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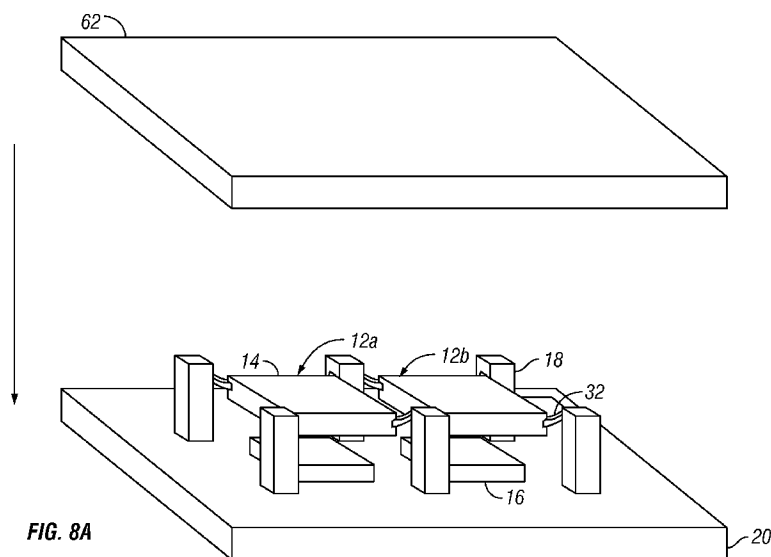


FIG. 8A

(57) Abstract: A method for packaging a display device and the device obtained thereof are disclosed. In one aspect, the method comprises providing a substrate. The method further comprises manufacturing an array of display elements on a back side of the substrate, the array comprising a plurality of posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements. The method further comprises providing a back plate. The method further comprises sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate, wherein one or more posts are in contact with the back plate after sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate.

**A METHOD FOR PACKAGING A DISPLAY DEVICE AND THE DEVICE
OBTAINED THEREOF**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The field of the invention relates to microelectromechanical systems (MEMS).

Description of the Related Technology

[0002] Microelectromechanical systems (MEMS) include micro mechanical elements, actuators, and electronics. Micromechanical elements may be created using deposition, etching, and/or other micromachining processes that etch away parts of substrates and/or deposited material layers or that add layers to form electrical and electromechanical devices. One type of MEMS device is called an interferometric modulator. As used herein, the term interferometric modulator or interferometric light modulator refers to a device that selectively absorbs and/or reflects light using the principles of optical interference. In certain embodiments, an interferometric modulator may comprise a pair of conductive plates, one or both of which may be transparent and/or reflective in whole or part and capable of relative motion upon application of an appropriate electrical signal. In a particular embodiment, one plate may comprise a stationary layer deposited on a substrate and the other plate may comprise a metallic membrane separated from the stationary layer by an air gap. As described herein in more detail, the position of one plate in relation to another can change the optical interference of light incident on the interferometric modulator. Such devices have a wide range of applications, and it would be beneficial in the art to utilize and/or modify the characteristics of these types of devices so that their features can be exploited in improving existing products and creating new products that have not yet been developed.

Summary of Certain Inventive Aspects

[0003] The system, method, and devices of the invention each have several aspects, no single one of which is solely responsible for its desirable attributes. Without

limiting the scope of this invention, its more prominent features will now be discussed briefly. After considering this discussion, and particularly after reading the section entitled "Detailed Description of Certain Embodiments" one will understand how the features of this invention provide advantages over other display devices.

[0004] In one aspect, a method of packaging a display device is disclosed. The method comprises providing a substrate; manufacturing an array of display elements on a back side of the substrate, the array comprising a plurality of posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements; providing a back plate; and sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate, wherein one or more posts are in contact with the back plate after sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate.

[0005] In another aspect, a method of packaging a display device is disclosed. The method comprises providing a substrate; manufacturing an array of display elements on a back side of the substrate comprising suitable landing areas between the display elements and a plurality of posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements; providing a back plate comprising a plurality of support posts; and sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate by aligning the support posts with the landing areas.

[0006] In another aspect, a method of packaging a display device is disclosed. The method comprises providing a substrate; manufacturing an array of display elements on a back side of the substrate comprising a plurality of support posts between the display elements and a plurality of connection posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements; providing a back plate; and sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate.

[0007] In another aspect, a display device is disclosed. The device comprises a front panel comprising an array of display elements on a back side of a substrate, the array comprising a plurality of posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements, wherein one or more posts are in contact with the back plate; and a back plate sealed to the back side of the substrate.

[0008] In another aspect, a display device disclosed. The device comprises a front panel comprising an array of display elements on a back side of a substrate, the array comprising suitable landing areas between the display elements and a plurality of posts

between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements; and a back plate sealed to the back side of the substrate, the back plate comprising a plurality of support posts.

[0009] In another aspect, a display device is disclosed. The device comprises a front panel comprising an array of display elements on a back side of a substrate, the array comprising a plurality of support posts between the display elements and a plurality of connection posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements; and a back plate sealed to the back side of the substrate.

[0010] In another aspect, a display device is disclosed. The device comprises means for modulating light transmitted through said supporting means, means for supporting the modulating means, means for enclosing the modulating means; and means for providing support to said enclosing means when the enclosing means is joined to the supporting means to form a package.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0011] FIG. 1 is an isometric view depicting a portion of one embodiment of an interferometric modulator display in which a movable reflective layer of a first interferometric modulator is in a relaxed position and a movable reflective layer of a second interferometric modulator is in an actuated position.

[0012] FIG. 2 is a system block diagram illustrating one embodiment of an electronic device incorporating a 3x3 interferometric modulator display.

[0013] FIG. 3 is a diagram of movable mirror position versus applied voltage for one exemplary embodiment of an interferometric modulator of FIG. 1.

[0014] FIG. 4 is an illustration of a set of row and column voltages that may be used to drive an interferometric modulator display.

[0015] FIG. 5A illustrates one exemplary frame of display data in the 3x3 interferometric modulator display of FIG. 2.

[0016] FIG. 5B illustrates one exemplary timing diagram for row and column signals that may be used to write the frame of FIG. 5A.

[0017] FIGS. 6A and 6B are system block diagrams illustrating an embodiment of a visual display device comprising a plurality of interferometric modulators.

[0018] FIG. 7A is a cross section of the device of FIG. 1.

[0019] FIG. 7B is a cross section of an alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0020] FIG. 7C is a cross section of another alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0021] FIG. 7D is a cross section of yet another alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0022] FIG. 7E is a cross section of an additional alternative embodiment of an interferometric modulator.

[0023] FIGS. 8A and 8B show a side view of an embodiment of a display comprising an array of interferometric modulators in a package.

[0024] FIGS. 9A and 9B show a side view of an embodiment of a display comprising an array of interferometric modulators in a package.

[0025] FIGS. 10A and 10B show a side view of an embodiment of a display comprising an array of interferometric modulators in a package.

Detailed Description of Certain Embodiments

[0026] The following detailed description is directed to certain specific embodiments of the invention. However, the invention can be embodied in a multitude of different ways. In this description, reference is made to the drawings wherein like parts are designated with like numerals throughout. As will be apparent from the following description, the embodiments may be implemented in any device that is configured to display an image, whether in motion (e.g., video) or stationary (e.g., still image), and whether textual or pictorial. More particularly, it is contemplated that the embodiments may be implemented in or associated with a variety of electronic devices such as, but not limited to, mobile telephones, wireless devices, personal data assistants (PDAs), hand-held or portable computers, GPS receivers/navigators, cameras, MP3 players, camcorders, game consoles, wrist watches, clocks, calculators, television monitors, flat panel displays, computer monitors, auto displays (e.g., odometer display, etc.), cockpit controls and/or displays, display of camera views (e.g., display of a rear view camera in a vehicle), electronic photographs, electronic billboards or signs, projectors, architectural structures, packaging, and aesthetic structures (e.g., display of images on a piece of jewelry). MEMS devices of similar structure

to those described herein can also be used in non-display applications such as in electronic switching devices.

[0027] Certain embodiments as will be described below relate to a method of packaging a MEMS display device and a device obtained thereof. In one embodiment, the device is formed by joining a back plate to a substrate including an array of interferometric modulators thereon. Various structures are included in the package to keep a minimum distance between the back plate and the substrate.

[0028] One interferometric modulator display embodiment comprising an interferometric MEMS display element is illustrated in Figure 1. In these devices, the pixels are in either a bright or dark state. In the bright (“on” or “open”) state, the display element reflects a large portion of incident visible light to a user. When in the dark (“off” or “closed”) state, the display element reflects little incident visible light to the user. Depending on the embodiment, the light reflectance properties of the “on” and “off” states may be reversed. MEMS pixels can be configured to reflect predominantly at selected colors, allowing for a color display in addition to black and white.

[0029] Figure 1 is an isometric view depicting two adjacent pixels in a series of pixels of a visual display, wherein each pixel comprises a MEMS interferometric modulator. In some embodiments, an interferometric modulator display comprises a row/column array of these interferometric modulators. Each interferometric modulator includes a pair of reflective layers positioned at a variable and controllable distance from each other to form a resonant optical gap with at least one variable dimension. In one embodiment, one of the reflective layers may be moved between two positions. In the first position, referred to herein as the relaxed position, the movable reflective layer is positioned at a relatively large distance from a fixed partially reflective layer. In the second position, referred to herein as the actuated position, the movable reflective layer is positioned more closely adjacent to the partially reflective layer. Incident light that reflects from the two layers interferes constructively or destructively depending on the position of the movable reflective layer, producing either an overall reflective or non-reflective state for each pixel.

[0030] The depicted portion of the pixel array in Figure 1 includes two adjacent interferometric modulators **12a** and **12b**. In the interferometric modulator **12a** on the left, a

movable reflective layer **14a** is illustrated in a relaxed position at a predetermined distance from an optical stack **16a**, which includes a partially reflective layer. In the interferometric modulator **12b** on the right, the movable reflective layer **14b** is illustrated in an actuated position adjacent to the optical stack **16b**.

[0031] The optical stacks **16a** and **16b** (collectively referred to as optical stack **16**), as referenced herein, typically comprise several fused layers, which can include an electrode layer, such as indium tin oxide (ITO), a partially reflective layer, such as chromium, and a transparent dielectric. The optical stack **16** is thus electrically conductive, partially transparent, and partially reflective, and may be fabricated, for example, by depositing one or more of the above layers onto a transparent substrate **20**. The partially reflective layer can be formed from a variety of materials that are partially reflective such as various metals, semiconductors, and dielectrics. The partially reflective layer can be formed of one or more layers of materials, and each of the layers can be formed of a single material or a combination of materials.

[0032] In some embodiments, the layers of the optical stack **16** are patterned into parallel strips, and may form row electrodes in a display device as described further below. The movable reflective layers **14a**, **14b** may be formed as a series of parallel strips of a deposited metal layer or layers (orthogonal to the row electrodes of **16a**, **16b**) deposited on top of posts **18** and an intervening sacrificial material deposited between the posts **18**. When the sacrificial material is etched away, the movable reflective layers **14a**, **14b** are separated from the optical stacks **16a**, **16b** by a defined gap **19**. A highly conductive and reflective material such as aluminum may be used for the reflective layers **14**, and these strips may form column electrodes in a display device.

[0033] With no applied voltage, the gap **19** remains between the movable reflective layer **14a** and optical stack **16a**, with the movable reflective layer **14a** in a mechanically relaxed state, as illustrated by the pixel **12a** in Figure 1. However, when a potential difference is applied to a selected row and column, the capacitor formed at the intersection of the row and column electrodes at the corresponding pixel becomes charged, and electrostatic forces pull the electrodes together. If the voltage is high enough, the movable reflective layer **14** is deformed and is forced against the optical stack **16**. A

dielectric layer (not illustrated in this Figure) within the optical stack **16** may prevent shorting and control the separation distance between layers **14** and **16**, as illustrated by pixel **12b** on the right in Figure 1. The behavior is the same regardless of the polarity of the applied potential difference. In this way, row/column actuation that can control the reflective vs. non-reflective pixel states is analogous in many ways to that used in conventional LCD and other display technologies.

[0034] Figures 2 through 5B illustrate one exemplary process and system for using an array of interferometric modulators in a display application.

[0035] Figure 2 is a system block diagram illustrating one embodiment of an electronic device that may incorporate aspects of the invention. In the exemplary embodiment, the electronic device includes a processor **21** which may be any general purpose single- or multi-chip microprocessor such as an ARM, Pentium®, Pentium II®, Pentium III®, Pentium IV®, Pentium® Pro, an 8051, a MIPS®, a Power PC®, an ALPHA®, or any special purpose microprocessor such as a digital signal processor, microcontroller, or a programmable gate array. As is conventional in the art, the processor **21** may be configured to execute one or more software modules. In addition to executing an operating system, the processor may be configured to execute one or more software applications, including a web browser, a telephone application, an email program, or any other software application.

[0036] In one embodiment, the processor **21** is also configured to communicate with an array driver **22**. In one embodiment, the array driver **22** includes a row driver circuit **24** and a column driver circuit **26** that provide signals to a display array or panel **30**. The cross section of the array illustrated in Figure 1 is shown by the lines 1-1 in Figure 2. For MEMS interferometric modulators, the row/column actuation protocol may take advantage of a hysteresis property of these devices illustrated in Figure 3. It may require, for example, a 10 volt potential difference to cause a movable layer to deform from the relaxed state to the actuated state. However, when the voltage is reduced from that value, the movable layer maintains its state as the voltage drops back below 10 volts. In the exemplary embodiment of Figure 3, the movable layer does not relax completely until the voltage drops below 2 volts. Thus, there exists a window of applied voltage, about 3 to 7 V in the example illustrated in Figure 3, within which the device is stable in either the relaxed or actuated state. This is

referred to herein as the “hysteresis window” or “stability window.” For a display array having the hysteresis characteristics of Figure 3, the row/column actuation protocol can be designed such that during row strobing, pixels in the strobed row that are to be actuated are exposed to a voltage difference of about 10 volts, and pixels that are to be relaxed are exposed to a voltage difference of close to zero volts. After the strobe, the pixels are exposed to a steady state voltage difference of about 5 volts such that they remain in whatever state the row strobe put them in. After being written, each pixel sees a potential difference within the “stability window” of 3-7 volts in this example. This feature makes the pixel design illustrated in Figure 1 stable under the same applied voltage conditions in either an actuated or relaxed pre-existing state. Since each pixel of the interferometric modulator, whether in the actuated or relaxed state, is essentially a capacitor formed by the fixed and moving reflective layers, this stable state can be held at a voltage within the hysteresis window with almost no power dissipation. Essentially no current flows into the pixel if the applied potential is fixed.

[0037] In typical applications, a display frame may be created by asserting the set of column electrodes in accordance with the desired set of actuated pixels in the first row. A row pulse is then applied to the row 1 electrode, actuating the pixels corresponding to the asserted column lines. The asserted set of column electrodes is then changed to correspond to the desired set of actuated pixels in the second row. A pulse is then applied to the row 2 electrode, actuating the appropriate pixels in row 2 in accordance with the asserted column electrodes. The row 1 pixels are unaffected by the row 2 pulse, and remain in the state they were set to during the row 1 pulse. This may be repeated for the entire series of rows in a sequential fashion to produce the frame. Generally, the frames are refreshed and/or updated with new display data by continually repeating this process at some desired number of frames per second. A wide variety of protocols for driving row and column electrodes of pixel arrays to produce display frames are also well known and may be used in conjunction with the present invention.

[0038] Figures 4, 5A, and 5B illustrate one possible actuation protocol for creating a display frame on the 3x3 array of Figure 2. Figure 4 illustrates a possible set of column and row voltage levels that may be used for pixels exhibiting the hysteresis curves of

Figure 3. In the Figure 4 embodiment, actuating a pixel involves setting the appropriate column to $-V_{\text{bias}}$, and the appropriate row to $+\Delta V$, which may correspond to -5 volts and +5 volts, respectively. Relaxing the pixel is accomplished by setting the appropriate column to $+V_{\text{bias}}$, and the appropriate row to the same $+\Delta V$, producing a zero volt potential difference across the pixel. In those rows where the row voltage is held at zero volts, the pixels are stable in whatever state they were originally in, regardless of whether the column is at $+V_{\text{bias}}$, or $-V_{\text{bias}}$. As is also illustrated in Figure 4, it will be appreciated that voltages of opposite polarity than those described above can be used, e.g., actuating a pixel can involve setting the appropriate column to $+V_{\text{bias}}$, and the appropriate row to $-\Delta V$. In this embodiment, releasing the pixel is accomplished by setting the appropriate column to $-V_{\text{bias}}$, and the appropriate row to the same $-\Delta V$, producing a zero volt potential difference across the pixel.

[0039] Figure 5B is a timing diagram showing a series of row and column signals applied to the 3x3 array of Figure 2 which will result in the display arrangement illustrated in Figure 5A, where actuated pixels are non-reflective. Prior to writing the frame illustrated in Figure 5A, the pixels can be in any state, and in this example, all the rows are at 0 volts, and all the columns are at +5 volts. With these applied voltages, all pixels are stable in their existing actuated or relaxed states.

[0040] In the Figure 5A frame, pixels (1,1), (1,2), (2,2), (3,2) and (3,3) are actuated. To accomplish this, during a "line time" for row 1, columns 1 and 2 are set to -5 volts, and column 3 is set to +5 volts. This does not change the state of any pixels, because all the pixels remain in the 3-7 volt stability window. Row 1 is then strobed with a pulse that goes from 0, up to 5 volts, and back to zero. This actuates the (1,1) and (1,2) pixels and relaxes the (1,3) pixel. No other pixels in the array are affected. To set row 2 as desired, column 2 is set to -5 volts, and columns 1 and 3 are set to +5 volts. The same strobe applied to row 2 will then actuate pixel (2,2) and relax pixels (2,1) and (2,3). Again, no other pixels of the array are affected. Row 3 is similarly set by setting columns 2 and 3 to -5 volts, and column 1 to +5 volts. The row 3 strobe sets the row 3 pixels as shown in Figure 5A. After writing the frame, the row potentials are zero, and the column potentials can remain at either +5 or -5 volts, and the display is then stable in the arrangement of Figure 5A. It will be appreciated that the same procedure can be employed for arrays of dozens or hundreds of

rows and columns. It will also be appreciated that the timing, sequence, and levels of voltages used to perform row and column actuation can be varied widely within the general principles outlined above, and the above example is exemplary only, and any actuation voltage method can be used with the systems and methods described herein.

[0041] Figures 6A and 6B are system block diagrams illustrating an embodiment of a display device **40**. The display device **40** can be, for example, a cellular or mobile telephone. However, the same components of display device **40** or slight variations thereof are also illustrative of various types of display devices such as televisions and portable media players.

[0042] The display device **40** includes a housing **41**, a display **30**, an antenna **43**, a speaker **45**, an input device **48**, and a microphone **46**. The housing **41** is generally formed from any of a variety of manufacturing processes as are well known to those of skill in the art, including injection molding and vacuum forming. In addition, the housing **41** may be made from any of a variety of materials, including, but not limited to, plastic, metal, glass, rubber, and ceramic, or a combination thereof. In one embodiment, the housing **41** includes removable portions (not shown) that may be interchanged with other removable portions of different color, or containing different logos, pictures, or symbols.

[0043] The display **30** of exemplary display device **40** may be any of a variety of displays, including a bi-stable display, as described herein. In other embodiments, the display **30** includes a flat-panel display, such as plasma, EL, OLED, STN LCD, or TFT LCD as described above, or a non-flat-panel display, such as a CRT or other tube device, as is well known to those of skill in the art. However, for purposes of describing the present embodiment, the display **30** includes an interferometric modulator display, as described herein.

[0044] The components of one embodiment of exemplary display device **40** are schematically illustrated in Figure 6B. The illustrated exemplary display device **40** includes a housing **41** and can include additional components at least partially enclosed therein. For example, in one embodiment, the exemplary display device **40** includes a network interface **27** that includes an antenna **43**, which is coupled to a transceiver **47**. The transceiver **47** is connected to a processor **21**, which is connected to conditioning hardware **52**. The

conditioning hardware **52** may be configured to condition a signal (e.g., filter a signal). The conditioning hardware **52** is connected to a speaker **45** and a microphone **46**. The processor **21** is also connected to an input device **48** and a driver controller **29**. The driver controller **29** is coupled to a frame buffer **28** and to an array driver **22**, which in turn is coupled to a display array **30**. A power supply **50** provides power to all components as required by the particular exemplary display device **40** design.

[0045] The network interface **27** includes the antenna **43** and the transceiver **47** so that the exemplary display device **40** can communicate with one or more devices over a network. In one embodiment, the network interface **27** may also have some processing capabilities to relieve requirements of the processor **21**. The antenna **43** is any antenna known to those of skill in the art for transmitting and receiving signals. In one embodiment, the antenna transmits and receives RF signals according to the IEEE 802.11 standard, including IEEE 802.11(a), (b), or (g). In another embodiment, the antenna transmits and receives RF signals according to the BLUETOOTH standard. In the case of a cellular telephone, the antenna is designed to receive CDMA, GSM, AMPS, or other known signals that are used to communicate within a wireless cell phone network. The transceiver **47** pre-processes the signals received from the antenna **43** so that they may be received by and further manipulated by the processor **21**. The transceiver **47** also processes signals received from the processor **21** so that they may be transmitted from the exemplary display device **40** via the antenna **43**.

[0046] In an alternative embodiment, the transceiver **47** can be replaced by a receiver. In yet another alternative embodiment, network interface **27** can be replaced by an image source, which can store or generate image data to be sent to the processor **21**. For example, the image source can be a digital video disc (DVD) or a hard-disc drive that contains image data, or a software module that generates image data.

[0047] Processor **21** generally controls the overall operation of the exemplary display device **40**. The processor **21** receives data, such as compressed image data from the network interface **27** or an image source, and processes the data into raw image data or into a format that is readily processed into raw image data. The processor **21** then sends the processed data to the driver controller **29** or to frame buffer **28** for storage. Raw data

typically refers to the information that identifies the image characteristics at each location within an image. For example, such image characteristics can include color, saturation, and gray-scale level.

[0048] In one embodiment, the processor **21** includes a microcontroller, CPU, or logic unit to control operation of the exemplary display device **40**. Conditioning hardware **52** generally includes amplifiers and filters for transmitting signals to the speaker **45**, and for receiving signals from the microphone **46**. Conditioning hardware **52** may be discrete components within the exemplary display device **40**, or may be incorporated within the processor **21** or other components.

[0049] The driver controller **29** takes the raw image data generated by the processor **21** either directly from the processor **21** or from the frame buffer **28** and reformats the raw image data appropriately for high speed transmission to the array driver **22**. Specifically, the driver controller **29** reformats the raw image data into a data flow having a raster-like format, such that it has a time order suitable for scanning across the display array **30**. Then the driver controller **29** sends the formatted information to the array driver **22**. Although a driver controller **29**, such as a LCD controller, is often associated with the system processor **21** as a stand-alone Integrated Circuit (IC), such controllers may be implemented in many ways. They may be embedded in the processor **21** as hardware, embedded in the processor **21** as software, or fully integrated in hardware with the array driver **22**.

[0050] Typically, the array driver **22** receives the formatted information from the driver controller **29** and reformats the video data into a parallel set of waveforms that are applied many times per second to the hundreds and sometimes thousands of leads coming from the display's x-y matrix of pixels.

[0051] In one embodiment, the driver controller **29**, array driver **22**, and display array **30** are appropriate for any of the types of displays described herein. For example, in one embodiment, driver controller **29** is a conventional display controller or a bi-stable display controller (e.g., an interferometric modulator controller). In another embodiment, array driver **22** is a conventional driver or a bi-stable display driver (e.g., an interferometric modulator display). In one embodiment, a driver controller **29** is integrated with the array driver **22**. Such an embodiment is common in highly integrated systems such as cellular

phones, watches, and other small area displays. In yet another embodiment, display array **30** is a typical display array or a bi-stable display array (e.g., a display including an array of interferometric modulators).

[0052] The input device **48** allows a user to control the operation of the exemplary display device **40**. In one embodiment, input device **48** includes a keypad, such as a QWERTY keyboard or a telephone keypad, a button, a switch, a touch-sensitive screen, or a pressure- or heat-sensitive membrane. In one embodiment, the microphone **46** is an input device for the exemplary display device **40**. When the microphone **46** is used to input data to the device, voice commands may be provided by a user for controlling operations of the exemplary display device **40**.

[0053] Power supply **50** can include a variety of energy storage devices as are well known in the art. For example, in one embodiment, power supply **50** is a rechargeable battery, such as a nickel-cadmium battery or a lithium ion battery. In another embodiment, power supply **50** is a renewable energy source, a capacitor, or a solar cell including a plastic solar cell, and solar-cell paint. In another embodiment, power supply **50** is configured to receive power from a wall outlet.

[0054] In some embodiments, control programmability resides, as described above, in a driver controller which can be located in several places in the electronic display system. In some embodiments, control programmability resides in the array driver **22**. Those of skill in the art will recognize that the above-described optimizations may be implemented in any number of hardware and/or software components and in various configurations.

[0055] The details of the structure of interferometric modulators that operate in accordance with the principles set forth above may vary widely. For example, Figures 7A-7E illustrate five different embodiments of the movable reflective layer **14** and its supporting structures. Figure 7A is a cross section of the embodiment of Figure 1, where a strip of metal material **14** is deposited on orthogonally extending supports **18**. In Figure 7B, the moveable reflective layer **14** is attached to supports at the corners only, on tethers **32**. In Figure 7C, the moveable reflective layer **14** is suspended from a deformable layer **34**, which may comprise a flexible metal. The deformable layer **34** connects, directly or indirectly, to the substrate **20** around the perimeter of the deformable layer **34**. These connections are herein referred to as

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

[0056] In embodiments such as those shown in Figure 7, the interferometric modulators function as direct-view devices, in which images are viewed from the front side of the transparent substrate 20, the side opposite to that upon which the modulator is arranged. In these embodiments, the reflective layer 14 optically shields the portions of the interferometric modulator on the side of the reflective layer opposite the substrate 20, including the deformable layer 34. This allows the shielded areas to be configured and operated upon without negatively affecting the image quality. Such shielding allows the bus structure 44 in Figure 7E, which provides the ability to separate the optical properties of the modulator from the electromechanical properties of the modulator, such as addressing and the movements that result from that addressing. This separable modulator architecture allows the structural design and materials used for the electromechanical aspects and the optical aspects of the modulator to be selected and to function independently of each other. Moreover, the embodiments shown in Figures 7C-7E have additional benefits deriving from the decoupling of the optical properties of the reflective layer 14 from its mechanical properties, which are carried out by the deformable layer 34. This allows the structural design and materials used for the reflective layer 14 to be optimized with respect to the optical properties, and the structural design and materials used for the deformable layer 34 to be optimized with respect to desired mechanical properties.

[0057] The interferometric modulator as described above includes a movable reflective layer 14. The movable layer 14 is typically thin and can be damaged by external force caused by accidental physical contact with objects. To ensure that the interferometric modulator operates properly, it is desirable to protect the movable layer 14 from external force.

[0058] Certain embodiments as will be described below with regard to Figures 8A-10B relate to a method of packaging a MEMS display device and a device obtained thereof. In one embodiment, a back plate is joined to a substrate including an array of interferometric modulators thereon. The substrate includes posts higher than the movable layer. Upon assembly, the back plate is in contact with the posts but not the movable layer. The back plate, the substrate, and the posts together protect the interferometric modulators from external force. In other embodiments, different structures are formed on the substrate and the back plate to keep a minimum distance between the back plate and the substrate and to prevent the back plate from being in contact with the movable layer.

[0059] Figures 8A-8B show a side view of an embodiment of a display comprising an array of interferometric modulators in a package. In this embodiment, a back plate is joined to a substrate including an array of interferometric modulators thereon. The array of interferometric modulators includes posts connecting the movable layer. Upon assembly, the back plate is in contact with the posts but not the movable layer. The back plate, the substrate, and the posts together protect the interferometric modulators from external force.

[0060] As shown, the package comprises a transparent substrate 20 and a back plate 62. The back plate 62 may be glass, metal, foil, polymer, plastic, and ceramic or semiconductor materials such as silicon. The transparent substrate 20 may be any transparent substance that is capable of having thin film, MEMS devices built upon it. Examples include glass, plastic, and transparent polymers.

[0061] An array of interferometric modulators is formed on the back side of the substrate 20. The back side of the substrate refers to the side of the substrate 20 distal from a viewer of the display.

[0062] The depicted portion of the array in Figures 8A-8B includes two adjacent interferometric modulators 12a and 12b. As illustrated, each interferometric modulator includes a movable reflective layer 14 positioned at a variable and controllable distance from an optical stack 16 to form a resonant optical gap with at least one variable dimension. The movable reflective layer 14 may be connected to a supporting structure in various ways as illustrated in Figures 7A-7E. For example, the movable reflective layer 14 may be attached to supports 18 on tethers 32 as shown in Figure 8A.

[0063] The optical stacks 16, as referenced herein, typically comprise several fused layers, which can include an electrode layer, such as indium tin oxide (ITO), a partially reflective layer, such as chromium, and a transparent dielectric. The optical stack 16 is thus electrically conductive, partially transparent, and partially reflective, and may be fabricated, for example, by depositing one or more of the above layers onto the transparent substrate 20.

[0064] As described with regard to Figure 1, in some embodiments, the optical stack 16 may form row electrodes. A highly conductive and reflective material such as aluminum may be used for the movable reflective layers 14, and may form column electrodes in a display device. The posts 18 are connected to the electrodes of the movable reflective layer 14 and therefore to the column electrodes of a display device.

[0065] The back plate 62 is joined to the back side of the substrate 20 to form a package. In one embodiment, the back plate 62 is joined to the substrate 20 via a non-hermetic seal (not shown). The back plate 62 needs to be separated from the substrate 20 for at least a pre-determined minimum distance such that the back plate 62 does not damage the structure of the pixels 12a and 12b or interfere with their functioning.

[0066] Figure 8B illustrates the exemplary display with the back plate 62 joined to the substrate 20. As shown, at least one of the posts 18 is in contact with the back plate 62 after the back plate 62 is joined to the substrate 20, thus separating the back plate 62 from the substrate 20. The mechanical support for the back plate 62 thus comes from the at least one post 18 which is used to connect the movable reflective layer 16. In the exemplary embodiment, the post 18 is higher than the movable reflective layer 16 such that the back plate 62 is in contact with the post 18 but not the movable reflective layer 16.

[0067] In one embodiment, the posts 18 are designed to have approximately the same height. Therefore, approximately all the posts 18 are in contact with the back plate 62, thus providing mechanical support to the back plate 62. In another embodiment, some of the posts 18 are designed to be higher than others. Only the portion of the posts 18 being the highest among all posts are in contact with the back plate 62.

[0068] An exemplary method of packaging a MEMS display device is described as follows. A transparent substrate 20 is provided. An array of MEMS display elements (such as the interferometric modulators 12a and 12b) are manufactured on a back side of the substrate 20. A back plate 62 is then provided. The back plate 62 is joined to the back side of the substrate 20. The resulting MEMS display device in a package is shown in Figure 8B.

[0069] Figures 9A-9B show another embodiment of a display comprising an array of interferometric modulators in a package. Figures 9A-9B show the side view of the embodiment. The back plate 62 includes support posts 64. When being joined to the substrate 20, the back plate 62 is aligned with the substrate 20 such that each support post 64 aligns with a suitable landing area 66 between the pixels on the substrate 20. Upon assembly, the back plate 62 is in contact with the support posts 64 but not the movable layer 14. The back plate, the substrate, and the support posts 64 together protect the interferometric modulators from external force.

[0070] Figure 9B illustrates the exemplary display with the back plate 62 joined to the substrate 20. As shown, the support posts 64 are in contact with the landing areas 66 on the substrate 20, thus separating the back plate 62 from the substrate 20. The posts 18 are not in contact with back plate 62 and thus under no mechanical force from the back plate 62.

[0071] In the package, the support posts 64 and the corresponding landing areas 66 are chosen such that, upon assembly, the support posts 64 do not interfere with the functioning of the pixels 12a and 12b. The support posts 64 are typically designed to have the same height. In some embodiments, the support posts 64 are designed to be the same to simplify the manufacturing process. Also, the support posts 64 are designed to have the appropriate height such that the posts 18 on the substrate 20 are not in contact with the back plate 62 upon assembly.

[0072] In one embodiment, each landing area 66 includes a hole in the surface of the substrate 20. When joining the back plate 62 to the substrate 20, each support post 64 is aligned with, and then dropped into, a hole of the corresponding landing area 66.

[0073] Figures 10A-10B show a side view of another embodiment of a display comprising an array of interferometric modulators in a package. In this embodiment, the support posts 64 are manufactured on the substrate 20 instead of the back plate 62 as shown in the previous embodiment of Figures 9A-9B. Upon assembly, the back plate is not in contact with the movable layer. The back plate and the substrate together protect the interferometric modulators from external force.

[0074] Figure 10B illustrates the exemplary display with the back plate 62 joined to the substrate 20. As shown, the support posts 64 are in contact with the back plate 62 after the back plate 62 is joined to the substrate 20, thus separating the back plate 62 from the substrate 20. The mechanical support for the back plate 62 thus comes from the support posts 64. The posts 18 are not in contact with back plate 62 now and thus under no mechanical force from the back plate 62.

[0075] The support posts 64 are located in suitable areas between the pixels 12a and 12b such that the support posts 64 do not interfere with the functioning of the pixels 12a and 12b. The support posts 64 are typically designed to have the same height. In some embodiments, the support posts 64 are designed to be the same to simplify the manufacturing process. Also, the support posts 64 are designed to have appropriate height such that the posts 18 on the substrate 20 are not in contact with the back plate 62 upon assembly.

[0076] In one embodiment (not illustrated), support posts are located on both the back plate and the substrate. The support posts may have the same height and each of the substrate and the back plate may have holes positioned to receive support posts.

[0077] The foregoing embodiments relate to a method of packaging a display device and the display device obtained thereof. Though the exemplary embodiment is described using an array of interferometric modulators as an example, the embodiments should not be limited to interferometric modulators. These embodiments are applicable to any suitable MEMS display elements and other types of display elements.

[0078] The foregoing description details certain embodiments of the invention. It will be appreciated, however, that no matter how detailed the foregoing appears in text, the invention can be practiced in many ways. It should be noted that the use of particular terminology when describing certain features or aspects of the invention should not be taken to imply that the terminology is being re-defined herein to be restricted to including any specific characteristics of the features or aspects of the invention with which that terminology is associated.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of packaging a display device, comprising:
 - providing a substrate;
 - manufacturing an array of display elements on a back side of the substrate, the array comprising a plurality of posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements;
 - providing a back plate; and
 - sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate, wherein one or more posts are in contact with the back plate after sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein each display element comprises a MEMS display element.
3. The method of Claim 2, wherein each MEMS display element comprises an interferometric modulator.
4. The method of Claim 3, wherein each interferometric modulator comprises:
 - a cavity defined by a fixed first layer deposited on the substrate and a movable second layer connected to the substrate, each of the first and second layer comprising an electrode;
 - wherein light incident to the interferometric modulator is interferometrically modulated by the first and second layer.
5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the second layer is movable between a first and a second position.
6. The method of Claim 5, wherein each interferometric modulator is configured to transmit or absorb a substantial amount of visible light while the second layer is in a second position.
7. The method of Claim 5, wherein each interferometric modulator is configured to reflect light of a particular wavelength range while the second layer is in a first position.
8. A display device packaged by the method of Claim 1.
9. A method of packaging a display device, comprising:
 - providing a substrate;

manufacturing an array of display elements on a back side of the substrate comprising suitable landing areas between the display elements and a plurality of posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements;
providing a back plate comprising a plurality of support posts; and
sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate by aligning the support posts with the landing areas.

10. The method of Claim 9, wherein each display element comprises a MEMS display element.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the support posts are substantially the same.

12. The method of Claim 10, wherein the support posts are of appropriate height such that the posts on the array are not in contact with the back plate.

13. The method of Claim 10, wherein each landing area is formed as a hole, and wherein the sealing of the back plate comprises dropping the support posts into the holes of the landing areas.

14. A display device packaged by the method of Claim 9.

15. A method of packaging a display device, comprising:

providing a substrate;

manufacturing an array of display elements on a back side of the substrate comprising a plurality of support posts between the display elements and a plurality of connection posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements;

providing a back plate; and

sealing the back plate to the back side of the substrate.

16. The method of Claim 15, wherein each display element comprises a MEMS display element.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein the support posts are substantially the same.

18. The method of Claim 16, wherein the support posts are of appropriate height such that the connection posts on the array are not in contact with the back plate.

19. A display device packaged by the method of Claim 15.

20. A display device, comprising:

a front panel comprising an array of display elements on a back side of a substrate, the array comprising a plurality of posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements; and

a back plate sealed to the back side of the substrate,

wherein at least one of the posts is in contact with the back plate.

21. A display device, comprising:

a front panel comprising an array of display elements on a back side of a substrate, the array comprising suitable landing areas between the display elements and a plurality of posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements; and

a back plate sealed to the back side of the substrate, the back plate comprising a plurality of support posts,

wherein at least one of the support posts is in contact with one of the landing areas.

22. The device of Claim 21, wherein each display element comprises a MEMS display element.

23. The device of Claim 22, wherein the support posts align with the landing areas.

24. The device of Claim 22, wherein the support posts are substantially the same.

25. The device of Claim 22, wherein the support posts are of appropriate height such that the posts on the array are not in contact with the back plate.

26. The device of Claim 22, wherein each landing area is formed as a hole, wherein the support posts are dropped into the holes of the landing areas.

27. A display device, comprising:

a front panel comprising an array of display elements on a back side of a substrate, the array comprising a plurality of support posts between the display elements and a plurality of connection posts between the display elements connecting electrodes of the display elements; and

a back plate sealed to the back side of the substrate,

wherein at least one of the support posts is in contact with the back plate.

28. The device of Claim 27, wherein each display element comprises a MEMS display element.

29. The device of Claim 28, wherein the support posts are substantially the same.

30. The device of Claim 28, wherein the support posts are of appropriate height such that the connection posts on the array are not in contact with the back plate.

31. The device of Claim 28, further comprising:

a display;

a processor that is configured to communicate with said display, said processor being configured to process image data; and

a memory device that is configured to communicate with said processor.

32. The device of Claim 31, further comprising a driver circuit configured to send at least one signal to the display.

33. The device of Claim 32, further comprising a controller configured to send at least a portion of the image data to the driver circuit.

34. The device of Claim 31, further comprising an image source module configured to send said image data to said processor.

35. The device of Claim 34, wherein the image source module comprises at least one of a receiver, transceiver, and transmitter.

36. The device of Claim 31, further comprising an input device configured to receive input data and to communicate said input data to said processor.

37. A display device, comprising:

means for modulating light comprising an array of display elements ;

means for supporting the modulating means, wherein the modulating means is configured to modulate light transmitted through the supporting means;

means for enclosing the modulating means; and

means for providing support to said enclosing means when the enclosing means is joined to the supporting means to form a package.

38. The device of Claim 37, wherein the supporting means comprises a transparent substrate.

39. The device of Claim 37, wherein the modulating means comprises an array of interferometric modulators.

40. The device of Claim 37, wherein the enclosing means comprises a back plate.

41. The device of Claim 39, wherein the providing means comprises a plurality of support posts on the enclosing means, the support posts being aligned to landing areas between the interferometric modulators.

42. The device of Claim 39, wherein the providing means comprises a plurality of posts between the interferometric modulators.

43. The device of Claim 42, wherein the posts are further configured to connect electrodes of the interferometric modulators.

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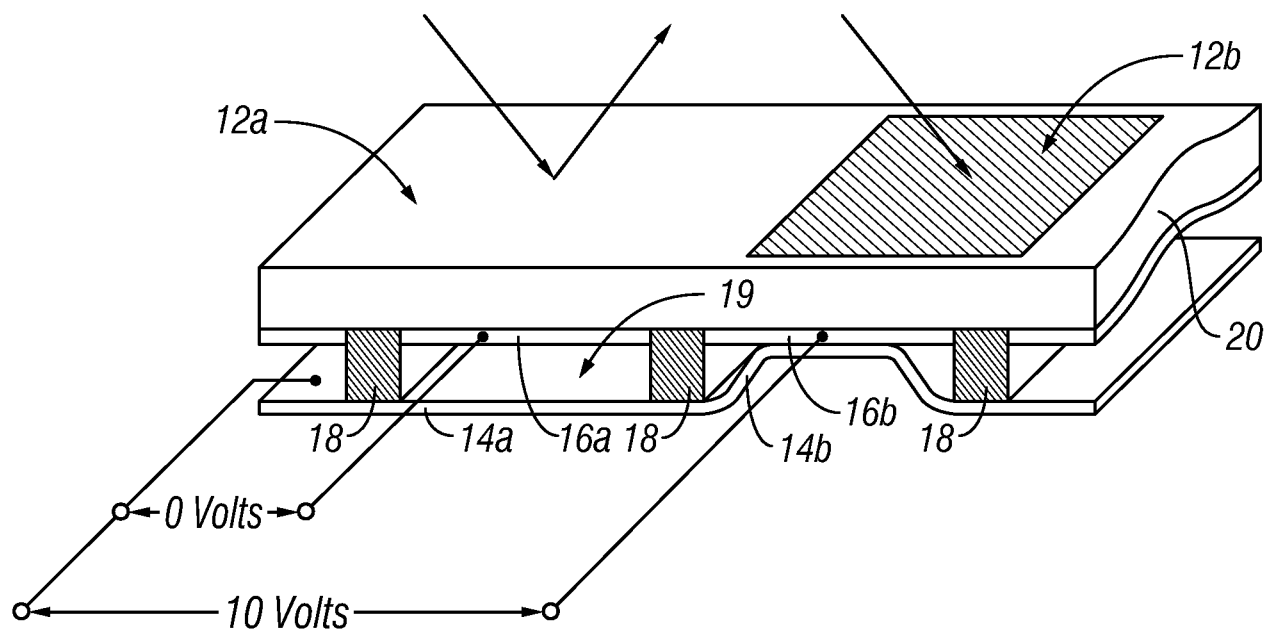


FIG. 1

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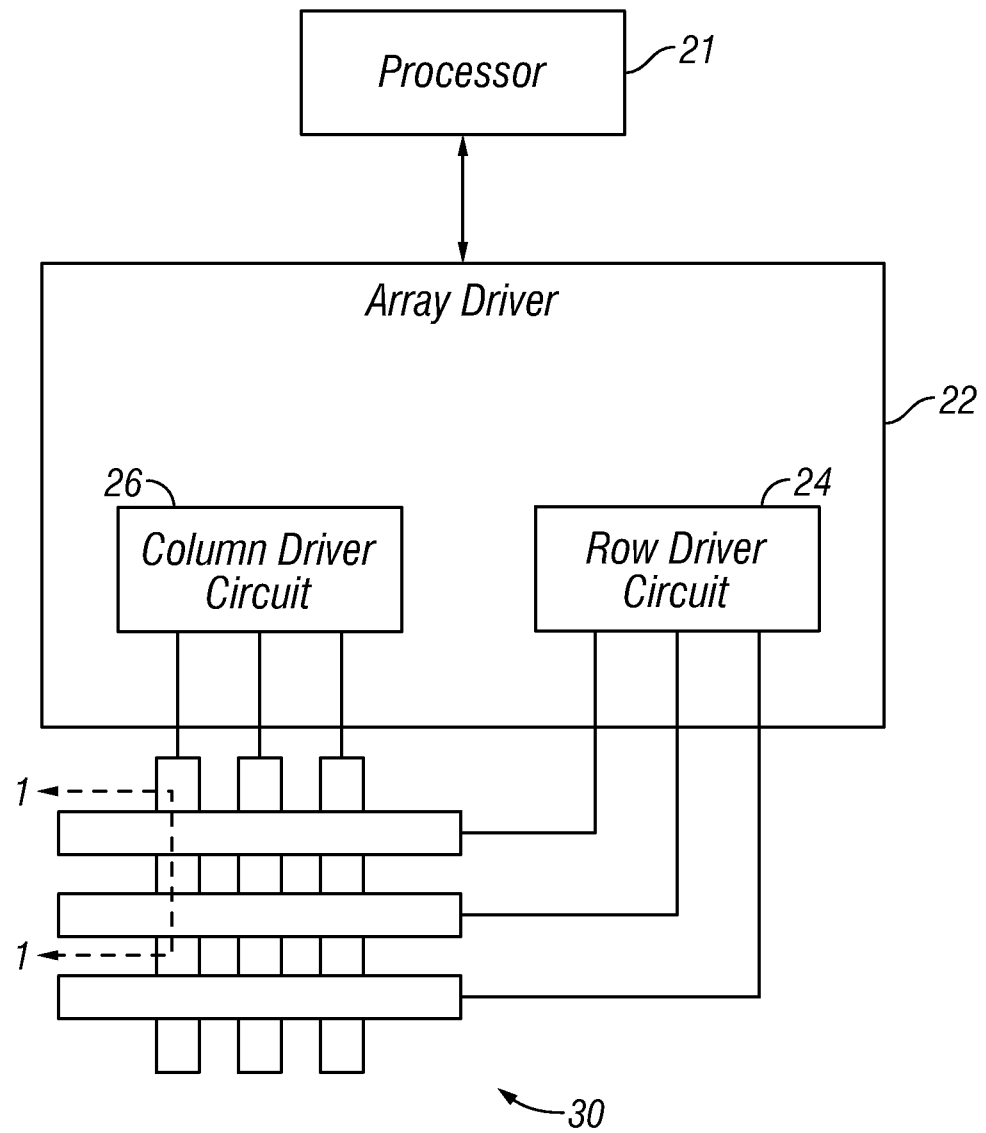


FIG. 2

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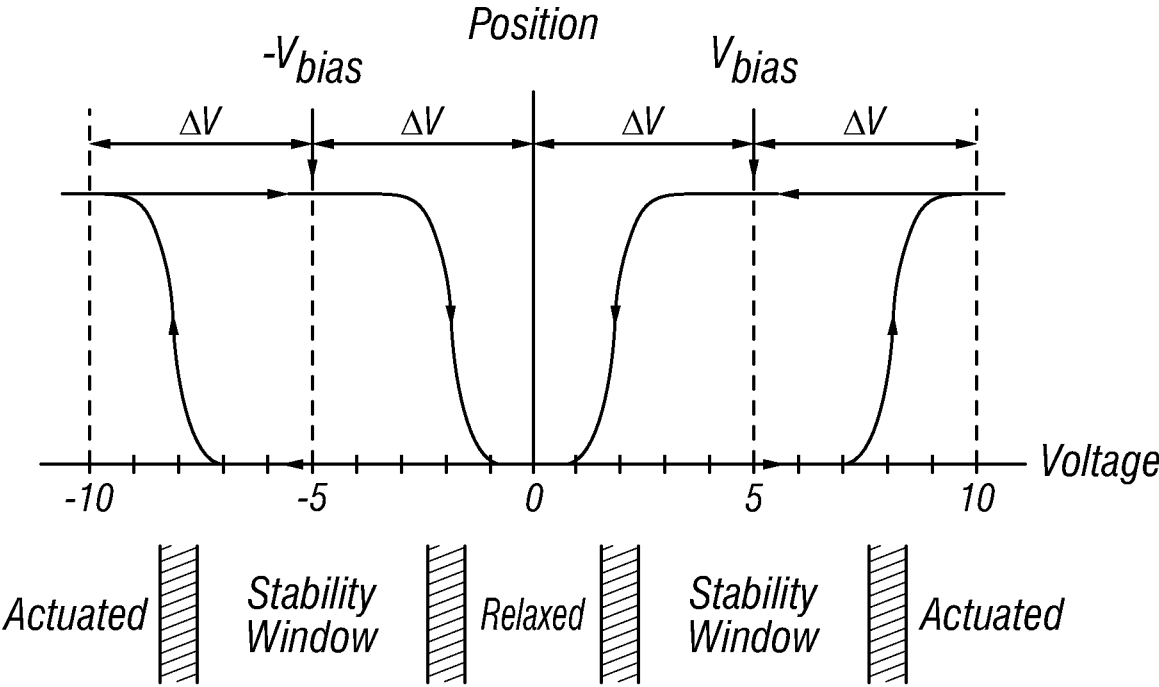


FIG. 3

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

FIG. 4

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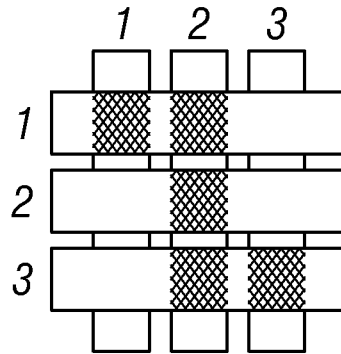


FIG. 5A

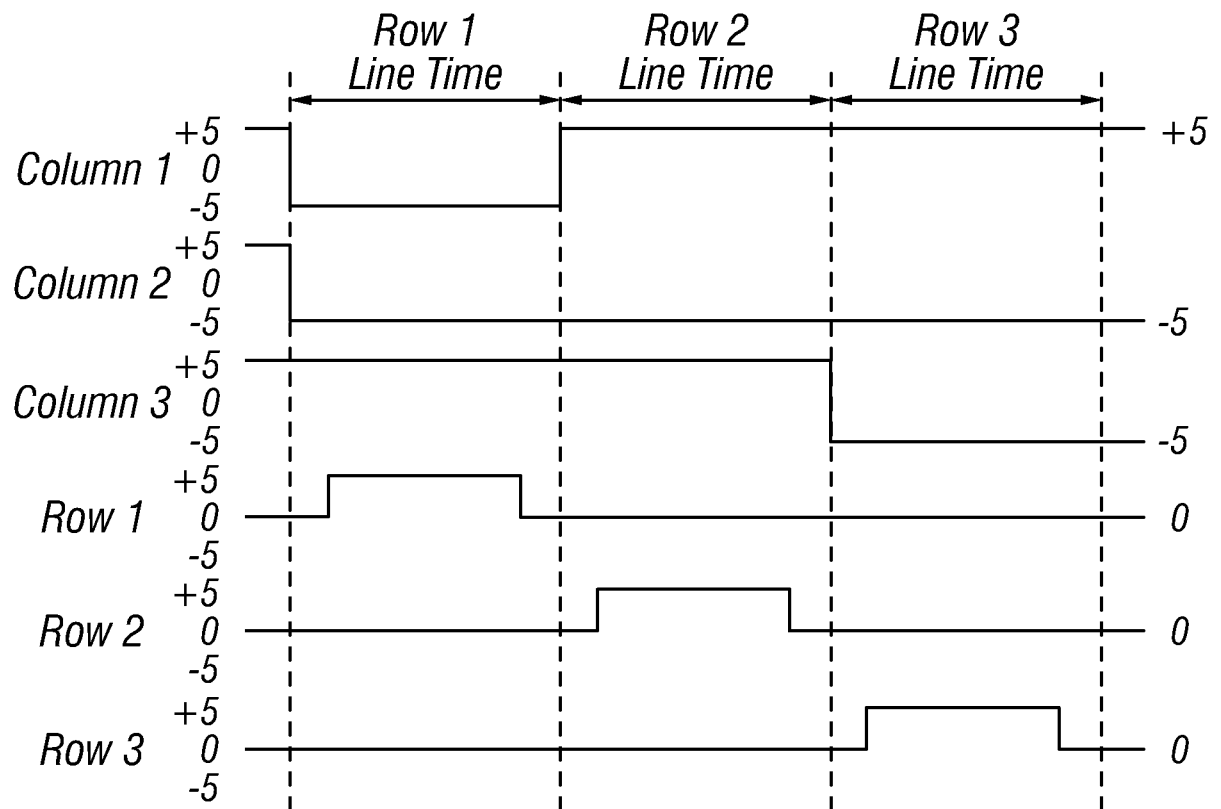


FIG. 5B

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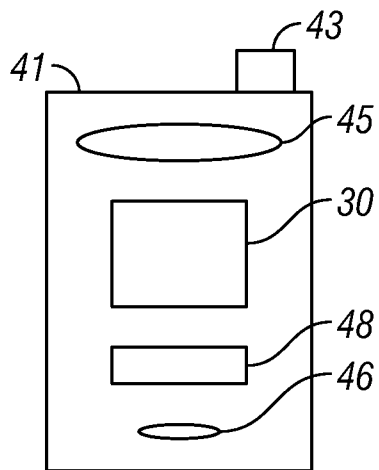


FIG. 6A

40

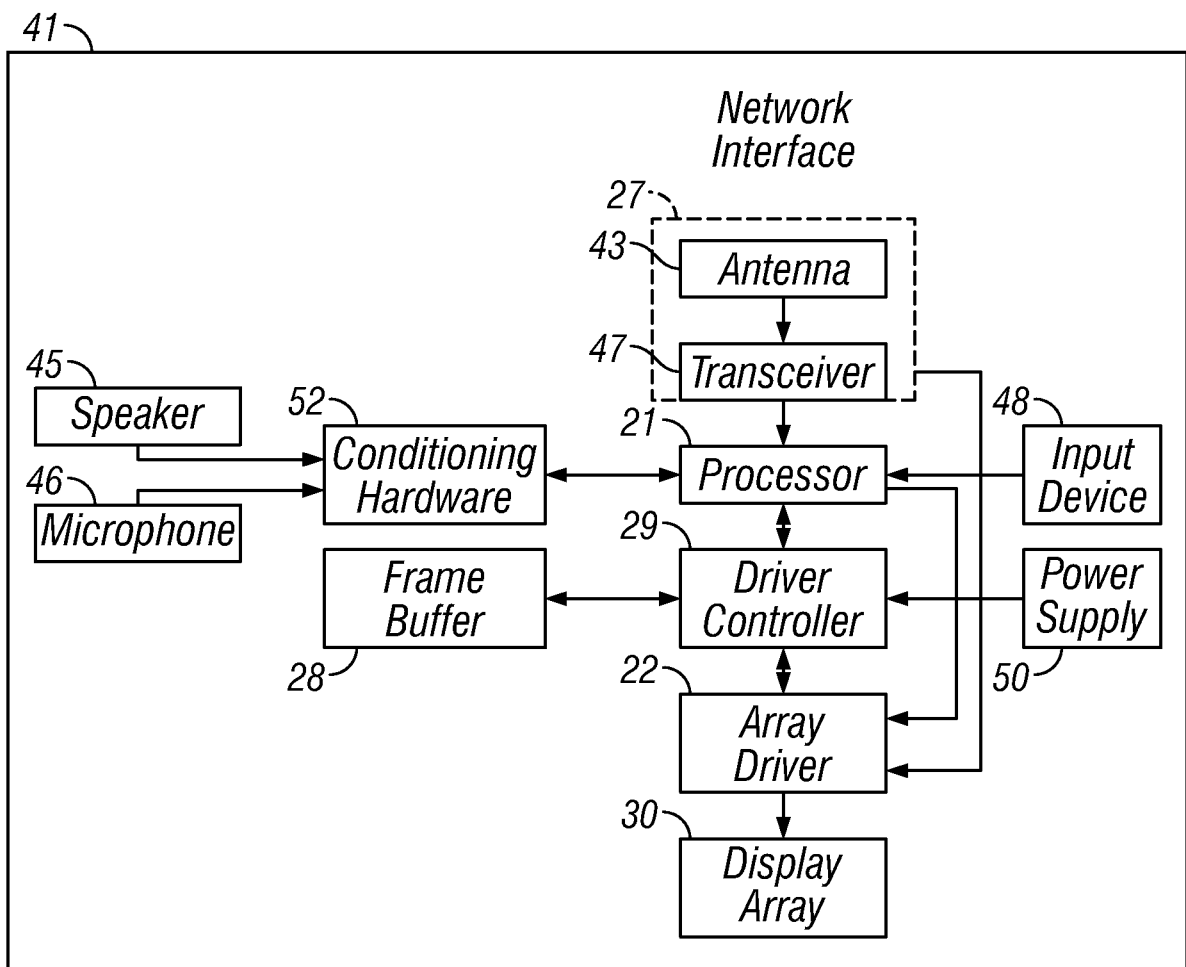


FIG. 6B

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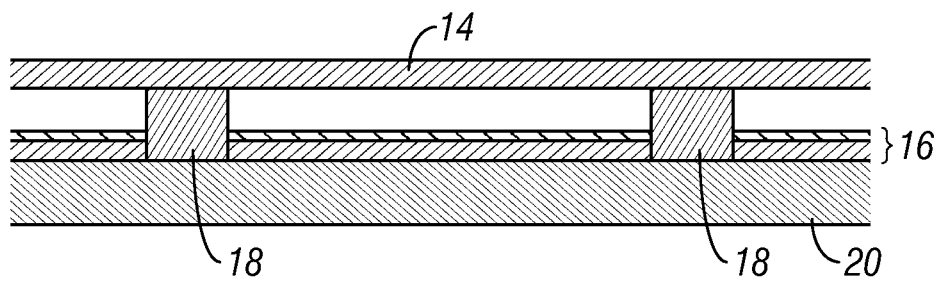


FIG. 7A

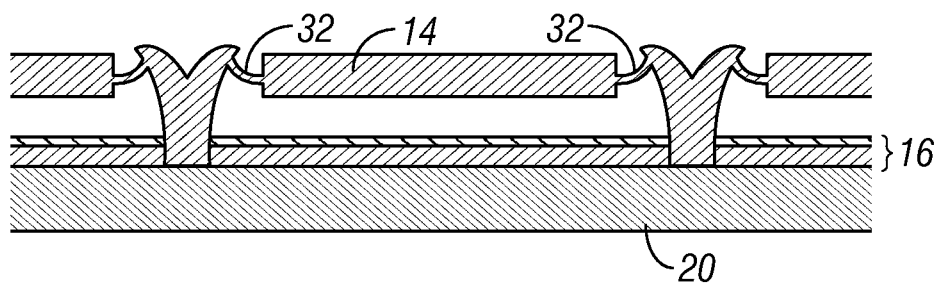


FIG. 7B

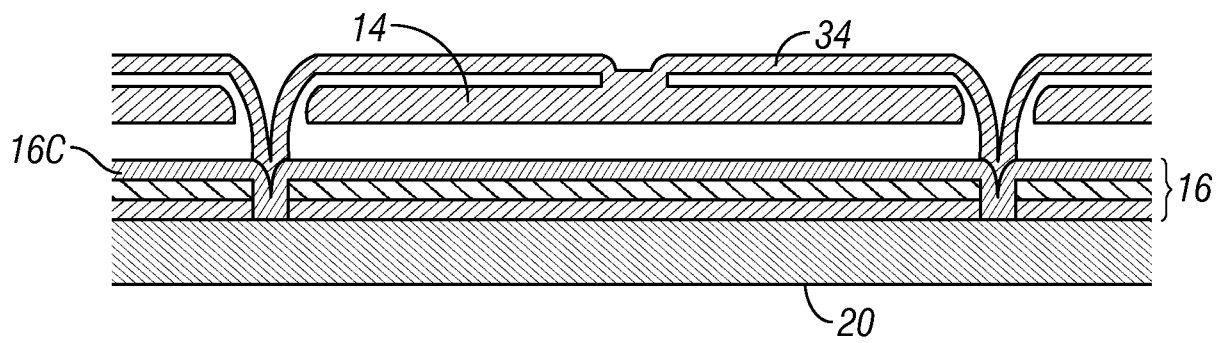


FIG. 7C

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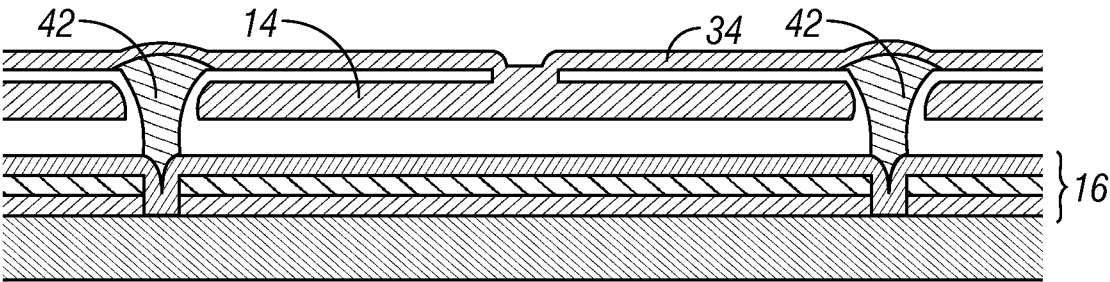


FIG. 7D

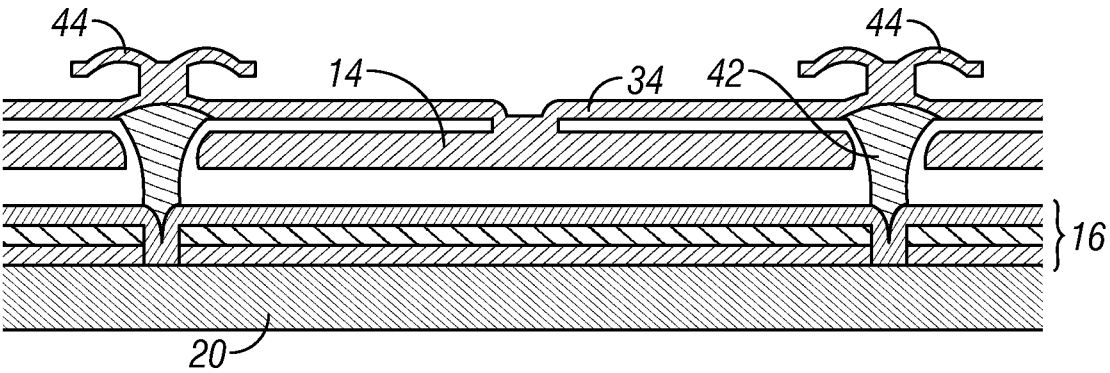


FIG. 7E

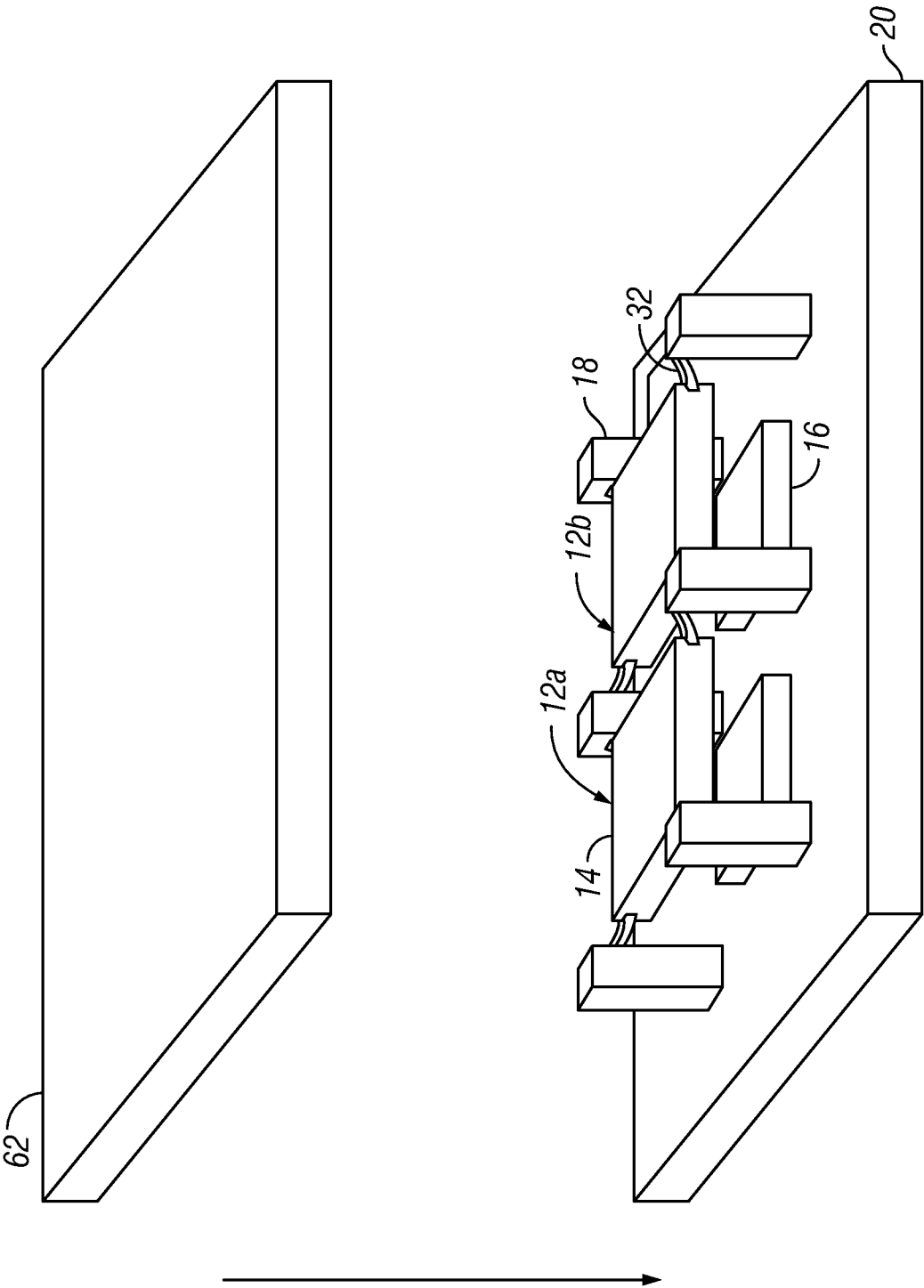


FIG. 8A

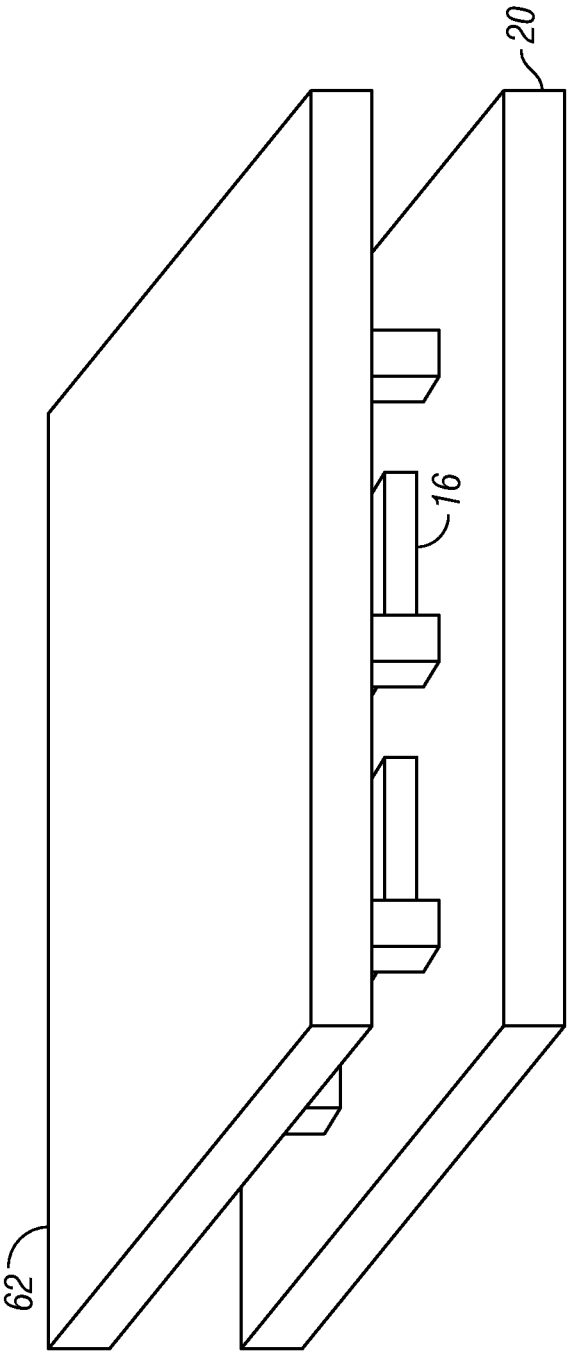


FIG. 8B

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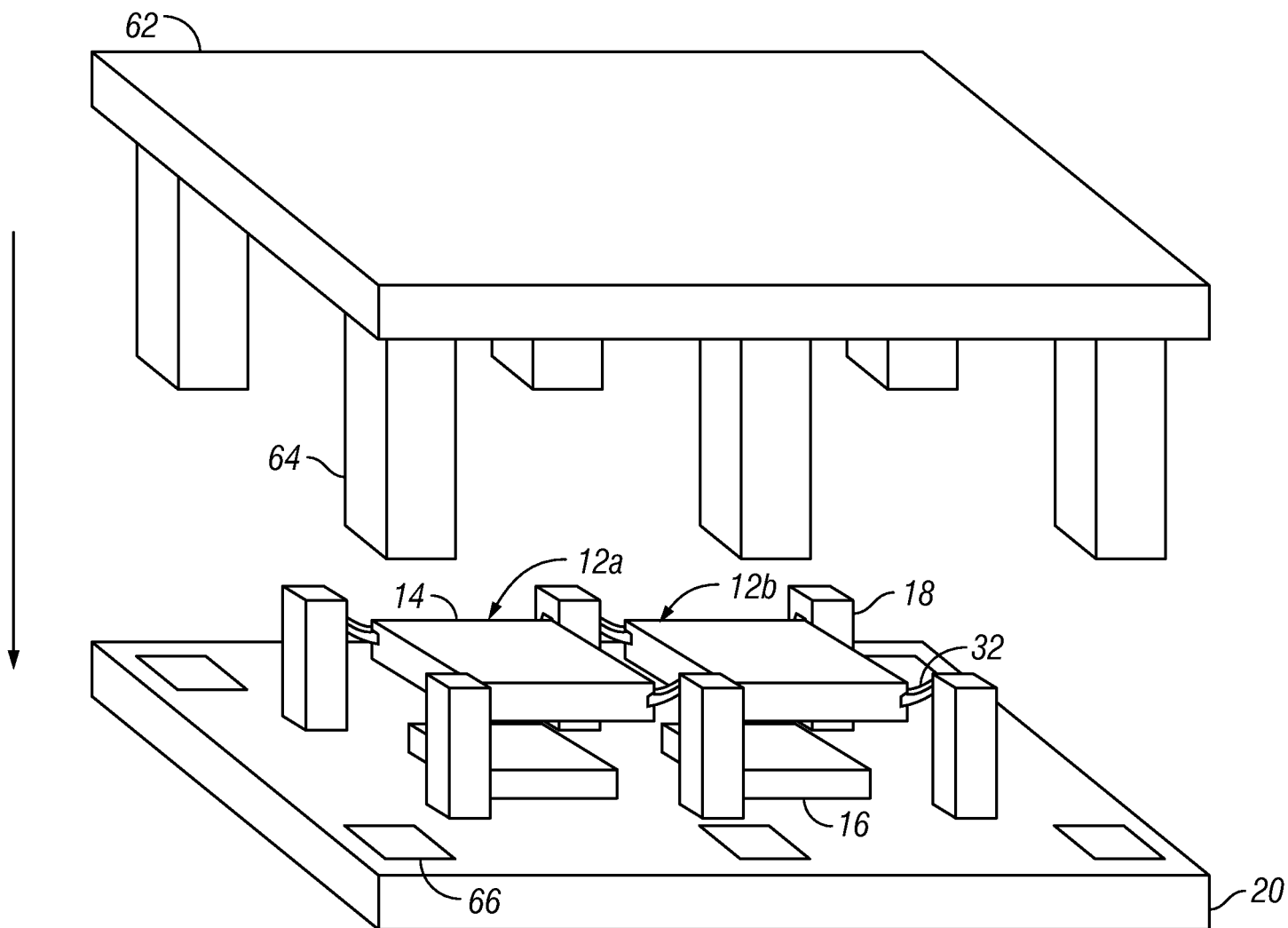


FIG. 9A

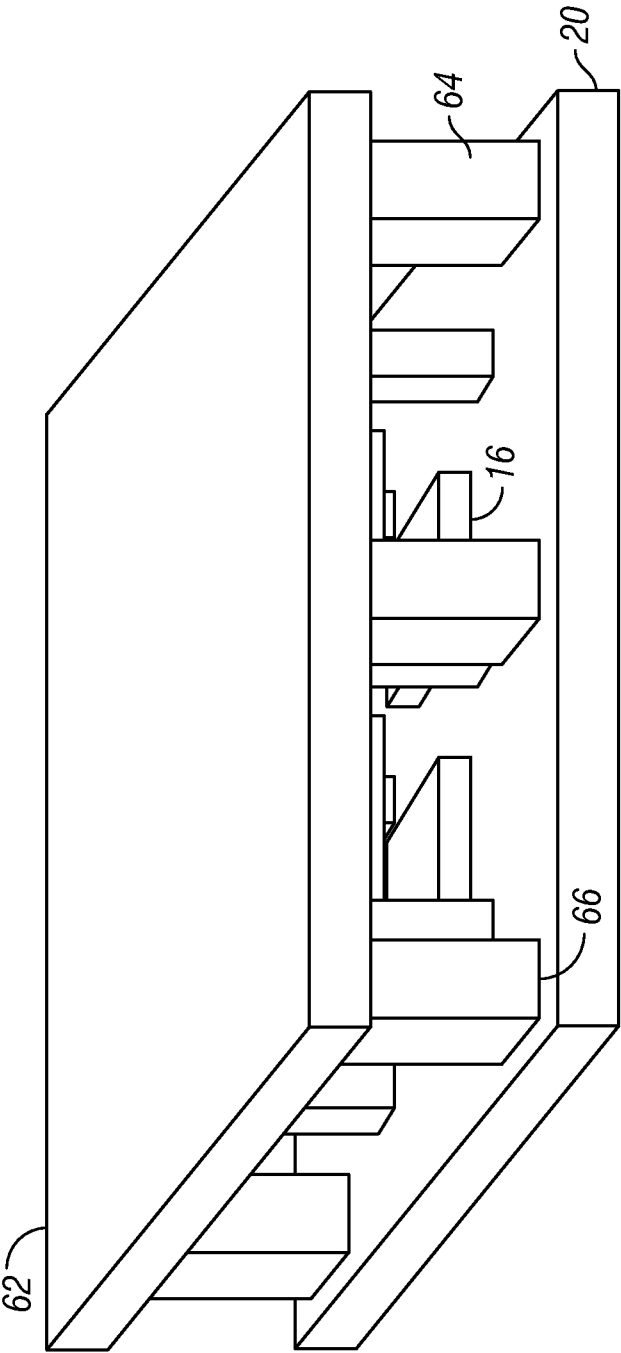


FIG. 9B

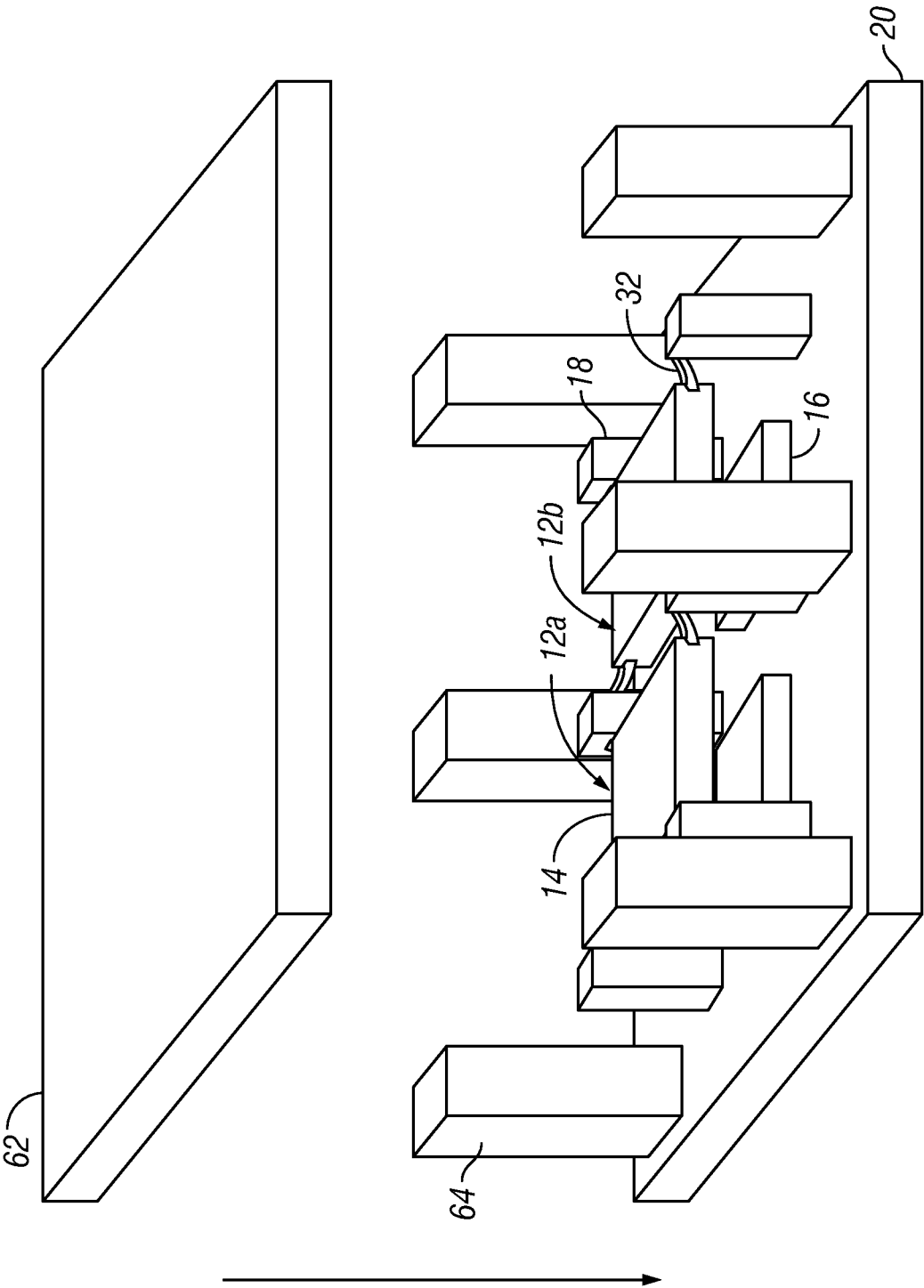


FIG. 10A

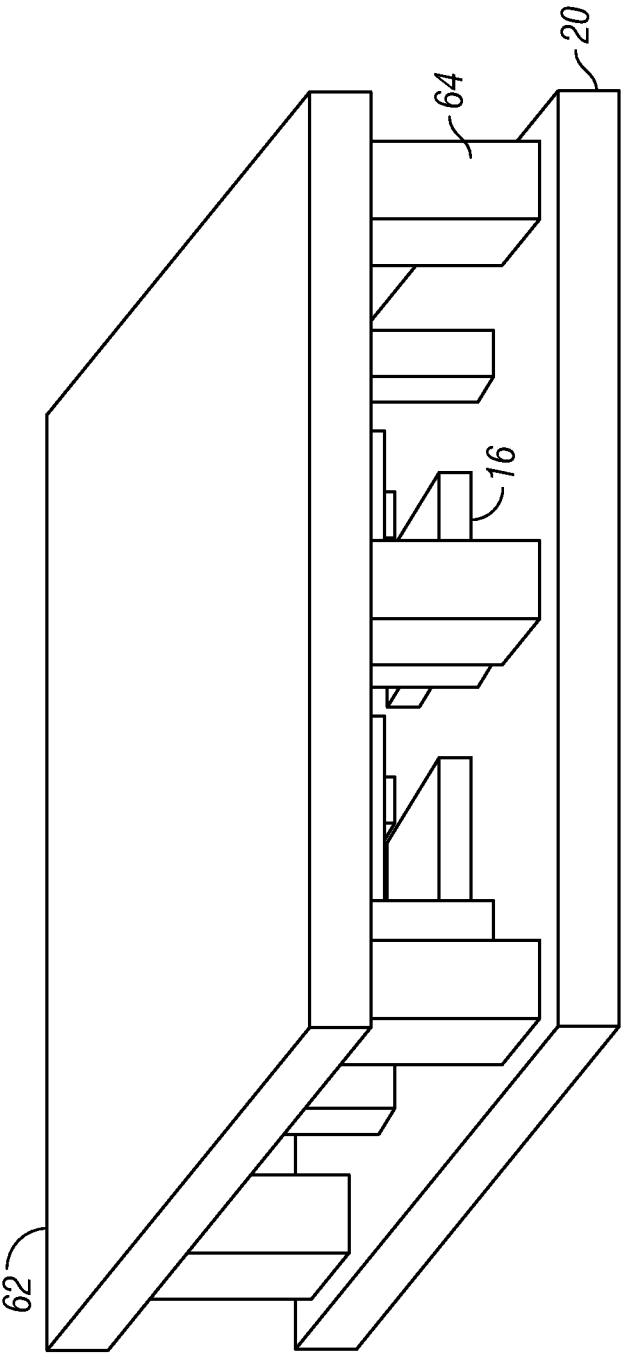


FIG. 10B