

SHE DANCES with HORSES

Stina Herberg's inspiring journey with a herd of rescues on St Vincent Island.
By equine photographer Manuela Stefan of 'Graceful Horses'



"I bring horses and humans together in harmony through a connection built on friendship, trust and respect."



I believe horses are on this planet to help us find our own way back to 'Source' (or however one prefers to call the place where nothing but love exists).

With remarkable patience for humankind, these incredible animals invite us constantly to join them in a state of oneness and pure connection.

In their majestic presence, our hearts synchronize rhythms with theirs and slow down, so we can fully surrender to the moment.

All that horses ask of us is to stay open to who they are; to partner with them while respecting their deep need for freedom; to understand that, when treated as equals and seen for their immense sensitivity, they are so very willing to come our way and never leave our side. Then the dance can begin.

Meeting Stina Herberg: A dream come true

A few years back I was guided to learn about Stina's amazing story with a herd of abandoned-turned-feral horses and, as it often happens in my life, I just knew I had to meet her. And I finally did: this past January I traveled to the lush and scenic St Vincent island.

Stina's experience with this herd, unfolding over a period of more than 10 years, is not easy to describe in a few paragraphs...like any personal journey, it is a complex story of patience, constant search and learning, resilience, openness of the heart and of course, the transformative power of love.

Stina's Story

Stina's journey with horses began at the age of ten when she fell in love with her first equine friend. Over the years she worked with Icelandics, trained trotters for race, took dressage and Western lessons and rode in India, Morocco and Mozambique.

Originally from Norway, Stina was brought to St Vincent in 2007 by a job opportunity: to lead the 'Richmond Vale Academy', which is an educational institution.

Soon after her arrival on St Vincent, Stina encountered a herd of feral horses. Brought over to the island 8-10 yrs prior and originally meant for trail rides, the horses were abandoned by their owners and left to survive the hard way. The original herd had sixteen members, but nine had already died. The last seven survivors were brought to Richmond Vale. And the journey began.

"When I came to St. Vincent I thought I knew quite a bit about horses but...when I rescued the wild herd, I realized I had to start over", explains Stina.

Rehabilitation and Natural Horse Management

Once at Richmond Vale, the horses were allowed to live together in a big pasture with a long road leading to

their water source, so their hooves would trim naturally.

"The horses were dewormed, we got the ticks off, and slowly they gained weight. We started to use their manure in the organic vegetable garden and many local people found the horses very interesting as there are not many of them around", explained Stina.

But the horses were still distant, seemed frightened and even showed signs of aggression at times. Faced with behaviour she had not previously encountered, Stina had to reconstruct her approach and find new ways to connect.

Building the connection

For weeks to come, Stina had spent time observing the herd dynamics without interference and began to get insight into the horses' language. "I did not want to use force. I intended to find a way to communicate with the horses. I wanted to help them relax and enjoy my company and the reason-

able challenges I presented to them. I studied with Carolyn Resnick, but most of all I studied my horses. I learned to wait for them to interact with me. While hanging out with them, I made them move a bit forward, showed them the way to the fruit trees, and sometimes I picked fruit for them. We built mutual trust and I copied their companionship interactions. The bond grew as I was learning their language. I became one with the herd." said Stina.

With the most difficult times already behind them (even though the learning never really ends), this admirable woman and her herd are now at a point of visible harmony, trust and joy in their interaction. They are a delight to watch moving together in synch and offering a spectacle of deep union. "Sometimes I just sit in the moonlight with the horses, watching the stars while feeling their breath and listening to the deep sounds of the rain forest.", says Stina.

I really enjoyed my walks to the

beach with Stina and her herd and captured their playfulness on camera, while contemplating the deep trust they have for each other.

More so, these horses are now very open and welcoming of all humans. I felt so much peace and joy around them, I could not wait for the mornings to come, so I could visit them again. I was very touched by their gentleness and could see my own soul in their loving eyes.

The horses came this far simply because a human was willing to be there for them in the most understanding and compassionate of ways.

Stina as Teacher

Stina's profound knowledge built through the interaction with her rescues is now an inspiration to many. Students from around the world visit Richmond Vale where Stina teaches the language of horses and how to work with them at liberty.

"I bring horses and humans together in harmony through a connection built on friendship, trust and respect. I teach about how to have better relationships in life from what you learn from horses. I show you how to win a horse's respect, how to keep a horse interested in learning and performing and how to create a perfect connection with them on a daily basis.", says Stina.

Every December, Stina also offers the unique 'Sahaja Liberty Training Clinic and Retreat'. To my delight, she invited me to co-host this year's clinic (December 1-5, 2018).

"I am very excited to have Manuela join me to co-teach so we can add more feminine and spiritual elements. Manuela's amazing photography will also gift the participants with some very unique moments and memories that are likely to be life changing." exclaims Stina. I look forward to creating magic together!

For more information, visit Stina's website at www.stinaherberg.com

Equine photographer Manuela Stefan travels the world to capture the beauty and majesty of the horse. Her work has been seen in Elite Equestrian, Horse Canada, Performance Horse Digest, The Rider, Equitrekking, Top50 Ranches, Equine VIP.

Manuela exhibits her large format equine images in art shows and galleries across Canada, US and Europe. She is available worldwide for private and commercial equine photography commissions.

*Visit her website, read her travel blog and shop for equine art at: www.gracefulhorses.com
Follow her adventures on Facebook and Instagram: @gracefulhorsesphotography and learn about the horse retreats for women she offers.*