

Definition: *In situ*



The boy in the cellar, *in situ*.
Smithsonian photo.

In situ, Latin for "in the place," refers to an artifact that has not been moved from its original resting place or the place where it was deposited. Being *in situ* is critical to the interpretation of an artifact and to the circumstances that influenced its history. Once the location where an artifact is found is carefully documented, the artifact can be moved for conservation, additional analysis, or display. An artifact that is not discovered *in situ* is considered out of context and will not provide an accurate picture of its historical context. Natural phenomena, such as floods and earthquakes, can relocate artifacts, as can human activities.



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This page is part of the [Smithsonian's The Secret in the Cellar Webcomic](#), an educational resource from the *Written in Bone* exhibition, February 2009 - 2014.