 Composition and editing

The first thirty minutes of Waste Land

1. Opening – the most crafted part of a film is often its opening. Beginning with footage from a talk show, the camera zooms out from the stage band and focuses on the host fixing his tie. The expectations of the documentary are subverted at the outset by a scene that is not explicitly linked to the intention of the text. Why do you suppose Walker chose to begin this way?
2. What techniques are used in first scenes to engage the viewer? What do you expect to see- a positive or negative documentary? How are you being positioned by the director to form opinions on Jardim Gramacho and the pickers?
3. Consider the visual representation of the setting in the early stages of the film. What shots and angles are utilised the first time we see the wasteland?
4. Framing the subject: Contemplate
   * his placement, costume and movement
   * his environment, the accompanying soundscape, and mise-en-scene
   * the camera angles, shot length and size, focus, light and lighting
5. Study what Valter Dos Santos:
   * says
   * shows us
   * does
   * has achieved
   * wears
   * feels
6. Do all the interviewees feel the same as Valter? Give evidence.
7. How do you weigh up the information when there are conflicting stories?
8. What kind of impression is the filmmaker trying to construct of Jardim Gramacho?
9. This documentary does not use narration as such but focuses on the interviewer’s voice to create pace and inform the audience. How have the director and editor constructed the film to keep the subjects clear?
10. What other devices are used in lieu of narration?
11. Each individual expresses their values and opinions differently. List the interviewees that have appeared so far, identify their values stated or implied.
12. What are some of the assumptions that emerge for the viewer in the early stages of the film? What assumptions can you make about Vik? What assumptions can you make about Isis?
13. Trace the different perspectives regarding Jardim Gramacho. Which perspective do you agree with and why?
14. Voids and silences: Are there any stakeholders who are not yet represented in the film? What views of Jardim Gramacho are not explored? Why do you think these have been omitted from this section of the documentary?