

The Young Italian Filmmakers Award: An International Exchange Program Rewards Young Talent

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Italian cinema is planning a comeback. Sorrentino's victory at the Academy Awards has started a chain reaction, and more and more Italian films and filmmakers are crossing the Ocean.

The Italian Cultural Institute of New York and The New York Film Academy have celebrated three young Italian directors who have won The 2013 Young Italian Filmmakers Award. The winners – Davide Gambino for his documentary *Pietra Pesante*, Manfredi Lucibello for his short *Storia di Nessuno* and Samuele Rossi for his feature-length film *La Strada Verso Casa* – had the opportunity to travel to NYC, showcase their work and discuss the future of filmmaking with other young filmmakers from all corners of the world.

All this was made possible thanks to a partnership with Yale University and the support of laFondazioneNY. Founded less than a year ago by internationally acclaimed designer Massimo Vignelli and professor Riccardo Viale, former director of the Italian Cultural Institute of New York,



laFondazioneNY is a cultural foundation that promotes the exchange of talented Italians abroad.

"It is important to import talented Americans back to our country, too, and support Italians looking for recognition in the United States," Viale told i-Italy in an interview a few weeks before the awards ceremony. David Klein, Senior Director of NYFA, has spoken profusely about the importance of a foreign exchange program for student filmmakers.

NYFA is an international film school founded in 1992 by Jerry Sherlock, a former film, television, and theater producer. The school's philosophy is that you "learn by doing," therefore students go through intensive, hands-on training. "In order to learn filmmaking you have to make films," David Klein told the three winners and others who attended a panel discussion in their honor.

Davide Gambino is a writer-director based in Palermo, Milan, and Brussels. His *Pietra Pesante* is a documentary shot in Sicily that tells the magical story of a shepherd and his passion for sculpture.

Manfredi Lucibello is originally from Florence, but filmmaking has taken him across the world. *Storia di Nessuno* is a powerful short that feels "like a river speeding towards its destination without any resistance," the filmmaker said.

Samuele Rossi's *La Strada Verso Casa* is the story of three young Italians, Michelangelo, Antonio, and, Giulia, whose lives are painfully interrupted by loss. Their stories appear different yet intertwine in unexpected ways. Without realizing it, they help each other through their pain and find a way to return to the normalcy of living.

Moderated by Italian journalist Andrea Visconti, the filmmakers spoke with other young aspiring directors about emerging movements in film, especially in countries like Brazil, Belgium, and Denmark. They all convened around one basic notion: yes, each country has its differences and sensibility, yet all desire to tell stories that are clearly affected by geographic, social, and cultural circumstances. They feel the need to depict smaller realities, rather than entire countries, like the Sicilian microcosm inhabited by the sculptor-shepherd of *Pietra Pesante*.

"Sharing these realities with the world," Fabio Troisi, cultural attaché at the Italian Cultural Institute said, "is made possible by programs like The Young Italian Filmmakers Award. This is a way to present our culture abroad, so that people get to know the many realities of Italy, and at the same time, it's a way to help young new talents develop. They are the ones who represent Italy and its excellence in the world."

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