

PAGES 2013
Wexner Center for the Arts
Teacher Resources for Wasteland



Synopsis

Filmed over nearly three years, WASTE LAND follows renowned artist Vik Muniz as he journeys from his home base in Brooklyn to his native Brazil and the world's largest garbage dump, Jardim Gramacho, located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. There he photographs an eclectic band of "catadores" -- self-designated pickers of recyclable materials. Muniz's initial objective was to "paint" the *catadores* with garbage. However, his collaboration with these inspiring characters as they recreate photographic images of themselves out of garbage reveals both the dignity and despair of the *catadores* as they begin to re-imagine their lives. Director Lucy Walker (DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND, BLINDSIGHT and COUNTDOWN TO ZERO) and co-directors João Jardim and Karen Harley have great access to the entire process and, in the end, offer stirring evidence of the transformative power of art and the alchemy of the human spirit.

(Source: <http://www.wastelandmovie.com/>)

About the Artist: Vik Muniz

Vik Muniz was born into a working-class family in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1961. As a young man he was shot in the leg whilst trying to break up a fight. He received compensation for his injuries and used this money to fund a trip to New York City, where he has lived and worked since the late 1980s. He began his career as a sculptor but gradually became more interested in photographic reproductions of his work, eventually turning his attention exclusively to photography. He incorporates a multiplicity of unlikely



materials into this photographic process. Often working in series, Vik has used dirt, diamonds, sugar, string, chocolate syrup and garbage to create bold, witty and often deceiving images drawn from the pages of photojournalism and art history. His work has been met with both commercial success and critical acclaim, and has been exhibited worldwide. His solo show at MAM in Rio de Janeiro was second only to Picasso in attendance records; it was here that Vik first exhibited his "Pictures of Garbage Series" in Brazil.

(Source: www.wastelandmovie.com)

First Look at *Waste Land*

Official website:

<http://www.wastelandmovie.com/>

Link to numerous newspaper reviews:

<http://www.wastelandmovie.com/reviews.html>

Check out PBS for interactive articles and videos

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/waste-land/>

Environmental Issues

How do the problems associated with trash point to larger social and cultural dynamics?

An overview of the global trash trade and an introduction to the issues

Link: [The Globalization of Garbage Following the Trail of Toxic Trash](#)

In what ways are countries/organizations/individuals responding productively to waste problems?

This article talks about how plastic shredding has become an industry in China:

Note: This article is part of a seven part segment on trash written by Adam Minter

Link: [The Plastics Shredders of China - James Fallows](#)

Another article from Adam Minter where he argues for the economic advantage working with recyclables has in China:

Link: [The Motor Breakers of China - James Fallows](#)

This article calls trash “a global commodity,” because of the money and products that can be made from recyclable materials. Read how recyclables are processed:

<http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/homepage-feature/item/14311-recycling>

How are the global issues of trash affecting the environment?

The world’s largest rubbish dump might actually be swirling in the Pacific Ocean. Read about what people are calling the ‘plastic soup’ of the Pacific:

Link: [The world's rubbish dump a tip that stretches from Hawaii to Japan - Green Living - Environment](#)

Learn what kinds of trash have landed on the moon and how they got there:

Link: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/12/the-trash-weve-left-on-the-moon/266465/>

How do environmental issues become economic? In what ways are people suffering, like the catadores, and in what ways are people prospering, like the woman who made an empire out of recycled paper?

Innovative ways of using trash can make yield financial wealth. Read how Chinese woman, Zhang Yin, became one of the richest women in the world through paper recycling:

[Blazing a Paper Trail in China - New York Times](#)

An article about the type of environmental work catadores are doing in Brazil

[SAPVoice No, Thank You. I Am Working Brazil's Hands-On Environmental Solution](#)

MIT Students partner with Brazilian *catadores* to improve profit

<http://green.blorge.com/2011/02/brazilian-catadores-and-mit-students-partner-on-the-green-grease-project/>

How does trash move?

This link leads to the site created by MIT's award-winning Trash|Track project.

Researchers adhered tracking devices to discarded materials and followed their travels:

****Be sure to locate the tabs on the left-hand side to see the visuals****

<http://senseable.mit.edu/trashtrack/index.php?id=1>

An article from 2009 which details the beginnings of MIT's project Trash|Track:

[MIT scientists track trash to final resting places - The Boston Globe](#)

What happens to old computers and electronics when they are obsolete? Read this article on e-waste, a summary of a segment on 60 Minutes:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/11/06/60minutes/main4579229.shtml>

Political Issues

How are individuals responding politically to the problems associated with food waste? What types of political positions are available to protest trash and reduce waste?

Dumpster Diving and freeganism are contemporary trends in America. OSU's campus newspaper, The Lantern, wrote an article that features this movement while highlighting the group, Food Not Bombs:

[Freegans salvage food dumpster diving](#)

The New York Times also has an article on the freeganism movement:

[Not Buying It - New York Times](#)

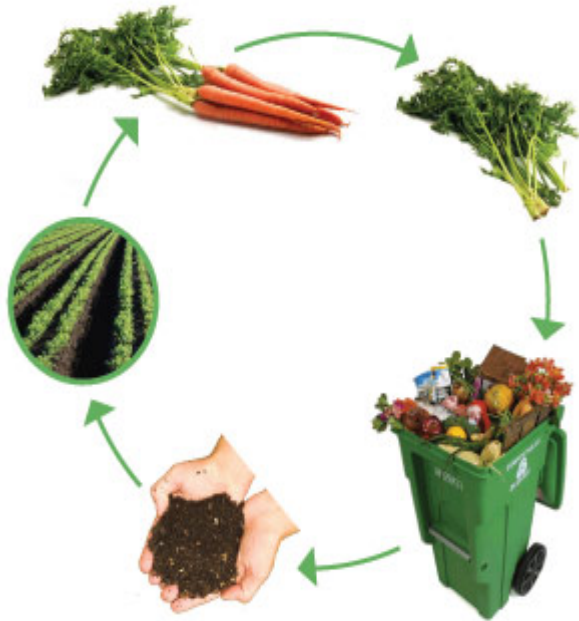
This article discusses how culinary dishes have stemmed from items that are considered 'throw-away,' like pineapple peels and eggshells:

[Fine dining's trash-to-table movement - Washington Post](#)

Are landfills sufficient solutions in combating waste?

Composting is a growing solution to solid waste management:

<http://www.enviropfectsolutions.com/compost-operations.html>



Although Columbus has one of the largest landfills in the United States, an increasing number of community members and businesses are employing composting techniques to promote sustainability:

<http://www.thisweeknews.com/content/stories/gahanna/news/2013/03/05/food-recycler-ramping-up-local-composting-efforts.html>

What are youth doing to change global trends in garbage?

Pick Up America, a youth-led movement, has responded to the trash crisis by creating a zero-waste campaign:

<http://www.pickupamerica.org/about/movement>

Similar Community Projects Creating Art from Trash

In the film, the artist works with the catadores to create artworks out of trash. What other communities do this type of work? Is it intrinsically political? Does your community participate in projects like this?

Read about a group of 15 artists in Nepal who have collected 1.5 tons of garbage from Mt. Everest to make art in the project called "Mt. Everest 8848 Art Project":

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/15/world/asia/everest-trash-art>

Students at Saint Mary-of-the-Wood College collected trash from the Wabashiki Fish 7 Wildlife area and transformed it into a fish sculpture to raise awareness of river pollution:

<http://www.pottsmc.com/article/20130221/LIFE05/130229850/students-to-turn-river-trash-into-art-with-message>

Found-Object Writing & Art

These links contain examples of writers and artists who use found materials in their artwork.

Austin Kleon is famous for popularizing newspaper blackout poetry, where words are removed from the text of newspapers to reveal serious, funny, and clever sentiments.

<http://austinkleon.com/category/newspaper-blackout-poems/>

Kleon's concept inspired many artists to create their own poetry which can be found compiled on this site.

[Newspaper Blackout](#)

This site suggests that found-poetry is a way to beat writer's block or write about something painful or inexpressible. It gives tips for other types of writing, too.

[Found Poetry - Found Poem](#)

How-to instructions from the New York Times on found & headline poetry

<http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/blogs/learning/pdf/2010/NCTEarticle>

The surrealist writing & drawing game called 'Exquisite Corpse' is a great way to write collaborative or group poetry. The website below features its historical root interactively.

www.exquisitecorpse.com

The Library of Congress also took up the surrealist idea to create an ongoing story called 'The Exquisite Corpse Adventure' designed for multiple writers to eventually end the tale.

<http://read.gov/exquisite-corpse/>

We don't just find text in books. Indeed, text is a visual part of everyday.

This flickr feed features found text, leading us to question in what ways text is understood and used.

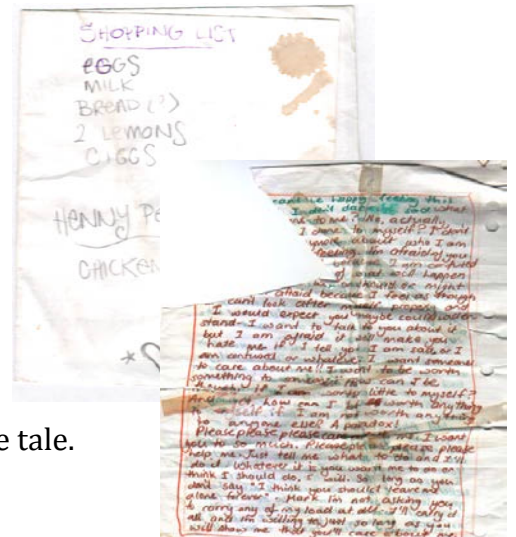
<http://www.flickr.com/groups/foundtext/>

Projects like Post Secret use written text and appropriated images creatively to write about confessional, traumatic, and joyful experiences

<http://postsecret.com>

An interesting blog that collects found and discarded notes and publishes them, calling it 'urban poetry.' How does context or lack-of-context inform our interpretation?

<http://www.objectnotfound.net/writing/gallery-one>



A project where people are encouraged to write love letters to strangers, leaving them around the city for others to find and receive love

[Found Letters](#) [The World Needs More Love Letters](#)

This website compiles forty works from artists who make & sell work from re-purposed items: [40 Terrific Works of Art Made From Common Trash](#)

Terms & Vocabulary

ASMARE: Association of Catadores of Paper, Cardboard, and Reusable Materials, founded may 1, 1990 by Dona Geralda Marçal. The association aims to fight for better opportunities for the homeless in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

Catadores – a word used to refer to a profession in Brazil, usually in reference to people who sort through garbage in search of recyclable material

<http://www.epa.gov/students/teachers.html>

Brazil



Capital: Brasilia

Population: 201,009,622 (July 2013 est.)

Ethnic Groups: White 53.7%, Mulatto (mixed white and black) 38.5%, Black 6.2%, other (includes Japanese, Arab, Amerindian) 0.9%, unspecified 0.7% (According to the 2000 census)

Languages: Portuguese is the official and most widely spoken language. (Less common languages include Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, English, and a large number of minor Amerindian languages)

Literacy Rate: 90.4% (people of 15+ years can read and write)

Climate: Mostly tropical.

Government type: Federal Republic

Administrative divisions: 26 states (estados, singular - estado) and 1 federal district* (distrito federal); Acre, Alagoas, Amapa, Amazonas, Bahia, Ceara, Distrito Federal*, Espirito Santo, Goias, Maranhao, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, Para, Paraiba, Parana, Pernambuco, Piaui, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Norte, Rio Grande do Sul, Rondonia, Roraima, Santa Catarina, Sao Paulo, Sergipe, Tocantins

Source: *The world factbook*

Book & Text Resources



GARBOLGY
Our Dirty Love Affair with Trash



Garbology: Our Dirty Love Affair with Trash by: Edward Humes
Humes, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist reports on America's biggest export: Trash. He writes about how it travels, how much is produced, how it is managed, and how countries are generating economic prosperity with new approaches.

Check out NPR's book review:

[Following Garbage's Long Journey Around The Earth NPR](#)

Steal Like An Artist 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative by: Austin Kleon

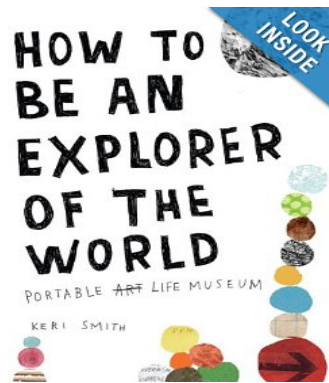
Called 'a manifesto for the digital age,' Kleon, famous for newspaper blackout poetry, describes 10 things artists working today should consider when making their work.

http://www.amazon.com/Steal-Like-Artist-Things-Creative/dp/0761169253/ref=pd_sim_b_2

How to Be an Explorer of the World by: Keri Smith

Through activities which demand observation, collection, and analytic thinking, Smith interactively encourages her reader to use their creative and scientific thinking to create text, documents, and works of art

<http://www.amazon.com/How-Be-Explorer-World-Portable/dp/0399534601>



The Waste Land by: T.S. Eliot

Heralded as one of the most important poems of the 20th century, Eliot's 434-line poem might be an interesting place for students to begin thinking about the power of language. How does Eliot characterize the Waste Land in the poem? How might we think about a documentary which appropriates the title of this quintessential modernist poem?

[The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot](#)



No Impact Man by: Colin Beavan

An inhabitant of bustling NYC life, Beavan recounts the drastic measures he and his family endured to attempt completely wiping their carbon footprint from the earth. Severely committed to recycling and reducing waste, Beavan's book might serve as an example for students as to what can be done in developing countries to decrease and eliminate trash. What can one seemingly minute action of an individual contribute to the lasting impact of helping to save our world? How can students be challenged to make a difference?

[Book Review No Impact Man by Colin Beavan](#)