

Fashion Culture

The Inaugural Coup de Cœur Boucheron Awarded to Artist Maitha Abdalla

At the MENART Fair in Paris, Emirati artist Maitha Abdalla becomes the first recipient of Boucheron's inaugural Coup de Cœur award.



A jeweler walks into an art fair.

It sounds like the start of a classic joke, but at MENART Fair in Paris, the punchline was an award. On October 22, Emirati artist Maitha Abdalla became the first recipient of the Coup de Cœur Boucheron, presented by CEO Hélène Poulit-Duquense at the vernissage of her new work, *Hug My Land*.





What might a jeweler have to do with this? Well, Boucheron has never been just a jeweler. Founded in 1858, it was the first of its great contemporaries to open a boutique on Place Vendôme, a habit of turning up where others hadn't. Today, Creative Director Claire Choisne's July Carte Blanche collections keep questioning the very nature of preciousness, and the new Boucheron Curation platform lends that curiosity a home. Bringing together art in the boutiques, a Beijing residency opposite the Forbidden City and the Her Art Prize, launched in 2025, in a world where women make up barely 6.6% of the works exhibited in French museums.



The MENART Fair in Paris is the missing piece of the puzzle. Founded in 2021 by Laure d'Hauteville, it's Europe's only fair devoted entirely to modern and contemporary art from the Middle East and North Africa, bringing galleries and artists from the region and its diasporas to Paris for its seventh edition. Boucheron has backed it since 2024, the year the fair dedicated its entire edition to female perspectives. This year's theme, *Where is Home?*, asks artists to reflect on belonging against a backdrop of displacement.





Maitha's answer is made out of bronze and stands about a meter high. Born in Sharjah in 1989, she has shown at the Venice Biennale as part of the UAE National Pavillion, Sharjah Biennale 15 and the Lyon Biennale, and her theatre-tinged work often places female figures in enclosed, domestic worlds. In *Hug My Land*, a woman folds in on herself, arms wrapping around her own body and land, falling and holding herself together at once. The idea began as an embrace of the land, an "almost bodily relationship" with it, she says, and grew into a different perspective on the theme: home as something you carry within you, so the figure is both the refuge and the one seeking it.



The dots we can't stop connecting is that jewelry is the most portable kind of home there is: the piece you take with you, the heirloom that crosses borders. So a house built on treasures that travel handing its first award to a sculpture about carrying home inside you akin to a stroke of the heart.

