

chicago manual for religious art citation

The Chicago Manual for religious art citation serves as an indispensable guide for scholars, researchers, and students engaging with the complex visual and material culture of faith traditions. Accurately citing religious art is crucial for maintaining academic integrity, allowing readers to verify sources and understand the context of the artwork being discussed. This comprehensive article will delve into the intricacies of referencing religious artworks within the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) framework, addressing common challenges and providing clear, actionable advice. We will explore the fundamental principles of CMOS citation as applied to various forms of religious art, from ancient icons to contemporary installations, and discuss specific considerations for different media and historical periods. Understanding these guidelines ensures that your research contributes effectively to the scholarly discourse on religious art.

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Understanding the Core Principles of CMOS Citation for Art

The Chicago Manual of Style, in its various editions, provides a robust framework for academic citation, and this extends to the nuanced field of religious art. At its heart, CMOS citation aims for clarity, precision, and consistency, enabling readers to locate and evaluate the sources an author has used. When citing religious art, the fundamental goal remains the same: to attribute the artwork accurately and provide sufficient information for identification and retrieval. This involves identifying the creator (if known), the title of the work, the date of creation, and its current location or repository.

The general principle for citing visual materials, including religious art, under CMOS typically follows a pattern that resembles that of other creative works. However, the unique nature of religious art—its function, context, and often communal authorship or veneration—introduces specific considerations. For instance, distinguishing between an artist's name and the name of a saint or deity depicted is a common point of attention. Furthermore, the provenance and historical significance of religious art often necessitate more detailed contextual information in the citation than might be required for secular works.

Key Elements of a Religious Art Citation

Regardless of the specific medium or tradition, certain core elements are essential for a

comprehensive Chicago-style citation of religious art. These elements help to uniquely identify the artwork and provide context for the reader. The following are typically included:

- **Artist or Creator:** If known, the name of the artist or maker. For works of uncertain authorship, this might be stated as "Anonymous" or attributed to a workshop.
- **Title:** The commonly accepted title of the artwork. This may be in its original language or a translated version, often italicized.
- **Date of Creation:** The period or specific year the artwork was created.
- **Medium:** The materials used to create the artwork (e.g., oil on canvas, bronze, stained glass, parchment).
- **Dimensions:** While not always mandatory, dimensions can be important for understanding the scale and impact of an artwork.
- **Current Location:** The museum, gallery, church, or collection where the artwork is presently housed.
- **Accession Number:** If available from the institution, the accession number is a crucial identifier.
- **Description:** A brief, descriptive phrase to further identify the work, especially if the title is generic.

Citing Religious Paintings and Sculptures

Religious paintings and sculptures represent some of the most widely studied forms of religious art. Citing these works requires attention to details that might be specific to their devotional or didactic purpose. When an artist is known, their name is typically given prominence. For example, Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling would be cited with his name as the creator. However, many significant religious artworks, particularly from earlier periods, lack a definitively known artist, and thus might be cited as "Anonymous" or by the workshop or school associated with them.

The title of a painting or sculpture is usually presented in italics. For religious works, titles often reflect the subject matter, such as "The Annunciation," "Crucifixion," or "Madonna and Child." If an artwork has multiple versions or significant variations, descriptive phrases are crucial. For instance, differentiating between "The Last Supper" by Leonardo da Vinci and a different depiction of the same subject by another artist would necessitate additional identifying details.

Attributing Authorship

Attributing authorship for religious art can be complex. In many traditions, artworks were created by

anonymous artisans or as part of collective efforts within monasteries or religious communities. When the artist is unknown, it is standard practice to indicate this. Phrases like "Anonymous" or "Unknown artist" are appropriate. Sometimes, attribution is to a school or period, such as "Master of the _____" or "By a follower of _____." CMOS guidelines allow for such attributions when they reflect scholarly consensus.

Describing the Work

Beyond the artist and title, a concise description of the religious painting or sculpture can be invaluable, especially if the title is common or if the work is part of a larger ensemble. For example, when citing a specific statue of Saint Francis, one might need to add details about its material, size, or distinguishing features if multiple statues of the same saint exist in the same collection. This descriptive element helps to pinpoint the exact object of study for your readers.

Referencing Religious Architecture and Sacred Spaces

Religious architecture and sacred spaces are vital components of religious art and practice, often serving as the primary site for devotion and community gathering. Citing these structures requires a slightly different approach, focusing on the building itself and its architects or builders, if known. The primary identifier will be the name of the sacred site, often including its religious affiliation or denomination. For example, "Notre-Dame Cathedral" or "The Great Mosque of Córdoba."

When discussing specific elements within a sacred space, such as a stained-glass window or a particular altar, the citation should reflect the hierarchy of the context. Citing a window within a cathedral, for instance, would typically mention the cathedral first, followed by details about the window itself, including its artist or maker if discernible. The date of construction or significant renovation is also a critical piece of information for architectural citations.

Identifying Sacred Structures

The naming of religious buildings can sometimes be varied, and it is important to use the most common and accepted name. This might include official names, popular names, or names associated with the deity or saint to whom the structure is dedicated. For example, Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City or the Temple of Heaven in Beijing. Consistency in naming throughout your work is paramount.

Architects and Builders

If the architect or significant builders of a religious structure are known, their names should be included in the citation. For example, a citation for the Sagrada Família would prominently feature Antoni Gaudí. However, many ancient religious structures were built over long periods by various

hands, and in such cases, attribution may be to a builder, a dynasty, or simply the period of construction. The CMOS manual provides guidance on how to handle such attributions in a clear and scholarly manner.

Citing Religious Manuscripts and Illuminated Texts

Religious manuscripts, including illuminated Bibles, Qurans, prayer books, and other sacred texts, represent a significant category of religious art. Citing these works involves acknowledging both the textual content and the visual artistry. The primary focus is often on the manuscript as a physical object and its artistic embellishments rather than solely its written words, although the text itself is also a critical element.

Key information for citing religious manuscripts includes the title of the text, the date of its creation or illumination, the scribe or illuminator (if known), the current repository, and any unique identifying features such as colophons or manuscript numbers. The medium, typically ink, pigment, and gold on parchment or paper, is also important.

Identifying the Manuscript

When identifying a religious manuscript, it is crucial to provide enough detail to distinguish it from other copies or versions of the same text. This often includes the specific title of the work, followed by identifying information such as its provenance or a library's shelf mark. For illuminated manuscripts, the term "illumination" or "decorated" is often used in conjunction with the title. For example, a citation might refer to "The Book of Kells, an illuminated manuscript."

Scribes and Illuminators

The attribution of scribal or illuminator work is often challenging for historical manuscripts. If the scribe or illuminator is known, their name should be included. However, many manuscripts are anonymous. In such cases, attribution may be to a specific scriptorium, a school of artists, or a historical period. CMOS allows for this flexibility, emphasizing accurate representation of what is known about the work's creation.

Citing Religious Artifacts and Ritual Objects

Religious artifacts and ritual objects encompass a vast array of items used in worship, ceremony, and devotional practice across different faiths. This can include reliquaries, liturgical vessels, prayer beads, ceremonial masks, statues for shrines, and much more. Citing these objects requires a focus on their function, materials, and provenance within a religious context.

When citing such an object, it is important to clearly identify what the object is. For instance, "A silver chalice used in Orthodox Christian liturgy" or "A Buddhist votive statue of Amida Buddha." The maker, if known, should be included, along with the date of creation and the materials used. The current location, such as a museum or a specific religious institution, is also vital for identification.

Describing the Object's Function

The religious function of an artifact often plays a significant role in its interpretation and citation. For example, when citing a specific type of Buddhist mandala, it is helpful to indicate its purpose in meditation or ritual. Similarly, describing a Christian crucifix might include its use in private devotion or public worship. This contextual information enhances the scholarly value of the citation.

Provenance and Acquisition

The history of ownership, or provenance, can be particularly important for religious artifacts, as it can reveal their journey through different religious communities, collections, or historical events. If the object has been acquired by a museum or institution, noting its accession number is crucial. Understanding how an object came to be in its current location can also provide valuable historical insights, which should be reflected in the citation where relevant.

Addressing Specific Challenges in Religious Art Citation

The study and citation of religious art present unique challenges that may not be encountered in other fields of art history. These can include issues of anonymity, communal creation, the sacred nature of objects, and the translation of titles or inscriptions. Navigating these complexities requires careful application of CMOS principles and a deep understanding of the specific cultural and religious contexts involved.

One common challenge is the attribution of artworks. Many religious objects and artworks were not signed by their creators, or their creators are lost to history. In such cases, CMOS allows for attribution based on scholarly consensus, such as "attributed to" or "workshop of." Another challenge arises from the sacred status of certain objects. In some traditions, it may be inappropriate to photograph or publicly display certain religious items, and this sensitivity must be respected in academic discourse and citation.

Handling Anonymous Works

As mentioned previously, a significant portion of religious art is anonymous. CMOS provides clear guidance on how to handle such attributions. Instead of leaving a blank space or omitting the creator, one should use terms like "Anonymous," "Unknown artist," or "Unknown maker." When more specific information is available, such as attribution to a particular school or period, this should be included.

For instance, "Icon, attributed to the Cretan School."

Inscriptions and Textual Elements

Many religious artworks feature inscriptions in various languages and scripts, which can provide crucial information about the artist, patron, date, or religious context. When citing an artwork with significant inscriptions, it is important to transcribe these inscriptions accurately and, if necessary, provide a translation. CMOS guidelines on citing texts and languages can be applied here to ensure proper handling of this data.

Digital and Online Resources for Religious Art Citation

In the digital age, a vast number of religious artworks are accessible online, through museum databases, digital archives, and scholarly websites. Citing these online resources requires adherence to CMOS guidelines for digital materials, which have evolved significantly over time. When referencing an image or information found online, it is crucial to provide a stable URL and the date of access, as online content can be ephemeral.

When citing religious art found online, one should still strive to include as much of the core information as possible: artist, title, date, medium, and current institutional location, if available. The website or database itself acts as the container for the digital object. This approach ensures that readers can locate the original source of the image or information, even if the specific URL changes.

Museum and Archive Websites

Museum websites and digital archives are primary sources for high-quality images and detailed information about religious artworks. When citing an artwork found on a museum website, the citation should typically include the museum's name, the artwork's title, the artist (if known), the accession number, and the URL of the specific object page, along with the date of access. For example, a citation might look like: "The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 'The Annunciation,' by Fra Angelico, ca. 1438-1447, tempera on panel, Accession Number 32.100.45, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436897> (accessed October 26, 2023)."

Databases and Digital Humanities Projects

Specialized databases and digital humanities projects dedicated to religious art or specific traditions offer invaluable resources. When citing from such projects, it is important to identify the project name clearly, the specific artwork or entry being referenced, and the project's URL. The credibility and scholarly rigor of the digital project itself should also be considered. Many of these platforms are curated by academic institutions or reputable scholars, making them reliable sources.

The meticulous practice of citing religious art according to the Chicago Manual of Style not only upholds academic integrity but also enriches scholarly understanding by providing a clear, verifiable pathway to the sources that inform our interpretations. By diligently applying these guidelines, researchers contribute to a more robust and accessible body of knowledge on the world's diverse religious artistic traditions.

FAQ

Q: What is the primary difference between citing a secular artwork and a religious artwork in the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: While the fundamental principles of citation remain the same, citing religious art often requires acknowledging its specific devotional function, potential anonymity of creators, and sometimes the sacred nature of the object itself, which can influence how it is described and referenced in a scholarly context.

Q: How should I cite a religious artwork where the artist is unknown?

A: When the artist of a religious artwork is unknown, use terms like "Anonymous," "Unknown artist," or "Unknown maker" in place of the artist's name. If scholarly consensus attributes the work to a specific school or period, you may use phrases like "attributed to the _____ School" or "By a follower of _____."

Q: What information is crucial when citing religious architecture, like a cathedral or temple?

A: When citing religious architecture, focus on the name of the structure, its location, the architect or builder (if known), and the date of construction or significant renovation. For specific elements within the structure, such as a mural or altar, ensure the citation hierarchically links it to the larger building.

Q: How do I cite an illuminated religious manuscript in CMOS?

A: For illuminated religious manuscripts, cite the title of the text, the date of creation, the scribe or illuminator (if known), the repository, and the manuscript number or accession number. Descriptive terms like "illuminated manuscript" or "decorated manuscript" should be included if appropriate.

Q: What are the considerations when citing religious artifacts like reliquaries or liturgical vessels?

A: When citing religious artifacts, clearly identify the object and its function. Include the maker (if known), date of creation, materials used, and current location. The religious context and purpose of the artifact are important aspects to convey in the citation.

Q: How should I handle inscriptions on religious artworks in my citations?

A: If a religious artwork features significant inscriptions, transcribe them accurately and provide a translation if necessary, following CMOS guidelines for quoting foreign languages. The inscription itself can be a key piece of information for identifying and contextualizing the artwork.

Q: What is the recommended practice for citing religious art found on museum websites?

A: When citing religious art from a museum website, include the museum's name, the artwork's title, artist, date, medium, accession number, and the stable URL with the date of access. This ensures readers can find the specific item online.

Q: Are there specific rules for citing icons within the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: While there isn't a separate chapter solely for icons, citing them follows the general principles for religious artworks. Key information includes the subject matter, approximate date, school of origin (e.g., Byzantine, Russian), medium (e.g., tempera on wood panel), and current location. Attribution, if known, should also be included.

Q: How does CMOS handle citing religious objects that are part of a larger religious practice or ritual?

A: When citing religious objects integral to a ritual, it's beneficial to describe their role or function within that practice. This contextual information, alongside standard citation elements like maker, date, and location, enhances the scholarly value of the citation by explaining the object's significance.

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