

BEIJING BESIEGED BY WASTE

Directed by Wang Jiuliang 71 minutes

00:01:52----00:02:21

WANG JIULIANG STUDIO

present

MU YING MEDIA

THE 6TH CULTURE AND ARTS FESTIVAL OF SONGZHUANG-CHINA

in association with

MOD'ART

art fund

BAOKUN

project consultant

ZHU RIKUN

montage director

00:03:37--00:03:48

Hurry up, or we will get nothing!

Why are you up here?

What are you looking for to eat?

Come here. There is a big eggshell.

00:03:58--00:04:03

Take a picture quickly!

We are busy sifting through trash now.

00:04:36

WANG JIULIANG

Photographer

00:04:45--00:05:17

This is only one of the landfills that I have shot around Beijing.

Since October 2008, for almost two years.

I have traveled to 400-500 landfills around Beijing.

I marked the exact locations of these landfills on the map with yellow points one by one.

In the end, as seen from the distribution of these points,

it is obvious that Beijing has become a city surrounded by waste.

00:05:19--00:05:29

BEIJING BESIEGED BY WASTE

The Observations from Wang Jiuliang

00:06:13--00:06:21

March on!
Let us face the enemy's gunfire.
March on! March on! March on! On!

00:06:49

(My Apartment Community)

00:07:18

(The Trash Collecting Station in My Community)

00:08:03

(Refuse Transfer Station in Majialou, Beijing)

00:08:47

(Nangong Composting Plant, Beijing)

00:09:12

The Composting Area

00:09:42--00:09:46

Is it profitable to turn compost into fertilizer?
Nope.

00:09:48

(1st Clean Car Department, Beijing)

00:12:16--00:12:29

Relying heavily on human labor, material resources and financial investments, we are able to remove the waste away from our city. Though here is the destination for the waste, the further treatment of the waste seems far from done.

00:12:30--00:12:51

Anding landfill, covering an area of forty-eight hectares (119 acres) receives 1,400 tons of waste daily. But in terms of Beijing as a whole, with its entire generation of waste amounting to 30,000 tons a day, a landfill like this one is far from being enough. There are eleven in total this type of large landfills in the suburbs of Beijing.

00:12:52--00:13:19

However, simply dumping waste into the landfills has inevitably caused severe problems to the water and atmosphere around the landfills.

As a matter of fact, the relationships between almost all the landfills and the neighboring residents are extremely bad, because no one wants to live close to a landfill.

Later, in order to avoid densely populated areas,, the government has to create new landfills in the high mountains.

00:14:26--00:14:34

No one wants to live close to a dump;
but meanwhile, there are many who have to be so close to the dump.

00:15:53--00:16:40

Amitabha Buddha
Her head broke off.

Amitabha Buddha
Amitabha Buddha
Amitabha Buddha
Amitabha Buddha

look at my little toy from trash.

I am so powerful!

Look! I broke the glass.

00:17:02--00:17:28

Under pressure from neighboring residents, the landfill operators have been forced to take all kinds of action to prevent the stench from spreading.

Although no one wants to live near a landfill, the frenzy in real estate development is continuously being catalyzed by the ever-climbing housing prices.

These tall buildings under construction are located in the largest area allotted for affordable housing projects in Beijing.

They are only 1.2 km away from the Gao'an Tun landfill.

00:17:29--00:17:40

Only 16 km away from Tian'anmen Square, the once remote Yonghezhuang landfill now has long been surrounded by high-density business districts and residential areas.

00:17:44--00:18:17

Nothing can stop the city from expanding,
or the generation of waste.

We quickly move the waste away from the city and bury it in haste.
However, no matter how hard we try to hide it,
it will not disappear, but will always be there.

This over-fifty-meter-high “mountain” is,
in fact, a landscape made of waste.
To make things worse, in three years,
all the landfills in Beijing will be full.

00:19:07--00:20:12

In fact,
not all the waste has been disposed of in the legal landfills.
Though this landfill is located beyond the sixth ring road,
all the waste is generated in the city.
Not all waste has gone into the government approved environmental system.
There is large amount of waste has gone into the so-called “underground
waste production chain”.
The junkmen acquire a land contract from the local government,
then purchase some waste at a low price from the city,
transport it outside of the city,
and then employ a large number of scavengers to separate the wastes into
different categories,
thus profiting from the resale of recyclable materials.
As for the un-recyclable portion, it will be left in this landfill.
A landfill like this does obvious harm to the surrounding environment.
Like this one,
the quality of the waters nearly 200,000 square meters, has greatly
deteriorated.
Floating waste has covered almost the entire surface.
As time goes by,
with the dust and seeds carried here by the wind,
it has become a “floating grassland”.

00:20:37--00:21:05

The Beijing government has announced that all illegal waste dumping is
prohibited.
All the waste in the city must be disposed of in the legal landfills approved by
the Environmental Health Department in the government.
But a fee for waste treatment will be charged.
As a result, some lower level administrators and departments, as well as
individuals, trying to avoid paying the fee, have decided to handle their waste
on their own.
And this is another important reason why there are so many illegal dumps
around Beijing.

00:22:33--00:22:54

This landfill is located on the bank of Wenyu River.
We often picture that the Wenyu River area is a place for golf courses, equestrianism clubs and luxurious villas.
In other words, Wenyu River always triggers a very beautiful image in our minds.
However, this is not always the case about Wenyu River.
It has another dark side that people don't know or don't want to know.

00:25:36--00:26:06

This is the west bank of Shahe Reservoir.
The entire landfill covers an area of 86 hectares (213 acres).
Most of the waste comes from the city.
But there is one profitable business in this area besides the waste trade, mining of sand.
The local controlling sand miners excavate the landfill to look for sand from below the landfill.
As a result, sand, underground water and wastes are completely mixed together.
It leads to the irreversible pollution of the ground water.

00:26:07--00:26:22

This creek flowing by the dump is a branch of Wenyu River.
The entire creek is covered by waste.
Speaking responsibly,
none of the rivers flowing through Beijing is clean.

00:26:27--00:26:51

How many landfills are there along Wenyu River?
Probably, nobody has a definite answer.
All the landfills I have been to are only part of them.
We can say, these landfills are the key contributors to the pollution of Wenyu River.
Maybe people are I ignorant, or consider it a hopeless situation.
It seems that nobody cares.

00:26:52

(Wenyu River)

00:27:56--00:28:37

Turn your heads to one side.
Bigger smile!
Good! Very good!
Why don't the sheep come this way?
It is better if you hold a lamb.

Is it all right if we hold a lamb?
If you can catch one.
Come here.
Let's go to another place.

00:29:01--00:29:20

It's hard to imagine that the underground water consumed by the neighboring residents comes from a location not far from this landfill.
According to the residents,
the quality of water is getting worse and worse.

It is the drinking water I was telling you about.
Quite dirty.
It got a little better after the improvement.
But it is still not good.
The water is dirty every now and then.

00:29:26--00:29:43

There is a bridge being built upstream,
so this river has been temporarily drained.
It gives us a chance to look at the real riverbed.
It is filled with trash in the silt, over one meter deep.
In a sense, this river is a landfill.

00:32:14--00:32:57

The water pollution caused by a landfill, and the subsequent impact,
are not confined within this area.
We may not drink the water from here,
but we cannot ensure that we will not eat the vegetables irrigated by this
polluted water.
It is really hard to imagine that the waste we throw away will somehow come
back to us in a new form.

Beijing is a city with severe shortage of water.
In order to solve the water crisis in Beijing,
the government has launched the well known "south-to-north water diversion"
project.
But what confuses me is that we spend so much on transporting the water
from the Yangtze River thousands of miles away,
but do not cherish the very water right around us.

00:33:10--00:33:22

At first, I didn't know what the black stuff was.
I just noticed the penetrating smell.

I had no idea where it was from either.
I asked the scavengers nearby,
but they were not willing to answer me.

00:33:59

(Excrement from long-distance buses)

00:35:32--00:36:04

Finally, I found out that the black crap was the residual substance from the sewage treatment plants.

That means it is the filthiest crud from the sewage.

It had been dumped here without proper treatment or permission.

Then what's the difference from directly disposing untreated sewage?

Where does the monthly sewage treatment fee we pay go?

Who can answer me?

This is not accidental.

In fact, it is quite common in the outskirts around Beijing.

00:36:18--00:36:55

This makes me very angry.

We can see the changes in this place from the historical images provided by Google Earth.

In 2005, the water still looked green on these sites.

In 2007, the site on the far left was filled with waste.

In 2009, the site in the middle was filled with the silt from the sewage treatment plants,

and the site on the right turned red.

In 2010, almost all the sites are now filled with waste,
while the tall buildings are being constructed not far away.

00:37:24--00:38:10

Hello, fellow villagers!

The remove in Tianzhu Village is being carried out in good order.

Thanks for your active cooperation.

We have completed the in-home assessments first.

But there are still some villagers not quite understand the remove policies.

They believe the rumors spread by some people with special intentions.

They are still speculating.

Now, the Remove Office declares

this remove project has been finalized.

It has been carried out under proper laws and regulations.

There will be no more changes.

It will not be replaced with a new remove project.

To those who are still speculating,
Please do not believe what some people say.
Do not listen to or believe any rumors.
Otherwise, it will cause you unnecessary losses.

00:38:12--00:38:45

You bastard! You don't let the villagers talk!
You don't let us talk! Ridiculous!
My first name is Du. I am Du Shuxin.
I once responded to Chairman Mao's call to support the third tier provinces.
Regarding the remove project, I have something to say.
I give them permission to record me, and make all my personal information public.
I will assume any legal responsibilities.
I will assume any legal responsibilities.

00:38:46

(The being removed graves)

00:38:50--00:39:01

No one can stop this city from expanding.
Demolishing and rebuilding are everywhere.
Nowadays, Beijing is more like one giant construction site.

00:39:06--00:39:24

Everyday there are huge amount of construction raw materials being transported into this city.
Meanwhile, there are huge amount of construction waste being transported out of the city.
The transportations of construction raw materials and construction waste, two types of things with opposite attributes, ironically often happen on the very same spot.

00:39:28--00:39:47

To provide materials for the construction of this city,
the loess from nature has been burnt into bricks,
while the big hole left after the digging is used to dump the waste from the city.
It's raw materials on one hand; the city waste on the other;
a brand-new city on one side, a fundamentally changed nature on the other.

00:39:53--00:40:24

These strange patterns are actually rock quarries hidden in the mountains.
The construction in the city demands large amount of rocks, lime, cement, and the like.

So the originally green mountain was torn by the crazy rock mining.
The mountain has contributed raw materials to the city,
while the city gives back the waste to the mountain.
It is already a wound hard to heal.
Now we are adding fuel to the fire.
Haven't we gone too far?

00:41:12--00:41:29

The sand in Yongding River, being nurtured for thousands of years,
has been used up by the city almost overnight.
The holes that left behind are used to fill with the waste from the city.
Along Yongding River, there appear countless quarries and landfills like this
one.

00:41:50--00:42:57

This is a mirror,
reflecting the rapidest modernization movement in the past 20 years in China.
All the attention has gone to the skyscrapers rising from the ground level,
but few people care about the whereabouts of the huge amount of construction
waste generated by the city.

Since the 1990s,
several hundred trucks have come and gone every day,
carrying away sand and bringing back the waste from the city.
After over a decade, this location has become the largest construction waste
dump in Beijing.

Under the shiny appearance of a new Beijing,
in the unknown outskirts surrounding the city,
over 100,000 scavengers from across the country are "dissolving" the waste of
this city.
Here alone in the peak time,
gathered more than 2,000 farmers from Sichuan, Anhui, Henan and other
provinces.
With the materials from the dump, they built houses and led a life there.
They relied on the dump for a living,
and weaved their dreams for a better life.

00:49:06

(Swill Pigs—pigs live on human leftovers)

00:49:28--00:50:17

What are you doing?
Taking out the chili pepper.

Oh, chili pepper. You want to use it again?
No, I am just taking it out.
It's too spicy for the pigs.
How many barrels of swill do you need to boil everyday?
About a dozen.
Do you go to the city to collect the swill?
Do you collect it yourself or someone delivers it to you?
Someone delivers it to you?
I have to get it myself, of course.
Do you get paid when you collect it?
I pay them.
They pay others, they buy it.
How much is one barrel?
It depends.
How much do you have to pay at least?
About several dozen RMB per barrel.
Sometimes it costs me two thousand RMB a day.

00:51:50--00:52:22

How is the business? Is it profitable to raise pigs?
Not much, but it is OK.
For farmers like us, anything is better than staying home in the village.
How much do you make a year?
About a few dozen thousand RMB.
How many pigs have you raised?
Now we have about 130-140 pigs.
So many!
How many families are here raising pigs?
About 40-50.
About 100 pigs a family.
Do you go to the city every day to collect swill?
Yes.

00:52:23--00:52:26

Now some restaurants filter the oil out of the swill and serve it back to the customers.
That's disgusting! Really?!
Oh, you don't believe me?
I often dine out.
They just filter and boil it, and then serve it to the customers.
Do they do this themselves, or ask you to do it?
They don't need us.
They just pour the swill into a barrel, and then use a bamboo strainer...
Wow, no way! I will never go to any restaurants any more!

Even if you don't go, there will always be rich people who go.

00:53:03

(Swill Oil—oil extracted from swill)

00:53:15--00:54:20

Our dog will bite you!
Get out of here quickly!
All our dogs tend to bite people.

How did you know there's swill oil produced here?
Who told you?
No one.
How could that be?
There must be someone.

All right.
We are not your enemies.
Why do you want to expose us?
We will be in trouble if you expose us.

00:54:21--00:54:32

I do not want to bring any harm to anyone because of my shooting,
but sometimes it can be a dilemma.
Especially to the scavengers,
I always pay them my full respect.

00:56:20--00:56:38

They want us to stop collecting trash?
Go! Hurry up!
Go! Here come the police!

00:57:25--00:58:05

The trash doesn't look good on camera.
Film more of Ms. Liu
We old ladies collecting trash do not look good on camera.
Don't film us. We don't look good.
We will be ashamed if people from our village see us on TV.
We didn't tell our families that our job in Beijing was to collect trash.
People will laugh at us if they know we work in the dump.
Even our parents do not know we collect trash for a living.
We told them we work in Beijing.

None of us tells people we collect trash in the dump.

We tell them we have a job, not this.

00:58:09--00:59:45

We built these houses with the bricks from the dump.

It's been over ten years.

I have spent over ten years in this house.

The clothes they wear, nine out of ten were found in the dump.

I am not kidding you.

This silk scarf I am wearing was also found in the dump.

I thought it looked nice, so I washed it and put it on.

As for them, all their clothes come from the dump.

I am not afraid of you laughing at us.

Everything we wear was found in the dump, including our underwear.

Some rich people from luxury residential areas like throwing things away.

Sometimes we find brand-new clothes, one pack after another.

Their child caught a cold yesterday.

It cost him 500 RMB to go see a doctor in a small clinic.

It cost 48 RMB just to have his blood tested.

Then there were fees for registration and IV drip for 3 days.

The grandpa said, he couldn't earn 500 RMB by picking trash for half a month.

But it was used up in one day yesterday.

Most of what they eat is found from trash.

That's true!

Especially my elder sister.

She often picked vegetables from the trash.

The people in Chaoyang and Tongzhou district,

They look down upon us because we are from the outside.

Because our clothes are dirty, they look down upon us.

They don't even want to talk to you.

They say you are filthy.

Don't mean to be rude, they won't even eat what you cook.

They don't think it's clean

01:00:52--01:01:19

Few scavengers are seen here.

It feels rotten and desolate.

But right in this desolate dump, an old man built his residence with heart.

It was a real home, meant so much to him.

But one day, this old man passed away alone in this dump.

He left so quietly that no one had noticed.

01:02:56--01:03:51

A great debate on waste incineration is taking place in China. The supporters hold that it is the most efficient way to eliminate waste; while the opponents argue that the toxic substances emitted from incineration will do harm to people's health. However, this debate only narrowly focuses on the consequential problems of the waste. Both the supporters and opponents of incineration have unspokenly shifted their focus to the technical aspect of waste incineration, but very few people want to delve into the causes of the waste problem.

The smoke emitted by the incineration still lingers over this city, and the city keeps on expanding without hesitation. In this nation, everything revolves around economic development; the waste problem is just a small trouble, not worthy of attention. It does not slow down the production. It does not affect the consumption. And it does not have an impact on the fast-beating rhythm.

01:05:11--01:05:24

A community once flourished here. After the 2,000 scavengers have been expelled, only the waste was still left in the dump. But in 2013, this dump will become the host location for the International Horticultural Exposition.

01:05:28--01:05:35

It was a large basin originally, but now it has turned into flat land by the landfill. Only the top of one willow tree still stays above the ground.

01:05:38--01:05:47

But here, people are planting trees on top of the previous landfill. The purpose of planting trees is to cover the fact that it was once a dump here.

01:05:54--01:06:03

This looks like a normal corn field. But who can imagine, it was really a landfill a year ago.

01:06:08--01:06:17

It was originally a lotus pond here, but was later filled up with all kinds of waste. Now, a vegetable greenhouse is being built here.

01:06:23--01:06:38

It was a landfill before,
as seen from the exposed foundation, full of trash.
But now an international school is under construction on this site.
And the landfill will be concealed under this school.

01:06:43--01:06:50

Now a factory is being built here,
but a year ago, this land was filled with waste.

01:06:58--01:07:20

How rapid are these changes on this land!
Yesterday, it was still a farmland;
today, it has become a dump;
but tomorrow, there will be rows of tall buildings.

On the ground,
we are creating a fast-growing economic miracle,
but under the ground,
we are creating a “trash world” at the same time.

01:10:00

BEIJING BESIEGED BY WASTE

01:10:05--01:10:16

WANG JIULIANG-- a film by

During the two years from October 2008 to October 2010, Wang traveled 15,000 kilometers around Beijing, visited and investigated nearly 500 landfills and shot more than 10,000 photos and 60 hours of video.

01:10:17--01:10:27

BAO KUN—project consultant

The initial sponsor, who helped launch the project, provided directions throughout the implementation of the project, organized and planned a series of important exhibitions.

01:10:28--01:10:44

DUAN YUTING&CHEN WEIXING

BAO KUN&LI XIANTING

The rollout of Beijing Besieged by Waste photo series took place at the 09LIPF in December 2009 where it won first prize.

The great Beijing Besieged by Waste exhibition was held in Songzhuang Art Center in June 2010. The exhibition showcased the series comprehensively. Both exhibitions caused a sensational stir and attracted tremendous media

attention at home and abroad.

01:10:45--01:10:56

XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

In February 2010, Xinhua News Agency issued a detailed internal reference report on the project. It attracted the close attention from the central authorities.

Premier Wen Jiabao wrote detailed instructions on this project, which propelled a series of policies on waste disposal to be initiated.

01:10:57--01:11:20

Thanks to the coverage in domestic and foreign media. Waste problems have triggered widespread public concern. Now, both the government and private groups are seeking solutions to the waste problems.

In April 2010, the Beijing municipal government planned to invest 10 billion RMB in all the waste disposal sites surrounding Beijing in the coming 5 to 7 years, to treat the waste properly.