

...the rest  
is smoke  
HELEN SEAR

**The composer Matt Lovett talks about his process for creating the sound for Helen Sear's *The Company of Trees***

All recorded sound is altered sound: the act of re-presenting an acoustic event through recording and playback fundamentally changes what it is that we are listening to. *Company of Trees*, in foregrounding this transformative process as part of its visual aesthetic, resonates with the way in which different degrees of transformation of sound can affect our listening experience. The brief to work with field recordings of birdsong and tree-felling in woodland in Monmouthshire allowed for this process to be explored through sound composition, in parallel with a set of images that are both recognisable, and at the same time fractured by zoetropic editing and dense layering. We can see and hear *Company of Trees*, but we don't quite know what we're looking at and what sounds we're hearing.

The sound work also explores different presentations of time. By definition, film and video allow us to experience at least two forms of time simultaneously, for example, where a series of images depicting the passing of a day, might be cut to a piece of music lasting thirty seconds. As such, *Company of Trees* works to achieve a multi-faceted temporal experience: we are experiencing the passing of time, and we are looking at time passing. Helen Sear's use of split-second editing, and the rhythmic cycles and temporalities that emerge from this approach, for me are reminiscent of Steve Reich's early phase-pattern compositions. In these pieces, the resultant melodies that arise from a shifting series of overlaid melodic fragments are strongly suggestive of multiple speeds and time cycles. In this sense, the sound often works to respond to the rhythms that are operating in the visual material, and builds on these to generate varied timeframes within the piece as a whole. The shifting assemblages that are generated by *Company of Trees* visual and sonic components have resulted in an experience where, after repeated viewings as a contributor to the project, I'm still seeing and hearing new perspectives within the piece.

Matthew Lovett, Composer