The present invention provides a uniform pan holder assembly adapted to receive a drywall pan and including a support having a pair of uprights spanning a cross member and terminating at an arcuate edge, the uprights and cross member defining a supporting area. Each arcuate edge is generally associated with the top edge and adapted to retain the pan within the supporting area.
UNIFORM PAN HOLDER ASSEMBLY
METHOD AND APPARATUS
CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of the prior filed U.S. provisional application No. 60/936,651 filed on Jun. 22, 2007 which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates to holders for containers. More specifically, the present invention relates to a hand held device adapted to store a variety of troughs for use by a variety of workers, such as dry wall finishers and plasterers, while working with dry wall materials.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] When finishing drywall, seams between the individual sheets of drywall are taped and spackled, and the nail heads or drywall screws are spackled to conceal the joints and the nails or screws. During the course of finishing the drywall, a drywall finisher is required to tape both wall and ceiling joints. This requires the finisher to have one hand free to manipulate the tape and the other hand free to control the blade used to apply the spackling compound. A spackling pan or mar pan is usually a trough which generally holds a desired amount of spackling material and must be carried while spackling nails or screws.

[0004] The spackling process, which depending on the project parameters, may require an extended period of time during which the finisher is required to hold the trough using their hand or arm causing the finisher to become tired or weary from carrying the pan. In addition, during the spackling process, a user may desire to rotate or otherwise manipulate the trough to work the compound to the proper consistency using one hand to hold a spackling tool which helps to work the compound while another hand is used to rotate the trough. In addition, the finisher may desire to shape the compound within the trough for application of the compound to the drywall surface. Manipulation of the trough may be awkward or become difficult over time for some finishers. In some cases, two hands may be required to rotate the trough to the desired position. While some attempts to address these concerns have included attaching the trough to a belt or use the trough in a hands-free operation, these attempts have not addressed the fact that some finishers desire to manipulate the trough in various orientations during the spackling process.

[0005] Additionally, not all commercially available drywall pans have the same shape and size. While some prior art holders have been developed, a holder which accommodates the variety of pan shapes and sizes is a problem which has not been adequately solved. Therefore, it would be a further benefit to provide a uniform pan holder assembly which could accommodate a variety of pan shapes and sizes without the need to change the pan holder device.

[0006] In addition, during the spackling process, the finisher uses a smooth surface provided by the spackling tool to apply and smooth the compound upon the drywall. During use, the compound may dry upon the smooth surface of the spackling tool making it difficult to use the tool to apply and smooth the compound upon the drywall. Also, periodically, it may be necessary to temporarily free one hand from holding the trough and the spackling tool. However, these needs are typically only temporary and after which the finisher usually goes right back to finishing the spackling process. Placing the tool or the trough on the ground or other nearby surface may not be advantageous because of debris or other concerns presented by such surfaces. While some attempts to resolve these concerns include providing a storage location within a standard tool belt or other waist attachment devices, over time and after a number of attempts to clean or store the tool, the debris adheres against the waist and fouls the attachment devices.

[0007] It would therefore be beneficial to provide a uniform pan holder assembly receiving a pan and drywall tool for retrievable storage during the drywall process which is ergonomic, easy to use or manufacture, and which is compact and convenient to carry during the drywall process.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] The present invention reduces the difficulties and disadvantages of the prior art by providing a simple, easy to use, device and method for a uniform pan holder assembly adapted for receiving a pan having a top edge and bottom surface, said uniform pan holder assembly including a support having a pair of uprights spanning a cross member and terminating at an arcuate edge, said pair of uprights and cross member defining a supporting area. Each arcuate edge is generally associated with the top edge and adapted for retaining said pan within said supporting area. Alternatively and additionally, the invention includes a uniform pan holder assembly in combination with a pan having a top edge and a bottom surface along with a drywall tool, said uniform pan holder assembly adapted to receive said pan and said drywall tool retrievably stored within said uniform pan holder assembly, said combination comprising said pan and said support device including a pair of uprights spanning a cross member having an upper and lower arm in spaced relation and forming a V-shaped slot adapted for releasably receiving said drywall tool, wherein each said upright extends vertically from said cross member and terminates at an arcuate edge, said pair of uprights and cross member defining a supporting area adapted for receiving said pan, said arcuate edge adapted for releasably engaging said top edge.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of the uniform pan holder assembly in receipt of a pan and a drywall tool.

[0010] FIG. 2 is a front perspective view of the uniform pan holder assembly spaced from the pan and drywall tool illustrated in FIG. 1.

[0011] FIG. 3 is a front elevational view of a uniform pan holder assembly illustrated in FIG. 1.

[0012] FIG. 3a is a magnified partial elevation, perspective view of the arcuate edge illustrated in FIG. 3.

[0013] FIG. 3b is a magnified partial elevation, perspective view of a V-shaped slot illustrated in FIG. 3.

[0014] FIG. 4a is a side elevational view of a uniform pan holder assembly of FIG. 1.

[0015] FIG. 4b is a side elevational view of the uniform pan holder assembly of FIG. 1 in receipt of the pan.

[0016] FIG. 4c is a sectional view of a uniform pan holder assembly from FIG. 3 in receipt of the drywall tool and the pan.

[0017] FIG. 5 is a bottom plan view of the uniform pan holder assembly of FIG. 4a in receipt of the pan.
I. Introduction.

As required, detailed embodiments of the present invention are disclosed herein; however, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely exemplary of the invention, which may be embodied in various forms. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but merely as a basis for the claims and as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to variously employ the present invention in virtually any appropriately detailed structure.

II. Uniform Pan Holder Assembly.

Referring to FIG. 1, an embodiment of the present invention, a uniform pan holder assembly is generally indicated by reference numeral 20, shown in combination with a pan 2 and drywall tool 10.

FIG. 2 shows a pair of uprights 32 spaced apart and extending vertically from a cross member 34. There are a variety of commercially available pans adapted for receiving and working with sheetrock many have different dimensions and sizes. The support area 22 of the uniform pan holder assembly 20 is configured for receiving and supporting these variety of pans with a pair of uprights 32 being angularly oriented with respect to the cross member 34. The pair of uprights 32 are illustrated in FIGS. 1-3 with a vertical bias, the upright pair 32 allowing for horizontal rotation, thereby expanding the support area for receipt of the pan 2. FIG. 2 further illustrates an arcuate edge 40 associated with a distal end of each of the pair of uprights 32.

The top edge 4 of the pan 2 is generally recessed within the support area 22, using the uniform pan holder assembly 20. In operation, a user may hold the uniform pan holder assembly by the handle 44 in a generally horizontal orientation with the pair of uprights 32 extending vertically upwards. The pan 2 may be positioned in the support area 22 by rotating either one or both of the pair of uprights 32 outwardly, providing an enlarged support area 22 for receipt of the pan 2.

Alternatively as illustrated in FIGS. 7-8, the an alternative pan holder assembly 220 may be utilized which has a pair of uprights 234 including a vertically rotational structure whereby the upright 234 has distal end 234a separated by a proximate end 234b, the distal end 234a being generally associated with the arcuate edge 240, the proximate end 234b associated with a cross member having an upper arm 236 and a lower arm 238. In addition, the proximate end 234b presents a socket for receiving the ridged structure 234c of the distal end 234a opposite the arcuate edge 240. In this configuration, the arcuate edge 240 may be rotated for receipt of the pan 2 along the upper arm 236.

Upon receipt of the pan 2 by the uniform pan holder assembly 20, the bottom surface 6 is positioned near or over the cross member 34. Once the pan is received within the support area 22, the uprights may return to their biased orientation. Depending on the size and shape of the pan 2, the pair of uprights 32 may rest against the sides 2c, urging the top edge 4 upward for engagement by the arcuate edges 40. During operation, the pair of uprights 32 move from the generally vertically biased orientation to a rotated operational
orientation with the pan 2 positioned between the spaced pair of uprights 32, the uprights 32 rotated angularly from the biased position.

[0031] An embodiment of the cross member 34 is illustrated in FIG. 3, the cross member 34 including an upper arm 36 and a lower arm 38, with the upper arm 36 positioned beneath the bottom surface 6, while the lower arm 38 is aligned with two members forming a pair of angularly declining frame members. Each frame member intersects at the V-shaped slot 42 and extends toward the uprights 32. The V-shaped slot 42 is formed between the upper and lower arms, each frame member extending from the vertically positioned handle to the pair of uprights 32.

[0032] The handle 44 is extended along a central longitudinal axis 32 associated with the uniform pan holder assembly 20. The handle 44 is illustrated having a cylindrical configuration with a grip 48 and a curb 46 encircling the upper portion of the grip 48 and separating the grip 48 from the cross member 34. The handle 44 may be fabricated from a variety of materials including, but not limited to, wood, plastic, metal, for example. The handle 44 may also include a number of alternative configurations, including those with a regular, irregular, ergonomic, or decorative design.

[0033] FIG. 4 illustrates a receiver 50 perpendicularly oriented with respect to the cross member 34, the receiver 50 extending outwardly from the cross member 34 and generally adapted for lateral alignment of the pan 2. While the cross members 34 provide longitudinal support of the pan 2, the receiver 50 laterally aligns the pan 2, supporting the pan 2 along the cross members 34 limiting movement of the pan 2. The receiver 50 depicted in FIG. 4 includes a front member 52 and rear member 54, the front member extending from the cross member 34 towards the front 2a and the rear member 54 extending from the cross member 34 towards the rear 2b, the front member 52 and rear member 54 being disposed substantially normal to the cross member 34. Generally the front and rear members 52, 54 are sized sufficiently to support the pan. As illustrated, the front and rear members 52, 54 are each approximately one-half the width of the bottom surface 6. The front and rear members 52, 54 generally terminate at the vertically extending portion 60 which, as illustrated, generally extends vertically along the sidewall 8, at least partly traversing the front 2a and rear 2b.

[0034] FIG. 4c illustrates the side of the uniform pan holder assembly 20 in an upright configuration while FIGS. 4b and 4c illustrate an alternative embodiment of the uniform pan holder assembly 120 in combination with the drywall tool 10 located beneath the bottom surface 6 of the pan 2. As depicted, the drywall tool 10 is a commercially available spackling tool with a handle and a blade used for applying the drywall compound to a wall material during the drywall process. Although a variety of configurations may be utilized by the present invention, preferably the drywall tool 10 is generally received between the upper and lower arms 136, 138 at the V-shaped slot (not shown). The V-shaped slot, being generally configured for releasably securing the drywall tool 10 below the bottom surface 6 for easy and convenient access to the drywall tool 10 for use with the pan positioned above the drywall tool 10 by the receiver 150 during the drywall process.

[0035] FIG. 5 illustrates the bottom view of the uniform pan holder assembly 20. The bottom surface 6 is generally positioned between the pair of uprights 32 along the cross member 32, the pan 2 being generally aligned within the receiver 50 by a first and a second prong 56, 58, each extending outwardly from the cross member 34. In general, the first and second prong 56, 58 generally includes a front member 52 and a rear member 54, both extending from the cross member 34 along the bottom surface 6. In FIG. 5 the handle 44 extends away from bottom surface 6 while in FIG. 6 the handle 44 is illustrated opposite the top edge 4. The vertically extending portion 60 associated with the receiver 50 is also illustrated in FIG. 6 whereby the front and rear members 52, 54 extend outwardly from the cross member 34 towards the vertically extending portion 60. Alternatively, the receiver 50 may include a number of prongs or other structures for retaining and aligning the pan 2 generally within the support area 22.

[0036] While the invention has been described with respect to specific examples including presently preferred modes of carrying out the invention, those skilled in the art will appreciate that there are numerous variations and permutations of the above described systems and techniques that fall within the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed is:

1. A uniform pan holder assembly adapted for receiving a pan with a top edge opposite a bottom surface, said uniform pan holder assembly comprising:
   a support including a pair of uprights spanning a cross member, each said upright extending vertically from said cross member and terminating at an arcuate edge, said pair of uprights and cross member defining a supporting area, and each said arcuate edge being generally associated with said top edge and being adapted for retaining said pan within said supporting area.
2. The uniform pan holder assembly according to claim 1 wherein said pair of uprights and cross member are angularly oriented and define a supporting area adapted for supporting said pan.
3. The uniform pan holder assembly according to claim 2 wherein said supporting area further includes a receiver extending from said cross member, said receiver including front and rear spaced members mounted on said cross member and configured for aligning said pan.
4. The uniform pan holder assembly of claim 3 wherein said receiver further comprises at least two prongs, a first prong extending forwardly from said cross member and a second prong extending rearwardly from said cross member said first and second prongs being perpendicular to said cross member and adapted to align said pan bottom surface with said cross member.
5. The uniform pan holder assembly of claim 4 wherein said prongs further comprise a vertically extending portion associated with a distal end, opposite said cross member and associated with a sidewall extending from said bottom surface towards said top edge.
6. The uniform pan holder assembly of claim 1 wherein said uprights angularly rotate from a vertically biased orientation to an operational orientation with said pan supported between said uprights.
7. The uniform pan holder assembly of claim 1 wherein said uprights further include a distal end and a proximate end, said distal end associated with said arcuate edge and said proximate end associated with said cross member.
8. The uniform pan holder assembly of claim 7 wherein said distal end further includes a ridged structure and said proximate end further includes a socket adapted to receive said ridged structure.

9. The uniform pan holder assembly of claim 1 wherein said support further includes a handle connected to and extending downwardly from said cross member.

10. The uniform pan holder assembly of claim 1 wherein said cross member further comprises an upper arm and a lower arm in spaced relations and forming a V-shaped slot adapted for releasably receiving a drywall tool.

11. In combination, a pan having a top edge and bottom surface, a uniform pan holder assembly adapted to receive said pan and a drywall tool retrievably stored within said uniform pan holder assembly, comprising:
   said pan,
   said drywall tool, and
   said uniform pan holder assembly including a pair of uprights spanning a cross member having an upper and lower arm in spaced relation and forming a V-shaped slot adapted for releasably receiving said drywall tool, wherein each said upright extends vertically from said cross member and terminates at an arcuate edge, said pair of uprights and cross member defining a supporting area adapted for receiving said pan, said arcuate edge adapted for releasably engaging said top edge.

12. The combination of claim 9 wherein said supporting area further including at least two prongs, a first prong extending forwardly from said cross member and a second prong extending rearwardly from said cross member said first and second prongs normal to said cross member and adapted to align said bottom surface with said cross member.

13. A method for applying drywall compound from a pan to a wall material comprising the steps of:
   providing a uniform pan holder assembly including a pair of uprights spanning a cross member, each said upright extending vertically from said cross member and terminating at an arcuate edge, said pair of uprights and cross member defining a supporting area, positioning said pan within said supporting area, said pan having a front and rear generally parallel to each other and separated by a bottom surface, said front and rear joined by a pair of sides, a top edge located opposite said bottom surface, said side, front and rear forming a sidewall around said bottom surface adapted for receiving the drywall compound, aligning said pan transversely within said supporting area by a receiver having at least two prongs, a first prong extending forwardly from said cross member and a second prong extending rearwardly from said cross member said first and second prongs being perpendicular to said cross member, engaging said top edge of said pan within said uniform pan holder assembly at said arcuate edge, grasping said uniform pan holder assembly using a handle connected to and extending downwardly from said cross member, releasably storing a drywall tool within a V-shaped slot of said cross member formed at the overlap of an upper arm spaced from a lower arm extending into said handle, rotating said uniform pan holder assembly using said handle for manipulating said drywall compound received within said pan, by applying pressure with said drywall tool until the desired drywall compound consistency is achieved, and spreading said manipulated drywall compound upon said wall material with said drywall tool.

* * * * *