Exhibition Catalog Project

As a curator, you have the following information needs:

1. background: information on artists, designers, or artistic movements
2. exhibits: high-quality reproductions of your chosen artworks or design objects
3. arguments: commentary or criticisms by experts (artists, art historians, curators, critics)
4. methods: look to examples on how to build an exhibition catalog and how to cite your sources

Background Information

You will need biographical information about the artists or designers included in your exhibition. For authoritative background information, try our digital encyclopedias: Oxford Art Online and the Bloomsbury Design Library.

- https://libguides.cca.edu/oxford-art-online
- https://libguides.cca.edu/bloomsbury-design

Eva Zeisel

Oxford Art Online’s entry on Eva Zeisel provides an overview on her career. The entry opens with “Hungarian ceramicist, designer, and teacher. Zeisel began her career studying painting at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest and, after a short tenue at the Academy, began an apprenticeship with a traditional potter.” For my exhibition catalog, I should adapt this information using my own words to avoid plagiarism.

Hungarian-born ceramicist and designer Eva Zeisel initially studied painting as a student at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts, but her career took a different path after apprenticing with a traditional potter.

Joe Colombo

Artstor provided both the image and the information for my caption about Colombo’s tube chair.

Arguments

Your exhibition catalog will be stronger if you include the expert testimony of art historians, critics, curators, and artists. Search Art & Architecture Source for online journal articles to quote or summarize relating to the artists or designers in your exhibition.

- https://libguides.cca.edu/art-source

Gaetano Pesce

Art & Architecture Source contains an article on Italian designer Gaetano Pesce, making the case that Pesce’s famous Up5 Chair (La Mama) is a feminist statement. To use this argument in my exhibition catalog, I could quote the article’s author, Justin Beal.

Writing for the journal X-tra: Contemporary Art Quarterly, the artist Justin Beal described Pesce’s Up5 Chair as “a political work — a feminist polemic on sexism and a commentary on the homogeneity, severity, and rigidity of an excessively masculine world.”

Methods

The best way to learn how to craft an exhibition catalog is to look at examples. We have over 2,000 in Meyer Library alone. Use this magic trick to find exhibition catalogs that relate to your topic.

- Go to our Visual Studies Research Guide at https://libguides.cca.edu/visual-studies
- Scroll down to the infobox titled “Sit on This!”
- Type keywords relevant to your subject into the search field and click “Search”
- Add filters for time period (e.g., 20th century) or library location (Oakland or San Francisco)

Citations

Cite all information sources through captions or footnotes. For examples of Chicago Manual of Style citations, see the CCA Libraries Guide to Citing Sources. Note that all captions in this handout are in CMS.

- https://libguides.cca.edu/citations