

chicago manual of style citing artwork

The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition, provides comprehensive guidelines for citing various sources, and understanding how to properly cite artwork is crucial for academic and professional writing. Whether you are referencing paintings, sculptures, photographs, or digital art, adhering to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) ensures your work is credible and respects intellectual property. This article will delve into the intricacies of Chicago Manual of Style citing artwork, covering both the bibliography and note-taking systems, and addressing common challenges encountered when documenting visual media. We will explore the essential elements required for citing different types of artwork, from museum pieces to online images, and offer practical advice for ensuring accuracy and clarity in your citations.

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Understanding the Basics of Citing Artwork in CMOS

The Chicago Manual of Style offers two primary citation systems: the Notes-Bibliography system and the Author-Date system. Both systems require meticulous attention to detail when citing artwork, as visual sources often present unique challenges compared to traditional textual sources. The core principle remains the same: provide enough information for your reader to locate the original artwork or source material. This involves identifying the artist, the title of the work, the date of creation, the medium, the dimensions, and importantly, its current location or the publication from which it was sourced.

When citing artwork, you are essentially providing a descriptor for a visual object. This descriptor needs to be clear, concise, and comprehensive enough to differentiate it from other works. The Chicago Manual of Style emphasizes accuracy above all else, encouraging writers to verify all details whenever possible. For artwork, this might mean confirming the spelling of an artist's name, the exact title of a piece, or the accession number if citing from a museum collection.

Citing Artwork in Notes: The Footnote/Endnote System

The Notes-Bibliography system uses footnotes or endnotes to cite sources. When citing artwork within a note, the format generally prioritizes clarity and immediate identification. The initial note for a piece of artwork will typically be more detailed than subsequent notes for the same work.

Initial Footnote/Endnote for Artwork

For artwork encountered in a museum or gallery, the initial note will usually include the artist's full name, the title of the artwork (*italicized*), the date of creation, the medium, the dimensions, and the current location of the artwork. If the artwork is part of a collection, the name of the collection and the accession number are often included. For example:

- *Frida Kahlo, The Two Fridas*, 1939, oil on canvas, 173.5 x 173 cm, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City.

When the artwork is reproduced in a book or exhibition catalog, the citation will also include details about the publication. The format might look like this:

- Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1*, 1932, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 91.4 cm, formerly collection of Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, now owned by Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, reproduced in [...publication details...].

Subsequent Footnotes/Endnotes

For subsequent citations of the same artwork within the same work, shorter versions of the note can be used. This typically includes the artist's last name, the title of the work, and the page number if applicable. For instance:

- Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*.
- O'Keeffe, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1*, 45.

Citing Artwork in the Bibliography: The Author-Date and Notes-Bibliography Systems

The bibliography, or reference list, provides a complete list of all sources consulted and cited in your work. The format for artwork in the bibliography differs slightly from the notes, as it is designed to be a reference list rather than an in-text citation.

Bibliography Entry for Artwork (Notes-Bibliography System)

In the Notes-Bibliography system, the bibliography entry for artwork generally follows a structure that places the artist's name first (last name, first name), followed by the title (*italicized*), the date of creation, the medium, and the location or source details. If the artwork is reproduced in a publication, the publication details are integrated into the entry.

- Kahlo, Frida. *The Two Fridas*. 1939. Oil on canvas. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City.
- O'Keeffe, Georgia. *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1*. 1932. Oil on canvas. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas.

When citing from a book:

- Van Gogh, Vincent. *Starry Night*. 1889. Oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Illustration in *Great Artists of the World*, edited by John Smith, 112. London: Art Books Publishing, 2020.

Bibliography Entry for Artwork (Author-Date System)

In the Author-Date system, the bibliography entry is similar in content but formatted to lead with the author's last name, followed by the year of publication or creation. For artwork where the creator is the primary identifier, they will be listed first.

- Kahlo, Frida. 1939. *The Two Fridas*. Oil on canvas. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City.
- O'Keeffe, Georgia. 1932. *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1*. Oil on canvas. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas.

When citing from a book in the Author-Date system:

- Van Gogh, Vincent. 1889. *Starry Night*. Oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York. In *Great Artists of the World*, edited by John Smith, 112. London: Art Books Publishing.

Key Elements for Citing Artwork in Chicago Style

Regardless of whether you are using notes or author-date, several core pieces of information are essential for accurately citing artwork according to the Chicago Manual of Style. These elements ensure clarity and allow for proper identification of the visual source.

- **Artist:** The creator of the artwork. Provide the full name.
- **Title:** The official title of the artwork, italicized.
- **Date of Creation:** The year or period when the artwork was made.
- **Medium:** The materials used (e.g., oil on canvas, bronze, watercolor).
- **Dimensions:** Height, width, and depth (if applicable) of the artwork, usually in centimeters.
- **Location:** Where the artwork is currently housed (e.g., museum name, gallery, private collection). Include city and country if necessary.
- **Accession Number:** If citing from a museum or gallery, the accession number helps in precise identification.
- **Source of Reproduction:** If you are citing an image of the artwork from a book, article, website, or other publication, include the details of that source.

Citing Artwork from Museums and Galleries

When you have viewed an artwork in person at a museum or gallery, your citation needs to reflect this direct encounter. The focus is on the artwork itself and its physical location.

Directly Viewed Artwork

For an artwork viewed directly in a museum or gallery, the note would include the artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, and the institution and city. The bibliography entry would follow the same format.

- Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1519, oil on poplar panel, 77 x 53 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

If an accession number is readily available and important for identification, it can be included after the location.

- Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.7 x 92.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York, acc. no. 473.1941.

Citing Artwork from Books and Articles

Often, artwork is encountered through reproductions in scholarly books, exhibition catalogs,

or journal articles. In these cases, the citation must include details of the publication where the image appears.

Artwork Reproduced in a Publication

When citing artwork found in a book or article, the citation should indicate the original artwork and then provide the details of the publication. The page number on which the artwork appears is crucial.

Note Example:

- Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Night Watch*, 1642, oil on canvas, 363 x 437 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, reproduced in Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, 225 (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997).

Bibliography Example:

- Rembrandt van Rijn. *The Night Watch*. 1642. Oil on canvas. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Reproduced in Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt: The Painter at Work*, 225. London: Thames & Hudson, 1997.

Citing Digital and Online Artwork

The proliferation of digital art and online archives presents new challenges for citation. The Chicago Manual of Style provides guidance for citing digital resources, which can be adapted for online artwork.

Artwork Accessed Online

When citing artwork found on a website, include as much information as is available: artist, title, date, medium, and the website's name. Crucially, include the URL and the date you accessed the content.

Note Example:

- Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*, 2010, Tate Modern, London, accessed June 15, 2023, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/ai-weiwei-sunflower-seeds-tate-modern-t13840>.

Bibliography Example:

- Ai Weiwei. *Sunflower Seeds*. 2010. Tate Modern, London. Accessed June 15, 2023. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/ai-weiwei-sunflower-seeds-tate-modern-t13840>.

If the artwork is a digital creation and not a physical object displayed online, the citation should reflect its digital nature.

- Artist Name. "Title of Digital Artwork." Year. Medium (e.g., digital video, interactive installation). Website Name. URL (accessed Date).

Citing Performance and Installation Art

Performance and installation art are ephemeral or site-specific, making their documentation and citation complex. The Chicago Manual of Style encourages capturing the essence of the experience and its available documentation.

Performance Art

For performance art, the citation should include the performer(s), title of the performance, date, location, and the format of the documentation (e.g., video, photographs, written description). If citing a specific recording, include its details.

Note Example:

- Marina Abramović, *The Artist Is Present*, March 14–May 31, 2010, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photographs by Marco Anelli, exhibition catalog entry in *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present*, 15-20 (New York: MoMA, 2010).

Installation Art

Installation art often exists in a specific space for a limited time. Citations should include the artist, title of the installation, date(s) of exhibition or creation, the site-specific location, and any available documentation.

Bibliography Example:

- Kusama, Yayoi. *Infinity Mirrored Room—The Souls of Millions of Light Years Away*. 2013. Installation. The Broad, Los Angeles. Photograph by="..." (if citing a photograph of the installation).

Common Challenges in Citing Artwork and Their Solutions

Citing artwork is not always straightforward, and writers often encounter unique difficulties. Understanding these common issues and their Chicago Manual of Style solutions is key to accurate referencing.

- **Unknown Artist or Date:** If the artist or creation date is unknown, use "Unknown" or "n.d." (no date). However, always strive to find this information through reputable art historical resources.

- **Multiple Creators:** If artwork has multiple credited creators, list them in the order they appear.
- **Reproductions in Different Sources:** If an artwork is reproduced in multiple sources, cite the source you directly consulted.
- **Artwork Title Variations:** Use the most commonly accepted or official title. If there are significant variations, you may need to note this.
- **Digital Rights and Permissions:** While CMOS provides citation guidelines, always be mindful of copyright and obtain necessary permissions for reproduction.

Maintaining Consistency in Artwork Citations

Consistency is paramount in any citation style, and Chicago Manual of Style citing artwork is no exception. Once you have chosen a format for a particular type of artwork, adhere to it throughout your paper.

This means consistently italicizing artwork titles, using the same order for elements in your notes and bibliography, and ensuring that the level of detail provided for each citation is uniform. For example, if you include dimensions for one sculpture, try to include them for other sculptures cited. If you are unsure about a specific detail, consult the latest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style or reliable online resources that interpret its guidelines.

Paying close attention to the nuances of citing visual materials will not only ensure your work meets academic standards but also demonstrates a thorough understanding and respect for the artwork and its creators.

Q: What is the primary difference between citing artwork in a note versus the bibliography in Chicago style?

A: In a note (footnote or endnote), the citation is typically more concise for subsequent references and aims to point the reader to the source within the text. The bibliography entry is a complete, standalone reference meant for a list at the end of the work, offering all necessary information for retrieval without direct reference to the in-text location.

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

A: If the artist is unknown, you should use the word "Unknown" in place of the artist's name. If the date of creation is also unknown, you would use "n.d." (no date). For example: Unknown. *Portrait of a Gentleman*. n.d. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Q: What is the rule for italicizing artwork titles in Chicago style?

A: In Chicago style, the titles of artworks (paintings, sculptures, photographs, etc.) are always italicized, both in notes and in the bibliography.

Q: Do I need to include dimensions for every piece of artwork I cite?

A: Including dimensions is recommended by the Chicago Manual of Style, especially when citing physical artworks (e.g., from museums). If the dimensions are not readily available or relevant (e.g., for a digital artwork or a performance), you can omit them. However, strive for completeness when possible.

Q: How do I cite a photograph of a piece of artwork from a museum that I did not visit in person?

A: You would cite the artwork itself, but your primary source would be the publication or website where you found the photograph. The citation would include the artwork details and then the publication details (book, article, website name, URL, and access date). For example: Artist Name, *Artwork Title*, Date, Medium, Location, accessed via [Publication/Website Name], Page/URL, Accessed Date.

Q: What is an accession number and when should I include it?

A: An accession number is a unique identifier assigned by a museum or gallery to each item in its collection. You should include the accession number when citing an artwork directly

from a museum's collection, as it aids in precise identification and retrieval, especially if you viewed it there or are referencing it from the museum's database.

Q: How do I cite a piece of artwork that has been created collaboratively by multiple artists?

A: List the artists in the order they are credited. For notes, you might use an ampersand (&) between the last two artists. For the bibliography, list them as they appear on the artwork or in its official documentation. For example: Artist A & Artist B, *Collaborative Work Title*, Date, Medium, Location.

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