I WAKE TO LISTEN

Words Megan Wilson-De La Mare

Photography Naomi Wood



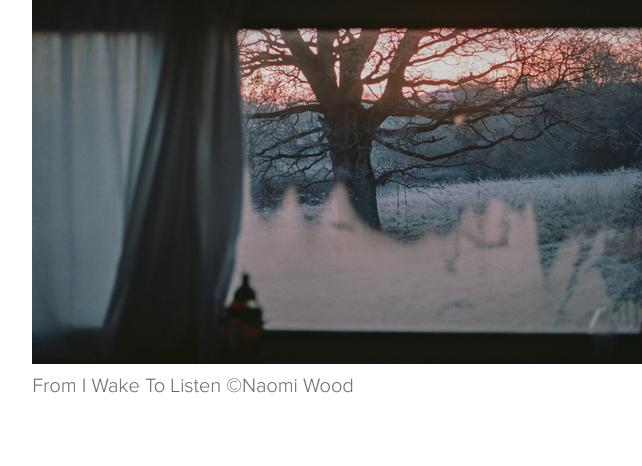
EXPERIENCES OF THE SUDDEN SHIFT AND EVER CHANGING PERIOD OF MOTHERHOOD. UNDER THE BACKDROP OF THE NATURAL WILD **ENVIRONMENT THAT SURROUNDS THEIR HOME, THE SERIES BRINGS US** IN TO THEIR INTIMATE SHARED SPACE AS NAOMI AND HER SON NAVIGATE THROUGH THEIR NEW SURROUNDINGS. I SPOKE WITH NAOMI ABOUT ALLOWING HER EXPERIENCE TO GUIDE THE PHOTOGRAPHY, THE THERAPEUTIC STRUCTURE THIS PROVIDED, AND HER NEW STATE OF **CONTINUALLY LISTENING.**

NAOMI WOOD'S PROJECT I WAKE TO LISTEN DOCUMENTS HER

sense of my surroundings. Definitely, as with almost all parents, there

What initially motivated you to start taking pictures from I Wake To Listen?

I think my gut reaction is always to pick up my camera as a way to make was a desire to document this moment which felt so fundamental and to of course, capture my newborn for the family album. But there was also something much deeper, a desire to regain some control perhaps, or even just to explore what was going on for me. I've always liked the structure that photography gives my creative process, which can often be quite messy. This time, it was me that felt very messy and raw, the situation I found myself in felt very beyond my control and the camera provided a way to structure this. It began to perform a therapeutic function for me, so I went with it, it felt good to do, there was no intention at this point other than to process these feelings for myself.

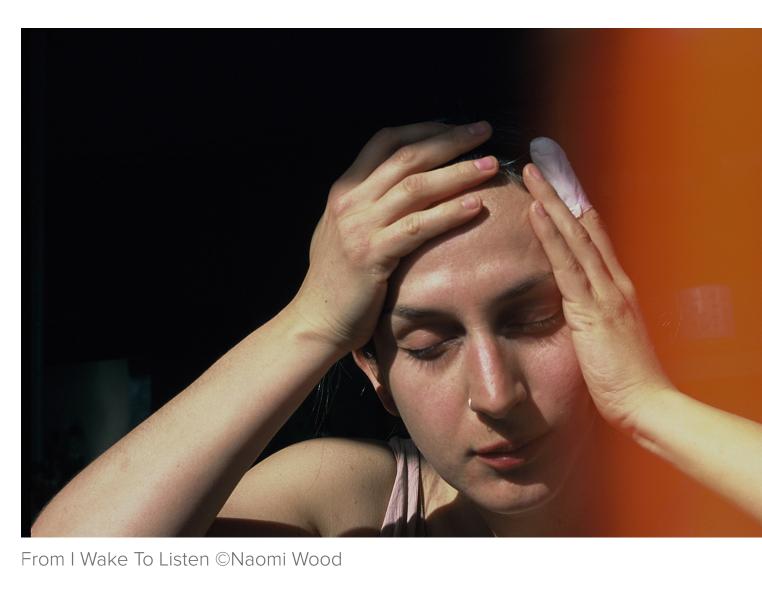


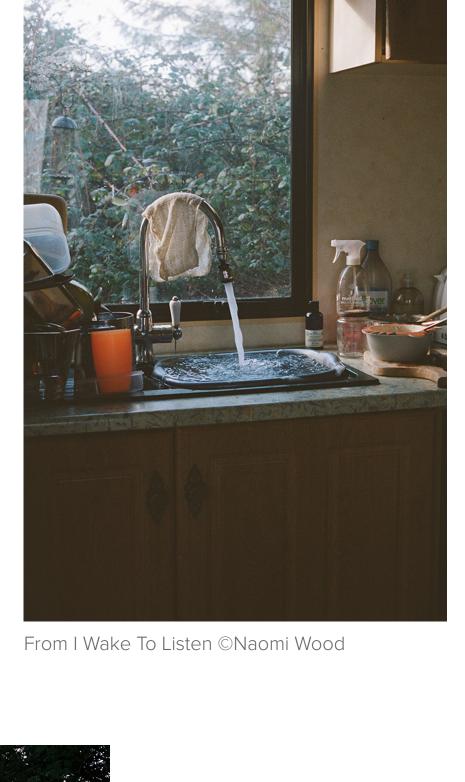
How has the work and your experience shifted your view of parenthood

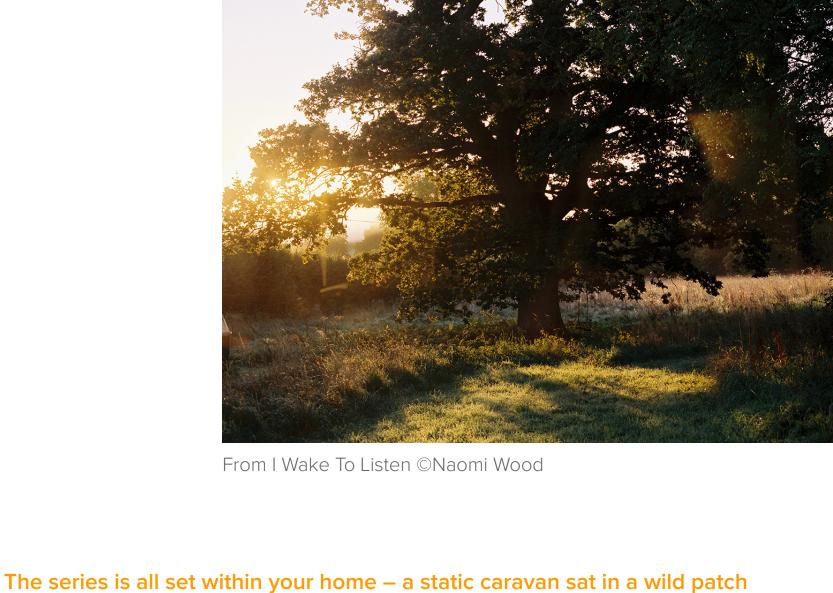
The work hasn't shifted my view at all. I'm very much in it, it's a process of

and being a Mother?

exploration for me. I can't view it as an outsider, I can only try to develop a narrative which communicates what I am feeling to an audience. I have come to realise that as much joy as getting to know my child has brought me, this dramatic shift, this process of Matrescene of which I was entirely unaware of before making this work and researching further, has been almost traumatic in it's very sudden appearance. That doesn't necessarily mean that the whole experience has been miserable, but that the sudden arrival of this huge change, swept me up in such a way that I can only describe as brutal and intoxicating.







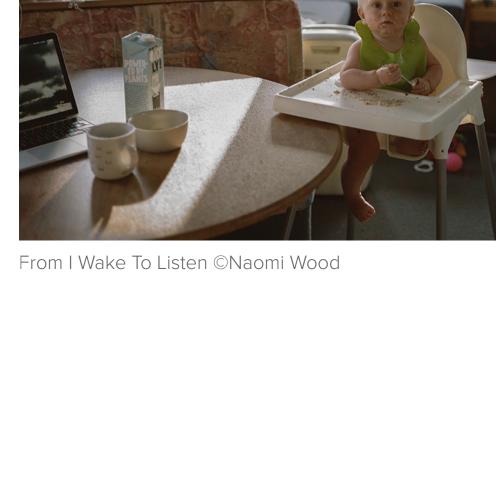
of land with an oak tree that sits beside. In what ways has your

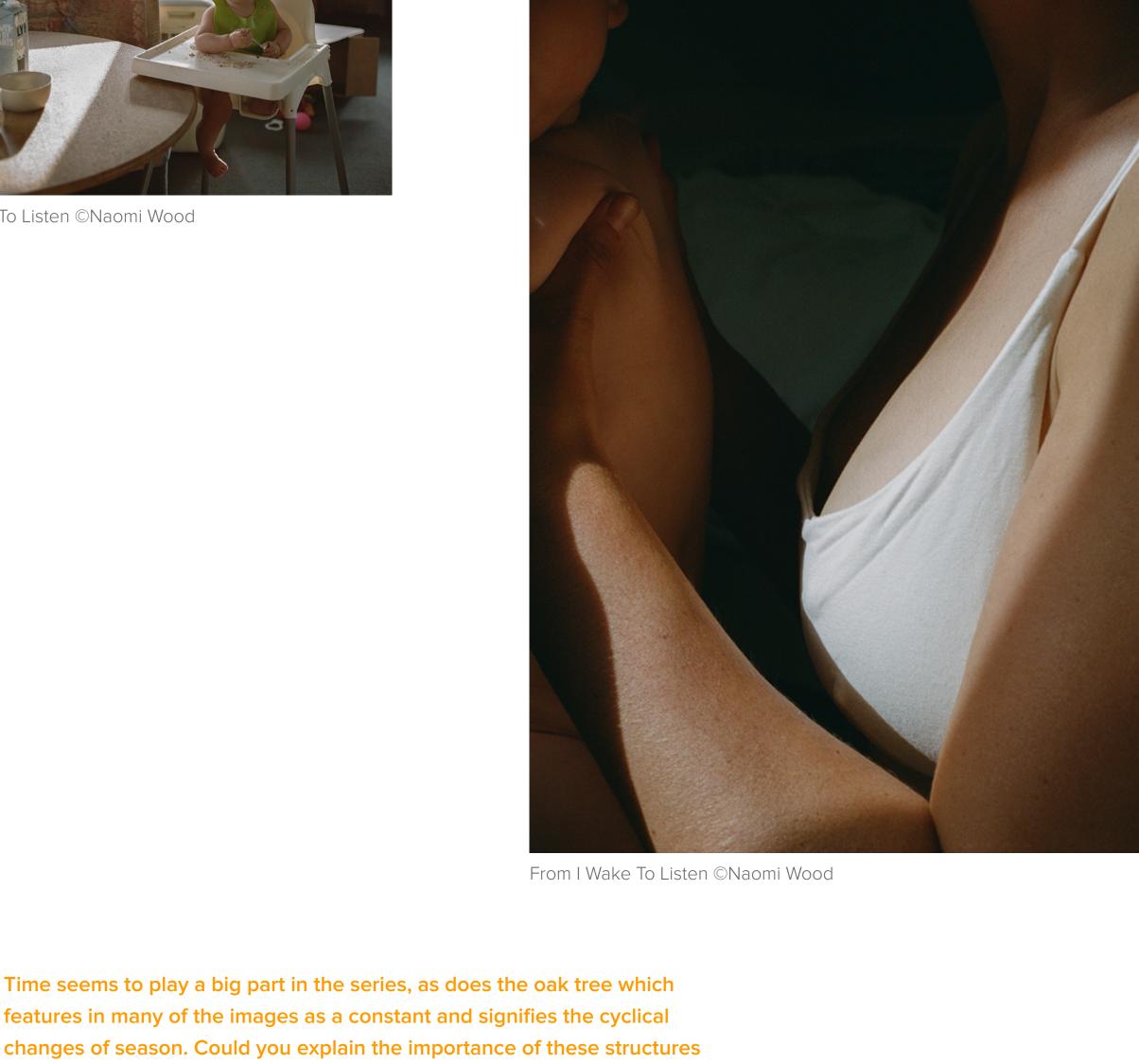
environment influenced the series?

There is so much nature around us, we are literally surrounded by it; it climbs in through the windows and wraps around our walls. So without me intending it to, it crept into the work too. My partner and I have spent

almost the entire 16 years we've been together living in boats and caravans, spaces with big windows, thin walls and no concrete around us. We've always been submerged in the environment around us and in that way, much more exposed to the changing seasons. Once I started editing the work, I realised how present nature is in the images and initially I was wary of drawing comparisons between the beauty I see in nature and Motherhood because Motherhood is often

over romanticised and I find that image damaging. My concern was that by including those images of the oak tree bathed in golden light, I would start to build a narrative around beauty, I felt like I wanted to push these images out of the edit. But Motherhood is a part of nature; like the bramble bushes that grow in through our windows it can be violent, relentless in its growth and all encompassing. And now, those same bramble bushes are currently covered in a delicate blossom, new buds appearing daily and in a few months time they will bear a delicious fruit. So nature came to represent all the nuances of the experience, the brutality, the beauty and all the spaces between.





I gave birth to our child in late October, it was a long labour and during it, in what seemed like a cruelty at the time, the clocks went back here in

months as the oak tree shed its leaves and the days became shorter, the darkness became a place of rest and a space for love to grow. I nestled in and started to enjoy this sudden change of pace. Slowly, buds began to reappear on the tree, new growth. Six months later we set our clocks forward an hour, the start of British Summer Time and I cried. It took me a

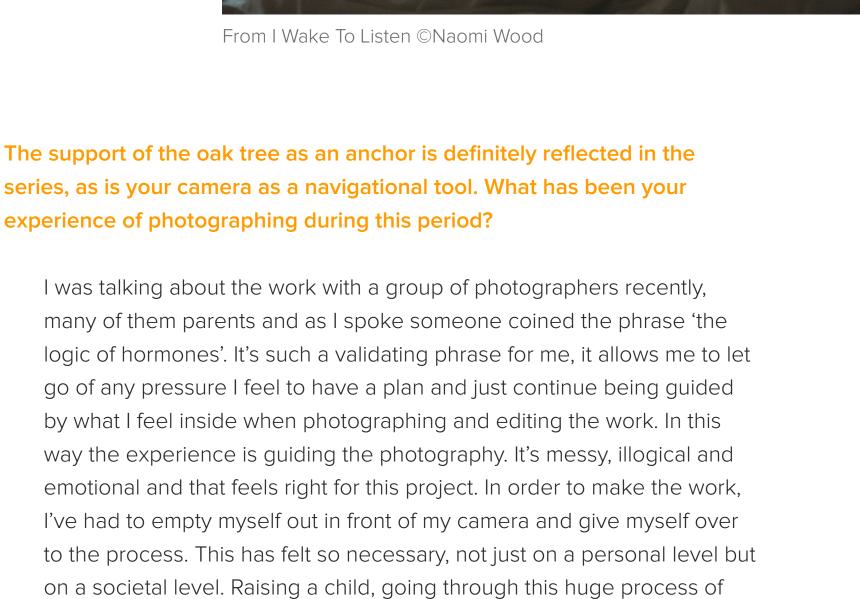
while to realise, but I was grieving for that quiet time with my new baby

and for the space that Winter allowed for myself to settle into my new

the UK, signalling the start of Winter. We went home and over the coming

during this period and making the series?

identity. The bright light of Spring, ripped me out of this space and forced me back into the world and I didn't feel ready. Of course, it was inevitable, Spring came, then Summer and back to Autumn again and as the seasons changed so did the challenges of parenting. I spent so much time at home, with that oak tree for company, that it became a symbol for my experience and a sort of anchor, a reminder that things constantly change and that's ok. Acceptance crept in and that was validating.



weight of responsibility would feel. So I'm digging deep, making myself vulnerable so that everyone else can feel it too.

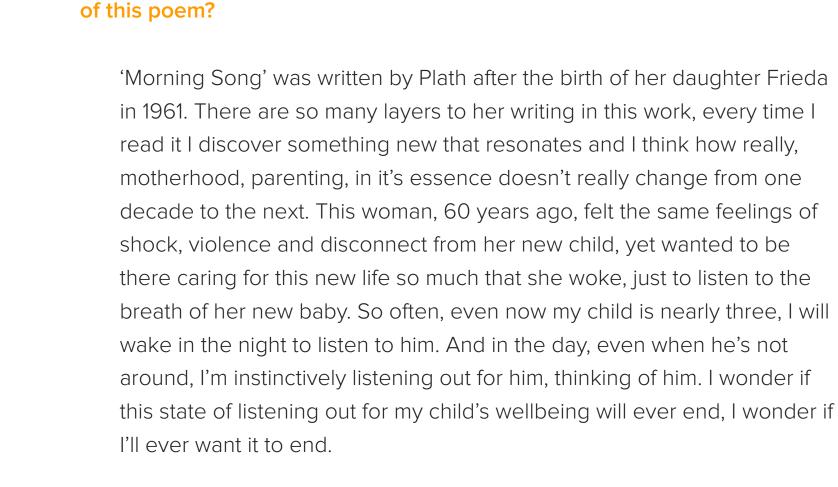
The title of the project 'I Wake to Listen' is taken from the poem 'Morning

Song' by Sylvia Plath. Could you tell us a bit more about the significance

change is so brutal and so hard. Although I knew it would be before

starting the journey of having my son, I couldn't fully comprehend just

how much support we would need to get through, nor how heavy the

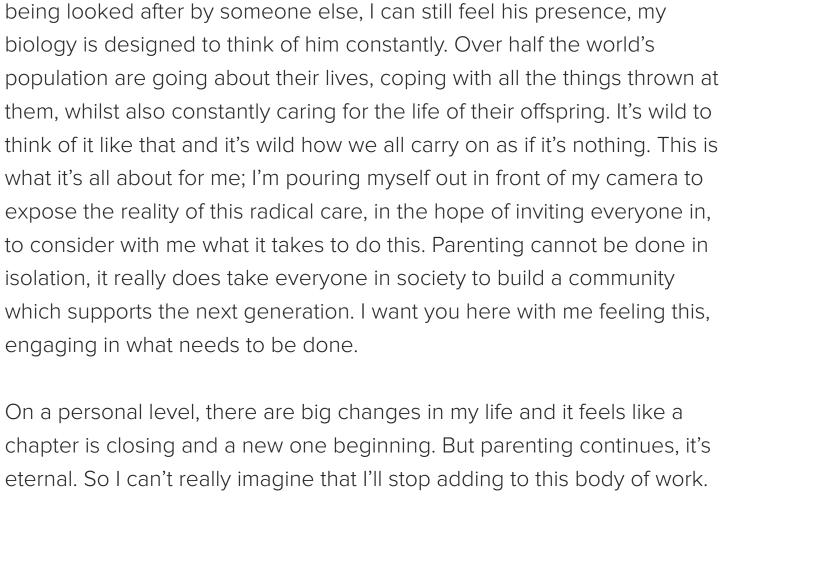


From I Wake To Listen © Naomi Wood

From I Wake To Listen ©Naomi Wood With this in mind is I Wake To Listen also ongoing?

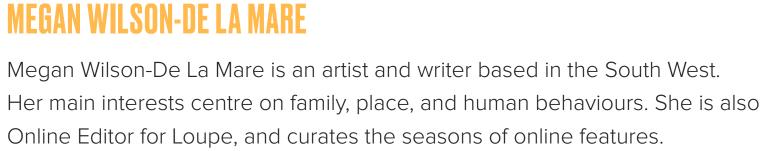
That's the thing that's always felt so suffocating and also so exciting

about parenting, it's forever. Even when I'm not with him and he's safe,



From I Wake To Listen @Naomi Wood

Has the project evolved through this process and the changes you've mentioned experiencing? Oh yes, totally. I'm working on realising it as a book, something intimate and raw and I'm seeing this as an opportunity to pull in some of the written elements from my diary, things that wouldn't feel right to have online. It's constantly changing and growing and it's challenging to keep returning to words and images which have often been made in painful moments. Sometimes I feel the need to censor the experience, make it more polite, when that happens I know it's time to change tact and reach out to those who know and support the work. It really relies on me making myself vulnerable and exposing what I naturally want to keep private, which could be harmful to me. But when I do it in a way that is in line with my core beliefs, it's extremely validating.



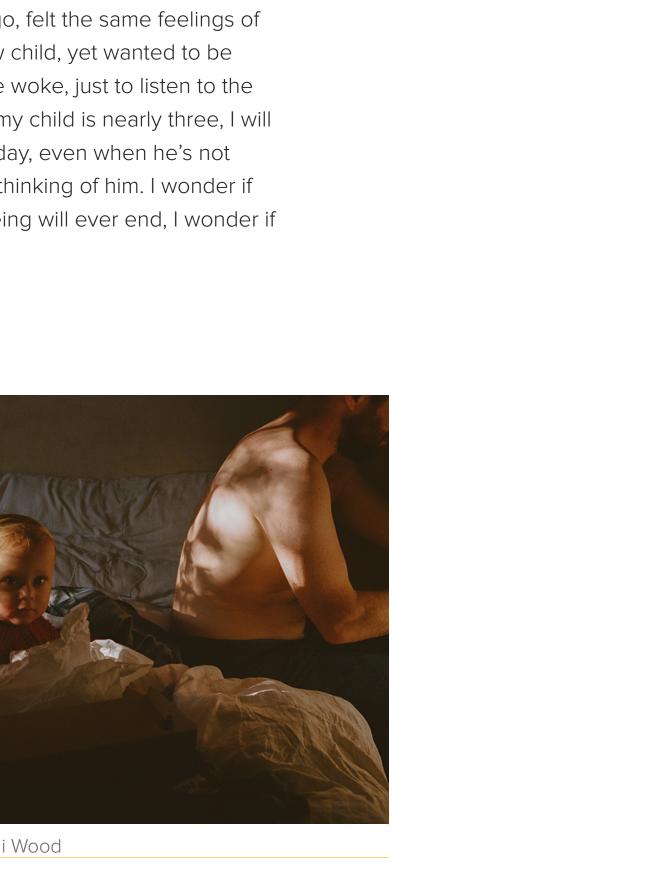
Online Editor for Loupe, and curates the seasons of online features. www.meganwilson-delamare.com Instagram @meganwdlm

Thank you for sharing! I look forward to seeing the project in book form

That, Vogue Italia and Creative Review among others. She is curator of

NAOMI WOOD Naomi's personal work explores the camera's ability as a therapeutic tool and has been exhibited at the Southbank centre and featured in BJP, It's Nice

platform @picturing parenthood and a lecturer at Bath Spa University and UWE Bristol. www.naomi-wood.com Instagram @naomiswood



From I Wake To Listen @Naomi Wood