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(54) **APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR MOUNTING OBJECTS FOR VIEWING**

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(75) Inventor: **Tim Charon, Keller, TX (US)**

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Correspondence Address:

**DOCKET CLERK
P.O. DRAWER 800889
DALLAS, TX 75380 (US)**

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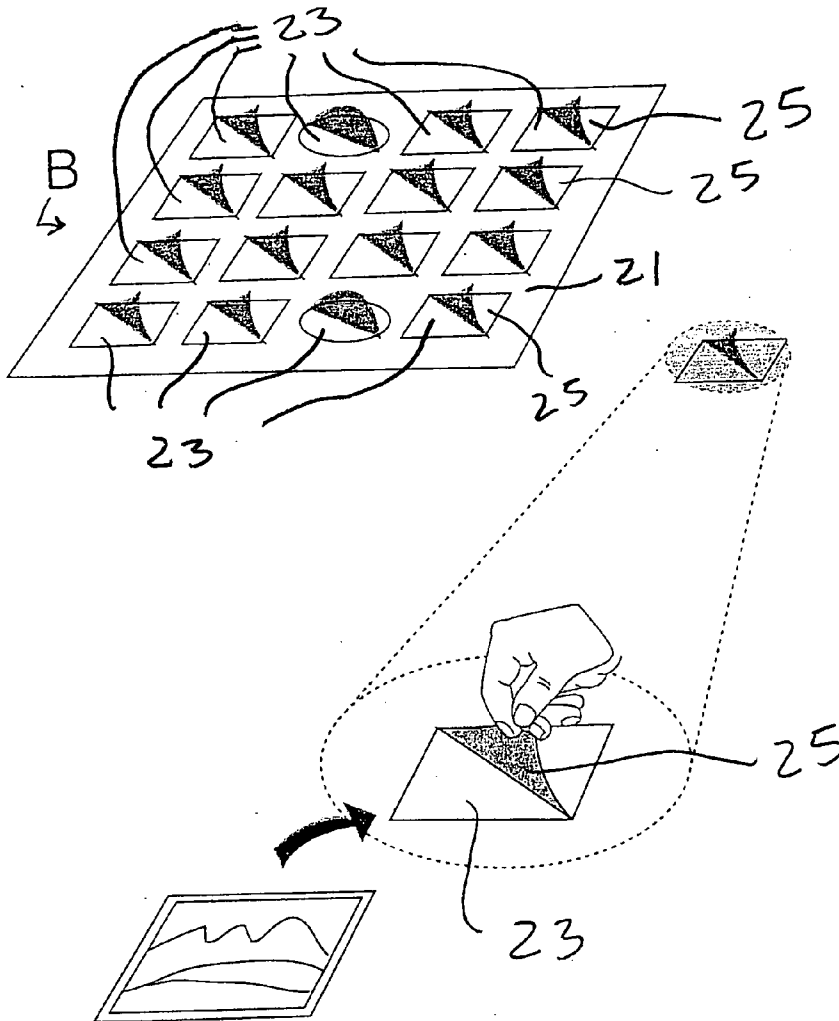
(73) Assignee: **PINNACLE FRAMES AND ACCENTS, INC., Fort Worth, TX (US)**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A bottom surface of an aperture within a display apparatus is prepared to adhesively bond to an object for viewing by simply removing from the bottom surface a layer of material which is removably adhered to the bottom surface. The object to be viewed is placed into contacting relationship with the bottom surface to adhesively mount the object onto the bottom surface.

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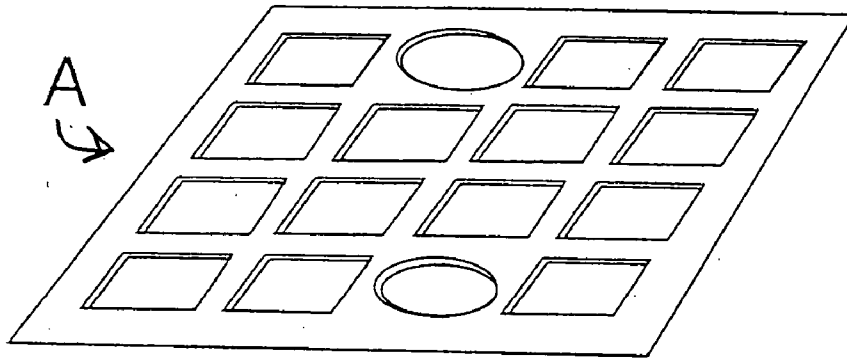


FIGURE 1

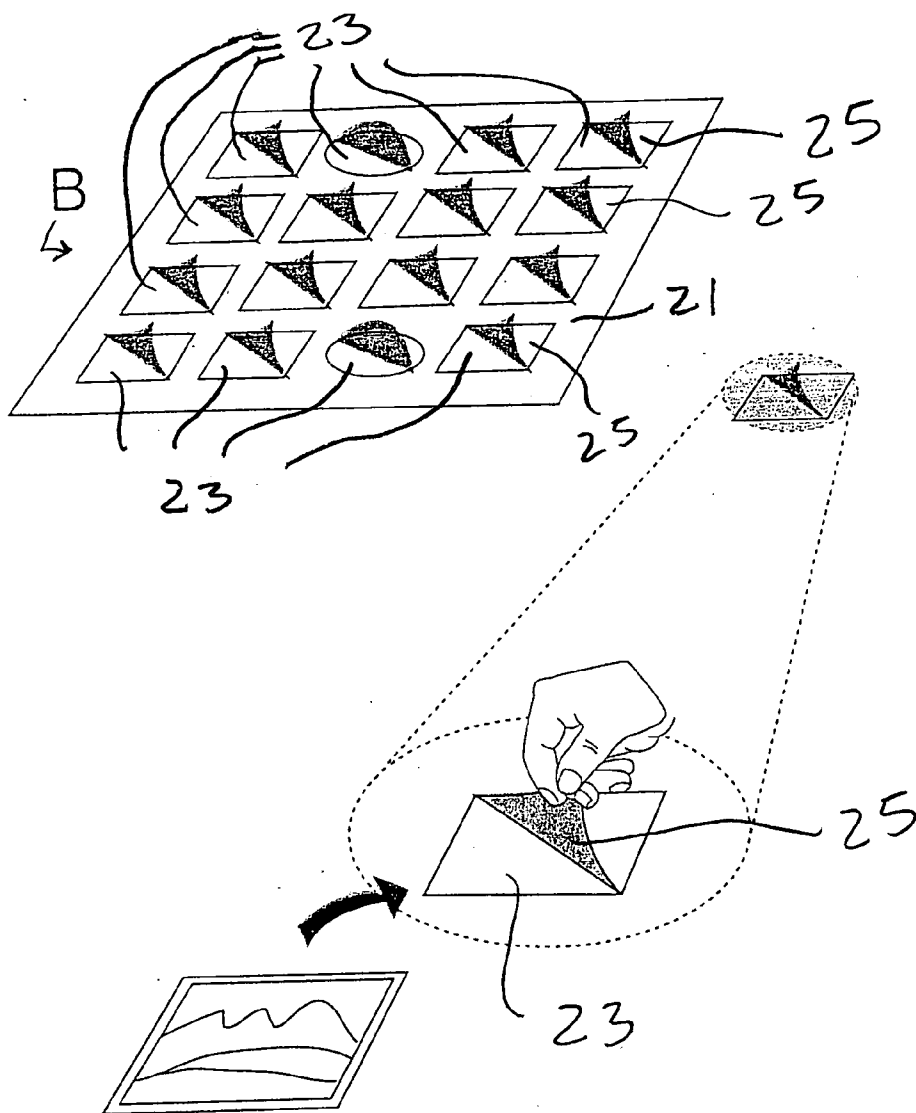


FIGURE 2

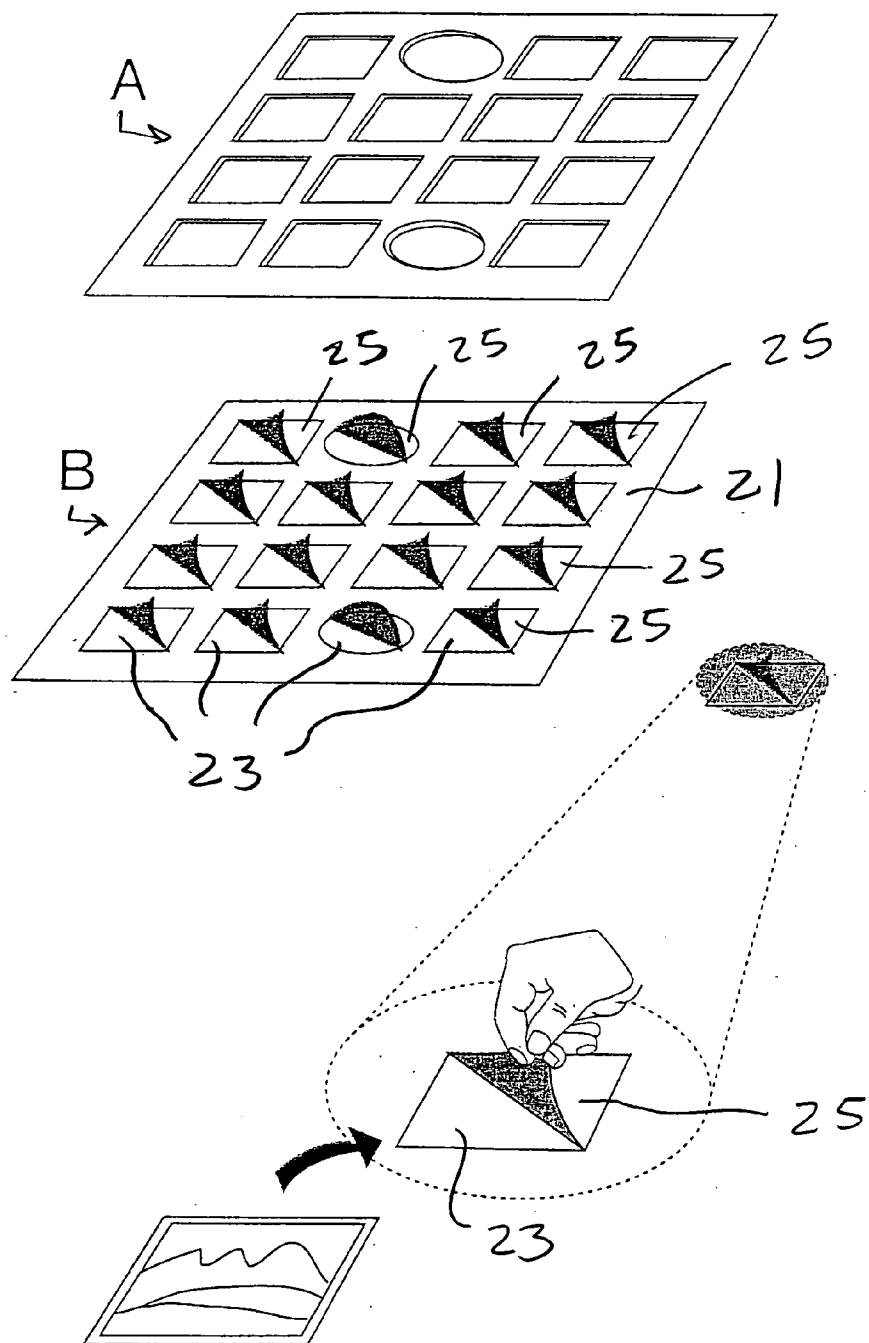


FIGURE 3

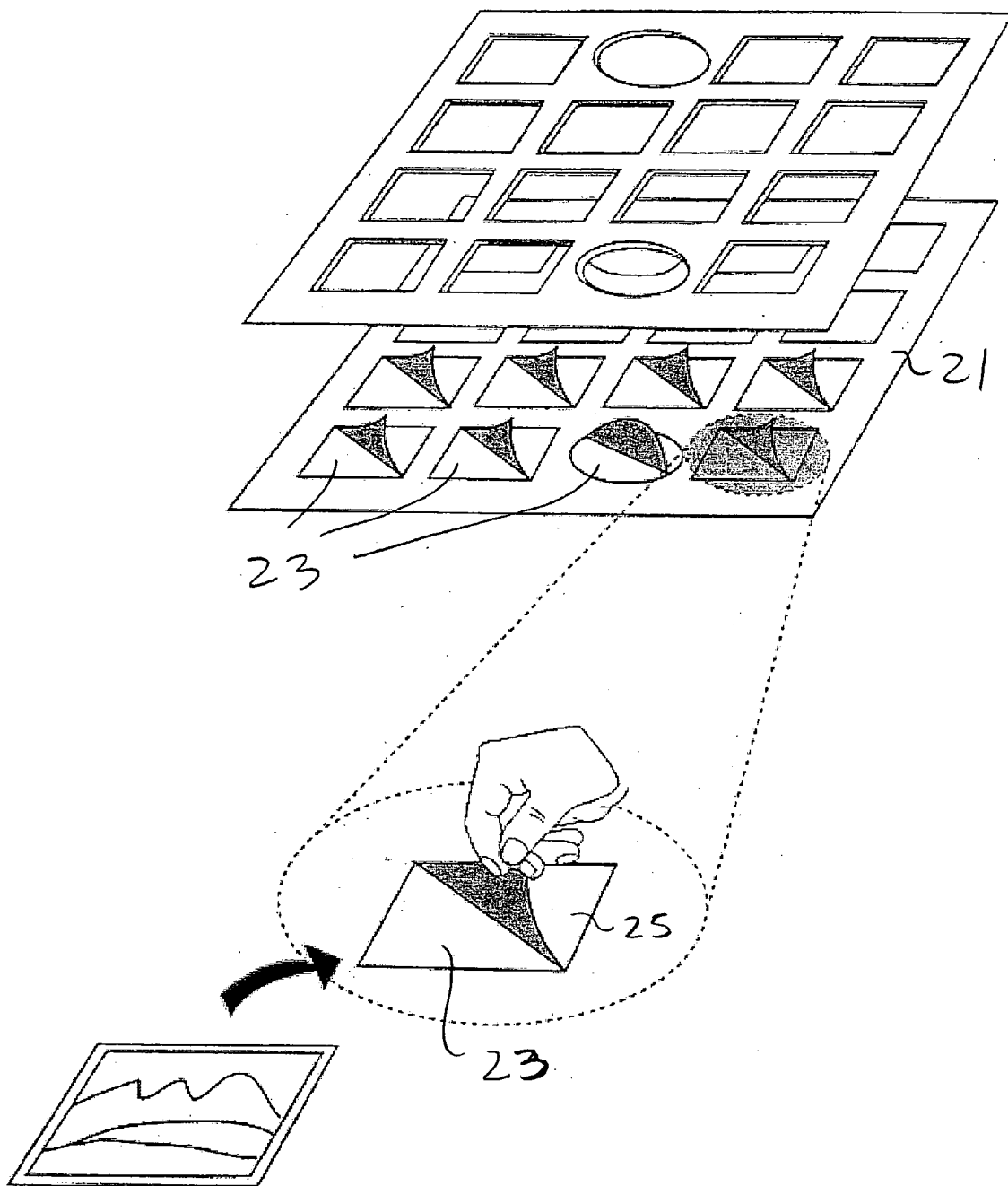


FIGURE 4

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR MOUNTING OBJECTS FOR VIEWING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO OTHER APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) (1) of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/498,111 filed Aug. 27, 2003, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to displaying objects for viewing and, more particularly, to the mounting of such objects onto a display apparatus.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Numerous albums, frames and other display arrangements are conventionally available for mounting thereon objects which can be viewed by an observer, for example, pictures (e.g., photographs), documents or other viewable objects. With some prior art display arrangements, a considerable amount of skill is required in order to obtain a satisfactory visual presentation of a viewable object or plurality of viewable objects.

[0004] It is therefore desirable to provide for a capability of arranging and mounting one or more viewable objects onto a display apparatus without the exercise of skills required by conventional approaches.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] According to exemplary embodiments of the invention, a bottom surface of an aperture within a display apparatus is prepared to adhesively bond to an object for viewing by simply removing from the bottom surface a layer of material which is removably adhered to the bottom surface. The object to be viewed is placed into contacting relationship with the bottom surface to adhesively mount the object onto the bottom surface.

[0006] The foregoing has outlined rather broadly the features and technical advantages of the present invention so that those skilled in the art may better understand the detailed description of the invention that follows. Additional features and advantages of the invention will be described hereinafter that form the subject of the claims of the invention. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that they may readily use the conception and the specific embodiment disclosed as a basis for modifying or designing other structures for carrying out the same purposes of the present invention. Those skilled in the art will also realize that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention in its broadest form.

[0007] Before undertaking the DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION below, it may be advantageous to set forth definitions of certain words or phrases used throughout this patent document: the terms "include" and "comprise," as well as derivatives thereof, mean inclusion without limitation; the term "or" is inclusive, meaning and/or; and the phrases "associated with" and "associated therewith," as well as derivatives thereof, may mean to include, be included within, interconnect with, contain, be contained within, connect to or with, couple to or with, be communicable with, cooperate with, interleave, juxtapose,

be proximate to, be bound to or with, have, have a property of, or the like. Definitions for certain words and phrases are provided throughout this patent document, and those of ordinary skill in the art will understand that such definitions apply in many, if not most, instances to prior as well as future uses of such defined words and phrases.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] For a more complete understanding of the present invention, and the advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following descriptions taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein like numbers designate like objects, and in which:

[0009] **FIG. 1** shows a perspective top view of top mat A according to exemplary embodiments of the invention.

[0010] **FIG. 2** shows a perspective top view of base mat B according to exemplary embodiments of the invention, and also shows how a protective film may be removed from an adhesive surface of an aperture of base mat B and that a photograph may be mounted with the aperture after the protective film is removed.

[0011] **FIG. 3** shows a perspective top view of top mat A and a perspective top view of base mat B with top mat A aligned over base mat B according to exemplary embodiments of the invention, and also shows how a protective film may be removed from an adhesive surface of an aperture of base mat B and that a photograph may be mounted with the aperture after the protective film is removed.

[0012] **FIG. 4** shows a perspective top view of top mat A and a perspective top view of base mat B showing how top mat A may be mounted on base mat B after photographs have been mounted within base mat B according to exemplary embodiments of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] **FIGS. 1 through 4**, discussed below, and the various embodiments used to describe the principles of the present invention in this patent document are by way of illustration only and should not be construed in any way to limit the scope of the invention. Those skilled in the art will understand that the principles of the present invention may be implemented in any suitably arranged device. The numerous innovative teachings of the present application will be described with particular reference to the presently preferred embodiment.

[0014] The present invention comprises a new and improved album (e.g., photo collage album) for mounting photographs and other documents (e.g., diplomas). Although the album of the present invention may be used to mount documents other than photographs, the structure and operation of the album of the invention will be described using photographs as the documents to be mounted. It is understood that the album of the invention is generally capable of mounting any type of document or other object to be viewed, and is not limited to mounting photographs.

[0015] As shown in **FIGS. 1-4**, the album comprises a top mat A and a base mat B. As will be more fully described, a user places photographs that are to be mounted in the album on base mat B. After the photographs have been mounted on

base mat B, then the user places top mat A over the base mat B to protect the photographs that are mounted on base mat B. Top mat A and base mat B then comprise a unitary mounting frame that encloses and protects the photographs.

[0016] Base mat B may be formed having portions that define a single aperture (not shown) for receiving and mounting a single photograph. Base mat B is usually formed having portions that define a plurality of apertures for receiving a plurality of photographs. As shown in FIGS. 2-4, a surface 21 adjoins a plurality of apertures having respective surfaces 23 that are offset from the surface 21 to define the depths of the respective apertures (a total of 16 apertures in FIG. 2). The surfaces 23, which can have various geometric shapes such as rectangles, ovals, etc., define the bottoms of the apertures. When base mat B is formed having a plurality of apertures, the plurality of apertures may be filled with photographs to form a collage of photographs. The number and shape and location of apertures in base mat B (and the corresponding number and shape and location of apertures in top mat A) form a template to receive and mount a collage of photographs. That is, the photographs are mountable within the album in a template formed by the number and shape of apertures formed within base mat B (and top mat A).

[0017] The method of mounting photographs in the album will now be described. The flat external surface 23 of each aperture within base mat B comprises an adhesive surface. A thin removable layer or film 25 of protective material is placed over and adhered to each adhesive surface of each aperture within base mat B to protect the adhesive surface until a photograph is to be mounted. When the user desires to mount a photograph in an aperture of base mat B, the user peels the film of protective material off of the surface of the aperture exposing the adhesive surface to the atmosphere. The user then places the photograph on the adhesive surface and presses the photograph against the adhesive surface to mount the photograph in the aperture.

[0018] After the film of protective material has been removed, it may be used as a template to size a photograph to fit the available space in the aperture from which the film of protective material was removed. Specifically, in some embodiments, the film of protective material has approximately the same geometric area and shape as the corresponding aperture, and may therefore be placed over a photograph that is larger than the aperture. The film of protective material is preferably transparent so that the underlying photograph may be visible through the film of protective material. The user can then see what portions of the underlying photograph will fit in the aperture. The user can then cut away the edge portions of the photographs that extend beyond the edges of the film of protective material so that the trimmed photograph will fit precisely within the aperture. In this way the film of protective material may serve as a template for sizing a photograph to fit within the aperture.

[0019] The strength of the adhesive in the adhesive surface of the aperture is sufficient to retain the photograph in place within the aperture. However, the strength of the adhesive in the adhesive surface is preferably limited so that the user can remove the photograph from the adhesive of the aperture without damaging the photograph. Prior art adhesive materials are commonly so strong that they do not permit a user

to remove a photograph after the photograph has been initially placed. Trying to remove a photograph from such prior art adhesive materials results in damage to the photograph.

[0020] The strength of the adhesive material in the adhesive surface of each aperture of base mat B allows the user to place a plurality of photographs in a first arrangement within the apertures of base mat B and then later remove the photographs without damage. The user can then rearrange the photographs in a second arrangement within the apertures of base mat B. The user can subsequently make other rearrangements of the photographs within the apertures of base mat B until the user decides on a final arrangement. The strength of the adhesive allows the photographs to be mounted and the subsequently removed to be rearranged numerous times. After the user has decided on a final arrangement of the photographs within the collage of photographs in base mat B, the user then places top mat A over the combination of the photographs and base mat B.

[0021] In one advantageous embodiment of the invention, the exterior surface of top mat A is covered with a sheet of transparent material such as plastic or glass. This exterior transparent sheet of material covers the entire surface of top mat A including the photographs mounted within base mat B. A viewer may see the photographs through the transparent sheet of material of top mat A after top mat A is mounted over base mat B. In one advantageous embodiment of the invention, the transparent sheet of material is not formed of an adhesive material. In another advantageous embodiment of the invention, the transparent sheet of material is formed of an adhesive material that adheres to base mat B and the photographs within base mat B. The strength of the adhesive material of the transparent material in top mat A is limited so that the user can remove top mat A from base mat B without damaging the photographs that are mounted within base mat B. This allows the user to subsequently remove top mat A from base mat B in order to rearrange the photographs in base mat B at some later time.

[0022] As described above, in some embodiments, the surface of top mat A that faces and contacts base mat B is covered with a sheet of transparent material such as plastic or glass. When top mat A contacts base mat B, this transparent sheet of material covers base mat B including the viewable objects mounted within base mat B.

[0023] An advantageous embodiment of a method for mounting a photograph in the album of the present invention comprises the steps of: (1) removing a protective film from an adhesive surface of an aperture of base mat B; (2) mounting a photograph within the aperture; and (3) mounting top mat A on base mat B and the photograph.

[0024] An advantageous embodiment of another method for mounting photographs in the album of the present invention comprises the steps of: (1) removing a plurality of protective films from a plurality of adhesive surfaces of a plurality of apertures of base mat B; (2) mounting a plurality of photographs within the plurality of apertures in a first arrangement; (3) removing the plurality of photographs from the plurality of apertures; (4) mounting the plurality of photographs within the plurality of apertures in a second arrangement; and (5) mounting top mat A on base mat B and the plurality of photographs.

[0025] As previously mentioned, top mat A may be removed from base mat B without damaging the photo-

graphs so that the photographs may also be rearranged at some later time. It is noted that the apertures within top mat A may or may not be the same size as the apertures in base mat B. In one advantageous embodiment of the invention the size of the apertures of top mat A are smaller than the apertures in base mat B.

[0026] In one advantageous embodiment of the invention, the album is capable of mounting a single photograph. In another advantageous embodiment of the invention, the album is capable of mounting a plurality of photographs in a collage of photographs. The layout of the collage of photographs is determined by the number and shape and location of apertures (i.e., the template) within the base mat B of the album. In another advantageous embodiment of the invention, the album may be mounted in a frame that is suitable for hanging on a wall for display.

[0027] Although an exemplary embodiment of the present invention has been described in detail, those skilled in the art will understand that various changes, substitutions, variations, and improvements of the invention disclosed herein may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention in its broadest form.

[0028] None of the description in the present application should be read as implying that any particular element, step, or function is an essential element which must be included in the claim scope: THE SCOPE OF PATENTED SUBJECT MATTER IS DEFINED ONLY BY THE ALLOWED CLAIMS. Moreover, none of these claims are intended to invoke paragraph six of 35 USC §112 unless the exact words “means for” are followed by a participle.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for displaying an object for viewing, comprising:
 - a base that defines therein an aperture for receiving the object, including a first surface adjacent said aperture and a second surface that defines a bottom of said aperture, said second surface offset from said first surface to define a depth of said aperture, said second surface including an adhesive surface portion; and
 - a layer of material removably adhered to said adhesive surface portion, said layer of material limited to a geometric area that is, at most, approximately equal to a geometric area of said second surface, said layer of material removable from said adhesive surface portion to expose said adhesive surface portion for adhesive mounting of the object onto said second surface.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said geometric area of said layer of material is approximately equal to said geometric area of said second surface.
3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said layer of material has a geometric shape that is substantially similar to a geometric shape of said second surface.
4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein said layer of material is transparent.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said geometric area of said layer of material is approximately equal to a geometric area of said adhesive surface portion.
6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein said geometric area of said layer of material is approximately equal to said geometric area of said second surface.

7. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein said layer of material is transparent.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said layer of material is transparent.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said adhesive surface portion has an adhesive strength that permits the object to be removed from said second surface without damaging the object.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said base includes a plurality of said apertures and a plurality of said layers of material respectively corresponding to said apertures.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein one of said second surfaces has a geometric shape which differs from a geometric shape of another of said second surfaces.

12. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said base is a mat and said object includes one of a pictorial image and a textual image.

13. A kit for producing an apparatus which displays objects for viewing, comprising:

- a first mat that defines therein an aperture for receiving the object, including a first surface adjacent said aperture and a second surface that defines a bottom of said aperture, said second surface offset from said first surface to define a depth of said aperture, said second surface including an adhesive surface portion;

- a layer of material removably adhered to said adhesive surface portion, said layer of material limited to a geometric area that is, at most, approximately equal to a geometric area of said second surface, said layer of material removable from said adhesive surface portion to expose said adhesive surface portion for adhesive mounting of the object onto said second surface;

said first mat defining therein a plurality of said apertures;

- a plurality of said layers of material removably adhered to respectively corresponding ones of said adhesive surface portions; and

- a second mat for mounting on said first mat after said objects have been adhesively mounted onto the respectively corresponding second surfaces, said second mat having a plurality of transparent portions which, when said second mat is mounted on said first mat, respectively overlie said objects to permit said objects to be viewed through said second mat.

14. The kit of claim 13, wherein said second mat includes an adhesive material for permitting said second mat to adhere to said first mat and to said objects, said adhesive material having an adhesive strength that permits said second mat to be removed from adherence to said first mat and said objects without damaging said objects.

15. The kit of claim 13, wherein said layers of material have respective geometric shapes which are substantially similar to geometric shapes of the respectively corresponding ones of said second surfaces.

16. The kit of claim 13, wherein said adhesive surface portions have adhesive strength that permits said objects to be removed from said second surfaces without damaging said objects.

17. A method of mounting an object onto a display apparatus, comprising:

- preparing a bottom surface of an aperture within the display apparatus to adhesively bond to the object

regardless of whether any adhesive material has been previously provided on the object, said preparing step consisting of removing from said bottom surface a layer of material which is removably adhered to said bottom surface and which is limited to a geometric area that is, at most, approximately equal to a geometric area of said bottom surface; and

placing the object into contacting relationship with said bottom surface to adhesively mount the object onto said bottom surface.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein said removing step includes peeling said layer of material from said bottom surface.

19. The method of claim 17, including, after said removing step, using said layer of material to determine a spatial relationship between said object and said bottom surface.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein said using step includes viewing said object through said layer of material.

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