



The Artist: Ed Gibbs

THE CANVAS: A long journey, looming winter, dense shale **THE PALETTE:** Waters from the Northumberland Strait, salt-splashed cedars, a picturesque bridge

THE MASTERPIECE: Nova Scotian charm, modern sensibility, shades of local color



A SALTWATER SPRING HELPS TRANSPORT CAPE COD TO THE GREAT WHITE NORTH

By Joshua Keim When Ed Gibbs was asked to work on this project in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Canada, he knew he was in it for the long haul — literally. The job site was a full 1,100 miles from his company's home base in Toronto.

He often accepts long-distance projects, though. His ISO-certified firm has built pools from Cote d'Azur to the Caribbean, including one at the Marriott Hotel in St. Kitts, U.S. Virgin Islands.

"Traveling and doing pools around the world is probably the most rewarding part of the business," says Gibbs, president of Gib-San Pools Ltd. by Master Pools. "It's similar to a military-style deployment. More precision is required because you can't just go back to the shop if you forget something."

The clients in this case were a high-profile Canadian family that owned a large chain of supermarkets, among other businesses. When it came to selecting the type of pool they wanted, Gibbs says, "It wasn't a question of dollars. It was a question of practicality and utility."

FROM THE OCEAN DEPTHS

The family wanted two for one — a lap pool that also could be used for fun. Because they loved swimming in the ocean, they asked that the vessel be filled with water from the Northumberland Strait. "The salt level is outrageously high," Gibbs notes, "but they didn't want an ordinary pool anyway."

That's why the vinyl-liner pool was the right choice, he says. A gunite or slate pool would etch and calcify too quickly when exposed for any duration to the brine air and waters of the harsh North Atlantic environment.

With construction set for late October, the threat of winter gave Gibbs' 10-man crew only a short window of opportunity to finish the project. "We worked for three weeks straight with no days off," he recalls. "Everything absolutely had to be executed on the day it was scheduled."

From day one, Gibbs had his share of challenges. The first 4 feet of topsoil was composed of dense shale, which had to be jackhammered and removed piece by piece. "It's an ominous task



Ed Gibbs, president, Gib-San Pools Ltd. by Master Pools, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Specialty: Gunite pools and spas.

Inspiration: Nature.

Favorite materials: Stone, granite and flagstone.

because it's not like you can take out huge chunks at once," he says. "It comes apart in small pieces."

Being at sea level, the ground had a high water table. Pumps were constantly running to dewater the area designated for the pool excavation at a site chosen because of its relationship to the house.

"We wanted to ensure that sight lines from the house looked at particular aspects of the pool," Gibbs says. "In this case, the clients have an office and a living room on the lower level of the house, which looks directly at the pool dock in the widest part of the pool."

A BRIDGE OVER SALTY WATERS

The dock and bridge became two of the most unique aspects of the project, from Gibbs' perspective. The dock serves as a tanning deck and diving point. It comes over the lip of the pool coping and thrusts out over the deep end, giving it the appearance of floating on the water.

The bridge was chosen not only to complement the dock from an aesthetic standpoint, but also to solve access issues due to the large size of the 40-by-80-foot pool. "If you want to get to one side of the pool, you'll have to do a lot of walking," he says. "Having the dock

and bridge brought a natural symmetry [and convenience] to the project."

Both features were made of cedar, which grays as it ages to lend a maritime look. It's "almost like washed driftwood," Gibbs says. The choice was inspired by the home's Cape Cod motif. For the deck, flagstone indigenous to Nova Scotia was used.

"We have to be reinventing the wheel all the time," Gibbs concludes. "A pool is a pool is a pool. It's a vessel in the ground with water. ... You reinvent it with shapes, textures, attitude and technology. That's what gets me out of bed in the morning." ■

Room with a view: The builder said it was important that sight lines from the home's lower-level office be focused directly on key features of the pool.

