

Hans-Ulrich Britsche
*1945 in Oranienburg

Perhaps it makes sense to first clarify what the painting of Hans-Ulrich Britsche is *not*. It is not an appropriation of historical styles, not a retro phenomenon, not a zombie of the classical avant-garde. His *light-metaphysical painting*, as he himself calls it, could not be further removed from such strategic resuscitations of outdated aesthetics, which contemporary art has continuously experienced since postmodernism. This is due in no small part to the fact that the classical art world, with all its discursive agility, has yet to create a space of resonance for this kind of work. For Britsche's artistic project is closely tied to an anthroposophical understanding of art—one that, put simply, envisions a pictorial fusion of the material and the spiritual, where the figurative is enveloped by the abstract like a warm coat, without entirely vanishing into it. The formal affinity of such an aesthetic to crystalline Expressionism or certain strands of Cubism and Futurism can be explained by the contemporaneity of anthroposophy's cult leader, Rudolf Steiner, with these movements. However, while art history pursued its metamorphoses in other directions, this artistic language persisted within the anthroposophical worldview, existing, so to speak, at a 90-degree angle to mainstream art historical developments. It may appear frozen in time, out of step with contemporary concerns, but upon closer examination, it does not function in the same way as a dead language like Latin. It is better compared to Pennsylvania Dutch as spoken by the Amish and Mennonites—a practiced, living language built on an archaic form of German, one that would be nearly incomprehensible to the original linguistic community. There are similarities, but above all, a fundamentally different orientation and understanding of presentness.

Hans-Ulrich Britsche's artistic project operates clearly within this ideological niche of anthroposophy, as well as within its very specific formal lingo: crystalline structures, planes fanning out into space, prismatic color values, or hints of astral phenomena—all of these are unmistakable elements of Britsche's visual program, as well as trademarks of anthroposophical art in general. However, it would be unfair to introduce him solely as a representative of this tradition. Instead his treatment of Waldorf aesthetics is refreshingly undogmatic, as evidenced by his significant shift towards the non-representational—a move that Steiner once condemned as heretical in the case of Hilma af Klint. Everything in his work dissolves into color values or is composed from them, allowing light to take on a metaphysical significance as a fundamental force of the world. Every object disappears behind its aura, dissolving into staggered fields of light that may depict flowers, crosses, angels, apotheoses—or perhaps not. However his compositions and color relationships are not always uplifting and balanced, but rather reveal an awareness of lessons from Abstract Expressionism and Informel painting. Particularly striking is his strong use of varnish, which enhances the painted refractions of light and makes them shine differently across the surface. With this wet sheen, his painting, despite all the acrylic and oil, aspires to the qualities of watercolor—a medium of direct expression and unfiltered color impact. All of this is realized through a lavish layering of paint, which almost becomes an end in itself, creating an impressive depth within the image. And this is perhaps the subtle elegance of his work: it

compresses the aesthetic framework of anthroposophy so intensely that it generates something new, or at least something that can be engaged with anew. For while Britsche's paintings find resonance in anthroposophical circles, their appeal does not lie solely in their otherness—at least not for those unfamiliar with this realm. Instead, their uniqueness comes from their continuous interplay with the thoroughly secularized concept of painting that emerged in postwar modernism. His work remains open to painterly innovations without ever compromising its core. In a sense, he puts the cart before the horse: while the classical avant-garde once plundered the imagery of theosophical movements to arrive at new forms of abstraction, Britsche expands the aesthetic cosmos of anthroposophy using the very knowledge that emerged in the wake of this raid. Of course, one might recognize late Franz Marc here, Delaunay's windows there, Feininger's crystals throughout, and occasionally even Boccioni's elasticity. None of this, however, amounts to a narrative of the backwardness of Britsche's painting, but rather underscores his persistence in allowing inwardness and the world to merge.

- Moritz Scheper

Hans-Ulrich Britsche (*1945) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. Alongside his long career as a Waldorf educator, he has maintained a continuous exhibition practice. Though based in the Ruhr valley, he considers his numerous visits to ancient sites in Greece central to his artistic work. *Amethyst* is his first exhibition with Lucas Hirsch.