

MECHANICAL UNIVERSAL HINGE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to eyeglasses and to hinges for an eyeglass.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Eyeglasses typically comprise a frame having a pair of apertures to support lenses and a pair of temples that extend rearwardly from the front portion of the spectacle frame for engagement with the users' ears. The temples are normally connected to the front portion of the spectacle frame by a hinge to allow the temples to be folded behind the lenses in the frame for storage when not in use.

[0003] In conventional eyeglasses, the hinge permits folding in one direction but inhibits movement of the temples beyond a position in which they are generally perpendicular to the plane of the lenses carried by the spectacle frame. In that position, the hinge is relatively vulnerable to abnormal loads that inevitably occur in normal use. Such loads may occur for example, from accidental contact with the eyeglasses, from improper storage when not in use or may be exerted by the side of a user's face where the overall width of the wearer's face is broader than the width of the spectacle frame. Inevitably, the hinge arrangement can be one of the more vulnerable components of the eyeglasses and accordingly, damage frequently occurs.

[0004] U.S. Patent No. 4,494,834 to Tabacchi discloses a resilient hinge in which a hinge block is mounted for sliding movement relative to the temple. A spring opposes such movement to hold the hinge block in the temple. If the temple is pulled outwardly, the outer edge of the temple abuts the outer edge of the frame and provides a fulcrum about which the temple rotates. The spring permits the movement and avoids bending of the temple.

[0005] Similarly, U.S. Patent No. 4,689,851 to Beyer shows a hinge arrangement that has a sliding support within the temple to permit lateral outward motion.

[0006] U.S. Patent No. 7,073,904, U.S. Publication No. 2005/0163560 and U.S. Patent No. 6,168,341 to Chene et al. show a number of variants in the placement of the type of hinge shown in the above two U.S. patents.

1 [0007] It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a hinge arrangement
2 for a pair of eyeglasses in which the above disadvantages are obviated or mitigated.

3 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

4 [0008] In one aspect, an eyeglass comprising a lens support assembly is provided. The
5 eyeglass comprises a pair of temples extending from the lens support to support the eyeglass
6 on a user, and a hinge assembly to connect respective ones of the temples to the lens support
7 assembly frame, each of the hinge assemblies comprising a pair of mutually perpendicular
8 pivot axes to permit movement between the temples and the lens support assembly about the
9 substantially perpendicular axes, and a biasing element operable about at least one of the
10 axes to maintain the temple in a stable position relative to the lens support assembly.

11 [0009] In another aspect, a hinge assembly is provided for connecting a temple to the
12 end piece of the spectacle frame. The hinge assembly comprises a cam member with a pair
13 of oppositely directed cam surfaces disposed in orthogonal planes; a pair of pivots extending
14 normal to respective ones of the planes and defining orthogonal pivot axes for relative
15 movement between the cam member and the end piece of the spectacle frame and the temple
16 respectively; a pair of followers, each associated with a respective one of the cam surfaces;
17 and a pair of biasing members acting on the followers to maintain the followers in contact
18 with the cam surfaces.

19 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

20 [0010] Embodiments of the invention will now be described by way of example only
21 with reference made to the appended drawings wherein:

22 [0011] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a pair of eyeglasses.

23 [0012] Figure 2 is a view on the line II-II of Figure 1.

24 [0013] Figure 3A-B is an exploded view of the arrangement shown in Figure 2.

25 [0014] Figure 4 is a view on the line IV-IV of Figure 2.

26 [0015] Figure 5A-B is a pair of views showing alternate configurations of the hinge
27 arrangement shown in Figures 2-4.

[0016] Figure 6 is a sectional view similar to Figure 4 of an alternative arrangement of a hinge.

[0017] Figure 7 is a perspective view of a portion of a further embodiment of a hinge for eyeglasses.

[0018] Figure 8 is a section on the line VIII-VIII of Figure 7.

[0019] Figure 9 is a view on the line IX-IX of Figure 7.

[0020] Among those benefits and improvements that have been disclosed, other objects and advantages of this invention will become apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying figures. The figures constitute a part of this specification and include illustrative embodiments of the present invention and illustrate various objects and features thereof.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0021] Detailed embodiments of the present invention are disclosed herein; however, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely illustrative of the invention that may be embodied in various forms. In addition, each of the examples given in connection with the various embodiments of the invention are intended to be illustrative, and not restrictive. Further, the figures are not necessarily to scale, some features may be exaggerated to show details of particular components. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but merely as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to variously employ the present invention.

[0022] Referring now to the drawings, and initially to FIGS. 1 to 4, a pair of eyeglasses incorporating a hinge in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention may comprise a laterally extending lens support assembly 11 and a pair of temples 20. In the embodiment of Figures 1 to 4 the lens support assembly is defined by a frame 11. The spectacle frame comprises apertures to receive lenses 14, defined by the lens rim 12. The eyeglass frame includes a bridge 16 and a pair of end pieces 24 that extend from the sides 18 of the eye rim 12. A pair of temples 20 generally extend rearwardly to the user's temple region or ears and are connected to the frame 11 containing the lens rim 12 at the end pieces 24 by a hinge assembly 22 shown in greater detail in Figures 2 through 4.

1 [0023] The hinge assembly 22 is located in the end piece 24 generally formed as an
2 extension of the sides 18. The end piece 24 is connected, attached or formed as a single
3 piece at one end to the eye rim 12 and has a slot 26 formed at the opposite end. A bore 28 is
4 formed in the end piece 24 that extends inwardly from the slot 26. The bore 28 houses a
5 follower 30 which is biased out of the bore 28 by a spring 32. The follower includes a
6 cylindrical tail 31 that passes within the spring 32 so as to locate the spring 32 relative to the
7 follower. The follower 30 bears against a cam surface 34 that is formed on the periphery of
8 a flange 35 of a cam member 36. The cam member 36 is received in the slot 26 and
9 pivotally secured to the end piece 24 by a pin 38 that defines a first pivot axis.

10 [0024] The cam member 36 has a rearwardly extending tongue 40 that is delimited by a
11 second cam surface 42. The tongue 40 is generally perpendicular to the flange 35 and has a
12 bore 44 disposed at an axis perpendicular to the pin 38. The tongue 40 is received in a slot
13 46 formed at one end of the temple 20. A bore 48 extends from the slot 46 and houses a
14 follower 50 that is free to slide within the bore 48. The follower 50 has a rearwardly
15 projecting cylindrical tail 51 that is located within a spring 52. Spring 52 biases the follower
16 50 out of the bore 48 and into engagement with the cam surface 42. The cam member 36 is
17 connected to the temple 20 by a pin 54 that extends through the bore 44 and into aligned
18 bores 56 intersecting the slot 46 to define a second pivot axis. The first and second axes are
19 substantially perpendicular to one another to permit movement between the main frame and
20 temple in mutually perpendicular planes and thereby provide universal movement.

21 [0025] Each of the cam surfaces 34, 42 is profiled to provide a stable disposition of the
22 temple 20 relative to the main frame 12 when generally perpendicular to one another. In a
23 preferred embodiment, the cam surface has a central portion that is at a minimum radius
24 from the respective axis. The cam surface progressively increases in radius to either side of
25 the central portion to provide a progressively increasing resistance to movement.

26 [0026] The temple 20 may be folded, as shown in Figure 5a, to a stored position by
27 rotation of the temple 20 about the axis provided by the pin 38. As the temple 20 is moved
28 inwardly, the cam member 36 rotates about the pin 38 and overcomes any bias imposed by
29 the follower 30 on the cam surface 34. In some circumstances, the cam surface 34 may be
30 part circular over the movement required to store the temples 20 so as to provide a uniform
31 resistance to movement caused by friction of the follower 30 across the cam surface 34.

1 Alternatively, the cam surface 34 may be profiled to provide resistance to movement from
2 the stable position over a certain range of movement and then a bias to the stored position
3 once that range of movement has been exceeded.

4 **[0027]** The arrangement of the pin 38 and cam member 36 also permits the temple 20 to
5 be moved outwardly beyond the normal position to accommodate abnormal lateral loads.
6 Such a load placed on the temple 20 causes rotation of the cam member 36 in the opposite
7 direction about the pin 38 and causes displacement of the follower 30 against the bias of the
8 spring 32. The temples 20 are able to move to accommodate the abnormal loading but upon
9 removal of that loading, the bias of the spring 32 will return the cam member to its stable
10 position. During such movement, the tail 31 is located within the spring 32 allowing it to
11 compress and expand. The tail 31 assists in locating the spring 32 in the chamber 28 and
12 also assists during assembly to hold the spring in situ.

13 **[0028]** The provision of the pin 54 also enables the temples to be displaced vertically in
14 either direction relative to the plane of the lenses 14, as shown in Figure 5b. The cam
15 surface 42 is profiled to provide a stable position with the temples 20 extending generally
16 perpendicular to the plane of the lenses 14. However, the pin 54 permits pivotal movement
17 of the temple relative to the cam member 34 and thus movement in a vertical plane.
18 Movement about the pin 54 causes displacement to the follower 50 against the bias of the
19 spring 52 to provide a restorative force when the loading on the temple is removed. The tail
20 51 again locates the spring 52, both during operation and assembly.

21 **[0029]** It will be appreciated therefore that the disposition of the pins 38 and 54 along
22 mutually perpendicular axes allows a compound movement between the main portions of the
23 eyeglass frame and temples 20 that can accommodate the abnormal loading that might be
24 placed on the eyeglasses 10. However, the provision of the cam surfaces 34, 42 enables the
25 stable configuration of the eyeglasses 10 to be maintained under normal conditions and
26 facilitates folding of the temples 20 to the stored position. It will be appreciated that the
27 relative disposition of the axes may be reversed from that shown, i.e. the first axis is
28 disposed horizontally and the second vertically, if preferred.

29 **[0030]** An alternative arrangement is shown in Figure 6 in which like components will
30 be identified by like reference numbers with a suffix "a" added for clarity. In the

1 arrangement shown in Figure 6, the hinge assembly 22a is accommodated within a pair of
2 exterior housings 60, 62. The bore 28a is formed within a body 63 that is dimensioned to fit
3 within a cavity 64 formed within the housing 60. Similarly, the bore 48a is formed within a
4 body 66 that is dimensioned to fit within a cavity 68 formed in the housing 62. The cam
5 member 36a is pivotally connected to each of the bodies 24a, 66 to form a unitary
6 construction. The housings 60, 62 are each provided with a socket 70, 72 respectively to
7 which the arm 24a and temple 20a may be attached by adhesive or pins or other suitable
8 means. In this way, the hinge 22a provides a unitary structure to which temples 20a and
9 frames 12a may be secured to provide the flexibility of the hinge 22a.

10 **[0031]** A further embodiment of the hinge is shown in Figures 7 through 9 with like
11 components being identified with like reference numerals and a suffix b added for clarity. In
12 the arrangement shown in Figure 7, the hinge assembly 22b has a bushing 60 formed at one
13 end of the arm 24b with a central bore 62 to receive pin 38b. The pin 38 b extends between
14 opposite arms 64 of a yolk 66 that is formed as part of the cam member 36b. The pin 38b is
15 threaded into one of the arms 64 and recessed in a socket in the other arm 64 to provide a
16 flush surface and allow relative pivotal movement between the cam member 36b and the
17 arm 24b. A biasing mechanism similar to that shown in Figure 2 is incorporated in the yoke
18 66 to bear against the bushing 60 and bias the temples to a predetermined position.
19 Alternatively, a spring may be incorporated between the bushing 60 and yoke 66 about the
20 pin 38b to provide the bias.

21 **[0032]** The cam member 36b has a rearwardly extending tongue 40b that is received in a
22 slot 46b formed at one end of the temple 20b. A pin 54b extends between the temple 20b
23 and the cam member 36b to pivotally connect them. The pin 54b is perpendicular to the pin
24 38b to permit relative pivotal movement about mutually perpendicular axis.

25 **[0033]** The cam member 36b has a cam surface 42b which bears against a follower 50b
26 biased into engagement with the cam surface 42b by a spring 52b. The cam surface 42b is
27 profiled to bias the temple 20b to a normal horizontal position but may yield against the bias
28 of the spring 52b to accommodate displacement in a vertical plane about the pin 54b.
29 Similarly, the temple may rotate in a horizontal plane by relative pivotal movement about
30 the pin 38b with the biasing device returning the temples to the predetermined position.

1 [0034] In the arrangement of Figures 7 through 9, the construction of the hinge assembly
2 22b is simplified to facilitate production.

3 [0035] Although the invention has been described with reference to certain specific
4 embodiments, various modifications thereof will be apparent to those skilled in the art
5 without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as outlined in the claims
6 appended hereto.

7 [0036] For example it is well known in the art that eyeglasses (e.g., spectacle frames,
8 sunglasses and other types of eyewear) are available in a diverse array of types, shapes,
9 sizes, and materials. Generally, eyeglasses come into three basic types—full, semi or half-
10 rimless, and rimless. In a “full” eyeglass frame, the lens support assembly is comprised of a
11 lens rim that completely encircles the lens. In a semi-rimless eyeglass frame there is no rim
12 encircling both the bottom and top of the lens. Rimless eyeglass frames normally have no
13 rim around the lens. For the most part, rimless eyeglasses come in three pieces (two end
14 pieces and the nose bridge), although other variations also exist. In this configuration, the
15 lenses form part of the of the lens support assembly. Generally, in a rimless configuration,
16 each lens is routinely drilled so that the components fit snugly into the lens. While the
17 invention is described using one specific example of spectacle frames (e.g., rimmed), it can
18 also be adapted and used for semi-rimless, rimless frames. For the purpose of ease and
19 convenience, the embodiments were illustrated and described using a "full" eyeglass frame
20 but each figure could be illustrated with any of the varying types of construction detailed
21 above or others known in the art.

22 [0037] Also, while the above descriptions and figures have been described in a specific
23 manner, it can be appreciated that the orientation of individual components can be reversed
24 to achieve the same result.

25 [0038] The entire disclosures of all references recited above are incorporated herein by
26 reference.

Claims:

1. An eyeglass comprising a lens support assembly; a pair of temples extending from said lens support to support the eyeglass on a user, and a hinge assembly to connect respective ones of said temples to said lens support assembly frame, each of said hinge assemblies comprising a pair of mutually perpendicular pivot axes to permit movement between said temples and said lens support assembly about said substantially perpendicular axes, and a biasing element operable about at least one of said axes to maintain said temple in a stable position relative to said lens support assembly.
2. An eyeglass according to claim 1 wherein said biasing element acts to return said temple to a predetermined position.
3. An eyeglass according to claim 2 wherein said predetermined position is centrally located within a range of movement provided by said one axis.
4. An eyeglass according to claim 1, wherein said hinge assembly includes a cam member movable with one of said temple and said lens support assembly frame and said biasing element is associated with the other of said temple and said lens support assembly and acts against a cam surface on said cam member.
5. An eyeglass according to claim 4, wherein said cam surface shaped to return said temple to a predetermined position relative to said lens support assembly.
6. An eyeglass according to claim 5 wherein a central portion of said cam surface has a minimum radius from said pivot axis and progressively increases in radius to either side of said central portion.
7. An eyeglass according to claim 6 wherein said biasing element includes a follower engaging said cam surface and a spring biasing said follower against said cam surface.

8. An eyeglass according to claim 7 wherein said follower is slidably supported within said other of said temple and said main frame.
9. An eyeglass according to claim 8 wherein said biasing element is a spring supported on an extension of said follower.
10. An eyeglass according to claim 9 wherein said spring and said follower are located within an elongate bore within said other of said temple and said lens support assembly and retained in said bore by a pin defining one of said pivot axes.
11. A hinge assembly for connecting a temple to a lens support assembly, said hinge assembly comprising a cam member with a pair of oppositely directed cam surfaces disposed in orthogonal planes; a pair of pivots extending normal to respective ones of said planes and defining orthogonal pivot axes for relative movement between said cam member and said main frame and said temple respectively; a pair of followers, each associated with a respective one of said cam surfaces; and a pair of biasing members acting on said followers to maintain said followers in contact with said cam surfaces.
12. A hinge assembly according to claim 11 wherein said cam surfaces have a progressively increasing radius to either side of a central portion to provide a stable position for said cam surface.
13. A hinge assembly according to claim 12 wherein each of said followers are slidable in a radial direction relative to respective ones of said axes.
14. A hinge assembly according to claim 13 wherein each of said biasing members is a spring acting to bias said follower toward the respective axis.
15. A hinge assembly according to claim 14 wherein said spring is mounted on an extension of said follower.

16. A hinge assembly according to claim 15 wherein each of said followers is slidably mounted in a respective housing and retained by a respective one of said pivots.

17. A hinge assembly according to claim 16 wherein said housings are integrally formed with said temple and said lens support assembly.

18. A hinge assembly according to claim 16 wherein each of said housings includes a docket to receive said temple and said lens support assembly.