

DOWNEAST

A documentary by David Redmon & Ashley Sabin

World Premiere: 2012 Tribeca Film Festival (World Competition)

77 minutes – 16x9 – Stereo – Color – Not Rated English

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Description

Downeast is an experiential story that unfolds over the course of a year-and-a-half in the small lobster village of Prospect Harbor, Maine. It observes the closing of the last remaining Sardine Cannery in the United States that shut down in April 2010. A few months later, Boston-based entrepreneur Antonio Bussone purchased the plant, hoping to re-build a lobster processing facility and rehire the laid-off sardine workers (most of whom are women over 65 years old).

Antonio's troubles begin on the first day he arrives to Prospect Harbor during a town-hall meeting as local politicians oppose his vision of rebuilding the factory with the use of a \$200,000 federal grant combined with his investment of more than \$2 million dollars. Undeterred, Antonio moves forward, determined to build and operate one of the first lobster factories in the United States.

Storytelling Approach

Our approach is simultaneously hands-off and direct involvement. We repeatedly wait and observe by putting ourselves in the middle of action and mundane activities (when possible). In this sense, *Downeast* is told from the point of view of the complexities Antonio experiences as he embarks on financing the building of a factory in the United States. Our story connects Antonio directly to the lobstermen who reside on the working waterfront of Maine, the elderly women who want to work in the factory, and the current climate of working people who are directly impacted by the decisions of a business owner, local politicians, the federal government, and private banks.

We make nuanced portraits to understand the tricky situations in which people find themselves and what happens when they navigate the situation. We hope audiences gravitate toward experiencing our stories with their bodies through tone, emotion and sensation.

Filmmakers' Biography

David studied qualitative and visual sociology and has a Ph.D. in sociology. He is a former 2010-2011 Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University. Ashley studied art history and graduated from Pratt Institute. Together Redmon and Sabin have produced, directed, edited and photographed *Mardi Gras: Made in China* (2005), *Kamp Katrina* (2007), *Intimidad* (2008), *Invisible Girlfriend* (2009), *Girl Model* (2011) and *Downeast* (2012). Their intimate and intricately crafted documentaries have won a variety of film festival awards and their work

has aired on television stations throughout the world.

Aesthetic Influences

Sweetgrass inspired us to expand our understanding of visual sensibilities and our conceptual understanding of experiential storytelling. However, our movie *Downeast* ended up the opposite of *Sweetgrass*. We should add that *Downeast* is part one of four films made in Downeast Maine. Part 2 is much more experimental, experiential, and sensory based. Part 3 is a 70 minute, one-shot movie of the entire factory. Part 4 is in progress.

Downeast received funding through the LEF Foundation.

Credits:

Directed, Produced, Edited, and Cinematography by David Redmon & Ashley Sabin

Producers: Deborah and Dale Smith

Consulting Producers: Marcy & Robert Garriott

Original Music by Matthew Dougherty; additional song by Bob Massey

Still Photography: Meghan Brosnan

Question and Answers

How did the project begin?

We read about the closing of the last sardine cannery in the United States in the New York Times and decided to pursue the building as the character in the story. In other words, our original intent was to document the transformation of the factory. What will happen to it? Will it become demolished? Will it deteriorate? Can the space itself be a story? Then, we heard about Antonio Bussone's intent to buy the factory. We immediately contacted him for permission to film. He gave 100% access. As the story progressed Antonio became the central character.

How long did it take to make the film?

In all, it took slightly over a year and a half to shoot and edit. Early into making the movie we decided to move to the small town of Prospect Harbor. Before we moved there, we were driving to Maine from the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard where we were finishing *Girl Model*. Eventually, we rented a small house directly on the coast of Maine, about 4 miles from the factory. We had 24 hour access to the story. It was important to be part of the story on a daily basis as it unfolded over time. Living in Prospect Harbor provided a sense of texture and the patterns of daily life that we otherwise wouldn't be able to capture episodically.

How did the storyline develop?

At the end of the day we'd capture footage and edit scenes. We realized the central story was about a businessman (Antonio) coming into a small community as an outsider and his struggles as a business owner. Lobsters, of course, are central to the story. The larger story is about the federal government's involvement in providing grants and loans to business that try to develop jobs in high-risk, impoverished areas for people without work, and how large banks can make whimsical decisions that impact thousands of people in these rural regions.