# Energy, motivation and the will to power: *See Hear Now* #4

The fourth iteration of *See Hear Now* begins to reveal a Nietzsche-arian approach to new media. In this episode of the biennial event there has been an attempt to draw on the power of local, national and international artists to immerse the community in an extravaganza of performance, visual arts and hybrid media.

Questioning the status quo has been the hall mark of artistic practice throughout time and with the emergence of new technology many artists can confidently cross genres and move away from the norm to highly innovative, cross disciplinary, experimental and challenging work. The great gift of this festival is the rich assortment of work from a variety of artists including musicians, visual artists, photographers, poets, performers, instrument makers, composers and performance artists. The calibre of these artists is world class, with a number of international renowned performers included in the program. The *will to power* seems entirely consistent with this series of creative interventions as the artists rise and fall in their quest to make a contribution to the arts; always attempting to clarify contemporary issues through mediums other than the privileged written word.

The intensity of deliberation in making contemporary visual and performing art has reached new heights in the 21st century abandoning the modernist trajectory of the new, to a reconnection with now, then and later. Contemporary work needs to be experienced in the real; so much of this festival depends upon the receptivity of the artist and audience to shape the improvisation through a connection between both entities. The act of performing intensifies the event but also opens channels of empathy by sharing the experience. Sounds, smells, temperatures, sensations, sights, discussions and enrapture all contribute to live performance. These features plus the cohort of visual artists who create and document sections of the performance, bundle the experience into a significant event; one that becomes engrained and stays with the audience for many years.

Nietzsche pursued the challenges of philosophy just as some contemporary artists pursue the evolution of art. To draw Nietzsche into this discussion may sound strange but the need to dig deep into contemporary practice runs parallel with his need to re-assess philosophy. The stages of artistic engagement within previous *See Hear Now* festivals encapsulate aspects enunciated by Nietzsche as he speaks of sensations in his levels of ‘striving for distinction’

The striving for distinction is the striving for domination over the next man, though it be a very indirect domination and only felt or even dreamed there is a long scale of degrees of this secretly desired domination, and a complete catalogue of them would be almost the same thing as a history of culture, from the earliest, still grotesque barbarism up to the grotesqueries of over-refinement and morbid idealism. The striving for distinction brings with it *for the next man* - to name only a few steps on the ladder: torment, then blows, then terror, then fearful astonishment, then wonderment, then envy, then admiration, then elevation, then joy, then cheerfulness, then laughter, then derision, then mockery, then ridicule, then giving blows, then imposing torment: - here at the end of the ladder stands the *ascetic* and martyr, who feels the highest enjoyment by himself enduring, as a consequence of his drive for distinction, precisely that which, on the first step of the ladder, his counterpart the *barbarian* imposes on others on whom and before whom he wants to distinguish himself. (Nietzsche, F. W., (1881). *Daybreak: thoughts on the prejudices of morality* p113.)

The immersion of artistic practice and the experience of significant art can take us outside of our corporality and bring us to rapture and empowerment. This aspiration to seek higher levels of engagement outside of popular culture and the everyday, are the drivers of festivals, concerts, performances, art events and many other cultural activities. *See Hear Now* distinguishes itself from the mainstream; it attempts to show alternate paths, to drive on the less travelled road, to go beyond the safe reaches of convention and ultimately to find new lands. These lands may be the bad lands of a Nietzsche-ian world, the forgotten sectors inhabited by both barbarians and aesthetes; but for better or worse they do exist and it is the responsibility of the arts to locate and reveal them to those who wish to see and hear - now.

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