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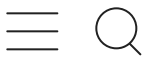


WHAT ZAPATA MEANS TO ME

February 11, 2022 • By Jill Soukup

Late one afternoon in the summer of 2003, I was riding in a dust-encrusted truck with Janet Phillips and her daughter Julie, who was about nine years old at the time. Janet was giving me the current lowdown on the ranch as we drove through the sunlit fields, cradled by neighboring mountains, whiffs of dusty grass and fragrant earth filling our lungs.

While passing a large group of grazing horses, Julie asked if she could take the rest of the way home via quadruped. Janet slowed to a stop and Julie jumped out of the truck, disappearing into the body of horses, only to reemerge in an effortless jump



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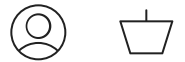
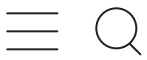
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Julie Phillips on her horse Buckshot. Photo courtesy of Janet Creswell.

Julie's ride off into the sunset and my visits to the ranch, in their quietly understated entirety, define my sense of groundedness. There is a calm, an unassuming confidence, a voiceless acceptance emanating from this place and its people. There are no hurried or distracted conversations. People look you in the eye with a steady gaze — listening intently — genuinely interested in whatever manner of exchange, no matter how mundane. It's a notable reprieve from city life's often chaotic, cursory energy. I am blessed and grateful for my home in the belly of the suburban beast.



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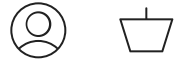
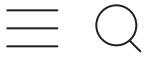


events of interest



Jill Soukup in her element, painting horses during her annual workshop at Zapata Ranch. Photo by Avery Sass Clark.

In the reprieve of my home studio, I relish in my dirty overalls and disheveled ponytail. A crumb may yet cling to my cheek from a hurried breakfast. I am replete in this joy of getting dirty. It is its own iteration of the satisfying accumulation of grime and clarity I bring home from a day spent at the ranch, seeking out the horses and embracing the dry soil. Crossed-legged, with my art supplies in my lap, I observe and absorb. The sweet smell of equine coats, a pungent mixture of earth and whispers of residual sweat, tickles my nostrils like an expensive bottle of perfume. Their graceful sway, tails softly swooshing as they peacefully graze, is disturbed only by an occasional romp, exuberant hooves and mane whipping the wind. I am happy that they accept me with little question, this strange human wielding colorful sticks and enchantment.



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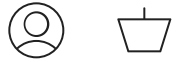
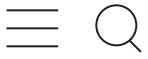


Some ranch days I might spend observing big bustling cattle brandings or the intimate happenstance of a wrangler working her project pony, sneaking in a quick and blissful bareback ride. Others might invite that big horse to come up from behind and give me a friendly nudge; he'll follow me around like an overgrown puppy when I acquiesce. Perhaps I'll wake up to elk frolicking in a rare early snow. These are only a few of many cherished experiences that Zapata (and Chico) have gifted me through the years — memories that fuel my work and remind me of my heart's song.

I may only be able to count on two hands the number of days I spend each year at Ranchlands, but the essence of this magical place keeps me grounded, no matter where I place my feet.

Jill Soukup is a celebrated artist and long time friend of Ranchlands. She has been teaching her drawing and painting workshop at the Zapata Ranch for the past 8 years, and visiting the Chico and Zapata ranches to photograph horses for her paintings for at least 18 years.

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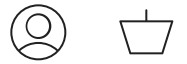
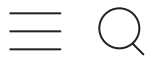
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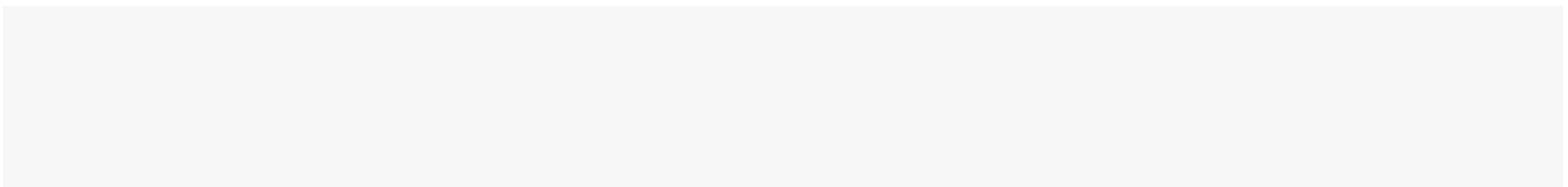
NICOLE MASTERS' POST-INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE PARADIGM

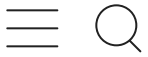
For too long, we've treated soil as an inert resource, when we should be down on our knees worshipping the fact that this is what gives us life on this...



MEET THIS YEAR'S STAFF AT ZAPATA RANCH

Meet and get to know a few faces from the 2022 cohort as they get underway with yet another guest season at the ranch.





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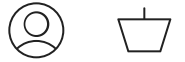
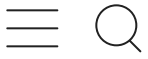
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