

chicago style art history citation

Understanding the Chicago Style Art History Citation

chicago style art history citation is a crucial element for any student, researcher, or scholar working within the visual arts field. Properly citing artworks, exhibitions, and art historical texts ensures academic integrity, avoids plagiarism, and allows readers to trace your sources and engage with the material you've presented. This guide provides a comprehensive overview of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) as it applies to art history, covering the nuances of citing various types of visual sources, including paintings, sculptures, photographs, and digital art, along with the essential components of both footnotes/endnotes and the bibliography. Mastering these citation practices is fundamental to producing credible and professional art historical scholarship.

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The Fundamentals of Chicago Style for Art History

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) offers two primary citation systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. For art history, the notes-bibliography system is overwhelmingly preferred. This system utilizes footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work. The core principle is to provide sufficient detail for your reader to locate the exact source you consulted. This involves identifying the creator, the title of the work, the date of creation, the medium, dimensions, and crucially, the location where the artwork can be found or was published. Understanding the purpose of each citation element is key to accurate application.

Key Components of an Art History Citation

When constructing an art history citation in Chicago style, several key pieces of information are indispensable. These components work together to create a clear and unambiguous reference. The order and specific punctuation may vary slightly depending on the source type, but the foundational elements remain consistent.

- **Author/Artist:** The creator of the artwork or the author of the text.
- **Title of Work:** The official title of the artwork, exhibition catalog, or publication.
- **Date of Creation/Publication:** The year the artwork was made or the publication was released.
- **Medium:** The materials used in the artwork (e.g., oil on canvas, bronze, digital).
- **Dimensions:** The size of the artwork, usually in inches or centimeters.
- **Location:** The museum, gallery, private collection, or website where the artwork is housed or found.
- **Publication Details:** For texts, this includes the publisher, place of publication, and page

numbers.

The Importance of Consistency

Regardless of the specific citation elements you are including, consistency is paramount. Once you decide on a particular format for a type of source, adhere to it throughout your entire paper. This includes consistent use of capitalization for titles, consistent formatting for dates, and consistent presentation of dimensions. Inconsistent citations can distract readers and undermine the credibility of your research.

Citing Visual Artworks in Chicago Style

Citing physical artworks, whether paintings, sculptures, drawings, or photographs, requires careful attention to detail. The goal is to provide enough information so that someone could theoretically find and view the artwork or a reproduction of it. This often involves specifying the artist, the title, the date of creation, the medium, the dimensions, and its current location. For reproductions of artworks in books or online, additional information about the publication or website is necessary.

Basic Format for Physical Artworks

The standard format for citing a physical artwork typically begins with the artist's name, followed by the title of the artwork in italics. Then comes the date of creation, followed by the medium and dimensions. Finally, the location of the artwork is provided, including the city and the institution.

For example, a footnote citation for Vincent van Gogh's "Starry Night" might look like this:

Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 29 x 36 1/4 in. (73.7 x 92.1 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

In the bibliography, the artist's name would be inverted:

Van Gogh, Vincent. *The Starry Night*. 1889. Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 1/4 in. (73.7 x 92.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

Reproductions of Artworks

When you are citing an artwork as it appears in a book or journal, you must also include the publication details. This means identifying the author of the text discussing the artwork, the title of the book or article, the publication information (publisher, date, page numbers), and the specific page where the artwork appears.

For a reproduction in a book, a footnote would appear as:

E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 402, ill. [for an illustration].

And in the bibliography:

Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art*. 16th ed. London: Phaidon Press, 1995.

Unpublished Works and Personal Collections

Citing artworks that are unpublished or held in private collections requires a different approach. You will need to indicate that the work is unpublished and provide details about where you accessed it,

such as a personal interview, an archive, or a studio visit. For private collections, you may need to anonymize the owner for privacy reasons.

Footnotes and Endnotes for Art History Citations

Footnotes and endnotes are the primary method of in-text citation in the Chicago style's notes-bibliography system, and they are particularly vital in art history where detailed information about artworks and their context is often necessary. They serve to direct the reader to the exact source of information without disrupting the flow of the main text. In art history, these notes are crucial for providing bibliographic details, identifying artworks, and offering brief commentary or supplementary information.

Structure of a First-Time Note

When you cite a source for the first time in a footnote or endnote, you provide a full citation. This includes all the necessary bibliographic information. For artworks, this means artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, and location. For secondary sources (books, articles), it includes author, title, publication details, and page numbers.

A first-time footnote for an artwork reproduced in a book:

1. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Ram's Head White Hollyhock and Little Hills*, 1935, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. (76.2 x 101.6 cm), Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe; reproduced in Carol Troyen and Virginia Jackson, *Georgia O'Keeffe: The Poetry of the Void* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2017), 115.

Subsequent Notes

For any subsequent references to the same source within your work, you use a shortened version of the note. This typically includes the author's last name and a shortened version of the title, followed by the page number. For artworks, if the artwork has already been fully identified, you can often refer to it by artist and title.

A subsequent note for the same artwork:

2. O'Keeffe, *Ram's Head White Hollyhock and Little Hills*, 122.

When to Use Notes

Notes are used for a variety of purposes in art historical writing:

- To cite the source of an image or information.
- To provide supplementary information that is not essential to the main text.
- To offer brief definitions or explanations of terms.
- To acknowledge quotation or paraphrased material.
- To provide access information for artworks or resources.

Crafting the Bibliography for Art History Sources

The bibliography, appearing at the end of your paper or book, provides a complete list of all the sources you have cited. Unlike footnotes or endnotes, the bibliography is alphabetized by the author's last name (or by title if no author is listed). The purpose of the bibliography is to give your readers a comprehensive overview of the scholarly materials you consulted and to enable them to find these sources themselves.

Formatting Rules for the Bibliography

The Chicago Manual of Style has specific formatting rules for bibliographies. Author names are listed last name first, followed by the first name. Titles of books and journals are italicized. Publication details, such as the publisher, place, and year, are included. For artwork citations in the bibliography, the artist's name is inverted, followed by the title, date, medium, dimensions, and location.

Example of a bibliography entry for an artwork:

Rothko, Mark. *Orange, Red, Yellow*. 1961. Oil on canvas, 8.5 x 9 ft. (2.59 x 2.74 m). Private collection. Photograph by John Smith.

Example of a bibliography entry for a book:

Elkins, James. *What Painting Is*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Alphabetization and Organization

The bibliography must be strictly alphabetized by the last name of the author. If you are citing multiple

works by the same author, list them chronologically by publication date. If a source has no author, it is alphabetized by the first significant word of its title, ignoring articles like "a," "an," and "the."

Including Different Source Types

Your bibliography should include all types of sources you have referenced. This may include:

- Books and book chapters
- Journal articles
- Exhibition catalogs
- Museum websites and online databases
- Artwork entries in catalogs raisonnés
- Archival materials
- Interviews

Citing Art Exhibition Catalogs

Exhibition catalogs are a cornerstone of art historical research, often containing in-depth essays, scholarly analyses, and high-quality reproductions of artworks. Citing them accurately in Chicago style is therefore essential. These citations typically include the exhibition title, the name of the institution

hosting the exhibition, the dates of the exhibition, the editor or author of the catalog, the title of the catalog (in italics), the place of publication, the publisher, and the year of publication.

Full Citation in a Footnote/Endnote

When you first cite an exhibition catalog, provide a comprehensive citation in your footnote or endnote. This allows the reader to locate the exact resource you used.

Example of a first-time footnote for an exhibition catalog:

1. *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, May 28–August 13, 2017, ed. Richard Brettell and Paul Hayes Tucker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 23, plate 4.

Bibliography Entry for an Exhibition Catalog

In the bibliography, the entry follows a similar structure but with specific formatting. The editor or author's name is inverted.

Bibliography entry:

Brettell, Richard, and Paul Hayes Tucker, eds. *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. May 28–August 13, 2017. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Citing Specific Essays within a Catalog

If you are citing a specific essay within an exhibition catalog, you must include the author of the essay, the title of the essay (in quotation marks), and then the exhibition catalog details.

Footnote for an essay within a catalog:

2. Griselda Pollock, "Introduction: The Art of Impressionism and the Construction of the Gaze," in *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, ed. Richard Brettell and Paul Hayes Tucker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 11-12.

Citing Digital Art and Online Visual Resources

The digital age has introduced new challenges and complexities to art historical citation. Citing digital art, online image archives, museum websites, and digital exhibitions requires attention to the URL, access dates, and the specific platform or institution providing the resource. Chicago style provides guidelines for these contemporary sources, emphasizing the need for clear and retrievable information.

Online Museum Collections and Databases

When referencing artworks found on museum websites or in online databases like Artstor or Wikimedia Commons, include the artist, title, date, medium, dimensions (if available), the name of the website or database, and the direct URL. Crucially, include the date you accessed the material, as online content can change or be removed.

Footnote for an online artwork:

3. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel, Musée du Louvre, Paris, accessed October 26, 2023, [URL of the Louvre's artwork page].

Bibliography entry:

Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*. c. 1503–1506. Oil on poplar panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Accessed October 26, 2023. [URL].

Digital Exhibitions and Virtual Tours

Virtual exhibitions and online gallery tours are increasingly common. Cite these by treating them as you would a website, noting the exhibition title, the institution hosting it, and the URL. Include the date of access.

Footnote for a digital exhibition:

4. "The Great War Remembered: Art and the First World War," Imperial War Museums, accessed October 26, 2023, [URL of the digital exhibition].

Digital Artworks

Citing digital art, such as net art or interactive installations, can be particularly challenging. You need to describe the artwork, its creator, the date of creation, the medium (e.g., interactive digital installation, net art), and its original or current accessible location, including URLs if applicable.

Common Challenges and Solutions in Art History Citation

Navigating the intricacies of Chicago style art history citation can present several challenges. These often arise from the unique nature of artworks, the evolving landscape of digital resources, and the varying levels of information available for different objects. Understanding common pitfalls and their solutions can greatly streamline the citation process.

Ambiguous or Missing Information

One of the most frequent issues is incomplete or ambiguous information about an artwork. For instance, the exact date of creation might be unknown, or an artwork might exist in multiple versions. In such cases, use "circa" (c.) for approximate dates, and be specific about which version or reproduction you are citing. If an artwork's location is a private collection and cannot be disclosed, note that it is privately held and indicate how you accessed the information.

Reproductions vs. Original Works

It is crucial to distinguish between citing an original artwork and citing its reproduction in a publication or online. When citing a reproduction, the primary source is the publication or website, and the artwork itself is secondary information. Always include the publication details or website information, along with the page number or URL where the reproduction appears.

Attribution and Authorship

Determining authorship can sometimes be complex, especially with works created by studios, workshops, or as collaborations. In these instances, follow the standard attribution used by reputable art historical sources or the institution housing the work. If the artist is unknown, you can cite the work

as "Unknown Artist" or by the title it is commonly known by.

- **Unknown Artist:** For works where the artist is genuinely unknown.
- **Studio/Workshop:** Indicate if the work is attributed to a known studio or workshop.
- **Anonymous:** Use this if the artist chose to remain anonymous or if the work is not attributed.

Consistency is Key

The most significant solution to most citation challenges is unwavering consistency. Once you establish a format for a particular type of source, adhere to it throughout your paper. This not only makes your work look professional but also significantly reduces the likelihood of errors and omissions. When in doubt, consult the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style or your instructor's specific guidelines.

FAQ: Chicago Style Art History Citation

Q: What is the primary citation system used for art history in Chicago style?

A: The primary citation system used for art history in the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is the notes-bibliography system, which employs footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work.

Q: How do I cite a painting that is in a museum?

A: To cite a painting in a museum, you typically include the artist's name, the title of the painting (in italics), the date of creation, the medium, the dimensions, and the name of the museum and its location. For example: Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 29 x 36 1/4 in., The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Q: What is the difference between a footnote and a bibliography entry for an artwork?

A: In a footnote, the artist's name is listed first name then last name, and the entry provides full details as needed within the text. In the bibliography, the artist's name is inverted (last name, first name), and the entry is formatted for alphabetical listing and provides all essential details for retrieval.

Q: How do I cite an artwork that I found reproduced in an art history book?

A: When citing a reproduction, you must cite the book that contains the reproduction. The citation will include the author of the book, the title of the book (in italics), publication details (place, publisher, year), and the specific page number or plate number where the artwork appears. You can also include details about the artwork itself as secondary information.

Q: What information should I include when citing digital art or an artwork viewed online?

A: For digital art or online resources, include the artist, title, date, medium, the name of the website or platform, and the direct URL. Crucially, also include the date you accessed the material, as online content can change.

Q: Is it acceptable to use an abbreviation like "ibid." or "op. cit." in art history citations?

A: While "ibid." and "op. cit." were once common, the current preference in Chicago style, especially for art history, is to use shortened notes for repeated sources, which typically include the author's last name and a shortened title. This is generally clearer and more efficient.

Q: How do I handle artworks with unknown artists in my citations?

A: If the artist is unknown, you should cite the artwork as "Unknown Artist" followed by the title, date, medium, and location. If a work is attributed to a workshop or school, indicate that in the citation.

Q: What are the key elements for citing an exhibition catalog?

A: For exhibition catalogs, you should include the exhibition title, the hosting institution, the exhibition dates, the editor or author of the catalog, the catalog title (in italics), the place of publication, the publisher, and the year of publication.

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