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(54) Funeral urn

(57) A funeral urn 1 comprising an electronic storage and playback device, means for triggering the playback of audio and/or visual messages stored in said storage and playback device, and a power supply.

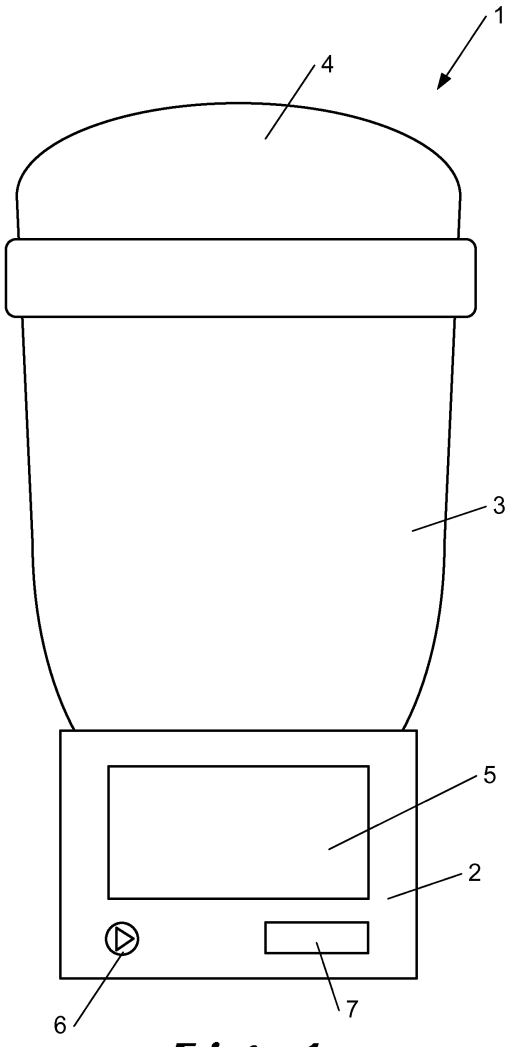

Fig. 1

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a funeral urn.

[0002] Because of the increasingly nomadic modern lifestyle, as well as the cost and environmental impact of traditional burials, cremation, which was a minority choice in the past, is becoming increasingly popular. In case of cremation the ashes of the departed are usually handed over to the family in a funeral urn. The urn forms thus a point of meditation and a shrine for the living, as well as a center of remembrance of the departed, which will be usually more accessible to the living than a grave in a cemetery which can often be distant. For this reason, even for people whose individual or religious choice excludes cremation, a funeral urn, even empty, may help the mourning of the living, leaving them a lively, tangible, personal and accessible trace of the departed.

[0003] For these reasons, it is well known to personalize a funeral urn by its shape or decoration, in a way as to reflect the personality of the departed. However, adornments, inscriptions or even fixed portraits can only give a very pale impression of the past presence of a then living person or even of a pet. This often can only increase the sense of loss, rather than facilitate the mourning. In order to remedy to this drawback, the funeral urn of this invention comprises an electronic storage and playback device, means for triggering the playback of audio and/or visual messages stored in said storage and playback device, and a power supply.

[0004] With these features, the funeral urn of the invention allows to associate audio and/or visual messages recorded during the life of the departed, and thus offer a more complete memory of the departed.

[0005] Preferably, the funeral urn of the invention also comprises an integrated display for displaying visual messages stored in said storage and playback device, said display being preferably in the form of a rigid or flexible screen. Visual messages of the departed can thus be directly displayed on the funeral urn without having to connect it to an external display.

[0006] Preferably, the funeral urn of the invention also comprises integrated loudspeakers for emitting audio messages stored in said storage and playback device. Audio messages of the departed can thus be heard directly without having to connect the urn to external loudspeakers or headphones.

[0007] Preferably, said power supply comprises a battery integrated into the funeral urn, freeing so the storage and playback device at least temporarily from external power supplies.

[0008] Preferably, said storage and playback means comprises means for randomly selecting for playback at least one message stored in said storage and playback device. The content of the message can thus maintain a certain unpredictability, avoiding routine, and giving a greater spontaneity to the messages.

[0009] Preferably, said playback triggering means comprise a timer. In this way, the playback triggering means may be programmed to trigger the playback of messages at particularly relevant times, such as, for instance, anniversaries. Preferably, this timer comprises an independent power supply, such as long-life batteries, so as to ensure its continued functioning.

[0010] Preferably, said playback triggering means comprise a presence sensor, so as to trigger the playback of a message only in presence of an audience.

[0011] Preferably, said playback triggering means comprise voice, touch and/or remote command means, so that a message playback may be activated by a voice, touch or remote command of somebody wishing to receive a message of the departed.

[0012] Preferably, the funeral urn of the invention also comprises a lighting device. In this way, the funeral urn can generate esthetically pleasing lighting effects.

[0013] Preferably, said lighting device is connected to said playback triggering means so as to be activated concurrently with the playback of an audio and/or visual message. In this way, the playback of a message may be combined with lighting effects aiming to amplify the emotional impact of the message.

[0014] Preferably, said storage and playback device may also comprise playback stop and/or pause means, preferably with touch, voice and/or remote command means, allowing thus to stop and/or temporarily pause the playback of a message if necessary.

[0015] Preferably, the funeral urn of the invention comprises means for connecting the storage and playback device to an external data processing device. In this way, messages could be recorded and eventually processed using an external data processing device, such as a conventional personal computer, and then loaded through this connection into the storage and playback device of the urn. It is particularly advantageous for these connection means to be in the form of a USB socket, since such a connector enables connection to a large variety of existing data processing devices.

[0016] A particular embodiment of the invention will now be described in an illustrative, but not restrictive form, with reference to the following figures:

[0017] Figure 1, showing a schematic front view of an embodiment of the funeral urn according to the invention; and

[0018] Figure 2, showing a schematic back view of the same embodiment.

[0019] The funeral urn 1 shown in Figs. 1 and 2 comprises two main parts attached to each other: a plinth 2 and a cup 3. The cup 3 is closed with a lid 4 and is adapted to receive the ashes of the departed. Such a funeral urn 1 may be used for the ashes of a human, but, alternatively, for those of a loved pet. Also, the cup 3 may not necessarily have to receive the ashes of the departed to be suitable as a shrine. The cup 3 may be offered in a variety of shapes for product differentiation purposes.

[0020] In the illustrated embodiment, an electronic storage and playback device is integrated within the plinth 2. At the front of the plinth 2, as seen in Fig. 1, are

integrated a display screen 5, a play/stop button 6, and a presence sensor 7. At the back of the plinth 2, as seen in Fig. 2, are integrated a loudspeaker 8, an on/off button 9 with an on/off light 10, a reset button 11, a USB socket 12, a 12v power supply socket 13, and a ventilation grating 14. At the bottom of the plinth 2, a door enables access to the electronic storage and playback device within the plinth 2, in particular to change batteries and/or perform repairs.

[0021] In the illustrated embodiment, the electronic storage and playback device is connected to the display screen 5 and the loudspeaker 8, so that audio and/or visual messages stored in the electronic storage and playback device can be played back through them. In alternative embodiments, the funeral urn 1 could be provided with audio and/or video output sockets to connect to external output devices so as to complement and/or substitute the integrated display screen 5 and/or loudspeaker 8. The funeral urn 1 could also be fitted with more than one display and/or loudspeaker.

[0022] In the preferred embodiment, the audio and/or visual messages are stored in digital form in the electronic storage and playback device, so as to offer a high storage capacity with high playback quality. However, analogous storage would also be considered by the skilled person according to the circumstances.

[0023] Digital electronic storage and playback devices are well known to the skilled person. Such digital storage and playback devices comprise at least a digital storage medium and an electronic device suitable for at least reading digital data stored in said medium and generating an electronic output in response. The digital storage medium may be i.a. electronic, such as, for example, a flash memory; magnetic, such as, for example, a hard disc drive or a magnetic tape; or optical, such as, for example, a CD or DVD. While read-only electronic storage and playback devices could also be considered, the digital electronic storage and playback of the illustrated embodiment is a recordable digital electronic storage and playback device, wherein the digital storage medium is recordable and the electronic device suitable not just for reading digital data from the storage medium, but also for recording digital data onto it. In this particular case, it is connected to the USB socket 12 so that it can receive from an external source, through that USB socket 12, digital data to be recorded in the storage medium.

[0024] The 12v power supply socket 13 is also connected to the electronic storage and playback device, so that it can supply this device with electric power. Other power supply means known to the skilled person could however also be considered. For instance, autonomous power supplies, such as batteries integrated within the plinth 2, may be used to supplement or substitute the 12v power supply socket of this embodiment. Such alternative or supplementary types of power supply means such as, for example a 110-240v AC power socket with a multi-voltage, multi-cycle transformer, an integrated battery or capacitor, an induction loop, a photovoltaic cell, and/or a fuel cell would be considered by the skilled person according to the necessities of the market.

[0025] The storage and playback device also comprises means for triggering the playback of stored messages. In the illustrated embodiment, those means comprise a timer (not shown), the play/stop button 6 and the presence sensor 7. The timer can be programmed to trigger the playback at certain important times or dates, such as anniversaries, and/or at predetermined intervals. To ensure that it will function continuously for long periods without resetting, the timer of the illustrated embodiment has an autonomous power supply in the form of long-life batteries within the plinth 2. However, to avoid that the timer triggers the playback of a message while there is nobody present to watch and/or listen to the message, the presence sensor 7 will inhibit playback if no presence is detected. Such presence detectors are also well-known of the skilled person, in particular from the security field of intruder alarms. The presence sensor 7 could take any known form adapted for this purpose, for instance a body heat detector or a movement detector.

[0026] To allow playback to be externally triggered, the illustrated preferred embodiment also comprises the play/stop button 6. To trigger playback of a message at any given moment, a user will just need to push this play/stop button 6. This button 6 can also be pushed to stop playback. In other embodiments, alternative and/or supplementary command means may be adapted to the invention, such as, for example, a sensitive touchscreen surface on the display screen 5, voice command means, and/or a remote control receiver, for instance an infrared remote control receiver

[0027] The storage and playback device of the preferred embodiment also comprises means for randomly selecting for playback a message from within a plurality of stored messages once playback is triggered by the abovementioned means. These random selection means may be in the form of hardware, such as, for instance, dedicated electronic circuitry within the storage and playback device, or in the form of software, that is a series of instructions to a programmable data processor in the storage and playback device.

[0028] The storage and playback device is also connected to the on/off and reset buttons 9, 11, and on/off light 10 at the back of the plinth 2. The purpose of the on/off button 9 is to activate and deactivate the storage and playback device. The on/off light 10 will light up if the storage and playback device is activated. The purpose of the reset button 11 is to reset the internal storage and playback device in case of data error.

[0029] The illustrated funeral urn 1 of the preferred embodiment also comprises a set of lights (not illustrated). In this preferred embodiment, the lights are independently activated at irregular intervals. However, in an alternative embodiment, the lights may also be activated by the playback triggering means, so as to act in combination with a message playback.

[0030] To record messages in the storage and play-

back device and/or to change settings of the storage and/or playback device such as i.a a playback schedule, a lighting schedule or a time-to-standby setting, the funeral urn 1 can be connected, through the USB socket 12, to an external device. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, that external device is a personal computer running software adapted to the adjustment of those parameters.

[0031] Although the present invention has been described with reference to a specific exemplary embodiment, it will be evident that various modifications and changes may be made to these embodiments without departing from the broader scope of the invention as set forth in the claims. Accordingly, the description and drawings are to be regarded in an illustrative sense rather than a restrictive sense.

Claims

1. A funeral urn (1), **characterised in that** it comprises an electronic storage and playback device with means for triggering the playback of audio and/or visual messages stored in said storage and playback device, and a power supply.

2. A funeral urn (1) according to claim 1, further comprising an integrated display for displaying visual messages stored in said storage and playback device, said display being preferably in the form of a rigid or flexible screen (5).

3. A funeral urn (1) according to any one of the previous claims, further comprising at least one integrated loudspeaker (8) for emitting audio messages stored in said storage and playback device.

4. A funeral urn (1) according to any one of the previous claims, wherein said power supply comprises a battery integrated into the funeral urn.

5. A funeral urn (1) according to any one of the previous claims, wherein said storage and playback device comprises means for randomly selecting for playback at least one message stored in said storage and playback device.

6. A funeral urn (1) according to any one of the previous claims, wherein said playback triggering means comprise a timer, preferably with an independent power supply, such as long-life batteries.

7. A funeral urn (1) according to any one of the previous claims, said playback triggering means comprise a presence sensor (7).

8. A funeral urn according to any one of the previous claims, wherein said playback triggering means comprise voice, touch and/or remote command means.

9. A funeral urn according to any one of the previous claims, further comprising a lighting device.

10. A funeral urn according to claim 8, wherein said lighting device is connected to said playback triggering means so as to be activated concurrently with the playback of an audio and/or visual message.

11. A funeral urn according to any one of the previous claims, said storage and playback device may also comprise playback stop and/or pause means, preferably with touch, voice and/or remote command means.

12. A funeral urn according to any one of the previous claims, further comprising means for connecting the storage and playback device to an external data processing device, said connecting means being preferably in the form of a USB socket (12).

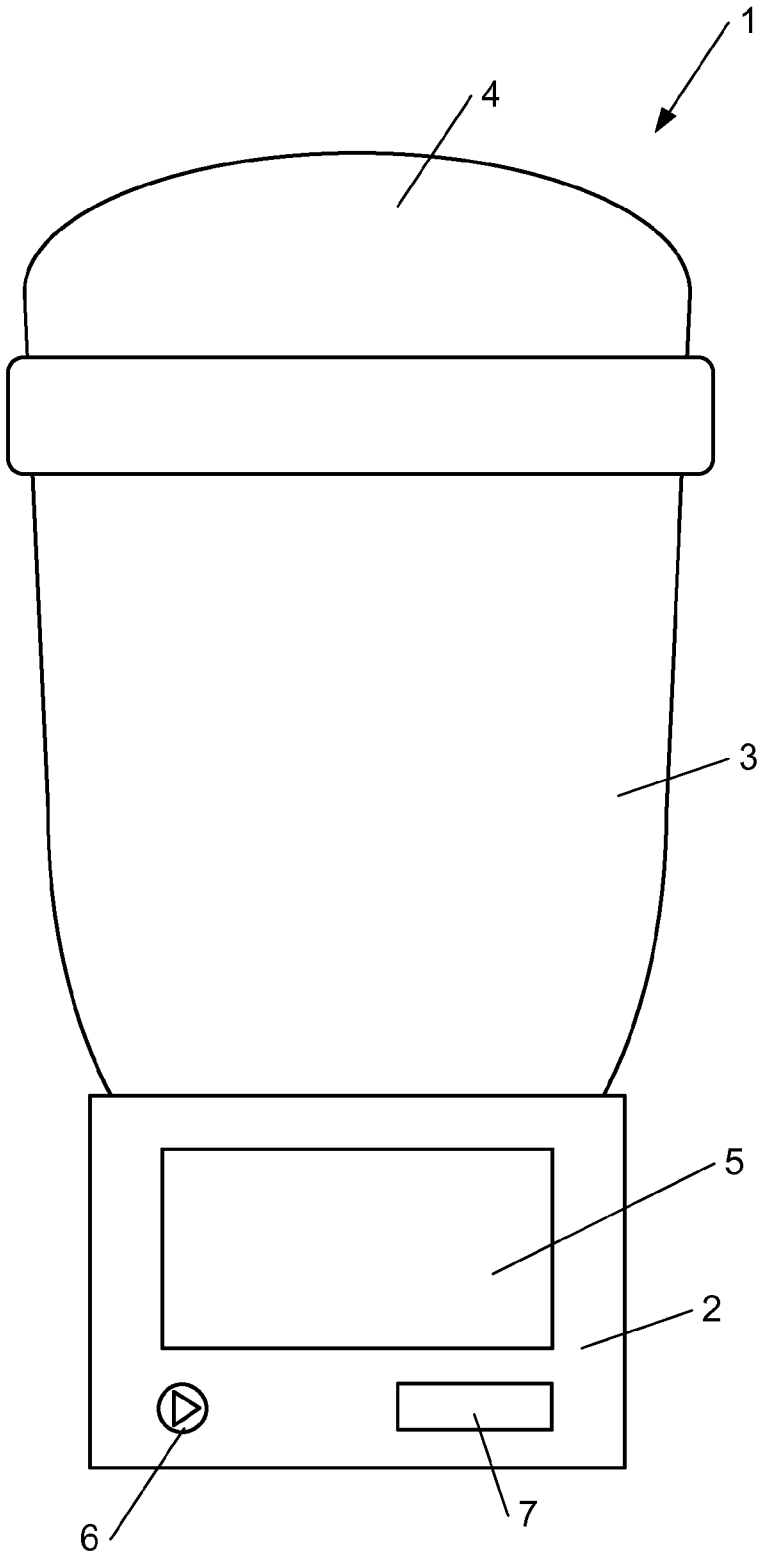

Fig. 1

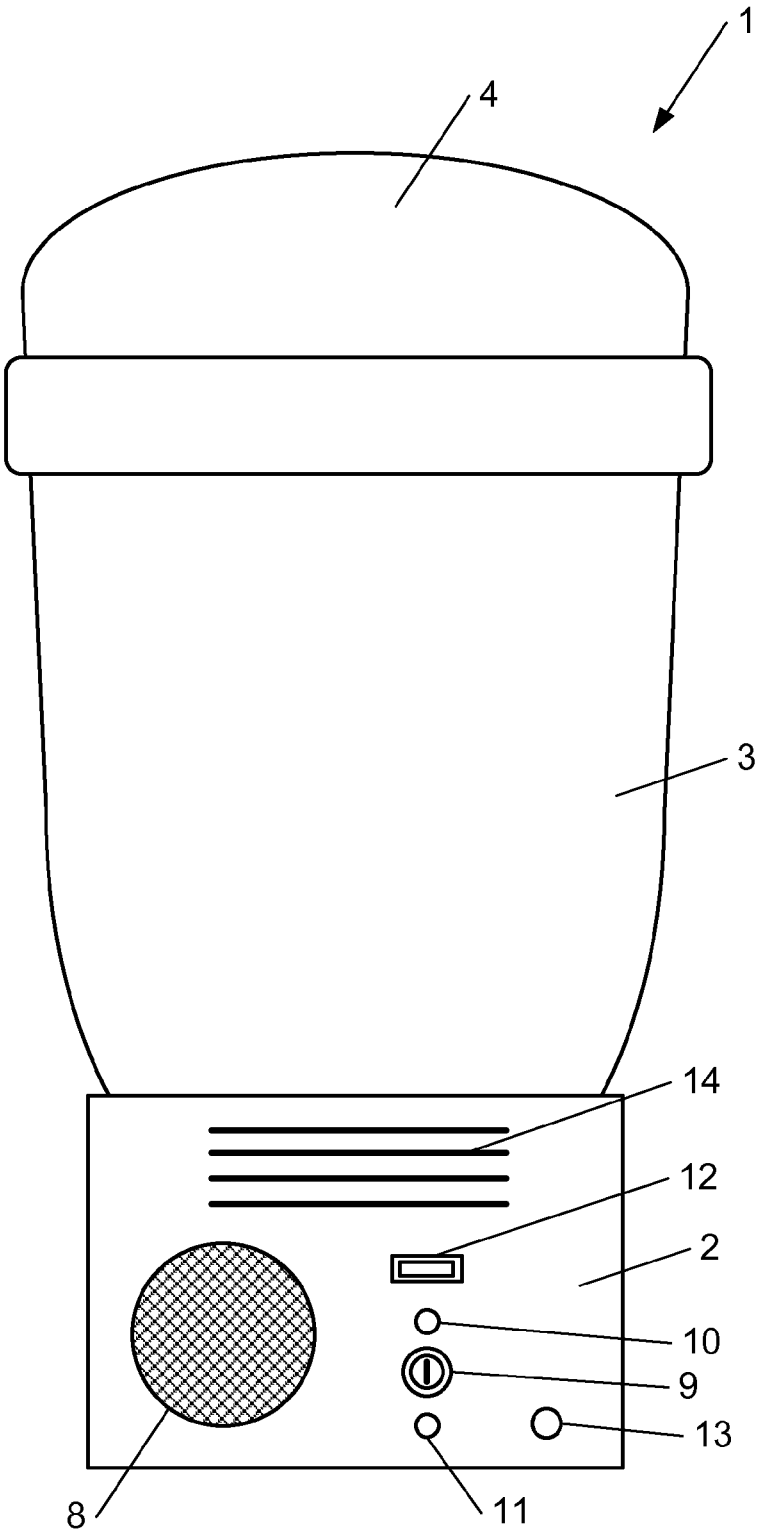

Fig. 2

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 07 11 8778

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
X Y	US 6 414 663 B1 (MANROSS JR DELBERT N [US]) 2 July 2002 (2002-07-02) * column 3, line 34 - column 8, line 47; figure 4 * -----	1,2,4-8, 11,12 9,10	INV. A61G17/08
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
The Hague	18 March 2008	Godot, Thierry

CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS

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