

78 of 172 DOCUMENTS

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COMPANIONSHIP DEVICE

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**ENGLISH-ABST:**

A bed covering with a preprinted image of a companion in a realistic pose lying on the bed covering is provided. A pillow covering or pillow is also printed with the head or head and torso of the companion to simulate the companion lying on the bed covering. A user lying in a bed on one side of the bed looks to the other side of the bed and sees the companion's image, and since the image is life-sized, the user has the visual comfort of a companion when the user goes to sleep and when the user wakes up. The image can also be printed on the bed covering at a realistic sleeping location, for example, a dog at the center of the foot of the bed.

**NO-OF-CLAIMS:** 24

**NO-DRWNG-PP:** 1

**SUMMARY:**

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to creating an appearance of a companion with the user. More particularly, the present invention provides a precisely placed image that allows a user to feel as if a companion is beside the user.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] In this day and age of families where both spouses work, where individuals travel and work abroad, where individuals often attend school for long, extended periods of time, that is, not just elementary school, middle school and high school, but college and often times, three or more years of graduate school, companionship is at a premium.

[0003] When both spouses work, often times, one spouse will have to take a business trip and will not be home for days at a time. Without question, the two spouses miss one another and there is a desire, or maybe more properly stated, a need to provide the simulated physical companionship that is missing because the two spouses are physically apart.

[0004] Moreover, when a student engages in college and long, extended periods of graduate school, such a student often times will have a significant other, or sometimes, a spouse, and that student, because she must attend school in a certain location, will not be able to physically be with the significant other or spouse. There is a need to simulate the physical companionship that the significant other or spouse would provide the student.

[0005] Additionally, there is a need to simulate the physical companionship that even a pet or other inanimate object offers. For many individuals, companionship of another person is not desired, but rather, an animal or inanimate object is a companion. For example, a family dog or stuffed teddy bear might be a desirable companion.

[0006] Companionship, although it can exist because somebody sees a wedding ring on her finger, or because somebody can chat with a significant other or spouse on the telephone, it is not complete unless it is manifested in a physical reality. There is a need for a device that allows someone who is lacking companionship to be able to simulate the companionship that that individual is used to when her companion physically cannot be near. Companionship is often reaffirmed in physical form when one companion sends another companion a small gift to keep on her desk or at her bedside. Companionship can also be simulated in the physical realm by merely displaying a picture at one's bedside or on one's desk.

[0007] Nevertheless, a gift or a simple 4 by 6 inch picture is just what it is--a symbol, but not convincing enough to simulate companionship. Thus, there is a need to provide a physical rendition of a companion that appears to be that companion as nearly as possible, even though the companion is not physically present.

[0008] For many individuals, companions are most missed at particular times of the day. Often times when an individual first wakes up in the morning, the first person she wants to see is her companion. Similarly, right before someone retires for the night and goes to sleep in her bed, the last person she wants to see is her companion. Furthermore, if an individual has trouble sleeping and wakes up in the middle of the night worried about something, or feeling ill, or merely longing to feel as if she is lying next to her companion, the need is there to have a companion, even though the companion is not physically present. While humans respond to scent and sound, the ability to see a companion arguably overwhelms the other senses.

[0009] P.C.T. Publication No. WO2004/016883A1, published on Feb. 26, 2004, by Park, shows a room tent that has preprinted characters. While the characters could serve as companions for the user, the device is a room tent, rather large, and does not realistically mimic an individual that would exist in real life. For example, the face shown in Park's device is much larger than the user, so much so that it would be impossible for the user to believe that the face is similar to that of an actual physical companion.

[0010] U.S. Patent Application Publication No. U.S. 2005/0050634A1, published on Mar. 10, 2005, by Birchenough for a headboard for a bed shows a headboard provided with one or more characters, images, texts, symbols or pictures. The outer shape of the headboard relates to the characters, images, texts, symbols or pictures that are depicted on its surface. Unlike the present invention, Birchenough's device does not mimic an actual companion, but rather is merely a decorative piece that serves as a headboard. For example, the figures in Birchenough's device show a larger-than-life baseball glove receiving a larger-than-life baseball. It is inconceivable that a user would believe that the headboard of Birchenough's device is an actual baseball glove and an actual baseball. Rather, the user would know that Birchenough's device is merely a decorative piece showing an enlarged baseball glove with an enlarged baseball.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 6,640,362-B1, issued on Nov. 4, 2003, to Kimball shows bedding with multiple overlays and openings. Kimball's device shows that patterns and images can be placed in specific areas on bedding. However, unlike the present invention, Kimball's device in no way attempts to provide any semblance of companionship for the user. Kimball's device merely presents part overlays.

[0012] U.S. Pat. No. 6,254,527-B1, issued on Jul. 3, 2001, to August, shows an apparatus for biophilically promoting personal relaxation, for reducing physical and/or physiological personal stress and for expediting personal recovery. August's device provides a user with a choice selecting for viewing one or more high-resolution, spatially open, serene, natural landscape scenes in which the user is believed to have an innate, positive biophilic affinity on a fabric frame display member mounted upon a flexible wall partition, such as a hospital curtain, a ceiling, a stand or other display member. Unlike the present invention, August's device is concerned with presenting a serene, positive scene for the user. Unlike the present invention, August's device does not recognize any solution to the problem of a lack of companionship, but rather, August's device attempts to transport the user to a serene environment. In fact, August's device, as largely and grandly as possible, appears to display a scene. Unlike the present invention, August's device is unconcerned with placement of an image on a medium.

[0013] U.S. Pat. No. 6,173,465-B1, issued on Jan. 16, 2001, to Deneau shows a hugging mattress and method of using and a sheet therefore. The sheet, having two walled slots or pockets that extend transverse, and nesting within two corresponding holes in the mattress. The mattress's holes go all the way through the mattress. The function of the holes is to extend the normal pleasures of a mattress to allow hugging one's bedmate for extended periods of time without the crushing weight that one often feels on its arms. Deneau's device is unconcerned with providing companionship, but rather, attempts to assist the user when hugging a live companion. Deneau's device, unlike the present invention, does not attempt to replicate a companion.

[0014] U.S. Pat. No. 4,442,558, issued on Apr. 17, 1984, to Alexander, shows a bed covering having an overall pattern and a pocket integrated therein. Alexander's device allows a child to become part of the scene that is displayed on the bed covering, as the bed covering has a pouch of sufficient size to accommodate a child as if the child is a baby kangaroo in a mother's pouch. Unlike the present invention, Alexander's device attempts to incorporate the user in a scene that is depicted on a sheet or a bed covering. Unlike the present invention, Alexander's device does not attempt to create a visual impression of a companion in bed alongside the user, but rather, Alexander's device offers a fictional character, and physically modifies the bed sheet, so that the user can become part of the fictional scene with the fictional character.

[0015] Thus, there is a need for a device that provides a realistic, visual impression of a companion, so lifelike that upon glancing quickly, the user will get the visual impression that the companion is beside the user in a bed. While there are many devices that create visual scenes, or allow the user to become incorporated into a scene, the relevant art does not provide a visual substitute for a companion. Furthermore, the relevant art does not provide a visual substitute for a companion in the context of a bed.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0016] Providing a realistic life-sized image of a companion, the present invention provides a substitute for a companion in one of the most intimate and personal ways possible.

[0017] According to the present invention, a user replaces the bed sheet or bed covering on the user's bed with a bed sheet or bed covering that has a life-sized image of a companion lying in the bed. By providing a life-sized visual image of a companion on the bed sheet, the user, going to sleep at night, can look to the user's left or right on the bed and visually have the impression of the user's companion next to them, even though the user's companion is actually not present.

[0018] It is further contemplated that offering a realistic placement of an inanimate object or resting pet animal such as a dog, would similarly provide companion effects. For example, an image of a dog would appear on the bed sheet at the typical sleeping place of a dog. The typical sleeping place could be at the foot of the bed sheet. This would provide a realistic simulation of that companion on the bed.

[0019] Unlike conventional printed sheets, the present invention does not have repeating patterns over and over again across the sheet, but rather, the present invention has a life-like image specifically placed to allow the user to as best as possible visually have a reminder and a feeling of companionship that looks identical or similar to the companion that is absent.

#### **DRWDESC:**

#### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

[0020] FIG. 1 shows a top view of the present invention, with a user lying thereon.

#### **DETDESC:**

#### **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT(S)**

[0021] With reference to FIG. 1, the present invention has a sheet (10) and a pillow (90). The sheet (10), for purposes of explanation, has a midline (20), such that a user (30) is positioned on one side of midline (20) and an image (40) is positioned on the other side of midline (20). Sheet (10) is a traditional sheet that would go on a bed. According to the present invention, user (30) would place sheet (10) on a conventional bed that user (30) sleeps on. The user would lie down upon sheet (10) to one side of midline (20). It is to be understood that midline (20) is not a line that actually exists on the present invention, but is merely being used for descriptive purposes, so that the present invention can be explained.

[0022] User (30) places its head toward the top (50) of sheet (10) and its feet toward the bottom (60) of sheet (10). On the other side of midline (20) of sheet (10) is image (40). Image (40) is a life-sized, realistic reproduction preferably, or an artist rendering, of a companion or multiple companions of user (30). Image (40) is positioned to look as if the companion is sleeping or lying in the bed, or any other position that a companion might normally take next to user (30). The goal is to convince user (30) as much as possible that image (40) is the missing companion, whether the missing companion be a spouse, a dog, a cat, or even a child. When user (30) turns its head and looks across midline (20), user (30) will see image (40), and although certainly, user (30) will know that image (40) is not a real companion, the physical semblance and the realistic, real-life size of image (40) being placed on the other side of midline (20) creates a visual convincing representation that a companion is present, even though the real-life companion is absent.

[0023] Pillow (90) is provided with the head, or head and torso image of image (40) to more visually depict an

actual companion lying on the other side of midline (20) next to user (30). Pillow (90) will cover the head and/or torso of image (40), but because the head and/or torso of the companion is replicated on pillow (90), the user (30), looking across midline (20), will visually think that image (40) is actually extended from sheet (10) onto pillow (90).

[0024] It is important to recognize that while other relevant art provides various images, icons, symbols, and even cartoon characters and images of animals and people, the relevant art does not recognize that merely putting an image on a sheet and/or a pillow provides a substitute for an actual physical companion. The present invention, in one embodiment, by recognizing that midline (20) defines the area where the user (30) will rest on the bed, and image (40) will need to rest on the bed, takes the present invention a step beyond the relevant art. Another embodiment of the present invention provides image (40) of a companion, such as a dog, positioned in a realistic sleeping location on the sheet (10) at the foot of the bed on the midline. In either embodiment, image (40) is positioned at a location that an actual physical companion would choose to rest.

[0025] In the present invention, image (40) cannot be regularly applied in a pattern over and over across sheet (10) and pillow (90). To do such would render the present invention inoperative. For the present invention to work, midline (20) must be defined. One side of midline (20) must be reserved for user (30) and the other side of midline (20) must be reserved for image (40). Further, image (40) must actually be life-sized or image (40) will not visually look like the intended companion.

[0026] For example, image (40) cannot be a 4 by 6 sized picture, meaning a 4-inch by 6-inch sized picture of a companion. Moreover, image (40) cannot be a picture of a companion standing in a swimming pool and waving hello. Image (40) must be an image of the companion that has the companion actually reclining on a bed, or sleeping on a bed. It is contemplated that image (40) can be drawn by an artist, or preferably, can be taken from an actual photo of the companion or a realistic image of a companion.

[0027] With pillow (90) in place, image (40) looks as if it is lying on sheet (10) and its head is residing atop pillow (90). However, if pillow (90) is kicked off sheet (10), or pushed off sheet (10), as often happens when people sleep in a bed, image (40) is still completely reproduced on sheet (10), such that the portion of image (40) that was covered by pillow (90) will be come visible when pillow (90) is removed, since the portion of image (40) that was covered by pillow (90) is merely a duplicate of the image atop pillow (90). Thus, in the middle of the night, if user (30) happens to push pillow (90) off of sheet (10), image (40) will not appear to have been decapitated.

[0028] Because the present invention provides a visual depiction of companionship on sheet (10) and pillow (90), the present invention is very portable. Essentially, if user (30) is staying in a hotel overnight and desires to have the visual representation that the present invention offers of a companion, user (30) merely needs to put sheet (10) on a conventional bed and put pillow (90) atop sheet (10). It should be understood that pillow (90) will typically actually be a pillow covering, although pillow (90) could be a conventional pillow.

[0029] In an embodiment of the present invention, the image (40) is positioned on pillow (90). The user (30) could pull a conventional blanket over user (30) and sheet (10), such that most of sheet (10) is covered by the conventional blanket. In such case, there is little necessity for having image (40) disposed on sheet (10), because sheet (10) is covered and not easily viewable by user (30). In such case, the image (40) on pillow (90) would show the head or head and torso of the companion.

[0030] The present invention can easily be effected via a computer and the internet, as individuals could upload pictures of their companion lying on a bed, and then those pictures could be conventionally applied to sheets (10), such that image (40) is created on the sheet (10). Essentially, an operator using the present invention could receive uploaded photos on a website, then take those photos and place them on sheets, and then mail the completed sheets and pillows and/or pillow coverings to the customer.

#### **ENGLISH-CLAIMS:**

[Return to Top of Patent](#)

1. A device for providing companionship in a bed for a user, comprising: a photographic representation of a living entity shown in a realistic sleeping position; an image, said image comprising said photographic representation enlarged to lifelike dimensions; and a sheet, said sheet being the sheet on which the user lies down, said image disposed thereon to look as if the companion is sleeping in the bed next to the user.

2. The device of claim 1, wherein said image is at least one person.

3. The device of claim 1, wherein said image is a least one animal.

4. (canceled)

5. (canceled)

6. (canceled)

7. (canceled)

8. The device of claim 1, further comprising a pillow case.

9. The device of claim 8, wherein said image is partially disposed on said pillow case.

10. The device of claim 8, wherein a head of said image is disposed on said pillow case.

11. The device of claim 8, wherein a head and upper torso of said image is disposed on said pillow case.

12. (canceled)

13. (canceled)

14. (canceled)

15. (canceled)

16. The device of claim 1, wherein said image has a head positioned at the point where a pillow would be placed on the bed for the head of a sleeper.

17. The device of claim 1, wherein said image has a head and upper torso positioned at the point where a pillow would be placed on the bed for the head of a sleeper.

18. (canceled)

19. (canceled)

20. (canceled)

21. The device of claim 1, wherein said living entity is at least one of the user's real life companions.

22. The device of claim 1, further comprising a blanket that covers said sheet so that said image is only partially visible.

23. A device for providing companionship in a bed for a user, comprising: a photographic representation of a living entity shown in a realistic sleeping position; an image, said image comprising said photographic representation enlarged

to lifelike dimensions; and a pillow case, said image disposed thereon to look as if the living entity's head and upper torso is sleeping in the bed on said pillow next to the user.

24. The device of claim 23, wherein said living entity is at least one of the user's real life companions.

**LOAD-DATE:** May 26, 2007