

chicago style citing artwork

Chicago Style Citing Artwork: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style citing artwork is a crucial skill for students, researchers, and art historians working with visual materials. Properly acknowledging the source of an image, sculpture, installation, or any other artistic creation is not only a matter of academic integrity but also a way to contribute to the scholarly conversation surrounding art. This guide will delve into the intricacies of citing artwork in Chicago style, covering both the notes-bibliography and author-date systems, and addressing various types of artworks and their specific citation requirements. We will explore how to identify the necessary bibliographic information for different art forms, including paintings, sculptures, and digital art, and how to format these citations accurately. Understanding these principles ensures your work is credible and your references are clear and consistent.

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Understanding Chicago Style for Art Citations

Chicago style, also known as the Turabian style when adapted for students, offers two distinct citation systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. Both are widely accepted in academic disciplines, including art history and visual studies. The primary goal of both systems when citing artwork is to provide enough information for a reader to locate the original work or its reproduction. This involves identifying the artist, the title of the work, the date of creation, the medium, and the location or source of the information.

The choice between the notes-bibliography and author-date systems often depends on the specific requirements of an assignment, publication, or academic department. While the core information needed for a citation remains consistent, the formatting and placement of this information differ significantly between the two systems. Familiarity with both will equip you to handle a wider range of academic and professional writing tasks involving visual sources.

The Notes-Bibliography System for Artwork

The notes-bibliography system uses footnotes or endnotes to cite sources within the text, followed by a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work. When citing artwork in a note, you provide a condensed version of the information, which is then fully elaborated in the bibliography. This system is prevalent in art history, where detailed descriptions and contextual information are often conveyed through notes.

Footnotes and Endnotes for Artwork

When citing an artwork encountered in a book, article, or exhibition catalog, the note will typically include the artist's name, the title of the artwork (italicized), the date of creation, the medium and dimensions (if available and relevant), and the source information (publication title, volume, issue, page number, or exhibition details).

For a reproduction of a painting in a book, a footnote might look like this: 1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel, 77 cm × 53 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris, in Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 145.

The Bibliography Entry for Artwork

The bibliography entry for the same artwork would follow a more structured format, ensuring all key details are present for easy retrieval. The artist's last name would be listed first, followed by their first name. The title of the artwork remains italicized, and the date of creation is provided. Crucially, the bibliography entry must also include information about where the artwork can be found, whether it's a museum or a publication. For a reproduction, the publication details are paramount.

The bibliography entry for the *Mona Lisa* example would be: Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*. c. 1503–1506. Oil on poplar panel, 77 cm × 53 cm. Louvre Museum, Paris. Reproduced in Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, 145. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

The Author-Date System for Artwork

The author-date system, while less common in traditional art history scholarship, is gaining traction in interdisciplinary fields and is often preferred in social sciences. In this system, in-text citations refer to the author and year of publication, and a reference list at the end provides full bibliographic details. This system emphasizes the publication date and author, making it straightforward for readers to cross-reference within the text.

In-Text Citations for Artwork

When citing artwork in the author-date system, the in-text citation typically includes the artist's last name and the year of the publication in which the artwork is discussed or reproduced. For instance, (Camille 1992, 145) would refer to the Leonardo da Vinci example if it were discussed on page 145 of Camille's book published in 1992.

If you are referring to the artwork itself and not a specific discussion or reproduction within a text, you might still cite the artist and the year the artwork was created, provided this information is readily available and relevant to your discussion. However, for reproductions or discussions, the publication details are most common.

The Reference List for Artwork

The reference list in the author-date system is structured alphabetically by the author's last name. For an artwork reproduction in a book, the entry would include the artist's name, the artwork's title, the creation date, the medium, the location, and then the full publication details, including the author of the publication, the title of the publication, and the page number where the artwork appears. The format is designed for quick identification of the source of the information.

A reference list entry for the Mona Lisa example would look like this: Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*. c. 1503–1506. Oil on poplar panel, 77 cm × 53 cm. Louvre Museum, Paris. 1992. Reproduced in Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, 145. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Citing Specific Types of Artwork

The principles of Chicago style citation for artwork extend to various media. Each type of artwork may require slightly different details to be included in the citation, depending on what information is most salient for identifying and locating it. The goal is always to provide the clearest possible reference for the reader.

Paintings and Drawings

For paintings and drawings, the artist's name, the title of the work (italicized), the date of creation, the medium (e.g., oil on canvas, watercolor on paper), and the dimensions are standard inclusions. If the artwork is in a public collection, its location (museum, gallery) should also be noted. If you are citing a reproduction, the source publication or website details are essential.

Example: Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930, oil on board, 76 cm × 68.3 cm, Art Institute of Chicago.

Sculptures and Installations

Citing sculptures and installations requires similar information: artist, title (*italicized*), date, medium (e.g., bronze, mixed media), and dimensions. For installations, describing the components and materials might be more extensive. The location of the artwork is also critical. If the artwork is ephemeral or exists in multiple iterations, this should be noted.

Example: Louise Nevelson, *Sky Cathedral*, 1957–58, painted wood, metal, and screws, overall 313.7 cm × 371.5 cm × 36.2 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Photographs and Prints

For photographs and prints, the artist, title (*italicized*), date of creation or printing, medium (e.g., gelatin silver print, lithograph), and edition number (if applicable) are important. The institution or collection holding the work should also be cited. For contemporary artists, the role of the printer can sometimes be included if significant.

Example: Ansel Adams, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, 1941, gelatin silver print, The Ansel Adams Trust.

Digital and Online Artwork Citations

Citing digital and online artwork presents unique challenges due to the ephemeral nature of the internet and the potential for works to be accessed through various platforms. Chicago style provides guidelines for these citations, emphasizing the need for stable access points.

Artwork on Museum Websites

When citing artwork found on a museum's official website, the citation should include the artist, title, creation date, medium, dimensions (if available), the museum's name, and the URL. The date of access is also crucial because online content can change.

Example: Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939, oil on canvas, 173.5 cm × 173 cm, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City. Accessed November 15, 2023. [URL]

Artwork on Artist Websites or Online Galleries

If the artwork is displayed on an artist's personal website or an online gallery, the citation should reflect this. Include the artist, title, creation date, medium, and the website name, followed by the URL and the date of access. If the artist's website provides specific exhibition or collection information, include that as well.

Example: Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Mirrored Room – The Souls of Millions of Light Years Away*, 2012, mirrors, lights, acrylic, metal, and wood, David Zwirner Gallery Online. Accessed November 15, 2023. [URL]

Common Challenges and Solutions in Art Citation

Citing artwork can sometimes be complex, especially when dealing with incomplete information, artworks in private collections, or works with unclear authorship. Chicago style offers flexibility to address these situations while maintaining scholarly rigor.

Unknown Artist or Date

If the artist or date of creation is unknown, use the abbreviation "n.d." for "no date" and "n.a." for "no artist" in the citation. However, it is always best to conduct thorough research to find this information. If the work is attributed to an artist but not definitively by them, use "attributed to" before the artist's name.

Example: *Portrait of a Woman*, n.d., oil on canvas, private collection.

Artwork in Private Collections

Citing artwork in private collections is challenging because it is not readily accessible to the public. In such cases, if you have personally viewed the work, you may cite it as if it were in a public collection, noting it as a private collection and, if possible, the owner's name or city. If you are citing information about a privately held artwork from a secondary source, cite that source.

Example: *The Blue Vase*, c. 1890, oil on panel, Private collection, New York.

Reproductions in Exhibition Catalogs and Exhibition Flyers

When citing artwork reproduced in exhibition catalogs or flyers, be precise about the source. The notes and bibliography should clearly distinguish between the artwork itself and the publication or event where it is presented. The details of the catalog or flyer are paramount, alongside the artwork's original details.

Example for a note: Unknown Artist, *Still Life with Fruit*, late 17th century, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. Reproduced in *Masterpieces from the Collection* (Exhibition Catalog, City Art Museum, 2010), pl. 5.

Essential Elements for Citing Artwork

Regardless of the specific type of artwork or the citation system used, certain core elements are almost

always necessary for a complete and accurate Chicago style citation:

- Artist's Name
- Title of the Artwork (italicized)
- Date of Creation
- Medium and Materials
- Dimensions (if available and relevant)
- Location of the Artwork (museum, gallery, collection)
- Source of Information (for reproductions: book title, article title, website name, etc.)
- Page number or plate number (for reproductions)
- URL and Date of Access (for online sources)

FAQ Section

Q: What is the primary difference between citing a painting and citing a sculpture in Chicago style?

A: While both require the artist, title, date, and location, a sculpture citation might more frequently include details about its medium (e.g., bronze, marble, mixed media) and dimensions, which are often more prominent features of three-dimensional art. For installations, a descriptive element of the work's components is also common.

Q: How do I cite an artwork when I've only seen it online through a blog or social media post?

A: In Chicago style, it's best to cite the original source of the artwork if identifiable. If the blog or social media post is the only access point and the original source cannot be determined, you would cite the platform (e.g., Instagram, personal blog) as the source, including the username, date of post, and URL, along with any discernible information about the artwork itself, while acknowledging the potential for unreliability.

Q: What if an artwork is unsigned and the artist is unknown?

A: If the artist is truly unknown and no attribution is possible, you would use "Unknown Artist" or "Anonymous" as the author. The rest of the citation would follow the standard format for the medium and type of artwork, noting any descriptive characteristics that help identify it.

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

A: Including dimensions is highly recommended when they are readily available and contribute to the identification and understanding of the artwork, especially for three-dimensional works or pieces where scale is a significant aspect. However, if dimensions are not easily found or are not critical to your discussion, they can sometimes be omitted.

Q: How do I cite an artwork that is part of a larger collection or exhibition that I am referencing?

A: You should cite the specific artwork first, providing all its identifying details. Then, you would cite the collection or exhibition catalog, or the exhibition itself, as the source where you encountered the artwork's reproduction or description, including relevant page or plate numbers.

Q: When do I need to include the medium of the artwork in my Chicago style citation?

A: The medium is almost always an essential element for accurately identifying and describing an artwork. It helps distinguish between different versions of a work or understand the artist's technique and material choices. You should include it whenever it is known.

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