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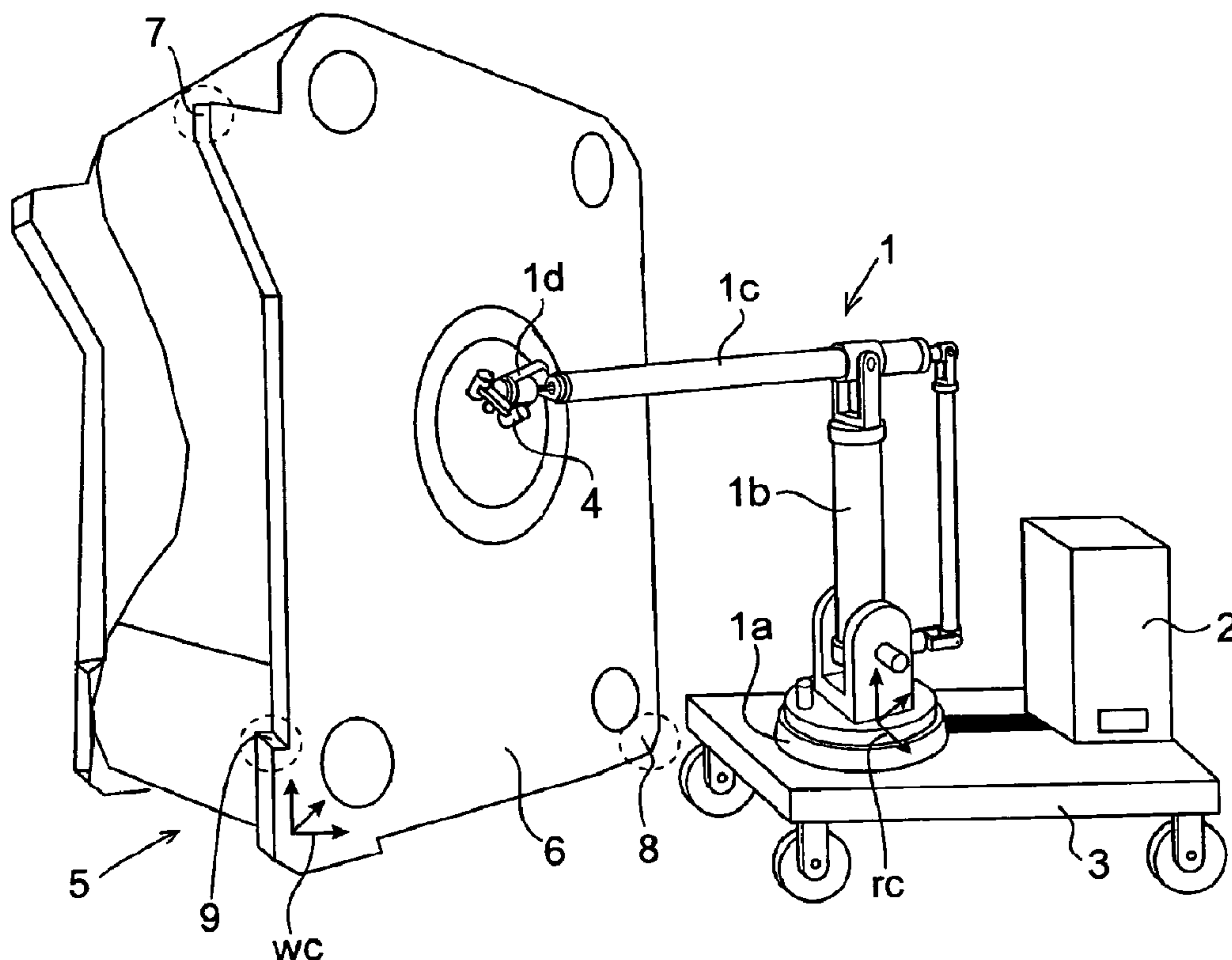
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(54) Titre : PROCÉDE POUR ETALONNER UN ROBOT POSITIONNÉ SUR UNE PLATEFORME MOBILE  
(54) Title: A METHOD FOR CALIBRATION OF A ROBOT POSITIONED ON A MOVABLE PLATFORM



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

The present invention relates to a method for calibration of a robot (1) positioned on a movable platform (3), in relation to a work object (5) using a measuring unit (4) mounted on the robot. The method includes the following first steps carried out in a software

**(57) Abrégé(suite)/Abstract(continued):**

CAD system: - placing CAD models of the platform and the work object so that the robot is able to reach the work object, - manipulating the robot CAD model until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a first pose in relation to the platform allowing measurement of a large feature on the work object, - storing the first pose, and - generating a first CAD model of the large feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in said first pose. The method includes the following second steps carried out in the real world : - automatically moving the real robot (1) to achieve said first pose of the measuring unit, - moving the real platform (3) to a place where measurements of the large feature can be made, - performing 3D measurements of the large feature and based thereon generating a second CAD model of the large feature, - performing a best fit between the first and the second CAD models of the large feature, and on bases thereof calculating the 6 DOF pose difference between the CAD models, and - instructing the real mobile platform to move and reorient to compensate for the calculated pose difference.

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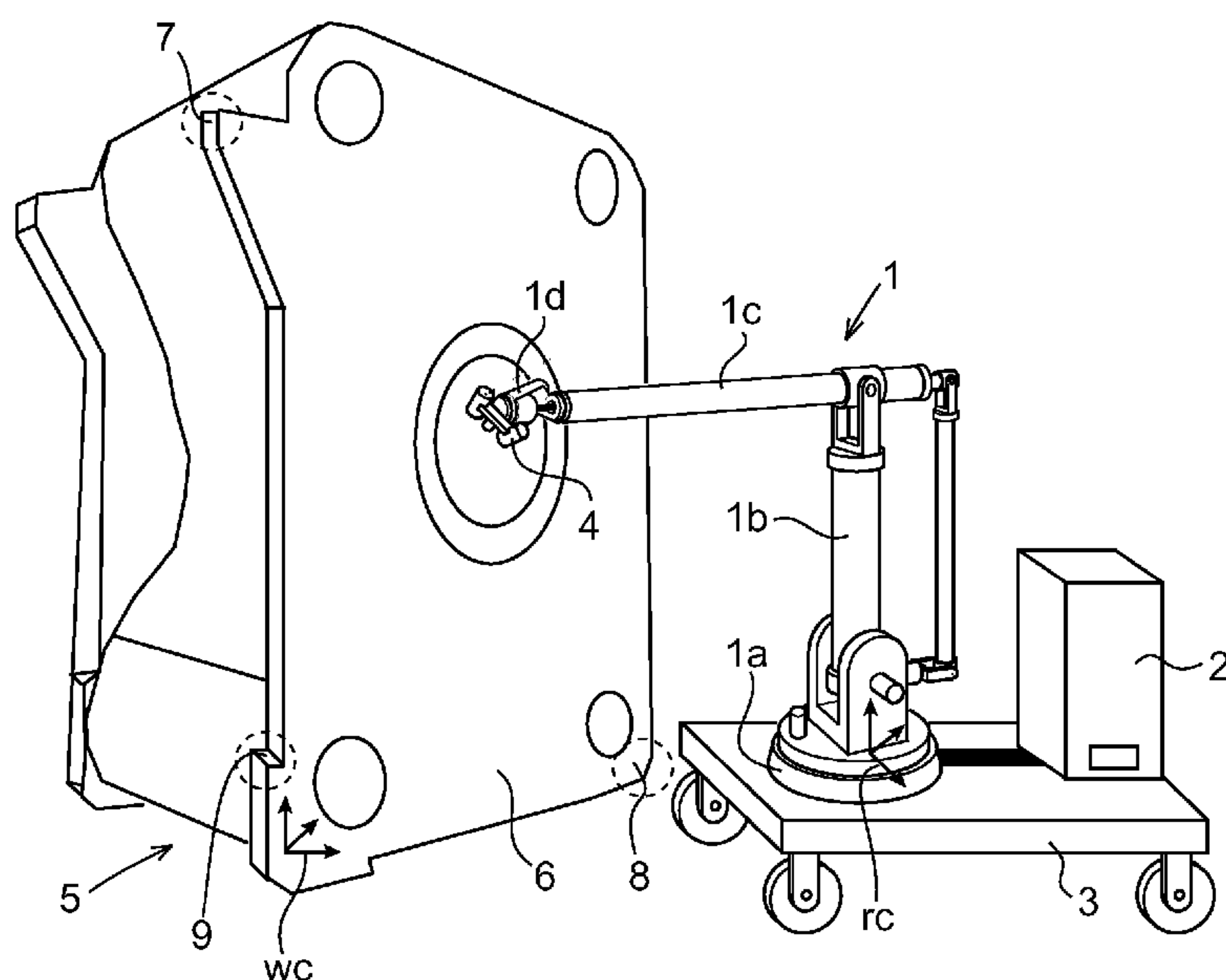


Fig. 1

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to a method for calibration of a robot (1) positioned on a movable platform (3), in relation to a work object (5) using a measuring unit (4) mounted on the robot. The method includes the following first steps carried out in a software CAD system: - placing CAD models of the platform and the work object so that the robot is able to reach the work object, - manipulating the robot CAD model until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a first pose in relation to the platform allowing measurement of a large feature on the work object, - storing the first pose, and - generating a first CAD model of the large feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in said first pose. The method includes the following second steps carried out in the real world: - automatically moving the real robot (1) to achieve said first pose of the measuring unit, - moving the real platform (3) to a place where measurements of the large feature can be made, - performing 3D measurements of the large feature and based thereon generating a second CAD model of the large feature, - per-

forming a best fit between the first and the second CAD models of the large feature, and on bases thereof calculating the 6 DOF pose difference between the CAD models, and - instructing the real mobile platform to move and reorient to compensate for the calculated pose difference.

## 5    **A METHOD FOR CALIBRATION OF A ROBOT POSI- TIONED ON A MOVABLE PLATFORM**

### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

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The present invention relates to a method for calibration of a robot, including a plurality of joints and positioned on a movable platform, in relation to a work object using a measuring unit mounted on a wrist of the robot. With a movable platform is  
15    meant a platform which is mobile of its own or is movable by other means, such as a truck.

### PRIOR ART

20    Even if mobile robot research has been made for more than 20 years, there is still no impact on the manufacturing industry. Examples of successful products are lawn mowers, vacuum cleaners, museum guides and toys, and the technology used for these products are difficult to use with the requirements met in indus-  
25    try. However, there are applications where manufacturing industry could benefit from mobile robots in order to increase the flexibility of the robot automation. One situation when this is easy to understand is when manufacturing is made of large structures as components to airplanes, trains, boats, machines,  
30    oil platforms, bridges, buildings, power plants, wind mills etc. In the cases when automation technology is used for large structures today, expensive large manipulators are needed and beside the high cost of these manipulators there is also the problem of moving the large objects to the fixed manipulators. Hav-  
35    ing mobile robots in these applications, the work objects could

remain where they are manufactured and the mobile robots could instead move to the work objects.

5 A mobile robot includes a base portion and a plurality of parts movable relative the base portion, and the base portion is mounted on a movable platform. A base coordinate system is defined in a fixed relation to the base portion of the robot. A work object coordinate system is defined in a fixed relation to a work object located in the work area of the robot. The work ob-  
10 ject coordinate system has to be calibrated in relation to the base coordinate system of the robot. When a calibration program for the robot on the movable platform is to be made, there are two main problems to be solved. At first the placement of the mobile platform during the processing must be determined, and  
15 then the work object coordinate system must be accurately measured to be used in the process programs executed by the robot.

20 The main technical problem using industrial robots on mobile platforms is that the calibration of a mobile robot relative a work object to obtain the accuracy needed for most industrial processes, is very difficult and time consuming.

## 25 OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The object of the present invention is to provide a simple and fast method for calibration of a robot positioned on a movable platform in relation to a large work object.

30 This object is achieved by a method including the following first steps carried out in a software CAD system:

- loading CAD models of the robot, the movable platform, the measuring unit on the robot, and the work object into the CAD system,

- placing the CAD models of the platform and the work object in a relation to each other so that the robot is able to reach the work object,
- 5       - manipulating the joints of the CAD model of the robot until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a first position and orientation in relation to the platform allowing measurement of a first feature of the work object,
- 10       - storing said first position and orientation of the measuring unit,
- generating a first CAD model of the first feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in said first position and orientation, and
- 15       - storing the first CAD model of the first feature in the CAD system.

The method includes the following second steps carried out in the real world:

- moving the real platform to a place where measurements of the first feature can be made,
- 20       - automatically moving the real robot to achieve said first position and orientation of the measuring unit in relation to the platform,
- performing 3D measurements of the first feature by means of the measuring unit,
- 25       - generating a second CAD model of the first feature based on the 3D measurements of the first feature,
- performing a best fit, including scaling and rotation, between the first and the second CAD models of the first feature, and on bases thereof calculating the 6 DOF
- 30       pose difference between the CAD models , and
- instructing the mobile platform to move and reorient to compensate for the calculated pose difference.

35       The present invention proposes possibilities to calibrate a robot in relation to a large work object, both in the case of robot programming made by teach in and in the case of CAD-based robot

programming. One result of the analysis is that off-line programming will have an even more important role for mobile robots since this can make the calibration and programming more or less automatic. The concept described is based on the use of  
5 a 3D measurement unit.

With the term pose is meant position and orientation.

With a CAD model is meant a 3D model generated by software  
10 in a CAD system.

With 3D measurements is meant to use a 3D measurement unit, such as a stereo camera system or a laser scanner, to measure the topology of an object.  
15

With 6 DOF pose difference between the CAD models is meant the difference in position and orientation in six degrees of freedom between the two CAD models.

20 The calibration is prepared in a CAD system, for example, a CAD-based off line robot programming tool. Thereafter, the calibration is automatically performed in the real world. This method provides as easy and fast calibration of the platform in relation to the work object, i.e. the placement of the mobile platform during the processing is determined. The accuracy achieved with  
25 this method is enough for applications having low demands on the accuracy of the position of the robot relative the work object, such as painting and material handling.

30 If CAD-models of the robot, the movable platform, the measuring unit, and the work object already exist in the robot programming tool, it is suitable to make the preparation of the calibration in the robot programming tool. It is assumed that a 3D measurement unit is mounted on the robot wrist.  
35

In order to obtain an automatic mobile platform placement it is proposed that a CAD model of a part of the work object is used as a reference when the robot is on a safe distance from the work object. The first feature is a part of the work object which  
5 is possible to measure with the measuring unit when the robot is on a safe distance from the work object, i.e. a distance large enough to avoid collisions between the robot and the work object during the calibration.

10 By scaling and rotation, a prepared CAD model of a first feature on the work object is adjusted to fit a CAD model obtained from measurements of the first feature or vice versa, and the pose difference is used to determine the position and orientation of the mobile platform. The reference pose is where maximum  
15 reachability is obtained for the robot according to earlier off-line analysis.

According to an embodiment of the invention, the steps carried out in the CAD system further includes:

- 20 - manipulating the joints of the CAD model of the robot until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a second position and orientation in relation to the platform allowing measurement of a second feature of the work object, wherein the second position is closer to the  
25 work object than the first position,
- storing said second position and orientation of the measuring unit,
- generating a first CAD model of the second feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen  
30 from the measuring unit in said second position and orientation, and
- storing the first CAD model of the second feature in the CAD system, and

said steps carried out in the real world further includes:

- automatically moving the real robot to achieve said second position and orientation of the measuring unit in relation to the platform,
- 5 - performing 3D measurements of the second feature by means of the measuring unit,
- generating a second CAD model of the second feature based on the 3D measurements of the second feature,
- 10 - performing a best fit, including scaling and rotation, between the first and the second CAD models of the second feature, and on bases thereof calculating the 6 DOF pose difference between the CAD models, and
- 15 - adjusting the coordinate system of the work object relative the coordinate system of the robot based on the difference between the first and the second CAD models of the second feature.

The adjustment of the work object coordinate system relative the coordinate system of the robot is carried out in the control system of the robot.

20

The work object coordinate system must be accurately measured to be used in the process programs executed by the robot. This embodiment of the invention increases the accuracy of the calibration by providing an accurate determination of the work object coordinate system with respect to the robot coordinate system. Further, this embodiment of the invention provides as easy and fast calibration of the work object relative the robot. This embodiment of the invention is suitable for applications which require high accuracy, such as arc welding, laser cutting, water jet cutting, and assembly.

30

For the accurate determination of the work object coordinate system, one or more local 3D features are measured with high accuracy and a best fit is made to prepared CAD models of the features. The differences between the positions and orientations of the measured and prepared CAD models are used to com-

35

compensate for the work object coordinate system deviation when the robot processing program is executed.

5 The first and second features are well defined 3D features on the work object, such as a side of the work object, a corner, a hole or a protruding part. The second feature is smaller than the first feature and can be a part of the first feature. However, the second feature can also be a part of the work object which is separate from the first feature. The second feature is measured  
10 with the robot manipulated to obtain a shorter distance between the measurement unit and the work object compared to when measuring the first feature, and accordingly the second feature can be measured with a higher accuracy than the first feature. Thus, it is not necessary to move the platform between the two  
15 measurements.

According to an embodiment of the invention the method further comprises:

- 20 - manipulating the joints of the CAD model of the robot until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a third position and orientation in relation to the platform allowing measurement of a third feature of the work object, wherein the third position and orientation is closer to the work object than the first position and orientation,
- 25 - storing said third position and orientation of the measuring unit,
- generating a first CAD model of the third feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in said second position and orientation,  
30 and
- storing the first CAD model of the third feature in the CAD system, and

said second steps carried out in the real world further includes:

- 35 - automatically moving the real robot to achieve said third position and orientation of the measuring unit in relation to the platform,

- performing 3D measurements of the third feature by means of the measuring unit,
  - generating a second CAD model of the third feature based on the 3D measurements of the second feature,
  - 5 - performing a best fit, including scaling and rotation, between the first and the second CAD models of the second and third features, and on bases thereof calculating the 6 DOF pose difference between the CAD models, and
  - 10 - adjusting the coordinate system of the work object relative the coordinate system of the robot based on the 6 DOF pose difference between the first and the second CAD models of the second and third features.
- 15 In this embodiment, at least two small features are used for the calibration of the work object coordinate system, which increases the accuracy of the calibration. In the same way, using three small features further increases the accuracy of the calibration.
- 20 In some embodiments of the present invention, there is provided a method for calibration of a real robot including a plurality of joints and positioned on a movable real platform, in relation to a real work object using a real measuring unit mounted on a wrist of the real robot, the method includes the following first steps
- 25 carried out in a software CAD system:
- loading CAD models of the real robot, the movable real platform, the measuring unit on the real robot, and the work object into the CAD system,
  - placing the CAD models of the movable real platform and the work object in a relation to each other so that
  - 30 the robot is able to reach the work object,
  - manipulating the joints of the CAD model of the real robot until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a first position and orientation in relation to the movable real platform allowing measurement of a first feature of the work object,
  - 35

8a

- storing said first position and orientation of the measuring unit,
- generating a first CAD model of the first feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in said first position and orientation and,
- 5       - storing the first CAD model of the first feature in the CAD system,

and the method includes the following second steps carried out in the real world:

- 10       - automatically moving the real robot to achieve said first position and orientation of the real measuring unit in relation to the movable real platform,
- moving the movable real platform to a place where measurements of the first feature can be made,
- 15       - performing 3D measurements of the first feature by means of the real measuring unit,
- generating a second CAD model of the first feature based on the 3D measurements of the first feature,
- performing a best fit, including scaling and rotation, between the first and the second CAD models of the first feature, and on bases thereof calculating a 6 DOF pose difference between the first and second CAD models of the first feature, and
- 20       - instructing the movable real platform to move and reorient to compensate for the calculated pose difference.
- 25

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

30       The invention will now be explained more closely by the description of different embodiments of the invention and with reference to the appended figures.

35       Fig. 1 shows a real robot cell including a work object, a robot on a movable platform, and a measurement unit mounted on the robot.

8b

Fig. 2 shows an example of a measurement unit.

5 Fig. 3 illustrates a CAD system including CAD models of the work object, the robot, the movable platform, and the measurement unit as shown in figure 1.

Fig. 4 illustrates the position and the orientation of the measurement unit model 16 when it measures one of the small features of the work object in the CAD system.

5 Fig. 5 shows the measurement unit measuring three small feature of the work object in the CAD system.

Figs. 6 - 8 illustrate the steps of positioning the platform in relation to the work object during the calibration.

10

Figs. 9 show the measurement unit measuring a small feature of the work object in the real robot cell.

15 Fig. 10 shows the position of the measuring unit when measuring a large feature and a small feature.

Fig. 11 shows the robot holding a tool during programming of the robot.

## 20 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

Figure 1 shows an example of a real robot cell including an industrial robot 1 positioned on a movable platform 3 and a large work object 5 partly located in the work area of the robot. The movable platform 3 is provided with wheels. However, if the platform has no wheel the platform can be moved between different robot cells, for example, by a truck. In this embodiment, the robot is a six-axis robot and accordingly is movable in 6 DOF (degrees of freedom) and has six joints. However, the robot may have less than 6 joints. The movements of the robot are controlled by a robot control system 2, which is also positioned on the movable platform 3. The movements of the platform can be instructed from the robot control system 2 or from a computer connected to the control system. It is also possible for the operator to move the platform manually.

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30  
35

The robot control system 2, or a computer connected to the robot control system, includes software for generating CAD models based on 3D measurements. In the example shown in figure 5 1, the robot 1 has three main axes, and three wrist axes. The robot includes a stationary base portion 1a, which supports a stand that is rotatable about a first axis. The stand supports a first arm 1b that is rotatable about a second axis. The first arm supports a second arm 1c, which is rotatable about a third axis. 10 The second arm supports a wrist 1d that is rotatable about a fourth, a fifth and a sixth axis. A robot coordinate system  $rc$  is defined in a fixed relation to the base portion 1a. A work object coordinate system  $wc$  is defined in a fixed relation to the work object 5 located in the work area of the robot. The work object coordinate system is to be calibrated in relation to the robot co- 15 ordinate system.

A measuring unit 4 is mounted on the wrist 1d of the robot. Figure 2 shows the measuring unit 4 in more details. The measuring 20 unit 4 is a 3D-measuring unit capable of measuring the topology of an object or part of an object. The measuring unit is, for example, a line scanner, a surface scanner, a stereoscopic camera system or an interferometer arrangement. In order to use such a measuring unit the robot system should be equipped 25 with a tool exchanger and the measuring unit must be protected from dust and liquids when not in use. In cases when the measuring unit does not interfere with the processing tool, it could remain on the robot wrist during processing if a tight locking mechanism is used.

30 In the following it will be described how the position and orientation of the platform 3 with respect to the work object 5 are determined, also called the placement measurement. In doing so it is necessary to define a first 3D feature of the work object. In 35 the following this feature is called a large feature. The large feature can be the whole work object, or a part of the work object,

which is possible to measure with the measuring unit when the robot is on a safe distance from the work object, i.e. a distance large enough to avoid collisions between the robot and the work object when placement of the platform is made. In the example  
5 shown in figure 1, a part of or the whole front side 6 of the work object is defined as the large feature.

Further, in order to obtain an accurate 6 DOF calibration of the work object coordinate system relative the robot coordinate sys-  
10 tem at least one second 3D feature should be defined on the work object. Thus, the next task is to select suitable features for the high accuracy calibration of the work object. The second features will be smaller than the first feature since the measuring unit is now closer to the work object than when the first fea-  
15 ture was measured for the placement calibration. The second feature can be a part of the first feature. However, the second feature can also be a part of the work object separated from the large feature. In the following the second features are called small features. At least one small feature should be measured,  
20 but up to three features will usually be needed dependent on the accuracy requirements and the geometry and size of the features. The features should be selected such that the geometry is as equal as possible between different work object individuals. In objects where this is difficult to obtain, it is possible to make  
25 markers on the object, for example, by casting a pattern in the case the object is made from for example plastic or iron. The small features are well defined 3D features on the work object, such as a corner, a hole, or a protruding part. In the example shown in figure 1, three corners 7, 8, and 9 are defined as small  
30 features.

Figure 3 illustrates a CAD system including a CAD model 14 of the work object 5, a CAD model 10 of the robot 1, a CAD model 12 of the movable platform 3, and a CAD model 16 of the meas-  
35 urement unit 4 as shown in figure 1. The large feature 6 is provided with number 18 in the CAD system, and the small features

7, 8, 9 are provided with the numbers 20, 22, 24 in the CAD system. The CAD system includes a computer, a screen 17 and software for handling CAD models and presenting a view of the CAD models on the screen 17. The CAD system should also include a model of the functionality of the measuring unit, which generates a CAD model of the measured feature in the perspective as seen from the 3D measurement unit, and preferably also include an error model indicating 6 DOF accuracy levels of the measurements. Preferably, the CAD system also includes an off-line programming tool for programming the movements of the robot. If the programming of the robot was made in the off-line programming tool, there already exist CAD models of the work object, the robot and the platform. In that case, only the CAD model of the measuring unit has to be added to the system. Preferably, the calibration is prepared in the CAD based off-line robot programming tool.

In the following it will be explained, as an example, how the work object 5 and the robot 1 shown in figure 1 can be calibrated using the method according to the invention. The first steps of the invention are carried out in the CAD system. The first steps include off-line preparation of the calibration of the robot and the mobile platform with respect to the work object. At first, CAD models 10, 12, 14, 16 of the robot, the movable platform, the measuring unit, and the work object are loaded into the CAD system. Views of the work object model 14, the platform model 12, the robot model 10 and the measuring unit model 16 are displayed on the screen 17 of the CAD system. In the next step, the CAD models of the platform 12 and the work object 14 are placed in relation to each other on the screen so that the robot is able to reach the part of the work object 14, which is to be processed by the robot. In this way it is then easy to place the real mobile or portable platform in an optimal position and orientation so that the robot can reach the whole area of the work object. The theoretical placement obtained by means of the CAD models should be such that typical errors in the real

platform placement can be accepted and still the intended part of the work object can be reached.

When placement of the platform model has been determined,  
5 the CAD model of the measurement unit 16 is moved to a position and orientation suitable for measurement of the large feature 18 on the work object 14, in the following named the first position and orientation. The placement of the real platform as defined by, for example, the rc coordinate system is determined  
10 based on measurements of the large feature 18. In the example shown in figure 3, the large feature is defined as the front side 18 of the work object. The CAD model 16 of the measuring unit is moved by manipulating the joints of the CAD model of the robot until the CAD model of the measuring unit has been moved  
15 to a suitable first position and orientation in relation to the platform allowing measurement of the large feature on the work object, as illustrated in figure 3. A calibration program is generated based on the movements of the joints of the robot model, including instructions for moving the robot so that the measuring unit  
20 is moved to the first position and orientation in relation to the platform. The distance between the measuring unit and the work object should be large enough to avoid collisions when the operator makes the first rough placement of the mobile platform. However, if the distance is too large there is a risk that the  
25 measurement accuracy of the large feature is not good enough and therefore the placement accuracy is not good enough for reaching the small features, which will be measured for the purpose of calculating the work object coordinate system as accurate as is needed from the process requirements, for example  
30 0.5 mm for arc welding and even better for laser welding or laser cutting.

Optionally, when moving the robot arm to a position in front of the work object, the measurement area is indicated on the CAD  
35 model of the work object. The virtually measured CAD model of

this area as calculated by the model of the measurement unit is displayed together with the 6 DOF accuracy figures.

When the large feature has been virtually measured, the position and orientation, in the following named first position and orientation, of the measuring unit are stored in the CAD system. A CAD model, in the following named first CAD model, of the large feature is generated based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in the determined position and orientation, and the first CAD model of the large feature is stored in the CAD system. If a line scanner is used, scan programming is made, either by moving the robot joints using, for example, a 6 DOF mouse connected to the CAD system or by an automatic function in the CAD system software that automatically generates a scan movement of the robot based on the obtained measurement area. The CAD model of the large feature and the calibration program for moving the measurement unit to the first position and orientation are stored for automatic mobile platform placement.

20

The calibration program contains the following:

- Movement orders to the robot itself to bring the measurement unit to the position and orientation as determined in the CAD system for the measurement of the large feature.
- Order to the 3D measurement system to perform measurements.
- If line scanner is used, order the scanning movements to the robot itself.
- Routines to make best fit between CAD models.
- Routine to calculate 6 DOF difference in position and orientation between two 3D models.
- Routine to calculate the 3 DOF movements of the platform needed to compensate for the mentioned 6 DOF difference.

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- Movement orders to the mobile platform to perform the 3 DOF movements.

5 The calibration program could be run iteratively to refine the placement of the platform.

10 In cases where low accuracy processes will be used, as for example in some painting cases, the placement measurement may be good enough for the process programming. When the calibration is then made at site with the real robot, the operator first runs the first part of the calibration program that moves the measurement unit to the first position and orientation prepared in the CAD system for the measurement of the large feature. Then the operator moves the platform until the measurement  
15 unit has a suitable position and orientation relative the large feature. The operator then starts the part of the calibration program that makes the platform placement and if the platform has wheels and can be controlled from the robot controller, it will automatically be controlled to obtain the position relative the  
20 work object, as determined in the CAD system.

In cases where high accuracy processes will be used, such as welding, cutting, deburring and assembly, the platform placement calibration is not accurate enough for the process programming and the following steps are carried out in order to adjust the coordinate system of the work object with respect to the  
25 coordinate system of the robot.

30 In the examples illustrated in the figures 3 - 5, three small features 20, 22, 24 are defined on the CAD model of the work object. Those small features correspond to the small features 7, 8, 9 of the real work object. Figure 5 shows the features in more detail and also the position and orientation of the measuring unit model 16 relative the work object model during measurement of  
35 the small features. The joints of the CAD model 10 of the robot are manipulated (by running the robot control in Cartesian

mode) until the CAD model 16 of the measuring unit is moved to a second position and orientation in relation to the platform allowing accurate close measurement of the small feature of the work object, as seen from figure 4. This second position is  
5 closer to the work object than the first position, shown in figure 3, in which the large feature was measured. The second position and orientation of the measuring unit model 16 is stored. If more than one feature is used, the positioning and storing steps are repeated for all of the small features. CAD models of the small  
10 features are generated based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in the second position and orientation used during measuring of the small features. The generated CAD models of the small features are stored in the CAD system.

15 To obtain maximum accuracy from the feature geometry, the orientation and distance of the measuring unit relative the small feature are adjusted until the highest 6 DOF accuracy levels are obtained. In order to make this adjustment simple, a TCP (Tool  
20 Centre Point), is defined in the middle of the measurement range of the measurement unit. During manipulation of the measurement unit, the CAD system should continuously calculate the closest measured distance and inform the user of this distance, in order to avoid collisions. Since the same measure-  
25 ment unit is used for the platform placement as well as the high accuracy calibration, the measurement range should be possible to change. For scanner based on triangulation this can be made by a motorized manipulation of the optical angle between the laser and the detector, and if necessary, it should also be possi-  
30 ble to control the distance between the laser and the detector.

When deciding on the number of features needed, it is suitable to have a function in the CAD system to calculate the position error at the border of the work object from the 6 DOF accuracy  
35 levels obtained by the measurement unit model.

- When virtual feature measurements for a work object have been made, calibration programs are generated which instruct the real robot to be moved so that the measuring unit achieves positions and orientations, in relation to the platform, suitable for measuring the small features. The calibration program instructs the robot to move the measurement unit between the small features. The calibration programs are stored together with the CAD models of the features. In the case of a line scanner, also the scanning movement programs are stored together with the CAD models. In this embodiment of the invention, the calibration program will further contain:
- Movement orders to the robot itself to bring the measurement unit to the positions and orientations as determined in the CAD system for the measurement of the small features.
  - Order to the 3D measurement system to perform measurements of the small features.
  - If line scanner is used, order the scanning movements to the robot itself.
  - Routines to make best fit between CAD models for the small features.
  - If only one small feature is used, call routine to calculate 6 DOF difference in position and orientation between the two CAD models.
  - If two small features are used, call routine to calculate 6 DOF differences in position and orientation for each of the two small features and then calculate the average 6 DOF difference in position and orientation for the two small features.
  - If three small features are used, call routine to calculate differences in position and orientation of each of the three small features and then calculate the 6 DOF difference in position and orientation for the whole work object from the 3 DOF position differences of the three small features.

- Routine to adjust the 6 DOF coordinate system transformation between the robot coordinate system and the work object coordinate system based on the 6 DOF difference in position and orientation.

5

Moreover, a work object coordinate system is defined related to the CAD models of the features, for example, the robot wrist coordinate system at certain position when the robot is in one of the measurement positions. The processing program is then made in relation to the defined work object coordinate system. This program also contains the tool exchange between the measurement unit and the process tool.

The next step of the calibration method is carried out in the real world, for example, in the work shop. The CAD models of the features to be measured, the calibration programs to move the measurement unit to the features, and optionally scanning movement programs are stored in the control system 2 of the robot, or in a computer that communicates with the control system 2. If the process movements of the robot are programmed in the same CAD system as is used for the preparation of the calibration, the control system is provided with the CAD models of the features and the robot programs used for the calibration movements together with the process program.

25

In a next step, the placement of the real platform relative the work object is carried out. The control system has all the information needed for performing the placement. Figure 6 shows an example of the pose of the platform and the robot before the calibration has started. At first, the real robot is automatically moved to achieve the first position and orientation of the measuring unit relative the robot base coordinate system as prepared in the CAD system for the measurement of the large feature, as shown in figure 7. This is done by running the first part of the calibration program generated in the CAD system that moves the measurement unit to the first position and orientation. Then,

35

the real platform is moved by the operator until the measurement unit has a suitable position and orientation relative the large feature so that measurements of the large feature can be made, as shown in figure 8. Then, the operator starts a program  
5 for platform placement and the platform will automatically be controlled to obtain the position relative the work object, as determined in the CAD system. Alternatively, the placement of the platform is carried out first and then the measuring unit is positioned even if it is then more difficult for the operator to find a  
10 suitable first rough placement of the platform

The user then starts the rest of the calibration program that orders the measurements and the fine adjustement of the platform position and orientation.

15

If the measurement unit includes a camera it is possible to show the operator the camera view with an overlap of the large feature as generated by the CAD system. When the platform has been placed, the operator starts the calibration program and the  
20 following will be performed automatically: 3D measurements of the large feature are made by means of the measuring unit 4, a CAD model of the large feature 6 is generated based on the 3D measurements of the large feature, a best fit including model scaling and rotation is made between the CAD generated and  
25 the measured models and the 6 DOF pose difference is calculated. For example, the distances between the CAD models are minimized by a least mean square method during the best fit. The mobile platform 3 is instructed to move and re-orient to compensate for the calculated pose difference. If the platform is  
30 only portable and not automatically controllable, the placement error is shown on a display and the operator moves the platform to reduce the error values until an acceptable error level calculated by the CAD system is obtained. During these movements, the platform placement error (x, y. angle) is continuously up-  
35 dated.

When high accuracy is required, the following steps are carried out to improve the accuracy of the calibration. The robot 1 is automatically manipulated to move the measuring unit 4 to the second position and orientation in relation to the platform, to allow measurement of one of the small features, as shown in figure 9. 3D measurements of the small feature 8 are performed by means of the measuring unit 4. A CAD model of the small feature 8 is generated based on the 3D measurements. In case more than one small feature is needed to achieve an accurate calibration, the above mentioned moving, measuring and generating steps are repeated for each of the small features 7,8,9. If a line scanner is used, the programmed scanning movements are made at each measurement pose. Best fits are made between the CAD generated and the measured CAD models of the small features using a well known method as for example Iterative Closest Point. For each feature the position and orientation of the feature coordinate system as defined during the CAD work is determined from the 3D measurements. If 3 small features are used the origos of the 3 small feature coordinate systems can be used to make a simple 3 points determination of the position and orientation of the work object. The real work object deviation in relation to the work object defined in the CAD system is calculated as a 6 DOF pose difference between the CAD generated and measured CAD models. This difference is then used for adjusting the 6 DOF coordinate system transformation between the robot coordinate system and the work object coordinate system.

Figure 10 shows the position of the measuring unit when it is measuring the large feature 18 and when it measures one of the small features 8. As seen from the figure the measuring unit 4 is closer to the work object 5 when it measures the small feature compared to when it measures the large feature 18. Note that the platform is not moved between the measurement of the large and the small feature, only the position of the measuring unit is

changed by means of movements of the robot joints, as seen from figure 8 and 9.

When the work object coordinate system has been adjusted, the  
5 system informs the operator that the process program can start.  
The measuring unit 4 is exchanged to a processing tool 30, as  
shown in figure 11. The operator starts the process program.  
The process program is executed and if necessary the user  
makes program adjustments. If necessary, touch-up can be  
10 made of the process program. This will not mean a need of a  
new calibration. It should be mentioned that if local coordinate  
systems have been used when programming parts of the work  
object, these should be defined in relation to the automatically  
generated work object coordinate system. Using an ABB system,  
15 the user coordinate system should be used as a work object co-  
ordinate system and the ABB object coordinate system should  
be used as a local coordinate system.

There are some cases when there are no CAD models of the  
20 work objects to be processed and calibration and programming  
must be made manually. This means that the use of the mobile  
robot must relay on the skills of its operators and the robot sys-  
tem should help the operator as much as possible to understand  
the results from the calibration process using the 3D measure-  
25 ment unit. In the following it is described how calibration and  
programming is made in this case.

Step 1: The robot 1 on the platform is moved to a first process-  
ing area of the work object 5.

30

The problem here for the user is to find a suitable placement of  
the mobile (or portable) platform. There will be a need to jog the  
robot to check that it reaches the intended area of the work ob-  
ject. If not, the platform position and orientation is adjusted. It  
35 should also be noted that the platform could have a lift to make  
it possible for the robot to reach a high work object. Sometimes

it might be difficult for the user to see that the robot really reaches the whole area to be processed and it could be advantageous to include a camera in the measurement unit making it possible for the user to see what the tool can reach.

5

Step 2: When a suitable placement of the platform 2 has been reached, the operator starts a program which picks the measurement unit from the tool exchanger. He moves the measurement unit 3 to obtain a 3D measurement of a relative large area of the work object corresponding to the large feature, compare Figure 6.

The result of the 3D measurements of the large feature is transformed to a geometric 3D model, in the following named a CAD model, for example, using polygons, and saved for use when upcoming objects will be processed. For upcoming work objects this CAD model will be scaled and moved/rotated until it matches the CAD model measured when the platform is placed relative the other identical object. The 6DOF CAD model difference is then used to calculate a corrective movement of the platform.

Step 3: In order to obtain an accurate 6 DOF calibration of the work object in relation to the robot, the operator jogs the robot such that the measurement unit gets close to at least one well defined 3D feature on the work object, compare Fig 5. Also here the user could benefit from a camera in the measurement unit to see the measurement area. Important then is that the orientation of the measurement unit is such that the perspective is useful. Of special importance is this when a line scanner is used and the robot needs to move the measurement unit during the scanning of the feature. In order to facilitate the jogging of the robot to a feature the following functionality could be implemented: a) TCP is defined at the center of the measurement area, making it easy for the user to reorient the measurement unit. b) During manipulation the system continuously calculates the closest

measured distance and stops the robot if this distance is smaller than a configured value. c) Scanning area shown as an overlay on the displayed camera view. d) The system informs the user on the measurement accuracy that is obtained for the selected  
5 feature at the present distance. When a line scanner is used more functionality could be necessary as e) automatically selected robot scanning movement (right angle to the measurement direction) is shown as an overlay on the camera view f) During the robot scanning movement the distance measured between the measurement unit and the feature is used to control  
10 the robot in such a way that collisions are avoided.

The 3D-model from the feature scanning is stored and the accuracy with respect to position and orientation is displayed for the  
15 user. In order to know if measurements on more features are needed, the user also gets figures on the accuracy at different distances from the feature (using the accuracy values of the measured orientation). Knowing the size of the object the user can decide if measurements of more features are needed. The  
20 system also makes accuracy calculations for the measurements made according to step 2 when the placement of the platform is calculated. If this calculation shows that the platform placement error is larger than the measured feature, the operator is urged to make a more accurate platform placement measurement or  
25 use a larger feature. The 3D geometrical model for each feature is stored as well as the program made by the user to move to the features. In the case of a line scanner also the scanning movement is stored.

30 When a large plane work object is calibrated overlapping calibration can be made, meaning that at least one calibration feature is used in two adjacent processing areas. It is then possible to reduce the requirements on the calibration since the information that the features are in a common plane can be used. The  
35 knowledge of the gross shape of a large object can also be used for automatic movement of the mobile platform. For example,

after the measurements of three features and the calculation of the work object plane, the platform can move parallel to the plane while the robot locks the measurement unit to the overlapping feature. The platform stops its movement when the robot  
5 arm reaches its work space limit.

Step 4: The operator programs the robot.

The programming is made in a work object coordinate system defined by the feature measurements. For example, the work  
10 object coordinate system could just be the wrist coordinate system for one position when a feature measurement was made. The importance for upcoming work objects is that the relation between the defined work object coordinate system and the geometrical models of the measured features are exactly known.  
15 This also means that it is important that the tool exchange is as accurate as required by the process.

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A method for calibration of a real robot including a plurality of joints and positioned on a movable real platform, in relation to a real work object using a real measuring unit mounted on a wrist of the real robot, the method includes the following first steps carried out in a software CAD system:

- loading CAD models of the real robot, the movable real platform, the measuring unit on the real robot, and the work object into the CAD system,
- placing the CAD models of the movable real platform and the work object in a relation to each other so that the robot is able to reach the work object,
- manipulating the joints of the CAD model of the real robot until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a first position and orientation in relation to the movable real platform allowing measurement of a first feature of the work object,
- storing said first position and orientation of the measuring unit,
- generating a first CAD model of the first feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in said first position and orientation and,
- storing the first CAD model of the first feature in the CAD system,

and the method includes the following second steps carried out in the real world:

- automatically moving the real robot to achieve said first position and orientation of the real measuring unit in relation to the movable real platform,
- moving the movable real platform to a place where measurements of the first feature can be made,
- performing 3D measurements of the first feature by means of the real measuring unit,
- generating a second CAD model of the first feature based on the 3D measurements of the first feature,
- performing a best fit, including scaling and rotation, between the first and the second CAD models of the first feature, and on

bases thereof calculating a 6 DOF pose difference between the first and second CAD models of the first feature, and

- instructing the movable real platform to move and reorient to compensate for the calculated pose difference.

2. The calibration method according to claim 1, wherein a first coordinate system is defined for the work object and a second coordinate system is defined for the real robot, and said first steps carried out in the CAD system further includes:

- manipulating the joints of the CAD model of the real robot until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a second position and orientation in relation to the movable real platform allowing measurement of a second feature of the work object, wherein the second position and orientation is closer to the work object than the first position and orientation,
- storing said second position and orientation of the measuring unit,
- generating a first CAD model of the second feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in said second position and orientation, and
- storing the first CAD model of the second feature in the CAD system, and

said second steps carried out in the real world further includes:

- automatically moving the real robot to achieve said second position and orientation of the real measuring unit in relation to the movable real platform,
- performing 3D measurements of the second feature by means of the real measuring unit,
- generating a second CAD model of the second feature based on the 3D measurements of the second feature,
- performing a best fit, including scaling and rotation, between the first and the second CAD models of the second feature, and on bases thereof calculating a 6 DOF pose difference between the first and second CAD models of the second feature, and
- adjusting the first coordinate system of the work object relative the second coordinate system of the real robot based on the 6

DOF pose difference between the first and the second CAD models of the second feature.

3. The calibration method according to claim 2, wherein the size of the second feature is smaller than the size of the first feature.

4. The calibration method according to claim 2 or 3, wherein the method further comprises:

- manipulating the joints of the CAD model of the real robot until the CAD model of the measuring unit is moved to a third position and orientation in relation to the movable real platform allowing measurement of a third feature of the work object, wherein the third position and orientation is closer to the work object than the first position and orientation,
- storing said third position and orientation of the measuring unit,
- generating a first CAD model of the third feature based on the CAD model of the work object as seen from the measuring unit in said second position and orientation, and
- storing the first CAD model of the third feature in the CAD system, and

said second steps carried out in the real world further includes:

- automatically moving the real robot to achieve said third position and orientation of the real measuring unit in relation to the movable real platform,
- performing 3D measurements of the third feature by means of the real measuring unit,
- generating a second CAD model of the third feature based on the 3D measurements of the second feature,
- performing a best fit, including scaling and rotation, between the first and the second CAD models of the second and third features, and on bases thereof calculating a 6 DOF pose difference between the first and second CAD models of the second and third features, and
- adjusting the coordinate system of the work object relative the coordinate system of the real robot based on the 6 DOF pose difference between the first and second CAD models of the second and third features.

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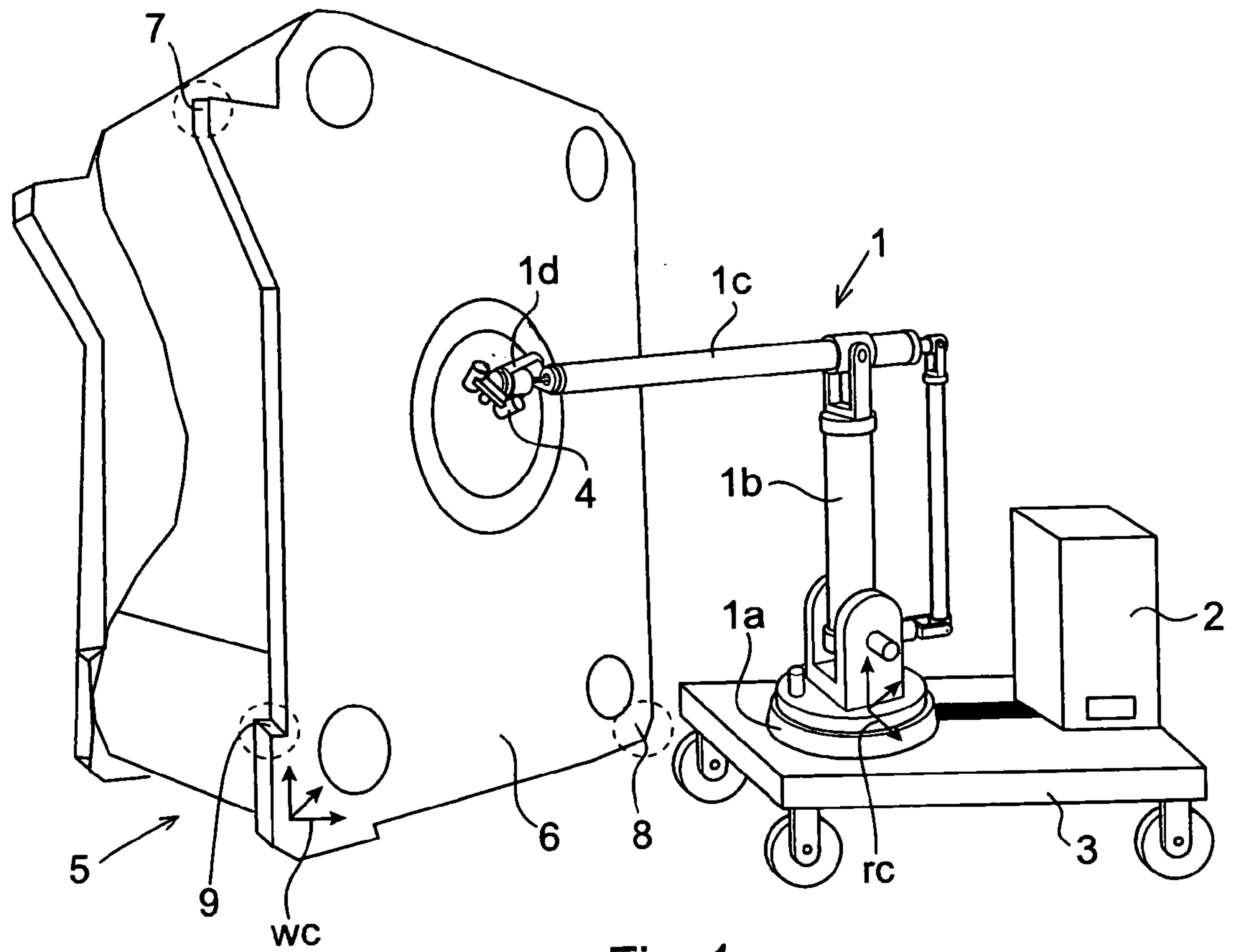
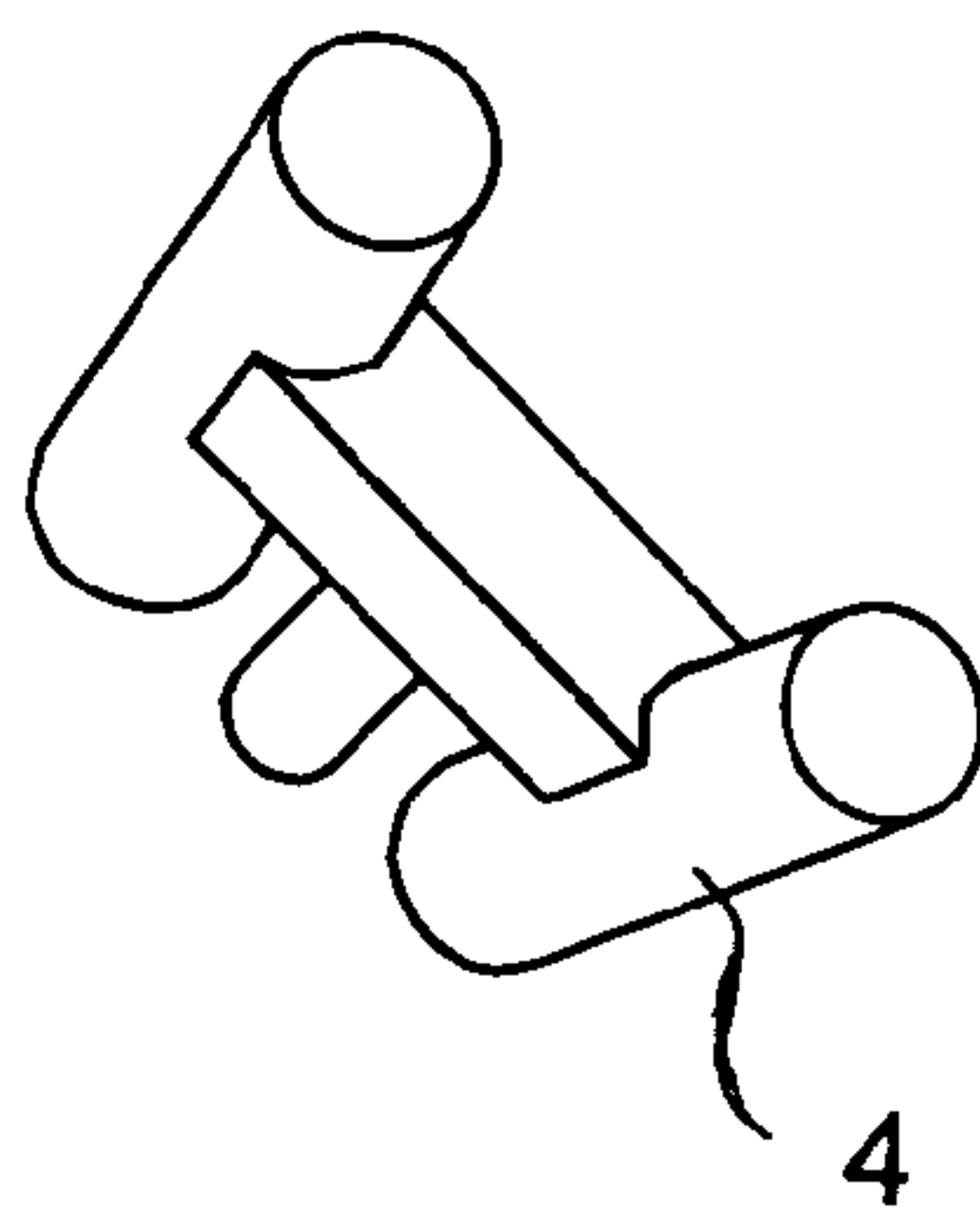


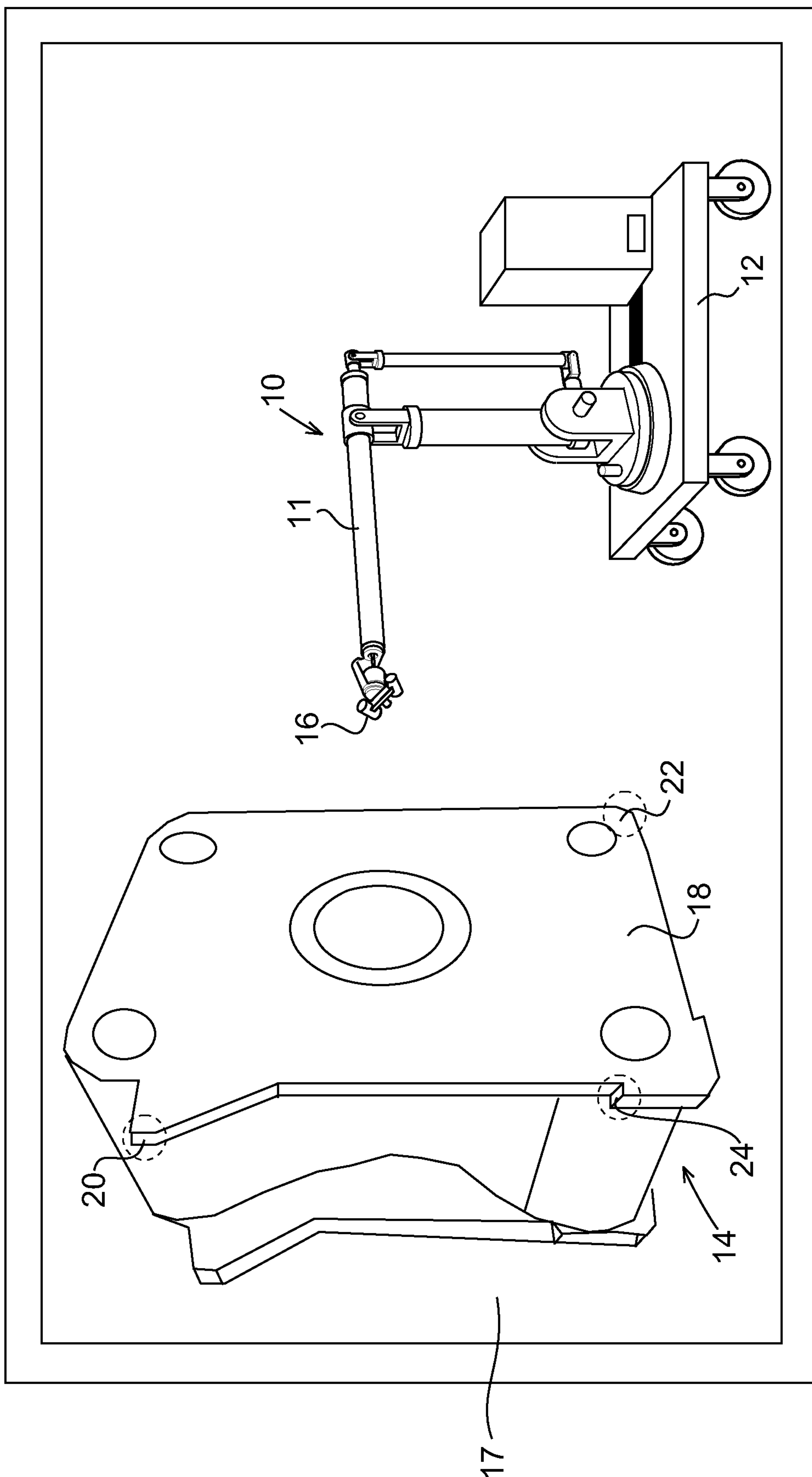
Fig. 1



4 Fig. 2

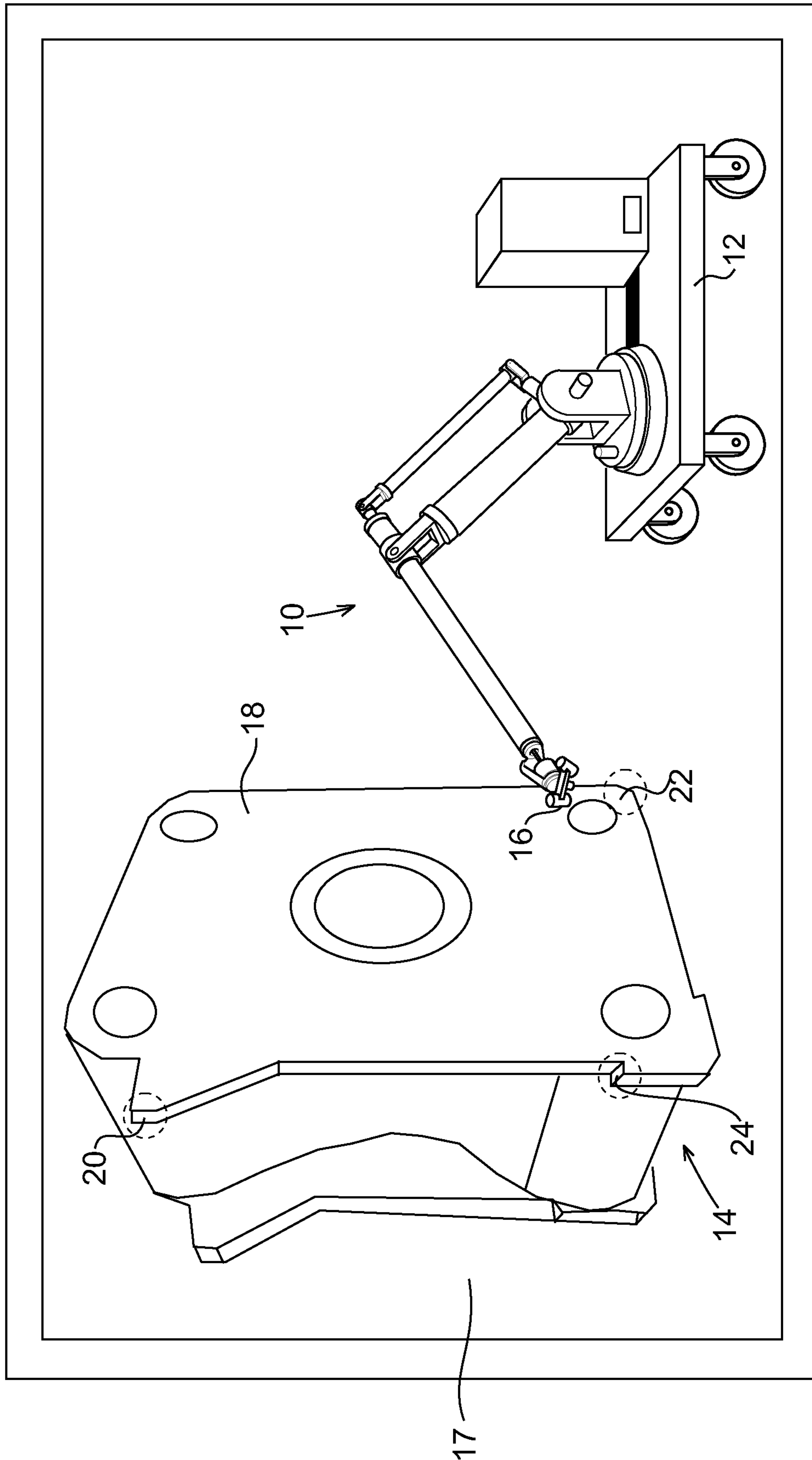
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Fig. 3



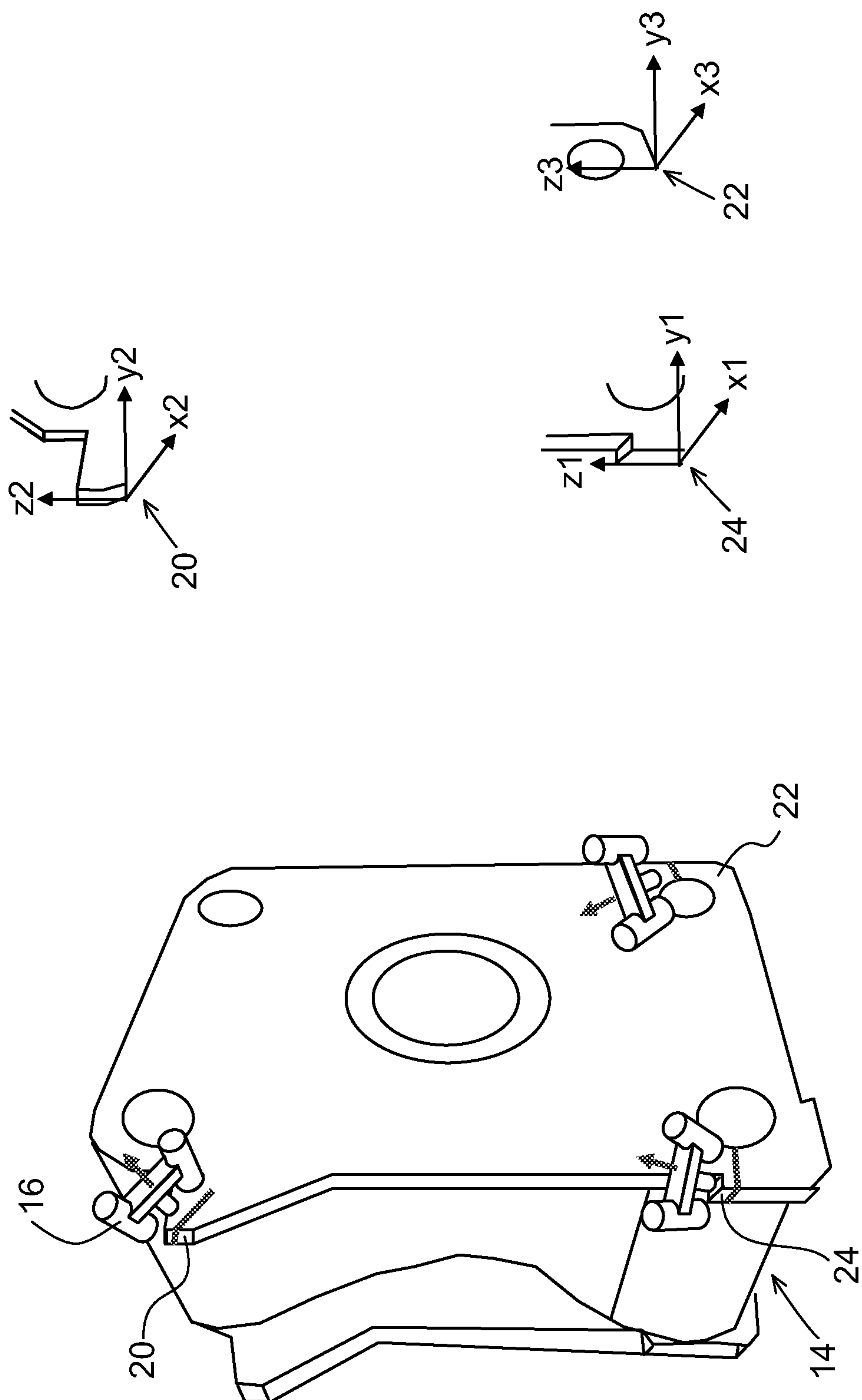
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Fig. 4



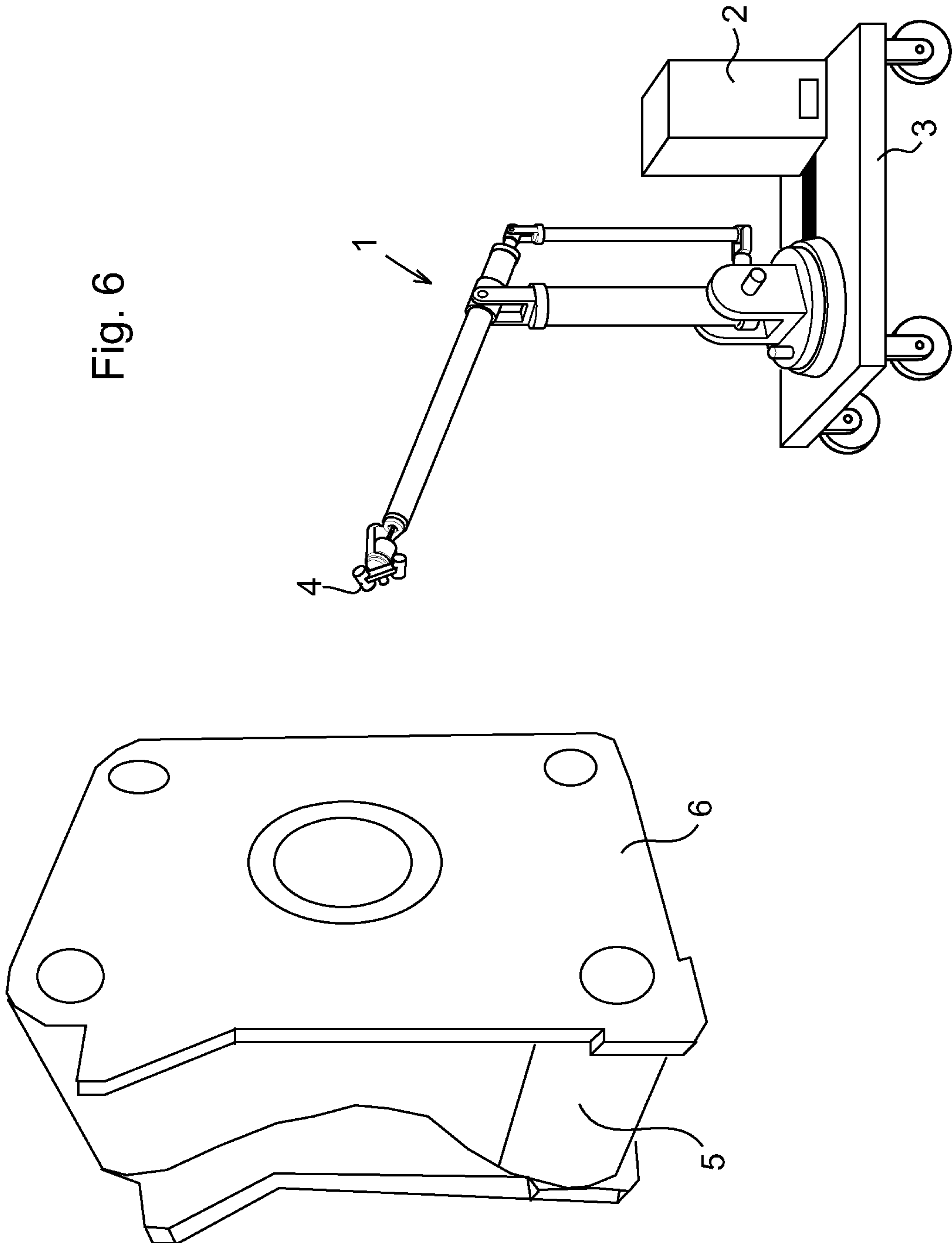
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Fig. 5



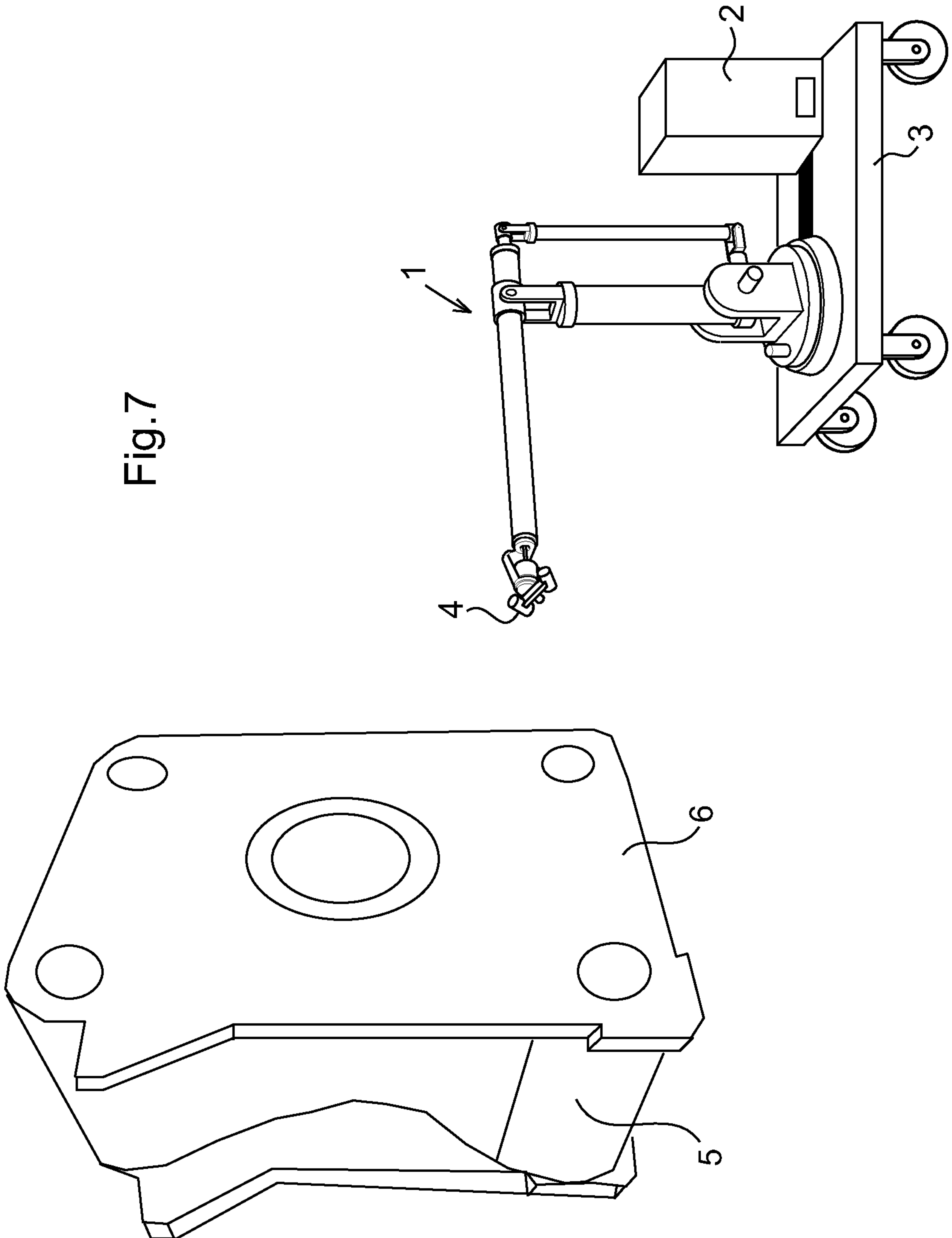
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Fig. 6

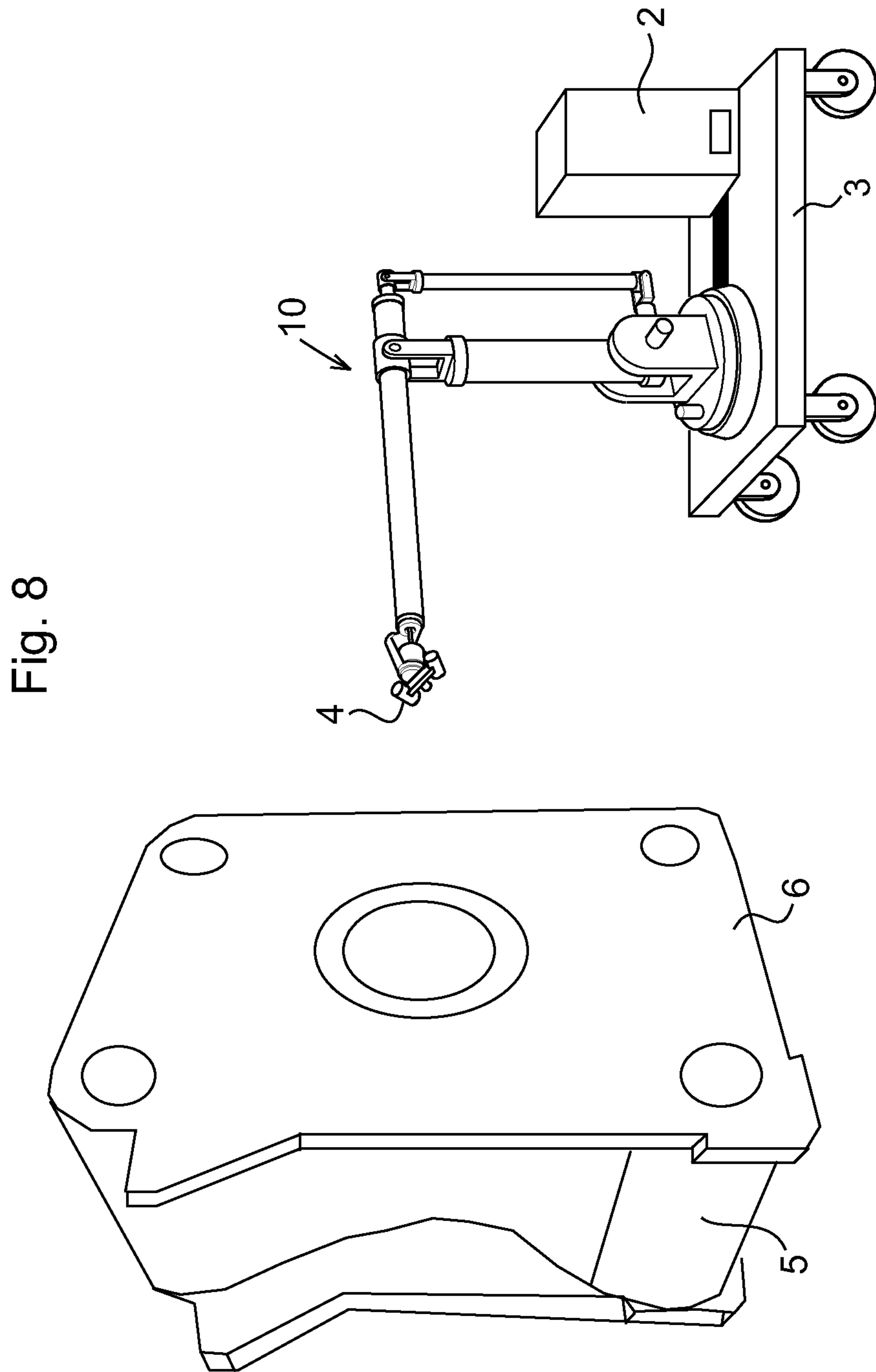


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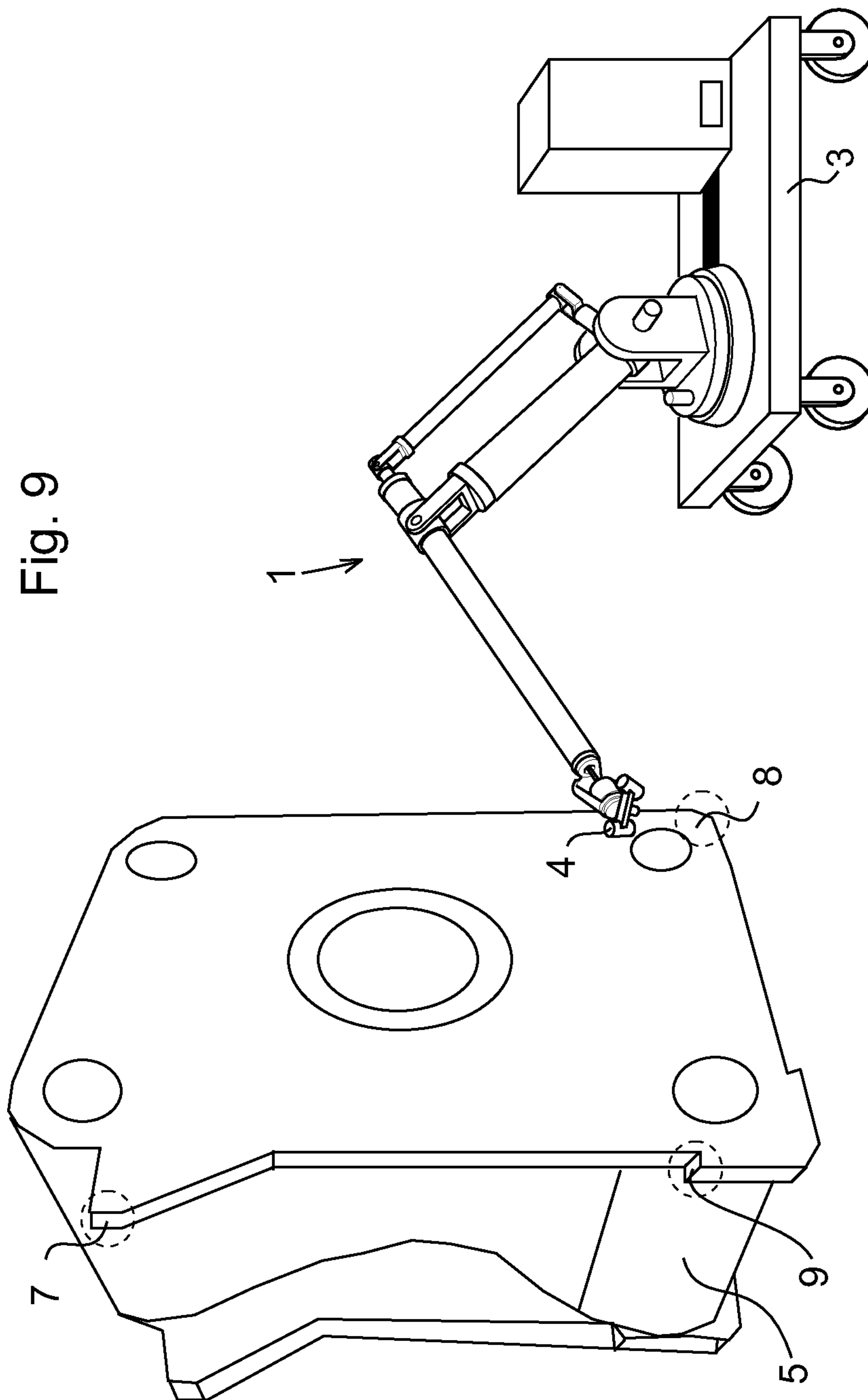
Fig. 7



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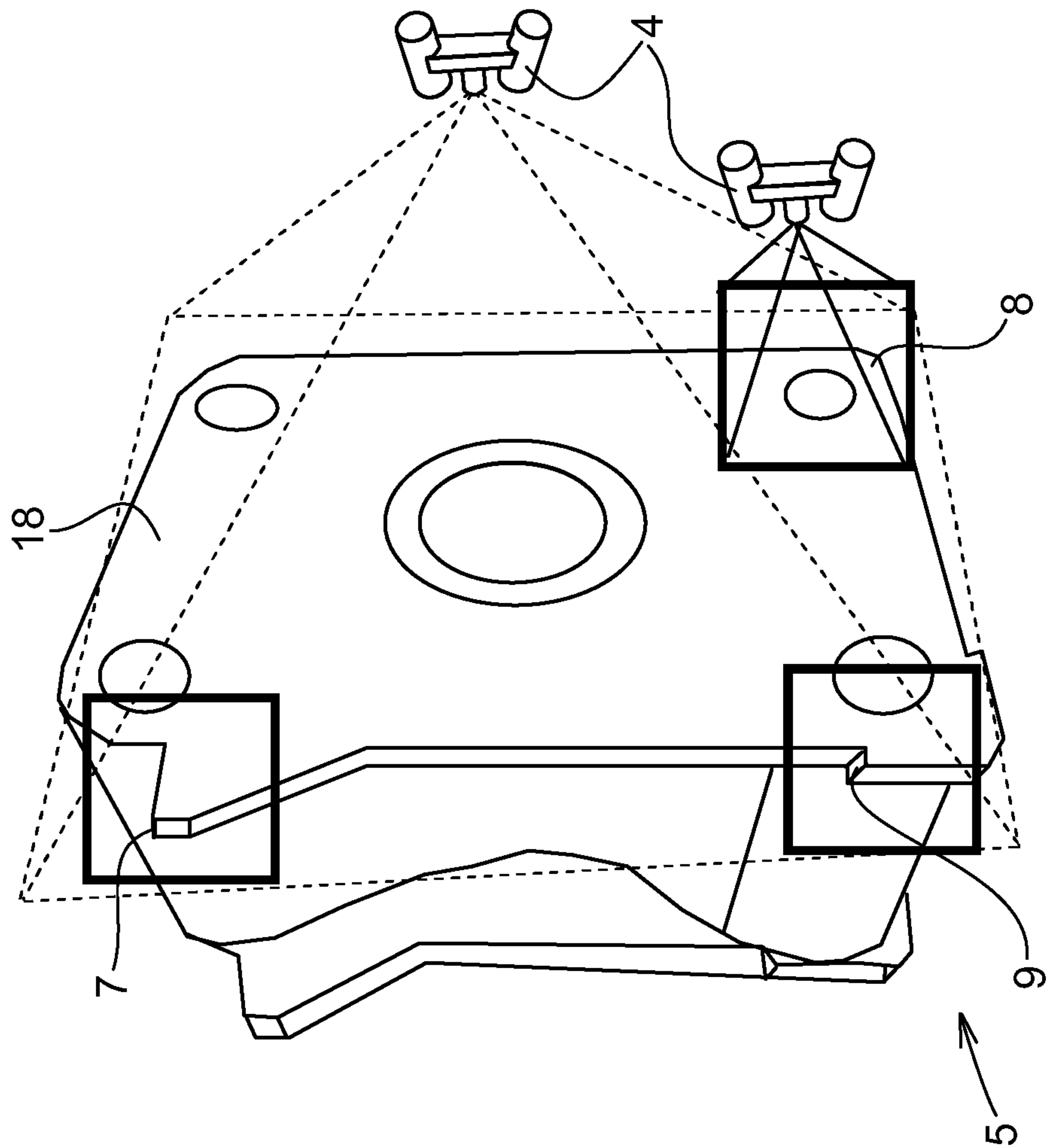


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Fig. 10



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Fig. 11

