

chicago style in-text citations art history

Mastering Chicago Style In-Text Citations in Art History

chicago style in-text citations art history is an essential skill for any scholar or student engaging with visual culture and historical analysis. Accurately attributing sources not only upholds academic integrity but also strengthens the credibility of your research by allowing readers to trace your arguments back to their origins. This guide delves deep into the nuances of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) for art history, covering the foundational principles of both the notes-bibliography and author-date systems, with a particular emphasis on their application within art historical contexts. We will explore how to cite various types of visual and textual materials, from paintings and sculptures to exhibition catalogs and scholarly articles, ensuring your citations are precise and professional. Understanding these conventions is paramount for clear communication and robust scholarly practice.

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What is Chicago Style and Why is it Important in Art History?

Chicago style, formally known as The Chicago Manual of Style, is a widely adopted citation style in academic writing, particularly prevalent in fields such as history, art history, and literature. Its flexibility and comprehensive nature make it suitable for a broad range of scholarly work. In art history, where analysis often relies on detailed descriptions of visual objects and their contextualization within historical and theoretical frameworks, precise citation is crucial. It allows scholars to demonstrate how they have engaged with existing scholarship, support their interpretations with evidence, and acknowledge the foundational research upon which their own work is built. Adhering to Chicago style in-text citations ensures that your arguments are both well-supported and transparent.

Understanding the Two Chicago Style Systems

The Chicago Manual of Style offers two primary citation systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. Both are acceptable within art history, though the notes-bibliography system is generally more common due to its suitability for detailed commentary and extensive source engagement often found in art historical scholarship.

Notes-Bibliography System

This system uses superscript numbers within the text to indicate a citation, corresponding to a footnote or endnote. The full bibliographic information for the source appears in a corresponding note, and a comprehensive bibliography lists all sources cited at the end of the paper. This method allows for detailed explanatory notes alongside citations, which can be very useful in art history for providing context or elaborating on an interpretive point without disrupting the flow of the main text.

Author-Date System

The author-date system is more concise, embedding citations directly into the text using the author's last name and the year of publication (e.g., Gombrich 1995). A corresponding reference list at the end of the paper provides the full bibliographic details for each source. This system is often favored in scientific disciplines but is also used in some areas of art history, particularly for shorter papers or when the focus is on the chronological development of ideas or stylistic trends.

Key Principles of Chicago Style In-Text Citations for Art History

Regardless of which system you employ, several core principles guide Chicago style in-text citations in art history. The primary goal is to provide enough information to clearly identify the source without overwhelming the reader. For visual art, this often means identifying the artist, title, date, and medium. For textual sources, it involves the author, title, and publication details. Clarity and consistency are paramount. Always ensure that your in-text citations directly lead the reader to the corresponding entry in your bibliography or notes.

Citing Visual Artworks in Chicago Style

One of the most significant challenges in art history citation is the accurate representation of visual artworks. The approach can vary depending on whether you are referring to the physical artwork or a reproduction of it.

In-Text Citations for Paintings, Sculptures, and Other Objects

When referring to an artwork directly, as you would in a physical exhibition or studio visit, the citation should include the artist's name, the title of the work (italicized), the date of creation, and the medium and dimensions. For example, if discussing Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* in a paper, an in-text citation in the notes-bibliography system might lead to a note that includes:

Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel, 77 cm × 53 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

In the author-date system, a concise citation might appear as (da Vinci 1503–06) followed by the full entry in the reference list.

Citing Digital Images of Artworks

In today's digital landscape, many art historical analyses rely on reproductions found online or in books. When citing an image, you must indicate the source of that image. If you are citing a digital image from a museum website, include the artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, the museum where the work is housed, and the URL.

Example (Notes-Bibliography): Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–1506, oil on poplar panel, 77 cm × 53 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, <https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/mona-lisa>.

The full citation in the bibliography would provide all these details, along with access dates if the content is likely to change.

Attributing Works in Museum Collections

When you have viewed an artwork in person, your primary citation will focus on the artwork itself. However, if your research relies on information provided by the museum (e.g., object labels, curatorial notes), you should cite the museum's collection information.

Example (Notes-Bibliography): The exhibition catalog entry for Raphael's *Self-Portrait* details its acquisition by the Uffizi Gallery. See Uffizi Gallery, "Raphael, *Self-Portrait*," accessed October 26, 2023, <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/raphael-self-portrait>.

Citing Art Historical Texts and Secondary Sources

The principles for citing textual sources in art history follow general Chicago style guidelines, but with specific attention to the types of materials art historians commonly use.

Referencing Books and Book Chapters

For books, the citation includes the author's name, the title of the book (italicized), the place of publication, the publisher, and the year of publication. If citing a specific chapter or essay within an edited volume, include the chapter author, chapter title, book title, editor(s), page numbers, place of publication, publisher, and year.

Example (Notes-Bibliography): E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1995).

Example (Notes-Bibliography - Chapter): Svetlana Alpers, "The Art of Describing," in *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 145–168.

Citing Journal Articles

Journal articles are cited with the author's name, the article title (in quotation marks), the journal title (italicized), the volume and issue number, the date of publication, and the page range. For online articles, include the DOI or URL and access date.

Example (Notes-Bibliography): T.J. Clark, "The Painting of Modern Life: Paris and the Spectacle of the Woman," *Critical Inquiry* 11, no. 2 (December 1984): 248.

Utilizing Exhibition Catalogs and Reviews

Exhibition catalogs are vital resources in art history. Cite them similarly to books, noting the

exhibition title, curator(s), contributing authors, city, publisher, and year. Exhibition reviews are cited like journal articles, but the "journal" is the publication in which the review appeared.

Example (Notes-Bibliography - Catalog): Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, eds., *High and Modern Art: Comprising the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, New York (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998).

Example (Notes-Bibliography - Review): Roberta Smith, "A Collector's Eye," *The New York Times*, April 12, 2002, sec. E.

Common Challenges and Solutions in Chicago Style Art History Citations

Art historical research often encounters unique situations that require careful application of citation rules.

When an Artist or Creator is Unknown

If the artist or creator of a work is unknown, begin the citation with the title of the work, followed by "artist unknown" or "creator unknown," and then the date, medium, and location.

Example (Notes-Bibliography): *The Arnolfini Portrait*, artist unknown, 1434, oil on oak panel, National Gallery, London.

Citing Performances and Ephemeral Art

For performance art or other ephemeral works, focus on the documentation available. This might include video recordings, photographs, or written descriptions, all of which should be cited according to their format. If you witnessed the performance, you can note that as well.

Handling Multiple Authors or Editors

For works with two or three authors or editors, list all of them in the citation. For four or more, list the first author or editor followed by "et al." (and others).

Citing Online Art Resources and Websites

When citing general websites or online resources that are not specific artworks or articles, provide the author or organization, the title of the page or section, the website name, and the URL. Always include the access date for online sources.

Example (Notes-Bibliography): The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "The Costume Institute," accessed October 26, 2023,

<https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/the-costume-institute>.

Crafting a Comprehensive Bibliography/Reference List

Whether using the notes-bibliography or author-date system, a complete bibliography or reference list is essential. This list should alphabetically arrange all the sources you have cited in your paper. The formatting for each entry must strictly adhere to Chicago style guidelines for the respective source type (book, article, website, artwork, etc.). This ensures readers can easily locate the full bibliographic details for every piece of information you have referenced, thereby enhancing the transparency and scholarly rigor of your art historical analysis.

A Final Word on Chicago Style Citation Best Practices

Mastering Chicago style in-text citations for art history is an ongoing process. Always consult the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for the most current guidelines. Consistency in your citation practices throughout your work is paramount. By diligently applying these principles, you not only demonstrate respect for scholarly conventions but also contribute to a clearer, more accurate, and more authoritative discourse within the field of art history, ensuring your research is both credible and accessible to your audience.

FAQ

Q: What is the most common Chicago style system used in art history?

A: The notes-bibliography system is generally the most common and preferred system in art history. This is because it allows for detailed endnotes or footnotes that can include explanatory text, providing context or further interpretation without disrupting the main narrative.

Q: How do I cite an artwork when I don't know the artist's name?

A: If the artist is unknown, you begin the citation with the title of the artwork, followed by the phrase "artist unknown" or "creator unknown," and then proceed with the date, medium, and location of the artwork.

Q: Should I italicize the title of an artwork in my in-text citation?

A: Yes, in Chicago style, the titles of artworks, including paintings, sculptures, and other visual art objects, should be italicized in both in-text citations and bibliography entries.

Q: What information is essential for citing a digital image of an artwork?

A: When citing a digital image of an artwork, you must include the artist's name, the artwork's title, date, medium, dimensions, the institution where the work is housed, and the specific URL for the image. You should also include the date you accessed the image.

Q: How do I cite an exhibition catalog in Chicago style?

A: Exhibition catalogs are cited similarly to books. Key information includes the exhibition title, the name of the curator(s) or editor(s), the city of publication, the publisher, and the year of publication. If specific essays are cited, they are treated as chapters within the catalog.

Q: Is there a difference in citing a physical artwork versus a reproduction of it?

A: Yes, there is a significant difference. When citing the physical artwork, you focus on its intrinsic details (artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, location). When citing a reproduction, you must also cite the source of the reproduction (e.g., a book, journal, or website), including its publication details or URL.

Q: What is the difference between a bibliography and a reference list in Chicago style?

A: In the notes-bibliography system, the list of all sources cited is called a bibliography. In the author-date system, it is called a reference list. Both lists contain full bibliographic information for the sources used in the paper.

Q: How do I handle citations when referring to multiple works by the same author in the same year?

A: If you have multiple works by the same author published in the same year, you distinguish them by adding lowercase letters to the year in both the in-text citation and the bibliography/reference list (e.g., Gombrich 1995a, Gombrich 1995b). The letters are assigned alphabetically based on the order in which the works appear in your bibliography.

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