

Free Style

Work and commentary :
Professor

Yasuto Sasaki

【Lesson 86】

Materials for Free Style

Rikka and *shoka* use plants alone as materials for composing works. Plants applied to this purpose are called “floral materials.”

As it happens, though, materials used for free style are not limited to plants. Many different types of materials can be used as required for the creator’s expressive intentions. Materials for free style are categorized as follows:

1. Floral materials

A: Materials that are alive and require water

Commonly used materials such as *edamono* (branch materials), *hamono* (leafy materials), cut flowers and potted plants.

B: Processed floral materials

Materials retaining plants’ original forms but that are dried, dyed or decolorized to create distinctive impressions or feelings, and bring about atmospheric types which cannot be realized with unprocessed floral materials. Unique features of a natural plant are enhanced by being processed in various ways, so that the material suggests certain images such as the passage of time. Preserved flowers also fall into this category. There are increasing varieties of processed floral materials owing to developments in processing technology, one reason for the growing popularity being the utility of materials requiring no watering.

2. Non-floral materials

All types of materials excepting plants. Various types

of materials can be used, including metal, plastic, paper, styrene foam, glass or stickers. Items beautifully designed using these materials, such as a chain made of one such material, can also be used to compose arrangements. It is also possible to use seasonal decorations, such as those for New Year’s or Christmas ornaments.

Why is the use of non-floral materials permitted in free style? Whereas *rikka* arrangements represent natural landscapes and *shoka* arrangements convey the beauty of the *shussho* (intrinsic, specific properties) of plants, free style is granted a broader range of expressive intentions. In addition, free style arrangements can be displayed in various environments. The use of non-floral materials is permitted because it enables types of expression unachievable in *rikka* and *shoka* and because these materials expand the range of emotions that an arrangement may give rise to in observers.

Floral materials, processed floral materials, and non-floral materials — which should be the focal point of expression? Naturally, floral materials play the main role in an arrangement, with processed and non-floral materials playing supportive roles in which they highlight or complement the attractiveness of the floral material. The principle common to all Ikenobo ikebana styles is that of conveying the “vigor of the plants.”

It is possible to compose a large free style arrangement with a wide use of processed or non-floral materials as the framework. Nonetheless, floral materials should be the focal points of such arrangements.

The sample work uses *Iris ochroleuca* leaves as its main material. The use of wire enhances the chilly impression evoked by the sharp leaves. ■

