

In-Sight Publishing
Ask A Genius 110 - Word, Sunsets, and Fucking¹
Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner
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This session has been edited for clarity and readability.

[Beginning of recorded material]

Rick Rosner: Words represent a lot of conceptual work that has already been done. The word “sunset” represents all of the important stuff that we’ve already thought of about sunsets. It carries that with it as opposed to something that doesn’t really have a name like when concrete gets in my neck, and gets dirty and sweaty, and is not quite a zit, but is concrete dust and sweat encrustations that I can find the next day or the day off and then can scrape them off and flick them across the room.

There’s no word for that yet—little concrete encrustations. It took a lot of work to describe what I am talking about and to establish of what I am talking about. It’s not compact the way a word is compact. If there were a word for it, everyone would know the word for it, especially in the concrete pouring industry. Somebody would say, “Jimbo, you’d got a lub on your neck.” Jimbo reaches over and goes, “Oh, yea.” Then flicks it off.

Words represent a lot of work and compactification that’s already been done. If you need to delve more, if you’re reading a *Scientific American*, into whether there really is a green flash just as the sun dips below the horizon, you can kind of open up your mental picture of what sunsets mean. You can do some work on that. So those are the main three things, and a couple other things.

They are—you can imagine if you’re looking at an information landscape, and if words are important enough, you can see nodes in that landscape, where sunset is represented by a little mini-galaxy of information. We know the word sunset carries with it a bunch of the most needed information about sunsets, just enough to communicate that to every other part of the brain,

¹ Four format points for the session article:

1. Bold text following and including “Scott Jacobsen:” or “S:” is Scott & non-bold text following and including “Rick Rosner:” or “R:” is Rick.
2. Session article conducted, transcribed, edited, formatted, and published by Scott.
3. Footnotes & in-text citations in the interview & references after the interview.
4. This session article has been edited for clarity and readability.

For further information on the formatting guidelines incorporated into this document, please see the following documents:

1. American Psychological Association. (2010). Citation Guide: APA. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/system/files/28281/APA6CitationGuideSFUv3.pdf>.
2. Humble, A. (n.d.). Guide to Transcribing. Retrieved from <http://www.msvu.ca/site/media/msvu/Transcription%20Guide.pdf>.

which means that there is probably local and redundant encoding of information throughout information.

Where we have locally encoded and redundant information in our own space, if someone tells you to picture of a sunset, you don't have to find an actual sunset. You can go to the Internet and find a representation of a sunset. You can find pictures of a sunset. There are available representations of sunsets in lots of places. You can go to an encyclopedia. You can go to an art store.

You can find sunsets all over the place. Local and redundant encoding of stuff. So I would guess that our own, in the interest of efficiency, information spaces have stuff tend to come up not infrequently multiply encoded—coded representations of those things in more than one place because it's handy. One last thing is when you think sunset. Something happens with the sensory input. Your idea of sunset can be disturbed or not.

Probably, for the most part, not, where you know what it is, it is the Sun setting. The Earth is turning and the Sun is apparently dropping in the sky—ba-ba-ba. You know, the sky gets all pink and so that idea of sunset isn't disturbed generally when you think of sunset. You've got the information node devoted to sunset in the information space. There must be ways to light up the galaxy that signals sunset to the rest of your awareness and says, "That's what you're thinking of," without disturbing that node greatly or by disrupting it greatly.

So you know what a sunset looks like, and you're online on a science fiction site that includes three pictures of suns, and so your idea of "Sun" is disturbed because you've got three images of suns in your mind. That represents a general idea or a number of concepts that tee up that word in your brain because they're relevant. But you can imagine having an experience or seeing something online that alters, significantly, what you picture as fucking.

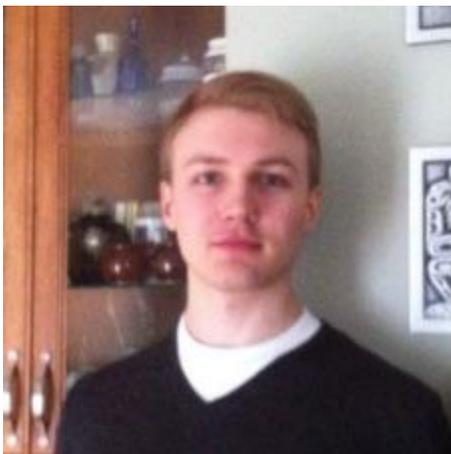
That means that information node, that galaxy, has to be rearranged, which could mean a bunch of energy flows into that via photons, particles, and radiation, extending the metaphor, and blows up a lot of stuff in that galaxy, or something releases or causes the black hole at the center of the galaxy to spew out a lot of stuff. It takes a long time. A lot of stuff is spewed out and coalesces into stars, the stars boil down, and the galaxy has been rearranged. It's been lit up in a way that's disruptive, but you can also light up the galaxy that hasn't been disruptive. So anyway, that's what I've been thinking about.

[End of recorded material]

Authors



Rick Rosner
American Television Writer
RickRosner@Hotmail.Com
Rick Rosner



Scott Douglas Jacobsen
Editor-in-Chief, In-Sight Publishing
Scott.D.Jacobsen@Gmail.Com
In-Sight Publishing

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