

Colette in Bonet Binding:

This luxurious collection of writings by Colette embodies that French sophistication she portrayed so vividly, with smooth paper, excellent printing, pleasing illustrations, and lovely bindings.

Our copy is distinguished by the author's special presentation inscription—complete with a witty self-portrait—to Jorge Ortiz-Linares, the Bolivian ambassador to France, a celebrated collector of French literature, and one of the richest men in the world at the time. It seems likely that Ortiz-Linares commissioned the exquisite bindings, which were designed by Paul Bonet, one of the great 20th century masters.

A French citizen of Belgian origin, Bonet had been a dress designer, but he was also a bibliophile, and one who was so disappointed by the quality of bookbinding available for his collection that he began to bind books himself. He became the leading bookbinder in France, creating unique and imaginative works of art in a modern idiom, and having a profound influence on the course of bookbinding, particularly on the Continent. At least as important as the books bound with his own hands are the designs he created for bindings executed by others.

In "Carnets," his catalogue raisonné of his bindings, Bonet describes the present bindings as "simple and elegant," and notes that his designs were executed by René Desmules and gilded by André Jeanne. The bindings are coordinated, but each volume has its own unique ornamentation, a combination of whimsical calligraphic silver tooling and inlaid morocco dots of turquoise, pink, sea green, or citron morocco—these inlays matching the color of the original color paper wrappers of each volume, which are bound in here. The matching chemises and slipcases have kept the bindings in absolutely pristine condition.

After publishing her first novel in 1900, Colette wrote prolifically for the next half century, amassing an oeuvre of more than 50 novels and scores of short stories and essays. Her writings are notable for their vivid sensual descriptions and for their indomitable female characters.

Printed by the Friends of Colette in 1935-36, Les Cahiers, or The Notebooks, contain Colette's best-known novel, "Chéri," and its proto-text "Clouk," along with an assortment of her short stories and essays. Her courtesans and rakes are brought to life in all their Belle Epoque decadence in the accompanying artwork, etchings and lithographs done by the French artists, André Dignimont, Jean-Gabriel Daragnès, Luc-Albert Moreau, and André Dunoyer de Segonzac. This beautiful set is a worthy tribute to the woman Britannica describes as "the outstanding French writer of the first half of the 20th century."