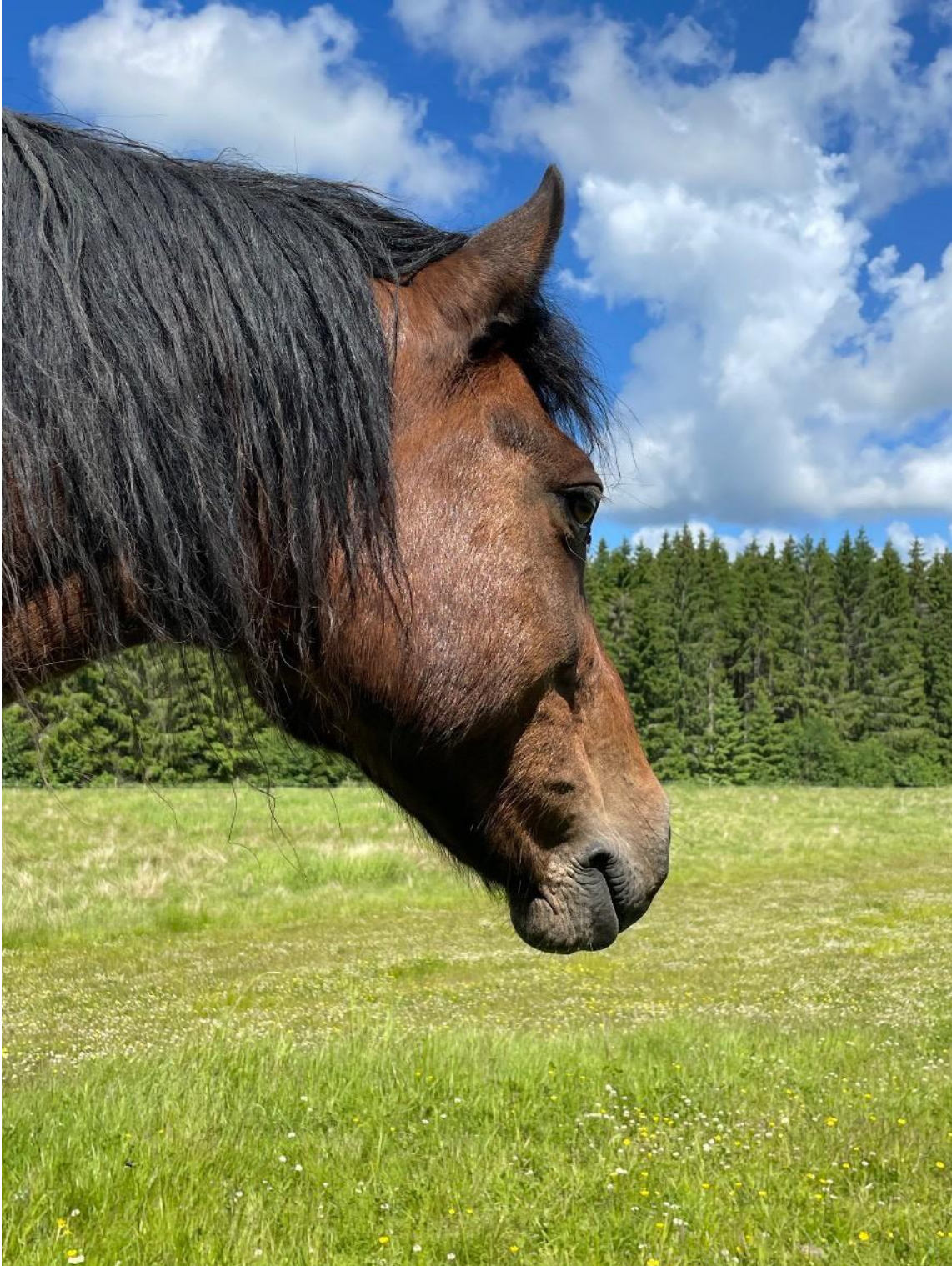


Stories of Mio



*"Carry your heart through this world
like a life-giving sun"*

Björnbusen is a horse that follows in Mio's footsteps. He came here because his longing for freedom became too intense. There are different kinds of need for freedom. The most obvious one was that he couldn't stand being locked in a small box or being left alone in a tiny paddock. His people wanted nothing more than for him to have the space to be himself, but they had no means to overcome external circumstances.

Finally, he came here. And in a way, it was as if he had always lived here. His inner longing merged with the outer reality. He found himself among equals; other horses seeking freedom in the same way he was. The real freedom of the soul.



Mio meant that while the desire for freedom can be motivating, it is not enough to go all the way. Not the kind of freedom that can be *defined* - in terms as the opposite to limitation. But then there is another kind of freedom, the one that the Björnbusen and the others express between the lines. Subtly, as in the air they breathe. The closeness to the world. Freedom from all illusions. The real world, which hits us with full force, *and makes us alive*.

Somewhere inside we remember. Somewhere there is an untouched place, free from civilization's web of stories. Björnbusen could never explain what it was he longed for, yet his people sensed that inner feeling - wordlessly. In their love for him, it became tangible. The essence; who he was inside. They felt his pain when he was locked up. They felt his isolation when he was forced to walk alone in the paddock. Because he was too wild, because he bit large holes in the other horses' blankets. Because he was unmanageable.

Mio explained that a healthy individual will always fill the space offered. Life is always looking for expansion. Björnbusen - like Tussen, another untamable soul - broke all dams. Time and again he tore down the defensive walls that surrounded him. He wanted to get out into the real world! When the space wasn't enough, his whole body ached. It was like a shock wave. The oxygen was never enough; he always needed more air.

The stretch boundary. I don't know how many times Mio talked about it. About the importance of being right there - where it might be most difficult to stay. Don't force it, and don't back down. If you stand there long enough, the boundary will dissolve. Consciousness leans over the edge, and for a moment you lose your footing. It has to do with time. When linear time dissolves, the whole idea of space disappears.

The room can only be as big as time allows. Some tasks cannot be performed because they simply do not involve *doing*. It is about an inner state. Like a quiet hopefulness. It may not be outwardly noticeable. But without it, life would seem unbearable. There would be no way in; the world would be a closed place.

Björnbusen was fighting the stretch boundary with full force, and it threw him back. It was the feeling of struggle that was eating him up from the inside. And what was he going to do with all his strength? The brute force that filled him, and that just couldn't be contained.

One of the principles of horseback riding according to Mio is not to reduce the amount of energy. Similar ideas exist in traditional Chinese medicine. You don't want to lose invaluable vital energy. Disposing of energy, which you will need to replenish at a later date, is also a waste of basic resources.

Instead, you allow the energy to return to its source. If, for whatever reason, the speed needs to be reduced, the force falls towards the earth. It's like gently (yet firmly) placing a bag of water on a table. A soft, malleable weight, spreading out.

If at a later time you need the energy again, perhaps to accelerate - you just have to open your pelvis to let it happen. You don't have to generate any new energy. Not if the exercise matches the individual's inner desire.

A sharp bit, or an auxiliary rein, will effectively break the flow of the movement. You may get an immediate and controlled stop. A sense of mastery of the situation. But it's the rider who controls the horse's power, not the horse itself - and thus the balance in the relationship, which is necessary for the experience of *interbeing* to occur, is lost. When the principles of Mio are practiced, in everyday action and communication, there is no longer any time difference. The whole idea of obedience ceases. The personal will no longer become as relevant, in either party.

It becomes more like a dance. The horse doesn't turn left because the rider demands it, and then explains to the horse when and how to do it. Instead, both the idea and the execution of the turn occur simultaneously and spontaneously; in both parties.

This gives a unique sense of participation, like an extended experience of *now*.

Björnbusen stands peering at the fence as his friend **Ronja** - a big, powerful mare - devotes herself to micromovements in the meadow outside the winter pasture. Ronja has a problem with her lumbar spine, which affects her pelvic, hock and vertebral joints. She uses very small, indirect movements, in contact with the rider's body, to stabilize the underlying musculature. It also involves increased body awareness and coordination.

For Björnbusen, this is a completely new concept. Healing, or maintaining balance, in one's own body - by facing variations in relation to a common idea - is similar to the dynamics of a herd of horses. But he has never seen it happen in a mounted practice before. He becomes curious to try it for himself, even though he renounced all forms of riding long ago.



Premo, pictured here, is over thirty years old. He loves the feeling of intimacy when he carries someone else's body. For that reason, he always wants people to sit bare-back. It feels like hugging. The merging, the experience of two minds sharing one body. Without this interconnection, the indirect movements would be meaningless. They would still be a variation in the space, but would not affect body consciousness. These small movements are like suggestions, ideas of what is possible.

A horse seeks out openings, not closed rooms - Mio repeatedly expressed. Perhaps the same applies to our consciousness?

In this way, a micromovement can never be controlled by thought. The goal and the linear logic, would constitute a limitation. It is also not the case that there is an immediate link between, for example, a peripheral movement of a finger, and a shoulder. It may be so, but the connection is always individual. They are like little keys, barely noticeable.

***"Improvisation is the expression
of the accumulated yearnings,
dreams and wisdom of the soul."***

Yehudi Menuhin

Micromovements - or indirect movements, which is perhaps a more accurate description - are almost impossible to teach. They cannot be explained, and they follow no obvious pattern. They are like underlying pencil lines, shadows in the painting, which make the individual appear more clearly. They only become relevant in relation to the whole. They help to bring out the full potential of the team. But even that objective must be dropped, to make room for *the moment*.

Premo takes a step into the unknown. The invisibility, the transparency, that starts where the body ends. The next phase of ageing; a different kind of freedom. He has always loved humankind. Not just one by one, but all of humanity. And that love endures. As he begins the process of letting go and returning his memories to posterity, he does not turn to the horse herd. Instead, he asks to be visited by as many children as possible. Everything he has experienced and learned in life, he wants to give as a gift to them.



Tomorrow is not a given for any of us. Of course, we hope that we will have Premo in our lives for as long as possible, even after he enters the next phase of ageing. Everything turns into a wider greatness. Aging is expanding, all other species seem to agree. Consciousness meets infinity in brief glimpses, and all boundaries are erased.

Mio often talked about *the empathic gaze*. It permeates the whole picture above. What does it mean to help enable a space where the other person is given the opportunity to be fully themselves? The only thing one can ever do for another, according to Marion Rosen. For Mio, it was first and foremost about an inner state. How one chooses to look at the world, will affect the shared experience of the space.

The empathic gaze can be extremely sharp and perceptive - but never judgmental. It may allow you to dare to see yourself, without paraphrasing or further interpretation.

Many Mio riding sessions contain only a few comments, and very rarely what one would describe as criticism. The whole set-up is extremely far from what I grew up with, at the equestrian school in Gothenburg. In those days, training was largely about overcoming resistance. This can also be the case during a Mio session. But resistance is usually about inner experiences - it's not about overcoming the horse.

As I recall, the training sessions were also relatively long. First a proper warm-up, then the struggle during the training. Towards the end it might have eased up, and then it was cool down and deceleration. Your body might ache for days afterwards, and that particular tiredness could also be seen as a sign that the training had been good.

A Mio session can last a very long time, or just a few minutes. You may stand completely still, or you may not mount the horse at all. Or it may be similar to a traditional session, although the content is slightly different. It's entirely up to the team.

The meeting begins with me asking the horse why he or she is here. What do you wish for? What do you long to do, with the time at our disposal? Usually, the horse answers something quite specific to that question. Like you want to find a new kind of momentum, a better balance in a certain situation. Sometimes it's something you want to show and share with those present.

Then some time is spent conveying these wishes to the accompanying person. In the name of equality, the question is put to both horse and human. But the horse takes precedence, at least for now. Historically, they have so rarely had a voice, in that way. Equality must be seen in a wider perspective, for now.

My part in the context is then to find an external form, which can express and create space for this inner longing. Exercises; such as turns, tempo changes, fences or barriers. How can we use the external space?

To all this is added the micro-movements. *The change in consciousness*. Mio's real area of interest. Horses seem to be designed to respond to variations. A very small movement - the hint of a movement, or even the *thought of* the movement - requires a greater alertness and presence on the part of those involved. We confirm each other's experiences by all participating at the same time. We experience it together, not separately. This is why the training sometimes contains only a few words. Sometimes almost only the word *good*, expressed with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Not to reinforce the idea of right and wrong, but more to highlight the moment just before a breakthrough. This is where resistance and confusion can be felt most clearly. And as a rule, it's just a matter of waiting a little longer. Holding the space and allowing the movement to take shape, from the inside out.

- *Good!* As a reminder not to give up hope.

The difference between moving, or being moved. That's how Martha Graham talks about the dancing human. To let oneself be danced..

In front of me in the riding hall is a black horse standing tall. He is very determined. He knows exactly why he is there. He wants to be able to stay in the air, a little longer. He wants to reach beyond the movement. What he's looking for isn't *here*. He has almost no equipment on him, and the rider is brutally focused. He wants to soar, I explain. *Me too*, she replies.

The horse in question has a problem with hypermobility. The word may have a positive connotation, as if you were just extra agile - or flexible. But in practice it is much more complicated. In an overly mobile individual, movement is not stabilized, for various reasons, which over time can lead to increased stress on the joints. In this horse's case, it first and foremost created a feeling of insecurity in relation to his own body.

He found it difficult to find the right push-off in the movement, and the feeling of being able to control his body at will was absent. This in turn affected his self-esteem. It was as if there was always a slight delay in the reaction between body and consciousness.

It felt like the body was falling out of coherence. There was no sense of interaction. Each leg acted individually, and that made the movement extremely heavy to perform.

Whether to strengthen a weak muscle, or even face a feeling of physical unawareness - like a blind spot - then a sense of vulnerability may arise. The immediate impulse would probably be to avoid that experience, and instead continue to use the muscles that are already strong. The habit and self-confidence would provide a sense of safety. A short-term gain, but at the same time a long-term reinforcement of the problem. It's not just humans who struggle with these things.

What this horse was looking for could not be found - unless he first confronted its opposite.



If the rider and the horse really share a whole body, like a centaur, then it is enough if one of the parties can perform the movement. One person's body awareness then becomes useful to the other - and vice versa. This horse would not be able to push off more strongly, and certainly not find the point of push-off itself, if you pushed more with the legs. *More* would only mean just that; more of what one already experiences.

Forcing him forward would thus increase the sense of difficulty. The present would be intensified. But where was the rider's point of departure? Where was her ardor and inner drive? How did it feel, and how could she use it? Mio always described the center of gravity/anchoring of the movement as a moving ball. The basic balance - somewhere below the navel. And then the collection point - the amount of energy conserved inside, until the exact moment when it is needed most - changing, gently moving along the spine.

The rider needed to find her center and then open up (mainly the pelvis) to make this power available to both parties. It was like getting to know a whole new instrument. How would she place the weight in the loin, like a rolling ball along the spine - in the most precise way possible - in order to reinforce and make this conscious in the horse?

It seemed impossible at first. There was too much to think about. The mind couldn't make any practical relevance of the idea. And that's where the micro-movements came in. The small, improvisational movements that reaches beyond logic.

The rider made light circular movements with the ankles, without touching the horse. She also lowered the center of gravity in the spine, deep into the sacrum. Then an opening of the pelvis, combined with an almost imperceptible outward rotation of the right shoulder.

The road was open, nothing was in the way anymore. It was just a matter of daring.

The horse pressed himself against the wall, as if seeking support in something outside of himself. The rider wanted so much to fall forward and do the work for him, as a compensation. But she managed to stop herself at the last second. And then, in that small variation, the horse found all his raw strength - in a single stride. He flew up, in a spontaneous canter stance, and thundered down the long side of the arena. He was in the middle of the movement. He wasn't going anywhere. There were no outwardly directions. His entire focus was to step inside and finally claim his entire being - right in this very moment.



The energy comes from an invisible source. It doesn't have to be contained in a physically measurable place. It never really has to be contained at all. He didn't know how it was that he had lost (awareness of) it. But at least now it was back again. He was one with the movement.

He found himself inside a force that he could finally trust. All the frustration he had experienced before when he couldn't control his body. When none of this was really about control. *It was all about being present.*



Surrender, an ongoing topic. Nothing can return unless you first let go. The hypermobile horse would not be able to find his own limits, and thus stability enough to dare to throw himself out - if he did not first go to his own stretch boundary.

It's as if we almost automatically seek balance, by parrying opposites. If the horse slips apart, we bring it back together. The expression that "you have to get the front and the back together". It's like pressing two glued-together boards together until they become a unified body.

Such pressure would immediately create a counter-pressure - a longing for space. Perhaps some kind of combat situation could arise. It's like trying to forestall the course of events. You hold the horse together, to prevent it from falling apart. You pack in the power and learn to master the explosiveness. The adaptation that the horse makes in relation to the rider's help risks weakening the contact with the essence.

The big black horse, which was currently flying around the riding hall, was looking for something completely different. *Dedication - instead of control. Trust, as opposed to obedience.*



The principles of Mio are universal. They can be applied in any context. Permission, in the form of letting each other be. *Practice non-doing, and everything will fall into place.* An expression in Taoism: create the conditions and then wait. Before the big black horse could find the center of the accelerating movement, he had to look outwards. And he did so in a big, long, stretchy trot.

In that elongation he found a sense of accomplishment. When he could stretch no further, the movement turned towards his own center. There, too, the timeline itself dissolved. Now, for the first time, he could choose. He was not at the mercy of external circumstances. He needed no one, not even himself. There was no difference between the dancer and the dance.

It was the hovering moment he had been looking for. Not to be immediately dragged along by thoughts, feelings, physical limitations, and expectations. This was a completely different kind of freedom.

Thank you Mio, for handing out all these little keys. Openings to roads we didn't know existed. Impossible to comprehend, but wondrous to experience.