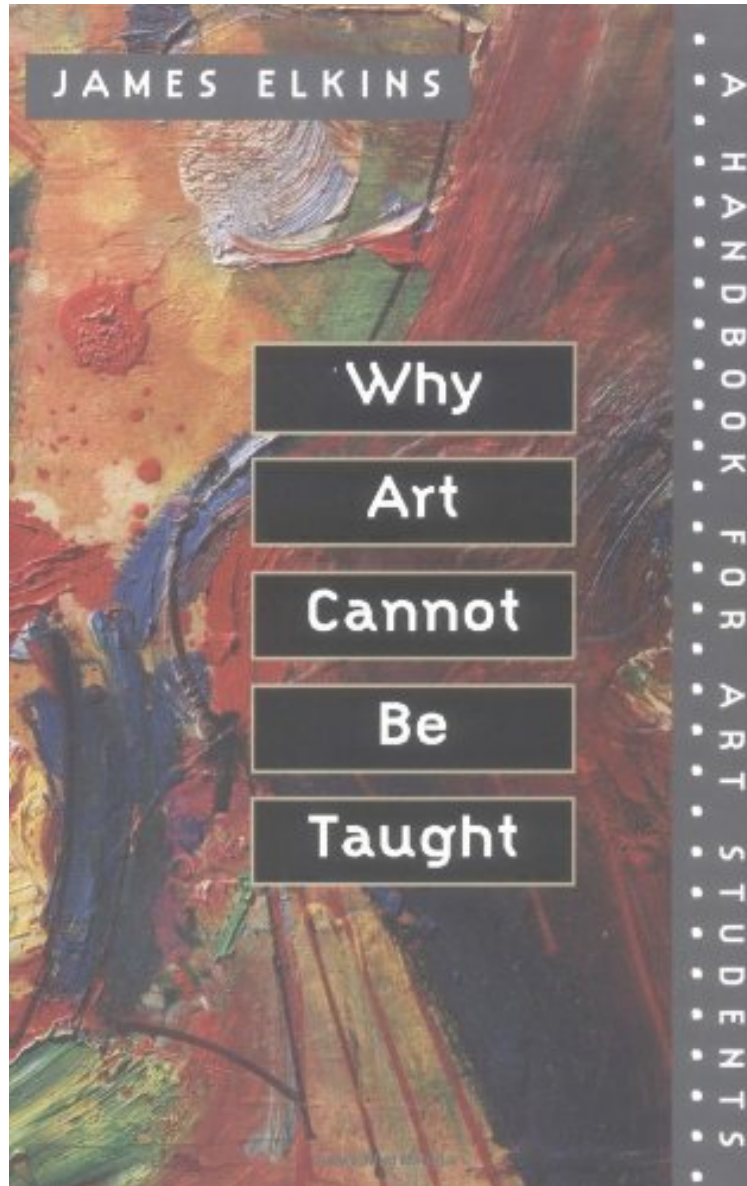


Why Art Cannot Be Taught: A Handbook for Art Students

James Elkins

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#658543 in Books 2001-05-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.25 x .70 x 5.751, .80 #File Name: 0252069501213 pages | File size: 26.Mb

James Elkins : Why Art Cannot Be Taught: A Handbook for Art Students before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why Art Cannot Be Taught: A Handbook for Art Students:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Indeed.By W D BINDINGElkins is right. Even we, in a small art and design school at the ends of the earth, cannot agree on what it is we teach. Good. Its when people pretend that they know, that the trouble starts, and the discourse thickens, and the students glaze over etc etc. Beware of lecturers for

whom the students and their work are the subject-object of a discourse they, the lecturers, are practicing on themselves. The question then becomes, what constitutes a lecturer, and what is a lecture, or a crit, or whatever? I tell my students that I am here to make noises around things that usually don't make noises. They say and do the things that count. Elkins, as usual, clears the air around art. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By CustomerGreat read 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Printgal By Photogirl I was required to buy his book for a class. Never underestimate the things your art professor requires you to read! I wish I had read this years ago...Fantastic.

In this smart survival guide for students and teachers--the only book of its kind--James Elkins examines the "curious endeavor to teach the unteachable" that is generally known as college-level art instruction. This singular project is organized around a series of conflicting claims about art: "Art can be taught, but nobody knows quite how." "Art can be taught, but it seems as if it can't be since so few students become outstanding artists." "Art cannot be taught, but it can be fostered or helped along." "Art cannot be taught or even nourished, but it is possible to teach right up to the beginnings of art so that students are ready to make art the moment they graduate." "Great art cannot be taught, but more run-of-the-mill art can be." Elkins traces the development (or invention) of the modern art school and considers how issues such as the question of core curriculum and the intellectual isolation of art schools affect the teaching and learning of art. 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 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. *Why Art Cannot Be Taught* is a response to Elkins's observation that "we know very little about what we do" in the art classroom. His incisive commentary illuminates the experience of learning art for those involved in it, while opening an intriguing window for those outside the discipline.

From Publishers Weekly In *Why Art Cannot Be Taught: A Handbook for Art Students*, James Elkins (The Object Stares Back), professor of art history, theory and criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, paints a nasty picture of what goes on in art schools. Critiques of students' art are comparable to "psychodramas," with the usual result of the criticized artist breaking down into tears. The chapter "Teaching and Learning Mediocre Art" begins from a sour premise, that "most artists do not make interesting art." Art students and teachers might find a grim sort of gallows accuracy in this deadly portrait of their activities. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "Instead of proposing drastic changes in the way that art is instructed, Elkins asks that schools and art departments try to understand what they are already doing He advises students to use a chain of questions process to try to uncover the teachers' reasoning and unexamined assumptions Whether you're an artist, a teacher, an administrator, or a student, I encourage you to explore your own questions through *Why Art Cannot Be Taught*."--Teaching Artist Journal