

California monolith pops up after finds in Utah, Romania

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A monolith stands on a Stadium Park hillside in Atascadero, Calif., Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2020. Days after the discovery and swift disappearance of two shining metal monoliths half a world apart, another towering structure has popped up, this time at the pinnacle of a trail in Southern California. Its straight sides and height are similar to one discovered in the Utah desert and another found in Romania. (Kaytlyn Leslie/The Tribune (of San Luis Obispo) via AP)

Days after the discovery and swift disappearance of two shining metal monoliths half a world apart, another towering structure has popped up and then quickly vanished, this time from the pinnacle of a trail in California.

After photos were posted on social media, the tall, silver metallic structure drew hikers to the top of the Pine Mountain trail in an Atascadero park, halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, KEYT-TV [reported](#) Wednesday.

The 3-sided, 10-foot-tall, 200-pound [monolith](#) was similar to two others discovered recently in the Utah desert and in Romania. Like those structures, the origin of the California edifice is also unknown.

But by Thursday, the California monolith had vanished, apparently torn down by a group of young men that traveled five hours from farther south to remove it, the city of Atascadero said in a Facebook post.

Video posted online showed a group of young men wearing night-vision goggles toppling what appears to be the monolith before dawn while chanting "Christ is king" and "America First." One man also is heard saying to the camera: "We don't want illegal aliens from Mexico or [outer space](#)."

The men replaced the structure with a wooden cross, which also disappeared. All that was left Thursday of the monolith were few pieces of supporting rebar.



In this Nov. 27, 2020, file photo, a metal structure sticks out from the ground on the Batca Doamnei hill, outside Piatra Neamt, northern Romania. Days after the arrival and swift disappearance of two shining metal monoliths spotted half a world away from each other, another towering structure has popped up, this time at the pinnacle of a trail in Southern California. Its straight sides and height appear similar to one discovered in the Utah desert and another that was found in Romania. (Robert Iosub/ziarpiatraneamt.ro via AP, File)

Police were reviewing the video, The Tribune of San Luis Obispo County [reported](#).

The destruction wasn't appreciated by locals.

"We are upset that these young men felt the need to drive 5 hours to

come into our community and vandalize the monolith," Mayor Heather Moreno said in a press release. "The monolith was something unique and fun in an otherwise stressful time."

"Bummer," Matt Cadaret, a gravedigger at a nearby cemetery, told the [San Francisco Chronicle](#). He had planned to hike up to see the structure.

"It's too bad it's gone," he said. "People were real excited about it. Anything that gets people excited is a good thing."

Another monolith spotted two weeks ago in Utah's otherworldly red-rock country became a beacon of fascination around the world as it evoked the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey" and drew hundreds of people to the remote spot.



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Two extreme sports athletes said they were part of a group that tore down the hollow metal structure because they were worried about the damage the droves of visitors were causing to the relatively untouched spot. Officials said the visitors flattened plants with their cars and left behind human waste.

A structure that appeared last week in Romania is also gone.

The Utah creation evoked famous land-art pieces that dot the West. Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty is an earthwork along the Great Salt Lake and Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels are huge concrete pieces in the desert.

Like those pieces, the monolith was fascinating in part because of its context in the landscape, said Whitney Tassie, a curator of modern and contemporary art at the Utah Museum of Fine Art.

"That's a big, big part of land art in general is this idea of an experience, of a journey," she said.

The intense [social media](#) reaction to the monolith against the backdrop of the punishing pandemic, along with the quick disappearance of the piece, has become a part of its story, she said. Police have said the dismantling may not be illegal since no one has claimed the [structure](#) as

their property.



In this Nov. 27, 2020, file photo, provided by Terrance Siemon, is a monolith that was placed in a red-rock desert in an undisclosed location in San Juan County southeastern Utah. Days after the arrival and swift disappearance of two shining metal monoliths spotted half a world away from each other, another towering structure has popped up, this time at the pinnacle of a trail in Southern California. Its straight sides and height appear similar to one discovered in the Utah desert and another that was found in Romania. (Terrance Siemon via AP, File)

The still-anonymous creator of the Utah monument did not follow steps taken by land artists of the 1970s to secure permission to make their works. Visitation to those remote sites is now managed and overseen to avoid too much stress on the environment. Federal and [state officials](#) in Utah had also expressed concern about the area around the monolith

being overrun.

"It's good to think about our relationship with the earth, which is ultimately what these sorts of projects do," Tassie said. "Man's impact on the environment front and center."

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