

chicago style footnotes for artwork

Understanding Chicago Style Footnotes for Artwork

chicago style footnotes for artwork is a critical skill for art historians, curators, students, and anyone producing academic or professional writing that references visual art. Properly citing artwork ensures that the original creators are credited and allows readers to locate the source material for verification and further study. This comprehensive guide will delve into the intricacies of creating accurate Chicago style footnotes and endnotes for various types of artwork, from paintings and sculptures to photographs and digital creations. We will explore the essential components of a citation, discuss variations based on the medium and location of the artwork, and provide clear examples to illustrate the process. Mastering these citation techniques is fundamental to maintaining academic integrity and contributing to scholarly discourse in the art world.

Table of Contents

- What are Chicago Style Footnotes and Endnotes?
- Key Components of a Chicago Style Artwork Citation
- Citing Paintings, Drawings, and Prints
- Citing Sculptures and Three-Dimensional Objects
- Citing Photographs
- Citing Digital Art and Online Reproductions
- Citing Artwork in a Museum Collection
- Citing Artwork from a Book or Exhibition Catalog
- Special Considerations for Artwork Citations
- Using Footnotes vs. Endnotes in Chicago Style

What are Chicago Style Footnotes and Endnotes?

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) offers two primary systems for citation: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. This article focuses on the notes-bibliography system, which utilizes footnotes or endnotes. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where the reference occurs, while endnotes are compiled at the end of the document. Both systems require a corresponding bibliography at the end of the work that lists all cited sources in alphabetical order. For referencing artwork, the notes system is particularly effective as it allows for detailed descriptions and context to be provided directly within the text without disrupting the flow.

The purpose of using footnotes or endnotes for artwork is multifaceted. They serve to give credit to the artist and acknowledge the source of the image or information, thereby avoiding plagiarism. Furthermore, they act as a guide for readers who wish to examine the artwork firsthand or consult the original publication for more in-depth analysis. This meticulous approach to citation is a hallmark of scholarly rigor and contributes to the credibility of the written work.

Key Components of a Chicago Style Artwork Citation

Regardless of the medium or location of the artwork, several core pieces of information are consistently required for a Chicago style citation. These elements ensure that the artwork and its source are clearly identifiable. Missing any of these can lead to ambiguity and make it difficult for readers to find the referenced work.

The essential components generally include:

- Artist's full name (first and last).
- Title of the artwork (italicized).
- Date of creation (as precise as possible).
- Medium of the artwork (e.g., oil on canvas, bronze, gelatin silver print).
- Dimensions of the artwork (height x width x depth, if applicable, in the specified units).
- Name of the collection or owner (if applicable).
- City where the collection is located (if applicable).
- Accession number (if available).
- Source of reproduction (e.g., book title, exhibition catalog, website URL).
- Publication details for the source (publisher, year, page number).

Citing Paintings, Drawings, and Prints

When referencing two-dimensional artworks like paintings, drawings, or prints, the details of creation and medium are paramount. The title of the work is always italicized, and the date of creation should be as specific as the source provides. If the exact year is unknown, an approximate date range or a phrase like "ca. [year]" (circa) can be used.

The medium provides crucial information about the artistic process. For example, specifying "oil on canvas" is different from "watercolor on paper" or "etching on laid paper." Dimensions, while not always strictly required in every footnote, are often included in scholarly art historical contexts, especially when the physical object itself is being discussed.

For a painting, a typical footnote might look like this:

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1*, 1932, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 101.6 cm, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas.

Citing Sculptures and Three-Dimensional Objects

Citing sculptures and other three-dimensional works requires attention to materials and form. The process is similar to two-dimensional works, but dimensions will typically include depth, and the medium will reflect the sculptural materials used, such as bronze, marble, wood, or mixed media.

The descriptive nature of the medium is important. For instance, stating "bronze, cast," "carved marble," or "welded steel" offers a clearer picture of the artwork's construction. If the sculpture is part of a larger installation or series, this context may also be relevant.

A footnote for a sculpture could be formatted as:

Constantin Brancusi, *Bird in Space*, 1923–24, polished bronze, 141.6 x 41.3 x 16.5 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased with the W. P. Wiltach Fund, 1950.

Citing Photographs

Photographic citations in Chicago style involve specifying the photographer, the title of the photograph (*italicized*), the date it was taken, and the medium. The process of creation and dissemination of photography has unique aspects that need to be reflected in the citation, such as the type of photographic process or whether it is a print made later by the artist or an estate.

If citing a specific print of a photograph, details about the edition size and the printer might be relevant if known. For historical photographs, the archives or collections where the original negative or print resides are also crucial to note.

A footnote for a photograph might appear as:

Ansel Adams, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, 1941, gelatin silver print, 39.4 x 49.5 cm, The Ansel Adams Gallery, Pebble Beach, California.

Citing Digital Art and Online Reproductions

The proliferation of digital art and online access to artwork presents unique challenges for citation. When referencing digital art, the format and the platform on which it is accessed are important. For online reproductions of physical artworks, the citation needs to include details about both the artwork itself and the source of the reproduction.

For digital art, the artist, title, year, and a description of the medium (e.g., interactive installation, net art, video) are essential. For online reproductions, the URL and date of access are critical, as web content can change or disappear. It is always preferable to cite the original artwork if possible, even if encountered through an online source, by providing the details of its physical location or publication.

A footnote for an online reproduction of a painting could be:

Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79822> (accessed October 26, 2023).

Citing Artwork in a Museum Collection

When you are referencing artwork that is part of a museum collection, the citation should clearly identify the museum and its location. This allows readers to find the artwork if they visit the museum or to consult the museum's own catalog or website for further information. The accession number, if provided by the museum, is a unique identifier that is highly useful for locating specific pieces.

Including the city and state (or country) of the museum is standard practice. If the artwork is currently on view, you might note that, but it is less critical than the permanent collection information unless the context specifically demands it. The goal is to direct the reader to the most stable and authoritative source for the artwork.

An example for artwork in a museum:

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

Citing Artwork from a Book or Exhibition Catalog

Referencing artwork that you have encountered through a published source, such as a book or an exhibition catalog, requires citing both the artwork and the publication. This is crucial because you are, in essence, using the book or catalog as your primary source for information about the artwork.

The citation will typically begin with the artwork details (artist, title, date, medium) and then provide the publication details. This includes the author of the chapter or essay discussing the artwork (if different from the book's editor), the title of the book or catalog (italicized), the publication information (city, publisher, year), and importantly, the page number(s) where the artwork or its discussion appears.

A footnote for artwork found in a catalog might look like this:

Gustav Klimt, *The Kiss*, 1907–8, oil and gold leaf on canvas, Belvedere, Vienna, in Tobias G. Natter, *Gustav Klimt: Masterpieces in the Belvedere*, exh. cat., Belvedere, Vienna (Munich: Prestel, 2012), 88–89.

Special Considerations for Artwork Citations

Beyond the standard components, several special considerations can arise when citing artwork. For example, if an artwork is part of a private collection and not publicly accessible, you might need to cite the owner or collector, with appropriate caveats about privacy. Similarly, if you are referencing a reproduction that has been cropped, color-corrected, or otherwise altered, you may want to note this,

although it is not always required.

Understanding when to include an accession number is also important. These numbers are standard in museum catalogs and are invaluable for precise identification. If the artwork is untitled, you would note "Untitled" in place of the title, followed by the date and other relevant information. When dealing with reproductions where the artwork is no longer extant or has been destroyed, the citation should reflect this, perhaps by referencing historical documents or early descriptions.

Using Footnotes vs. Endnotes in Chicago Style

The choice between footnotes and endnotes in Chicago style is largely a matter of preference and publication convention. Footnotes offer the advantage of appearing on the same page as the reference, making it convenient for the reader to glance down for information. However, they can sometimes disrupt the visual flow of a page, especially if there are many of them.

Endnotes, conversely, are grouped at the end of the document, which can lead to cleaner page layouts. The downside is that readers must constantly flip to the end of the chapter or book to consult the notes. For academic papers or theses, either system is generally acceptable, but consistency is key. Whichever system is chosen, it must be applied uniformly throughout the entire document.

In practice, for extensively illustrated works like art history texts, endnotes are often favored to maintain a clean design and allow for more flexibility in image placement. However, for shorter essays or articles where detailed, immediate cross-referencing is desired, footnotes can be more practical.

Frequently Asked Questions About Chicago Style Footnotes for Artwork

Q: What is the primary difference between a footnote and an endnote for artwork citations in Chicago style?

A: The primary difference lies in their placement. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where the citation is made, while endnotes are compiled at the end of the document, typically at the end of a chapter or the entire work. Both serve the same purpose of providing source information.

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

A: While dimensions are highly recommended for art historical scholarship, the Chicago Manual of Style does not always mandate them for every footnote. However, their inclusion provides valuable context, especially when discussing the physical presence or scale of the artwork. It is best to include them when available and relevant to your argument.

Q: How should I cite a digital artwork found on an artist's website?

A: When citing a digital artwork, you would include the artist's name, the title of the work (italicized), the year of creation, and a description of the medium or format. You would then provide the website name, the full URL, and the date of access. For example: Jane Doe, *Digital Dreamscape*, 2022, interactive net art, <https://janedoeart.com/digitaldreamscape> (accessed October 26, 2023).

Q: What if the artwork I am citing is part of a private collection?

A: If the artwork is in a private collection and not publicly accessible, you should cite the owner's name (if known and permission has been granted to use it), along with other relevant details like the artist, title, date, medium, and location. You might also add a note indicating it is from a private collection.

Q: How do I cite a photograph when the photographer is unknown?

A: If the photographer is unknown, you begin the citation with the title of the photograph (italicized), followed by the date, medium, and then the collection or source. For example: *Untitled Landscape*, ca. 1950, gelatin silver print, Private Collection.

Q: Should I always include the accession number when citing artwork from a museum?

A: Including the accession number is highly recommended, especially when citing artwork from museum collections. It is a unique identifier that helps scholars and readers locate the exact piece within the museum's database or physical collection, greatly enhancing the accuracy of your citation.

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

A: When citing the artwork itself, you focus on its creation details: artist, title, date, medium, and original location. When citing a reproduction in a book or catalog, you focus on the publication as your source. This means including the artist, title, date, and medium of the artwork, followed by the details of the book or catalog, including the author of the introductory text (if applicable), book title, publisher, year, and page number of the reproduction.

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