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- (71) Applicant: GREEN-TREK LLC [US/US]; 2024 Brian Drive, Merrick, New York 11566 (US).

(72) Inventors: GREENFIELD, Michael; 2024 Brian Drive, Merrick, New York 11566 (US). GREENFIELD, Kenneth; 2024 Brian Drive, Merrick, New York 11566 (US). KRALJIC, John; 91 Eight Bells Road, Riverhead, New York 11901 (US).

(74) Agent: MEAGHER, Edward C.; Carter, DeLuca & Farrell LLP, 576 Broad Hollow Road, Melville, New York 11747 (US).

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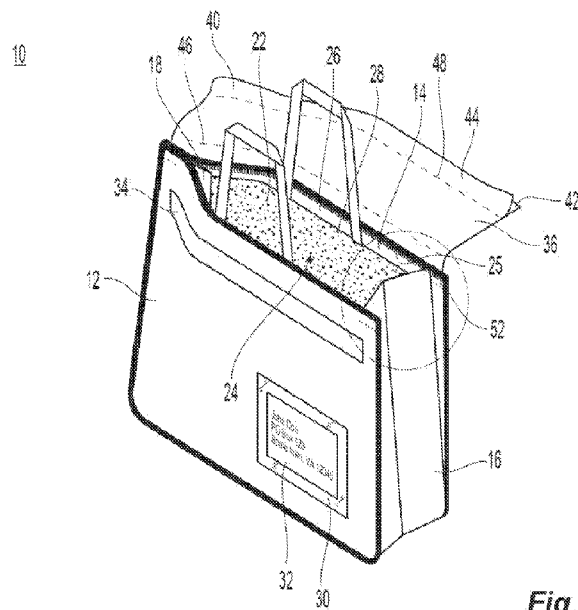


Fig. 1

(57) Abstract: A reusable mailer bag includes a front panel, a rear panel, side panels, and a bottom panel having interior surfaces defining a carrying volume with a top opening opposite the bottom panel. The rear panel including a pouch defined therein configured to receive a gift card. A piece of protective tape including a first portion is configured to removably adhere to the rear panel and is configured to extend across the top opening. A second portion of the protective tape is configured to removably adhere to the front panel to close the carrying volume. Side tabs on either side of the protective tape are configured to wrap around and removably adhere to the front or rear panel and close the side panels proximate the top opening. The protective tape is configured to be removed after shipping enabling the reusable bag to be used as a tote, lunch box or backpack.

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REUSABLE MAILER BAG

Cross-Reference to Related Applications

[0001] This application claims the benefit of and priority to U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 63/533,224 filed on August 17, 2023 and U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 63/463,849 filed on May 3, 2023 which are both continuation-in-part applications of U.S. Patent Application 17/729,621 filed on April 26, 2022, which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 16/989,799 filed August 10, 2020, now U.S. Patent No. 11,312,540 issued on April 26, 2022, which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 16/240,969, filed January 7, 2019, now U.S. Patent No. 10,737,843 issued on August 11, 2020, which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 16/023,236, filed June 29, 2018, now U.S. Patent No. 10,737,842 issued on August 11, 2020 which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 14/302,151, filed June 11, 2014, now U.S. Patent No. 10,011,394, issued on July 3, 2018. The entire contents of each of the above applications are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

Technical Field

[0002] The present disclosure relates to a reusable mailer bag, gift bag and a method for customizing and using a reusable mailer bag.

Background of Related Art

[0003] Shipping packaging is typically provided in disposable form for a single use. In particular, boxes, envelopes, and other forms of shipping packaging are often transported from a merchant to an end user and are then subsequently thrown away or recycled by the end user. The

end user typically does not gain any lasting value or use from the shipping packaging. Still further, when shipping a gift or other item for transport, a user typically must purchase several items, e.g., a gift card, individually (sometimes at different stores), assemble the items and the gift or shipping product for shipping and drop the item at a transport company for shipping. The recipient of the gift or shipping product often discards the shipping bag as waste.

SUMMARY

[0004] A reusable mailer bag and a method of use according to aspects of the present disclosure are now described. The reusable mailer bag provides an end user with shipping packaging that may be repurposed for use as a carrying bag. The end user can therefore realize a return value on the cost of shipping.

[0005] In accordance with aspects of the present disclosure, a method includes extending a flap attached to a rear panel of a reusable mailer bag over an opening of the reusable mailer bag, securing the flap to a first removable tape layer of a front panel of the reusable mailer bag, detaching the flap from the front panel and the rear panel, and extending a pair of handles from a carrying volume of the reusable mailer through the opening of the reusable mailer.

[0006] In an aspect of the present disclosure, detaching the flap from the front panel includes tearing the flap along a first tear strip.

[0007] In a further aspect of the present disclosure, detaching the flap from the rear panel includes tearing the flap along a second tear strip.

[0008] In another aspect of the present disclosure, the first tear strip includes perforations.

[0009] In an aspect of the present disclosure, detaching the flap from the front panel includes detaching the first removable tape layer from the front panel.

[0010] In an aspect of the present disclosure, the method further includes attaching a shipping label to a second removable tape layer of the front panel.

[0011] In a further aspect of the present disclosure, the method further includes detaching the second removable tape layer from the front panel to remove the shipping label from the front panel.

[0012] In another aspect of the present disclosure, detaching the second removable tape layer reveals a hidden surface selected from the group consisting of a promotional code, an advertisement, and a writable surface.

[0013] In an aspect of the present disclosure, the reusable mailer bag is non-reversible.

[0014] In another aspect of the present disclosure, an interior surface of the carrying volume includes a bubble lined protective layer and the method further includes removing the bubble lined protective layer.

[0015] In accordance with aspects of the present disclosure, a reusable mailer bag is disclosed including a front panel, a rear panel, a pair of side panels, and a bottom panel. The panels together define a carrying volume including an opening opposite the bottom panel. A pair of handles is attached to an interior surface of the carrying volume and is configured for positioning entirely within the carrying volume during shipping. The pair of handles is configured to extend out of the opening. A flap is attached to the rear panel at a first end and is configured to extend across the opening to close the opening. The flap includes a second end

that is securable to the front panel. The flap is configured to be removed from the mailer bag after shipping.

[0016] In an aspect of the present disclosure, the second end of the flap is securable to a first tape layer of the front panel.

[0017] In a further aspect of the present disclosure, the first tape layer is removable from the front panel to detach the flap from the front panel.

[0018] In another aspect of the present disclosure, the second end of the flap includes an adhesive layer. The adhesive layer is configured to adhere to the first tape layer of the front panel when the second end of the flap is secured to the front panel.

[0019] In an aspect of the present disclosure, the front panel further includes a second tape layer configured to receive a shipping label.

[0020] In a further aspect of the present disclosure, the front panel includes a hidden surface disposed under the second tape layer. The second tape layer may be removable to reveal the hidden surface. The hidden surface may be selected from the group consisting of a promotional code, an advertisement, and a writable surface.

[0021] In another aspect of the present disclosure, the flap includes a first tear strip adjacent the first end. The first tear strip is tearable to detach the flap from the rear panel.

[0022] In a further aspect of the present disclosure, the flap includes a second tear strip adjacent the second end. The second tear strip is tearable to detach the flap from the front panel.

[0023] In an aspect of the present disclosure, the side panels include recessed portions adjacent the opening. The recessed portions are secured to the front and rear panels adjacent the opening and are recessed relative to side edges of the front and rear panels. The recessed portions are configured to inhibit tampering with the carrying volume when the flap closes the opening.

[0024] In a further aspect of the present disclosure, the recessed portions inhibit the reusable mailer bag from being reversed.

[0025] In an aspect of the present disclosure, an interior surface of the carrying volume includes a bubble lined protective layer.

[0026] In a further aspect of the present disclosure, the bubble lined protective layer is removable.

[0027] In another aspect of the present disclosure, a reusable mailer bag includes front, rear, first side, second side, and bottom panels which include interior surfaces that define a carrying volume that has an opening which is opposite the bottom panel. The mailer bag also includes a flap and a first side extension. The flap is configured to extend across the opening to close the carrying volume during shipping. The flap includes a first end portion that is attached to the rear panel and a second end portion that is configured to secure to the front panel. The first side extension extends from a first edge of the second end portion of the flap that is adjacent the first side panel. The first side extension is configured to extend around the first side panel and to secure to the rear panel when the second end portion is secured to the front panel.

[0028] In aspects, the mailer bag includes a tape layer that is releasably secured to the rear panel. The first side extension may be configured to secure to the tape layer to secure to the rear panel.

[0029] In some aspects, the mailer bag includes a pair of handles that are attached to the interior surface of the front and rear panels. The pair of handles may be configured to be positioned entirely within the carrying volume during shipping and configured to extend out of the opening for transport.

[0030] In certain aspects, the flap is configured to be completely removed from the mailer bag after shipping.

[0031] In particular aspects, the mailer bag includes a tape layer that is releasably secured to the front panel. The second end portion of the flap may be securable to the tape layer. The tape layer may be removable from the front panel to detach the flap from the front panel. The second end portion of the flap may include an adhesive layer. The adhesive layer may be configured to adhere to the tape layer of the front panel to secure the second end portion of the flap to the front panel. The tape layer may be configured to receive a shipping label. The front panel may include a hidden surface that is disposed under the tape layer. The tape layer may be removable to reveal the hidden surface. The hidden surface may be selected from a group of a promotional code, an advertisement, and a writable surface.

[0032] In aspects, the flap includes a first tear strip that is adjacent the first end portion that is configured to detach the flap from the rear panel. The flap may include a second tear strip that is adjacent the second end portion and configured to detach the flap from the front panel.

The flap may include a third tear strip along the first edge to detach the first side extension from the second end portion. The first, second, and third tear strips may form a continuous tear strip.

[0033] In some aspects, the mailer bag includes a second side extension that extends from a second edge of the second end portion that is opposite the first edge. The second side extension may be configured to extend around the second side panel and secure to the rear panel when the second end portion is secured to the front panel.

[0034] In another aspect of the present disclosure, a reusable mailer bag includes front, rear, first side, second side, and bottom panels, a flap, and a first side extension. The panels include interior surfaces that define a carrying volume that has an opening opposite the bottom panel. The flap is configured to extend across the opening to close the carrying volume during shipping. The flap includes a first end portion that is attached to the rear panel and a second end portion that is configured to secure to the front panel. The first side extension extends from a first edge of the flap between the first and second end portions adjacent the first side panel. The first side extension is configured to secure to the first side panel when the second end portion is secured to the front panel.

[0035] In aspects, the mailer bag includes a tape layer that is releasably secured to the first side panel. The lap may be configured to be completely removed from the mailer bag after shipping.

[0036] In another aspect of the present disclosure, a reusable mailer bag includes front, rear, first side, second side, and a bottom panel that include interior surfaces which define a carrying volume that has an opening opposite the bottom panel. The side panels include recessed portions that are adjacent the opening such that the side panels are spaced apart from side edges

of the front and rear panels adjacent the opening to reduce a length of the opening opposite the bottom panel. A top edge of each of the first and second side panels are attached to each of the front and rear panels spaced apart from the side edges of the front and rear panels. The mailer bag also includes a flap that is formed separate and distinct from the front, rear, first side, second side, and bottom panels. The flap is configured to extend across the opening to close the carrying volume during shipping. The flap includes a first end portion that is attached to the rear panel and a second end portion that is securable to the front panel.

[0037] The present disclosure also relates to a reusable mailer bag which includes a front panel, a rear panel, a pair of side panels, and a bottom panel that include interior surfaces defining a carrying volume having a top opening opposite the bottom panel. One of the interior surfaces of the front panel and/or the rear panel includes a pouch defined therein configured to receive an item. A piece of protective tape including a first portion is configured to removably adhere to the rear panel and is configured to extend across the top opening. A second portion of the protective tape is configured to removably adhere to the front panel to close the carrying volume. One of the first or second portions of the protective tape includes side tabs on either side thereof configured to wrap around and removably adhere to the front or rear panel and close the side panels proximate the top opening.

[0038] In aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the pouch is configured to carry a gift card therein. In other aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the pouch includes a locking mechanism configured to secure items within the pouch. In still other aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the locking mechanism includes at least one of a magnetic clasp, a hook and loop fastener, a snap-lock, or a tab lock.

[0039] In aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, a protective film is disposed on the front, side and rear panels and the first and second portions of protective tape are removably adhered to the protective film. In other aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the protective film is adhered to the reusable mailer bag using an adhesive. In still other aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the protective film is adhered to the reusable mailer bag using a first adhesive and the first and second portions of protective tape is removably adhered to the protective film using a second adhesive, the second adhesive having a higher coefficient of adhesion than the first adhesive such that the protective film peels away from the reusable mailer bag with less force than the first and second portions of protective tape peel away from the protective film facilitating opening of the reusable mailer bag.

[0040] In aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, a pair of handles is attached to the interior surfaces of the front and rear panels, the pair of handles is configured to be positioned entirely within the carrying volume during shipping and is configured to extend out of the top opening for transport.

[0041] In aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the first and second portions of protective tape are configured to be completely removed from the reusable mailer bag after shipping. In other aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, indicia is disposed under the protective film which is revealed upon removal of the protective film, the indicia is selected from the group consisting of: additional advertising, a secondary layer of store indicia, a promotional item, a gift, a discount coupon/code, or prize.

[0042] In aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the interior surface of the front panel, rear panel, pair of side panels or bottom panel includes an insulative layer.

[0043] In aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the reusable mailer bag is selectively invertable after shipping to expose one or more components to facilitate utilizing the reusable mailer bag as a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, or backpack. In other aspects in accordance with the present disclosure, the one or more components is selected from the group consisting of straps, drawstrings, handles, stays, loops and insulative materials.

[0044] The present disclosure also relates to a method of converting a mailer bag into a reusable bag and includes placing an item into a top opening of a carrying volume defined by interior surfaces of a front panel, a rear panel, a pair of side panels, and a bottom panel. The method further includes: removably adhering a first portion of protective tape to the rear panel and extending a second portion of protective tape across the top opening in the carrying volume and removably adhering the second portion to the front panel to close the top opening of the carrying volume; extending a first side tab of the second portion of the protective tape around the side panel and removably adhering the first tab to the rear panel and extending a second side tab of the second portion of the protective tape around the opposite side panel and adhering the second tab to the rear panel; and removing the first and second portions of protective tape from the front, side and rear panels after shipping and using the mailer bag as at least one of a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, or backpack.

[0045] In aspects according to the present disclosure, prior to adhering the first portion of protective tape to the rear panel, the method further includes inserting an item into a pouch defined within the front and/or rear panels of the interior surfaces of the carrying volume.

[0046] In aspects according to the present disclosure, prior to removably adhering the first portion of protective tape to the rear panel, the method further comprises positioning a pair of handles entirely within the carrying volume during shipping and wherein after shipping the

method further includes exposing the handles from the carrying volume to facilitate using the mailer bag as a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, and/or backpack.

[0047] In aspects according to the present disclosure, prior to removably adhering the first portion of protective tape to the rear panel, the method further includes: inverting the front panel, rear panel, pair of side panels and bottom panel to form an inverted carrying volume; and positioning one or more components within the inverted carrying volume employed to facilitate utilizing the mailer bag as a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, and/or backpack. In other aspects according to the present disclosure, the one or more components is selected from the group consisting of straps, drawstrings, handles, stays, loops and/or insulative materials.

[0048] In aspects according to the present disclosure, after removing the first and second portions of protective tape from the front, side and rear panels after shipping, the method further includes: re-inverting the front panel, rear panel, pair of side panels and bottom panel to expose the one or more components; and utilizing the mailer bag as a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, or backpack.

[0049] Any of the above aspects and embodiments of the present disclosure may be combined without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0050] Various aspects of the present disclosure are described hereinbelow with reference to the drawings, wherein:

[0051] Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a reusable mailer bag provided in accordance with the present disclosure;

[0052] Fig. 2 is a top view of the reusable mailer bag of Fig. 1, illustrating the closure mechanism and the carrying volume;

[0053] Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the reusable mailer bag of Fig. 1, illustrating the flap extended over the opening and secured to the front panel;

[0054] Fig. 4 is a side view of the front panel of the reusable mailer bag of Fig. 1;

[0055] Fig. 5 is an enlarged view of the area of detail depicted in the Fig. 1;

[0056] Fig. 6 is a side cross-section view of the reusable mailer bag of Fig. 1;

[0057] Fig. 7 is a perspective view of the reusable mailer bag of Fig. 2, illustrating partial removal of tape layers and tear strips of the reusable mailer bag;

[0058] Fig. 8 is a perspective view of another reusable mailer bag provided in accordance with the present disclosure;

[0059] Fig. 9 is a perspective view of the reusable mailer bag of Fig. 8, illustrating a flap extended over an opening of the bag and a side extension secured to a rear panel;

[0060] Fig. 10 is a rear view of the reusable mailer bag of Fig. 8;

[0061] Fig. 11 is a perspective view of another reusable mailer bag provided in accordance with the present disclosure;

[0062] Fig. 12 is a perspective view of the reusable mailer bag of Fig. 11, illustrating a flap extended over an opening of the bag and a side extension secured to a side panel;

[0063] Figs. 13A-13F show a flow diagram of one envisioned method of assembling a product within the reusable mailer bag with a gift card;

[0064] Figs. 14A-14C show a flow diagram of another envisioned method of receiving and opening the mailer bag and method of reusing the reusable mailer bag;

[0065] Figs. 15A-15I show a flow diagram of one envisioned method of assembling a product within the reusable mailer bag with a gift card, receiving and opening the mailer bag and removing a mailing strip, and a method of reusing the reusable mailer bag;

[0066] Figs. 16A-16C show various views of another embodiment of the reusable mailer bag shaped in the form of a lunch box having an internal insulating liner and a zipper;

[0067] Figs. 17A-17D show various views of another embodiment of the reusable mailer bag shaped in the form of a conventional lunch bag or wine pouch having an internal insulating liner and zipper;

[0068] Figs. 18A-18C show various views of another embodiment of the reusable mailer bag shaped in the form of a backpack having on or more storage compartments; and

[0069] Figs. 19A-19B show another embodiment of a reusable mailer bag with removeable components that may be sold separately enabling the mailer bag to be reused for mailing purposes.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0070] Referring now to Fig. 1, a mailer bag 10 is provided in accordance with the present disclosure. The mailer bag 10 includes a front panel 12, a rear panel 14, a first side panel

16, a second side panel 18, and a bottom panel 20 (Fig. 6). The panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 are joined together by stitching, gussets, or other similar methods of joining to form a carrying volume 22. An opening 24 opposite the bottom panel 20 provides access to the carrying volume 22. As shown in Fig. 2, carrying volume 22 includes a closure mechanism 25, for example, a zipper, snaps, or other similar forms of closure, adjacent opening 24 that is configured to selectively close opening 24.

[0071] Panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 may be formed from a fabric material. For example, panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 may be formed of polypropylene, 120-180 GSM, or other similar materials. The fabric material may be woven or non-woven. The panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 may include various graphical art designs including four color art designs and may include sublimation imprints. The graphical art designs may include advertising. The outer surfaces of panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 may also be laminated to provide resistance to weather elements such as, for example, water. In an embodiment, the outer surfaces of panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 may be formed of or may be laminated with a material that is resistant to common adhesives such as those commonly used with shipping labels. Accordingly, in some embodiments, common adhesives may not be sufficient to secure a shipping label or other materials to the outer surfaces of panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20. In this instance a user would adhere the shipping label 32 and flap 36 to the respective tape layers 30 and 34 as described in more detail below.

[0072] As shown in Fig. 1, the interior surface 26 of carrying volume 22, i.e., the interior surfaces of panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20, may include a plastic bubble lined protection layer 28 for protecting items transported in the carrying volume 22. The protection layer 28 may be removable and may include, for example, perforations, removable adhesive, or other similar

features that allow for separation of the protection layer 28 from the interior surface 26 of carrying volume 22.

[0073] As shown in Figs. 3 and 4, a first tape layer 30 is adhered to front panel 12 and provides an adhesive friendly surface for receiving a shipping label 32. First tape layer 30 may be transparent and may be formed of a plastic material. First tape layer 30 may include an adhesive backing. In an embodiment, the adhesive backing may include an adhesive such as, for example, adhesives sold by 3M Company, that are suitable for adhering to the outer surfaces of panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20. In this instance, the particular adhesive of the first tape layer 30 adheres to the panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and/or 20 even if the panels 12, 14, 16, 18, or 20 are made from a material or are coated with a laminate that generally resists common adhesives. Hence, only designated tapes 30, 34 may be adherable (or adherable in a substantially secure manner) to the panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 at specified locations.

[0074] Shipping label 32 and/or first tape layer 30 may be removable by an end user to reveal a hidden surface 33, as shown, for example, in Fig. 7. For example, in an embodiment, hidden surface 33 may include a promotional code that may be redeemable by the end user online or in a brick-and-mortar store. In an alternative embodiment, hidden surface 33 may include advertising. In yet another alternative embodiment, hidden surface 33 may include a writable surface on which the end user may take notes. Mailer bag 10 may also include a writing instrument (not shown), such as, for example, an erasable or non-permanent marker, within carrying volume 22 for use by an end user to write on the writable surface.

[0075] With continued reference to Figs. 3 and 4, a second tape layer 34 is adhered to front panel 12 adjacent opening 24 to provide an adhesive friendly surface for receiving

attachment of a flap 36. Second tape layer 34 may be transparent and may be formed of a plastic material. Second tape layer 34 may include an adhesive backing. In an embodiment, the adhesive backing may include adhesives such as, for example, adhesives sold by 3M Company, that are suitable for adhering to the outer surfaces of panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20. In this instance, the particular adhesive of the first tape layer 30 adheres to the panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and/or 20 even if the panels 12, 14, 16, 18, or 20 are made from a material or are coated with a laminate that generally resists common adhesives. Hence, only designated tapes 30, 34 may be adherable (or adherable in a substantially secure manner) to the panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 at specified locations. Rear panel 14 may also include a third tape layer (not shown) similar to second tape layer 34.

[0076] First and second tape layers 30 and 34 are removably attached to front panel 12 by the adhesive backing or other similar forms of attachment. In an embodiment, the adhesive backing may include an adhesive that is a different kind of adhesive than that used for shipping label 32 to provide for adhesion to outer surfaces of panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 when the outer surfaces of panels 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20 are resistant to adhesion of common adhesives such as those used for shipping labels.

[0077] Flap 36 is attached to rear panel 14 at a first end 38 (Fig. 6) and is configured to extend across the opening 24 to cover opening 24, as shown in Fig. 3. A second end 40 of flap 36 is securable to the second tape layer 34 of front panel 12 by an adhesive strip 42 (Fig. 3). As shown in Fig. 1, flap 36 includes a protective layer 44 covering adhesive strip 42 which is removable from flap 36 prior to securing second end 40 to second tape layer 34 of front panel 12. Flap 36 includes a first tear strip 46 adjacent first end 38 and a second tear strip 48 adjacent

second end 40 which are tearable to remove flap 36 from mailer bag 10, as shown, for example, in Fig. 7. First and second tear strips 46 and 48 may include perforations 50. Specifically, the first and second tear strips 46 and 48 may include fine perforations that allow for the clean separation of two portions of the fabric, e.g., two portions of the flap 36, while providing a substantially smooth edge on each of the portions of the fabric. The fine perforations may be created by using needles having a specific size and shape and by creating each perforation a specific distance from adjacent perforations. In embodiments, the perforations are made in a unique pattern to optimize a smooth edge after being torn while maintaining structural integrity during shipping.

[0078] As shown in Fig. 1, each of first and second side panels 16 and 18 includes recessed portions 52 adjacent opening 24 to provide additional protection against pilfering when the flap 36 is secured to front panel 12 to close opening 24. As shown in more detail in Fig. 5, recessed portions 52 are formed by attaching each of side panels 16 and 18 to front and back panels 12 and 14 respectively adjacent opening 24 through the use of stitching, heat welding, or other similar methods, such that side panels 16 and 18 are recessed relative to the side edges 56 of front and back panels 16 and 18. Recessed portions 52 are also configured to inhibit carrying volume 22 and mailer bag 10 from being reversed. In some embodiments, the mailer bag 10 is non-reversible.

[0079] As shown in Figs. 1 and 6, each of front panel 12 and rear panel 14 includes a handle 58, 60 attached to interior surface 26 adjacent opening 24. Handles 58 and 60 are configured to be received entirely within carrying volume 22 and are extendable out of opening 24 when opening 24 is not closed by flap 36.

[0080] The use and operation of mailer bag 10 will now be described below.

[0081] In an initial state, opening 24 is uncovered with flap 36 attached to rear panel 14, as shown in Fig. 1. An item or product (not shown) to be shipped to an end user, e.g., a customer or consumer, is inserted into carrying volume 22 and a shipping label 32 is applied to the first tape layer 30. Handles 58 and 60 are positioned entirely within carrying volume 22 and the protective layer 44 of flap 36 is removed to expose adhesive strip 42. Flap 36 is then extended across opening 24 to close opening 24, as shown in Fig. 3. Adhesive strip 42 is attached to second tape layer 34 of front panel 12 to secure flap 36 in place. Mailer bag 10 is now prepared for shipping to an end user.

[0082] Referring now to Fig. 7, after shipping, once the end user has received mailer bag 10, the flap 36 is removed by tearing along the tear strips 46 and 48 of flap 36. In addition, or alternatively, the second tape layer 34 may be removed from front panel 12 to remove flap 36. In an embodiment, first end 38 of flap 36 may also be removable from rear panel 14 by removing a third tape layer (not shown) on rear panel 14 that is similar to second tape layer 34.

[0083] With continued reference to Fig. 7, the end user may remove the shipping label 32 and/or first tape layer 30 to reveal hidden surface 33 which, as described above, may include promotional codes, advertising, or a writable surface.

[0084] Once the flap 36 has been removed, handles 58 and 60 may be extended from the carrying volume 22 through opening 24 such that mailer bag 10 is converted into a carrying bag or tote.

[0085] In an embodiment, replacement first and second tape layers (not shown) may be provided or included with mailer bag 10 that are similar to first and second tape layers 30 and 34 may be added to front panel 12 by the end user. A new shipping label 32 may then be attached to the replacement first tape layer to allow for further shipping. In this embodiment, an additional adhesive strip (not shown) and protective layer (not shown) which is similar to adhesive strip 42 and protective layer 44 may be provided on flap 36 adjacent tear strip 46. The flap 36 is partially detached from mailer bag 10 by only tearing along tear strip 46 to provide access to carrying volume 22 through opening 24 and the flap 36 may be extended over opening 24 to close carrying volume 22 once an item to be shipped has been added to carrying volume 22. The additional adhesive strip and protective layer allows flap 36 to be secured to the second replacement tape layer in a similar manner to that described above for adhesive strip 42, protective layer 44, and second tape layer 34 to provide a second closure of the opening 24 for the second shipping. In this manner the mailer bag 10 may be re-used by the end user for shipping another item or product.

[0086] With reference to FIGS. 8-10, another mailer bag 110 is provided in accordance with the present disclosure. The mailer bag 110 is similar to the mailer bag 10 detailed above with like elements labeled with a similar label with a “1” preceding the previous label and will not be detailed herein for brevity. The mailer bag 110 includes a front panel 112, a rear panel 114, first side panel 116, a second panel 118, and a bottom panel 120 that are joined together by stitching, gussets, adhesives, welding, or other similar methods of joining to form a carrying volume 122.

[0087] The mailer bag 110 includes a flap 136 configured to extend across and close an opening 124 of the mailer bag 110, which is opposite the bottom panel 120. The flap 136 includes a first end portion 138, a second end portion 140, a first side flap or extension 162, and a second side flap or extension 164. The first end portion 138 is attached to the rear panel 114 and the second end portion 140 is securable to the front panel 112. The front panel 112 includes a first tape layer 130 and a second tape layer 134 that are releasably attached to the front panel 112. The second end portion 140 of the flap 136 may be secured to the front panel 112 by the second tape layer 134.

[0088] The rear panel 114 may include a third tape layer 166 and a fourth tape layer 168. The third tape layer 166 is adjacent a top edge 115 of the rear panel 114 and the first side panel 116. The fourth tape layer 168 is adjacent the top edge 115 and the second side panel 118. The third and fourth tape layers 166, 168 may form a single continuous tape layer adjacent the top edge 115.

[0089] The first side extension 162 extends from a first side edge 137 of the flap 136 and the second side extension 164 extends from a second side edge 139 of the flap 136. In embodiments, the first and second side extensions 162, 164 extend from portions of the first and second side edges 137, 139 entirely along the second end portion 140 of the flap 136. The flap 136 may include tear strips 165 along the first and second side edges 137, 139 where the first and second side extensions 162, 164 meet the first and second side edges 137, 139. The tear strips 165 may form a continuous tear strip with a tear strip 148 between the second end portion 140 and a main portion of the flap 136.

[0090] The first and second side extensions 162, 164 are configured to cover portions of the first and second side panels 116, 118, respectively, to prevent tampering with contents in the carrying volume 112 when the mailer bag 110 is sealed for mailing. The first and second side extension 162, 164 may allow for mailer bags having side panels 116, 118 having a dimension along the bottom panel 120 greater than eight inches. For example, the side panels 116, 118 may have a dimension along the bottom portion 120 in a range of about 8 inches to about 14 inches.

[0091] In some embodiments, the first and second side extension 162, 164 extend from the first and second side edges 137 of the flap along the first end portion 140 of the flap 136 such that the first and second side extensions 162, 164 extend from the rear panel 114 and releasably secure to the front panel 112. In such embodiments, the third and fourth tape layers 166, 168 may be disposed on the front panel 112. Alternatively, the third and fourth tape layers 166, 168 may be disposed on a surface of the second end portion 140 opposite a surface of the second end portion 140 that is secured to the front panel 112 such that the first and second side extension 162, 164 are secured directly to the second end portion 140. In embodiments, the first and second side extensions 162, 164 may secure to the second tape layer 134 and include the third and fourth tape layers 166, 168 on a surface opposite the surface that secures the second tape layer 134 such that the second end portion 140 is secured to the second, third, and fourth tape layers 134, 166, 168 to close the opening 124.

[0092] The front and/or rear panel 112, 114 may include an internal pocket 172 on an inner surface 113 defining the carrying volume 122. The internal pocket 172 may be formed of a sheet of material secured to the inner surface 113. The internal pocket 172 may allow the items to be secured to the front and/or rear panel 112, 114 and secured separate from the carrying

volume 122. For example, a cooling medium, e.g., dry ice, may be secured within the internal pocket 172 to keep the carrying volume 122 at or below a desired temperature during shipping. The internal pocket 172 may include a closure mechanism similar to the closure mechanism 125 to selectively close the internal pocket 172.

[0093] In some embodiments, the front, rear, bottom, and/or side panels 112, 114, 116, 118, 120 may be insulated, padded, and/or coated to protect the contents of the carrying volume and/or the mailer bag 110.

[0094] Continuing to refer to FIGS. 8-10, the use of the mailer bag 110 to ship one or more items and then to convert the mailer bag 110 into a tote is described in accordance with the present disclosure. The mailer bag 110 may be provided in a flat, folded configuration such that handles 158 of the mailer bag 110 are disposed within a carrying volume 122 of the mailer bag 110. The mailer bag 110 is unfolded such that the carrying volume 122 is accessible through the opening 124. The item or items to be shipped are placed within the carrying volume 122. The item or items may be wrapped in protective packaging. In some embodiments, a cooling medium, e.g., dry ice, may be secured in the internal pocket 172 of the mailer bag 110 before or after the item(s) is placed in the carrying volume 122.

[0095] With the item(s) to be shipped are placed within the carrying volume 122, a closure mechanism 125 may be used to close the opening 124 of the mailer bag 110. The closure mechanism 125 may be a zipper, string and eyelets, a hook and loop fastener system, or another suitable closure mechanism. A top portion of each of the front and rear panels 112, 114 are pinched together to close the opening 124 for shipping. As the front and rear panels 112, 114 are pinched together, each of the first and second side panels 116, 118 may be folded into the

carrying volume 122. The flap 136 is then folded over the opening 124 and the second end portion 140 is secured to the second tape strip 134. To secure the second end portion 140 to the second tape strip 134, a protective layer 144 may be removed from over an adhesive strip 142 to expose the adhesive strip 142 which is subsequently pressed into the second strip 134 and/or the front panel 112.

[0096] The first and second side extensions 162, 164 are then folded over the respective first or second side panel 116, 118 and secured to the respective one of the third or fourth tape strip 166, 168. The first and/or second side extensions 162, 164 may include an adhesive strip and protective layer similar to the adhesive strip 142 and protective layer 144. The first and second side extension 162, 164 further protect access to the carrying volume 122 when the mailer bag 110 is in transit.

[0097] The mailer bag 110 may be labeled and shipped in a manner similar to the mailer bag 10 detailed above.

[0098] When the mailer bag 110 is received, the first side extension 162, second side extension 164, and/or the flap 136 may be pulled to open the mailer bag 110. Specifically, as the respective one of the extensions 162, 164 or the flap 136 is pulled, the tear strips 146, 148, 165 may rip to allow for access to the carrying volume 122. When the mailer bag 110 includes a closure mechanism 125, the closure mechanism 125 may prevent access to the carrying volume 122 and may also need to be opened, e.g., unzipped, to access the carrying volume 122 after the tear strip or strips 146, 148, 165 are ripped. The tear strips 146, 148, 165 are designed to be able to withstand the rigors of being shipped and to be easily ripped when force is directly applied along or adjacent the respective tear strip 146, 148, 165. In addition, the tear strips 146, 148, 165

are configured to rip such that a clean edge remains after the tear strip 146, 148, 165 is ripped. Such a clean edge may be aesthetically preferred to a jagged edge when the mailer bag 110 is reused.

[0099] With the carrying volume 122 accessible through the opening 124, the contents may be removed from the carrying volume 122. The mailer bag 110 may then be converted to reusable tote by removing the first, second, third, and/or fourth tape strips 130, 134, 166, 168 from the respective panel to remove any remaining portions of the flap 136, first side extension 162, and/or second side extension 164 from the mailer bag 110. The handles 158 may then be pulled from within the carrying volume 122 such that the mailer bag 110 is converted into a reusable tote. As a reusable tote, the closure mechanism 125 may be used to close the carrying volume 122.

[00100] With reference to FIGS. 11 and 12, another mailer bag 210 is provided in accordance with the present disclosure. The mailer bag 210 is similar to the mailer bag 10 detailed above with like elements labeled with a similar label with a “2” preceding the previous label and will not be detailed herein for brevity. The mailer bag 210 includes a front panel 212, a rear panel 214, first side panel 216, a second panel 218, and a bottom panel 220 that are joined together by stitching, gussets, adhesives, welding, or other similar methods of joining to form a carrying volume 222.

[00101] The mailer bag 210 includes a flap 236 configured to extend across and close an opening 224 of the mailer bag 210, which is opposite the bottom panel 220. The flap 236 includes a first end portion 238, a second end portion 240, a first side flap or extension 262, and a second side flap or extension 264. The first end portion 238 is attached to the rear panel 214

and the second end portion 240 is securable to the front panel 212. The front panel 212 includes a first tape layer 230 and a second tape layer 234 that are releasably attached to the front panel 212. The second end portion 240 of the flap 236 may be secured to the front panel 212 by the second tape layer 234.

[00102] The first side panel 216 may include a third tape layer 266 and the second side panel 218 may include a fourth tape layer (not explicitly shown). The third and fourth tape layers 266 are adjacent a top edge 217 of the respective side panel 216, 218.

[00103] The first side extension 262 extends from a first side edge 237 of the flap 236 and the second side extension 264 extends from a second side edge 239 of the flap 236. In embodiments, the first and second side extensions 262, 264 extend from portions of the first and second side edges 237, 239 disposed between the first and second end portions 238, 240 of the flap 236. The flap 236 may include tear strips 265 along the first and second side edges 237, 239 where the first and second side extensions 262, 264 meet the first and second side edges 237, 239. The tear strips 265 may form a continuous tear strip with a tear strip 248 between the second end portion 240 and a main portion of the flap 236 and/or a tear strip 248 between the first end portion 238 and the main portion of the flap 236.

[00104] The first and second side extensions 262, 264 are configured to cover a gap G between the flap 236 and a respective one of the first or second side panels 216, 218 to prevent tampering with contents in the carrying volume 212 when the mailer bag 210 is sealed for mailing. As shown, the mailer bag 210 is sealable without pinching a top portion of the front and rear panels 212, 214 together such that the mailer bag 210 remains substantially cuboidic in shape, i.e., a three-dimensional shape having six rectangular surfaces. The first and second side

extension 262, 264 may allow for mailer bags having side panels 216, 218 having a dimension along the bottom panel 220 greater than eight inches. For example, the side panels 216, 218 may have a dimension along the bottom portion 220 in a range of about 8 inches to about 24 inches.

[00105] With continued reference to FIGS. 11 and 12, the use of the mailer bag 210 to ship one or more items and then to convert the mailer bag 210 into a tote is described in accordance with the present disclosure. The mailer bag 210 may be provided in a flat, folded configuration such that handles 258 of the mailer bag 210 are disposed within a carrying volume 222 of the mailer bag 210. The mailer bag 210 is unfolded such that the carrying volume 222 is accessible through the opening 224. The item or items to be shipped are placed within the carrying volume 222. The item or items may be wrapped in protective packaging. In some embodiments, a cooling medium, e.g., dry ice, may be secured in an internal pocket 272 of the mailer bag 210 before or after the item(s) is placed in the carrying volume 222.

[00106] With the item(s) to be shipped are placed within the carrying volume 222, a closure mechanism 225 may be used to close the opening 224 of the mailer bag 210. The closure mechanism 225 may be a zipper, string and eyelets, a hook and loop fastener system, or another suitable closure mechanism. The flap 236 is then folded over the opening 224 and the second end portion 240 is secured to the second tape strip 234. To secure the second end portion 240 to the second tape strip 234, a protective layer 244 may be removed from over an adhesive strip 242 to expose the adhesive strip 242 which is subsequently pressed into the second strip 234 and/or the front panel 212.

[00107] The first and second side extensions 262, 264 are then folded over the respective first or second side panel 216, 218 and secured to the respective one of the third or fourth tape

strip 266. The first and/or second side extensions 262, 264 may include an adhesive strip and protective layer similar to the adhesive strip 242 and protective layer 244. The first and second side extension 262, 264 further protect access to the carrying volume 222 when the mailer bag 210 is in transit while allowing the mailer bag 210 to remain in a substantially cuboidic shape.

[00108] The mailer bag 210 may be labeled and shipped in a manner similar to the mailer bag 20 detailed above.

[00109] When the mailer bag 210 is received, the first side extension 262, second side extension 264, and/or the flap 236 may be pulled to open the mailer bag 210. Specifically, as the respective one of the extensions 262, 264 or the flap 236 is pulled, the tear strips 246, 248, 265 may rip to allow for access to the carrying volume 222. When the mailer bag 210 includes a closure mechanism 225, the closure mechanism 225 may prevent access to the carrying volume 222 and may also need to be opened, e.g., unzipped, to access the carrying volume 222 after the tear strip or strips 246, 248, 265 are ripped. The tear strips 246, 248, 265 are designed to be able to withstand the rigors of being shipped and to be easily ripped when force is directly applied along or adjacent the respective tear strip 246, 248, 265. In addition, the tear strips 246, 248, 265 are configured to rip such that a clean edge remains after the tear strip 246, 248, 265 is ripped. Such a clean edge may be aesthetically preferred to a jagged edge when the mailer bag 210 is reused.

[00110] With the carrying volume 222 accessible through the opening 224, the contents may be removed from the carrying volume 222. The mailer bag 210 may then be converted to reusable tote by removing the first, second, third, and/or fourth tape strips 230, 234, 266 from the respective panel to remove any remaining portions of the flap 236, first side extension 262,

and/or second side extension 264 from the mailer bag 210. The handles 258 may then be pulled from within the carrying volume 222 such that the mailer bag 210 is converted into a reusable tote. As a reusable tote, the closure mechanism 225 may be used to close the carrying volume 222.

[00111] FIGS. 13A-13F show another embodiment of a reusable mailer bag 510 for use in accordance with the present disclosure and a method of assembling the same for mailing. FIGS. 14A-14C show one envisioned method of removing the contents of the mailer bag 510 for reuse. Turning initially to FIGS. 13A-13F, reusable mailer 510 is similar to the other reusable mailer bags described herein and incorporates all of the same features and advantages attributed thereto, but for the purposes of brevity will only be described in such detail as necessary to explain the unique differences of mailer 510. Mailer bag 510 includes a removable tab or strip 540 that is attached to the rear 514 via a PSA adhesive 542 (or other similar type adhesive).

[00112] Once a gift item 350 is purchased at a local store, the gift item 350 can be carried around within the store within the mailer bag 510 until checkout via handles 515a, 515b. A gift card 520 comes with the mailer bag 510 and can be coordinated based on a Holiday, particular event (e.g., Birthday, Anniversary, Graduation, etc.), store-of-purchase, city, college, country, advertising, etc. After checkout, the user can simply fill in the card 520 with a given sentiment to personalize the card 520, place the card 520 within the pouch 518 defined within the inside surface of the front 512 or rear 514 panel of the mailer bag 510 and close the pouch 518. The user then tucks the handles 515a, 515b within the inside of the mailer bag 510 and then inserts the gift item 350 into the mailer bag 510.

[00113] Since the mailer bag 510 essentially acts as durable gift wrapping, the user simply collapses the sides 517 of the mailer bag 510 and adheres first portion 542 (after peeling protective mask therefrom) of the protective strip 540 to the rear panel 514 and pulls the remaining part of the protective strip 540 and second portion 545 around the top of the mailer bag 510 to enclose the gift 350 and adheres the second portion 545 (after peeling protective mask therefrom) to the front panel 512 of the mailer bag 510. The user then folds the side tabs 546 of the strip 540 around the sides 517 of the mailer bag 510. Once sealed, the user places the proper postage on the mailer bag 510 (onto the front or rear panel 512, 514, respectively) and mails the mailer bag 510 to the intended recipient. In embodiments, a postage compartment 521 may be included on the front or rear panels 512, 514, respectively.

[00114] In embodiments, the first portion 542 and side tabs 546 of the strip 540 may be made from a stretchable or elastic material to facilitate or accommodate larger gift items 350 within the reusable bag 510. In embodiments, the pouch 518 includes a self-closing mechanism 519 to facilitate retention of items contained therein and for the purposes of reuse. In other embodiments, the self-closing mechanism 519 of the pouch 518 includes a flap to retain items therein. In still other embodiments, the self-closing mechanism 519 of the pouch 518 includes a locking mechanism to secure items contained therein such as a magnetic clasp, hook and loop fasteners commonly sold under the trademark Velcro[®], snap-locks, tab locks or other locking mechanisms known in the art.

[00115] In embodiments, once the gift item 350 is secured within the reusable mailer bag 510, one of the front panel 512 or rear panel 514 may include a pre-paid mailing label (not shown) that simply needs to be scanned at the register or input into a kiosk with a mailing

address to print a mailing label and the checkout counter can accept the package for shipping. The mailing label may be secured within the postage compartment 521.

[00116] In FIGS. 14A-14C, upon receipt of the reusable mailer bag 510, the recipient peels back the side tabs 546 of the strip 540 and peels off the first and second portions 542, 545 of the protective strip 540 from the front of the reusable bag 510 to open the sides 517 and expose the interior of the mailer bag 510 revealing the gift item 350 contained therein. The gift recipient then removes the gift item 350 from the mailer bag 510 revealing the card pouch 518 containing the personalized gift card 520 therein. Once the gift item 350 has been opened and the sentiment conveyed, the recipient can convert the reusable mailer bag 510 into a tote 510' simply by removing the protective strip 540 from the front panel 512 and rear panel 514 and exposing the handles 515a, 515b from within the interior of the reusable mailer bag 510.

[00117] In other embodiments, users may custom print a reusable mailer bag 510 and gift card 520 on a kiosk or on-line. Again, the reusable mailer bags 510 may be themed based on Holidays, events, birthdays, stores, advertising, colleges, countries, etc. In these envisioned embodiments, the user would log onto a kiosk or computer and enter data or pick from a pre-organized menu of different mailer bags 510 based on the size of bag, size of gift, cost, detail of graphics, type of material, shipping cost, etc. Some reusable mailing bags 510 might be available to be customized and printed with basic graphics at the kiosk while others might be available in a few days or weeks. Other more common reusable mailer bags 510 with coordinating gift cards 520, e.g., Holiday themes, Birthday, Weddings, Anniversaries, etc., as discussed above, may be made "ready for purchase" and/or for use immediately at the store, on-line or at point of purchase.

[00118] FIGS. 15A-15I show another embodiment of a reusable mailer bag 610 for use in accordance with the present disclosure and a method of using the same. More particularly, reusable mailer 610 is similar to the other reusable mailer bags, in particular, mailer bag 510 described above, and incorporates all of the same features and advantages attributed thereto, but for the purposes of brevity will only be described in such detail as necessary to explain the unique differences of mailer 610. Mailer bag 610 includes a removable tab or strip 640 that is attached to the rear panel 614 via a PSA adhesive 642 (or other similar type adhesive).

[00119] Once a gift item 350 is purchased, the gift item 350 can be carried around within the mailer bag 610 until checkout via handles 615a, 615b. A gift card 520 comes with the mailer bag 610 (or can be purchased along-side or separately) and can be coordinated based on one or more specialized events as described above. After checkout, the user personalizes the card 520 and places the card 520 within the pouch 618 defined within the front 612 or rear 614 panel of the mailer bag 610 and closes the pouch 618. The user then tucks the handles 615a, 615b within the mailer bag 610 and inserts the gift 350.

[00120] Similar to above, the user collapses the sides 617 of the mailer bag 610 and the adheres the first and second portions 642, 645 of the strip 640 around the top of the mailer bag 610 as described above to close the gift within the mailer bag 610. In this instance, however, a protective peel-away film 613 is disposed on the front panel 612 and back panel 614 of the mailer bag 610 and the strip 640 is adhered to the protective film 613 on the rear panel 614 in the initial step (FIG. 15A) and to the front panel 612 to close the mailer bag 610 with the gift 350 disposed therein in the step shown in FIG. 15E. The user then folds the side tabs 646 of the strip

640 around the sides panel 617 of the mailer bag 610 and adheres the sides tabs 646 of the strip 640 to the protective film 613.

[00121] Once sealed, the user places the proper postage on the mailer bag 610 (onto the front or rear panel 612, 614, respectively) and mails the mailer bag 610 to the intended recipient. In embodiments, a postage compartment 621 may be included on the front or rear panels 612, 614, respectively.

[00122] Similar to the above embodiments, the first and second portions 642, 645 and sides 646 of the strip 640 may be made from a stretchable or elastic material to facilitate or accommodate larger gift items 350 within the reusable bag 610. Moreover, pouch 618 may include a self-closing mechanism, e.g., a locking mechanism 619. Further, a pre-paid mailing label (not shown) may be scanned at the register or input into a kiosk with a mailing address to print a mailing label at the checkout counter for shipping purposes.

[00123] Turning now to FIGS. 15G-15I, upon receipt of the reusable mailer bag 610, instead of trying to peel the protective strip 640 from the bag 610 as described above, in this envisioned embodiment, the gift recipient peels the protective film 613 from either the front or rear panel 612, 614, respectively, of the mailer bag 610 which, in turn, peels the protective strip 640 and exposes the contents of the mailer bag 610. It is envisioned that the protective film 613 may be made from a different material that is easier to peel from the mailer bag 610 thereby facilitating the process of opening the mailer bag 610 and exposing the gift 350. Moreover, it is envisioned that the protective film 613 may be distinguishable in color or texture from the mailer bag 610 or the protective strip 640 making the protective film 613 easier to locate, handle, grasp, and/or peel from the mailer bag 610, or in some cases, discard.

[00124] It is envisioned that the protective strip 640 and the protective film 613 may be made from materials or include an adhesive that has a higher bonding strength to one another than the protective film 613 has to the mailer bag 610 for both shipping and handling purposes and for facilitating removal of the protective film 613 from the mailer bag 610 by the gift recipient. Or the protective film 613 may use a first adhesive having one bonding strength or coefficient of adhesion to the mailer bag 610 and the protective strip 640 may use a different adhesive having a higher bonding strength.

[00125] In embodiments, both the protective strip 640 and protective film 613 may be made from recyclable or biodegradable materials. The protective film 613 may include indicia 627 printed thereon facilitating assembly of the mailer bag 610, e.g., directions for use, may include visual or fiducial markings for placing the protective strip 640 and side tabs 646 on the front and rear panels 612, 614, respectively, of the mailer bag 610, and/or may include advertising or holiday themes which can be imprinted on the protective film 613 and adhered to the mailer bag 610.

[00126] As can be appreciated, in certain instances, it would be desirable to have the indicia 627 imprinted on the protective film 613 come off with the protective film 613, e.g., directions, fiducial markings, etc., so the mailer bag 610 can be used as a reusable tote 610', whereas in other instances, it would be desirable to have the certain elements of the mailer bag 610 remain, e.g., collegiate advertising or store indicia. In embodiments, the protective film 613 may have a dual purpose and be utilized to expose secondary indicia 629, e.g., additional advertising, a secondary layer of store indicia or, in certain instances, a promotional item, gift, discount coupon/code, or prize. As can be appreciated, the protective film 613 would need to

include some level of opaqueness or color to preclude the user from visualizing the secondary indicia 629 behind the protective film 613. In certain instances, indicia 627 may be imprinted onto protective film 613 in such a manner as to hide the secondary indicia 629.

[00127] As shown in FIG. 15G, the gift recipient pulls the protective film 613 from the front panel 612 (or rear panel 614), which, in turn, peels the protective strip 640 therealong. The gift recipient pulls the protective film 613 across the face of the front panel 612 in the direction of the arrows “P₁” (generally across the face of the mailer bag 610 and towards the top thereof), then pulls the protective film 613 around one side 617 of the mailer bag 610 to release the side tabs 646 of the protective strip 640 and then peels the remainder of the protective film 613 from the rear panel 614 to expose the gift 350 within the mailer bag 610.

[00128] The gift recipient then removes the gift item 350 from the mailer bag 610 revealing the card pouch 618 containing the personalized gift card 520 therein. Once the gift item 350 has been opened and the sentiment conveyed, the recipient can convert the reusable mailer bag 610 into a tote 610’ simply by removing the protective film 613 and protective strip 640 as described above from the mailer bag 610 and exposing the handles 615a, 615b from within the interior of the reusable mailer bag 610 (FIG. 15I).

[00129] FIGS. 16A-16C show various views of another embodiment of the reusable mailer bag which is shaped in the form of a lunch box, hereinafter termed “mailer/lunch box 710”. Again, for the purposes of brevity, mailer/lunch box 710 is similar to the other reusable mailer bags described above and incorporates all of the same features and advantages attributed thereto but will only be described in such detail as necessary to explain the unique differences of mailer/lunch box 710.

[00130] Similar to the mailer bags above, mailer/lunch box 710 includes a removable tab or strip 740 that is attached to the rear 714 via an adhesive. Assembling the mailer/lunch box 710 for mailing and removing the gift 350 from within the mailer/lunch box 710 are similar to the mailer bags described above with the exception that the mailer/lunch box includes a zipper 795 disposed along the side 717 thereof which is configured to enclose the gift 350 therein for shipping and secure contents therein during transport when converted after shipping to a lunch box 710'.

[00131] Mailer/lunch box 710 also includes an insulated internal liner 755 disposed therein which is configured to thermally insulate the components of the mailer/lunch box 710 during transport or the lunch box 710' after conversion. The internal liner 755 may also be waterproof and include multiple layers of material, e.g., a layer of semi-pliable aluminum foil 755a (or a material with similar insulative, waterproof, thermally conductive properties), a layer of additional insulation 755b, and a rubberized or vulcanized bottom layer 755c (FIG. 16C). Other known insulating liners are envisioned.

[00132] FIGS. 17A-17D show various views of another embodiment of the reusable mailer bag which is shaped in the form of a lunch bag, hereinafter termed "mailer/lunch bag 810". Mailer/lunch bag 810 is similar to the mailer/lunch box 710 described above, and incorporates all of the same features and advantages attributed thereto such as a protective strip 840 (FIG. 17A), but also includes removable handles 815a, 815b similar to the other bags described above for use as a lunch tote 810" (FIG. 17B) and the zipper 895 is elongated handle to enclose the top of the mailer/lunch bag 810 (FIG. 17C) and lunch bag 810' (FIG. 17D). Mailer/lunch bag 810 also includes an insulated internal liner 855 disposed therein which is

configured to thermally insulate the components of the mailer/lunch bag 810 during transport or the lunch bag 810' after conversion or lunch tote 810'' when carrying.

[00133] FIGS. 18A-18C show various views of another embodiment of the reusable mailer bag which is shaped in the form of a backpack, hereinafter termed "mailer/backpack 910". Mailer/backpack 910 is similar to the other reusable bags described above with the exception that the top 918 of the mailer/backpack 910 closes via a common drawstring 925 that is tucked into the mailer/backpack 910 during mailing assembly and then exposed and mechanically assembled to the outer panels 912 or 914 for use as a backpack 910'. More particularly, to use as a mailer, the mailer/backpack 910 the gift 350 is inserted into the mailer/backpack 910 similar to the bags described above and the top 918 of the mailer/backpack 910 is cinched by pulling common drawstring 925. The protective strip 940 is then used to further secure the gift 350 for mailing purposes.

[00134] When the gift recipient receives the mailer/backpack 910, the gift recipient opens the mailer/backpack 910 in a similar fashion as described above, e.g., by pulling protective tab 940 from the mailer/backpack front and rear panels 512, 514, respectively, and manually opens the top 918 of the mailer/backpack 910 to expose the gift 350. The drawstring 925 is removed from the mailer/backpack 910 to form two straps 925a, 925b, respectively, which are attached through loops 935a, 935b of respective sides 917a, 917b of the mailer/backpack 910. Straps 926a, 926b may be employed to retain the straps 925a, 925b within the respective loops 935a, 935b. Other known mechanical attachments are also envisioned. The two straps 925a, 925b may be adjustable depending upon a particular purpose. The mailer/backpack 910 is now usable as a backpack 910'.

[00135] A storage compartment 913 may be disposed within the front or rear panel 912, 914, respectively, of the mailer/backpack 910 for storing the gift card 520 during mailing. The storage compartment 913 may act as a secondary compartment for supplies when used as a backpack 910'.

[00136] In an alternative embodiment, the mailer/backpack 910 may be used as a mailer when disposed in an inverted or inside-out orientation such that the drawstring 925, storage compartment 913 (with gift card 520), loops 935a, 935b and stays 926a, 926b, and other mechanical features are all disposed internally during mailing. This eliminates issues with mailing and exposed features later necessary with the mailer/backpack 910. Once the gift recipient receives the mailer/backpack 910, the gift recipient removes the protective strip 940 and exposes the gift 350 and card 540 (as described above) but inverts the mailer/backpack 910 to convert the mailer/backpack 910 for use as a backpack 910'. As can be appreciated, this eliminates the need to assemble the straps 925a, 925b or other external mechanical components for use as a backpack 910'. Any of the other mailer bags described above may be suitable for inversion depending upon a particular purpose.

[00137] FIGS. 19A-19B is an illustrative example of a reusable mailer bag (but may be any of the mailer bags described above) which may be reused for a second or possibly multiple times for mailing gift items and converted to a tote, lunch box/bag or backpack generally referred to as "multi-usable mailer bag 1010". Multi-usable mailer bag 1010 may be designed for use as any of the above bags but specifically designed for reuse of one or more reusable or disposable mailing features, e.g., the protective strip 1040, mailing label 1060, and in some instances,

protective film 1013, are all selectively removeable, disposable and replaceable components for use with any of the aforementioned mailer bags.

[00138] As can be appreciated, one or all of these replaceable and disposable components, e.g., protective strip 1040, mailing label 1060, and in some instances, protective film 1013, may be sold separately or in multi-packs for subsequent use. It is envisioned that designing and utilizing any of the above reusable mailer bags or reusable mailer bags with the features described herein will greatly reduce the amount of waste associated with a normal mail cycle in that only the replaceable and disposable components become waste or are recycled while the remainder of the mailer bag serves another purpose, e.g., converts to a tote, lunch box/bag, backpack, reusable mailer and/or other envisioned consumer product.

[00139] As can be appreciated, the various mailer bags described above may be made from a variety of different products depending upon a particular purpose which can vary due to price point, theme, quality or design of the tote, lunch box/bag, backpack, etc., material for mailing or material for use (e.g., quality of material of tote or bag, insulation, and/or other features such as straps, handles, etc.). In addition, the removeable and disposable components may be made from an environmentally friendly material, e.g., biodegradable, recyclable, etc.

[00140] For example, it is envisioned that in addition to the many examples described above, aspects of the design may be simplified or the method of converting the mailer to a tote may be simplified or otherwise altered depending upon a different purpose, e.g., to make the mailer-to-tote more (or less) environmentally friendly, to make the mailer-to-tote more (or less) user friendly, to make the mailer-to-tote more (or less) user safe, to make mailer-to-tote less (or more) expensive, to make the mailer-to-tote more (or less) user safe, to make mailer-to-tote more

(or less) durable, to make the mailer-to-tote more (or less) user safe, to make mailer-to-tote for one time mailer usage, etc.

[00141] In order to accomplish one or more of the above objectives, in embodiments, the mailer, e.g., mailer 510 (FIG. 13A-14C), may be made from a highly durable material that is resistant to tearing. The removeable strip 540 and adhesive 542 are press-fit onto the mailer 510 for shipping purposes as described above. Obviously, the adhesive-to-mailer contact integrity is essential during shipping so the contents of the mailer 510 are not lost during shipping.

[00142] When the recipient receives the mailer 510 and tears removeable strip 542 from the mailer 510 to open the mailer 510, it is important that the mailer 510 remain intact for subsequent use as a tote 510'. In this instance, it is envisioned that the removable strip 540 may be fully removeable from the mailer 510 or only partially removeable from the mailer 540 via an engineered tear strip (not shown but disposed anywhere along and across the removeable strip 540. When the removeable strip 540 is fully removed from the mailer 510, the mailer 510 must be made from a material that durable enough to resist the forces required to peel the removeable strip 540 from the mailer 510 without tearing or conversion to a tote 510' will be moot. Further, careful considerations with mailer material and adhesive choices must be made under all shipping conditions, e.g., heat, cold, humid, wet, dry, etc.

[00143] When the removeable strip 540 is only partially removed, the remaining portion or edges of the removeable strip 540 may help fortify the exposed upper rim of the mailer 510 now being used as a tote 510'. The mailer 510 may need to include indicia disposed thereon to help align the removeable strip 540 when orienting the removeable strip on the mailer 510 for

shipping in this instance. Or, alternatively, the mailer 510 may be sold with the removable strip 540 already pre-aligned for shipping purposes (as with any embodiment described herein).

[00144] In embodiments, the mailer, e.g., 510, may be manufactured such that after the gift is inserted within the mailer 510, aligned and sealed via the removable strip 540, and mailed to the gift recipient, the gift recipient is instructed to tear the mailer 510 along a predefined line across the mailer 510 on the front and back panel 512, 514 or the mailer 510 to expose the gift. This line is positioned below the removable strip 540 on both the front and back panel 512, 514 and is an engineered tear strip (not shown) across and around the mailer 510 below the removable strip 540 when sealed. Both the removable strip 540 and the portion of the mailer 510 adhered to the removable strip 540 are discarded in this instance. In addition, the mailer 510 would typically include the removable strip 540 already adhered to one panel, e.g., rear panel 514, and an indication line of the front panel (not shown) for alignment purposes to ensure proper placement of the removable strip 540 when sealing the mailer 510 for shipping. In this instance, the mailer 510 is typically envisioned for use only one time as a mailer 510 whereas other bags described above may be utilized multiple times as a mailer 510 if desired by purchasing additional removable strips 540. The upper or remaining edge of the tear strip may be reinforced with yet another adhesive strip which flaps over and around the entire exposed edge or the remaining edge may remain exposed in a decorative fashion, e.g., soft geometric edge pattern.

[00145] While several embodiments of the disclosure have been shown in the drawings, it is not intended that the disclosure be limited thereto, as it is intended that the disclosure be as broad in scope as the art will allow and that the specification be read likewise. Therefore, the

above description should not be construed as limiting, but merely as exemplifications of particular embodiments. Those skilled in the art will envision other modifications within the scope and spirit of the claims appended hereto.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A reusable mailer bag, comprising:

a front panel, a rear panel, a pair of side panels, and a bottom panel that include interior surfaces defining a carrying volume having a top opening opposite the bottom panel, at least one of the interior surfaces of the front panel or the rear panel including a pouch defined therein configured to receive an item; and

a piece of protective tape including a first portion configured to removably adhere to the rear panel and configured to extend across the top opening and a second portion configured to removably adhere to the front panel to close the carrying volume, one of the first or second portions of the protective tape including side tabs on either side thereof configured to wrap around and removably adhere to the front or rear panel and close the side panels proximate the top opening to configure the reusable mailer bag for shipping purposes.

2. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 1, wherein the pouch is configured to carry a gift card therein.

3. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 1, wherein the pouch includes a locking mechanism configured to secure items within the pouch.

4. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 3, wherein the locking mechanism includes at least one of a magnetic clasp, a hook and loop fastener, a snap-lock, or a tab lock.

5. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 1, further comprising a protective film disposed on the front, side and rear panels, wherein the first and second portions of protective tape are adhered to the protective film.

6. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 5, wherein the protective film is adhered to the reusable mailer bag using an adhesive.

7. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 5, wherein the protective film is adhered to the reusable mailer bag using a first adhesive and the first and second portions of protective tape are adhered to the protective film using a second adhesive, the second adhesive having a higher coefficient of adhesion than the first adhesive such that the protective film peels away from the reusable mailer bag with less force than the first and second portions of protective tape peel away from the protective film facilitating opening of the reusable mailer bag.

8. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 1, further comprising a pair of handles attached to the interior surfaces of the front and rear panels, the pair of handles configured to be positioned entirely within the carrying volume during shipping and configured to extend out of the top opening for transport.

9. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 1, wherein the first and second portions of protective tape are configured to be completely removed from the reusable mailer bag after shipping.

10. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 5, further comprising indicia disposed under the protective film which is revealed upon removal of the protective film, the indicia selected from the group consisting of: additional advertising, a secondary layer of store indicia, a promotional item, a gift, a discount coupon/code, or prize.

11. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the interior surfaces of the front panel, rear panel, pair of side panels or bottom panel includes an insulative layer.

12. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 1, wherein the reusable mailer bag is selectively invertable after shipping to expose one or more components to facilitate utilizing the reusable mailer bag as a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, or backpack.

13. The reusable mailer bag according to claim 12, wherein the one or more components is selected from the group consisting of straps, drawstrings, handles, stays, loops and insulative materials.

14. A method of converting a mailer bag into a reusable bag, comprising:

placing an item into a top opening of a carrying volume defined by interior surfaces of a front panel, a rear panel, a pair of side panels, and a bottom panel;

removably adhering a first portion of protective tape to the rear panel and extending a second portion of protective tape across the top opening in the carrying volume and removably adhering the second portion to the front panel to close the top opening of the carrying volume;

extending a first side tab of the second portion of the protective tape around the side panel and removably adhering the first tab to the rear panel and extending a second side tab of the second portion of the protective tape around the opposite side panel and removably adhering the second tab to the rear panel; and

removing the first and second portions of protective tape from the front, side and rear panels after shipping and using the mailer bag as at least one of a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, or backpack.

15. The method of converting a mailer bag into a reusable bag according to claim 14, wherein prior to removably adhering the first portion of protective tape to the rear panel, the method further comprises inserting an item into a pouch defined within at least one of the front or rear panels of the interior surfaces of the carrying volume.

16. The method of converting a mailer bag into a reusable bag according to claim 14, wherein prior to removably adhering the first portion of protective tape to the rear panel, the method further comprises positioning a pair of handles entirely within the carrying volume during shipping and wherein after shipping the method further comprising exposing the handles from the carrying volume to facilitate using the mailer bag as at least one of a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, or backpack.

17. The method of converting a mailer bag into a reusable bag according to claim 14, wherein prior to removably adhering the first portion of protective tape to the rear panel, the method further comprises:

inverting the front panel, rear panel, pair of side panels and bottom panel to form an inverted carrying volume; and

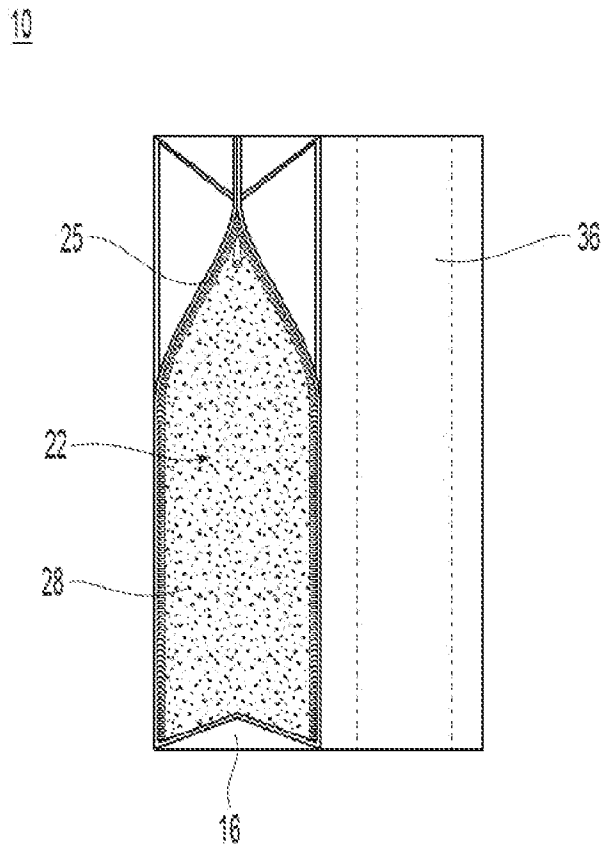
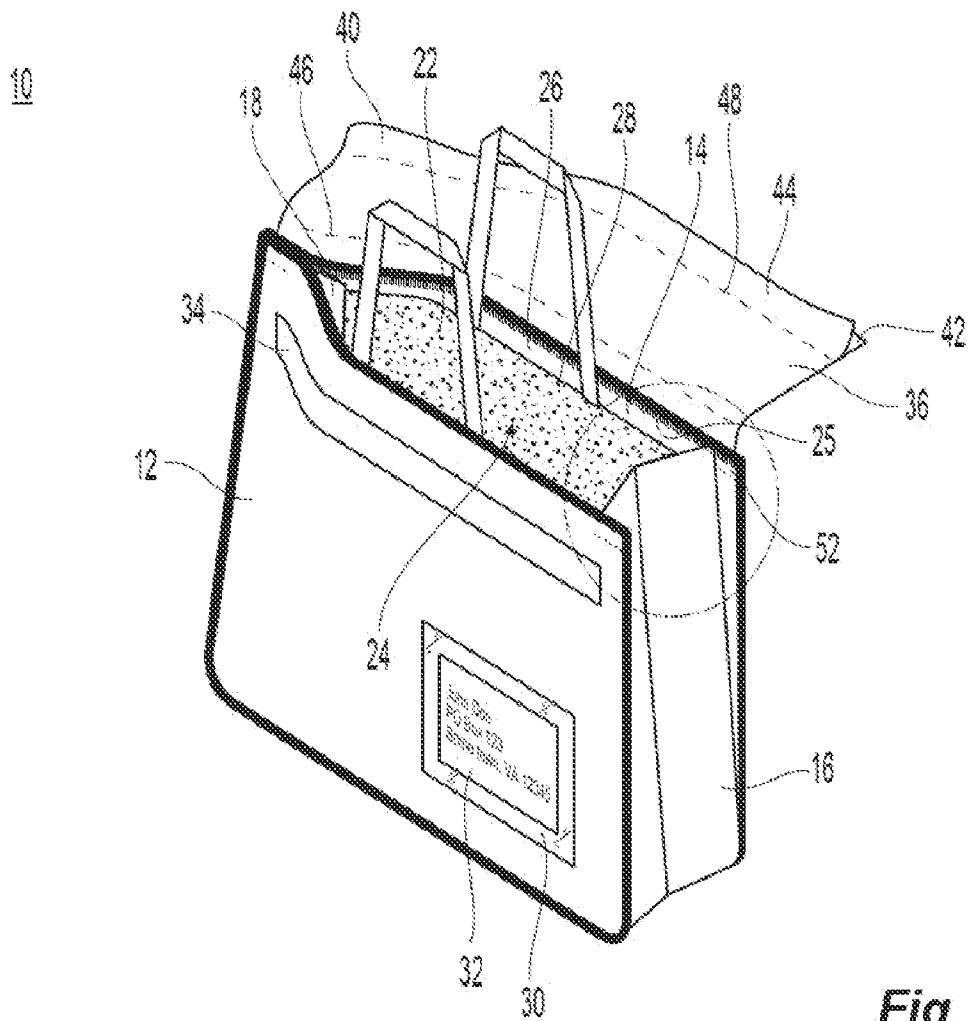
positioning one or more components within the inverted carrying volume employed to facilitate utilizing the mailer bag as a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, or backpack.

18. The method of converting a mailer bag into a reusable bag according to claim 17, wherein the one or more components is selected from the group consisting of straps, drawstrings, handles, stays, loops and insulative materials.

19. The method of converting a mailer bag into a reusable bag according to claim 17, wherein after removing the first and second portions of protective tape from the front, side and rear panels after shipping, the method further comprises:

re-inverting the front panel, rear panel, pair of side panels and bottom panel to expose the one or more components; and

utilizing the mailer bag as a tote, lunch box, lunch bag, or backpack.



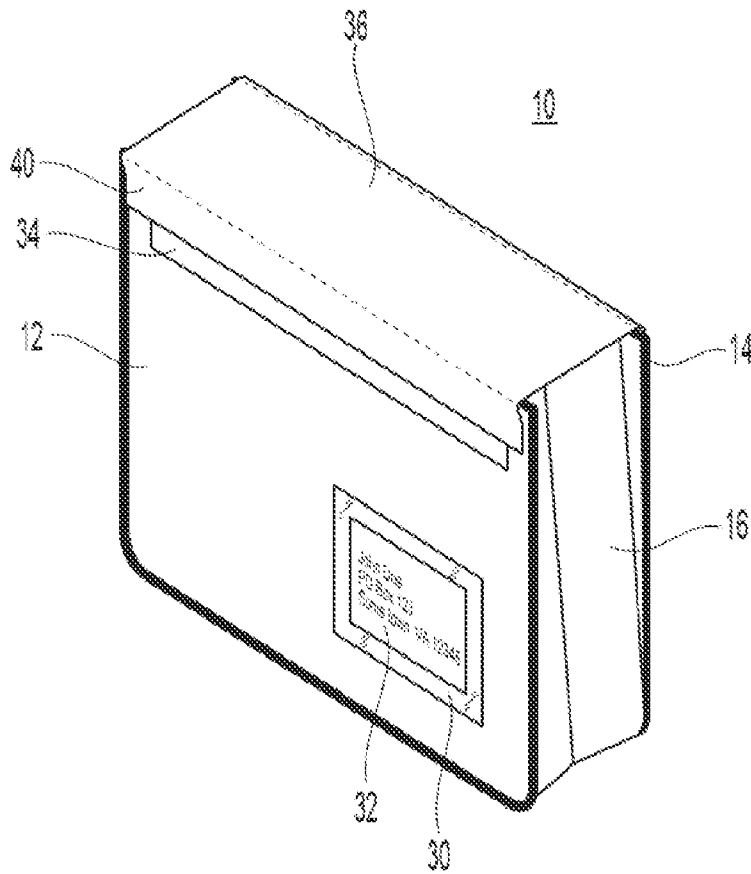


Fig. 3

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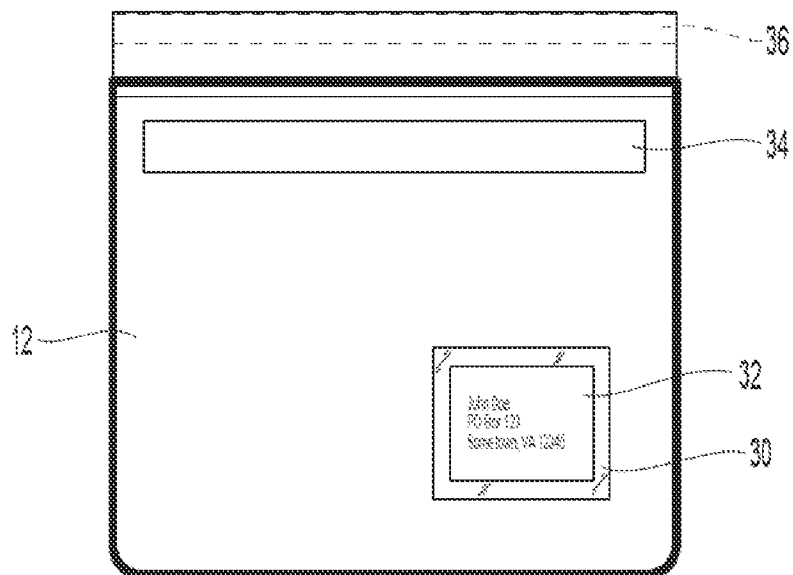


Fig. 4

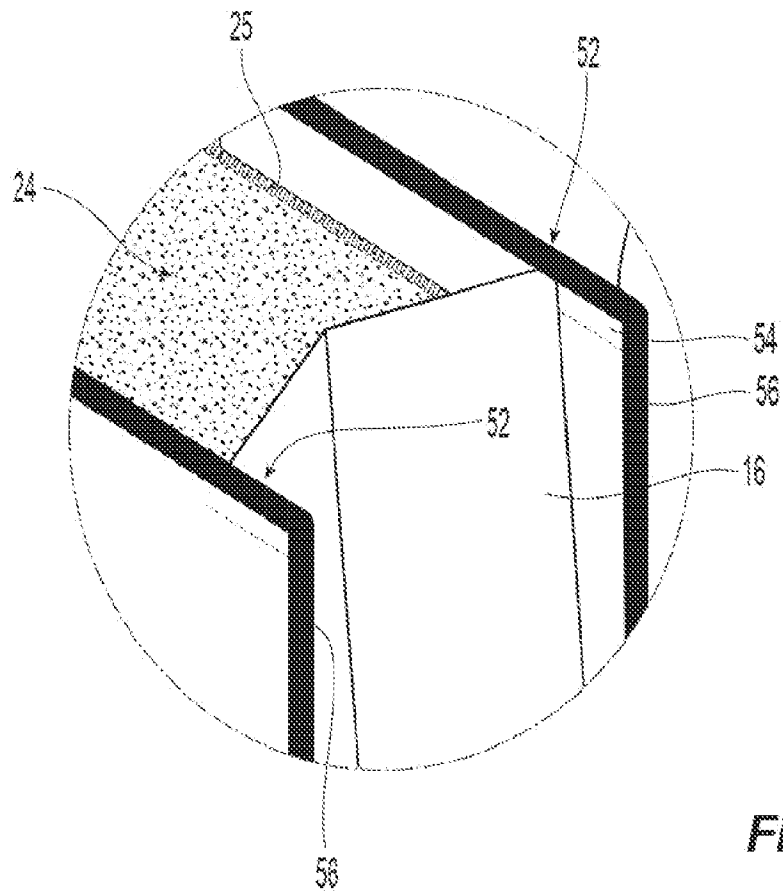


Fig. 5

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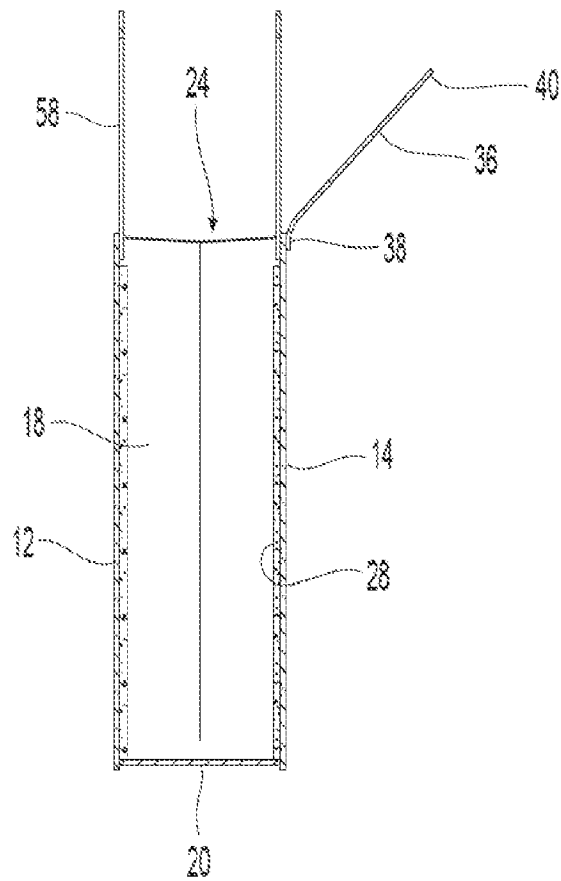


Fig. 6

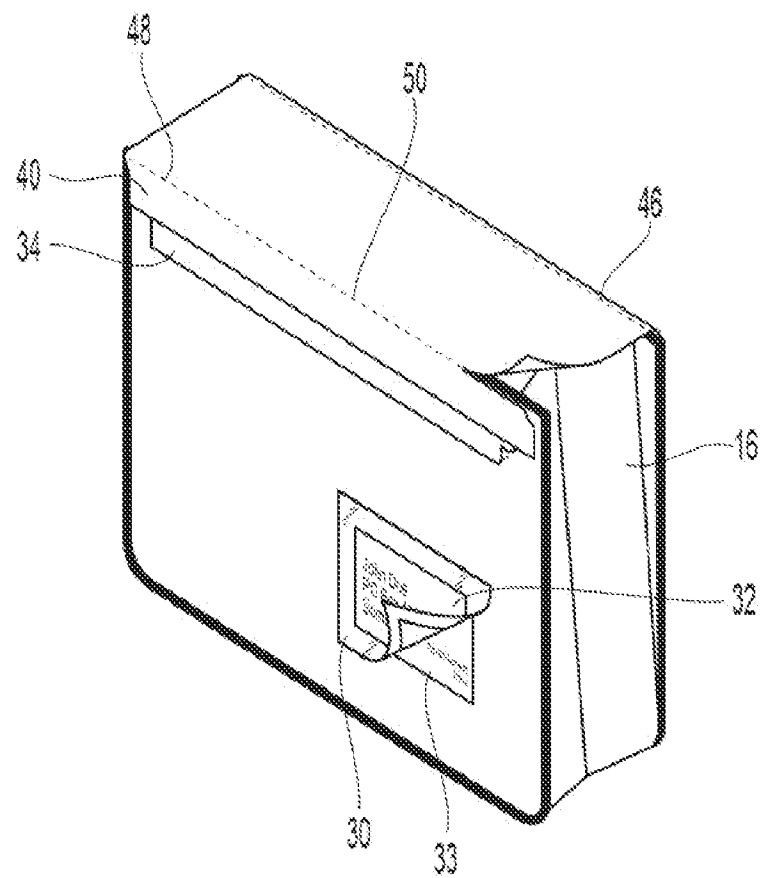


Fig. 7

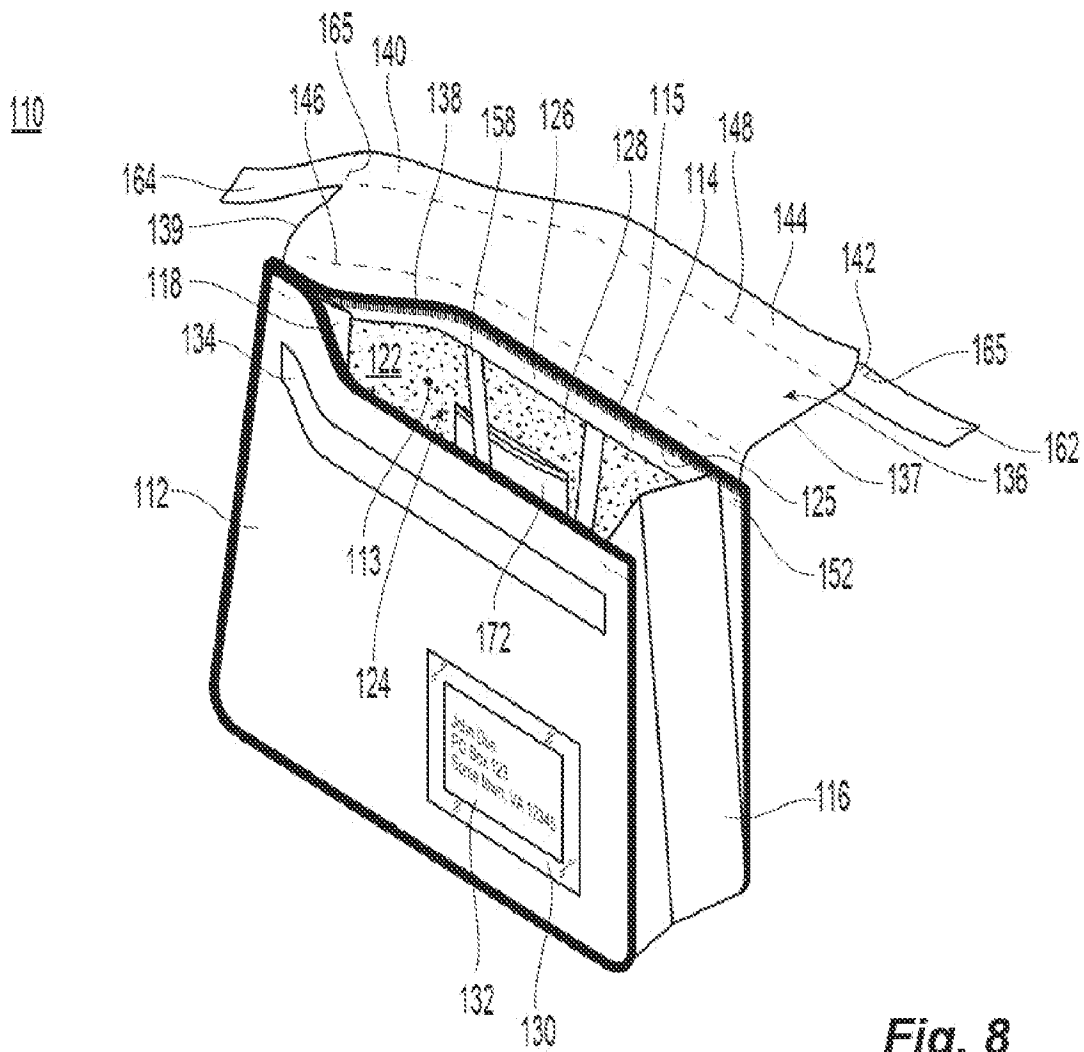


Fig. 8

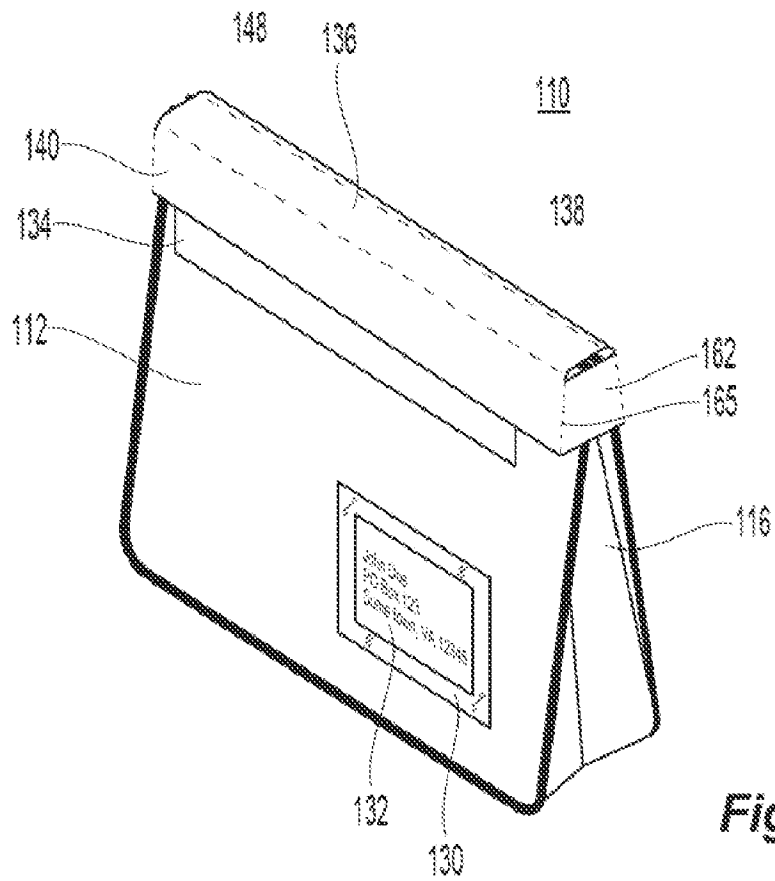


Fig. 9

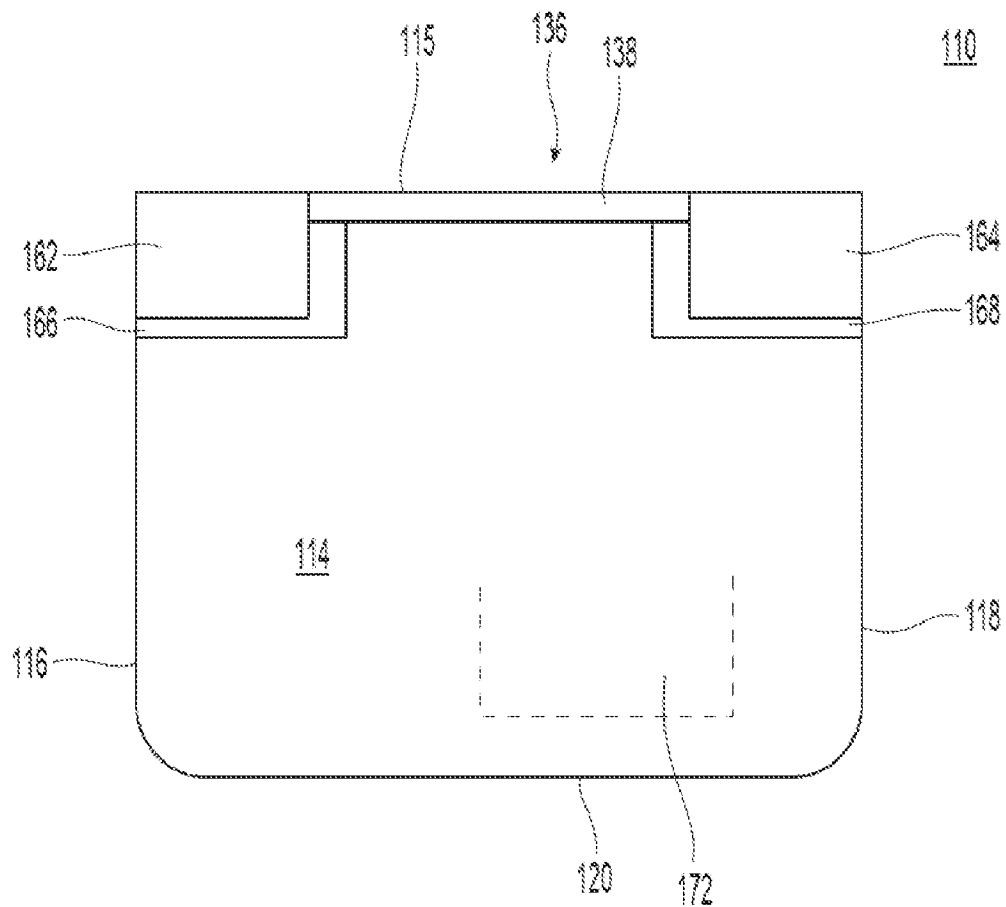
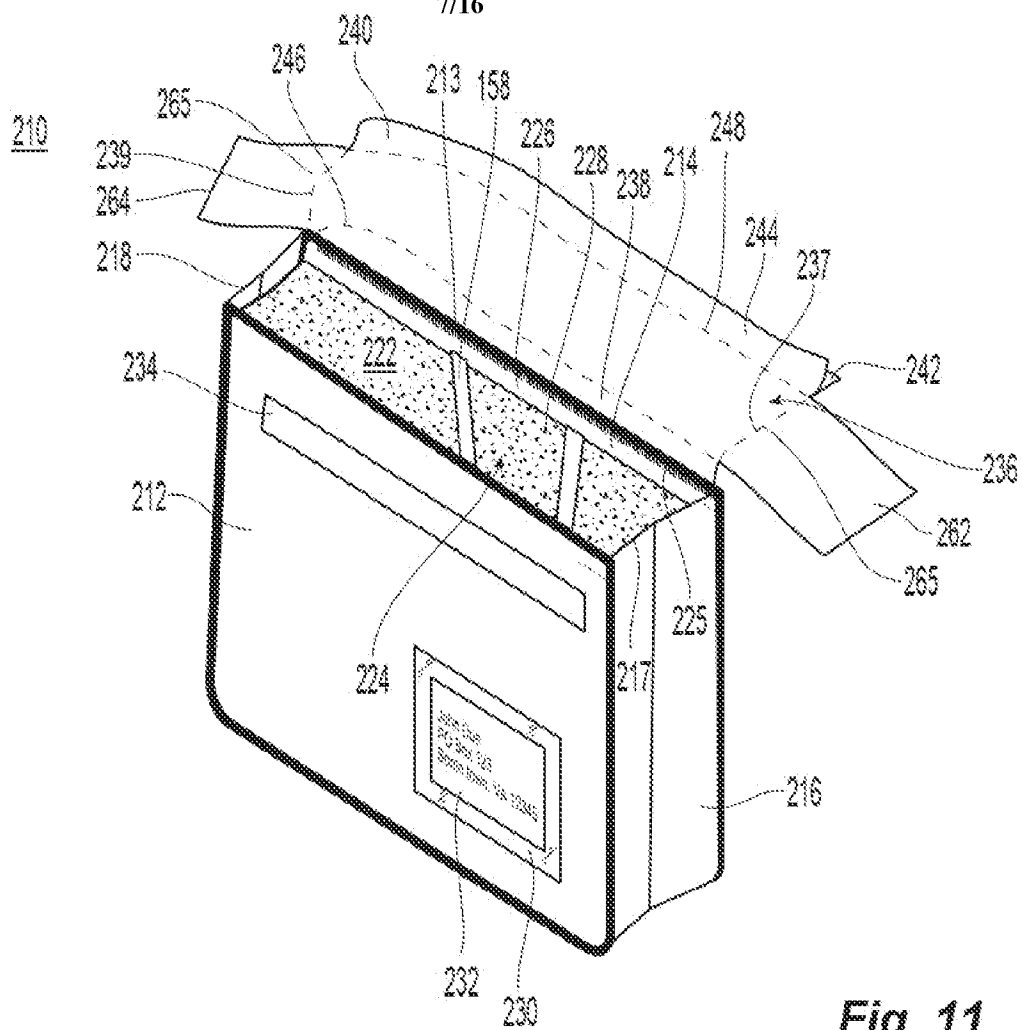
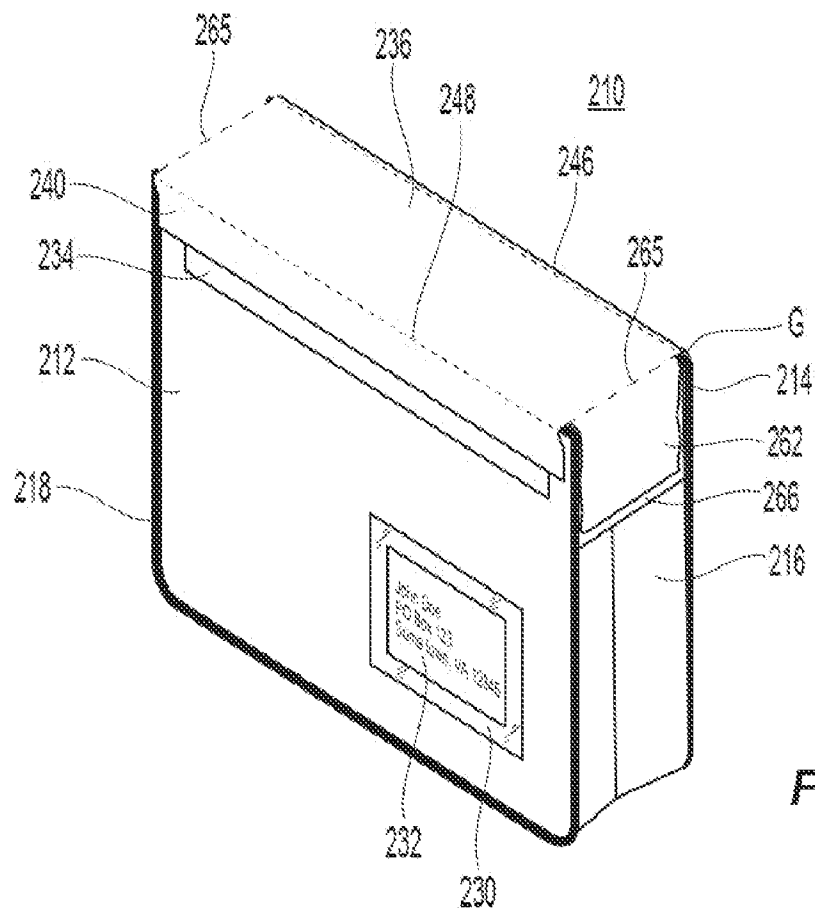
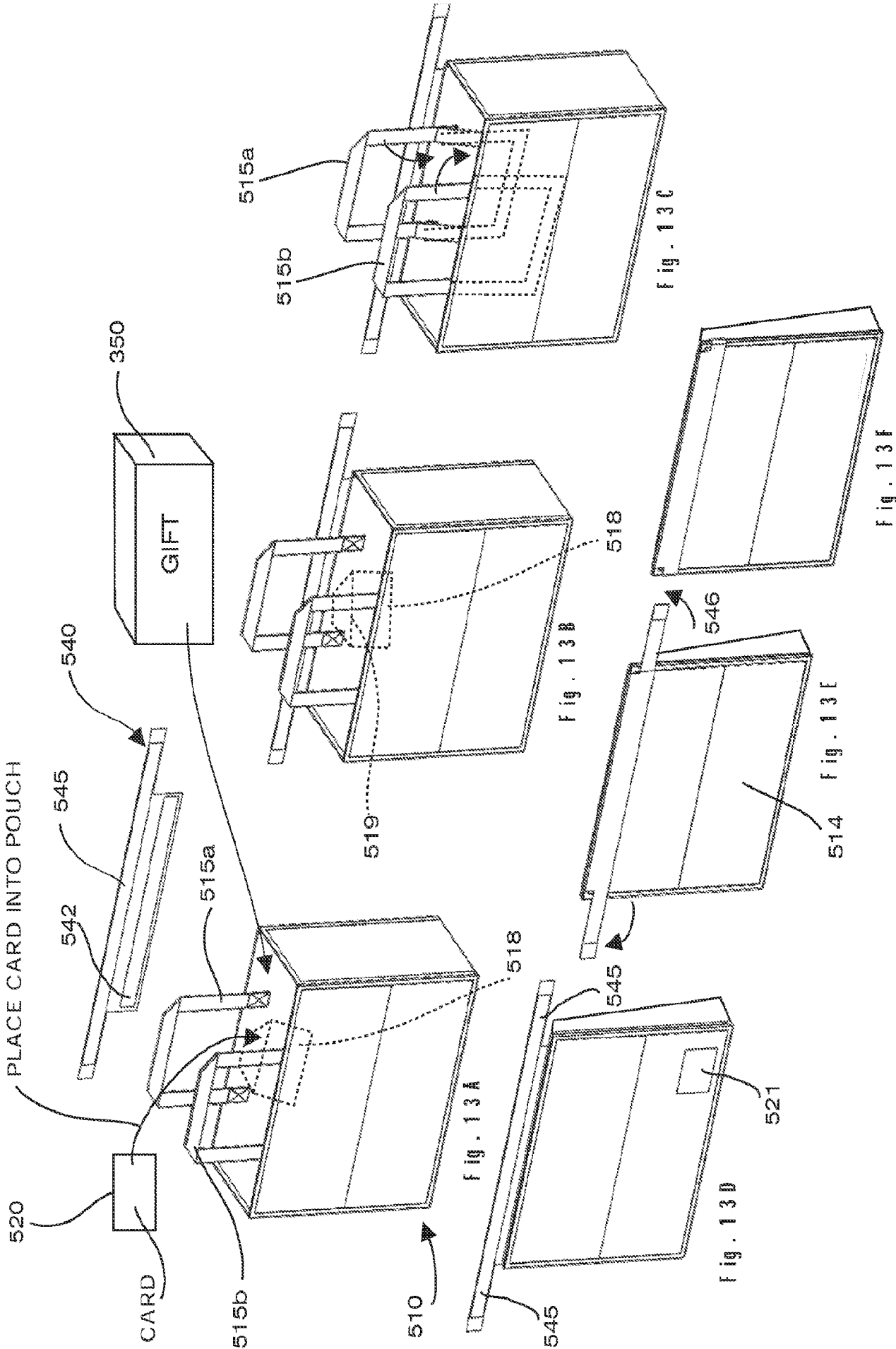
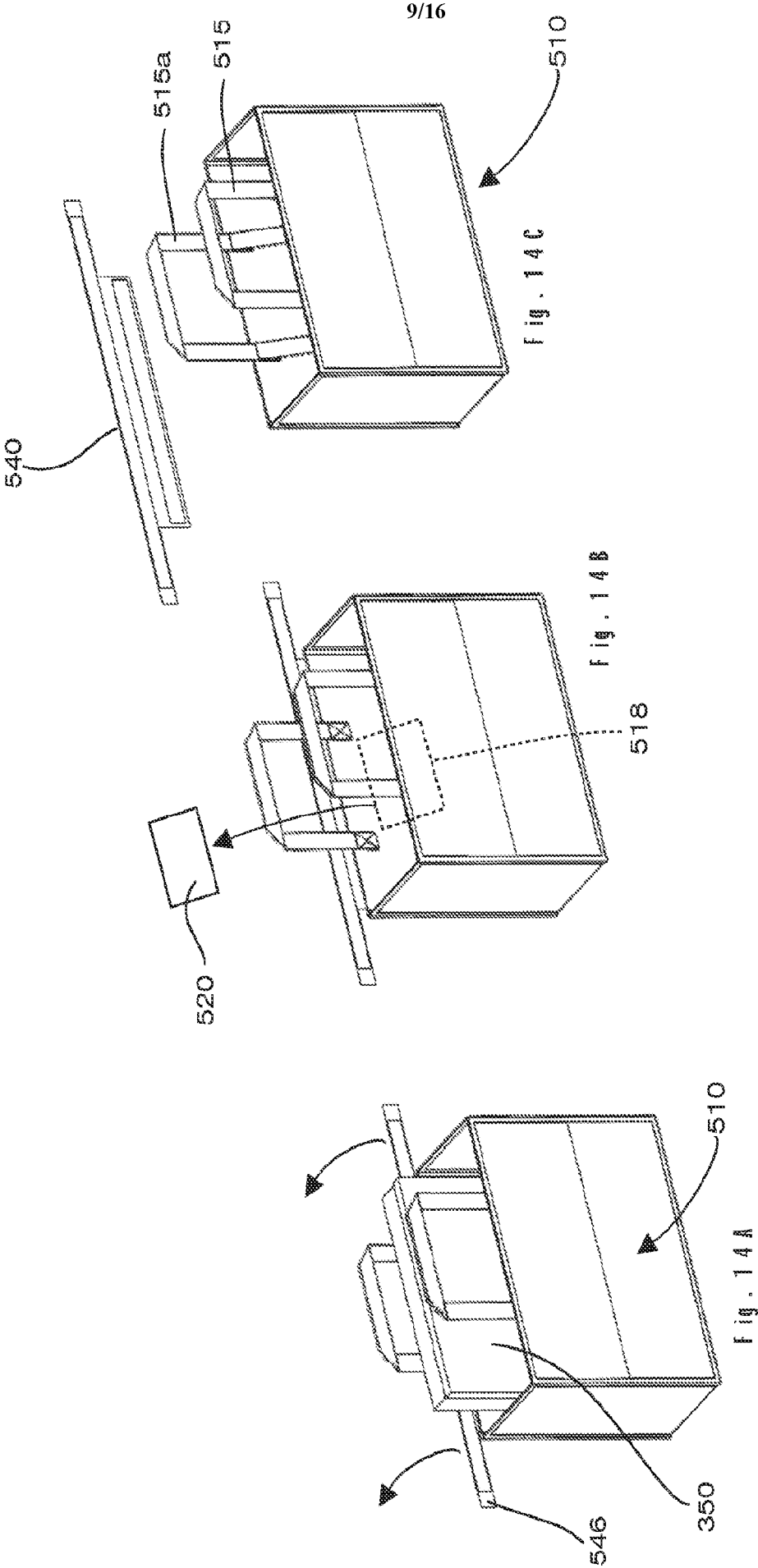


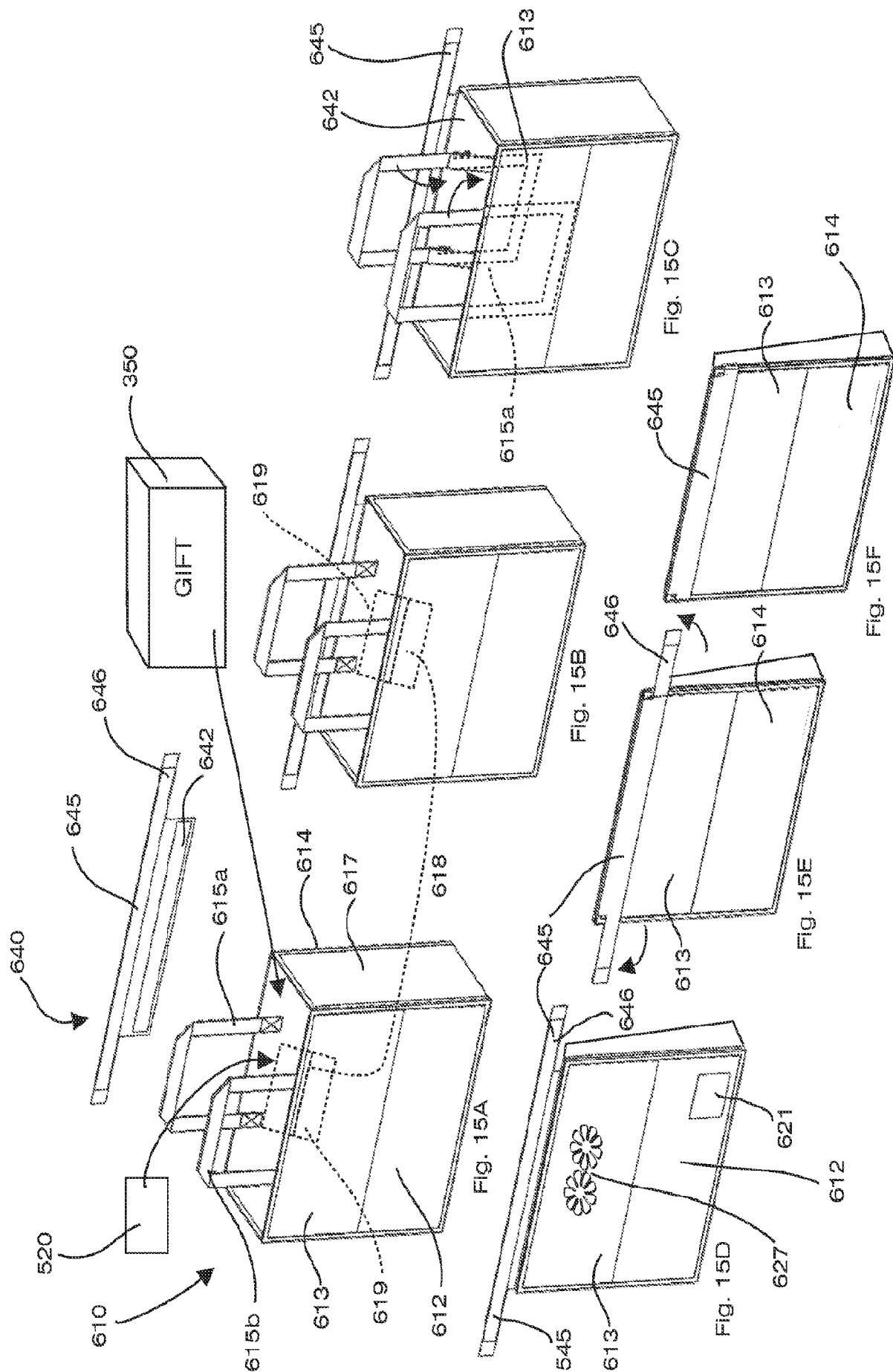
Fig. 10

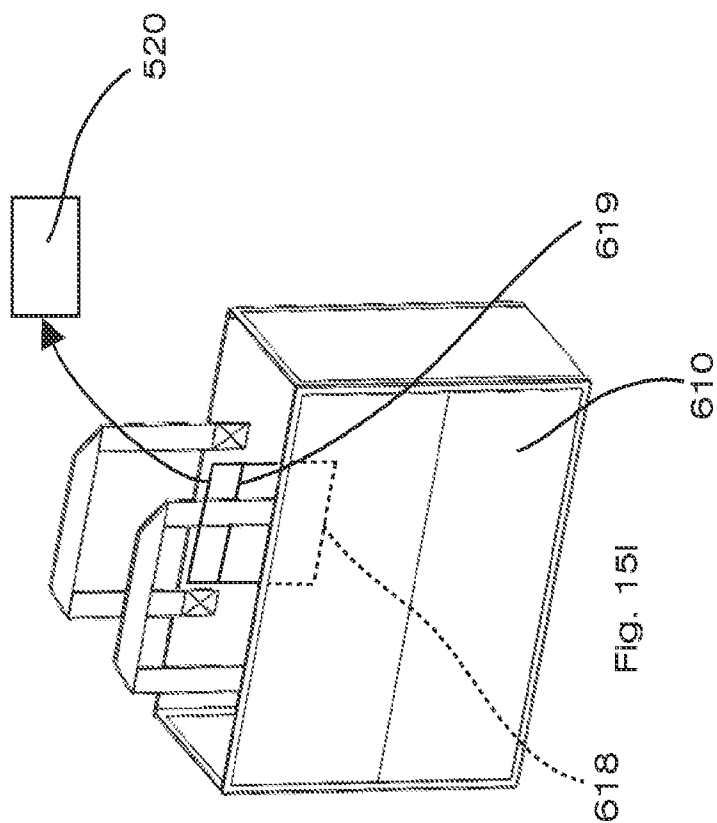
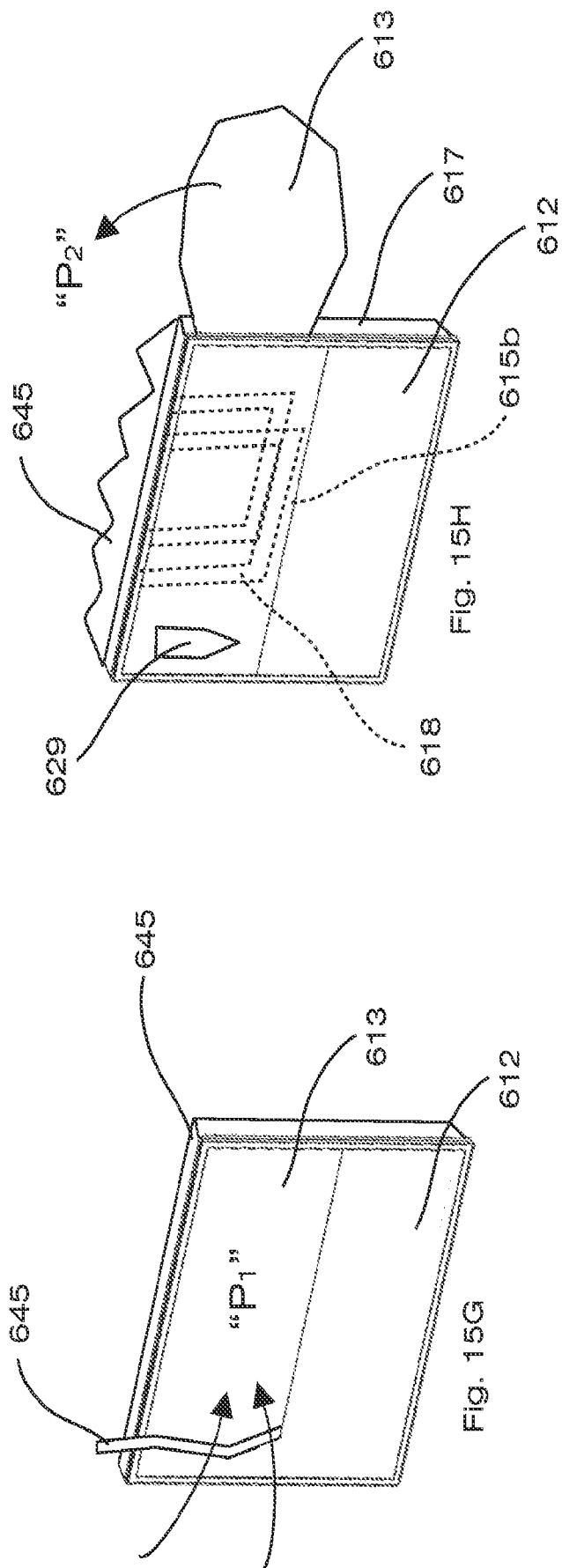
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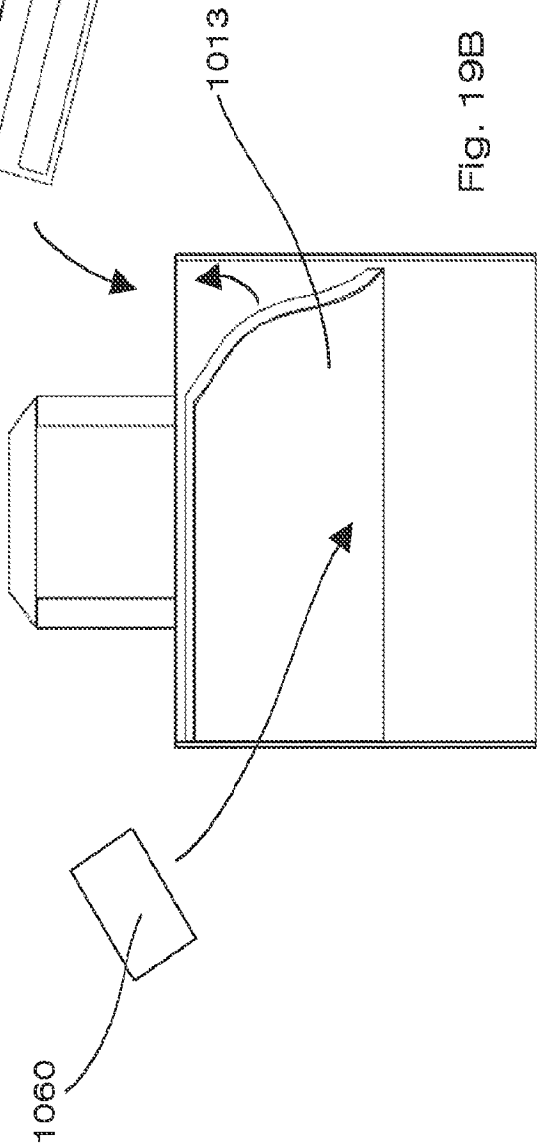
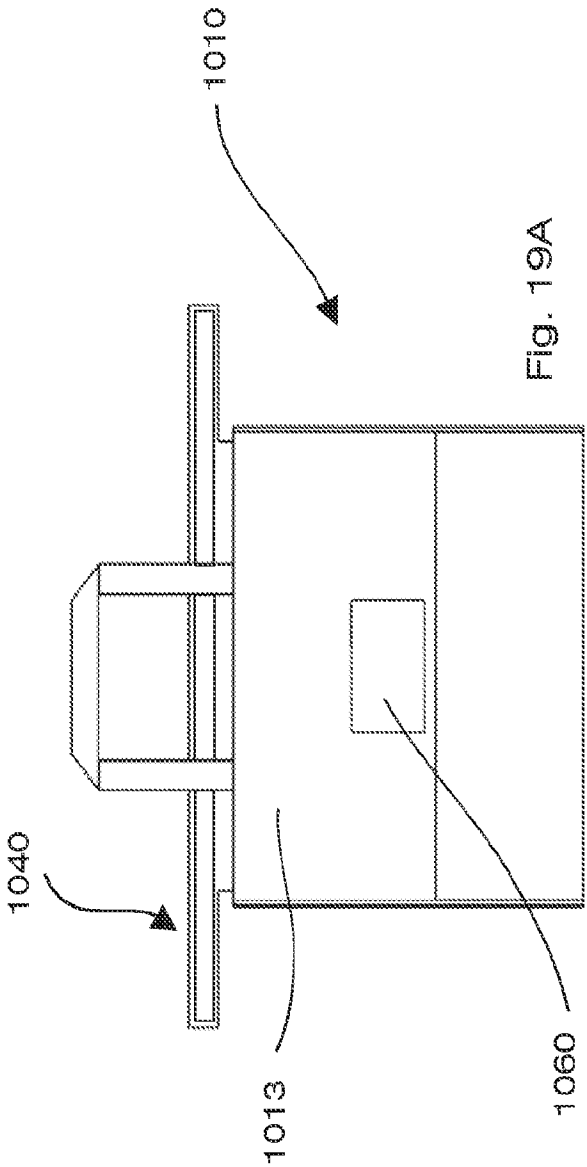
**Fig. 11****Fig. 12**

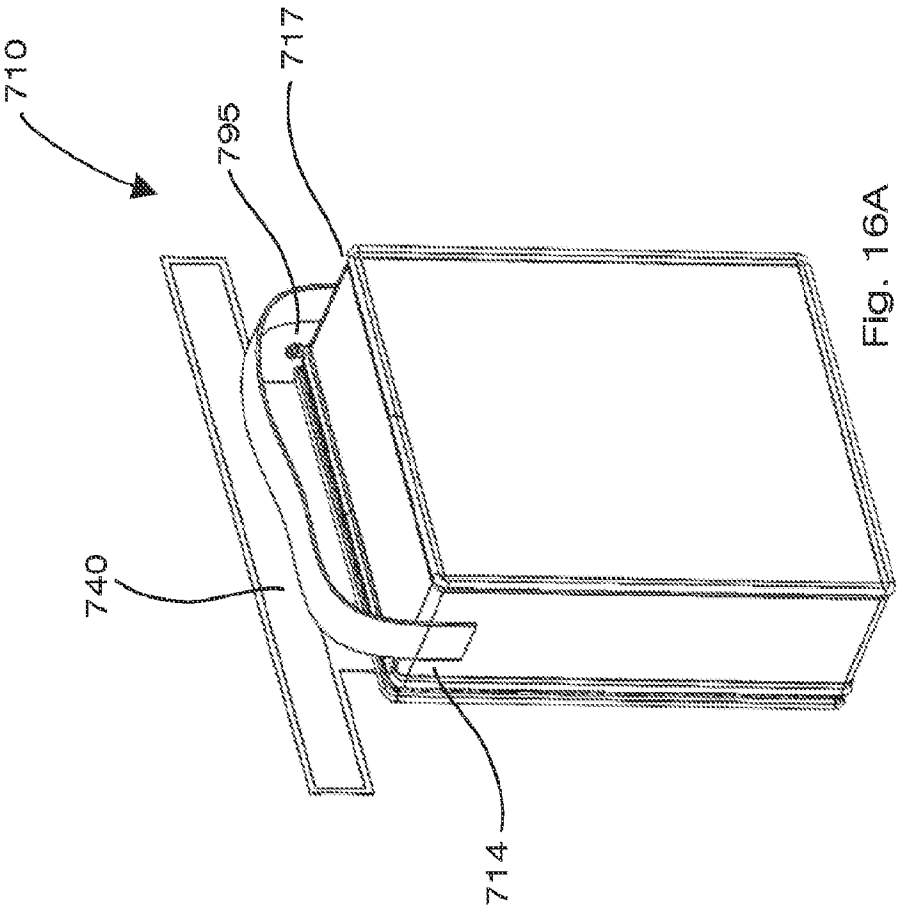
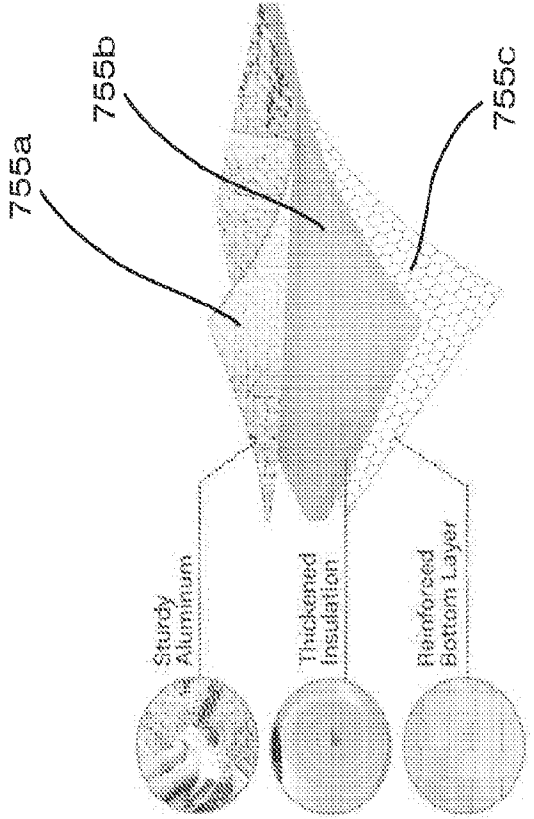
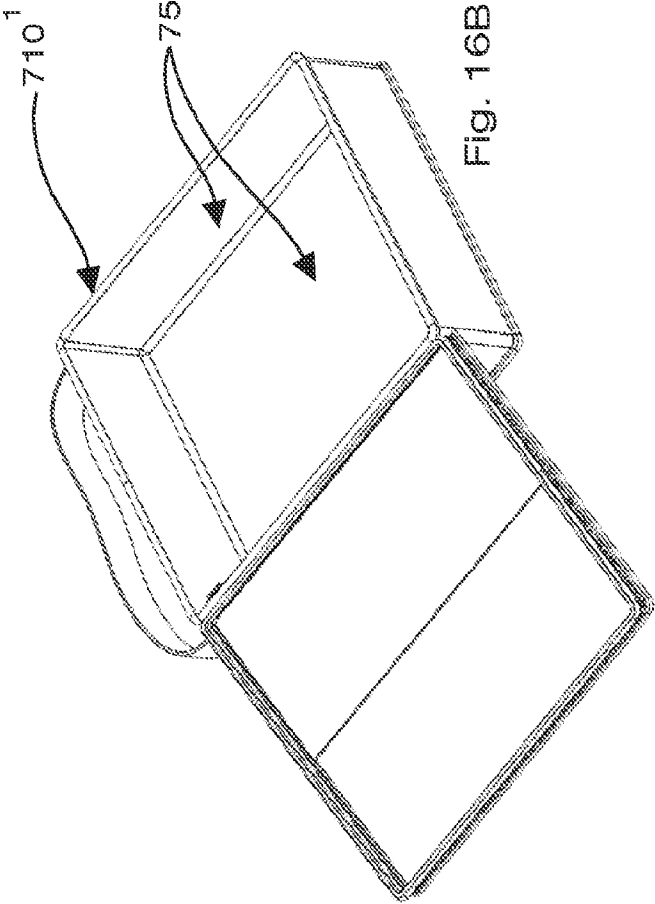


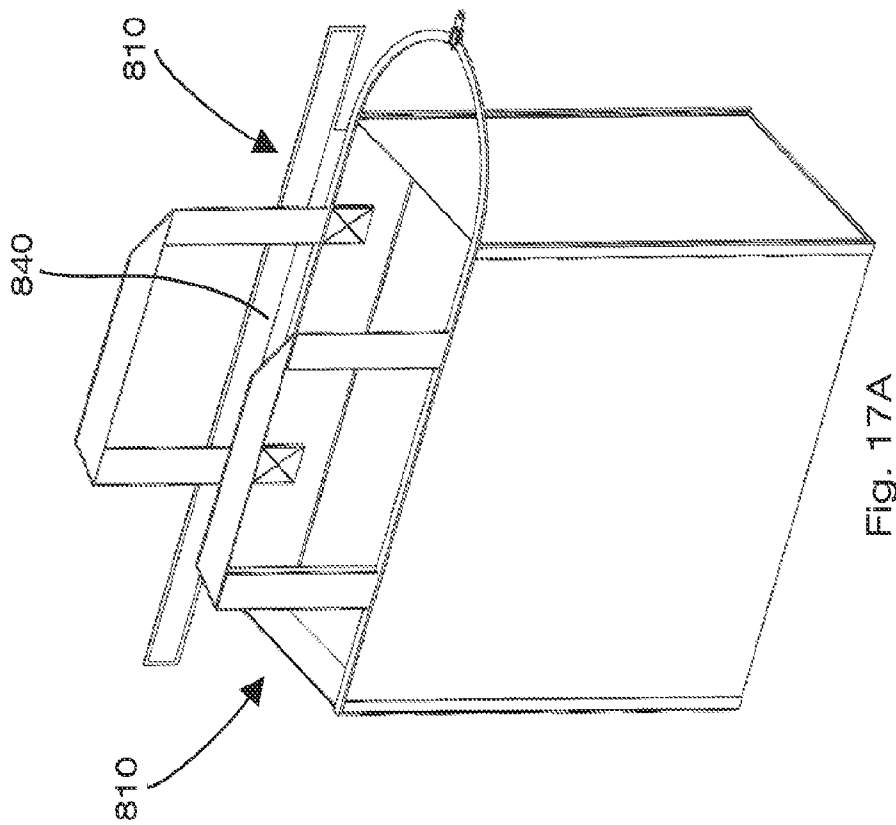
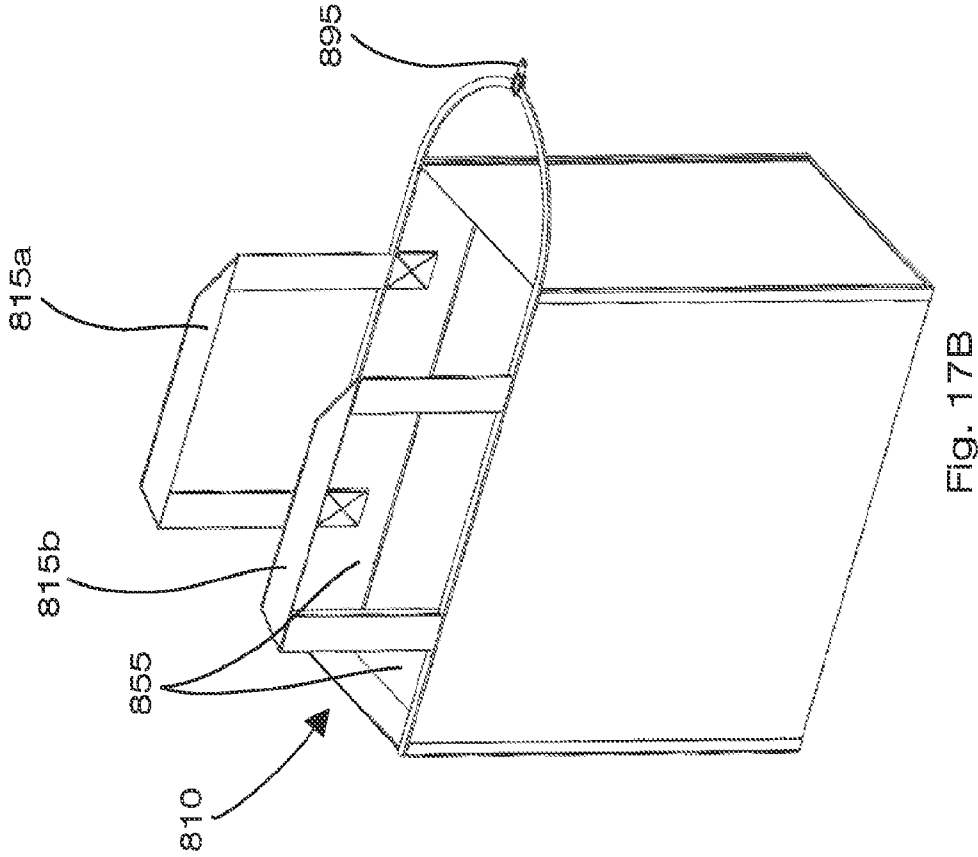












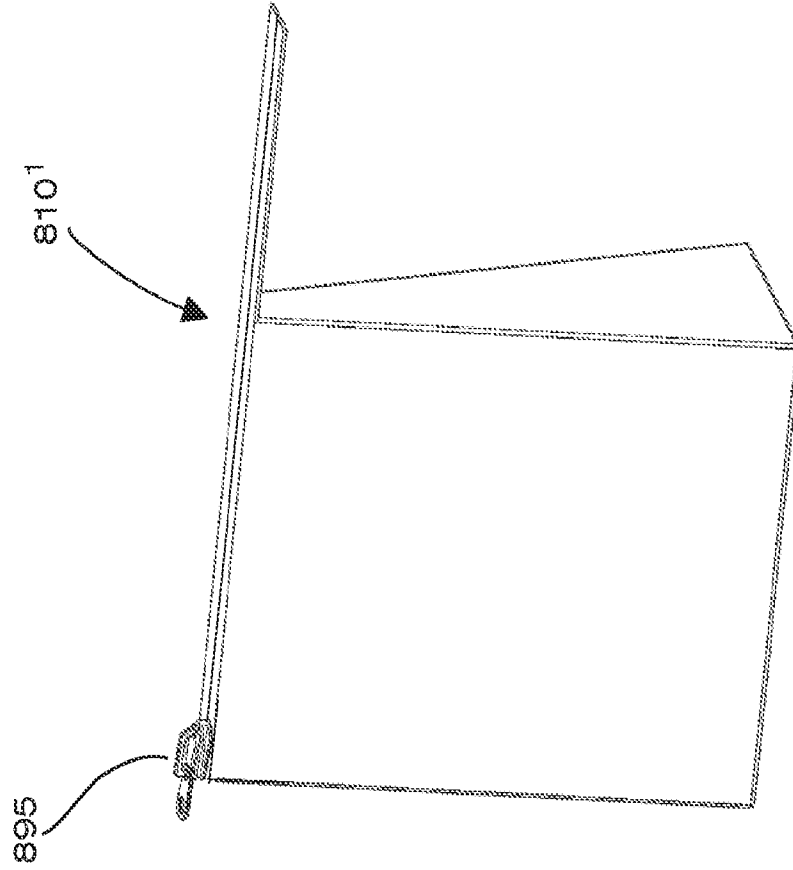


Fig. 17D

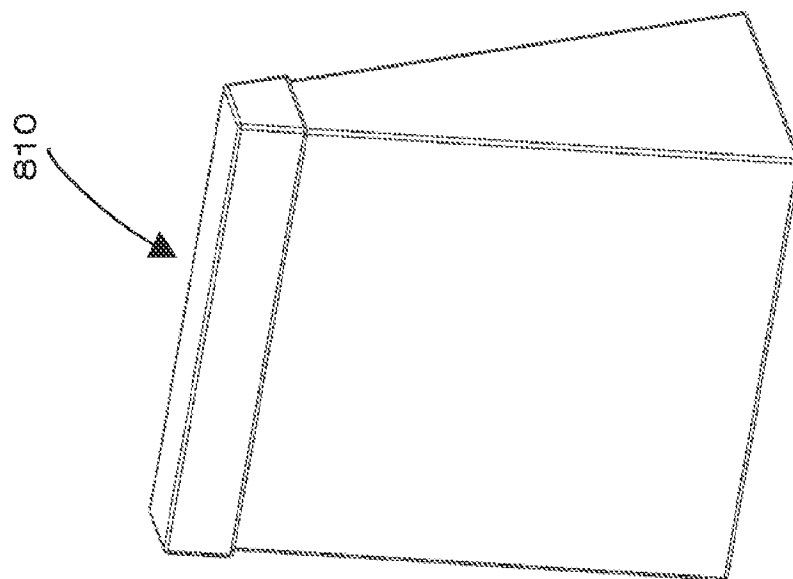


Fig. 17C

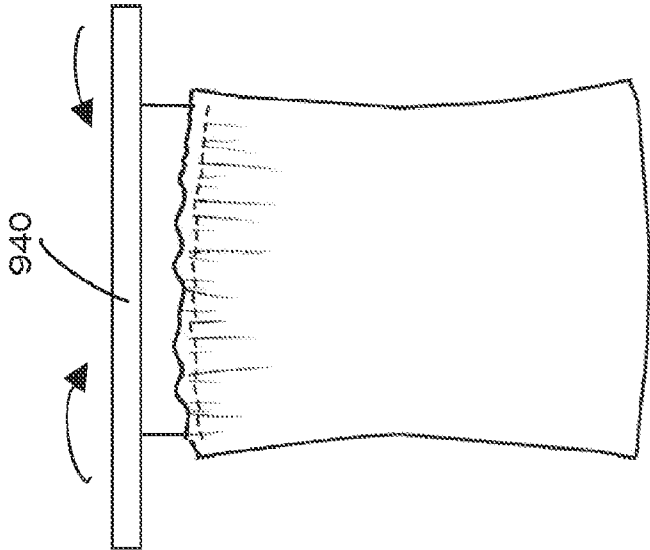


Fig . 18B

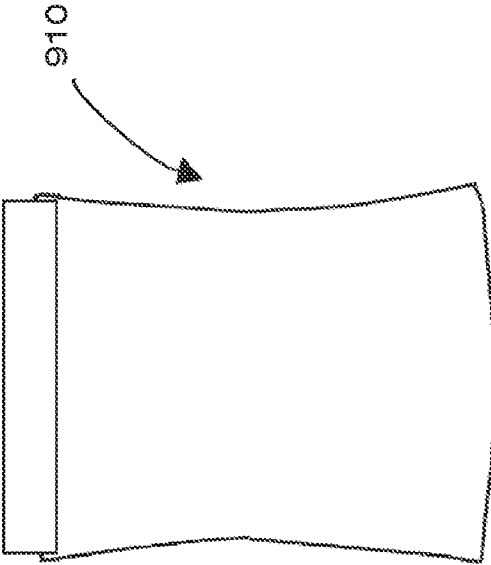


Fig . 18C

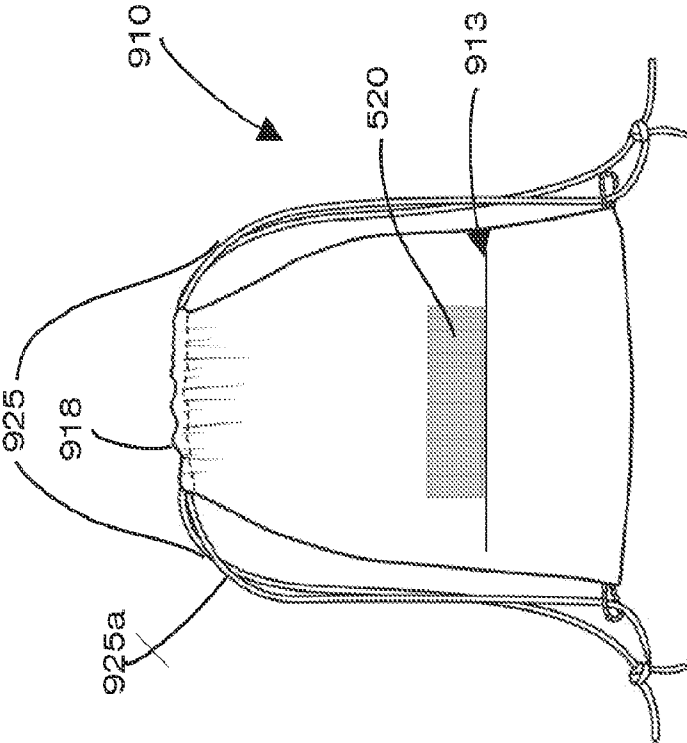


Fig . 18A

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2023/036042

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER		
INV.	A45C3/00	A45C3/04
	A45F3/04	B65D27/14
	A45C3/06	B65D27/24
	A45C9/00	B65D33/18
	A45C11/20	
ADD.		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)		
A45C B65D A45F		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
EPO-Internal		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2018/305088 A1 (GREENWOOD HUGH L [US] ET AL) 25 October 2018 (2018-10-25)	1-6, 8-16
A	paragraph [0050] - paragraph [0090]; figures	7, 17-19

A	US 2011/155794 A1 (RUSSELL BRIAN E [US]) 30 June 2011 (2011-06-30)	1
	paragraph [0015] - paragraph [0020]; figures	

A	WO 2022/180507 A1 (MOURET JEAN [CN]) 1 September 2022 (2022-09-01)	1
	figures	

A	JP 2023 041572 A (HOSHIZORA KOKUSAI CO LTD) 24 March 2023 (2023-03-24)	1
	figures	

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☒ See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents : "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance;; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance;; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art "&" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search		Date of mailing of the international search report
8 February 2024		23/02/2024
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016		Authorized officer van de Beek-Duijker

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/US2023/036042

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