

Force is strong with this artist

New Star Wars book features local painter's Wookiee family portrait

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Calgary artist Maya Gohill is no stranger to painting foreign faces, but the subjects of one family portrait she did were actually out of this world — from a galaxy far, far away.

In 2008, Gohill received an email from ACME Archives Direct, a publishing company linked with famed *Star Wars* creator George Lucas, asking if she would paint a piece for the release of a *Star Wars* book featuring 100 artists' work.

"I was first just so blown away that I had to be a little suspicious," said Gohill, who immediately checked whether the email was part of a scam, but found it to be legitimate.

"I was just kind of floored, I was blown away and very flattered."

She is unsure why the company chose her to take part, but accepted the challenge.

Gohill, a self-professed *Star Wars* fan, who said one of the first movies she ever saw was *The Empire Strikes Back*, admitted that despite her love of the film series, painting science fiction falls far outside her usual style of figures and portraits.

"It is a bit of a stretch, it's not something I would normally paint," she said.

But the force was with her and she quickly came up with an idea that two months later became the oil painting she calls *Wookiee Family Portrait*, showing Han Solo's hairy co-pilot Chewbacca with his wife, three kids and family pet — ironically, a hairless cat.

The piece was published alongside the work of dozens of other artists in the book *Star Wars Art*:

Visions, which was released Nov. 1.

"It's an honour to be in here, there's people I definitely look up to in here," said Gohill, who, on top of painting and taking care of a young son, teaches classes part-time in the visual communications design program at the Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD). The book is available at Amazon.ca.

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Local Calgary Artist Maya Gohill poses with a piece of art she painted for a newly released *Star Wars* book. The picture is of Chewbacca and his family. Gohill was among 100 artists sought after by George Lucas's publishing company.