

MEET THE SUPPLIER

BENJAMIN SHINE

Artist & inventor of Cordz

"The Cordz Ultimate Art Studio for children came about from a technique that I developed back in 2002-03 when doing mixed media artworks. In one of the processes I threaded ribbons through thousands of eyelets like dot-to-dots to create portraits of, among others, Margaret Thatcher. It's the same with Cordz. It's just string and a backing board but kids can be creative with it. They can do their own art.

It all happened very quickly. It took two months to develop the product and patent it. I took it to Flair plc in October 2006 and it was in shops by July 2007. It sold 40,000 to 50,000 units in six months.

It's definitely important having these hands-on products in the age that we're in. There's a constructional element to it - it's as much about building a picture as it is about drawing one.

The cords come in different lengths so children need to identify which pieces to use. There are different levels of complexity. Cordz is aimed at aged four and up but if you give it to seven-year-olds they will start drawing cars, houses and people, and if you give it to eight or nine-year-olds they are happy using the stencil to create patterns.

I love working with it. Last year I recreated Big Ben using 2,500 pieces of cord. I've also created a series of celebrity Cordz, including Elvis, Marilyn Monroe and the Queen.

I'd love it if it goes on to have the same impact as LEGO. LEGO's a staple product that any kid can use. Their imagination takes over and they can build what they want. It's the same with Cordz, and from a parent's point of view, you can make a lot of mess without any spillages. That wasn't my intention, but it's a plus." ●

Interview: Joanne Horne

Cordz Ultimate Art Studio is available from branches of John Lewis and John Lewis Direct, priced £16.95.

