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Declarations under Rule 4.17:

- as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent (Rule 4.17(ii))
- as to the applicant's entitlement to claim the priority of the earlier application (Rule 4.17(iii))

(54) Title: FLEXIBLE FASTENING SYSTEM FOR SHOE TONGUE FOOTWEAR

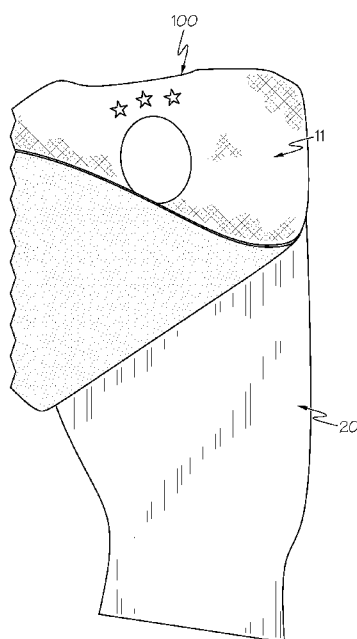


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A customizable, multi-unit elongated element. A changeable tongue for shoes, to allow for customization at the users discretion. The hook and loop elongated element may consist of two features, a woven Jacquard fabric customizable portion which may be manipulated with different colors, textures, logo/designs, etc. and a base portion that is attached directly to the original elongated element of a given shoe. The hook and loop elongated element is a solution for the desired customization of shoes.

Published:

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TITLE OF THE INVENTION**FLEXIBLE FASTENING SYSTEM FOR SHOE TONGUE FOOTWEAR****CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION(S)**

[0001] The present application claims priority to and the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/331,143 filed on May 3, 2016, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to interchangeable material and more specifically to footwear wherein the tongue of a shoe is a changeable. The invention enables a component of a consumer product such as a shoe to be changed by the wearer, therefore, creating the ability to customize the color, texture, logo/design or any other aesthetic quality of the tongue whenever the user desired.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] With the fashion industry forever evolving, what may be the “In” today may be “Out” tomorrow. In an attempt to keep up with the latest fashion trends while adding one’s own touch of style to everyday apparel, a consumer may end up spending more than what is desired in order to maintain a fashionable, up-to-date wardrobe. A market need exists for apparel articles that are easily customizable. This need is not limited to strictly clothing items, as the need for innovation encompasses various areas of fashion including accessories and even footwear. Footwear is often considered one of the finishing touches to an outfit. Coordination between the style of footwear and the rest of the outfit is ideal in order to create a complete look. Today, when a consumer desires specific footwear but lacks the variety in their shoe collection, they ultimately fail to select a pair of shoes that compliments the stylistic goals of their entire outfit. The consumer is then forced to purchase a new pair of shoes to compliment the outfit. This can result in a significant cost to the end user. Additionally, it is impractical for a consumer to purchase a new apparel article, such as a pair of shoes, every time the consumer

wants to coordinate an entire ensemble. In this case, what is needed is a customizable feature on an article like a shoe that may be altered at the user's discretion. The need for customizability can also be seen in the sporting industry. Sports teams are consistently changing uniforms and the color patterns on their equipment. In addition to providing another level of customizability, the present invention may also provide additional functionality such as, but not limited to support and protection from outdoor elements. The present invention provides for a cost effective way to add another level customization to footwear and other articles of commerce.

[0004] Additionally, the present invention provides for a means for various companies to utilize a component of a consumer article such as a shoe tongue, for various purposes including but not limited to marketing, promotional purposes, pricing, sizing, and enhancing comfort. This is beneficial to a retailer as it may decrease in the amount and cost of packaging and may be used as an extra marketing tool.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] It is an object of the present invention to provide a new type of changeable personalization element that may be attached to a consumer article such as, but not limited to, an elongated portion of a shoe creating a customized look.

[0006] A specific embodiment of the present invention provides for a top portion may be made with a woven Jacquard fabric, using "hook & loop" parts. Overall, the idea enables the elongated elements to be changed by the wearer. A wearer may customize an article such as a shoe by changing the specifications of the elongated element. Some of the specifications of the element that may be changed are the color, texture, logo/design (team name for example) etc., all at the user's discretion.

[0007] In a further exemplary embodiment of the present invention, the elongated element may host various forms of embellishments on either of its sides. In addition to this, the material(s) that may be used to construct the element is not limited to the woven jacquard fabric. The elongated element may be constructed of several types of material and even contain multiple types in one embodiment, all at a user's discretion. The irregular shapes illustrated in the figures are dependent

upon the shape of the article, accessory, and or user's purpose. The elongated element may be adhered or affixed to an article in various ways, thus providing a user with ultimate control of how to fasten the element to a given article.

[0008] Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description. It is to be understood, however, that the detailed description of the various embodiments and specific examples, while indicating preferred and other embodiments of the present invention, are given by way of illustration and not limitation. Many changes and modifications within the scope of the present invention may be made without departing from the spirit thereof, and the invention includes all such modifications.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] By referring to the following more detailed description of the presently preferred exemplary embodiments, the objects and advantages of this invention will be more completely understood and appreciated with the accompanying drawings, of which:

[0010] FIGURE 1 illustrates a top view of the personalization element in accordance with the present invention.

[0011] FIGURE 2 illustrates a top view of the front of the customizable portion of the personalization element.

[0012] FIGURE 3 illustrates a top view of the back of the customizable portion, of personalization element.

[0013] FIGURE 4 illustrates a top view of the front of the base portion of personalization element.

[0014] FIGURE 5 illustrates a top view of the back of the base portion, of the personalization element.

[0015] FIGURE 6 illustrates one embodiment of the present invention without a base portion.

[0016] FIGURE 7 illustrates a top view of the front of one embodiment of the present invention where a base portion may not be required and the personalization element may have multiple sections.

[0017] FIGURE 8 illustrates a top view of the back of one embodiment of the present invention where a base portion may not be required and the personalization element may have multiple sections.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0018] The invention and methods disclosed in this document are described in detail by way of examples and with reference to the figures. Unless otherwise specified, like numbers in the figures indicate references to the same, similar, or corresponding elements throughout the figures. It will be appreciated that modifications to disclosed and described examples, arrangements, configurations, components, elements, apparatuses, methods, materials, etc. can be made and may be desired for a specific application. In this disclosure, any identification of specific shapes, materials, techniques, arrangements, etc. are either related to a specific example presented or are merely a general description of such a shape, material, technique, arrangement, etc. Identifications of specific details or examples are not intended to be, and should not be, construed as mandatory or limiting unless specifically designated as such. Selected examples of apparatuses and methods are hereinafter disclosed and described in detail with reference made to FIGURES.

[0019] Attention is now directed to FIG. 1 of the present invention, which illustrates an embodiment of a personalization element 100 of the present invention. The personalization element 100 includes a customizable portion 11 that has a front face 200 and a back face 300. The personalization element in FIG. 1 also includes a base portion 20 to which the customizable portion 11 is attached. The base portion 20 may serve as the foundation for adherence of the entire customizable portion 11 of the personalization element 100 onto a consumer article such as a shoe.

[0020] The present invention contemplates that the present invention is not limited to any sort of shapes and contemplates a wide variety of different geometric shapes for instance, the shape

illustrated in the drawings in the present invention, circular, oval, square, rectangular, etc. At a user's discretion one may prefer one form shaping over another. In one embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in FIG. 4, there may be a fastening mechanism 401 that covers the front of the base portion 400. The fastening mechanism 401 may be, but is not limited to the loop structure of a hook and loop mechanism. The fastening mechanism 401 may be attached to the base portion 400 by a variety of means such as but not limited to sewing, adhesive connection, mechanical fasteners (e.g. snaps, buckles), temporary bond and the like. The base portion 400 may be shaped by any means known in the art such as laser cutting, manual scissoring, and other methods for obtaining specific geometric, alpha, or random shape. Also, in another embodiment the front of the base portion and the fastening mechanism 401 may be one in the same. The fastening mechanism 401 may also be shaped by any means known in the art such as laser cutting, manual scissoring, and other methods for obtaining specific geometric, alpha, or random shape.

[0021] Attention is directed to FIG. 2, which illustrates the customizable portion 200 in which the customizable portion 200 has both a front 203 and back side 301 (illustrated in FIG. 3) of an irregular shape. The front 203 of the customizable portion 200 may be composed of a customizable material 202. In one embodiment of the present invention, the customizable material 202 is a Woven Jacquard Fabric. The present invention contemplates that the customizable material may be a wide variety of materials and is not limited to any specific type of fabric. For instance, the customizable material may be made of various types of yarns, e.g. natural and synthetic yarns, Cotton, Nylon, Metallic threads, Recycled PET, etc. or a combination thereof. Also, other non-woven materials such as PU, Silicone, TPU, or a combination thereof might also be used in combination with the woven fabric or separately on their own. Leather and leather likes such as suede, and also various animal skin materials or a combination thereof may be used. Preferably, the materials would be subject to passing standard foot wear testing such as Abrasion, Colorfastness, Pull Strength, Flexometer, Auto-Clave as required by the foot wear manufacturer. Size of the present invention could range from Children's through Adult's shoe tongue sizes.

[0022] This customizable material 202 may be laser cut or cold die cut to fit the irregular shape of the customizable portion 10. The front of the customizable portion 200 may also include and has the ability to host customizable embellishments 202, to provide the wearer with the option to customize the front of the customizable portion 200 with different company logos or designs of various textures and colors. In one embodiment of the personalization element 100, the front 203 of the customizable portion 200 may be composed of one or more different materials. For example, for an increased level of resistance to water, the customizable material 202, may be a more rubbery or plastic material. However, in another embodiment, for aesthetics or any other purpose, the customizable material 202, on the front of the customizable portion 200, may consist of half rubber and half woven Jacquard fabric. This allows for the personalization element 100 to become customizable even from a functionality perspective. In a similar manner, the customizable material 202 may be made of one or more colors. The colors may be arranged according to any pattern designed by the user. The material combinations disclosed within this description are not to limit the invention but rather to serve as examples. For instance, the present invention contemplates that in one embodiment, the material 202 is a woven jacquard fabric with a TPU wear resistant coating. The present invention also contemplates that the material 202 and a combination of half Jacquard and half suede materials combined together.

[0023] Attention is redirected to FIG. 2 which displays an example of a customizable embellishment 201 that may be on the customizable material 202, located on the front of the customizable portion 200. The customizable embellishments 201 may be of any geometric, alpha, numeric, or random shape. In the same manner as the customizable material 202 of the customizable portion 200, the customizable embellishments 201 may consist of one or more different materials. Though FIG. 2 displays only one customizable embellishment 201 on the front of the customizable material 202, the customizable material 202 on the front of the customizable portion 200 may host one or more customizable embellishments 201 and is not limited to any particular number of embellishments. Customizable embellishments 201, may be adhered to the customizable material 202, or the front of the customizable portion 200 through many different processes known in the art, for

example, but not limited to, heat transfer, sewing, weaving, and gluing, each method having unique properties that may be utilized depending on a user's need.

[0024] In another embodiment of the personalization element 100, there may be shoe lace holes on the front of the customizable portion 200 should the personalization element be a component of a shoe article. The shoe lace holes of this embodiment serve as a means to stop shoe tongue slippage, as well as a means to secure the shoe lace in the desired pattern. The shoe lace holes may be incorporated as part of the design aesthetics of the customizable portion 200 of the personalization element 100. In the same manner as the customizable material 202 and customizable embellishment 201, the shoe lace holes may consist of one or more different materials or colors.

[0025] In yet another embodiment, the personalization element 100 is a shoe tongue consisting of multiple layers. In this particular embodiment the personalization element 100 may completely replace the original shoe tongue of the article, in this case, the article being a shoe. The personalization element 100 may be permanently fastened to the shoe, or temporarily fastened to the shoe. Both the customizable top portion 200 and the base portion 400 (illustrated in FIG. 4) may consist of additional layers other than the previously mentioned. The additional layers serve as a means to manipulate the characteristics of the customizable portion 200, as well as the base portion. For example, a user may request additional layers beneath the customizable portion 200, thereby creating an additional barrier(s) between the climate/weather and the article. If the article was a shoe tongue for example, the additional layers would protect the foot and base portion from inclement weather. In respect to the base portion 400, illustrated in FIG. 4, a user may request additional layers in order to provide more padding for foot comfort upon impact, especially in the case of an athletic shoe. The disclosed examples provided above are not to limit the use of additional layers within the elongated element, but rather to expand on the capabilities of this particular embodiment of the invention.

[0026] Attention is redirected to FIG 3. of the present invention which displays the back side 300 of the customizable portion 200 having an area and a perimeter. The back 300 of the customizable portion 200 may be composed of a fastening mechanism 301 in one embodiment. In one embodiment, the fastening mechanism 301 covers the entire area of the back side 300 of the

customizable portion 200. The present invention also contemplates that the fastening mechanism 301 may occupy only a portion of the area of the back side 300 of the customizable portion 200 or the fastening mechanism surround the entire or portion of the perimeter of the back side 300 of the customizable portion 200. The fastening mechanism 301 may be shaped to fit irregular shape of the back of the customizable portion 300 shown in FIG 3. It is to be noted that the fastening mechanism is not limited to just the irregular shape presented in FIGURES 1-5. In one embodiment of the personalization element 100, the fastening mechanism 301, may be a hook and loop mechanism. Within this embodiment, pressure may be required for complete fastening of the customizable portion 10, to the base portion 20 illustrated in FIG 1. In another embodiment, the fastening mechanism 301 may be a type of adhesive such as a pressure sensitive adhesive. The adhesive may be removable or permanent based on a user's need.

[0027] Attention is directed to FIG. 4 which illustrates the front 402 of the base portion 400, having both an area and a perimeter. The fastening mechanism 401 of the base portion may be found on the front side of the 402 of the base portion 400 instead of or in addition to the back side 300 of the customizable portion 200 if the fastening mechanism utilized on the back side 300 of the customizable portion 200 is a hook and loop type fastening mechanism. The fastening mechanism 401, if on the base portion 400, may cover the entire area of the front 402 of the base portion 400. This aids to fit the shape of the customizable element 10 if the customizable element 10 is an elongated element such as a shoe tongue. However, the present invention also contemplates that the fastening mechanism 401 may only occupy a portion of the area of the front side 402 of the base portion 400 or may occupy the entire or a portion of the perimeter of the front side 402 of the base portion 400. The fastening mechanism 401 of the base portion 401 may be shaped to fit the irregular shape of the front 402 of the back portion 400. It is to be noted that the shape of the base portion 400 is not limited to the irregular shape presented in the figures presented. Additionally the base portion 400 may be shaped by any means known in the art such as laser cutting, manual scissoring, and other methods for obtaining specific geometric, alpha, or random shape.

[0028] FIG. 5 illustrates the back side 500 of the base portion 400. The back side 500 of the base portion 400 includes a base surface 501 that may be fastened to a consumer article or accessory. Methods of attachment of the back of the base surface 501, to an article or accessory may include, but are not limited to, sewing, gluing or adhering with an adhesive. While the back side 500 of the base surface 501 may be attached to an article or accessory, the underlying properties of the article or accessory may not change. Where the original article or accessory provided certain comforts or molds, the same properties remain prevalent. It is thereby suggested that one may add the base surface 501 located on the back side 500 of the base portion 400 to an article or accessory while maintaining the functional integrity of the original article or accessory. Besides the initial adherence of the base surface 501 to the original article or accessory, no other manipulation of the original shoe is required for the use of the personalization element 100. However in another embodiment, the base portion 400 may contain material properties that may manipulate the functionality of the underlying article or accessory.

[0029] The fastening mechanism 301 of the customizable portion 200 and the base portion 400 fastening mechanism 401 may be shaped identically to align perfectly when placed on top of one another. When the fastening mechanism 301 is placed on the base portion 400 fastening mechanism 401, the assembly of the personalization element 100 becomes complete. However, it is also contemplated that the fastening mechanism 301 and the fastening mechanism 401 do not align and may be positioned unevenly to one another. The personalization element 100 may be dis-assembled at the discretion of the wearer. Various customizable portions 11 may be substituted by the dis-assembly of the fastening mechanism 301 and base portion 401.

[0030] In yet another embodiment of the personalization element 100 there may be RFID compatibility. The personalization element 100 may host RFID technology on the customizable portion 10, and the base portion 20. In one embodiment, the customizable embellishment 201 illustrated in FIG. 2 may be an RFID device. The RFID technology may be used to obtain data such as, but not limited to heart rate, steps, and mileage. This embodiment of the personalization element 100 would serve exceptionally well within running shoes or any athletic shoe.

[0031] Attention is now directed to FIG 6. Where the present invention also contemplates an embodiment in which the personalization element 600 does not require a base portion 20 before it is attached to an article. This embodiment presents a personalization element 600 that may be directly fastened to an article by a user. The customizable portion 602 has both a front 601 and back 604 side. Both the customizable portion 602 and the back surface 604 may host embellishments 603 just as stated in the previous embodiments. The fastening method by which the personalization element 600 is attached to an article may vary. One may fasten the personalization element 600 to an article through methods such as, but not limited to, gluing, sewing, or heat transfer. The personalization element may be removable or permanently adhered to an article at a user's discretion. This embodiment also encompasses the potential to coincide with the previously stated embodiments.

[0032] Attention is now directed to FIG 7. In yet another embodiment, the personalization element 700 may not require a base portion 20. The personalization element 700 has both a front 701 and back 800 sides, see FIG 8 for diagram of the back side. Both the customizable portion 702 of the front face 701 and the back surface 801 of the back side 800 may host embellishments 705 just as stated in the previous embodiments. The customizable portion 702 of the front face 701 may have a first 703 and a second 704 section; whereby the first section 703 may be permanently or temporarily adhered to the article and the second section 704 may be temporarily adhered to the first section 703 by various means of fastening, such as, but not limited to, gluing, sticking, or stitching. The disclosed examples provided above are not to limit the number of sections prevalent on the personalization element, but rather to expand on the capabilities of this particular embodiment of the invention. This embodiment of the current invention may have multiple sections. This embodiment also encompasses the potential to coincide with the previously stated embodiments.

[0033] It will thus be seen according to the present invention highly advantageous method of article or accessory customization. While the invention has been described in connection with what is presently considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiment, it will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that the invention is not to be limited to the disclosed embodiment, and that many modifications and equivalent arrangements may be made thereof within the scope of the

invention, which scope is to be accorded the broadest interpretation of the appended claims so as to encompass all equivalent structures and products.

[0034] The inventors hereby state their intent to rely on the Doctrine of Equivalents to determine and assess the reasonably fair scope of their invention as it pertains to any apparatus, system, method or article not materially departing from but outside the literal scope of the invention as set out in the following claims.

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A personalization element for an article comprising:
a base portion with a front and a back face such that the back side is attachable to the article;
a customizable portion having a front and back side wherein the back face of the customizable portion is attached to the front face of the base portion; and
a fastening mechanism disposed between the front side of the base portion and the back side of the customizable portion to secure the customizable portion to the base portion.
2. The element of claim 1, wherein the front face of geometric, alpha, numeric or random shape created by a user.
3. The element of claim 1, wherein the front of the customizable portion is composed of a material, of any geometric, alpha, numeric or random shape created by a user.
4. The element of claim 1, wherein the front of the customizable portion is composed of a customizable woven Jacquard fabric.
5. The element of claim 1, wherein the front of the customizable portion may have one or more external embellishments for additional personalization.
6. The element of claim 1, where the back of the customizable portion contains a fastening mechanism such as, but not limited to hooks as part of a hook and loop mechanism for fastening the customizable portion to the base portion.
7. The element of claim 1, where the base portion may be of any geometric, alpha, numeric or random shape created by a user.
8. The element of claim 1, where the front of the base portion may contain a fastening mechanism such as, but not limited to loops as part of a hook and loop mechanism for fastening to the back of the customizable portion.

9. A method for constructing a personalization element having a base portion and a customizable portion, both having front and back faces, for a shoe comprising the steps of;
- placing the back face of the base portion unto a shoe tongue, so that the back face of the base portion is in contact with the shoe tongue;
- adhering the back face of a base portion to the shoe tongue by stitching, gluing, or other fastening means;
- affixing the back face of the customizable portion unto the front of the base portion, so that the back of the customizable portion rests on the front of the base portion.
10. The method as in claim 9, further comprising of the application of ample pressure to the top of the customizable portion for durable adhesion to the base portion, if desired.
11. The method of claim 9 wherein, in one embodiment the assembly of the personalization element is complete upon adherence of the base portion to the shoe tongue.
12. The method as in claim 9, wherein the mechanism for adhesion of the base portion to the shoe tongue may not be permanent.
13. The element of claim 9, whereby the affixing between the customizable portion and the base portion is separated upon a user's discretion.
14. The element of claim 1, wherein the article is an apparel item or accessory.
15. A customizable element for an article comprising:
- a base portion having a front and back face;
- the front face having a perimeter and a first and second section, and the back face having a perimeter and a first and second section wherein the perimeter of the front face and the back face are different from one another; and
- wherein a first section of the front face is permanently adhered to a first section of the base portion; and
- the second section of the front face is customizable that is removable adhered to the second section of the back face of the base portion.

16. The element of claim 15, wherein the article may be a shoe, whereby the customizable element may serve as a shoe tongue.
17. The element of claim 15, wherein the customizable, removable portion has a perimeter different from the front face and the base portion.
18. The element of claim 15, wherein the customizable, removable portion may host multiple customizable embellishments i.e. team crests, symbols, badges, logos, text, etc.
19. The element of claim 15, wherein the article may be a shoe tongue, whereby the customizable element serves as an attachment to the shoe tongue.
20. The element of claim 15, wherein the customizable portion may be made of a different material than the front and back portion.

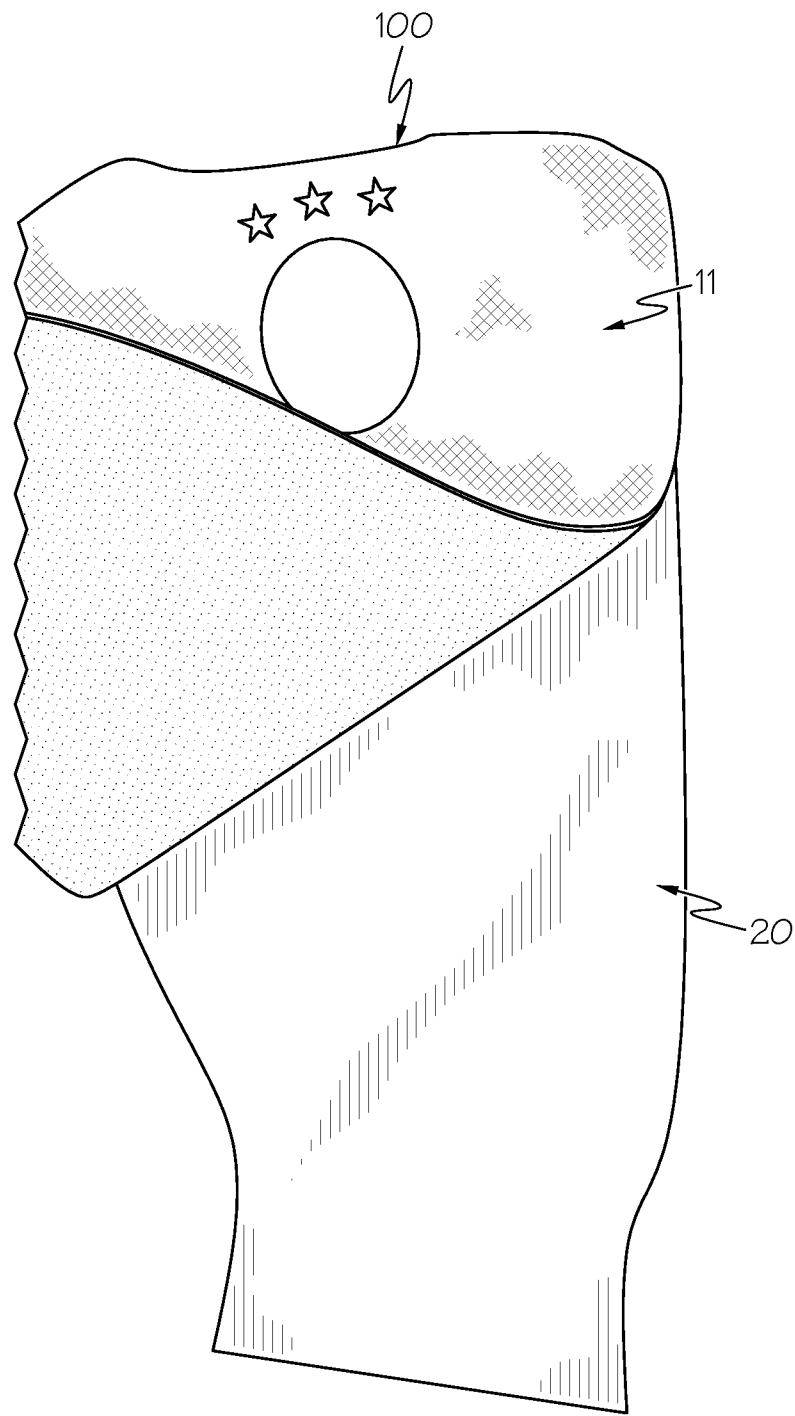


FIG. 1

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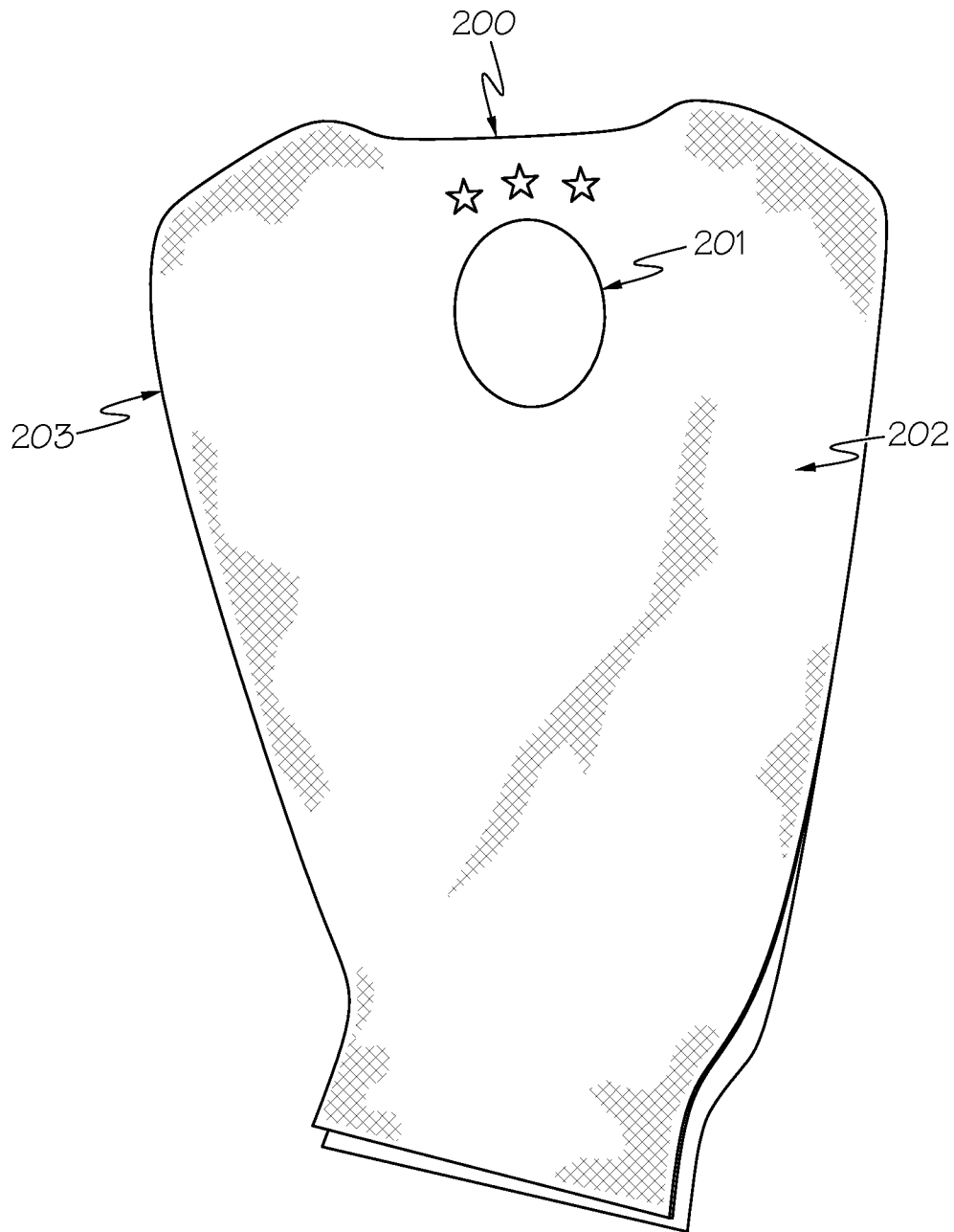


FIG. 2

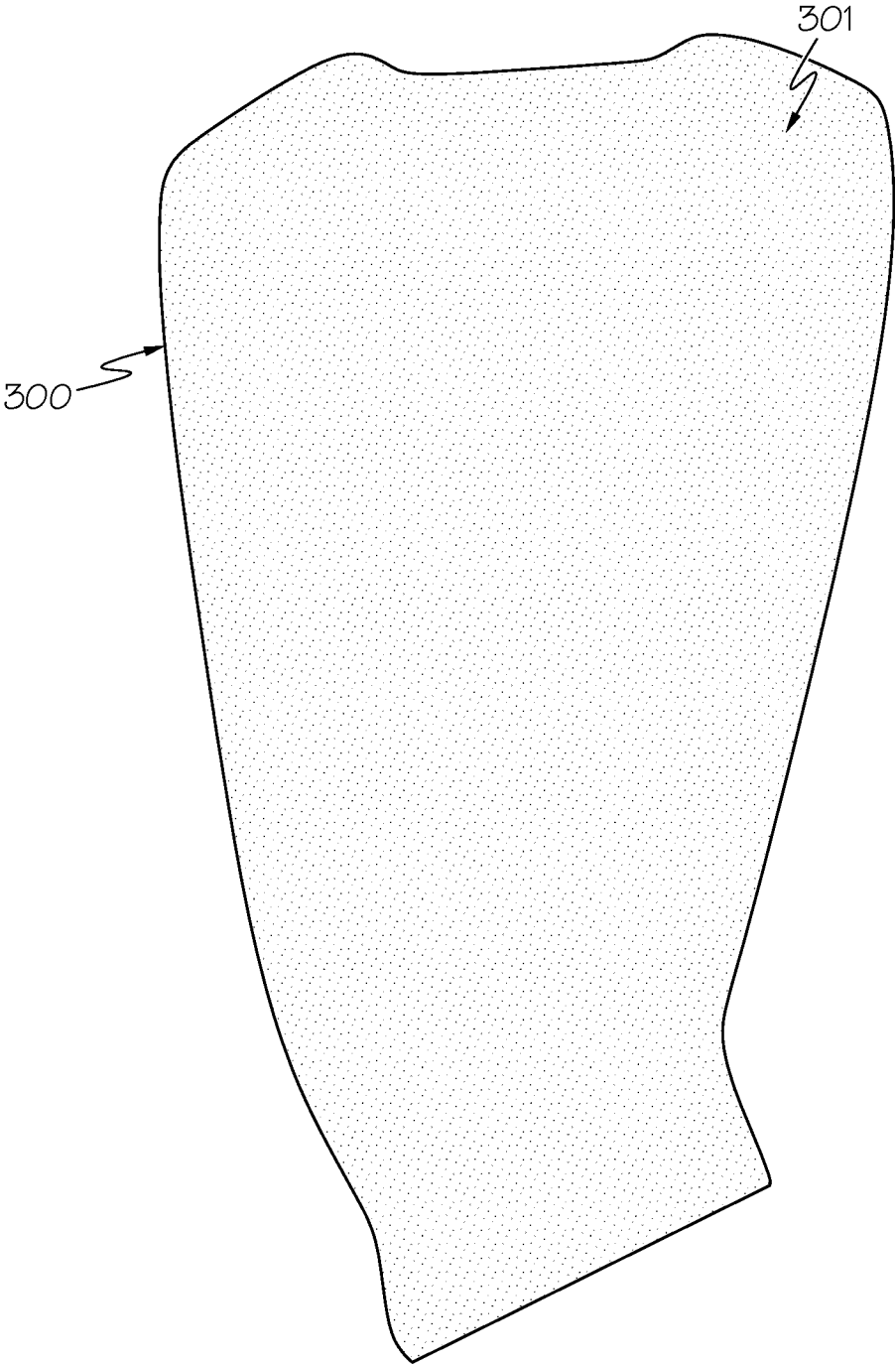


FIG. 3

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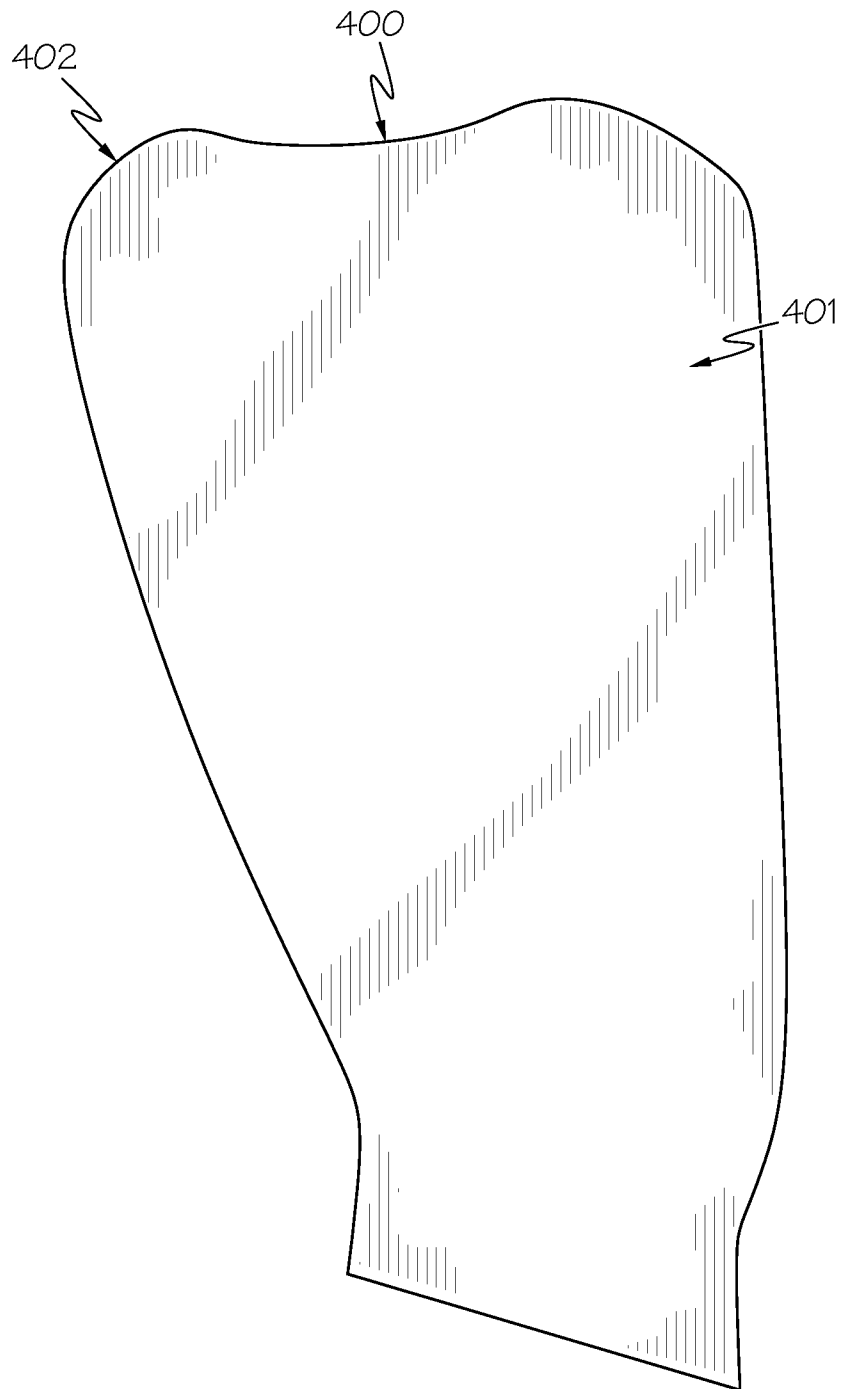


FIG. 4

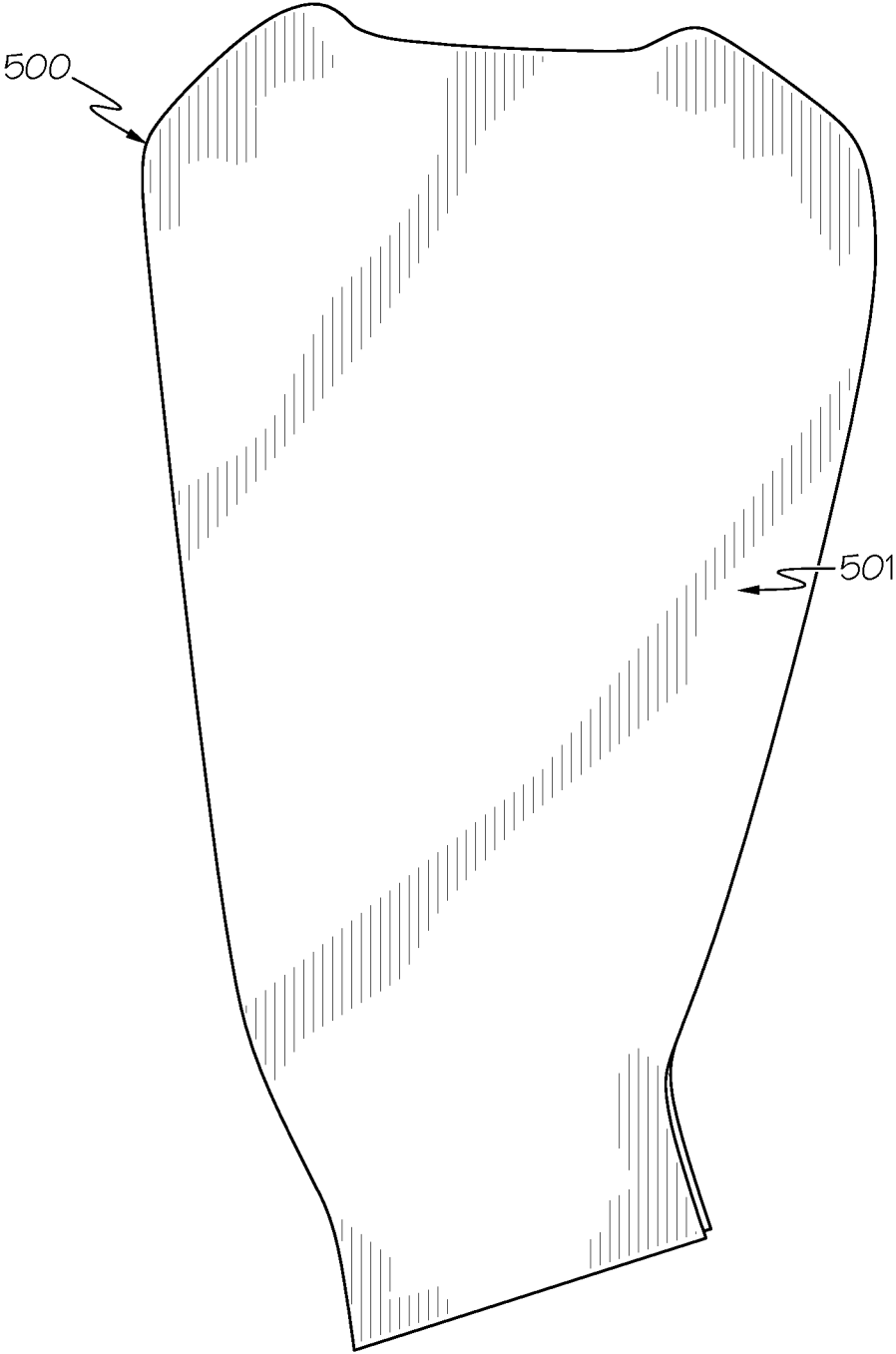


FIG. 5

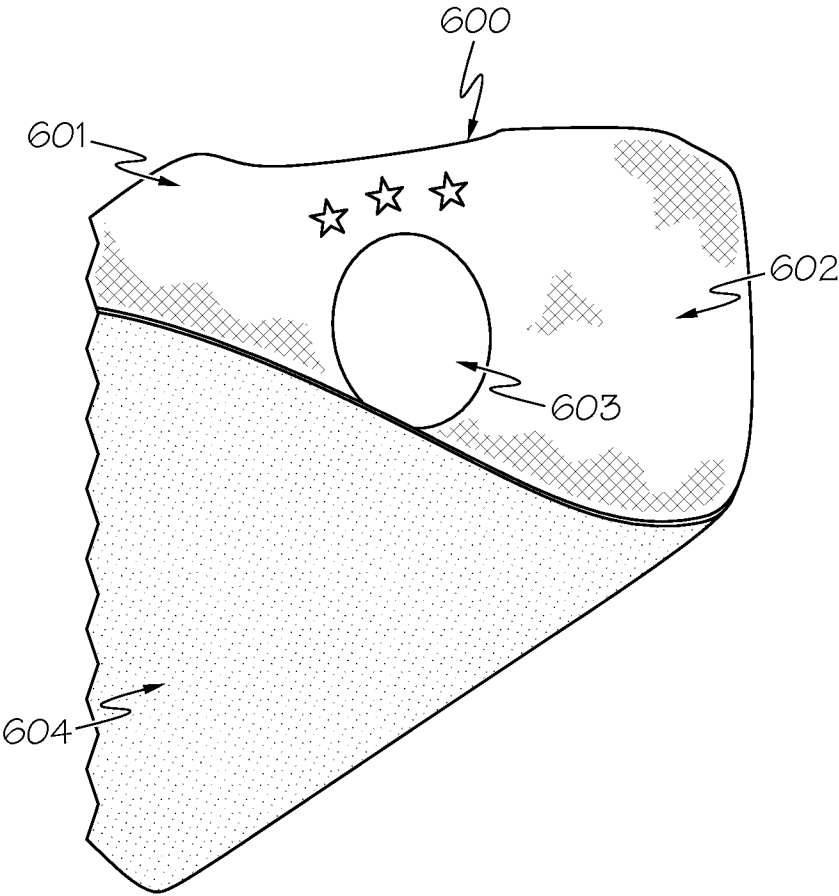


FIG. 6

7/8

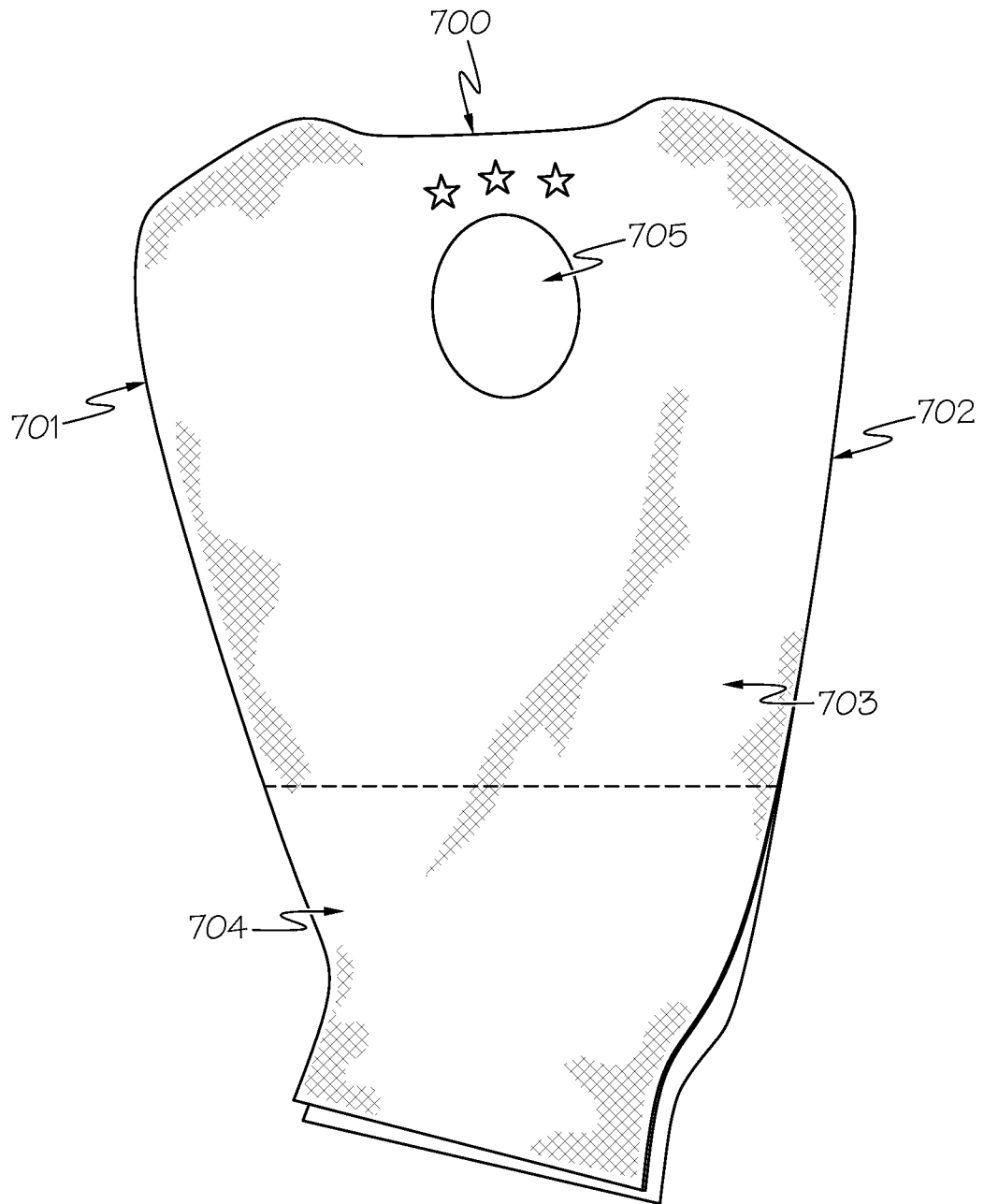


FIG. 7

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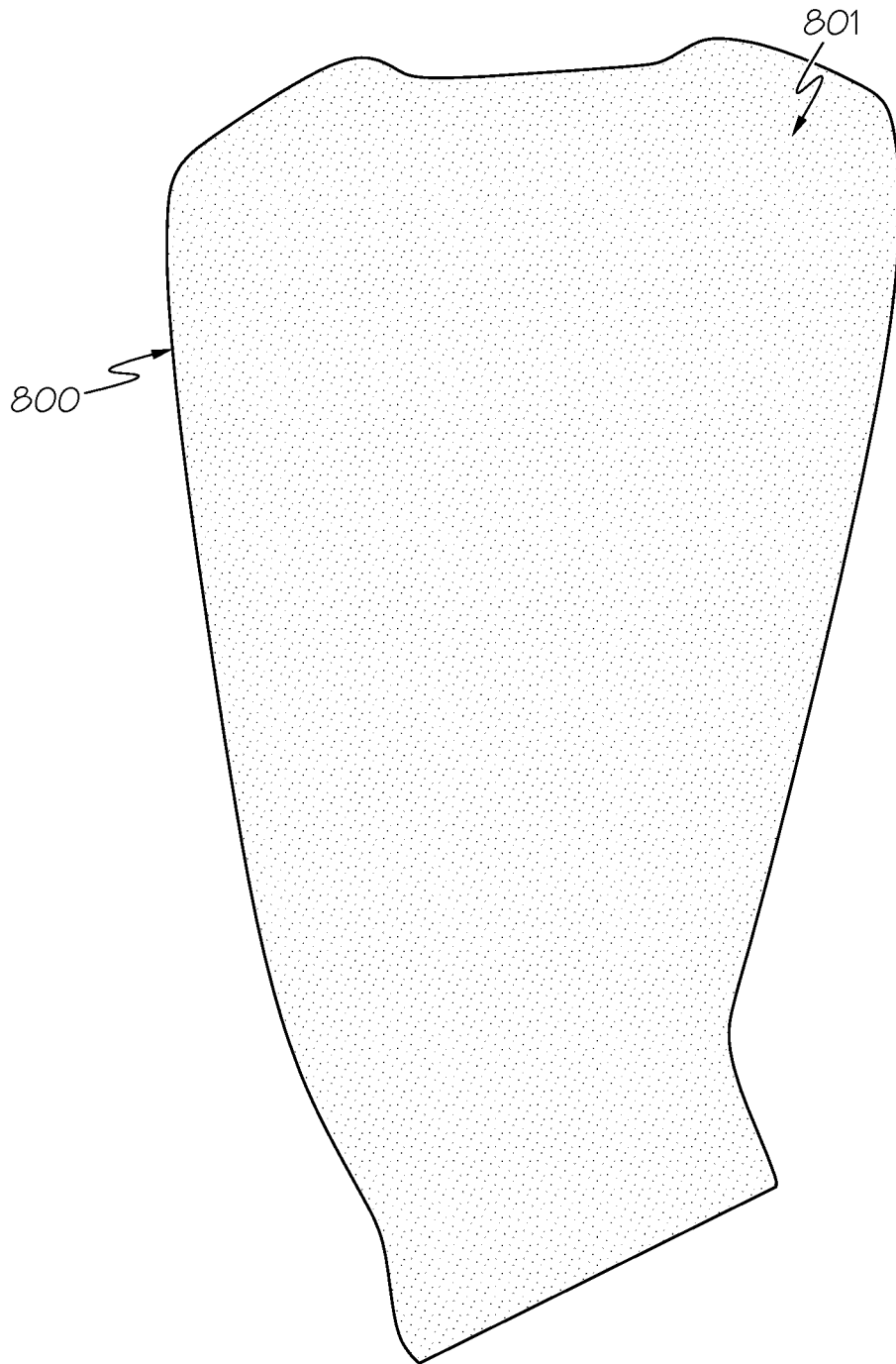


FIG. 8

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2017/030831

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. A43B3/00 A43B1/00 A43B23/26
ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
A43B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 2014/031091 A1 (IN EDEN PROPERTIES LLC COMPANY [US]; KATZ MARCELLA MIRIAM [US]) 27 February 2014 (2014-02-27)	1-3,5-8, 10-14
Y	paragraph [0055]; figures	4
X	US 5 979 085 A (ROSS MICHAEL E [US] ET AL) 9 November 1999 (1999-11-09)	1-3,5-14
Y	figures	4
X	US 4 955 150 A (FAGAN NANCY L [US]) 11 September 1990 (1990-09-11)	1,9
X	US 5 459 947 A (LASHER CHARLES M [US]) 24 October 1995 (1995-10-24)	15-20
	figures	
	----- -/-	



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2017/030831

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