FASHIONING THE PERFECT BACKYARD LOOK





EQUIPMENT

HEATER:
PENTAIR ETI

PUMP:
INTELLIFLO3 PENTAIR

FILTER:
PENTAIR XF

DECK:
TECHO BLOC

INTERIOR FINISH:
AQUA BELLA TILE / WET EDGE PLASTER

AUTO SYSTEMS:
THE ATTENDANT BY POOLSIDE TECH

FIBER OPTICS:
PAL LIGHTNING

OTHER:
AQUASTAR PURE STAR

During the 2026 Pool & Spa Show, members voting in NESPA's People's Choice category for the 2025 Outstanding Achievement Awards selected Grecian Pools International's Holmdel, New Jersey, residential project as the People's Choice – Best of Competition winner.

The project stands out as more than a large-scale backyard installation. It reflects a deliberate balance of design, engineering and vision that reflects Grecian's upscale, custom residential work. Internally referred to as "the reservoir" for its scale, the project maintains a surprising sense of intimacy, with each space serving a clear and intentional purpose within the broader design.

Accepting the recognition, Nektario "Nick" Tsoukas, owner and lead designer of Grecian Pools International, marked the award as a recognition of the company's long-standing commitment to high-end design and construction. For Tsoukas, the project reflects a continuation of a multigenerational approach to craftsmanship, shaped by both heritage and a refined design sensibility.

FROM HAUTE COUTURE TO HIGH-END POOLS

Grecian Pools International began as a family business founded by Tsoukas' father in the early 1980s. Tsoukas grew up in the industry, working in the family retail store, running service routes and eventually joining his father directly on construction sites. However, his path to becoming a luxury pool builder took an unconventional detour through the upper echelons of the fashion world.

After graduating from NYU Stern School of Business with a degree in international marketing and business, Tsoukas pursued his own path outside of his family's business. He spent nearly seven years working in corporate roles for premium department stores, including Federated (owners of Macy's & Bloomingdales) and the luxury retailer Barneys New York. Surrounded by world-class designers, visual display artists and style innovators, Tsoukas absorbed a unique education in color theory, layout and aesthetic harmony. He frequently worked with top designers, learning how they paired materials and developed their seasonal collections.

When Tsoukas returned to the family business two decades ago, he brought that distinct creative lens with him. He started to shift the company's focus away from standard, vinyl-liner installations and steered it toward high-end design and custom builds.

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BEST OF COMPETITION WINNER

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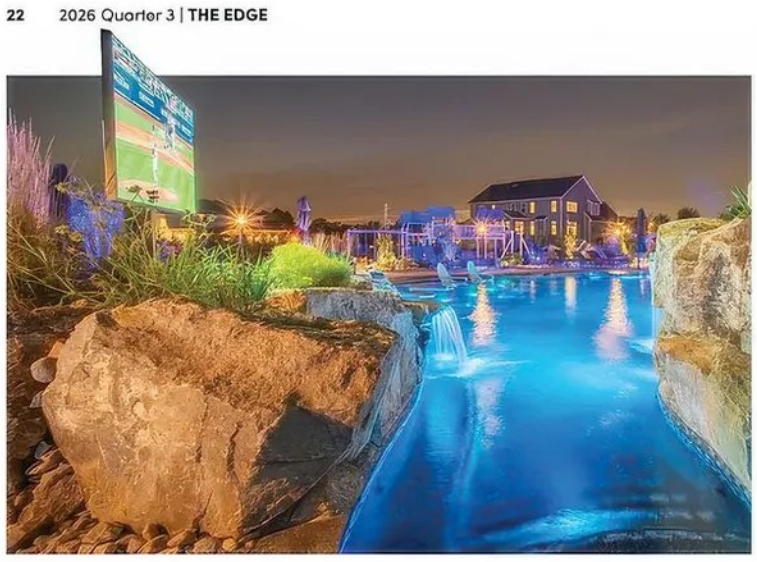
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"Getting exposed to that world made me see things differently and brought out the creativity in me, and it made me learn to think outside the box," Tsoukas says. "My thought processes are different. My color schematics, the matching, are based on a different mindset from being involved in the fashion world."

This fashion influence permeates every facet of how Grecian Pools International operates today. Tsoukas doesn't view his customer consultations as standard sales calls. He's looking to understand not only the project, but the people behind it. With months of collaboration ahead, finding the right fit matters just as much as the design itself. He approaches design choices with a stylistic vocabulary, even swapping out the word "portfolio" on the company website for "look book," a nod to his apparel industry roots.

MATERIALIZING THE VISION

To maintain creative control over his high-end niche market, Tsoukas personally sources unique materials. He travels to Europe four to six times a year, visiting mountain quarries to select stone blocks that are custom-cut and imported directly for his clients. He has also developed an exclusive interior plaster line to ensure a singular aesthetic for his builds.

This attention to detail was tested to its limits when a landscape and hardscape partner, Creative Design, connected Grecian Pools International with a homeowner in Holmdel, New Jersey. The client was looking for something unprecedented on an existing property: a backyard lifestyle environment defined by advanced technology, unique features and sheer magnitude.

The project went through four separate design iterations before finding its true form. When a previous concept failed to hit the mark, Tsoukas sat down at his office and sketched a completely new layout in five minutes based on a deep understanding of the client's goals. The client was instantly blown away.

The resulting concrete gunite pool measures a staggering 3,900 square feet. To bring a natural, resort-like feel to the space, the design incorporates a massive, wraparound sand beach entry, utilizing specialized hardeners to secure the sand, paired with a towering peninsula of natural boulder formations.

OVERCOMING THE MAGNITUDE OF SCALE

Building at this scale required managing massive engineering and structural hurdles. Foremost among them was balancing the immense weight of the natural rock formations.









"When the rock formation was being built, I didn't want any excess weight or pressure on the pool structure," Tsoukas explains. "I probably drove the stone guy a little crazy, but we come up with a way to self-reinforce those boulders, so there was no weight touching the pool."

Beyond the structural load, the sheer volume of water required complex plumbing and mechanical considerations. Grecian Pools installed seven 3-horsepower Pentair IntelliFlo 3 pumps, two Pentair XF filters, and two 400k Pentair ETI heaters to keep the massive body of water circulating and heated flawlessly.

The design also integrates highly advanced lighting and lifestyle zones. The pool features a custom-built, 16-foot submerged dining table complete with built-in bar stools and benches. To prevent the table from becoming a dark spot at night, Tsoukas cut holes directly into the structure and placed lighting fixtures underneath to shoot light upward through the table.

Illumination was a massive undertaking across the property, featuring over 80 pool and rock lights alongside roughly 300 landscape lights. The entire lighting array is driven by an AI-controlled system that syncs with outdoor entertainment. If the homeowner is watching a baseball game, the lights can shift to team colors or flash like a strobe during a home run; if holiday music is playing, the system recognizes the audio and instantly bathes the yard in festive color themes.



Nick Tsoukas, Grecian Pools International, receives his 2025 Outstanding Achievement Awards at the 2026 Pool & Spa Show.

To maximize the functional space, Tsoukas added custom touches on the fly, including a dual-semicircle step configuration that naturally directs swimmers to the left or right sides of the pool. He also built an integrated therapy jet station powered by a dedicated pump and air blower, providing a luxurious jacuzzi effect seamlessly blended directly into the main pool structure.

To finish the deck, they utilized 7,000 square feet of Techo-Bloc pavers and granite coping, all perfectly coordinated with a Wet Edge Glossy Black interior pool finish. The flawless execution relied on a seamless partnership with Creative Design, the hardscaping team. Both firms operated with an obsessive attention to detail, bouncing ideas off one another late into the night to achieve perfection.

EXPANDING THE BRAND

For Tsoukas, the ultimate success of the project comes back to the experience of the client. He firmly believes that luxury pool building is half design and half relationship management. By understanding his clients' styles and matching their energy, he converts customers into lifelong advocates.

This relationship-driven success is fueling the next chapter for Grecian Pools International. Having successfully expanded from its New York roots into New Jersey, the company is now establishing a firm footprint in Pennsylvania with a new design center in Doylestown, Bucks County. This office joins existing New Jersey design hubs in Holmdel and Brick.

Tsoukas' expansion strategy avoids blind mass marketing in favor of building physical, beautifully decorated design showrooms that provide local communities with a clear sense of presence and permanence. Backed by a fiercely loyal team, some of whom have worked with the family for 30 years since his father's era, Grecian Pools International continues to elevate the standard of custom pool construction across the NESPA region.

With a People's Choice award in hand and a growing pipeline of complex, high-end builds, Tsoukas remains focused on pushing the envelope of backyard luxury. By treating every pool like a distinct fingerprint, Grecian Pools International ensures that its work remains an enduring statement of style, craftsmanship and pure imagination.