

# Final Product Elaboration

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**Final Product: “Chapter 17, Table 2,” Mixed Media, 20” x 20”, 2010**

A mixed-media construction may seem an unlikely response to editor Ernesto Villalba’s *Measuring Creativity: The Book* (2009). But after thinking about the principles outlined in Chapter 17, “Fostering and measuring creativity and innovation: individuals, organizations, and products,” by David H. Cropley, it seemed a worthy reply to the author’s emphasis on the role of products to spark growth in individual intellect, and by extension in economies and countries.

In his abstract, Cropley addresses the ways creativity “can be measured, and how these measures must interact in order to fully realize [their] potential...” (p. 257). To drive home his point, he devised a table that represents his syntheses, a model of how social and psychological components relate to the processes of creativity and innovation.

## **Synthesizing and Communicating Originality**

In particular, Cropley's assertion that each element of creativity embodies what he calls on page 261 "a bundle of paradoxes" led me to consider a sequence of abstract paintings I've made over the last year. I weighed how I could fashion this assignment to extend that series and represent my point of view in a highly original product.

In my mid- and large-scale pieces in this series, I've drawn from my life as a writer to incorporate calligraphic and cursive lines in ink, paint, and metallic leaf. These repeated gestural marks range from the refined to the expressive. They effectively form my own alphabet, coming together to build a visual vocabulary. The images that emerge begin subtly, and incorporate shifts of scale and accumulation of layers until a strong sense of unity emerges. That sense can come about with the completeness of a map, or with the statement and restatement of independent works literally cut apart and woven back together into a single piece.

Indeed, Cropley's description of "drawing the threads of business models of innovation with the social/psychological dimensions of creativity," clearly spoke to me of weaving (p. 261). To be sure, Table 2 on page 273, which articulated Process, Motivation, Personal Properties, Feelings, Product and Press as the dimensions of creativity, crystallized the form my expression would take.

## **Representing Creativity**

An examination of how I made this work details how my product is elegant, well-crafted and refined. I assigned colors and painted abstract studies in acrylic and metallic leaf on paper for each dimension. I elaborated the phase paradoxes on each study using my self-created alphabet. For Process, I chose blue, and in black and silver ink wrote about Convergent versus Divergent paradoxes. Motivation, red, I detailed with Reactive/Proactive paradoxes; and Personal Properties,

yellow, I informed with Adaptive versus Innovative paradoxes. Similarly, for Feelings, green, I wrote about Conserving versus Generative paradoxes; Product, purple, Routine versus Creative; and Press, Orange, High Demand versus Low Demand. I then cut each painted, detailed study into strips of varying widths. The variance represents how the dimensions sometimes begin tentatively before proceeding emphatically.

I embellished a black paper matrix with ink and metallic-leaf gestures representing the phases of creativity. I vertically split it into sections standing for Dimension, Phase Paradox, Preparation, Activation, Generation, Illumination, Verification, Communication, and Validation.

### **A Useful Construct**

Then I wove the dimensions and matrix together, realizing Cropley's point about the way phases move in and out of each dimension "at any stage of the innovation process," as he puts it (p. 274). Indeed, it is in this very warp and weft of phases and dimensions that link them into a unified whole, into creativity.

Because he subtitles Table 2 an "Ideal Constellation of Paradoxical Dimensions," I situated my weaving in a constellation wrought of elements common to each dimension; namely, distressed metallic leaf on paper. And to acknowledge what Cropley terms the "differentiated diagnosis of creativity and innovation," I buffered the golden constellation with a torn-edged, slightly smaller square of translucent canary paper to represent the unavoidable vagueness that accompanies the pursuit of innovation (p. 274). I built the layers up with spacers and framed the finished piece.

One of my art mentors used to say that the purpose of a painting was to improve the wall it hangs on. My piece, entitled "Chapter 17, Table 2," does that in a glittering way. It reminds those engaged in active creation to take into account the sharply contrasting factors involved in their work; the

intersections of these factors make their creations unique. While the work communicates Cropley's key points, it articulates those points obliquely. In that way, it admits the possibility that meaningful individual insights can occur during pursuit of a goal.

## **Personal Reflections**

Interestingly, my insights in creating the work itself were amplified in making the video presentation that broadcast it to my cohort. By documenting the steps I used to create the piece (even by posting my progress on my Twitter feed), I constantly traded on the convergent/divergent Process continuum. Using Animoto, a type of software I'd never tried before—one that meshed written captions with images and music—required me to repeatedly contrast the Routine and Creative aspects of making Product. And sharing the work with my classmates on VoiceThread, yet another new-to-me software platform, necessitated contradicting the Low Demand of Generation with the High Demands of Communication and Validation.

Each experience in moving the assignment toward its multi-faceted completion has led me back to the “Ideal Constellation of Paradoxical Dimensions,” and, rewardingly, to fresh product ideas for expanding my calligraphic series into a new year.