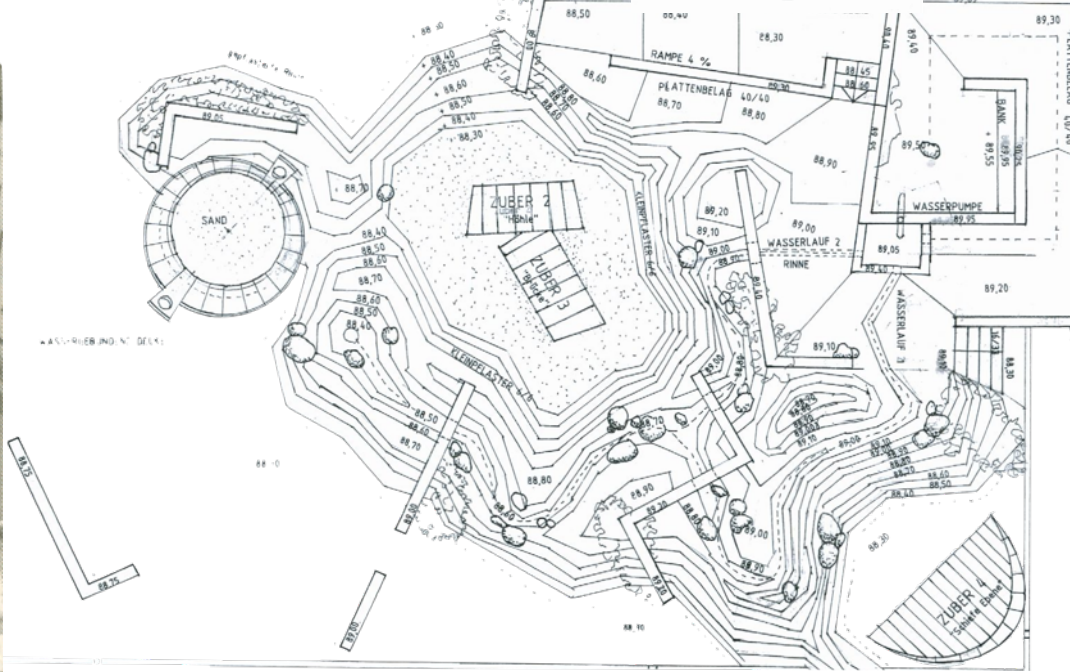


Birgit Kratzheller

## HOF DER BADER / COURTYARD OF THE 'BADER'

Courtyard-Design on the history of medieval bathing houses and traditional herb medicine, Badergasse, Mainz, Germany, 2001.



The courtyard of the BADER is build on the roof of a newly created underground car park. The carrying capacity of the ceiling did not allow sufficient soil replenishment for an extensive greening with bigger plants and so the task was to design an 'artificial landscape' as recreation area and play facilities for the residents and their children.

The in-depth construction in the center of the old town with its 2000 year history, uncovered layer by layer older remnants of former cultivations . At the planned bottom of the garage, in 8m depth even a 2000 year old mosaic floor from the Roman time was found.

The square design is reminiscent of the quite well-documented, medieval past of the site that hosted more than 400 years the seat of the guild of the Bader. The 'Bader' were the hosts of the medieval bathing houses, herbalists and providers of medical treatment for the less wealthy people.

Unlike bathing in Roman perfection the medieval bath house was very simple. The most significant elements were the big wooden bath tubs .

The square design takes up the idea of uncovering founds from the past in an archaeological excavation site. Five oversized tubs arise out of the flat plane of a water-bound floor cover. "Sand vat ", " cave " bridge ", " Inclined Plane " and " bucket " form very different spaces to play on.

From the ground level curvatures covered with mosaic pavement arise and form an amorphous landscape. The indentations accommodate two watercourses. Recessed foundlings remind of the fire heated stones that were used in the medieval bathhouse for reheating the water in the bath tub .

Water-blue colored concrete walls form benches, bridges, barriers, culverts and condense in the southern corner of the square in an elevated plateau. Rough wooden benches - like in the medieval bathing house - offer more opportunities to sit . The adjacent pond can be filled with a hand pump and water can alternately be led in tone of the two watercourses.

Bader herb garden: at seven locations different, fragrant herbs grow. Each of them was of particular importance in medieval medicine and were mentioned in the best known herb book of the Middle Ages. The texts and images of the respective pages of the famous medieval book 'Gart der gesuntheit' that was printed in Mainz are attached to the locations of the medicinal herbs as deep-etched copper reliefs .

The attentive visitor can find signs and symbols of brass - arranged in a specific pattern on the walls

: planetary symbols, zodiac signs, signature shortcuts, items characters, hieroglyphics of transmutation processes and other alchemical systems refer to practices, classification systems and ideas of medieval herb medicine.

**Sundial for the St. John's day** (21th of june): particularly important since pagan times was the bath at the summer solstice and later on the St. John's day. The bath on the eve of June 24th (S. Johannis Baptistae) was meant to be particularly healing. In a wall of the upper plateau a brass tube is inclined at the precise angle of the local sun culmination of the summer solstice. On the floor in a exactly calculated distance a brass sun symbol is inclined. Only on the 21th of june at 12 O'clock local time the sun stands high enough and in the right position to fall through the brass tube in the wall and form an circle of light that exactly matches and meets the round center of the sun symbol on the floor and thus give an indication for the arrive of this special day.

