

A GUIDE TO

Writing and Formatting Gallery Text

DENVER
art
MUSEUM



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

"Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity."

—CHARLES MINGUS (MUSICIAN, 1922–1979)



This guide is for writers, editors, and producers of gallery text in all its myriad forms. Its purpose is to help DAM staff write engaging and accessible gallery texts and to help clarify the ins and outs of the writing, editing, and production processes. Much of it also relates to the catalogs we produce.

It supplements the style guides and other resources we use, including our [DAM Style Guide](#), [Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition](#), and [Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary](#).

Many resources mentioned in these pages can be found on the [Publications Pulse Page](#).

We hope this guide will be a useful and dynamic resource that we can update as new research and approaches come to light.

—Valerie Hellstein and Stefania Van Dyke, Fall 2023

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QUICK TIPS FOR THINKING ABOUT AND WRITING GALLERY TEXTS

- 1 | Write with inclusive and equitable language for a diverse audience.**
- 2 | Let the Big Idea and Visitor Experience Goals guide your storytelling.**
- 3 | Don't overwhelm visitors with information.**
- 4 | Clear and concise language benefits all visitors.**
- 5 | Write as you speak—read your texts aloud.**
- 6 | Encourage close looking to help visitors engage more deeply with objects.**
- 7 | Choose objects, ideas, and stories that are relevant to contemporary audiences.**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE DAM VOICE

Write text that speaks to and addresses the DAM's audience

The DAM welcomes a diverse audience with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Text needs to be relevant and, often, delightfully unexpected. Adult art museum visitors, for the most part, come by choice with a range of motivations that vary in a single individual from visit to visit.¹ They may come by themselves, with a group of friends, or with kids. Also, different exhibitions attract different audiences—including first-time visitors. All of these scenarios affect how—and how *much*—a visitor engages with the content

we provide. Think about your friends' and your family members' behaviors as a museum visitor. What would they want to read and know?

Our voice should be consistent, but we can, and should, adapt our voice for different audiences and platforms. For more on the DAM voice, visit the [Marketing & Communications Pulse Page](#).



Photographs © Denver Art Museum

¹ John H. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2009).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE DAM VOICE

What we know about adult visitors

Most are not experts in art history and don't have a vocabulary in art theory or art criticism.

They are reading on their feet and have many things vying for their attention.

They are selective about the objects they engage, typically reading a label only when an object sparks their interest.

They can be overwhelmed by labels that look or *feel* too long and may avoid that content altogether.

They visit the museum as a leisure activity. They want to learn about and experience something new, but they may also want to have fun and relax with family and friends.

How labels can meet them where they are

Write reader-friendly text. That doesn't mean dumbed down—it means comprehensible, memorable, and conversational.² Write like people talk.

A simple, informal writing style won't underestimate the intelligence of our visitors. It takes into consideration the fact that a museum isn't an ideal reading situation (standing up, sometimes in a crowd, surrounded by distractions).

Use informative headers that help the visitor decide quickly if they want to commit to reading the full text.³

Write and design text into shorter chunks of information rather than long text blocks.⁴

When text is easy to locate, understand, and digest, visitors are more likely to engage with interpretation. Sharing interesting tidbits and asking questions can spark fun and enlightening conversations.

²Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 62.

³Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 124.

⁴Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 118-19, 155.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE DAM VOICE

Write text that reflects the DAM's values

Creative



Try new ways of delivering information in unexpected formats while being clear and concise, e.g., bullet points, maps, and timelines.

Dynamic



Connect objects from the past to the present by including stories and ideas that are relevant to visitors today.

Respectful



Present viewers with new perspectives and ideas, but don't talk down to them or tell them what to think or feel. Provide opportunities for visitors to feel empowered and competent while exploring artworks.

Inclusive



Be friendly, conversational, approachable, and empathetic. Offer a range of perspectives, including those that have traditionally been excluded from museums.

Curious



Share provocative ideas or ask questions that spark conversation and invite an open exchange of ideas. Excite visitors about making new discoveries.

INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES FOR EXHIBITIONS

“ Interpretive labels tell stories; they are narratives, not lists of facts. Any label that serves to explain, guide, question, inform, or provoke—in a way that invites participation by the reader—is interpretive.”

—BEVERLY SERRELL⁵

By following Serrell's definition of interpretive text, we're making messages useful to visitors. We're giving them something to do—to agree, disagree, draw conclusions, or make discoveries. Make your interpretive text a two-way street, not one-way communication from you to the reader.

At the DAM, every exhibition will have a unique Big Idea and Visitor Experience Goals that encompass its overall program. Interpretive strategies—including audio, video, interactive components, in-gallery text, live programming, learning lounges, family games and interactives, and exhibition catalogs—work together to tell the complete story. *Remember, not all strategies will be used in every exhibition. And no one interpretive strategy will be meaningful or useful to all visitors.*



⁵Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 19.

Stan Hunt, "Well, for That Matter, What Is the Meaning of You?," *The New Yorker*, January 27, 1973.

INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES FOR EXHIBITIONS

The Big Idea

An interpretive program for an exhibition should start with a Big Idea—a short, memorable statement of an exhibition's scope and purpose. It is an important tool that keeps the project planning team focused and helps you decide what stories to tell (you can't say it *all*). The project team, particularly the interpretive specialist and the curator, should craft and agree upon the Big Idea early in the planning process. Some DAM examples:



Star Wars and the Power of Costume
2016

This exhibition explores the creative process behind the costumes in the *Star Wars* films, as well as the important role that costumes play in bringing fantasy characters to life.



Monet: The Truth of Nature
2019

Landscape lent itself better (than objects or portraits) to Monet's pursuit of capturing light and other intangible qualities in paint.



Amoako Bofo: The Soul of Black Folks
2023

Amoako Bofo's unique approach to portraiture encourages viewers to intimately connect with the subjects.

INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES FOR EXHIBITIONS

Visitor Experience Goals

Each exhibition team should also articulate two to four visitor experience goals. What do we hope visitors do, see, think, and/or feel during their time in the exhibition? These are less about learning specific facts and more about making connections and discoveries, exploring ideas and sensations, and delighting in or questioning something.

Desert Rider (2023)

01

Make connections between the different vehicles, conversations, generations, and people represented in the show

02

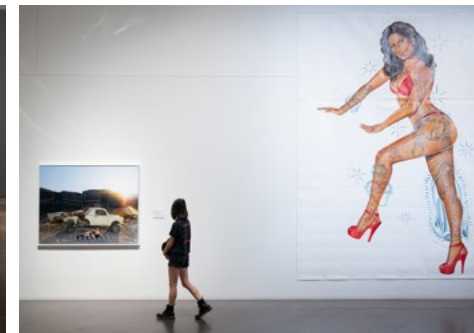
Learn about the artistic and community significance of lowriders and skating

03

Experience the artistry and energy of lowriders and skateboards

04

Feel connections to local (Southwest and Denver) communities



Photos by the Denver Art Museum

INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES FOR EXHIBITIONS

Interpretive Principles

The DAM's interpretive engagement team applies the following principles to all interpretive materials:

- Reinforce **shared humanity**
- Include **multiple perspectives**, highlighting those that traditionally have been excluded from museum narratives
- Celebrate **diversity & variety**
- Explore the **relationship between past & present**
- Help visitors feel **welcome & safe**



Photos by the Denver Art Museum

INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES FOR EXHIBITIONS

Inclusivity and Equity

Authors should be sensitive about race, gender, sexuality, disability, family status, and other key issues. Language matters, so choose your words with thoughtful intention. We all have biases that emerge in our writing. Consider topics from a perspective that does not center US or European traditions. What are you assuming the viewer already knows? What terminology are you using? Art-historical terms like *Surrealism* and technical terms like *daguerreotype* may be unfamiliar to most visitors. Nor can we assume that everyone is familiar with the Christian pantheon of important figures and saints. Additionally, terms, titles, names, etc. evolve over time. We strive to keep up with ongoing discussions in the field and use the most inclusive terms.

Inclusive Language

When it comes time to write, make sure you are using inclusive language. Describe a subject's race, ethnicity, gender identity, or disability with intentionality. In your decisions, note whether such information is pertinent to understanding the topic at hand, and respect the subject's preference in how they are described.

In general, find an alternative to needlessly gendered terms. For example, *actor* is preferred to *actress*, *server* to *waitress*, *average person* to *common man*, *chair* to *chairman*.

Note the problematic nature of terms like *flesh-colored* that don't consider the full range of skin tones.

For inclusive language resources, see the [Appendix](#).

Using the Racial Equity Lens

When crafting your exhibition interpretive strategy, review the [EDI Critical Questions](#) that were developed collaboratively between interpretive specialists, curators, project managers, and publications staff. For instance, consider which stories you're starting with, which perspectives you are not addressing, and ask yourself why. Our intention is that *early in the planning process* project teams will address these questions and make EDI commitments for each exhibition. Also consider meeting with the EDI Committee. Please refer to the full document in the [Appendix](#).

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT

Gallery text plays an important part in centering our interpretive principles. But remember: It is only one part of how we tell an exhibition story. *Don't try to do it all in labels.*

All gallery text should work together to support the Big Idea. Hardly anyone reads every label (in the order we expect them to), so each text must also stand alone. Sometimes ideas and definitions may need to be repeated.

Gallery Text Content

In our visitor study of the [2022 Martin Building reinstallation](#), we found that visitors are most engaged when exhibition content prompts them to:

- Make connections
- Learn something new
- Be surprised
- Evoke memories
- Reflect on a variety of diverse objects and voices
- Bridge past and present

Keep in mind that special exhibition text might be more experimental than what we find in permanent collection galleries.

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT

Writing Tips to Keep in Mind . . . (Because the editor will, too!)

"The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak."

—HANS HOFMANN (ARTIST, 1880–1966)

- Write as you speak. Try reading your text out loud.
 - Words like *you* and *your* reach out to readers. Words like *we* and *our* put a friendly face on the museum.
 - Don't be afraid of contractions and figures of speech. (That's more natural than "Do not be afraid of contractions and idioms.")
 - Simplify your tenses. Skim off the extra *had* or *will* to make your writing feel more immediate.
- Be concrete and specific rather than abstract and general.
- Keep your readers awake—pack your sentences full of active verbs and avoid passive construction.
- Create the environment for discovery. If you ask questions, make sure they are visitors' questions and present them in a non-threatening way. Compare: "What are the standards that define good art?" vs. "What draws you into a work of art?"
- Make every word count. You don't have to repeat information available in the tombstone.

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT: WRITING TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND (CONT.)

- Don't tell visitors what to think or feel. Give context but acknowledge that meanings can change over time and that most artworks can support multiple interpretations. Using *perhaps* or *might* can help signal that multiple interpretations are possible.
- Encourage close looking by pointing out aspects of the object that the visitor may not notice on their own. Help the viewer connect a visible detail of an artwork with a larger idea, theme, or question. Such connections can spark "aha! moments" and might get them to linger and look longer than if they hadn't read the label.
- If you need/want to point to a work of art or artistic style not on display, include a comparative illustration (comp image). Don't assume visitors will know what you're referring to.
- When deciding what is/isn't essential to include, ask yourself: "Will this information help the visitor get more out of the object on view?" and "Is it related to the experience goals and/or Big Idea?"
- Make connections that are relevant to the visitor. Tell stories and use analogies. Use the gallery text to answer the questions "So what?" and "Why should I care about this object?"
- Empower visitors with information they can use throughout the exhibition (like pointing out a technique or a repeating motif).

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT

Examples of Extended Text



Frank Lobdell, *15-Apr-62*, 1962. Oil paint on canvas. 70 × 61¼ in. Oakland Museum of California.

DO THIS

Frank Lobdell experienced firsthand the horrors of World War II, which affected him deeply. This painting's roughly coiled lines, intense colors, and gaping mouths full of sharp teeth might express the artist's feelings about the atrocities humans are capable of committing.

NOT THIS

A tightly coiled form struggles against the confines of the canvas. Thick paint, hot colors, hard lines, and a gouged surface reinforce the sense of uneasiness. They express the artist's view of the human condition as a struggle for meaning and dignity.⁶

WHY

Instead of the vague "human condition," the text makes concrete connections between an event (World War II) and the theme of the painting. Instead of saying that the forms express only one thing, it uses "might" to indicate that there could be more than one interpretation of these forms. "Gaping mouths" could lead a viewer to look more closely at what seems like a completely abstract painting.

⁶Gail Gregg, "Your Labels Make Me Feel Stupid," *ARTnews*, July 1, 2010, artnews.com/art-news/news/your-labels-make-me-feel-stupid-319. The "Do This" label is adapted from the same source to better match DAM voice.

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT: EXAMPLES OF EXTENDED TEXT (CONT.)



Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *The Attributes of the Arts and the Rewards Which Are Accorded Them*, 1766. Oil paint on canvas. 44½ × 57¼ in. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

DO THIS

This still life offers more than just a tabletop from the 1700s—it presents an encyclopedia of various arts. A palette and brushes symbolize painting, while building plans and drafting tools indicate architecture. The pitcher evokes goldsmithing, and the portfolio points to drawing. J. B. S. Chardin also included the sculpture *Mercury* as an homage to fellow artist J. B. Pigalle, who won the Order of St. Michael, the highest honor an artist could receive.

NOT THIS

J. B. S. Chardin, born in Paris, had his first art instruction from his father, a master cabinetmaker. In 1713, he began his academic training, and achieved his first recognition in 1726. He was elected a member of the Académie Royale in 1728 and thereafter exhibited at the Paris Salons. He specialized in still life and genre and was championed by the encyclopedist Diderot. There are several extant versions of this subject, which features a plaster model of Pigalle's famous work. The Hermitage painting is closely related to Minneapolis's and has a provenance reaching back to Catherine II. It may well be the original Salon of 1769 work, though both pictures are signed and dated 1766. Neither should be confused with the Moscow canvas entitled *Attributs des arts avec une tête de Mercure en plâtre*, which shows a bust of Mercury, since this is not Pigalle's Mercury but, instead, a cast of a famous antique portrayal of the messenger of the gods. Recent studies suggest that Minneapolis's painting may in fact be a replica Chardin executed as a gift for Pigalle himself.

WHY

Instead of focusing on Chardin's biography and a painting not on view, the text focuses on what viewers can see. It also suggests that even a realistic, seemingly simple still life can have layers of symbolic meaning.

⁷ Kris Wetterlund, "If You Can't See It Don't Say It: A New Approach to Interpretive Writing," terraamericanart.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Wetterlund-Interpretive-Writing.pdf. Accessed March 29, 2023. The "Do This" label is adapted from the same source to better match DAM voice.

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT: EXAMPLES OF EXTENDED TEXT (CONT.)



Wailaki artist, *Condor Cape*, late 1800s. Condor feathers and cord. 36 × 27 in. Denver Art Museum.

DO THIS

Wailaki artists in what is now called California were masters at using the feathers of birds large and small. Here, the feathers of gigantic condors are accented with a few flicker feathers to make a resplendent cape. Imagine a dancer wrapped in these large wing feathers as they floated gracefully across his shoulders and back, accentuating his movements. Only a handful of these rare capes still exist today.

NOT THIS

This Wailaki condor cape is a remarkable example of the traditional regalia worn by Indigenous people of Northern California. Made from the feathers of the California condor, this cape was a symbol of high status and spiritual power. The intricate weaving and arrangement of feathers reflect the Wailaki people's deep connection to the natural world and their beliefs about the condor's sacred powers. The cape was worn during important ceremonial events, including dances and initiations, and served as a visible expression of the wearer's status and spiritual power. Today, these capes are rare and highly prized cultural artifacts.⁸

WHY

Pointing out condor and flicker feathers encourages close looking. The prompt "imagine" gives the viewer something to do besides just read facts. Also, it points out the rarity of the object without emphasizing its commodity status as a "prize."

⁸ Label generated by ChatGPT from the prompt "Write a 75-word museum label about a Wailaki condor cape." The "Do This" label is the current label on the DAM's Online Collection website.

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT

Text Length and Types

Studies prove that people read more and stay in an exhibition longer if the labels are short and clear. We learned in our **2022 Martin Building evaluation** that visitors can feel overwhelmed when we provide too much information. Instead of long, complex labels, help the visitor learn something new with clear, focused text that tells a single story. Paradoxically, including less information increases the amount that visitors can and will absorb.⁹

Gallery Text Type	Word Count	Purpose
Intro Text	No more than <u>150 words*</u>	Introduces viewers to the Big Idea and important themes. It sets the stage for what follows. It may also contain information that would otherwise appear on every label, e.g., a credit line, collection, etc.
Section Texts	No more than <u>150 words*</u>	Gives viewers an overview of a gallery/section—what connections can viewers make between the artworks grouped together here? What more detailed context might help flesh out the Big Idea?
Subsection/Group Labels	No more than <u>100 words*</u>	Connects 2 or 3 works of art within a section without having extended labels for each.
<u>Extended Labels**</u>	No more than <u>75 words*</u>	Helps viewers make sense of a single artwork, sparks a question, or clarifies something puzzling. Each also relates to the Big Idea.
Tombstones	n/a	Gives basic identifying information about an object (see below for formatting and guidelines). All objects in an exhibition have tombstone information.

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT

* A Note about Word Counts¹⁰

Many of the stories we tell in the galleries are complicated, nuanced, and elevate diverse voices and perspectives. Word counts can be adjusted as needed, but such decisions have a number of considerations, including wall space, the length of the Spanish translations (up to 20 percent longer than the English), and the density of labels in a given area. Longer intro, section, group, and extended texts are accommodated in conversation with the editor, project manager, and director and should be discussed at the beginning of the writing process.

** More on Extended Labels

As a general rule, about one third of the objects in an exhibition should have extended labels, and the labels should be paced across the installation and not bunched on one wall in conjunction with other interpretives. This number will vary by show based on a variety of factors (contract requirements, other interpretive components, size of exhibition, etc.). If it makes more sense, consider writing *slightly* longer texts about fewer objects.

To determine which objects might need some more context, ask:

- Which objects raise obvious questions?
- Are particular objects likely to be attractive to visitors? (Is it famous? Conspicuously displayed? Large scale?)
- What other interpretive strategies are you planning for the exhibition (e.g., audio tour)? Distribute content accordingly.
- Which objects offer opportunities to tell counter-narratives? Center a nondominant point of view?
- Which objects tell important stories that advance an exhibition's Big Idea?
- Is there difficult or challenging subject matter that needs further explanation?
- What insights aren't available to a visitor just by looking?

⁹ Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 61, 98, 102-103, and 327; Kathleen McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions* (Washington, DC: The Association of Science-Technology Centers, 1993), 19; Elizabeth Gilmore and Jennifer Sabine, "Writing Readable Text: Evaluation of the Ekarv Method," in *The Educational Role of the Museum*, ed. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (London: Routledge, 1999), 205-10.

¹⁰ Serrell recommends even shorter word counts than we have listed in this document. Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 43.

THE ROLE OF GALLERY TEXT

Other Interpretive Strategies

Family Interpretation

The project's interpretive specialist will work with the DAM's family programs team to develop family interpretation for most exhibitions. You'll find a full set of guidelines in the [Appendix](#).

Community Voice Labels

Consider using quotations from various community stakeholders to add new voices and underrepresented perspectives to the gallery. These might bolster the big picture or add alternative narratives. Use the [EDI Critical Questions](#) and existing community partners to help identify individuals. These labels should have a distinct look from DAM-generated texts and should identify the individual who is providing their voice. *If possible, they should also adhere to our 75-word rule for Extended Labels.*

Graphics

Consider using graphics, like maps, timelines, and diagrams, to convey information instead of text. Sometimes showing is more effective than telling.

Supergraphic Quotes

Consider using a pithy or insightful quote from an artist, writer, or other voice as a supergraphic on the wall. If it sparks interest, the viewer may choose to read more of the exhibition text throughout the gallery.

QR Codes

QR codes are an option for providing related information that is supplemental to understanding an artwork. We use QR codes in all exhibitions in Anschutz, Martin & McCormick, Gallagher, and Stanton galleries so visitors can access the exhibition text online. It's important to provide a prompt in English and Spanish. See [Non-Object Labels](#) for examples of prompts.

SPANISH AND OTHER NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGES IN GALLERY TEXT

DAM's Spanish Voice

The Denver metro area's population is about one third Latino/a/x.* As a bilingual institution, the DAM provides descriptive exhibition text in both English and Spanish. Seeing Spanish language creates feelings of welcome, inclusion, and value for Latino/a/x visitors regardless of whether they speak Spanish. Bilingual texts also convey to *all* visitors that we have a diverse community and value inclusion.

Bilingual exhibition text supports a self-directed visit in which both English and Spanish speakers can participate. The DAM strives to provide text in Spanish that can be understood by any Spanish speaker. As a rule, we give preference to terms used in Mexico, which is the country of origin of the majority of Spanish speakers in Denver, but we must be sensitive about words having different (sometimes negative) connotations in other Spanish-speaking communities. In special instances, the label in Spanish will offer a term used in

Mexico as well as other terminology that is common in other Spanish-speaking countries. For example: In *Desert Rider*, when we used the word *hood*, we provided the translation as both *cofre* (Mexico) and *capó* (Latin America) in order to be more inclusive.

Spanish and English should be given equal weight in an exhibition's interpretive program, placed side by side whenever possible. But it is important to distinguish them visually from one another by color, staggered spacing, a graphic rule or flourish, or another visual cue that's obvious for the visitor to identify from afar.

While we typically do not translate tombstone information, we have made some exceptions, depending on the nature of the exhibition. Please discuss this possibility with your project manager, managing editor, and Senior Spanish Language and Community Engagement Liaison.

*Often we use Latino/a in gallery texts, but sometimes we use Latinx, depending on the preferences of our collaborators.



Photos by the Denver Art Museum

SPANISH AND OTHER NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGES IN GALLERY TEXT

Other Non-English Languages

While we haven't yet created fully trilingual gallery texts, there are several occasions when we might use other non-English languages—for example, highlighting and honoring Indigenous and original-language terms, indicating an original-language title, or indicating an artist's name in its original script. This is an ongoing discussion, and we'll update this document as practices evolve.

Styles for Non-English Languages

Styles and formatting might depend on the original language or the frequency of use in an exhibition, but generally we follow these guidelines:

Non-English words in gallery texts (see the [DAM Style Guide](#) based on the [Chicago Manual of Style](#)) are usually set in italics only on the first mention. Commonly understood terms (like “tour de force”) don't need italics. This is a judgment call, not something that can be decided simply by checking to see if the phrase can be found in an English dictionary (although that is a good start). Many terms that aren't widely understood can be

found in a dictionary. For terms that may be less familiar to our audience, italicize and define the word or phrase on first use. Later uses should be set in roman. This is true for gallery texts but let frequency of occurrence and how central the term is be your guide for catalogs (and work with your publication project manager to make such decisions).

Untranslatable Non-English Words

There will always be words that are impossible to translate. These cases call for creativity in balancing cultural sensitivity with the needs of the majority of our visitors and may be helped by context clues in extended text.

Non-English proper names are not italicized (e.g., Académie Julian, Prix de Rome, etc.). We do use accents on capital letters (École des Beaux-Arts).

Non-English Artist/Maker Terms

If the culture uses a word other than *artist*, you can use that word instead—e.g., Khipucamayoc (Inca *quipu*-maker)—as long as that word is explained in an extended label or nearby section text.

SPANISH AND OTHER NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGES IN GALLERY TEXT

Non-English Titles

Depending on an exhibition's interpretive strategy and Big Idea, it may be appropriate to include the original-language title, a transliteration, and/or a translation of the English title. All should be in bold to conform with our label style.

Non-English-language titles should be set in italics and follow the capitalization and punctuation conventions of the language. English translations should be in headline/title case and set in roman. Depending on the context and needs of the exhibition, either language can come first. Please note that parentheses are only italicized when they are part of the title. Otherwise, they are always in roman.

Examples:

Wir Bauen ein Neues Europa (We're Building a New Europe)

In this example, the German title appears on the print itself, so the English translation is given after.

The Revenge of History (La venganza de la historia)

In this case, the given title is in English, but all titles in the exhibition were translated into Spanish.

Autumn, Poplars, Éragny

Foreign place names are set in roman (not italics), and no translation is needed.

Waterlilies or The Waterlily Pond (*Nymphéas*)

In this instance, even though *nymphéas* is a common noun, it is capitalized and italicized because it is the original French title of the painting. Note that *or* in the English title is not in bold and instead indicates the addition of an alternate English title.

Non-English Words in Given and Descriptive Titles

If an artist-given title contains a non-English word or phrase, set it in italics if a common noun, though maintain headline/title case capitalization as one would in an English title. If a translation is not given in the title, ideally it would be included in an extended text.

If it is appropriate and relevant to the gallery or exhibition, non-English words can be included in descriptive titles. Depending on the context or emphasis of the installation, the non-English word can come before or after the English translation. If the non-English word is a common noun, it should be italicized. If the non-English word is a proper noun, it should be set in roman.

SPANISH AND OTHER NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGES IN GALLERY TEXT

If the non-English word is given after the English, it should follow that language's capitalization conventions. If the English word is given after the non-English word, it should follow headline/title case conventions.

If the non-English word is explained in a nearby gallery text, it need not be translated in the title.

Examples:

Check Out the Lowrider *Ese*

"Ese" is not easily translated and is explained in an extended label.

Theater Mask *Netsuke*

"Netsuke" is explained in a nearby section text and so is not translated in the title.

Scepter (*ruyi or nyo*)

Hat (*Xaadas dajáangaa*)

"Xaadas" is a proper noun (a translation of Haida, which is not included in the English title because it is indicated as the artist's cultural affiliation), and "dajáangaa" is a common noun (hat).

Hu'tuuu (Harvester) *Katsina*

"Hu'tuuu" is a proper noun in Hopi, and while "harvester" is not a proper noun in English, English words follow headline-style capitalization in titles.

Non-English Scripts

Sometimes it is desirable or appropriate to provide visitors with a transliteration and/or original script of a non-English term or name.

Proper name examples:

Liu Kuo-sung (Liu Guosong 劉國松)

Takeuchi Shōran 武内小鸞

Title example:

Three Obediences (Sanjū 三従)

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES

Tombstones provide identifying details about a work of art, including artist, culture, year, materials, and technique. We aim to make tombstone information as consistent as possible across collections and exhibitions, so visitors can find information quickly in a consistent format throughout our galleries. But there is still room for curatorial discretion.

If exhibiting a work from another DAM collection (e.g., arts of Ancient Americas exhibiting textiles), consult with the appropriate curator to ensure the information presented is correct/acceptable. We strive for internal consistency within each installation.

What follows are guidelines. Never let these guidelines take the place of common sense.

Default Hierarchy of Tombstone Information

Artist/Maker

Nationality/cultural affiliation (or style in certain cases),
life dates, and/or sometimes place

Title (given or descriptive)

Place created (in certain cases)

Date created

Medium

Credit line and object ID

Each element gets its own line, though it is possible to combine elements when they are very short or if space is needed:

title, date
date, media

For exhibitions where an element is the same every time, this information can be omitted on tombstones if included in an introductory panel, e.g., artist's name (in the case of a single-artist exhibition) or credit line (in the case of all works belonging to/coming from a single collection/collector/institution, if the lender approves).

Sometimes it is helpful to include directional information on tombstones as well (e.g., *left to right*, *top*, *bottom*). These are usually placed above the tombstone information in smaller font, but their styling may depend on design considerations. On labels with extended text, they are usually translated into Spanish, but they are not always translated on tombstone-only labels.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES

Artists and Their Information

Often, an artist's or maker's biographical information is very straightforward, but sometimes it can be more complex. Depending on the collection and circumstance, we can variously combine and format this information.

Artist's Name

- The [Getty Union List of Artist Names \(ULAN\)](#) includes artists' preferred names and variants. Sometimes this information does not necessarily match a subject area's convention. Defer to the curator's expertise/subject area convention.
- If an artist has transitioned, respect their chosen name. Avoid deadnaming (using the artist's previous name). In some instances, however, an artist may choose to use their former name if a work of art was made and acquired with that name. For example, Jay Lynn Gomez indicated to the DAM that when *Lupita* is exhibited, it should be exhibited with her former name, Ramiro Gomez. All work made after 2020, however, will be exhibited with the name Jay Lynn Gomez.
- Many cultures have naming conventions that differ from the West. For example, for East Asian names, the family name comes before the given name and is sometimes written in all capital letters. On second reference, the family name would most often be used. In Ethiopia, it is preferred to refer to the individual by their first name rather than their last name after both names are used. The names of Indigenous artists in Australia who have died are not used in public. Don't make assumptions and do your research!
- Unnamed artists, makers, and designers
Do not use *anonymous*. *Unknown artist* or *unrecorded artist* is preferred if it is not possible to be more specific. Which one to use depends on preference and subject area conventions. Be consistent in a single space.
 - For galleries with all or mostly unnamed artists, curators can omit this line if they wish to avoid an entire gallery of labels that begin *unknown artist*. But this omission should be noted in accompanying gallery text. However, if the cultures or nationalities of the unknown artists can be identified and vary from object to object, curators should include this information. See next point.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: ARTISTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Artist's Name (cont.)

- If the artist's culture or nationality is known, identify by culture/nationality instead of *unknown*. Do not assign cultures without a solid reason. If it's helpful, include a place name after the artist's line or object's title ([see p. 30 for example](#)).

Examples:

Hopi artist
Maya artist
French artist
Imazighen (Berber) artist

* Note that there is no reason to indicate "Unrecorded" Hopi artist

- In Architecture and Design, if *artist* is inappropriate, use *designer* instead. If appropriate, the designer's culture can be included.

Examples:

Unrecorded designer
Italian designer

- In Textile Arts and Fashion, if *artist* or *designer* is inappropriate, use *unrecorded maker* for utilitarian objects like hats or purses. If appropriate, the maker's culture can be included. Note this wording should seldom be used outside this department and only with the curator's approval.

Examples:

Unrecorded maker
Kazakh makers

- Curators may have specific reasons for using or not using the words *artist*, *designer*, or *maker*. If terms like *weaver*, *sculptor*, or *leatherworker* are appropriate, these can be used to convey a little more information to the reader, provided the term will be known to our audience. [See also p. 22 for non-English words](#).
- Manufacturer, etc. in addition to artist: Typically, the best place for the manufacturer is after the medium line. It is okay to drop company types, e.g., Inc., S. p. A., Srl, on labels. Use *manufactured by* only if the object is mass produced. If an object is made in limited quantities, use *made by*.

Examples:

Manufactured by Herman Miller, Zeeland, Michigan

Manufactured by Gorham Manufacturing Company,
Providence, Rhode Island

Made by David Bohnoff, American, born 1968

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: ARTISTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Artist's Name (cont.)

- Artist/designer plus maker: List each separately as you would individual artists and indicate their role.

Example:

Designed by Kenneth Noland
American, 1904–2010

Woven by Sadie Curtis
Navajo, 1930–2011

- Company with named principals or designers

Examples:

Venturi and Rauch
Philadelphia, 1964–1979
Robert Venturi, American, 1925–2018
John Rauch, American, 1930–2022
Denise Scott Brown, American, born 1931

House of Yves Saint Laurent
French, born in Algeria, 1936–2008

House of Dior
Established 1947

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: ARTISTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Artist's Nationality

Nationality is not always an easy thing to assign and is variously used to indicate legal citizenship status as well as cultural identity. In general, if artists are living, ask and respect their preferences (except if it's Jimmie Durham). For deceased artists, follow established convention. [Getty Union List of Artist Names \(ULAN\)](#) includes artists' preferred nationalities, but not all artists can be found there, and occasionally ULAN is incorrect. [The Netherlands Institute for Art History \(RKD\)](#) is also a good source for such information but does not always match Getty ULAN. Defer to the curator's expertise/subject area convention. *Do not assume nationality based on where an artist worked.*

If the artist does not prefer to identify by nationality, or if for other reasons the artist isn't identified by nationality, see [Artist's Place on p. 30](#) for alternatives.

As a rule, use British for all UK artists (rather than English, Scottish, or Welsh). Curators may include more specific information at their discretion when relevant. Do not use British for Irish artists.

As a rule, artists born in or after 1579 in the Netherlands are considered Dutch. Artists born before 1579 (with certain exceptions, such as Rubens) are Netherlandish.

For Indigenous artists, give a cultural or tribal affiliation, e.g., Ewe culture, Shoshone, Apsáalooke (Crow). In gallery text, use *citizen of Tribe/Nation* not *member of Tribe/Nation*.

Do not identify artists by race or religion. If relevant, include this information in extended text but never in the tombstone.

Do not hyphenate multiple identities, e.g., Chinese American not Chinese-American; Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: ARTISTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Artist's Place

For artists born somewhere other than where they later established residence, include place of birth. However, if an artist is born to American parents, but their place of birth happens to be overseas, no need to mention unless it is important in some way to the exhibited material.

Example:

American, born 1942 in Bulgaria

American, born in Germany, 1935–2004

For named Indigenous artists, if helpful, add a place where they worked in addition to their tribal or cultural affiliation. If there is any possibility that culture might be confused with place, add a helpful word like *tribe* (only if accurate for North American artists) or *culture* (when appropriate for African artists). Do not use *tribe* for African artists. See the [DAM Style Guide](#) on the use of *tribe*.

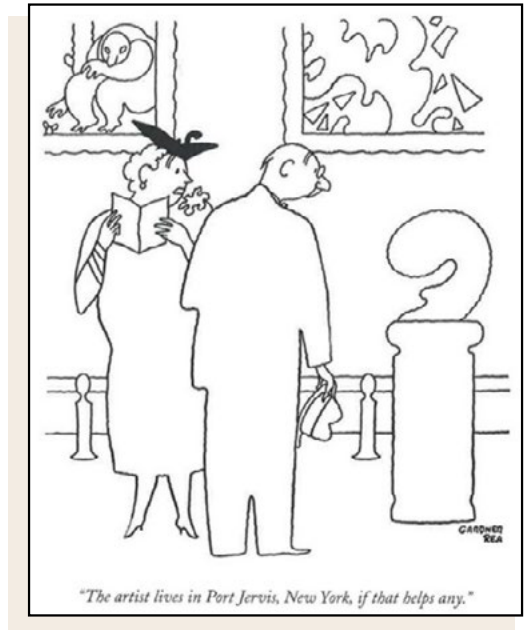
Examples:

Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, White Earth Reservation, born 1976

Apsáalooke (Crow), born 1982, lives and works in Oregon

Maidu, 1902–1990, active in New Mexico

Yoruba culture, Nigeria, 1926–2002



Gardner Rea, "The Artist Lives in Port Jervis," *The New Yorker*, October 12, 1940.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: ARTISTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Artist's Place (cont.)

For less familiar nations, tribes, clans, or African and Oceanic cultures, it can be helpful to add a place:

Examples:

Wailaki artist	Cheyenne artist	Bamana artist	Melanesian artist
Present-day California	Plains Region	Mali	Papua New Guinea

If an artist's nationality is not discernable through research or inquiry, or if an artist prefers not to be identified by a nationality, we can instead use birth, death, and/or active places.

Examples:

Born 1993 in Mumbai, India, lives and works in New York

Born 1920 in China, died 2014 in Japan

1746–1810, active in Mexico (when life dates are known and only an active place is known)

Active in Mexico, 1680s (when only active dates, and not life dates, are known)

We do not use New York City as the location in an artist's bio line—New York suffices (but New York City in running text is OK).

For a list of national and international cities that don't need to be accompanied by state or country name, [see the Appendix \(p. 66\)](#).

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: ARTISTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Artist's Life Dates

We typically rely on the preferred dates in [Getty Union List of Artist Names \(ULAN\)](#). That being said, ULAN isn't always accurate or up to date. Defer to the curator's expertise/subject area conventions.

Use full inclusive numbers for life dates, connected with an en dash (the middle-sized dash that's not a hyphen or an em dash): 1958–1990.

For artists (named or unnamed) whose dates are unknown, it is preferable to indicate when that artist was active (based on the object date, if known) than to indicate dates unknown. It may also be appropriate to list a place with the dates.

Examples:

Active 1647–1668

Active 1460s

Active in Spain, 1600s

Active about 1480–1510 in Florence

If a date is in question, e.g., the artist was born in 1786 or 1788, there are various ways to style, but generally, 1786/1788 works well.

If we only know approximate dates: About 1647–1712, 1647–about 1712. Don't use *circa*, *c.*, or *ca.* on in-gallery labels. (They can be used in catalogs, though.)

If an artist is still living: Born 1989 or born 1989, depending on the format of other information.

When a company is the artist, give the "life" dates of the company along with its location.

Examples:

Strobridge Lithographing Company
Cincinnati, Ohio, 1867–1960

Multiple Artists and Attributions

More than one artist

Example:

Nicholas Kahn, American, born 1964

Richard Selesnick, British, born 1964, works in the United States*

*Avoid using America as a place name

Multiple artists who work collectively

Examples:

Larson Shindelman
Established 2007

Nate Larson
American, born 1971
Marni Shindelman
American, born 1973

ASMA

Artist duo founded in 2017
Lives and works in Mexico City

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: ARTISTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Named artist, variants on attributed, etc.

Examples:

Attributed to Domenico Ghirlandaio
Italian, 1448–1494

Circle of the Master of the Brunswick Diptych
Netherlandish, active about 1480–1510

Follower of Andrea Mantegna (possibly Girolamo da
Cremona)
Italian, active 1460s

Artist “after” another artist

It may depend on who is the more famous artist—the original one or the copier—or who is the focus in a particular exhibition

Examples:

Engraving by unknown artist after a drawing by
William de la Montagne Cary
American, 1840–1922

Edgar Degas
French, 1834–1917

Elisabeth de Valois

About 1865

Drawing after a painting by Anthonis Mor
(about 1517–1576/1577)

Additional Biographical Information

Depending on the installation, exhibition, artist, or object, it may be useful to give additional information that provides more context for the viewer.

Examples:

Melanie Yazzie
Diné (Navajo)*, born 1966

*Artist prefers Diné, but we include Navajo to help visitors.

Alfred Sisley
British, worked in France, 1839–1899

Birger Sandzén
American, born 1871 in Sweden, lived in Kansas from 1894
until his death in 1954

Joan Mitchell
American, 1925–1992, lived in France after 1955

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES

Objects and Their Information

Like with artists, often the identifying details for objects are straightforward, but depending on the object and the context, this information can be more complex and nuanced. Always let good design and common sense lead the way.

Object's Title

Studies have shown that this is the most important piece of information for visitors. For this reason, titles should be easily visible at first glance. All titles—given and descriptive—will be set in bold. We don't set titles in italics unless there are non-English words in the title (see pp. 23–24).

Given Titles

Nonstandard spelling and capitalization should be respected in artist-given titles.

Examples:

Under the bitter Orange tree not **Under the Bitter Orange Tree**
Golden Yella Girl

Treat **Untitled** the same as any other title—initial cap and bold.

Descriptive Titles

Works that don't have titles are given descriptive titles. Some descriptive titles function like given titles (**Saint George and the Dragon**, **The Crucifixion**). Others are more functional (**Ice Cream Dish**). Use headline-style capitalization for descriptive titles.

Descriptors like **Cup** or **Bowl** tell visitors little that they couldn't figure out on their own. What more context could you give with another word or two? Compare **Coiled Serpent Pendant** to just **Pendant** and **Cup for Drinking Chocolate** to **Cup**. However, try to keep the title to one line.

Including the style in a title can be helpful for some collections.

Examples:

Olmec-Style Maskette

Parita-Style Breastplate with Supernatural Figure



Eldon Dedini, "Still-Life of New Mexican Grilled Quail," *The New Yorker*, August 5, 1991.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: OBJECTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Series Titles

Words in the title line that aren't part of the title (*from the series*, etc.) should be treated in a different graphic manner. Generally, this means not bolded and not capitalized, but this depends on overall graphic treatment. Names of series are given same graphic treatment as title: **Untitled**, from the series **Inherit the Land**.

Non-English Titles and Non-English Words in Titles

See Spanish and Other Non-English Languages (pp. 23–24).

Object's Date Created

Use BCE (before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) when it is necessary to distinguish, always following the year. Use capital letters and do not insert periods. Do not use B.C./A.D. In galleries where everything is CE, no designation needs to appear on the label.

For approximate dates, use *about* not *circa*, *c.*, or *ca.* (although okay to use in catalogs, [see catalog captions](#)). If there is a date range, especially a large one, you likely don't need to use *about*.

Use numerals (1800s) not ordinals (19th century).

OK to use shortened date range (1880s–90s rather than 1880s–1890s).

Chinese, Japanese, and Korean objects typically include

mention of the dynasty in which they were created and, sometimes, the inclusive date range for that dynasty, though this last is not always necessary or helpful. This information follows the date. Inclusion of dynasties, eras, and periods for objects from other cultures is at the curator's discretion.

Examples:

Mid-1800s, Qing dynasty

1100s, Heian period

About 1850, Edo period (1615–1868)

If an object has a manufacturing/made date that differs from the date of the design, this can be included after the design date: 1981, made in 2022

If a time element is in question: use brackets and a question mark around only the element in question: 15[06?]

If no date: Use *date not known* or, if appropriate, *date not recorded*, BUT if a range can be inferred from artist dates or otherwise, use that.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: OBJECTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Posthumously created material (casts, prints)

This is a potentially sensitive topic and is not well understood by audiences. Inclusion of posthumous material may require an explanation, either in section or extended text. If you do include casting or printing dates:

Examples:

Original wax modeled about 1885–90, cast possibly late 1920s/early 1930s, definitely by 1947

Modeled 1912, cast 1914 by Roman Bronze Works

1861, printed about 1970 by Richard Benson*

*If Richard Benson is discussed in an extended text, perhaps it's not necessary to include biographical details in the tombstone here.

Object's Place

Some departments, like Latin American Art and Arts of the Ancient Americas, include an object's place to help orient the visitors. In certain cases, it may be wise to be more specific than just naming a country—for example, we might name the city/country or the region/country. We may even have three elements on occasion, though this is the limit. When we do have three elements, at least one should have a qualifier to

help visitors understand what the sequence is (e.g., a word like *province*, *region*, or *peninsula*) if the names are likely to be unfamiliar to our visitors. Always list from smallest to largest: city, state, country.

Examples:

Azuero Peninsula, Pacific region, Central Panama

Possibly Jaina Island, Campeche region, Mexico

Greater Nicoya region, Costa Rica

In most circumstances, use the current country/city name and spelling (e.g., Czechia or Czech Republic not Czechoslovakia, Mumbai not Bombay). However, with older works, an area's former name may be more relevant (Mesopotamia instead of Iraq). You may want to explain further in extended text or include the modern name in parentheses or vice versa, e.g., Etruria (modern-day Italy), Ohkay Owingeh (previously known as San Juan Pueblo), Spanish Territory (present-day Arizona).

For a list of national and international cities that don't need to be accompanied by state or country names, [see the Appendix](#).

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: OBJECTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Collected, recovered, or acquired by in addition to place made
Additional information can tell a lot about an object's journey. As with situations where we have a manufacturer in addition to an artist, make smart graphic choices to keep the information from appearing overwhelming. Also be clear about why we are including such information and do it in terms a lay audience understands—*collected* is vague and not likely to be understood—and if you are naming a person because he or she is well known in the field, let readers know this. Including such detailed information is at the curator's discretion.

If it's appropriate to include an object's full provenance, consult with the managing editor and senior provenance researcher to discuss how best to communicate this history with the viewer.

Examples:

Reportedly found at Culebra Bay, Guanacaste province, Costa Rica

Acquired on the Cow Creek Reservation, Florida, 1940*

* The implication being that date the object was acquired was 1940.

Object's Medium

The medium line is probably the most technical information we share with the viewer. Without compromising technical and/or specialty conventions, we strive to make this information as intelligible to the viewer as possible. The best medium lines tell visitors what the object is made of and how it was made. Think

of it as a little story: Find a way to relate the parts that makes it more understandable for the viewer. Instead of *wood, paint, and fiber*, use *painted wood and fiber*.

Be clear, though, about the difference between what something is made of and how it is made.

- For example, brocade and tapestry are kinds of fabric construction. The underlying fiber is probably silk and/or wool, so *silk and wool tapestry weave (dovetail, interlocked)* and *cotton plain weave with supplementary-weft patterning*. If the technique is particularly complex or interesting, consider helping the viewer understand it better by including a special label about techniques, parenthetical explanations, etc.
- If a material or process is unfamiliar, look for ways to explain it in the medium line or add a line of text that explains it. For a gallery of ceramics, we might want a separate label or panel explaining stoneware, earthenware, and porcelain. The same might be true for a print or photography exhibition.

How much detail to include depends on context. In a show about blue-and-white porcelain, it might be worth including details like *porcelain with underglaze blue* while in another context *porcelain* alone would suffice. If focus is really on technique, even more detail might be merited.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: OBJECTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Object's Medium (cont.)

Keep it short by including a phrase like *and other materials* after naming a few materials: *Paper, yarn, cardboard, and other materials* or even *mixed-media installation*. But if the material is truly interesting, point it out! Butterflies, for example.

Multiple Materials

If an object consists of different parts made of different materials, help the visitor see this unless it's self-evident. If it's a metal dagger with a wooden handle, it's OK to say *steel and wood*. But if it is a silk dress with a cotton lining, *silk with cotton lining* is more helpful to a visitor than *silk and cotton*, which implies that the fabric is a blend.

If you do simply list materials, list them in order of prominence in the work (like how the list of ingredients in packaged food starts with what there's most of).

List material on substrate where this is appropriate: Oil paint* on cardboard

* Note that we use *oil paint* rather than just *oil* because there are instances where oil (not oil paint) is used as a material. For less familiar media, like casein and tempera, adding *paint* helps a visitor understand that they're looking at a type of paint.

Format and Materials

For arts of Asia, it may be helpful to the viewer to indicate the format (hanging scroll or folding screen) in addition to the materials used: *Hanging scroll: ink and color on paper*.

Singular vs. Plural

Don't use a singular noun if plural makes more sense—this is a holdover from ARGUS. Indicate *shell*, not *shells*, regardless of how many shells or shell types were used. Use common sense and put yourself in the visitor's place.

Pottery vs. Ceramic

Do not use *pottery*, use *ceramic* unless something more specific is warranted. Also do not use *clay* for kiln-fired objects, but it may be appropriate to use *fired Native clay* in certain circumstances.

Miscellaneous Points

- In general, it's not necessary to say what color something is. The visitor can see that the ink is purple. The same goes for words like *carved*. Only include if you wish to draw attention to the color or technique or if it helps a visitor find an object among a group of similar objects (e.g., there's only one red dress in a group of four similar dresses).
- We prefer generics to brand names. If it is crucial to use a brand name, it should be capitalized and explained if unfamiliar.
- Use *and* and the serial comma: *Wood, fiber, and shells* not *wood, fiber, shells*.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: OBJECTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Use terms that are familiar to our visitors or find opportunities to explain them either in the medium line or extended text.

INSTEAD OF

anodized ~~~~~

casein ~~~~~

earthenware ~~~~~

etching/drypoint/engraving ~~~~~

jadeite/nephrite ~~~~~

jadeite/nephrite ~~~~~

graphite ~~~~~

gouache ~~~~~

parfleche ~~~~~

polychrome ~~~~~

Naugahyde ~~~~~

marquetry ~~~~~

schist (or other uncommon rock) ~~~~~

stoneware ~~~~~

woodblock print ~~~~~

USE

anodized (coated)

casein paint

ceramic

intaglio process print

green stone (for arts of the ancient Americas)

jade (nephrite) OR jade (jadeite)

graphite pencil

gouache (opaque watercolor)

parfleche (processed rawhide) NOT (rawhide)

applied color (on wood)

Naugahyde (artificial leather)

marquetry (wood/ivory/shell inlay)

stone (schist/uncommon rock)

ceramic

woodcut print (or color woodcut print)

*Please note this list is far from exhaustive and is subject to curator and conservation approval.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: OBJECTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Credit Line and Object ID

Credit Line

Although ARGUS is generally considered the final word on donor lines (as well as other information commonly included on labels), remember that ARGUS is only as accurate as the information given to it. Do not blindly repeat odd or incorrect punctuation, spelling, or capitalization just because it appears in ARGUS. Question what seems off and let common sense prevail.

Refer to the document on [DAM Credit Line Standards](#) found on the Publications Pulse Page for more detailed information.

But here are just a few reminders:

- No comma before *Jr.* or *Sr.*
- Lowercase *family* unless it's part of an organization's name. The same goes for *sons*, *daughter*, etc.—unless it's part of a business or foundation name.

Examples:

Gift of the Paul Harbaugh family
Gift of the Harold and Esther Edgerton Family
Foundation

- To avoid ambiguity, *at the Denver Art Museum* should be added to donor lines for internal collections.

Examples:

Lucile and Donald Graham Collection at the Denver Art
Museum

Neusteter Textile Collection at the Denver Art Museum

AIGA Design Archives* at the Denver Art Museum

* Note in the last example that it isn't only the word *collection* that requires this clarification.

- Credit lines indicating that something is a gift from a collection ("Gift of the Mayer Collection") do not need *Denver Art Museum* added.
- If it is necessary to indicate that an object belongs to the Denver Art Museum, e.g., in an exhibition with works from another collection, use this format: Denver Art Museum: Gift of the Robert Appleman family, 1986.456

Object ID

Object IDs (also called accession numbers) are only included if the work is in the museum's permanent collection. We do not include PTL/TL numbers in credit lines. If a lending institution requires their object ID to be included, we would include it.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: OBJECTS AND THEIR INFORMATION (CONT.)

Object ID (cont.)

If your label applies to more than one artwork (such as a set of objects), use your best judgment in condensing the object IDs.

Examples:

2003.34-36, 2016.163, 2016.165, 2016.168-169
2003.26, .27, .29-32, .34

If the Object ID includes multiple parts, use a hyphen to separate the letters or numbers, not an en dash. If you are only displaying a few of the multiple parts, consider leaving the parts off the object ID.

Examples:

1970.11A-B
1991.61.1-2
1991.61

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Architecture and Design

Charles Eames
American, 1907-1978

Ray Eames
American, 1912-1988

Side Chair (model DCM)
1946

Molded plywood with zebrawood veneer,
chrome-plated steel, and rubber

Manufactured by Herman Miller, Zeeland, Michigan

Funds from 1994 Collectors' Choice, 1995.120

- multiple artists
- manufacturer
- technique + material ("molded plywood")

Bottom:

Domus Flatware

About 1956

Stainless steel

Manufactured by Krupp Italiana, Milan

Gift of Dung Ngo, 2014.121.1-5

- directional at the top helps viewers locate the correct object info
- exact design date not known, so used "about"
- no designer indicated because this label belongs to a larger case of objects all designed by Gio Ponti, who was mentioned in a subsection/group label

La Pierre Manufacturing Company

New York and Newark, New Jersey,
active 1885-1929

Vase

About 1900

Glass with silver overlay

Funds in memory of Earl M. Kipp from his
friends, 1985.349

- manufacturer instead of artist
- location of company and active dates

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Arts of Africa

Attributed to Olowe of Ise
Yoruba culture, Nigeria, 1860-1936

**Epa Mask with Jangunjagun
(Warrior) and Captive**
Late 1800s-early 1900s
Carved and painted wood
Funds by exchange, 2006.27

Bamana artist
Mali

Female Chi Wara Headdress
Before 1960
Wood
Anonymous gift, 2001.938

El Anatsui
Ewe culture, born 1944 in Ghana,
lives and works in Nigeria

Rain Has No Father?
2008
Found bottle tops and copper wire

Funds from Native Arts acquisition funds, U.S. Bank, Richard & Theresa Davis, Douglas Society, Denver Art Museum Volunteer Endowment, Alex Cranberg & Susan Morris, Geta & Janice Asfaw, Saron & Daniel Yohannes, Lee McIntire, Milroy & Sheryl Alexander, Dorothy & Richard Campbell, Wayne Carey & Olivia Thompson, Morris Clark, Rebecca H. Cordes, Kenneth & Rebecca Gart, Tim & Bobbi Hamill, Kalleen & Robert Malone, Meyer & Geri Saltzman, Ann & Gerry Saul, Mary Ellen & Thomas Williams, Nancy & James Williams, Forrest Cason, First Western Trust Bank, Howard & Sandy Gelt, Gene Osborne, Boettcher Foundation, John & Eve Glesne, The Schlegel White Foundation, Jeffrey & Nancy Balter, and Tamara Banks, 2008.891

- "attributed to"
- indicates culture
- non-English word + translation in title
- medium tells a story

- unknown artist identified by culture
- artist's place given
- "Chi Wara" in this instance is a proper noun (though it can also be a common noun)

- artist's culture and place given
 - given the label design, would have preferred no comma after "Ghana" and capital "Lives" at the beginning of third line
- long credit line includes "&" between members of couples for ease of reading

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Arts of the Ancient Americas

Unknown Olmec artist
Gulf Coast region, Mexico
Standing Figure with Sprouting Plant Emerging from Head
1000–400 BCE
Greenstone
Funds from 1984 Collectors' Choice, 1985.14

- unknown artist identified by culture
 - would have been better to simply use "Olmec artist"
- region and country; note that "region" is not capitalized because it's not an officially named region of Mexico
- very descriptive title
- BCE dates

Unknown artist
Colima region, Mexico
Standing Dog
Comala style
About 300 BCE–300 CE
Slip-painted ceramic
Gift of Laurence DiRosario, 1970.292

- style of object included
- combo of BCE and CE dates
- technique + material

Unknown artist
Mexico or Guatemala
Olmec-Style Standing Figurine
About 200 BCE–200 CE
Greenstone
Gift of the Collection of Frederick and Jan Mayer, 1988.161

- possible artist's places given
- style of object included in title

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Arts of Asia

Wrist Rest in Form of a Musical Instrument (*qin*)

China
1800s, Qing dynasty (1644-1911)
Bamboo

Lutz Bamboo Collection at the Denver Art Museum:
Gift of Walter and Mona Lutz, 1987.330

- no artist or maker given because this is in a case of unknown artists
- non-English word included in title
- place of object included
- date includes dynasty + dates
- credit line: includes "at the Denver Art Museum" to make it clear to visitors that the Lutz Bamboo Collection is part of our permanent collection

Box

China
1300s-1400s,
Ming dynasty (1368-1644)
Lacquer on wood

Collectors' Choice 1986, 1986.16A-B

- no artist or maker given because this is in a case with other objects with unknown artists
- period and dynasty given instead of an estimated date
- medium could be "Lacquered wood"
- object ID includes parts separated with a hyphen

Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu

太田垣蓮月

1791-1875

Painting by Wada Gesshin

和田月心

1800-1870

Stag and Poem

About 1865-70

Ink on paper

2018.245

- more than one artist/maker
- names given in Japanese characters
- does not include credit line because all objects in the exhibition had the same credit line, and this information was given on the Intro Text Panel
- does not include nationality because all artists in the show were Japanese

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Arts of Oceania

Asmat artist
West Papua, New Guinea, Indonesia
Bis Memorial Pole
1900s
Painted wood and fiber
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George G. Anderman, 1991.976

Marshallese artist
Marshall Islands
**Hand-Woven Purse with
Turtle Shell**
Mid-1900s
Coconut and/or pandanus fiber and turtle shell
Gift of Allan and Ronnie Gerard, 2022.154

Marquesan artist
French Polynesia
Ti'i (Stone Deity Figure)
About 1800-50
Lava stone
Gift of Vincent and Mary Price, 1949.4545

- unknown artist indicated by culture
- place of artist (no more than 3 places)
- non-English word in title, translated in extended nearby text

- descriptive title with headline capitalization
- may not need to include "with Turtle Shell" since that's listed in the medium line, but if in a case with other woven bags, could be helpful for the viewer to quickly identify the right tombstone

- non-English word in title translated into English with headline-style capitalization
- elided date of object
- reminder that spooky Vincent Price was an art collector!

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

European and American Art before 1900

Gustave Caillebotte
French, 1848–1894

The Fields, Plains of Gennevilliers, Study in Yellow and Green
(Les Champs, plaine de Gennevilliers, étude en jaune et vert)

About 1884

Oil paint on canvas

Frederic C. Hamilton Collection, bequeathed to the Denver Art Museum

Thomas Sully

American, born in England, 1783–1872

The Lost Child

1837

Oil paint on panel

The T. Edward and Tullah Hanley Memorial Gift to the People of Denver and the area, 1974.412

Jacopo del Casentino

Italian (Florence), 1297–after 1349

Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints and Angels; Nativity and Crucifixion

About 1340

Tempera paint on panel

Simon Guggenheim Memorial Collection at the Denver Art Museum, 1958.99

- English title first, then original French title in italics, following French capitalization conventions
- credit line clarifies the relationship between the Hamilton Collection and the DAM
- no object ID because not yet officially accessioned into the museum's collection

- additional biographical information
- "people" in credit line should be lowercase

- nationality: Italy didn't exist as a nation in the 13th century, so "Florence" added to be more accurate
- title: a tripartite panel with different scenes on each panel
 - perhaps better to separate each title with commas. As it is, it looks like 2 works instead of 3. Or another solution if there were space would be to include directionals after each title: (center), (left), (right). These would not be set in bold.

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Indigenous Arts of North America

Nunivak Cup'ig artist
Nunivak Island (Nuniwar),
Alaska

Mask (agayu)

1952
Painted wood, feathers,
sinew, and wire

Native Arts acquisition funds, 1952.381

- artist identified by culture + place
- title includes Indigenous term
- medium + technique
- credit line: this fund is a general fund without a proper name so "acquisition funds" should appear in lowercase

David P. Bradley
Chippewa, born 1954
New Mexico

Land O Bucks, Land O Fakes, Land O Lakes

2006
Acrylic paint on paper over wood

Native Arts acquisition funds, 2010.396

- artist identified by tribal affiliation and place.
 - a clearer label would indicate the artist's relationship to New Mexico: Chippewa, born 1954, lives and works in New Mexico
- title style follows artist's given title

Ancestral
Puebloan artist

Jar

Pueblo III period,
1150-1300
Painted ceramic

Gift of Charles MacAllister
Wilcox, 1930.110

- artist identified by culture
- date defined by period
- perhaps could use a more descriptive title

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Latin American Art

Unknown artist
Strike-a-Light
(*yesquero*)

Peru or Bolivia, 1700s
Silver and iron
Bequest of Robert J. Stroessner,
1992.73

Gaspar Muñoz de Salazar
Mexican, active early 1700s

**Mystic Dinner (Doña Guiomar of
Ulloa, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Peter
of Alcantara, Christ)**

Mexico, about 1730
Oil paint on canvas
Gift of the Collection of Frederick and Jan Mayer, 2015.542

Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez

Mexican, 1824-1904

Portrait of an Old Man

Colombia, 1873-75
Oil paint on paper laid on canvas
Gift of the Stapleton Foundation of Latin American Colonial
Art, made possible by the Renchard Family, 1990.559

- title given in English and Spanish
- place of object given and combined with the date to save space

- only active date known for artist
- place of object given to be consistent with the rest of the gallery

- place of object doesn't always match nationality/place of artist
- credit line: "family" should be lowercase since it's not part of a proper name

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Modern and Contemporary Art

David Schnell
German, born 1971
Aussicht (Prospect)

2005
Oil paint on canvas

Funds from the Alliance for Contemporary Art in Honor of Dianne Perry Vanderlip, 2006.66

Mary Carlson
American, born 1951
She's so good . . . You Don't Even Know She's There

1992-93
Nylon veil

Gift of Polly and Mark Addison, 2015.250

Ingar Dragset

Born 1969, Trondheim, Norway; lives and works in Berlin

Michael Elmgreen

Born 1961, Copenhagen, Denmark; lives and works in Berlin

24 Hours

2003

Roll-up door, neon sign, and tin garbage can

Gift from Vicki and Kent Logan to the Collection of the Denver Art Museum, 2015.636A-G

- non-English title with English translation

- respects unusual capitalization in artist-given title
- elided years for date of object

- two artists
- places instead of nationalities.
 - could replace the first comma with "in": Born 1969 in Trondheim, Norway
- semicolon instead of comma after birth place in this instance makes it easier to parse because of the comma between the city and country
- donor's credit line honored even though we would usually just say "Gift from Vicki and Kent Logan"

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Photography

Evan Whale

American, born 1987

Then the Earth Shook

2018

Carving and chemigram (painting with chemicals) on chromogenic print

Courtesy of David and Kathryn Birnbaum

Eliot Porter

American, 1901-1990

**Lichen-Covered Boulder,
between San Javier and
Comondú, Baja California**

March 9, 1964; Dye transfer print

Gift of Diane Wolf, 1982.139.29

Zig Jackson

Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara, born 1957

**From the series Entering Zig's
Indian Reservation:**

Hutchinson Island, Georgia

1999

Gelatin silver print

**Buffalo Enclosure, Golden Gate
Park, San Francisco, California**

1997, printed later

Inkjet print

Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, P2021.3,
P2021.4

- uncommon medium explained in parentheses
- credit line dictated by loaning party

- very specific date
- date and medium share line to save space.
 - would prefer comma and lowercase *dye* instead

- bilingual directionals at top
- two works from the same series with different object information but with same credit line

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Textile Arts and Fashion

Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, Paris Skirt Suit

Haute Couture Spring-Summer 1990
Wool jacket; silk chiffon skirt

Gift of Susan Gutfreund, 2020.339A-D

Prototype (original runway piece)

Carrutos Coat

Made in collaboration with
Santiago Granados Cuevas and
Jesús Rosas, Sahuayo, Michoacán

Ropa de Trabajo (Work Clothes)
Collection, Fall-Winter 2022

Miniature metal carriages on wool

Khamseh Lion Rug

Southwestern Iran
1800s

Hand-knotted wool pile; wool warp and weft

Private Collection

- designer + fashion house
- collection + date
- medium for each piece clearly indicated.
 - would prefer no semicolon in favor of a comma or "and"
- additional/unusual information given below the credit line

- artist not indicated because this was in a single-artist show
- Spanish word in title is untranslatable
- collaborators included + their place
- collection name is translatable + specific date of whole collection
- no credit line because it's indicated on the Intro Text Panel

- no maker indicated
- culture indicated in title
- medium line gives more specific context
- "collection" should be lowercase

TOMBSTONE GUIDELINES: REAL-LIFE TOMBSTONE EXAMPLES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT

Western American Art

Thomas Moran
American, born in England, 1837-1926
**Indian Pueblo of Laguna,
New Mexico**
1905
Oil paint on canvas
Funds from Henry Roath, 2020.195

- additional biographical information given for artist

Marsden Hartley
American, 1877-1943
New Mexico Recollection #6
1922
Oil paint on canvas
William Sr. and Dorothy Harmsen Collection at the
Denver Art Museum, 2001.455

- relationship between the Harmsen Collection and the DAM made clear; no "The" before the collection name

Gene Kloss
(born Alice Geneva Glasier)
American, 1903-1996
In the Rio Grande Gorge
About 1950
Oil paint on canvas
Funds from William Sr. and Dorothy Harmsen Collection by exchange,
2018.33

- additional biographical information given (not a deadname)
- credit line: "Funds from" is enough to indicate that this now belongs to the DAM and not the Harmsen Collection

GALLERY TEXT PROCESS: WRITING TO PRODUCTION

Gallery Text Team

Many people are involved in the production of gallery text, from conception to fabrication. Remember, we all have the same goals: to make art and information enjoyable, understandable, digestible, and engaging for our viewers. Often, roles overlap and intersect at various points.

Curator: Generally, the content expert who conceives of the project/installation (or is the internal Curator for a traveling exhibition taken from another institution). Usually drafts gallery text, with initial input from the Interpretive Specialist. If the in-house Curator for a traveling exhibition, the Curator often amends the shared text to conform to DAM style and voice and may navigate disagreements about modifications with the organizing Curator.

Interpretive Specialist (IS): Creates and updates the exhibition experience plan, the team's working document that records the Big Idea, Visitor Experience Goals, interpretive strategies, organizational ideas, look and feel, etc. Works on the exhibition narrative with the Curator, including identifying which texts will be written and by whom. Outlines major points of each text with the Curator and reviews draft texts with audience advocacy in mind.

Curatorial Assistant (CA): Assists the Curator in administrative duties related to the exhibition, compiles all object tombstones, formats text for editing and translating, cleans up documents at various points, and helps ensure all text is accounted for and properly formatted/designed.

Editor: Ensures all gallery text refers to the Big Idea and furthers the exhibition narrative. Asks clarifying questions with the visitor in mind. Edits text to align with the DAM voice. Ensures all text is grammatically correct and adheres to the DAM style. Proofreads designed exhibition texts and graphics (including maps).

Director: Reads and approves all exhibition text.

Sr. Spanish Language and Community Engagement Liaison (Sp. L&CEL): Coordinates translation of exhibition text. Edits Spanish translations to conform with the DAM voice and style. Proofreads designed exhibition texts and graphics (including maps if bilingual).

Project Manager (PM): Shepherds the exhibition planning from conception to installation. Not involved in crafting exhibition text but keeps the writing, editing, and production processes on track and on budget. Typically sends edited text to the Director and to organizing venues of traveling exhibitions.

Asst. Project Manager, Exhibition Graphics (Asst. PM Graphics): Shepherds final exhibition text through production and installation.

GALLERY TEXT PROCESS: WRITING TO PRODUCTION

General Timeline

Each project's timeline will be different, but many projects roughly follow a timeline like this:

Curatorial content complete:

3.5–5 months before exhibition opens

IS review:

1–2 weeks

Editing and Director/outside stakeholder approval:

2–4 weeks

Translation:

3–4 weeks

Design:

2–3 weeks

Designer proofs:

2–3 weeks

Production:

4 weeks before the exhibition opens

Writing and Editing Process

1. The Curator generally drafts gallery texts based on the exhibition's Big Idea and exhibition narrative in consultation with the Project Manager (PM), Interpretive Specialist (IS), and sometimes advisory councils, focus groups, and the EDI committee. The Curator shares this draft with the IS, who reviews it and shares comments and suggestions based on audience advocacy. The IS and others in L&E draft additional interpretive texts if using. Input from focus groups and community advisory panels is usually sought early in the drafting process. If helpful, Editors can be brought in at this point to consult and gauge benefits of having a more involved role in crafting gallery text.
2. The Curatorial Assistant (CA) compiles thumbnail images and tombstones and formats **all** exhibition text, ideally using the Exhibition Text Template document (found in: [S:\Public Temp\Exhibitions\Exhibition Text Template](#)) or a similar format. CAs should indicate text/label type, wall/case color, and other needed information for designers. Some of these details may not be known in this early stage but should be added to the template before the document is sent to the designer.
3. At least four to six weeks before gallery text is due to the Editor, the PM sets up a meeting so that the Curator and IS can give the Editors a preview of the overall interpretive

GALLERY TEXT PROCESS: WRITING TO PRODUCTION

Writing and Editing Process (cont.)

strategy of the exhibition/installation. During this meeting, any concerns about label content, length, and any potentially sensitive or novel topics can be discussed. Having these conversations early helps the editing process later.

4. Once the Curator and IS agree on a draft of the gallery text, the CA sends all text (intro, section, subsection/group, extended, tombstones, and all interpretive content, including quotations, activities, etc.) to the Editors. Ideally, the texts should be grouped in sections and in order. The Editor:
 - checks tombstone information against ARGUS to point out any discrepancies.
 - does basic fact checking on artists' names, nationalities, and life dates as well as basic facts in extended and section labels (dates, geographic names, etc.); ensures any descriptions match the objects.
 - ensures formatting conforms to DAM style.
 - ensures that language and sentence construction will be understood and appeal to our audiences.

Multiple rounds of editing between the Editor, Curator, IS, and CA is often common to confirm and finalize outstanding details.

5. The CA cleans up changes and comments and finalizes the complete text document.
6. The PM sends the document to the Director and additional stakeholders (e.g., organizing institutions). The Curator usually sends documents to artists, if necessary.
7. The Director and any other stakeholders review text, and any further substantial revisions go back to the Editor.
8. Once the text is finalized, the IS submits a Translation Request, always indicating the PM.
9. Once text translation is returned, the Sp. L&CEL reviews the Spanish translation, makes any final adjustments, and sends to the IS and PM.

GALLERY TEXT PROCESS: WRITING TO PRODUCTION

Graphic Production and Installation Process

1. Once the final English/Spanish document is created, the PM sends it to the graphic designer, copying the Asst. PM Graphics. The PM or Asst. PM Graphics sends DAM's Graphic Guidelines to new designers around this time as well.
2. The graphic designer sends completed proofs to the Asst. PM Graphics, who then sends the project team a link to the PDFs saved on PubTemp and deadlines for content review.
 - Typically, the Curator reviews proofs first, followed by the IS, Editors (in the first round of graphic proofs and first printer proofs), CA, and the Sp. L&CEL. At this point, substantial revisions are discouraged unless necessary.
 - After each person reviews, they save the file on PubTemp with their initials added to the end of the document's file name, moving the previous file to the archive folder. They will then reply all to the email chain, alerting the next team member for their review.
 - If at any point during this process there is a question for another party, especially if they have already reviewed, call this out in the body of the email, so they know to take a second look.
3. After Sp. L&CEL reviews, the CA checks that all content is accounted for and presented in the correct/desired format.

This includes:

- checking label background colors.
 - making sure all labels have been designed and no content is missing. If something is missing, please add the text to the PDF or send it to the Asst. PM Graphics via email so a new design can be requested.
 - ensuring all graphics appear the way we'd like them to. If there is a question about sizing or the scale of a graphic, please alert the Asst. PM Graphics or the PM so hard proofs can be obtained. This is the time to question sizing so changes can be made before production.
 - reconciling any edits or lingering comments
4. Once all parties have reviewed, the Asst. PM Graphics reviews comments and seeks any necessary clarifications. Once all questions are resolved, the Asst. PM Graphics resaves the final files with "DAM EDITS" at the end and sends the document back to the graphic designer for revisions.
 5. The Asst. PM Graphics sends out the second round of proofs for the Curator, IS, and CA to review. If a style question arises during that phase, Editors can review specific questions. The Sp. L&CEL will also review and make necessary changes.

GALLERY TEXT PROCESS: WRITING TO PRODUCTION

Graphic Production and Installation Process (cont.)

6. If at this phase, a large-scale design edit occurs, the Asst. PM Graphics will decide if a third proofing phase is necessary. If necessary, the Asst. PM Graphics will send a final proof for quick approval prior to moving items into production.
7. Once all revisions have been made, the Asst. PM Graphics works directly with the graphic designer to release final files to print. The Asst. PM Graphics and graphic designer review press proofs to ensure items are produced with the correct materials, substrates, etc. The Asst. PM Graphics and/or the Editor will review the first press proof to ensure there are no outstanding typos. The final press proof should be reviewed by the Curatorial team. Only typos and factual errors will be corrected during this phase. No edits should occur at this time.
8. CA makes any text changes that occurred during graphic proofing to the Word document of gallery text. This serves as a final, accurate record. It is especially important for traveling exhibitions and exhibitions with a commemorative catalog that will reproduce the gallery text.
9. Production for graphics and exhibition text takes approximately four weeks. Once final texts are received, the Asst. PM Graphics delivers them to the CA for a final check to make sure all items are accounted for. If reprints are needed, the CA will mark up the final PDF file with any needed changes and will send it to the Asst. PM Graphics, who will coordinate revisions with the graphic designer. The Asst. PM Graphics will send a quick proof back to the CA for final approval before any reprints are sent to production.
10. The Asst. PM Graphics coordinates installation of graphics and exhibition text in conjunction with the PM's master schedule. Usually, the week before the exhibition opening, the Curator, CA, someone from the preparation team, and the IS meet to discuss placement of exhibition texts and certain graphics. The CA should have all labels placed in their general locations prior to the start of this meeting. If time allows, the CA should also discuss left/right placement with the Curator prior to this meeting to help facilitate the process. Labels are hung with a starting height of 58" from the floor to the top of the label, but this can change depending on curatorial aesthetics. During this meeting, the Curator, CA, IS, and preparator determine final placement for all exhibition texts and any other graphics being installed by the preparation team.
11. The Curator and/or IS along with the Sp. L&CEL will proofread all installed section texts and cut vinyl graphics to ensure no elements are missing prior to the exhibition opening.

NON-OBJECT LABELS AND CAPTIONS OF VARIOUS SORTS

Sometimes non-objects—like interpretive videos, quotes, playlists, and comparative images—need labels, too. If you don't see your non-object on this list, consult with Publications to format. These texts should be included in the full gallery text document and follow the production timeline [on page 55](#).

Interpretive Videos

Watch [title or description of video]

Duration: X min. XX sec., no sound [if applicable, otherwise video must include transcription]

Caption [typically provided by video source].

Video credit [courtesy of and/or ©].

[Translation of video description>]

Duración: XX min XX sin, sin sonido [if applicable]

[Translation of video credit]

Quotes

On labels, quotes should be styled in curly quotation marks (not straight) with an em dash and no space between the closing quotation mark and the person's name.

For wall quotes, do not use quotation marks. Use an em dash before the person's name (unless it is a single-artist show or otherwise obvious who the speaker is).

Gallery Playlists/Music

If the music is playing in the gallery, we need to license it and include copyright information. If we are just directing visitors to a playlist we created, the format is more relaxed. Song title, artist, and date are the most important pieces of information. Very often a song will have a composer other than the singer, and that name should be included as space allows.

Example:

The music playing in this gallery includes the following songs, in order. Find this playlist by searching Denver Art Museum on Spotify [or alternately, a QR code].

1. "Isn't She Lovely," Stevie Wonder © 1976 Universal Music Group
2. "Fly Me to the Moon," Frank Sinatra and Count Basie and His Orchestra. Composer: Bart Howard © 1964 Universal Music Group
3. "Messe pour le temps present (Mass for the Present Time): 2. Psyché rock," performed for Maurice Béjart choreography, Avignon Festival. Composers: Pierre Henry and Michel Colombier © 1967 Universal Music Group

NON-OBJECT LABELS AND CAPTIONS OF VARIOUS SORTS

Captions

For in-gallery comparative illustrations (comp images) and catalog images, we typically use run-in captions instead of tombstone-style, stacked captions. Object parts that logically go together are separated by commas. Different parts are separated by periods: Artist, *title*, date. Medium, dims. Collection/source.

We typically don't include an artist's nationality in captions, but we could if relevant. If relevant, include an artist's tribal or cultural affiliation.

Catalog Captions

The format for captions in catalogs can range widely. When objects are reproduced as plates (whole-page images), sometimes captions take a form that resembles a tombstone. If full details are given in an exhibition checklist, these captions may include only selected information. Copublishers may have particular caption styles/formats we are required to follow.

Source and copyright information may be included in catalog captions, but it may be easier to compile those on a single page in the front or back matter. Consult with the project manager.

In catalog captions, it's common to use *c.* or *ca.* instead of *about* in dates. Check with your publication project manager. Often this decision depends on the publisher's preferred style and subject area conventions.

Examples:

Thomas E. Warren (active 1840–1860), *Centripetal Spring Side Chair*, ca. 1849. Manufactured by American Chair Company (Troy, NY). Painted cast iron and steel, wood, and original upholstery, 21½ × 18⅞ × 20½ in. (54.6 × 47.9 × 52.1 cm). Denver Art Museum: Funds from DAM Yankees, 1989.91.

Aztec artist, *Maize Goddess Chicomecoatl*, central Mexico, 1400–1519. Volcanic stone, 17¼ × 9⅞ × 3 in. Denver Art Museum: Gift of Frederick and Jan Mayer, 1957.31.

Ason Yellowhair (about 1913–2013, Navajo, Teesto, Navajo Reservation, Arizona), *Bird and Cornstalk Rug*, 1983. Dyed wool, 7 ft. 10 in. × 10 ft. 11 in (2.4 × 3.3 m). The Gloria F. Ross Collection of Contemporary Navajo Weaving at the Denver Art Museum, 1984.4.

Cutline Captions

The Marketing and Communication department (MarComm) and the online collection catalog use the content of the Cutline Caption field in the Copyright tab in ARGUS to generate captions. Cutline captions appear directly below an image. In journalism, they are short descriptions of the photograph, e.g., "Original works by acclaimed Denver-born painter Jordan Casteel are installed behind a protective barrier at the Sie Welcome Center on Oct. 7, 2021. (Photo by Rebecca Slezak/ The Denver Post)."

NON-OBJECT LABELS AND CAPTIONS OF VARIOUS SORTS

Note that MarComm cutline caption dims are styled differently from catalog captions, and if necessary, the © and image source are included.

The suggested format for cutlines is:

Artist (tribal/cultural affiliation if relevant), *Title*, dynasty/culture/era/country [when applicable], date. Medium; dimensions [in inches]. Denver Art Museum: full credit line, object ID. © XXX, source if applicable.

Examples:

Mary Abbot, *All Green*, 1954. Oil paint on linen; 49 × 44 in. Denver Art Museum: Gift of Janis and Tom McCormick, 2013.250. © Estate of Mary Abbot, photography courtesy Denver Art Museum.

Thomas E. Warren, *Centripetal Spring Side Chair*, about 1849. Painted cast iron and steel, wood, and original upholstery; 21 1/2 × 18 7/8 × 20 1/2 in. Manufactured by American Chair Company, Troy, NY. Denver Art Museum: Funds from DAM Yankees, 1989.91.

Dimensions

We don't include dimensions on tombstones in the galleries because the size of the work is evident when standing in front of it. If helpful for a comparative illustration (comp image), we can include the dims in the caption. We also use dims in catalog captions/exhibition checklists (for both works in the exhibition and comp images) and in MarComm cutline captions. We

always use inches (in.) and, if style and space permit, include centimeters (cm) in parentheses.

For 3-D works: height × width × depth

For 2-D works: height × width

For round works: height × diameter, but diameter should be noted: 14 × 13 in. dia.

Use the math × (alt+0215) rather than lowercase letter x to separate numbers in dimensions.

If the largest dimension of an artwork is more than 72 inches (6 feet), it might be appropriate to give the dimension in feet and inches. Use your best judgment. Include the abbreviations for feet and inches after each dimension for clarity.

28 in. × 16 ft. 10 in. × 16¾ in.

In some cases, exact dimensions might not be available or practical to include.

- If the artwork has moveable parts: 48½ × 6 ft. 10 in., depth variable
- If the artwork has many separate components:
 - Each 48 × 48 × 48 in.
 - Each 21 × 2½ in. dia.
 - 31 × 76¼ in. (top portion); 26½ × 24 in. (bottom portion)
- If it's an installation with unmeasurable dims: Dimensions variable

NON-OBJECT LABELS AND CAPTIONS OF VARIOUS SORTS

Fractions

In catalogs, we usually set fractions as character fractions and eliminate the space in between ($7\frac{5}{8}$). MarComm does *not* use character fractions and uses a space in between ($7\ 5/8$). MarComm also does not include centimeters in their captions.

Simplify fractions to halves, quarters, and eighths only. Do not use thirds or fifths. If helpful, Publications has a handy fraction/decimal converter/rounder.

Catalog example:

$9\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{4} \times 2$ in. (24.4 × 13.3 × 5.1 cm)

MarComm example:

9 5/8 × 5 1/4 × 2 in.

Centimeters

Round to one decimal place. If the decimal rounds to zero, drop the digit and the decimal point (6 cm not 6.0 cm). The abbreviation for centimeter is cm without a period.

Copyright and Source Information

For in-gallery comp images, we usually include the copyright information and/or the source of the image in the caption. For catalog captions, this information can be included in captions, but it can also be collated on a separate page in the catalog's back matter. The editor and/or the rights and reproduction manager make this decision.

NON-OBJECT LABELS AND CAPTIONS OF VARIOUS SORTS

Commonly Used Directional Labels (English & Spanish)

Do Not Touch

For your safety, please do not touch.

Por tu seguridad, por favor, no toques. (Informal, singular)

Por su seguridad, por favor, no toque. (Formal, singular)

Por su seguridad, por favor, no toquen. (Plural for both informal & formal)

Help us keep the artwork safe by not touching.

Ayúdanos a mantener la obra de arte segura al no tocarla.

QR Codes

Scan the QR code to access . . .

Escanea el código QR para conocer . . .

Enlarge for better visibility or use your screen reader. Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera, or enter this URL in your browser:

Amplíe para una mayor visibilidad o use su lector de pantalla.

Escanee el código QR con la cámara de su teléfono inteligente o introduzca este URL en su navegador:

Low Light Levels

Works on paper and textiles are easily damaged if exposed to light levels that are too high. To help preserve the works on paper and textiles in this gallery, we keep the light levels low.

Las obras en papel y los textiles se dañan fácilmente si se les expone a niveles de luz demasiado altos. Con el propósito de

ayudar a preservar las obras en papel y los textiles en esta sala es que mantenemos los niveles de luz bajos.

Works on paper are easily damaged if exposed to light levels that are too high. To help preserve the works on paper in this gallery, we keep the light levels low.

Las obras en papel se dañan fácilmente si se les expone a niveles de luz demasiado altos. Con el propósito de ayudar a preservar las obras en papel en esta sala es que mantenemos los niveles de luz bajos.

Photographs are easily damaged if exposed to light levels that are too high. To help preserve the works in this gallery, we keep the light levels low.

Las fotografías se dañan fácilmente si se les expone a niveles de luz demasiado altos. Con el propósito de ayudar a preservar las obras en esta sala es que mantenemos los niveles de luz bajos

Textiles are easily damaged if exposed to light levels that are too high. To help preserve the textiles in this gallery, we keep the light levels low.

Los textiles se dañan fácilmente si se les expone a niveles de luz demasiado altos. Con el propósito de ayudar a preservar los textiles en esta sala es que mantenemos los niveles de luz bajos.

APPENDIX

[Overview of the DAM Style Guide](#)

[Additional Style Guide and Inclusive Language Resources](#)

[US and International Cities](#)

[Critical Questions: Exhibition Planning](#)

[Family Interpretation Guidelines](#)

[Additional Sources](#)

Overview of the DAM Style Guide

An extensive [DAM Style Guide](#) exists on the Publications Pulse Page. The standards have been agreed upon by Publications and Marketing (with input from other departments) to ensure consistent use of language and punctuation when communicating with the public.

While the manual addresses some frequent sticking points, it is not intended as a substitute for either a published style manual or plain good judgment. Strategic exceptions are almost always possible. We look to the [Chicago Manual of Style](#), available for free use by DAM employees, for the answers to most of our style questions (although for press releases, MarComm defers to the Associated Press Stylebook). For spelling and hyphenation, we defer to [Merriam-Webster](#).

In the DAM Style Guide, you can find answers about capitalizing geographic regions, how to treat foreign words, and correct names for museum departments and programs. You'll also find extended discussion of Native Arts terms, as well as when we italicize terms and when we don't, among a host of other things.

APPENDIX

Additional Style Guide and Inclusive Language Resources

Association of Art Editors Style Guide (for capitalization of art movements)

artedit.org/style-guide.php

DAM Spanish Glossary of Terms

pulse.denverartmuseum.org/pages/viewpage.action?spaceKey=EDU&title=Spanish+Language+Glossary+of+Terms

The Diversity Style Guide

diversitystyleguide.com/resources/

Conscious Style Guide

consciousstyleguide.com/

Native American Journalists Association Reporting Guides

najanewsroom.com/reporting-guides/

GLAAD Media Reference Guide (for LGBTQ guidance)

glaad.org/reference

DAM's L&E Access Terminology

pulse.denverartmuseum.org/display/EDU/Access+Terminology

Disability Language Style Guide

ncj.org/style-guide/

Disability Language Guide

https://disability2022.sites.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj26391/files/media/file/disability-language-guide-stanford_1.pdf

APPENDIX

US and International Cities

The cities below don't require the state or country to follow (based on Associated Press Style). In some situations, however, it may be preferable to list all countries for consistency's sake.

US cities

Atlanta
Baltimore
Boston
Chicago
Cincinnati
Cleveland
Dallas
Denver
Detroit
Honolulu
Houston
Indianapolis
Las Vegas
Los Angeles
Miami
Milwaukee
Minneapolis
New Orleans

New York
Oklahoma City
Philadelphia
Phoenix
Pittsburgh
St. Louis
Salt Lake City
San Antonio
San Diego
San Francisco
Seattle
Washington, DC

International cities

Amsterdam
Baghdad
Bangkok
Beijing
Beirut
Berlin
Brussels
Cairo
Djibouti
Dublin
Geneva
Gibraltar
Guatemala City
Havana
Helsinki
Hong Kong
Islamabad
Istanbul
Jerusalem
Johannesburg
Kuwait City
London
Luxembourg
Macau
Madrid
Mexico City
Milan
Monaco
Montreal
Moscow
Munich
New Delhi
Panama City
Paris
Prague
Quebec City

Rio de Janeiro
Rome
San Marino
São Paulo
Shanghai
Singapore
Stockholm
Sydney
Tokyo
Toronto
Vatican City
Vienna
Zurich

Critical Questions: Exhibition Planning

The following questions are meant to center the Denver Art Museum's EDI initiative in the exhibition planning process. These critical questions were developed collaboratively between interpretive specialists, curators, project managers, and publications staff. Our intention is that *early in the planning process*, project teams will address these questions and therefore make commitments around EDI for each exhibition.

Curators or ISes can initiate this conversation, ideally in advance of the project manager's scheduled kick-off meeting, and it should include the core project team (Curator, IS, CA, PM). This initial conversation should be part of the official exhibition planning timeline. This process will be dynamic; teams should revisit their answers to these questions throughout the process, and there may be implications even after installation (e.g., a second phase of interpretation).

Stories and the Big Idea

- What stories are we starting with? What stories are we not addressing and why?
- What objects are we starting with? Can the objects on the preliminary checklist tell these stories or do we need additional or different objects/ephemera?

- Are there any compelling stories we can tell to address controversial points in the exhibition (e.g., artists, provenance, colonialism, looting, repatriation, etc.)?
- What interpretive strategies or supportive content should we consider?¹²
- How does all of this inform the Big Idea of the exhibition?

Perspectives

- What perspectives are we starting with? What perspectives are we not addressing and why?
- Are there nondominant perspectives we haven't considered? Which ones should be prioritized?
- What sources might offer these perspectives (e.g., scholarly writings or critiques, first-hand accounts, artist interviews, community conversations)?
- Do we have access to these sources or does it require special planning (e.g., organize an advisory group, conduct visitor panels, identify external readers, set up an interview)?

¹² Note that the catalog, digital strategies/web-based interpretation, and programming are other avenues for telling stories. This document focuses on the installed in-gallery experience.

Critical Questions: Exhibition Planning (cont.)

Processes

- Are our processes and systems stifling EDI (e.g., “that’s not how we do it” or making assumptions that something would negatively impact facilities or conservation before talking with them)? Can we reassess those?
- Are privilege and power (internal, external) coloring our attitudes and decisions (consider donors, lenders, other stakeholders, our own biases, etc.)?
- How can we plan to adapt to visitor responses or tell new stories once galleries are open, given limited resources (e.g., phased/layers of interpretation, rotations as opportunities)?

Family Interpretation Guidelines

Goals for family exhibition text:

- Support and empower parents and caregivers.
- Build family comfort in the galleries.
- Encourage conversations.
- Promote creative thinking; spark new ideas.
- Expose families to new perspectives.
 - When possible, incorporate kids' voices.
- Pique curiosity.

On Design:

- Layout matters. Text should not look like a big dense paragraph. Instead, use short, separate sentences or bullet points.
- Family interpretives should fit with the exhibition's design but should have a distinct look and feel so that families can identify them quickly.
- When appropriate, icons are helpful to distinguish family/kid labels.

On Content:

- Kids can handle tougher subjects than you think. Don't shy away from challenging subjects but give caregivers the tools to have resulting conversations.

- Make it snappy! Keep it short so you can capture attention—and hold it—at a glance.
- For activity instructions, be explicit about time: "take 5 minutes..." or "30 minutes max" so families can have a better idea of how involved a project or activity might be.

Some approaches:

- Mix tone and style.
 - Drop in fun facts.
 - Experiment with writing in a way that sparks imagination and/or invokes the senses.
- Utilize an eye-catching **headline**.
 - Include a question but not one resulting in a yes-no answer.
 - Imagine...
 - Talk about it...
 - Use the DAR strategy (Describe, Analyze, Relate).
- When possible and appropriate, use visuals and/or icons. A picture is worth a thousand words!

Feel free to reach out to the family programs team for further details.

APPENDIX

Additional Sources: Accessibility and Label Philosophy

Characteristics of Exemplary Interpretation. National Interpretation Project: An Exploration of Standards and Best Practices for Interpretation. Technical Information Service, American Association of Museums, Washington, DC, 2001.

Falk, John H. *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc. 2009.

Gregg, Gail. "Your Labels Make Me Feel Stupid." *ARTnews*, July 1, 2010, artnews.com/art-news/news/your-labels-make-me-feel-stupid-319/

Serrell, Beverly. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, 2nd edition. Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

Smith, Lisa F., and Jeffrey K., Tinio, and Pablo P. L. "Time Spent Viewing Art and Reading Labels." *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 11, no. 1 (2017): 77–85.

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