

(21) Application No 8823331.7
(22) Date of filing 05.10.1988
(30) Priority data
(31) 161986 (32) 29.02.1988 (33) US

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(51) INT CL⁴
H04N 1/40

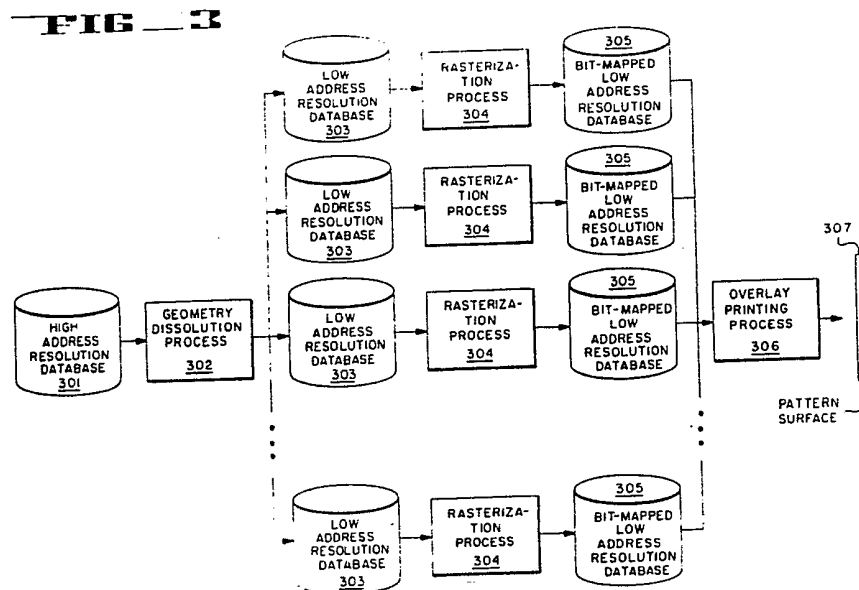
(52) UK CL (Edition J)
H4F FCQ FEL FS2 FS25R FS30C FS30E FS42M
G4H HQF H13D
U1S S2088

(56) Documents cited
GB 2183121 A

(58) Field of search
UK CL (Edition J) G4H HQF, H4F FCQ FDB FEL
FRS
INT CL⁴ H04N

(54) Rasterization system

(57) Improved address resolution in a rasterization system comprising a high resolution pattern database 301, is achieved by deriving low resolution pattern databases 303 which output to a radiant energy system 306 in which a plurality of logical passes are made across a substrate to produce photolithographically formed patterns. The plurality of passes use a combination of offset printing techniques and application of energy to photosensitive material at a plurality of intensities to provide improved address resolution.



At least one drawing originally filed was informal and the print reproduced here is taken from a later filed formal copy

FIG 1A (PRIOR ART)

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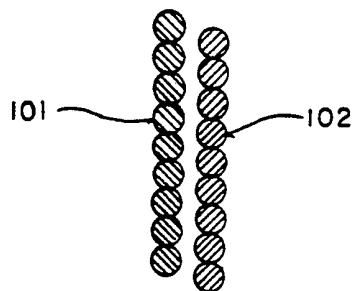


FIG 1B (PRIOR ART)

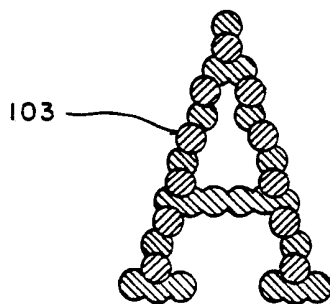


FIG 1C (PRIOR ART)

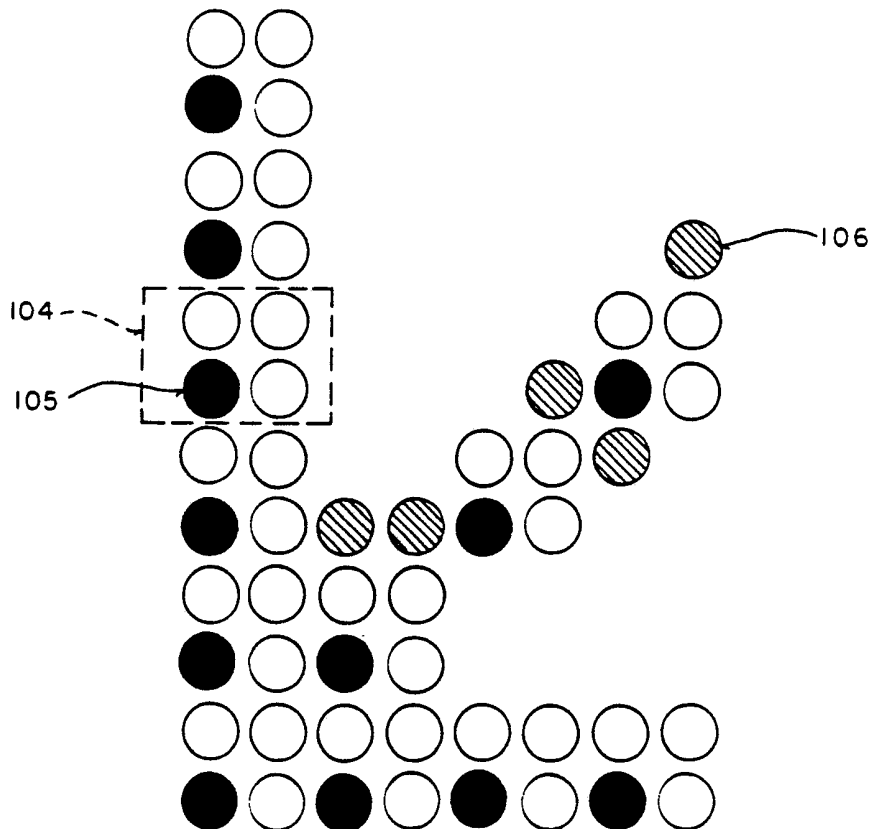


FIG. 2 (PRIOR ART)

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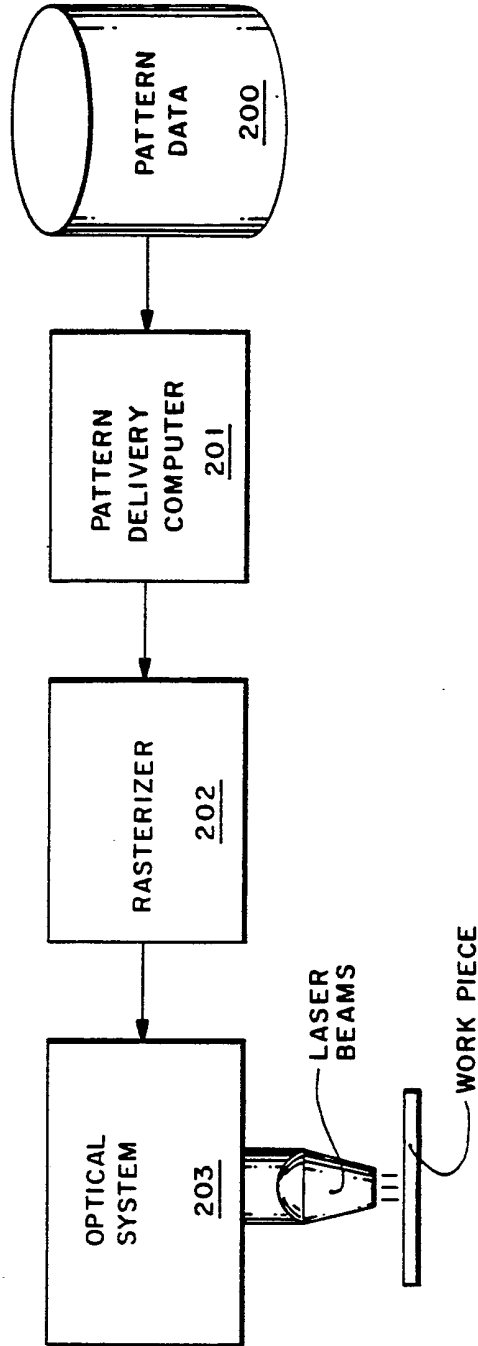
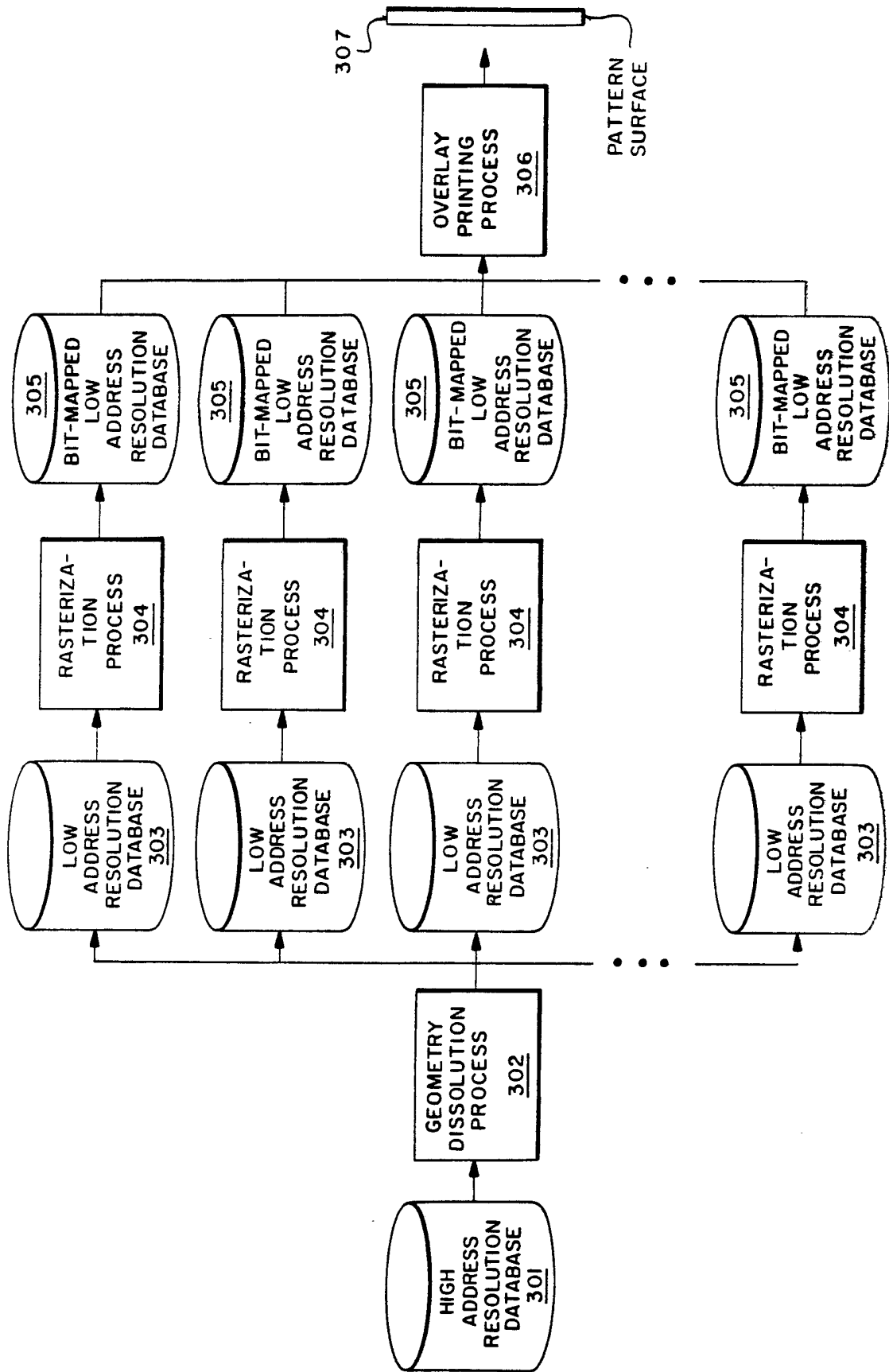


FIG 3



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FIG 4A

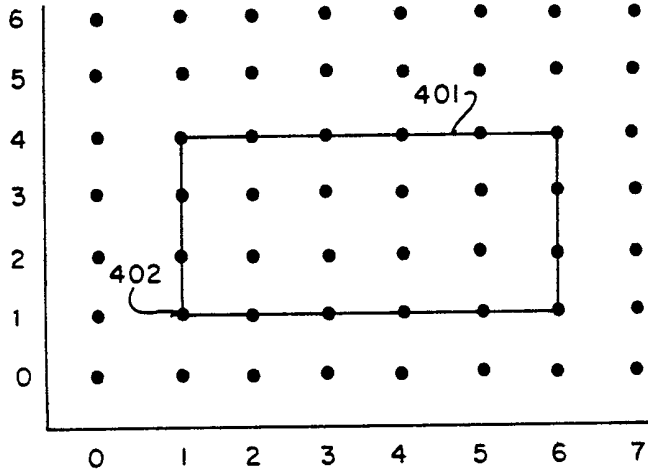


FIG 4B

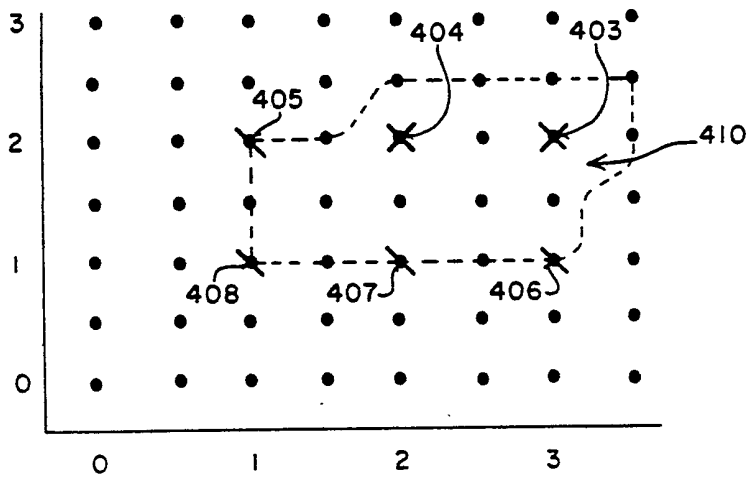


FIG 5

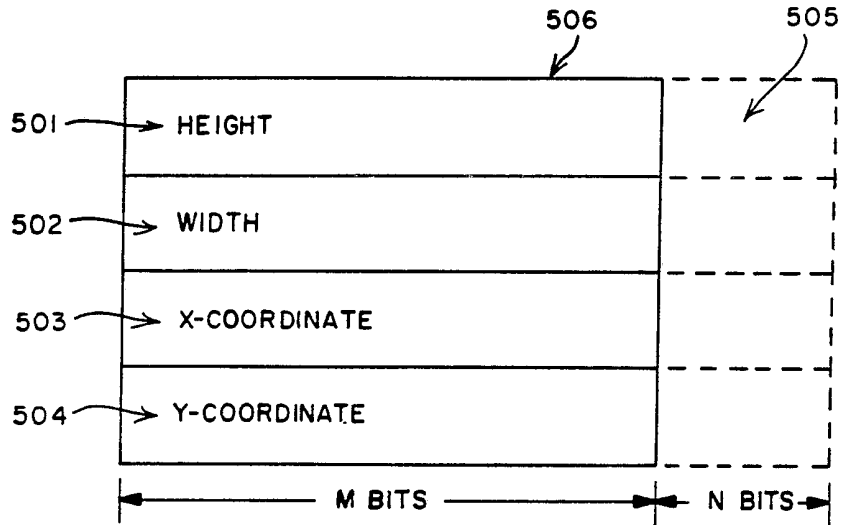


FIG 6

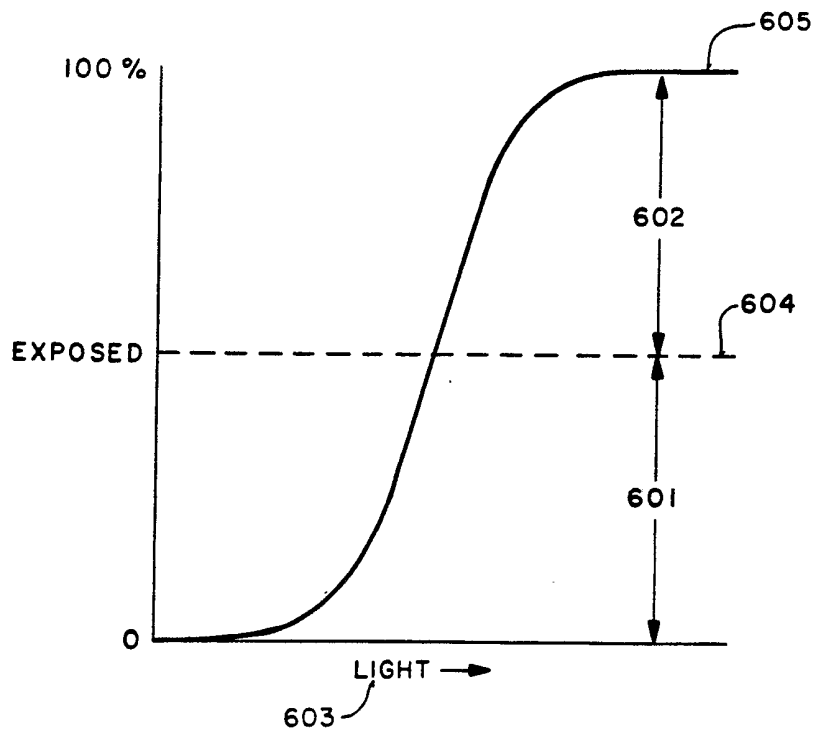


FIG 7A (PRIOR ART)

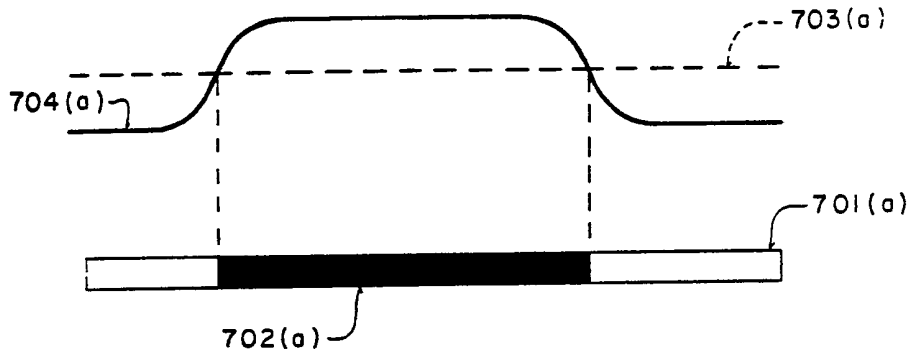


FIG 7B

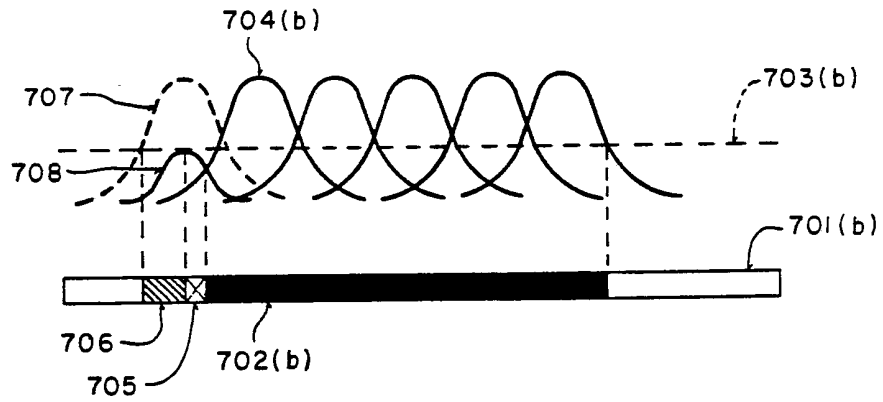


FIG 7C

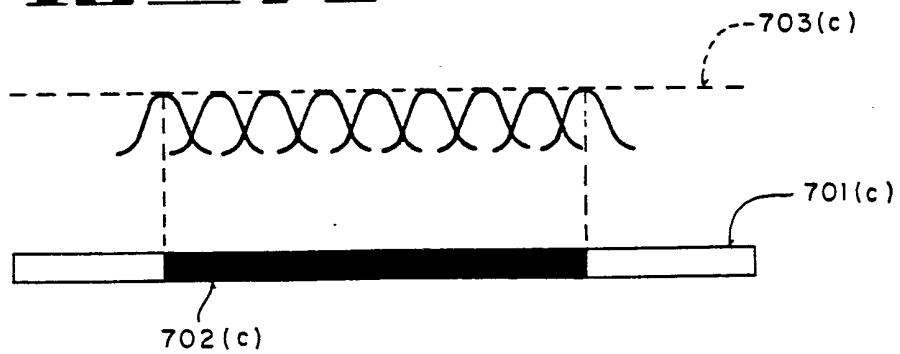


FIG 8

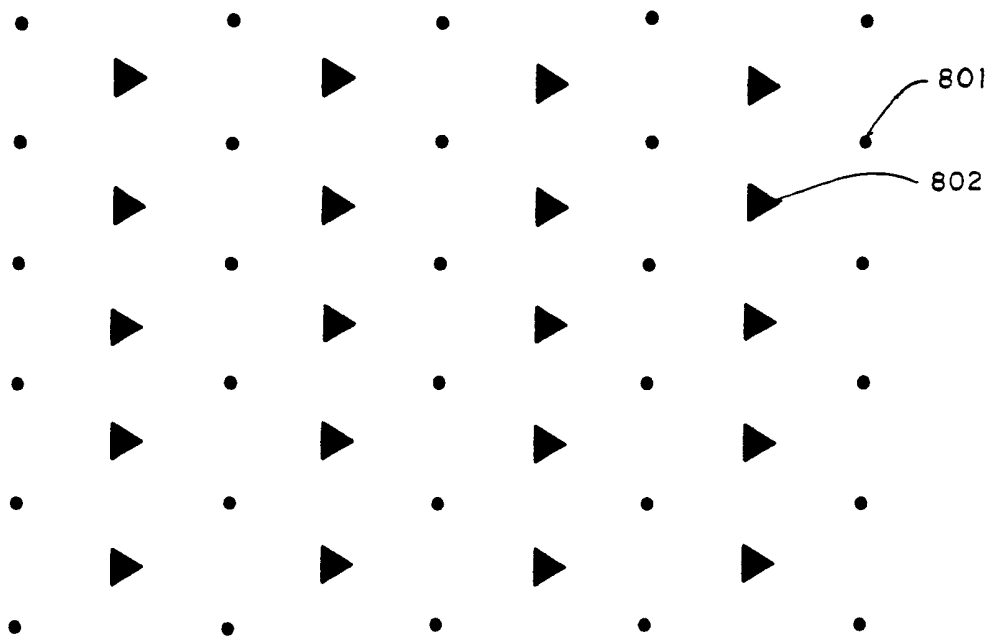
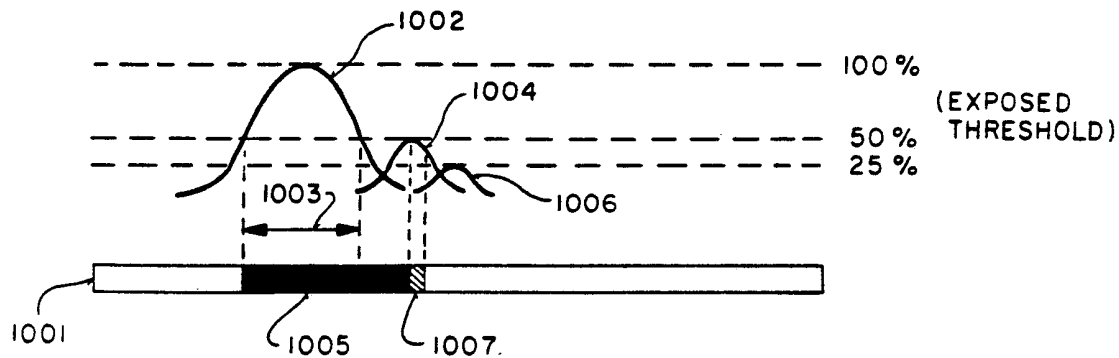
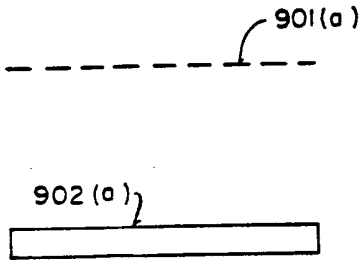


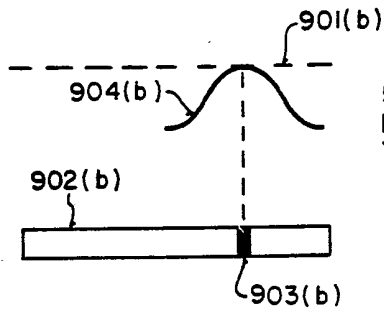
FIG 10



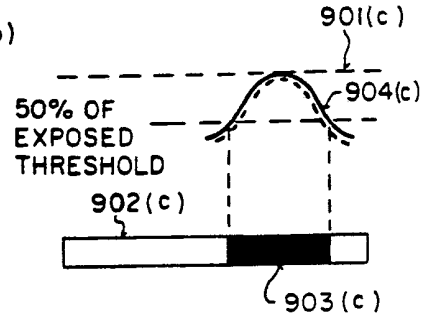
**FIG
9A**



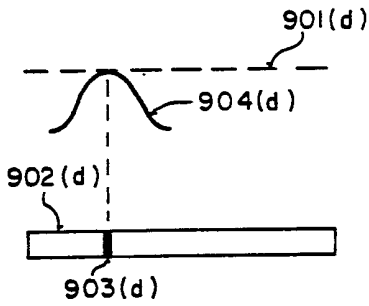
**FIG
9B**



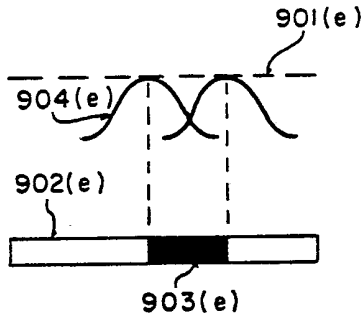
**FIG
9C**



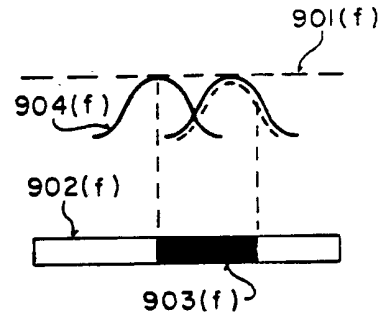
**FIG
9D**



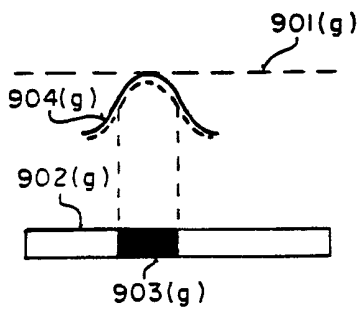
**FIG
9E**



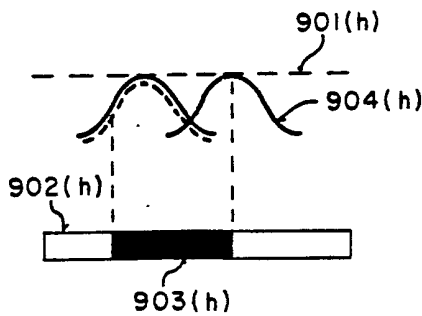
**FIG
9F**



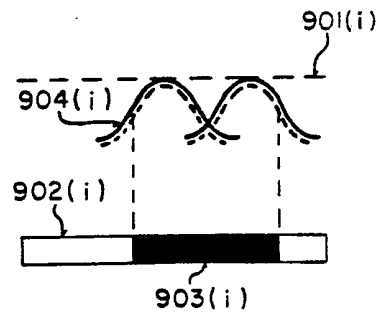
**FIG
9G**



**FIG
9H**



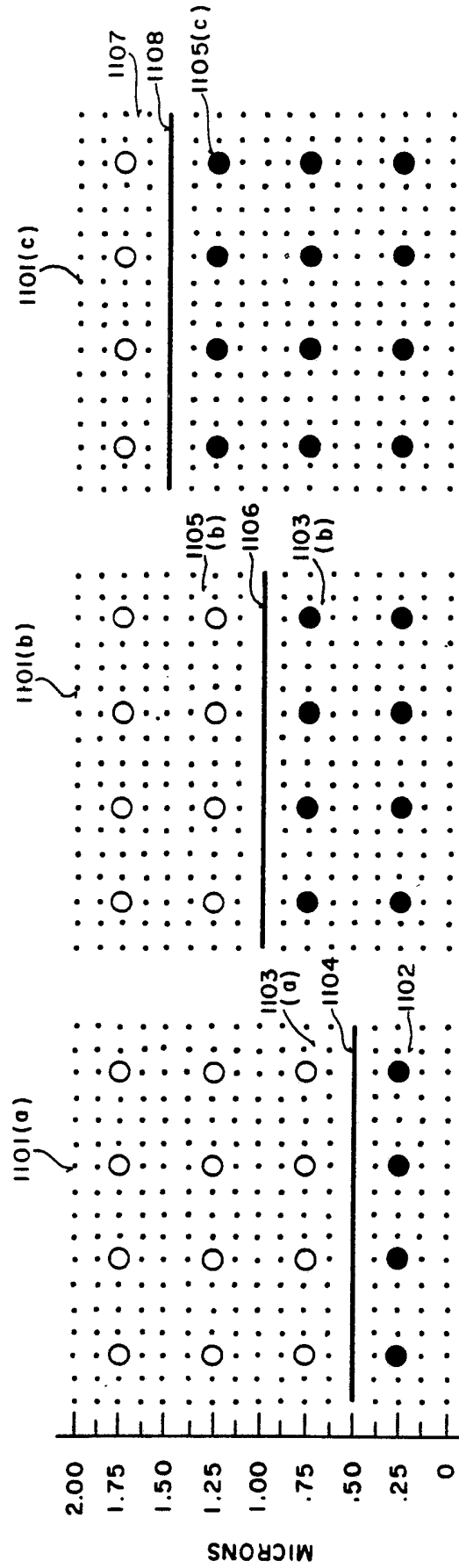
**FIG
9I**



**FIG
11C**

**FIG
11B**

**FIG
11A**



**FIG
12A**

**FIG
12B**

**FIG
12C**

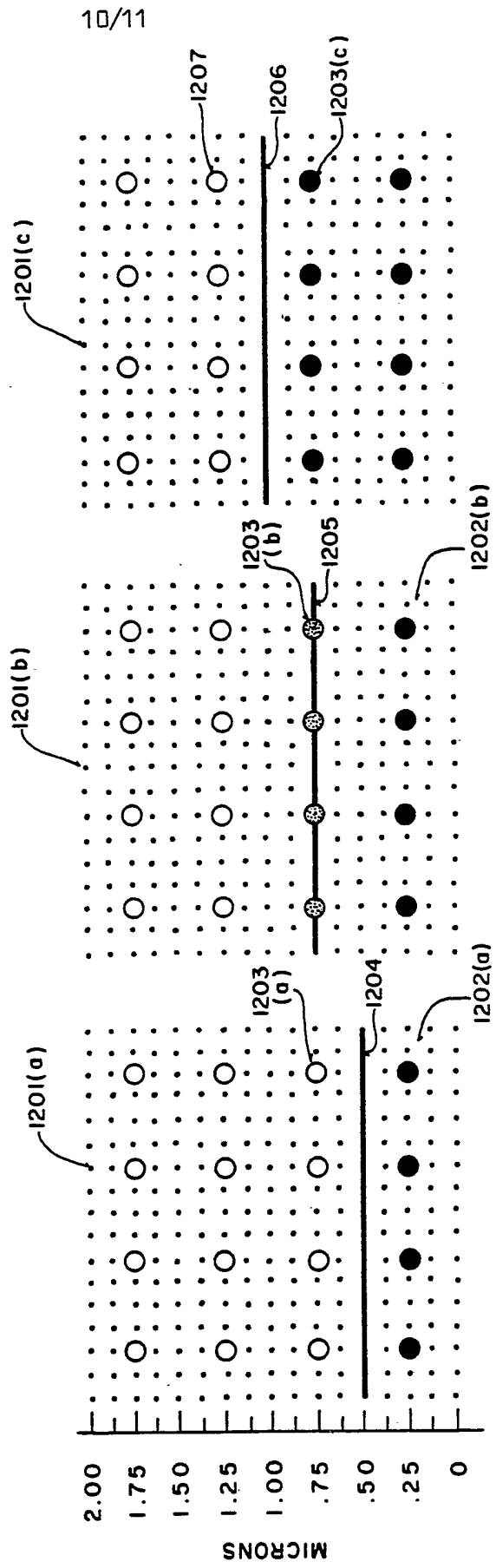
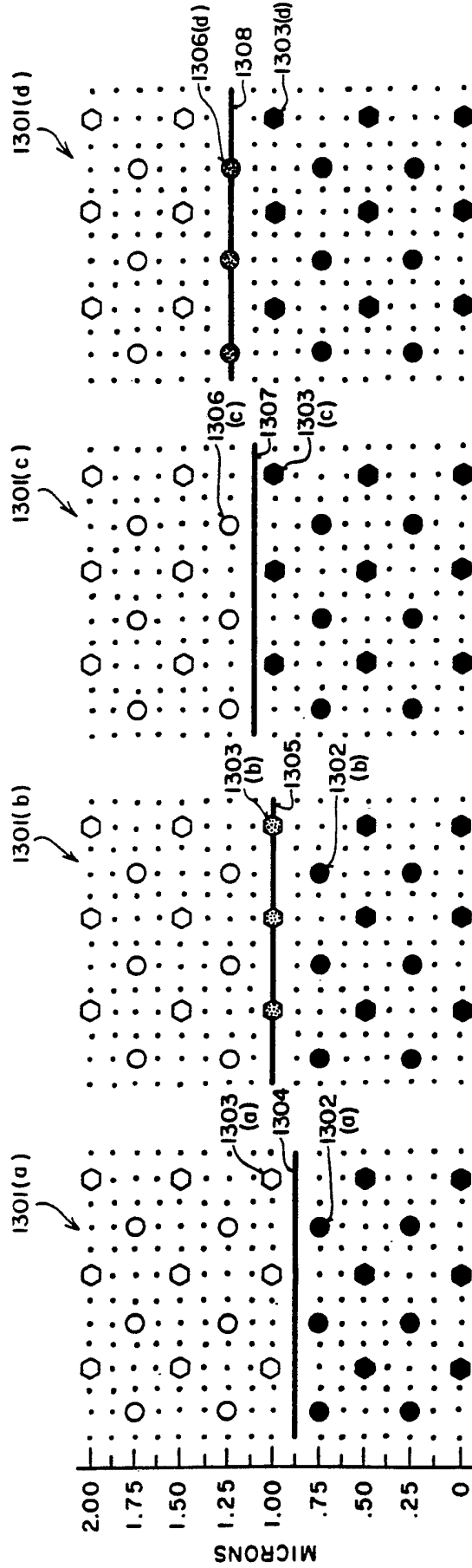


FIG 131D

FIG 131C

FIG 131B

FIG 131A



IMPROVED RASTERIZATION SYSTEM

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention.

The present invention relates to a method and
5 apparatus for high address resolution rasterization and,
more specifically, to a method and apparatus for high
address resolution rasterization using low address
resolution rasterization and printing systems.

2. Prior Art.

10 It is known to increase the address resolution
of rasterized displays through one of a number of
techniques. One method of improving address resolution is
to increase "pixel" density and decrease the diameter of
each individual pixel. Such a method yields improved
15 address resolution, however, the ability to decrease the
diameter of pixels and to increase the density is limited
in most applications.

In a second method for improving address resolution,
it is known to allow pixels to increase in density and be
20 offset from each other with some degree of overlap between
adjacent pixels. For example, referring to Figure 1(a),
two columns of pixels 101 and 102 are shown. In this
example, each of the pixels of column 102 are offset
slightly from the pixels of column 101. A specific
25 application of this technique is shown with reference to
Figure 1(b). The letter "A" 103 is shown represented as a
plurality of overlapping and offset pixels. This method is
utilized by a number of dot matrix printer companies to
produce what is often referred to as "near-letter-quality"
30 print.

Other pertinent art includes a method, utilized by the Spectrum C2500 Series Plotter manufactured by Versatec of Santa Clara, California, in which low address resolution plot data is accepted and utilizes for plotting at a
5 plotter's normal plotting address resolution. Referring to Figure 1(c), when data is outputted by the plotter, each input bit to the plotter (represented by a darkened pixel in Figure 1(c)), such as bit 105, is translated into a 2 x 2 pixel area, such as area 104. In Figure 1(c), bits
10 added by the translation are not blackened. A smoothing algorithm is define to minimize two-pixel steps on non-orthogonal lines. The bits added by this smoothing algorithm, such as bit 106, are indicated in Figure 1(c) with hash marks.

15 It is further known to utilize a rasterization system in the fabrication of photolithographically formed patterns for production of integrated circuits. Such a system is disclosed in copending application entitled "RASTERIZER FOR PATTERN GENERATOR", Serial No. 784,856, filed October 4,
20 1985 and assigned to the assignee of the present application.

It is desired to develop an improved technique for providing high address resolution output from a low address resolution system and, more specifically, to develop such a
25 system for use with a rasterizer used in the generation of photolithographically formed patterns.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

A method for providing improved address resolution output in a system used in production of
5 photolithographically formed patterns. The method has particular application in the production of photolithographically produced masks and the like for production of integrated circuits.

The present invention discloses a method for printing
10 high address resolution printed patterns from a high address resolution database utilizing a low address resolution printing system. The present invention discloses creating a plurality of low address resolution databases based on the high address resolution database and
15 utilizing the plurality of low address resolution databases as input to a low address resolution printing system. The low address resolution printing system prints each of the low address resolution databases overlaid on each other, yielding a high address resolution printed pattern.

20 The preferred embodiment discloses use of a plurality of logical passes of a laser optical system to expose photosensitive material. A first set of passes exposes a first set of areas. Each of the passes in the first set may vary in dosage, thus exposing varying amounts of the
25 photosensitive material. A second set of passes is made to expose a second set of areas, the second set of areas offset from the first. Each of the passes in the second set of passes may also vary in dosage of light.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1(a) is a diagram illustrating a known method of increasing address resolution of pixels by offsetting columns of pixels.

Figure 1(b) further illustrates the known method of offsetting pixels to produce improved address resolution characters.

10

Figure 1(c) illustrates a known method of displaying improved address resolution data from low address resolution input.

15 Figure 2 is a block diagram showing a known rasterizer as may be utilized by the present invention.

Figure 3 is a data flow diagram illustrating a method of the present invention.

20

Figure 4(a) and 4(b) are illustrative of formation of a geometric object by the present invention.

25 Figure 5 is illustrative of the input data to a rasterizer of the present invention.

Figure 6 is a graph illustrating a characteristic of photoresistive material.

Figure 7(a) through 7(c) are diagrams illustrating the effect of exposure of photoresist to a radiant energy source.

5 Figure 8 is a pixel map illustrating pixel formation of the present invention.

Figure 9(a) through 9(i) are diagrams further illustrative of the effect of exposure photoresist to a radiant energy
10 source.

Figure 10 is a diagram further illustrative of the effect of exposure of photoresist to a radiant energy source.

15 Figures 11(a) through 11(c), 12(a) through 12(c) and 13(a) through 13(d) are diagrams illustrative of anti-aliasing and interstitial grid printing methods of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

A method and apparatus for providing improved resolution output in a system used in production of photolithographically formed patterns is disclosed. In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth such as specific dimensions, etc. in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be obvious, however, to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known structures and circuits have not been set forth in detail in order not to unnecessarily obscure the present invention.

The present invention discloses a method of generating high address resolution printed patterns from a high address resolution database in a printing system utilizing a low address resolution printer. The preferred embodiment may be utilized to generate photolithographically formed patterns for the production of integrated circuits and the like. Further, the preferred embodiment is described with reference to a laser optical system. It will be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that the methods of the present invention are equally applicable to other systems utilizing radiant energy to expose a substrate, an example being an electron beam system.

In the prior art, it is known to utilize the low address resolution printer of the present invention to produce photolithographically formed patterns. Such a system is exemplified by Figure 2 and is further disclosed by Applicant's copending application Serial No. 784,856,

entitled "Rasterizer For Pattern Generator", filed October 4, 1985, which is incorporated here by reference.

Referring to Figure 2, a pattern delivery computer 201 receives conventional data 200 defining patterns and
5 converts the data to the format utilized by the rasterizer 202. Typically, in the fabrication of a semiconductor device each level of the device is "digitized" to delineate objects on that level. This data may set out the location, size and orientation of a trapezoid or other geometric
10 object. The pattern delivery computer 201 converts the data into two geometric objects, rectangles and triangles. The rasterizer 202 operates on this converted data forming pixel data which drives the optical system 203.

It is an object of the present invention to utilize
15 the pattern delivery computer 201, rasterizer 202 and optical system 203 to produce higher address resolution printed patterns.

Referring now to Figure 3, a data flow diagram illustrating a method of the present invention is
20 illustrated. A high address resolution database 301 defining patterns is utilized as input to a geometry dissolution process 302. The geometry dissolution process 302 may be executed on the pattern delivery computer 201 or other processor. The geometry dissolution process 302 may
25 utilize any of a plurality of methods to create a plurality of low address resolution databases 303. As examples of methods which may be employed by the geometry dissolution process, a table look-up routine, in-line decision trees or other algorithm may be employed.

For example, utilizing rectangles as an example of a geometric object, the following algorithm may be utilized. Assume a rectangle may be described with reference to its origin (X,Y), height (H) and width (W). A plurality N of low address resolution databases 303 may be output by the geometry dissolution process 302 utilizing the algorithm:

```
For each geometry (i.e. rectangle)
  Load geometry (X0, Y0, H0, W0)
  For each pass 1 to N

    Xpass = (X0 + X_Offsetpass) >> log2N
    Ypass = (Y0 + Y_Offsetpass) >> log2N
    Hpass = ((Y0 + H0 + H_Offsetpass) >> log2N) - Ypass
    Wpass = ((X0 + W0 + W_Offsetpass) >> log2N) - Xpass

    Store (Xpass, Ypass, Hpass, Wpass)
  End pass
End Geometry
```

The particular X_Offset_{pass}, Y_Offset_{pass}, W_Offset_{pass} and H_Offset_{pass} are determined based on the value of N and the particular geometry (i.e. rectangle, triangle, etc). The value of X_{pass}, Y_{pass}, H_{pass} and W_{pass} are right shifted log₂N unit positions.

As an example, referring to Figure 4(a), a desired rectangle 401 is shown. The desired rectangle 401 has an origin 402 (X,Y) at (1,1) with a height of (H) of three units and a width (W) of five units. Assume a system in which two low address resolution geometries are generated (i.e. N=2). In such a system, X_Offset₁, Y_Offset₁, H_Offset₁, and W_Offset₁ are equal to 1. For pass 2, X_Offset₂, Y_Offset₂, H_Offset₂, W_Offset₂ are equal to 0. Then:

X₁ = 1

Y₁ = 1
H₁ = 1
W₁ = 2

and

5

X₂ = 0
Y₂ = 0
H₂ = 2
W₂ = 3

Figure 4(b) is illustrative of pixel grid which may be
10 printed by a low address resolution printing system.

Utilizing the geometries generated by the above algorithm,
pixels 403 and 404 are selected by the first pass and
pixels 403, 404, 405, 406, 407 and 408 are selected by the
second pass. This yields a geometry 410 which corresponds
15 closely with desired rectangle 401.

The low address resolution databases 303 are used as
input to a rasterization process 304. The rasterization
process 304 may process the plurality of low address
resolution databases 303 either in parallel or serially.
20 The rasterization process 304 is described in more detail
with reference to Applicant's above-mentioned copending
application.

The rasterization process 304 produces as output a
plurality of bit mapped low address resolution databases
25 305 corresponding to the low address resolution databases
303. The format of these databases 305 as utilized by the
preferred embodiment is described in more detail by
Applicant's above-mentioned copending application and with
reference to Figure 5.

30 Figure 5 illustrates the general format for the height
501, width 502, x-coordinate 503 and y-coordinate 504 data.
The particular format of bits 506 are described in the
Applicant's above-mentioned copending application. Bits

505 are provided in addition to bits 506 to provide additional addressing capability utilized by the present invention.

In general, a rectangle or right 45° triangle may be described with reference to its height 501, width 502, origin (comprised of an X axis coordinate 503 and Y axis coordinate 504) and its orientation (northwest of origin, southwest of origin, southeast of origin or northeast origin). The present invention utilizes a plurality N of additional bits 505 to define the plurality of geometries corresponding to the bit mapped low address resolution databases 305.

The bit mapped low address resolution databases 305 are utilized as inputs to an overlay printing process 306 in which a substrate 307 is printed with a desired pattern. In the preferred embodiment, the substrate 307 may comprise a photoresistive mask for production of integrated circuits or the patterns may be written directly onto a semiconductor wafer. The patterns may be written to the substrate 307 in a single pass or may be written in a plurality of separate passes corresponding to each of the bit mapped low address resolution databases. The term "logical pass" as used herein shall refer to the writing of one of the bit-mapped low address resolution databases whether in a separate physical pass or combined in a single pass.

The present invention combines techniques of interstitial grid or offset printing with an anti-aliasing or "line smoothing" technique in which a plurality of geometries are printed overlaid with each other, based on

the plurality of bit mapped low address resolution databases 305.

Referring briefly to Figure 6, a characteristic of photoresist is detailed. Typically, photoresist is unexposed (area 601) until after the application of a certain amount of light (or other radiant energy) 603. The photoresist then reaches an exposed threshold 604 and remains exposed during the application of more light (area 602). The exposure of photoresistive material to light may be in a single exposure or may be cumulative over some plurality of exposures.

Referring now to Figure 7(a), a substrate 701(a) is shown comprising a photoresistive material. The substrate 701(a) is exposed to a light source over its surface such as that shown by graph line 704(a). When the light source reaches the exposed threshold of the photoresistive material shown by line 703(a), the surface of the substrate is exposed upon development (area 702(a)).

As shown by Figure 7(b), substrate 701(b) may be exposed with a plurality of pixel exposures, such as shown graphically by line 704(b). Due to the properties discussed above of photoresistive material, substrate 701(b) is properly exposed in area 702(b). Assume it is desired to expose area 705. Exposure of another pixel 707 would result in both areas 705 and 706 being exposed, yielding an exposed area larger than desired. By reducing the dosage of the light source as shown by graph 708, only desired area 705 is exposed to the exposure threshold level 703(b).

As illustrated by Figure 7(c), the present invention discloses exposing an area 702(c) of substrate 701(c) through use of a plurality of logical passes of the beams from the optical system 203 of Figure 2. In a printing system utilizing a low address resolution printer, the logical passes may be offset from each other. For example, in the preferred embodiment, an interstitial grid is utilized in which a first set of logical passes exposes a first set of pixel locations and a second set of logical passes exposes a second set of pixel locations. The second set of pixel locations is offset and centered between the first set of pixels. For example, with reference to Figure 8, a first plurality of pixels are represented by dots such as dot 801 and a second plurality of pixels, offset and centered from the first plurality of pixels, are represented by triangles, such as triangle 802.

In the preferred embodiment, each logical pass of the laser optical system provides a light dosage approximately equal to one-half the exposure threshold level 703(c). The preferred embodiment makes two logical passes at each pixel location on each grid totalling four passes. During each pass the light source may either be on or off. Each pass provides approximately one-fourth of the 100% exposure dosage 605 of Figure 6.

Thus, for any combination of two pixel locations there are a number of possible patterns which may be printed. As illustrated by Figures 9(a) through 9(i) and the below table, in a system utilizing four logical passes of the light source (two logical passes per pixel) and each pass

yielding approximately the exposure threshold dosage of light at its peak value, nine distinct patterns may result.

The four logical passes in fact yield sixteen different combinations. For example, referring to pattern 2 in the table below, whether the light source is on in pass 3 or pass 4 will yield the same approximate pattern and only pass 3 having the light source on is illustrated in detail. In the preferred embodiment, the seven combinations not illustrated in Figures 9(a) through 9(i) are actually utilized in certain instances depending on the adjacent geometries and other factors.

In the illustrated example, pixel 1 is exposed by pass 1 and pass 2 and pixel 2 is exposed by pass 3 and pass 4. Again, it will be obvious that passes 1, 2, 3 and 4 may occur either serially or in parallel.

In the figures, Figure 9(a) corresponds to pattern number 1, 9(b) to pattern number 2, 9(c) to pattern number 3, etc.

<u>PATTERN#</u>	<u>PIXEL</u>	<u>PASS 1</u>	<u>PASS 2</u>	<u>PASS 3</u>	<u>PASS 4</u>
1	1	OFF	OFF		
	2			OFF	OFF
2	1	OFF	OFF		
	2			ON	OFF
3	1	OFF	OFF		
	2			ON	ON
4	1	ON	OFF		
	2			OFF	OFF
5	1	ON	OFF		
	2			ON	OFF
6	1	ON	OFF		
	2			ON	ON

	7	1	ON	ON		
		2			OFF	OF
5	8	1	ON	ON		
		2			ON	OF
	9	1	ON	ON		
		2			ON	ON

10 Referring to Figures 9(a)-9(i), lines 901(a)-901(i)
correspond to an exposure threshold level dosage of light
for exposing substrates 902(a)-902(i). It will be obvious
to one of ordinary skill in the art that the Gaussian
distributions represented by graphs 904(b) through 904(i)
15 and the particular number of pixels may vary. The
cumulative radiant energy dosage on any particular area of
the substrate is determinitive of exposure.

In Figure 9(a), both pixel 1 and pixel 2 are unexposed
in each pass of the light source. The result is a pattern
20 not being printed in the substrate.

In Figure 9(b), graph 904(b) illustrates pixel 2 being
exposed during one pass of the light source. The result is
exposure of area 903(b) on the substrate 902(b). Although
the particular example shows exposed area 903(b) as being
25 essentially a dot on the substrate 902(b), in fact when
combined with exposure by adjacent pixels not shown,
further patterns are developed.

In Figure 9(c), graph 904(c) illustrates pixel 2 being
exposed during both pass 3 and 4 of the light source.
30 Pixel 1 remains unexposed yielding an exposed area 903(c)
on the substrate 902(c). The combined dosage of light from
the first and second pass causes the cumulative effect of
the light on the photoresistive substrate 902(c) to yield
the exposed area 903(c). The exposed area 903(c)

corresponds approximately to the area which is under the graph 904(c) at 50% of the exposure threshold.

Referring to Figure 9(d), pixel 1 is exposed during one pass of the light source as shown graphically by graph 904(d). This results in area 903(d) being exposed on substrate 902(d). In Figure 9(d), pixel 2 remains unexposed.

Referring to Figure 9(e), as shown by graph 904(e) pixel 1 is exposed during one pass of the light source and pixel 2 is exposed during one pass of the light source. The cumulative effect of exposures of pixel 1 and pixel 2 yields exposed area 903(e) on substrate 902(e).

Referring to Figure 9(f), graph 904(f) illustrates pixel 1 being exposed during one pass of the light source and pixel 2 being exposed during two passes of the light source. This yields exposed area 903(f) on substrate 902(f).

Referring to Figure 9(g), graph 904(g) illustrates exposure of pixel 1 during two passes of the light source yielding exposed area 903(g) on substrate 902(g). In Figure 9(g), pixel 2 remains unexposed. Figure 9(g) is essentially a mirror image of Figure 9(c).

Referring Figure 9(h), graph 904(h) illustrates pixel 1 being exposed during two passes of the light source and pixel 2 being exposed during one pass of the light source yielding exposed area 903(h) on substrate 902(h). Figure 9(h) is essentially a mirror image of Figure 9(f).

Finally, Figure 9(i) illustrates graph 904(i) in which pixel 1 is exposed during two passes of the light source and pixel 2 is exposed during two passes of the light

source. The result is exposure of the area 903(i) on substrate 902(i).

Utilizing the various combinations of exposure of pixels as illustrated by Figure 9(a)-9(i), it will be obvious that geometric objects may be drawn with boundary edges at the center of a pixel or at the outer edge of a pixel area. It will be further obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that the above two pixel example is extendable to a system in which any number of pixels are utilized and the accumulative light dosage from adjacent pixels may yield a number of distinct patterns.

It is further obvious that the above example is extendable to a system in which the dosage of light is varied from pass to pass. For example, with reference to Figure 10, a first pass may expose an area of a substrate 1001 as illustrated by graph 1002 to a relative dosage of 100% exposing area 1003. A second pass may expose an area of the substrate 1001 at a relative dosage of 50%, exposing area 1005 due to the cumulative dosage effect of graph 1002 and graph 1004. A third pass may expose area 1007 due to the cumulative effect of graph 1004 and graph 1006 which has a relative dosage of 25%. The result is a yield of increasingly better address resolution through use of multiple logical pass exposures at varying intensities of overlaid geometries.

The method of utilizing interstitial grids and anti-aliasing techniques to produce better boundary resolutions is further illustrated with reference to Figures 11(a)-11(c), 12(a)-12(c) and 13(a)-13(d).

Referring to Figures 11(a)-11(c), a conventional method of writing to grids 1101(a), 1101(b), and 1101(c) is illustrated. In Figures 11(a)-11(c), pixels are offset on approximately 0.5 micron centers. In Figure 11(a), pixel row 1102 is fully exposed by a light source of a relative dosage of 100%. Pixel row 1103(a) remains unexposed. This yields an effective feature edge 1104 midway between pixel row 1102 and pixel row 1103(a). Referring to Figure 11(b), by exposing pixel row 1103(b) and leaving pixel row 1105(b) unexposed the effective feature edge is moved approximately 0.5 microns. Referring to Figure 11(c) by exposing row 1105(c) and leaving row 1107 unexposed the feature edge 1108 is moved again approximately 0.5 microns.

Referring to Figures 12(a)-12(c), the effect of utilizing an anti-aliasing technique is demonstrated. Again, grids 1201(a), 1201(b) and 1201(c) have pixels located on approximately 0.5 micron centers.

In Figure 12(a) pixel 1202(a) is fully exposed to a light source with a relative dosage of 100%. Pixel row 1203(a) remains unexposed yielding an effective feature edge 1204 approximately midway between rows 1202(a) and 1203(a). This corresponds with the edge of Figure 11(a). In Figure 12(b), pixel row 1202(b) is exposed to a light source of a relative dosage of 100% and row 1203(b) is exposed to a light source of a relative dosage of approximately 50%. As shown in connection with Figure 10, this yields an effective feature edge approximately on the center of pixel row 1203(b), line 1205. In Figure 12(c) row 1203(c) is exposed to a relative light source dosage of 100% and row 1207 remains unexposed, yielding an effective

feature edge 1206 approximately midway between rows 1203(c) and 1207. Thus, use of the anti-aliasing technique yields an effective 0.25 micron writing grid using pixels on 0.50 micron centers. It will be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that other pixel densities will yield corresponding effective writing grids.

Referring to Figures 13(a)-13(d), the combined use of an anti-aliasing technique and interstitial grids is shown to yield yet more improved address resolution. Grids 1301(a)-1301(d) have a first set of pixels, represented by circles, on approximately 0.5 micron centers and a second set of pixels, represented by hexagons, on approximately 0.5 micron centers. The second set of pixels are offset and centered between the first set of pixels.

In Figure 13(a), pixel row 1302(a) is exposed to a light source of relative dosage of 100% and pixel row 1303(a) remains unexposed. This yields an effective feature edge 1304 approximately midway in between pixel row 1302(a) and pixel row 1303(a) and corresponds approximately with Figure 9(g). Figure 13(b) illustrates pixel row 1302(b) being exposed to a light source relative dosage of 100% and pixel row 1303(b) being exposed to a light source of relative dosage of 50% yielding effective feature edge 1305. This corresponds approximately with Figure 9(h).

Figure 13(c) illustrates pixel row 1303(c) being exposed to light source of relative dosage of 100% and pixel row 1306(c) remaining unexposed yielding effective feature edge 1307 and corresponding approximately with Figure 9(c).

Figure 13(d) illustrates pixel row 1303(d) being exposed to a light source of relative dosage of 100% and pixel row

1306(d) being exposed to a light source relative dosage of 50% yielding effective feature edge 1308 and corresponding approximately with Figure 9(f). The combination of the anti-aliasing technique and interstitial grids yields a
5 0.125 micron effective writing grid in a system having a first set of pixels offset on approximately 0.5 micron centers and a second set of pixels, offset and centered from the first set of pixels, on approximately 0.5 micron centers. This allows a low address resolution printing
10 system which is able to write to pixel locations on approximately 0.5 micron centers to yield an effective 0.125 micron writing grid utilizing multiple logical passes of the light source.

15 Thus, a method and apparatus for producing high address resolution printed patterns from a high address resolution database utilizing a low address resolution printing system is described.

CLAIMS

1. A method for producing a high address resolution printed pattern from a high address resolution database, comprising the steps of:

producing a plurality of low address resolution databases based on said high address resolution database, said plurality of low address resolution database comprising a plurality of overlay patterns corresponding to said high address resolution printed pattern;

producing a plurality of low address resolution patterns from said low address resolution databases;

printing each of said low address resolution patterns overlaid on each other.

2. The method as recited by Claim 1, wherein said printing comprises the steps of:

printing a first set of low address resolution patterns utilizing a first plurality of pixels;

printing a second set of said low address resolution patterns utilizing a second plurality of pixels, said second plurality of pixels offset and centered from said first plurality of pixels.

3. The method as recited by Claim 1, wherein said printing process comprises the steps of:

printing a first of said plurality of low address resolution printed patterns on a substrate utilizing an

energy source, said energy source producing radiant energy at a first dosage;

printing a second of said plurality of low address resolution printed patterns on a substrate utilizing an energy source, said energy source producing radiant energy at a second dosage.

4. The method as recited by Claim 3, wherein said first dosage and said second dosage are approximately equal to an exposure threshold level of said substrate.

5. The method as recited by Claim 1, wherein said plurality of low address resolution databases comprises four databases.

6. The method as recited by Claim 1, wherein said plurality of low address resolution databases are generated based on a table look-up algorithm.

7. The method as recited by Claim 1, wherein said high address resolution database comprises a first X-coordinate of said pattern, a first Y-coordinate of said pattern, a first height dimension of said pattern and a first width dimension of said pattern, and said plurality of low address resolution databases are generated by a method comprising the steps of:

for each of said plurality of low address resolution databases;

- (a) accepting as input said first X-coordinate, said first Y-coordinate, said first height dimension and said first width dimension;
- (b) computing a second X-coordinate based on said first X-coordinate and a first predetermined value;
- (c) computing a second Y-coordinate based on said first Y-coordinate and a second predetermined value;
- (d) computing a second height dimension based on said first height dimension, said first Y-coordinate and a third predetermined value;
- (e) computing a second width dimension based on said first width dimension, said first X-coordinate and a fourth predetermined value.

8. In a system for producing a rasterized pattern from data representing geometric objects, said system comprising a high address resolution database representing a geometry to be printed and a low address resolution printing system, a method comprising the steps of:

producing a plurality of low address resolution databases having a format compatible with said low address resolution printing system, said plurality of said low address resolution databases representing a plurality of overlay patterns corresponding to said geometry;

producing a plurality of bit mapped low address resolution databases for input to a radiant energy system;

said radiant energy system accepting said plurality bit mapped low address resolution databases and producing a plurality of overlay patterns on a substrate in response to said bit mapped low address resolution databases.

9. The method as recited by Claim 8, wherein said step of producing a plurality of overlay patterns on a substrate comprises the steps of:

printing a first of said overlay patterns utilizing a first plurality of pixels;

printing a second of said overlay patterns utilizing a second plurality of pixels, said second plurality of pixels offset and centered from said first plurality of pixels.

10. The method as recited by Claim 8, wherein said process of producing a plurality of overlay patterns on a substrate comprises the steps of:

printing a first of said overlay patterns on said substrate utilizing a energy source, said energy source producing radiant energy at a first dosage;

printing a second of said overlay patterns of said substrate utilizing a energy source, said energy source producing radiant energy at a second dosage

11. The method as recited by Claim 10, wherein said first dosage and said second dosage are approximately equal to an exposure threshold level of said substrate.

12. The method as recited by Claim 8, wherein said plurality of low address resolution databases comprises four databases.

13. The method as recited by Claim 8, wherein said radiant energy source is a light source.

14. The method as recited by Claim 8, wherein said radiant energy source is an electron beam means.

15. In an apparatus for generating a rasterized pattern representing a geometric object, said apparatus comprising a high address resolution database and a low address resolution printing system, a method of generating said rasterized pattern comprising the steps of:

 exposing a substrate to a light source at a first set of pixel locations during a first logical pass of said light source, said light source producing radiant energy at a first dosage;

 exposing said substrate to a light source at said first set of pixel locations during a second logical pass of said light source producing radiant energy at a second dosage.

16. The method as recited by Claim 15, further comprising the steps of:

 exposing said substrate to a light source at a second set of pixel locations, said second set of pixel locations offset and centered from said first set of pixel locations during a third logical pass of a light source, said light source producing radiant energy at a third dosage;

 exposing said substrate to a light source at said second set of pixel locations during a fourth logical pass of said light source, said light source producing radiant energy at a fourth dosage.

17. The method as recited by Claim 15, wherein said first dosage and said second dosage are each approximately equal to the exposure threshold value of said substrate.

18. The method as recited by Claim 16, wherein said first dosage, said second dosage, said third dosage and said fourth dosage are each approximately equal to the one-half exposure threshold of said substrate.

19. A method for producing a high address resolution printed pattern from a high address resolution database, substantially as hereinbefore described.

20. An apparatus for generating a rasterized pattern representing a geometric object, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.