

Stouffville's Cynthia Soda, a graduate of Brother Andre High School in Markham and Ryerson University, appears on the reality show Design Interns on HGTV starting Tuesday night.



HGTV PHOTO

Intern has designs on reality TV show

BY JIM MASON
Staff Writer

Everything you've heard about reality TV is true.

Contrived conflict. Sleep deprivation. Out-of-context quotes.

And Stouffville's Cynthia Soda loved every minute of it.

We'll see when she appears in the debut of Design Interns on HGTV (Channel 51 on Rogers cable) Tuesday at 10 p.m.

"It's basically The Apprentice with a million projects to complete," she said. And without Donald Trump.

"An all-access pass into the exclusive,

intimidating world of a powerhouse design firm," is how the show is promoted.

Ms Soda, 22, is one of 12 recent interior design graduates competing for a job at Ceccoli Simone Inc., a renowned interior design firm in Toronto. Anna Simone and Elaine Ceccoli's projects include private homes, boutique hotels, spas, restaurants and major corporate projects in Los Angeles and New York.

"If all fails, I thought (auditioning for the show) was the best way to show off my profile," she said. "All I know was that I would end up working in my field."

She can't reveal how she'll fare on the show. Contestants swear themselves to secrecy by signing a contract with the producers. She can't even say where she has found work.

In the show, contestants are presented a design challenge they have to win to stay in the game in each episode. The interns are challenged on building, styling and selling their designs as well as themselves.

The six one-hour episodes were filmed last summer at Ryerson University, from which Ms Soda graduated in the spring.

She was put up in a downtown hotel during the six weeks of production, but didn't see much of it. Days lasted from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.

"At some points, we were operating on seven hours sleep a week," she said. "They probably (filmed) me sleeping."

And the conflict?

"They would tell us things others said about us to try and get us going," she said. "At first, we were such Canadians; we were so polite. But, by the end, we were jaded. It should get more interesting, as the show goes along."

Ms Soda wrote in her Grade 8 yearbook at St. Mark Catholic School she wanted to be "a lawyer, pediatrician or interior designer." She still keeps in touch with teachers at the Stouffville school and her high school alma mater, Brother Andre in Markham.

"I told them to watch," she said.

She teaches classes three times a week in the pool at the Lebovic Leisure Centre.

"My aquafitness ladies are my own fan club," she said.

Family, friends and fans are already voting for Ms Soda on HGTV website. Even before the first show airs, she's second in voting with 12 per cent.

She was auditioning to be an interior designer but may have found another career.

"I want to be on TV all the time; it was so much fun," she said. "That was my dream job (on the show). I'd love to have my own TV show."

For more on the show, go to hgtv.ca/microsites/designinterns/

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