

chicago style artwork citation

Chicago Style Artwork Citation: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style artwork citation requires meticulous attention to detail, ensuring that visual sources are properly credited and attributed. This guide delves into the intricacies of citing artwork in Chicago style, covering various formats for paintings, sculptures, photographs, and digital images, whether they appear in print or online. Understanding these nuances is crucial for academic integrity, allowing readers to locate and verify the sources used in research. We will explore the essential components of a Chicago-style citation for artwork, the differences between notes-bibliography and author-date systems, and provide practical examples for common scenarios. Mastering artwork citation not only prevents plagiarism but also elevates the credibility of your work by acknowledging the creators of visual content. This comprehensive overview aims to demystify the process, making Chicago style artwork citation accessible and manageable for students, researchers, and writers alike.

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Understanding Chicago Style Citation for Artwork

Chicago style, also known as The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), offers two distinct citation systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. Both systems aim to provide clear and consistent attribution for all sources, including visual materials like artwork. The choice between these systems often depends on the specific academic discipline or publication requirements. For artwork, the fundamental goal remains the same: to give credit to the artist, identify the artwork specifically, and provide sufficient information for the reader to locate it. This involves understanding the specific elements required for each type of visual source.

The flexibility of Chicago style allows for variations in how artwork is cited, depending on whether it is a primary source encountered directly

(e.g., in a museum) or a secondary source (e.g., reproduced in a book or online). Regardless of the context, accuracy and completeness are paramount. Failure to correctly cite artwork can lead to accusations of plagiarism and diminish the scholarly value of your research. This section lays the groundwork for understanding the core principles that govern all Chicago style artwork citations.

Key Components of an Artwork Citation

A complete Chicago-style citation for artwork, whether in a note or bibliography entry, typically includes several crucial pieces of information. These elements work together to uniquely identify the artwork and its source. Understanding each component is the first step toward constructing accurate citations for any visual medium.

Artist's Name

This is the most fundamental piece of information, identifying the creator of the artwork. The artist's name should be provided as it is commonly known, usually in the format Last Name, First Name. If the artist is unknown, this should be indicated as "Unknown." For historical or cultural objects where a single artist is not applicable, the name of the group or culture responsible might be used.

Title of the Artwork

The title of the artwork should be presented in italics. If the artwork has no formal title, a descriptive phrase can be used, enclosed in quotation marks and followed by a description (e.g., "Untitled," photograph of a cat). For sculptures, paintings, and other traditional art forms, the italicized title is standard. For more ephemeral or performative art, the description might be more detailed.

Date of Creation

The year or period during which the artwork was created is essential. This can be a specific year (e.g., 1937), a range of years (e.g., 1888–1890), or an approximate date (e.g., ca. 1600) if the exact date is unknown. For contemporary artworks, the exact date of completion is often available.

Medium and Dimensions

Specifying the medium (e.g., oil on canvas, bronze, watercolor on paper)

provides valuable context about the artwork's physical properties. Dimensions, usually in inches or centimeters (height × width × depth), are also important, particularly when citing artwork from museum collections. This information helps distinguish between different versions or reproductions.

Identification Number or Collection Information

For artworks housed in museums or galleries, a collection number, accession number, or inventory number is vital for precise identification. This allows a reader to locate the specific object within a museum's catalog. Information about the collection and its location (city and country) is also included.

Source Information (if reproduced)

If the artwork is being cited as it appears in a book, journal, website, or other secondary source, details about that source are necessary. This includes the title of the book or journal, the publication details (publisher, year), page numbers, and URLs for online sources.

Citing Artwork in the Notes-Bibliography System

The notes-bibliography system requires two types of citations: footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography. For artwork, both will include similar information, but the format and order of elements may differ slightly.

Footnote/Endnote for Artwork

In a footnote or endnote, the artist's name is typically given in first name, last name format. The title is italicized. Details about the medium, dimensions, and collection follow. If the artwork is reproduced in a book or article, the citation for that source is then provided, including page numbers. The goal of the note is to provide immediate context and attribution for the specific instance the artwork is referenced in the text.

Example (artwork in a museum):

1. Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.7 cm × 92.1 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Example (artwork reproduced in a book):

2. Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939, oil on canvas, 173.5 cm × 173 cm. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City. Reproduced in Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 5th ed. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 278.

Bibliography Entry for Artwork

The bibliography entry generally presents the same information as the note but follows a different order and punctuation. The artist's last name comes first. The title of the artwork is italicized. For artworks in collections, the collection and location are listed. For reproductions, the citation of the book or article where it is found is detailed. The bibliography entry provides a comprehensive list of all sources consulted, allowing readers to find the original or reproduced artwork.

Example (artwork in a museum):

Van Gogh, Vincent. *The Starry Night*. 1889. Oil on canvas, 73.7 cm × 92.1 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Example (artwork reproduced in a book):

Kahlo, Frida. *The Two Fridas*. 1939. Oil on canvas, 173.5 cm × 173 cm. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City. Reproduced in Chadwick, Whitney. *Women, Art, and Society*. 5th ed. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012. 278.

Citing Artwork in the Author-Date System

The author-date system, commonly used in the social sciences, replaces footnotes/endnotes with parenthetical citations within the text and a reference list at the end of the paper. For artwork, the in-text citation will typically include the artist's last name and the year of creation. The reference list will contain more detailed information similar to a bibliography entry.

In-Text Citation for Artwork

The in-text citation provides a concise pointer to the full reference list entry. It typically includes the artist's last name and the year of creation. If page numbers are relevant (e.g., when discussing a specific detail of a reproduced artwork), they can also be included.

Example:

Van Gogh's depiction of celestial bodies is striking (Van Gogh 1889).

Or, when discussing a reproduction:

The emotional intensity of Kahlo's self-portraits is evident (Kahlo 1939, 278).

Reference List Entry for Artwork

The reference list entry provides the full bibliographic details for the artwork and its source. It is structured to allow readers to easily locate the information. The artist's name, artwork title, date of creation, medium,

dimensions, and collection information are included if the artwork is accessed directly. If the artwork is reproduced, the citation for the book or article containing the reproduction is provided.

Example (artwork in a museum):

Van Gogh, Vincent. 1889. *The Starry Night*. Oil on canvas, 73.7 cm × 92.1 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Example (artwork reproduced in a book):

Kahlo, Frida. 1939. *The Two Fridas*. Oil on canvas, 173.5 cm × 173 cm. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City. In Chadwick, Whitney. *Women, Art, and Society*. 5th ed., 278. New York: Thames & Hudson.

Citing Artwork from Museums and Galleries

When you encounter artwork directly in a museum or gallery, your citation should reflect this firsthand experience. The primary goal is to identify the specific artwork and its location within the institution.

Notes-Bibliography System for Museum Artwork

The footnote or endnote will include the artist's name, the artwork's title (italicized), the date of creation, medium, dimensions, and the name of the museum or gallery with its city and country. The bibliography entry will follow a similar structure but with the artist's last name first.

Example Note:

3. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Ram's Head White Hills, No. 2*, 1935, oil on canvas, 76.2 cm × 101.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Example Bibliography Entry:

O'Keeffe, Georgia. *Ram's Head White Hills, No. 2*. 1935. Oil on canvas, 76.2 cm × 101.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Author-Date System for Museum Artwork

The in-text citation would be (O'Keeffe 1935). The reference list entry would be structured to provide the same detailed information as the bibliography entry, but often with the year placed after the artist's name.

Example Reference List Entry:

O'Keeffe, Georgia. 1935. *Ram's Head White Hills, No. 2*. Oil on canvas, 76.2 cm × 101.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Citing Artwork from Books and Periodicals

Reproductions of artwork in books and academic journals are common sources. The citation must account for both the original artwork and the publication in which it appears.

Notes-Bibliography System for Reproduced Artwork

The note will cite the artist, artwork title, date, medium, and collection (if known). It will then provide the citation for the book or journal article where the artwork is reproduced, including the title of the publication, volume and issue numbers (for journals), publisher and year (for books), and specific page numbers where the artwork appears. The bibliography entry will follow a similar pattern, often with a more detailed breakdown of the publication information.

Example Note:

4. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, ca. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Reproduced in Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 243.

Example Bibliography Entry:

Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*. ca. 1503–1506. Oil on poplar panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris. In Kemp, Martin. *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 243.

Author-Date System for Reproduced Artwork

The in-text citation would typically be (Kemp 2006, 243), referencing the publication where the artwork is found. The reference list entry would provide the full bibliographic details, including the artist and artwork information followed by the publication details.

Example Reference List Entry:

Da Vinci, Leonardo. ca. 1503–1506. *Mona Lisa*. Oil on poplar panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris. In Kemp, Martin. *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 243.

Citing Artwork from Online Sources

The proliferation of online art archives, museum websites, and digital galleries requires specific citation practices for artwork found online. Accuracy in providing URLs and access dates is crucial.

Notes-Bibliography System for Online Artwork

For artwork viewed online, the note or bibliography entry should include the artist, artwork title, date, medium, and collection (if applicable). Crucially, it must include the name of the website, the URL, and the date of access. If the artwork is part of a larger digital collection, specific accession numbers or digital collection identifiers should be included.

Example Note:

5. Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, 1872, oil on canvas. Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris. Accessed February 15, 2024.
<https://www.marmottan.fr/en/permanent-collections/impression-sunrise/>.

Example Bibliography Entry:

Monet, Claude. *Impression, Sunrise*. 1872. Oil on canvas. Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris. Accessed February 15, 2024.
<https://www.marmottan.fr/en/permanent-collections/impression-sunrise/>.

Author-Date System for Online Artwork

The in-text citation would be (Monet 1872) if the artwork is the primary focus. If the focus is on the website providing the artwork, the citation might be (Musée Marmottan Monet, accessed February 15, 2024). The reference list entry would mirror the bibliography entry, ensuring all details are present.

Example Reference List Entry:

Monet, Claude. 1872. *Impression, Sunrise*. Oil on canvas. Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris. Accessed February 15, 2024.
<https://www.marmottan.fr/en/permanent-collections/impression-sunrise/>.

Special Considerations for Artwork Citation

Certain types of artwork or situations may present unique challenges for citation. Adhering to Chicago style guidelines while adapting to these complexities ensures thoroughness.

Citing Sculptures and Three-Dimensional Art

For sculptures and other three-dimensional works, dimensions are particularly important and should be listed as height × width × depth. The medium is also crucial, specifying materials like bronze, marble, wood, or mixed media.

Citing Photographs and Digital Art

When citing photographs as artworks (as opposed to photographs of artworks), the photographer is credited as the artist. For digital art, the medium should clearly indicate "digital art" or specific software used if known. The citation should also include details about how the digital artwork was accessed or presented.

Artwork with Unknown Artist or Date

If the artist or date of creation is unknown, this should be explicitly stated in the citation. For the artist, use "Unknown." For the date, use "n.d." (no date) or "ca." (circa) with an approximate date if a reasonable estimate can be made. This transparency is vital for academic honesty.

Citing Installations and Performance Art

For installation art, describe the components and materials. For performance art, cite the artist, title of the performance, date, and location. If referencing a recording or documentation of a performance, cite that specific source, including the medium (e.g., video recording).

The Role of Accession Numbers

Accession numbers are unique identifiers assigned by museums and galleries. Including them in your citation is highly recommended for artworks from institutional collections, as it provides the most precise way to locate the specific object.

Frequently Asked Questions about Chicago Style Artwork Citation

Q: What is the most crucial element when citing artwork in Chicago style?

A: The most crucial element is providing enough information for a reader to identify and locate the specific artwork you are referencing. This includes the artist, title, date, and source details.

Q: How do I cite a painting I saw in a museum?

A: You would cite the artist's name, the italicized title of the painting,

the date of creation, medium, dimensions, and the name of the museum with its location.

Q: What if the artwork's artist is unknown?

A: If the artist is unknown, you should indicate this by using "Unknown" in place of the artist's name in your citation.

Q: How do I cite artwork that is reproduced in a book?

A: You need to cite both the original artwork (artist, title, date, etc.) and the book in which it appears, including the book's title, author, publisher, year, and the specific page number where the artwork is shown.

Q: Is there a difference in citing artwork between the notes-bibliography and author-date systems?

A: Yes, the primary difference lies in the presentation. The notes-bibliography system uses footnotes/endnotes and a bibliography, while the author-date system uses parenthetical in-text citations and a reference list. The information included is largely the same, but the formatting and placement vary.

Q: What information should I include for an artwork found online?

A: For online artwork, you should include the artist, title, date, medium, collection (if applicable), the name of the website, the full URL, and the date you accessed the source.

Q: Should I always include the dimensions of the artwork?

A: Including dimensions is highly recommended, especially for artworks encountered directly in galleries or museums, as it helps to specifically identify the object. It may be less critical for reproductions where the page number is the primary locator.

Q: What does "ca." mean in an artwork citation?

A: "Ca." is an abbreviation for "circa," meaning "around" or "approximately." It is used when the exact date of creation is uncertain but can be reasonably estimated.

Q: How do I cite a sculpture differently from a painting?

A: For sculptures, you must include depth in the dimensions (height × width × depth) and clearly state the materials used (e.g., bronze, marble).

Q: When should I use quotation marks versus italics for artwork titles?

A: Artwork titles (paintings, sculptures, photographs, etc.) are always italicized in Chicago style. Titles of smaller works within a larger publication, such as individual chapters or articles, are typically put in quotation marks.

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