**Art of Agnes Denes Lesson Guide**

Use these slide by slide notes to follow along with the Agnes Denes powerpoint. Learn more about Agnes Denes by visiting her website: <http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/>

**Slide 1: About Agnes Denes**

A primary figure among the concept-based artists who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, Agnes Denes is internationally known for works created in a wide range of mediums. A pioneer of several art movements, she is difficult to categorize. Investigating science, philosophy, linguistics, psychology, poetry, history, and music, Denes's artistic practice is distinctive in terms of its aesthetics and engagement with socio-political ideas. As a pioneer of environmental art, she created Rice/Tree/Burial in 1968 in Sullivan County, New York which, according to the renowned art historian and curator Peter Selz, was "probably the first large scale site-specific piece anywhere with ecological concerns." [*Source: http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/catalog.html*](http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/catalog.html)

**Slide 2**

**Prompt Question:** Is a tree a sculpture?

Why or why not?

**Slide 3**

*Wheatfield – A Confrontation*, which the scholar and curator Jeffrey Weiss, has called "perpetually astonishing . . . one of Land Art's great transgressive masterpieces" (Artforum, September 2008) is perhaps Agnes Denes's best-known work. It was created during a four-month period in the spring and summer of 1982 when Denes, with the support of the Public Art Fund, planted a field of golden wheat on two acres of rubble-strewn landfill near Wall Street and the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan (now the site of Battery Park City and the World Financial Center). [*Source: http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/catalog.html*](http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/catalog.html)

**Slide 4**

Born in Budapest, Hungary in 1931, Agnes Denes was raised in Sweden and educated in the United States. Since her exhibition career began in the 1960s, she has participated in more than 450 exhibitions at galleries and museums throughout the world. [*Source: http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/catalog.html*](http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/catalog.html)

**Slide 5**

Among her many other artistic achievements is *Tree Mountain–A Living Time Capsule*, a monumental earthwork, reclamation project and the first man-made virgin forest, situated in Ylöjärvi, in Western Finland. The site was dedicated by the President of Finland upon its completion in 1996 and is legally protected for the next four hundred years. [*Source: http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/catalog.html*](http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/catalog.html)

**Slide 6**

A Gift to the Future: Tree Mountain by Agnes Denes | IN THE WORKS | THE SHED

**Video Link: [https://youtu.be](https://youtu.be/nmVFGwNeWcc)**[**/nmVFGwNeWcc**](https://youtu.be/nmVFGwNeWcc)

**Slide 7-8 Tree Burial**

Rice/Tree/Burial was first realized in 1968 in Sullivan County, New York, in a private ritual. It was a symbolic "event" and announced my commitment to environmental issues and human concerns. It was also the first exercise in Eco-Logicï¿½ an act in eco-philosophy. I coined the words to be used this way emphasizing the importance of eco-logical thinking. This work is considered the first ecological realization in public art.

**Slide 9**

A FOREST FOR NEW YORK - A PEACE PARK FOR MIND AND SOUL

A Project for the Edgemere Landfill, Queens, New York © 2014

Agnes Denes-

“Last year I embarked on a project to create a forest in New York on the last open space before it is swallowed up by condos and shopping malls. The area where I planted and harvested Wheatfield-A Confrontation of 2 acres of wheat in 1982 became Battery Park City, a complex of office spaces and condos and the city reversed to its old congestion. The pressure to develop is ever present, more so in a city like New York. In dealing with climate change and environmental necessities, this project magnifies the need for the right kind of development. Cultural and environmental.

My other forests around the world respond to important concerns beyond mere public art projects. Tree Mountain - A Living Time Capsule, the forest in Finland is one of the largest reclamation sites in the world and a Forest for Australia in Melbourne has survived the 6-year draught and is visible on Google Earth.

The place for my forest is the Edgemere landfill in Queens, 117 acres of barren land where I plan to plant 100,000 trees specifically suited to survive in this environment once the soil is prepared. This environmental project also addresses Far Rockaway's public health problems through the positive effects of a forest to remove carbon dioxide from the air purifying it, clean ground water and create a healthy ecosystem through natural biological processes for the whole city and its surroundings.

The importance of this project is not only to help with health conditions but to transform a treeless, barren landfill into a thriving forest. More than merely cleaning the air and ground water, a place of beauty will be created that people will be able to visit and take pleasure in, a destination to give them strength for the challenges of modern life.”

Additional resources:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/07/arts/design/agnes-denes-the-shed-review.html>

**Slide 10: Environmental Awareness Topic: Carbon Footprint**

Personal carbon footprint: the total amount of greenhouse gases (including carbon dioxide and methane) that are generated by our actions.

The average carbon footprint per person in the United States is estimated to be 16 tons per year.

1 ton = 2000 lbs

According to a 2017 report done by the Carbon Majors Database in partner with the Climate Accountability Institute, identified 100 energy companies that are responsible for contributing 71% of all industrial emissions.

The top 15 U.S. food and beverage companies generate nearly 630 million metric tons of greenhouse gases per year (Ceres, 2019).

1 metric ton = 2205 lbs

Although your personal carbon footprint is extremely important to keep in mind, we have to realize that often times, we are being gaslighted or manipulated by large corporations into thinking that we, as consumers, are the main contributors to carbon emissions, and ultimately climate change.

- Disclaimer: we do contribute a large portion of carbon emissions as a whole, but take a look at the bar graph on the right.

- Corporations have a larger responsibility of making sure that they take accountability for their actions and change a lot of their manufacturing processes to a greener alternative. The problem? It’s very expensive.

**Slide 11**

A lot of companies have set goals such as greenhouse gas reduction targets and net zero projections to make them seem more environmentally friendly as more consumers are becoming aware of their lack of effort to become more environmentally friendly.

**Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets:** a goal to reduce emissions by a specific amount by a predetermined date.

**Net Zero Projections**: a goal to balance the amount of greenhouse gas emissions released by an equal amount being taken out of the atmosphere.

Proctor and Gamble (P&G)

A report by the national resources defense fund revealed that P&G contributes to more than 25 million metric tons every single year in order to produce their products. They have pledged to reduce annual emissions by 50% by the year 2030.

However, their mission to do this only encompasses the activities that are happening within their own facilities, but does not take into account the production of raw materials, consumer consumption, and the disposal of these products.

**Slide 12**

The effects of climate change are often detrimental to poor communities. We don’t always see it, but many people lose their homes due to catastrophic events such as floods and forest fires that have been heightened due to climate change. There are droughts and ocean acidification which causes wildlife to be depleted and communities who depend on these resources to also be left without food or source of income.

Take a moment to think about how you’ve been personally affected by climate change, and measure it from a scale of 1-10.

As we progress and turn a blind eye to corporate exploitation and lack fo government intervention, we could potentially be at a 5 or a 6. All the while, the 1% will remain at a 0.

**Slide 13: What Can We Do?**

Vote!

Stay updated on current events

Sign Petitions

Volunteer

Try to reduce before recycling or reusing

Vote for representatives who REALLY want to make a change. It’s not enough to know that they said that they agree that climate change is an issue, we want to see action because words are just words at the end of the day.

Government intervention and the responsibility of state and federal departments are crucial to making changes. No matter how much we recycle, compost, shorten out showers, etc, if the government continues to cut fundings for programs that help nurture environmental progress, and recycling companies continue to improperly dispose recyclables

Even if we hold up our end of the bargain, it’s impossible to make real changes if the other end does not hold up their end.

Stay updated on current events whether it’s current events pertaining to new legislations or bills being passed.

**Sources:**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/22/business/energy-environment/corporations-climate-change.html>

<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/josh-axelrod/corporate-honesty-and-climate-change-time-own-and-act>

<https://engagethechain.org/top-us-food-and-beverage-companies-scope-3-emissions-disclosure-and-reductions>

**Craft Activity:** **Repurposed Tote and Leaf Patch**

**Repurposed Tote Bag**

Old T-Shirt & Scissors to make a no sew tote bag. Follow step by step instructions here: <https://happiestcamper.com/how-to-make-a-no-sew-t-shirt-bag/>

**Left Patch**

2-3 Pieces of Felt Fabric

Embroidery or Sewing Needle

Embroidery Floss or Single Cotton Thread (~1-2 yards

Scissors

Ballpoint Pen or Marker

