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Kolster et al.

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[54] **COMBINATION STORAGE AND DISPLAY RACK**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** **312/117**; 211/55; 312/234

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A47b 47/00**; A47b 87/02

[58] **Field of Search** 312/50, 117, 118, 120, 312/183, 234; 211/55, 148; 40/78

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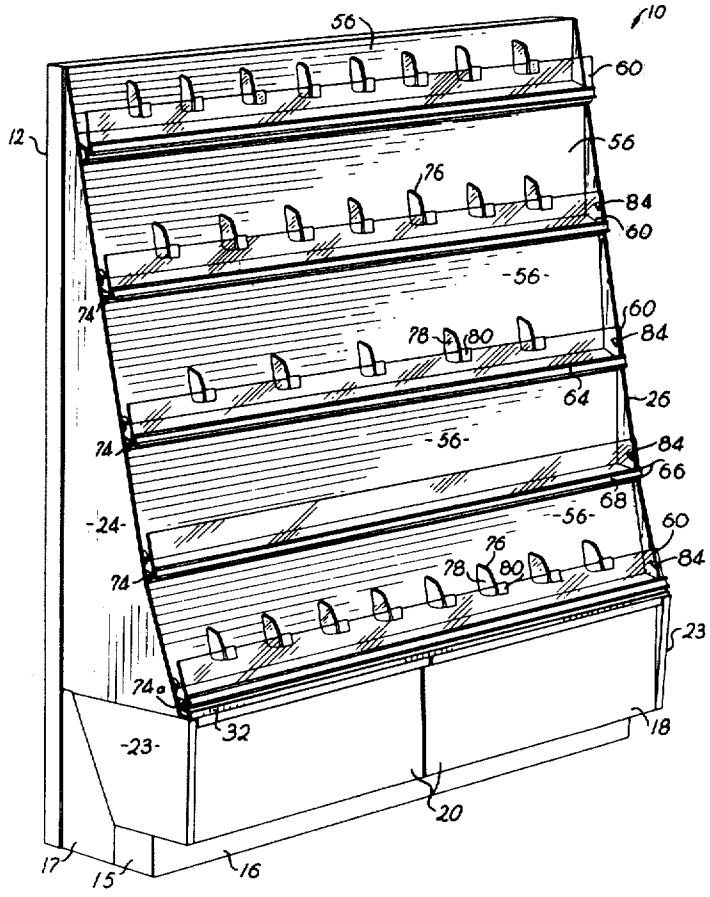
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A low cost, multi-purpose fixture for showcasing greeting cards or the like which includes a series of upright, vertically stacked, horizontally extending card supporting racks arranged to provide full view display of each type of card. The display racks are of uniform, generally J-shaped cross section permitting relatively inexpensive extrusion fabrication thereof and normally are located in inclined, covering disposition to adjacent, rearward, open pockets adapted for storage of replacement supplies of merchandise. In preferred forms, forward upright sections of the individual racks are of transparent material to serve as keepers which do not in any way interfere with full viewing of the displayed articles and facilitate customer selection thereof without the need for individual inspection of each article in the fixture. When restocking of the fixture is required, the separate display racks can simply be swung open to permit access to the replacement supplies of merchandise stored in the pockets therebehind. In this fashion restocking time and costs are drastically reduced, and a convenient method for determining the need for reordering is provided by virtue of the fact that a dealer's entire supply of a given article can be conveniently stored in one section of a single display fixture.

10 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures



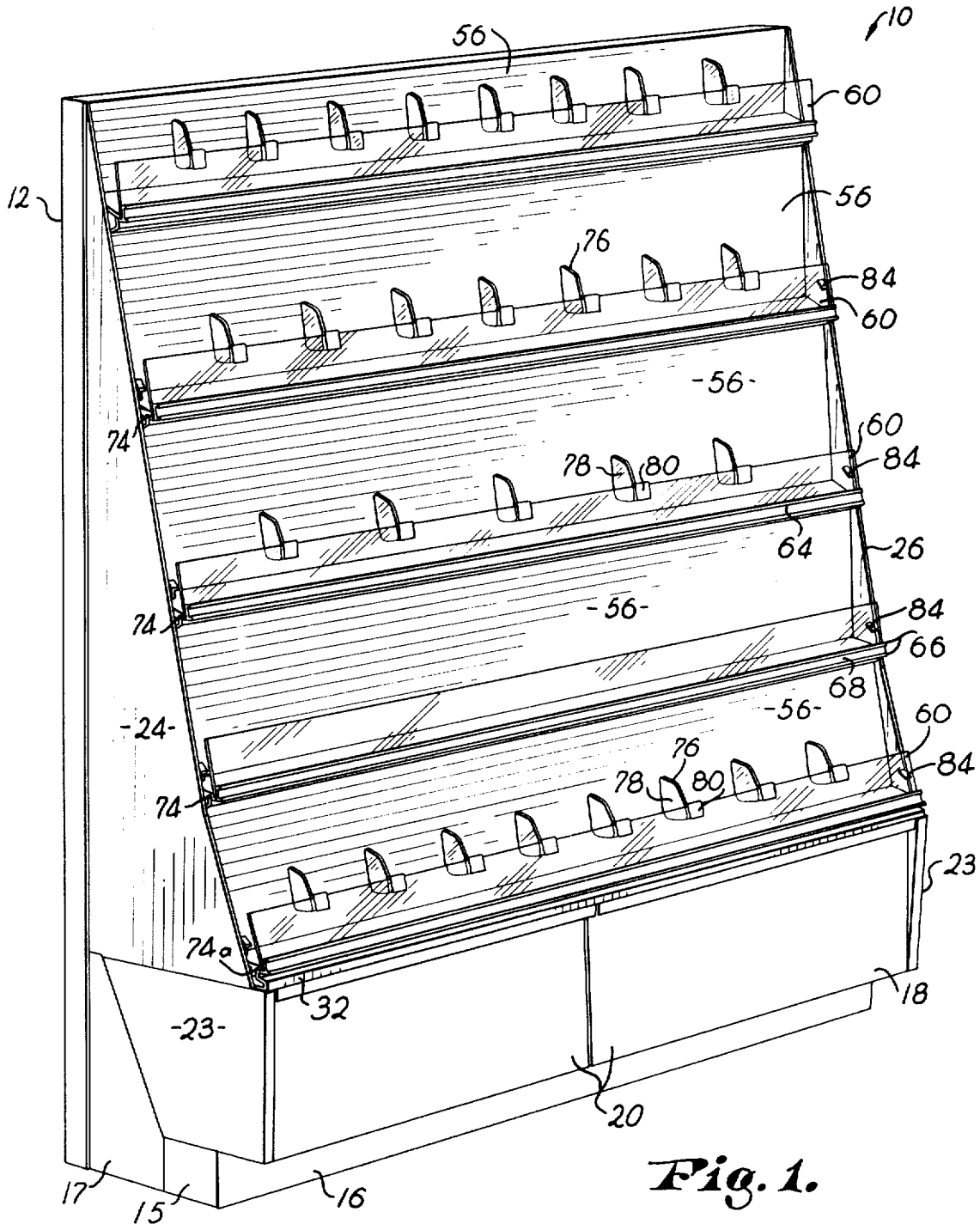

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Fig. 1.

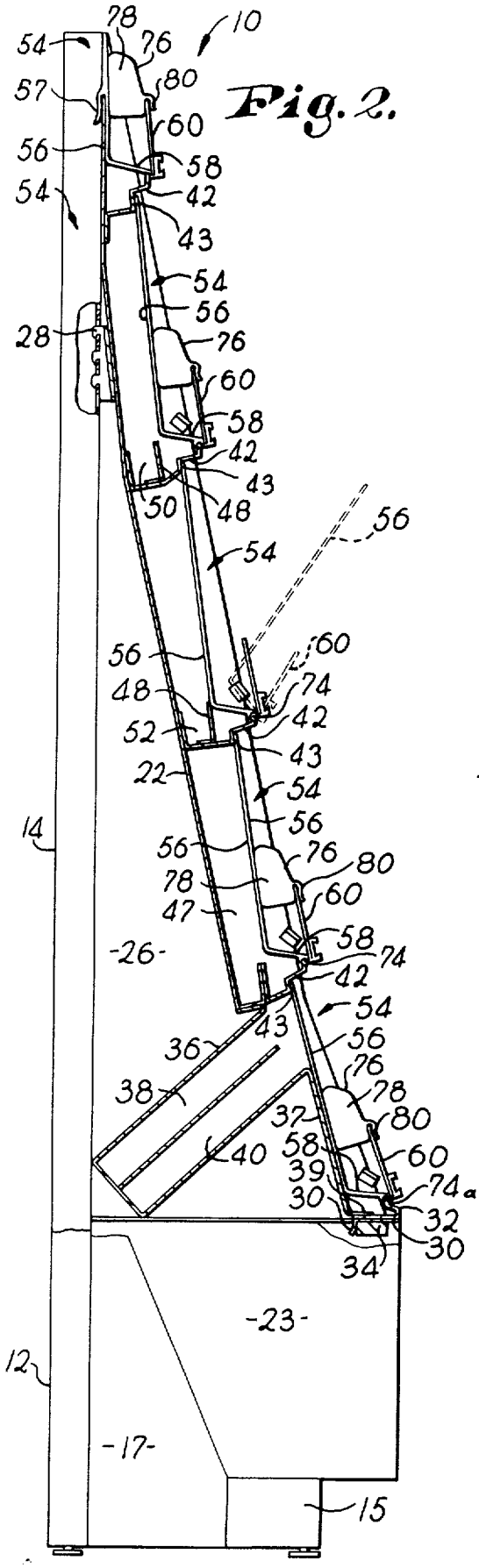


Fig. 2.

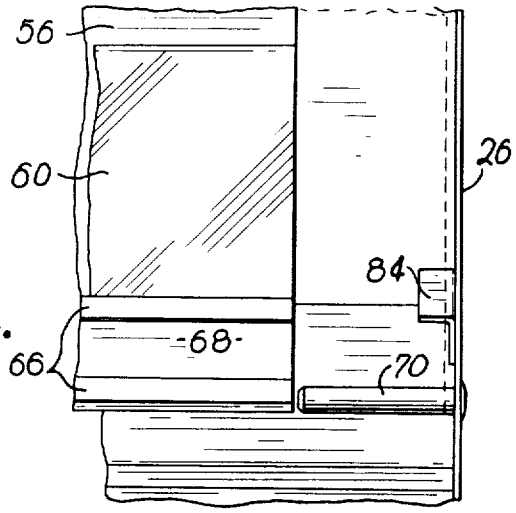


Fig. 4.

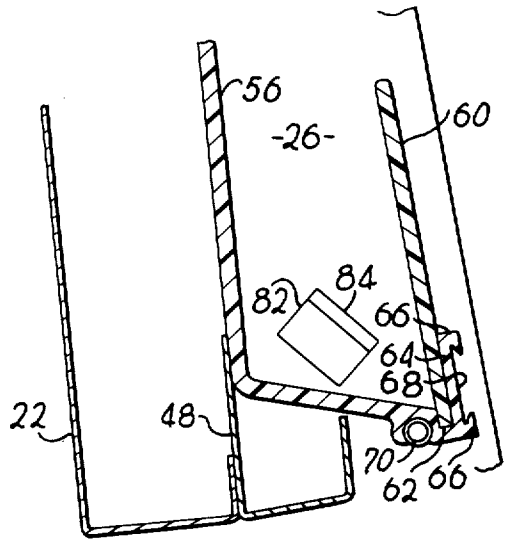


Fig. 5.

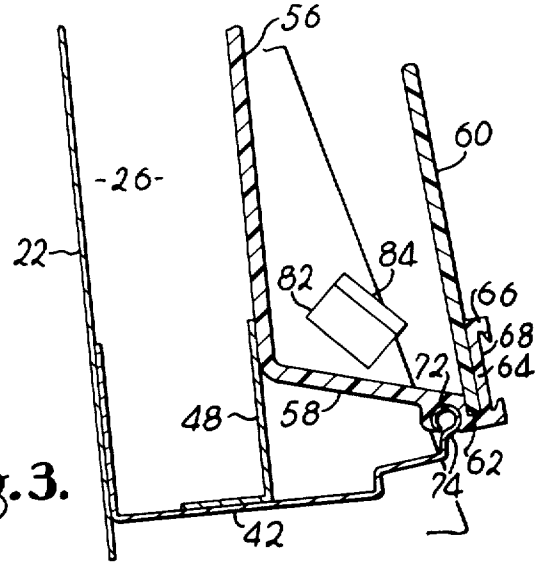


Fig. 3.

COMBINATION STORAGE AND DISPLAY RACK

This invention relates to a low cost, multi-purpose fixture for displaying greeting cards, novelties or other similar items which includes merchandise storage pockets located directly behind separate, covering, independently pivotally mounted display racks which are adapted to receive merchandise for sale. More particularly, it is concerned with a display fixture which includes vertically staggered, inclined back wall structure defining a series of vertically stacked, horizontally extending storage pockets, with separate, integral, transversely extending, extruded synthetic resin display racks of uniform, generally J-shaped cross section in covering disposition to the respective pockets for receiving sale articles and being pivotally openable to permit access to the storage pockets therebehind.

In the merchandising of greeting cards, small ceramic novelties and other generally planar items, it has conventionally been a practice to employ upstanding display fixtures which generally are relatively bulky in size and that usually include a series of transversely extending, stepped ledges having upright keeper walls along the forwardmost edges of the individual ledges. Such fixtures have also frequently included overhead fluorscent or incandescent lighting to illuminate the displayed articles, as well as storage drawers therebelow located to receive replacement supplies of merchandise. The articles to be displayed are simply placed in the respective sections of the fixture for customer inspection and selection. In order to permit display of a maximum number of cards in a minimum of vertical space, they were usually supported in overlapping layers with two-thirds of each row, except for the one at the bottom, being obscured by the row of cards therebelow. Relatively large storage drawers were necessarily required to provide replacement stock for the large number of cards on display and the resulting card display unit was not only of relatively large size but more importantly was expensive and did not do a totally effective job of effectively merchandising the cards placed on display therein.

Although prior display fixtures as described have been successfully used in the past, steady increases in the costs of merchandising space have made it mandatory that more efficient product display units now be made available to retail outlets. Not only must the display units occupy less overall space, but desirably they should also make it unnessary for customers to manually inspect the various displayed articles by individually removing the same from the fixture for perusal thereof until a final selection is made. As can be appreciated, this is not only a time consuming process which inevitably lessens the number of prospective customers which may have access to a given display, but moreover merchandise losses due to the frequent handling of the displayed articles by customers is accentuated.

Futhermore, distributors and shopkeepers have long been aware that the restocking of conventional display fixtures is a costly and time consuming procedure. When it was determined that the supply of a given item was insufficient, it was necessary to pull open the large, common storage drawers below the fixture, find the appropriate items (usually by manufacturer's number since the partially obscured cards in the rack could not be quickly identified by sight), restock the fixture and close the drawers. This procedure blocked off floor space, particularly in critical aisle areas and made it desireable that such restocking be done during hours when the store area was not open to the public. Waiting until the store closed to do restocking though presented problems with personnel to do the job and resulted in instances of lost sales where displayed articles became depleted but were still available in the storage areas.

One response to the problems outlined above is illustrated in co-owned U.S. Pat. No. 3,302,797 wherein a display fixture is disclosed having a series of independent, pivotally mounted display pockets for greeting cards, in conjunction with a separate storage area behind each display pocket for holding a supply of the cards on display. After selecting a particular card, the customer was required to pull open a respective shelf member to gain access to a card of the type chosen and to then reclose the combination shelf and door assembly. While the fixture illustrated in U.S. Pat. No. 3,302,797 provided an acceptable answer to a number of the problems that existed theretofore, the cost of the structure in many instances rendered it uncompetitive with conventional rack type display units. This stemmed principally from the fact that the separate, independently openable display pockets had to be individually fabricated at relatively high cost. Furthermore, the general complexity of the fixture inherent in the use of separate display pockets for each individual article increased the cost of the overall fixture to a level which in many cases was unacceptable.

Another problem created by this type of fixture stemmed from the fact that only greeting cards of certain maximum dimensions corresponding to those of the display pockets could be effectively showcased therein. Also, it was impractical to display ceramic novelties or other oddly shaped articles in this type of fixture, thus limiting its overall utility.

It is therefore the most important object of this invention to provide a display fixture for articles such as greeting cards or the like which incorporates full face, unobscured display of the cards on a relatively narrow package that not only takes up very little floor space but still retains adequate storage for replacement stock, yet may be manufactured at a cost which renders it competitive with older style rack units when the overall advantages of the fixtures are compared one with the other.

A further important object of the invention is to provide a display fixture as described wherein economy of manufacture and fabrication is obtained without sacrifice of functionality by the use of generally J-shaped article display rack members which are of uniform cross sectional configuration so that they may be extruded from synthetic resin material using a relatively inexpensive die. Moreover, such racks lend themselves to pivotal mounting on the fixture housing so that they may be placed over storage pockets making up a part of the fixture housing whereby the rack members not only support the cards in full face disposition for complete viewing thereof by customers, but also serve to hide the storage compartment without interfering with ready access thereto when necessary to replenish the stock available to a purchaser.

Another object of the invention is to provide a combination display and storage fixture of the type described wherein positive retention of a number of cards of each display rack member is assured without blocking the customer's ability to see the entire face of the outermost of group of cards stacked one behind the

other on the display support by virtue of the use of upstanding transparent keeper walls forming the forward upright segment of the separate display racks. Thus, not only is customer selection of the displayed merchandise facilitated, but losses due to excessive customer handling and inspection of the displayed items are drastically reduced.

Yet another object of the invention is to provide a fixture as described which requires a minimum of floor space and permits the use of separate, plate like spacer means adapted to be secured to the transparent keeper segment of the respective display racks transversely thereof to provide individual merchandise pockets for respective sale articles to thereby facilitate restocking of the fixture, give desirable display flexibility thereto, and minimize the need for continual straightening of the displayed articles. The spacer means are preferably of the snap-on variety in order to facilitate the display of greeting cards of varying dimensions along with other oddly shaped solid articles.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a display fixture of the characteristics previously delineated wherein means is provided on the front of each article supporting rack permitting mounting of an identifying indicia thereon as for example, the type of cards displayed immediately above thus permitting different types of cards to be mounted as a single unit and allowing the retailer to vary the display at will for seasonal promotions and any other changes he might decide to make.

In the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of combination display and storage rack embodying the preferred design and functional characteristics of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a side view in vertical section of the fixture shown in FIG. 1, with the pivoting movement of one of the spearate display racks being illustrated in phantom;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged, fragmentary view in vertical section of the embodiment of the invention as illustrated in FIG. 2 wherein the pivotally movable display rack is swingably attached along the forward transverse edge of the support therefor;

FIG. 4 is a fragmentary, front elevational view showing a pivotally movable display rack of the invention prior to installation thereof on an inwardly extending pivot pin attached to the sidewall of the overall frame of the fixture, with the normal attached disposition of the rack being shown by phantom lines; and

FIG. 5 is an enlarged, fragmentary, vertical cross sectional view showing a pivotally movable display rack in its article display position which also serves to cover the associated storage pocket aligned therewith;

A display fixture in accordance with the present invention shown in perspective in FIG. 1 and is designated generally by the numeral **10.** Broadly, fixture **10** comprises an upright frame structure including a pair of spaced, upstanding slotted standards **12** and **14** having a pair of forwardly extending beams **15** adjacent thereto, the latter being joined by forward transverse beam **16.** The base section of the fixture **10** is completed by provision of forwardly tapered side plates **17** which are attached to respective standards **12** and **14** by inserting hook structures on the rearmost vertical edges of the side plates into complemental slots therefor on the spaced standards. This skeletal frame structure can be positioned adjacent a wall or can form a merchandising "island" in an aisle area, in which case only a single set of standards need be employed with the remaining base components connected as described to the opposed, slotted faces thereof. When in a desired position, a storage compartment **18** (which may be in the form of an open top, two-section bin having spaced sidewalls **23** and pivotally openable forward doors **20.**

The display section of fixture **10** comprises an inclined backwall **22** having a pair of rearwardly extending sidewalls **24** and **26** connected thereto. For convenience and economy of manufacture, backwall **22** may be fabricated from a single large section of sheet metal which has a series of rearwardly projecting hooks **28** permenantly attached to the rear marginal edges thereof. Hooks **28** are adapted to be inserted within complemental slots in the respective standards **12** and **14,** as depicted in FIG. **2.** Thus when it is desired to install the back and sidewall section of fixture **10,** this integral unit may be positioned simply by inserting hooks **28** into slots provided therefor in standards **12** and **14.** In this regard, the lower marginal edges of sidewalls **24** and **26** are preferably supported by the uppermost peripheral edges of sidewalls **23** of storage compartment **18.** In order to prevent forward rotational movement of backwall **22,** an elongated retainer **30** is provided which is attached to the underside of the lowermost base segment **32** which is positioned between the respective sidewalls **24** and **26** and aids in the support of backwall **22.** Retainer **30** is adapted to engage and seat on an elongated wooden beam **34** which extends the entire width of fixture **10** between the sidewalls **23** of compartment **18.** In the well known manner, retainer **30** prevents forward pivotal movement of backwall **22** when installed on the frame assembly.

A transversely extending, cavity-defining section **36** is welded or otherwise permenantly affixed to the lowermost edge of backwall **22.** Section **36** is disposed at an obtuse angle with respect to backwall **22** and is partitioned into two separate storage compartments **38** and **40** for purposes to be made clear hereinafter. The section is suspended from backwall **22** and includes a depending support wall **37** which terminates in transversely extending foot portion **39,** the latter being secured to the upper face of the lowermost base segment **32** as depicted in FIG. **2.**

A series of spaced, transverse, forwardly extending stepped support members **42** are affixed to the forward face of backwall **22** in order to divide the latter into discrete sections. Each support **42** includes an upstanding portion **43** serving as a stop ledge for the display rack immediately therebelow, as will be described hereinafter. Lowermost support **42** is attached to an upturned lip of backwall **22** to define a storage pocket **47.** The intermediate supports **42** are provided with upstanding ledge-defining means **48** spaced from backwall **22** to thereby present individual storage pockets **50** and **52.** Thus, a series of discrete, vertically spaced storage pockets are provided for fixture **10,** the purpose of which will be discussed in detail hereinafter.

A number of preferably extruded, synthetic resin display racks **54** of uniform, generally J-shaped cross-section are provided for receiving articles to be displayed and located in covering relationship to respective storage pockets **47, 50** and **52,** as well as to cavity-defining section **36** and the uppermost section of fixture **10,** thus enhancing the overall appearance of the fixture. In particular, the separate, transversely extend-

ing racks **54** (which are preferably formed of opaque or translucent synthetic resin material) include upright backwall portions **56** which extend substantially the entire height of the respective storage pockets to cover the same, with integral, normally inclined base sections **58** of sufficient width to receive a plurality of the articles to be sold, if the latter comprise greeting cards or the like. The forwardmost upstanding keeper walls **60** of racks **54** are advantageously composed of transparent synthetic resin material which allows complete viewing of articles displayed in the individual racks. As depicted, uppermost rack **54** is attached to the upper marginal edge of backwall **22** by means of integral, transverse clip **57** forming a part of backwall portion **56** thereof.

Referring specifically to FIG. **3**, it will be seen that the upright transparent keeper walls **60** are frictionally or adhesively connected to the forward edges of bases **58** which are configured to present wall receiving slots **62** for this purpose. Slots **62** are in part defined by short, upstanding sections **64** having transverse, opposed ears **66** on the external face thereof. The ears **66** of sections **64** define opposed grooves **68** which serve to removably hold indicia bearing plates or cards which identify the particular type of product (and optionally the price thereof) supported thereabove in the rack.

In the preferred embodiment of the invention shown in detail in FIG. **3**, the forward transverse edge of the respective supports **42** is rounded to define a self-contained, arcuate pivot pin **74** which is adapted to be received in the arcuate groove presented by jaw sections **72** provided in the underside of the forward marginal end of respective racks **54.** In this fashion, pivotal connection of the racks **54** to the supportive frame is provided which permits pivotal opening of the display racks **54** to allow selective access to associated storage pockets located behind each of the same, save for uppermost rack **54** which is clipped onto backwall **22** as described and thus does not require pivotal mounting.

The individual display racks **54** can also be pivotally mounted within the overall frame of the fixture by respective pairs of opposed, inwardly extending pivot pins **70** (see FIGS. **4** and **5**) which are attached to sidewalls **24** and **26** respectively at points proximal to the forward marginal edges thereof. For this purpose the underside of each base **58** includes a transverse arcuate jaw section **72** along the forward marginal end thereof which is adapted to receive the opposed pivot pins **70** to allow pivotal movement of the entire display rack **54** pivotally supported thereon. As with the embodiment shown in FIG. **3**, the upright transparent keeper wall **60** of each rack **54** which pivots with the latter is of a height to assure retantion of the articles within the racks **54** during such swinging movement.

Preferably, the racks **54** each include a plurality of separate, removable, clip-on article spacers **76** which serve to separate the longitudinal lenghts of each rack **54** into a series of discrete article receiving pockets. In this regard, spacers **76** include generally planar wall segments **78** which extend between backwalls **56** of racks **54** and the upstanding tansparent keeper walls **60** thereof. A frictional snap-fit connection between the spacers **76** and keeper walls **60** is assured by means of resilient, downwardly extending connection tongues **80** which are integral with the planar walls **78.** As can be appreciated, spacers **78** are shiftable to any desired position along the separate keeper walls **52** and can be easily removed and repositioned as the need arises.

In the construction of the fixture **10**, upright standards **12** and **14** are first set up along with forwardly extending beams **15** and transverse beam **16**, and side plates **17.** Compartment **18** is then placed on the respective lower beams between sideplates **17.** This presents an upright skeletal frame assembly which can be positioned as desired in a given merchandising area. The overall backwall **22** with rearwardly extending sidewalls **24** and **26** is then attached to spaced standards **12** and **14** by inserting hooks **28** attached thereto into the complemental slots provided in the standards. Installation is completed by positioning retainer **30** over beam **34** to preclude forward pivotal movement of backwall **22** and to securely affix the latter in fixture **10** in a desired inclined orientation.

The separate pivotally movable display racks **54** are next positioned within the fixture by snapping the arcuate jaw segments **72** thereof onto pivot pins **70** shown in FIGS. **4** and **5**, or preferrably over rounded sections **74** of FIG. **3.** (In this regard lowermost base section **32** (see FIG. **2**) is likewise provided with a transverse rounded section **74***a* to permit mounting of lowermost rack **54.**) In this manner, it is possible to swing the pivotal display racks **54** about the pivot axes defined by these elements in both a forward and rearward direction. Installation of the display racks is completed by snapping clip **57** of uppermost rack **54** over the top marginal edge of backwall **22,** as described above, to produce a stationary upper rack with no storage pocket therebehind. Any desired number of space elements **76** can then be attached to the upright transparent keeper walls **60** of the separate display racks **54,** in order to present a series of article receiving pockets throughout fixture **10.**

Each of the movable display racks **54** can then be swung forwardly as needed to give access to the storage pocket therebehind. Forward pivotal movement of the racks is limited by provision of generally L-shaped brackets **82** affixed to the inside of walls **24** and **26.** Brackets **82** include inwardly extending segments **84** which are positioned to stop racks **54** during pivotal movement thereof. Rearward movement of these racks is limited by abutment of the upper marginal edges of backwalls **56** thereof with the stepped portion **43** provided in the support **42** immediately thereabove.

In the use of the fixture in accordance with the present invention, the shopkeeper first stocks the individual display racks **54** with any desired merchandise such as greeting cards, and places his reserve or replacement supply thereof in the storage pocket immediately below. In the case of the lower display rack **54** as shown in FIG. **2**, one section of the two-compartment, cavity-defining section **36** can be utilized for such secondary storage, while the remaining section thereof can hold secondary supplies for the rack immediately thereabove. In the case of greeting cards, a plurality of cards and associated envelopes are placed in a compartment of a respective rack **54** for selection by prospective customer.

When a particular item on rack **54** is sold out or depleted, the shopkeeper has only to swing the display rack therebelow forwardly as shown in phantom in FIG. **2** in order to remove the needed articles from the storage pocket therebehind. In this manner the stocking clerk has an unimpeded view of the rack to be

stocked, since the latter is not disturbed during such work. In this fashion, restocking time and the consequent costs thereof are significantly reduced because the shopkeeper can quickly restock a given item without the need of stooping and tediously examining the contents of a large, common storage drawer. Moreover, reordering of a given item or items is likewise facilitated because the shopkeeper can tell at a glance if his supplies need replenishment simply by opening the respective display racks **54** and inspecting the contents of the associated storage pockets therebehind.

Another additional advantage obtained through the use of fixtures in accordance with the invention stems from the fact that customer inspection and selection of the displayed articles is facilitated, thereby permitting greater flow of customer traffic which leads to greater sales. In particular, by virtue of the transparent keeper walls **60,** it is possible for the customer to visually inspect the greeting cards or the like within the fixture without the need of manually removing the same therefrom for close perusal. Therefore, the customer can tell at a glance the overall design of a given greeting card or the nature of a specific article, and thereby can make his selection in reduced time. Furthermore, because the displayed articles are handled much less frequently, losses associated with article soilage attributable to frequent handling of the merchandise is reduced.

Also by virtue of the described construction, it is possible to produce a display rack requiring substantially less floor space than normally needed, while nevertheless being capable of holding substantially the same or greater amounts of sale merchandise as conventional fixtures. This not only is pleasing aesthetically, but is of considerable importance to the small shopkeeper or in situations where space is at a premium.

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed as new and desired to be secured by Letters Patent is:

1. A combination storage and display fixture, comprising:

a back wall;

stationary pocket-defining structure attached to the forward face of said back wall and presenting a plurality of superposed, stationary, transversely extending storage pockets;

an elongated, generally transversely J-shaped display rack in covering disposition to each of said storage pockets, and including a forward keeper of lesser height than the back wall of said rack which extends substantially the entire length of the latter for retaining display merchandise within said rack;

means pivotally mounting each of said racks in said disposition and permitting pivotal movement thereof with respect to the stationary storage pocket therebehind in order to allow selective access to the latter; and

frame structure supporting said back wall and display racks in inclined, merchandise receiving and displaying disposition.

2. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **1** wherein said display racks include upright backwalls, forwardly extending bottom walls, and upright keepers of transparent material along the forward transverse marginal edges thereof.

3. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **1** wherein means are provided for limiting the forward and rearward pivotal movement of said racks.

4. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **3** including stop means on the interior face of the sidewalls of said frame means for limiting the forward pivotal movement of said respective display racks.

5. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **4** wherein said stop means comprises L-shaped stop members attached to said sidewalls with inwardly extending legs in disposition for interrupting the forward pivotal movement of said respective display racks.

6. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **1** wherein a rearwardly extending, two-section storage compartment is attached to the lower marginal edge of said backwall, there being a pivotally mounted display rack in covering disposition to said storage compartment.

7. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **1** wherein said storage pockets are defined by a series of vertically spaced, transverse, forwardly extending pocket-defining supports affixed to the forward face of said backwall.

8. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **7** wherein each of said pocket defining supports include a forward extension having an integral, transversely extended rounded portion defining a pivot pin for pivotally mounting said display racks thereon.

9. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **1** including sidewalls attached to said backwall, each of said display racks being pivotally mounted at the forward edges thereof to respective sidewalls at points proximal to the forward marginal edges of the latter.

10. The combination storage and display fixture as set forth in claim **9** wherein is provided inwardly extending pivot pins attached to respective sidewalls for pivotally mounting said display rack thereon.

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