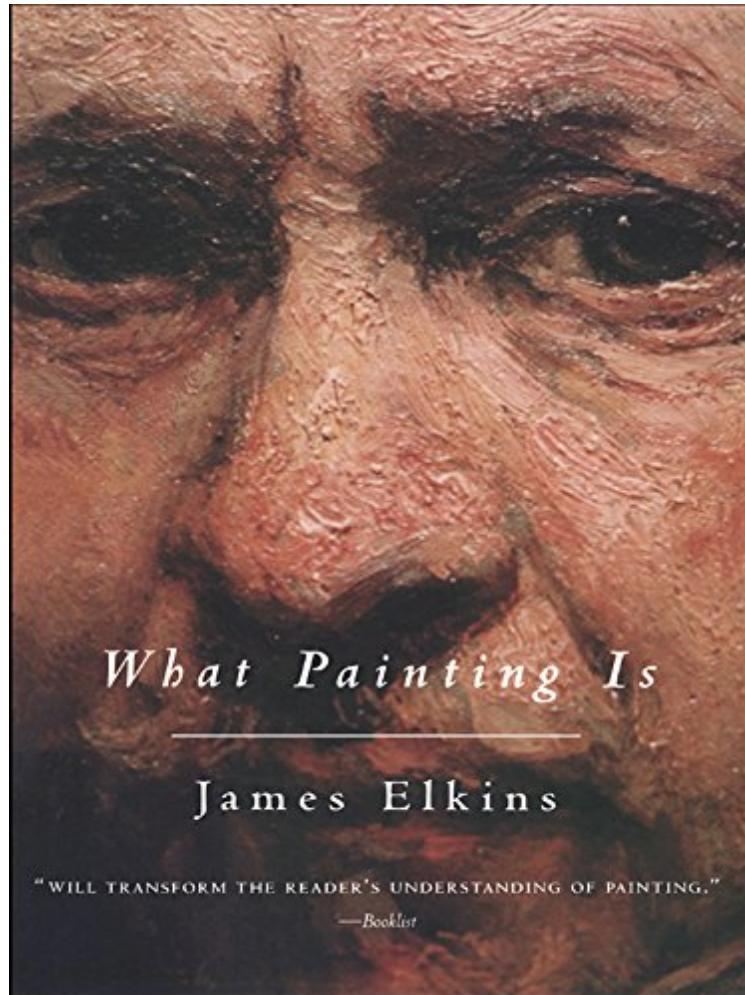


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## What Painting Is

*James Elkins*

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**James Elkins : What Painting Is** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What Painting Is:

34 of 34 people found the following review helpful. Excellent read By Jason Powell Elkins uses alchemy to interpret and read paintings. It sounds strange, but the way he explains it using such an odd device helped me to expand the way I think about art and paintings. It also is a book about paint- not conceptual or computer art or even theory. It is more concerned with the physical act of pushing paint, the solid matter of pigment, and the artisan-like way a painter operates in the studio. If you're a person who is interested in the hands-on experience in art, and like thinking about new ideas, this book will be a lot of fun. If you don't like getting your hands dirty, you may want to look elsewhere. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. My Favorite read this year. By Customer Not sure the exact reason, but this is my favorite read this year. I mix my own paints, and this is the only book that gets the joy of mixing oil pigments and experimenting. I did read this on the Kindle, btw, which was a bit tricky, but still solid. 19 of 20 people found the

following review helpful. Painter's perspective on paintingBy ScottI have been painting for nearly 20 years and this is the first book that I have encountered that has accurately described the material act of painting itself from a painter's perspective. I agree to some extent with other reviewers who complained that the discussions of alchemy were too long and obscure. However, in an age of digital images this foray into obsolete and arcane mucking about is absolutely necessary to explain why paint remains a vital medium. Even without the metaphoric parallels between painting and alchemy, delving into the alchemists kitchen seems like an excellent introduction into the mind of a painter.I have one serious reservation about this book: I do not think that it would be useful for inexperienced painters. It is all too easy to be utterly seduced by the descriptions of lush thickets of paint and exquisite glazes. These must remain a means to greater understanding rather than an end in themselves. Elkins is aware of the problem and devotes a later chapter to self-reference and narcissism.I am keen to try this book out on non-painting friends to see what impression it makes on them...

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