

TINY BITES REBECCA ECKLER'S COTTON CONFIDENTIAL ADDRESS MARK MCEWAN FLIPS OVER T.O.'S BBQ BURGERS
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POST

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MATERIAL GIRL

DVIRA OVADIA

How this Thornhiller is stitching, stuccoing and styling her way to reality TV stardom



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How this Thornhiller is stitching, stuccoing and styling her way to reality TV stardom



A recent plan to build several skyscrapers at Yonge Street and Doncaster Avenue could radically alter the landscape of the area known for its strip plazas and low-rise developments. Is this a sign of municipal maturity, or will the towers destroy downtown Thornhill's village atmosphere? by Jenny Yuen

As Canada's comfy contribution to the world of fashion, hooded sweatshirts, or "hoodies" as they're affectionately called, are an essential part of any wardrobe. But as our intrepid Shop Girl discovers, there's more to these pullovers than meets the eye. From drawstrings to drawdowns, we try on the city's cottony best. **by Rebecca Eckler**

Any way you slice it, there's nothing better for your summer barbecue than fresh butcher shop burgers. In our sample the finest, freshest patties, we enlisted chef extraordinaire Mark McEwan, of Bymark and North 44, as the ground to cook 'em up and see who gets top grill marks. by Hailey Eisen

For the first lady of food, Rose Reisman, August is the best month for outdoor eating. Whether you're hosting, being entertained or simply spending some time in the backyard, a wide selection of appetizers offer a light, healthy and delicious snack. Enjoy recipes for pepper pesto, smoked salmon and four-cheese quesadillas, all flavoured with the spice of life: variety. **by Rose Reisman**

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How this Thornhiller is stitching, stuccoing and styling her way to reality TV stardom

BY JENNIFER PATTERSON

OVADIA

ON GLOBAL TV'S reality design show *From the Ground Up with Debbie Travis*, competition is getting fierce. Only three weeks are left before one of the design icon's proteges is crowned her new chief designer.

Recently, Travis cut the hopefuls from seven down to four. Remaining are a product designer, an industrial designer, an interior designer and Dvira Ovadia, a interior architect and Thornhill native.

All the contestants have strong opinions and clash each week as they struggle to complete Travis's design challenges. But Ovadia, 27, comes off as the quiet one. And that may just be what will get her the prize. In the high-stress episode where Travis nearly cut her group of proteges in half, her critiques employed words such as "disaster," "unpractical," "boring," "clumsy," "awkward" and "poorly developed."

Yet Ovadia's modern and distinctive dining room table was called "innovative and marketable," earning the young designer the auspicious title of most impressive designer of the week.

Coming out on top certainly gives the design maven the boost she needs in the competition, but with only three episodes remaining, will Ovadia become Debbie Travis's new chief designer?

It's been months since filming wrapped in Ottawa last November, and Ovadia knows the answer. Unfortunately, she isn't spilling any secrets. All 14 proteges have signed confidentially agreements and receive regular phone calls from the show's producers reminding them not to leak any information.

Despite the tension to keep mum on the show's final episode, Ovadia remembers her intense month in Ottawa with pleasure. "It was a pressure cooker, really," she says. "Everybody was competing against each other, but at the same time, everybody got along. It was tough because you were competing against people whom you became friends with."

When asked where in Ottawa they were housed, Ovadia has no idea. The proteges' only free time was spent indoors between the house and the studio, and it was usually only after a full 12-hour day completing one of Travis's challenging tasks.

Quite a change from her life as a freelance designer living in the leafy suburb of Thornhill with her fiancé, Bryan Lipovetsky, a product manager for Yahoo.

Ovadia was born in the bustling capital of Tel Aviv and spent her formative years in the architecturally diverse city of Brussels. She moved to Thornhill at the age of 10, and spent her high school years at Vaughan Secondary School.

While studying architecture at the University of Toronto and then interior design at the renowned Pratt Institute in New York City, Ovadia got a taste of big city life. But despite her diverse geographical background, she still prefers living in Thornhill.

"It's more peaceful," she says. "You have that piece of green land, and you are able to get away from the city. But at the same time, you just get into your car and drive for two minutes, and you still have all the luxuries of being in the downtown core."

At a local Thornhill Starbucks, Ovadia sits crossed-legged at a table with her Louis Vuitton handbag balanced on her lap. Her fashion sense is as modern and streamlined as her design style: simple diamond stud earrings, black pants, a white peasant blouse with beading and open-toed flats showcasing pink nails.

The solemn and low-key Ovadia that television has depicted is nowhere to be found. Instead, the real Ovadia is effusive and passionate as she tells me how she found her love for design.

"I used to love puzzles and putting things together," she says. "As a child, I always loved design, whether it was fashion design or interior design or architecture."

Ovadia went into architecture because she considered it to be a broad field that would open up a lot of

different doors for her. "I knew that having the base of architecture could allow me to go into interior design or fashion design," she says.

After two years in New York City, Ovadia returned to Toronto. Living in a condo downtown, she began to build her freelance design career, while pining for the simplicity and peacefulness of life in Thornhill.

"I decided to come back up here because all my friends and family live here," she says. "It's really a tight-knit community for us. It's close to home. Although I love the urban life of downtown, Thornhill is close to our hearts."

Then, last summer, her fiancé told her about the opportunity to audition for the second season of Debbie Travis's hit reality TV show. One online application and one interview later, Ovadia was chosen, along with 14 other young designers from across Canada, to compete for a six-figure dream job.

Out of nine high-pressure episodes and one month confined to a large house in Ottawa, Ovadia is still able to choose her favourite moment of the show: the kitchen design project. Past tasks ranged from creating functional storage drawers for a summer camp to reinventing a modern bedroom. This solo task was a facelift on a pristine white kitchen.

"We had fictitious, invisible clients," Ovadia remembers. "And we had to design based on whether they said it was traditional, modern; whether they liked bright colours or warm colours; whether they liked dark floors or slate."

When elimination day rolled around, the proteges were introduced to their mystery clients: their mothers.

"It was funny because my mom didn't even pick my kitchen. She picked the one next to mine," Ovadia says and laughs. "Maybe she sensed that I was in the area, but she just missed the mark."

And despite the pressure of the competition, Ovadia definitely came through with valuable hands-on design and life experience. "The show

taught me so much," she says. "I was used to working under pressure, but everything that you would do in normal life was extremely heightened in this type of environment. You had to work fast, you had to be around people you didn't know, you had to work with tools you weren't familiar with, you had to do things that you couldn't imagine you were ever capable of."

Ovadia also learned a great deal from her mentor, Debbie Travis.

"She is such an icon because she brings accessible design to the general public," says Ovadia. "I enjoyed working with her because she's definitely a firm person, she's not wishy-washy, she knows what she's looking for, and she really drives you," Ovadia continues. "She made me believe that I could be the next Debbie Travis—or my own version of her."

In three more episodes, we will find out if Ovadia will do just that and become the chief designer for the new Debbie Travis Designed Condos and Homes. Partnered with Tribute communities, a well-known residential development company in the GTA, Travis's venture launches this fall.

But, if she doesn't come out on top, Ovadia will still apply all that she has learned to whatever comes next. "I definitely see myself in 10 years as someone who has influenced the public, whether it's here in my own community or whether it's on a larger scale," she says. "I also hope that I am in a position where I can teach others about design and make design a more prominent element in today's society."

For now, Ovadia has brought her innovative design to her new home in Thornhill.

"It's a typical sub-development home, I made so many changes to it that the contractors were saying that it looks very different," she says. "I took down all the walls and made it all open concept. From the outside it looks like your typical suburban home, but on the inside it really has my own personal Dvira touch — a little bit modern, with warm elements to it. I really think it does have a piece of me now."