A shower curtain ensemble (10) is provided with a curtain (10a) member that has a plurality of apertures along the top thereof for engagement by a plurality of plastic hooks (12) that have been covered with a tubular fabric (14) that matches the curtain member and creates the pleasing effect of being completely fabric in appearance. Also, a process for covering the hooks (12) with fabric (14) by initially creating a tube of fabric and slipping it over the hooks (12) is disclosed.
FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

| AT  | Austria     | ES | Spain       | MG | Madagascar |
| AU  | Australia   | FI | Finland     | ML | Mali        |
| BB  | Barbados    | FR | France      | MN | Mongolia    |
| BE  | Belgium     | GA | Gabon       | MR | Mauritania  |
| BF  | Burkina Faso | GB | United Kingdom | MW | Malawi      |
| BG  | Bulgaria    | GN | Guinea      | NL | Netherlands |
| BJ  | Benin       | GR | Greece      | NO | Norway      |
| BR  | Brazil      | HU | Hungary     | PL | Poland      |
| CA  | Canada      | IT | Italy       | RO | Romania     |
| CF  | Central African Republic | JP | Japan | SD | Sudan       |
| CG  | Congo       | KP | Democratic People's Republic of Korea | SE | Sweden      |
| CH  | Switzerland | KR | Republic of Korea | SN | Senegal     |
| CI  | Côte d'Ivoire | LI | Liechtenstein | SU* | Soviet Union |
| CM  | Cameroon    | LK | Sri Lanka   | TD | Chad        |
| CS  | Czechoslovakia | LU | Luxembourg  | TG | Togo        |
| DE* | Germany     | MC | Monaco      | US | United States of America |

+ Any designation of “SU” has effect in the Russian Federation. It is not yet known whether any such designation has effect in other States of the former Soviet Union.
IMPROVED SHOWER CURTAIN ENSEMBLE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The objects of the present invention are accomplished in general by providing a curtain ensemble that includes a flexible sheet of material that is preferably opaque as well as decorative in the form of a shower curtain. The curtain has apertures along the top thereof that can be associated with plastic or metal hooks that have been covered with matching or complementary material and associated with a curtain rod and curtain to provide a pleasing effect to a bathroom when the ensemble is installed. Generally, these ensembles are used in stall-type or bathtub enclosures capable of catching water and facilitating drainage out of the enclosure. The invention also includes the process of covering the plastic hooks with fabric by initially creating a tube sized in length and diameter to fit and cover the hooks in a gathered state and thereafter assembling the hooks with the curtain so that only fabric shows to one viewing the ensemble while facing the shower enclosure.

This invention relates to improvements in shower curtains and more particularly is concerned with an ensemble where a fabric shower curtain is held on a curtain rod by a plurality of hook members that are covered with a matching or complementary fabric.

Showers intended for bathing purposes generally consist of a spray head positioned at an elevated
location within an enclosure capable of catching water and facilitating its drainage away from the enclosure. In stall-type and bathtub enclosures, it is common to utilize a horizontally traversable, flexible curtain to facilitate passage into and out of the shower enclosure. The curtain, when moved to its fully opened position, serves to prevent water from traveling beyond the bounds of the enclosure and, in addition to affording privacy to the user, creates a decorative effect, depending upon the material that is used.

One important disadvantage with maintaining a decorative effect is where hooks are used to hold the shower curtains on the shower curtain rod which generally traverses the enclosure. These hooks are generally made of plastic or metal and do not create a pleasing appearance insofar as they are generally made of a different material than the fabric that is used for the shower curtain. While patents do exist for making the shower curtain and shower hooks of the same material, such as for instance, Wilson, U.S. Patent No. 4,120,343 as well as Thompson, U.S. Patent No. 2,011,662, there is no specific teaching in any of these patents of coating or covering an ordinary plastic or metal shower curtain hook with a fabric that matches the shower curtain to create a pleasing effect.

It is, accordingly, an object of the present invention to provide a shower curtain that is held together and supported by a series of metal or plastic
hooks on a horizontal shower curtain rod with the hooks covered with material that is matching or complementary to the shower curtain.

It is another object of this invention to provide an improved shower curtain hook and hook covering process for creating a pleasing appearance to a shower stall or the like whereby a pleasing, decorative effect in the bathroom is obtained.

These and other objects and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following description wherein:

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a shower curtain ensemble of the present invention in its fully extended position on a curtain rail showing some of the plastic or metal hooks covered with gathered fabric;

Fig. 2 is a plan view of a piece of cut material;

Fig. 2a is a piece of fabric pictorially illustrated after it has been sewed along a seam to form a tube or cylinder that is sized to be used for covering a plastic hook;

Fig. 3 is a side elevational view of a shower hook;

Fig. 4 is a hook partially covered by a piece of gathered fabric formed into a shape of a flexible tube; and
Fig. 5 is a sectional view of Fig. 4 taken on the line 5-5 and looking in the direction of the arrows.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to the drawings wherein like characters of reference indicate corresponding parts throughout, Fig. 1 is an assembled shower curtain ensemble 10 of this invention, suspended by a plurality of plastic hooks 12 that have each been covered with a tubular-shaped fabric 14 and is shown suspended by the hooks from the curtain rail 15 extending between the walls 16 facing a bathtub enclosure 17. The shower curtain 10a, being made of the same fabric as the covered hooks 12a, creates a pleasing appearance to the ensemble in its extended position, since the material shows very well in this position.

As seen from Fig. 3, each of the hooks 12 is substantially cylindrically shaped and bent into the form of a "C" with a small cross section, as shown in Fig. 5, that is sized to fit around curtain rail 15 and through the apertures 18 that are disposed along the top of the curtain, as shown in Fig. 1. Since it is necessary to slide the plastic hooks 12 along the curtain rail 15 when the hooks 12 have been covered by fabric in a gathered state as designated at 14, it is necessary that the hooks 12 with their fabric covering be sized to be slidably associated with the curtain rail 15.

As is common for the apertures 18, the region of the curtain surrounding each aperture should be
preferably reinforced to minimize the likelihood that the hole will initiate a tear. In the preferred embodiment, the entire upper edge of the curtain is provided with a reinforced strip 22 where the apertures are located. It is further noted that preferably the curtain is made of a water impervious fabric in order that the water splashing in the bathtub or shower stall enclosure does not escape the enclosure. At any rate, the ensemble can have more than one layer of fabric, just as long as the decorative fabric faces outward of the bathtub or shower enclosure.

Further, in addition to providing the improved ensemble, it can be seen that a new and improved shower curtain hook and also a shower curtain hook covering process has been provided wherein ordinary metal or plastic shower hooks are covered. To summarize, pieces of decorative material are cut to a size that enables them to be formed into a substantially cylindrical, tubular shape by sewing them longitudinally along the tube. The tubes are sized for enabling them to then each be slipped over a corresponding hook and gathered along each of the hooks. The covered hooks can then be assembled with a curtain rod because the hooks are sized to be slidably mounted in relation thereto. The covered hooks suspend a curtain by putting the hooks through the curtain apertures with the open ends of the hooks facing inward toward the bathtub or shower stall enclosure to achieve a pleasing appearance.
It is noted that while the cross section of the hooks and the tubular fabric are shown as being substantially circular, it should be realized that other cross-sections are contemplated as a part of this invention.

Accordingly, it will be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the specific construction or arrangement of parts shown but that they may be widely modified within the invention as defined by the claims.
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. In a shower ensemble having a plurality of hooks that are sized to hang from a curtain rail, in order to suspend an operational shower curtain made of a certain fabric, a plurality of tubular-shaped pieces of fabric that match the fabric of the curtain applied as covering to each of the hooks in order to provide a slideable ensemble and a pleasing effect to a shower enclosure whereby a pleasing effect is portrayed by the ensemble while functioning to contain water within the shower enclosure so the water can be drained through a drainage system in the enclosure rather than end up on the bathroom floor.

2. The shower ensemble of Claim 1 wherein C-shaped hooks are provided that can be associated with a curtain rail in a bathtub by being bent at the opening of the "C" in order to slip the rings on a shower rod.

3. The shower ensemble of Claim 2 wherein the fabric of the shower curtain as well as the hooks are impervious to water.

4. A shower curtain hook, having a tubular-shaped fabric covering for the hook that allows the hook to be slideable on a shower curtain rail and provides a pleasing effect with a shower curtain.

5. A shower curtain hook, for hanging from a curtain rail, for suspending from said curtain rail an operational shower curtain made of a certain fabric, for forming a shower enclosure and containing water therein, said shower curtain hook comprising a tubular-shaped piece of fabric that matches said certain fabric of the curtain for covering the hook, said hook slideable on the curtain rail, and said hook providing a pleasing effect to said shower enclosure.

6. The shower curtain hook of claim 5 wherein the hook is C-shaped and can be associated with the curtain rail in the shower enclosure by being bent at the opening of the "C" in order to slip the hook on the curtain rail.

7. The shower curtain hook of claim 6 wherein the fabric of the shower curtain as well as the hook is impervious to water.

8. The shower curtain hook of claim 5 wherein the fabric applied as covering to the hook is in a gathered state.

9. The shower hook of claim 5 wherein the hook is made of plastic or metal.
10. A process for creating a series of covered hooks that are used for associating a shower curtain having apertures therein for receiving the hooks whereby the curtains can be associated with the hooks for suspension in a decorative manner from the curtain rail comprising the steps of:

- cutting fabric that matches the fabric of the shower curtain to a size that can be formed into a tubular cover having an inside diameter sized for association with and receiving the hooks by insertion of one end of each of the hooks into one end of the tube and moving the tube to completely cover each of the hooks,

- said tubular cover being fastened into its tubular shape by means of sewing a seam along the tube.

11. In a process for covering and supporting hooks for curtains so that the supporting hooks have a matching fabric with the shower curtains comprising the steps of:

- cutting a piece of matching fabric sized to form a covering for each of said hooks, the diameter of each of the tubes that are used to cover the hooks being sized of a dimension that enables the tube to peripherally surround each of the hooks as well as be slidably associated with the hooks and a curtain rail.

12. In a process for covering a bathtub or shower stall enclosure wherein a curtain rail is provided for suspending hooks and shower curtains that are both covered with matching fabric and the curtains have a series of apertures extending along the top thereof, and the hooks are individually covered with cylindrical tubes of material that are gathered and the inside diameter of said fabric, substantially cylindrical tubes enabling each of the tubes to be slipped over each of said corresponding hooks and gathered along each of said hooks, said hooks having a dimension that enables the tubes to peripherally surround the hook in a gathered state while at the same time allowing for slidable association with said curtain rail, comprising the steps of:

- cutting a piece of matching fabric sized to form a covering for each of said hooks,

- forming a subsequently cylindrical tube with said fabric by sewing along the longitudinal ends of each of the pieces of said cut fabric,

- suspending the curtain from each of said hooks by extending each of said hooks through said apertures and with the open ends of said hooks facing inward toward the bathtub or shower stall enclosure whereby an ensemble of pleasing appearance is achieved.
I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC

Int.Cl. 5 A47K3/22; A47H13/02

II. FIELDS SEARCHED

Classification System

Classification Symbols

Int.Cl. 5 A47K; A47H

Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation to the extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Citation of Document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th>
<th>Relevant to Claim No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>GB,A,225 999 (FRANK GILMAN) 18 December 1924 see page 2, line 37 - line 59; figures 1-4</td>
<td>1,4,5,8,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>FR,A,467 870 (WILLIAM HENRY WALLIN) 23 June 1914 see page 1, line 29 - page 2, line 32; figures 1-3</td>
<td>1,4,5,8,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>US,A,2 600 152 (PERRY BLATT) 10 June 1952 see the whole document</td>
<td>1,3-5,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>US,A,4 333 187 (BOB A. SCHULER) 8 June 1982 see column 1, line 2 - line 41 see column 3, line 54 - column 4, line 3; figures 4-6</td>
<td>2,3,5,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

"I" document which may throw doubt on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"G" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"D" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"A" document member of the same patent family

IV. CERTIFICATION

Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search

03 FEBRUARY 1992

Date of Mailing of this International Search Report

13.02.92

International Searching Authority

EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE

Signature of Authorized Officer

BARBAS A.
This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on.
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information. 03/02/92

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patent document cited in search report</th>
<th>Publication date</th>
<th>Patent family member(s)</th>
<th>Publication date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GB-A-225999</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR-A-467870</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-A-2600152</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US-A-4333187</td>
<td>08-06-82</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more details about this annex: see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82.