



(51) International Patent Classification:
F26B 17/00 (2006.01) **F26B 21/00** (2006.01)
B01J 8/08 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:
PCT/AU2011/001524

(22) International Filing Date:
25 November 2011 (25.11.2011)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
2010905233 26 November 2010 (26.11.2010) AU

(72) Inventor; and

(71) Applicant : **POTTER, Owen** [AU/AU]; 835 Riversdale Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124 (AU).

(74) Agent: **GRIFFITH HACK**; Level 3, 509 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, Victoria 3004 (AU).

(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, CL, 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, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

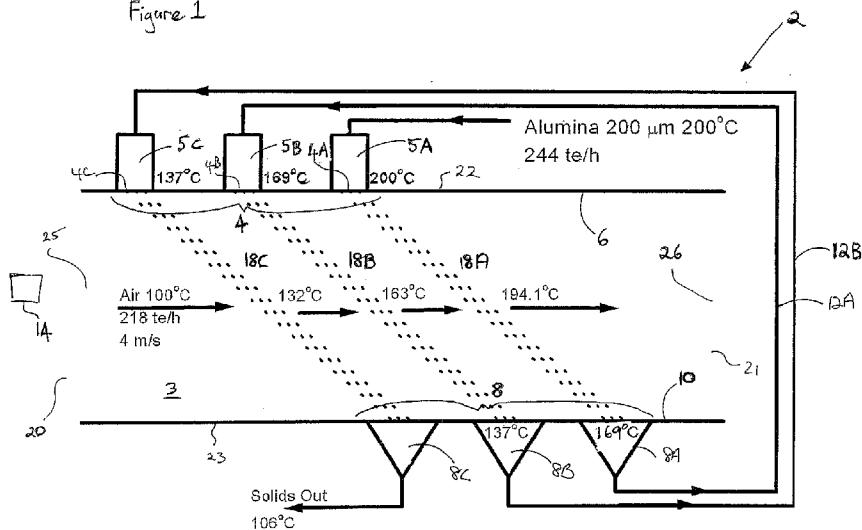
(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— with international search report (Art. 21(3))

(54) Title: A GAS-PARTICLE PROCESSOR

Figure 1



(57) Abstract: A gas-particle processor comprising: a chamber having a gas inlet, a gas outlet and one or more particle inlets; a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first controlled mass flowrate; and a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce particles in one or more streams into the chamber at a second controlled mass flowrate, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the chamber, wherein the processor is operable to control the first and/or second controlled mass flowrates to provide a gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region of 0.900-0.995.

A GAS-PARTICLE PROCESSOR

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 This present invention relates to gas-particle processes and gas-particle processors, including processes and processors relating to gas-solid heat and mass transfer, gas-catalyst reactions, gas absorption (in liquid droplets) and cooling towers.

BACKGROUND

10 There are many systems used to conduct gas-solid processes such as gas-particle energy recovery and regeneration, gas-solid chemical reactions, gasification, adsorption, drying, gas absorption and distillation.

15 Examples of these systems are rotary dryers and rotary kilns, but these are not efficient gas-solid contactors. Other systems such as fluidised beds and circulating fluidised beds have been used instead. However, these systems have their own deficiencies such as an increased pressure drop and contacting inefficiency.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

20 In a first embodiment, there is provided a gas-particle processor comprising:
a chamber having a gas inlet, a gas outlet and one or more particle inlets;
a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first controlled mass flowrate; and
25 a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce particles in one or more streams into the chamber at a second controlled mass flowrate, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the chamber,
wherein the processor is operable to control the first and/or second controlled mass flowrates to provide a gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region of 0.900-0.995.

30 The processor may be operable to control the first and/or second mass flowrates to provide a gas-particle mixture porosity through a substantial portion of each processing region of preferably not less than 0.955, even more preferably not less than 0.980, most preferably close to 0.990. This allows a substantial proportion of the particles within a particle stream to be unencumbered, that is particles substantially unhindered by adjacent particles within the particle

- 2 -

stream. As a result, increased access to the particles' surface by the gas and a substantially constant velocity of the particle stream may be achieved.

5 In one form, the processor is operable such that the substantial portion of each processing region is adjacent to its respective particle inlet. In this embodiment, the gas-particle mixture porosity in each processing region may increase away from its respective particle inlet.

The processor may be operable such that the gas-particle mixture porosity is substantially constant through a substantial portion of each respective processing region.

10

The processor may be operable such that the gas-particle mixture porosity of each processing region increases away from its respective particle inlet.

15

The particles may be solid particles or may be liquid particles in the form of droplets or thin sheets for example.

Heat and/or mass transfer and/or a chemical reaction may occur between the particles and the gas as they travel through the chamber.

20

In one form, the processor may be in a horizontal configuration. In another form, the processor may be in a vertical configuration.

The chamber may comprise at least one particle outlet through which particles exit the chamber.

25

The chamber may comprise one particle outlet for each particle inlet, the particle inlets and outlets configured such that each particle stream enters the chamber through a particle inlet and exits the chamber through a specific particle outlet. Each particle inlet and its specific outlet form a processing stage which also includes the processing region in the chamber 30 occupied by the particle stream between the inlet and outlet of that stage.

Each particle inlet and its specific outlet may be located in respective opposing regions of the chamber.

35

Each particle inlet may comprise a plurality of inlet portions and each particle outlet comprises a plurality of outlet portions.

Each particle inlet may extend across a substantial portion of the width of the chamber, preferably across the entire width.

5 Each particle inlet may extend along the length of the chamber for as long as is required to enable the processor to achieve the required gas-particle mixture porosity during operation.

The chamber may comprise a single particle outlet through which the particles from all of the particle inlets exit the chamber. The single particle outlet may comprise a grid, grate or the like in the floor of the chamber.

10

The particle inlet may be configured as an array of inlets along a region of the chamber and the particle outlets may be configured as an array of outlets along an opposing region of the chamber to that on which the inlets are formed.

15

The array of particle inlets may comprise an initial inlet and a plurality of subsequent inlets, distributed along the length of the chamber and the array of particle outlets comprise a plurality of intermediate outlets and a final outlet, distributed along the length of the chamber, wherein each intermediate outlet communicates with a respective subsequent inlet such that the processor is operable to recycle particles from each intermediate outlet to its respective 20 subsequent inlet.

The processor may be operable such that each particle stream introduced into the chamber is discrete from other particle streams.

25

In an embodiment, the gas outlet may act also as a particle outlet from the chamber (the particles then exiting the chamber with the gas) or particles may exit the chamber partly through particle outlets at the chamber walls and partly through the gas outlet, the gas and particles being collected from the gas outlet and separated elsewhere.

30

Each embodiment where the particles are recycled across the chamber therefore provides a gas particle processor which operates on a "multi-stage" process whereby each particle makes multiple passes through the gas in the processor. This provides the benefit of reducing the space and cost requirements over having multiple processors to carry out repetitive processes on a single particle stream.

35

In other embodiments the gas-particle processor operates on a "multi-stage" process whereby a number of particle streams are co-processed within the chamber at the same time.

- 4 -

This also beneficially reduces the space and cost requirements over having the same number of individual processors.

5 The chamber may comprise a first end and an opposite second end, the chamber extending between the first and second ends, the gas inlet located near the first end and the gas outlet located near the second end.

10 The chamber may be enclosed by wall portions whereby the chamber defines an enclosed space in which the processing regions are located.

15 The chamber may comprise first and second opposite wall portions extending between the first and second ends.

20 The chamber may be orientated with the second end, at which the gas outlet is located, positioned above the first end, at which the gas inlet is located, and the wall portions extending generally vertically. In this embodiment, the gas flows generally vertically upwards through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet and the particles may flow generally radially with respect to the wall portions.

25 The chamber may be orientated with the second end, at which the gas outlet is located, positioned to the side of the first end, at which the gas inlet is located, and the wall portions extending generally horizontally. In this embodiment, the gas flows generally horizontally through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet and the particles may flow generally vertically between opposite wall portions.

30 The chamber may be generally cylindrical (where the gas is arranged to flow substantially vertically) or rectangular in shape (where the gas is arranged to flow substantially horizontally).

35 The at least one particle inlet may be formed in the first wall portion and the at least one particle inlet is formed in the second wall portion.

The chamber may comprise an internal member, the at least one particle inlet being formed in the internal member and the at least one particle outlet being formed in the first and/or second wall portions of the chamber.

- 5 -

The gas flow arrangement may comprise a gas rotator for causing the gas to flow in a spiral flow path through the chamber.

In this embodiment, each particle stream will be introduced into the chamber in a radial direction and then is subject to the centrifugal force of the rotational acceleration imparted on the particles by the rotating gas at each stream's respective particle inlet location, giving the particle stream a radial velocity. Upon introduction in this manner the particles fall with terminal velocity but rise with the upward gas velocity as they travel radially and tangentially with respect to the chamber.

10

The gas rotator may comprise one or more impellers, paddles, vanes or any other suitable member, device or apparatus which can be used to cause gas to flow in a spiral flow path through the chamber.

15

The gas rotator may comprise a plurality of impellers, paddles or the like arranged in a number of banks.

The banks may be spaced apart between the gas inlet and gas outlet.

20

The banks may be positioned between each processing region.

There may also be at least one of the banks located within each processing region.

25

The banks of impellers, paddles or the like may be mounted onto the internal member by rotatable rings to enable rotation of the banks about the axis of the internal member.

30

The gas flow arrangement may be operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first velocity which is a streamline velocity of the gas through the chamber and the particle flow arrangement is operable to introduce a particle stream into the chamber at a second velocity, the second velocity comprising a first directional component and a second directional component. The processor is operable such that the first directional component of the second velocity of the particles as they are introduced into the chamber is controlled to be substantially equal to the first streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing region, less any velocity due to known forces that will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the streamline velocity upon introduction to the chamber.

35

In this way, the energy required to accelerate the particles is provided by the mechanism that feeds particles into the chamber so that each unencumbered particle in the stream has minimal forces acting on the particle by the gas stream and consequently, the pressure drop across the processor (ie. between the gas inlet and the gas outlet of the chamber) is minimised.

The “streamline velocity” of the gas is understood to be the velocity of the gas in a direction that is tangent to the velocity vector of the gas flow.

10 “Known forces that will act on the particles in the opposite direction” may include gravity and gas resistance.

15 During operation of the processor, the velocity of the gas will vary across the chamber due to the heat and/or mass transfer processes occurring within the chamber. Accordingly, the first (gas) velocity and any of its components in each respective processing region may be taken as the local gas velocity (or respective component) at a relevant location within the chamber such as near the particle inlet for the respective processing region, but preferably may be determined from the mean of the local velocities (or respective components of the velocities) across the processing region.

20 The first and second directional components of the second velocity of each particle stream may comprise resolved horizontal and vertical components of the second velocity.

25 In another embodiment, the second directional component of the second velocity of each particle stream may comprise a radial velocity.

The processor may be operable to introduce the particles in such a way that the second directional component of the second velocity is substantially equal to or greater than the terminal velocity of the particles.

30 The processor may be operable to introduce the particles under gravitational acceleration to achieve terminal velocity for the second directional component.

35 The processor may be configured so that the gas flows from the gas inlet to the gas outlet of the chamber substantially linearly whereby the streamline velocity of the gas is a linear velocity between the gas inlet and the gas outlet of the chamber.

The processor may be configured so that the gas flows from the gas inlet to the gas outlet of the chamber along a spiral flowpath whereby the streamline velocity of the gas is aligned with this spiral flowpath. In this embodiment, the first velocity of the gas (the streamline velocity) incorporates a linear velocity component between the gas inlet and the outlet and an 5 angular velocity component.

The processor may be operable to introduce each particle stream into the chamber at a feed angle relative to the direction of the first (gas) velocity, the feed angle and the second 10 velocity of each particle stream being determined so that the first directional component of the second velocity of the particles as they are introduced into the chamber is substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing region.

Embodiments of these processors provide, at least in part, gas-particle interactions with high heat and mass transfer rates, a short gas-particle contact time and a low pressure drop 15 across the system.

The particle flow arrangement may comprise one or more particle feeders for feeding particles to the particle inlet(s).

20 In one embodiment, the particle flow arrangement comprises a single particle feeder which feeds to each of a plurality of particle inlets.

In another embodiment, the processor comprises a particle feeder for feeding particles to each particle inlet.

25 In an embodiment, the outlet of each feeder may form one of the particle inlets of the chamber.

Each particle feeder may feed particles from one or more storage vessels each in the 30 form of a hopper, bin or similar unit.

In an embodiment, the gas flow arrangement may comprise a gas feeder for feeding the gas to the chamber through the gas inlet.

35 The gas feeder may be in the form of a compressor, pump, blower or similar unit.

- 8 -

In a second embodiment, there is provided a gas-particle processing method comprising:

- introducing gas into a chamber through a gas inlet;
- flowing the gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first controlled mass flowrate; and
- introducing at least one particle stream into the chamber through one or more particle inlets of the chamber at a second controlled mass flowrate;
- flowing each particle stream through a respective processing region in the chamber; and
- controlling the first and/or second mass flowrates such that the gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region is 0.900-0.995.

The gas-particle mixture porosity through a substantial portion of each processing region is controlled to be preferably not less than 0.955, even more preferably not less than 0.980, most preferably close to 0.990.

The gas-particle mixture porosity may be controlled to be substantially constant through a substantial portion of each respective processing region.

The gas-particle mixture porosity of each processing region may increase away from its respective particle inlet.

The gas may flow substantially linearly from the gas inlet to the gas outlet.

In an alternative arrangement, gas may flow in a spiral flowpath from the gas inlet to the outlet.

Each particle stream may be introduced into the chamber through a wall portion of the chamber.

In another embodiment, each particle stream is introduced into the chamber from an internal member located within the chamber.

The method may comprise flowing each particle stream from its respective particle inlet to a wall portion of the chamber.

The method may also comprise outputting each stream of particles from the chamber through a respective particle outlet.

5 The gas may flow through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first velocity, the first velocity being a streamline velocity of the gas through the chamber and each particle stream may flow into the chamber at a second velocity, the second velocity comprising a first directional component and a second directional component. In this embodiment, the method may also comprise controlling the first directional component of the second velocity of the particles as they are introduced into the chamber to be substantially equal to the first
10 streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing region, less any velocity due to known forces which will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the gas streamline velocity upon introduction to the chamber.

15 The first and second directional components of the second velocity may comprise resolved horizontal and vertical components of the second velocity.

In another embodiment, the second directional component of the second velocity of each particle stream may comprise a radial velocity.

20 Each stream of particles may be introduced with the second directional component of the second velocity substantially equal to or greater than the terminal velocity of the particles.

Each stream of particles may be introduced under gravitational acceleration to achieve terminal velocity for the second directional component.

25 The method may also comprise flowing the gas from the gas inlet to the gas outlet of the chamber substantially linearly whereby the streamline velocity of the gas is a linear velocity between the gas inlet and the gas outlet of the chamber.

30 In another embodiment, the method may comprise flowing the gas from the gas inlet to the gas outlet of the chamber along a spiral flowpath whereby the streamline velocity of the gas is aligned with this spiral flowpath. In this embodiment, the first velocity of the gas (the streamline velocity) incorporates a linear velocity component between the gas inlet and the outlet and an angular velocity component.

35 The method may comprise introducing each particle stream into the chamber at a feed angle relative to the direction of the gas's streamline (first) velocity.

The method may further comprise determining the feed angle for each particle stream to result in the first directional component of the second (particle) velocity to being substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas.

5

Particles with a diameter of less than 300 μm may be used, more preferably with a diameter between 200 μm and 100 μm . The small particle size provides the bulk of particles (at the high porosity in the processing region) with a very high surface area relative to the mass flow. The high surface area of particles enhances exchange processes between the particle and gas streams. In preferred embodiments, the particles also have a narrow size distribution which enables each processing region in the chamber to be kept small and the desired gas-particle mixture porosity to be maintained. Furthermore, it is desirable to use such particles having a small diameter and a narrow size distribution so that each particle stream may be introduced into the processor at a velocity which does not require excessive expenditure of energy or cost 10 to achieve a substantially uniform velocity including in all directional components of each 15 particle stream (second velocity). However, in other embodiments it is possible to use particles with a wide size distribution, although in such instances this may result in some mixing of the particles from different processing regions and/or some of the particles exiting the chamber through the gas outlet.

20

In a third embodiment, there is provided a gas-particle processor comprising:
a chamber having a gas inlet, a gas outlet and one or more particle inlets;
a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first velocity which is a streamline velocity of the gas through the chamber;
25 and

a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce one or more streams of particles into the chamber at a second velocity, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the chamber, the second velocity comprising a first directional component and a second directional component, wherein the processor is operable to control the first directional 30 component as the particles are introduced into the chamber to be substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing regions less any velocity due to known forces that will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the primary directional component upon introduction to the chamber.

35

In a fourth embodiment, there is provided a gas-particle processing method comprising:
introducing gas into a chamber through a gas inlet;

flowing the gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first velocity which is a streamline velocity of the gas; and

introducing at least one particle stream into the chamber at a second velocity, the second velocity comprising a first directional component and a second directional component,
5 wherein the method also comprising controlling the first directional component of the second velocity of the particles as they are introduced into the chamber to be substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing region, less any velocity due to known forces which will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the gas streamline velocity upon introduction to the chamber.

10

In another embodiment, there is provided a gas-particle processor comprising:
a chamber having a gas inlet, a gas outlet and one or more particle inlets;
a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet such that the gas has a linear velocity component between the gas inlet and the
15 gas outlet and an angular velocity component within the chamber; and
a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce one or more streams of particles into the chamber, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the chamber.

20

In a further embodiment, there is provided a gas-particle processing method comprising:

introducing gas into a chamber through a gas inlet;
flowing the gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet such that the
gas has a linear component velocity between the gas inlet and the gas outlet and an angular
25 component velocity within the gas chamber;
introducing at least one stream of particles into the chamber; and
flowing each particle stream through a respective processing region in the chamber.

30

In a further embodiment, there is provided a gas-particle processor comprising:
a chamber having a gas inlet and a gas outlet which define a chamber length there
between, the chamber also having at least two particle inlets;
a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to
the gas outlet; and
35 a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce one or more streams of particles into
the chamber, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the
chamber, wherein the chamber length is less than the combined minimum length of the same

number as particle inlets of the chamber of substantially identical chambers but which each only operate with a single stream of particles and a single respective processing region.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

5

Embodiments of the present invention are hereinafter described by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of a horizontally configured gas-particle processor; and

10 Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of a vertically configured gas-particle processor.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

One form of a horizontal gas-particle processor 2 is illustrated in Figure 1. The 15 processor 2 comprises a chamber 3 having a first end 20, an opposite second end 21 and top and bottom wall portions 22, 23 extending between the first and second ends. The second end is located to the side of the first end and the side wall portions extend generally horizontally so as to define a horizontally orientated chamber.

20 The chamber 3 has an array of particle inlets 4 comprising first, second and third inlets 4A, 4B and 4C respectively through which particles are introduced into the chamber. Solid particles are fed to each inlet by a particle flow arrangement comprising respective particle feeders with associated particle accelerators 5A, 5B and 5C the feeders feed particles from one or more storage vessels in the form of hoppers, bins or the like. However, in other embodiments 25 the particles may be liquid droplets or thin liquid sheets which are fed by a spray nozzle, atomiser or the like. The particle inlets 4 are formed in a surface 6 of top wall portion 22 of the chamber. The outlets of the feeders communicate with and/or are co-existent with the particle inlets 4. The processor is configured and operated such that the particles fed through each particle inlet produce a stream of particles which flows from a top wall portion to a bottom wall 30 portion, which is separate and discrete from each other particle streams. The inlets 4 are also of a width which extends across a substantial portion, preferably across the entire width of the chamber so that the respective particle streams also extend substantially across the width of the chamber.

35 The chamber 3 also has an array of particle outlets 8 comprising first, second and third outlets 8A, 8B and 8C respectively through which particles exit the chamber. The particle outlets are formed on a surface 10 of opposite bottom wall portion 23 to that which the inlets are

formed on. The first, second and third particle outlets 8A-C oppose, but are offset from, respective first, second and third particle inlets 4A-C. Each outlet is located downstream from its respective inlet due to some horizontal travel of the particles as they move through the chamber. The discrete particle streams flowing from respective particle inlets 4A-C exit the 5 chamber through a specific particle outlet. For example, particles flowing from the first particle inlet 4A exit the chamber through the first particle outlet 8A only. A processing stage 18A-C is defined by each particle inlet and its specific particle outlet and includes a processing region in the chamber occupied by the particle stream as it flows from its inlet to its respective outlet. For example, processing stage 18A is defined by particle inlet 4A and particle outlet 8A and 10 includes the processing region in the chamber occupied by the particle stream between particle inlet 4A and particle outlet 8A. As the particles fall through the gas stream in the processor 2, heat and/or mass exchange and/or a chemical reaction occurs between the particle stream and the gas stream in the processing stages 18A-C. At any moment in time within the chamber 3, the particles streams in the processing stages do not substantially intermix.

15

Because of the ability of the processor to operate with a number of discrete particle streams, it can act as a "multi-stage" processor. This provides the benefit of reducing the space and cost requirements over having multiple processors to carry out the same number of single particle stream processes.

20

The arrays of particle inlets and outlets could be configured to recycle particles through the chamber 3. In one form, this recycling could be from each outlet to its respective inlet. In another embodiment, the first particle outlet 8A connected to the second particle inlet 4B via conduit 12A and the second particle outlet 8B is connected to the third particle inlet 4C via 25 conduit 12B so that particles flow between the connected outlets and inlets. In this embodiment, the first particle inlet 4A defines an initial feed of particles to the chamber 3 and the third particle outlet 8C defines a final outlet for particles to exit the chamber 3 and leave the processor. In a variation, the system may be semi-closed so that some of the particles leave the processor at the third particle outlet but some are recycled to the first particle inlet with a make-up of particles 30 added to compensate for the particles that have exited the system.

It is of course to be understood that the processor may comprise more or less particle inlets and outlets. In one variation, the processor may comprise a single particle outlet formed at the bottom of the chamber which receives all the particles entering the chamber through the 35 inlets.

In a further variation, each inlet and outlet may respectively comprise a plurality of inlet or outlet portions defined by grids or grates for example. In particular, the floor of the chamber, in some embodiments, may be in the form of a grate or grid which allows the particles to fall through the floor and be collected underneath the chamber.

5

The chamber 3 also comprises a gas inlet 25 located at the first end 20 and a gas outlet 26 located at the second end 21 of the chamber 3 whereby gas flows along the length of the chamber between the inlet and the outlet during operation of the processor 2. To provide and direct this flow of gas, the processor 2 comprises a gas flow arrangement incorporating a gas 10 feeder 14 which feeds gas to the gas inlet 25 of the chamber, and possibly one or more flow straighteners. The gas feeder is in the form of a pump, compressor, blower or the like.

The gas and each particle stream have respective first and second mass flowrates through the chamber. Preferably, during operation of the processor one or both of these mass 15 flowrates are controlled such that the gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region and preferably substantially through each processing region is 0.900-0.995 (preferably close to 0.990). This allows a substantial proportion of the particles with the particle stream to be unhindered by adjacent particles in the particle stream. As a result, increased access to the particles' surface by the gas and a substantially constant velocity of the 20 particle stream may be achieved. At the same time the gas-particle mixture porosity is limited so that the gas's first mass flowrate would not be unfeasibly low and hence so that the chamber is not required to be excessively long. The particle inlets 4 extend along the length of the chamber for as long as is required to enable the processor to achieve the required gas-particle mixture porosity during operation.

25

For the processor 2 shown in Figure 1, the processor is operated such that the gas-particle mixture porosity is generally constant through each processing region, particularly if the particles are introduced into the chamber at terminal velocity. However, the gas-particle mixture porosity may be higher in the portion of each processing region adjacent its respective particle 30 inlet than in the remainder of the processing region if the particles are introduced at a velocity greater than terminal velocity.

Either but preferably both the gas and particle mass flow rates may be controlled, the selection of which being based on the application for which the gas-particle processor is being 35 used. For example, in a gas-catalyst process, the process may be gas and particle phase controlled because of the reaction, with catalyst particle flow controlled to provide the required chemical conversion. Where the processor is used as a cooling tower for example (with

particles in the form of liquid droplets), operation of the processor may also be gas phase controlled. In this application, the liquid particles are injected at a mass flow rate that will provide the surface area for the cooling tower process.

5 The processor 2 is operated such that the gas flows through the chamber 3 at a streamline (first) velocity which is generally linear in the horizontal direction. To assist in achieving this, flow straighteners such as baffles may be provided near the gas inlet 25. It is noted that during operation the gas velocity will vary across the chamber due to the heat and/or mass transfer occurring within the chamber.

10

Each stream of particles is introduced into the chamber at a second velocity and a feed angle with respect to the direction of the streamline velocity of the gas. This gives the second velocity a first directional component and a second directional component. The second directional component is the velocity of the particles perpendicular to the direction of the gas flow, ie. a vertical velocity. The first directional component is the velocity of the particles parallel to the direction of the streamline velocity of the gas, ie. the horizontal velocity.

15

The second velocity (the velocity of the particles) as well as the feed angle of the particles are controlled such that the first directional component of the particles velocity as they are introduced to the chamber is substantially equal (in magnitude and direction) to the streamline velocity of the gas velocity. It is noted that because the gas velocity varies across the length of the chamber (due to the heat and/or mass transfer processes occurring within the chamber) the first (gas) velocity and any of its components in each respective processing region is taken either as the local gas velocity (or respective component) at a relevant location within the chamber such as near the particle inlet for the respective processing region, or preferably is determined from the mean of the local velocities (or respective components of the velocities) across the processing region.

20

The second velocity (the velocity of the particles) is also controlled so that the second (vertical) directional component is substantially equal to the terminal velocity of the particles in the gas.

25

Accordingly, the second velocity at which the particles are introduced into the chamber and the feed angle of the particles are determined from knowledge of the first and second directional components.

By operating the processor with the above described velocities and mass flowrates, the energy required to accelerate the particles as they enter the chamber is provided by their respective particle feeder so that each unencumbered particle in each stream has minimal forces acting on the particle by the gas stream. Consequently the pressure drop across the 5 processor (ie. between the gas inlet and the gas outlet of the chamber) is minimised.

In a variation, the particles may be simply dropped vertically into the chamber so that they fall under gravitational acceleration. Such a process would not have as low a pressure drop across the chamber as is the case where the particles enter with the above described 10 horizontal and vertical components and therefore would not be as efficient. However, this variation could be operated with the mass flowrates of the gas and particles controlled such that the gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region is 0.900-0.995, preferably close to 0.990.

15 It is desirable also to use particles with a small diameter and a narrow sized distribution in the processor. Typically particles with a diameter less than 300 μ m, more preferably between 200 and 100 μ m are used. The use of such small particles provides a very high surface area of particles when mixed with the gas in the processing regions in the chamber at the gas particle mixture porosities referred to above. Such a high surface area enhances the exchange 20 processes between the particles and the gas enabling the processor to operate at high efficiencies. Use of particles having a narrow size distribution also enables the processing region in the chamber to be kept narrow and makes it easier to retain the desired porosity of the gas particle mixture. The combination of these attributes of the particles enables each particle stream to be introduced into the processor at a velocity which does not require excessive 25 expenditure of energy or cost to achieve a substantially uniform particle velocity.

In some applications, it is also desirable to use particles having a high porosity such as 30 in a gas catalyst processor. However, this may not be the case in some embodiments, such as in a heat transfer processor where the high porosity may lower thermal conductivity within the particle.

Referring now to Figure 2, a vertical gas-particle processor 102 according to another embodiment is shown. Similar features of the processor 102 to the processor 2 shown in Figure 1 have been marked with the same reference number but prefixed with the numerals 1 or 10.

35

The processor 102 comprises a generally cylindrical chamber 103 which is orientated vertically such that the second end 121 at which the gas outlet 126 is located is positioned

above the first end 120 at which the gas inlet 125 is located. The opposite side wall portions 122, 123 extend vertically between the ends 120, 121. The gas thus flows vertically through the chamber 103 from the bottom to the top during operation of the processor 102. A central internal member or column 180 is provided within the chamber on which the particle inlets 5 104A-C are located. The particles thus enter chamber form the centre of the chamber. Particle feeders 110A-C feed to the inlets 104A-C located on the internal member 180.

Upon entering the chamber, the particles travel along a spiral flowpath out towards the inner surface of the chamber carried by a spiralling gas flow which is under the influence of a 10 gas rotator (described below) where they exit the chamber through the particle outlets 108A-C. Each particle outlet 108A-C is located upstream of its respective inlet 104A-C as the particles are carried upwards somewhat by the gas (against gravity) as the particles move through the chamber.

15 Although the gas moves in a general direction which is vertical through the chamber 103, the gas flow arrangement of the processor 102 of Figure 2 also comprises a gas rotator 130 for rotating the gas within the chamber. This causes the gas to spiral through the chamber in operation. The gas rotator 130 comprises banks of plate-like paddles 130A-F located in and 20 between the processing regions 118A-C, which help to maintain the direction and magnitude of the gas velocity through the chamber 3. The gas rotator may also in addition to or instead of the paddles comprise vanes, fixed at the bottom of the chamber near the gas inlet. The paddles 130A-F are mounted onto the internal member 180 within the chamber by rotatable rings or the like to allow rotation of the banks about the axis of the column by a motor. Because 25 the gas is spiralling, it causes a similar spiralling of the particles within the chamber by the gas rotator. Paddles 130A, 130C and 130E are located between processing stages 118A, 118B and 118C, respectively, while paddles 130B, 130D and 130F are located within the processing stages 118A, 118B and 118C, respectively.

30 In this embodiment shown in Figure 2, the streamline velocity of the gas (the first velocity) incorporates a linear velocity component between the gas inlet and the gas outlet, which is in a vertical direction against gravity and an angular velocity component imparted by the rotation of the gas rotator. In operation, the gas may have a distribution of angular velocities across the chamber.

35 The gas rotation inside the chamber drags particles tangentially as they are introduced through their respective particle inlets on the centrally located column. The associated centrifugal forces result in radial acceleration of the particles within the chamber. Thus the particles spiral out towards the sides of the chamber, where they exit through their respective

particle outlets. The particles are also carried along in the direction of the gas flow between the inlet and outlet upwards against gravity (provided the vertical gas velocity is greater than the terminal velocity of the particles falling under gravity).

5 The particle streams are introduced into the chamber where they are subjected to the centrifugal force of the rotational acceleration imparted on the particles by the rotating gas at each particle stream's respective particle inlet location. Upon introduction in this manner the particles fall with terminal velocity relative to the gas but rise with the upward gas velocity in the vertical system as they travel radially and tangentially with respect to the chamber.

10 15 The particles are introduced at a second velocity which resolves into a first directional component which is substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas less any velocity due to known forces that will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the streamline velocity upon introduction to the chamber including for example gravity in this vertically arranged processor 102, and a second directional component in the radial direction which is substantially equal to or greater than the terminal velocity of the particles.

20 As with the above described horizontal system, by operating the vertically arranged processor 102 in this manner, the energy required to accelerate the particles as they enter the chamber is provided by their respective particle feeder so that each unencumbered particle in each stream has minimal forces acting on the particle by the gas stream. Consequently the pressure drop across the processor (ie. between the gas inlet and the gas outlet of the chamber) is minimised.

25 Further, by operating the processor such that the radial velocity of the particles at the location of each stream's respective particle inlet is not less than the terminal velocity of the particles, the feeder length to be reduced whilst maintaining the same gas particle mixture porosity adjacent to the particle inlets. It is also desirable to maintain the radial velocity of the particles higher at shorter radii in the chamber, so that the difference in gas-particle mixture porosity across the radius of the chamber is not too large.

30 The gas and each particle stream has respective first and second mass flowrates through the chamber. During operation of the processor one or preferably both of these mass flowrates are controlled such that the gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region and preferably substantially through each processing region is 0.900-0.995 (preferably close to 0.990). This allows a substantial proportion of the particles with the particle stream to be unhindered by adjacent particles in the particle stream. As a result, increased access to the particles' surface by the gas and a substantially constant velocity of the particle stream may be achieved. At the same time is the gas-particle porosity is limited so that

the gas's first mass flowrate would not be unfeasibly low and hence so that the chamber is not required to be excessively long.

For the processor 102 shown in Figure 2, the gas-particle mixture porosity of each 5 processing region increases away from its respective particle inlet. This may mean that the gas-particle mixture porosity becomes greater than 0.995 in a portion of each processing region furthest from its respective particle inlet, ie. adjacent the particle outlets 108A-C at the side wall portions 122, 123.

10 It is of course to be understood that the processor may comprise more or less particle inlets and outlets. In other variations, the gas outlet acts also as the particle outlet from the chamber (i.e. the particles exit with the gas), or particles exit the chamber partly through particle outlets at the chamber walls and partly through the gas outlet the gas and particles that are collected from the gas outlet being subsequently separated elsewhere.

15 The embodiments described and shown above in respect of Figures 1 and 2 may be used in numerous applications. For example they may applied in a heat exchanger or an absorber/desorber.

20 The processor is also appropriate for energy recovery from gas-solid processes. One example involves a regenerator comprising two exchangers, whereby an outgoing hot gas stream exchanges heat with a particle stream in one exchanger and the heated particles are used to heat another gas stream in a second exchanger. Another example relates to an air preheater unit comprising two exchangers, wherein the first exchanger cools a flue-gas stream 25 from a boiler using a particle stream and the heat transferred to the particle stream from the flue-gas stream is transferred to an unheated air stream fed to the boiler in a second exchanger.

30 In another application, the processor, in particular the vertical embodiment shown in Figure 2, may be employed as a cooling tower where the particles are in a form of liquid droplets. In such an application, the liquid particle mass flow rate is controlled to be a value which produces maximum cooling for the given gas mass flow rate, but with a high gas velocity imposed.

35 EXAMPLES

- 20 -

Figure 1 illustrates the horizontal gas-particle processor and Figure 2 illustrates the vertical gas-particle processor used to conduct the following examples 1 and 2, respectively. The Examples provide calculations under ideal or theoretical conditions. In actual applications, some reduction in efficiency must be allowed for.

5

Example 1:

Gas feeder 14 introduces a stream of gas at a mass flowrate of 218 tonnes/hr, a velocity of 4m/s and a temperature of 100 °C into a 4m x 4m chamber. The gas stream exits the 10 chamber from gas outlet 26.

A stream of alumina particles of 200 µm in diameter, a mass flowrate of 244 tonnes/hr and a temperature of 200 °C is introduced into the chamber from particle feeder 5A.

15 As the particles fall through the gas stream, heat exchange occurs between the particle stream and the gas stream at stage 18A. This results in cooling of the alumina stream to 169 °C under ideal conditions. Recycling of this particle stream occurs as it exits through particle outlet 8A and is fed to particle inlet 4B via conduit 12A. For the purposes of this calculation, no or little heat exchange is assumed for the flow in any connecting conduits. The particle stream re-20 enters processor 2 at stage 18B. Further heat exchange between the particle stream and the gas stream occurs as the temperature of the particle stream drops from 169 °C to 137 °C under ideal conditions. This process is further repeated at stage 18C, where particles cooled to a final temperature of 106 °C (under ideal conditions) exits through particle outlet 8C.

25 Concurrently, the gas stream is (under ideal conditions) heated from 100 °C to 132 °C as it contacts stage 18C; and to a final temperature of 194 °C as it contacts stage 18A.

Example 2:

30 Gas feeder 114 introduces a stream of gas at a mass flowrate of 1370 tonnes/hr, a velocity of 4m/s and a temperature of 100 °C into a chamber having a 12m outer diameter and a central particle feeder member which is 4m in diameter. The gas stream exits processor 102 from gas outlet 126. Paddles 130A, 130B and 130C are located between processing stages 118A, 118B and 118C to provide a means for gas rotation. Additional paddles 130B, 130D and 35 130F may be located within stages 118A, 118B and 118C, respectively, which may be also used to regulate the rotational velocity of the gas. These paddles would be in the form of a number of small paddles fixed to a rotating framework.

A stream of alumina particles of 150 µm in diameter, at a mass flowrate of 1535 tonnes/hr and a temperature of 200 °C is introduced into the chamber from particle feeder 110A.

5

As the particles are introduced into the chamber through particle inlet 104A, centrifugal forces imparted by the spiralling gas stream to the particle stream cause the particle stream to spiral out towards the chamber surface such that the particle stream in stage 118C is received by particle outlet 108A. The particle stream subsequently travels via conduit 132A to particle 10 inlet 104B. This process repeats itself as the particle stream in stage 118B is received by particle outlet 108B and is transferred to particle inlet 104C via conduit 134B. The particle stream finally exits processor 102 through particle outlet 108C. Heat transfer occurs between the particle stream and the gas stream at processing stages 118A, 118B and 118C, resulting in a final particle stream temperature of 105 °C and a final gas stream temperature of 195 °C 15 (under ideal conditions).

It is to be understood that, if any prior art publication is referred to herein, such reference does not constitute an admission that the publication forms a part of the common general knowledge in the art, in Australia or any other country.

20

In the claims which follow and in the preceding description of the invention, except where the context requires otherwise due to express language or necessary implication, the word "comprise" or variations such as "comprises" or "comprising" is used in an inclusive sense, i.e. to specify the presence of the stated features but not to preclude the presence or addition of 25 further features in various embodiments of the invention.

The described arrangement has been advanced by explanation and many modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention which includes every novel feature and novel combination of features herein disclosed.

30

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention described herein is susceptible to variations and modifications other than those specifically described. It is understood that the invention includes all such variations and modifications which fall within the spirit and scope.

CLAIMS:

1. A gas-particle processor comprising:
 - a chamber having a gas inlet, a gas outlet and one or more particle inlets;
 - 5 a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first controlled mass flowrate; and
 - a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce particles in one or more streams into the chamber at a second controlled mass flowrate, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the chamber,
- 10 wherein the processor is operable to control the first and/or second controlled mass flowrates to provide a gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region of 0.900-0.995.
2. A processor as claimed in claim 1, wherein the processor is operable to control the first and/or second mass flowrates to provide a gas-particle mixture porosity through a substantial portion of each processing region of close to 0.990.
- 15 3. A processor as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the processor is operable such that the gas-particle mixture porosity is substantially constant through a substantial portion of each respective processing region.
- 20 4. A processor as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the processor is operable such that the gas-particle mixture porosity of each processing region increases away from its respective particle inlet.
- 25 5. A processor as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, the chamber comprises at least one particle outlet through which particles exit the chamber.
- 30 6. A processor as claimed in claim 5, wherein the chamber comprises one particle outlet for each particle inlet, the particle inlets and outlets configured such that each particle stream enters the chamber through a particle inlet and exits the chamber through a specific particle outlet.
- 35 7. A processor as claimed in claim 6, wherein each particle inlet and its specific outlet are located in respective opposing regions of the chamber.

8. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 5-7, wherein each particle inlet comprises a plurality of inlet portions and each particle outlet comprises a plurality of outlet portions.
9. A processor as claimed in claim 5, wherein the chamber comprises a single particle outlet through which the particles from all of the particle inlets exit the chamber.
10. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 5-9, wherein the particle inlets are configured as an array of inlets along a region of the chamber and the particle outlets are configured as an array of outlets along an opposing region of the chamber to that on which the inlets are formed.
11. A processor as claimed in claim 10, wherein the array of particle inlets comprise an initial inlet and a plurality of subsequent inlets, distributed along the length of the chamber and the array of particle outlets comprise a plurality of intermediate outlets and a final outlet, distributed along the length of the chamber, wherein each intermediate outlet communicates with a respective subsequent inlet such that the processor is operable to recycle particles from each intermediate outlet to its respective subsequent inlet.
12. A processor as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the processor is operable such that each particle stream introduced into the chamber is discrete from other particle streams.
13. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 5-12, wherein the chamber comprises a first end and an opposite second end, the chamber extending between the first and second ends, the gas inlet located near the first end and the gas outlet located near the second end.
14. A processor as claimed in claim 13, wherein the chamber comprises first and second opposite wall portions extending between the first and second ends.
15. A processor as claimed in claim 14, wherein the chamber is orientated with the second end, at which the gas outlet is located, positioned above the first end, at which the gas inlet is located, and the wall portions extending generally vertically.
16. A processor as claimed in claim 14, wherein the chamber is orientated with the second end, at which the gas outlet is located, positioned to the side of the first end, at which the gas inlet is located, and the wall portions extending generally horizontally.

17. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 13-16, wherein the at least one particle inlet is formed in the first wall portion and the at least one particle inlet is formed in the second wall portion.

5 18. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 13-16, wherein the chamber comprises an internal member, the at least one particle inlet being formed in the internal member and the at least one particle outlet being formed in the first and/or second wall portions of the chamber.

10 19. A processor as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the gas flow arrangement comprises a gas rotator for causing the gas to flow in a spiral flow path through the chamber.

15 20. A processor as claimed in claim 19, wherein the gas rotator comprises one or more impellers, paddles, vanes or any other suitable member, device or apparatus which can be used to cause gas to flow in a spiral flow path through the chamber.

21. A processor as claimed in claim 19 or 20, wherein the gas rotator comprises a plurality of impellers, paddles or the like arranged in a number of banks.

20 22. A processor as claimed in claim 21, wherein the banks are spaced apart between the gas inlet and gas outlet.

23. A processor as claimed in claim 21 or 22, wherein the banks are positioned between each processing region.

25 24. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 21-23, wherein there is at least one of the banks located within each processing region.

25 30 25. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 21-23 when dependent on claim 18, wherein the banks of impellers, paddles or the like are mounted onto the internal member by rotatable rings to enable rotation of the banks about the axis of the internal member.

35 26. A processor as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the gas flow arrangement is operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first velocity which is a streamline velocity of the gas through the chamber and the particle flow arrangement is operable to introduce a particle stream into the chamber at a second

velocity, the second velocity comprising a first directional component and a second directional component,

5 wherein the processor is operable such that the first directional component of the second velocity of the particles as they are introduced into the chamber is controlled to be substantially equal to the first streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing region, less any velocity due to known forces that will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the streamline velocity upon introduction to the chamber.

27. A processor as claimed in claim 26, wherein the first and second directional 10 components of the second velocity of each particle stream comprises resolved horizontal and vertical components of the second velocity.

28. A processor as claimed in claim 26 or 27, wherein the processor is operable to 15 introduce the particles in such a way that the second directional component of the second velocity is substantially equal to or greater than the terminal velocity of the particles.

29. A processor as claimed in claim 26 or 27, wherein the processor is operable to 20 introduce the particles under gravitational acceleration to achieve terminal velocity for the second directional component.

30. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 26-29, wherein the processor is configured 25 so that the gas flows from the gas inlet to the gas outlet of the chamber substantially linearly whereby the streamline velocity of the gas is a linear velocity between the gas inlet and the gas outlet of the chamber.

31. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 26-29, wherein the processor is configured 30 so that the gas flows from the gas inlet to the gas outlet of the chamber along a spiral flowpath whereby the streamline velocity of the gas is aligned with this spiral flowpath.

32. A processor as claimed in claim 31, wherein the second directional component of 35 the second velocity of each particle stream comprises a radial velocity.

33. A processor as claimed in any one of claims 26-32, wherein the processor is operable 35 to introduce each particle stream into the chamber at a feed angle relative to the direction of the first (gas) velocity, the feed angle and the second velocity of each particle stream being determined so that the first directional component of the second velocity of the particles as they

are introduced into the chamber is substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing region.

34. A gas-particle processing method comprising:
 - 5 introducing gas into a chamber through a gas inlet;
 - flowing the gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first controlled mass flowrate; and
 - introducing at least one particle stream into the chamber through one or more particle inlets of the chamber at a second controlled mass flowrate;
 - 10 flowing each particle stream through a respective processing region in the chamber; and
 - controlling the first and/or second mass flowrates such that the gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region is 0.900-0.995.
- 15 35. A processing method as claimed in claim 34, wherein the gas-particle mixture porosity through a substantial portion of each processing region is controlled to be close to 0.990.
36. A processing method as claimed in claim 34 or 35, wherein the gas-particle mixture porosity is controlled to be substantially constant through a substantial portion of each
20 respective processing region.
37. A processing method as claimed in claim 34 or 35, wherein the gas-particle mixture porosity of each processing region increases away from its respective particle inlet.
- 25 38. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-37, wherein the gas flows substantially linearly from the gas inlet to the gas outlet.
39. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-37, wherein the gas flows in a spiral flowpath from the gas inlet to the outlet.
30
40. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-39, wherein each particle stream is introduced into the chamber through a wall portion of the chamber.
41. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-39, wherein each particle stream is introduced into the chamber from an internal member located within the chamber.
35

- 27 -

42. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-41, the method comprising flowing each particle stream from its respective particle inlet to a wall portion of the chamber.

43. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-42, wherein the method also 5 comprises outputting each stream of particles from the chamber through a respective particle outlet.

44. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-43, wherein the gas flows through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first velocity, the first velocity being 10 a streamline velocity of the gas through the chamber and each particle stream may flow into the chamber at a second velocity, the second velocity comprising a first directional component and a second directional component,

wherein the method also comprises controlling the first directional component of the second velocity of the particles as they are introduced into the chamber to be substantially 15 equal to the first streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing region, less any velocity due to known forces which will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the gas streamline velocity upon introduction to the chamber.

45. A processing method as claimed in claim 44, wherein the first and second directional 20 components of the second velocity comprise resolved horizontal and vertical components of the second velocity.

46. A processing method as claimed in claim 44 or 445, wherein each stream of particles is introduced with the second directional component of the second velocity substantially equal to 25 or greater than the terminal velocity of the particles.

47. A processing method as claimed in claim 44 or 45, wherein each stream of particles is introduced under gravitational acceleration to achieve terminal velocity for the second 30 directional component.

48. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 44-47, wherein the method comprises flowing the gas from the gas inlet to the gas outlet of the chamber substantially linearly whereby the streamline velocity of the gas is a linear velocity between the gas inlet and the gas outlet of the chamber.

49. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 44-47, wherein the method comprises flowing the gas from the gas inlet to the gas outlet of the chamber along a spiral flowpath whereby the streamline velocity of the gas is aligned with this spiral flowpath.

5 50. A processing method as claimed in claim 29, wherein the second directional component of the second velocity of each particle stream is a radial velocity.

10 51. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 44-50, where the method comprises introducing each particle stream into the chamber at a feed angle relative to the direction of the gas's streamline (first) velocity .

52. A processing method as claimed in claim 51 further comprising determining the feed angle for each particle stream to result in the first directional component of the second (particle) velocity to being substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas.

15 53. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-52, wherein the particles used have a diameter of less than 300 µm.

20 54. A processing method as claimed in any one of claims 34-52, wherein the particles used have a diameter of between 200 µm and 100 µm.

25 55. A gas-particle processor comprising:
a chamber having a gas inlet, a gas outlet and one or more particle inlets;
a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first velocity which is a streamline velocity of the gas through the chamber;
and
a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce one or more streams of particles into the chamber at a second velocity, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the chamber, the second velocity comprising a first directional component and a second directional component, wherein the processor is operable to control the first directional component as the particles are introduced into the chamber to be substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing regions less any velocity due to known forces that will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the primary directional component upon introduction to the chamber.

30 35 56. A gas-particle processing method comprising:
introducing gas into a chamber through a gas inlet;

flowing the gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet at a first velocity which is a streamline velocity of the gas; and

introducing at least one particle stream into the chamber at a second velocity, the second velocity comprising a first directional component and a second directional component,
5 wherein the method also comprising controlling the first directional component of the second velocity of the particles as they are introduced into the chamber to be substantially equal to the streamline velocity of the gas in the respective processing region, less any velocity due to known forces which will act on the particles in the opposite direction to the gas streamline velocity upon introduction to the chamber.

10

57. A gas-particle processor comprising:

a chamber having a gas inlet, a gas outlet and one or more particle inlets;

a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet such that the gas has a linear velocity component between the gas inlet and the
15 gas outlet and an angular velocity component within the chamber; and

a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce one or more streams of particles into the chamber, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the chamber.

20

58. A gas-particle processing method comprising:

introducing gas into a chamber through a gas inlet;

flowing the gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet such that the gas has a linear component velocity between the gas inlet and the gas outlet and an angular component velocity within the gas chamber;

25

introducing at least one stream of particles into the chamber; and

flowing each particle stream through a respective processing region in the chamber.

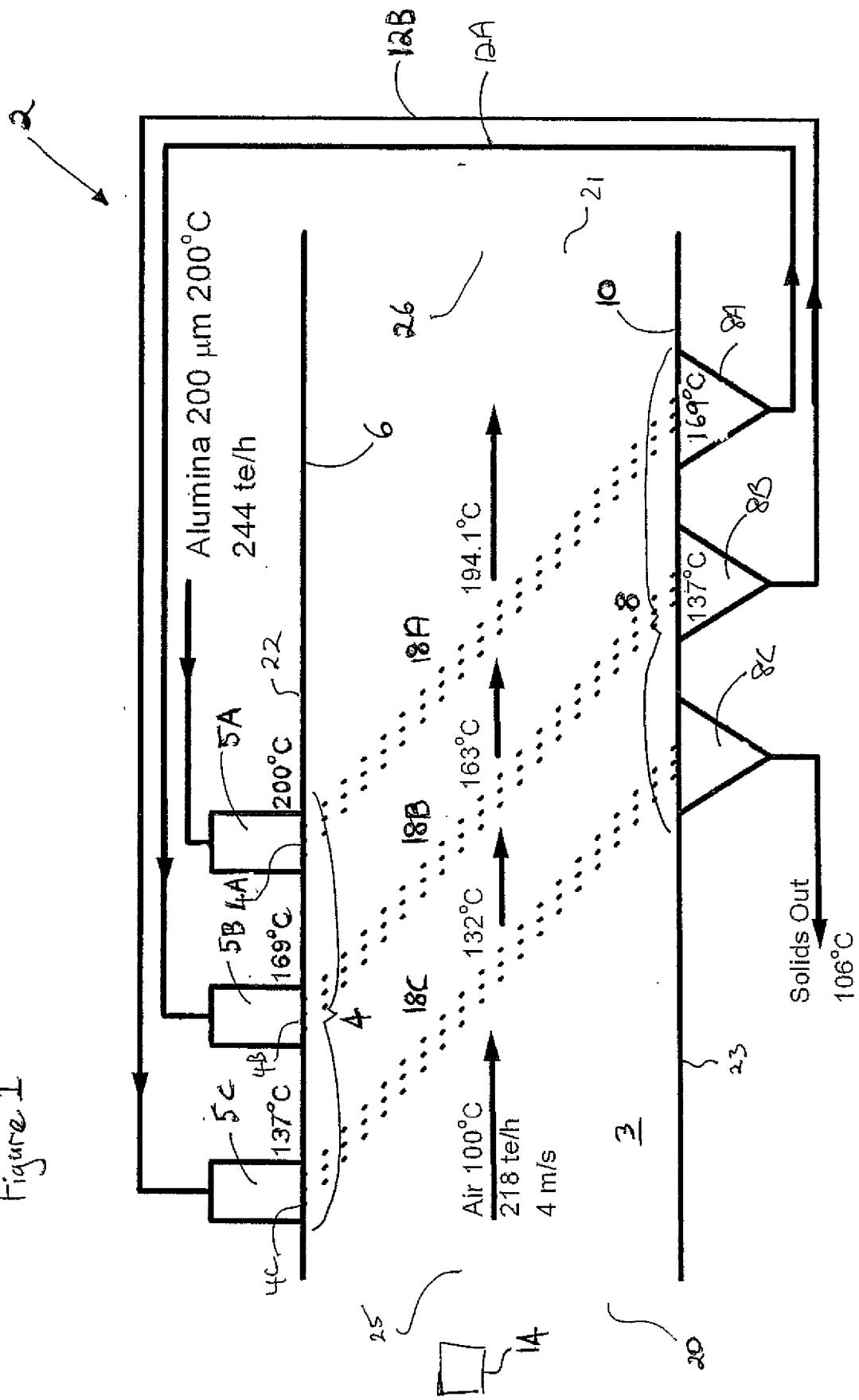
59. A gas-particle processor comprising:

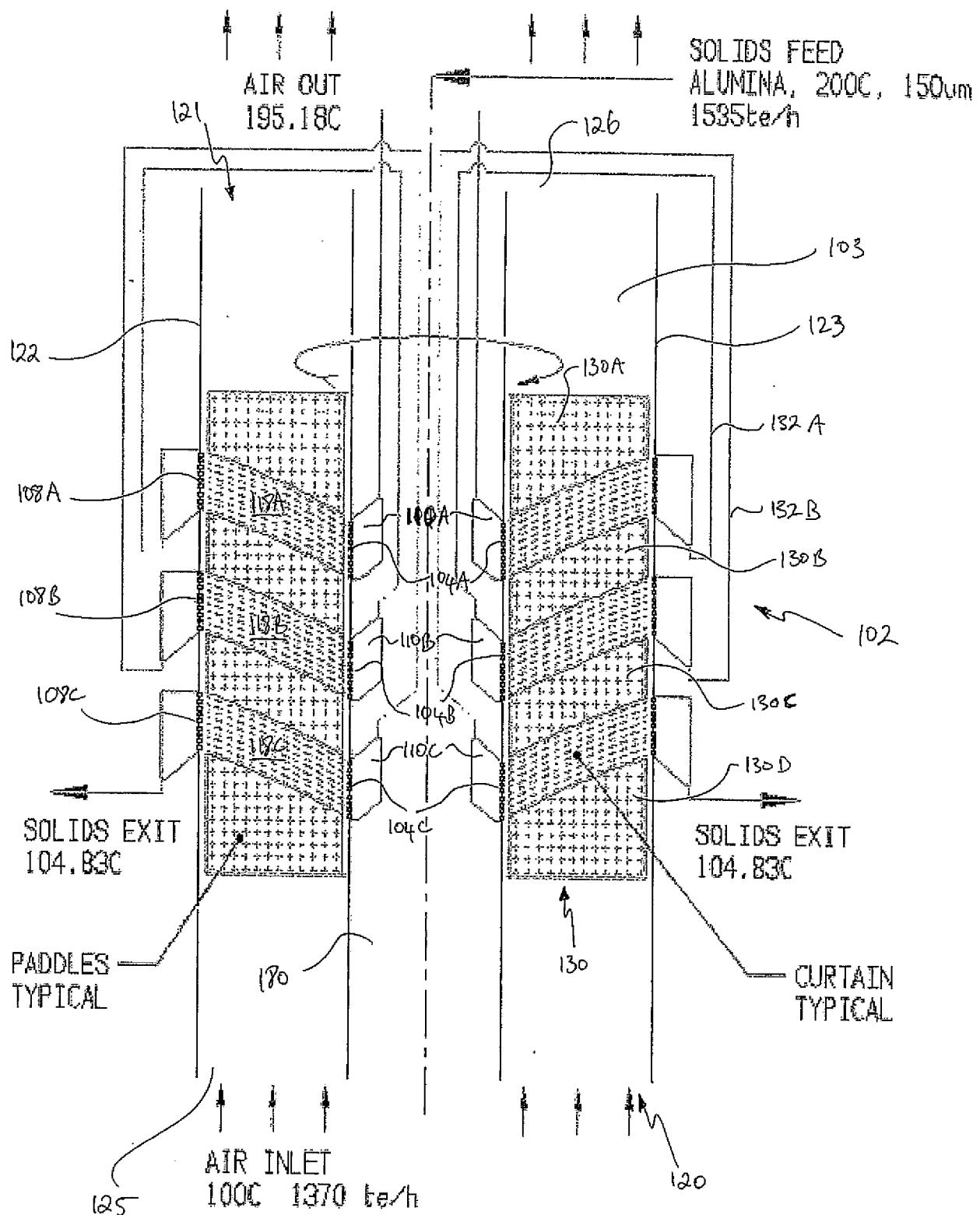
a chamber having a gas inlet and a gas outlet which define a chamber length
30 therebetween, the chamber also having at least two particle inlets;

a gas flow arrangement operable to flow gas through the chamber from the gas inlet to the gas outlet; and

a particle flow arrangement operable to introduce one or more streams of particles into the chamber, each particle stream flowing through respective processing regions in the
35 chamber, wherein the chamber length is less than the combined minimum length of the same number as particle inlets of the chamber of substantially identical chambers but which each only operate with a single stream of particles and a single respective processing region.

Figure 1





DRIVER AND SUPPORT DETAILS
FOR THE PADDLES NOT SHOWN

Figure 2

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU2011/001524

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int. Cl.

F26B 17/00 (2006.01)**B01J 8/08** (2006.01)**F26B 21/00** (2006.01)

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

WPI/EPODOC: keywords partic+, heat+, dry+, thermal, cataly+, adsor+, absor+, distill+, flow+, gas+, chamber+, bed+, kiln+, furnace+, retort+, tower+, mix+, porosity, velocity+, flow rate, rota+, spin+, revolv+, turn+. Google patent keyword search: gas, solid+, particle+, contact+, react+, absor+, adsor+, chamber, process+, multiple inlet+, flow velocity..

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X A	GB 913464 A (RUHRCHEMIE AG) 19 December 1962 See Abstract, Figure	57-58 1-56, 59
X A	US 2376365 A (LASSIAT) 22 May 1945 See Abstract, pages 1-3, Figures	59 1-58
A	US 2865848 A (RAMELLA) 23 December 1958 See Abstract, Figures, all claims	1-59
A	US 3905127 A (DAVIS) 16 September 1975 See Abstract, Figures	1-59

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C See patent family annex

* Special categories of cited documents:		
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search
11 January 2012Date of mailing of the international search report
16 January 2012Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU
AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE
PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA
E-mail address: pct@ipaaustralia.gov.au
Facsimile No. +61 2 6283 7999Authorized officer
HONG YU
AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE
(ISO 9001 Quality Certified Service)
Telephone No : +61 2 6283 7946

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU2011/001524

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 2006/0165564 A1 (CAVAGLIA) 27 July 2006 See Abstract, Figures	1-59
A	US 4840651 A (TIGGELBECK) 20 June 1989 See Abstract, Figures	1-59

Supplemental Box

(To be used when the space in any of Boxes I to IV is not sufficient)

Continuation of Box No: III

This International Application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention because it does not relate to one invention or to a group of inventions so linked as to form a single general inventive concept.

This Authority has found that there are different inventions based on the following features that separate the claims into distinct groups:

- Claims 1-54 are directed to a gas-particle processor and a gas-particle processing method. The feature of controlling gas and/or particle flow rates to achieve a certain gas-particle mixture porosity in a substantial portion of each processing region in which a particle stream flows through is specific to this group of claims.
- Claims 55-56 are directed to a gas-particle processor and a gas-particle processing method. The feature of a particle stream flow velocity comprising a first and a second directional components, the former being substantially equal to a streamline velocity of a gas in a respective processing region less any velocity due to known forces acting on particle in the opposite direction to the gas streamline velocity is specific to this group of claims.
- Claims 57-58 are directed to a gas-particle processor and a gas-particle processing method. The feature of a gas flow having a linear velocity component between gas inlet and outlet of a chamber and an angular velocity component within the chamber is specific to this group of claims.
- Claim 59 is directed to a gas-particle processor. The feature of a length of a chamber having particle flow streams and respective processing regions being less than the combined minimum length of the same number as particle inlets of the chamber of substantially identical chambers but which each only operating with a single stream of particles and a single respective processing region is specific to this group of claims.

PCT Rule 13.2, first sentence, states that unity of invention is only fulfilled when there is a technical relationship among the claimed inventions involving one or more of the same or corresponding special technical features. PCT Rule 13.2, second sentence, defines a special technical feature as a feature which makes a contribution over the prior art.

When there is no special technical feature common to all the claimed inventions there is no unity of invention.

In the above groups of claims, the identified features may have the potential to make a contribution over the prior art but are not common to all the claimed inventions and therefore cannot provide the required technical relationship. The only features common to all or part of the claimed inventions and which provides a technical relationship among them include gas flow, particle flow streams and respective processing region. However these features do not make a contribution over the prior art because they are disclosed in US 2376365.

Therefore in the light of this document these common features cannot be a special technical feature. Therefore there is no special technical feature common to all the claimed inventions and the requirements for unity of invention are consequently not satisfied *a posteriori*.

The International Searching Authority believes that a search and examination for the 2nd to the 4th inventions will not involve more than negligible additional search and examination effort over that for the first invention and so no additional search fee is required in order to search and examine that invention.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/AU2011/001524

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report		Patent Family Member					
GB	913464	NONE					
US	2376365	NONE					
US	2865848	NONE					
US	3905127	NONE					
US	2006165564	AU 2003280353 IT TO20021124	CN 1732202 US 7557180		EP 1576028		WO 2004058852
US	4840651	NONE					

Due to data integration issues this family listing may not include 10 digit Australian applications filed since May 2001.

END OF ANNEX