

ON
magazine
FASHION 09

SPRING FASHION

SPRING MAKEUP TRENDS
Let Your Eyes Do the Talking

EDWARD BAUM
Architectural Genius

THE BIG HOME TOUR
*Home Builders Association
of Greater Dallas*



ON

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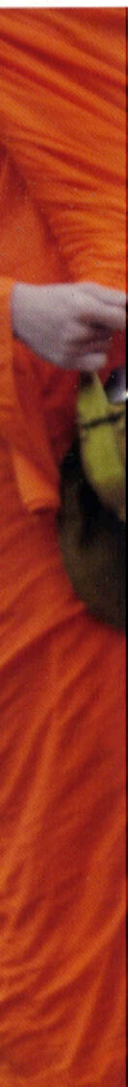




photo by MATT HAWTHORNE

Architectural genius

by CHARLSYE LEWIS

There is a ripple in the space/time continuum caused by none other than architect Edward M. Baum. His spaces are spectacular; his time is now.

You probably saw his modern houses in *Dwell* magazine. You have no doubt seen his Dallas Police Memorial. Dallas has been bestowed with a phenomenal talent in Edward Baum. He has won national awards, enthralled modern architecture enthusiasts across North Texas, and brought world-renowned professionals to the area via his Dallas Architecture Forum. Baum is everything you'd expect in a forward-thinking, award-winning architect. He's witty, insightful, well read, and passionate. This makes him a wonderful conversationalist and an even better architect.

Baum has cemented his place in the timeline of modern architecture. He blends the past and the future with intoxicating results, the "past" being the collective modern aesthetic realized by iconic mid-century architects like Joseph Eichler and Richard Neutra, even Arthur Erickson. From Art Deco, to the naturalism of Frank Lloyd Wright, through Bauhaus, with influences of Scandinavian and Far Eastern design, the past is

an anchor to which the present and future can be built. The definition of contemporary architecture is fluid-changing and expanding with each new space and each new project. Fortunately, we pride ourselves here in North Texas on being receptive to both historic and contemporary architecture. Baum finds a particularly enthusiastic audience in Dallas.

"I like the risk taking," he says. "It's a very friendly place to be an architect. They value good design more than in most places in the country. I certainly wouldn't have gotten things built that were as interesting anywhere else. In Boston, where I lived for a long time, and St. Louis, it was hard to get modern architecture done."

Much of contemporary architecture is focused on the pressing matters of conservation and of lightening our ecological footprint on our world. To Baum, these "green" elements are instinctively understood and incorporated. He takes some inspiration from the good design and solid construction of European homes.

His infill housing project on Throckmorton utilizes renewable wood, concrete floors, blown cellulose insulation, and an on-demand hot water heater. It is true that, "They don't make homes like they used to." And thank goodness.

"I've remodeled 19th and early 20th century houses," says Baum. "They didn't have building codes, they undersized things; that's why old floors sag. Frankly, plywood is a much better material than big thick boards. Old houses are horrific to insulate. They're energy sieves. The worst electric bill I ever had in the middle of the summer for all my air-conditioning and everything in this house was \$200. And the worst gas bill for heating and hot water was \$70. So when you end up spending more for your cable TV and your cell phone than you do for utilities, then there's a change. And I'm very comfortable."

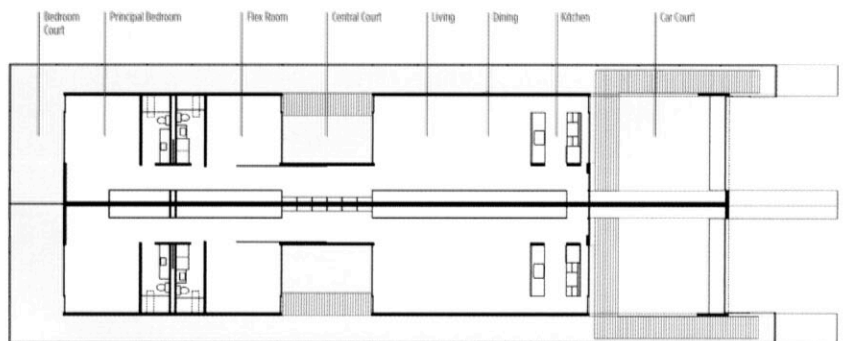
Perhaps the most important eco-friendly element is the lack of a lawn. Yes, that's correct. No lawn. Before you judge, hear this:



“There was a survey done by Columbia University where they said that in the summertime about 80 percent of the water used in DFW is used in the exterior landscape,” said Baum.

Everybody, human and animal, loves to be surrounded by green. Crushed rock replaces grass around the house, but its presence doesn't assume a lack of soothing vegetation. On the contrary, there is a high probability that even more green surrounds you – it is simply on the vertical plane instead of the horizontal one. Evergreen vines entwine along the span of fence, providing privacy and consuming little water. This is a people-friendly solution that would be a smart addition to any home design.

How appropriate that the progressive Baum is a co-founder of The Dallas Architecture Forum. Having taught at Harvard, and having served as both a professor and Dean of the School of Architecture at UTA, his goal was to provide a better lecture series for the school. Is there a better way to learn than from the best?





What a great cultural asset for those among us who are interested in architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design. If you want to earn an unofficial degree in design, you can do so by attending lectures, panels and seminars and by participating in local field trips.

Baum notes: "We have 400 subscription members, which puts it on par with some of the big cultural institutions in Dallas. Just last week, America's best structural engineer came to talk about a project he is doing - the extension of the Kimbell in Fort Worth. Next week, a great Finnish architect is coming."

Baum's latest partnership is with the Dallas Contemporary, a pioneering art space (as opposed to museum or gallery) that "presents art in a forum that cultivates artists, ignites learning and inspires the community." Since so much of modern art is geared toward exposing reality and the rawness of life experience, Baum's involvement in their renovation project at 161 Glass is appropriate, given his ideas on modern art. He feels very strongly that modern art belongs in places that are closer to real life.

"The whole project of modern art and modern writing in the 20th century was to reconnect that art to life," says Baum. "They said that over and over again - art and life together as opposed to having it pulled apart, which certain aspects of the 19th century did. And so to reconnect art and life, to me, means putting the art where the life is and vice versa."

Joan Davidow, the sharp and engaging director of the Dallas Contemporary, agrees: "It is exciting that somebody of his caliber is in our community. He is very in tune with how modern art came to be. He takes the world how it is and celebrates it."

With Baum's bedrock of talent at their disposal, the Dallas Contemporary is proudly leading by example in preserving one of Dallas' impressive 37,000-square-foot, mid-century industrial buildings replete with 12-foot ceilings, clerestory windows, and plenty of raw brick and steel. It is splendid, grand and teeming with energy - a perfect fit for modern art.

"The whole building is dock high," says Davidow. "You feel like you're floating."

She and Baum are vibrantly embracing the philosophy of adaptive reuse, saving this building from architectural homicide in a city where demo permits are handed out like tissues at a funeral. Notable victims of this carnage include the low, sleek mid-century Harwood K. Smith office building on Turtle Creek Boulevard, the magnificent Dr. Pepper bottling plant on Mockingbird Lane, and the stately Ross Avenue Baptist Church.

But let's not digress. The victory-in-progress is the resurrection of Dallas Contemporary's new art space.

Davidow states, "We have taken something historic and are making it modern. We are following DIA:Beacon (a former Nabisco factory), Mass MOCA (a former mill), and the Tate Modern (a

former generating plant). We were a manufacturing site."

Davidow, with her genuinely warm style, reminds us that artists seek out these old open buildings for studio space, so they are appropriately following the essential premise of how artists make art. To that effect, says Davidow, Baum is the right architect for the job because "he doesn't make it something other than what it already is—the rawness of the building and the richness of contemporary art mixed."

A reminder to those out there contemplating a home purchase: Just as there are obvious reasons to choose a well-designed BMW over a cost-conscious KIA, the same reasoning applies to buildings.

"The value added of having a good architect is immense," says Baum. "The resale value is greater, and the maintenance costs less. I think people have two different mind-sets, where they can just buy a building based on the amount of square feet, where bigger is better. No! A bigger house is not better...the *right* size house is the best."

That being said, the *right* architect is also the best.

Find Edward M. Baum at www.emb-arc.com, the Dallas Architecture Forum at www.dallasarchitectureforum.org, and The Dallas Contemporary at www.dallascontemporary.org.