

SLOANE SQUARE

Art • Culture • Fashion
Food • February 2009

Henry Dallal:
the beauty
of horses

Middle Eastern
art at Saatchi

Paul Costelloe
kicks off London
Fashion Week

Click-clop, click-clop

Photographer Henry Dallal has spent a lifetime photographing horses. Sophie Bishop talks to him about his new book - a study of India's 61st cavalry



TAKING A PHOTOGRAPH while sitting astride a horse is no small feat. Taking one at full gallop is quite another matter. It is, however, a talent that has been perfected by photographer Henry Dallal.

A keen horseman, Dallal has been

years after his first encounter with the cavalry in 1979, he devoted an entire book to the subject.

Self-published in 2003, *Pageantry and Performance* features six years' of photographs and covers every aspect of life at the Household Cavalry, from early morning exercise drills in Hyde Park to the full pomp and ceremony



taking photographs since he was nine years old, after he was given a Box Brownie by his father. Born in Iran, Dallal moved to London in 1979 following the fall of the Shah. It was shortly after his move here at 7am one morning that he was woken by the sound of Household Cavalry clattering past his window. "It was the most amazing sight," says Dallal, "and that's where my fascination with the Household Cavalry began."

It was to be another 15 years until Dallal finally visited the barracks of Knightsbridge and started taking photographs of the cavalry. Almost 25

of Trooping the Colour.

"You have to develop a relationship with your subject," says Dallal. "You've got to get to know them inside out. They have to trust you and you have to trust them and then you can be creative."

"I love the pageantry," he adds, "and I love the spirit and how hard they work behind the scenes – no one sees that."

A selection of images from the book were later staged as a *son et lumière* at Windsor Castle – the first time images have ever been projected on to the castle walls – and official and private

commissions to photograph the Queen, a keen horsewoman, followed soon after.

The royal stamp of approval established Dallal as the photographer of choice for the international equestrian crowd and subsequent portrait commissions included HRH Princess Royal as well as Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Prime Minister and ruler of Dubai, and his wife Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein of Dubai.

But it is horses that Dallal is passionate about and it is these that form the basis of his second book: *Horse Warriors: India's 61st Cavalry*.

The vast book documents the last active mounted horsed regiment in India.

The cavalry was formed in 1953 after Independence at the request of the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and is now based in Jaipur, Rajasthan, with a squadron in Delhi.

Dallal's photographs capture the cavalry in the deserts of Rajasthan, on the polo fields of Jaipur, on parade at the palaces of the maharajas and the pageantry of the annual Republic Day Parade. Other images include the camel fairs of the Thar Desert, the Victorian interiors of the Babugarh Breeding Centre and the nomadic Nihang warriors mounted on India's indigenous Marwari horses in Rajasthan. Beautifully reproduced in vivid colour, the images – all of which have been shot on film and are without digital remastering – are printed to appear like original photographs.

A keen traveller, Dallal is rarely in one place for too long. When we meet he is shortly to go off to Libya and then to Oman, to work on a similar book on the Calvary of Oman, this time commissioned by the Sultan of Oman.

Horse Warriors: India's 61st Cavalry is £50, hardback, and available from www.henrydallalphotography.com



Previous page:
Nihang Warrior
Adjusting Bridle

Left: Circle of Horses

Above: Zanskar
Valley, Ladakh