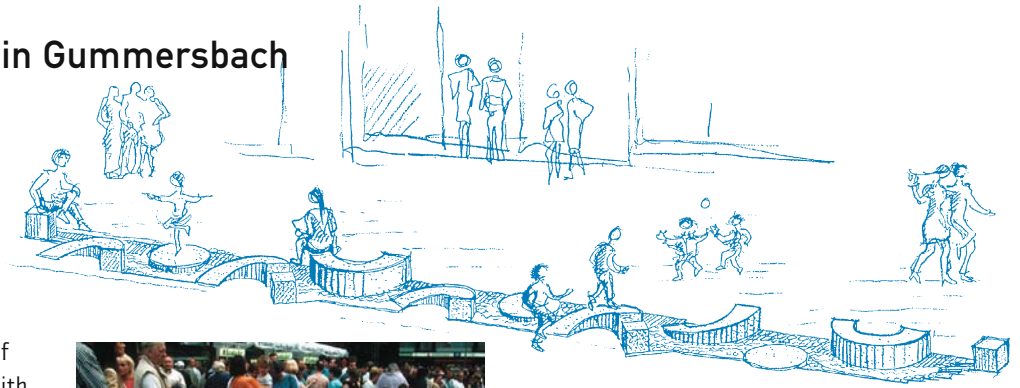


The new town square in Gummersbach

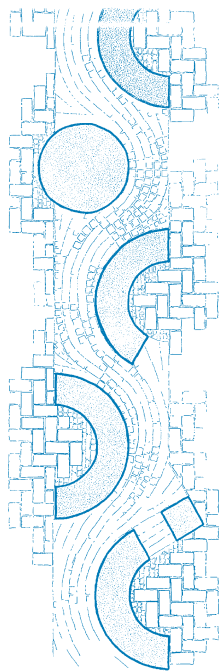


Gummersbach is the chief town of its district, Oberberg, which it runs with credible efficiency: the economy flourishes. The prosperity of this town of 50,000 inhabitants 50 kilometres east of Cologne has been on a solid basis from time immemorial. A small-scale, balanced mixture of industry, trade, agriculture and services has always produced – to express it positively – self-confident people. But this had unfortunate consequences for the central Lindenplatz in the 1960s. In an act of bold self-overestimation, examples of medieval timber-frames, classicism and Jugendstil were all pulled down and replaced with dreary progressive buildings completely surrounded by concrete slabs, everything grey on grey. And life gradually disappeared from the town centre. Now the town wants to get away from the dreary image conveyed by these buildings without any sense of scale, style or category, but they are not as easily pulled down as their predecessors. And so in the mid-1990s people concentrated all the more on the squares and walkways in the pedestrian area. And because a large number of individuals have an interest in these areas in particular, representatives from the local authority, the residents and the service and retail industries were invited to a discussion about new design ideas. The participants in the discussion quickly agreed on a modern water landscape. Symbolically this was seen to stand for movement, and possibly also change, uniqueness and something that was most convincing of all for the people of Gummersbach: a place where people would come to meet each other again. And they do.

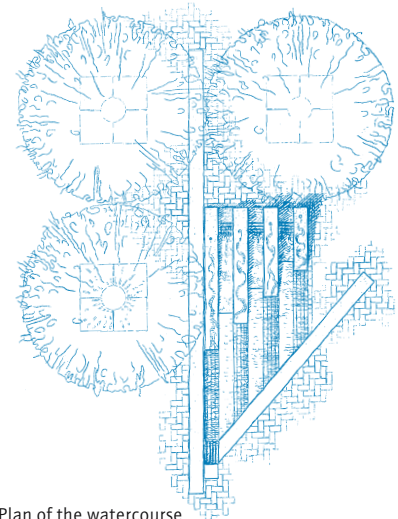
One place that appeals, for example, is by the spring, with its fan-shaped, sculpted natural stone slabs, with lights between them to create mysterious areas of light and shade in the twilight. From there the water flows down a slight slope through a curved channel



Hands and feet can be used to touch and grasp water structures and currents – an experience for all the senses, and for the young and old.



Plan and detail view of the sculpted installations.



Plan of the watercourse source: Water gushes forth from stone slabs set at different angles.

Carefully designed handling of waves and light transforms an ordinary object into sparkling jewels.