

# Muralist masters art of illusion

etc.

by  
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**Z**ehava Power remembers seeing wall murals when they first started appearing on public spaces in a big way in the mid-1990s. She'd be in a restaurant, and her dinner guests would notice they no longer had her attention. Her eyes would be on the wall.

"I'd be going close to the wall to check out the texture and brushstrokes," she recalls. "The first thing that came to my mind was: 'I can do that.'"

She could indeed. Today, Zehava transforms homes and places of business into tropical beaches, dreamy cloud-filled skies and faraway lands. She's a practitioner of *trompe l'oeil*, the French term for tricking the eye, creating illusions compelling enough that the human eye will accept them as reality.

When she paints a window in a windowless room it becomes brighter, more inviting and pleasing. If you can't have a real window, the illusion is the next best thing.

"You can use *trompe l'oeil* to transform the atmosphere in a room," she says. "Especially in basement rooms, or small spaces."

Zehava has been painting on canvas for the past 18 years, but when she began painting murals about seven years ago it represented a career change. After studying graphic design at George Brown College in Toronto, she went to work for CIBC. But the corporate world had its own set of creative constraints — budgets, printing limitations, specific fonts and logos, etc. It was stifling to her expressive side.

She was noticing a growing number of murals in the Toronto area, and it was family members who prompted Zehava to give it a try. Her first mural was for her sister, an esthetician running a home-based business who wanted to provide a relaxing, pleasing environment for her customers. Then, on a visit to another sister in Israel, she was convinced by her sister's children to paint the Disney character Mulan, and the *Ninja Turtles*.

"Then I did some murals for friends, and it went from there," says Zehava.

In 1999 she moved to Halifax with her husband and two children. Her daughter Nicole's room had a window, but it was near the ceiling, so Zehava painted a faux window. A project with a large dinosaur scene in son Daniel's room is still in progress. Since moving to Halifax she's done murals for



Photo of Zehava Power by Joseph Robichaud Photography; other photos contributed  
"Master of illusions" Zehava Power transforms rooms into mystical lands, gardenscapes, and tropical beaches.



restaurants, travel agencies, Northwood Manor, the Children's Aid Society and numerous residences. You can see more of her work at [www.zehava.ca](http://www.zehava.ca).

Zehava's inspiration comes from many places. While she was on vacation in Whistler, B.C., her sister-in-law said she wanted her bathroom to be an outdoor, otherworldly, exotic experience. Together they looked through National Geographic issues until they

came upon photos of Egyptian ruins, which became the inspiration for a mural that covers three walls and the ceiling.

"I really like scenes with lush, full colour," she says. "It's great to make a difference in how people feel in a room."

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