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Press Release

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Stefania Tejada Enters the Collection of Christian Levett and FAMM Museum with *Magdalena* (2025)

Looking has never been a neutral act.

Every image participates in an economy of power. Images determine which bodies enter visibility, which histories acquire legitimacy, and which remain peripheral. In a culture shaped by constant exposure, images organize belief, desire, and authority. They shape the present.

What does it mean to make an image under these conditions? What does it mean to place a form into circulation at a moment when images accumulate faster than meaning, when narratives compete for dominance, and visibility itself has become a site of power? What responsibility does an image assume once it enters collective space, where it will be consumed, misread, repeated, archived, and folded into the machinery of public life?

It is within this context that *Magdalena* (2025), by Franco-Colombian artist Stefania Tejada, enters the collection of Christian Levett and FAMM: Femmes Artistes du Musée de Mougins. The acquisition marks the artist's second institutional placement and her second acquisition by Levett and the museum. It signals an alignment with a practice attentive to the conditions of the present and willing to remain within unresolved tension.

Commissioned specifically for the FAMM Museum, *Magdalena* is an oil on linen painting measuring 170 × 140 cm. The image gathers spiritual archetypes, inherited memory, colonial histories, technological consciousness, and the artist's interior landscape into a single charged field. The composition resists immediacy. It adopts saturation as a language, mirroring a collective experience shaped by excess information, fragmented attention, and the relentless circulation of images that rarely allow time for reflection.

Rather than simplifying this landscape, Tejada chooses to inhabit it. *Magdalena* does not function as illustration or closed allegory, but as an open system of relations. The work does not argue a thesis. It holds a question. What happens to interior life in a culture that privileges exposure? How does meaning form when experience is continuously intercepted, recorded, and redistributed?

At the center of the painting stands Magdalena. Her presence organizes the image without stabilizing it. She gathers surrounding elements into a field of relation where body, history, spirituality, and public meaning remain in tension. She is not offered as a symbol to decode, but as a position through which these forces pass.

The painting proposes a critical return—to the body as political territory, to spirituality as contested space, to narratives that have historically determined who may know and who may speak. Biblical and Gnostic archetypes appear without reverence. They are dismantled and reconfigured in tension with belief systems that continue to shape contemporary notions of guilt, redemption, and power.

A vertical rhythm runs through the work, insistent without being doctrinal. At its upper register, an entwined couple opens into a moment of ecstasy. Their bodies form a cruciform geometry marked by exposure and illumination. The scene does not signal suffering; it suggests access—a radical openness to knowledge. The bitten apple appears as an act of consciousness assumed collectively. Enlightenment unfolds here as a shared condition rather than an individual privilege.

At the center, Magdalena emerges as apostola apostolorum, a bearer of knowledge historically subject to control, projection, and erasure. Across centuries, her image functioned as a surface for fear, desire, and penitence. In Tejada's painting, this history remains present. Magdalena occupies a threshold where contradiction is sustained and knowledge circulates.

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Around her, faces multiply. They do not assert individuality. The painting suggests that one life contains many lives, that identity is not essence but historical accumulation. The subject that emerges has occupied opposing positions—saint and sinner, colonizer and colonized, victim and agent. The work gestures toward a shared human terrain shaped by movement, transmission, and return.

Symbolic elements surface quietly. A serpent sheds its skin, registering transformation as process. A fragment of mirror reflects the body as structure rather than surface. The feminine body ceases to function as spectacle and asserts itself as origin. The apple appears in friction with its synthetic counterpart. Organic knowledge—slow, silent, interior—encounters manufactured consciousness. The painting questions the replacement of inner orientation with technological systems that organize daily life through commands, notifications, and endless task lists. Experience becomes content. Intimacy becomes extractable. Even revelation can be captured.

Hands enter the image from another realm. They guide. They suggest the act of making itself: a return to interior landscapes shaped by memory, intuition, and association, and the gesture of drawing something back into form. The painting allows this movement to remain visible.

Ultimately, Magdalena insists on a recognition that unsettles fixed identity: that the self has never been singular. The work draws on reincarnation not as doctrine, but as structure—a way of understanding subjectivity as cumulative, shaped by multiple lives, memories, and positions that coexist without cancellation. The figure that emerges carries traces of many conditions, many histories, many ways of being in the world.

Plurality appears here as lived reality. Connection precedes separation. Identity forms through relation, transmission, and continuity across time. Distinct histories remain visible, held together without collapse or erasure.

Magdalena does not resolve these tensions. It asks what becomes possible when the self is understood as layered and shared, when history is felt as something that moves through us rather than something external. Meaning does not arrive as certainty. It emerges through attention—through proximity, and through openness to what has long been present but insufficiently seen.

ARTIST'S NOTE

I think of painting as a way of staying with questions rather than answering them. I am interested in how belief systems—religious, cultural, technological—continue to shape how we see ourselves and one another, often without our consent. In my work, figures carry memory, contradiction, and repetition. They hold multiple lives at once. I am drawn to moments where identity becomes unstable and where inherited narratives can be revisited, reorganized, and felt differently. Painting allows me to return to these interior landscapes and to make visible what usually remains unspoken.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Stefania Tejada (b. 1990, Tuluá, Colombia) is a Franco-Colombian artist based in Paris. Her practice operates at the intersection of symbolic figuration, critical inquiry, and visual culture, examining how belief systems, cultural memory, and structures of power shape identity.

She studied Fashion Design in Bogotá and Monterrey, where illustration and image-making became foundational to her visual language. After relocating to Paris in 2019, she expanded into oil painting, developing a materially driven practice alongside her digital work. She moves deliberately between mediums, treating each as a distinct register of time, circulation, and value.

In 2022, she presented her first solo exhibition in Paris, *The Almighty Feminine*, marking a pivotal moment in her exploration of feminine archetypes and spiritual narratives. Her work is held in major private and institutional collections,

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including the Laurence Graff Collection (acquired through Christie's, 2023), the Turji Akintokun African Art Collection, the De Iorio Collection (Italy), the Christian Levett / FAMM Museum collection (France), and the collection of Princess Elisabeth von Thurn und Taxis (USA/Germany). In 2023, she made her secondary-market debut at Christie's in First Open: Post-War & Contemporary Art, curated by Aindrea Emelife, in support of the Museum of West African Art (MOWAA).

ABOUT CHRISTIAN LEVETT AND FAMM MUSEUM

Christian Levett is a British collector and philanthropist whose practice spans more than three decades. In 2024, he founded the FAMM Museum as a critical intervention into the institutional history of art, dedicated to addressing the historical underrepresentation of women in museum collections.

The FAMM collection spans the 19th century to the present and includes artists such as Frida Kahlo, Leonora Carrington, Alice Neel, Joan Mitchell, Lee Krasner, Marina Abramović, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas, Jenny Saville, and Jenna Gribbon. Within this context, the acquisition of Magdalena situates Tejada's work within a lineage of practices that have redefined the relationship between body, subjectivity, and power.

Stefania Tejada lives and works in Paris, France.
Photography by Cecy Young

Artwork details
Stefania Tejada
Magdalena, 2025
Oil on linen
170 × 140 cm
Commissioned by Christian Levett for the FAMM Museum, Mougins, France

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