

GREENE NAFTALI

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Simone Fattal

The Primeval Forest and The Hearth

January 16 – February 28, 2026

Greene Naftali, Ground Fl

January 9 – February 28, 2026

kaufmann repetto, 55 Walker Street

*Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.
— Dante Alighieri, The Inferno*

Time itself becomes pliant in the hands of Simone Fattal, who has spent six decades forging a singular project to bridge the ancient and modern. This joint presentation spans two linked exhibitions—*The Primeval Forest*, at Greene Naftali, and *The Hearth*, at kaufmann repetto—and marks the artist's return to New York following her acclaimed 2019 survey at MoMA PS1. The works on view range from sculptures in clay, stoneware, and bronze to large-scale drawings and cut-paper collage, implying a ritual landscape suffused with belief in what can't be seen.

Born in Damascus in 1942, Fattal was raised in Lebanon and educated in Beirut and Paris, where she studied archaeology at the École du Louvre and philosophy at the Sorbonne. In 1969 she returned to Beirut, where she began her career as an artist, exhibiting her paintings locally through the start of the Lebanese Civil War. She left the city in 1980 and resettled in California. There she founded the Post-Apollo Press to publish avant-garde authors from around the world. By 1988 Fattal had resumed her visual art, enrolling at the San Francisco Art Institute where she discovered ceramics, coaxing a near-animistic quality from the supple medium of clay. As Negar Azimi has remarked, her "figures look as old as the earth and yet they breathe." Fattal eventually returned to Paris where she still resides, making a body of work informed by poetry and myth that views the deep past through living eyes.

Known primarily as a sculptor of totemic works in clay and bronze, Fattal makes use of motifs that imply a cultural mix—from Sumerian tales to Sufi mysticism and pre-Islamic lore—that mirrors her own itinerant life, tapping into shared narratives of displacement and human resilience. Recurring forms include striding men on sturdy legs, suggesting archetypal heroes that endure through the ages. The bronze *Walker*, at kaufmann repetto, renders a life-size figure in motion, paired with a rock that trails it like a shadow. "Man is a standing animal," Fattal has said of her prophets and wanderers. "Before he started thinking, he got up." At Greene Naftali, *Ghaylan and Mayya* depicts seafaring lovers from Arabic literature, one splayed like a billowing sail—a material sleight-of-hand that uses the solidity of bronze to capture something as airy and impermanent as the wind. At the gallery's center, the monumental bronze *Tree* likens organic growth to artistic creation, and the stoneware *Humbaba* from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* stands sentry, protecting a hand-drawn forest scrawled and dripped in skeins of ink.

Both exhibitions feature an array of tabletop ceramics that pay homage to the natural world, with glazed vignettes of plants and animals, a sand dune or an ocean wave. Other clay structures resemble humble dwellings or architectural ruins. These rough-hewn objects portray elemental forces and our means of shelter from them: the fundamental drive to make a home, to preserve what might otherwise be lost. *The Primeval Forest* and *The Hearth* consider the environmental relations of humans to their surroundings, with the Mediterranean as an abiding source of inspiration. In *Golden Sea*, a tessellated path of Murano glass tiles evokes a space of fluid circulation, while a series of collages picture sun on water from remnants saved over time and pieced together. Layered and nonlinear, collage is ideally suited to the multiplicity Fattal favors, with truncated forms that convey history's ruptures as well as its affinities. "We do not and cannot have any real knowledge of the past," Fattal has said. "We only have fragments."

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Simone Fattal lives and works in Paris. A major solo exhibition dedicated to her work will open at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris in September 2026. Recent solo exhibitions and public commissions include Musée du Louvre, Paris (2024–25); IVAM, Valencia (2024–25); Secession, Vienna (2024); Portikus, Frankfurt (2023); National Museum of Qatar, Doha (2022–ongoing); Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich (2022); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2021); ICA Milano, Milan (2021); and MoMA PS1, New York (2019). Significant group exhibitions include *Making Their Mark: Works from the Shah Garg Collection*, Berkeley Art Museum / Mildred Lane Kemper Museum, St. Louis (2024–2026); the 18th Istanbul Biennial (2025); Kunstmuseum Basel (2025); the 59th Venice Biennale, *The Milk of Dreams* (2022); Gropius Bau, Berlin (2022); Aïshti Foundation, Beirut (2022); 12th Berlin Biennale (2022); 16th Biennale de Lyon, France (2022); Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (2021); Punta Della Dogana, Pinault Collection, Venice (2019); New Museum, New York (2014); and Sharjah Biennial (2011).

Her work is in the collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; National Museum of Qatar, Doha; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah; mumok, Vienna; Sursock Museum, Beirut; Aïshti Foundation, Beirut; Musée Yves Saint Laurent, Marrakech; Block Museum of Art, Evanston, IL; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among others.