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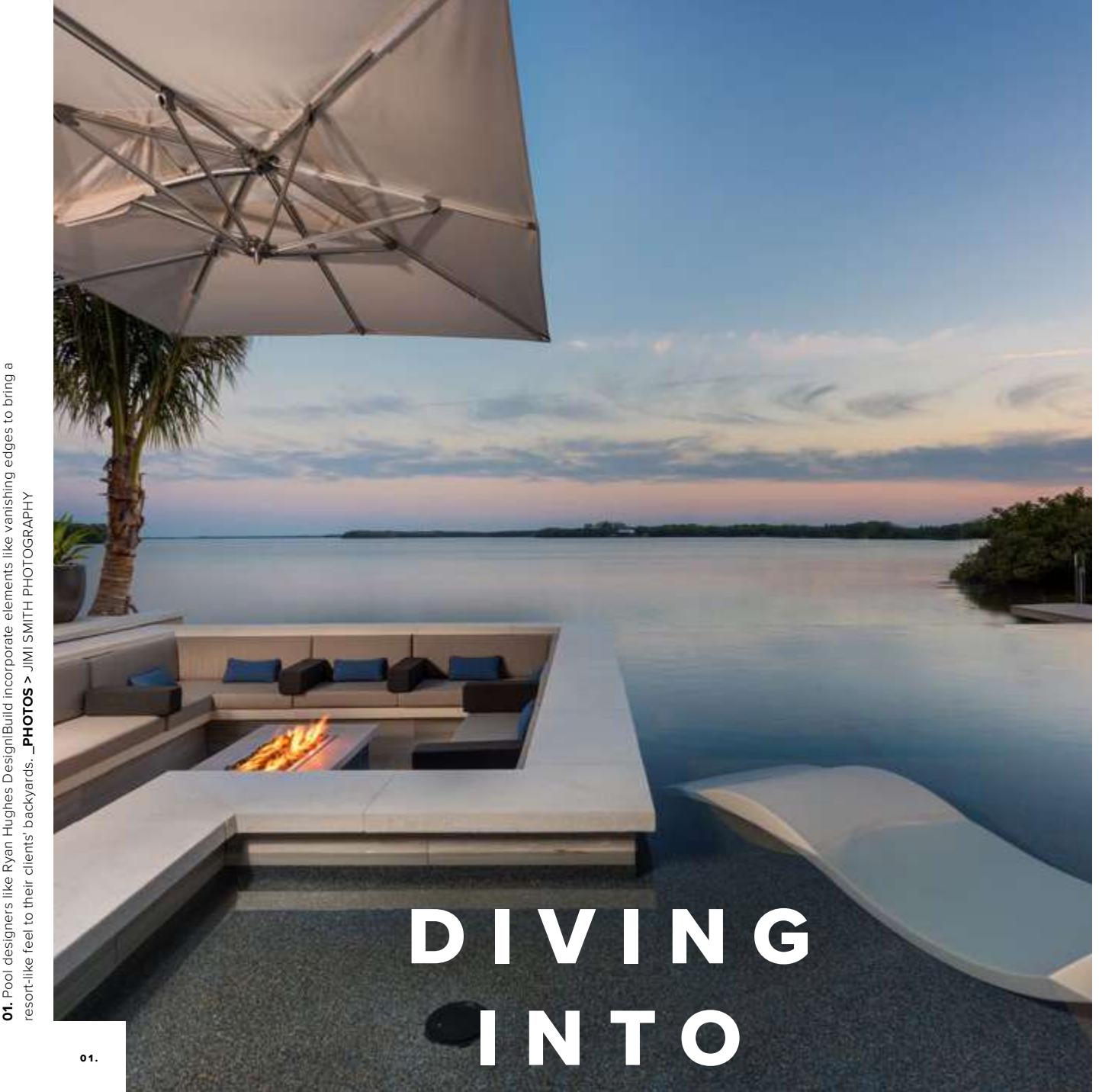
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01. Pool designers like Ryan Hughes DesignBuild incorporate elements like vanishing edges to bring a resort-like feel to their clients' backyards. [PHOTOS > JIMI SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY](#)

01.

DIVING INTO POOL DESIGN

STORY > MARCY SANFORD

FIVE DESIGN TRENDS THAT ARE HEATING UP KITCHENS AROUND THE TAMPA BAY AREA



COOL DOWN

02. Modern pools are meant to be usable, so designers like Olympus Pools are embracing square-like shapes and multiple areas to hang out and relax. [PHOTOS > OLYMPUS POOLS](#)



02.

Homeowners want and expect more out of the pool area in 2021. It needs to be a place to relax, somewhere to entertain family and friends, and a work of art, all at the same time. "The status quo is not good enough anymore," says Ryan Hughes, president and creative director of Ryan Hughes Design/Build. "People realize that a pool serves more than just one function. It is not just a place for swimming. COVID has accelerated the trend. Now people are home more, and they realize just how much of a sanctuary it is to be outside. With all the craziness in the world, water can create a sense of stillness and tranquility." Here's how the pool design pros are helping homeowners unwind in their own backyard this year.

HIP TO BE SQUARE

When it comes to the shape of the pool, the freeform, kidney-shaped rounded pool is out, and homeowners are opting for a sleeker design. "People want more modern, clean, geometric lines," says Toni Massey, sales manager for Olympus Pools. The area around the pool is changing, too. "They want modern-looking, cohesive decking. Travertine has always been popular, but now even more so."

"Instead of a plaster finish, we are using glass mosaic tiles to create a smooth, comfortable, finish," says Hughes. "Vanishing edge and perimeter overflow pools, along with design elements like sunken firepits and sunken spas, are very streamlined. They create some amazing reflections and can really make you feel one with the water."

LET US ENTERTAIN YOU

"Homeowners are investing in their pool area as an entertainment space, not just as an element," says Massey. "They want custom kitchens. Just like the kitchen is the heart of the home, the same concept applies with outdoor kitchens. Everyone wants to be together, so the space has to be functional [and allow] you to talk to each other."

Ryan Hughes adds, "People are investing more in their outdoor kitchens because of their value, and [homeowners] want to have the same resources as they do indoors. It is for more than just grilling." Separate islands or bars for serving drinks and food and fun features like glass bars, shelves and live walls are just a few of the design elements Hughes sees homeowners asking for to make their outdoor space complete and unique.

Massey adds that most homeowners are asking for sun shelves and shallow pools so that the entire pool is usable. "Most of the pools we build are 3 to 5 feet deep. People don't want deep pools anymore; they don't want to have to tread water. They want to be able to use all of the pool."

GET YOUR ZEN ON

"There is a lot of science out there about water and well-being," says Hughes. One of the best ways to relax is by indulging in your spa. The typical pool spa has five to six jets and uncomfortable seating, but Hughes says his company has been building variations with captain's chairs, cup holders, glass tile and up to 50 jets.

"They are years beyond a traditional spa," he says. "Now it is a therapeutic spa, where people can really relax and unwind."

"When you are in and around water, it is instantly relaxing," Hughes adds. Plus, all the factors involved with a pool design can contribute to the feeling of relaxation you'd get on a vacation far from home. "We are using the same theories and designs as resorts but in a residential setting." 