

# Free Style

Work and commentary :  
Professor

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## 【Lesson 85】

### Ikenobo Free Style: Features

#### The term “free style”

Today, “free style” collectively refers to any ikebana arrangements having no prescribed floral patterns. Free style is said to have developed during the end of the Taisho Era (1912-1926) and continuing into the early Showa Era (1926-1989) as a means of developing a new type of ikebana suited to the times.

In those days, in Ikenobo, ikebana arrangements not considered *kakuhana* (styles considered dignified) or devoid of a *mizugiwa* (the part of the roots of the floral materials just above the water surface) were defined as *nageire* or *moribana*, and collectively referred to as *oyobana* (ikebana based on the structure of *rikka* and *shoka*). They were not called “free style” until sometime after World War II. The term “free style” first appeared in the magazine “Kado” in 1969 to indicate ikebana of flexible structures. The choice of the name for the style suggests the desire to pursue flexible ikebana arrangements qualifying as Ikenobo ikebana while distinguishing them from the ornamental ikebana arrangements popular in post-World War II days.

#### Free style as Ikenobo ikebana

Currently, 257 schools of ikebana belong to the Japan Ikebana Art Association. Among them, Ikenobo is the only school with three styles of ikebana: *rikka*, *shoka*, and free style. This carries great significance for Ikenobo free style, as Ikenobo practitioners engage in free style only after studying and apprehending *rikka* and *shoka*. Practitioners learn the fundamental principles of ikebana defined in “Ikenobo Sen’no Kuden (Oral Teachings of Ikenobo Sen’no),” study the aesthetic structures of prescribed patterns by practicing *rikka* and *shoka* arrangements, and only then create free

style arrangements in pursuit of sensibilities, individuality and expressions adapted to the new era. This is a subtle but noteworthy characteristic underlying Ikenobo free style as ikebana.

Meanwhile, Ikenobo free style is tasked with conveying a type of plant appeal which is unconveyable in *rikka* or *shoka* arrangements. We are required to create works that educe the fresh beauty of plants for future while fulfilling traditional aesthetics, aesthetics of the times, and the aesthetics of the creator.

The aim is to create a distinct free style arrangement suited to the times, based on a solid grasp of traditional aesthetics. Instead of relying on sensibilities of the past, we should set our eyes on the future, as we are required to create works that resonate with Ikenobo practitioners and non-practitioners alike.

To create such works, we should observe the world at large rather than focus solely on ikebana. We can take interest in and draw inspiration from various fields such as videos, photographs, paintings, fashion and interior design. ■



<Ikebana in the Japanese-modern style, for display during the New Year's Season>