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Company Profile

A Bit of Sparkle

Michelle Huberman is the driving force behind tonertex foils, having spent almost two decades in the design business, Michelle's commitment and passion has secured the company with a loyal following

Fifteen years ago in the heart of St Tropez, a young woman with lots of bright ideas decided it would be fun to razor slash the knees of her jeans and sew some sequins around the edges. It was a crazy idea that caught the imagination of the likes of Madonna, Cher and the chic followers of French fashion. It enabled her to go from making them in her bedroom to opening a factory in Paris for mass-production.

This year that same woman, Michelle Huberman is managing an international organisation that manufactures foils and glitters both here and in

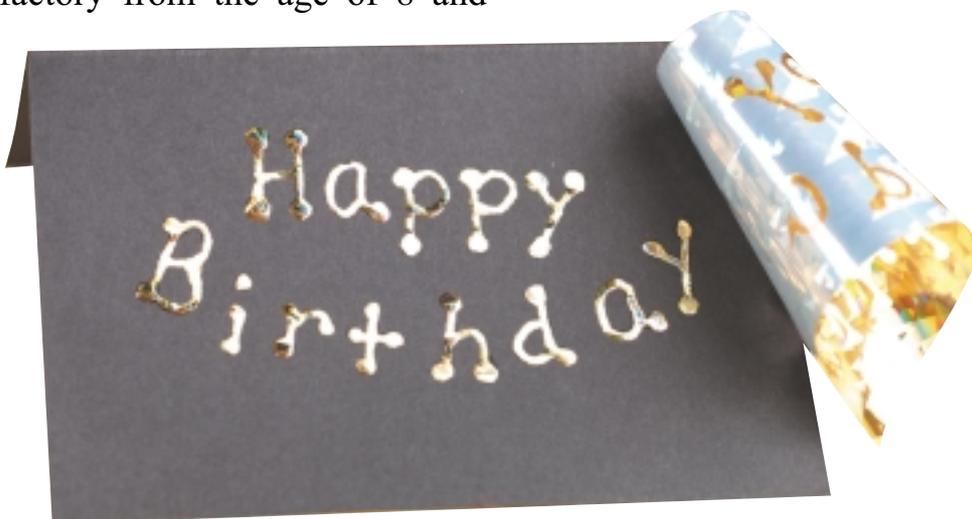


the USA. "I am lucky" says Michelle, "Despite leaving school at 16 with only 3 'O' levels, I have always understood business and manufacturing. I helped in my parents' coat factory from the age of 8 and

loved it. I learnt how business operated and how to develop ideas from the planning stage right through to production on a large scale."

The start

Her company, Tonertex Foils has been manufacturing sparkly craft materials in the UK for the past 10 years, but last year opened their own manufacturing plant in New York to handle the American market. The company was founded after Michelle wrote a book entitled "Fashion Magic" in 1989 and was inundated with readers' requests for the materials that she's used in her book. "The big wholesalers never took me seriously, and I started supplying the materials myself," she states "we are now supplying major manufacturers and retailers worldwide, and



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have a multi-million dollar turnover". Michelle is still very hands on in the factory, and designs all the automated machinery for cutting foils and filling glitter. The production capacity is at 100,000 units a

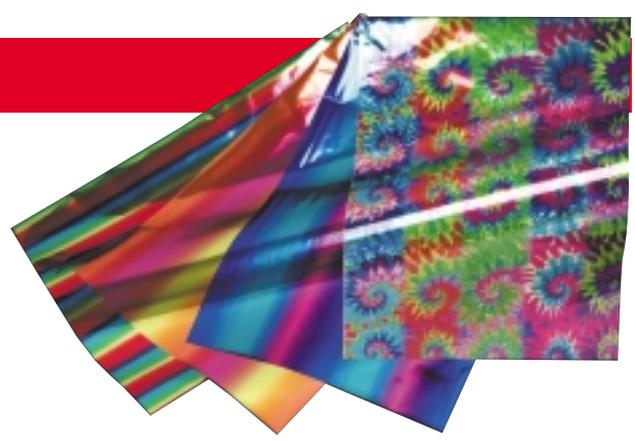


week and expanding, and they strongly believe they are competitive with the Far East. "The advantage that we have" states Michelle "is the fast turnaround. It's all very well designers coming up with good ideas, but what we do here is produce an original product, at a great price ...and quickly."

Her vision

Despite the growing success and pressure of her business, Michelle continues to make a name for herself in the design world. In 2000 Michelle won a British Female Inventor of the Year Award, and more recently developed the 'Write 'n' Rub' Foiling Pen, which is an original tool used with her foils that gives fantastic results on paper and card, and is loved by both children and adults. It has been an enormous success, probably

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to do with Michelle's endless enthusiasm for it. She regularly demonstrates it at consumer shows and on the QVC Shopping Channel both here and in America. "Our products need to be demonstrated " states Michelle "and most of our sales are through this avenue." Tonertex Foils have recently tied up with QVC's division - QDirect, to do infomercials for the toy industry in both the USA and Europe. "This is a major breakthrough, we have had to jump through a lot of hurdles for the toy market, but are confident that with the marketing power of QDirect, we will establish ourselves in this area."

Child's spirit

"When companies buy our products, they take me on board, too. You see I never grew up.... on an ideas level, I can think like an 8 year old. I turn up at serious business meetings with my tiara on... I am totally passionate about what I do, and amaze myself that I can continuously come up with original ideas."

When asked where her inspiration comes from, Michelle says from found objects on her travels. "Sometimes I just pick up a piece of broken glass on a beach

Working Together

Grant Timms at Crayola tells us about his involvement with Tonertex Foils

"I have very much enjoyed working with Michelle over the last three years and have found that in the business environment she brings a welcome breath of fresh air with her unique blend of ideas, enthusiasm and passion for her products. However, in terms of pure business application Tonertex has only been a small part of our overall business. During the three years we have worked with the company, we have explored product development platforms utilising foil with cards, stickers and fabric and each has contributed well.

The main benefit working with Michelle is her ability to help us stretch our thinking to include, in particular, her products for older girls. The Crayola brand has always tried to reach out more appropriately to girls aged between 8-12. Michelle's creativity has helped us to think and act in more imaginative ways, therefore helping us to explore different ideas."

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and fantasise about it on a pair of jeans, then the idea goes from there. I develop my ideas from within, and pay little attention to the latest trends, as I know from working within the fashion industry many years ago that trends will come and go, but truly brilliant ideas prevail."

On the high street

One of Michelle's best selling designs has been the 'Decorate Your Underwear' kit with Marks and Spencer, which is now successfully selling into its second year. "Most lines that are successful with M & S we all know about, because everybody is walking around with the same sweater. This kit makes me laugh, because there are hundreds of thousands of girls with glittery knickers that very few know about..."

Michelle admits to being a real workaholic, but takes as much time as possible to spend with her 11 year old daughter. "I am a single mother and it's difficult juggling everything. I have responsibilities to everybody, but am the most grateful to my parents who help with my daughter when I'm travelling. At the end of the day, it's family that counts above everything."

Michelle is currently rebuilding her North London home on a Moroccan theme, and is intending to take a TV crew with her when she goes shopping in North Africa for architectural features. "A sort of Michael Palin meets Home Front programme." She is hoping the TV company will film all the

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transformations she intends making, as she is also very good at DIY.

When asked about plans for the future, Michelle says that she can see continuous and steady growth within Tonertex, especially in the US market. Two years ago Philip Harris joined Tonertex Foils as financial director, and he has guided the company through their expansion and will continue to do so.

Concludes Michelle, "my love for shiny and beautiful materials still fires me, and my company will continue to develop new technology to mass produce my ideas".

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