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(54) CONTAINER FOR USE WITH OPENING MEANS

BEHÄLTER ZUR VERWENDUNG MIT ÖFFNUNGSMITTELN

EMBALLAGE À UTILISER AVEC UN DISPOSITIF D'OUVERTURE

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Description

[0001] The invention relates to an improved container for use with opening means. The invention further relates to a method of manufacturing said container. Although the following description refers to plastic blister pack containers and/or clam shell containers it will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that the inventive concept herein can be used for a wide variety of containers, including those made from paper, card, foil, metal and/or the like and is not limited to plastic blister pack containers and/or clam shell containers.

[0002] The use of plastic blister packs and clam-shells as containers is extensive. Such containers are routinely used to sell many different types of products such as electronic articles, for example disposable cameras, memory cards sticks, hard-drives; household articles including lightbulbs; small replacement parts for cars such as sparking plugs; children's toys and so on. Blister packs generally have a molded plastic front and a cardboard back. Clam-shells generally have a plastic front and back, one or both of which is molded. Both of these types of containers are generally described as preformed containers. These types of containers are usually thermoformed and/or heat sealed around the edges of the container defining an interior volume within the container in which is provided the product. Such containers have many advantages including being inexpensive, relatively easy to produce, strong, transparent and thus the contents can be readily viewed, and the forming process ensures that the surface container follows the shape of contents, thereby reducing the overall size of the container whilst being aesthetically pleasing. The containers, being sealed, also provide security for the contents as well as protecting said contents from exposure to moisture, static and general environmental conditions.

[0003] A significant problem of such containers is that they are very difficult to open. Typically a sharp knife, scissor or specifically designed widget is used to open the containers which can injure the person and/or damage the contents. Opening such containers is particularly demanding for the elderly or infirm. Indeed, it has been reported that thousands of people every year need medical treatment after injuring themselves opening or attempting to open such containers. Furthermore, once the containers have been opened, the edges of the openings are usually sharp enough to cut a person and dangerous to children and domestic animals.

[0004] It is therefore an aim of the present invention to provide a container which attempts to negate the above-mentioned problems and allow the container to be easily opened in order to remove the contents provided within. It is a further aim of the present invention to provide a new type of blister pack and/or clam-shell container that attempts to negate the abovementioned problems, whereby a sealed packaging container having a flange being provided with an elongated depression for facilitating opening is disclosed by US 3 580 485 A.

[0005] According to one aspect, a container includes: at least one plastic surface, having a formation or step having a peripheral edge arranged around an area to be opened; and at least one second surface located in a region adjacent the first surface, and having a recess adjacent the formation on the plastic surface, wherein the first and second surfaces are sealed at an edge of the container for securing an object located therebetween, and wherein the plastic surface and the second surface are configured such that in cross-section a channel is formed between the formation and the recess, and said formation, or formation and recess, is configured to receive and/or guide a cutting edge for opening the container.

[0006] The wall, or a portion thereof, of the step may be thinner than the plastic surface such that it is easier to initiate a cut or tear in the container.

[0007] In cross-section, the channel can have a quadrilateral profile. The profile shape can be continuous around the portion to be opened. The profile can be square or triangular. In cross-section, the channel can have a minimum dimension of 3mm.

[0008] The second interior surface can have a recess for locating an object therein. By way of example, the channel can be formed on three sides of the recess.

[0009] The formation can have a raised portion configured to provide a void or air-gap above the second surface, and wherein the formation, in cross-section, has a groove.

[0010] The formation can have a cross sectional profile having a channel arranged between two raised sections.

[0011] The formation may have a cross sectional profile in the form of the letter "M" from the Latin alphabet.

[0012] The channel between the formation and the recess defines a void, or air-gap, which is configured to receive the tip of a cutting implement such that said tip is guide or retained therein.

[0013] The groove or channel of the formation has tear-line and/or perforations.

[0014] Overall, the formation is provided on the surface to form a channel having space beneath that can receive the end of an implement. When an implement, such as an edge of a knife, is pushed in to the formation it tears or cuts through the formation until the tip is located in the recess. Movement of the implement along the recess splits or divides the formation to open the container. This inhibits accidental or uncontrolled movement of the implement.

[0015] The shape of the formation in cross-section is profiled to further secure the implement and further inhibit accidental or uncontrolled movement of the implement.

[0016] By way of example, an M-shaped formation in a plastic surface can be formed having a space there beneath such that an implement penetrating the central groove of the M-shaped formation is located (i) between the edges of the M-shape and/or (ii) in a recess in the second surface.

[0017] One or more of the plastic surfaces can com-

prise molded plastic. The container can be formed from a single piece or sheet of plastic.

[0018] The container can be a molded blister pack type, or a molded clam shell type.

[0019] The container can be adapted to guide a cutting edge protruding through said plastic surface of the container in the region of the step and passing through the plastic surface.

[0020] The invention also relates to a method of manufacturing a container including: providing at least one plastic surface, having a step having a peripheral edge arranged around an area to be opened; and providing at least one second interior surface located in a region beneath the first surface, and forming a corresponding formation adjacent the recess or protrusion of the plastic surface; sealing the first and second surfaces at an edge of the container for securing an object located therebetween, wherein the plastic surface and the second surface are configured such that in cross-section a channel is formed between the step and the formation, and said channel is configured to receive a cutting edge for opening the container.

[0021] Typically the term "cut" refers to a break, split, incision, slice and/or the like of the plastic surface of the container.

[0022] The container can be a pre-formed blister pack type container, pre-formed clam shell type container and/or the like. Preferably when the container is of a blister pack type, the one or more articles contained inside are located between one or more sheets of molded plastics material. Further typically at least one surface of the blister pack is formed from heat and/or vacuum molding a plastic sheet to closely fit the package contents to be located in the same in use.

[0023] Preferably when the container is a clam shell type container, the one or more articles are held between two or more sheets of plastics material in use at least one of which is molded.

[0024] Typically the plastics material is substantially includes Polyvinyl chloride (PVC), Polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polypropylene (PP), and/or copolymers of the aforementioned, and/or plastics material with similar characteristics. The container is typically constructed from plastics material that is relatively sturdy where the container is not intended to be opened by hand.

[0025] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that opening means can be attached to the surface in any shaped path and thus the resulting cut-line can also be in any shape corresponding to the path.

[0026] The channel of the invention can form a groove, which can be a corner in a recess of a surface of the container. The groove can be internal, located between the surfaces of the container. The container can contain one or more channels or grooves that substantially guide the opening means.

[0027] The channel can define an interior volume along which the opening means is guided. The channel may be located separately from the molded interior volume

provided to contain product. The channel can extend along a substantial section of one surface of the plastic container forming essentially a "U" or "C" shape. The channel can be between 1-5mm wide and 3-10 mm deep.

[0028] The groove and/or channel can allow selective sectional opening of a container which has more than one section. Typically this is for use when opening a pack or container containing more than one item, where only a portion of the total items are used at a time and the container is retained to store the remaining items. Further typically when the retained items are required the user simply moves the opening means further through the container to open a further section.

[0029] In order that the invention can be more readily understood, reference will now be made, by way of example, to the drawings in which:

Figure 1 is cross-sectional view of a container in accordance with the invention;

Figure 2 is a plan view of a container in accordance with the invention;

Figures 3a and 3b are plan views of a container having formation patterns, while Figure 3b is a close-up of an overhang at a corner of a formation; and

Figure 4 is a cross-sectional view of a formation on plastic surface.

[0030] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the improved container formations are applicable to wide number of difficult to open configurations which are not intended to be opened easily and/or by hand.

[0031] Referring to Figure 1, a container 10 has a plastic surface 12 having a step or formation 14, in the form of a recess or protrusion, or having a recess. The formation has a peripheral edge 16 arranged around an area to be opened 18. A second surface 20 is located in a region adjacent, or beneath the first surface, as viewed, and having a corresponding recess 22 adjacent the formation 14 of the plastic surface. The recess 22 is optional, and the second surface 20 can be flat beneath the formation 14. The first and second surfaces are sealed at an edge 24 of the container for securing an object located therebetween. The plastic surface and the second surface are configured such that in cross-section a channel or void 26 is formed between the step 14 and the second surface or formation 22, and said channel 26 is configured to receive a cutting edge (not shown) for opening the container.

[0032] Figure 2 shows a plan view of a container wherein the step 14 and peripheral edge 16 are located proximal the edge 24 of the container 10.

[0033] The features of Figures 1 and 2 are shown, by way of example, on a molded clam shell blister pack container 10, comprising upper 12 and lower 20 surfaces which are preformed and heat sealed together. The container includes the shell or blister portion 18 where the upper and lower surfaces are spaced apart, and thus not sealed together. It is in the shell or blister portion 18 in

which the contents of the container are located.

[0034] When the user wants to open the container, a cutting means pierces the surface of the first surface 12, or second surface 20, in the region of the channel 26 and is drawn through the channel, by way of example, in the direction of the arrows shown in Figures 1 and 2. During this movement the cutting means is drawn through the surface 12, 20 in a guided manner along the path formed by the channel 26. In Figure 1, this path follows the edge of recess 16 in which an object is stored, while in Figure 2 the path follows the periphery of the container 10.

[0035] It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the path formed by channel can be of any shape and does not need to follow the outer edge of the blister portion. Indeed it is possible that only a section of the blister portion and/or the upper surface needs to be removed to open the container. Often this type of opening is used if the container is intended for re-use. Furthermore it will be appreciated that the container can include means, such as clips, studs and/or the like to re-seal the container.

[0036] The cutting implement could be a small kitchen knife, scissors or specifically designed widget that pierces channel 26 and is guided along the channel to cut open the container 10. Either the first surface 12 or the second surface 20 can be pierced and/or cut. Either surface can have a weakened portion in the region of the channel to aid piercing and/or cutting along the channel. By way of example, the edge 14 can run closer to the edge of the packaging, whilst a wall of the channel 26 can be formed of thinner plastic making the container easier to cut. Cutting action would be straight cuts along the channel 26 and around the packaging.

[0037] Although Figure 2 shows a channel 26 around the entire periphery of the container, said channel may only be configured along three (3) edges in order to retain the material of the perforated surface. In this way, the packaging is still in one piece making disposal and recycling easier. Sharp edges, perforation burs or shards of plastic are inhibited.

[0038] The channel 26 can be configured abutted close, at a distance of approximately 3mm, from a welded edge of the container. This facilitates extracting the contents.

[0039] Multiple steps 14 and channels 26 can be configured upon a container such that multi-content packaging can be provided e.g. light bulbs. To be clear, in any event both the abutted and the 3-sided guide groove can be used in combination to optimise the opening solution for any particular packaging topology.

[0040] Figures 3a and 3b show examples of channels 26 that can be formed on a container 10. In Figure 3a the channel 26 has rounded corners to enable a cutting implement to pass through the channel and open the blister portion 18 in fewer movements or operations.

[0041] In Figure 3b, the formation has three straight portions with two 90-degree bends along its length. At the corners, overhangs can be provided to make the cut-

ting of the formation easier.

[0042] Figure 4 shows in cross-section one example of a formation 14 formed in an upper plastic surface 12 that can be positioned above a surface 20. The formation is substantially M-shaped having two peaks 28 with a trough or groove 16 therebetween. The surface 20 can optionally have a recess 22 (as required by claim 1, however not shown) located underneath the groove 16. The groove can optionally have a thin-walled portion and/or perforations.

[0043] In use, the container can be opened by pushing an implement into the groove to penetrate the material at the base of the groove 16. The implement is then partially constrained by the adjacent walls of material 12 forming the peaks 28. If a recess 22 were located beneath the groove the tip of the implement would rest therein.

[0044] Once inserted, the implement can be drawn along the groove 16 (in to or out of the page as viewed) and be guided by the peaks 28. To be clear, the tip of the implement is guided within the void or channel 26, formed by an air gap, as it moves along the groove 16 such that it is inhibited from moving out of the groove.

[0045] The present invention has been described above purely by way of example, and modifications can be made within the scope of the invention as defined by the claims.

Claims

1. A container (10) including:

at least one first plastic surface (12), having a formation or step (14) having a peripheral edge (24) arranged around an area (18) to be opened; and

at least one second surface (20) located in a region adjacent the first surface, and having a recess (22) adjacent the formation on the plastic surface, wherein the first and second surfaces are sealed at an edge (24) of the container for securing an object located therebetween, and wherein the plastic surface and the second surface are configured such that in cross-section a channel (26) is formed between the formation (14) and the recess, and said formation, or formation and recess, is configured to receive and/or guide a cutting edge for opening the container.

2. The container according to claim 1 wherein one wall of the formation or step (14) is thinner than the plastic surface (12) such that it is easier to cut or tear.

3. The container according to any of the preceding claims wherein, in cross-section, the channel (26) is quadrilateral.

4. The container according to any of the preceding claims wherein, in cross-section, the channel (26) has a minimum dimension of 3mm.
5. The container according to any of the preceding claims wherein, the second interior surface has a recess for locating an object therein, and the channel (26) is formed on three sides of the recess.
6. The container according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the formation (14) has a raised portion configured to provide a void or air-gap above the second surface, and wherein the formation, in cross-section, has a groove.
7. The container according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the formation (14) has a cross sectional profile having a channel (26) arranged between two raised sections.
8. The container according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the formation (14) has a cross sectional profile in the form of the letter "M" from the Latin alphabet.
9. The container according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the channel (26) between the formation and the recess defines a void, or air-gap, which is configured to receive the tip of a cutting implement such that said tip is guide or retained therein.
10. The container according to any of claims 6 to 9, wherein the groove or channel (26) of the formation has tear-line and/or perforations.
11. The container according to any of the preceding claims wherein one or more of the plastic surfaces comprises molded plastic.
12. The container according to any of the preceding claims wherein said container is of a molded blister pack type, or a molded clam shell type.
13. The container according to any of the preceding claims wherein the container is adapted to guide a cutting edge protruding through said plastic surface of the container in the region of the step and passing through the plastic surface.
14. The container according to any of the preceding claims, wherein a portion of the formation wall is weaker and/or thinner to enable the container to be opened more easily.
15. A method of manufacturing a container including:

providing at least one first plastic surface, having a formation or step (14) having a peripheral edge

arranged around an area to be opened; and providing at least one second interior surface located in a region beneath the at least one plastic surface, and forming a corresponding recess (22) adjacent the formation or step of the plastic surface; sealing the first and second surfaces at an edge of the container for securing an object located therebetween, wherein the plastic surface and the second surface are configured such that in cross-section a channel (26) is formed between the formation or step and the recess, and said channel is configured to receive a cutting edge for opening the container.

Patentansprüche

1. Behälter (10), der Folgendes umfasst:

mindestens eine erste Kunststofffläche (12), die ein Gebilde oder eine Stufe (14) mit einem um einen zu öffnenden Bereich (18) angeordneten Umfangsrand (24) aufweist; und mindestens eine zweite Fläche (20), die in einer der ersten Fläche benachbarten Region gelegen ist und einen dem Gebilde an der Kunststofffläche benachbarten Rücksprung (22) aufweist, wobei die erste und die zweite Fläche an einem Rand (24) des Behälters versiegelt sind, um einen dazwischen gelegenen Gegenstand zu sichern, und wobei die Kunststofffläche und die zweite Fläche derart konfiguriert sind, dass im Querschnitt ein Durchgang (26) zwischen dem Gebilde (14) und dem Rücksprung gebildet wird und das Gebilde, oder das Gebilde und der Rücksprung, dazu konfiguriert ist, eine Schneidkante zum Öffnen des Behälters aufzunehmen und/oder zu führen.

2. Behälter nach Anspruch 1, wobei eine Wand des Gebildes oder der Stufe (14) dünner ist als die Kunststofffläche (12), sodass sie sich leichter schneiden oder reißen lässt.
3. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Durchgang (26) im Querschnitt viereckig ist.
4. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Durchgang (26) im Querschnitt ein Mindestmaß von 3 mm aufweist.
5. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei die zweite innere Fläche einen Rücksprung zum Positionieren eines Gegenstands darin aufweist und der Durchgang (26) auf drei Seiten des

Rücksprungs gebildet ist.

6. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei das Gebilde (14) einen erhöhten Abschnitt aufweist, der dazu konfiguriert ist, einen Hohlraum oder Luftspalt über der zweiten Fläche bereitzustellen, und wobei das Gebilde im Querschnitt eine Nut aufweist. 5
7. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei das Gebilde (14) ein Querschnittsprofil mit einem zwischen zwei erhöhten Abschnitten angeordneten Durchgang (26) aufweist. 10
8. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei das Gebilde (14) ein Querschnittsprofil in Form des Buchstabens "M" des lateinischen Alphabets aufweist. 15
9. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Durchgang (26) zwischen dem Gebilde und dem Rücksprung einen Hohlraum oder Luftspalt definiert, der dazu konfiguriert ist, die Spitze eines Schneidgeräts derart aufzunehmen, dass die Spitze darin geführt oder gehalten wird. 20 25
10. Behälter nach einem der Ansprüche 6 bis 9, wobei die Nut oder der Durchgang (26) des Gebildes eine Reißlinie und/oder Perforationen aufweist. 30
11. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei eine oder mehrere der Kunststoffflächen geformten Kunststoff umfasst. 35
12. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Behälter vom Typ geformte Blisterpackung oder vom Typ geformt zweischalig ist. 40
13. Behälter nach eine der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Behälter dazu angepasst ist, eine Schneidkante zu führen, die in der Region der Stufe durch die Kunststofffläche des Behälters ragt und durch die Kunststofffläche verläuft. 45
14. Behälter nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, wobei ein Abschnitt der Gebildewand schwächer und/oder dünner ist, um das Öffnen des Behälters zu erleichtern. 50
15. Verfahren zum Herstellen eines Behälters, das Folgendes umfasst: 55

Bereitstellen mindestens einer ersten Kunststofffläche, die ein Gebilde oder eine Stufe (14) mit einem um einen zu öffnenden Bereich angeordneten Umfangsrand aufweist; und
Bereitstellen mindestens einer zweiten inneren Fläche, die in einer Region unter der mindestens

einen Kunststofffläche gelegen ist, und
Bilden eines entsprechenden Rücksprungs (22), dem Gebilde oder der Stufe der Kunststofffläche benachbart;

Versiegeln der ersten und der zweiten Fläche an einem Rand des Behälters, um einen dazwischen gelegenen Gegenstand zu sichern, wobei die Kunststofffläche und die zweite Fläche derart konfiguriert sind, dass im Querschnitt ein Durchgang (26) zwischen dem Gebilde oder der Stufe und dem Rücksprung gebildet wird und der Durchgang dazu konfiguriert ist, eine Schneidkante zum Öffnen des Behälters aufzunehmen.

Revendications

1. Emballage (10) comprenant :

au moins une première surface plastique (12) qui possède une formation ou un gradin (14) ayant un bord périphérique (24) disposé autour d'une zone (18) à ouvrir ; et
au moins une deuxième surface (20) qui se trouve dans une région adjacente à la première surface et qui possède un creux (22) adjacent à la formation sur la surface plastique, les première et deuxième surfaces étant scellées au niveau d'un bord (24) de l'emballage afin de retenir un objet situé entre elles et la surface plastique et la deuxième surface étant configurées de telle façon que, vu en coupe, un canal (26) est formé entre la formation (14) et le creux et ladite formation ou la formation et le creux est (sont) configuré(s) pour recevoir et/ou guider un bord coupant servant à ouvrir l'emballage.

2. Emballage selon la revendication 1, dans lequel une paroi de la formation ou du gradin (14) est plus fine que la surface plastique (12) de façon à être plus facile à couper ou déchirer.
3. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel, vu en coupe, le canal (26) a la forme d'un quadrilatère.
4. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel, vu en coupe, le canal (26) a une dimension minimum de 3 mm.
5. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la deuxième surface intérieure possède un creux pour y loger un objet et le canal (26) est formé sur trois côtés du creux.
6. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la formation (14) pos-

sède une partie surélevée configurée pour créer un vide ou une couche d'air intermédiaire au-dessus de la deuxième surface, et dans lequel la formation, vue en coupe, possède une rainure.

7. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la formation (14) présente un profil vu en coupe ayant un canal (26) disposé entre deux sections surélevées.

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8. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la formation (14) présente un profil vu en coupe ayant la forme de la lettre "M" de l'alphabet latin.

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9. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel le canal (26) entre la formation et le creux définit un vide ou une couche d'air intermédiaire configuré(e) pour recevoir l'embout d'un instrument coupant de telle façon que ledit embout est guidé ou retenu dedans.

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10. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications 6 à 9, dans lequel la rainure ou le canal (26) de la formation possède une ligne de déchirure et/ou des perforations.

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11. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel une ou plusieurs des surfaces plastiques comprennent du plastique moulé.

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12. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel ledit emballage est du type emballage pelliculé (blister) moulé ou du type emballage coque moulé.

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13. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel l'emballage est adapté pour guider un bord coupant qui dépasse de ladite surface plastique de l'emballage dans la région du gradin et qui traverse la surface plastique.

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14. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel une partie de la paroi de la formation est affaiblie et/ou amincie de façon à permettre une ouverture plus facile de l'emballage.

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15. Procédé de fabrication d'un emballage, comprenant les étapes consistant à :

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préparer au moins une première surface plastique qui possède une formation ou un gradin (14) ayant un bord périphérique disposé autour d'une zone à ouvrir ; et

préparer au moins une deuxième surface intérieure située dans une région en dessous de ladite au moins une surface plastique ; et

former un creux (22) correspondant adjacent à la formation ou au gradin de la surface plastique ;

sceller les première et deuxième surfaces au niveau d'un bord de l'emballage de façon à retenir un objet situé entre elles, la surface plastique et la deuxième surface étant configurées de telle façon que, vu en coupe, un canal (26) est formé entre la formation ou le gradin et le creux et ledit canal est configuré pour recevoir un bord coupant servant à ouvrir l'emballage.

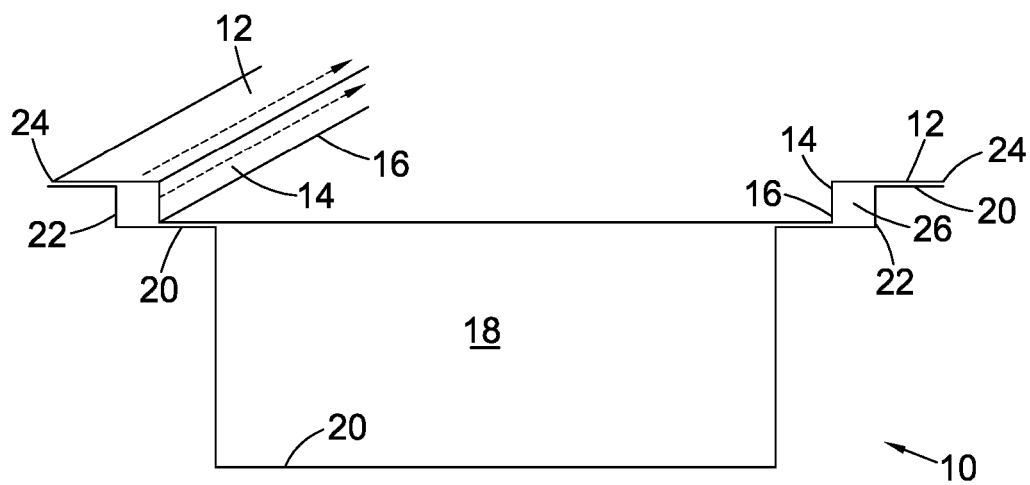


Fig. 1

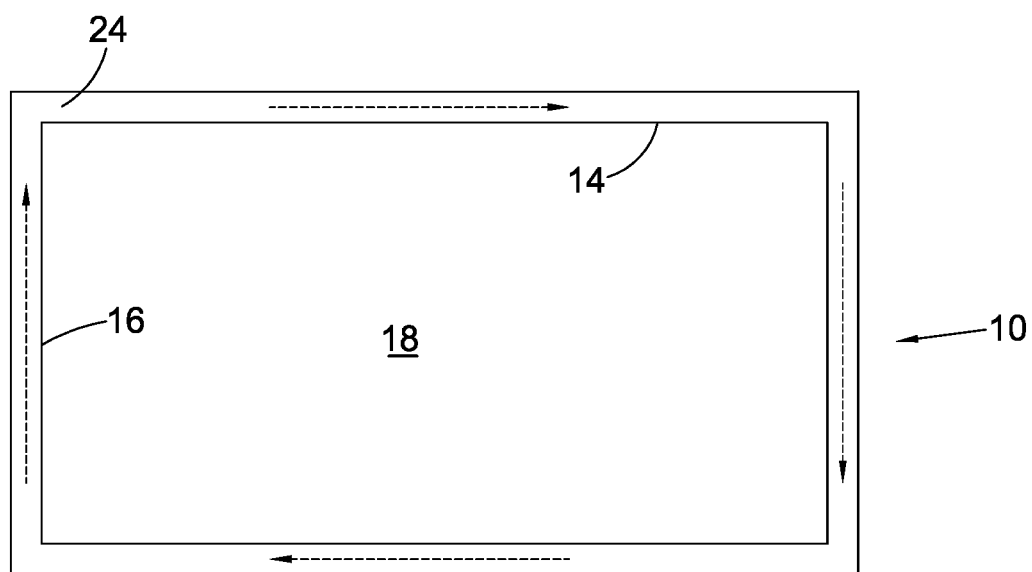


Fig. 2

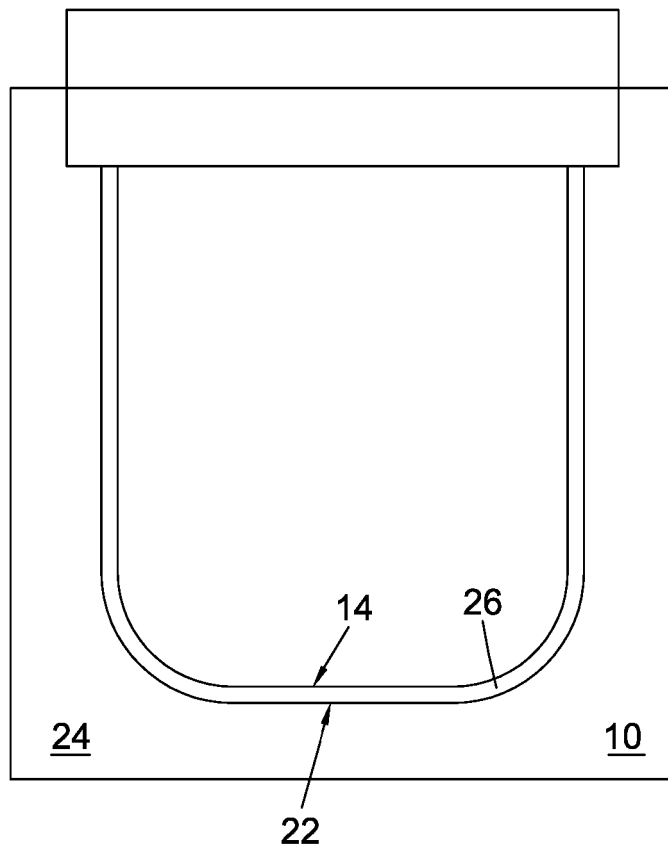


Fig. 3a

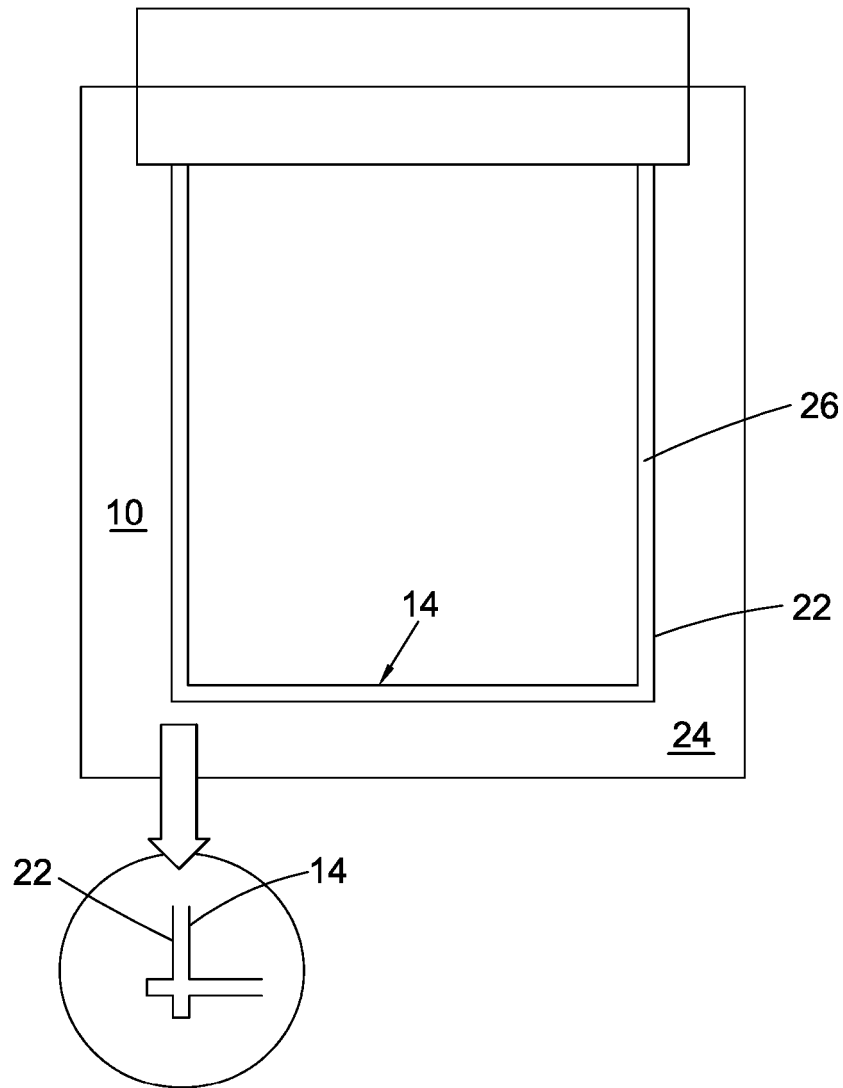


Fig. 3b

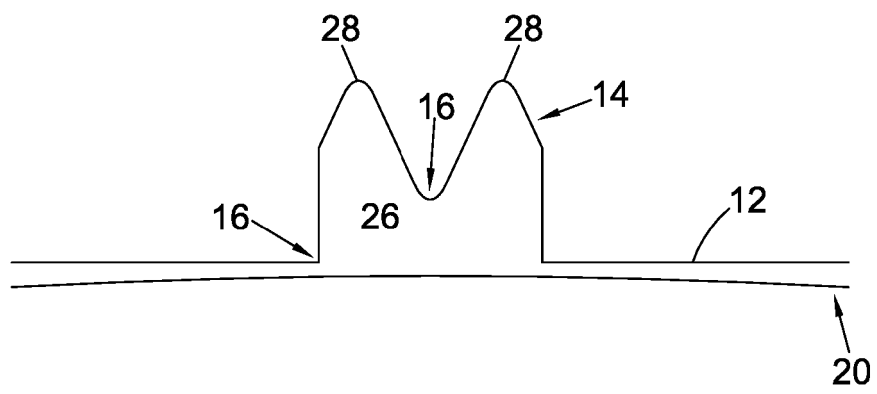


Fig. 4

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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