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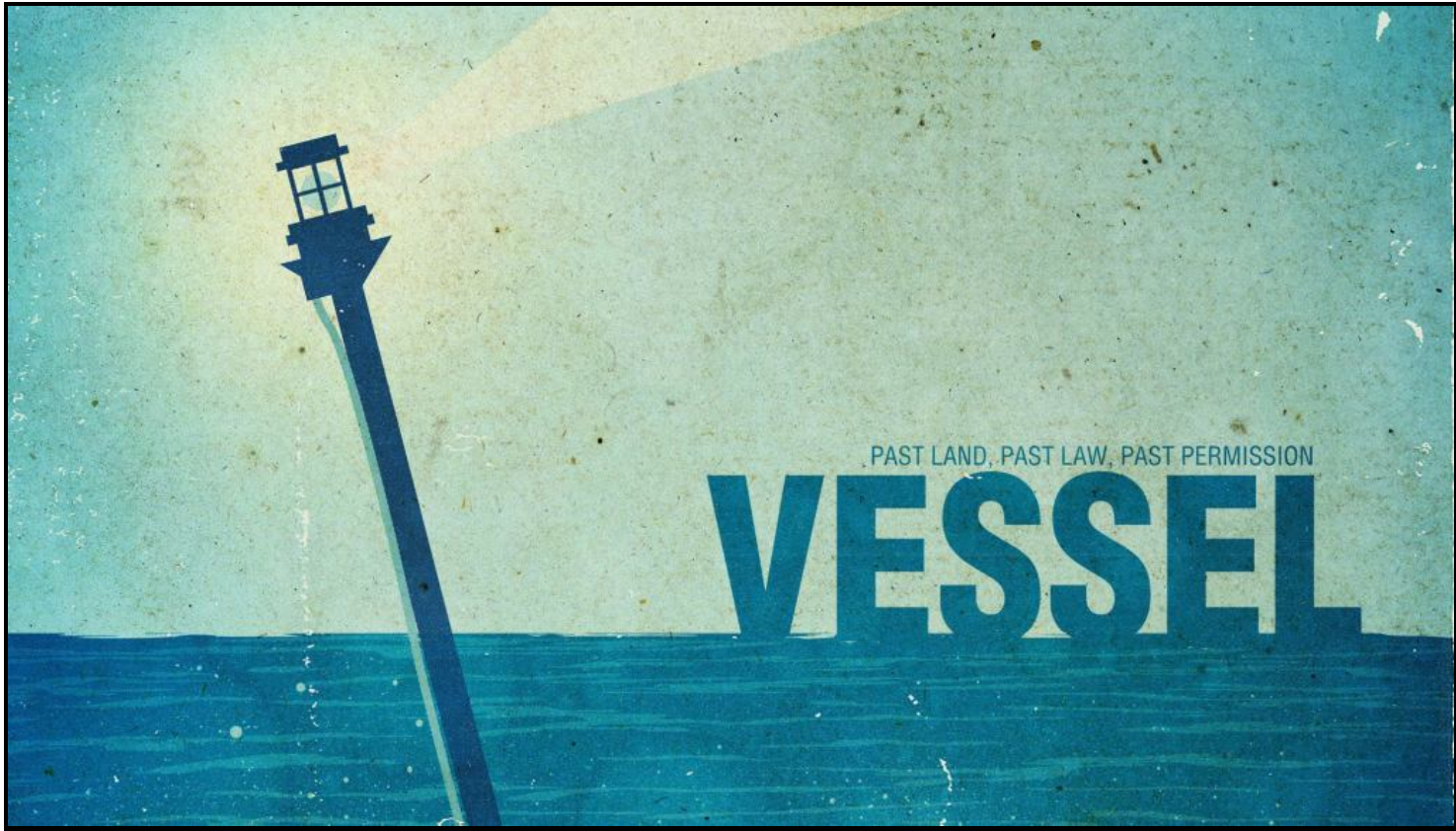


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On September 24, 2014 [Dawn Porter came to Montclair State University to discuss her two films: "Spies of Misery" and "The Last Days of the American West"]

# Film Premiere: Vessel



Words by **Bryana Arlington**

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**P**eople often ask me, “Why documentaries?” and I am instantly filled with dread. It always bothers me that I struggle to come up with what should be a simple answer. Truthfully, documentary filmmaking was not something I considered on my list of “things I want to be when I grow up”. It happened naturally, through opportunity and continued social interest. (Booooring!) Still, I wish I could formulate a solid response that would a) melt your heart, b) keep you from falling asleep, and c) convince you that documentaries are not only for the history channel!

I recently returned from a two-month stay in Europe where I was editing my first “real” documentary film. This rigorous experience really stretched me, both professionally and personally, and by the end of the trip I began to ask myself, “why documentaries?” Luckily, my passions were renewed last weekend when I saw the documentary film, “Vessel” at its New York City premiere.

There was a lot of buzz about “Vessel” online, but I never got around to watching it. The extent of what I knew about the film was that it was about medical abortions and there was some sort of boat involved. (In hindsight, I’m surprised my curiosity about such a peculiar match-up didn’t motivate me to watch it sooner.) In any case, I’m glad I held off. Watching it for the first time after struggling with putting together my own documentary absolutely reinvigorated my love and passion for the art.

I spent the first half of the film analyzing and admiring the technical ways it was put together—the use of animation to deliver heavy information, the seamless segues from different locations and time periods, and most importantly, the use of rough and gritty footage. In a time when HD and aesthetics are everything, the use of this raw footage really indicated that the content of the film was compelling enough for me, as a viewer, not to care about that minute and half where the subject’s head was cut off, or when the camera was out of focus, or that three-point-lighting was not used for that interview. I was completely enveloped in the characters and the story being told.

I spent the second half of the film mesmerized by the subject, Rebecca Gomperts, and all the work she puts into her organization, Women on Waves (and now, Women on Web). Watching her and her incredible team of women fight unapologetically to provide access to information about abortion to women around the world was electrifying. I described this feeling to a friend afterwards as, “watching a superhero movie.”

As I sat in the theatre watching this story unfold... I realized my answer to the reoccurring question, “why documentaries?” Much like “Vessel’s” main character, Rebecca, documentaries are chaotic, passionate, unapologetic, and most importantly... they’re real. No one is writing a script or staging a scene. There are no sets, no actors, no “let’s try that again... with feeling!” Documentaries are stories about real people, and real places, and they can be incredible platforms for real change to be made. Sure, George Clooney is nice to look at... but have you ever seen a 40-year-old Norwegian doctor jump onto a ship as it’s being pulled away by a foreign government?!



# Vessel - Trailer

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Watch Trailer

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**vesselthefilm.com**(<http://vesselthefilm.com/>)

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Montclair State | New Jersey

12.05.2014

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Bryana is a senior in the Television and Digital Media program at Montclair State University with a concentration in Documentary.

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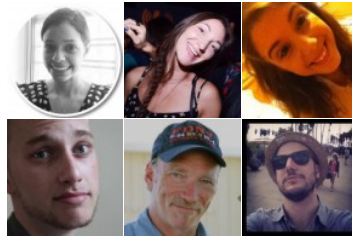
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