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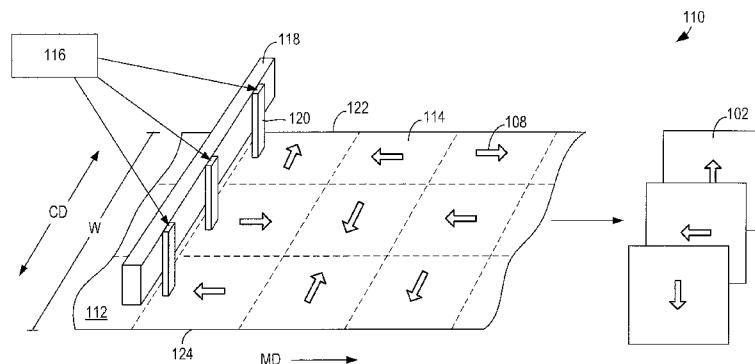


FIG. 1E

(57) Abstract: A method of manufacturing a modular textile system comprises dividing a textile web into a plurality of frames, each frame defining a carpet tile to be formed from the textile web, providing each frame with an indicium, and forming the textile web into a plurality of carpet tiles. The indicium may comprise at least one of a variously oriented indicium and a variously positioned indicium for indicating the orientation of each carpet tile in an installation.

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RANDOM TILE INSTALLATION USING NON-RANDOM INSTALLATION TECHNIQUE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

5 This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/182,807, filed June 1, 2009, which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

10 This disclosure is related to a method of making and installing floor coverings, for example, carpet tiles. This disclosure also is related to carpet tile systems and carpet tile installations.

BACKGROUND

15 Textile tiles, for example, carpet tiles, have been used in many floor covering applications due to their ease of installation. Traditionally, carpet tiles have been installed in a manner that seeks to mimic the appearance of a broadloom installation. Since carpet tiles are cut from a textile web, the tiles are typically installed monolithically, that is, with all of the tiles oriented in the same direction, 20 usually the machine direction. To facilitate the installation, an indicium, for example, an arrow, may be printed on the back of each tile to indicate how the tiles should be oriented. The installer simply rotates each tile as needed so the arrows are pointing in the same direction.

Carpet tiles have also been designed with various patterns and designs that 25 allow the tiles to be installed “randomly.” As used herein, the term “random installation” generally refers to an installation technique in which each tile is oriented variably and indiscriminately with respect to an adjacent tile. For instance, in one exemplary random tile installation, the installer positions a first tile, and for each subsequent tile, the installer can choose one of four rotational 30 positions (0, 90, 180, or 270 degrees) relative to the previous tile. After the tiles

are arranged on the flooring surface, the installer is charged with reviewing the installation and reorienting any tiles that do not appear to have been laid randomly, based on the particular installer's perception. Unfortunately, by reconfiguring the tiles in this manner, some degree of true randomness of the installation is 5 substituted by the judgment of the installer. Further, this step of reorienting tiles to create a more random "look" in the installer's view is both time-consuming and burdensome.

In some cases, the tiles may be provided with an arrow indicating the machine direction to assist the installer with rotating the tiles in a more "random" 10 manner. However, if the installer focuses too much effort on trying to orient the arrows, and thereby the tiles, randomly, the installer may intentionally or inadvertently use a pattern of rotation, such that the resulting installation may not be random at all. Thus, there is a need for a method and system that provides a more truly random installation as compared with conventional tile systems, 15 without placing a burden on the installer.

SUMMARY

This disclosure is directed generally to carpet tiles, a modular textile system including such tiles, and a textile installation that may be created using the 20 modular tile system. This disclosure is also directed generally to a method of making and installing modular textiles, for example, carpet tiles, and a textile web from which the tiles may be formed.

In one aspect, each carpet tile of the modular textile system includes a variously positioned and/or variously oriented indicium. The position and/or 25 orientation of the indicium may be random or may be pre-determined in a seemingly random or variable manner. Each carpet tile is installed such that each indicium is oriented in a uniform manner (i.e., identically oriented and/or positioned with respect to each other indicium). By arranging the variously positioned and/or variously oriented tiles in a like manner, the overall installation 30 is random or at least seemingly random.

In another aspect, the method of this disclosure facilitates the creation of a random carpet tile installation (or an at least seemingly random carpet tile installation) using an organized or non-random installation technique. To do so, an arrow or other indicium is printed on the back of each carpet tile to indicate the 5 configuration of the tile to be laid. The direction and/or placement of the indicium on a particular tile may be determined using a random number generator or using any other suitable method. When the tiles are installed, the installer rotates each tile until all of the indicia are oriented in a like manner (e.g., the arrows are unidirectional such that the arrow heads are pointing in the same direction), in a 10 manner similar to a conventional monolithic installation. However, since the indicia are printed with various orientations or locations, the resulting tile installation includes variously oriented tiles. Thus, the installer need not be concerned with attempting to create a random installation because the unidirectional arrangement of the indicia will inherently result in a random 15 installation.

Numerous variations of the method and system are contemplated. For example, although the method is described in connection with carpet tiles, the method may be used with other textile systems or flooring systems (e.g., hard surface flooring), or may be used in any other suitable manner.

20 Other features, aspects, and embodiments will be apparent from the following description and accompanying figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The description refers to the accompanying schematic drawings, in which 25 like reference characters refer to like parts throughout the several views, and in which:

FIG. 1A schematically illustrates a modular textile system according to the disclosure;

30 **FIG. 1B** schematically illustrates an exemplary installation using the modular textile system of **FIG. 1A**;

FIG. 1C schematically illustrates another exemplary installation using the modular textile system of **FIG. 1A**;

FIG. 1D schematically illustrates still another exemplary installation using the modular textile system of **FIG. 1A**;

5 **FIG. 1E** schematically illustrates an exemplary process for forming the modular textile system of **FIG. 1A**;

FIG. 2 schematically illustrates another exemplary process for forming a modular textile system; and

10 **FIG. 3A** schematically illustrates another modular textile system according to the disclosure; and

FIG. 3B schematically illustrates an exemplary installation using the modular textile system of **FIG. 3A**.

DESCRIPTION

15 **FIG. 1A** schematically illustrates an exemplary modular textile system **100**. The modular textile system **100** includes a plurality of textile tiles **102** (only one of which is labeled), for example, carpet tiles, each of which includes a first pair of edges **104a**, **104b** that extend in a machine direction **MD** and a second pair of edges **106a**, **106b** that extend in a cross-machine direction **CD**, such that the 20 carpet tiles **102** have a generally square shape. However, other shapes are contemplated. Each tile **102** includes a first or front side comprising fibers and a second or back side comprising a backing, as will be understood by those of skill in the art.

As shown in **FIG. 1A**, the back side of each carpet tile **102** includes an 25 indicium **108** that is variously oriented with respect to the machine direction **MD** and cross-machine direction **CD**. The orientation of the indicium **108** may vary for each application. In one example, the indicium **108** may be oriented 0, 90, 180, or 270 degrees with respect to the machine direction **MD**, such that the indicium **108** is generally parallel and/or perpendicular to the various edges **104a**, 30 **104b**, **106a**, **106b** of the carpet tile **102**. In another example, the indicium **108**

may be generally oblique to the various edges **104a**, **104b**, **106a**, **106b** of the carpet tile **102** (e.g., pointing towards the corners of the tile). Other possibilities are contemplated.

If desired, the orientation of each variously oriented indicium **108** may be 5 provided randomly, for example, using a random number generator, as will be discussed further below. Alternatively, the orientation may be provided manually or otherwise in a predetermined, non-random, but variable manner (i.e., such that it is seemingly random).

The indicium **108** may generally comprise a directional indicium, i.e., a 10 word, shape, symbol, mark, or other element that is asymmetrical along at least one line of symmetry, such that the direction and/or orientation of indicium **108** can be used to indicate an installation direction or orientation for the carpet tile **102**. In this example, the indicium comprises an arrow. However, other possibilities are contemplated, as will be discussed further below in connection 15 with **FIGS. 3A and 3B**.

To use the carpet tiles **102** to create an installation on a flooring surface, each tile **102** may be rotated as needed so that the indicia **108** on the back of the tiles **102** are arranged in a unidirectional manner, for example, with the arrows **108** pointing in the same direction, and placed in an edge-to-edge relationship with one 20 another, as shown, for example, in **FIG. 1B** (in which the arrows **108** on the back of the tiles **102** are hidden from view and shown with dashed lines). However, since the arrows **108** are oriented variously on the tiles **102**, the resulting tile installation inherently includes an arrangement of variously oriented tiles. The tiles may be secured to the flooring surface in the conventional manner.

25 It will be understood that in any carpet tile installation, the relative positions of the carpet tiles **102** may be generally at the discretion of the installer. If desired, this “positional randomness” or “positional variability” may be minimized by instructing the installer to position the tiles in a sequential manner as the tiles **102** are removed from the packaging without regard to the installer’s 30 personal preferences.

It will also be appreciated that countless possible installation types or styles are contemplated. In **FIG. 1B**, the carpet tiles **102** are arranged in a unidirectional block configuration with the tile edges aligned with one another. In **FIG. 1C**, the carpet tiles **102** are arranged in a unidirectional ashlar configuration. In **FIG. 1D**, 5 the carpet tiles **102** are arranged in a unidirectional brick configuration. Still other configurations may be used.

FIG. 1E schematically illustrates an exemplary process **110** for forming the modular textile system **100** of **FIG. 1A**. A textile web **112** having a printable backing or back side may be divided into a plurality of smaller areas or frames **114** 10 (e.g., cutting frames) (shown schematically with dashed lines), each of which defines a tile **102** to be cut from the web **112**. In this example, the textile web **112** includes three substantially square shaped tile frames **114**, each having a tile length and a tile width, across a width of the textile web **112** extending in the cross-machine direction **CD**. However, other shapes and numbers of frames may 15 be used.

Each frame **114** may be provided with a variously oriented indicium **108** for facilitating installation of the tiles. As stated above, the orientation of the indicium may be random or may be seemingly random or variable.

For example, in one embodiment, as the textile web **112** advances in the 20 machine direction **MD**, a random (or pseudo-random) number generator **116** may generate a plurality of orientation values, each of which represents a pre-determined orientation of an arrow or other indicium **108** to be printed on the back of the textile web **112** within the respective tile frame **114**. For example, the orientation value may be an integer that corresponds to a 0, 90, 180, or 270 degree 25 rotation of the printed indicium **108** relative to some predetermined point. Alternatively, the random number generator may be programmed to select from the values 0, 90, 180, or 270. Alternatively still, the orientation values may be determined manually or automatically using some other random or non-random technique. Still other possibilities are contemplated.

The orientation values may be sent to a printing unit or printer **118**, which in this example, includes three independently operable print heads **120** generally facing the back side of the textile web **112**. Each print head **120** may print the indicium **108** within the respective frame **114** based on the orientation value 5 supplied by the random number generator **116**.

Numerous orientation values and corresponding printing configurations are contemplated. In one particular example, an orientation value of 1 may correspond to a 0 degree position, such that the arrow is printed with the arrow head facing the respective print head **120**. An orientation value of 2 may 10 correspond to a 90 degree rotation with respect to the 0 degree position, such that the arrow is printed with the arrow head facing a first longitudinal edge **122** of the web **112**. An orientation value of 3 may correspond to a 180 degree rotation with respect to the 0 degree position, such that the arrow is printed with the arrow head facing away from the respective print head **120**, and an orientation value of 4 may 15 correspond to a 270 degree rotation with respect to the 0 degree position, such that the arrow is printed with the arrow head facing a second longitudinal edge **124** of the web **112**. In another example, the arrows may be directed towards the corners of the frames. Countless other variations may be used. Further, while arrows are used commonly in the textile industry, it will be understood that the indicium may 20 be any word, number, symbol, or other image that is capable of being oriented with other indicia in a like manner, such that the indicium serves to indicate the installation direction.

In some embodiments, it may be desirable to ensure that an equal number of tiles having each rotation are produced from a particular web. To do so 25 according to one example, the algorithm used to generate the orientation values may be adjusted to ensure that an equal number of orientation values are generated within a given total number of orientation values and/or length of textile web. Alternatively, the algorithm may require that after returning a particular value (e.g., “1”), that each other value (e.g., “2,” “3,” and “4”) must be generated (in any

order) before generating that value (e.g., “1”) again. However, other methods are contemplated.

Any suitable printing technique and/or equipment may be used to print the indicia **108** on the textile web **112**. In the exemplary process shown in **FIG. 1E**, at 5 least one of the print heads **120** may be a digital printer (e.g., an ink jet or dot matrix print head). In another exemplary process **210** schematically illustrated in **FIG. 2** (in which like reference numerals are used where appropriate, except that the “1” is replaced with a “2”), at least one print head **220** may be a transfer-type printer (e.g., flexographic, gravure, etc.). In such an embodiment, each print head 10 **220** may index, pivot, or rotate independently to print the variously oriented indicium **208**. Countless other possibilities are contemplated. Further, it will be understood that any number of printers, each containing one or more print heads, may be used as needed or desired.

Returning to **FIG. 1E**, after the arrow or other directional indicium **108** is 15 printed within each tile frame **114**, the textile web **112** can be cut to form a modular textile system **100** including a plurality of carpet tiles **102**. The tiles **102** then may be processed in the conventional manner. In some instances, the tiles **102** may be packaged sequentially, such that some tiles cut from adjacent portions 20 of the textile web **112** may be packaged together. In other instances, the tiles **102** may be accumulated for later packaging. In such cases, the tiles **102** may be packaged indiscriminately, that is, without regard to their original position on the textile web **114**, thereby introducing a further degree of randomness into the modular textile system and resulting installation.

FIG. 3A schematically depicts an exemplary variation of the system **100** of 25 **FIG. 1A**. The modular textile system **300** includes features that are similar to the system **100** shown in **FIG. 1A**, except for variations noted and variations that will be understood by those of skill in the art. For simplicity, the reference numerals of similar features are preceded in the figures with a “3” instead of a “1.”

In this example, the indicium **308** comprises a word, symbol, mark, or 30 other element that is variously positioned on the back of the carpet tile **302**, such

that each indicium **308** is proximate to one of the edges **304a**, **304b**, **306a**, **306b** and/or corners **326a**, **326b**, **326c**, **326d** of the respective carpet tile. The indicia **308** may be symmetrical or asymmetrical since the position of the indicium **308** may be used to indicate the orientation of each tile **302**. For example, in the 5 illustrated embodiment **300**, each indicium comprises a circle or dot **308** positioned adjacent to one of the corners **326** of each tile **302**. In still another variation (not shown), the indicium may comprise a line or other marking proximate to one of the edges of each tile (e.g., perpendicular, parallel, or oblique to the respective edge). Countless other variations are contemplated hereby.

10 To install the tiles **302** according to one exemplary method, the tiles **302** may be oriented in a unidirectional manner such that the indicium **308** are similarly positioned with respect to one another, for example, as shown in **FIG. 3B** (in which the indicium **308** are hidden from view and shown with dashed lines).

15 The system **300** can be made as described in connection with **FIGS. 1E** and **2**, or using any other suitable process, equipment, or technique. In this example, however, the values generated by a machine or manually may be referred to as position values, such that the indicium **308** is provided in a particular quadrant of the tile and/or adjacent to a particular corner of the respective tile 20 frame **314**. Numerous other possibilities are contemplated.

It will be appreciated that the present method and system greatly simplify the creation of a random tile installation. Unlike conventional systems, the installer need not adhere to complicated instructions for rotating the tiles with respect to one another to ensure some degree of variation in tile orientation. 25 Further, the installer need not be burdened with the visual discretion and responsibility associated with conventional random tile systems. Instead, the carpet tiles may be positioned quickly and effortlessly as needed to arrange the indicia in a unidirectional configuration. Further, the present method and system ensure a greater degree of randomness in the resulting installation since the

installer is not given the discretion to change the orientation of each tile to suit his particular preferences.

It will be readily understood by those persons skilled in the art that, in view of the above disclosure, the present invention is susceptible of broad utility and 5 application. Although specific embodiments or aspects are disclosed, it will be understood that this disclosure is only illustrative and exemplary of the invention and is made merely for purposes of providing a full and enabling disclosure of the invention and to set forth the best mode of practicing the invention known to the inventors at the time the invention was made.

10 Many adaptations, variations, modifications, and equivalent arrangements will be apparent from or reasonably suggested by the present invention and the above detailed description thereof without departing from the substance or scope of the present invention. It will be recognized that various elements discussed with reference to the various embodiments may be interchanged to create entirely 15 new embodiments coming within the scope of the invention. Accordingly, all matter contained in the above description or shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative only and is not intended nor is to be construed to limit or otherwise to exclude any such other embodiments, adaptations, variations, modifications, and equivalent arrangements of the present invention.

20

What is claimed is:

1. A method of manufacturing a modular textile system, comprising:
 - dividing a textile web into a plurality of frames, each frame defining a carpet tile to be formed from the textile web;
 - providing each frame with an indicium, the indicium comprising at least one of a variously oriented indicium and a variously positioned indicium; and
 - forming the textile web into a plurality of carpet tiles.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the indicium is for indicating an installation direction of each carpet tile.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein dividing the textile web into a plurality of frames comprises dividing the textile web into a number of tile widths and lengths.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein each tile width and tile length defines one frame of the plurality of frames.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein
 - the indicium is a variously oriented indicium, and
 - the method further comprises providing a plurality of orientation values, each orientation value corresponding to an orientation of the indicium to be printed in each frame of the plurality of frames.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein providing the plurality of orientation values comprises randomly generating the plurality of orientation values.
7. The method of claim 5, wherein providing the plurality of orientation values comprises manually generating the plurality of orientation values.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein each orientation value corresponds to a 0, 90, 180, or 270 degree rotation of the indicium relative to an initial position.
9. The method of claim 5, wherein providing each frame with the indicium comprises printing the indicium onto the textile web in an orientation corresponding to the orientation value for the respective frame.
10. The method of claim 5, wherein the indicium comprises a directional indicium.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein the indicium comprises an arrow.
12. The method of claim 1, wherein
the indicium is a variously positioned indicium, and
the method further comprises providing a plurality of positional values, each positional value corresponding to a position of the indicium to be printed in each frame of the plurality of frames.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein providing the plurality of positional values comprises randomly generating the plurality of positional values.
14. The method of claim 12, wherein providing the plurality of positional values comprises manually generating the plurality of positional values.
15. The method of claim 12, wherein each positional value corresponds to a corner of the respective frame.
16. The method of claim 12, wherein providing each frame with the indicium comprises printing the indicium onto the textile web in a position corresponding to the positional value for the respective frame.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein
the textile web includes a first side including fibers and a second side opposite the first side, and
providing each frame with the indicium comprises printing the indicium onto the second side of the textile web.
18. A textile web for forming a plurality of carpet tiles, the textile web including a plurality of indicia for being provided on the carpet tiles formed from the textile web, the indicia comprising at least one of variously oriented indicia and variously positioned indicia, wherein the indicia are for arranging the carpet tiles with the indicia positioned in a like manner.
19. A modular textile system including a plurality of carpet tiles, each carpet tile having a machine direction, each carpet tile including an indicium for arranging the tiles in a uniform manner, wherein each indicium comprises at least one of variously oriented indicia with respect to the machine direction and variously positioned indicia.
20. A modular textile system including a plurality of carpet tiles, each carpet tile including an indicium adjacent to one of a plurality of corners of each carpet tile, wherein the indicium is for arranging the tiles in a uniform manner.
21. A textile installation comprising a plurality of carpet tiles arranged in an edge-to-edge relationship, each carpet tile including an indicium, the indicia of the plurality of carpet tiles being oriented in a uniform manner, wherein orienting the indicia in the uniform manner provides a random tile installation.

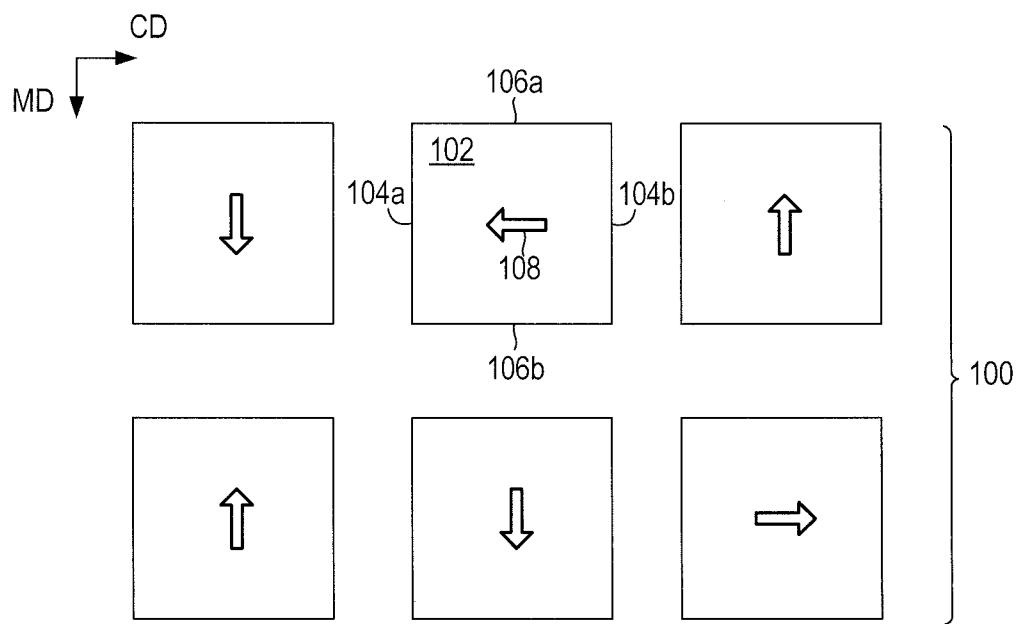


FIG. 1A

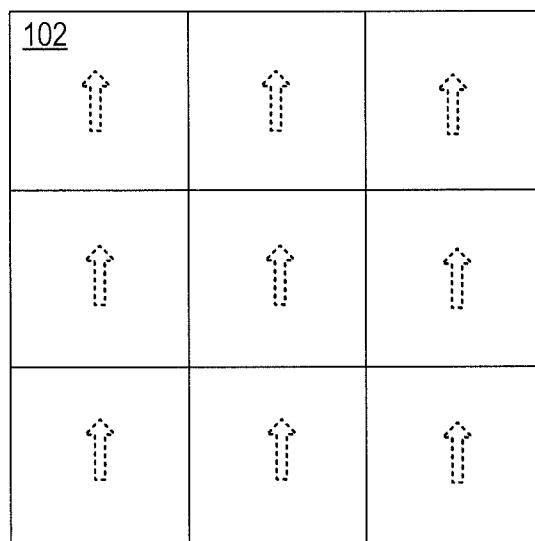


FIG. 1B

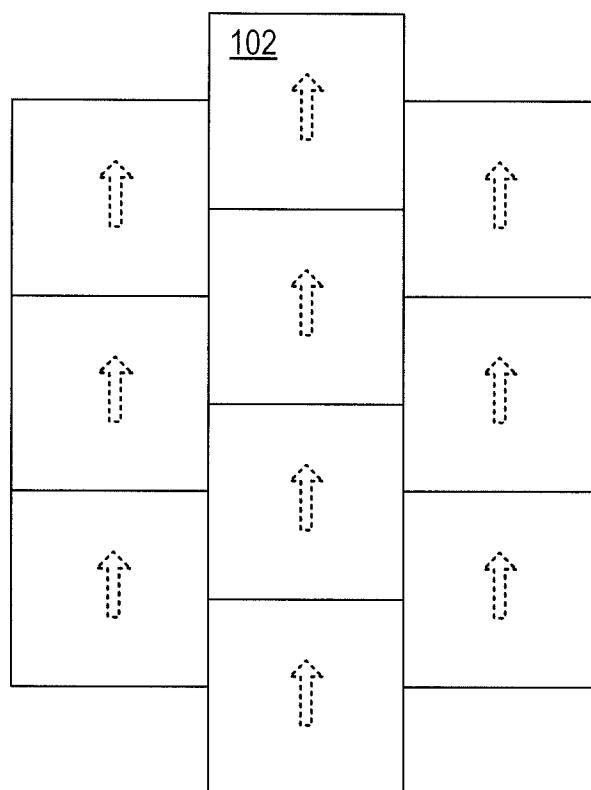


FIG. 1C

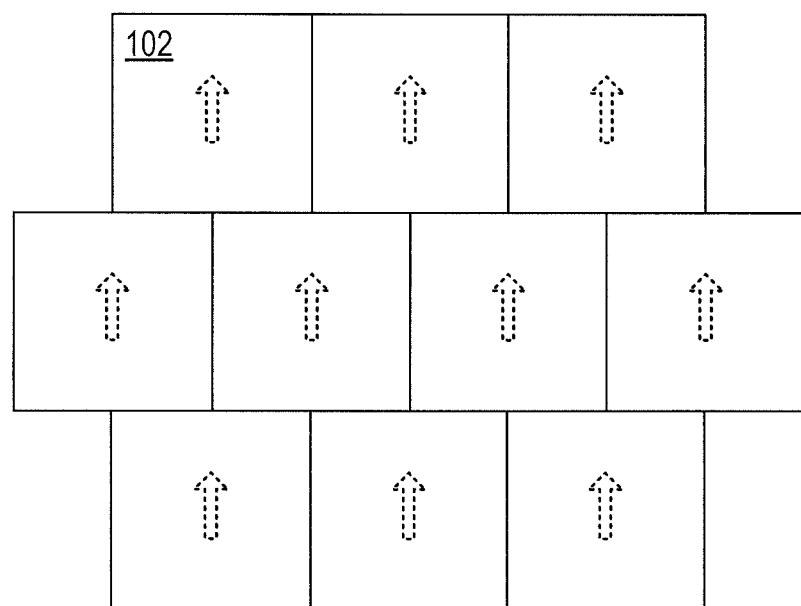


FIG. 1D

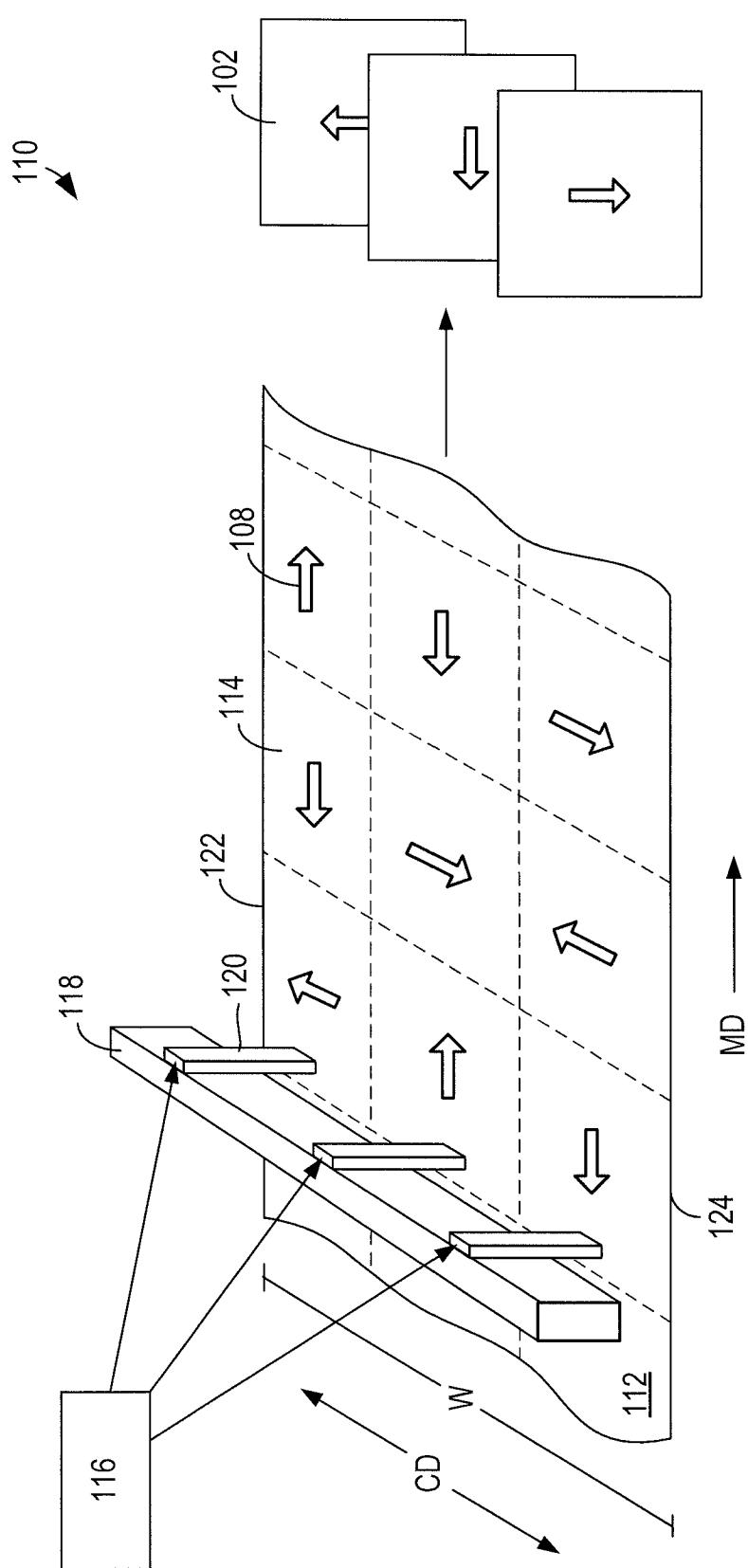


FIG. 1E

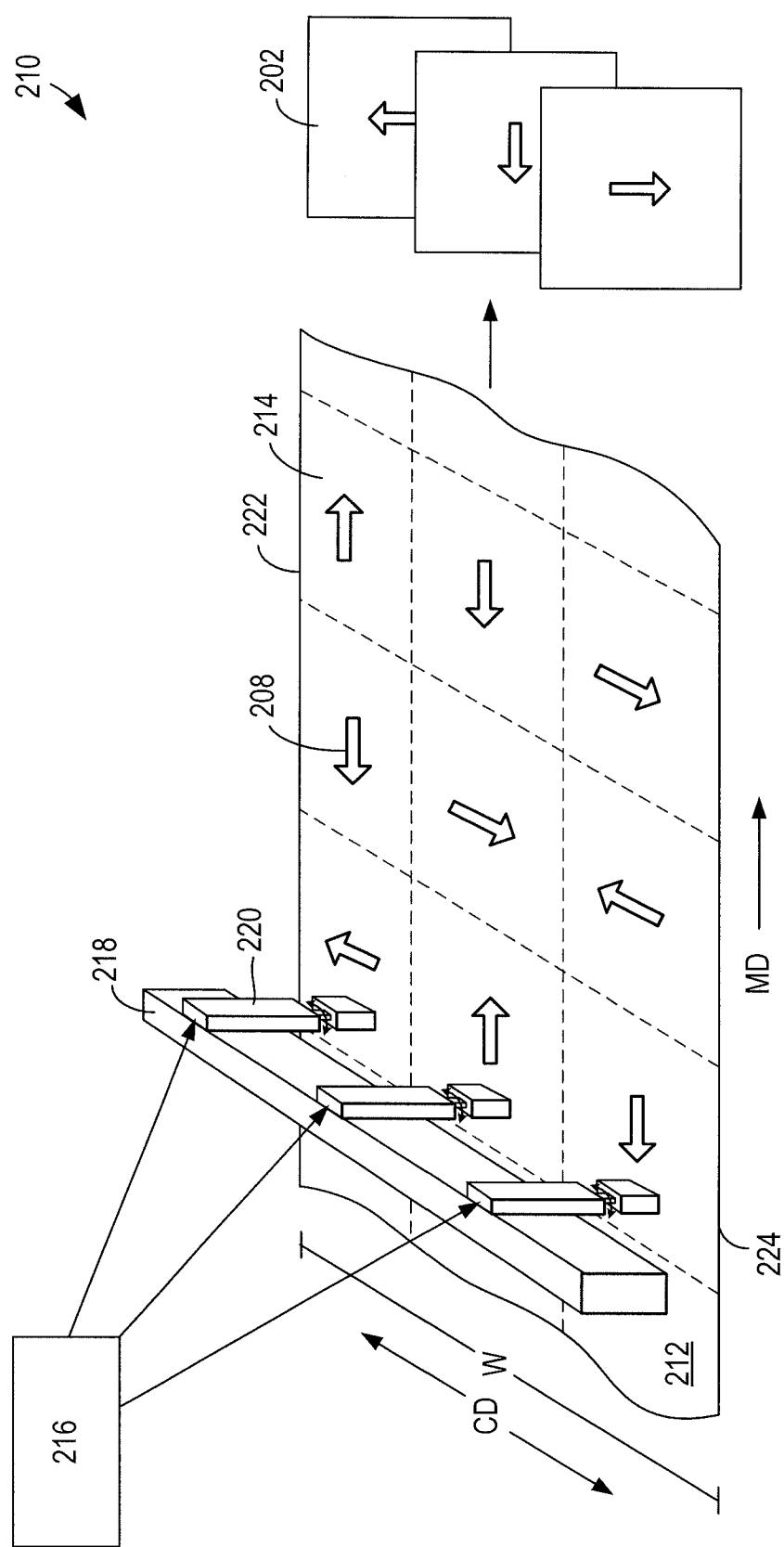


FIG. 2

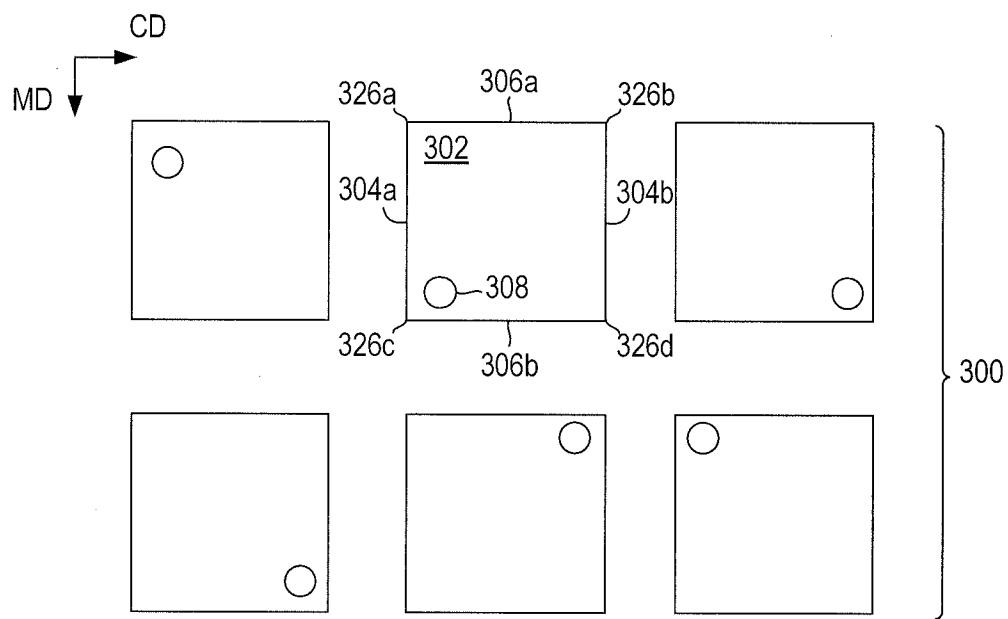


FIG. 3A

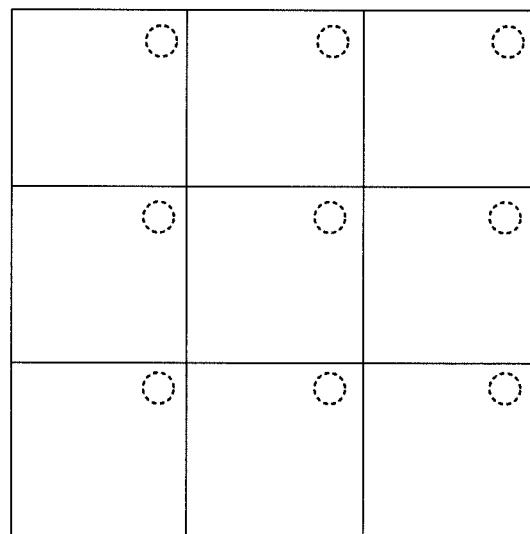


FIG. 3B