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SYMMETRY IN IKEBANA

“EXHIBIT” (Discipline: VISUAL ARTS)

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The concept of symmetry is central in visual arts and art-related theory; it has, however, not been systematically applied before to the analysis of ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement) probably because it is widely believed that the Japanese traditional arts prefer asymmetrical structures. Yet, as the present paper claims, symmetrical and dissymmetrical structures are quite common in ikebana; organization, symbolism, spiritual and social meaning, history, as well as formal rules and implements of ikebana can be better explained via the symmetry theory.

The paper considers the degree of symmetry, symmetry transformations and successive asymmetrization in the elementary forms (“A”, “B”, “C” and “D”) and basic styles (“Upright”, “Slanting”, “Cascading”, “Heavenly” and “Contrasting”) of Ohara school of ikebana. Symmetry is seen as an integral part of creating a visual balance of shape, texture and colour, which is the goal of ikebana. Superficial formal structure of flower arrangement is accounted for from the viewpoint of symmetry theory along with the hidden subdivision into three horizontal planes

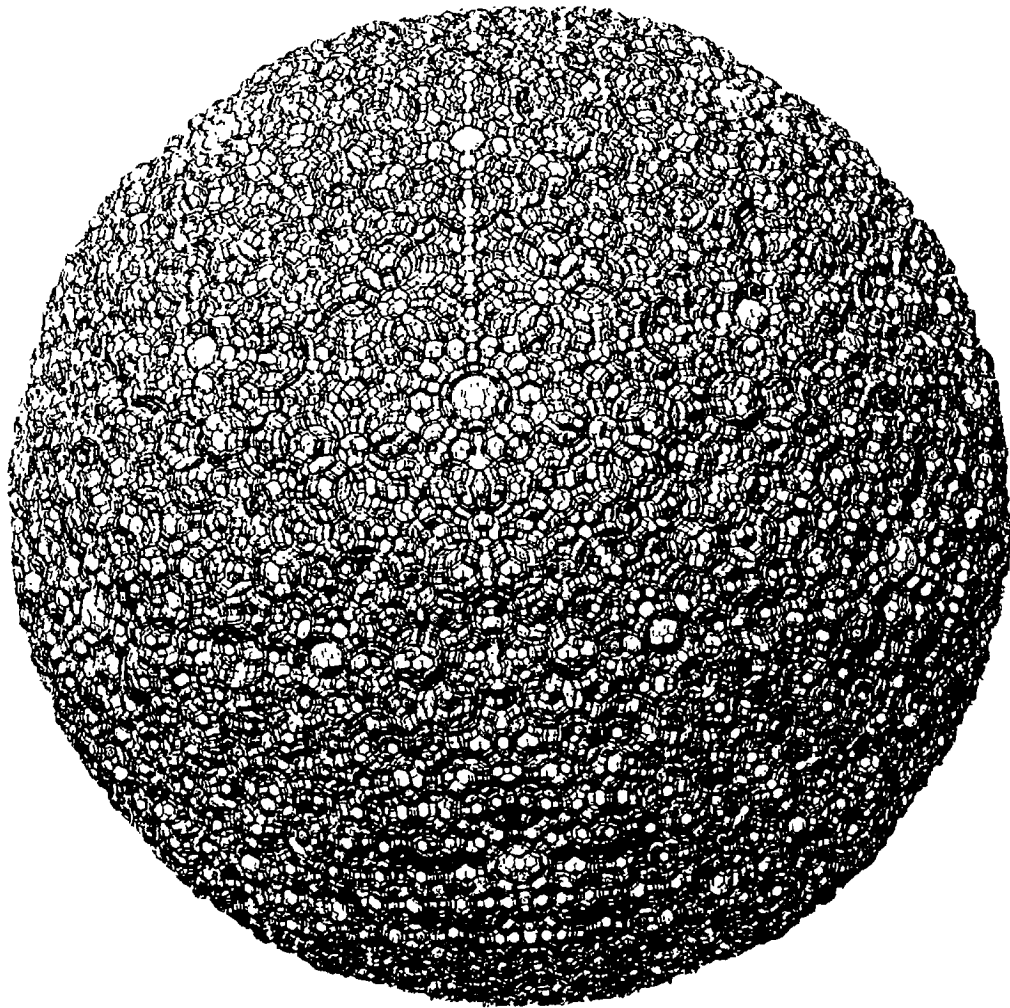
(“the earth”, “the man”, “the heaven”). The latter planes can be seen as transforms of each other.

Michael Leyton’s interpretation of symmetry as a tool to extract time from shape is employed to explain the claim of ikebana for rendering time, movement and power. Psychological role of curvature extrema is shown to be accounted for in the technique of shaping material, organization and formal rules of ikebana arrangements.

Finally, the paper attempts to explain the symmetry in ikebana through its function, history and philosophical meaning.

THE EXHIBIT IS PRESENTED ON TWO POSTERS WITH
EXPLANATIONS

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