

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

Darrelyn Gunzburg

SOPHIA CENTRE

GUIDE TO USING VISUAL SOURCES

This guide is designed to help you understand how to approach and use visual material in your essays and dissertations from the following perspectives:

- What is visual material?
- When and why might you use visual material?
- How can you find appropriate visual sources for your research and how do you cite it?
- How do you incorporate your visual material into your essays/dissertations, including layout, captioning, and accreditation?

What is visual material and when and why might you use it?

There is often an assumption that primary sources are written documents, and that written texts alone give us primary information about the way people think about their world. Yet visual material such as **frescoes, stained glass, mosaics, sculpture, paintings, sky maps, zodiacs and astrological imagery** are also vital in helping us understand a culture's relationship with the sky and therefore constitute primary source evidence. We look at visual evidence in the History of Astrology module, and visual material also includes any photographs that you take as part of your research in the Sacred Geography, Heavenly Discourses, or Skyscapes, Cosmology and Archaeology modules.

In approaching a visual artefact, if you recognize that any primary source is a dialogue from the maker to the user and that it was created for a purpose in an era that was different from ours, you will begin to enjoy the journey of investigation of how that culture saw the world and created the art/artefact as its response.

Initially, then, it is extremely important to avoid jumping in and assuming anything about the document, artefact, or building until you have looked closely at the document/ artefact/building (**OBSERVATION**) and then interrogated the material (**GENERATED QUESTIONS**). All of this can be considered as interviewing the primary source when evaluating the artefact as your primary source within the history of astrology.

Here are some questions to start the process of understanding the visual material:

1. Observe.

What do you see? Write down what you see as unambiguously as possible.

- What is its size?
- What is its location?
- Why has it been crafted?
- Who is going to use it?
- What can you glean from the images on the artefact about the cosmology in which it was created?

- Who is the imagined spectator in the making of this work?
- Is there other primary source material created in the same time period and region with the same or similar sky/star/astrological symbolism that can act as a comparator?
- What did the people who created it believe and understand about their world?

2. Context

- In what year was the art/artefact created? What were the circumstances around which it was created?
- What secondary source material has been written about this artefact? Look not only in JSTOR but also for museum catalogues in which the artefact is held, for example, the British Museum or the Met Museum in New York.

3. Relevance to Essay Question

How will this visual source help you to answer the essay question?

4. Literature Review

What have previous writers said about the object?

Does the previous literature support or not support what you can see/read in the art/artefact?

5. Findings

Does what you have found answer the essay question? This comprises the next step.

The Next Step

The gathering of evidence emerging from the above is simply that – gathered evidence. It now needs you to draw this evidence together in an academic response to an essay question. Therefore, they must be captioned correctly and linked to your essay text by the use of correct numbering – (Fig.1), (Fig.2), and so on.

For example, if you are answering a compare and contrast question in History of Astrology of the treatment of one astrological planet, star, zodiac sign or constellation in at least three primary source documents, and you select (for example), the Moon in a carved marble votive relief of Selene, from the second to third centuries CE held in the British Museum, Velazquez's painting *The Immaculate Conception*, painted 1618/19 and held in the National Gallery, London, and a Korean porcelain Moon Jar from the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) – second half of the eighteenth century – held in The Met Museum, New York, then you would include all three images in your essay, with correct figure numbers and captions (see later in this document) and you would continually refer to them as you drew evidence from each. For example, 'In the Roman period, the Moon was seen as the figure of the goddess Selene (Fig.1) whereas Velasquez saw the Moon as the platform for a young Virgin Mary floating in the sky (Fig.2), while in the Korea in the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) – second half of the eighteenth century – the Moon's radiance was captured in porcelain (Fig.3). These show distinctly different approaches and cultural attitudes to the Moon, which will be explored in this essay...'

Remember, photographs and images are your primary source visual evidence in answering the essay question. Although you may have taken a number of photographs or used a number of images in your essay, unless they are linked to your text they serve only as decoration – art appreciation – rather than supportive evidence.

Finding Appropriate Visual Sources

There are good visual databases provided by UWTSD in the online library, such as the Bridgeman Collection, which contains over 1.2 million images from museums, galleries, private collections, and contemporary artists.

Here are some others:

- The Warburg Institute's **Photographic Collection** contains physical photographs of sculptures, paintings, drawings, prints, tapestries and other forms of imagery. The Collection was begun by Aby Warburg in the late 1880s, and includes tens of thousands of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century photographs and slides, together with hundreds of thousands of images added since the Institute came to London in 1933. Most of the works depicted are European, and range in date from classical antiquity to circa 1800, with expanding sections on various forms of non-European art:
<https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/library-collections/photographic-collection>
- The Warburg Institute **Iconographic Database** contains digitised images from the Institute's Photographic Collection and Library:
<https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/special-collections/photographic-collection/iconographic-database>
- The photograph catalogues of the British Library:
http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=IAMS_VU2
- The visual catalogues of the Metropolitan Museum, New York, USA:
<https://www.metmuseum.org>
- The visual catalogues of the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, USA:
<https://art.thewalters.org>
- The visual catalogues of the Medieval Art, University of Pittsburgh, USA:
<http://www.medart.pitt.edu>

Once you have chosen your work of art or artefact, interrogated the material, and incorporated it into your question, you need to know how to caption it appropriately. The next section shows you how to do that.

REFERRING TO WORKS OF ART

a) Citing a work of art

When citing the title of a painting or sculpture for the first time in the text, give full details of date and location in a footnote. For

For example: '... this technique can be identified in Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity*¹ and in Bernini's *Apollo And Daphne*²...'.

Subsequent references to the same work normally require only the title, but sometimes, when an artist has produced several works of the same subject (such as Cézanne's paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire), it is necessary to specify the particular

¹ Sandro Botticelli, *Mystic Nativity* [Oil on canvas] (1500, National Gallery, London).

² Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Apollo And Daphne* [Marble] (1622–1625, Galleria Borghese, Rome).

one referred to by identifying it by date and/or location. This avoids unnecessary confusion.

b) Titles of works of art

Titles of works of art should always be italicised. Bear in mind that, for pre-modern works of art, the conventional 'titles' used only reflect the conventional ways in which the work is described, and not a 'title' in the sense of a name given to a work by an artist. In these cases, the titles given to such works may vary, and may change according to the language of the book or article or website in which the work appears. Thus, you might see 'Ognissanti Madonna' or 'Madonna d'Ognissanti'. Use the English translation of the title: you will usually be able to find this by consultation of basic works in English.

c) References to architectural works

References to architectural works should be in normal script, not italicised, but should have dates and locations. For example:

'... the church of S. Giorgio Maggiore by Andrea Palladio (begun 1566; Venice) ...'.

Sometimes you will find variants of the same building, such as 'Scrovegni Chapel' and also 'Arena Chapel'. Use what appears to be the most conventional title in the English-speaking works.

Inserting images and image captions in your work

Any image included in an essay or dissertation requires a caption.

- Use the 'Insert – Photo – Picture From File' function in the menu along the top of the page and keep the image in-line rather than wrapped.
- Then click on the image and use the 'Insert – Caption' (below the 'Insert- Footnote') function along the top menu.
- This will bring up a caption box with 'Figure 1.' 'Figure 2', 'Figure 3', automatically and consecutively.
- Click 'OK' and then manually write in the image details in the caption box.

The convention for image captions is:

Figure number, Name of artist (life dates), *Name of work*, year, medium, dimensions (if known), where located. *Image attribution*. (for example – *Image*: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY or *Image*: Wikimedia Commons). If an image is from Wikimedia Commons, you **MUST** credit it under the suitable licensing terms unless it is clearly shown as Public Domain. For example: David Hockney, *Nichols Canyon* [Acrylic on canvas] *Image*: Wikimedia Commons, *Credit*: CNN, Justin Kamp, CC BY-SA 4.0.

For example:

Figure 26. Giotto di Bondone (c.1267–1337), *The Visitation*, c.1305, fresco, Arena Chapel, Padua, Italy. *Image*: ARTstor.

Sandro Botticelli (1444/5–1510), *Venus and Mars*, c.1483, tempera on wood, 27.5 cm x 68 cm, National Gallery of London. *Image*: National Gallery of London. *Credit*: National Gallery, London, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Giovanni Del Vecchi (1536–1615). Ceiling from Sala del Mappamondo, fresco by G. De Vecchi and da Reggio, showing the constellations, Palazzo Farnese Caprarola. *Photo*: Alfredo Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.

NOTE: AVOID URLS, book references and footnotes in captions.

If you look at any of the secondary sources written about works of art you will see that this is the case.