



PLAYFIX® 

# SEAMLESS SAFETY FLOORING

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PARKOUR AREA ON THE SITE OF THE ZOLLVEREIN,  
ESSEN (GERMANY)

## AT A GALANCE

### BSW products used

- playfix®  
Colours: slate grey,  
light grey

Installed area  
approx. 220 m<sup>2</sup>

Customer  
Zollverein Foundation

# PARKOUR AREA ON THE SITE OF THE ZOLLVEREIN, ESSEN, GERMANY



Pictures of the Parkour area:  
EMG-Essen Marketing GmbH

At 600 m<sup>2</sup>, the Parkour area on the site of the disused Zollverein coking plant in Essen is the Ruhrgebiet's largest parkour facility and already a highly popular meeting point for advanced tracers, as parkour athletes are called, to train and socialise. This public facility is however also open to those with less than expert parkour skills. BSW GmbH supplied the seamless **playfix**® safety flooring to make sure that, if the worst comes to the worst, no-one hits the ground too hard.

The Parkour movement has its origins in France and was originally used as an escape technique in the Vietnam war by former soldier Raymond Belle. He passed his skills on to his son David, who then developed the technique further, applying it with his friends to the urban environment. That was in the late 1980s in the Paris suburb of Lisses. Since then, the sport has grown strongly and is currently experiencing quite a wave of popularity. This has led to towns and cities reacting to the trend and taking action. Next to classical playgrounds, parkour areas with their urban-inspired elements are increasingly beginning to appear. Concrete steps and blocks, ramps, walls and metal bars are taking the place of swings, slides and see-saws – as is the case in Essen.

BSW spoke about the new parkour facility on the Zollverein with Kevin Rutkowski, personal fitness trainer and parkour coach from Mülheim.

**BSW: Mr. Rutkowski, you are a parkour trainer and you introduce children, teenagers and adults to the new facility and to parkour techniques. What's the attraction of this sport for you personally?**

Kevin Rutkowski (KR): Parkour offers a vast scope of possibilities for me to keep myself active both physically and mentally outside in my environment. I don't need any equipment, apart from my own body and a little creativity. Parkour doesn't have any strict rules. I can determine how I want to move forward. For instance, do I jump over the wall or do I get over it in a completely different way. The city is transformed into one huge training ground and that's why it never gets boring.

**BSW: You say that, as a trainer, you want to "pass on parkour with the right values". How would you describe the values of parkour?**

KR: The sport of parkour is still very young compared to other forms of artistic movement, but it's developing. Lots of people think of parkour as daredevil jumping and youngsters vandalising urban furniture looking for adrenalin kicks, but the philosophy of parkour is very different. Safety, risk assessment and the complete control of your own body are the top priorities. It's about respect and self confidence, about learning to assess dangers and handling yourself and your body well. The careful treatment of our environment as well as public and private property is a given. Real tracers are always prudent and safety-minded. It's really important to me to correct the false impressions people have about parkour.



**BSW: The origins of parkour lie in the urban environment. With areas like the Zollverein, the sport is shifting away to specially designed facilities. Can real tracers find themselves in these places?**

KR: Absolutely. Facilities like this show us that the sport is being taken seriously. Demand is growing and tracers can meet up with other people who are interested. Parkour isn't shifting to these new areas completely, but it does offer additional scope for training. In the Zollverein park, for instance, the different elements mean you can be very versatile in your training. And besides, it's created a place where you can meet your friends and spend time together. And these are great places for workshops or courses where beginners can get to know the sport better.

**BSW: You mention beginners. That's when safety should play an even more important role. On the parkour course at Zollverein, there's a synthetic **playfix**® surface which is elastic, with impact reducing properties. Does such a floor surface benefit your parkour moves?**

KR: Parkour runners actually like to hone their senses to take in real surroundings, like hard concrete surfaces. Safety flooring conveys a certain security that can lead to reduced alertness. For us tracers, seamless synthetic surfaces are a very good compromise when it comes to doing justice to beginners and advanced tracers alike. On the one hand, they provide fall protection for inexperienced athletes, but on the other hand, they're still solid enough for us to execute our moves in a controlled manner.

Such surfaces are well accepted in the parkour scene, especially as the grey colour of **playfix**® makes it look like a concrete floor. Loose safety surfaces, like sand or bark mulch would be much less suitable. Your feet sink in and you can't get a good start. Mulch absorbs moisture and soon gets soggy. It rained solidly for the two days before the facility in Essen opened, but we were surprised how quickly BSW's synthetic surface dried out once the rain stopped.

**BSW: Then, we wish you all the best for your future coaching activities and your own training. Thank you very much, Mr. Rutkowski.**

KR: You're welcome.

The parkour park on the Zollverein site is a joint project between the youth welfare network of AWO Essen (Essen Workers Welfare Association) and the Zollverein Foundation with the project "Zollverein mittendrin" (Zollverein in the thick of it). Young people developed the park together with landscape architects, professional planners and the Zollverein Foundation.

BSW installed approximately 220 m<sup>2</sup> of their seamless **playfix**® safety flooring in slate grey and light grey in the Zollverein parkour park. Due to its resilient, PU-bonded synthetic surface, **playfix**® has some decisive benefits to offer when it comes to resistance to vandalism as well as parkour module maintenance and abrasion protection.



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