

Artist Amanda Coogan
Title *The Fall* (2009)
Medium c-print
Edition 1 of 3
Notes Documentation of 'The Fall',
performed on 25th June, 2009 at the
Kevin Kavanagh Gallery
Purchased in 2015 from The Provost's
Fund for Contemporary Art



b. Dublin, 1978

Amanda Coogan is a leading practitioner of Live Performance Art in Ireland, producing work of major significant value to the development and recognition of Irish Performance Art both nationally and internationally. Her practice is centred upon live durational performances, from which video and photographic documents are made, such as this work. From 1989 to 1992, Coogan studied at Limerick School of Art and Design, earning her diploma there before going on to obtain her degree from the National College of Art and Design in Dublin in 1998. The artist has described the 'painterly quality', visible in the composition and style of her performances, as a direct outcome of her training in Fine Art. Her knowledge of contemporary art and postmodern theories has further enriched her work; 'Snails, after Alice Maher' (2010) pays homage to a fellow Irish artist, while 'I love Beuys and Beuys loves me' (2010) refers to controversial figure Joseph Beuys, and one of his many infamous live art performances.

Following her education in Ireland, Amanda Coogan trained with the matriarch of high endurance performance art, Marina Abramović, who described the work of the Irish artist as being "layered with metaphors and references, and at the same time very confrontational and very tough". Viewed in the context of contemporary Irish art, Coogan's contribution cannot be overstated; in tackling issues of sexuality and religion in our society, the artist calls attention to the oppressive, patriarchal nature of the Catholic Church in Ireland and asserts women's right to bodily autonomy. As part of her 'Madonna Series', Coogan assumed the role of the Virgin Mary; dressed in a light blue satin shirt unbuttoned to reveal her left breast, she was photographed looking down and away from the lens in what might be considered stereotypical 'female' modesty, allowing the viewer to gaze unashamedly at her. According to the artist, the intention of this piece was to create an image which "blurs the line between religious prayer cards and sex line advertisements".

During her career, Coogan's work has been exhibited and performed at the Venice Biennale; Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane; the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA); Liverpool Biennial; Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris; the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam; and

the Niemeyer Centre in Aviles, Spain. Awards and bursaries include the prestigious Allied Irish Banks (AIB) Art prize (2004), the EVA International Award (2002) as well as several grants awarded by the Arts Council of Ireland (between 2002 and 2015). Her work is represented in the collections of IMMA, the AIB Collection in Dublin, the National Self-Portrait Collection in Limerick, Limerick City Gallery, and Trinity College Dublin.

The Fall

In the accompanying statement to this performance, Coogan described 'The Fall' as being inspired by French action painter Yves Klein's photomontage work, 'Leap into the Void' from 1960. For her 'Fall', Coogan was dressed in a bright yellow strapless dress; she circled a large yellow mattress in the centre of the gallery space, climbed a ladder at one end of the mattress and fell from the top, directly on to the mattress below. This series of actions was re-enacted again and again, over a period of four hours. With each repetition of 'The Fall', Coogan's audience were witness to the determination and commitment of the artist to her act. In a literal and symbolic sense, the artist expressed the persistence and belief of performance artists, whose work may be as risky and unorthodox as it is compelling and inspiring.

The information in this article has been taken from www.amandacoogan.com, www.irishtimes.com/culture/art-and-design/visual-art/a-high-risk-performance-from-amanda-coogan-visual-art-1.2339165, and "PERFORMANCE ART." *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume III: Sculpture 1600-2000*. Ed. Andrew Carpenter and Paula Murphy. Royal Irish Academy, 2015.492-95.