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(54) **PUPPET/SLIPPER COMBINATION**

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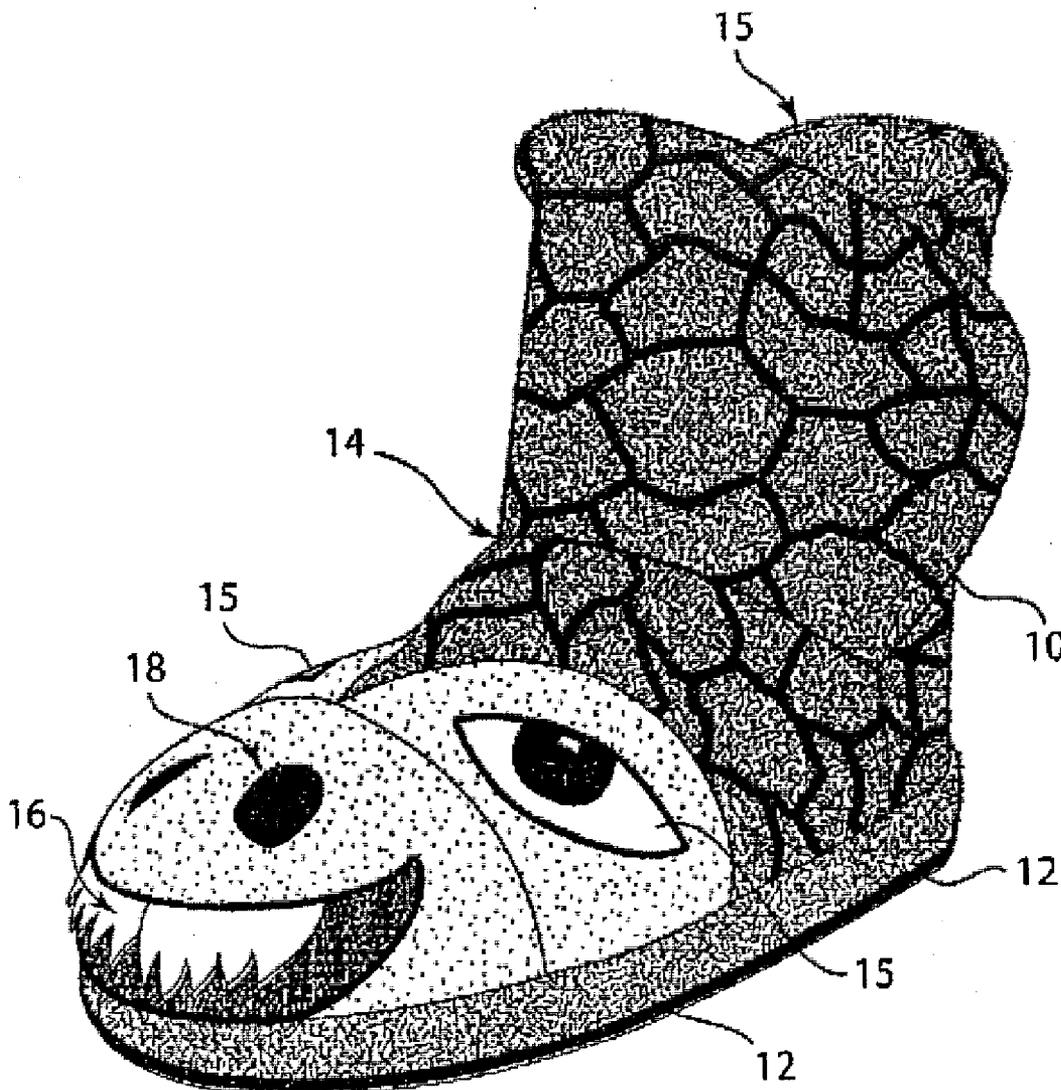
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A slipper that also functions as a puppet having a vamp with decorative creature or character cartoon features thereon, a flexible sole that can be transversely folded to align the rear of the sole with the toe of the vamp to simulate the mouth of a creature or character.



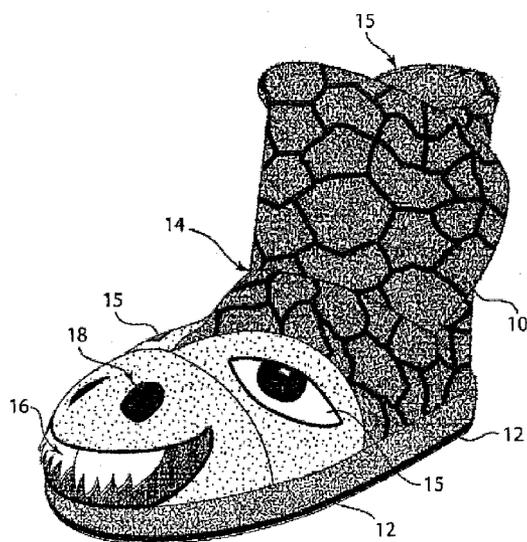


Fig. 1

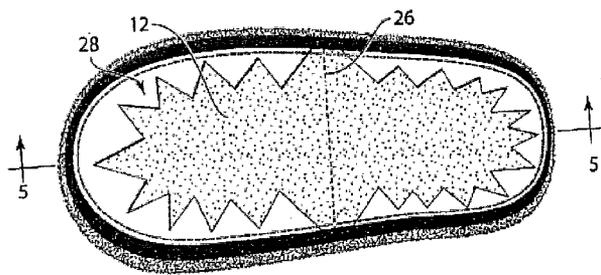


Fig. 2

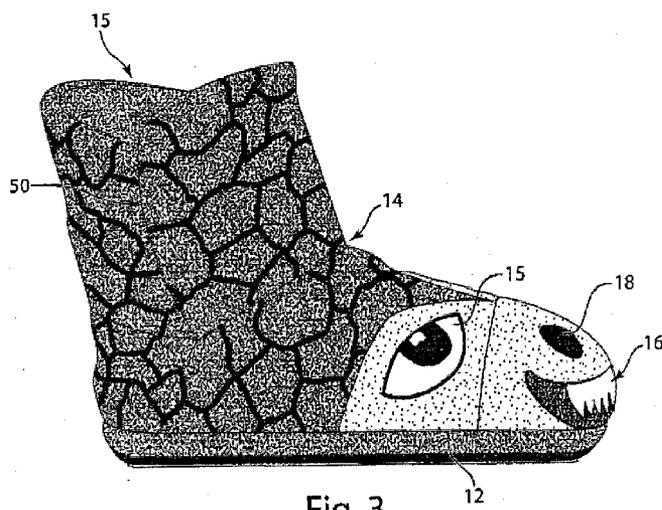


Fig. 3

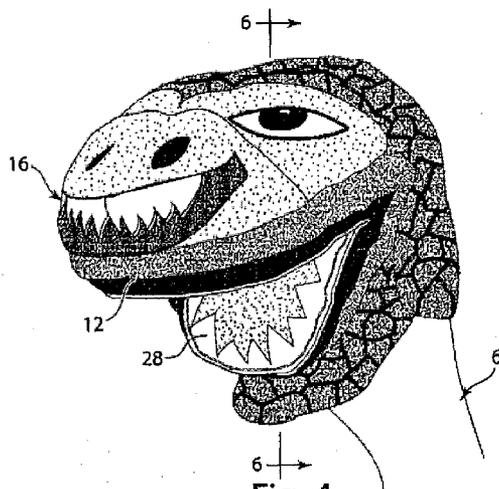


Fig. 4

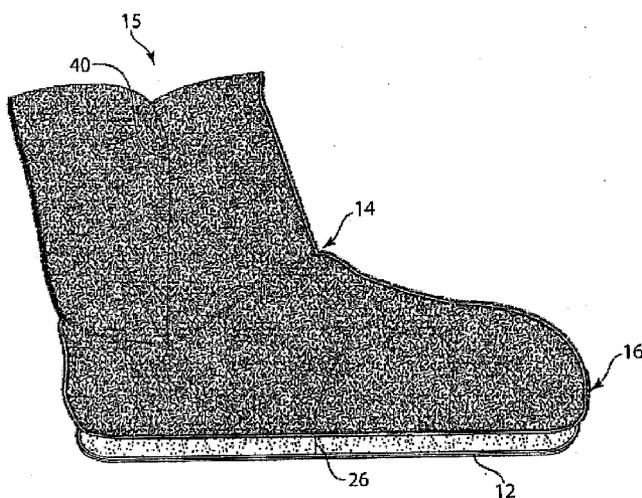


Fig. 5

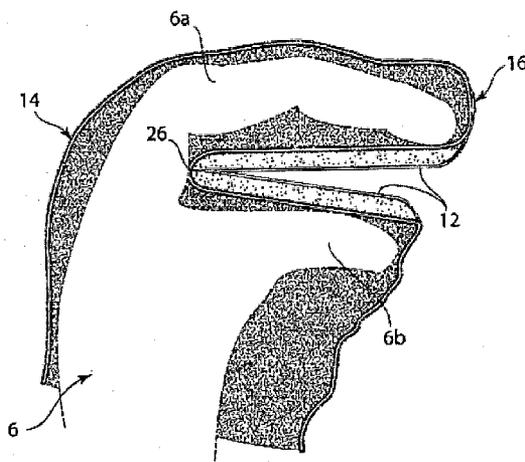


Fig. 6

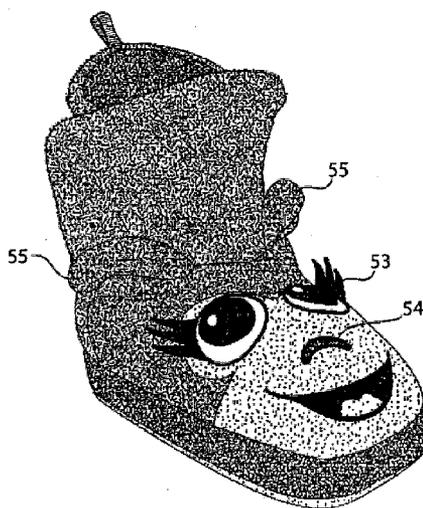


Fig. 7

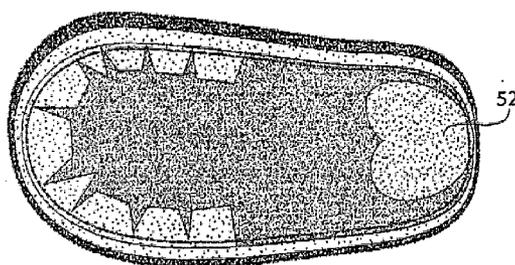


Fig. 8

PUPPET/SLIPPER COMBINATION

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0001] There have been many commercial slipper products on the market directed particularly to young children and infants. Often, these slippers are decorative, with animals on the vamp and instep region to provide an attractive feature for children wearing them. However, there are no slippers which function both as a slipper and as a play puppet in which the slipper, when taken off the foot, may be hand manipulated in much the same fashion as a puppet with features of the slipper simulating creature parts or other components that are particularly designed to attract children.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to a slipper that may also function as a puppet. The slipper comprises essentially a normal slipper with special features formed particularly by the sole and in the vamp portion of the slipper that allows the user to manipulate the slipper in a manner simulating a puppet.

[0003] In the present invention, footwear or a slipper, made of flexible material, preferably knitted or woven material or natural or synthetic yarn, is formed with a conventional vamp portion extending rearwardly toward the back of the slipper. The slipper may terminate at the ankle or, in some instances, may extend upwardly, cover the ankle and parts of the calf 15 depending upon the particular design selected. In the present invention, the slipper is formed with an extra flexible sole that is capable of being transversely folded on itself from heel to toe by a person inserting his hand in the slipper and simply grasping the inside to squeeze both ends of the sole together. This function permits the slipper to simulate an animal or other creature such as reptile, insect or cartoon character, with the vamp having facial designs of one of a variety of animals or other creatures and the bottom surface of the sole functioning as an open mouth or lower jaw of the animal.

[0004] The fundamental features of the invention allow for a multitude of designs with a wide range of animals, birds, mammals, insects reptiles, fish, people and the like, which for the most part may be designed as cartoon characters.

[0005] In the present invention as shown, the upper surface of the vamp is formed with an animal face that extends rearwardly as far as the designer desires with the animal fur styling extending rearwardly up into the shaft of the slipper, preferably towards the calf. The exact length of the shaft that covers the ankle may vary from design to design or may even be eliminated in some instances where only the bottom portion of a slipper is desired.

[0006] In the present invention, the slipper is preferably formed entirely of very flexible knit or woven material that can be worn by an infant or child very comfortably as would any slipper design. However, in this instance, the sole of the slipper is extra soft to permit folding the sole along transverse lines so that the rear portion of the heel of the sole can be folded towards and close to a toe of the slipper.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0007] These and other features of the present invention will be more clearly understood when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0008] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a slipper embodying the present invention;

[0009] FIG. 2 is a plan view of the sole in the embodiment of FIG. 1;

[0010] FIG. 3 is a side elevational view taken of FIG. 1;

[0011] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 1 with the sole folded transversely to simulate the mouth of the creature;

[0012] FIG. 5 is a longitudinal cross-section of a slipper as shown in FIG. 1 and taken along the line 5-5 of FIG. 2;

[0013] FIG. 6 is a perspective view taken along the line 6-6 of FIG. 4 showing the slipper with the sole folded to simulate a mouth and the operator's hand in the slipper;

[0014] FIG. 7 is a side elevational view of a further modification of the present invention intended to show the breadth of the present invention; and

[0015] FIG. 8 is a bottom view of the slipper shown in FIG. 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INVENTION

[0016] The slipper in the present invention functions as both a puppet and a slipper, with the design particularly adapted to attract young children and infants. As illustrated in the drawing FIGS. 1-6, the footwear in many ways has conventional styling which includes the slipper, itself, 10, which is secured to a flexible sole 12. The slipper upper and vamp 14 are conventionally styled and may have several modifications. In the embodiment of the slipper shown, the vamp 14 is continuous with a flexible shaft that extends rearwardly from the open end of the vamp and is shaped and sized to be worn around the wearer's ankle, with its foot inserted at 15. The vamp is decorated, which decorations may vary in many ways, with the limitations of the decorations limited only by the imagination of the designer. In the illustration of FIG. 1, the upper has a vamp with eyes 15, a mouth and teeth 16 and a nose 18. These items are formed on the outer surface of the upper towards the toe area of the slipper and provide an interesting, stylized puppet design for the wearer. While the present illustration discloses a creature having eyes, mouth and nose, it may also have other characteristics of facial features used to decorate children's animated puppets. These may include, for example, moustaches, eyebrows and the like. The particular location of these elements vary depending upon the desired appearance of the designer and can be positioned anywhere on the footwear. When worn, these features usually characterize a mammal, birds, insects fish, person or other creatures.

[0017] The sole best illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 5 is secured to the bottom of the vamp 14 and extends rearwardly to the heel as is conventional. The sole 12 fits over the entire width, length of the slipper and is secured to the vamp 14. Sole 12 is made of flexible, preferably resilient material such as polyurethane, and is capable of being folded over itself and, in particular, is capable of being folded transversely, preferably along the center line 26 of the sole (FIG. 2).

[0018] The bottom of the sole 12 may be decorated with features simulating a mouth. In the embodiment of FIG. 2, the features include a series of teeth 28 that line the periphery of the sole and may be stylized in a continuous scallop fashion or maybe discrete teeth of different sizes. The sole material and teeth are preferably of contrasting color.

[0019] While the sole shown in the drawings simulates a mouth having teeth 28, other features may be included such as a tongue.

[0020] As illustrated in FIGS. 4 and 6, one's hand may be inserted into the slipper towards the toe area of the footwear.

When the hand 6 is inserted, the thumb is placed underneath the sole as illustrated in FIG. 6, and the forefingers are inserted above the sole 12 all the way to the forward end of the footwear. The arrangement thus permits the user's hand to move the fingers 6a and thumb 6b in a manner that allows the sole to move closer or farther away from the sole position as illustrated in FIG. 6. When folded as illustrated in FIG. 6, the decorative elements on the bottom of the sole 12 and the decorative elements on the vamp 6 simulate a creature with an open and closing mouth. Because the flexible sole may be readily folded at the line 26, the unit has a very life-like appearance of a moving mouth to a child.

[0021] FIG. 4 illustrates the puppet slipper when worn on a hand 6 and with the mouth folded transversely along the line essentially transverse of the sole about halfway between the toe and the heel. This way, as best illustrated in FIG. 4, the vamp having the various elements such as teeth 16 will close down towards teeth 28 and thus simulating an open and closing mouth much to the delight of an infant or child.

[0022] In the particular drawings illustrating the invention, certain illustrative creature features are shown, but other types of uses may include children's heads or faces, or other animals such as bugs and other wildlife.

[0023] In the arrangement illustrated, as best illustrated in FIG. 3, the bottom surface of the sole functions as a ground supporting and engaging surface, as well as the dual function of a decorative element that forms teeth with the upper, and also simulates a mouth.

[0024] In preferred embodiments, the shaft may be provided with an opening 50 in the side for ease in inserting a foot with the opening comprising a slit that may be closed by a zipper or other closure with this slit best illustrated in FIGS. 3 and 5 at 50. The slit extends downwardly and closes on the wearer's foot and ankle when in use.

[0025] The footwear may be a conventionally formed slipper provided the sole is flexible and capable of folding on itself along the transverse line as illustrated and described above. The limitation in the present invention requires that the bottom of the sole have decorative elements that cooperate with the appearance of the vamp when folded over as best illustrated in FIG. 4.

[0026] The embodiments of FIGS. 7 and 8 illustrate further enhancements of the invention. As illustrated in FIG. 8, the bottom of the sole is provided not only with teeth, but with a tongue 52 shaped somewhat like a heart, but which will be visible when the slipper sole is folded as described previously. In addition, the embodiment of FIG. 7 illustrates more of a 3-dimensional slipper in which the slipper has projecting eyes 53 and nose 54, as well as ears 55 that add enhanced interest to the arrangement. In this particular embodiment, the slipper has a shaft that extends upward over the ankle of the wearer and is slit along one side to provide ease and access to the foot. The slit may be closed by a zipper or other closure as the designer chooses.

What is claimed is:

1. A slipper that also function as a puppet in which the slipper has a flexible upper which includes a shoe vamp,

a flexible sleeve extending from the open end of the vamp shaped and sized to be worn around the wearer's ankle, decorative elements on the upper surface of the vamp simulating the face of a creature,

said slipper having a sole secured to the bottom of the vamp, said sole of flexible material capable of being folded on itself, transverse to its length,

decorative elements attached to the bottom of the slipper and simulating features of the inside of the mouth of the creature depicted by the creature decorative elements.

2. A slipper as set forth in claim 1 in which the upper has decorative features comprising a creature selected from a design simulating an animal, person or creature/character.

3. A slipper as set forth in claim 1 wherein the creature decorative elements on the vamp and sleeve are of the same creature.

4. A slipper as set forth in claim 1 wherein a portion of the lower surface of the slipper functions to selectively form a ground supporting and engaging surface and also functions as a decorative portion of the creature's mouth.

5. A slipper such as set forth in claim 4 wherein said portion of the lower surface of the slipper includes simulated teeth extending inwardly around at least a portion of the periphery of the sole on its bottom.

6. A slipper as set forth in claim 1 wherein a shaft extension is formed with a closeable opening exterior from its upper end toward the vamp on one side of the slipper.

7. A slipper as set forth in claim 1 wherein the decorative elements on the vamp include simulated eyes which may be directed toward the toe area of the sole.

8. A slipper as set forth in claim 6 wherein the decorative elements include a simulation of a nose.

9. A slipper as set forth in claim 7 wherein the decorative elements on the sole include a simulated tongue.

10. A slipper as set forth in claim 1 adopted for use as a puppet including a recess defined by a sleeve connected to the vamp and sole into which a wearer's hand may be inserted between the vamp and sole and the sole folded on itself to permit movement of the rear portion of the sole toward and below the upper of the vamp.

11. A slipper that also functions as a puppet, having, in combination, a vamp and a flexible sole secured thereto, decorative elements on the upper surface of the vamp simulating at least a portion of the face of an animal, said sole transversely foldable whereby the rear of the sole may be folded to a position adjacent and below the vamp to simulate an open mouth.

12. A slipper as set forth in claim 11 wherein the decorative elements are cartoon decorations.

13. A slipper as set forth in claim 11 wherein decorative elements simulating teeth are formed along at least a portion of the sole, wherein the simulated teeth will generally align with at least a portion of the bottom of the sole below the vamp.

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