(19) Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

(11) EP 1 100 065 A2

(12) EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
16.05.2001 Bulletin 2001/20

(51) Int Cl.[7]: **G09F 3/04**

(21) Application number: **00310003.9**

(22) Date of filing: **10.11.2000**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU MC NL PT SE TR
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

(30) Priority: **12.11.1999 US 440024**

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(54) Container wrap

(57) A wrap for a container having an exterior includes a transparent laminar substrate. An ink design is placed on at least a portion of a surface of the substrate to leave other portions of the surface uncovered by the design. The substrate is then positioned and held against the exterior of the container to visually integrate the exterior of the container with the design on the substrate. For one method of manufacture, the substrate may be made of a shrinkable polyvinylchloride and is first formed as a tube with a lumen. The container is then inserted into the lumen of the substrate and the substrate is made to contact and conform with the exterior of the container by heat shrinking.

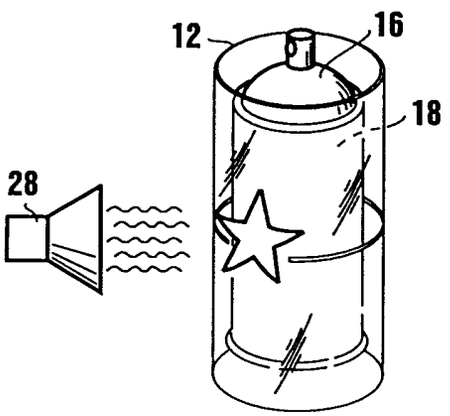

Figure 6

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Description

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention pertains generally to containers and methods for their manufacture. More particularly, the present invention pertains to fancifully designed containers. The present invention is particularly, but not exclusively, useful as a device and method for visually integrating the exterior of a container with an ink design that is printed on a laminar substrate to create a fanciful design for the container.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] It has long been a practice to provide fanciful and eye-catching trade dress for products that are to be commercialized. The ultimate merchandising objective is, of course, to bring the product to the attention of the consumer in a manner which will influence the consumer to purchase the product. For this same end, it is also an objective to provide an informative, entertaining, and distinctive commercial presentation for the product which will emphasize the beneficial aspects of the product in the eye of the consumer. To accomplish these objectives, a number of factors are important. These include: the color or combinations of color that are used for the trade dress of the product; the shape and texture of the product's packaging; and the overall visual appearance of the product's trade dress.

[0003] For the purposes of merchandising a product, the visual presentation of articles such as signs, cards, tags or labels which are used to attract the attention of consumers need to be distinctive and readily recognizable. Accordingly, it has happened in recent years that technology has been advantageously employed to provide new and exciting, visually distinctive trade dress and art work for a wide variety of products and objects. For example, U.S. Patent No. 5,082,703, which issued to Longobardi for an invention entitled "Sign with Transparent Substrate", and which is assigned to the same assignee as the present invention, discloses a sign which incorporate inks in a way that gives the sign an etched or embossed appearance. As another example of signage technology, U.S. Patent No. 5,407,711, which issued to Lovison et al. for an invention entitled "Display with Enhanced Highlights", and which is also assigned to the same assignee as the present invention, discloses a display that uses process printing together with a pattern of opaque white ink dots against a reflective layer to give the display an appearance of relative depth.

[0004] As noted above, many products require some form of specialized packaging in order for them to be properly commercialized. Indeed, for items such as aerosols, shaving cream products and toiletries, beverages and food stuffs, the container can be a very important aspect of the commercialized product. In many instances these containers are specifically designed for the particular product. In these cases, although the special nature of the container must be preserved, it is still necessary for the container to be dressed and presented in a way which will emphasize and show off the more favorable aspects of the product.

[0005] In light of the above, it is an object of the present invention to provide a wrap for a product container which will visually integrate the exterior of the container with an artful ink design on the container wrap. It is another object of the present invention to provide a wrap for a container which is easily modified to provide a plethora of visual presentations for similar type containers. Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a wrap for a container which is easy to manufacture, simple to use and comparatively cost effective.

SUMMARY OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0006] In accordance with the present invention, a fancifully designed container includes an ink design on a transparent laminar substrate which is positioned over and attached to the exterior of the container. More specifically, the ink design is applied to cover portions of the substrate's surface, while leaving other portions of the surface uncovered. Consequently, when the substrate is positioned and held against the exterior of the container, portions of the container's exterior can be seen through the substrate. Thus, the design on the substrate is visually integrated with the exterior of the container to give the container its fanciful design.

[0007] As intended for the present invention, the exterior of the container can be either textured or smooth and, although it will most likely be cylindrical in shape, the exterior of the container can be contoured to have any particularly desired configuration that is suitable for contact with the designed laminar substrate. Further, in addition to being either textured or smooth, the container's exterior may be colored as desired, and it can have either a flat or a shiny appearance.

[0008] Insofar as the substrate itself is concerned, the substrate can be transparent or translucent, and it can either be clear or tinted with a desired color. Also, the ink design which is placed on at least a portion of the substrate's surface can be of any type ink that is suitable for use with the laminar substrate. For the present invention, the design can be applied to the surface in any way that is well known in the pertinent art, such as by process printing, screen printing, or off-set printing.

[0009] One method for manufacturing the wrapped container of the present invention involves printing a design on a substrate. The substrate is then positioned over the exterior of the container. Once in position over the container's exterior, the overlapping edges of the substrate can be bonded together to hold the substrate against the exterior. Additionally, an adhesive can be used to glue or bond the entire substrate against the exterior of the container.

[0010] For an alternate method of manufacturing the

wrapped container of the present invention, the substrate can be made of an unplasticized polyvinylchloride (i.e. a shrink wrap) and be generally formed as a tube with open ends. Then, with the container positioned in the lumen of the substrate tube, to locate the design and substrate over the exterior of the container, a heat source is activated to heat the substrate and thereby shrink the substrate onto the container.

[0011] As an additional feature for the present invention, an extraordinarily thick ridge of ink can be placed along selected edges or portions of the design to give an etched or embossed appearance to the design.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The novel features of this invention, as well as the invention itself, both as to its structure and its operation, will be best understood from the accompanying drawings, taken in conjunction with the accompanying description, in which similar reference characters refer to similar parts, and in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a wrapped container in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of a container before application of the wrap;

Figure 3 is a view of a wrap substrate suitable for use with the present invention;

Figure 4 is a cross sectional view of the wrap as seen along the line 4-4 in Fig. 3;

Figure 5 is a perspective view of a wrap and container showing one method for applying the wrap to the container; and

Figure 6 is a perspective view of a wrap and container showing an alternate method for applying the wrap to the container.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0013] Referring initially to Fig. 1, a wrapped container in accordance with the present invention is shown and is generally designated 10. As shown, the wrapped container 10 includes an outer wrap 12 on which a design 14 has been printed. More specifically, the individual components of the wrapped container 10 are best seen with reference to both Fig. 2 and Fig. 3. For this purpose, Fig. 2 shows a base container 16 which has an exterior 18, and Fig. 3 shows that the wrap 12 is initially a substantially flat laminar substrate.

[0014] For the present invention, the base container 16 can be of any of several different sizes and shapes. More specifically, the base container 16 can be made of any material that is desired or necessary for the presentation, preservation or functional requirements of the product that is being marketed. With this in mind, although the particular base container 16 shown in Fig. 2 is a typical aerosol can which is cylindrical in shape, this particular configuration for the container 16 is only exemplary. Further, by way of example, the tactile and visual aspects of the exterior 18 of the base container 16 can differ according to the type and nature of the materials used to manufacture the base container 16. Specifically, depending on the material used, the exterior 18 can be textured or smooth, it can be colored, and it can have either a flat or a shiny appearance.

[0015] As contemplated for the present invention, the wrap 12 shown in Fig. 3 is preferably a laminar substrate which is flexible and capable of conforming to the exterior 18 of the base container 16. Preferably, the wrap 12 is transparent or translucent to visible light and, as shown in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4, there is some form of a design 14 which is applied to a surface 20 of the substrate that is the wrap 12. For the present invention, the wrap 12 can be clear or color tinted and can be made of a plastic material such as polyvinychloride (PVC). Further, it is preferable for the design 14 (e.g. the stripe and star shown in the Figures) to cover only portions of the wrap 12. Thus, regardless whether the design 14 is opaque or transparent, there will be at least some portions of the wrap 12, such as the area 22 of wrap 12 that is outside the stripe and star of design 14, which are transparent to visible light.

[0016] As best appreciated with reference to Fig. 4, the design 14 on wrap 12 is preferably a layer of ink 24 which is deposited or applied directly onto the surface 20 of the substrate wrap 12. For the present invention, the type of ink 24 that is used, alone or in combination with other inks, is a matter of choice (e.g. transparent, translucent or opaque). Further, the method for applying or depositing the ink 24 onto the surface 20 can be any of several methods well known in the pertinent art, such as by process printing, screen printing or off-set printing.

[0017] In addition to the other aspects of design 14 disclosed above, it is to be appreciated that an etched or embossed visual effect can be achieved by placing an extraordinarily thick ridge of ink 26 at selected locations on the design 14, such as at the edge of the design 14 as indicated in Fig. 4. It is within the contemplation of the present invention that an extraordinarily thick ridge of ink 26 can be applied as disclosed and claimed in U.S. Patent No. 5,082,703 which issued to Longobardi, and which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0018] It is an important aspect of the present invention that the art work for the design 14 can be accomplished in a two dimensional perspective. Stated differently, the design 14 can be created on the wrap 12 while the wrap 12 is either flat or otherwise susceptible to a planar presentation. On the other hand, in its final presentation, the wrap 12 will most likely be seen in three dimensions. For example, the exterior 18 of the base container 16 presents a curved cylindrical shaped surface which has three dimensional aspects. Also, as implied above, other shapes of three dimensional surfaces could just as easily be presented by a base container 16. In any event, the present invention contemplates conforming the two dimensional wrap 12 onto a three

dimensional exterior 18. This can be done in several ways.

[0019] Referring now to Fig. 5 it is shown that the wrap 12 can be positioned over the exterior 18 and attached or affixed to the exterior 18 by an adhesive (not shown) in a manner well known in the pertinent art. In an alternate method for affixing the wrap 12 to the exterior 18 of the base container 16, the wrap 12 can be made of a "shrink wrap" material, such as unplasticized polyvinylchloride. The wrap 12 can then be formed as a hollow, tubular shaped substrate which is positioned to surround the base container 16 over its exterior 18. A heat source can then be activated to shrink the wrap 12 onto the exterior 18 and, thereby, cause the wrap 12 to conform to the exterior 18. In either case, the design 14 will be presented, as substantially shown in Fig. 1, and the exterior 18 of the base container 16 will be seen through portions of the wrap 12, i.e. area 22, to visually integrate the surface aspects of the exterior 18 with the design 14 on the wrap 12. The result is a wrapped container 10 in accordance with the present invention.

[0020] While the particular Container Wrap as herein shown and disclosed in detail is fully capable of obtaining the objects and providing the advantages herein before stated, it is to be understood that it is merely illustrative of the presently preferred embodiments of the invention and that no limitations are intended to the details of construction or-design herein shown other than as described in the appended claims.

Claims

1. A wrap for a container having an exterior which comprises:

a laminar substrate having a surface, said surface being located between a first edge of said substrate and a second edge of said substrate;
a design placed on at least a portion of said surface of said substrate; and
a means for attaching said first edge of said substrate to said second edge of said substrate to position said substrate against said exterior of said container to visually integrate said exterior of said container with said design on said surface.

2. A wrap as recited in claim 1 wherein said substrate is transparent for viewing said exterior through said substrate.

3. A wrap as recited in claim 2 wherein said substrate is tinted.

4. A wrap as recited in claim 1 wherein said substrate is made of polyvinylchloride (PVC).

5. A wrap as recited in claim 1 wherein said surface of said substrate is positioned against said exterior with said design between said exterior and said substrate.

6. A wrap as recited in claim 1 wherein said design is made of ink.

7. A wrap as recited in claim 6 wherein said design has an edge and includes an extraordinarily thick ridge of ink applied on said surface at the edge of said design.

8. A wrap for a container having an exterior which comprises:

a hollow, substantially tubular shaped substrate formed with a lumen and having a surface;
a design placed on at least a portion of said surface of said substrate; and
a means for holding said container in said lumen of said substrate with said substrate against said exterior of said container to visually integrate said exterior of said container with said design on said surface.

9. A wrap as recited in claim 8 wherein said substrate is made of an unplasticized polyvinylchloride and is shrinkable from a first configuration wherein said container is insertable into said lumen of said tubular shaped substrate to a second configuration wherein said substrate conforms with said exterior of said container.

10. A wrap as recited in claim 9 wherein said holding means is a heat source for shrinking said substrate from said first configuration to said second configuration.

11. A wrap as recited in claim 9 wherein said substrate is transparent.

12. A wrap as recited in claim 9 wherein said surface of said substrate is positioned against said exterior with said design between said exterior and said substrate.

13. A wrap as recited in claim 9 wherein said design is made of ink.

14. A wrap as recited in claim 9 wherein said design has an edge and includes an extraordinarily thick ridge of ink applied on said surface at the edge of said design.

15. A method for manufacturing a container which comprises the steps of:

providing a container having an exterior;
placing a design on at least a portion of the surface of a laminar substrate, the surface being located between a first edge of the substrate and a second edge of the substrate; and
attaching the first edge of the substrate to the second edge of the substrate to position the substrate against the exterior of the container to visually integrate the exterior of the container with the design on the surface.

16. A method as recited in claim 15 wherein said attaching step forms the substrate as a hollow tube with a lumen, and wherein the substrate is made of an unplasticized polyvinylchloride and is shrinkable from a first configuration wherein the container is insertable into the lumen of the tubular shaped substrate and a second configuration wherein the substrate is conformed with the exterior of the container, and wherein said method further comprises the step of shrinking the substrate from the first configuration to the second configuration.

17. A method as recited in claim 16 wherein said shrinking step is accomplished by heating the substrate.

18. A method as recited in claim 15 wherein the substrate is transparent.

19. A method as recited in claim 15 wherein the design is made of ink.

20. A method as recited in claim 19 wherein the design has an edge and said method further comprises the step of applying an extraordinarily thick ridge of ink on the surface at the edge of the design.

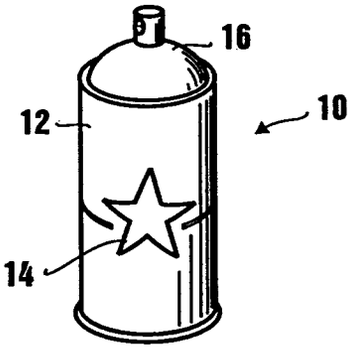

Figure 1

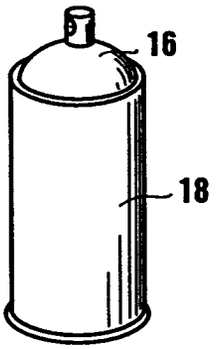

Figure 2

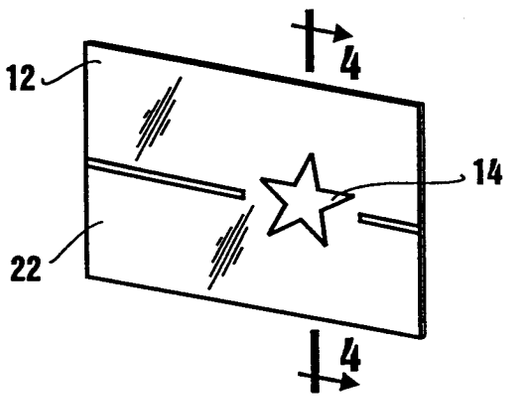

Figure 3

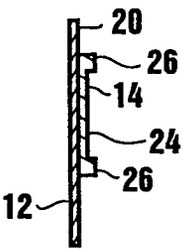

Figure 4

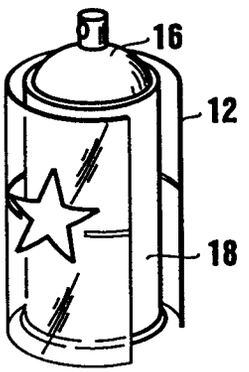

Figure 5

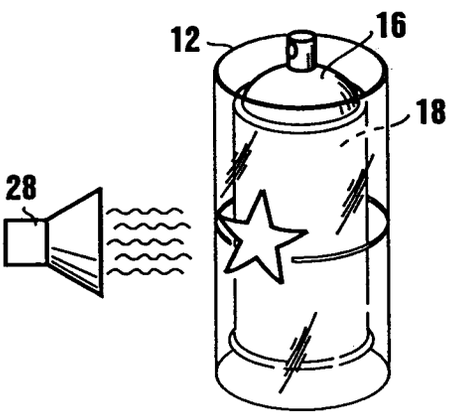

Figure 6