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Sundance: Transgender Filmmaker Says Jury Prize Is "Huge Stride" for LGBTQ Portrayals

Canadian director Luis de Filippis hopes the honor will mean fewer transgender characters are "eroticized, sensationalized or vilified."

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[\[Photo\]](#)



Transgender filmmaker Luis de Filippis on Tuesday night earned a special jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival for a short film, *For Nonna Anna*, that depicts a transgender character who has already transitioned.

That such depictions are rare in Hollywood has made the Sundance honor all the more satisfying for the Toronto-based writer and director. The short film about a trans girl caring for her Italian grandmother takes transgender storytelling in Hollywood beyond traditional coming-out narratives.

"It's a huge stride for trans filmmakers and trans representation on screen for Sundance to recognize *For Nonna Anna* with this Special Jury Prize," de Filippis said Wednesday. The Canadian filmmaker told *The Hollywood Reporter* trans stories have too often "eroticized, sensationalized and vilified trans characters."

de Filippis accepts that film and TV audiences accustomed to transgender representations like Laverne Cox in *Orange is the New Black* and Caitlyn Jenner's reality TV series are captivated by transition and its physical mechanics. But in *For Nonna Anna*, de Filippis

portrays a young girl after transition who assumes her dying grandmother doesn't approve of her, only to discover a tender bond in their shared vulnerability.

"This film allows us to be seen as human beings, not as creatures looked down [upon] as different. If we can make our lives a little bit nicer and easier, that's what film should be about," de Fillippis explains. *For Nonna Anna* premiered at the Toronto Film Festival, and de Fillippis is taking the short next to Rotterdam.

"I hope this emboldens funders and programmers to continue supporting work that represents unrepresented authentic experiences," de Fillippis added.

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