

Sonia Lakeram  
Photography I  
6pm Monday class  
Professor Pelka

### Sebastiao Salgado

Sebastiao Salgado is known to be a photojournalist and a social documentary photographer born on February 8th 1944 in Aimores, State of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Due to Sebastiao Salgado's frequent trips to Africa because of his work at the International Coffee Organization in London he became fascinated with the lifestyle thus influencing his interest in photography. He captures unique and exquisite pictures of the powerless and poor. He has achieved many things throughout his lifetime such as becoming an economist and receiving his masters in documentary photography, which has helped him reach where he is today, he also has written over five books and has been a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for about nineteen years. Some of his work is presented at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Known pieces include Workers(1993), Migration (2000) and GENESIS (2013) all of which touch upon the social-economic conditions that affect humans. The work that caught my eye the minute I saw it was a piece from his Genesis collection. Genesis can be viewed at the International Center of Photography which is located in NYC. With this collection Sebastiao Salgado wanted to show the beauty of the planet rather than the hardships it and the living organisms living on it endure. A quote he said regarding the Genesis photographs was "So many times I've photographed stories that show the degradation of the planet. I had one idea to go and photograph the factories that were polluting, and to see all the deposits of garbage. But, in the end, I thought the only way to give us an incentive, to bring hope, is to show the pictures of the pristine planet - to see the innocence." He wants people to not only see the bad, but also the good and beauty of the world which would give people hope and encourage them to take better care of the planet.

The photograph is composed of mountains which are asymmetrically balanced, a river that cuts between the mountains down the middle while there are clouds in the sky. At the top left corner the clouds are pouring heavy rain down. The photo has a dramatic feel to it because it is in black and white. This accentuates the lights and darks within the photo and gives a sense of depth. The thing that strikes me about the photo is the fact that when I stare at it longer I notice more things and it feels realistic. I interpret the photo in a motivational way, meaning the rain in the corner would be like the darkness and the river is the guidance through the "rough patches" in life while the mountains are the difficult obstacles a person endures. There are different paths that diverge from the straight path of the river, these would be like the different decisions an individual would make in their life which would set them on a new path with a whole new set of obstacles and difficulties. The mountains in the back are the hardships that the person has already been through. I think Sebastiao Salgado is trying to show how beautiful the world can be. Compositional elements such as movement and the point of view are used within the photograph to guide the viewer from the top to the bottom of the picture. The framing of the picture is perfect because it captures just the right amount of clouds and mountains.

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Sources

<https://www.icp.org/exhibitions/sebastiao-salgado-genesis>

<https://iphf.org/inductees/sebastiao-salgado/>

<https://www.artsy.net/artist/sebastiao-salgado>

<https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/sebastiao-salgado?all/all/all/all/0>