



(22) Date de dépôt/Filing Date: 2005/03/08

(41) Mise à la disp. pub./Open to Public Insp.: 2005/11/28

(45) Date de délivrance/Issue Date: 2009/07/07

(30) Priorité/Priority: 2004/05/28 (US10/857,202)

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *B32B 17/04* (2006.01),
B32B 5/10 (2006.01), *B44C 5/04* (2006.01)

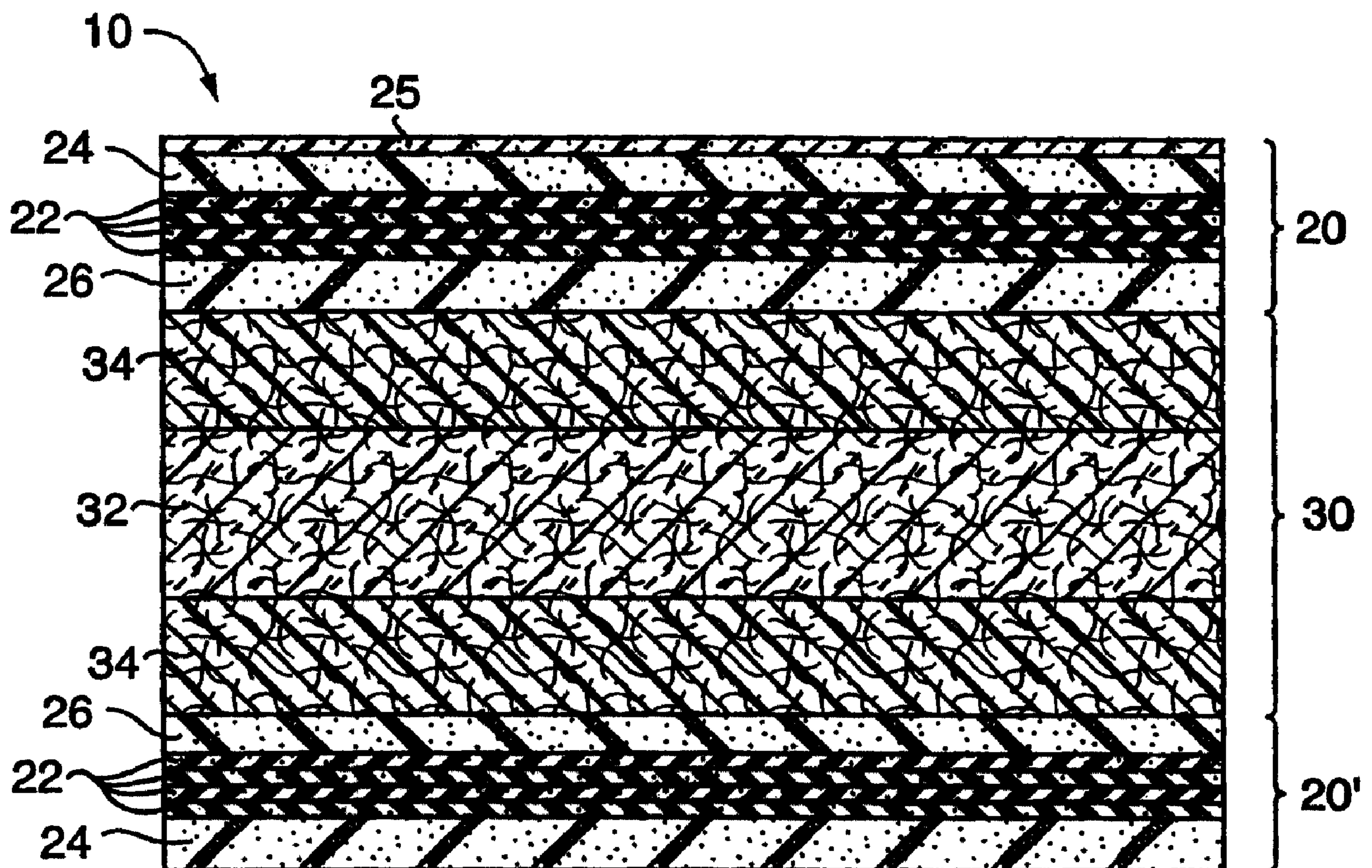
(72) Inventeurs/Inventors:
KARAM, FOUAD TORKUM, US;
GAUTHIER, SYLVIE, US

(73) Propriétaire/Owner:
PANOLAM INDUSTRIES INTERNATIONAL, INC., US

(74) Agent: RICHES, MCKENZIE & HERBERT LLP

(54) Titre : STRATIFIE DECORATIF RENFORCE DE FIBRES

(54) Title: FIBER-REINFORCED DECORATIVE LAMINATE



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A method for the production of a fiber-reinforced decorative laminate is provided. The method includes stacking, in a superimposed relationship, a decorative layer and a fiber-reinforced core layer. The decorative layer, which includes one or more decorative sheets, is at least partially resin-impregnated, and at least partially cured. The fiber-reinforced core layer includes at least one fiber-

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

reinforced sheet, which is substantially devoid of cellulose, and at least partially resin-impregnated, and at least partially cured. The decorative and core layers are simultaneously cured, under heat and pressure, to create the fiber-reinforced decorative laminate. A fiber-reinforced decorative laminate produced according to the above method is also provided.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method for the production of a fiber-reinforced decorative laminate is provided. The method includes stacking, in a superimposed relationship, a decorative layer and a fiber-reinforced core layer. The decorative layer, which includes one or more decorative sheets, is at least partially resin-impregnated, and at least partially cured. The fiber-reinforced core layer includes at least one fiber-reinforced sheet, which is substantially devoid of cellulose, and at least partially resin-impregnated, and at least partially cured. The decorative and core layers are simultaneously cured, under heat and pressure, to create the fiber-reinforced decorative laminate. A fiber-reinforced decorative laminate produced according to the above method is also provided.

FIBER-REINFORCED DECORATIVE LAMINATE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to decorative laminates in general and, more particularly, to decorative laminates having a fiber-reinforced layer. In addition, the present invention relates to a method for manufacturing the same.

Background Information

[0002] High pressure decorative laminates are often used in the construction of kitchen and bath cabinetry, furniture, store fixtures and other building products. Heat and pressure consolidated decorative laminates are generally produced utilizing a core material comprising a plurality of phenolic resin impregnated kraft paper sheets, a face sheet impregnated with a melamine-formaldehyde resin and optionally a melamine resin impregnated overlay sheet. These high pressure laminates, examples of which are described in U.S. Patent No. 3,418,189 to Grosheim et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,311,748 to Casey et al., and U.S. Patent No. 4,473,613 to Jaisle et al., have found world-wide acceptance as construction materials, i.e., wall panels, countertops, etc. in the home and office. They can be prepared so as to function in a variety of service applications and can be produced with surfaces such as high gloss, a matte finish or an embossed finish. There is considerable consumer demand for decorative laminates in a variety of colors, patterns, and textures. Furthermore, high pressure decorative laminates capable of withstanding high abuse in applications such as high-traffic corridor areas of stores, restaurants, hotels, schools and hospitals are also highly desirable.

[0003] Decorative laminates are usually laminated or glued in a separate operation to a structural base or substrate. Typically, the structural base has been formed from plywood, particleboard, chipboard, hardboard, wood waste, medium- or high-density fiberboard. Although not as common, it is also known to form the structural base from recycled plastic, ABS/PC, nylon, and/or PVC.

[0004] U.S. Patent No. 4,871,596 to Kamiya et al. discloses an artificial marble laminate formed from a plurality of porous cellulosic sheets impregnated with a melamine resin. Each of these resin-impregnated cellulosic sheets, although mostly composed by weight of either alpha-cellulose or linter fiber, may include a limited amount of non-

cellulose fiber, such as glass, carbon, polyester, or nylon fiber. Kamiya discloses a two-step process for forming the finished laminated panel. In the first step, the resin-impregnated cellulosic sheets may be cured with a decorative layer to form a decorative laminate. In the second step, the decorative laminate is bonded to the structural base material such as plywood.

[0005] Composite structural panels formed from woven, non-woven or chopped fibers bound together with a thermosetting or a thermoplastic resin have been available for some time. Typical high-modulus or high-strength fibers include, among others, glass, graphite, Kevlar® or aramid, boron, polyethylene, polyimide, or silicon carbide.

[0006] Generally, composite fiber-reinforced panels are formed from multiple layers or plies of the resin-impregnated fiber-reinforced sheets. The individual layers of a multi-layer composite fiber-reinforced panel need not be identical, but can vary in the style, fiber material, thickness, and orientation of the fiber-reinforcing sheets and in the specific resin material used, additives to the resin, and amount of impregnation.

[0007] Presently available composite fiber-reinforced panels lack desirable decorative qualities such as color or patterns.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] According to the present invention, a method for the production of a fiber-reinforced decorative laminate is provided. The method includes stacking, in a superimposed relationship, a decorative first layer and a fiber-reinforced second layer. The first layer, which includes a decorative sheet, is at least partially resin-impregnated and at least partially cured. The second layer includes at least one fiber-reinforced sheet, which is substantially devoid of cellulose. The method further includes simultaneously curing, under heat and pressure, the first and second layers to create the fiber-reinforced decorative laminate.

[0009] Also according to the present invention, a heat and pressure consolidated laminate is provided that comprises in superimposed relationship a decorative layer consisting of one or more cellulosic pigmented sheets impregnated with a transparent thermosetting resin, a core layer containing at least one fiber-reinforced sheet, which is substantially devoid of cellulose and is impregnated with a thermosetting resin, and an optional backer layer, which includes one or more cellulosic sheets impregnated with a thermosetting resin. The decorative layer, core layer, and the optional backer layer being

consolidated by heat and pressure to provide a fiber-reinforced decorative Laminate ("fiber-reinforced decorative laminate") having desirable flexural strength, impact resistance as well as having desirable resistance to water absorption, fire, chipping, and being easily fabricated.

[0010] In one embodiment, the fiber-reinforced decorative laminate may further include stacking, in a superimposed relationship to the decorative layer and the core layer, a decorative second layer that replaces the optional backer layer, consisting of one or more cellulosic pigmented sheets impregnated with a transparent thermosetting resin. The decorative layer, core layer, and the decorative second layer being consolidated by heat and pressure to provide a fiber-reinforced decorative laminate having desirable flexural strength and impact resistance, as well as having desirable resistance to water absorption, fire, chipping, and being easily fabricated.

[0011] In another embodiment, the decorative layer of the inventive fiber-reinforced decorative laminate may include one or more cellulosic sheets, wherein at least one of said cellulosic sheets is pigmented throughout or has a design printed on its surface. The decorative layer may also include one or more overlay sheets, a top coating that may or may not contain abrasive particles, and one or more barrier sheets. The fiber-reinforced sheets of the core layer may include one or more sheets made of woven glass fibers, non-woven glass fibers, and/or chopped glass fibers. Further, the fiber-reinforced sheets may include glass fibers, graphite fibers, aramid fibers, boron fibers, high-modulus fibers, and/or a combination of fibers thereof.

[0012] An advantage of the present invention is that it may provide an impact-resistant fiber-reinforced decorative laminate. A further advantage of the present invention is that it may provide a lightweight decorative laminate with desirable flexural strength for use in situations where the laminate may be subject to impact loads. Another advantage of the present invention is that the presence of a decorative layer may not adversely affect the flammability of the fiber-reinforced laminate. In addition, the flammability properties of the fiber-reinforced decorative laminate may be superior to that of a conventional high pressure decorative laminate. Another advantage of the present invention is that the complete fiber-reinforced decorative laminate may be formed in a single curing operation.

In another aspect, the present invention provides a method for the production of a

fiber-reinforced decorative laminate comprising: stacking in a superimposed relationship a decorative layer, which includes one or more decorative sheets, said decorative layer being at least partially resin-impregnated and at least partially cured, and a fiber-reinforced core layer, which includes at least one fiber-reinforced sheet and at least one cellulosic sheet, wherein the at least one fiber-reinforced sheet is substantially devoid of cellulose, and at least partially resin-impregnated and at least partially cured, and a barrier sheet disposed between the decorative layer and the fiber-reinforced core layer; and simultaneously curing, under heat and pressure, said decorative, barrier and core layers to create said fiber-reinforced decorative laminate.

In another aspect, the present invention provides a fiber-reinforced decorative laminated panel, comprising: a decorative layer impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin; a core layer that includes at least one cellulosic sheet, and a plurality of non-cellulosic, fiber-reinforced sheets impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin, wherein at least one of said plurality of fiber-reinforced sheets is selected from one of a woven glass fiber sheet, a non-woven glass fiber sheet, and a chopped glass fiber sheet; and a barrier sheet disposed between the decorative layer and the plurality of fiber-reinforced sheets.

In a further aspect, the present invention provides a fiber-reinforced decorative laminated panel, comprising: a decorative layer including one or more cellulosic sheets impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin; a core layer that includes at least one cellulosic sheet, and a plurality of non-cellulosic, fiber-reinforced sheets impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin, wherein at least one of said plurality of fiber-reinforced sheets includes fibers selected from one of glass fibers, graphite fibers, aramid fibers, boron fibers, high-modulus fibers, or a combination of fibers thereof; and a barrier sheet disposed between the decorative layer and the plurality of fiber-reinforced sheets.

[00131] These and other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent in light of the drawings and detailed description of the present invention

provided below.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] FIG. 1 is a cross sectional view (not to scale) of the superimposed constituent layers according to the first embodiment of the present invention; and

[0015] FIG. 2 is a cross sectional view (not to scale) of the superimposed constituent layers according to another embodiment of the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 3 is a cross sectional view (not to scale) of the superimposed constituent layers according to another embodiment of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 4 is a cross sectional view (not to scale) of the superimposed constituent layers according to another embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0018] Now referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, the decorative laminated structure of the present invention is generally represented by reference numeral 10. Decorative laminated structure 10 includes a decorative layer 20, a fiber-reinforced layer 30 and an optional backer layer 40 or decorative layer 20'. Decorative layer 20 is superimposed onto fiber-reinforced layer 30. Backer layer 40 or decorative layer 20' may be superimposed onto fiber-reinforced layer 30, on the opposite side of first decorative layer 20.

[0019] Decorative layer 20 includes one or more sheets. In its simplest configuration, decorative layer 20 includes one or more decorative sheets 22. Decorative layer 20 may further include one or more overlay sheets 24 and one or more barrier sheets 26 (e.g., see FIGS. 1 and 3). Decorative layer 20 may be impregnated, fully or partially, with a thermosetting resin.

[0020] As used herein, the term "sheet" generally means a thin, distinct ply. A sheet may be planar, but a sheet may also be capable of assuming a non-planar configuration, for example, sheets that conform to three-dimensional structures. A decorative sheet 22 may be a cellulosic sheet. A cellulosic sheet includes any thin layer formed substantially of plant fibers or processed plant fibers, for example, paper, alpha-cellulose, or linter products. Alternatively, decorative sheet 22 may be formed from fabrics, polymeric sheets, such as a polyester non-woven, and any other continuous, discontinuous or particulate material, or combination of materials, capable of imparting a color or design to the finished laminate. Decorative sheets 22 may be pigmented

throughout, may have a design woven into their structure, or may have a design printed on their surface. Optionally, a top coating 25 may be applied to decorative sheets 22 (FIG. 4) or it may be applied to overlay 24 (FIG. 1). The top coat 25 may include abrasive particles. Decorative layer 20 may be impregnated, fully or partially, with a resin. Typically, the resin is a thermosetting resin.

[0021] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 3, overlay layer 24 may include one or more cellulosic sheets, in particular, overlay layer 24 may include alpha-cellulosic sheets. Overlay layer 24 may further include abrasive particles, as known in the art, to impart increased abrasion resistance to the layer. Overlay layer 24 may be impregnated, fully or partially, with a resin. For example, overlay layer 24 may be formed of high-quality alpha-cellulose paper impregnated with a thermosetting resin. Typically, the alpha-cellulose paper acts as a translucent carrier for the resin, imparts strength to the resin, facilitates maintaining a uniform resin thickness, and provides a measure of abrasion resistance to the decorative layer 20.

[0022] Barrier sheets 26 may include cellulosic sheets, which may or may not be impregnated with a thermosetting or other suitable resin. For example, a melamine-formaldehyde resin, a phenol-formaldehyde resin or other thermosetting or thermoplastic resin.

[0023] Fiber-reinforced layer 30 includes at least one fiber-reinforced sheet, which is substantially devoid of cellulose. The use of the phrase "devoid of cellulose" means that the sheet contains no plant fiber or processed plant fiber product. The use of the phrase "substantially devoid of cellulose" means that the sheet may have some minor amount of plant fiber product, but the majority of the sheet, by weight, is composed of non-plant fiber materials. For example, layer 30 may include multiple sheets or plies that are reinforced only with glass, carbon, aramid, boron, and other known synthetic reinforcing fibers. The reinforcing fiber sheets may be supplied as woven or non-woven sheets, and as continuous or discontinuous fibers, as are generally known in the art. For example, as shown in FIG. 1, a chopped glass fiber sheet 32 may be sandwiched between two woven aramid (Kevlar[®]) fiber sheets 34.

[0024] Fiber-reinforced layer 30 may also include nonfiber-reinforced sheets, for example, a sheet of solid or foamed polymeric material or a sheet of resin filled with particulate matter. These nonfiber-reinforced sheets may be interspersed within the fiber-reinforced layer. Alternatively, it is within the scope of the present invention, for fiber-

reinforced layer 30 to contain cellulose sheets in addition to at least one fiber-reinforced sheet, which is substantially devoid of cellulose. Further, it is also within the scope of the present invention, for layer 30 to include one or more fiber-reinforced cellulosic sheets in addition to the at least one fiber-reinforced sheet, which is substantially devoid of cellulose.

[0025] Fiber-reinforced layer 30 may be impregnated with a thermosetting or a thermoplastic resin, as is also known in the art. Impregnation may be full or partial, and the resin may be partially cured.

[0026] Decorative laminated structure 10 may include a backer layer 40. Backer layer 40, as best shown in FIG. 2, lays adjacent fiber-reinforced layer 30 on the side opposite decorative layer 20. Backer layer 40 may be formed of one or more sheets 42, which may or may not be coated or impregnated, with a resin. The sheet typically includes a cellulosic material. In one embodiment of the present invention, backer layer 40 may be coated or impregnated with a thermosetting resin and partially cured. Example backer products include fire retardant kraft paper, or décor paper impregnated with thermosetting resins. During curing of decorative laminated structure 10, backer layer 40 is thermofused to fiber-reinforced layer 30.

[0027] Also optionally, rather than including backer layer 40, decorative laminate structure 10 may include a second decorative layer 20', as best shown in FIG 1. This second decorative layer 20' would be superimposed with fiber-reinforced layer 30 on the side opposite the first decorative layer 20. Typically, the second decorative layer 20' would be the mirror image (possibly with the exception of the specific design incorporated into decorative sheet) of the first decorative layer 20. However, the second decorative layer need not contain the identical sheets as in the build up of the first decorative layer.

[0028] In the partially cured state, the sheets of the decorative layer, the sheets of the fiber-reinforced layer and the sheets of the backer/decorative layer may be drapable. The term drapable, as used herein to describe the various sheets of the present invention, is intended to mean that the materials are substantially flaccid, and have the ability to conform to two- or three-dimensional features in a substantially uniform fashion. In the cured state, the decorative laminate structure may be quasi-flexible or essentially rigid. The term quasi-flexible, as used herein, means that the stiffness characteristics of the structure come into play and that only a limited amount of flexing without incurring permanent damage is possible. With an essentially rigid decorative laminated structure,

the stiffness characteristics of the structure as a whole dominate, although individual plies or groups or plies may remain flexible or quasi-flexible. In addition, the flexibility of the structure can be modified to suit a particular application by altering or changing the resins and/or the thickness of the structure.

[0029] In a preferred embodiment, the decorative laminated structure is impact-resistant. As used herein, the term "impact-resistant" means the ability to withstand relatively low-energy and/or low-speed blunt objects impinging or striking the surface of the structure with no, or only minor, damage. In general, an impact-resistant structure may resist the formation of cracks radiating from the point of impact and the delamination of plies beneath the point of impact.

[0030] Prior to curing, the sheets of the decorative layer, the fiber-reinforced layer or the backer/decorative layer may be processed to improve their handleability. This may include, for example, partially drying a sheet to remove some of the more volatile elements from the resin, thereby reducing the stickiness of the sheet.

[0031] Thermosetting resins, thermoplastic resins, and their various additives are well known in the art and are commercially available. The properties of specific resins will not be described in further detail other than to say that specific parameters of the resin may be chosen to best accommodate the application at hand. For instance, certain resins and additives might be selected based on their ability to provide impact-resistance and bonding strength depending upon the fiber-reinforcements, fire-resistance, overall panel flexibility, resistance to degradation due to heat, moisture, or radiation cycles, etc.

[0032] A first process of manufacturing the present fiber-reinforced decorative laminate 10 involves stacking the decorative layer 20, the fiber-reinforced layer 30 and, optionally, the backer/decorative layer 40 in a superimposed relationship (i.e., a "build-up") between caul plates. The build-up is then subjected to a predetermined pressure and temperature for a time sufficient to consolidate the respective layers.

[0033] A second process for manufacturing the present fiber-reinforced decorative laminate 10 involves continuously, or semi-continuously, supplying to a continuous press the decorative layer 20, the fiber-reinforced layer 30 and, optionally, the backer/decorative layer 40, in the aforesaid superimposed relationship, from sources upstream of the continuous press. The continuous press is set up to create the temperature and pressure environment required to thermally fuse the layers into the finished laminated product. The line speed of the continuous press is chosen to create a dwell time within the press that is

adequate to ensure sufficient bonding of the various layers. A release sheet may be disposed on each side of the build-up prior to entering the press. The release sheets are typically drawn off after the laminate exits the press. The continuous press may be advantageous because it decreases the processing time of the laminate, although use of the continuous press requires that the sheets fed into the press be continuous (or semi-continuous) and have a certain measure of handleability.

[0034] In both of the above-described manufacturing processes, the elevated temperature and pressure is meant to cause the resins within the sheets to flow between the sheets, such that upon cooling, the sheets have been consolidated and an integral panel formed. In the discontinuous curing process, the present invention would generally be processed at a temperature in the range from about 110°C to about 170°C, and at a pressure within the range of about 500 psi to about 1600 psi. In the continuous curing process, the present invention would generally be processed at a temperature above about 120°C, with the temperature range depending on the dwelling time of the laminate in the press, and at a pressure within the range of about 300 psi to about 1000 psi. Curing temperatures and pressures are typically selected based on the specific resin in use and the ultimate desired properties of the cured laminate. Curing temperatures can also be manipulated to suit the speed of the process; e.g., higher curing temperatures can be used at higher processing speeds and lower curing temperatures can be used at lower processing speeds.

[0035] In a preferred embodiment, the cured decorative laminated structure 10, described above, is designed to be subsequently attached to another structure. For example, decorative laminate structure 10 could be adhesively or mechanically fastened to cargo-carrying products or to walls in high-traffic corridors to provide protection from impact or other damage. As another example, laminated structure 10 could be permanently or removably attached to a finished piece of furniture in an after-market situation.

[0036] The following examples are illustrative of the inventive decorative laminate and do not constitute any limitation with regard to the subject matter of the invention:

EXAMPLE I:

[0037] A decorative laminated structure 10 is manufactured using a non-continuous press. A build-up consisting of a release sheet, a decorative layer 20, a fiber-

reinforced layer 30, and a backer layer 40 is made in a superimposed relationship and placed between steel caul plates. The decorative layer 20 includes a solid color décor paper treated with melamine resin and an untreated barrier sheet. The fiber-reinforced layer 30 includes eight plies of glass cloth impregnated with melamine resin. Each glass cloth ply is formed of woven glass fabric, style 7628, with finish 516. The backer layer is regular 65-lbs. HP balancing paper. The build-up is then subjected to a pressure of about 700 psi. Once the predetermined pressure is reached, the press is heated to a predetermined temperature of about 140°C. The press is held at the predetermined pressure and temperature for a heating cycle of about 5 minutes. The pressed laminate is then cooled in the press under pressure to under about 60°C. The pressure is then released and the fiber-reinforced decorative laminate is removed from the press. The resulting laminate is approximately 0.060 inches thick.

[0038] Alternatively, the decorative layer 20 may include a printed décor paper treated with melamine resin and an overlay, also treated with melamine resin. Also alternatively, the fiber-reinforced layer 30 could be formed of twelve plies of glass cloth, in which case the resulting laminate would be approximately 0.090 inches thick. Optionally, more or fewer glass cloth plies or different types of glass cloth plies could be used to provide almost any thickness of pressed laminate. In even other alternatives, the backer layer may be selected from fire retardant kraft paper or kraft 118 lb: paper treated with a fast cure phenolic resin.

EXAMPLE II:

[0039] The fiber-reinforced decorative laminate 10 is manufactured using a GreCon continuous high pressure laminating press, which includes an inlet section, a heating section and a cooling section. The temperature of each section is controlled independently. The total amount of heat imparted to the layers of the build-up is controlled by the temperature of the different sections and the dwell time, which is dependent on the line speed. This continuous process requires that the various sheets used to manufacture the laminate be fed into the press as continuous webs. A roll of décor paper treated with melamine resin, a roll of untreated barrier paper, multiple rolls of the glass cloth, as described in Example I above, and a roll of backer paper are situated upstream of the continuous press in a manner enabling them to continuously enter the press in the aforesaid superimposed relationship. The temperature settings of the different

press sections are as follows: the inlet section is set at approximately 200°C, the heating section is set at approximately 186°C, and the cooling section is set at approximately 181°C. The pressure is set at about 350 psi. The line speed of the continuous press is set at about 5 ft/min to create a dwell time within the press of approximately 2.4 minutes.

[0040] It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention and that the invention is not to be considered limited to what is described and exemplified in the specification.

What is claimed is:

What is claimed is:

1. A method for the production of a fiber-reinforced decorative laminate comprising:

stacking in a superimposed relationship a decorative layer, which includes one or more decorative sheets, said decorative layer being at least partially resin-impregnated and at least partially cured, and a fiber-reinforced core layer, which includes at least one fiber-reinforced sheet and at least one cellulosic sheet, wherein the at least one fiber-reinforced sheet is substantially devoid of cellulose, and at least partially resin-impregnated and at least partially cured, and a barrier sheet disposed between the decorative layer and the fiber-reinforced core layer; and

simultaneously curing, under heat and pressure, said decorative, barrier and core layers to create said fiber-reinforced decorative laminate.

2. The method of claim 1, further including:

stacking, in a superimposed relationship to said decorative and core layers, a second decorative layer, which includes one or more decorative sheets, said second decorative layer being at least partially resin-impregnated and at least partially cured, and a second barrier sheet disposed between the second decorative layer and the fiber-reinforced core layer; and

simultaneously curing said layers.

3. The method of claim 1, further including:

stacking, in a superimposed relationship to said decorative and core layers, a backer layer; and

thermofusing said backer layer to said core layer simultaneously with said curing step.

4. The method of claim 1, further including:

impregnating at least one of said decorative layer and said core layer, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of curing includes:
inserting said stacked layers between plates of a thermosetting press; applying a predetermined pressure to said stacked layers within the thermosetting press;
applying a predetermined temperature to said stacked layers within the thermosetting press; and
maintaining said stacked layers in the heated, pressurized thermosetting press for a period of time sufficient to form a laminated structure from said layers.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein said predetermined temperature ranges from about 110°C to about 170°C and said predetermined pressure ranges from about 500 PSI to about 1600 PSI.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of curing includes:
setting a temperature of a continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature;
setting a pressure of said continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined pressure;
feeding said layers into said continuous thermosetting press, said layers being fed into said press from a location upstream from said press; and
maintaining said superimposed layers in said heated, pressurized continuous thermosetting press for a period of time sufficient to form a laminated structure from said layers.
8. The method of claim 7, wherein said predetermined temperature is above about 120°C and said predetermined pressure ranges from about 300 psi to about 1000 psi.
9. The method of claim 7, wherein at least one of said decorative layer and said core layer include multiple sheets and said multiple sheets are fed into said continuous thermosetting press from continuous webs located upstream from said press.

10. A fiber-reinforced decorative laminate produced according to the method of claim 1, the fiber-reinforced decorative laminate having a barrier sheet disposed between a decorative layer and a fiber-reinforced core layer.
11. The laminate of claim 10, wherein said decorative layer includes one or more cellulosic sheets, and wherein at least one of said cellulosic sheets is pigmented throughout.
12. The laminate of claim 10, wherein said decorative layer includes one or more cellulosic sheets, and wherein at least one of said cellulosic sheets has a design printed on its surface.
13. The laminate of claim 10, wherein said decorative layer further includes an overlay layer, said overlay layer including one or more alpha-cellulose sheets.
14. The laminate of claim 10, wherein said decorative layer further includes a top coating containing abrasive particles.
15. The laminate of claim 10, wherein said barrier layer includes one or more cellulosic sheets.
16. The laminate of claim 10, wherein said decorative layer and said core layer are impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin.
17. The laminate of claim 10, wherein said core layer includes at least one of a sheet of woven glass fiber material, a sheet of non-woven glass fiber material, a sheet of chopped glass fiber material, or a combination thereof.
18. The laminate of claim 10, wherein said core layer includes at least one of a glass fiber, a graphite fiber, an aramid fiber, a boron fiber, or a high-modulus fiber material.

19. A fiber-reinforced decorative laminated panel, comprising:
a decorative layer impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin;
a core layer that includes at least one cellulosic sheet, and a plurality of non-cellulosic, fiber-reinforced sheets impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin, wherein at least one of said plurality of fiber-reinforced sheets is selected from one of a woven glass fiber sheet, a non-woven glass fiber sheet, and a chopped glass fiber sheet; and
a barrier sheet disposed between the decorative layer and the plurality of fiber-reinforced sheets.
20. A fiber-reinforced decorative laminated panel, comprising:
a decorative layer including one or more cellulosic sheets impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin;
a core layer that includes at least one cellulosic sheet, and a plurality of non-cellulosic, fiber-reinforced sheets impregnated, at least partially, with a thermosetting resin, wherein at least one of said plurality of fiber-reinforced sheets includes fibers selected from one of glass fibers, graphite fibers, aramid fibers, boron fibers, high-modulus fibers, or a combination of fibers thereof; and
a barrier sheet disposed between the decorative layer and the plurality of fiber-reinforced sheets.
21. The laminated panel of claim 19 or claim 20, wherein said decorative layer is pigmented throughout.
22. The laminated panel of claim 19 or claim 20, wherein at least one of said cellulosic sheets within the decorative layer has a design printed on its surface.
23. The laminated panel of claim 19 or claim 20, further comprising an overlay layer, said overlay layer including one or more alpha-cellulose sheets.
24. The laminated panel of claim 19 or claim 20, wherein said decorative layer further includes a top coating containing abrasive particles.

25. The laminated panel of claim 19 or claim 20, wherein said barrier layer includes one or more cellulosic sheets.
26. The laminated panel of claim 19 or claim 20, further comprising a second barrier sheet disposed between a second decorative layer and the plurality of non-cellulosic, fiber-reinforced sheets.
27. The laminated panel of claim 19 or claim 20, further comprising a backer layer attached to the plurality of non-cellulosic, fiber-reinforced sheets.

1/2

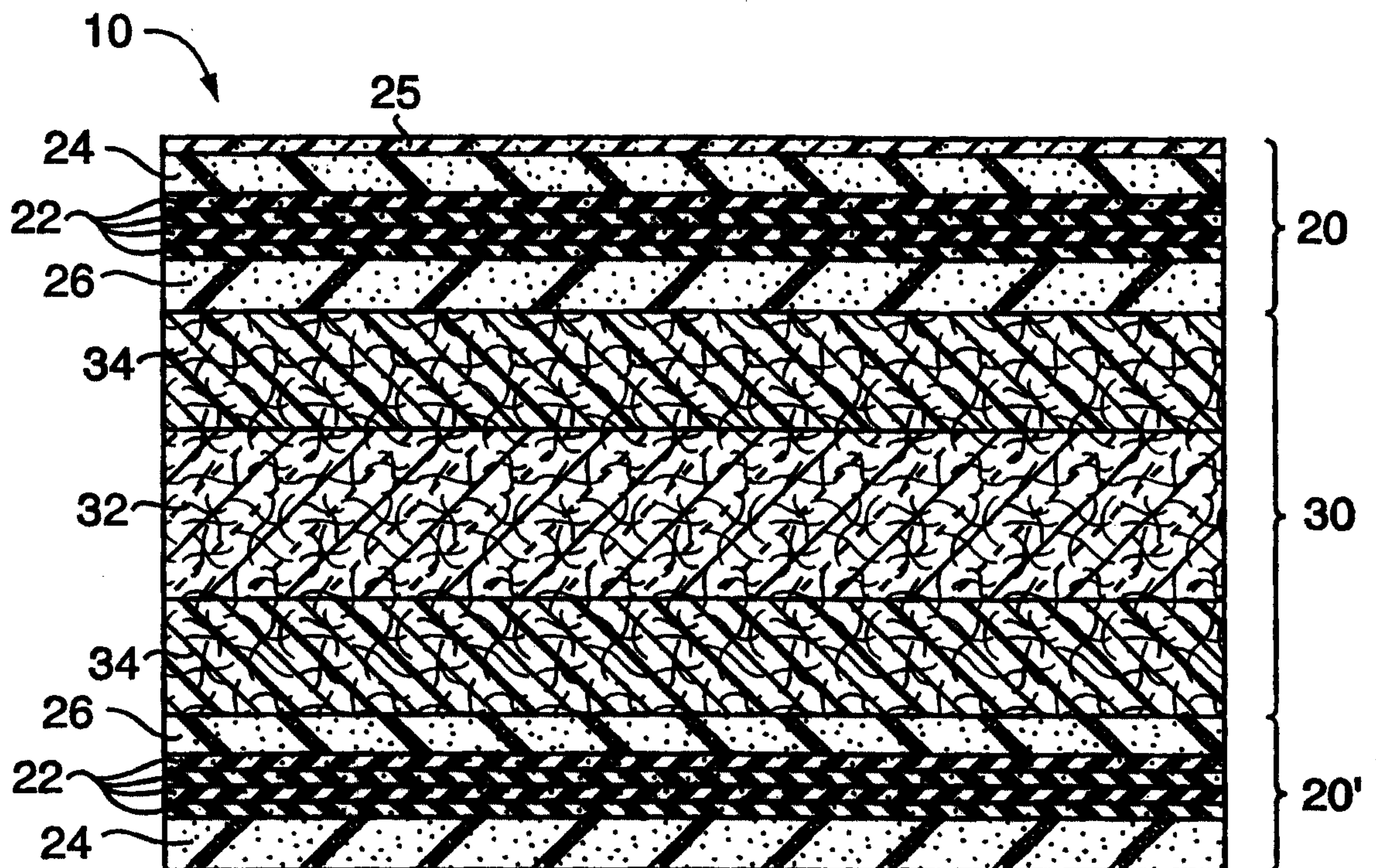


FIG. 1

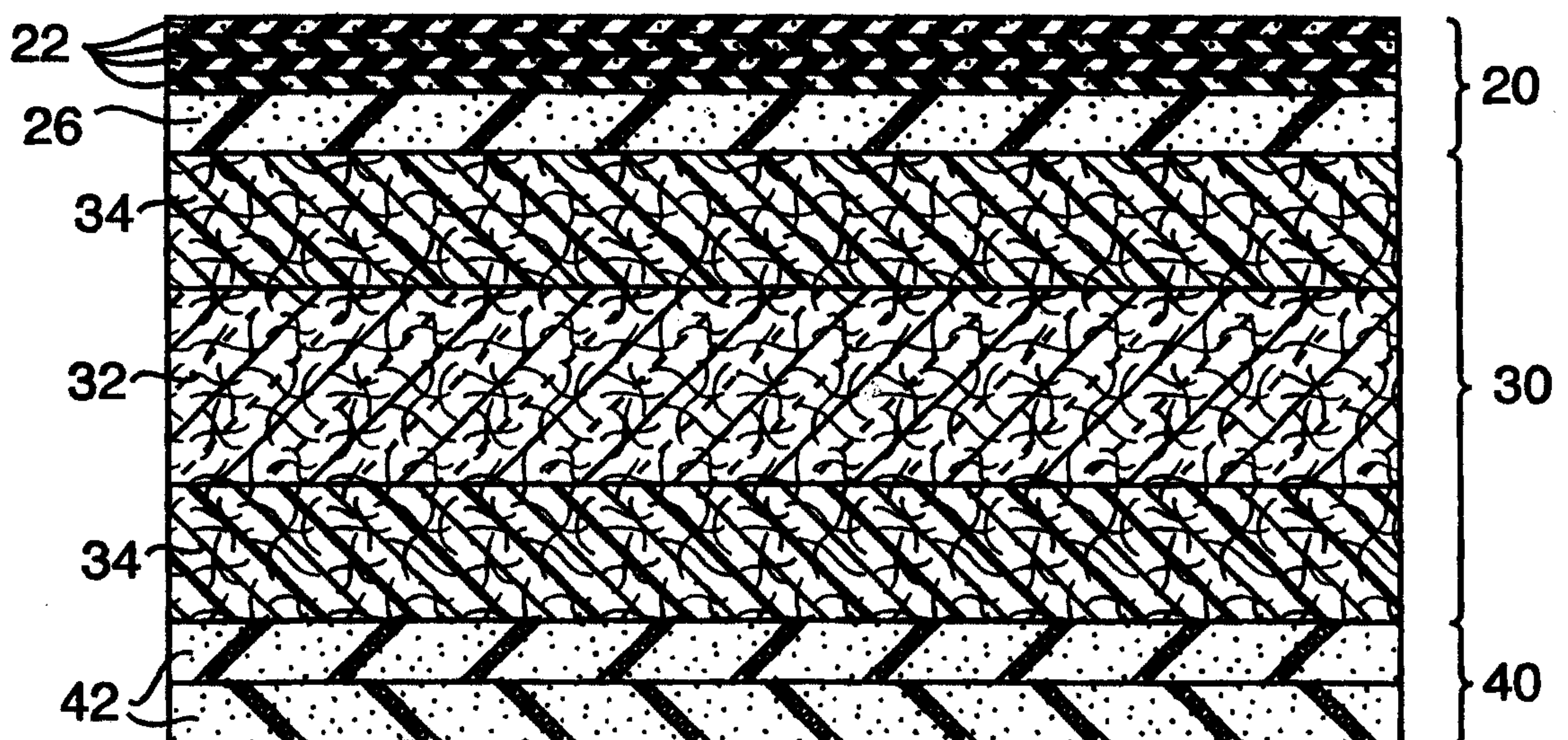


FIG. 2

2/2

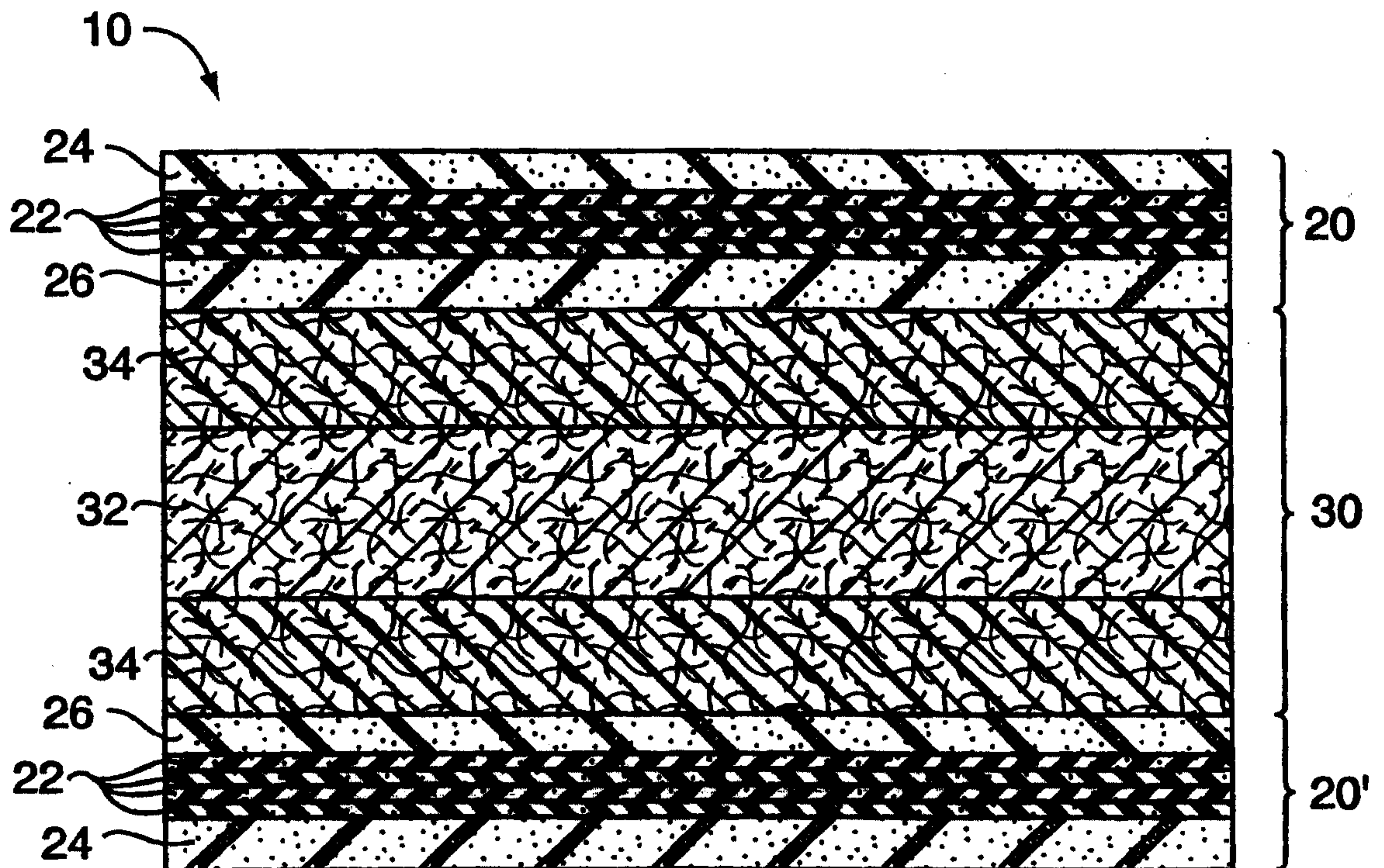


FIG. 3

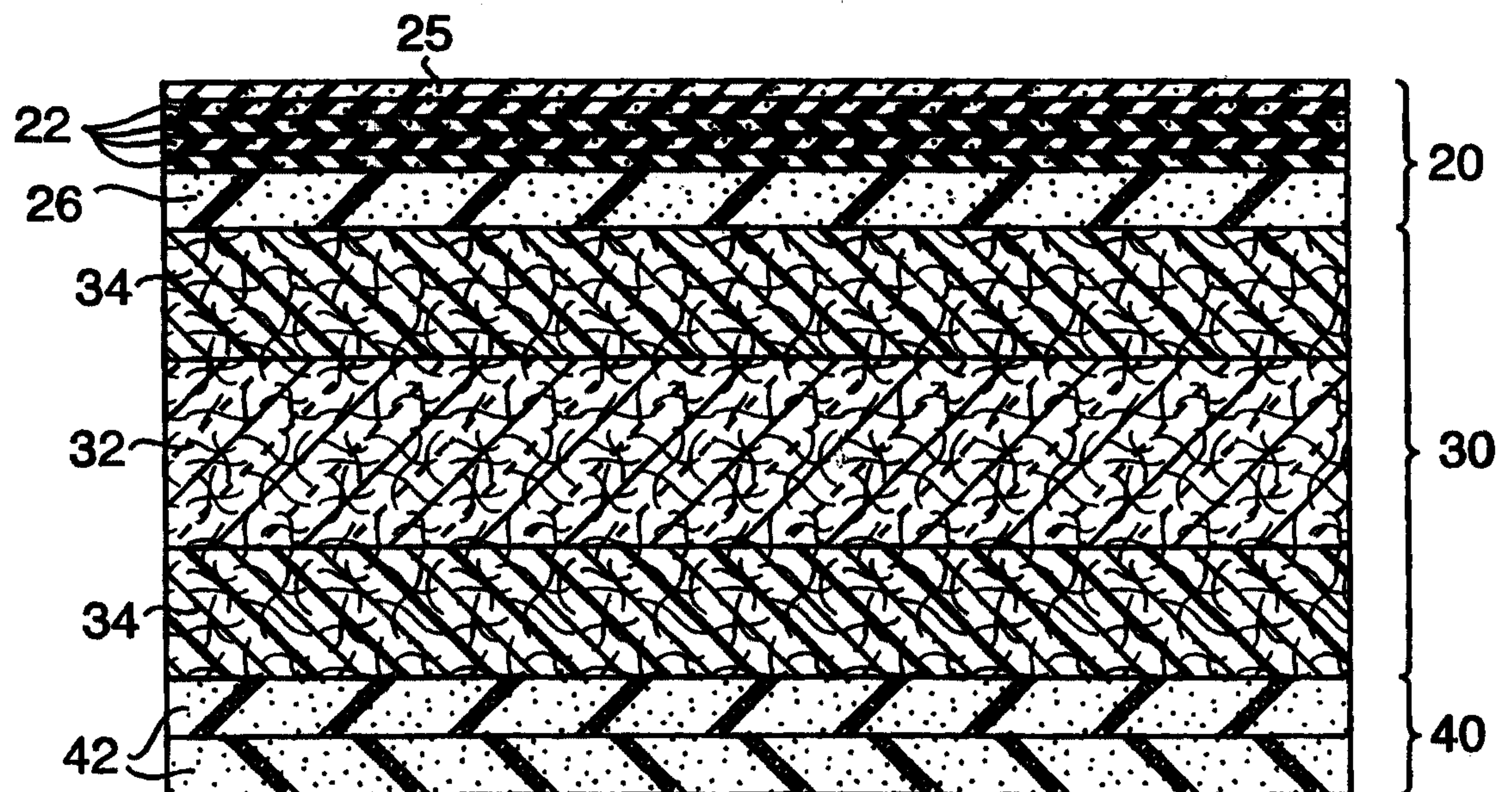


FIG. 4

