

DOWN ON THE ART FARM



PHOTOS BY ERIN COVEY REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

'They look different every time you see them,' says Edward Tufte of Cheshire, about the artwork on his Woodbury property.

Hogpen Hill home to 100 sculptures

BY RICK HARRISON
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On a hilltop farm off Weekepeemee Road, a rocket prepares to launch a silver Airstream trailer to Mars. Stonehenge-like megaliths tower in seemingly precarious yet decidedly steadfast configurations. A 420-pound aluminum fish faintly smirks as, suspended by one cable, it bobs and swims above a roadway.

"It's not just playful — it's high art," said Edward Tufte, the artist and owner of Hogpen Hill Farm, home to more than 100 of his outdoor sculptures. "I'm into high art, but not high seriousness."

Tufte retired in 1999, after 33 years teaching politics, public affairs, statistics and computer science at Princeton and Yale. A resident of Cheshire, he purchased the 234-acre Woodbury farm in 2005, seeking to preserve it as open space and a museum for his sculptures.

An expert in the field of



Edward Tufte says he places his giant artwork based on the lay of the land, and its relation to other works on his 234-acre tree farm in Woodbury. Visit rep-am.com to see more photos.

data visualization, Tufte began sculpting seriously about 10 years ago.

"Science and art are both about intense seeing," Tufte said. "Reasoning about what

ONE DAY OF ART

Edward Tufte opens his property once a year for visitors to view his sculptures. This year's open house will be 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. June 13 at Hogpen Hill Farm at 100 Weekepeemee Road. For information, including his artwork and academic work, visit edwardtufte.com.

you see. And acting on what you see. Making something."

He refers to one of his earliest pieces, a massive collection of three undulating metallic "twigs" as "1 percent steel and 99 percent air." Choosing the locations for his installation art requires Tufte to consider each work's location in relation to each other, the landscape, the viewer, and nearby plants and trees.



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Edward Tufte says he considers his changing landscape when he lands another piece of art in his 100-plus collection.

SCULPTURES: Signs tell visitors to ‘Shut up and look’

“I’m very, very lucky that way,” Tufte said of the property. “Most sculpture is on a plaza in front of a monster building. Here it’s all forever landscape.”

He notes that landscape changes every day with the weather, the seasons and the sunlight. He said he likes to photograph pieces in fog, which “calms the air space.”

“They look different every time you see them,” Tufte said. “Not like a painting on a wall.”

On a tour of the property earlier this month, Tufte encouraged a photographer to catch the Airstream trailer rocket ship from the side to capture a break in the clouds revealing a streak of blue sky behind blowing snow.

The rebuilt trailer is fully equipped, Tufte said, pointing out a rotating TV antenna, operating brake lights, and a lawn chair affixed to the side with extra nylon webbing for future extraplanetary repairs.

The attached rocket includes parts from the nuclear Millstone Power Station in Waterford.

He’s not one to muse extensively about the meaning or inspiration behind his work, at least not aloud.

“I don’t like to think like that,” he said. “Because that’s thinking in words. In art, the only language is vision.”

The property includes signs instructing visitors to “Shut up and look” or “If you see something, say nothing.”

Tufte creates the megaliths from stone found on the property, some with the help of Vermont artist Dan Snow. For the biggest pieces, he employs a rigger with heavy cranes.

Tufte’s goal is to create a contemplative sculpture garden featuring the work of a single artist. No yoga classes. No horse rides. No weddings. When Tufte dies, his foundation will maintain the property, raising money from the sale of trees and ornamental grasses.

“The fun part is doing it,” Tufte said. “The foundation can run it.”

And while Tufte is working on a new book and a film called “The



Above, these fish seem to bob and weave above a road at Edward Tufte’s landscape sculpture park in Woodbury. Left, Tufte lives in Cheshire, but his sculpture park has preserved 234 acres in Woodbury as open space.

ERIN COVEY
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Thinking Eye” while continuing to teach a one-day course that has attracted about 260,000 people over 20 years, many of the sculptures re-

main unfinished. Others, just begun.

Some take up to two years to complete, with regular edits and moves to different locations. Some get dis-

mantled for display at shows.

“It’s done when you start making changes that make it worse,” Tufte said.