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(54) **DECORATIVE WALL PANEL SYSTEM**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

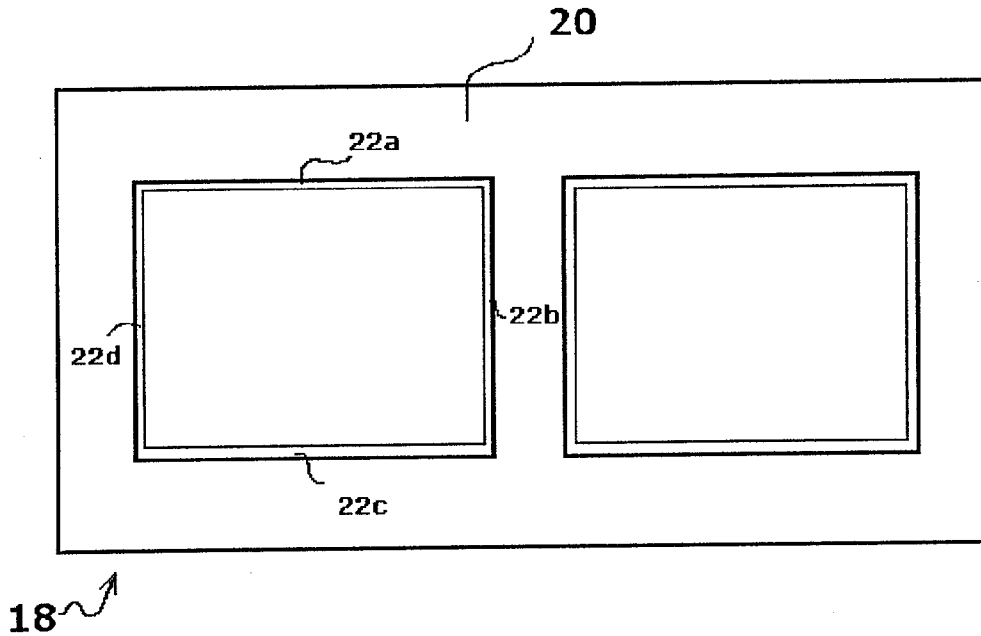
A wall paneling system is provided in which panels of various widths are pre-fabricated with raised moldings. The panels are thin enough to be easily cut, if necessary, and applied to a wall by an inexperienced installer with adhesive. Various chair rails and baseboards are provided. By providing the panels in different standard widths, they can be easily pieced together to cover walls of any length, thereby enabling an inexperienced installer to easily complete the lower wall paneling of an entire room. Corner moldings are provided to cover any gaps where the panels meet in corners of a room.

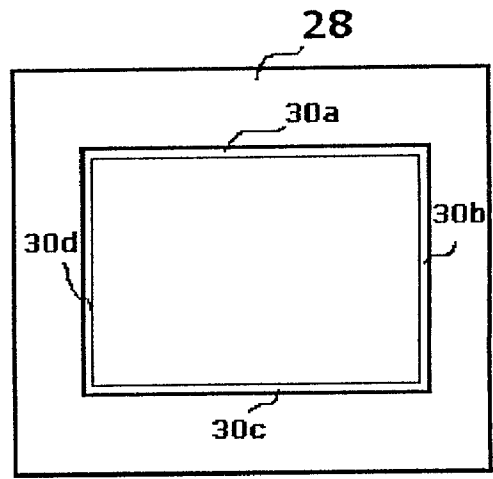
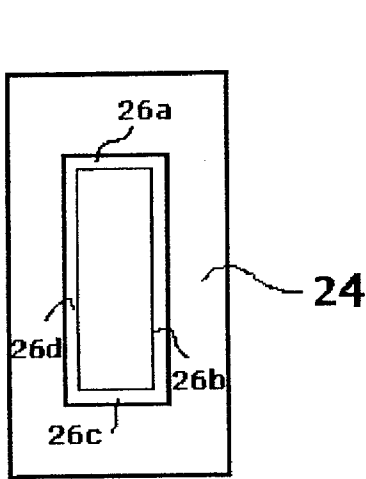
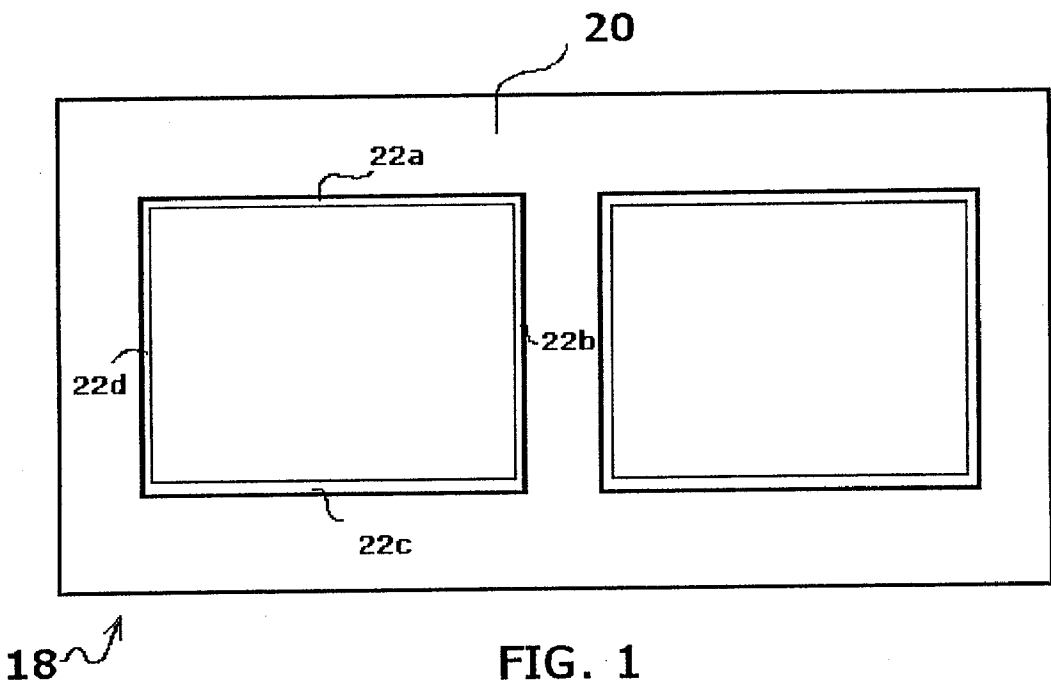
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Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/293,392, filed on May 24, 2001.





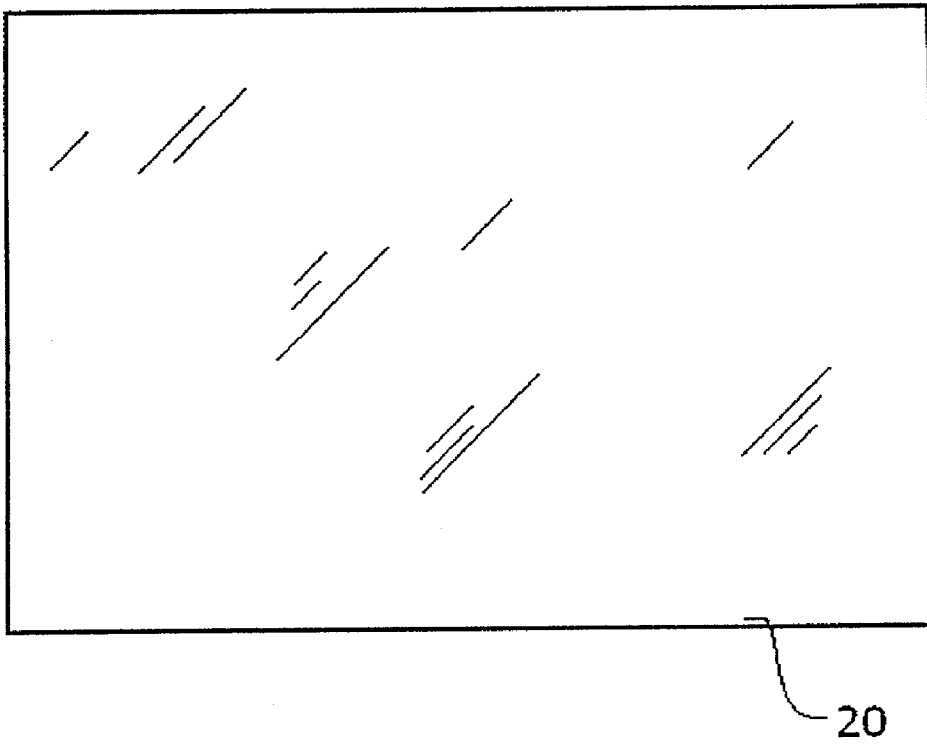


FIG. 4

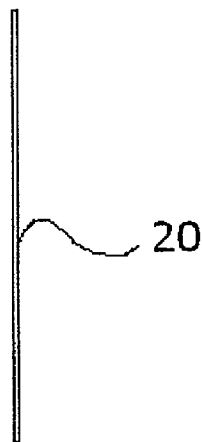


FIG. 5

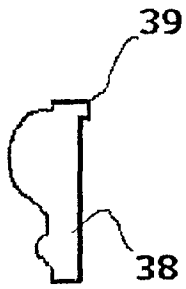


FIG. 7

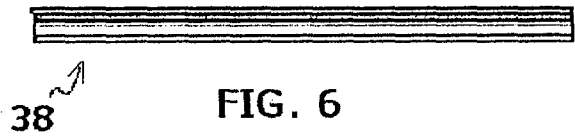


FIG. 6



FIG. 9

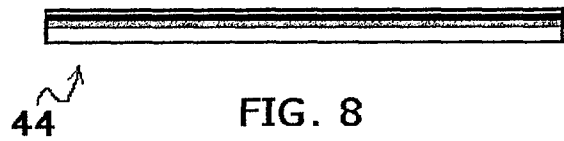


FIG. 8

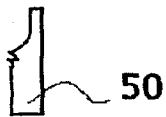


FIG. 11

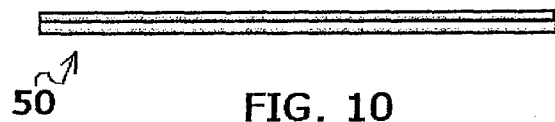


FIG. 10



FIG. 12

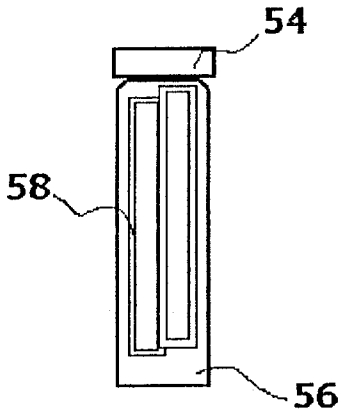


FIG. 13

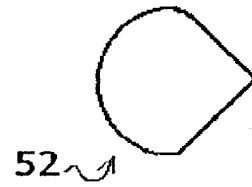


FIG. 14

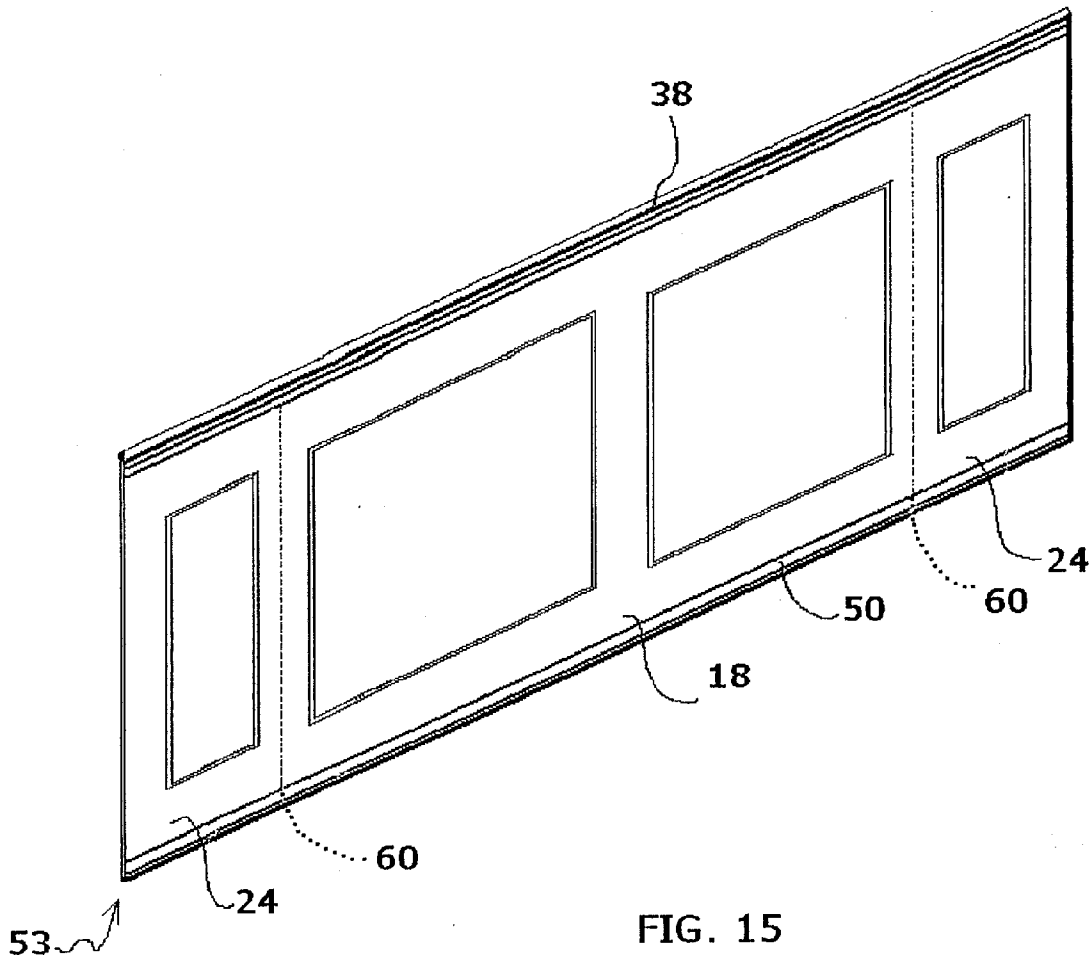


FIG. 15

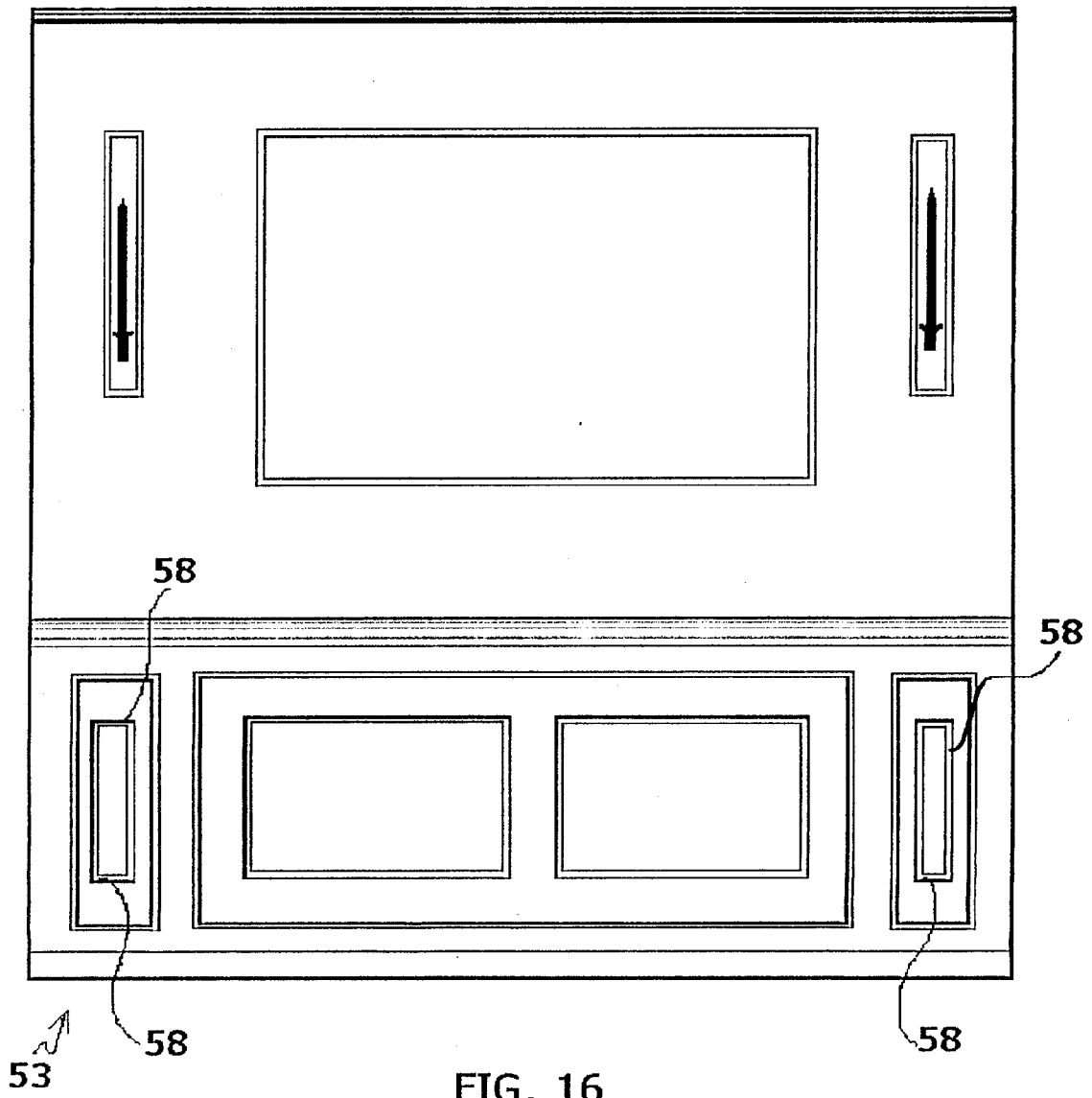


FIG. 16

DECORATIVE WALL PANEL SYSTEM

[0001] This provisional application includes the following specification, six sheets of patent drawings, and two sheets of Applicant's preliminary promotional materials entitled "Southampton Wall Panels."

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to decorative wall panels, and more particularly to a wall panel system which is economical to manufacture and sell, and can be installed by a homeowner without professional design or carpentry assistance.

[0003] Various types of wall panel systems are known in the art. For example, one quarter inch paneling is available for finishing basements and other rooms of the house. Such paneling is sold in various styles and generally is provided in panel sizes that are 4' wide by 8' high. Such panels are available in various different finishes, and often have vertical grooves. However, such paneling sheets do not have raised panel designs such as found in more expensive custom cabinetry, wainscoting, and the like. Moreover, such prior art panels are designed to cover a wall from floor to ceiling, and not to cover the lower portion (e.g., 32" or so in height) of a wall.

[0004] Although custom designed lower wall panel systems and wainscot have been used in homes for many years, such solutions have generally been custom crafted at the homeowner's premises by experienced professional finish carpenters. Often, the panel systems are approximately 32" high and are topped off by a chair rail. The carpenter will generally use wainscoting, formed from individually assembled vertical strips of wood, on an interior wall. Any raised panel effects are individually crafted from desired moldings. The labor intensive process of applying such wall systems is very expensive. Accordingly, such decorative wall treatments are typically found only in expensive homes.

[0005] It would be advantageous to provide a decorative wall treatment that simulates expensive custom crafted treatments, but is inexpensive and easy for a homeowner to install without professional assistance. The present invention relates to such a system.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] In accordance with the present invention, prefabricated wall treatment panels are provided in a variety of sizes in order to simulate the appearance of expensive, hand crafted wall treatment systems. The panels of the present invention are formed of relatively low cost materials, such as thin (e.g., 1/8" or 1/4" thick) plywood with a finish veneer in oak, cherry, walnut, or the like. The panels can alternatively be fabricated from any other suitable material, such as pressboard, plastic, manufactured wood substitutes, and the like. The panels of the invention are sized to fit the lower part of an interior wall (e.g., 24" to 32" high) and come in a variety of widths so that they can be assembled with minimal cutting and to fit any size interior wall when a plurality of such panels are combined. Wall panels without a finish veneer can also be provided for painting.

[0007] In one embodiment, the panels of the present invention are provided with pre-mounted raised moldings, which can be separate pieces of wood, plastic or the like

fastened to the panels by the manufacturer. Alternatively, the panels can be manufactured in a press or the like, such that the raised moldings are actually part of the panel itself. Such pressed panels can be made from manufactured wood, particle board, plastic, or the like.

[0008] It is anticipated that such panels will be sold in kits, whereby a homeowner purchases panels in the various widths needed to cover pre-existing walls from corner to corner, together with necessary trim moldings such as baseboard, chair rails and corner moldings to provide a finished installation. Alternatively, the base molding and chair rail can be attached to the panels by the manufacturer, so that all the homeowner has to do is purchase the proper width panels, trim them as necessary around windows and other wall mounted fixtures, and fasten them to the wall, e.g., by glue, nails, double sided tape, or other easy to use fastener. It should be appreciated that since the panels will only be sold in certain standard sizes, some vertical trimming of the panels may be necessary by the homeowner. However, since the panels are thin and easy to cut, the installation will still be simple. Moreover, with proper planning as to the panel sizes purchased, the homeowner can minimize the amount of cutting necessary.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a plan view of an example wide double raised panel design in accordance with the present invention;

[0010] FIG. 2 illustrates an example narrow single raised panel design in accordance with the present invention;

[0011] FIG. 3 illustrates a wide single panel design in accordance with the present invention;

[0012] FIG. 4 is a back view of the panel of FIG. 1, the back views of panels 2 and 3 being similar except for the overall width;

[0013] FIG. 5 is a side view of the panel of any of FIGS. 1 to 3;

[0014] FIG. 6 illustrates a chair rail that can be used on top of any of the panels of FIGS. 1 to 3;

[0015] FIG. 7 is a side view of the chair rail of FIG. 6;

[0016] FIG. 8 illustrates a base molding that can be used with any of the panels of FIGS. 1 to 3;

[0017] FIG. 9 is a side view of the base molding of FIG. 8;

[0018] FIG. 10 illustrates an alternative embodiment of a base molding;

[0019] FIG. 11 is a side view of the base molding of FIG. 10;

[0020] FIG. 12 is a top view of any of the panels of FIGS. 1 to 3, without a chair rail placed thereon;

[0021] FIG. 13 illustrates the packaging of supplemental moldings which may be purchased by the homeowner in a plastic bag or the like;

[0022] FIG. 14 is a cross section of a corner molding in accordance with the present invention;

[0023] FIG. 15 is a front and left side perspective view of an assembly of three separate wall panels in accordance with the present invention; and

[0024] FIG. 16 illustrates a finished wall showing the paneling system of the present invention on the lower portion of the wall and decorative items hung on a plain wall surface thereabove.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0025] The present invention provides a series of panels and associated accessories for use in providing an upgraded and classically finished look to residential and commercial walls. The wall paneling system can be provided in any of a variety of finishes to match many decors. Paintable panels and accessories are also contemplated.

[0026] Installation of the paneling system is simple, and is facilitated by the use of thin panels, on the order of $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ " in thickness. Simple wood glue, double sided tape, finishing nails, or other easy to use adhesive can be used to hang the panels on a pre-existing wall. Although the panels will be manufactured with raised moldings in the preferred embodiment, accessory moldings will also be available which can simply be glued on with any well known adhesive. These accessory moldings can be used to customize the look of the prefabricated panels, or to provide raised panel effects on plain panels, e.g., where it is difficult to complete a corner-to-corner installation on a wall using the inventive prefabricated panels which are sold in only a limited number of predetermined widths.

[0027] Moldings which can be prefabricated onto the panels by the manufacturer include raised panel moldings 22a, 22b, 22c and 22d as shown mounted on panel 20 in FIG. 1. The completed, prefabricated panel of FIG. 1 is generally designated by reference numeral 18. Although prefabricated panel 18 has a width of, e.g., 48", and contains two raised rectangles, other size panels will also be provided. For example, FIG. 2 shows a narrow panel, e.g., 12" in width, with a single raised rectangle prefabricated thereon using moldings 26a, 26b, 26c and 26d. A plurality of completed panels 24 of FIG. 2 can be used together, e.g., with one or more panels 18 of FIG. 1, to create a custom look and fill out the entire width of a wall. For example, where a six foot wide wall portion is to be covered, a 48" panel 18 can be combined with two 12" panels 24 along seams 60 to create an overall length of six feet, as shown in FIGS. 15 and 16. The combined six foot assembly 53 is illustrated in FIGS. 15 and 16 with the chair rail 38 and base molding 50 already attached. In a preferred embodiment, these items will be attached by the manufacturer, so that the homeowner does not have to separately install the chair rail and base molding. However, the panels, chair rail and base molding can also be sold separately for homeowner installation, which provides a more custom look.

[0028] Other size panels can also be provided, such as illustrated in FIG. 3. For example, FIG. 3 can comprise a 24" wide panel 28, with a single square or rectangular raised panel formed by moldings 30a, 30b, 30c and 30d. It should be appreciated that other widths can also be provided to increase the homeowner's choice and facilitate the installation of a complete wall panel assembly on any size wall. It is further noted that the panels of FIGS. 1, 2 and 3 are all

of the same height. For example, the panels can be provided in a standard 30" height so that with a chair rail and base molding, a conventional 32" height from floor to top of the chair rail will be achieved. The actual sizes of the panels and accessory moldings and chair rails will be chosen by the manufacturer depending on the extent of the paneling product line to be offered to the consumer.

[0029] Although the raised moldings illustrated on the panels of each of FIGS. 1 to 3 can be fabricated of separate wood components, they may also be pressed into the panels if the panels are made of a suitable material, such as pressed board or plastic. Techniques for pressing designs into such materials are well known in the art.

[0030] FIGS. 4 and 5 illustrate back and side views of the panels, respectively. FIGS. 6 to 11 illustrate various moldings that can be used with the wall panels. For example, FIG. 6 illustrates a chair rail 38 and FIG. 7 illustrates the side view thereof. Similarly, FIGS. 8 and 10 illustrate two different types of base molding 44, 50, respectively. FIGS. 9 and 11 illustrate side views of the base moldings 44 and 50. As can be seen, the chair rail of FIG. 6 includes a lip 39 for simplifying and registering the installation of the chair rail onto a panel, e.g., panel 20 or a series of panels as shown in FIG. 15.

[0031] FIG. 12 illustrates a top edge view of the wall panel without the chair rail installed. It will be appreciated that the bottom edge view is identical.

[0032] FIG. 13 illustrates accessory moldings 58 which can be packaged, for example, in a see-through plastic bag 56 having a closure 54 for hanging and/or labeling the product at a retail establishment. The moldings 58, which are provided in different sizes, can be used, for example, to create effects such as the double raised panels illustrated in FIG. 16.

[0033] FIG. 14 shows a corner molding 52 that can be adhesively mounted by the homeowner where the panels join in corners of a room. The size of the corner molding is such that it easily hides gaps between the adjacent panels at the corners. This facilitates the completion of a wall paneling project on different size walls using predetermined width panels offered by the manufacturer.

[0034] The panels and moldings can be provided in any desired finish, such as in a cherry stain, oak stain, antique white (which can be painted by the homeowner) and the like.

[0035] Advantageously, the panels and moldings will be sold with simple instructions for teaching the homeowner how to optimize the measurement of a wall, select appropriate wall panel widths, and simplify the overall installation of the panels.

[0036] It should now be appreciated that the present invention provides elegant looking lower wall panel systems of wood, plastic or other materials that are desirable for use in upgrading the look of residences, offices, restaurants and the like. The inventive wall panel system obviates the need for expensive custom made cabinetry and/or skilled carpenters and designers. Both wainscot style panels of vertical slatted design and raised panel designs (as illustrated herein) can be provided in accordance with the invention. Plain, finished or unfinished panels can also be provided for painting and/or customizing by the homeowner/installer.

The lower wall panel system is provided with sufficient moldings and accessories to satisfy the needs of interior designers, homeowners, architects and others who desire to easily upgrade the look of residences and commercial buildings.

[0037] Although the invention has been described in connection with various specific embodiments, it should be appreciated that numerous adaptations and modifications may be made thereto without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A wall panel system comprising pre-finished panels including raised moldings, said panels having a thickness that facilitates their easy cutting and mounting on walls by an adhesive.

2. The wall paneling system of claim 1, further comprising a chair rail and baseboard molding pre-fabricated onto the panel.

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