

THE SOUL OF IKEBANA

The history of Ikenobo is the history of ikebana. Ikebana began with Ikenobo and although over 500 years other schools have branched off from Ikenobo, Ikenobo is said to be the origin of ikebana. Ikenobo's history encompasses both the traditional and the modern, the two continually interacting to encourage new development in today's ikebana.

People in every era have loved flowers, but our predecessors in ikebana felt that flowers were not only beautiful but that they could reflect the passing of time and the feelings in their own hearts. When we sense plant's unspoken words and silent movements we intensify our impressions through form, a form which becomes ikebana.

We arrange plants cut and removed from nature so that they are filled with new beauty when placed in a new environment. Rather than simply re-create the shape a plant had in nature, we create with branches, leaves, and flowers a new form which holds our impression of a plant's beauty as well as the mark of our own spirit. Ikebana should also suggest the forces of nature with which plants live in harmony - branches bent by winter winds ... a leaf half-eaten by insects.

Ikenobo considers a flower's bud most beautiful, for within the bud is the energy of life's opening toward the future. Past, present, future ... in each moment plants, and humans, respond to an ever-changing environment. Together with plants, humans are vital parts of nature and our arranging ikebana expresses this awareness.

Like a poem or painting made with flowers, Ikenobo's ikebana expresses both the beauty of flowers and the beauty of longing in our own hearts. Ikenobo's spirit has spread not only in Japan but throughout the world. It is my deepest hope that the beauty of Ikenobo will increasingly serve as a way of drawing the world's people together.

Sen'ei Ikenobo
45th Headmaster of Ikenobo

IKENOBO'S IKEBANA

Changes over the centuries in customs and living environments are reflected in the evolution of Ikenobo's ikebana styles. Each age has brought new challenges for ikebana to express the spirit of the time. Today's styles include "rikka", "shoka" and the especially modern "free style".

RIKKA

Rikka's origin lies in the 16th century tatehana style. Reaching full flower in the 17th century under Headmaster Ikenobo Senko II, rikka is the source of all later Ikenobo styles. Study continues today of both traditional and modern rikka forms.

To construct rikka's seven or nine basic parts, many contrasting but complimentary materials are arranged in a single vase to express the beauty of a natural landscape. Hidden within the principles of this most representative of ikebana styles is surprisingly fertile ground for variation and adaptation to contemporary environments.

SHOKA

Shoka's origins are in the simpler ikebana of the 18th century. Shoka came fully into flower in the 19th century under Headmaster Senjo Ikenobo.

Shoka shofutai's three main branches, shin, soe and tai, form a unity which expresses life's perpetual change and renewal. We present our impression of a plant's essence simply and beautifully. Shoka rises gracefully from the water's edge ("mizugiwa") filled with our feeling of the life hidden in each branch, leaf and flower.

Shoka shimputai, a new style developed by the present headmaster, Sen'ei Ikenobo, presents a bright, modern feeling. The two main parts, shu and yo, respond to each other with contrasting yet harmonious qualities. A third part, ashirai, is often added as a finishing touch.

FREE STYLE

Free style is the most recent to emerge from Ikenobo's long tradition. As a more personal expression it is suited to contemporary environments and tastes. Free style is sometimes broadly divided into a naturalistic style and a more abstract style. Both styles use plant materials in new ways, yet respect the beauty and essential qualities of each material. Flowing from the arranger's inventiveness in using materials to convey an effect or mood, free style's possibilities are unlimited.

IKENOBO HEADQUARTERS

As a continuing center in the world of ikebana, the Ikenobo Headquarters in Kyoto stands adjacent to the Rokkakudo temple where ikebana began over 500 years ago. The Headquarters is home for communication, ongoing study, and workshops for Ikenobo's professors and students from throughout Japan and the world. Here at the center of Ikenobo's rich tradition students receive both classical training and encouragement to explore ikebana's most modern forms.