

# JURY



## Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury

Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury is an Indian filmmaker known for his nuanced storytelling and ability to address pressing social issues through cinema. Primarily working in Bengali and Hindi films, Roy Chowdhury has earned a reputation for crafting narratives that blend realism with deep emotional resonance. His films often explore themes of justice, gender dynamics, and human relationships, making him one of India's most thought-provoking contemporary filmmakers.

Roy Chowdhury's breakthrough came with his Bengali films *Anuranan* (2006) and *Antaheen* (2009), both of which received critical acclaim for their exploration of complex human emotions and relationships. *Antaheen* won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in 2009, solidifying his place in Indian cinema. His ability to capture the subtleties of personal struggles, combined with his lyrical visual style, sets him apart as a filmmaker.

His most widely recognised film, *Pink* (2016), marked his Hindi cinema debut and became a landmark in discussions on women's rights and consent in India. Starring Amitabh Bachchan and Taapsee Pannu, *Pink* presented a gripping courtroom drama that challenged societal perceptions of morality and victim-blaming. The film's impactful message and realistic portrayal of gender injustice resonated widely, earning both critical and commercial success.

Roy Chowdhury's style is characterised by an understated yet powerful narrative approach, relying on naturalistic performances and carefully constructed atmospheres. His films often use everyday settings to depict profound social realities, making them relatable and thought-provoking.

With a commitment to telling meaningful stories that reflect contemporary societal challenges, Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury continues to shape Indian cinema with his insightful and compelling narratives. His work not only entertains but also provokes critical discussions, reinforcing the power of cinema as a medium for change.

# JURY



## Urvashi Archana

Urvashi Archana, an acclaimed actress in South Indian cinema, is known for her powerful performances and ability to bring depth to complex characters. She gained prominence in the 1980s with her naturalistic acting style, which set her apart in an industry often dominated by glamour-driven roles. Archana has worked in multiple languages, including Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi, and Odia, making her one of the most versatile performers in Indian cinema.

Her career is marked by a strong selection of films that emphasize storytelling and character depth. She has collaborated with some of the most respected filmmakers in the industry. One of her most notable performances came in *Veedu* (1988), directed by Balu Mahendra. The film, a poignant drama about a woman struggling to build a house amidst bureaucratic hurdles, earned Archana the National Film Award for Best Actress. Her restrained yet deeply emotional portrayal cemented her reputation as an actress of immense talent and substance.

Another significant film in her career is *Daasi* (1988), a Telugu period drama directed by B. Narsing Rao. Her performance as a bonded laborer in pre-independence India won her another National Film Award for Best Actress, making her one of the few actresses to receive the honor multiple times. Films like *Neengal Kettavai* (1984), *Kuttrapathirikai* (2007), *Janani* (1993), *Shesha Drushti* (1997), and *Nireekshana* (1982), showcase her versatility across genres and languages.

Unlike many mainstream actresses of her time, Archana has been selective about her roles, prioritizing performance-oriented characters over commercial success. Her dedication to meaningful cinema has made her a respected figure in the Indian film industry. Her legacy is defined by her ability to portray deeply human emotions with authenticity, making her a significant and enduring presence in Indian cinema.

# JURY



## Djordje Stojiljkovic

Celebrated Serbian cinematographer Djordje Stojiljkovic (SAS), is a graduate of the Camera Department at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade. He is known for his evocative imagery and ability to enhance storytelling through his mastery of light, composition, and movement. Stojiljkovic developed his artistic sensibilities during a time of political and cultural transformation in the Balkans, a context that informs much of his visual work.

Stojiljkovic's cinematography is distinguished by its poetic realism, seamlessly blending naturalistic visuals with striking, often symbolic imagery. His ability to capture the emotional essence of a scene elevates the narratives he works on, immersing audiences in stories that resonate deeply. His approach to light and shadow, combined with his precise framing, creates a visual language that is both atmospheric and intimate, bringing characters and their environments to life in profound ways. Stojiljković's work has been featured in *American Cinematographer*, the world's leading magazine on cinematography, further solidifying his reputation as a visionary director of photography. He is also a brand ambassador for Nanlux, actively contributing to the advancement of lighting technology in filmmaking and sharing his expertise with the industry.

His collaboration on international projects including the sci-fi fantasy *Kalki 2898 AD* has brought him global acclaim. Stojiljkovic's work has been recognized at various international film festivals, where critics have praised his ability to use the camera not just as a recording device, but as a storyteller in its own right. His versatility allows him to adapt to different genres and directors, yet his signature style—a balance of raw authenticity and visual lyricism—remains consistent.

Beyond his technical expertise, Stojiljkovic's contributions to Serbian and Balkan cinema reflect a commitment to preserving and promoting the region's cultural identity through visual storytelling. His work continues to inspire, ensuring his legacy as one of Serbia's most influential cinematographers.

# JURY



## Marco Bechis

Marco Bechis is a celebrated Chilean-Italian filmmaker and screenwriter known for his poignant explorations of political oppression, exile, and human resilience. Born in Santiago, Chile, in 1957, Bechis grew up in a politically turbulent environment, deeply shaping his artistic sensibilities. His work often delves into themes of dictatorship and its psychological toll, offering a profound lens into the human condition.

Bechis's personal history is intricately linked to his films. After being detained and expelled from Argentina during the military junta in the late 1970s, he sought refuge in Europe, eventually settling in Italy. This lived experience of political exile and repression forms the emotional core of his storytelling. His narratives are characterized by a deep empathy for his characters, often exploring the blurred boundaries between victim and perpetrator.

One of his most acclaimed works is *Garage Olimpo* (1999), a harrowing depiction of Argentina's Dirty War. The film follows Maria, a young activist detained in a clandestine torture center, capturing the dehumanizing machinery of state violence. Its unflinching realism and ethical complexity earned international acclaim, highlighting Bechis's ability to transform historical trauma into universally resonant cinema.

Bechis employs a restrained yet evocative visual style, favoring naturalistic performances and a stark aesthetic that amplifies the gravity of his narratives. His focus on marginalized voices and untold histories extends to films like *Hijos/Figli* (2001) and *Birdwatchers* (2008), the latter addressing the plight of Brazil's Indigenous Guarani-Kaiowá people.

Beyond his artistic achievements, Bechis's work underscores cinema's power as a tool for memory and resistance. Through his films, he confronts societal injustices, ensuring that the stories of the silenced and oppressed are neither forgotten nor ignored. His legacy as a filmmaker is a testament to the enduring strength of human storytelling.

# JURY



## Margarida Gil

Margarida Gil is a distinguished filmmaker and writer who has made significant contributions to Portuguese cinema. Born in 1950 in Lisbon, Gil emerged as a vital figure in the artistic landscape of Portugal, particularly during a time of profound cultural and political change in the country. Her works reflect a nuanced understanding of human relationships, cultural identity, and the interplay between personal and collective experiences.

Gil began her career in the 1970s, an era marked by Portugal's Carnation Revolution and the subsequent end of the Salazar dictatorship. This period of political upheaval profoundly influenced her artistic sensibilities, and her films often explore themes of freedom, identity, and societal transformation. She studied at the Lisbon Theatre and Film School (Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema), where she honed her craft and developed her distinctive voice as a storyteller.

Her directorial debut, *Rosa de Areia* (1989), garnered critical acclaim for its poetic and contemplative narrative style. The film delves into Portugal's colonial past and its impact on contemporary society, employing a visual language that is both evocative and introspective. Gil's subsequent works, such as *O Anjo da Guarda* (1999) and *Paixão* (2012), further showcase her ability to weave intimate human dramas with broader cultural and historical themes. Her most recent film, *Hands in Fire* (2024), premiered at the Berlinale.

Margarida Gil's films are celebrated for their striking cinematography, profound character development, and a deep engagement with Portugal's cultural and historical tapestry. Her work resonates with audiences beyond Portugal, offering universal insights into the human condition while remaining deeply rooted in her national identity.

Through her compelling storytelling and dedication to her craft, Margarida Gil continues to inspire new generations of filmmakers and solidify her legacy as one of Portugal's most influential cinematic voices.

# JURY



## Petri Kotwica

Petri Kotwica is a prominent Finnish filmmaker known for his compelling narratives and masterful exploration of human psychology. Born in 1964 in Helsinki, Kotwica has established himself as one of Finland's most notable contemporary directors, blending intense emotional depth with stark visual storytelling. His works often examine themes of morality, trust, and the fragility of human relationships, reflecting a distinctly Nordic sensibility.

Kotwica studied at the University of Helsinki and later honed his skills at the University of Art and Design Helsinki (now part of Aalto University). He gained recognition with his feature debut, *Homesick* (2005), which marked him as a director capable of crafting intricate emotional landscapes. His breakout success came with *Black Ice* (Musta jää, 2007), a psychological thriller that delves into betrayal, jealousy, and revenge. The film's taut narrative and striking cinematography earned it widespread acclaim, including a nomination for the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival.

A recurring theme in Kotwica's work is the moral ambiguity of his characters. His films resist simplistic categorizations, instead delving into the complex interplay of human emotions. For instance, *Rat King* (2012) explores the dark corners of online gaming addiction, while *Absolution* (2015) addresses guilt and forgiveness through the lens of a tragic accident.

Kotwica's visual style is minimalist yet powerful, employing Finland's stark landscapes to enhance the emotional resonance of his stories. His films often juxtapose external serenity with internal turmoil, creating a sense of unease that lingers long after the credits roll.

Through his thought-provoking narratives and keen psychological insights, Petri Kotwica continues to push the boundaries of Finnish cinema, earning him a respected place in the international film community.

# JURY



## Sudath Mahaadivulwewa

Sudath Mahaadivulwewa is a Sri Lankan filmmaker known for his socially conscious storytelling and commitment to shedding light on the country's socio-political realities. Through his films, he has tackled themes of war, displacement, and human resilience, making him one of Sri Lanka's most influential contemporary filmmakers.

Emerging during a time of significant political unrest in Sri Lanka, Mahaadivulwewa's work has often focused on the impact of the country's prolonged civil war. His films provide a voice to marginalised communities, particularly those affected by conflict and displacement. His documentary-style realism and unflinching portrayal of suffering distinguish him from many of his contemporaries, as he uses cinema as a tool for activism and awareness.

One of his most notable works is *This Land Belongs to the Army* (2003), a powerful documentary that critiques the military's occupation of civilian land in post-war Sri Lanka. The film, known for its raw and compelling narrative, sparked discussions on land rights and the struggles of displaced communities. Mahaadivulwewa's fearless approach to storytelling reflects his deep concern for justice and human rights.

His cinematic style is marked by an emphasis on authenticity, often incorporating real-life testimonies and minimalistic visuals to enhance the emotional weight of his narratives. He seamlessly blends fiction and documentary elements, creating films that are both informative and deeply moving.

Despite the challenges of censorship and political opposition, Mahaadivulwewa continues to make films that provoke critical thought and challenge the status quo. His work remains a vital part of Sri Lanka's film industry, proving that cinema can be a powerful medium for truth and change. Through his dedication to socially relevant filmmaking, he has cemented his legacy as a fearless storyteller and advocate for justice.

# JURY



## Tamineh Milani

Tamineh Milani is a renowned Iranian filmmaker and screenwriter celebrated for her bold and thought-provoking narratives that explore themes of gender, freedom, and social justice. Born in 1960 in Tabriz, Iran, Milani began her career as an architect before transitioning to cinema, and emerged as one of the most prominent voices challenging societal norms. A prolific director, she has made 15 films, each contributing to important social discourse in Iranian and global cinema.

Milani's films focus on the complexities of women's lives in a patriarchal society and address the struggles and aspirations of Iranian women, tackling subjects often considered taboo. Her works blend personal and political elements, crafting narratives that resonate deeply within and beyond Iran's borders.

One of her most acclaimed films, *Two Women (Do Zan)*, (1999), examines the divergent fates of two university friends, capturing the societal pressures and constraints imposed on women. The film was both a critical and commercial success, earning international recognition and sparking important conversations about women's rights in Iran.

Another significant work is *The Hidden Half (Nimeh-ye Penhan)*, (2001), a daring exploration of love, political idealism, and personal sacrifice set against the backdrop of Iran's tumultuous political history. The film's candid portrayal of sensitive issues led to controversy and even legal challenges, underscoring Milani's courage in confronting entrenched societal norms.

In *The Fifth Reaction (Vakonesh-e-Panjom)*, (2003), Milani explores the challenges faced by women in a legal system that favors men. The film follows a widow fighting for custody of her children, highlighting systemic injustices and the resilience of women against oppression.

Milani's work transcends filmmaking, serving as a testament to the power of art to challenge oppression and inspire change. Her legacy as a fearless storyteller ensures her place as one of the most influential figures in Iranian and global cinema.