

# KINGS

*Tom Campbell*  
SOMETHING TO BE  
UNDERSTOOD

EMERGING  
WRITERS PROGRAM

*Artist Run*

Tom Campbell (Scottish/Kadazan) is an artist and writer working in philanthropy in Kamberrri/Canberra. His work seeks to articulate the gaps between muscles and memories across his lineages of Scottish kings and Sabahan chiefs. Tom has published work with Photoaccess and ANCA, in addition to showing work with Airspace Projects, Next Wave, and You Are Here.



Established in 2003, KINGS Artist-Run provides a location for contemporary art practice, supporting distinctive experimental projects by artists at all stages of their careers.

Open 12-5pm Thursday,  
Friday, Saturday  
69 Capel Street,  
West Melbourne VIC 3003

KINGS Artist Run acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate. We offer our respect to Elders both past and present and extend this offer to all First Nations people.

As an expression of gazing:

*gospel of biblically correct  
angel Diavolo*

1 Misplaced, misremembered  
2 words / Something about putting  
3 the buttons all in a straight line /  
4 Like some kind of ‘I can’t  
5 believe it’s not yet finished’  
6 nascent ideology approaching.

7 The expression of a nascent  
8 ideology likens itself to one  
9 which you might once have  
10 remembered / Apostasy like  
11 material spread pure / Flowing  
12 all back like liquid butter.

13 Evidently informed by a  
14 lingering rhythmic idea / Each  
15 button blinks into a shimmering  
16 collection of eyes / All evidence  
17 of authorial context ignored in  
18 favour of the decorative garden.

19 All these eyes enable acts of  
20 observing anti-idols / A long  
21 term performativity reveals a  
22 hidden thought / A will when  
23 strong enough results in a bible  
24 bent beyond recognition.

25 At work words mean only one  
26 thing / Something about endless  
27 permutations boiling down to  
28 one profane use / Ending up at  
29 the beck and call of my angelic  
30 tormentor.

31 No long nights await / Lo, I find  
32 myself flouncing forward  
33 through a silken mesh / The  
34 membrane is a mixed message  
35 from a method actor rather than  
36 something to be understood.

37 An intensely structured text /  
38 Can’t even begin to imagine the  
39 commitment necessary to  
40 undertake such a healing process  
41 / Unconcerned archangels  
42 always land on their feet.

43 Anointed curatorially, a more  
44 cunning person may neglect the  
45 less deflective connotation / A  
46 firm hand marks the small of  
47 your back / Permission to share  
48 widely a deeply coded yearning.

As an expression of my  
ancestors:

*gospel of ricky pampang*

1 Each muscular translation I see /  
2 The flipping of which is my  
3 grandfather taking a biblical text  
4 and running with it / As a guy in  
5 Erskineville springs back from a  
6 bungee and onto the ground.

7 The recurrence of which lies in  
8 my dreams / The approximation  
9 of which is one part orality /  
10 Partly in pursuit of anticipation  
11 as a key ingredient lurching  
12 forward and down.

13 On another errand this time on  
14 an expressway up a trail behind  
15 the ancestral home / This time I  
16 have not indulged in site specific  
17 hijinks / Surprise – a portrait  
18 awaits after rounding the corner.

19 I was not ready for any of you to  
20 know about it / The English  
21 Language Bible with its strained  
22 relationship to the aural  
23 discourse which came before it /  
24 An easily seduced consumer.

25 A shared resistance to what  
26 might become a shadow of a  
27 word / A specific aversion to an  
28 uninitiated gospel / Words on  
29 long term loan must eventually  
30 obtain a deed of purchase.

31 The truth is you can’t help but  
32 twist into this new form /  
33 Holding together the clasp of a  
34 skirt coming undone akin to  
35 holding two mutually exclusive  
36 truths or an angel in the mind.

37 A vacant register effortlessly  
38 embraced as if second nature /  
39 Enviously adopting a little  
40 brother demeanour / Active-duty  
41 painterly success story harshly  
42 buzzkills otherwise perfect life.

43 I was not ready for any of these  
44 unforeseen transmissions /  
45 Migratory erosions begging you  
46 to learn all there is to know  
47 about the Sumazau before it’s  
48 too late / Unfurled eagle flight.

As an expression of a  
Metatron:

*gospel of mechanical  
transformation (spot of oil in  
between the gears)*

1 Was there any point in making  
2 a gun this size / The splash area  
3 would be just too small /  
4 Entrance to the departure  
5 lounge betrays a minor spot of  
6 oil in between the gears.

7 Decided on a form closer in  
8 shape than that which was  
9 originally intended / Still, it was  
10 about 7” which was, too, a  
11 topic of debate / Eventually we  
12 settled on boyfriend size.

13 Three things which might help /  
14 (One) re-builder’s rifle, using  
15 my 2c bonus power to make it  
16 cheaper / (Two) increased  
17 sensitivity of targets when  
18 firing weapons / (Three) Jessica  
19 Rabbit, or a label entitled as  
20 such / (Four) The long run  
21 might reveal a log of all the  
22 times you resisted that which  
23 makes you happy / (Five) Drill  
24 a little deeper and you’ll find it  
25 / (Six) A constantly validated  
26 embarrassment / (Seven) The  
27 crouching shadow in the garden  
28 completes the cryptic crossword  
29 puzzle / (Eight) Was there any  
30 point completing what was  
31 already way too small / (Nine)  
32 A minor major spot in D Flat. /  
33 (Ten) Decided on an engineer  
34 instead of an architect /  
35 (Eleven) A precise reason  
36 sought instead of a lean towards  
37 uncertainty / (Twelve) No  
38 shade to architects more  
39 referring to a preference to  
40 never do primary research /  
41 (Thirteen) Opting instead for an  
42 echoed, twisted, co-opted  
43 version that can no longer be  
44 controlled / (Fourteen)  
45 Inescapable rolling thoughts  
46 carry on wave after wave /  
47 (Fifteen) Remembering one too  
48 many times what it was like to  
49 be the crouching shadow in the  
50 forest / (Sixteen) The ocean of  
51 oil in between the gears  
52 befriends the skulking eye at  
53 the starboard helm.

As an expression of a violent  
machine:

*gospel of miscellaneous  
screen bodies*

1 That I might approximate an  
2 Olsen is in itself a mode of  
3 undoing / A lowly decorum  
4 settles as a complex orange  
5 aroma makes its presence  
6 known within the room.

7 Finding that against is not  
8 adversarial / All still life  
9 paintings have a relational  
10 consequence / Asserting an  
11 ‘off’ sculptural mounting or an  
12 ethereal text on anarchism.

13 A screen exercises its right to  
14 opacity while being reshaped  
15 by a molten heat / An artist  
16 exercises the right of refusal  
17 while being reshaped by a  
18 second or third or fourth force.

19 A rabbit or a label entitled as  
20 such slips the surly bonds of  
21 earth / Those on either side of  
22 the aisle continue a vertiginous  
23 march / Beset by an off-brand  
24 negotiator at dawn.

25 In a room filled with puppets or  
26 a laughing clown / Strings of  
27 conversation snap just before  
28 the point of comprehension /  
29 Errant knife grazes the neck  
30 leaving another small notch.

31 Will we present him a sword  
32 with a sapphire or ruby hilt /  
33 Peasant lines of questioning and  
34 then you wake up just before  
35 the convertible rounds the  
36 sunset Mediterranean highway.

37 Wielding endless permutations  
38 without origin / All moments  
39 approach other moments and  
40 then turn away / Time of death  
41 indeterminate due to closed  
42 tabernacle door.

43 A crisp breath heralds a new  
44 day / Five drill sergeants hardly  
45 pretend to adhere to their own  
46 advice / Erupting in tears in the  
47 crowded bar reflects a  
48 responsive honesty.

Note to the reader: This text is written in response to Megan Tan’s exhibition *The artist is not allowed*, first exhibited at Kings ARI in 2023. The text takes as a launching point Megan’s synthesis of their journey learning Cantonese with the biblical format of the gospel, where the source text (their mother’s answers to Megan’s questions in Cantonese) is filtered through secondary interpreters before arriving at the end user. The source is, at time of print, still secret to Megan, and I continued absorbing the text with this act of trust in mind, without seeking to provide my own direct account. Instead, this response represents a convergence of what I perceive to be Megan’s artistic vision with my own. XO Tom