



Grand Jury Fiction Statement 2023

The jury was deeply moved and impressed by the eight films in competition for the Movies That Matter 2023 Fiction Award. Each film possessed unique qualities, a distinct perspective, and illuminated critically important issues that range from the UK's 1988 law known as Clause 28, stigmatizing the LGBTQ community - frighteningly comparable to what is occurring in many countries today - to the racism faced by the Roma community, to the terrible shortfalls in mental health support, to the childbearing burdens carried by women everywhere who lack reproductive rights and the dead ends faced by youth abandoned by society. Some of these films demanded that we acknowledge the young adults who have bravely taken responsibility for bearing witness to the dysfunction of the ossified systems they are born into and honor their efforts to make change. And yet, despite how dark this may sound, these are also films infused with humor, wit, and humanity.

We would like to give a Special Mention to the film *THE BLUE CAFTAN* for its beautifully rich and tender visualization and its representation of an observant Muslim woman who was also inclusive, open and loving. It is transcendent in its representation of a familial love that emerges from a romantic, erotic spark. *The Blue Caftan* has a timeless quality, and heartbreaking emotional depth. It is in every way a deeply satisfying film, a whispering requiem of love; mesmerizing, and beautifully crafted.

Ultimately, we have chosen a film that in every way manifests the highest form of cinema, combining exceptional craft and extraordinary creative expression. It takes on a subject so dark and taboo that it is rarely explored in any form of media and when it is, it is typically sensationalized. This film does so with an acutely real script, nuanced direction, and unforgettable performances. The cinematography is exceptionally immersive, yet unobtrusive; we felt we were living every moment. The director's connection to the actors has resulted in outstanding performances from an ensemble of actors of all ages. We realized the characters' transformative experiences were revealed in ways so subtle that we could only place them in the timeline of the film after we had seen it. For all these reasons, and more, we award the *Movies that Matter 2023*

Fiction Prize to *DALVA* by Emmanuelle Nicot, a production from Belgium and France.