

[54] CONVERTIBLE CONTAINER PUPPET THEATRE

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 [58] Field of Search 312/237, 240, 108, 312/111, 244; 46/126, 13

[56] References Cited

UNITED STATES PATENTS

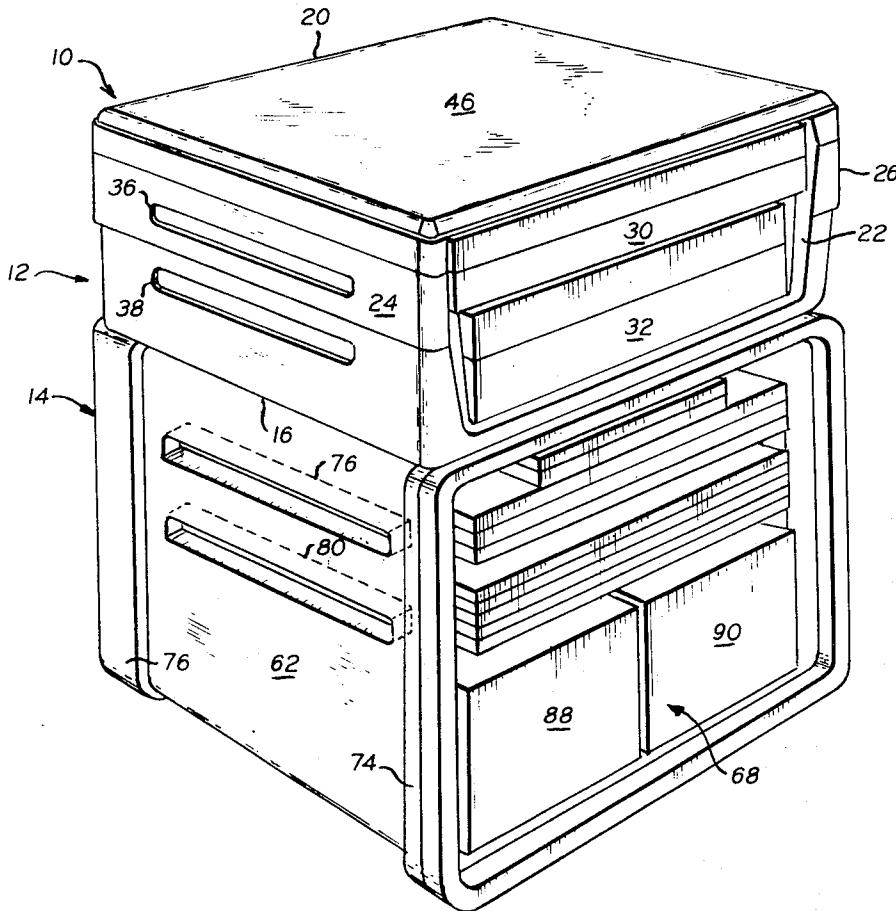
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[57] ABSTRACT

A carrying case or storage container is adapted to be converted into a puppet stage, such as for stick puppets. The case comprises a first storage compartment having a closed bottom, an open top, and two pair of opposed peripheral side walls. The top is closed by a removable cover when the case is utilized as a storage container and also serves as a base for mounting the stage therein when the container is utilized as a puppet stage. Slots are contained in a pair of closed side walls which enable the manipulation of stick puppets therethrough when the container is converted to a puppet stage. One side wall of the other pair of side walls has an opening therein to substantially the full extent thereof for removably receiving at least one slidable drawer therethrough when the container is utilized as a storage container and for receiving scenery therethrough when the container is converted to a puppet stage. The storage container preferably includes a pair of nesting compartments, one of these compartments being convertible into the puppet stage while both of these compartments may be utilized for storage.

7 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures



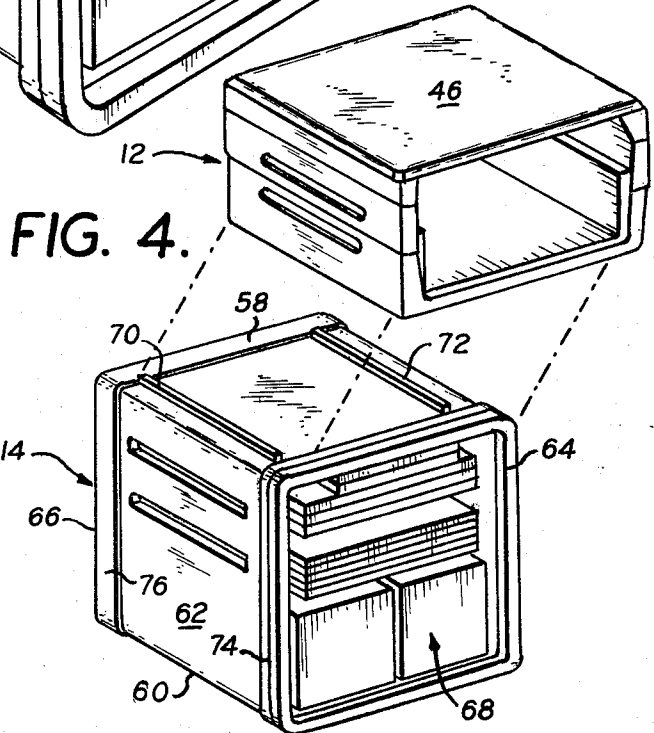
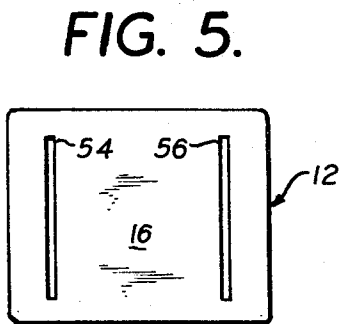
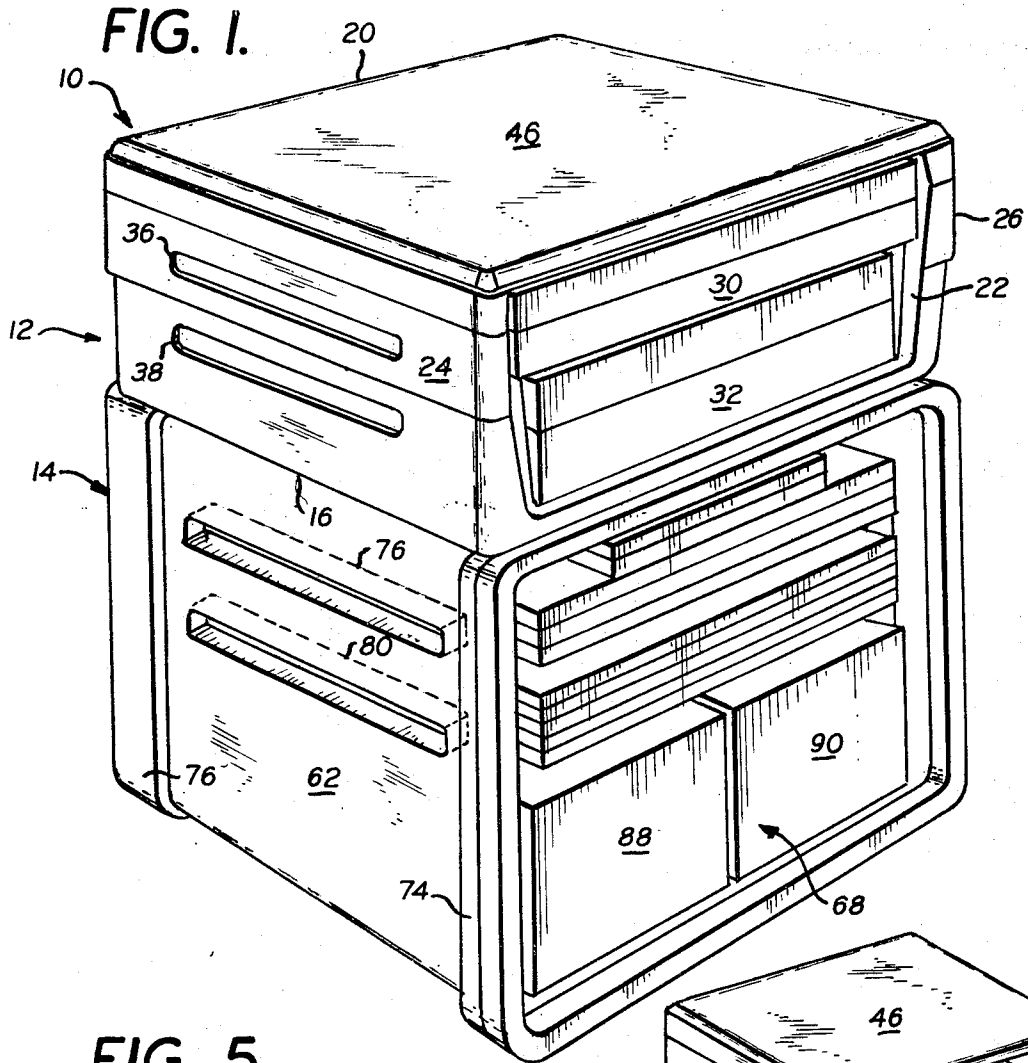


FIG. 2.

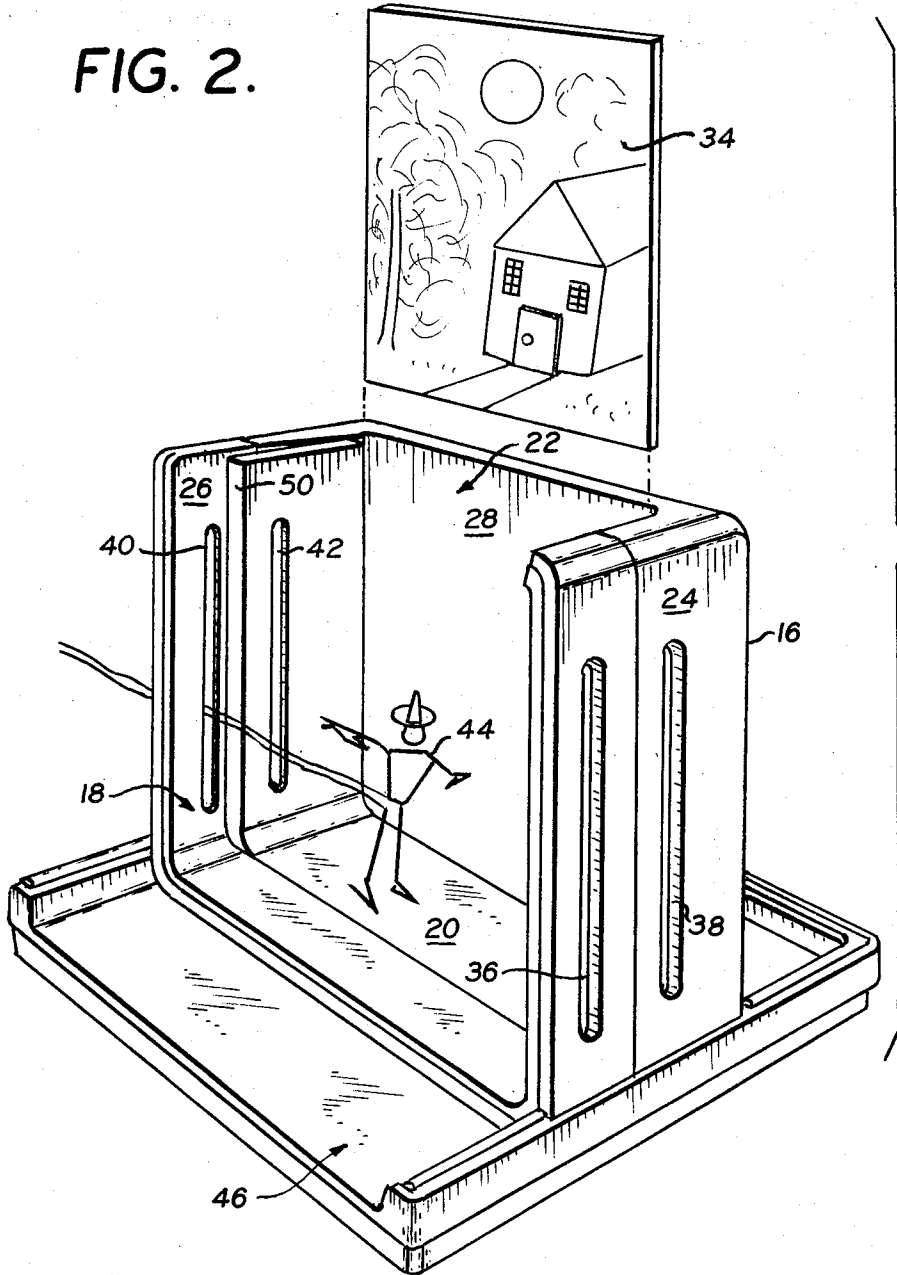
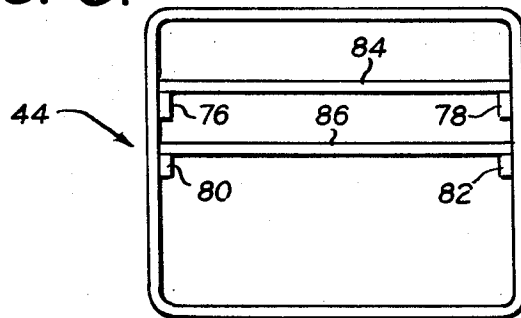


FIG. 3.



CONVERTIBLE CONTAINER PUPPET THEATRE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to convertible storage containers adapted to be converted into a puppet stage.

Description of the Prior Art

Combined puppet stage-storage containers are well known in the prior art. By way of example, such arrangements are disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 1,662,899; 2,130,343 and 2,837,863. However, such prior art combined puppet stage-storage containers do not contain sufficient storage space for all the essential elements necessary to stage a proper puppet performance nor do these prior art arrangements facilitate a well organized storage arrangement, merely providing a single open box for randomly placing the various components required for a proper puppet performance therein, such components being easily jostled around when the case is carried. The emphasis in such prior art combined puppet stage-storage containers have been on the collapsibility of the stage which unsatisfactorily restricts the storage capacity of the collapsed stage as a container. Thus, prior art combined container-puppet stages have not proved satisfactory in performing both functions without sacrificing certain advantages of one of these two functions. These disadvantages of the prior art are overcome by the present invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A convertible storage container adapted to be converted into a puppet stage is provided. The container comprises a housing enclosure having a substantially closed bottom portion, a substantially open opposed top portion, a first pair of opposed peripheral side walls upstanding from the bottom portion, and a second pair of opposed peripheral side walls upstanding from the bottom portion. One of the first pair of opposed side walls has an opening therein to substantially the full extent thereof for removably receiving at least one slidable drawer therethrough when the container is utilized for storage and for receiving scenery therethrough when the container is converted to a puppet stage. The other of the first pair of opposed side walls is substantially closed and substantially continuous with the second pair of opposed side walls. The second pair of opposed side walls has apertures or slots therein for enabling the manipulation of puppets, such as stick puppets preferably, therethrough when the container is converted to a puppet stage. Preferably, a cover is removably mountable in a first position on the housing side walls to close the top portion when the container is utilized for storage. The housing is preferably removably mountable within the cover in a second position thereof with the side walls being oriented substantially normal to their orientation in the first position of the cover with the substantially closed side wall of the first pair of side walls being nestable in the cover when the container is converted to a puppet stage. If desired, however, the housing may rest solely on the substantially closed side wall of the first pair of side walls without the use of the cover to increase the size of the stage base or apron, although the use of the cover to accomplish this is preferred.

The container preferably includes at least two compartments, one of these compartments being convertible into the puppet stage while the other compartment

preferably serving primarily for additional storage. These two compartments preferably nest together when the container is utilized for storage so as to provide a multicompartment storage facility for the various components utilized in accomplishing a proper puppet performance. When it is desired to convert the container into a puppet stage, the compartment having the removable cover portion is then unmounted from the other storage compartment, the drawer or drawers contained therein are removed, and the compartment is preferably oriented substantially normal to its orientation for storage with the substantially open side wall at the top and the slotted side walls at the sides, the portion where the cover has been removed therefrom serving as the front of the stage. Preferably, this housing portion is then nested in the removed cover and the puppet stage is ready for use.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention with the container utilized as a storage container;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1 with the container having been converted to a puppet stage;

FIG. 3 is a front elevation of the portion of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1 which provides additional storage;

FIG. 4 is an exploded perspective view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1; and

FIG. 5 is a bottom plan view of the convertible storage container-puppet stage portion of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings in detail and especially to FIG. 1 thereof, a perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the convertible storage container, generally referred to by the reference numeral 10, of the present invention is shown. As shown and preferred, the storage container 10 preferably includes an upper storage compartment 12 and a lower storage compartment 14 upon which the upper storage compartment 12 is removably mounted as will be described in greater detail hereinafter. The convertible storage container 10 is illustratively shown in FIG. 1 as it will preferably appear when the container 10 is utilized for storage. The upper compartment 12 or housing enclosure, preferably includes a bottom portion 16 (FIG. 5), an opposed open top portion 18 (FIG. 2), a first pair of opposed peripheral side walls 20 and 22 upstanding from the bottom portion 16, and a second pair of opposed peripheral side walls 24 and 26 also preferably upstanding from the bottom portion 16. Preferably, side walls 24, 20 and 26 are substantially continuous. Side wall 22 preferably includes an opening 28 therein for substantially the full extent thereof. This opening 28 as will be explained in greater detail hereinafter, preferably removably receives slidable drawers 30 and 32, two such drawers being shown by way of example and not by way of limitation, therethrough when the container 10 upper storage compartment 12 is utilized for storage, as illustrated in FIG. 1, and for receiving scenery 34 therethrough when the storage container 10 upper compartment 12 is converted to a puppet stage such as in the preferred arrangement illustrated in FIG. 2. Side

walls 24 and 26 preferably have slots or apertures 36-38 and 40-42, respectively, therein. As will be explained in greater detail hereinafter, these slots 36, 38, 40 and 42 enable the manipulation of stick puppets 44, one such puppet 44 being shown by way of example in FIG. 2, therethrough when the container 12 is converted to a puppet stage as shown in FIG. 2. A cover 46 is preferably removably mountable in a first position on the housing or container 12 side walls 26, 20 and 24 primarily to close the open top portion 18 of the container 12 when the container 12 is utilized for storage as illustrated in FIG. 1. Most preferably, this cover 46 mounts on the side walls 26, 20 and 24 in a conventional snap-lock arrangement, although any other desired mounting arrangement may be utilized for removably mounting the cover thereon.

As shown and preferred in FIG. 2, the convertible housing or container 12 is preferably removably mountable within the cover 46 in a second position thereof. As shown and preferred in FIG. 2, the side walls 20, 22, 24 and 26 are preferably oriented substantially normal to their orientation in the first position of the cover 46 illustrated in FIG. 1, the housing 12 resting on side wall 20 in this position. As also shown and preferred, the housing 12 in this position preferably nests within the cover 46 when the container 12 is converted to a puppet stage as shown in FIG. 2. This nesting may be accomplished in any conventional fashion such as by notching the interior of the cover 46 at the desired location of the balance of the housing 12 in this position. If desired, the cover 46 which provides a more secure base and a greater apron for the stage need not be utilized but rather the housing may rest solely on side wall 20, although the arrangement illustrated in FIG. 2 is the more preferred.

As also shown and preferred in FIG. 2, the interior of the housing 12 includes a ridge 50 extending along side walls 26 and 24 (not shown) for removably slidably mounting drawer 30 thereon; drawer 32 preferably being removably slidably mounted on the interior portion of bottom portion 16. As also shown and preferred, slots 36, 38, 40 and 42 preferably extend in the direction between side walls 20 and 22 so as to facilitate multidirectional manipulation of the stick puppet 44. As shown and preferred in FIG. 5, the bottom portion of the upper housing or compartment 12 preferably includes a pair of spaced apart longitudinal grooves 54 and 56 for removably mounting the upper compartment 12 on the lower compartment 14 when the container 10 is utilized for storage as shown in FIG. 1.

As shown and preferred in FIG. 4, the lower storage compartment 14 preferably includes a top portion 58, an opposed bottom portion 60, a pair of opposed side portions 62 and 64, and a second pair of opposed side portions 66 and 68. Preferably, the top portion 58 of compartment 14 includes a pair of longitudinally extending protrusions 70 and 72 which are nestable in grooves 54 and 56, respectively, of upper compartment 12 when the upper compartment 12 is mounted on the lower compartment 14. If desired, any other conventional arrangement may be utilized for removably mounting the upper compartment 12 on the lower compartment 14.

The lower storage compartment 14 preferably is substantially enclosed by top and bottom portions 58 and 60, respectively, and peripheral side walls 62, 64 and 66 which are substantially continuous with top and bot-

tom portions 58 and 60, respectively, the lower storage compartment 14 preferably only being open at side wall 68 which is open for substantially the entire extent thereof, as shown and preferred in FIGS. 1, 3 and 4. Preferably, side wall 68 and side wall 66, which for purposes of explanation may be termed the front and rear, respectively, of compartment 14 in the orientation illustrated in FIG. 1, include a collar portion 74 and 76, respectively, extending substantially around the entire periphery thereof for providing additional rigidity to the structure. If desired, however, these collars 74 and 76 may be omitted if such additional rigidity is not desired. In addition, as shown and preferred in FIG. 3, side walls 62 and 64 include pairs of spaced apart ridges 76 and 78, respectively, and 80 and 82, respectively, for mounting shelves 84 and 86 between ridges 76 and 78, and ridges 80 and 82, respectively, to such shelves being shown by way of example and not by way of limitation.

As shown and preferred in FIG. 1, if the storage container 10, and particularly storage compartment 14 is manufactured from a plastic such as by injection molding thereof, the ridges 76, 78, 80 and 82 may be provided in the conventional fashion by integrally forming them as protrusions in the side walls. Preferably, in addition to the additional storage provided by shelves 84 and 86, storage containers 88 and 90 may be removably inserted within compartment 14 below the lower most shelf 86.

In utilizing the present invention first as a storage container for the components necessary for the proper performance of a puppet show, the container 10 appears as shown in FIG. 1 with the upper compartment 12 removably mounted on the lower compartment 14 by means of nesting protrusions 70 and 72 which nest in grooves 54 and 56, respectively. The drawers 30 and 32 which may contain various components are inserted in place in upper compartment 12 while various items such as scenery may be placed on the shelves 84 and 86 of lower compartment 14 and additional items may be placed in containers 88 and 90 in lower compartment 14. When it is desired to convert the storage container 10 to a puppet theatre, the upper compartment 12 is removed from the lower compartment 14, the cover 46 is removed from upper compartment 12 and placed top down as shown in FIG. 2, the drawers 30 and 32 are removed from the housing, and the housing 12 is placed with side wall 20 nesting in cover 46 as illustrated in FIG. 2. Scenery, if desired, may then be inserted through opening 28 in side wall 22 and the stick puppets 44 may be manipulated through the various slots 36, 38, 40 and 42 in side walls 24 and 26. When it is desired to once again convert the housing 12 into a storage compartment, the reverse procedure is repeated.

It is to be understood that the above described embodiment of the invention is merely illustrative of the principles thereof and that numerous modifications and embodiments of the invention may be derived within the spirit and scope thereof, such as providing a storage container 10 having only one compartment, the convertible compartment if the additional storage afforded by having more than one compartment is not desired.

What is claimed is:

1. A convertible storage container adapted to be converted into a puppet stage comprising at least a first storage compartment and a second storage compart-

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ment, said first storage compartment being removably mountable on said second storage compartment when said container is utilized as a storage container, said first compartment being removable from said second compartment and convertible to said puppet stage, said first compartment comprising a housing enclosure having a substantially closed bottom portion, a substantially open opposed top portion, a first pair of opposed peripheral side walls upstanding from said bottom portion, and a second pair of opposed peripheral side walls upstanding from said bottom portion, one of said first pair of opposed side walls having an opening therein to substantially the full extent thereof for removably receiving a slidable drawer member therethrough when said container is utilized for storage and for receiving scenery therethrough when said container is converted to said puppet stage, the other of said first pair of opposed side walls being substantially closed and substantially continuous with said second pair of opposed side walls, the portion of said second pair of opposed side walls facing the interior of said housing including means for removably slidably mounting at least one slidable drawer member thereon, said second pair of opposed side walls having at least a pair of substantially parallel spaced apart slots therein extending in the direction between said first pair of opposed side walls for a substantial extent, said slots enabling multidirectional manipulation of stick puppets therethrough when said container is converted to said puppet stage; and a cover member removably mountable in a first position on said housing side walls to close said top portion when said container is utilized for storage, said cover having a notched portion at a predetermined location therein, said housing being removably mountable within said cover notched portion in a second position thereof with said side walls being oriented substantially normal to their orientation in said first position of said cover with said substantially closed side wall of said first pair of side walls being nestable in said cover notched portion when said container is converted to said puppet stage.

2. A convertible storage container in accordance with claim 1 wherein said container includes at least two removable slidable drawer members disposed one on top of the other within said first compartment housing when said container is utilized for storage, said

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drawer members being removed therefrom when said container is utilized as a puppet stage.

3. A convertible storage container in accordance with claim 1 wherein said second storage compartment includes a top portion, an opposed bottom portion, a first pair of opposed peripheral side walls upstanding from said bottom portion and a second pair of peripheral side walls upstanding from said bottom portion, one of said first pair of opposed side walls having an opening therein to substantially the full extent thereof, said storage compartment being substantially closed except for said side wall opening.

4. A convertible storage container in accordance with claim 3 wherein said first storage compartment bottom portion is removably mounted on said second storage compartment top portion and said first storage compartment side wall opening for removably receiving a slidable drawer therethrough and said second storage compartment side wall opening both open in the same direction when said first storage compartment is removably mounted on said second storage compartment when said container is utilized as a storage container.

5. A convertible storage container in accordance with claim 4 wherein said first storage compartment bottom portion and said second storage compartment top portion each include nestable mounting means, said first and second storage compartment nestable mounting means being nestable with each other for removably mounting said first storage compartment on said second storage compartment.

6. A convertible storage container in accordance with claim 1 wherein each of said second pair of opposed side walls has at least two of said slots therein extending in a direction between said first pair of opposed side walls, said apertures being spaced apart one on top of the other in each of said second pair of side walls.

7. A convertible storage container in accordance with claim 3 wherein the portion of the other pair of said second storage compartment opposed side walls facing the interior of said second storage compartment includes means for mounting at least one shelf thereon extending between said other pair of opposed side walls.

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