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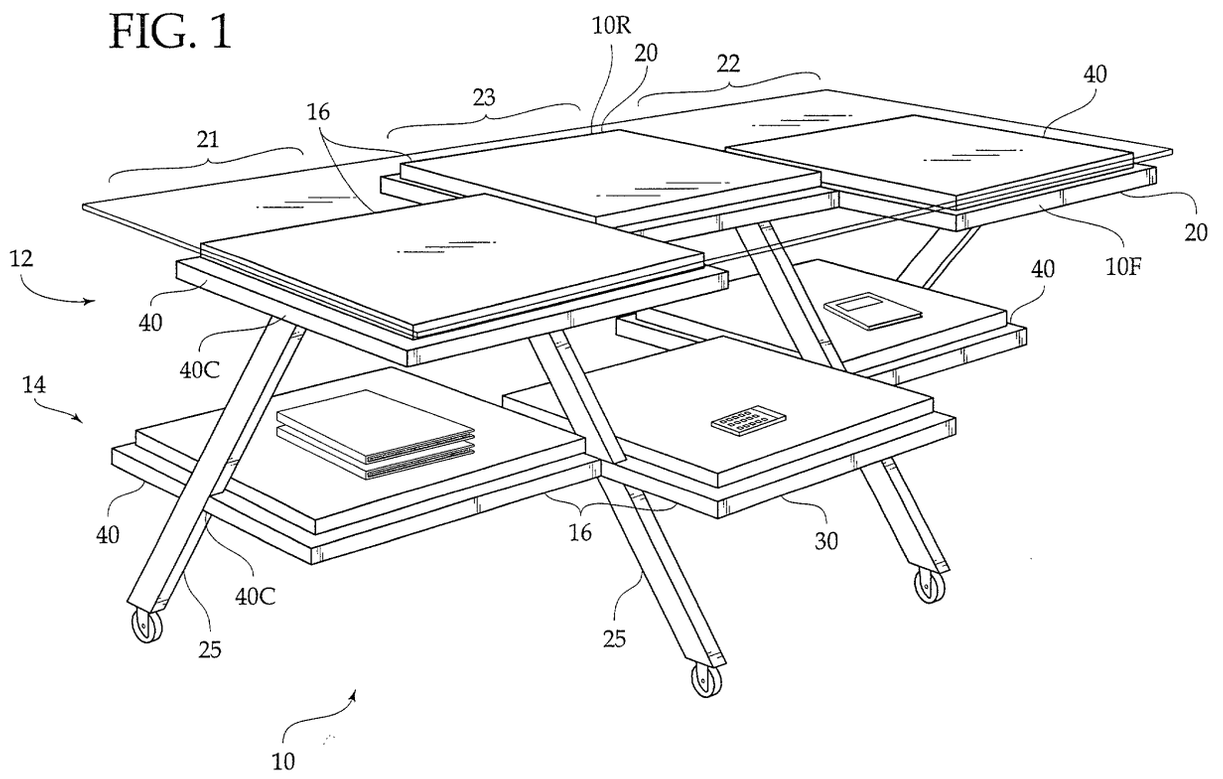
(54) Table

(57) A table (10) for allowing several people to comfortably sit at a sofa or a similar seating system, with their legs extending comfortably under the table. The table has an upper level (12) and a lower level (14) and comprises seating portions and non-seating portions. At the seating portions the upper level (12) extends forwards while the lower level (14) is recessed rearwards, so that a person can sit comfortably with their legs extending under the upper level (12) At the non-seating portions the lower level (14) extends forward and the upper level (12) is recessed rearward. The table has a table front (10F) and a table rear (10R). Seating portions and non-seating portions are alternated along both the table front (1OF) and table rear (10R). The table (10) is made up of a plurality of adjacent sections, wherein each section is made up of one seating portion and one non-seating portion.

FIG. 1



EP 1 285 603 A1

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a multiple utility table, such as a table which can be configured so as to be useful for a variety of purposes.

[0002] In homes around the world, the most common type of table found in front of sofas, divans, chairs and other casual seating is a "coffee table". A standard coffee table is approximately 46cm (eighteen inches) high. Such a height makes the coffee table ideal as a footrest, for holding books and magazines, and for holding a variety of other objects while not obscuring the view of people seated at the sofa. However, this height makes the coffee table unsuitable for use when eating, reading, or working at the sofa or other chair.

[0003] However, since most coffee tables are even lower than the knees of a person seated at a sofa, the person must both lean forward and crouch downward in order to use the coffee tabletop as an eating surface or a work surface. This position is extremely uncomfortable and can even lead to back pain and muscle aches over a period of time.

[0004] As a result, many have proposed devices which allow one to more easily work or eat at the sofa. Such devices generally take the form of lap desks and other devices which are based on the assumption that the coffee table is too unsuitable to even be adapted to carry out the desired tasks.

[0005] While these units may be suitable for the particular purpose employed, or for general use, they would not be as suitable for the purposes of the present invention as disclosed hereafter.

[0006] The present invention seeks to provide an improved table.

[0007] According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a table as specified in claim 1.

[0008] The preferred embodiment can provide a table which is suitable for use in front of a sofa or chair, but which allows a variety of activities to be carried out therewith which could not be carried out effectively with a conventional coffee table.

[0009] The preferred table can allow a person to eat, work and read at the table while comfortably seated in the sofa or chair. Accordingly, the table is preferably situated so that it provides a convenient surface immediately adjacent to the lap of the user.

[0010] The preferred table can also prevent inadvertent ankle injuries. Accordingly, the table legs are advantageously positioned so that they do not interfere with the user's legs as the user stands up toward the side of the table.

[0011] The table is preferably useable from opposite sides and allow several people to work, eat or read at the same time. Accordingly, the preferred staggered configuration of the table in its standard configuration allows three people to work at the table, wherein each person is seated comfortably and also has his or her own expansive workspace.

[0012] Advantageously, the table is configurable in numerous ways, for accomplishing numerous different uses.

[0013] To the accomplishment of the above and related objects the invention may be embodied in the form illustrated in the accompanying drawings. Attention is called to the fact, however, that the drawings are illustrative only. In the drawings:

FIG 1 is a diagrammatic perspective view, showing an embodiment of table;
FIG 2 is a top plan view of the table, showing the relative positions of various platform segments; and
FIG 3 is an exploded view, showing another embodiment of table which employs modular components.

[0014] FIG 1 illustrates a table 10. The table 10 includes an upper level 12 and a lower level 14, which each extend in horizontal planes - an upper horizontal plane and a lower horizontal plane, respectively. Each of the upper level 12 and lower level 14 includes several platform segments 16 that respectively extend in the horizontal planes thereof.

[0015] In the embodiment shown in FIG 1, the table has three longitudinal sections, including a first section 21, a second section 22, and a middle section 23. The first section 21 and middle section 23 are adjacent sections. Also, the second sections 22 and middle section 23 are adjacent sections. Adjacent sections are joined by table legs 25, which also provide support for the various platform segments 16. Wheels 26 are located beneath the table legs 25 for providing convenient mobility for the table 10.

[0016] Since the various platform segments 16 which make up the upper level 12 and lower level 14 are staggered within their respective planes, reference to the top plan view of FIG 2 is now appropriate for understanding the positional relationships of these various components. In particular, the table 10 has a front 10F and a rear 10R, which are of course interchangeable but which are designated herein for the purpose of establishing a convention for the following discussion. The front 10F and rear 10R correspond to a front vertical plane 100F, and a rear vertical plane 100R, respectively. The table has sides 11 which extend fully between the front 10F and rear 10R. However, it is important to note that none of the platform segments 16 extends fully between the front 10F and rear 10R. Preferably, each platform segment extends approximately two thirds of the way between the front 10F and rear 10R and each is biased against either the front or the rear. Accordingly, the concept of the "sides" 11 is conceptual only, as the sides are a discontinuous combination of the overlapping platform segments 16 of the upper level 12 and lower level 14, as is apparent from FIG 1.

[0017] The table has seating areas 20 where a person could sit with a tabletop surface immediately in front of him/her at a comfortable height for working, eating,

reading or the like, and space below the tabletop surface for his/her legs to extend comfortably. Then, with reference again to FIG 2, people would ordinarily be seated at the front 10F of the table where the upper level 12 of the table extends immediately adjacent to the front vertical plane.

Conversely, a person would ordinarily be seated at the rear 10R of the table where the upper level of the table extends immediately adjacent to the rear vertical plane. Accordingly, one seating area 20 is present at the rear 10R and two seating areas 20 are present at the front 10F.

[0018] The table also has several non-seating areas 30 which are equal in number to the seating areas 20 and are in opposite positions therefrom. At the non-seating areas 30 of the front 10F, the lower level extends to the substantially the front vertical plane 100F. At the non-seating areas 30 of the rear 10R, the lower level extends to the substantially the rear vertical plane 100R. As seen in FIG 2, the seating areas 20 and non seating areas 30 are alternated on each of the table front 10F and table rear 10R, whereas the table front 10F and table rear 10R have opposite configurations of alternating seating 20 and non-seating areas 30.

Accordingly, at the non-seating areas 30, forwardly staggered platform segments 16 positioned at the lower level 14 provide a convenient storage space for use by people seated at adjacent seating areas 20.

[0019] Another way to consider the various platform segments 16 which make up the upper level and lower level, is that they are alternatively staggered towards the front vertical plane and rear vertical plane. This staggered configuration is best accomplished by a careful arrangement of the legs 25. Each of the legs is either angled towards the table front (as it extends upwards), or towards the table rear. In the configuration shown in FIG 1, the table leg 25 located between the first section 21 and middle section 23, and the table leg 25 located between the middle section 23 and second section 22 are both angled towards the table rear 10R. consequently, the table legs 25 which adjoin only the first section 21 and only the second section 22 are angled towards the table front 10F.

[0020] The table has outer edges 40, each having an outer edge centre 40C. In following its slant towards the table front 10F, the legs 25 extend along each of the outer edge centres 40C at the first section 21 and at second section 22.

[0021] This arrangement of the table legs 25 allows people seated at the seating areas 20 of the first section 21 and second section 22 to get up from the table towards the sides 11 thereof without interference with their feet, calves or ankles from the table legs 25. Accordingly, banging one's ankles and feet is prevented by this configuration of the table legs.

[0022] Further, the table legs 25 do not even interfere with the feet of a person seated at the seating area 20 located in the middle section 23. The person's feet easily slide under the platform segments of the lower level immediately adjacent this seating area.

[0023] FIG 3 provides an example of another embodiment of table, in which the table is constructed in modular form. From the foregoing discussion, it should be apparent that the table can be made of arbitrary length, wherein each seating area has a complementary non-seating area. In addition, each seating area and non-seating area is located in a distinct section or portion of the table. Accordingly, it should be apparent then that such an arrangement lends itself to modular construction. FIG 3 provides a workable example of such a modular construction for the table. Each section has an upper panel 50U and a lower panel 50L. The positions of the upper panel 50U and lower panel 50L are staggered by attaching the upper panel 50U and lower panel 50L to a modular leg unit 60. The modular leg units 60 are mounted between each section and can face in either direction in furtherance of the principles of preventing interference with the feet of the users while providing structural stability. The hole and peg construction shown in FIG 3 is illustrative only. In practice, sturdier attachment means would be employed. By combining adjacent sections with alternate seating and non-seating areas by alternately staggering the upper panels 50U and lower panels 50L and alternate positioning of the modular leg units 60 as shown, a construction similar to that shown in FIG 1 and FIG 2 can be created. However, using the modular system, a table having two, four, five or more portions or sections can also be created with equal ease.

[0024] It should be understood that the instant discussion focuses on the functional configuration of the table and not on particular details of the table's construction. Thus, structural considerations such as brackets and cross supports are omitted for clarity. In addition, cosmetic design features are simplified or are varied from more aesthetic designs for the purposes of understanding the utilitarian features of the present invention. Accordingly, numerous variations of the table are possible while adhering to the principles of the present invention.

Claims

1. A table, for use by at least one person, comprising:

a table front and a table rear, wherein a front vertical plane extends substantially vertically at the table front and a rear vertical plane extending substantially vertically at the table rear;

an upper level, extending substantially horizontally;

a lower level, extending substantially horizontally;

at least two seating areas, including at least one located at the table front and at least one located at the table rear, at each of said seating

areas the upper level extends substantially to one of the front and the rear vertical plane which is closest to said seating area, and the lower level thereat is recessed from said vertical plane so that a person could sit at said seating area with their legs extending beneath the upper level while the lower level does not interfere with their legs; and

at least two non-seating areas, including at least one located at the table front and at least one located at the table rear, at each of said non-seating areas the lower level extends substantially to one of the front and the rear vertical plane which is closest to said non-seating area, and the upper level thereat is recessed from said vertical plane.

2. A table as in claim 1, including at least two adjacent sections, wherein each section has one seating area at one of the table front and table rear, and has one non-seating area at the other of the table front and table rear.

3. A table as in claim 2, wherein each section comprises a platform segment at the upper level and a platform segment at the lower level neither of which extends fully between the table front, wherein one of said platform segments is biased towards the table front and the other of said platform segments is biased towards the table rear.

4. A table as in claim 3, wherein each section is bordered by a table leg, wherein adjacent sections share a table leg.

5. A table as in claim 4, wherein the table legs are angled as they extend upwardly in a direction selected from towards the table front and towards the table rear.

6. A table as in claim 5, wherein the table has three adjoining sections, wherein the table front alternates between seating areas and non-seating areas and the table rear alternates between seating areas and non-seating areas, such that the table front has two seating areas and one non-seating area, and the table rear has two non-seating areas and one seating area.

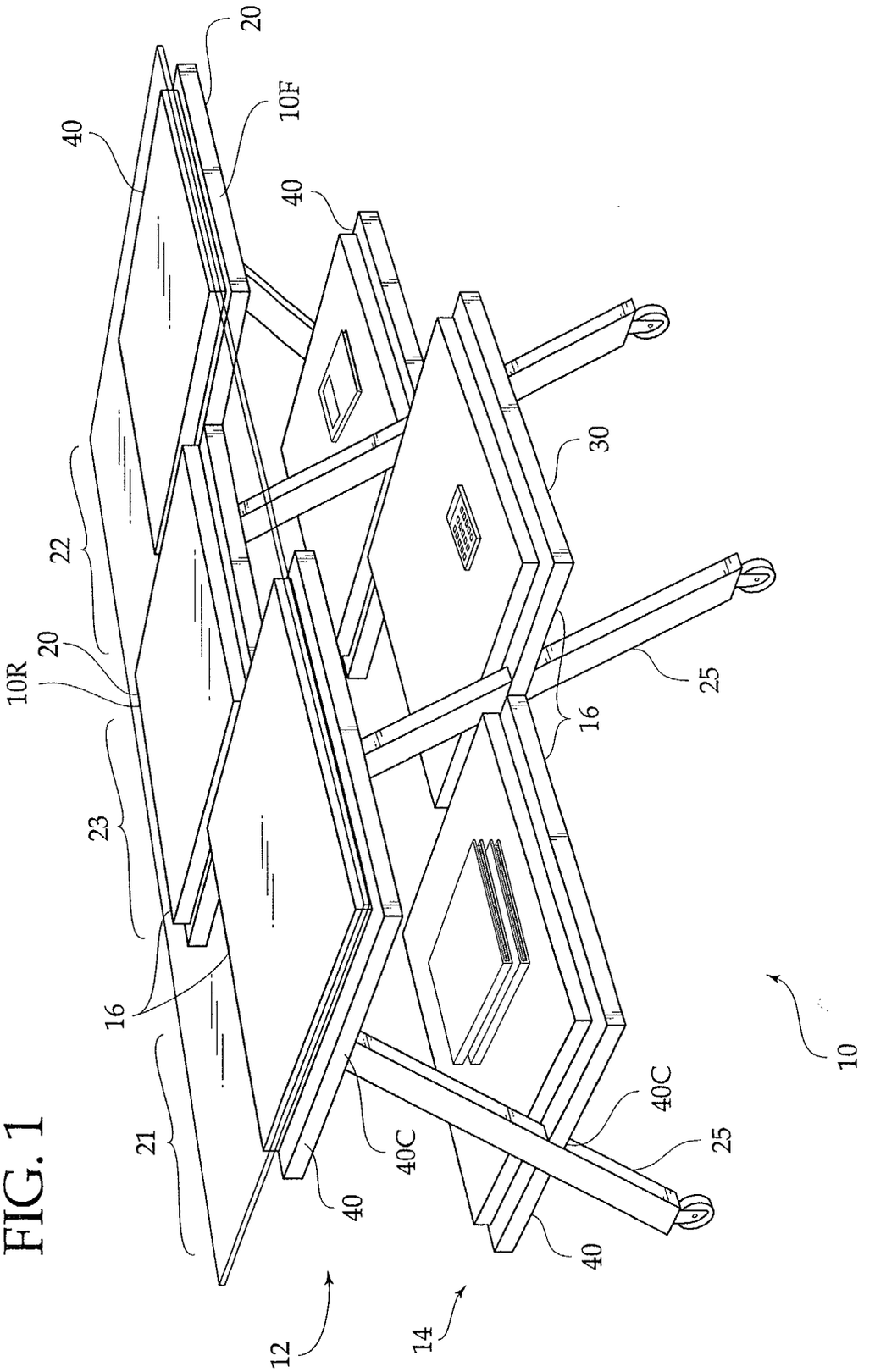
7. A table as in claim 6, including platform sections, wherein distinct coplanar platform segments provide the upper level at each of the seating portions, and distinct coplanar platform segments provide the lower level at each of the non-seating portions.

8. A table as in claim 7, including a first section, a second section and a middle section.

9. A table as in claim 8, wherein the middle section is located between the first section and second section, wherein the first section and second section have outer edges which do not adjoin the middle section, and wherein one table leg extends along each of the outer edges and is angled upwardly towards the table front.

10. A table as in claim 9, wherein each outer edge has an outer edge centre, and wherein the table legs extend along the outer edge centre at the lower level and the outer edge centre at the upper level.

FIG. 1



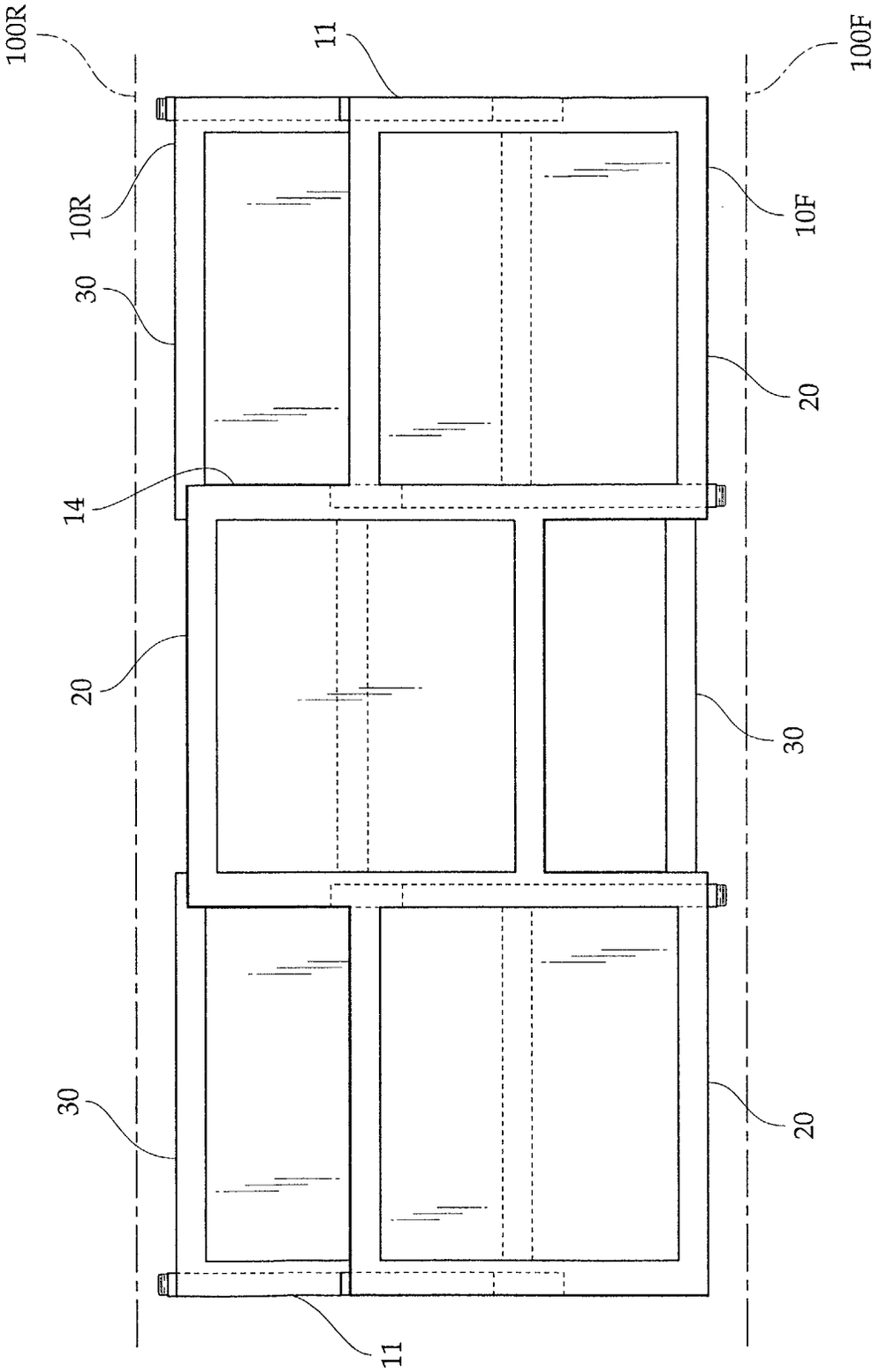


FIG. 2

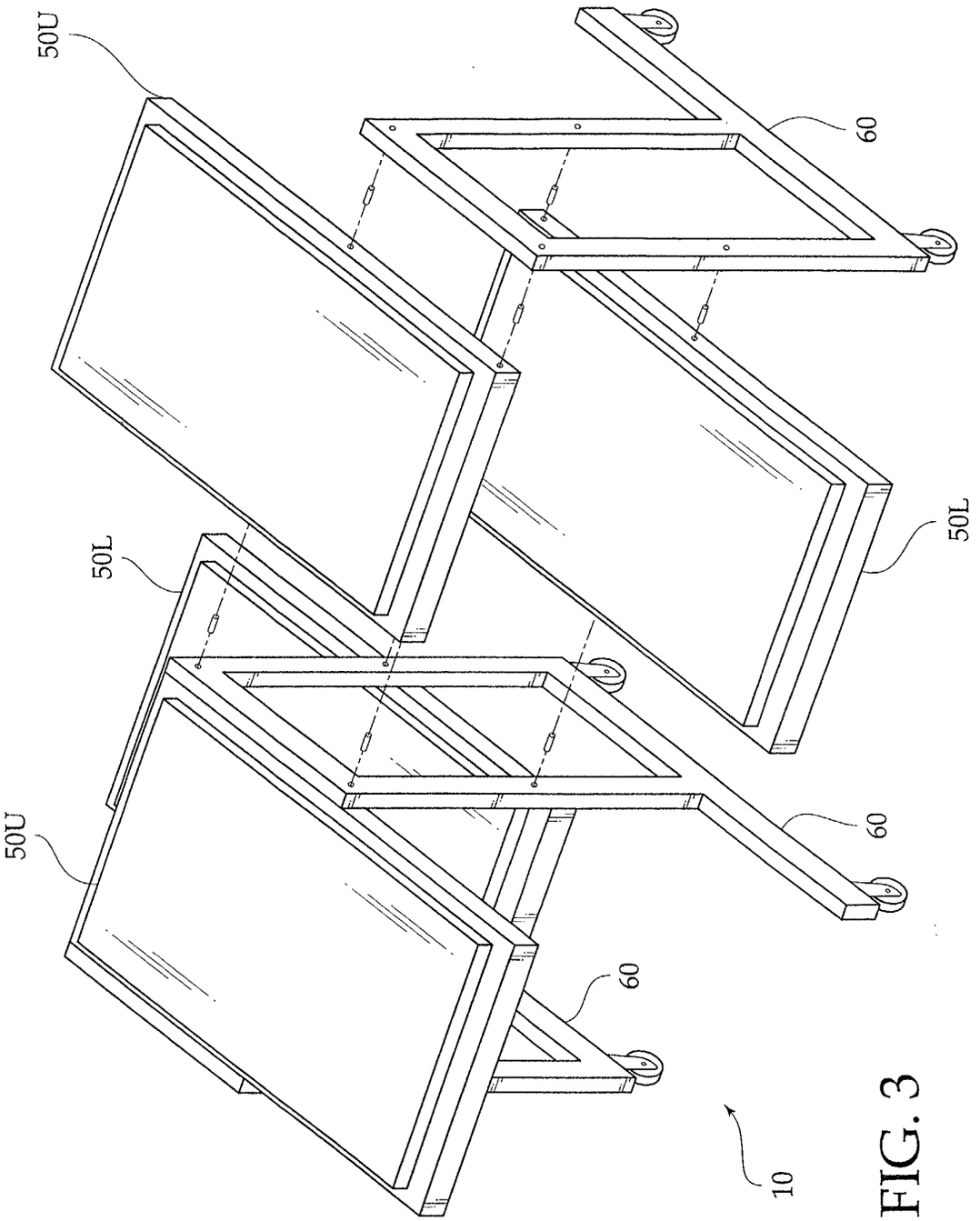


FIG. 3

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 01 30 6871

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	DE 197 00 538 A (FISCHER MATTHIAS DIPL DESIGNER) 16 July 1998 (1998-07-16) * column 2, line 40 - line 62; figure 1 *	1-4	A47B31/00 A47B37/00
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X	EP 1 020 137 A (FISCHER MATTHIAS) 19 July 2000 (2000-07-19) * column 1, line 29 - line 31 * * column 4, line 50 - line 10; figures 1,2 *	1	

TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
A47B

The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
MUNICH	26 October 2001	Papadimitriou, S

CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS

X : particularly relevant if taken alone
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ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO. EP 01 30 6871

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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26-10-2001

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