

Waste Land

Brazil / UK 2010

Directed by
Lucy Walker
Karen Harley
João Jardim

Cinematography
Ernesto Herrmann
Dudu Miranda
Heloísa Passos

Original Music
Moby

Cast
Vik Muniz
Himself

99 minutes

Welcome to our first film 'day trip' and indeed our first visit to Winchester Discovery Centre. Tonight's film is an uplifting documentary reflecting the transformative power of art and another reminder of just how incredible the human spirit is.

'I will show you fear in a handful of dust,' wrote T S Eliot in his 1922 poem 'The Waste Land'. And while Lucy Walker's enlightening documentary shares its title with Eliot's masterpiece of disillusionment (discounting the definite article anyway), it's not fear her subjects find in handfuls of dust but self-respect, hope and a means of living a more dignified life. In eschewing this kind of reductive sensationalism in favour of something altogether subtler, nobler and, more importantly, authentic, Walker raises serious questions about the distribution of global wealth without recourse to hand wringing and in doing so leaves the humanity and dignity of her subjects intact.

A compelling story in its own right, *Waste Land* is also clearly meant as an illustration of what's possible with recycling; it's a call to arms against our everyday indifference to our considerable waste as well as an attempt at an empathetic portrait of a group of people that many aren't too anxious to get to know. These aspirations mesh together with an ease that's unusual in a socially minded documentary because the filmmakers understand the power of their most potent image: the expansive mounds of Jardim Gramacho itself. The landfill provokes contradictory feelings that give the film a much-needed grit. At first we see a depressing testament to mankind's inability to more efficiently make its way on this planet. But, yet, this wasteland is also strangely, ironically beautiful—an abstract art form far beyond Muniz's, or anyone's, scope. This wasteland has come to define a group of people who may have otherwise never found definition, and who're gradually allowing the Jardim Gramacho to redeem itself as a producer of valuable (and lucrative) reused materials. That's the ultimate generosity of Muniz's pursuit here: He illustrates to the *catadores* their own value, and he communicates that message without relying on words whose meaning could be compromised by cultural difference.

Our next screening...

The Illusionist (Fr/UK)

Dir: Sylvain Chomet

Tue 28 June 2011 7:30pm

at The Point, Eastleigh £6

Box Office – 02380 652333

Jason Woodyer, Little White Lies

Pick through trash pickers
Wade through the refuse and filth
Find value, find art

The Haiku Review

Chuck Bowen, Slant Magazine

