SHOE WITH A LOOP-FABRIC BODY

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ABSTRACT

A shoe (2) for attachment of at least one decorative accessory (4) is provided. The shoe (2) includes an upper (6) for covering a foot of a wearer, at least a portion of the upper (6) has a loop fabric (8). The loop fabric (8) is configured to removable attach the at least one decorative accessory (4) with a hook fabric (10) to the upper (6). A system including the shoe (2) and the at least one decorative accessory (4), and a related method for customizing an appearance of the shoe (2), are also provided.
SHOE WITH A LOOP-FABRIC BODY

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/135,886, filed on Jul. 25, 2008. The entire disclosure of the above application is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present disclosure relates to shoes, and more particularly, to a system and method for removably attaching a decorative accessory to a shoe.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] A typical shoe includes two main portions: a sole; and an upper. The entire portion of the shoe that is located below a wearer's foot is generally called the sole. The portion of the shoe that covers an upper portion of the wearer's foot is generally called the upper. The sole may include a variety of components such as an insole for creating a layer of comfort between the sole and the wearer's foot, a midsole for shock absorption, and an outsole formed from a durable material for contacting the ground. Likewise, the upper may include a variety of components, such as a toe cap that covers the front of the wearer's foot, a vamp that covers the mid-front of the wearer's foot, and a quarter that covers the rear and sides of the wearer's foot. The toe cap, vamp, and quarter may be sewn together separately, or provided as one or more integral pieces, and together may be referred to as the “body” of the shoe.

[0004] Depending on the shoe design employed, the shoe may also have a fastening portion disposed adjacent an aperture in the shoe where the wearer inserts the wearer's foot. The fastening portion may include fasteners such as laces, zippers, and hook and loop fasteners. A tongue may be provided, generally when the shoe includes a fastening portion with laces, and may run along a top-center of the shoe between the fastener and the wearer's foot. The location of the fastener and the tongue is generally referred to as the instep of the shoe. The typical shoe may also include a variety of other features for affecting the comfort and overall aesthetics of the shoe such as liners, cushions, heels, toe inserts, and design elements for logos and the like.

[0005] It is known to provide a shoe that allows the wearer, and a particularly a child wearer, to attach one or more accessories to the shoe and customize the aesthetics thereof. One type of shoe system is described in U.S. Pat. Appl. Pub. No. 2008/0060110 to Schmelzer et al., the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. The Schmelzer et al. shoe system attaches a decorative accessory to a molded shoe through an expandable hole formed in the molded shoe. The decorative accessory has a shoulder configured for insertion through the expandable hole. The shoulder is larger than the expandable hole and secures the decorative accessory to the molded shoe when inserted through the expandable hole.

[0006] There is a continuing need for a shoe and related system that facilitates the attachment of accessories such as characters, toys, stickers, insignia, and the like, to the shoe. Desirably, the shoe and related system allows a wearer to simply and repeatedly customize the appearance of the shoe with different accessories.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] In concordance with the instant disclosure, a shoe and related system that facilitates the attachment of accessories, such as characters, toys, stickers, insignia, and the like, to the shoe, and allows a wearer to simply and repeatedly customize the appearance of the shoe with different accessories, is surprisingly discovered.

[0008] In a first embodiment, a shoe for attachment of at least one decorative accessory includes an upper for covering a foot of a wearer. At least a portion of the upper has a loop fabric. The loop fabric is configured to removably attach at least one decorative accessory with a hook fabric to the upper.

[0009] In another embodiment, a shoe system for attachment of decorative accessories includes a shoe having an upper for covering a foot of a wearer. At least a portion of the upper has a loop fabric. The system further includes at least one decorative accessory having a hook fabric. The hook fabric removably attaches the decorative accessory to the loop fabric of the shoe.

[0010] In a further embodiment, a method for customizing an appearance of a shoe includes the steps of: providing a shoe having an upper for covering a foot of a wearer, at least a portion of the upper having a loop fabric; providing at least one decorative accessory having a hook fabric; and attaching the loop fabric of the decorative accessory and the loop fabric of the shoe.

DRAWINGS

[0011] The above, as well as other advantages of the present disclosure, will become readily apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description, particularly when considered in light of the drawings described herein.

[0012] FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of a shoe according to an embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0013] FIG. 2 is a front elevational view of the shoe shown in FIG. 1.

[0014] FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the shoe shown in FIGS. 1 and 2.

[0015] FIG. 4 is a side elevational view of the shoe shown in FIGS. 1-3, further depicting a decorative accessory according to the present disclosure.

[0016] FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional side elevational view of the shoe shown in FIGS. 1-4.

[0017] FIG. 6 is a side elevational view of an illustrative decorative accessory for use with the shoe shown in FIGS. 1-5.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0018] The following detailed description and appended drawings describe and illustrate various embodiments of the invention. The description and drawings serve to enable one skilled in the art to make and use the invention, and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention in any manner. In respect of the methods disclosed, the steps presented are exemplary in nature, and thus, are not necessary or critical.

[0019] As shown in FIGS. 1-6, the present disclosure includes a shoe 2 to which at least one decorative accessory 4...
may be attached. The shoe 2 includes an upper 6 for covering a foot of a wearer. At least a portion of the upper 6 has a loop fabric 8. The loop fabric 8 is configured to removably attach the at least one decorative accessory 4 with a hook fabric 10 to the upper 6. As a nonlimiting example, suitable hook and loop fabrics 10, 8 are commercially available under the brand name Velcro®, from Velcro Industries B.V. and its affiliates. It should be understood that other brands and types of hook and loop fabrics 10, 8 may also be used within the scope of the present disclosure.

[0020] In a particular embodiment, substantially an entire outer surface of the upper 6 may have the loop fabric 8. For example, as shown in FIG. 5, the upper 6 may have an inner layer 12. The inner layer 12 is formed from a material having a stiffness sufficient to maintain a shape of the shoe 2 and support the at least one decorative accessory 4. The loop fabric 8 may be secured to the inner layer 12, for example, with an adhesive. The loop fabric 8 may cover the entire outer portion of the inner layer 12, or a portion of the inner layer 12. As nonlimiting examples, the inner layer 12 may be formed from one of a leather material, a woven fabric such as a polyester or nylon fabric, and a molded polymeric material. In an alternative embodiment, the upper 6 is composed entirely of a single layer of the loop fabric 8. One of ordinary skill in the art may select other suitable materials and means for securing the loop fabric 8 to the inner layer 12, as desired.

[0021] With renewed reference to FIGS. 1-4, the shoe 2 has a shape facilitating the attachment of a plurality of the decorative accessories 4 thereto. In one embodiment, the upper 4 of the shoe 2 includes a body 14 having a toe or front portion 16, a pair of side portions 18, 20, and a rear portion 22. The front portion 16 has a width W1 greater than a width W2 of the rear portion 22. For example, a ratio of the width W1 of the front portion 16 to the width W2 of the rear portion 22 (W1/W2) is from about 1.25:1 to about 1.75:1. In an illustrative embodiment, the width ratio is about 1.5:1. It should be appreciated that the greater width W1 facilitates the attachment of a multitude of decorative accessories 4 to the front portion 16 of the upper 6. Other dimensions configured to provide sufficient surface area for the decorative accessories 4 at the front portion 16 may also be employed.

[0022] In certain embodiments, each of the side portions 18, 20 of the shoe 2 has a concave outer surface 24. The concave outer surfaces 24 transition the rear portion 22 of the body 14 to the front portion 16 of the body 14. The concave surfaces 24 permit the front portion 16 to bulge outwardly from a longitudinal axis A of the shoe 2. As illustratively shown in FIG. 5, the body 14 of the shoe 2 may have a substantially constant thickness. In another nonlimiting example, the body 14 of the shoe 2 may have a greater thickness in the front portion 16, such as through use of puff or padding inside of the shoe 2, to optimize comfort for the wearer of the shoe 2. A skilled artisan may also select other dimensions for the body 14 of the shoe 2.

[0023] It should be understood that the body 14 of the shoe 2 has an aperture 26 that allows the wearer to insert the wearer's foot into the shoe 2. A border 28 may be disposed adjacent the aperture 26. For example, the border 28 may surround the aperture 26. The border 28 may have a thickness greater than a thickness of the rest of the body 14, for example. At least a portion of the border 28 may have the loop fabric 8, allowing the wearer to attach the decorative accessory 4 to the border 28 of the shoe 2, as desired.

[0024] In one embodiment, the rear portion 22 of the body 14 has a loop 30 of material coupled thereto for facilitating gripping thereof during an insertion of the foot of the wearer into the shoe 2. The loop 30 may be formed from a folded strip of material that is sewn at ends of the strip to the rear portion 22 of the body 14. The loop 30 allows the wearer to pull upwardly on the rear portion 22 of the body 14 to slip the rear portion 22 over a heel of the wearer's foot. The loop 30 may further provide a location for the loop, logo, trade name, insignia, and the like on the shoe 2.

[0025] The shoe 2 has a sole 32 disposed between the foot of the wearer and the ground. The sole 32 may be formed from any suitably durable material, such as rubber, plastic, or leather. The sole 32 may be formed from a plurality of layers to optimize durability and comfort. The sole 32 is coupled to the upper 6. In an illustrative embodiment, at least a portion of the sole 32 has the loop fabric 8 secured to an outer surface thereof. In particular, the sole 32 may have the loop fabric 8 secured to the outer surface adjacent the rear portion 22 of the body 14. The location of the loop fabric 8 on the sole 32 near the rear of the shoe 2 mitigates against the wearer inadvertently kicking and removing the decorative accessory 4 while walking.

[0026] In certain embodiments, the shoe 2 includes a fastener 34 coupled to the upper 6 in an instep of the shoe 2. The fastener 34 is configured to secure the shoe 2 to the foot of the wearer. As nonlimiting examples, the fastener 34 may include one of a shoestring, a zipper, and a hook and loop fastener. As illustrated in FIGS. 1-5, the fastener 34 may be a hook and loop fastener disposed across a top of the body 14 from one side 18 to the other side 20. It should be appreciated, however, that the shoe 2 may be provided without the fastener 34, for example, in the form of a slip on design, as desired.

[0027] The fastener 34 may also be disposed adjacent a tongue 36 in the instep of the shoe 2. The tongue 36 is configured to separate the fastener 34 from the foot of the wearer. At least a portion of each of the fastener 34 and the tongue 36 may also have the loop fabric 8.

[0028] In view of the present disclosure, a skilled artisan should understand that a shoe system for attachment of decorative accessories 4 is provided. The shoe system includes the shoe 2 and the at least one decorative accessory 4. As examples, the decorative accessory 4 may include at least one of a character, a toy, a sticker, and an insignia. In particular, the shoe system allows a wearer to attach the decorative accessory 4 of a three dimensional character, as opposed to two dimensional charms, for example, to the shoe 2.

[0029] An exemplary decorative accessory 4 for attachment to the shoe 2 of the present disclosure is shown in FIGS. 4 and 6. The decorative accessory 4 may have a base 38 with a substantially planar lower surface 40. The hook fabric 10 may be secured to the substantially planar surface 40 of the base 38. For example, the hook fabric 10 is secured to the base 38 with an adhesive. Other means for securing the hold fabric 10 to the base 38 may also be employed.

[0030] In a particular embodiment, the three-dimensional decorative accessory 4 may have a height H3D greater than a width W3D of the base 38. The shoe system facilitates the attachment of the three-dimensional decorative accessory 4 to the shoe 2, having the height H3D greater than the width W3D of the base 38, in a substantially upright position.

[0031] The present disclosure further includes a method for customizing an appearance of the shoe 2. The method first includes the step of providing the shoe 2 and the at least one
decorative accessory 4 of the shoe system, as described hereinabove. The wearer then aligns the hook fabric 10 of the decorative accessory 4 with the loop fabric 8 of the upper 6. By then pressing the decorative accessory 4 onto the upper 6, the decorative accessory 4 is removably attached to the shoe 2. The method may also include the steps of attaching further decorative accessories 4 to loop fabric 8 of the shoe 2, wherever the loop fabric 8 may be disposed. For example, in an embodiment where the loop fabric 8 is secured to the fastener 34, the decorative accessory 4 may be likewise attached to the fastener 34 of the shoe 2.

[0032] It should be appreciated that the present shoe 2 and related system and method facilitates the attachment and transportation of accessories 4, such as characters, toys, stick- ers, insignia, and the like, on the shoe 2. Advantageously, the system allows a wearer to readily customize the shoe with different accessories 4. Unlike systems known in the art, where it may be difficult for the wearer to remove the decorative accessory 4 following insertion in a hole, for example, the present system allows the wearer, and particularly a child wearer, to easily remove the decorative accessory. The wearer may simply and repeatedly decorate the shoe 2 with the system according to the present disclosure.

[0033] While certain representative embodiments and details have been shown for purposes of illustrating the invention, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes may be made without departing from the scope of the disclosure, which is further described in the following appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A shoe customizable with at least one decorative accessory, the shoe comprising:
   an upper for covering a foot of a wearer, at least a portion of the upper having a loop fabric, the loop fabric configured for removable attachment of the at least one decorative accessory configured with a hook fabric to the upper.

2. The shoe according to claim 1, wherein substantially an entire outer surface of the upper has the loop fabric.

3. The shoe according to claim 1, wherein the upper includes an inner layer, the loop fabric secured to the inner layer.

4. The shoe according to claim 3, wherein the loop fabric is secured to the inner layer with an adhesive.

5. The shoe according to claim 1, wherein the upper includes a body having a front portion, a pair of side portions, and a rear portion, the front portion having a width greater than a width of the rear portion, the front portion facilitating the attachment of a plurality of the at least one decorative accessory to the front portion of the upper.

6. The shoe according to claim 5, wherein a ratio of the width of the front portion to the width of the rear portion is from about 1.25:1 to 1.75:1.

7. The shoe according to claim 5, wherein each of the side portions has a concave outer surface transitioning the rear portion of the body to the front portion of the body.

8. The shoe according to claim 5, wherein a thickness of the body is substantially the same throughout the shoe.

9. The shoe according to claim 5, wherein the body has an aperture allowing an insertion of the foot of the wearer into the shoe, and a border disposed adjacent the aperture, at least a portion of the border having the loop fabric.

10. The shoe according to claim 5, wherein the rear portion of the body includes a loop of material coupled thereto for facilitating an insertion of the foot of the wearer into the shoe, the loop of material having at least one of a logo, a trade name, and an insignia.

11. The shoe according to claim 1, further comprising a sole for placement between the foot of the wearer and ground, the sole coupled to the upper, at least a portion of the sole having the loop fabric secured to an outer surface thereof.

12. The shoe according to claim 1, further comprising a fastener coupled to the upper, at least a portion of the fastener having the loop fabric secured to an outer surface thereof.

13. The shoe according to claim 10, further comprising a tongue coupled to the upper and disposed beneath the fastener, at least portion of the tongue having the loop fabric secured to an outer surface thereof.

14. A shoe system, comprising:
   a shoe having an upper for covering a foot of a wearer, at least a portion of the upper formed from a loop fabric; and
   at least one decorative accessory having a hook fabric removably attaching the at least one decorative accessory to the loop fabric of the upper.

15. The shoe system according to claim 14, wherein the decorative accessory has a base with a substantially planar surface, the hook fabric secured to the substantially planar surface of the base.

16. The shoe system according to claim 15, wherein the hook fabric is secured to the base with an adhesive.

17. The shoe system according to claim 15, wherein a height of the decorative accessory is greater than a width of the base, the decorative accessory held in a substantially upright position when removably attached to the upper of the shoe.

18. A method for customizing an appearance of a shoe, the method comprising the steps of:
   providing the shoe having an upper for covering a foot of a wearer, at least a portion of the upper formed from a loop fabric;
   providing at least one decorative accessory having at least a portion formed from a hook fabric;
   aligning the hook fabric of the decorative accessory with the loop fabric of the upper; and
   pressing the decorative accessory onto the upper, wherein the decorative accessory is removably attached to the upper of the shoe.

19. The method according to claim 18, wherein the decorative accessory is disposed in a substantially upright position when removably attached to the upper of the shoe.

20. The method according to claim 18, wherein the shoe includes a body having a front portion, a pair of side portions, and a rear portion, the front portion having a width greater than a width of the rear portion, the front portion facilitating the attachment of a plurality of the decorative accessories to the front portion of the upper.