

chicago manual of style artwork citation rules

The Chicago Manual of Style artwork citation rules are a cornerstone for academics, researchers, and writers who wish to accurately attribute and present visual materials within their work. This guide will delve deep into the intricacies of citing various forms of artwork, from paintings and sculptures to digital images and illustrations, ensuring proper acknowledgment and adherence to scholarly standards. We will explore the essential components of an artwork citation, the different formats required for both footnotes/endnotes and bibliographies, and how to navigate common challenges. Understanding these detailed rules is crucial for avoiding plagiarism and enriching the reader's experience by providing them with the necessary information to locate the cited artwork. This comprehensive article aims to demystify the process of citing artwork according to the Chicago Manual of Style.

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Understanding the Basics of Artwork Citation

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) provides a detailed framework for acknowledging sources, and this extends rigorously to visual materials. Proper citation of artwork is not merely a matter of academic formality; it is fundamental to respecting intellectual property, enabling further research, and lending credibility to your own work. When citing artwork, the goal is to provide enough information for your reader to identify the specific piece and, if possible, to locate it.

CMOS recognizes two primary citation systems: the notes and bibliography system and the author-date system. This article will primarily focus on the notes and bibliography system, as it is more commonly used in the humanities and arts, where the citation of visual evidence is particularly prevalent. The principles, however, are adaptable to the author-date system.

Key Components of an Artwork Citation

Regardless of the specific format (footnote/endnote or bibliography), several core pieces of information are consistently required to create a comprehensive artwork citation. These elements ensure that the artwork is clearly identified and its source is traceable.

Artist or Creator

The name of the artist or creator is paramount. For well-known artists, their surname is typically used first in bibliographical entries, while in notes, the full name is often preferred. If the creator is unknown, this should be indicated accordingly.

Title of the Work

The full and accurate title of the artwork is essential. Titles are usually italicized. If the artwork is part of a larger collection or series, this information should also be included where relevant.

Date of Creation

The year or period during which the artwork was created is a crucial identifier. If the exact date is unknown, an approximate date or period should be provided. CMOS uses specific conventions for indicating approximate dates, such as "ca." for circa.

Medium and Dimensions

While not always mandatory for every citation, including the medium (e.g., oil on canvas, bronze, digital print) and dimensions (height x width x depth, in that order, with units) adds significant detail and specificity. This is particularly important for scholarly analysis of the artwork itself.

Collection or Location

Where the artwork is currently housed or was last known to be is vital for locating it. This includes museum names, gallery names, private collections, or specific archival locations. The city where the collection is located is also usually included.

Accession Number (If Applicable)

Many museums and institutions assign unique accession numbers to their artworks. Including this number can be invaluable for precise identification, especially when citing works from large collections.

Source of Access (For Reproductions)

If you are citing a reproduction of the artwork (e.g., in a book, exhibition catalog, or website), you

must cite the source of that reproduction. This involves providing the bibliographic details of the publication or website where you encountered the image.

Citing Artworks in Footnotes and Endnotes

Footnotes and endnotes provide immediate citation information at the bottom of the page or at the end of the document, respectively. They are often more detailed in their initial presentation than bibliography entries and are abbreviated upon subsequent use.

First Reference to an Artwork

The first time an artwork is mentioned and cited in your text, the footnote or endnote should contain the full information. The structure typically follows this pattern:

- Artist's First Name Last Name, *Title of Artwork*, Year of Creation, Medium, Dimensions (if available), Collection Name, City of Collection, Accession Number (if available).

For example:

1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, ca. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel, 77 cm x 53 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, RF 776.

Subsequent References to an Artwork

After the first full citation, subsequent references to the same artwork can be shortened. CMOS prefers using the artist's last name and a shortened title. If the artist is unknown, a shortened version of the artwork's title or identifying descriptor is used.

For example:

2. Da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*.

Or, if citing a reproduction from a book:

3. Da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, in *Masterpieces of the Louvre*, ed. Jean Dubois (Paris: Art Publications, 2020), 45.

Citing Artworks in the Bibliography

The bibliography appears at the end of your work and lists all sources consulted. Unlike footnotes/endnotes, bibliography entries are alphabetized by the author's last name (or by title if no author is listed) and present information in a consistent, unadorned format.

General Bibliography Format

Bibliography entries for artworks typically omit page numbers unless you are referring to a specific reproduction on a page. The order of information is also slightly adjusted from the initial footnote format.

- Last Name, First Name. *Title of Artwork*. Year of Creation. Medium. Dimensions (if available). Collection Name, City of Collection. Accession Number (if available).

For example:

Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*. ca. 1503-1506. Oil on poplar panel. 77 cm x 53 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. RF 776.

Citing Reproductions in the Bibliography

When citing a reproduction of an artwork found within another publication, the bibliography entry includes the details of the source publication, structured as a book or article citation.

- Last Name, First Name. *Title of Artwork*. Year of Creation. In *Title of Book or Catalog*, edited by Editor's Name, page numbers. Publisher, Year of Publication.

For example:

Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*. ca. 1503-1506. In *Masterpieces of the Louvre*, edited by Jean Dubois, 45-46. Paris: Art Publications, 2020.

Specific Types of Artwork Citations

The Chicago Manual of Style offers guidance for a wide array of visual materials. The specific details and emphasis may vary depending on the nature of the artwork and how you are engaging with it.

Paintings and Sculptures

These are the most traditional forms of artwork and are cited using the principles outlined above, emphasizing the artist, title, date, medium, and current location. For historical works where attribution is uncertain, phrases like "Attributed to" or "School of" can be used.

Photographs and Prints

For photographs and prints, the creator's name (photographer, printmaker) is crucial. If you are citing a historical photograph, the date of the photograph is important, along with its collection or archival source. For prints, the medium (e.g., etching, lithograph) is essential.

Digital Art and Online Images

Citing digital art and images found online requires careful attention to detail, including the URL and the date of access. For artwork viewed on a website, cite the artist, title, website name, and the specific URL. If an accession number or collection information is available on the website, include it.

Example footnote:

4. Shepard Fairey, *Hope* poster, 2008, digital graphic, available at Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shepard_Fairey_-_Obama_Hope_poster.jpg (accessed October 26, 2023).

Illustrations within Books and Journals

When citing an illustration (a figure or plate) within a published work, the citation should include details of the illustration itself, followed by the bibliographic information of the publication. This allows readers to find the specific image within the larger source.

- Artist's Name, *Title of Artwork*, Year of Creation (if known), Medium (if known), Figure/Plate Number, in *Title of Book or Journal*, by Author of Text, page numbers of illustration. Publisher, Year of Publication.

Works from Museums and Galleries

When referencing artworks held in museums or galleries, the citation should clearly indicate the institution and city. If you viewed the artwork in person, and it is not reproduced in your text, a simple reference in your notes might suffice, followed by the full details in the bibliography. If citing an exhibition catalog, that publication becomes the primary source for citation.

Common Challenges and Solutions in Artwork Citation

Navigating artwork citations can present unique challenges, particularly with older works, anonymous artists, or when dealing with reproductions.

Unknown Artist or Title

If the artist or title is unknown, use descriptive phrases. For example, "Unknown Artist, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, ca. 1780." In the bibliography, if both are unknown, alphabetize by the first significant word of the description.

Works of Art in Series or Collections

When an artwork is part of a larger series or a specific collection within a museum, indicate this

clearly in the citation. For example, "Artist's Name, *Title of Work*, from the series *Series Title*."

Reproductions in Different Media

Be precise about the source of your visual evidence. If you are analyzing an image from a website, cite the website. If you are discussing a painting based on a photograph, and you are citing the photograph, then the photograph's source is what needs to be documented. Your primary source for citation should be the most accessible and authoritative version you consulted.

Adhering to the Chicago Manual of Style artwork citation rules ensures academic integrity and enhances the scholarly value of your research by providing clear and complete attribution for all visual elements used.

Q: What is the most crucial piece of information when citing artwork in Chicago style?

A: The most crucial piece of information when citing artwork in Chicago style is the name of the artist or creator, followed closely by the full title of the artwork. This allows for clear identification and attribution.

Q: How do I cite artwork if the artist is unknown?

A: If the artist is unknown, you should indicate this in your citation. In notes, you might use "Unknown Artist." In the bibliography, you would alphabetize the entry by the title of the artwork or by a descriptive phrase if the title is also unavailable.

Q: Should I include dimensions when citing artwork in Chicago style?

A: Including dimensions is recommended, especially for scholarly works where the physical characteristics of the artwork are relevant to the discussion. However, it is not always mandatory for every citation, particularly in less formal contexts or when only referencing a reproduction.

Q: What is the difference between citing artwork in a footnote versus a bibliography entry?

A: Footnotes/endnotes typically provide the first full citation of an artwork and use a more narrative structure, while subsequent notes are shortened. Bibliography entries are more concise, alphabetized, and follow a standardized format for all listed sources.

Q: How do I cite an artwork that I found on a museum's

website?

A: When citing an artwork from a museum website, you should include the artist, title, year of creation, medium, collection name, city, and accession number (if available), along with the website name and URL. You should also include the date you accessed the information.

Q: What if I am citing a reproduction of an artwork from a book?

A: If you are citing a reproduction of an artwork from a book, your citation will include the artwork's details (artist, title, date, medium) followed by the bibliographic information of the book where the reproduction appears, including the title, editor, publisher, year, and relevant page numbers.

Q: How do I indicate if an artwork's date is approximate?

A: To indicate an approximate date for artwork in Chicago style, you use "ca." (for circa) before the date. For example, "ca. 1503-1506."

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