Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Shimputai

Work and commentary / Professor
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【Lesson 21】

Thinking about Emphasis

Nowadays, we do not have a lot of opportunities to go out into forests or mountains, and we do most of our floral material selection at flower shops. Due to developments in horticulture, cultivation, and distribution, most kinds of plants in shops are available throughout the year, regardless of the season. And, many of the plants have straight stems, which can fit more easily into boxes. Although admittedly, it has become easier to obtain rare, foreign species and gorgeous improved varieties.

Regarding the places where the works are to be displayed, our living environments and concepts of interior decoration have diversified with the blending of Japanese and Western styles.

And alongside the changes in circumstances surrounding floral materials and our living environment, our understanding of how to capture the beauty of plants itself has changed. We used to appreciate the natural appearance of plants stylized in a floral pattern. Today, however, the shape, color, and texture of flowers, leaves, and stems are all handled separately before then being combined to express beauty. It was in a state of affairs such as this in which *shoka shimputai* was introduced as a new style of ikebana in which tradition and innovation are fused with one another.

In introducing *shoka shimputai* in his textbook in 1977, Headmaster Sen'ei Ikenobo described:

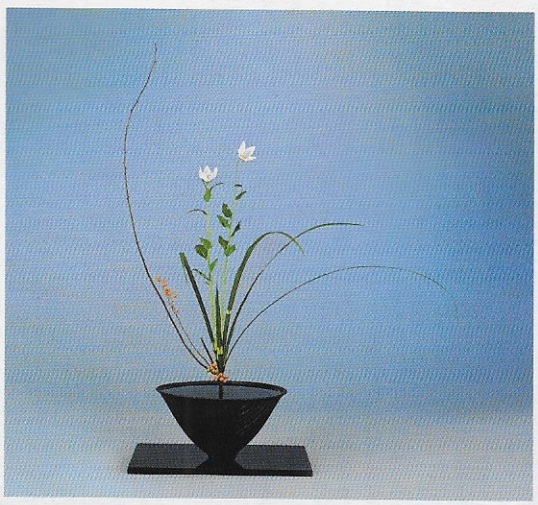
"I tend to believe that the source of ikebana is our feelings emerging even before they are realized with form, and these feelings must be ones that other people of the time can relate to. The expression of the creator must be appreciated by his or her contemporaries."

That means the creation of a *shimputai* work begins with deeply powerful emotions.

The subject of this emotion is *shu*, and the supporting character supplementing *shu* is *yo*. The emotion, atmosphere, and mood produced by *shu* and *yo* are the high points of the work, or the essence of *shimputai* expression. *Shoka shimputai* is an expression of the creator's heart, and it is important that their emotions show up clearly in the work. And of course, it must be an expression that is able to be understood and taken to heart by others around us. In other words, we must pursue a sensibility which is sophisticated, stylish, and modern.

One of the three particular features of *shoka shofutai* is emphasis, which is the theme of this edition. Emphasis is described in the above-mentioned textbook as "shown by a pure, bright living thing in an environment surrounded with colorful inorganic materials." In order to express the brightness within the living thing, its front and back sides, its size, length, and density, its strength or weakness, whether it is straight or curved, or bright or dark, and the intensity of *shu* and *yo* are all differentiated while working to bring a sense of harmonized unity to the work.

In this work, Oriental bittersweet lends a feeling of tenseness by rising up sharply as *ashirai*, and emphasizes what almost appears to be a pure, fresh breeze around the work.



* Japanese texts and pictures: p.28-29