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(54) **CONTAINER**

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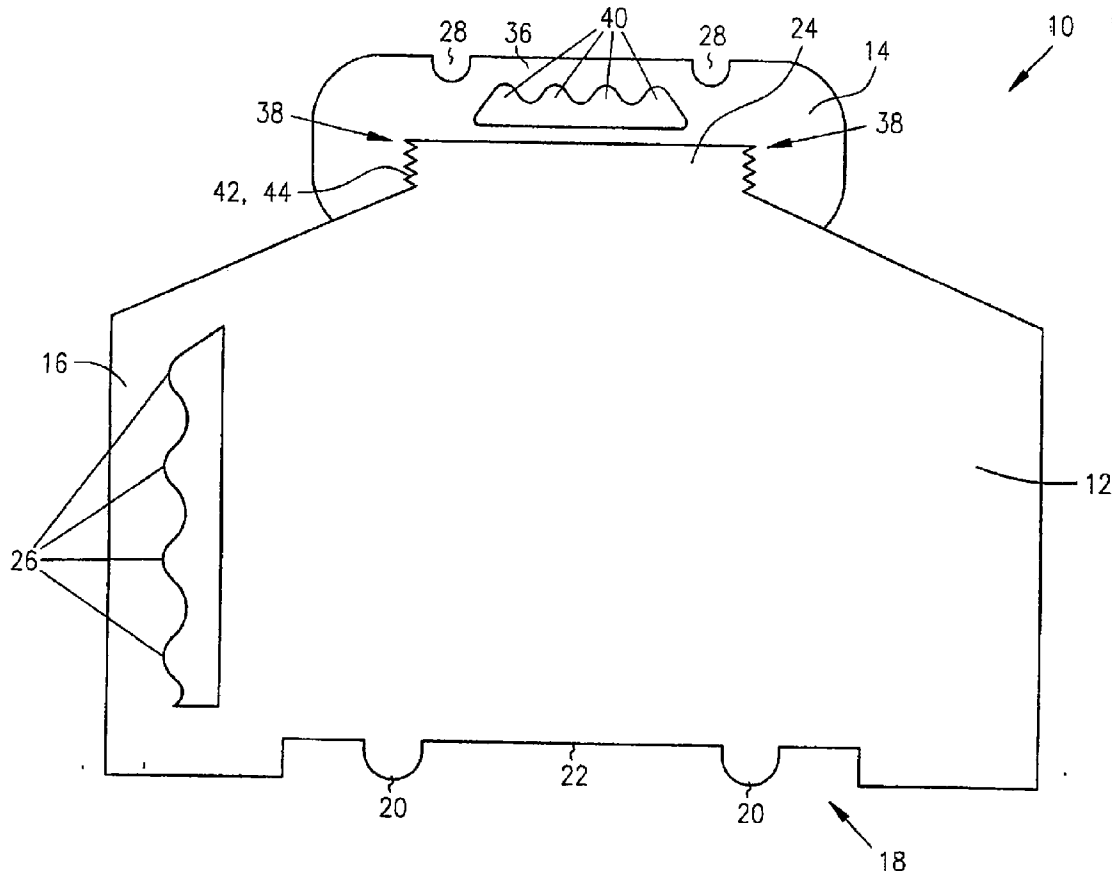
(57) **ABSTRACT**

(22) Filed: **Aug. 14, 2006**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 11/278,788, filed on Apr. 5, 2006, which is a continuation of application

The present invention relates to containers, and more specifically, to plastic containers. The containers described herein may be applied to any use, but they are particularly useful for storing paint.



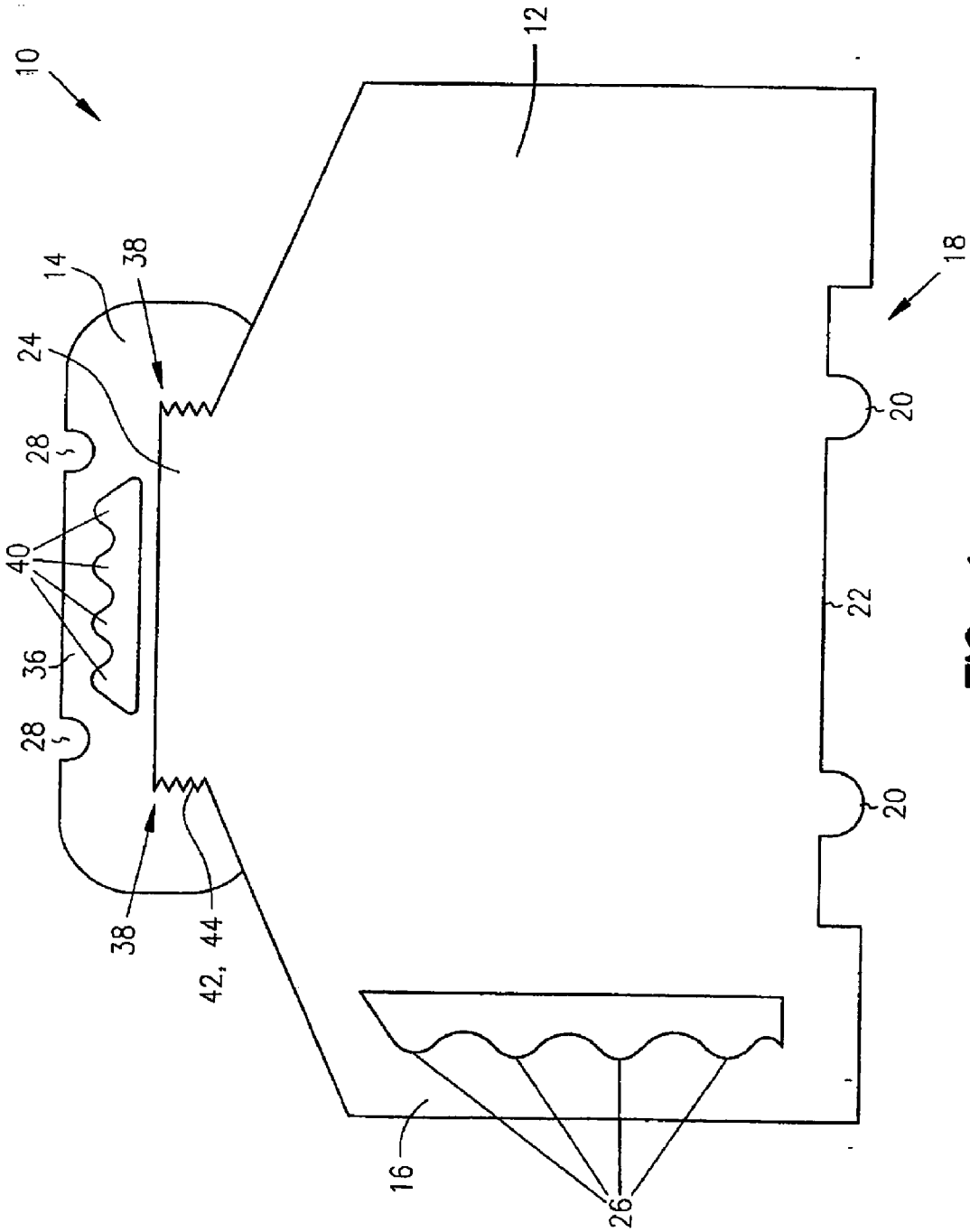


FIG. 1

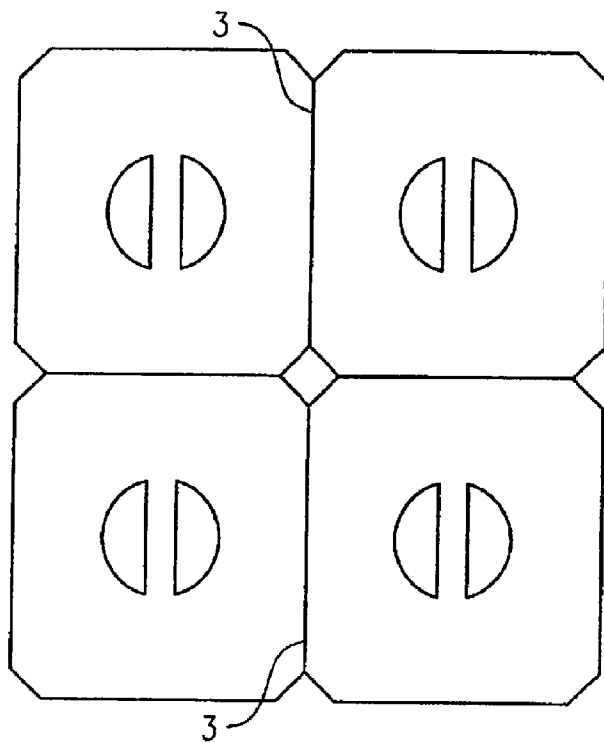


FIG. 2

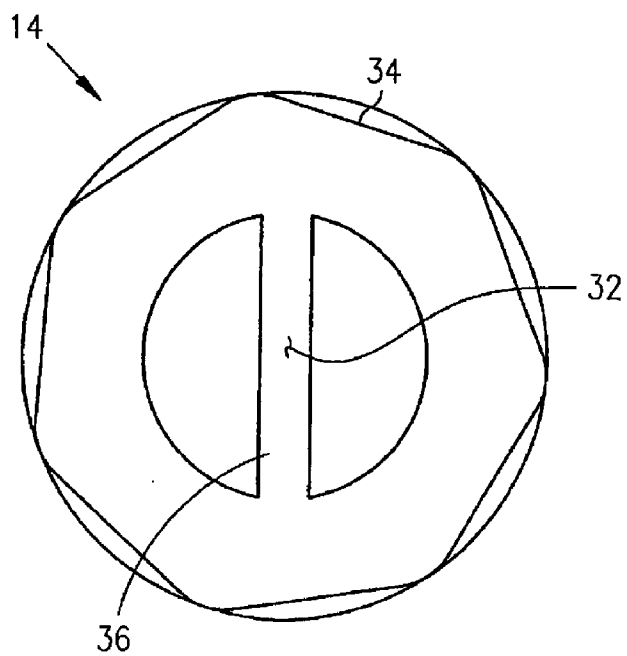


FIG. 3

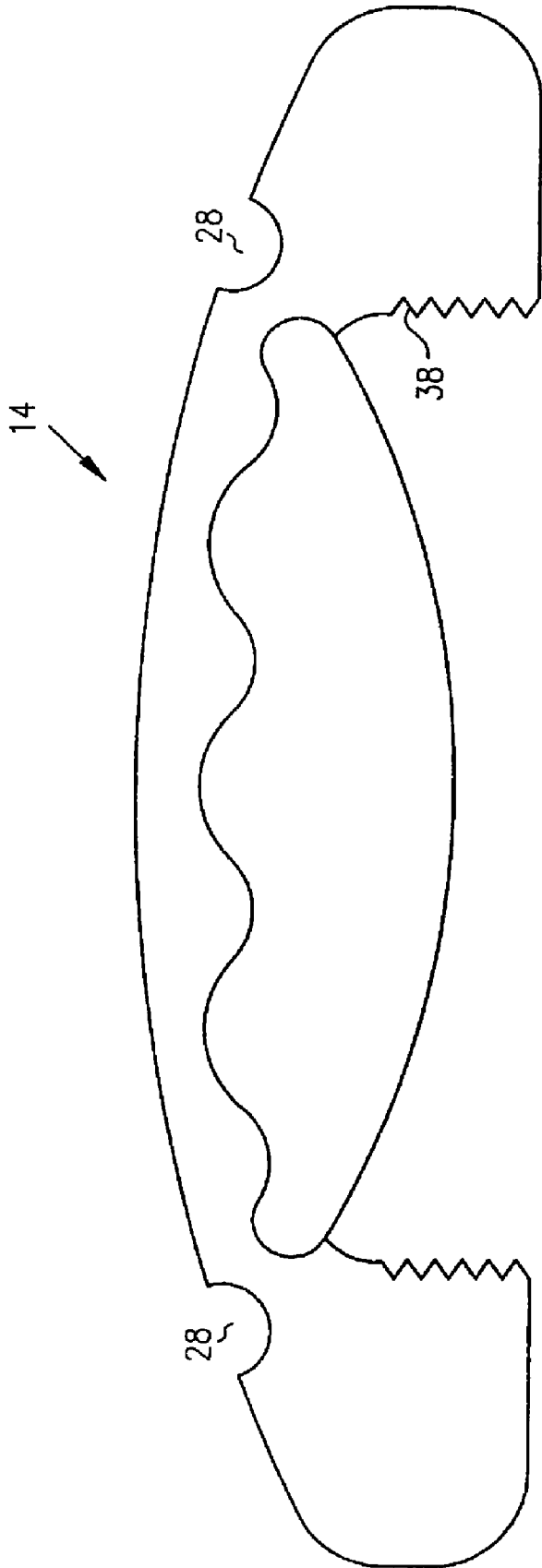


FIG. 4

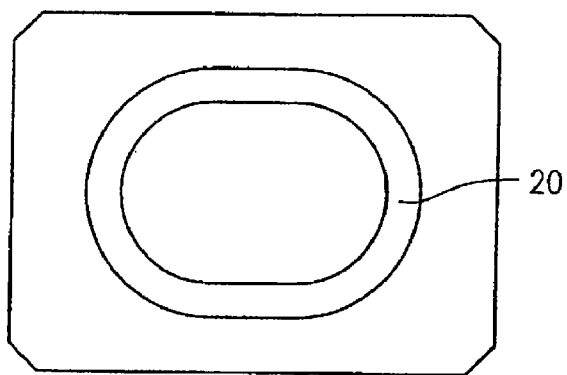


FIG. 5A

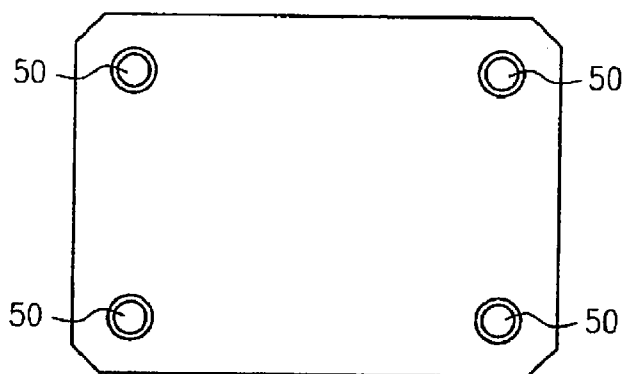


FIG. 5B

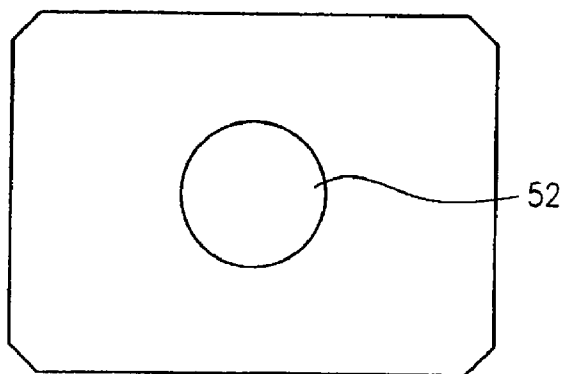


FIG. 5C

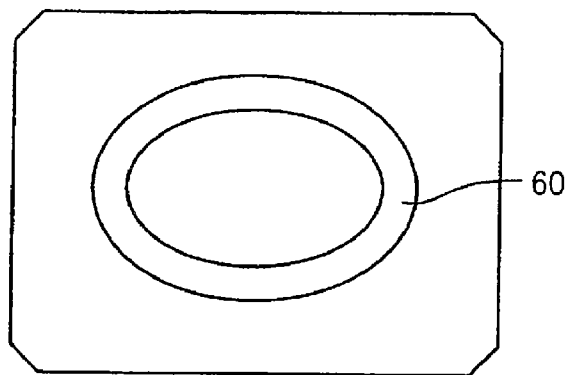


FIG. 6A

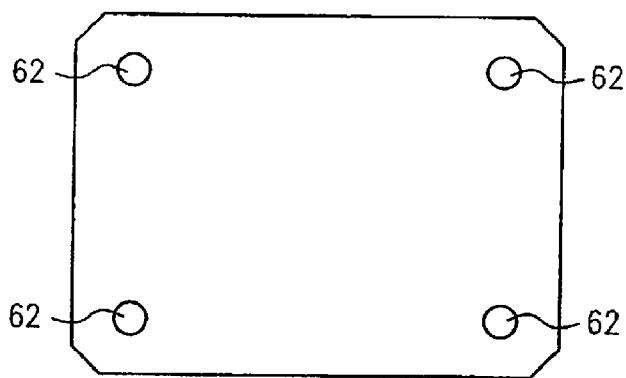


FIG. 6B

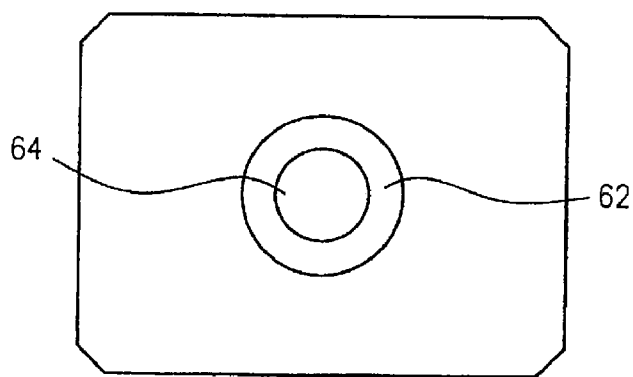


FIG. 6C

CONTAINER

RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/278,788, filed Apr. 5, 2006, which is a continuation under 37 C.F.R. 1.53(b) of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/547,249 filed Apr. 11, 2000, now U.S. Pat. No. 7,032,756, issued Apr. 25, 2006, which applications are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to containers, and more specifically, to plastic containers. The containers described herein may be applied to any use, but they are particularly useful for storing paint, varnish, stain and the like. The containers of the invention will be described in connection with the use of storing paint with the understanding that the container has other usages, such as storing food or other contents.

[0003] Paint is conventionally stored and sold in metal cans which have an upper edge with a groove in which an annular edge of a metal cover is secured by a press fit. The cover is typically removed by prying an edge of the cover upwardly out of engagement with the can edge so that the stored paint can be used. The cover is usually pried upwardly with a screwdriver or other pointed device. The cover can be resecured onto the can by press fit, typically by striking the lid with a solid object, such as a hammer. Because the paint frequently fills the groove of the can, striking the lid with a hammer oftentimes causes the paint to spray outwards. Further, any paint that remains in the groove prevents a tight securing of the cover.

[0004] Paint has generally been stored in round metal containers because the density and weight of paint has been too great for polymeric-based containers to contain and because of a reactivity of the paint with polymeric containers. Round-shaped cans have been used to store paint because it has been difficult to fabricate metal containers with symmetries that are not round.

[0005] Notwithstanding the widespread use of round metal cans as containers for paint, the use of those cans has been expensive and wasteful with respect to storage and transport. For example, round metal cans cannot be positioned efficiently. Further, round metal cans add significant weight to the paint product. Round metal cans are typically difficult to open and close, and round metal cans are difficult to carry. Round metal cans are also easily dented. Moreover, problems are associated with reclosing the round metal can after use since paint has most likely filled the channel groove portion of the can which receives the standard lid, resulting in spray, spillage and disrupted resealing.

[0006] Efforts have been made to utilize paint containers manufactured from materials other than paint. For example, plastic paint containers are reported in U.S. Pat. Nos. 3,938,686; 4,453,647; 4,530,442; 4,548,332; 4,619,373; 4,655,363; 5,303,839; and 5,975,346. However, a need still exists for a paint container that can be easily and efficiently transported, stored, positioned, opened, closed and carried by hand. In securing the cover in position, it is important that the cover is both securely attached and readily removed when desired. Further, the container should be designed not

only to store the paint, but also to prevent undesired escape of the paint, to prevent the ingress of dust, moisture or other materials into the container, to allow opening without special tools and to allow tight resealing.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] One embodiment of the present invention includes a polymeric container. The polymeric container comprises a main body. The main body includes a neck portion, a bottom portion and a handle portion. The bottom portion defines a lug. One other embodiment further includes a lid positionable over the neck. The lid defines indentations capable of receiving lugs from another polymeric container. In another embodiment, the main body defines an indentation capable of receiving one or more lugs.

[0008] Another embodiment includes a method for stacking containers. The method comprises providing a first container comprising a main body with a bottom portion. The bottom portion defines one or more lugs. A second container is also provided. The second container comprises a main body that defines an indentation and a bottom portion. The bottom portion defines one or more lugs. The first container is stacked on the second container so that the lug of the first container is seated within the indentation of the second container.

[0009] One other embodiment of the present invention includes a method for stacking containers. The method comprises providing a first container with a main body that includes a bottom portion. The bottom portion defines one or more lugs. The method also comprises providing a second container and a lid positioned on the container. The lid defines an indentation. The first container is stacked on the second container so that the lug of the first container is seated within the indentation on the lid.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of the container of the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a top plan view of a plurality of the containers positioned for transport or storage.

[0012] FIG. 3 is a top plan view of one embodiment of the container of the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 4 is a top plan view of one embodiment of the container with an indentation for lug receipt in a lid applied to the container.

[0014] FIG. 5a is a top plan view of another embodiment of the bottom portion of the container of the present invention with an annular lug in a main body of the container.

[0015] FIG. 5b is a top plan view of one other embodiment of the bottom portion of the container of the present invention with a plurality of discrete lugs in the main body of the container.

[0016] FIG. 5c is a top plan view of another embodiment of the bottom portion of the container of the present invention with a single centrally positioned lug.

[0017] FIG. 6a is a top plan view of a top portion of one embodiment of the container of the present invention wherein the main body defines an annular indentation.

[0018] FIG. 6*b* is a top plan view of a top portion of one embodiment of the container of the present invention wherein the main body defines a plurality of discrete indentations.

[0019] FIG. 6*c* is a top plan view of one embodiment of a container and lid of the present invention wherein an indentation is defined by the lid.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0020] One embodiment of the container of the present invention, illustrated generally at 10 in FIG. 1, includes a main body 12 with a generally parallelepiped shape and a lid 14 attachable to the main body 12 at a neck 24. The main body 12 comprises the neck 24, a handle 16, and a bottom portion 18 with an annular lug 20 and a central indentation 22. Although the container depicted represents a paint volume content of approximately one gallon, the container is readily manufactured in different sizes. The container of the present invention is not limited to any one volume or dimension.

[0021] The container of the present invention includes a number of features that render the container more easily and efficiently stored and transported than conventional containers, such as round metal paint containers. One of these features is the symmetry of the main body. The main body of the container of the present invention is a parallelepiped that permits the container to be transported with a minimum of free space. Straight sidewalls of adjacent containers are alignable with each other, as is shown at 3 in FIG. 2. The container of the present invention also includes a number of features that render the container more easily and efficiently opened and closed than conventional containers.

[0022] The container of the present invention 10 includes a unitary handle 16 that forms indentations for fingers 26 that enable a user to more easily carry the container 10. One embodiment of the container 10 includes an annular lug 20 that permits more stable stacking of the container 10. In particular, the lug 20 is insertable in an annular groove 28 defined within one embodiment of the lid 14.

[0023] The shape of the lug 20 can be varied for other container embodiments. For example, the lug may be a continuous annular lug, such as is shown at 20 in FIG. 5*a* or may be a discrete lug such as is shown at 50 in Figure 5*b*. The lug may also be a single lug 52 positioned in a central region of the bottom of the container, as shown in FIG. 5*c*. Although four lugs are shown, in FIG. 5*b*, it is understood that more or fewer lugs are suitable for use. The lugs 20, 50, and 52 have shapes ranging from rectangular to ovoid.

[0024] The shape of the groove 28 defined is of a shape that permits the stacking of the containers and that permits receipt of the lug 20. This shape is an annular shape for receipt of annular lug 20 as shown at 60 in FIG. 6*a*. The groove 60 is defined by the container main body. The shape of the groove or indentation is discrete, as shown at 62 in FIG. 6*b*, for receipt of discrete lugs 50. The discrete indentations 62 are also positioned within the main body of the container. In one other embodiment shown in FIG. 6*c*, the indentation 64 is in a lid 62. The indentation receives the lug 52.

[0025] The unitary handle 16 also creates a modular shape for the container 10 that renders the container more efficient to store. The handle 16 may be hollow or solid. The handle 16 is, for some embodiments, integral with the main body.

[0026] One lid embodiment is illustrated generally at 14 in FIG. 3. The lid 14 comprises two turning mechanisms, a central mechanism 32 and indentations 34. The central mechanism comprises a unitary band 36 that allows the lid 14 to be moved in clockwise and a counter clockwise directions. The band 36 has an elevation that permits fingers of a user to be placed below the band 36 to turn the lid 14. The band forms indentations 40 for fingers that enable the user to more easily carry, open and close the container. The indentations 34 are positioned and sized to enable a user to grasp the lid 14 and to turn the lid 14 clockwise and counter clockwise. The lid 14 of the present invention is configured to enable individuals with "stiff" fingers to use and to turn with relative ease. The lid 14 is sealed to the container 12 by an o-ring 38. The lid 14 defines threading 42, and the neck 24 defines threading 44, so that the threadings 42 and 44 are capable of interacting to attach the lid 14 to the main body 12.

[0027] The container of the present invention is fabricated from a polymeric material such as polypropylene with methods well known to the art worker. The handle is for some embodiments filled and for other embodiments hollow.

[0028] For some embodiments, the container is lined with a material such as a heat sealable thermoplastic or laminate which acts to contain a material such as paint and, along with the o-ring seal, to prevent air oxidation. Suitable liner materials include polyester, polyvinylidene chloride, polyethylene and the like. Other suitable liner materials include cellulose, polycarbonates, polypropylene, polyester or metallized plastic sheet material. One liner material is a plastic laminate that includes nylon, polyvinylidene chloride, polyethylene and a 0.003 to 0.001 inch aluminum foil. The aluminum foil is sandwiched between layers of the plastic material.

[0029] In one embodiment, an aluminum foil barrier is laminated to an outer polymeric shell by a thermosealing polycoat. The polycoat thermally bonds the foil to the polymeric material. One polycoat comprises a polyethylene extrusion that is coated to the polymeric shell.

[0030] The container of the present invention is usable for storing and transporting a material such as paint. The shape of the container permits space-efficient transport. The shape of the container as well as the ergonomic features of the lid and handle render the container easy and safe for an individual to carry.

[0031] While preferred embodiments of the invention are described herein, those familiar with the art to which this invention relates will recognize various alternative designs and embodiments for practicing the present invention that do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention. All such modifications and variations are intended to be included within the scope of the invention, as defined by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

filling a stackable paint container with paint;

wherein the stackable paint container comprises

a unitary main body, wherein the main body includes a threaded neck portion and a sidewall, the unitary main body including a handle portion having opposite ends each of which extend from the main body, the handle portion comprising a molded handle

wherein the molded handle and the main body define an opening for receiving fingers of a human hand, the handle portion extending along a corner of the unitary main body wherein the handle portion and the unitary main body define a generally square or rectangular perimeter of the container;

the unitary main body further comprising a bottom portion having a bottom surface with a recessed area defined centrally in the bottom surface, the recessed area including a recessed horizontal surface having a perimeter that is vertically offset from the bottom surface, wherein the recessed area is a substantial area of the bottom portion of the second container and the bottom portion is free of an interlocking extension, the recessed horizontal surface extending inwardly from the perimeter of the recessed horizontal surface;

a lid threaded attachable to the threaded neck portion of the unitary main body, wherein the threaded neck portion is disposed centrally with respect to the main body, the lid of the container including a top surface portion, and a skirt extending from the perimeter of the planar top surface portion, the skirt having an outer surface which is free of interlocking extensions, the lid having at least one edge portion between the top surface portion and the skirt;

wherein the bottom recessed area of the container is sized to receive the top surface portion of the lid so that the at least one edge portion is within the bottom recessed area and functions to aid in aligning the top surface portion within the bottom recessed area and so that the recessed horizontal surface of the bottom portion is parallel to and proximate to the top surface portion of the lid; and

further wherein the container is constructed to support a second paint container stacked on the lid while the lid is attached to the threaded neck portion and so that the stackable container supports substantially all of the weight of the second container substantially filled with paint and retains the second container in a stable stacked arrangement, wherein the second container is substantially identical to the stackable container so that the recessed area of the bottom portion of the second container receives the top portion of the lid when stacked thereon and the recessed horizontal surface of the bottom portion of the second container is parallel to and proximate to the top surface portion of the lid.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the container is fabricated to support the weight of the second container having paint.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising stacking the second container on top of the container so that the recessed area of the bottom portion of the second container receives the top portion of the lid of the container.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the main bodies of the container and the second container are fabricated to comprise a parallelepiped shape.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising stacking the second container on top of the container so that the recessed area of the bottom portion of the another container receives the top portion of the lid of the container.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the lid of the container is fabricated with a centrally positioned groove on the top surface portion thereof.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the bottom of the second container is fabricated with a centrally positioned lug receivable by the groove on the top surface portion of the lid of the container.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising stacking the second container on top of the container so that the centrally positioned lug of the second container is received by the groove on the top surface portion of the lid of the container.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the lid of the container is fabricated with more than one symmetrically positioned discrete grooves on the top surface portion thereof.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the bottom of the second container is fabricated with more than one symmetrically positioned lugs receivable by more than one symmetrically positioned discrete grooves on the top surface portion of the lid of the container.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising stacking the second container on top of the container so that the more than one symmetrically positioned lugs of the second container are received by the more than one symmetrically positioned discrete grooves on the top surface portion of the lid of the container.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the handles of the container and the second container are respectively fabricated so as not to extend beyond the sidewalls of the container and the second container.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising stacking the second container on top of the container so that the recessed area of the bottom portion of the second container receives the top portion of the lid of the container.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the handles of the container and the second container are fabricated to be hollow.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the handles of the container and the second container are fabricated to be plastic-filled.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the main bodies of the container and the second container are fabricated with polymer.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the polymer is polypropylene.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the container and the second container are fabricated to be lined with a liner.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the material of the liner includes one of polyester, polyvinylidene chloride, and polyethylene.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein the material of the liner includes one of cellulosic, polycarbonate, polypropylene, polyester and metallized plastic sheet material.

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