



(86) **Date de dépôt PCT/PCT Filing Date:** 2008/04/02
(87) **Date publication PCT/PCT Publication Date:** 2008/10/09
(45) **Date de délivrance/Issue Date:** 2016/08/23
(85) **Entrée phase nationale/National Entry:** 2009/10/01
(86) **N° demande PCT/PCT Application No.:** CA 2008/000635
(87) **N° publication PCT/PCT Publication No.:** 2008/119187
(30) **Priorité/Priority:** 2007/04/02 (US60/921,468)

(51) **Cl.Int./Int.Cl.** *H04N 7/18* (2006.01),
A61F 9/00 (2006.01), *G02B 23/12* (2006.01),
G02B 27/01 (2006.01), *G02B 27/02* (2006.01),
G02C 9/00 (2006.01), *H04N 5/351* (2011.01)

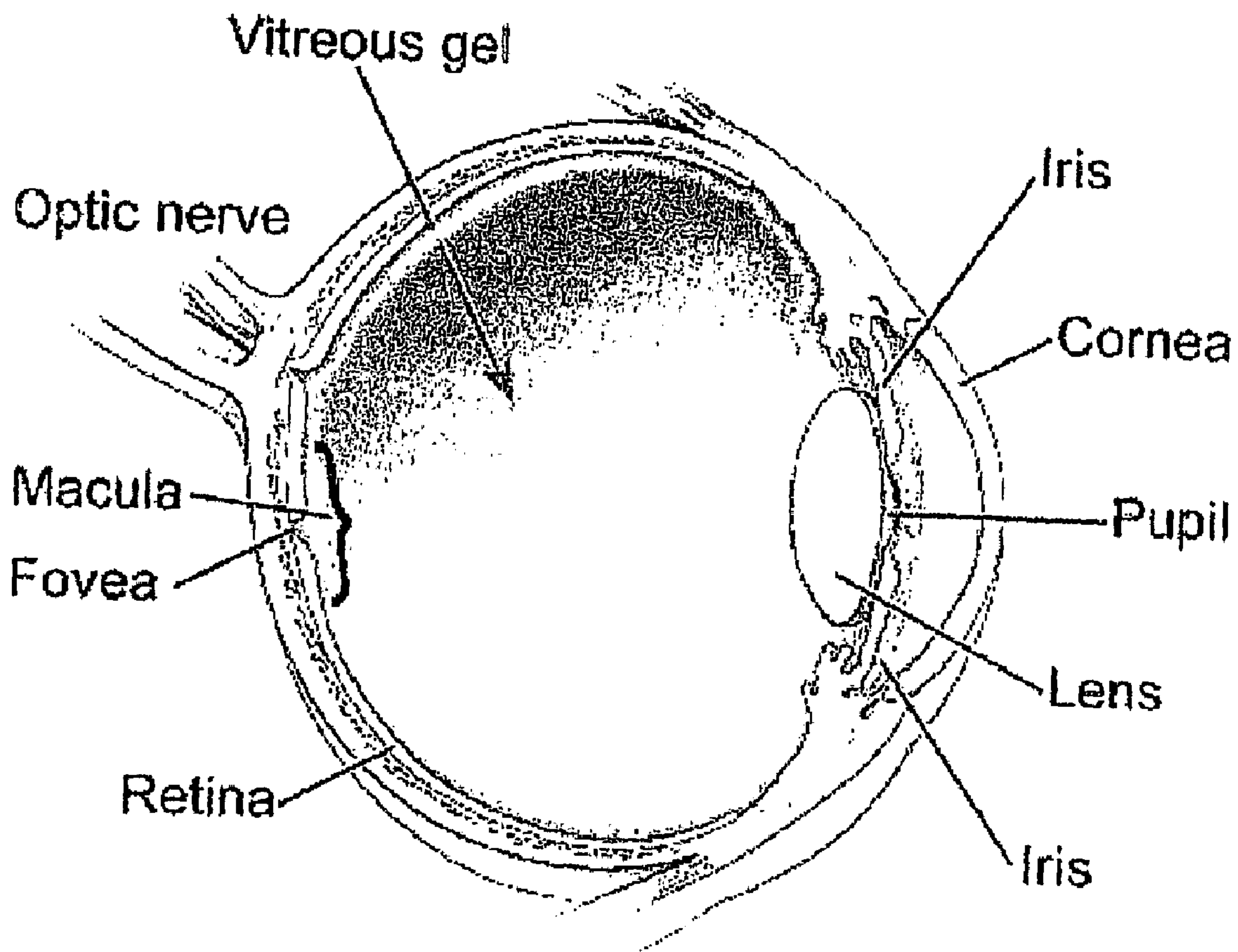
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(54) **Titre : APPAREIL ET PROCEDE POUR AUGMENTER LA VISION**

(54) **Title: AN APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR AUGMENTING SIGHT**



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A method of augmenting sight in an individual. The method comprises obtaining an image of a scene using a camera carried by the individual; transmitting the obtained image to a processor carried by the individual; selecting an image modification to be applied to



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

the image by the processor; operating upon the image to create a modified image using either analog or digital imaging techniques, and displaying the modified image on a display device worn by the individual. The invention also relates to an apparatus augmenting sight in an individual. The apparatus comprises a camera, carried by the individual, for obtaining an image of a scene viewed by the individual; a display carried by the individual; an image modification input device carried by the individual; and a processor, carried by the individual. The processor modifies the image and displays the modified image on the display carried by the individual.

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
9 October 2008 (09.10.2008)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2008/119187 A1

(51) International Patent Classification:

H04N 7/18 (2006.01) *G02B 27/02* (2006.01)
A61F 9/00 (2006.01) *G02C 9/00* (2006.01)
G02B 23/12 (2006.01) *G06Q 50/00* (2006.01)
G02B 27/01 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:

PCT/CA2008/000635

(22) International Filing Date: 2 April 2008 (02.04.2008)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:

60/921,468 2 April 2007 (02.04.2007) US

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(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, SV, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MT, NL,

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: AN APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR AUGMENTING SIGHT

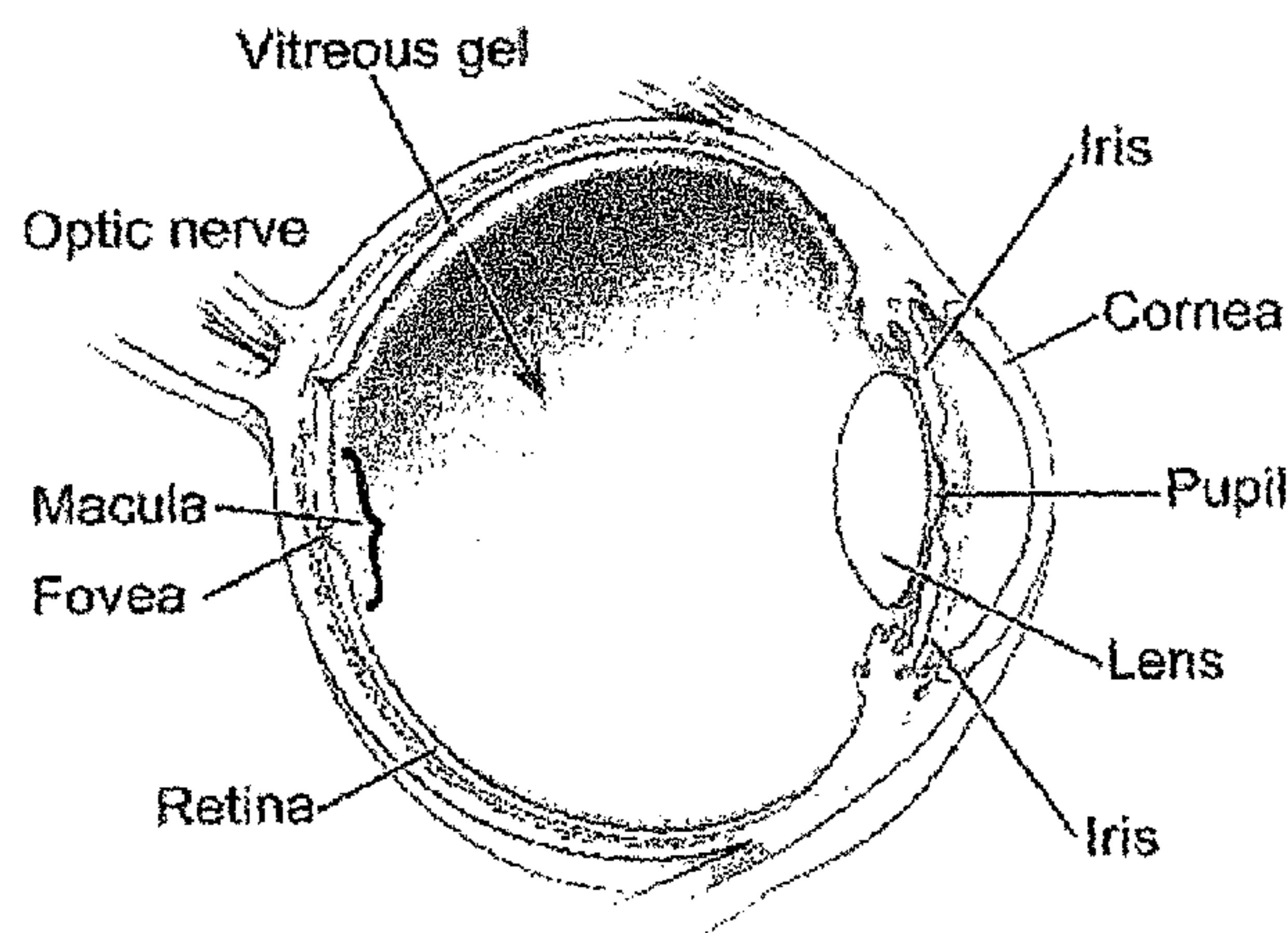


Fig 1

(57) Abstract: A method of augmenting sight in an individual. The method comprises obtaining an image of a scene using a camera carried by the individual; transmitting the obtained image to a processor carried by the individual; selecting an image modification to be applied to the image by the processor; operating upon the image to create a modified image using either analog or digital imaging techniques, and displaying the modified image on a display device worn by the individual. The invention also relates to an apparatus augmenting sight in an individual. The apparatus comprises a camera, carried by the individual, for obtaining an image of a scene viewed by the individual; a display carried by the individual; an image modification input device carried by the individual; and a processor, carried by the individual. The processor modifies the image and displays the modified image on the display carried by the individual.

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WO 2008/119187 A1



NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG,
CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

— *before the expiration of the time limit for amending the
claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of
amendments*

Published:

— *with international search report*

An Apparatus and Method for Augmenting Sight

Field of the Invention

[0001] The invention relates generally to the field of vision care and more specifically to the field of augmenting sight.

Background of the Invention

[0002] There are conditions under which even individuals with 20/20 vision need sight augmentation. Such conditions may be brought on by, for example, low light levels, low or no color differentiation between objects in the visual field, or the small size of the object viewed. Individuals with less than optimal vision or with other visual defects, such as retinopathies, also need augmentation to correct for their visual defects.

[0003] Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram of the eye. A portion of the retina responsible for fine detail vision is the macula. One form of visual defect is AMD, or age-related macular degeneration. In macular degeneration, which begins with the deposit of druses in layers beneath the photoreceptors, the degenerative process affects mostly the macula and results in death of cells necessary for vision. In some patents, the result of macular degeneration is a central visual field blind-spot or scotoma. At this time there is no cure for AMD. Other diseases (such as, but not only, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, macular edema, and optic nerve atrophy) can also result in significant losses in vision, sometimes macular, sometimes peripheral, to this region of high quality vision. Furthermore, the diseases' impact on vision is

unique for each patient. What these vision losses have in common is the loss in quality of life due to the reduced quality of vision.

[0004] There have been attempts to augment the quality of the perceived visual field using such items as image intensity amplifiers, or “night scopes”, or mechanical or electrical image magnifiers. These devices tend to be big, bulky, limited in their application, and not appropriate for non-military or paramilitary uses.

[0005] What is needed then is a general device that is capable of augmenting an image to be viewed by an individual, whatever the source of the image, be it a computer display, a television or other image source, under the command of that individual, to aid the individual in poor viewing conditions or to overcome physiological and psychological visual defects in the individual. The present invention addresses this need.

Summary of the Invention

[0006] The invention, in one aspect, relates to a method of augmenting sight in an individual, the method comprising the steps of: obtaining an image of a scene viewed by the individual using a camera carried by the individual; transmitting the obtained image to a processor carried by the individual; selecting an image modification to be applied to the image by the processor; operating, by the processor, upon the image to create a modified image in response to the selected image modification; and displaying the modified image on a display device carried by the individual.

[0007] According to illustrative embodiments:

- the image modification is magnification;
- the image modification is a remapping of the image to avoid visual defects in the individual;
- the image modification is a remapping of colors within the image;
- the image modification is edge enhancement;

- the image modification is at least one of brightness and contrast intensity enhancement;
- the image is modified substantially in real time; and
- the modification to the image is alternatively applied and removed.

[0008] In another aspect, the present invention relates to an apparatus for augmenting sight in an individual comprising: a camera, carried by the individual, for obtaining an image of a scene viewed by the individual; a display carried by the individual; an image modification input device carried by the individual; and a processor, carried by the individual, the processor in communication with the camera, image modification input device and display, the processor for modifying the image obtained by the camera, in response to the instructions provided by the individual using the image modification input device, and for displaying the modified image on the display carried by the individual.

[0009] In yet another aspect, the invention relates to a method for improving the visual acuity of a patient with retinal defects comprising the steps of: determining the locations of retinal damage in an eye of the patient; obtaining an image of a scene viewed by the patient; and mapping the image to a display in such a way to avoid the locations of retinal damage when the display is viewed by the patient.

[0010] In a further aspect, the invention relates to an apparatus for improving the visual acuity of a patient with retinal damage, the apparatus comprising: a camera, carried by the patient, for obtaining an image of a scene viewed by the patient; a display, carried by the patient; a memory for storing locations of retinal damage in an eye of the patient; and a processor, in communication with the camera, display and memory, for mapping the obtained image to the display in such a way to avoid the locations of retinal damage when the display is viewed by the patient.

[0011] In a still further aspect of the present invention, there is provided an apparatus for augmenting sight in an individual comprising: an image capture device, carried by the

individual, for obtaining an image of a scene viewed by the individual; a display carried by the individual; an image modification input device carried by the individual; and a pupil tracking device mounted to observe the directional of movement of a users pupil; and a processor, carried by the individual, the processor in communication with the image capture device, image modification input device and display, the processor for modifying the image obtained by the image capture device, in response to the instructions provided by the individual using the image modification input device, and for displaying the modified image on the display carried by the individual.

Description of the Drawings

[0012] The foregoing and other objects, advantages and features of the present invention will become more apparent upon reading of the following non-restrictive description of illustrative embodiments thereof, given by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters generally refer to the same parts throughout the different views and in which:

[0013] Fig. 1 is a diagram of the eye;

[0014] Fig. 2 is a highly schematic diagram of an embodiment of the system of the invention;

[0015] Fig. 2a is a flow diagram of an embodiment of a method, implemented by the system of Fig. 2, to modify an image;

[0016] Fig. 2b is an example of an image modified by this method;

[0017] Fig. 3a is an example of an image as viewed with a blind spot defect in the visual field;

[0018] Fig. 3b is an example of an image as viewed with a blind spot defect in the visual field but with the image magnified;

[0019] Fig. 3c is an example of an image as viewed with a blind spot defect in the visual field but with magnification and deformation generated by a “pushout” algorithm;

[0020] Fig. 3d is an example of an image as viewed with a blind spot defect in the visual field but with magnification and horizontal spacing generated by a “horizontal split” algorithm;

[0021] Fig. 4 (a-c) respectively depict an image, the image with the gradient applied and the image with the gradient applied with suppression;

[0022] Fig. 5 is a flow diagram of an embodiment of a color-mapping algorithm;

[0023] Fig. 6 (a-c) depict respectively an image, and grayscale renderings of the image as a result of mapping colors as would be seen by someone with red-green color blindness.

Description of the Preferred Embodiment

[0024] In brief overview and referring to Fig. 2, the system for augmenting sight in one embodiment includes a pair of eyeglass frames 10 or headmounted display, such as an Nvisor SX, by NVIS (Reston, VA), and a processor 14. In one embodiment, the processor 14 is a general purpose computer, such as made by Shuttle Computer Group (City of Industry, CA). The eyeglass frames 10 are the typical eyeglass frames generally available and used today with transparent lenses. In this embodiment, the transparent lenses have been replaced with one or two display screens 18, 18' (generally 18). Attached to the frames 10 are one or more image capture devices 26, such as a camera. In one embodiment, the image capture device is a Microsoft 2.0M Webcam (Redmond, WA). Optionally, one or more eye or pupil tracking sensors 28 and associated electronics are also attached to the frames 10. The electronics provide for image capture by the image capture device 26 and transmission to the processor 14 by way of a wired or wireless link 50. The processor 14 includes one or more input output (I/O) modules 34, 34', 34'' and a memory 38 in communication with each other by way of a bus as in standard computer design. The I/O modules 34, 34', 34'' not only receive images from the image capture device 26, but transmit the modified images back to the eyeglass frames 10 for

display on one or both of the display screens 18, 18'. With two or more image capture devices 26, the resulting images each may be displayed on a respective display 18, 18' to provide depth perception (depending on the capture device position), or one image capture device 18 can select an region of interest (ROI) in the field of view (FOV) of the other image capture device 18' and display the region of interest within the field of view on both displays. In this way, for example, a magnified region of interest may be displayed in the larger field of view.

[0025] In more detail, in various embodiments, the displays 18, 18' in the eyeglass frames 10 include, in one embodiment, a thin film display such as a liquid crystal display. In another embodiment, the displays use Liquid Crystal on Silicon (LCOS) technology. In a further embodiment, the displays use Organic Light Emitting Diode (OLED) technology. In still a further embodiment, the displays use micro-projection technology onto a reflective (partial or 100% reflective) glass lens. In various embodiments, each display shows a different image or the same image. If the modified image is to be displayed only to one eye, only one display 18 is required. The displays in various embodiments can incorporate refractive lenses similar to traditional eyeglasses, such that the display works in concert with a person's unique optical prescription.

[0026] Similarly, the image capture device 26 in one embodiment is a charge coupled device (CCD) camera with high depth-of-field optics. In another embodiment, the image capture device is a Complimentary Metal Oxide Semiconductor (CMOS) image sensor with appropriate optics. In other various embodiments, the image capture device is any imaging device with an analog or digital signal output that can be sent to a processing unit 14 for processing. In a binocular configuration, each image capture device or camera 26 sees a slightly different image, thereby providing stereoscopic vision to the viewer. If the image is to be presented to only one eye, then only one image capture device or camera 26 is needed to record the image for that eye. Although, in the embodiment shown, the image capture device or

camera 26 and related electronics are mounted on the eyeglass frames 22, it is contemplated that the camera 26 and electronics could also be located elsewhere on the individual's person. Also, although two cameras 26 are contemplated for binocular vision, it is possible for one camera 26 to view the image and present the same image to both displays 18. In addition, in various other embodiments the source of the image may be another camera, a television, a computer 54 or other source 58 capable of supplying an input to the processor 14.

[0027] The optional eye tracking sensor 28 is also in communication with the electronics and determines where in the visual field the individual is looking. In one embodiment, this sensor 28 operates by following the position of the pupil. Such eye tracking devices 28 are common in presently available "heads-up-displays" utilized by military pilots. Again, although an embodiment contemplated includes two tracking sensors 28, because both eyes typically track together, one tracking device may be used. In another embodiment, the eye tracking sensor 28 uses a combination of mirrors and prisms such that the optical path for the eye tracking sensor 28 is orthogonal to the pupil. Eye tracking is used to determine the region of interest (ROI), and to ensure that the damaged areas of a person's vision are avoided when the modified image is presented to the eye. The eye-tracking information is suitably averaged and dampened in software to minimize the sensitivity to random eye movements, blinks, etc., and to optimize the system for various usage models. For example, reading English requires specific eye tracking performance in the left to right direction different from that in the right to left direction, and different again from that in the vertical direction.

[0028] Images from the image capture device 26, eye position information from the eye tracking device 28 and images destined for the displays 18 are passed through the appropriate I/O module 34, 34', 34'' (HDMI to PCI, VGA, and USB respectively) of the processor 14. In the embodiment shown, the display on the NVISOR SX display unit is controlled by an nVIS controller 52 by the same manufacturer of the NVISOR SX display 18. This communication

between the processor 14 and the electronics of the eyeglass frames 10 may be transmitted through a wired connection 50 or be transmitted wirelessly. Certain functions, such as magnification, may be performed in an analog manner, such as by adjusting the lens array on the camera or digitally by mathematically processing pixels.

[0029] In the embodiment shown, the processor 14 is a Shuttle computer having memory 38 and I/O modules 34, 34', and 34''. The I/O modules 34, 34' and 34'' not only communicate with the eyeglass frames 10 but also with other displays and input devices. For example, the processor 14 may be connected to a second optional monitor 46, so that a health care provider or device technician can see what the wearer is seeing. In addition, the NVIS controller 52 is capable of providing video data to a projector 56. In this way, greater numbers of individuals may see what the wearer is seeing.

[0030] Additionally, display images from a computer 54 or from a video source 58 such as a DVD may be displayed on the display of the eyeglass frames 10. Such images may be used to help train the wearer to diagnose hardware and software failures and to help diagnose and treat the patient. In one embodiment, an input device such as a DVD player 58 provides a signal to an RF modulator 62 which then passes the RF image signal to the processor 14 through a Win TV NTSC to USB module 66. This signal enters the processor 14 through a USB connector 34''. Similarly, image data from a computer monitor 54 may also be displayed on the glasses 10 by converting the signal from the monitor 54 using a VGA to USB converter (for example an Epiphan Systems converter, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.) 68. Additionally, the user may wear a ring-like "text-camera" on his or her finger which he or she then scans over a line of text. Such devices reduce the optical complexity of the eyeglass camera 26. Finally, in this embodiment, input commands may be entered by way of a microphone 48 in communication with an iPAQ computer 72.

[0031] The processor 14 in another embodiment is a processing device having cellular telephone capabilities or a software modified cellular telephone. In this embodiment data, for example from an ophthalmologist or other health care professional 46, may be received from the cellular telephone network and verbal control instructions from the individual 48 may be input through the phone's microphone or alternatively may be keyed in through the phone's touchpad or movement sensor. In other embodiments, the processor 14 is a specialized computer or handheld device.

[0032] Received data and control instructions are then stored in memory 38. The memory 38 includes random access memory (RAM) for data storage and program execution, and read only memory (ROM) for program storage. The microprocessor 14 accesses the data in the memory 38 and manipulates it in response to the control instructions for transmission back to the eyeglass frames 10 for display. In this way, the individual can tailor the displayed image for optimal viewing.

[0033] One embodiment of the method using the system which is capable of modifying an image of the field of view is shown in Fig. 2a. The wearer begins by setting the preferred method of determining the location of the region of interest (ROI) through a keyboard or other input device (step 10). The individual may indicate his or her preferred location of the ROI by selecting one of a mouse input (step 12), preset coordinates (step 14), or by eye-tracking imaging (step 16).

[0034] If an eye-tracking sensor 28 is used, the individual only needs to move an eye to determine the region of interest (step 18). Some mathematical parameters are applied to determine the sensitivity of the eye-tracking algorithm in the X and Y directions (step 20) to minimize the effect of involuntary eye movement on the choice of region of interest.

[0035] From this information, the center of the region of interest (ROI) is determined. If the region of interest (ROI) is not within the viewing area (step 22), the region of interest is set

to the last valid region of interest (step 24). The complete region of interest (ROI) is then determined, or “mapped” such that it is centered on the coordinates determined (step 26). The size and shape of the ROI is determined through user inputs (step 28).

[0036] The visual information in the region of interest (ROI) may be input from either the field of view (FOV) image (step 32), or from a separate region of interest image source (step 34), as determined by user input (step 36). If the ROI image is to come from a separate source (step 36), then the user can input an optical zoom requirement (step 38) for this image. The ROI image is then captured (step 40) and overlaid or mapped, onto the ROI area (step 42).

[0037] The individual sets the zoom requirement (step 44) for the field of view (FOV) image. The zoom function is a combination of both optical zoom done in the FOV camera using lenses, and digital zoom performed by the software. The FOV image is then captured. (step 44).

[0038] The image is then modified (steps 24 and 25) as further required by the user input values (steps 46 48, and 54). Note that some modifications are applied to the left and right displays, or left and right eyes, differently (step 52), while others are applied to the left and right displays equally (step 54). Any of the image modifications may be applied to either the region of interest (ROI) or the entire field of view (FOV), or both. The final modified images are then presented to the displays (step 58). Fig. 2b depicts what the displayed magnified text would look like.

[0039] Referring also to Figs. 3, the system can also be used to correct vision defects in the eyes of the individual. In this example, an individual has a defect in his or her visual field that causes a perceived image defect as shown in Fig. 3a. As a first step, an ophthalmologist performs an eye examination on the individual, mapping the areas of the eye which are not functioning properly. This information is downloaded to the memory 38 of the processor 14 through the I/O module 34. The processor 14 can then map the image to avoid the defect as is shown in Figs. 3b, 3c and 3d. The end result is that the remapped image removes loss of

information (previously hidden behind the defect) caused by the defect as shown in Figs. 3b, 3c, and 3d. In Fig. 3b the text is magnified about the defect region, while in Figs. 3c and 3d the text is remapped to be spaced about the defect. Thus, with training the individual is capable of seeing a full image substantially free of distortion. The individual may perform many types of image modification by entering data through the keypad of the device or by speaking instructions through the microphone of the device.

[0040] The device is designed to help anyone having to deal with visual challenges which cannot be addressed by simple optical means (glasses, contact lenses, etc). Visual challenges can be due to either less than optimal performance of the visual system or environmental conditions. The visual system is a complex structure which combines an optical imaging system (the front end of the eye), a network of sensors (the photoreceptors) positioned at or near the focal plane of the imaging system, and a complex neural network (and its supporting infrastructure of cells) for processing the information from the sensors into a visual signal. A problem in either the optical, sensing or neural component of vision will result in less than optimal vision. The resulting visual problems can manifest themselves in many ways including, but not limited to, a reduced ability to see fine details; a reduced sensitivity to contrast; a reduced ability to extract color information; a loss in peripheral field of view; a loss of central field of view; and an increased sensitivity to brightness.

[0041] These various types of vision loss can be the result of trauma to the eye or disease of the eye. Most of these diseases affect the back of the eye (retina) where light sensing and some signal processing occurs. Glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and retinitis pigmentosa are some of the more common causes of vision loss in the developed world. The resulting visual problems and their extent vary from almost no noticeable effect to complete blindness and are unique to each patient.

[0042] The invention is not disease specific, and is able to address the major diseases discussed above as well as most other retinal conditions (such as, but not limited to retinopathies, optic disc neuropathies, Stargardt's disease, retinal dystrophies, most variations of macular/foveal edema, etc.) short of profound blindness, by dramatically improving the wearer's visual experience and ability to function beyond that which is possible without the invention.

[0043] The proposed solution can also be helpful, if likely to a lesser extent, to patients with degraded optical properties including optical errors in the cornea (front element of the eye), the crystalline lens (lens inside the eye) and any issues with the liquid contained within the eye (scattering sites, opacification, etc.).

[0044] Finally, the invention can also help some people with visual problems due to higher level processing errors in the brain such as, but not limited to, compensating for missing portions of their field of view, problems with tracking, problems that are helped by improving mental focus and removing peripheral distractions (such as dyslexia), etc.

[0045] Outside of visual problems, there are many environmental conditions that can lead to poor visual information transfer, such as, trying to look at someone's face while they stand in front of a window on a bright sunny day, looking at a baseball game where part of the field is in sunlight and another in shadows, poor quality illumination (lots of blue for example). The device can certainly help most of these people reduce the impact of the environmental condition on their visual performance. These conditions can occur during work or leisure activities, for example, facing the sun up on a telephone pole while performing a repair, walking the dog, attending a sports event, etc.

[0046] Finally, the device can enhance the amount of information available to normally sighted people. It can overlay multiple sources of information on a same field of view. It can be used in professional applications, for example, to call up stock figures or inform a wearer of incoming email overlaid upon a real-world image while walking down the street; to call up an

electrical wiring diagram overlaid with a magnified image of broken down electric circuit to effect a repair. These images will not only be overlaid, but can be manipulated to optimize information delivery and minimize disturbance from natural visual experience. Also, the invention enables hands-free access to this information, which is critically important in some applications.

[0047] To correct for these conditions, the user can issue instructions that cause the processor 14 to perform operations on the image including but not limited to:

[0048] 1. Magnify field of view (FOV) or ROI – this function permits the field of view to be decreased and the resolution increased up to the resolution of the camera and the resolution of the display.

[0049] 2. Minification: Reducing the FOV to a smaller size to account for conditions which manifest themselves as “tunnel vision”. This is equivalent to fractional magnification.

[0050] 3. Enhance contrast in entire FOV or only ROI– this function permits contrast contained naturally in the image to be modified so as to enhance the difference between various levels of contrast to improve the detection of information in the image.

[0051] 4. Enhance edges in entire FOV or only in ROI – this function permits the edge of an object in the field of view to be detected and enhanced (for example, but not limited to, adding a black band) to improve the ability of the patient to perceive the edges of different features of the image.

[0052] 5. Change to grey scale in entire FOV or only in ROI – this function permits the image to be converted to a grey scale from a color scale.

[0053] 6. Threshold grey scale in entire FOV or only in ROI – this function permits all the colors and intensities of the image to be mapped into either black or white.

[0054] 7. Remap colors in entire FOV or only in ROI– this function remaps the colors in the original image into another range of colors, thereby permitting color blindness or deficiency to be ameliorated.

[0055] 8. Remap image based on the user's blind spot in ROI– this function allows the individual to remap the image to avoid the blind spots caused by diseased regions of the eye, such as in macular degeneration or Stargardt's disease. Various algorithms relocate pixels from behind a blind spot to areas near the periphery of the blind spot according to a mathematical spatial distribution model.

[0056] 9. Relocation and Enhancement of Text: This technique is a specific implementation of "Spatial Remapping" above, where text is moved out from behind a blind spot. The technique includes application sensitive techniques such as only splitting the image on the blank lines between text lines, serif removal, text edge smoothing, text enhancement through color and contrast improvement, optical character recognition (OCR), etc.

[0057] 10. Brightness adjustment of field of view or region of interest: Individual pixels can be modified to increase or decrease their brightness either globally or according to a mathematically defined spatial distribution.

[0058] 11. Brightness flattening of field of view or region of interest: The variation in brightness across an image can be reduced, such that "hotspots" or washed out regions are darkened, and dark areas are brightened.

[0059] 12. Image Superimpositioning: This is a technique where peripheral information is overlaid into a central area of the FOV, in order to provide contextual data to people with lost peripheral visual performance.

[0060] 14. Color Identification: The invention can identify (via screen text) the dominant color or the statistical red-green-blue (RGB) content for a specific portion of the image, as identified for example by "cross-hairs."

[0061] 15. Black/White Conversion and Inversion of field of view or region of interest:

Color or grayscale images can be reduced to B/W or inverted B/W (W/B).

[0062] By using fast processors it is possible to make these modifications in substantially real time. This allows a visually impaired individual to function substantially as if there were no visual defect. With a fast enough computer, these enhancements may be applied and removed sequentially to an image, that is the image toggled between the actual image or the image as modified, by the user so that the user sees the original image and the enhanced image as a repeating toggled sequence. This provides the user with a clearer sense about what aspects of the presented image are “real” and which are “enhancements”.

[0063] Further certain enhancements can be applied and removed from the image automatically. For example, an edge enhancement modification can be applied and removed sequentially and repetitively such that the user sees an edge enhanced image and then the unmodified image.

[0064] Many algorithms can be used to achieve these purposes. For example, one embodiment of an edge finding algorithm detects edges using a gradient operator. To avoid noise due to small natural variations in intensity of the image, the gradient operator is applied to a low pass digitally filtered version of the image. If the digital filter is a Gaussian, then the gradient of the filtered image is simply the convolution of the image with the gradient of the filter; the Canny Gradient Operator. This technique has two major advantages. First, this technique avoids the issue of having to calculate a finite derivative of the natural image. Although the derivative of the Gaussian function is known analytically, the derivative of the natural image is mathematically ill-posed. Second, this technique permits both the filtering and derivative operations to be performed simultaneously in Fourier space. This is represented by:

[0065]
$$\nabla f_{\sigma}(x, y) = (f * \nabla g_{\sigma})(x, y),$$

[0066] where f and f_σ are the unfiltered and filtered images respectively and g_σ is the Gaussian filter. The amount of filtering applied will be controlled by the Gaussian width (σ). One embodiment of the implementation separates the gradient operator into its two Cartesian coordinates, so that in its final form the gradient is:

$$\begin{aligned} \nabla_x f_\sigma(x, y) &= \left(f * \frac{\partial g_\sigma}{\partial x} \right)(x, y), & M_\sigma(x, y) &= \sqrt{(\nabla_x f_\sigma(x, y))^2 + (\nabla_y f_\sigma(x, y))^2}, \\ \nabla_y f_\sigma(x, y) &= \left(f * \frac{\partial g_\sigma}{\partial y} \right)(x, y), & \Theta_\sigma(x, y) &= \text{atan}\left(\frac{\nabla_y f_\sigma(x, y)}{\nabla_x f_\sigma(x, y)}\right) \end{aligned}$$

[0067]

[0068] This generates an amplitude term (M) which is the vector sum of the two components and a direction component (θ). The result of this filtering is a gradient map which does not show edges specifically. The gradient image is then processed to identify edges by first using a bi-linear interpolation around each point in the image to identify the points which are local maxima. Once identified, only the local maxima are retained and all other points are ignored. Then the direction of the gradient is used to identify adjacent points which are connected, because the gradient will be similar for adjacent points if they are part of the same edge. Other outliers in the gradient are rejected. Finally, a thresholding algorithm is applied which retains all gradient points having a value in the upper percentile (in one embodiment, threshold 1, the 90th) and rejects all weak gradients having a value in the lower percentile (in one embodiment, threshold 2, the lowest 20th). Anything between the two thresholds is rejected if it has no strong companion near it, and kept if its neighborhood indicates an edge. All retained gradient points are then binarised to 1, all others to 0, creating the outline of edges in the image. Fig. 4a depicts an image in its natural state. Fig. 4b depicts the image of Fig. 4a with a gradient applied, and Fig. 4c depicts the image of Fig. 4b with rejection of pixels below a certain value.

[0069] Similarly, an example of a color remapping algorithm is next described. Normally sighted people depend on both brightness and color differences (luminance and color contrast) to identify features in their visual field. Abnormal color vision will often result in the inability

to distinguish between colors; a reduced capacity to use color contrast to extract information. Color confusion is usually asymmetric, so that color confusion occurs along the Red-Green or Yellow-Blue color axis. This means that by remapping colors in the field of view which are confusing to an observer to colors in the spectrum which offer better contrast, it is possible for the user to recover the information content of the field of view.

[0070] The algorithm described below is intended to remap the color contained in the field of view to allow the user to extract maximum content information. The color content of the processed field of view will not be true to the real world thus actual color information will not always be natural, but the color contrast will be enhanced for the observer so that there will be little or no confusion due to reduced color contrast between the objects in the field of view. This will allow the observer to identify a maximum number of details and maximize information extraction.

[0071] The algorithm is illustrated in Fig 5. If a color perception defect is identified in a patient, then the image is modified by shifting some of the color in the defective color channel (Red-Green or Blue-Yellow) in the other color channel. Two parameters are typically required. The first is to identify which colors in the image must be modified, and the second is to determine the amplitude of the color shift necessary to move the affected colors to the unaffected color channel.

[0072] First, the colors to be modified are selected by the amount of the affected primary color (Red, Green or Blue) in the image. For example, if the color defect is the inability to detect color contrast in the red/green channel, then either the reds or greens are shifted to the blue channel; whichever gives the observer the best contrast. Given that White will contain 33% of each Red, Blue and Green primary color, then the threshold for shifting a given primary color should be >33%. The threshold will be both observer and image dependent and will need

to be adjustable. The amount of remapping to the better color channel will also be observer dependent as well as image dependent and thus it too will also need to be adjustable.

[0073] For each point in the image, where R, G and B represents the intensity of each primary color, the algorithm proceeds as follows:

[0074] First, the RGB values are measured, and the brightness (T) ($T = R + G + B$) and the normalized color values (r,g,b) ($r = R/T$, $g = G/T$ and $b = B/T$) calculated. Next, for each point in the image where the color contains more than the threshold amount of the problematic primary color, a percentage, shf, of the problem primary is shifted into another primary color.

[0075] For example, if (r) is the normalized value of the problematic color then:

[0076] If $r > 0.4$ then red the primary color is more than 40% of the color of the image and hence above the threshold.

[0077] $r(n) = (1 - shf(r))$, where r is the normalized value of the problematic color, and r(n) is the new normalized value for the shifted red primary color. Similarly, $b(n) = b + shf \cdot r$ where b(n) is the new normalized value for blue primary. Finally, $g(n) = g$ which means the normalized primary color green (g) is unmodified.

[0078] One skilled in the art would recognize that if red is not the problematic color, then similar shifts are possible for the other primary colors. Thus, if the problem primary color is green (g) then the algorithm will shift some of the primary green color (g) into blue. Similarly, if the primary color blue is the problem, then the algorithm will shift blue into red.

[0079] The new RGB coordinates of the point being examined is then the new normalized shifted color times the brightness T. Thus $R_n = r_n \cdot T$, $G_n = g_n \cdot T$ and $B_n = b_n \cdot T$. The results of this algorithm are shown in Figs. 6a-c.

[0080] An embodiment of the algorithm for automatic brightness and contrast enhancement transforms the image based on the intensity (signal) histogram distribution for the whole image. This technique is usually referred to as brightness/contrast equalization. An intensity

distribution (number of pixels at each intensity levels), D_A , from the original image (A) is remapped into a new image (B) with distribution, D_B , with the constraints that the remapping result be single valued (each intensity level in D_A can only transform to a single intensity level in D_B) and that the transform be reversible or monotonic.

[0081] These constraints are embodied in the equations:

[0082]
$$D_B = f(D_A)$$

[0083] and

[0084]
$$D_A = f^{-1}(D_B)$$

[0085] Many different transforms can be used that meet these constraints. One embodiment is the algorithm discussed below. This algorithm is a simple and effective approach that is widely used in the image processing world.

[0086] This embodiment of the algorithm adds additional constraints to the determining the mapping function $f(D_A)$. In one embodiment, an additional requirement is that the energy contained within a small region (dD_A) of the distribution D_A must equal the energy to the corresponding region dD_B of the distribution D_B . That is:

[0087]
$$h_A * dD_A = h_B * dD_B$$

[0088] where h is the number of pixels at a predetermined intensity level, (x). If the values of h are rescaled by dividing the value by the total number of pixels then the values of h can be expressed as probability distributions p_A and p_B . Furthermore, because the intensity distribution is being stretched from the original image (0 to a maximum intensity, D_M) and because the area under the two probability distributions must be equal as described above, then the derivative of the transfer function $df = df(x)/dx$, can be set to a constant equal to D_M . The transform function is then rewritten in terms of the probability distribution p_A and D_M :

[0089]
$$f(D_A) = D_M * \int p_A(u) du = D_M * F_A(D_A)$$

[0090] where $F_A(D_A)$ is the cumulative distribution function for the original image. The implementation then becomes:

[0091] First, obtain an intensity distribution function for the original image with the same number of bins available as there are available grey levels for the display mode (that is, 8 bits gives you 256 potential bins.)

[0092] Next, normalize the distribution function by dividing it by the number of pixels to convert the distribution function to a probability function.

[0093] Third, find the largest gray level with a non zero value in the original image and set this to DM.

[0094] Fourth, create a cumulative distribution function: For example bin 0 is the number of pixels of brightness = 0; bin 1 is sum of the number of pixels in bin 0 and 1; bin 2 is sum of pixels in bins 0,1,2; and so on.

[0095] Fifth, for each pixel, obtain the intensity, $I(c,r)$ where c and r are the column and row indices, and find the cumulative probability for that intensity $I(c,r)$; a value between 0 and 1.

[0096] Then multiply this value by DM. This is the new value of the intensity for that pixel, after equalization.

[0097] Finally, to obtain stretching as well, multiply the new intensity value by the ratio of the maximum possible for display divided by DM. This step ensures the maximum contrast. Fig. 6 shows a grey-scale image of a color blindness test image. Figs 6b and 6c depicts grey-scale images of the color blindness test image with the green shift to blue and red shifted to blue, respectively. Thus a person with red-green color blindness would be able to easily see portions of the image which would normally appear hidden.

[0098] A patient may use any function which addresses his or her visual defects by entering the requested function using the keypad. However, the parameters which the system used to

correct for the defects may need to change over time. This is because typically, over time, the patient's visual preferences may evolve; or the visual defect may worsen due to the aging process, due to an accident, or disease. Further, a patient may simply prefer to change the configuration settings based on the current task they are performing, and as such may have different preferences for different tasks. Thus a user, using the control features for the display system, can adjust the settings of the optical display, allowing the user to make minor changes to his or her prescription.

[0099] When a user requires a minor change to his or her vision system settings, he or she can either go to a vision care professional, who will change the system settings, or change the settings themselves. For example, the user is able to configure a 'recipe' of image modification software algorithms to correct or enhance his or her vision in a simple, time-efficient way for a defined set of visual tasks such as watching TV, reading, playing bridge, needlepoint, etc. without the assistance of a specially trained clinician.

[00100] For major changes to the system settings, professional ophthalmic oversight may still be required. For example, the ability for a clinician to synthesize, review, modify and, if deemed appropriate, approve a user-selected image enhancement 'recipe' as above, may be required for regulated activities such as driving. The software 'recipe' would not become operational in the system, which is identified by a unique software serial number, unless and until activated by the clinician. Typically, the clinician is also identified by a unique secure government identification number provided to those clinicians authorized to approve visual aids for driving. The clinician may interact with the system directly or may remotely connect to the system. Upon clinician approval of the prescription, the clinician would then receive compensation for services. The compensation is provided by way of funds transfer from one or both of the system manufacturer, distributors or dealers and the user or his or her insurance company. The funds transfer in one embodiment is done electronically.

[00101] For example, in one embodiment, the user would enter the changes required to their settings to a settings application running on the system. The requested changes would then be indicated to the user's clinician or eye doctor by way of the settings application, allowing the new prescription to be downloaded by the optometrist or ophthalmologist. The optometrist or ophthalmologist's office system would first be paid for services rendered, by system supplier directly for initially selling the system. All fees for 'Optometric oversight' functions or adjustments would be paid directly by the insurance company or individual patient, to the eye care professional or clinician. The system adjustments could also be used to make changes to the user's prescription such that a 'configurable low vision aid' version of the system which incorporates multi-diopter lens characteristics could be used instead of refractive lenses.

[00102] While the present invention has been described in terms of certain exemplary preferred embodiments, it will be readily understood and appreciated by one of ordinary skill in the art that it is not so limited, and that many additions, deletions and modifications to the preferred embodiments may be made within the scope of the invention as hereinafter claimed. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is limited only by the scope of the appended claims.

[00103] What is claimed is:

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CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of improving the visual function of a patient comprising the steps of:
determining a vision loss relating to degradation in a visual field of view of the patient;
obtaining image data relating to a predetermined portion of the visual field of view of the patient;
modifying a predetermined portion of the image data with an electronic processor to generate
modified image data in dependence upon at least a predetermined portion of the
determined vision loss; and
displaying the modified image data to the patient.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein,
the vision loss relates to at least one of a higher level processing error in the patient's brain, a
retinal condition, an element forming part of an eye of the patient, a trauma to an eye of the
patient, a disease of an eye of the patient, and photoreceptors of an eye of the patient.
3. The method according to claim 1 wherein,
modifying the predetermined portion of the image data to generate the modified image data is
performed substantially in real time.
4. The method according to claim 1 wherein,
determining a vision loss relating to the visual field of view of the patient comprises at least one
of determining the locations and characteristics of the vision loss and assessing a predetermined
vision characteristic of the patient by a health professional.
5. The method according to claim 1 wherein,
modifying the image data with the electronic processor comprises applying at least one algorithm
of a plurality of algorithms to the image data with at least one of a microprocessor and an
electronic circuit wherein the at least one algorithm and algorithm data relating to the at least one
algorithm are established in dependence upon the determined vision loss of the patient.

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6. The method according to claim 5 wherein,
when the electronic processor is a microprocessor the algorithm data is stored within a memory for retrieval by the microprocessor; and
when the electronic processor is an electronic circuit the algorithm data is at least one of stored within a memory for retrieval by the electronic circuit and used to generate the electronic circuit.
7. The method according to claim 1 wherein,
modifying a predetermined portion of the image data comprises at least one of enhancing edges of objects, modifying the image data spectrally, and modifying the image data spatially.
8. A device for improving the visual function of a patient with visual defects comprising:
a digital image device to provide image data relating to a predetermined portion of a field of view of the patient;
an electronic processor for receiving and modifying a predetermined portion of the image data to generate modified image data in dependence upon at least a predetermined portion of a determined vision loss relating to the predetermined portion of the field of view of the patient; and
a display for displaying the modified image data to the patient.
9. The device of claim 8 wherein,
the vision loss relates to at least one of a higher level processing error in the patient's brain, a retinal condition, an element forming part of an eye of the patient, a trauma to an eye of the patient, a disease of an eye of the patient, and photoreceptors of an eye of the patient.
10. The device according to claim 8 wherein,
modifying the predetermined portion of the image data to generate the modified image data is performed substantially in real time.

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11. The device according to claim 8 wherein,
the determined vision loss relating to the visual field of view of the patient is at least one of
determined locations and characteristics of the vision loss and determined by a health
professional assessing a predetermined vision characteristic of the patient.

12. The device according to claim 8 wherein,
the electronic processor comprises at least one of a microprocessor and an electronic circuit
applying at least one algorithm of a plurality of algorithms to the image data wherein the at least
one algorithm and algorithm data relating to the at least one algorithm are established in
dependence upon the determined vision loss of the patient.

13. The device according to claim 12 wherein,
when the electronic processor is a microprocessor the algorithm data is stored within a memory
for retrieval by the microprocessor; and
when the electronic processor is an electronic circuit the algorithm data is at least one of stored
within a memory for retrieval by the electronic circuit and used to generate the electronic
circuit.

14. The device according to claim 8 wherein,
modifying a predetermined portion of the image data comprises at least one of enhancing edges
of objects, modifying the image data spectrally, and modifying the image data spatially.

15. A non-transitory tangible computer readable medium encoding a computer program for
execution by the microprocessor, the computer program comprising the steps of:
receiving image data relating to a predetermined portion of a field of view of the patient;
modifying a predetermined portion of the image data to generate modified image data in
dependence upon a predetermined portion of a determined vision loss relating to the
predetermined portion of the field of view of the patient; and
providing the modified image data to a display for presentation to the patient.

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16. The non-transitory tangible computer readable medium encoding a computer program for execution by the microprocessor according to claim 15 wherein, the vision loss relates to at least one of a higher level processing error in the patient's brain, a retinal condition, an element forming part of an eye of the patient, a trauma to an eye of the patient, a disease of an eye of the patient, and photoreceptors of an eye of the patient.

17. The non-transitory tangible computer readable medium encoding a computer program for execution by the microprocessor according to claim 15 wherein, modifying the predetermined portion of the image data to generate the modified image data is performed substantially in real time.

18. The non-transitory tangible computer readable medium encoding a computer program for execution by the microprocessor according to claim 15 wherein, the determined vision loss relating to the visual field of view of the patient is at least one of determined locations and characteristics of the vision loss and determined by a health professional assessing a predetermined vision characteristic of the patient.

19. The non-transitory tangible computer readable medium encoding a computer program for execution by the microprocessor according to claim 15 wherein, modifying the predetermined portion of the image data to generate modified image data comprises applying at least one algorithm of a plurality of algorithms to the image data wherein the at least one algorithm is determined in dependence upon the determined vision loss of the patient.

20. The non-transitory tangible computer readable medium encoding a computer program for execution by the microprocessor according to claim 19 further comprising, retrieving algorithm data from a memory associated with the microprocessor, the algorithm data relating to the at least one algorithm and generated in dependence upon the determined vision loss of the patient.

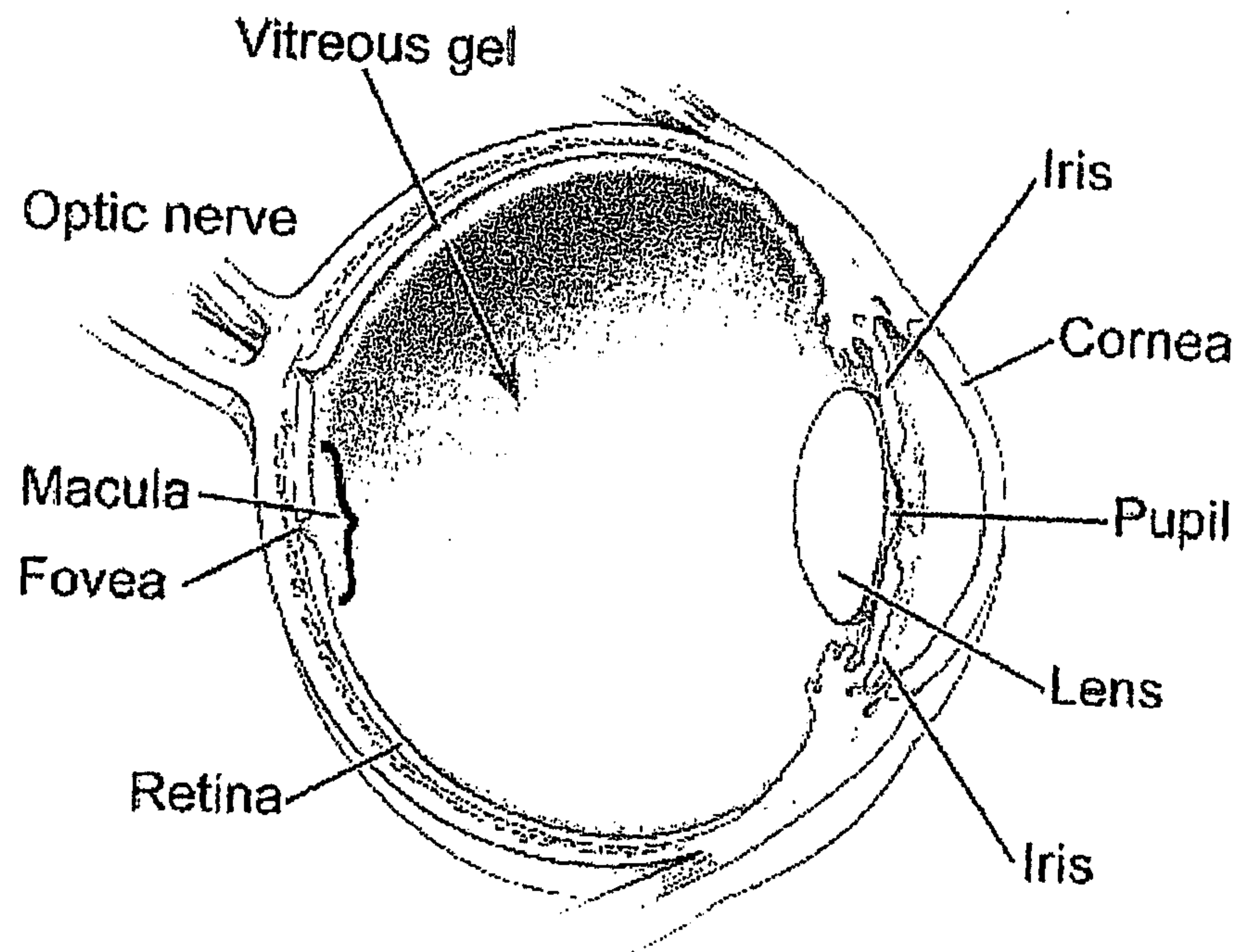
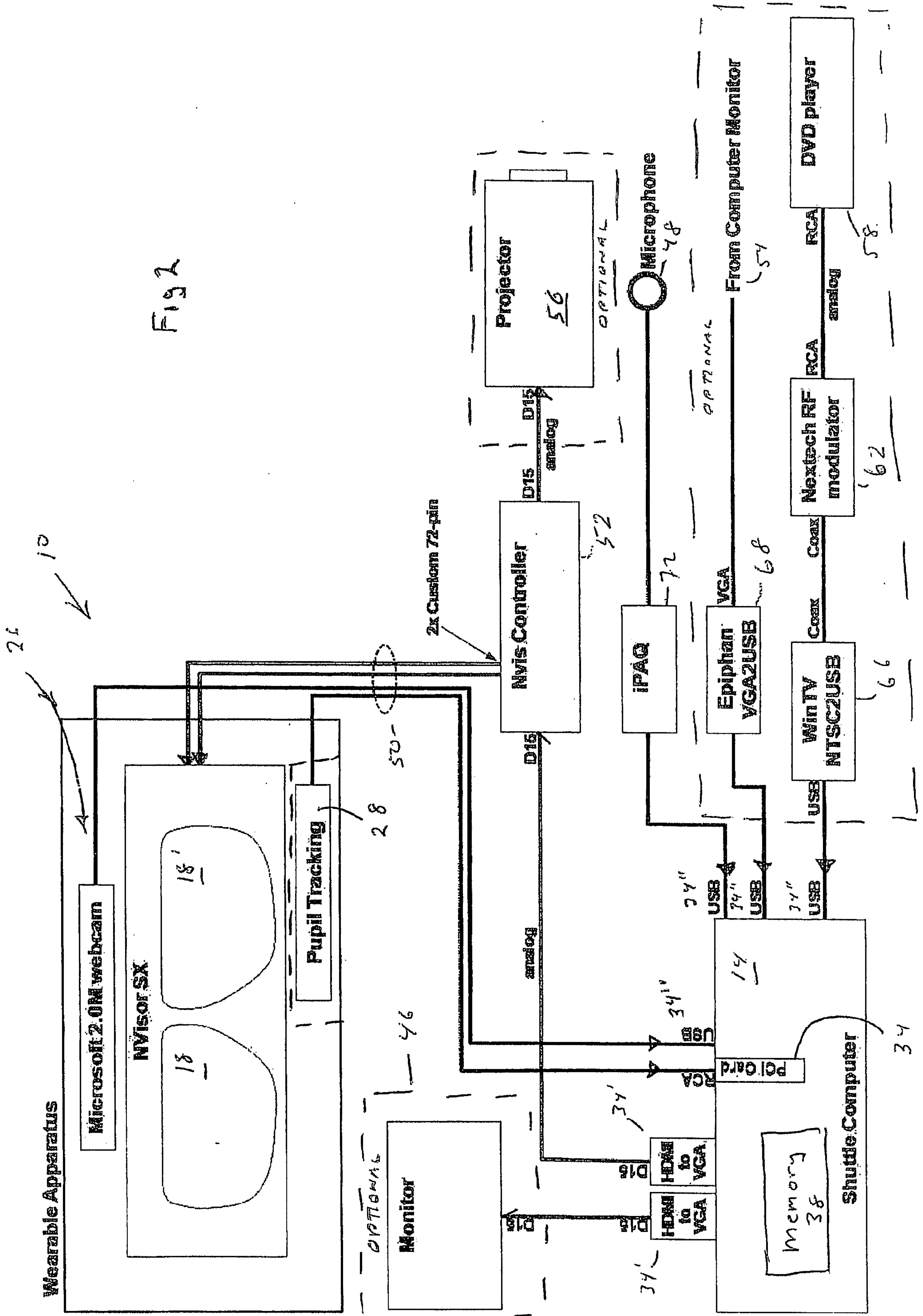


Fig 1

Fig 2



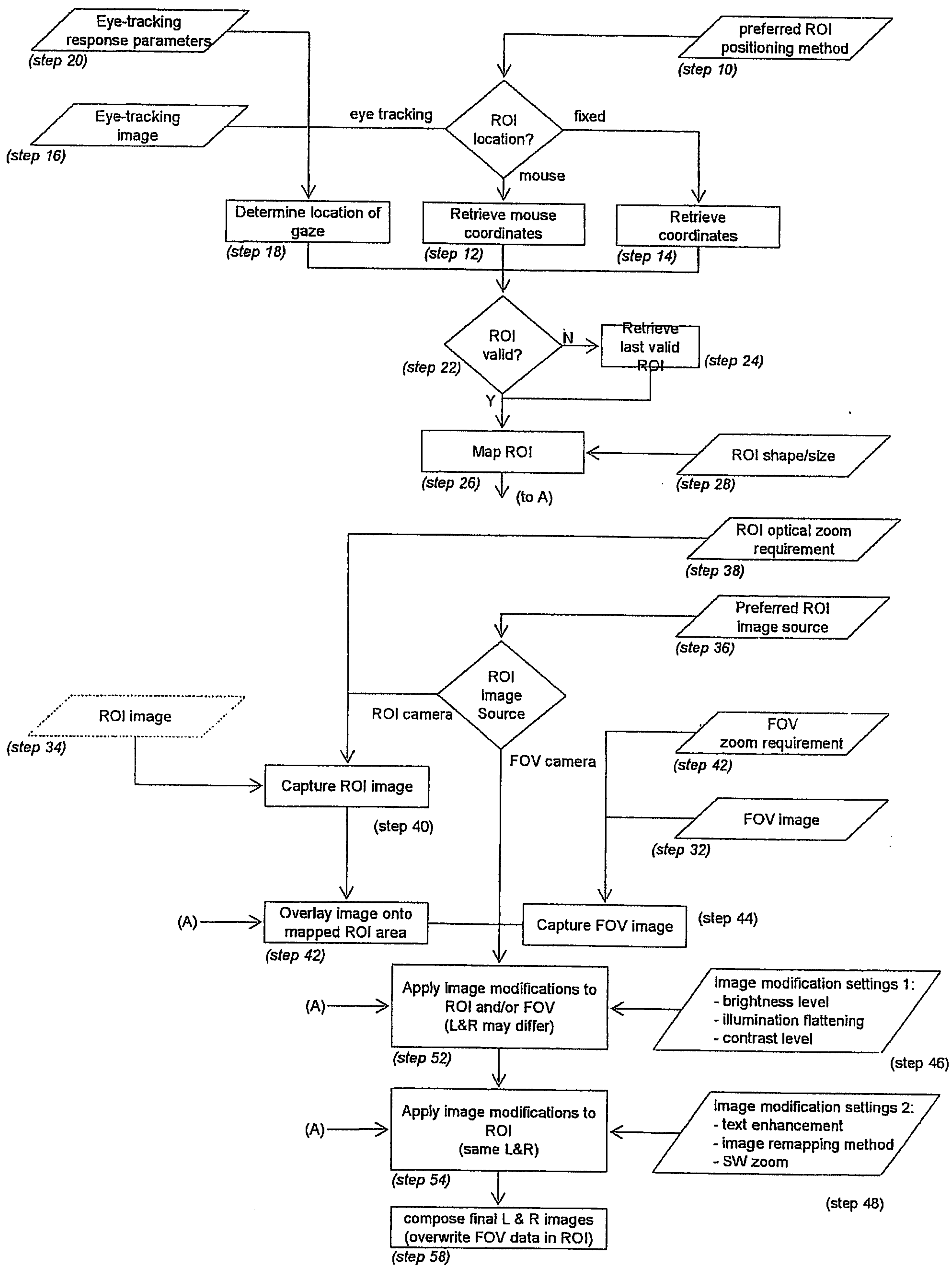


Fig 2b

- There is much uncertainty on the part of software developers as to whether reuse will significantly improve the quality of the resulting system. There is little evidence and few accepted metrics for success in the reuse of

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software components

We hope to develop new software or re-engineer legacy codes into software which is adaptable. Adaptive software has the following characteristics:

- There is much uncertainty on the part of software developers as to whether reuse will significantly improve the quality of the resulting system. There is little evidence and few accepted metrics for success in the reuse of software in real applications. Very often, there is often a trade off between performance and quality.
- The learning curve could be steep.
- Highly motivated software developers are tempted to rewrite code.
- Old systems often have little or no documentation.
- If the reusable component is obtained from a commercial company, there might be issues related to patents, copyrights and royalty payments.

For a comprehensive introduction to software components and reuse, see [10].

D. Adaptive Software

We hope to develop new software or re-engineer legacy codes into software which is adaptable. Adaptive software has the following characteristics:

- *Program for change:* Although it is hard to predict the future, objects should not make assumptions which are valid for only a short duration of time. Whenever possible, a good design should abstract some core concepts into a small number of functions and classes, and provide simple interfaces to access the functionality.

Fig 3a

- There is much uncertainty on the part of software developers as to whether reuse will significantly improve the quality of the resulting system. There is little evidence and few accepted metrics for success in the reuse of software in real applications. Very often, there is often a trade

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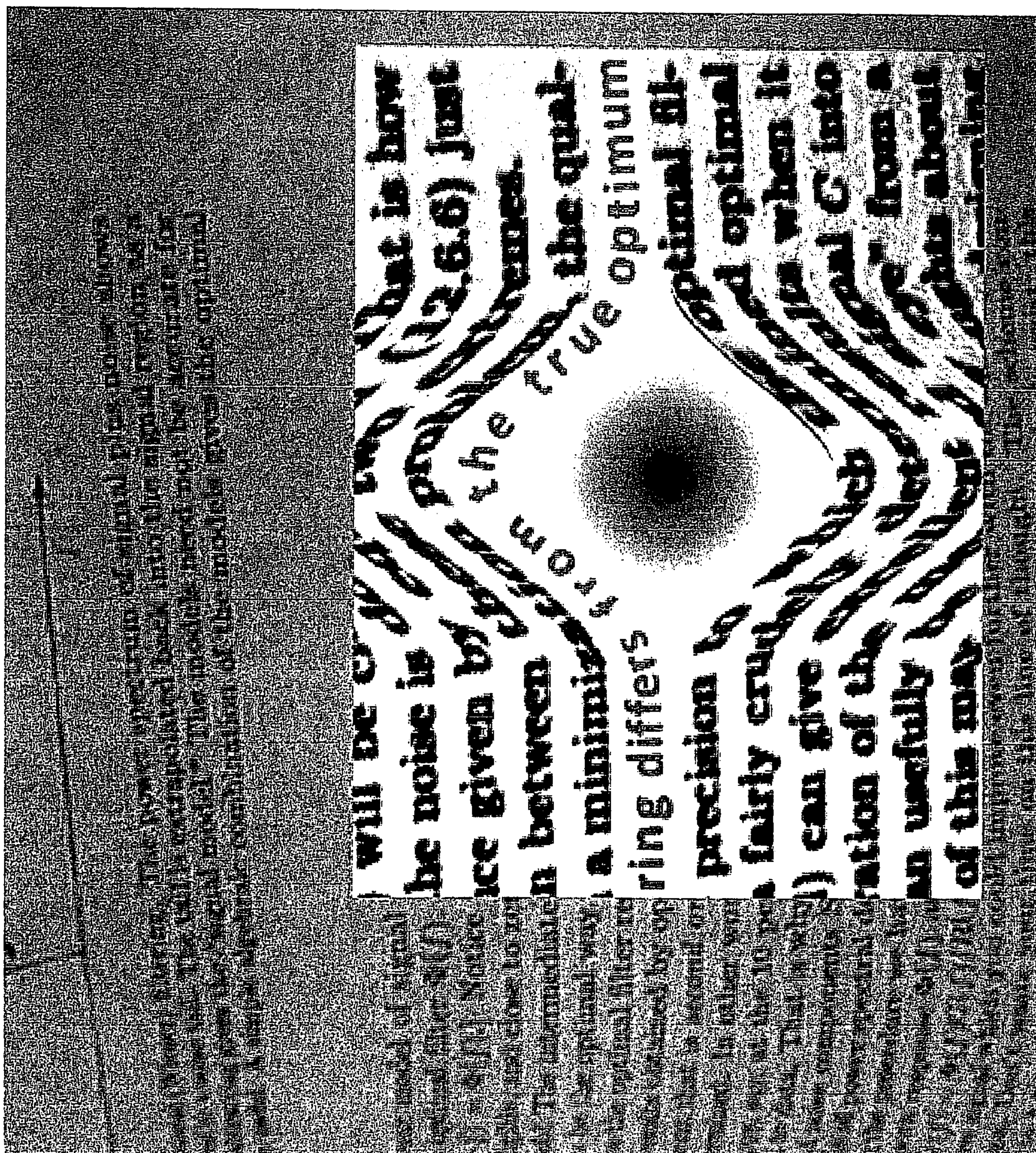
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D. Adaptive ^{S.} software

We hope to develop new software or re-engineer legacy codes into software which is adaptable. Adaptive software has the following characteristics:

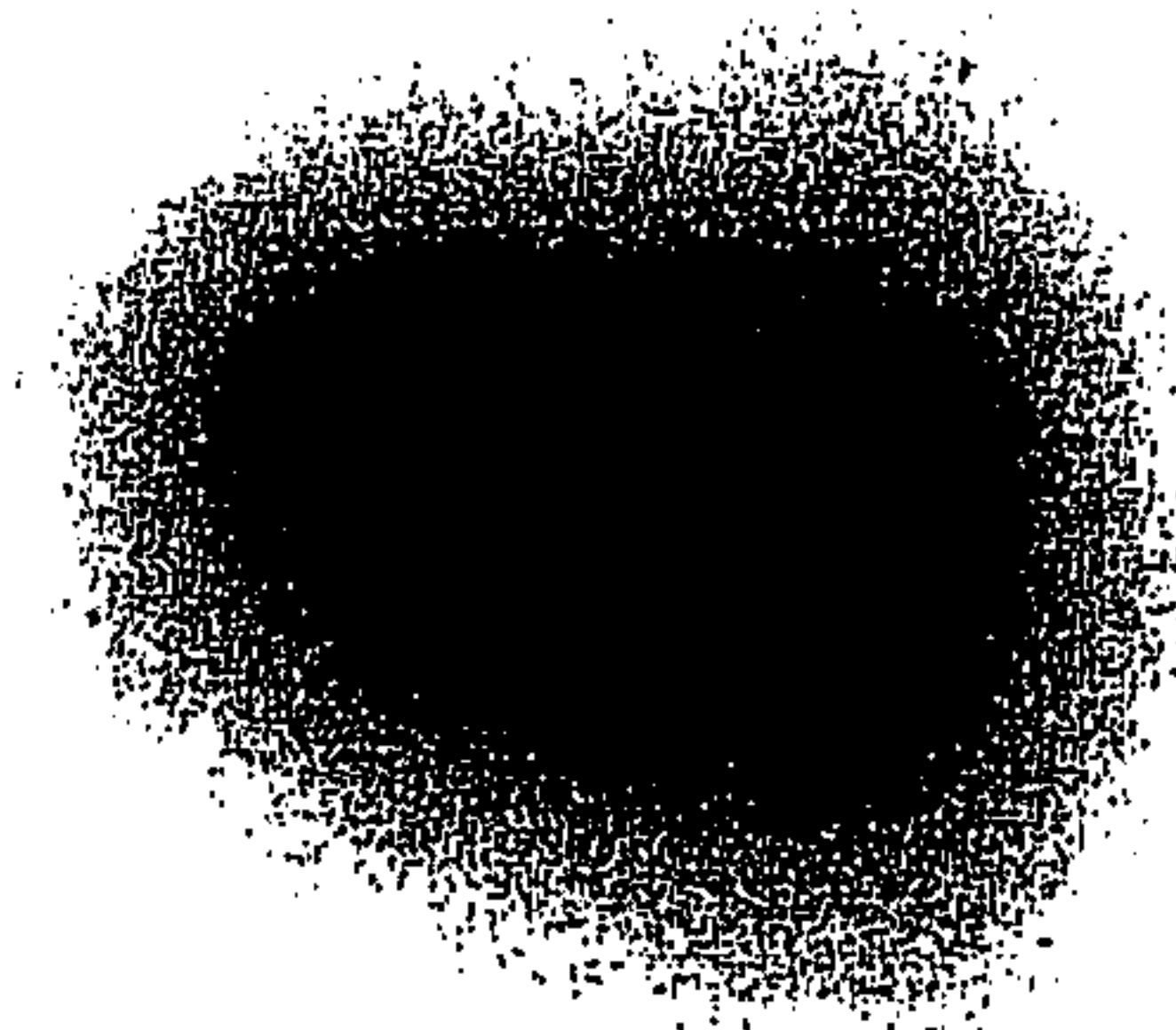
- *Program for change:* Although it is hard to predict the future, objects should not make assumptions which are valid for only a short duration of time. Whenever possible, a good design should abstract some core concepts into a small number of functions and classes, and provide simple interfaces to access the functionality.



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- There is much uncertainty on the part of software developers as to whether reuse will significantly improve the quality of the resulting system. There is little evidence and few accepted metrics for success in the reuse of software in real applications. Very often there is often a trade

- The least have little or no documentation
- Highly complex, often with many dependencies
- Old systems
- If the re-engineering company, then the cost of re-engineering and royalties



For a company, the benefit comes from the reuse of components

and reuse, so the benefit is related to the reuse of components

D. Adaptive Software

We hope to develop new software or re-engineer legacy codes into software which is adaptable. Adaptive software has the following characteristics:

- *Program for change:* Although it is hard to predict the future, objects should not make assumptions which are valid for only a short duration of time. Whenever possible, a good design should abstract some core concepts into a small number of functions and classes, and provide simple interfaces to access the functionality.

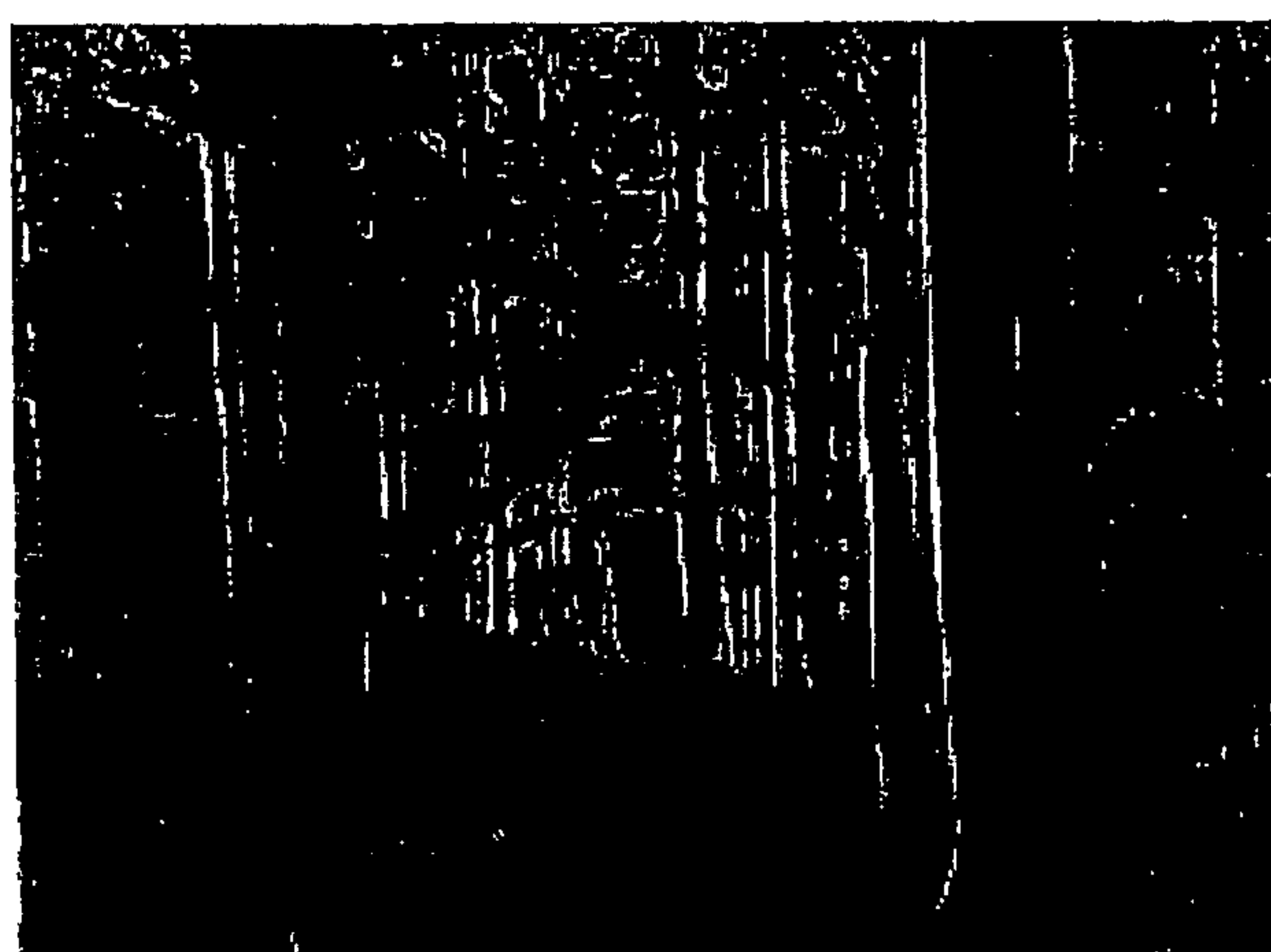
Fig 3d



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Image

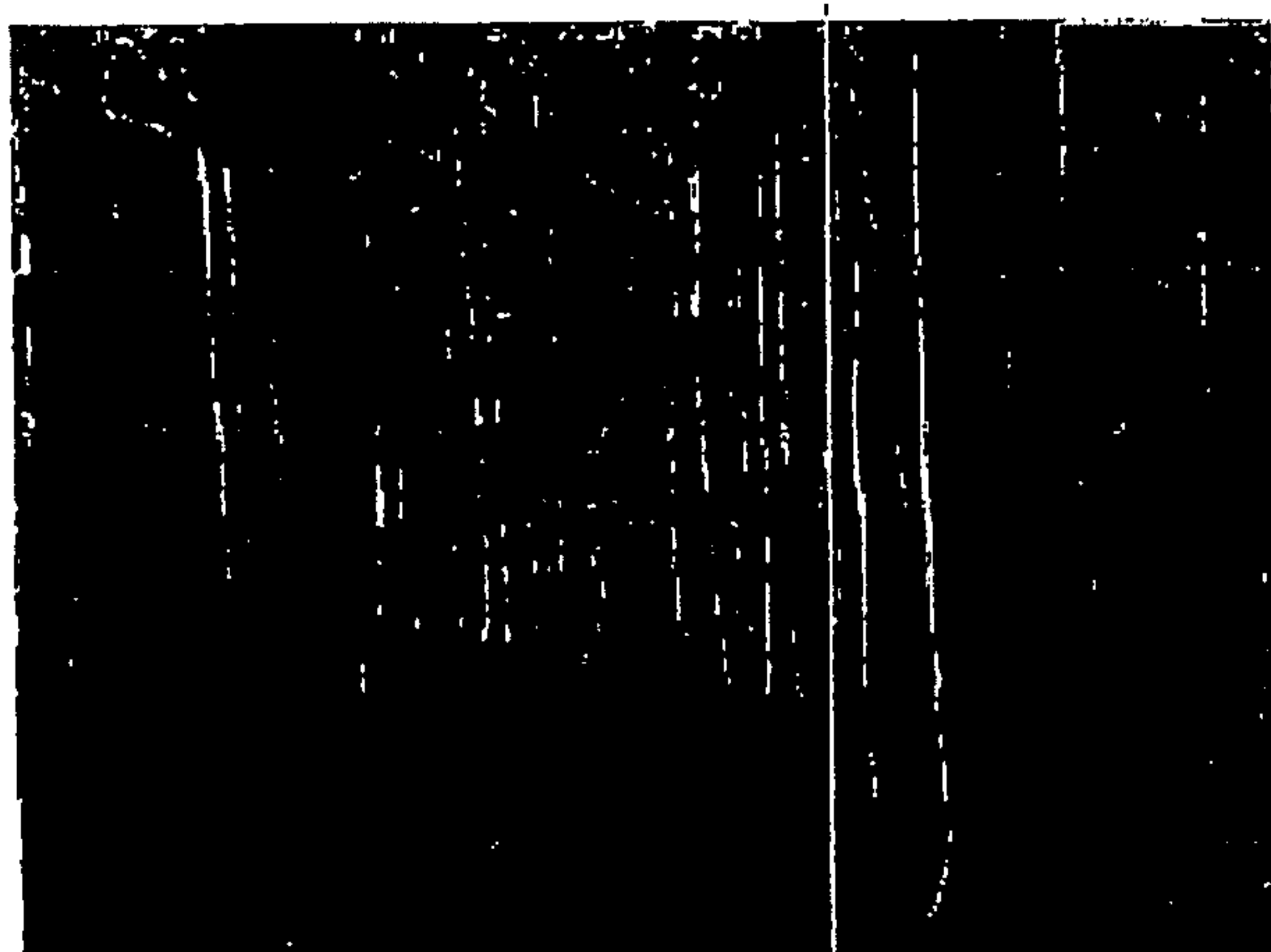
Fig. 4a



M2-SC1

Gradient without suppression

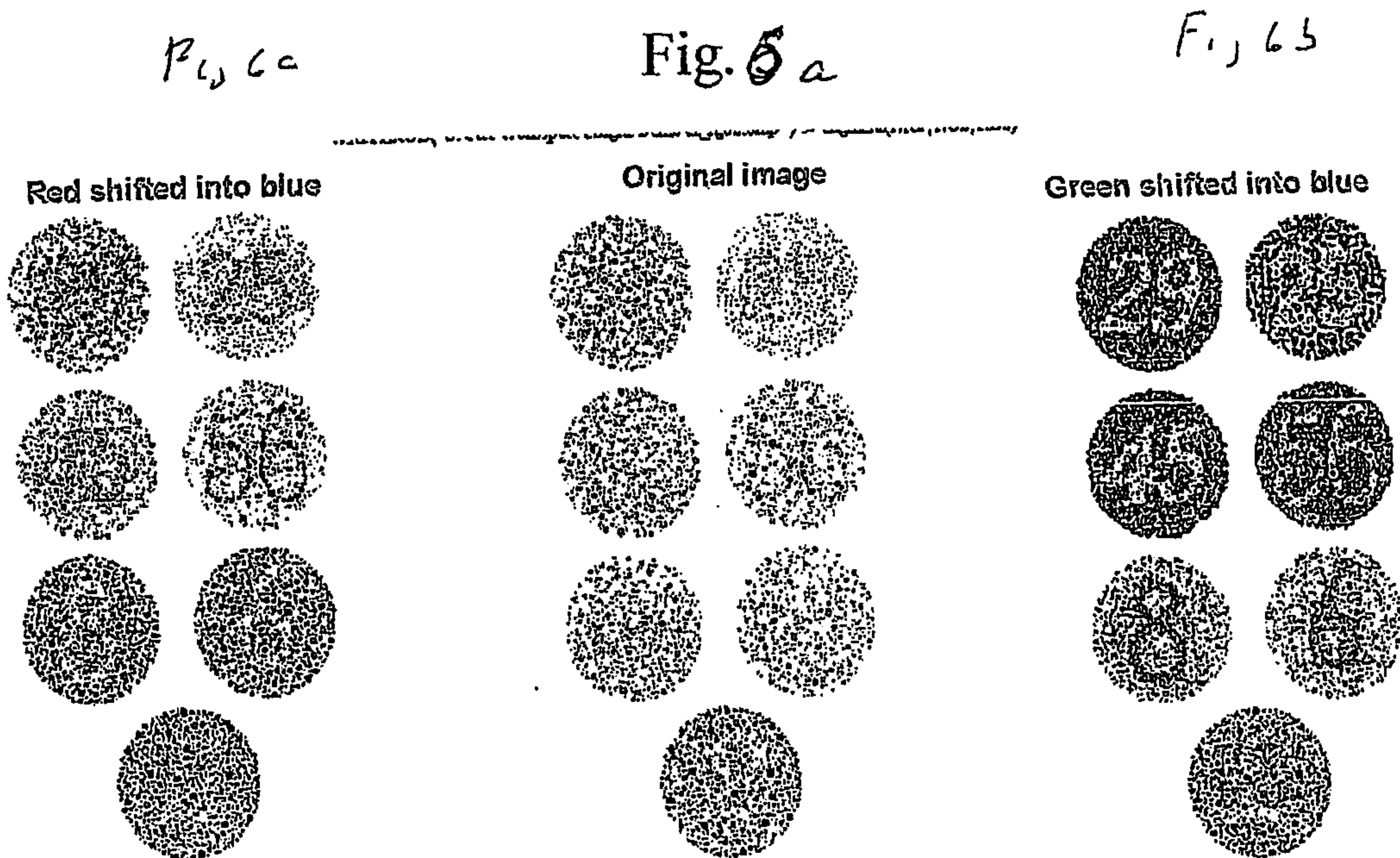
Fig. 4b



M3-SC2

Gradient with suppression

Fig. 4c

*Fig. 5*