

PAPER CITY.

Tippet Rise Is the Montana Art Destination Where Music Meets the Wild

By Georgie Miller

Paper City Magazine

September 17, 2026

Inside the Art Center's Founding, Experiences, and How to Plan Your Visit



Here is a scene for you: you're in the middle of Montana, sitting inside a state-of-the-art, wood-paneled music barn, listening to an award-winning pianist play, while a floor-to-ceiling window frames the mountains beyond, Ai Weiwei's *Iron Tree* sculpture standing in the distance. It's a scene almost hard to fathom, and it's entirely by design. This is Tippet Rise Art Center, an expansive, untouched stretch of Montana ranchland where large-scale sculpture and globally renowned classical music come together to form something closer to a visual and performing arts community than a destination alone.

There are outdoor museums. There are music venues. And then there is Tippet Rise, where abstract large-scale art and globally renowned classical musicians [create a world unlike any other](#).

When I arrived to experience one of Tippet Rise's curated performance weekends this summer, that otherworldly scene became my breathtaking reality. In this unique haven, it's clear why Tippet Rise has already established itself as one of the world's premier arts destinations, a place built for experiencing art in a setting so intimate and raw that it changes how you sense the work itself.

Founding Tippet Rise

Tippet Rise exists because founders and passionate philanthropists Cathy and Peter Halstead set out to find land that could become an [intimate epicenter for the arts](#), a place that would bring art, music, and nature into one ecosystem. “We dreamed of this land where art and music could come together to create this community as an inspiring space,” Cathy Halstead said when we chatted at Tippet Rise.



The Domo is one of the outdoor music venue's that creates a raw environment for visitors of Tippet Rise to experience music. (Photo by Kevin Kinzley. Courtesy of Tippet Rise Art Center.)

Fishtail, Montana, a two-hour drive from Bozeman and an hour from Billings, set against the backdrop of the Beartooth Mountains, was the place to do it. Inspired by [Storm King Art Center in New York](#), TICKON in Denmark, and Snape Maltings in England, the Halsteads built Tippet Rise on what was once the Johnson family ranch, with big, bold plans for the land to evolve into an inviting way to experience the arts.

Cathy is an abstract painter and the daughter of [Sidney Frank](#), the entrepreneur behind Grey Goose and Jägermeister. Peter is a pianist, photographer, novelist, and serious Steinway collector. Both followed their creative passions while traveling the world researching other art and music centers to hone their vision. The adorable couple, now in their 70's, can be found bopping around the campus during performance weekends, with Mr. Halstead even hosting poetry readings in between concerts while Cathy passes out cookies.

The Tippet Rise Summer Season

The Halsteads' mission is unapologetically philanthropic and meant to be shared. Concert tickets for Tippet Rise's performance weekends during its annual season are capped at ten dollars, free for anyone 21 and under. Hiking and biking exploring the land are free and sculpture van tours exploring the land are only ten dollars also. Reservations to explore the land and tickets to each concert have become such a hot commodity that the team established a fair lottery system for the many people clamoring to experience it.

Co-directors Pete and Lindsey Hinmon have been with Tippet Rise since the idea was still a dream, working alongside artistic advisor [Pedja Muzijevic](#) to orchestrate the Halsteads' vision and what is now extensive programming for visitors, students, and arts aficionados new and old. Tippet Rise's operations and programming are, themselves, a kind of carefully composed symphony.



At Tippet Rise, abstract large-scale art and globally renowned classical musicians create a world unlike any other. (Photo by Kevin Kinzley. Courtesy of Tippet Rise Art Center.)

Now in its 11th season, summer is when Tippet Rise truly comes to life. Over five weekends running from mid-August to mid-September, Muzijevic, alongside the Halsteads, curates a lineup of renowned musicians from all over the world, with a variety of specializations, skill levels, and practices. Each weekend is a welcoming, unpretentious invitation to those near and far to experience the arts and nature together.

“We get so obsessed with what happens on stage, but what happens in the audience is just as important,” Muzijevic, who joyfully embodies the laid-back approach to fine art, told me. It’s a philosophy that runs through the entire campus: art here is meant to be discovered, not staged.

Chamber Music in the Wild

Tippet Rise is home to several music venues scattered throughout the property. At its heart sits the Olivier Music Barn, timber-framed with acoustics engineered to rival the great performance halls of Europe. Inside, three Steinways (the Halsteads are avid collectors) anchor the room, including an 1890s model and a Hamburg D once used for a 1940s Vladimir Horowitz recording. The property is also equipped with a recording and mastering studio that has captured some of the world’s most celebrated musicians, and Tippet Rise recently launched its own record label to further its mission of fostering the musical arts. It’s all state-of-the-art, but feels so casual.



Clayton Stephenson, an award-winning pianist and notable finalist in Fort Worth’s storied Van Cliburn Competition performing at The Music Barn at Tippet Rise. (Photo by Kevin Kinzley. Courtesy of Tippet Rise Art Center.)

During my visit, I was excited to catch Clayton Stephenson, an [award-winning pianist and notable finalist in Fort Worth's](#) storied Van Cliburn Competition, who set the magical aforementioned scene that sold me on this place.

Scattered across the property are architectural marvels in their own right, like the Domo and the Geode, outdoor performance spaces engineered for acoustics as much as for scenery. “Disrupting expectations of what a concert is” is how Muzijevic put it, and after watching a Rachmaninoff trio perform on a hillside overlooking the jagged Montana mountains, I understood exactly what he meant.

An Intimate Campus, 12,500 Acres Wide

Despite spanning a massive 12,500 acres, Tippet Rise was built to feel like an intimate journey of discovery. Daily hiking and biking reservations are limited to keep the land uncrowded, and concerts cap at around 150 guests. That intimacy is the point. A sculpture that would tower over you inside a museum's walls plays with scale entirely differently against the open Montana sky and mountain backdrop, especially with no one around.

Nature lovers are even welcome to hike to the venues, drop their gear, and take in a performance just as they are. This laid-back, nature-driven approach to such a typically formal type of musical experience is the magic of Tippet Rise.

[More than twenty large-scale sculptures](#) are scattered across the ranch's canyons, rises, and grasslands, making Tippet Rise one of the largest outdoor sculpture centers in the world. Each piece is sited with intention and carefully chosen by the Halsteads, tucked into a fold of land or set atop a hill so that you round a bend on foot or by bike and simply come upon it.

Ensamble Studio, the Madrid- and Boston-based practice led by Antón García-Abril and Débora Mesa, has four permanent structures here, including *Beartooth Portal* (2015; 26' 5 1/2" tall), the *Inverted Portal* (2016; 22' 5 1/2" tall), two rock-like concrete forms that lean toward each other and touch at their peaks, framing incredible mountain and canyon views.



Alexander Calder is represented by two mid-century works, *Two Discs* and *The Stainless Stealer*, both on loan from the Hirshhorn Museum. Mark di Suvero, a dear friend of the Halsteads, has four monumental steel pieces on site, including *Whale's Cry* (1981-1983), most recently joined by *Scythian* (1979-1995), a kinetic piece that moves with the wind.

Richard Serra's *Crossroads II* (1990) arrived by donation, while Louise Nevelson's 44-foot *Trilogy* (1978) and Alexander Liberman's *Archway II* (1984), a 40-foot red steel arch, punctuate the landscape in bright contrast to the native grasses around them. All of the works throughout Tippet Rise lean into the land itself rather than against it.

Planning Your Tippet Rise Visit

There are no accommodations at Tippet Rise itself. Most visitors base themselves in nearby Fishtail or Red Lodge, an easy stopover when traveling through the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

As for what comes next, aside from the promise of new, exciting performance seasons each summer, "We want to deepen relationships, the meaning and impact of bringing accessible art into dialogue with the land, one weekend, one sculpture, and one intimate discovery at a time," the Halsteads say. Their hopes for the coming decades are less about growth than about depth and accessibility.

<https://www.papercitymag.com/culture/tippet-rise-is-the-montana-art-destination-where-music-meets-the-wild-inside-its-founding-experiences-and-how-to-plan-your-visit/>