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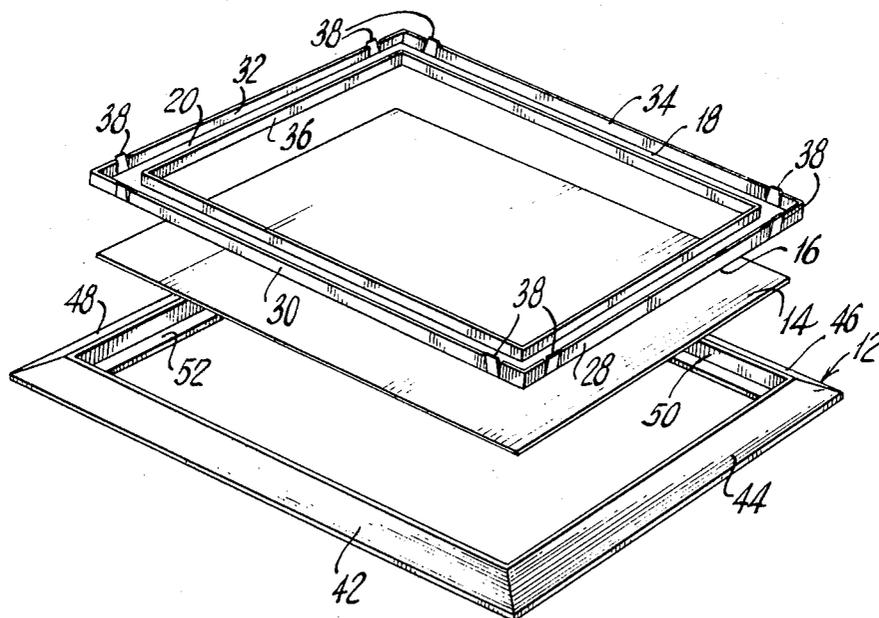
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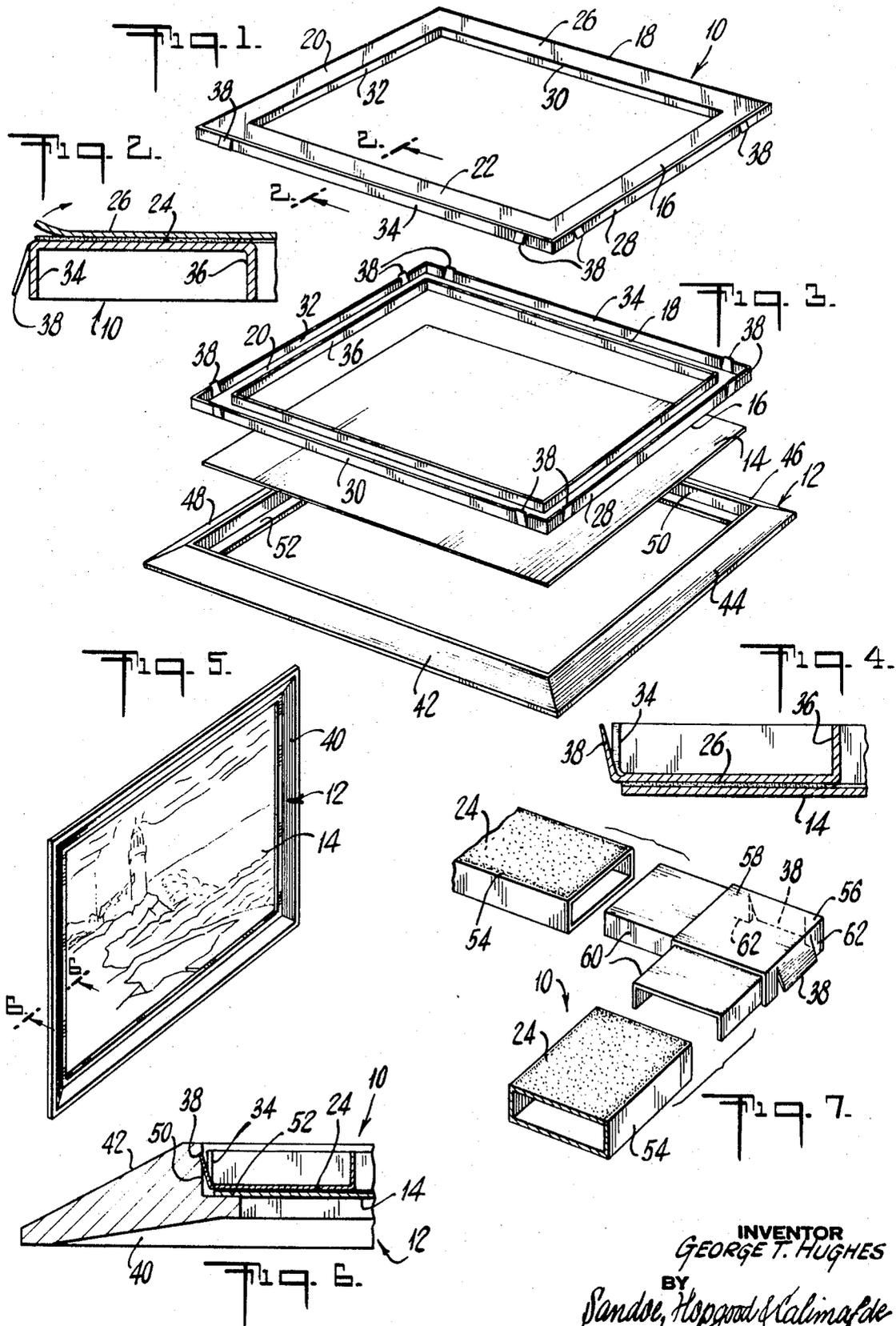
[54] **PICTURE FRAME MOUNTING CONSTRUCTION**  
 5 Claims, 7 Drawing Figs.

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**ABSTRACT:** A low-cost picture frame assembly includes a stretch frame onto which a print, lithograph or the like is initially secured such as by an adhesive substance provided over at least a portion of one surface of the stretch frame. The inner frame having the print secured thereto is frictionally engaged by means of locking means provided on one of the frames, to thereby unite the two frames into the desired assembly.





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## PICTURE FRAME MOUNTING CONSTRUCTION

The present invention relates generally to picture frames, and more particularly to a decorative, low-cost picture frame highly suitable for mass production and distribution.

Along with the general increase in affluence and education, has been an increasing realization by many of the importance of art as an enrichment to one's life and environment. This trend is exemplified by the marked increase in museum attendance and in the purchase of art works for display in the home.

It has long been recognized that the overall impression of a painting, print, lithograph, or the like, is enhanced by the appearance of the frame in which it is displayed. Namely, a frame having its own attractive appearance may considerably enhance the overall appearance of the art work, while a frame having a poor appearance may well detract from the overall appeal of the painting.

Recently developed lithographic techniques permit the making of fine low-cost reproductions of art on canvas or canvaslike material. The cost to the consumer purchasing the framed art work is thus determined largely by the cost of the frame. This cost could be reduced by purchasing the art work in a less expensive and hence less attractive frame, but this would remove much of the initial motivation for purchasing the work since, as noted above, this would detract from the appearance of the work. Moreover, a sound and rigid structural frame is particularly required when the low-cost art work is printed on canvas or canvaslike material which best simulates the texture and color of the original work from which the copy is derived, since canvas is a pliable material that must be maintained flat and wrinkle-free over long periods of time to maintain its appearance. This has heretofore required the tacking of the canvas about the edges of a wooden frame, which frame is then mounted in a decorative frame by the use of tacks or nails. The labor and materials required for this process have so increased the cost of the frame that its use has become prohibitive for all but original oil paintings.

Thus, at the present time, the prospective purchaser of an art work must make one of three decisions; to purchase an expensive but decorative frame; to purchase a less expensive but unattractive and structurally unsound frame; or to postpone the purchase of the art work until a future date when more money is available for this purpose. The necessity of making a choice of this nature has heretofore prevented many from purchasing works of art for display in the home, and has thus deprived such would be art purchases of a source of considerable satisfaction.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a decorative and yet inexpensive picture frame.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a picture frame which may be readily assembled without the use of tools or additional fastening elements.

It is another object of the invention to provide an inexpensive and yet decorative frame highly suitable for mounting and displaying art work printed on canvas or similar nonrigid backing material.

It is yet a further object of the present invention to provide an inexpensive and yet decorative picture frame which lends itself readily to mass production and mass distribution.

In accord with the invention, as briefly stated, a picture frame is formed by the frictional engagement of an inner stretch frame and an outer decorative frame. The work of art is secured to the inner frame by means such as an adhesive film applied to the mounting surface of the inner frame. The frames are secured together without the use of nails, tacks or the like, by means of a locking device formed in one of the frames, which, as herein described, is the inner stretch frame.

In the embodiment of the invention herein particularly described, the inner frame comprises a first peripheral surface over which the adhesive film is disposed, and a second peripheral surface which extends substantially perpendicular to the adhesive-carrying surface. The locking device projects outwardly from the second peripheral surface and frictionally

engages the inner periphery of the outer decorative frame in a secure manner. When the two frames are so engaged with one another, a peripheral flange on the outer frame bears on the adhesive-carrying surface of the inner frame to ensure the secure retention of the picture on the inner frame.

To the accomplishment of the above and to such further objects as may hereinafter appear, the present invention relates to a picture frame assembly, substantially as defined in the appended claims and as described in the following specification taken together with the accompanying drawing in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one construction of the inner stretch frame of the picture frame of the invention with a protective backing provided over its adhesive-carrying surface;

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view taken across the line 2-2 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is an exploded view illustrating the basic elements of the picture frame of the invention;

FIG. 4 is a fragmentary cross-sectional view showing the manner in which the picture is secured to the inner stretch frame;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the assembled picture frame of the invention;

FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional view taken across the line 6-6 of FIG. 5; and

FIG. 7 is a perspective, exploded view of an alternate construction of the inner stretch frame.

The picture frame of this invention lends to itself for mass production at low cost, and is particularly useful in providing a decorative, and yet low-cost frame for paintings, lithographs and the like (hereinafter referred to as picture) printed or taped on canvas or canvaslike material.

The picture frame of the invention is formed of two basic elements, namely an inner stretch frame generally designated 10 (FIG. 1), and an outer decorative frame (FIG. 3) generally designated 12. The picture 14 is initially secured to one surface of the stretch frame 10, and the thus assembled stretch frame is then united or engaged with the outer decorative frame 12 without the use of fastening elements such as nails, clips, tacks or the like to form the completed unitary frame assembly shown in FIG. 5.

As shown in FIG. 1, stretch frame 10 may be in the form of a unitary injection molded plastic frame having four arms 16, 18, 20 and 22 connected at their adjacent ends. The upper surface of arms 16-22 (as viewed in FIG. 1) defines a rectangular picture-carrying, peripheral surface over which a narrow strip of any suitable, commercially available pressure-sensitive adhesive 24 is placed. As shown in FIG. 1, when stretch frame 10 is not in use the adhesive may be protected by placing a protective backing layer 26 over the adhesive.

Arms 16-22 each also respectively comprise depending side walls 28-34 which extend respectively from the outer edges of the upper surfaces of arms 16-22. Sidewalls 28-34 thus define a second peripheral surface substantially perpendicular to the picture-carrying surface. A similar peripheral surface 36 is defined by inner sidewalls which depend perpendicularly from the inner edges of the picture-carrying surface.

Locking means in the form of tabs or lugs 38 are formed in inner frame 10 and have free ends that project outwardly (and inwardly as viewed in FIG. 3) from each of the sidewalls 28-34. As shown, two tabs 38 are attached near the ends of each of arms 16-22 along the intersection of the upper surfaces of the arms and the sidewalls 28-34 near the four corners of the inner frame 10 (FIGS. 2 and 4).

The outer decorative frame 12 is preferably made of a soft wood such as pine and is generally rectangular in shape. Frame 12 includes a decorative frame part 40 (FIG. 5) which may be molded, shaped and colored to assume any desired decorative appearance. Sloping surfaces 42-48 extend inwardly from the front frame part 40 and terminate at the upper edge of four inner vertical walls 50 (only two of which can be seen in FIG. 3). The four inner walls 50 define an inner peripheral wall of the decorative frame 12. An inner peripheral flange 52 (two sections of which can be seen in FIG. 3) extends inwardly and perpendicularly from walls 50.

To construct the unitary picture frame of the invention, the backing layer 26 is first removed by hand from the adhesive coating on the inner frame upper surface, to thereby expose the adhesive surface. The picture 14 is then secured to the upper surface of the inner frame by pressing the upper adhesive-carrying surface of the stretch frame onto the rear surface of the picture, taking care that the corners of the frame are in accurate registration with the corners of the picture.

The inner frame with the picture secured thereto is then inserted into the interior of the decorative frame which is positioned with its decorative face part 40 facing down. Upon the downward movement of the inner frame the locking tabs engage inner peripheral walls 48 of the decorative frame, and the resulting camming action on the tabs causes them to be flexed inwardly by walls 50 until picture 14 comes to rest on peripheral flange 52 (FIG. 6). At this time the free ends of tabs 38 dig into the soft wood of inner peripheral walls 50 to thereby effectively frictionally engage the inner and outer frames and prevent the release of the inner frame from its engagement with the outer frame.

Moreover, flange 52 at this time bears against the outer border of the picture over its area where it is secured to the adhesive-carrying upper surface of the stretch frame. Flange 52 in this manner exerts pressure on the picture and adhesive to ensure the secure retention of the picture on the inner stretch frame.

FIG. 7 illustrates an alternate construction of the stretch frame in which each of the frame arms is in the form of a hollow rectangular member 54 having the adhesive layer 24 formed only on their upper surfaces. The arms are joined to one another at their respectively adjacent ends by means of corner joining members 56. Each corner member 56 has a base 58 from which extend two three-sided insert members 60 arranged at right angles to one another. The locking tabs 38 project outwardly from the two sidewalls 62 depending from base 58. The inner stretch frame is formed by inserting and snap fitting the insert members of four such corner members into the hollow interiors of adjacent frame arms 54 to achieve a secure, fit between the arms and the corner members. The retention between the corner members and the stretch frame arms is increased by the bearing of the decorative frame inner flange on the picture-carrying surface of the stretch frame.

The picture frame of the invention thus satisfies the objects set out above in that it permits the fabrication of a decorative and yet sturdy picture frame at a low cost and without the need for fastening elements such as bolts, tacks or clips. Moreover, the manner in which the picture is initially secured to the inner stretch frame allows the use of pictures formed on

canvas or canvaslike material while retaining the picture surface flat and wrinkle free. The manner of engagement of the inner stretch frame and outer decorative frame not only ensures the reliable retention of the two frames to form the completed frame assembly, but also ensures the reliable retention of the picture on the adhesive surface of the stretch frame. The use of the stretch frame of FIG. 7 permits the ready adaptation of the size of the picture frame to accommodate pictures of varying dimensions simply by mating the corner members with frame arms of the desired length.

While only several embodiments of the invention have been herein specifically described, it will be apparent that modifications may be made therein all without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A unitary picture frame assembly comprising an inner frame including a first peripheral surface having means for securing an image-carrying surface provided over at least a portion thereof, and a second peripheral surface perpendicular to said first peripheral surface, an outer decorative frame having an inner peripheral surface and a peripheral flange extending substantially perpendicularly therefrom, and locking means including flexible tab means provided on said second peripheral surface of said inner frame and having a free end extending therefrom for frictionally engaging the inner periphery of said outer decorative frame, for retaining said inner frame to said outer frame and form said unitary assembly with said peripheral flange bearing on said first peripheral surface of said inner frame.

2. The frame assembly of claim 1, in which said securing means comprises an adhesive substance arranged over said first peripheral surface of said inner frame.

3. The frame assembly of claim 2, in which said adhesive substance is a pressure-sensitive adhesive, and said outer frame peripheral flange engages said inner frame adhesive-carrying portion to maintain pressure on the border of the image surface and said adhesive carrying portion.

4. The frame assembly of claim 2, in which said inner frame comprises four arms respectively interconnected at their ends to define an inner opening, said adhesive substance being placed over an image-receiving first peripheral surface of each of said arms, said flexible tab means being located adjacent the ends of each of said arms.

5. The assembly of claim 4, further comprising four corner means for connecting adjacent ones of said arms, said tab means being secured at another of its ends to each of said corner means.

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