



Entertainment

A Once-A-Year, Massive, Megalith Sculpture Garden Opens To Public



Sculptor and Yale professor Edward Tufte has a 234-acre farm in Woodbury that he has spent years filling with his enormous sculptures, which he opens to the public one day a year. This year's date is Oct. 17. [Read story here.](#)



By **Susan Dunne** · Contact Reporter

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One of the most interesting scenic views in the state can be found looking southward from atop Stone Mountain in Woodbury. Never heard of Stone Mountain? That may be because it's not exactly a mountain, but rather an artistic creation by Edward Tufte.

Stone Mountain, on Tufte's 234-acre property, is a field of massive stone megaliths. Standing among the boulders, looking south, a visitor can see a rolling landscape filled with other creations by Tufte: a stone "Tunnel of Love," stainless steel creations in shiny arcs, diagrams and a series of walls, and in the far distance, three gargantuan constructions that look like they're about to shoot off into space.



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One day each year for the past five years, Tufte has opened his property, Hogpen Hill Farms, to visitors so they can see his 80 sculptures, wander his peaceful grounds and meet and talk to him. This year's event will take place Saturday, Oct. 17, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tufte, 73, who lives in Cheshire, is a professor emeritus of political science, statistics and computer science at Yale University in New Haven. He is one of the world's leading experts on information design and data visualization. He has written four books on those subjects and for 20 years has toured the country giving a popular one-day course on presenting data and information.

Tufte (pronounced Tufty) bought the Woodbury land about 10 years ago and has been filling it with his sculptures for years. He creates artworks between teaching travels, and hopes to raise enough money to create an endowment that will keep the land and the sculptures as they are in perpetuity.

In addition to housing the sculptures, Hogpen Hill Farms is a working farm, growing architectural evergreens and ornamental grasses, which can be seen thriving alongside Tufte's sculptural works. (One of these growths, a bamboo maze, is called the "bambouserie.")

Tufte says that science and art have one thing in common: intense seeing.



Edward Tufte, a computer science professor at Yale, is also a sculptor, and has spent a decade filling part of his 234-acre property in Woodbury with his massive sculptures. One day each year for the last five years, Tufte has opened his property, Hogpen Hill Farms, to visitors so they can see his 80 sculptures, wander his peaceful grounds and meet and talk to him. This year's event is Oct. 17 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"So many things we look at today are expressed on flat land, a computer screen. I'm doing a project now called 'The Thinking Eye.' A lot of it is how to see in free space," he said. "We see very well in this computer screen. Can we bring that intensity of seeing out in the real world, in free space? I want to help people see with the same intensity when looking at the glowing flat rectangle."

Along with seeing intensely, Tufte hopes that people who visit his property come away with a sense of quiet and calm. This is especially true of the megaliths. He tries to enforce a "no-talking" rule around the stones.

"Conversation takes a lot of brain-processing power. I want all the brain-processing power devoted to seeing and to staying in the optical experience," he said. "The magic moment, when you first see something, should be silence. It's in the optical experience."

He calls this feeling "vacation eyes." "You know how it is, the first three days you're away you see new things. Then you get used to them and don't see them anymore," he said.

The first sculpture visitors will see is "Magritte's Smile," an aluminum fish inspired by Rene Magritte's painting of a fish on a rock, which will be hanging by the driveway to guide people inside.



Magritte's Smile is a 12 feet long aluminum casted fish which hangs from a tree. This sculpture refers to surrealist artist Rene Magritte and his paintings. (Lauren Schneiderman, lschneiderman@courant.com)

Most of Tufte's works, however, have a scientific element to them. Placed throughout Hogpen Hill are a series of stainless steel constructions based on the diagrams of physicist Richard Feynman, which represent the behavior of subatomic particles.

"I love them because they are like my old work, a visualization. They might be the best visualization done," he said. "They describe very hairy mathematical equations. They also represent reality, an empirical measurement."

Feynman diagrams decorate one of the series of three shooting-into-space pieces, called "Interplanetary Explorer." It features an Airstream trailer perched on the top. Tufte tells a fanciful story about that trailer.

"The Airstream goes way out and discovers extraterrestrial life. It arrives at one of these exoplanets out there. They see Feynman diagrams on the Airstream so they know 'These are pretty smart people, they do subatomic physics'," he said. "Aliens have no

understanding of the NASA logo but Feynman diagrams reflect the laws of nature. They're understandable anywhere in the universe. Chances are all intelligence we discover is smarter than we are to communicate with extraterrestrial beings in a language they understand."

The megaliths, however, are primarily focused on inspiring contemplation.

"When I make them I don't think so much about the stone. I think about the air space between the stone. Air is a material like stone. I'm shaping the airspace."

STONE MOUNTAIN OPEN HOUSE: *Edward Tufte's landscape sculpture park will be open to the public Saturday, Oct. 17, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Hogpen Hill Farms, 100 Weekepeemee Road in Woodbury. (Note: There also is a 100 Weekepeemee Road in nearby Bethlehem. Make sure your GPS has the correct one.) Visitors should wear good walking shoes, as well as sun protection. Guests can bring picnic lunches. Visitors with mobility issues will be offered transportation around the grounds. Admission is free but an optional donation of \$20 per car is suggested. Small versions of some of his artworks will be for sale. edwardtufte.com.*