

A FILLABLE AEROSOL CONTAINER

FIELD OF INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to a fillable aerosol container, and more particularly to an aerosol container that permits filling of a customisable content under atmospheric pressure during and/or after production of the aerosol container, in which the customisable content is mixed with a prefilled pressurised content contained within the aerosol container when the aerosol container is in use.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

An aerosol container is a dispensing system designed to turn a liquid product into a finely dispersed mist, by propelling the liquid product with a pressurised propellant fluid stored therein. One of the commonly known dispensing systems is prepared by tightly sealing the container upon receiving the liquid product, and providing the container with a highly pressurised gaseous propellant through a valve system. Another popular dispensing system that uses a liquefied gas as the propellant is prepared by providing the sealed container with the liquefied gas which remains in its liquid state as long as the pressure therein is maintained. When the pressure within the dispensing system is reduced by pressing a nozzle thereon, the liquefied gas propellant boils and causes particles therein to break free, such that a gas layer is formed on a top portion of the system to push the liquid product and the propellant out from the container *via* the nozzle. However, these dispensing systems are non-refillable, and the aerosol container has to be discarded when the liquid product cannot be dispersed due to the low pressure or the propellant content in the container.

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A fillable aerosol container is improvised to solve the abovementioned problems, but it generally requires additional equipment, such as an air compressor, to increase or

- maintain the pressure therein. In addition, dispersing consistency of the mist is highly dependable on several factors, including chemical makeup of the liquid product and propellant, ratio of the liquid product to propellant, pressure of the propellant, etc., thus disabling users without prior knowledge on the used aerosol container to fill up the
- 5 aerosol container. The currently available fillable aerosol container only receives the refilling of the propellant or pressurised content. Such fillable aerosol container has been disclosed in United States patent no. US3718165A, in which the refillable aerosol dispenser comprises a container for dispensing a mixture of liquid and a gaseous propellant. The container has an upper wall provided with a dispensing valve, and a
- 10 bottom wall provided with a separate inlet valve, in which the separate inlet valve operates independently of the dispersing valve for admitting gaseous propellant into the container. However, the filling operation of this invention requires a separate aerosol can to inject the gaseous propellant into the container.
- 15 A custom colour mixing aerosol container is disclosed in a United States patent no. US6543490B1, in which the patent discloses a pre-charged aerosol container for dispensing paints that allows the user to custom mix colours in the container at a paint store or retail outlet to obtain a desired colour. Nevertheless, the filling operation requires a sophisticated apparatus to supply the colourant to the container, and needs a
- 20 precaution to remove the colorant from its manifold and dip tube to prevent colour contamination. The aerosol container that is already filled with a propellant, solvent and base paint receives a desired colorant through an injection means of the apparatus into the pressurised aerosol container through a fluid discharge valve of the container.
- 25 Accordingly, it would be desirable to provide a fillable aerosol container having a body prefilled with a pressurised content and is capable of receiving a customisable content under atmospheric pressure either or both during and after production of the aerosol container with or without the assistance of additional apparatus. Such aerosol container solves the limitations of the abovementioned disclosed inventions.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

The main objective of the invention is to provide an aerosol container configured with an arrangement for receiving a customisable content under atmospheric pressure, and permitting its mixing with a prefilled pressurised content, such that the composition, texture and colour of the customisable content can be decided prior to being introduced into the aerosol container to suit a desired application and preference of a user. Such invention allows users to manipulate the content to be dispersed including adding, modifying, removing and replacing the customisable content. The aerosol container is provided with at least one chamber for receiving a content under atmospheric pressure, and thereby permits filling the container even without the application of any pressurising equipment at any time including either or both during and after production of the aerosol container. The invention provides an easy and convenient approach to promote homogenous mixing of the contents therein, such that the mixture to be discharged has better dispensing properties. Manual pouring or injection using an injector enables the aerosol container to be filled with the customisable content. By allowing the customisable content to be filled into the aerosol container under atmospheric pressure, safety of use of the aerosol container is enhanced.

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In a first aspect of the invention there is provided an aerosol container comprising a body divided into a first chamber and a second chamber by a divider, in which the first chamber is under atmospheric pressure and configured to receive a customisable content through an inlet at the body either or both during and after production of the aerosol container, and the second chamber is under a pressurised environment and prefilled with a pressurised content; wherein the body includes a mechanism which, when activated, acts on the divider so as to allow mixing of the customisable content and pressurised content to form a mixture to be dispensed from the body through an outlet.

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In this aspect of the invention, the divider can be in a form of an inner sleeve, whereby space within the inner sleeve is defined as the first chamber, and space between the inner sleeve and the body is defined as the second chamber.

- 5 In this aspect of the invention, the mechanism extends from an external portion of the body into an internal portion of the body for forming an aperture at the divider when the mechanism is activated through exerting a force on the external portion of the body to allow the mixing of the customisable content and pressurised content.
- 10 In this aspect of the invention, the mechanism comprises a stem that has at least one sharp distal end facing the divider such that when the mechanism is activated, the sharp distal end comes into contact with the divider and ruptures it.

In this aspect of the invention, the inlet comprises a valve assembly having a housing
15 that accommodates a gasket and a spring-supported stem, and a cap connected to the housing and having a protrusion that projects towards the spring-supported stem.

In this aspect of the invention, the cap can be formed with an opening for receiving the customisable content.
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In this aspect of the invention, the gasket fits around the spring-supported stem that blocks the customisable content from entering into or exiting from the first chamber when the valve assembly is in a non-actuated state.

- 25 In this aspect of the invention, the spring-supported stem can be dislocated from being fitted around the gasket when a force is applied thereon through the protrusion of the cap such that a gap is formed between the gasket and the spring-supported stem for allowing the customisable content entering from the opening of the cap to flow into first chamber when the valve assembly is in an actuated state.

In this aspect of the invention, the outlet enables dispensing of the pressurised content or the mixture when the body is held in a particular or any position.

5 In this aspect of the invention, the aerosol container further comprises a dip tube in the body that comprises one free end disposed within the body and another end connecting to the outlet for dispensing the pressurised content before the mixture is produced, or dispensing the mixture after the mixture is produced.

10 In this aspect of the invention, the inlet and the outlet share a same position on the body, and the mechanism is coupled to the inlet and the outlet and disposed in the first chamber.

One skilled in the art will readily appreciate that the present invention is well adapted to carry out the objects and obtain the ends and advantages mentioned, as well as those
15 inherent therein. The embodiment described herein is not intended as limitations on the scope of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

20 For the purpose of facilitating an understanding of the invention, there is illustrated in the accompanying drawing the preferred embodiments from an inspection of which when considered in connection with the following description, the invention, its construction and operation and many of its advantages would be readily understood and appreciated.

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Figure 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating a preferred embodiment of the aerosol container in the present invention.

Figure 2 shows the cap and the valve assembly that forms the inlet before

the cap is fitted to the valve assembly.

Figure 3 shows the actuated state of the valve assembly when the cap is fitted around the housing of the valve assembly.

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Figure 4 shows a detailed diagram of the spring-supported stem being fitted around by the gasket when the valve assembly is in a non-actuated state.

10 **Figure 5** shows a detailed diagram of the spring-supported stem being moved away from being fitted around by the gasket when the valve assembly is in an actuated state when a force is exerted onto the spring-supported stem to allow the customisable content to flow through the passageway.

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Figure 6 shows an exemplary injector for introducing the customisable content into the aerosol container.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

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The invention will now be described in greater detail, by way of example, with reference to the drawings.

25 The present invention relates to an aerosol container which allows users to conveniently fill in a customisable content under atmospheric pressure for mixing with a prefilled content therein at any time either or both during and after production of the aerosol container. When the customisable content is filled into the aerosol container during production of the aerosol container, it is considered to be prefilled. However, the customisable content can also be filled into the aerosol container after production of the

aerosol container to be ready for use by a user. The aerosol container which is also known as a dispensing system houses both the customisable content under atmospheric pressure and the prefilled content under pressurised environment in their respective chambers. The contents are mixable and dispensable for a desired application. The term
5 'customisable' used herein indicates that the customisable content can be added, removed, replaced or modified based on the preference of a user of the aerosol container. For example, but not by limitation, the customisable content, preferred to be liquid, is a colourant, a polymer, a lacquer or a water-based solvent, whereas the prefilled content can comprise a resin or hardener and is in the form of a colourant, a
10 polymer, a lacquer or a water-based solvent.

FIG. 1 illustrates a preferred embodiment of the aerosol container **100**. In this particular embodiment, the aerosol container **100** has a body **101** being divided into a first chamber **10** and a second chamber **20** by a divider **102**. By way of example, but not by
15 way of limitation, the divider **102** is in a form of a wall extending from one inner surface to another inner surface of the body **101**, or an inner sleeve having a cylindrical casing with one end connected to an inner surface of the body **101**. Preferably, at least one portion of the divider **102** is a rupturable diaphragm or membrane. In this particular embodiment, the first chamber **10** is defined by a space within the divider **102**
20 configured for receiving the customisable content under atmospheric pressure through an inlet **200**, and thus the first chamber **10** is in an atmospheric pressure environment. The second chamber **20** is defined by a space between the divider **102** and the body **101** configured to be prefilled with the pressurised content, and therefore the second chamber **20** is in a pressurised environment. The body **101** may be provided with a
25 shape of, but not limited to, a cylinder, and is made up of, but not limited to, a metal or an alloy that can withstand a suitable amount of pressure.

The body **101** includes a mechanism **104** being a stem extending from an external portion of the can body **101** into an internal portion of the can body **101**. Preferably, the

stem comprises at least one sharp distal end facing and in proximity to the divider **102**. When the mechanism **104** is activated through exerting a force onto the stem that is located at the external portion of the body **101**, the stem comes into contact with the divider **102** and ruptures the divider **102** to form an aperture to allow the mixing of the customisable content and pressurised content to form the mixture. Optionally, the mechanism **104** can be activated to open one side of the divider **102** being the inner sleeve to form the aperture. The aperture may also be formed by detaching the divider **102** from at least one inner surface of the body **101** in which the divider **102** is adhered thereon by exerting a force thereon through the mechanism **104**. The aperture enables a fluid communication between the chambers to form a mixture to be dispensed from the body **101** through an outlet **300**.

As described herein, the term “fluid communication” refers to mixing the contents from the first chamber **10** and the second chamber **20**. The content from either one or both the chambers may flow through the aperture to induce the mixing *via* diffusion. The fluid communication may also be facilitated by vigorously agitating the body **101**. A ball bearing may be provided therein to facilitate the agitation.

FIG. 2 and **3** show a preferred embodiment of the inlet **200** that is formed by two main portions which are a valve assembly **210** and a cap **220**. Particularly, the valve assembly **210** has a housing **211** that accommodates a gasket **212** and a spring-supported stem **213**. The cap **220** is at least partially fitted around the housing **211**. An external surface of the housing **211** is preferably formed with threads that correspond to threads formed on an inner surface of the cap **220**. The threads allow rotation of the cap **220** around the housing **211** as indicated by arrow B for adjusting position of the cap **220** to move closer towards or away from the body **101** when the cap **220** is engaged to the housing **211** of the valve assembly **210**. A protrusion **221** is provided within the cap **220** and is projected towards the spring-supported stem **213**. In the preferred embodiment of the invention shown in **FIG. 2** and **3**, the protrusion **221** is positioned around the inner

surface of the cap **220**. The outer end of the spring-supporting stem **213** is formed with a recess **2131** that is reachable by the protrusion **221**. An opening **222** is formed on the cap **220** for receiving the customisable content, in which the content can be introduced therein through a manual pouring or injection. The cap **220**, especially the opening **222**
5 can be structured to facilitate manual pouring of the customisable content, or connection with an apparatus such as an injector for the injection of the customisable content. In one exemplary embodiment, one end of the opening **222** is sealed with a membrane **223** rupturable when the cap **220** is fitted around the housing **211**. The membrane **223** prevents the customisable content from leaking prior to the fitting. Another end of the
10 opening **222** is fitted with an injector **230** comprising a vessel **231** containing the customisable content and a plunger **232** to facilitate the injection. The plunger **232** is further provided with a scrapper **233** to ensure an air-tight condition within the vessel **231** when filling the customisable content into the body **101**. An exemplary injector **230** is shown in **FIG. 6**.

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In one preferred embodiment, the housing **211** has an open end and another end connected to the first chamber **10**. The open end has an inner circumference that is provided with the gasket **212**. The gasket **212** is in a shape and dimension that correspond to the inner surface of the open end of the housing **211**. The gasket **212** is
20 formed with an orifice to allow the spring-supported stem **213** to extend therethrough. Thus, it is preferred that the gasket **212** is in an annular shape. Particularly, the spring-supported stem **213** has a spring **215** attached to an inner end of the stem **213** that is positioned adjacent to the first chamber **10**. The stem **213** has an outer end that extends out of the gasket **212** and distal to the first chamber **10**. A groove **216** is provided on
25 the outer end of the stem **213** for forming a gap **214** between the gasket **212** and the groove **216** to allow entry or exit of the customisable content into the body **101** respectively. The outer end of the stem **213** is provided with a sharp end **219** for rupturing the membrane **223** on the cap **220**.

The stem body in between the inner end and outer end of the spring-supported stem **213** has a diameter that corresponds to the diameter of the orifice of the gasket **212** and is larger than diameter of the outer end. The stem body is provided with a depression **217** that fits the gasket **212** for locking the valve assembly **210** to prevent entry or exit of the customisable content. When the valve assembly **210** is not actuated, the gasket **212** is fitted around the depression **217**, such that the open end of the housing **211** is sealed to block the customisable content from entering or exiting the first chamber **10** through the housing **211**. When the open end of the housing **211** is sealed, the valve assembly **210** is considered as being in a non-actuated state or a closed state.

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On the other hand, when the open end of the housing **211** is not sealed, the valve assembly **210** is in an actuated state or an open state. This state is attainable by moving the stem body away from the orifice, such that the depression **217** moves towards the first chamber **10** and away from the gasket **212**, and the groove **216** moves partially into the housing **211** to form the gap **214** between the gasket **212** and the groove **216**. Furthermore, the outer end of the stem **213** has a smaller diameter which does not correspond to the diameter of the orifice is positioned within the orifice, when the stem body is dislocated from being fitted around by the orifice of the gasket **212**. Such movement of the stem **213** is performed through actuating the valve assembly **210** by exerting a force onto the stem **213** that in turn compresses and shortens the spring **215** to move the stem **213** towards the first chamber **10**. The movement also enables the outer end of the stem **213** to be positioned within the orifice. Such positioning of the outer end of the stem **213** enables the formation of the gap **214** and an air flow passage **218** between the outer end of the stem **213** and the groove **216**. The air flow passage **218** enables air within the first chamber **10** to be released into the atmosphere. In one preferred embodiment, the sharp end **219** of the outer end of the stem **213** penetrates and ruptures the membrane **223** to enable the customisable content to enter from the opening **222** of the cap **220** and flow along a passageway that includes the opening **222** and the groove **216** within the inlet **200** as indicated by arrow C as shown in FIG. 5 to

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reach the first chamber **10**. Meanwhile, the air flow passage **218** allows the air within the first chamber **10** to escape into the atmosphere in a direction as indicated by arrow **D**.

- 5 Preferably, actuating of the valve assembly **210** can be done through applying a force to move the stem body away from the orifice of the gasket **212**. The force can be either or both of a rotational force and a push force, in which the push force may include pressing, pushing, compressing, etc. In a preferred embodiment as shown in **FIG. 4** and **5**, both the external surface of the housing **211** and the inner surface of the cap **220** are
- 10 threaded to allow the cap **220** to be rotated around the external surface of the housing **211**. When the cap **220** is rotated towards the body **101**, the protrusion **221** therein contacts the recess **2131** at the outer end of the stem **213** and the rotational force translates to a push force to push the stem **213** towards the first chamber **10** as indicated by arrow **A** and **B** in **FIG. 2**, thereby causing the stem body to move closer to the first
- 15 chamber **10** and the outer end of the stem **213** to be positioned within the orifice to expose the gap **214** for allowing entry of the customisable content. Besides that, the actuation of the valve assembly **210** allows replacement or removable of the customisable content contained within the first chamber **10** along the passageway. When the cap **220** is rotated away from the body **101**, the protrusion **221** moves away
- 20 from the recess **2131** at the outer end of the stem **213** and the push force is removed from the stem **213**, allowing the spring **215** to return to its original length that brings the stem **213** back to be positioned within the orifice to seal the open end of the housing **211**, thus closing the gap **214**.
- 25 The outlet **300** extends from an external portion towards internal portion the body **101**. The outlet **300** includes a valve fixture **301** affixed to the body **101** at which the valve housing **302** is mounted. A valve stem **303**, a spring **304**, and a gasket **308** are located within the valve housing **302**. A button **305** having at least a nozzle **306** is attached to external end of the valve stem **303** to allow pressing of the button **305** for dispensing

the mixture. A valve **307** is disposed at a position adjacent to internal end of the valve stem **303**. Preferably, the valve **307** allows 360 degree opening for the mixture to be dispensed out of the body **101**. Depending on the type of valve **307** used and the components within the outlet **300** that are involved in the dispensing process, the pressurised content or the mixture can be dispensed when the body **101** is held in a particular or any position. A dip tube **105** is provided in the aerosol container **100** that comprises one free end disposed within the body **101** and another end connecting to the outlet **300**, in particular near to the valve **307** at the inner end of the valve stem **303** for dispensing the pressurised content before the mixture is produced, or dispensing the mixture after the mixture is produced. The dip tube **105** extends towards a bottom portion of the body **101** to ensure the content or mixture therein can be fully dispensed.

The outlet **300** and the mechanism **104** can be disposed at various positions on the aerosol container **100**. In an exemplary embodiment, the inlet **200** and outlet **300** share a same position on the body **101**, and the mechanism **104** is coupled to the inlet **200** and outlet **300** and disposed in the first chamber **10**. In another exemplary embodiment, the inlet **200** and outlet **300** respectively dispose at a different position on the body **101**, and the mechanism **104** either couples to the inlet **200** and being disposed in the first chamber **10**, or couples to the outlet **300** and being disposed in the second chamber **20**. In the preferred embodiment depicted in **FIG. 1**, the inlet **200** is positioned at one end of the aerosol container **100**, whereas the outlet **300** is positioned at an opposite end of the aerosol container **100**. The mechanism **104** is coupled to the outlet **300** such that when the button **305** is pressed to dispense the content within the body **10**, the valve **307** of the outlet **300** is actuated at the same time as the activation of the mechanism **104** to form the aperture on the divider **102** for allowing mixing of the customisable content with the pressurised content. This embodiment requires one single force to be applied onto the button **305** for both rupturing of the divider **102** and dispensing of the mixture.

Advantageously, the aerosol container **100** of the present invention enables filling of a customisable content, such as a fluid, a liquid, or a molten composition, through a convenient approach without pre-pressurizing it. This feature widens the usability of an aerosol container **100** by allowing the user to decide on the composition, texture and
5 colour of the customisable content, and enables the invention to be conveniently used for a coating or spraying application. In addition, the arrangement of the chambers, the divider and the mechanism in the aerosol container **100** is carefully tailored to enable homogenous mixing of the contents therein and improved dispensing properties of the mixture.

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The present disclosure includes as contained in the appended claims, as well as that of the foregoing description. Although this invention has been described in its preferred form with a degree of particularly, it is understood that the present disclosure of the preferred form has been made only by way of example and that numerous changes in
15 the details of construction and the combination and arrangements of parts may be resorted to without departing from the scope of the invention.