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## **Over the overlay: shifting towards digital technologies for condition reporting at the Art Gallery of NSW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes those pictures need a bit more explanation. Annotated images for condition reporting are the bread and butter of the conservation profession. From traditional hand-drawn diagrams to the ubiquitous acetate overlay, marked-up representations of objects are a primary instrument in the conservators' toolbox. But, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is it finally time to throw the awkward handfuls of marker pens in the bin and connect with new digital technologies? Many conservation organisations around the world are developing their own methods and systems for moving to born-digital documentation and there are a variety of programs and apps available on the market.

At the Art Gallery of NSW, staff in the conservation department have been increasingly incorporating the use of tablet computers in everyday conservation tasks. Particularly significant has been the development of systems for annotating digital images using simple, easy-to-use and readily available iPad apps. Immediate benefits have been evident, from improving efficiency on the gallery floor to increasing compatibility with other digital workflows. There are also added advantages for activities beyond condition reporting, including documenting installations, creating iteration reports and recording scientific analysis. However, processes are far from perfect and experimentation and improvement will need to continue, especially with the acceleration of technological innovation.

This paper will examine the successes and issues with the use of iPads for conservation at the AGNSW, review some alternative options that are available now and propose requirements for future advancement in the field.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Kasi Albert is currently an Objects Conservator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and has previously held positions at the NGA, Australian War Memorial, Artlab Australia and the National Trust. Holding a Masters in Cultural Materials Conservation from the University of Melbourne and a

Postgraduate Diploma in Conservation and Restoration Studies from the University of Lincoln, Kasihas a special interest in the preservation and management of contemporary art, especially installation works, and in advocacy for the conservation profession.