

chicago style for art history journals

Chicago Style for Art History Journals: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style for art history journals is the standard for scholarly communication, ensuring clarity, consistency, and credibility in academic discourse. This guide delves into the nuances of employing the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) specifically for art history publications, covering citation methods, formatting conventions, and best practices essential for art historians, researchers, and students. Mastering these guidelines is crucial for presenting original research, engaging with existing scholarship, and contributing meaningfully to the field. We will explore the intricacies of both the notes-bibliography and author-date systems, discuss image permissions and captions, and highlight common pitfalls to avoid when submitting your work to academic presses and journals.

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Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style in Art

History

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a widely adopted style guide in the humanities, and its application in art history is particularly prevalent. It provides a comprehensive framework for academic writing, encompassing everything from punctuation and grammar to the intricate details of scholarly citation. For art history journals, CMOS offers a robust system that allows for detailed engagement with visual evidence and complex theoretical frameworks. The manual is updated regularly, so it is always advisable to consult the latest edition for the most current guidelines.

Art historians often deal with a wide array of source materials, including primary visual evidence (paintings, sculptures, architecture), archival documents, interviews, exhibition reviews, and secondary scholarly literature. The Chicago style is designed to accommodate this diversity, allowing for precise attribution and clear presentation of arguments. Whether you are examining a Renaissance altarpiece or a contemporary installation, adhering to Chicago style ensures that your research is presented with academic rigor and professionalism.

Choosing the Right Citation System: Notes-Bibliography vs. Author-Date

The Chicago Manual of Style offers two distinct citation systems, and the choice often depends on the specific requirements of the art history journal or publisher. The notes-bibliography system is more traditional and widely favored in art history. It utilizes footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations, with a corresponding bibliography at the end of the paper detailing all sources consulted. The author-date system, while less common in traditional art history, is sometimes preferred in interdisciplinary contexts or by certain journals, employing parenthetical in-text citations that refer to a reference list.

The notes-bibliography system allows for more extensive commentary within the notes themselves, which can be beneficial for art historians who wish to provide supplementary information or engage in brief discussions without disrupting the flow of the main text. It also allows for a clearer distinction between primary and secondary sources in the bibliography. The author-date system is often seen as more streamlined for readers, particularly in fields where empirical data is central, but it can sometimes feel less nuanced for the close analysis of visual culture.

When to Use Notes-Bibliography

The notes-bibliography system is the preferred choice for most art history journals and academic presses. This system is particularly well-suited for the genre because it allows for extensive discussion in the footnotes or endnotes without interrupting the narrative flow of the main text. Art historians frequently need to cite multiple sources for a single point, provide detailed provenance information for artworks, or offer biographical details about artists. The notes-bibliography system facilitates this through the use of comprehensive footnotes or endnotes.

When to Use Author-Date

The author-date system, while less prevalent in art history, is sometimes adopted by journals that aim for a more concise presentation or are cross-disciplinary. This system uses parenthetical citations within the text, such as (Gombrich 1995, 45), which refer to a full entry in the reference list at the end of the document. It can be efficient for readers who want to quickly identify the source of information. However, for the detailed analysis and layered arguments typical in art history, the notes-bibliography system often proves more flexible.

Notes-Bibliography System: In-Text Citations and Full Notes

In the notes-bibliography system, in-text citations are handled through superscript numerals that correspond to footnotes at the bottom of the page or endnotes at the end of the document. The first time a source is cited, a full note is provided, including all necessary bibliographic information. Subsequent citations of the same source use a shortened note format, typically including the author's last name, a shortened title, and the page number.

For example, a first note for a book might look like this: 1. E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1995), 45. A subsequent note for the same source would appear as: 2. Gombrich, *Story of Art*, 102. This system allows for a rich engagement with sources while maintaining a clean and readable main text, which is crucial when discussing complex visual analyses or historical contexts.

Formatting First Notes

The initial citation of a source in a note should be comprehensive. For a book, this typically includes the author's full name, the full title (italicized), publication details (city of publication, publisher, and year), and the specific page number(s) being referenced. For journal articles, it includes the author's name, the article title (in quotation marks), the journal title (italicized), the volume and issue numbers, the publication date, and the page numbers. This thoroughness ensures that any reader can easily locate the original source.

Formatting Subsequent Notes

After the initial full note, subsequent references to the same source should use a shortened format. This generally consists of the author's last name, a shortened version of the title (italicized if it's a book, in quotation marks if it's an article), and the relevant page number. For example, if you have already cited Gombrich's *The Story of Art*, a subsequent reference to page 102 would be written as Gombrich, *Story of Art*, 102. This convention avoids redundancy and keeps the notes concise.

Author-Date System: Parenthetical Citations and Reference Lists

The author-date system, as implemented by CMOS, relies on brief parenthetical citations within the text and a comprehensive reference list at the end of the work. The in-text citation typically includes the author's last name and the year of publication, followed by a page number if specific information is being cited. For instance, a citation might appear as (Gombrich 1995, 45).

The reference list at the end of the document serves a similar function to the bibliography in the notes-bibliography system. It provides full bibliographic details for every source cited in the text, arranged alphabetically by author's last name. This system prioritizes quick identification of sources and is often preferred for its efficiency in scientific and social science disciplines, though it is increasingly seen in some humanities fields.

Creating Parenthetical Citations

Parenthetical citations in the author-date system are concise and integrated directly into the text. They typically follow the pattern (Author Last Name Year, Page Number). For example, if you are quoting or paraphrasing a passage from page 45 of E.H. Gombrich's 1995 edition of *The Story of Art*, the citation would be (Gombrich 1995, 45). If the author's name is mentioned in the text, only the year and page number are needed in the parentheses, such as Gombrich (1995, 45) argues that... This ensures readers can easily track the origin of ideas and information.

Compiling the Reference List

The reference list in the author-date system is an alphabetized compilation of all sources cited in the paper. Each entry provides the full bibliographic details necessary for a reader to locate the source. Unlike the notes-bibliography system's bibliography, which can include sources consulted but not directly cited, the reference list should only contain works that are explicitly referenced in the text. Entries for books typically include the author's name, year of publication, title (italicized), and publication details. Journal articles include similar information but also the journal title, volume, issue, and page numbers.

Formatting Artworks and Visual Materials

A critical aspect of art history writing is the proper citation and description of artworks. When referring to an artwork, it is essential to provide sufficient information for the reader to identify it and locate it, if possible. This typically includes the artist's name, the title of the work (italicized), the date of creation, the medium, and the dimensions. Furthermore, the current location of the artwork, such as a museum or private collection, must be provided.

When using the notes-bibliography system, the first mention of an artwork in the text or in a note should include these details. For example: Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 29 x 36 1/4 in. (73.7 x 92.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. In subsequent mentions, a shortened reference might suffice, depending on the context and the complexity of the artwork discussions.

Citing Paintings, Sculptures, and Drawings

For visual artworks such as paintings, sculptures, and drawings, the standard Chicago style format involves presenting the artist's name, the title of the work in italics, the date of creation, the medium used, the dimensions, and the current location. For instance: Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, 1940, oil and tempera on canvas on Masonite, 20 1/4 x 16 1/4 in. (51.4 x 41 cm). Gift of Gladys and Harry Lewis, 1947. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. This level of detail is crucial for scholarly accuracy and allows readers to fully understand the object of study.

Citing Architectural Works

When citing architectural works, the format typically includes the architect's name, the name of the building or project, the date of completion or construction period, and its location. For example: Frank Lloyd Wright, Guggenheim Museum, 1956–1959, New York City. If relevant, additional information such as the materials or specific construction phases can be included. For historical buildings where the architect may be unknown or less significant than the structure itself, the name of the building followed by its dates and location is appropriate.

Citing Photographs and Prints

For photographic works and prints, the citation should include the photographer or printmaker, the title of the work (italicized), the date of creation, the medium (e.g., gelatin silver print, etching), dimensions, and the collection or print number if applicable. For example: Ansel Adams, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, 1941, gelatin silver print, 15 5/8 x 19 1/2 in. (39.7 x 49.5 cm). Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson. Clarity in medium and edition details is important for these reproducible art forms.

Image Permissions and Copyright Considerations

Scholarly art history publications almost invariably require the reproduction of images of artworks. Securing proper permissions for these reproductions is a legal and ethical imperative. Authors are generally responsible for obtaining written permission from the copyright holder of any image they wish to publish. This often involves contacting the artist, their estate, a gallery, a museum, or a photographic archive.

When submitting to an art history journal or publisher, you will likely need to provide documentation of these permissions. Additionally, it is customary to include a clear credit line or caption for each image, which should follow Chicago style guidelines and include all necessary bibliographic information about the artwork itself, as well as the source of the image and the permission granted.

Obtaining Image Rights

The process of obtaining image rights can be time-consuming. It involves identifying the copyright owner, which might be the artist, their heirs, the institution holding the artwork, or a commercial photographic agency. Many museums and artists' foundations have specific procedures for image requests, often requiring a formal application and the payment of reproduction fees. It is essential to begin this process early in your research and writing to avoid delays in publication.

Writing Image Captions

Image captions are integral to art historical scholarship, serving to identify artworks and provide essential contextual information. Following Chicago style, each caption should include the artist's name, the title of the artwork (italicized), the date of creation, the medium, dimensions, and the current location. Crucially, it must also include the source of the image and a statement of permission. For instance: Figure 1. Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 29 x 36 1/4 in. (73.7 x 92.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Image courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art. (Permission granted by MoMA). This ensures proper attribution and demonstrates compliance with copyright law.

Bibliography and Works Cited: Essential Elements

Whether employing the notes-bibliography or author-date system, a comprehensive list of sources is a cornerstone of academic integrity. In the notes-bibliography system, this is called a "Bibliography," and it lists all sources consulted during the research process, whether or not they were directly cited in the text. The author-date system uses a "Reference List," which includes only those sources that were cited within the paper.

Both lists follow strict formatting rules dictated by Chicago style, including alphabetical order by author's last name, specific punctuation, and consistent formatting for different types of sources (books, journal articles, exhibition catalogs, websites, etc.). Proper construction of these lists demonstrates thorough research and allows readers to verify and explore the scholarship on which your arguments are built.

Structuring the Bibliography

The bibliography in the notes-bibliography system is organized alphabetically by the author's last

name. Each entry provides full bibliographic details. For books, this typically includes the author's full name, the title (italicized), city of publication, publisher, and year of publication. For journal articles, it includes the author, article title (in quotation marks), journal title (italicized), volume and issue numbers, publication date, and page range. The goal is to provide complete information in a standardized format.

Structuring the Reference List

The reference list in the author-date system is also alphabetized by author's last name. Its structure closely mirrors the bibliography in terms of the information required for each entry. For books, the year of publication immediately follows the author's name, e.g., Gombrich, E.H. 1995. *The Story of Art*. New York: Phaidon Press. For journal articles, the year is also placed early in the entry. This system emphasizes the temporal aspect of the source, which can be important for tracking the development of ideas.

Common Chicago Style Errors in Art History Writing

Despite the detailed nature of Chicago style, several common errors tend to appear in art history writing. One frequent mistake is inconsistent application of the chosen citation system, leading to a mix of footnote and parenthetical citations or incorrect formatting within notes. Another common issue is the improper italicization of artwork titles or the omission of essential bibliographic information for artworks and sources.

Ensuring accurate and consistent application of CMOS requires careful attention to detail. Proofreading specifically for stylistic consistency, checking that all essential elements are present for each citation, and verifying that artwork details are complete are crucial steps in producing a polished and professional manuscript. Familiarity with common errors can help prevent them.

Inconsistent Citation Practices

A prevalent error is the inconsistent application of the chosen citation style. For example, an author might use full notes for some sources and shortened notes for others without clear justification, or mix elements of the notes-bibliography and author-date systems. This inconsistency can confuse readers and undermine the credibility of the scholarship. Adhering strictly to the chosen system from the outset of writing is paramount.

Incorrect Formatting of Artwork Details

Art history writing frequently struggles with the correct formatting of artwork details. This can include failing to italicize artwork titles, omitting crucial information such as medium or dimensions, or incorrectly listing the current location. For instance, citing "Starry Night by Van Gogh" is

insufficient; it should be Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 29 x 36 1/4 in. (73.7 x 92.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Precision here is non-negotiable.

Punctuation and Capitalization Issues

Minor errors in punctuation and capitalization can also detract from the professionalism of an art history paper. This includes incorrect use of commas, semicolons, and periods within citations, as well as errors in the capitalization of titles and proper nouns. For instance, ensuring that the titles of books and articles are capitalized and punctuated according to Chicago style guidelines, and that artwork titles are italicized correctly, is essential. Close attention to these details during the editing process is vital.

Leveraging Chicago Style for Effective Art Historical Argumentation

Beyond merely being a set of rules, Chicago style serves as a powerful tool for constructing clear and persuasive art historical arguments. The precision afforded by its citation system allows scholars to meticulously trace the lineage of ideas, acknowledge the contributions of previous researchers, and precisely attribute visual evidence. This rigor strengthens the author's own arguments by demonstrating a deep engagement with the existing scholarly conversation.

Furthermore, the structured presentation of information through footnotes, bibliographies, and detailed captions enhances readability and allows readers to critically engage with the evidence presented. By mastering Chicago style, art historians can ensure their research is not only accurate and credible but also effectively communicates their insights to a wider academic audience, fostering a more robust and dynamic field of study.

Enhancing Scholarly Credibility

Adhering to Chicago style significantly enhances the credibility of art historical scholarship. When a paper consistently and accurately employs the manual's guidelines for citations, formatting, and presentation, it signals to editors, reviewers, and readers that the author has engaged deeply with academic conventions and conducted thorough research. This meticulousness builds trust in the author's findings and strengthens the overall argument being presented.

Facilitating Reader Engagement

The clear and organized structure mandated by Chicago style greatly facilitates reader engagement. Well-formatted footnotes and bibliographies allow readers to easily locate and verify sources, delve deeper into the evidence, and follow the scholarly discourse. For art history, where visual analysis is

paramount, detailed captions and precise attribution of images empower readers to connect the text with the visual material, fostering a more immersive and critical reading experience.

Frequently Asked Questions

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

A: The primary difference lies in how in-text citations are handled. The notes-bibliography system uses footnotes or endnotes, while the author-date system uses parenthetical in-text citations. Art history journals most commonly prefer the notes-bibliography system due to its flexibility for detailed commentary within notes.

Q: When should I italicize the title of an artwork in Chicago style?

A: In Chicago style, the titles of artworks such as paintings, sculptures, and drawings should always be italicized when they appear in the text or in citations.

Q: What is the correct order of information for citing an artwork in a Chicago style footnote?

A: The correct order is typically: Artist's full name, *Title of Artwork*, Date of Creation, Medium, Dimensions, Current Location (including museum or collection name and city).

Q: Do I need permission to reproduce an image of an artwork in my art history journal article?

A: Yes, in most cases, you are legally and ethically required to obtain written permission from the copyright holder before reproducing an image of an artwork in a scholarly publication. Authors are typically responsible for securing these permissions.

Q: How do I cite a museum exhibition catalog in Chicago style using the notes-bibliography system?

A: A typical first note for an exhibition catalog would include: Author's full name, *Title of Catalog* (City of Publication: Publisher, Year), page number(s). If there is no single author, the museum or exhibition organizers might be listed as the author.

Q: Is it acceptable to use shortened titles in footnotes for subsequent citations of the same source in Chicago style?

A: Yes, Chicago style strongly recommends using shortened titles for subsequent citations of the same source in footnotes. This typically includes the author's last name, a shortened version of the title, and the page number.

Q: What is the difference between a Bibliography and a Reference List in Chicago style?

A: In the notes-bibliography system, the Bibliography lists all sources consulted during research, cited or not. In the author-date system, the Reference List includes only those sources that were directly cited in the text.

Q: How do I handle citing an artwork where the artist is unknown?

A: If the artist is unknown, begin the citation with the title of the artwork (italicized), followed by its date, medium, dimensions, and location. For example: *Altarpiece of the Virgin*, ca. 1450, oil on panel, 72 x 54 in. (183 x 137 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Q: What are the key elements required for citing a journal article in Chicago style, notes-bibliography system?

A: The key elements are: Author's full name, "Title of Article" (in quotation marks), *Title of Journal* (italicized), volume number, issue number, publication date (usually the season or month and year), and page range of the article. A specific page number is included in the note itself.

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