

## The Spirit Crossing the Clay

by Khaled el Najjar

Translated from the Arabic by Etel Adnan

### Adam and Eve...

I believe that it would have been possible that Simone Fattal's universe—her obsession to give the world its first biography—would contain all the animals of Noah's Ark, whose remains are to be found in the vicinity of Mount Kaf, or as Mas-soudi, faithful to the Arab storytellers that mentioned the event, in the vicinity of the Door of Doors. It is even said that the Ark contains up to now some carcasses belonging to those animals. It is also said that an English navigator had found these bones in a remote Asiatic valley, towards the end of the nineteenth century. He seemed to have wanted to trace the boundary of the kingdom of "Brother John" in India. By the way, it was the dream of the Crusaders, along the centuries to have this Christian King come to their rescue with an army from his Indian kingdom. And what to say about the fact that this English navigator believed that those pieces of rotten wood and decayed animals were remnants of military Mongolian chariots. He even sent a report on his findings...

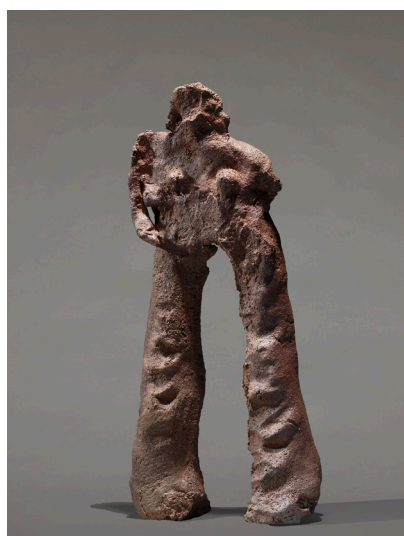
That is the way I see the figurines sculpted by Simone Fattal: as controversial as Noah's Ark, as real and imaginary at the same time. Symbolically, they looked like Noah's Ark which has preserved that which is primitive in us, something that belongs to a antediluvian age. Like this ark, they appear to be legendary, and thus come close to the dynamic reality of history much more than what we call objective reality.

In Simone Fattal's sculptures the clay looks sometimes impure, as if having submitted to the waters of a powerful rain that has left on it its sudden traces. One has also the impression that the clay has been dried under the impact of wind and sun which have also have left their imprint. That is the way nature interferes when it brings a touch of the absolute to the works of this young woman. Once more, we witness the touch of her hands when they tame the clay in order to create forms that share with sculptures made by children, their spontaneity, their absence of memory. What calls me most in Simone Fattal's work is its kind of primitive anonymous presence. I am not speaking here of a naïve art, of a passion for primitive man as in Rousseau or Gauguin, for example. I am not also speaking of a poetic invocation of old artifacts of antiquity or idols excavated by archeologists. No, No. What we have here are works whose originality comes from somewhere else. What arrests me the most with Simone Fattal's sculptures — and here I refer for example to her pieces "Adam" and "Eve" — is the fact that this artist seems to work the clay as if for the first time, before the existence of sculpture. She is doing this since the beginning of time because she is devoid of any artistic memory, devoid of any examples to follow. Simone functions independently of theory, movements, schools. She is exactly like Adam and Eve with the world and

the meaning that ensued. Nevertheless Simone leaves in her works something that belongs to the absolute, something that comes from the passing of the spirit, of its descent, through and into the objects she makes, the spirit that crosses the clay.

The clay gels and turns into blood. Arab philosophers would have spoken of the transmutation of a heavy to a subtle body.

You can observe for the first time sculpture as if you were at the first day when Adam saw the water of the Euphrates.



1. Centaure n.1 . 57 x 40 x 20 cm
2. Deesse prehistorique . 63 x 35 x 10 cm
3. Homme au collier . 55 x 22 x 10 cm
4. Femme n.1 . 46 x 24 x 10 cm