



US 20060176487A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication****Cummings et al.**(10) **Pub. No.: US 2006/0176487 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Aug. 10, 2006**(54) **PROCESS CONTROL MONITORS FOR INTERFEROMETRIC MODULATORS****Publication Classification**(76) Inventors: **William Cummings**, Millbrae, CA (US); **Brian Gally**, Los Gatos, CA (US)(51) **Int. Cl.**
G01N 21/55 (2006.01)
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **356/445**

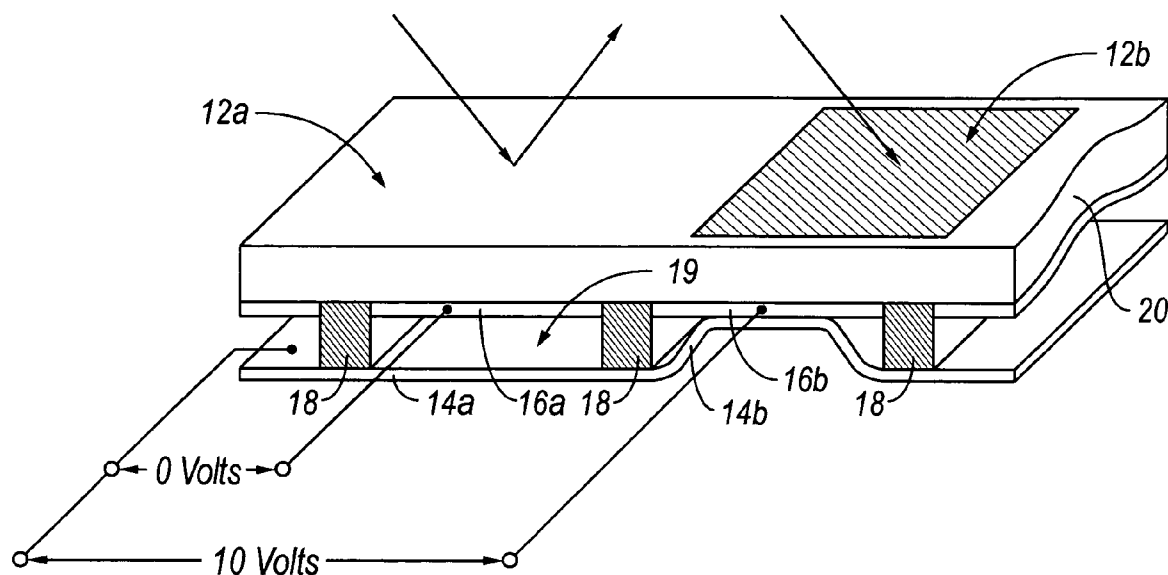
Correspondence Address:

KNOBBE MARTENS OLSON & BEAR LLP
2040 MAIN STREET
FOURTEENTH FLOOR
IRVINE, CA 92614 (US)(57) **ABSTRACT**

Process control monitors are disclosed that are produced using at least some of the same process steps used to manufacture a MEMS device. Analysis of the process control monitors can provide information regarding properties of the MEMS device and components or sub-components in the device. This information can be used to identify errors in processing or to optimize the MEMS device. In some embodiments, analysis of the process control monitors may utilize optical measurements.

(21) Appl. No.: **11/198,888**(22) Filed: **Aug. 5, 2005****Related U.S. Application Data**

(60) Provisional application No. 60/613,537, filed on Sep. 27, 2004.



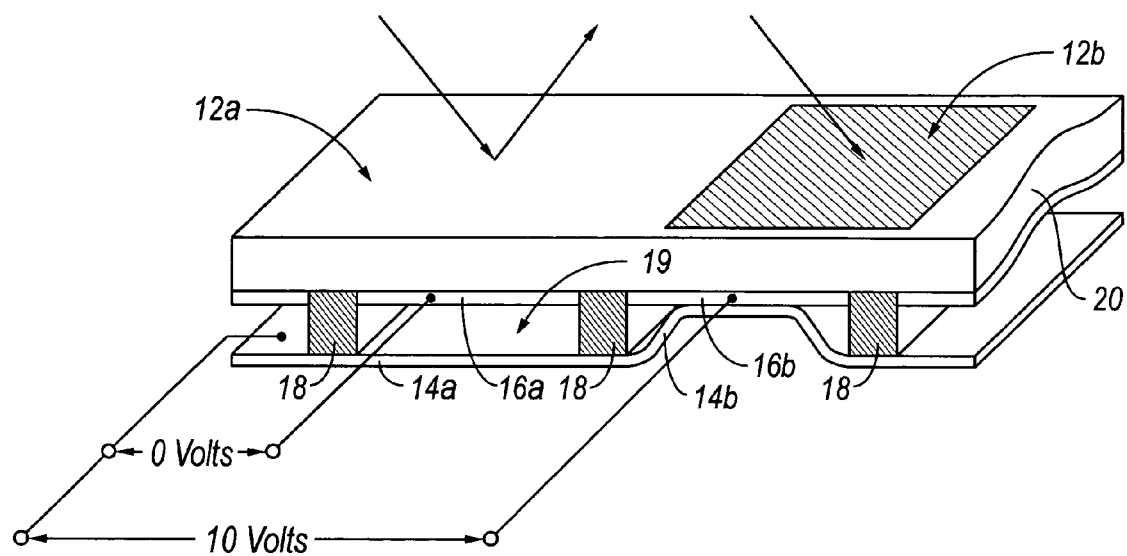


FIG. 1

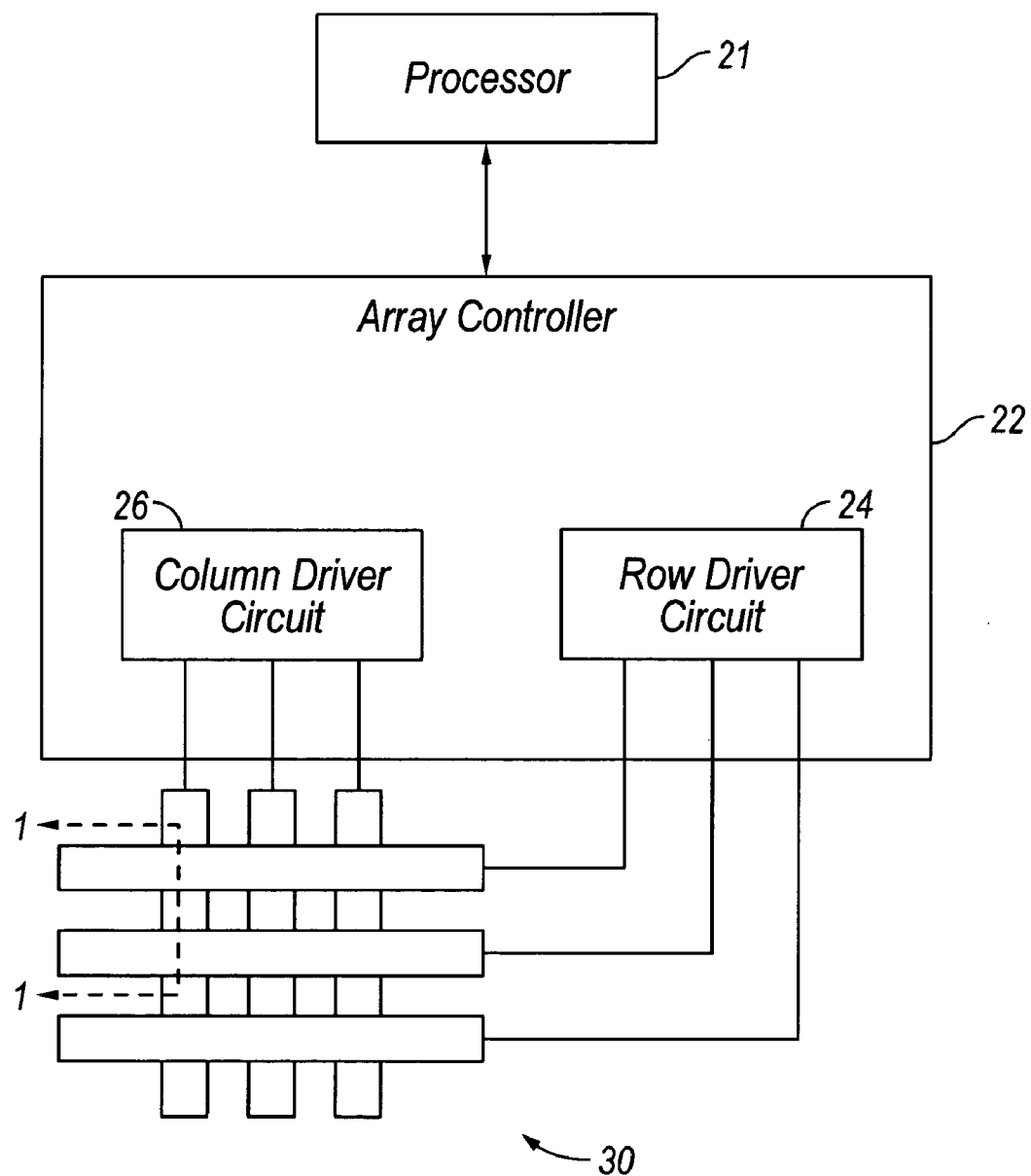


FIG. 2

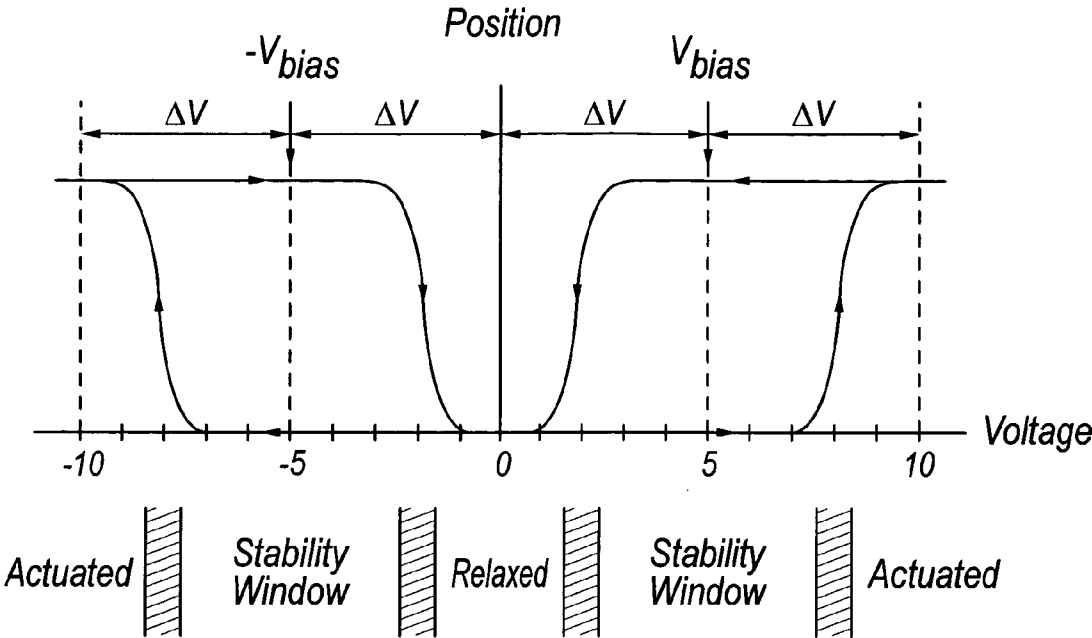


FIG. 3

	Column Output Signals	
	$+V_{bias}$	$-V_{bias}$
Row Output Signals		
0	Stable	Stable
$+\Delta V$	Relax	Actuate
$-\Delta V$	Actuate	Relax

FIG. 4

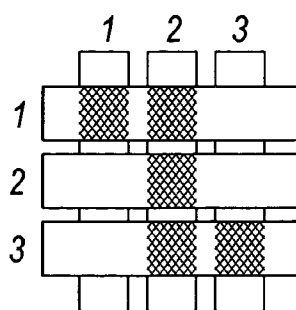


FIG. 5A

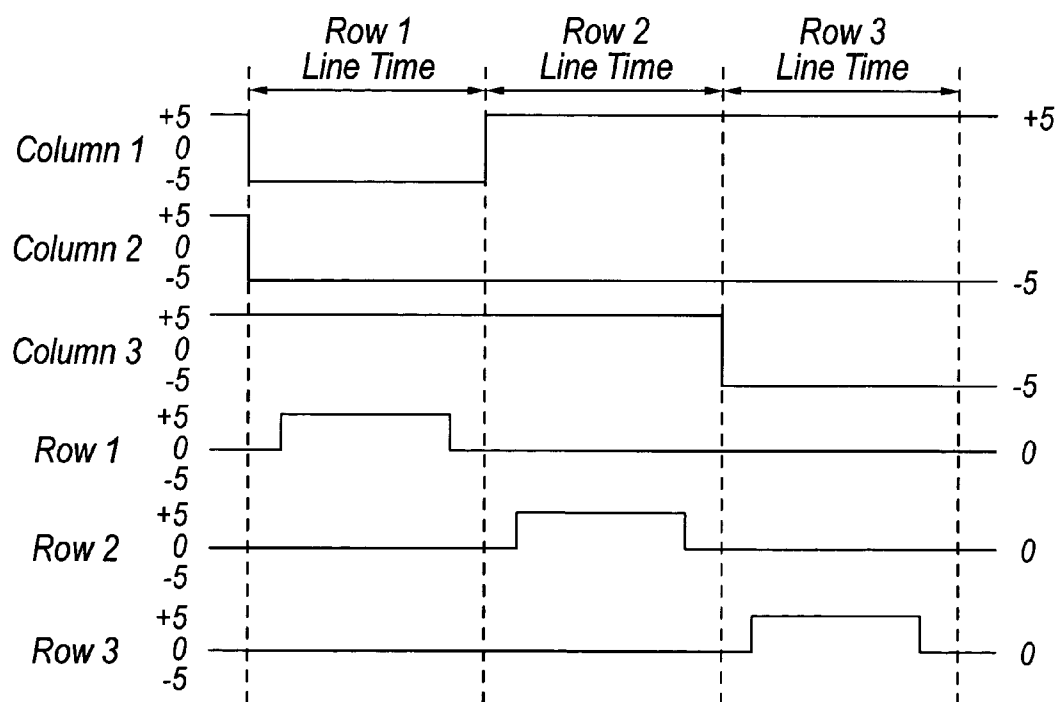


FIG. 5B

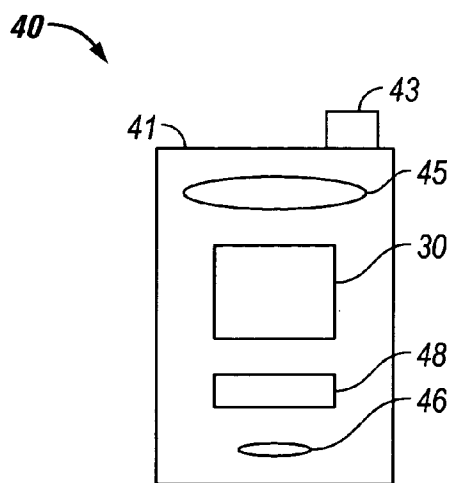


FIG. 6A

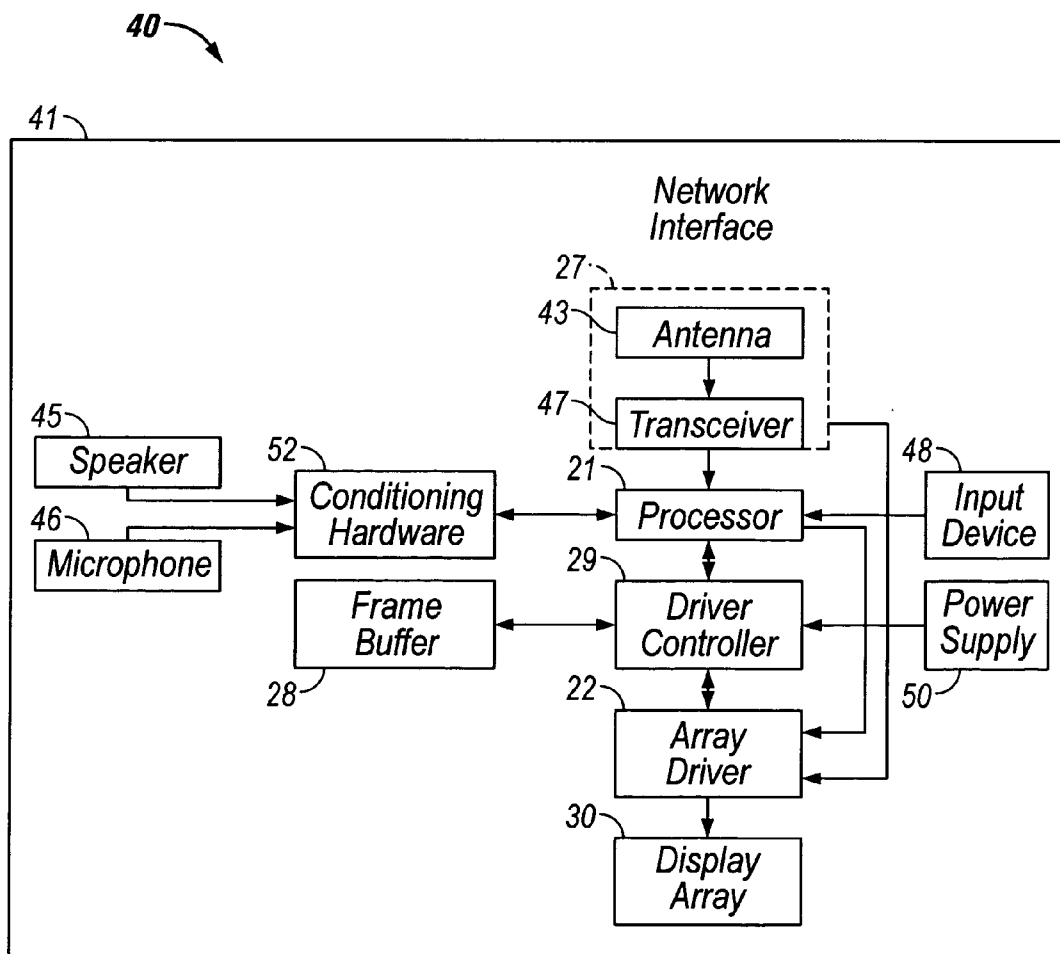


FIG. 6B

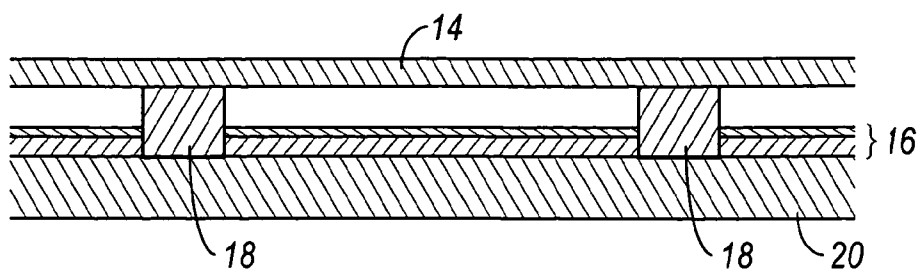


FIG. 7A

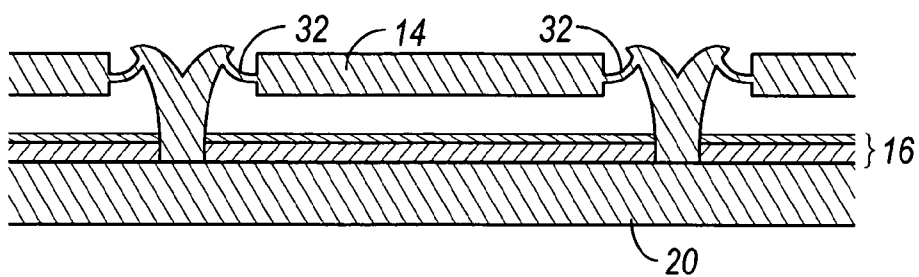


FIG. 7B

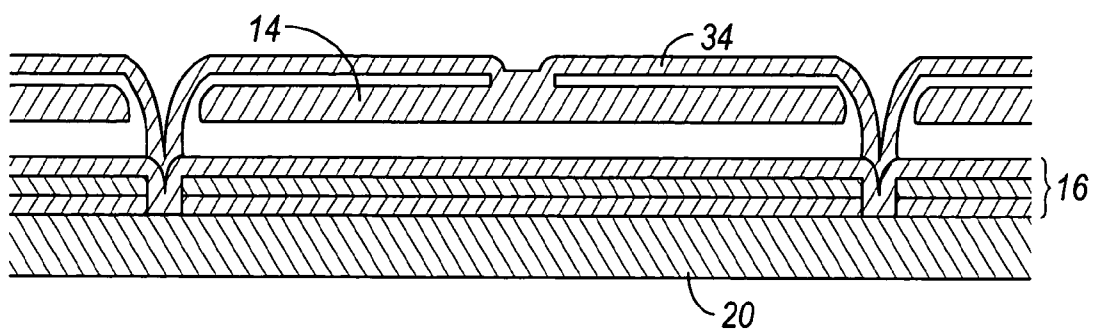


FIG. 7C

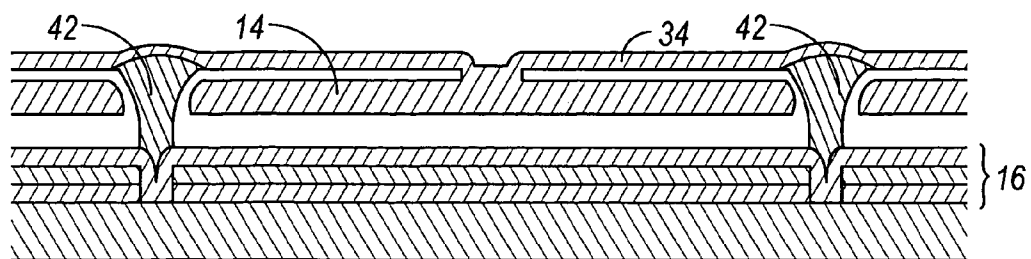


FIG. 7D

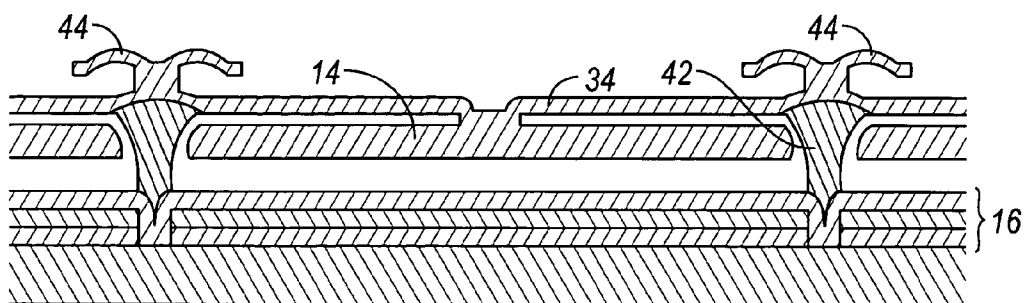


FIG. 7E

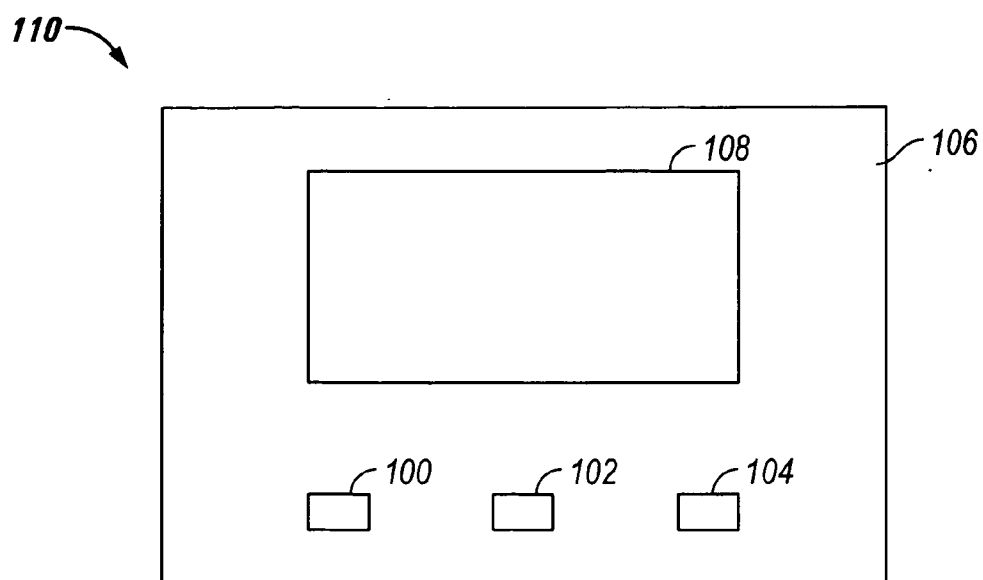


FIG. 8

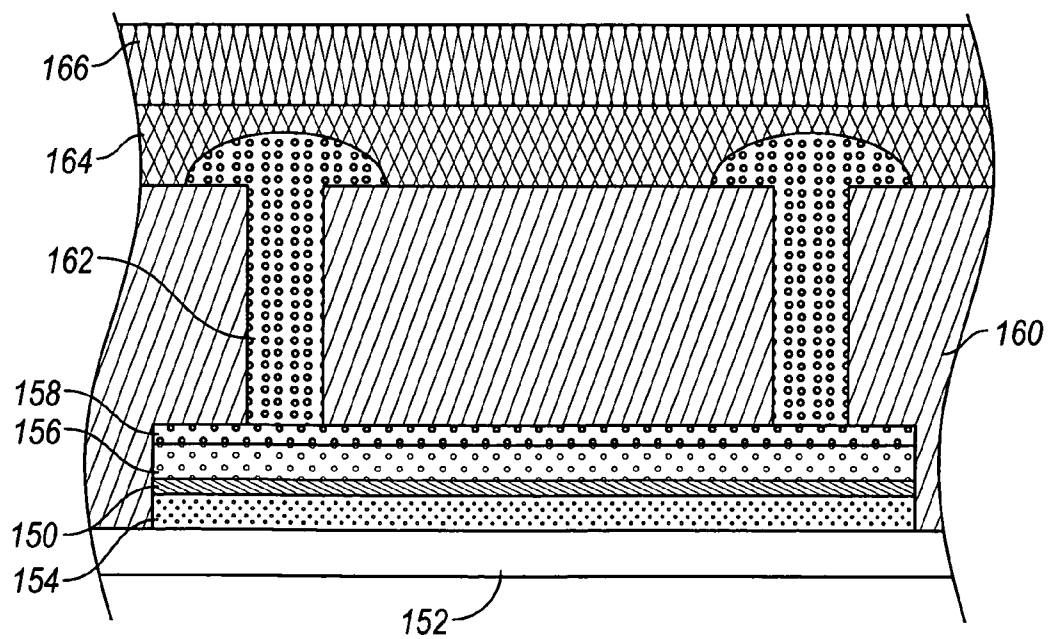


FIG. 9

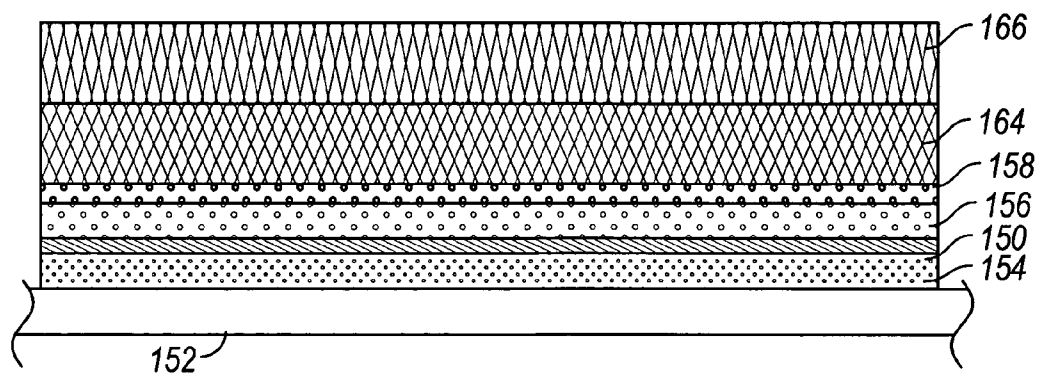


FIG. 10A

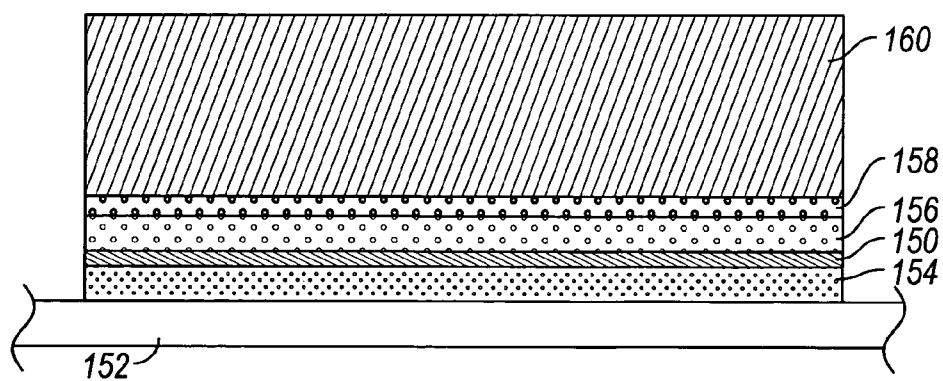


FIG. 10B

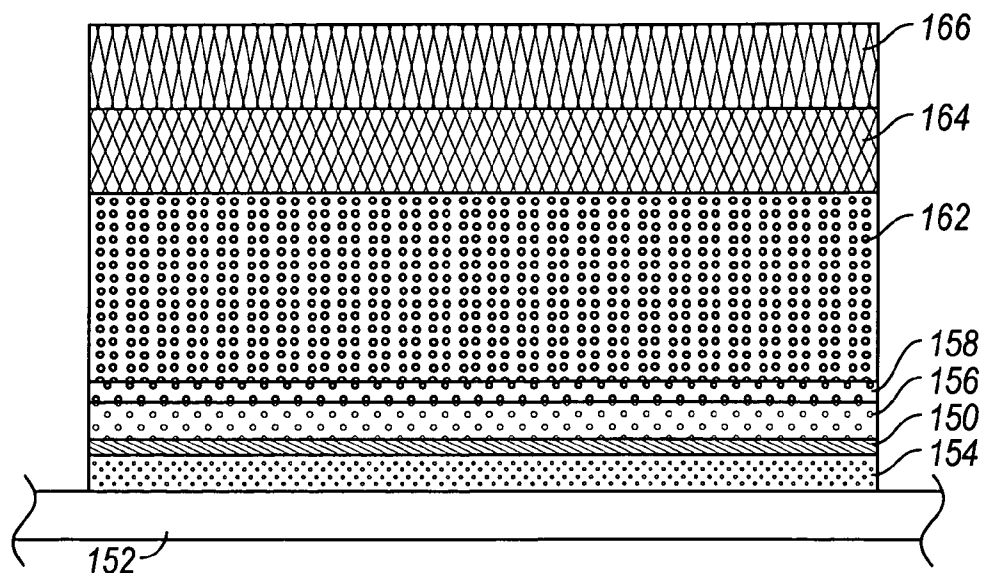


FIG. 10C

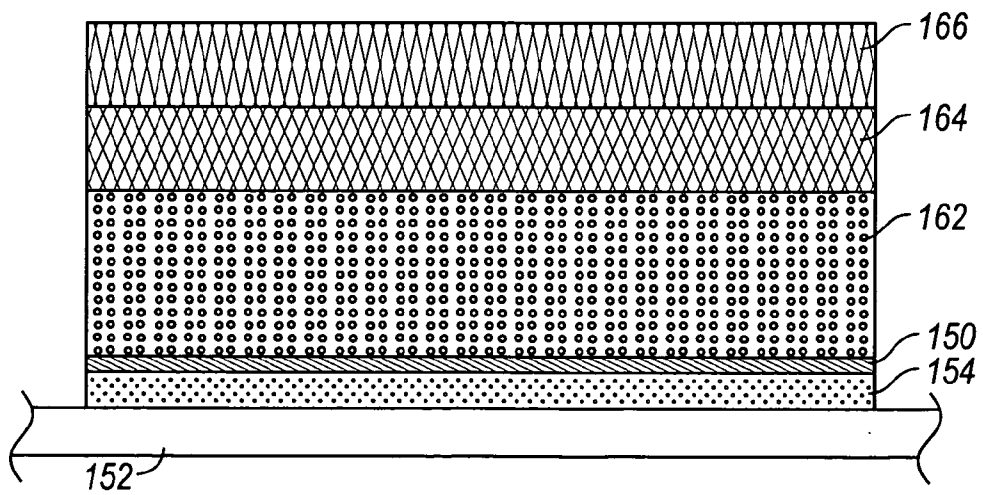


FIG. 10D

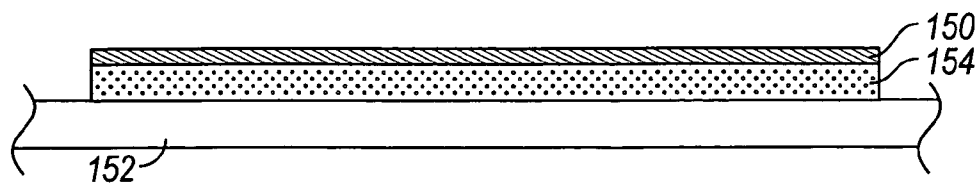


FIG. 11A

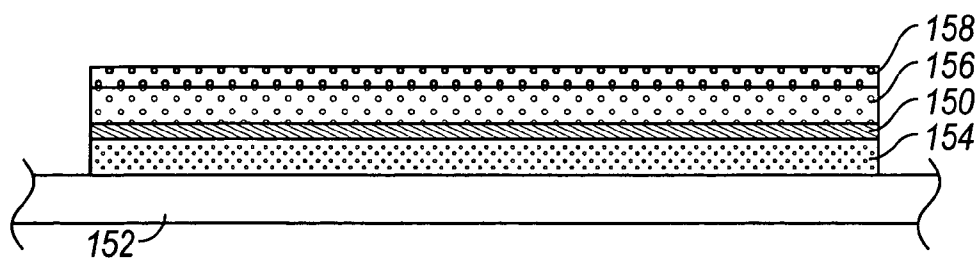


FIG. 11B

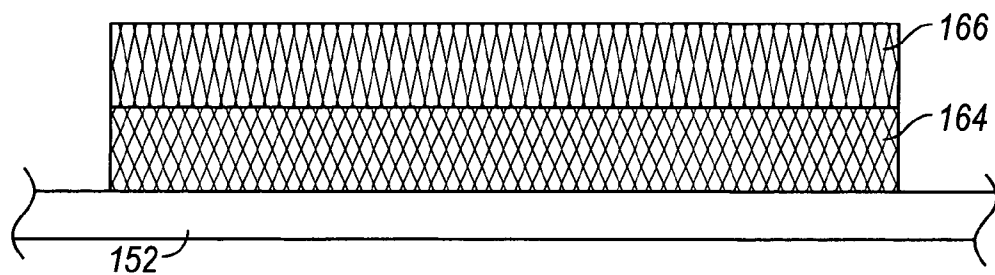


FIG. 11C

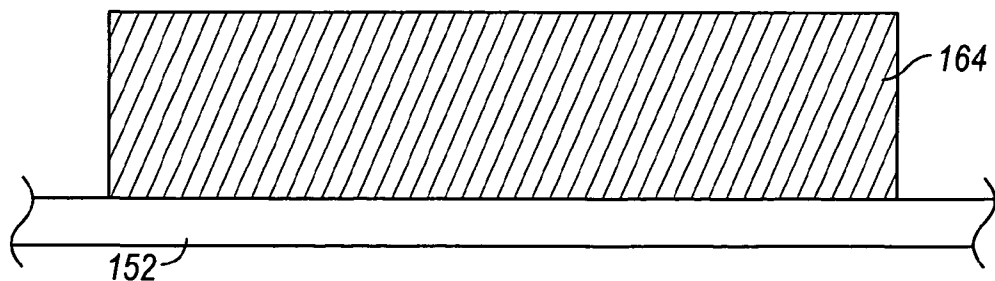


FIG. 11D

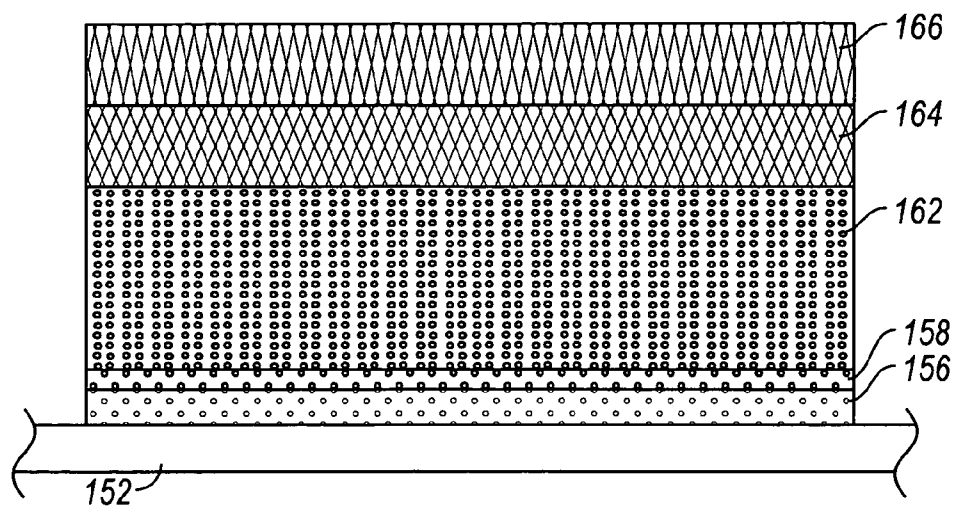


FIG. 11E

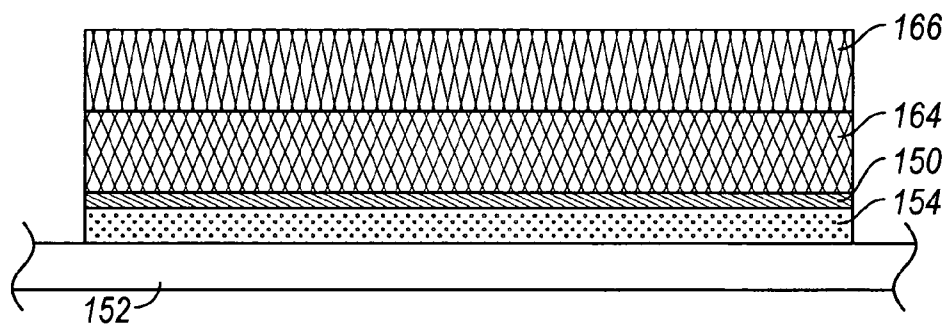


FIG. 11F

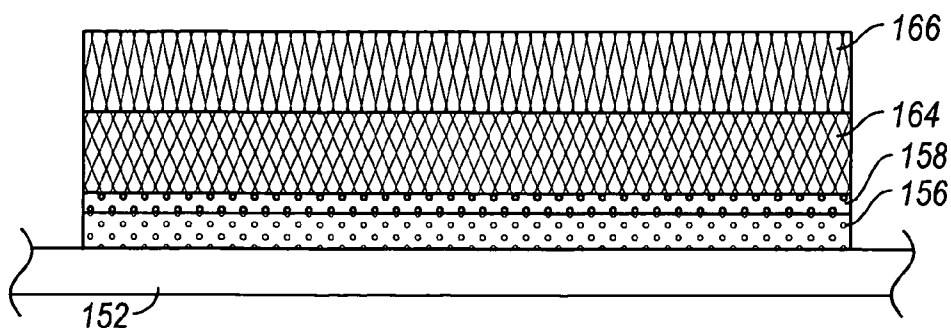


FIG. 11G

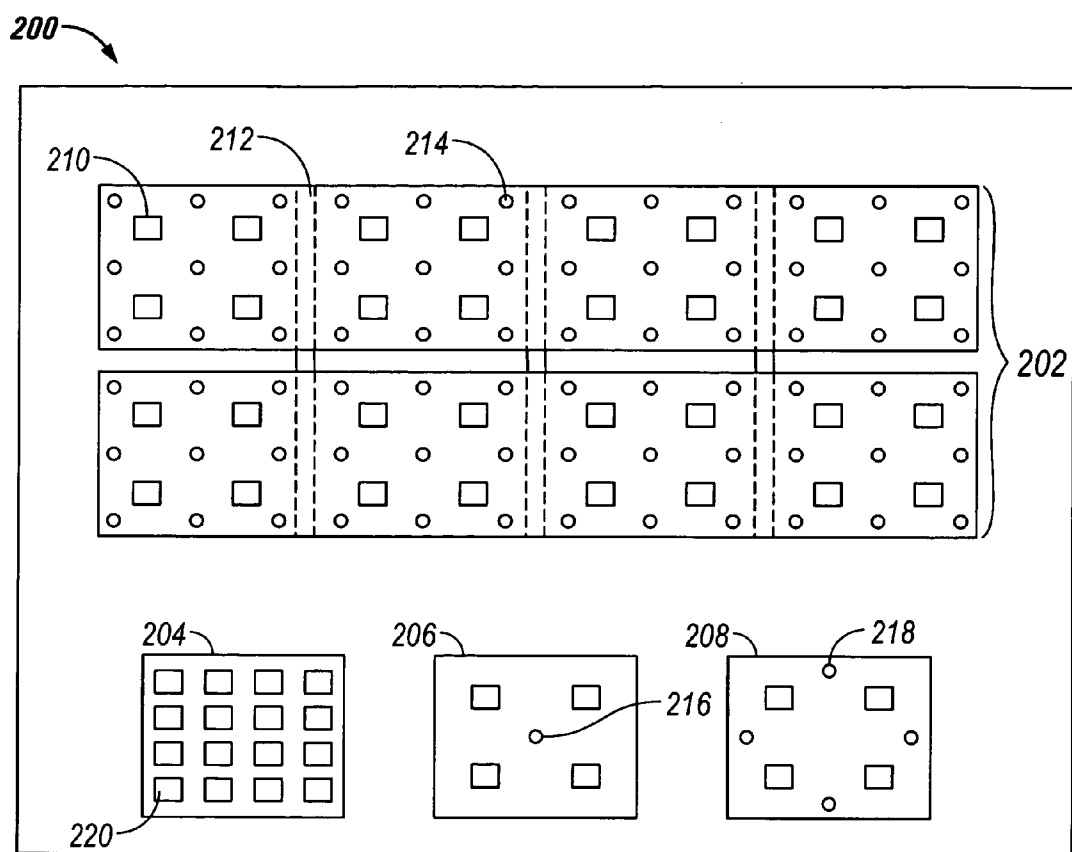


FIG. 12

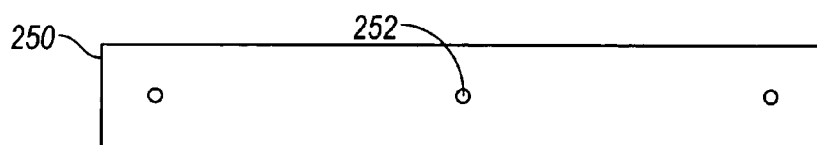


FIG. 13A

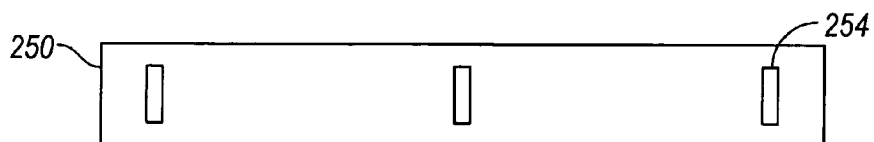
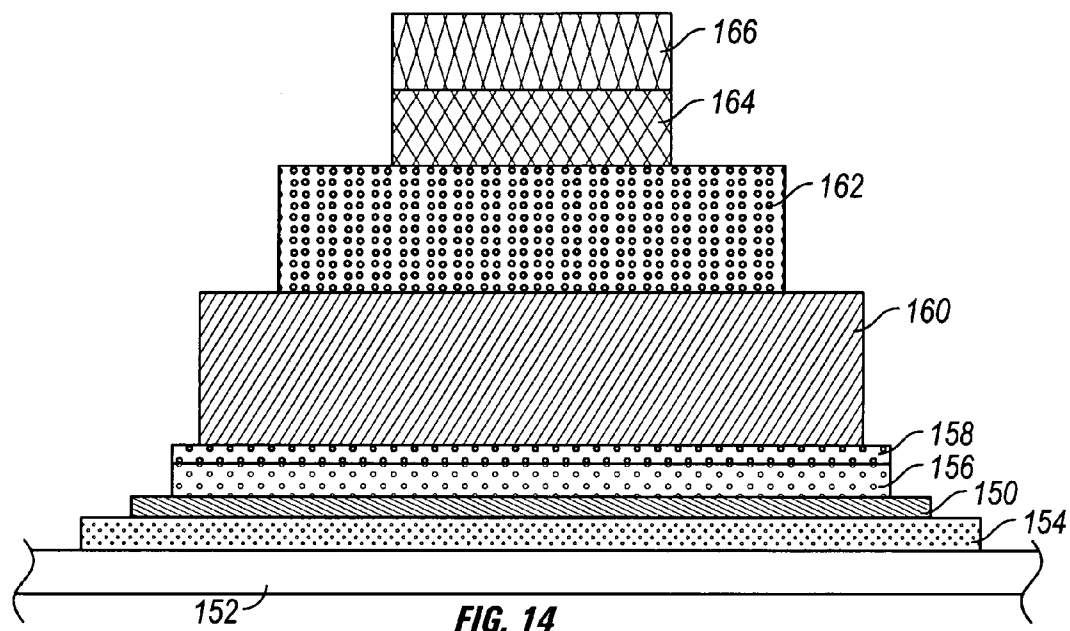


FIG. 13B



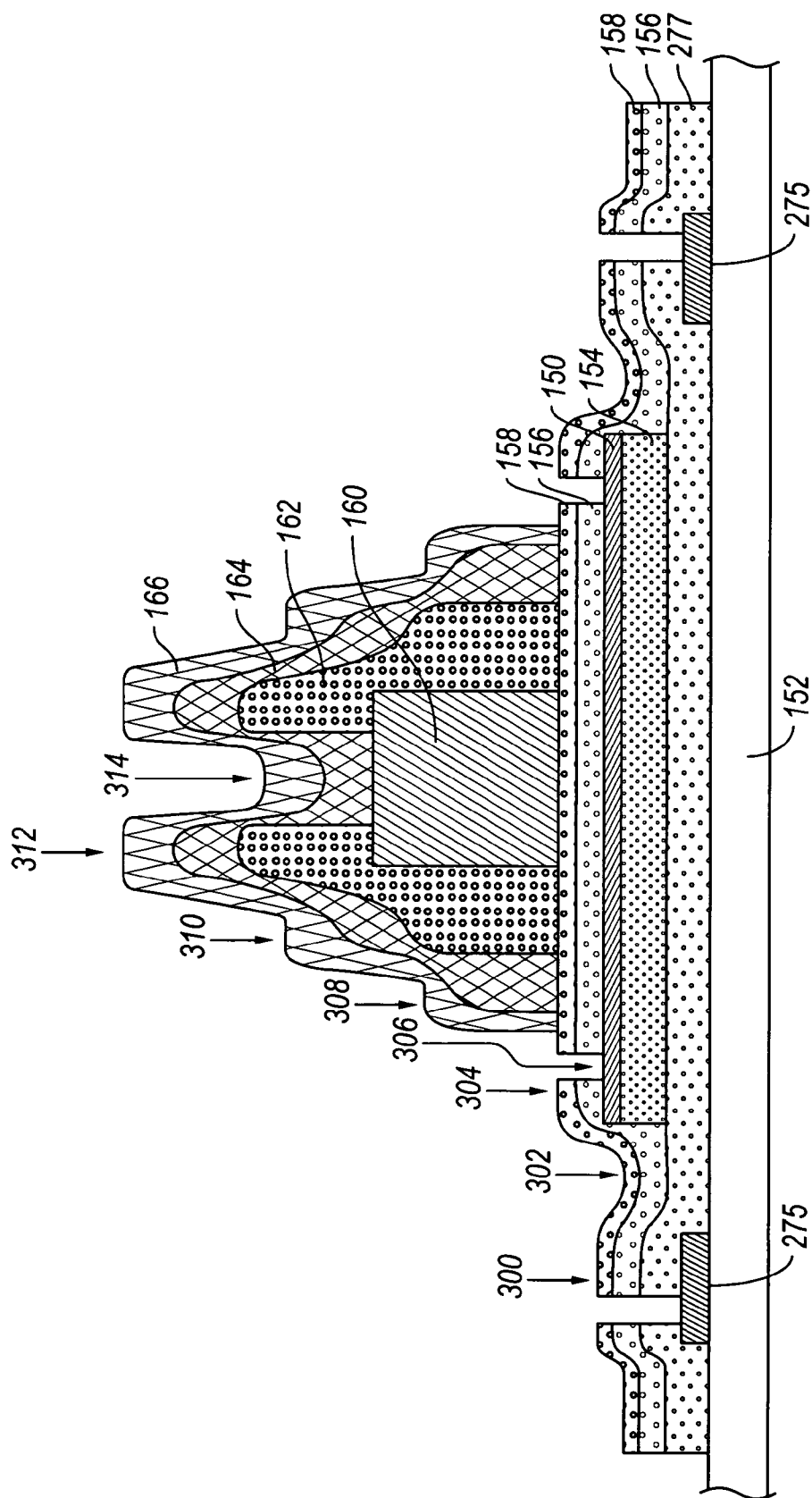


FIG. 15

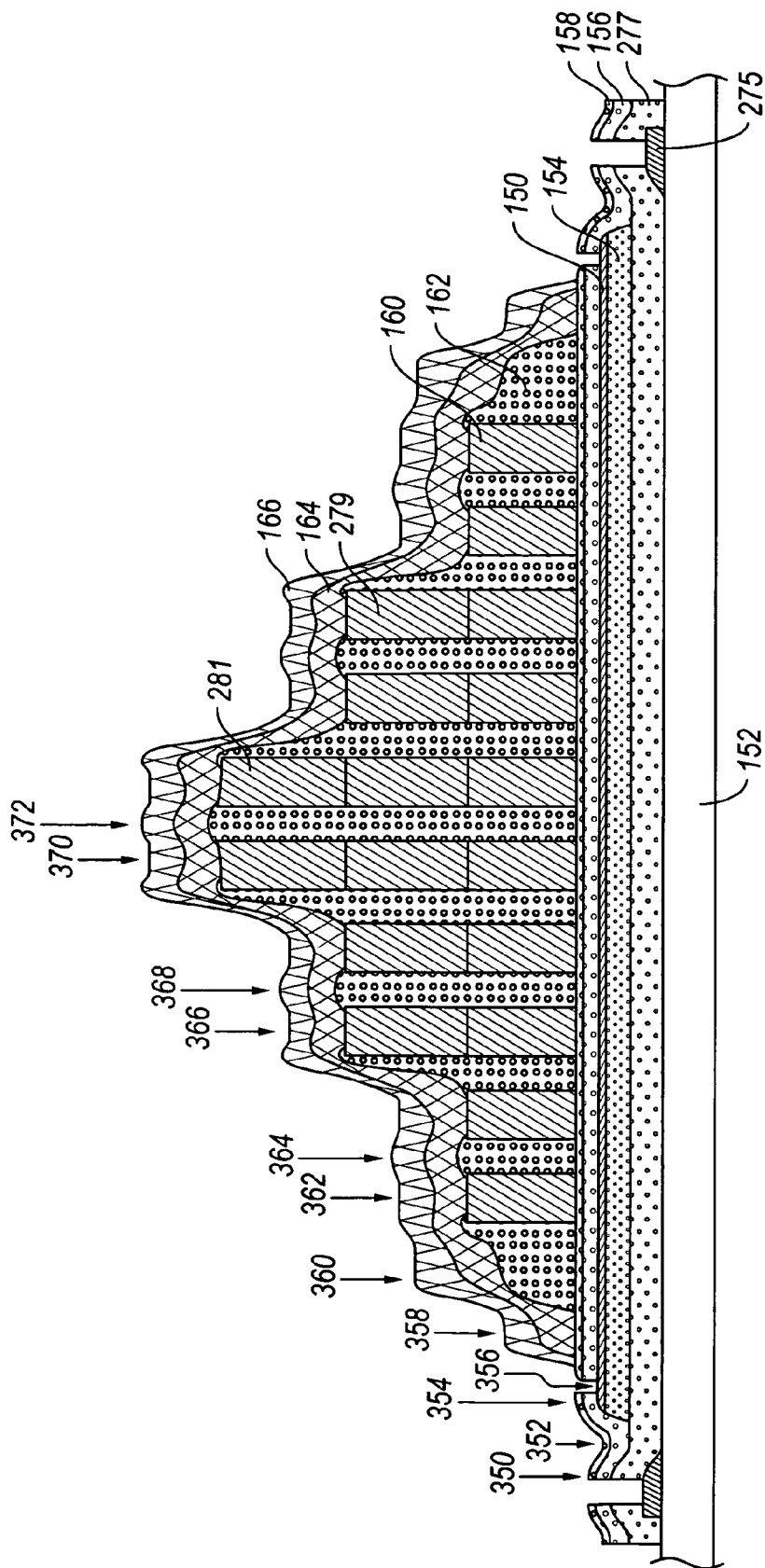


FIG. 16

PROCESS CONTROL MONITORS FOR INTERFEROMETRIC MODULATORS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/613,537, filed on, Sep. 27, 2004, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The field of the invention relates to microelectromechanical systems (MEMS).

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] Microelectromechanical systems (MEMS) include micro mechanical elements, actuators, and electronics. Micromechanical elements may be created using deposition, etching, and or other micromachining processes that etch away parts of substrates and/or deposited material layers or that add layers to form electrical and electromechanical devices. One type of MEMS device is called an interferometric modulator. As used herein, the term interferometric modulator or interferometric light modulator refers to a device that selectively absorbs and/or reflects light using the principles of optical interference. In certain embodiments, an interferometric modulator may comprise a pair of conductive plates, one or both of which may be transparent and/or reflective in whole or part and capable of relative motion upon application of an appropriate electrical signal. In a particular embodiment, one plate may comprise a stationary layer deposited on a substrate and the other plate may comprise a metallic membrane separated from the stationary layer by an air gap. As described herein in more detail, the position of one plate in relation to another can change the optical interference of light incident on the interferometric modulator. Such devices have a wide range of applications, and it would be beneficial in the art to utilize and/or modify the characteristics of these types of devices so that their features can be exploited in improving existing products and creating new products that have not yet been developed.

[0006] Errors can occur during the manufacturing of MEMS devices. Detecting the errors and the source of the errors can present a problem in the quality control and optimization of MEMS devices. Accordingly, there is a need for structures and methods for monitoring manufacturing processes and their results.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] One embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of obtaining information regarding manufacturing processes used to manufacture a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS), the method including forming at least one MEMS structure on a first side of a substrate through a series of deposition and patterning steps, simultaneously forming at least one process control monitor on the first side of the substrate utilizing the series of deposition and patterning steps, wherein the process control monitor has at least one structural difference from the MEMS structure, and detecting light reflected from the process control monitor from a second side of the substrate opposite the first side, whereby

the detected light provides a characteristic of at least one material deposited or removed during the deposition and patterning steps.

[0008] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of monitoring interferometric modulator manufacturing processes, wherein the manufacturing process comprises a series of deposition and patterning steps, the method including forming a process control monitor using the series of deposition and patterning steps, wherein the process control monitor has at least one structural difference from interferometric modulators formed by the manufacturing process and detecting optical reflectance from the process control monitor.

[0009] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a process control monitor for use in monitoring interferometric modulator manufacturing processes, wherein the interferometric modulators are adapted for use in a display, the process control monitor manufactured by a process comprising at least one step in common with steps used to manufacture the interferometric modulators adapted for use in the display.

[0010] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising one or more interferometric modulators adapted for use in a display and one or more process control monitors adapted to reflect incident light and thereby provide information regarding processes used to manufacture the one or more interferometric modulators.

[0011] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of first means for reflecting light for use in a display and second means for monitoring processes used to manufacture the first means.

[0012] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a display, comprising a first wafer that comprises a plurality of interferometric modulators, wherein the first wafer is produced by a process comprising forming the plurality of interferometric modulators and at least one process control monitor on a second wafer and cutting the second wafer to remove the process control monitor and thereby produce the first wafer.

[0013] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of identifying an array of interferometric modulators as suitable for use in a display, wherein the interferometric modulators are manufactured by a process comprising a series of deposition and patterning steps, the method including forming at least one process control monitor using at least some of the series of deposition and patterning steps and detecting at least one characteristic of the process control monitor.

[0014] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of monitoring the extent of etching of a first material positioned between and adjacent to two layers of other material during manufacturing of a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS), the method including manufacturing a process control monitor that comprises the two layers of other material and the first material disposed between and adjacent to the two layers, wherein one of the two layers comprises a hole, exposing the hole to an etchant, and optically detecting a distance from the center of the hole to where the etchant has etched away the first material, whereby the distance is indicative of the extent of etching of the first material.

[0015] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of structures comprising a sacrificial layer and at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer, wherein the structures become interferometric modulators upon removal of the sacrificial layer, wherein the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer comprises a plurality of holes through which an etchant can reach the sacrificial layer and a process control monitor also comprising the sacrificial layer and the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer, wherein the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer in the process control monitor comprises multiple holes, wherein the distance between the holes in the process control monitor is greater than the distance between the plurality of holes in the plurality of structures.

[0016] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of structures comprising a sacrificial layer and at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer, wherein the structures become interferometric modulators upon removal of the sacrificial layer, wherein the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer comprises a plurality of holes through which an etchant can reach the sacrificial layer and a process control monitor also comprising the sacrificial layer and the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer, wherein the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer in the process control monitor comprises a single hole.

[0017] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of manufacturing a wafer having a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS) and a process control monitor structure, the method including forming a plurality of structures, wherein forming the plurality of structures includes one or more material deposition and removal steps, wherein the structures comprise a sacrificial layer and at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer, wherein the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer comprises a plurality of holes through which an etchant can reach the sacrificial layer, simultaneously forming a process control monitor, wherein forming the process control monitor includes the one or more material deposition and removal steps, wherein the process control monitor also comprises the sacrificial layer and the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer, wherein the at least one layer above and adjacent to the sacrificial layer in the process control monitor comprises multiple holes, wherein the distance between the holes in the process control monitor is greater than the distance between the plurality of holes in the plurality of structures, and exposing the plurality of structures and the process control monitor to an etchant.

[0018] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising: a micro-electro-mechanical structure (MEMS) and means for measuring extent of etching of a material removed during manufacturing of the MEMS.

[0019] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a process control monitor produced by process including depositing at least three layers of material on top of each other and forming a hole in the top layer of material.

[0020] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method for determining the effect of an interferometric modulator manufacturing process on color reflected from interferometric modulators manufactured by the process, the

method including manufacturing a plurality of interferometric modulators comprising posts that support a first mechanical membrane, manufacturing a process control monitor etalon comprising posts that support a second mechanical membrane, wherein the posts in the process control monitor are present in higher density than the posts in the plurality of interferometric modulators, and detecting light reflected from the process control monitor etalon, whereby the detected light provides an indication of the depth of an interferometric cavity in the plurality of interferometric modulators.

[0021] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a process control monitor for monitoring the effect of a process for manufacturing interferometric modulators on color reflected by those interferometric modulators, comprising a test etalon that comprises a higher density of posts supporting a mechanical membrane in the test etalon than in interferometric modulators produced by the process.

[0022] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of interferometric modulators adapted for use in a display and a process control monitor that comprises an etalon having a higher density of posts supporting a mechanical membrane than in the plurality of interferometric modulators.

[0023] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a process control monitor, comprising an etalon having a conductive partial mirror and a conductive mechanical membrane comprising a mirror, wherein the mechanical membrane is separated from the partial mirror by a plurality of posts, wherein the density of posts is high enough such that the mechanical membrane cannot collapse toward the partial mirror when a voltage is applied between the partial mirror and the mechanical membrane.

[0024] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of manufacturing a combined micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS) and process control monitor structure, the method including forming a MEMS structure, wherein forming the MEMS structure includes one or more material deposition and patterning steps, wherein the MEMS structure comprises a first mechanical membrane supported by a first plurality of posts and simultaneously forming a process control monitor, wherein forming the process control monitor includes the one or more material deposition and patterning steps, the process control monitor comprising a second mechanical membrane supported by a second plurality of posts, wherein the second plurality of posts are present in a higher density than the first plurality of posts.

[0025] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of first means for reflecting light for use in a display and second means for stably reflecting light having substantially the same color as reflected from at least one of the second means.

[0026] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a process control monitor produced by a process that includes forming a partial mirror, forming a mechanical membrane, and forming a plurality of posts supporting the mechanical membrane and separating the mechanical membrane from the partial mirror, wherein the density of posts is high enough such that the mechanical membrane cannot collapse toward the partial mirror when a voltage is applied between the partial mirror and the mechanical membrane.

[0027] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of monitoring deposition of material deposited during manufacturing of a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS), the method including forming a process control monitor that consists of at least three layers of material deposited during the manufacturing, wherein the at least three layers of material is less than the number of layers deposited during manufacturing of the MEMS, wherein the at least three layers of material form an etalon and detecting light reflected from the etalon, whereby information regarding properties of the at least three layers is obtained.

[0028] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of interferometric modulators adapted for use in a display and a non-modulating interferometer.

[0029] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of monitoring deposition of material deposited during manufacturing of a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS), the method including forming a process control monitor comprising one or more layers of material deposited during the manufacturing, wherein the number of layers of material in the process control monitor is less than the number of layers deposited during manufacturing of the MEMS and detecting the reflectance of the process control monitor, whereby the reflectance provides information regarding properties of the layers in the process control monitor.

[0030] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of interferometric modulators adapted for use in a display, the interferometric modulators comprising a plurality of material layers and a process control monitor comprising one or more of the material layers, wherein the process control monitor comprises less than all of the plurality of material layers.

[0031] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of manufacturing a combined micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS) and process control monitor structure, the method including forming a MEMS structure, wherein forming the MEMS structure includes one or more material deposition and patterning steps and simultaneously forming a process control monitor, wherein forming the process control monitor includes the one or more material deposition and patterning steps, wherein the process control monitor comprises less than all components present in the MEMS structure.

[0032] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer produced by a process that includes depositing and patterning a series of material layers on a substrate to form a MEMS structure and simultaneously depositing and patterning a series of material layers on the substrate to form a process control monitor, wherein the process control monitor comprises less than all components present in the MEMS structure.

[0033] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of measuring thicknesses of layers deposited during manufacture of a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS), the method including forming a structure that comprises two or more layers successively deposited on top of each other, wherein the layers are formed using a process that is used for forming those layers during manufacture of the MEMS, wherein the layers are patterned such that at

least two steps are formed in a profile of the structure and measuring the height of the steps by sweeping a profilometer across the structure.

[0034] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a process control monitor for measuring the thicknesses of a plurality of layers deposited during manufacturing of an interferometric modulator, comprising the layers stacked on top of each other so as to form at least two steps in a profile of the process control monitor.

[0035] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of interferometric modulators adapted for use in a display, the interferometric modulators comprising a plurality of material layers and a process control monitor comprising the plurality of material layers stacked on top of each other so as to form at least two steps in a profile of the process control monitor.

[0036] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of manufacturing a combined micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS) and process control monitor structure, the method including forming a MEMS structure, wherein forming the MEMS structure includes one or more material deposition and patterning steps, wherein the MEMS structure comprises a plurality of layers and simultaneously forming a process control monitor, wherein forming the process control monitor includes the one or more material deposition and patterning steps, wherein the process control monitor comprises the plurality of layers so as to form at least two steps in a profile of the process control monitor.

[0037] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer, comprising a plurality of first means for reflecting light for use in a display and second means for measuring thickness of at least one material deposited during manufacture of the first means.

[0038] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a wafer produced by a process comprising depositing and patterning a series of material layers on a substrate to form a MEMS structure and simultaneously depositing and patterning the series of material layers on the substrate to form a process control monitor, wherein layers of material remaining in the process control monitor after the patterning form at least two steps in a profile of the process control monitor.

[0039] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a method of testing a process used to manufacture a polychromatic interferometric modulator display, wherein different color interferometric modulators in the display are manufactured by forming different depth gaps between a partial reflector and a reflective mechanical membrane, wherein the depths of the gaps are determined by deposition of one or more sacrificial layers, wherein the depth of at least one gap is determined by deposition of a plurality of sacrificial layers, the method including forming a process control monitor that comprises the one or more sacrificial layers, wherein at least one region of the process control monitor comprises the plurality of sacrificial layers deposited on top of each other, measuring a profile of the process control monitor, and determining a cumulative thickness of the plurality of sacrificial layers from the profile.

[0040] Another embodiment disclosed herein includes a process control monitor for use in testing a process used to manufacture a polychromatic interferometric modulator dis-

play, wherein different color interferometric modulators in the display are manufactured by forming different depth gaps between a partial reflector and a reflective mechanical membrane, wherein the depths of the gaps are determined by deposition of one or more sacrificial layers, wherein the depth of at least one gap is determined by deposition of a plurality of sacrificial layers, the process control monitor comprising a plurality of material layers on top of each other, wherein one region of the process control monitor includes a single sacrificial layer, a second region of the process control monitor includes two sacrificial layers on top of each other, and a third region of the process control monitor includes three sacrificial layers on top of each other.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0041] **FIG. 1** is an isometric view depicting a portion of one embodiment of an interferometric modulator display in which a movable reflective layer of a first interferometric modulator is in a relaxed position and a movable reflective layer of a second interferometric modulator is in an actuated position.

[0042] **FIG. 2** is a system block diagram illustrating one embodiment of an electronic device incorporating a 3×3 interferometric modulator display.

[0043] **FIG. 3** is a diagram of movable mirror position versus applied voltage for one exemplary embodiment of an interferometric modulator of **FIG. 1**.

[0044] **FIG. 4** is an illustration of a set of row and column voltages that may be used to drive an interferometric modulator display.

[0045] **FIG. 5A** illustrates one exemplary frame of display data in the 3×3 interferometric modulator display of **FIG. 2**.

[0046] **FIG. 5B** illustrates one exemplary timing diagram for row and column signals that may be used to write the frame of **FIG. 5A**.

[0047] **FIGS. 6A and 6B** are system block diagrams illustrating an embodiment of a visual display device comprising a plurality of interferometric modulators.

[0048] **FIG. 7A** is a cross section of the device of **FIG. 1**.

[0049] **FIG. 7B** is a cross section of an alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0050] **FIG. 7C** is a cross section of another alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0051] **FIG. 7D** is a cross section of yet another alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0052] **FIG. 7E** is a cross section of an additional alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0053] **FIG. 8** is a top view of a wafer comprising a MEMS structure and multiple process control monitors.

[0054] **FIG. 9** is a cross section of layers deposited during manufacture of an interferometric modulator.

[0055] **FIG. 10A** is a cross section of layers in an etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0056] **FIG. 10B** is a cross section of layers in another etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0057] **FIG. 10C** is a cross section of layers in another etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0058] **FIG. 10D** is a cross section of layers in another etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0059] **FIG. 11A** is a cross section of layers in a non-etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0060] **FIG. 11B** is a cross section of layers in another non-etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0061] **FIG. 11C** is a cross section of layers in another non-etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0062] **FIG. 11D** is a cross section of layers in another non-etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0063] **FIG. 11E** is a cross section of layers in another non-etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0064] **FIG. 11F** is a cross section of layers in another non-etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0065] **FIG. 11G** is a cross section of layers in another non-etalon-based process control monitor for use in monitoring a process used to manufacture the interferometric modulator of **FIG. 9**.

[0066] **FIG. 12** is a top view of a wafer comprising an interferometric modulator array and process control monitors used to monitor release etching and color reflected from the interferometric modulators.

[0067] **FIG. 13A** is a top view of a process control monitor that can be used to monitor release etching.

[0068] **FIG. 13B** is a top view of another process control monitor that can be used to monitor release etching.

[0069] **FIG. 14** is a cross section of a process control monitor that can be used to measure the thickness of layers in interferometric modulators.

[0070] **FIG. 15** is a cross section of another embodiment of a process control monitor that can be used to measure the thickness of layers in the process control monitor.

[0071] **FIG. 16** is a cross section of yet another embodiment of a process control monitor that can be used to measure the thickness of layers in the process control monitor.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN EMBODIMENTS

[0072] The following detailed description is directed to certain specific embodiments of the invention. However, the invention can be embodied in a multitude of different ways. In this description, reference is made to the drawings wherein like parts are designated with like numerals throughout. As will be apparent from the following description, the embodiments may be implemented in any device that is configured to display an image, whether in motion (e.g., video) or stationary (e.g., still image), and whether textual or pictorial. More particularly, it is contemplated that the embodiments may be implemented in or associated with a variety of electronic devices such as, but not limited to, mobile telephones, wireless devices, personal data assistants (PDAs), hand-held or portable computers, GPS receivers/navigators, cameras, MP3 players, camcorders, game consoles, wrist watches, clocks, calculators, television monitors, flat panel displays, computer monitors, auto displays (e.g., odometer display, etc.), cockpit controls and/or displays, display of camera views (e.g., display of a rear view camera in a vehicle), electronic photographs, electronic billboards or signs, projectors, architectural structures, packaging, and aesthetic structures (e.g., display of images on a piece of jewelry). MEMS devices of similar structure to those described herein can also be used in non-display applications such as in electronic switching devices.

[0073] Manufacturing of MEMS devices typically involve the formation of several layers of material having structures and thicknesses formed by using a series of material deposition, patterning, and etching steps. It can be difficult to diagnose from the final MEMS device any errors that occurred during the processing of given layers in the device. Furthermore, it can be difficult to determine from the final device which specific parameters, such as film thicknesses, should be adjusted in order to optimize the device for its intended use. Accordingly, there is a need for structures and methods that can be used to monitor the result of specific processing steps. Therefore, in various embodiments, process control monitors are provided that are constructed using at least some of the same processes used to manufacture MEMS devices. Analysis of the process control monitors provide information regarding individual components or sub-sets of components that make up the MEMS device.

[0074] One interferometric modulator display embodiment comprising an interferometric MEMS display element is illustrated in FIG. 1. In these devices, the pixels are in either a bright or dark state. In the bright ("on" or "open") state, the display element reflects a large portion of incident visible light to a user. When in the dark ("off" or "closed") state, the display element reflects little incident visible light to the user. Depending on the embodiment, the light reflectance properties of the "on" and "off" states may be reversed. MEMS pixels can be configured to reflect predominantly at selected colors, allowing for a color display in addition to black and white.

[0075] FIG. 1 is an isometric view depicting two adjacent pixels in a series of pixels of a visual display, wherein each pixel comprises a MEMS interferometric modulator. In some embodiments, an interferometric modulator display comprises a row/column array of these interferometric modulators. Each interferometric modulator includes a pair

of reflective layers positioned at a variable and controllable distance from each other to form a resonant optical cavity with at least one variable dimension. In one embodiment, one of the reflective layers may be moved between two positions. In the first position, referred to herein as the relaxed position, the movable reflective layer is positioned at a relatively large distance from a fixed partially reflective layer. In the second position, referred to herein as the actuated position, the movable reflective layer is positioned more closely adjacent to the partially reflective layer. Incident light that reflects from the two layers interferes constructively or destructively depending on the position of the movable reflective layer, producing either an overall reflective or non-reflective state for each pixel.

[0076] The depicted portion of the pixel array in FIG. 1 includes two adjacent interferometric modulators 12a and 12b. In the interferometric modulator 12a on the left, a movable reflective layer 14a is illustrated in a relaxed position at a predetermined distance from an optical stack 16a, which includes a partially reflective layer. In the interferometric modulator 12b on the right, the movable reflective layer 14b is illustrated in an actuated position adjacent to the optical stack 16b.

[0077] The optical stacks 16a and 16b (collectively referred to as optical stack 16), as referenced herein, typically comprise of several fused layers, which can include an electrode layer, such as indium tin oxide (ITO), a partially reflective layer, such as chromium, and a transparent dielectric. The optical stack 16 is thus electrically conductive, partially transparent and partially reflective, and may be fabricated, for example, by depositing one or more of the above layers onto a transparent substrate 20. In some embodiments, the layers are patterned into parallel strips, and may form row electrodes in a display device as described further below. The movable reflective layers 14a, 14b may be formed as a series of parallel strips of a deposited metal layer or layers (orthogonal to the row electrodes of 16a, 16b) deposited on top of posts 18 and an intervening sacrificial material deposited between the posts 18. When the sacrificial material is etched away, the movable reflective layers 14a, 14b are separated from the optical stacks 16a, 16b by a defined gap 19. A highly conductive and reflective material such as aluminum may be used for the reflective layers 14, and these strips may form column electrodes in a display device.

[0078] With no applied voltage, the cavity 19 remains between the movable reflective layer 14a and optical stack 16a, with the movable reflective layer 14a in a mechanically relaxed state, as illustrated by the pixel 12a in FIG. 1. However, when a potential difference is applied to a selected row and column, the capacitor formed at the intersection of the row and column electrodes at the corresponding pixel becomes charged, and electrostatic forces pull the electrodes together. If the voltage is high enough, the movable reflective layer 14 is deformed and is forced against the optical stack 16. A dielectric layer (not illustrated in this Figure) within the optical stack 16 may prevent shorting and control the separation distance between layers 14 and 16, as illustrated by pixel 12b on the right in FIG. 1. The behavior is the same regardless of the polarity of the applied potential difference. In this way, row/column actuation that can con-

trol the reflective vs. non-reflective pixel states is analogous in many ways to that used in conventional LCD and other display technologies.

[0079] FIGS. 2 through 5B illustrate one exemplary process and system for using an array of interferometric modulators in a display application.

[0080] FIG. 2 is a system block diagram illustrating one embodiment of an electronic device that may incorporate aspects of the invention. In the exemplary embodiment, the electronic device includes a processor 21 which may be any general purpose single- or multi-chip microprocessor such as an ARM, Pentium®, Pentium II®, Pentium III®, Pentium IV®, Pentium® Pro, an 8051, a MIPS®, a Power PC®, an ALPHA®, or any special purpose microprocessor such as a digital signal processor, microcontroller, or a programmable gate array. As is conventional in the art, the processor 21 may be configured to execute one or more software modules. In addition to executing an operating system, the processor may be configured to execute one or more software applications, including a web browser, a telephone application, an email program, or any other software application.

[0081] In one embodiment, the processor 21 is also configured to communicate with an array driver 22. In one embodiment, the array driver 22 includes a row driver circuit 24 and a column driver circuit 26 that provide signals to a panel or display array (display) 30. The cross section of the array illustrated in FIG. 1 is shown by the lines 1-1 in FIG. 2. For MEMS interferometric modulators, the row/column actuation protocol may take advantage of a hysteresis property of these devices illustrated in FIG. 3. It may require, for example, a 10 volt potential difference to cause a movable layer to deform from the relaxed state to the actuated state. However, when the voltage is reduced from that value, the movable layer maintains its state as the voltage drops back below 10 volts. In the exemplary embodiment of FIG. 3, the movable layer does not relax completely until the voltage drops below 2 volts. There is thus a range of voltage, about 3 to 7 V in the example illustrated in FIG. 3, where there exists a window of applied voltage within which the device is stable in either the relaxed or actuated state. This is referred to herein as the “hysteresis window” or “stability window.” For a display array having the hysteresis characteristics of FIG. 3, the row/column actuation protocol can be designed such that during row strobing, pixels in the strobed row that are to be actuated are exposed to a voltage difference of about 10 volts, and pixels that are to be relaxed are exposed to a voltage difference of close to zero volts. After the strobe, the pixels are exposed to a steady state voltage difference of about 5 volts such that they remain in whatever state the row strobe put them in. After being written, each pixel sees a potential difference within the “stability window” of 3-7 volts in this example. This feature makes the pixel design illustrated in FIG. 1 stable under the same applied voltage conditions in either an actuated or relaxed pre-existing state. Since each pixel of the interferometric modulator, whether in the actuated or relaxed state, is essentially a capacitor formed by the fixed and moving reflective layers, this stable state can be held at a voltage within the hysteresis window with almost no power dissipation. Essentially no current flows into the pixel if the applied potential is fixed.

[0082] In typical applications, a display frame may be created by asserting the set of column electrodes in accor-

dance with the desired set of actuated pixels in the first row. A row pulse is then applied to the row 1 electrode, actuating the pixels corresponding to the asserted column lines. The asserted set of column electrodes is then changed to correspond to the desired set of actuated pixels in the second row. A pulse is then applied to the row 2 electrode, actuating the appropriate pixels in row 2 in accordance with the asserted column electrodes. The row 1 pixels are unaffected by the row 2 pulse, and remain in the state they were set to during the row 1 pulse. This may be repeated for the entire series of rows in a sequential fashion to produce the frame. Generally, the frames are refreshed and/or updated with new display data by continually repeating this process at some desired number of frames per second. A wide variety of protocols for driving row and column electrodes of pixel arrays to produce display frames are also well known and may be used in conjunction with the present invention.

[0083] FIGS. 4, 5A, and 5B illustrate one possible actuation protocol for creating a display frame on the 3x3 array of FIG. 2. FIG. 4 illustrates a possible set of column and row voltage levels that may be used for pixels exhibiting the hysteresis curves of FIG. 3. In the FIG. 4 embodiment, actuating a pixel involves setting the appropriate column to $-V_{\text{bias}}$ and the appropriate row to $+\Delta V$, which may correspond to -5 volts and $+5$ volts respectively. Relaxing the pixel is accomplished by setting the appropriate column to $+V_{\text{bias}}$ and the appropriate row to the same $+\Delta V$, producing a zero volt potential difference across the pixel. In those rows where the row voltage is held at zero volts, the pixels are stable in whatever state they were originally in, regardless of whether the column is at $+V_{\text{bias}}$ or $-V_{\text{bias}}$. As is also illustrated in FIG. 4, it will be appreciated that voltages of opposite polarity than those described above can be used, e.g., actuating a pixel can involve setting the appropriate column to $+V_{\text{bias}}$ and the appropriate row to $-\Delta V$. In this embodiment, releasing the pixel is accomplished by setting the appropriate column to $-V_{\text{bias}}$ and the appropriate row to the same $-\Delta V$, producing a zero volt potential difference across the pixel.

[0084] FIG. 5B is a timing diagram showing a series of row and column signals applied to the 3x3 array of FIG. 2 which will result in the display arrangement illustrated in FIG. 5A, where actuated pixels are non-reflective. Prior to writing the frame illustrated in FIG. 5A, the pixels can be in any state, and in this example, all the rows are at 0 volts, and all the columns are at +5 volts. With these applied voltages, all pixels are stable in their existing actuated or relaxed states.

[0085] In the FIG. 5A frame, pixels (1,1), (1,2), (2,2), (3,2) and (3,3) are actuated. To accomplish this, during a “line time” for row 1, columns 1 and 2 are set to -5 volts, and column 3 is set to $+5$ volts. This does not change the state of any pixels, because all the pixels remain in the 3-7 volt stability window. Row 1 is then strobed with a pulse that goes from 0, up to 5 volts, and back to zero. This actuates the (1,1) and (1,2) pixels and relaxes the (1,3) pixel. No other pixels in the array are affected. To set row 2 as desired, column 2 is set to -5 volts, and columns 1 and 3 are set to $+5$ volts. The same strobe applied to row 2 will then actuate pixel (2,2) and relax pixels (2,1) and (2,3). Again, no other pixels of the array are affected. Row 3 is similarly set by setting columns 2 and 3 to -5 volts, and column 1 to $+5$ volts. The row 3 strobe sets the row 3 pixels as shown in

FIG. 5A. After writing the frame, the row potentials are zero, and the column potentials can remain at either +5 or -5 volts, and the display is then stable in the arrangement of **FIG. 5A**. It will be appreciated that the same procedure can be employed for arrays of dozens or hundreds of rows and columns. It will also be appreciated that the timing, sequence, and levels of voltages used to perform row and column actuation can be varied widely within the general principles outlined above, and the above example is exemplary only, and any actuation voltage method can be used with the systems and methods described herein.

[0086] **FIGS. 6A and 6B** are system block diagrams illustrating an embodiment of a display device **40**. The display device **40** can be, for example, a cellular or mobile telephone. However, the same components of display device **40** or slight variations thereof are also illustrative of various types of display devices such as televisions and portable media players.

[0087] The display device **40** includes a housing **41**, a display **30**, an antenna **43**, a speaker **45**, an input device **48**, and a microphone **46**. The housing **41** is generally formed from any of a variety of manufacturing processes as are well known to those of skill in the art, including injection molding, and vacuum forming. In addition, the housing **41** may be made from any of a variety of materials, including but not limited to plastic, metal, glass, rubber, and ceramic, or a combination thereof. In one embodiment the housing **41** includes removable portions (not shown) that may be interchanged with other removable portions of different color, or containing different logos, pictures, or symbols.

[0088] The display **30** of exemplary display device **40** may be any of a variety of displays, including a bi-stable display, as described herein. In other embodiments, the display **30** includes a flat-panel display, such as plasma, EL, OLED, STN LCD, or TFT LCD as described above, or a non-flat-panel display, such as a CRT or other tube device, as is well known to those of skill in the art. However, for purposes of describing the present embodiment, the display **30** includes an interferometric modulator display, as described herein.

[0089] The components of one embodiment of exemplary display device **40** are schematically illustrated in **FIG. 6B**. The illustrated exemplary display device **40** includes a housing **41** and can include additional components at least partially enclosed therein. For example, in one embodiment, the exemplary display device **40** includes a network interface **27** that includes an antenna **43** which is coupled to a transceiver **47**. The transceiver **47** is connected to the processor **21**, which is connected to conditioning hardware **52**. The conditioning hardware **52** may be configured to condition a signal (e.g. filter a signal). The conditioning hardware **52** is connected to a speaker **45** and a microphone **46**. The processor **21** is also connected to an input device **48** and a driver controller **29**. The driver controller **29** is coupled to a frame buffer **28** and to the array driver **22**, which in turn is coupled to a display array **30**. A power supply **50** provides power to all components as required by the particular exemplary display device **40** design.

[0090] The network interface **27** includes the antenna **43** and the transceiver **47** so that the exemplary display device **40** can communicate with one or more devices over a network. In one embodiment the network interface **27** may also have some processing capabilities to relieve require-

ments of the processor **21**. The antenna **43** is any antenna known to those of skill in the art for transmitting and receiving signals. In one embodiment, the antenna transmits and receives RF signals according to the IEEE 802.11 standard, including IEEE 802.11(a), (b), or (g). In another embodiment, the antenna transmits and receives RF signals according to the BLUETOOTH standard. In the case of a cellular telephone, the antenna is designed to receive CDMA, GSM, AMPS or other known signals that are used to communicate within a wireless cell phone network. The transceiver **47** pre-processes the signals received from the antenna **43** so that they may be received by and further manipulated by the processor **21**. The transceiver **47** also processes signals received from the processor **21** so that they may be transmitted from the exemplary display device **40** via the antenna **43**.

[0091] In an alternative embodiment, the transceiver **47** can be replaced by a receiver. In yet another alternative embodiment, network interface **27** can be replaced by an image source, which can store or generate image data to be sent to the processor **21**. For example, the image source can be a digital video disc (DVD) or a hard-disc drive that contains image data, or a software module that generates image data.

[0092] Processor **21** generally controls the overall operation of the exemplary display device **40**. The processor **21** receives data, such as compressed image data from the network interface **27** or an image source, and processes the data into raw image data or into a format that is readily processed into raw image data. The processor **21** then sends the processed data to the driver controller **29** or to frame buffer **28** for storage. Raw data typically refers to the information that identifies the image characteristics at each location within an image. For example, such image characteristics can include color, saturation, and gray-scale level.

[0093] In one embodiment, the processor **21** includes a microcontroller, CPU, or logic unit to control operation of the exemplary display device **40**. Conditioning hardware **52** generally includes amplifiers and filters for transmitting signals to the speaker **45**, and for receiving signals from the microphone **46**. Conditioning hardware **52** may be discrete components within the exemplary display device **40**, or may be incorporated within the processor **21** or other components.

[0094] The driver controller **29** takes the raw image data generated by the processor **21** either directly from the processor **21** or from the frame buffer **28** and reformats the raw image data appropriately for high speed transmission to the array driver **22**. Specifically, the driver controller **29** reformats the raw image data into a data flow having a raster-like format, such that it has a time order suitable for scanning across the display array **30**. Then the driver controller **29** sends the formatted information to the array driver **22**. Although a driver controller **29**, such as a LCD controller, is often associated with the system processor **21** as a stand-alone Integrated Circuit (IC), such controllers may be implemented in many ways. They may be embedded in the processor **21** as hardware, embedded in the processor **21** as software, or fully integrated in hardware with the array driver **22**.

[0095] Typically, the array driver **22** receives the formatted information from the driver controller **29** and reformats

the video data into a parallel set of waveforms that are applied many times per second to the hundreds and sometimes thousands of leads coming from the display's x-y matrix of pixels.

[0096] In one embodiment, the driver controller 29, array driver 22, and display array 30 are appropriate for any of the types of displays described herein. For example, in one embodiment, driver controller 29 is a conventional display controller or a bi-stable display controller (e.g., an interferometric modulator controller). In another embodiment, array driver 22 is a conventional driver or a bi-stable display driver (e.g., an interferometric modulator display). In one embodiment, a driver controller 29 is integrated with the array driver 22. Such an embodiment is common in highly integrated systems such as cellular phones, watches, and other small area displays. In yet another embodiment, display array 30 is a typical display array or a bi-stable display array (e.g., a display including an array of interferometric modulators).

[0097] The input device 48 allows a user to control the operation of the exemplary display device 40. In one embodiment, input device 48 includes a keypad, such as a QWERTY keyboard or a telephone keypad, a button, a switch, a touch-sensitive screen, a pressure- or heat-sensitive membrane. In one embodiment, the microphone 46 is an input device for the exemplary display device 40. When the microphone 46 is used to input data to the device, voice commands may be provided by a user for controlling operations of the exemplary display device 40.

[0098] Power supply 50 can include a variety of energy storage devices as are well known in the art. For example, in one embodiment, power supply 50 is a rechargeable battery, such as a nickel-cadmium battery or a lithium ion battery. In another embodiment, power supply 50 is a renewable energy source, a capacitor, or a solar cell, including a plastic solar cell, and solar-cell paint. In another embodiment, power supply 50 is configured to receive power from a wall outlet.

[0099] In some implementations control programmability resides, as described above, in a driver controller which can be located in several places in the electronic display system. In some cases control programmability resides in the array driver 22. Those of skill in the art will recognize that the above-described optimization may be implemented in any number of hardware and/or software components and in various configurations.

[0100] The details of the structure of interferometric modulators that operate in accordance with the principles set forth above may vary widely. For example, FIGS. 7A-7E illustrate five different embodiments of the movable reflective layer 14 and its supporting structures. FIG. 7A is a cross section of the embodiment of FIG. 1, where a strip of metal material 14 is deposited on orthogonally extending supports 18. In FIG. 7B, the moveable reflective layer 14 is attached to supports at the corners only, on tethers 32. In FIG. 7C, the moveable reflective layer 14 is suspended from a deformable layer 34, which may comprise a flexible metal. The deformable layer 34 connects, directly or indirectly, to the substrate 20 around the perimeter of the deformable layer 34. These connections are herein referred to as support posts. The embodiment illustrated in FIG. 7D has support post plugs 42 upon which the deformable layer 34 rests. The movable

reflective layer 14 remains suspended over the cavity, as in FIGS. 7A-7C, but the deformable layer 34 does not form the support posts by filling holes between the deformable layer 34 and the optical stack 16. Rather, the support posts are formed of a planarization material, which is used to form support post plugs 42. The embodiment illustrated in FIG. 7E is based on the embodiment shown in FIG. 7D, but may also be adapted to work with any of the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. 7A-7C as well as additional embodiments not shown. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 7E, an extra layer of metal or other conductive material has been used to form a bus structure 44. This allows signal routing along the back of the interferometric modulators, eliminating a number of electrodes that may otherwise have had to be formed on the substrate 20.

[0101] In embodiments such as those shown in FIG. 7, the interferometric modulators function as direct-view devices, in which images are viewed from the front side of the transparent substrate 20, the side opposite to that upon which the modulator is arranged. In these embodiments, the reflective layer 14 optically shields some portions of the interferometric modulator on the side of the reflective layer opposite the substrate 20, including the deformable layer 34 and the bus structure 44. This allows the shielded areas to be configured and operated upon without negatively affecting the image quality. This separable modulator architecture allows the structural design and materials used for the electromechanical aspects and the optical aspects of the modulator to be selected and to function independently of each other. Moreover, the embodiments shown in FIGS. 7C-7E have additional benefits deriving from the decoupling of the optical properties of the reflective layer 14 from its mechanical properties, which are carried out by the deformable layer 34. This allows the structural design and materials used for the reflective layer 14 to be optimized with respect to the optical properties, and the structural design and materials used for the deformable layer 34 to be optimized with respect to desired mechanical properties.

Process Control Monitors

[0102] Many MEMS manufacturing processes consist of a series of material deposition and patterning steps. Various materials may be serially deposited on a substrate to form layers. Patterning with material etching between deposition steps may be used to structurally tailor the deposited material to achieve the desired MEMS structure. The multiple layer approach to MEMS manufacturing and the small scale of the structures created presents problems in trying to evaluate whether the manufacturing process has produced structures and layers of materials having the desired properties. Accordingly, in one embodiment, process control monitors are provided that may be used to evaluate the results of various manufacturing processes. In some embodiments, the process control monitors are produced using at least some of the same manufacturing steps used to manufacture a MEMS device. Evaluation of these process control monitors may then be used to determine properties of various materials and structures formed during those manufacturing steps. In some embodiments, the process control monitors are produced using the same set of material deposition and patterning steps used during the manufacturing. The process control monitors may be structurally tailored by applying different patterns to the process control monitor than is applied to the MEMS structure. For example, one layer of material present

in the MEMS structure may be completely absent in the process control monitor by patterning the process control monitor in such a way that the entire layer deposited is etched away during an etching step. Similarly, in other embodiments, a layer of material normally etched away during manufacture of the MEMS structure may remain in the process control monitor.

[0103] In some embodiments, information from the process control monitor may be obtained through optical means. For example, light reflected from the process control monitor may contain information regarding the materials present in the process control monitor. Those of skill in the art will appreciate other methods of evaluating process control monitors such as laser scanning, microscopy including optical, electron, and x-ray microscopy, and spectroscopy. In one embodiment, the light reflected is detected with a photodetector to obtain the intensity of reflected light. This information may be used to determine the reflectance and transmittance of materials in the process control monitor. These properties may in turn provide information regarding the thicknesses of materials in the process control monitor. For example, the amount of reflectance from an inherently reflective material will provide a measure of its thickness. In one embodiment, a Minolta® reflectometer is used. In another embodiment, the light reflected from the process control monitor is measured with a spectrometer to obtain the wavelength dependence of the reflected light. This wavelength dependence can provide information regarding the absorptive properties of the materials in the process control monitor and the index of refraction of the materials. Furthermore, because MEMS devices often contain reflective surfaces in close proximity, reflected light may undergo constructive and destructive interference (e.g., the MEMS device may contain one or more etalon). Therefore, the wavelength dependence of the reflected light can provide information regarding the relative positioning of reflective surfaces in the MEMS. In one embodiment, a measured spectrum is fit to a model spectrum predicted to be reflected from an etalon in order to determine properties such as the depth of the etalon. In some embodiments, a colorimeter is used to measure the color of light reflected from the process control monitor. As used herein, an “etalon” refers to two surfaces that are at least partially reflective positioned such that light may enter through one surface and be reflected between the two surfaces multiple times before reflecting back through the same surface. The multiple reflectances can lead to destructive and constructive interference at various wavelengths, allowing for the filtering of optical wavelengths.

[0104] In one embodiment, a transparent substrate may be used to support the process control monitor. Such a substrate enables optical detection from the side opposite the deposition side. Thus, in some cases, lower deposited materials may be probed where they could not otherwise be (e.g., where the upper layers include a highly reflective layer). In other embodiments, a process control monitor is optically probed from the side of material deposition.

[0105] In one embodiment, with reference to FIG. 8, process control monitors 100, 102, and 104 may be formed on the same substrate 106 at the same time as the MEMS device 108 is being formed. As discussed above, all of the substrate 106 may be exposed to the same material deposition and patterning steps, however, different patterns may be

applied to form the process control monitors 100, 102, and 104. For example, the pattern applied to the process control monitors 100, 102, and 104 during a patterning step may be different than the pattern applied to the MEMS device 108 during a corresponding patterning step. The patterning steps may include any suitable patterning technique in the art (e.g. photolithography). Any number of different process control monitors 100, 102, and 104 may be formed on the substrate. The integrated wafer 110 depicted in FIG. 8 allows the probing of the processes applied during the manufacturing of the specific MEMS device 108. Thus, any anomalous results can be quickly identified before the MEMS device 108 is tested electrically or incorporated into a packaged device, thereby avoiding additional expense. In some embodiments, the process control monitors 100, 102, and 104 may also be probed after manufacture of the MEMS device 108. In one embodiment, the MEMS device 108 consists of an array of interferometric modulators suitable for use in a display. In some embodiments, the process control monitors on the substrate 106 are labeled during manufacturing.

Etalon Based Process Control Monitors

[0106] As noted above, in some embodiments, process control monitors are constructed such that they contain at least one etalon. The spectrum of light reflected from the etalon may then be detected and fit to an etalon model to determine properties of the process control monitor, and hence properties of analogous structures in the MEMS device. In some embodiments, the process control monitors are formed by the same material deposition steps as the MEMS device and thus contain at least some of the material layers found in the MEMS device. In some embodiments, the number of layers found in the process control monitors is less than the number found in the MEMS device.

[0107] One set of examples of etalon based process control monitors are structures that contain less than all of the layers found in an interferometric modulator but nonetheless still contain an etalon. FIG. 9 depicts an example of materials that may be deposited during manufacture of an interferometric modulator. First, a layer of indium-tin-oxide (ITO) 154 is deposited onto a transparent substrate 152. The ITO 154, which is a transparent conductor, provides a conductive plate so that a voltage can be applied between the movable mirror in the interferometric modulator and the plate. In one embodiment, the ITO is about 500 Å thick. Next, a layer of chrome 150 is deposited. In one embodiment, the chrome 150 is relatively thin (in one embodiment, approximately 70 Å), allowing it to act as a partial reflector. Alternatively, the chrome layer 150 may be deposited onto the substrate 152 followed by the ITO layer 154. Next, a dielectric layer 156/158 is deposited. The dielectric layer may consist of one or more oxides. In some embodiments, the oxide layer 156/158 may be a composite layer. For example, a relatively thick layer of SiO₂ 156 (in one embodiment, approximately 450 Å) may be deposited followed by a thin layer of Al₂O₃ 158 (in one embodiment, approximately 70 Å) to protect the SiO₂ 156. In some embodiments, three or more oxide layers may be used (e.g., Al₂O₃—SiO₂—Al₂O₃). The oxide layer 156/158 provides an insulating layer between the movable mirror and the chrome 150. The thickness of the layer determines the interference properties of the interferometric modulator, particularly when it is in an actuated state. In the next step, a sacrificial

layer 160 is deposited (in one embodiment, approximately 2000 Å). The sacrificial layer provides a space filling material that can be easily etched away without affecting the other materials. In one embodiment, the sacrificial layer 160 is molybdenum. Other examples of suitable materials for the sacrificial layer include polysilicon, amorphous silicon, or photoresist. In the last step of manufacturing, the sacrificial layer 160 will be etched away to create an air gap between the movable mirror and the oxide layer 156/158. Patterning and etching of the sacrificial layer 160 may be used to create holes and trenches in the layer for the formation of posts and rails that will support the movable mirror. Planar material 162 may be applied to fill the holes and form the posts. Finally, the mechanical membrane 164/166 containing the movable mirror is formed. In one embodiment, the mechanical membrane 164/166 is formed by an aluminum layer 164 (in one embodiment, approximately 500 Å) followed by a nickel layer (in one embodiment, approximately 1450 Å) 166. In some embodiments, an additional aluminum layer is added on top of the nickel layer to provide better adhesion of photoresist used during patterning. After etching away the sacrificial layer 160 in the structure depicted in FIG. 9, an interferometric modulator similar to that depicted in FIG. 7A is obtained. In some embodiments, a dark mask layer may be added to the transparent substrate 152 prior to addition of the other layers. The dark mask layer may be patterned to reduce reflection from portions of the structure such as posts or rails. In some embodiments, the dark mask layer includes a MoCr layer and an oxide layer. Those of skill in the art will appreciate that patterning and etching steps in addition to those mentioned here may be used to form an interferometric modulator. Furthermore, it will be appreciated that other structures of interferometric modulators are possible, as for example depicted in FIGS. 7B-7E.

[0108] Examples of etalon based process control monitors containing some of the material layers discussed above are depicted in FIGS. 10A-10D. The process control monitor depicted in FIG. 10A contains the ITO 154, chrome 150, oxide 156/158, and mechanical membrane 164/166 layers deposited on top of each other onto the substrate 152. The partially reflective chrome layer 150 and the reflective mechanical membrane 164/166 form an etalon whose reflectance may be measured from the bottom side of the substrate 152. Analyzing the spectrum of light reflected from this etalon or its color can provide an indication of the combined thickness of the oxide 156/158 layers and their index of refractions and the thickness and reflectivity of the chrome 150 layer. It will also be appreciated that this configuration approximates that obtained when an interferometric modulator is in an actuated state (i.e., the mirror is collapsed against the oxide layer). Therefore, evaluating these process control monitors will provide an indication of whether interferometric modulators produced by the process used will have the desired actuated spectral characteristics.

[0109] The process control monitor depicted in FIG. 10B consists of the ITO 154, chrome 150, oxide 156/158, and sacrificial layer 160. As mentioned above, the sacrificial layer 160 may be molybdenum, which is inherently reflective. Accordingly, an etalon is formed by the partially reflective chrome layer 150 and the reflective sacrificial layer 160. In addition to providing the same parameters regarding the oxide 156/158 layers and the actuated interferometric modulator state as discussed above, reflectance from this process control monitor may provide information

regarding the sacrificial layer 160. For example, reflectance from the sacrificial layer 160 will depend on the thickness of the sacrificial layer 160. In some embodiments, the sacrificial layer 160 is removed by etching and the remaining ITO 154, chrome 150, and oxide 156/158 layers analyzed to determine if the sacrificial layer 160 has interacted with any of the remaining layers.

[0110] The process control monitor depicted in FIG. 10C contains the ITO 154, chrome 150, oxide 156/158, planar 162, and mechanical membrane 164/166 layers. An etalon is formed by the chrome 150 and mechanical membrane 164/166 layers. Analyzing the spectrum of reflected light and comparing it to the results obtained for the process control monitor in FIG. 10A can provide the index of refraction of the planar material and its thickness. Furthermore, the optical response from this process control monitor will approximate that caused by the areas of an interferometric modulator array where there are posts or rails.

[0111] The process control monitor depicted in FIG. 10D contains the ITO 154, chrome 150, planar 162, and mechanical membrane 164/166 layers. An etalon is formed by the chrome 150 and mechanical membrane 164/166 layers. Analyzing the spectrum of reflected light can provide the index of refraction of the planar material 162 as well as the thickness of the planar 162 material. Comparison with the process control monitor of FIG. 10D can provide information regarding the oxide layers 156/158 (e.g., indices of refraction and thickness).

[0112] When the etalon based process control monitors described above are formed by the same deposition and patterning steps as used to manufacture interferometric modulators, as for example when it is formed on the same substrate 106 as an interferometric modulator array 108 (see FIG. 8), then appropriate patterning may be applied so that layers that are not desired in the process control monitor are etched away. For example, in the process control monitor depicted in FIG. 10A, the sacrificial layer 160 and planar 162 material deposited during manufacturing may be etched away. In some embodiments, it may be desirable to protect regions of the process control monitors to prevent etching away of layers during processing. For example, deposited planar material or material from the mechanical membrane 164/166 may be patterned so that it remains on the edges of the process control monitor to protect the sacrificial layer 160 during the release etch if it is desirable to have a process control monitor containing the sacrificial layer 160.

[0113] Those of skill in the art will appreciate many other combinations of layers deposited in a process control monitor whose optical properties (e.g., interference properties) may provide information about the corresponding material formed during manufacturing of a MEMS device.

Non-Etalon Based Process Control Monitors

[0114] In some embodiments, process control monitors are constructed that do not contain two reflective surfaces forming an etalon. In these process control monitors, information regarding the materials in the monitors can be obtained through reflectance and/or transmittance measurements. These reflectance and/or transmittance values may be correlated to film thicknesses. In some embodiments, the process control monitors are formed by the same material deposition steps as the MEMS device and thus contain at

least some of the material layers found in the MEMS device. In some embodiments, the number of layers found in the process control monitors is less than the number found in the MEMS device. The reflectance and/or transmittance characteristics of these structures may help identify any errors that occurred during processing of the elements included in the process control monitor structures. These process control monitor structures may be evaluated using any suitable detector such as a reflectometer, photodetector, spectrometer, or colorimeter. In one embodiment, the reflectance of the film is measured using a spherical integrator and reflectometer. These process control monitor structures enable the processing of individual elements in the MEMS structures to be monitored to determine any errors and to optimize the manufacturing process.

[0115] FIGS. 11A-11G depict one set of examples of non-etalon based process control monitors that contain less than all layers of material deposited during manufacture of interferometric modulators such as depicted in FIG. 9. The process control monitor in FIG. 11A consists of the ITO layer 154 and the chrome layer 150 deposited onto the substrate 152. The reflectivity of this process control monitor provides an indication of the thickness of the chrome layer 150 and the transparency of the ITO layer 154. In order for the chrome layer 150 to act as a partially reflective mirror in an interferometric modulator, the film making up the partial reflector may be very thin. For example, the film may have a thickness of about 70 Å. The thickness of such thin films are difficult to measure and verify. Therefore, in one embodiment, the thickness of the chrome layer 150 is determined by measuring the reflectance of the layer in the process control monitor of FIG. 11A. As the thickness of the film increases, so will the reflectance. Therefore, by calibrating film thickness with measured reflectance for a given material, the thickness can be easily determined from a measured reflectance. The optical properties of the process control monitor of FIG. 11A also approximate the optical properties observed in an interferometric modulator array between columns where the mechanical membrane and oxide layers have been removed. Accordingly, these process control monitors can be used to determine if the intercolumn properties are acceptable for using the array as a display.

[0116] In another embodiment, a process control monitor containing only the chrome layer 150 on the substrate 152 may be used to determine the reflectance, and hence the thickness, of the chrome layer 150. Measurements of this process control monitor may be compared to those obtained for the process control monitor depicted in FIG. 11A to determine the optical properties of the ITO layer 154. For example, reflectance from the surface of the ITO layer 154 may be proportional to the ratio of the reflectance from the two process control monitors. In some embodiments, a chrome-only process control monitor may be manufactured on a wafer separate from that used to manufacture the interferometric modulators if the processing conditions for the interferometric modulators cannot be used to create a chrome-only layer.

[0117] FIG. 11B depicts another embodiment of a non-etalon based process control monitor structure that consists of the ITO layer 154, chrome layer 150, and oxide layer 156/158. This structure may be used to measure the optical characteristics of the ITO-chrome-oxide combination. For example, measuring the transmittance through the process

control monitor provides an indication of the combined attenuation caused by the ITO layer 154, chrome layer 150, and oxide layer 156/158. Comparison of the measurements of this process control monitor structure with the measurements of the process control monitor in FIG. 11A can be used to isolate the optical properties of the oxide layer 156/158. In addition to providing information regarding the optical characteristics of the oxide layer 156/158, the comparison can also be used to determine the thickness of the oxide layer 156/158 (e.g., a lower transmittance will indicate a thicker oxide layer 156/158). The optical properties of the process control monitor in FIG. 11B also approximates those observed in an interferometric modulator array in the area of the etch release holes in the mechanical membrane.

[0118] FIG. 11C depicts another embodiment of a process control monitor structure that consists of the mechanical membrane layer 164/166. This process control monitor may be used to isolate and measure the reflective properties of the mechanical membrane layer 164/166.

[0119] FIG. 11D depicts still another embodiment of a process control monitor structure consisting only of the sacrificial layer 160 deposited onto the substrate 152. This process control monitor may be used to measure characteristics of the sacrificial layer 160 alone, including its thickness. This process control monitor may be analyzed prior to any release etch. Alternatively a layer of a protective material may be deposited over the sacrificial layer 160 to protect it during a release etch.

[0120] FIG. 11E depicts another embodiment of a process control monitor having oxide layers 156/158, planar material 162, and mechanical membrane layer 164/166. The reflectance from this process control monitor approximates that observed in an interferometric modulator array between rows where cuts in the ITO 154 and chrome 158 layers have been made.

[0121] FIG. 11F depicts an embodiment of a process control monitor having the ITO layer 154, chrome layer 150, and mechanical membrane layer 164/166. Because the chrome layer 150 and mechanical membrane layer 164/166 will together act as a reflector, the reflectance from this process control monitor can provide information regarding the transparency, thickness, and index of refraction of the ITO layer 154. Furthermore, the reflectance from this process control monitor may be compared with that for FIG. 11A to isolate the optical properties of the chrome layer 150. In other words, the results from testing this process monitor may be used to subtract the optical effects of the ITO layer 154 in the process control monitor of FIG. 11A.

[0122] FIG. 11G depicts still another embodiment of a process control monitor that comprises the oxide layer 156/158 and the mechanical membrane layer 164/166. Because the mechanical membrane layer 164/166 acts as a strong reflector, this process control monitor may be used to determine the transparency, thickness, and index of refraction of the oxide layer 156/158.

[0123] As for the etalon based process control monitors, the non-etalon based process control monitors described above may be formed by the same deposition and patterning steps as used to manufacture the interferometric modulators. Appropriate patterning may be applied so that layers that are not desired in the process control monitor are etched away. In addition, appropriate protection against etching may be applied.

[0124] Those of skill in the art will appreciate many other combinations of layers deposited in a process control monitor whose optical properties (e.g., reflectance and/or transmittance) may provide information about the corresponding material formed during manufacturing of a MEMS device.

Release Etch Process Control Monitors

[0125] The rate and extent of the release etch process during MEMS manufacture may be monitored using a release etch or spatial process control monitor. FIG. 12 depicts a wafer 200 containing an interferometric modulator array 202 and a series of process control monitors 204, 206, and 208. The interferometric modulator array 202 contains a number of posts 210 and rails 212 to support the mechanical membrane. A series of etch holes 214 are formed into the mechanical membrane so that etchant can reach the sacrificial layer during the release etch. For the manufacturing to be successful, the sacrificial layer should be completely removed from the array region. Accordingly, in one embodiment, process control monitors are provided to monitor the rate and extent of release etching.

[0126] One such process control monitor is depicted in process control monitor 206. This process control monitor 206 consists of the same interferometric modulator structure as present in the array 202, however, only a single hole 216 is patterned into the mechanical membrane. The distance between the hole 216 and the edges of the process control monitor 206 is greater than the distance between the holes 214 in the interferometric modulator array 202. Because the process control monitor 206 contains only a single hole 216 as opposed to multiple holes 214, not all of the sacrificial layer can be removed from the process control monitor 206 in the amount of time it takes the release etchant to remove the entire sacrificial layer in the array 202. As the etching in the process control monitor 206 proceeds, the area of the process control monitor where the sacrificial layer has been removed will contrast in color from the areas where the etchant has not yet reached as observed from the side of the substrate opposite the process side. In cases where a reflective sacrificial layer is used (e.g., molybdenum), this contrast is due to the different etalons formed. Where the sacrificial layer is still present, an etalon will be formed between the chrome layer and the reflective sacrificial layer. Where the sacrificial layer has been removed, an etalon will be formed between the chrome layer and the reflective mechanical membrane. Thus, the color observed where the sacrificial layer has been removed will approximate the color of an unactuated interferometric modulator (e.g., a bright state) while the color observed where the sacrificial layer remains will approximate the color of an actuated interferometric modulator (e.g., a dark state). The distance from the center of the hole 216 to the boundary of color change (e.g., the radius) will provide a measure of the extent of etching. This process control monitor may be used to measure the rate and extent of etching either during the process itself (i.e., in-situ) or after its completion.

[0127] A similar etch-release process control monitor is depicted by the process control monitor 208. In this process control monitor, multiple holes 218 are formed in the mechanical membrane, however, the distance between each hole 218 is greater than the distance between the holes 214 in the interferometric modulator array 202. Thus, etching in the process control monitor 208 will be incomplete after the

entire sacrificial layer has been removed from the interferometric modulator array 202. A distance indicating the extent of etching may be measured from the center of each hole 218 in the process control monitor 208.

[0128] Etch-release process control monitors as described above may take on any suitable shape. For example, instead of a structure similar to that found in the interferometric modulator array, the process control monitor may consist of a strip shape 250 with one or more holes 252 in the mechanical membrane, as depicted in FIG. 13A. The extent of etching may then be measured by determining the linear distance from the holes 252 along the strip 250 to where etching has extended. In another embodiment, depicted in FIG. 13B, holes having the shape of rectangular slots 254 are formed into the strip 250 instead of holes having a circular shape. In some embodiments, a plurality of slots 254 are provided having varying widths (e.g., 3 μm , 4 μm , 5 μm).

[0129] In some embodiments, planarization or other protective material may be patterned around the edges of the process control monitor to provide a seal to protect against the release etchant from reaching the sacrificial layer from the edges. Accordingly, the sacrificial layer will only be removed by etchant entering the etch release holes. In some embodiments, the mechanical membrane in the etch release process control monitor may be electrically shorted to the ITO/chrome layers.

[0130] The extent of etching may be measured using the process control monitors described above by visually observing the process control monitors or by electronically imaging the process control monitors, such as by using a CCD camera, and then computationally analyzing the image so that the measuring is automated. In some embodiments, posts in the process control monitor may be used as a vernier for determining the extent of etching. For example, posts may be formed in the process control monitor having a known distance from each other. The number of posts along a line from the center of the hole may then be used to approximate the distance. In some embodiments, a higher density of posts than formed in the interferometric modulators may be used to provide a more precise measurement. Those of skill in the art will appreciate many other shapes and structures that may be used to measure the extent of etching.

Interferometric Modulator Process Control Monitors

[0131] In one embodiment, the interference properties (e.g., the spectrum of reflected light) of interferometric modulators may be determined by using a process control monitor that consists of an interferometric modulator with enhanced stability. Such process control monitors may be constructed so that the mechanical membrane is resistant to movement, and therefore fixed in position, forming a static etalon. In one embodiment, such process control monitors may be formed by using a substantially transparent dielectric layer (e.g., an oxide layer) in place of the sacrificial layer. The reflective mechanical membrane will thus rest against the dielectric layer and be in a fixed position. Such a process control monitor may advantageously be manufactured separately from a display interferometric modulator array so that a thicker oxide layer can be deposited than is deposited during typical interferometric modulator manufacture.

[0132] In another embodiment, a process control monitor is formed that may be manufactured by the same material

depositions as a display interferometric modulator array. For example, as depicted in **FIG. 12**, a process control monitor **204** may be constructed that comprises a higher density of posts **220** than is found in the interferometric modulator array **202**. The higher density of posts **220** provide increased positional stability to the mechanical membrane that they support. Accordingly, even under application of an electric potential (e.g., less than about 10 volts, 15 volts, or 20 volts), the mechanical membrane in the process control monitor **204** will resist moving toward the ITO layer and thereby, reflect the same spectrum of light. As used herein, by "posts" it is meant any intermittent structure that may be used to support a mechanical membrane. Accordingly, it is intended that "posts" include "point" structures consisting essentially of a vertical linear structure. It is also intended that "posts" include structures consisting essentially of a strip of vertical material, also known as rails.

[0133] Process control monitors having stable mechanical membranes, such as described above, may be used to optimize manufacturing to produce interferometric modulators that will reflect a desired spectrum of light. Furthermore, such process control monitors provide a quick check of the success of a manufacturing process. In some embodiments, where a manufacturing process produces an array of interferometric modulators that reflect different colors (e.g., for use in a polychromatic display), multiple process control monitors as described above may be used, each reflecting the corresponding color. Alternatively, a single process control monitor may be formed having different regions where each region has posts having a different height than other regions. Thus, each region will reflect a different color light.

Thickness Process Control Monitors

[0134] Still another type of process control monitor is used to measure the thickness of each layer deposited during processing. In one embodiment, thickness process control monitors are manufactured such that a single step is formed from the substrate to the top of the process control monitor. The step height of the single step will thus correspond to the combined thickness of the all the layers of the process control monitor at the location of the step. Non-limiting examples of layers that may be deposited include the ITO and chrome layers, the oxide layers, the sacrificial layer, planarization on the sacrificial layer, mechanical membrane layer on the oxide layers, and mechanical membrane layers on the sacrificial layer on the oxide layers.

[0135] In another embodiment, multiple layer process control monitors are formed such that a stack with a stair-step pattern profile may be formed. The step heights will correspond to the thickness of one or more deposited layers. For example, the resulting process control monitor may have a structure similar to that in **FIG. 14**. The process control monitor in **FIG. 14** contains each of the layers deposited during manufacturing of an interferometric modulator, such as the one depicted in **FIG. 9**. The process control monitor provides steps corresponding to the thickness of the ITO layer **154**, the chrome layer **150**, the oxide layers **156/158**, the sacrificial layer **160**, the planar material **162**, and the mechanical membrane, **164/166**. The thickness of each step may be measured in a single sweep of an appropriate thickness measuring technique rather than having to measure each layer in a separate process control monitor. In a non-limiting example, a stylus-based surface profiler (e.g., a

profilometer), such as available from KLA-Tencor may be used to measure step heights by a single sweep of the stylus and thus quickly determine the thickness of each layer deposited in a particular interferometric modulator manufacturing run. The stair step pattern reduces the natural bounce encountered when using profilometers and thereby improves accuracy as compared to sweeping across each layer individually. Those of skill in the art will recognize that any combination of layers may be used in a multi-stair step pattern. Thus, not all layers deposited during manufacture of interferometric modulators need to be included.

[0136] Another embodiment of a thickness process control monitor is depicted in **FIG. 15**. This process control monitor also has a stair-step profile; however, the stair-step pattern formed does not monotonically increase in height. One advantage of such a pattern is that the step heights may be formed to more closely correspond to actual thicknesses present in some interferometric modulators. In addition to layers discussed above, the process control monitor of **FIG. 15** also contains a dark mask layer **275**. The dark mask layer **275** may be used in interferometric modulators to inhibit reflection from some static structures such as posts and rails. In this embodiment, an additional oxide layer **277** may be deposited above the dark mask layer **275**.

[0137] Step **300** in **FIG. 15** corresponds to the combined thicknesses of all of the oxide layers (**277**, **156**, and **158**) and the dark mask **275**. This step may be compared with step **302** to determine the thickness of the dark mask **275**. The absolute height of step **304** provides the combined thickness of the oxide layers **277**, **156**, and **158** and the ITO **154** and chrome **150** layers. Comparison with step **302** provides the thickness of the combined ITO **154** and chrome **150** layers. Step **306** provides the thickness of the oxide layers **156/158** that are deposited on top of the ITO **154** and chrome **150** layers. Step **308** corresponds to the thickness of the mechanical membrane **164/166**. The absolute height of step **308** will also approximate the combined thicknesses of material when an interferometric modulator is in an actuated state with the mechanical membrane **164/166** collapsed on top of the oxide layer **158**. Step **310** corresponds to the combined thicknesses of the mechanical membrane **164/166** and the planar material **162**. Comparison with step **308** may be used to determine the thickness of the planar material **162**. Step **312** corresponds to the thickness of the sacrificial layer **160**. Finally, step **314** corresponds to the thickness of the planar material **312**. The absolute height of step **314** also corresponds to the position of the mechanical membrane **164/166** when an interferometric modulator is in an unactuated state.

[0138] In some embodiments, polychromatic interferometric modulator displays are formed. One such polychromatic display uses interferometric modulators having different gap depths to reflect different colors. For example, interferometric modulators having three different gap depths adapted to reflect predominantly red, green, or blue colors may be employed. One method of forming such a polychromatic display is to deposit and pattern three sacrificial layers prior to deposition of the planar material and mechanical membrane layers. The patterning of the sacrificial layers may be such that a single layer remains for one set of interferometric modulators, two layers remain for another set of interferometric modulators, and three layers remain for a final set of interferometric modulators. After deposition

of the mechanical membrane and release etching, a smaller gap depth will be formed where the single sacrificial layer was formed, a medium gap depth will be formed where two sacrificial layers were formed, and a larger gap depth will be formed where three sacrificial layers were formed. **FIG. 16** depicts a thickness process control monitor that may be used to measure layer thicknesses formed during use of such a three-sacrificial layer process. In addition to sacrificial layer **160**, sacrificial layers **279** and **281** are also formed. Those of skill in the art will appreciate that the sacrificial layers **160**, **279**, and **281** may be deposited sequentially or they may be deposited in a different order if liftoff or etch back techniques are utilized. Step **350** corresponds to the combined thicknesses of all of the oxide layers (**277**, **156**, and **158**) and the dark mask **275**. This step may be compared with step **352** to determine the thickness of the dark mask **275**. The absolute height of step **354** provides the combined thickness of the oxide layers **277**, **156**, and **158** and the ITO **154** and chrome **150** layers. Comparison with step **352** provides the thickness of the combined ITO **154** and chrome **150** layers. The comparison of step **356** with step **354** provides the thickness of the oxide layers **156/158** that are deposited on top of the ITO **154** and chrome **150** layers. Step **358** corresponds to the thickness of the mechanical membrane **164/166**. The absolute height of step **358** also approximates the combined thicknesses of material when an interferometric modulator is in an actuated state with the mechanical membrane **164/166** collapsed on top of the oxide layer **158**. Step **360** corresponds to the combined thicknesses of the mechanical membrane **164/166** and the planar material **162**. Comparison with step **358** may be used to determine the thickness of the planar material **162**.

[**0139**] Step **362** corresponds to the combined thickness of the mechanical membrane **164/166** and the single sacrificial layer **160**. Comparison of step **362** with step **358** provides the thickness of the sacrificial layer **160**. The absolute height of step **362** also corresponds to the position of the mechanical membrane **164/166** when the interferometric modulator having the smallest gap depth is in an unactuated state. The absolute height of step **364** corresponds to the combined height in an interferometric modulator array over a post that is between two interferometric modulators having the smallest gap depth. Comparison of step **364** with step **358** provides the height of the post. In a similar manner, step **366** corresponds to the combined thickness of the mechanical membrane **164/166** and the first **160** and second **279** sacrificial layers. Comparison of step **366** with step **362** provides the thickness of the second sacrificial layer **279**. The absolute height of step **366** also corresponds to the position of the mechanical membrane **164/166** when the interferometric modulator having the medium gap depth is in an unactuated state. The absolute height of step **368** corresponds to the combined height in an interferometric modulator array over a post that is between two interferometric modulators having the medium gap depth. Comparison of step **368** with step **358** provides the height of the post. Step **370** corresponds to the combined thickness of the mechanical membrane **164/166** and first **160**, second **279**, and third **281** sacrificial layers. Comparison of step **370** with step **366** provides the thickness of the third sacrificial layer **281**. The absolute height of step **370** also corresponds to the position of the mechanical membrane **164/166** when the interferometric modulator having the largest gap depth is in an unactuated state. The absolute height of step **372** corresponds to the

combined height in an interferometric modulator array over a post that is between two interferometric modulators having the largest gap depth. Comparison of step **372** with step **358** provides the height of the post.

[**0140**] The process control monitor of **FIG. 16** provides for the accurate measurement of the gap depths produced by a particular interferometric modulator manufacturing process. Measuring the cumulative height of the sacrificial layers corresponding to the medium and large gap depth interferometric modulators provides a more accurate indication of the resulting gap depth than would be obtained by measuring the individual thicknesses of the three sacrificial layers. If the three layers were measured separately, local variation in the thickness of each layer would be compounded when the thicknesses are added together to obtain total gap depths. In contrast, the process control monitor of **FIG. 16** provides single measurements of the combined thicknesses the sacrificial layers, reducing errors introduced by local variances in each separate sacrificial layer.

[**0141**] In the embodiments of **FIGS. 15 and 16**, the mechanical membrane **164/166** may be used to protect the sacrificial layer **160** in the process control monitors during the release etch. Accordingly, in some embodiments, the thickness process control monitors may be evaluated after release etch. In some other embodiments, thickness process control monitors may be evaluated prior to the release etch. If the results indicate a problem with one or more layer thicknesses, the wafer may be scrapped prior to the release etch, thereby saving time and money.

[**0142**] Those of skill in the art will recognize that many other stair-step patterned process control monitors may be produced. It will also be appreciated that thickness process control monitors that contain less than all of the layers in a MEMS device may be constructed.

[**0143**] Although the invention has been described with reference to embodiments and examples, it should be understood that numerous and various modifications can be made without departing from the spirit of the invention. Accordingly, the invention is limited only by the following claims.

1. A method of obtaining information regarding manufacturing processes used to manufacture a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS), comprising:

forming at least one MEMS structure on a first side of a substrate through a series of deposition and patterning steps;

simultaneously forming at least one process control monitor on the first side of the substrate utilizing the series of deposition and patterning steps, wherein the process control monitor has at least one structural difference from the MEMS structure; and

detecting light reflected from the process control monitor from a second side of the substrate opposite the first side, whereby the detected light provides a characteristic of at least one material deposited or removed during the deposition and patterning steps.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the MEMS structure is an interferometric modulator.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the process control monitor is formed using the same sequence of deposition and patterning steps used to form the MEMS structure.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein after forming the process control monitor and the MEMS structure, the process control monitor comprises a layer of material not present in the MEMS structure.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein after forming the process control monitor and the MEMS structure, the MEMS structure comprises a layer of material not present in the process control monitor.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein after forming the process control monitor and the MEMS structure, the process control monitor comprises the same layers of material as present in the MEMS structure.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said detecting includes measuring the reflected light with a photodetector.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said detecting includes measuring the reflected light with a spectrometer.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said detecting includes measuring the reflected light with a colorimeter.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein said detecting includes detecting the reflected light with a camera.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristic of said material deposited or removed includes the thickness of the material.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristic of said material deposited or removed includes the material's index of refraction.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristic of said material deposited or removed includes the material's reflectivity.

14. A method of monitoring interferometric modulator manufacturing processes, wherein the manufacturing process comprises a series of deposition and patterning steps, the method comprising:

forming a process control monitor using the series of deposition and patterning steps, wherein the process control monitor has at least one structural difference from interferometric modulators formed by the manufacturing process; and

detecting optical reflectance from the process control monitor.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein optical reflectance is detected from a side of the process control monitor where the deposition and patterning steps are applied.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein optical reflectance is detected from a side of the process control monitor opposite a side where the deposition and patterning steps are applied.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein the process control monitor is formed using the same sequence of deposition and patterning steps used in the manufacturing process.

18. The method of claim 14, wherein after forming the process control monitor, the process control monitor comprises a layer of material not present in interferometric modulators formed by the manufacturing process.

19. The method of claim 14, wherein after forming the process control monitor, the process control monitor is lacking a layer of material present in interferometric modulators formed by the manufacturing process.

20. The method of claim 14, wherein after forming the process control monitor, the process control monitor comprises the same layers of material as present in interferometric modulators formed by the manufacturing process.

21. The method of claim 14, wherein the detecting step includes using a photodetector.

22. The method of claim 14, wherein the detecting step includes using a spectrometer.

23. The method of claim 14, wherein said detecting includes measuring the reflected light with a colorimeter.

24. The method of claim 14, wherein said detecting includes detecting the reflected light with a camera.

25. A process control monitor for use in monitoring interferometric modulator manufacturing processes, wherein the interferometric modulators are adapted for use in a display, the process control monitor manufactured by a process comprising at least one step in common with steps used to manufacture the interferometric modulators adapted for use in the display.

26. The process control monitor of claim 25, wherein the at least one step in common includes a deposition step.

27. The process control monitor of claim 25, wherein the process control monitor comprises at least one layer of material also present in the interferometric modulators.

28. The process control monitor of claim 25, wherein the process control monitor comprises an etalon.

29. The process control monitor of claim 28, wherein the etalon comprises:

a layer of partially reflective material;

a layer of substantially totally reflective material; and

one or more dielectric layers positioned between the partially reflective material and the substantially totally reflective material.

30. The process control monitor of claim 29, wherein the partially reflective material and the substantially totally reflective material contact the one or more dielectric layers.

31. A wafer, comprising:

one or more reflective display elements adapted for use in a display; and

one or more process control monitors adapted to reflect incident light and thereby provide information regarding processes used to manufacture the one or more reflective display elements.

32. The process control monitor of claim 31, wherein the reflective display elements are interferometric modulators.

33. The process control monitor of claim 31, wherein at least one of the one or more process control monitors includes an etalon.

34. The process control monitor of claim 31, wherein the information regarding manufacturing processes includes information regarding properties of a material deposited during the manufacturing processes.

35. The process control monitor of claim 34, wherein the information regarding properties of deposited material includes the material's thickness.

36. The process control monitor of claim 34, wherein the information regarding properties of deposited material includes the material's index of refraction.

37. The process control monitor of claim 34, wherein the information regarding properties of deposited material includes the material's reflectivity.

38. The process control monitor of claim 31, wherein at least one of the one or more process control monitors comprises at least one layer of material also present in the reflective display elements.

39. A wafer, comprising:

a plurality of first means for reflecting light for use in a display; and

second means for monitoring processes used to manufacture the first means.

40. The wafer of claim 39, wherein the first means comprise interferometric modulators.

41. The wafer of claim 39, wherein the second means comprises a process control monitor formed on the wafer.

42. The wafer of claim 39, wherein the processes monitored include one or more deposition steps.

43. The wafer of claim 39, wherein the second means provides information regarding the processes prior to the first means being rendered functional.

44. The wafer of claim 39, wherein the second means for monitoring provides information regarding the processes after the second means are rendered functional.

45. A display, comprising a first wafer that comprises a plurality of interferometric modulators, wherein the first wafer is produced by a process comprising:

forming said plurality of interferometric modulators and at least one process control monitor on a second wafer; and

cutting said second wafer to remove the process control monitor and thereby produce said first wafer.

46. The display of claim 45, further comprising:

a processor that is in electrical communication with said display, said processor being configured to process image data;

a memory device in electrical communication with said processor.

47. The display of claim 46, further comprising a driver circuit configured to send at least one signal to said display.

48. The display of claim 47, further comprising a controller configured to send at least a portion of said image data to said driver circuit.

49. The display system as recited in claim 46, further comprising an image source module configured to send said image data to said processor.

50. The display system as recited in claim 49, wherein said image source module comprises at least one of a receiver, transceiver, and transmitter.

51. The display system as recited in claim 46, further comprising an input device configured to receive input data and to communicate said input data to said processor.

52. A method of identifying an array of interferometric modulators as suitable for use in a display, wherein the interferometric modulators are manufactured by a process comprising a series of deposition and patterning steps, the method comprising:

forming at least one process control monitor using at least some of the series of deposition and patterning steps; and

detecting at least one characteristic of the process control monitor.

53. The method of claim 52, wherein the characteristic is an optical characteristic.

54. The method of claim 52, wherein the characteristic is a height profile of the process control monitor.

55. An array of interferometric modulators identified as suitable for use as a display by the method of claim 52.

56-176. (canceled)

* * * * *