

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Shimputai

Work and commentary :
Professor

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【Lesson 89】

The Basics of *Rikka Shimputai*

Shimputai expression is left to the creator's intention, as it arises from the inspiration the creator gains from the encounter with plants. However, it is impossible to create an elegant work merely by arranging plants just as one pleases. To avoid this pitfall, the Headmaster Sen'ei Ikenobo presented three features of *shimputai* as guidelines for expression when he introduced *shoka shimputai* in 1977. The three features are brightness, sharpness and emphasis. Later, when introducing *rikka shimputai* in 1999, he added two additional features expansiveness and luster.

Shimputai has no prescribed floral patterns. As described above, *shimputai* works are composed based on the inspiration that each creator obtains from the encounter with plants. Thus, plants are not observed from the conventional perspective of natural beauty. Rather, we should capture the nature of life latent in plants via the appearance of each plant and via the combination of varied plants. Particularly important in *shimputai* is conveying in the arrangement the bursting vigor of plants that the creator perceives intuitively. The arrangement should convey the creator's latent feeling born of the plants' appearance, expressing the creative intention with even greater impressiveness and emotion.

The above-mentioned five features are the basics of *shimputai*. However, pondering the meaning of these words is not the top priority. What is important is that we enjoy the encounter with various plants, instantaneously capture the vigor latent in them, and convey that vigor in our works.

Nearly fifty years have passed since the introduction

of *shimputai*. The establishment of *shimputai* correlated with circumstances surrounding ikebana, and the style has changed with the trends of the times while continuously evolving. Ikenobo practitioners must always bear in mind the imperative for us to convey in our *shimputai* works the emotions we feel now, at this very moment.

In his book "General Theory of *Shimputai*" (2015) the Headmaster writes, "*Shimputai* is a style for the fast pace of contemporary life." We need to be flexible and responsive to contemporary life with its diversity in living environments, circumstances pertaining to floral materials, and social thinking. For this, we are required to develop perspectives to observe a plant as a single unit, to focus on specific beauty out of a plant, and to determine how to make the most of the plant in its entirety. *Shimputai* pleases us by unveiling the charm of plants via fresh perspectives. 

