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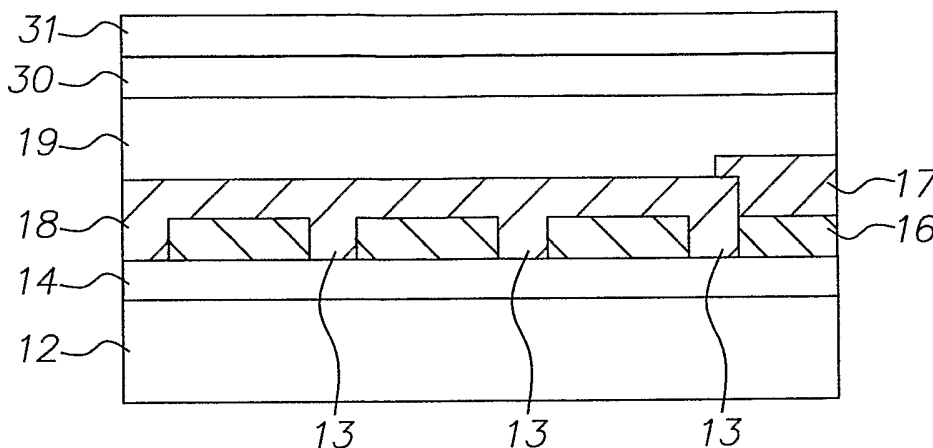
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- (71) **Applicant (for all designated States except US):** EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY [US/US]; 343 State Street, Rochester, New York 14650-2201 (US).
- (72) **Inventor; and**
- (75) **Inventor/Applicant (for US only):** COK, Ronald Steven [US/US]; 36 Westfield Commons, Rochester, New York 14625 (US).
- (74) **Common Representative:** EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY; 343 State Street, Rochester, New York 14650-2201 (US).

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(54) **Title:** OLED DISPLAY WITH ELECTRODE



(57) **Abstract:** An OLED display comprising a substrate (12); at least one heat insulating layer (16) disposed over the substrate; a first electrode (18) located over the heat insulating layer and having a thermal conductivity higher than the heat insulating layer; a plurality of thermal contacts (13) provided through the heat insulating layer between the first electrode and the substrate, the thermal contacts comprising material having a thermal conductivity higher than that of the heat insulating layer; one or more organic layers (19), at least one of which is a light emissive layer, disposed over the first electrode; and a second electrode (30) disposed over the one or more organic layers.

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## **OLED DISPLAY WITH ELECTRODE**

### **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention relates to organic light-emitting diode devices. In particular, the present invention relates to improving device lifetime and reducing localized non-uniformity in an OLED device due to heating within an organic light-emitting display device.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Solid-state organic light emitting diode (OLED) image displays are of great interest as a superior flat-panel display technology. These displays utilize current passing through thin films of organic material to generate light. The color of light emitted and the efficiency of the energy conversion from current to light are determined by the composition of the organic thin-film material. Different organic materials emit different colors of light. However, as the display is used, the organic materials in the device age and become less efficient at emitting light. This aging effect is dependent on the temperature of the OLED display and is increased at higher temperatures. It is useful, therefore, to provide a means to reduce the temperature of an OLED device in operation.

OLED devices are conventionally either top-emitting or bottom-emitting. An OLED display is constructed upon a substrate by depositing a first electrode upon the substrate, organic light emitting materials over the first electrode, and a second electrode above the light emitting materials. A cover is used to encapsulate and protect the device. Light is emitted by the application of a current from one electrode to another passing through the organic light emitting materials. A bottom-emitting device emits light through the substrate and first electrode, which must both be transparent. The second electrode may be either transparent or reflective. A top-emitting device emits light through the cover and second electrode, which must both be transparent. In this case, the first electrode may be either transparent or reflective.

A variety of materials may be used to construct suitable substrates and encapsulating covers for OLED devices and to fill the cavity between the second electrode and the cover. The desirable material properties and/or characteristics of an OLED substrate and cover include low cost, very flat surface, low coefficient of thermal expansion (CTE), high strength and stability under a variety of environmental stresses, and electrically non-conductive (or able to be coated with electrically non-conductive material). The material used most often for such substrates is glass, typically borosilicate glass, because it is transparent, very stable, can be made at low cost, and has a very smooth surface suitable for the deposition and processing of semiconductor and organic materials. Other substrate materials, both rigid and flexible, have been described in the art, for example ceramics, plastics, and metals such as stainless steel (see U.S. Patent 6,641,933 B1 to Yamazaki et al. entitled "Light-Emitting EL Display Device").

Organic light-emitting diodes can generate efficient, high-brightness displays. In operation, OLED devices are provided with a voltage differential across the electrodes by an external power supply either directly (as in a passive-matrix OLED device) or through a locally controlled power circuit (as is found in an active-matrix device). The voltage differential causes a current to flow through the OLED materials, which then causes the OLED materials to emit light. However, the conversion of current to light is relatively inefficient, so that much of the energy is converted to heat. Moreover, much of the emitted light does not escape from the OLED device and is reabsorbed into the device as heat. Hence, OLED devices can become very hot and operate at temperatures well in excess of ambient temperatures. For example, in an ambient environment of 20°C, applicants have demonstrated that an OLED may operate at 40°C to 60°C. This heat is detrimental to the OLED device. As is well known, OLED materials degrade as they are used and degrade faster at higher temperatures. Therefore, providing improved heat management to cool an OLED device improves the lifetime of the OLED device.

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While it is important to maintain the overall brightness of an OLED display, it is even more important to avoid localized degradation within a display. The human visual system is acutely sensitive to differences in brightness in a display. Hence, differences in uniformity are readily noticed by a user. Such  
5 localized differences in uniformity in an OLED display may occur as a consequence of displaying static patterns on the display, for example, graphic user interfaces often display bright icons in a static location. Such local patterns will not only cause local aging in an OLED display, but will also create local hot spots in the display, further degrading the light-emitting elements in the local pattern.  
10 Glass and plastic supports, the use of which is advantageous in view of their relative electrical non-conductivity, may not be sufficiently thermally conductive to provide a uniform temperature across the substrate when the display is in operation. Hence, improved thermal management techniques may significantly improve the life expectancy of an organic display device.

15 One method of removing heat from an organic light emitting display device is described in U.S. Patent No. 6,265,820 to Ghosh et al., entitled, "Heat Removal System for Use in Organic Light Emitting Diode Displays Having High Brightness." The '820 patent describes a heat removal system for use in organic light emitting diode displays. The heat removal assembly includes a heat  
20 dissipating assembly for dissipating heat from the organic light emitting device, a heat transfer assembly for transferring heat from the top organic light emitting device to the heat dissipating assembly and a cooling assembly for cooling the organic light emitting display device. While the system of the '820 patent provides a means for heat removal in an OLED application, its efficiency is limited by the  
25 presence of a glass substrate having poor thermal conductivity characteristics through which heat generated by the OLED devices must transfer for removal. Moreover, the structure described in the '820 patent is complex, requiring multiple layers and specific heat transfer materials in contact with delicate OLED layers.

U.S. Patent 6,480,389 to Shie et al. entitled "Heat Dissipation  
30 Structure for Solid-State Light Emitting Device Package" describes a heat dissipation structure for cooling inorganic LEDs characterized by having a heat

dissipating fluidic coolant filled in a hermetically sealed housing where at least one LED chip is mounted on a metallic substrate within a metallic wall erected from the metallic substrate. U.S. Patent 5,821,692 to Rogers et al. entitled “Organic Electroluminescent Device Hermetic Encapsulation Package” describes  
5 an organic electroluminescent device with a dielectric liquid filling the space between the cover and the organic electroluminescent device. Such arrangements are complex, require fluids, and are difficult to construct in devices such as OLEDs.

U.S. Patent Application Publication 2004/0004436 A1 to Yoneda  
10 entitled “Electroluminescent Display Device”, describes an organic electroluminescent (EL) panel having a device glass substrate provided with an organic EL element on a surface thereof, a sealing glass substrate attached to the device glass substrate, a desiccant layer formed on a surface of the sealing glass substrate, and spacers disposed between a cathode of the organic EL element and  
15 a desiccant layer. A heat-conductive layer can be formed by vapor-depositing or sputtering a metal layer such as a Cr layer or an Al layer that inhibits damaging the organic EL element and increases a heat dissipating ability, thereby inhibiting aging caused by heat. U.S. Patent 6,633,123 to Tazawa entitled “Organic Electroluminescence Device with an Improved Heat Radiation Structure.”  
20 describes an organic electroluminescence device having a heat radiation layer higher in heat conductivity than the substrate. However, such structures, while useful, do not assist in removing heat from the electroluminescent element itself.

Heat sinks are also well known in the integrated circuit industry and are applied to cooling large integrated circuits. Such sinks typically are thick  
25 and are unsuitable for displays in which limiting the thickness of the display is an important goal.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a more uniform distribution of heat within an OLED display and to improve the removal of heat from an OLED display device thereby increasing the lifetime of the

display, while maintaining the simplicity of the design and manufacturing process as well as the thinness of the display.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5           In accordance with the invention there is provided an OLED display comprising a substrate; at least one heat insulating layer disposed over the substrate; a first electrode located over the heat insulating layer and having a thermal conductivity higher than the heat insulating layer; a plurality of thermal contacts provided through the heat insulating layer between the first electrode and  
10 the substrate, the thermal contacts comprising material having a thermal conductivity higher than that of the heat insulating layer; one or more organic layers, at least one of which is a light emissive layer, disposed over the first electrode; and a second electrode disposed over the one or more organic layers.

### 15           ADVANTAGES

The advantages of this invention are an OLED display device that provides a means to reduce the operating temperature of the light emissive layers in an OLED display device to decrease the rate of aging while maintaining the simplicity of design and manufacture as well as thinness of the display.

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### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a cross sectional schematic diagram of an OLED display according to the present invention;

25           Fig. 2 is a cross sectional schematic diagram of a portion of a prior art top-emitting OLED display;

Fig. 3 is a cross sectional schematic diagram of an alternative embodiment of an OLED display according to the present invention; and

Fig. 4 is a top view schematic diagram of an embodiment of an OLED display according to the present invention.

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## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to Fig. 2, a prior art top-emitting OLED display **10** is shown with a substrate **12**, and a thin-film transistor (TFT) active-matrix layer **14** comprising an array of TFTs that provides power to OLED elements. A patterned first heat insulating layer **16** is provided over the TFT active-matrix layer **14**, and an array of first electrodes **18** are provided over the first heat insulating layer **16** and in electrical contact with the TFT active matrix layer **14**. A patterned second heat insulating layer **17** is provided over the array of first electrodes **18** such that at least a portion of the each of the first electrodes **18** is exposed. The first and second heat insulating layers **16** and **17** may be electrically and thermally insulating.

Over the first electrodes **18** and first heat insulating layer **16** are provided red, green, and blue-emitting organic electroluminescent (EL) elements **19**. Herein, the collection of organic EL elements **19** may also be referred to as the organic EL layer. This organic EL layer **19** may be made up of other layers as is known in the art, for example a hole-injection layer **32**, hole-transport layer **34**, light emissive layer **36**, electron-transport layer **38**, and electron injection layer **39**. Alternatively, a single continuous white emitting layer may be used with an array of color filters in the place of separate red, green and blue light emitting elements.

The light-emitting pixel area is generally defined by the area of the first electrode **18** in contact with the organic EL elements **19**. Over the organic EL layer **19** is provided a common second electrode **30**. The first electrode **18**, second electrode **30** and the first heat insulating layer **16** may be formed by employing a thin-film manufacturing technique. Each first electrode **18** in combination with its associated organic EL element **19** and second electrode **30** is herein referred to as an OLED element. A typical OLED display comprises an array of OLED elements wherein each OLED element emits red, green or blue. However, monochrome display devices are also known wherein the array of

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OLED elements emit the same color light, for example, white. An encapsulating or protective layer **31** may be provided over the second electrode **30**.

In operation, the thin-film transistors in TFT active-matrix layer **14** allow current to flow between the first electrodes **18**, each of which can be  
5 selectively addressed, and the common second electrode **30**. Holes and electrons recombine within the organic EL elements **19** to emit light.

In a conventional, prior-art OLED device (as shown in Fig. 2), the heat generated within the EL elements **19** must pass through the first and second electrodes **18** and **30** before it can escape from the OLED display **10**. Some of the  
10 heat can pass through the first electrode **18**, through the first heat insulating layer **16**, and thence through the substrate **12**, while some of the heat passes through the second electrode **30** and an encapsulating cover **50**. However, as demonstrated by applicant, the heat generated by operation of the OLED device cannot readily be conducted out of the OLED device because of the heat insulating layers within the  
15 device.

Referring to Fig. 1, according to one embodiment of the present invention, the first electrode **18** has a plurality of thermal contacts **13** having a thermal conductivity higher than the thermal conductivity of the first heat insulating layer **16**. First heat insulating layer **16** is conventionally formed of  
20 silicon materials, for example silicon dioxide or silicon nitride having a thermal conductivity of approximately 1 W/mK. The first heat insulating layer **16** may also be an epoxy or photoresist. The thermal contacts **13** extend through the first heat insulating layer **16** and comprise a material that is more thermally conductive than the first heat insulating layer **16**. Suitable thermally conductive materials for  
25 use in the thermal contacts **13** may include the same materials used to form the first electrode **18**, for example metals such as silver, aluminum, or manganese, metal oxides such as indium tin oxide (ITO), or metal alloys having a thermal conductivity higher than that of the first heat insulating layer **16**, for example 237  
30 W/mK for Al or 427 W/mK for Ag. Other metals useful in forming electrodes may be employed as long as they have a thermal conductivity higher than the thermal conductivity of the first heat insulating layer **16**. Since the size of the

light-emitting area of the electroluminescent element **19** is relatively large compared to the current integrated circuit found in the art, for example 50 microns by 200 microns, the thermal contacts **13** can be constructed easily using conventional lithographic processes.

5                   The thermal contacts **13** may contact the substrate **12**. In one embodiment, the substrate **12** is thermally conductive, for example if it is made from metal or metal foil. The substrate **12** may be a flexible substrate. Alternatively, the thermal contacts **13** may contact an additional thermally conductive layer **15**. Referring to Fig. 3, a thermally conductive layer **15** is  
10                   located above the substrate **12** and below the first heat insulating layer **16**. It is also possible for the thermally conductive layer **15** to be electrically conductive and form alternative connections to the first electrode **18**, thereby serving to distribute current to the first electrode **18** as well as distribute heat from the first electrode **18** through the thermal contacts **13**.

15                   The number and size of the thermal contacts **13** may be chosen to accommodate the lithographic manufacturing processes employed in manufacturing the device. In applications where thermal considerations are acute, a large number of thermal contacts **13** may be employed. Referring to Fig. 4, a plurality of thermal contacts **13** are shown in a top view distributed in a two-  
20                   dimensional array over the first electrode **18** of the OLED device. The thermal contacts **13** may be located in the center of the first electrode **18**, around the edges of the first electrode **18**, or in any location required by the application. The thermal contacts **13** may have a variety of cross-sections depending on the needs of the applications, for example circular or rectangular cross-sections. By  
25                   increasing or decreasing the size or periodicity of the thermal contacts **13**, a greater or smaller thermally conductive area may be provided.

                    According to one embodiment of the present invention, heat generated within the OLED device is conducted into the first electrode **18**, through the thermal contacts **13** away from the organic EL layer **19**, thereby cooling the

OLED device and prolonging its lifetime. The heat may be distributed further by a thermally conductive substrate or by a thermally conductive layer **15** under the first heat insulating layer **16**.

Thermal contacts **13** may conveniently be formed by forming a  
5 plurality of vias in first heat insulating layer **16**, and subsequently filling the vias with thermally conductive material. The vias for the thermal contacts **13** can be patterned at the same time as the first heat insulating layer **16** is formed so that no further photolithography steps are necessary to create the thermal contacts **13**.  
The thermal contacts **13** can comprise the same material as the first electrode **18**  
10 and the thermal contact **13** and first electrode **18** can be formed in a common manufacturing step. Alternatively, if a non-electrically but thermally conductive contact is desired, a thermally conductive polymer or cured epoxy may be employed.

According to the present invention, the thermal contacts **13** may be  
15 employed in either a top emitter or bottom emitter configuration. In a top emitter configuration, the thermal contacts **13** comprise a thermally conductive material that may be opaque, transparent, or reflective. In a bottom emitter configuration, the thermally conductive material may be transparent. In an additional bottom emitter embodiment, the first electrode **18** is transparent but the thermal contacts  
20 **13** may be opaque. An opaque thermal contact may be necessary to effectively transfer heat. While an opaque thermal contact will not transmit light as effectively as a transparent thermal contact, the benefit gained from improved heat distribution may more than compensate for any loss of light emitted from the device. The thermal contacts **13** may contact the substrate **12**, other planarization  
25 or insulative layers formed on the substrate or the TFT active-matrix layer **14**. Any of these layers may also serve as thermal conductors to spread heat horizontally or vertically within the device. The number, shape and structure of the thermal contacts **13** may be the same or different depending on the processes used to manufacture the OLED device or to meet the needs of a specific  
30 application.

In a preferred embodiment, the invention is employed in a device that includes Organic Light Emitting Diodes (OLEDs) that are composed of small molecule or polymeric OLEDs as disclosed in but not limited to U.S. Patent 4,769,292, to Tang et al., and U.S. Patent 5,061,569 to VanSlyke et al. Many combinations and variations of organic light emitting displays can be used to fabricate such a device.

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**PARTS LIST**

- 10 OLED display
- 12 substrate
- 13 thermal contact
- 14 TFT active-matrix layer
- 15 thermally conductive layer
- 16 first heat insulating layer
- 17 second heat insulating layer
- 18 first electrode
- 19 electroluminescent (EL) element or EL layer
- 30 second electrode
- 31 encapsulating layer
- 32 hole-injection layer
- 34 hole-transport layer
- 36 light emissive layer
- 38 electron-transport layer
- 39 electron injection layer
- 50 cover

**CLAIMS:**

1. An OLED display, comprising:
  - a) a substrate;
  - 5 b) at least one heat insulating layer disposed over the substrate;
  - c) a first electrode located over the heat insulating layer and having a thermal conductivity higher than the heat insulating layer;
  - d) a plurality of thermal contacts provided through the heat insulating layer between the first electrode and the substrate, the thermal contacts comprising  
10 material having a thermal conductivity higher than that of the heat insulating layer;
  - e) one or more organic layers, at least one of which is a light emissive layer, disposed over the first electrode; and
  - f) a second electrode disposed over the one or more organic layers.
- 15 2. The display claimed in claim 1 wherein the thermal contacts are in thermal contact with the first electrode.
3. The display claimed in claim 2 wherein the thermal contacts are  
20 touching the first electrode.
4. The display claimed in claim 3 wherein the thermal contacts are formed in a common manufacturing step with the first electrode.
- 25 5. The display claimed in claim 2, wherein the thermal contacts and the first electrode comprise the same material.
6. The display claimed in claim 2, wherein the first electrode is made of a metal, a metal oxide, or a metal alloy including one or more of the  
30 group including silver, aluminum, manganese, indium tin oxide, or alloys thereof.

7. The display claimed in claim 1, wherein the heat insulating layer comprises silicon.

8. The display claimed in claim 7, wherein the heat insulating layer  
5 is silicon dioxide.

9. The display claimed in claim 7, wherein the heat insulating layer is silicon nitride.

10. The display claimed in claim 1, wherein the heat insulating  
10 layer has a thermal conductivity of approximately 1 W/mK.

11. The display claimed in claim 1, wherein the heat insulating  
layer is an epoxy or a photoresist.

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12. The display claimed in claim 1, wherein the second electrode transmits light emitted by the light emissive layer.

13. The display claimed in claim 1, further comprising a thermally  
20 conductive layer located between the substrate and the heat insulating layer.

14. The display claimed in claim 13, wherein the thermally conductive layer is electrically conductive.

25 15. The display claimed in claim 13, wherein the thermally conductive layer is electrically connected to the first electrode.

16. The display claimed in claim 1, wherein the thermal contacts form a two-dimensional arrangement.

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17. The display claimed in claim 1, wherein the substrate is made of a glass, metal foil, plastic or one or more layers of glass, metal foil, or plastic.

18. The display claimed in claim 1, wherein the substrate is  
5 flexible.

19. The display claimed in claim 1 wherein the first electrode is transparent and the thermal contacts are not transparent.

20. A method of making an OLED display, comprising the steps  
10 of:

- a) providing a substrate;
- b) forming at least one heat insulating layer over the substrate, wherein the heat insulating layer is provided with a plurality of vias;
- 15 c) forming thermal contacts in the plurality of vias in the heat insulating layer;
- d) forming a first electrode over the heat insulating layer;
- e) depositing a light emissive layer over the first electrode; and
- f) forming a second electrode over the light emissive layer.

21. The method claimed in claim 20, wherein the thermal contacts  
20 are electrically insulating.

22. The method claimed in claim 20, wherein the thermal contacts  
25 are electrically conducting.

23. The method claimed in claim 20, further comprising the step of forming a thermally conductive layer between the substrate and the heat insulating layer.

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24. The method claimed in claim 20, wherein the first electrode is a metal, metal oxide, or metal alloy.

25. The method claimed in claim 20, wherein the steps of forming  
5 the first electrode, second electrode or heat insulating layers employ a thin-film manufacturing technique.

26. The method claimed in claim 20, wherein the thermal contacts  
include at least one thermal contact positioned in the center of the first electrode.  
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27. The method claimed in claim 20, wherein the thermal contacts  
include at least one thermal contact positioned at an edge of the first electrode.

28. The method claimed in claim 20, wherein the thermal contacts  
15 are formed in a common manufacturing step with the first electrode.

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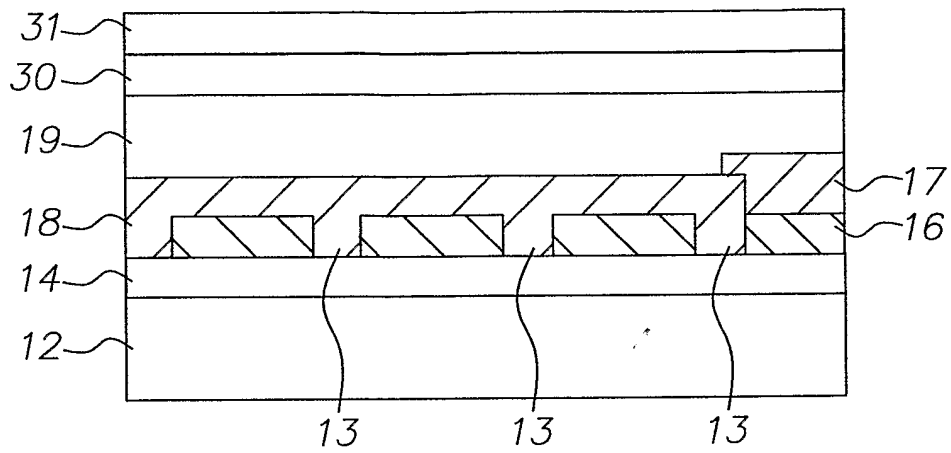


FIG. 1

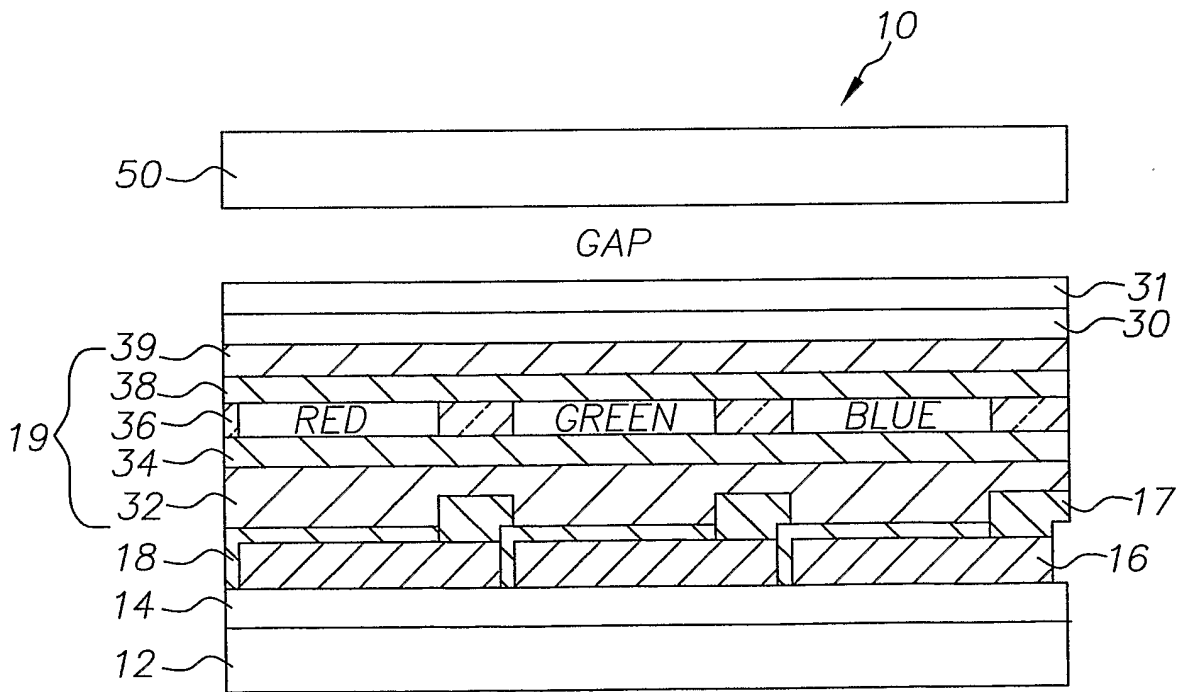


FIG. 2  
(PRIOR ART)

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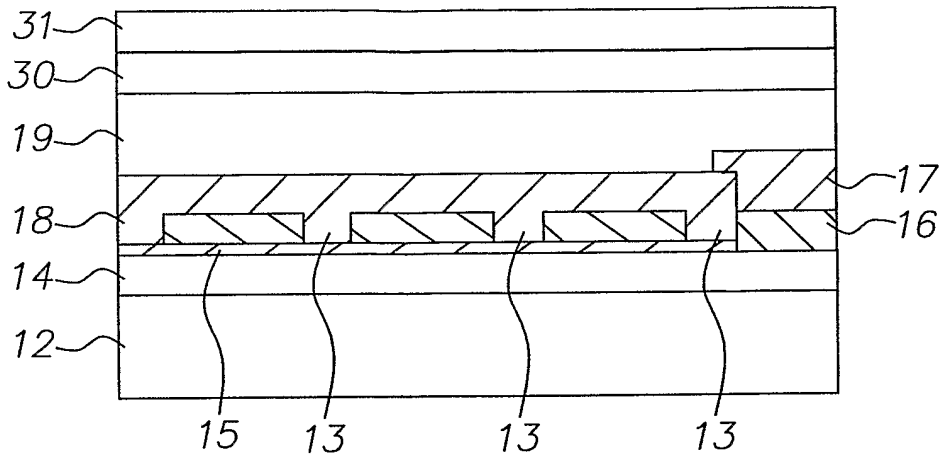


FIG. 3

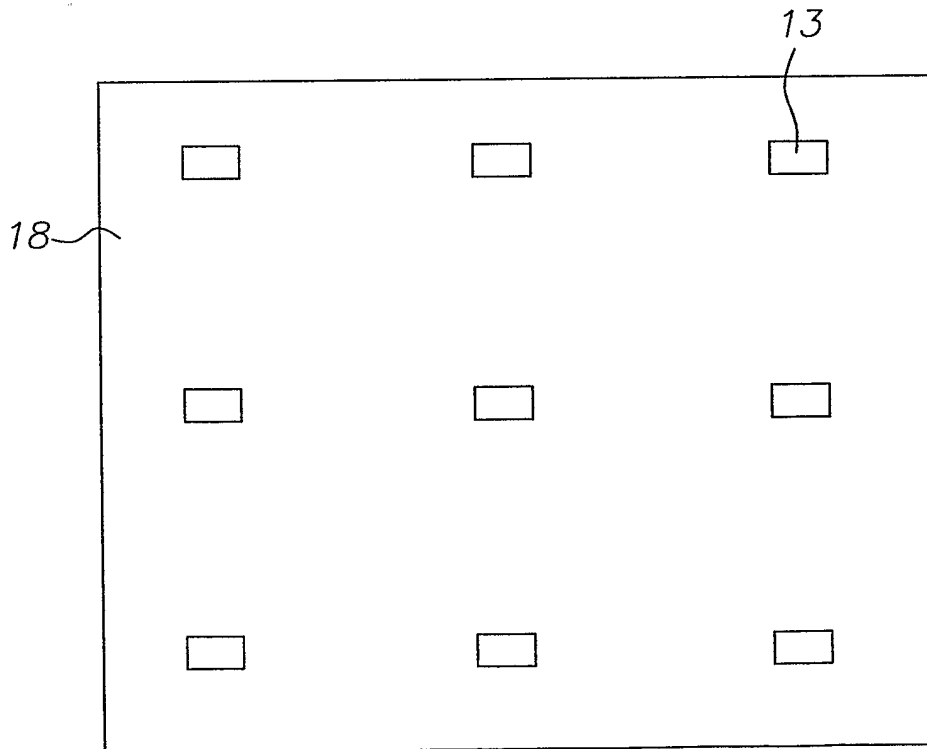


FIG. 4

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No  
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<b>A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER</b> H01L51/52 H01L27/32		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
<b>B. FIELDS SEARCHED</b>		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) H01L		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used) EPO-Internal, PAJ, WPI Data, INSPEC		
<b>C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT</b>		
Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 2003, no. 11, 5 November 2003 (2003-11-05) & JP 2003 208980 A (FUJI ELECTRIC CO LTD), 25 July 2003 (2003-07-25)	1, 2, 6, 10, 11, 16-22, 24-27
Y	abstract	3-5, 7-9, 12-15, 23, 28
Y	US 2004/061438 A1 (YAMAZAKI SHUNPEI ET AL) 1 April 2004 (2004-04-01)  paragraphs '0041! - '0043!, '0069! - '0071!, '0074!, '0076!, '0079!, '0080!, '0082!, '0207!, '0208!, '0230! - '0232!  ----- -/--	3-5, 7-9, 12, 13, 23, 28
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patent family members are listed in annex.		
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Date of the actual completion of the international search  7 December 2005		Date of mailing of the international search report  16/12/2005
Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016		Authorized officer  De Laere, A

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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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A	EP 1 351 323 A (EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY) 8 October 2003 (2003-10-08) figure 2	1

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Information on patent family members

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PCT/US2005/027533

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