Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Shimputai

Work and commentary / Professor
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【Lesson 29】

Kabuwake in a *Shoka Shimputai*

Contemporary Japanese homes are quite often a mixture of Japanese and Western styles, and the décor within them has very much diversified. Concomitantly, people's perspectives on enjoying the beauty of plants are changing as well. Instead of merely appreciating the natural appearance of the plants, creators are trying to focus on the shape, color, and texture of each flower, leaf, and branch, combining them to express their beauty. *Shoka shimputai* is a new style of *shoka* which adapts to all of these changes.

In *shoka shimputai*, creators select floral materials from a wide variety of options with their own senses and combine them creatively. They capture different aspects of floral materials based on their image, focus on their color, shape, as well as the vitality and emotion within them, and compose them while considering the correspondence between the main and responding branches.

The simple structure of this floral style consists of two main branches and additional *ashirai* branches which all closely correspond with one another. Enhancing the correspondence and resonance between the different branches effectively expresses the plants' lively impression. The flavor and elegance of the seasons, as well as a variety of different emotions can all be seen in works of *shoka shimputai*. You can even express yet unexplored aspects of yourself or meaning that goes beyond merely how you feel, all through the rhythm, strength, sharpness, or sense of tension within the plants. *Shoka shimputai* calls for the expression of the innermost thoughts of contemporary people.

The technique of *kabuwake* (dividing floral materials into two or more groups) is used in *shoka shimputai*, just like *shoka shofutai*. Using the *kabuwake* technique can expand the range of expression, enhance the creativity of the work, produce harmony between floral materials, vases and the environment, as well as improve spatial structure. Good combination of floral materials can produce unprecedented effects, and expressions unachievable with only one group are possible by using *shu* and *yo* branches dynamically.

When dividing floral materials into two groups, they are positioned side by side. Which side each one is to be positioned on is not specifically defined, but they are positioned based on the expression of the work or how *shu* and *yo* branches correspond to each other. Which group the *shu*, *yo*, and *ashirai* branches should be positioned in is not defined either, and they can be sorted freely depending on what the creator intends to express.

In *shoka shofutai*, floral materials are generally divided into two groups in two different ways. In *suirikuike* arrangements, *okamono* (land plants) and *mizumono* (water plants) are positioned separately as two groups, while in *gyodoike* arrangements, two different *mizumono* materials are divided into two groups. In *shoka shimputai*, however, floral materials are seldom divided based on whether they are *okamono* or *mizumono*.

There are three ways to position the two separate groups in *shimputai* works: positioning the two groups in one vase using one *kenzan*, positioning them in a wide-mouthed vase using two *kenzan*, and positioning each of them in two different vases to provide a certain three-dimensional effect.

In *shoka shofutai*, the bigger group (the one with the *shin* branch) is regarded as *okabu* (male group) and the smaller group as *mekabu* (female group). In *shimputai*, the groups are simply called right group or left group, regardless of their size.

In this work, dividing the floral materials into two groups enhances the image of pleasant breeze.

* Japanese text and picture: p.32-33