

The background of the entire page is a photograph of tall, thin grasses or reeds reaching upwards. The sky in the background is a soft gradient of colors, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, with a warm orange glow on the left side fading into a cooler blue-grey on the right. The text is overlaid on this background.

Imaginary Gardens

*EDEN Engagement: Katowice
Seed City Curriculum
Pawel Pokutycki*

JUNE 2023



International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC)
and
Joyce DiDonato's

EDEN ENGAGEMENT

ABOUT

Three-time Grammy Award winning opera superstar Joyce DiDonato has created the global tour of EDEN, her major concert hall performance about environmentalism. Her personal commitment and partnership with ITAC has launched a re-imagining of the impact of a concert experience through teaching artist-led workshops in every city. The International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC) is the world-wide network of artists who work in community and educational settings, who have the skills to bring change to communities. Together ITAC and EDEN Engagement will pilot a new approach to prove that touring can be a legitimate and powerful tool for change in communities.

Cities on the tour are designated either "Root Cities" or "Seed Cities". Seed Cities are a 1-4 day(s) event that engages the youth with one of three specific environmental issues; Urban Gardens, Urban Trees, Food Choices:

- Urban Gardens: They are youth-friendly. Among many social benefits, they bring these environmental benefits: reduce carbon use (reduced food transport); reduce water runoff; help pollinators; plants absorb CO₂ and pollutants and produce oxygen; health benefits in the food and the community building (reduced stress and blood pressure).
- Urban Trees: Trees are omnipresent and overlooked in cities—kid friendly. They can plant them, and the EDEN performance encourages that. Trees are powerful answers to heat mitigation (reduce temperatures by 8 to 10 degrees and need for air conditioning), carbon and pollution sequestration and oxygen production, water flow pollution reduction, biodiversity, and food insecurity. Health benefits include healthier air, psychological benefits, lowering blood pressure and stress.
- Food Choices: Scientists have proven that small choices make a big difference. Because many foods with a high health burden, including processed meats or red meats, also have high environmental costs, switching out 10 percent of a person's daily caloric intake can cut a person's food-based environmental footprint by over 30 percent. Between growing it, packaging it, moving it around, cooking it, and often wasting it, food production makes up about one-fifth to one-third of all annual greenhouse gas emissions globally. Eat less red and processed meats, eat more veggies and fruits, reduce food waste, and if you have a way...compost.

Teaching Artist: Pawel Pokutycki

Date: June 5th-6th

Students: 40 children, ages 10-13

About: Creating own imagined plants and animals (with help of AI/ML) to inhabit urban spaces of the city, illustrating desirable environmental futures and scenarios of interaction between humans and nature, all documented in a music video made collectively by the participants of the workshop.

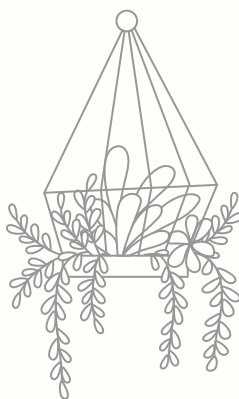
Photo Credits: Radosław Kazmierczak/NOSPR





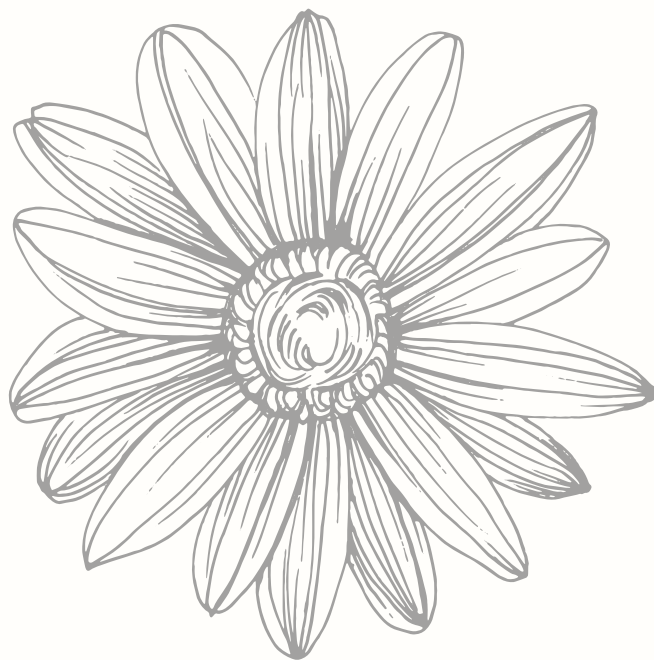
DAY 1 (INDOOR)

- The participants of the workshop gather in a computer classroom (at their school) and get introduced to the general goal of the workshop spread over two afternoons.
- The teaching artist asks the participants about their reflections on the song "Seeds of Hope" that they are preparing to perform together with Joyce DiDonato on stage.
- There is a short discussion on the meaning of the song followed up with a brainstorm about the presence of flora and fauna in the urban spaces of Katowice. Is nature important in our lives? How do we imagine the future with or without it? How climate change can influence our relationship with nature and what can we do about it?
- The participants are introduced to the first assignment.
- With help of AI/ML technology called Scribble Diffusion (<https://scribblediffusion.com/>) they are asked to sketch imaginary plants and animals for their own "Eden", a garden expressing their own fantasy, an artistic vision, a dream future scenario for the city they live in.
- During the sketching phase the teaching artist provides some technical assistance and engages in small talks around the classroom. What choices are they making? What species do they imagine to create? What is the future of nature they would like to experience and interact with?
- The teaching artist stimulates the participants to create drawings with care for details and think of interesting AI prompts related to them (or exactly not related: to create unexpected, surprising outcomes).
- The participants are asked to save their favourite artworks (at least 3).
- They are introduced to the second assignment.
- Using the tool Monster Mash ([Need lesson plan](#)) they are instructed on how to animate their creations done earlier with AI/ML. The goal is to move the plants and animals in such a way that they can be a part of the (music) video to be shot a day later with the participants of the workshop in the center of Katowice.
- The participants are asked to imagine a situation outdoor, in which they could interact somehow with their animated plants or animals.
- They are also asked to think about a sound that their (imaginary) animals would be making, to be performed vocally or with use of a musical instrument a day later.
- The participants are asked to save their animations (at least 3).
- The workshop afternoon ends with a brief collective reflection on the role of artistic creativity with use of AI/ML in imagining the future of nature, evolution of species, visualising climate change and alike.



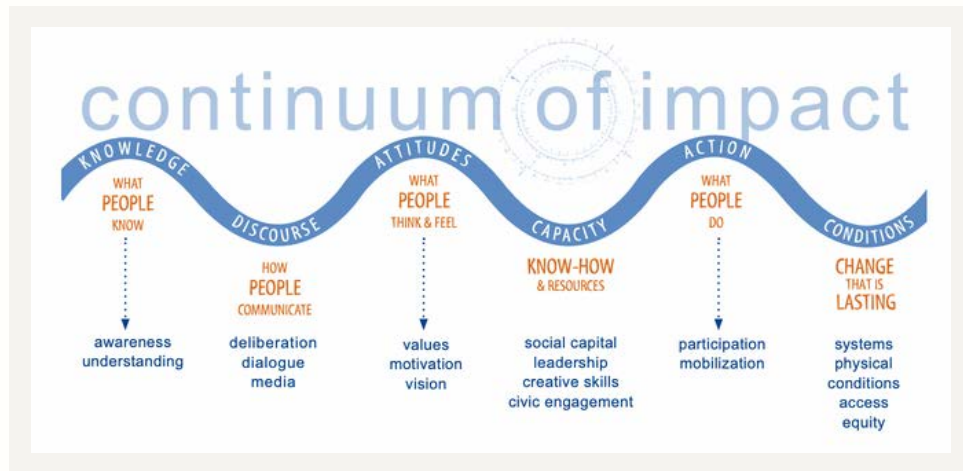
DAY 2 (OUTDOOR)

- The participants gather in a park in the center of the city (surroundings of NOSPR, concert hall of Katowice).
- The teaching artist is shooting a (music) video. There are camera's around recording the activities taking place.
- The workshop afternoon begins with a collective action of planting a tree in a dedicated location.
- After the tree is being planted the participants are singing a song of "Seeds of Hope" and other repertoire relevant for the performance with Joyce DiDonato on stage.
- Between the songs the participants are vocally imitating sounds of nature. It's being captured in audio and video.
- During the break participants look back at the animations of own imaginary flora and fauna made during the first day of the workshop and discuss their plans concerning the unexpected, surprising "appearance" of these species in the center of the city.
- The participants become actors in a film directed and edited by the teaching artist in close collaboration with everyone involved.
- Individually or in small groups the participants spread around the NOSPR area outdoor and perform short acts in front of the camera, as if they were playing with the animated plants and animals they have created.
- In between the acts the participants are asked to imitate the sounds of their (imaginary) animals using their voice and/or a music instrument of own choice.
- The workshops ends with a collective reflection on the creative process of the last two days.
- The edited (music) video of is being shared with the participants within a week after the workshop.





IMPACT & EVALUATION

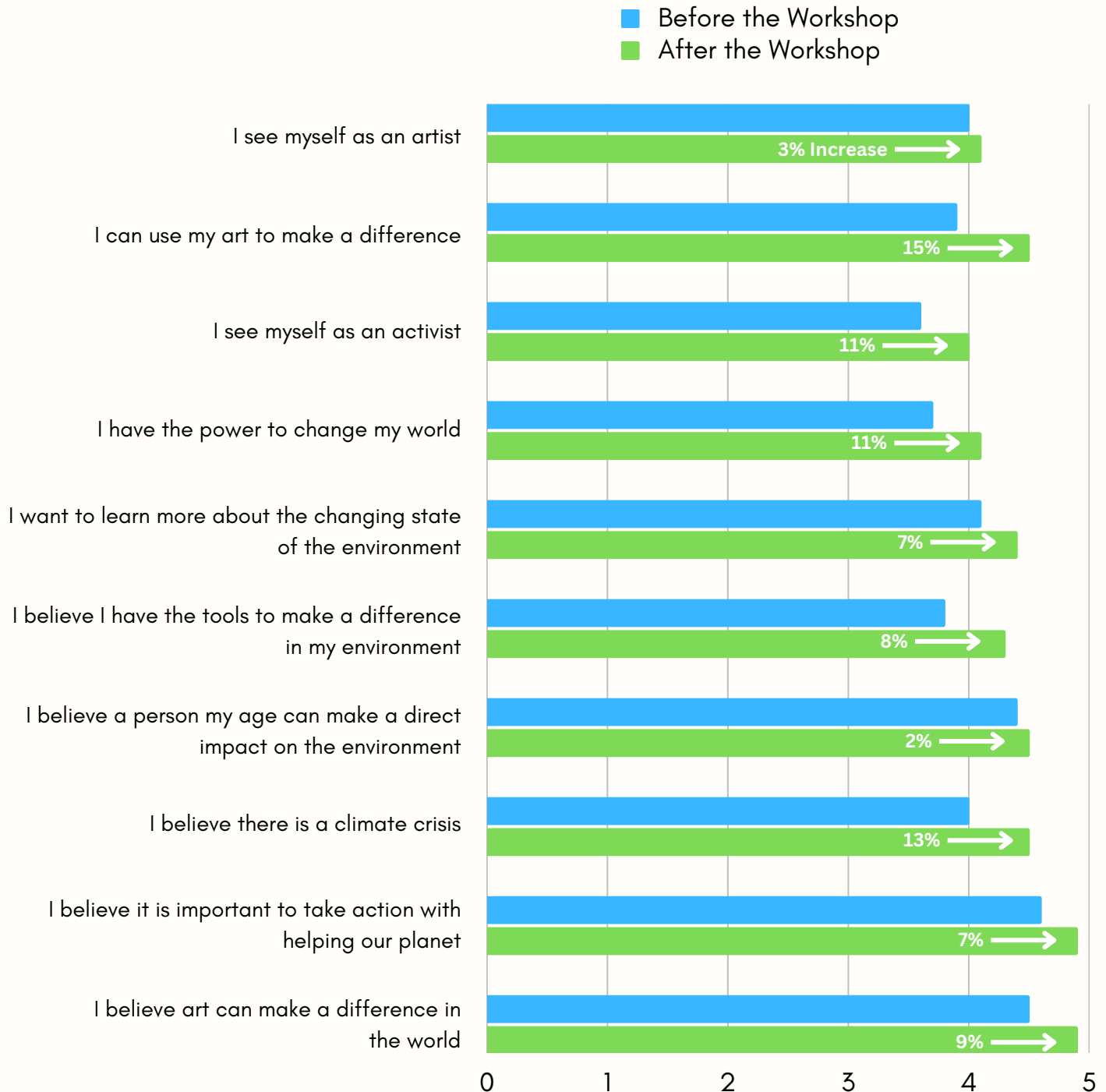


The goal of this effort is to learn about the impact that the activities have on participants. It is not gathered to impress funders, but to advance our own effectiveness in generating objective information about the power of our work. We are especially curious to learn if there is any evidence that they have the impulse to take action and/or feel they can make a difference—this is the high goal of the arts-for-climate field, and we believe teaching artists have a particularly strong contribution to the field. Teaching artists were encouraged to use the Continuum of Impact Guide as a model when thinking about impact and assessment in their workshops. We asked: Did participants demonstrate greater personal connection to this environmental issue and deepen their understanding of it? Did participants demonstrate a personal motivation to do something about this issue and show a sense that they could make a difference if they did? Did they actually take some action?



STUDENT EVALUATIONS

During this round of EDEN, students were given a survey before and after the workshops. These surveys were designed according to the outcomes provided in the Continuum of Impact Guide. Students were asked if they 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neither Agree or Disagree, 4-Agree, or 5-Strongly Agree with the following statements.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE TEACHING ARTIST

In what ways did you observe change in your participants understanding and engagement of the environmental issue you chose?

"I asked them a couple of questions before and after the workshops. In the urban environment of Katowice there are not enough of plants, trees and animals. I believe that the symbolic action of planting a real tree together with the kids and creating "imaginary" species to inhabit the spaces around NOSPR (the concert hall in the center of the city) increased their understanding of the importance of nature around us. They reflected on that with their artistic, musical and verbal skills, what has been captured on video to be published and presented to them, their teachers and their parents (as well as the broader audience) in the weekend just before the EDEN performance with Joyce DiDonato on stage."

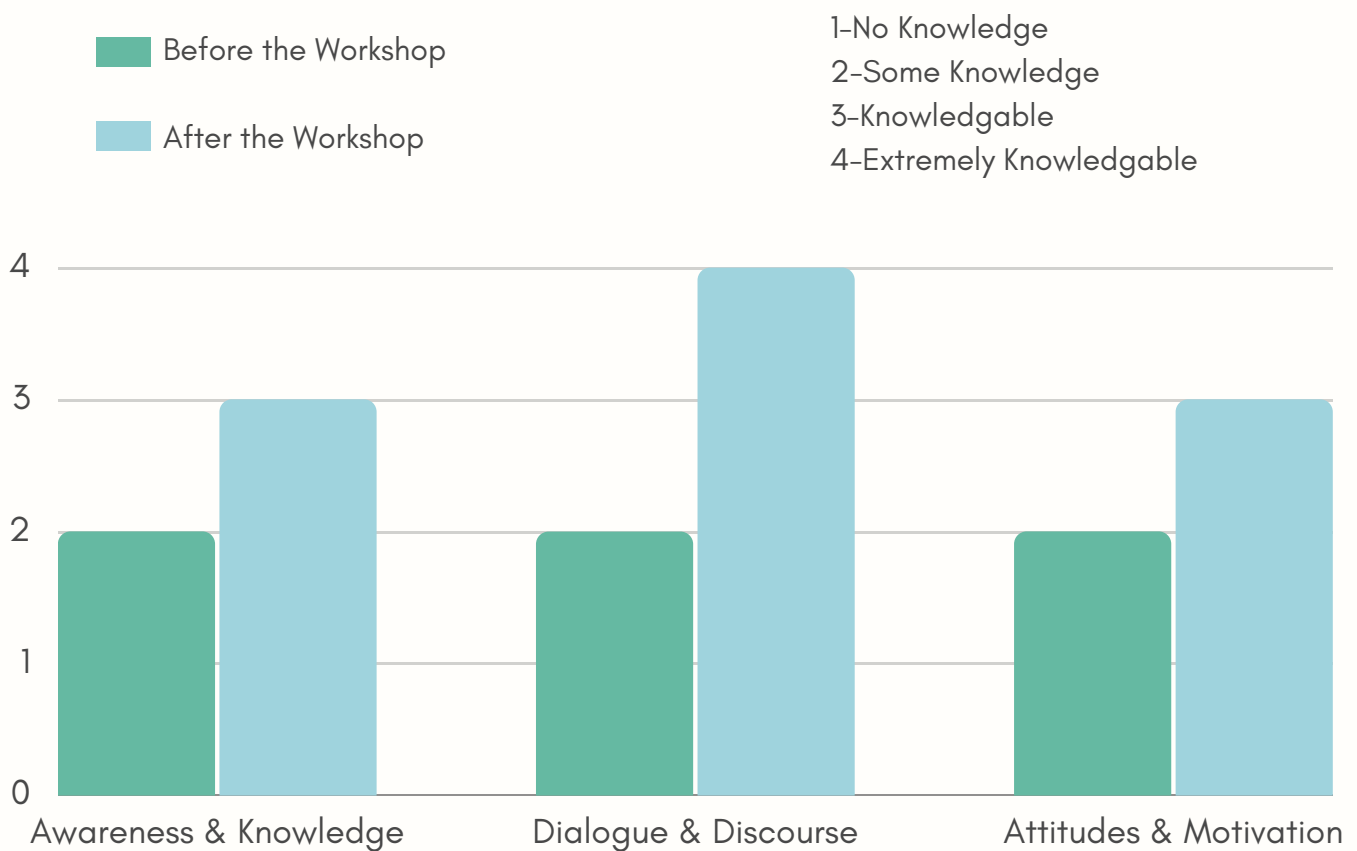
Did your EDEN experience expand your work or skills as a teaching artist in any specific ways?

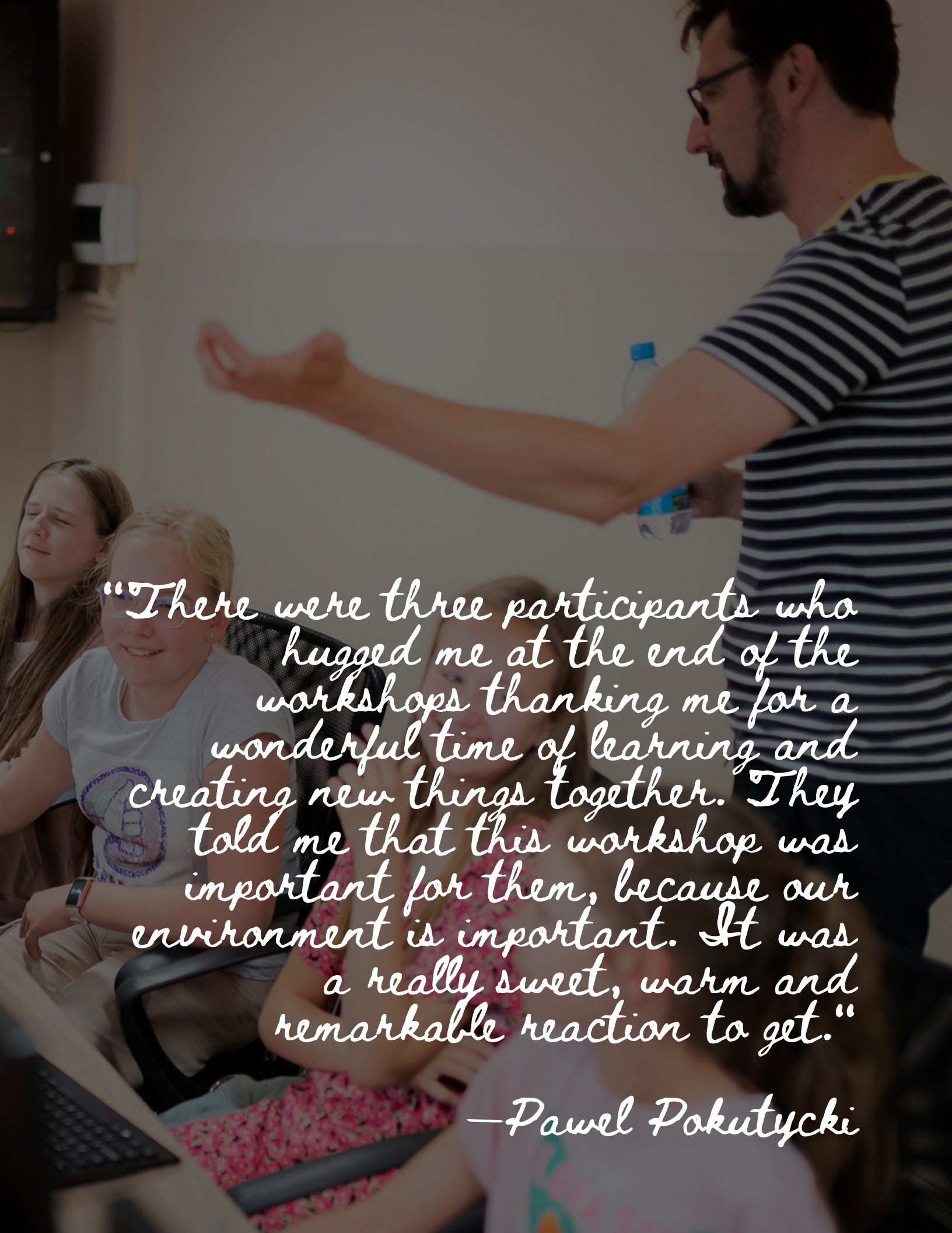
"Definitely! I have succeeded in bringing innovative approach to educational work with children/youth, in particular by using such technology as creative AI/ML. At the same time I managed to stimulate a collective critical reflection among the workshop participants on the presence of nature in urban spaces of Katowice. I believe that the context of having the upcoming live performance with Joyce on stage motivated the kids and myself, to stay focused and make things work as effectively as possible within the given time and resources."





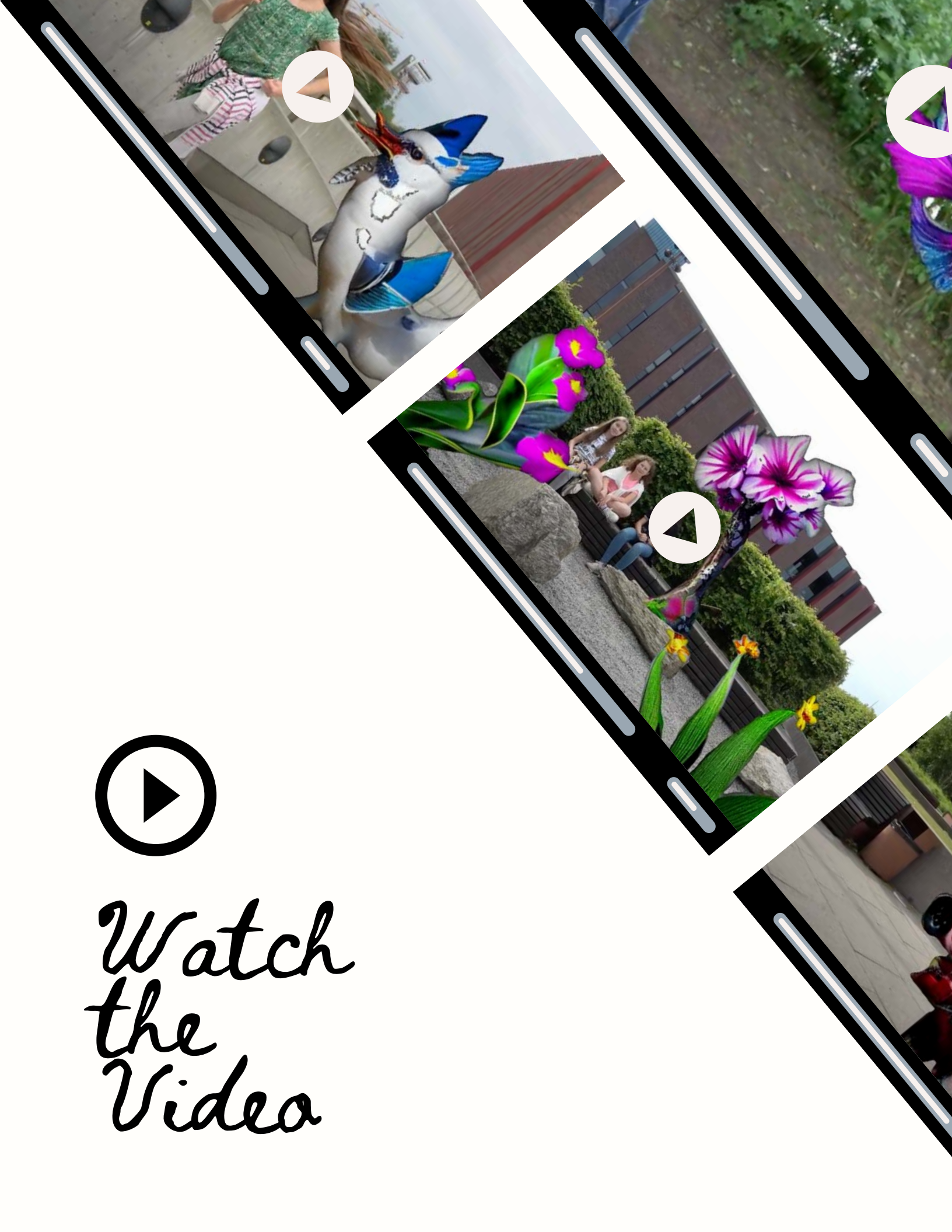
We tasked each teaching artist with evaluating their students based on the Continuum of Impact Guide. They rated their students on a scale from 1 (no knowledge of the subject) to 4 (extremely knowledgeable about the subject). The following graph reflects the teaching artists' observations of their students.



A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a black and white striped t-shirt, stands on the right side of the frame, gesturing with his right hand towards a group of children. The children are seated in the foreground and middle ground, looking towards the man. One girl in the foreground is smiling. The background is a plain wall with a light switch visible on the left. The overall atmosphere is educational and interactive.

"There were three participants who hugged me at the end of the workshops thanking me for a wonderful time of learning and creating new things together. They told me that this workshop was important for them, because our environment is important. It was a really sweet, warm and remarkable reaction to get."

—Pawel Pokutycki



Watch
the
Video



ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTIST



PAWEL POKUTYCKI

Pawel Pokutycki (PL/NL) is an interaction designer, researcher and lecturer at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague and Design Academy Eindhoven, The Netherlands. In 2005 he initiated early activities of the RFID Lab, later called the AR+RFID Lab, an experimental interdisciplinary platform for research in the application of Augmented Reality (AR) and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technologies in the field of art and design. He is a core member of the Alternative Learning Tank (ALT), a nomadic school and artistic organization that focuses on research, creation and implementation of didactical programs on progressive and radical fields of knowledge which are often neglected by educational institutions.

His recent projects focus on exploring relationships between new media theory, political, social, cultural and environmental studies by concept development and prototyping for interactive media. He believes in a methodology of design based on his own, peculiar interpretation of the Black Box Theory presented at a TEDx event in 2012.

Currently, he is conducting multidisciplinary research on "Humane Technology for the Global South: Ethics of Interaction Design in the (post)Colonial Context", besides Europe frequently lecturing and giving master classes in such countries as Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, India and China. In years 2017-2018 he was elected chair of Central Participation Council of the University of the Arts The Hague (Royal Academy of Art + Royal Conservatoire). In 2022 he received the Impact: Climate Award from ITAC (International Teaching Artists Collaborative) for educational work on climate change problematics based on experimental use of new digital technologies. He is also a committee member for 'Digital Culture' in Creative Industries Fund NL (Stimuleringsfonds) and a nominator to the Prins Claus Award.

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