

# TINWORKS ART

**Agnes Denes at Tinworks Art**

***Wheatfield—An Inspiration. The seed is in the ground* opens June 2024**



*Wheatfield - A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan - With Agnes Denes Standing in the Field*, 1982. Photo: John McGrail. Courtesy Agnes Denes and Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects

Bozeman, MT— From June 15 through October 19, 2024, Tinworks Art will present a significant new work by Agnes Denes. *Wheatfield—An Inspiration. The seed is in the ground* will be a multi-faceted installation on Tinworks' site in the northeast neighborhood of Bozeman, Montana.

A groundbreaking, internationally recognized figure in the conceptual, environmental, and ecological art movements that emerged in the 1960s and 70s, Denes continues to defy easy classification. She engages science, philosophy, math, linguistics, technology, engineering, urban planning, music, and poetry in visionary works that explore environmental consciousness and humanity's impact on the planet. One of her most recognized and influential works is *Wheatfield—A Confrontation*, from 1982, in which Denes planted a two-acre field of wheat in prime New York real estate in Lower Manhattan. Her artistic and environmental intervention disrupted the normative urban landscape with a rural element, forcing viewers to confront the

contrast between a natural, agricultural scene and the dense, constructed environment of the city. It is widely considered to be one of the first ecological artworks.

In the forty years since *Wheatfield—A Confrontation* appeared in New York City, this is the first time that Denes has accepted an invitation to reposition the work in the United States and reconsider the materiality and symbolism of the wheatfield in another American context. Reimagining *Wheatfield* in this location proved particularly compelling for the artist because of the significant role wheat has played in the economy of Montana, the increasing loss of farmland in the rapid urban growth of Bozeman, and the opportunity to reclaim another valuable piece of land through an artistic ecological intervention.

“I am truly honored that Agnes Denes has chosen Tinworks for the creation of a significant new work.” said Jenny Moore, Director of Tinworks Art. “Agnes was the first artist I thought of in imagining what could be possible as we establish a new artist-centered space in the American West. Agnes has been posing brilliant solutions to the world’s greatest problems for more than sixty years. The breadth of her work and the range of her interests has been deeply inspiring in the consideration of where artists can take us.”

Denes created *Wheatfield—A Confrontation* (1982) in the landfill created by the construction of the World Trade Center; planting, tending, and harvesting the field before the site was developed into Battery Park City. Denes has shared that *Wheatfield—A Confrontation* represented “food, energy, commerce, world trade, economics. It referred to mismanagement, waste, world hunger, and ecological concerns. It was an intrusion into the citadel, a confrontation of high civilization. Then again it was Shangri-la, a small paradise, one’s childhood, a hot summer afternoon in the country, peace, forgotten values, simple pleasures.” *Wheatfield—An Inspiration* (2024), is planted on land once slated for development, but is now being restored through the installation of land-based ecological artworks, beginning with Denes’ *Wheatfield—An Inspiration*. The subtitle, *The seed is in the ground*, refers to the current state of the new artwork, with seeds planted this past fall, to the role of art in the rejuvenation of the land at Tinworks, and also to the seed of a new art space that is Tinworks taking root in the American West. Using wheat as material for the consideration of ecological knowledge, community solidarity, restorative practices, and creative food production, Denes inspires dialog and reflection about humanity’s impact on the environment and the role of art in addressing critical social issues.

For *Wheatfield—An Inspiration*, Denes selected a variety of winter wheat specific to Bozeman, which was seeded on-site at Tinworks in October 2023. As the sprouts go dormant in the winter months, the project expands through the circulation of *Questionnaire*, a work Denes first produced in 1979. Denes is inviting the public to answer questions about humanity that she has posed since *Questionnaire*’s first drafting, as well as additional questions addressing new concerns about artificial intelligence and global warming, *Questionnaire* is not only a compilation of creative solutions but also an opportunity to communicate with the future. While past

iterations have been buried in time capsules with instructions to be opened in 1000 years, Tinworks' questionnaire will offer perpetual engagement, as the questions are made accessible to the public by a QR code included on the plaque that will mark the piece at Tinworks' site and responses continuously saved to the cloud.

Another important component of this new work is the invitation Denes extends to the Bozeman community to participate in the artwork by planting spring wheat "on any fallow piece of land throughout town, in solidarity with *Wheatfield—An Inspiration* (2024)." This participatory element has instigated a partnership with the College of Agriculture at Montana State University in Bozeman. Professors in the Department of Plant Sciences and Plant Pathology will use Denes' artwork as an outdoor laboratory for soil fertility, crop production, and landscape design courses. Additional partnerships are planned for harvest. The wheat will be processed into flour by local small-scale mills, baked into bread by celebrated Bozeman bakery Wild Crumb, and distributed throughout the community. The scope of *Wheatfield—An Inspiration* demonstrates Tinwork's commitment to ambitious projects that provide the space and support for artists and the public to directly engage in contemporary issues and the complex challenges of our time. As Denes explains, "The *Wheatfield* is hope. There is renewal in the seed. We are planting hope."

### **About the Artist**

Agnes Denes was born in Hungary in 1931. Since the 1960s, she has participated in more than 700 exhibitions at museums, galleries, and art spaces worldwide. Recent solo exhibitions and presentations include "Agnes Denes: Early Work," *If the Berlin Wind Blows My Flag. Art and Internationalism Before the Fall of the Wall*, Galerie im Körnerpark, Berlin, Germany (2023); *Agnes Denes: Philosophy in the Landscape*, acb Gallery, Budapest (2023); *Agnes Denes: The Living Pyramid*, Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Sabancı University, Emirgan, Istanbul (2022); *Agnes Denes: Another Confrontation*, CIRCA, London, New York, Berlin (2022); *Agnes Denes: Photos of the Mind, 1969–2002*, Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, ADAA Member Viewing Rooms (2020); and *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*, The Shed, New York (2109). Recent group exhibitions with her work include *Artists Born Elsewhere: Selections from the Museum's Permanent Collection*, University Museum of Contemporary Art, UMASS, Amherst (2023); *The Irreplaceable Human: The Conditions of Creativity in the Age of AI*, Louisiana Museum of Art Humlebæk, Denmark (2023); *Extreme Tension: Art between Politics and Society 1945-2000*, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2023); *Our Ecology: Toward a Planetary Living*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2023); *Can't See*, Sequences Biennial XI, Icelandic Art Center, Reykjavik (2023); RE/SISTERS, Barbican Art Gallery, London (2023); *Groundswell: Women of Land Art*, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2023); *Nature Doesn't Know About Us*, Sculpture Milwaukee (2023); *Dear Earth: Art in a Time of Crisis*, The Hayward Gallery, London (2023); *Coded: Art Enters the Computer Age*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2023); *Adaptation: A Reconnected Earth*, MCAD, Manila (2023); *Pour, Tear, Carve*, The Philips Collection, Washington, D.C. (2023); *Territories of Waste: On the Return of the Repressed*, Museum Tinguely, Basel (2022); *Back to Earth*, Serpentine North Gallery, London (2022); and *The Milk of Dreams*, the 59<sup>th</sup> International

Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2022). Denes has completed many public and private art commissions in the Americas, Europe, Australia and the Middle East, is the author of six books, and has participated in numerous publications. Among several international awards and honors including four National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships and the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, she holds honorary doctorates from Ripon College, Ripon, Wisconsin and Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and fellowships from the Studio for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon University and the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T.

### **About Tinworks Art**

Tinworks Art is a new non-profit art space in Bozeman, Montana. It is a place where contemporary art connects with the American West by weaving together its complex landscape, stories, experiences, and cultures. Tinworks makes possible art engagement in non-traditional spaces, enriching the cultural and social fabric of greater Bozeman and the Mountain West. In 2022, Tinworks Art committed to invest in a permanent home to deepen its connections with artists and audiences, and to center art in this time of change.

Tinworks Art is located at 719 N. Ida Avenue and Cottonwood in Bozeman, Montana. Tinworks Art is open seasonally through the summer and fall. For more information visit [tinworksart.org](http://tinworksart.org).