

chicago style for art history books

Mastering Chicago Style for Art History Books: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style for art history books, specifically the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), provides a robust framework for academic and scholarly publications, and nowhere is its meticulousness more vital than in the realm of art history. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricacies of applying Chicago style to art history texts, ensuring clarity, accuracy, and scholarly integrity. We will explore the nuances of citation, formatting illustrations, managing bibliographies, and adhering to the stylistic conventions that elevate art historical discourse. Understanding these elements is crucial for authors, editors, and students aiming to produce polished and authoritative works that meet the high standards of 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 that offers comprehensive instructions on manuscript preparation and citation. For art history books, its emphasis on detailed source attribution and clear presentation makes it an indispensable tool. It provides guidelines for everything from punctuation and grammar to the specific requirements of footnotes, bibliographies, and the presentation of visual materials, which are inherently central to art historical research.

Within the broader context of CMOS, art historians benefit from its flexibility in allowing for either the notes-bibliography system or the author-date system. However, the notes-bibliography system is overwhelmingly preferred and almost universally adopted in art history publications. This preference stems from the need for precise attribution of sources for specific visual analyses, iconographical interpretations, and stylistic comparisons, where detailed referencing is paramount for scholarly credibility and for allowing readers to trace the lineage of ideas and interpretations.

Footnotes and Endnotes in Art History Scholarship

The cornerstone of scholarly citation in art history, particularly when employing the Chicago Manual of Style, lies in the effective use of footnotes or endnotes. These citations serve not only to acknowledge the sources of information, arguments, and direct quotations but also to provide crucial details about the artworks and images discussed. For art history, footnotes offer a more immediate and integrated way to present this information without disrupting the flow of the main text, allowing for the inclusion of accession numbers, exhibition histories, and provenance details directly within the citation.

Citing Visual Sources

When referencing artworks, the meticulous citation of visual sources is non-negotiable. This typically involves providing the artist's name, the title of the work (italicized), the date of creation, the medium, the dimensions, and crucially, the current location of the artwork, including the museum or collection name and city. For example: Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel, 77 x 53 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Referencing Secondary Literature

Citing books, journal articles, and exhibition catalogs is equally critical. A full footnote or endnote entry will include the author's name, the title of the work (italicized for books and journals, in quotation marks for articles within journals or chapters within books), publication details (city, publisher, year), and specific page numbers. For example: Mary Ann Caws, *The Surrealist Image: Rrose Sélavy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 45.

Incorporating Image Numbers

When an image is reproduced within the text, the corresponding footnote or endnote should ideally include a reference to the figure number used in the book. This creates a direct link between the discussion, the visual evidence, and its source. For instance: Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 112, fig. 88.

Subsequent Citations

After the first full citation of a source, subsequent references should be shortened. This typically includes the author's last name, a shortened

version of the title if necessary, and the page number. For very frequent citations of the same work, the Latin abbreviation "ibid." (meaning "in the same place") may be used for consecutive references to the exact same source and page, though its use should be judicious and not overuse.

Crafting the Bibliography for Art History Books

The bibliography, or "Works Cited" as it is often titled in art history, is a critical component of any Chicago-style art history book. It serves as a comprehensive alphabetical list of all sources cited in the text, providing readers with a complete roadmap to the scholarly conversation informing the author's work. The structure of bibliography entries mirrors that of the first footnote/endnote citation but is presented in a slightly different format, typically with the author's last name preceding their first name, and with elements separated by periods rather than commas.

Alphabetical Arrangement

Entries in the bibliography are arranged alphabetically by the author's last name. If multiple works by the same author are included, they are listed chronologically by publication year. If an author has multiple works from the same year, they are differentiated with letters (e.g., 2020a, 2020b).

Formatting Book Entries

A typical book entry in the bibliography would appear as: Smith, John. *A History of Renaissance Painting*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Formatting Journal Article Entries

Journal articles are also meticulously formatted. For example: Davies, Emily. "Iconography of Early Christian Art." *Journal of Art Studies* 35, no. 2 (2010): 123–150.

Formatting Exhibition Catalog Entries

Exhibition catalogs are vital resources in art history. An entry might look like this: National Gallery of Art. *Masterpieces of Impressionism*. Edited by Jane Doe. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2018.

Online Resources

When citing online resources, CMOS requires specific details to ensure

retrievability. This often includes the author (if known), title of the specific page or article, name of the website, publication date (if available), and a URL. A retrieval date is also recommended for content that may change. For example: Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Art History Resources." Accessed October 26, 2023.
<https://www.metmuseum.org/learn-and-explore/art-history>.

Illustrations and Image Captions in Art History Texts

In art history, illustrations are not mere decorative elements; they are primary evidence and integral to the argument. The Chicago Manual of Style offers specific guidance on how to integrate and caption these images to maximize their scholarly utility and adhere to academic standards.

Placement and Numbering

Images should be placed as close as possible to their first mention in the text. Each illustration is assigned a number, typically preceded by "fig." (e.g., fig. 1, fig. 2). These numbers should be sequential throughout the entire book. The numbering system should be clearly established early in the manuscript.

Caption Content

Captions are crucial for providing essential information about the artwork and its context. According to CMOS, a standard caption should include:

- Artist's full name
- Title of the work (*italicized*)
- Date of creation
- Medium
- Dimensions (height × width, in that order, with units specified)
- Current location (museum or collection, city)
- Credit line (if required by the image source)
- Figure number

For example:

fig. 1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel, 77 × 53 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

Permissions and Image Rights

While CMOS doesn't dictate image acquisition, it's essential for authors to be aware of copyright and to secure the necessary permissions for all reproductions. The credit line in the caption often acknowledges the source of the image and the copyright holder. Authors are responsible for ensuring that all images used are properly licensed or fall under fair use guidelines.

Referencing Images in Text

When referring to an illustration in the text, use the assigned figure number. For example: "The subtle sfumato technique employed in the *Mona Lisa* (fig. 1) revolutionized portraiture."

Formatting Art Historical Terminology and Proper Nouns

Art history is rich with specialized terminology, proper nouns, and specific stylistic conventions that require careful attention to formatting. Adhering to Chicago style ensures consistency and clarity in presenting this complex information.

Italicization

Titles of artworks, books, journals, and other major works are consistently italicized. Foreign terms that are not commonly absorbed into English usage may also be italicized on their first appearance, with an explanation provided. For example: "The artist explored the concept of *Jingtu*, or Pure Land Buddhism."

Capitalization

Proper nouns, including names of artists, movements, specific historical periods (when used as a specific era, e.g., the High Renaissance), and named architectural styles (e.g., Gothic Revival), are capitalized. However, general terms for periods or styles are often lowercase unless part of a specific named era (e.g., "a Renaissance painting" versus "the Italian Renaissance"). Art movements themselves are generally capitalized: Impressionism, Cubism, Surrealism.

Periods and Eras

When referring to distinct historical periods that are widely recognized, capitalization is generally applied. For instance, the Baroque period, the Rococo era, the Victorian age. However, if referring to a general time frame, lowercase is used: "a painting from the early seventeenth century."

Technical Terms

Technical terms specific to art history, such as *chiaroscuro*, *impasto*, or *trompe-l'oeil*, are generally not italicized unless they are foreign terms being introduced for the first time, as noted above. They are treated as standard vocabulary within the discipline.

Names of Institutions and Collections

The full, official names of museums, galleries, universities, and private collections should be used consistently. For example: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Getty Research Institute, The Rijksmuseum.

Key Considerations for Art History Book Authors

Beyond the fundamental rules of citation and formatting, art history book authors working with Chicago style must consider several overarching factors that contribute to the success and scholarly integrity of their work. These include meticulous attention to detail, collaborative communication with editors, and a deep understanding of the visual culture they are analyzing.

Consistency is Paramount

Perhaps the most critical aspect of applying any style guide, including CMOS for art history, is unwavering consistency. Once a decision is made regarding a particular formatting convention (e.g., how to abbreviate museum names, the level of detail in image captions), it must be applied uniformly throughout the entire manuscript. Inconsistencies can detract from the professionalism of the book and confuse the reader.

Collaboration with Editors and Publishers

Authors should maintain open communication with their editors and publishers regarding stylistic preferences. While CMOS provides a robust framework, individual publishers may have specific house style variations or additional requirements. Understanding these nuances from the outset can prevent significant revisions later in the production process.

The Role of Visual Evidence

Art history is inherently visual. Authors must ensure that their textual analysis directly supports and is supported by the visual material presented. The Chicago style's emphasis on clear, detailed captions and accurate referencing of images directly serves this crucial relationship between text and image, allowing readers to critically engage with both.

Navigating Permissions and Copyright

The practicalities of acquiring images and securing reproduction rights can be complex and time-consuming. Authors must budget ample time for this process and be prepared to understand and adhere to the specific requirements of image providers, which often influence caption content and placement.

The Evolving Nature of Scholarship

While CMOS provides a stable foundation, the field of art history is constantly evolving with new research, methodologies, and technologies. Authors should remain aware of current scholarly practices in citation and discourse, ensuring their work is both stylistically sound and intellectually current. This might involve referencing digital archives, online databases, or new theoretical frameworks.

Frequently Asked Questions About Chicago Style for Art History Books

Q: What is the primary citation system recommended by the Chicago Manual of Style for art history books?

A: The Chicago Manual of Style primarily recommends and art historians overwhelmingly prefer the notes-bibliography system for art history books. This system uses footnotes or endnotes for citations and a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book.

Q: How should I cite a painting in a Chicago style footnote or endnote for an art history book?

A: A citation for a painting should include the artist's name, the title of the work (*italicized*), the date of creation, the medium, dimensions, and its current location (museum or collection, city). For example: Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on oak panel, 82.2 × 60 cm, The National

Gallery, London.

Q: Are there specific rules for italicizing art historical terms in Chicago style?

A: Generally, titles of artworks, books, and journals are italicized. Foreign terms not yet fully integrated into English usage may be italicized on their first appearance, followed by an explanation. Common technical art historical terms are usually not italicized unless they fall into the category of foreign terms being introduced.

Q: What information must be included in an illustration caption for an art history book using Chicago style?

A: An illustration caption should include the figure number, artist's name, title of the work (italicized), date of creation, medium, dimensions, current location, and credit line or source of the image.

Q: Can I use the author-date system for art history books in Chicago style?

A: While the Chicago Manual of Style does present an author-date system, it is rarely used for art history books. The notes-bibliography system is the standard and expected format in the discipline due to the need for detailed source attribution for specific visual and iconographical analyses.

Q: How do I format a bibliography entry for a chapter in an edited art history book according to Chicago style?

A: A chapter entry in a bibliography would typically include the author of the chapter, the chapter title (in quotation marks), followed by "in," the editor(s) of the book, the title of the book (italicized), publication details, and page numbers for the chapter. For example: Eisenman, Stephen F. "The Temptation of the Icon." In *The Cambridge Companion to Michelangelo*, edited by William E. Wallace, 227–53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Q: What is the significance of the credit line in an image caption in art history?

A: The credit line in an image caption is important because it acknowledges

the source of the image, often the photographer or archive, and indicates ownership or rights. It is crucial for giving credit and often necessary for fulfilling reproduction agreements.

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