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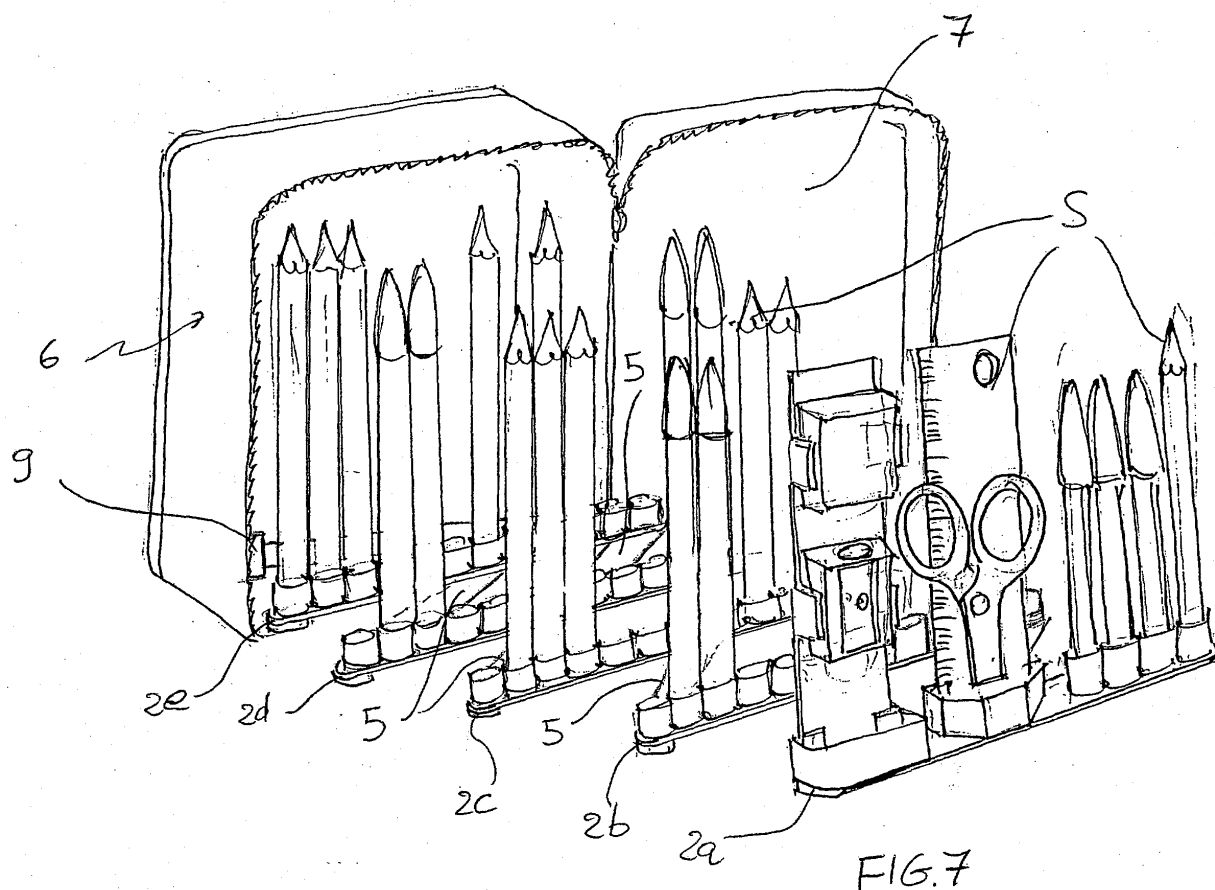
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(54) **An accessory for supporting stationery articles**

(57) An accessory for supporting stationery articles comprises a plurality of support elements (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e) each provided with respective housing means (3) for housing stationery articles (S) in an orderly manner. The support elements (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e) are advantageously articulated to one another in a manner

such as to define an articulated structure which can change from a folded configuration to an opened-out configuration and *vice versa*, in which configurations the first and second support elements (2) are arranged substantially close together and are spaced apart, respectively.



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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to an accessory according to the preamble to Claim 1 for supporting stationery articles such as, for example, pencils, pens, felt highlighting pens, scissors, pencil-sharpeners, rulers, and the like.

[0002] With reference to stationery articles, the need to be able to keep them grouped together, for example in a box or case, so as to be able to find them easily and use them when required, is known.

[0003] For example, the use of cases or containers of greatly varying shapes and sizes in which stationery articles are housed loosely is very widespread. This leads to the disadvantage that the identification of the desired stationery article, for example a red pen, when required, is not easy and necessitates searching for the article or, even worse, requires the entire contents of the case or container to be emptied out so as to be able to see the article.

[0004] In order to be able to use a plurality of different stationery articles without the need for them to be scattered on a desk or held loosely in a case, the use of support elements having a plurality of housing means suitable for housing the various stationery articles individually and in an orderly manner has become established.

[0005] Although the use of the above-mentioned support means enables the various stationery articles to be housed independently and in an orderly manner, it has the disadvantage of being rather bulky. Naturally this leads to a limitation of the number of stationery articles which can be supported, since support elements of excessive linear extent are in fact neither practical nor desirable.

[0006] In this context, it should be pointed out that, to enable the desired stationery article to be identified quickly and picked up easily, it is advantageous for the support element to be able to display the stationery articles arranged in a single row and not in several overlapping rows. In fact, if the stationery articles are arranged in a plurality of rows, clearly only those in the front row can be identified at a glance and can be removed easily from the support. Above all, the positioning of a stationery article in a housing means, for example, a felt-pen holder which is disposed in a back row, is not easy and may sometimes lead to the entire support element being overturned.

[0007] The problem underlying the present invention is that of devising an accessory for supporting stationery articles which has structural and functional characteristics such as to satisfy the above-mentioned need, at the same time overcoming the disadvantages mentioned with reference to the prior art.

[0008] This problem is solved by an accessory for supporting stationery articles according to the characteristics of Claim 1.

[0009] Further characteristics and the advantages of

the accessory for supporting stationery articles according to the present invention will become clear from the following description of some preferred embodiments thereof which is given by way of non-limiting example with reference to the appended drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a simplified perspective view of an accessory according to the invention for supporting stationery articles, in a folded configuration,

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the accessory of Figure 1, in an opened-out configuration,

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the accessory of Figure 1, in a partially opened-out configuration,

Figure 4 is a perspective view of the accessory of Figure 3 supporting some stationery articles,

Figure 5 is a perspective view of a container containing the accessory of Figure 1,

Figure 6 is a perspective view of the container of Figure 5 in which the accessory of Figure 1 is visible, with some stationery articles.

[0010] With reference to the appended drawings, an accessory for supporting stationery articles, generally indicated S, is generally indicated 1.

[0011] In the embodiment shown, the stationery articles S comprise pencils, pens, felt pens, a pair of scissors, a rubber, a ruler, and a pencil-sharpener but, naturally, other stationery articles may be supported.

[0012] The accessory 1 comprises a first support element 2a provided with housing means 3 for housing the stationery articles S in an orderly manner.

[0013] The support element 2a takes the form of a substantially rigid support extending along a predominant longitudinal axis X-X and having a front end and a rear end. The housing means 3 are fixed to the upper surface of the support element 2a so as to be arranged substantially side by side along the axis X-X.

[0014] The housing means 3 may be shaped differently from one another according to the type of stationery article S to be supported, for example, a pencil, a pair of scissors, etc. The housing means 3 are known *per se* and will not be described in detail herein; it will suffice to point out that the number and type of housing means 3 may vary according to requirements.

[0015] In order to have the stationery articles arranged in a row in a straight line, the support element 2a is shaped so as to define a rectangular base extending predominantly along the axis X-X.

[0016] The housing means 3 may have associated fixing means 4, known *per se*, for acting on the stationery articles S in order to restrain them releasably in the respective housings. The fixing means 4 may take the form of spring clips, Velcro, magnets, hooks, and other

functionally equivalent, releasable fixing systems.

[0017] The accessory 1 advantageously comprises at least one second support element 2b provided with respective housing means 3 for housing stationery articles S in an orderly manner. The second support element is substantially equivalent structurally and functionally to the first support element 2a described above. Naturally, the configuration and arrangement of the housing means 3 and of any fixing means 4 of the second support element 2b may differ from those of the first support element 2a, as in the embodiment shown in the drawings.

[0018] It should be pointed out that the first and second support elements 2a, 2b are articulated to one another so as to be able to move from a folded configuration (Figures 1 and 6) to an opened-out configuration (Figures 2, 3, 4) and vice versa, in which configurations the first and second support elements 2a, 2b are substantially close together and are spaced apart, respectively.

[0019] The first and second support elements 2a, 2b are advantageously articulated to one another with the interposition of at least one pivoting arm 5 having a flattened and straight shape substantially coplanar with the support elements 2a, 2b. The connection between the pivoting arm 5 and the support elements 2 is formed by means of an articulated joint which permits relative pivoting between the pivoting arm 5 and the support element 2a, 2b in a horizontal plane parallel to the plane defined by the support elements.

[0020] In the embodiment shown, the first and second support elements 2a, 2b are articulated to one another with the interposition of two pivoting arms 5 so as to define an articulated parallelogram, preferably an articulated quadrilateral. In fact, a first pivoting arm connects the central point M of the first support element 2a to the rear end of the second support element 2b and a second pivoting arm 5 connects the front end of the first support element 2a to the central point M of the second support element 2b (Figure 2). As will become clearer from the following description, this latter pivoting arm is extended to engage the rear end of a third support element 2c.

[0021] When the articulated structure comprising the first and second support elements 2a, 2b is fully opened out, the support elements 2a, 2b are arranged as extensions of one another.

[0022] The accessory 1 advantageously comprises more than two support elements 2 (in the embodiment shown there are five elements, indicated 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d and 2e) articulated to one another in the manner described above.

[0023] When three support elements 2 are arranged in succession, a pivoting arm 5 articulates the central point M of the intermediate support element to the front end of one of the two support elements which are positioned at the sides of the intermediate support element and to the rear end of the other support element which is positioned at the side of the intermediate support el-

ement. Thus, for example, for the support elements 2a, 2b and 2c, a pivoting arm 5 connects the front end of the support element 2a, the central point M of the support element 2b, and the rear end of the support element 2c.

[0024] The support elements 2 (that is, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d and 2e), as well as the pivoting arms 5, may be formed with the use of a great variety of materials such as, for example, metal, wood, plastics, or rubber, according to requirements. If the material used is plastics, naturally the support element may be produced by hot moulding. In this case, the fixing means 3 may optionally be formed integrally with the support elements 2.

[0025] The accessory 1 may be provided with a container 6, which is a case in the embodiment shown, for housing all of the support elements 2 when they are in the folded configuration and, optionally, are supporting the stationery articles S. As can be seen from Figure 6, the container 6 has a front opening which is delimited by a rim, to a portion of which a cover 7 is articulated. A "zip" fastener 8 enables the cover 7 to be kept engaged on the container 6 for the closure thereof.

[0026] The container 6 and the cover 7 may be made of a soft material, for example, a fabric, optionally stiffened, or may be made of rigid material such as plastics, wood, or the like.

[0027] The support element 2e of the plurality of support elements is advantageously fixed releasably to a pin fixed firmly to the container 6.

[0028] The use of the accessory 1 according to the invention is described below, starting from an initial condition in which the container 6 is closed and houses the support elements 2, in a folded position, as well as the stationery articles S (Figure 5).

[0029] Owing to the presence of the housing means 3, the stationery articles S are not housed in the container 6 loosely but in an orderly manner. The fixing means 4, when they are provided, hold the stationery articles S in position in the respective housing means 3. In this configuration, the container 6 enables the stationery articles S to be transported without danger of the articles S being damaged or mixed up.

[0030] The cover 7 can be removed and the container 6 opened by operating the "zip" closure 8 (Figure 6). The first support element 2a appears, arranged at the front, together with the stationery articles S supported thereby which, in the embodiment of Figure 6, are three pens, a pencil, a pair of scissors, a ruler, a rubber, and a pencil-sharpener.

[0031] If the desired stationery article is amongst those supported by the first support element 2a, it can be picked up for use and replaced when finished with. Otherwise, it is necessary to grip the first support element 2a at its free end (the left-hand end in the drawing) with one hand and to start to remove it from the container. During the removal of the first support element 2a from the container 6, care must be taken to hold the container 6 still with the other hand. The articulated struc-

ture of the accessory 1 formed by the support elements 2 and by the pivoting arms 5 is thus brought to the opened-out configuration of Figure 7. The opening-out of the articulated structure may continue until the support elements are arranged substantially in line, that is, as extensions of one another.

[0032] It should be pointed out that the more the articulated structure formed by the support elements 2 and pivoting arms 5 is opened out, the more it tends to be arranged in a rectilinear configuration, so that all of the stationery articles S supported by the support elements 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d and 2e are in view and easily accessible. In fact, in the opened-out position, all of the support elements are offset and spaced apart, so that the desired stationery article is readily identifiable and easily accessible.

[0033] When the accessory 1 is in the folded configuration, on the other hand, the support elements 2 are arranged close together so as to render the articulated structure more compact.

[0034] The connection between the support element 2e and the container 6 can be released, if required, so that the entire articulated structure of the accessory 1 can be separated from the container 6, for example, in order to be placed on a desk.

[0035] As will be appreciated from the foregoing description, the accessory for supporting stationery articles according to the present invention satisfies the above-mentioned need and at the same time overcomes the disadvantages mentioned in the introductory part of the present description with reference to the prior art. In fact, the articulated structure of the accessory enables the configuration of the accessory to be altered so as to change it from a very compact and easily transportable configuration to an opened-out configuration in which all of the stationery articles S can be identified at a glance and are easily accessible.

[0036] Another advantage of the accessory for supporting stationery articles according to the present invention is that the user is left to decide to what extent to open out the articulated structure, according to the space available.

[0037] Naturally, in order to satisfy contingent and specific requirements, a person skilled in the art will be able to apply to the above-described accessory for supporting stationery articles many modifications and variations all of which, however, are included within the scope of protection of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

[0038] Thus, for example, the support elements may simply be articulated to one another at their adjacent ends without the interposition of the pivoting arms so as to define an articulated structure which can be closed like a book.

[0039] Moreover, the articulation between the support elements and the pivoting arms may be formed at points of the support elements which do not include their ends.

Claims

1. An accessory for supporting stationery articles, comprising a first support element (2a) provided with housing means (3) for housing stationery articles (S) in an orderly manner, **characterized in that** it comprises a second support element (2b) provided with respective housing means (3) for housing stationery articles (S) in an orderly manner, and **in that** the first and second support elements (2a, 2b) are articulated to one another in a manner such as to define an articulated structure which can change from a folded configuration to an opened-out configuration and *vice versa*, in which configurations the first and second support elements (2a, 2b) are arranged substantially close together and are spaced apart, respectively.
2. An accessory according to Claim 1 in which the first and second support elements are articulated to one another with the interposition of at least one pivoting arm.
3. An accessory according to Claim 2 in which the first and second support elements (2a, 2b) are articulated to one another at a first vertex.
4. An accessory according to Claim 2 in which the first and second support elements (2a, 2b) are articulated to one another with the interposition of two pivoting arms (5) so as to define an articulated parallelogram.
5. An accessory according to Claim 2 in which the first and second support elements (2a, 2b) are articulated to one another with the interposition of two pivoting arms (5) so as to define an articulated quadrilateral.
6. An accessory according to Claim 4 or Claim 5 in which the first and second support elements (2a, 2b) are articulated to one another at an opposite vertex and at respective intermediate points.
7. An accessory according to Claim 3 or Claim 4 in which the first and second support elements (2a, 2b) are articulated to one another at an opposite vertex and at respective central points (M).
8. An accessory according to any one of Claims 1 to 7 in which the accessory comprises more than two support elements (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e) articulated to one another.
9. An accessory according to Claim 8 in which, when three support elements (2) are arranged in succession, a pivoting arm (5) articulates the central point (M) of the intermediate support element to a front

end of one of the two support elements that are positioned at the sides of the intermediate support element and to a rear end of the other support element that is positioned at the side of the intermediate support element.

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- 10.** An accessory according to any one of Claims 1 to 9 in which the accessory comprises a container (6) in which the support elements (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e) are housed in the folded configuration.

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- 11.** An accessory according to Claim 10 in which a support element (2e) is articulated to a pin (8) fixed firmly to the container (6).

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- 12.** An accessory according to any one of Claims 1 to 11 in which the housing means (3) comprise fixing means (4) for stationery articles (S).

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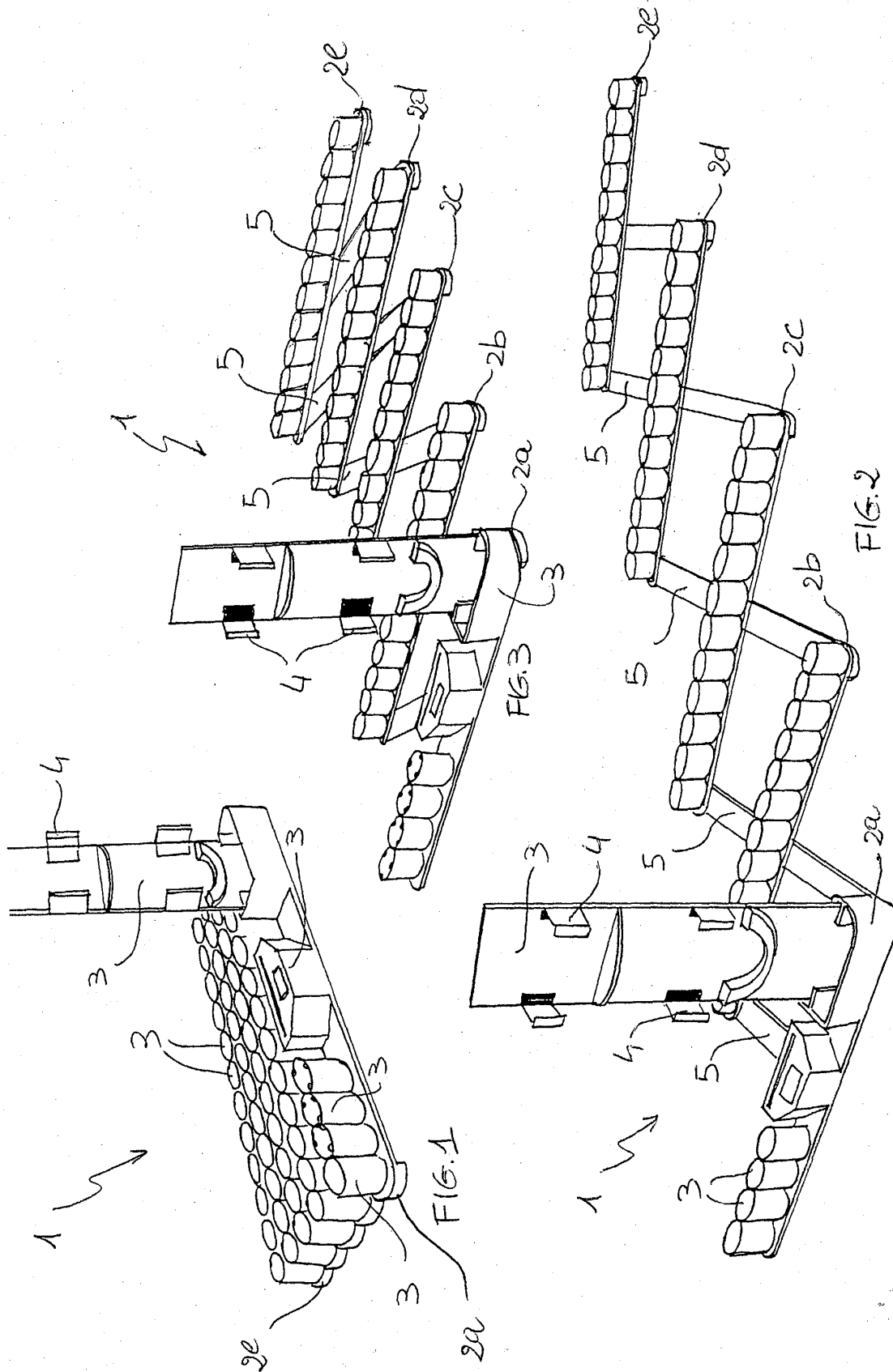
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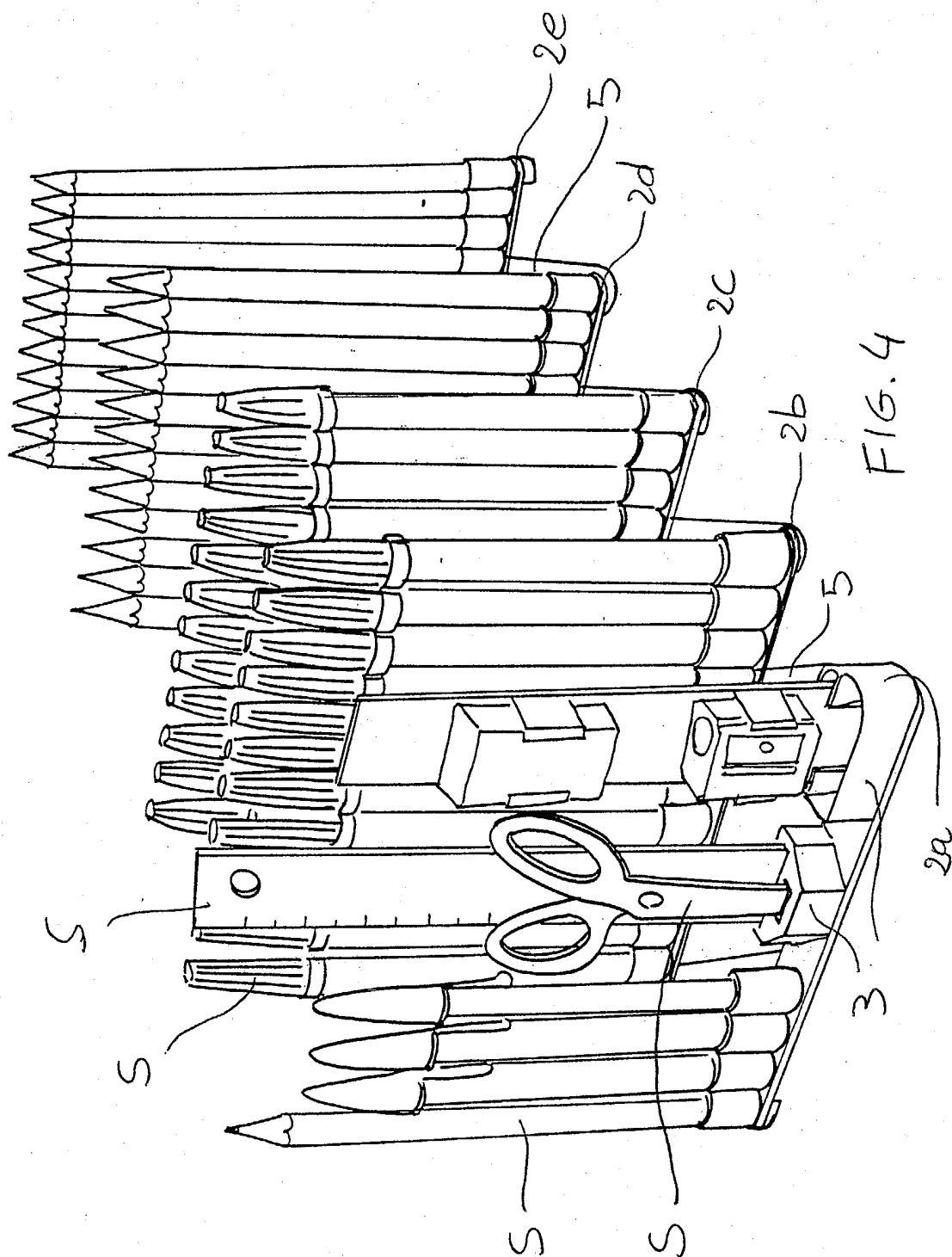
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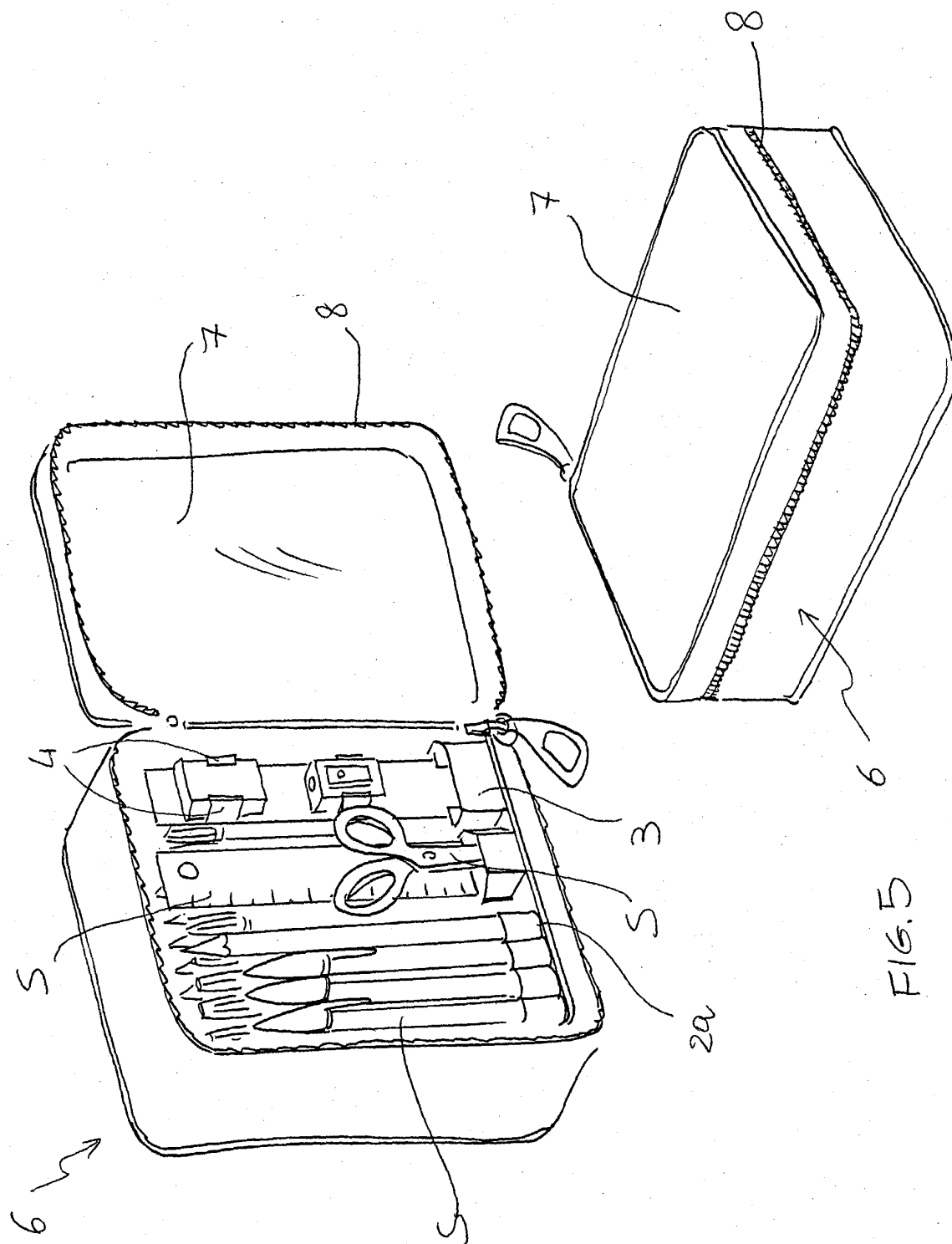
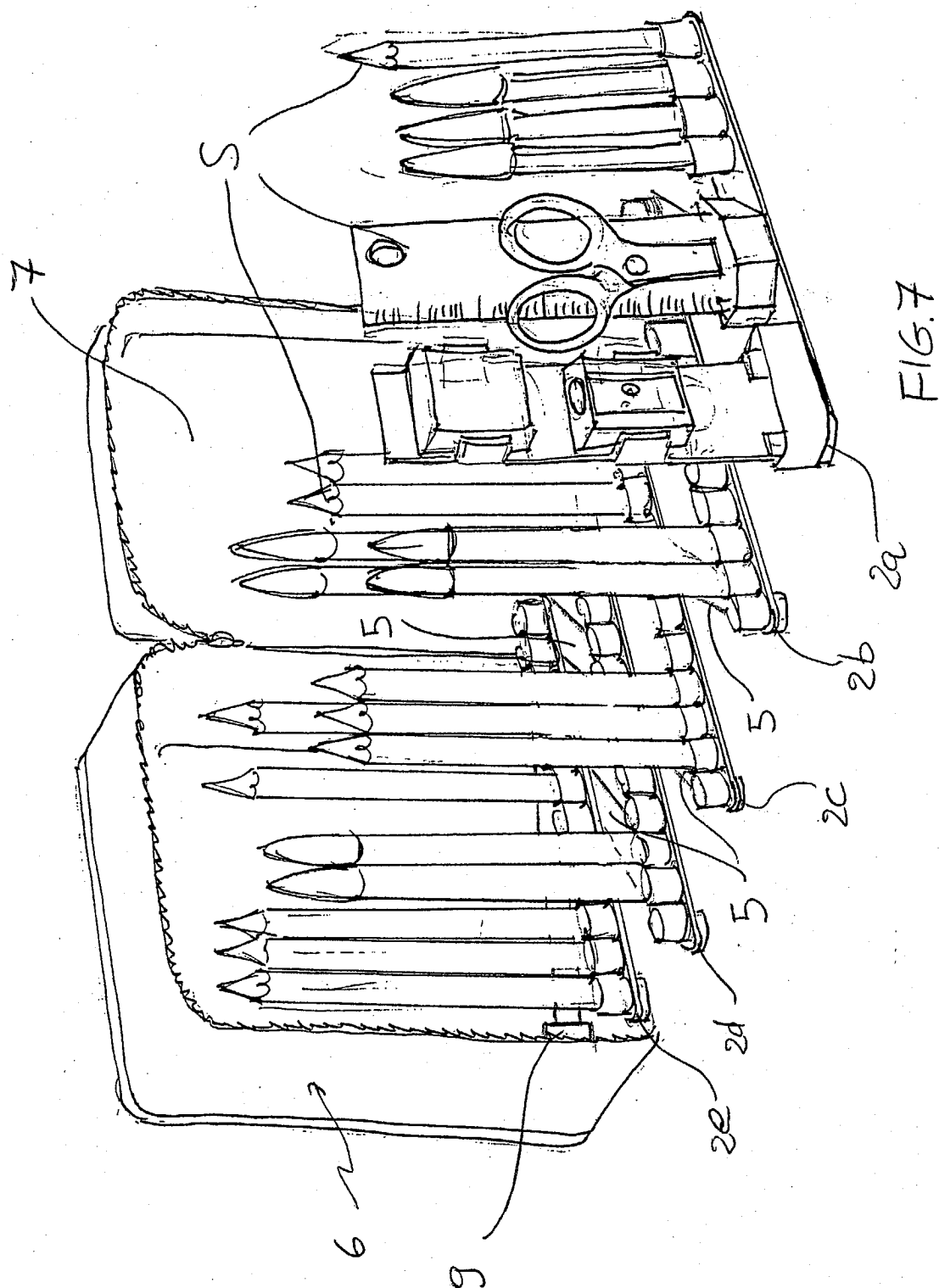


FIG. 5





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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 03 42 5704

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	US 5 025 934 A (VOGEL) 25 June 1991 (1991-06-25) * figures 1-6 *	1-3,8,12	A45C11/34
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			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
			A45C B43M B25H B43K
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 20 April 2004	Examiner Dinescu, D
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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EPO FORM 1503 03/82 (P04C01)

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

EP 03 42 5704

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