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(54) **A stave or panel construction for a user supporting shower bottom**

(57) A stave or panel construction, for the user supporting bottom of a shower and the like, is characterized in that said stave or panel construction comprises a bear-

ing structural element, made either of a metal or a plastics (polymeric) material coated by a ceramics plate-like element.

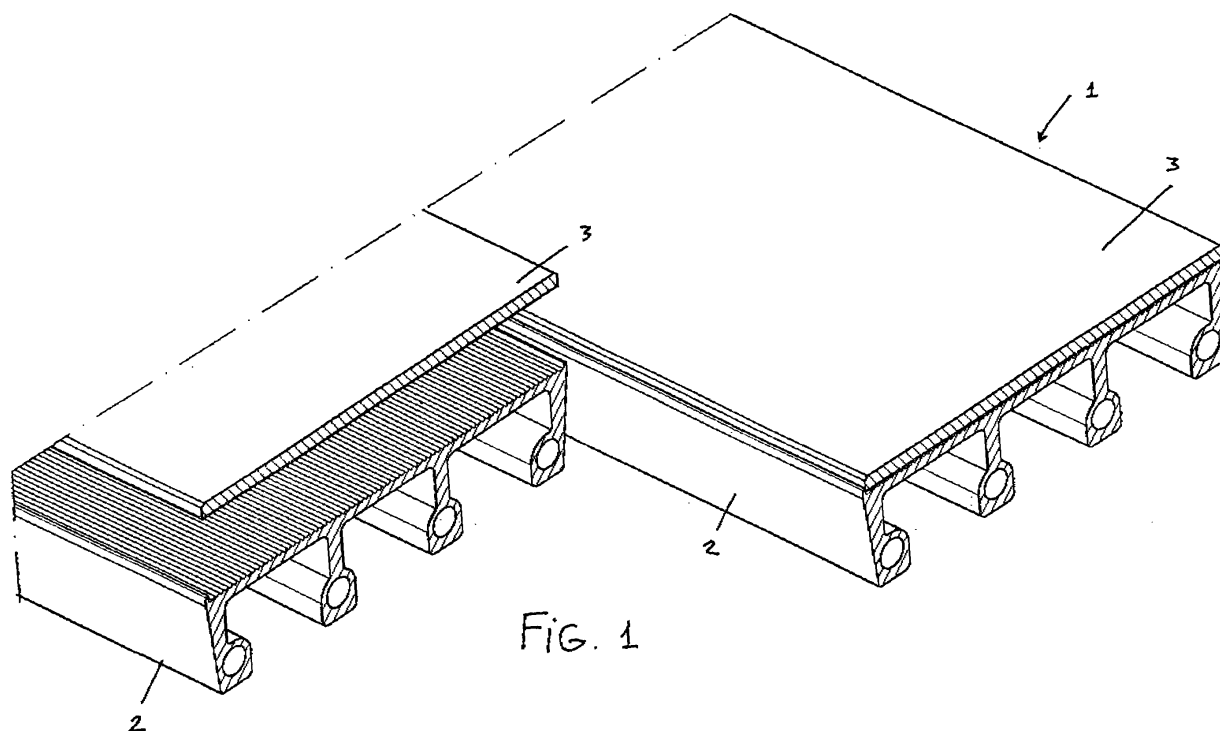


Fig. 1

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Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a stave or panel construction, specifically designed for forming the user supporting bottom of a shower and the like.

[0002] As is known, a shower bath construction usually comprises a bottom or base panel, made either of a plastics or ceramics material, operating both as a water collecting tray and as a supporting element for the user.

[0003] Shower bottoms including a water collecting tray made of a plurality of adjoining wood, aluminium or plastics (polymeric) material staves or panels, operating as a user supporting plane, are also known.

[0004] The above mentioned wood staves or panels provide a supporting surface which is very satisfactory from a comfort and aesthetic standpoint, but they have the drawback of a comparatively high cost, since the wood material to be used must resist against water or be waterproof.

[0005] Moreover, the mentioned wood staves or panels have a comparatively short useful life, with respect to aluminium or plastics (polymeric) material staves or panels.

[0006] In fact, the aluminium or plastics material (polymeric) staves or panels have very good waterproofing properties and a low cost, but, on the other hand, do not have satisfactory aesthetic characteristics.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Accordingly, the aim of the present invention is to provide such a stave or panel construction, specifically designed for making a user supporting bottom for showers and the like, which are provided both of very satisfactory aesthetic and functional characteristics.

[0008] Within the scope of the above mentioned aim, a main object of the invention is to provide such a stave or panel construction, having a practically unlimited useful life.

[0009] Yet another object of the present invention is to provide such a stave or panel construction which can be easily applied to existing bottoms, in replacement of prior wood bottoms or covering assemblies, as well as aluminium, plastics material and other material conventional bottom arrangements.

[0010] According to one aspect of the present invention, the above mentioned aim and objects, as well as yet other objects, which will become more apparent hereinafter, are achieved by a stave or panel construction, specifically designed for forming a user supporting bottom for showers and the like, characterized in that said construction comprises a bearing structural element, made of a metal or plastics (polymeric) material, coated by a plate ceramics element.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] Further characteristics and advantages of the invention will become more apparent hereinafter from the following detailed disclosure of a preferred, though not exclusive, embodiment of the invention which is illustrated, by way of an indicative, but not limitative, example in the accompanying drawings, where:

Figure 1 is a perspective view showing a pair of staves, according to the present invention, one of which being shown by an exploded arrangement, and the other being shown in an assembled condition;

Figures 2, 3 and 4 are front elevation views showing respectively a possible sequence of assembling steps for assembling the stave construction according to the present invention; and

Figure 5 is a cross-sectioned elevation view showing a portion of the bottom surface of a shower, having a plurality of bottom staves according to the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0012] With reference to the number references of the above mentioned figures, the stave construction according to the present invention, which has been generally indicated by the reference number 1, comprises a bearing constructional elements 2, made of a metal material, preferably aluminium, or a plastics (polymeric) material, coated by a ceramics plate element 3.

[0013] Preferably, said ceramics plate element 3 comprises a porcelain or the like material element, coupled by the bearing element 2 through a resin layer 4.

[0014] The thus made stave construction 1 can be applied to a shower bottom 5, of a per se known type, for replacing conventional staves, as made in a single piece, starting from wood, aluminium or plastics (polymeric) materials.

[0015] Thus, the stave construction according to the present invention allows to associate the strength and long duration properties, which are peculiar characteristic of aluminium, to aesthetic and comfort characteristics of a ceramics material.

[0016] In fact, the subject ceramics element can be made with different patterns and colors, and the user supporting surface thereof can be made with suitable finishing patterns, thereby being very comfortable for the user feet.

[0017] In this connection it should be pointed out that the surface finishing of the subject stave or panel can also have anti-sliding properties.

[0018] For making the shower bottom, said staves or panels are assembled on a base panel, to define therebetween a space or gap sufficient to allow water to flow therethrough, thereby said water can be easily and quickly collected in the underlying tray element and drained in

any per se known manners.

[0019] It should be apparent that the maintenance operations on the thus made staves or panels would be reduced to a minimum, i.e. to simple cleaning operations, since the ceramics layer and aluminium or plastics material structural element have very good waterproof characteristics. 5

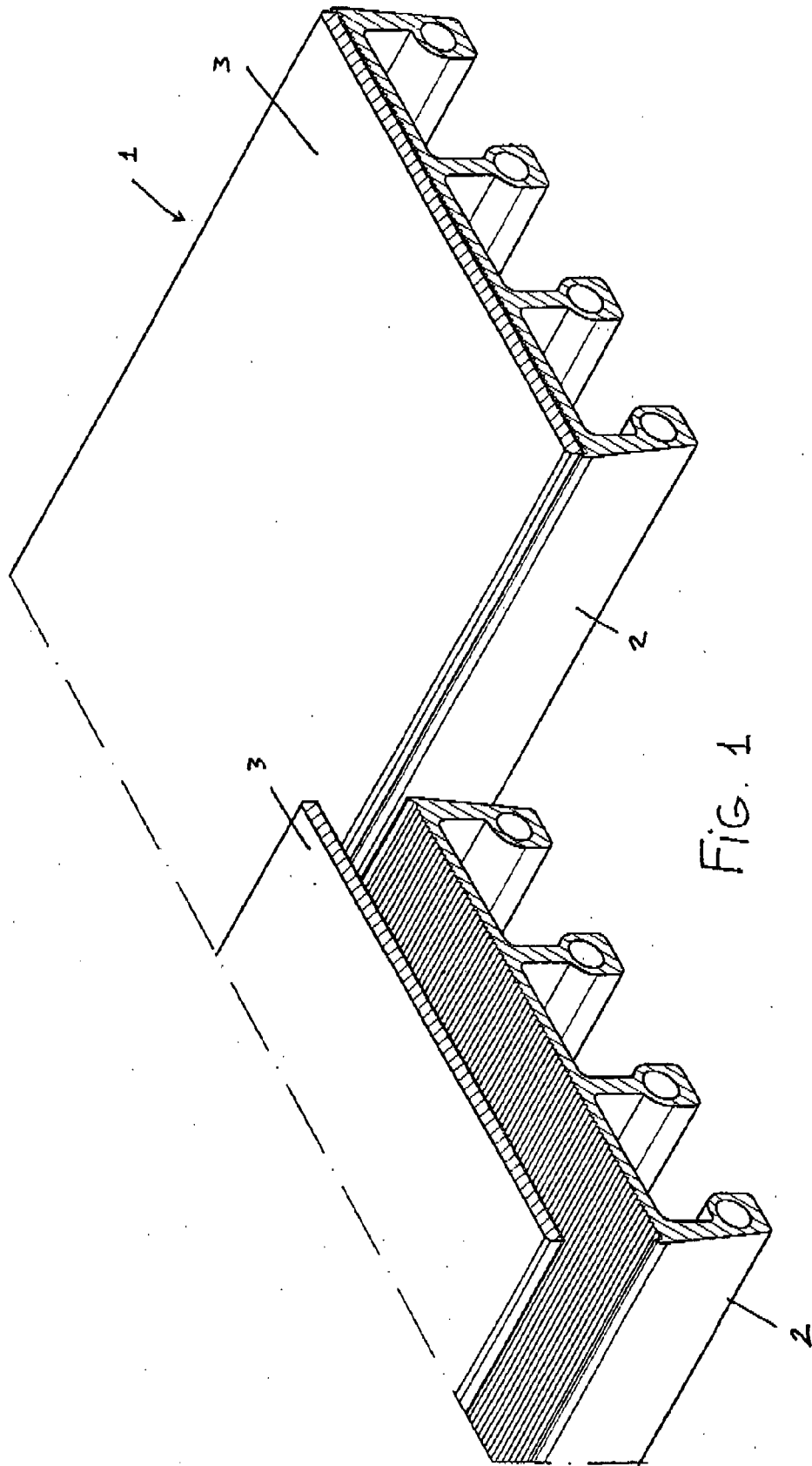
[0020] It has been found that the invention fully achieves the intended aim and objects.

[0021] In fact, the invention provides a stave or panel construction which has a very high strength and duration and, in the meanwhile, very satisfactory touch and aesthetic characteristics, owing to the provided surface finishing pattern of a ceramics or porcelain material. 10

[0022] In practicing the invention, the used materials, as well as the contingent size and shapes, can be any, depending on requirements and the status of the art. 15

Claims 20

1. A stave or panel construction, specifically designed for forming a user supporting bottom for showers and the like, **characterized in that** said construction comprises a bearing structural element, made of a metal or plastics (polymeric) material, coated by a plate ceramics element. 25
2. A stave or panel construction, according to claim 1, **characterized in that** said bearing structural element is made of an aluminium or plastics (polymeric) material. 30
3. A stave or panel construction, according to claim 1 or 2, **characterized in that** said plate ceramics element comprises a porcelain or the like material element, associated with said structural element by a resin layer. 35
4. A stave or panel construction, according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** said construction is adapted to be applied to a bottom panel for a shower, in replacement of conventional single piece wood, aluminium or plastics material staves or panels. 40 45
5. A stave or panel construction, according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** said ceramics element comprises different patterns and colors, and that a user supporting surface can be made with suitable finishings, thereby providing a touch comfortable surface for the user feet. 50
6. A stave or panel construction, according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** said construction comprises one or more of the disclosed and/or illustrated characteristics. 55



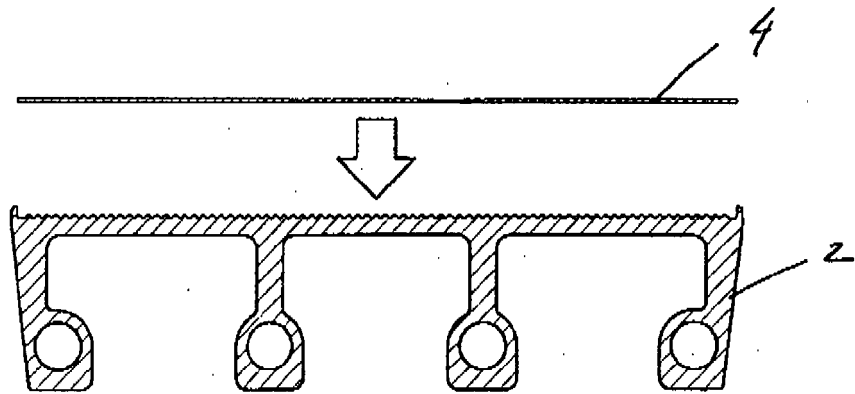


Fig. 2

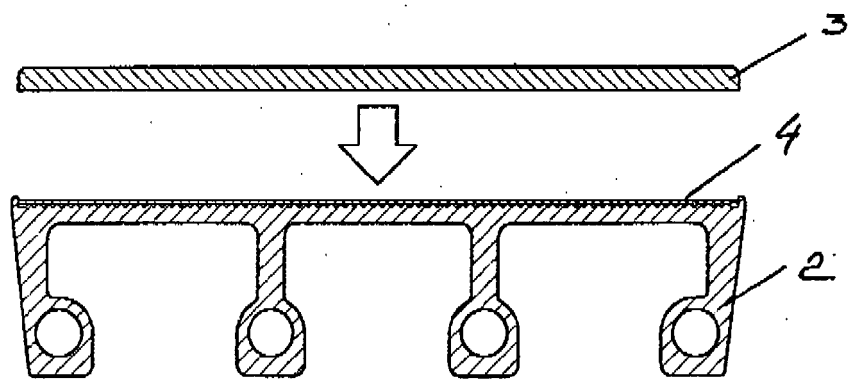


Fig. 3

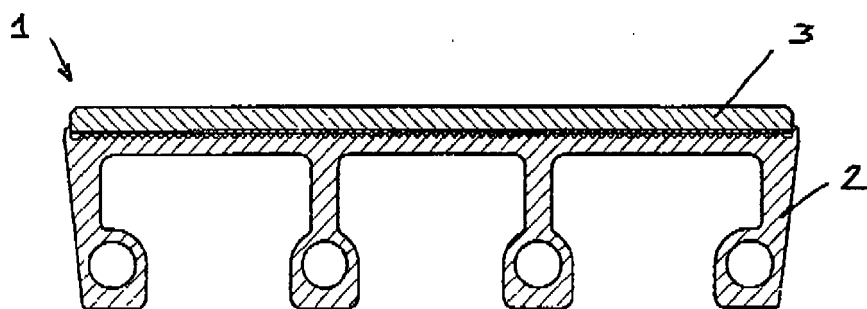


Fig. 4

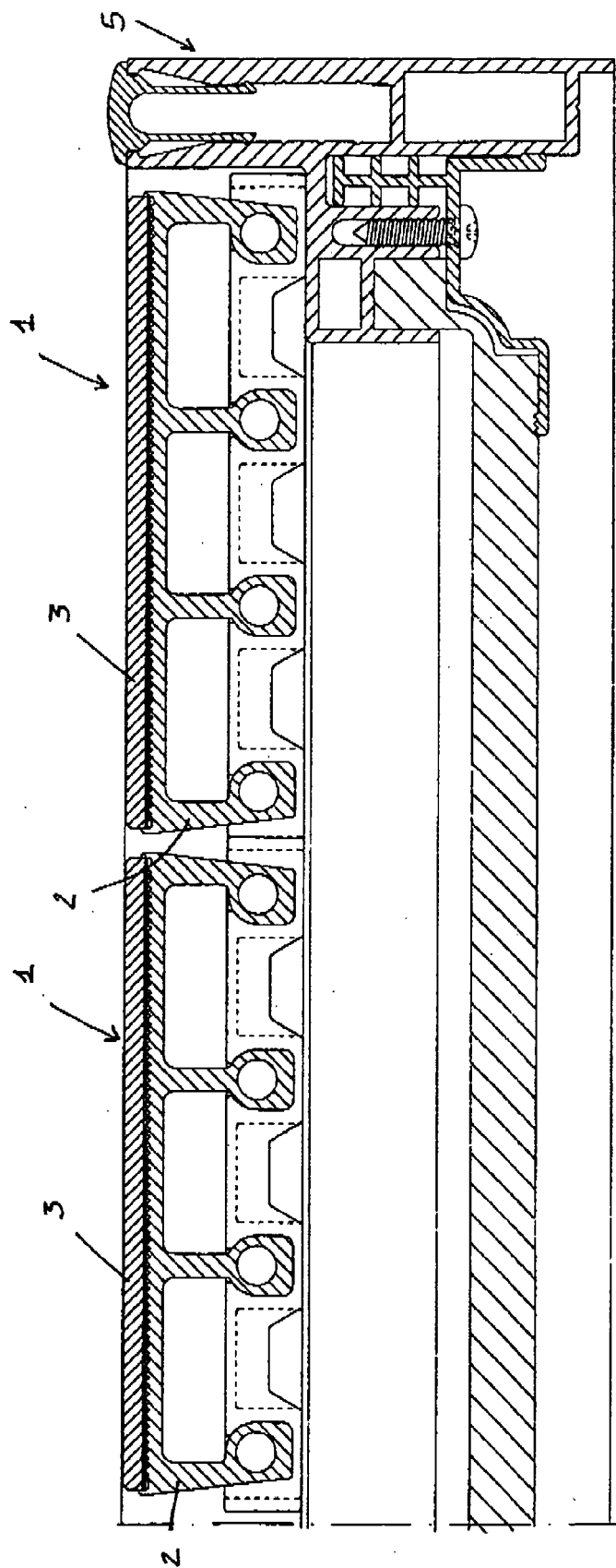


FIG. 5