

Emily Liang

Film Review

AMS 122

Waste Land

Every single day, we generate garbage. In the vast majority of our towns, we are lucky to have garbage collectors who collect for us. Our business with it ends there. We care little about the fate of what we generate from there. What eludes us is that that garbage we generate gives people a livelihood. Hopeless as it may sound, Lucy Walker creates an inspiring story from the depths of the biggest dumpsite in the world, the Jardim Gramacho dump site outside Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Even though Walker initially looked to create a documentary about Brazilian photographer Vik Muniz, her veering off the topic and into the lives of the pickers in Jardim Gramacho is what makes the whole documentary intriguing. It is not only informative but also inspiring.

The story that Walker addresses in the documentary resonates strongly with the socioeconomic state of Brazil. The director uses the livelihoods of over 3000 people living in the environs of the dumpsite, despite the odor, to reveal the economic and social challenges of Brazil. The pickers are driven by challenges to take what they do as a profession. In the documentary, one of the pickers even reports meeting a corpse in the dump site; a demonstrator of the extrajudicial killings that define Brazil's social state. Despite the negativities and the ethical questions the film raises, the film doubles as a great inspiration. One can only marvel at the innovativeness of the pickers. Apart from income, they make meals out of the little they get there. They utilize every valuable item they come across. The fact that the materials they collect

are of great artistic value can drive one to tears. Their decision to form a union and even run a clinic for themselves are among the most inspiring stories one will ever meet.

Moreover, the filmmaker uses perfect allure to present their message. Waste land is adept with color. The colors that the filmmaker utilizes blend perfectly with the mood and the message that Walker is attempting to pass across. The cinematography has a touch of perfection to it; it takes the view right to Jardim Gramacho. The film utilizes a tone that emphasizes the seriousness of the message therein without introducing boredom. Despite the lack of emotion in the tone, it is still effective in passing the message across. The soundtracks and the bits of music used also related perfectly to the subject matter and prevent moments of absolute silence; there is no cause for boredom.

Even in the most difficult of places, hope does exist and is strong enough to drive people ahead. The cheerful nature of the pickers in Jardim Gramacho and their innovation and diligence are important challenges for anyone watching the documentary. Even in 2019, Waste land is a documentary worth viewing.

Comment Summary

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1. Good observation/introduction
2. pickers
3. "meeting a corpse" feels oddly phrased, maybe "unearthing" or "finding" would fit better
4. important observation, a moment you could pick up further in your analysis, the authoritarian regime that define Brazil into the mid 80s

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5. "allure" feels like an odd word choice
6. elaborate