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(54) **CONVERTIBLE LUGGAGE AND A REVERSIBLE PANEL THEREFOR**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

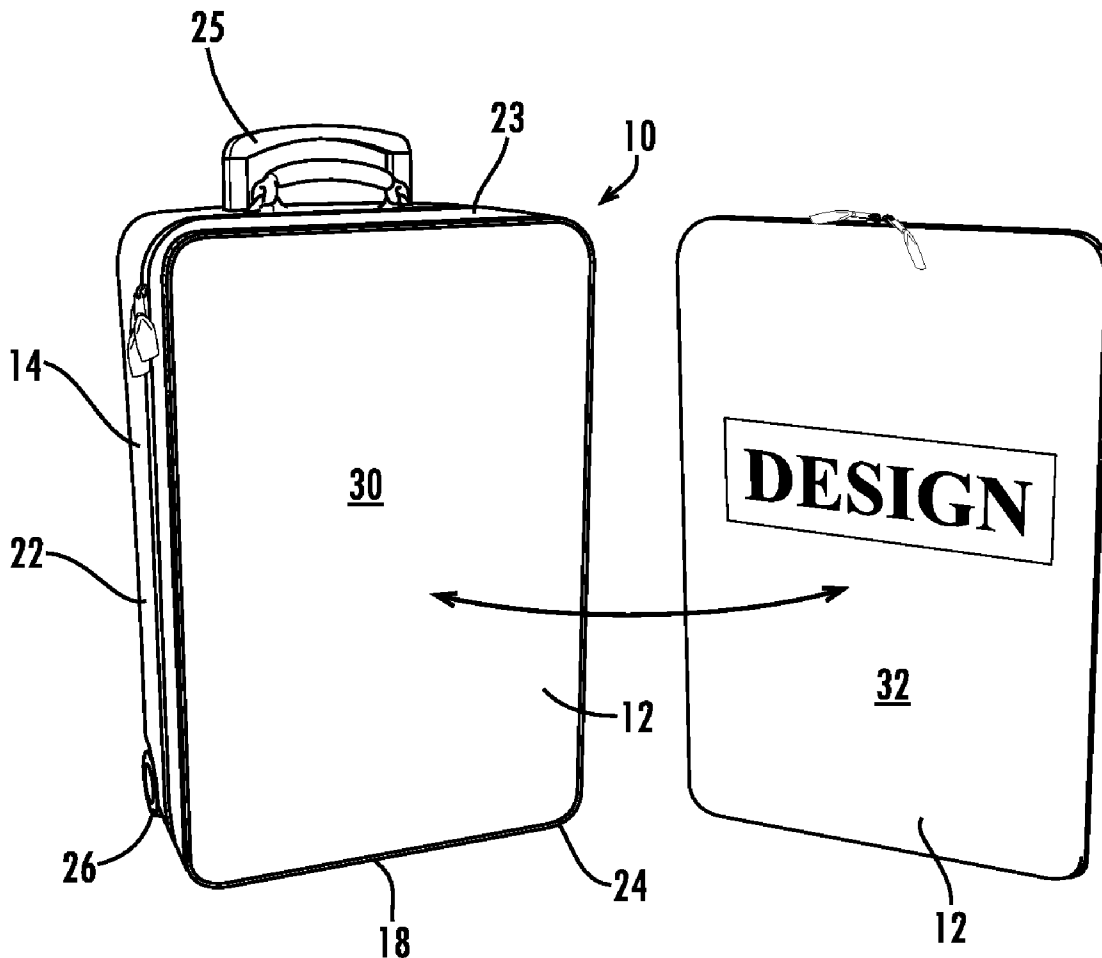
(21) Appl. No.: **11/567,094**

Convertible luggage, such as a suitcase, purse, briefcase, backpack, etc. includes a body and a detachable and reversible panel having a first face and a second face having a different appearance than the first face. The detachable and reversible panel can be securely attached to at least a portion of the body such that in at least a first configuration with the first face facing out and in at least a second configuration with the first face facing in and the second face facing out. Moreover, the detachable and reversible panel can create a pocket for housing items therein.

(22) Filed: **Dec. 5, 2006**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/742,313, filed on Dec. 5, 2005. Provisional application No. 60/815,301, filed on Jun. 21, 2006.



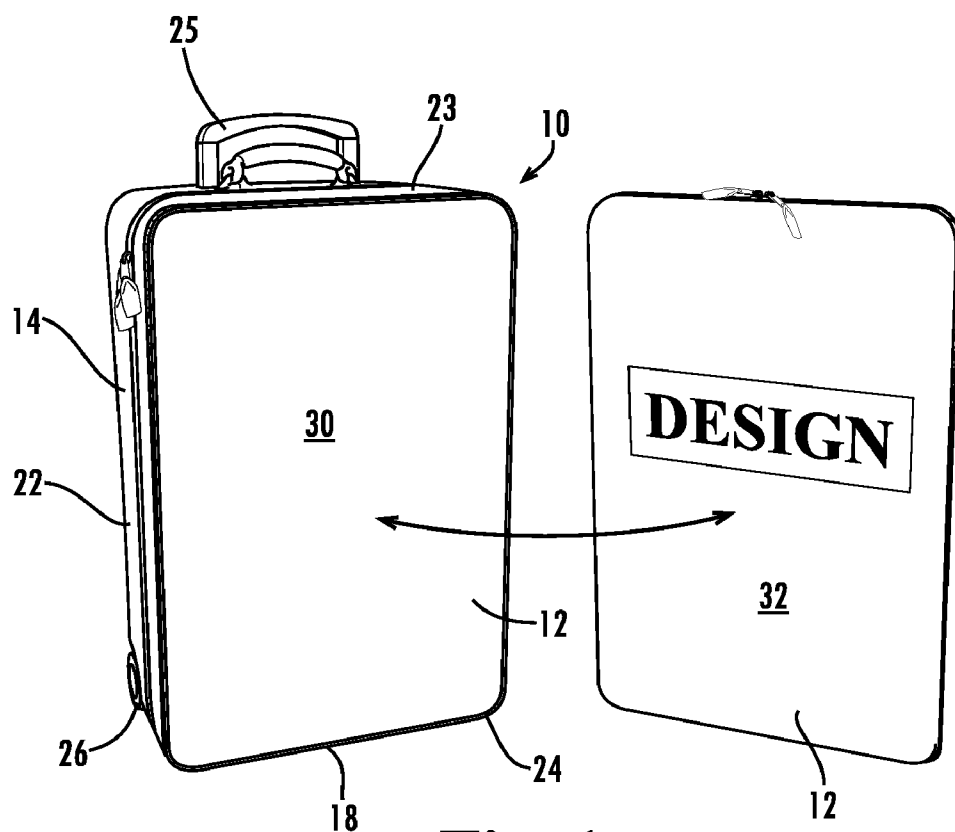


Fig. 1

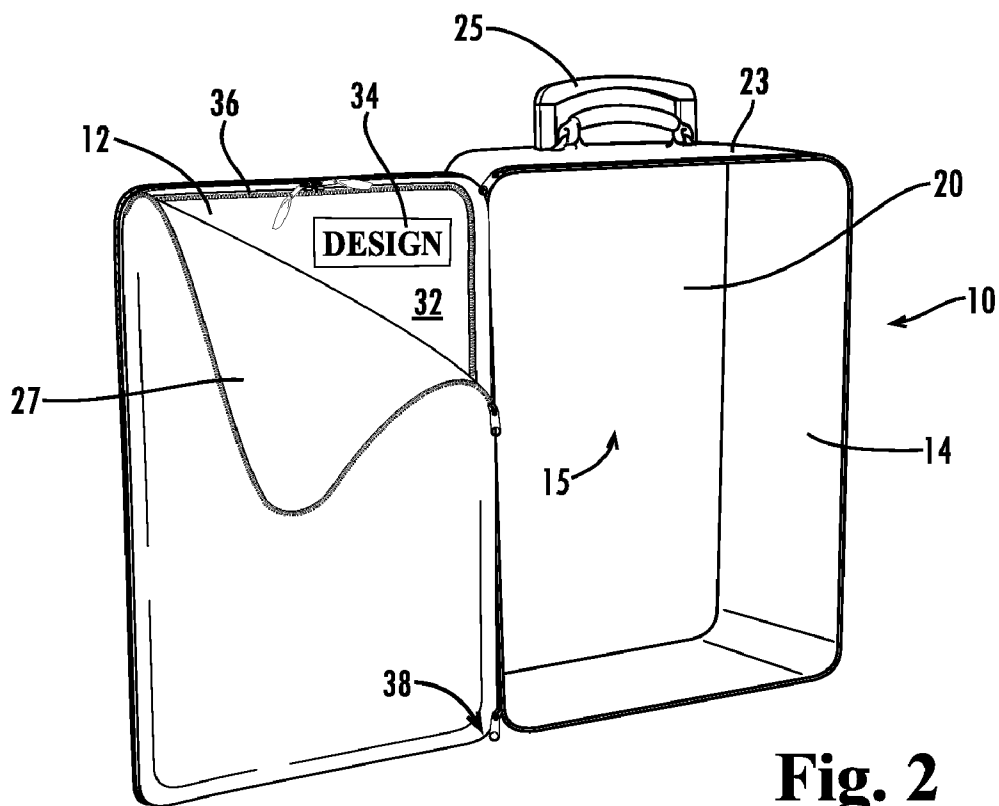


Fig. 2

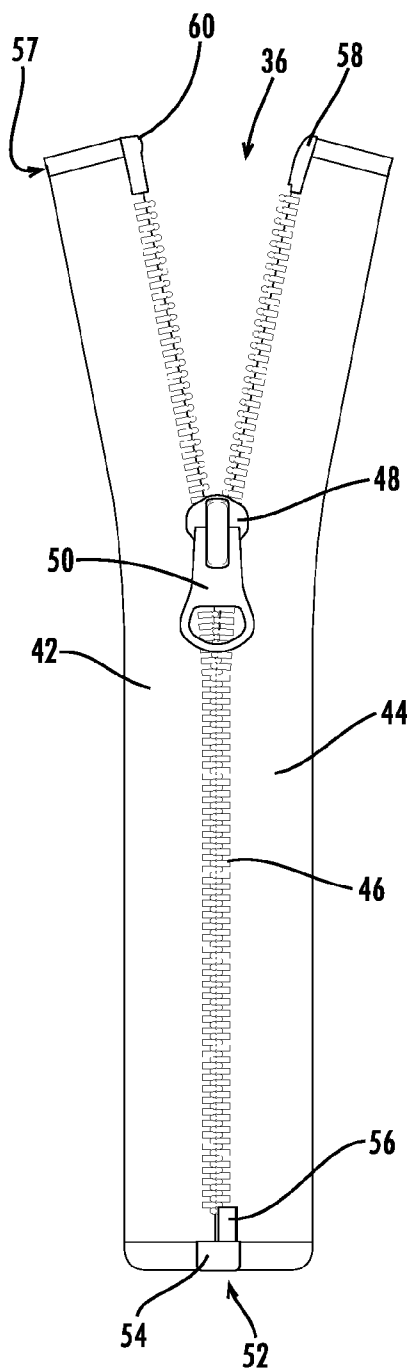


Fig. 3

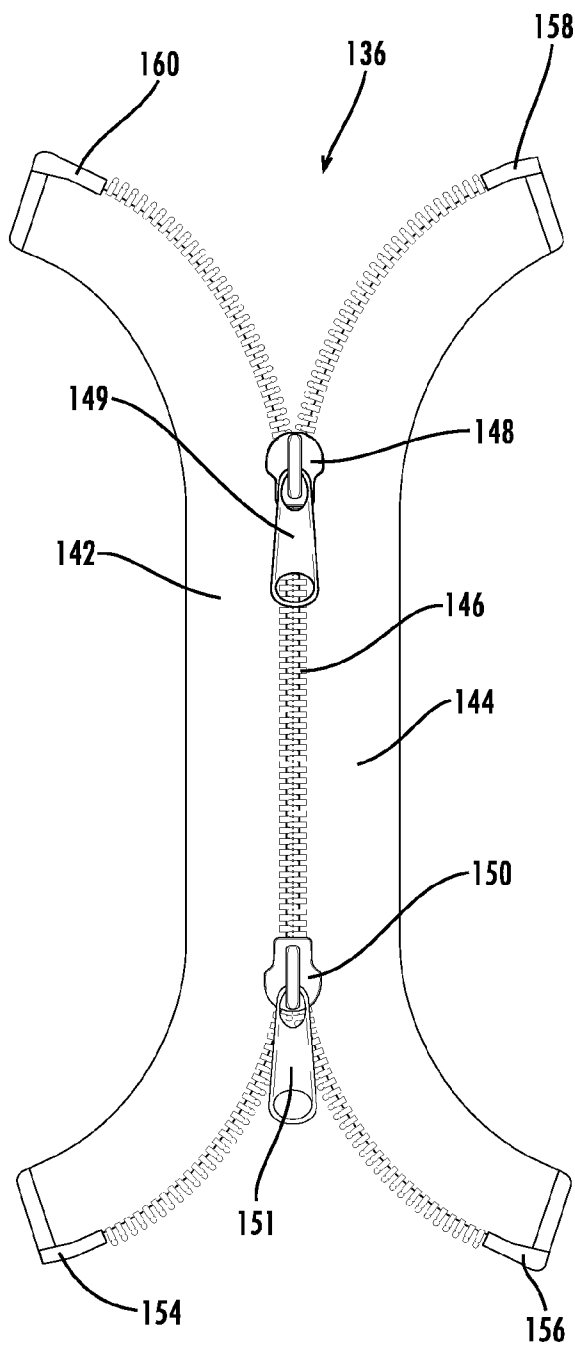


Fig. 4

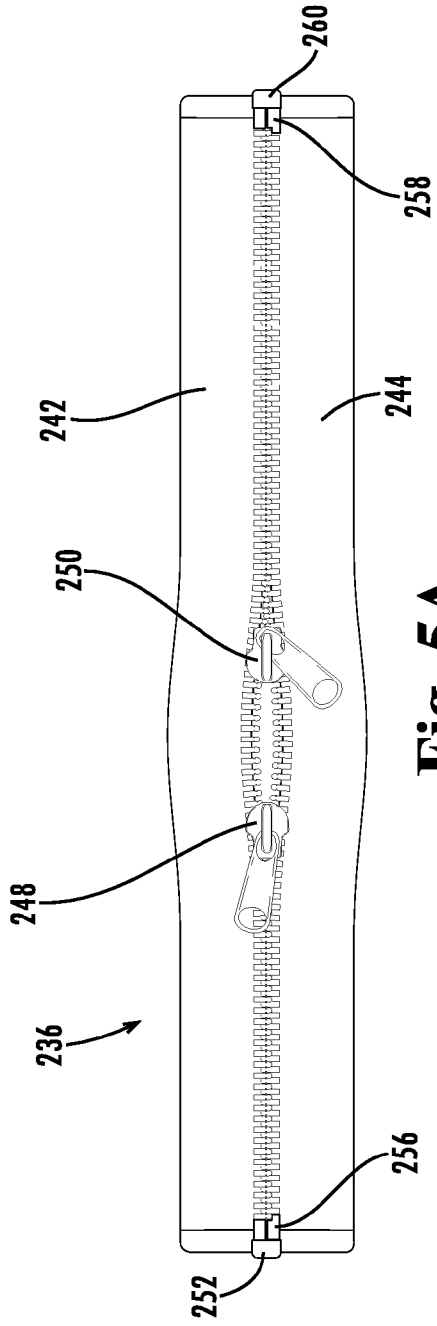


Fig. 5A

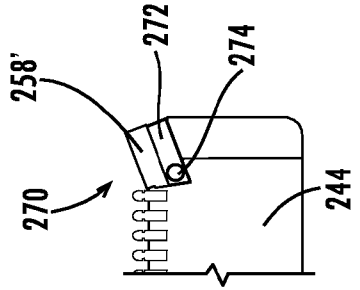


Fig. 5C

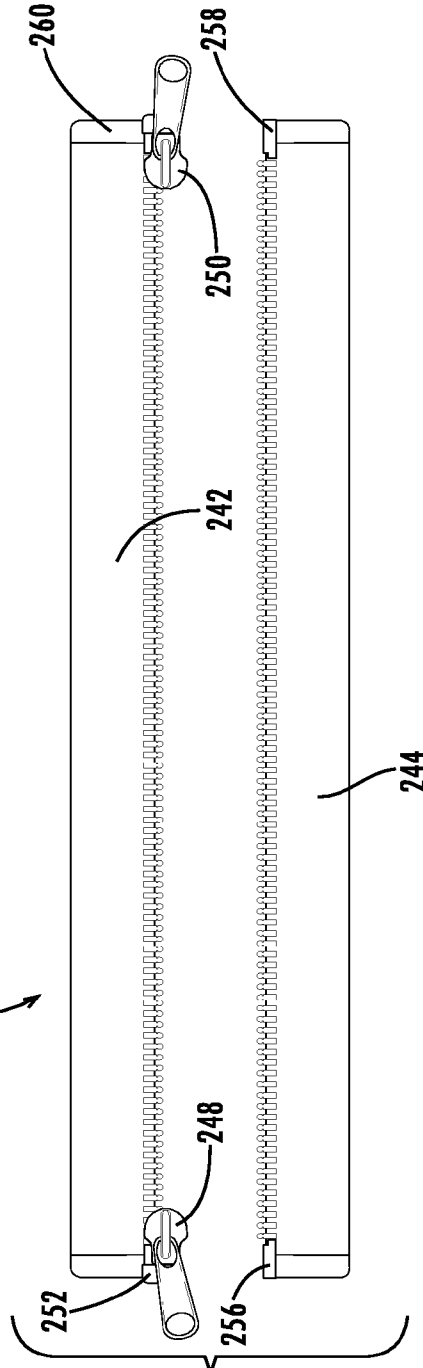


Fig. 5B

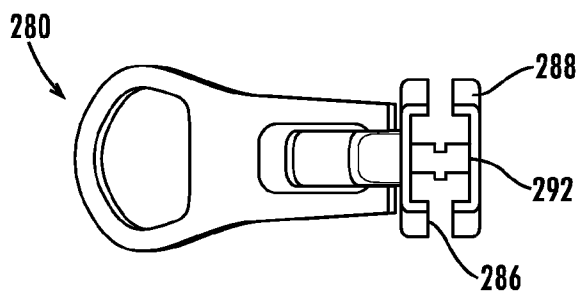


Fig. 6A

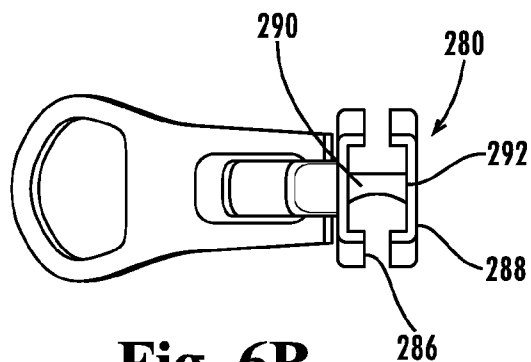


Fig. 6B

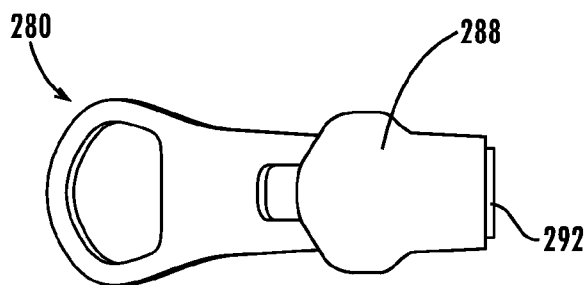


Fig. 6C

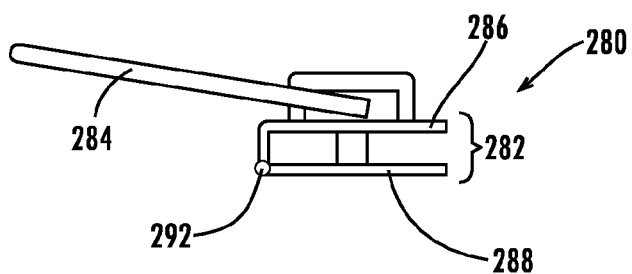


Fig. 6D

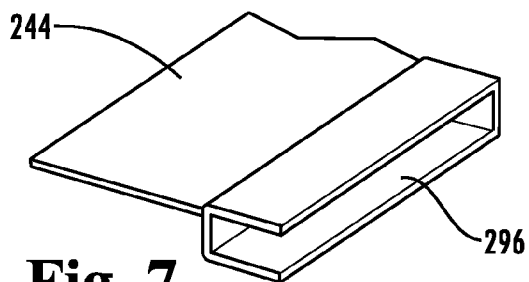


Fig. 7

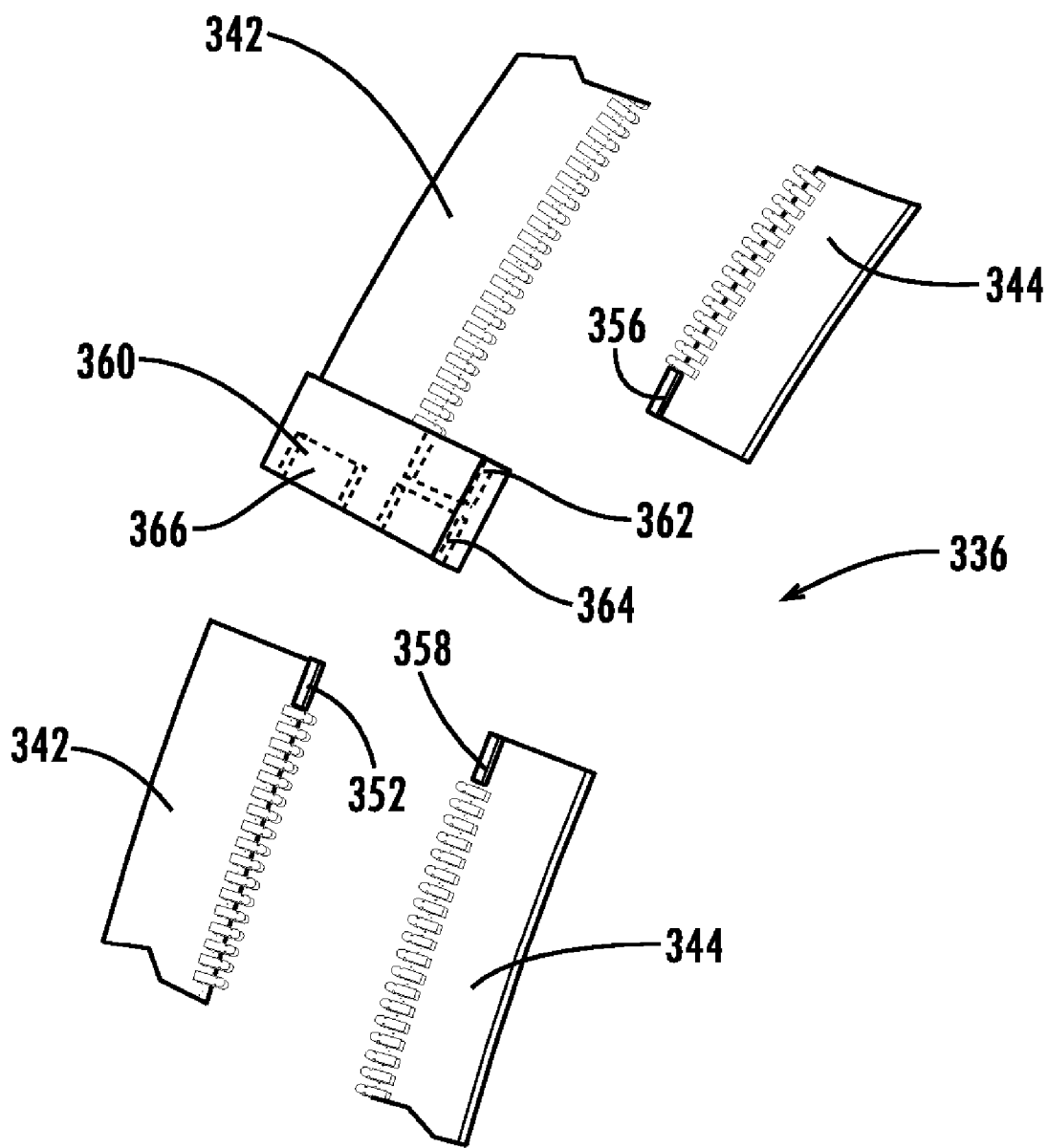


Fig. 8

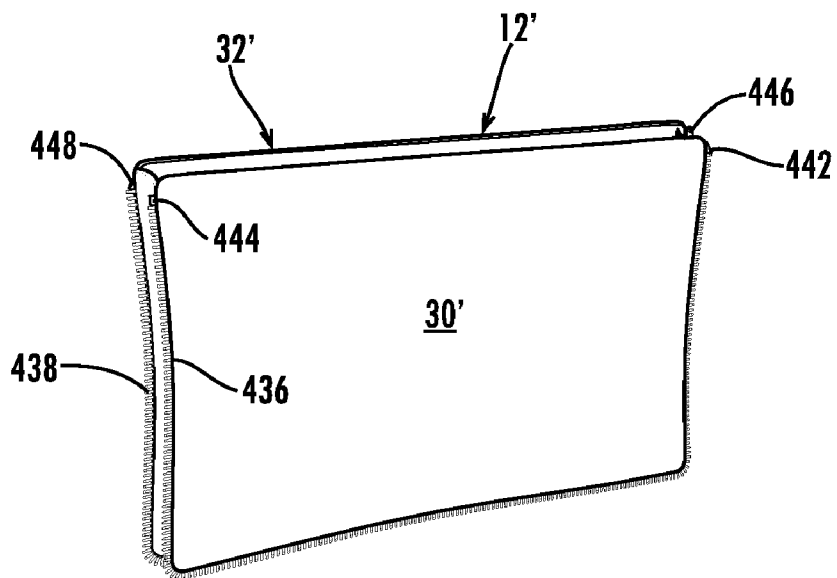


Fig. 9

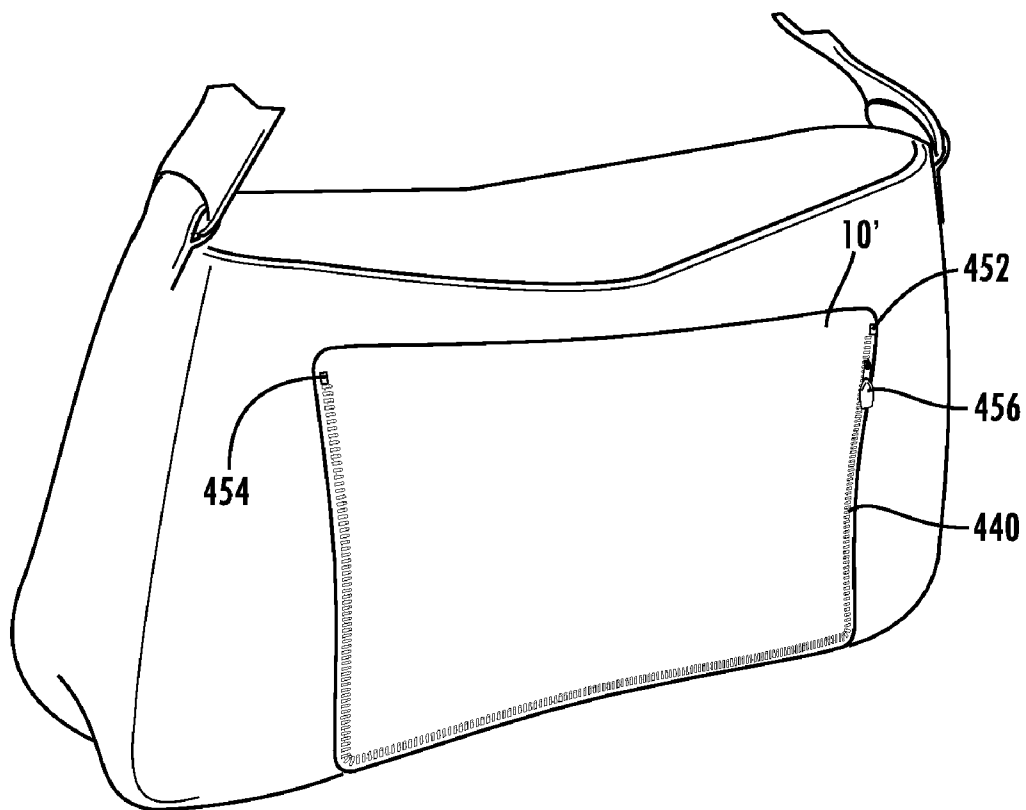


Fig. 10

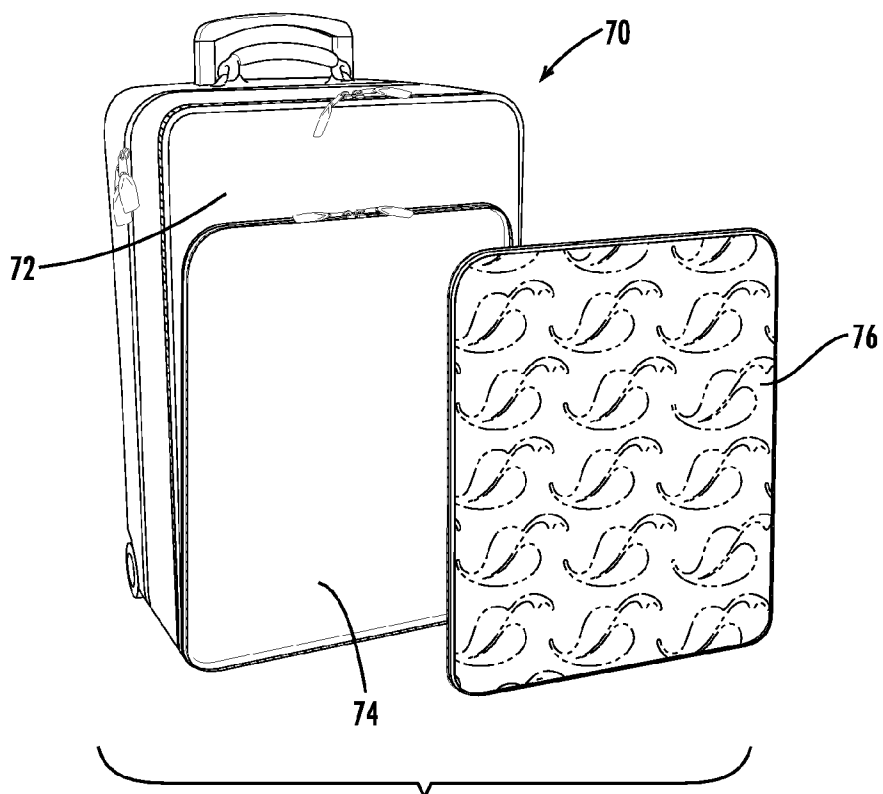


Fig. 11

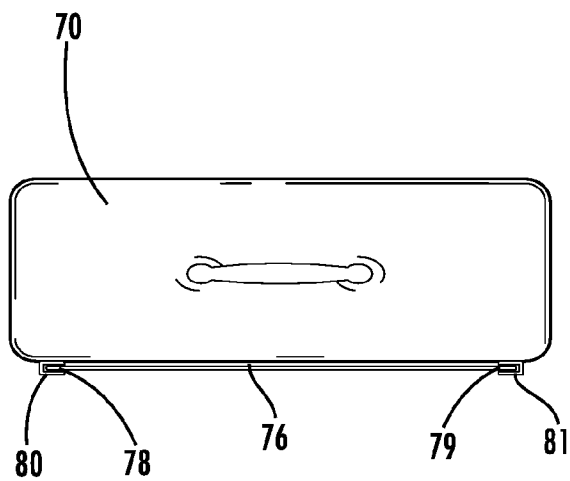


Fig. 12

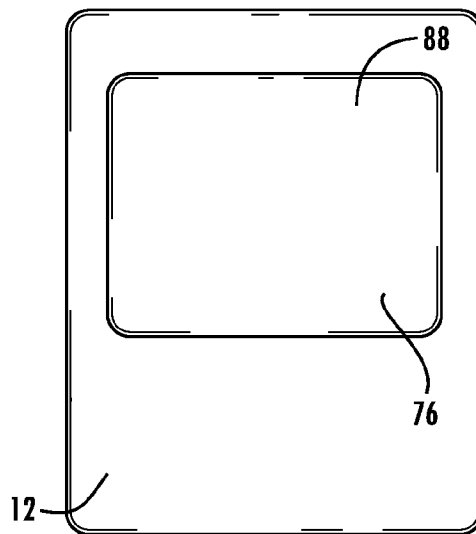


Fig. 13

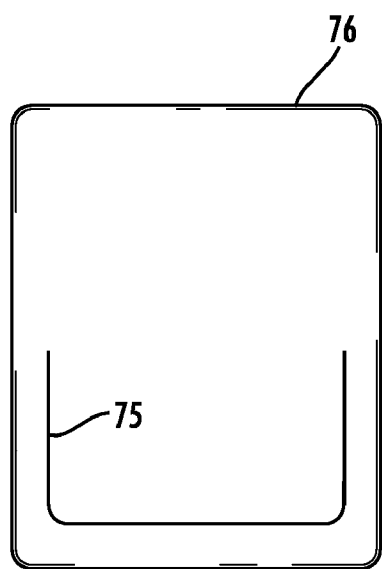


Fig. 14A

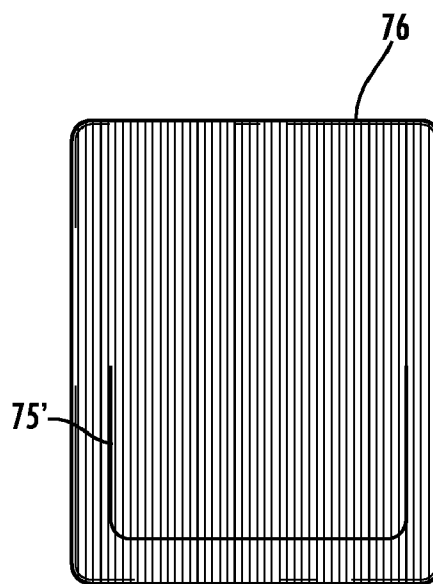


Fig. 14B

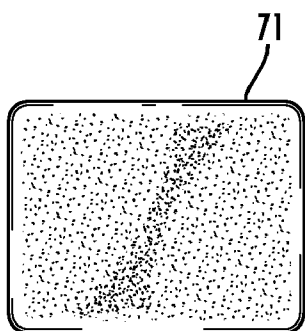


Fig. 14C

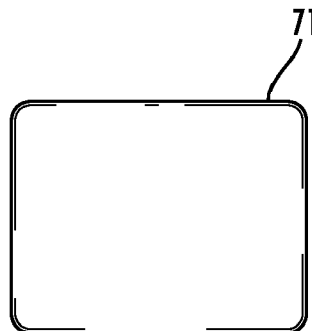


Fig. 14D

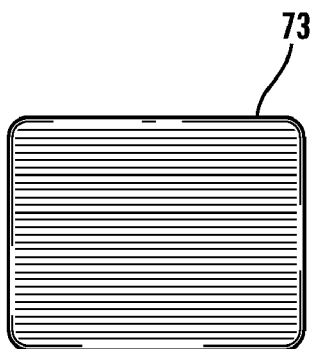


Fig. 14E

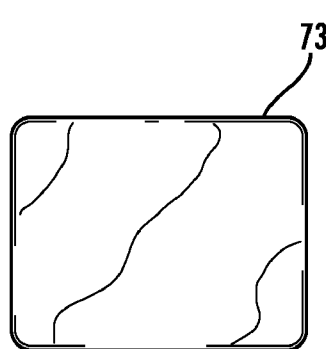


Fig. 14F

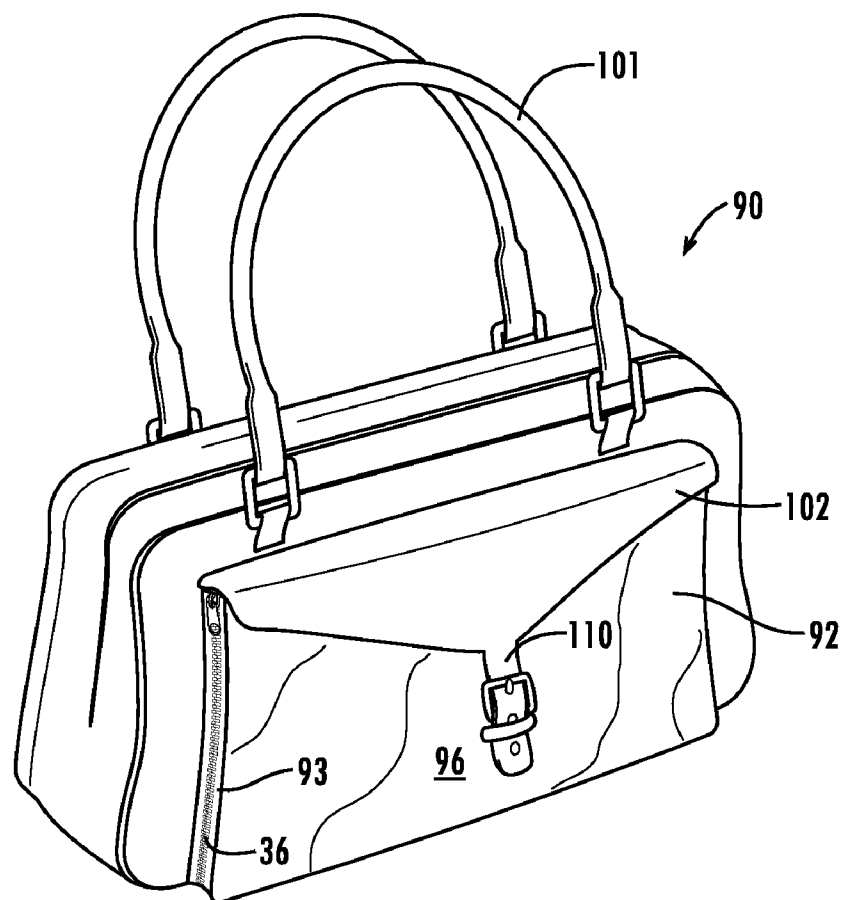


Fig. 15

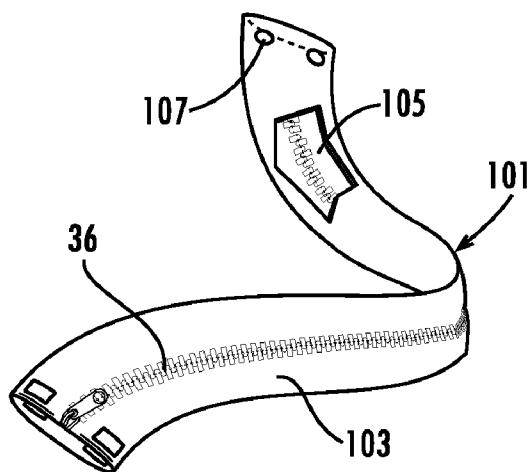


Fig. 16A

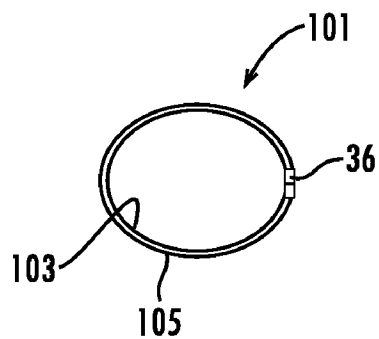


Fig. 16B

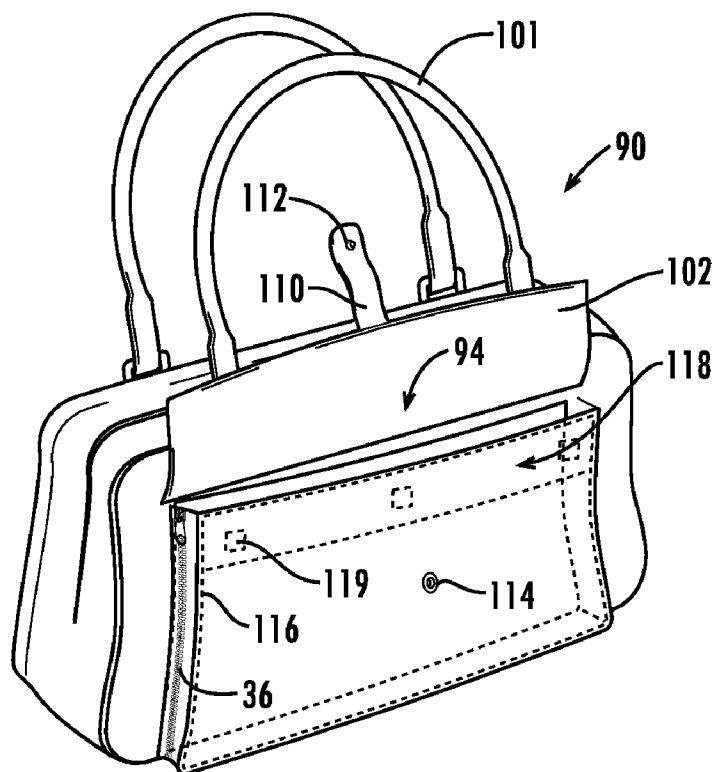


Fig. 17

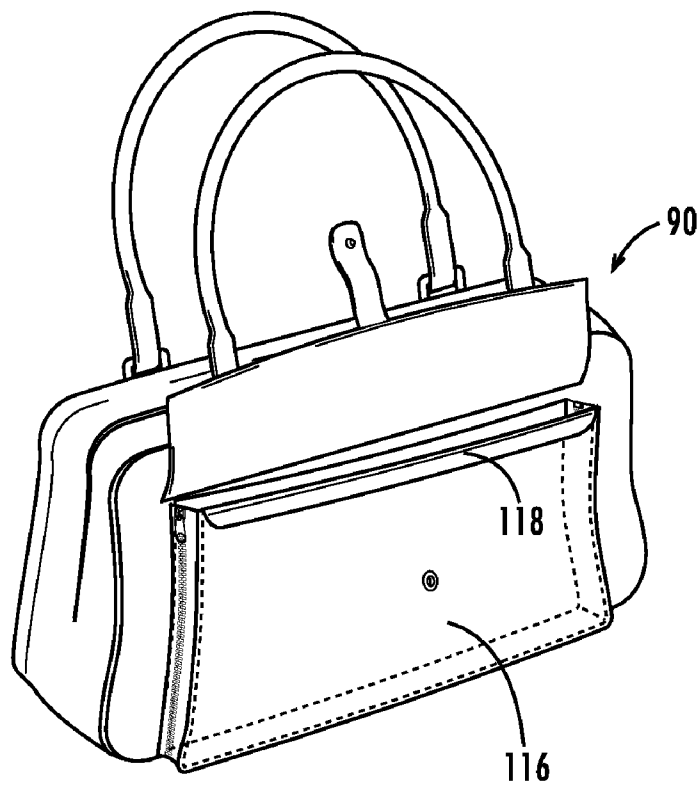


Fig. 18

Fig. 19

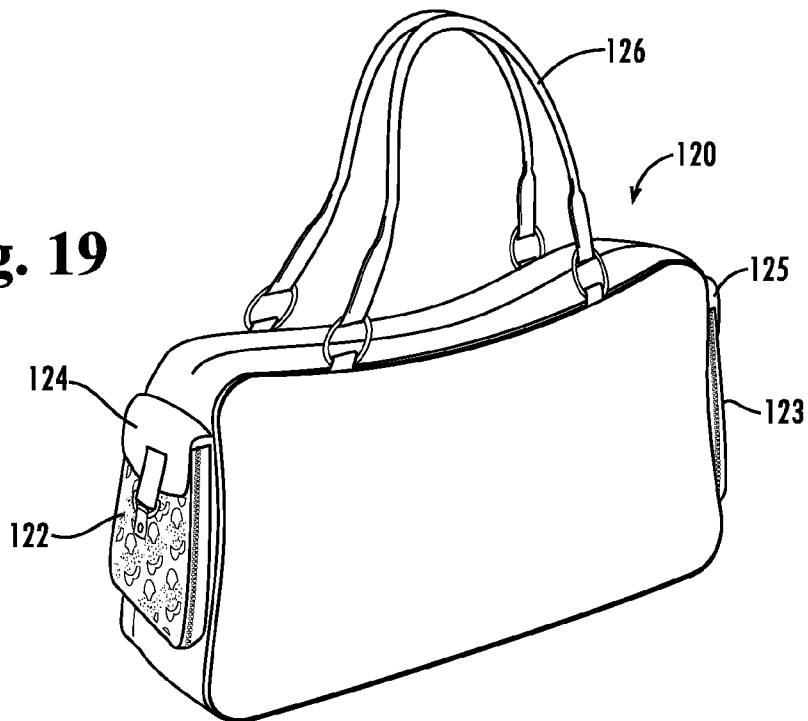


Fig. 20

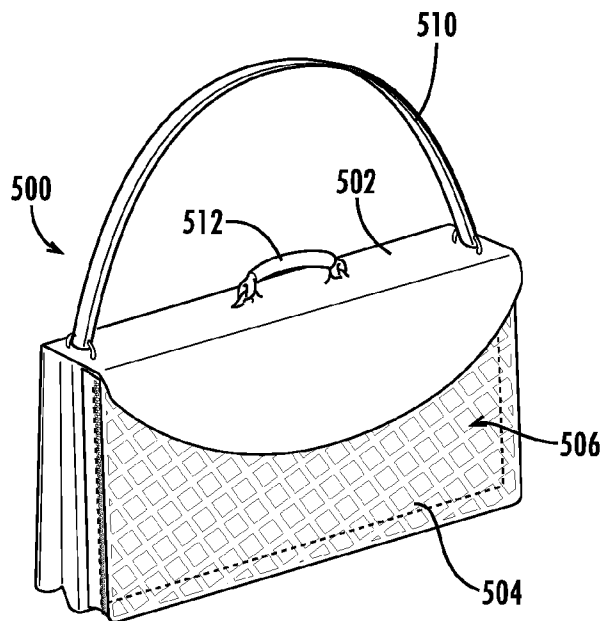
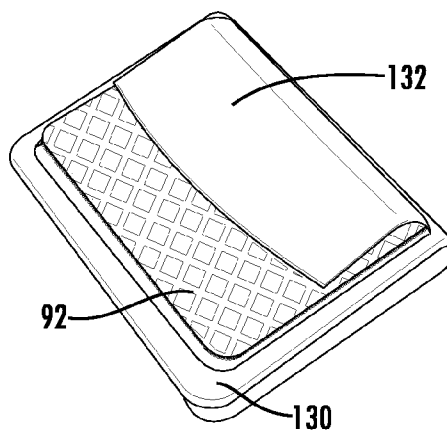


Fig. 21

CONVERTIBLE LUGGAGE AND A REVERSIBLE PANEL THEREFOR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims the priority benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. Nos. 60/742,313, filed Dec. 5, 2005, and 60/815,301 filed Jun. 21, 2006, and incorporates the disclosures of the same in their entireties herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates to convertible luggage and to a reversible panel that can be securely attached thereto.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] A piece of luggage has a certain appearance. Once a piece of luggage is produced, however, its appearance and functionality cannot be changed or varied in any way or manner. In some cases, the fabric of the luggage is a solid color, and in other cases, the fabric of the luggage has certain designs. Sometimes, the appearance and function of the luggage is appropriate for the present use, while other times, the appearance and function may not be desirable. Thus, if a user would like a different appearance or functionality, the user would need to use a different piece of luggage, as it would be difficult if not impossible to change the luggage's appearance. However, purchasing multiple pieces of luggage can be expensive. It would be desirable to have a piece of luggage that could have different appearances and functions, which could be used for different purposes.

[0004] Therefore, there exists in the industry a need for luggage or other items whose appearance and functionality can be quickly and easily altered so as to create a different piece of luggage.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] Advantageously, the present invention provides luggage that allows the user of the luggage to change its appearance and/or functionality by reversing or changing one or more panels. Thus, with one piece of luggage, a user can gain many different looks and functions. For example, the panels can include different colors, designs, and fabrics so as to change the look and feel of the luggage. Additionally or alternatively, the panels can include compartments and/or pockets so as to add functionality. The panels can also be layered on top of one another.

[0006] Briefly described, in a first preferred form the present invention comprises convertible luggage, such as a suitcase, purse, briefcase, backpack, computer bag, etc. The piece of luggage has a body and a detachable and reversible panel for creating a pocket on the body that can be attached to the convertible luggage, such as with a zipper. The panel has a first face and a second face on an opposite side of the panel. The detachable and reversible panel can be securely attached to at least a portion of the body in at least a first configuration with the first face facing out and in at least a second configuration with the first face facing in and the second face facing out. In one form, the first face matches a color and a fabric of the body, and the second face comprises a contrasting fabric or design. Such design can be a pattern,

artwork, or a logo. The detachable and reversible panel can be fastened to the body with a reversible zipper. The reversible zipper includes a pair of tapes, wherein one tape has an insertion pin at each end.

[0007] In another aspect, the present invention comprises a plurality of detachable and reversible panels for attachment to a piece of luggage. The first panel has a front face and a rear face, wherein the rear face has a different appearance than the front face. The first panel also includes a first portion of a reversible zipper attached to the front face. The second panel has a front face and a rear face, wherein the rear face has a different appearance than the front face. The second panel also includes an edge extending around the front and rear faces and a reversible zipper, wherein the reversible zipper extends around at least a portion of the edge of the second panel and mates with the cooperating zipper portion on the first panel. At least one of the faces can include a design. Preferably, the first panel is reversible such that the front face is visible in a first configuration and the rear face is visible in a second configuration. The first panel can attach to either an external surface or an internal surface of the piece of luggage. Additionally or alternatively, the second panel can form a pocket when attached to the first panel.

[0008] In still another aspect, the present invention comprises an improvement to a piece of luggage of the type having a body with a front portion, a rear portion, and a plurality of size portions for defining at least one inner compartment for housing items. The improvement includes a removable and reversible front portion having a first face and a second face, wherein the detachable and reversible front portion can be securely attached to the body in a first configuration with the front face facing out and in at least a second configuration with the first face facing in and the second face facing out. Preferably, a removable and reversible panel is attached to the front portion. In another form, at least one face of the front portion matches the appearance of a fabric clothing item worn by a user of the luggage such that at times the luggage can match the clothing item and at other times not.

[0009] These and other features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent upon reading the following specification in conjunction with the accompanying drawing figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

[0010] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a piece of convertible luggage having a reversible panel according to an example embodiment of the present invention and shown in a closed configuration.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the convertible luggage of FIG. 1 and shown in an open configuration.

[0012] FIG. 3 is a front view of a reversible zipper having a single slider for use with the reversible panel of the present invention according to a first example embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 4 is a front view of a reversible zipper having a double slider for use with the reversible panel of the present invention according to a second example embodiment of the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 5A is a front view of a reversible zipper having a double slider for use with the reversible panel of the present invention according to a third example embodiment of the present invention and shown in a closed configuration.

[0015] FIG. 5B is a front view of the reversible zipper of FIG. 5A and shown with the two tapes separated from one another.

[0016] FIG. 5C is a detail view of an end of a tape for the reversible zipper of FIG. 5A according to another example embodiment.

[0017] FIGS. 6A-6D show various views of a slider that can be used with the reversible zipper of FIG. 5A.

[0018] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of a U-shaped channel member for retaining a bottom portion of the slider of FIGS. 6A-6D.

[0019] FIG. 8 is a partial front view of a reversible zipper for use with the reversible panel of FIG. 1 according to a fourth example embodiment of the present invention.

[0020] FIG. 9 is a front view of a reversible panel having a pair of right tapes secured thereto for cooperating with a piece of convertible luggage of the present invention.

[0021] FIG. 10 is a front view of a piece of luggage for receiving the panel of FIG. 9.

[0022] FIG. 11 is a perspective view of a piece of convertible luggage having a reversible panel attached to a pocket thereof according to another example embodiment of the present invention.

[0023] FIG. 12 is a top view of an alternative embodiment of the luggage of FIG. 11.

[0024] FIG. 13 is a front view of a reversible panel for use with the convertible luggage of FIG. 11 or 12 and having a plurality of reversible pockets thereon.

[0025] FIGS. 14A-14F are various views of reversible panels for use with the convertible luggage of present invention.

[0026] FIG. 15 is a perspective view of a piece of convertible luggage having a reversible panel that forms a pocket according to another example embodiment of the present invention.

[0027] FIG. 16A is a perspective view of a reversible strap for use with the convertible luggage of the present invention.

[0028] FIG. 16B is a sectional view of a reversible strap of FIG. 16A and shown in a closed configuration.

[0029] FIGS. 17 and 18 are perspective views of the convertible luggage of FIG. 15, and showing a pocket liner.

[0030] FIG. 19 is a perspective view of a piece of convertible luggage according to yet another embodiment of the present invention.

[0031] FIG. 20 is a perspective view of a notebook cover having a reversible pocket attached thereon according to another example embodiment of the present invention.

[0032] FIG. 21 is a perspective view of a folio having a reversible pocket attached thereon according to another example embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0033] Referring now to the drawing figures, in which like reference numbers refer to like parts throughout the several views, preferred forms of the present invention will now be described by way of example embodiments. It is to be understood that the embodiments described and depicted herein are only selected examples of the many and various forms that the present invention may take, and that these examples are not intended to be exhaustive or limiting of the claimed invention. Also, as used in the specification including the appended claims, the singular forms "a," "an," and "the" include the plural unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. Ranges may be expressed herein as from "about" or "approximately" one particular value and/or to "about" or "approximately" another particular value. When such a range is expressed, another embodiment includes from the one particular value and/or to the other particular value. Similarly, when values are expressed as approximations, by use of the antecedent "about," it will be understood that the particular value forms another embodiment.

[0034] FIGS. 1 and 2 depict a perspective view of a piece of convertible luggage 10 having a reversible panel 12. As defined herein, luggage can include, but is not limited to, conventional luggage or suitcases (soft-sided or hard-sided, large or small) used by travelers, backpacks, briefcases, computer cases, ladies hand bags or purses, men's hand bags, fanny packs, athletic bags, duffle bags, laundry bags and bins, cell phone cases, wallets, camera bags, cosmetic bags, coolers, notebooks/portfolios, diaper bags, golf bags, and any other type of bag. As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, the piece of luggage 10 has a body 14 that defines an inner compartment 15. The body 14 has a front portion 18 (which in the depicted embodiment is substantially formed by the panel 12), a back portion 20, and side portions 22. The body 14 can be rigid or substantially rigid or the body 14 can be flexible or substantially flexible. Preferably the body 14 is formed of or is covered with a fabric 23 and finished with piping 24. Such fabric 23 can include, but is not limited to, leather, nylon, urethane, canvas, mesh, suede, fur, vinyl, velvet, silk, beaded material, cotton, cotton blends, polyester, and polyester blends. Optionally, the piece of luggage 10 includes a handle 25 or a strap and one or more wheels 26. Alternatively, the piece of luggage 10 can be a clutch-type bag without any handles, straps, or wheels.

[0035] Preferably, the panel 12 is removable and reversible and has a first side or face 30, as shown in FIG. 1, and a second side or face 32, as shown in FIG. 2. For example, the first side 30 of the panel 12 can be constructed of a fabric to match the color and fabric of the body 14. Thus, if the piece of luggage 10 is a black suitcase constructed of ballistic nylon, then the first side 30 of the panel can be (but is not limited to be) constructed of black ballistic nylon. Alternatively, the first side 30 can be constructed of a different fabric, color, and/or design than that of the luggage 10. The second side 32 of the panel 12 can include a design 34, such as for example, a logo, artwork, or pattern, as depicted in FIG. 2. The design can be used to promote a business or sports team, or the design can be used to distinguish the piece of luggage from other similar pieces of luggage such as when a traveler is picking up his or her bags at a baggage claim terminal. For example, a user of the piece of luggage 10 can promote his or her company on a business

trip by displaying a corporate logo that is on the rear side of the panel, but convert the same piece of luggage **10** to a configuration with a matching front panel (on the reverse side) for a personal trip. A user can also use a panel that reflects his or her personal style. Moreover, both sides of the panel can be constructed of black ballistic nylon, but the second side includes a logo. Those skilled in the art will understand that the logo can be placed on the luggage in any conventional manner, such as stenciling, silk-screening, stitching, applying an appliqué, or the like. In another example, a print or a pattern can be used, such as a plaid, paisley, stripes, sawtooth, houndstooth, polka dots, animal prints, characters, shapes, or the like. Alternatively or additionally, a user can customize a panel with his or her name or other identifying information. Still further, a user can use a solid print in a contrasting color to that of the luggage so as to easily identify the luggage (such as, for example, a pink or lime green panel against a black suitcase). Additionally, the user can customize the luggage **10** by using a panel **12** having at least one face that matches the appearance of a fabric clothing item that the user is wearing. Thus, at times the luggage can match the clothing item and at other times not. In still another embodiment of the panel **12**, one face can include a clear pocket so that any fabric panel can be inserted therein.

[0036] As shown in FIG. 1, the panel **12** is the entire front side of the body **14**. However, those skilled in the art will understand that the panel **12** can alternatively cover the entire rear or side of the body. Although FIG. 1 depicts a generally rectangular panel **12** forming the front portion of the body, those skilled in the art will also understand that the panel **12** can have various sizes and shapes and can cover or form only a portion of the front, rear, or side of the body. Additionally, one or more panels **12** can be attached to an inner surface of the luggage **10** so as to provide discrete compartments for particular items.

[0037] The panel **12** can be attached to the body **14** with one or more conventional fastening techniques, such as for example, reversible zippers, hook and loop material, snaps, buttons, ties, buckles, channel fasteners, hook and eye fasteners, magnets, or the like. Preferably, one or more reversible zippers **36** are used to securely fasten an edge **38** of the panel **12** to the body **14**. The zipper or fastener can secure the entire perimeter of the panel **12**, or the zipper or fastener can secure only a portion of the perimeter of the panel. As shown in FIG. 2, the zipper **36** is on the inside of the luggage. Thus, the entire front panel **12** can be removed and reversed. By placing the zipper **36** on the inside of the luggage, the zipper is hidden from sight, as the zipper is beneath the piping **24** on the front of the luggage. Moreover, a detachable and removable lining **27** (common in suitcases) can be attached to inside of the luggage so that when the lining is zipped around the perimeter and over the face **32**, the lining completely covers the zipper (or other fastener). Thus, the lining **27** hides the reversible zipper **36** from view when the luggage **10** is opened. Alternatively, the zipper **36** can be external to the luggage **10**. The reversible zipper **36** can be any of the zippers shown in FIGS. 3-7 or any other reversible zipper.

[0038] FIG. 3 shows a front view of a reversible zipper **36** according to a first embodiment of the present invention. The zipper **36** includes a left tape **42**, which is attached to the luggage **10**, and a right tape **44**, which is attached to the

panel **12**. However, those skilled in the art will understand that the left tape **42** can be attached to the panel **12** and the right tape **44** can be attached to the luggage **10**. The left and right tapes **42** and **44** have interlocking teeth **46** joined together with a slider **48**. Preferably, the teeth **46** are symmetrical, and the measure of the distance between the teeth is the same as the measure of the width each tooth. The slider **48** has a pull-tab **50**. At a first end **52** of the zipper **36** is a retainer box **54** secured to the left tape **42** and an insertion pin **56** secured to the right tape **44**. At the opposite end **57** is a left top stop **60** secured to the left tape **42**. The top stop **60** is shown as having a similar shape to the insertion pin **58**, but the stop has a thicker part or a catch to arrest the movement of the slider. Alternatively, a ball-type stop can be employed. Those skilled in the art will understand that any of a variety of zipper stops can be used. A right insertion pin **58** is secured to opposite end of the right tape **44**. Thus, each end of the right tape **44** includes an insertion pin. As shown in FIG. 3, the tapes **42** and **44** are flush with the edge of the top stop **60** and the insertion pin **58**. However, those skilled in the art will understand that the tape **44** can extend beyond the insertion pins **56** and **58**. Similarly, the tape **42** can extend beyond the stop **60** and retainer box **54**. Preferably, the insertion pin **58** is identical or substantially similar to the insertion pin **56** so that either end of the right tape **44** can be inserted into the slider **48**.

[0039] The zipper **36** can be constructed of nylon, plastic, and/or metal components, for example. Those skilled in the art will understand generally how to construct the zipper **36**. Moreover, those skilled in the art will understand that coil zippers can also be employed. In such cases, the coil is preferably tooled to be identical or substantially similar on both the front and back of the zipper, which is unlike conventional coil zippers where one side includes most of the coils and the other side is what is referred to as an invisible zipper.

[0040] FIG. 4 shows a front view of a reversible zipper **136** according to a second embodiment of the present invention. The zipper **136** is substantially similar to the zipper **36** with the exception of the differences noted herein. The zipper **136** includes two sliders **148**, **150**, with two corresponding pull-tabs **149**, **151**, attached to the left tape **142**. The right tape **144** is the separating portion and includes two insertion pins **156**, **158**, one at each end. Preferably, the insertion pins **156**, **158** are identical or substantially similar to one another. Thus, either end of the tape **144** can be inserted into the sliders **148**, **150**. The left tape **142** includes a stop at each end. Thus, a first stop **154** is located at one end and a second stop **160** is located at the other. Preferably, the stops **154**, **160** are identical or substantially similar to one another. The stops can be any of the variety of conventional zipper stops, such as a ball-type stop, or a stop that looks like an insertion pin, but has a catch for arresting the movement of the zipper. As shown in FIG. 4, as the sliders **148**, **150** are moved toward one another, the tapes **142** and **144** remain open and separate. As the sliders **148**, **150** are moved away from one another (and hence towards the ends of the tapes), the tapes **142**, **144** close, and the teeth **146** interlock.

[0041] FIGS. 5A and 5B show a reversible zipper **236** according to a third embodiment of the present invention. The zipper **236** is substantially similar to the zipper **136** with the exception of the differences noted herein. The zipper **236** has a left tape **242** and a right tape **244**. The left tape **242**

includes retainer boxes **252** and **260**, one at each end (in lieu of the stops **154** and **160** of the zipper **136**). The right tape **244** includes insertion pins **256**, **258**, one at each end. Thus, either end of the right tape **244** can be inserted in either of the sliders **248**, **250** and corresponding the retainer boxes **252** and **260**. As the sliders **248**, **250** are moved towards one another, the tapes **242**, **244** close. As the sliders **248**, **250** are moved away from one another, the tapes **242**, **244** separate.

[0042] Also, the tapes **242** and **244** can extend beyond the retainer boxes **252** and **260**, so as to eliminate any potential gap in the fabrics if the zipper were configured in closed (or circular) configuration (so that the ends of the tapes and retainer boxes meet). In other words, the zipper **236** can extend around the entire perimeter of the panel. Additionally, when using a pair of sliders, it may be difficult to insert each insertion pin into each slider if both tapes are secured to even a somewhat rigid panel or body. To overcome this, one of the tapes can include a riveted or pivotal end **270**, as shown in FIG. 5C. Thus, the insertion pin **258** can be attached to a small piece of tape **272** that is connected to the main tape **244** with a rivet **274** or other pivot such that the insertion pin can be easily inserted into the slider.

[0043] Alternatively, a removable slider **280**, as shown in FIGS. 6A-6D, can be used to overcome any potential problems of inserting the insertion pin into each slider. The slider **280** includes a base **282** to which a pull-tab **284** is connected. The base **282** itself has a top **286** connected to a bottom **288** with a generally Y-shaped insert **290** which serves to separate and to close the teeth. The insert **290** of the slider **280** can further include a hinge **292** or a pivot pin such that the top **286** of the base **282** pivots about the hinge so that the slider can open. Thus, an insertion pin can be inserted into the slider **280** and the top **286** can be pivoted (or snapped) shut. Preferably, the slider **280** includes a latch for keeping the top **282** secured to the bottom **288**. Alternatively, the top **286** and bottom **288** of the base **282** can be releasably connected to one another and snap on and off. Thus, the top can be completely removed, the insertion pin can be inserted and lay on top of the bottom, and then the top can be secured to (or snapped onto) the bottom. Those skilled in the art will understand how to construct a removable zipper.

[0044] Optionally, the zipper employing the slider **280** can further include a generally U-shaped channel member **296**, as shown in FIG. 7, into which the bottom **288** can be securely retained when the top **286** is snapped off or opened. The channel member **296** can be constructed of any suitable material, including, for example, metal or plastic, and can be attached by any conventional fastening technique, such as by gluing or bonding. Those skilled in the art will understand how to construct and attach the U-shaped member to the tape **244**.

[0045] FIG. 8 shows a front view of a reversible zipper **336** according to a fourth example embodiment of the present invention. The zipper **336** is substantially similar to the zipper **136** (of FIG. 4) with the exception of the differences noted herein. The zipper **336** includes left tape **342** and right tape **344**. The right tape **344** includes insertion pins **356** and **358**, one at each end of the tape. The left tape **342** includes an insertion pin **352** at one end and a double retainer box **360** at the other. The double retainer box **360** includes three slots **362**, **364**, and **366** for receiving insertion

pins **356**, **358**, and **352**, respectively. Additionally, by attaching the double retainer box **360** to a single end of the tape **342**, the zipper can be sewn or attached flush with the item to which it is sewn without a gap between the item and the zipper.

[0046] Alternatively, a combination of two right tapes can be used so as to allow the panel **12'** to be reversed and attached to the luggage **10'**, as shown in FIGS. 9 and 10. FIG. 9 shows a first right tape **436** and a second right tape **438** secured to the panel **12'**. The first right tape **436** can be secured at or near an edge of the front face **30'**. The second right tape **438** can be secured at or near an edge of the rear face **32'**, as shown in FIG. 10. The first and second right tapes **436** and **438** mate with a left tape **440** secured to the luggage to be attached. The first right tape **436** includes in an insertion pin **442** at a first end and a stop **444** at the other end. The second right tape **438** includes a stop **446** at a first end and an insertion pin **448** at the other. The left tape **440** includes a retainer box **452** at one end and a stop **454** at the other. The left tape **440** also includes a slider **456**. Thus, either the insertion pin **442** of the first right tape **436** or the insertion pin **448** of the second right tape **438** can be inserted into the slider **456** and retainer box **452** so as to attach the panel **12'** to the luggage **10'**. Thus, as the slider **456** is pulled from the first end to the opposite end, the right and left tapes close together.

[0047] Those skilled in the art will understand that the reversible zippers can have various configurations. Such modifications can include attaching the sliders to the right tape, or rearranging where the insertion pins, stops, and retainer boxes are located. Still further, one or more sliders having various configurations of pull-tabs can be used. Each slider can include one or two pull-tabs. Additionally, the ends of the tapes can include plastic pieces so as to add rigidity. Moreover, the right tape and the left tape can have different colors. Additionally, the teeth on the right tape can be a different color than those on the left tape. Moreover, the teeth on either tape can include a first color on a first side and a second color on the rear side. Those skilled in the art will understand how to make such modifications.

[0048] In another embodiment, as shown in FIG. 11, a piece of luggage **70** includes a body **72** with a pocket **74** thereon to which a panel **76** can attach. The panel **76** can be zipped onto the pocket **74**. Alternatively, the panel **76** can slide within a pair of channels **78** and **79** created by a pair of generally elongated U or L shaped members **80**, **81** extending along at least a portion of the sides of the pocket **74**, as generally depicted in the top view of FIG. 12.

[0049] Moreover, multiple panels **12** (such as that seen in FIG. 1) and **76** can be securely attached to the front, back, and/or sides of the body. Additionally, the panels **12** and **76** can provide compartments or pockets **88** for added functionality, as shown in FIG. 13. The pockets **88** can have various shapes and sizes and can be constructed of various materials. Moreover, the pockets **88** can be customized for a particular purpose. For example, one pocket can be constructed of a vinyl material with subcompartments to hold various toiletries. Another pocket can be constructed with subcompartments to hold office supplies. Those skilled in the art will understand how to construct the various pockets or compartments.

[0050] FIGS. 14A-14F show a front and back of a first panel **76** and a pair of panels **71**, **73** that can be layered on

the surface of the first panel so as to create a different look or function. For example, the front side of the first panel 76, as shown in FIG. 14A can comprise a solid color, and the rear side can comprise a first pattern, as shown in FIG. 14B. Similarly, the panels 71 and 73 can include any of a variety of colors, prints, patterns, artwork, etc., as generally shown in FIGS. 14C-14D. Thus, either side of the panel 71 or 73 can attach to either the front or rear side of the panel 76 by mating the zipper portion 75' on the edge of panel 71 or 73 with the zipper portion 75 on the panel 76. Thus, with three different panels, which can be neatly attached to a single piece of luggage, a user can create eight different looks.

[0051] Additionally, pockets can be formed by the panels 71 and 73 when attached to the base panel 76. Thus, one or more smaller, reversible panels can be securely attached to the base panel 76 so as to provide a different aesthetic look and different functionality. Advantageously, by purchasing one piece of luggage (such as a purse) and three panels, which are themselves compact, a female traveler can simply take one purse with her while traveling, but she can configure the purse with eight different looks (such as business-look, a sporty-look, a formal-look, a casual-look, etc.). All panels and pockets can fit conveniently within the inner compartment of the luggage such that luggage can be configured into a different style whenever and wherever. Those skilled in the art will understand that there are infinite possibilities for using various panels of various shapes, sizes, colors, fabrics and designs.

[0052] Still alternatively, a piece of luggage 90 can include a reversible panel 92 that forms a pocket 94, as shown in FIGS. 15 and 17. The panel 92 can have a first design on front face 96, and a different design on an opposite face (not shown). Those skilled in the art will understand that the panel 92 can have various shapes and sizes. In the depicted embodiment, the panel 92 is attached to the luggage 90 with a zipper of the present invention, such as zipper 36, that is in the shape of a "U." In other words, the zipper 36 attaches three sides of the panel 92 to the luggage 90, although, those skilled in the art will understand that the panel can be attached at all four sides or along fewer sides. The panel 92 can include the sides 93 or the luggage 90 can provide the sides 93 (in which case, the zipper would attach to edge of the sides and not directly to the luggage).

[0053] As shown in this embodiment, the panel 92 extends to the lower edge of the luggage 90. Alternatively, the panel 12 can be placed anywhere on the body of the luggage 90. Those skilled in the art will understand that any of the reversible zippers of the present invention can be used to secure the panel 92 to the luggage 90. Those skilled in the art will also understand that the zipper can be hidden or can blend in with the fabric color, so as to provide a more aesthetically pleasing look. Thus, the panel 92 creates a pocket 94 when attached to the luggage 90. In the depicted embodiment, the pocket 94 is gusseted, though those skilled in the art will understand that various pockets of various shapes and sizes can be employed as well.

[0054] Additionally, the luggage 90 can include one or more interchangeable handles or straps 101. The straps 101 can be interchanged so as to complement or contrast with face of the panel that is facing outward. Preferably, the straps 101 are secured the luggage 90 with a releasable fastener, such as with a carabineer-type clip. Those skilled in the art

will understand that the interchangeable straps can be secured to the bag with any conventional, yet releasable, fasteners, such as but not limited to, snaps, hook and loop material, buttons, buckles, hook and eye fasteners, ties, or the like. Additionally, the straps 101 can themselves be reversible, as shown in FIGS. 16A and 16B. The straps 101 can include a first surface 103 and a second surface 105. Preferably, the first and second surfaces 103, 105 provide a different look or appearance. For example, one side can include a solid color, and the other side can include a print or pattern (and can even match the print or pattern on the panel 92). Preferably, the strap 101 rolls or folds into a shape generally resembling that of cylinder (or a flatted cylinder). Thus the surface 103 attaches to the surface 105 such as with a reversible zipper 36 of the present invention. Such attachment can be alternatively provided with buttons, snaps, buckles, hook and loop material, magnetic closures, hook and eye fasteners, ties, or the like. Thus, in one configuration, a first color is exposed, and in a second configuration, a different color or pattern is exposed. Those skilled in the art will understand how to configure such reversible strap. Moreover, the straps can include one or more holes 107 or openings for inserting a clip and connecting to the piece of luggage. Though the holes 107 are depicted as being centered on the strap 101, those skilled in the art will understand that the holes or openings can be located at any suitable place on the strap. Additionally, the straps can include a flap sewn or otherwise attached to the underside of the strap so as to hide the zipper or fasteners.

[0055] Referring back to FIGS. 15 and 17, the luggage 90 can include a flap 102 that overlays at least a portion of the panel 92. The flap 102 provides a closure for the pocket 94 created by the attachment of the panel 92 to the luggage 90. Additionally, the flap 102 can be secured to the panel with a fastener, such as a faux buckle 110, as shown in FIGS. 15 and 17. As shown in FIG. 15, the faux buckle 110 is attached to the flap 102. On the underside of the faux buckle 110 is a first portion of a magnetic snap 112. As shown in FIG. 17, a second cooperating snap 114 is attached to opposite face of the front panel. The first and second portions of the magnetic snap provide a closure for the pocket when they are connected together. Alternatively, various other fasteners can be employed to securely hold the flap closed. For example, the panel 92 and the flap 102 can include snaps, buttons, magnetic closures, an actual buckle, hook and loop material, hook and eye fasteners, ties, or the like to securely hold the flap 102 against the panel 92.

[0056] Optionally, the pocket can include a pocket liner 116, as shown in FIGS. 17 and 18. The pocket liner 116 serves to protect the inner surface of the panel 92 and can protect the outer surface of the luggage. The liner can be constructed of any suitable fabric and can be securely attached to the luggage and the panel 92 with any conventional fastener, such as but not limited to, a snap, button, hook and loop material, zipper, tie, magnetic closure, or the like. Preferably, the liner 116 is sewn into the luggage 90 and forms a pouch or a pocket for securely holding items, even when the panel 92 is removed and reversed. Those skilled in the art will understand that the pocket liner 116 can be constructed in a variety of manners. As shown in FIG. 17, the pocket liner 116 has a thin flap 118 for connecting to the panel 92. Fasteners (not shown) can be located on the inside of each side of the panel 92 to mate with corresponding fasteners 119 or openings in the liner 116. For example, hook

and loop material can be attached to the panel and to front surface of the luggage. The liner 116 can be inserted between the two faces of the panel so as to protect the face facing towards the luggage. Thus, the contents of the pocket do not have to be removed when the panel is reversed. Additionally, the pocket contents will not damage the side of the panel 92 facing inward. Alternatively, the flap 118 can include a variety of fasteners, such as snaps, hook and loop material, buttons, etc., for securely holding the liner against the panel 92. Alternatively, the pocket liner can simply be a pouch that is inserted into the pocket.

[0057] FIG. 19 depicts yet another example embodiment of piece of convertible luggage 120 of the present invention. The luggage 120 includes one or more panel pockets. As depicted in FIG. 19, two panel pockets 122, 123 are shown, one on each side of the luggage 120. Flaps 124, 125 provide a closure for the panel pockets 122, 123, respectively. Preferably, the flaps 124, 125 are formed as part of the luggage 120, although the flaps can be formed as part of the panel pockets 122, 123. Those skilled in the art will understand that various other removable and reversible panels can be included anywhere on the body of the luggage 120 so as to create a different look or functionality. Those skilled in the art will also understand that the straps 126 can be interchangeable with other straps so as to provide a different look.

[0058] In another embodiment shown in FIG. 20, the panel 92 can be attached to a notebook cover, day planner or organizer, a multi-ring binder, or portfolio cover 130. In the depicted embodiment, the cover 130 zips closed, although those skilled in the art will understand that any conventional fastener, such as hook and loop material, snaps, magnetic closures, buckles, buttons, hook and eye fasteners, ties, or the like can be used to provide a closure for the cover 130. Those skilled in the art will further understand that the cover 130 may not include a closure. Preferably, the portfolio cover 130 can house items such as calendars, notebooks, etc. The panel 92 can be secured to the portfolio cover 130 in any manner described herein. In one embodiment, the portfolio cover provides a flap 132. Alternatively, the flap 132 can be a part of the panel 92. Those skilled in the art will understand that the portfolio cover 130 can optionally include a strap or a handle to facilitate carrying the portfolio. Alternatively, the portfolio cover does not include a handle or strap, and as such, a user would carry it in a manner similar to carrying a clutch bag.

[0059] In another embodiment shown in FIG. 21, a folio 500 includes a body 502 and panel 504 attached thereto to form a pocket 506. The folio 500 can include large envelopes or pouches, constructed of any material, whether fabric, leather, or the like. The pocket 506 can be covered with a flap 508 that is part of the folio 500, or the pocket can be covered with its own flap. Optionally, the folio 500 can include a strap 510 and/or a handle 512. The strap 510 can be used to carry the folio over the user's shoulder, while the user can grip the handle 512 with his or her hand. The strap 510 and handle 512 can be removably secured to the folio 500, such as with releasable fasteners including zippers, buckles, hook and loop material, carabineers, clips, snaps, buttons, and the like. Alternatively, the strap 510 and the handle 512 can be permanently or semi-permanently secured to the folio 500 such as by gluing, bonding, or sewing.

[0060] In still another embodiment, a transparent or substantially transparent pocket can house a panel. For example, the pocket can be formed of a clear vinyl or clear urethane. The pocket can be removably secured to the body or the pocket can be permanently attached to the body. The pocket can provide a housing for panels having different fabrics and textures, thereby resulting in an unlimited number of looks for one piece of luggage.

[0061] In yet another embodiment, existing luggage can be retrofitted with reversible panels. For example, in the case of a piece of luggage with an existing external pocket, a removable pocket or panel can be inserted into the existing pocket such that it hangs over the existing pocket, thereby giving the appearance of a different piece of luggage. Alternatively, existing luggage can be retrofitted with one tape of a reversible zipper sewn thereto or a portion of any other fastener such that a reversible panel can be attached thereto. Still alternatively, a separate panel (or portion thereof) with appropriate fasteners can be bonded, glued, or sewn onto the luggage so as to provide an attachment surface for the detachable and removable panel of the present invention. Those skilled in the art will understand that various retrofits can be employed and still be within the scope of the present invention.

[0062] While the invention has been described with reference to preferred and example embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that a variety of modifications, additions and deletions are within the scope of the invention, as defined by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. Convertible luggage, comprising:

a body;

a detachable and reversible panel for creating a pocket on the body, wherein the detachable and reversible panel includes a first face and a second face on an opposite side of the panel, and wherein the detachable and reversible panel can be securely attached to at least a portion of the body in at least a first configuration with the first face facing out and in at least a second configuration with the first face facing in and the second face facing out.

2. The convertible luggage of claim 1, wherein the first face matches a color and a fabric of the body.

3. The convertible luggage of claim 2, wherein the second face comprises a contrasting fabric or a design.

4. The convertible luggage of claim 3, wherein the design is one of a pattern, artwork, or a logo.

5. The convertible luggage of claim 1, further comprising a pocket liner.

6. The convertible luggage of claim 1, wherein the detachable and reversible panel is fastened to the body with a reversible zipper.

7. The convertible luggage of claim 6, wherein the reversible zipper has a pair of tapes, wherein one tape has an insertion pin at each end.

8. The convertible luggage of claim 1, wherein the detachable and reversible panel is fastened to the body with one of a buckle, snap, channel fastener, hook and eye fastener, button, hook and loop material, or a magnetic closure.

9. The convertible luggage of claim 1, wherein a second reversible and detachable panel can be attached to the first panel.

10. The convertible luggage of claim 1, further comprising a reversible strap.

11. A plurality of detachable and reversible panels for attachment to a piece of luggage, comprising:

- a first detachable and reversible panel, comprising:
 - a front face;
 - a rear face, wherein the rear face has a different appearance than the front face; and
 - a first portion of a reversible zipper, wherein the first portion of the reversible zipper is attached to the front face; and
- a second detachable and reversible panel for creating a pocket on the first detachable and reversible panel, comprising:
 - a front face;
 - a rear face, wherein the rear face has a different appearance than the front face;
 - an edge extending around the front and rear faces;
 - a cooperating portion of the reversible zipper, wherein the cooperating portion of the reversible zipper extends around at least a portion of the edge and mates with the first portion attached to the front face of the first panel.

12. The plurality of panels of claim 11, wherein the piece of luggage has an external surface, and the first panel attaches to the external surface.

13. The plurality of panels of claim 11, wherein the piece of luggage has an internal surface, and the first panel attaches to the internal surface.

14. The plurality of panels of claim 11, wherein at least the first panel is reversible such that the front face is visible in a first configuration and the rear face is visible in a second configuration.

15. The plurality of panels of claim 11, wherein the first panel has an edge and wherein at least a portion of the edge is fastened to the piece of luggage.

16. The plurality of panels of claim 15, wherein the second panel forms a pocket when attached to the first panel.

17. The panel of claim 11, wherein at least one of the front and rear faces comprises a design.

18. In a piece of luggage of the type having a body with a front portion, a rear portion, and a plurality of size portions for defining at least one inner compartment for housing items, the improvement therein comprising:

- a removable and reversible front portion having a first face and a second face, wherein the detachable and reversible front portion can be securely attached to the body in a first configuration with the front face facing out and in at least a second configuration with the first face facing in and the second face facing out.

19. The improvement of claim 18, further comprising a removable and reversible panel attached to the front portion.

20. The improvement of claim 18, wherein the front face has a different appearance than the rear face.

21. The improvement of claim 20, wherein at least one face of the front portion matches the appearance of a fabric clothing item worn by a user of the luggage such that the at times the luggage can match the clothing item and at other times not.

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