

# Jury reports Movies that Matter Festival 2024

## Grand Jury Documentary Competition

Jury members: Lukasz Konopa, Anadil Hossain and Don Edkins

Movies That Matter continues to challenge us as jurors and viewers with powerful selection of films for the Grand Jury Documentary category. This year presented a dynamic and provocative slate of films which provided us with multitude of stories addressing human rights and dignity of people from around the world - both historic and current; reminding us of the circular nature of what people endure.

We congratulate all the filmmakers on their courageous and inspiring films for which they took both creative and personal risks. At a time when documentary filmmaking is becoming ever more challenging, evermore imperative, these filmmakers display a true dedication to the craft through a passion and perseverance which comes through the screen.

For a film that brings back to us the effects of colonial injustice and power struggles through an impressive archival of images, music and words and for reigniting passages of history with a unique reimagining of the language of film our special mention goes to ***Soundtrack to a Coup D'Etat***, directed by Johan Grimonprez.

This film is prescient in its stark reminder of the complicity of western governments and institutions in the conflicts raging through the world today due to the ongoing legacy of colonialism and oppression.

To the main award. We would like to highlight a film that brings to the fore an undocumented massacre and the retelling of this event to honor the victims and their families, and bring healing and closure to an open wound.

The **Mother of All Lies** by Asmae El Moudir (Morocco) is innovative, angry, funny and compassionate. It addresses generational trauma and the power of stolen memories, through a family and community forced to confront a painful, and unresolved past. Using a hybrid form of storytelling which takes a bold and creative approach the filmmaker takes us on a journey to excavate emotions and artefacts to confront human rights violations and freedom of speech in her country. Recreating a miniature stage for her characters to revisit this unspoken tragedy, this deeply personal film allows the memories and actions from that time to begin a cathartic healing.

The filmmaker displays a dexterity and ingenuity with which she weaves through a complex narrative and we are intrigued to see where this will take her in future endeavours.

## Grand Jury Fiction Competition

Jury members: Marnie Blok, Fatih Abay, Elaheh Nobakht

Before we reveal who the winner is of the grand jury fiction award of this edition of MTM, we would very much like to take this opportunity to thank the festival for giving us the opportunity to see so many compelling and beautiful films, for all the inspiring encounters we had, the heartfelt speeches we witnessed. Thank you all for putting your heart and soul in this festival. We felt it every inch of the way.

We as a jury would like to give a special mention to a film that across nine chapters, we witness individuals navigating the cultural, religious, and institutional constraints imposed in contemporary Iran. Each story paints a nuanced portrait of a complex society, the abuse of power and narrow-mindedness, with the resilience of individuals at its core. While you laugh at the absurdity, you realize tears of anger and indignation would be more fitting here. Our special mention goes to TERRESTERIAL VERSES by Ali Asgari & Alireza Khatami

As a jury we felt the need to pay tribute to a filmmaker that dedicated a big part of her cinematographic life to making movies that really matter. Agnieszka Holland- her film Green Border addresses one of the biggest problems we are facing- it depicts the fate of refugees stranded in the border region between Belarus and Poland, where they are hunted and humiliated by Polish and Belarusian border guards. The film is as stunning and impressive as it is heartbreaking and horrific. Miss Holland we make a deep bow to you.

Now for our winner- we as a jury were unanimous. Although we argued along the way about a possible winner- and did not always agree, when this film came along- we looked at each other and knew: we have a winner. For this film addressed issues such as social class, gender, authority, inclusion and empowerment in a superior mix of humor and emotions. The performances of the young cast members are impressive. This film addresses the very important basic human right to education, gives hope for a new generation to stand up and highlights the utmost importance of dedicated teachers. The winner of the MTM fiction Award 2024 is the Mexican film RADICAL by Christopher Zella.

## Activist Competition

Jury members: Gita Saedi Kiely, Joseph Curran, Hanne Küpers

Good Evening, we are Joseph Curran, Hanne Kupers and Gita Saedi Kiely and are honored to be this year's Activist Award jury this year. We had the privilege of watching eight exceptional films that all could receive this award. These films took us on many personal journeys. We followed brave activists as they combated systems of oppression, colonialism, censorship, violence and eroding democracies. Whether it was Drawing a Line or guarding a forest or river, writing a song or refusing to share a password, uncovering buried histories or sharing unspeakable traumas, at the heart of these extraordinary stories was a fierce resistance that could, and have, changed our world for the better.

All of these films are truly winners, but since we cannot give them all this award, we have chosen an honorable mention and award-winner.

As for the honorable mention, the jury was deeply moved by the commitment and endurance of this film. Presenting a complex historical injustice with unresolved reverberations into the modern day, the film's masterful combination of verite and archive material delivered both information and emotion with equal impact. The significance of documenting oral history in an ongoing struggle to reveal the willfully buried truths of a colonial past, was striking and vital. The film's harrowing revelations and perseverance and strength of its activist left an indelible mark. In honor of the mobilizing power of *Evelyn's* story, the jury felt compelled to award the SPECIAL MENTION to OUR LAND, OUR FREEDOM by MEENA NANJI & ZIPPY KIMUNDU.

The activist award goes to a film that left the jury speechless and profoundly touched. This intimate portrayal, told through first person and observational narrative, pulled you in immediately and didn't let you go. And in fact, the filmmaking process itself became a powerful tool for the activist to discover and build her own voice. With the most poignant and beautifully captured cinematic moments, this film shares a story of a people - and a young woman - that should not be forgotten. *Mediha* will serve as a role model for many young women who have suffered and survived, and the film will leave you gutted but hopeful through the resilience and joy *Mediha* and her brothers continue to present. We are thrilled to give the ACTIVIST AWARD to MEDIHA and co-directors HASAN OSWALD and MEDIHA IBRAHIM ALHAMAD.

## Camera Justitia Competition

Jury members: Doreen Boonekamp, Jennifer Huang

The jury was very impressed by the 9 powerful films selected for this year's Camera Justitia Competition. The selection included features, documentaries and an animated film by highly creative, talented and committed filmmakers showing us the many faces of justice and underlining the urgency of human rights and the rule of law. Many stories required great courage and stamina to be brought to the screen. According to the jury, all the films in the competition tell extremely important stories that audiences must see to gain a better understanding of the human experience around the world and of the functioning - and dysfunction- of legal systems. We paid special attention in our considerations to the impact a Special Mention and Movies that Matter Award can have in helping the film and filmmakers reach out to a wider audience.

During a time when peace seems to be a receding dream, our **Special Mention** goes to a film that offers an authentic voice of understanding and reconciliation. The jury was impressed by the filmmakers skillful integration of history within a personal story, and the determination of the film's protagonist to bring a human face to the suffering of his people by sharing his own pain. We find hope in the Israeli filmmaker's work across deep division to amplify Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish's work, and would like to underline this with a **Special Mention** to *I Shall Not Hate* by **Tal Barda**.

Our choice for the **Camera Justitia Award** captures globally shared issues on an intimate scale, offering a unique insight into the human cost when state institutions fail their citizens. The jury believes the film makes a powerful statement about the realities of poverty, intergenerational violence and failures of the social welfare system within Europe and around the world.

The film spotlights issues that often fail to capture headlines, leading to entrenched societal weaknesses resulting in individual, ubiquitous tragedies that are often ignored. Yet it also captures humor, love, and the hope of redemption for its young protagonist. We commend the filmmakers' great independence of spirit in their filmmaking approach and their courage in the risk they took following their protagonist for twelve years.

This year, Movies that Matter Camera Justitia Award goes to **Kix** by **Bálint Révész, Dávid Mikulán**.

## **Dutch Movies Matter Competition**

Jury members: Jean-Jaques Peretti, Mercedes Stalenhoef, Bülent Bahri Küçükerdoğan

“The jury was deeply moved by the films presented in this Dutch selection. Thanks to all the brilliant filmmakers!

The films were very different in their subjects and forms which made the work of the jury even more difficult.

Nevertheless, the jury members agreed that one of the films carried – not only an important human issue – but also used a very strong narrative form, confronting two types of images, photos and films. Rather than a confrontation, these two forms reinforced each other, projecting us into the subject with an incredible feeling of empathy!

That being said, the jury is happy to announce the winner of this Dutch selection: “Eddy’s oorlog”, directed by Joost van der Valk.”

## **Shorts Competition**

Jury members: Julian Ross, Clara Helbig, João Carlos Rodrigues

The Short Film Competition Jury appreciated the expansive range of accomplished works that opened different windows into what political filmmaking can be. It brought to the forefront a diverse range of issues that are urgent, always foregrounding humanity as a whole.

The jury would like to offer a special mention to a film that preserves a piece of local history which speaks to the ingenuity and resistance of people. Captured with raw energy, this film is a time capsule on an enduring subject: freedom of speech. The special mention goes to Julio Matos for Mute Utopia.

The awarded film is resolutely political, but not in a way that we are used to seeing in cinema. It plays with what can be shown and what is left to the imagination. Approaching a sensitive subject through tactile sensuality, this personal recollection of adolescent romance becomes a tale on prohibited intimacy. The Short Award goes to Maryam Tafakory for Mast-del.

## **Students' Choice Competition**

Jury members: Jop Emonts, Irene Altavilla, Timo van Daal

### **The Green Border**

The Green Border is a film that was never in the discussion of those to leave out of the selection. In a competition like this, for a big part filled with insightful documentaries, experienced Polish filmmaker Agnieszka Holland shows us how a largely fictional film can also serve truth in a humanitarian crisis. With the poetic black and white imagery and intense camerawork she separates these refugees from their common representations in the media and creates a heartfelt story of human beings. We want to especially commend the way in which she expands this towards all humans involved on either side of the border, and how she sharply condemns the deeply discriminatory paradox that is at the heart of this crisis.

### **Photophobia**

Our second nominee is Photophobia, directed by Ivan Ostrochovsky and Pavol Pekarčík, depicting, other than Nika and Vika's, the lives of the many Ukrainians whom at the start of the Russian invasion took shelter in a metro station in Kharkiv, mere kilometers away from the battle line. Photophobia consists of many scenes that could be seen as little vignettes of hope and escapism in the midst of fear and despair. All the scenes are gorgeously shot and framed, where this metro station looks just as enormous as it is claustrophobic, where characters who're standing in the middle of a crowded shot can still seem to be alone with just their own endless stream of thoughts, and where the sparse amount of daylight we do get to see simultaneously feels like a medicine and a warning to what's happening above the stairs. The title, Photophobia, has a double meaning: it's not only referring to how these people are scared of entering the daylight ('photo'), but through a clever use of an old View-Master to incorporate archive footage into this film that otherwise restricts itself to just only location, the title also refers to how difficult it can be to look back at better times when you're living in the midst of a nightmare.

### **Samuel and the Light**

Our third and last nomination is the fragrant and candid Samuel and the Light, a documentary filmed over the course of 6 years depicting the lives of young boy Samuel and his family and those of the community of the idyllic Ponta Negra, Brazil, as electricity appears in the coastal city for the first time. Interesting sounds, interesting natural shots. depiction of the close link of a culture and its geographical coordinates, while, at the same time, about people other than about a culture, and showing both local and non-local dynamics. Family dynamics. Modernity and tradition dynamics. Subtle and intelligent. We found this documentary to be having a remarkable effect on a young, Western audience: eliciting curiosity without forced sentimentalism, showing sides and ways of the process of globalization without reductive and over-simplifying preaching, depicting the village life that follows the rhythm of nature in a refreshingly non-condescending or alienating way. We found ourselves genuinely, sincerely interested in what those people were doing, not because of their cultural difference or the diversity of their lifestyle with ours - it was simply, non-corruptedly, interesting. For these reasons, we care to give Samuel and the light a heartfelt special mention - congratulations, Vinicius Girnys!

### **Announcement winner: Photophobia**

With unanimous agreement since rather the beginning of a genuinely long deliberation of around 3 hours. We believe the unanimity to speak for itself in regards to the beauty, realness, and intentionality in storytelling of this documentary. Congratulations, Pavol Pekarčík and Ivan Ostrochovský!

## Education Award

Jury members: Annelou Molendijk, Valentino Zaalman, Arthur Gort, Elly de Bruin

The winning film is an incredibly impressive documentary. A must-see for every young person and adult. It teaches you to consider people who have fled. There are many people, including many children, on the run.

Even today. This documentary takes you through the life story of the protagonist and the fears he, like many others, unfortunately had to endure for years. Especially in these times of much polarization and discrimination towards refugees, it is extra valuable that this film can raise awareness. We have a lot of respect for the protagonist, the friends he has made along the way, and the crew that has followed and supported him for years. We hope that this documentary will be watched by many. And that we all become a little kinder to each other.

The winning film is.....The Mind Game by Sajid Khan Nasiri, Eefje Blankevoort en Els van Driel

Special mention goes to Kleinkinderen van de Oost / Waves of War:

This documentary is very important. It shows that you can have respect for each other even when you have a different historical background.