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CONTACT

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS 415-356-8383 x 244
Mary Lugo 770-623-8190
Cara White 843-881-1480

voleine_amilcar@itvs.org
lugo@negia.net
cara.white@mac.com

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For the program's companion website, visit <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/waste-land>

**WASTE LAND PREMIERES ON THE PBS SERIES
INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2011 AT 10 PM**

The Transformative Power of Art Revealed in the World's Largest Garbage Dump

“The moment when one thing turns into another is the most beautiful moment. A combination of sounds turns into music. And that applies to everything.” — Vik Muniz

(San Francisco, CA) — Filmed over nearly three years, Lucy Walker's *Waste Land* follows renowned artist Vik Muniz as he journeys from his home base in Brooklyn to his home country of Brazil, and to Jardim Gramacho, the world's largest garbage dump located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. There Muniz photographs an eclectic band of *catadores* — pickers of recyclable materials — and works with them to “paint” their portraits using garbage. The resulting collaboration with these inspiring characters provides profoundly moving evidence of the transformative power of art and its impact on the human spirit. *Waste Land*, currently on the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences Short List for Best Documentary, will premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by America Ferrera, on Tuesday, April 19, 2011 at 10 PM (check local listings).

An estimated 3,000 to 5,000 people live in Jardim Gramacho, while 15,000 derive their income from activities related to it; some are from families who have been working there for three generations. Muniz was surprised to meet the community of people who scavenge the recyclable refuse of Rio to make a living. “I was expecting to see people who were beaten and broken, but they were survivors,” he says. He collaborates with a number of *catadores* on large-scale portraits of themselves, including Irma, a cook who sells food in the dump; Zumbi, the resident



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intellectual who has held on to every book he has scavenged; and 18-year-old Suelem, who first arrived there when she was seven.

Upon finishing the series of portraits, Muniz takes one of them to auction at the esteemed Phillipe de Pury auction house in London, where it sells for over \$50,000. One hundred percent of the profits are returned to the Garbage Pickers Association of Jardim Gramacho, whose young, charismatic president Tiao finds his life changed forever.

To learn more about the film, visit the *Waste Land* interactive companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/waste-land>), which features an interview with the filmmaker and links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section, where viewers can share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

About 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 while 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, he 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 Muniz first exhibited his "Pictures of Garbage Series" in Brazil.

About the Filmmaker

Lucy Walker (Director) uses dramatic filmmaking techniques to make documentary films, following memorable characters on transformative journeys that grant unique access inside closed worlds. In addition to *Waste Land*, Walker directed a second feature documentary that premiered at Sundance 2010 and was recently released in theaters: *Countdown to Zero*, a terrifying exposé of the current threat of nuclear terrorism and proliferation.

Walker's previous films include *Blindsight*, the emotional journey of six blind Tibetan teenagers who climb up the north side of Mt. Everest with their hero, blind American mountaineer Erik Weihenmeyer, and their teacher, Sabriye Tenberken, who founded Braille Without Borders, the only school for the blind in Tibet. *Devil's Playground* examined the struggles of Amish teenagers during their period of experimentation (*rumspringa*). Her credits also include Nickelodeon's *Blue's Clues*, for which she was twice nominated for Emmy® Awards for Outstanding Direction in a Children's Series, and several award-winning narrative short films.

Walker grew up in London, England and graduated from Oxford University. She won a Fulbright

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Scholarship to attend New York University's Graduate Film Program, where she earned her MFA. While at NYU, she moonlighted as a musician and DJ, and met Moby, who contributed the music for *Waste Land*.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities, and moments in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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