



Our Mission Statement

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A hypothetical situation

Imagine you are a big fan of Cezanne. You become so interested in Cezanne that you begin studying his works in-depth. Wanting to collect and study all of his paintings, you begin buying books. One book has 30 pictures of his paintings. Another book has 50 paintings, but 15 of them were in the first book. The third book only has three works you don't already have. After a while you start looking for any book with one or two paintings you're missing. That quickly gets expensive, so you start scouring the web. Many of the web sites have disappeared, and most of them offer nothing new. You search museum web sites. Museum X owns eight Cezanne paintings, but only 4 are on the web site - you'd have to travel to the museum to see the others. Plus, how do you know when you've finally found them all - is there is a master list somewhere? Probably there is a master list, or *catalogue raisonné*, but it likely costs hundreds of dollars. Finally, let's imagine that you become such an expert that you decide to write a book on Cezanne, and use some of the pictures you've collected. Well, even though Cezanne is long gone, you can't use his images freely, because the book publishers and museums will charge you for using their *photographs* of his paintings.

It's a mess, huh?

This site attempts to address some of those difficulties, and add tools for scholarship and community-building never available before now. We are working to be a repository of primary source materials, whether they are images of artworks, texts, maps, or other related materials. But beyond that, we want to give you new ways to store and share your own notes, to make connections, and build an interconnected web of learning.

Not just art

At the moment, the vast majority of our content consists of artworks. There are several reasons for this. The most important is that it is easier to program a web interface for uploading art, and creating notes about it, than for texts, or historical events, or ideas. How do you upload an *event*? So, we are starting with the more concrete things, but the plan is eventually to cover art history, history, philosophy, mythology, religion, archaeology, and more - the whole gamut of the humanities. One of our core beliefs is that all of the humanities are interconnected. That is a key difference between us and other art archives. Where one site may give you images, we will strive to provide the history, myth, and culture that inform the images. It will take a while, but we'll get there.

Our ideals

The Athenaeum bases its design and content on the following ideals:

- All creative work should earn its creator a fair wage.

- All people should have maximum access to art, and the good things that flow from creative works.
- Following the first two rules, once copyright has expired (long after the artist has passed away and therefore ceased to be able to profit), creative works should be FREE.

Obviously, there are barriers to providing art and text for free, but the web removes a lot of those barriers. There are still costs (disk space, bandwidth), but they are much lower than the costs of museums or publishers.

The rules

This site will try wherever possible to abide by the following rules:

- All artwork and historical texts will be free.
- We won't bug you with banner ads or popups.
- We won't link to people selling stuff, unless that's what you request.
- We will give you tools to have a voice and to contribute.
- You can reuse the artwork (but not our logos or original text) in any way, as long as you credit us.

It's not going to make us a ton of money, but it's the right way to do things. We think we can survive, and even thrive, with your help.

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