

# ARTISTS' TOWN OF GMÜND IN CARINTHIA - STRENGTHENING OF THE CITY CENTRE BY INNOVATIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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**Summary:** *Everything began in 1991. All over Austria local communities were developing so called „regional development plans“. The municipal council has decided for the way to an Artists' Town. The main objective was to stimulate the Old Town of Gmünd by setting up cultural tourism, increasing the quality of life and creating of a brand.*

*From the very beginning the idea of reanimating the small medieval town through arts and culture events and programmes formed the centre piece of the concept. Over the years, it was possible to reopen 17 formerly empty houses to the public throughout the summer months.*

*Walking through the medieval streets the visitors can feel that a whole town is living with and through art. This development also supports local trade: No other Austrian town of the size of Gmünd is able to offer such an intact, complete infrastructure.*

*Naturally, a variety of factors was important to establish Gmünd as Artists' Town, such as a high number of motivated and culturally active inhabitants, the diversity of the programme and the constant focus on high quality.*

**Keywords:** *Urban development, City centre, Artists' Town, Seminar.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gmünd is a small medieval town with a well-preserved and picturesque historical centre the upper part of Carinthia – the most southern province of the Austrian Republic. There are living about 2600 residents. The municipality covers a surface area of 31,59 km<sup>2</sup>.

Due to its location between the two national parks “Nationalpark Hohe Tauern” and “Nationalpark Nockberge” and based on the historical centre with a building stock in good condition, the private Porsche-automobile-museum and the storage power plant “Kölnbreinsperre” with one of the highest dam walls in Europe Gmünd has just been attractive for visitors. In the town of Gmünd you could be found extensive traditional culture with a variety of cultural associations like choirs, music bands, theatre associations and many other more.

Independently to this background a new way was needed for the future of the town.

In 1991 the association “Kulturinitiative Gmünd” was founded. At the same time all over Austria regional and urban development plans were devised.

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## 2. FIRST STEPS INTO THE FUTURE

Stimulating the town by building up cultural tourism, increasing quality of life and creating of a one-of-a-kind brand were defined as the main objectives. Based on these targets key success factors were identified to make the development measurable. A mixture of hard and soft factors was chosen:

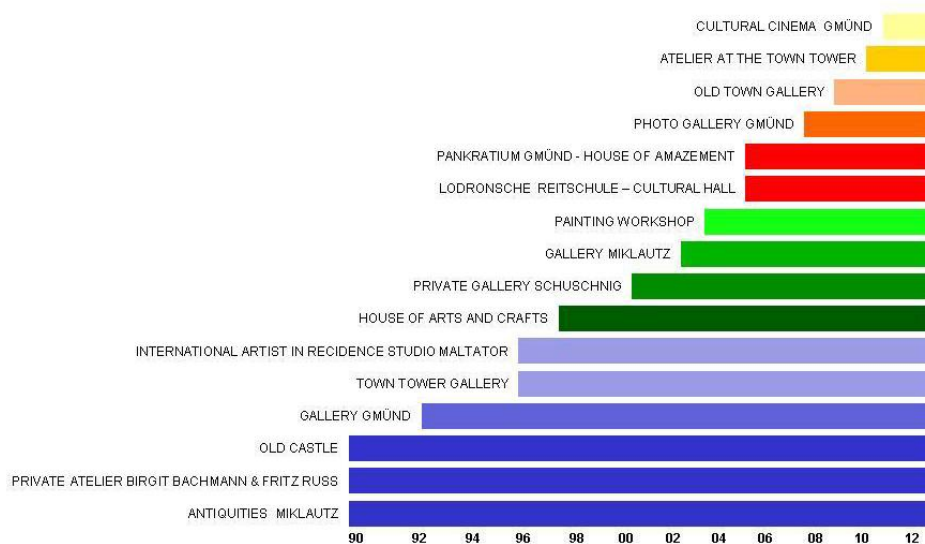
- Varied and diverse range of offers with high quality
- Revitalisation of vacant houses in the historical centre
- Public acceptance and growing enthusiasm
- Development of visions
- Patience with the implementation of the new strategy

The new cultural work includes the following contents: exhibitions, open-air-art-projects, sculpture gardens, artists' house galleries, communication of art programmes, school partnerships, summer academies – art seminars and workshops, concerts, literature events, theatre and cabarets, cultural cinema, art and crafts markets.

## 3. DEVELOPMENT

Based on the new strategy more and more vacant houses within the medieval Old Town of Gmünd were filled with new life. Over the years, it was possible to reopen 16 formerly empty houses to the public throughout the summer months. A 17th building followed in early 2012. The following chart displays the development and the successful city centre management of free spaces in Gmünd [1].

**Development of the last 20 years**



*Figure 1: Development since 1990<sup>2</sup>*

On a City plan each visitor of Gmünd can find quite easily all the buildings with cultural offers. On the following map of Gmünd these buildings are marked with pink dots [2].

<sup>2</sup> *Stadtgemeinde Gmünd in Kärnten, <http://www.stadtgmueund.at/en/kunstlerstadt-gmund-e/20-years/>.*

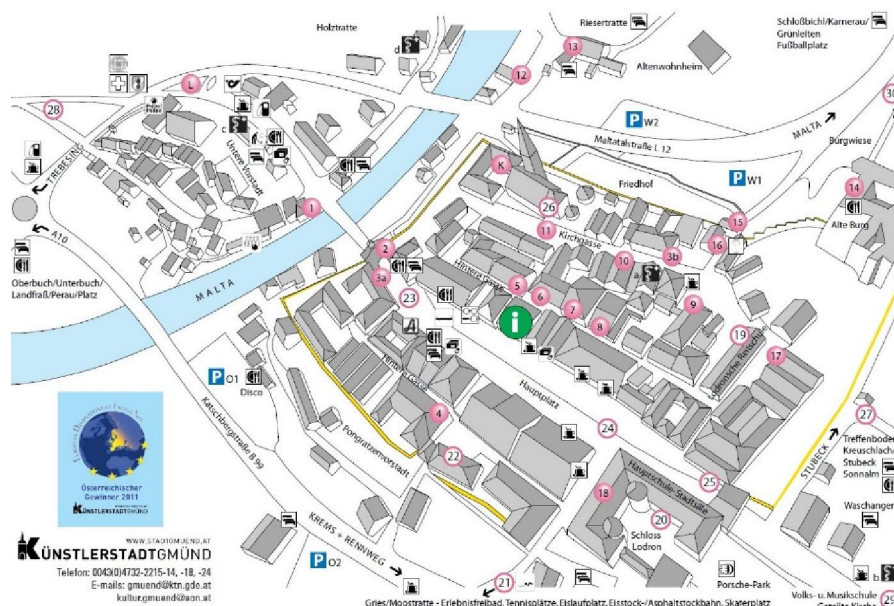


Figure 2: City plan of Gmünd<sup>3</sup>

GASTKÜNSTLER/INNEN IM INTERNATIONALEN GASTATELIER IM MALTATOR 1994-2012							
NAME	VORNAME	HERKUNFT	JAHR	NAME	VORNAME	HERKUNFT	JAHR
Fleck	Fee	PL/D	1994	Modolo	Laura	I	2004
Zolly	Fabio	A	1994	Cerqueni	Daria	I	2004
Eibl	Wolfgang	A	1995	Vitolins	Andris	LETT	2005
Blittersdorf	Tassilo	A	1995	Lipski	Marlene	D	2005
Andrzejewska	Malgorzata	PL	1995	Müller	Marcella	D	2006
Thorisdottir	Gudrum	ISL	1996	Šataite	Indre	LIT	2006
Roithner	Hubert	A	1996	Vassilieva	Katja	RUS/A	2007
Oremek	Rosita	D	1997	Ramacher	Einfalt	A	2007
Prantner	Gabriele	A	1998	Ivanov	Ivan Kanchev	BULG	2007
Dobrowolcki	Remigiusz	PL	1998	Tömö	Ilona Agnes	HU/A	2008
Juritsch	Richard	A	1998	König	Frigyes	HU	2008
Dzintare	Ieva	LETT	1999	Mrsulja	Danijela	SRB	2008
Scheifler	Robert	A	1999	Traub	Herbert	A/D	2009
Pere	Katrin	EST	2000	Cmelka	Helga	A	2009
Raadik	Ülle	EST	2000	Judisch	Thomas	D	2009
Merja	Herzog-Hellén	FIN/D	2000	c/o:K Linz	Kunstinitiative	A/D	2010
Krall	Karen	A	2001	Thalmann	Linda	A	2010
Haas	Roland	A	2001	Aigner	Christoph	A	2010
Krúmina	Ieva	LETT	2001	KunstSportGruppe	hochobir	A/D	2011
Löb Mossberg	Annika	S	2002	Schweiger	Teresa	A/GB	2011
Klugmann	Jürgen	D	2002	Suske	Detlef	D	2011
Engblom	Tom	FIN	2003	Nepo-Stieldorf	Gabriela	A	2012
Peralta Rosales	Gabriela	MEX	2003	Ohya	Rica	Japan	2012
Masin	Orietta	I	2003	Beitl	Theresa	D	2012
Dunn	Mary	USA/D	2004				

Figure 3: artists in the international artist-in-residence-studio Maltator<sup>4</sup>

With using this map you find pink balls in front of each building where you can consume cultural offerings. The walk through the town is therefore accompanied by the combination of historical structure and the signs for the offers. During the summer months a variety of topics is offered in form of summer academies including workshops

<sup>3</sup> Stadtgemeinde Gmünd in Kärnten, <http://www.stadtgmueund.at/en/stadt-gmund-in-karnten-e/unsere-stadt-e/stadtplan-e/>.

<sup>4</sup> Association „Kulturinitiative Gmünd“

and seminars on mosaic, painting in watercolours, painting of frescos, colour-oil-woodcarving, painting in acrylic, ceramic sculptures, drawing and painting, Chinese ink painting, nude modelling, icon painting or soapstone sculptures. To get a brief overview of the numerous events an annually produced Cultural Calendar is introduced. This shows the event programme including descriptions of the offers and the artists who are active in the town in form of a wall calendar. One important point of the way to an Artists' Town is a growing internationalisation with more and more artists from other European and non European countries. The following list shows the guest artists in the international artist-in-residence-studio "Maltator" since this house has been renovated and adapted in 1994 [3].

#### 4. MARKETING AND COOPERATION

One of the most important conditions for success is a good combination of marketing and cooperation. Some examples of cooperation and partners of the Artists' town of Gmünd:

- Cooperation with media (newspapers, professional journals etc.)
- Tourism associations and townships (e.g. Verbund Touristik, TV Lieser-/Maltatal, MTG, BKK, Tourismusregion Nationalpark Hohe Tauern)
- Austrian tourism association
- EDEN network – cooperation with about 98 excellent destinations in Europe
- Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences, special high schools
- Commercial concerns (e.g. KELAG, Villacher Brauerei, ÖBB)
- Travel organisations, publishing houses for guide books
- Cultural institutions (e.g. State Museums, Kulturkontakt Austria – Artists in Residence)
- European partners (Alpe-Adria, Osnabrück, Walled township circle)
- Creative artist and cultural promoters

The marketing is based on the idea to create distinctive brand. Therefore all marketing activities use the new logo of the town which is shown bellow [4].



*Figure 4: new logo of the town<sup>5</sup>*

The marketing activities also include the pink art points as a leading structure through the Artists' town, QR-Codes with accurate information about the different points of culture and arts. As a further step to increase the level of awareness cooperation with travel book publishers e.g. Merian Kärnten, ConnecetdDrive BMW, ADAG Reisemagazin, Dumont Reiseführer and television productions e.g. ORF "Gmünd – Artists' town in Carinthian mountains" are used. A further route to success can be seen in using European Union development programmes. This involves for example cooperation with the Carinthian University of Applied Sciences to plan a pixel-hotel for Gmünd, a sculpture-project along the high way – A10 Tauernautobahn or the EU-leader-project "Berg & Kunst" (mountains and arts).

<sup>5</sup> *Stadtgemeinde Gmünd in Kärnten*

## 5. SUCCESS AND AWARDS

The following facts show that we are on the right track. The creation of a unique brand “Künstlerstadt Gmünd” is working. Gmünd is meanwhile a best practice example in Austria and a dominating cultural promoter in upper Carinthia. Due to the activities a successful management of 17 former vacant buildings and places is to be mentioned. The townscape of Gmünd is in a very good order and an entire satisfaction of visitors is to observe. The expectations of the visitors are exceeded and one very important fact is the increased duration of stay of the visitors. The permanently growing number of day-trip tourism (coach tourism and individual tourists) is stimulating the local economy and gastronomy. The new way created a value added for local undertakings of € 3.200.000 each year. This is estimated by 200.000 visitors per year more. Some more examples for the success are 300 media reports yearly for free, an improvement of the quality of life and last but not least the identification of the population with the new brand – “we are proud to live here ...”!

On the other side a number of awards encourage the town to continue following this path. Some examples of the last years:

- 1999 **“Lebenswerteste Gemeinde Kärntens”** (Town with the highest standards of living in Carinthia)
- 2000 **European Village Renewal Prize** for its cultural town development concept of excellent quality that includes all aspects of community life and local economy
- 2004 In a **representative survey** on the topic of „strengths of the municipality of Gmünd“ conducted by the local Agenda 21, the Arts and Culture sector is voted as a „major strength of Gmünd“.
- 2006 **Special premium award** from the Arts Division of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture for a vast cultural programme that is of high quality and that exceeds the region of Gmünd, and for exemplary art education.
- 2008 The Artists‘Town concept is presented as a **Best Practice example** of successful urban development through cultural engagement at the European Spatial Development Conference, South Bank University, London.
- 2009 The Artists‘Town is presented as a **role model for „Urban development through cultural engagement“** at the International Cultural Management Conference in Linz, European Capital of Culture.
- 2010 The Artists‘Town of Gmünd gets awarded with the most prestigious tourism award in **Carinthia, the „TOURISMUS AWARD 2010“**.
- 2011 **EDEN Award** = acronym for European Destinations of Excellence, a project promoting sustainable tourism development models across the European Union; selection of a tourist “destination of excellence”

## 6. LOCAL STRUCTURE AND FINANCING

The project is supported by the municipality of Gmünd with the cultural office, the private association for cultural work “Kulturinitiative Gmünd” and private operators. Surprisingly this way does not require large amounts of money. The cultural budget includes € 200.000 of the cultural association (procured by the township, Province of

Carinthia, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, European Union, Job centres, sponsors, donations and miscellaneous receipts), additional personal contributions of the association – voluntary work in different areas – valued at € 40.000 and an additional municipal budget for cultural activities valued at € 130.000.

## 7. FUTURE PROSPECTS

- Revitalisation of further vacant buildings and areas – especially in the historic centre
- Development of cultural cooperation
- Reinforcement of the European networking
- Increasing of the level of awareness
- Extension of the day-trip tourism and
- Expansion of the number of overnight stays
- Creation of jobs
- Holding up of emigration
- Rising level of awareness and as a result a better future outlook for overnight staying

20 years of cultural commitment have revitalised this little medieval town and have transmuted it into a vital jewel and into a popular visitor centre.

## UMETNIČKI GRAD GMUND U KARINTIJI – JAČANJE CENTRA GRADA INOVATIVNIM URBANIM RAZVOJEM

**Rezime:** Sve je počelo 1991. godine. Širom Austrije u lokalnim zajednicama razvijali su se takozvani “regionalni planovi razvoja”. Gradski senat se odlučio za razvoj Umetničkog grada. Glavni cilj je bio da se stimuliše Stari Grad Gmund (Gmünd) uspostavljanjem kulturnog turizma, povećanjem kvaliteta života i stvaranjem brenda. Od početka je ideja reanimiranja malog srednjevekovnog grada kroz umetnost i kulturne događaje i programe stvorila centralni deo koncepta. Tokom godina, bilo je moguće ponovno otvaranje za javnost 17 ranije praznih kuća tokom letnjih meseci. Šetnjom kroz srednjevekovne ulice posetioци mogu da osećaju da ceo grad živi sa ili kroz umetnost. Ovaj razvoj takođe podržava lokalna trgovina: nema drugog austrijskog grada veličine Gmunda koji je u mogućnosti da ponudi takvu kompletnu netaknutu infrastrukturu. Prirodno, raznovrsni faktori su bili važni da se uspostavi Gmund kao Umetnički grad, kao što su visok broj motivisanih i kulturno aktivnih stanovnika, raznovrsnost programa i konstantni fokus na visok kvalitet.

**Ključne reči:** Urbani razvoj, gradski centar, Umetnički grad, Seminar.