



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:
13.06.2007 Bulletin 2007/24

(51) Int Cl.:
A43B 23/24 (2006.01) A43B 3/24 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **06025437.2**

(22) Date of filing: **08.12.2006**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC NL PL PT RO SE SI SK TR
Designated Extension States:
AL BA HR MK YU

- Huban, Eric G.
90403 Nürnberg (DE)
- Hopwood, Adam Robertson
90429 Nürnberg (DE)
- Knauer, Susanne
90402 Nürnberg (DE)
- Rabus, Daniel
90419 Nürnberg (DE)

(30) Priority: **09.12.2005 DE 102005058927**

(71) Applicant: **adidas International Marketing B.V.**
1062 KR Amsterdam (NL)

(74) Representative: **Wegner, Hans**
Patent- und Rechtsanwälte
Bardehle - Pagenberg - Dost
Altenburg - Geissler
Postfach 86 06 20
81633 München (DE)

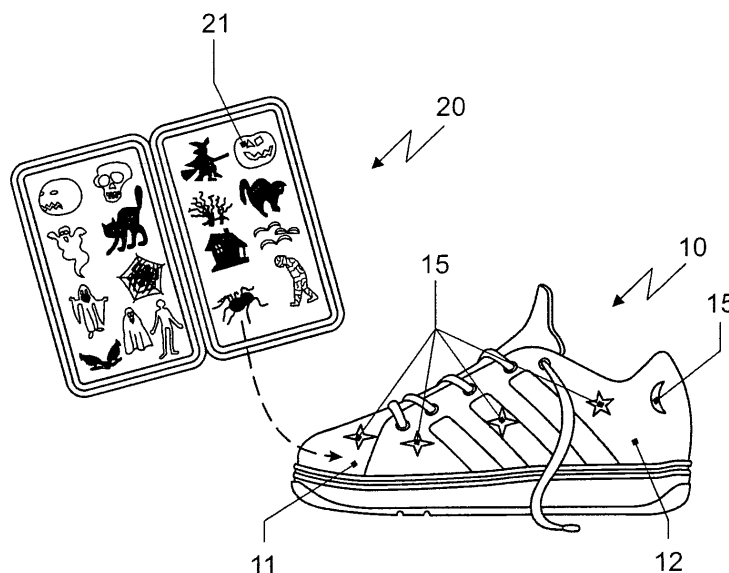
(72) Inventors:
• **Brady, Peter Dennis**
91074 Herzogenaurach (DE)
• **Cardoso, Catarina**
90489 Nürnberg (DE)

(54) **Customizable concept for kids footwear**

(57) The present invention concerns a system for individualizing a shoe (10), comprising a shoe (10) with a first surface region (11, 12) having at least one first design element (15). The system further comprises at least one second design element (21), wherein the second design

element (21) has a contact surface and wherein the contact surface and / or the surface region (11, 12) are provided such that the second design element (21) can be rubbed onto an arbitrary location on the surface region (11, 12) of the shoe (10).

Fig. 1



Description

1. Technical field

[0001] The present invention relates to a system for individualizing a shoe, in particular kids' shoes.

2. The prior art

[0002] Shoes are nowadays mass products, wherein identical models are produced in high numbers for reducing the manufacturing costs. Although there is a great variety of models on the market, selecting a shoe with respect to its outer appearance is generally limited to given shoe models.

[0003] At the same time, there is a trend for individualization in many areas of society. The wearer of a shoe wants to identify with his shoe and to make it different from other shoes. For example, major shoe manufacturers now offer the possibility to configure a shoe over the internet within certain limits and to arrange the name of the owner on the shoe. However, this does not provide a real individual design of the shoe. Furthermore, the configuration requires a knowledge which many customers are lacking, in particular kids.

[0004] In order to overcome these disadvantages, several approaches are known in the prior art. For example, applicant of the present application distributed already in the mid-80s shoes for kids having a white upper together with a set of pens for individually designing the shoe. However, the achieved result was not always aesthetically pleasing.

[0005] Other approaches allowing an individualization of the outer design are known from the US 5,673,501 and the US 5,136,726. The US 5,673,501, for example, discloses a shoe wherein a number of attachment means are integrated into the shaft. The attachment means operates similar to a snap-on device and allows the attachment of different decorating elements such as a ribbon or the like depending on the preferences of the wearer. However, these elements can only be arranged at locations of the few predetermined attachment means of the shaft.

[0006] The US 5,136,726 discloses a shoe wherein almost the entire outer surface comprises a fabric forming a hook and loop fastener together with another fabric on the backside of a decorative element. Therefore, one or more decorative elements can be almost arbitrarily distributed on the surface of the shoe. However, the limitation to a fabric which forms one side of a hook and loop fastener not only strongly impairs the usability of the shoe but also its outer appearance. Furthermore, there is the risk that the upper material becomes permanently dirty when using the shoe according to the US 5,136,726. This is, since the required open structure of the upper material will very easily take up soiling.

[0007] According to one aspect, the present invention is therefore based on the technical problem to provide a

system for individualizing a shoe, which presents on the one hand a large amount of design freedom for the exterior of the shoe, but which is on the other hand easy to use and furthermore does not impair the practical usability of the shoe.

3. Summary of the invention

[0008] The present invention solves this problem by a system for individualizing a shoe comprising a shoe with a surface region, which includes at least one first design element, and at least one second design element, wherein the second design element comprises a contact surface and wherein the contact surface and/or the surface region are provided such that the second design element can be rubbed at an arbitrary location onto the surface region of the shoe.

[0009] The system according to the invention allows the easy realization of an unlimited number of different overall designs of a shoe by rubbing one or more second design elements at different locations onto the surface region of the shoe. As a result, no shoe is identical to another, which leads to the highest degree of individualization.

[0010] In the presently preferred embodiment, the system comprises a plurality of second design elements, each of which has smaller dimensions than the surface region of the shoe. As a result, there is a high degree of flexibility where and in which combinations the plurality of second design elements can be arranged on the surface region of the shoe with the first design element. The surface region is preferably provided on the instep and/or the sides of the upper of the shoe.

[0011] If the first design element and the at least one second design element are thematically adapted to each other, particularly advantageous overall aesthetic impressions are easily obtained.

[0012] In a particular flexible embodiment of the system according to the invention, the surface region of the shoe and/or the contact surface are provided such that the at least one second design element is removable from the surface region without damaging the first design element. To this end, the system comprises preferably a removing means to remove the second design element from the surface region of the shoe.

[0013] According to a further aspect of the invention, the system comprises in addition a rubbing element for rubbing the second design element onto the surface region. The rubbing element comprises preferably a handle region and a rubbing region and becomes wider in the direction from the handle region to the rubbing region. In addition, it is preferred, if the rubbing element comprises an attachment opening so that it can be mounted like a key-fob.

[0014] Preferably, the first design element has on the surface region an abrasion resistance such that it substantially survives without damage an abrasion test with sandpaper with 280 graining and a pressure force of ap-

prox. 9.8 N of preferably 200 cycles, particularly preferably 300 cycles. The second design element preferably has material properties such that it is substantially removed from the surface in an abrasion test with a linen and a pressure force of approx. 9.8 N after 20 - 30 cycles, particularly preferred 25 cycles. The combination of these preferred material properties makes it possible in a particularly advantageous manner to repeatedly arrange and remove second design elements on the surface without damaging the first design element.

4. Short description of the accompanying figures

[0015] In the following, aspects of the present invention are further discussed with reference to the accompanying figures. These figures show:

Fig. 1: A schematic general view of a presently preferred embodiment of the system according to the invention;

Fig. 2: An exemplary view of an individualized shoe; and

Fig. 3: An embodiment of a preferred rubbing element for the system according to the invention.

5. Detailed description of preferred embodiments

[0016] In the following, embodiments of the system according to the invention are further described with reference to the example of an individual design of kids' footwear. However, it is to be understood that the system according to the invention can also be used to easily individualize the design of other types of shoes independent from their field of use and size.

[0017] Fig. 1 presents a general view of a shoe 10 and a set of rub-on pictures 20. The shoe 10 comprises a common upper, having an instep region 11 and side regions 12. A plurality of first design elements 15 are permanently arranged on the instep region 11 and the side regions 12, for example by imprinting the material of the upper (leather, patent leather or the like) before, during or after the manufacture of the shoe 10. Imprinting can be done via screen-printing, sublimation printing or transfer printing. Other manufacturing techniques are also conceivable. For example, the first design elements 15 can also be generated by coining, punching, gluing or other techniques, which do not only generate a two-dimensional design of the surface but design the corresponding region of the shoe three-dimensionally, similar to a relief. The shaping of the relief can predetermine positions where second design elements 21 are preferably to be arranged.

[0018] As shown in Fig. 1, a few stars and a moon are arranged in different locations of the shoe 10 being examples for first design elements 15. Additionally, parts or the overall design region of the upper of the shoe, i.e.

the instep 11 and the side surfaces 12 of the present embodiment, may be provided with one or more background colors or the like, e.g. a black color corresponding to the stars and the moon (not shown in Fig. 1).

[0019] Alternatively or in addition to the instep 11 and the side regions 12, also other regions of the shoe, for example the tongue or side areas of a midsole and / or the outsole, may be provided with first design elements or a background colour (not shown).

[0020] The rub-on pictures are provided as a set 20 on a foil or a similar carrier, which is known per se. As indicated by the dashed arrow in Fig. 1, individual pictures 21 may be transferred by rubbing onto a desired location of the instep 11 and / or the side areas 12. Based on the selection of the rub-on pictures to be transferred and their arrangement, there is an unlimited number of design options so that each shoe designed with the system according to the invention has finally an individual appearance. This is, since the rub-on pictures are each significantly smaller than the available surface on the instep 11 or the side 12. Additionally, there are no high requirements on the artistic or technical skills of the designer. For example, even a child may right away arrange the rub-on pictures of the set 20 in the desired positions on the instep 11 or the side surface 12 of the shoe 10.

[0021] Preferably, the set of rub-on pictures 20 relates to the same topic as the design elements 15, which are permanently arranged on the upper material of the shoe 1. In Fig. 1, for example, the shoe 10 presents a scenery at night and the set 20 of rub-on pictures comprises ghosts or the like. Other combinations are also conceivable.

[0022] Fig. 2 presents an example of the fully designed shoe having as a first design element 15 a meadow. In this embodiment, three corresponding second design elements 21 were rubbed-on, namely a balloon, a butterfly and a beetle. As can be seen, the rubbed-on design elements 21 and the predetermined design elements 15 can barely be distinguished in the finished shoe. Accordingly, in spite of having been individually designed, the shoe 10 created with the system according to the invention meets the highest quality requirements concerning the execution of a design.

[0023] A particular good and long-lasting attachment of the rubbed-on pictures 21 is achieved if the surface region, where the rubbed-on pictures are arranged, as well as the rub-on pictures themselves, have specific material properties. Preferably, the first design elements 15 are arranged with a larger degree of abrasion resistance than the abrasion resistance resulting for the rubbed-on second design elements.

[0024] Particularly preferred is an arrangement in which the first design elements substantially survive an abrasion test according to DIN EN-ISO 11640 with a 280-graining sandpaper without visible damage. To this end, a stamp provided with the sandpaper is moved over the surface region with a pressure force of 9.8 N and the first design elements are subsequently examined for visible

damage. The screen-print or the other method used for applying the first design elements 15 should preferably be made such that this test is survived at 200, preferably 300 movement cycles, i.e. that substantially no damage to the first design elements 15 can be seen.

[0025] The rubbed-on second design elements 21 preferably have material properties such that a clearly reduced abrasion resistance results. Here, it is preferred if the second design element 21 is substantially removed from the surface in an abrasion test according to DIN EN-ISO 11640 with a linen and again a stamp with a pressure force of 9.7 N after 20 - 30 cycles, preferably 25 cycles, so that other design elements 21 can be applied. The indicated preferred values of the abrasion resistance of the first and second design elements 15, respectively 21, enable the realization of many different aesthetic overall impressions of the shoe with the inventive system. However, alternatively it is also conceivable to add a clear coat to the system according to the invention which can be used to cover once rubbed-on pictures 21 to protect them permanently against damages (not shown).

[0026] However, a modified embodiment is also possible wherein the rubbed-on pictures 21 are even more easily removable, e.g. due to different surface properties of the respective surface region of a shoe and / or due to a different composition of a contact surface of a rub-on picture. Removing a rubbed-on picture can also be achieved by mechanical scratching or by using a suitable solvent, e.g. a common nail-polish remover. In this case, the shoe may be repeatedly re-designed over its lifetime in a particularly simple manner. In this case, it may be advantageous if the shoe regions provided with the first design elements 15 are additionally provided with a coating preventing an unintentional damage when removing the rub-on images. This coating can be applied by different techniques, e.g. spraying on or laminating.

[0027] Fig. 3 presents a preferred tool 30 for rubbing-on, which has a shape somewhat similar to a miniaturized dented spray can. The lower part 31 of the tool 30 provides the rubbing area allowing a controlled transfer of a rub-on picture 21 onto the desired location of the instep 11 or a side region 12 or the like by putting the picture onto the shoe and rubbing from above forth and back on the carrier foil. The upper part 32 of the rubbing tool 30 serves preferably as a handle region and can due to its limited dimensions easily be held by children's hands.

[0028] On top of the handle region 32, there is preferably a mounting projection 33 comprising an opening 34. The opening 34 allows attaching the small tool 30, for example to a key ring. Using this preferred embodiment, however, is not inevitable. Other rubbing tools such as suitable wooden plates can also be used. In fact, the tool 30 is not required at all and the rub-on pictures can be rubbed on using finger nails or the like.

[0029] The rub-on tool 30 is preferably made from a sufficiently soft plastic material to avoid damages to the first design elements 15 during rubbing.

Claims

1. System for individualizing a shoe (10) comprising:
 - a. a shoe (10) with a surface region (11, 12), comprising at least one first design element (15);
 - b. at least one second design element (21);
 - c. wherein the second design element (21) comprises a contact surface, and wherein the contact surface and/or the surface region (11, 12) are provided such that the second design element (21) can be rubbed-on at an arbitrary position onto the surface region (11, 12) of the shoe (10).
2. System according to claim 1 comprising a plurality of second design elements (21), each having smaller dimensions than the surface region (11, 12) of the shoe (10).
3. System according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the surface region is arranged on the instep (11) and/or the sides (12) of the upper of the shoe.
4. System according to one of the preceding claims, wherein the first design element (15) and the at least one second design element (21) are thematically related to each other.
5. System according to one of the preceding claims, wherein the surface region (11, 12) of the shoe (10) and / or the contact surface are provided such that the at least one second design element (21) can be removed from the surface region (11, 12) without damaging the first design element (15).
6. System according to claim 5, further comprising a removing means to remove the second design element (21) from the surface region (11, 12) of the shoe (10).
7. System according to one of the preceding claims, further comprising a rub-on element (30) for rubbing on the second design element (21) onto the surface region (11, 12).
8. System according to claim 7, wherein the rub-on element (30) comprises a handle region (32) and a rubbing region (31) and wherein the rubbing element becomes wider in the direction from the handle region (32) to the rubbing region (31).
9. System according to claim 7 or 8, wherein the rubbing element (30) comprises an attachment opening (34).
10. System according to one of the preceding claims, wherein the first design element (15) on the surface

region (11, 12) has a larger abrasion resistance than the rubbed-on second design element (21).

- 11.** System according to claim 10, wherein the first design element (15) has an abrasion resistance such that it survives an abrasion test with a 280 graining sandpaper and a pressure force of 9.8 N of 200 cycles, preferably 300 cycles, substantially without damage.
- 12.** System according to claim 10 or 11, wherein the second design element preferably has material properties such that it is removed from the surface region (11, 12) in an abrasion test with a linen and a pressure force of 9.8 N after 20 - 30 cycles, preferably after 25 cycles.

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Fig. 1

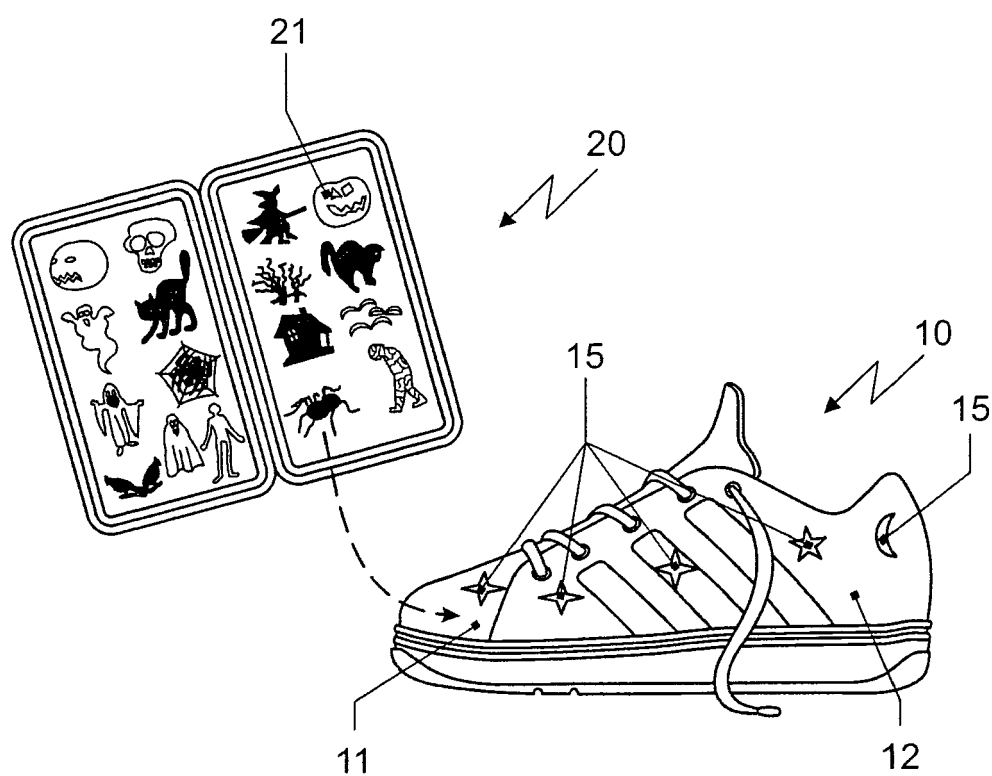


Fig. 2

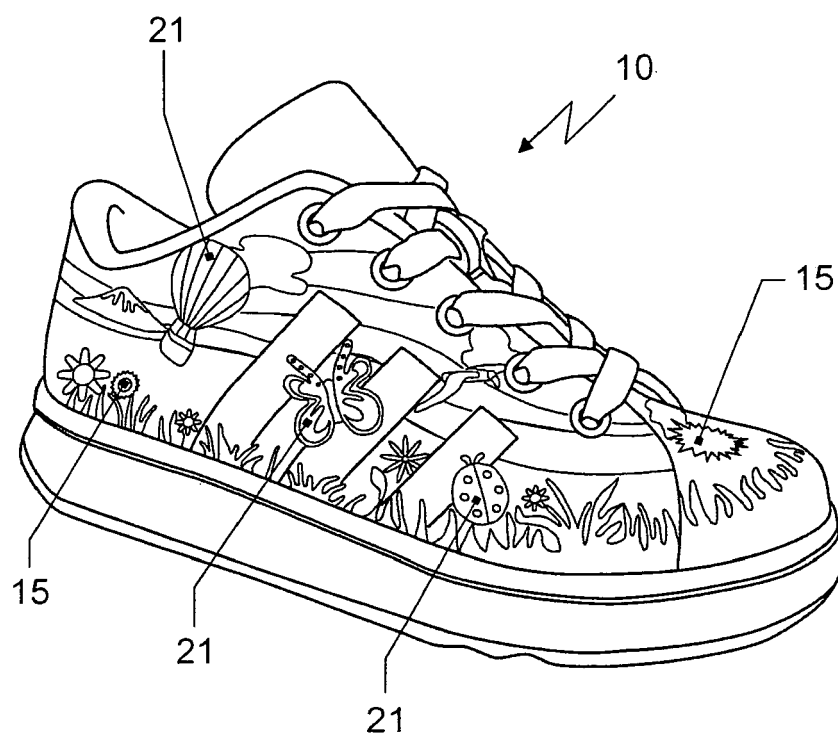
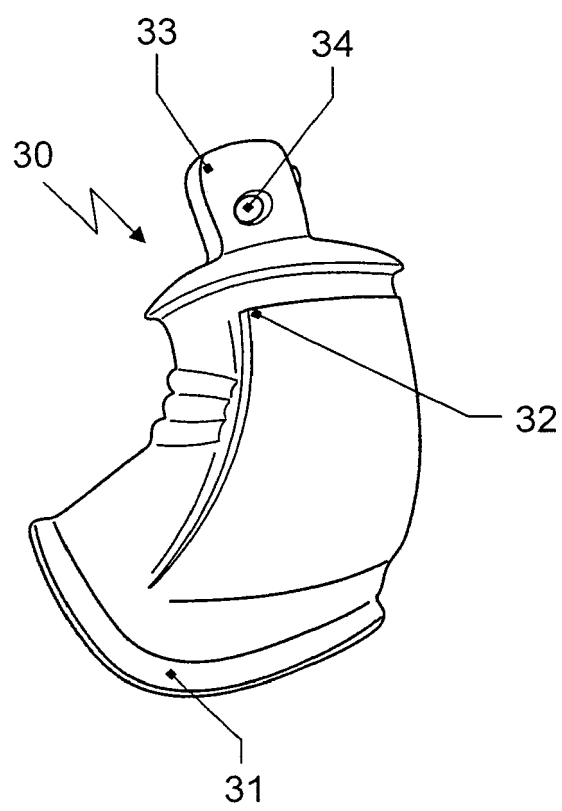


Fig. 3





European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 06 02 5437

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Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 12 March 2007	Examiner Schölvinck, Thérèse
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EPO FORM 1503 03-82 (P04C01)



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
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