

Spencer Art Reference Library

Research Guide

Steps for Researching Artworks in The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art



- Visit the artwork in the **Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art**. Look at the label copy, and note the title, artist, artist period and accession number.



- Search the collections online from the museum's website, **nelson-atkins.org/collections** located under the Heading Art | Collections. This valuable resource may include label copy, size, medium, museum location and other information



- Search the library's collection of books, auction catalogs and more in the online catalog **libraryonsearch.nelson-atkins.org**



- Search the library's databases at **libraryonsearch.nelson-atkins.org**. The databases include a comprehensive art encyclopedia, article citations, full text articles, auction sales results and much more. Subscription databases are available from the library's public computers.



- Library staff is happy to help you research further. Please contact the reference staff at the Spencer Art Reference Library at **816.751.1216** or via the Museum's website at: **nelson-atkins.org/library**

1. *Guanyin of the Southern Sea*, 34-1 | 2. *Ferryman* by Tony Cragg, 2001.26.1 | 3. Spencer Art Reference Library Reading Room | 4. Public Access Computer terminals in Spencer Art Reference Library Reading Room | 5. Spencer Library Reference desk



- The first step in researching an art object is **visual description**. Visit your artwork in the Nelson-Atkins gallery, and answer some basic questions about the work. Who is the artist? When was it made? What is the subject of the artwork? What do you know about the period or object? Note the accession number.

Visual Description These resources offer guidance on analyzing your artwork and writing about it.

Acton, Mary. *Learning to Look at Modern Art*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Call No: READING ROOM N 7477 .A28 2004

Barnet, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson, 2008.

Call No: READING ROOM N 7476 .B372 2008

Munsterberg, Marjorie. *Writing About Art*. [New York]: www.writingaboutart.org, 2009.

<<http://www.writingaboutart.org/>>.

Online version: <http://www.writingaboutart.org/>

Print version: Call No: READING ROOM N 7476 .M86 2009

Sayre, Henry M. *Writing About Art*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002.

(See Chapter 2: “Using Visual Information: What to Look For and How to Describe What You See,” pp. 33-65, including “Questions to Ask Before Writing about a Work of Art,” inside cover and pp. 64-65.)

Call No: READING ROOM N 7476 .S29 2002

Taylor, Joshua Charles. *Learning to Look; A Handbook for the Visual Arts*. [Chicago]: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Call No: READING ROOM N 7477 .T39 1981

Tucker, Amy. *Visual Literacy: Writing About Art*. Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill, 2002.

(See Chapter 2: “Intelligent Seeing;” Description and Analysis of Form,” pp. 25-58; and Chapter 4: “The Museum as Context: Display and Representation,” pp. 91-113.)

Call No: READING ROOM N 7476 .T824 2002

Zelanski, Paul, and Mary Pat Fisher. *The Art of Seeing*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002.

(See Chapter 2: “Visual Elements,” pp.60-168; and Chapter 3: “Organizing Principles of Design,” pp.169-200.)

Call No. Stacks N 7430.5 .Z36 2002



- Search the collections online from the museum's website, **nelson-atkins.org/collections** located under the Heading Art | Collections. This valuable resource may include label copy, size, medium, museum location and other information

Museum Website Search the museum’s collections online to get further information about the artwork including the artist’s name, title, date, purchase information, accession number and the label copy for each art object reproduced on the Museum’s website. It also notes if the artwork is currently on view, and in which gallery **nelson-atkins.org/collections**

Browse the Museum's Mobile Guide You can access the mobile guide on a mobile phone using nelson-atkins.org/mobileguide or via a desktop computer using nelson-atkins.org/desktopguide You can search the collections either by tour stop number (noted on the label in the galleries) or by browsing the collections. When you find an artwork you are interested in, you can either listen to the tour, or read the text by clicking on the *Read* button.

Museum Collections Database While most of the museum's collection is searchable from the website's collection search portal in some cases there may be additional information including exhibition history, provenance information and citations available to reference staff. Library reference staff is happy to search the full database for you.



- Search the library's collection of books, auction catalogs and more in the online catalog libraryonesearch.nelson-atkins.org

Search To search in LibraryOneSearch, use keywords such as the artist's name, title of a book, author, subject or artistic time period and search *Everything in the Spencer Library*. Use the Advanced Search option to combine several of your search terms and narrow your query results. Artists' names can be entered either with the first name or the last name first. Ex: "Edgar Degas" or "Degas, Edgar."

Browse After your search results are retrieved they will display next to the column *Refine My Results*. You are able to review all of your query results or further refine your results using subjects, authors, dates from the *Refine My Results* column. You can also search using subject headings allowing you to browse Nelson-Atkins publications, including museum handbooks, museum catalogs, exhibition catalogs and museum bulletins.

Art--Missouri--Kansas City--Catalogs
Art -- Missouri -- Kansas City -- Exhibitions
Art -- Missouri -- Kansas City -- Catalogs
Catalogs
Handbooks, manuals, etc
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art--Catalogs

Museum Handbooks These publications begin in 1933 and will be especially helpful to you. These publications include images of the artwork in the collection, the artist's name, title, medium and accession numbers for each piece.

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. *The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: A Handbook of the Collection*. Kansas City, MO: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2008.

This volume includes color thumbnail images of the artwork.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K3 W5 2008

* For earlier editions of museum handbooks, please see library staff.

Major Collection Catalogs The Museum has published several catalogs about the Museum's collections. These books include essays about the works of art, a bibliography and the provenance for art objects. Below is a listing of the catalogs that are available.

Adams, Henry. *Handbook of American Paintings*. Kansas City, Mo: The Museum, 1991.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 1991 no. 12

Adams, Henry. Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original. New York: Knopf, 1989.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 1989 no. 1

Conrads, Margaret C., Lauren Lessing, and Randall R. Griffey. *The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. American Paintings to 1945*. Kansas City, Mo: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2007.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 2007 no. 3 v. 1-2

Davis, Keith F., Jane Lee Aspinwall, and Marc F. Wilson. *The Origins of American Photography: From Daguerreotype to Dry-Plate, 1839-1885*. Kansas City, Mo: Hall Family Foundation, 2007.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 2007 no. 4

Dunbar, Burton L., Molly Faries, and Dena Marie Woodall. *The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. German and Netherlandish Paintings, 1450-1600*. Kansas City, Mo: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in association with the University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2005.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 2005 no. 1

Goheen, Ellen R.. *The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*. New York: H.N. Abrams, in association with the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1988.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 1988 no. 15

Mackenzie, Colin, and Ling-En Lu. *Masterworks of Chinese Art: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*. Kansas City, Mo: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2011.

Call No: N7342 .N45 2011

McKenna, George L.. *The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Prints, 1460-1995*. Kansas City, Mo: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in association with the University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1996.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 1996 no. 8

Rowlands, Eliot Wooldridge. *The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Italian Paintings, 1300-1800*. Kansas City, Mo: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1996.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 1996 no. 12

Schall, Jan, and Robert Storr. *Sparks!: The William T. Kemper Collecting Initiative at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*. Kansas City, Mo: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2008.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 2008 no. 3

William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, and Wai-kam Ho. *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art*. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art in cooperation with Indiana University Press, 1980.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K31 1980 no. 3

The Nelson-Atkins Museum Bulletin Index (1956-1983) Bulletins can be searched from an electronic file available on the Public Access computers in the Library Reading Room in the SARL Programs folder. The index can be searched by using the “Find” function on the upper right hand side of the Home ribbon, or by browsing the alphabetical list.

William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, and Jay I. Kislak Reference Collection (Library of Congress). *The Nelson Gallery and Atkins Museum Bulletin*. Kansas City, Mo: Nelson Gallery and Atkins Museum, 1956.

January 1956 – July 1983.

Call No: READING ROOM N 582 .K3 A21 1956-1983

Museum Exhibition Catalogs If you find that your object was included in an exhibition, it may be included in an exhibition catalog in the library’s collection. Not all exhibitions have an accompanying exhibition catalog, but many do.



• After you've searched the collection database, museum publications and the online catalog, the next step is to search the library's databases at libraryonesearch.nelson-atkins.org. The databases include a comprehensive art encyclopedia, article citations, full-text articles, auction sales results and much more.

The library subscribes to many databases and makes freely accessible databases available through the online catalog’s *Focused Article Search*. Library databases are accessible from the public computers in the Spencer Art Reference Reading Room.

Oxford Art Online <http://www.oxfordartonline.com> This database is only available in the library and includes these reference works: *Benezit Dictionary of Artists*, *Grove Art Online*, *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*, *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*. Search *Oxford Art Online* to find general information, including the artist’s biography, definitions of terms, etc.

Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History | Metropolitan Museum of Art This freely available resource can help you develop a contextual framework for your object. In addition to a timeline, the Heilbrunn site includes thematic essays, geographical maps and suggested readings to further your research @ <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/>

Articles and Citations For indexing, citations and full-text articles from printed or online journal articles you’ll use the library’s LibraryOneSearch | Focused Article Search @ libraryonesearch.nelson-atkins.org. Searching the Focused Article Search will expand your search to include databases like *Art Abstracts*, *Art Index Retrospective*, *JSTOR* and *Bibliography of the History of Art* and many more.



- Contact the staff of the Spencer Art Reference Library at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art for further assistance with your project.

The library staff can assist you with developing an efficient search strategy tailored to your specific request or assignment. Library staff can also help with concept formulation, searching strategies, finding visual images, using specialized art historical information sources, specialized online services and primary sources.

- The Reading Room is in the Bloch Building, Level 2.
- Contact us by phone at 816.751.1216.
- Current Library hours and a web reference assistance form are available from the library website at **nelson-atkins.org/library**
- The online catalog may be searched 24 hours a day at **libraryonsearch.nelson-atkins.org**