HANDBAG INSERT ASSEMBLY AND METHOD

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ABSTRACT

A handbag insert assembly and method for using is disclosed. The insert is constructed from lightweight durable water resistant material that is transparent enough to allow a user to easily view stored within without have to access the interior of the insert. The assembly is constructed to generally retain its shape and resist bulging when filled. Interior storage pockets are provided and located adjacent to transparent exterior panels to allow easy viewing of items through transparent exterior panels. Handles may be utilized to assist removal of the assembly from a handbag. Radio signal blocking materials may be utilized in the construction of panels and interior pockets to provide security from the unwanted transfer of important data and information from stored items containing RFID technology. Lighting may be provided to allow illumination of stored items.
FIELD OF INVENTION

Handbags can be important fashion accessories. A variety of handbags are available to complement any fashion idea, purpose or suit any occasion. As a result, it is common for many people to maintain numerous handbags in their wardrobe. While owning many handbags can be enjoyable and rewarding, the problems associated with using more than one handbag on a regular basis can be numerous and otherwise prevent users from utilizing the many handbags they own.

One common problem associated with using many different handbags is in having to constantly transfer items from one bag to another. While different handbags are often used for different purposes and to accommodate different items, most users carry a very similar set of more or less “essential” items with them at all times. These items usually include identification materials (such as a driver’s license or visa), transactional items (such as money, credit cards, and check books) and personal care items (such as medications, brushes or combs, and cosmetics). The seemingly simple task of moving these items from bag to bag can be time consuming and particularly onerous for persons regularly utilizing a variety of handbags of different sizes for different styles and purposes.

Another problem associated with constantly transferring items from bag to bag is that the user is often focused on other concerns (such as style or occasion) and simply forgets to transfer a particular important item or doesn’t have time to search for and find a particular item to transfer. It is easy for the user to forget to transfer an item when the user is focused on another item. A person who is going to a business meeting, for example, may be focused on the appropriateness of the handbag and whether the bag will accommodate business materials in addition to the essential items. It is common for persons who are persons preparing for business meetings or social occasions to run out of time and Time issues can also result in a user failing to transfer a particular item from one bag to another because there often isn’t enough time to think about or locate all the essential items that might be needed when the transfer is made. And a person who is quickly transferring items from one bag to another may simply not see an item in one bag that would otherwise be visible.

Another problem associated with using a variety of handbags is accounting for the items contained within the bag once they have been transferred. Generally, persons want to feel secure that they have certain items with them before they leave the house. This is particularly true for essential items such as identification materials, credit cards and keys. But it can be difficult to account for items in a handbag containing other items. Certain items may shift in the bag or otherwise become easily hidden from view. Since organizational elements (such as dividers and pockets) often different from bag to bag, the user may simply not remember where a particular item has been stored. The seemingly simple task of assuring oneself that a particular item is indeed in the bag can be frustrating. And it is not uncommon for users to search through the entire contents of a bag even resort, in frustration, to emptying the entire contents of a bag onto a table or chair to account for a particular item. It may be particularly problematic to account for smaller sized items or items generally stored in a wallet or pouch. The user may need to remove, open and search through a wallet to make sure she has a driver’s license or credit card before leaving the house. Sometimes, finding an item that the user knows is in the bag can be difficult if there is not enough light to visually identify the item in the bag.

There are other issues which prevent users from utilizing many of the handbags in their wardrobe. Many handbags are expensive and stylish but lack practicality. They may be made of beautiful materials that easily lose shape when loaded with many items. The handbag materials may be easily damaged if liquids (such as lotions or cosmetics) are spilled inside the bag. They may be easily damaged by hard or rough materials (such as keys or brushes) are carried loose inside the bag. Many handbags, particularly women’s high fashion handbags are too open or do not have closures which adequately prevent items (particularly smaller items) from falling out too easily. Some are too inviting to theft in that they are open enough to allow a person to remove items undetected. Because of these issues, users are limited on what they can carry in these bags. As a result, they do not utilize some handbags as much as they would like.

Most handbags lack modern security features. Technology advances have created new risks that handbag users must account for. For example, many credit cards and passports now have embedded Radio Frequency Identification Technology (RFID) in the form of tags or chips which enable the easy transfer of important information using radio frequency readers at store cash registers, security checkpoints and other venues. Unfortunately, the transfer of such information can occur through materials used in most handbags (such as cloth, vinyl, plastic or leather) without detection. And this creates opportunities for thieves to steal valuable information and data from persons carrying readable items in their handbags. Such data has been stolen from persons standing on escalators, in a checkout lane, an elevator and/or anywhere where people may congregate.

RFID technology creates additional privacy concerns. In addition to the surreptitious collection of information, RFIDs can enable tracking of an individual’s movements, profiling of individuals, and aggregation of data that may be used to reveal a great deal of additional personal information such as medical prescription or personal health histories that could have an impact on the availability of insurance or employment. Individuals carrying items having embedded tags or chips are susceptible to a variety of privacy risks. Thus, it would be helpful to provide the ability to block or control the ability of RFID readers when desired.

Prior art approaches to alleviating the problems and issues discussed above have been unsuccessful. One prior art approach utilizes interchangeable lining and outer shell systems to allow variety of style and function without the need to continuously transfer items from one handbag to another. Examples of such systems are: 1) U.S. Pat. No. 5,207,254 describing a handbag assembly with an outer envelope sus-
pended from a strap and a lining pouch which sits in and fastens to the outer envelope; 2) U.S. Pat. No. 6,029,723 describes a interchangeable purse assembly having a housing with a plurality of fasteners on the exterior surface to connect with a variety of covers that snap-fit to the housing. The assembly described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,179,025 is also a pouch with a variety of attachable covers. The handbag of U.S. Pat. No. 6,186,201 is also an inner bag with an attachable outer shell. The assembly of U.S. Pat. No. 6,422,278 is a pair of nested handbags which may be secured to a plurality of outer handbags having different colors and styles. The handbag with frame and insert of U.S. Pat. No. 6,971,424 B1, the purse with interchangeable decorative liners of US 2008/0230157 A1, and the interchangeable modular assembly of US 2010/0043930 are all essentially a frame outer bag with inner liner.

[0011] One obvious drawback of the above listed prior art approach is that it merely provides an alternative handbag solution and do not utilize the numerous handbags a person might already have in her wardrobe. While these prior art systems provide added versatility and, in a limited way, alleviate the need for items to be transferred from one bag to another, this is only true if one is utilizing covers or frames that are part of the system. In many instances, the transfer of covers and other interchangeable elements would appear difficult without emptying and replacing the items in the bag component of the system. No additional features are provided which might alleviate other practical issues associated with wear and tear, damages from spills, items falling out the bag or the modern security issues discussed above.

[0012] Another prior art approach involves the use of a removable interior lining that may be utilized with variety of handbags. US 2006/0065110 A1 describes a removable interior lining which may be expanded or contracted to fit various outer handbag shells. This solution only alleviates the problems associated with having to switch items from one bag to another. It does not provide any specific approach to assist the use in accounting for easily locating items once in the bag insert. And the expandability of the lining creates the added problem of extra material taking up space in smaller handbags. There are no added security features. While the specification describes the possibility of utilizing clear plastic to increase the visibility of the items contained in the lining, the lining is difficult to remove and there are no additional features which might enable a user to account for specific essential items.

[0013] The current retail market also provides a number of simple clear plastic inserts that may be utilized with handbags to alleviate the problem associated with switching items from one bag to another. Some liners are sold in various sizes for particular purposes such as for travel accessories or cosmetic kits (see those sold on www.ultra.com). Some are specifically marketed as handbag inserts (for example, see those inserts sold on www.borneasked.com). Such bags are generally unstructured clear plastic pouches with few organizational elements designed to be carried separately or thrown into a much larger bag. They do not provide features which would allow credit cards or other information to be easily visible from the outside of the insert and have no modern security features.

[0014] In summary, the prior art solutions are limited in their ability to resolve most or all of the issues outlined above, namely: 1) they are either limited for use with the outer covers and/or frames designed specifically to be part of the assembly and/or are difficult to use with a variety of handbags; 2) their use is time consuming in that users must swap out new covers or frames or, if they are used with a handbag that is not part of the prior art system, transfer items to and from other handbags; 3) they do not provide an easy way to account for or locate items specific important items in the pouch or insert; and 4) they do not provide any modern security features.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0015] It is desirable to have a versatile handbag assembly which takes into consideration and overcomes the limitations of the prior art. The assembly described is a handbag insert assembly made of lightweight durable and water resistant material that is transparent enough to allow the user to easily view some or all of the contents stored within. The assembly is of a size and shape which allows easy insertion and removal from most handbags without damaging the interior of the handbag after continued use. The insert material retains shape and resists bulging. Handles, such as retractable straps, may be included along one or more sides of the insert to assist the user in removing the insert from the handbag. Interior storage pockets specifically sized for credit cards and identification materials and located immediately adjacent to transparent panels provide organization while allowing the user to view them easily without having to access the interior of the insert. Temporary attachment means, such as key rings and other organizational amenities, may be provided to allow the user to secure and account for important items. Radio frequency blocking materials may be utilized on those portions of the insert adjacent to where credit cards and identification materials containing data chips and/or RFID tags may be stored thus increasing security by preventing the unwanted transfer of data and other information through the insert and handbag materials. Security features such as zippers and other temporary closures at access openings insure that items are safe but easily accessible. A method for using the assembly is also described.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] FIG. 1 is a front side perspective view of a handbag insert assembly embodying the principles of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 2 is a back side perspective view of a handbag insert assembly embodying the principles of the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 3 is a front side perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a handbag insert assembly embodying the principles of the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 4 is a front side perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a handbag insert assembly embodying the principles of the present invention.

[0020] FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram showing a method of a user using a handbag insert assembly embodying the principles of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0021] The drawings are for purposes of illustrating several embodiments of a handbag insert assembly embodying the principles of the present invention and are not for purposes of
limiting the same. Like reference characters indicate corresponding elements throughout the several views.

[0022] FIG. 1 is a front side perspective view of an embodiment of a handbag insert assembly 10. The embodiment of FIG. 1 consists of a plurality of panels joined by seams. There is a front panel 12, back panel 14, left side panel 16, right side panel 18, bottom panel 20 and a top panel 22 joined together at the seams 24. A piece of piping or other material may be sewn over the seams to make a smoother seam and prevent chaffing or damaging the interior of the handbag when the insert is inserted and removed from an inside storage cavity of a handbag.

[0023] The various panels are made of clear plastic or similarly tough, water resistant, transparent materials typically used for the construction of transparent handbags. The materials may be sewn, glued, heat sealed or otherwise joined together the seams. The transparent material allows the user to easily view the contents of the insert from the outside without having to access the interior of the insert. Examples of materials typically used for construction of transparent handbags may be viewed at www.Clear-Handbags.com.

[0024] The structure of the handbag insert assembly 10 will depend, in part, on the size and shape of the handbag with which the insert will be used. The size and shape of the insert must allow easy insertion and removed from the interior storage cavity of a handbag without damaging the interior handbag materials. It is preferable, though not necessary for purposes of the invention, for the insert to be a size and shape that will not easily slip out of a handbag during normal use.

[0025] Each insert panel has an inside surface and an outside surface. Adjacent panels are joined together by conventional methods known in the industry (such as sewing or gluing or heat sealing) forming a seam between adjacent panels. Alternative embodiments may incorporate other materials (such as rubber, silicone or leather) between panels to allow greater strength and flexibility at the seams. Water resistant, washable panel materials are preferred.

[0026] As previously noted, the panels should be made of materials that are clear enough to allow the user to look through the panels and view at least some of the contents of the insert from the outside without having to access the interior of the insert. FIG. 1 shows an insert made entirely of transparent panels. This approach is preferable to maximize the ability of the user to view the interior contents of the insert. However, some portion of the panels may be made of non-transparent materials as long as the viewing of important interior contents is not unduly impaired. For example, an alternative embodiment might utilize non-transparent materials for end or bottom panels but have transparent side and top panels. Or, transparent panel material may utilized only at locations immediately adjacent to interior pockets to allow items contained in those pockets to be easily viewed but otherwise utilize non-transparent materials (such as cloth, leather, dark colored plastic or vinyl and the like) for other portions of the various panels. The panels may utilize a variety of tints, painted indicia or other decorative elements as long as some portion of the panels is transparent and allow for easy viewing of interior contents.

[0027] The insert has one or more access openings 26. Such openings may incorporate a temporary closure mechanism 28 such as a zipper, snaps, hook and loop closures or other temporary closures known in the industry to provide security and prevent contents from falling out when the opening is closed. The embodiment shown in FIG. 1 has a single access opening at or near the seam of the top panel and incorporates a zipper type closure mechanism. In a preferred embodiment, the access opening and accompanying closure mechanism will be located at or near the top portion of the insert to allow the user to easily access the interior contents of the insert without having to remove the insert from the handbag. However, alternative embodiments might have access openings and accompanying closure mechanisms at different locations on the insert.

[0028] The insert assembly contains interior storage pockets 30 for storing important items such as credit cards, identification materials (such as driver’s license and passport), check books and keys. These storage pockets are positioned to allow these items to be viewed by the user through transparent portions of the panel walls. Referring again to FIG. 1, the storage pockets 30 are positioned immediately adjacent to the inside surface of the front panel 12 and the pockets are specifically sized to hold identification cards, credit cards and like sized items. These storage pockets may be constructed by joining pocket material to the inside surface of a transparent portion of a panel. Thus the item stored in the storage pockets are easily viewed through the transparent panel from outside the insert. In a preferred embodiment, the material used to attach to the inside surface of the panel to fashion the pocket is also made of a transparent material so not to impair the user’s ability to view the contents of a storage pocket from the outside when nothing is stored in the pocket. Assuming, however, that credit cards and other opaque items will be stored in the storage pocket, such materials may be non-transparent without impairing visibility under normal usage.

[0029] Alternative embodiments of the insert may incorporate materials which prevent the transfer of radio signals (i.e. RFID technology) used to transfer information and data from RFID tags or chips embedded in items stored by the user in the insert. Depending on the scope and placement of these RFID block materials, radio signals may be blocked from reaching all of the some of the contents stored in the insert. The insert may, for example, be constructed with panels made entirely of signal blocking materials to secure all stored items. Alternatively, only portions of the insert (such as those materials used to construct the storage pockets) may be constructed using signal blocking materials.

[0030] While there are various examples of wallets and purses incorporating RFID signal blocking material available on the market (for example, wallets made of duct tape or metal lined leather or vinyl) none of these prior art examples block radio signals while at the same time allow for the easy viewing of items containing RFID technology from the outside.

[0031] Radio signals used in RFID technology may be effectively blocked by non-transparent metal lined materials such as cloth, leather or vinyl lined with aluminum tape of a thickness approximating 27 microns. This is the most common material used in the prior art to block radio signals. However, transparent materials, such as water, may also be utilized to effectively block radio signals. For example, insert panels constructed of two sheets of clear plastic surrounding at least 1 mm of salt water solution may be used to effectively block the signals from reaching the contents of an insert. By constructing insert panels in this manner, all the contents of the insert may be securely shielded while maintain the visibility of content from the outside. But the user may only need
to secure credit cards and other items carried in the storage pockets. And an alternative embodiment of an insert may incorporate interior pockets made of non-transparent blocking materials while utilizing transparent blocking materials at the panels immediately adjacent to the pockets. This material will effectively block the transfer of radio signals through the pocket material. Further, an alternative embodiment might utilize transparent panel materials made of non-signal blocking material but use outer flaps made of non-transparent RFID blocking material (foil-lined leather for example) to cover those portions of the panel immediately adjacent to storage pockets or other locations where items containing RFID technology are likely to be stored in the insert. Such flap may or may not be designed to be removable. However, it must allow the user to easily open the flap to provide easy viewing of the items in the pockets when desired.

FIG. 2 is a back side perspective view of an embodiment of the handbag insert assembly 10 depicted in FIG. 1. FIG. 2 shows the back panel 14 having an pocket 26 positioned immediately adjacent to the d to the inside surface of the back panel 14 to allow the user to easily view the item place therein from the outside without accessing the interior of the insert. In this embodiment, the pocket depicted in FIG. 2 is specifically sized to hold a checkbook, passport or like-sized item.

FIGS. 1 and 2 show the access opening 26 with accompanying temporary closure mechanism 28 (in this case a zipper) located just below the seam between top and side panels. In this case the zipper opening extends approximately three quarters of the way around the circumference of the top panel. However, access openings may be smaller or larger as long as they provide enough room to store and access items in the insert. Although typical closure mechanisms such as snaps, hook and loop, press-lock or other known methods may be used instead of zippers, closure mechanisms may also be eliminated on alternative embodiments by providing open folds or seams to allow users to easily insert or remove items as long as such open folds or seams do not allow the items inside the insert to easily fall out of the insert during normal use.

FIG. 3 is a front side perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a handbag insert assembly 10. As shown, the top panel 22 has a handle 32, in this case a retractable strap, attached to the outer surface to assist the user in pulling the insert from the handbag. Other known methods (such as but not limited to the use of chains, cords, loops or non-retractable straps) may be alternatively used as handles and located on other exterior portions (not just the top) of the insert. However, it is preferable that such alternative methods be used on or near the top panel so that they do not interfere with the insertion or removal of the insert from the handbag where the size and shape of the insert is closely fitted to the interior cavity of the handbag to prevent catching an insure that the insert can be easily inserted in and removed from the handbag storage cavity as well as to prevent damage to the handbag materials during normal use.

FIG. 4 is a front side perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a handbag insert assembly 10. FIG. 4 shows a temporary attachment mechanism (in this case a strap for attaching a key ring) attached to the outer surface of the right side panel 18. The temporary attachment mechanism may be any attachment mechanism known in the art for attaching an object to the interior of an insert or handbag. For example, alternative attachment mechanisms might include a hook and loop system, a clasp, a hook with closeable opening and the like. In this embodiment, the key ring is placed in the upper interior portion of the handbag insert to allow easy viewing through the panel material from the outside without being obscured by other items contained within the insert. Alternatively, interior storage pockets may be sized to fit keys, coins or other similarly sized items.

Alternative embodiments of the handbag insert described above may include lighting such as flexible fiber optic strands located at or around the interior pockets of the insert to allow easy viewing of the items stored in the insert from the outside without the user having to access the interior of the insert. A power source, such as a battery, and a switch accessible from the exterior of the insert may be used to enable the lighting source when desired.

FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram showing a person inserting or removing the handbag insert assembly similar to that depicted in FIG. 1 through FIG. 4 above. In this case, the embodiment of the handbag insert is sized to allow easy insertion and removal of the insert from the handbag. The items stored within the handbag include credit cards and a driver's license placed in pockets positioned immediately adjacent to the front insert panel and clearly visible from the outside. A key ring is positioned in the interior upper side portion of the insert allowing them to be easily viewed by the user from the outside without having to access the interior of the handbag. The positioning of the keys also allows easy removal when desired.

The manner for using the handbag insert assembly described above involves storing items in the interior of the insert, including storing special items in the provided interior storage pockets if desired, and inserting the insert assembly into the interior storage cavity of a handbag. The contents of the insert are easily transferred from handbag to handbag by simply removing the insert from one handbag and inserting it into another. The user may easily identify items contained in the insert by viewing them from the outside without having to access the interior of the insert. Important items such as credit cards, identification materials, check books which might otherwise be hidden in a wallet may be easily accounted for by the user simply by storing those items in the interior storage pockets and viewing them from outside. When the user wants to retrieve and item, she easily identify the location of the desired item, open the access opening, and remove the item. Alternative embodiments of the insert provide for modern security such as RFID blocking materials which allow the user to secure credit cards, identification materials and other items containing RFID technology in the interior cavity of the insert or in the interior storage pockets without compromising her ability to view stored items from outside. Alternative embodiments of the insert containing lighting (such as but not limited to fiber optic filaments attached to the interior surface of the insert panels or woven into seams and enabled by batter power or other typically utilized power source) the user may turn on the light to readily find desired items.

Accordingly, the reader will appreciate that the various embodiments of the insert assembly described above may be used to provide an easy way for persons to utilize multiple handbags while easily transferring items from handbag to handbag, easily accounting for items stored, and easily storing and retrieving stored items. Furthermore, the described insert assembly is superior to any comparable assembly found in the prior art in that:
1) It may be fitted to insert neatly into a provide support to a handbag without compromising the shape and utility of the handbag.

2) It provides the user the ability to easily account for items stored in interior pockets without the user having to access the interior of the insert to move items or open a wallet;

3) It provides for modern security features without compromising performance;

4) It may be used in combination with lighting and other known methods for assisting identification of items without searching through the insert; and

5) It is by far easier to use and provides more utility than the prior art.

Although the description of the above contains many specificities, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the embodiments but as merely providing illustrations of some of the several embodiments. For example, the insert assembly may have other shapes, such as circular, oval, trapezoidal, triangular, etc.; there may be one or more panels used in construction; a variety of openings and accompanying temporary closure mechanisms may be utilized to access the interior to the insert; a variety of handles may be used in a variety of locations; there are numerous ways to enable RDIF blocking while maintaining visibility of items store in the insert from outside without accessing the interior of the insert etc. Thus, the scope of the embodiments should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the examples given.

1. A handbag insert assembly comprising:
   (a) a carrying bag insert having one or more panels, said panels forming a storage compartment, said storage compartment having an inner surface, an outer surface, and access opening;
   (b) wherein said insert may be fitted to the approximate size and shape of the interior storage compartment of a handbag;
   (c) wherein at least some portion of said one or more panels is made of a transparent material;
   (d) wherein said insert may be easily removed from said handbag and transferred to another handbag;
   (e) wherein personal items may be easily stored in and removed from the interior of said insert; and
   (f) wherein interior storage pockets provided immediately adjacent to the inner surface of the one or more panels allows easy viewing of items contained the pockets from the outside without a user having to access the interior of said insert.

2. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said opening in said insert has a temporary closure mechanism positioned to allow a user to easily access the interior of said insert to store and remove personal items and easily close said opening while the insert is positioned within the outer carrying bag.

3. The assembly of claim 1 wherein the inner surface of said main compartment contains one or more temporary attachment mechanisms for temporarily attaching keys and other items to said inner surface of said main compartment.

4. The assembly of claim 1 wherein the outer surface of said insert has one or more handles to aid the user in easily removing said insert from an outer carrying bag.

5. The assembly of claim 4 wherein the handle is a retractable handle located on or near the top of the insert.

6. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said insert has one or more interior lighting devices capable of lighting at least some portion of the main compartment.

7. The assembly of claim 6 wherein said one or more interior lighting devices includes fiber optic materials.

8. The assembly of claim 7 wherein said one or more interior lighting devices is positioned to illuminate items stored in said pockets and/or attached to said temporary attachment mechanisms.

9. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said interior storage pockets are designed specifically to hold credit cards and identification materials.

10. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said interior storage pockets are designed specifically to hold cosmetics.

11. The assembly of claim 1 wherein said interior storage pockets are designed specifically to hold a checkbook.

12. The assembly of claim 1 wherein materials for blocking radio signals are incorporated into panels to prevent the transfer of RDIF technology signals to and from items stored in the insert.

13. The assembly of claim 1 wherein materials for blocking radio signals are incorporated into the interior storage pocket materials prevent the transfer of RDIF technology signals to and from items stored in the interior storage pockets.

14. A method for using the assembly of claim 1 comprising the following steps:
   a. Inserting personal identification items in interior storage pockets such that the personal identification items can be easily viewed through the transparent panels of the insert;
   b. placing the insert in a handbag; and
   c. removing the insert from the handbag and placing it in another handbag.