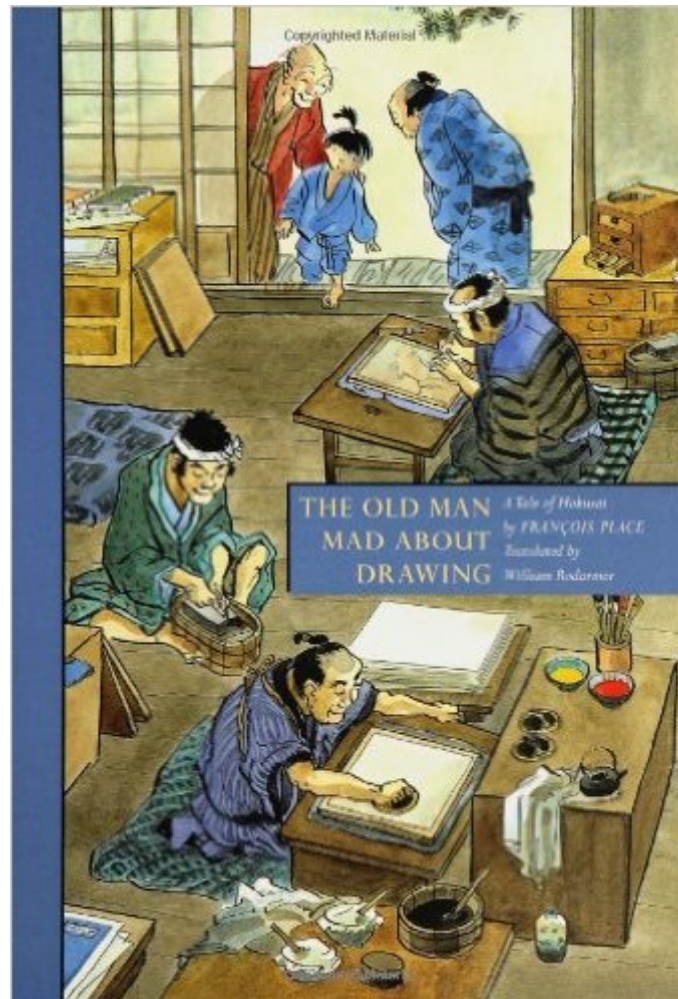


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# The Old Man Mad About Drawing: A Tale Of Hokusai



## Synopsis

In 1993, François Place's *The Last Giants* was universally acclaimed a work of great, if heartbreaking, originality. In this recent effort, he brings to life the immortal Japanese illustrator and printmaker Hokusai. And just as he made real the "land of the giants," so he brings the reader into the swirling and vibrant world of Tokyo. Trained early as an engraver, Hokusai studied under the master Sunsho, producing illustrated volumes of verse. His first manga volume followed in 1814, after he abandoned the traditional style of engraving to perfect the technique of the colored woodcut, in what many consider his greatest work, *The 36 Views of Mt Fuji*. His life was unsettled, his marriages uncertain, and his business affairs irregular, but his energy was boundless. He left for posterity thousands of sketches and drawings, illustrated books and prints, saying just before he died in 1889 "If heaven gives me ten more years (or even an extension of five), I shall certainly become a true artist." The exuberance of his life is marvelously conveyed in Place's tribute to an artist who clearly ranks among his heroes. Both have the same genius for draughtsmanship, the perfectly defined, energetic stroke, the subtle wash. We see the humor and pathos of Hokusai's life, recorded through the eyes of a young apprentice. This is a lovely book by an artist and writer we consider among the very best of his generation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a librarian I see many, many books and this is a definite favorite. The simple story of the great Ukiyoe master, Hokusai, and his young apprentice, Tojiro, is told with humor and feeling. Along the way, there are lessons about being young and old, about persistence and talent. Many of the stories about Hokusai and his artwork are based on fact, such as his most famous Great Wave of

Kanagawa from the collection Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji and his "thought-up drawings" in Hokusai Manga. As wonderful as the story is, the illustrations may be the very best part of this book. Francois Place's paintings are a story in themselves. The illustrations are colorful, well executed, with a subtle oriental flavor. Interspersed with Hokusai's own woodblock prints, they appeal to adults and children who love art, Japan, or just a warm and heartfelt story. I recommend *Old Man Mad About Drawing* to children, parents, and anyone who loves interesting stories blended with captivating art.

Francois Place has cleverly built this story about a mentoring relationship between the revered artist, Hokusai, and a young apprentice he names "sparrow." In the process of learning to serve "the old man mad about drawing" the sparrow, Tojiro, is introduced to the progressive stages of Hokusai's art. At first the old man seemed scraggly & wild to the boy; then he grew to appreciate the humor & many-faceted talents of the artist. Tojiro was taught to read, make inks and serve in many capacities. Each time I hold this book the 'feel' of it pleases me. The font, Perpetua, is discussed in the back. There is also a Glossary - illustrated, naturally! The book's illustrations are plentiful and filled with the energy of Hokusai's "manga" - the sketchbooks which also brought him fame. Because Francois Place is both author & illustrator of "The Old Man . . ." he had the freedom to paint chapter headings as vertical 'capsules' showing what each chapter is about. Place has a strong individual style that has brought him success as an illustrator, & Reviewer mcHAIKU is eager to search for his other titles. The warmth of the relationship between teacher and student is shown when, during a walk together, the master whispers to Tojiro, "Learn to look in silence, if you don't want noise to drive away the beauty of fragile things that are before your eyes." On page 96, Place has an amusing sketch of the master letting the boy leave to find his future, tethered by a rope inked in by paintbrush. Hokusai's assessment of his own growth as an artist was added to his now-famous album of "One Hundred Views of Mount Fugi." (see page 100), This statement giving perspective on aging, persistence and achievement should be used at all seminars for 'seniors'. Long after his death in 1889, HOKUSAI IS A ROLE MODEL FOR TODAY.

Not only is this book interesting, it is fun! The illustrations are creative, colorful, catchy and in the style of hokusai. Although it is probably a children's book, I love it. It is also a good read.

I've just finished reading 'The Old Man Mad About Drawing: A Tale of Hokusai' by Francois Place, and I have to say that it is one of the most charming books I've read in a long while. It is a book for

young readers, but it is such a lovely volume that I think adults will also find it enchanting... I certainly did. It tells the story of Tojiro, a nine year old orphan who sells rice cakes in nineteenth century Edo, and his relationship with one of his customers, a grumpy old artist... Hokusai. Hokusai takes a shine to the boy, who he affectionately refers to as 'Sparrow,' and soon takes him on as his assistant. The artist teaches him to read, introduces him to the process of woodblock printing, and little Sparrow learns all about Hokusai's earlier works. The relationship between artist and pupil is most endearing and there is a great deal of humour and warmth in the text. On each and every page there is an illustration... either a reproduction of one of Hokusai's designs (when it is relevant to the text), or one of Place's fantastic sketches of Hokusai and his little apprentice or of nineteenth century Edo and its colourful inhabitants. If you want to introduce a young reader, or an adult beginner for that matter, to Japanese prints then this is the book to do it with.

Introduce your child to the Edo Period with this wonderful story about an apprentice in Hokusai's studio. The prose and illustrations are very charming and a fun way to learn about Japan's most celebrated artist.

I am not a collector of books. Not really. But after seeing (and buying) Francois Place's book *The Last Giants* this summer, I knew that I would also want to own this book by him. It arrived from in the mail today and it is thrilling. It tells the story of an orphaned boy who lives with his uncle and aunt and sells rice cakes in the streets of Edo to earn his keep. He meets a "crazy old man," who turns out to be the 90-year-old artist Hokusai. The boy becomes Hokusai's apprentice. There are beautiful drawings of street life in Edo (modern-day Tokyo), a Kabuki performance, a Sumo wrestling match, and night-time boating on the Sumida River.

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