

Lesson for Intermediate and Advanced Learners

Free Style

Work and commentary :
Professor

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【Lesson 51】

Free Material

Materials for free style include living plants (floral materials) and plants that are artificially dried, decolorized or dyed (processed materials). Moreover, any material other than plants (non-floral materials) can be used. Nevertheless, to display the vigor of plants, floral materials should be the main element of a work.

The appearance of floral materials decays over time, spoiling the work. In contrast, processed materials and non-floral materials can remain in good condition over time, but the designed nature of their beauty cannot hold the vigor of plants. Accordingly, processed / non-floral materials should be used only as supplements in ikebana works, to effectively change the impression made by a plant. For example, a camellia flower can represent a severe winter with the coldness of stainless-steel material, while it can suggest a spring breeze with dyed or decolorized airy ferns.

As vases support a work as the base and contain water to keep the plants fresh, they are indispensable in *rikka* and *shoka*. In free style, however, vases are regarded as non-floral material. In addition, some restrictions on the use of vases are not applied to free style. For example, in *shoka*, *okiike* (standalone style) vases are not used for *tsurumono* (trailing materials) and *nabikimono* (swaying materials) such as Oriental bitter-sweet or Kerria. Instead, *tsuribana* (suspended style) or *kakehana* (hanging style) vases, ones classified as *so* vases, are generally used to enhance the *shussho* (intrinsic, specific properties) of the plant. In free style, however, such preconceived ideas are unnecessary, with creative and unrestrained expressions being possible. Still, vases must convey meaning in the expression, just as floral

materials do. They should evoke an image of a certain season, or of mountain or waterside scenery, or complement the color, shape, or texture of the floral materials.

In free style, a material's beauty can be captured either in whole or in part. The fundamental idea is to integrally capture the beauty of plants, including its *shussho* and the nature surrounding them, as traditionally seen in *rikka* or *shoka* works. We see the typical examples of these in the plants that bloom in a certain season, such as Prunus or Iris laevigata. In contrast, when capturing beauty via a certain aspect of a plant, creators should focus on each aspect (shape, color, texture etc.) as an element for design, considering each aspect as an individual material for a work.

There is no prescribed method for capturing the beauty of materials; rather, creators should select and position materials in accordance with their expressive intention while making good use of the characteristics of each material. This is what "free material" means in free style. As its name indicates, free style is a style of ikebana in which diversity, flexibility and individuality are valued. However, a free style work must richly express the spirit of the times while displaying the aesthetics of Ikenobo ikebana. Creators must cultivate a broad perspective in evaluating materials and developing varied ways of capturing their beauty, allowing a work to be completed with minimal time spent considering its arrangement.

This work uses a sky-blue basin that creates a soft impression, representing imaginary spring scenery. The basin serves as a material highlighting the surface aspect, and clarifies the expressive intention of the work by enhancing the color effect.

