

A deluxe illustrated edition

Sense and Sensibility

by

JANE AUSTEN

with

ten color collages by

AUGUSTA TALBOT

Arion Press is proud to mark the two-hundredth anniversary of the death of the revered English novelist Jane Austen with a special letterpress-printed edition of *Sense and Sensibility*, which was the first of her novels to be published. Originally written in 1797, when the author was only nineteen, as a series of letters between the sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, it was retold as straight narrative for publication, anonymously and at her own expense, in 1811. Its plot finds the young heroines turned out of their family estate by greedy relatives after their father dies. Suddenly without the securities of home, wealth, and position, the sisters struggle to rebuild their lives in a society ruled by money and class distinctions.

The worldwide celebration of Jane Austen in 2017 is evidence of her relevance today and the astonishing range of her admirers, from academics who rank her with Shakespeare, to devotees of the endless output of theater, film, and television adaptations. Austen's audience swells with every decade. In *Sense and Sensibility*, we find the qualities that make this so: her delicious send-up of social climbers, her endearing comic characters, and the heroines who win us over with their developing wisdom and infectious love of life. Then there is what novelist and critic Diane Johnson calls "the special tool of her art": Jane Austen's style. "The witty precision of Austen's style," Johnson observes, "has entertained readers for nearly two hundred years without losing its freshness and

power to delight, a testimony to her unparalleled genius and the capacities of the English language.”

THE AUTHOR

Born in 1775 in Hampshire, one of eight children of the rector of a village church, Jane Austen published four novels in her lifetime: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815); and two posthumously: *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey*. She did not marry, remaining within the orbit of her intellectually lively and well-connected family until her death at forty-one. At home, she educated herself through the schoolbooks of her older brothers, as well as in her father’s library, and wrote comic sketches and theatricals for family amusement from an early age. Our knowledge of her life is spotty, since most of the more than 3,000 letters left at her death were destroyed by her older sister Cassandra. Although Austen’s novels appeared anonymously, their authorship was not a secret during her lifetime. She was reviewed positively and won a reputation among an elite, although it was far short of the popularity that would come by the end of the nineteenth century. Jane Austen died in 1817, leaving scholars wondering to this day what she would have added to English literature had she lived longer.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

To illustrate the novel, we commissioned ten collages from the American painter and collage artist Augusta Talbot. Her pieces combine familiar representational depictions of Austen’s characters with new imagery from sources both expected and unexpected. Fragments of the black and white Hugh Thomson line drawings from the 1896 *Sense and Sensibility* provide recognizable faces and torsos for Marianne, Elinor, Willoughby, Edward, Lucy Steele and other characters, while their postures and placement express a modern insight into how pressures, often of a financial nature, distort their behavior. The world around the characters—clothes, furniture, rooms, gardens, and landscapes—is composed from cut-out color images from botany, painting, and landscape architecture. In her manipulation of color and scale, Talbot writes, she wanted to create “spaces in which the characters are never

quite comfortable". We are grateful to the British Library for making the Thomson illustrations available for creative use.

THE BOOK

The book is designed on the scale and in the spirit of novels from Jane Austen's lifetime. The book is small octavo in format, 8 inches by 5-1/2 inches, 432 numbered pages. The type, printed by letterpress, is Bell, composed and cast in Monotype, with larger sizes handset, and Union Pearl and Bulmer handset for display. The paper is Mohawk Letterpress Text. The binding is Smyth-sewn with a full cloth cover and a leather label stamped with genuine gold. The book is presented in a slipcase. The collages are printed by offset lithography in color on dull-coat stock and are tipped onto the pages by hand. Each book is numbered and signed by the artist.

THE EDITION

This is the one-hundred-eleventh publication of the Arion Press. The edition is three hundred numbered copies for sale and twenty-six lettered copies for complimentary distribution. The original Talbot color collages are 11 x 6 3/4 inches and signed by the artist. The price of the book is \$700. Original collages are available for sale at \$2,000 with a copy of the book, for a total price of \$2,700. A portion of the edition is reserved for Arion Press subscribers, individuals, and institutions committed to purchasing the annual series of publications and receiving a 30% discount. For further information on this publication and subscription terms, contact:

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