

Fire breaks out at Chinese dissident-run sculpture park in California desert

It was the second fire in 3 years at the park, which remembers victims of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre.

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Firefighters work to extinguish a fire that broke out at the Liberty Sculpture Park in Yermo, California, Aug. 19, 2024.

Chen Weiming

A fire broke out Monday at a sculpture park in California's Mojave desert that's run by Chinese-American dissident artist Chen Weiming, destroying studios, documents and residential structures – the second time in three years that a fire has engulfed the park.

The Liberty Sculpture Park, which opened in 2017, displays a host of outdoor pieces of art that are generally critical of the Chinese government, including a life-size sculpture of the “tank man” facing off against a tank, commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

Chen said he raced to the park on Monday night after receiving a call from volunteers and arrived to find thick clouds of smoke and fire. The local fire department dispatched as many as eight fire trucks to extinguish the blaze.

The county sheriff and fire department told RFA they are investigating the fire. Authorities have yet to comment on the cause of the blaze.



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