INFLATABLE SHAPE MAINTENANCE DEVICE FOR A HANDBAG OR PURSE

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ABSTRACT

An inflatable shape maintenance device is provided to maintain the shape of a handbag or purse by first inserting it into a void space within the handbag or purse while being substantially deflated or partially inflated. Then a gas is introduced into the inflatable shape maintenance device until it is at a desired turgidity, whereby a desired shape (form) of the handbag or purse is restored and/or maintained. The turgid inflatable shape maintenance device remains within the handbag or purse during times of storage. Then when use of the handbag or purse is desired the valve is opened and the gas contained with the inflatable shape maintenance device is passively or actively evacuated to decrease turgidity thereof. Once a sufficient volume of gas has been removed from the inflatable shape maintenance device, it may then be removed from inside of the handbag or purse.
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TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present disclosure relates to handbags or purses, and more particularly, to an inflatable shape maintenance device for a handbag or purse.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The shape of handbags or purses is essential to their function as a fashion accessory. They are often constructed of materials that are not rigid and are deformable. Manufacturers recommend that when handbags or purses are not being used their inner voids be filled with stuffing to help restore and maintain their original intended shape. Crumpled tissue paper is usually employed for this purpose. While generally sufficient for this purpose, the use of tissue lacks void fill precision and lacks sophistication associated with upscale handbags or purses.

SUMMARY

[0003] Therefore, a need exists for a device capable of filling voids inside of handbags or purses during storage periods in order to restore and preserve the originally designed shape thereof.

[0004] An inflatable shape maintenance device, according to the teachings of this disclosure, is provided to maintain the shape of a handbag or purse by first inserting it into a void space within the handbag or purse while being substantially deflated or partially inflated. Then a gas, e.g., air, is introduced into an at least one inflatable chamber through at least one valve, e.g., one valve to multiple chambers, multiple valves to multiple chambers, multiple valves to a single chamber, etc., until the inflatable shape maintenance device is at a desired turgidity and thereby restores and/or maintains a desired shape (form) of the handbag or purse.

[0005] The turgid inflatable shape maintenance device remains within the handbag or purse during times of storage. Then when use of the handbag or purse is desired the valve is opened and the gas contained with the inflatable shape maintenance device is passively or actively evacuated to decrease turgidity thereof, e.g., a normal pressure release of the gas through the valve(s) or by means of an evacuation pump coupled to the valve(s). Once a sufficient volume of gas has been removed from the inflatable shape maintenance device, it may then be removed from inside of the handbag or purse. The handbag or purse is now usable with its internal void space(s) available to fill with the contents of a user.

[0006] According to a specific example embodiment of this disclosure, an inflatable shape maintenance device comprises: a three dimensional envelope having walls comprising substantially gas-tight and flexible material that forms at least one inflatable chamber therein, and at least one valve in gas communication with the at least one inflatable chamber, wherein when gas is introduced through the least one valve the at least one inflatable chamber is inflated to a turgid form that substantially replicates an inside shape of a handbag or purse; inserting the inflatable shape maintenance device into the handbag or purse; and inflating the inflatable shape maintenance device to a turgid form while inside of the handbag or purse, wherein the shape of the handbag or purse is maintained by the inflated inflatable shape maintenance device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] A more complete understanding of the present disclosure thereof may be acquired by referring to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein:

[0009] FIG. 1 illustrates a side and end view of an inflatable shape maintenance device, according to a specific example embodiment of this disclosure;

[0010] FIG. 2 illustrates the inflatable shape maintenance device shown in FIG. 1 inserted into a handbag or purse, according to the teachings of this disclosure;

[0011] FIG. 3 illustrates a handbag or purse before insertion of the inflatable shape maintenance device;

[0012] FIG. 4 illustrates the inflatable shape maintenance device before inflation thereof in a handbag or purse;

[0013] FIG. 5 illustrates the inflatable shape maintenance device being inflated in a handbag or purse; and

[0014] FIG. 6 illustrates a handbag or purse having the inflatable shape maintenance device inflated therein for restoring and preserving the originally designed shape thereof.

[0015] While the present disclosure is susceptible to various modifications and alternative forms, specific example embodiments thereof have been shown in the drawings and are herein described in detail. It should be understood, however, that the description herein of specific example embodiments is not intended to limit the disclosure to the particular forms disclosed herein, but on the contrary, this disclosure is to cover all modifications and equivalents as defined by the appended claims.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] Referring now to the drawing, the details of specific example embodiments are schematically illustrated. Like elements in the drawings will be represented by like numbers, and similar elements will be represented by like numbers with a different lower case letter suffix.

[0017] Referring to FIG. 1, depicted is a side and end view of an inflatable shape maintenance device, according to a specific example embodiment of this disclosure. The inflatable shape maintenance device, generally represented by the numeral 100, comprises an inflatable three dimensional envelope 102 having walls 104 made from any material that is substantially gas-tight (e.g., gas impermeable) and flexible material that forms at least one inflatable chamber therein. At least one valve 106 is provided and is in fluid, e.g., gas, communication with the at least one inflatable chamber. The at least one valve 106 is used to introduce gas, e.g., air, into the at least one inflatable chamber so as to inflate the inflatable
shape maintenance device 100 into a turgid form that is the desired inside shape of the handbag or purse 202 (FIG. 2). The at least one valve 106 further provides for removal of the gas, either through natural gas pressure release or with an evacuation pump, inside of the at least one inflatable chamber to allow the envelope 102 to relax to a non-turgid form so that the inflatable shape maintenance device 100 may be easily removed without damaging the inside of the handbag or purse 202.

[0018] Referring to FIG. 2, depicted is the inflatable shape maintenance device shown in FIG. 1 inserted into a handbag or purse, according to the teachings of this disclosure. The inflatable shape maintenance device 100 is shown inserted into the handbag or purse 202 in an inflated turgid state, whereby a desired shape of the handbag or purse 202 is thereby maintained.

[0019] Referring to FIG. 3, depicted is a handbag or purse before insertion of the inflatable shape maintenance device. The handbag or purse 202 is shown in an undesirable shape that may cause deformation and wrinkling of the material making up the handbag or purse 202.

[0020] Referring to FIG. 4, depicted is the inflatable shape maintenance device before inflation thereof in a handbag or purse. The inflatable shape maintenance device 100 is shown in a deflated non-turgid state being inserted into the handbag or purse 202.

[0021] Referring to FIG. 5, depicted is the inflatable shape maintenance device being inflated in a handbag or purse. The inflatable shape maintenance device 100 is shown in an inflated turgid state inside of the handbag or purse 202. An inflation device 510, e.g., pump or gas cartridge or cylinder, is shown attached to the inflatable shape maintenance device 100 at the at least one valve 106. The inflation device 502 may be used to inflate the at least one inflatable chamber in lieu of merely manually blowing into the at least one valve 106. The inflation device 510 may be for example, but is not limited to, a built-in pump integral with the at least one inflatable chamber, and may be manually operable, battery powered, or powered by an external power source, e.g., wall-wart charger.

[0022] Referring to FIG. 6, depicted is a handbag or purse having the inflatable shape maintenance device inflated therein for restoring and preserving the originally designed shape thereof. The handbag or purse 202 is shown having a desirable shape that will substantially prevent deformation and wrinkling of the material making up the handbag or purse 202, according to the teachings of this disclosure.

[0023] It is contemplated and within the scope of this disclosure that the inflatable shape maintenance device 100 may be constructed in any (unlimited) different shapes and sizes so as to fit snugly into the inner void of a respective handbag or purse 202 once inflated. The shape of the inflatable shape maintenance device 100 may be custom in shape and specifically designed for a particular handbag or purse 202, or it may have a non-custom general shape that may be adapted for best fit inside of a handbag or purse 202 by means of inflation thereof, e.g., selective inflation of appropriate inflatable chambers of the inflatable shape maintenance device 100, thereby providing a single inflatable shape maintenance device 100 for a plurality of different shaped handbags or purses 202. It is also contemplated and within the scope of this disclosure that a preformed shaped outer covering (not shown in the drawing figures) that is substantially inelastic may be used over the inflatable shape maintenance device 100 so as to define a desired shape to fill the handbag or purse when the inflation chamber(s) is turgid. The preformed shaped outer covering may be made from substantially inelastic (e.g., doesn’t substantially stretch) solid, perforated, or netting materials.

[0024] It is contemplated and within the scope of this disclosure that a plurality of inflation chambers within the inflatable shape maintenance device 100, each one of the plurality of inflation chambers having an associated valve for gas to pass therethrough. Whereby each one of the plurality of inflation chambers may be adapted to produce a more exact and custom inflated fit within the particular handbag or purse 202. In addition, one such inflatable shape maintenance device 100 having a plurality of inflatable chambers may be used with more then one type or shape of handbag or purse 202.

[0025] It is contemplated and within the scope of this disclosure that the inflatable shape maintenance device disclosed and claimed herein may be effectively used to maintain the shape of a small duffle bag or backpack, and that all terms used herein referring to “handbag or purse” may equally apply to “small duffle bag or backpack.”

[0026] While embodiments of this disclosure have been depicted, described, and are defined by reference to example embodiments of the disclosure, such references do not imply a limitation on the disclosure, and no such limitation is to be inferred. The subject matter disclosed is capable of considerable modification, alteration, and equivalents in form and function, as will occur to those ordinarily skilled in the pertinent art and having the benefit of this disclosure. The depicted and described embodiments of this disclosure are examples only, and are not exhaustive of the scope of the disclosure.

We claim:

1. An inflatable shape maintenance device, comprising: a three dimensional envelope having walls comprising substantially gas-tight and flexible material that forms at least one inflatable chamber therein; and at least one valve in gas communication with the at least one inflatable chamber, wherein when gas is introduced through the at least one valve the at least one inflatable chamber is inflated to a turgid form that substantially replicates an inside shape of a handbag or purse.

2. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 1, further comprising an inflation device adapted to inflate the at least one inflatable chamber of the three dimensional envelope.

3. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 2, wherein the inflation device is integral with the at least one inflatable chamber.

4. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 2, wherein the inflation device is external to the at least one inflatable chamber.

5. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 2, wherein the inflation device is a pump.

6. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 5, wherein the pump is electrically driven.

7. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 5, wherein the pump is mechanically driven.

8. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 2, wherein the inflation device is a gas cartridge or cylinder.

9. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 1, wherein the at least one inflatable chamber is inflated by blowing into the at least one valve.
10. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 1, further comprising a preformed shaped outer covering that is substantially inelastic, wherein the preformed shaped outer covering substantially surrounds the inflatable shape maintenance device so that a desired shape is maintained when the at least one inflatable chamber of the inflatable shape maintenance device is inflated to the turgid form.

11. The inflatable shape maintenance device according to claim 10, wherein the preformed shaped outer covering is made from material selected from the group consisting of solid, perforated and netting.

12. An inflatable shape maintenance device, comprising:
   a three dimensional envelope having walls comprising substantially gas-tight and flexible material that forms at least one inflatable chamber therein; and
   at least one valve in gas communication with the at least one inflatable chamber, wherein when gas is introduced through the least one valve the at least one inflatable chamber is inflated to a turgid form that substantially replicates an inside shape of a small duffle bag or backpack.

13. A method for maintaining the shape of a handbag or purse, said method comprising the steps of:
   providing an inflatable shape maintenance device, comprising a three dimensional envelope having walls comprising substantially gas-tight and flexible material that forms at least one inflatable chamber therein, and
   at least one valve in gas communication with the at least one inflatable chamber, wherein when gas is introduced through the least one valve the at least one inflatable chamber is inflated to a turgid form that substantially replicates an inside shape of a handbag or purse;
   inserting the inflatable, shape maintenance device into the handbag or purse when the inflatable shape maintenance device is substantially deflated and in a non-turgid form;
   and
   inflating the inflatable shape maintenance device to a turgid form while inside of the handbag or purse, wherein the shape of the handbag or purse is maintained by the inflated inflatable shape maintenance device.

14. The method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of deflating the inflatable shape maintenance device before removing therefrom the handbag or purse.

15. The method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of surrounding the inflatable shape maintenance device with a preformed shaped outer covering that is substantially inelastic before the step of inserting the inflatable shape maintenance device into the handbag or purse.