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Alfaro

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(54) **CONTROL SYSTEM FOR A PUPPET**

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446/266; 40/411; 40/416; 40/418

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446/217, 218, 236, 239, 246, 359-368, 314,
446/489, 330, 352, 353; 40/411, 416, 418
See application file for complete search history.

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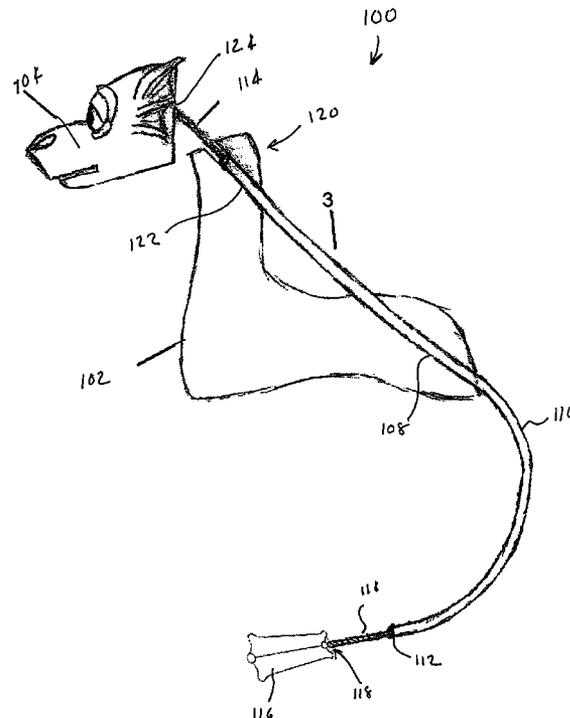
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

There is provided a control mechanism for use with a puppet and puppets adapted for control thereby. One or more single-strand, sheathed cables are adapted for imparting motion to at least one movable part of a puppet. Both longitudinal (i.e., in-and-out) and rotary motions may be imparted to the cables, thereby allowing a wide range of resulting movements of the attached puppet part. In one embodiment, longitudinal movement of the cable strand imparts a flapping motion to the wings of a puppet while rotary motion of the same cable imparts a wagging motion to the puppet's tail. Regardless of whether one or two cables are used, the actuation of the cables may be performed discreetly and out of view of the audience of the puppeteer's show.

7 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



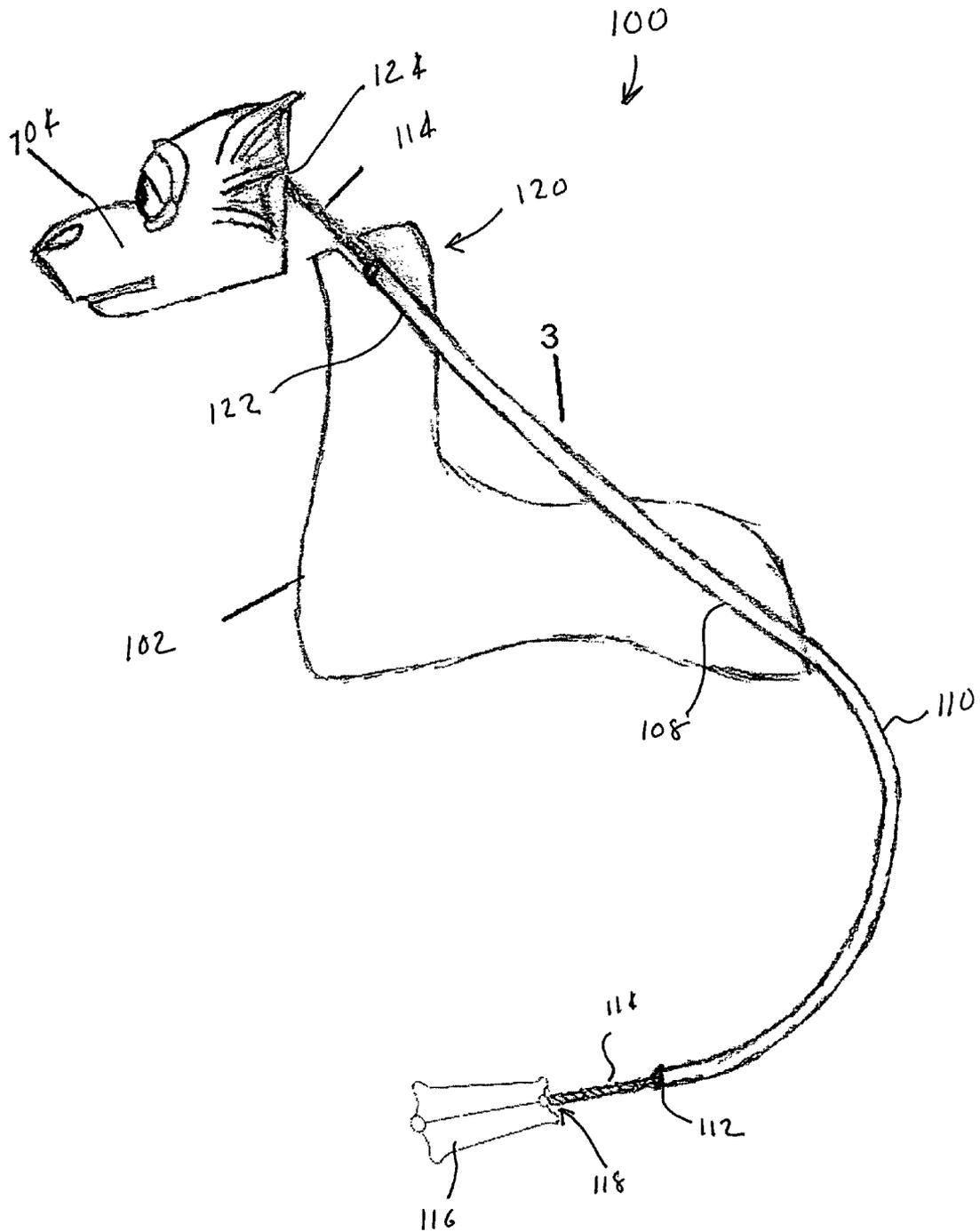
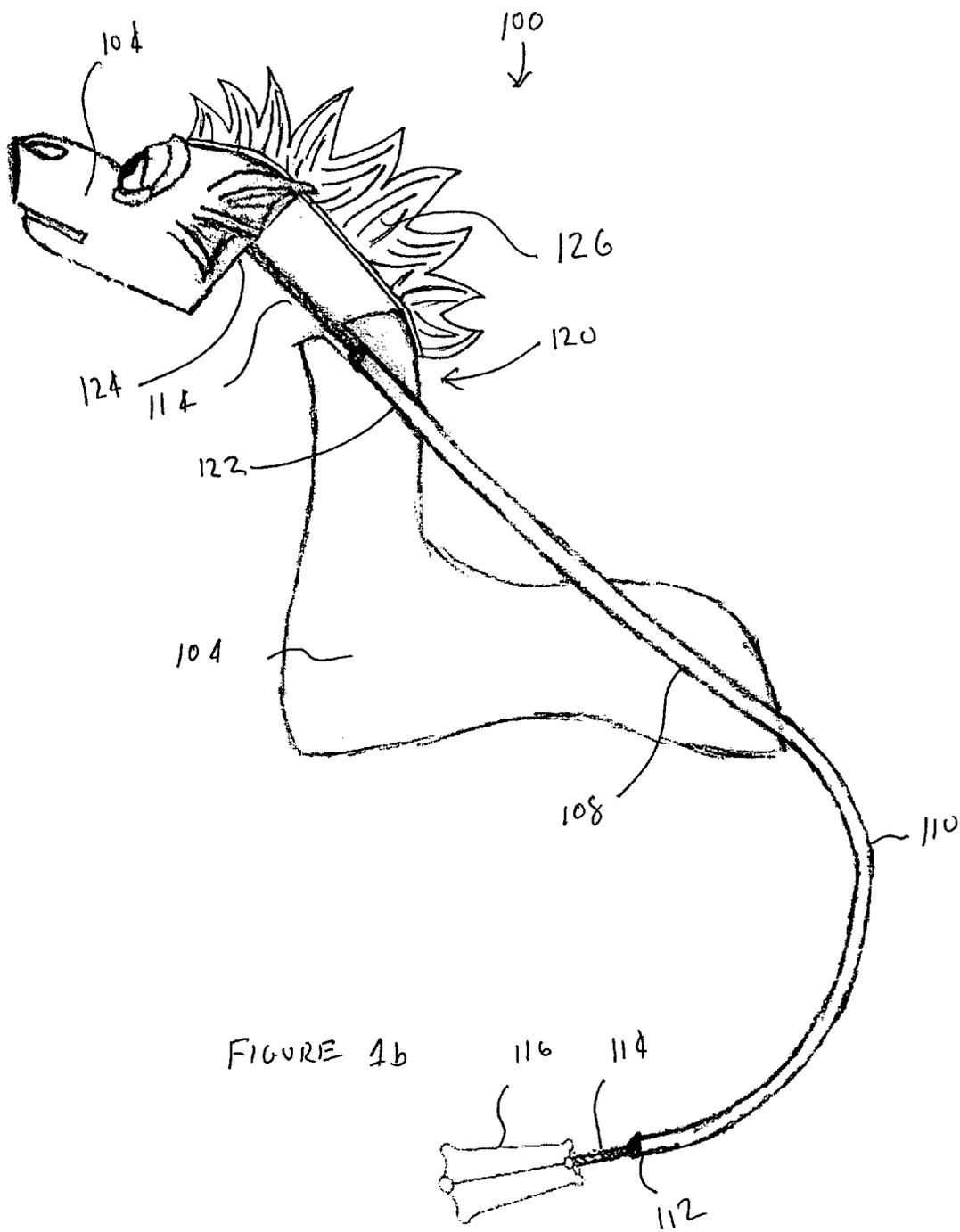


FIGURE 1a



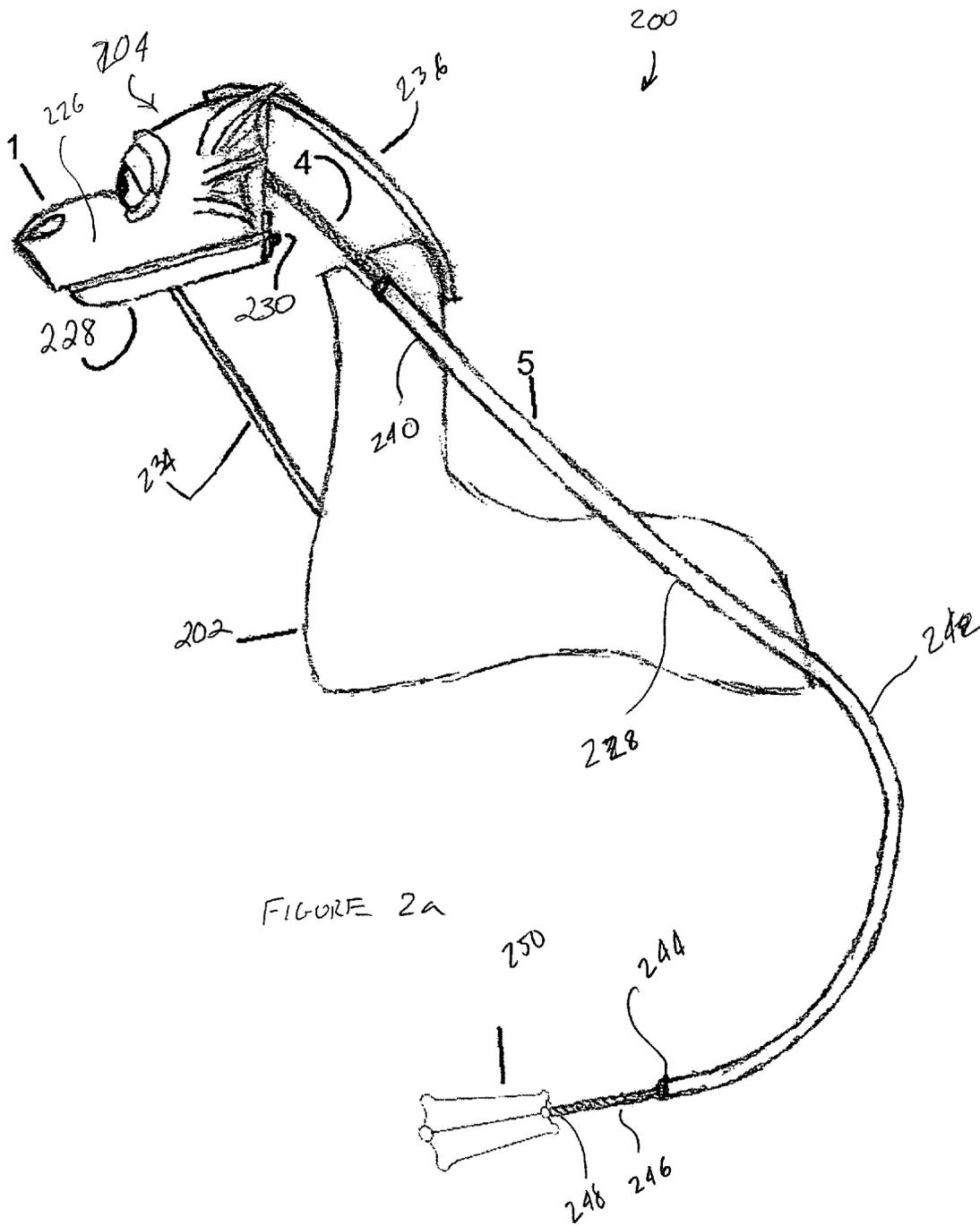


FIGURE 2a

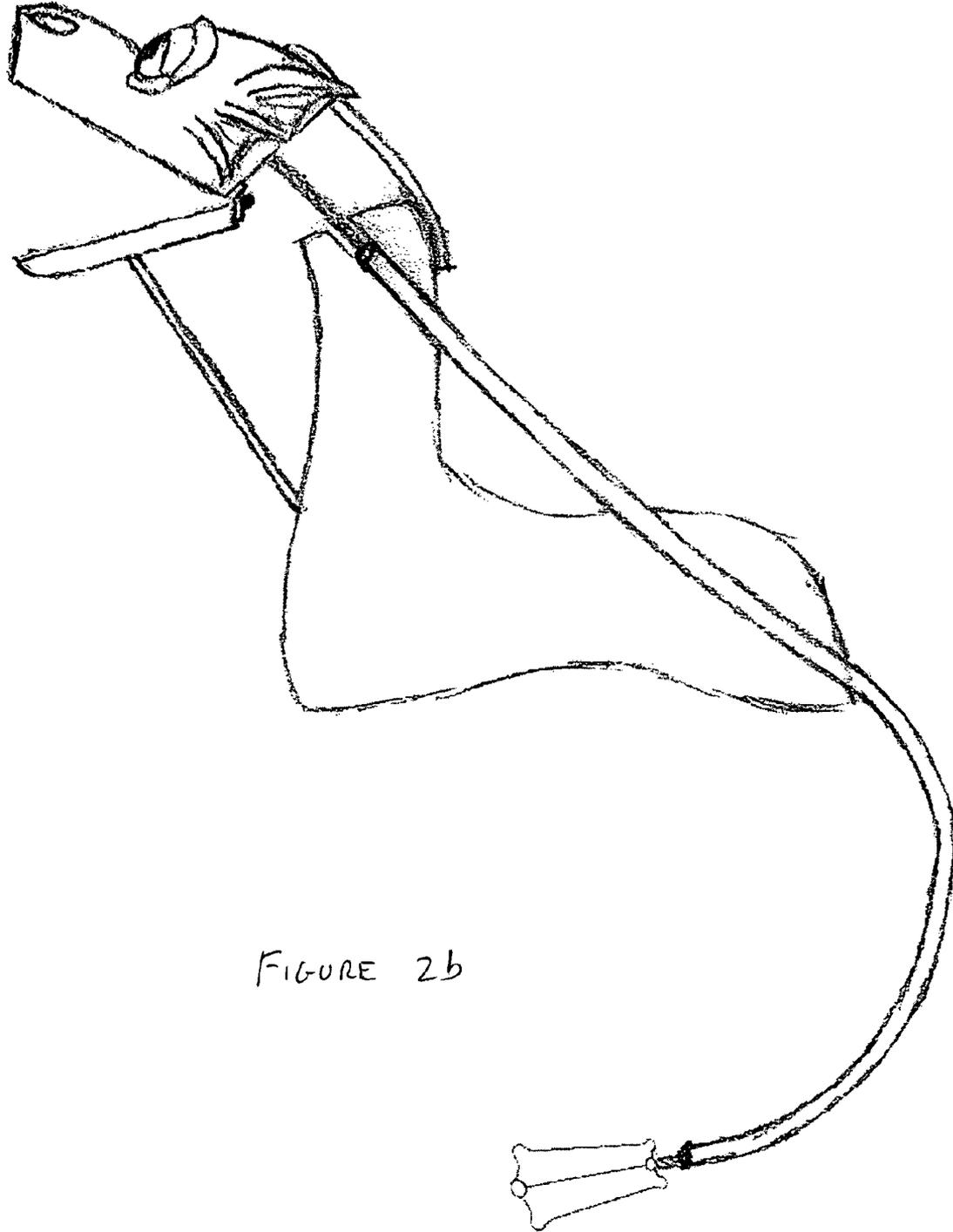


FIGURE 2b

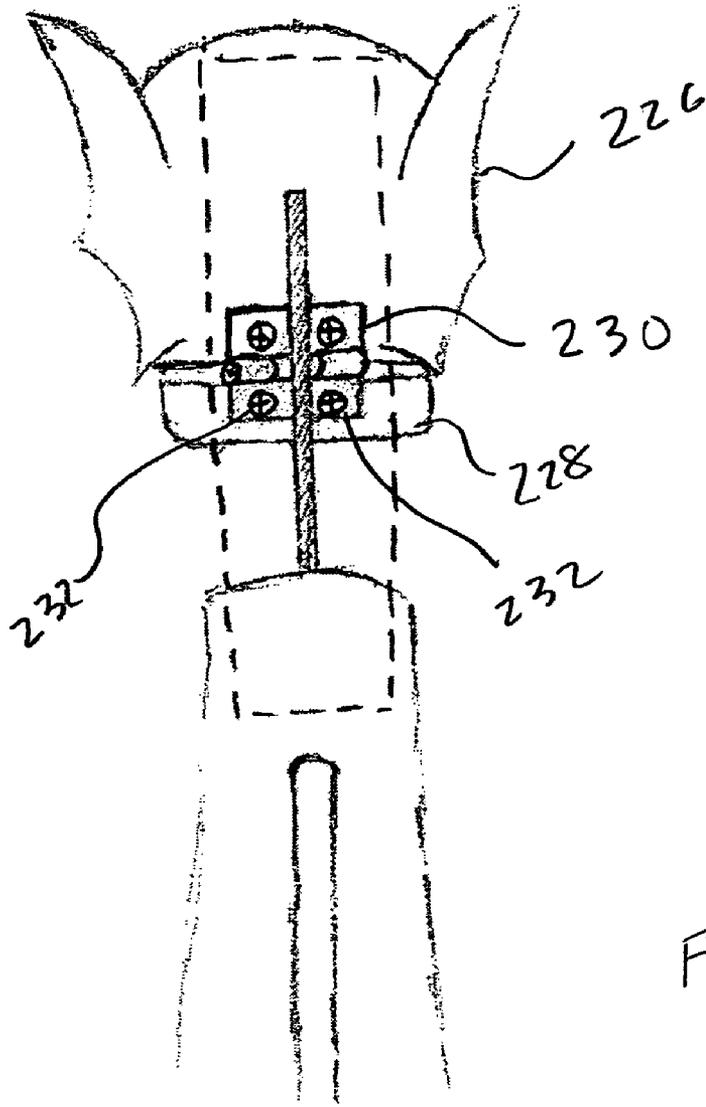


FIGURE 2C

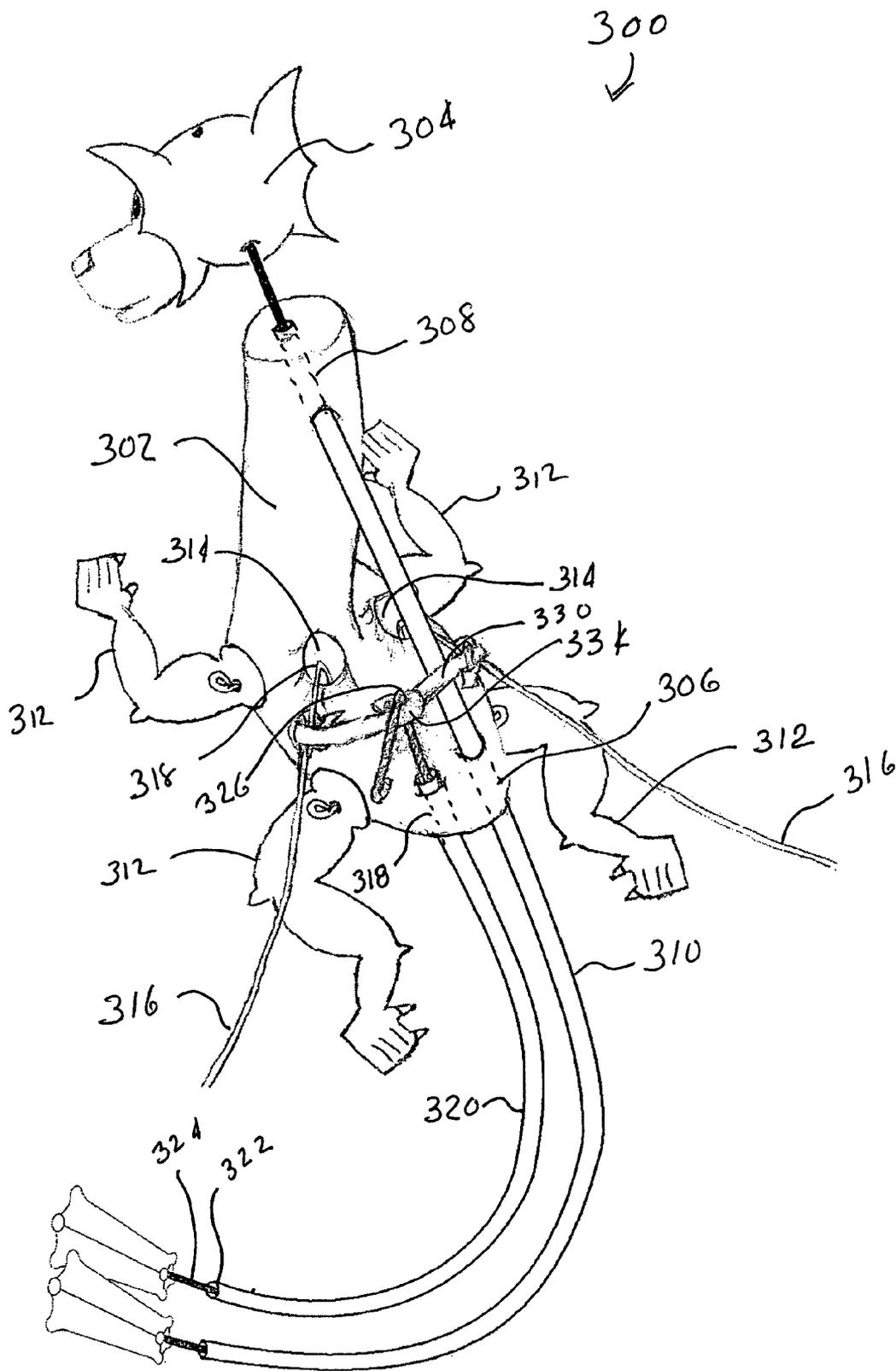


FIGURE 3a

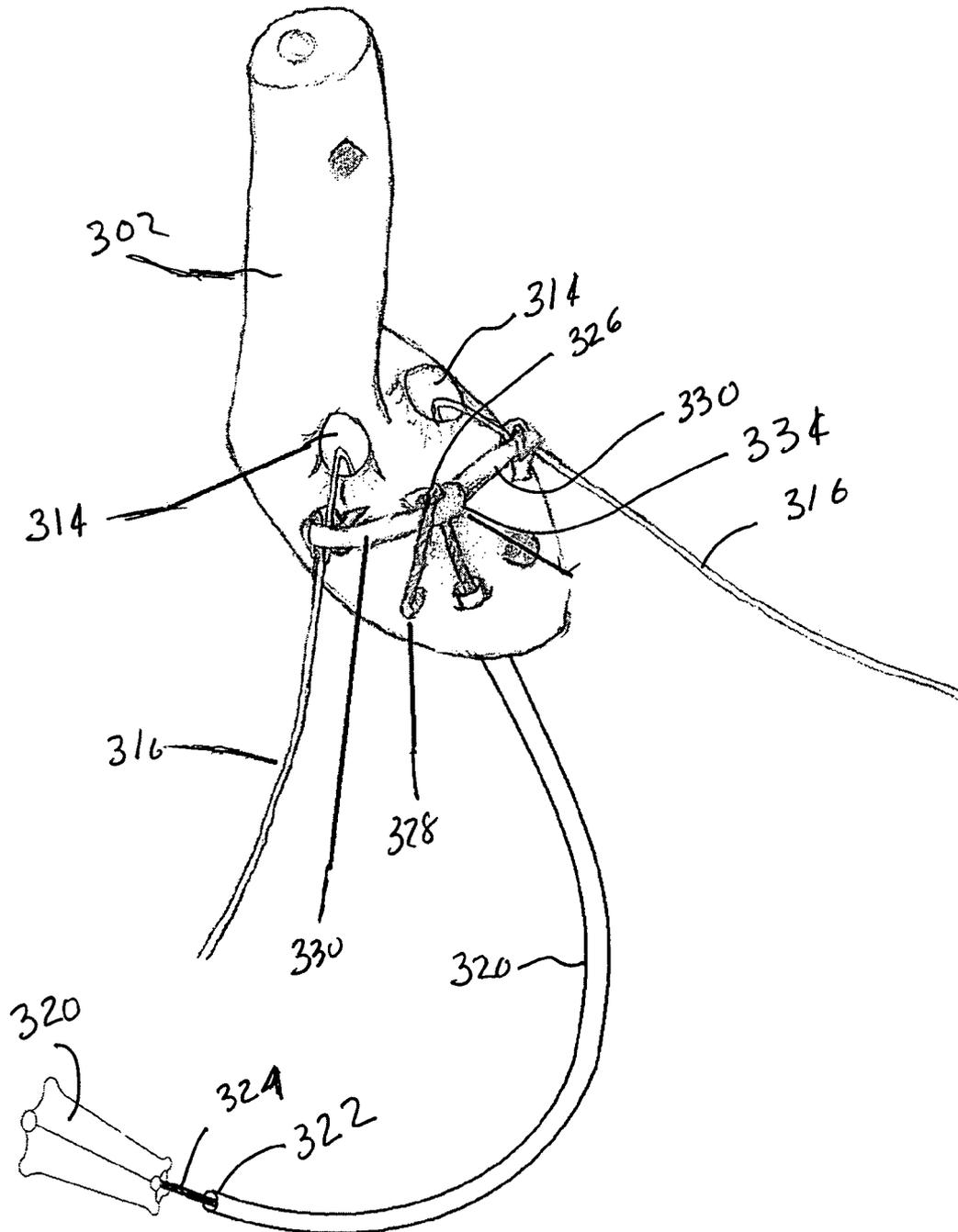


FIGURE 3b

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CONTROL SYSTEM FOR A PUPPET

RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present invention is related to U.S. Pat. No. 4,986,719 for PUPPET, issued Jan. 22, 1991, included herein in its entirety by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention pertains to puppets and, more particularly, to a puppet having a control system for imparting realistic movements to a head, wings, or tail thereof.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Puppeteers often utilize puppets placed on or near the bodies, for example, for use as a ventriloquist's dummy. In such situations, it is desirable to discreetly impart movement to portions of the puppet perched, for example, on the shoulder of the puppeteer. Many mechanisms have been developed to accomplish this purpose, such as solid rods attached to the head of a puppet, etc. None of the methods of the prior art provides realistic movements using a mechanism discreetly operable by the puppeteer.

DISCUSSION OF THE RELATED ART

U.S. Pat. No. 3,390,481 for PUPPET AND ANIMATION DEVICES, issued Jul. 2, 1961 to Boris Runanin provides a complex actuation mechanism using pulleys in cooperation with other mechanisms to motivate a puppet. The RUNANIN puppet is not adapted for placement on or near the body of a puppeteer and the complex mechanism provided could not be easily adapted for discrete operation of a puppet.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,986,791 for PUPPET, issued Jan. 22, 1991 to Albert Alfaro shows a mechanism wherein a sheathed cable is used to actuate the head of a shoulder-sitting puppet.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,498,193 for MANUALLY ACTUATED TOY DINOSAUR STRUCTURE AND METHOD, issued Mar. 12, 1996 to Salvatore Locricchio provides a figurine having movable parts remotely actuatable by a sheathed cable having plural actuating cable strands housed therewithin. Actuation is provided by a hand-held apparatus having plural triggers for imparting only linear motion to individual actuating cable strands.

U.S. Pat. No. 6,827,626 for MARIONETTE, issued Dec. 7, 2004 to Mary Jo Feeney, et al. provides a marionette having, in addition to strings, a solid actuating rod attached to the head of the marionette.

None of these patents taken singly, or in any combination, is seen to teach or suggest the puppet and actuating mechanism of the present invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention features a unique control mechanism for use with a puppet and puppets adapted for control thereby. One or more single-strand, sheathed cables are adapted for imparting motion to at least one movable part of a puppet. Both longitudinal (i.e., in-and-out) and rotary motions may be imparted to the cable strands thereby allowing a wide range of resulting movements of the attached puppet part. In one embodiment, longitudinal movement of the cable strand imparts a flapping motion to the wings of a puppet while rotary motion of the same cable imparts a wagging motion to the puppet's tail. Regardless of whether one or two cables are

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used, the actuation of the cables may be performed discreetly and out of view of the audience of the puppeteer's show.

It is, therefore, an object of the invention to provide a puppet figure having at least one part movable with respect to another part.

It is an additional object of the invention to provide a puppet figure wherein a part is moved by the movement of a cable strand within a sheathed cable.

It is another object of the invention to provide a puppet figure wherein the movement of the cable strand may be both longitudinal and rotary.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a puppet figure wherein two parts may be selectively moved independently by longitudinal and rotary motion of a single cable.

It is a still further object of the invention to provide a puppet figure wherein the moved part is supported solely by the cable strand of the sheathed cable.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A complete understanding of the present invention may be obtained by reference to the accompanying drawings, when taken in conjunction with the detail description thereof and in which:

FIG. 1a is a side elevational view of a first embodiment of a puppet in accordance with the invention;

FIG. 1b is a side elevational view of an alternate embodiment of the puppet of FIG. 1a;

FIGS. 2a and 2b are side elevational views of a second embodiment of a puppet in mouth closed and mouth open positions, respectively;

FIG. 2c is an enlarged schematic view of a hinge portion of the puppet of FIGS. 2a and 2b;

FIG. 3a is a rear, perspective view of a third embodiment of a puppet in accordance with the invention; and

FIG. 3b is a detailed, schematic view of the puppet shown in FIG. 3a.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The present invention features a control system for a multi-part puppet wherein one portion of the puppet, for example a head, is supported solely by a flaccid control cable and is thereby movable independently of any other body part.

Referring first to FIG. 1a, there is shown a side elevational pictorial view of a two piece puppet, generally at reference number 100. Puppet 100 is designed to resemble a dragon. It will be recognized, however, that any other puppet shape might be substituted therefor. Consequently, the inventive puppet control system may be used with any suitable puppet shape and the invention is not considered limited to the shape chosen for purposes of disclosure.

Puppet 100 has a main body portion 102 and a head portion 104. Main body portion 102 and head portion 104 are made from polymer clay. Body portion 102 and head 104 may be formed by casting, sculpting, or any other suitable means. Body portion 102 has a posterior region 106 having a first bore 108 therethrough sized to accept the outer diameter of a cable 110. Body portion 102 has a neck portion 120 having a second bore 122 therethrough. Second bore 122 is also sized and configured to receive and secure a proximal end of a hollow outer sheath 112 of cable 110. Cable 110 has sheath 112 and a central shaft 114 disposed substantially concentrically therein. Shaft 114 is free to move both longitudinally and rotatively with respect to sheath 112. An actuator 116 is disposed at a distal end 118 of shaft 114 of cable 110.

Head **104** is securely affixed to proximal end **124** of shaft **114**. Securement is typically by an adhesive. It will be recognized by those of skill in the art that other mechanical mechanisms such as clips, staples, clamps, screws, etc. may also be used to secure head **104** to shaft **114** and the invention is not limited to any particular securing method.

Typically, proximal end **124** of shaft **114** protrudes beyond second bore **122** sufficiently so that head **104** is spaced apart from body **102**, thereby allowing room for movement of head **104** relative to body **102**.

An inexpensive cable found useful for practicing the invention is brake control cable well known to those of skill in the bicycle arts.

In operation, an operator of puppet **100** moves head **104** by pushing, pulling, or rotating actuator **116**. Because head **104** is securely affixed to proximal end **124** of shaft **114**, head **104** moves up and down or around in response to movement of actuator **116**. Unlike other puppet constructions of the prior art, the inventive control system, while simple in concept, provides unique motions to head **104**.

Referring now to FIG. **1b**, there is shown an alternate embodiment of puppet **100** of FIG. **1a**. Most details remain the same, but a piece of fur **126** is placed between head portion **104** and body portion **102**. As head portion **104** moves, fur **126** moves responsively creating an interesting visual illusion.

Referring now to FIGS. **2a-2c**, there are shown side elevational pictorial views of another puppet, generally at reference number **200**. FIG. **2a** depicts puppet **200** in a closed mouth position while FIG. **2b** depicts puppet **200** with an open mouth. FIG. **2c** shows details of a mouth hinge **230**. Puppet **200** is similar in construction to puppet **100** (FIG. **1a**) but includes a movable mouth.

Puppet **200** has a main body portion **202** and a head portion **204**, both made from polymer clay or other suitable material as discussed hereinabove. Head portion **204** consists of an upper portion **226** and a lower mouth portion **228** attached thereto by a hinge **230**, best seen in FIG. **2c**. Hinge **230** is attached to both upper mouth portion **226** and lower mouth portion **228** using screws **232** or other suitable fasteners. In alternate embodiments, hinge **230** could be adhesively affixed to one or both of upper mouth portion **226** or lower mouth portion **228**. A rigid support member **234** holds lower mouth portion **228** fixed relative to body portion **202**. A thin, stiff wire or other such device may be used as support member **234**. A flaccid restraining member **236** is attached to upper portion **226** and to body portion **202**. Flaccid restraining member **236** is preferably a piece of thin, non-elastic fabric.

As discussed hereinabove in conjunction with puppet **100** (FIG. **1**), body portion **202** has both a first bore **238** and a second bore **240** adapted to receive a cable **242**. Cable **242** has an outer sheath **244** and a shaft **246** disposed substantially concentrically therein. The distal end **248** of shaft **246** is equipped with an actuator **250**.

In operation, inward pressure on actuator **250** causes shaft **246** to move longitudinally within sheath **244**. Because lower mouth portion **228** is held in a fixed relationship to body portion **202** by rigid support member **234**, the movement of head portion **204** is substantially upward as upper portion **226** rotates around a pivot, not shown, formed by hinge **230**. Upward movement of head **204** is limited by flaccid restraint member **236**. The motion of head **204** caused by in-and-out motion of actuator **250** creates an upward opening illusion in the motion of puppet **200**. The open position of head **204** may be seen in FIG. **2b**.

Referring now to FIGS. **3a** and **3b**, there are shown a rear perspective, pictorial view and a detailed view of a portion

thereof, respectively, of a third puppet, generally at reference number **300**. Puppet **300** is similar to puppets **100** and **200** (FIGS. **1** and **2a-2c**, respectively) discussed hereinabove. Similar components and/or features previously described are not further described in detail. Puppet **300**, however, has additional, movable appendages, described in greater detail hereinbelow. Puppet **300** has a body portion **302** and a one-piece head portion **304**, similar to head portion **104** of puppet **100**. While a one-piece head portion **304** is shown for purposes of disclosure, it will be recognized that puppet **300** might be provided with a two-piece head similar to head portion **204** of puppet **200** (FIG. **2a**). As has already been described, body portion **302** has a first bore **306** a second bore **308** sized and adapted to receive a first, head control cable **310**.

Four legs **312** are attached to body portion **302**. Legs **312** may be fixed or movable with respect to body portion **302**.

Body portion **302** has a pair of sockets **314** disposed in a central, posterior region thereof. Sockets **314** are each adapted to loosely receive the end of a wing support member **316** therein. Wing support members **316** are typically formed from stiff wire and each has a bent portion **318** formed at a proximal end thereof. Bent portion **318** may move freely within socket **314**, typically experiencing three degrees of freedom of movement. Dragon wings, not shown, are typically attached to wing support members **316**.

A third bore **318** formed in body portion **302** is sized and adapted to receive and retain a second cable **320**. Second cable **320** has an identical construction as first head cable **310** and has an outer sheath **322** and an inner shaft **324**. Sheath **322** is retained within a third bore **318**. Shaft **324** extends beyond third bore **318** and has a bend **326** formed therein. A loop **328** is formed at the proximal end of shaft **324** of second cable **320**. Loop **328** is configured for attachment to a tail, not shown. An actuator **320** is disposed at the distal end of shaft **324**.

Wing actuating links **330** are formed from thin, non-elastic fabric or the like. A distal end **332** of wing actuating link **330** is knotted around wing support member **316** proximate bent portion **318**. The proximal ends of wing actuating links **330** are each knotted around and secured to shaft **324** proximate bend **326** forming a main operating joint **334**.

In operation, first cable **310** controls the movement of head portion **304** in a manner similar to that of head portion **104** of puppet **100** (FIG. **1**) as described hereinabove. Second cable **320** provides control of the puppet's wings and tail, neither of which are shown. In-and-out motion of shaft **324** of cable **320** imparts up-and-down linear motion to main operating joint **334** which, in turn, moves wing support members **316** through wing actuating links **330**. However, rotary motion imparted to shaft **324** within cable **320** causes rotation of loop **328** and the proximal end thereof which, in turn, imparts wagging (i.e., back and forth movement) of the puppet's tail, not shown.

Since other modifications and changes varied to fit a particular operating requirements and environment will be apparent to those skilled in the art, the invention is not considered limited to the example chosen for purposes of disclosure, and covers all changes and modifications which do not constitute a departure from the true spirit and scope of the invention.

Having thus described the invention, what is desired to be protected by Letters Patent is presented in the subsequent appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A puppet, comprising:
 - a) a body portion;

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- b) a first cable having a first outer sheath rigidly affixed to said first body portion and having a first shaft disposed substantially concentrically therein, said first shaft being adapted for movement relative to said first sheath;
- c) a head portion rigidly affixed to said first shaft;
- d) a second cable having a second outer sheath rigidly affixed to said first body portion and having a second shaft disposed substantially concentrically therein, said second shaft being adapted for movement relative to said second sheath; and
- e) means for supporting a wing flexibly affixed to said body portion and operatively connected to a proximal end of said second shaft;

whereby movement of said first shaft imparts motion to said head portion relative to said body portion, and movement of said second shaft imparts motion to said means for supporting a wing.

2. The puppet as recited in claim 1, wherein said motion of at least one of said first shaft and said second shaft comprises at least one of: rotary motion, and longitudinal motion.

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3. The puppet as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
 f) at least one of a first actuator disposed at a distal end of said first shaft, and a second actuator disposed at a distal end of said second shaft.

4. The puppet of claim 3, wherein at least one of said first actuator and said second actuator comprises a cable button.

5. The puppet of claim 1, wherein said head portion comprises an upper head portion and a lower jaw portion hingedly affixed thereto.

6. The puppet as recited in claim 5, further comprising:
 f) a rigid support member disposed between said lower jaw portion and said body portion.

7. The puppet as recited in claim 5, further comprising:
 f) a flaccid restraining member disposed between said head portion and said body portion.

* * * * *