Tablet Techniques for Digital Documentation

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Introduction

Digital documentation with an iPad and the PDF Expert application makes it possible to work expediently with increased accuracy when creating condition reports for artworks. Hundreds of iPad reports have been completed in the paper conservation studio since this system was introduced to the Menil Collection conservation department in 2016. Following up on Katrina Rush's 2019 presentation to AIC's Collection Care Network, examples will show how these tools have the flexibility to easily adapt for purposes such as high volume acquisitions, documenting large-scale works, and other project specific needs. Techniques demonstrated in this poster are easy to implement and can be readily adopted into new or existing digital documentation toolkits with this or other tablet and PDF editing systems.

Why Digital Reports? – *Born Digital* Revisited

Carry Hundreds of Reports on one Device

- Save reports locally (on the ipad)
- Cloud supported (icloud, dropbox, etc.)
- Easy to share and collaborate (email, airdrop, & more)
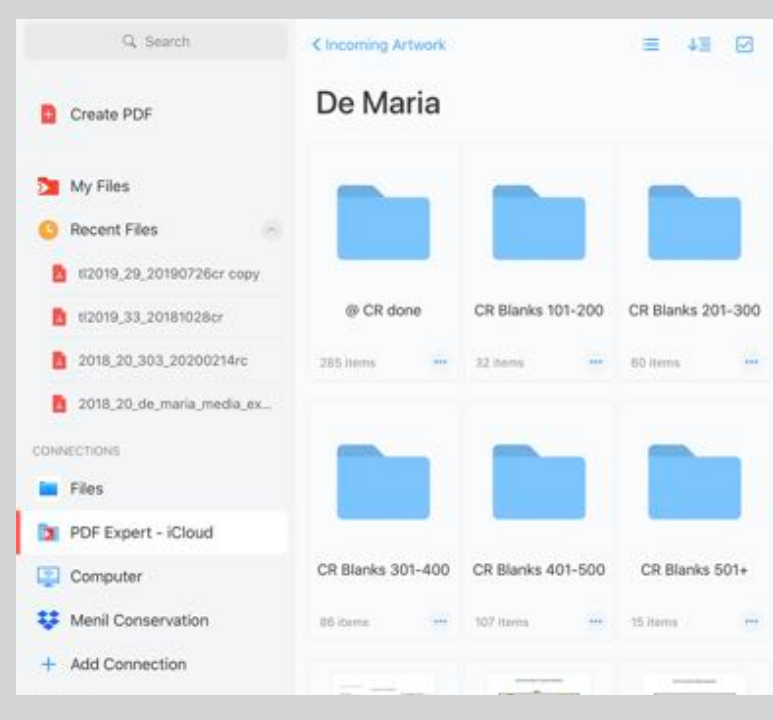- No more traveling with large binders

Image – Walter De Maria project with over 500 digitally accessible documents.

In Situ Reporting

- Generate blank reports ahead, or create them on-location
- Take high-quality raking and specular light images and details for reports (all detail images in this poster were taken with an iPad).
- Add and edit notes and diagrams as you go. Once the report is finished "flatten" your notes in place.

Save Time with Templates

- Generate blank condition report templates as PDFs ahead using TMS or other programs. Quickly duplicate and add blank pages as you go.
- Add saved image templates of frame diagrams or checklists.
- Use the "stamp" and "signature" features to add frequently used phrases, the date, or to quickly sign documents.
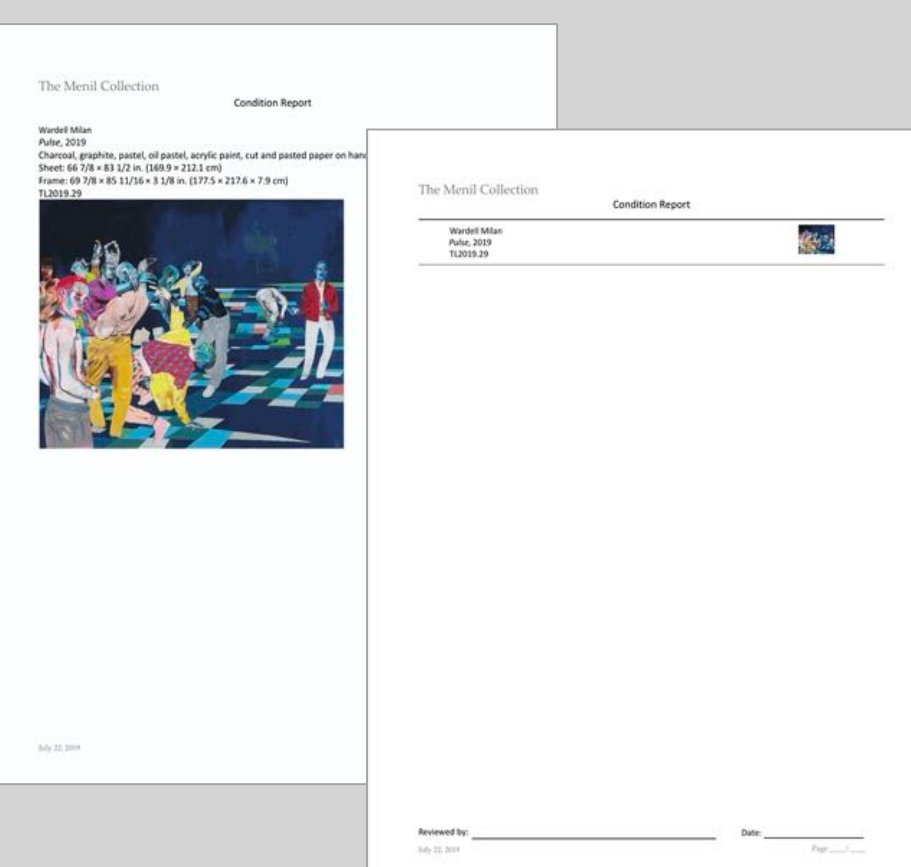
Image – Blank condition reports generated from The Museum System (TMS.)
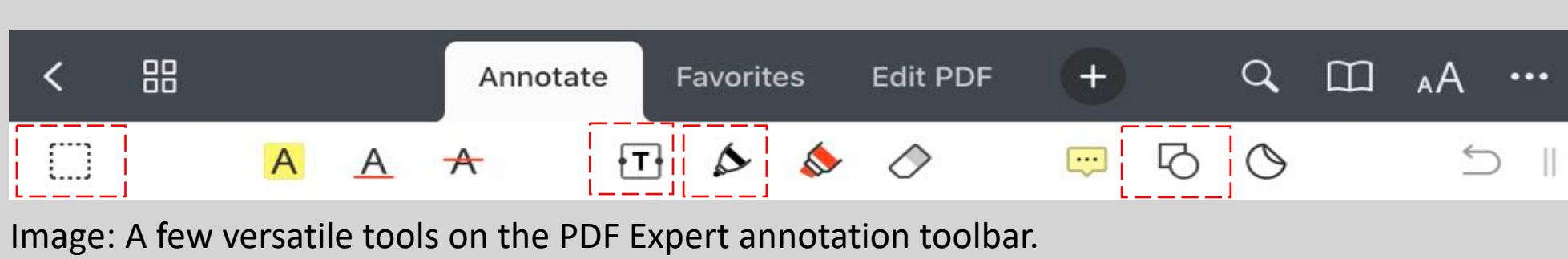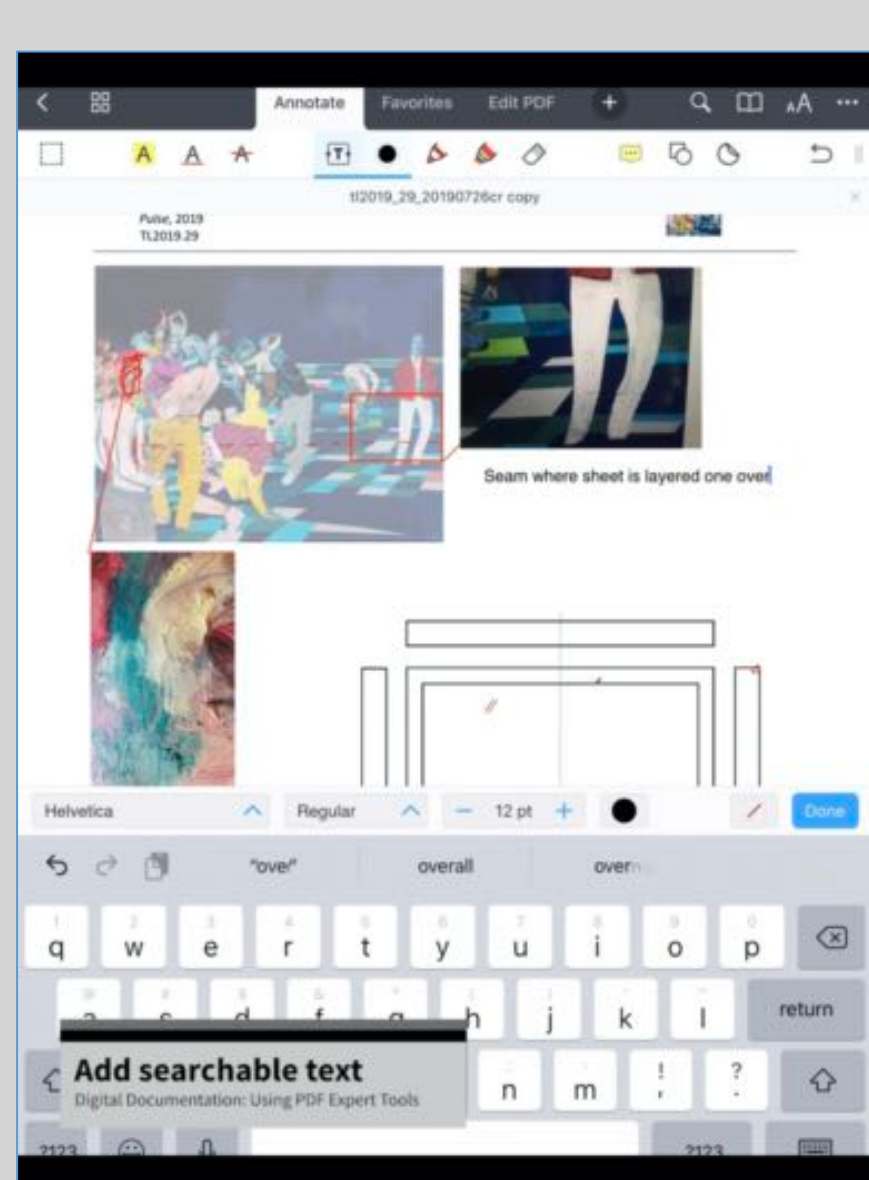
Intuitive Tools

Image: A few versatile tools on the PDF Expert annotation toolbar.

Select All – Select everything in an area. Selected items are temporarily grouped and able to be relocated, resized, or copied and pasted exactly as they appeared when selected.

Free Text – Type text in a variety of fonts, sizes, and colors anywhere in your report using the iPad's digital keyboard, or a compatible Bluetooth keyboard. Text can be searched even after exporting or sharing the report.

Pen – Write or draw directly onto the report. Adjust the digital pen's color, thickness, or pressure sensitivity. Works best with the iPencil accessory.

Shapes – Adds a rectangle, circle, line, or arrow into the report. The shape has a variety of customizable options such as border and fill colors, opacity, and line thickness.
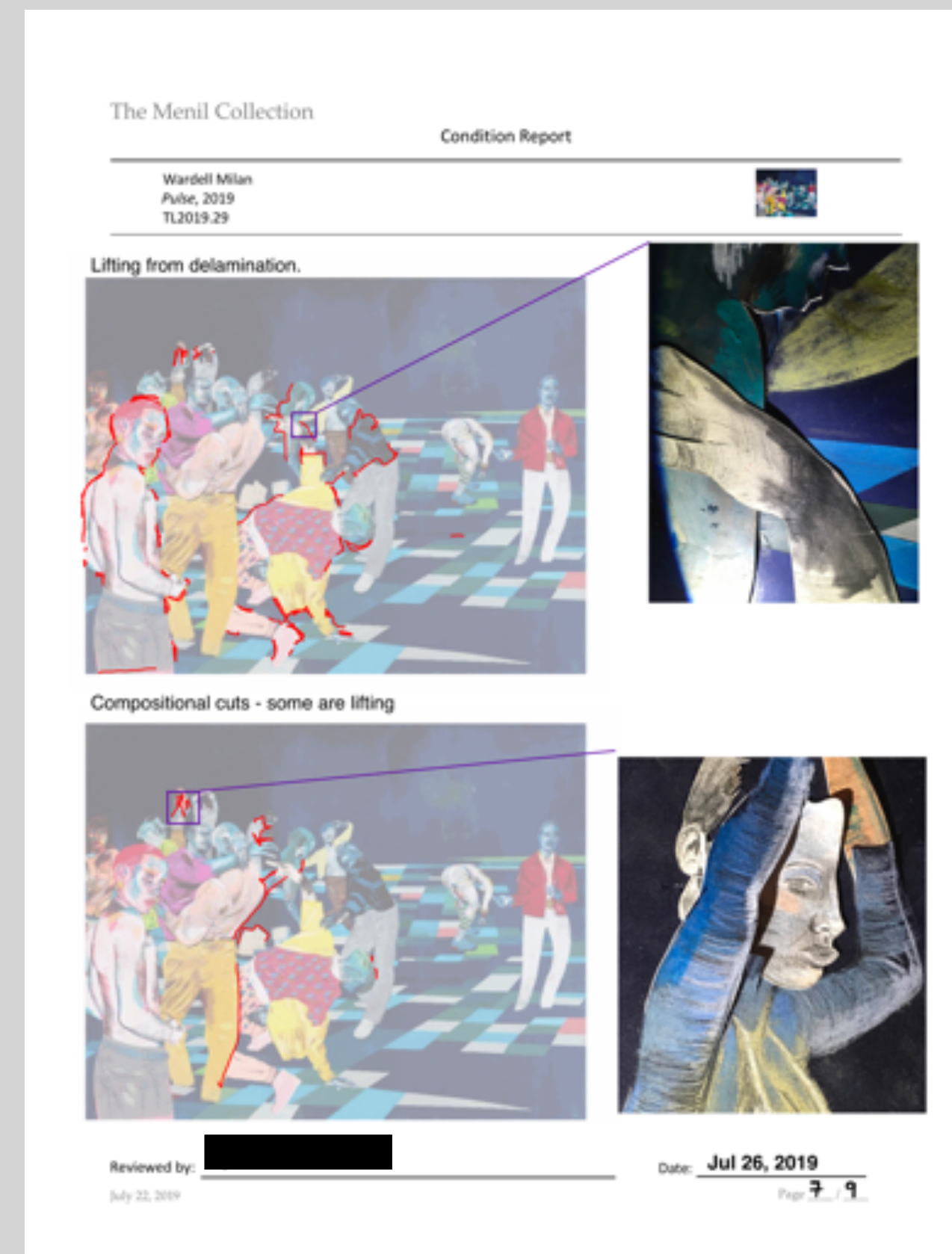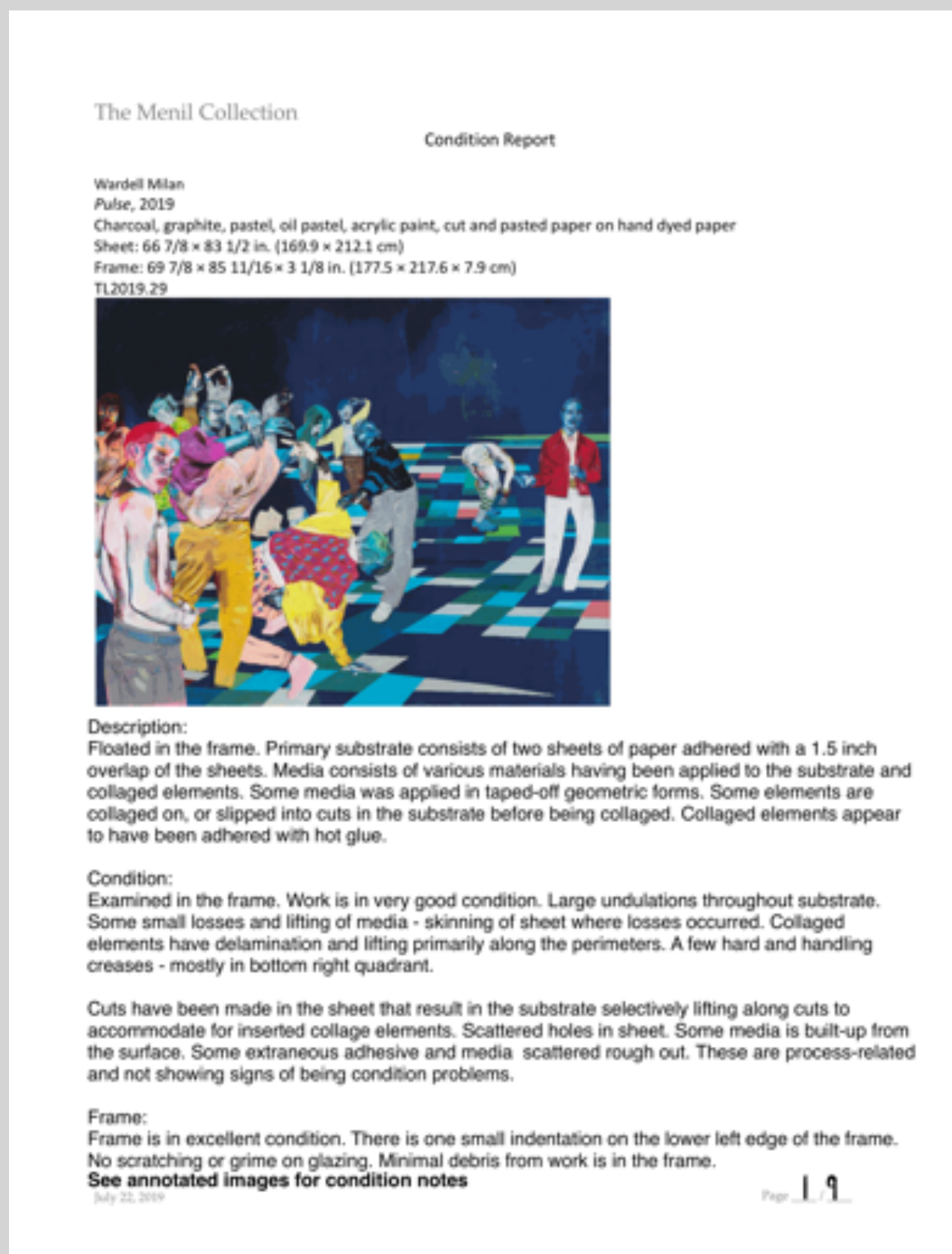
Watch this video to see these tools in action (04:03): https://vimeo.com/434423921/86070dacd0

Diagramming for Clarity on Busy Surfaces

Approach

Create a diagram for each condition using a transparent shape overlay .

Use free-hand annotations to note exact locations for each condition or condition type.

Use pop-out detail images to show representative examples as needed.

When to Use

Multiple conditions occur in the same or similar position on the artwork .

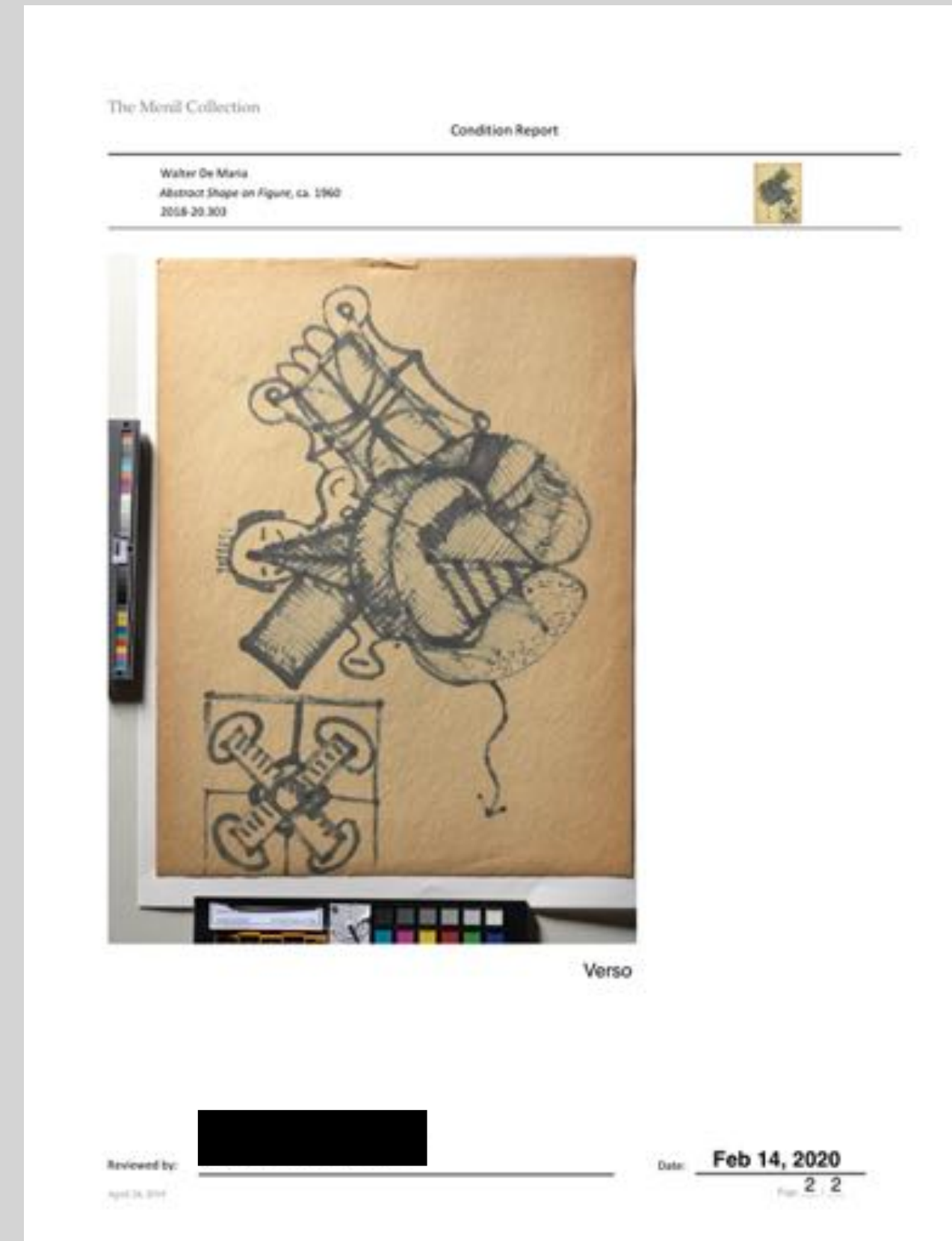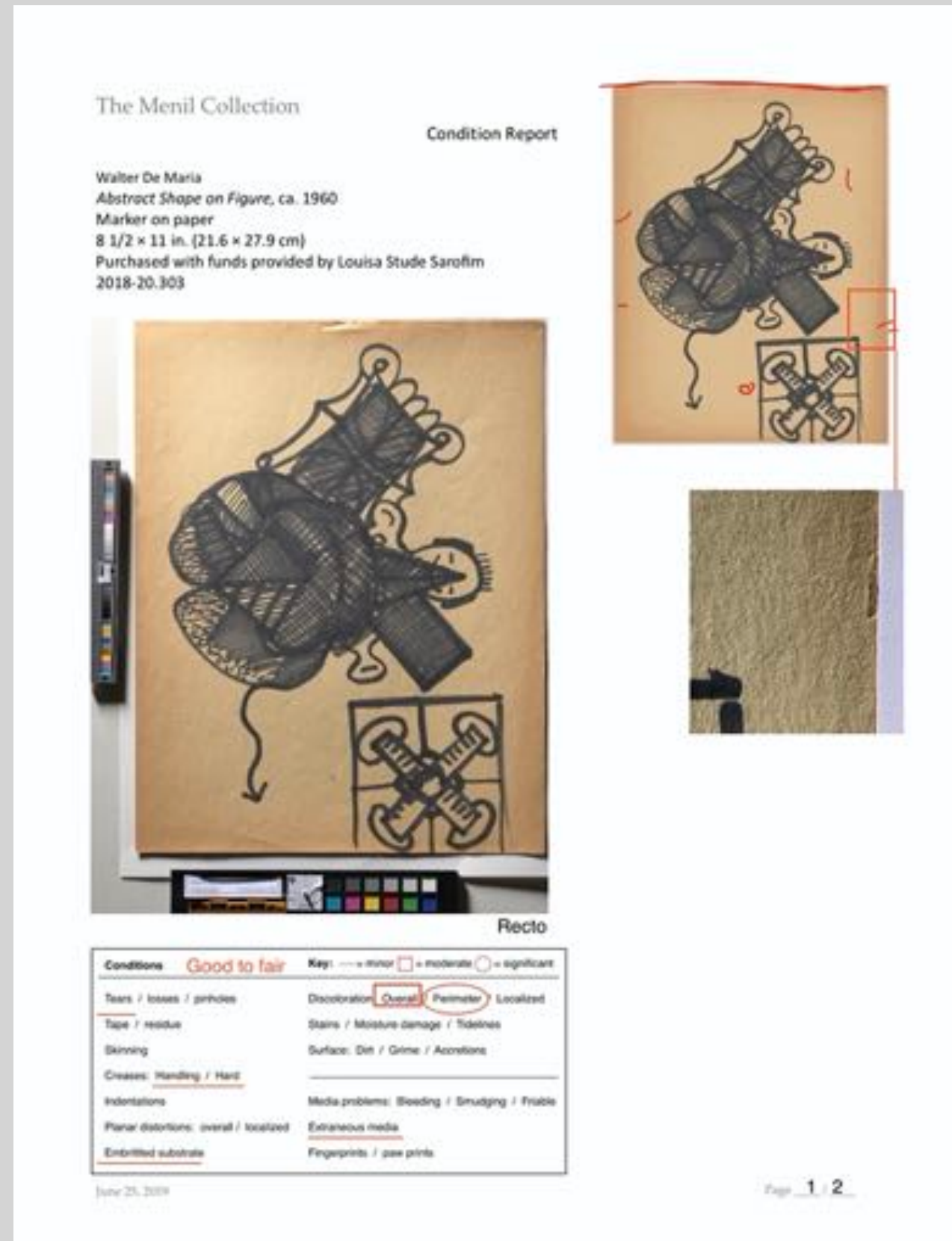The artwork has a busy surface, and annotations of exact condition locations are lost amongst the visual noise.

Consistent Documentation for High-volume Acquisitions

Approach

Assess the common conditions of all works in the group.

Create a legend-style condition image template - list common conditions.

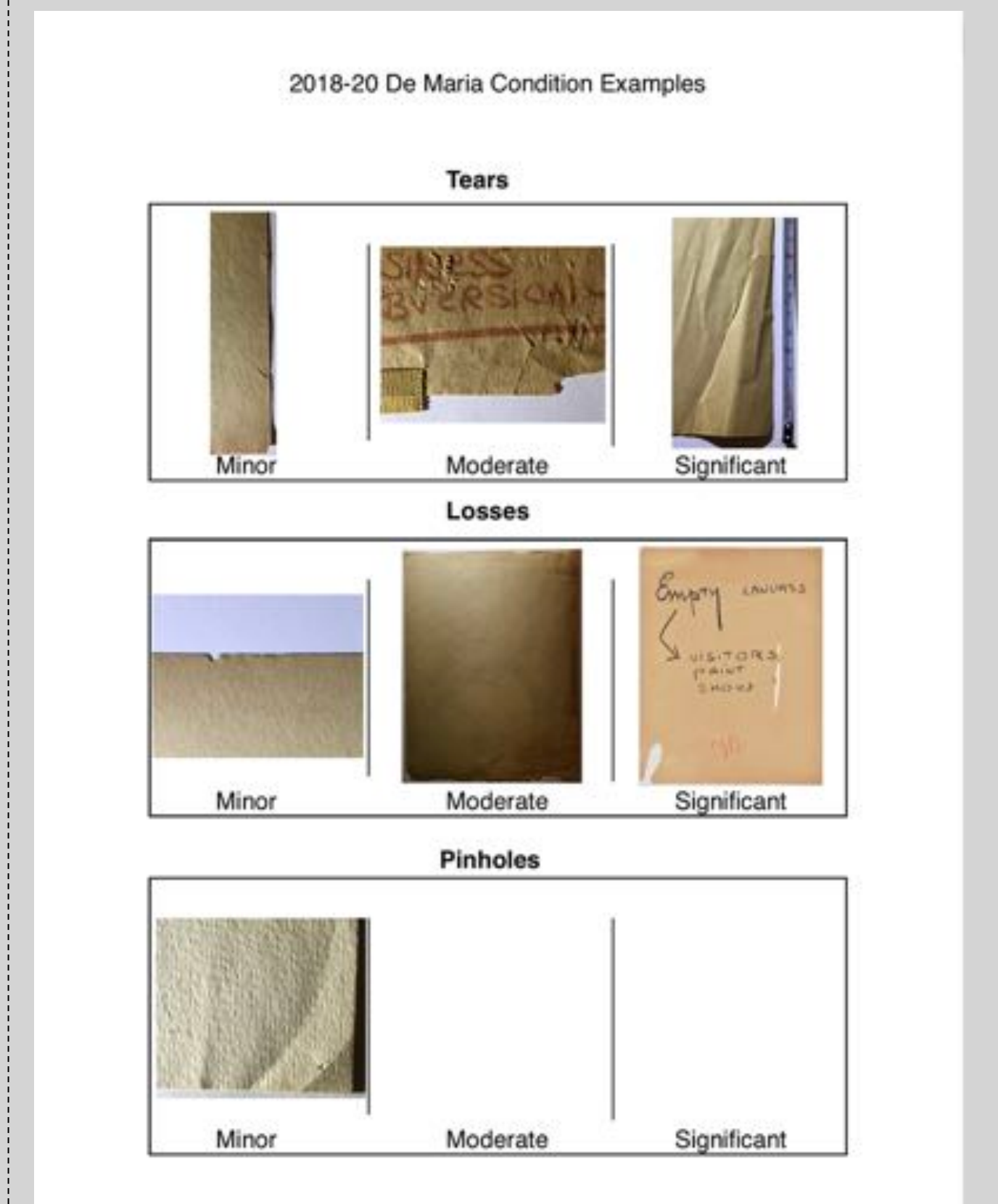Add condition image template and raking light images, note condition severity, and add details as needed.

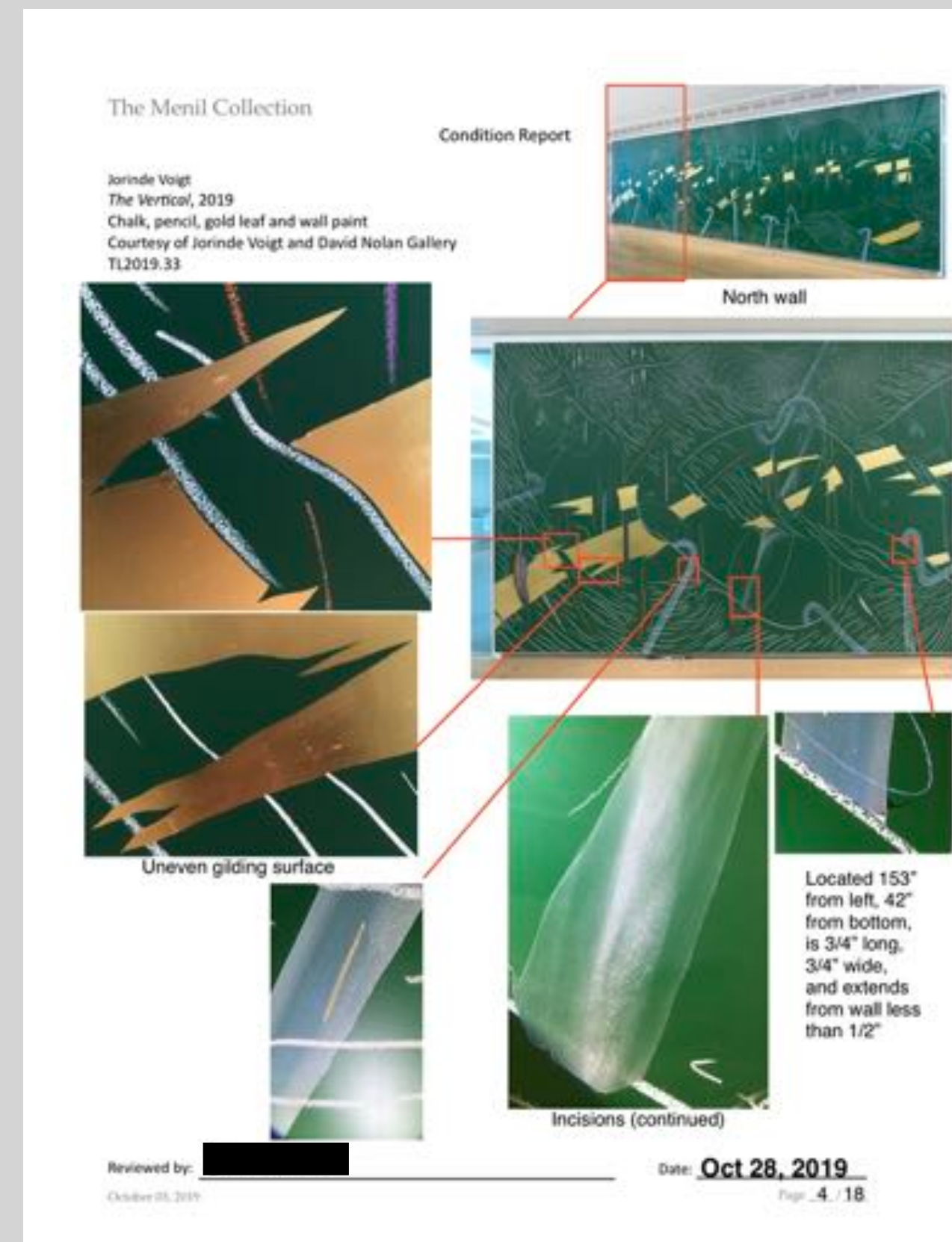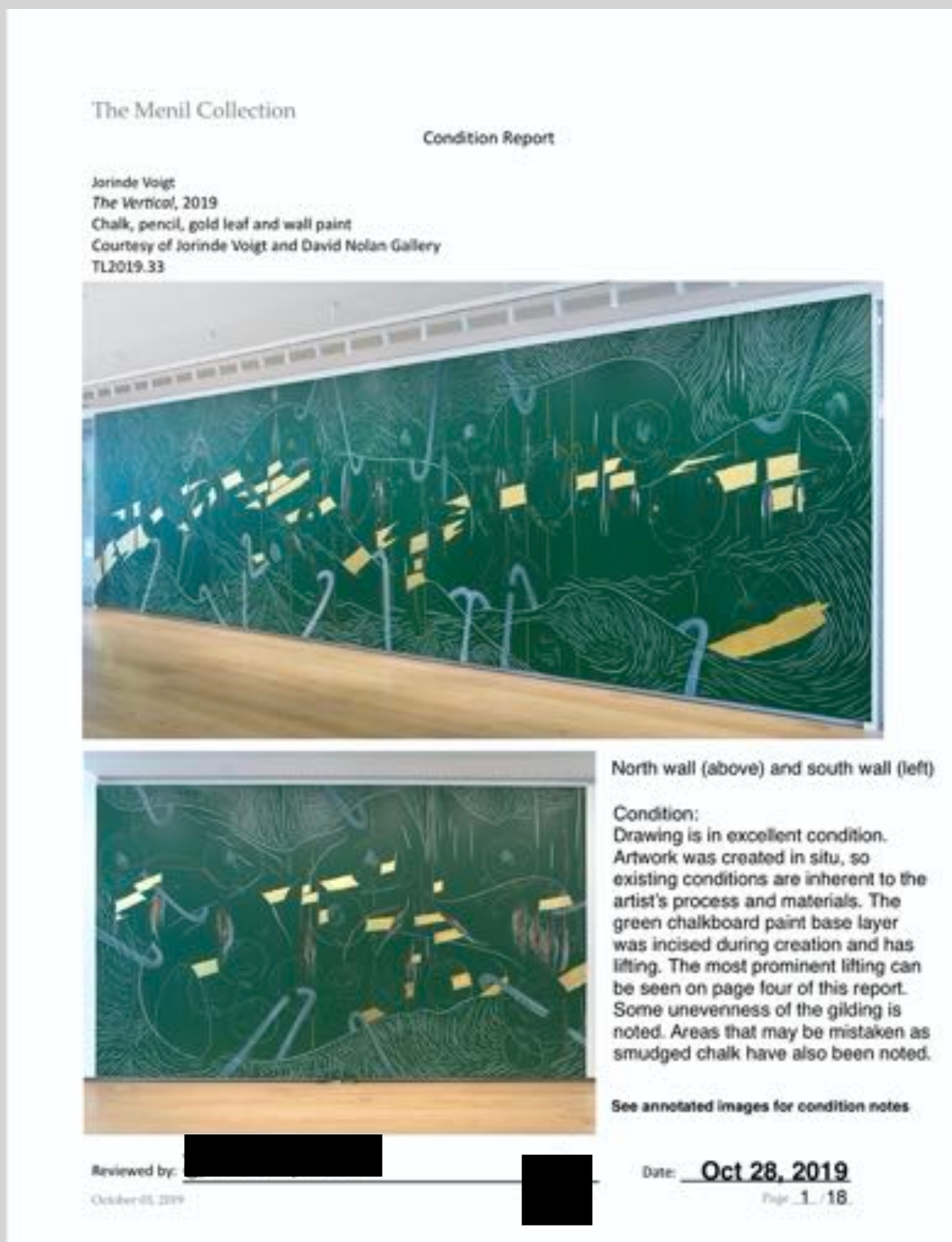Image – Example condition image template.

Tracking Project Conditions

When documenting this group of 500+ artworks, we wanted both speedy and accurate reporting. The condition template was created, but also a glossary of condition examples so that anyone joining the project could add documentation consistent with existing reports.
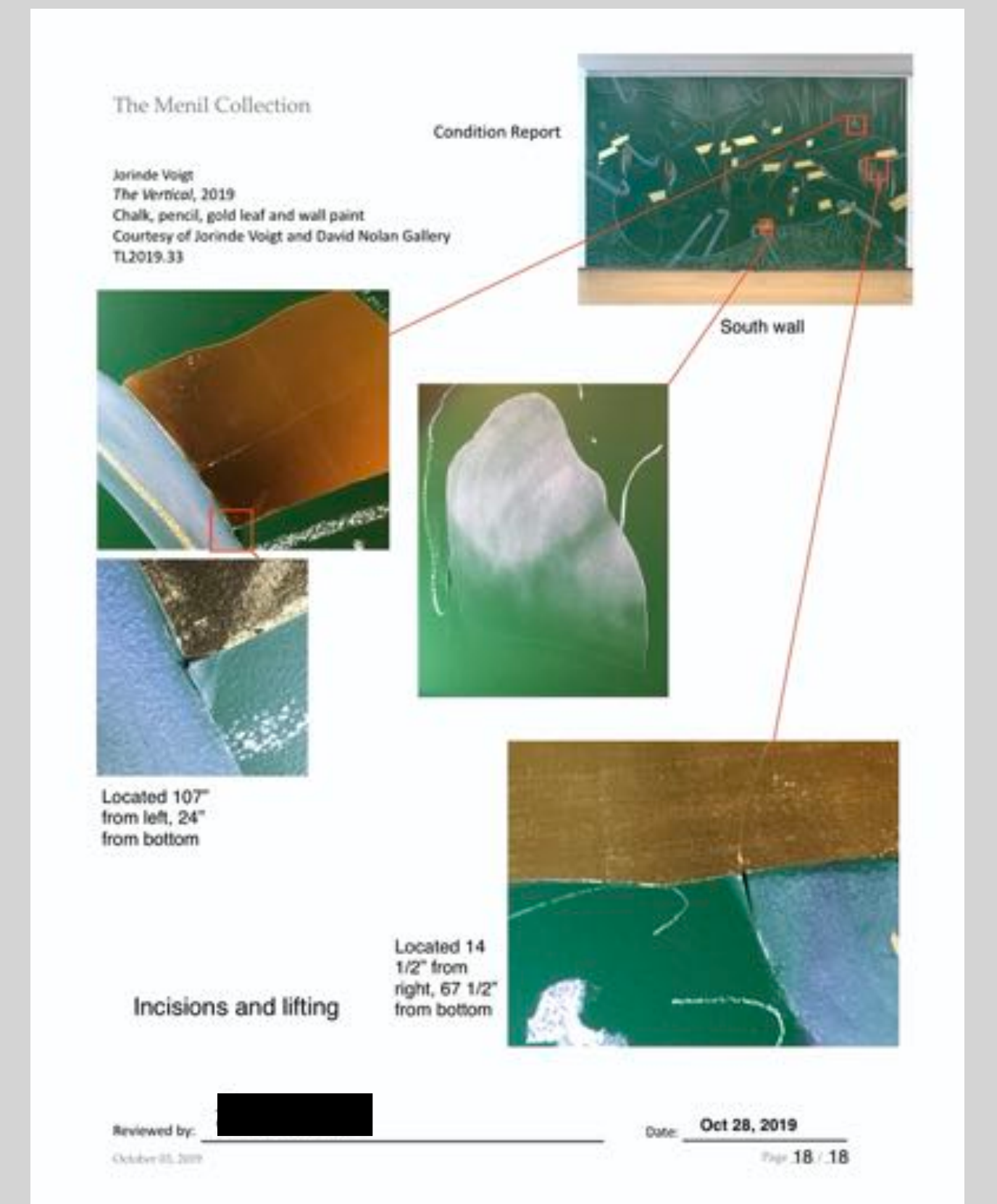
Documenting Large-Scale Drawings

Approach

Use pop-out images to divide large artwork into more manageable areas to document.

Show specific examples of conditions, focusing on those likely to need closer monitoring.

When monitoring, use high-resolution images to check entire surface - reference report as needed.

When to Use

The artwork is large-scale. Specific locations and details of the artwork are obscured or difficult to locate in a report using a single image of the entire artwork.

Acknowledgements

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