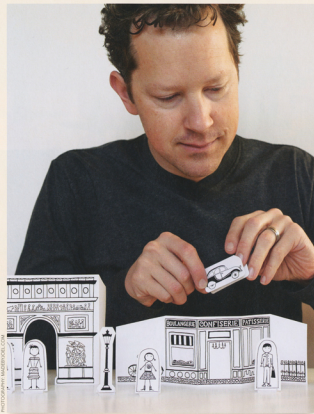


Talking paper with...

JOEL HENRIQUES



Artist and toy designer Joel Henriques explains why all the creative inspiration he needs can be found at home

Artist and stay-at-home dad Joel lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife, chickens and twin children. He works from a studio on the top floor of his house, where he creates mainly in paper and card, but occasionally yarn and fabric too. We speak to Joel and discover the inspiration behind his fun projects, from a mini paper Paris (above) to a family of well-dressed cats...

Q Hello Joel! As an artist, tell us a bit about what you do in your day-to-day life and how crafts feature?

A For work I mostly paint, but I also do some wire sculpture. Then, when my wife and I had our twins six years ago, I became a stay-at-home dad. As you can imagine, I had pretty much no time for painting, so I started to make little toys for my kids. When they got a little older, I began doing art and craft projects with them. And that's how Made by Joel got started. So now, most of my work is a combination of art, toy design and playing with the kids – it's great!

Q Tell us a bit about your childhood. Did you craft much – if so who inspired you to make?

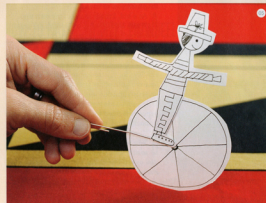
A As a kid, I made many of my own toys. When I was young, we lived in my great-grandmother's old house, and there was a tool shed that still held many of my great-grandfather's tools. I used them to make all kinds of things, from wooden animals to zip-lines for my trehouse. I also learned a lot from both of my grandmothers. One was an artist, and one was very good at making little homemade toys, like walnut boats and paper owls filled with candy. It was a wonderful environment to grow up in.

Q You work with many different materials, what advantages have you discovered working with paper and card rather than other materials?

A Paper and card have so many advantages for me. It's really easy to draw and paint on, and it's fun to transform a two-dimensional sheet of paper into a three-dimensional object. Also, with the internet, being able to share printable paper crafts is a powerful way to share with others, which is really fun. And also, of course, paper is inexpensive and recyclable!

Q When you are making your creative projects where do you tend to find your inspiration?

A These days, I see toys in almost everything! I get most of my inspiration by watching my children play. It's always fascinating for me to see what they spend a lot of time with. And to me, that's the biggest challenge – to find a craft, or make a toy that will hold their attention for a while.



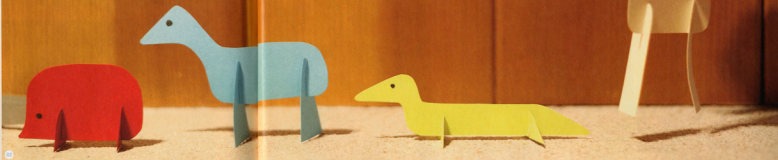
Joel's much-loved Dressy Cats are a cute printable project, just waiting to be cut out and assembled.

These simple coloured card animals are an instant hit with very little makers. Paper Cities look great when assembled, choose from Paris, Sydney and more. Joel's twin children are his crafting inspiration. The website is full of cute projects like this unicycle guy.

Toys such as the Dressy Cats can keep them busy for a very long time. There's plenty of cutting and assembly involved, which they find rewarding. Then after that, they get to play with it. Nice!

Q What pieces of advice would you give someone who hasn't tried crafting since they were little?

A Just to dive right in and try something. It might be easiest to start out with a printable project so you can get fast results. Also, never worry about doing something perfectly – rather, just try to have fun and finish the project.



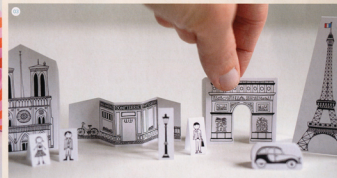
Q Out of everything you have made, can you pick what has been your favourite so far?

A I think the Paper Cities (including Paris and Sydney) are the most popular, but I really like making all of the stuff I do!

Q Would you be able to share with us what craft projects you are concocting right now?

A I've just finished a project, which turned my ever-popular Paper City Paris design into an animated card project. When you

THESE DAYS, I SEE TOYS IN ALMOST EVERYTHING! I GET MOST OF MY INSPIRATION BY WATCHING MY CHILDREN PLAY...



pull a tab, then the little people walk (slide) down the streets of Paris. It's pretty good fun to make as well as give away on birthdays! Have a look, it's on my website right now, complete with a how-to video.

Q Do you have any more projects or books in the pipeline, which you could tell us about?

A Yes, there are lots of things going on! I'm currently in the process of starting my own toy company, which is pretty exciting. We've got many toys and projects

that are currently in the works for that. And I always have about 20 things on the back-burner that I'm itching to release, including a kids' TV show with paper puppets (for lack of a better word!). I'm also writing some scripts and storylines as well as composing the music for it. I can't wait to get the first episode out. It's really going to be a blast!

Check out the full range of Joel's wonderful work, including plenty of free printable projects for the little ones, over at his website www.madebyjoel.com.