

Free Style

Work and commentary :
Professor

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【Lesson 87】

“*Ikeru*” and “*Tsukuru*”

In ikebana, the Japanese verb “*ikeru*” refers the composing of ikebana works. In Ikenobo ikebana, “*ikeru*” conveys a specific sense “maximize the vigor of plants in a vase.” This is the essence of Ikenobo ikebana.

In *rikka*, the act of composing works is conveyed with the verb “*tateru*,” the literal meaning of which is to stand an object upright. This word, “*tateru*,” expresses the fundamental principle of *rikka*. In *shoka*, “*ikeru*” is the verb used, signifying the philosophy of *shoka* in which the vigorous appearance of each plant is maximized in works.

Continuing this discussion, the act of composing free style works has been described by “*tsukuru*,” a verb generally meaning “to make” or “to build.” However, in the context of free style, the verb suggests a more creative aspect. “*Tsukuru*” involves the composing of works based on new types of expression, new ways of capturing the appeal of plants, in new structures. Also in my opinion, the intent is to convey the fundamental values of free style: no prescribed floral patterns, with works aimed at being keenly adapted to the trends of the times.

Composing free style—*ikeru* or *tsukuru*

Recently, it has become common to apply “*ikeru*” to the act of composing free style works, and we see this trend in the revised edition of “Ikenobo Kadensho 2: Elementary.” This shift is based on the policy addressed by the Headmaster Sen’ei Ikenobo: “Observe the characteristics and conditions of each plant, and maximize their innate, most natural and attractive appearance.” His words strongly suggest the direction in which today’s free style should move.

After World War II, free style gained publicity in ikebana arrangements. Many of those were elaborately designed, and often referred to as “ornamental ikebana arrangements.” Things reached the point that creators were pursuing formative design, composing free style works eschewing the use of live plants. In the end, such design-focused arrangements were frowned upon. Ikenobo’s free style has a similar background. In the 1950s, works that were arranged in the construction style or that were elaborately designed experienced a boom in popularity. Even now, some creators mistakenly assume that free style requires deforming the shapes of plants by paring certain portions or inserting wire into stems. The recent trend of describing free style creation with the verb “*ikeru*,” which involves making the most of plants’ natural appearances, is in tune with the changing times.

Composing free style—*ikeru* and *tsukuru*

For all that, merely placing plants in their natural forms into various vases does not constitute the act of “*ikeru*” in free style.

Then what is natural appearance to be demonstrated? How can we enhance it best, in whole or in part? Should arrangements depict landscapes, be tailored to the display occasion or convey feelings? What type of vase is best suited to the intended expression? Creators must consider various structures to educe the appeal of the plants in ways that cannot be achieved in *rikka* and *shoka*, as well as to align with the aesthetics of the modern age. That is, while composing free style arrangement, we must be aware of the concepts underlying both “*ikeru*” and “*tsukuru*.”

Composing an arrangement simply based on the aesthetics of existing floral patterns or neatly organizing natural plants in a unique vase does not qualify a work as free style. We must always be conscious of the concept of “*ikeru*” and pursue free style arrangements reflecting the spirit of the age. ■