

Gustave-Henri Jossot
1866–1951

A man beats up a roughly four-year-old boy, in another image a nanny spansks an infant. A physician holds up a newborn baby in his bloody hands, while the assisting midwife stands by with a pair of forceps. The baby, the caption explains, refused to be born. Gustave-Henri Jossot rendered these scenes with clear outlines and pure, flat colors in the graphic style of Cloisonnism, which was influenced by modernist painting of the time. While the artistic quality of the postcards is high, their content doesn't correspond to the dignified bourgeois taste of the day—indeed, it could hardly be more shocking. Jossot's illustrations attack Church, state, and the army and paint a merciless picture of French society. In impressive pictorial inventions, he criticizes domestic and state violence, colonialism, racism, pedophilia, and a corrupt justice system.

The postcard series was first published as a set of pictures in the periodical *L'Assiette au Beurre*, an illustrated French weekly satirical magazine featuring socialist and anarchist caricatures. By castigating the optimism and narcissism of the Belle Époque, Jossot became a forerunner of Günter Brus and the Viennese Actionists. In a correspondingly drastic manner, the Austrian artists worked with their own bodies to criticize the state, Church, and social institutions. Similarities can also be found in Brus's watercolors exhibited on the top floor of Kunsthaus Bregenz. During the Covid pandemic, Brus too chose to use a combination of text and colorful images as well as caricatures to make his terse statements.

Gustave-Henri Jossot

L'Assiette au Beurre, *Dressage par Jossot* (January 1904), no. 144

16 postcards, SIPHULA, Paris, edition: 2000

Courtesy of the collection of Richard Huter