

1 Discipline = Fun! – where is the work and what does it mean to work at something so esoteric?

The writer Ernest Hemmingway stood in front of a typewriter typing from 6am to noon every day. Others are lazy as hell and drift a lot. There is no single secret to what it takes to make creative work.

Because art is not real life - it merely reflects (or can reflect) life, as seen through one or more overlays - the making of creative work is more like raising a child than some stereotypic idea of an art party. Andy Warhol's Factory has been portrayed as a non-stop holiday, but Mr. Warhol himself was always working, while the revelers were occasionally starring in his projects. When Steven Spielberg and his team were making the film E.T., no one was doing that type of thing with a big picture company budget, and they spoke of being very scared and concerned that the production company executives even know exactly what they were doing, because of fears that it would seem far too childish and not worthy. Only after it came out and became a success did they breathe sighs of relief.

A child brings great joy, but not always and not every moment. Sometimes they cause you to question everything you are doing for them. The wonderful moments make it all worthwhile, but the difficult successes are also noteworthy for their own value. Sometimes it is merely about finding the fun adventure within the journey, like the Glass Half Full concept.

What do you imagine the process to be? A lot of people imagine the life of a creative person to be a fantasyland full of lazy time, dreaming, and getting paid to enjoy yourself... like some kind of party-planner.

Classical dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov was one of many students of the great Russian ballet teacher, Aleksandr Pushkin (no relation to the author of the same name), and in speaking of his teacher's greatness, Baryshnikov offered one very important insight imparted him by the great Pushkin: "He introduced us to the work."

What he meant by this was that Pushkin instilled in his students an understanding of how important it is to invest in your art form by accepting that it takes a lot of work. If you accept that premise, you will hold yourself responsible for putting in that work, especially when you don't feel like it on those many occasions when it is easier to say, "I'll get to it next time."

There will always come times when nothing is happening and you are losing your way, or already lost. This might seem like a good time to give up, but instead think of it this way: these are part of it too, and must be seen not as "in the way" but as other sections on the timeline. If getting to work when you don't want to is an essential part, so is working through the blockages. The process is not usually a direct line from start to finish. When you look chronologically at your process, you can always see how many stops, starts, turns, shifts and all the rest were there on the timeline. What's harder is to see them when in the middle of the process and feeling blocked, inhibited, prevented or unmotivated. In order to find what is beyond that blocked section, you must be willing to remain with your

process while you feel your way through the block. Not “around” it, but through it. They must be addressed with no more weight than the times of easy flow. Be there with the work when you barely can see the work at all... and you’ll ultimately be rewarded for your investment in the work itself. It all must be acknowledged as a part of the larger creative event.

That’s what Baryshnikov meant about what Pushkin meant. And that’s what I mean when I talk about discipline.

A thing about work: don’t confuse it with the product. Thinking is work and research also is work. Informing yourself about techniques, philosophy, peers, locations, events, festivals, theory and theorists, and dreaming all constitute work, if you remain aware of their intention as concerns your pursuit. There is value in incubation of concepts and ideas, and even internet, social media sites, and video search engines can be time well spent, although trending humor about cats and/or celebrities may not qualify, depending on what your artistic commentary is all about.

If each separate creation is part of the opus of your life’s work, you can see that those events that prove more difficult will also illuminate your understanding of certain techniques, viewpoints, and sensibilities of yours; and they also point you along your path as the valuable mentors they are.

We grow when we address new, unfamiliar territory, and we struggle as we grow; therefor we will always run into difficult times when finding new ways to address the new experiences with which we struggle. If we never struggle, we do not grow.

That is a fundamental part of life; and therefor it also is a fundamental part of a creative life.