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RESEARCH PAPER

Relational Archival Investigation

Identity, Chronology, and Historical Judgment in Korean Experimental Art

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Research note

A methodological study of how relationships among records become historical claims. The paper examines identity, chronology, naming, and photographic evidence in Korean experimental art. It is accompanied by a documentary supplement and extended case studies.

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Abstract

Historical claims can become unsound even when their sources have been accurately transcribed. A date assigned to a work may be transferred to its present materials; a recurring title may identify a series rather than one object; an image may be used to establish an occasion other than the one it records. This paper develops Relational Archival Investigation (RAI) as a source-critical method for examining such changes of reference. It connects the formation of a historical question with explicit judgments about identification, chronology, explanation, and consequence.

The study compares seven consecutive entries in MMCA's 2016 acquisition list with public collection descriptions and develops additional cases from Korean experimental art. Two leading production-year assignments differ; published artist testimony distinguishes production from presentation in one case, while the other remains open. Further comparisons distinguish an original one-monitor presentation from a later twelve-monitor arrangement, a title's accidental origin from its subsequent adoption, and an action from the repaired photograph through which it survives. These findings support a methodological argument: the relationship joining otherwise accurate statements requires its own historical justification. RAI makes that justification explicit without claiming an unprecedented logic of inquiry or a measured advantage over other historical practices. Post-Interpretive Criticism supplies a philosophical background; documentary evidence sustains the historical conclusions.

Keywords: Relational Archival Investigation; art historiography; Korean experimental art; source criticism; historical identification; chronology; performance documentation; Post-Interpretive Criticism.

1. Accurate statements and an inaccurate history

Kim Youngjin's *1978–2* offers a concise problem for art-historical reasoning. MMCA identifies the work with the year 1978 and describes an installation using twelve monitors. Its fuller account distinguishes the original presentation through one monitor from a twelve-monitor presentation at the 2016 Busan Biennale. The historical year and the component count are therefore both intelligible, but they do not jointly establish that twelve monitors were used in 1978. Such a sentence would place accurate information within an unsupported historical conjunction (MMCA, record 7928).

The problem is neither a mistranscription nor necessarily an error in the museum record. It arises when information referring to different occasions is made to describe one occasion. Correcting it requires more than confirming each detail separately. The historian must identify what makes the details belong together. The same difficulty appears when two works share a title, when the date of an action is assigned to a later photographic print, or when a retrospective explanation is treated as contemporary testimony.

This paper argues that these changes of reference deserve explicit examination within historical inquiry. It develops Relational Archival Investigation (RAI) around four connected requirements: explaining the formation and revision of the question; stating the scope and grounds of identification; distinguishing the historical reference of dates and occasions; and reaching separate judgments about a documentary relationship, its explanation, and its consequences. The contribution is a source-critical account of the passage from documentary description to historical argument, demonstrated through particular comparisons rather than asserted through the name of a method.

The argument has a positive historical purpose. Distinguishing occasions can resolve an apparent contradiction, recover a more exact sequence, or identify a different object of inquiry. In Kim

Youngjin's case, the question shifts from the number of components assigned to the work to the relation between successive presentations. In the title history of Kim Yong-Ik's *Flat Object* series, a choice between correct and incorrect wording becomes a history of an accidental expression reportedly adopted for a time. In Rim Dong Sik's archive, a photograph becomes evidence of both an earlier action and the artist's subsequent treatment of its record. These are changes in what can reasonably be understood, not merely restrictions on what may be said.

The study brings together two kinds of comparison. A bounded examination includes every entry in a seven-row sequence of MMCA's 2016 acquisitions, retaining agreements and disagreements alike. Additional, deliberately chosen cases provide closer readings of naming, photographic repair, and early exhibition through documentation. The latter draw on two unpublished investigations by the author, whose publication is planned. Their decisive sources and arguments are presented here; access to the separate manuscripts is not required to examine the historical claims (Vale 2026a; 2026b).

The distinction between a method and its effects remains important. This paper formulates and demonstrates a practice within a particular documentary field. It does not report a comparison of researchers or claim that the findings could only have been reached through RAI. The scholarly issue is whether the specified distinctions clarify consequential relations among sources and whether the conclusions remain open to precise reconsideration. The demonstrations answer that question at the level of the cases examined.

2. What the method asks of a comparison

The historical subject must remain identifiable

Relational Archival Investigation is a method of historical inquiry through which relationships among records form or revise research questions, while the grounds of identification, the reference of dates and occasions, and the judgments about relationship, explanation, and consequence remain explicit in the argument.

The term *archival* concerns records and the circumstances of their production, preservation, arrangement, description, and use. The sources may include an acquisition list, a photographic object, a published interview, a catalogue, or a later scholarly account. Their inclusion within one investigation does not establish a common provenance. A relationship proposed by the historian is itself a historical proposition, distinct from a relationship established by the activities that produced the records.

The scope of identification must be stated because "the same work" can conceal several different assertions. Two descriptions may concern an artist-authorized work without referring to unchanged materials. Two photographs may belong to one series without depicting one object. An installation can retain its title through successive presentations whose arrangements differ. The appropriate grounds depend on the claim: a museum management number, an inscription, a distinctive configuration, dimensions, an exhibition reference, or an explicit connection in the source.

Identity is therefore examined in relation to the question. Recognizing a work across a reconstruction may be sufficient for a collection history but insufficient for a claim about the original materials. A series-level connection can be useful without authorizing an individual-object chronology. A rejected identification is an affirmative result when it prevents the inquiry from assigning one subject's evidence to another.

Dates refer to acts

A date is historically meaningful through what it dates. Production, exposure, performance, exhibition, printing, annotation, remaking, and description are different acts. A source may distinguish them explicitly, abbreviate them, or leave their relation uncertain. The historian must read the date in its documentary setting before classifying two different years as contradictory.

The same principle applies to a source's own chronology. A statement recalled in 2016 about an action in 1975 has at least two relevant dates. A manuscript's assigned year may differ from an inscription within it. A consultation date establishes when a researcher encountered a particular description; it does not identify when an institution entered or changed that description. These distinctions prevent a history of the work from being confused with a history of its documentation.

Chronological precision is not always obtainable. An artist may remember a sequence without providing a month; a catalogue may preserve an exhibition year while the production date remains unknown. The task is to retain the precision the source supplies. An unspecified interval should neither be made exact nor used to render an otherwise established sequence wholly uncertain.

Relationship, explanation, and consequence

Three judgments organize the result of a comparison. The first asks whether the connection is warranted and what it establishes. The second asks what explains it. The third concerns a historical consequence: what follows for the account of the work, and whether any claimed effect on subsequent scholarship or practice is documented.

These judgments can have different evidential strengths. Two descriptions may demonstrably assign different production years while the reason for the assignments remains unknown. An artist's testimony may distinguish production from exhibition without explaining the museum's editorial decision. A date can alter the chronology available to an art historian without evidence that a particular historian adopted it. The last distinction separates a reasoned implication from a demonstrated episode of reception.

The source's wording and the historian's conclusion must also remain distinguishable. A reliable transcription can survive the rejection of an identification based upon it. Agreement between two accounts may reflect a common authority rather than independent observations. Repetition through another repository or publication does not create a new witness to the same proposition. These considerations concern the support of particular claims, not the general prestige of a source or institution.

The formation of the question belongs to the account

The first question need not be the question the investigation ultimately answers. A supposed conflict may disappear once its dates are understood. An apparent correction may turn out to concern different objects. A title variant may prompt inquiry into its adoption rather than its origin alone. The account should preserve the documentary comparison that occasioned the change and the reason for pursuing the revised question.

This requirement gives RAI a practical form. Before explaining a discrepancy, the researcher records the proposed subject, relevant statements, dates and occasions, grounds of comparison, and strongest alternative reading. After examination, the researcher states the accepted, rejected, or unresolved connection and identifies what evidence could alter that judgment. The procedure can be brief where the relation is straightforward and more extensive where identification or

explanation is disputed. Supplement 1 supplies the documentary account; Supplement 2 develops the additional cases at greater length.

3. Intellectual inheritance and the contribution proposed

Historical inquiry already possesses substantial resources for this work. Collingwood makes a source's evidential significance inseparable from the question addressed to it, while allowing inquiry to transform the question itself (1946, 249–282). Langlois and Seignobos distinguish the interpretation of testimony from its criticism and require examination of the ancestry of apparently corroborating statements (1904, book II). The significance of a documentary relationship cannot therefore be claimed as a new discovery merely because it is made explicit here.

Toulmin's account of grounds, warrants, qualifications, and rebuttals clarifies why a citation does not complete an argument (2003, 87–134). Goodwin's examination of Wigmore's chart method similarly brings supporting considerations and competing explanations into view (2000, 224–227, 235–236). These approaches can represent the reasoning considered in this paper. RAI gives particular historical content to the premises connecting records: the work or realization identified, the act to which a date refers, and the conclusion for which the relation is being used.

Langtree, Birks, and Biedermann provide a further close precedent by making source appraisal, conflicting evidence, uncertainty, and the development of the researcher's reasoning available for examination (2019). The contribution proposed here is consequently not the invention of a research record. It is an account of what that record must preserve when a comparison changes its historical subject or occasion. The notes have value when they make the change intelligible, not because their length or formal appearance guarantees rigor.

Archival theory likewise treats relationships as constitutive of evidential meaning. Duranti's archival bond arises through the activities in which records are produced or received, rather than through resemblance alone (1997). Meehan examines evidence through the relationship between records and events (2006). These arguments prevent institutional custody from being mistaken for a single evidential origin: two descriptions issued by one museum may have different authors, purposes, and sources.

Museum description already has the means to distinguish the historical acts at issue. Getty's *Categories for the Description of Works of Art* differentiates creation, design, production, presentation, performance, and alteration and allows qualifications and uncertainty in the description of dates. Its guidance also recognizes that information may concern components rather than an undifferentiated whole (Getty Research Institute, "Creation," §4.2). Records in Contexts represents documentary relationships and circumstances; CRMinf provides a vocabulary for argumentation and belief (ICA EGAD 2023; Doerr, Fafalios, and Stead 2023). RAI asks how those distinctions remain effective when description is used in historical prose. It offers no replacement for these standards.

Jones, Demb, and Nichols identify the loss that occurs when documentary heritage is separated from objects and wider contexts, arguing for relational approaches to its preservation and understanding (2024). Their account provides an important counterpart to the present argument. Dissociation can impoverish historical knowledge; reconnection requires care about what has been joined. A connection can restore context while an unsupported equivalence can create a history the sources do not establish.

Wang and Liu's published abstract describes a related concern with the fit between claims and documentary support, including transformation, warrants, and subsequent correction (2026). The

comparison here is limited to that abstract. No assertion about a missing capacity in their full account, or priority over it, is required by the present argument. The direct comparisons with source criticism, evidential reasoning, and museum description already establish the relevant intellectual inheritance.

The positive contribution is an account of three related changes that can occur between a source and a historical claim. An identification can shift from a series to an individual work or from a work to its materials. An occasion can shift from production to exhibition or from exposure to later display. The reach of a conclusion can shift from a documentary difference to its cause or subsequent effect. The cases below show how these changes can be identified and how correcting them can produce a different historical question or a more exact answer.

Their connection matters because attention to one distinction cannot substitute for the others. Accurate dating cannot rescue a comparison of different objects. Secure identification cannot make an exhibition year a production year. An explanation of two dates cannot establish the administrative circumstances in which they were assigned. RAI places these obligations together within the conduct and presentation of the inquiry. This is a specific methodological synthesis whose historical usefulness is demonstrated here, rather than a claim that its constituent capacities were absent from earlier scholarship.

4. Sources and selection

The principal documentary comparison comprises entries 73–79, inclusive, on printed pages 39–40 of MMCA's *2016 Annual Report*. All seven entries are retained and paired with public collection records 7922–7928. The collection management numbers are recorded separately from the online address numbers. Artist, title, medium, dimensions, component counts, and distinctive arrangements support the proposed matches. The annual report does not supply a shared accession identifier in each row, so the comparison concerns supported work-description identifications rather than an unqualified certification of material continuity.

The selection is retrospective. The *Untitled 75031* and *Jeok–Eungnyeok* comparisons were already known before the surrounding acquisition sequence was examined. Including a contiguous block makes that extension transparent and retains cases without leading-year differences; it does not create a representative sample or a prospectively designed test. The results concern these seven pairs, not the prevalence of error within MMCA or Korean museums generally.

Each pair is examined through the same questions: what is identified; what the leading year refers to; whether the years agree; which additional acts the fuller description distinguishes; and what further historical claim follows. Differences in measurements, durations, or material descriptions are retained without being automatically classified as mistakes. Agreement is recorded even when it does not generate a further problem.

The additional cases have a different purpose. Kim Yong-Ik's naming history, Rim Dong Sik's photographic repair, and Sung Neung Kyung's early photographic presentation were chosen because they require different judgments about intention, material history, and public form. They are not added to the denominator of the seven-entry comparison. Their earlier development in the author's unpublished manuscripts is acknowledged, while the institutional sources supporting them are identified directly (Vale 2026a; 2026b).

Online descriptions are considered in the documentary forms consulted on 9 November 2026. Relevant annual-report entries were collated against the page images. The evidence comprises public records, published testimony, and scholarship; it does not include new interviews, internal

amendment logs, physical conservation examinations, or an experiment with independent participants. Supplement 1 distinguishes the form in which each source was examined and preserves the decisive references. A consultation date is not presented as an independent archival timestamp.

5. Seven acquisitions and several kinds of result

The leading-year comparison

The selected sequence contains three works by Lee Kang-so, one by Park Suk-won, one by Sung Neung Kyung, and two by Kim Youngjin. Table 1 presents every pair. Two leading production-year assignments differ and five agree. The count describes the compared fields; it is not a count of institutional mistakes. Further evidence determines whether the dates describe different acts, conflicting assignments, or a problem that remains unexplained.

Table 1. Leading-year assignments in MMCA's acquisition entries 73–79

Entry	Artist and work	Report year	Catalogue year	Management no. Online record
73	Lee Kang-so Untitled 75031	1975	1975	07909 / 7922
74	Lee Kang-so Painting (Event 77–2)	1977	1977	07910 / 7923
75	Lee Kang-so Painting–78–1	1978	1977	07911 / 7924
76	Park Suk-won Jeok–Eungnyeok	1974	1972	07912 / 7925
77	Sung Neung Kyung Eight Pages of Newspaper	1977	1977	07913 / 7926
78	Kim Youngjin 1978–10–2	1978	1978	07914 / 7927
79	Kim Youngjin 1978–2	1978	1978	07915 / 7928

Sources: MMCA, 2016 Annual Report, printed pages 39–40, and public collection records 7922–7928. The count describes differences in the cited assignments, not a rate of institutional error.

Production and presentation: *Painting–78–1*

Entry 75 assigns 1978 to Lee Kang-so's *Painting–78–1*. Collection record 7924 gives 1977 and associates the first presentation with the fourth Daegu Contemporary Art Festival in 1978. Artist, distinctive title, single-channel colour video, and the account of painting on glass before a camera support the work-description match. The report records 29 minutes 25 seconds; the collection description gives 30 minutes. That difference is retained separately (MMCA, *2016 Annual Report*, 39; record 7924).

A published conversation dated 14 October 2018 provides work-specific testimony. Asked about *Painting–78–1*, Lee Kang-so distinguishes its production in 1977 from its presentation in 1978 and says that confusion in the record needs correction. The statement supports an attributed chronology rather than a choice between unexplained numbers (Lee 2018, exchange on *Painting–78–1*). The date belongs to the conversation identified within the document; the "2021" designation in the hosted filename is not substituted for it.

The testimony gives the inquiry an affirmative answer: the artist identifies different historical acts associated with the two years. It does not settle why an annual-report compiler chose 1978 or when an institutional field was amended. Those questions concern different historical actors and require further records. Nor does the testimony explain the duration difference. Rounding, a different transfer, or another description of the recording remains possible until the relevant moving-image material is examined.

The result is useful precisely because it is differentiated. The work's production–presentation sequence has an attributed explanation. The history of the institution's assignments remains open. Treating the entire case as unresolved would suppress a supported conclusion; treating the testimony as the history of a museum correction would enlarge it beyond its subject.

One monitor and twelve: *1978–2*

The account of Kim Youngjin's *1978–2* provides a firmer distinction between historical presentations. The leading year is 1978 in both witnesses. The collection description explains that twelve recorded bodily actions were first shown on one monitor because equipment was limited, whereas the 2016 Busan Biennale presentation used twelve monitors. The acquisition list describes a twelve-monitor installation beneath the year 1978 (MMCA, record 7928; *2016 Annual Report*, 40, entry 79).

The fuller account authorizes an important historical separation. The year identifies the work's early history; the component description identifies a material presentation that must be dated in its own right. Neither fact needs correction for the proposed sentence "the installation used twelve monitors in 1978" to be unwarranted. The error would reside in the conjunction. This sentence is an illustrative inference under examination, not a quotation attributed to another historian.

The distinction changes the question available for exhibition history. Instead of treating the later arrangement as evidence of an early simultaneous display, inquiry can examine how twelve recorded actions were presented through limited equipment and what changed when twelve monitors became available. The source does not supply the full playback order, installation plan, or duration of spectators' attention. Those are subsequent questions rather than reasons to ignore the documented difference in equipment.

The case is not evidence that the museum failed to preserve its own history. Its explanatory account supplies the decisive distinction. RAI locates responsibility at the point where that information enters another argument: the historian must carry the relation between year, work, and presentation into the narrative instead of allowing the catalogue line to merge them.

Agreements that preserve further histories

Painting (Event 77–2) retains 1977 while identifying later printing and remaking. The institutional account separates bodily action, photographic exposure, and exhibition of the resulting materials. An unchanged historical date therefore accompanies a differentiated material history (MMCA, record 7923). The agreement establishes a stable leading assignment, not that every surviving component was made at one time.

The comparison of Sung Neung Kyung's *Eight Pages of Newspaper* retains agreement about 1977. Its fuller description explains materials that a shorter field may abbreviate. Kim Youngjin's *1978–10–2* retains 1978 while differing in component measurements and photographic terminology. Those differences are preserved in Supplement 1 without assigning causes to them. They do not establish an altered work or a new interpretation simply because they are measurable.

These cases matter to the procedure because they prevent the inquiry from equating productivity with discrepancy. The same comparison can establish compatible dates, distinguish presentations, retain a material question, or identify a production-year difference. An adequate account reports what each relation supports rather than counting every difference as a discovery.

6. Park Suk-won: a genuine pair and an unwarranted third date

The *Jeok–Eungnyeok* case yields a different result. Acquisition entry 76 gives 1974; collection record 7925 gives 1972 and identifies remaking of the wooden elements in 2016. The record also associates the work with the First Seoul Biennale in 1974. Artist, Korean title, cloth-and-wood materials, cloth dimensions of 332 × 358 cm, and four closely corresponding wooden elements support comparison of the descriptions as accounts of one work (MMCA, *2016 Annual Report*, 40; record 7925).

The final dimension of the fourth wooden element differs by 0.1 cm, and the variation is retained. A small measurement difference alone does not outweigh the conjunction of identifying details, but neither is it silently normalized. An accession cross-reference would strengthen the identification; evidence of separately identified realizations could alter its scope. The claim concerns the described work and its acknowledged remaking, not unchanged materials throughout its history.

Separating the 2016 intervention leaves the leading 1972/1974 contrast intact. The public comparison establishes different production-year assignments. It does not determine which year is historically correct, whether one published description directly replaced another, or why either year was assigned. An exhibition-associated convention, a correction, or different information available to the compilers remain possible explanations.

The historical stake is specific. MMCA describes wooden elements surrounding a cloth surface with painted shadows, producing an implausible relation between the objects and their representations. A 1972 production date would place this arrangement two years before its reported Seoul exhibition; 1974 would locate production within the exhibition year. The question is whether the exhibition presented an existing experiment or a more recently made work. The artist's documented Myeongdong Gallery exhibition in 1974 identifies another body of contemporary material worth examining, but its existence does not establish that this installation appeared there (Arts Council Korea, artist record 1172).

The same institutional artist record lists *Jeok–Eungnyeok 2*, dated 1973, in wood and measuring 240 × 40 × 25 cm. The numbered title, materials, and dimensions do not identify MMCA's cloth-and-four-wood arrangement. Adding 1973 to the paired dates would therefore turn a plausible relation among works into an unsupported identity of one work.

That exclusion is one of the investigation's completed judgments. The 1973 record is relevant to the artist's practice, but it does not supply a third production year for the MMCA installation. The established date difference and the rejected third-date extension have different grounds. One remains historically open because the needed explanation is missing; the other is withheld because the evidence does not establish the proposed individual identity.

Further documentation could revise either judgment. A contemporary photograph could support an earlier production date. An accession file could identify the basis of the museum's assignment. A source linking the separately titled work to the installation could explain their relationship. Each would answer a particular question. None should be made to settle all aspects of the case merely because it concerns the same artist or series.

7. Naming, repair, and early photographic presentation

Kim Yong-Ik: origin and adoption

The title history developed in *A History of Korean Art Through Changed Titles and Dates* illustrates a question changed by the evidence. SeMA's portfolio record 89408 reports Kim Yong-Ik's recollection that "plain objet" became "place objet" through a typographical error, that he temporarily used the latter because its meaning seemed compatible, and that he later returned to the intended wording. Its description of image 18 transcribes a verso naming a 1977 work, 100 × 300 cm, as "平面 objet (Place object)" (SeMA, item 89408, images 17–18; Vale 2026a).

The two kinds of statement serve different purposes. The reported recollection explains an origin and a subsequent choice. The attributed inscription records a particular wording associated with a work description. Neither dates every other use of the term. A dated 1978 award certificate supplies another title form without deciding when the English wording first appeared or when the artist recalled its history (SeMA, item 89335).

The resulting finding is more exact than a correction of spelling. According to the artist's reported testimony, an expression accidental in origin became temporarily intentional in use. Error and agency belong to different moments of the naming history. Treating "place" as intentional from the outset would obscure the reported accident; dismissing every use as meaningless would obscure its reported adoption.

This distinction changes the research question from "Which word is correct?" to "How did a variant arise, become usable, and later receive an explanation?" The reasoning draws an affirmative history from the attributed account while preserving its status as retrospective testimony. It is not a surviving proof sheet locating the error's first appearance. Nor does it establish how a later critic interpreted "place." That reception claim would require an identified text and an argument showing dependence on the wording.

Individual work identity remains a further matter. The unpublished investigation records different dimensions and arrangements within the series. Shared title and year cannot merge them into one accession history. A history of naming may be established at series level while formal retitling of a particular object remains unproved. Supplement 2 develops these distinctions in greater depth.

Rim Dong Sik: what a repaired photograph can establish

When Documentation Becomes the Work examines a photograph whose present surface has more than one historical reference. SeMA's record MA-03-00006485 describes a photograph of *Tying Reeds and Beard*, associated with Wonsando in 1988, that suffered moisture damage. The institution reports that Rim Dong Sik used marker and oil paint to restore background elements. The represented action, exposure, deterioration, and intervention are connected, but they are different acts (SeMA, item 23414; Vale 2026b).

The account changes the question put to the photograph. If the historian asks about the exact appearance of the background at exposure, the surviving surface cannot certify that every contour remains photographically untouched. An earlier print or negative would matter. If the question concerns the artist's continuing treatment of his records, the same description supplies affirmative evidence of further work on the image. The photograph's value changes with the proposition for which it is being used.

Authorship does not collapse chronology. The fact that the artist undertook the intervention does not make it contemporary with the original event. Equally, later intervention does not invalidate

every historical use of the photograph. Its material history qualifies the conclusions it can support. The institution describes restoration; the present argument does not convert that account into an allegation of deception or a universal determination of the object's artistic identity.

A separate copied photographic document, MA-02-00007550, places copying and reuse within Rim Dong Sik's practice (SeMA, item 24479). It provides context for documentary activity, not independent confirmation of the repair of MA-03-00006485. Preserving that distinction prevents a second source about a related practice from being counted as a second witness to one event.

The case enlarges the historical account in a particular direction. The artist did not simply leave a passive record for an institution to interpret later. On the cited descriptions, the record itself remained material for artistic intervention. The repaired image can consequently bear evidence of an earlier action and a later act of preservation without making those histories interchangeable.

Sung Neung Kyung: documentation within the early exhibition history

Sung Neung Kyung's *Reading Newspaper* supplies a different chronology. MMCA identifies performances on 4 April and 3 July 1976 and a photographic panel presented at the Fourth Independents Exhibition in the same year. The museum states that it holds that panel, comprising twelve photographic elements (MMCA, record 8194; Vale 2026b).

The source supports an early public history of exhibition through photographs. It qualifies a reading in which documentary presentation necessarily arose only through much later museum collecting. That reading is considered here as a general hypothesis to test, not attributed without evidence to a named scholar. The institution's account establishes that a photographic form participated in the work's early circulation.

Several distinct questions remain. The record does not identify which performance supplied every exposure or, by assigning the work to 1976, independently certify the manufacture date of every surviving print. A panel may gather images with more than one origin. The early exhibition of photographs and the material continuity of the present ensemble therefore require different evidence.

The finding nevertheless stands at its proper level. Performance and photographic presentation belong to different occasions within the work's reported early history. The later public form need not be understood solely as an inadequate substitute for a vanished action. The historian can ask how it made the action available through sequence and arrangement, while keeping that interpretative question separate from the dates of the individual exposures and prints.

8. Lee Kang-so and the limits of an apparent contradiction

The accounts of *Untitled 75031* demonstrate why a proposed disagreement must itself be tested. MMCA locates the photographic exposure in Korea before the 1975 Paris exhibition and describes the Paris presentation through traces and photographs. Kaeun Park already distinguishes Korean photography from Paris action and questions the photographs' apparent evidential authority. Her account describes a bird present on site before its removal on the opening day (MMCA, record 7922; K. Park 2025, 364–366).

These statements do not establish a choice between Korean photographs and a living bird in Paris. The propositions concern different acts. Photographs made in Korea could accompany another action elsewhere; a bird absent during later display could have been present during preparation. The initial opposition must therefore be withdrawn before the inquiry asks about the more precise sequence.

Lee Kang-so's published symposium discussion of 4 November 2016 adds a relevant recollection.

On printed page 202, the phrase "오프닝부터," rendered here as "from the opening," locates a living bird in the exhibition space. This is retrospective testimony, not a contemporary record. Kaeun Park cites the same interview alongside the 1976 *Konggan* travelogue, so her historical sequence and the interview cannot be counted as independent confirmations simply because they appear in different publications (Lee 2016, 201–202; K. Park 2025, n. 38).

The remaining question concerns how preparation, opening, removal, and continuing display are aligned. "From the opening" and removal "on the opening day" do not by themselves establish either identical intervals or incompatible accounts. The original *Konggan* pages 71–73 have not been directly collated for this study. Their contents are not reconstructed from the later citation. The paper accordingly presents a defined question about the Paris chronology rather than a correction of Kaeun Park's interpretation.

The photographic counts are also source-specific. Kaeun Park describes eight images; MMCA's acquisition record and the 2025 gallery presentation identify ten. Without image-by-image correspondence, the difference cannot establish that two photographs were added to an unchanged original ensemble. It identifies a question about the sets described (K. Park 2025, 364–366; MMCA, *2016 Annual Report*, 39, entry 73; Thaddaeus Ropac 2025).

The later restaging provides evidence about its own occasion. The gallery describes live action during the opening and subsequent display of traces. That sequence shows how action and absence can coexist, but it does not decide the sequence fifty years earlier. The proper result is a differentiation of claims, some compatible and others requiring more evidence. Its interpretative importance concerns what an account of spectatorship presupposes: witnessing an animal's movements differs from inferring them through marks and images. Neither chronology by itself determines the full artistic significance of the work.

9. Interpretation and historical responsibility

Post-Interpretive Criticism (PIC) provides a philosophical background to this inquiry. It concerns the authority, limits, and responsibilities of interpretation rather than a categorical prohibition against explanation. In *Interpretation at Risk*, that responsibility extends beyond the truth of isolated statements to the relation between an interpretation and the encounter it addresses (Vale 2025). RAI gives a particular historical form to the question of what an explanation authorizes a writer to settle.

The domains must remain distinct. Aesthetic experience cannot determine the production year of an artwork; a securely dated record cannot determine everything ethically appropriate in a critical response. Historical warrant is required for a factual premise, but it does not exhaust the significance of a work. RAI concerns the documentary grounds of historical assertions. PIC addresses a wider responsibility for the authority and effects of interpretation.

The cases show the distinction in practice. An accidental wording can acquire significance through later acceptance. A repaired photograph can retain artistic force while requiring care as evidence of an earlier surface. A photographic panel can provide an encounter irreducible to witnessing the live action. None of those possibilities settles the date or origin of a particular historical statement. Conversely, identifying a production date or material intervention does not settle the work's meaning.

Interpretation can make the evidence more intelligible. The institutions' fuller descriptions preserve the differences between a work and its components, between exposure and exhibition, and between early and later arrangements. Kaeun Park's account already resists the equation of photographic appearance with straightforward proof. These are contributions to the inquiry, not impurities to remove before it begins. A philosophical concern with restraint may require fuller explanation when abbreviation conceals a decisive distinction.

The relation between PIC and RAI is therefore one of intellectual motivation, not evidential dependence. The historical conclusions must stand whether or not the reader accepts PIC. Their success would not validate the philosophy as a whole; a finding that defeats the researcher's expectation must remain available. Nor are the present demonstrations represented as earlier published applications of RAI. The method is formulated and examined here through documentary investigations, including the two related manuscripts that remain unpublished.

10. What the comparison contributes

The cases support an affirmative account of a recurring inferential difficulty: an argument can move between related but different historical subjects while its words appear to remain stable. In *1978–2*, the accepted identity of a work does not date every presentation of it. In the *Flat Object* material, the history of a title's origin does not settle the history of its adoption. In the Rim Dong Sik photograph, the date of the depicted action does not absorb the later treatment of its record. The distinction is consequential even when every quoted statement is accurate.

The contribution has three parts. First, the paper specifies the point at which a documentary connection requires its own justification. Second, it shows that preserving the connection can generate a different historical question, rather than merely qualify an existing answer. Third, it presents an accompanying record through which another scholar can revise the affected conclusion without discarding findings whose grounds remain intact.

That last consequence is visible in the dating cases. New evidence supporting 1972 for *Jeok–Eungnyeok* would not explain why the report used 1974. Evidence identifying a different work would instead affect the pairing, while leaving each transcription available. In *Painting–78–1*, the production–presentation testimony clarifies chronology without deciding the duration or editorial history. The inquiry is not one undifferentiated verdict of certainty or doubt.

The examples also establish limits on the paper's reach. The seven-entry sequence was chosen retrospectively; the additional cases were selected for their particular difficulties. Their value is analytical depth and explicit grounds, not representativeness. The research has not measured how often historians make these errors or whether the RAI apparatus improves other scholars' performance. A comparative assessment could address those questions; it remains a separate undertaking from the documentary argument presented here.

The strongest objection remains that competent historians can already make these distinctions. They can, and the intellectual genealogy explains why. RAI's contribution is not exclusive possession of their capacities. It is a sustained formulation of the historical conditions under which otherwise accurate statements may be joined, together with cases showing how those conditions change the inquiry. Its merit lies in the argument's usefulness and specificity, not in an unverified declaration that no predecessor exists.

The source limitations are likewise particular. An institutional description is not a conservation examination; reported artist testimony is not a contemporary proof sheet; a later account of an exhibition does not certify every phase of it. The paper resolves the questions its evidence can

answer and distinguishes those answers from an administrative or material history still requiring other documents. This is a boundary of the historical claims, not a claim that the remaining questions have been answered elsewhere.

11. Conclusion

Relational Archival Investigation examines what happens when records are brought into a historical relation. Its central obligation is to preserve the subject, occasion, and reach of the claim through that movement. A catalogue's correct title, year, and component count may require different historical references. Joining them without those references can produce a proposition that none of the sources supports.

The Korean cases yield different results. Published testimony distinguishes production from presentation for *Painting–78–1*. The paired descriptions of *Jeok–Eungnyeok* sustain a date difference while the separately numbered 1973 work is excluded from the same individual chronology. The history of *1978–2* separates an early one-monitor presentation from a later twelve-monitor arrangement. Kim Yong-Ik's reported naming history distinguishes accident from subsequent adoption; Rim Dong Sik's photographic repair distinguishes action from the material afterlife of its record; and Sung Neung Kyung's photographic panel locates documentary presentation within the work's early exhibition history.

These results do not converge on a general allegation of institutional error. They show institutions preserving distinctions that scholarship must carry forward, as well as comparisons whose explanation remains open. The method's purpose is to make that difference answerable to evidence. A historical account becomes stronger when a reader can identify what has been established, how the question changed, and which further document would alter a particular conclusion.

Note on sources and accompanying materials

Documentary Evidence and Source Comparisons (Supplement 1) supplies the acquisition comparison, source identifiers, decisive readings, alternative explanations, and judgments. *Extended Case Studies and Methodological Demonstrations* (Supplement 2) develops the naming, photographic, and presentation cases in depth. The supplements support the present paper and are not separate evidence of prior publication or independent assessment of RAI.

Korean names follow the forms used consistently in this paper; source titles retain institutional spellings where necessary. Kaeun Park is cited as K. Park to distinguish her from artists sharing that surname. English renderings of Korean titles are explanatory unless an established institutional form is identified. Online descriptions reflect the sources consulted on 9 November 2026; this is neither a catalogue amendment date nor an independently timestamped web capture.

The two related manuscripts by Dorian Vale are unpublished, with publication planned. They are cited for the development of the arguments, not as independent witnesses to the institutional records they use. No earlier published RAI application, new interview, physical examination of the works, or comparative participant study is claimed. The author formulated RAI and founded Museum of One; the affiliation does not constitute external validation.

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