

A Model of Creative Achievement

The model below (based on Sawyer's sociocultural model) synthesizes insights from 60 years of research on creativity.

1. ***Creative achievement is hard work***
 - People undertake this hard work because creativity is one of the peak experiences of life
 - Creative people may lead wild and crazy lives outside the studio (or they may not!), but in the studio they are focused, disciplined, persistent, and greatly tolerant of frustration and tedium
 - Creative people also learn how to stop working and relax, to avoid burnout and recharge physical and emotional energy
2. ***Creative achievement is usually an incremental step beyond what has come before***
 - Creativity is the ability to generate and build on mini-insights
 - Creativity involves skills in problem-finding, not just problem-solving
 - The problems and mini-insights are innovations based in knowledge of what has gone before
3. ***Creative achievement rarely emerges from a solitary individual; it nearly always is the result of ongoing interaction with others who are in the field***
 - The field includes both practitioners and audiences (often made up mainly of practitioners!)
 - Interaction doesn't necessarily mean formal collaboration: think of the model of the critique as a form of structured interaction
 - Fundamental to creative achievement is knowledge of the domain (both experiential and book-learning)
 - Remember that within every large domain is a multi-leveled group of domains
 - Fundamental to creative achievement is a willingness to identify, seek out, and engage with the field
 - Remember that within every large domain is a multi-leveled group of fields
4. ***Creative achievement requires setting up the proper work habits and environment for achievement and may involve substantive changes in the way things are done***
 - Creative achievement requires self-knowledge and self-discipline
 - To achieve self-knowledge requires structured practices of self-inquiry
 - To achieve self-discipline means figuring out the precise way of organizing your life that allows you to stick with things through a long process to the end
5. ***Creative achievement almost always results from intrinsic motivation, not from motives like making money or gaining fame***
 - The money and fame might be nice, but creative people would do the work even if it did not lead to money and fame; and they continue to do it after they are rich and famous
 - Achieving flow is a powerful intrinsic motivator