

FIG. 1A

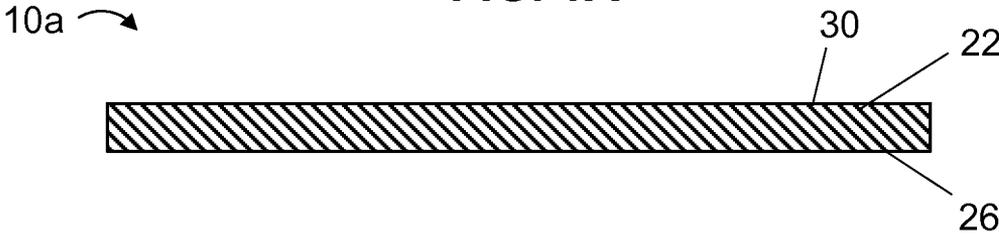


FIG. 1B

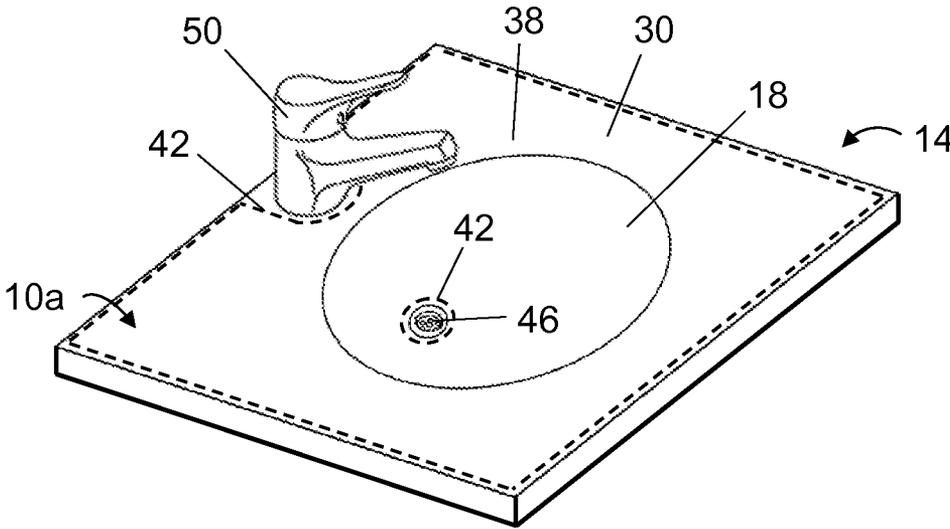


FIG. 1C

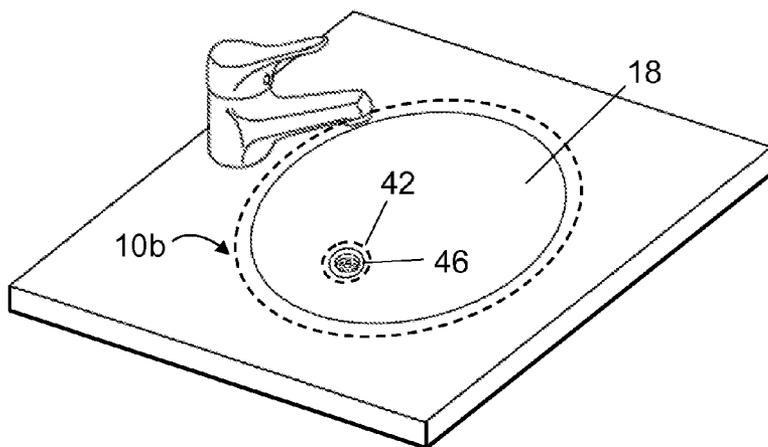


FIG. 2

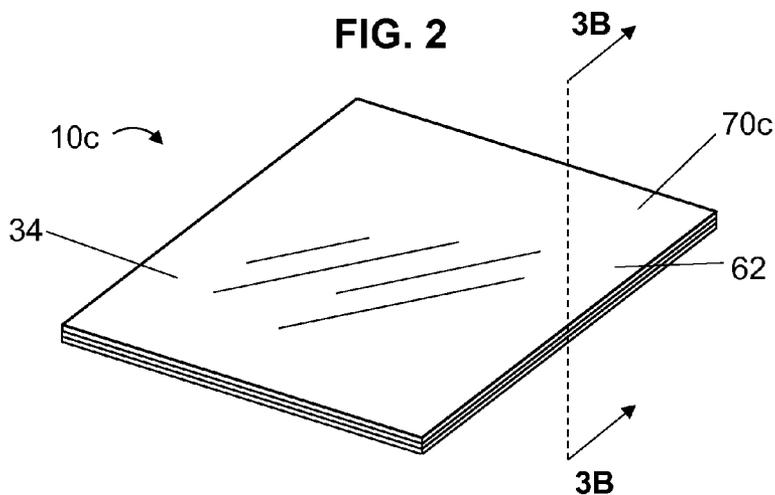


FIG. 3A

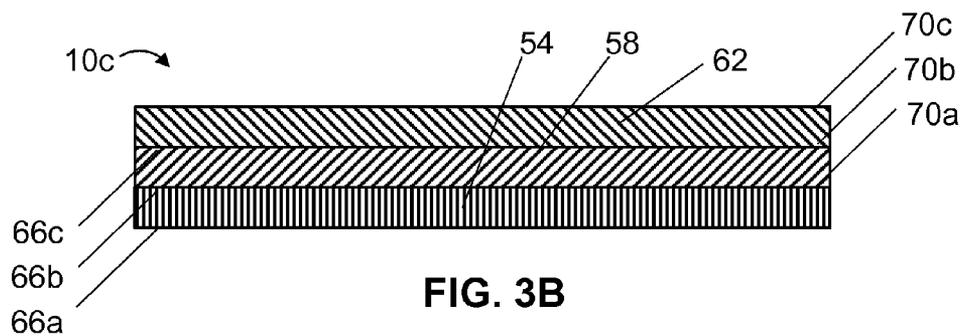


FIG. 3B

**APPARATUSES AND METHODS FOR
COVERING, CLEANING, AND/OR
PROTECTING A SURFACE OF A FIXTURE
OR APPLIANCE**

BACKGROUND

[0001] 1. Field of Invention

[0002] This disclosure relates generally to covering, cleaning, and/or protecting of household and/or commercial fixtures or appliances, and more specifically, but not by way of limitation, to removable covers for covering and/or cleaning of fixtures or appliances and/or protecting fixtures or appliances from stains, dirt, build-up, and/or the like.

[0003] 2. Description of Related Art

[0004] Certain household and/or commercial fixtures or appliances may be susceptible to stains, dirt, build-up, and/or the like, and especially those fixtures or appliances that are regularly exposed to dirt and/or water, such as kitchen and/or restroom sinks, bath tubs, showers, toilets, and/or the like.

[0005] Typically, such fixtures or appliances require frequent cleaning for sanitary and/or aesthetic reasons. Often, such cleaning involves the use of chemicals, which can pose an environmental hazard, for example, when the chemicals are rinsed down a drain. Cleaning chemicals may also pose a health hazard, for example, when a user is exposed to chemicals during cleaning, and certain users may be particularly susceptible to chemical exposure (e.g., children, expectant mothers, senior citizens, individuals who are allergic to certain chemicals, etc.). Additionally, such cleaning can be time consuming, and the chemicals used may be expensive. And, in some instances, cleaning alone may be insufficient to completely remove a stain and/or defect.

[0006] These issues may be particularly pronounced for individuals in homes and/or businesses with large numbers of fixtures or appliances, such as hotels, schools, restaurants, and/or the like.

SUMMARY

[0007] In some aspects, the disclosed covers are configured, through at least one flexible layer removably disposed within and/or around a fixture or appliance basin, to allow a user to remove the layer from the fixture or appliance when the layer has become soiled and/or otherwise unsuited for continued use, thus pulling contaminants away from the fixture or appliance without the use of cleaning chemicals. Some of the present covers are configured, through multiple flexible layers coupled together and coupled to, within, and/or around a fixture or appliance basin, to allow for chemical-free removal of contaminants away from the fixture or appliance a plurality of times.

[0008] Some embodiments of the present covers for a fixture or appliance having a basin comprise one or more flexible layers coupled together, each having a first side and a second side having a substantially non-stick surface, where at least one flexible layer is a first flexible layer configured to be coupled within the basin via the first side such that the second side faces away from the basin. In some embodiments, the one or more flexible layers comprises a second flexible layer and the first side of the second layer is removably coupled to the second side of the first layer.

[0009] In some embodiments, the cover is configured such that the second layer can be decoupled from the first layer without decoupling the first layer from within the basin. In

some embodiments, the first side of at least one flexible layer comprises adhesive. In some embodiments, the first side of at least one flexible layer is configured to adhere through static cling. In some embodiments, the substantially non-stick surface of at least one flexible layer comprises polytetrafluoroethylene.

[0010] In some embodiments, at least one flexible layer comprises plastic. In some embodiments, at least one flexible layer is transparent. In some embodiments, at least one flexible layer is water resistant.

[0011] Some embodiments of the present covers for a fixture or appliance having a basin comprise a plurality of flexible layers coupled together, including a bottom flexible layer configured to be coupled to the basin and a top flexible layer configured to be exposed when the bottom layer is coupled to the basin, each layer comprising a first side, and a second side having a substantially non-stick surface, where the first side of each layer other than the bottom layer is coupled to the second side of an adjacent one of the layers and the second side of each layer other than the top layer is coupled to the first side of an adjacent one of the layers.

[0012] In some embodiments, the cover is configured such that the top layer can be decoupled from the plurality of flexible layers without decoupling the bottom layer from the basin. In some embodiments, the first side of the bottom layer comprises adhesive.

[0013] In some embodiments, at least a portion of the cover is contoured to the basin. In some embodiments, at least a portion of the cover is configured to overlie at least a portion of the fixture or appliance surrounding the basin.

[0014] In some embodiments, the cover defines one or more openings. In some embodiments, at least one opening is configured to be in fluid communication with a drain of the fixture or appliance. In some embodiments, at least one opening is configured to receive an implement of the fixture or appliance. In some embodiments, the implement comprises a faucet, drain, handle, or knob.

[0015] Some embodiments of the present methods for cleaning a fixture or appliance having a basin comprise removing a first flexible layer of a cover coupled within the basin. Some embodiments comprise exposing a second flexible layer of the cover when the first layer is removed.

[0016] Some embodiments of the present methods comprise coupling a bottom flexible layer of a plurality of flexible layers to a fixture or appliance basin, the plurality of flexible layers coupled together and having an exposed top flexible layer. Some embodiments comprise removing the top layer from the plurality of flexible layers without decoupling the bottom layer from the basin.

[0017] The term “coupled” is defined as connected, although not necessarily directly, and not necessarily mechanically; two items that are “coupled” may be unitary with each other. The terms “a” and “an” are defined as one or more unless this disclosure explicitly requires otherwise. The term “substantially” is defined as largely but not necessarily wholly what is specified (and includes what is specified; e.g., substantially 90 degrees includes 90 degrees and substantially parallel includes parallel), as understood by a person of ordinary skill in the art. In any disclosed embodiment, the terms “substantially,” “approximately,” and “about” may be substituted with “within [a percentage] of” what is specified, where the percentage includes 0.1, 1, 5, 10, and 20 percent.

[0018] Further, a device or system that is configured in a certain way is configured in at least that way, but it can also be configured in ways other than those specifically described.

[0019] The terms “comprise” (and any form of comprise, such as “comprises” and “comprising”), “have” (and any form of have, such as “has” and “having”), “include” (and any form of include, such as “includes” and “including”), and “contain” (and any form of contain, such as “contains” and “containing”) are open-ended linking verbs. As a result, an apparatus that “comprises,” “has,” “includes,” or “contains” one or more elements possesses those one or more elements, but is not limited to possessing only those elements. Likewise, a method that “comprises,” “has,” “includes,” or “contains” one or more steps possesses those one or more steps, but is not limited to possessing only those one or more steps.

[0020] Any embodiment of any of the apparatuses, systems, and methods can consist of or consist essentially of—rather than comprise/include/contain/have—any of the described steps, elements, and/or features. Thus, in any of the claims, the term “consisting of” or “consisting essentially of” can be substituted for any of the open-ended linking verbs recited above, in order to change the scope of a given claim from what it would otherwise be using the open-ended linking verb.

[0021] The feature or features of one embodiment may be applied to other embodiments, even though not described or illustrated, unless expressly prohibited by this disclosure or the nature of the embodiments.

[0022] Some details associated with the embodiments described above and others are described below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0023] The following drawings illustrate by way of example and not limitation. For the sake of brevity and clarity, every feature of a given structure is not always labeled in every figure in which that structure appears. Identical reference numbers do not necessarily indicate an identical structure. Rather, the same reference number may be used to indicate a similar feature or a feature with similar functionality, as may non-identical reference numbers. The figures are drawn to scale (unless otherwise noted), meaning the sizes of the depicted elements are accurate relative to each other for at least the embodiment depicted in the figures.

[0024] FIGS. 1A and 1B are cutaway perspective and cutaway cross-sectional side views, respectively, of a first embodiment of the present covers.

[0025] FIG. 1C is a perspective view of the cover of FIG. 1A, coupled to a fixture or appliance.

[0026] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of the present covers, coupled to a fixture or appliance.

[0027] FIGS. 3A and 3B are cutaway perspective and cutaway cross-sectional side views, respectively, of a third embodiment of the present covers.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENTS

[0028] FIGS. 1A-1C depict a first embodiment 10a of the present covers. FIGS. 1A and 1B are shown in cutaway fashion, in that only a portion of cover 10a is shown. In the depicted embodiment, cover 10a is configured to be coupled to a fixture or appliance (e.g., sink 14) having a basin 18. Sink 14 and basin 18 are provided only by way of example, as the present covers can be used with any suitable household and/or

commercial fixture or appliance (e.g., kitchen and/or bathroom sinks, bath tubs, showers, toilets, countertops, stove tops, dish washers, washing machines, driers, and/or the like), whether or not those fixtures or appliances comprise a basin. In the embodiment shown, cover 10a comprises a single flexible layer 22. However, as described in more detail below, the present covers can comprise any suitable number of flexible layers (e.g., 22) coupled together, such as, for example, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more flexible layers.

[0029] In the embodiment shown, flexible layer 22 has a first side 26 configured to be coupled to basin 18, and a second side 30 configured to face away from basin 18 when the first side is coupled to the basin (e.g., as shown, the location of cover 10a on sink 14 is indicated by dashed lines in FIG. 1C). Such coupling can be accomplished through any suitable structure, such as, for example, adhesive disposed on a surface of sink basin 18 and/or on first side 26, static cling, and/or the like.

[0030] In the embodiment shown, second side 30 of flexible layer 22 has a substantially non-stick surface 34. Non-stick surface 34 can comprise any suitable material, such as, for example, polytetrafluoroethylene, and/or any other material that is resistant to dirt, water, and/or other contaminants, easy to clean, and/or the like. In this way, cover 10a can resist contamination with dirt and/or other contaminants (e.g., when sink 14 is in use), and/or facilitate cleaning of the cover (e.g., if it is not desired to remove flexible layer 22 from the sink, as described below). In some embodiments, flexible layer 22 comprises anti-microbial materials (e.g., anti-microbial plastics, and/or anti-microbial coatings). In this embodiment, flexible layer 22 comprises plastic, however, in other embodiments, the flexible layer(s) can comprise any suitable material.

[0031] In the embodiment shown, at least a portion of cover 10a is contoured to sink basin 18 (e.g., through flexible characteristics of cover 10a). For example, cover 10a can be pressed into basin 18 such that the cover or a portion thereof flexes, stretches, shrinks, and/or otherwise deforms to contour to a surface of basin 18. In other embodiments, at least a portion of cover 10a can be pre-formed and/or pre-disposed to resemble a shape of a surface of basin 18. In this embodiment, at least a portion of cover 10a is configured to overlie a portion 38 of the sink surrounding basin 18. In this way, an area surrounding basin 18 can also be covered and/or protected by cover 10a, and/or cleaned through use of cover 10a. In other embodiments, the present covers can be configured to overlie a portion of a fixture or appliance without a basin (e.g., a stove top, counter top, and/or the like), for example, in part through flexibility, some embodiments of the present covers can contour to any suitable shape.

[0032] In the embodiment shown, flexible layer 22 is configured to be removable from basin 18 (e.g., after flexible layer 22 has become contaminated, unsuited for continued use, and/or its removal is otherwise desired). In this way, dirt and/or contaminants that may be disposed on flexible layer 22 can be removed away from sink 14 without the use of chemicals. In this embodiment, first side 26 of flexible layer 22 is adhered to sink 14 and/or basin 18 such that the layer can be removed without damaging the finish of the sink or basin.

[0033] In the embodiment shown, cover 10a defines one or more openings 42. One or more openings 42 can be configured to receive and/or surround any fixture or appliance components, such as, for example, faucets, handles, knobs, drains, plugs, overflow ports, and/or the like. For example, in this

embodiment, at least one opening **42** is configured to be in fluid communication with a drain **46** of sink **14** (e.g., as shown). In this way, normal operation of drain **46** can be maintained when cover **10a** is installed. In a further example, in the depicted embodiment, at least one opening **42** is configured to receive an implement **50** of the sink (e.g., as shown, a faucet and/or handle of the sink). In some embodiments, cover **10a** can be trimmed such that, for example, openings **42** can be created where necessary and/or desired.

[0034] In the embodiment shown, cover **10a** and/or flexible layer **22** is transparent. However, in other embodiments, the covers and/or flexible layers may be colored and/or decorated. For example, some embodiments can comprise an opaque cover and/or flexible layer. Such embodiments can function to hide any cracks, stains, flaws, and/or the like which may be present on a fixture or appliance and/or basin of a fixture or appliance. In some embodiments, the covers and/or flexible layers may be scented (e.g., to imitate the scent of a typical cleaning agent). Through such features, the present covers and/or flexible layers can be configured for a particular user (e.g., for a child by having, for example, decorations such as cartoon characters and/or child friendly scents such as, for example, bubblegum, cotton candy, and/or the like).

[0035] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a second embodiment **10b** of the present covers. Cover **10b** is substantially similar to cover **10a**, with the primary exception that cover **10b** is configured to be disposed substantially only within basin **18** (e.g., as shown, for example, comprising a substantially rounded shape). However, the present covers can comprise any suitable shape, such as, for example, substantially square, rectangular and/or otherwise polygonal, circular, elliptical, and/or otherwise rounded. In some embodiments, the present covers can be provided in multiple pieces (e.g., 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or more pieces) (e.g., to facilitate installation). Some embodiments of the present covers can be trimmed to fit and/or for installation (e.g., with scissors). For example, some embodiments of the present covers can be cut into sections to ease installation around areas with sharp edges and/or high degrees of curvature.

[0036] FIGS. 3A and 3B depict a third embodiment **10c** of the present covers. FIGS. 3A and 3B are shown in cutaway fashion, in that only a portion of cover **10c** is shown. Cover **10c** is substantially similar to cover **10a**, with the primary exception that cover **10c** comprises a plurality of flexible layers coupled together. In the embodiment shown, cover **10c** includes a bottom layer **54** configured to be coupled to a sink basin (e.g., which, in some embodiments, may be in a similar fashion to as described above for flexible layer **22** of cover **10a**) and a top layer **62** configured to be exposed when bottom layer **54** is coupled to the basin. In the embodiment shown, cover **10c** comprises a middle layer **58** coupled to and between bottom layer **54** and top layer **62**. Flexible layers **54**, **58**, and **62** of cover **10c** can possess any and/or all of the features described above for flexible layer **22** of cover **10a**.

[0037] In this embodiment, each flexible layer comprises a first side (e.g., **66a**, **66b**, **66c**) and a second side (**70a**, **70b**, **70c**), where each second side has a substantially non-stick surface. In the embodiment shown, the first side of each flexible layer other than the bottom layer is coupled to the second side of an adjacent one of the flexible layers (e.g., first sides **66b** and **66c** are coupled to second sides **70a** and **70b**, respectively) and the second side of each flexible layer other than the top layer is coupled to the first side of an adjacent one of the layers. For example, in this embodiment, first side **66a**

is configured to be coupled within and/or around a basin (e.g., **18**) of a fixture or appliance (e.g., sink **14**), and second side **70c** is configured to be exposed when cover **10c** is in use.

[0038] In the embodiment shown, cover **10c** is configured such that top layer **62** can be decoupled from the plurality of flexible layers (e.g., from middle layer **58**) without decoupling bottom layer **54** from the fixture or appliance. For example, a coupling agent (e.g., adhesive) on the first side of each layer (e.g., **66a**, **66b**, and/or **66c**) can be configured to provide a stronger bond with a fixture or appliance surface (e.g., sink basin **18**) than a bond between two layers (e.g., between **62** and **58** and/or between **58** and **54**). In some embodiments, the first side (e.g., **66a**) of the bottom layer (e.g., **54**) can comprise a different coupling structure than others of the plurality of layers. For example, bottom layer **54** can be configured to be adhered to the fixture or appliance with an adhesive, and subsequent layers can be configured to adhere to the bottom layer and/or to one another, for example, through static cling. In this way, bottom layer **54** can be installed as a foundation for subsequent installation or removal of additional layers.

[0039] Some of the present methods for cleaning a fixture or appliance (e.g., **14**) having a basin (e.g., **18**) comprise removing a first flexible layer (e.g., **22**, **62**) from a cover (e.g., **10a**, **10b**, **10c**) coupled to the basin. Some methods comprise exposing a second flexible layer (e.g., **58**) of the cover (e.g., **10c**) when the first flexible layer (e.g., **62**) is removed. Some of the present methods comprise coupling a bottom layer (e.g., **22**, **54**) of one or more flexible layers coupled together to a fixture or appliance basin (e.g., **18**), the one or more flexible layers coupled together and having an exposed top layer (e.g., **22**, **62**). Some methods comprise removing the top layer (e.g., **62**) without decoupling the bottom layer (e.g., **54**) from the basin.

[0040] The above specification and examples provide a complete description of the structure and use of illustrative embodiments. Although certain embodiments have been described above with a certain degree of particularity, or with reference to one or more individual embodiments, those skilled in the art could make numerous alterations to the disclosed embodiments without departing from the scope of this invention. As such, the various illustrative embodiments of the methods and systems are not intended to be limited to the particular forms disclosed. Rather, they include all modifications and alternatives falling within the scope of the claims, and embodiments other than the one shown may include some or all of the features of the depicted embodiment. For example, elements may be omitted or combined as a unitary structure, and/or connections may be substituted. Further, where appropriate, aspects of any of the examples described above may be combined with aspects of any of the other examples described to form further examples having comparable or different properties and/or functions, and addressing the same or different problems. Similarly, it will be understood that the benefits and advantages described above may relate to one embodiment or may relate to several embodiments.

[0041] The claims are not intended to include, and should not be interpreted to include, means-plus- or step-plus-function limitations, unless such a limitation is explicitly recited in a given claim using the phrase(s) “means for” or “step for,” respectively.

- 1. A cover for a fixture or appliance having a basin, the cover comprising:
 one or more flexible layers coupled together, each having:
 a first side; and
 a second side having a substantially non-stick surface;
 where at least one flexible layer is a first flexible layer configured to be coupled within the basin via the first side such that the second side faces away from the basin.
- 2. The cover of claim 1, where the one or more flexible layers comprises a second flexible layer and the first side of the second layer is removably coupled to the second side of the first layer.
- 3. The cover of claim 2, where the cover is configured such that the second layer can be decoupled from the first layer without decoupling the first layer from within the basin.
- 4. The cover of claim 1, where the first side of at least one flexible layer comprises adhesive.
- 5. The cover of claim 1, where the first side of at least one flexible layer is configured to adhere through static cling.
- 6. The cover of claim 1, where the substantially non-stick surface of at least one flexible layer comprises polytetrafluoroethylene.
- 7. (canceled)
- 8. The cover of claim 1, where at least one flexible layer is transparent.
- 9. (canceled)
- 10. The cover of claim 1, where at least a portion of the cover is contoured to the basin.
- 11. The cover of claim 1, where at least a portion of the cover is configured to overlie at least a portion of the fixture or appliance surrounding the basin.
- 12. The cover of claim 1, where the cover defines one or more openings.
- 13. The cover of claim 12, where at least one opening is configured to be in fluid communication with a drain of the fixture or appliance.
- 14. The cover of claim 12, where at least one opening is configured to receive an implement of the fixture or appliance.

- 15. (canceled)
- 16. A cover for a fixture or appliance having a basin, the cover comprising:
 a plurality of flexible layers coupled together, including a bottom flexible layer configured to be coupled to the basin and a top flexible layer configured to be exposed when the bottom layer is coupled to the basin, each layer comprising a first side, and a second side having a substantially non-stick surface;
 where the first side of each layer other than the bottom layer is coupled to the second side of an adjacent one of the layers and the second side of each layer other than the top layer is coupled to the first side of an adjacent one of the layers.
- 17. The cover of claim 16, where the first side of at least one flexible layer comprises adhesive.
- 18. The cover of claim 17, where the first side of the bottom layer comprises adhesive.
- 19. (canceled)
- 20. The cover of claim 16, where the cover is configured such that the top layer can be decoupled from the plurality of flexible layers without decoupling the bottom layer from the basin.
- 21. The cover of claim 16, where the cover defines one or more openings and at least one opening is configured to be in fluid communication with a drain of the fixture or appliance.
- 22. The cover of claim 16, where at least a portion of the cover is contoured to the basin.
- 23. A method for cleaning a fixture or appliance having a basin, the method comprising removing a first flexible layer of a cover coupled within the basin.
- 24. The method of claim 23, comprising exposing a second flexible layer of the cover when the first layer is removed.
- 25. (canceled)
- 26. (canceled)

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