

Dipping into the archive is always an interesting, if sometimes unsettling, proposition. It often begins with anxiety, with the fear that the thing you want won't surface. But ultimately the process is a little like tapping into the unconscious, and can bring with it the ambivalent gratification of rediscovering forgotten selves.

This year, RM is showing at the Art Fair for the first time as a part of In Residence, a new initiative for artist-run spaces, and they're bringing a unique approach to the table. RM know who they are; they're firm in their values toward a community-focused space, and it is this assuredness to which I'm sure they owe their longevity. In their 20-year history they have committed to engage with practices, discourses and specific conditions of display that often have a hard time finding their way onto the white walls of a dealer gallery. As you walk up their staircase on Samoa House Lane, one will come across a variety of artists; many of which will be making their debut with RM, and others who are more seasoned practitioners, that value and enjoy the freedom RM offers to experiment with their space.

Since 2009, RM have been collecting ephemera and exhibition material from each exhibition and storing it in boxes in their archive-room. Initiating an archival practice is quite the undertaking, a historical method with implications they are definitely aware of; and it is this archive that they are presenting to the Art Fair this year. The RM booth will transport a fundraising event to the Auckland Art Fair through an evolving exhibition of around sixty artists from the RM archive who will be showing new artworks that are sized at approximately 200 x 340 mm. This is the size of the cardboard boxes that house the archive of RM exhibitions, (it is also the size of foolscap paper, a kind of standard writing paper size named after the cap and bells of a court fool).

The "archive" as a system, can be defined as the means by which historical knowledge and forms of remembrance are accumulated, stored and recovered. Created as much by state organizations and institutions as by individuals and groups, the archive—as distinct from a collection or library—constitutes a repository or ordered system of documents and records, both verbal and visual, that is the foundation from which history is often written.

RM are acutely aware of the power inherent in creating relations and systems, and that artistic archives are usually static, rationally ordered collections. In representing their archive of artists

at this year's ArtFair, they propose a new model, subverting those old ideas by turning their archive into a dynamic one: an archive that grinds and reshapes the reference materials so they can be ready for later use. In this process of rediscovery, there's an invitation to understand an alternative history that's taken place in their gallery, presenting the possibility to give new meanings to old ideas. This opportunity to excavate a specific site of knowledge allows magical visions relegated to history to be re-ignited again with the touch and breath of the users, so that they can enter the viewers subconscious, and again, be a part of the artist's works and memories.

Mobilising this idea of the "court-fool" through their use of the foolscap paper size is perhaps a means by which RM are posturing as a jester in a context they are not usually in. Yet what they are offering is far more than a sardonic chuckle. As an invaluable resource to the community now mobilises to occupy a different stage, so too do they contribute new visions and forms, fuelled by an innovative dynamism at the core of their gallery's values.