

1954, URBAN DREAM BROKERAGE, 7-17 DECEMBER 2017

David Green



Figure 1. 1954 Entrance to Dreavers. Photograph: David Green.

Urban Dream Brokerage projects, managed by Tamsin Cooper, are designed to engage people in Dunedin City by providing unique and innovative experiences which demonstrate an awareness of Dunedin's current usages, issues and history and connect them to location and existing uses.

This installation *1954*¹ was held in the historic vacant shop space that was formerly the Dreaver family's milliners shop. The family maintained their business at the George Street location between the 1870s and 1950s. A mosaic laid on the shop threshold still announces their name.

Six months after her coronation (which followed Edmund Hillary's conquest of Everest by one week), Queen Elizabeth spent three days in and around Dunedin. The numerous fragments distributed throughout the *1954* installation at 165 George Street are drawn from the documentation made by members of the Dunedin Cine Club between 25 and 28 January 1954.

While the shop still stands, for most of us, it is hard to recognise the day-to-day interactions in the Dunedin that existed nearly 64 years ago.

1954 was designed as a public video art installation primarily featuring the footage of a dozen or so members of the Dunedin Cine Club during the 1954 visit of the newly crowned 25-year-old Queen Elizabeth II. Given to the extraordinary popularity of the young, charismatic monarch, virtually every owner of an 8mm or 16mm movie camera went out to film it. As a result, in the manner of an insect caught in amber; a trove of visual fragments of this moment in the life and culture of Dunedin are trapped and held. The amateur films employed in the installation offer a rare historicity that is the result of a particularly unsullied indexical quality often afforded by their very lack of crafting.



Figure 1. D. Green, *1954*, 2017, seven channel video installation. Photograph: David Green.

Urban dwellers are like successions of hermit crabs who readily take up empty shells provided by makers, now long gone. These shells retain the traces of lives and worldviews quite different from ours today. Only amateur documentation reveals the virtual ghosts in the dust and discolouration of the spaces we ourselves memorialise with signs of wear. More often than not, traditional cinema assembles loose evidence into a very particular story. Any collection of images can be maneuvered to serve any number of intentionalities, but once presented with a

particular construction it becomes difficult to change the way we have seized upon it as a viewer. But what happens when those fragments of evidence are encountered in a distributed manner that is similar to the way we experience the world? Perhaps then the viewer has room to connect events in a manner more resonant, even more truthful, by using them as the building blocks of meaning while calling upon their own experience, imagination, and memory to enlarge the narrative form.

The installation furthered my experiments with an expanded cinematic form I call “disarticulated cinema.” This approach, in part, distributes different film segments and film fragments throughout an interior or exterior space – in this instance, a century-old commercial retail space on George Street (Dunedin’s “High Street”), open for three hours a day during the pre-Christmas rush. The royal motorcade passed this storefront during the visit in the eponymous year.

Because I was invigilating the installation over its run, I fell into many conversations with visitors and was able to understand a variety of viewers’ perspectives relating to form and content which I found valuable.

David Green’s research and practice might best be described as cinema in the expanded field. His artworks sometimes appropriate and re-contextualise motion pictures, produced by both professionals and amateurs, in order to reveal their iconological meanings (or embedded social and cultural themes). David is interested in applying the phenomenology and the neurology of perception to the collaborative engagement between artwork and viewer. The ideas examined in his writing and practice arise from a variety of schools of thought ranging from Pre-Socratic philosophy to Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO).

1 Link for online content <https://vimeo.com/263103458>.