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PHOTO BY SEBASTIÃO SALGADO/AMAZONAS IMAGES/SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

The documentary "Salt of the Earth" tells the story of acclaimed photographer Sebastião Salgado who brings a deep appreciation for the humanity of his subjects in 40 years of work around the world, like these Waura Indians fishing in near their village in Brazil's Upper Xingu Basin, home to an ethnically diverse population.

## Journey <sup>into</sup> Humanity

'Salt of the Earth' brings lens to farthest reaches of the globe

For most of the last 40 years, acclaimed photographer Sebastião Salgado has been traveling the globe and focusing his practiced photographer's eye primarily on the experiences of people at the margins -- the poor, the dispossessed, refugees, the starving, the homeless. The images he has captured, all in black and white, are startling; luminous and beautiful, though often stark and disturbing, they convey a profound sympathy and a deep appreciation for the humanity of his subjects.

This artist understands and is fully at home with what the 12th century philosopher Miguel de Unamuno termed "the tragic sense of life." His work evinces a mindfulness that, as Unamuno explained, life is characterized much more by exception and disorder than by total or perfect order, and that life is inherently tragic. The documentary "The Salt of the Earth" meditates on the images them-

selves, and allows their creator to speak from the experiences that brought them into being. The result is a kind of spiritual journey into the deep.

The film is co-directed by Wim Wenders and by Salgado's son, Juliano, and theirs is an inspired collaboration. Juliano Ribeiro Salgado had begun to travel with his father and had accumulated a wealth of footage of the elder Salgado at work among the Yali tribe in Papua New Guinea; among another isolated tribe, the Zo'é, in the Brazilian Amazon; and in an island in the Arctic Circle. The two Salgados recognized that the creation of a documentary would benefit from a third perspective, and enlisted Wenders, who had long admired the elder Salgado's work. Wenders' prior films -- notably "Wings of Desire," a black-and-white film about an angel who wishes to become human when he falls in love with a mortal, and "Pina," a documentary tribute to the late German choreographer, Pina Bausch -- display a facility with mystery and deep longing that makes Wenders a good collaborator with Salgado.

From Juliano, who films in color, we acquire a sense of his father at work and of the influence of his important relationships. The photographer does not merely drop into

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a place and snap pictures with a practiced eye. Rather, he spends months at a time living with his subjects. He comes to know their way of life, their circumstances, and builds trust that can only be assembled through deep observation and shared space. Yet for Juliano in childhood, his father was a frequently absent, mythic adventurer; there were costs to the life his father chose. One sees, too, that the work depends on support from Salgado's wife Lelia, who is an important presence in the film. These observations ground a sense of momentum, of calling, that drove Salgado to more than 100 countries in the furthest reaches of the globe.

Wenders, working in black-and-white, hints throughout at Lelia's importance in grounding Salgado's work. He also films Salgado discussing his art, often through a marvelous sort of dark room technique; Salgado appears

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