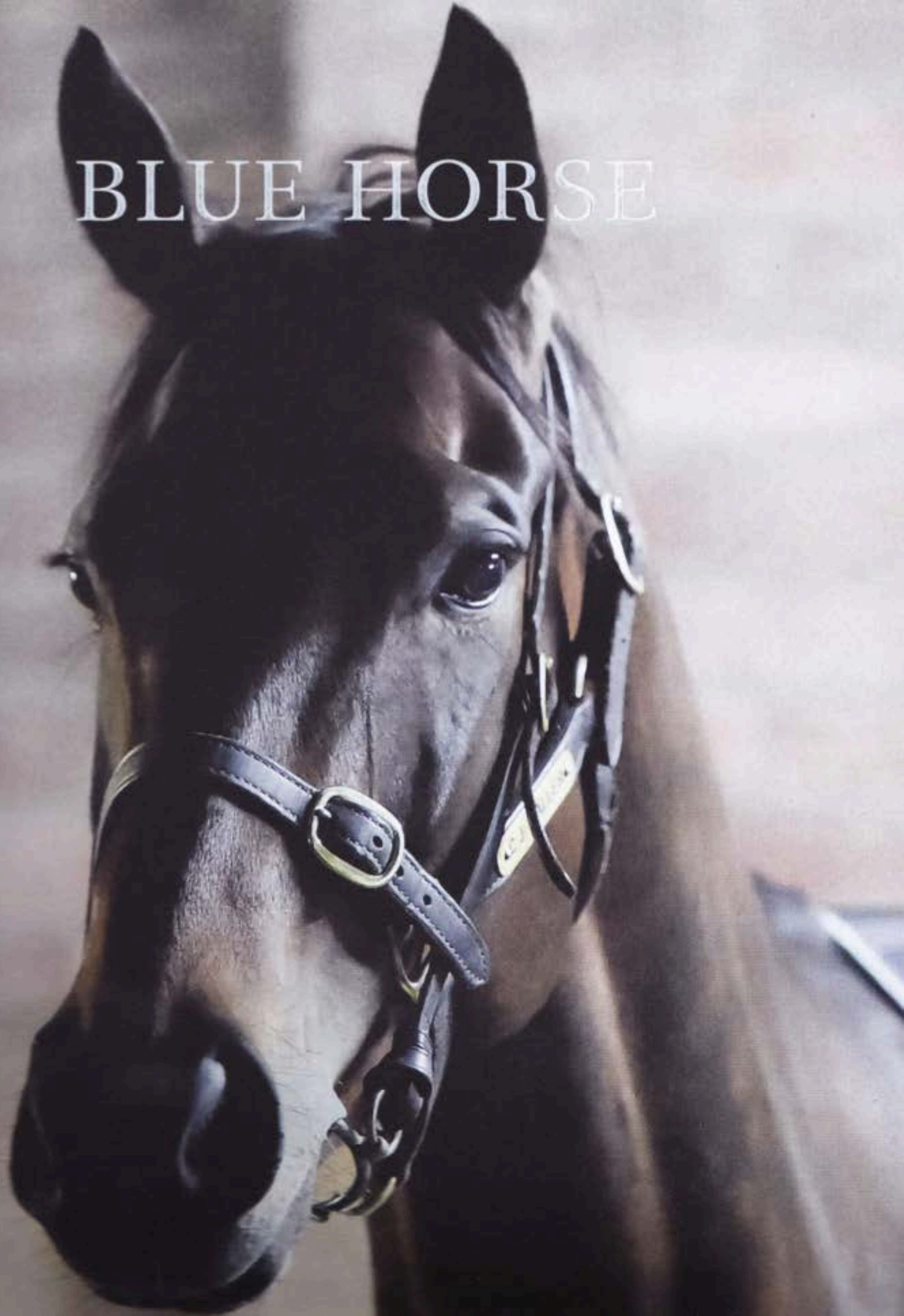


# BLUE HORSE





# The Elegance is in the Hat!

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*Horseracing is the epitome of elegance. From the graceful movements of the equine champions to the beautifully wide sweeping racecourses, to the stylish and sophisticated attire of the spectators, there is no sport in the world that embodies elegance like the sport of kings.*

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The tradition of "dressing up" for a race meeting goes back hundreds of years to the origins of the sport, at a time when kings and queens and members of the nobility were not only looking for entertainment, but also for a platform that allowed them to make a statement of their wealth and social standing. It was no coincidence that My Fair Lady's Eliza Doolittle was taken to the Ascot racecourse, steeped in history and synonymous with high fashion and elaborate millinery, for her first public appearance to see if she could pass as a Lady. Today, the sport of kings is as popular as ever, embraced by people from all different ways of life and cultures. It remains the ultimate event for fashionistas and is a showcase for the world's most famous milliners. As it is considered disrespectful to have one's head uncovered in the presence of a Monarch, at certain race meetings, like Royal Ascot, where the Queen is in attendance on each of the five days, wearing a hat is compulsory. Yet, even those race meetings without the attendance of royalty, generally provide a great opportunity to flaunt the latest hat or headpiece, preferably matched with the same coloured outfit, shoes and handbag.

Rachel Trevor-Morgan, a British milliner based in London St James's, is delighted that horse racing has retained the customs and traditions from an era when millinery was de rigueur. Appointed in 2006 to design hats for H.M. The Queen, she is renowned all over the world for her beautiful handwork and design, resulting in the glamorous, feminine elegance that every woman aspires to. Her hats are regularly seen at the world's most important race meetings and she confirms: "Horse racing plays a very important role in my industry. Royal Ascot is obviously the main focus of the year. As soon as we come back after Christmas, we start thinking about Royal Ascot, as that is when the first orders come in. It is an important social event and most ladies plan their outfits and hats a long time in advance. And before Royal Ascot there is the Kentucky Derby in America. We send a lot of hats across the Atlantic for that event."

The Swiss watchmaking brand Longines is the Official Watch and Time-keeper of the Kentucky Derby and the Longines Kentucky Oaks, which features the Longines Kentucky Oaks Fashion contest. In fact, all over the world, Longines regularly celebrates the most elegant lady at the races by awarding her one of the iconic Longines watches. "It is great to have these contests at race meetings," pursues Rachel Trevor-Morgan. "There are some ladies who make these contests a priority and I have clients who have sent me pictures or contacted me after those events to tell me that they have won. The contest puts the attention firmly on what people are wearing and how they coordinate their outfits."

Putting together the perfect ensemble for a day at the races is no easy task and often the milliner's role will stretch beyond the design of the hat to that of adviser and confidante. After all, a hat is not just something to cover the head for protection. No, a hat is much more than that as Rachel Trevor-Morgan explains: "A hat allows you to change your personality. It is very much like a mask in the sense that you can be who you want to be by wearing a different style. You can wear a hat to hide or you can wear a hat to stand out. The possibilities are endless. I have a lot of people who come to me and ask me what they should wear. Many of my clients are very au fait with hats and know what they are doing. But then there are people who come along and who might have never been racing before. I sit down with them and talk to them to find out what exactly they want. You need to find out if they want to make a statement, if they want to be outrageous or if they would like to blend in. You want to get it right for the individual."

One person who has an unwavering sense of style is the Queen who in the 60 years of dressing for public appearances has yet to make a single faux pas. Her outfits are always elegantly coordinated and Rachel Trevor-Morgan who was given The Royal Warrant by H.M. The Queen in 2014, tells us: "You want the Queen to look beautiful, which she does so well as she has a great sense of style and coordination. For her hats, there are certain shapes that work really well for her. When I design a hat for her, I will get a sketch and a piece of the fabric of the outfit she is planning on wearing and then I design the hat around that."

Rachel Trevor-Morgan, whose hats are instantly recognisable thanks to the delicately crafted flowers for which she is famous, also designed the hat Rebecca Riggs, wife of Longines Ambassador of Elegance Simon Baker, was wearing to Royal Ascot. "Rebecca wore a black silk organza pill box, which had woven and stitched loops that came off at the side," she recalls. "She said she didn't wear hats that often and this understated hat suited her. I think she really enjoyed it. Her daughter Stella went for a big hat. I think she thought let's go for it, let's go big."

Rachel Trevor-Morgan smiles before adding: "You are either a big hat person or you are not. Younger people in general are more nervous about bigger hats, as they lack the experience of wearing a hat. But once you have been complimented on a hat, you will love wearing a hat, big or small, outrageous or understated." And she concludes: "Hats are always elegant. I don't feel the need for my hats to be outrageous. I would like them to get noticed for the right reasons and that is a beautifully coordinated ensemble that is not dull, just simply elegant." There can be no doubt: the elegance is in the hat! *(L.V. Price)*

