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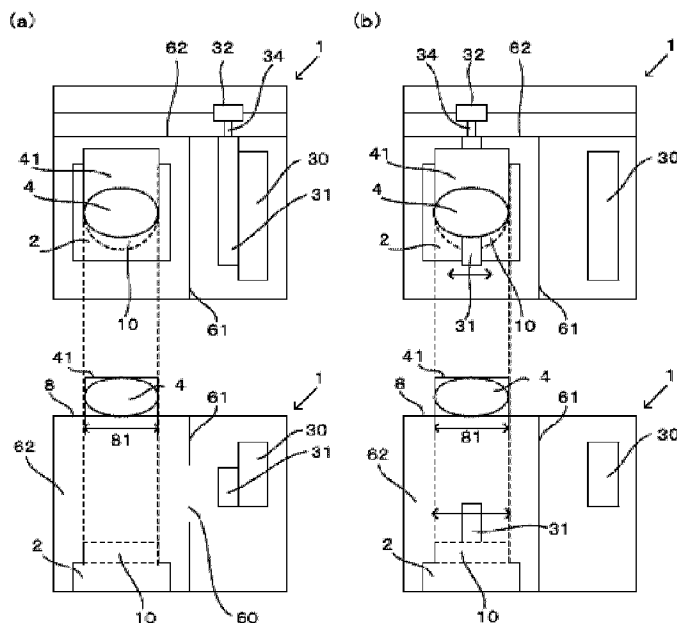
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(54) Title: THREE-DIMENSIONAL SHAPING DEVICE



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A three-dimensional shaping device and a three-dimensional shaping method are described. In the three-dimensional shaping device, a region of an elevatable/lowerable table for forming a powder layer and a vicinity thereof and a region of a powder supply device and a vicinity thereof are divided by a shield plate, an inert gas injection port is provided in the former region, the shield plate is made so as to be freely opened or closed so that a powder spraying squeegee traveling on the table is passed through, or a pipe which supplies powder from the powder supply device to the powder spraying squeegee which has traveled to the side of the shield plate penetrates through the shield plate, and a sintering device is provided which applies a laser beam via a transparent region in a ceiling of a chamber.

ABSTRACT

A three-dimensional shaping device and a three-dimensional shaping method are described. In the three-dimensional shaping device, a region of an elevatable/lowerable table for forming a powder layer and a vicinity thereof and a region of a powder supply device and a vicinity thereof are divided by a shield plate, an inert gas injection port is provided in the former region, the shield plate is made so as to be freely opened or closed so that a powder spraying squeegee traveling on the table is passed through, or a pipe which supplies powder from the powder supply device to the powder spraying squeegee which has traveled to the side of the shield plate penetrates through the shield plate, and a sintering device is provided which applies a laser beam via a transparent region in a ceiling of a chamber.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL SHAPING DEVICE

Technical Field

[0001]

The present invention relates to a three-dimensional shaping device which realizes the multilayering of powder layers, the sintering of the powder layers with a laser beam and furthermore the cutting of the individual layers after the completion of the sintering.

Background Art

[0002]

In the case of the three-dimensional shaping device described above, in a region on a table within a chamber, the multilayering and sintering of a plurality of powder layers are performed, thereafter the cutting is performed, and the step of performing the multilayering and sintering of the powder layers and the cutting afterward as described above is repeated.

[0003]

In the case of three-dimensional shaping, in order to prevent metal powder from being oxidized at the stage of sintering, a chamber is filled with an inert gas such as nitrogen or argon.

[0004]

However, in a conventional technique, an inert gas is supplied not only to a region of a table and the vicinity thereof where shaping of a three-dimensional article is performed, but also to a region where a powder supply device is present.

[0005]

For example, in JP 2010-037599 dated February 23, 2010, a cartridge portion 5 in which an inert gas is stored is installed in the neighborhood of a material storage frame 24 (Fig. 1 and paragraphs [0050] and [0051]), and in the case of such an arrangement, the inert gas supplied from an enclosure 50 is inevitably made to flow also to the side of the powder supply device.

[0006]

In JP 2011-049143 dated March 7, 2011, it is proposed that an injection port and a suction port for an inert gas are provided, then the inert gas is made to flow locally to a region to which an optical beam is applied and thus the inert gas is economically utilized.

[0007]

However, in a case where an inert gas is made to flow locally, before sintered powder is cooled, the contact of the sintered powder with the inert gas is completed, and the sintered powder is brought into contact with air, with the result that it is impossible to realize sufficient prevention of oxidization.

[0008]

In JP 2014-125643 dated June 18, 2014, a shroud 7 in a state where the shroud 7 covers a powder layer 13, a sintering device, that is, an optical beam application means 5, a powder supply device, that is, a powder supply means 3, and a powder spraying machine, that is, a powder smoothing means 4 are integrally provided in three-dimensional directions, and thus moved on a shaping bed 2, with the result that the amount of inert gas used is reduced

(abstract, selected diagram in Fig. 1 and paragraph [0024]).
[0009]

However, the integral configuration of the movement in the three-dimensional directions described above is inconvenient to operate as a device, and the control thereof is extremely complicated in that it is impossible to perform a simple operation in which a table is made elevatable/lowerable and in which then a powder spraying squeegee is independently moved.

[0010]

As described above, in the conventional technique, with the relatively simple configuration, the efficient use of the inert gas is proposed.

[0011]

Further, DE 10 2010 052206 A1 appears to describe a three-dimensional shaping device comprising a process chamber, wherein a three-dimensional shaping process is conducted. The device also comprises an inert gas injection port configured to blow inert gas into the process chamber and a wall configured to steer the gas flow in the chamber such that the gas circulates from the gas injection port down to a bottom of the chamber and all the way to a suction port where the gas is exhausted from the chamber.

[0012]

EP 1 704 989 A2 describes a laser sintering apparatus that comprises a process chamber and a build chamber. The build chamber is aligned with the process chamber and includes a build cylinder having a moveable platform. The process chamber, in turn, comprises a powder bed and a

powder spreader and, separated by a wall with a laser window, a laser and a powder feed hopper which provides powder to the powder bed. The process chamber maintains an inert atmosphere condition while the laser sintering process is conducted.

[0013]

US 2008/0134965 A1 describes a three-dimensional shaping device comprising a building space with a building field, in which a building powder is dispensed by a blade and solidified. The powder is provided by a supply opening to the building field from outside the building space. In order to prevent deterioration of the building material, the building space is filled with an inert gas.

[0014]

DE 10 2008 022495 A1 yet describes a laser sintering apparatus comprising within a process chamber a powder spraying squeegee for dispensing powder on a table for forming a powder layer, a laser to melt or sinter the powder layer in selected places and an inert gas inlet to create a secured atmosphere in the process chamber. Further, the apparatus comprises a powder supply device located outside the process chamber to provide the powder spraying squeegee with powder.

[0015]

Further selective sintering devices and/or methods are described in DE 10 2012 012413 A1, JP 2011 006719 A, US 2016/101469 A1, EP 2 286 982 A1, DE 10 2006 014835 A1, DE 43 25 573 A1, US 2011/300248 A1, JP 2010 132961 A, DE 10 2014 010931 A1 and US 2013/287590 A1.

Summary of Invention

Technical Problem

[0016]

An object of the present invention is to provide a configuration of a three-dimensional shaping device in which, in the processing of a three-dimensional shaped article, an elevatable/lowerable table and a powder spraying squeegee traveling on the table are adopted and in which thus it is made possible to efficiently use an inert gas.

Solution to Problem

[0017]

In order to achieve the above object, the basic configurations of the present invention are as follows:

(1) A three-dimensional shaping device consisting of two chambers positioned adjacent to each other, wherein within each of the two chambers, a region of an elevatable/lowerable table for forming a powder layer and a region of a powder supply device are divided by a first shield plate, an inert gas injection port is provided in the region of the elevatable/lowerable table, the first shield plate is made so as to be freely opened or closed so that a powder spraying squeegee traveling on the table is passed through, wherein a region of a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee and the region of the table are divided by a second shield plate, wherein the table is provided in each of the regions on a side where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and the powder supply device is provided in each of the regions where the two chambers are not adjacent to each other,

wherein one sintering device is provided which applies a laser beam to a shaping region of a three-dimensional shaped article via a transparent region in a ceiling of each of the two chambers, wherein one main shaft for cutting a sintered three-dimensional shaped article and a three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for the main shaft are provided within the region of the table, wherein the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism, by which the main shaft is moved, is provided within the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other, wherein a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the sintering device is provided on an upper side of the ceiling of the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and wherein a control device is provided which alternately moves the one main shaft and the one sintering device between the two chambers;

(2) A three-dimensional shaping device consisting of two chambers positioned adjacent to each other, wherein within one of the two chambers, a region of an elevatable/lowerable table for forming a powder layer and a region of a powder supply device are divided by a first shield plate, an inert gas injection port is provided in the region of the elevatable/lowerable table, a pipe which supplies powder dropped from the powder supply device to a powder spraying squeegee which has traveled to a side of the first shield plate penetrates through the first shield plate, wherein the table is provided in each of the regions on a side where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and one powder supply device is provided on one side of the

regions where the two chambers are not adjacent to each other, wherein one sintering device is provided which applies a laser beam to a shaping region of a three-dimensional shaped article via a transparent region in a ceiling of each of the two chambers, wherein a region of a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee and the region of the table are divided by a second shield plate, wherein one main shaft for cutting a sintered three-dimensional shaped article and a three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for the main shaft are provided within the region of the table, wherein the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism, by which the main shaft is moved, is provided within the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other, wherein a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the sintering device is provided on an upper side of the ceiling of the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and wherein a control device is provided which alternately moves the one main shaft and the one sintering device and one powder spraying squeegee corresponding to the one powder supply device between the two chambers;

(3) A three-dimensional shaping device consisting of two chambers positioned adjacent to each other, wherein within one of the two chambers, a region of an elevatable/lowerable table for forming a powder layer and a region of a powder supply device are divided by a first shield plate, an inert gas injection port is provided in the region of the elevatable/lowerable table, a part of a region of the first shield plate is used as a powder supply

port for a powder spraying squeegee which has traveled to a side of the first shield plate, a pipe through which powder passes through when dropping from the supply port is provided to protrude at a lower part, wherein the table is provided in each of the regions on a side where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and one powder supply device is provided on one side of the regions where the two chambers are not adjacent to each other, wherein one sintering device is provided which applies a laser beam to a shaping region of a three-dimensional shaped article via a transparent region in a ceiling of each of the two chambers, wherein a region of a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee and the region of the table are divided by a second shield plate, wherein one main shaft for cutting a sintered three-dimensional shaped article and a three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for the main shaft are provided within the region of the table, wherein the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism, by which the main shaft is moved, is provided within the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other, wherein a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the sintering device is provided on an upper side of the ceiling of the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and wherein a control device is provided which alternately moves the one main shaft and the one sintering device and one powder spraying squeegee corresponding to the one powder supply device between the two chambers.

Advantageous Effects of Invention

[0018]

In the three-dimensional shaping devices of the basic configurations (1), (2) and (3), the region of the powder supply device and the vicinity thereof are basically not filled with the inert gas, and it is made possible to prevent the three-dimensional shaped article from being oxidized at the stage of sintering and the subsequent stages.

[0019]

Moreover, in the case of the basic configuration (4) described above, the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee and the vicinity thereof are not filled with the inert gas, and it is possible to prevent the oxidization described above.

Brief Description of Drawings

[0020]

Fig. 1-1 shows the configuration of Example 1, Fig. 1-1(a) shows a state where multilayering and sintering are performed in a chamber 1A and where cutting is performed in a chamber 1B, Fig. 1-1(b) shows a state where the cutting is performed in the chamber 1A and where the multilayering and the sintering are performed in the chamber 1B.

And downward arrows show a state where a table is sequentially lowered as the multilayering proceeds;

Fig. 1-2 shows a flow chart showing that in Example 1, a computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering controls the movement of a sintering device and that a computer for controlling the cutting controls the movement of a main shaft;

Fig. 1-3 is a flow chart showing the conditions in

Example 1, a computer for controlling the alternate movement of the sintering device and the main shaft is provided, and is operated with the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering and with the computer for controlling the cutting with the main shaft in a coordinated manner;

Fig. 2-1 shows the configuration of Example 2, Fig. 2-1(a) shows a state where the multilayering and the sintering are performed in the chamber 1A and where the cutting is performed in the chamber 1B, Fig. 2-1(b) shows a state where the cutting is performed in the chamber 1A and where the multilayering and the sintering are performed in the chamber 1B.

And downward arrows show a state where the table is sequentially lowered as the multilayering proceeds;

Fig. 2-2 shows a flow chart showing that in Example 2, the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering controls the movement of a powder spraying squeegee and the sintering device, and that the computer for controlling the cutting with the main shaft controls the movement of the main shaft;

Fig. 2-3 is a flow chart showing the conditions in Example 2, a computer for controlling the alternate movement of the powder spraying squeegee and the sintering device, and the main shaft is provided, and is operated with the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering and with the computer for controlling the cutting in a coordinated manner;

Fig. 3 is a top view and a side cross-sectional view

showing the basic configuration (1), Fig. 3(a) shows a state where powder is supplied to the powder spraying squeegee and Fig. 3(b) shows a state where the powder spraying squeegee is moved on the multilayer powder;

Fig. 4 is a top view and a side cross-sectional view showing the basic configuration (2), Fig. 4(a) shows a state where the powder is supplied to the powder spraying squeegee and Fig. 4(b) shows a state where the powder spraying squeegee is moved on the multilayer powder;

Fig. 5 is a top view and a side cross-sectional view showing the basic configuration (3), Fig. 5(a) shows a state where powder is supplied to the powder spraying squeegee and Fig. 5(b) shows a state where the powder spraying squeegee is moved on the multilayer powder;

Fig. 6 is a top view and a side cross-sectional view showing, in the basic configuration (4), embodiments in which a rotation shaft penetrates through a second shield plate, Fig. 6(a) shows the embodiment in which the rotation shaft is engaged with a ball screw for moving the powder spraying squeegee and Fig. 6(b) shows the embodiment in which the rotation shaft is engaged with a chain for moving the powder spraying squeegee;

Fig. 7 shows, in the basic configuration (4), an embodiment in which a member that supports the powder spraying squeegee and that is integrally moved in a horizontal direction is fixed to a door that slides along the second shield plate without forming an opening state and in which the door is coupled to a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee;

Fig. 8-1 shows, in the basic configuration (4) and in an embodiment in which the main shaft for cutting a three-dimensional shaped article is moved within the region of a table 2 and the vicinity thereof, an embodiment in which a three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for the main shaft is provided within the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof; and

Fig. 8-2 shows, in the basic configuration (4) and in the embodiment in which the main shaft for cutting the three-dimensional shaped article is moved within the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof, an embodiment in which the second shield plate is made so as to be freely opened or closed and in which the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for the main shaft is provided on the side of the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee and the vicinity thereof.

Description of Embodiments

[0021]

In any of the basic configurations (1), (2) and (3), the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof and the region of the powder supply device 30 and the vicinity thereof are divided by the first shield plate 61, the inert gas injection port is provided in the former region and the sintering device 4 is provided which applies a laser beam to the shaping region of the three-dimensional shaped article 10 via the transparent region 81 in the ceiling 8 of the chamber 1.

[0022]

The ceiling 8 is preferably in a hermetically sealed state between a wall surrounding the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof and the first shield plate 61 dividing both regions.

[0023]

In the case of the basic configuration (1), as shown in Fig. 3(a), in order for the powder spraying squeegee 31 to receive the supply of the powder from the powder supply device 30, it is essential to bring the first shield plate 61 into an open state, and thus a small amount of inert gas cannot be prevented from leaking, via the opening portion 60 of the first shield plate 61, to the side of the region of the powder supply device 30 and the vicinity thereof.

[0024]

However, as shown in Fig. 3(b), at the stages of the forming and the sintering of the powder layer, the first shield plate 61 is brought into a closed state and the amount of inert gas jetted to the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof is adjusted, thus it is sufficiently possible to make up for the leaked inert gas described above and to fill the regions.

[0025]

Moreover, in the powder spraying squeegee 31, the supply of the powder to the powder spraying squeegee 31 is not performed for every layer in the multilayers, but the storage volume for the powder which makes it possible to perform the supply for every multilayer, specifically, every four or more layers is set, and thus it is possible to lower the degree of the leakage described above.

[0026]

In the case of the basic configuration (2), as shown in Figs. 4(a) and 4(b), the pipe 33 which supplies the powder dropped from the powder supply device 30 to the powder spraying squeegee 31 which has reached to the side of the first shield plate 61 penetrates through the first shield plate 61.

[0027]

In the case of the basic configuration (3), as shown in Figs. 5(a) and 5(b), a part of the region of the first shield plate 61 is used as the powder supply port for the powder spraying squeegee 31 which has reached to the side of the first shield plate 61, and the pipe 33 through which the powder passes when dropping downward from the supply port is provided to protrude at a lower part.

[0028]

In the case of the basic configurations (2) and (3), it is possible to prevent the inert gas from reaching to the region of the powder supply device 30 and the vicinity thereof and the basic configurations (2) and (3) are superior to the basic configuration (1) in that the inert gas is efficiently utilized.

[0029]

In the case of the basic configuration (2), it is also possible to obtain an effect of lowering the degree of the oxidization of the powder in storage by the inert gas entering into the side of the powder supply device 30 through opening outlet of the powder.

[0030]

However, even in the basic configurations (1) and (3), in particular, by filling the powder supply device 30 with the inert gas, it is naturally possible to obtain the same effect.

[0031]

It is to be noted that, in the case of the sintering device 4 using a laser beam, it is possible to realize the sintering via the transparent region 81 of the ceiling 8, whereas in the case of an electron beam, since it is impossible to transmit the transparent region 81, thus an electron beam is not adopted in the basic configurations (1), (2) and (3).

[0032]

Although in the three-dimensional shaping device, the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 for alternately moving the powder spraying squeegee 31 to the side of the powder supply device 30 and to the side opposite thereto is provided, in the basic configurations (1), (2) and (3), it is not essential to divide, with the second shield plate 62, the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 and the vicinity thereof and the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof, and Figs. 4 and 5 show such a case.

[0033]

By contrast, based on the configurations of the basic configurations (1), (2) and (3), the basic configuration (4) is characterized in that the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 for the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the vicinity thereof and the region of the

table 2 and the vicinity thereof are divided by the second shield plate 62, and Figs. 3(a) and 3(b) show the basic configuration (4) in a case based on the basic configuration (1) (illustration of the basic configuration (4) based on the basic configurations (2) and (3) is omitted).

[0034]

With the characteristics described above, it is possible to prevent the former region from being filled with the inert gas.

[0035]

It is to be noted that the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 for the powder spraying squeegee 31 naturally has a drive source, and the same is true for the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 42 for the sintering device 4 and the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism 52 for the main shaft 5 which will be described later.

[0036]

Figs. 6(a) and 6(b) show embodiments which are characterized in that, a ball screw or a chain for movement 92 which moves the powder spraying squeegee 31 in the horizontal direction is provided in the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof, and in which a rotation shaft 71 that transmits rotation drive to the ball screw or the chain for movement 92 penetrates through the second shield plate 62 and is coupled to the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32, and Fig. 6(a) shows the embodiment in which the rotation shaft 71 is engaged with the ball screw 92 and Fig. 6(b) shows the embodiment in which the rotation shaft 71 is engaged with the chain for movement 92 (in Figs. 6(a)

and 6(b), the illustration of a specific configuration in which the powder is supplied from the powder supply device 30 to the powder spraying squeegee 31 is omitted).

[0037]

In the case of the embodiment described above, since almost no gap is formed between the rotation shaft 71 and the second shield plate 62, it is unlikely that the inert gas leaks from the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof to the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 for the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the vicinity thereof.

[0038]

Fig. 7 shows an embodiment which is characterized in that, a support member 34 that supports the powder spraying squeegee 31 and that is moved in the horizontal direction together with the powder spraying squeegee 31 is fixed to a door 72 that slides within the second shield plate 62, and in which the door 72 has a horizontal width larger than that of the second shield plate 62 such that a state where an opening portion is not formed in the sliding is made possible to be realized and then the door 72 is coupled to the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 (it is to be noted that, also in Fig. 7, the illustration of a specific configuration in which the powder is supplied from the powder supply device 30 to the powder spraying squeegee 31 is omitted).

[0039]

In the embodiment described above, since the length of the door 72 is designed such that even when the door 72

slides on the second shield plate 62, the opening portion is prevented from being formed between the door 72 and the second shield plate 62, the inert gas which fills the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof is prevented from leaking via the opening portion to the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 for the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the vicinity thereof.

[0040]

Both the state where the rotation shaft 71 penetrates through the second shield plate 62 in the embodiment of Fig. 6 and the state where the door 72 slides on the second shield plate 62 in Fig. 7 are preferably in a hermetically sealed state.

[0041]

For that, it is possible to realize the purpose by setting the shape of a gap formed between the rotation shaft 71 or the door 72 and the second shield plate 62 and the distance necessary for passing through the gap such that, in the case where the inert gas and air flow through the gap, the flow resistance is extremely large to the extent that the passing-through amount can be disregarded.

[0042]

In the basic configuration (4), it is possible to adopt any one of the embodiments which is characterized in that, as shown in Fig. 8-1, the main shaft 5 for cutting the sintered three-dimensional shaped article 10 and the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism 52 for the main shaft 5 are provided within the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof, and the embodiment which is characterized

in that, as shown in Fig. 8-2, the second shield plate 62 for dividing the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof and the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 for the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the vicinity thereof is made so as to be freely opened or closed and in which the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism 52 for the main shaft 5 for cutting the sintered three-dimensional shaped article 10 is provided on the side of the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 for the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the vicinity thereof (it is to be noted that, also in Figs. 8-1 and 8-2, the illustration of a specific configuration in which the powder is supplied from the powder supply device 30 to the powder spraying squeegee 31 is omitted).

[0043]

In each of the embodiments described above as well, basically, it is possible to reduce the filling of the region of the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 32 for the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the vicinity thereof with the inert gas.

[0044]

However, it is impossible to deny the fact that the embodiment in which, as in the embodiment of Fig. 8-2, the second shield plate 62 of the basic configuration (4) is made so as to be freely opened or closed and then in which the second shield plate 62 is opened at each time the main shaft 5 is moved, is inferior to the embodiment in which, as in Fig. 8-1, the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism 52 for the main shaft 5 is provided within the

region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof in the point that a small amount of inert gas leaks from the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof via the opening portion 60 at the stage of opening.

[0045]

However, at the stage of the forming and the sintering of the powder layer, the amount of inert gas jetted to the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof is adjusted, and thus it is sufficiently possible to make up for and load the leaked inert gas as described above.

[0046]

Moreover, in the case where, in the embodiment of Fig. 8-2, a method is adopted where, one table 2, one powder supply device 30 and one powder spraying squeegee 31, and one sintering device 4 are adopted for one chamber 1, and then the cutting with the main shaft 5 is performed after the completion of all steps of the multilayering of the powder with the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the sintering of the powder with the sintering device 4, since, at the stage of the cutting, there is already a very low possibility that metal powder involving sintering is oxidized, hence it is possible to sufficiently avoid the damage of the leakage.

[0047]

A description will be given below according to Examples.

Example 1

[0048]

Example 1 is characterized in that, as shown in Figs.

1-1(a) and 1-1(b), the table 2 is provided in each of the regions on the side where two chambers 1 are adjacent to each other, the powder supply device 30 is provided in each of the regions where the two chambers 1 are not adjacent to each other, one main shaft 5 is provided which is moved by the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism 52 provided within the regions where the two chambers 1 are adjacent to each other, one sintering device 4 is provided which is moved by the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 42 provided on the upper side of the ceiling 8 of the regions where the two chambers 1 are adjacent to each other and a control device is provided which alternately moves the one main shaft 5 and the one sintering device 4 between the two chambers 1 (Figs. 1-1(a) and 1-1(b) show cases which are based on the basic configuration (1)).

[0049]

Due to the characteristics described above, Example 1 is significant as compared with the case of the conventional technique, in terms of economical cost, in the point that it suffices to provide one powder multilayer device and one main shaft 5 for two chambers 1.

[0050]

Moreover, by making it possible to simultaneously perform the multilayering step and the sintering step of the powder layer and the cutting step in the two chambers 1, it becomes possible to avoid the occurrence of a waiting time of the main shaft 5 for all the time of the multilayering step and the sintering step and the occurrence of a waiting time of the sintering device 4 for all the time

of the cutting step.

[0051]

It is to be noted that, in Example 1, since the sintering device 4 and the main shaft 5 need the control device capable of alternately moving the sintering device 4 and the main shaft 5 between the two chambers 1, it is essential that the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism 52 for the main shaft 5 is inevitably provided within the region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof, that is, the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism 52 for the main shaft 5 is based on the embodiment of Fig. 6(a).

[0052]

In Example 1, in order to realize the multilayering, the sintering, the cutting and the alternate movement, as shown in the flow chart of Fig. 1-3, the control method can be adopted in which the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering controls the movement of the sintering device 4 and in which the computer for controlling the cutting controls the movement of the main shaft 5.

[0053]

Furthermore, as shown in Fig. 1-3, the control method can also be adopted in which, in addition to the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering and the computer for controlling the cutting, the computer for controlling the movement of the sintering device 4 and the main shaft 5 is provided and is operated with the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering and the

computer for controlling the cutting in a coordinated manner.

Example 2

[0054]

Example 2 is characterized in that as shown in Figs. 2-1(a) and 2-1(b), the table 2 is provided in each of the regions on the side where two chambers 1 are adjacent to each other, one powder supply device 30 is provided on one side of the regions where the two chambers 1 are not adjacent to each other, one main shaft 5 is provided which is moved by the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism 52 provided within the regions where the two chambers 1 are adjacent to each other, one sintering device 4 is provided which is moved by the horizontal-direction drive mechanism 42 provided on the upper side of the ceiling 8 of the regions where the two chambers 1 are adjacent to each other and a control device is provided which alternately moves the one main shaft 5, and the one sintering device 4 and one powder spraying squeegee 31 corresponding to the one powder supply device 30 between the two chambers 1 (it is to be noted that Figs. 2-1(a) and 2-1(b) show cases which are based on the basic configuration (2), and Fig. 2-1(a) shows a state where the powder spraying squeegee 31 indicated by dotted lines receives the supply of the powder via the pipe 33 from the powder supply device 30).

[0055]

In Example 2 as well, the same actions and effects as in Example 1 can be achieved, and it is essential that the main shaft 5 for performing the cutting is provided in the

region of the table 2 and the vicinity thereof.

[0056]

In Example 2 as well, in order to realize the alternate movement, as shown in the flow chart of Fig. 2-2, the control method can be adopted in which the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering controls the movement of the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the sintering device 4 and in which the computer for controlling the cutting controls the movement of the main shaft 5.

[0057]

Furthermore, as shown in the flow chart of Fig. 2-3, the control method can also be adopted in which, in addition to the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering and the computer for controlling the cutting, the computer for controlling the movement of the powder spraying squeegee 31 and the sintering device 4, and the main shaft 5 is provided and is operated with the computer for controlling the multilayering and the sintering and the computer for controlling the cutting in a coordinated manner.

[Industrial Applicability]

[0058]

A plurality of embodiments and Examples have been described as above, and the present invention in which, at the stage of the sintering and the subsequent stages up to cooling, the inert gas for preventing the oxidization of the metal powder is efficiently used can be utilized in all fields of three-dimensional shaping devices.

Reference Signs List

[0059]

- 1: Chamber
- 10: Shaped article
- 2: Table
- 30: Powder supply device
- 31: Powder spraying squeegee
- 32: Horizontal-direction drive mechanism for powder spraying squeegee
- 33: Pipe
- 34: Support member for powder spraying squeegee
- 4: Sintering device
- 41: Holding member for sintering device
- 42: Horizontal-direction drive mechanism for sintering device
- 5: Main shaft
- 51: Holding member for main shaft
- 52: Three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for main shaft
- 60: Opening portion formed in the first shield plate
- 61: First shield plate
- 62: Second shield plate
- 71: Rotation shaft
- 72: Door
- 8: Ceiling
- 81: Transparent region
- 92: Ball screw or chain for movement for moving powder spraying squeegee in horizontal direction
- 93: Coupling rotation portion of rotation shaft and ball screw or chain for movement

CLAIMS

[Claim 1]

A three-dimensional shaping device consisting of two chambers positioned adjacent to each other, wherein within each of the two chambers, a region of an elevatable/lowerable table for forming a powder layer and a region of a powder supply device are divided by a first shield plate, an inert gas injection port is provided in the region of the elevatable/lowerable table, the first shield plate is made so as to be freely opened or closed so that a powder spraying squeegee traveling on the table is passed through, wherein a region of a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee and the region of the table are divided by a second shield plate, wherein the table is provided in each of the regions on a side where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and the powder supply device is provided in each of the regions where the two chambers are not adjacent to each other, wherein one sintering device is provided which applies a laser beam to a shaping region of a three-dimensional shaped article via a transparent region in a ceiling of each of the two chambers, wherein one main shaft for cutting a sintered three-dimensional shaped article and a three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for the main shaft are provided within the region of the table, wherein the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism, by which the main shaft is moved, is provided within the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other, wherein a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the sintering

device is provided on an upper side of the ceiling of the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and wherein a control device is provided which alternately moves the one main shaft and the one sintering device between the two chambers.

[Claim 2]

A three-dimensional shaping device consisting of two chambers positioned adjacent to each other, wherein within one of the two chambers, a region of an elevatable/lowerable table for forming a powder layer and a region of a powder supply device are divided by a first shield plate, an inert gas injection port is provided in the region of the elevatable/lowerable table, a pipe which supplies powder dropped from the powder supply device to a powder spraying squeegee which has traveled to a side of the first shield plate penetrates through the first shield plate, wherein the table is provided in each of the regions on a side where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and one powder supply device is provided on one side of the regions where the two chambers are not adjacent to each other, wherein one sintering device is provided which applies a laser beam to a shaping region of a three-dimensional shaped article via a transparent region in a ceiling of each of the two chambers, wherein a region of a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee and the region of the table are divided by a second shield plate, wherein one main shaft for cutting a sintered three-dimensional shaped article and a three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for the main shaft are provided within the region

of the table, wherein the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism, by which the main shaft is moved, is provided within the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other, wherein a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the sintering device is provided on an upper side of the ceiling of the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and wherein a control device is provided which alternately moves the one main shaft and the one sintering device and one powder spraying squeegee corresponding to the one powder supply device between the two chambers.

[Claim 3]

A three-dimensional shaping device consisting of two chambers positioned adjacent to each other, wherein within one of the two chambers, a region of an elevatable/lowerable table for forming a powder layer and a region of a powder supply device are divided by a first shield plate, an inert gas injection port is provided in the region of the elevatable/lowerable table, a part of a region of the first shield plate is used as a powder supply port for a powder spraying squeegee which has traveled to a side of the first shield plate, a pipe through which powder passes through when dropping from the supply port is provided to protrude at a lower part, wherein the table is provided in each of the regions on a side where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and one powder supply device is provided on one side of the regions where the two chambers are not adjacent to each other, wherein one sintering device is provided which applies a laser beam to a shaping region of

a three-dimensional shaped article via a transparent region in a ceiling of each of the two chambers, wherein a region of a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the powder spraying squeegee and the region of the table are divided by a second shield plate, wherein one main shaft for cutting a sintered three-dimensional shaped article and a three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism for the main shaft are provided within the region of the table, wherein the three-dimensional-direction drive mechanism, by which the main shaft is moved, is provided within the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other, wherein a horizontal-direction drive mechanism for the sintering device is provided on an upper side of the ceiling of the regions where the two chambers are adjacent to each other and wherein a control device is provided which alternately moves the one main shaft and the one sintering device and one powder spraying squeegee corresponding to the one powder supply device between the two chambers.

[Claim 4]

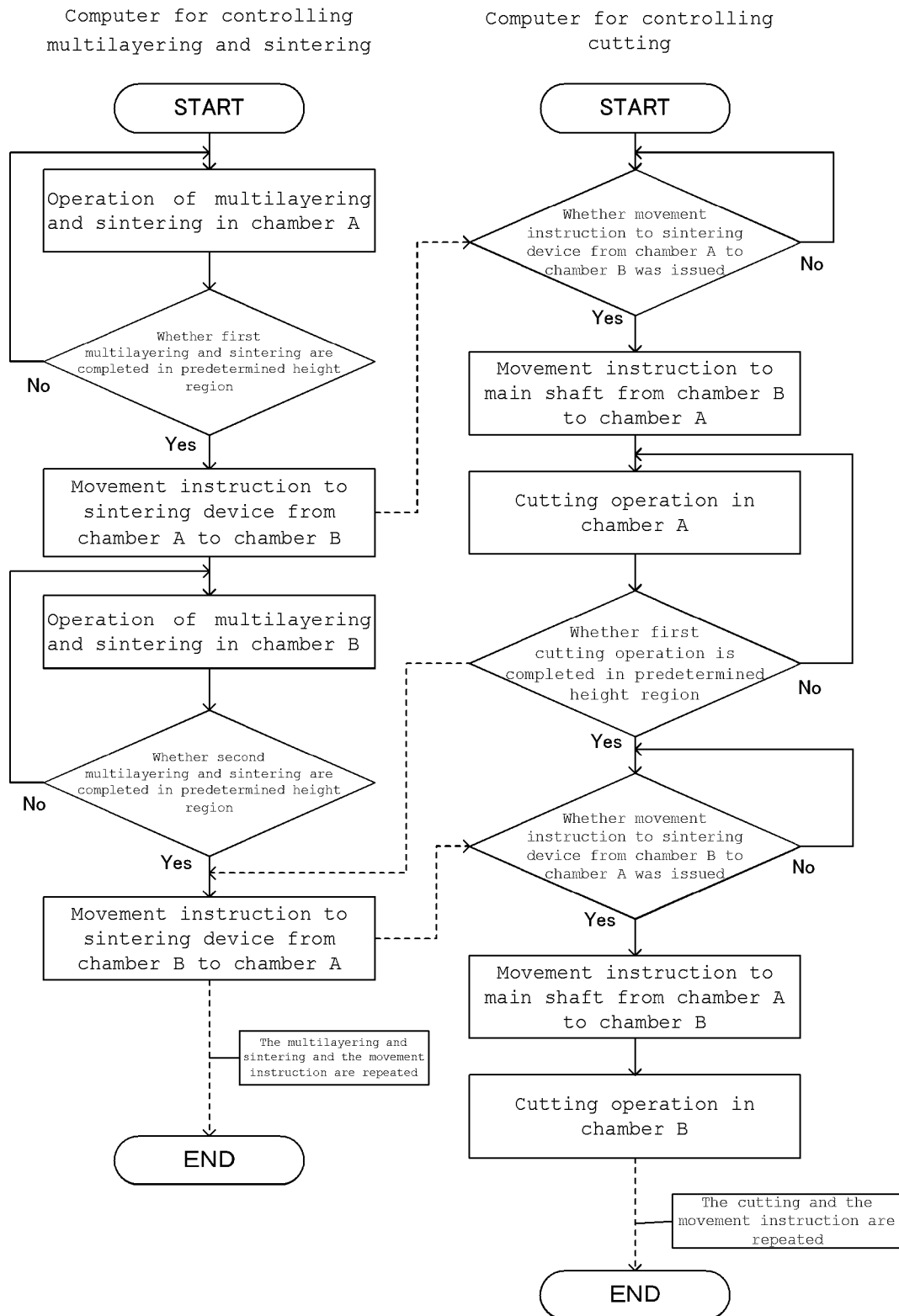
The three-dimensional shaping device according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein a ball screw or a chain for movement which moves the powder spraying squeegee in a horizontal direction is provided in the region of the table, and a rotation shaft which transmits rotation drive to the ball screw or the chain for movement penetrates through the second shield plate and is coupled to a rotation drive mechanism.

[Claim 5]

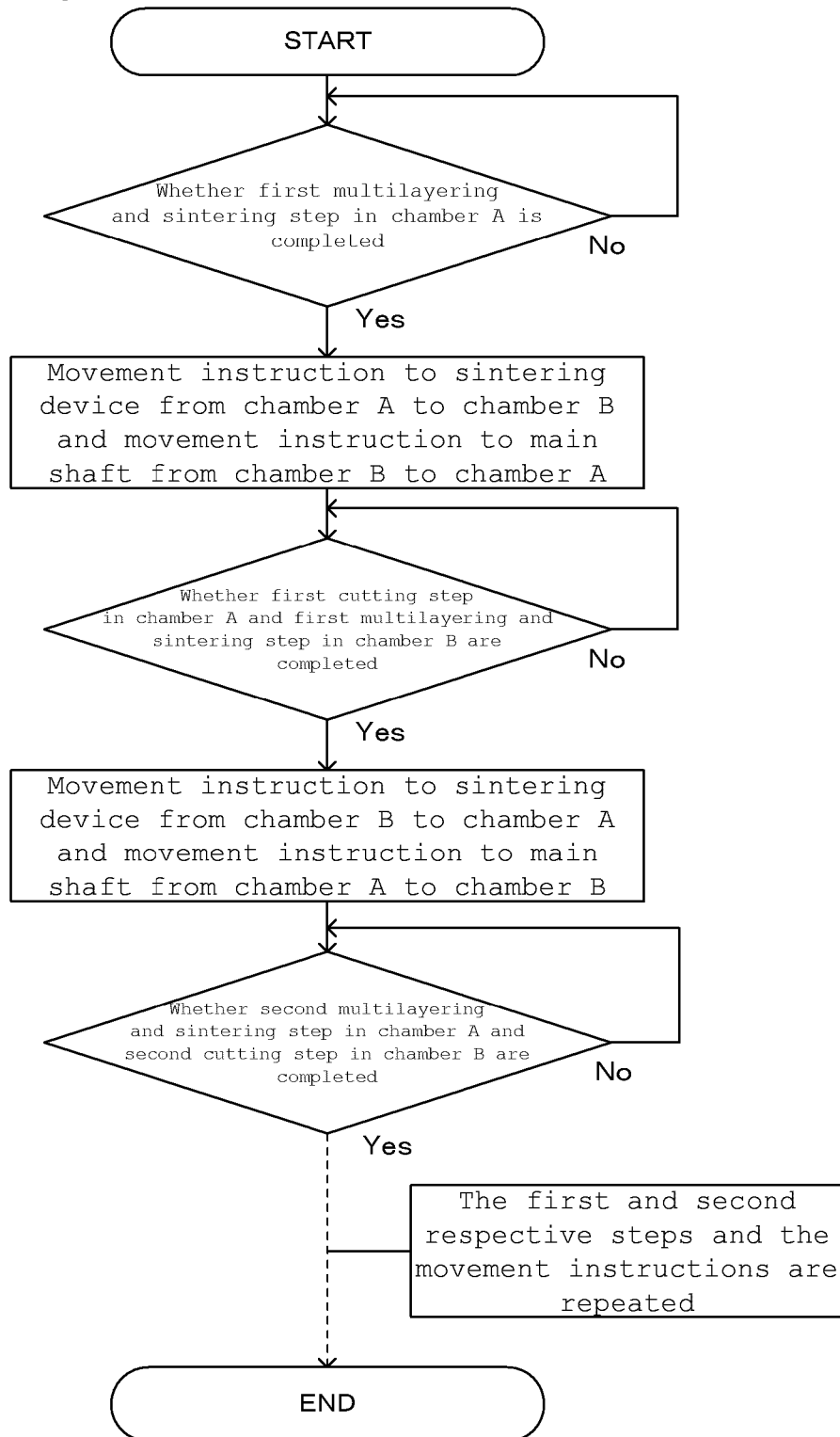
The three-dimensional shaping device according to any

one of claims 1 to 3, wherein a support member which supports the powder spraying squeegee and which is moved in a horizontal direction together with the powder spraying squeegee is fixed to a door that slides within the second shield plate, and the door has a horizontal width larger than that of the second shield plate such that a state where an opening portion is not formed in the sliding is made possible to be realized and then the door is coupled to the horizontal-direction drive mechanism.

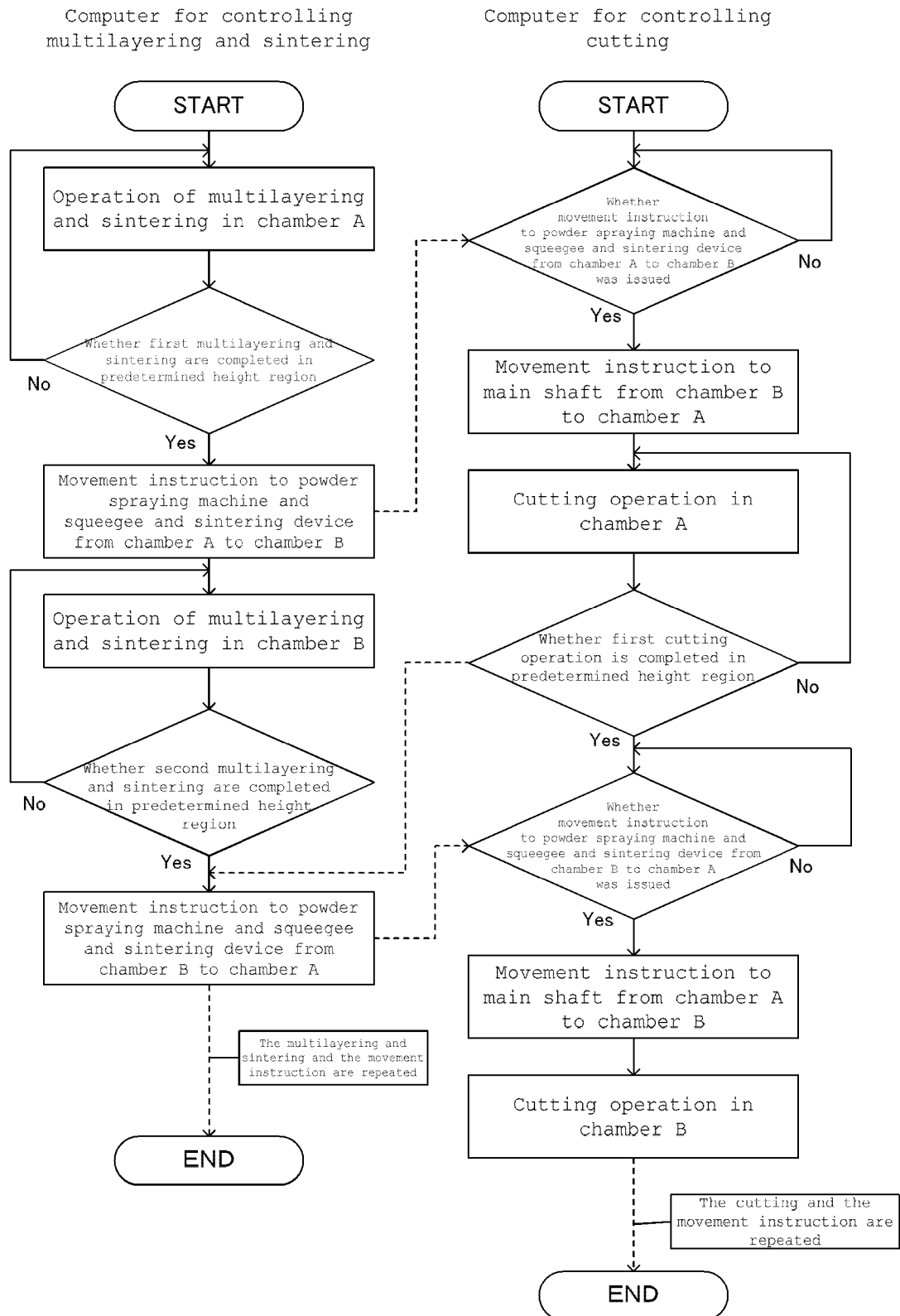
【Fig.1-2】



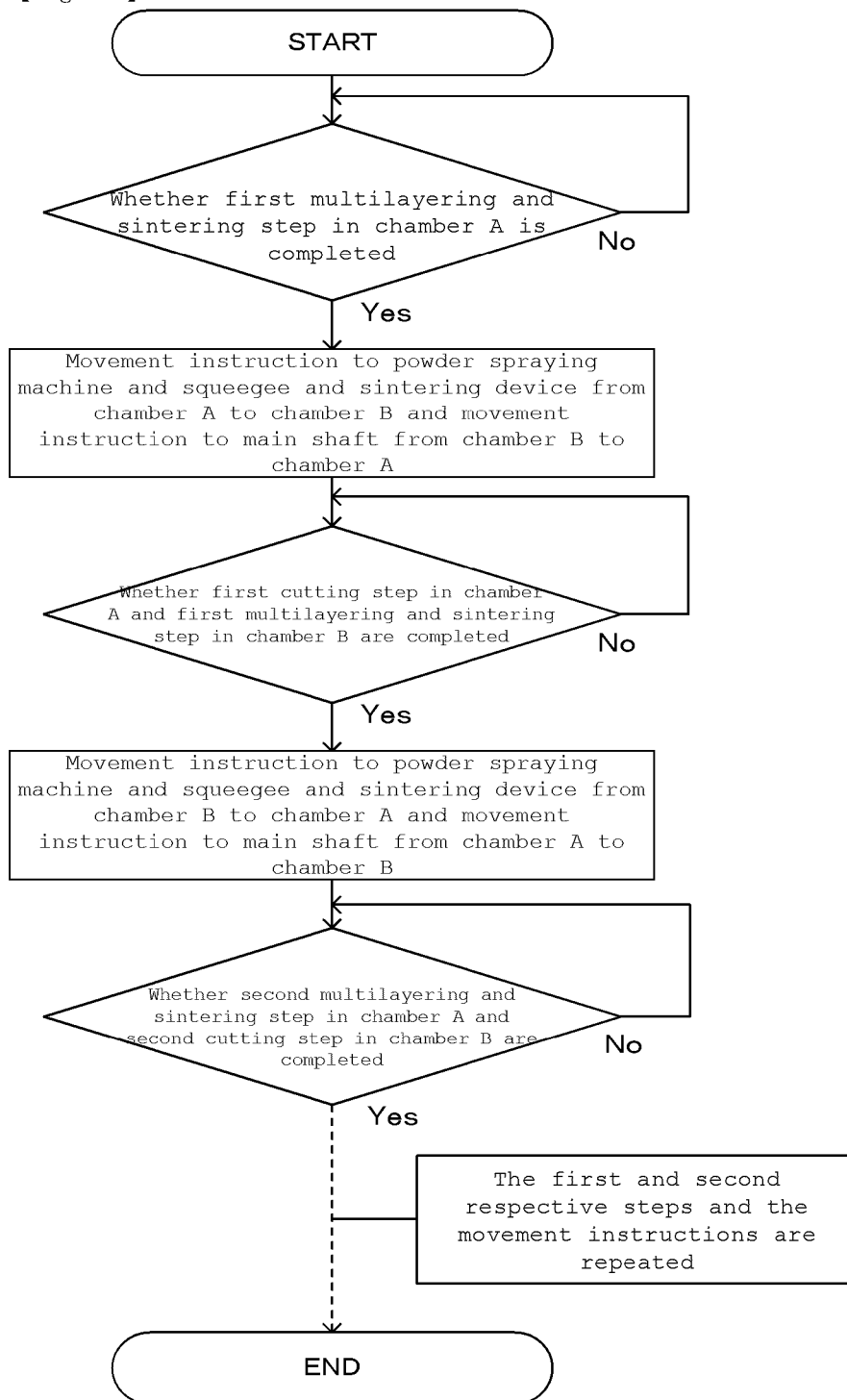
【Fig.1-3】



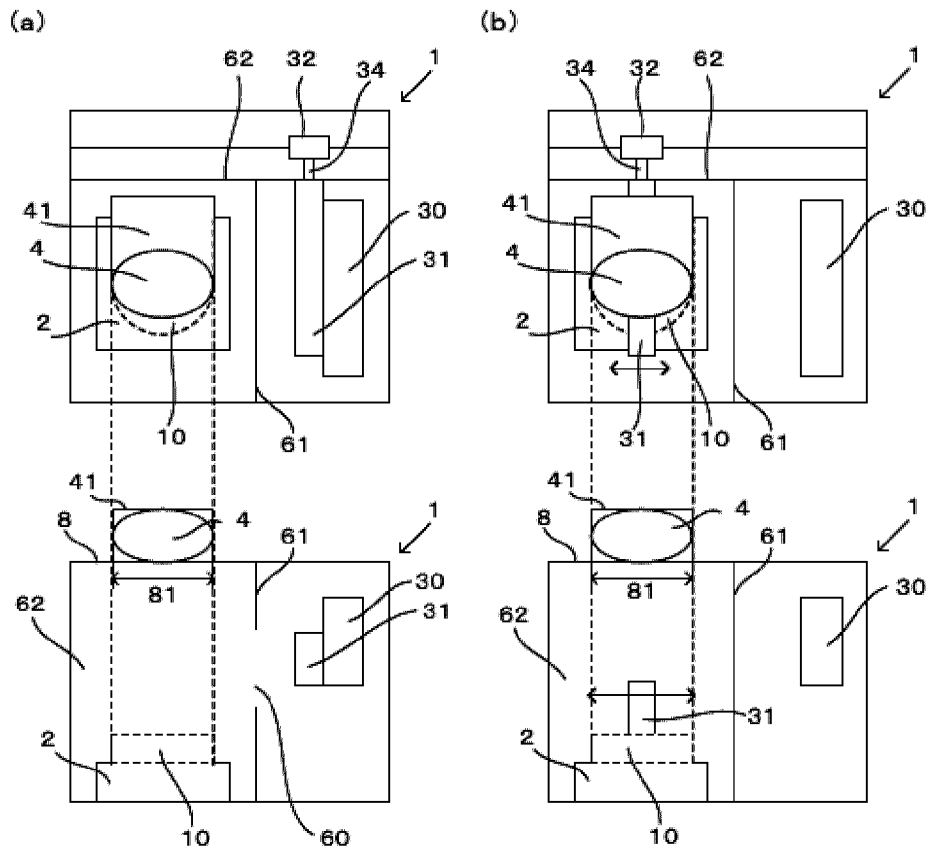
【Fig.2-2】



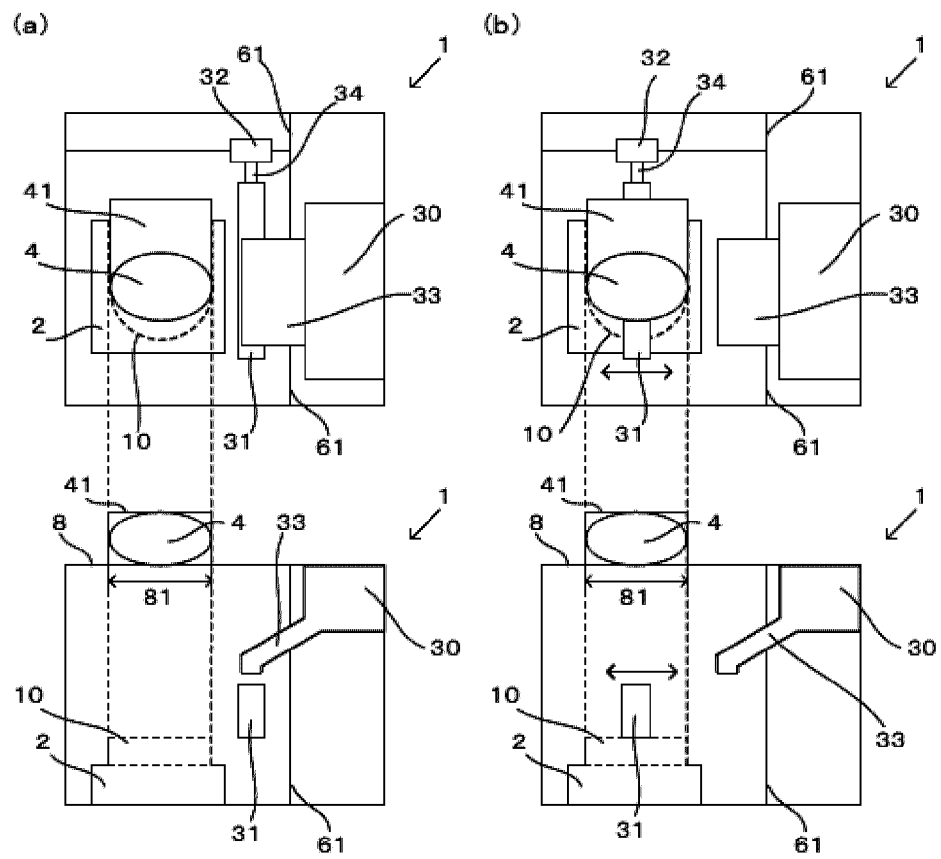
【Fig.2-3】



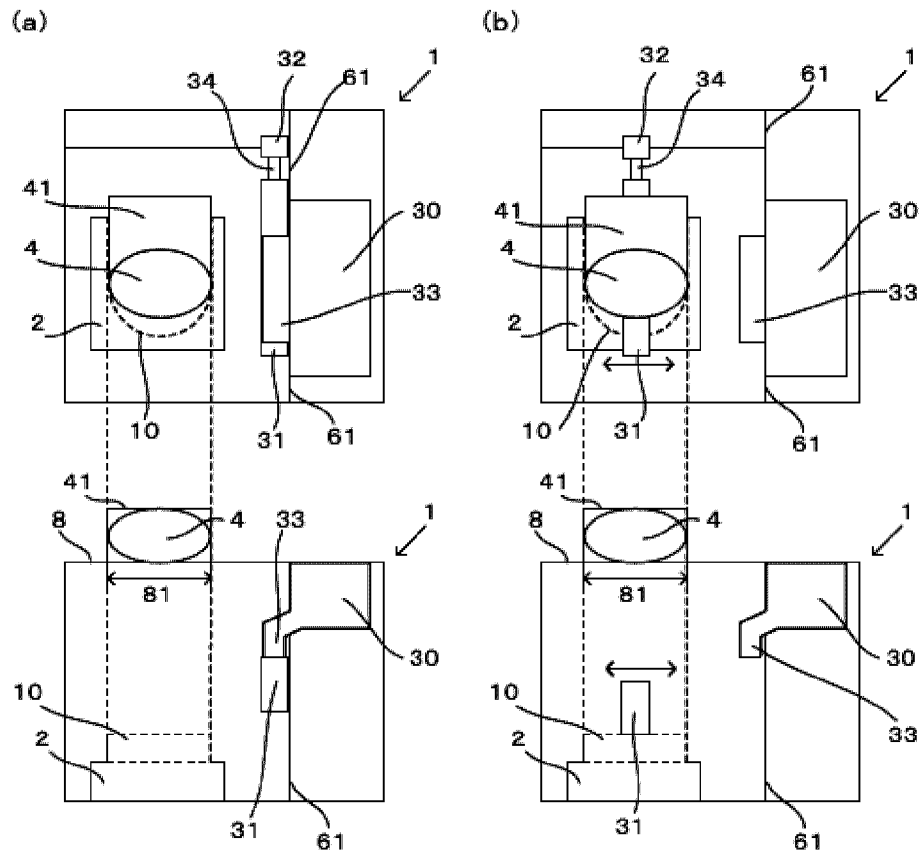
[Fig. 3]



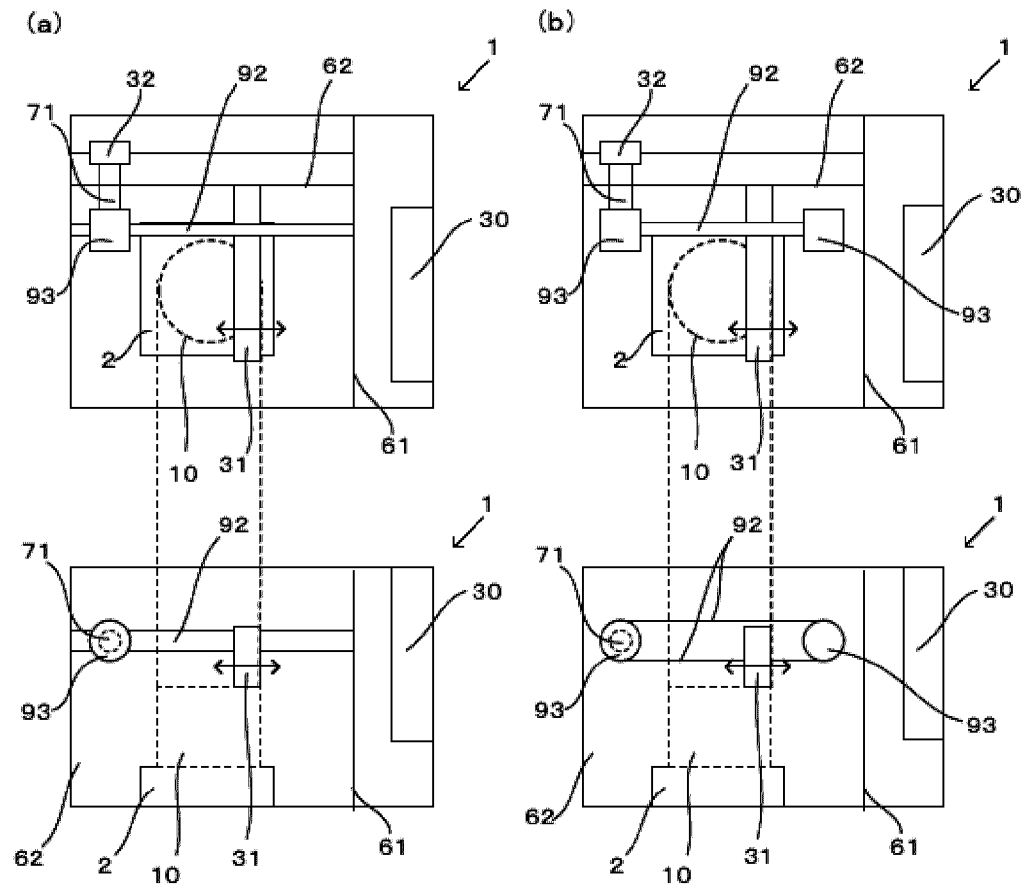
[Fig. 4]



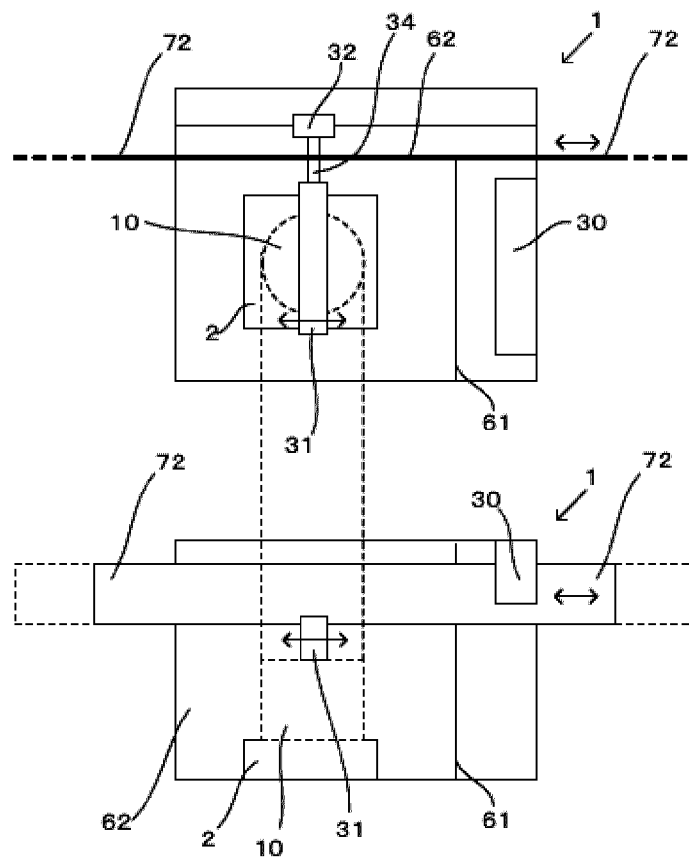
[Fig. 5]



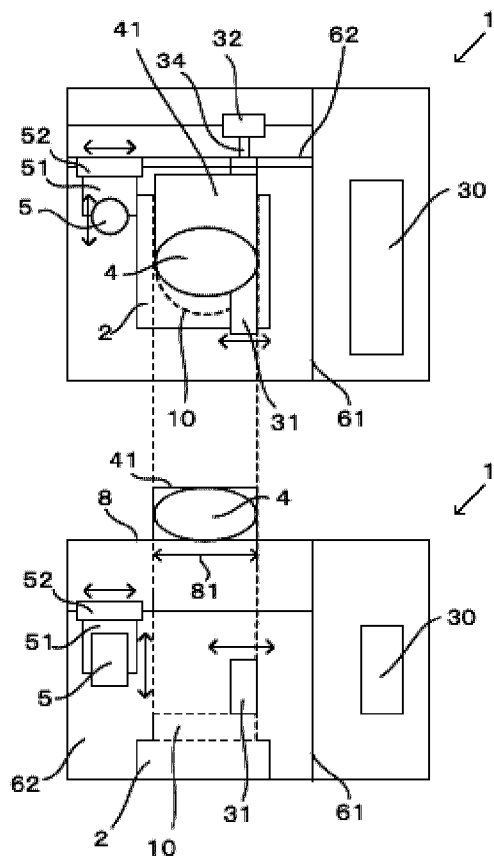
[Fig. 6]



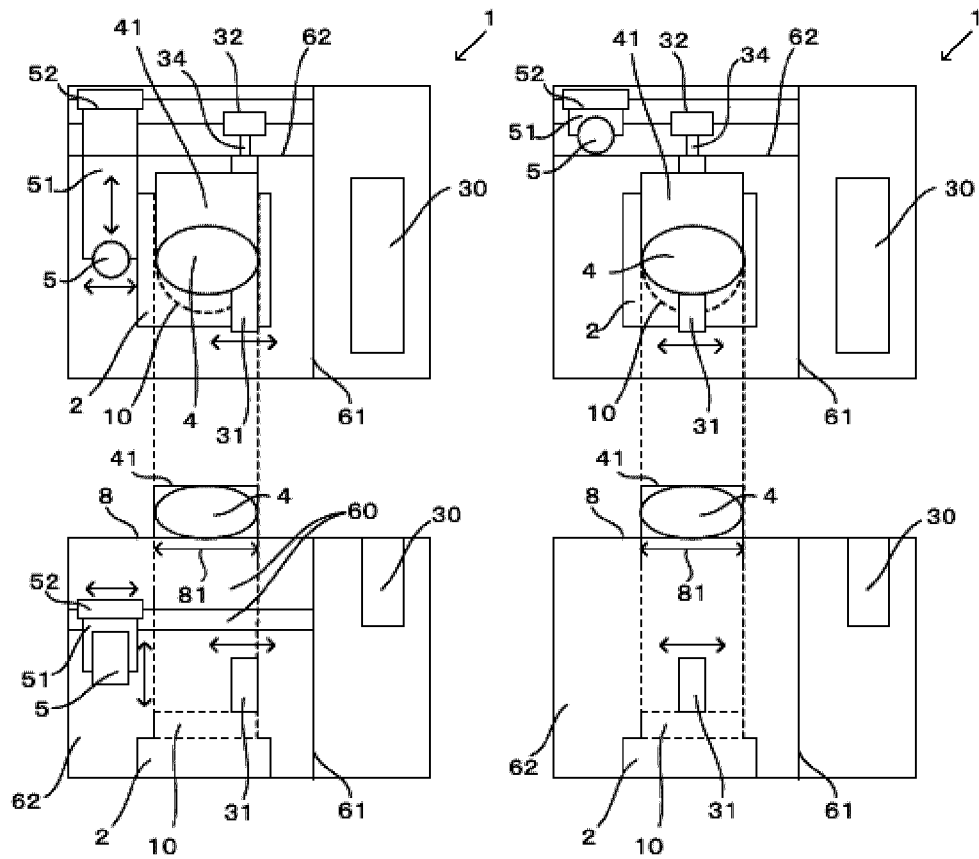
[Fig. 7]



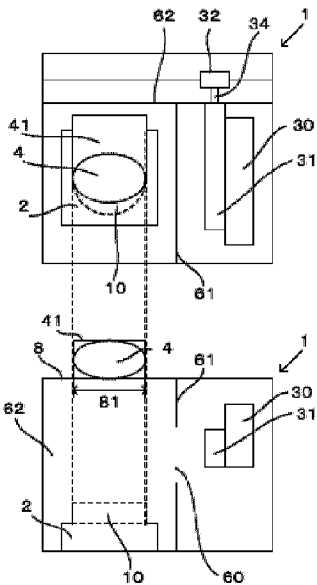
[Fig. 8-1]



[Fig. 8-2]



(a)



(b)

