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(54) **Toy playset**

(57) The invention relates to a playset of the type which can be interacted with by a child, said child typically using articles and model characters to do so. The playset includes at least one portion (6) which can be moved between a retracted position and an extended position. The said portion is held in at least one of said positions by a retaining assembly (14',14''), said assembly releasable via a release means (18). The release means can include a formation to allow mechanical actuation of the retaining assembly and/or a magnet or magnetic material to create a magnetic field with a magnet or magnetic material on the retaining assembly to allow release of the retaining assembly, and hence allow movement of the at least one portion (6) of the playset to the other of said positions.

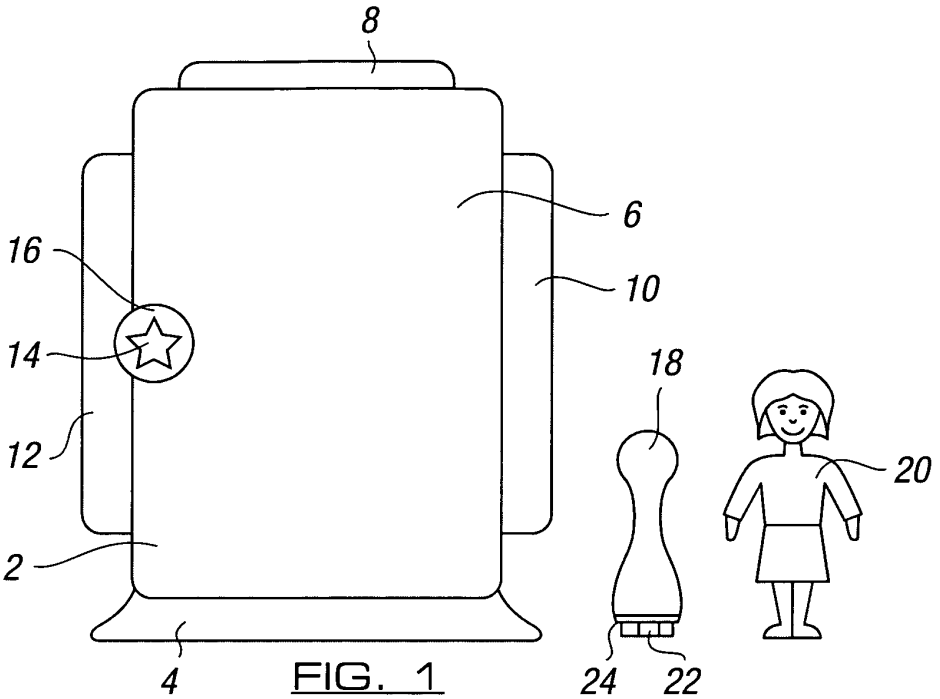

FIG. 1

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Description

[0001] The invention which is the subject of this application is a toy playset of the type which can be used by a child and which typically comprises a scene backdrop and/or base in relation to which one or more characters and/or articles can be selectively positioned and/or moved so as to provide a play facility to a child.

[0002] The playsets of the type to which this application relates are well known and popular with children. They can often be styled so as to depict a scene which is well known by the child such as, for example, to be linked to a television programme, film, book and/or geographical location. This styling can be provided by the provision of appropriate graphics, colourings and/or shaping of the structure which is used to form the backdrop and/or base for the playset. One or more characters can also be provided which can be provided of a form so as to be linked to the scene depicted by the playset. The child can then move the characters, which may depict humans or animals, and/or articles with respect to the playset backdrop and/or base so as to create their own versions of the toy.

[0003] It is also known to provide the playsets in a form which allows the same to be movable between a first position in which the same is in a storage or retracted mode and a second position in which the playset is extended typically to provide the desired play mode. The movement between the two positions may be achieved by the hinged movement of parts of the playset and/or by the axial movement of parts of the playset between said positions.

[0004] It has been identified that the conventional playsets of this type, while providing significant play potential and enjoyment to a child, can become limited in their attraction as the child quickly identifies that the playsets can be moved between positions in a predictable manner. It can also be the case that the child has no means of identifying or restricting access by others to their playset.

[0005] The aim of the present invention is to provide a playset which can be moved between retracted and extended positions and to do so in a manner which allows the movement to be controlled, or appear to be controlled, thereby allowing the child to identify more closely with that specific playset.

[0006] In a first aspect of the invention there is provided a playset, said playset including a base and/or backdrop with which a child may interact in play, at least a portion of the said playset movable between a retracted position and an extended position and wherein movement of the playset to at least one of the positions is only possible upon the release of a retaining assembly by use of a release means.

[0007] In one embodiment the child interacts with the playset using one or more character models and articles.

[0008] In one embodiment the movement of the playset from a retracted position to an extended position is only possible by release of the retaining assembly.

[0009] In one embodiment the release of the retaining assembly is achieved as a result of interaction with the same by the child using a release means.

[0010] In one embodiment the release means includes a formation thereon and the retaining assembly, at least appears to be, and in one embodiment is, only releasable when the formation thereon matches with a formation provided on the retaining assembly.

[0011] Typically the formation on the release means is a male formation and that provided on the retaining assembly is a female formation although this could equally be reversed to suit specific requirements.

[0012] In one embodiment the release means is formed, and/or coloured and/ or otherwise provided so as to be linked to the scene depicted by the playset.

[0013] In one embodiment the release means is an article linked to the playset. In an alternative embodiment the release means is a character model provided to be used in play with the playset.

[0014] Typically the release means achieves release of the retaining assembly by direct mechanical contact.

[0015] In an alternative and preferred embodiment the release means includes a magnet or magnetic material which, when the same is brought into range of the retaining assembly which also includes a magnet or magnetic material, allows movement to cause and/or allow mechanical movement to release the retaining assembly and hence allow one or more movable portions of the playset to move to the extended position.

[0016] In one embodiment the magnetic field range is such that the release of the retaining assembly can only be achieved when the release means formation is at least partially engaged with the formation of the retaining assembly.

[0017] In one embodiment the retaining assembly is biased towards a locking position by a biasing means such as a spring. The force of the biasing means can be overcome by the magnetic influence alone or alternatively, or in addition, a physical force is required to be exerted by the child via the release means engagement with the retaining assembly.

[0018] Typically, once released, at least one portion of the playset is free to be movable to an extended position so as to create a larger playset. In one embodiment at least one portion of the playset is freed to be movable under the influence of a biasing means to move to a position to extend the playset automatically upon the release of the retaining assembly.

[0019] Typically, to move the playset to the retracted position, the extended portions of the same can be moved manually to the retracted position whereupon, the retaining assembly can be moved manually or more typically, moved under the influence of biasing means to thereby retain the playset in the retracted position until the release means is next used.

[0020] In one embodiment the release of the retaining assembly may cause and allow the release of a plurality of portions, each of said portions resiliently biased so as

to move towards the extended position.

[0021] In a further aspect of the invention there is provided a method of moving at least a portion of a playset between retracted and extended positions, said playset including a retaining assembly to retain the playset in one or both of retracted and/or extended positions, and release means, and when the playset is retained in a position by the retaining assembly, the method is characterised by the steps of moving the release means into contact with, or adjacent to, part of the retaining assembly, and, if the release means is the correct match for the said part of the retaining assembly, the assembly is released to allow at least one portion of the playset to be moved to an extended position.

[0022] Specific embodiments of the invention are now described with reference to the accompanying drawings; wherein

Figure 1 illustrates a playset in accordance with one embodiment of the invention in a retracted position;

Figure 2 illustrates the playset of Figure 1 moving towards the extended position;

Figure 3 illustrates the playset of Figures 1 and 2 in an extended position;

Figures 4a and b illustrate release means in accordance with two embodiments of the invention; and

Figure 5 illustrates views of the retaining assembly in detail in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0023] Referring firstly to Figures 1-3 there is illustrated one embodiment of the invention. The playset 2 is provided in Figure 1 in a retracted or storage mode and is provided with a base 4, front portion 6 and side and top supports 8, 10,12. Also shown is the front of a retaining assembly 14 mounted on the front portion 6 and which includes therein a female formation 16 in the form, in this case, of a star. Also shown are an article 18 and character model 20 which are provided to be used in conjunction with the playset in play and which will typically be linked thereto by means of colour, pattern and/or shape.

[0024] In one embodiment it is the article 18 which is provided to be used as a release means for the retaining assembly 14. The article includes a male formation 22 as shown in Figure 4a, at the base 24. If the male formation 22 matches the female formation 16 of the retaining assembly then the same can be used to release the retaining assembly. In one embodiment the release can be achieved by engaging the formations and then turning the release means, and hence the retaining assembly, to release a latch or, alternatively, the insertion of the release means into the retaining assembly causes a magnetic attraction between one of magnetic material or a magnet in the release means and one of a magnetic material or a magnet in the retaining assembly to allow actuation and release of the retaining assembly.

[0025] Figure 4b illustrates an alternative arrangement wherein the character model 20 is provided with a base 23 and formation 25 thereon so as to allow the character model 20 to be used instead of the article 18 as the release means.

[0026] When released, the playset portions 6, 28 and 30 are consecutively released and, under the influence of respective spring biasing means 32, 34, 36, move about the respective hinges, 38, 40, 42 as indicated by arrows 44, 46, 48 respectively to contact with respective support portions 10,8,12.

[0027] Figure 2 shows the portions 6, 28, 30 in intermediate positions as they move to the extended position, and the fully extended positions are shown in Figure 3.

[0028] Figures 2 and 3 also show how the retaining assembly is provided with a first part 14' mounted on the front portion 6 and a second part 14" mounted on the side wall 50 of the rear part 52 of the playset and the provision of the correct, matching, release means for that playset allows the release of the two parts of the retaining assembly.

[0029] It should therefore be appreciated that in one embodiment of the invention the correct release means formation is required to be fitted with the retaining assembly in order to allow the physical movement of the retaining assembly to release the same. However in another embodiment, while the male and female formations are preferably still provided so as to give the impression to a child that the correct matching of the formation shapes is required, this, in reality, is not necessary as the release means and retaining assembly are provided with magnets or magnetic material and it is the magnetic interaction which allows the release of the retaining assembly rather than any mechanical contact between the retaining assembly and release means and the formations thereon.

[0030] In order to move the playset to the retracted position the portions 28 and 30 are moved manually to lie within the rear part 52 against the action of a biasing means and are then enclosed by moving the portion 6 to overlie the same and the retaining assembly parts 14', 14" are engaged in a closed position. The retaining assembly parts 14'. 14" can, in one embodiment, be biased towards an engaged position.

[0031] The retaining assembly parts 14', 14" are shown in more detail in Figure 5 in one embodiment. The front face of the retaining assembly is provided with a formation 16 and the part 14' leads to the rear side 60 of the front portion 6. Depending from the rear side 60 the retaining assembly includes a latch 62 which is provided to engage with a catch 64 provided on the rear part 52 of the playset. When the latch and catch are engaged, the portions of the playset 6, 28, 30 are retained in a fixed, retracted position with respect to the rear part. The latch, and hence part 14' of the retaining assembly, are biased towards the engaged position by the spring 66.

To overcome the action of the spring and disengage the latch 62 from the catch 64, the release means formation 22 of the correct shape is moved into contact with the formation 16 on the retaining means and, if the release means and retaining assembly match there is sufficient mechanical location between the formations to allow rotation of the release means to cause the rotation of the retaining assembly part 14' and latch 62. This rotation then allows the latch to be released from the catch 64 and hence the biasing means acting on the portions 6, 28 and 30 allow the same to move once the latch is released, to the extended positions as previously described.

[0032] There is therefore provided in accordance with the invention a playset which can be moveable between retracted and extended positions but only when an appropriate release means is provided to be used in conjunction with a retaining assembly provided on the playset. This therefore makes the particular playset more personal to the particular child who owns the same.

Claims

1. A playset, said playset including a base and/or backdrop with which a child may interact in play, at least a portion of the said playset movable between a retracted position and an extended position and **characterised in that** movement of the playset to at least one of the positions is only possible upon the release of a retaining assembly by use of a release means.

2. A playset according to claim 1 **characterised in that** the child can interact with the playset using one or more character models and articles.

3. A playset according to claim 1 **characterised in that** the release means includes a formation thereon and the retaining assembly at least appears to be only releasable when the formation on the release means matches with a formation provided on the retaining assembly.

4. A playset according to claim 3 **characterised in that** the retaining assembly is only releasable when the respective formations on the release means and the retaining assembly are engaged in a matching manner.

5. A playset according to claim 3 **characterised in that** the formation on the release means is one of a male formation or female formation and that provided on the retaining assembly is the other of the female or male formations.

6. A playset according to claim 1 **characterised in that** the release means is formed, and/or coloured and/or is an article provided so as to be linked to a scene depicted by the playset.

7. A playset according to claim 6 **characterised in that** the release means is an article linked to the playset.

8. A playset according to claim 1 **characterised in that** the release means achieves the release of the retaining assembly by allowing mechanical actuation of the retaining assembly via the release means.

9. A playset according to claim 1 **characterised in that** the release means includes a magnet or magnetic material which, when the same is brought into range of a magnet or magnetic material in the retaining assembly allows the release of the retaining assembly.

10. A playset according to claim 9 **characterised in that** the release of the retaining assembly is possible when the release means is at least partially engaged with the retaining assembly.

11. A playset according to claim 1 **characterised in that** the retaining assembly is biased towards a locking position.

12. A playset according to claim 11 **characterised in that** the force of the biasing means can be at least partially overcome by a magnetic attraction force between the release means and the retaining assembly.

13. A playset according to claim 11 **characterised in that** a physical force is required to be exerted to overcome the biasing means via engagement of the release means with the retaining assembly.

14. A playset according to claim 1 **characterised in that** at least one portion of the playset is free to be movable from a first to a second position so as to create a larger playset when the retaining assembly is released.

15. A playset according to claim 14 **characterised in that** the at least one portion of the playset is moved under the influence of a biasing means to extend the playset automatically upon the release of the retaining assembly.

16. A playset according to claim 1 **characterised in that** the release of the retaining assembly causes and allows the release of a plurality of portions, each of said portions resiliently biased so as to move towards the extended position.

17. A method of moving at least a portion of a playset between retracted and extended positions, said playset including a retaining assembly to retain the

playset in one or both of retracted and/or extended positions, and release means, and when the playset is retained in a position by the retaining assembly, the method is **characterised by** the steps of moving the release means into contact with, or adjacent to, part of the retaining assembly, and, if the release means is the correct match for the said part of the retaining assembly, the assembly is released to allow at least one portion of the playset to be moved to an extended position.

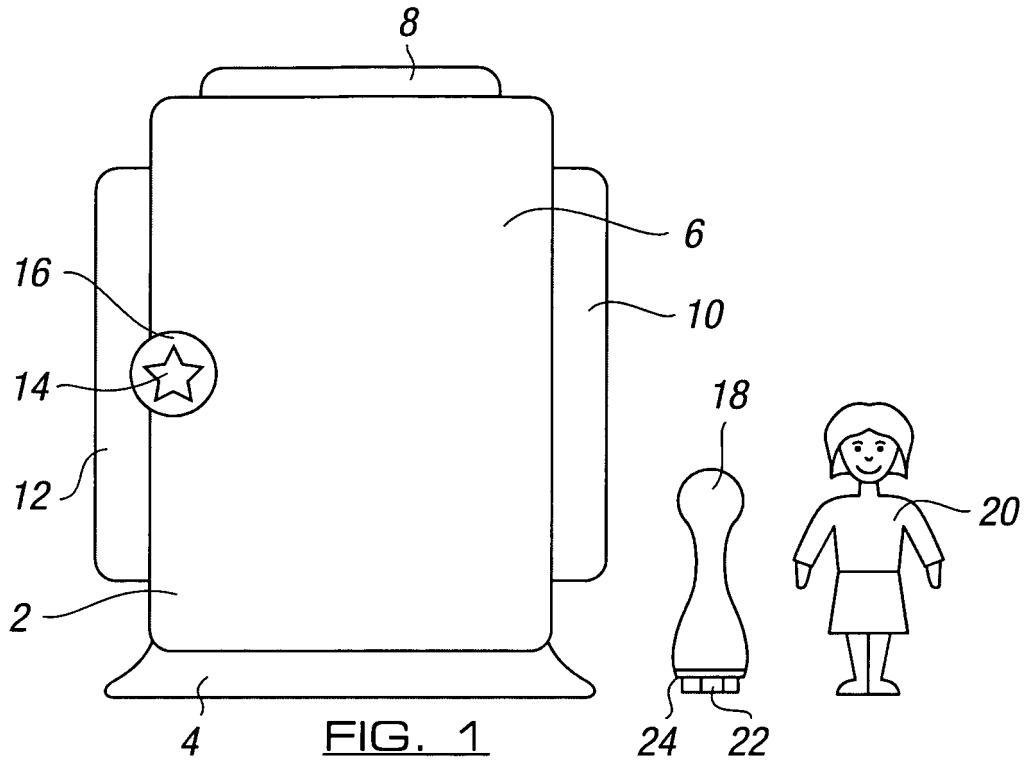
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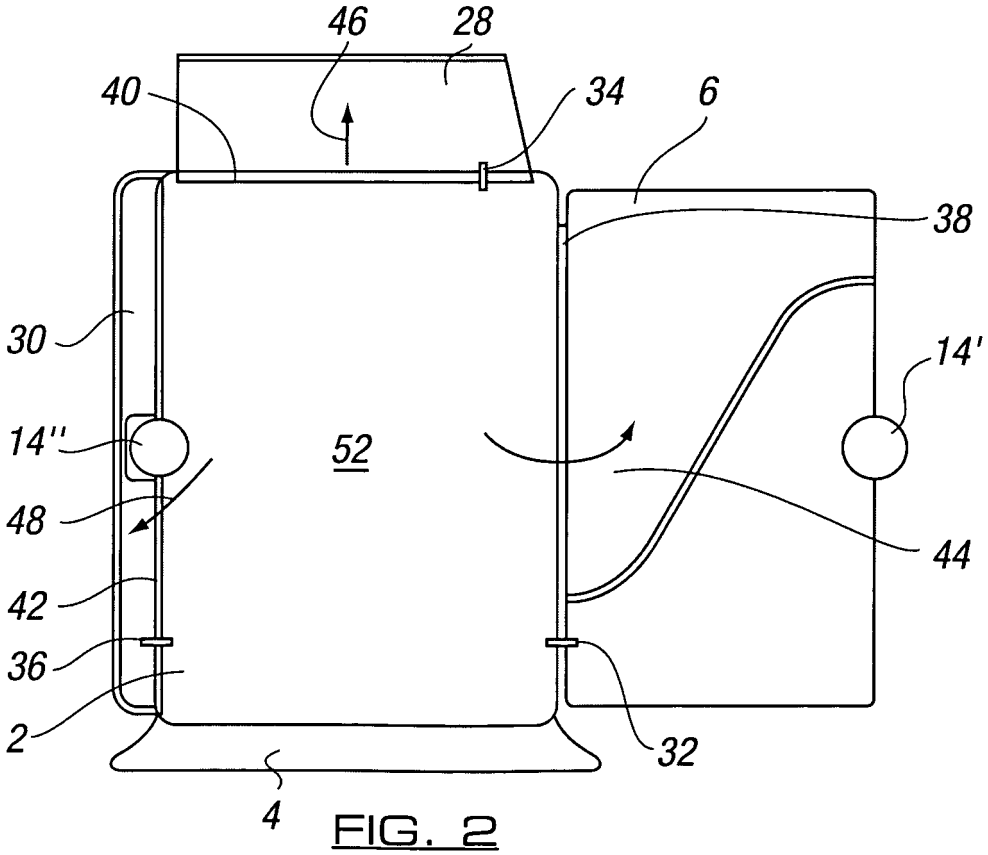
FIG. 1


46
28
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38
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14'
14''
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FIG. 2

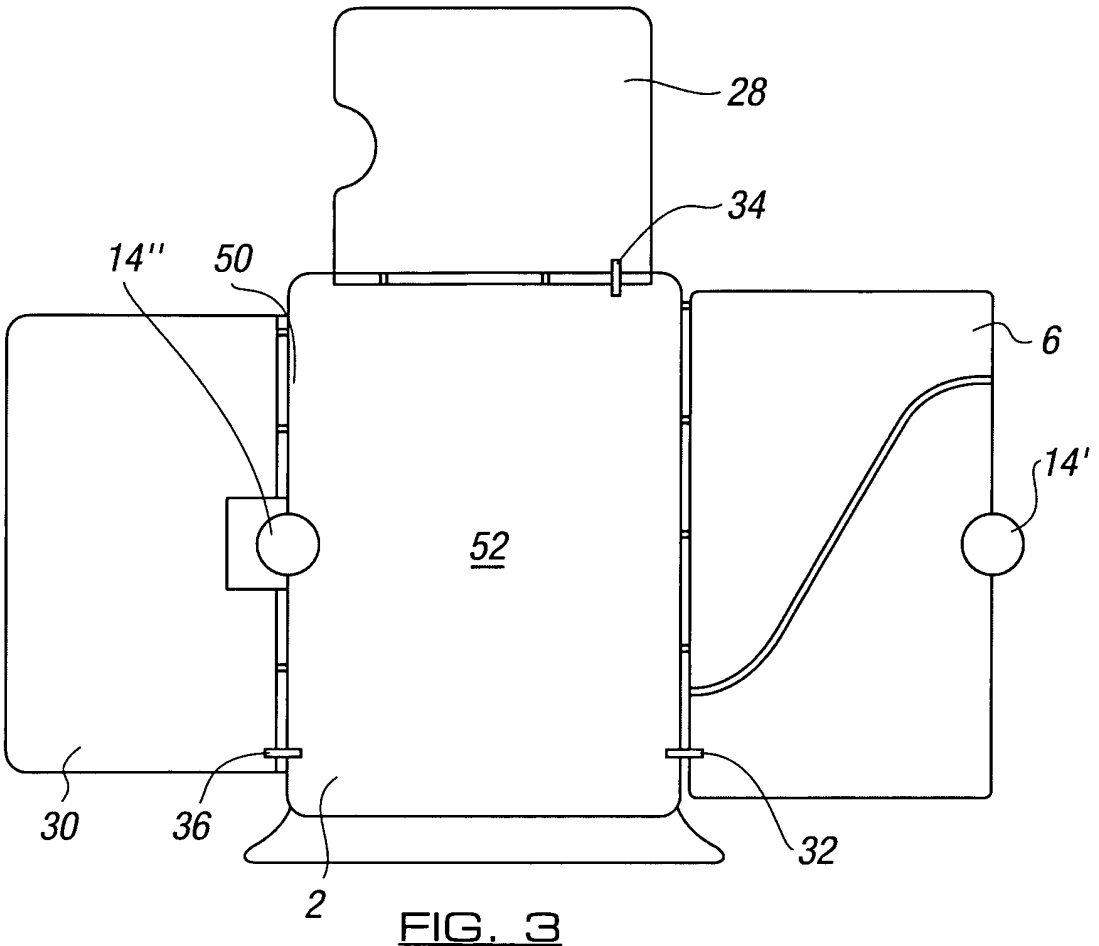

FIG. 3

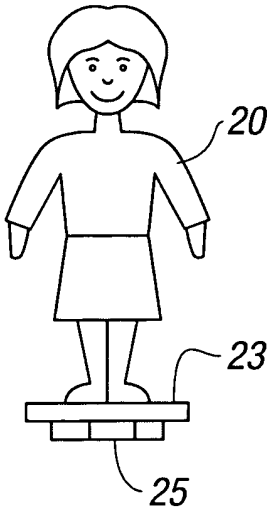

FIG. 4b

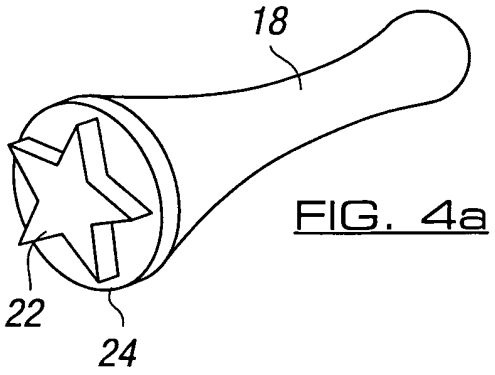

FIG. 4a

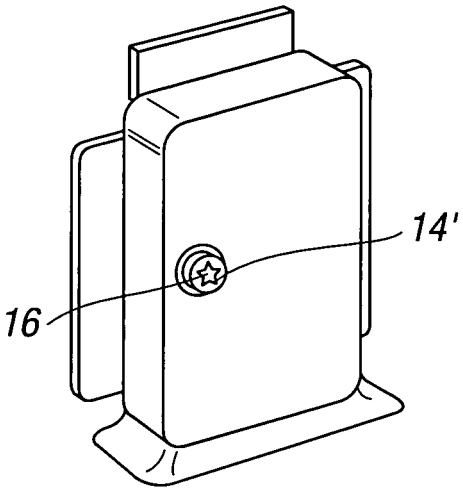

FIG. 5

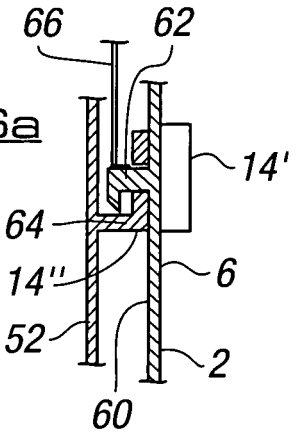

FIG. 6a

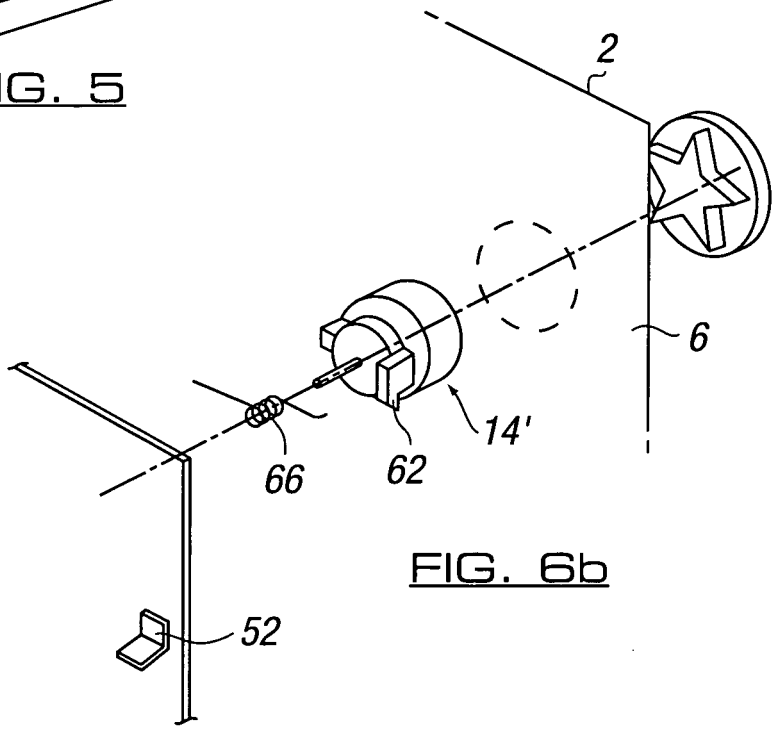

FIG. 6b

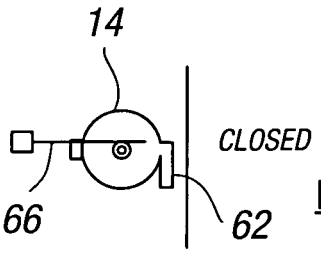

FIG. 7a

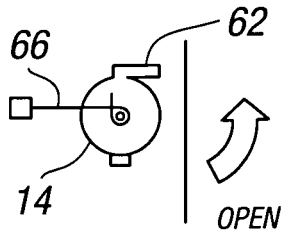

FIG. 7b

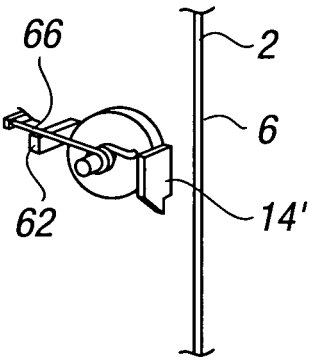

FIG. 8

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 09 25 2675

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
X	US 4 533 336 A (DIXON JOHN [GB] ET AL) 6 August 1985 (1985-08-06) * claims 1-14; figures 1,2 * * column 2, line 8 - column 3, line 50 *	1-8, 13-17	INV. A63H33/30 A63H3/52
X	WO 2007/003870 A1 (EVOLVE NPD LTD [GB]; CARTLIDGE PETER [GB]; ROWE TIM [GB]; TYLER LUCAS) 11 January 2007 (2007-01-11) * paragraph [0065] - paragraph [0072]; figures 1-12 *	1-8,11, 13-17	
X	GB 1 109 819 A (A RESPOSABILITE LTD KIDDICRAFT) 18 April 1968 (1968-04-18) * claims 1-3; figures 1,2 *	1-8,14, 17	
X	US 3 216 558 A (MARSH OWEN T) 9 November 1965 (1965-11-09) * column 12, line 6 - line 12; figures 1-12 * * claims 1-6 *	1,9-12, 17	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
			A63H

The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
Munich	27 April 2010	Shmonin, Vladimir

CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS

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27-04-2010

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