

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
2 April 2009 (02.04.2009)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2009/042784 A1

(51) International Patent Classification:
H01L 21/00 (2006.01)

(74) Agents: **SCOZZAFAVA, Mary, Rose** et al.; Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale And Dorr LLP, 60 State Street, Boston, MA 02109 (US).

(21) International Application Number:
PCT/US2008/077704

(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(22) International Filing Date:
25 September 2008 (25.09.2008)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
60/995,199 25 September 2007 (25.09.2007) US

(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **THE TRUSTEES OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK** [US/US]; 412 Low Memorial Library, 535 West 116th Street, New York, NY 10027 (US).

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

(72) Inventor; and

(75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): **IM, James, S.** [US/US]; 2828 Broadway, Apt. 9E, New York, NY 10025 (US).

Published:
— with international search report

(54) Title: METHODS OF PRODUCING HIGH UNIFORMITY IN THIN FILM TRANSISTOR DEVICES FABRICATED ON LATERALLY CRYSTALLIZED THIN FILMS

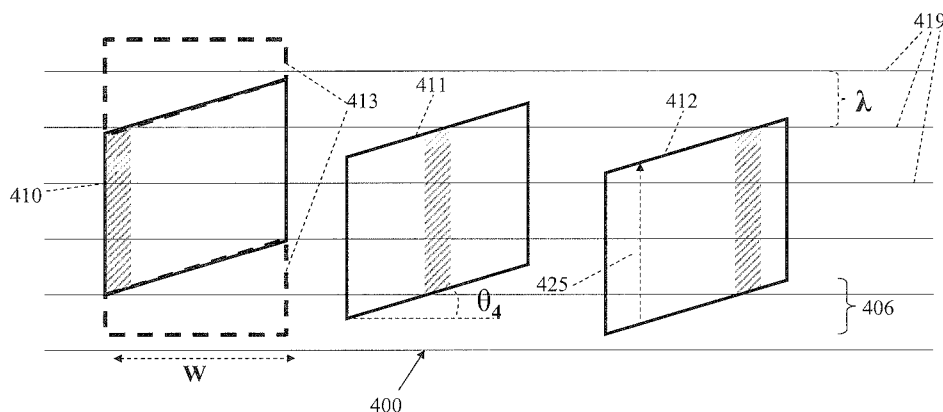


FIG. 4

(57) Abstract: Methods of producing high uniformity in thin film transistor devices fabricated on laterally crystallized thin films are described. A thin film transistor (TFT) includes a channel area disposed in a crystalline substrate, which has grain boundaries that are approximately parallel with each other and are spaced apart with approximately equal spacings. The shape of the channel area includes a non-equilateral polygon that has two opposing side edges that are oriented substantially perpendicular to the grain boundaries. The polygon further has an upper edge and a lower edge. At least a portion of each of the upper and lower edges is oriented at a tilt angle with respect to the grain boundaries. The tilt angles are selected such that the number of grain boundaries covered by the polygon is independent of the location of the channel area within the crystalline substrate.

Methods of producing high uniformity in thin film transistor devices fabricated on laterally crystallized thin films

FIELD

[0001] The disclosed subject matter relates generally to laser crystallization of thin films and specifically to methods of increasing uniformity of performance among thin film transistors formed on crystallized thin films.

BACKGROUND

[0002] In recent years, various techniques have been investigated for crystallizing or improving the crystallinity of an amorphous or polycrystalline semiconductor film. Such crystallized thin films can be used in the manufacturing of a variety of devices, such as image sensors and active-matrix liquid-crystal display (“AMLCD”) devices. In the latter, a regular array of thin-film transistors (“TFTs”) is fabricated on an appropriate transparent substrate, and each transistor serves as a pixel controller.

[0003] Crystalline semiconductor films, such as silicon films, have been processed to provide pixels for liquid crystal displays using various laser processes including excimer laser annealing (“ELA”) and sequential lateral solidification (“SLS”) processes. SLS is well suited to process thin films for use in AMLCD devices, as well as organic light emitting diode (“OLED”) and active-matrix OLED (AMOLED) devices.

[0004] In ELA, a region of the film is irradiated by an excimer laser to partially melt the film, which subsequently crystallizes. The process typically uses a long, narrow beam shape that is continuously advanced over the substrate surface, so that the beam can potentially irradiate the entire semiconductor thin film in a single scan across the surface. The Si film is irradiated multiple times to create the random polycrystalline film with a uniform grain size. Although ELA produces small-grained polycrystalline films; however, the method often suffers from microstructural non-uniformities, which can be caused by pulse to pulse energy density fluctuations and/or non-uniform beam intensity profiles. **FIG. 10A** illustrates a random microstructure that can be obtained with ELA. This figure, as

well as all other figures, are not drawn to scale, and are intended to be illustrative in nature. **FIG. 10E**, is a top view SEM image of a film process via ELA and shows the random microstructure of the film, containing randomly located grain boundaries **1002**.

SUMMARY

[0005] The application describes methods of and systems for producing high uniformity in thin film transistor devices fabricated on laterally crystallized thin films.

[0006] According to one aspect of the application, a thin film transistor (TFT) includes a channel area disposed in a crystalline substrate, said crystalline substrate comprising a plurality of grain boundaries that are approximately parallel with each other and are spaced apart with approximately equal spacings, λ . The shape of the channel area comprises a non-equiangular polygon, the polygon having two opposing side edges that are oriented substantially perpendicular to the plurality of grain boundaries and an upper edge and a lower edge. At least a portion of each of the upper and lower edges is oriented at a tilt angle with respect to the plurality of grain boundaries that is greater than 0 and less than or equal to 90 degrees. The tilt angles for the portion of each edge of the upper and lower edges selected such that the number of grain boundaries covered by the polygon is independent of the location of the channel area within the crystalline substrate.

[0007] According to another aspect of the application, the polygon comprises a concave polygon.

[0008] According to another aspect of the application, the polygon comprises a convex polygon.

[0009] According to another aspect of the application, the tilt angles for the portion of each edge of the upper and lower edges are the same.

[0010] According to another aspect of the application, the tilt angles for the portion of each edge of the upper and lower edges are different.

[0011] According to another aspect of the application, the polygon comprises a parallelogram.

[0012] According to another aspect of the application, the upper and lower edges of the parallelogram are substantially parallel with each other, and wherein the tilt angles for the upper and lower edges of the parallelogram are selected such that the vertical span for each of the upper and lower edges is about an integer multiple of the spacing between the grain boundaries.

[0013] According to another aspect of the application, in the parallelogram, the tilt angle θ for the upper and lower edges, the approximately equal spacing λ among the grain boundaries, and the distance W between the two side edges, satisfy the equation, $W \cdot \tan(\theta) = m \lambda$, with the value of m about an integer.

[0014] According to another aspect of the application, for the parallelogram, m is about 1.

[0015] According to another aspect of the application, for the parallelogram, m about an integer greater than 1.

[0016] According to another aspect of the application, the polygon comprises a quadrilateral.

[0017] According to another aspect of the application, the upper and lower edges of the quadrilateral are not parallel with each other, and the tilt angles for the upper and lower edges of the parallelogram are selected to be different, such that the vertical spans for the upper and lower edges are about different integer multiples of the spacing between the grain boundaries

[0018] According to another aspect of the application, the tilt angle θ for the upper edge or the lower edge of the quadrilateral, the approximately equal spacing λ among the grain boundaries, and the distance W between the two side edges, satisfy the equation, $W \cdot \tan(\theta) = m \lambda$, with the value of m about an integer.

[0019] According to another aspect of the application, the TFT also includes a source area and a drain area each adjacent to one of the upper and lower edges.

[0020] According to another aspect of the application, at least one of the upper and lower edges comprises a plurality of line segments, and one or more of the line segments has a tilt angle with respect to the plurality of grain boundaries that is greater than 0 and less than or equal to 90 degrees. The tilt angles for each of the one or more line segments is selected such that the number of grain boundaries covered

by the polygon is independent of the location of the channel area within the crystalline substrate.

[0021] According to yet another aspect of the application, the tilt angle for each of the one or more line segments is selected such that the vertical span for that line segment is about an integer multiple of the spacing between the grain boundaries.

[0022] According to another aspect of the application, one of the upper and lower edges includes n line segments each having the same tilt angle θ , and connects an end of a first side edge to an end of a second side edge. Further, for a distance W between the two side edges, the tilt angle θ satisfies the equation $W \cdot \tan(\theta)/n = m \lambda$, with the value of m close to an integer.

[0023] According to yet another aspect of the application, a system for processing a film includes a laser source providing a sequence of laser beam pulses, laser optics that shape each laser beam pulse into a set of shaped beamlets, each of the beamlets having a length defining the y -direction, a width defining the x -direction, and a fluence that is sufficient to substantially melt a film throughout its thickness in an irradiated region and further being spaced in the x -direction from adjacent beamlets by gaps; and a stage for supporting the film and capable of translation in at least the x -direction, wherein the ratio of the length and the width is approximately one.

[0024] According to yet another aspect of the application, a method of preparing a polycrystalline film includes providing a substrate having a thin film disposed thereon, said film capable of laser-induced melting; generating a laser beam for irradiating the film, wherein the laser beam is a line beam which causes the irradiated portion of the film to melt throughout its thickness, and wherein the irradiated portion of the film has a long axis and a short axis, and further wherein the laser beam has an intensity profile that is asymmetric such that the intensity of the laser beam changes from a first end of the short axis to a second end of the short axis; melting a first portion of the film by irradiating the first portion with the laser beam; permitting the first portion to laterally solidify, wherein the solidified first portion includes a first column and a second column of laterally grown crystal grains, the first column formed parallel to the long axis on a first side of the first portion covering the first end of the short axis, and the second column formed

parallel to the long axis on a second side of the first portion covering the second end of the short axis, and wherein when measured in the direction of the short axis a first average length of crystal grains in the first column is larger than a second average length of crystal grains in the second column; and melting a second portion of the film by irradiating the second portion with the laser beam, wherein the second portion is laterally displaced by a displacement with respect to the first portion, wherein the displacement is parallel to the short axis and in the direction going from the second end to the first end of the short axis, and further wherein the value of the displacement is larger than the second average length and smaller than the sum of the first and the second average lengths.

[0025] According to another aspect of the application, the intensity profile of the laser beam is a linear profile which changes linearly from the first end of the short axis to the second end of the short axis, and remains almost constant along the long axis.

[0026] According to another aspect of the application, a method of using a plurality of thin film transistors (TFTs) disposed in a crystalline substrate, said crystalline substrate including a plurality of grain boundaries that are approximately parallel with each other and are spaced apart with approximately equal spacings, is provided. The method comprises causing a channel current to flow through each TFT of the plurality of TFTs, such that the number of grain boundaries intersected by the channel current of each TFT of the plurality of TFTs is approximately the same.

[0027] According to another aspect of the application, a method of manufacturing a plurality of thin film transistors (TFTs) on a crystalline substrate, wherein the plurality of TFTs are disposed in a crystalline substrate, said crystalline substrate having a plurality of grain boundaries that are approximately parallel with each other and are spaced apart with approximately equal spacings, λ , is provided. The method includes forming a channel region of each TFT of the plurality of TFTs in a shape which comprises a non-equiangular polygon, the polygon having two opposing side edges that are oriented substantially perpendicular to the plurality of grain boundaries and an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein at least a portion of each of the upper and lower edges is oriented at a tilt angle with respect to the

plurality of grain boundaries that is greater than 0 and less than or equal to 90 degrees, the tilt angles for the portion of each edge of the upper and lower edges selected such that the number of grain boundaries covered by the polygon is independent of the location of the channel area within the crystalline substrate.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0028] In the Drawing:

[0029] **FIGS. 1A-1C** are schematic illustrations of TFTs formed at different tilt angles on a crystallized film with periodic grain boundaries;

[0030] **FIG. 2** is a schematic illustration of tilted small width TFTs on a crystallized film with periodic grain boundaries;

[0031] **FIG. 3** is a schematic illustration of shape engineered TFTs on a crystallized film with periodic grain boundaries, according to some embodiments;

[0032] **FIG. 4** is a schematic illustration of three shape engineered TFTs on a crystallized film with periodic grain boundaries, according to some embodiments;

[0033] **FIG. 5** is a schematic illustration of a shape engineered TFT with zig-zag shaped edges on a crystallized film with periodic grain boundaries, according to some embodiments;

[0034] **FIG. 6** depicts the effect of different beam profiles on crystallization;

[0035] **FIGS. 7A-7C**, depict a schematic representation a 2 shot SLS technique;

[0036] **FIGS. 8A-8C**, depict a schematic representation of an embodiment using an asymmetric beam profile in a 2 shot SLS technique;

[0037] **FIG. 9** shows a schematic of a system for generating a 2D laser beam;

[0038] **FIG. 10A** is a schematic illustration of a TFT formed within a film having a crystalline microstructure formed by excimer laser annealing;

[0039] **FIGS. 10B-10D** illustrate TFTs formed within films having crystalline microstructures formed by sequential lateral solidification;

[0040] **FIG. 10E**, is a top view SEM image of a film process via ELA;

[0041] **FIG. 10F** is a top view SEM image of a film with a uniform microstructure;

[0042] **FIG. 10G** is a top view SEM image of a film with a directional microstructure;

[0043] FIGS. 11A-11D illustrate the generation of “uniform” crystals using sequential lateral solidification.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0044] The issued US patents, allowed applications, published foreign applications, and references, that are cited herein are hereby incorporated by reference to the same extent as if each was specifically and individually indicated to be incorporated by reference.

[0045] SLS is a pulsed-laser crystallization process that can produce high-quality polycrystalline films having large and uniform grains. For SLS, the film can be installed on a substrate, including a substrate made of a material, e.g., plastic or glass, which may be intolerant to heat. Exemplary SLS processes and systems are described in commonly-owned U.S. Patent Nos. 6,322,625, 6,368,945, 6,555,449, and 6,573,531, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

[0046] SLS uses controlled laser pulses to melt a region of an amorphous or polycrystalline thin film on a substrate. The melted region then crystallizes from the solid-melt interface into a laterally solidified columnar structure or a plurality of location-controlled large single-crystal regions. Generally, the melt/crystallization process is sequentially repeated over the surface of a large thin film, with a large number of laser pulses. The processed film on substrate is then used to produce one large display, or even divided to produce multiple displays. FIG. 10B is a schematic drawing of a TFT fabricated within a film having a “uniform” microstructure created with SLS methods, e.g., the “2 Shot” SLS method. FIG. 10F is a top view SEM image of a film with a uniform microstructure, showing the perpendicular grain boundaries 1004 and horizontal grain boundaries 1008. FIG. 10C is a schematic drawing of a TFT fabricated within a film having a “directional” microstructure created with SLS. FIG. 10G is a top view SEM image of a film with a directional microstructure, showing horizontal grain boundaries 1006. FIG. 10D is a schematic drawing of a TFT fabricated within a film having a single crystal structure created with SLS.

[0047] When a polycrystalline material is used to fabricate devices having TFTs, the total resistance to carrier transport within the TFT channel can be affected by the

combination of high resistance barriers that a carrier has to cross as it travels under the influence of a given potential. Grain boundaries, i.e., the boundaries between crystallographic grains, can pose such high resistance barriers. Thus, in general, the performance of TFT devices fabricated on SLS-processed polycrystalline films depends on the microstructure of the film in the channel, as well as the orientation of channel with respect to grain boundaries.

[0048] One important factor when manufacturing devices, e.g., displays, that use TFTs, is to achieve uniform performance among different TFTs. Differences among performances of different TFTs in a device can result in a variance in the output of the device, e.g., a variance in the brightness of different pixels in a display. Such differences can be discernible at macroscopic levels and can affect the overall quality of the device. Furthermore, the differences are most noticeable when pixel brightness varies abruptly, that is, when adjacent pixels show a sharp difference in brightness. Gradual changes in brightness across a pixel display are not as obvious to the human eye. Thus it can be useful to achieve a more uniform, albeit intermediate, performance for all TFTs, rather than to achieve a high performance for some and a medium or low performance for other TFTs.

[0049] For a TFT formed on a crystallized film, its performance can be affected by the number of intersecting grain boundaries, which are the crystalline grain boundaries that intersect the direction of the channel current in the TFT. Thus a difference in performance among different TFTs can arise from a difference in the number and location of intersecting grain boundaries. In order to reduce this type of non-uniformity, one can reduce the variance in the number of grain boundaries among different TFTs.

[0050] In one or more embodiments, in accordance with one aspect of the invention, the number and location of grain boundaries and the location of TFTs with respect to these grain boundaries is controlled to provide a statistically similar number of intersecting grain boundaries among different TFTs. While intersecting grain boundaries can reduce the performance of the TFT, they exist because typical manufacturing processes generate such boundaries. It can therefore be useful to crystallize a film such that different TFTs can experience approximately the same number of such intersecting grain boundaries.

[0051] An irradiation protocol, referred to herein as “uniform” SLS, can be used to prepare a uniform crystalline film characterized by periodic columns of laterally elongated crystals and a set of periodic grain boundaries as depicted in **FIGs. 10B, 10F**. Uniform SLS involves exposing a film to a pulsed laser irradiation, which melts the irradiated region of the film. Upon removal of the irradiation from the melted region, the melted region crystallizes starting from the boundaries of the melted region with the solid region around it. The crystal thus formed grows for a distance LGL (Lateral Growth Length) before crystallization stops and the melted region completely solidifies. Maximum value of LGL depends on the characteristics of the film, e.g., thickness, film composition, and melt temperature. A maximum LGL is achieved when crystallization conditions are optimal for crystal growth. In some embodiments using the SLS method, the laser beam is selected as a line beam with a width such that the width of the melted region does not exceed twice the maximum value of LGL. In these embodiments, the effective LGL is approximately half of the width of the melted region. After each pulse, the laser beam is shifted with respect to the film by an amount δ . For uniform SLS, this shift is chosen to be between LGL and 2LGL (width of the melted region), i.e., $LGL < \delta < 2 LGL$. Uniform SLS method is described with reference to **FIGS. 11A-11D**.

[0052] Referring to **FIG. 11A**, a first laser pulse irradiates and melts the region **400** of the film. In some embodiments, the laser beam is a linear beam. As a result, the melted region **400** is in the shape of a rectangle. The width of the beam is selected such that the width of the melted region **W** is less than two times the maximum LGL. The length of the beam can be greater than 10 mm and up to or greater than 1000 mm. In the exemplary embodiments, the energy density of the beam is sufficient to completely melt the irradiated region, **400**. After the irradiation is removed from region **400**, the melted region cools down and crystallizes. In this case, grains grow laterally from an interface **420** between the unirradiated solid region and the melted region. The two melt fronts collide approximately at the centerline **405** before the temperature of the melt becomes sufficiently low to trigger nucleation.. As a result, the region **400** is divided into two columns of crystalline grains, each with a width LGL, where the value of LGL is approximately half of **W**, the width of the originally melted region.

[0053] Referring to **FIG. 11B**, the location of the laser beam shifts with respect to the film by a predetermined displacement distance δ , which is selected greater than LGL and less than two LGL. A second region of the film, 400', is irradiated and melted by a second laser beam pulse. The displacement of the film, δ , is related to the desired width of overlap 430 of consecutive laser beam pulses. The overlap can be less than about 90% and more than about 10% of the LGL. The overlap, melts part of the crystal grains of the left hand column in 400 and leaves unmelted part of those grains, shown in column 407. The region 400', similar to the region 400 in **FIG 11A**, crystallizes into two columns of crystal grains, each with a width LGL. For grains growing from the left hand side boundary 406, the unmelted crystal grains in column 407 constitute seeds for the crystal growth. These crystal grains grow further during this stage of crystallization to form region 440 in **FIG. 11C**.

[0054] **FIG. 11C** illustrates the crystallized region 450 of the film after the irradiation from the second pulse is removed and the region 400' completes crystallization. Region 450 includes a region 440 that results from growth of the crystal grains in column 407 of **FIG 11B**. These crystal grains all have a length equal to δ which is larger than LGL. Thus, a column with width δ , consisting of elongated crystals, is formed by two laser beam irradiations on average. Irradiation continues across the film to create multiple columns of laterally extended crystals of width δ .

[0055] **FIG. 11D** illustrates the microstructure of the film after multiple irradiations and depicts several columns 440 of laterally extended crystals. The crystals that form within the melted regions preferably grow laterally and with a similar orientation, and meet each other at a boundary within the particular irradiated region of film. In such instances, the grains are not significantly elongated; however, they are of uniform size and orientation. Specifically two types of grain boundaries, called perpendicular and parallel grain boundaries, are observed in silicon films processed via uniform SLS, and are marked in **FIG. 11D**. Three perpendicular grain boundaries 1110, extend from points a to b, c to d, and e to f. Perpendicular grain boundaries are spaced almost regularly at a distances δ apart, and at approximately right angles with respect to the direction of laser scan. Other shown grain boundaries, some of which are marked as grain boundaries 1120, are

parallel grain boundaries which, when extended, intersect perpendicular grain boundaries. The direction and spacing between parallel grain boundaries varies in general. For further details, see U.S. Patent No. 6,573,531, the contents of which are incorporated herein in their entirety by reference.

[0056] Crystals formed via “uniform” SLS methods exhibit substantial uniformity in their grain structure, with the number and location of perpendicular grain boundaries substantially controlled. In order to achieve more uniformity in performance, TFTs have been oriented on these films such that the TFT channel direction (and thus the current flow) runs along the direction of the parallel grains **1120**, and thus mostly the perpendicular grain boundaries **1110** and not the parallel grain boundaries **1120** intersect their channel currents.

[0057] In some SLS schemes, uniform SLS method is achieved using a “2D systems”. In a 2D system, a region of a thin film is irradiated with laser pulses shaped in rectangular forms. **FIG. 9** depicts an exemplary system **900** for generating a 2D laser beam. The system **900** includes a laser source **220**, an attenuator **910**, a telescope **920**, a homogenizer **930**, a condenser lens **940** and a beam reflecting element **950**. The laser beam pulses **240** generated by the laser source **220** are directed to the beam reflecting element **950** via the attenuator **910**, telescope **920**, homogenizer **930** and condenser lens **940**. At the beam reflecting element **950**, the incoming laser beam pulses **240** are directed along the out-going beam paths, leading to the substrate **260** that is mounted on the wafer-handling stage **270**. The optical path includes a variable-focus field lens **970b**, a mask **280b** and a projection lens **295b**.

[0058] Other methods useful in providing uniformly crystallized films having grain boundaries at regular intervals can benefit from this invention. By way of example, a line scan SLS method such as described in co-pending US patent publication 2006-0254500 A1, entitled “Line Scan Sequential Lateral Solidification of Thin Films”, filed December 2, 2005, can be employed.

[0059] According to one aspect of the invention, a higher uniformity in performance of various TFTs can be achieved by appropriate selection of the shape or geometry of the TFT channel that is manufactured on the underlying crystallized film. Conventional TFTs are typically formed such that their channel region is

shaped as a square or a rectangle. Moreover, TFTs are typically positioned at zero angles with respect to perpendicular grain boundaries (See, e.g., **FIG. 1A**). Such orientations cause maximum performance variations among TFTs, when they are placed randomly with respect to the film.

[0060] In one or more embodiments, TFTs channels are shape engineered, that is shaped as polygons having at least one set of parallel edges substantially perpendicular to the regularly located grain boundaries (e.g., perpendicular grain boundaries in a uniformly crystallized film) and substantially parallel to the direction of the current flow in the channel. The polygons further have a second set of edges that are tilted with respect to the intersecting grain boundaries. The shape and the tilt of the second set of edges is chosen such that the average number of intersecting grain boundaries remains approximately constant among different randomly placed TFTs. In some embodiments the TFTs are shaped as parallelograms, with the tilt angle of the edges selected based on the TFT width and the grain boundary periodicity. In general, the tilt angle for any line segment on the edge of a shape is defined as the smaller angle between that line segment and the direction of the periodic grain boundaries. According to other embodiments, the tilted set of edges are shaped as a non straight lines, containing multiple angled straight sub-edges (e.g., a zigzag shape), or edges that are in some irregular forms in order to further reduce the variability of intersecting grain boundaries.

[0061] **FIG. 3** shows an example in which such shape engineering technique has been used according to some embodiments. **FIG. 3** shows two shaped engineered TFTs, represented by their channel regions, **320** and **321**, created over a crystallized film with periodic grain boundaries **319** that are spaced apart by distance λ . The channel region of TFT **320**, for example, is defined as the area between the source and drain areas **323** of that TFT. The channel regions **320** and **321** have been shaped as parallelograms, each with a length **L** and a width **W**. Moreover, the channel current for each TFT flows in the direction **325** between source and drain **323**. Vertical span **326** for each of the upper and lower edges of the parallelogram is defined as the projection of that edge along the direction perpendicular to the periodic grain boundaries **319**. The tilt angle θ_3 of lower and upper edges of the parallelogram is selected such that the vertical span **326** of the lower and upper

edges of the parallelogram can be close to an integer multiple of the spacing λ between the perpendicular grain boundaries. The angle θ_3 thus satisfies the general equation (1) below

$$\text{Vertical span} = W \cdot \tan(\theta) = m \lambda \quad (1)$$

where θ is the tilt angle of the edges, and m is selected with a value close to one, or another integer.

[0062] FIG. 4 depicts the substantial uniformity of performance achieved by shape engineering according to some embodiments. FIG. 4 shows three identically shaped parallelogram TFTs 410-412, positioned at three different random locations with respect to a crystallized film 400. For example, the shape and position of TFT 410 is defined by the shape and position of its source and drain areas 413. The channel currents for all three TFTs is in the direction 425. The angle θ_4 of the parallelogram satisfies equation (1) with m close to one, that is the vertical span 406 is close to one λ . The shaded areas depict those parts of the channel area where there are two intersecting grain boundaries, and the non-shaded areas depict those parts with three intersecting grain boundaries. For TFTs 410-412, positioned randomly with respect to the grain boundaries 419, the relative location of the shaded, and non-shaded, parts change but the total area of each of these parts stays constant. Thus, the TFTs can maintain a uniform performance.

[0063] In some embodiments, TFTs are manufactured by depositing and forming the gate dielectric and metalline contact in the gate area, and then doping the TFT areas, for example as a p-doped region. The presence of the gate substantially masks the gate area from being doped and thus only the source and drain areas will be doped, while the gate area will remain substantially undoped or lightly doped. Finally, the source and drain contacts are formed on their corresponding areas. The source and drain areas are built with the shapes such that the channel area defined between them is in accordance with the shape used in the embodiment. The precise methodology for placing TFTs on the processed thin film is not important to the present invention, and hence any known technique may be employed. One exemplary technique is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,766,989 to Maegawa et al., the contents of which are incorporated by reference herein.

[0064] Shape engineering, unlike tilt engineering methods discussed below, does not require tilting the TFT manufacturing devices with respect to the crystallization devices. The direction of the channel current **325** stays perpendicular to the perpendicular grain boundaries **319** and effectively parallel to the parallel grain boundaries **327**. This orientation of the current, minimizes the effect of parallel grain boundaries on the performance of the TFT and makes it possible to control the number of periodically spaced perpendicular grain boundaries intersecting the channel current and thus achieve uniform performance.

[0065] As seen in **FIG. 4**, shape engineering, addresses the problem of variation in intersecting grain boundaries encountered in conventional zero angle TFTs, e.g., seen in **FIG. 1A**. **FIG. 1A** shows a schematic of zero angle TFTs, that is, rectangularly shaped TFTs oriented such that the upper and lower TFT edges are at zero angle with respect to perpendicular grain boundaries represented by lines **110**. Parallel grain boundaries **117** are also shown only for TFT **120**, and understood to extend across the crystallized surface in all figures and intersect the perpendicular boundaries **110**. While the zero angle TFT setup increases the uniformity by orienting the direction of TFT channels to permit current flow perpendicular to perpendicular grain boundaries, it can not address variation in the number of intersecting grain boundaries due to the random location of the TFTs. As seen for TFTs **120** and **122**, the number of grain boundaries that intersect the channel current can differ based on the location of the TFT on the crystal. Specifically, for TFT **120**, the channel current crosses two grain boundaries both located very close to the edges and the source and drain regions **123** and **125**. On the other hand, for TFT **122**, the channel current crosses one grain boundary which is located far from the source and drain regions. As a result, the TFT **120** can have a higher resistance and lower performance than the TFT **122**. The variation in number and location of intersecting grain boundaries become more severe as the channel dimensions decrease and become comparable to the grain size. In these cases, the TFT typically contains only a small number of grain boundaries and a small variation in that number can introduce a large relative change. For example, in **FIG. 1A**, TFTs **120** contain two perpendicular grain boundaries compared to TFT **122** which contains one, amounting to a 100% increase.

[0066] Shape engineering can also address problems of large tilt angles and small packing numbers encountered in some cases by tilt engineering techniques. In tilt engineering, TFTs channels are rectangular and are placed at an angle tilted with respect to grain boundaries, as is illustrated in FIGS. **1B-1C**. The tilt angle is selected such that the TFTs typically contain substantially the same average number of intersecting grain boundaries irrespective of their location on the film. The appropriate tilt angle thus depends on the width of the TFT and the periodicity length of the grain boundaries. Further details regarding tilted TFTs can be found in U.S. Patent application number 10/487,170, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference. In tilt engineering, in order to achieve a substantially uniform performance among the randomly located TFTs, the vertical span can be chosen to be approximately equal to an integer multiple of the grain spacing λ , that is

$$\text{Vertical span} = W \cdot \sin(\theta) = m \lambda \quad (2)$$

where θ is the tilt angle and m is an integer or a number close to an integer in value. FIGs. **1B** and **1C** depict systems in which the TFTs formed on a film are tilted in accordance with equation (2). Specifically, TFTs **150-152** are tilted by an angle θ_{1b} such that the vertical span **156** is close to the spacing λ , that is m in equation (2) is close to 1. TFTs **190-192** are tilted further by an angle θ_{1c} such that the vertical span **196** is close to twice the spacing λ , that is m in equation (2) is close to 2. FIG. **1C** also shows that the source and drain areas **223** for TFT **190** are created at the same tilt angle θ_{1c} with respect to the film. The shaded areas indicate areas containing two grain boundaries, and the non-shaded areas indicate areas containing one grain boundary. As can be seen, for each set of TFTs tilted by the same angle and located at random on the film, the shaded area can move around inside the TFT, but the total shaded area and the total non-shaded area stay constant within each set **150-152** and **190-192**. Tilt engineering can be accomplished by tilting the placement of the channel region itself on the processed thin film, or alternatively, by fabricating a thin film during SLS processing which includes a tilted periodic grain structure. A combination of both alternatives can also be employed. Exemplary tilt engineering processes and systems are described in commonly-owned U.S. Patent No.

7,160,763, titled “Polycrystalline TFT uniformity through microstructure mis-alignment.”

[0067] While tilt engineering can be a useful technique in reaching performance uniformity, tilting is less practical for narrow TFTs, or randomly sized TFTs. Creating a tilt can require the TFT manufacturing instruments to be tilted with respect to the film and crystallization laser and other instruments. For some industrial techniques of crystallization and some laser setups, such tilting of the instruments can decrease efficiency. Moreover, if the device includes TFTs of different widths (W), then according to equation (2) different tilt angles are needed, and thus the TFT manufacturing instruments must change their tilt while creating different TFTs, a change that can be difficult to implement in industrial production.

[0068] Tilt engineering can also become less practical for large tilt angles. As the technology progresses and the channels becomes narrower, the required tilt angle increases, posing manufacturing difficulties and also increasing the random effect of parallel grain boundaries. FIG. 2 shows a schematic of a TFT **310**, represented by its channel region, that has a small width W relative to the spacing λ . According to equation (2), even for m close to 1, TFT **310** requires a relatively large angle θ_2 such that the vertical span **306** is close to one λ . Large tilt angles, for example, angles close to or larger than 45 degrees, pose a practical difficulty in installing the instruments at those angles. Moreover, for large tilt angles, the TFT performance will be affected by the parallel grain boundaries. As seen for TFT **311**, for the large tilt angle θ_2 , channel current **315** is no longer effectively parallel to the parallel grain boundaries **317**. Instead a large number of the parallel grain boundaries intersect the channel current and thus increase the resistance in the TFT. The number of these intersections depend on the location of the TFT and the parallel grain boundaries and can vary from one TFT to another. These variations increases the variation in performance of TFTs and limits the effect of the tilt.

[0069] Avoiding the above difficulties, shape engineered TFTs can introduce a large tilt in the edge of the TFTs to ensure device uniformity while maintaining a current direction that is parallel to the parallel grain boundaries, as seen in FIG. 3. Moreover, shape engineered TFTs, uses a more efficient crystallization process

compared to the tilt engineered TFTs, since there is no need to tilt the crystallization instruments with respect to the TFT manufacturing instruments.

[0070] Shape engineering also achieves a larger packing efficiency compared to tilt engineering. For example, parallelogram shaped TFT **320** has a smaller packing factor and uses the film more effectively compared to the tilted TFT **310**. Due to its tilt, W_t , the effective horizontal span of the tilted TFT **310** is significantly larger than W , the horizontal span of the parallelogram shaped TFT **320**. As a result, the effective areas of the film used by the shape engineered TFTs is smaller than that used by the tilted TFTs, and in any given area of a device, it is possible to pack many more parallelogram shaped TFTs compared to tilted TFTs. Alternatively, for a fixed number of TFTs used in a device, the shape engineered TFTs require less crystallized area compared to the tilted TFTs.

[0071] In addition to parallelogram shapes, other shapes can be employed for shape engineered TFTs according to some embodiments. In some embodiments, the TFTs are shaped as quadrilaterals, for which the side edges are parallel to each other and perpendicular to the periodic grain boundaries. The based edges of the quadrilateral, on the other hand, are positioned at two different tilt angles with respect to the grain boundaries, such that each tilt angle separately satisfies equation (1) with a value for m that is different from that of the other angle. Thus the vertical span of the lower edge can be different from the vertical span of the upper edge. For example, one such quadrilateral can be formed by modifying the parallelogram of FIG. 3 such that the upper and lower edges have different tilt angles and thus are not parallel with each other.

[0072] In yet some other embodiments the TFTs are shaped such that one or both of the edges include multiple intersecting angled sub-edges. In yet other embodiments, the TFTs have edges with other irregular shapes. FIG. 5 depicts a shape engineered TFT **510** according to some embodiments. In TFT **510**, the upper and lower edges of the channel region, defined by the source and drain areas **513**, are shaped in the form of two edges that include multiple sub-edges (the so-called zig-zag). The tilt angle θ_5 for each of the sub-edges of is defined as the smaller angle between that sub-edge and the direction of the periodic grain boundaries. The tilt angles for the shape in FIG. 5 are selected all to be equal to θ_5 such that the

vertical span **506** of the lower and upper edges of the parallelogram can be close to an integer multiple of the spacing λ between the perpendicular grain boundaries. The angle θ_5 thus satisfies the general equation (3) below

$$\text{Vertical span} = W \cdot \tan(\theta) / n = m \lambda \quad (3)$$

where n is the number of sub-edges, and where m is selected to have a value close to an integer. Specifically for FIG. 5, the value of n is 6, and the value of m is close to one. In some embodiments, the sub-edges might have different angles. Other geometries may also be contemplated, which provide an approximately constant number of intersecting grain boundaries among different randomly placed TFTs.

[0073] In some embodiments, one or both of the upper and the lower edges can include multiple sub-edges, for which the tilt angles are not the same. For example, in an embodiment, the edge has a “saw-tooth” shape, in which the tilt angle for the sub-edges alternates between a value below 90 degrees and a value equal to 90 degrees. In some other embodiments, the sub-edges could be inter-connected with line segments that are oriented at zero tilt angles, and thus with zero vertical span. In some other embodiments, for each of the sub-edges the vertical span is an integer multiple of the spacing.

[0074] In some embodiments, a combination of tilt engineering and shape engineering can be employed to create shape engineered TFTs that are also tilted with respect to the film. In some embodiments, the angle of the parallelogram can be selected to be large, such that the angle satisfies equation (1) or equation (3) with the value of m close to an integer greater than one, for example two. Larger values of m are especially recommended for films with non-uniform grain boundaries.

[0075] One source of non-uniformity in crystallized films created by the 2D system, can be non-uniformity in the radiation power of the rectangular shaped laser beam. In the 2D systems, the beam is elongated in order to extend the scanned region and reduce the stage scan velocity. While such elongation increases the throughput rate, it can reduce the uniformity of the radiation power, since it can be difficult to have the same projection properties in regions far off the laser axis compared to regions near the axis. Thus elongating the beam can cause the power of the laser beam to be reduced in areas closer to the edges. Non-uniformity in the

radiation power of the laser can in turn cause a non-uniformity in the characteristics of the melted film and the resulting crystal.

[0076] In some embodiments, in order to reduce the relative effect of the variation in the number of grain boundaries, larger TFTs, and more specifically TFTs with larger length L , are utilized. Larger TFTs typically contain a larger number of perpendicular grain boundaries. As a result, their properties can result from averaging the properties of a large number of individual grain boundaries. Moreover a variation of one in the number of grain boundaries causes a small relative change in the total number of grain boundaries and a small relative variation in the performance of the TFT.

[0077] In other embodiments, the device uniformity is increased by **reducing** crystalline grain size, with respect to device dimensions, so that more effective averaging takes place. Such setups can be useful in particular for future display products and AMOLED displays. Conceptually, shorter grains (smaller spacing between the perpendicular grain boundaries) can be achieved by reducing the beam width, e.g., the “short axis” of the beam width, so that lateral growth fronts collide sooner. Reduced beam width can for example be achieved by reducing the width of the pattern to be projected, possibly in combination with reducing radiation intensity. However, in practice this is not easy because of resolution limitations of the projection systems used. A higher resolution is achieved only at the expense of a reduced depth of focus. Given beam dimensions (e.g., as long as the width of a Gen4 panel) and roughness of the panel this is problematic. Similar issues are found with non-projection systems in which the beam is focused in a narrow line. Here, the additional issue is that a Gaussian beam profile is less preferred because the crystallization is more sensitive to pulse-to-pulse power.

[0078] In some embodiments, a laser beam with an intensity profile that is asymmetric along its short axis is utilized to create smaller grains. **FIG. 6(c)** shows an example of the intensity profile of such a beam. In some embodiments, an asymmetric beam profile can be created by shifting the incident beam which is directed into the projection lens from the center of the lens. The shift causes the aberration and creates an asymmetric intensity beam. In other embodiments, an asymmetric beam profile is created by directing an incident beam into the beam-

width-defining slit. In yet other embodiments, an asymmetric beam can be generated by modifying the position of optic elements, for example, projection lens, slit, homogenizer etc., to redistribute the intensity of laser energy within the width of the beam.

[0079] The effect of different short-axis beam profiles is shown in **FIG. 6**. A low intensity beam, as in **FIG. 6(a)**, results in a limited lateral growth. The region **6001** melts by the beam. Upon removal of the beam, region **6001** laterally crystallized into regions **6002** and **6003**. Due to the low energy of the beam, the crystallized regions **6002** and **6003** complete their crystallization before meeting each other, and there forms a non-crystallized nucleated silicon region **6004** between them. The reduced beam energy therefore results in smaller lateral grain growth, but limits to beam resolution prevents practical application of such beam. The nucleated region can be avoided by reducing the beam width, but such reduction might be not feasible as explained before. A higher intensity beam, as in **FIG. 6(b)**, results in a larger lateral growth length. In this case, the laterally crystallized regions **6005** and **6006** meet along a grain boundary **6008**, and there is no nucleated silicon region. In some embodiments, a low intensity can be around 1.3 times the complete melting intensity, while a high intensity can be around 1.9 time the complete melting intensity. The complete melting intensity depends on film thickness and pulse duration. In some embodiments, the typical value of the complete melting intensity is around 0.4 to 0.9 Joules/cm².

[0080] An asymmetric intensity beam as shown in **FIG. 6(c)**, however, can provide both a longer and shorter lateral growth compared to a high energy density profile, like that of **FIG. 6(b)**. Specifically, growth on the cool side, i.e., left hand side in **FIG. 6(c)**, may proceed more quickly than on the hot side, i.e., the right hand side, while nucleation is still effectively suppressed in the hottest region. As a result, the lateral growth on the less intense side of the beam, i.e., the left hand side in the example of **FIG. 6(c)**, is longer than that on the more intense side of the beam, i.e., the right hand side. This results in asymmetric lateral growth, in which the lateral growth LGL1 for region **6012** is larger than the lateral growth length LGL2 for region **6014**.

[0081] Systems with asymmetric intensity beams can for example be used for crystallizing Gen4 panels with a high throughput. In such systems aiming at creating directionally solidified materials, one can increase the in-between-pulse translation distance (the relative displacement of the beam with respect to the film) by increasing the sample translation velocity and thereby achieve higher throughput.

[0082] In some embodiments, utilizing the 2-Shot SLS techniques, the asymmetric beam can be used to **reduce** crystalline grain size. **FIGs. 7A-7C** depict the beam progress in a 2-Shot SLS method using a symmetric beam. In such a system, the beam moves by a displacement D which is between LGL and $2LGL$. The resulting periodic grain boundaries are distanced apart by the value of displacement D .

[0083] **FIGs. 8A-8C** depict the beam progress in a 2-Shot SLS method using an asymmetric beam, according to some embodiments. In such a system, the beam moves to the left, that is in a direction of the larger grains. For a 2-Shot SLS system, the value of the displacement D , has to be between $LGL2$, and $LGL1 + LGL2$, which is the total width of the beam. The resulting periodic grain boundaries are still distanced apart by the value of displacement D . By choosing a displacement D' to be close to $LGL2$, one can therefore create periodic boundaries that are closer together than that of the system of **FIG. 7C**. Thus, shorter grains are created without compromising the depth of focus. Typically D' is selected to be equal to $LGL2 + \delta$ where δ is chosen to be small, but such that the overlap between consecutive irradiations reduces the effect of variations in the intensity of the beam along beam's edges. In some embodiments, where the beam width is typically between 4 to 10 microns, δ is can typically be around 0.2 to 0.5 microns.

[0084] Throughput in **FIGs. 8A-8C** would be lower than **FIGs. 7A-7C**, which uses the symmetric beam to create longer grains, because the displacement in **FIGs. 8A-8C** is chosen to be smaller than **FIGs. 7A-7C**. On the other hand, in a system using directional SLS method with a symmetric beam, the displacement must be selected to be less than LGL , half of the beam width. Thus, the throughput in **FIGs. 8A-8C** may still be comparable or better than that of the directional SLS using the asymmetric beam if the displacement in **FIGs. 8A-8C** is comparable or larger than that of the latter system.

[0085] In some embodiments, a performance non-uniformity is caused by a variance in the power of a two dimensional (2D) laser beam. In order to reduce this type of non-uniformity, in some embodiments, a smaller aspect ratio is used for the beam, reducing the ratio of the beam's length to its width, and creating a laser beam with a shape closer to a square. A smaller aspect ratio beam makes more use of the central parts of the lenses focusing the beam, as opposed to the outer, less perfect, parts of the lenses. Such technique can specifically be useful for laser setups such as the 2D-laser system sold by JSW.

[0086] While there have been shown and described examples of the present invention, it will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made therein without departing from the scope of the invention. Those skilled in the art will recognize, or be able to ascertain, using no more than routine experimentation, numerous equivalents to the specific compositions and procedures described herein, for example by combining or rearranging elements or embodiments. Such equivalents are considered to be within the scope of this invention, and are covered by the following claims.

CLAIMS

1. A thin film transistor (TFT) comprising:

a channel area disposed in a crystalline substrate, said crystalline substrate comprising a plurality of grain boundaries that are approximately parallel with each other and are spaced apart with approximately equal spacings, λ ,

wherein the shape of the channel area comprises a non-equiangular polygon, the polygon having two opposing side edges that are oriented substantially perpendicular to the plurality of grain boundaries and an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein at least a portion of each of the upper and lower edges is oriented at a tilt angle with respect to the plurality of grain boundaries that is greater than 0 and less than or equal to 90 degrees, the tilt angles for the portion of each edge of the upper and lower edges selected such that the number of grain boundaries covered by the polygon is independent of the location of the channel area within the crystalline substrate.

2. The TFT of claim 1, wherein the polygon comprises a concave polygon.
3. The TFT of claim 1, wherein the polygon comprises a convex polygon.
4. The TFT of claim 1, wherein the tilt angles for the portion of each edge of the upper and lower edges are the same.
5. The TFT of claim 1, wherein the tilt angles for the portion of each edge of the upper and lower edges are different.
6. The TFT of claim 1, wherein the polygon comprises a parallelogram.
7. The TFT of claim 6, wherein the upper and lower edges are substantially parallel with each other, and wherein the tilt angles for the upper and lower edges of the parallelogram are selected such that the vertical span for each of the upper and lower edges is about an integer multiple of the spacing between the grain boundaries.

8. The TFT of claim 7, wherein the tilt angle θ for the upper and lower edges, the approximately equal spacing λ among the grain boundaries, and the distance W between the two side edges, satisfy the equation, $W \cdot \tan(\theta) = m \lambda$, with the value of m about an integer.
9. The TFT of claim 7, wherein m is about 1.
10. The TFT of claim 7, wherein m is about an integer greater than 1.
11. The TFT of claim 1, wherein the polygon comprises a quadrilateral.
12. The TFT of claim 11, wherein the upper and lower edges of the quadrilateral are not parallel with each other, and wherein the tilt angles for the upper and lower edges of the parallelogram are selected to be different, such that the vertical spans for the upper and lower edges are about different integer multiples of the spacing between the grain boundaries
13. The TFT of claim 12, wherein the tilt angle θ for the upper edge or the lower edge of the quadrilateral, the approximately equal spacing λ among the grain boundaries, and the distance W between the two side edges, satisfy the equation, $W \cdot \tan(\theta) = m \lambda$, with the value of m about an integer.
14. The TFT of claim 1, further comprising a source area and a drain area each adjacent to one of the upper and lower edges.
15. The TFT of claim 1, wherein at least one of the upper and lower edges comprises a plurality of line segments, and wherein one or more of the line segments has a tilt angle with respect to the plurality of grain boundaries that is greater than 0 and less than or equal to 90 degrees, the tilt angles for each of the one or more line segments selected such that the number of grain boundaries covered by the polygon is independent of the location of the channel area within the crystalline substrate.
16. The TFT of claim 12, wherein the tilt angle for each of the one or more line segments is selected such that the vertical span for that line segment is about an integer multiple of the spacing between the grain boundaries.

17. The TFT of claim 12, wherein one of the upper and lower edges comprises of n line segments each having the same tilt angle θ and connects an end of a first side edge to an end of a second side edge, and for a distance W between the two side edges, the tilt angle θ satisfies the equation $W \cdot \tan(\theta)/n = m \lambda$, with the value of m close to an integer.

18. A system for processing a film, the system comprising:

a laser source providing a sequence of laser beam pulses;
laser optics that shape each laser beam pulse into a set of shaped beamlets, each of the beamlets having a length defining the y-direction, a width defining the x-direction, and a fluence that is sufficient to substantially melt a film throughout its thickness in an irradiated region and further being spaced in the x-direction from adjacent beamlets by gaps; and
a stage for supporting the film and capable of translation in at least the x-direction;
wherein the ratio of the length and the width is approximately one.

19. A method of preparing a polycrystalline film comprising:

providing a substrate having a thin film disposed thereon, said film capable of laser-induced melting;

generating a laser beam for irradiating the film, wherein the laser beam is a line beam which causes the irradiated portion of the film to melt throughout its thickness, and wherein the irradiated portion of the film has a long axis and a short axis, and further wherein the laser beam has an intensity profile that is asymmetric such that the intensity of the laser beam changes from a first end of the short axis to a second end of the short axis;

melting a first portion of the film by irradiating the first portion with the laser beam;

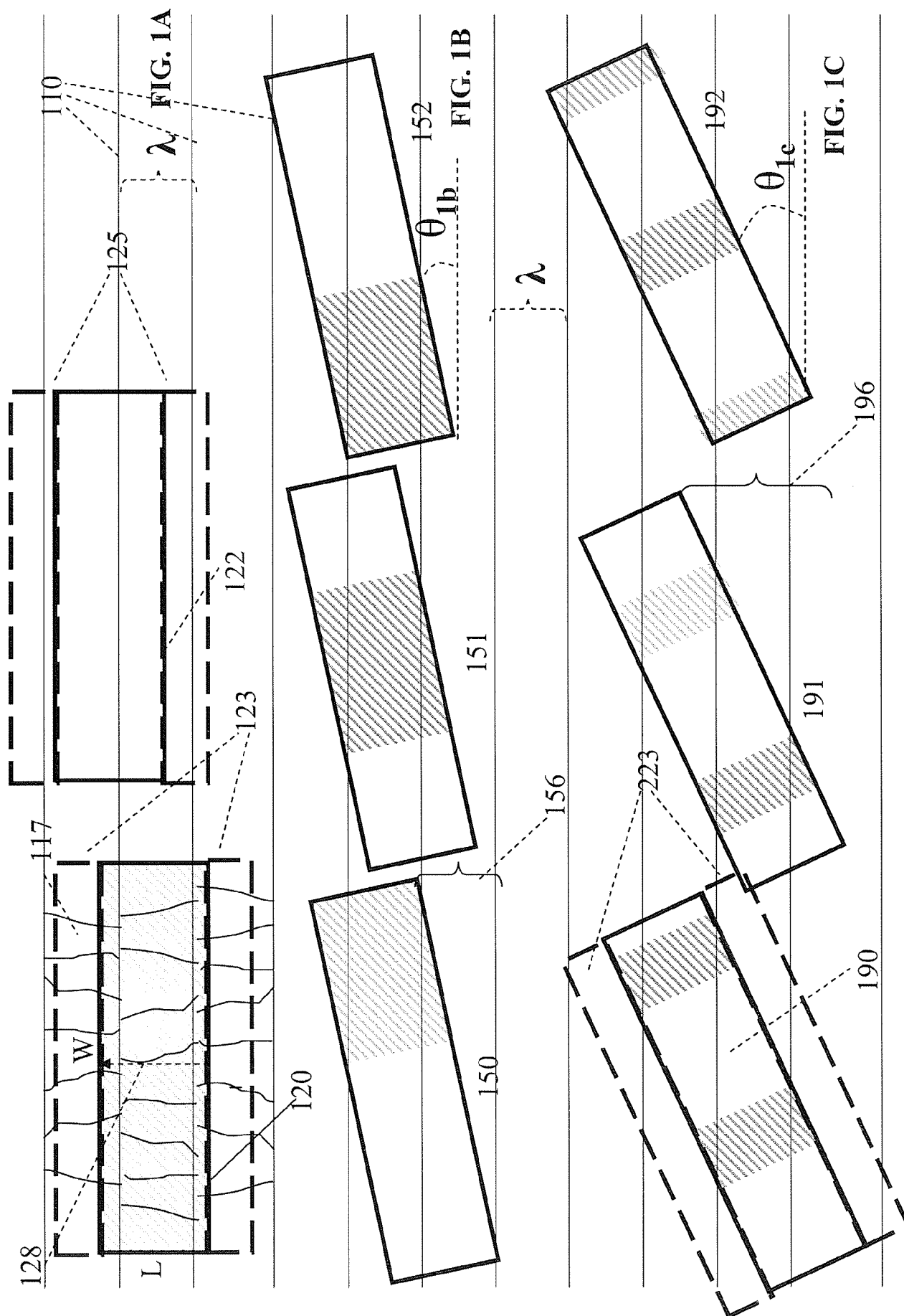
permitting the first portion to laterally solidify, wherein the solidified first portion includes a first column and a second column of laterally grown crystal grains, the first column formed parallel to the long axis on a first side of the first

portion covering the first end of the short axis, and the second column formed parallel to the long axis on a second side of the first portion covering the second end of the short axis, and wherein when measured in the direction of the short axis a first average length of crystal grains in the first column is larger than a second average length of crystal grains in the second column; and

melting a second portion of the film by irradiating the second portion with the laser beam, wherein the second portion is laterally displaced by a displacement with respect to the first portion, wherein the displacement is parallel to the short axis and in the direction going from the second end to the first end of the short axis, and further wherein the value of the displacement is larger than the second average length and smaller than the sum of the first and the second average lengths.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the intensity profile of the laser beam is a linear profile which changes linearly from the first end of the short axis to the second end of the short axis, and remains almost constant along the long axis.
21. A method of using a plurality of thin film transistors (TFTs) disposed in a crystalline substrate, said crystalline substrate including a plurality of grain boundaries that are approximately parallel with each other and are spaced apart with approximately equal spacings, the method comprising:
causing a channel current to flow through each TFT of the plurality of TFTs, such that the number of grain boundaries intersected by the channel current of each TFT of the plurality of TFTs is approximately the same.
22. A method of manufacturing a plurality of thin film transistors (TFTs) on a crystalline substrate, wherein the plurality of TFTs are disposed in a crystalline substrate, said crystalline substrate having a plurality of grain boundaries that are approximately parallel with each other and are spaced apart with approximately equal spacings, λ , the method comprising:
forming a channel region of each TFT of the plurality of TFTs in a shape which comprises a non-equiangular polygon, the polygon having two opposing side edges that are oriented substantially perpendicular to the plurality of grain

boundaries and an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein at least a portion of each of the upper and lower edges is oriented at a tilt angle with respect to the plurality of grain boundaries that is greater than 0 and less than or equal to 90 degrees, the tilt angles for the portion of each edge of the upper and lower edges selected such that the number of grain boundaries covered by the polygon is independent of the location of the channel area within the crystalline substrate.



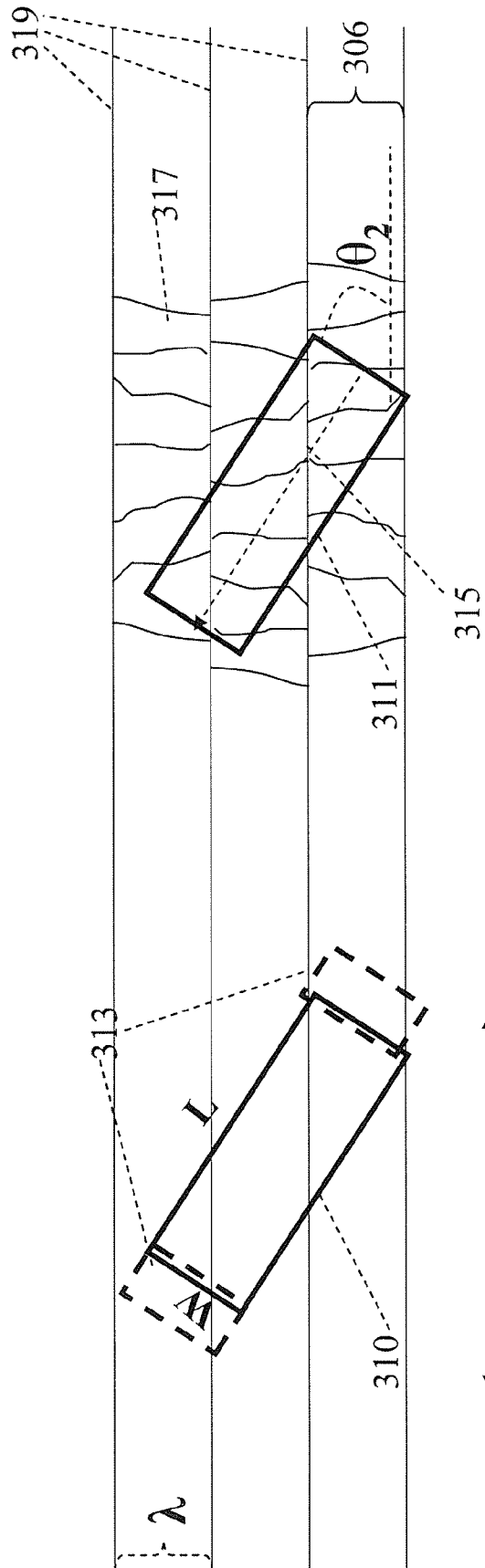


FIG. 2

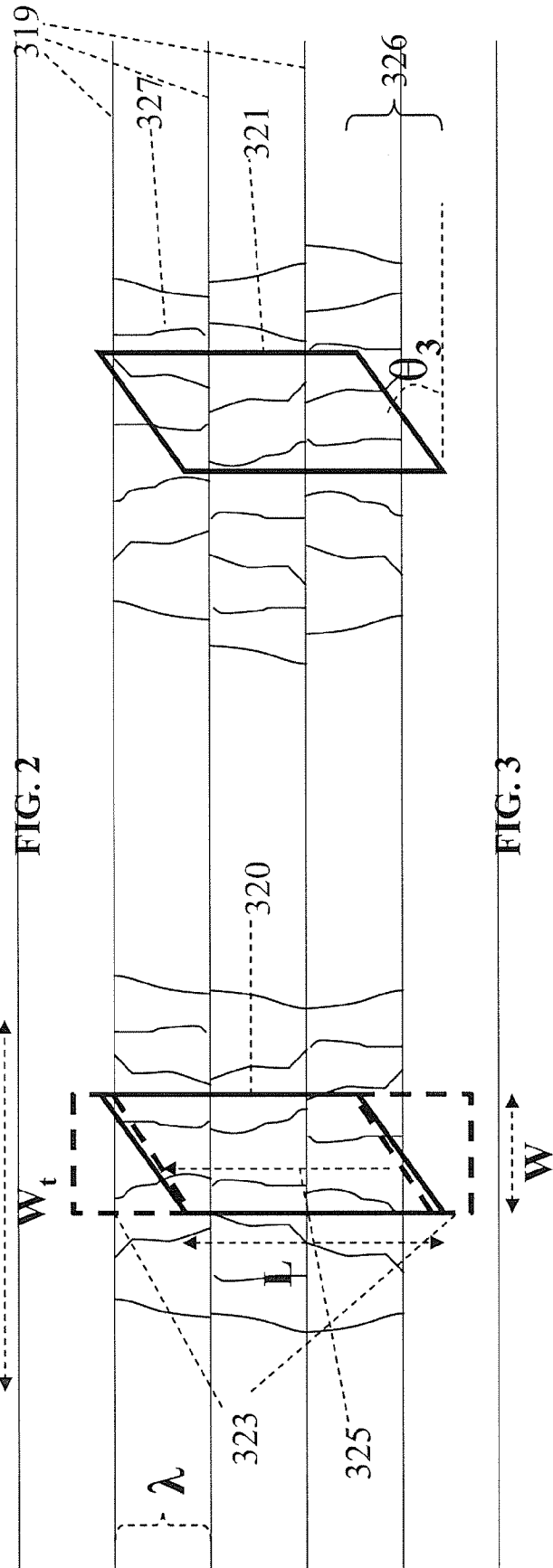


FIG. 3

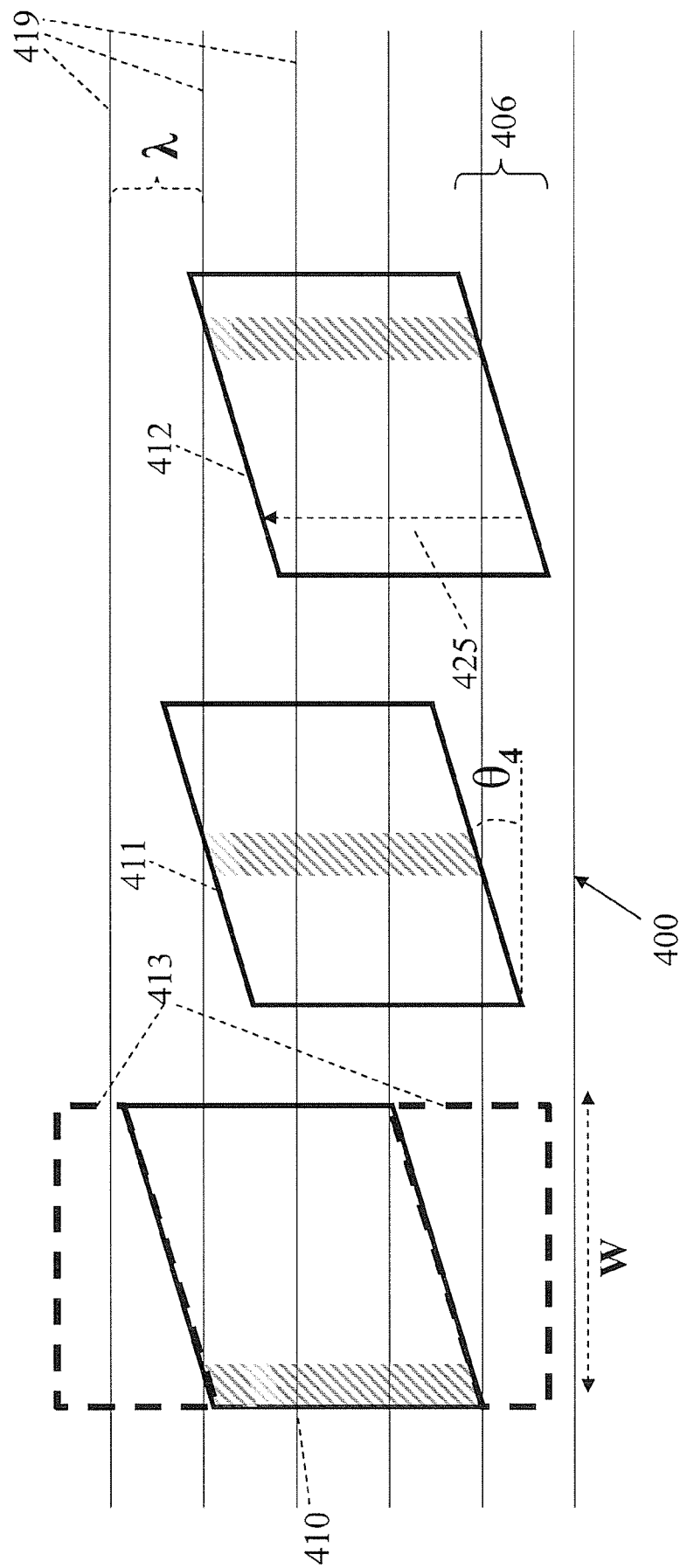


FIG. 4

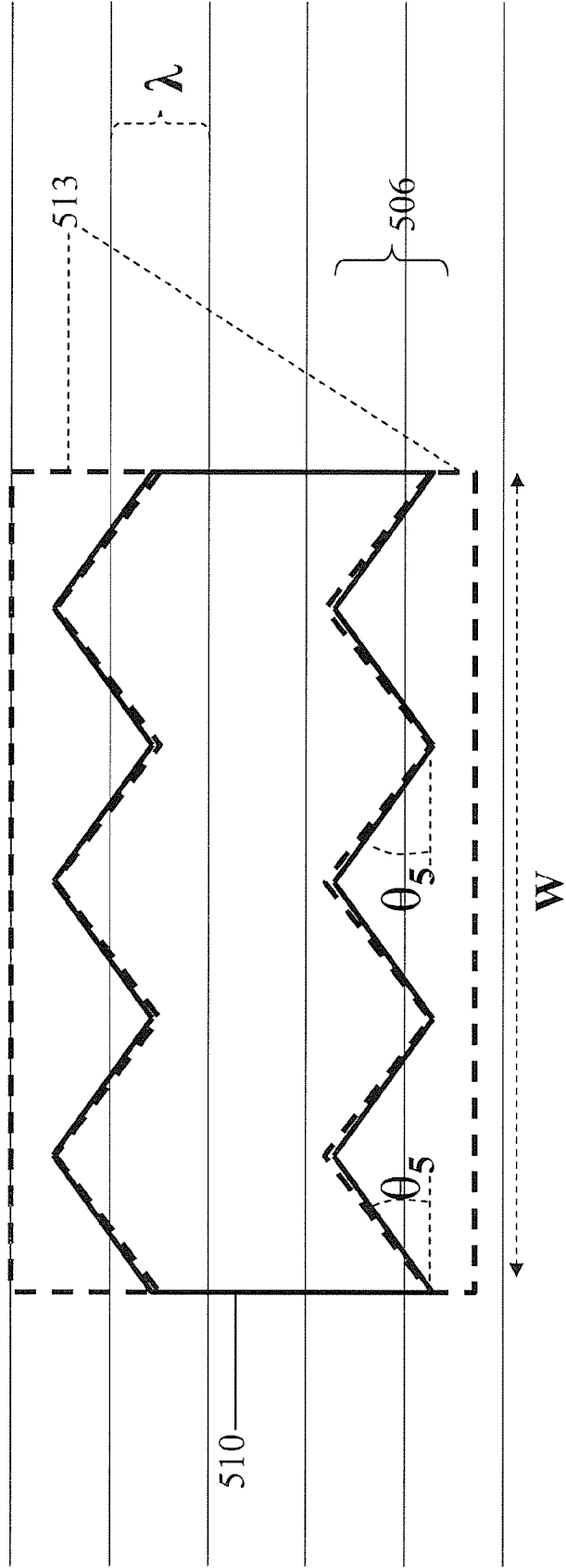


FIG. 5

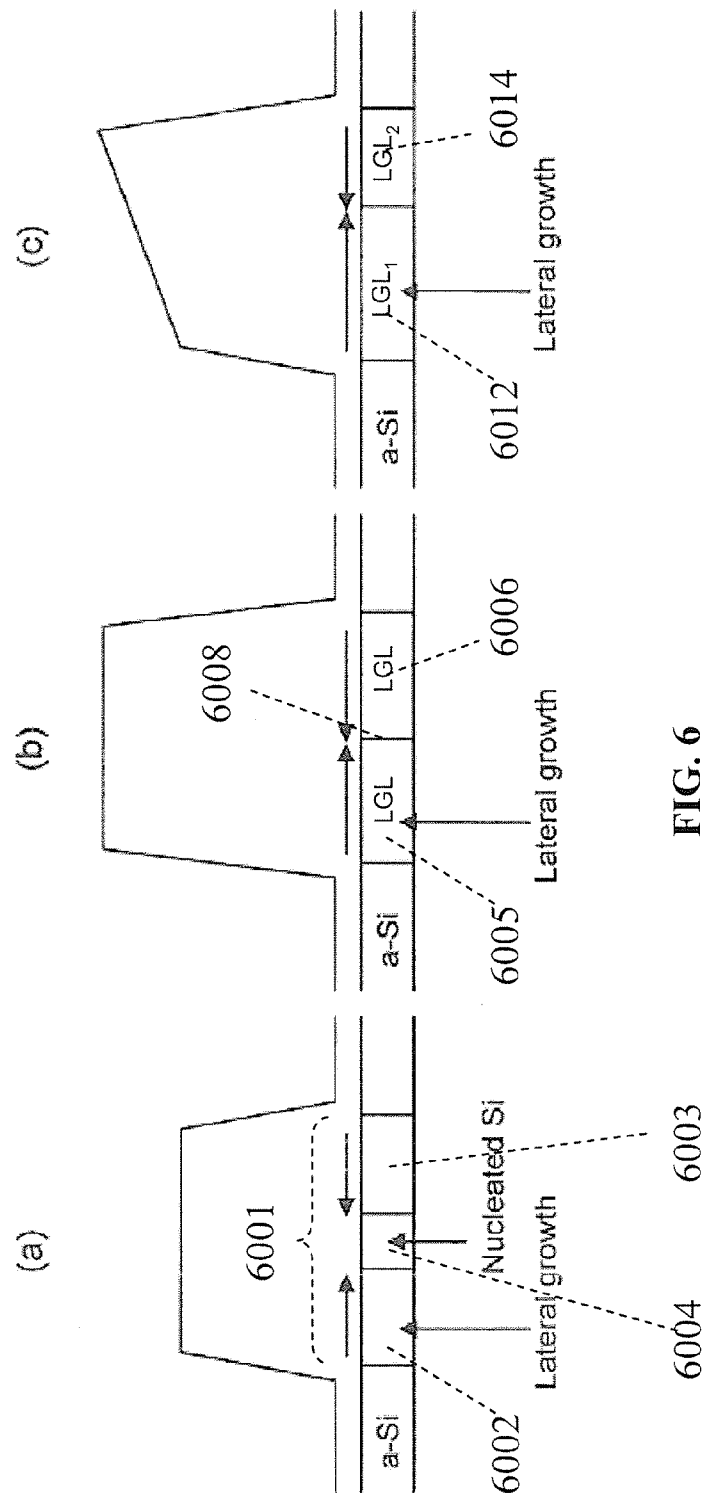


FIG. 6

2 Shot SLS

Symmetric beam

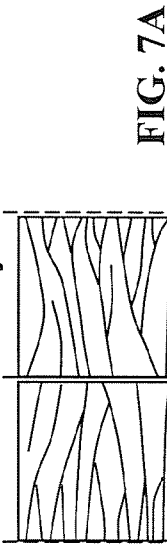


FIG. 7B

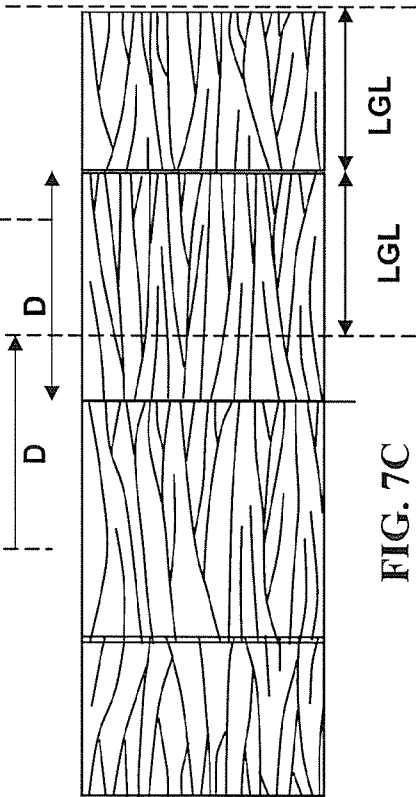
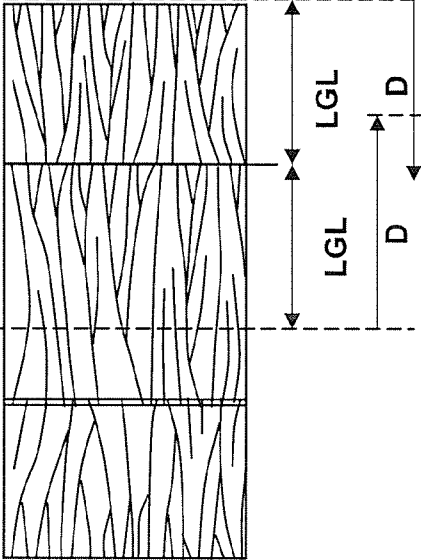


FIG. 7C

Asymmetric beam

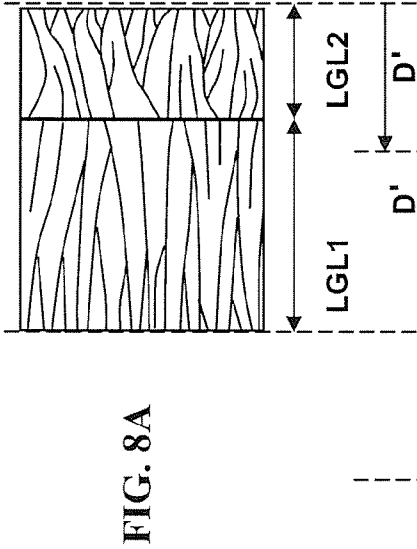


FIG. 8A

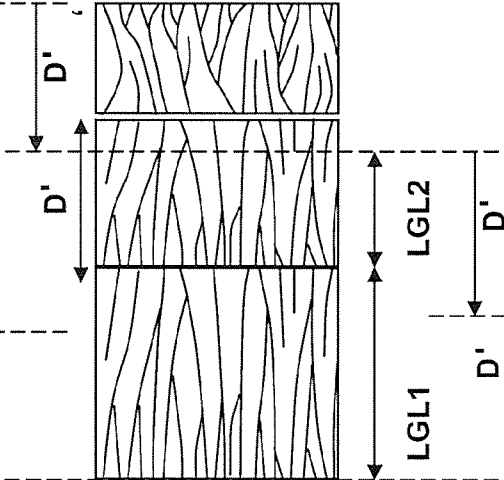


FIG. 8B

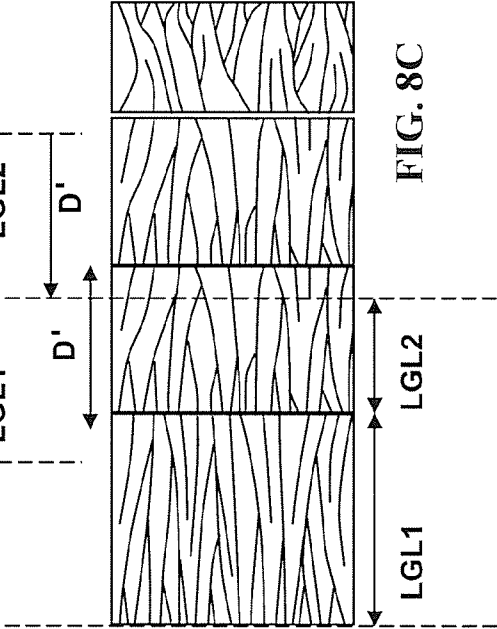


FIG. 8C

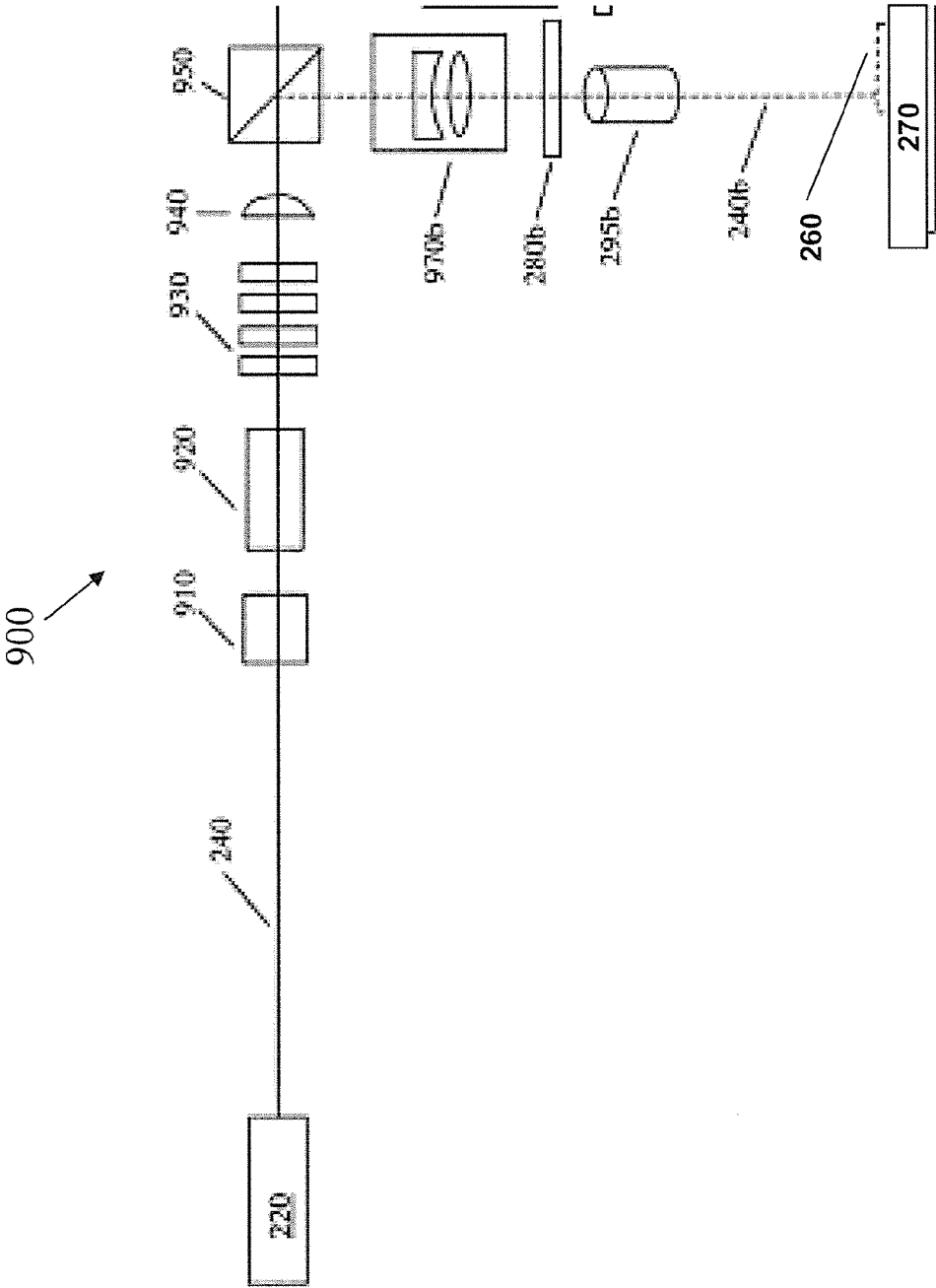
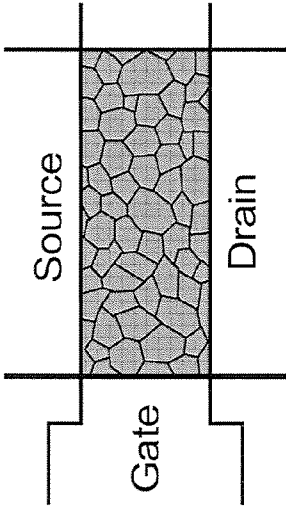
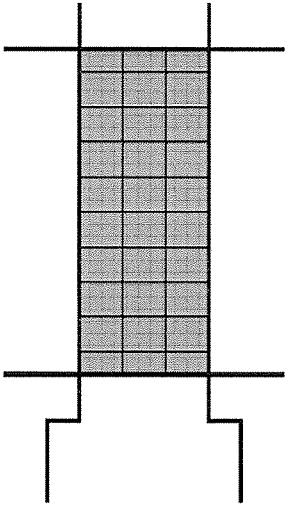


FIG. 9



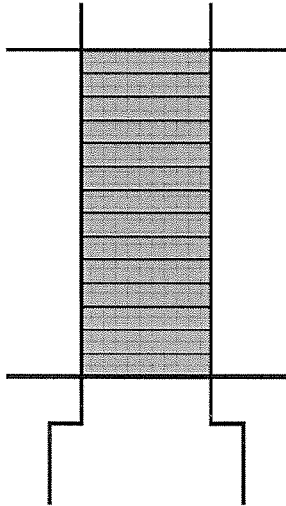
Random

FIG. 10A



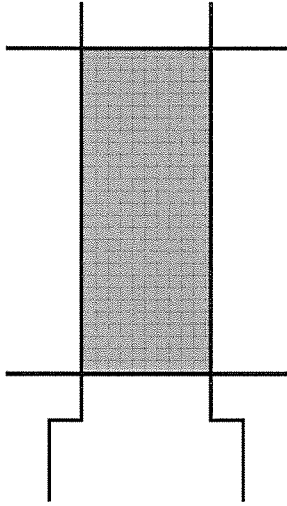
Uniform

FIG. 10B



Directional

FIG. 10C



Single-crystal islands

FIG. 10D

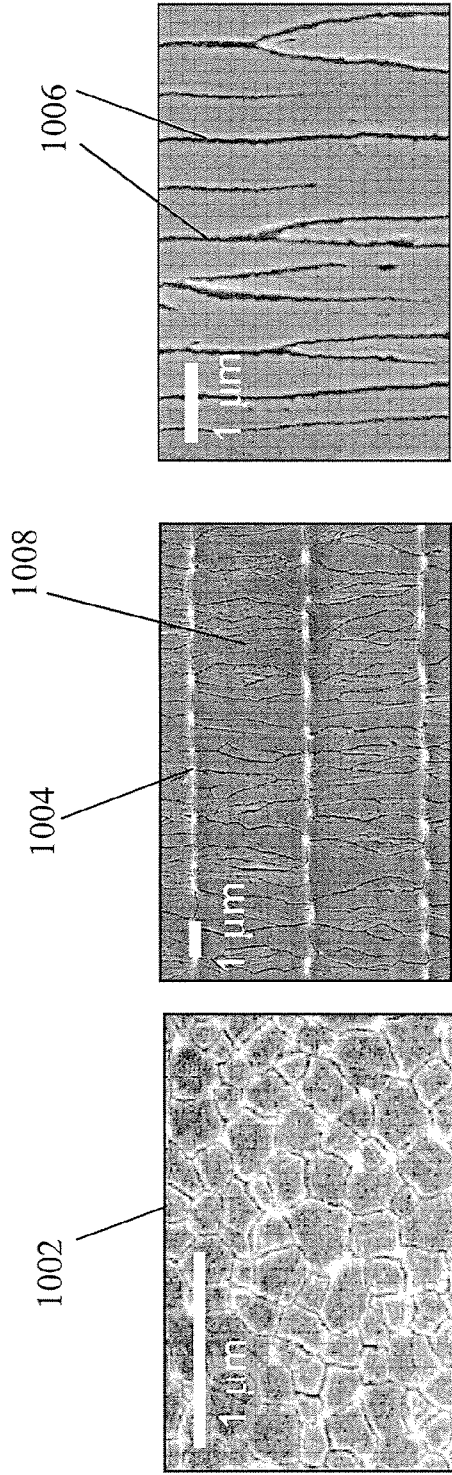
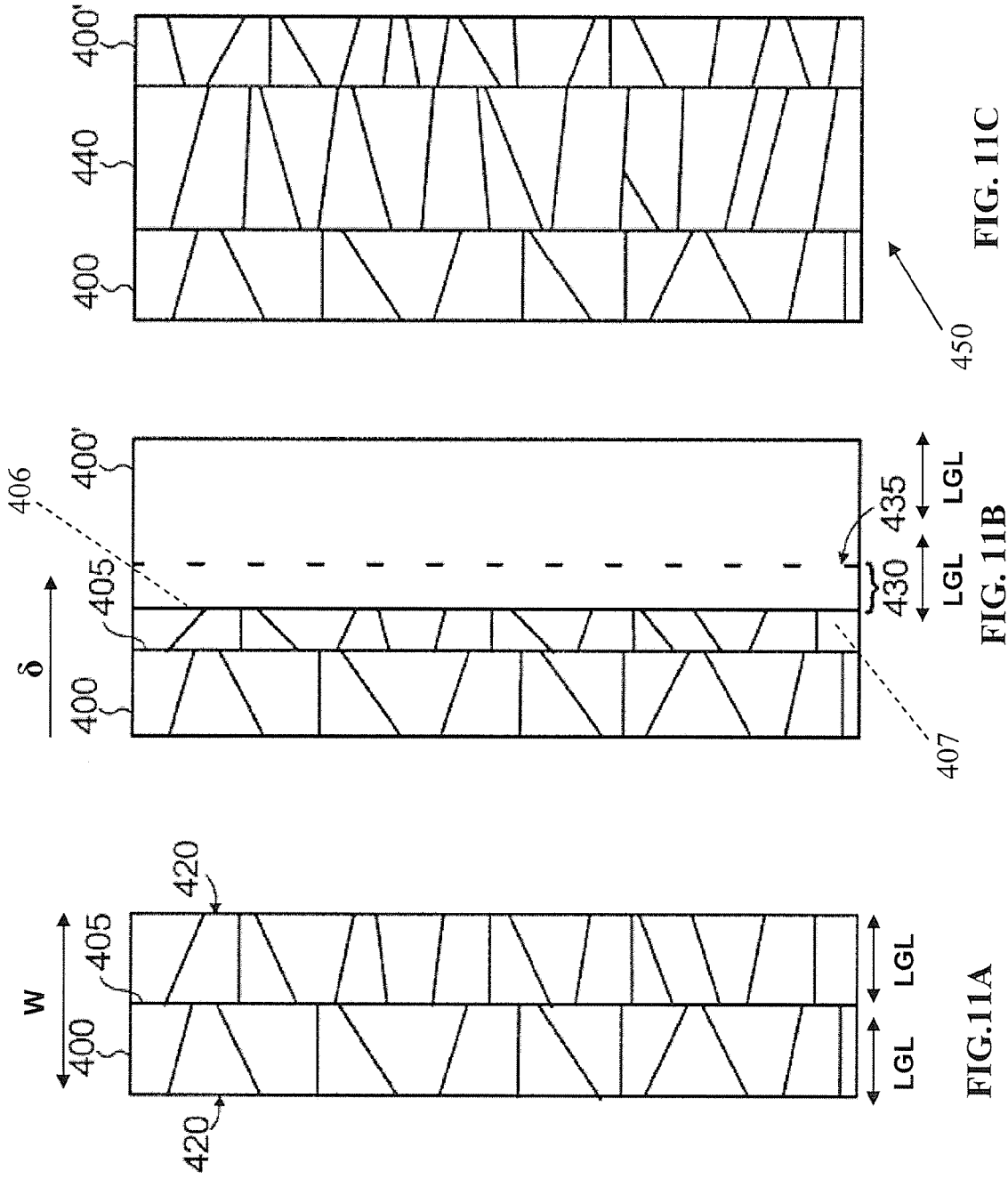


FIG. 10G

FIG. 10F

FIG. 10E



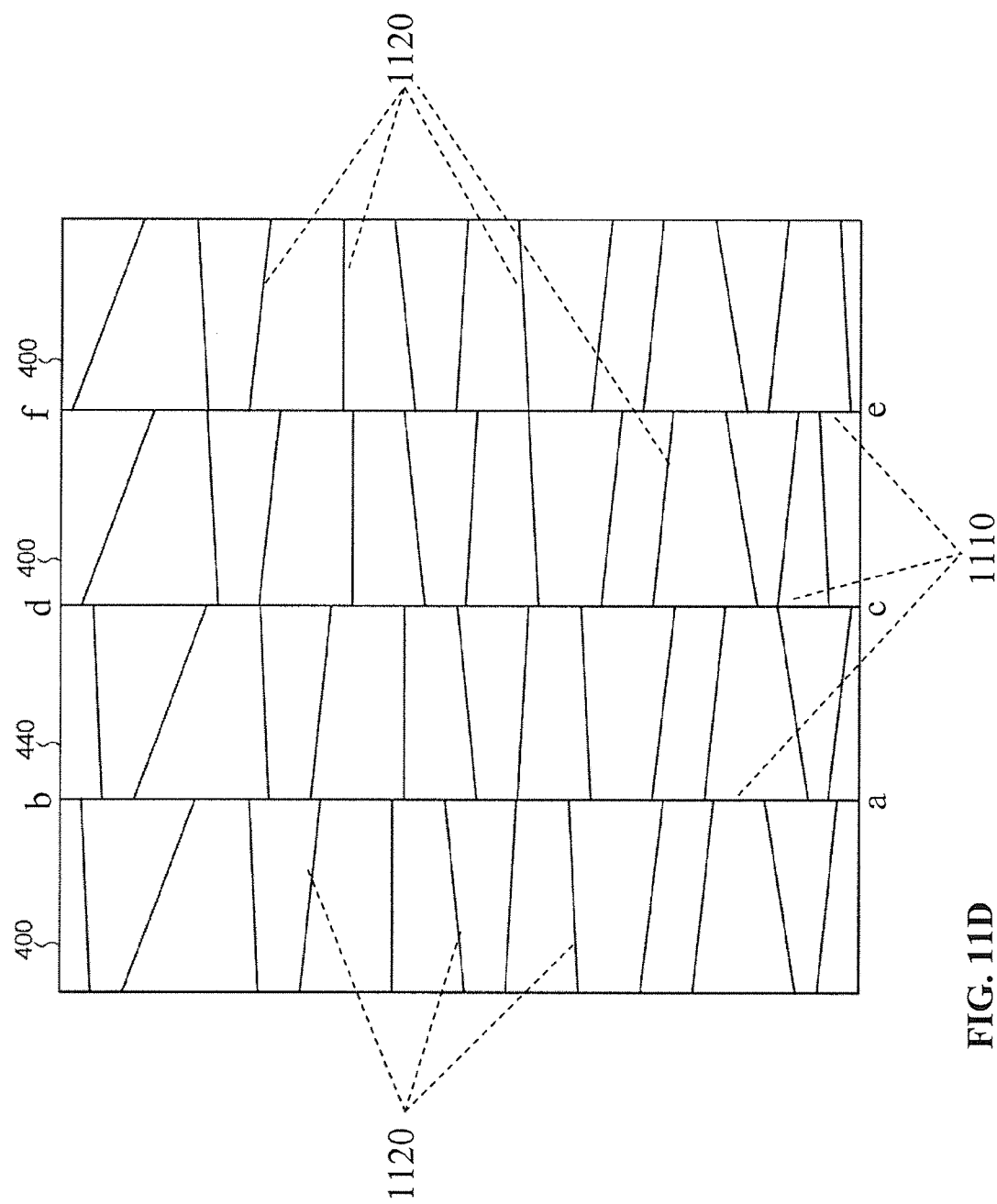


FIG. 11D

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US 08/77704

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - H01L 21/00 (2008.04)

USPC - 438/30; 257/E21.001

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

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

USPC: 438/30; 257/E21.001

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

USPC: 438/30; 257/E21.001; 438/5; 156/345.24

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

PubWEST(USPT,PGPB,EPAB,JPAB); DialogPRO(Engineering); Google Scholar

Search Terms: TFT, channel grain bounries, laterally crystalized, thin films, grain boundary spacing, channel tilt angle, polygon, convex channel, convex polygon channel, grain boudaries, channel area, thin film transistor, crystalline substrate.

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2007/0215942 A1 (Chen et al.) 20 September 2007 (20.09.2007), entire document especially abstract; para. [0009], [0025]-[0028].	1-5, 11-17, 21-22
Y		6-10
X	US 2007/0007242 A1 (Im) 11 January 2007 (11.01.2007), entire document especially abstract; para. [0025]-[0027].	18-20
Y	US 7,187,016 B2 (Arima) 6 March 2007 (06.03.2007), entire document especially abstract;	6-10

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

19 November 2008 (19.11.2008)

Date of mailing of the international search report

16 DEC 2008

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

Facsimile No. 571-273-3201

Authorized officer:

Lee W. Young

PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300
PCT OSP: 571-272-7774