

chicago style footnotes art history

Article Title: Mastering Chicago Style Footnotes in Art History: A Comprehensive Guide

Introduction

chicago style footnotes art history is an essential citation method for scholars and students working within this dynamic field. Its detailed approach ensures proper attribution of sources, lending credibility and allowing readers to trace the lineage of research and interpretation. This guide delves into the intricacies of employing Chicago style footnotes, focusing specifically on their application within art history. We will explore the fundamental principles of the Notes-and-Bibliography system, the specific requirements for citing various art historical sources such as artworks, exhibitions, and scholarly texts, and best practices for seamless integration into your academic writing. Understanding these elements is crucial for presenting your findings with academic rigor and adhering to the conventions expected in the discipline.

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Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style for Art History

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a widely respected style guide in academic writing, and its Notes-and-Bibliography system is particularly prevalent in art history. This system uses numbered footnotes or endnotes to cite sources within the text, followed by a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work. This method allows for detailed information to be presented without disrupting the

flow of the main narrative, making it ideal for scholarly articles and books where nuanced arguments are paramount.

Within art history, the application of Chicago style is often nuanced. The specific nature of the discipline, which frequently involves the analysis of visual objects and their historical contexts, necessitates precise methods of citation. This means that not only textual sources but also the visual evidence itself, along with its provenance and exhibition history, must be documented meticulously. The goal is always to provide the reader with sufficient information to locate the source material and verify the claims made by the author.

The Mechanics of Chicago Style Footnotes

The core of the Chicago style footnote system lies in the numbering of citations. When you first refer to a source, you assign it a sequential number. This number appears as a superscript in the text, immediately following the relevant information or quotation. A corresponding note, containing the full citation details, is then placed at the bottom of the page (footnote) or at the end of the document (endnote). Subsequent references to the same source are typically shortened.

The first time a source is cited, the footnote includes all necessary bibliographic information: author's full name, title of the work (italicized for books and articles, in quotation marks for essays within edited volumes), publication details (place, publisher, year), and page numbers. For subsequent citations of the same source, a shortened form is used, typically consisting of the author's last name, a shortened title, and the specific page number.

There are specific rules for formatting different types of sources:

- Books: Author's full name, Title of Book (City of Publication: Publisher, Year), page number(s).
- Journal Articles: Author's full name, "Title of Article," Title of Journal volume, no. issue (Year): page number(s).
- Websites: Author's name (if available), "Title of Page," Name of Website, Publication date (if available), URL (accessed Month Day, Year).

Understanding these basic structural elements is the foundation for effectively using Chicago style footnotes in any academic discipline, including the specialized demands of art history.

Citing Visual Artworks

Citing visual artworks presents unique challenges in art history. Unlike textual sources, artworks are not typically found within the pages of a book or journal. Therefore, Chicago style provides specific guidelines for documenting them accurately. The essential elements include the artist's name, the title of the artwork (italicized), the date of creation, the medium, dimensions, and crucially, the

current location (museum, gallery, private collection) and accession number if available.

When an artwork is reproduced in a book or exhibition catalog, the citation should include the bibliographic details of that publication as well as information about the artwork itself. For example, a footnote referencing a painting might look like this: John Singer Sargent, *Madame X* (Madame Pierre Gautreau), 1884, oil on canvas, 146.7 x 111.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acc. no. 22.100.1. If this image is being referenced from a book, the footnote would continue with the book's citation details.

It is important to distinguish between citing the artwork itself and citing a reproduction of the artwork. If you are discussing the visual qualities or historical significance of the painting, you will cite the artwork. If you are quoting or referencing information from a text that discusses the artwork, you will cite that text.

Citing Exhibitions and Curatorial Texts

Exhibitions and their accompanying catalogs are vital resources in art history research. When citing an exhibition, it is important to include the exhibition title, the venue, and the dates of the exhibition. If you are referencing a specific work within the exhibition, you would cite that work as detailed in the previous section, often noting its inclusion in the exhibition catalog.

Citing exhibition catalogs requires careful attention to detail. The primary author is often the curator or editor. The citation should include the curator/editor's name, the catalog title, exhibition details, publication information, and page numbers where relevant information is found. For instance: Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008). If referencing a specific essay within the catalog, the format would be similar to citing an essay in an edited volume.

The provenance and exhibition history of an artwork are often documented in exhibition catalogs. When citing these details, ensure you are referencing the correct catalog and providing accurate page numbers. This meticulousness is crucial for demonstrating thorough research and providing verifiable information for your readers.

Citing Secondary Sources in Art History

Secondary sources, such as scholarly books and journal articles, form the backbone of much art historical research. When citing these, the standard Chicago style footnote format applies, but with an emphasis on the specific nuances of art historical scholarship. This includes referring to works that analyze artworks, artists, movements, or theories.

For books, include the author's full name, the title of the book in italics, the place of publication, the publisher, the year of publication, and the specific page number(s) being referenced. For example: Meyer Schapiro, *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: George Braziller, 1978), 54. If you are citing a chapter or essay within an edited volume, the format will adjust to reflect the chapter author and the overall edited volume.

Journal articles are cited with the author's full name, the article title in quotation marks, the journal title in italics, the volume and issue numbers, the publication year, and the specific page range. For example: T. J. Clark, "The Conditions of Artistic Freedom," *October* 99 (Winter 2002): 3–24. Accurate citation of these sources is fundamental to engaging with existing scholarship and contributing meaningfully to the discourse in art history.

Integrating Footnotes into Art Historical Writing

The effective integration of Chicago style footnotes into art historical writing is an art in itself. Footnotes should not merely be appended to your text; they should seamlessly support your arguments and provide necessary substantiation without disrupting the reader's engagement with your narrative. This involves careful consideration of where to place the superscript numbers.

Generally, footnote numbers should be placed at the end of a sentence or clause, immediately after the punctuation mark. This ensures that the citation is clearly linked to the specific information it supports. Avoid placing footnote numbers mid-sentence, as this can create confusion. If a single sentence contains information from multiple sources, it is permissible to use multiple footnote numbers, though striving for clarity by breaking down complex sentences may be preferable.

Moreover, the content of the footnote itself should be concise and informative. While the first note provides full bibliographic details, subsequent notes often use a shortened format. However, for particularly complex sources or when additional context is beneficial, a footnote can also include brief explanatory remarks or tangential information that might otherwise interrupt the main text. This judicious use of the footnote space can enhance the depth and readability of your art historical analysis.

Common Pitfalls and Best Practices

Navigating Chicago style footnotes in art history can present certain challenges. One common pitfall is inconsistency in formatting, particularly when dealing with the wide variety of sources unique to the discipline, such as artworks, exhibition materials, and digital resources. Ensuring that every citation adheres strictly to the established format is crucial for academic integrity.

Another frequent error is the misattribution of sources. This can occur when paraphrasing ideas or borrowing arguments without clear citation. Always err on the side of caution and cite anything that is not common knowledge or your own original thought. This also extends to visual material; even when you are not quoting directly, if an interpretation or analysis is derived from another scholar's work, it must be cited.

Best practices include maintaining a consistent system of referencing throughout your work, using citation management software if your project is extensive, and consulting a style guide or your institution's writing center for clarification. Familiarity with the Chicago Manual of Style itself, or reliable summaries of its guidelines, is invaluable. Regular proofreading specifically for citation accuracy will help catch errors before submission. For art history, always double-check that details

regarding artworks, such as dimensions, medium, and accession numbers, are precisely recorded.

Here are some key best practices:

- Always consult the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.
- Maintain a consistent citation style throughout your paper.
- Ensure all information about artworks (artist, title, date, medium, location) is accurate.
- When in doubt, cite.
- Proofread your footnotes and bibliography meticulously for errors.
- Use shortened notes for repeated citations to improve readability.

Frequently Asked Questions about Chicago Style Footnotes in Art History

Q: What is the primary difference between Chicago style footnotes and endnotes for art history papers?

A: The primary difference lies in their placement. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where they are cited, while endnotes are gathered at the end of the document, typically before the bibliography. Both use the same citation format and are considered part of the Notes-and-Bibliography system within Chicago style. The choice between them often depends on the publisher's preference or the writer's stylistic choice for readability.

Q: How should I cite an artwork that I saw in person but is not reproduced in any book or catalog?

A: When citing an artwork you viewed directly, you should provide as much information as possible in the footnote. This typically includes the artist's full name, the title of the artwork (italicized), the date of creation, the medium, dimensions, and its current location (museum, gallery, or collection, with the city). If available, include the accession number. For example: Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.7 x 92.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York, acc. no. 472.1941.

Q: What if an exhibition catalog has multiple authors or contributors for different essays?

A: For exhibition catalogs with multiple contributors, you would cite the curator or editor first, followed by the title of the catalog, and then the exhibition details. If you are referencing a specific essay

within the catalog, you would cite that essay's author and title, followed by the catalog's publication details and relevant page numbers. For example: Griselda Pollock, "Encountering the Old Masters: Impressionism and the Historical Canon," in *Looking at the Collection*, ed. Richard Shiff (New York: Abrams, 2005), 45–67.

Q: How do I cite an online exhibition or digital artwork using Chicago style footnotes?

A: For online exhibitions or digital artworks, you will cite the creator, the title (in quotation marks if it's a webpage title, italicized if it's the name of a digital publication), the name of the website or platform, and the URL. Crucially, include the date of access. For example: Hito Steyerl, "How Not to Be Seen: A Few Simple Instructions," 2013, video installation, e-flux Video Art, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://www.e-flux.com/video/164648/how-not-to-be-seen-a-few-simple-instructions/>.

Q: Can I use a shortened note for a source if it's the very next source cited in my paper?

A: Yes, Chicago style allows for the use of "Ibid." (Latin for "in the same place") for consecutive citations of the same source. If the subsequent note refers to the same source and the same page number, you simply use "Ibid." If it refers to the same source but a different page, you would use "Ibid., page number." Once a different source is cited, you revert to the author-short title format.

Q: What is the difference between citing a primary artwork and citing a reproduction of that artwork in a book?

A: Citing a primary artwork involves detailing the artwork itself (artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, location). Citing a reproduction of that artwork in a book means you are referencing the book containing the image. Your footnote would then include the bibliographic information for the book, including the page number where the reproduction appears, in addition to the artwork's details if you are analyzing the artwork itself.

Q: Are there specific guidelines for citing art historical dissertations or theses in Chicago style?

A: Yes, dissertations and theses are typically cited similarly to unpublished manuscripts or books. You would include the author's full name, the title of the dissertation (italicized), the degree sought (e.g., Ph.D. dissertation), the institution, and the year of completion. If the dissertation has been published, you would cite it as a book with its publication details. For example: Jane Doe, *The Influence of Abstract Expressionism on Contemporary Sculpture* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2022).

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