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(54) **METHOD AND APPARATUS TO DRY PAINT BRUSHES**

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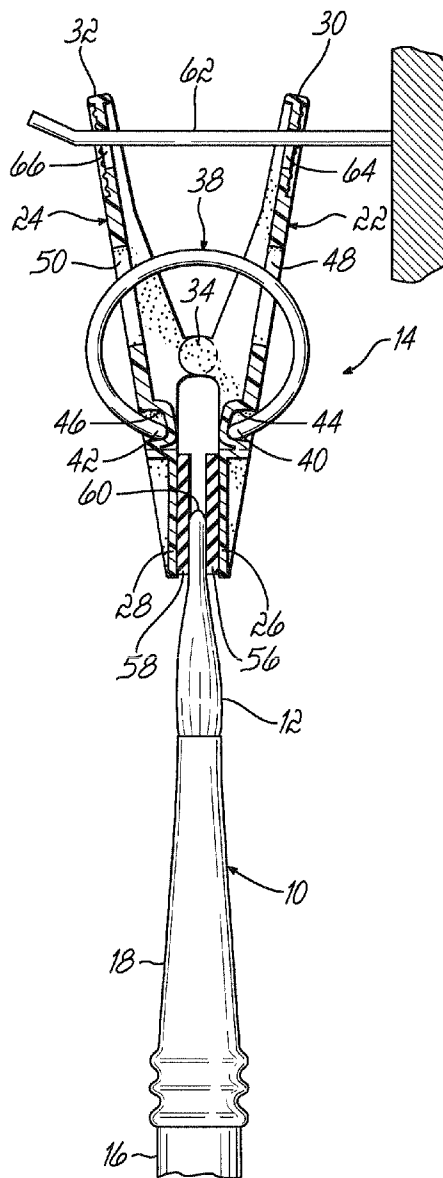
(57) **ABSTRACT**

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In order to prolong the useful life of an artist's paint brush, the paint brush is supported from a clamp while drying. The clamp has first and second coplanar surfaces which clamp against the tip of the brush supporting it as it drying. The clamping surfaces are covered with a compressible material such as an open cell foam rubber. The compressible material prevents the bristles of the brushes from spreading out excessively and the open celled foam further facilitates wicking of liquid from the brush as it dries.

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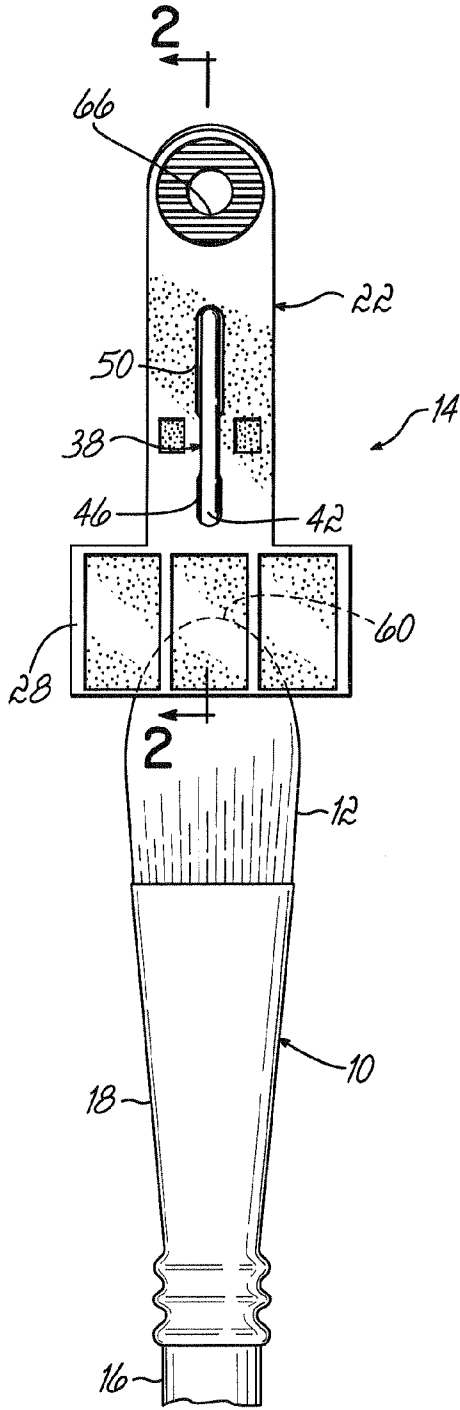


FIG. 1

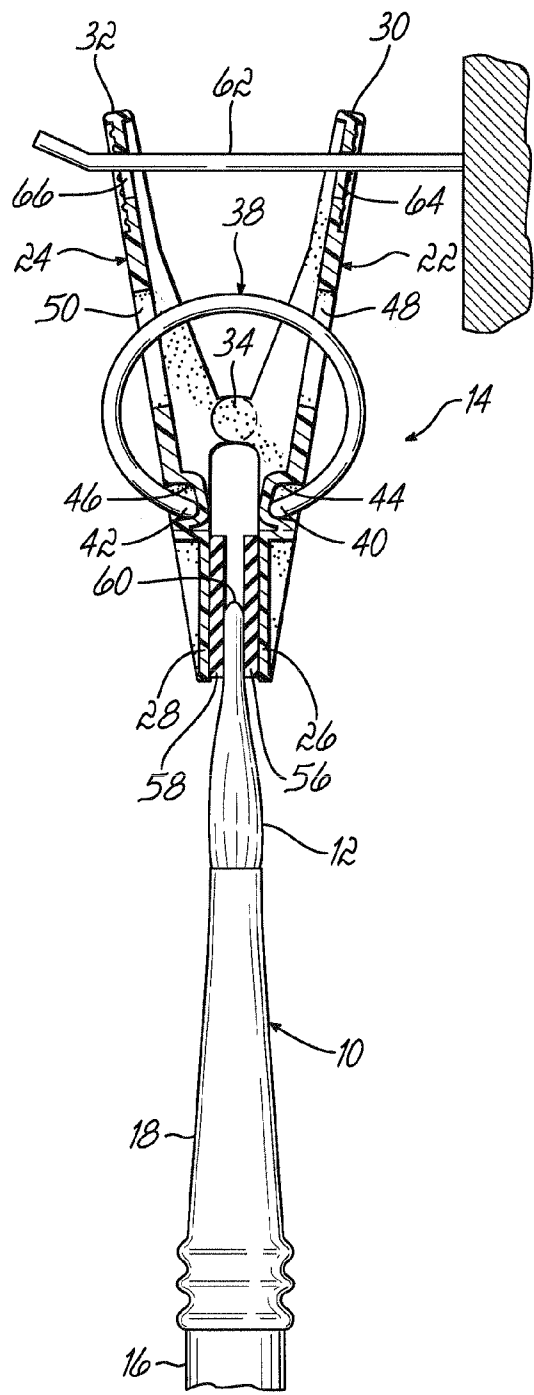


FIG. 2

METHOD AND APPARATUS TO DRY PAINT BRUSHES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Artists use paint brushes to work in oil paint, acrylic paint, and watercolors, as well as other media. Since the time of the “impressionist” artists in the nineteenth century, artists often have used flat, wide brushes having a rectangular or oval cross-section in order to do detailed work and give the maximum amount of control over their paint or color medium. When using these types of flat brushes, it is important that the brushes have a sharp, chiseled edge, as they do when they are new. Unfortunately, as paint brushes get old and used, the bristles on the brushes tend to curve and spread away from each other and this sharp edge is lost.

[0002] These flat paint brushes are named “Flats” and “Brights” when the bristles are all cut to the same length, giving a flat shape at the tip of the bristles. When the bristles are cut into a curved, convex edge, the brushes are called “Filberts” or Long Filberts”.

[0003] Typically, artists who use paint brushes clean their brushes with soap and water following a painting session. In the case of oil paints, they may first clean the brush in a solvent, such as turpentine, and then clean the brush with soap and water to remove the solvent. Again, paint brush bristles tend to spread out and lose their original sharp edge more and more each time the brush is used and cleaned. This spreading naturally happens as paint builds up at the base of the bristles where the bristles enter the ferrule, or metal piece, that connects the bristles to the handle of the brush.

[0004] A worn brush that does not have a sharp edge is not nearly as useful to the artist. Such a worn brush cannot be used to paint sharp, accurate detail as a new brush with a sharp edge. As the brush ages and loses its shape, the artist loses control over the paint while using such a brush.

[0005] Historically, artists have tried to do various things to shape their brushes and maintain their original shape as they get old. For example, some artists dip their brushes, after washing them, into a “stiffening” fluid such as milk, or saliva, or soap, and then shape them with their fingers and then allow them to dry. This is time consuming and in some cases unsanitary. In addition, it does not work very well since there is nothing to positively hold the bristles in the desired shape as the brush dries. Moreover, if placed on a table top to dry, the bristles can dry in a curved, bent shape rather than straight due to the shape of the handle and bristles. Also if the brush rolls slightly or touches anything on the tabletop while drying, the bristles can dry in a curved, bent shape, which is undesirable.

[0006] In another attempt to have old paint brushes have a sharp, chiseled edge, one artist was known to place brushes between small pieces of cardboard while still wet after washing and securing the pieces of cardboard in place using rubber bands. This is very time consuming and awkward considering that artists frequently use up to 30 or more brushes in a single painting session. As it gets wet, the cardboard loses its strength and shape. This frequently leads to the bristles drying in a different configuration than they were in when the cardboard was first attached. Moreover, the wet cardboard can slow the rate of drying of the brush and cause moisture to be trapped in the metal ferrule which attaches the bristles to the wooden handle of the brush. Over time, this can lead to rotting of the wooden handle and/or corrosion of the metal ferrule, whereon the bristles can loosen and fall out. These disadvantages have caused very few artists to use this technique today.

[0007] The only other alternative to insure that one’s paint brushes have a sharp, chiseled edge is to frequently discard the older, misshapen brushes and replace them with new brushes. This is very expensive.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The present invention is premised on the realization that artists’ paint brushes can be dried in a manner that promotes the retention of the shape of the tips of the brushes. More particularly, the brushes are supported by a spring biased clip having two gripping coplanar surfaces. The coplanar surfaces are preferably covered with a compressible material, such as open celled foam rubber pads. The tips of the brushes are inserted between the pads, which holds the bristles in position as they dry without excessively spreading them out, thus maintaining the shapes of the tips. The clips are supported from the opposite ends so that the brush dries hanging from the clip. The open celled foam rubber supports drying by wicking away the liquid on the bristles.

[0009] The present invention can be used on any size of paint brush with bristles forming a general rectangular or oval cross-section where a sharp, chiseled edge is desirable at the tip of the bristles.

[0010] The objects and advantages of the present invention will be further appreciated in light of the following detailed description and drawings in which:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0011] FIG. 1 is a front view of the present invention;
- [0012] FIG. 2 is a side view partially in cross section taken as lines 2-2 of FIG. 1, but supported by a hanger; and
- [0013] FIG. 3 is an overhead plan view of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0014] According to the present invention, a paint brush 10 is supported from its bristles 12 by a clamp 14. As shown, the brush 10 includes a handle 16 with a ferrule 18, which holds the bristles 12 in position attached to the handle.

[0015] The clamp 14 includes first and second clamp portions 22 and 24. Each clamp portion has planar clamp surfaces 26 and 28, which are generally coplanar with respect to each other. Opposite the clamping surfaces 26 and 28 are first and second gripping members 30 and 32.

[0016] Clamp portions 22 and 24 include central interengaging hinge portions 34 and 36, which snap together and hold the two clamp portions 22 and 24 together and allow rotation about the formed hinge to open and close the clamp 14. Clamp portions 22 and 24, held together at a hinge 34 are biased together at their clamping surfaces 26, and 28 by a ring-shaped spring 38 having first and second ends 40 and 42, which rest in indented portions 44 and 46, located between the hinge 34 and the clamping surfaces 26 and 28, respectively. The ring 38 extends from indented portion 44 through openings 48 and 50, into the indented portion 44.

[0017] The clamp 14 including clamping surfaces 26 and 28 is formed from a rigid plastic material such as a polyamide or a rigid polyvinyl chloride, or the like. Preferably, the plastic is a thermoplastic, and the clamping members 22 and 24 are formed by injection molding.

[0018] The clamping surfaces 26 and 28 are covered with a material that is compressible relative to the clamping surfaces and, preferably, foam rubber pads 56 and 58. The foam rubber

pads are formed from an open cell natural rubber foam having a patterned surface to promote wicking of the liquid away from the bristles of the brush, as discussed below. The thickness of the pads 56 and 58 should be about 1/16 to about 1/8-inch thick, or greater.

[0019] To use the clamp 14 of the present invention, a tip 60 of the bristles 12 of brush 10 is positioned between the clamping surfaces 26 and 28 of the opened clamp. The clamp 14 is allowed to close, compressing the tip 60 with the foam rubber pads 56 and 58. The clamp is then supported with the brush hanging down from the clamp 14. As shown in FIG. 2, the clamp 14 is supported by a hanger 62, which extends through holes 64 and 66 in the gripping members 30 and 32. The paint brush is then supported in a vertical position until dried.

[0020] The clamp may be supported in any other manner, such as on a string that runs underneath hinge 34 or a carousel of rods.

[0021] The ring spring 38 further can be replaced by any other type of spring which biases the clamping surfaces 26 and 28 together. Such structures are well known. Preferably, the spring will exert only enough pressure to support the brush while in an upright position. Excessive pressure will cause the bristles to separate, although the sponge rubber pads 56 and 58 will reduce the likelihood of this occurrence.

[0022] Thus, by using the present invention, the paint brushes can be easily supported during drying in a manner that will prolong the useful life of the brush, maintaining a sharp, crisp tip, which facilitates further use. Hanging the brushes from the bristles keeps the bristles straight. The compression on the bristles keeps the tip sharp. Further, the foam pad prevents the bristles from spreading out. This maintains the tip of the brush in a near original condition even after repeated uses. Finally, the open cell foamed pads promote drying of the bristles. The present invention is also very easy to use and inexpensive.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of drying a wet paint brush having bristles, said bristles having a tip comprising:

compressing said bristles with a clamp, said clamp having first and second opposed coplanar clamping surfaces; wherein said bristles are positioned between said clamping surfaces and said brush is supported in a vertical position by the pressure of said clamping surfaces.

2. The method claimed in claim 1 wherein said clamping surfaces comprise a compressible surface.

3. The method claimed in claim 2 wherein said compressible surface comprises a compressible open cell foam rubber.

4. The method claimed in claim 4 wherein said clamp is supported by a hanger, and said brush hangs downwardly from said clamp with a handle of said brush below said bristles.

5. A clamp having first and second coplanar clamping surfaces, said surfaces covered with a soft compressible foam rubber;

said clamping surfaces being spring biased toward each other.

6. The clamp claimed in claim 5 in combination with a paint brush, said paint brush having bristles, said bristles located between said coplanar clamping surfaces with said foam rubber pads engaging said bristles.

7. The clamp claimed in claim 6 wherein said clamp further includes arms extending from said clamping surfaces, said clamp is supported by a supporting member with said brush hanging downwardly from said clamp.

8. A method of supporting a paint brush as said paint brush dries, said brush having a handle and bristles, said bristles having a tip, said method comprising clamping said bristles with a clamp and supporting said clamp with said brush in a vertical position hanging down from said clamp;

said clamp having first and second coplanar clamping surfaces, said clamping surfaces covered with a compressible material and wherein said compressible material engages the tip of said brush to thereby support said brush.

9. The method claimed in claim 8 wherein said compressible material is an open celled foam rubber.

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