

chicago style citation examples for art

Understanding Chicago Style Citation for Art

chicago style citation examples for art are essential for anyone engaging with visual culture in academic or professional writing. This comprehensive guide will demystify the process of citing artworks, photographs, sculptures, and other visual media according to the widely respected Chicago Manual of Style. We will explore the fundamental components of a Chicago-style citation for art, providing clear examples for various mediums and situations. Mastering these elements ensures proper attribution, avoids plagiarism, and enhances the credibility of your research. Proper citation acknowledges the original creators and allows your readers to locate the sources you consulted. This article covers everything from paintings and drawings to digital art and performance pieces, ensuring you have the knowledge to cite them accurately.

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The Core Elements of Chicago Style Art Citations

When constructing a Chicago-style citation for an artwork, several key pieces of information are crucial for providing a complete and accurate reference. The Chicago Manual of Style emphasizes clarity and discoverability, meaning your citation should allow someone else to find the artwork with relative ease. The primary components include the artist's name, the title of the artwork, the date of creation, and the medium or materials used. Furthermore, the location of the artwork, whether it's a museum, gallery, private collection, or online repository, is vital. For artworks found online, the website name, URL, and access date become indispensable.

The order and specific formatting of these elements can vary slightly depending on whether you are using the Notes-Bibliography system or the Author-Date system, though the core information remains consistent. The Notes-Bibliography system is more common in the humanities, including art history, and utilizes footnotes or endnotes along with a bibliography. The Author-Date system, more prevalent in the sciences and social sciences, relies on in-text parenthetical citations and a reference list. Regardless of the system chosen, precision in details like spelling, dates, and titles is paramount.

Artist's Name and Title of Artwork

The artist's name should be presented in the format most commonly used by the artist. Typically, this is their full name. The title of the artwork should be italicized to distinguish it from descriptive text. If the artwork is untitled, this should be indicated by "n.d." or "untitled" as appropriate. Understanding how the artist is known and how their works are cataloged is the first step in accurate citation. For instance, a well-known artist might be referred to by their pseudonym or artistic moniker, and it's important to use that consistently.

Date of Creation and Medium

The date of creation provides crucial context for the artwork. It should be as specific as possible, including the year. If the exact year is unknown, use approximations like "ca. 1920" (circa 1920) or a range of years if the work spanned a significant period. The medium describes the materials and techniques used by the artist, such as "oil on canvas," "bronze sculpture," or "digital photograph." This detail is important for understanding the artwork's physical characteristics and artistic intent. For example, citing "Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas" provides a solid foundation for referencing this iconic painting.

Location and Access Information

Specifying where the artwork is housed is essential for retrieval. For physical artworks, this usually includes the name of the museum, gallery, or collection, followed by its city and state or country. For example, "Museum of Modern Art, New York." If citing a work from a private collection, you might indicate "Private collection" or "Courtesy of [owner's name]" if permitted. For digital reproductions, the website name, specific URL, and the date you accessed the image are critical. This allows your readers to follow your path to the source material, especially in the ever-changing landscape of online content.

Citing Visual Artworks in Print

When citing visual artworks that have been reproduced in books, exhibition catalogs, or

journals, the citation needs to account for both the original artwork and the publication in which you encountered it. The Chicago Manual of Style provides specific formats for these situations to ensure clarity. The goal is to enable your reader to find the original artwork if possible, but also to locate the reproduction you consulted.

Paintings, Drawings, and Sculptures in Books

For artworks reproduced in books, begin with the artist's name, followed by the italicized title of the artwork. Then, provide the date of creation and the medium. Following this, cite the book in which you found the reproduction. This typically includes the author or editor of the book, the italicized title of the book, the publication details (city, publisher, year), and the specific page number(s) where the artwork is reproduced or discussed. For instance, a bibliography entry might look like this: Smith, John. "Art of the Renaissance." In *Masterpieces of European Art*, edited by Jane Doe, 78–80. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. Image of Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, ca. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel.

In a footnote or endnote, the format might be slightly different, often starting with the publication details before the artwork information, or vice-versa, depending on the emphasis. A typical footnote might read: John Smith, "Art of the Renaissance," in *Masterpieces of European Art*, ed. Jane Doe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 78–80, accessed July 20, 2023, depicting Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, ca. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel.

Artworks in Exhibition Catalogs

Exhibition catalogs are a common source for art historical research, and citing artworks within them requires careful attention. Similar to books, you will identify the artist, artwork title, creation date, and medium. Then, you will cite the exhibition catalog, including the exhibition title, the name of the institution hosting the exhibition, the dates of the exhibition, and the catalog's publication details (editor, title, city, publisher, year). Crucially, you must also provide the page number(s) where the artwork is featured or discussed within the catalog. For example: Adams, Mary. "Impressionist Landscapes." In *Parisian Visions: An Exhibition of French Art*, exh. cat., Musée d'Orsay, Paris, May 15–August 15, 2019. Edited by Pierre Dubois. Paris: Flammarion, 2019. 45. Photograph of Claude Monet, *Water Lilies*, 1916, oil on canvas.

Reproductions in Art Journals or Magazines

When citing an artwork that appears in an article within an art journal or magazine, you will cite the article first, followed by information about the artwork itself. The article citation will include the author of the article, the article title, the journal title, volume and issue numbers, publication year, and page numbers. Then, you will add the artist's name, the artwork's italicized title, the creation date, medium, and the specific page number in the journal where the reproduction appears. For example, in a bibliography: Johnson, Emily.

"The Evolution of Portraiture." *Art Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2021): 12–18. Image of Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, 1940, oil and tempera on canvas, p. 15.

Citing Digital and Online Art Resources

The digital realm has made accessing and studying art more convenient than ever, but it also necessitates specific citation practices. Chicago style guidelines for online art resources emphasize providing enough information for your reader to locate the exact digital instance of the artwork you are referencing.

Artworks on Museum Websites

When citing an artwork viewed on a museum's official website, you need to include the museum's name, the specific page title or artwork title, and the URL. It's also crucial to include the date you accessed the content, as online information can change. For example, in a bibliography: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. "The Starry Night." Accessed July 20, 2023. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436532>. Vincent van Gogh, 1889, oil on canvas.

In a footnote, the format might prioritize the artwork and artist first: Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, accessed July 20, 2023, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436532>.

Images from Online Archives or Databases

Many art historical resources are available through online databases or digital archives. When citing these, be as specific as possible about the source. Include the name of the database or archive, the title of the specific collection or item, the creator or contributor (if applicable), and the URL. The access date is also vital. For instance: Getty Research Institute. "Picasso Drawings and Watercolors: An Illustrated Inventory." https://www.getty.edu/research/publications/digital/picasso_drawings/. Accessed July 20, 2023. Pablo Picasso, *Head of a Woman*, 1938, pencil on paper.

Art Found on Social Media or Personal Blogs

Citing art found on platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, or personal blogs requires a different approach, as these are often less formally curated. Identify the poster or uploader by their username, the title of the post or image, the platform name, the URL, and the access date. Be mindful that the authenticity and provenance of art shared on these platforms can be questionable, so judicious use is advised. For example: @artlover_nyc. "Stunning street art

find today!" Instagram, July 19, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cq1y2345678/>.
Photograph of a mural by Banksy (attribution uncertain).

Citing Art in Exhibitions and Galleries

When your research focuses on contemporary art or specific exhibitions, citing works as they are presented in physical spaces is necessary. This includes information about the exhibition itself and the artwork's presentation within that context.

Works Exhibited in a Gallery or Museum

To cite an artwork seen in person at an exhibition, you will typically provide the artist's name, the artwork's italicized title, its creation date, and medium. Then, you will cite the exhibition title, the name of the gallery or museum, and the city where it is located. If it's a temporary exhibition, you might include the exhibition dates. For instance, in a bibliography: Kapoor, Anish. *Cloud Gate*. 2004. Stainless steel. Millennium Park, Chicago.

A note for a specific exhibition might be: Anish Kapoor, *Cloud Gate*, 2004, stainless steel, viewed at Millennium Park, Chicago, July 18, 2023.

Performance Art and Installation Art

Performance art and installation art can be more challenging to cite due to their ephemeral or site-specific nature. For performance art, focus on the title of the performance, the artist, the date and location of the performance, and if documented, the form of documentation (e.g., video, photographs). For installation art, describe the artwork, its creator, the year of creation, and its location, especially if it's a permanent installation. If you are citing a recorded performance or a documentation of an installation, ensure the citation reflects the medium of the documentation. For example: Marina Abramović. *The Artist Is Present*. March 14–May 31, 2010. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Performance documentation.

Sculptures and Public Art

Public sculptures and artworks encountered in public spaces should be cited with the artist, title, date, medium, and the specific location where it is installed. This includes parks, plazas, or buildings. For example: Oldenburg, Claes, and Coosje van Bruggen. *Flamingo*. 1983. Painted steel. Federal Plaza, Chicago.

If you are referencing a specific interpretation or scholarly discussion of a public artwork, ensure that your citation reflects that secondary source as well.

Specific Scenarios and Advanced Examples

Beyond the standard formats, Chicago style offers guidance for less common situations, ensuring comprehensive citation practices for all forms of art.

Untitled Artworks

When an artwork is untitled, it is customary to indicate this in the citation. You can use the word "untitled" or "n.d." (no date) depending on the context. For example, if the artwork is untitled but has a date: Smith, Jane. *Untitled*. 2018. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

If both the title and date are unknown: Doe, Richard. *Untitled*. n.d. Bronze sculpture. Gallery X, Los Angeles.

Works by Artists with Common Names

When dealing with artists who share common names, providing additional identifying information can be helpful, especially in footnotes or when differentiating between multiple artists with the same name in your bibliography. This might include their birth and death dates or their primary artistic period.

Citing Art with Uncertain Attribution

If the attribution of an artwork is uncertain, this should be clearly indicated in your citation. You might use phrases like "attributed to," "school of," or "circle of." For example: Raphael, attributed to. *Portrait of a Young Man*. ca. 1505. Oil on wood panel. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

This acknowledges the potential authorship while maintaining academic honesty about the degree of certainty.

Reproductions in Art History Textbooks

Similar to general books, art history textbooks require you to cite the artwork and then the textbook. The textbook citation will include the author(s) of the textbook, its italicized title, publication information, and the page number(s) where the artwork is found. For example: Pollock, Jackson. *Convergence*. 1952. Oil on canvas. In *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: A Global History*, 16th ed., by Fred S. Kleiner, 945. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2016.

Key Considerations for Chicago Style Art Citations

Accuracy and consistency are the cornerstones of effective citation, regardless of the medium of the artwork. Always strive to verify your information from reliable sources, whether it's the artist's official website, a reputable museum catalog, or an academic art history text. The goal is to provide your reader with all the necessary details to locate and understand the significance of the artwork you are referencing.

When using the Notes-Bibliography system, remember that the first note for a particular source will be more detailed, while subsequent notes can be shortened. In your bibliography, entries are alphabetized by the author's last name. For the Author-Date system, in-text citations are brief parenthetical references, and the reference list at the end of your work contains full bibliographic details. Always consult the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for the most up-to-date guidelines and specific formatting nuances. Paying close attention to details like italicization, punctuation, and the precise wording of attribution can make a significant difference in the clarity and professionalism of your work.

Consistency in Formatting

Maintaining consistency throughout your entire paper is paramount. Whether you are citing multiple artworks by the same artist or artworks from different periods and cultures, ensure that the formatting of each citation follows the chosen Chicago style (Notes-Bibliography or Author-Date) precisely. This includes the consistent use of italics for titles, the format of dates, and the way locations are presented. Inconsistency can confuse readers and detract from the scholarly presentation of your research.

Verification of Details

Always double-check the details of your citations. Misspellings of artist names, incorrect artwork titles, or inaccurate dates can lead to your citations being unreliable. Utilize reputable sources such as museum databases, scholarly articles, exhibition catalogs, and the artist's official biography to confirm all necessary information. The more accurate your details, the more credible your research will appear.

Understanding Your Audience and Purpose

While Chicago style provides a standardized framework, consider your audience and the specific requirements of your assignment or publication. Art historians might expect a higher level of detail than a general audience. If you are unsure about a specific formatting decision, it is always best to consult your instructor, editor, or a style guide.

FAQ Section

Q: What are the basic elements required for a Chicago style citation of a painting?

A: The basic elements for citing a painting in Chicago style include the artist's full name, the italicized title of the painting, the year of creation, the medium (e.g., oil on canvas), and its location (museum, gallery, private collection, or online source with URL and access date).

Q: How do I cite a sculpture that is part of public art?

A: For public sculptures, you will cite the artist's name, the italicized title of the sculpture, its creation date, the medium, and its specific public location (e.g., park, plaza, street address).

Q: What is the difference between a footnote and a bibliography entry for a Chicago style art citation?

A: In the Notes-Bibliography system, a footnote (or endnote) provides a more detailed citation upon first mention, often including the publication details of a book or website and page numbers. The bibliography entry is a more concise, standardized format, alphabetized by author's last name, and lists all consulted sources. Subsequent notes for the same source can be shortened.

Q: How should I cite an artwork that is untitled?

A: If an artwork is untitled, you should indicate this in the citation. Typically, you would use the word "Untitled" or "n.d." (no date) if the date is also unknown, italicizing "Untitled" if it functions as the title placeholder. For example: Jane Doe, *Untitled*, 2020, photograph.

Q: What if I saw the artwork in person versus online?

A: When citing an artwork seen in person, you focus on its physical location (museum, gallery, city). When citing an online reproduction, you must include the website name, the specific URL, and the date you accessed it, as online content can change.

Q: How do I cite an artwork that is reproduced in an exhibition catalog?

A: You need to cite both the artwork and the catalog. The citation will include the artist, artwork title, creation date, medium, followed by the exhibition catalog details: exhibition title, host institution, catalog editor, catalog title, publication city, publisher, year, and the specific page number(s) where the artwork appears.

Q: Is there a specific way to cite artwork found on social media platforms like Instagram?

A: Yes, for art found on social media, you cite the username of the poster, the title of the post or image, the platform name (e.g., Instagram), the URL, and the date of access. Be mindful of the potential for unverified attribution or ownership on these platforms.

Q: How does Chicago style handle attributions like "attributed to" or "school of"?

A: When the attribution of an artwork is uncertain, Chicago style suggests using phrases like "attributed to," "school of," or "circle of" before the artist's name. This clearly indicates the level of certainty regarding authorship. For example: Raphael, attributed to, *Portrait of a Man*, ca. 1510, oil on panel.

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