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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

ART

Agnes Denes

This sui-generis artist has long envisioned—and occasionally realized—exceptionally humane public projects. Her best-known piece is “Wheatfield—A Confrontation,” from 1982, for which the New York-based artist cultivated two acres of grain near the Twin Towers to draw attention to global hunger. In 1993, Denes transformed a gravel pit in Finland into a small mountain patterned with eleven thousand trees, each one assigned its own human custodian. New drone footage of that piece is on view in the expansive, overdue retrospective “Absolutes and Intermediates,” impeccably curated by Emma Enderby (assisted by Adeze Wilford). Two numinous sculptures, commissioned for the exhibition, bring a pair of the artist’s schematic “Pyramid” drawings—a series she began in 1971—into three dimensions. In the first new work, conceived on paper in 1976, thousands of translucent, compostable bricks form a luminous seventeen-foot-high pyramid. In the second sculpture, an electromagnetic model for the 1984 drawing “Teardrop—Monument to Being Earthbound,” a glowing nine-inch-high ellipse levitates like a candle flame above a circular base—a melancholic architectural memorial for our threatened planet.

— *Johanna Fateman*

Through March 22, The Shed.