

The Zen of Svend

While his roster of great renovations grows, Svend Fruit dodges the wrecking ball | *By Rebecca Sherman | Photography by Nick Prendergast* |

At 46, architect Svend Fruit has renovated some of the most important mid-century modern residences in Dallas, including an Edward Larabee Barnes, an O'Neil Ford and a couple of Howard Meyers. The renovation of a spectacular Philip Johnson house in Preston Hollow, done with partner and interior designer Mil Bodron, is slated for publication this spring in *The New York Times*. While Fruit was busy fixing up moderns, others were busy tearing them down. "In the last 15 years, Dallas has lost some of its most significant modern homes. ... Everything became a tear down," says Fruit, who still cringes at the loss of a particular Harwell Hamilton Harris house in Highland Park.

Teardowns are a hot-button topic for the Houston-born architect, who co-founded Bodron +

Fruit (bodronfruit.com) in 1998. So much so that he moderated a panel on the subject at a recent meeting of the Dallas Architecture Forum. "Dallas grew a lot during the '50s and '60s and our architecture reflected that. It's important for the fabric of the city to keep [architecturally significant homes]." That said, he's no purist.

"Lifestyles have changed incredibly since the '50s. You have to make the kind of changes that are viable to the market. We do renovations, not restorations," says Fruit, who credits a handful of local real estate agents and a surge of modern home tours with helping educate the city on its trove of modernist jewels. In a twist of fate, the bad economy brings an unexpected windfall. "Historically, a recession is when most old houses are saved," he says. ■

Fruit's Hots

Honed, matte surfaces such as grayish-green pietra serena sandstone and dark gray Italian basalt, walnut floors with Benjamin Moore Decorators White, concrete and travertine anything, terrazzo, The Architects Newspaper (archpaper.com), Giuseppe Penone sculpture, Sergio Rodrigues Diz chair

Fruit's Nots

Bad '70s ranches masquerading as mid-century modern, stone fashions that change with hemlines, white box architecture: "It's hard to integrate the outdoors with a white box unless you live in Greece." Purist architecture: "Who wants to live in a time capsule?"



OUTSPOKEN ARCHITECT

Svend Fruit at a Howard Meyer-designed house he renovated.