

# Fighting Communism with Art in a California Desert

Artist & Activist Weiming Chen Uses Art to Counter CCP Message, Goals



Entrance to Liberty Sculpture Park, Yermo, California  
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HOLLY ABERNATHY | 03/23/2024

I have no idea what time it is in the remote area of Yermo, California, population 981. My body is on Central Standard Time (CST), my mind on Pacific Standard Time (PST), and it's also the day the clocks change. All my devices display different numbers, although I think it's somewhere around midnight. From the interstate, another set of numbers catches my attention. An illuminated, sizable steel-looking number "64" ascends into a starlit sky over a dark desert area. I take the nearest freeway exit, backtrack a bit, and discover the meaning of the numbers—along with other works of art at the park, the artist and activist responsible for the sculptures, and what these displays are doing out in the middle of the Mojave Desert.



Liberty Sculpture Park is "the world's largest sculpture park with the theme of fighting for democracy and freedom and opposing communist tyranny." In the "64 Monument," the 6 stands for the month of June, and the 4 is the day of the month: June 4—the date of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989. Adjacent to the "64 Monument," you'll find "Tank Man," an unidentified individual—some say his name was Wang Weilin, but that has never been confirmed—with a briefcase in his left hand, a shirt in his right hand, facing down the infamous tank, depicting that fateful day in 1989. There are many other works in the park from "The Chained Woman" to "Chief Crazy Horse" to "CCP Virus I" (what remains) and "CCP Virus II" that I discover early the next morning when I return to investigate further under the light of the rising sun.

I note that "CCP Virus I," a sculpture which depicted Chinese President Xi Jinping as a coronavirus molecule, has been damaged by fire. To understand why, I must first gain some understanding of the artist behind the work. Weiming Chen is the man responsible for the sculptures in the park. Chen, known as a troublemaker to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its government, is a New Zealand citizen of Chinese origin who creates works of art that get the attention of the CCP and government spies. "These spies destroyed 'CCP I,'" Chen says, referring to his first sculpture about the origin of the SARS-CoV2 virus. "My opinion is different than the government's opinion, so they just destroyed it." According to court documents filed by the United States District Court, Eastern District of New York, one of these spies "planned to assume the role of an art broker" so that he could determine locations of Chen's art installations and exhibitions. The spies also had a goal to obtain his tax returns to "publicly disseminate any tax liabilities ... to publicly discredit him." In communications uncovered during the investigations, one spy initially advocated against destroying "CCP I" for fear that would garner too much attention for Chen's art and activist work, "but later advocated for destroying the sculpture." Chen and his friends first discovered that a hole was cut behind the sculpture in order to gain entry into it, and an angle grinder was used to weaken the structure so a car could pull it down. Upon the team's arrival, they found several yards of steel cable still on the ground; they keep it as a reminder. Days later, "CCP I" was destroyed by arson, but the team keeps the remains on display as evidence of what the CCP will do to shut down opposing viewpoints, even here on American soil.



"In China, there is no freedom, there is no free speech," Chen says. "Here in America, you can say anything—Americans are free to speak, but I should tell Western people, the Chinese government has infiltrated America and the world, it's very dangerous. So many people died in China because they want democracy and freedom, like in America, so they struggle, and in China this is a very big and heavy sacrifice. And so many women in China are very miserable, they are like slaves. It's essential that you know this truth. So, I make a sculpture of the social problem, the truth. It's right. My sculptures should say something about this poverty. My sculptures, my art, is a way to communicate truth."

Labeled a terrorist by the Chinese government, Chen says some of his larger works are still on display in Hangzhou, China, but his name has been "scrubbed from them." He has also had a GPS tracking device attached to his car, surveillance cameras placed, and conversations recorded by the spies attempting to infiltrate his organization. I ask him how concerned he is about his personal safety. "I don't care about safety. Everyone will die. Some people may be trafficked, some drink too much, some get sick and die. I'm not scared about when I die. I think before I die, I should have made some kind of choice ... I am very patient, like the French sculptor, Laudin ... they say the truth is beautiful, so now I just make truth. It's right."

Clearly, Chen has no desire to turn away from the truth. The 36-acre desert park is decorated with evidence of his own personal, artistic retaliation against human rights offenses committed by communists over many decades. A volunteer notes that "everyone knows about Hitler and the Nazis and what happened during World War II, but that's not all. There aren't enough volumes for the evils of communism. It kills you. It brainwashes you—and brainwashes your kids—and makes sure they hate you too. This is why we fight—to keep it from happening here in America and we do that by communicating through art and through these displays."

Next on Chen's list for Liberty Sculpture Park is a monument for victims of communism. He plans to underscore the human emotion, particularly in people's faces, expressing the horrors—the truth—of what communism really is in an emotive piece scheduled to be displayed in the park in June 2024.

I may still be catching up from differing time zones and DST, but there are people out in the Mojave Desert in California who understand exactly what time it is in the United States, and alarms are going off for many, but not nearly enough. "So many American people will not wake up. There is big trouble," Chen says. "There's so much propaganda. It's a mental game full of propaganda as much as anything. You also don't understand how bad it can get under the guise of equality. The truth is—there is no equality in China. There's so much propaganda."

The group at Liberty Sculpture Park is deeply dedicated to their cause—"fighting for democracy and freedom and opposing communist tyranny" while educating others through art and activism, sounding the alarm to the deadly dangers of communism. "That's why we fight and do this in California and are willing to face whatever force they send at us—because you cannot allow America to become China," Chen's friend says. "I'm sure you're familiar with Isaiah 6:8 where it says: 'And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"' Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.' Here I am ... and what I intend to do is to keep America from becoming China."

Weiming Chen, artist and activist, and his team continue to speak the truth through art, educating others about the dangers of communism. Liberty Sculpture Park is located just off I-15 in Yermo, California.

The images in this article are © 2024 Holly Abernathy. From the top, they are "64 Monument," the remains of "CCP Virus I," and "Chained Woman." Below are views of "Tank Man."

Weiming Chen, Tank Man



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