CONTINUOUS DESIGN FOOTWEAR

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A pair of shoes 10 have a continuous design 30 applied to the upper structures 18 of the shoes, with the left shoe 12 containing the left portion 32 of the continuous design and the right shoe 14 containing the right portion 34. The left and right portions of the design are formed so that when the left shoe is worn on the wearer’s left foot and the right shoe is worn on the wearer’s right foot and the feet are brought together, the continuous design is formed and is displayed to the wearer, or to third parties observing the shoes, thereby enabling the wearer and/or third parties to discern if the shoes are being worn on the correct feet.
CONTINUOUS DESIGN FOOTWEAR

CROSS REFERENCE


TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention generally relates to footwear, and in particular to footwear having a right shoe and a left shoe with dissimilar partial designs on each shoe that when placed together form a complete design. This assists the wearer to visually recognize how to put each shoe on the correct foot.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Outdoor footwear for humans typically incorporates a sole upon which the foot rests and an upper structure connected about the perimeter of the sole and covering the sides and the upper surfaces of the foot. Because of the flexibility and movement of the parts of the foot, the typical upper structure of the shoe that is rugged enough for outdoor use generally is formed in several parts that match the parts of the foot, and the parts of the upper structure of the shoe are sewn together. Usually the parts and their stitching on the upper structure of the shoe form a visual pattern that is substantially dictated by the function and structure of the shoe. This results in a pair of shoes with each shoe having a visual design that is identical to but a mirror image of the other shoe. The design of each shoe, although similar, does not form a design that is continuous from one shoe to the other shoe.

[0004] In recent years, shoes have become more decorative and more versatile, with the upper structure being made of more flexible and more durable materials, with more padding and support added for the foot. Some manufacturers have placed trade dress designs on the shoes for the purpose of enhancing the look of the shoes and for identifying the manufacturer. The visual images formed by the upper covers of shoes have become less dependent on following the shape of the foot.

[0005] Although shoes are more design diverse, it is a difficult task for children and mentally disabled adult people to learn how to place shoes on their correct feet, the left shoe on the left foot and the right shoe on the right foot. Since typical shoes match each other with reverse images, there usually is no other visual indication for the unknowledgeable person of which is the left or the right shoe and which shoe fits what foot. Usually, the parent of the child must teach the child that the shape of the right shoe matches the shape of the right foot, and the shape of the left shoe matches the shape of the left foot. This is difficult for some to learn.

[0006] Thus there is a need for designs on footwear which address these and other shortcomings of the prior art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The present invention involves pairs of footwear, or shoes, with each shoe having a design on its upper structure wherein a complete design is formed when both the left and right shoes of a pair of shoes are worn together on the appropriate foot and the feet are brought together in side-by-relationship. In a preferred embodiment, a portion of the design appears on the left shoe, and the remainder of the design appears on the right shoe. Wearing the pair of shoes together on the appropriate foot forms the complete continuous design and displays the continuous design to the wearer or any third parties observing the shoes. An additional feature of the continuous design on the footwear is that the continuous design assists the wearer, especially children, in putting the shoes on the proper foot.

[0008] In one embodiment, the designs on the upper structures of a pair of shoes can be incomplete mirror images that form a complete design when the shoes are placed on the correct feet and brought together side-by-side. Another embodiment includes the upper structures of a pair of shoes having images that are not mirror images, but when the shoes are placed on the correct feet and brought together the shoes form a recognizable continuous image from one shoe to the next shoe. In both embodiments, when the shoes are placed on the incorrect feet, the combined image formed by the pair of shoes is indiscriminate and alerts the viewer that the shoes are on “backwards.”

[0009] When shoes of the invention are made for children, the design can be colorful and interesting to children. Shoes for the adult can be more subtle or can be directed to more adult interests, such as sports or high fashion.

[0010] Thus, it is an object of this invention to provide a pair of shoes with improved upper structure visual designs, each shoe bearing an incomplete design that is dissimilar to the design of the other shoe but matches with the other shoe to form a complete design.

[0011] Another object of the invention is to provide a pair of shoes that has a visual design formed on the upper structure of each shoe that aids the wearer of the shoe to determine which shoe fits which foot.

[0012] Another object of the invention is to provide a pair of shoes that bear an image on each shoe that when placed on the correct feet and brought together side-by-side form a complete image, and when placed on the wrong feet and brought together side-by-side form a mismatched image.

[0013] Other objects, features and advantages will become apparent upon reviewing the following specification when taken in conjunction with the attached drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] The invention can be better understood with reference to the following drawings. The components in the drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon clearly illustrating the principles of the present invention. Moreover, in the drawings, like reference numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the several views.

[0015] FIG. 1 is a perspective illustration of a pair of lace-up shoes, for adults or children, showing a continuous design extending across the upper structures of the toe portions of the shoes, with the segments of the design being mirror images of each other.

[0016] FIG. 2 is a perspective illustration of a pair of sports shoes, showing a continuous design formed on the upper structures of the toe portions of the shoes, with the segments of the design not being mirror images of each other.
FIG. 3 is a front elevational view of a pair of shoes of the type shown in FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a rear elevational view of a pair of shoes, showing the heels of the shoes.

FIGS. 5 and 6 are top views of pairs of shoes, with both pair being sized, shaped and designed for children’s wear.

FIG. 7 is a top view of a pair of shoes suitable for women’s use.

FIG. 8 is a perspective illustration of a pair of women’s boots.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now in more detail to the drawings, in which like numerals indicate like parts throughout the several views, FIG. 1 illustrates a pair of shoes that can be sized and shaped for wear by children or adults. The pair of shoes 10 includes a left shoe 12 and a right shoe 14. The left shoe is shaped for fitting the left foot of a wearer, the right shoe is shaped for fitting the right foot of the wearer, and the left and right shoes are reversed shaped. This is conventional.

Each shoe includes a sole 16 and an upper structure 18, with the upper structure 18 being joined by adhesive, stitching or other conventional means to the perimeter of the sole 16.

As illustrated in FIG. 3, the upper structure 18 of each shoe includes a U-shaped perimeter wall 22 joined to and extending upwardly from the perimeter of the sole 16, and shaped for extending about the toes of the foot of the wearer (not shown). A top panel 24 is attached at its perimeter to the upper edges of the U-shaped perimeter wall 22 for covering the toes of the foot of the wearer. A heel wall 26 is also U-shaped and is joined at its edge to the perimeter of the sole and is shaped to extend upwardly about the heel of the foot of the wearer of the shoes. This leaves the opening 28 for inserting the foot into and withdrawing the foot from the shoe.

As shown in FIG. 1, a continuous design 30 is formed on the top panels 24 of both the left and right shoes 12 and 14 of the pair of shoes. The design is segmented so that a left portion, or segment 32, is formed on the upper structure 18 of the left shoe 12 and the right portion, or segment 34, is formed on the upper structure 18 of the right shoe 14. This example is a “smiley face” design. In this embodiment, the continuous design 30 is formed of a pair of reverse or “mirror” images, each design portion being substantially identical to but the reverse of the other design portion and neither segment of the design forming a complete design. The design portions 32 and 34 are arranged so that they form a continuous when paired together, as when the shoes are placed on the correct feet of the wearer and the wearer places his or her feet in adjacent, inside to inside relationship. The design portions 32 and 34 of the two shoes form the continuous design 30 extending across both shoes. Neither design portion is a complete design without the other design portion.

While the continuous design 30 of FIG. 1 is formed of a pair of reverse image portions, a continuous design across the pair of shoes can be formed with other design portions that are not mirror images of each other. For example, FIG. 2 illustrates a pair of sports shoes 40 having features similar to those of FIG. 1, but having a continuous design 50 that is formed of dissimilar left and right design portions 52 and 54. The example of the continuous design 50 is a tomahawk and includes a left portion 52 that is the lower portion of the handle of the tomahawk and the right portion 54 that is the blade or head portion of the tomahawk. If the shoes are placed on the correct feet of the wearer, with the left shoe on the left foot and the right shoe on the right foot, and the feet are brought together in side by side relationship, the left and right design portions 52 and 54 will complete the continuous design 50 of the tomahawk.

As illustrated in FIG. 4, similar continuous designs can be formed on the heel walls 26 of a pair of shoes, such as shoes 10 of FIG. 1 or shoes 40 of FIG. 2. The continuous design can be in addition to or an alternative to the continuous design formed on the upper structure of the shoes.

The example illustrated in FIG. 4 is that of a swimmer, with the lower abdomen and legs on the left shoe 12 and the upper abdomen, arms and head on the right shoe 14. Again, when the left shoe is placed on the left foot of the wearer and the right shoe is placed on the right foot of the wearer and the shoes are brought in adjacent side-by-side relationship, the left and right design portions of the swimmer will be placed adjacent each other, completing the continuous design across the pair of shoes. Neither design portion forms a complete design, but when the shoes are brought together as described, the complete or continuous design of the swimmer is formed.

FIGS. 5 and 6 are additional continuous design concepts for children’s shoes. When forming a design on young children’s shoes, it may be more important to have mirror image left portion 44 and right portion 46 of a continuous design 48. FIG. 5 shows a continuous design of a sunburst, with the sunburst design divided in halves, each half being a mirror image of the other half. When the shoes are matched together as described above, the completed continuous design 48 of a sunburst is formed by the shoes. A young child is likely to learn about which shoe fits which foot when the mirror image of the left and right design portions of the continuous design are mirror images of each other, so that they “match” one another, like adjacent pieces of a puzzle.

FIG. 6 shows a similar but more sophisticated version of the mirror image design portions for the left and right children’s shoes. The continuous design of a butterfly 50 is formed by the mirror image design portions.

FIG. 7 illustrates a pair of adult women’s shoes having a continuous design 54 formed by the shoes. In this instance, the continuous image is not formed by left and right mirror images, but by dissimilar mirror images 56 and 58. This provides a more sophisticated look for a person of more discriminating taste.

FIG. 8 shows a pair of women’s boots having continuous color design from one boot to the other and continuous structural design features from one boot to the other. As with FIG. 7, the boots of FIG. 8 show left and right design portions 60 and 62 that are not mirror images of each other, but the designs, when mated together as described above, show a continuous design from one boot to the other.
In addition, the upper edges of the boots of FIG. 8 are shaped differently, yet the design of each boot forms a continuous design across both boots of the pair of boots. This is a more sophisticated design feature for the discriminating adult.

It should be noted in all of the illustrated examples that if the shoes should be placed on the wrong feet, with the left shoe on the right foot and the right shoe on the left foot, the left and right design portions of the shoes will form an indiscriminate design, not a continuous matching design. For example, if the pair of children’s shoes of FIG. 5 are placed on the wrong feet and the feet are brought together, the sunburst will not be formed. Indeed, the design of the sunburst, which is likely to be in a bright orange color, will be segmented and facing outwardly on the shoes, instead of the design portions facing together, thus forming an unrecognizable design. This is likely to alert the child and the adult caring for the child that the shoes have been improperly placed on the feet of the child.

Likewise, the shoes of FIG. 6 should also alert the child and the person caring for the child when the shoes are placed on the wrong feet.

When the continuous design is applied to the heels of the pair of shoes as illustrated in FIG. 4, again, the adult caring for the child or anyone positioned behind the child should immediately recognize when the shoes are placed on the wrong feet.

FIGS. 2, 7 and 8 are intended to show a continuous design formed of a matching pair of dissimilar design portions, suitable for the sports person. While a tomahawk is shown as the continuous design in FIG. 2, other sports images, and images of other types, that are more desirable for the adult sports person can be applied, such as shown in FIGS. 7 and 8. For example, the continuous image of a sports mascot could be segmented, with the left portion placed on the left shoe and the right portion placed on the right shoe.

While the shoes of FIGS. 1 and 2 are shown to be more of an athletic style where there is a definite U-shaped perimeter wall 22 that extends upwardly from the sole 16 and then a top panel 24 is formed on the perimeter wall to cover the toes of the foot, the shoes of FIG. 7, which may be “ballerina” shoes, may have less of a departure between the perimeter wall and the top panel. Accordingly, the design of FIG. 7 might extend across both the top panel 24 and the perimeter, down to the sole, assuring that the continuous design extends from one shoe to the other.

While the continuous designs illustrated herein show a single object divided so as to place the left portion of the continuous design on one shoe and the right portion on the other shoe, it is also within the scope of this invention to have a complete design on each shoe, with the complete designs coming together to form a continuous design that incorporates the two dissimilar designs. For example, the image of a basketball could be placed on one shoe and the image of a basketball goal could be placed on the other shoe so that the two images together form a continuous design and when taken together become identifiable with each other.

While the drawings illustrate the invention in black and white, it should be understood that the designs applied to the shoes are likely to be in color that contrasts with the background color of the shoes. Similar color extending from one shoe to the other tends to enhance the recognition of a continuous design across both shoes.

It is important to the invention that the continuous design from shoe to shoe be visible to the wearer in the situations where the wearer is a child and relies upon the continuous design to determine if the shoes are being placed on the correct foot of the wearer. Typically, this will be on the top panels 24 of the upper structure 18 of the shoes.

As illustrated in FIG. 8, the boots can have the continuous design formed of different materials as well as different colors, so that one colored segment can be formed of one material and the adjacent segment of a different color can be formed of a different material. However, the general arrangement is that the continuous design applied to the boots as well as to the other shoes of the drawings will be artistic rather than structural design features.

Although the footwear is described herein as “shoes,” it is intended that the expression “shoes” is to include not only conventional shoes but also boots, sandals, athletic shoes, and other footwear for both children and adults.

Although preferred embodiments of the invention have been disclosed in detail herein, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that variations and modifications of the disclosed embodiments can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims.

Therefore, having thus described the invention, at least the following is claimed:

1. A pair of shoes for the left and right feet of a human wearer of the shoes, said shoes comprising:
   - a left shoe shaped for fitting a left foot of a wearer, a right shoe shaped for fitting the right foot of the wearer, said left and right shoes being reversed shaped;
   - each shoe having a sole on which the foot of the wearer is to rest with a perimeter, and an upper structure attached to said perimeter for covering the foot of the wearer;
   - said upper structure of each shoe including a top panel for covering the toes of the foot of the wearer, the improvement therein comprising:
     - a continuous design formed on said top panels of said the upper structure of said pair of shoes, said continuous design continuing from one shoe to the other shoe, including:
       - a left portion of said continuous design formed on said top panel of said upper structure of said left shoe; and
       - a right portion of said continuous design formed on said top panel of said upper structure of said right shoe;
       - said left portion of said continuous design and said right portion of said continuous design being different from each other;
     - said left portion of said continuous design and said right portions of said continuous design being formed to complete said continuous design of the pair of shoes when said left shoe is worn on the left foot of the wearer
and said right shoe is worn on the right foot of the wearer and the feet of the wearer are brought together side-by-side, and

said left portion of said continuous design and said right portion of said continuous design being formed to complete an indiscernible design when the left shoe is worn on the right foot of the wearer and the right shoe is worn on the left foot of the wearer and the feet of the wearer are brought together side-by-side.

2. The pair of shoes of claim 1, wherein said left portion and said right portion of said continuous design are not mirror images

3. The pair of shoes of claim 1, wherein said upper structures of said shoes include a U-shaped perimeter wall having an edge joined to said sole and joined to said top panel, and said design portions extend across said U-shaped perimeter wall.

4. A pair of shoes wherein each shoe of said pair of shoes includes a heel wall joined to a sole and shaped to extend upwardly about the heel of the foot of the wearer of the shoes, and a design formed on said heel walls of each of said pair of shoes, with the designs on each heel wall being different than the design on the heel wall of the other of said shoes and forming a continuous design from one shoe to the other shoe when the feet of the wearer are placed together side-by-side.

5. A pair of shoes for human feet including a left shoe shaped to fit only a left foot and a right shoe shaped to fit only a right foot, said shoes being of the same size, each shoe having a bottom surface for engaging the ground and an upper structure for extending about the human foot, comprising:

- a portion of a continuous visual design applied to the upper structure of each of the shoes of said pair of shoes, the portion of the visual design of each shoe alone being incomplete and different from and not a mirror image of the portion of the continuous visual design of the other shoe and the portions of the continuous visual design of the shoes being complementary to each other to form a matching continuous design that extends from one shoe to the other shoe when the left shoe is placed on the left foot and the right shoe is placed on the right foot and the feet are placed in side-by-side relationship.

6. The pair of shoes of claim 4, wherein said design portions of the shoes are formed to create and indiscernible design that is not continuous from one shoe to the other shoe of said pair of shoes when the left shoe is placed on the right foot and the right shoe is placed on the left foot and the feet brought together in side-by-side relationship.