

CAUX ARTS AND PEACE ENCOUNTERS

12-14 May 2025
 Caux Palace, Switzerland

Reaffirming the transformative power
 of the arts in building peace



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THE CAUX PALACE: A LIVING INVITATION

Come, let me tell you a little about myself.

I am the Caux Palace.

I have stood for over a century high above the shining waters of Lake Lemán, embraced by the mountains and the endless sky.

Once, I was a place of grandeur — a grand hotel where travellers from every corner of the world came to celebrate life's beauty.

My halls knew laughter, music, elegance...

And then they knew silence, sorrow, and the long shadows of war.

My windows stood empty. My great halls fell silent.

Even in that silence, I bore witness to a depth of human suffering few can imagine — etched deep into my foundations.

I became a haven for those who had survived humanity's darkest impulses — a brutal reminder of how far hatred can go when compassion fails, and how such darkness is never confined to one time or place.

They arrived bearing the weight of unspeakable loss, yet within them stirred the will to live, to heal, to begin again.

It is they — the refugees, the displaced, the broken and brave — who consecrated me, not with ceremony, but with the raw truth of survival.

In receiving them, I became more than a palace. I became a refuge.

It might have been the end of my story — but it wasn't. I was not forgotten.

People who believed in new beginnings found me, broken though I was.

They patched my wounds, lit my fireplaces once more, and filled me not with luxury, but with hope and renewal.

Here, within my walls, they planted seeds of trust where distrust had reigned... and they dared to believe that change could start with a single soul.

In my halls, enemies have become friends. Leaders have found courage. Wounded hearts have dared to hope again.

If you ask me what truly changes the world, I will tell you: it is what happens inside the human heart.

Before treaties, before headlines, there is a moment — silent, often painful — when a man or a woman chooses to change. To forgive. To take a step they thought impossible.

I have witnessed thousands of these hidden victories. They are the true foundation stones of peace.

I am a bridge between past and future, between pain and promise.

Every creak of my floorboards, every sunbeam through my vast windows, carries the memory of those who believed a better world was possible — and made it so.

Inner transformation is not a dream whispered in my corridors — it is the very foundation of every new beginning that has taken root within my walls.

And oh, how the arts have been my companions on this journey.

Through music, theatre, poetry, and storytelling, I have seen hearts soften, imaginations awaken, and walls come down.

The arts are the language of the soul, reaching places that reason alone cannot touch.

Here, a simple song, a shared story, a painted canvas, have often done what speeches could not: they have opened the way to understanding.

I am not just stone and concrete, timber and glass.

I am a living invitation: come as you are, meet the stranger, listen to your own soul, and become part of the story.

I am a gathering place for those who believe that change begins within — and that creativity, courage, and compassion are its truest companions.

And if you listen closely, beyond the noise of the world, you will hear me speaking still — calling you to be part of the next chapter.

Sarah Noble and ChatGPT, Andrew Stallybrass, 10.05.2025

ABOUT THE CAUX ARTS AND PEACE ENCOUNTERS

We have witnessed the highest levels of violent conflict since World War II. Dialogue and non-violent solutions are more urgent than ever. In this global crisis, creativity, culture, and the arts emerge not as luxuries, but as lifelines—offering empathy, healing, and human connection.

Peacebuilding, as described by scholar John Paul Lederach, is not merely technical; it's imaginative, deeply human, and profoundly creative. Solutions to complex conflicts demand new ways of seeing—and creativity and culture give us those lenses.

The profound link between culture, the arts and peace has been recognized by the 194 member states of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development that recognized culture as a “global public good” and affirmed that “culture, as a global and strategic resource, has a fundamental role in peacebuilding and reconciliation.” The declaration called for a stronger focus on cultural and artistic approaches in public policy, education, and international cooperation.



Photo: Adrien Giovannelli

Caux's Arts and Peace Encounters is part of a growing recognition of the importance of placing creative, cultural, and artistic practices at the heart of conflict transformation and efforts to build peace.

The Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation, based in Caux, Switzerland, is part of the broader Initiatives of Change (IofC) global movement, which seeks to foster trust, ethical leadership, and sustainable change in society. Its mission centers around promoting peace, reconciliation, and social transformation through dialogue, trust-building, and personal responsibility.

Throughout its nearly 80-years history, the arts have been part of Initiatives of Change's DNA. Over the years Caux programming has fostered a network of people who share the belief that different forms of arts can be positive and powerful forces for change both in personal lives and in the world at large.

The Caux Arts and Peace Encounters is building on this legacy. A soft launch and benefit concert was held with world-renowned pianist Khatia Buniatishvili in May 2024 at Caux to support this work.

It's a three-year journey—uniting artists, peacebuilders, diplomats, and policymakers to explore how creativity can help transform conflict and restore humanity. It includes an annual residential event in Caux, Switzerland, sessions during Geneva Peace Week, and planned ongoing online engagement. These Encounters serve as a space for reflection, collaboration, and the co-creation of innovative strategies for peace through artistic practice.

The inaugural event, held from May 12–14, 2025, welcomed 55 participants from around the world. The program featured masterclasses, panels, performances, and workshops across disciplines such as music, movement, visual arts, and storytelling. The initiative is grounded in a theory of change.



Over the next three years, the Caux Arts and Peace Encounters will:

- Convene an in-person residency in Caux in 2026 and 2027
- Elevate creativity, culture, and the arts as central tools for peace—not side notes in international forums on peace and security such as the Geneva Peace Week.
- Serve as the foundation for building a sustained international community of cultural peacebuilders and artist-activists.
- Equip participants with practical, cross-cultural methods for their communities and work.



PROGRAMME

DAY I: 12 MAY

17:00-18:00

WELCOME TO CAUX & INNER TRANSFORMATION, OUTER ACTION: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INITIATIVES OF CHANGE APPROACH

18:00-19:00

DINNER

19:15-21:00

STAGE FOR CHANGE: THEATRE, DIALOGUE AND HEALING IN CONFLICT ZONES

21:00-22:00

TEA TIME

DAY II: 13 MAY

07:00-07:30

GREETING THE DAY CEREMONY

07:30-08:30

BREAKFAST

09:00-10:30 Main Hall, Caux Palace

PLENARY: WHAT IS ARTS AND PEACE AND WHY?

10:30-11:00 , Main Hall, Caux Palace

TEA/ COFFEE BREAK

11:00-12:00, Belle Epoque, Caux Palace

WORKSHOP: MUSICKING TOGETHER

12:00-13:00

LUNCH

13:15-14:15

COMMUNITY GROUPS

14:30-16:00 , Belle Epoque

MASTERCLASS: PEACEBUILDING THROUGH THE ARTS—NO ARTISTIC BACKGROUND REQUIRED

15:00-16:30, Main Hall

TEA/ COFFEE BREAK

16:30-18:00, Belle Epoque

WORKSHOP: EXPLORING BOUNDARIES AND PEACE THROUGH EXPRESSIVE ARTS

18:00-19:00

DINNER

19:00-21:30 , Theatre

HARMONY BEYOND BORDERS: AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND DIALOGUE FOR PEACE

21:30-22:30, Belle Epoque

TEA TIME

DAY III: 14 MAY

07:00-07:30

GREETING THE DAY CEREMONY

07:30-08:30

BREAKFAST

08:30-09:00

INNER REFLECTION

09:00-10:30, Main Hall

DANCE PERFORMANCE BY DALIA ESTERER, DANCE AND ART THERAPIST, AND ANTONIO PERUJO, FLAMENCO DANCER

PLENARY: ARTS AND HEALING

10:30-11:00, Main Hall

TEA/ COFFEE BREAK

11:00-12:00

COMMUNITY GROUPS

12:00-13:00

LUNCH

13:15-14:45

THE ARTS AS ICEBREAKER: BRIDGING PERSPECTIVES FOR ARCTIC AND GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

14:45-16:00

COMMITMENTS AND CLOSING SESSION

WELCOME TO CAUX & INNER TRANSFORMATION, OUTER ACTION

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INITIATIVES OF CHANGE APPROACH

The inaugural Caux Arts and Peace Encounters began with a warm welcome from Sarah Noble, Head of Global Engagement at the Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation, and Ignacio Packer, Executive Director of the Foundation. Together, they greeted participants and reflected on the importance of personal transformation as the foundation for global change.

The opening performance featured Hyung Joon Won, a South Korean violinist who is trying to form a sustainable Inter-Korean Orchestra after establishing a successful joint concert between North and South Korea in China and Sweden in 2019.

This was followed by an interactive session led by medical doctor and musician Tristan Kaufmann, who guided participants through rhythm, movement, and a unique language of signs — a musical communication system developed by Argentine musician Santiago Vázquez.

Beyond music, participants engaged their voices and bodies as instruments for building empathy, trust, and connection. Through each rhythm, they explored how to support soloists, mirror group dynamics, and navigate the delicate balance between individual expression and collective harmony.



Sarah Noble and Ignacio Packer



Tristan Kaufmann



Musical performance by Hyung Joon Won, South Korean violinist

“

“We come together not by title, but as humans. We are here for human connection, co-creation, and moments that invite us to slow down, listen, and truly engage.”

“

“Art is a way to express emotions, metaphors, symbols... It’s part of making the world more peaceful.”

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND GREETING THE DAY CEREMONY

A defining element of in-person gatherings in Caux are Community Groups — small circles where participants come together to share their experiences, concerns, and hopes. In these conversations, barriers dissolve and genuine connections emerge, allowing people to listen deeply, reflect together, and support one another in their personal and collective journeys toward peace.

Each morning began with the Greeting of the Day Ceremony, a tradition that invites participants to welcome the new day with intention. Guided by Indigenous leader Lewis Cardinal, the ceremony honored ancestral wisdom through Indigenous practices that reminded everyone of our shared relationship with the Earth and with one another

“

Quiet the mind, get in touch with who you are again. Listen to that inner voice. It's about being in balance and being in relationship to what is around you and what we are connected to. We all stand in a great circle of life, and we need to hear each other.

STAGE FOR CHANGE: THEATRE, DIALOGUE AND HEALING IN CONFLICT ZONES

Introduction:

Anne-Catherine SUTERMEISTER, Head of Community Engagement Switzerland, Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation.

With:

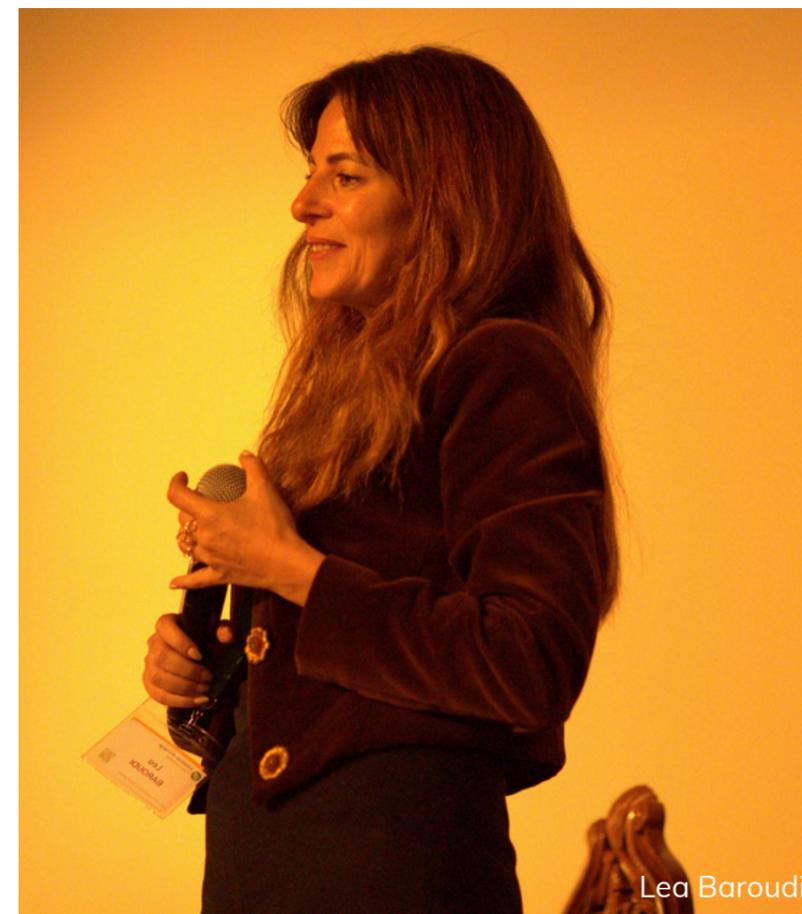
- Lea BAROUDI, Founder and Director of March Lebanon
- Michel ABOU KHALIL, PhD, Director of Swiss Made Culture

Featuring the documentary “Love and War on the Rooftop in Lebanon”, Lea Baroudi highlighted MARCH’s impactful use of theatre as a tool for reconciliation—one of the core pillars of its rehabilitation and peacebuilding programs.

Through this approach, former fighters and ex-convicts from opposing communities in Tripoli have embarked on transformative journeys toward healing and coexistence.



Michel Abou Khalil & Lea Baroudi



Lea Baroudi

“

You saw in me a power that I didn't see in myself.

This moving testimony from a young participant continues to resonate with Lea Baroudi, reflecting the impact of her peacebuilding initiative that harnesses theatre as a tool for change and conflict resolution.

It is a reminder that arts can be a powerful catalyst for personal transformation and social healing.

WHAT IS ARTS AND PEACE AND WHY?

Welcome Address:

- Francois BARRAS, Council Member, Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation

Plenary Discussion:

- Alexandre FASEL, Secretary of State Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland.
- Kathy JETNIL-KIJNER, poet and climate change activist, Marshall Islands Climate Envoy for the Marshall Islands Ministry of Environment.
- Karim WASFI, Cellist, Composer and Conductor, Iraqi State Symphony
- Lisa YASKO, Ukraine, Member of Parliament.

Plenary Moderator:

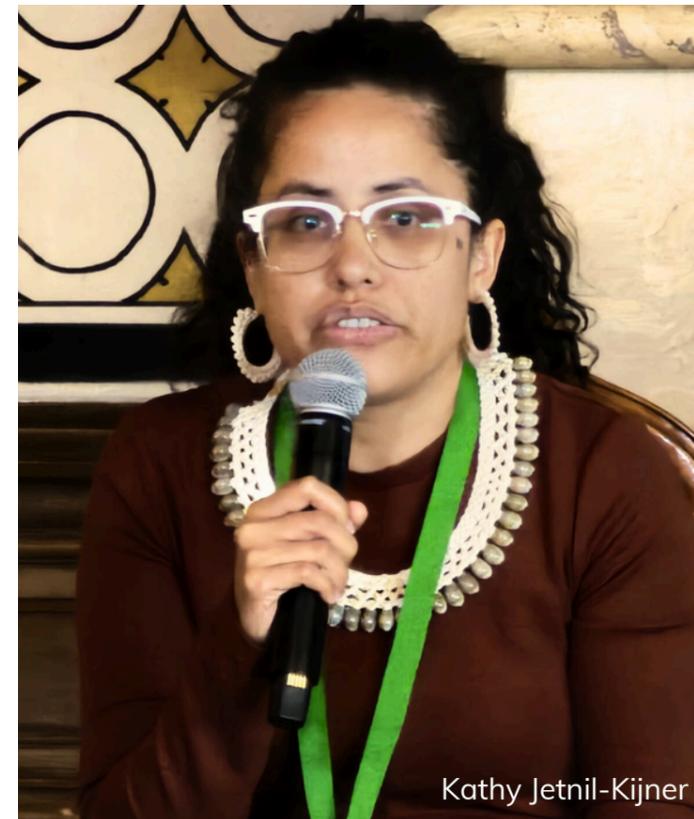
- Sarah NOBLE, Head of Global Engagement, Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation

This plenary brought together diplomats, activists, and artists from Switzerland, Ukraine, Iraq, and the Marshall Islands to explore the intersection of arts and peace. The discussion highlighted the power of personal stories in shaping peacebuilding efforts and examined both the strengths and challenges of promoting peace through artistic practice.

In his welcome address, François Barras highlighted the symbolic significance of holding a dialogue on arts and peace in Caux, a place long associated with artistic expression as a vehicle for social transformation. He recalled the organization's tradition of using theatre and musicals to communicate its values worldwide, emphasizing arts' unique ability to foster community, awareness, and dialogue in conflict settings. Before introducing Alexandre Fasel, Barras also noted the growing academic interest in arts' role in mediation.



Alexandre Fasel



Kathy Jetnil-Kijner

Following this introduction, Swiss Foreign Affairs Minister Alexandre Fasel reflected on his exploration of how artistic practice can enrich conflict mediation. Drawing parallels between artists and mediators—both navigating uncertainty and fostering understanding—he proposed that art could be applied not only in peacebuilding but also earlier, during conflict transformation itself.

Building on these reflections, Kathy Jetnil-Kijner, a poet and climate activist from the Marshall Islands, shared her work at the intersection of climate change and the nuclear legacy left by U.S. weapons testing. As a climate envoy, she represents her country in international negotiations and helps shape advocacy strategies. She underscored the existential threat facing the Marshall Islands—only two meters above sea level—and how poetry and traditional arts help her community, especially youth, process climate grief.

Her message called for global solidarity, asserting that frontline communities deserve respect, justice, and urgent action.

To illustrate her message, Kathy presented a 2015 video poem—“Rise: From One Island to Another”—created with Greenlandic poet Aka Niviâna, linking the melting ice of Greenland with the rising seas of the Marshall Islands—a powerful expression of shared struggle, ancestral connection, and a plea for global action.

Continuing the discussion on art as a force for resilience, Karim Wasfi, founder of Peace Through Arts, shared his experience using music as a form of cultural diplomacy, healing, and resistance in conflict zones.

Performing in regions affected by war, such as Iraq and Lebanon, he uses music not as entertainment but as a tool for psychological and social restoration. Through his organization, Karim advocates for access to the arts as a human right, positioning artists as essential agents in rebuilding societies.



I'm sure we are onto something, but we have to react.



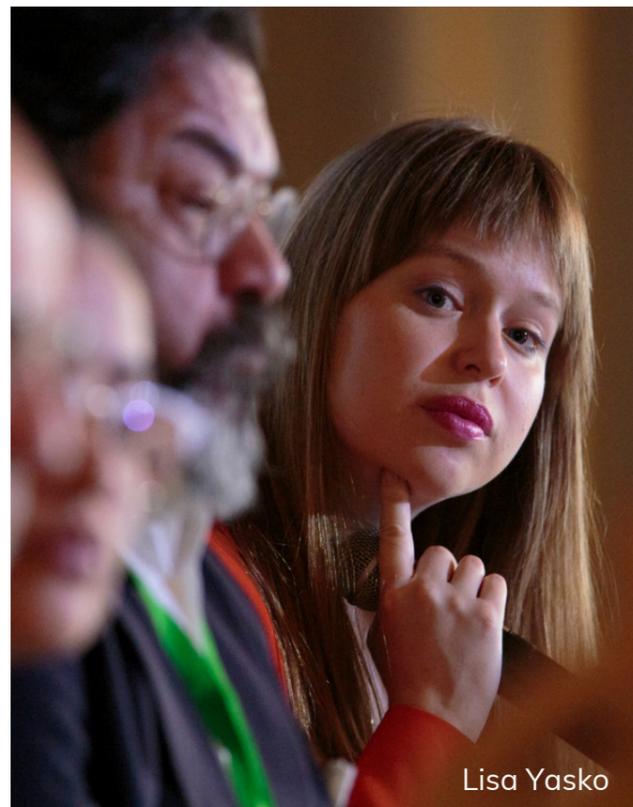
Karim Wasfi



We see the arts as a really important practice for helping [young people] process [climate grief].

Concluding the panel, Lisa Yasko, a Ukrainian politician and musician, reflected on her dual role as an artist and human rights advocate. She spoke of Ukraine’s ongoing struggle for sovereignty, illustrating how art and music serve as vital tools for cultural diplomacy, healing, and preserving identity during wartime.

In closing, Sarah Noble reaffirmed the transformative power of the arts in conflict mediation, cultural diplomacy, and community healing. Participants agreed that art is not a peripheral pursuit but a fundamental human need—one that nurtures empathy, preserves cultural identity, and rebuilds fractured societies. The discussion underscored the importance of trust, collaboration, and shared purpose in harnessing art’s unifying potential.



Lisa Yasko



Access to the arts is not a luxury; it is a human right.



Sarah Noble, Alexandre Fasel, Kathy Jetnil-Kijner, Claudia Meier

“MUSICKING” TOGETHER

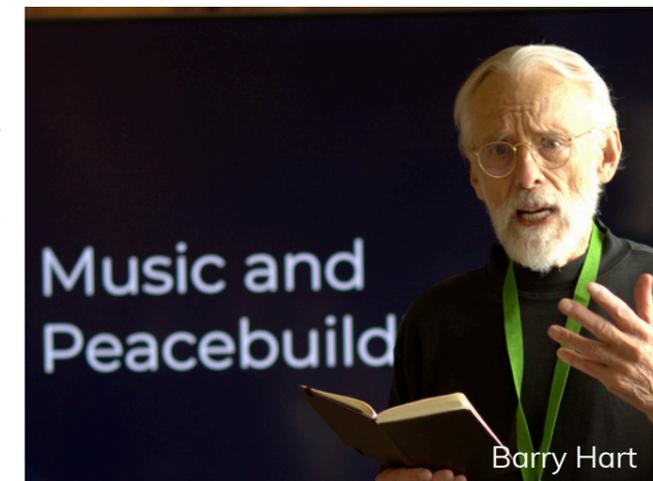
Welcome Address:

Barry HART (USA), Professor of Trauma, Identity and Conflict Studies, Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University

Workshop Organizer:

Benjamin BERGEY (USA) – Educator, Conductor and Peacebuilder

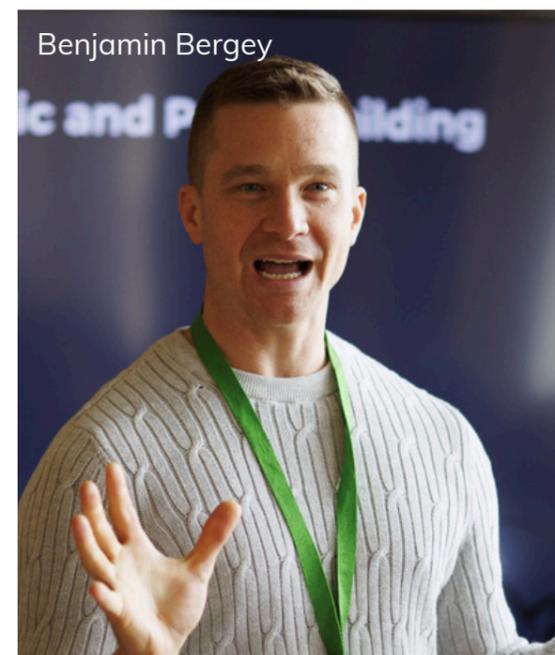
The session was introduced by Barry Hart and led by Benjamin Bergey, an educator, conductor, and peacebuilder. The workshop was designed to demonstrate, explore, and experience the power of making music together as a means of creating shared experiences and common ground. Bergey emphasized that to fully harness the peacebuilding potential of collective music-making, careful and intentional facilitation is essential. The space was open and inclusive, welcoming participants of all backgrounds — no prior musical experience required.



Barry Hart

In his workshop, Benjamin Bergey explored the power of collective music-making—what he calls “musicking”—as a tool for connection and peacebuilding. He began by noting that singing is a deeply vulnerable act: using one’s voice in front of others reveals something personal and authentic. Yet, when people sing together, that vulnerability transforms into a shared human experience, creating a space of inclusion, safety, and connection — free of judgment.

Benjamin Bergey



Bergey outlined four key ways music contributes to peacebuilding:

- **Music Creates Common Ground:** It transcends language, culture, and belief, offering a shared experience where everyone belongs.
- **Music Builds Empathy:** Singing and playing together engage both emotion and intellect, helping individuals feel and understand one another beyond words.
- **Music Opens Space for Dialogue:** By fostering trust and openness, music gently dismantles barriers and allows authentic conversation to emerge.
- **Music Meets Needs and Breaks Cycles of Oppression:** Collective music-making meets emotional and communal needs, empowering participants and supporting healing from trauma and marginalization.

While music alone does not solve conflict, it creates the conditions for transformation. Through intention, repetition, and shared presence, “musicking” nurtures empathy, trust, and hope — the essential foundations for sustainable peace.

PEACEBUILDING THROUGH THE ARTS

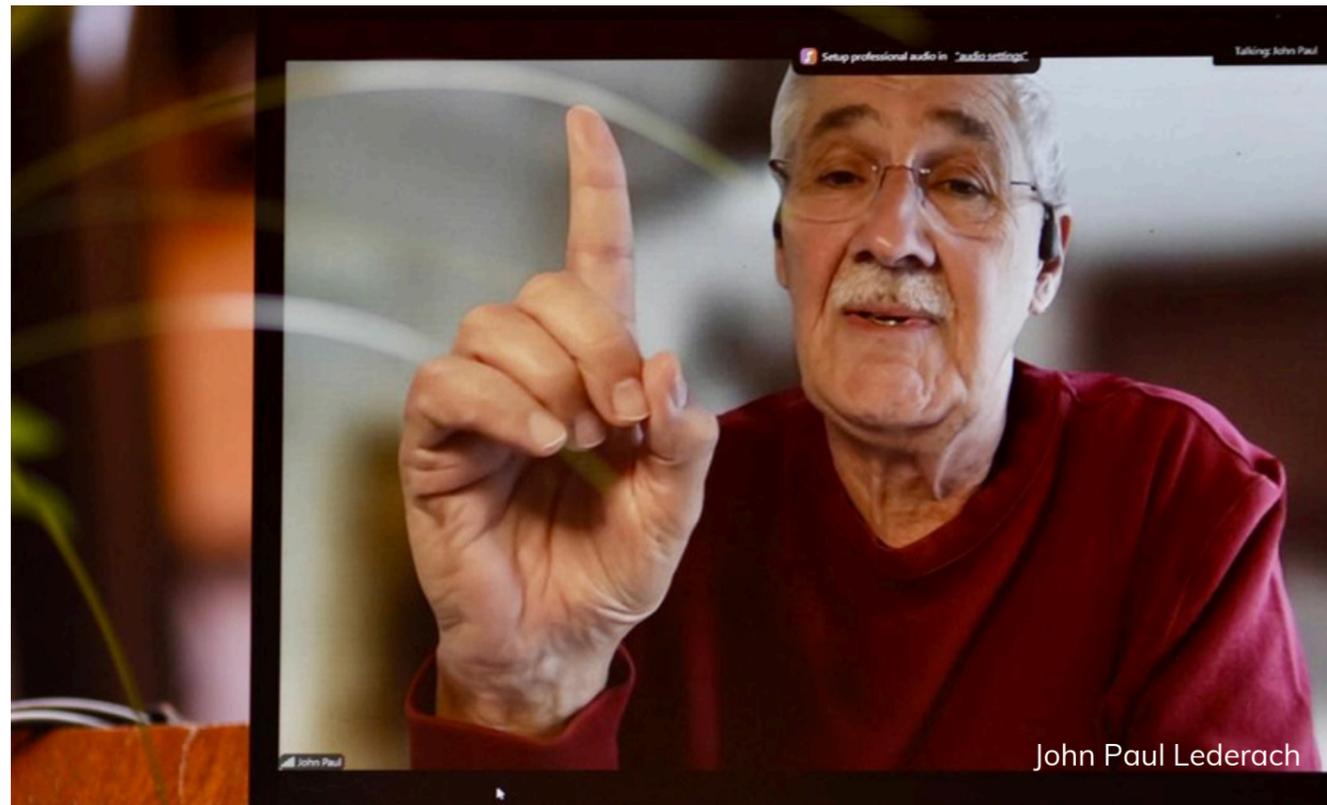
Masterclass with John Paul Lederach, Professor Emeritus of International Peacebuilding, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, USA (via video conference)

The masterclass, introduced as “Peacebuilding through the Arts” was delivered by renowned peacebuilder John Paul Lederach, who reflected on his lifelong journey integrating creativity, spirituality, and human connection into peace work.

Drawing from his seminal book *The Moral Imagination* (2005), Lederach emphasized that imagination and artistic processes lie at the heart of peacebuilding, enabling individuals and communities to transcend violence and envision new possibilities for coexistence, especially in the current global dynamics. Afterwards, the floor was open for a QA with the participants to engage with John Paul Lederach.

“ Life without creativity is not possible.”

In his masterclass, he began by recounting the origins of *The Moral Imagination*, written after a life-changing accident that forced him into deep introspection. This period of stillness revealed a vital truth: “life without creativity is not possible.” Listening to his own body, he discovered parallels between healing, creativity, and peace—each requiring awareness, patience, and imagination.



Lederach identified several dimensions of imagination essential to peace work:

- Relational Imagination: Recognizing that peace grows through relationships rooted in trust and curiosity.
- Creative Imagination: Seeing and bringing into being what does not yet exist.
- Risk Imagination: Understanding that genuine change always involves stepping beyond what is known and safe.
- Moral Imagination: The capacity to envision and sustain relationships across lines of division, even amidst conflict.

He explained that the arts uniquely “unveil” reality, helping people see themselves, their communities, and the world as they truly are. When language fails to express suffering or trauma, arts offers alternative pathways—through poetry, music, movement, or image—to communicate the unspeakable and reconnect fractured relationships.

In an interactive reflection, participants were invited to visualize the “200-year wealth” they each carry—linking the generations that held them in the past to those they will hold in the future. Inspired by Indigenous Seven Generations wisdom, this exercise reminded participants that peacebuilding is intergenerational work, grounded in continuity, creativity, and care.

Addressing a question on social media, Lederach acknowledged its dual capacity to amplify both hate and empathy. He urged participants to restore intention and sacredness in digital expression, treating creativity as an ethical act of connection.

EXPLORING BOUNDARIES AND PEACE THROUGH EXPRESSIVE ARTS

During her workshop, Maruee Pahuja, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner, invited participants to explore the theme of home, both as a personal space and a concept of belonging, using arts-based methodologies. Through sensory experiences and interactive exercises, participants reflected on the meaning of home, crossed perceived boundaries, creatively destroyed and reconstructed homes, and concluded with reflections on peace.



HARMONY BEYOND BORDERS: AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND DIALOGUE FOR PEACE

Moderation:

Michel ABOU KHALIL, PhD, Director of Swiss Made Culture.

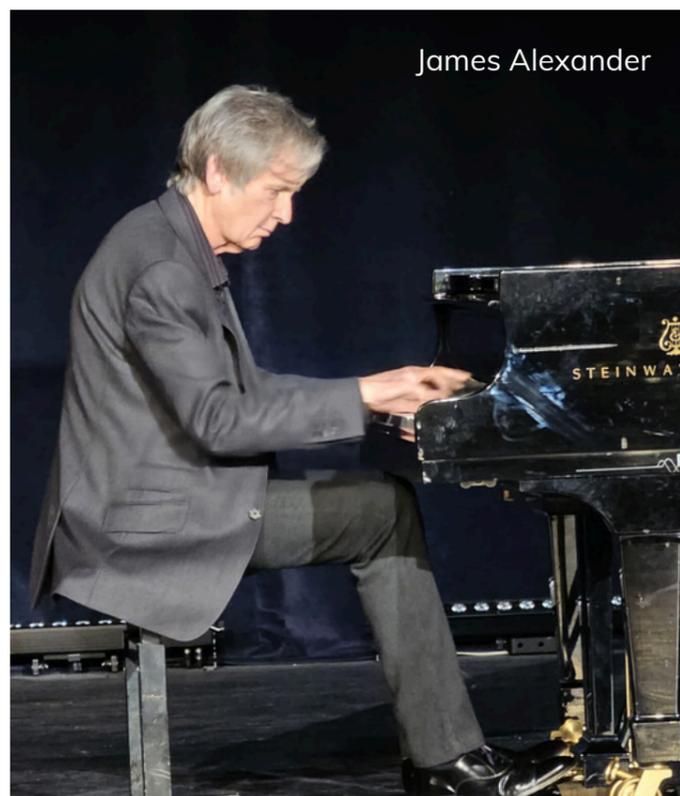
The evening event, Harmony Beyond Borders, brought together musicians and peacebuilders to explore how music transcends divisions and creates spaces of empathy and healing across cultures and conflicts. The session featured Karim Wasfi, cellist, composer, and conductor of the Iraqi State Symphony Orchestra, in dialogue with, Kathy Jetnil-Kijner, poet and climate change activist, Marshall Islands Climate Envoy for the Marshall Islands Ministry of Environment, and James Alexander, a world-renowned pianist and was moderated by Dr. Michel Abou Khalil, Director of Swiss Made Culture.

The session opened with a reflective Monologue of the Caux Palace performed by Andrew Stallybrass, Council Member of the Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation and Caux Palace Historian.

Ignacio Packer, Executive Director of the Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation, welcomed participants and introduced the moderator and artists in the Caux Palace theatre. He framed the discussion around the transformative role of music in societies affected by war.



Michel Abou Khalil



James Alexander



Karim Wasfi and participants



Andrew Stallybrass

The conversation drew parallels between their experiences and global artistic peace initiatives. The dialogue also explored whether art alone can resolve conflict. The speakers agreed that while art may not directly end wars, it plays a vital role in raising awareness, restoring humanity, and opening emotional space for transformation.

They emphasized how music unites people through shared emotional resonance and how its social role continues to evolve in an age of global crisis and digital interconnection.

Between reflections, Wasfi delivered a moving 20-minute cello performance, demonstrating music's unique capacity to communicate beyond words. His piece carried both sorrow and hope, embodying the evening's message that music can speak across the boundaries of pain and conflict.

In closing, Dr. Michel Abou Khalil reflected on the therapeutic and cathartic power of art, explaining how music activates the limbic system—the part of the brain linked to memory and emotion—helping listeners process pain and reconnect with empathy. He concluded that in times of war, the arts do not merely entertain; they heal, remember, and rehumanize.

As the evening unfolded, an impromptu dance and musical interaction emerged between the artists and participants. This spontaneous exchange created a contagious atmosphere of joy and unity, dissolving the boundaries between audience and performers and transforming the theatre into a shared space of harmony and collective expression.

ARTS AND PEACE THROUGH DANCE

Performance by Dalia ESTERER, dance & art therapist, and Antonio PERUJO, flamenco dancer

On May 16th, the morning opened with the Greeting the Day Ceremony, bringing everyone together to welcome fresh energy and inspiration. The event then flowed into an evocative dance performance by Dalia Esterer—dancer and art therapist—and flamenco artist Antonio Perujo. Their collaborative piece, centered on the theme of peace, wove expressive movement and rhythmic intensity into a portrayal of harmony, strength, and our shared human connection.



Tristan Kaufmann, Martha Cerny, Lewis Cardinal



Dalia Esterer & Antonio Perujo



Celine Yvon, Regula Gattiker, Dr. Guila Clara Kessous & Barry Hart

ARTS AND HEALING

Moderator:

- Celine YVON – Expert in Venture Philanthropy and Sustainable Development, Former Director of the Leenaards Foundation

Speakers:

- Barry HART – Emeritus Professor of Trauma, Identity and Conflict Studies, Eastern Mennonite University, USA
- Dr. Guila Clara KESSOUS – UNESCO Artist for Peace
- Regula GATTIKER– Global Peacebuilder specializing in Conflict Transformation, Arts, and Inclusive Dialogue Across Cultures

The Arts and Healing plenary explored how creativity can support personal and collective recovery from trauma, grief, and conflict. Moderator Celine Yvon opened the session by inviting speakers to reflect on how artistic expression fosters healing, connection, and renewal.

She illustrated this through a moving example: children who had witnessed war beginning to draw gardens and flowers — symbols of safety and hope — as their first steps toward emotional recovery.

Professor Barry Hart shared his lifelong journey from activism during the Vietnam War to trauma transformation and peacebuilding. He described how his experiences in Liberia reawakened his appreciation for art’s healing power.



Artivism is when the artist becomes an activist—using art to prevent conflicts, and to support healing during and after them.

Using simple materials like sticks, stones, and sand, his team created safe spaces where displaced children could express themselves non-verbally. Over time, their drawings transformed from dark war scenes to peaceful images, revealing deep emotional healing.

Barry emphasized that presence, trust, and resilience are central to trauma recovery and that art can restore connection where violence has fractured human relationships. His later initiatives, including a Youth Theatre program and a radio drama on trauma and peace, demonstrated how creative platforms can foster awareness, dialogue, and collective resilience.

Dr. Guila Clara Kessous, UNESCO Artist for Peace, reflected on her evolution from theatre artist to global peace advocate. She introduced her concept of the “Art of Resilience”, rooted in theatre’s ability to give voice to those silenced by trauma.

Through her academic work and international projects, she has developed artistic methods that help people reclaim agency and dignity.

Her initiatives include World Arts Day, featuring roundtables on Arts and Health (with WHO), Artivism (art as activism), and Art and Peace Education. In Afghanistan, she supports Radio Begum, a project by and for women offering psychological and educational support to girls denied access to schooling.

Guila emphasized that while art heals, it must be practiced with humility and sensitivity. Drawing from her peace work in the Democratic Republic of Congo, she explained that art enables people to represent themselves — to be believed, to be acknowledged — rather than speaking for them.



Presence, trust, and resilience are central in trauma work, especially in post-war societies where people lose connection with themselves and each other. Art creates safe spaces where this reconnection—and thus healing—can begin.



Regula Gattiker

Similarly, Regula Gattiker shared her path of integrating arts into peacebuilding after years of rejection and experimentation. She developed arts-based approaches for conflict prevention and community resilience in Colombia, Myanmar, and Kyrgyzstan.

A defining moment came during a project in Colombia, where she collaborated with displaced farmers to record a CD sharing their stories through song. The music moved audiences—including government and NGO representatives — leading to national recognition:

- The farmers regained official victim status
- They received the National Peace Prize for peaceful resistance
- They won a Premios Shock Award for Special Recordings

The project demonstrated how self-expression can lead to empowerment and social recognition. Years later, part of the same community finally received their land titles — a milestone symbolizing the long-term impact of peaceful artistic resistance.

Regula underscored the importance of humility and co-creation in cross-cultural peace work. She only engages by invitation and co-designs solutions with local communities, ensuring legitimacy and safety.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

In closing, Celine Yvon reflected on two essential lessons from the session:

- Questioning the Ego: Artists and peacebuilders must remain aware of their own motivations. Even well-intentioned help can become self-serving if not rooted in empathy and humility.
- Reclaiming Joy: True healing and solidarity are sustained by joy — not superficial happiness, but a deep faith in possibility and a desirable future.

THE ARTS AS ICEBREAKER: BRIDGING PERSPECTIVES FOR ARCTIC AND GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

Moderator:

- Anne-Catherine SUTERMEISTER, Head of Community Engagement Switzerland, Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation

Speakers:

- Natascha Cerny EHTESHAM, One Arctic & Museum of Contemporary Circumpolar Art, Bern
- Martha CERNY, One Arctic & Museum of Contemporary Circumpolar Art, Bern
- Jo Morten KAVEN, Sámi encaustic artist, singer/joiker, original member of the Sámi band Rolffa
- Lewis CARDINAL, Leader of the Global Indigenous Dialogue



Jo Morten Kaven, Natascha Cerny Ehtesham, Lewis Cardinal, Martha Cerny



Jo Morten Kaven

Martha and Natascha opened by describing art as a universal language—a medium that fosters trust, dialogue, and emotional connection across Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Through creativity, they noted, complex scientific and Indigenous knowledge can be translated into accessible, human terms that support advocacy, education, and the envisioning of new futures.

Building on this, Jo Morten Kaven shared his personal journey growing up Sámi, where art, maps, and family traditions sustained his identity despite social pressures to assimilate. For him, art became not only a form of expression but an affirmation of belonging.

Expanding the discussion, Lewis Cardinal highlighted the use of symbols—especially circles—as powerful motifs reflecting Indigenous worldviews of balance, interdependence, and harmony, demonstrating how visual forms embody deep spiritual and communal meanings.



That circle there is one of the oldest human symbols in the world ... it's a message to us of how we need to be living in balance and harmony.

COMMITMENTS AND CLOSING SESSION



Ignacio Packer & Anne-Catherine Sutermeister

Moderator:

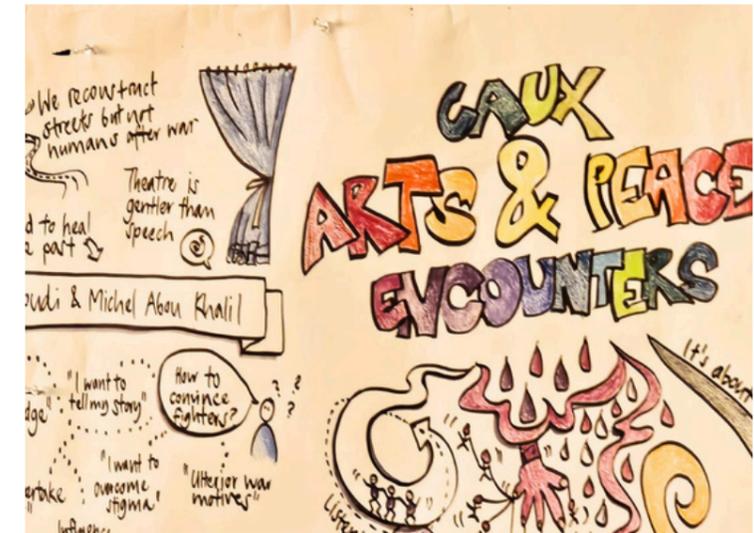
- Sarah NOBLE, Head of Global Engagement at Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation

Speakers:

- Claudia MEIER, Social Cohesion Activist and Europe Lead at Build Up
- Yara ZGHEIB, Writer and International Consultant on Human Security

Closing Address:

- Ignacio PACKER, Executive Director of Caux Initiatives of Change Foundation



This closing session transformed the main hall into an interactive space with three pin boards displaying the graphic recordings created throughout the residential programme by Claudia Meier. These visual narratives captured the essence of the dialogues, emotions, and creative processes experienced over the past days.

Claudia began by inviting participants to engage physically and mentally with the artwork — to “walk through the story of the week” — before returning to their seats for a moment of shared reflection. She then introduced five guiding questions from her peacebuilding practice, encouraging deep introspection:

- Perception & Intuition: What unseen forces guide you, and do you trust them when they appear in your life?
- Technology & Amplification: How can technology be used to amplify art for peace rather than harm?
- Power & Positionality: Where do you hold power, and how do you use it constructively?
- Permission & Participation: What creates a sense of belonging that allows everyone to contribute?
- Strength & Flexibility: Where can you hold steady, and where can you adapt so that things do not fall apart?

Through these reflections, Claudia emphasized embodiment, trust, inclusion, and shared ownership — key ingredients for sustainable peace and creative collaboration.



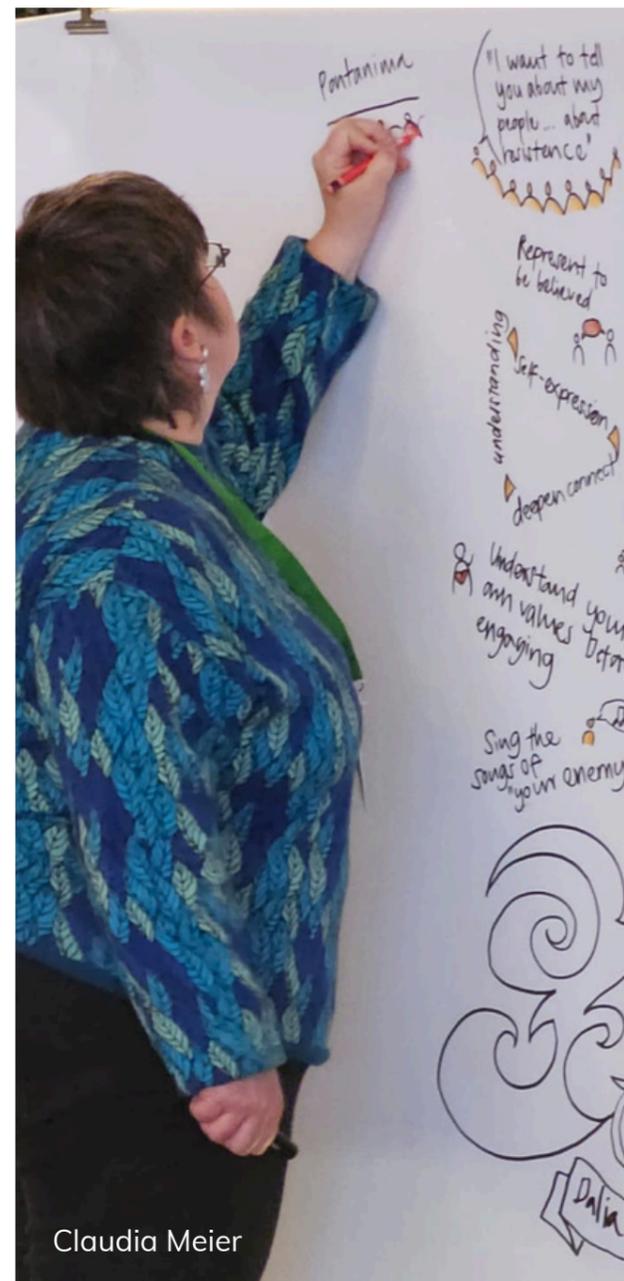
Natascha Cerny Ehtesham

The panel then turned to how art exhibits and museum projects reveal hidden or untaught histories, such as post-World War II Inuit experiences or the displacement of sacred objects like the Manitou Stone. These artistic initiatives allow both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences to engage with and learn from challenging histories.

In this context, non-Indigenous curators emphasized the importance of approaching such work with respect, humility, and collaboration, shifting from collecting and displaying to consulting, partnering, and amplifying Indigenous voices rather than speaking on their behalf.

A particularly insightful connection emerged between Arctic Indigenous communities and Switzerland’s mountain populations; both rooted in ancestral knowledge and sensitive to the rhythms of environmental change.

Finally, Lewis Cardinal and others underscored the transformative power of reclaiming sacred objects, reviving traditional arts and ceremonies, and reimagining governance through Indigenous models of relationship and balance—demonstrating how art continues to serve as a bridge between healing, identity, and collective renewal.



Claudia Meier

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The arts have always been a mirror of human experience — reflecting pain, beauty, and resilience in equal measure. Yet in the context of efforts to build peace, they do more than reflect: they transform. The arts invite empathy where words fail, build bridges across divides, and restore a sense of dignity and belonging to those silenced by conflict. When integrated intentionally into peace processes, artistic practices become both a method and a metaphor for healing, reconnection, and renewal. The following key takeaways highlight the ways creativity can shape more inclusive, compassionate, and enduring forms of peace.

1. Embed Creativity and the Arts at the Core of Peace Processes

Efforts to build peace should move beyond technical or political frameworks to embrace imagination and artistic expression as essential tools of transformation and peacebuilding. Integrating imagination and creativity as core competencies in peacebuilding practice and training fosters empathy, collaboration, and the capacity to envision shared futures.

2. Recognize the Arts as a Human Right and a Source of Dignity

Artistic expression is a universal human right tied to identity, belonging, and self-determination. Protecting this right ensures that marginalized and conflict-affected communities can reclaim their voices, restoring dignity and agency through creative participation.

3. Empower Artists as Advocates and Catalysts for Peace

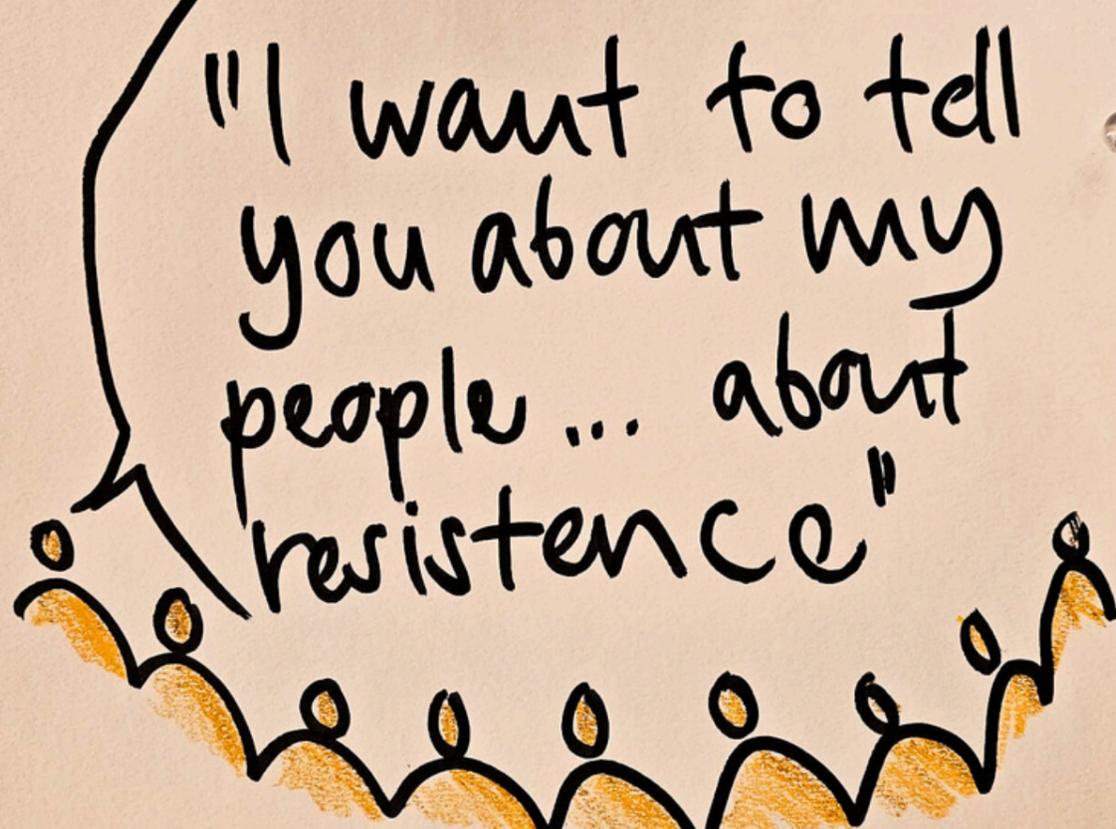
Artists are interpreters of human experience and catalysts for empathy. Their ability to translate pain into understanding and imagination into action positions them as vital advocates for efforts to build peace. Supporting artists with platforms, training, and networks enables them to lead healing, dialogue, and social transformation.

4. Harness the Healing and Restorative Power of the Arts

The arts provide safe spaces for trauma recovery, emotional expression, and collective renewal. Their therapeutic and symbolic dimensions help individuals and communities process loss and rediscover strength. Integrating creative processes—music, storytelling, performance, visual arts—into efforts to build peace fosters dignity, unity, and resilience.

5. Foster Dialogue, Connection, and Cultural Exchange

The arts transcend language and cultural barriers. Music, performance, and participatory art create inclusive platforms for dialogue where trust and understanding can grow. Cultural diplomacy and activism extend efforts to build peace beyond formal negotiations, weaving relationships that endure across generations and borders.



A moment of quiet followed, leading into Yara Zgheib's literary reflection inspired by Viktor Shklovsky's *Zoo*, or *Letters Not About Love*. Yara reflected on love as a universal creative force that transcends language, inviting participants to "take your heart in your teeth and write your story." Her message was both poetic and practical — an appeal for authenticity, courage, and creative expression as tools for transformation.

Participants were then invited to articulate their personal commitments for peace and creativity. To make these commitments tangible, Sarah Noble led a symbolic "Planting Seeds of Peace" activity. Each participant received bee-friendly seeds and a small pot, planting their intentions before walking together to the flagpole — a gesture of collective hope and continuity beyond Caux.

Ignacio Packer concluded the session by expressing gratitude to the speakers, facilitators, partners, and the Caux community, echoing the spirit of connection that defined the week. He reaffirmed Caux's commitment to sustaining dialogue and collaboration through upcoming initiatives, including Geneva Peace Week 2025 and the next APE in May 2026.

The plenary closed with a reminder that art unlocks trust — the key to collaboration — and that each act of creation, however small, contributes to the ongoing work of peace.



Yara Zgheib

PARTICIPANTS

6. Center Indigenous Voices and Knowledge Systems

True peace must include Indigenous wisdom and creativity as guiding principles.

- Use the arts as a universal language to foster emotional connection across cultures.
- Promote collaborative and respectful curation that centers Indigenous voices.
- Integrate the arts into education and advocacy to translate complex Indigenous and scientific knowledge into accessible forms.
- Support cultural revival projects reconnecting communities with ancestral practices, ceremonies, and traditions.
- Encourage museum partnerships and artist exchanges to amplify Indigenous histories and perspectives.
- Recognize shared symbols such as the circle as teachings of harmony and balance.
- Build solidarity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous networks to protect cultural heritage and advance environmental justice.
- Shift institutional and governance models toward Indigenous circular frameworks rooted in reciprocity and equity.

7. Practice Humility, Cultural Sensitivity, and Continuous Learning

Effective arts-based peace work requires deep listening, humility, and respect for cultural contexts. Practitioners should enter creative spaces with openness and invitation, prioritizing co-creation over control. For collaborators, this means ongoing learning, reflection, and accountability grounded in relationship.

8. Reimagine Presence, Technology, and Intention

In a digital world, the quality of presence and intention shapes the impact of the arts and efforts to build peace. Technology can amplify creativity positively when used with mindfulness and authenticity. By restoring a sense of sacredness and care to digital storytelling, communication can deepen connection rather than division.

9. Engage and Empower Youth Through the Arts

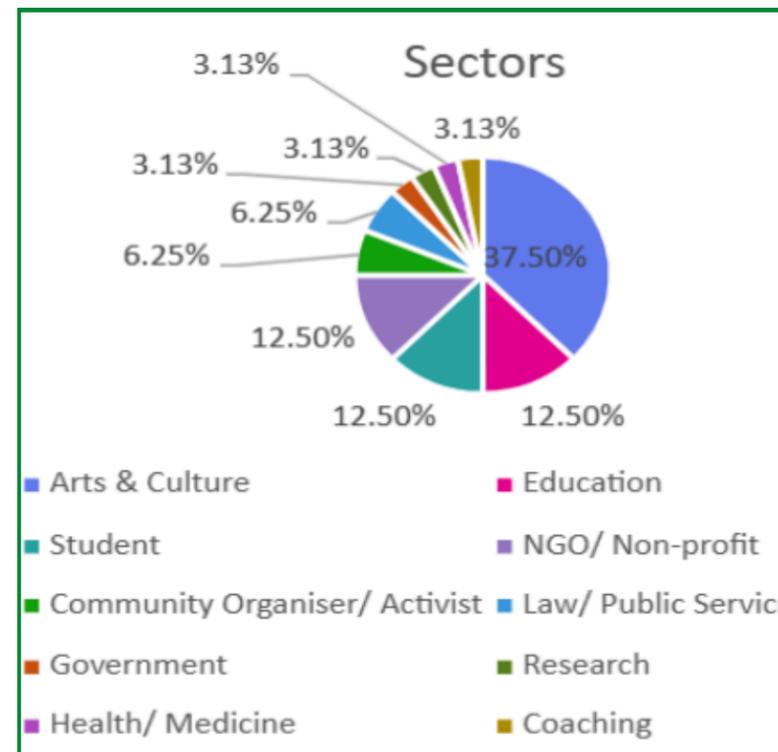
Youth are carriers of imagination, courage, and innovation. Supporting youth-led creative initiatives allows young people to become co-authors of peace. Intergenerational collaboration through the arts preserves collective memory while cultivating new visions of justice and harmony.

10. Lead with Love, Joy, and Collective Hope

Efforts to build peace through the arts are sustained by joy, imagination, and love. These forces nurture resilience and courage amid uncertainty. Trust intuition and subtle guidance, use power responsibly and inclusively, and create spaces where everyone can contribute. Turn reflection into action, nurture hope by planting seeds of peace, and keep the momentum through collaboration and care.

CONCLUSION

The arts are both a pathway and a practice for peace. They invite us to listen differently, to see one another more fully, and to act with renewed creativity and compassion. When those engaged in peacebuilding—artists, communities, and other stakeholders—collaborate with humility and imagination, the arts become not just an outcome of peace but one of its most powerful engines: a living reminder that beauty and justice are intertwined, and that peace, like the arts, is always in the making.



Over 2.5 days, the Caux Arts and Peace Encounters event demonstrated remarkable inclusivity, attracting 55 participants from a diverse range of sectors. While 37.5% came from arts and culture, the event also drew educators, students, NGO and non-profit professionals, community organizers, legal and public service workers, government representatives, researchers, health professionals, and coaches.

This cross-sector participation highlights how the event appeals to a wide spectrum of individuals, offering a space where anyone—regardless of their professional background—can engage as an artist, cultural practitioner, or peacebuilder.

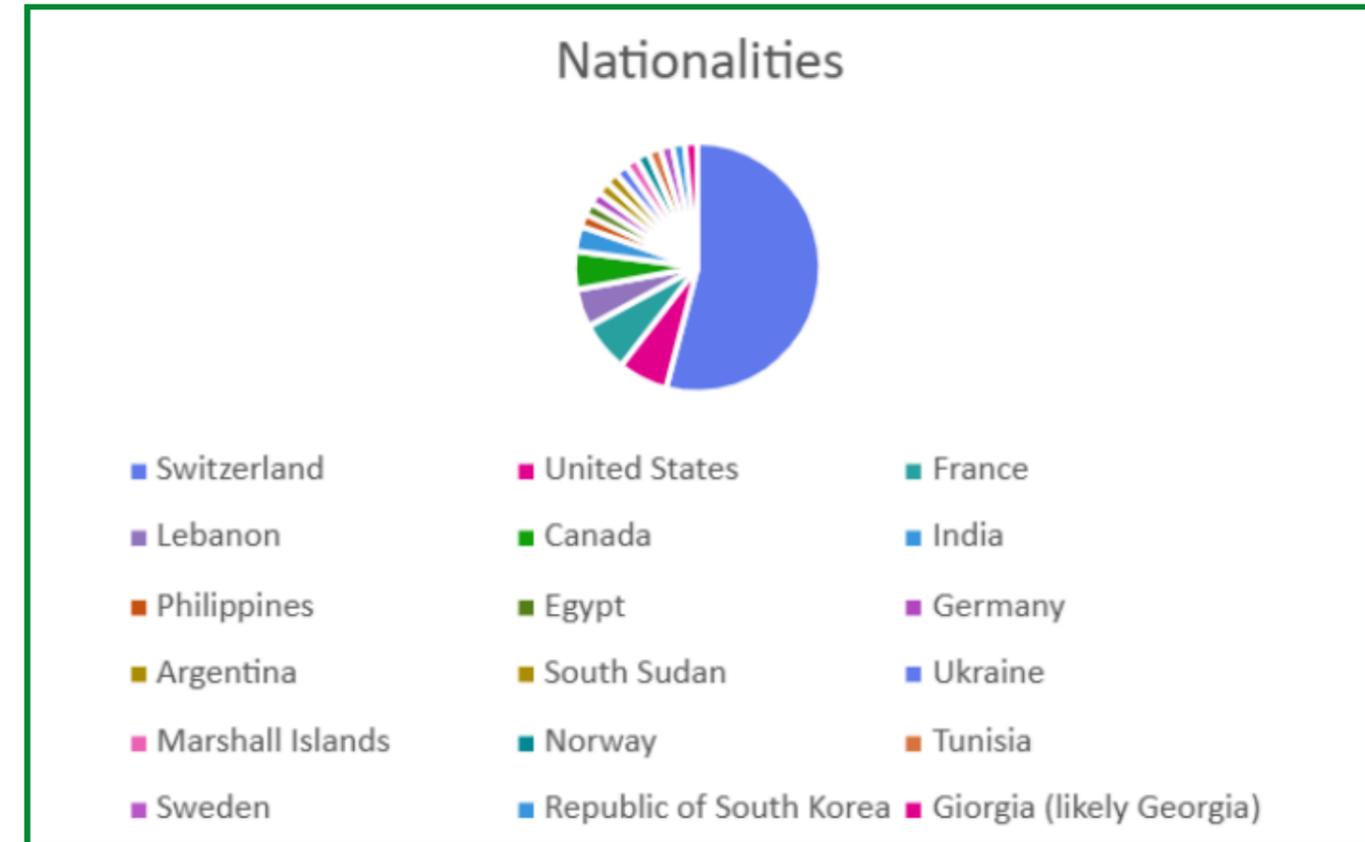
By bringing together such varied perspectives, the event fosters interdisciplinary dialogue, collaboration, and innovation, ensuring that all participants can contribute meaningfully to the shared goals of arts-driven peacebuilding.



Mer Ayer

The nationality data shows a strong Swiss representation (33 participants, or 55%), reflecting the event's host location and the active engagement of local peacebuilders and artists. The United States and France (4 participants each), along with Lebanon and Canada (3 each), indicate meaningful international participation from diverse cultural and geographic backgrounds. Smaller representations from countries such as India, the Philippines, Ukraine, South Sudan, and the Marshall Islands demonstrate the event's global reach and inclusivity, bringing together voices from across continents.

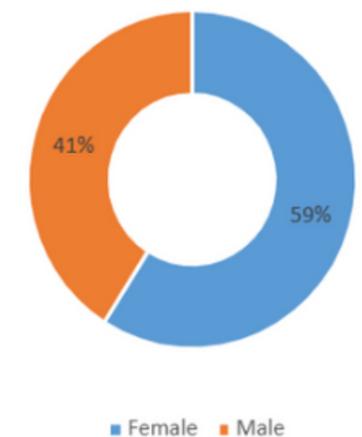
Overall, the distribution highlights Switzerland's central role as a convening hub for international dialogue on arts and peacebuilding, while fostering cross-cultural exchange and global solidarity.



The gender distribution of participants shows a female majority (59%) and male representation (41%), reflecting a strong presence of women in arts and peacebuilding.

This balance highlights the inclusive nature of the event and the growing role of women as leaders and collaborators in fostering dialogue, creativity, and social transformation.

Gender Distribution Percentage



To what extent did the event increase your awareness of the role of the arts in peacebuilding?



■ Significantly ■ Moderately ■ Slightly ■ Not at all ■ Total

In response to the question, "To what extent did the event increase your awareness of the role of arts in peacebuilding?", nearly 60% of participants reported a significant increase, showing a strong impact.

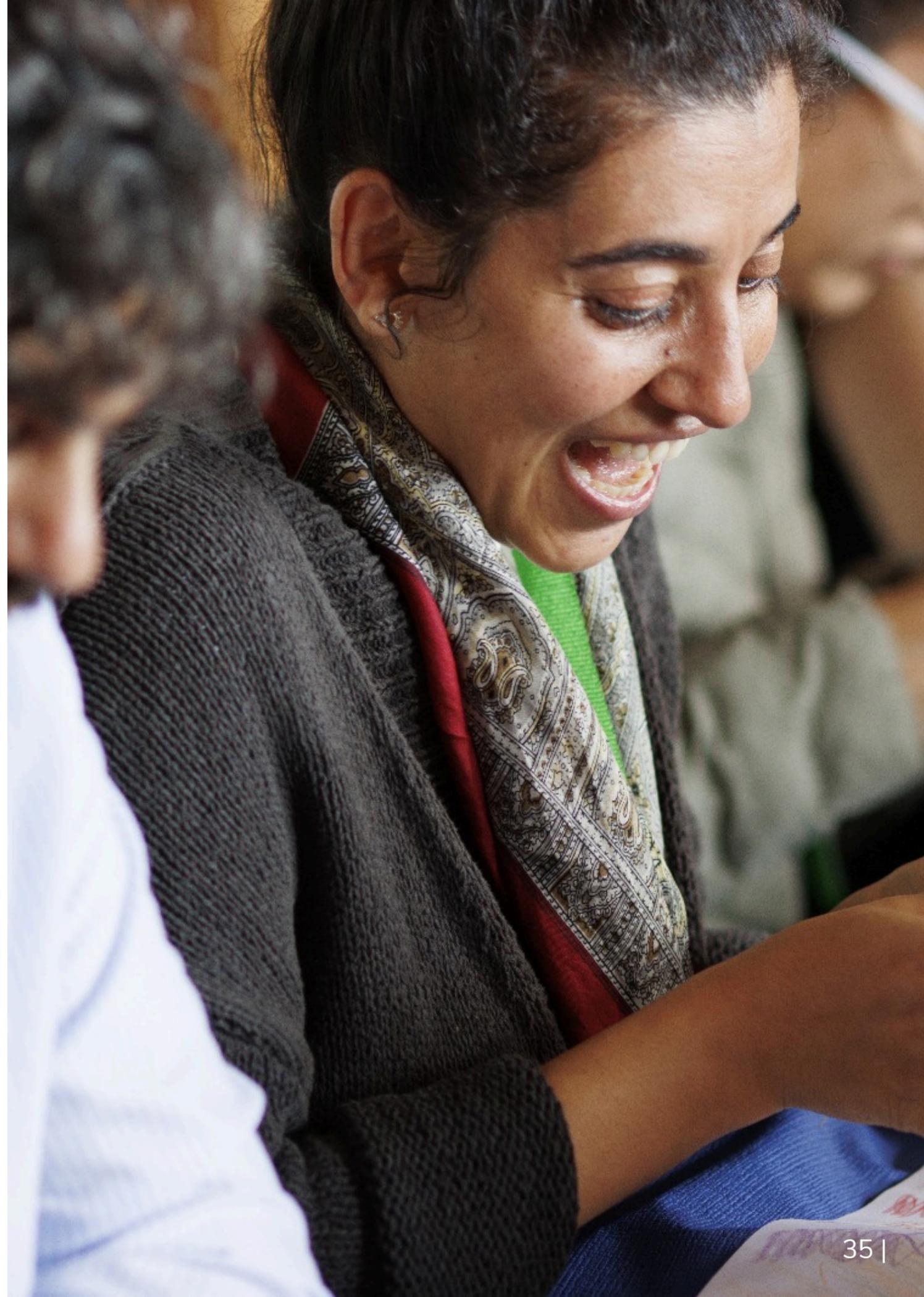
About 24% experienced a moderate increase, reflecting meaningful engagement with room for further learning, while 17% noted only a slight impact, likely due to prior awareness of the peacebuilding potential of the arts.

No participants selected "not at all," demonstrating that the event effectively raised awareness for everyone.

“

**What if the joy we cultivate through art is not only a tool of peacebuilding, but a balm for the peacebuilder?
In these days of quiet grief and shared breath, my attendance to the Caux Arts and Peace Encounters reminded me that perhaps peace need not be scalable to be effective or sacred. Make it so—with your skin. Your time.**

Jennifer Thornquest, participant



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THANK YOU... to all our speakers, artists, participants, community group leaders, housekeeping, kitchen, technical and hospitality teams who have contributed to these first Caux Arts and Peace Encounters. Without you, these 3 days would not have been possible!

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Our sincere gratitude goes to our partners:



We look forward to seeing you at the Caux Palace for the second edition of the **Caux Arts and Peace Encounters** (10 - 13 May 2026)!

