

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Free Style

Work and commentary :
Instructor

Yoshitada Sato

【Lesson 88】

Vase and Expression

Ideas for creating free style works

In a subsection entitled “What Ikebana Represents,” “Ikenobo Kadensho 1: Introductory” states:

Ikebana can express the ideals or feelings of its creator, while reflecting the beautiful harmony of nature in flux, the fleeting shifts in accordance with the laws of nature, and the beauty found in the vigor of plant life.

Rikka and *shoka*, which are traditional styles of ikebana, capture the orderly beauty of nature in flux. Both styles represent the vitality of plants in accordance with fixed forms that have been developed over their long history.

In free style, creators focus on the beauty found in a certain aspect of plants, in addition to the orderly beauty of nature in flux. Such aspects include their colors or shapes, and thus creators can compose free style ikebana without any prescribed form. This approach does not mean to deny the beauty of form; it is an attempt to be unique and creative while recognizing the beauty of form.

That is, ideas originate in a flexible perspective according to which we observe plants from diverse viewpoints, including modern ways of viewing and thinking.

Origin of ideas


Commonly, ikebana practitioners begin free style creation by developing a concept for the work. This owes to the facts that there are diverse expressions to select and that no specific theme need be followed. The sources from which creators gain ideas for purposes

and techniques to use for creating a free style arrangement are boundless. We generally learn to gain ideas from the feelings, the materials, the vase, or the event or environment in which the work is to be displayed.

Vase as a material

Vases in *rikka* and *shoka* represent the ground, and function to supply water to floral materials. Here, the focus is placed on the “harmony of nature” composed above the vase. On the other hand, in free style, creators can develop an idea through the impression made by a vase itself. The vase is harmonized with plants as a material of an arrangement, or contrasts with floral materials to enhance their appeal. Namely, the vase can be the focus of the expression.

Moreover, vases are the art objects manifested by their shapes, colors or textures. Harmonization or contrast between these aspects of a vase and the materials generates clues to selecting the materials and structures. In addition, creators can obtain inspiration from certain features of a vase, such as straightness or curvature. In any case, the creator’s expressive intention is clarified when “unity” and “variety” are well balanced in an arrangement.

The sample work portrays scenery in a forest through which the song of the cuckoo echoes. The floral materials are arranged to spread horizontally, representing clumps of trees in the forest. The color of the roses contrasts beautifully with the colors of the other materials, mutually enhancing the work’s attractiveness. The vase featuring the element “surface” evokes the image of a mountain and the sky, and thus provides harmony to the entire arrangement, which uses *Sorbus japonica* as its main material. 



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