

Writing

A R T



A GUIDE for Denise Johnson's students

HISTORY

Most scholarly journals and art publications utilize Chicago Manual of Style to handle formatting and citation decisions. Publications use it to standardize submissions, and make the process of editing more efficient. As a student, an important component to learning the discipline of art history involves becoming comfortable with the use of CMS.

One of the advantages of CMS is that writers are given some flexibility in how they document bibliographic information on the sources of information they cite - called a "citation." In lengthy books, authors will often provide citations in footnotes appearing at the bottom of the page in which information is cited – called a "footnote." Footnotes make finding bibliographic and further information easy for the reader because it's immediately accessible. However, footnotes don't always look great on the printed page. Therefore, some publications choose to place notes at the end of an article or chapter – called an "endnote." Book publishers, but not typically journals and other shorter publications, may also include Bibliographies at the end of the volume to assist readers in further scholarship on the subject.



Man Ray, *Rayograph (Five light bulbs)*, 1930.

PLAGIARISM, the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own, is a serious concern in academic and professional realms. Importantly, following CMS rules lend credibility to your writing, as it demonstrates accountability and offers support to your ideas and positions.

Creating thorough citations starts at the beginning of your research with careful, and complete note taking. Any use of unique ideas, quoted language, or novel analysis should be cited. However, do not cite common knowledge or facts that can be easily found in reference material. Use class texts as a gauge – there is no need to cite knowledge that you read about repeatedly, or that may be generally understood. Nonetheless, when in doubt, cite your source!

A good rule of thumb, if you've noticed that you're including citations in every sentence, that's a great indication that you haven't included many of your own ideas and analysis. Be sure your voice is present in your writing because, that's what's most interesting to the instructor! Furthermore, taking a position will be crucial towards developing a thesis.

CMS RULES

- All margins should be set at 1”
- Use legible fonts that are standard in size, such as Arial or Times New Roman
- Font size should be set at 12 pt. (like the font on this page)
- Text should be double-spaced
 - Except when a quotation is more than five lines. In this case, single-space and indent half an inch on each side.
- I do not require a title page. However, your paper should note your full name, the class title, and date at the beginning.

Since the writing you will be developing this semester is considered by the discipline to be short, you are NOT required to include a Bibliography. If you decide to include an optional Bibliography, please be advised that CMS requires different formatting for bibliographic entries not covered in this handout.

Be sure to give the artist's name, *Title* (capitalized and italicized), and the date a work of art was made—in that order—when introducing a work to your readers. Thereafter, it is fine to subsequently refer to it only with the *title*, and dropping the author and date.

Footnotes or endnotes give your reader all of the information they need to know to find the source of your information. A proper footnote gives the source's author, title, publication facts, and the page number the information you cited was found on—in that order. Elements are separated by commas, and publication facts are enclosed in parentheses. Titles of large works (like a book) are capitalized and italicized, while the titles of shorter works (like magazine articles) are enclosed in quotation marks. Page numbers are listed simply by number—please do not include “page,” or “pg.” before the number.

Notes are listed in numerical order as they appear in the body of your essay, and *do not repeat*. Notes are placed immediately after the cited information, with a superscript number. Footnotes are placed in the footer of the page (as demonstrated on this page), while endnotes are listed at the end of your essay.

Example Text with Note:

While the trickster is sometimes described as a hero, a villain, or something in between, he is ultimately a marginal figure whose power arises from his ability to exist between boundaries, to “live interstitially in the cracks, betwixt and between, marginally, to confuse and to escape the structures of society and the order of cultural things.”¹

Accompanying Footnote:

¹ Barbara Babcock-Abrahams, “A Tolerated Margin of Mess: The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 11, no. 3 (March 1975): 149.

Other footnote considerations

- The first time you use a source, include all relevant information, arranged in proper order, and with appropriate punctuation (see below) in your footnote.
- If you use the same source again, you may shorten the note by using just the author's last name, a shortened title (if more than four words), and page numbers:

² Babcock-Abrahams, “A Tolerated Margin of Mess: The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered,” 152.



Lyubov Popova, *Composition (Red-Black-Gold)*, 1920.

CMS Footnote Formatting for Common Types of Sources

Book

³ Firstname Lastname, *Title of Book* (Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication), page number.

Multiple Author, Multivolume, Multiple Edition Works

⁴ Firstname Lastname and Firstname Lastname, *Title of Book, edition* (Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication), page number.

Journal Article

⁵ Firstname Lastname, "Title of Article," *Name of Journal in italics* volume, number (publication date): page number.

Journal Article Found in an Online Database

⁶ Firstname Lastname, "Title of Article," *Name of Journal in italics* volume, number (publication date): page number, URL or DOI.

Page on a Website

⁷ "Title of Web Page," *Name of Publishing Organization*, date last modified and/or access date if available, URL or DOI.



Aleksander Rodchenko, *Somersault (at Dynamo Stadium)*, 1936.

Online Multimedia

⁸ Speaker's Firstname Lastname. "Title of Media." *Name of Publishing Organization*, duration in hours:minutes. Date posted. URL or DOI.

Public Lectures

⁹ Firstname Lastname, "Title of Lecture" (lecture, place where lecture was given, city, state, date).

Be sure to consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*¹ 17th ed. for less common types and other concerns.

¹ The Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 2017).



Man Ray, *Luminograph (Discs)*, 1924.

Types of Writing in Art History

Writing about art takes several different forms. An essay in an art history class may ask you to respond to specific questions, compare and contrast multiple works, and/or analyze a work of art using various art historical methodologies. Publications concerning art often include exhibition reviews, overviews of an artist's career, or the development of theory through the discussion of relevant works of art. In lengthier essays or papers, you will be asked to use a combination of methodologies. With each type of art historical writing, you are asked to make observations, formulate an argument based in research, and support your positions by citing observations and arguments made by experts in the field.

Visual Analysis

Visual analysis, also known as formal analysis, asks the writer to translate what they see into words - no small task! You are asked to make observations on formal elements such as the quality of line, combinations of colors, placement of dominating features, arrangement of forms, etc. You should focus your discussion on the physical properties of the work, how the artwork looks, and the choices the artist made in creating the piece. Most discussions of art include some kind of visual analysis to, at the very least, establish a sense of shared experience of the work. When asked to conduct a thorough formal analysis, your observations should then be related to an interpretation of the work that considers why the artist made certain choices, and why they are significant.

If you're new to the study of art history, the following handouts from the Getty Museum can help with key formal concepts:

<http://www.theslideprojector.com/pdffiles/elementsofart.pdf>

<http://www.theslideprojector.com/pdffiles/principlesofdesign.pdf>

An excellent tutorial on writing a visual analysis can be found here: <https://letterpile.com/writing/How-to-Write-a-Visual-Analysis-Paper> .

Stylistic Analysis

Similar to visual analysis, a stylistic analysis asks you to thoroughly describe what you see. Where it differs, is that in a stylistic analysis, the writer will also consider how the artwork fits into art historical movements, or theoretical concerns. This kind of writing requires you to be able to identify key characteristics of a specified style, and to discuss how a particular work of art demonstrates those characteristics, or counters them. You will also need to relate the work of art to larger historical or cultural trends.

Examination of Iconography and Iconology

Before the Modern period, figures and objects were represented in works of art were used as a kind of shorthand, or code, for bigger ideas. For example, in the western world, the combination of representations of a naked man + a naked woman + an apple in a work of art is commonly understood to be a depiction of Adam and Eve and the Christian concept of original sin. Such codes are so interwoven in our culture, we are often unaware when we are in the act of interpreting them. When writing about a work's iconography, you will make observations concerning the depictions of figures and objects, then consider what meaning the artist and viewers of the time would have associated with those people and things.

Erwin Panofsky wrote an influential explanation of iconography and iconology, *Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait* (1934), which can be accessed here: <http://www.theslideprojector.com/pdffiles/art261/janvaneycksarnolfiniportrait.pdf> .

Provenance and Patronage Study

The people who have supported artists and collected works of art have often exerted a great deal of influence on the style and subject matter of works of art made.

Equally, the story of an art object - who has owned it, where it has traveled, and sometimes, periods that its whereabouts were unknown - can often tell us important things about the value of art and its evolving meanings. A provenance (where a work was made and traveled) and/or patronage (who financially supported the making of, or owned a work) study will examine the history of an art object's ownership and travels. These facts are then used to consider larger questions on cultural relationships to, and appreciation for art.

Consideration of Theory and Criticism

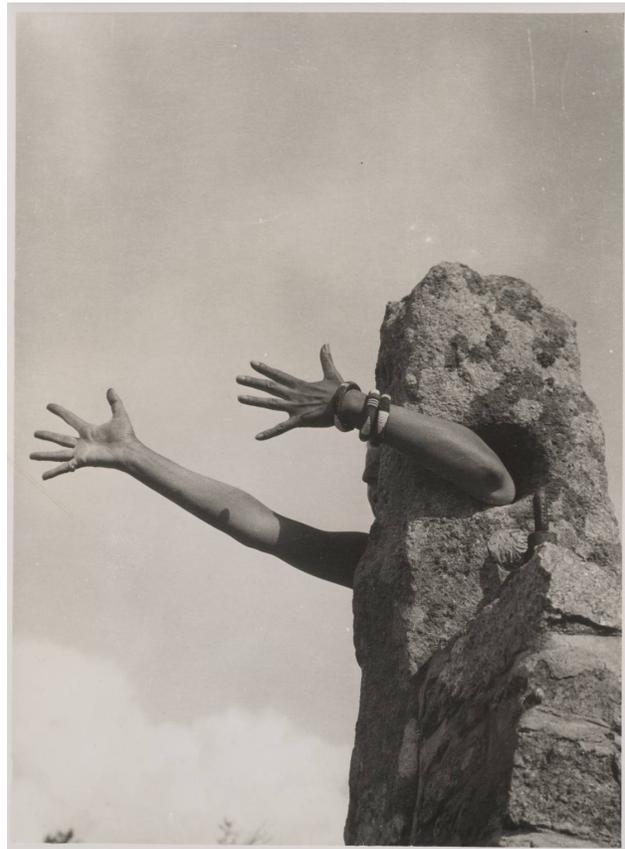
Over time, writers, artists, and philosophers developed theories that sought to organize and explain many facets of culture and the human condition. These frameworks and the world views that they express often consider the meaning and cultural significance of art. When considering an artwork in relation to theory and criticism, you are asked to argue how an artwork's formal or stylistic qualities reflect important social, political, and cultural values during time in which it was made. With this kind of writing assignment, it's important to remember to keep your discussion of the artwork in the foreground, as it is often easy to get mired down in the intellectual work of understanding the theory. As well, remember that the theory or criticism is a tool by which you, as a writer, offer an understanding of the artwork's meanings.

You will read some excellent examples of theoretical essays as part of your required coursework. Here are some classics that can be found on The Slide Projector's "Sources" pages are:

- Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936)
- Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* (1939)
- Linda Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists* (1971)
- Susan Sontag, *America, Seen Through Photographs Darkly* (1977)

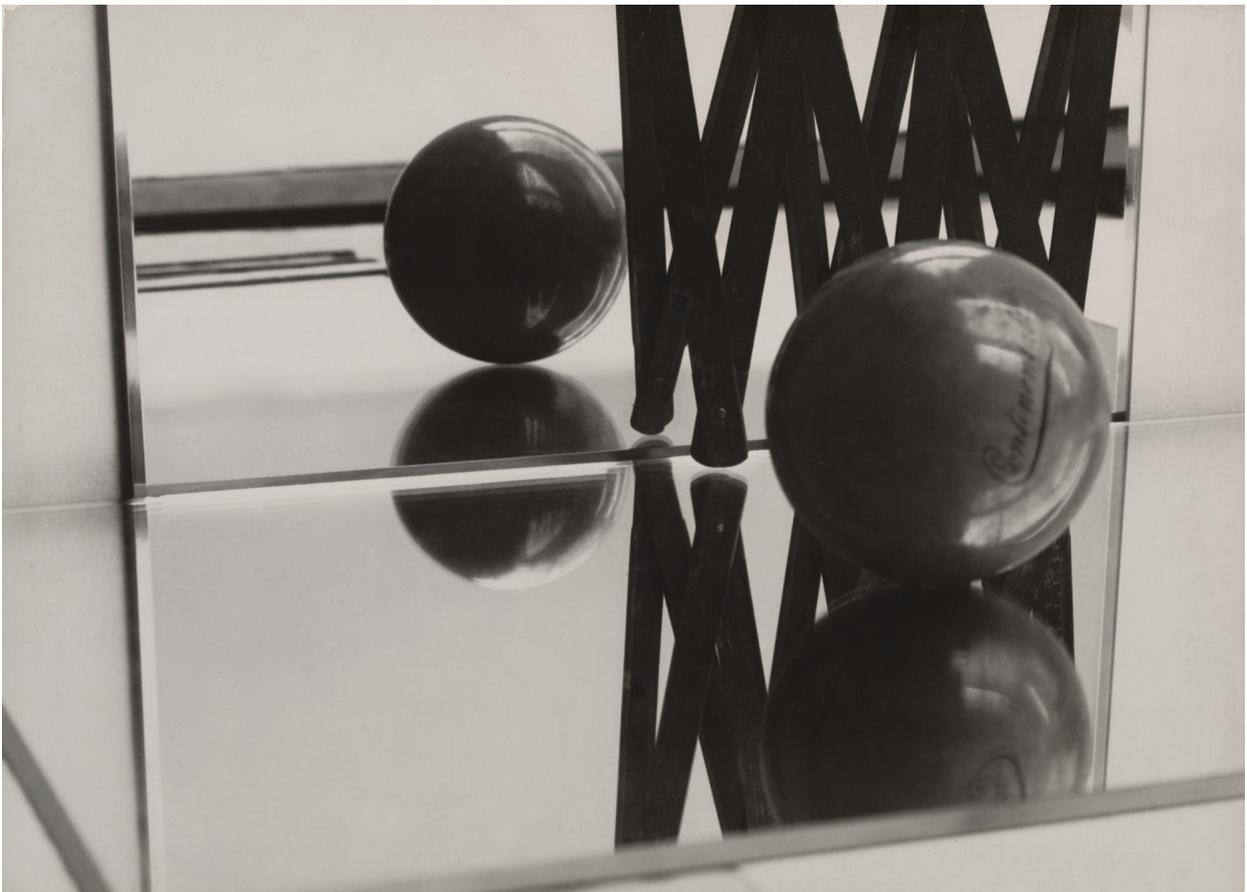
Exhibition Review

An exhibition review will ask you to see an exhibition in person, and consider how the context and curatorial decisions of the organization or institution that is showing the work of art have framed your understanding of that piece. You will need to make observations about the artworks on view, as well as the setting of the exhibition venue, what works were hung (and sometimes, which were excluded) with the artwork you are focusing on, how works were physically installed (carefully placed, salon style, or throughout multiple venues, for example), and what informational didactics within the exhibition space and in the form of handouts were available to viewers. An exhibition review asks you to consider works viewed, as well as the place they were shown, and the choices made by curators.



Claude Cahun, *I Extend My Arms*, 1931 or 1932.

You can find examples of exhibition reviews in most newspapers and art journals, such as Artforum, Art in America, and Art Bulletin. Further examples can be found at:
<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-bio-christopher-knight-staff.html>
<https://www.nytimes.com/topic/subject/art>
<http://nymag.com/author/Jerry%20Saltz/>
<https://www.artforum.com/picks/>



Florence Henri, *Composition No. 76*, 1931 or 1928.