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Hot chocolat

Chocolat was there

Janette Ewen judging

TV host Debbie Travis turned to *Chocolat* for extra help judging her latest reality show

Text: Giancarlo La Giorgia

Debbie Travis' *From the Ground Up* is more than just a design show — it's the *Survivor* of interior design. With the show's second season, host Travis was on the hunt for a chief designer for the upcoming Debbie Travis-branded condos. She sought out the savvy of *Chocolat*'s style editor, Janette Ewen, to guest judge the Sonotube creations of the show's remaining seven participants.

Ewen's job was to select the individual project that shoppers would most desire. The item had to be stylish but functional, with a flair that would complement almost any Canadian home. She met with the contestants as they put their projects together

to discuss their ideas and motivations and whether the pieces would work for *Chocolat*'s readers. Ewen joined Travis and judge Stuart Reid, an Ontario College of Art and Design professor, in giving helpful tips on how to improve the projects. Then came the judging.

After a final walk around and a few last-minute tweaks to the projects, the judges met to deliberate. In the end, the episode's winning design was Dvira Ovadia's elegant table with scrolling Sonotube legs. The prize: Ovadia secured her position in the next round, and is featured here, in Canada's newest shopping magazine for the home.

The challenge: Participants had to create functional housewares out of Sonotubes — the enormous paper tubes used in construction to mould concrete pillars. They had to come up with an original design in just two days, on a budget, and without losing their cool.

The winner of the Sonotube challenge

Dvira Ovadia, Toronto
Interior architect

Debbie Travis: "Dvira's table won the challenge. Without a doubt, you could manufacture it tomorrow and people would want to take it home. It showed an ingenious use of materials, but more importantly, it worked."

Janette Ewen: "I loved the clean lines and modern shape."

Jodie Fletcher, Ottawa
Industrial designer

Janette Ewen: "The concept was interesting — stools that work as one unit and can be broken out into discrete components. But adjusting it was a bit too time-consuming."

Diana Côté, Kanata
Visual artist

Debbie Travis: "Diana's design just didn't work. It was an interesting concept, but not a practical one."

Aleem Kassam, North Vancouver
Freelance designer

Debbie Travis: Aleem's nesting tables were nice, but a little bit too conventional."

Christopher Artymko, Toronto
Interior designer

Janette Ewen: "The use of fabric was perfect — very fashion forward and a bit masculine. But, when it came to actually using the chair, both Christopher and Stuart Reid slipped off. Debbie and I wouldn't get on!"

Clay Rochemont, Toronto
Urban artist

Janette Ewen: "It was a cool concept that really reinvented the fold-out sofa. The design had real legs, and properly tweaked, it could be marketed to loft-dwellers."

Chris Köser, Montreal
Product designer

Debbie Travis: "Chris' floor lamp was really beautiful — you could picture it at the entrance of a Philippe Starck hotel — but it was just too big to put in a home."

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