US 20040256338A1

(19) United States

(12) Patent Application Publication (10) Pub. No.: US 2004/0256338 A1

McGarry et al. (43) Pub. Date: Dec. 23, 2004

(54) WALL MOUNTABLE CURVILINEAR DISPLAY RACKS, HANGERS, AND ASSOCIATED DISPLAY METHODS

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(21) Appl. No.: **10/847,638**

(22) Filed: **May 17, 2004**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/471,664, filed on May 19, 2003.

Publication Classification

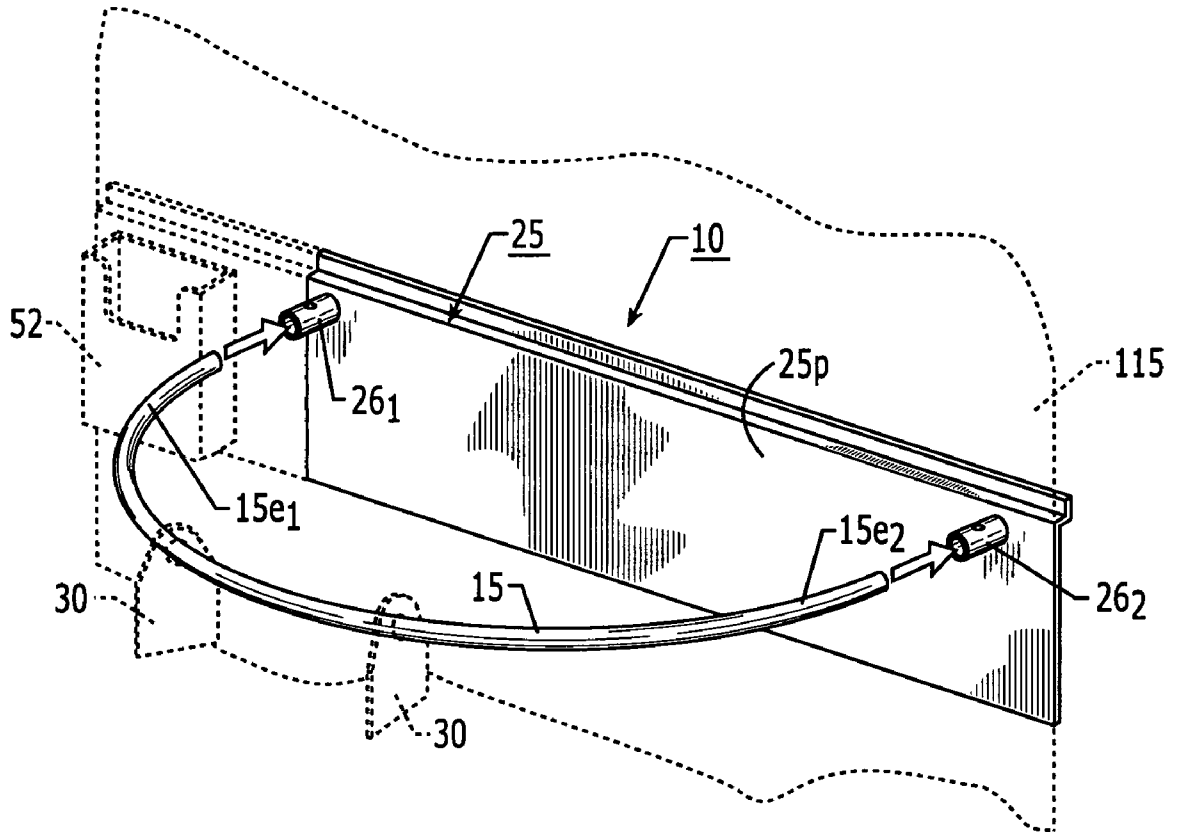
(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **A47F 5/08**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **211/94.01**; 211/105.1; 211/105.2

(57) **ABSTRACT**

The display systems include a plurality of wall-mountable racks for holding articles for display on an upstanding mounting wall or panel. Each rack includes an elongate rack having opposing spaced apart first and second end portions and an intermediate portion that together present a continuous curvilinear profile when viewed from the top. In position, the elongate rack projects outwardly a distance from the mounting wall or panel to laterally extend in a substantially horizontal orientation. The system also includes a plurality of hangers slidably mounted to the rack and plurality of discrete articles. The elongate rack is configured to releaseably engage with a selected slot or slots of a multi-slot panel or wall. The display systems are particularly suitable for displaying soft fabric drapery samples.

Hangers used to display samples or consumable items and related methods are also described.



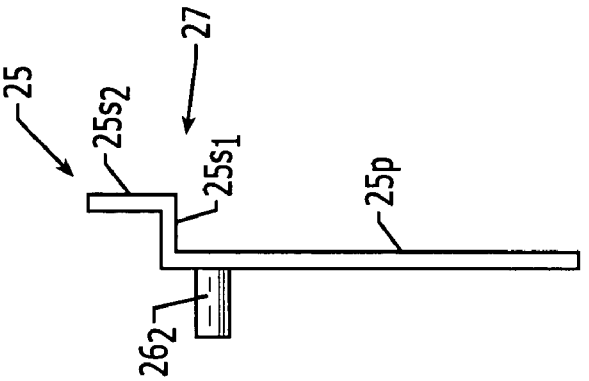

25
25s2
27
25s1
25p
26₂

FIG. 1B

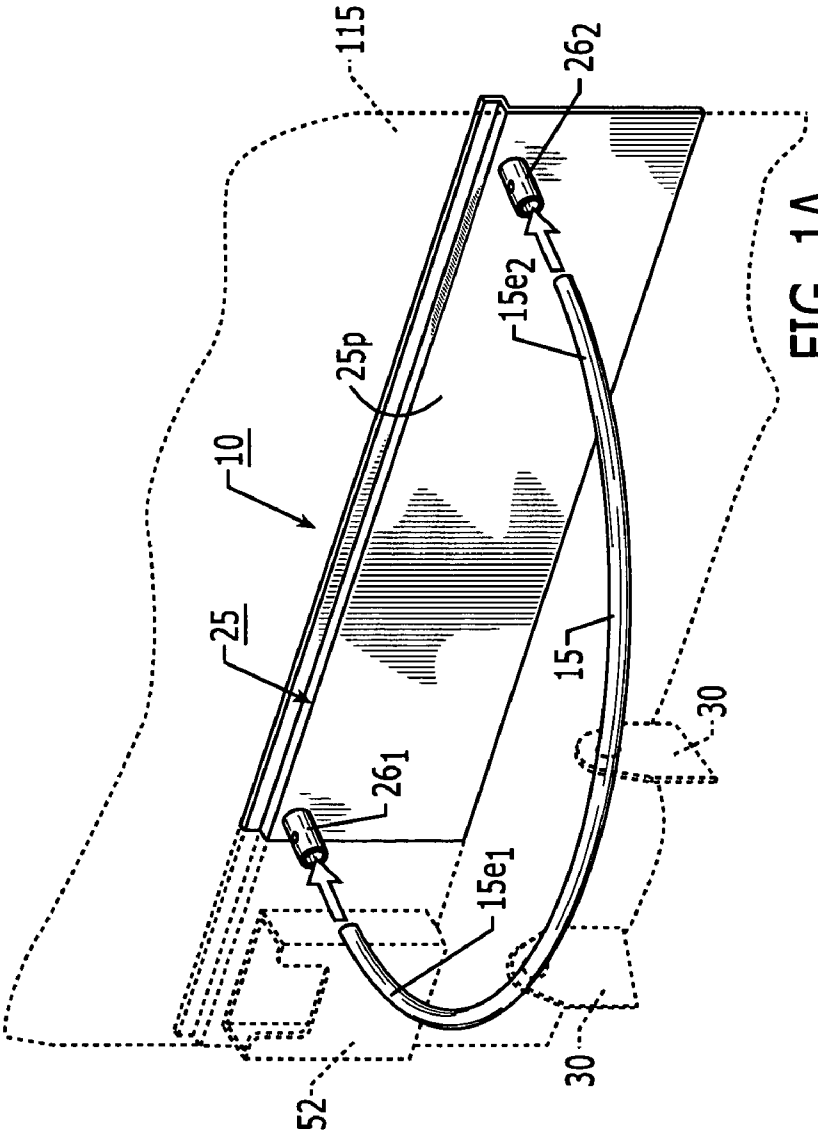

115
26₂
15e2
25p
10
25
15
30
26₁
15e1
30
52

FIG. 1A

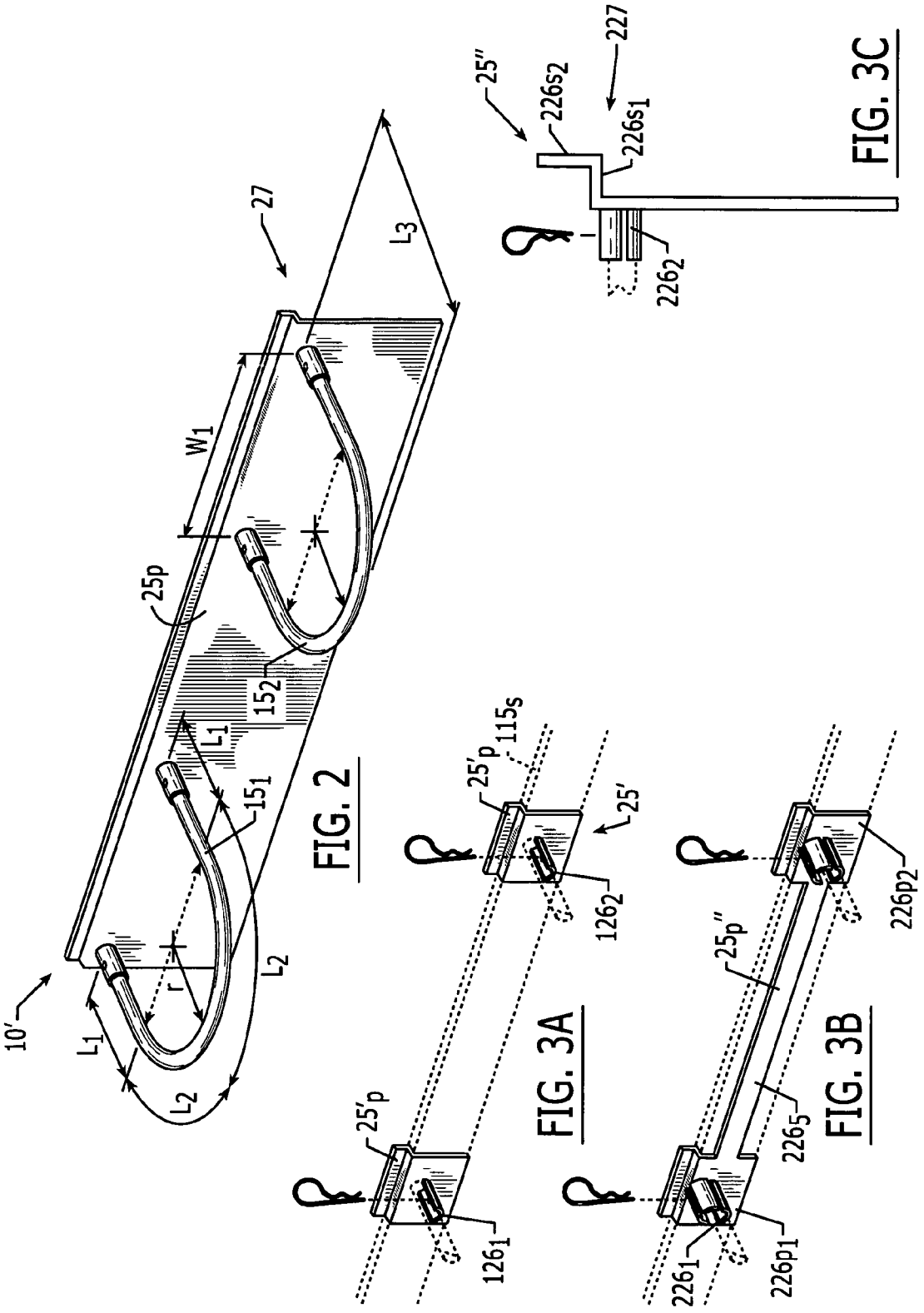


FIG. 2

FIG. 3A

FIG. 3B

FIG. 3C

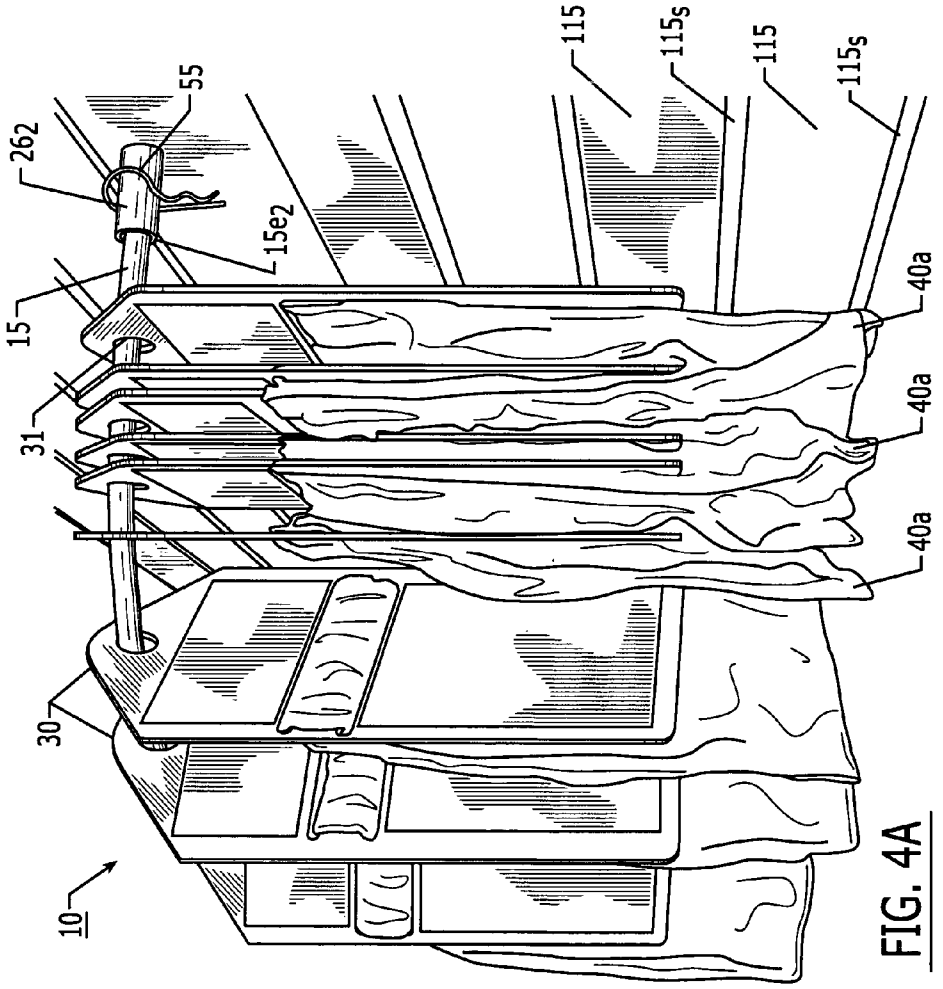


FIG. 4A

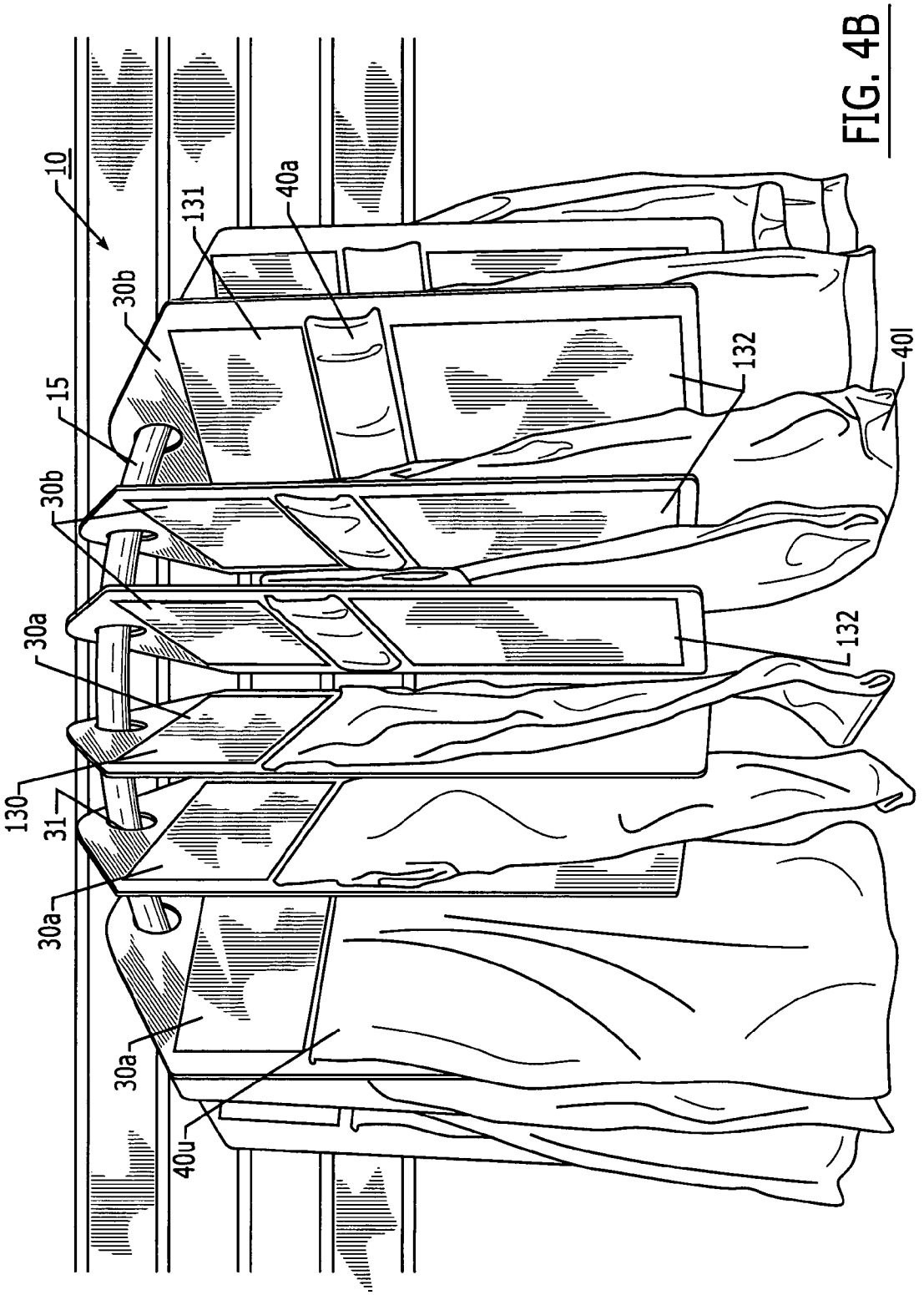


FIG. 4B

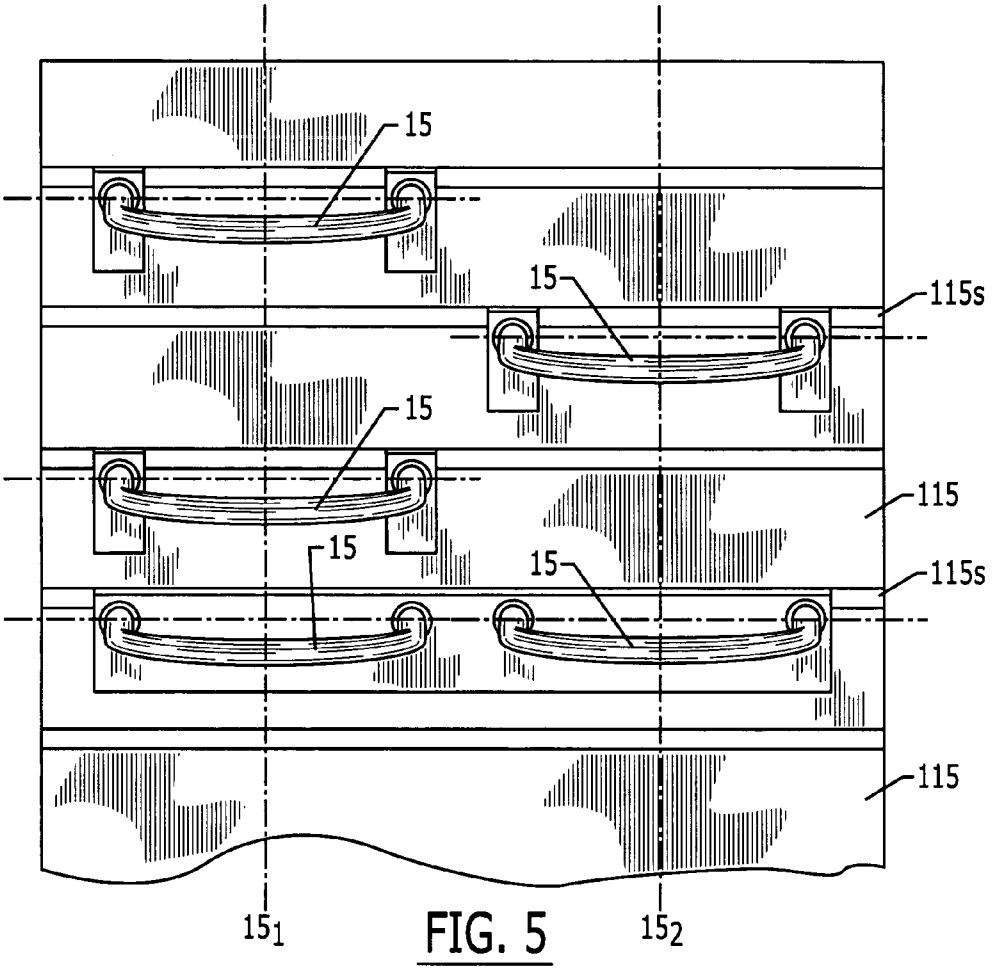


FIG. 5

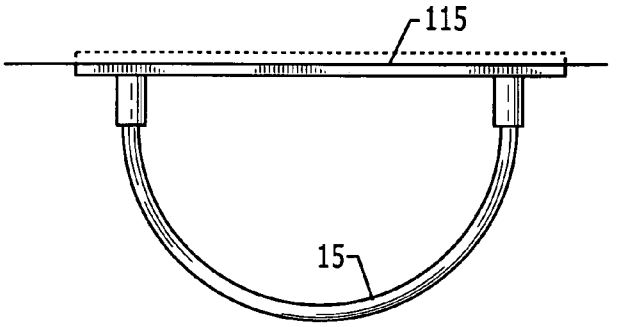


FIG. 6A

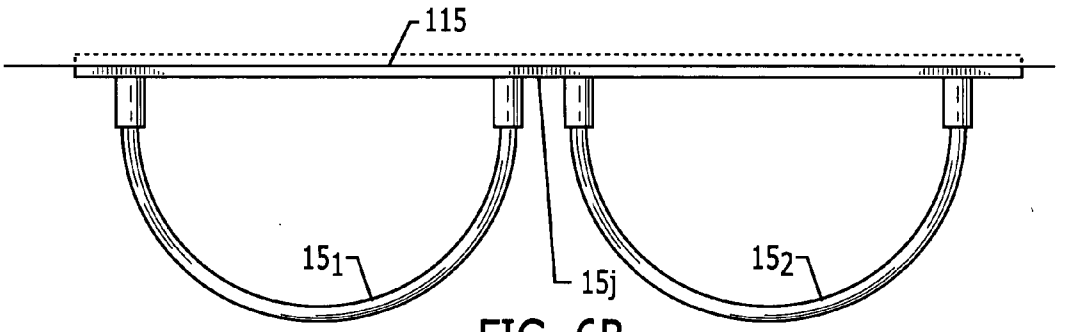


FIG. 6B

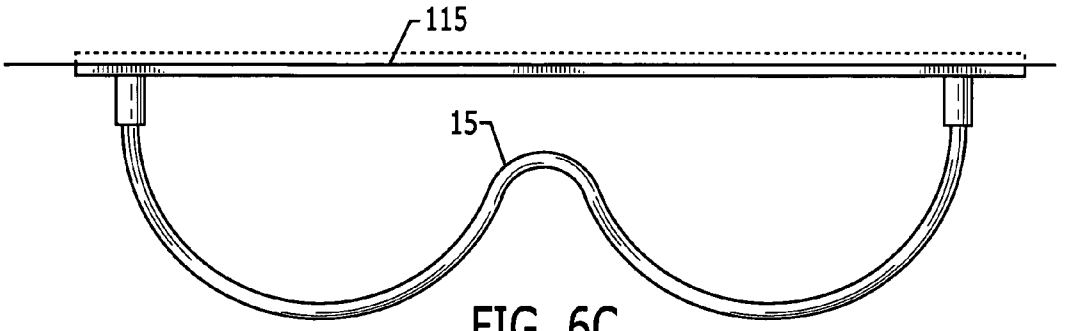


FIG. 6C

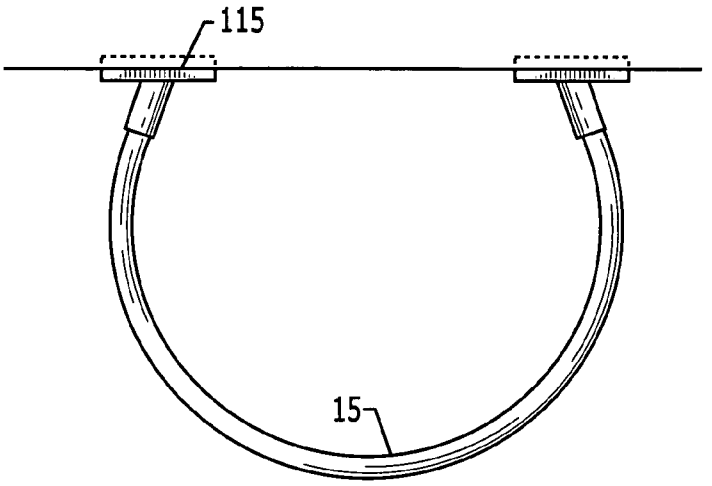


FIG. 6D

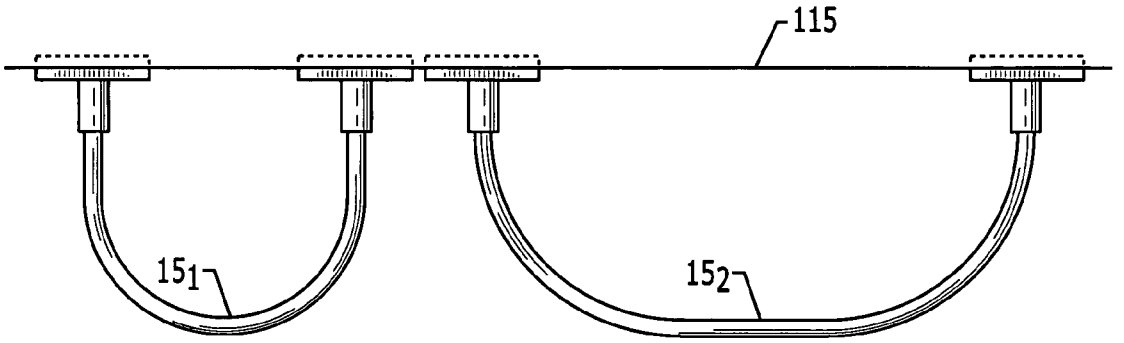


FIG. 6E

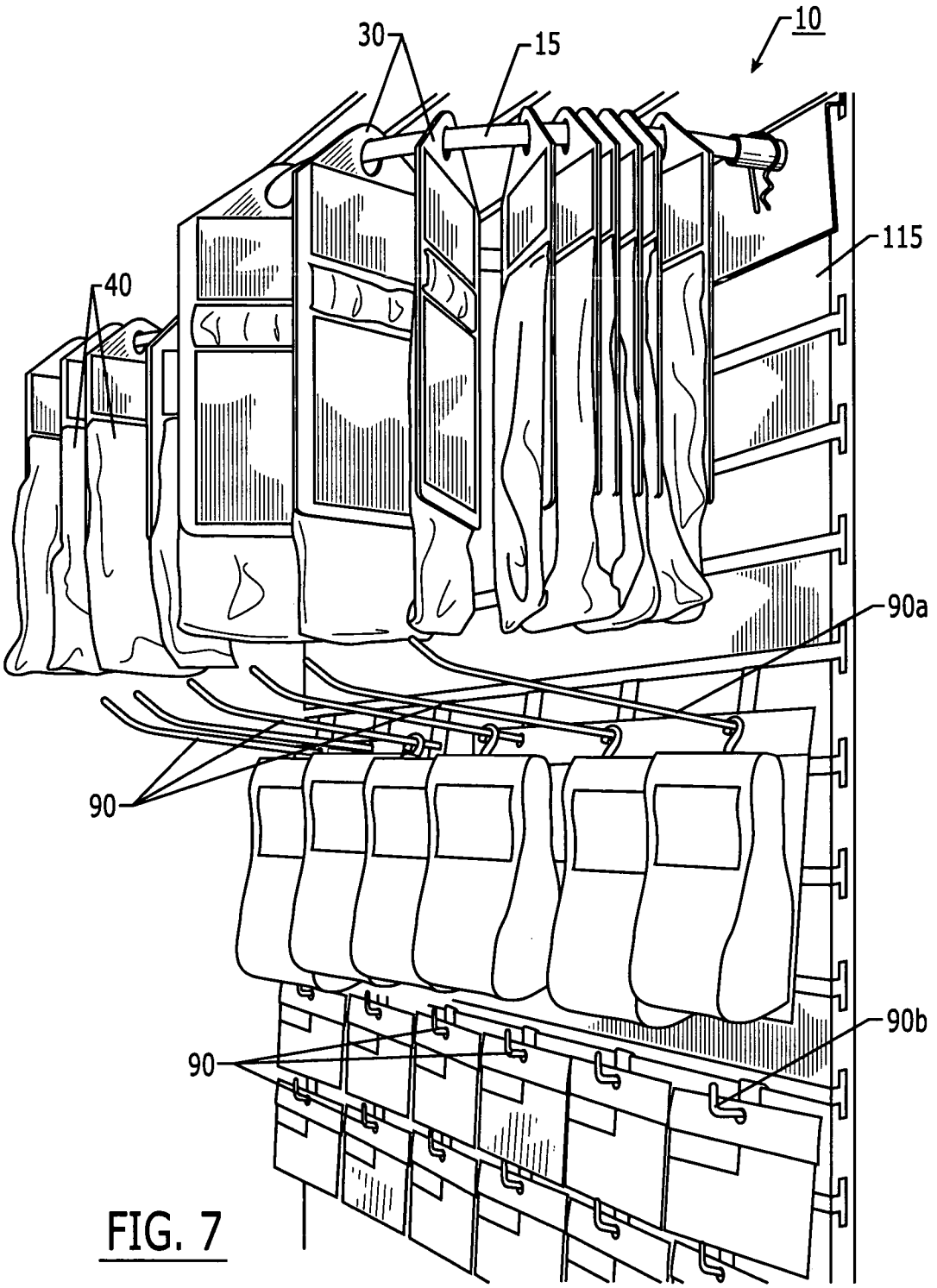


FIG. 7

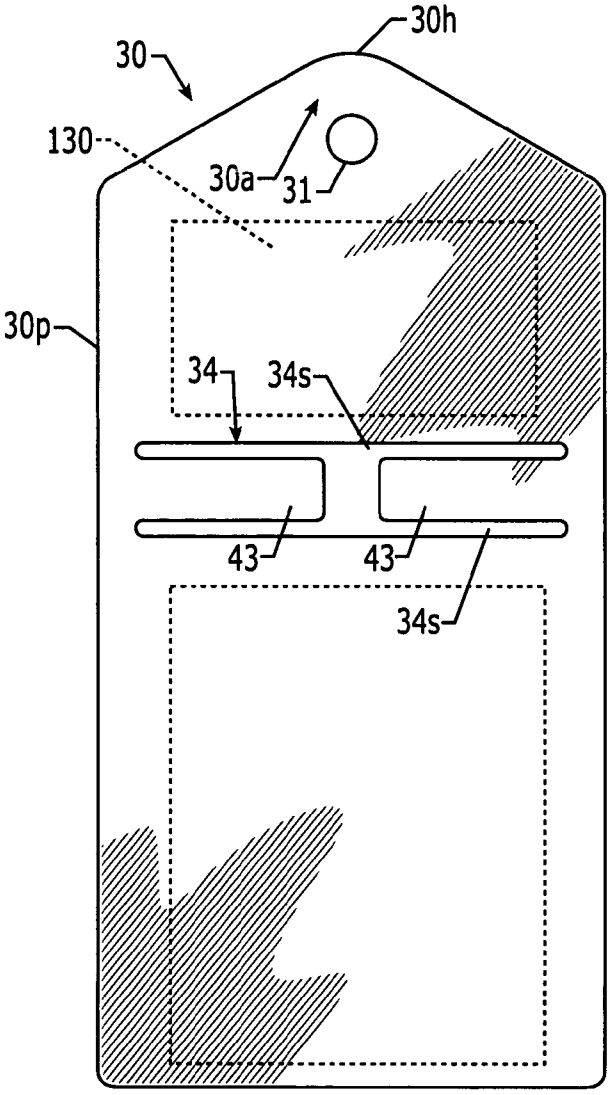


FIG. 8A

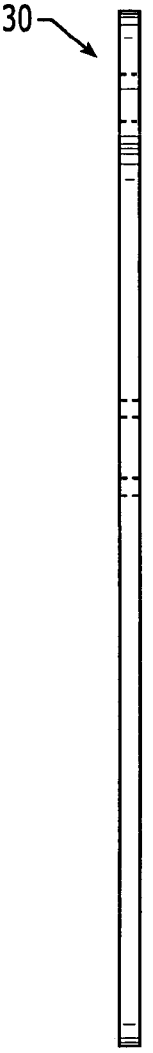


FIG. 8B

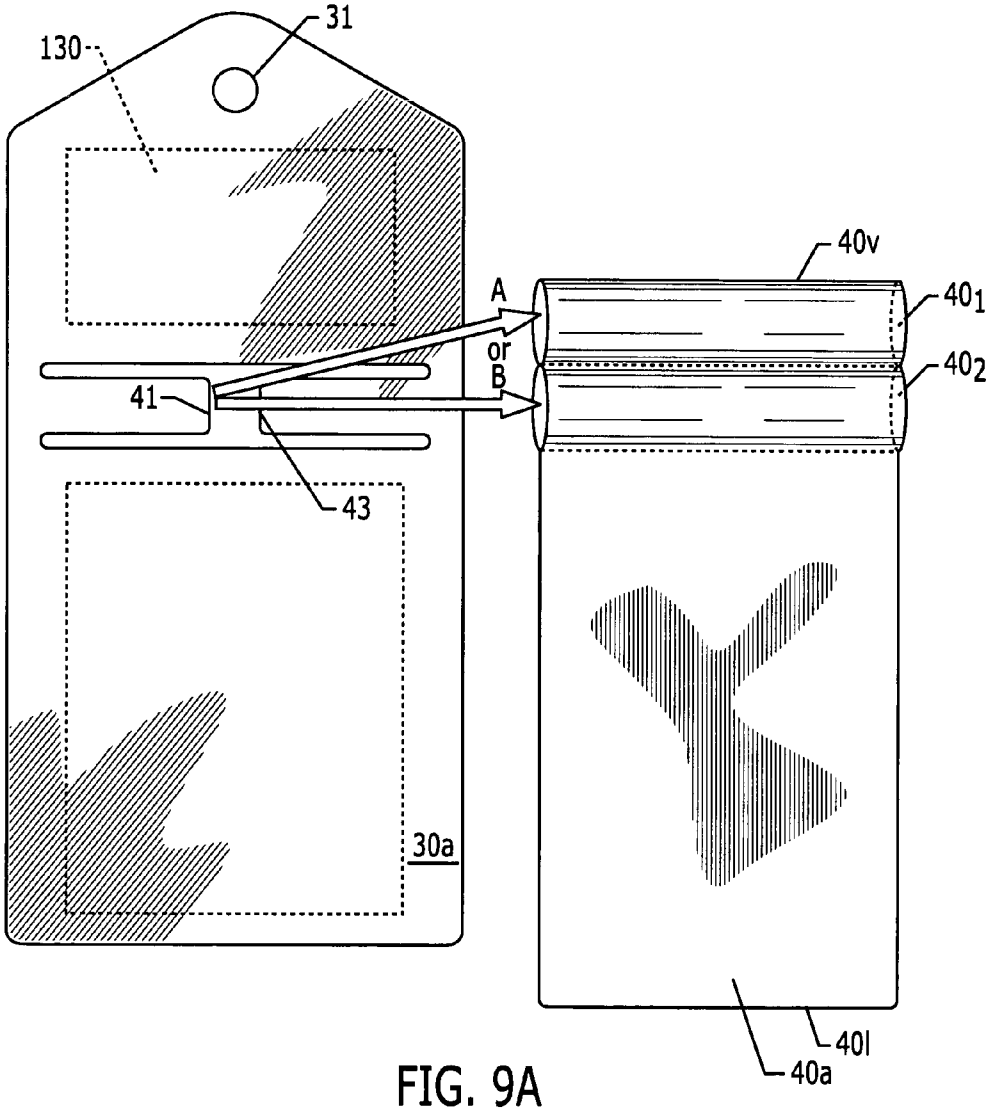


FIG. 9A

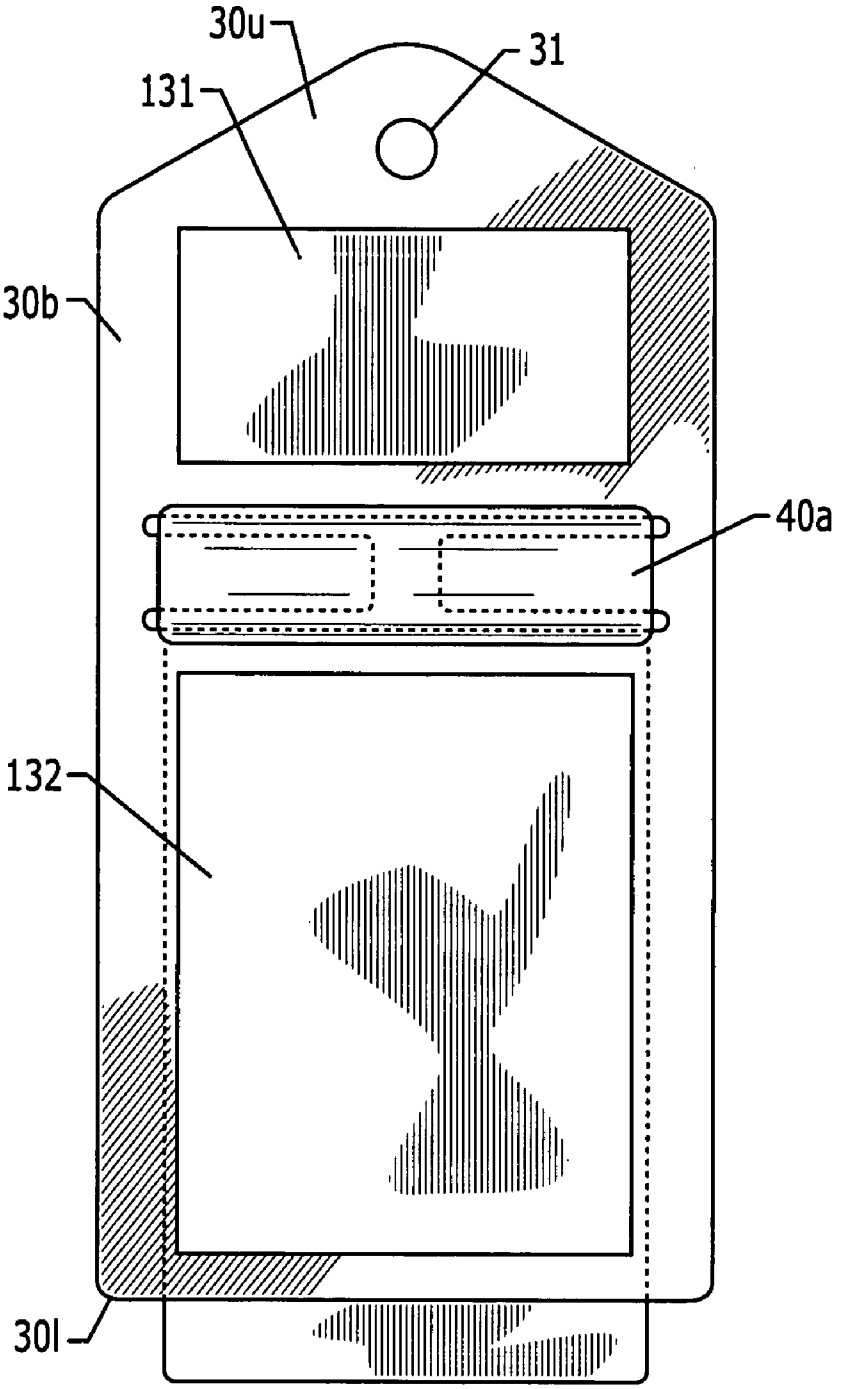


FIG. 9B

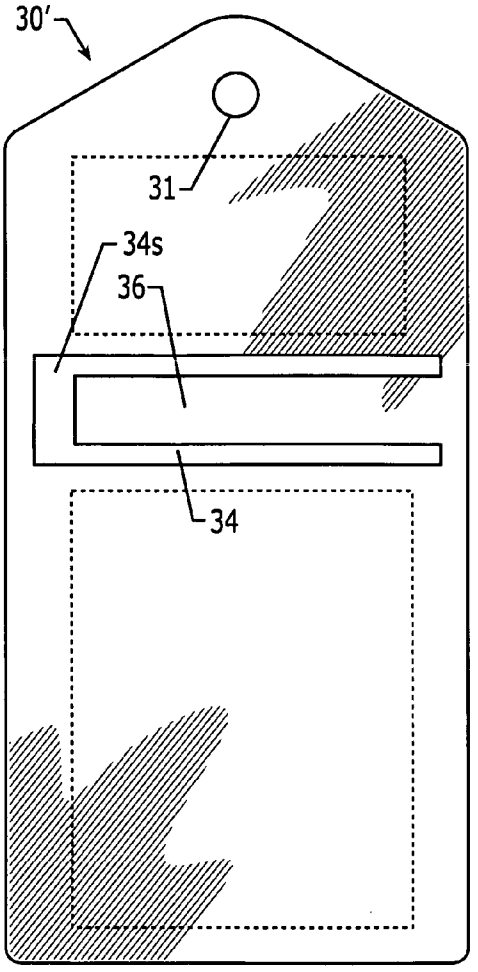


FIG. 10A

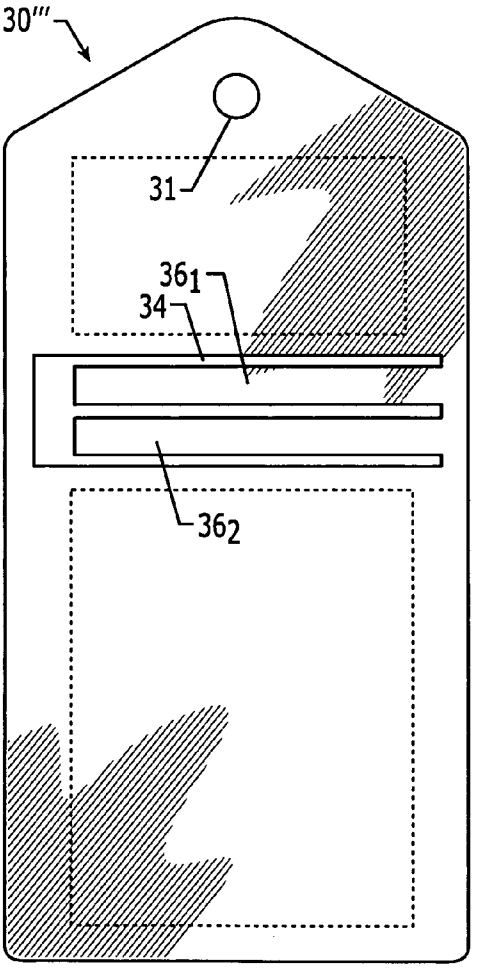


FIG. 10B

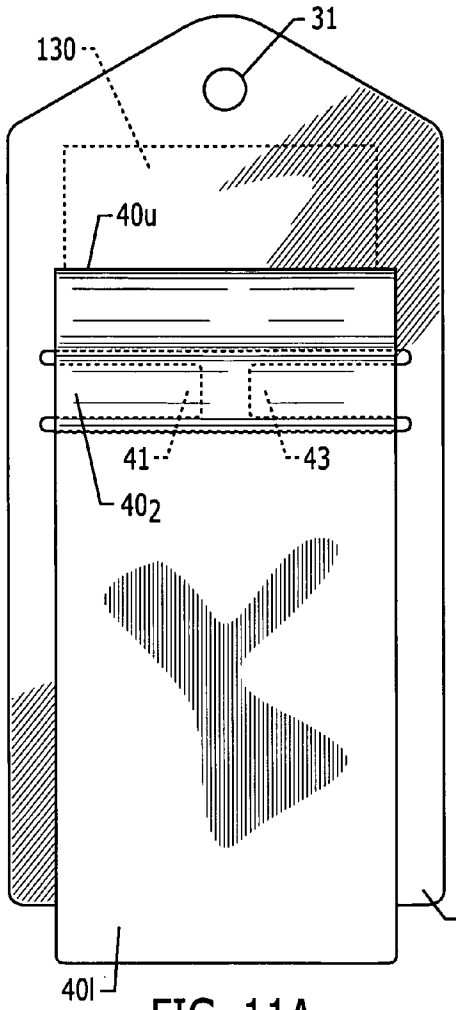


FIG. 11A

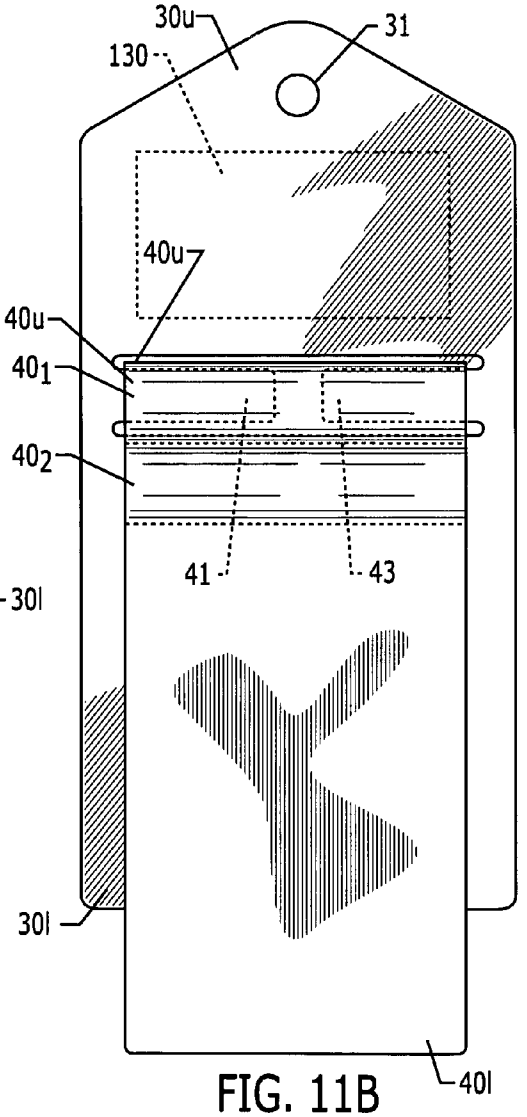


FIG. 11B

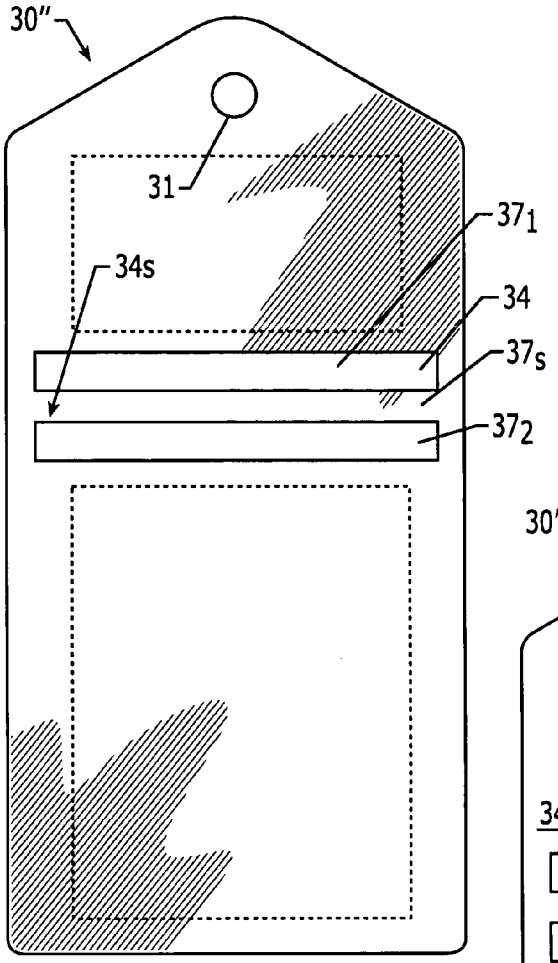


FIG. 12A

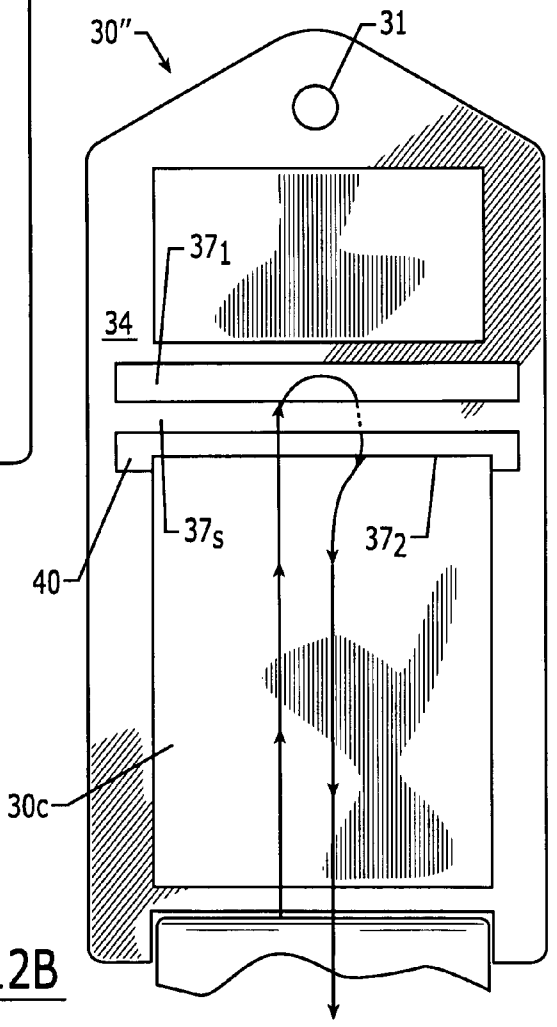


FIG. 12B

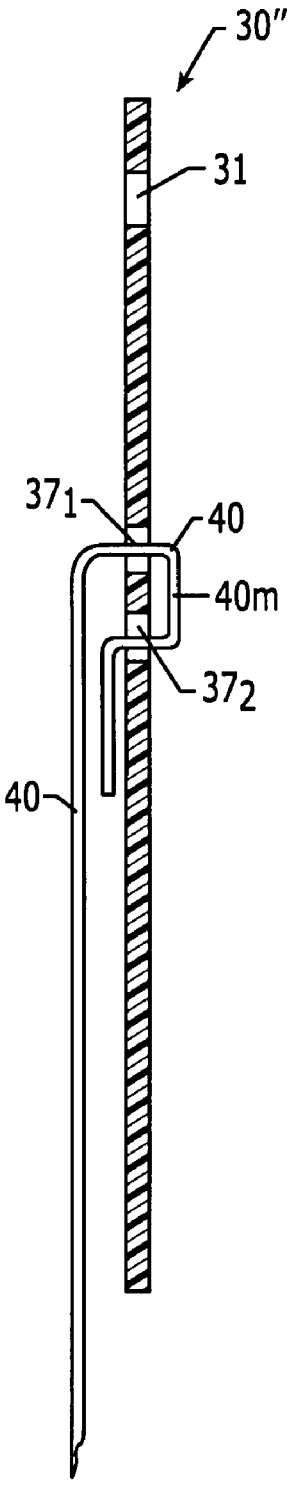


FIG. 12C

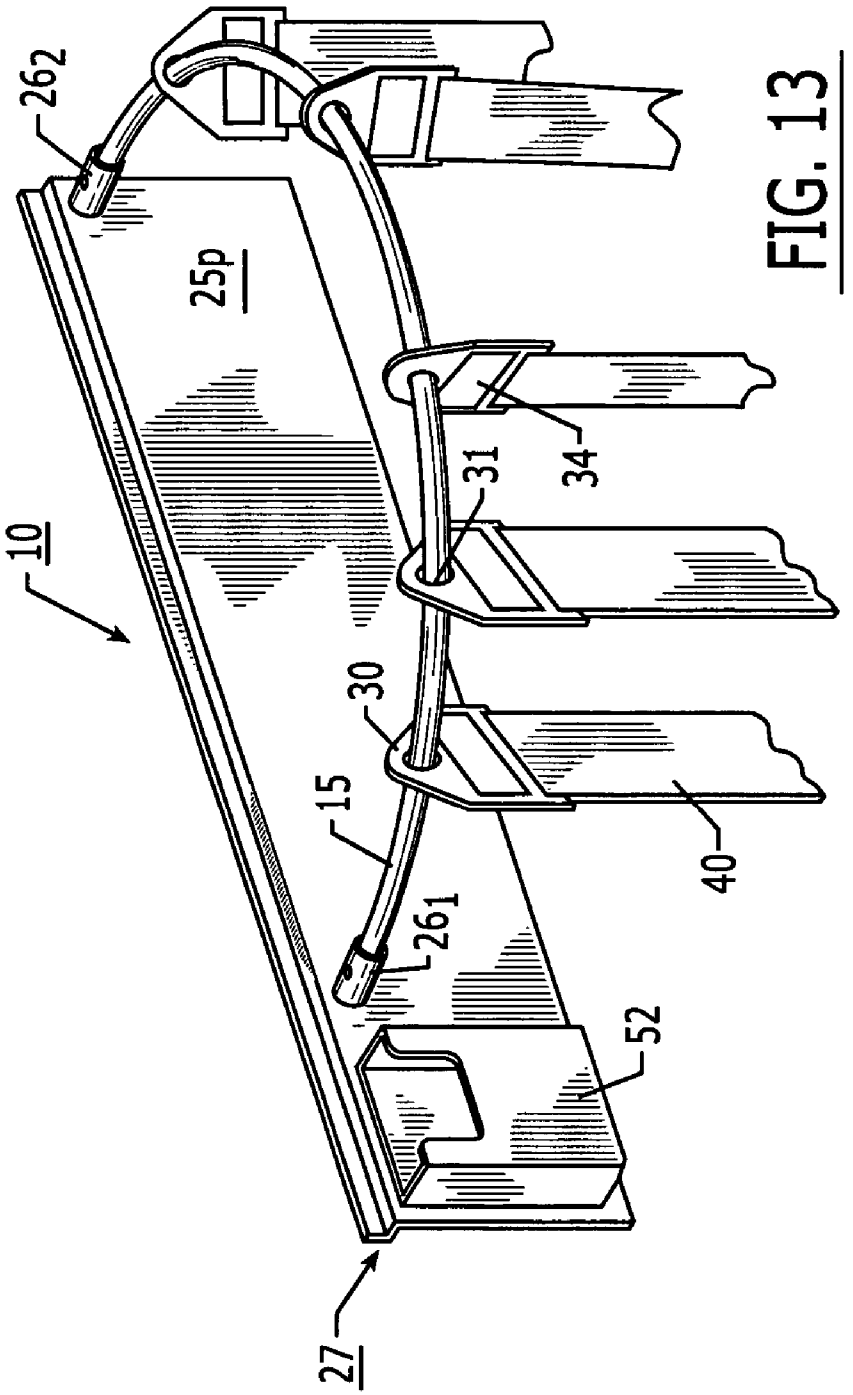


FIG. 13

WALL MOUNTABLE CURVILINEAR DISPLAY RACKS, HANGERS, AND ASSOCIATED DISPLAY METHODS

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/471,664, filed May 19, 2003, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference as if recited in full herein.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to devices and systems for displaying goods.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Consumer goods or samples are often displayed on shelves or floor-mounted racks in stores for customer viewing. To aid in installation, multi-slot display panels or walls with horizontal slots have been used to allow stores to customize displays so that products or samples can be displayed at selectable positions or heights. Nonetheless, there remains a need to provide alternate display systems that can allow for increased display density, additional aesthetic display choices, and/or easily installed devices for displaying items of interest.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] Embodiments of the present invention provide curvilinear wall-mountable display racks. In certain embodiments, the display racks can be configured to releaseably engage a slot or slots in a multi-slot display panel or wall. The curvilinear racks may be particularly suitable for displaying home improvement items in a large home improvement store setting. In particular embodiments, the curvilinear racks are configured to display samples of window covering materials, such as soft drapery fabric samples.

[0005] Certain embodiments are directed to wall-mountable rack assemblies for holding articles for display on an upstanding mounting wall or panel. The rack assemblies include: (a) an elongate rack having opposing spaced apart first and second end portions and an intermediate portion that together present a continuous perimeter curvilinear profile when viewed from the top, wherein, in position, the elongate rack projects outwardly a distance from the mounting wall or panel to reside in a substantially horizontal orientation and wherein the elongate rack is configured to releaseably engage with at least one slot of a multi-slot mounting wall or panel; (b) a plurality of hangers slidably suspended by the rack; and (c) a plurality of discrete articles held by the hangers, wherein the hangers and respective articles are configured to slide along the rack so that the articles can be individually viewed.

[0006] In certain embodiments, the plurality of articles is at least 10, and typically at least 20 or more articles. The wall-mountable rack may be formed as a unitary continuous tubular member.

[0007] Other embodiments of the present invention are directed to consumer display systems. The systems include a plurality of wall-mountable racks for holding articles for display on an upstanding mounting wall or panel. Each rack includes: (a) an elongate rack having opposing spaced apart first and second end portions and an intermediate portion that together present a curvilinear profile when viewed from the top, wherein, in position, the elongate rack projects outwardly a distance from the mounting wall or panel to reside in a substantially horizontal orientation; (b) a plurality of hangers slidably mounted to the rack; and (c) a plurality of discrete articles held by the hangers. The elongate rack is configured to releaseably engage with a selected slot of a multi-slot panel or wall.

[0008] In certain embodiments, the system comprises at least two elongate racks held in side-by-side alignment on a common mounting plate in the same slot of the multi-slot panel or wall. In other embodiments, the elongate racks are held on a common display wall or panel in different horizontal slots of the multi-slot panel or wall. Combinations of the above are also possible.

[0009] Other embodiments of the present invention are directed to methods of displaying window-covering samples. The methods include: (a) positioning a plurality of discrete hangers on an elongate curvilinear display rack; (b) mounting the curvilinear display rack to a desired slot in a multi-slot panel or wall so that the display rack is substantially horizontal and has a curvilinear profile when viewed from the top; and (c) attaching a plurality of display articles, one to a respective one of the hangers.

[0010] In particular embodiments, the discrete hangers are positioned on the rack before the rack is mounted to the wall or panel. The articles can include soft fabric drapery samples that may include a laterally extending upper channel (such as a rod pocket or header).

[0011] Still other embodiments of the present invention are directed toward hangers for displaying articles on a rack. The hangers include a rigid planar body having opposing top and bottom portions. An aperture is formed in the top portion of the planar body; the aperture is sized and configured to engage a display rack. In addition, at least one slot is formed through an intermediate portion of the planar body. In use, a display sample is positioned about the slot so that the article is releaseably mounted to the hanger.

[0012] In particular embodiments, the hanger can be formed of an elastomeric material, such as plexiglass or other suitable material. The hanger can be translucent and/or transparent. The intermediate slot pattern can include two laterally aligned tongue portions that face each other and are spaced apart. The article can include a loop segment configured to receive the tongue members to hold the article on the hanger. The article can be a drapery material sample with two upper channel portions and the hanger can be configured with a tongue or tongues that engage one of the upper channels of the article to hold the article to the hanger.

[0013] In other embodiments, the intermediate slot portion is configured with upper and lower slots spaced apart by a continuous center support segment and the material sample is inserted through the upper and lower slots to hold the sample on the hanger in a self-looped fashion.

[0014] In certain embodiments, the hanger planar body has a perimeter with the slots positioned to extend about an interior portion thereof. The perimeter can have a substantially rectangular shape with the opposing sides gradually traveling together about an upper end portion to terminate at a highest center segment located above the aperture.

[0015] The foregoing and other objects and aspects of the present invention are explained in detail herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] **FIG. 1A** is a front perspective view of a wall mountable display rack assembly according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0017] **FIG. 1B** is a side view of the mounting bracket shown in **FIG. 1A**

[0018] **FIG. 2** is a front perspective view of an alternate configuration of a display rack assembly according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0019] **FIG. 3A** is a front perspective view of an alternate configuration of a mounting bracket according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0020] **FIG. 3B** is a front view of yet another alternate configuration of a mounting bracket according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0021] **FIG. 3C** is a side view of the bracket shown in **FIG. 3B**.

[0022] **FIG. 4A** is a side perspective view of a curvilinear display rack mounted on a multi-slot display panel or wall according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0023] **FIG. 4B** is a front perspective view of the mounted display rack shown in **FIG. 4A**.

[0024] **FIG. 5** is a front view of alternate exemplary mounting arrangements for curvilinear display racks on display walls or panels according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0025] **FIGS. 6A-6E** are schematic top views of alternate curvilinear configurations for one or more display racks according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0026] **FIG. 7** is a side perspective view of a display system employing combinations of curvilinear and straight display rods on a common display panel or all according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0027] **FIG. 8A** is a front view of a hanger suitable for suspending articles from a display rack according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0028] **FIG. 8B** is a side view of the hanger shown in **FIG. 8A**.

[0029] **FIG. 9A** is an exploded view of a hanger and drapery fabric sample according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0030] **FIG. 9B** is a rear view of the assembled hanger and sample shown in **FIG. 9A**.

[0031] **FIG. 10A** is a front view of a hanger according to alternate embodiments of the present invention.

[0032] **FIG. 10B** is a front view of a hanger according to alternate embodiments of the present invention.

[0033] **FIG. 11A** is a front view of an assembled hanger with an article mounted thereon according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0034] **FIG. 11B** is a front view of an assembled hanger with an article mounted thereon according to alternate embodiments of the present invention.

[0035] **FIG. 12A** is a front view of another hanger configuration according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0036] **FIG. 12B** is a front view of the hanger shown in **FIG. 12A** with arrows indicating one way of assembling a sample thereon according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0037] **FIG. 12C** is a side view of the hanger of **FIG. 12A** with an article mounted thereon according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0038] **FIG. 13** is a side perspective view of a curvilinear display rack according to embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0039] The present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying figures, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout. In the drawings, layers, regions, or components may be exaggerated for clarity. In the figures, broken lines indicate optional features unless described otherwise.

[0040] Generally described, with reference to **FIG. 1A**, the invention relates to wall-mountable rack assemblies **10** that include an elongate curvilinear rack **15** that is configured to hold multiple discrete articles for display (as shown, for example, with reference to feature **40** in **FIG. 4A**). The assembly **10** includes a fastener member **25** that mounts the rack **15** to the upstanding wall or panel **115**. As shown in **FIG. 1A**, the fastener member **25** comprises a mounting plate **25***p* and two spaced-apart channel members $\mathbf{26}_1$, $\mathbf{26}_2$.

[0041] In certain embodiments, the rack **15** is tubular with an outer diameter and the channel members $\mathbf{26}_1$, $\mathbf{26}_2$ may protrude out away from the panel **115** a distance with a substantially cylindrical shape and an inner diameter that is sized and configured to snugly receive the outer diameter of a respective end portion $\mathbf{15}e_1$, $\mathbf{15}e_2$ of the rack **15** therein. Other rack and bracket or mounting hardware configurations may also be used.

[0042] For example, the end portions $\mathbf{15}e_1$, $\mathbf{15}e_2$ of the rack **15** may be configured with hollow cores that are sized and configured to receive the respective protruding channel member (which themselves may be formed with solid or open cores) therein (not shown). **FIG. 3A** illustrates channels $\mathbf{126}_1$, $\mathbf{126}_2$ having an open configuration. **FIG. 3A** also illustrates that instead of a common mounting plate **25***p* as shown in **FIG. 1A**, the channel members $\mathbf{126}_1$, $\mathbf{126}_2$ may reside on or in separate mounting plates **25***p*' or have unconnected bracket members that mount the end portions of the rack $\mathbf{15}e_1$, $\mathbf{15}e_2$ to the desired wall or panel. **FIGS. 3B and 3C** illustrate channel members $\mathbf{226}_1$, $\mathbf{226}_2$ with a series of circumferentially spaced apart wall segments that form a discontinuous perimeter that is configured to receive (or enter) the corresponding rack end portion $\mathbf{15}e_1$, $\mathbf{15}e_2$. **FIGS.**

3B and 3C also show that the mounting plate **25***p*" may have a center segment **226***s* that has different configuration from the other portions of the plate (shown as having a lesser height than the portions holding the channel members **226**$_1$, **226**$_2$). The center segment **226***s* can attach to and extend between the outermost portions of the mounting plate **226***p*$_1$, **226***p*$_2$ to provide reliable spacing of the edge portions of the rack **15***e*$_1$, **15***e*$_2$ and/or supplemental support.

[**0043**] The rack **15** may be configured as a unitary tubular member with a diameter of between about ¼-1 inch, and typically between about 7/16-½inches. The channel members **26**$_1$, **26**$_2$ **126**$_1$, **126**$_2$, **226**$_1$, **226**$_2$, may have a length that is between about 0.5-1.5 inches, and is typically between about 1-1.25 inches long.

[**0044**] As shown in **FIG. 2**, the rack **15** may have an arcuate forwardmost portion with a radius "r". The center of the radius of curvature may be located in front of the mounting plate (or wall or panel) a distance L_1 as is also shown in **FIG. 2**. The rack **15** may be configured with a linear loading length $2(L_1+L_2)$ of between about 25-50 inches, and typically between about 29-33 inches. The length of the rack **15** can be measured as the length of the rack from the portion proximate member **26**$_1$ to the portion proximate member **26**$_2$.

[**0045**] In particular embodiments, the radius of curvature "r" may be between about 4-10 inches. In certain embodiments, the rack **15** includes first segment "L_1" of between about 2-6 substantially straight inches on each side, and typically between about 3-5 inches, that merges into an arcuate second segment "L_2" portion having a radius of between about 5-10 inches, and typically about 7-9 inches. Thus, in certain embodiments, the outermost portion of the rack **15** may extend from the wall a distance "L_3" that is between about 10-14 inches.

[**0046**] The rack may have a width "W" measured between the centerlines of the end portions **15***e*$_1$, **15***e*$_2$ of the rack **15** that is between about 10-30 inches, or longer. In particular embodiments, the width W is about 14 inches. In certain embodiments, the rack **15** has a forward or outwardly projecting length "L" of between about 10-20 inches, and typically about 12 inches, measured from the wall **115** to the center of the outermost portion of the rack **15**.

[**0047**] The rack **15** can be configured to releaseably engage a slot or slots in a multi-slot panel. The panel or wall can include a series of pre-formed horizontal elongate slots that allow height-adjustable, on-site assembly. As shown in **FIG. 1B**, the substantially planar body of the mounting plate **25***p* can be configured with edge portions that attach to the slot in the wall or panel.

[**0048**] In the embodiment shown in **FIG. 1B**, the mounting plate **25** includes a stepped portion **27** that engages the slot (**115***s*, **FIG. 4A**) in the mounting wall or panel. As shown, the stepped portion **27** includes a first segment **25***s*$_1$ that is substantially perpendicular to the primary surface of the (vertically oriented) plate **25** and a second segment **25***s*$_2$ that is substantially perpendicular to the first segment **25***s*$_1$ (and parallel to the primary body of the Mounting plate **25***p*). **FIG. 3C** illustrates a similar stepped configuration **227** with the two segments **226***s*$_1$, **226***s*$_2$ for the mounting plate **25***p*" shown. The stepped edge portions may be integrally formed onto the plate (such as by bending a sheet metal material) or may be provided as separate components that can be affixed to the mounting plate **25***p* via suitable attachment means (for example, brazing, welding, using fasteners such as screws, pins, nails, clamps, or adhesives). It is noted that other rack mounting configurations may also be used.

[**0049**] As shown in **FIG. 1A**, the mounting plate **25***p* can have a lateral width that is at least as wide as the distance between the first and second rack end portions **15***e*$_1$, **15***e*$_2$. **FIG. 2** illustrates that the mounting plate **25***p* has a width that is longer than the sum of the distances between each of the first and second end portions **15***e*$_1$, **15***e*$_2$.

[**0050**] As shown in **FIGS. 6A-6E**, in position and attached to the display wall or panel **115**, the rack **15** has a curvilinear profile when viewed from the top. The rack **15** projects outwardly a distance from the wall and laterally extends in a substantially horizontal orientation with a length sufficient to hold multiple articles **40** thereacross. **FIG. 2** illustrates a dual curvilinear rack configuration, with the racks **15**$_1$, **15**$_2$ positioned in side-by-side alignment. The racks **15**$_1$, **15**$_2$ may be configured to mount to a common slot in a slotted panel or wall. The racks **15**$_1$, **15**$_2$ may share a common mounting plate **25***p* as shown, or may have individual mounting plates or employ other mounting and/or fastening means. Although shown in **FIG. 2** with two side-by-side racks **15**$_1$, **15**$_2$, the rack assembly **10**' may be configured with a greater number of racks on a common plate **25***p* or as separately mountable racks.

[**0051**] As shown in **FIG. 2**, the racks **15**$_1$, **15**$_2$ are two discrete racks that may be mounted using a common mounting plate **25***p* . In certain embodiments, as shown in **FIG. 6B**, the two side-by-side racks **15**$_1$, **15**$_2$ may be joined at a joint **15***j* (or formed of a continuous unitary tubular member) and this portion of the two racks may be mounted to the underlying mounting wall or panel, using an alternate mounting bracket that is configured and sized to receive the joint portion of the two racks thereby reducing the mounting hardware required. **FIG. 6A** illustrates a single semicircular rack profile, and **FIG. 6C** illustrates an alternate continuous curvilinear profile. **FIG. 6D** illustrates a substantially circular profile and **FIG. 6E** illustrates that different rack profiles may be concurrently mounted on a display wall or panel **115**.

[**0052**] In certain embodiments, the rack **15** is configured and sized to hold multiple discrete hanging articles that can (individually) slide along the rack **15**. The articles **40** can be configured to be directly or indirectly supported by the rack **15**. For the indirect support embodiment, the articles **40** can be held by one or more hangers **30**, with the hangers **30** being disposed intermediate the article **40** and the rack **15**. The hangers **30** can be configured to suspend the articles **40** from the rack **15** and to allow the hangers **30** to translate along a portion of the length of the rack **15** and/or to pivot outwardly away from (and/or toward) the support wall or panel (**115**, **FIG. 4A**) for viewing as desired. The articles **40** may be arranged to extend downwardly from the support rack in a front-to-front, back-to-front, back-to-back, and/or side-by-side alignment. For example, as shown in **FIG. 4A**, the articles **40** are held on a respective hanger **30** and all the articles have their fronts facing the same direction with their primary surfaces all generally parallel (front-to-front orientation).

[**0053**] The rack **15** may be particularly suitable for displaying samples of window covering materials, including

soft drapery fabric samples. The articles **40** can be arranged on the rack(s) **15** so that their primary forward faces are aligned to face the same direction. The hangers **30** and respective article **40** can be configured to slide together to closely spaced positions to allow for increased density loading of the rack **15**. In certain embodiments, the rack **15** can be configured and sized to hold at least about 10, typically about 20, and in certain embodiments, at least about 30 discrete articles.

[**0054**] The term "soft drapery fabrics" refers to fabrics that can be draped over a curtain rod or backing so that the fabric yields to pressure or weight and may include fabrics ranging in texture and density from fine to relatively stiff. As will be discussed further below, the soft drapery fabric sample may be formed with a rod pocket across its width (see, e.g., **FIG. 9A**) and/or a header portion that may form an open channel. However, the rack **15** may also be useful for displaying other home-improvement items, such as, but not limited to, other fabric samples such as samples of bedding, sheets, tablecloths, and towels, as well as paper (such as paint) samples, tile samples, flooring samples, cabinet samples, paneling samples, countertop samples, wallpaper samples, and the like.

[**0055**] The rack **15** may also be suitable for displaying other consumer items such as clothing or accessory items (for example, socks, belts, and purses) as well as other articles including toys, batteries, posters, magazines, books, packaged food items, and the like.

[**0056**] As shown in **FIG. 1A**, in use, the rack **15** is attached to an upstanding support wall or panel **115** so that it is substantially horizontal and extends in a lateral direction across a portion of the face of the panel or wall. As noted above, the rack **15** may be tubular (with either a solid or open core). The rack **15** may be configured to have its curvilinear shape preformed with a sufficient rigidity to be able to retain its shape in use and before mounted to the bracket(s) that attach it to the mounting wall or panel. In other embodiments, the rack **15** may be resiliently or flexible configured so as to have a first configuration when not mounted and a second curvilinear configuration when mounted (not shown). That is, the rack **15** can flex or bow as its sides are brought together to provide the curvilinear shape as the end portions $\mathbf{15}e_1$, $\mathbf{15}e_2$ are inserted into spatially fixed fasteners or mounting bracket(s). The length of the rack **15** and/or the spacing of the mounting brackets that hold each end of the rack **15** can define the curvature of the rack **15** in position. In certain embodiments, the rack **15** may be configured from a material that is sufficiently malleable so that it can be formed into the desired shape. The material may be a metal, polymer and/or co-polymer, plastic, thermoplastic, ceramic, fiber-reinforced resin, or blends and/or mixtures thereof.

[**0057**] The rack **15** and mounting bracket(s) should be configured to hold the weight of the rack **15** and the articles **40** and hangers **30** thereon so as that the rack **15** is able to maintain its horizontal (level) orientation even when loaded. In certain embodiments, a loaded hanger **30** can have a weight of about 5.8 ounces. The rack **15** can hold a plurality of these loaded hangers **30**, such as at least about 10 hangers **30** loaded with articles **40** over between about 25-50 inches on the rack **15**. In certain embodiments, in position, the rack **15** is configured to hold a distributed load of between at least about 3.48 oz to 6.96 oz per linear inch without bending or drooping.

[**0058**] Referring again to **FIG. 1A**, the rack assembly **10** may also include a pocket **52** for holding product or consumer information, papers, brochures, or cards that include product or consumer data, ordering or warranty information and the like. The pocket **52** may be formed on the mounting plate **25***p* or provided as a separately mountable object for adjustable site-specific display options.

[**0059**] **FIGS. 4A and 4B** illustrate hangers **30** with soft drapery samples **40***a* suspended on the rack **15**. As is also shown in **FIG. 4A**, the assembly **10** may include a locking fastener **55** that extends through the channel member $\mathbf{26}_2$ and the end portion of the rack $\mathbf{15}e_2$ to hold the components securely together. Accordingly, the channel members $\mathbf{26}_1$, $\mathbf{26}_2$, $\mathbf{126}_1$, $\mathbf{126}_2$, $\mathbf{226}_1$, $\mathbf{226}_2$ and the end portions of the rack $\mathbf{15}e_1$, $\mathbf{15}e_2$ may have a locking aperture **55***a* formed therethrough (not shown). The locking fastener **55** is shown as a cotter pin, but other locking fasteners may also be used, such as, but not limited to, screws, nails, other pins, dowels, clamps and the like.

[**0060**] **FIG. 4B** illustrates the hangers **30** with the drapery sample **40***a* suspended primarily over a first primary (forward) face **30***a* of the hanger **30**. Only a minor segment of the sample is exposed on the opposing primary face **30***b*. Instead, labels are attached to a major portion of the rear surface **30***b*. As shown, the hanger **30** can include two different label-mounting surfaces, upper and lower label surfaces **131**, **132**, respectively, with the labels located above and below the minor segment of sample material on the rear surface **30***b*. **FIG. 4B** also illustrates that the sample **40***a* is suspended over a major portion of the forward primary surface **30***a*, but an upper portion of the hanger **30** can also be used as a labeling surface **130**.

[**0061**] As shown in **FIG. 4B**, each fabric sample article **40***a* can be held by a respective hanger **30**. In certain embodiments, the sample has opposing end portions and can be arranged on the hanger so that a lowermost portion **401** extends a distance below a lowermost portion of the hanger **301** and an uppermost end portion **40***u* resides below an upper portion of the hanger **30***u*.

[**0062**] **FIGS. 4A and 4B** also illustrate that the hangers **30** include an aperture **31** that is sized and configured to receive the rack **15** therethrough. As shown, the aperture **31** is circular, but other shapes may be used. In addition, as shown, the body of the hanger **30** about the aperture **31** is continuous and the hangers **30** are positioned on the rack **15** prior to the rack **15** being positioned on the mounting wall or panel **115** so that the hangers **30** remain on the rack **15** as long as the rack **15** remains affixed to the mounting wall or panel **115**. In other embodiments, the hanger **30** may be configured with a vertical split segment at the top that separates a transverse distance and then returns to a desired substantially closed configuration to allow for the hanger to be attached to the rack **15** after the rack **15** is mounted to the wall or panel (not shown). In certain particular embodiments, a plurality of hangers **30** can be used to hold a particular sample (not shown). Combinations of the above configurations may be used.

[**0063**] **FIG. 5** illustrates a display wall or panel **115** with a plurality of racks **15** (discrete or combination racks $\mathbf{15}_1$,

15_2) held at different locations to provide a display system. The racks **15** may be horizontally and/or vertically aligned or offset to allow for multiple selectable display arrangements. **FIG. 7** illustrates another embodiment of a display system for a display wall or panel **115**. As shown in **FIG. 7**, two racks **15** (or 15_1, 15_2) are held along a top portion of the display wall or panel **115** with a plurality of outwardly extending (straight) display arms **90** holding samples below the racks. The display arms **90** can have different lengths. As shown, the longer length arms **90***a* are held under the racks **15**, while the shorter length arms **90***b* are held lower on the wall or panel **115**. As shown, the two laterally spaced display racks occupy the same amount of lateral space on the wall or panel (shown as the entire panel section) as six aligned columns of samples on display arms **90***a*, **90***b*. Thus, a larger number of articles **40** (such as samples) may be able to be displayed on the rack(s) **15** than can be displayed for viewing as the forwardmost sample in the columns underlying the rack **15** (i.e., six samples on the display arms versus 10-60, or more on the racks **15**). In addition, the display systems provided by the devices of the instant invention provide increased display format options and site-selectable customization and adjustability over conventional arrangements. Further, in particular embodiments, in position, the display rack(s) **15** can give a consumer an improved aesthetic simulation of a window covering by its placement on the display wall, the flowing length of sample, and/or the sample's ability to move in a horizontal direction. In particular embodiments, a decal or other simulated window, structure or outdoor environment, can be placed on the display panel or wall behind the rack and hanging drapery samples **40** to give a consumer a more realistic "in-use" visual point of reference. Similarly, adjustable lighting or wall colors may also be provided for use with the display panel or wall to create a more natural use environment. The adjustable environment can be provided using projected lights, decals, selectable paneling that can be interchanged by a viewer, and my be held by the mounting plate or the display panel or wall adjacent the display rack and the like (not shown).

[**0064**] **FIG. 8A** illustrates one example of a hanger **30**. In certain embodiments, the hanger **30** is suitable for use with a size that is between about 8-12 inches tall and 4-10 inches wide, and is typically about 6-8 inches wide and about 11 inches tall. The hanger **30** includes an aperture **31** as discussed above and a slot pattern **34**. In certain embodiments, the hanger **30** has a rigid planar body with the slot pattern **34** having at least one slot **34***s* (shown in **FIG. 8A** as two lateral slots connected by a vertical slot segment) formed through an intermediate portion of the planar body. In use, the display article **40** is positioned about the slot pattern **34** so that the article is releaseably mounted to the hanger **30**.

[**0065**] In the embodiment shown in **FIG. 8A**, the slot pattern **34** is formed in the hanger **30** so that the hanger **30** includes two laterally extending spaced-apart tongue portions **41**, **43** that face each other. In certain embodiments, the tongue portions **41**, **43** can pivot relative to the body of the hanger **30** so that they can be relatively easily inserted into the channel formed in the article. The hanger **30** can also be configured with two sets of the tongue portions **41**, **43** (not shown), and each can selectively or concurrently engage with the article **40**.

[**0066**] As shown in **FIG. 8B**, the hanger **30** can have a substantially planar (card-like) body. As shown in **FIG. 8A**, the planar body includes a perimeter **30***p* with the slot pattern **34** extending about an interior portion thereof. The perimeter **30***p* has a substantially rectangular shape with opposing sides gradually traveling together toward an upper end portion **30***u* to terminate at a highest center segment **30***h* located above the aperture **31**.

[**0067**] In certain embodiments, the hanger **30** is formed of an elastomeric material, which may include polymers, co-polymers, cellulose, and derivatives, blends and mixtures thereof. In particular embodiments, the hanger **30** can be formed from a thermoplastic and/or plexiglass or polyvinyl-chloride material. In certain embodiments, the hanger **30** can be translucent and/or transparent. In particular embodiments, the hanger **30** is formed of a unitary plexiglass planar body.

[**0068**] As shown in **FIG. 9A**, the article **40** can be a fabric or material sample having at least one, and typically two, laterally extending channels 40_1, 40_2. In particular embodiments, the article **40** is a soft drapery fabric sample **40***a* and the fabric sample **40***a* is formed to have at least one channel that corresponds to a rod pocket and/or header. **FIG. 9A** illustrates that the tongue portions **41**, **43** are inserted into a selected channel (mount position "1" or "2") to hold the fabric sample in a display configuration. **FIG. 11A** illustrates the tongue portions **41**, **43** in the lower channel 40_2 and **FIG. 11B** illustrates the tongue portions **41**, **43**, in the upper channel. **FIG. 9B** illustrates the rear of the hanger **30** when the fabric sample is loaded as shown in **FIGS. 9A, 11A** or **11**B.

[**0069**] **FIG. 10A** illustrates an alternate embodiment of a hanger **30'**. As shown, the slot pattern **34** is formed to provide a single elongate laterally extending tongue portion **36** that extends across a major portion of the width of the hanger **30**. **FIG. 10B** illustrates a slot pattern **34** with two vertically spaced apart tongues 36_1, 36_2 that extend from a common side of the hanger **30** across a portion of the width of the hanger **30'**. Similar to the tongue portions **41**, **43** shown in **FIG. 8A**, tongue portions **36** or 36_1, 36_2 can releaseably engage articles **40** having transverse or lateral channels, such as the fabric sample shown in **FIG. 9A**.

[**0070**] **FIGS. 12A-12C** illustrate an additional embodiment of a hanger **30"**. As shown, the intermediate slot portion **34** is configured with separate upper and lower slots 37_1, 37_2 that are spaced apart by a continuous center support segment **37***s*. As shown by the direction of the arrows in **FIG. 12B**, to position the sample on the hanger **30"**, the sample **40** can be inserted through the upper slot 37_1, threaded around the center segment and then back into the lower slot 37_2 to hold the sample on the hanger **30** in a substantially looped fashion. The term "looped"means that the material has a nearly or completely closed turn. The lowermost portion of the hanger **30** may include a cutout portion **30***c*. As shown in **FIG. 12C**, sample **40** may be loaded on the hanger so that a longer portion resides over the looped segment and only a minor amount of sample extends through the rear surface of the hanger.

[**0071**] **FIG. 13** illustrates yet another embodiment of a display rack assembly **10** according to the present invention. As shown, the rack **15** includes a plurality of hangers **30**, each holding an article **40** that is configured as a strip of

fabric suitable for window coverings. The strip of fabric may be about 3-6 inches wide and about 4-18 inches long, and is typically arranged on the hanger **30** to extend for viewing with about 5 inches in width and 8 inches long. Similarly, the hanger **30** can be about 5-6 inches wide and includes a slot pattern **34** that allows the sample **40** to be wrapped around the hanger **30** to suspend the article on the hanger. The hanger **30** can have a length that is about 3-6 inches long, and is typically less than about 4-5 inches long, with the strip of fabric hung so as to be substantially longer than the hanger **30** (typically about at least 60% longer than the hanger).

[**0072**] The foregoing is illustrative of the present invention and is not to be construed as limiting thereof. Although a few exemplary embodiments of this invention have been described, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many modifications are possible in the exemplary embodiments without materially departing from the novel teachings and advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of this invention as defined in the claims. In the claims, means-plus-function clauses, where used, are intended to cover the structures described herein as performing the recited function and not only structural equivalents but also equivalent structures. Therefore, it is to be understood that the foregoing is illustrative of the present invention and is not to be construed as limited to the specific embodiments disclosed, and that modifications to the disclosed embodiments, as well as other embodiments, are intended to be included within the scope of the appended claims. The invention is defined by the following claims, with equivalents of the claims to be included therein.

That which is claimed is:

1. A wall-mountable rack assembly for holding articles for display on an upstanding mounting wall or panel having a plurality of elongate horizontal mounting slots, comprising:

an elongate rack having opposing spaced apart first and second end portions and an intermediate portion that together present a continuous curvilinear profile when viewed from the top, wherein, in position, the elongate rack projects outwardly a distance from the mounting wall or panel to reside in a substantially horizontal orientation, and wherein the elongate rack is configured to releaseably engage with at least one slot of a multi-slot mounting wall or panel;

a plurality of hangers slidably suspended from said rack; and

a plurality of articles are held by the hangers, wherein the hangers and respective articles are configured to slide along the rack so that the articles can be individually viewed.

2. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein the articles are aligned with the primary surfaces substantially normal to the axial direction of the rack.

3. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein each article is held by a respective hanger, and wherein, in position, the articles have opposing end portions with a lowermost end portion extending a distance below a lowermost portion of the hangers and an uppermost end portion residing below an uppermost portion of the hangers.

4. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 3, wherein the plurality of articles is at least 10 articles.

5. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein the rack is formed of a unitary tubular member.

6. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein the curvilinear profile is a substantially semi-circular profile.

7. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein the curvilinear profile includes a forwardmost arcuate portion.

8. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, further comprising fastener members attached to each of said rack first and second end portions, the fastener members being configured to releaseably mount the curvilinear rack to one slot in the upstanding support wall or panel.

9. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 8, wherein the fastener members comprise a planar, substantially vertically oriented mounting plate.

10. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 9, further comprising outwardly extending spaced apart channel members attached to said mounting plate, each channel member sized and configured to be able to receive a respective first or second end portion of the rack therein.

11. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 10, wherein the elongate rack is tubular, and wherein the channel members have cylindrical channels with an inner cross-sectional diameter that is greater than the diameter of the tubular rack.

12. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 11, wherein the mounting plate has a lateral width that is at least as wide as the distance between the first and second end portions.

13. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 12, wherein the mounting plate is substantially planar with a stepped edge portion.

14. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 13, wherein, when viewed from the side, the stepped edge portion is formed to have a first segment that is substantially perpendicular to a planar vertical portion of the mounting plate with a second segment that is substantially perpendicular to the first segment and substantially parallel to the planar vertical portion of the mounting plate.

15. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 14, further comprising a locking member that extends through a respective channel member and rack end portion to affix the rack to the mounting plate.

16. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 14, wherein the mounting plate stepped portion is on an upper portion of the mounting plate and is configured and sized to reside in a selectable transverse elongate slot on the wall or panel.

17. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 9, wherein the mounting plate comprises a pocket that is externally accessible to hold informational materials for consumers.

18. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein the elongate rack is tubular, and wherein the articles comprise discrete fabric samples, a respective one for each hanger, and wherein the hangers are configured to suspend the fabric samples with their primary surfaces generally facing a direction that is normal to an imaginary line extending through the centerline of the rack.

19. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein the hangers are configured with an aperture formed in a top portion thereof, the aperture configured and sized to receive the elongate rack therethrough.

20. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 19, wherein the hangers comprise a slot pattern formed through an intermediate portion thereof, the slot pattern configured to receive and hold the article to the hanger.

21. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 20, wherein the hangers are substantially planar and formed of a thermoplastic material.

22. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 21, wherein the hangers are translucent and/or transparent.

23. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 22, wherein the planar hangers suspend the articles so that they are generally substantially normal to an imaginary line extending through the centerline of the rack.

24. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 20, wherein the slot pattern is formed so as to provide at least one laterally extending tongue portion that is able to pivot relative to the primary surfaces of the hanger.

25. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 24, wherein the intermediate slot pattern includes two laterally extending tongue portions that extend from opposing side portions of the hanger and face each other across a gap, and wherein the article is configured to engage the tongue members to hold the article on the hanger.

26. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 25, wherein the sample includes a lateral channel portion, and wherein the intermediate slot pattern includes one laterally extending tongue portion that extends through the lateral channel of the article across a major portion of the width of the hanger to hold the article on the hanger.

27. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein the articles are material samples, and wherein the intermediate slot portion is configured to hold the material sample in a substantially looped fashion.

28. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 24, wherein the articles are soft drapery fabrics having a rod pocket portion and/or a header portion, and wherein, in position, the tongue is configured to reside in the rod pocket or header portion.

29. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 1, wherein the articles are samples of home-improvement items.

30. A wall-mountable rack assembly according to claim 29, wherein the home improvement item sample is at least one of a bedding sample, sheet sample, tablecloth sample, towel sample, paper sample, paint sample, flooring sample, tile sample, cabinet sample, paneling sample, countertop sample, and wallpaper sample.

31. A display system, comprising:

a plurality of wall-mountable racks for holding articles for display on an upstanding mounting wall or panel, each rack comprising:

an elongate rack having opposing spaced apart first and second end portions and an intermediate portion that together present a curvilinear profile when viewed from the top, wherein, in position, the elongate rack projects outwardly a distance from the mounting wall or panel to laterally extend in a substantially horizontal orientation;

a plurality of hangers slidably suspended to said rack; and

a plurality of discrete articles held by the hangers,

wherein the elongate rack is configured to releaseably engage a selected slot or slots of a multi-slot panel or wall.

32. A display system according to claim 31, wherein the system comprises at least two elongate racks mounted in side-by-side relationship on a common mounting plate in the same slot of the multi-slot panel or wall.

33. A display system according to claim 31, wherein the elongate racks are mounted on a common display wall or panel in different horizontal slots of the multi-slot panel or wall.

34. A display system according to claim 31, wherein at least two of the plurality of the elongate racks are mounted in the same slot with at least one additional elongate rack being mounted in a different horizontal slot.

35. A display system according to claim 31, further comprising a plurality of outwardly extending discrete display arms configured to releaseably engage a slot in the multi-slot wall or panel to hold articles thereon in a substantially straight line, and wherein the display arms are arranged to reside on a common wall or panel with the curvilinear elongate racks.

36. A display system according to claim 31, wherein the arms are configured to reside under the plurality of elongate racks on the multi-slot wall or panel.

37. A display system according to claim 31, wherein the articles comprise window covering samples, a respective one for each hanger, and wherein the hangers are configured to suspend the samples with their primary surfaces facing generally normal to a line extending through the centerline of the rack.

38. A display system according to claim 37, further comprising a plurality of hangers suspended from the elongate racks, wherein the hangers and respective articles are configured to pivot in a direction that is substantially normal to a line extending through the centerline of the rack so that the articles can be individually viewed.

39. A display system according to claim 38, wherein the articles comprise soft drapery fabric samples.

40. A display system according to claim 39, wherein the soft drapery fabric samples include a rod pocket portion and a header portion, the hanger configured to have at least one laterally extending tongue that is insertable through at least one of the rod pocket and/or header portion to hold the sample on the hanger.

41. A method of displaying window covering samples, comprising:

positioning a plurality of discrete hangers on an elongate curvilinear display rack;

mounting the curvilinear display rack to a desired slot in a multi-slot panel or wall so that the display rack is substantially horizontal and has a curvilinear profile when viewed from the top; and

attaching each of a plurality of display articles to a respective one of the hangers.

42. A method according to claim 41, wherein the discrete hangers are positioned on the rack before the rack is mounted to the wall or panel.

43. A method according to claim 41, wherein the articles are soft fabric drapery samples having a rod pocket channel and/or a header channel, and wherein the hanger includes at least one tongue portion that extends through one of the article channels to releaseably hold the article to the hanger.

44. A hanger for displaying an article on a rack, comprising:

a rigid planar body having opposing top and bottom portions;

an aperture formed in the top portion of the planar body, the aperture sized and configured to engage with a display rack;

at least one slot formed through an intermediate portion of the planar body;

wherein, in use, a display sample is positioned about the slot so that the article is releaseably mounted to the hanger.

45. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the hanger is formed of a translucent and/or transparent thermoplastic material.

46. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the hanger intermediate slot pattern includes at least one laterally extending tongue portion.

47. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the intermediate slot pattern includes two laterally aligned tongue portions that face each other and are spaced apart, and wherein the article includes a loop segment with the loop segment configured to receive the tongue members to hold the article on the hanger.

48. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the intermediate slot pattern includes one laterally extending tongue portion, and wherein the article includes a loop segment with the loop segment configured to receive the tongue to hold the article on the hanger.

49. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the article is a drapery material sample with a header and/or rod pocket channel portion.

50. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the article is a drapery material sample, wherein the intermediate slot portion is configured with upper and lower slots spaced apart by a continuous center support segment, and wherein, in use, the material sample is inserted through the upper and lower slots to hold the sample on the hanger in a self-looped fashion.

51. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the planar body has a perimeter with the slots extending about an interior portion thereof, and wherein the perimeter has a substantially rectangular shape with opposing sides gradually traveling together toward an upper end portion to terminate at a highest center segment located above the aperture.

52. A hanger according to claim 51, wherein the aperture is circular.

53. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the planar body is a unitary plexiglass body.

54. A hanger according to claim 44, wherein the planar body comprises front and rear primary surfaces, said hanger further comprising at least one label affixed above the slot pattern on the front primary surface and at least one label affixed over the top and/or center portion of the rear surface.

55. A hanger according to claim 44, in combination with a display article, wherein the display article is a window covering sample.

56. A hanger and display article according to claim 55, wherein the window covering display article is a soft drapery fabric sample.

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