gestures of rest, conviviality, and surrender.

When, standing before the paintings, some finished and others still in progress, I began to see, that is, when, all at once, the forms revealed themselves and, in that sleight of hand, the painting offered itself as a material reality (a subtle double movement akin to transubstantiation), duration (*la durée*, in French, perhaps more eloquent) was the quality that moved me most, both emotionally and physiologically.

3. [On the Crisis of the Subject and the Translucency of Time]

The veil, the glaze. In painting, the most artificial of all artistic disciplines, one in which *techné* is intrinsically structural and central to both its discourse and process, temporal density is achieved,

among other means, through the subtle accumulation of layers on the painted surface. The greater the depth, the further we recede into time; somewhat like stratigraphy in archaeology.

We understand, of course, that, as Georges Bataille wrote in his classic book on Édouard Manet, apropos of the indecently famous painting *Olympia* (depicting a naked woman lying on a bed looking directly at the viewer), the subject amounts to nothing more than "mere pretexts for painting itself." That is to say, the subject, underlying the pictorial layers, is a subtext, an introduction to what is truly relevant: the matter, the body of painting, which unsettles us at the level of small sensations rather than the intelligible ("Structure, as related to function, needs our intellect to construct it or, analytically, to decipher it. *Matière*, on the other hand, is mainly nonfunctional, nonutilitarian, and in that respect, like colour, it cannot be experienced intellectually" – Annie Albers).

In recent years I have been studying and reflecting on the work of a painter of another generation, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, whose work has brought me closer to that of Maaike Schoorel. Both artists work with duration, silence, and the depth of the pictorial space. Both treat minor subjects with the grandiloquence of classical painters, and both tell stories beyond history: stories woven in the secrecy of the studio or the home, stories of tactility, stories of intimacy. Annie Albers again: "All progress, so it seems, is coupled to regression elsewhere. We have advanced in general, for instance, in regard to verbal articulation – the reading and writing public of today is enormous. But we certainly have grown increasingly insensitive in our perception by touch, the tactile sense" (...) We touch things to assure ourselves of reality. We touch the objects of our love. We touch the things we form. Our tactile experiences are elemental. If we reduce their range, as we do when we reduce the necessity to form things ourselves, we grow lopsided."

4. [On Hybridity: Figurines and Collages, Mixing Temporalities, Entities, and Identities]

Among the many "themes" that weave through Schoorel's paintings presented here, I have chosen, in concluding this short text, to turn to the problem of the figure. Not by chance, for in this exhibition in particular, as in Maaike's work more generally, the human figure is omnipresent – body, her own body, is one of the most recurrent themes in her work.

During the preparation of this exhibition, the artist made a series of small clay sculptures from moulds: female figures in upright, hieratic, and unadorned positions. They are doubles of the figurines produced by the Cycladic Civilization (c. 3200–2000 BCE). What are they? Fertility idols? Do they symbolize the feminine ideal, a fusion with nature, the sacredness of motherhood, childbirth, and gestation? The enigma of the Cycladic figurines, echoed in Maaike's small sculptures, remains vibrant: so distant in time and yet so close in spirit. Such is the mystery of artistic creation.

When I visited the studio I was able, as I mentioned earlier, to enter the workshop and witness thought in the making – that fascinating moment when doubts become tentative steps towards a

still unknown territory. Beyond the figurines, a group of small collages hanging on the studio wall caught my attention and have remained vivid in my imagination. They are quick assemblages, modest and precarious in nature, like the small sculptures, yet they condense the subversive power of transformation, as if they sprang, in spirit, from the narratives Ovid gathered in his most celebrated book, *Metamorphoses.*

Arms becoming wings, bellies multiplying into many spheres, an underwater goddess, like Calypso, with Maaike's body and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva's bust, a self-portrait of the artist as Diana of Ephesus.

In short, an open-ended encounter with the mystery of the small events of our existence.

— Nuno Faria
Lisbon, May 2026

Maaike Schoorel (b. 1973, Santpoort, the Netherlands) lives and works in Amsterdam.

Some of the artist's solo exhibitions have been held by **Mendes Wood DM**, Brussels (2026); **Mendes Wood DM**, New York (2024); **Maureen Paley**, London (2023); **Willet-Holthuysen**, Amsterdam (2022); **Mendes Wood DM**, São Paulo (2021); **Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens**, Deurle (2020); **Gemeentemuseum**, The Hague (2017); **Fondazione Memmo**, Rome (2016); **Frans Hals Museum**, Haarlem (2012); and **Museum de Hallen**, Harleem (2008).

Additionally, her work has been included in group exhibitions at **Casa da Cultura da Comporta**, Comporta (2025); **Shimmer at Les Bains Douches**, Alençon (2024); **Mendes Wood DM**, São Paulo (2023); **7th Biennial of Painting – Inner Spaces**, Deurle (2020); **Het HEM**, Zaandam (2020); **Mendes Wood DM**, Brussels (2020); **Gropius Bau**, Berlin (2019); **Gemeentemuseum**, The Hague (2017); **20th Sydney Biennale**, Sydney (2016); **Kunstverein Amsterdam**, Amsterdam (2015) and **Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)**, Los Angeles (2014).

Schoorel returned to Amsterdam in 2016, having spent many years living in London, New York, Rome, and Berlin. She has undertaken residency programs at **Van Wassenhove House**, Deurle (2020); **KNIR**, Rome (2016), **Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science**, Amsterdam; **American Academy in Rome**, Rome (2015); and **ISCP**, New York (2012).