

NOBODY GOES TO A PARTY TO WORK ON THEMSELVES.

Yet thousands did. And they kept coming back.

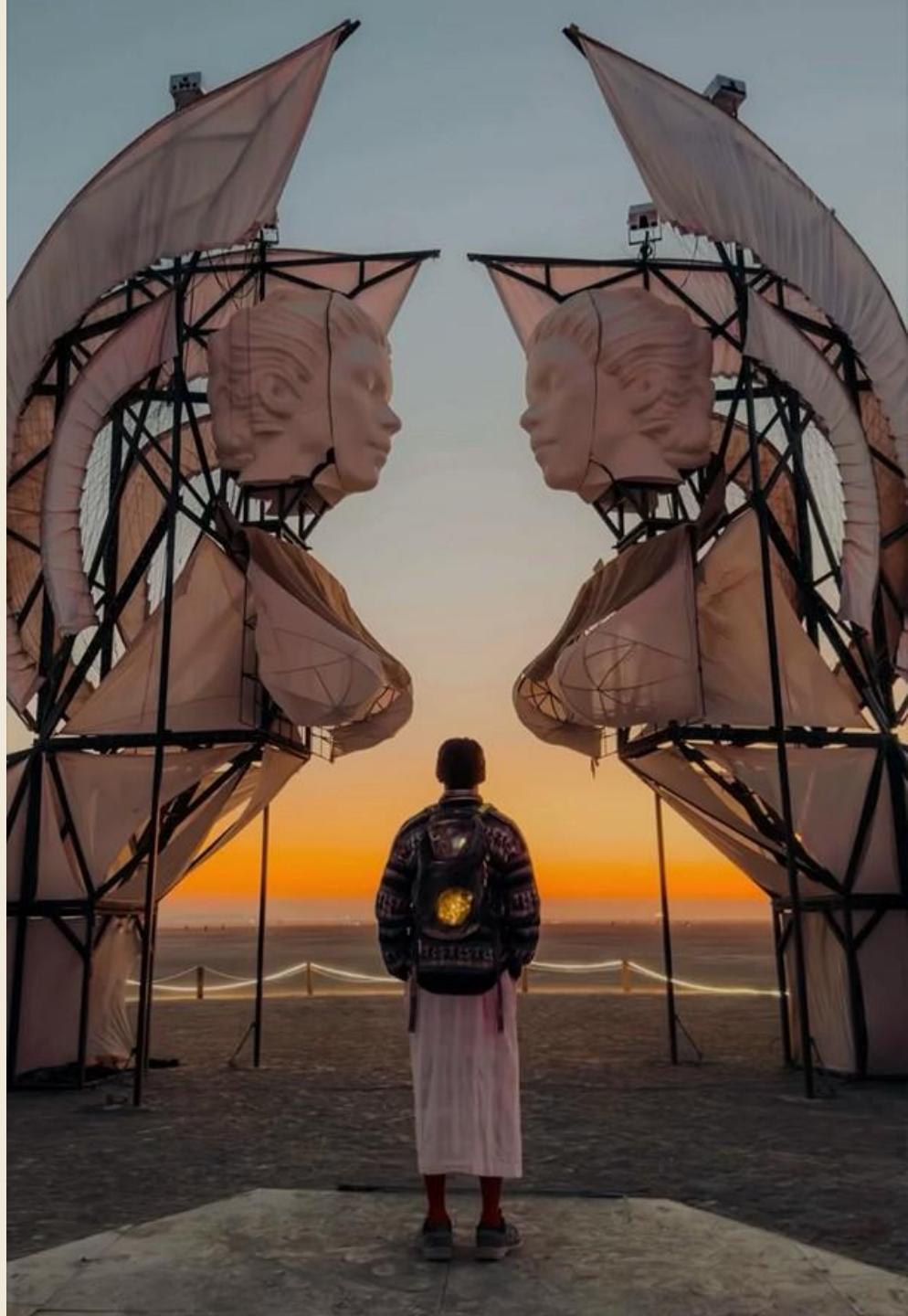
Largest honorarium, Burning Man 2025 · Psychedelic Design finalist · $250,000 raised · 12 activations

We realized we could turn inner work
– from something people typically avoided –
into something people actually want to do.

What if we could bring this experience to people around the world?

“I kept coming back to the Sphinx Gate at Burning Man, each time for a different reason.”

JONAS · BURNING MAN 2025





We invited people into a mystery.
The riddles they discovered were their own.

A magical, communal rite of passage that turned powerful questions into unexpected discoveries.

PART TEMPLE. PART EMOTIONAL GYM. PART QUEST.

THE SPHINX ASKS

What if our hardest thoughts hold some of our greatest wisdom?

Seekers name a difficult thought, explore what sits behind it, and carry the wisdom they uncover between two towering Sphinxes, who guard this threshold.

Mind Name it.

Body Feel it.

Heart Meet it with care.

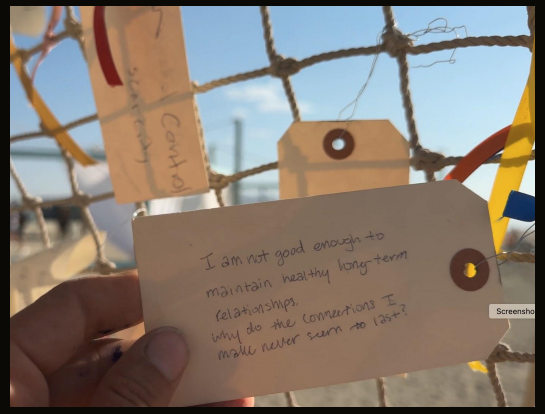
Story Claim a new possibility.

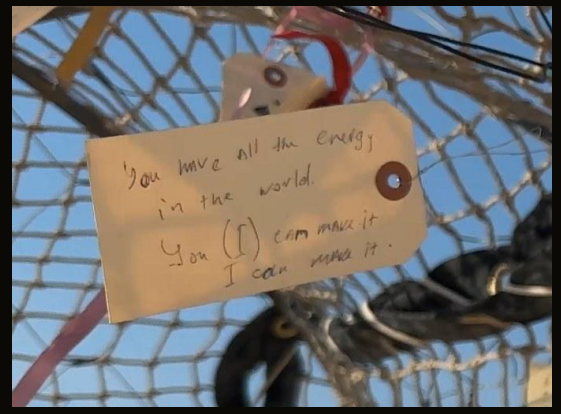
The practice was developed by Mareesa Stertz and draws on Story Catharsis, inner hygiene, embodied reflection and rites of passage. This protocol is the immersive mechanism that drives the experience for the large sculptures, the small portals, and the facilitated ritual. Seekers often describe it as a parallel to a psychedelic journey, no substance required.



People discovered they weren't alone...

After crossing the threshold, seekers are invited to weave in their contribution and then witness the thoughts of those who've passed before them. Many share how cathartic it is to see that they aren't the only one with this struggle.







WHAT HAPPENED NEXT SURPRISED US.

Unprompted reflections, shared on social media in the days after Burning Man.

Maery Edwina
This was suuuuch an incredible experience and piece. Thank you 🙏 so much for this art. As a therapist, I will be integrating aspects of the portal journey into my practice with clients. Gracias por todos!! 🖖



"Somehow, through the steps, I was able to be kind to myself for all of it, to claim belonging and feel like I can be home here." Marianna

Gilad Paz Top contributor
Lisa Katz-Paz and I experienced deep moments of introspection lying down on the mattresses around your beautiful and impressive piece, listening to the sounds from around the Playa converging upon us.

I kept thinking, "how privileged we are to be around art that makes you feel and think in this way."

Thank you for this wonderful gift 🫀

That night I rewrote my story. I saw a childhood reborn, one filled with love. I placed myself in a home by the sea where I was safe and cared for. I realized the pain we carry is so often not the past itself but the story we keep telling about it. We were not safe then, but we are safe now. The weight of yesterday does not need to be carried into today.

Step by step we moved through the gate. With each layer we shed the pain that no longer belonged to us. By the end our doubts and fears had dissolved. And when we stepped through together I felt as though we had become one. And since then we've been closer than ever.–**TheModernArtista**

Ashley Hyde
Thank you for making my favorite piece of the year. This installation changed my life 💗

Jennifer Arenz

Your art installation fixed my brain on the playa one morning. I woke up after sunrise one morning and set out in my bike, solo, to look at art, and I was just in a funk, my brain in a negative feedback loop that I couldn't stop. I came upon this installation, went through the process, and by the time I left, it had completely changed my outlook, and had a wonderful rest of the day. Thank you!!



What if experiences like this could become part of everyday life?

Imagine finding a portal to self-discovery in a park, a town square, an airport, or at a community gathering.

CONCEPT RENDERING · PROPOSED NEXT ITERATION

Most of us were never taught what to do with hard feelings.

Inner work is hard, isolating and expensive, so most of us skip it.

Yet these unattended feelings don't just disappear. They show up in our health, our relationships, and in how we treat each other.

What happens within us shapes how we show up in the world.

And how we show up shapes the world we create.

What is missing is not willingness to do this work. It is accessible, enjoyable, communal places to practise.

35%
higher risk of early death for people who suppress emotion

171 studies
of 252,605 people link trouble managing hard feelings to more aggression

871,000
deaths a year linked to loneliness, roughly 100 every hour

Chapman et al. 2013 · Smith et al., Aggressive Behavior 2025 · WHO Commission on Social Connection 2025



Most approaches to inner work wait until we are in a crisis.

How might the world be a better place if we came to this work proactively, and in play?

We've already taken the first steps.

After seeing the monumental Sphinxes at Burning Man, Everywhen Festival commissioned our first portable Sphinx Portal. We have since run smaller installations and facilitated versions across **12 activations in three formats**.

The first portable design proved the experience could travel. It was also heavier and more cumbersome than we want. The next version needs to be lighter, easier to install, and able to adapt to very different settings.





FEATURED IN Forbes DOUBLE BLIND PSYCHEDELICS TODAY PSYCHEDELICS DESIGN Psychedelic Passage



Meet the next Sphinx Portal.

HOW IT RUNS

The experience takes between fifteen minutes and an hour. It is self-led, and peer support is built into how it runs. Setup takes about half a day with a couple of hands.

WHAT IS NEW

Lighter, more compelling, transportable and scalable. City-ready and indoor-capable, so it can stand on a conference floor as readily as in a park.

Concept rendering, proposed next iteration. Roughly a 40-foot circle with Sphinxes around 10 feet tall, design estimates rather than approved engineering. We hope to debut it at Psychedelic Science 2027 in Denver.

Can a playful rite of passage help us become more self-aware, connected, and intentional?

We are gathering data as we bring Sphinx Gate to new places.

SELF-AWARENESS
Do Seekers find new perspective on their thoughts and patterns?

CONNECTION
Do they feel less alone and more connected to others?

REGULATION
Do they feel better equipped with difficult feeling?

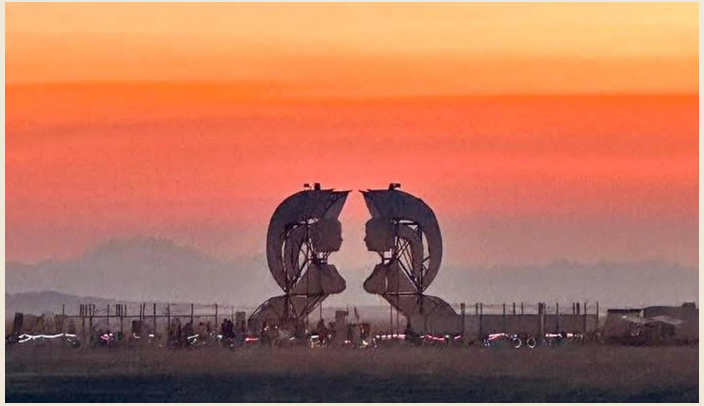
LASTING IMPACT
Does any of it hold weeks later?

We've collected thousands of tags from Seekers who have traveled through our experiences. In the 303 coded so far, roughly three in four complete the four steps and identify a new action or story. **Eric Young** leads research and data collection.

Preliminary data from Seekers who finished, not clinical or causal proof.



One invitation. Many ways to enter.



THE MONUMENTAL SPHINX GATE

The original 44-foot Sphinxes, built for Burning Man 2025, with their final elements still to be funded. The flagship artistic vision.



THE TRAVELING SPHINX PORTAL

A tested prototype, now being redesigned into something stronger and more mobile. This is what we are seeking partners to build.



THE KNOW THYSELF RITUAL

A facilitated rite of passage that runs with no sculpture at all. **Available now** for gatherings, conferences, festivals, and on Zoom.

Experience the Know Thyself itual. Then imagine what we could create together.

Help us bring the next Sphinx Portal to life.

Fund it, build it, refine it, and start testing it in the world.

FUND DEVELOPMENT
Design, engineering, fabrication, transport, production, and the people doing the work.

HOST A PILOT
An activation at your festival, your event, or a public space in your city.

CURIOUS TO LEARN MORE
Let's book the ritual so you can experience it for yourself.

SUPPORT EVALUATION
Help us find out what actually happens, and for whom.

We are raising $40,000 for the Traveling Portal by mid-February.

Any amount moves this forward. $250 buys the tags for a full deployment, $1,000 a day of the build crew. The monumental Sphinx rebuild is a separate opportunity, in the appendix.



We need more places to be human together.

Bring Sphinx Gate to your world.

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ERIC YOUNG
RESEARCH & DATA

November 2026 · Fiscally sponsored by Givsum, a 501(c)(3) · Photography Emily Fields, Jayme Romeio, Ryan Loftus, World Wide Citizens



APPENDIX A

The monumental Sphinx rebuild. Possibly going to Burning Man 2027?

44 ft Tall
Two guardians, winner of the largest honorarium at Burning Man 2025.

Two thirds
Complete, and currently in storage in San Diego.

$250,000
Raised in 2025, against a $350,000 goal.

$160,000
Funds the exterior, legs, haunches & surrounding portals.

A separate opportunity from the Traveling Portal, fundable on its own. Whether Burning Man, or it's own festival, the Sphinxes will rise again!

APPENDIX B

A parallel to the psychedelic journey.

Between the research and the hype, psychedelics have become something a great many people want to try. They are also hard to access, and are not right for everyone.

What they do follow is a recognizable pattern. Something unfaced surfaces. You come into presence with it. You see it from perspectives you could not reach alone. You come back with a different account of it.

We asked whether that arc could be distilled into steps that need no substance, no clinician, and under an hour.

Sphinx Gate is the result.

