Oct. 27, 1953 G. BERGEN 2,656,633

ARTIST'S PALETTE

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Fig. 1

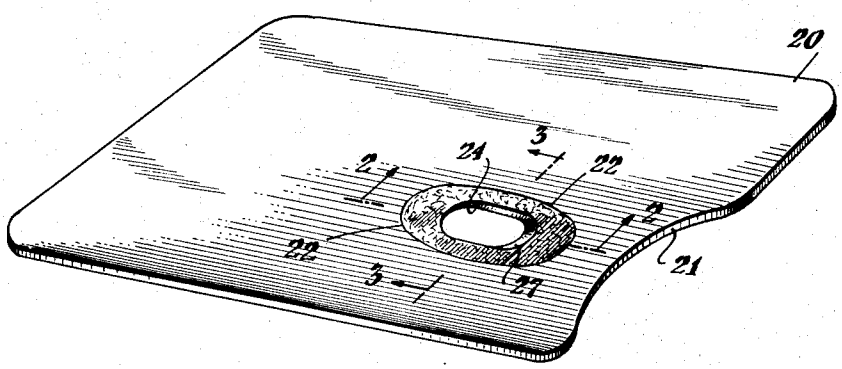


Fig. 2

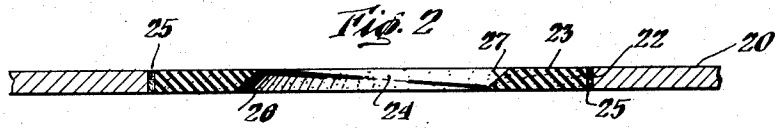


Fig. 3

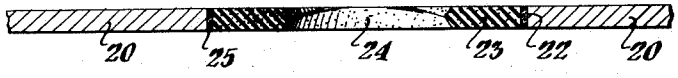


Fig. 4

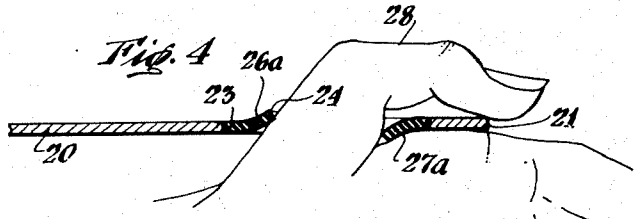


Fig. 5

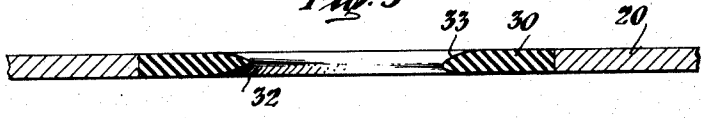
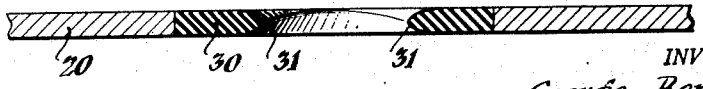


Fig. 6



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ARTIST'S PALETTE

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Fig. 7

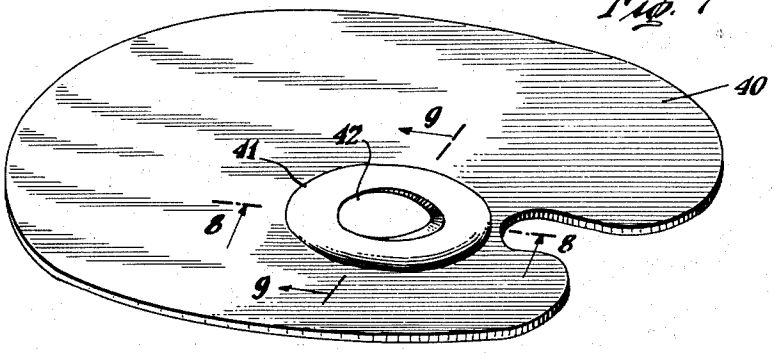


Fig. 8

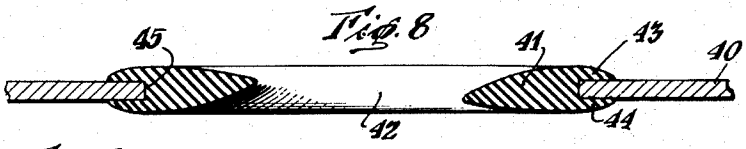


Fig. 9

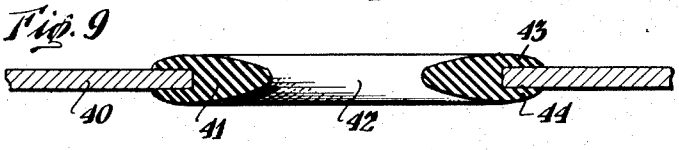


Fig. 10

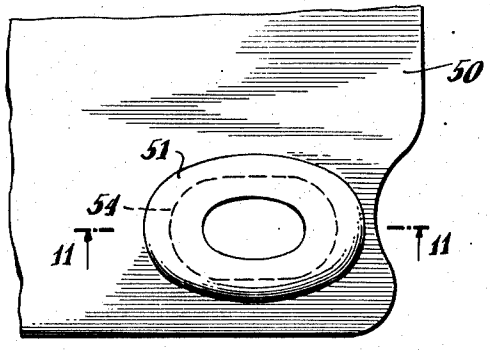


Fig. 11

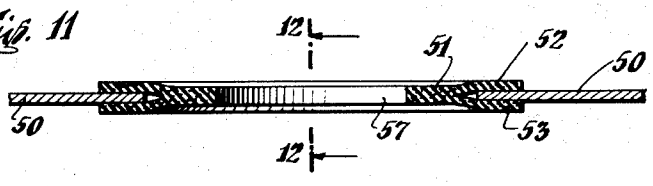
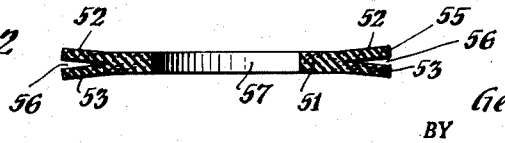


Fig. 12



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ARTIST'S PALETTE

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Application November 13, 1950, Serial No. 195,338

9 Claims. (Cl. 41—5)

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This invention relates to artist's palettes, and more partcularly to palettes of the various types which are intended to be held with or by the hand, during use for exhibiting, mixing and storing colors and the like.

A palette of this character commonly comprises a rigid panel, e. g. of wood, metal, sheet fibre or plastic material and the like, having dimensions appropriate for support by the artist's hand, and shaped to permit manual engagement, such shaping including a thumb-receiving configuration, usually in the nature of a hole near one end of the panel and therefore herein generally defined as a thumb hole. While such palettes may be of a wide variety of sizes and shapes (including studio palettes designed to rest on the user's arm, as well as to be grasped by his thumb), and while some special forms of palettes may include additional structure as of the nature of pans, trays or other vessels for holding coloring materials and various liquids used in art work, all such devices are essentially characterized as involving a rigid panel, provided with a thumb hole or equivalent configuration so arranged that the artist may grasp and hold the palette with one hand while he is working with the other.

Even though some effort has been made in the past to shape the edges of the thumb hole, especially by an oppositely tapering configuration at opposite ends, to facilitate the grasping of the device, continued use of a palette is almost invariably uncomfortable. Since the holding force exerted by the thumb, against the sides of the thumb hole and indirectly against the other fingers or other portion of the hand, must be sufficient to support the panel (or at least a considerable part of its weight in the case of studio palettes) in a more or less level position, a constant and relatively tight pressure must be exerted, especially at the edges of the thumb hole. Even after short periods of work, such as a half hour or so, the effect on the user's hand, and especially his thumb, is physically uncomfortable, the circulation being impaired by the pressure and the muscles being affected in a cramped or otherwise objectionable manner. For longer times, the discomfort increases, and unless care is taken, actual injury to the skin or other parts of the hand may result. While professional artists may, in the course of time, become somewhat accustomed to the difficulties of manually holding a palette, and achieve some skill in reducing the unpleasantness or in avoiding severe pain, the discomfort and tiring effect invariably

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arise during anything more than a very short period of use of these devices. Furthermore, temporary or make-shift remedies, such as wrappings of cloth or the like have often been ineffective, and are at best cumbersome and inconvenient, with the result that most artists commonly endeavor to use the conventional wooden or like structures without change and in spite of the difficulties.

An important object of the present invention is to provide an improved palette, incorporating novel thumb-hole structure which obviates discomfort and other trouble heretofore encountered and which interferes in no way with the use or other convenience of the device.

A further object is to provide an artist's palette of novel structure, capable of use for long times with a minimum of discomfort and relatively simple in construction.

Still further objects are to afford improved devices of the character stated, which are inexpensive to manufacture and yet which may be of a durable character and adapted to serve their intended purposes for long times without wear or derangement.

To these and other ends, presently preferred structures of the invention comprise a rigid panel, as of one or another of the materials and shapes heretofore employed for artists' palettes, and having a thumb hole arrangement which includes an annulus or like structure more or less annularly arranged, of suitably flexible or resilient material mounted in the panel. Most advantageously the annular element may consist of a flat, relatively wide ring of stiff cushioning material such as rubber, foam rubber or an equivalent substance. The central opening of the ring is shaped to constitute a thumb-receiving aperture, e. g. of the oval shape otherwise conventional in such devices. At its outer periphery, the annular cushioning structure is mounted in the panel, preferably so that its faces lie flush with, or at least substantially in the planes of the palette surfaces. A convenient construction to that end involves the securing of the flat, oval shaped ring in a corresponding opening of the rigid palette body, i. e. an opening thus somewhat larger than the conventional thumb aperture. A further feature of special importance is involved in the flexibility or resilience of the material constituting the ring; notably good results are obtained where the thickness and characteristics of the rubber or equivalent substance leave the member sufficiently flexible so that it can bend outwardly from the palette plane under the hold-

ing pressure of the thumb, yet sufficiently stiff that such bending is only of a partial character, keeping the thumb well separated from the edge of the opening in the palette body. Such structures have been found to satisfy the requirements indicated above, and particularly to reduce or indeed obviate the discomforts attending use of a manual palette. The thumb is effectively cushioned in a thoroughly comfortable manner, yet at the same time a firm grip of the device is always assured. Furthermore, the structure is essentially simple and inexpensive to manufacture.

By way of example, a number of presently preferred embodiments of the invention are described below and illustrated in the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a palette embracing one form of the invention;

Figs. 2 and 3 are respectively sections on lines 2—2 and 3—3 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a simplified view similar to Fig. 2, but showing the functioning of the device when grasped by the user;

Figs. 5 and 6 are sectional views corresponding respectively to Figs. 2 and 3, but showing a modified structure;

Fig. 7 is a perspective view of another form of the invention;

Figs. 8 and 9 are respectively sections on lines 8—8 and 9—9 of Fig. 7;

Fig. 10 is a fragmentary plan view of a palette embodying another modification of the present improvements;

Fig. 11 is a section on line 11—11 of Fig. 10; and

Fig. 12 is a sectional view taken as if on line 12—12 of Fig. 11 but showing the annular member before it is inserted in place.

As indicated above, the present improvements are designed for incorporation with palettes of a wide variety of shapes and sizes, and indeed for palettes wherein the body or rigid panel is made of any suitable material, e. g. panels consisting of a single sheet of ordinary wood (usually maple or other hard wood), plywood, fibre compositions, rigid sheets of plastic material, or even panels of metal, ceramic material, glass or the like. Accordingly for purposes of illustration Fig. 1 shows a palette having a conventional oblong panel **20**, for example of wood, provided with the usual gripping indentation **21** and having simple plane faces. Around the locality where the usual thumb hole would be provided, i. e. near the gripping edge **21**, an opening **22** is provided in the panel **20**, somewhat larger than the thumb-receiving aperture. Inset in the opening **22** is the annular member **23**, e. g. a flat ring of oval shape exactly fitting the opening **22** and having a central and preferably oval opening **24**.

The ring **23** is preferably made of resilient or elastic material, having some stiffness, i. e. as distinguished from a complete or rather limp flexibility. For example, a rubber sheet of moderate stiffness and of a thickness commensurate with the panel **20** (e. g. about ⅛", or from $\frac{1}{16}$" to $\frac{3}{16}$") has been found suitable, especially satisfactory results having been obtained with a firm, close grained foam rubber material. Thus the specific structure shown in Figs. 1 to 3 may be cut or stamped from sheet rubber or similar material as just indicated. The outer edge of the annulus **23** fitting closely the inner edge of the opening **22**, these edges may be readily secured by a layer of adhesive **25**, which can be any glue, rubber cement or other composition suitable for providing an effective bond between the inserted annular member and the surrounding edge **21** of the panel **20**.

As indicated, the central opening **24** of the ring is of a shape and size to serve the function of a thumb hole, and may, if desired, have oppositely tapered or sloping surfaces at the ends of its oval configuration, for conformity with the sides of a thumb inserted at an acute angle to the face of the panel. Such sloping shapes are indicated at **26**, **27** in the drawing. Although the width of the annulus may vary, it is at present greatly preferred that this member be wide relative to its thickness, advantageously throughout its circumference and most significantly at the ends of its oval shape, e. g. at places where pressure by and against the thumb is greatest. In structures where the thickness of the annulus is of the order indicated above, or greater, the present preference is that the flexible body should be at least about ¼" wide or indeed more advantageously of the order of ½" or so.

In use, the palette is employed in exactly the same manner as conventional palettes. The artist inserts his thumb **28** through the opening **24**, as shown in Fig. 4, so as to support or hold the palette in a desirably level position. With the structure shown, the inner edge portions of the flexible cushioning ring **23** will tend to bend along the sides of the thumb. For example, the edge region at **27***a* will bend downwardly beneath the thumb while the edge region at **26***a* above the thumb will usually tend to bend upwardly. At the same time, the flexible ring has sufficient stiffness in a direction along the plane of the panel to prevent its being completely folded away, so that a firm grip is possible, appropriate to keep the palette in a desirably level or like position. While in some cases the opening **24** may be relatively large, convenience is usually served by having it of a close or near fit for the base of the thumb. The cushioning nature of the material prevents any uncomfortable binding or cramping effect, while a close envelopment of the thumb facilitates security of grasp and stability of position for the palette as held. So arranged and manipulated the palette may be used in the customary manner for receiving, mixing and holding a series of batches of paint, such as oil paints, water colors or others. Indeed, as indicated above, appropriate pans or other vessels may be constructed in or mounted upon the panel as desired. Since such supplemental devices are in themselves no part of the present invention, their illustration is omitted here, for brevity.

As should now be readily apparent, the structure of Figs. 1 to 4 provides a fully comfortable non-tiring thumb hole structure which nevertheless permits an effective grip of the palette. Quite customarily an artist not only carries the palette with his hand but also holds a group of brushes in the same hand; while such practice ordinarily heightens the strain, pressure and discomfort occasioned by the conventional thumb hole, the present device has been found to obviate the problem under even these more critical conditions. The flexible ring or like structure **23** is conveniently made, as indicated, of a soft, cushioning type of rubber or similar material, although preferably of sufficient stiffness to be self-sustaining and to prevent being completely deformed or bent under force which is normally sufficient to support the palette. While foam or

other types of rubber are generally suited to the conditions of use of these devices, like materials of other composition may be employed, such as various synthetic rubbers or rubber-like substances, elastic or flexible plastic compositions. For example, if in some kinds of work it is impossible to avoid frequent exposure of the insert **23** to particular oils or fluids that may be injurious to ordinary rubber, appropriate synthetic compositions (for example, neoprene) of a more resistant character, may be employed.

Figs. 5 and 6 illustrate another form of the device, wherein the cushioning annulus **30**, which is of the same general shape and secured in the palette panel **20** in the same general manner as the member **23** of Fig. 1, consists of a rubber or like body molded or cast to the desired configuration. So fabricated, the inner edge structure of the ring **30** may be quite easily provided with a smoothly rounded contour, for example as at **31**, **31** on opposite sides of the minor axis of the oval, and likewise as indicated at **32**, **33** at the ends. In the latter localities the curved edge shape may include oppositely tapering configurations of the character shown, corresponding to the slopes **26**, **27** of Fig. 2 and intended for like purpose. In respects of use and the like, the device of Figs. 5 and 6 is similar to that of Figs. 1 to 4, accomplishing like beneficial results. A molded type of insert, such as indicated at **30** in Figs. 5 and 6, may be manufactured in quantity at a minimum of cost, thus permitting the commercial production of the improved palettes at very little and indeed probably least additional expense, over that required for conventional wooden or like structures wherein the thumb hole is simply an opening produced by a machine operation and having relatively sharp edges, even though generally tapered. Indeed even if made of rigid or semi-rigid plastic or the like, a smoothly curved, molded insert **30** represents a marked advance over conventional palettes of an inexpensive class, i. e. in providing at least a somewhat more comfortable fit while permitting mass production at low cost, e. g. to meet the constantly increasing amateur as well as professional demand for art equipment at a modest price.

Figs. 7 to 9 show a further modification, here embodied, for the sake of variety of illustration, in a palette panel **40** of the oval shape. Here the inserted annulus **41**, providing the desired thumb hole **42** and molded or otherwise shaped of rubber, foam rubber or other suitable material as indicated above, is peripherally provided with a pair of spaced flanges **43**, **44** arranged to overlie the adjacent, surrounding portions of the panel **40**. Specifically, the flanges **43**, **44** may be mutually shaped, relative to each other and the inwardly projecting body of the annulus **41**, so as to provide a peripheral groove into which the edges of the receiving opening **45** of the panel may fit, advantageously with considerable snugness. If desired, a structure of this type may be held in place simply by the resilient grip of the material of the ring, thus facilitating assembly and indeed permitting replacement of the cushioning member should such operation become necessary. On the other hand the annulus can be permanently glued or cemented in place by suitable adhesive material (not shown) forming a coating or layer between the inner surface of the groove and the recessed faces and edge surface of the panel. The opening **42** may be shaped as before, in any suitable manner, for example with smoothly curved edges and oppositely sloping configurations as illustrated and as described above in connection with Figs. 5 and 6.

Another somewhat modified form of the device is illustrated in Figs. 10 to 12, here for further variety, in embodiment with a palette panel **50** of relatively very thin structure, such as more commonly exemplified by palettes made of rigid plastic sheet material, or of sheet metal, or the like. In general shape and function, the inserted cushioning member **51** is identical with like parts in other figures, but more specifically akin to the structure of Figs. 7 to 9, in having peripheral flange portions **52**, **53** which form a notch or groove to receive the edge of the panel opening **54** and to overlie adjacent portions of the panel surface. Here, as in Figs. 1 to 3, the member **51** is specifically represented as cut or otherwise fashioned from sheet material, for example foam rubber sheet of some firmness. The flanges or flaps **52**, **53** can be conveniently fashioned, as illustrated in Fig. 12 which shows the member **51** prior to its insertion in the panel hole **54**, by simply slitting or incising the outer edge **55** of the annulus to a desired depth. By virtue of the elasticity of the material the resulting narrow slit or notch **56** may be opened to accommodate the panel structure, yet the elasticity of the flaps **52**, **53** permits them to engage the adjoining portions of the panel when the device is mounted. Although the structure may be removably seated in place, it may with some advantage be secured by suitable adhesive as indicated above. Arrangements of the general sort shown in Figs. 10, 11 or 12, whether made from sheet material or whether molded or otherwise fashioned, are particularly adapted for application to panels of varying thickness, e. g. including extremely thin structures and also panels where the thickness may vary in use, for example palettes of the so-called peel-off type embodying a pad of thin sheets of specially processed paper or other material, which are successively peeled away to reveal a fresh surface after certain periods of use.

As indicated above, the general shape of the palette, i. e. whether oblong, oval or different configuration, may vary with any of the other illustrated forms of the invention, and likewise indeed the shape of the thumb hole formed in the cushioning structure. Athough circular or other configurations may be employed, an oval thumb hole is usually most desirable. An especial advantage of some forms of the device, such as the arrangement shown in Figs. 10 to 12, is that the bottom or inner edge of the slit **56** need not conform precisely with the opening **54** of the panel **50**; especially where the flaps or flanges **52**, **53** are glued in place, it is only necessary that every diameter of the inner end of the slit be at least about as small as (or smaller than) the corresponding diameter of the opening **54** in the panel. For variety of illustration the thumb hole opening **57** is shown as having simple, straight or rectangular edges, it being found that to a very considerable extent the flexible and cushioning nature of the annulus affords a comfortable fit for the user's thumb even without any special curved or tapering configurations. Indeed one advantage of all of the illustrated structures is that the palettes, even though in some cases primarily designed to be held in the left hand, may quite readily be grasped (in a reverse position) by the right hand. Such reversibility is notably available in the case of the device of Figs. 10 to 12, where there is no special shaping of the thumb hole edge which might

tend to favor one hand to some extent as against the other. Prior types of rigid thumb hole openings, being usually sloped in one direction, did not admit of interchangeable use by left handed and right handed artists; hence the present structure may obviate the necessity of manufacturing two types of palette for persons of opposite dexterity. It has been noted, moreover, that the inserted structures may be made of a considerable variety of materials; although selected natural bodies in sheet or like form having suitable properties of firm but soft resilience (even such as some kinds of leather or leather structures) may be used in certain cases, special advantages, of both economy and functional superiority, are achieved with rubber and rubber like compositions, the use of such compositions being indeed a specific and preferred feature of the invention. Likewise, while other shapes and relationships of the cushioning structures (such as discontinuous arrangements angularly spaced around the thumb hole) may sometimes be employed, and while the improved cushioning or separating structure, e. g. of the nature of a wide band, may sometimes usefully be applied to other digit-receiving openings, such as the outer recessed slots in the panel, the principal and peculiarly important features of the invention reside in a completely annular structure of the types illustrated, designed to alleviate fatigue and discomfort at the thumb hole of the palette. As will now be appreciated, the several devices shown, including an inserted ring defining the thumb hole, are eminently satisfactory for such purpose, indeed for essentially obviating the otherwise tiring and painful effects exerted on the user's thumb by conventional palettes.

It is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the specific devices herein illustrated and described but may be embodied in other forms without departure from its spirit.

I claim:

1. An artist's palette comprising a rigid panel having structure providing a digit-receiving opening configuration, said structure comprising a substantially flat band of relatively flexible, elastic, cushioning material mounted on the panel and extending around the opening, said band including a plurality of portions angularly distributed about the opening and extending from the rigid panel to said opening through a distance which is large relative to the thickness of the panel, for resiliently abutting opposite sides of a digit inserted through the band.

2. An artist's palette comprising a rigid panel having structure providing a digit-receiving opening configuration, said structure comprising a flat band of relatively stiffly elastic cushioning material extending around the opening and mounted on the panel in substantially coplanar relation with the panel.

3. A palette as described in claim 2, wherein the band has an outer edge portion comprising upper and lower flanges of said material, said band being mounted with an edge of the panel body seated between said flanges and said flanges overlying and flatwise engaging adjacent surfaces of the panel.

4. An artist's palette comprising a rigid panel having thumb-hole structure which comprises a substantially flat self-sustaining, relatively elastic cushioning structure annularly disposed about a thumb-receiving aperture.

5. An artist's palette as defined in claim 1 in which the structure providing a digit-receiving opening configuration comprises a wide band of foam rubber material mounted substantially in the plane of the panel and having an inner edge defining said opening configuration.

6. An artist's palette comprising a rigid panel having thumb-hole structure which provides a thumb-receiving aperture and which includes oppositely disposed portions of relatively resilient cushioning material forming edges of said aperture, said portions having a width sufficient to space said edges from the panel by a distance large relative to the thickness of the panel.

7. An artist's palette comprising a rigid panel having thumb-hole structure comprising a flat annulus of relatively resilient material mounted in an opening of the panel and including oppositely disposed wide regions, to be abutted by opposite sides of an inserted thumb, said material being sufficiently flexible to bend slightly and sufficiently stiff to bend no more than partially under grasp of said inserted thumb sufficient to hold the palette.

8. An artist's palette comprising a rigid panel having an opening and having thumb-hole structure mounted in said opening, said structure comprising a molded annulus of relatively flexible plastic material providing a thumb aperture and having a smoothly curved edge around said aperture.

9. An artist's palette as defined in claim 1 in which the structure providing a digit-receiving opening configuration comprises a wide, flat band of said cushioning material mounted exactly in the plane of said panel and having its surfaces flush with the surfaces of the panel.

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