

chicago style author date for art

The Nuances of Chicago Style Author-Date for Art Citations

chicago style author date for art provides a clear and consistent framework for academic and professional writing, especially when referencing visual materials. Understanding this citation method is crucial for art historians, museum professionals, students, and anyone involved in scholarly discourse surrounding art. This article will delve into the intricacies of the Chicago Manual of Style's author-date system as applied to art, covering its foundational principles, specific elements of art citations, and common pitfalls to avoid. We will explore how to properly cite artworks in various media, reproductions, and exhibition contexts, ensuring academic integrity and proper attribution. Navigating these details is key to producing well-researched and credible art-related scholarship.

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Understanding the Chicago Style Author-Date System

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) offers two primary citation systems: notes-bibliography and author-

date. The author-date system is favored in some disciplines for its directness, allowing readers to quickly locate the source of information within the text and subsequently find the full bibliographic entry. This system relies on two key components: parenthetical in-text citations that include the author's last name and the publication date, and a comprehensive reference list at the end of the work that provides full bibliographic details for all cited sources.

When applied to art, the author-date system requires careful consideration of what constitutes the "author" and the "date" for visual works. Unlike traditional texts, artworks may have creators who are artists, sculptors, photographers, or designers. The "date" can refer to the creation date of the artwork itself, the publication date of a reproduction, or the date of an exhibition. Precision in identifying these elements is paramount for accurate scholarly communication.

Core Components of Chicago Style Art Citations

Regardless of the specific type of art being cited, several core pieces of information are generally required in a Chicago style author-date citation. These components help to uniquely identify the artwork and its context. The fundamental elements typically include the artist's name, the title of the artwork, the date of creation, the medium or materials used, and the location or collection where the artwork is housed. For reproductions, additional information such as the publication title, publisher, and page number is essential.

The specific order and formatting of these elements can vary slightly depending on whether you are citing an original work or a reproduction. However, maintaining consistency throughout your document is a key tenet of the Chicago Manual of Style. Familiarizing yourself with these core components will lay the groundwork for constructing accurate citations for a wide range of art-related materials.

The Artist's Name

The artist's name is typically the primary identifier for an artwork. In Chicago style, it is usually presented as Last Name, First Name. For well-known artists, often only their last name is used in subsequent references if the context is clear. However, for the first mention, providing the full name is standard practice. If an artwork is by an unknown artist, this should be noted, often with "Unknown" or "Artist unknown."

The Title of the Artwork

The title of the artwork should be italicized. If the artwork does not have an official title, a descriptive title may be provided in square brackets. For example, "[Untitled portrait]." It is important to be accurate with the spelling and capitalization of the artwork's title as it is commonly known or cataloged.

Date of Creation

The date of creation for the artwork is a critical piece of information. This is typically presented as a specific year or a range of years if the exact date is uncertain or the work was created over a period. For example, "1937" or "ca. 1888-1890." Consistency in how dates are presented (e.g., using "ca." for circa) is important.

Medium and Dimensions

The medium or materials used to create the artwork should be clearly stated. This could include oil on canvas, bronze, watercolor on paper, or digital media. Dimensions, though not always mandatory for every citation, can add valuable context and are often included, typically in inches or centimeters. For example, "oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in."

Collection or Location

Identifying where the artwork is located is vital for verification and research. This includes the name of the museum, gallery, private collection, or the city and country where it is housed. For instance, "Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York" or "Private collection of Jane Doe, Chicago."

Citing Original Artworks

Citing an original artwork, meaning the physical object itself, requires a specific approach within the Chicago author-date system. The focus is on providing enough detail for a reader to understand what the artwork is and where it can be found, should they wish to see it. This is particularly relevant for scholarly works that are analyzing an artist's oeuvre or discussing artworks in situ.

The typical format for citing an original artwork in the reference list of an author-date system follows a structured pattern. The artist's name, the italicized title, the date of creation, the medium, and the location are the essential components. For example, a citation might look like: Smith, John. *Landscape in Blue*. 2015. Oil on canvas. Art Institute of Chicago.

When referring to an original artwork within the text of your paper, you will use a parenthetical citation that includes the artist's last name and the year of creation. For instance, (Smith 2015). If the artwork does not have a known artist, you would use the title or a descriptive term in place of the artist's name, along with the year. The reference list entry would then reflect this, perhaps starting with "Artist unknown" or the title itself if no artist is attributed.

In-Text Citations for Original Artworks

The in-text citation for an original artwork is concise and directs the reader to the corresponding entry in the reference list. It typically includes the artist's last name and the year the artwork was created. For example, if an artwork by Georgia O'Keeffe titled *Ram's Head White Hollyhock and Little Hills* was created in 1935, the in-text citation would be (O'Keeffe 1935).

Reference List Entries for Original Artworks

The reference list entry provides the full details. Following the standard Chicago author-date format for an original artwork, it would be structured as follows:

- Artist's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Artwork*. Year of Creation. Medium. Collection Name, City, State/Country.

An example would be: O'Keeffe, Georgia. *Ram's Head White Hollyhock and Little Hills*. 1935. Oil on canvas. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Citing Reproductions of Artworks

Citing reproductions of artworks is extremely common, especially in art history texts, exhibition catalogs, and academic papers where the original artwork is not directly accessible. The Chicago style author-date system requires careful attention to the publication in which the reproduction appears. The goal is to credit both the artist and the source of the reproduction.

When citing a reproduction, the author-date system treats the publication containing the image as the primary source for your citation. This means the author of the publication (or the editor, or the work itself if no author is listed) and the publication date become the key elements in the in-text citation. The reference list entry will then detail the publication fully, including the artwork's details within that context.

For instance, if you are referencing a reproduction of a painting by Vincent van Gogh from a book published in 2020, your in-text citation might be (Jones 2020, fig. 5). The reference list entry would then describe the book, and within that entry, specify the artwork, artist, and page or figure number where the reproduction is found. This ensures that readers can locate the specific image you are discussing.

In-Text Citations for Reproductions

In-text citations for reproductions typically include the author of the publication (or the primary editor), the publication year, and often a locator like a page number or figure number. For example, (Berger 2018, 45) or (Smith, ed. 2021, fig. 3). If the artwork's artist is crucial for the discussion, it might be mentioned in the text leading up to the citation.

Reference List Entries for Reproductions

The reference list entry for a reproduction is more complex as it must account for both the publication and the artwork itself. A common format is:

- Author of Publication, First Name Last Name. Year of Publication. *Title of Book or Article*. Publication Details (e.g., City: Publisher, Year). Include information about the artwork: Artist's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Artwork*. Year of Creation. Medium. Page or Figure Number.

An example: Berger, John. 2018. *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Penguin Books. Includes: Picasso, Pablo. *Guernica*. 1937. Oil on canvas. p. 67.

Citing Art in Exhibitions and Collections

Citing artworks featured in exhibitions or within museum collections requires special attention to the context provided by the exhibition or the collection's cataloging. Exhibition catalogs are often treated as books, but the specific details of the exhibition itself can also be crucial.

When citing an artwork displayed in an exhibition, the author-date system usually requires referencing the exhibition catalog if one exists. This catalog serves as the authoritative source for details about the artwork and its presentation. The in-text citation will point to the catalog's author and publication year, while the reference list entry will provide full bibliographic information for the catalog, including the specific artwork, artist, and exhibition details.

For artworks viewed in a permanent collection without a specific exhibition catalog, the citation will focus on the institution that houses the artwork and its official cataloging information if available. The goal remains to provide sufficient information for a reader to identify and locate the specific artwork being discussed.

Exhibition Catalogs as Sources

Exhibition catalogs are invaluable resources for citing art. They often provide scholarly essays, high-quality reproductions, and detailed provenance information. When using an exhibition catalog in the author-date system, treat it much like a standard book citation, attributing it to the author of the catalog, the exhibition curator, or the institution if no specific author is listed.

Reference List Entries for Exhibition Catalogs

A typical reference list entry for an exhibition catalog would be:

- Curator or Author of Catalog, First Name Last Name. Year of Publication. *Title of Exhibition Catalog*. Exhibition Dates. Museum or Gallery Name, City, State/Country. Include: Artist's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Artwork*. Year of Creation. Medium.

Example: Goldin, Nan. 2017. *Nan Goldin: The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. Exhibition July 15–October 15, 2017. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Includes: Goldin, Nan. *Self-Portrait, New York City*. 1984. C-print.

Permanent Collection Citations

When citing an artwork from a permanent collection, especially if you viewed it directly or are referencing its institutional record, the citation should clearly indicate the institution and any accession numbers or catalog references provided by the museum. The author-date citation might then focus on the museum's publication or website if that is the source of your information.

Common Challenges and Solutions in Art Citations

Citing art using the Chicago author-date system presents unique challenges due to the diverse nature of artistic creation and dissemination. One of the most frequent difficulties arises with artworks that lack clear attribution, a definitive title, or a precise creation date. In such cases, adhering to consistent practices ensures clarity and credibility.

Another common issue involves differentiating between an original artwork and its reproduction. Misattributing the date or author can lead to confusion. The key is to always identify the source of your information and cite it accurately. If you are analyzing the physical artwork, cite the artwork itself. If you are referencing an image in a book or online, cite that publication or website.

Understanding the nuances of citing different media, such as sculptures, installations, performance art, and digital art, is also important. Each may require slightly different descriptive elements. For instance, performance art might be cited by the performer, the title of the performance, the date, and the location, often referencing a video recording or description if the original performance is not directly experienced.

Handling Unknown Artists or Titles

When an artist is unknown, use "Artist unknown" or "Unknown artist" at the beginning of the citation. Similarly, if an artwork lacks a formal title, use a descriptive phrase in square brackets, such as "[Untitled landscape]." The date should be as specific as possible, using "ca." for circa if needed. For example: Artist unknown. *[Portrait of a Woman]*. ca. 1750. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Distinguishing Original Works from Reproductions

The distinction is critical. If you are discussing the physical presence of an artwork, cite the original. If you are discussing an image of the artwork you found in a book, journal, or website, cite that source. The in-text citation and reference list entry will reflect which you are referencing.

Citing Contemporary and Digital Art

Contemporary art can be fluid, with works that evolve or exist in multiple forms. Digital art might be cited with URLs and access dates if it is primarily accessed online. Performance art often requires citing documentation, such as video recordings or written descriptions, rather than the live event itself, unless the event is the primary subject of analysis.

The In-Text Citation in Chicago Style Author-Date

The in-text citation in the Chicago author-date system is designed to be brief and informative, allowing the reader to immediately identify the source of information without disrupting the flow of the text. For art citations, this typically involves the artist's last name and the year associated with the artwork or its reproduction. The goal is to provide a direct link to the full bibliographic entry in the reference list.

The format is generally (AuthorLastName Year). However, variations exist based on the specific nature of the art source. For example, if you are citing a reproduction from a book authored by someone other than the artist, the author of the book would be used in the in-text citation. This system emphasizes the immediate source of the information being presented in your paper.

Accuracy in matching in-text citations to their corresponding reference list entries is paramount. A misplaced comma or an incorrect year can render the citation useless. Proofreading is essential to ensure every parenthetical reference corresponds precisely to an entry in the reference list, and vice versa.

Structure of In-Text Citations

The standard structure for an in-text citation is a pair of parentheses containing the author's last name and the year of publication or creation. For instance, (Rembrandt 1665). If you are citing a specific part of the work, such as a figure or a page number, it can be included after the year, separated by a comma. For example, (Smith 2020, fig. 4) or (Jones 2019, 78).

Handling Multiple Authors or Editors

If a publication has multiple authors or editors, the author-date system has specific rules for their inclusion in in-text citations. For two authors, both last names are typically used (Smith and Jones 2021). For three or more authors, the first author's last name followed by "et al." is usually employed (Davis et al. 2018).

The Reference List in Chicago Style Author-Date

The reference list, appearing at the end of your paper, is the comprehensive compilation of all the sources you have cited in your text. In the Chicago author-date system, the reference list is alphabetized by the author's last name (or by title if no author is listed). Each entry provides full bibliographic details, enabling readers to locate and consult the original sources themselves.

For art citations, the reference list entries must meticulously detail the artist, artwork title, creation date, medium, location, and any publication or exhibition details. The formatting within each entry is crucial, adhering to specific rules for italicization, punctuation, and order of information. Consistency is key, ensuring that each entry follows the same pattern, making the list easy to navigate and understand.

A well-constructed reference list is a hallmark of rigorous scholarship. It demonstrates your engagement with the relevant literature and your commitment to providing transparent and verifiable information. For art, this means meticulously accounting for both the artwork and the sources used to discuss or reproduce it.

Formatting Guidelines for Reference Entries

Each reference list entry begins with the author's last name, followed by a comma, then the first name. The title of the artwork is italicized. The year of creation follows, then the medium. For reproductions, the

citation continues with the publication details, including the book or article title, publisher, and year. For original works, the location (museum, gallery, collection) is included.

Alphabetical Order and Consistency

The entire reference list must be alphabetized according to the first word of each entry, typically the author's last name. If an entry does not have an author, it is alphabetized by the first significant word of the title. Maintaining strict consistency in formatting, punctuation, and the order of elements within each entry is essential for clarity and professional presentation.

FAQ

Q: What is the primary difference between Chicago style notes-bibliography and author-date for art citations?

A: The primary difference lies in how sources are referenced within the text. The notes-bibliography system uses footnotes or endnotes to cite sources, while the author-date system uses parenthetical in-text citations consisting of the author's last name and the publication year, directing readers to a corresponding entry in the reference list.

Q: How do I cite an artwork if the artist is unknown?

A: If the artist is unknown, you should begin the citation with "Artist unknown" or "Unknown artist." The rest of the citation will follow the standard format, including the artwork's title (in italics), creation date, medium, and location.

Q: Should I italicize the title of the artwork or the title of the book containing its reproduction?

A: You should italicize the title of the artwork itself when it appears in the citation. The title of the book or publication containing the reproduction will also be italicized according to standard book citation rules within the overall reference entry.

Q: What information is essential when citing a reproduction of an artwork?

A: Essential information for citing a reproduction includes the artist's name, the artwork's title and creation

date, and the details of the publication where the reproduction appears (author of the publication, title of the publication, publisher, and year). You also need to specify the page or figure number where the reproduction is located.

Q: How do I cite an artwork that was created over a period of years?

A: If an artwork was created over a period of years, you should indicate this date range. For example, "1910-1912." If the exact dates are uncertain, you can use "ca." (circa) before the date range, such as "ca. 1955-1957."

Q: What is the role of the reference list in Chicago style author-date for art?

A: The reference list in Chicago style author-date is a complete alphabetical listing of all sources cited in the text. For art, it provides full details for each artwork or reproduction, including the artist, title, creation date, medium, and location or publication information, enabling readers to verify and explore the sources.

Q: How do I cite a sculpture or three-dimensional artwork versus a painting?

A: The core elements remain similar: artist, title, date, and location. For sculptures, you might specify the material (e.g., bronze, marble) more explicitly. Dimensions are often more critical for sculptures and should be included if readily available. The fundamental principles of Chicago style author-date apply to all forms of art.

Q: Is it acceptable to use a website as a source for art citation in Chicago style?

A: Yes, websites can be used as sources, especially for contemporary art or museum collection information. When citing a website, include the author (if available), the title of the specific page or artwork, the website name, the publication date (if available), and the URL, along with an access date. The in-text citation would typically use the author's name or the website's name if no author is clear.

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