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The Object Stares Back On

Elkins takes off from this familiar phenomenological point, and goes on to explore some of the ways in which vision expects the visible, a world that is not just there to be seen, but that responds to our glances, "stares back." In a sense, Elkins reminds us, our eyes aren't ours.

The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing: Elkins ...

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Lacan sees this as the site of the gaze, or the point in the painting at which the object looks back at the spectator and invites participation (similar to Foucault's reading of "Las Meninas").

gaze | The Chicago School of Media Theory

He sometimes overstates his case, as when he lamely argues that we exist in "a world full of gazes" because "each object has a certain force, a certain way of resisting or accepting my look and...

Nonfiction Book Review: Object Stares Back by James Elkins ...

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The world is full of objects that catch our eye, and that seem to have eyes of their own. The sun is an eye, perhaps the most powerful of all. It sees us as much as we see it, and when we stare at it, the sun stares back."

The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing by James ...

The Object Stares Back. On the Nature of Seeing. by James Elkins. ISBN: 0156004976. There is no such thing as "just looking"; Elkins argues persuasively that seeing is more complicated than that. As an art historian with a willingness to explore not only the metaphorical but biological underpinnings of vision, he's in a position to know.

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A thoughtful study on how our eyes function with our brains examines the irrational elements of physical sight and concludes that human seeing transforms both the viewer and the object being viewed. Additional information

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2.0 out of 5 stars James Elkins, The Object Stares Back Reviewed

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in the United States on October 19, 2007 James Elkins gives a lot of interesting speculation on the experience of seeing, but unfortunately, he fails to give much linkage of his subject to the experience of making and seeing art, which is curious in that the author is an art ...

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Synopsis A study on how our eyes function with our brains examines the irrational elements of physical sight and concludes that human seeing transforms both the viewer and the object being viewed.

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A study on how our eyes function with our brains examines the irrational elements of physical sight and concludes that human seeing transforms both the viewer and the object being viewed

A thoughtful study on how our eyes function with our brains examines the irrational elements of physical sight and concludes that human seeing transforms both the viewer and the object being viewed. 15,000 first printing.

James Elkins's *How to Use Your Eyes* invites us to look at--and maybe to see for the first time--the world around us, with breathtaking results. Here are the common artifacts of life, often misunderstood and largely ignored, brought into striking focus. With the discerning eye of a painter and the zeal of a detective,

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Elkins explores complicated things like mandalas, the periodic table, or a hieroglyph, remaking the world into a treasure box of observations--eccentric, ordinary, marvelous.

In the domain of visual images, those of fine art form a tiny minority. This original and brilliant book calls upon art historians to look beyond their traditional subjects—painting, drawing, photography, and printmaking—to the vast array of "nonart" images, including those from science, technology, commerce, medicine, music, and archaeology. Such images, James Elkins asserts, can be as rich and expressive as any canonical painting. Using scores of illustrations as examples, he proposes a radically new way of thinking about visual analysis, one that relies on an object's own internal sense of organization. Elkins begins by demonstrating the

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arbitrariness of current criteria used by art historians for selecting images for study. He urges scholars to adopt, instead, the far broader criteria of the young field of image studies. After analyzing the philosophic underpinnings of this interdisciplinary field, he surveys the entire range of images, from calligraphy to mathematical graphs and abstract painting. Throughout, Elkins blends philosophic analysis with historical detail to produce a startling new sense of such basic terms as pictures, writing, and notation.

He also addresses the phenomenon of art critiques as a microcosm for teaching art as a whole and dissects real-life critiques, highlighting presuppositions and dynamics that make them confusing and suggesting ways to make them more helpful. Elkins's

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no-nonsense approach clears away the assumptions about art instruction that are not borne out by classroom practice. For example, he notes that despite much talk about instilling visual acuity and teaching technique, in practice neither teachers nor students behave as if those were their principal goals. He addresses the absurdity of pretending that sexual issues are absent from life-drawing classes and questions the practice of holding up great masters and masterpieces as models for students capable of producing only mediocre art. He also discusses types of art--including art that takes time to complete and art that isn't serious--that cannot be learned in studio art classes.

Unlike many books on painting that usually talk about art or painters, James Elkins's compelling and original work focuses on

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alchemy, for like the alchemist, the painter seeks to transform and be transformed by the medium. In *What Painting Is*, James Elkins communicates the experience of painting beyond the traditional vocabulary of art history. Alchemy provides a magical language to explore what it is a painter really does in her or his studio - the smells, the mess, the struggle to control the uncontrollable, the special knowledge only painters hold of how colours will mix, and how they will look. Written from the perspective of a painter-turned-art historian, *What Painting Is* is like nothing you have ever read about art.

What does it mean to be visually literate? Does it mean different

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things in the arts and the sciences? In the West, in Asia, or in developing nations? If we all need to become "visually literate," what does that mean in practical terms? The essays gathered here examine a host of issues surrounding "the visual," exploring national and regional ideas of visuality and charting out new territories of visual literacy that lie far beyond art history, such as law and chemistry. With an afterword by Christopher Crouch, this groundbreaking collection brings together the work of major art and visual studies scholars and critics to explore what impact the new concept of "visual literacy" will have on the traditional field of art history. Contributors: Matthias Bruhn, Vera Dünkel, Jonathan Crary, Christopher Crouch, Peter Dallow, James Elkins, Henrik Enquist, W.J.T. Mitchell, Richard K. Sherwin, Susan Shifrin, Jon Simons, Barbara Maria Stafford, William Washabaugh

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Art Does art leave you cold? And is that what it's supposed to do? Or is a painting meant to move you to tears? Hemingway was reduced to tears in the midst of a drinking bout when a painting by James Thurber caught his eye. And what's bad about that? In *Pictures and Tears*, art historian James Elkins tells the story of paintings that have made people cry. Drawing upon anecdotes related to individual works of art, he provides a chronicle of how people have shown emotion before works of art in the past, and a meditation on the curious tearlessness with which most people approach art in the present. Deeply personal, *Pictures and Tears* is a history of emotion and vulnerability, and an inquiry into the nature of art. This book is a rare and invaluable treasure for people who love art. Also includes an 8-page color insert.

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"Brings together historians, philosophers, critics, curators, artists, and educators to ask how art is and should be taught. Explores the theories that underwrite art education at all levels, the pertinent history of art education, and the most promising current conceptualizations"--Provided by publisher.

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