

BLACK & WHITE MAGAZINE FOR COLLECTORS OF FINE PHOTOGRAPHY

# B&W



**SALGADO'S  
AFRICA**

ISSUE 62 . OCTOBER 2008 . US \$7.95 . CAN \$9.95

# SALGADO'S AFRICA

FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, BRAZILIAN PHOTOJOURNALIST SEBASTIÃO SALGADO HAS BEEN A ROVING PROPHET WITH A CAMERA, ALERTING THE DEVELOPED WORLD TO THE CONSEQUENCES—UNINTENDED AND OTHERWISE—OF UNCHECKED GLOBALIZATION.

BUT NO MATTER HOW HARROWING THE JOURNEY HAS BECOME, HIS ELOQUENT, UNFORGETTABLE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE INVARIABLY ATTUNED TO THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT. SALGADO HAS PRODUCED MANY OF HIS CHALLENGING AND REWARDING PHOTO ESSAYS IN AFRICA, HOME TO 46 COUNTRIES, NEARLY ONE BILLION PEOPLE, COUNTLESS HARDSHIPS, AND DREAMS WITHOUT NUMBER. A RECENT BOOK OF HIS AFRICAN IMAGES TRACES HIS ODYSSEY OF HOPE. CONTRIBUTING EDITOR DEAN BRIERLY LOOKS BACK AT A DEEPLY AFFECTING BODY OF WORK.

It's all too easy to succumb to hyperbole when considering the protean career of Sebastião Salgado. No photographer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has done more to call attention to those trapped by circumstance—the displaced, the dispossessed, and the defenseless. His consciousness-raising projects have ranged from ethnic cleansing in the Balkans to famine victims in Ethiopia to impoverished workers the world over. He has done so in images of such classical purity and iconic force that it doesn't seem like an exaggeration to describe him as Ganchi with a camera.

"There are photographers and photographers, just as there are composers and composers," says Peter Fetterman, owner of the eponymous gallery that has represent-

ed Salgado for nearly 20 years. "But it's rare that a Mozart or a Beethoven comes along. In the history of the photographic medium, Salgado will be considered one of those greats, a special talent that appears once in a generation."

The Brazilian-born economist-turned-photographer is a certifiable force of nature, with a larger-than-life aura surrounding his commitment, his energy, and his ability to effect change on behalf of oppressed people everywhere. Words seem superfluous in the face of images so eloquent and powerful that they seem to travel directly to the heart before eventually resonating in the brain. Salgado has photographed in nearly every nation on the planet, and typically works to epic scale, as proved by his two





DINKA CATTLE CAMP OF AMAK AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHEN THE HERD IS BACK IN THE CAMP FOR THE NIGHT. THIS IS THE MOST ACTIVE TIME IN THE CAMP, SOUTHERN SUDAN - 2006





ORPHANAGE ATTACHED TO THE HOSPITAL AT KIBUMBA NUMBER ONE CAMP.  
GOMA, ZAIRE - 1994

most celebrated projects, *Workers* (seven years, 23 countries) and *Migrations* (seven years, 40 countries). Yet it is the continent of Africa, the cradle of humanity, that has laid special claim on his heart and his head; he has produced more than 40 photo essays in various African countries over a period of three decades.

His latest monograph, simply titled *Africa*, is a massive tome (over 300 pages) that presents a vivid and comprehensive cross-section of his work. In terms of scope, the nearest comparison that comes to mind is Eugene Smith's *Pittsburg* project, yet Sal-

gado's *Africa* travels a much greater chronological distance and plays out against a significantly larger political-social-cultural canvas. Salgado's camera has been witness to such landmark events as the wars of independence in Angola, Mozambique and Sahara; victims of genocide in Rwanda; Sudanese and Ethiopian refugees; drought and famine in the Sahel; and many others.

Yet, in counter-balance to such dramatic upheavals, Salgado has in recent years focused on stories of hope and regeneration, such as the efforts of the Himba tribe in Namibia and the Dinkas of southern





FOOD CENTER RUN BY SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND FOR MOTHERS NURSING THEIR CHILDREN AT KOREM CAMP MOTHER & CHILDREN ETHIOPIA - 1994





SCHOOL IN THE LAKE VICTORIA REGION  
KENYA - 1986



FISHING IN THE MARSHES OF THE GEL CANAL,  
WHICH IS FILLED WITH WATERS FROM THE NILE RIVER,  
SOUTHERN SUDAN - 2006





MATA TEA PLANTATION WORKER  
RWANDA - 1991

Sacan to hold onto cultural traditions in spite of increasing modernization and, in the case of the latter, decades of civil war. He has also photographed extensively in the continent's Great Lakes region, with particular emphasis on the Virunga Mountains, home to a chain of volcanoes and critically endangered gorillas. (These images are part of Salgado's current project, titled *Genesis*, which chronicles and celebrates the remote places, people and animals of the world untouched by global development.)

What is perhaps most remarkable about Salgado's work in general, and his African pictures in particular, is his refusal to exploit his subjects by turning them into symbols, rather than individuals, in a reductive effort

to elicit outrage and sympathy. (Although he has sometimes been accused, wrongly, I think, of doing so.) He doesn't consciously attempt to ennoble the people he lines up in his viewfinder; rather, he allows them the dignity of revealing themselves in all their unguarded strength and fear, resourcefulness and frustration. "It's not the photographer who makes the picture, but the person being photographed," he has said.

Granted, he typically enhances the dramatic quotient by shooting his subjects against the light, lending a heroic aspect to their contours, but arguably does so to ensure that the underlying context of each image is rendered with greater clarity and impact. In this way he can not only evoke the



BOYS FLEEING FROM SOUTHERN SUDAN TO AVOID BEING FORCED TO FIGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR. HEADING FOR THE REFUGEE CAMPS OF NORTHERN KENYA. SOUTHERN SUDAN - 1993

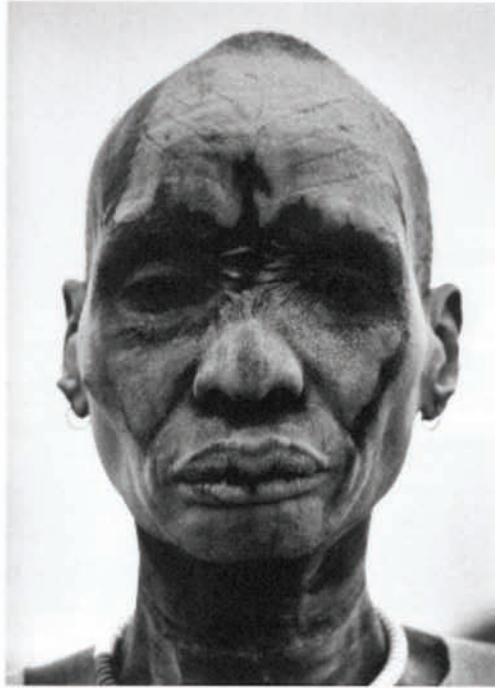
horror and degradation that often shadow life in Africa and other impoverished regions, but also illuminate the resilience and forbearance of the people who live there. In an increasingly cynical age, Salgado's positive-skewing thematic is refreshing.

This dynamic is particularly evident in such pictures as *Dinka Cattle Camp* and blanket-clad Ethiopian refugees. Salgado's command of light, form, texture and perspective is at times so overpowering as to almost transcend the mediating presence of the camera. Such imagery is imbued with an uncanny spiritual lyricism and a time-

less narrative trajectory. As Mozambique writer Mia Couto asserts in the book's accompanying text: "Populating absence and silence, Sebastião Salgado shows us an Africa as a place assembled from every place....What is presented here goes beyond places and circumstances: moments in time which over time fade away."

Salgado's visual MO always plays out in organic fashion. One of the most stunning images in the book shows a small child traversing a dry lake bed in Mali, circa 1985. The visual parallels between the





DINKA MAN AT THE CATTLE CAMP OF KEI. PEOPLE COVER THEMSELVES WITH ASH FROM BURNED COWPATS TO STERILIZE THE SKIN AGAINST INSECTS AND PARASITES, SOUTHERN SUDAN - 2006



DRAPED IN BLANKETS TO KEEP OUT THE COLD MORNING WIND REFUGEES WAIT OUTSIDE KOREM CAMP ETHIOPIA - 1984





THIS USED TO BE THE LARGE LAKE FAGUIBINE. IT DRIED UP LITTLE BY LITTLE WITH THE DROUGHT AND INVASION OF THE DESERT. ALL OF THE MEN HAVE GONE, ONLY THE CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY AND THE WOMEN REMAIN, MALI - 1985



THE POPULATION OF THE CATTLE CAMP OF KENY WALK TOWARD THE POLIO VACCINATORS AS SOON AS THEY ARRIVE MAPER PAYEM AREA, RUMBEK DISTRICT, SOUTHERN SUDAN - 2001





VILLAGERS IN EXODUS BETWEEN TOKAR AND KARORA WALK IN THE HOPE OF REACHING A REFUGEE CAMP. RED SEA REGION, SUDAN - 1985

withered trees and the boy's silhouette emphasize the interdependence between man and environment, even when the relationship turns sour. Another kind of energy is present in the famous image of a mother and child at an Ethiopian refugee camp. Shooting against the light, Salgado has bothed the woman in an ethereal glow redolent of religious iconography. Although seemingly on the point of exhaustion, she radiates eternal perseverance. Salgado himself is not religious, yet such imagery adds another level to the work, another entry point to

capture the eye and provoke compassion.

From the outset of his career, Salgado seemed to intuitively recognize the limitations inherent in didactic imagery. While his work undoubtedly resonates with a political subtext, this is more felt than seen in his photographs. Salgado considers himself a "critical mirror," but doesn't photograph to make rich people feel guilty. He once summed up his credo thusly: "My hope is that, as individuals, as groups, as societies, we can pause and reflect on the human condition at the turn of the millennium. In





THE FIRST DAY OF INSTALLATION OF THE CAMP OF BENAKO FOR THE RWANDAN TUTSI AND HUTU REFUGEES. TANZANIA - 1994

its rawest form, individualism remains a prescription for catastrophe. We have to create a new regimen of coexistence."

Despite the enormity of his achievements, Salgado remains unaffected by the material trappings of success. "He is the most humble and modest man considering his enormous contributions to this medium," Fetterman says. "He would never talk about himself in terms of being a social icon. He is egoless in that respect. He just does his work. Despite what he has seen and experienced, he is empowered by the basic dignity of man despite the enormous

injustice that is often leveled. Nowhere can this be more clearly seen than in his African work."

■ PRINT AND CONTACT INFORMATION

*Prints of the images shown here, and many others, are available from Peter Fetterman Gallery, Bergamot Station 2525 Michigan Avenue, Number A7 Santa Monica, California 90404*  
Phone: 310.453.6463  
Fax: 310.453.6959  
Email: [info@peterfetterman.com](mailto:info@peterfetterman.com)  
Website: [www.peterfetterman.com](http://www.peterfetterman.com)





DINKA GROUP AT PAGARAU CATTLE CAMP.  
SOUTHERN SUDAN - 2006



IN THE HILLS OF MOKO AT THE GISOVO TEA PLANTATION.  
RWANDA - 1991



# PETER FETTERMAN GALLERY



Sebastião Salgado. Church Gate Station, Western Railroad Line, Bombay, India, 1955

FOR ONE OF THE LARGEST INVENTORIES OF CLASSIC PHOTOGRAPHY PLEASE VISIT [WWW.PETERFETTERMAN.COM](http://WWW.PETERFETTERMAN.COM)

BERGAMOT STATION • GALLERY A7 • 2525 MICHIGAN AVE • SANTA MONICA 90404 • 310 453 6463 • [INFO@PETERFETTERMAN.COM](mailto:INFO@PETERFETTERMAN.COM)