

Guidelines for Writing an Art History Research Paper

by Dr. Laura J. Crary, Art Department

I. Organization

The research paper takes one of two forms: analytical and narrative. The first sets up a problem or argument, then provides evidence to support whatever position you, the writer, have chosen. The narrative approach is usually a description of a topic based on facts and opinions presented as paraphrases and direct quotes from secondary sources. On the whole it is less interesting to write and read than an analytical paper.

Any paper follows a basic structure of an introduction, body or argument, and conclusion. The introduction should not exceed 2 or 3 paragraphs, in which you set out the scope of the problem you will examine, your procedure, and reasons for the project. In the body of the paper you present the argument methodically, supplying evidence in the form of examples and quotes where needed. The conclusion can either summarize your findings or open the problem up for further exploration while presenting some of your conclusions.

II. Citing Sources or References

In the course of writing your paper, you will naturally rely on the works of other writers to supply your evidence unless you are conducting interviews, in which case you still have to cite your sources. Whenever you use a piece of information that is not common knowledge and is drawn from an outside source, you must cite it in the form of an intratextual reference, footnote, or endnote. For the purposes of an art history paper, the format used by the *Art Bulletin* is considered to be standard.

A. Intratextual references

These are inserted immediately following the information drawn from the outside source, whether it be a quote, observation or information obtained through someone else's research. They include the author's name, date of work if you have more than one source by the same author, and page number within parentheses. Because they tend to be distracting, **intratextual references are not commonly used in art historical writing.**

Example: "Jack and Jill went up the hill" (Goose, 4).

B. Footnotes or Endnotes

The only difference between a footnote and endnote is where they appear in your paper. A footnote appears on the bottom of the same page as the reference. Endnotes are listed at the end of the document. The choice

mostly depends on whether your software has a footnote function or if you have to keep track by hand, in which case the endnote system is easier.

All the following examples come from *Art Bulletin*

Example: Single author text

1. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, MA and London, 1988, 11.

Please note punctuation and that page number is not preceded by 'p.' or 'pp.' The title is either underlined or italicized, not bold-face or any other combination.

Example: Essay from an anthology

2. Russell Ferguson, "Invisible Center," In Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures. Russell Ferguson et al., ed., New York, 1990, 9.

Example: Article from Journal or Periodical

3. Anthony dePalma, "A Scholar Finds Huck Finn's Voice in Twain's Writing about a Black Youth," New York Times, July 7, 1992, A16.

4. David Craven, "Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to 'American' Art," Oxford Art Journal, XIV, no. 1, 1990, 44-65.

5. George Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum," The Nation, June 16, 1926, repr. in Nathan Huggins, ed., Voices from the Harlem Renaissance. New York, 1976, 309-12.

Example: Essay from Exhibition Catalogue

6. Gerardo Mosquera, "Modernity and Africa: Wifredo Lam on his Island," in Wifredo Lam. exh. cat., Barcelona, 1993, 174.

If you cite the same work immediately following the first citation:

7. Ibid.

If the second note follows immediately but has a different page number:

8. Ibid., 175.

If you repeat a source later in the notes with other sources in between:

9. dePalma, A17.

All footnotes are numbered successively. You do not repeat the number of the earlier citation.

10. Internet sources should have the author of the page (if known), the title of the page, and the address and date searched.

III. Illustrations

You should include a reproduction of any work of art that you discuss in your paper. The proper form for this is to cut the photocopied image out and paste it onto another sheet of paper or to scan the image in by computer. Under the image you should have the following information:

- the illustration or figure number that you have assigned it in the text.
- artist's name, title underlined or *italicized* (not in quotation marks), and the date of the work. This information can either be included in the text at the time you discuss the work or be placed under the illustration or in a separate list of illustrations at the end of the paper.
- source of illustration. This resembles footnote form: author, title of publication, place of publication, date and page or plate number. If from a periodical, just follow that form.

IV. Bibliography

The bibliography is a list of all the works you have consulted for the writing of the paper, including those which were not cited in your footnotes, but not including those that you checked out of the library but didn't end up using because they didn't really relate to your topic but your bibliography looks awfully short with just two works on it.

Bibliographies are not numbered. They are always in alphabetical order by the author's last name. More than one entry by the same author is indicated by a line.

Examples of bibliographic form from Art Bulletin

Bois, Y.-A., "Painting as Trauma," Art in America, LXXVI, no. 6, June, 130-41, 172-73.

_____, 1992, "The Semiology of Cubism," in Picasso and Braque: A Symposium. I. Zelansky, ed., New York, 169-208.

Buci Glucksmann, C., "Catastrophic Utopia: The Feminine as Allegory of the Modern," in The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century. C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur, ed., Berkeley, 1987, 220-29.

Daix, P., 1993, Picasso: Life and Art. H. O. Emmet, trans., New York.

Once again, Internet sources should have the author of the page (if known), the title of the page and date searched. You can alternatively put the date of publication after the place

of publication. The important thing is to be internally consistent. Choose a format and stick to it.

V. General Points and Frequent Errors

1. Watch for the difference between '*effect*' and '*affect*.' Generally if it's a verb you want '*affect*' and '*effect*' for a noun. Generally. If you're not sure, look it up in the dictionary.

2. Note well the difference between the contraction of 'it is'--*it's*--and the possessive pronoun *its*. The possessive pronoun has no apostrophe.

3. Look for repeated words and terms. It may seem that 'painting' has no synonyms. It does. Another word that art-writers tend to overuse is 'influence.' Try to find a more precise word to describe what you mean.

Example: Degas's paintings were a big *influence* on José Fulano.

Compare to: José Fulano used Degas's treatment of young ballerinas as the basis for his studies of salsa dancers.

4. Try to avoid the passive voice.

5. Note the difference between single quotation marks (' ') and double (“ ”). Single ones denote a word or phrase itself, not what it means. Example: I wrote about the verb 'to be.' Double quotation marks denote a quote or set off a phrase for its meaning. He likes to play "good cop" to her "bad cop."

6. 'Feel' and 'believe' mean different things. In a research paper, you generally mean 'believe' rather than 'feel.' Example: I *believe* that the artist made such ugly paintings to express his *feelings* about the ugliness of the world. Or: I *felt* a sudden pain in my head when I looked at his painting.

7. 'Medium' is singular. 'Media' is plural.

8. PROOFREAD!

9. Any other pet peeves of your instructor as noted by that person.