

Proposal: The Torii of the Sacred Yes

Introduction: A Threshold to Affirmation



Figure 1. The great Torii of Itsukushima Shrine at sunset.

The *Torii of the Sacred Yes* will be the defining entrance to the new Burning Man camp, *The Sacred Yes*. Standing tall at approximately 12–15 feet, it will draw inspiration from the famous Itsukushima Shrine in Japan, scaled to a size both monumental and approachable for participants. Like the great Torii rising from the waters of Hiroshima Bay, this Torii will mark a threshold between two realms: the world of the ordinary and the world of possibility.

The placement of the Torii at the entryway to the camp serves as a literal and metaphorical passage. To step through it is to move into a space that affirms life in all its complexity—joys, sorrows, beauty, and imperfection. It announces to all who enter that this camp is rooted in both art and care, in creativity and harm reduction, in reverence for human experience and irreverence for convention.

Symbolism: Shinto Meets Nietzsche

In Shinto, a Torii marks the transition from the profane to the sacred. Passing beneath one is to cross from the everyday world into a realm where the sacred reveals itself. It is not the gate itself that is sacred—it is the act of passage, the threshold, that reorients the visitor.

Friedrich Nietzsche, in his philosophy of affirmation, spoke of the *sacred yes*: the deep affirmation of life with all its contradictions, imperfections, and cycles of joy and suffering. It is a radical embrace of existence, saying yes not only to the easy and pleasurable but to the whole of life.

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The Torii of the Sacred Yes unites these traditions. It is both a Shinto threshold and a Nietzschean invitation. To pass through is to embody the sacred yes—to accept life fully, in all its messiness, beauty, and truth.

Visual Design and Participant Experience



Figure 2. Torii illuminated in Twilight, an inspiration for nighttime lighting design.

The Torii will mirror the iconic vermilion form of Itsukushima, with two tall supporting pillars joined by a horizontal lintel beam, capped with slightly curving crossbars. Its dimensions will allow for a clear passageway of 10–12 feet, wide enough for participants and small art carts to pass beneath with ease.

- **Daytime Experience:** During the day, the Torii will stand as a vivid, visible landmark. Its warm color—burnt orange or red—will contrast with the pale desert horizon. Visitors will see it from a distance and feel drawn toward it, recognizing it as a marker of both art and sanctuary.
- **Nighttime Experience:** At night, the Torii will be illuminated with carefully placed LEDs. Soft, indirect uplighting will make the pillars glow, while programmable LED strips on the crossbeam can create slow, meditative pulses of light—breathing patterns that mirror the rhythm of life itself. Hidden solar-powered lanterns can give the impression of floating firelight, recalling the Torii rising from the water.

As participants approach, they will sense that this is more than an entry—it is an artwork, a ritual passage, and a beacon. It will become a landmark for wayfinding and a place of gathering, reflection, and transition.

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Invitation Text

At the base of the Torii, small signs (weather-resistant, reusable panels) will welcome participants:

*Welcome to The Sacred Yes.
To pass beneath this Torii is to affirm life in all its fullness—
its joy, its sorrow, its beauty, and its imperfection.
Step through with intention, and enter a world of art, care, and co-creation.
Say Yes to life. Say Yes to yourself. Say Yes to others.
This is the Sacred Yes.*

Structural Design and Safety

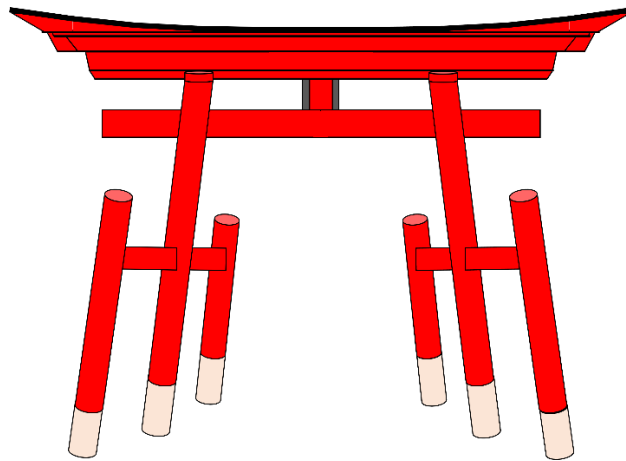


Figure 3. Conceptual structural sketch of the Sacred Yes Torii, showing pillars, beams, and anchoring.

A structure of this size must withstand the harsh conditions of the Black Rock Desert, including 70 mph winds. The Torii can be built with modular, reusable materials:

- **Frame:** Structural steel tubing or laminated wood beams for strength and portability.
- **Anchoring:** Deep auger anchors (36–48 inches into the playa) at each pillar, cross-braced with steel cables disguised within the design. Anchors will be reusable and engineered to withstand high lateral loads.
- **Joinery:** Bolted steel plates or interlocking joints allow for disassembly and reuse each year.
- **Finish:** Painted with UV-resistant coatings in traditional vermilion, with weatherproof sealant to prevent cracking or fading.

Each component will be designed to break down into transportable sections, with assembly achievable in less than a day by a crew of 6–8 people.

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Longevity and Reuse

The Torii will not be a one-year project but a reusable, evolving landmark for The Sacred Yes. Stored carefully off-playa and maintained annually, it will grow in meaning and memory each year, becoming a recognized symbol of the camp's ethos. As the camp grows, the Torii will embody its permanence, resilience, and vision.

Alignment with Camp Mission

The Sacred Yes seeks to balance art and harm reduction, gifting and sovereignty. The Torii embodies this balance:

- **As Art:** It is a monumental sculpture, both beautiful and symbolic.
 - **As Sanctuary:** It marks the threshold into a space where participants can receive hydration, rest, and education—including fentanyl testing and harm reduction.
 - **As Invitation:** It calls people to say yes to life, to enter a co-creative community, and to align with Burning Man's principles of radical self-expression and communal care.
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Conclusion: An Irresistible Gateway

The *Torii of the Sacred Yes* will be more than an entry—it will be a landmark, a spiritual threshold, a beacon, and a gathering place. It will unite the profound symbolism of Shinto with Nietzsche's affirmation of life, translated into the aesthetic and ethos of Burning Man.

Each participant who passes through it will feel invited into a world that is both grounding and inspiring, practical and transcendent. As a durable, reusable artwork, it will anchor the identity of The Sacred Yes camp for years to come.

This Torii is not just a structure. It is an irresistible vision waiting to be built—a monument to art, affirmation, and care.