

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

# Conservation Report

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Dorothy Kay, The Lamp (1954)

**Heinrich Groenewald**

**GRNHEI003**

## CONSERVATION REPORT

### IDENTIFICATION DETAILS



#### ARTIST

KAY, Dorothy.

#### TITLE

*The Lamp*

Still-life of a lamp on stacked boxes.

#### DATE

1954

#### SIGNATURE

Signed Dorothy Kay, 1954, bottom right in black paint

#### ACCESSION NUMBER

38R

#### DIMENSIONS

Height: 780mm

Width: 613mm

Depth: 25mm

**FRAME:**

Wooden frame, painted white.

Height: 918mm

Width: 817 mm

Depth: 21mm

The four separate members that make up the frame are each 113mm wide.

The frame is in good condition with light dirt marks on the front. On the back the corners of the frame are fixed with metal V-shaped plates. There are various places where screws and nails had been removed from the frame. Brown gum tape had also been removed partially from the back but some pieces have not been fully removed. There are three labels stuck to the top member of the frame and around it in black marker is written "do not remove label." The labels read:

1. "Iziko South African National Gallery  
Permanent Collection  
Dorothy Kay, *The Lamp* (1954)  
Source: M. Reynolds  
Location: SA  
File no.: 38R"
2. "*The Lamp* by Dorothy Kay, 1954  
Oil on canvas – Quadriennial 1956  
Aunt Muriel's (Reynolds) Lamp"
3. "38R"



Labels on frame and secondary support.



Back of frame showing metal corner-support and hanging-fittings, as well as evidence of previous nail holes and gum tape that had been removed.

## CONDITION REPORT (CANVAS PAINTING)

### SECONDARY SUPPORT

The canvas is supported by a wooden stretcher, comprising of four members. Their dimensions are 39mm in width and 18mm at the beveled edge facing the inside of the canvas. The members are put together with a mortise and tenon joint. There are eight wooden expansion keys; two in each joint. The secondary support is in an overall good condition. There are two labels and a sticker stuck onto the support:

1. "*The Lamp* (1954)  
Quadrenial Ex. 1956  
Oil Canvas  
28" x 24"  
Dorothy Kay"
2. "South African National Gallery  
D. Kay  
*The Lamp*  
Exhibition: *Retrospective 82*  
Lent by: Ms. M. Reynolds"
3. "96"

One can speculate that this is not the original support. This may be due to the previous support creating stretchy bar line marks due to not having a beveled inner. This current support is beveled. Evidence for a previous support can be drawn from holes from previous nails attaching the canvas to the support. The canvas is also not evenly stretched around the support and shows paint extending over two sides of the canvas.

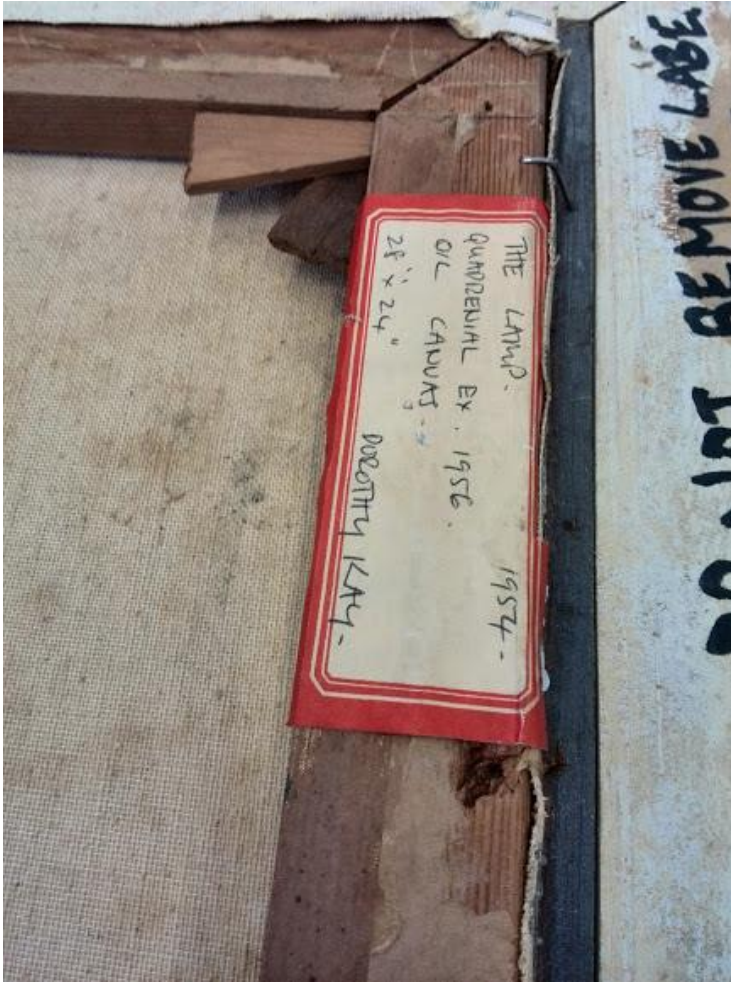


Image showing top left corner of the wooden secondary support, label, mortise and tenon joint as well as expansion keys.



Holes where previous nails had attached canvas to secondary support.

## PRIMARY SUPPORT

Canvas support with a medium weight tabby weave. The canvas consists of one piece and there is no selvage visible; only a cut edge.

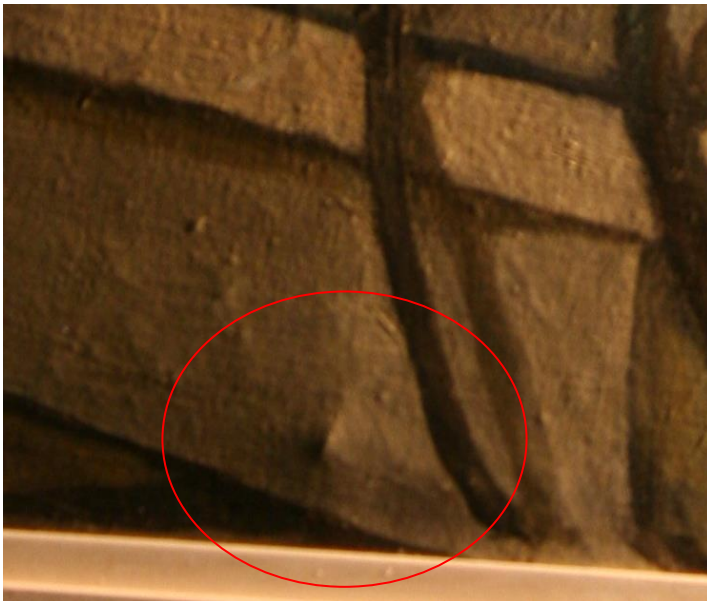
The canvas is in a general good condition with only one tiny slub in the top right corner. There is one surface deformation visible when one views the front of the canvas. There is a small dent, possibly due to dirt trapped between the canvas and the secondary support. The canvas is slightly discoloured with a few dirt marks.

The canvas is attached to the secondary support with nails, with a general 75mm margin in between.

No restorations or inscriptions have been done to the canvas.



Minor slub in back of canvas.



Small dent at the bottom middle of the canvas.

## GROUND

The ground appears to be durable and in good condition. The raking photograph reveals a white-coloured ground under the light layers of the painting, in the background behind the neck of the lamp. A black imprimatura is applied over the bottom third of the ground before the artist started her final paint layer. At the back of the canvas one can see the extent of the ground going over the edge of the canvas, indicating a commercially prepared canvas. The ground is gesso.



Ground extends beyond edge of painting.

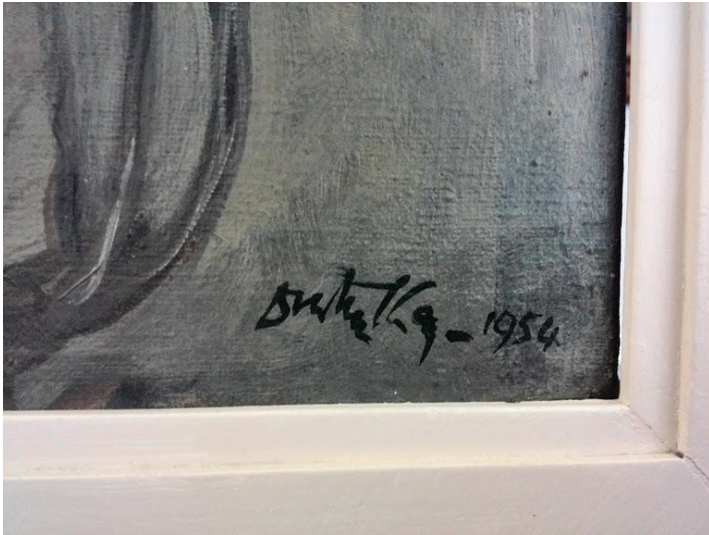
## PAINT LAYER

The paint appears to be applied finely with subtle impasto in the highlights of the painting. In some areas (i.e. the head of the lamp and the stacked box) layers of glaze is built up.

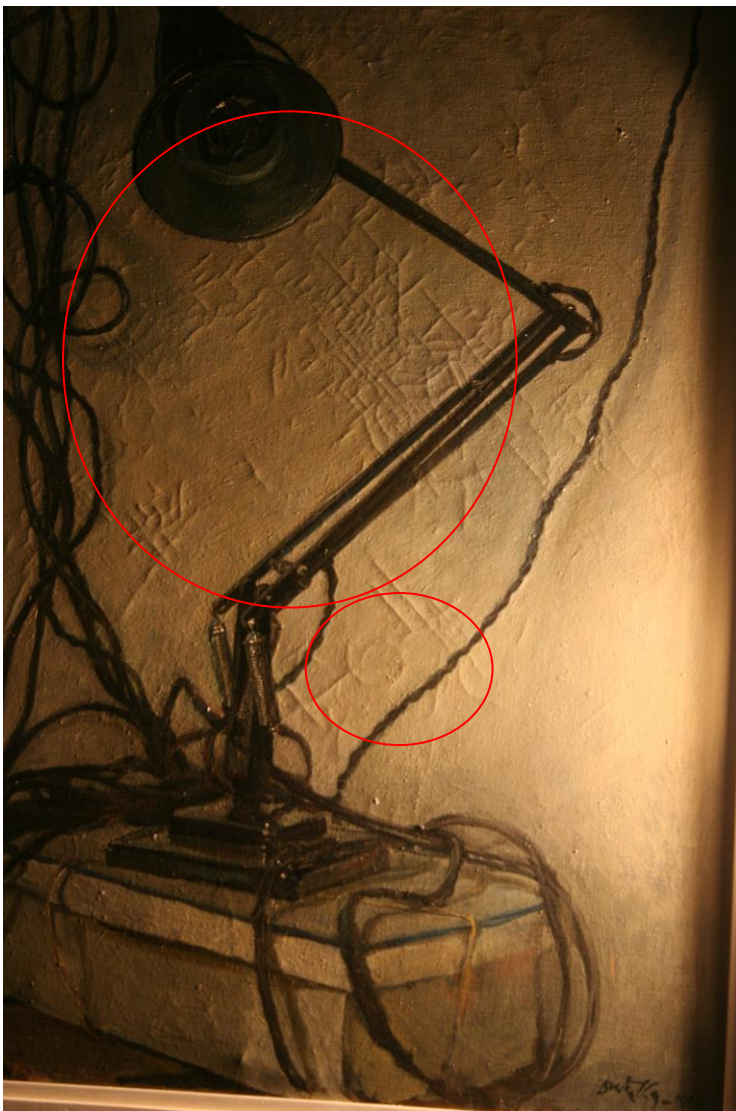
Large areas of the painting are covered by aging cracks. Under scrutiny of the raking light and magnification one can also see a small sigmoid crack between the single chord and the first bend of the lamp. Small scratch marks appear on the front edge of the box's lid. There is also a miniscule orange dot of paint to the right of the lamp's head. There are visible stretch marks along all four sides of the canvas, possibly caused by the previous unbeveled secondary support.

UV light reveals small black marks on various areas of the painting, indicating minor touch-up restoration. When examined under the raking light one can see a thicker texture where the paint was applied.





Artist's signature – bottom right corner.



Aging cracks (big circle) and sigmoid crack (small circle) under raking light.



Small black marks indicating minor touch-ups.



Small scratch marks.

## VARNISH LAYER

UV light reveals irregular varnishing across the surface of the painting. It may possibly be that the painting was not varnished by the artist. The UV light shows varnish that is thicker and drippier in some areas and is painted over most of the painting. It also shows areas where varnish was painted over a few times. The varnish shows green under the UV light, indicating a natural varnish.

Generally the varnish is in a good condition. There is a little surface dirt present.



Varnish showing light green and irregular under UV light.