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ARAB NEWS

Artist Maitha Abdalla wins prize at MENART Fair in Paris



DUBAI: French luxury jewelry house Boucheron has named Emirati multidisciplinary artist Maitha Abdalla the inaugural recipient of its Coup de Coeur award at the MENART Fair 2026 in Paris.

The recognition celebrates female artists from the Middle East and North Africa whose work challenges conventions and offers distinctive perspectives. The MENART Fair returned to Paris from Oct. 23-25 for its seventh edition.

Abdalla was selected for her bronze sculpture, "Hug My Land," created in response to this year's fair theme, "Where is Home?" The approximately 1-meter-high work explores the relationship between identity, belonging and the land.

The sculpture depicts a female figure folded inward, her arms wrapped around her body in a gesture that conveys both vulnerability and protection. Initially conceived as an embrace of the land, the work evolved into an exploration of home as something carried within rather than defined by geography.

"This work evokes an almost bodily relationship to the land: what it transmits to us, what we project onto it, and what we continue to carry within us when we move away," Abdalla said in a released statement.

Born in Sharjah in 1989, Abdalla works across painting, sculpture, film, photography and performance. Her practice draws on theater, folklore and mythology to explore memory, psychology and social conditioning. Her work has featured at the Sharjah Biennial 15, the UAE National Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale and the Aichi Triennale 2025.

Founded in 2021, the MENART Fair is dedicated to modern and contemporary art from the Middle East and North Africa. Boucheron has partnered with the fair since 2024, supporting emerging artistic voices and women creators.

Participating galleries this year included Dubai's Amal Rakibi Gallery, Firetti Contemporary and Nasij; Abu Dhabi's Artbooth Gallery and K Gallery; and Muscat's Stal Gallery.