

# CASUAL

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## ELEMENTAL DESIGN

Fire and water set the scene in this Tampa retreat

*By Laurie Rudd*

Juxtaposing cool, tranquil water with dancing fire, the Ryan Hughes Design Build team created a serene sanctuary for a Tampa, Florida, client. The designer outfitted the space with an array of custom-built structures, punctuated by carefully selected high-end furnishings to create a luxurious retreat. We recently caught up with Hughes to get the scoop on how he approached the project.

*Casual Living: What was the inspiration for this project?*

**Ryan Hughes:** The word the homeowner used was “sanctuary.” As a single male, he was into creating an environment centered on serenity and a peaceful vibe. He wanted to walk into the outdoor space and feel the stress of the day escape. It had to be very inviting, but with a tranquil atmosphere. From every structure to furniture and ac-

cessories, this project began with the word “sanctuary” and built from there.

*CL: How did the furnishings and textiles play into the overall design?*

**RH:** Typically in projects of this size, the structures and custom-built elements are the first priority, with furnishings secondary. But in this case, furniture was primary, and the patios and pergolas were designed around it. The colors and textures of the furnishings and fabrics were what provided the cool continuity throughout the space.

*CL: With the contemporary pool and spa as a centerpiece, how did your plan work to create a cohesive multi-room outdoor design?*

**RH:** We always create the outdoor living areas of lounging, kitchen or dining with the pool shape created to fit within

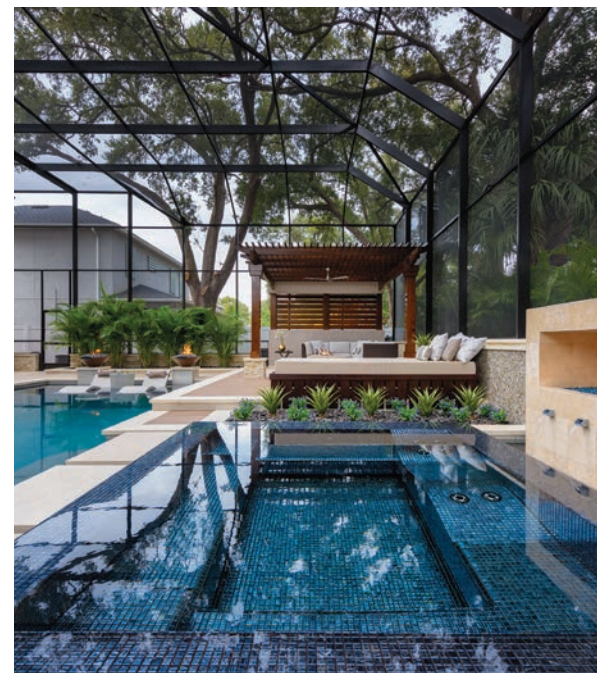
the overall space. With the small dimensions of the property, the outdoor space was designed down to the inch. We also had to accommodate the protected grandfather oaks that surround the property. The enclosure was a requirement for the homeowner to keep the outdoor living area clean while living in harmony with the oaks.

*CL: How do you marry your custom-built structures with the furniture?*

**RH:** With every project, the furniture has to be incorporated in the initial concept. You need to know what sectional will sit under a pergola. Each piece factors into the space planning of the entire project.

*CL: How do you typically source furnishings for a project like this?*

**RH:** We have a select core of five to six



outdoor furniture manufacturers that we work with depending on the style of the project. They have been curated by me over the years as I look for brands with the best quality and look, customer service, flexibility and the ability to customize to fit our color palette, texture and feel. Price is never the only factor.

*CL: How did fire play into the overall plan?*

**RH:** In creating a sanctuary, water and fire are essential elements. The feeling of the blend of fire and water, stone and earth, it takes all of that to make a captivating environment. Each piece works in concert.

*CL: How important is outdoor lighting?*

**RH:** Outdoor lighting is super-critical. Nighttime is when the space comes alive with reflections, and the mood is amplified. Our design incorporates an exact amount of lighting and intensity, which is scientifically determined and difficult to master. When we attempt to explain on a scientific level, it can scare clients. With more lights, we can actually have lower intensity, spread out and create an even effect and a chill mood. This project has 100 light fixtures, but they are hidden throughout the outdoor space.

*CL: What was the highlight of the project?*

**RH:** The reveal was definitely the highlight, when everything comes together from the chaos of construction. This client was missing, and I found him by the fire pit on the sectional with a grin on his face amazed at what a difference we made. His comment was that he realized why it was important to invest in high-quality furniture. Without the contribution of every detail, it wouldn't have been possible to create his sanctuary.