

# Work of ART ...

PAINTED HORSES AND BIOMECHANICS  
TURN HORSES INSIDE OUT!

Text: Michéle MacKenzie SAPC PRO  
Photography: Courtesy of SA Pony Club

**W**hen Karen Ososki visited South Africa in July 2013, she contacted the Pony Club to ask if they wanted her to run a Refined Performance Horsemanship clinic for their members. She even offered to postpone her flight back home to Montana, USA, if they decided to take her up on her offer. After some quick internet research, the Pony Club found out that Karen Ososki had been named one of the 'Top 50 Riding Instructors' by the American Riding Instructors Association! So they said, "Yes, please!"

Pony Club riders in Gauteng raved about Karen's holistic and kind approach, and so did their parents, instructors and branch committees ... so the SAPC invited her back this year! Karen Ososki ran her first 2014 South African clinic at the KwaZulu-Natal Pony Club Inter-branch show at the Durban Shongweni Club. Her in-depth knowledge and passion for horses were infectious.



Abigail De Blanche holds Alex Cromme's pony Daydream Jiveman, who was the Riverpark branch's 'painted pony'!

Muhammad Varachia, Sumaiya Varachia and Nicole Luis from the Zululand branch of the SAPC and Newmarket Stables enjoying one of Karen's mounted clinics at the DSC



## Watching riders

Karen spent a great deal of time watching the riders compete at the different levels in the multi-disciplinary show. She was very impressed by the magnitude and extent of the region's Inter-branch show, which is hosted annually over 4 days with over 100 riders from Pony Club branches all over the province. The atmosphere and excitement of the competitors and supporters from their branches were catching!

Karen then travelled up to Gauteng to teach in Walkerville. The clinic in the south was jointly hosted by the Walkerville branch of the SAPC and Taneil Arkner's Immaculate Equestrian Academy. This bustling stable yard is also the home of The IEA Elite School, the first equestrian and academic school in the south of Johannesburg. The next weekend was spent in Sandton running a 2-day clinic for the Riverpark branch members.

## Sessions and demos

For the groundwork sessions handlers wore



Karen demonstrating a groundwork exercise with Infinity, Juanita du Plessis's mare



Queen Street focusing at last in her groundwork lesson!



At the KZN Clinic – Georgina Kotras and her little pony Sugar Lump, with her Dad in the background leading Snowflakes

gloves, hard hats and boots, with their equine partners wearing halters. The natural horsemanship approach encourages the horse to become mentally in tune, and to work with the handler. Queen Street, a feisty and opinionated Pony Club mare in Gauteng, showed remarkable improvement during the course of the session. Her handler plans to use the techniques she has learned to focus and calm her down while in the saddle during showjumping competitions.

The Equine Biomechanics lectures and demonstrations were once again the most popular sessions. An hour-long PowerPoint slideshow featured photographs and illustrations to introduce the horse's anatomy and how horses move. Discussion focused on how to encourage a horse to carry himself while working under saddle in a way that is healthy and efficient.

Pony Club members at both the Riverpark and Walkerville branches created their own painted horses by capturing each one's skeletal structure on their coats! Karen used the demo horses to demonstrate how the horse's mechanisms for movement, usually unseen under the skin, worked in a healthy posture.

The mounted lessons focused on using rider positioning and exercises to work towards a more well-balanced partnership between horse and rider. Ebro, a Thoroughbred fresh off the smooth surface of the race track, was encouraged to watch his feet more carefully on uneven ground. The result was a more attentive horse and a calmer rider, now empowered with the knowledge of exercises to practice in the warm-up arena at horse shows.

## Valuable insights

Karen combined her equine training and instruction with trips to Zambia and Botswana, and enjoyed a week in the SA bush adjoining the Kruger Park.

The new insights learned by participants and spectators were invaluable, with the enthusiastic sharing of information between local experts and Karen Ososki making it a valuable trip for all concerned. ☺

## WHAT IS REFINED PERFORMANCE HORSEMANSHIP?

RPH is a training method intended to improve the performance and soundness of both competition and pleasure horses using a mixture of mounted and unmounted instruction as well as groundwork. RPH transforms a horse's mind and body through the use of simple and logical work, which is a combination of natural horsemanship techniques, classical principles, biomechanics, conditioning and schooling.

When the horse becomes quiet and willing, his body becomes more balanced. RPH offers riders an understanding of how

to help their horses and teaches them how to achieve these results. This programme is applicable to all disciplines.

## KEY BENEFITS

- Riders of all disciplines and levels gain confidence and skill while improving the willingness, wellbeing, responsiveness and suppleness of their horses.
- Riders develop an understanding of why horses need relaxation, strengthening, suppling and conditioning to become balanced and even, preventing burnout and lameness.

[www.karenososki.com](http://www.karenososki.com)



Karen Ososki giving her Equine biomechanics lecture at IEA Elite