

citing artists chicago manual of style

The Importance of Citing Artists: Chicago Manual of Style Guidelines

Citing artists Chicago Manual of Style is a critical practice for anyone engaging with visual arts, music, literature, or any creative field requiring academic rigor and proper attribution. Adhering to established citation styles ensures the integrity of your work, respects intellectual property, and allows your readers to trace your sources. The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), a widely respected guide, offers comprehensive instructions for citing various types of artistic works, from paintings and sculptures to musical compositions and performances. This article delves into the nuances of citing artists according to CMOS, covering essential elements, specific examples, and common challenges encountered when documenting creative contributions. Understanding these guidelines is paramount for students, researchers, curators, and anyone aiming to present scholarly or professional work with accuracy and credibility.

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Understanding the Fundamentals of Citation

At its core, citation is about acknowledging the intellectual labor and creative output of others. When you cite an artist, you are giving credit where credit is due, preventing plagiarism, and building trust with your audience. The Chicago Manual of Style, often referred to as CMOS, provides a dual-citation system: the NOTES-BIBLIOGRAPHY system (preferred by many in the humanities, including art

history) and the AUTHOR-DATE system (more common in the sciences). For citing artists, the NOTES-BIBLIOGRAPHY system is generally more applicable, allowing for detailed descriptions of artworks and their provenance in footnotes or endnotes, followed by a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work. This system is particularly useful for art historical research where descriptive details are often as important as factual attribution.

The purpose of citing artists extends beyond mere compliance. It allows readers to verify your information, explore your sources further, and understand the context of your arguments. For visual arts, this means accurately identifying the artist, the title of the artwork, the date of its creation, the medium used, and its current location. Similarly, for musical and performance arts, it involves identifying composers, performers, works, and performance details. The Chicago Manual of Style offers detailed guidelines to ensure that this information is presented consistently and clearly, regardless of the specific medium or type of artwork.

Citing Visual Artworks in Chicago Style

Visual arts encompass a vast range of creative expressions, each with unique characteristics that require specific citation approaches within the Chicago Manual of Style. Whether you are referencing a centuries-old masterpiece or a contemporary digital installation, accuracy in attributing the artist and describing the work is paramount. The NOTES-BIBLIOGRAPHY system is particularly adept at handling the descriptive nature of visual art citations.

Paintings and Drawings

When citing a painting or drawing, the artist's full name is the starting point, followed by the title of the work in italics. The date of creation, often an approximate year or range, is then provided, followed by the medium and dimensions. If the work is housed in a museum or private collection, its location should be included. For instance, a footnote might appear as: Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.7 cm × 92.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In the bibliography, the entry would typically follow a similar structure, with the artist's last name first: Van Gogh, Vincent. *The Starry Night*. 1889. Oil on canvas, 73.7 cm × 92.1 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Sculptures and Three-Dimensional Works

Citing sculptures and other three-dimensional works follows similar principles. The artist's name, the title of the work (italicized), and the date of creation are essential. For sculptures, details about the materials used (e.g., bronze, marble, mixed media) and the dimensions are particularly important for conveying the physical presence of the artwork. The location of the sculpture, whether in a public space, museum, or private collection, should also be noted. An example footnote could be: Auguste Rodin, *The Thinker*, cast c. 1904, bronze, 73 cm high, Rodin Museum, Paris.

The corresponding bibliography entry would be: Rodin, Auguste. *The Thinker*. Cast c. 1904. Bronze, 73 cm high. Rodin Museum, Paris.

Prints and Photographs

For prints and photographs, it is often important to distinguish between the original work and reproductions or editions. If citing an original print or photograph, include the artist's name, the title (*italicized*), the date of creation, the medium (e.g., etching, gelatin silver print), and the edition number if known. If citing a photograph of a sculpture or architectural work, the credit for the photograph itself might also be necessary, depending on the context. A footnote for a photograph might read: Ansel Adams, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, November 1, 1941, gelatin silver print, 20 × 25.3 cm, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

The bibliography entry for this photograph would be: Adams, Ansel. *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*. November 1, 1941. Gelatin silver print, 20 × 25.3 cm. Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

Digital Art and Multimedia

Citing digital art and multimedia presents unique challenges due to the ephemeral nature of some works and the technologies involved. The Chicago Manual of Style provides guidance for these emerging forms. Key information includes the artist's name, the title of the work (*italicized*), the date of creation, and the medium (e.g., video, interactive installation, net art). For digital works, it's often crucial to specify the platform or software used, and if possible, provide a stable URL or archival reference. If the work is accessible online, the date of access is also required. For example: Refik Anadol, *Machine Hallucination*, 2019, data sculpture, AI, live data streams, The Shed, New York (exhibited October–December 2019).

For a bibliography entry of a digital artwork accessible online, you might see: Anadol, Refik. *Machine Hallucination*. 2019. Data sculpture, AI, live data streams. The Shed, New York. Accessed [Date]. [URL if applicable].

Citing Musical Works and Performances

Music, in its various forms, requires precise attribution to honor composers, performers, and the works themselves. The Chicago Manual of Style offers clear directives for citing published scores, recorded music, and live performances, ensuring that these creative contributions are properly recognized.

Published Music Scores

When citing a musical score, the composer's name is primary, followed by the title of the musical work (*italicized*). Information about the specific edition used, including the publisher and publication year, is vital. For larger works like symphonies or operas, identifying the specific movement or section being referenced is also important. A footnote could look like this: Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, op. 125, Choral*, edited by Jonathan Del Mar (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008).

The bibliography entry would be: Beethoven, Ludwig van. *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, op. 125*,

Choral. Edited by Jonathan Del Mar. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008.

Recorded Music

Citing recorded music involves identifying the composer, the performers, the recording title (often italicized), the record label, and the release year. If referencing a specific track from an album, that should also be clearly indicated. The format for a footnote might be: Johann Sebastian Bach, *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988, performed by Glenn Gould, Sony Classical, 1981, CD.

For a bibliography, the entry would be structured as: Bach, Johann Sebastian. *Goldberg Variations*, BWV 988. Performed by Glenn Gould. Sony Classical, 1981. CD.

Live Performances

Citing a live musical performance requires details about the composer, the performers (soloists, orchestra, conductor), the title of the work, the venue, the date of the performance, and potentially the city. This form of citation is crucial for documenting ephemeral events. A footnote for a concert might read: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Requiem in D minor*, K. 626, performed by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, with soloists, Philharmonie, Berlin, May 15, 2023.

A bibliography entry for a live performance is less common unless it's a formally documented or broadcast event, but if needed, it would follow a similar pattern, focusing on the key participants and event details.

Citing Performances and Exhibitions

Beyond individual artworks and musical pieces, Chicago style also provides frameworks for citing broader artistic events such as theatrical performances, dance recitals, and art exhibitions, recognizing the collaborative and often transient nature of these undertakings.

Theater and Dance Performances

When citing a theatrical or dance performance, essential elements include the title of the play or dance (italicized), the playwright or choreographer, the director, the lead performers, the theater or venue, and the date and location of the performance. This level of detail helps anchor the citation to a specific instance of artistic creation. A footnote for a play could be: William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, directed by Gregory Doran, starring David Tennant, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, October 2008.

For a bibliography, if the performance is significant enough to warrant inclusion, the entry would mirror the footnote's details, prioritizing the title and key creative figures.

Art Exhibitions

Citing an art exhibition requires a different set of particulars. You should include the exhibition title (italicized), the name of the institution or gallery hosting it, the city, and the dates of the exhibition. If the exhibition featured a specific catalog or publication, referencing that is also a standard practice. A footnote for an exhibition might appear as: *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, April 15–July 29, 2013.

The corresponding bibliography entry would be: *Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, April 15–July 29, 2013.

Key Considerations for Citing Artists

Regardless of the medium, several core pieces of information are fundamental to accurately citing artists and their works according to the Chicago Manual of Style. These elements ensure that your citation is not only informative but also traceable, allowing readers to locate the original sources or artworks themselves. Consistency in presenting these details is a hallmark of scholarly writing.

Artist's Name and Lifespan

Always use the full name of the artist as it is commonly known. Including the artist's lifespan (birth and death dates) in parentheses after their name, particularly in bibliographical entries or initial footnotes, provides valuable context and helps distinguish artists with similar names. For established artists, this is a standard convention in art historical citation.

Title of the Work

The title of the artwork, musical composition, or performance should be presented accurately and in italics, as per Chicago style conventions. Ensure that you are using the officially recognized title, as variations can sometimes exist. For untitled works, indicate this clearly, often by stating "Untitled" in place of a title.

Date of Creation

The date of creation is a crucial piece of information. For completed works, this is typically the year. For ongoing projects, historical works with uncertain dates, or works with multiple creation stages, provide the most accurate dating available, using approximations like "c. [year]" (circa) or a date range if necessary. CMOS provides guidance on how to handle dating for various art forms.

Medium and Dimensions

Specifying the medium (e.g., oil on canvas, bronze, watercolor, digital) is essential for visual arts. For sculptures and installations, dimensions are often included to give a sense of scale. For music, the

instrumentation or format might be relevant. These details enhance the reader's understanding of the artwork's physical or conceptual nature.

Current Location or Collection

For physical artworks, identifying where the work is currently housed—be it a museum, gallery, public space, or private collection—is vital for locating it. Provide the name of the institution and its city. If citing a digital work, the platform or archive where it is hosted is equally important.

Source of Information

Crucially, the source from which you obtained information about the artist or artwork must be cited. This could be a book, journal article, exhibition catalog, website, or interview. In the NOTES-BIBLIOGRAPHY system, this is handled through footnotes/endnotes and the bibliography, ensuring full transparency of your research.

Footnotes vs. Endnotes in Chicago Style

The Chicago Manual of Style's NOTES-BIBLIOGRAPHY system offers two primary ways to present your citations: footnotes and endnotes. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where the citation is referenced in the text, offering immediate context to the reader. Endnotes, on the other hand, are collected at the end of a chapter or the entire document, providing a cleaner page layout but requiring readers to flip to the back.

Both systems are acceptable and serve the same purpose: to provide detailed source information without disrupting the flow of the main text. The choice between footnotes and endnotes is often a matter of personal preference or publisher guidelines. For citing artists, especially in art history, the descriptive nature of footnotes can be particularly beneficial, allowing for in-text commentary alongside the citation details.

- Footnotes: Appear at the bottom of the page.
- Endnotes: Gathered at the end of a chapter or document.

Common Pitfalls in Citing Artists

Navigating the intricacies of citing artists can sometimes lead to errors. One common pitfall is inconsistent formatting of titles, artist names, or dates. Another frequent issue is failing to provide sufficient detail, such as omitting the medium, dimensions, or location of a visual artwork, making it difficult for readers to identify or verify the work.

For musical works, a mistake might be not specifying the edition of a score or the specific performers on a recording. In performance citations, forgetting the date or venue can render the citation vague. Additionally, not distinguishing between primary sources (e.g., the artwork itself) and secondary sources (e.g., an art historical analysis of the work) can lead to confusion. Familiarity with the Chicago Manual of Style's specific examples and rules is the best defense against these common errors.

The Role of Citation in Art History and Research

In the field of art history and related disciplines, proper citation of artists is not merely a procedural requirement; it is foundational to scholarly discourse. Accurate attributions and detailed source references enable rigorous analysis, build upon existing scholarship, and contribute to the ongoing understanding and interpretation of art. When you cite artists using a standard like the Chicago Manual of Style, you are participating in a global conversation, ensuring that the lineage of creative ideas and works remains clear and traceable.

The ability to precisely reference artworks, performances, and artistic contributions allows scholars to construct well-supported arguments, engage critically with historical and contemporary art, and contribute new insights to the field. By adhering to the detailed guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style, researchers demonstrate a commitment to intellectual honesty and uphold the integrity of their work, fostering trust and credibility among peers and the wider academic community.

Q: What is the primary citation system recommended by the Chicago Manual of Style for citing artists?

A: The Chicago Manual of Style primarily recommends the NOTES-BIBLIOGRAPHY system for citing artists, especially in fields like art history and the humanities. This system utilizes footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work.

Q: How should I cite a painting by an artist if I'm using the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: To cite a painting using Chicago style (NOTES-BIBLIOGRAPHY), you would typically include the artist's full name, the title of the painting in italics, the year of creation, the medium, dimensions, and its current location. For example: Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.7 cm x 92.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Q: What information is crucial when citing a musical composition by a composer in Chicago style?

A: When citing a musical composition, it is essential to include the composer's full name, the title of the work (italicized), any opus numbers or catalog designations (e.g., BWV, K.), and specific details about the edition used, including the publisher and publication year. If referencing a particular movement or section, that should also be specified.

Q: How do I cite a live music performance using the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: To cite a live music performance, include the composer, the title of the work performed (italicized), the performing artists (soloists, orchestra, conductor), the venue, and the date and city of the performance. For example: Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 5 in C minor, op. 67*, performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, Royal Albert Hall, London, July 20, 2023.

Q: What are the key differences between citing a sculpture and a painting in Chicago style?

A: While the fundamental elements (artist, title, date, location) are similar, citing a sculpture often requires more emphasis on the materials used (e.g., bronze, marble, steel) and precise dimensions to convey its three-dimensional form effectively, whereas for paintings, the medium and canvas dimensions are standard.

Q: How does the Chicago Manual of Style handle citing artists who created digital or multimedia art?

A: For digital art, Chicago style requires identifying the artist, title (italicized), date of creation, medium (e.g., video, interactive installation, net art), and the platform or software used. If accessible online, include the URL and the date of access. The ephemeral nature of some digital works necessitates clear documentation of its presentation context.

Q: Is it necessary to include the artist's lifespan when citing them in Chicago style?

A: Including the artist's lifespan (birth and death dates) in parentheses after their name is highly recommended, especially in bibliographical entries and often in the first mention in footnotes. This helps to clearly identify the artist and distinguishes them from others with similar names, adding valuable contextual information.

Q: What are the best practices for citing an artwork that is untitled according to Chicago style?

A: If an artwork is officially untitled, you should indicate this in your citation. Instead of an italicized title, you would typically write "Untitled" or "Unpublished work" in place of the title, followed by the other relevant details such as the artist, date, medium, and location.

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