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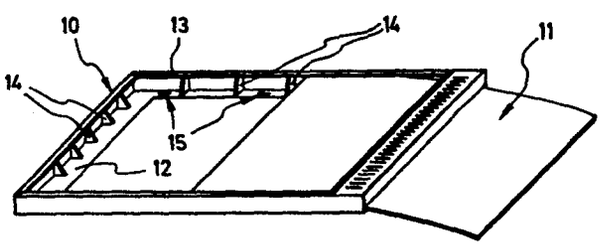
(71) Applicant: **ZANUSSI COMPONENTI PLASTICA S.p.A., Via Giardini Cattaneo 3, I-33170 Pordenone (IT)**

(72) Inventor: **Munini, Dino, Via Mason 53, I-33080 S. Quirino Pordenone (IT)**

(74) Representative: **Patentanwälte Grünecker, Kinkeldey, Stockmair & Partner, Maximilianstrasse 58, D-8000 München 22 (DE)**

(54) Working table top for electric appliances.

(57) A working table top for electric household appliances such as washing machines, refrigerators and the like is essentially composed of a one-piece frame preferably made of a plastics material by injection molding, and a flexible panel to be inserted into the frame. To this purpose, the frame has at least one open-bottomed side for the insertion of the panel into guide channels or the like formed on at least two opposite side of the frame. The open-bottomed side is provided with a resilient profile member adapted to be deformed for insertion of the flexible panel and for its retention in a snap fit. The resilient profile member may be provided with or replaced by inwards projecting elements acting as supports for retaining the flexible panel in position in the frame.



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Description

The present invention relates to a working table top to be employed as the top surface of electric household appliances such as laundry washing machines, dishwashing machines and refrigerators.

In a known embodiment, a working table top is formed of a panel made of a rigid material, such as a fiberboard lined with a plastic sheet, and inserted into a peripheral frame made for instance of metal or plastics and optionally formed at its rear with a grille serving as a spacer element for spacing the respective appliance from a wall and ensuring the circulation of air between the appliance and the wall.

The peripheral frame may be formed by extrusion or injection molding, and have usually at least one open side, preferably at the rear, for the insertion of the panel, the open side being subsequently closed with a further frame element. In order to ensure rigid and reliable mounting, the panel may require additional fastener elements for its connection to the frame.

In any case, working table tops of this type are composed of a number of individual pieces requiring complicated and expensive assembling operations. In particular, there are difficulties due to the necessity to make and to employ different types of table tops as regards their surfaces and frames, for use in kitchen furniture of the composition type. These differences require the substitution, the modification or even separate manufacture of different types of table tops and their various components.

It is thus an object of the present invention to provide a working table top of simple and economic construction composed of no more than two elements adapted to be readily and quickly assembled while ensuring a durable and reliable construction of the table top.

To this purpose the invention proposes a working table top

for electric household appliances, in particular for washing machines and refrigerators, comprising a flexible panel made of a fibrous material and covered by a sheet of plastics material, said panel being enclosed in a frame made of a plastics material by injection molding.

This working table top is characterized in that said frame is of one-piece construction and provided, at two opposite inner edges, with rigid guide rails and, at a third inner edge, with at least one resilient profile member adapted to be deformed for the insertion of said flexible panel and for the retention thereof in a snap fit.

The deformable profile element is preferably associated with the rear border portion of the frame and provided with elements projecting towards the interior of the frame and forming a plurality of stops adapted to keep the panel in position after its insertion into the frame.

The characteristics and advantages of the invention will become evident from the following description, given by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

fig. 1 shows a perspective view from above of the working table top according to the invention during insertion of the flexible panel into the frame,

fig. 2 and 3 show partial sectional views of two details of the working table top of fig. 1,

fig. 4 shows a perspective view from below of a part of the frame of the working table top of fig. 1, and

fig. 5 shows a sectional view taken along the line V-V in fig. 3.

As shown in fig. 1, the working table top according to the invention is essentially composed of two elements, namely, a profiled frame 10 made of a thermoplastic material such as polystyrene or ABS by injection molding in a one-piece construction, and a flexible panel 11 made of a fibrous material, such as wood fibers impregnated with a plastics

material or an adhesive, and covered by a melamine resin sheet.

Frame 10 is of C-shaped cross-sectional configuration having a lower leg 12 and an upper leg 13 interiorly interconnected by a number of stiffener tabs 14. Lower leg 12 is additionally formed with bores 15 (figs. 1 and 2) and threaded bores 16 (figs. 3 and 4) cooperating with screws 17 for adjustably securing the working table top to upper rim portions 18 of the electric household appliance. Two opposite inwards facing sides of frame 10, preferably its lateral sides, are provided with rigid guides 19 formed integrally therewith (figs. 3 and 4).

These guides 19 are suitably inclined for facilitating the insertion of the flexible panel 11 into a channel formed adjacent upper leg 13 of frame 10 and extending at least partially around three sides of the frame. The fourth side of frame 10, preferably the rear side opens downwards and has its inner edge portion provided with a resilient profile member 20 (fig. 4) adapted to be deformed for the insertion of panel 11 and its retention in a snap fit. To this purpose profile member 20 is of undulating configuration (fig. 5), its surface turned towards the interior of frame 10 being provided with projecting retention elements 21, 22 and 23 (figs. 4 and 5) forming a plurality of stops adapted to keep flexible panel 11 in position after its insertion into frame 10.

These elements may themselves be flexible and formed with an inclined profile for facilitating the passage of the respective edge of panel 11 over resilient profile member 20. For assembly, flexible panel 11 is inserted through the bottom opening at the rear side of frame 10, to be guided by guides 19 into the channels formed adjacent upper leg 13 of the frame. After panel 11 has thus been completely inserted, its rear edge is pushed upwards into contact with upper leg 13 of the frame so as to ride over profile member 20 due to the resiliency thereof. The projecting elements

21, 22 and 23 act as a number of supports for panel 11 so as to keep it in position (fig. 5).

The resilient profile member 20 may of course be replaced by a number of individual resilient elements 21, 22 disposed at equal spacings along the panel insertion side.

Preferably a layer of foamed plastics material (not shown) is disposed below the working table top, i.e. between panel 11 and the top edge portion 18 of the electric household appliance prior to the table top being secured thereto by means of the connections formed by bores 15, 16 and screws 17. This layer, made for instance of polyurethane foam, acts as a thermal and acoustic insulation and as an additional support for flexible panel 11.

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GRÜNECKER, KINKELDEY, STOCKMAIR & PARTNER

EUROPEAN PATENT ATTORNEYS

A. GRÜNECKER DIPL. ING.
DR. H. KINKELDEY DIPL. ING.
DR. W. STOCKMAIR DIPL. ING. M.E. (CALTECH)
DR. K. SCHUMANN DIPL. PHYS.
P. H. JAKOB DIPL. ING.
DR. G. BEZOLD DIPL. CHEM.
W. MEISTER DIPL. ING.
H. HILGERS DIPL. ING.
DR. H. MEYER-PLATH DIPL. ING.
DR. M. BOTT-BODENHAUSEN DIPL. PHYS.
DR. U. KINKELDEY DIPL. BIOL.

LICENCIE EN DROIT DE L'UNIV. DE GENEVE

8000 MÜNCHEN 22
MAXIMILIANSTRASSE 58

EP 2596

ZANUSSI COMPONENTI PLASTICA S.p.A.
Via Giardini Cattaneo, 3
33170 Pordenone-C.P. 147

I t a l y

Working Table Top for Electric Appliances

P a t e n t C l a i m s

1. A working table top for electric household appliances such as laundry washing machines, dishwashing machines, refrigerators and the like, comprising a flexible panel made of a fibrous material and covered by a sheet of plastics material, said panel being enclosed in a frame made of a plastics material by injection molding, said working table top being characterized in that said frame (10) is of one-piece construction and provided, at two opposite inner edges, with rigid guide rails (19) and, at a third inner edge, with at least one resilient profile member (20) adapted to be deformed for the insertion of said flexible panel (11) and for the retention thereof in a snap fit.

2. A working table top according to claim 1, characterized in that said resilient profile member (20) is associated with the rear edge of said frame (10) and provided with elements (21, 22, 23) projecting towards the interior of said frame and forming a plurality of stops adapted to keep said panel (11) in position after insertion thereof into said frame (10).

3. A working table top according to claim 2, characterized in that said resilient profile portion (20) is of undulating configuration and in that said projecting elements (21, 22, 23) are flexible and formed with an inclined profile for facilitating the passage of said profile member (20) over the corresponding edge of said panel (11).

4. A working table top according to claim 1, characterized in that said profile member (20) is foremd of a plurality of individual resilient elements (21, 22) located at equal spacings along the panel insertion border of said frame (10).

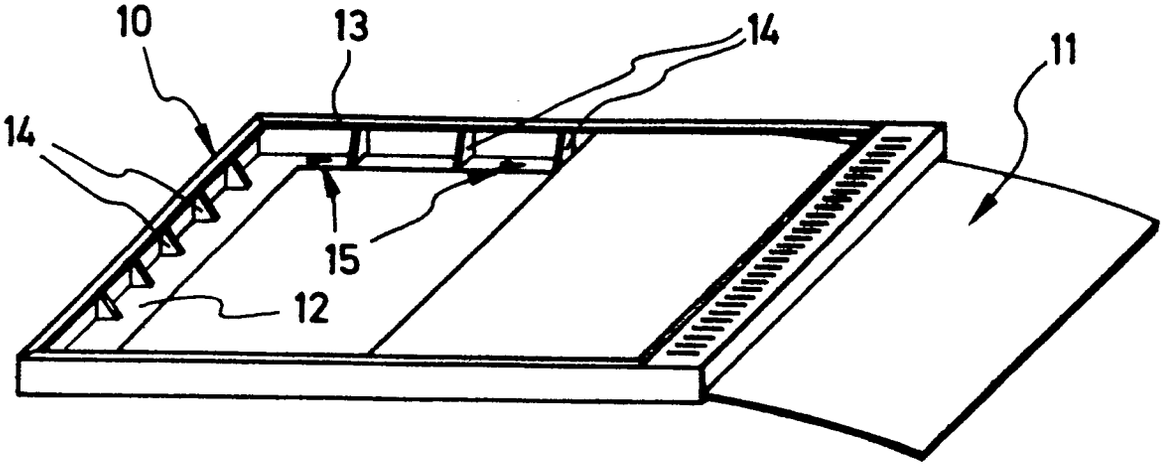

FIG. 1

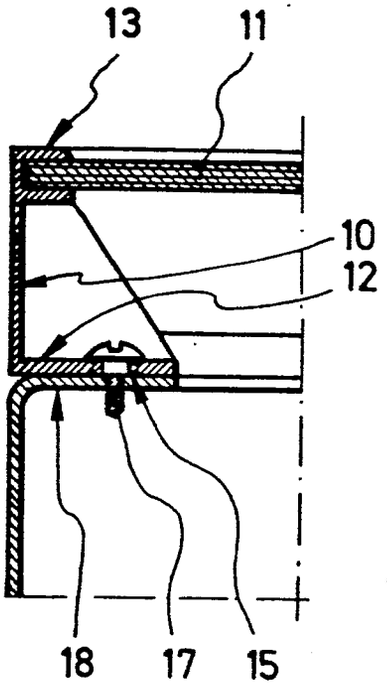

FIG. 2

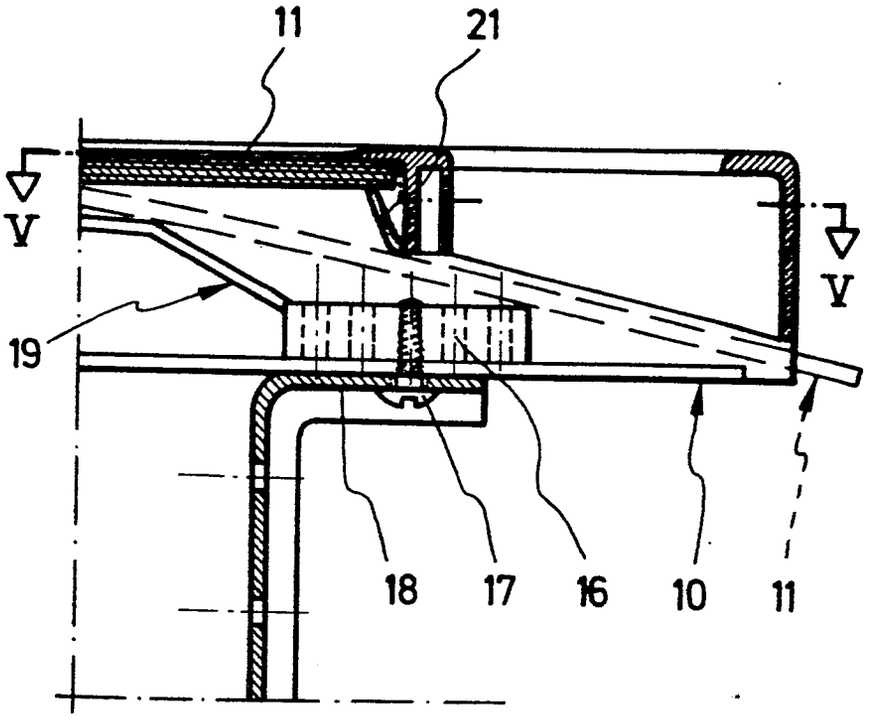

FIG. 3

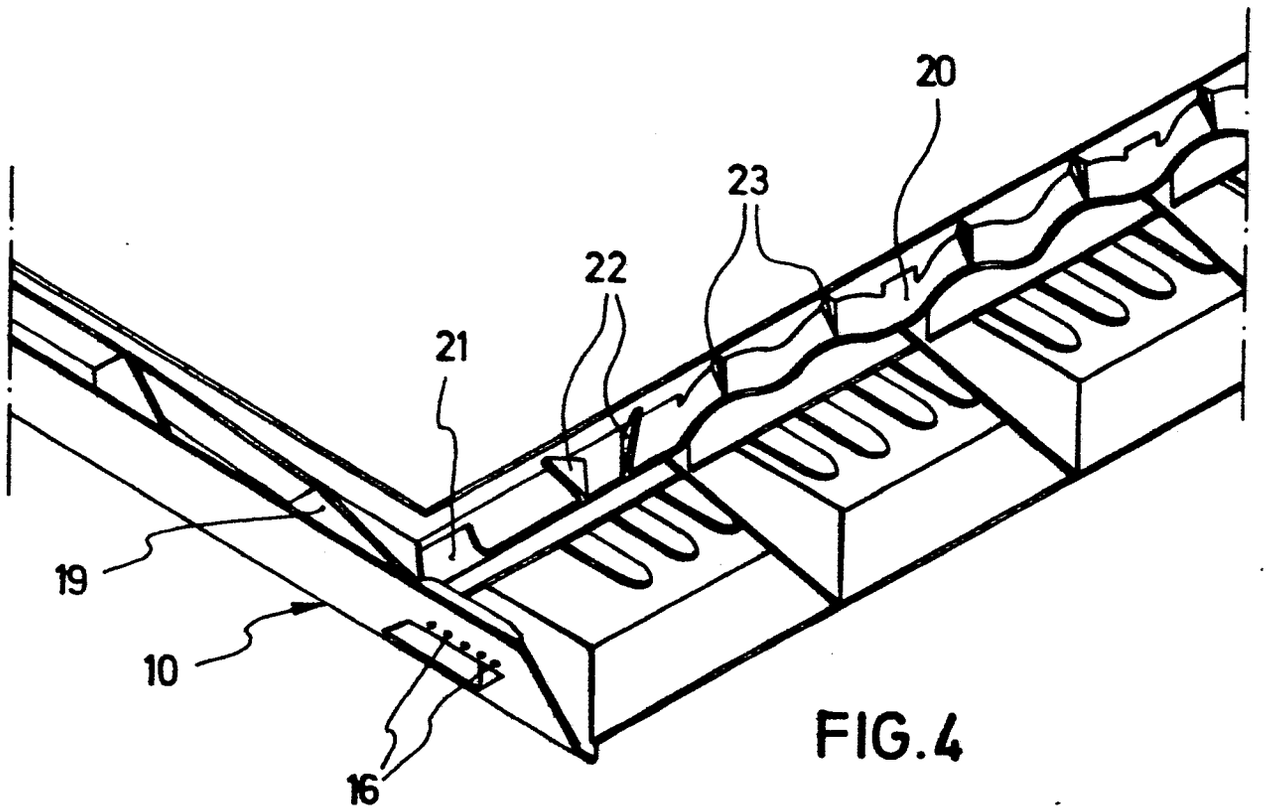

FIG.4

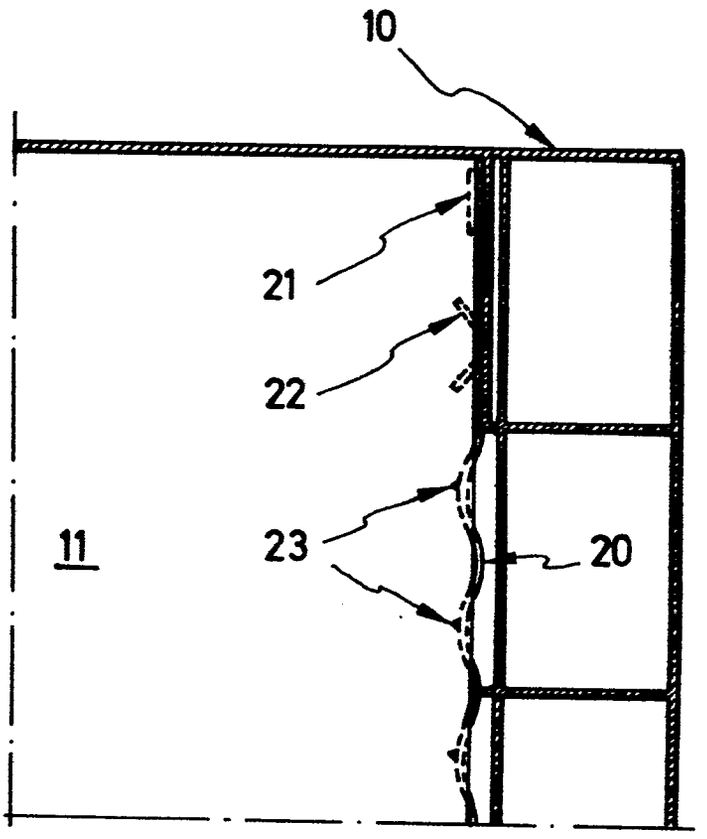

FIG.5