

Dvira's Dream Design

The winner of season two of Debbie Travis' design reality show talks about her dream come true.

Just back from her trip to London for design week, I was fortunate enough to chat with Dvira Ovadia, given that she has barely been able to catch her breath in the last year. After a grueling elimination process consisting of interviews and aptitude tests, Ovadia was chosen among 8,000 applicants across Canada to participate along with 13 other contestants in Global Television's reality series *From the Ground Up With Debbie Travis*, Season 2. In July 2007, Debbie Travis, television personality and interior designer, picked Ovadia to be the chief designer for a new line of Debbie Travis Designed Condos and Homes with building partner Tribute Communities.

Somewhere in Ottawa, over a period of 5-6 weeks in a large 70's "Brady Bunch" style house, Ovadia, 28, and her fellow contestants were cut off from the outside world and assigned

ten different tasks each week by Travis herself. That's right, no telephone, no television, no radio and no Internet. Even board games needed to be selected and approved. A challenge which Ovadia says "made people crumble". In a constant state of "pins and needles", Ovadia tried to be neutral, did not pick fights and remained friends with everyone. If Ovadia could get through this challenge, with all the extreme pressure and crazy deadlines, any real job would be a cakewalk.

"My drive, my focus and my determination is what got me there." For Ovadia, the contest was about "gaining a new opportunity". Ovadia claims she took the contest exactly for what it was and did not get caught up in the fact that she was being filmed 24/7. When asked how she felt about watching herself on the tube when the show started airing, Ovadia humbly replied, "I was a little bit shy, a little bit proud and a little bit scared."

Sweet, soft-spoken and self-assured, Ovadia has always been a step ahead. Born in Tel Aviv, Ovadia moved to Brussels with her parents, and subsequently to Toronto with her mother at the age of 12. As a child, Ovadia loved to play with Lego and puzzles, and always knew that she wanted to do something in design. After receiving an undergraduate degree in architecture at the University of Toronto, Ovadia wanted to learn more and decided to pursue a Masters. She applied all over the United States and got into the Pratt Institute in New York City, her first choice. Three years later, she graduated with a Master of Science in Interior Architecture. "New York exposed me to everything, different cultures, and developments in cutting edge and high end design."

Make no mistake, Ovadia's life before Debbie Travis was also good. Ovadia worked full-time with a company that designed interior spaces for restaurants and nightclubs and really enjoyed it. However, crazy hours and working weekends took its toll on her.



Photos courtesy of D. Ovadia

When Ovadia's fiancé read about the contest he urged her to apply. Wanting "an extreme kickstart" to her career, Ovadia agreed to try, and when chosen, "took the risk" and quit her job.

Winning the coveted prize, a one-year full-time contract with Travis and Tribute Communities, is a dream come true for Ovadia. She is a one-woman show, doing everything from administrative work and design development to sourcing materials. In her spare time, when Ovadia is not busy working with Travis and Tribute, she still manages to do design work for her own clients.

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Ovadia is passionate about being an interior architect and is determined to make a difference in design. "It's kind of like theatre, you get to play with the set and really create that mood for whomever is going to utilize it."

Although Ovadia's preferred style is modern, she is a versatile designer who is thrilled to create all types of environments for her clients. When asked about her approach to design, Ovadia explained, "It can be modern, traditional or transitional, but always with a fresh twist, a new look, a new palette, with something that is rejuvenated and hasn't been seen and re-seen."

Dvira Ovadia is a rising star in the design world and will undoubtedly continue to inspire others and stand out for her design style. Renovating my living room has never sounded so sweet.

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