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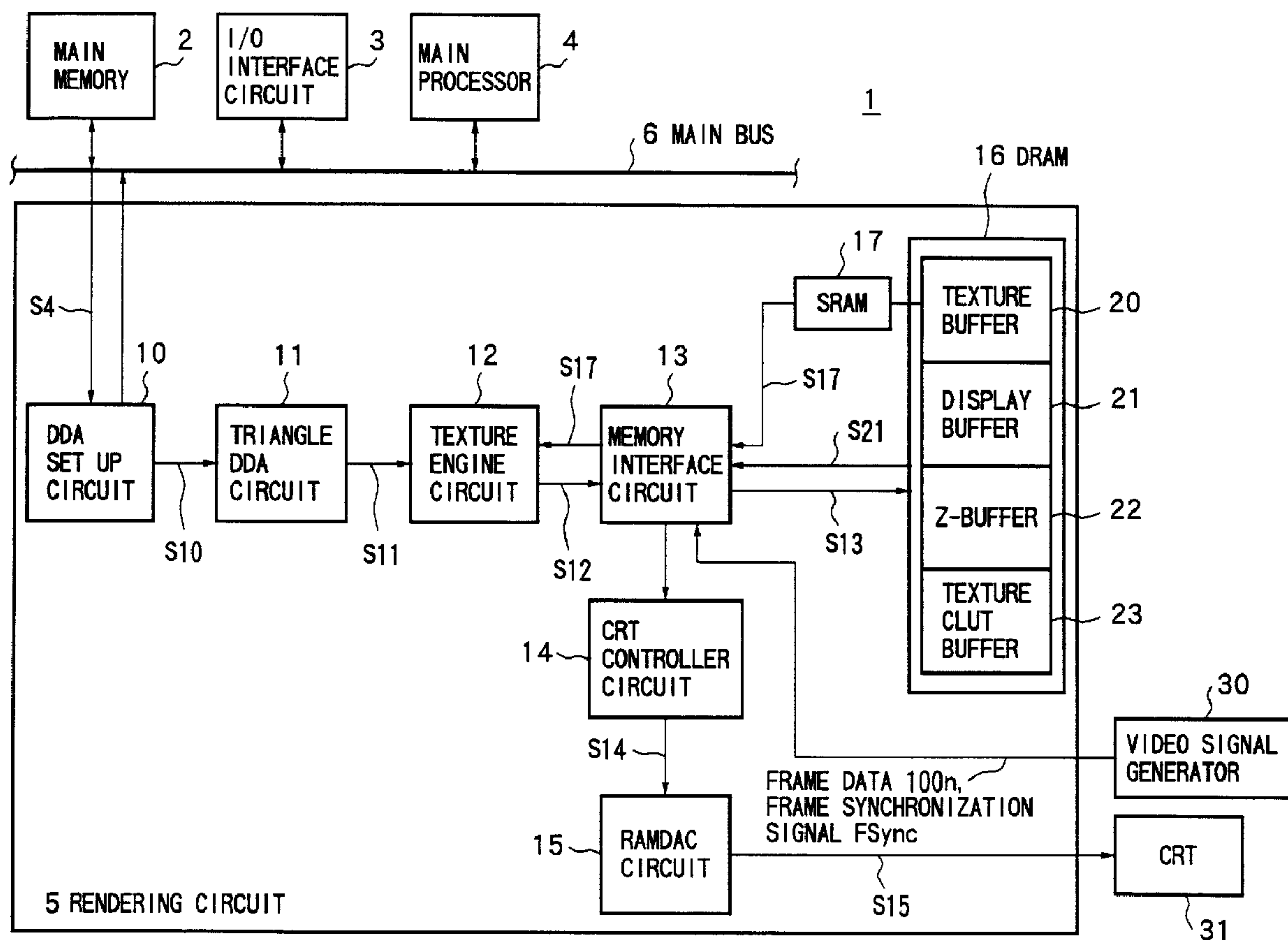
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(54) Titre : METHODE ET APPAREIL DE TRAITEMENT D'IMAGES

(54) Title: IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS AND METHOD OF SAME



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

An image processing apparatus which can perform a variety of graphic processing using a video signal obtained by an image pickup apparatus. A system comprising a DDA set-up circuit for generating first image data and first z-data, a triangle circuit, a

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

texture engine circuit, and a memory I/F circuit for writing the first image data and the first z-data respectively in a display buffer memory and a z-buffer memory and for writing the second image data and the second z-data respectively to the display buffer memory and the z-buffer memory when second image data corresponding to image pickup results of an image pickup apparatus and second z-data corresponding to the second image data are input from the video signal generator.

IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS AND METHOD OF SAMEAbstract of the Disclosure

5 An image processing apparatus which can perform a
variety of graphic processing using a video signal
obtained by an image pickup apparatus. A system
comprising a DDA set-up circuit for generating first
image data and first z-data, a triangle circuit, a
10 texture engine circuit, and a memory I/F circuit for
writing the first image data and the first z-data
respectively in a display buffer memory and a z-buffer
memory and for writing the second image data and the
second z-data respectively to the display buffer memory
15 and the z-buffer memory when second image data
corresponding to image pickup results of an image pickup
apparatus and second z-data corresponding to the second
image data are input from the video signal generator.

IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS AND METHOD OF SAME

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to an image processing apparatus capable of performing graphic processing such as hidden plane processing on a video signal obtained from a video camera or the like.

2. Description of the Related Art

10 Computer graphics are often used in a variety of computer aided design (CAD) systems and amusement machines. Especially, along with the recent advances in image processing techniques, systems using three-dimensional computer graphics are becoming rapidly
15 widespread.

 In three-dimensional computer graphics, the color value of each pixel is calculated at the time of deciding the color of each corresponding pixel. Then, rendering is performed for writing the calculated value
20 to an address of a display buffer (frame buffer) corresponding to the pixel.

 One of the rendering methods is polygon rendering. In this method, a three-dimensional model is expressed as an composite of triangular unit graphics
25 (polygons). By drawing the polygons as units, the colors

of the pixels of the display screen are decided.

Also, in the three-dimensional computer graphics, hidden plane processing using a z-buffer memory is performed.

5 Namely, when composing a first image data
(color data) already stored in a display buffer memory
and a second image data subjected to graphic processing,
it is judged whether or not an image corresponding to the
second image data is positioned closer to the viewing
10 point than an image corresponding to the first image data
by comparing first z-data stored in the z-buffer memory
and second z-data corresponding to the second image data.
Then, when it is judged that it is positioned closer, the
first z-data stored in the z-buffer memory is updated by
15 the second z-data, and the first image data stored in a
display buffer memory is updated by the second image
data.

Then, the image data is read from the display
buffer memory and output to a display such as a CRT
20 (cathode ray tube).

There has been a demand to performing
processing by using a three-dimensional computer graphic
system on a video signal obtained by taking a picture of
a natural image by an image pickup apparatus such as a
25 video camera.

However, since a video signal does not include z-data, there is a disadvantage of an incapability of handling the input video signal in the same way as an image signal obtained through normal graphic processing when simply inputting the video signal taken by an image pickup apparatus into a three-dimensional computer graphic system. For example, a video signal has a disadvantage that hidden plane processing etc. cannot be performed.

10

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention was made in consideration of the above prior art and has as its object providing an image processing apparatus and method capable of performing a variety of graphic processing using a video signal taken by an image pickup apparatus.

15

To solve the above problems of the prior art and to achieve the above object, the image processing apparatus of the present invention provides a first memory for storing image data for output to a display; a second memory for storing depth data of said image data; an image processing circuit for performing three-dimensional graphic processing of predetermined data to generate a three-dimensional image data including first image data and first depth data corresponding to the first image

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data; and a write circuit for writing said first image data and said first depth data respectively in said first memory and said second memory as said image data and said depth data and, when second image data corresponding to image pickup data and second depth data corresponding to said second image data are input, writing said second image data and said second depth data respectively to said first memory and said second memory as said image data and said depth data.

In the image processing apparatus of the present invention, when second image data corresponding to image pickup data of, for example, an image pickup apparatus and second depth data corresponding to said second image data are input by a write circuit, said second image data and said second depth data are respectively written to said first memory and said second memory.

Therefore, it becomes possible to handle the second image data stored in the first memory in the same way as the first image data subjected to normal three-dimensional graphic processing by using the second depth data stored in the second memory in the image processing apparatus.

Further, the image processing apparatus of the present invention preferably has a write circuit which alternately receives as input frame data indicating said

second image data and frame data indicating said second depth data, writes the frame data indicating said second image data to said first memory, and writes the frame data indicating said second depth data to said second memory.

Alternatively, the image processing apparatus of the present invention preferably has a write circuit which alternately receives as input line data indicating said second image data and line data indicating said second depth data, writes the line data indicating said second image data to said first memory, and writes the line data indicating said second image data to said second memory.

Alternatively, the image processing apparatus of the present invention preferably has a write circuit which successively receives as input a plurality of data blocks respectively including said second image data and said second depth data for each pixel, writes said second image data included in the input data block to said first memory every time said plurality of data blocks are input, and writes said second depth data to said second memory.

Alternatively, the image processing apparatus of the present invention preferably has a write circuit which receives as input third image data obtained by

chroma key composition of said second depth data with
said second image data, extracts said second image data
from said third image data, writes the extracted image
data to said first memory, extracts said second depth
5 data from said third image data, and writes the extracted
depth data to said second memory.

Alternatively, the image processing apparatus of
the present invention preferably has a write circuit
which directly writes said input second image data and
10 second depth data respectively to said first memory and
said second memory.

Alternatively, the image processing apparatus of
the present invention preferably has a write circuit
which writes said input said second image data and said
15 second depth data to said first memory, reads said second
depth data from said first memory, and writes it to said
second memory.

Alternatively, the image processing apparatus of
the present invention preferably has a write circuit
20 which writes said input said second image data and said
second depth data to said second memory and reads said
second image data from said second memory and writes it
to said first memory.

The image processing method of the present
25 invention includes the steps of performing three-

dimensional graphic processing to generate first depth data corresponding to first image data and first depth data corresponding to said image data; writing said first image data and said first depth data in a first memory for storing image data to be output to a display and a second memory for storing depth data of image data stored in said first memory; generating second image data corresponding to image pickup data and second depth data corresponding to said second image data; and writing said second image data and said second depth data respectively to said first memory and said second memory.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other objects and features of the present invention will become clearer from the following description of the preferred embodiments given with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a view of the system configuration of a three-dimensional computer graphic system according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a view for explaining frame data output from a video signal generator in the three-dimensional computer graphic system shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a flow chart for explaining processing of

a memory I/F circuit shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a system configuration of a three-dimensional computer graphic system according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

5 Fig. 5A and Fig. 5B are views for explaining line data output from a video signal generator in the three-dimensional computer graphic system shown in Fig. 4;

Fig. 6 is a flow chart for explaining processing of the memory I/F circuit shown in Fig. 4;

10 Fig. 7 is a view of the system configuration of a three-dimensional computer graphic system according to a third embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 8 is a view for explaining image data and z-data output from a video signal generator in the three-dimensional computer graphic system shown in Fig. 7;

15 Fig. 9 is a view for explaining another example of image data and z-data output from the video signal generator in the three-dimensional computer graphic system shown in Fig. 7; and

20 Fig. 10 is a flow chart for explaining processing of the memory I/F circuit shown in Fig. 1 in the three-dimensional computer graphic system according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention.

First Embodiment

Below, in the present embodiment, a case will be explained of applying the present invention to a three-dimensional computer graphic system for displaying a desired three-dimensional image of any three dimensional object as a model on a display, such as a CRT (cathode ray tube), at a high speed.

Figure 1 is a view of the system configuration of a three-dimensional computer graphic system 1 of the present embodiment.

In the three-dimensional computer graphic system 1, a three-dimensional model is expressed by a composite of triangular unit graphics (polygons). By drawing the polygons, this system can decide the color of each pixel on the display screen and perform polygon rendering for display on the screen.

In the three-dimensional computer graphic system 1, a three-dimensional object is expressed by using a z-coordinate for indicating the depth in addition to the (x, y) coordinates for indicating positions on a two-dimensional plane. Any point of the three-dimensional space can be expressed by the three coordinates (x, y, z).

As shown in Fig. 1, in the three-dimensional computer graphic system 1, a main memory 2, an I/O

interface circuit 3, a main processor 4, and a rendering circuit 5 are connected via a main bus 6.

Also, the three-dimensional computer graphic system 1 comprises a video signal generation apparatus 30 and a CRT 31.

Below, the operations of the respective components will be explained.

(Main Processor 4)

The main processor 4, for example, in accordance with the execution of a program, generates a control signal to control components inside a rendering circuit 5 and outputs the control signal to the rendering circuit 5 via the main bus 6.

Also, the main processor 4, when executing a predetermined instruction in a program, reads necessary graphic data from the main memory 2, performs clipping, lighting, geometrical processing, etc. on the graphic data and generates polygon rendering data. The main processor 4 outputs the polygon rendering data S4a to the rendering circuit 5 via the main bus 6.

Here, the polygon rendering data includes data of each of the three vertexes (x , y , z , R , G , B , α , s , t , q , F) of the polygon.

Here, the (x , y , z) data indicates the three-dimensional coordinates of a vertex of the polygon, and

(R, G, B) data indicates the luminance values of red, green, and blue at the three-dimensional coordinates, respectively.

5 The data α indicates a coefficient of blending the R, G, B data of a pixel to be drawn and that of a pixel already stored in the display buffer 21.

Among the (s, t, q) data, the (s, t) indicates homogeneous coordinates of a corresponding texture and the q indicates the homogenous term. Here, the texture
10 size USIZE and VSIZE are respectively multiplied with the "s/q" and "t/q" to obtain coordinate data (u, v) of the texture. The texture coordinate data (u, v) is used for accessing the texture data stored in the texture buffer memory 20.

15 Here, the texture data means data indicating a pattern of the surface of an object to be displayed three-dimensionally.

The F data indicates an α value of fogging.

Namely, the polygon rendering data indicates
20 physical coordinate values of the vertexes of a triangle (unit graphic) and values of colors of the vertexes, texture, and fogging.

(I/O Interface Circuit 3)

An I/O interface circuit 3, in accordance with
25 need, receives as input the polygon rendering data from

the outside and outputs the same to the rendering circuits via the main bus 6.

(Video Signal Generating Apparatus 30)

A video signal generating apparatus 30 generates
5 frame data 100_n by adding z-data to a video signal of a
natural image etc. taken by an image pickup apparatus
such as a video camera, where n is an integer of one or
more, and outputs the frame data 100_n to a memory I/F
circuit 13 by synchronizing with a frame (vertical)
10 synchronization signal Fsync.

Here, as shown in Fig. 2, frame data 100_{2k-1} with n
as an odd number indicates image data, while frame data
 100_{2k} with n as an even number indicates z-data (depth
data) of the image data indicated by the frame data 100_{2k-1} .
15

At this time, for example, by outputting the frame
data 100_n of 60 frames to the memory I/F circuit 13, a
video signal having 30 frames' worth of z-data can be
supplied to the rendering circuit 5.

20 (Rendering Circuit 5)

Below, a rendering circuit 5 will be explained in
detail.

As shown in Fig. 1, the rendering circuit 5
comprises a DDA (digital differential analyzer) set up
25 circuit 10, a triangle DDA circuit 11, a texture engine

circuit 12 (image processing circuit), a memory I/F circuit 13 (write circuit), a CRT controller circuit 14, a RAMDAC circuit 15, a DRAM 16, and an SRAM 1 which operate based on control signals from the main processor 4.

The DRAM 16 functions as a texture buffer memory 20, a display buffer memory 21 (first memory), a z-buffer memory 22 (second memory), and a texture CLUT buffer memory 23. For example, the frame buffer memory is used for the display buffer memory 21.

(DDA Set Up Circuit 10)

The DDA set-up circuit 10 performs linear interpolation on the values of the vertexes of a triangle in the physical coordinates in a triangle DDA circuit 11 in its latter part. The DDA set-up circuit 10, prior to obtaining information of the color and depth of the respective pixels inside the triangle, performs a set-up operation for obtaining the sides of the triangle and the difference in a horizontal direction for the data (z, R, G, B, α , s, t, q, F) indicated by the polygon rendering data S4a.

Specifically, this set-up operation uses values of the starting point and the ending point and the distance between the two points to calculate the variation of the value to find movement for a unit length.

The DDA set-up circuit 10 outputs the calculated variation data S10 to the triangle DDA circuit 11.

(Triangle DDA Circuit 11)

5 The triangle DDA circuit 11 uses the variation data input from the DDA set-up circuit 10 to calculate the (z, R, G, B, α , s, t, q, F) data after linear interpolation of each pixel inside the triangle.

10 The triangle DDA circuit 11 outputs the data (x, y) for each pixel and the (z, R, G, B, α , s, t, q, F) data at the (x, y) coordinates to the texture engine circuit 12 as DDA data (interpolation data) S11.

15 In the present embodiment, the triangle DDA circuit 11 outputs the DDA data S11 of 8 (=2x4) pixels positioned inside a block being processed in parallel to the texture engine circuit 12.

(Texture Engine Circuit 12)

20 The texture engine circuit 12 performs the calculation of "s/q" and "t/q", calculation of the texture coordinate data (u, v), reading of the data (R, G, B, α) from the texture buffer memory 20, and α blending (texture α blending) successively in a pipeline format.

25 Note that the texture engine circuit 12 performs processing on the 8 pixels positioned inside a predetermined block simultaneously in parallel.

The texture engine circuit 12 performs an operation for dividing the data s by the data q and an operation for dividing the data t by the data q on the (s, t, q) data indicated by the DDA data S11.

5 Also, the texture engine circuit 12 respectively multiplies the texture sizes USIZE and VSIZE with the division results " s/q " and " t/q " to generate the texture coordinate data (u, v) .

The texture engine circuit 12 outputs a read
10 request including the generated texture coordinate data (u, v) to the SRAM 17 or DRAM 16 via the memory I/F circuit 13 and obtains the data S17 (R, G, B, α) as texture data read from an address on the SRAM 17 specified by the texture coordinate data (u, v) via the
15 memory I/F circuit 13.

Here, texture data corresponding to a plurality of reducing rates of MIPMAP (textures for a plurality of resolutions) is stored in the texture buffer memory 20 and a copy of the texture data stored in the texture
20 buffer memory 20 is stored in the SRAM 17.

In the present embodiment, by generating the texture coordinates (u, v) in the above way, texture data of a desired reduction rate can be read from the SRAM 17 in units of triangles as unit graphics.

25 The texture engine circuit 12 generates pixel data

S12 by blending the (R, G, B) data in the read data S17 (R, G, B, α) and the (R, G, B) data included in the DDA data S11 from the triangle DDA circuit 11 in the former stage by the ratio indicated by the α data (texture α) included in the data S17 (R, G, B, α).

The texture engine circuit 12 outputs the pixel data S12 to the memory I/F circuit 13.

In the case of a full color mode, the texture engine circuit 12 directly uses the data (R, G, B, α) read from the texture buffer memory 20. In the case of an index color mode, the texture engine circuit 12 reads a color look-up table (CLUT), prepared in advance, from the texture CLUT buffer memory 23, transfers and stores the same in the built-in SRAM, and uses the color look-up table to obtain the data (R, G, B) corresponding to the color index read from the texture buffer memory 20.

(Memory I/F Circuit 13)

A memory I/F circuit 13 outputs display data S21 read from the display buffer memory 21 to the CRT controller circuit 14 when displaying on a CRT 31.

Also, the memory I/F circuit 13 compares the z-data corresponding to the pixel data S12 input from the texture engine circuit 12 with the z-data stored in the z-buffer memory 22 and judges whether the image drawn by the input pixel (image) data S12 is positioned closer to

the viewing point than the image stored in the display buffer memory 21. When it is judged that the image drawn by the input pixel data S12 is positioned closer, the memory I/F circuit 13 updates the z-data stored in the z-buffer memory 22 by the z-data corresponding to the pixel data S12 and updates the pixel data in the display buffer memory 21 by the pixel data S12.

Also, the memory I/F circuit 13, in accordance with need, blends the (R, G, B) data included in the image data S12 and the (R, G, B) data already stored in the display buffer memory 21 by the blending ratio indicated by the α data corresponding to the pixel data S12, that is, α blending. Then, the memory I/F circuit 13 writes the data (R, G, B) as display data after blending to the display buffer memory 21.

Note that the DRAM 16 is simultaneously accessed by the memory I/F circuit 13 for 16 pixels' worth of data.

Also, as shown in Fig. 3, when a pulse included in the frame synchronization signal Fsync input from the video signal generating apparatus 30 is detected, the memory I/F circuit 13 judges whether or not the input frame data 100_n comes as an odd number (Step S2). When it is judged to be an odd number, the memory I/F circuit 13 writes frame data 100_{2k-1} with n as an odd number indicating image data in the display buffer memory 21 of

the DRAM 16 in a data format defined in the memory 21
(Step S3), while when it is judged not to be an odd
number, writes frame data 100_{2k} with n as an even number
indicating z-data in the z-buffer memory 22 in the format
5 defined in the memory 22(Step S4).

As a result, hereinafter, the frame data 100_{2k-1}
indicating the image data through the normal graphic
processing is handled in the same way as the pixel data
written in the display buffer memory 21. Namely, the
10 hidden plane processing using the z-data, α blending
processing, and chroma key processing are performed on
the image data taken from a video signal.

(CRT Controller Circuit 14)

The CRT controller circuit 14 generates an address
15 for display on a not shown CRT 31 and outputs a request
for reading the display data stored in the address from
the display buffer memory 21 to the memory I/F circuit
13. In response to this request, the memory I/F circuit
13 reads a certain amount of the display data from the
20 display buffer memory 21.

The CRT controller 14 has a built-in FIFO (first-in
first-out) circuit for storing the display data read from
the display buffer memory 21 and outputs the stored
display data by reading at certain time intervals to the
25 RAMDAC circuit 15 as display data S14a.

(DRAM 16)

A DRAM 16 comprises a texture buffer memory 20, display buffer memory 21, z-buffer memory 22, and texture CLUT buffer memory 23.

5 Here, the texture buffer memory 20 stores texture data corresponding to a plurality of reduction rates such as MIPMAP (textures for a plurality of resolutions) as explained above.

10 The display buffer memory 21 stores display data indicating R, G, and B values of each pixel in a predetermined data format. Also, the display buffer memory 21 stores, as explained above, the frame data 100_{2k-1} indicating image data input from the video signal generator 30 via the memory I/F circuit 13.

15 The z-buffer memory 22 stores z-data of each pixel in a predetermined data format. Also, the z-buffer memory 22 stores, as explained above, the frame data 100_{2k} indicating z-data input from the video signal generator 30 via the memory I/F circuit 13.

20 The texture CLUT buffer memory 23 stores a color look-up table (CLUT).

(RAMDAC Circuit 15)

25 The RAMDAC circuit 15 stores the R, G, B data corresponding to the respective index values, transfers the display data S14 input from the CRT controller 14 to

the D/A converter, and generates RGB data in an analog form. The RAMDAC circuit 15 outputs the generated R, G, B data S15 to the CRT 31.

Below, an example of the operation of the three-dimensional computer graphic system 1 will be explained.

In the three-dimensional computer graphic system 1, the frame data 100_{2k-1} indicating image data and the frame data 100_{2k} indicating z-data of the image data indicated by the frame data 100_{2k-1} are generated in the video signal generator 30 and output to the memory I/F circuit 13 in synchronization with the frame synchronization signal Fsync.

Next, in the memory I/F circuit 13, as shown in Fig. 3, when the pulse included in the frame synchronization signal Fsync input from the video signal generator 30 is detected (Step S1), it is judged whether or not the input frame data 100_n is an odd number (Step S2). When it is judged to be an odd number, the frame data 100_{2k-1} with n as an odd number indicating the image data is written to the display buffer memory 21 of the DRAM 16 (Step S3), while when it is judged to not be an odd number, the frame data 100_{2k} with n as an even number indicating z-data is written to the z buffer memory 22 (Step S4).

As a result, hereinafter, the frame data 100_{2k-1}

indicating image data obtained by a video signal is handled in the same way as the image data written in the display buffer memory 21 after being subjected to the normal graphic processing. Namely, the hidden plane
5 processing using the z-data, α blending, and chroma key processing are performed on the image data taken from a video signal.

Also, for example, polygon rendering data S4a is output from the main processor 4 to the DDA set-up
10 circuit 10 via the main bus 6. Variation data S10 indicating the difference between the sides of the triangle and the horizontal direction etc. is generated in the DDA set-up circuit 10.

This variation data S10 is output to the triangle
15 DDA circuit 11. In the triangle DDA circuit 11, the linearly interpolated data (z, R, G, B, α , s, t, q, F) for each pixel inside the triangle is calculated. Then, the calculated (z, R, G, B, α , s, t, q, F) data and the (x, y) data of the vertexes of the triangle are output
20 from the triangle DDA circuit 11 to the texture engine circuit 12 as DDA data S11.

Next, the texture engine circuit 12 performs an operation for dividing the data s by the data q and an operation for dividing the data t by data q for the data
25 (s, t, q) indicated by the DDA data S11.

At this time, the division "s/q" and "t/q" are simultaneously carried out for 8 pixels by eight division circuits. Then, the texture sizes USIZE and VSIZE are respectively multiplied with the division results "s/q" and "t/q" to generate the texture coordinate data (u, v).

Next, a request for reading including the above generated texture coordinate data (u, v) is output from the texture engine circuit 12 to the SRAM 17 via the memory I/F circuit 13. Then, the texture data S17 (R, G, B, α) stored in the SRAM 17 is read via the memory I/F circuit 13.

Next, in the texture engine circuit 12, the data (R, G, B) in the read data S17 (R, G, B, α) and the (R, G, B) data included in the DDA data S11 from the triangle DDA circuit 11 in the former stage are blended by the ratio indicated by the α data (texture α) included in the data S17 (R, G, B, α) to generate the pixel data S12.

This pixel data S12 is output from the texture engine circuit 12 to the main memory I/F circuit 13.

Then, in the memory I/F circuit 13, the z-data corresponding to the pixel data S12 input from the texture engine circuit 12 and the z-data (for example, the z-data indicated by the frame data 100_{2k}) stored in the z-buffer memory 22 are compared. When the image drawn by the input pixel data S12 is judged to be positioned

closer to the viewing point than the image corresponding
to the image data indicated by the frame data 100_{2k-1}
stored in the display buffer memory 21 the previous time,
the z-data stored in the z-buffer memory 22 is updated by
5 the z-data corresponding to the image data S12.

Next, in the memory I/F circuit 13, in accordance
with need, the (R, G, B) data included in the image data
S12 and the (R, G, B) data indicated by the frame data
 100_{2k-1} already stored in the display buffer memory 21 are
10 blended by the ratio indicated by the α data (α data
included in the DDA data S11) corresponding to the pixel
data S12. Then, the blended data (R, G, B) is written to
the display buffer 21 as display data.

Then, the (R, G, B) data stored in the display
15 buffer memory 21 is read as display data S21 by the
memory I/F circuit 13 and output to the CRT controller
circuit 14.

Then, after the display data S21 is adjusted in
timing in the CRT controller circuit 14, it is output to
20 the RAMDAC circuit 15 as display data S14.

Then, the display data S14 is converted to R, G, B
data S15 in the RAMDAC circuit 15 and the R, G, B data
S15 is output to the CRT 31.

Second Embodiment

25 The present embodiment is basically the same as the

three-dimensional computer graphic system 1 shown in Fig. 1 of the first embodiment except for the point that the functions of the memory I/F circuit 13 and the video signal generator shown in Fig. 1 are different.

5 Figure 4 is a view of the system configuration of a three-dimensional computer graphic system 201 of the present embodiment.

10 In Fig. 4, components having the same reference numbers are the same as those explained in the first embodiment.

Namely, in the three-dimensional computer graphic system 201, a memory I/F circuit 213 and the video signal generator 230 are different from the corresponding components in the above first embodiment.

15 The video signal generator 230 generates line data 200_n by adding z-data to an image signal obtained from an image pickup apparatus such as a video camera, where n is an integer of 1 or more, and outputs the line data 200_n to the memory I/F circuit 13 in synchronization with a horizontal synchronization signal Hsync as shown in Fig. 5(A) and (B).

20 Here, as shown in Fig. 5, the line data 200_{2k-1} with n as an odd number indicates image data and the line data 200_{2k} with n as an even number indicates z-data of image data indicated by the line data 200_{2k-1} .

25

Namely, the video signal generator 230 outputs image data and z-data corresponding to the image data alternately in every horizontal synchronization period to the memory I/F circuit 213.

5 Also, as shown in Fig. 6, when a pulse included in the horizontal synchronization signal Hsync input from the video signal generator 30 is detected (Step S11), the memory I/F circuit 213 judges whether the input line data 200_n is an odd number (Step S12). When judged an odd
10 number, the line data 200_{2k-1} with n as an odd number indicating image data is written to the display buffer memory 21 of the DRAM 16 (Step S13), while when judged not an odd number, the line data 200_{2k} with n as an even number indicating z-data is written to the z-buffer
15 memory 22 (Step S14).

 Also in the present embodiment, in the same way as in the above first embodiment, the line data 200_{2k-1} indicating image data obtained from a video signal is handled in the same way as the image data subjected to
20 normal graphic processing and written in the display buffer memory 21. Namely, the hidden plane processing using the z-data, α blending, and chroma key processing are performed on the image data taken from a video
 signal.

The present embodiment is basically the same as the three-dimensional computer graphic system 1 shown in Fig. 1 of the first embodiment except for the point that the functions of the memory I/F circuit 13 and the video signal generator shown in Fig. 1 are different.

Figure 7 is a view of the system configuration of a three-dimensional computer graphic system 301 of the present embodiment.

In Fig. 7, components having the same reference numbers are the same as those explained in the first embodiment.

Namely, in the three-dimensional computer graphic system 301, a memory I/F circuit 313 and the video signal generator 330 are different from the corresponding components in the above first embodiment.

The video signal generator 330 is, for example, generates a plurality of data blocks including image data obtained from a video signal obtained from an image pickup apparatus such as a video camera and z-data for each pixel, and simultaneously outputs data comprising the data block to the memory I/F circuit 313.

At this time, as shown in Fig. 8, the upper 24 bits in a 40-bit data block stores image data and the lower 16 bits stores z-data corresponding to the image data.

Also, the memory I/F circuit 313 writes the image

data stored in the upper 24 bits of the data block to the display buffer memory 21 of the DRAM 16 and writes the z-data stored in the lower 16 bits to the z-buffer memory 22 for every data block input from the video signal generator 330.

Also, by the present embodiment, in the same way as in the above first embodiment, the image data obtained from a video signal is handled in the same way as the image data subjected to normal graphic processing and written in the display buffer memory 21. Namely, the hidden plane processing using the z-data, α blending, and chroma key processing are performed on the image data taken from a video signal.

Note that, for example as shown in Fig. 9, a 32-bit data block comprised by R, G, B data each of which is 8 bits and z-data may be output from the video signal generator 330 to the memory I/F circuit 313.

By doing so, as shown in Fig. 7, it becomes possible to make the data format of the R, G, B data match between the 8-bit image data S12 comprised by R, G, B, α data and the block data input from the video signal generator 330, therefore processing on the R, G, B data can be made common between a case of inputting the image data S12 and the case of inputting the block data.

Also, as an example of a modification, in the

present invention, for example, the video signal generator may generate image data including z-data by chroma-key composition of z-data with the image data obtained from a video signal using predetermined color data, the predetermined color data may be extracted from the image data input from the video signal generator to obtain z-data, for example, in the memory I/F circuit, the z-data may be written in the z-buffer memory 22, and the image data after removal of the z-data may be written in the display buffer memory 21 based on the results of z-comparison.

Fourth Embodiment

The three-dimensional computer graphic system of the present embodiment has the same configuration as the above explained three-dimensional computer graphic system 1 shown in Fig. 1, however, part of the processing of the memory I/F circuit 13 is different from that of the first embodiment.

Namely, in the above first embodiment, the memory I/F circuit 13 wrote odd number frame data 100_{2k-1} to the display buffer memory 21 of the DRAM 16 and wrote even number frame data 100_{2k} to the z-buffer memory 22 in the frame data 100_n input from the video signal generator 30 as explained by referring to Fig. 3.

Figure 10 is a flow chart for explaining the

processing of the memory I/F circuit 13 in the three-dimensional computer graphic system of the present embodiment.

On the other hand, as shown in Fig. 10, in the present embodiment, the memory I/F circuit 13 temporarily writes all of the frame data 100_n input from the video signal generator 30 to the display buffer memory 21 of the DRAM 16 in a format defined by the memory 21 (Step S21) and, after writing a predetermined amount of frame data 100_n to the display buffer memory 21 (Step S22), performs control to transfer and store even number frame data 100_{2k} in the written frame data 100_n to the z-buffer memory by transfer between buffers in a format defined by the memory 22 (Step S23).

In the present embodiment, by performing control in the memory I/F circuit 13 in the above way, the frame data 100_{2k} indicating z-data can no longer be written in the z-buffer memory 22 in real time. However, in the memory I/F circuit 13, it is not necessary to distribute the frame data 100_n input from the video signal generator 30 to the display buffer memory 21 and the z-buffer memory 22 and so the processing load on the memory I/F circuit 13 can be reduced.

Note that in the present invention, for example, the memory I/F circuit 13 temporarily writes all of the

frame data 100_n input from the video signal generator 30 in the z-buffer memory of the DRAM 16 in a format defined by the memory 22 and, after writing a predetermined amount of frame data 100_n in the z-buffer memory 22, may
5 perform control to transfer and store the odd number frame data 100_{2k-1} in the written frame data 100_n in the display buffer memory 21 by transfer between buffers in the format defined by the memory 21.

The present invention is not limited to the above
10 embodiments.

For example, image data and z-data read from the DRAM 16 of another three-dimensional computer graphic system having the same configuration as Fig. 1 may be input to the memory I/F circuit 13 of the above three-
15 dimensional computer graphic system 1 shown in Fig. 1 and may be written in the display buffer 21 and the z-buffer 22.

Also, in the above embodiment, the configuration of using an SRAM 17 was shown as an example, however, it may
20 be configured not to have the SRAM 17.

Also, the texture buffer memory 20 and the texture CLUT buffer memory 23 shown in Fig. 1 may be provided outside of the DRAM 16.

25 Furthermore, in the three-dimensional computer

graphic system 1 shown in Fig. 7, a case where the geometrical processing for generating polygon rendering data was performed in the main processor 4 was shown as an example, however, the system may be configured to perform the same in the rendering circuit 5.

As explained above, according to the image processing apparatus and method of the present invention, it is possible to perform a variety of graphic processing by using image data (video signal) obtained by an image pickup apparatus.

While the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiment chosen for purpose of illustration, it should be apparent that numerous modifications could be made thereto by those skilled in the art without departing from the basic concept and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An image processing apparatus comprising:
a display buffer memory for storing image data for output to a display;
a z-buffer memory for storing depth data of said image data;
an image processing circuit for performing three-dimensional graphic processing of predetermined data to generate a three-dimensional image data including first image data and first depth data corresponding to the first image data; and
a write circuit for writing said first image data and said first depth data respectively in said display buffer memory and said z-buffer memory as said image data and said depth data and,
when second image data comprising image pickup-data and added second depth data associated with said second image data are input, writing said second image data and said second depth data respectively to said display buffer memory and said z-buffer memory as said image data and said depth data.
2. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said write circuit alternately receives as input frame data indicating said second image data and frame data indicating said second depth data, writes the frame data indicating said second image data to said display buffer memory, and writes the frame data indicating said second depth data to said z-buffer memory.
3. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said write circuit alternately receives as input line data indicating said second image data and line data indicating said second depth data, writes the line data indicating said second image data to said display buffer memory, and writes the line data indicating said second depth data to said z-buffer memory.
4. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said write circuit successively receives as input a plurality of data blocks respectively including said second image data and said second depth data for each pixel, writes said second image data included in the

input data block to said display buffer memory every time said plurality of data blocks are input, and writes said second depth data to said z-buffer memory.

5. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said write circuit receives as input third image data obtained by chroma key composition of said second depth data with said second image data, extracts said second image data from said third image data, writes the extracted image data to said display buffer memory, extracts said second depth data from said third image data, and writes the extracted depth data to said z-buffer memory.

6. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said write circuit writes said input second image data and second depth-data respectively to said display buffer memory and said z-buffer memory when receiving the input from a compatible image processing apparatus.

7. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said write circuit writes said input second image data and second depth data to said display buffer memory, reads said second depth data from said display buffer memory, and writes it to said z-buffer memory.

8. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said write circuit writes said input second image data and second depth data to said z-buffer memory, reads said second image data from said z-buffer memory, and writes said second image data to said display buffer memory.

9. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said display buffer memory and said z-buffer memory are separated in a single semiconductor device.

10. An image processing apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said image processing circuit performs hidden plane processing by using depth data stored in said z-buffer memory.

11. An image processing method comprising the steps of:

performing three-dimensional graphic processing to generate first image data and first depth data corresponding to said first image data;

writing said first image data and said first depth data in a display buffer memory for storing image data to be output to a display, and in a z-buffer memory for storing depth data corresponding to image data stored in said display buffer memory, respectively;

generating second image data comprising image pickup data and added second depth data associated with said second image data; and

writing said second image data and said second depth data respectively to said display buffer memory and said z-buffer memory.

12. An image processing method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

generating frame data indicating said second image data and frame data indicating said second depth data; and

alternately performing writing to said display buffer memory of the frame data indicating said second image data and writing to said z-buffer memory of the frame data indicating said second depth data.

13. An image processing method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

generating line data indicating said second image data and line data indicating said second depth data; and

alternately performing for every horizontal synchronization period writing to said display buffer memory of the line data indicating said second image data and writing to said z-buffer memory of the line data indicating said second depth data.

14. An image processing method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

successively generating a plurality of data blocks respectively including said second image data and said second depth data for each pixel; and

writing said second image data included in said data block to said display buffer memory and writing said second depth data to said z-buffer memory.

15. An image processing method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

generating third image data obtained by chroma key composition of said second depth data with said second image data, extracting said second image data from said third image data, and writing the extracted image data to said display buffer memory, extracting said second depth data from said third image data, and writing the extracted depth data to said z-buffer memory.

16. An image processing method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising the steps of writing said generated second image data and second depth data respectively to said display buffer memory and said z-buffer memory when receiving input from a compatible image processing apparatus.

17. An image processing method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising the steps of: writing said generated second image data and second depth data to said display buffer memory, and reading said second depth data from said display buffer memory, and writing said second depth data to said z-buffer memory.

18. An image processing method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising the steps of writing said generated second image data and second depth data to said z-buffer memory, reading said second image data from said z-buffer memory, and writing it to said display buffer memory.

19. An image processing method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising the step of performing hidden plane processing by using depth data stored in said z-buffer memory.

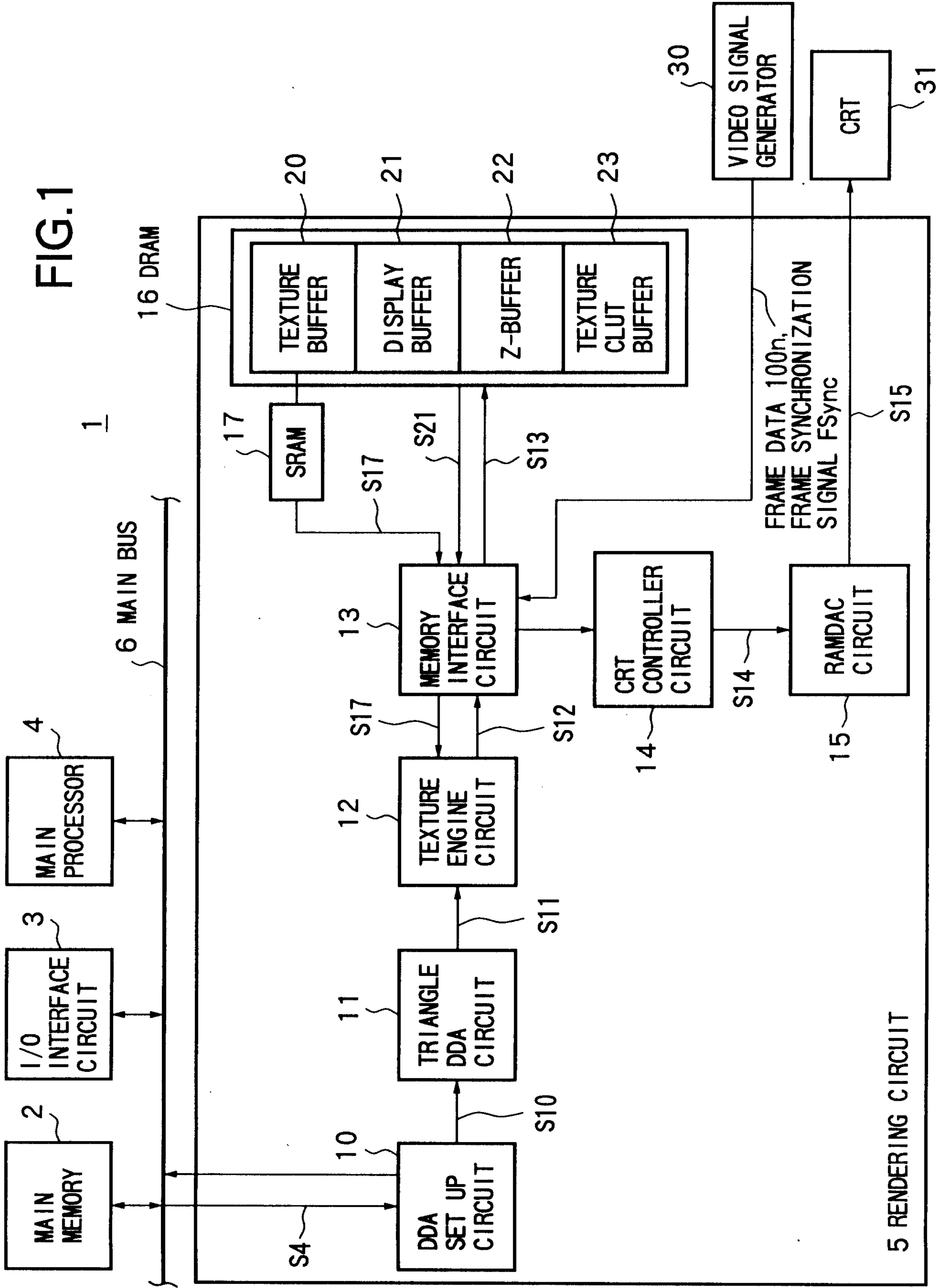


FIG.2

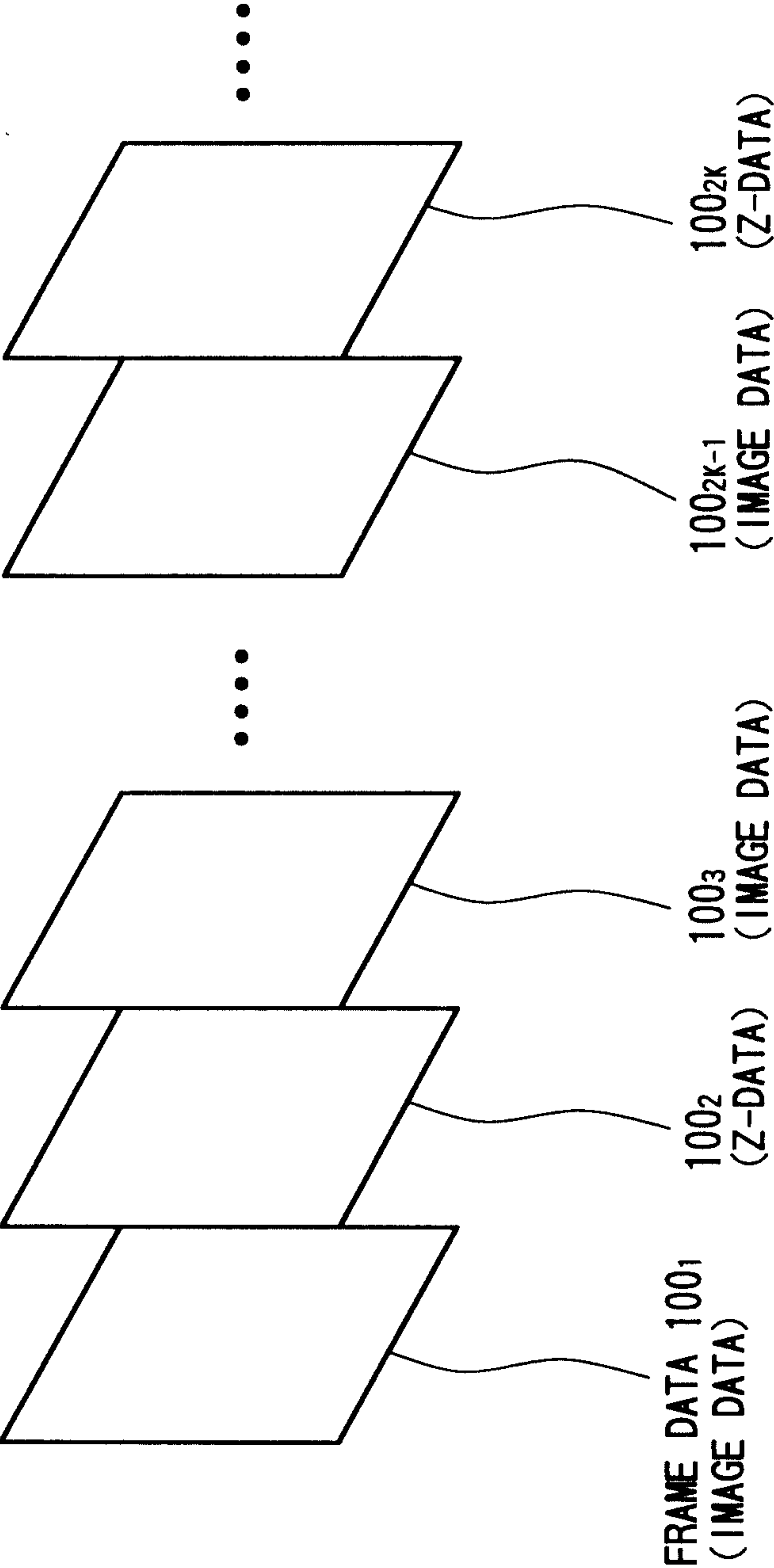


FIG.3

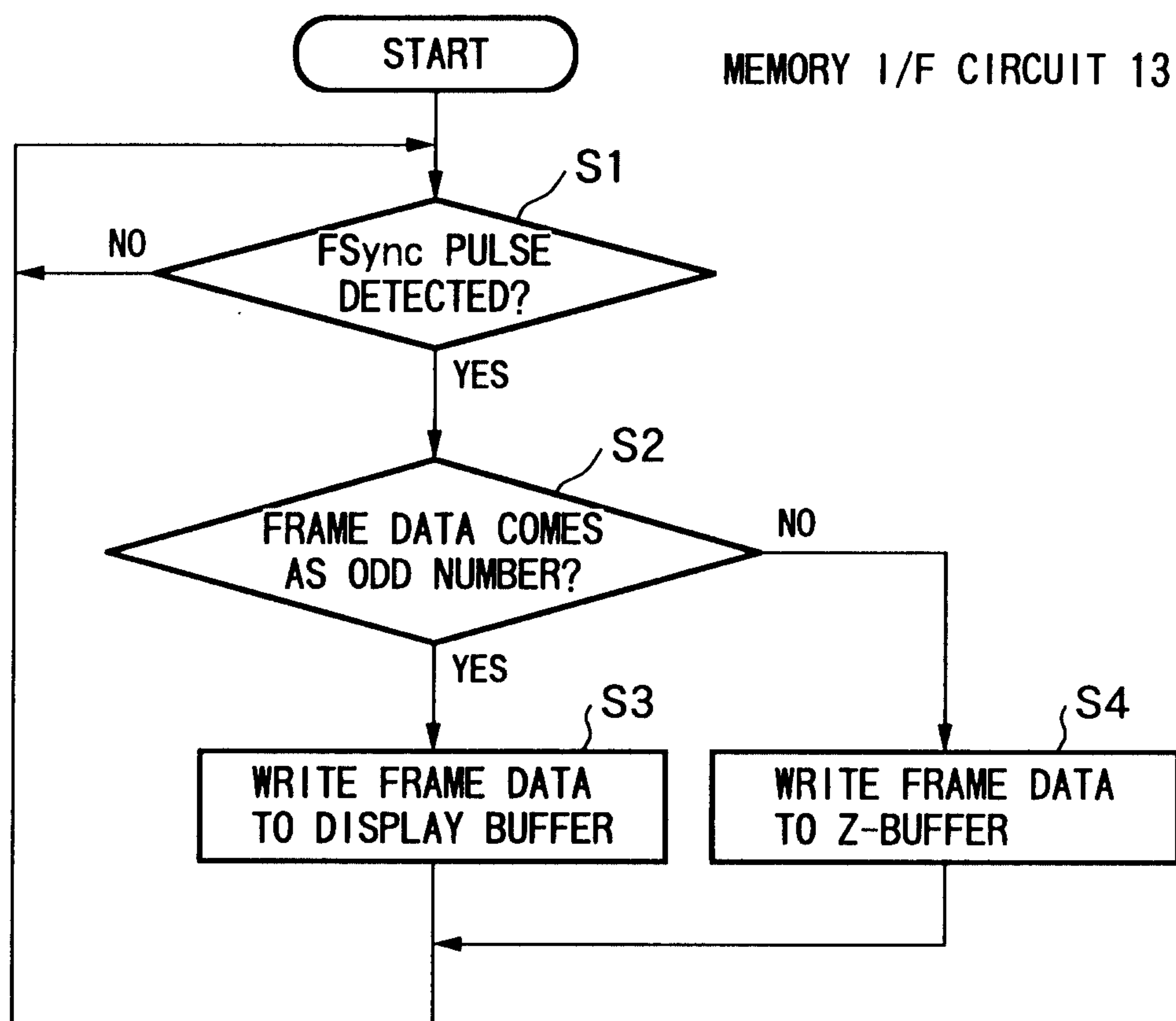
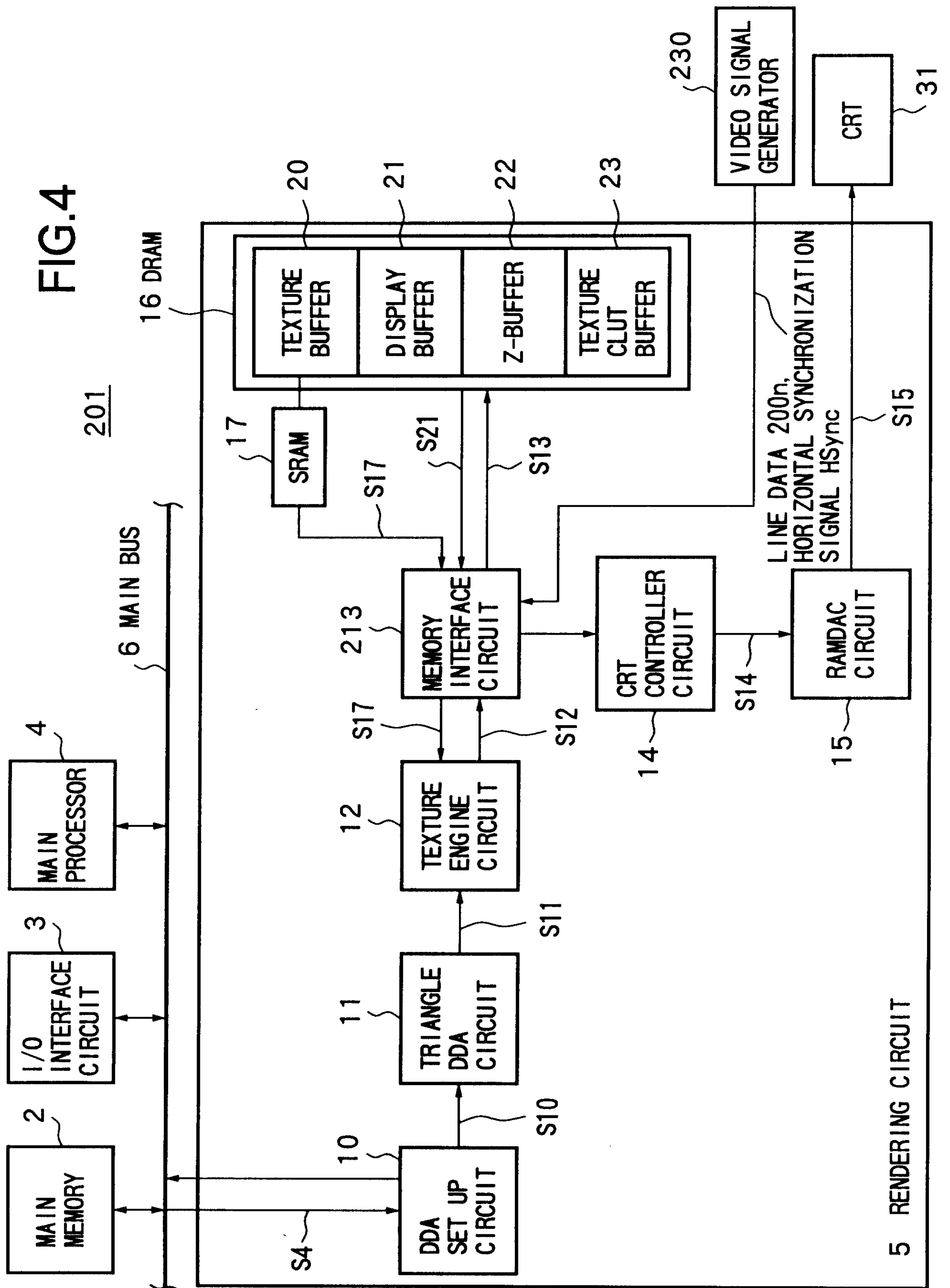


FIG. 4



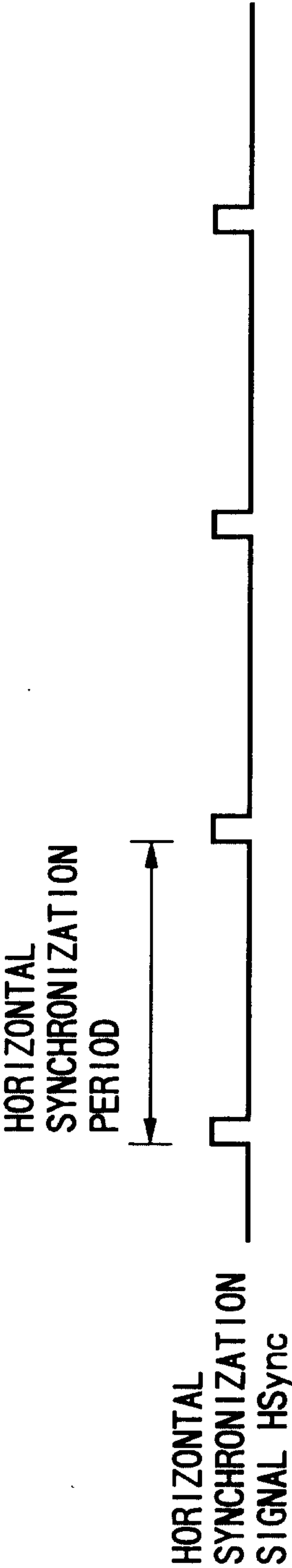


FIG.5A

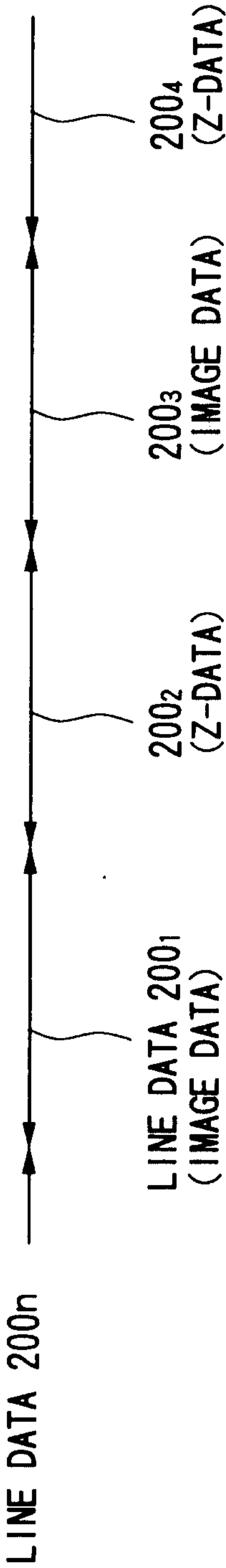


FIG.5B

FIG.6

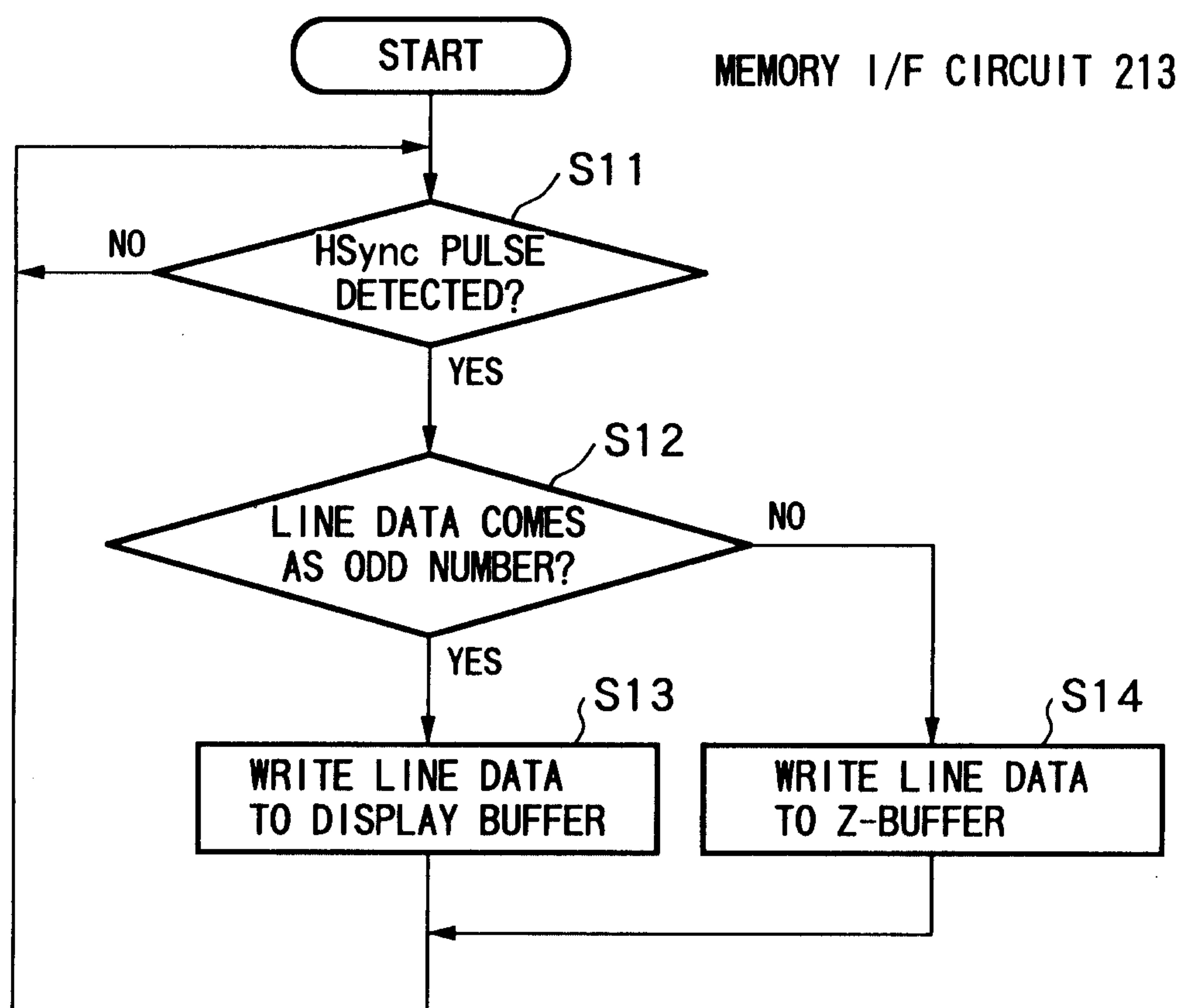


FIG. 7

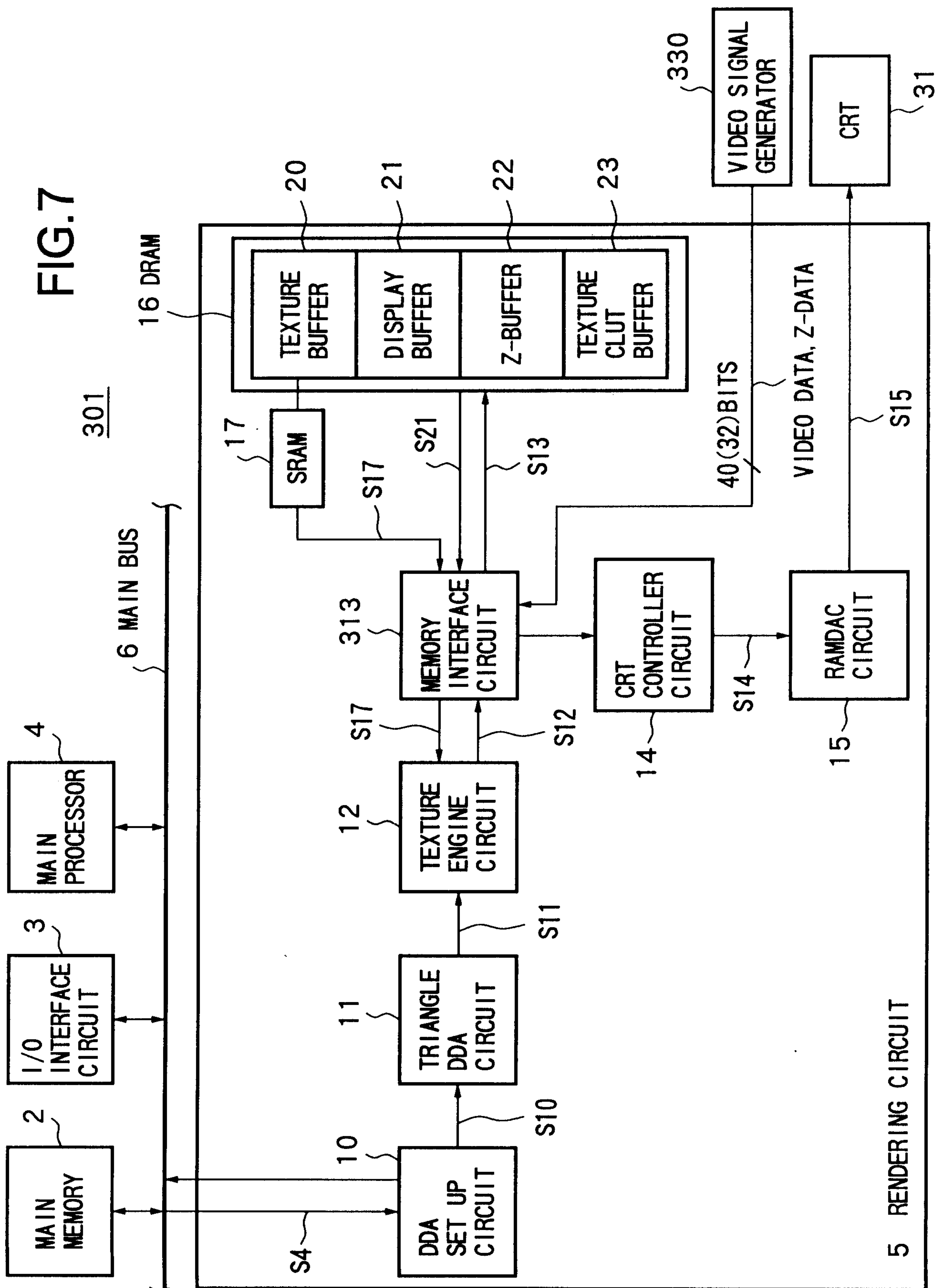


FIG.8

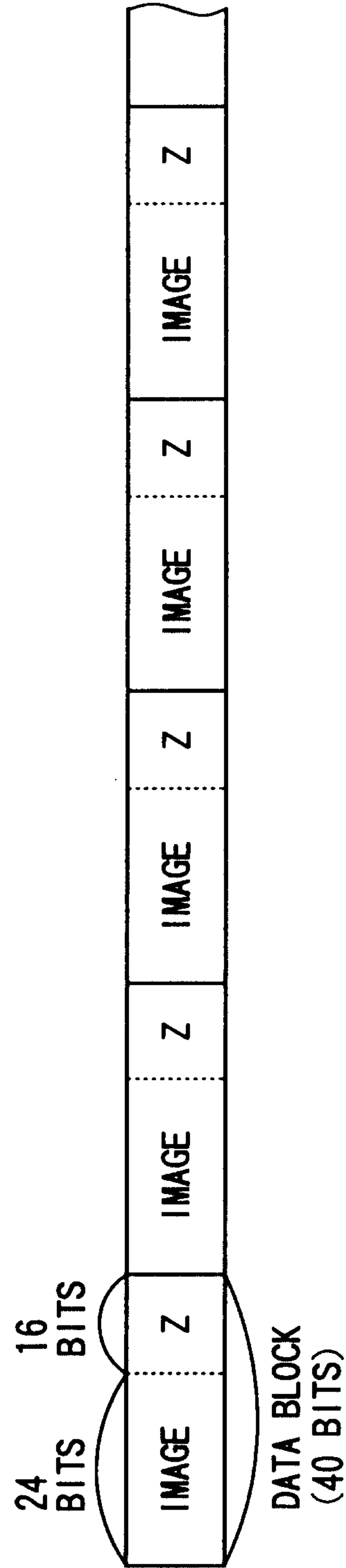


FIG.9

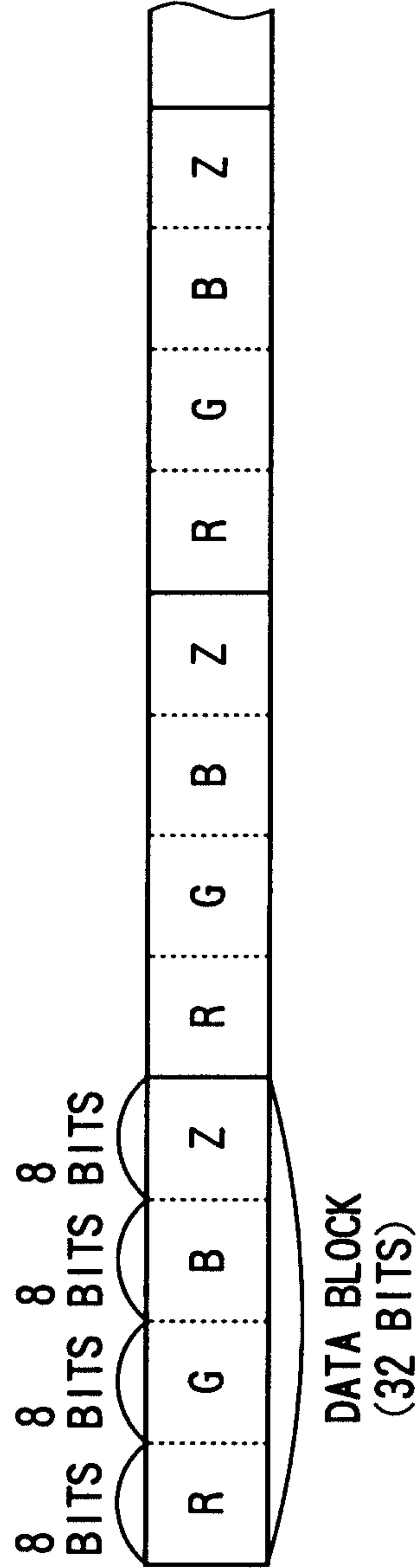


FIG.10

