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(54) **Decorating means**

(57) Decorating means for decorating flat elements, in particular ceramic tiles (2), which allows the wear to be reduced and the productivity to be improved by limiting consumption of glaze, comprises a tubular sleeve (3) provided with openings (7) through which a flowing decorating product, such as ceramic powdery glaze, may pass, said openings (7) being arranged so as to form a decoration on a flat element (2) underlying said sleeve (3) and is characterised in that said sleeve (3) is made of rigid material, such as plastic material or metal; an apparatus for decorating ceramic supports (15) comprises flexographic belt decorating means (18) arranged to form a loop and suitable for transferring on the surface of said supports (15) decorating fluid means according to a preestablished drawing, said fluid decorating means being initially contained into cavities of said flexographic belt decorating means (18), conveyor means (16) suitable for moving said supports (15) along an advancing direction (F2) so as to cause said supports (15) to interact with said flexographic belt decorating means (18), actuating means (19) suitable for rotating said flexographic belt decorating means (18) around an axis perpendicular to said advancing direction (F2), pressing means (22) arranged internally to said flexographic belt decorating means (18) and suitable for promoting transferring of said decorating fluid means to said supports (15).

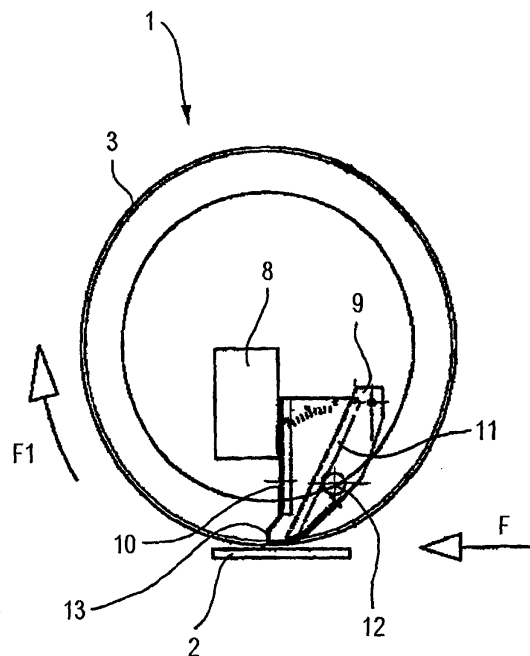


Fig. 1



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	US 4 026 208 A (HORNE JR CHARLES G ET AL) 31 May 1977 (1977-05-31) * column 7, line 65 - column 8, line 12 * * column 8, line 59 - column 9, line 7 * ---	1,2,4-6	B28B11/00 B41F15/38
X	EP 0 816 072 A (SERIGRAFICA TOSI S R L) 7 January 1998 (1998-01-07) * the whole document * ---	1,4-6	
X	US 3 858 507 A (OWREN ERLING ET AL) 7 January 1975 (1975-01-07) * the whole document * -----	1,4-6	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
			B41F B05C
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 26 March 2003	Examiner Orij, J
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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CLAIMS INCURRING FEES

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing more than ten claims.

- ☐ Only part of the claims have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid, namely claim(s):
- ☐ No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims.

LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

see sheet B

- ☐ All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the Search Division did not invite payment of any additional fee.
- ☐ Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid, namely claims:
- ☒ None of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims, namely claims:

1-6



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**LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION
SHEET B**

Application Number
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The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

1. Claims: 1-6

rigid tubular decorating means

2. Claims: 7-19

flexographic belt decorating means

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 01 11 8519

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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26-03-2003

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For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82