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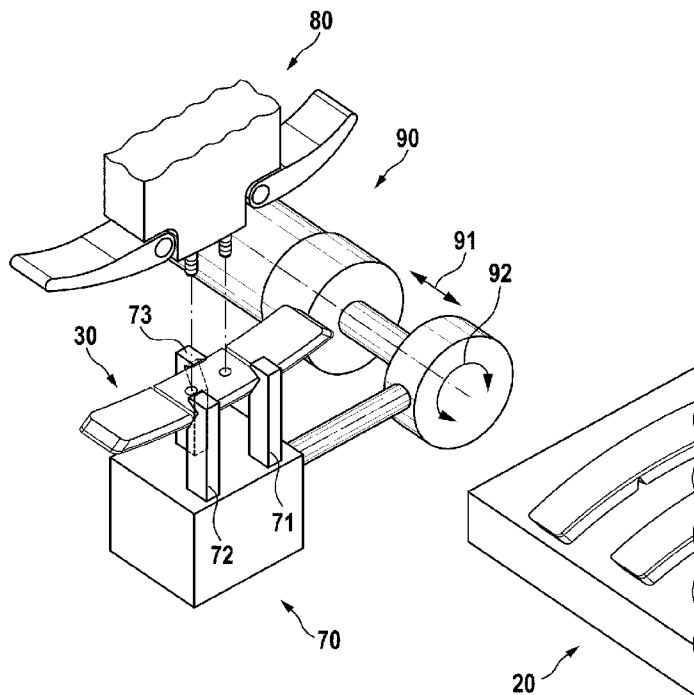
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(54) Title: TRAY ASSEMBLY FOR BALANCING WEIGHTS

Fig. 10



(57) Abstract: A tray assembly (20 for balancing weights (31 to 34) is disclosed. The tray assembly (20) has trays of different sizes adapted to different sizes of the balancing weights (31 to 34). This results in that the balancing weights (31 to 34) are all positioned in the same height, and therefore can easily be picked up by a handling system. The size of the tray may automatically be adjusted by slides (55 to 58) operated by actuators (51 to 54). The tray may be a horizontal rotating tray assembly which preferably has a conical form, thus allowing a plurality of handling systems, picking up balancing weights (31 to 34) at the same time. This results in a significantly improved loading speed.

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Tray Assembly for Balancing Weights

Field of the invention

The invention relates to methods and devices for dispensing weights used in vehicle ballasting applications, in particular for dispensing weights used in balancing automobile or other vehicle wheels.

Description of the related art

In automotive wheel balancing, individual wheel balancing weights are applied to specific positions of a rim. Basically, two types of balancing weight are used. The first kind is a balancing weight which is attached by a clamp, as disclosed in the European patent EP 1 613 876 B1, while the second kind is fixed by means of a self-adhesive tape, as disclosed in US patent 6,364,421 B1.

Both kinds of balancing weights are available in a plurality of sizes, resulting in different weights. When balancing a vehicle wheel, the correct size of balancing weight is selected and attached to the rim. Most balancing weights are supplied as bulk material in boxes, from which the required number of weights is manually taken.

This allows for a simple, comparatively cheap supply of balancing weights. The drawback is that the person who is taking the weights from the box may take a wrong weight, and therefore a further step of balancing is required. Furthermore, the process of taking the weights can hardly be automated. Therefore, other solutions as disclosed in WO 2008/103651 A1, using a continuous polymer tape, have been developed. This has the drawback that a solid balancing weight is significantly more robust and reliable than these continuous tapes.

Summary of the invention

The problem to be solved by the invention is to provide selected balancing weights to be picked up by a handling device at predetermined positions, independent of the size of the balancing weight.

- 5 Solutions of the problem are described in the independent claims. The dependent claims relate to further improvements of the invention.

According to the invention, a tray assembly for balancing weights is provided. This tray assembly allows a handling device, like an industrial robot, to pick up individual balancing weights, which previously may have been selected and/or
10 delivered by a dispenser. Furthermore, the tray assembly has means to position the individual balancing weights within a tray such that they are in a reproducible position, independent of the size of the balancing weights. Most preferably the at least one picking element of the balancing weights is at the same height. Picking elements may be any parts of the balancing weights, which may be used for
15 picking a balancing weight by a handling system. Such picking elements may be holes, preferably the pair of standard picking holes or clamps or any other part. The term height refers to the height above a reference plane, which may be defined by the base of the tray assembly.

There are various balancing weights on the market, whereas some of these balancing weights have holes by which they may be held by a handling system. To
20 simplify the interface to handling system, it is preferred that these holes always are located at the same position, independent of the balancing weight's size.

A first embodiment of a tray assembly has different trays with different sizes, for holding balancing weights of different sizes. Each tray is adapted to a specific
25 type of balancing weights, which results in a constant position of the holes, independent of the individual balancing weight. Instead of placing the holes at a constant position, other parts of balancing weights, like a clamp, may also be placed

at a constant position. Preferably, the tray assembly has a balancing weight loading section, which may be connected to a dispenser or a belt conveyer delivering balancing weights. The loading section may be a chute through which the balancing weights are delivered. Preferably, trays are moveable against the loading
5 section to select the appropriate tray for each balancing weight, which is received, by the loading section. In a first embodiment, the selection of the tray may be controlled by a common controller, which also controls a dispenser delivering the balancing weight. The controller has the information, which balancing weight is to be delivered by the dispenser, and therefore can select the appropriate tray. If there is no common controller, a sensor may be in front of the
10 trays, which may for example be connected to the loading section, for detecting the size of the balancing weight. According to the detected balancing weight size, the tray may be selected. In a further embodiment, there may be a ledge, which prevents a balancing weight from entering into the trays for the case the trays
15 are in movement, or not in the final position, or the tray is still occupied by a balancing weight. To identify whether a tray is empty or occupied by a balancing weight, an occupancy sensor may be provided. This may be an optical, magnetic, or any other sensor.

The trays may be arranged in a linear assembly, or in an arch-shaped or a ring-
20 shaped assembly. A ring-shaped assembly has the advantage that movement is only required into one direction, while a linear assembly must be moved forward and backward. It is further preferred, if a ring-shaped assembly has a conical shape to allow the balancing weight to be positioned on a slanted surface, thereby holding a stable position. In a further embodiment, the trays are adapt-
25 able to the required size. This may be done by a slide, which may be controlled by an actuator via a push rod. This slide may be set to its correct position to limit the size of the tray, as soon as the size of the incoming balancing weight is known. In another embodiment, there may be a hole sensor or a sensor detecting any feature of a balancing weight for determining the size location of this

feature. The slide may now be moved until the desired preferably of the balancing weight within the tray is reached. This may for example be the position, where the hole sensor detects a hole of the balancing weight.

5 Description of Drawings

In the following, the invention will be described by way of example, without limitation of the general inventive concept, on examples of embodiment with reference to the drawings.

10 Figure 1 shows a tray assembly for balancing weights.

Figure 2 shows a front view of a tray assembly.

Figure 3 shows a horizontal rotating tray assembly.

Figure 4 shows a conical tray.

Figure 5 shows a tray with slides.

15 Figure 6 shows a tray assembly with constant-sized trays.

Figure 7 shows a tray with slide and sensors.

Figure 8 shows trays with limiting stops.

Figure 9 shows an embodiment of a transfer device.

Figure 10 shows the transfer device in the second position.

In figure 1, a tray assembly for balancing weights according to the invention is shown. Here, the tray assembly 20 is shown in a sectional view through a first tray 21. The other trays 22, 23, 24 having different sizes are arranged behind this tray. Furthermore, a loading section 10 is shown. This loading section may comprise of a belt conveyer having a belt 12 driven by a conveyer pulley 11. The belt moves into direction 15, transporting balancing weights towards the tray assembly. For picking up the balancing weights from the belt 12, a chute 13 is provided. Sidewalls 14 prevent the balancing weights from falling of the chute. From the chute, the balancing weights may slide directly into a tray of the tray assembly below the slide. Furthermore, there may be a ledge 60 for preventing balancing weights to slide into the tray assembly for case the desired tray is not in a correct position, or the desired tray is still occupied by a balancing weight. This ledge may be operated by an actuator 61. Furthermore, a sensor 62 may be provided for detecting the presence of a balancing weight. Furthermore, there may be a sensor for detecting the size or type of balancing weights. This may be the same sensor as sensor 62 for the presence of a balancing weight. Although it is preferred that the loading section comprises a belt conveyer, this is not necessary. Instead, the balancing weights may slide directly by means of chute 13 into the tray assembly. Accordingly, the tray assembly may be coupled by means of a chute to a dispenser.

In figure 2, a front view of the tray assembly is shown. There are exemplarily shown four different sizes of trays 21, 22, 23, 24. Each tray is loaded with a balancing weight 31, 32, 33, 34. The trays are adapted to the individual balancing weight types in such a way that the height (or position) of holes 28 and 29 is the same for all balancing weights. This allows for very simple picking-up of the balancing weights by a handling device, as the handling device only has to know the position of the holes, and therefore can pick the balancing weights always from the same location. Furthermore, the loading section 10 is shown, comprising a conveyer belt 12 moving into direction 15, and transporting the balancing

weights via chute 13 towards the tray assembly 20. Tray assembly 20 may be moved as shown by arrow 27 in a linear movement under the loading section, so that each of the trays 21 to 24 may be loaded.

In figure 3, a horizontal rotating tray assembly 40 is shown. Basically, this may have a similar design as the linear tray assembly shown in the previous figures. The main difference is a circular arrangement, which allows for rotation in directions 47. It furthermore allows access by handling devices from a plurality of directions 46, which may even access the tray assembly at the same time. This allows for a significant improvement in loading speed. During time periods, where the handling devices are mounting the balancing weights to the rims, the trays may be loaded with new balancing weights.

In figure 4, a horizontal rotating tray assembly 40 is shown which has a conical shape. Due to the conical shape, the balancing weights lie on a slanted surface, and therefore may take a stable position. Here, the balancing weight easily can be accessed from a plurality of handling systems at the same time.

In figure 5, a tray assembly with slides for adapting the trays to the size of individual balancing weights is shown. Here, the trays 21 to 24 have slides 55 to 58 at the bottom sides for adapting the length of the trays to the balancing weights 31, 32. The slides are operated by actuators 51 to 54, which may push the slides upwards by push rods 59. In a further embodiment, there may be screws or other means for manually adjusting the slides instead of driving the slides by actuators. This will simplify the system and reduce costs while maintaining some flexibility.

Figure 6 shows a tray assembly having trays of the same size 21 to 24 with differently sized balancing weights 31 to 33, resulting in different heights of the holes.

In figure 7, a side view of a tray with slide 55 is shown. The slide may be operated by an actuator 51. Furthermore, an occupancy sensor is provided for detecting,

whether a balancing weight is in the tray. Furthermore, it is preferred, if a hole sensor 65 is provided. This sensor may detect holes of the balancing weights and may serve to control the height of slide 55. When a balancing weight is loaded into the tray, preferably slide 55 is at the lowest-possible position. Afterwards, it will be driven upwards until the hole sensor 65 detects the first hole. Then, the movement of slide 55 is stopped, as the balancing weight has reached its final position. In a further embodiment, the hole sensor 65 and the occupancy sensor 66 are combined.

In figure 8, a different tray assembly with exchangeable stops is shown. Herein, stops 35, 36, 37 are inserted into trays 21, 22, 23 for limiting the lengths of the trays. These stops may be fixed by gluing or welding into the trays. In a further embodiment, these stops are removable, and therefore the trays may be adapted in a flexible manner to the individual requirements. The sidewalls 25 may have holes or other means for locating the stops in discrete and predetermined position. This will improve the stability of the stops within the trays and furthermore reduce failures.

In figure 9 and figure 10, a further embodiment of a transfer device is shown. Here, an actuator 90 is provided together with a transfer head 70 to transfer balancing weights 31, 32, 33 which may be served at a first transfer position on a tray assembly 20, a belt or any other means into a position suitable for picking up the balancing weights, into a second transfer position reachable by an application head 80. In figure 9, the transfer head 70 is shown in the first transfer position, while in figure 10, it is shown in the second transfer position. The transfer head 70 has means for holding balancing weights like holding pins 71, 72, 73. The means for holding may be adapted to a specific kind of balancing weights like a self-adhesive balancing weights or clip-on balancing weights. There may also be a universal means, which can be adapted or adapt itself to different kinds of balancing weights. Preferably, the means are designed to hold the balancing weight

by its sides to prevent contact with a self-adhesive surface. This works also with balancing weights having no self-adhesive surface like clip-on balancing weights. The means may be operated by spring force, electrically, pneumatically or hydraulically. The holding force should be sufficiently high to hold the balancing weight during movement. The transfer head 70 is preferably mounted to an actuator 90 for moving the transfer head between at least two transfer positions. The actuator 90 may provide a linear movement 91 and/or rotational movement 92. An actuator 90 performing only a rotational movement 92 may deliver balancing weights from a constant first transfer position to a second transfer position. In this example, rotation about an angle of 180° is shown. Although this is the preferred rotational angle, smaller or larger angles may also be used. Adding a linear movement 91, would allow to pick up balancing weights at displaced first transfer positions and to deliver the same at a constant second transfer position. By a linear movement 91, a specific balancing weight of a choice of different balancing weights may be selected. This embodiment may be used alone or in conjunction with any of the previous embodiments.

List of reference numerals

10	loading section
11	conveyer pulley
12	belt
13	chute
14	sidewall
15	direction of belt
20	tray assembly
21 – 24	trays
25	sidewall
27	direction of movement
28, 29	height of holes
31 – 34	balancing weights
35, 36, 37	stops
40	horizontal rotating tray assembly
41	tray
42	tray separator
46	access by handling devices
47	direction of rotation
48	rotation axis
51 – 54	actuator
55 – 58	slide
59	push rod
60	ledge
61	actuator
62	sensor
65	hole sensor

66	occupancy sensor
70	transfer head
71, 72, 73	holding pins
80	application head
90	actuator
91	direction of translation
92	direction of rotation

Claims

1. Tray assembly (20) for balancing weights, comprising a plurality of trays (21 to 24) for holding balancing weights (31 to 34) of different sizes, wherein at least two trays are adapted in their size such that balancing weights contained in the trays have picking elements in the same height.
2. Tray assembly (20) for balancing weights, comprising a plurality of trays (21 to 24) for holding balancing weights (31 to 34) of different sizes, wherein at least two trays are adapted in their size such that balancing weights contained in the trays have holes in the same height.
3. Tray assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in, that the tray assembly is moveable against a loading section (10) for delivering balancing weights to select a specific tray into which a balancing weight is to be delivered.
4. Tray assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in, that the trays are arranged on a plane and the movement in relation to the loading section is a linear movement.
5. Tray assembly according to claims 1 to 3, characterized in, that the tray assembly is a horizontal rotating tray assembly, which may have a conical shape.

6. Tray assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in, that at least one of the trays has a slide (55 to 58) for adapting the size of the tray to the size of a specific balancing weight.
7. Tray assembly according to claim 7, characterized in, that the at least one slide (55 to 58) is operated by an actuator (51 to 54) or manually.
8. Tray assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in, that at least one of the trays has a stop for limiting the size of the tray.
9. Tray assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in, that a hole sensor is provided for detecting the position of a balancing weight in a tray.
10. Tray assembly according to claim 11, characterized in, that the hole sensor detects the position of a hole of a balancing weight within a tray.
11. Tray assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in, that an occupancy sensor is provided for detecting the presence of a balancing weight within a tray.

12. Tray assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in, that
a loading section for loading the trays is provided, which may have a ledge to control transport of balancing weights into the trays.
13. Transfer device for transferring a balancing weight from a tray assembly and/or a belt to an application head, characterized in, that
the transfer device has a transfer head (70) coupled to an actuator (90) to perform a rotational movement.
14. Transfer device according to claim 13, characterized in, that
the transfer head (70) has at least one holding pin (71, 72, 73).
15. Transfer device according to any one of claims 13, 14, characterized in, that
the actuator (90) also performs a linear movement.

Fig. 1

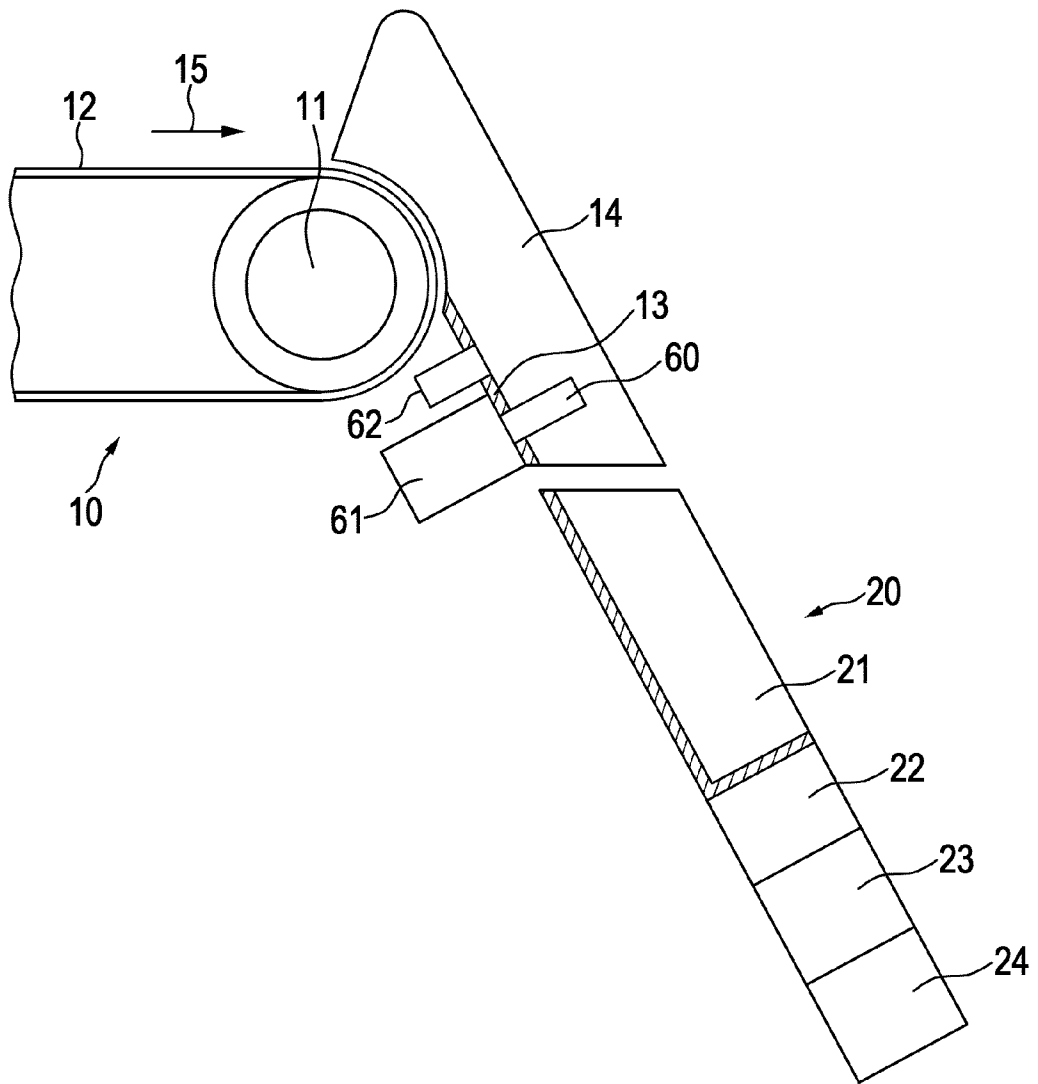


Fig. 2

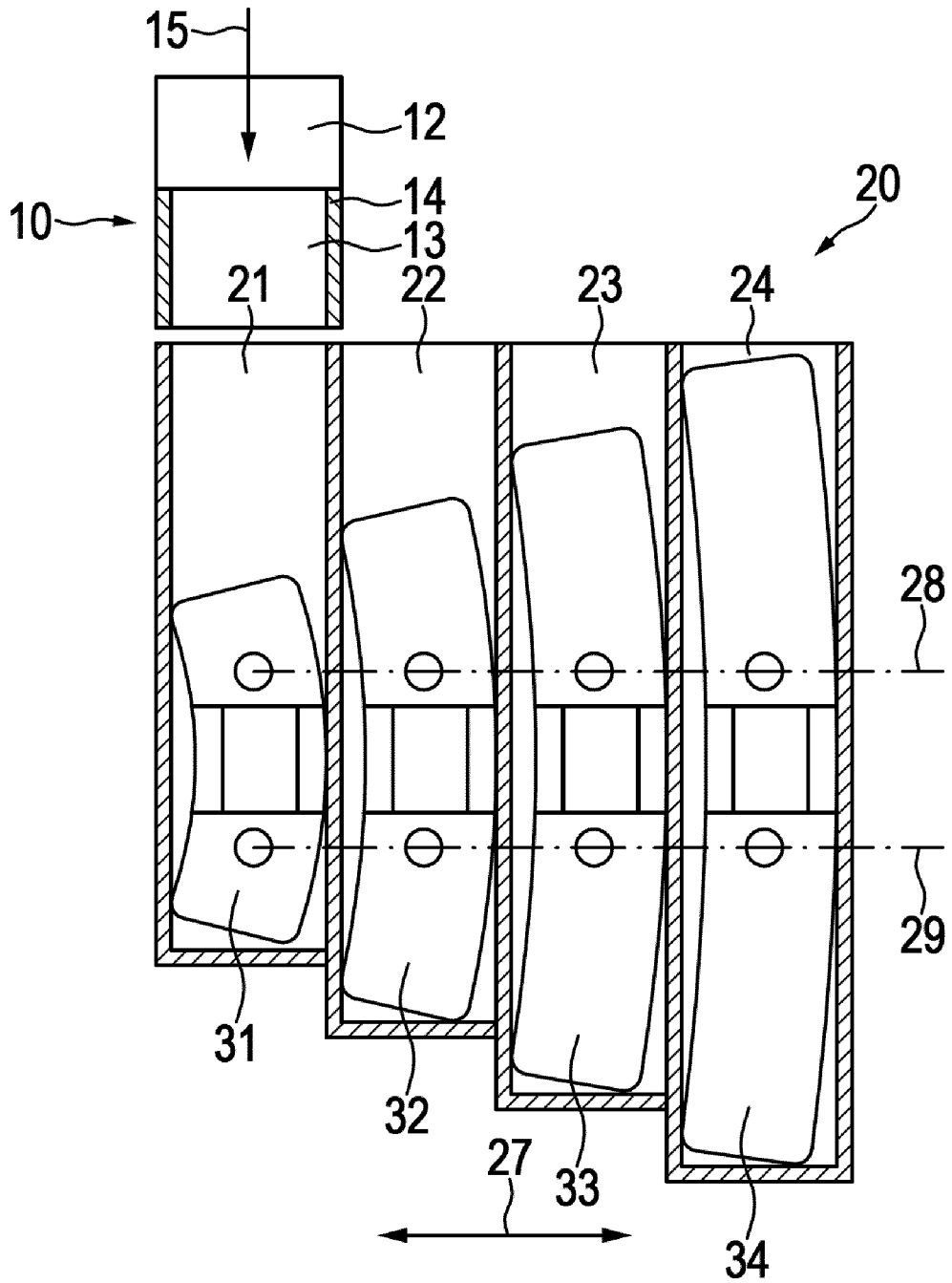


Fig. 3

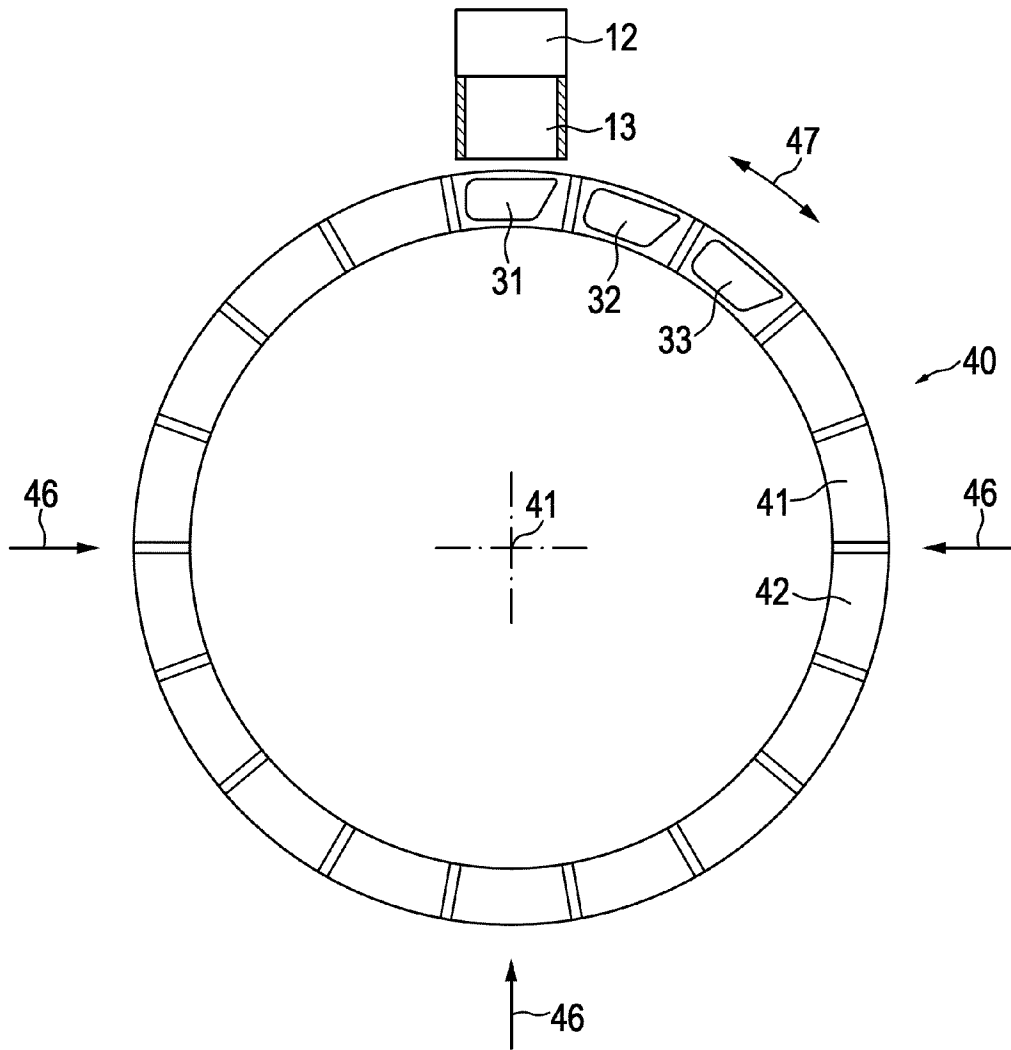


Fig. 4

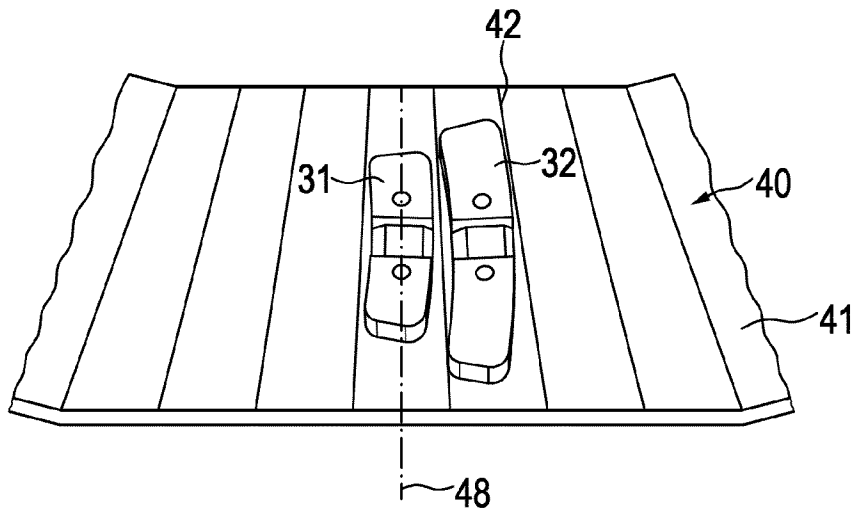


Fig. 5

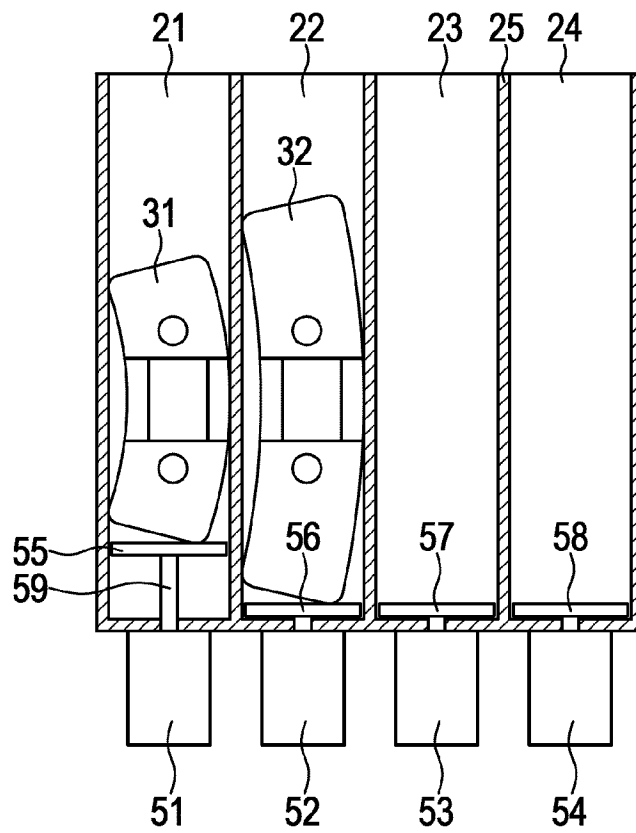


Fig. 6

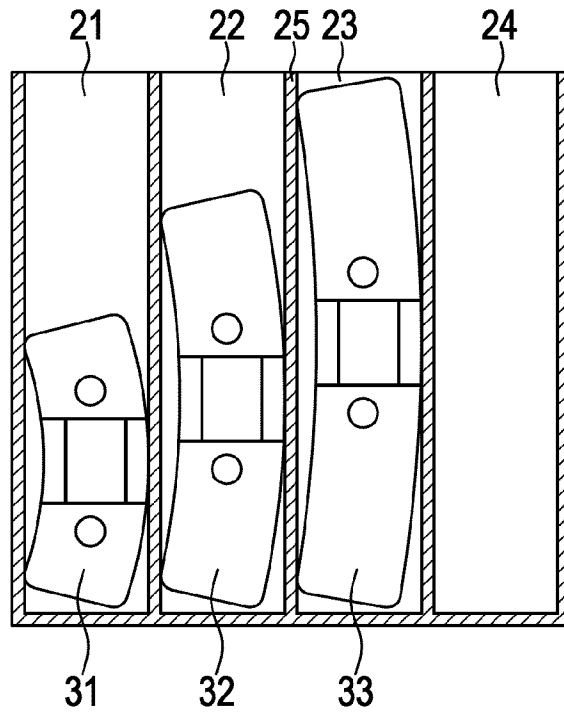


Fig. 7

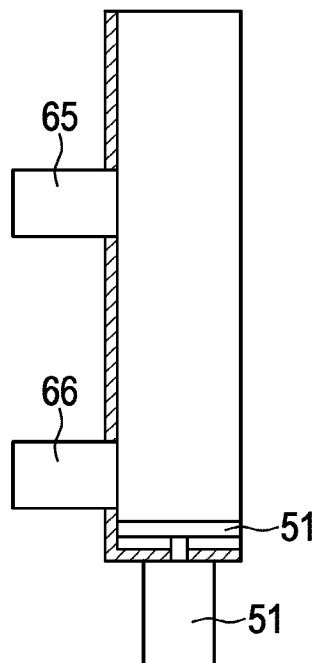


Fig. 8

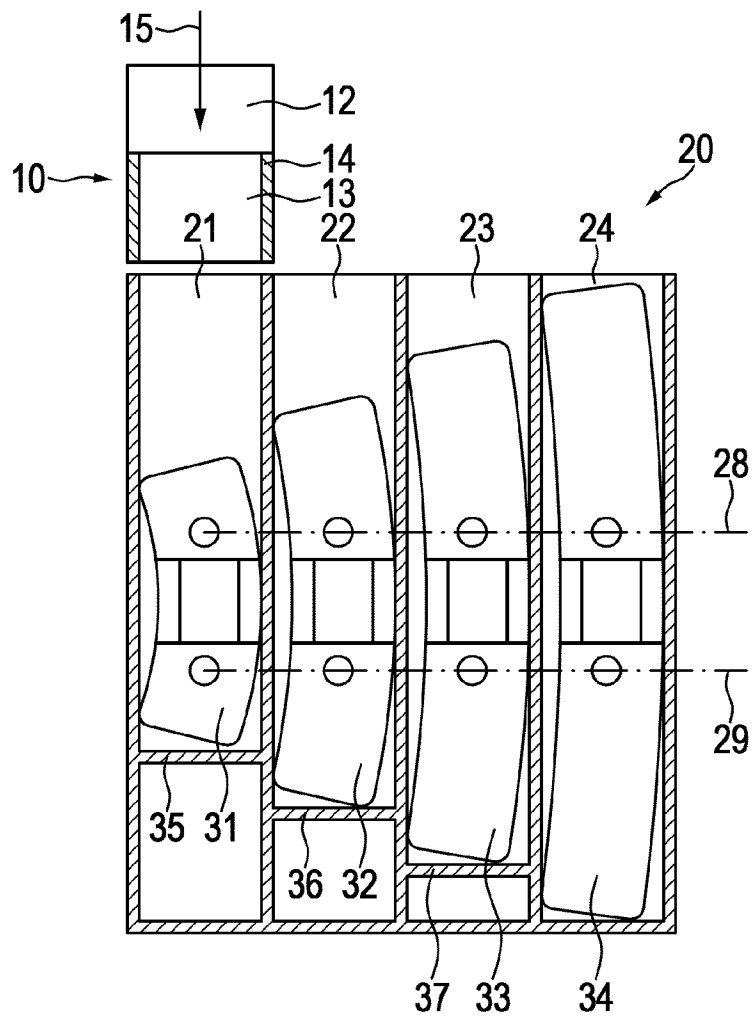


Fig. 9

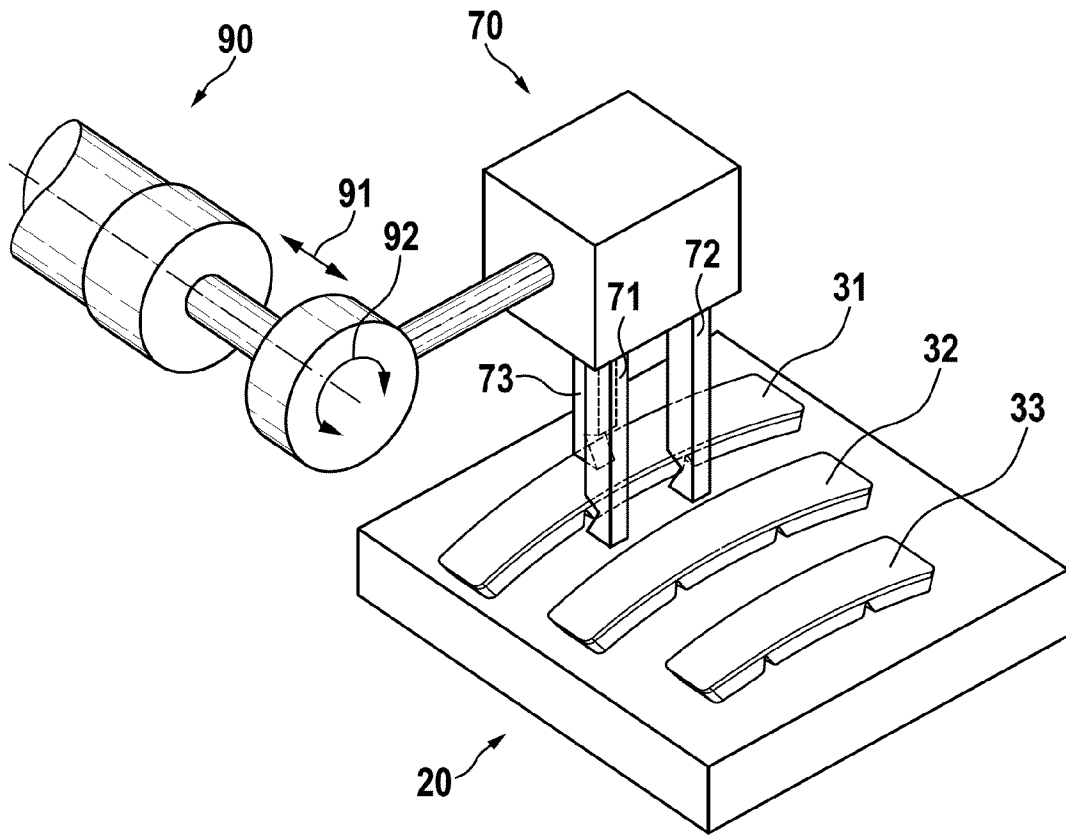
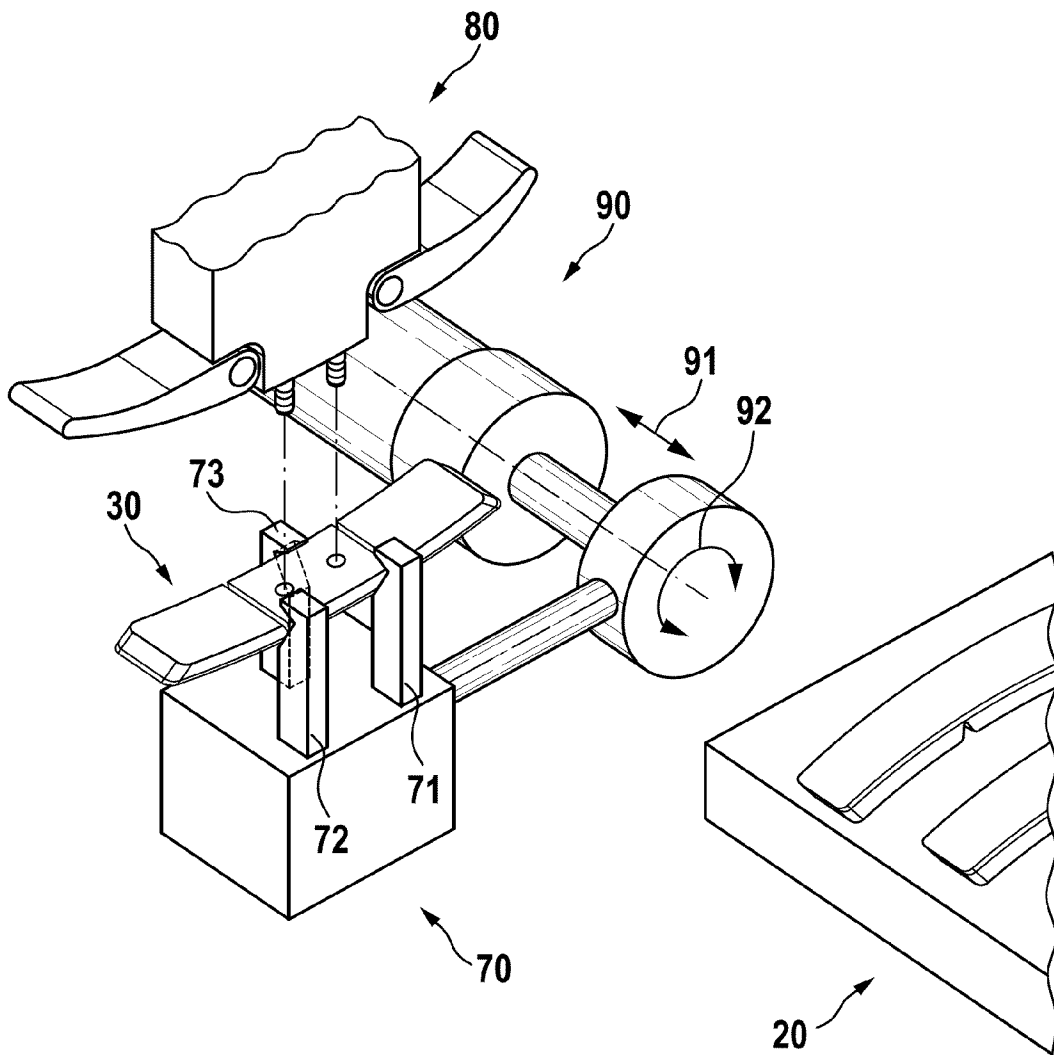


Fig. 10



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/EP2013/055781

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. F16F15/32 G01M1/32
ADD.
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
F16F G01M
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	DE 33 16 945 A1 (HOFMANN GMBH & CO KG MASCHINEN [DE]) 15 November 1984 (1984-11-15)	1-5,9-15
A	the whole document	6-8
A	DE 79 20 660 U1 (GEBR. HOFMANN GMBH & CO KG) 20 December 1979 (1979-12-20) abstract; figures	1-15
A	US 2007/068259 A1 (DOUGLAS MICHAEL W [US]) 29 March 2007 (2007-03-29) the whole document	1-15
A	GB 911 275 A (DIONYS HOFMANN JNR) 21 November 1962 (1962-11-21) abstract; figures	1-15
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Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

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"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search 18 June 2013	Date of mailing of the international search report 28/06/2013
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Name and mailing address of the ISA/ European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer Kramer, Pieter Jan
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/EP2013/055781

C(Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	DE 24 11 077 A1 (JAUDAS FA EUGEN) 13 November 1975 (1975-11-13) abstract; figures -----	1-15

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/EP2013/055781

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