



US 20130267144A1

(19) **United States**
(12) **Patent Application Publication**
COOK et al.

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2013/0267144 A1**
(43) **Pub. Date: Oct. 10, 2013**

(54) **CONVERTIBLE STUFFED TOY**

Publication Classification

(71) Applicants: **Michael John COOK**, Butler (AU);
Patricia Ann COOK, Butler (AU);
Janene MCNAMARA, Bulleen (AU)

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A63H 33/00 (2006.01)
(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC *A63H 33/004* (2013.01)
USPC **446/73; 446/72**

(72) Inventors: **Michael John COOK**, Butler (AU);
Patricia Ann COOK, Butler (AU);
Janene MCNAMARA, Bulleen (AU)

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A stuffed toy 11 convertible to another stuffed toy, or a cushion 13. The stuffed toy 11 has a first shape formed by a first shell 35 and a second shape formed by a second shell 41, the shells being joined by a zip fastener 47 to form a contiguous hollow structure when unzipped. The structure contains a flowable stuffing that may be manipulated between the first shell 35 and the second shell 41. The stuffing can be entirely contained with the second shell 41, within the first shell 35 and the zip fastener 47 is done up to form the stuffed toy 11. By undoing the zip fastener, the stuffing can be manipulated to be entirely contained within the second shell 41 with the first shell 35, within the second shell 41, and the zip fastener 47 done up to form the other stuffed toy or cushion 13.

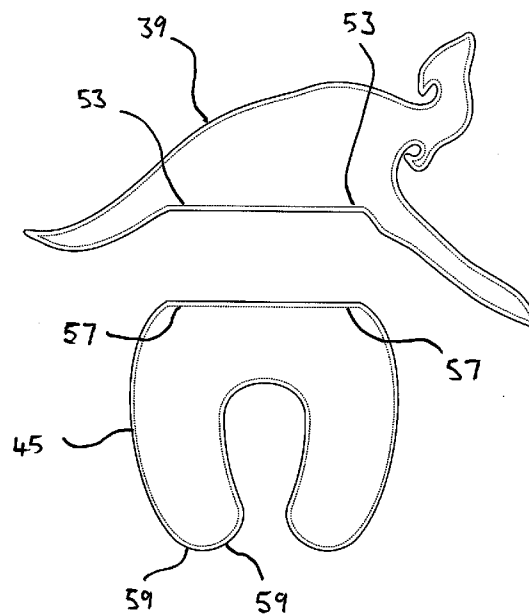
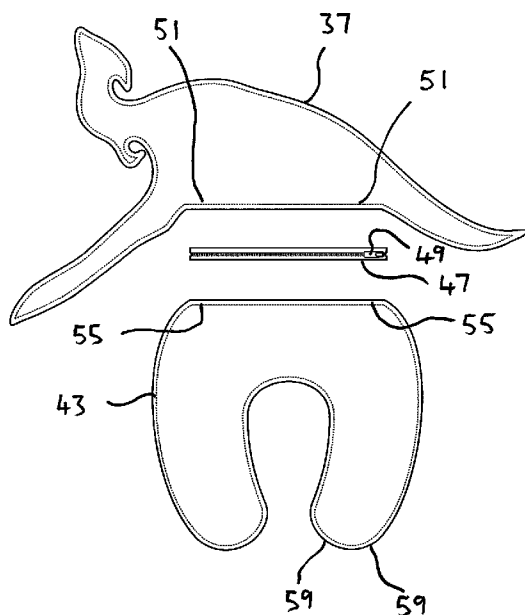
(73) Assignee: **Michael John COOK**, Butler (AU)

(21) Appl. No.: **13/629,617**

(22) Filed: **Sep. 28, 2012**

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Mar. 30, 2012 (AU) 2012901287



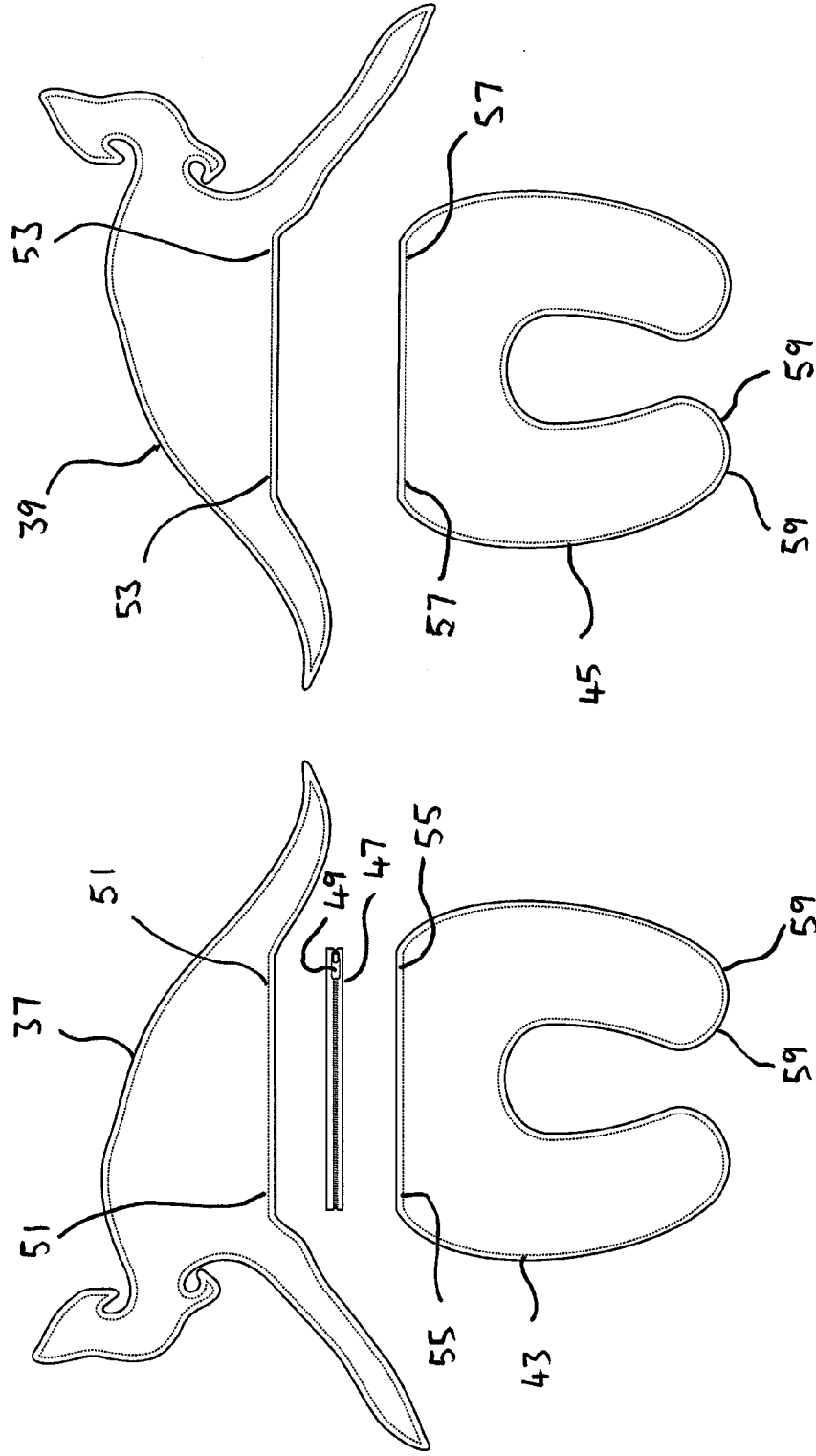


Fig. 1

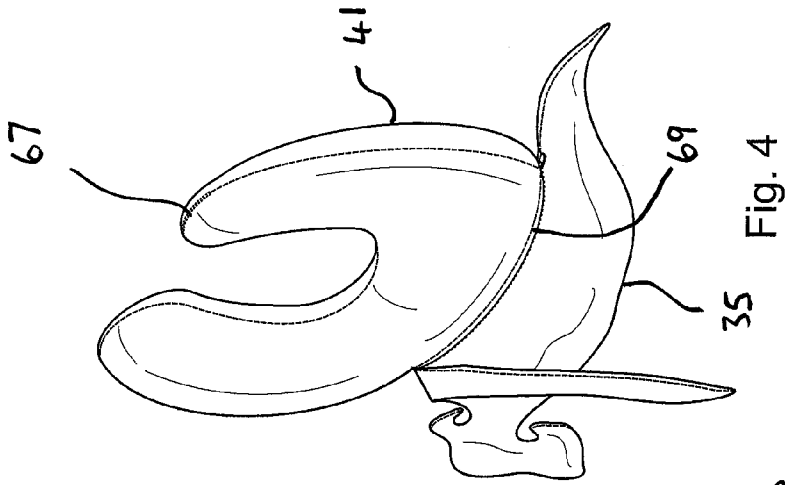


Fig. 4

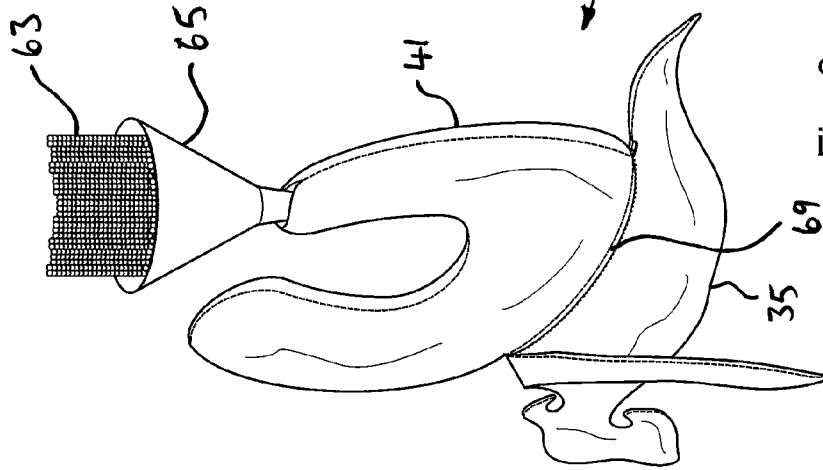


Fig. 3

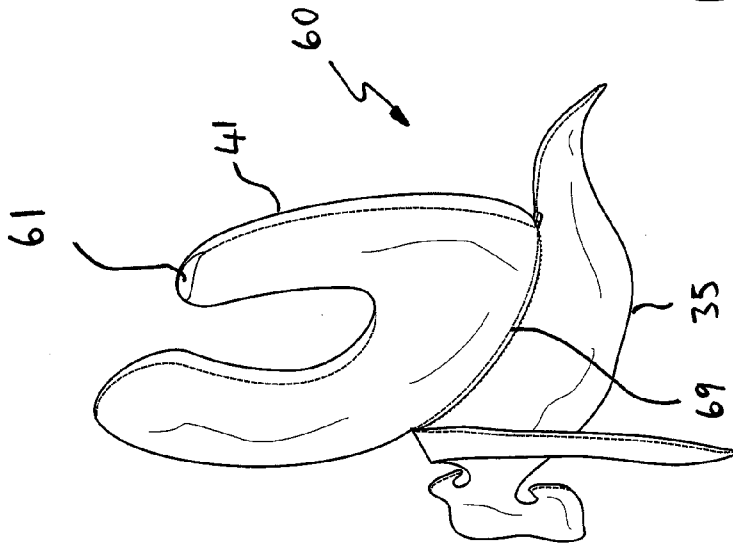


Fig. 2

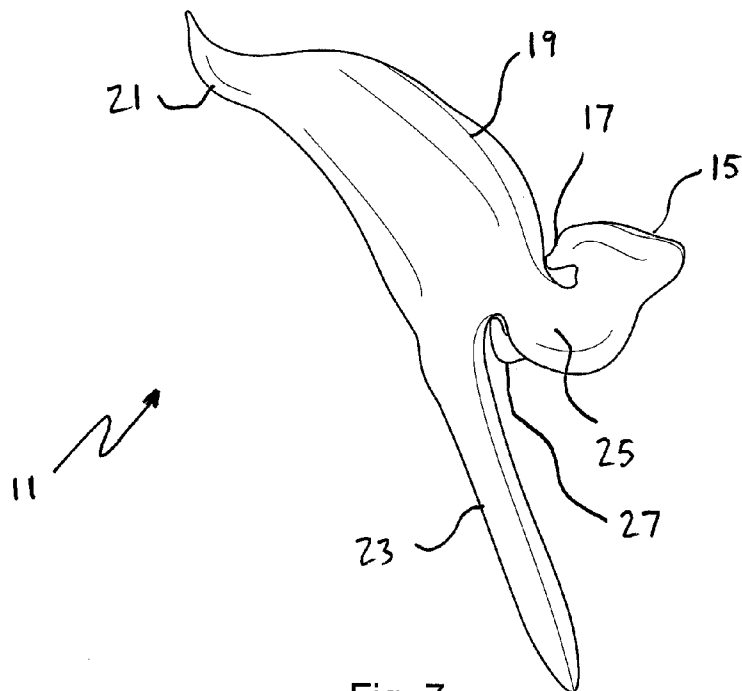


Fig. 7

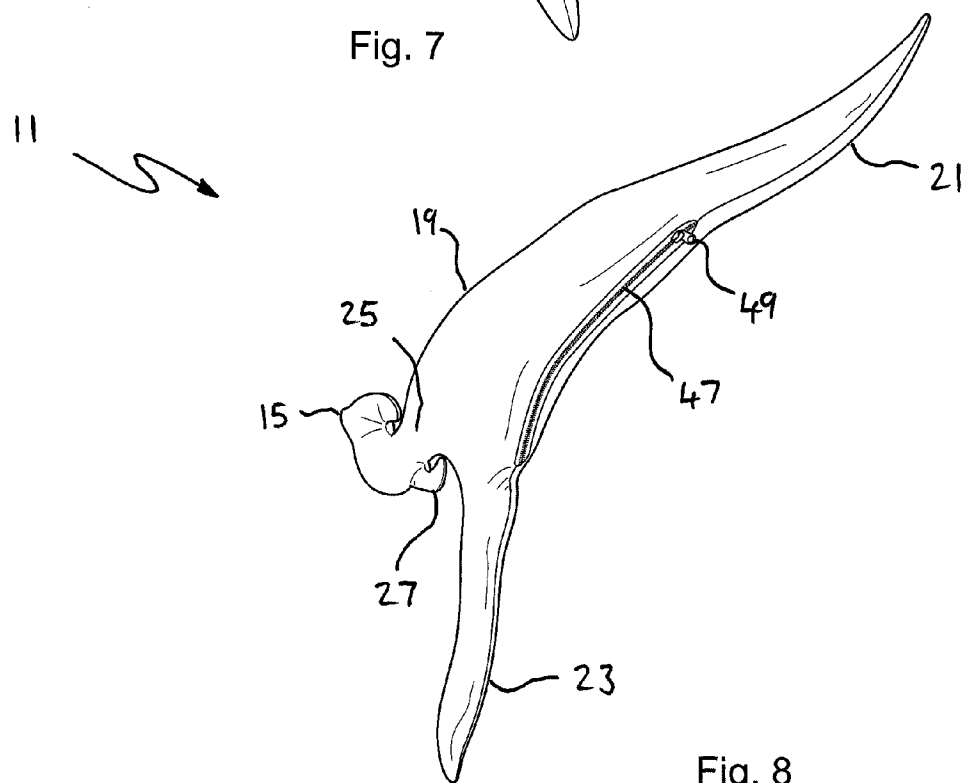


Fig. 8

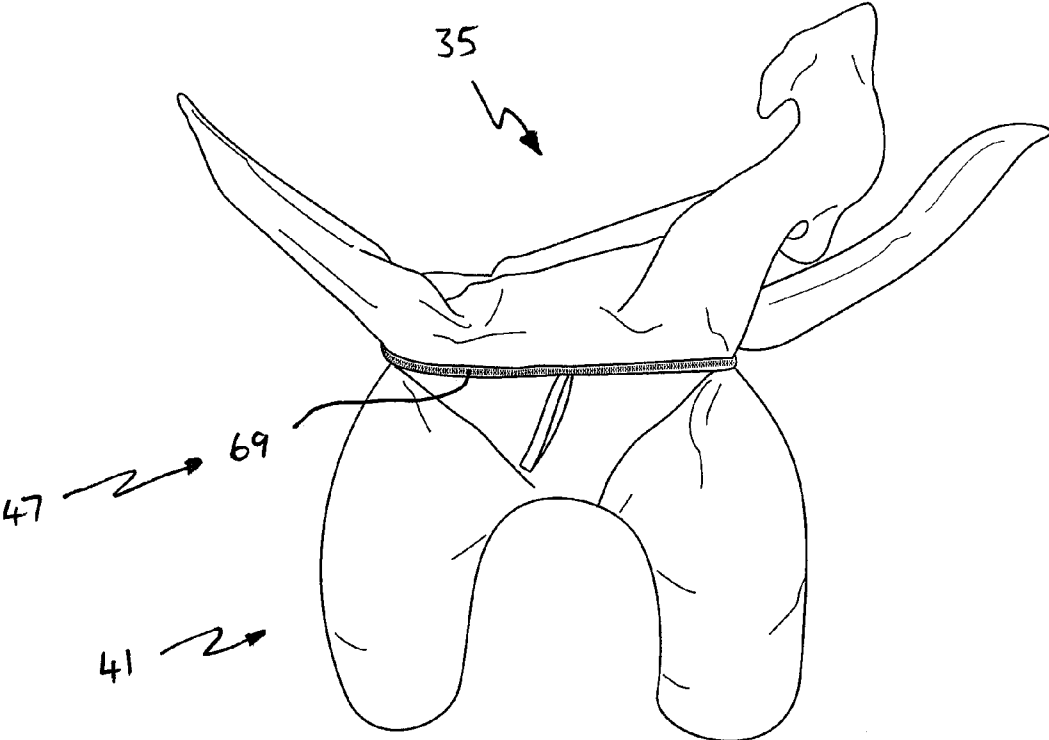


Fig. 9

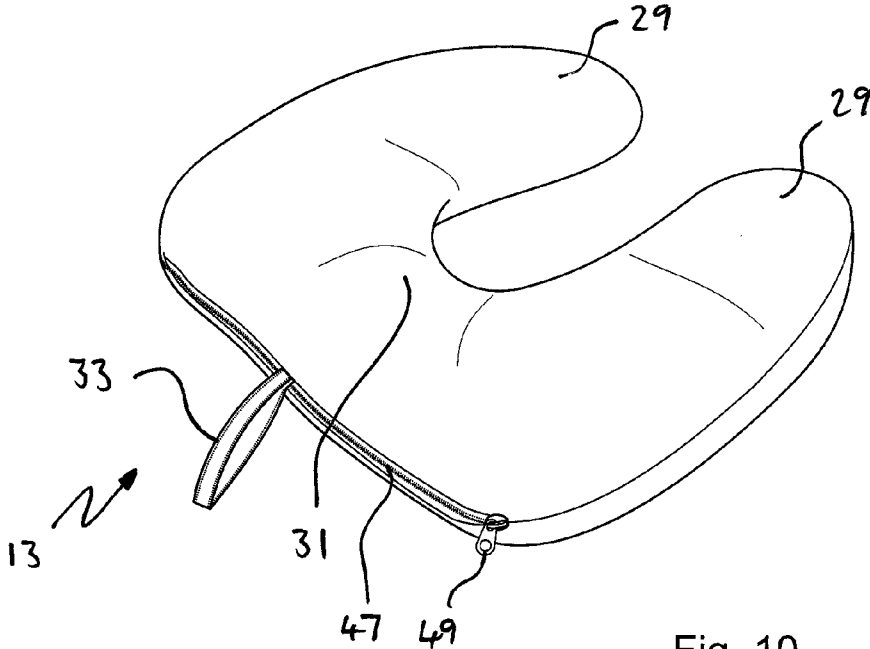


Fig. 10

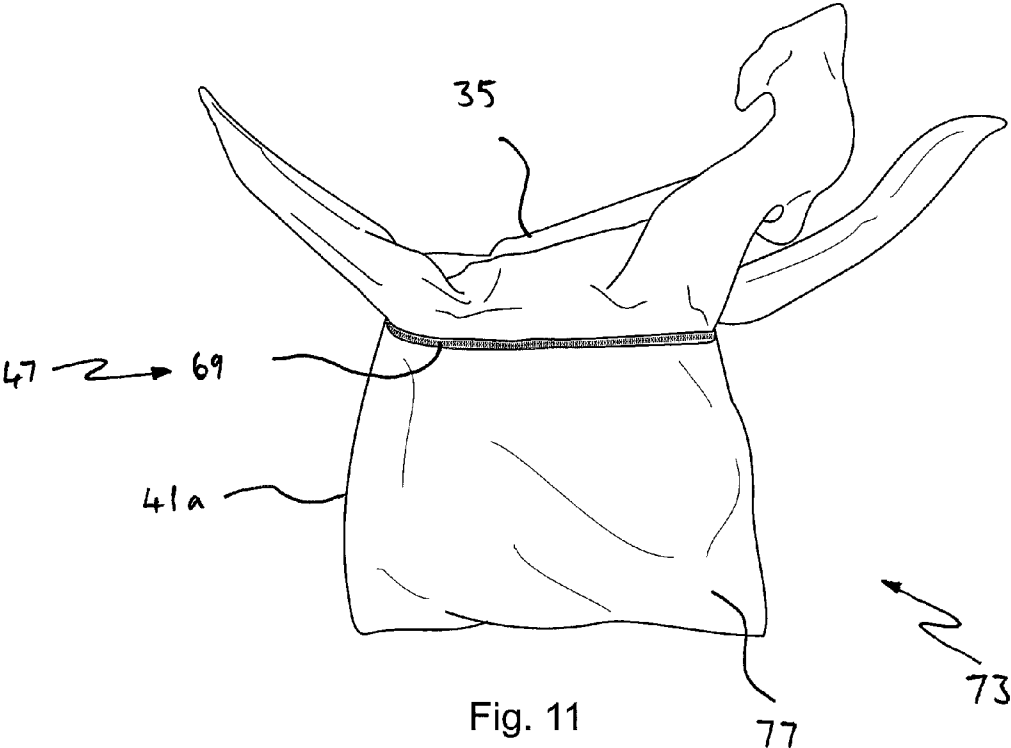


Fig. 11

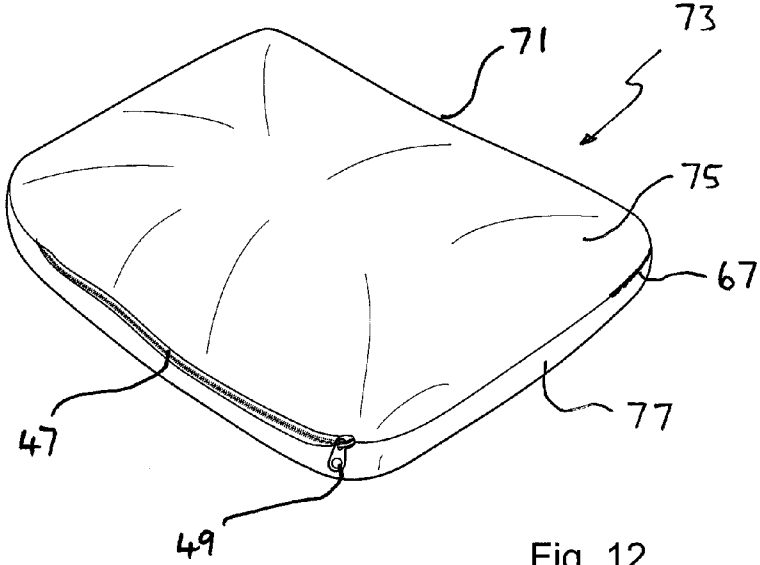


Fig. 12

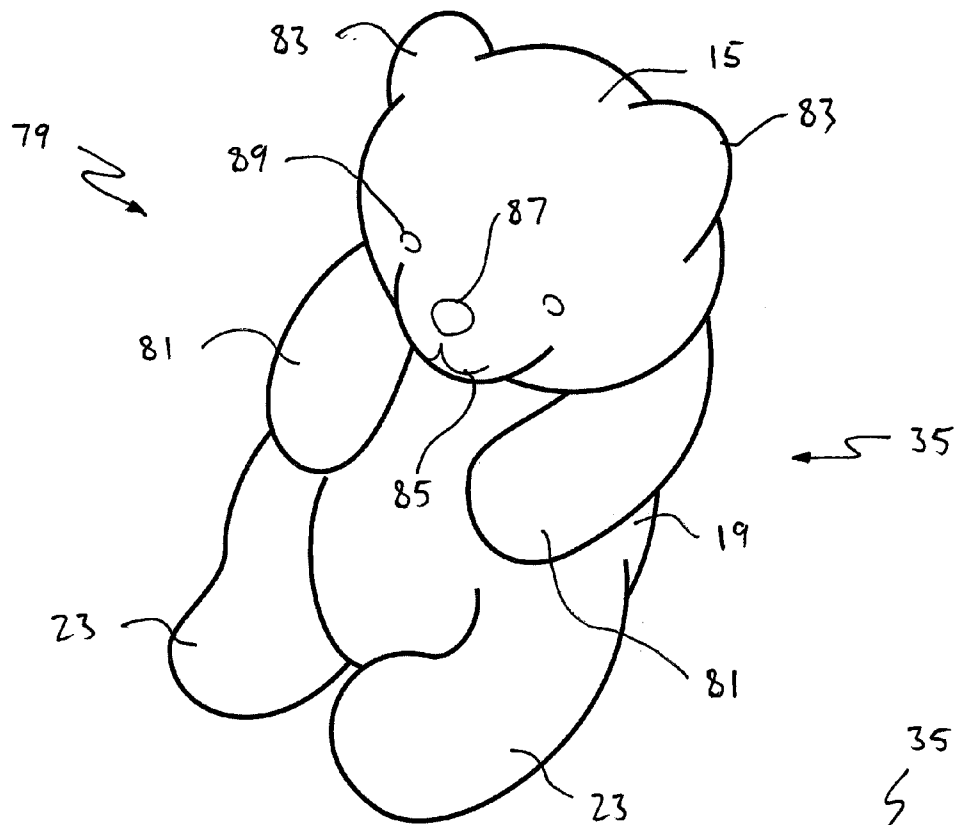


Fig. 13

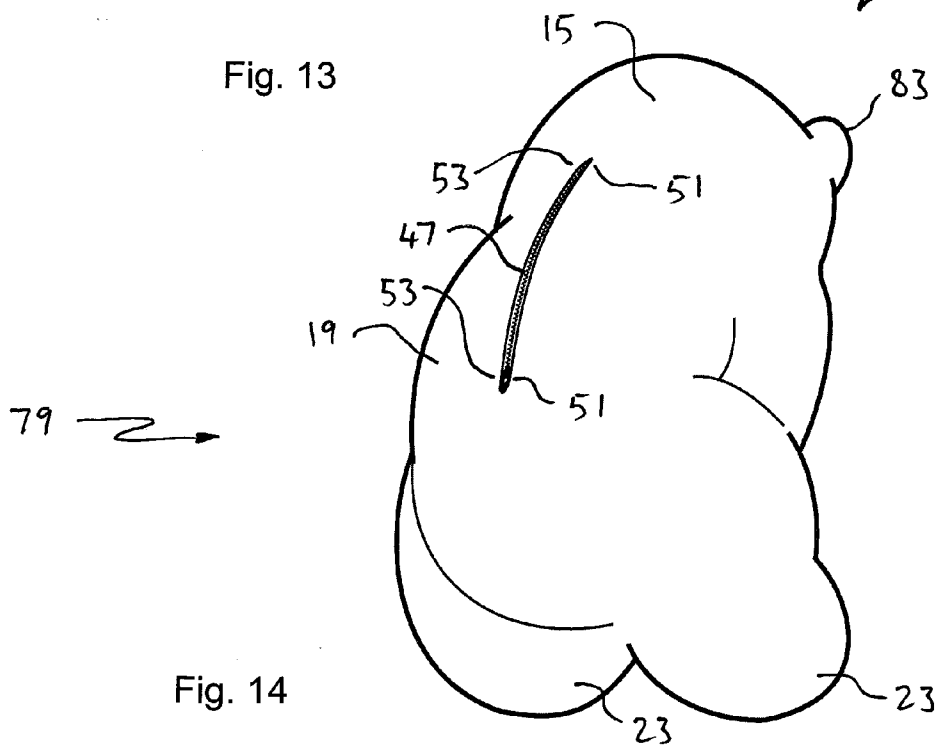


Fig. 14

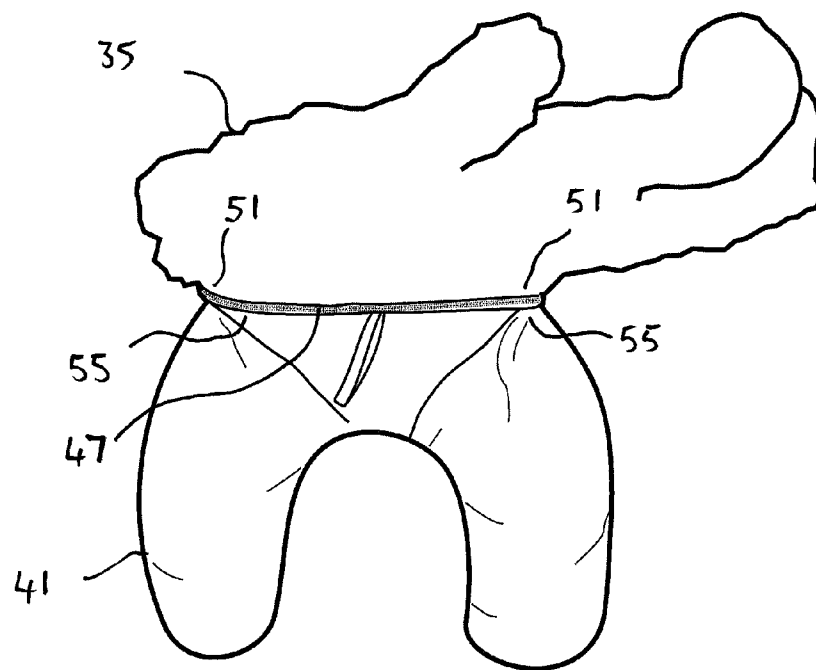


Fig. 15

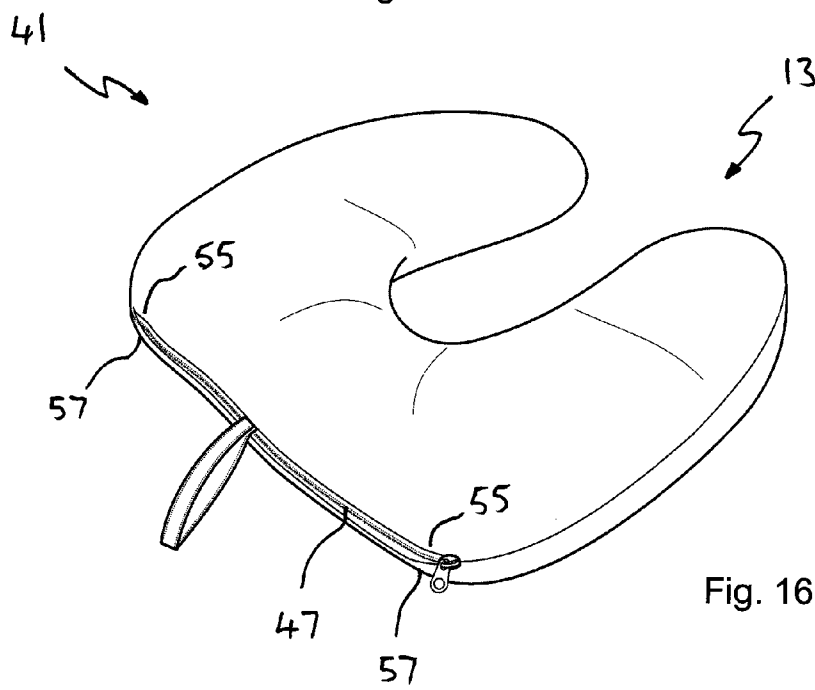


Fig. 16

CONVERTIBLE STUFFED TOY

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to a soft toy and in particular to a stuffed toy or plush toy.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] The following discussion of the background art is intended to facilitate an understanding of the present invention only. It should be appreciated that the discussion is not an acknowledgement or admission that any of the material referred to was part of the common general knowledge as at the priority date of the application.

[0003] Stuffed toys have been known since the late 1800's, manufactured from fabric and stuffed with a filling in order to give the stuffed toy a three dimensional form. Earliest known stuffed toys were produced by Margarete Steiff GmbH of Germany, and included animal shapes including a stuffed bear. A Morris Michtom is credited with contemporaneous creation of a stuffed toy in the shape of a bear which was referred to as a teddy bear following publication of a political cartoon featuring Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt.

[0004] Other stuffed toys followed shortly thereafter, include those of the characters from the Beatrix Potter books. Plush toys are those which are formed of an outer material having an appearance and feel that approximates animal fur. However, whether the outer material is plush or of knitted construction, these toys have long been a favourite particularly of young children and as a comforter for infants.

[0005] Generally, stuffed toys have not had much utility beyond what is described above, although some attempts have been made to provide arrangements having utility beyond a mere stuffed toy. One example is an arrangement described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,421,045, to Bowen, in which is described a soft "sculpture" which in effect is a stuffed toy having a pocket in which a blanket is stored, from which the blanket may be retrieved and used. The blanket may be separate from the stuffed toy or of unitary construction with the stuffed toy. In the arrangement described in Bowen, the blanket provides the stuffing for the stuffed toy.

[0006] Recently popular in the United States are Pillow Pets™ which are a brand of stuffed toys that convert from an animal shape to a pillow. This is accomplished through folding the pillow and securing it in a predetermined configuration with straps having hook and loop fasteners (such as Velcro™), to form the animal shape. Transformation to a pillow is accomplished by undoing the hook and loop fasteners and unfolding the animal shape to regain the pillow shape.

[0007] Throughout the specification unless the context requires otherwise, the word "comprise" or variations such as "comprises" or "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or group of integers but not the exclusion of any other integer or group of integers.

[0008] Throughout the specification unless the context requires otherwise, the word "include" or variations such as "includes" or "including", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or group of integers but not the exclusion of any other integer or group of integers.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

[0009] This invention provides a stuffed toy having a particular shape or caricature, that may be interconverted between another shape, caricature or expression. The stuffed

toy has a first shape formed by a first shell and the other shape caricature or expression is provided by a second shape formed by a second shell. The first shell and the second shell are joined by a double sided zip fastener either with a pull on each side or more preferably a pull that can be located to the required side in use, prior to fastening the zip fastener. The first shell and the second shell form a contiguous hollow structure when the zip fastener is undone, the structure containing a stuffing which is flowable, and may be manually manipulated between the first shell and the second shell. In a first configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the first shell and the second shell is also contained within the first shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a first side to contain the stuffing and second shell within the first shell, forming the stuffed toy. In a second configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the second shell and the first shell is also contained within the second shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a second side to contain the stuffing and first shell within the second shell, forming the other shape caricature or expression. The zip fastener may be operated only when the second shell is wholly contained within the first shell or the first shell is wholly contained within the second shell.

[0010] Preferably the stuffing comprises plastic beads such as polystyrene beads. The plastic beads may be of a size down to half a millimetre, but the size is limited to what may be safely contained within the sewn first and second shells. A larger size may be desirable to present less of a choking hazard should the beads be accidentally liberated through rupture of the fabric of the first and second shells. Since the stuffing never comes into contact with the zip fastener teeth, any apertures presented by the zip fastener teeth are not a consideration.

[0011] The stuffed toy of the first shape may be a caricature such as a teddy bear or other stuffed toy or plush toy, and may be any animal shape or character from a popular movie, television program or cartoon, as may be franchised by its owner. The other shape caricature or expression may be a pillow, a neck cushion, another caricature, or may be the same caricature but with a different facial expression or gesturing in a different manner.

[0012] The volume of the first and second shells is preferably such that the sum of the volume of the first shell when filled or inflated less the volume of the second shell when emptied or deflated is substantially equal to the sum of the volume of the second shell when filled or inflated less the volume of the first shell when emptied or deflated. In this manner the volume of stuffing required to inflate the first shell or the second shell is the same.

[0013] In an embodiment where the other shape is a pillow or a neck cushion, the volume of the first and second shells is preferably such that the sum of the volume of the first shell when filled or inflated less the volume of the second shell when emptied or deflated is less than the sum of the volume of the second shell when filled or inflated less the volume of the first shell when emptied or deflated. In this manner the first shell when filled or inflated and in the first configuration of the stuffed toy will be more taut, and in the second configuration the pillow or neck cushion so formed will have more give and will be more deformable, to facilitate its use as a pillow or as a neck cushion, as the case may be.

[0014] Also in accordance with the present invention there is provided a cushion, that may be interconverted between

said cushion and a stuffed toy having a particular shape or caricature, said stuffed toy having a first shape formed by a first shell and the cushion shape is provided by a second shape formed by a second shell, wherein the first shell and the second shell are joined by a double sided zip fastener either with a pull on each side or more preferably a pull that can be located to the required side in use, prior to fastening the zip fastener, wherein the first shell and the second shell form a contiguous hollow structure when the zip fastener is undone, the structure containing a stuffing which is flowable, and may be manually manipulated between the first shell and the second shell, where in a first configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the first shell and the second shell is also contained within the first shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a first side to contain the stuffing and second shell within the first shell, forming the stuffed toy, and in a second configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the second shell and the first shell is also contained within the second shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a second side to contain the stuffing and first shell within the second shell, forming the cushion.

[0015] By way of explanation, the zip fastener may be operated only when the second shell is wholly contained within the first shell or the first shell is wholly contained within the second shell.

[0016] Preferably the stuffing comprises plastic beads such as polystyrene beads. The plastic beads may be of a size down to half a millimetre, but the size is limited to what may be safely contained within the sewn first and second shells. A larger size may be desirable to present less of a choking hazard should the beads be accidentally liberated through rupture of the fabric of the first and second shells. Since the stuffing never comes into contact with the zip fastener teeth, any apertures presented by the zip fastener teeth are not a consideration.

[0017] The stuffed toy of the first shape may be a caricature such as a teddy bear or other stuffed toy or plush toy, and may be any animal shape or character from a popular movie, television program or cartoon, as may be franchised by its owner. The cushion may be a pillow or a neck cushion.

[0018] The volume of the first and second shells is preferably such that the sum of the volume of the first shell when filled or inflated less the volume of the second shell when emptied or deflated is less than or equal to the sum of the volume of the second shell when filled or inflated less the volume of the first shell when emptied or deflated.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] Three preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described in the following description of a stuffed toy, convertible to form a cushion, made with reference to the drawings, in which:

[0020] FIG. 1 is a plan view of parts laid flat to assemble a stuffed toy in the form of a kangaroo, convertible to form a neck cushion, according to a first embodiment;

[0021] FIGS. 2 to 4 show steps in the manufacture of the stuffed toy and neck cushion of the first embodiment;

[0022] FIGS. 5 and 6 show steps in arranging the stuffed toy and neck cushion of the first embodiment into the configuration of a kangaroo;

[0023] FIG. 7 is a perspective view from above of the kangaroo stuffed toy of the first embodiment;

[0024] FIG. 8 is a perspective view from below of the kangaroo stuffed toy of the first embodiment;

[0025] FIG. 9 shows steps in arranging the kangaroo stuffed toy and neck cushion of the first embodiment into the configuration of a neck cushion;

[0026] FIG. 10 is a perspective view from above of the kangaroo stuffed toy of the first embodiment, in the neck cushion configuration;

[0027] FIG. 11 is a view showing a stuffed toy in the form of a kangaroo stuffed toy convertible to a pillow according to a second embodiment, showing the intermediate conversion between the two forms;

[0028] FIG. 12 is a perspective view from above of the kangaroo stuffed toy of the second embodiment, in the pillow configuration;

[0029] FIG. 13 is a perspective view from above of a stuffed toy in the form of a bear which is convertible to a neck cushion, according to a third embodiment;

[0030] FIG. 14 is a perspective view from below of the bear stuffed toy of the third embodiment;

[0031] FIG. 15 shows steps in arranging the bear stuffed toy and neck cushion of the third embodiment into the configuration of a neck cushion;

[0032] FIG. 16 is a perspective view from above of the bear stuffed toy of the third embodiment, in the neck cushion configuration;

BEST MODE(S) FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

[0033] The first embodiment, illustrated in FIGS. 1 to 10 is a stuffed toy having the shape of a kangaroo as indicated generally as 11 in FIGS. 7 and 8, that may be interconverted between another shape, particularly into the shape of a neck cushion 13, shown in FIG. 10. In FIGS. 7 and 8, the kangaroo 11 has a head 15 with rear facing protuberance 17 which represents ears, a body 19, having a tail 21, rear legs 23, and torso and neck 25 with forelegs 27. In FIG. 10, the neck cushion 13 has two arms 29 and a rear neck rest 31. A tag 33 is sewn in, to allow the neck cushion to be hung on a display peg in a retail store situation, ready for sale.

[0034] Referring to FIG. 1, The stuffed toy with the first shape of the kangaroo 11 is formed by a first shell 35 comprising two fabric halves 37 and 39, which to form the kangaroo shape in the completed stuffed toy. These two fabric halves 37 and 39 clearly also have a kangaroo shape. The other shape forming the neck cushion 13 is provided by a second shell 41 formed by two fabric halves 43 and 45. A double sided zip fastener 47, also commonly known as a reversible zip fastener, completes the construction. The zip fastener 47 is double sided or reversible in the sense that it can be "zipped up" or unzipped from either side, since the pull 49 may be located to the side from which it is accessible.

[0035] Assembly of the parts shown in FIG. 1 proceeds as follows. The two fabric halves 37 and 39, which to form the kangaroo shape in the completed stuffed toy are overlaid with plush sides (if using plush fabric) in contact and stitched together, except for the straight extents 51 and 53 which are left unstitched. The two fabric halves 43 and 45 forming the second shell 41 are also overlaid with plush sides (if using plush fabric) in contact and stitched together, except for the straight extents 55 and 57 and except for a portion 59 about 2 to 4 cm long on the extremity on the end of one of the arms 29,

which are left unstitched. To give an idea of perspective, the straight extents and zip fastener 47 are about 28 cm (~11 inches) long.

[0036] With zip fastener 47 undone and the zipper teeth thereof located inward towards the inside of the fabric halves, one side of the zip fastener 47 is sewn to fabric halves 37 and 43, and the other side of zip fastener 47 is sewn to fabric halves 39 and 45. After this the whole sewn assembly is pulled through an aperture 61 formed by the unsewn portion 59, turning inside out in the process, to present the plush surfaces on the outside, as shown in FIG. 2. It will be understood that throughout this process from sewing of the zip fastener 47 and fabric halves 39 and 45, the zip fastener 47 remains unzipped.

[0037] The first shell 35 and the second shell 41 form a contiguous hollow structure 60. Referring to FIG. 3, a flowable stuffing in the form of 1 mm polystyrene foam balls 63 is introduced into the hollow structure 60 through the aperture 61, guided by a funnel 65, although in mass production a skilled addressee will understand that more suitable means for this may be effectively employed. The aperture 61 is then sewn closed with stitching 67 as shown in FIG. 4. The teeth 69 of the zip fastener 47 present on the outside of the hollow structure 60, at the boundary between the first shell 35 and the second shell 41.

[0038] When filled with flowable polystyrene foam balls 63, the flowable polystyrene foam balls 63 will distribute throughout the hollow structure 60 formed by the first shell 35 and the second shell 41. The hollow structure 60 formed by the first shell 35 and the second shell 41 may be manually manipulated to shift the flowable polystyrene foam balls 63 between the first shell 35 and the second shell 41. Referring to FIG. 5, the second shell 41 is shown being manipulated to shift the flowable polystyrene foam balls 63 to the first shell 35 in order to reach a first configuration forming a kangaroo. Referring to FIG. 6, once all of the flowable polystyrene foam balls 63 have been forced into the first shell 35 and manipulated into the extremities of the kangaroo shape (namely into the head 15 ears 17 tail 21, rear legs 23, torso and neck 25 and forelegs 27) the fabric of the second shell 41 may also be pushed into the body 19 of the kangaroo 11, and then the zip fastener 47 may be zipped up to complete the kangaroo 11 as shown in FIGS. 7 and 8.

[0039] Conversion to the neck cushion 13 is accomplished by unzipping the zip fastener 47, pulling out the second shell 41, then manually manipulating the kangaroo 11 to shift most of the flowable polystyrene foam balls 63 from the first shell 35 to the second shell 41, as is shown partially completed in FIG. 9. When the flowable polystyrene foam balls 63 are mostly in the second shell 41, the first shell 35 may be folded and pushed through the zip fastener 47 inside the second shell 41, and the zip fastener 47 zipped up to complete the neck cushion 13.

[0040] Referring to FIGS. 11 and 12, the second embodiment is shown. The second embodiment is similar in all respects to the first embodiment, except that instead of a neck cushion the second shell 41a forms a pillow 71, having a second shell 73 comprising rectangular shaped fabric halves 75 and 77.

[0041] It will be understood that while both kangaroos described in the first and second embodiments utilise flowable polystyrene foam balls 63 to fill all extremities of the first shell 35, the finer extremities may be filled with a resilient compressible filling which is not motile and remains in the extremities, being compressed as the extremities of the first

shell 35 are pushed into the second shell 41, as the kangaroo is transformed into the pillow or cushion, as the case may be. The remainder of the filling may comprise the flowable polystyrene foam balls 63, as described.

[0042] In FIGS. 13 to 16, a third embodiment is shown, being a bear 79 that converts to a neck cushion 13. The bear is formed of a hollow fabric shell to form a first shell 35 and has a head 15, body 19, legs 23 and arms 81. Features such as ears 83 may be of hollow fabric forming part of the first shell 35 or separate shells filled with a stuffing and sewn in place on the head 15. Features such as mouth 85, nose 87 and eyes 89 are provided in any suitable form.

[0043] An opening bounded by straight extents 51 and 53 is provided in the back of the first shell 35 into which a double sided zip fastener 47 is sewn, in co-operation with the second shell 41. The first shell forming the bear is connected to a second shell 41 forming a neck cushion 13, in the same manner as the first shell forming the kangaroo 11 is connected to the second shell 41 in the first embodiment. Due to the relatively complex shape of the bear, it may be necessary to push the second shell 41 inside out into the first shell with the straight extents 51 and 53 aligned with the straight extents 55 and 57 respectively, before the zip fastener 47 in the open condition (for access) is sewn in place, one side of the zip fastener 47 being sewn to edges 51 and 55 and the other side of the zip fastener 47 being sewn to edges 53 and 57. Once sewn in place the second shell 41 may be drawn out of the first shell, in which position the outer surfaces of both shells 35 and 41 will present. The two shells may be filled with the required amount of flowable polystyrene foam balls 63 through the aperture 61 in an arm 29 of the neck cushion, before the aperture 61 is sewn closed with stitching.

[0044] It should be appreciated that the scope of the invention is not limited to the particular embodiment described herein, and that changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. The character shapes may be varied to create other toys for children and promotional items. In an alternative embodiment instead of a cushion the second shell could be another character shape, or the same character shape but striking a different pose.

1. A stuffed toy having a particular shape or caricature, that may be interconverted between another shape, caricature or expression, the stuffed toy having a first shape formed from a first shell and the other shape caricature or expression is provided by a second shape formed from a second shell, wherein the first shell and the second shell are joined by a zip fastener, the first shell and the second shell forming a contiguous hollow structure when the zip fastener is undone, the structure containing a stuffing which is flowable, and may be manually manipulated between the first shell and the second shell while the zip fastener is undone; wherein, in a first configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the first shell and the second shell is also contained within the first shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a first side to contain the stuffing and second shell within the first shell, forming the stuffed toy, and in a second configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the second shell and the first shell is also contained within the second shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a second side to contain the stuffing and first shell within the second shell, forming the other shape caricature or expression.

2. A stuffed toy as claimed in claim 1 wherein the stuffing is selected from plastic beads or polystyrene foam beads or a combination thereof.

3. A stuffed toy as claimed in claim 1 wherein the stuffed toy of the first shape may be a caricature and the other shape caricature or expression may be a pillow or a neck cushion.

4. A stuffed toy as claimed in claim 1 wherein the volume of the first and second shells is such that the sum of the volume of the first shell when filled less the volume of the second shell when emptied is substantially equal to the sum of the volume of the second shell when filled less the volume of the first shell when emptied

5. A stuffed toy as claimed in claim 3 wherein the volume of the first and second shells is preferably such that the sum of the volume of the first shell when filled less the volume of the second shell when emptied is less than the sum of the volume of the second shell when filled less the volume of the first shell when emptied.

6. A cushion, that may be interconverted between said cushion and a stuffed toy having a particular shape or caricature, said stuffed toy having a first shape formed by a first shell and the cushion shape is provided by a second shape formed by a second shell, wherein the first shell and the second shell are joined by a double sided zip fastener either with a pull on each side or more preferably a pull that can be located to the required side in use, prior to fastening the zip fastener, wherein the first shell and the second shell form a contiguous hollow structure when the zip fastener is undone, the structure containing a stuffing which is flowable, and may be manually manipulated between the first shell and the second shell, where in a first configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the first shell and the second shell is also contained within the first shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a first side to contain the stuffing and second shell within the first shell, forming the stuffed toy, and in a second configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the second shell and the first shell is also contained within the second shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a second side to contain the stuffing and first shell within the second shell, forming the cushion.

7. A cushion as claimed in claim 6 wherein the stuffing is selected from plastic beads or polystyrene foam beads or a combination thereof.

8. A cushion as claimed in claim 6 wherein the volume of the first and second shells is preferably such that the sum of the volume of the first shell when filled less the volume of the second shell when emptied is less than or equal to the sum of the volume of the second shell when filled less the volume of the first shell when emptied.

9. A stuffed toy having a particular shape or caricature, that may be interconverted between said stuffed toy and a cushion, said stuffed toy having a first shape formed by a first shell and the cushion shape is provided by a second shape formed by a second shell, wherein the first shell and the second shell are joined by a double sided zip fastener either with a pull on each side or more preferably a pull that can be located to the required side in use, prior to fastening the zip fastener, wherein the first shell and the second shell form a contiguous hollow structure when the zip fastener is undone, the structure containing a stuffing which is flowable, and may be manually manipulated between the first shell and the second shell, where in a first configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the first shell and the second shell is also contained within the first shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a first side to contain the stuffing and second shell within the first shell, forming the stuffed toy, and in a second configuration the stuffing is substantially entirely contained within the second shell and the first shell is also contained within the second shell, in which position the zip fastener may be fastened from a second side to contain the stuffing and first shell within the second shell, forming the cushion.

10. A stuffed toy as claimed in claim 9 wherein the stuffing is selected from plastic beads or polystyrene foam beads or a combination thereof.

11. A cushion as claimed in claim 9 wherein the volume of the first and second shells is preferably such that the sum of the volume of the first shell when filled less the volume of the second shell when emptied is less than or equal to the sum of the volume of the second shell when filled less the volume of the first shell when emptied.

* * * * *