WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A holding apparatus for holding a workpiece, comprising:

holding means has an upper surface being a holding surface for holding the workpiece thereon, the holding surface has a recess being a suction area defined in the holding surface along an outer circumferential edge of the holding means and in such a manner that the recess is covered by the workpiece when the workpiece is placed on the holding means, the suction area operatively connected to a suction channel coupled with a suction source so that the workpiece has a central area that is not drawn under suction on the holding means during operation, ;

pressure measuring means connected to the suction channel for measuring a pressure in the suction channel; and

control means coupled with the pressure measuring means for determining whether or not foreign matter is present between the workpiece and the holding means based the value of the pressure in the suction channel as measured by the pressure measuring means.

2. A holding apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the control means (i) determines that no foreign matter is present between the workpiece and the holding surface if the pressure measured by the pressure measuring means is lower than a preset threshold value and (ii)determines that foreign matter is present between the workpiece and the holding surface if the

pressure measured by the pressure measuring means is higher than the threshold value.