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(54) **FIXTURE SUPPORT MEMBER ASSEMBLY**

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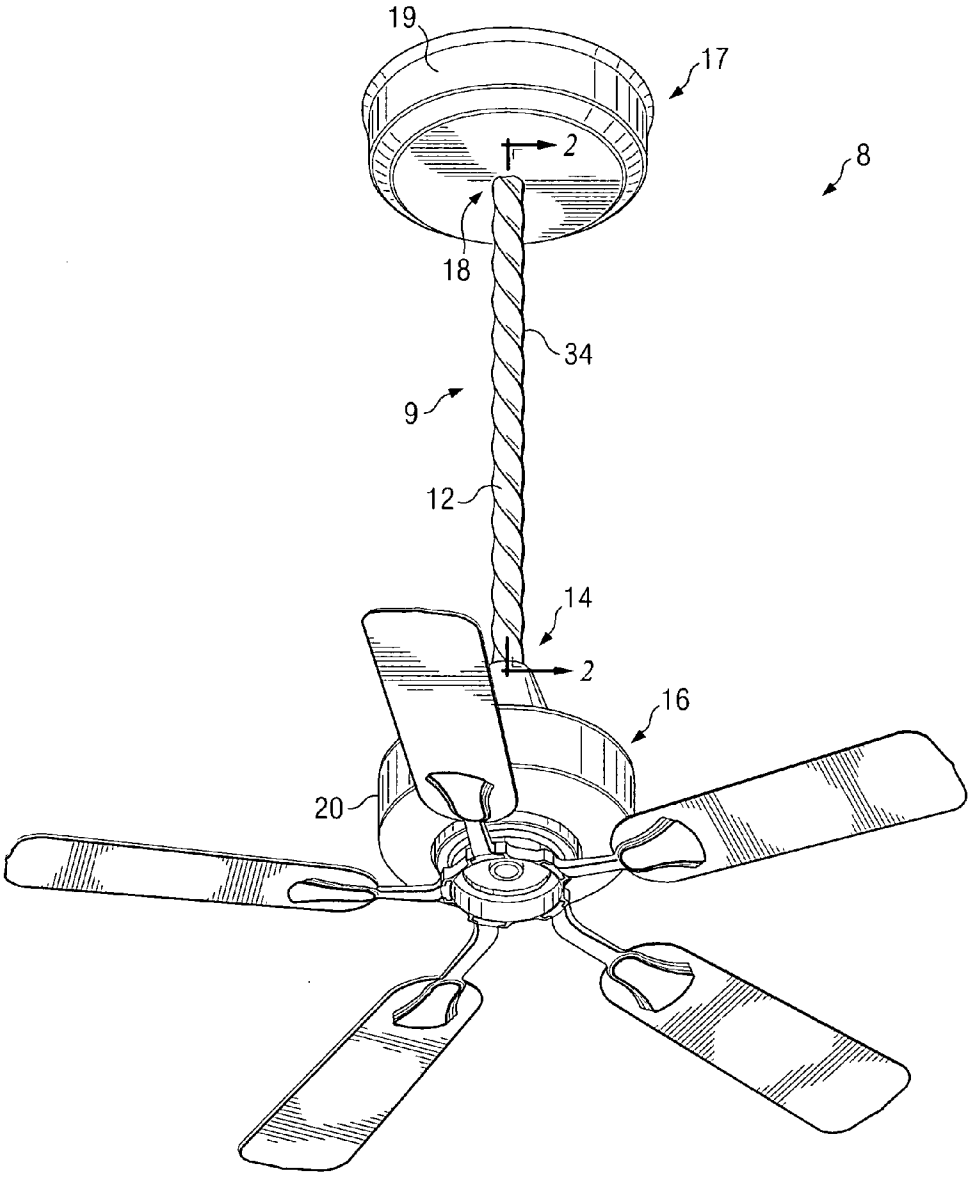
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A fixture support member assembly comprises a downrod configured to support a fixture from an elevated structure, the downrod having a sidewall molded onto an exterior surface thereof.



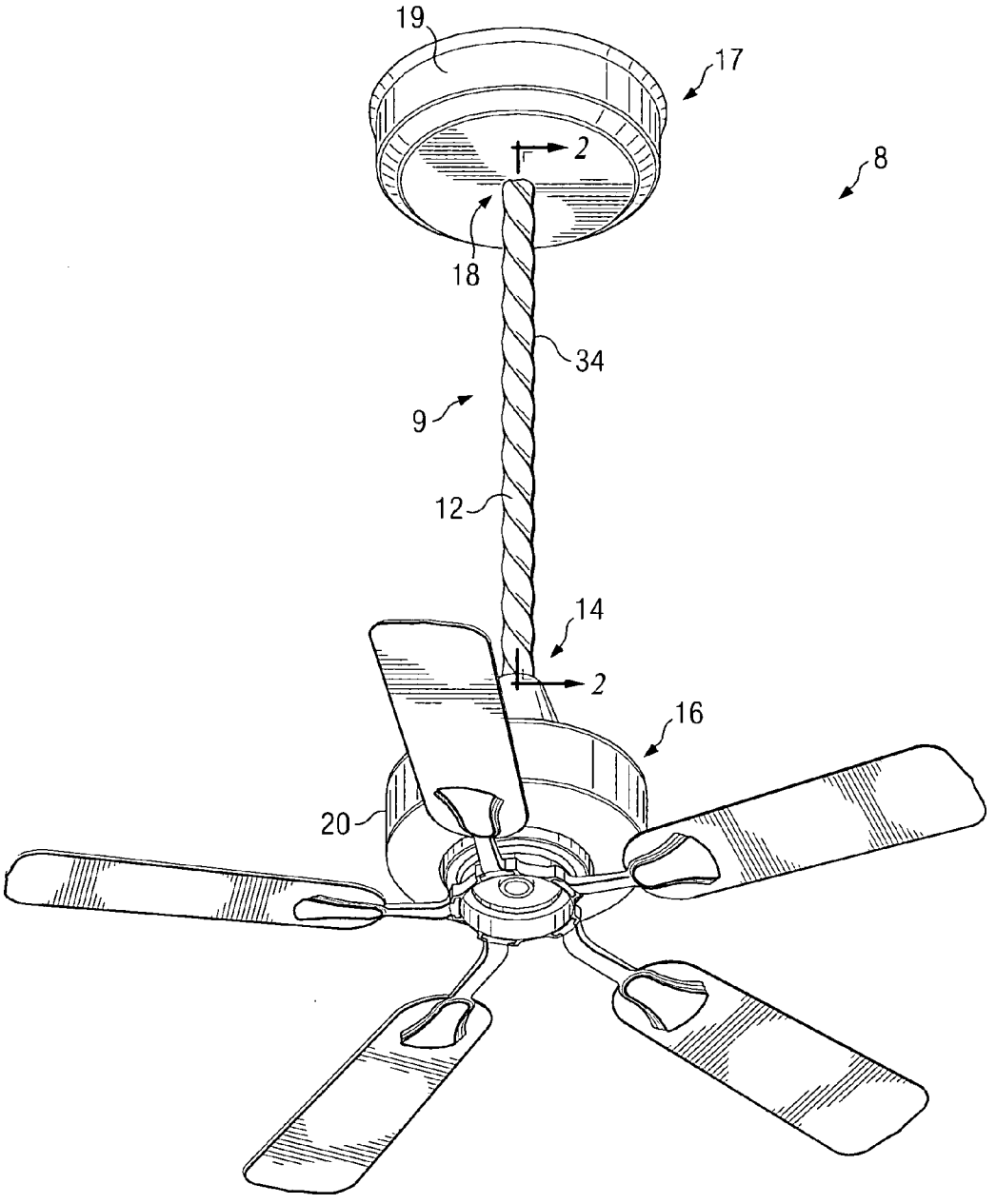


FIG. 1

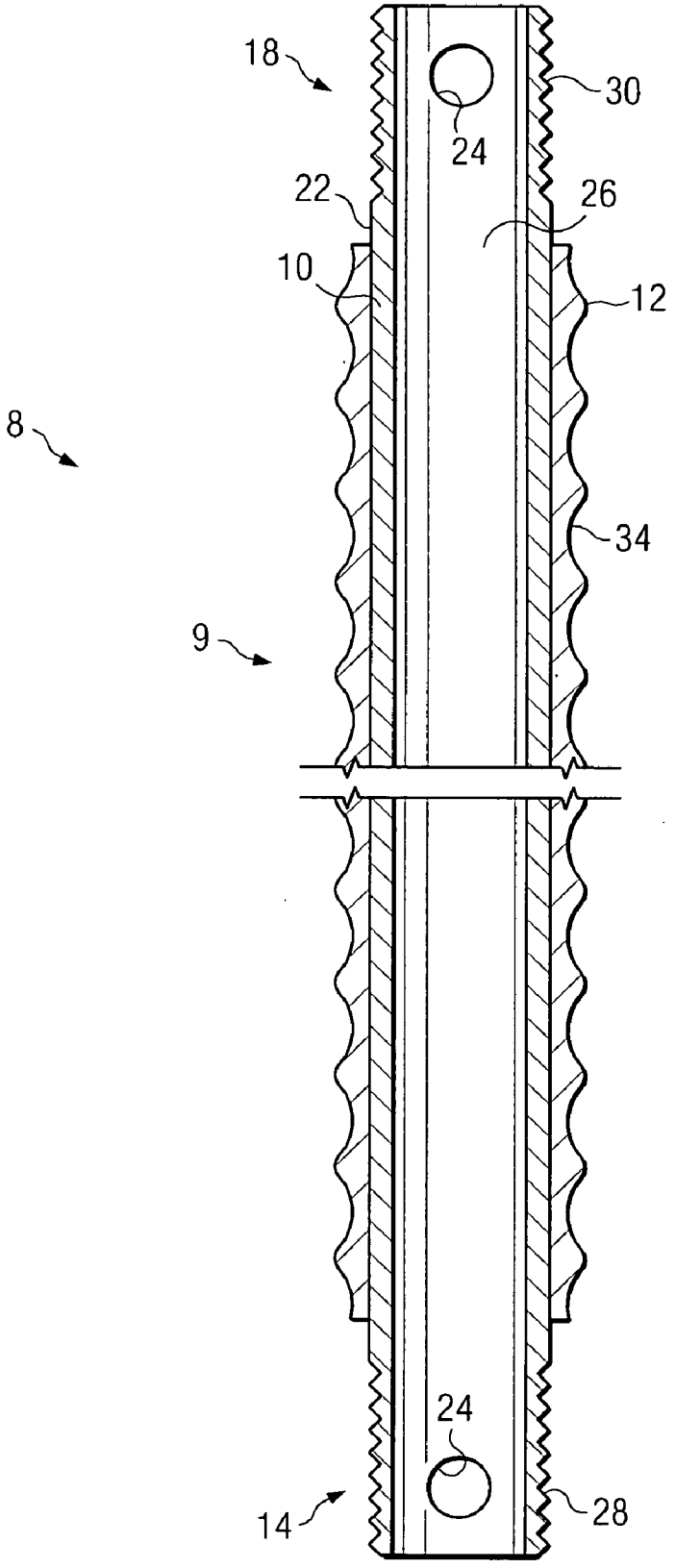


FIG. 2

FIXTURE SUPPORT MEMBER ASSEMBLY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Downrods are used to support and/or suspend fixtures such as ceiling fans, pendants, chandeliers, or other items from a ceiling or other structure. Such downrods are typically fabricated to engage the fixture on one end and a ceiling/ceiling fixture on the other end. Such downrods are generally a metallic pipe and do not readily enhance the ornamentation or decoration of the attached fixture.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0002] For a more complete understanding of the present invention, and the objects and advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following descriptions taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0003] FIG. **1** is a diagram illustrating a perspective view of an embodiment of a fixture support member assembly in accordance with the present invention; and

[0004] FIG. **2** is a diagram illustrating a section view of the fixture support member assembly of FIG. **1** taken along the line **2-2** of FIG. **1**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] The preferred embodiments of the present invention and the advantages thereof are best understood by referring to FIGS. **1-2** of the drawings, like numerals being used for like and corresponding parts of the various drawings.

[0006] FIG. **1** is a diagram illustrating a perspective view of an embodiment of a fixture support member assembly **8** in accordance with the present invention. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**, fixture support member assembly **8** comprises a fixture support member **9** having a first end **14** coupleable to a fixture **16** and a second end **18** coupleable to an elevated structure **17** such as a ceiling fixture **19** or other support structure (e.g., coupleable directly to a ceiling or other elevated structure). In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**, fixture **16** comprises a ceiling fan **20**; however, it should be understood that fixture support member **9** may be used to support other types of fixtures, such as, but not limited to, a chandelier, pendant or any other type of device mountable from a ceiling or other elevated structure. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**, fixture support member **9** comprises a generally cylindrical cross section and an exterior molded sidewall **12**; however, it should be understood that fixture support member **9** may be otherwise configured (e.g., square cross section, oval cross section, rectangular cross section, etc.). Preferably molded sidewall **12** comprises an enhancing exterior surface **34** that enhances the overall appearance of fixture support member **9**. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**, enhancing exterior surface **34** comprises a "twisting" or "spiraling" appearance; however, it should be understood that enhancing surface **34** may be otherwise configured to enhance the overall appearance of fixture support member **9**.

[0007] FIG. **2** is a diagram illustrating a section view of fixture support member **9** of FIG. **1** taken along the line **2-2** of FIG. **1**. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **2**, fixture support member **9** comprises a downrod **10** having molded sidewall **12** molded and/or otherwise permanently attached to an exterior surface **22** thereof to cover at least a portion of exterior surface **22**. In some embodiments of the present invention, downrod **10** is fabricated from a metallic material; however, it should be understood that downrod **10** may be fabricated from other materials such as plastic, for example.

[0008] In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **2**, downrod **10** comprises a hollow interior **26** to serve as an electrical conduit for the passage of electrical connections to fixture **16** (FIG. **1**); however, it should be understood that hollow interior **26** may be omitted from downrod **10** (e.g., a solid downrod **10**) when supporting fixtures **16** that do not require electricity or in which it is not necessary to pass electrical or other types of connections through interior **26** to fixture **16**. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **2**, downrod **10** comprises a pair of threaded ends **28** and **30** disposed on first end **14** and second end **18**, respectively, for attachment of fixture support member **9** to fixture **16** and ceiling fixture **19** and/or any other elevated support structure. Additionally and/or alternatively, fixture support member **9** may be attached to fixture **16** and/or ceiling fixture **19** via a pin or bolt insertable within or through openings **24** formed and/or otherwise disposed in downrod **10**. Sidewall **12** preferably circumferentially about downrod **10** on surface **22** and extends longitudinally at least partially between threaded ends **28** and **30** to overlay and to cover a desired portion of exterior surface **22** of downrod **10**; however, it should be understood that sidewall **12** may be configured to extend and overlay the entire surface of downrod **10** such that threaded ends **28** and **30** would be formed in sidewall **12** or otherwise omitted from downrod **10** in their entirety.

[0009] In some embodiments of the present invention, fixture support member **9** is fabricated by placing downrod **10** within a mold configured to produce a desired ornamentation of sidewall **12** and enhancing surface **34** (e.g., the "twisting" or "spiraling" appearance illustrated in FIG. **1**). In some embodiments of the present invention, the mold is a two-piece silicone mold sized to receive downrod **10**. With downrod **10** placed in the mold, the mold is filled with a resin mixture which conforms and bonds directly to surface **22** of downrod **10** to form sidewall **12** and enhancing surface **34**. Downrod **10** preferably remains within the mold as the resin mixture hardens/cures and bonds to downrod **10**. After the mixture has cured, downrod **10** is removed from the mold for drying and cooling. After sidewall **12** dries and cools, downrod **10** is further processed, such as, for example, by grinding parting lines, removing burrs, cleaning and/or removing residue from enhanced surface **34** by immersing downrod **10** in an alkalain water solution, threading first and/or second ends **14** and **18**, patching air holes on enhanced surface **34**, and sanding, polishing and painting enhanced surface **34** to obtain the finished fixture support member **9**. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **1**, the resin mixture used to form molded sidewall **12** preferably comprises a stone powder and resin mixture that bonds directly to surface **22** of downrod **10**. In some embodiments of the present invention, the resin mixture comprises a polyresin; however, it should be understood that the resin mixture may comprise other types of materials or compounds. In some embodiments of the present invention, a hardening agent may be applied to and/or included in the mixture to strengthen/harden sidewall **12**.

[0010] Thus, embodiments of the present invention enable a downrod **10** to be fabricated having a decorative molded exterior surface **34**.

What is claimed is:

1. A fixture support member assembly, comprising:

a downrod configured to support a fixture from an elevated structure, the downrod having a sidewall molded onto an exterior surface thereof.

2. The support member assembly of claim **1**, wherein the sidewall extends at least partially between first and second ends of the downrod.

3. The support member assembly of claim **1**, wherein the sidewall extends circumferentially about the downrod.

4. The support member assembly of claim **1**, wherein the downrod comprises a cylindrical downrod.

5. The support member assembly of claim **1**, wherein the sidewall comprises a mixture of stone powder and a resin.

6. The support member assembly of claim **5**, wherein the resin is a polyresin.

7. The support member assembly of claim **1**, wherein the downrod is configured having a cylindrical cross section.

8. A method of manufacturing a fixture support member assembly, comprising:

disposing a downrod within a mold; and

pouring a resin mixture within the mold to form a sidewall on the downrod.

9. The method of claim **8**, further comprising disposing the downrod in a silicone mold.

10. The method of claim **8**, further comprising applying a hardening agent to the resin mixture.

11. The method of claim **8**, further comprising disposing a cylindrical downrod in the mold.

12. The method of claim **8**, further comprising forming the sidewall to extend circumferentially about the downrod.

13. The method of claim **8**, wherein pouring a mixture within the mold comprises pouring a mixture of stone powder and a polyresin within the mold.

14. A fixture support member assembly, comprising:

a downrod coupleable at one end to an elevated structure, the downrod having a sidewall molded to an exterior surface thereof; and

a ceiling fan coupleable to a second end of the downrod.

15. The fixture support member assembly of claim **14**, wherein the sidewall extends at least partially between the first and second ends of the downrod.

16. The fixture support member assembly of claim **14**, wherein the sidewall extends circumferentially about the downrod.

17. The fixture support member assembly of claim **14**, wherein the sidewall comprises a resin and stone powder mixture.

18. The fixture support member assembly of claim **17**, wherein the resin comprises a polyresin.

19. The fixture support member assembly of claim **14**, wherein the downrod comprises a cylindrical downrod.

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