

Letter to Johannes, March 1997

Sunday 16th March, 1997

The Lodge,
Knockanemore,
Ovens,
Co. Cork
Ireland

Dear Johannes,

Hello there. Here I am emerging out of the blur of the last month or so. Always one for the epic image, I started out trying to hang 23,000 needles from the gallery ceiling. I found out pretty quick that this was probably several months work and I only had a couple of weeks. At the gallery, everyone was hustled into threading needles and wrapping them on cards. I came back from a rushed weekend in London to find people I didn't know sitting in the cafe threading needle after needle. There was a staff meeting at the gallery where all the staff sat and threaded needles. People on sick leave threaded in their beds. Quite the war effort. I sat afternoon after afternoon measuring red cotton threading and winding. Ten boxes of different lengths. There were tragedies - the young photographer who injured his leg but still sat and threaded 250 needles wrongly, so we couldn't use them. We didn't tell him. And then great frames strung with cat gut at inch intervals, and we begin to hang them. At the weekend, we thread and hang needles as if we are preparing for some great party. A baby in the corner, people laughing. Quietness and then music. Young men turn up and carefully hang hundreds of needles. I am full of my own purpose. I fight sickness nightly - stay at a friends in town, take baths, eat well. Take vitamins. Laugh loudly at breakfast. Little sections of the frame take up my vision, and we fill it out, as we continue blocking ourselves into corners or perched up in the eaves on ladders. By Tuesday there are 5000 needles hanging. We spook ourselves by laying underneath them. They look like warp factor 5. It's so cool. The red thread hangs in the air. If I had more birdies I could make a state which just picked out the needles glinting silver in the air, but I would lose the red and it's the

red I love so much. As I begin to hang the needles I feel overwhelmed by melancholy. This thing that I do with many others. This detailed mournful action. I bring the computer from my office, pick up the old Singer sewing table with treadle, which the keyboard and mouse will be placed on, and set them up. Although the needles and the computer are in separate spaces, the gorgeous sound fills the space; a physical thing. I am nervous before the opening. Pleased that so many of my colleagues have come, and are even game enough to lay under the sculpture. I'm photographed and have to speak. I drink wine properly. I'd never even been to an opening before.

With Love

Jools