

THE WASTE LAND: Director's Statement

Between the first line, "April is the cruellest month," and the last line, "Shantih shantih shantih," there are about four hundred lines of poetry, filled with quotations, references, and shifting perspectives. The Waste Land is one of the most important poems of the last century, but also one of the most challenging. Dante, Shakespeare, Ovid, the Upanishads, but also popular songs – T.S. Eliot incorporated them into his work. And for a hundred years, we've been trying to guess what it exactly means. The Waste Land is something you feel more than you understand.

I didn't want to make a film about a poem, or give my interpretation of it, but what if you consider it as a space, and you can invite others into that space and ask them what it means to them, what it does to them? So, if you go through the poem with different people, you can arrive at something where the present and the contemporary naturally crash into the film, and you can involve everything. I had the idea that there should be a war correspondent, a scientist, writers, you name it. That was the key. But it wasn't enough; something else had to happen, and it took a long time for me to figure out what that was.

During a vacation in Death Valley, in a landscape where nothing moved because there was nothing that could move, I finally found the solution: photographs. I had to make the film using still images instead of moving pictures because it provides a way to translate the poetic experience of reading into a cinematic language, away from the traditional documentary form. I found it interesting to select moments that we look at longer, which allows you to form a different kind of relationship with someone or a situation because you freeze time and also stretch it out.