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(71) Applicant  
**BCL Limited (United Kingdom),  
Bath Road, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 4PA**

(72) Inventors  
**Kenneth Wade,  
Keith Pye**

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service  
**Boult, Wade & Tennant,  
27 Furnival Street, London WC4A 1PQ**

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(54) **Decorative packaging films**

(57) A decorative packaging film comprises a base film of a synthetic polymeric material (e.g. an olefinic polymer) containing a highly light absorbent pigment, e.g. carbon black, and at least one surface layer of a second synthetic polymeric material which is light transmittable and which contains a solid particulate material e.g. calcium carbonate, having a particle size of from 0.1 to 10 microns and present in an amount from 1 to 40% by weight, the combination having been stretched to form voids in the surface layer or layers at the sites of the particles of the particulate material. The appearance of the film varies from an intense opalescence to a lustrous metallic appearance.

**GB 2 150 881 A**

## SPECIFICATION

**Decorative packaging films**

5 This invention is concerned with decorative packaging film and, in particular, with a packaging film having a lustrous appearance.

10 It is well known to manufacture a packaging film having an opalescent pearl-like appearance by forming in the body of the film a large number of microscopic voids. This is achieved, for example in polypropylene film, by incorporating within the film a dispersion of inert particulate material for example particulate calcium carbonate having a  
15 particulate size of about 3 microns and then stretching the film in one or in two directions at right angles to each other at a temperature below its second order transition temperature when voids are formed at the site of each particle. Such films  
20 have wide applications in the packaging field, particularly in the packaging of food-stuffs.

According to the present invention, a method for the manufacture of a decorative packaging film comprises forming a base film of a synthetic poly-  
25 meric material incorporating a highly light-absorbent pigment, applying to at least one surface of the base layer a surface layer of a second synthetic polymeric material which is light transmittable and in which is dispersed from 1 to 40% by weight of a  
30 solid particulate material having a particle size of from 0.1 to 10 microns and stretching the combination of the base layer and surface layer or layers in one or more directions so as to form voids in the surface layer or layers at the sites of the parti-  
35 cles of the particulate material.

The packaging film so produced by the method of the present invention has an attractive lustrous appearance when viewed through a surface layer.

40 By selection of the thickness of the surface layer, the particle size of the particulate material and the concentration of the particulate material in the layer the appearance of the surface layer may be varied from an intense opalescence to a very distinctive lustrous metallic sheen. Further the film  
45 has a particular colouration depending upon the pigment incorporated in the base layer.

The base film may be any of the well known synthetic polymeric materials used for packaging films such as low, medium or high density poly-  
50 ethylene, linear low density polyethylene, polypropylene, a copolymer or terpolymer selected from the monomers ethylene, propylene or butene-1, and polyvinyl chloride which prior to formation into a film by melt extrusion through a film forming die has been pigmented either by dispersing a  
55 particulate pigment in the polymeric material or by incorporating a dyestuff.

The pigment must be in such quantity and of such a nature that a major proportion of the light  
60 transmitted by a surface layer is absorbed. A preferred hue for the pigment is black and preferably the pigment is carbon black in fine particulate form suspended in the polymeric material of the base film in an amount not less than 0.1% or exceeding  
65 about 10% by weight.

Other pigments having, for example, deep red or blue hues may usefully be employed in the practice of the invention to give different coloured and in particular, metallic effects to the product.

70 The second synthetic polymeric material applied as a surface layer to one or both surfaces of the base layer may be the same as or different from the synthetic material forming the base layer. It, too, may be a low, medium or high density polyethylene, a linear low density polyethylene, polypropylene, a copolymer or terpolymer selected from the monomers ethylene, propylene and butene-1, or polyvinyl chloride.

80 The solid particulate material may be of any of the materials commonly used in the production of the known opalescent pearl-like ("pearlised") films, that is, any mineral, for example talc, Wollastonite, mica, silica, titanium dioxide and most preferably in the present invention, calcium carbonate, or natural filler such as wood flour or a synthetic polymer having a melting point above the extrusion  
85 temperature of the second synthetic polymeric material such as a polyamide or a polyester. The particulate material preferably has an average size in the range from 1 to 5 microns and is present in the second synthetic polymeric material to an extent of from 2 to 20% by weight. The particulate material is conveniently introduced into the second synthetic material and intimately dispersed therein  
90 during batch mixing operations.

The surface layer or layers may be applied to one or both sides of the base layer by lamination, by melt extrusion or more conveniently by co-extrusion.

100 If required, a transparent heat-sealable composition layer may be applied to one or both surfaces of the base layer/ surface layer or layers combination to render the decorative packaging film heat-sealable and to increase the surface gloss. Such heat-sealable layer may be of any of the usual heat-sealing compositions, namely polyethylene, a copolymer of propylene with a minor proportion of ethylene, a linear copolymer of ethylene with a minor proportion of propylene or butene-1 or a terpolymer of propylene, ethylene and butene-1, and is  
105 conveniently applied to the base film/surface layer or layers combination by melt extrusion or co-extrusion.

The invention also includes a decorative packaging film when manufactured by a method in accordance with the invention.

115 Specific examples of the production of a decorative packaging film in accordance with the invention are now described.

*Example 1*

120 A melt of an intimate blend of polypropylene granules and 3% by weight of carbon black sandwiched between two outer layers of a melt of polypropylene containing in dispersion 5% by weight of uniformly dispersed particles of calcium carbonate having an average particle size of about 3 microns was co-extruded through a slot die. The melt combination was immediately quenched and the  
125 resulting film was then heated to a temperature of  
130

100°C and stretched 4.5 times in the longitudinal direction. Immediately thereafter the film was led into a stenter, heated to a temperature of 160°C and then stretched 10 times in the transverse direction. After heat-setting at a temperature of 150°C the film was trimmed at the edges and wound into a roll. The thickness of the layers on co-extrusion were so chosen that in the final film product the centre layer was 23 microns thick and each outer surface layer was 6 microns thick. On examination it was found that the product had on both sides a lustrous metallic appearance which resembled aluminium metallised film.

#### 15 *Example 2*

The procedure of Example 1 was repeated except that the outer layers of the co-extruded melt consisted of a propylene/ethylene copolymer in which the ethylene content was 4% by weight and in which one of the layers only contained 10% by weight of carbon black and the centre layer consisted of polypropylene containing 2.5% by weight of particulate Calcium Carbonate in which the average particle size was 3 microns. The thickness of the layers on co-extrusion were so chosen that in the final film product the centre layer was 23 microns thick and each of the outer layers were 6 microns thick. When viewed from the side of the clear outer layer, the product had a glossy lustrous metallised appearance resembling aluminium and when viewed from the side of the outer layer containing the carbon black the product was a satin black. Further the product was heat-sealable top-side to top-side and top-side to under-side.

#### 35 *Example 3*

The procedure of Example 2 was repeated except that the thicknesses of the layers on co-extrusion were so chosen that in the final product the centre layer was 35 microns thick and the outer layers were 2.5 microns thick and the centre layer contained 10% by weight of particulate Calcium Carbonate in which the average size of the particles was 3 microns. The product, when viewed from the side of the clear outer layer was a glossy intense lustrous white and when viewed from the side of the outer layer containing the carbon black was a satin black. The product was heat-sealable top-side to top-side and top-side to under-side.

#### 50 *Example 4*

The procedure of Example 1 was repeated except that the thickness of the layers on co-extrusion were adjusted so that the thickness of the outer layers in the product were 4 microns thick whilst retaining the thickness of the centre layer at 23 microns and the outer layers contained 5% by weight of particulate Calcium Carbonate having an average particle size of 1.5 microns. The product had on both sides a lustrous metallic appearance which resembled aluminium.

The examples hereinbefore described may be modified by substituting for polymer of the base film or that of the coating of the second synthetic polymeric material one or more of the following

polymers:

1. A polyester such as polyethylene terephthalate.
2. A propylene/ethylene copolymer having 2 to 6 per cent of ethylene, or any copolymer described in British Patent Specification No 1145199.
3. A linear random copolymer of ethylene and up to 12 mole per cent of an alpha olefin such as propylene or butene-1, as described in British Patent Specification No 1440311.
4. A terpolymer such as a commercially available polymer comprising 86.3 per cent propylene units, 12 per cent butene-1 and 1.7 per cent ethylene.

#### CLAIMS

1. A method for the manufacture of a decorative packaging film comprising forming a base film of a synthetic polymeric material incorporating a highly light absorbent pigment, applying to at least one surface of the base layer a second synthetic polymeric material which is light transmittable and in which is dispersed from 1 to 40% by weight of a solid particulate material having a particle size of from 0.1 to 10 microns and stretching the combination of the base layer and surface layer or layers in one or more directions so as to form voids in the surface layer or layers at the sites of the particles of the particulate material.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1 in which the base film is low, medium or high density polyethylene, linear low density polyethylene, polypropylene, a copolymer or terpolymer selected from the monomers ethylene, propylene or butene-1 or polyvinyl chloride.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 in which the pigment is carbon black.
4. A method as claimed in claim 1, claim 2 or claim 3 in which the pigment is present in the synthetic polymeric material of the base layer in an amount of from 0.1% to about 10% by weight.
5. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the second synthetic polymeric material is low, medium or high density polyethylene, linear low density polyethylene, polypropylene, a copolymer or terpolymer selected from the monomers ethylene, propylene or butene-1 or polyvinyl chloride.
6. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the solid particulate material dispersed in the second synthetic polymeric material is a mineral, a natural filler or a polymer having a melting point above the extrusion temperature of the second synthetic polymeric material.
7. A method as claimed in claim 6 in which the mineral is silica, titanium dioxide or calcium carbonate.
8. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the solid particulate material has an average particle size in the range between 1 and 5 microns and is present in the second polymeric material from 2 to 20% by weight.
9. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which a heat-sealable layer is applied to one or both surfaces of the base layer/

surface layer or surface layers combination.

10. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the second synthetic polymeric material layer is applied to the base film by melt extrusion or by co-extrusion.

11. A method as claimed in claim 1 substantially as specifically described with reference to any of the Examples.

12. A decorative film when manufactured by a method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims.