

Hokusai Says

Hokusai says Look carefully.
He says pay attention, notice.
He says keep looking, stay curious.
He says there is no end to seeing.

He says Look Forward to getting old.
He says keep changing,
you just get more who you really are.
He says get stuck, accept it, repeat yourself
as long as it's interesting.

He says keep doing what you love.
He says keep praying.
He says every one of us is a child,
every one of us is ancient,
every one of us has a body.
He says every one of us is frightened.
He says every one of us has to find a way to live with fear.

He says everything is alive—
shells, buildings, people, fish, mountains, trees.
Wood is alive.
Water is alive.
Everything has its own life.
Everything lives inside us.
He says live with the world inside you.

He says it doesn't matter if you draw, or write books.
It doesn't matter if you saw wood, or catch fish.
It doesn't matter if you sit at home
and stare at the ants on your verandah or the shadows of the trees
and grasses in your garden.

It matters that you care.
It matters that you feel.
It matters that you notice.
It matters that life lives through you.

Contentment is life living through you.

Joy is life living through you.
Satisfaction and strength
are life living through you.
Peace is life living through you.
He says don't be afraid.
Don't be afraid.
Look, feel, let life take you by the hand.
Let life live through you.

Roger Keyes

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Roger Keyes (1942 – 2020) was a scholar of Japanese prints and co-author, with Timothy Clark, of *Hokusai: Beyond the Great Wave* (2017). You can hear him read his poem, "Hokusai Says," here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-_6K56uz-k.