



### A Strange Arrangement

Some one had made a big mistake. The manager was not happy, he had no idea how many of the measurements had gone unnoticed, and how many of the ornamental measuring kits had been manufactured, packaged and sold. He reached for the phone and called the production team, telling them to halt all activity. This was hardly what he wanted a week before christmas. The manager worked in an industry that could not afford to make any mistakes. For years, they had worked hard with the neuro-aesthetics researchers to promote the mathematically proven school of Ikebana, finally making the aesthetic forms of flower arranging an empirically studied art-form. Things were actually going well, with some of the observations of formal and environmental qualities being co-opted by the art and design world, culture had begun to take note of this new system.

Ettore set up the camera, and prepared for the latest of his broadcasts, he had stopped competing a while ago. The table was set, a clean cloth hung low to the ground, and the background was illuminated by a projector. For over a year now he had filmed his arrangements, which were hardly in line with the new rules of Ikebana. The governing body had said it was the worst form of arranging they had ever seen, that there must have been a mistake in his calculations. For some time Ettore had accepted his creations as defective, ugly or wrong, but he began to receive anonymous messages, praising his style, and was urged to set up regular video casts in hard to find places.

He began, with a flurry of activity, his style was undoubtedly unique, the tools laid out on the table suggested this even before he used them, and the projection of analytics behind him had no resemblance to the normal Ikebana user interface. He screwed his face up and thrust a branch next to the vase, gluing it down with a stapler, scanning the leaves with the endoscope he found the least riveting points, and began to highlight them with blossom, frantically dropping his ornamental callipers in the act of what seemed to be pure improvisation. That was a dirty word now, and long since forgotten about. Regaining his composure, the performance continued.

The ancient art of flower arranging had been in turmoil. The rules set out over centuries of practise had changed from a being rooted in a spiritual arrangement of nature into yet another realm of self expression, and at the meeting of the most important descendants of the ancient schools of Ikebana it was decided that something had to be done. It was a well known principle that the art form was supposed to react and identify with the cultural changes in aesthetic appreciation, but at this point in time none of the current trends resembled anything of the old beauty that Ikebana had always encapsulated. Change was needed, and a vote was taken. Reform beauty, retain the past, but use the latest technologies to achieve a new standard, a new perspective.

They brought in the latest exile of western neuroscience, she was familiar with Ikebana, and had in fact used the principles of Ikebana as the basis for her research on neuro-aesthetics, a journey to discover the true science of aesthetic appreciation. Banished by his own scientific community, he had sought refuge in the east, a far more open and appreciative audience, who could accept his endeavour for defining something abstract.

Her approach was truly incredible, expanding the old rules of distance ratios and colour combinations, he embarked on a definition of harmony, and included newer considerations such as temperature, atmosphere, genetic relationships and the florists real time mood, which could all contribute to the effectiveness of an arrangement. New equipment was developed to achieve these precise measurements, from measuring tools to computer interfaces. Ikebana was now more of a clinical operation, but the governing body loved it. the technologised alterations offered something that they had craved, stability.

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