



FIGURE 1

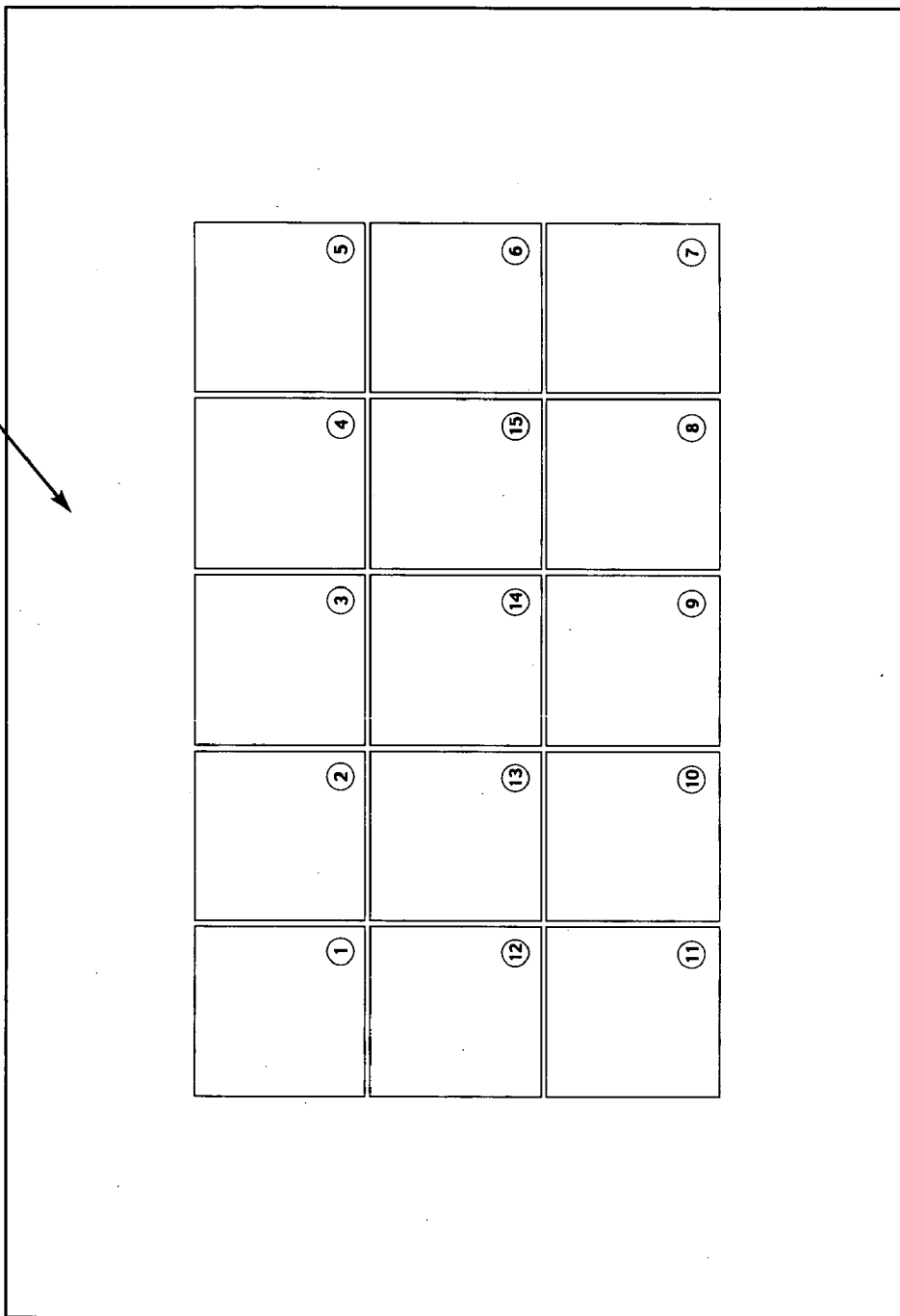
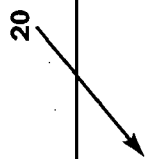


FIGURE 2

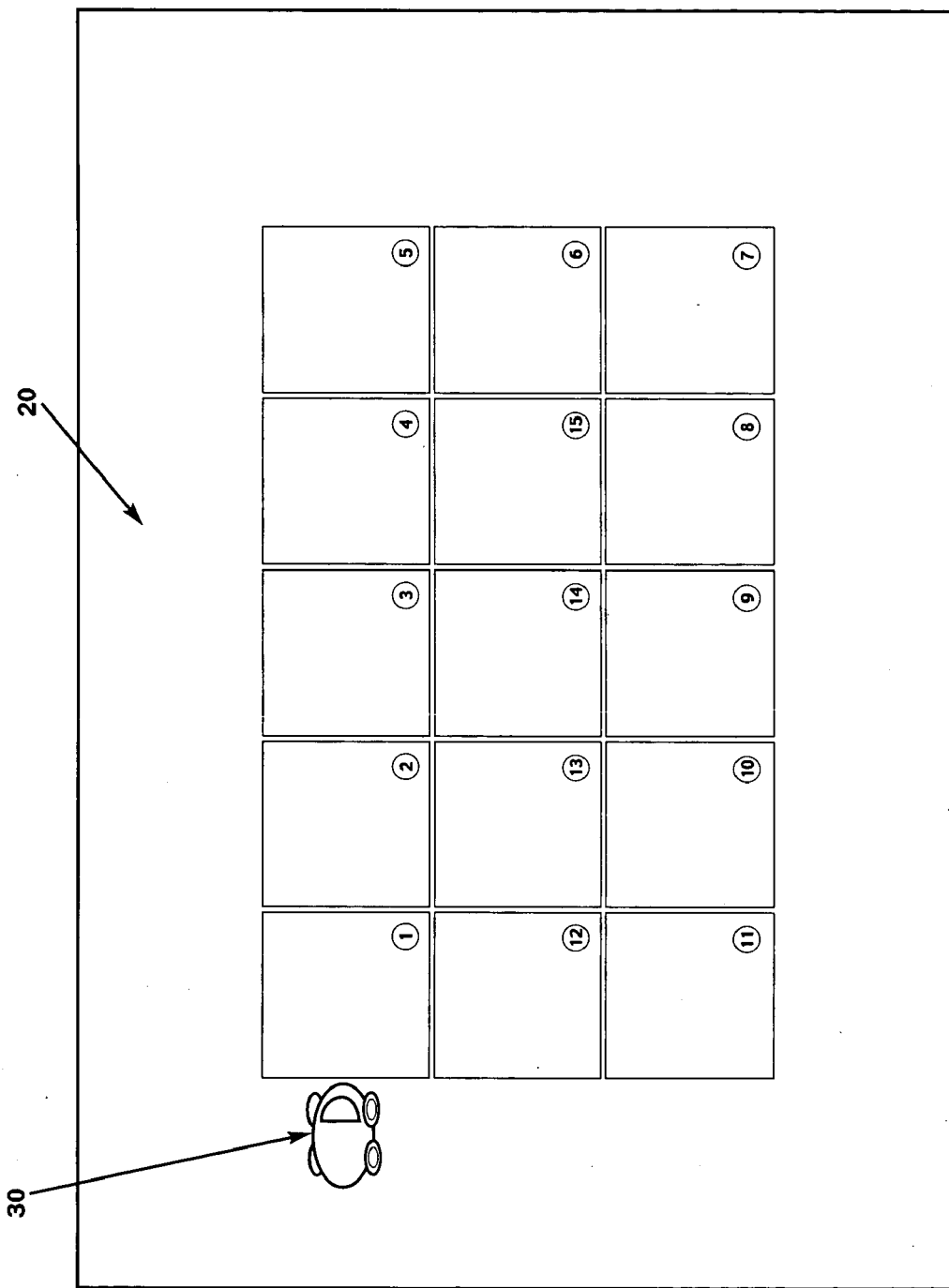


FIGURE 3

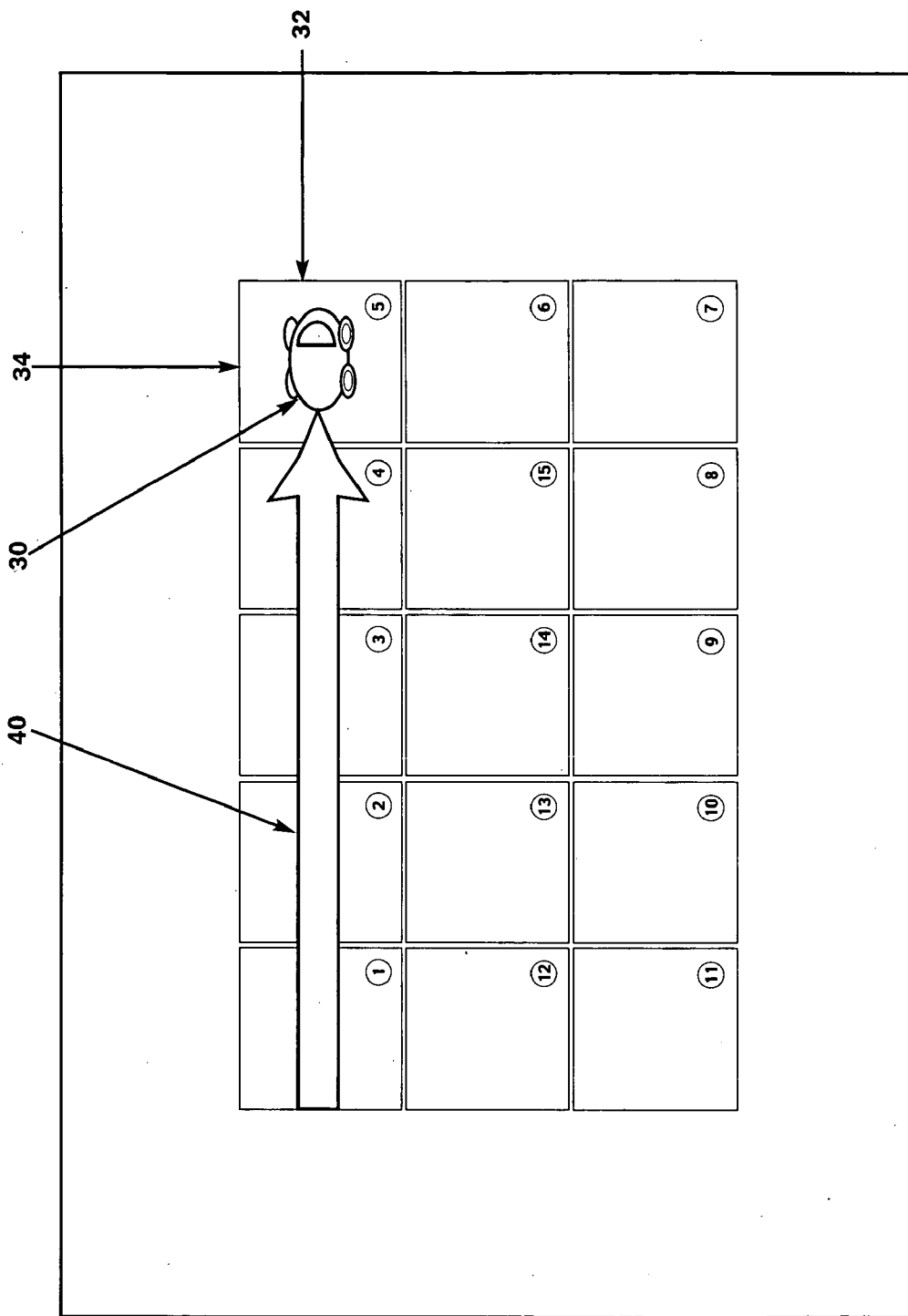


FIGURE 4

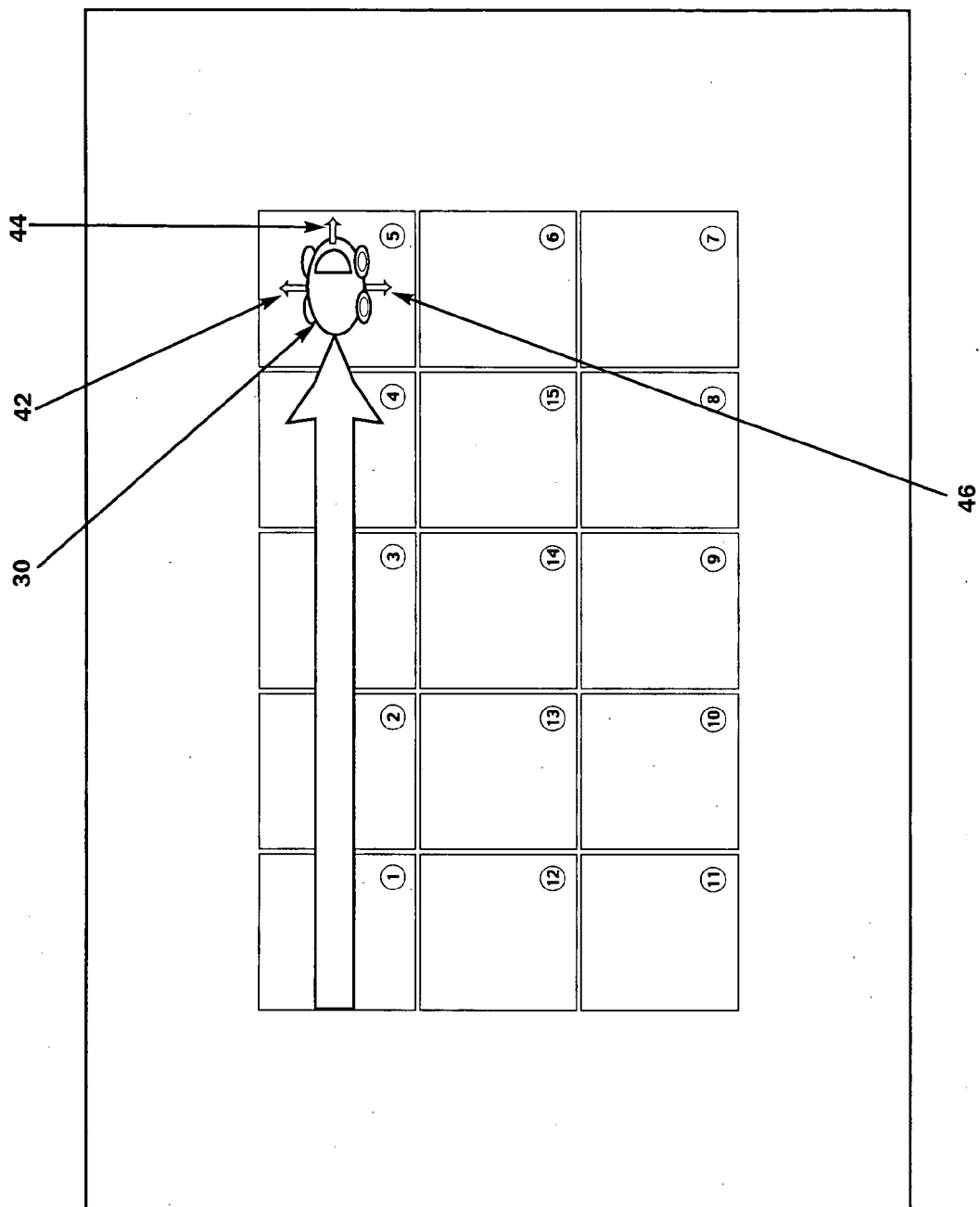


FIGURE 5

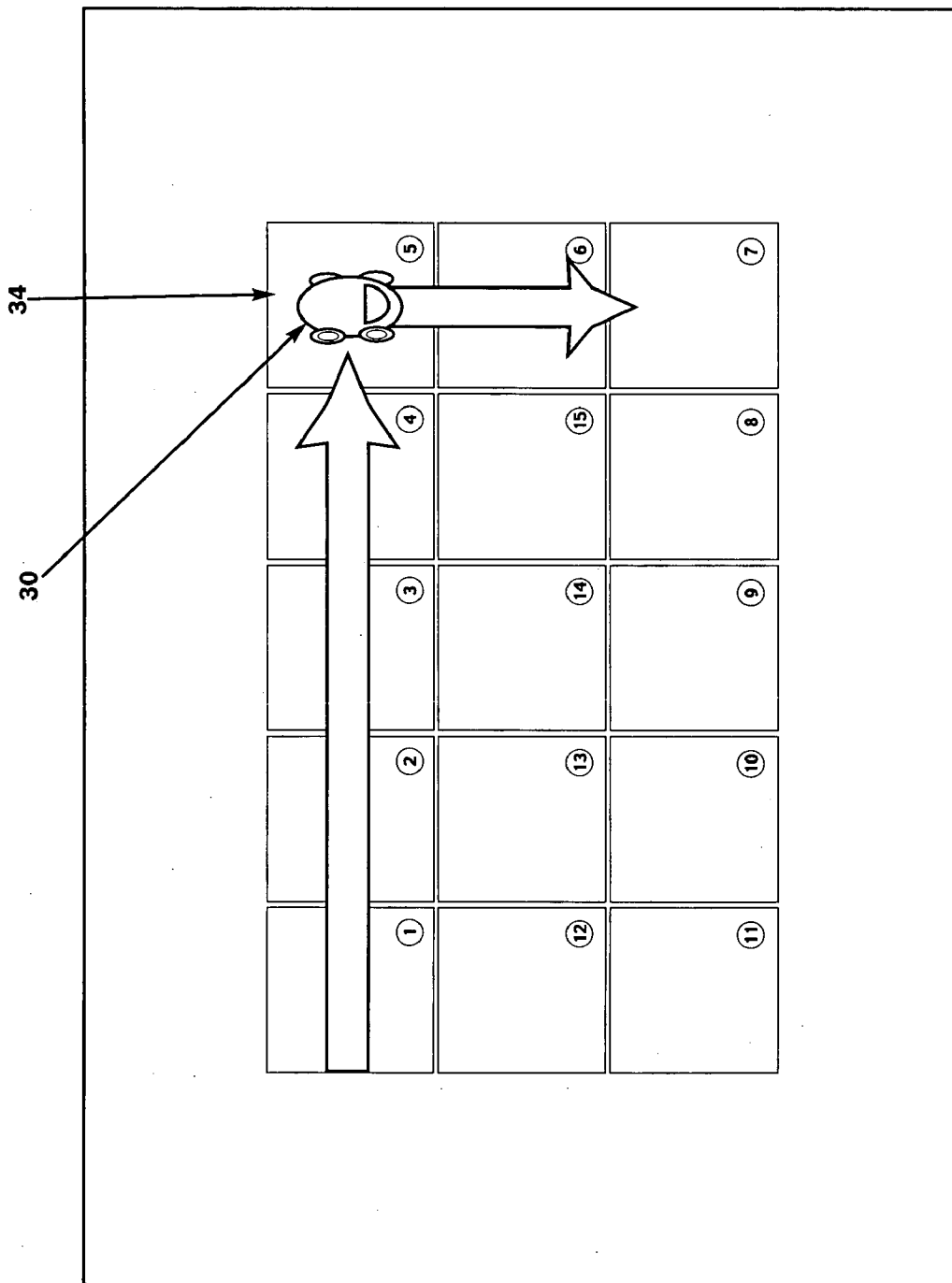


FIGURE 6

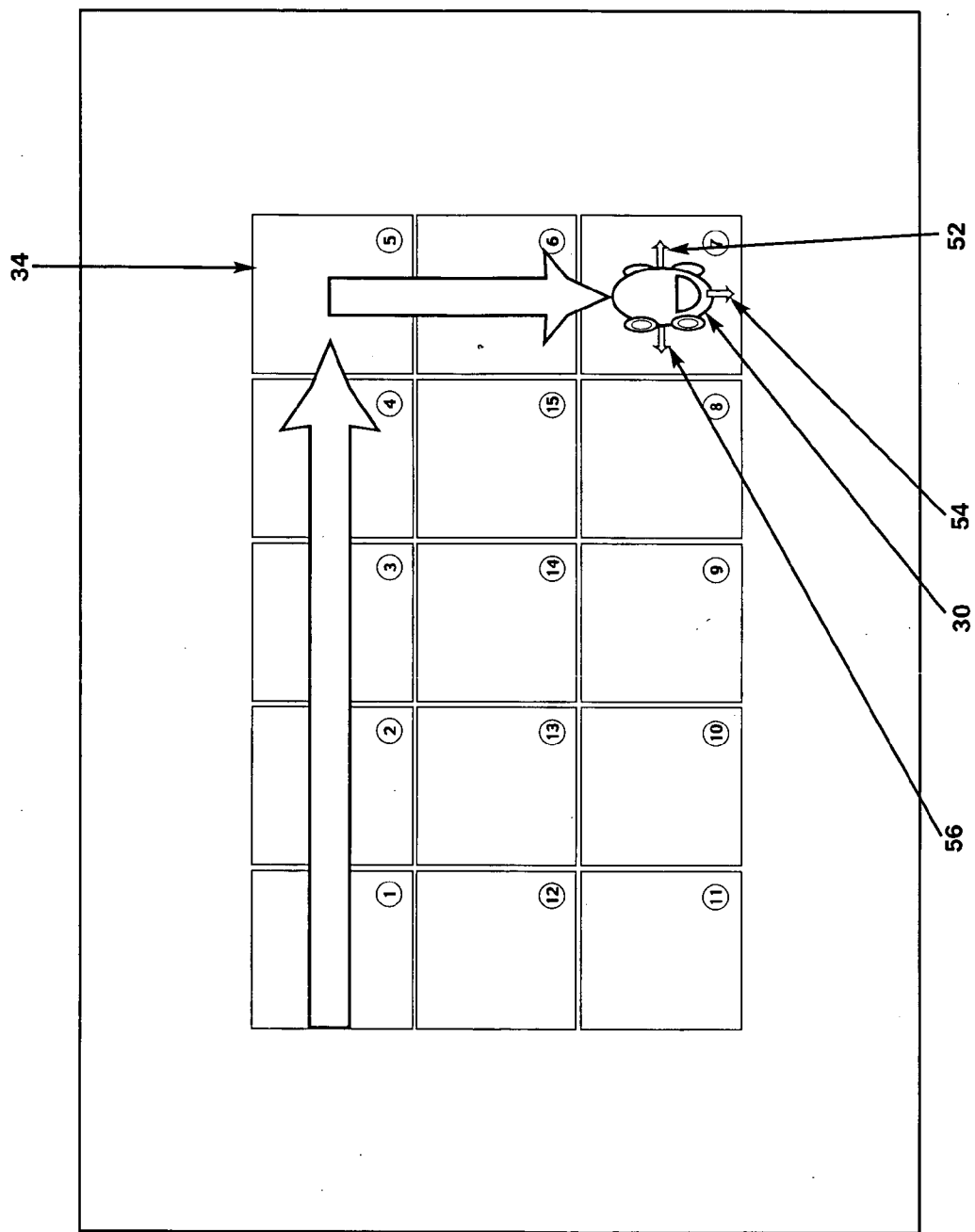


FIGURE 7

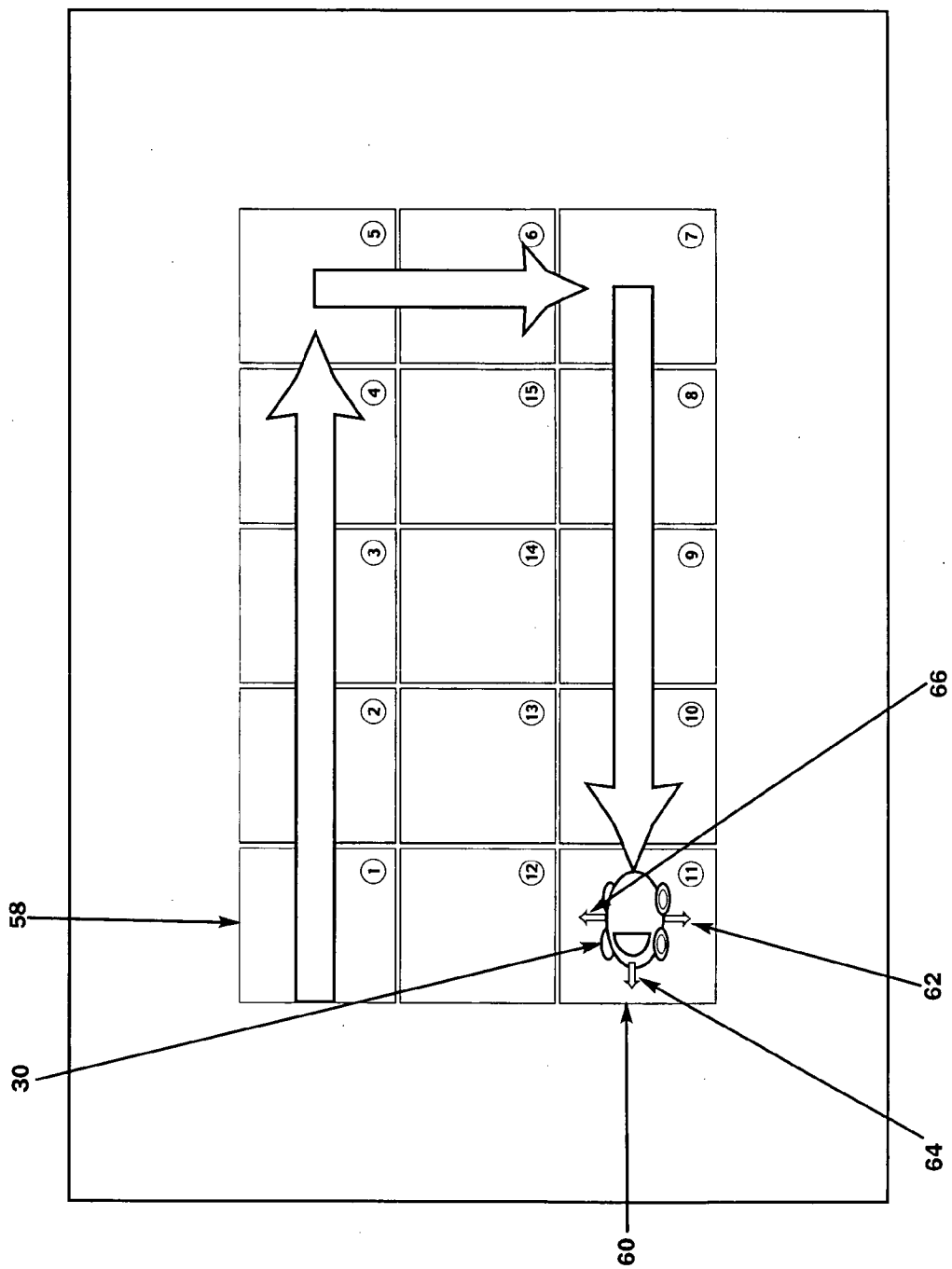




FIGURE 8

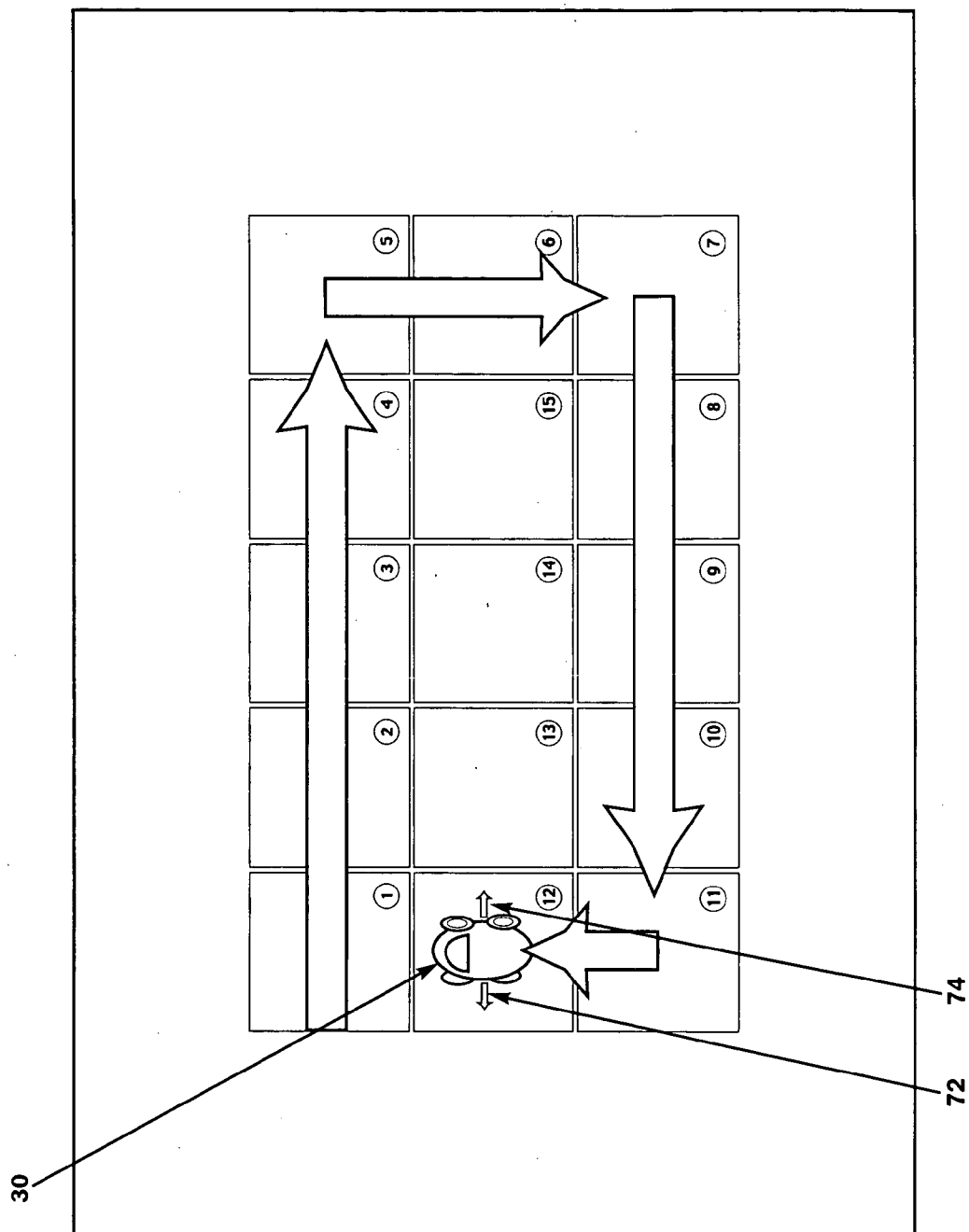




FIGURE 10

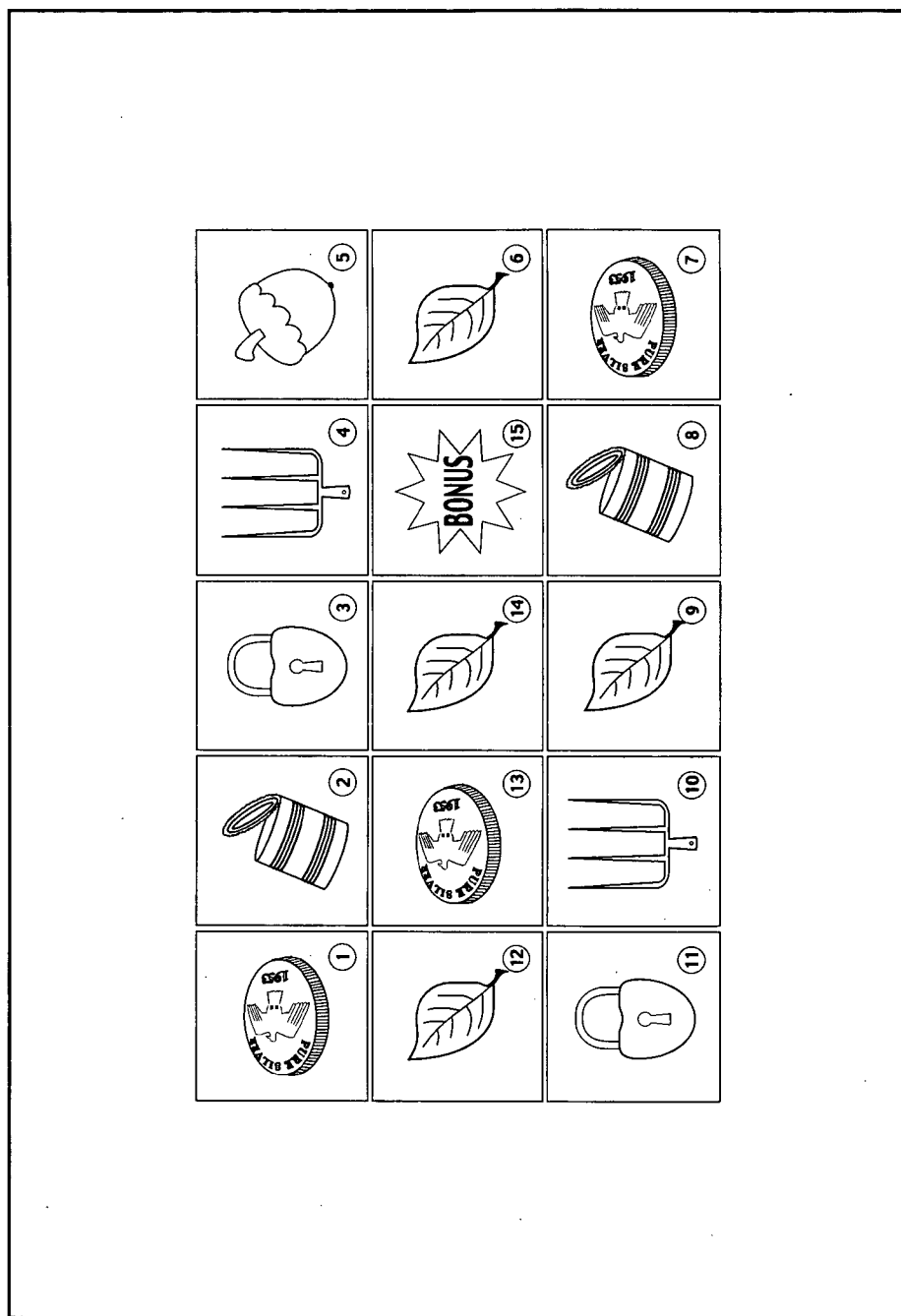


FIGURE 11

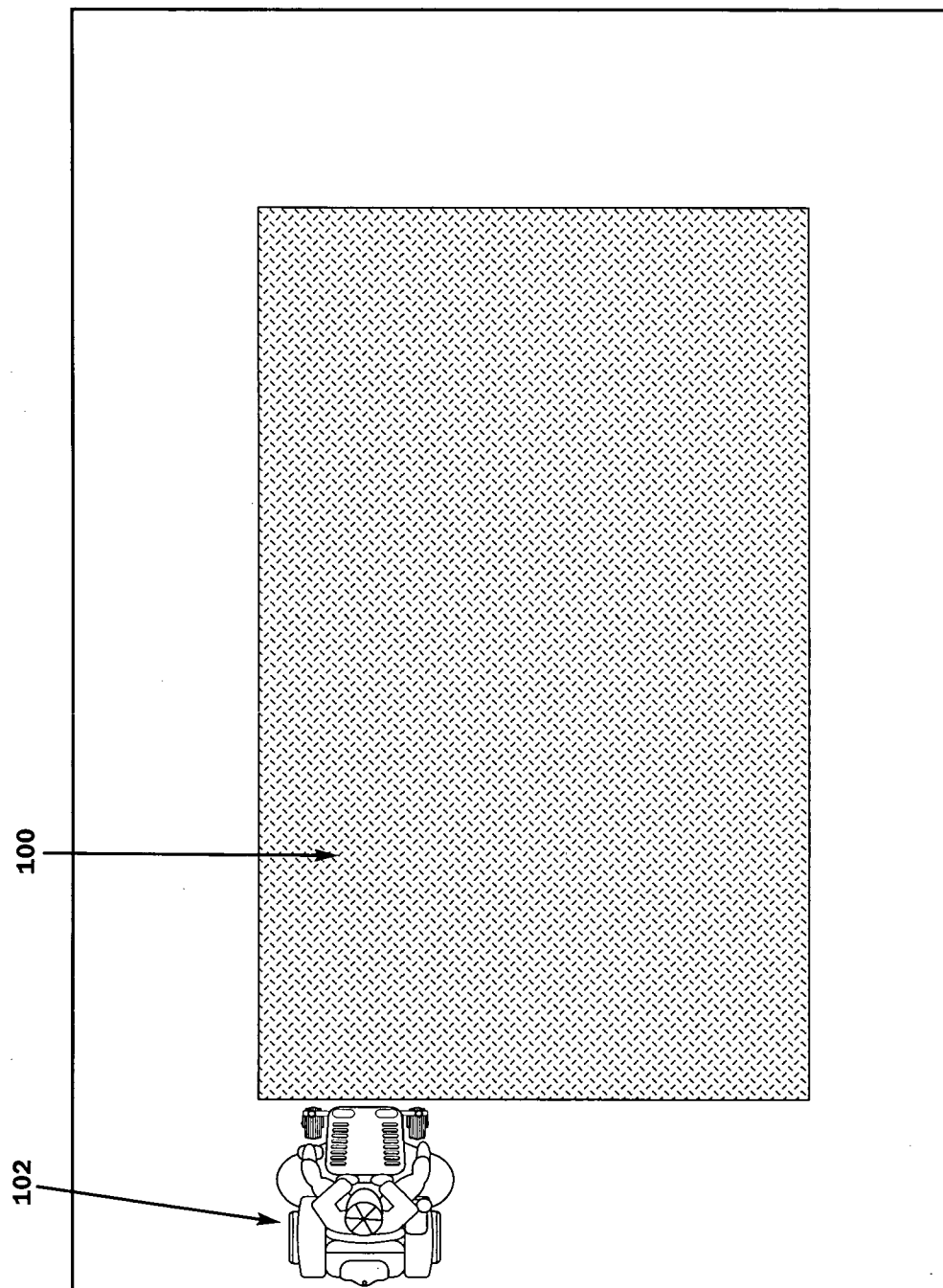


FIGURE 12

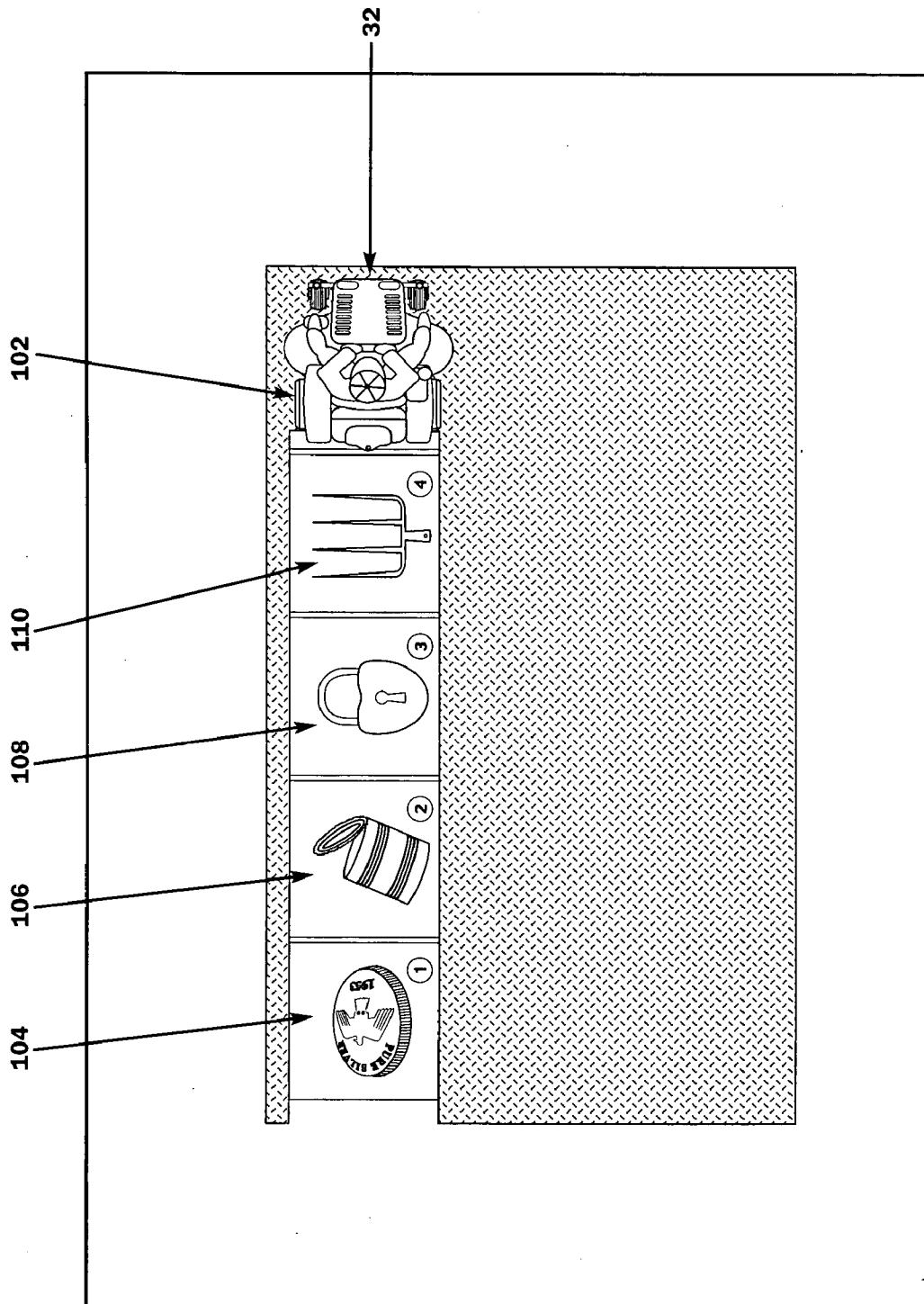


FIGURE 13

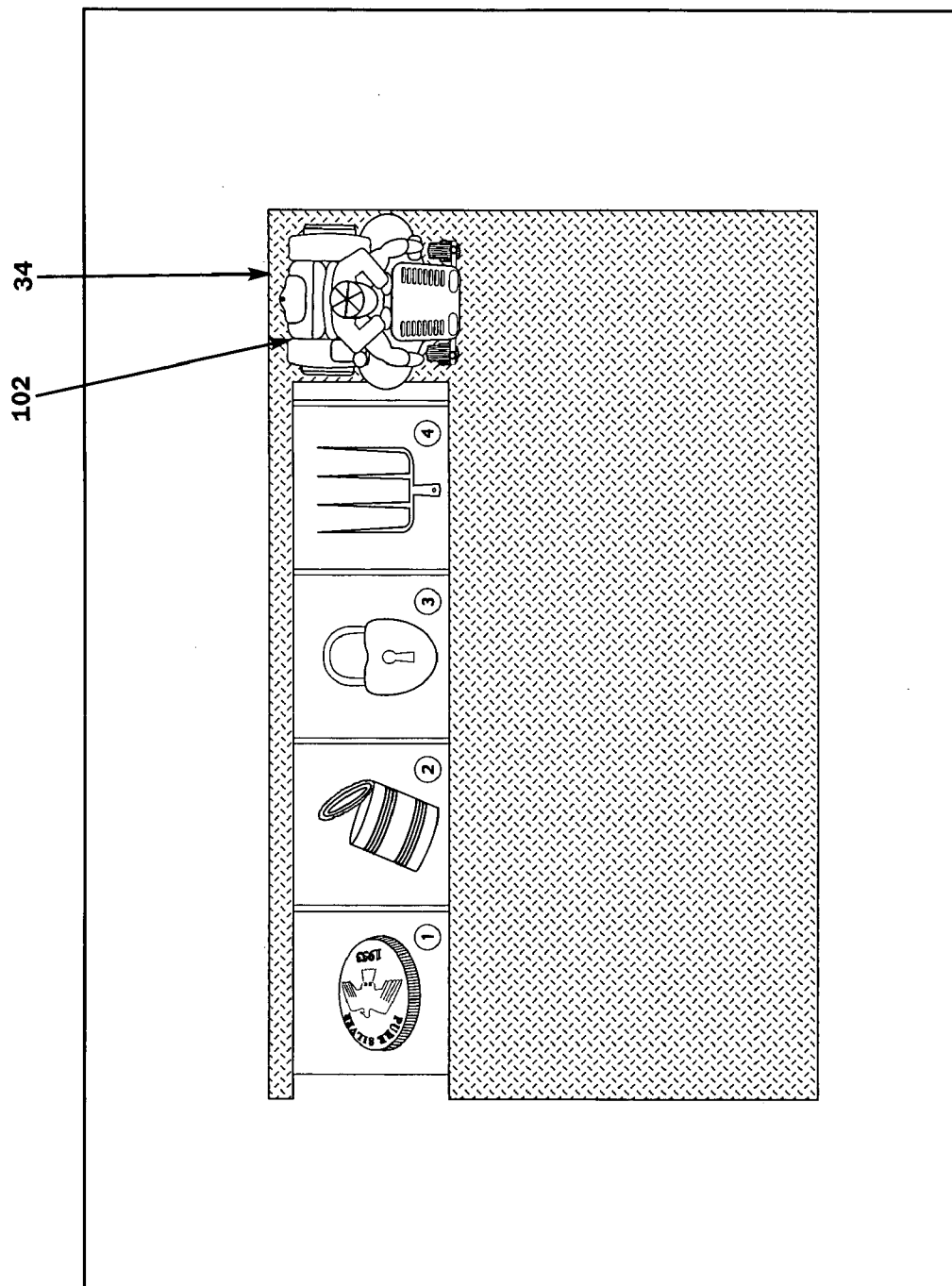


FIGURE 14

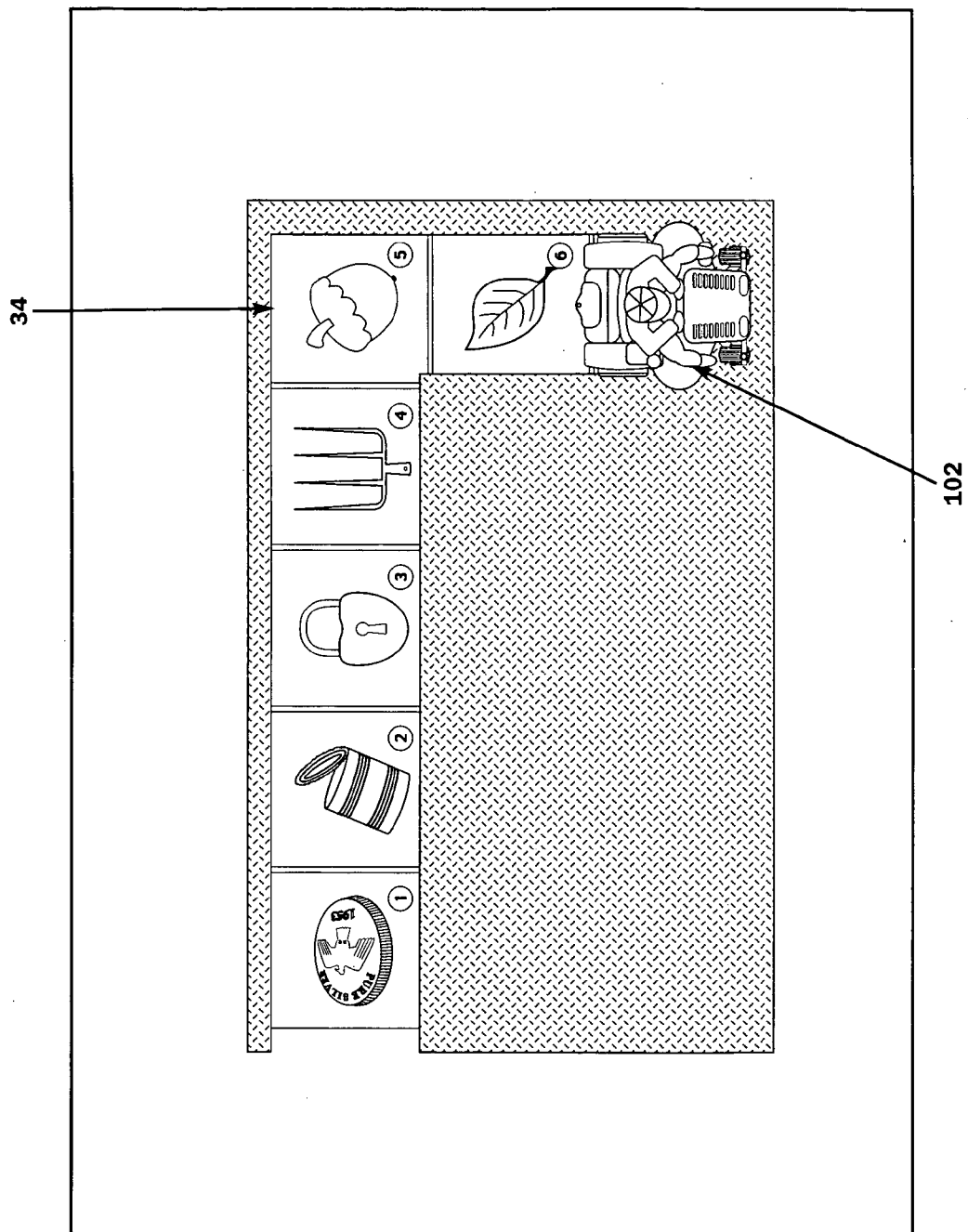


FIGURE 15

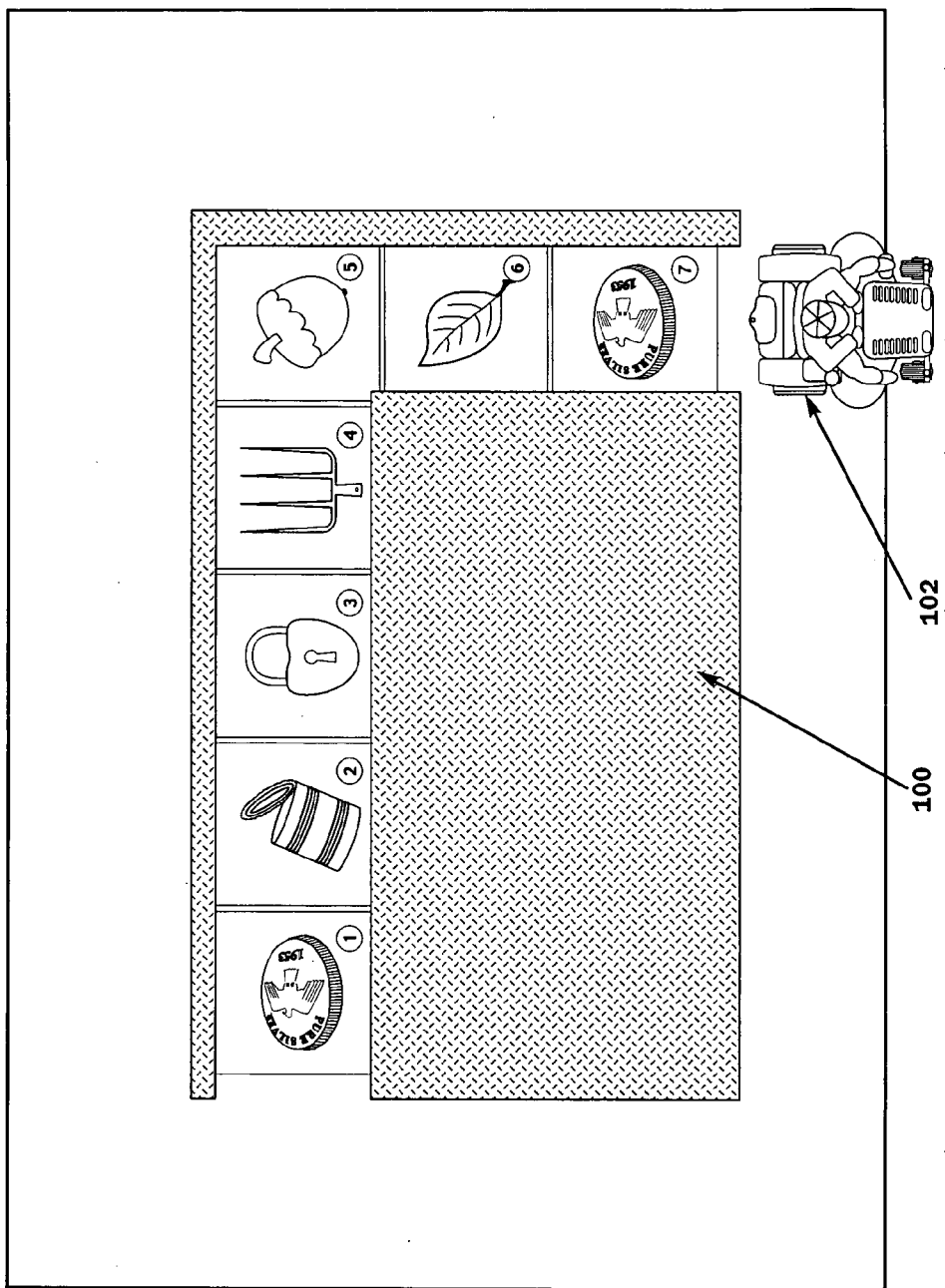




FIGURE 16

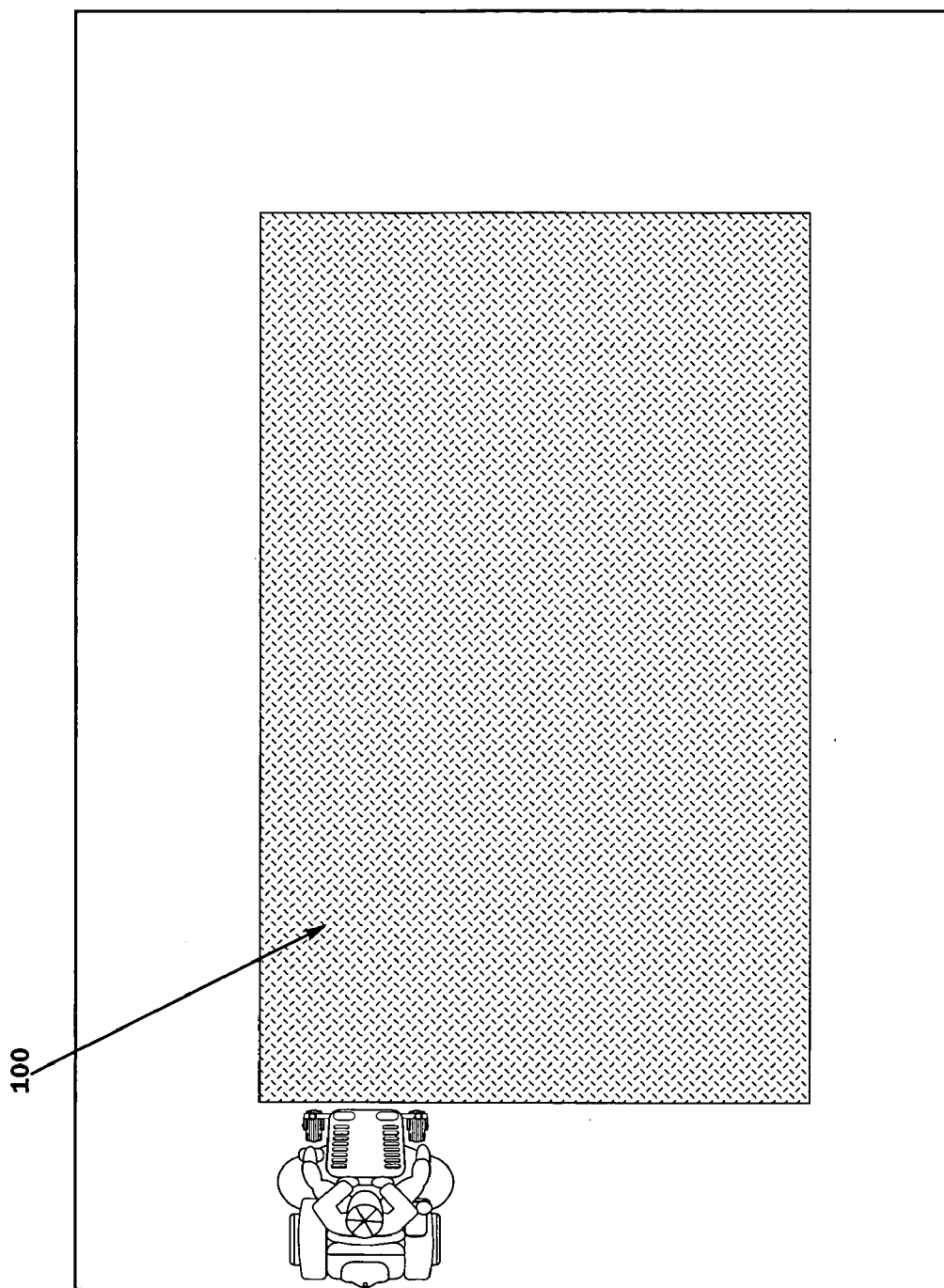


FIGURE 17

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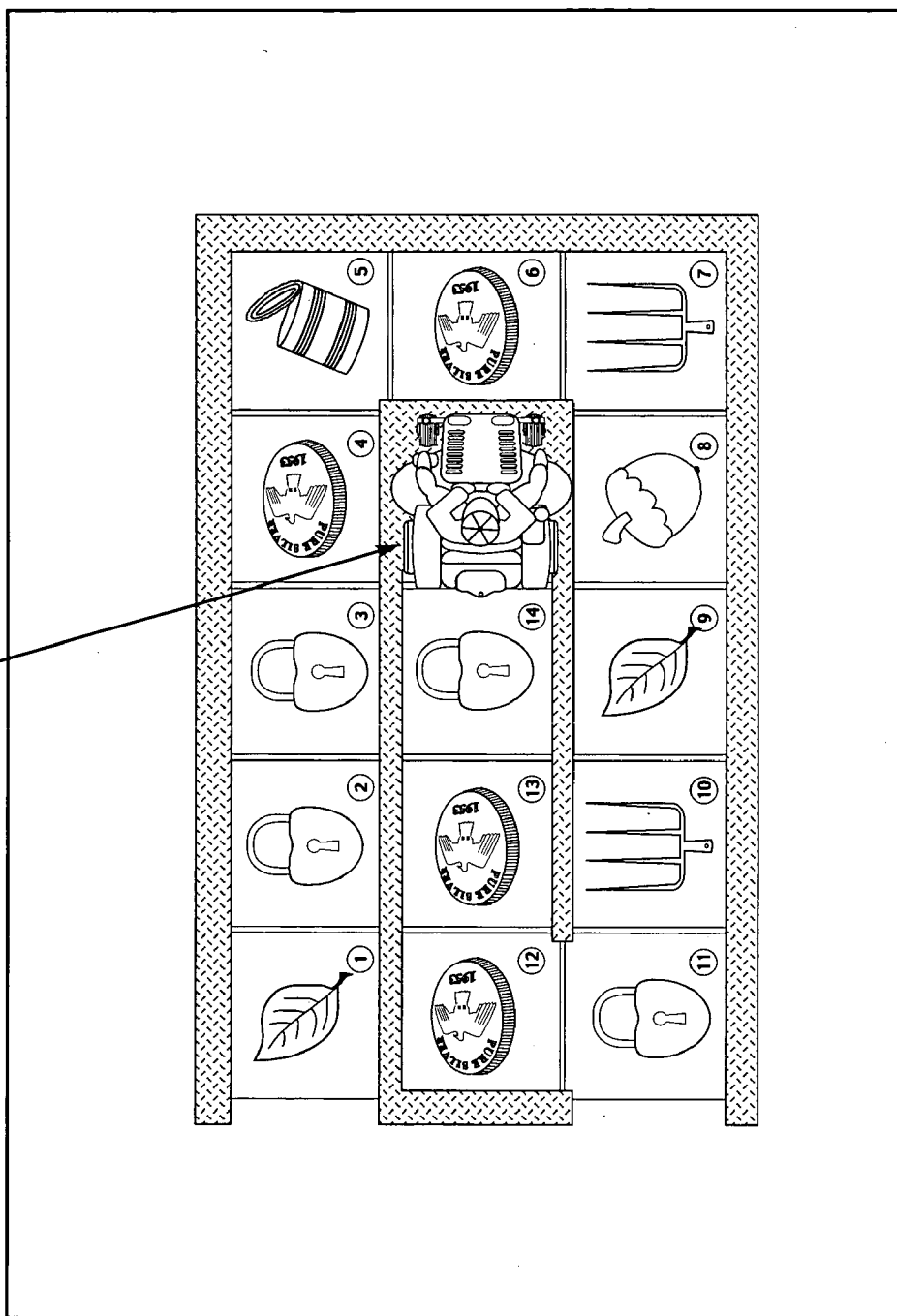


FIGURE 18

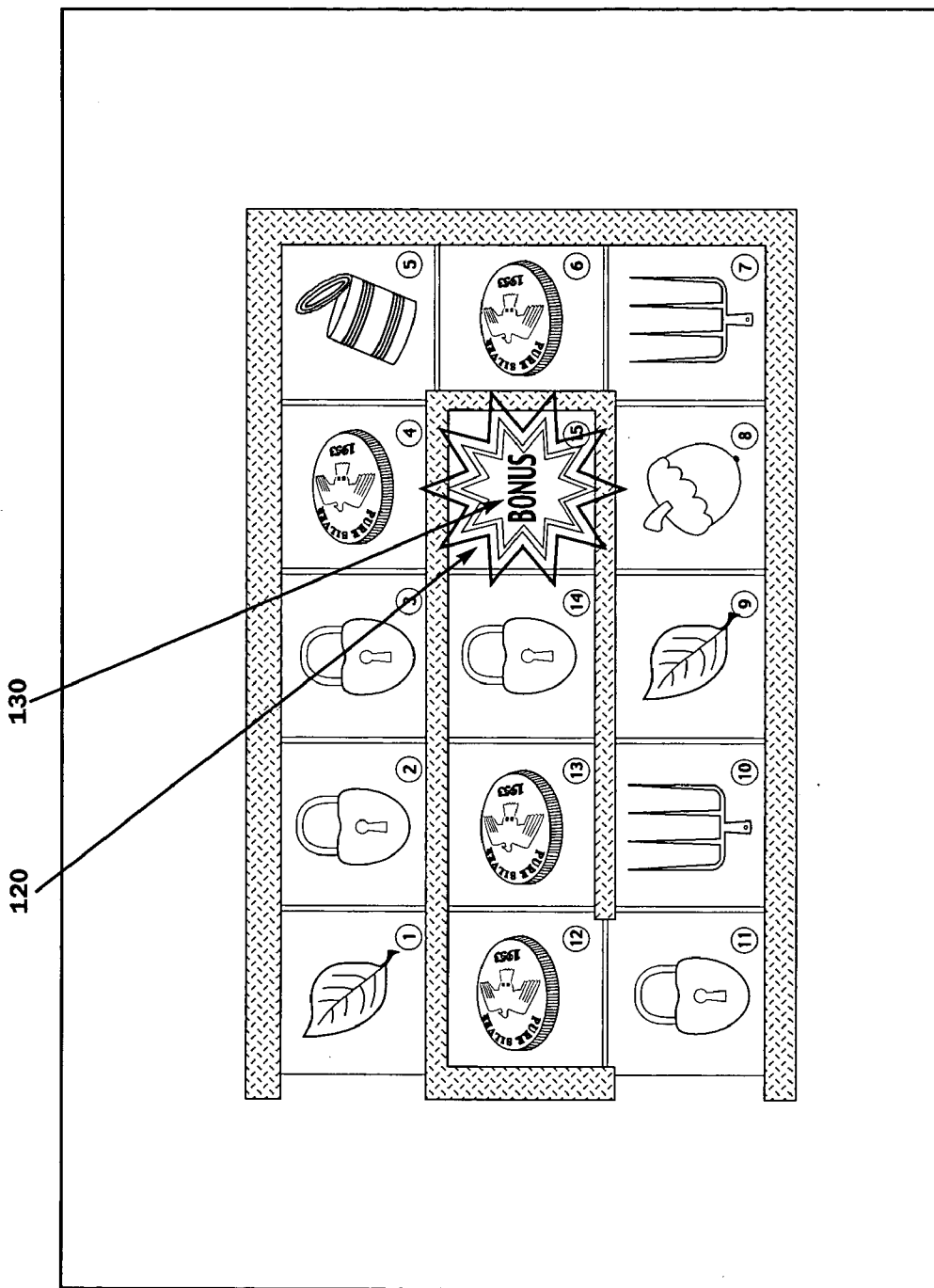


FIGURE 19

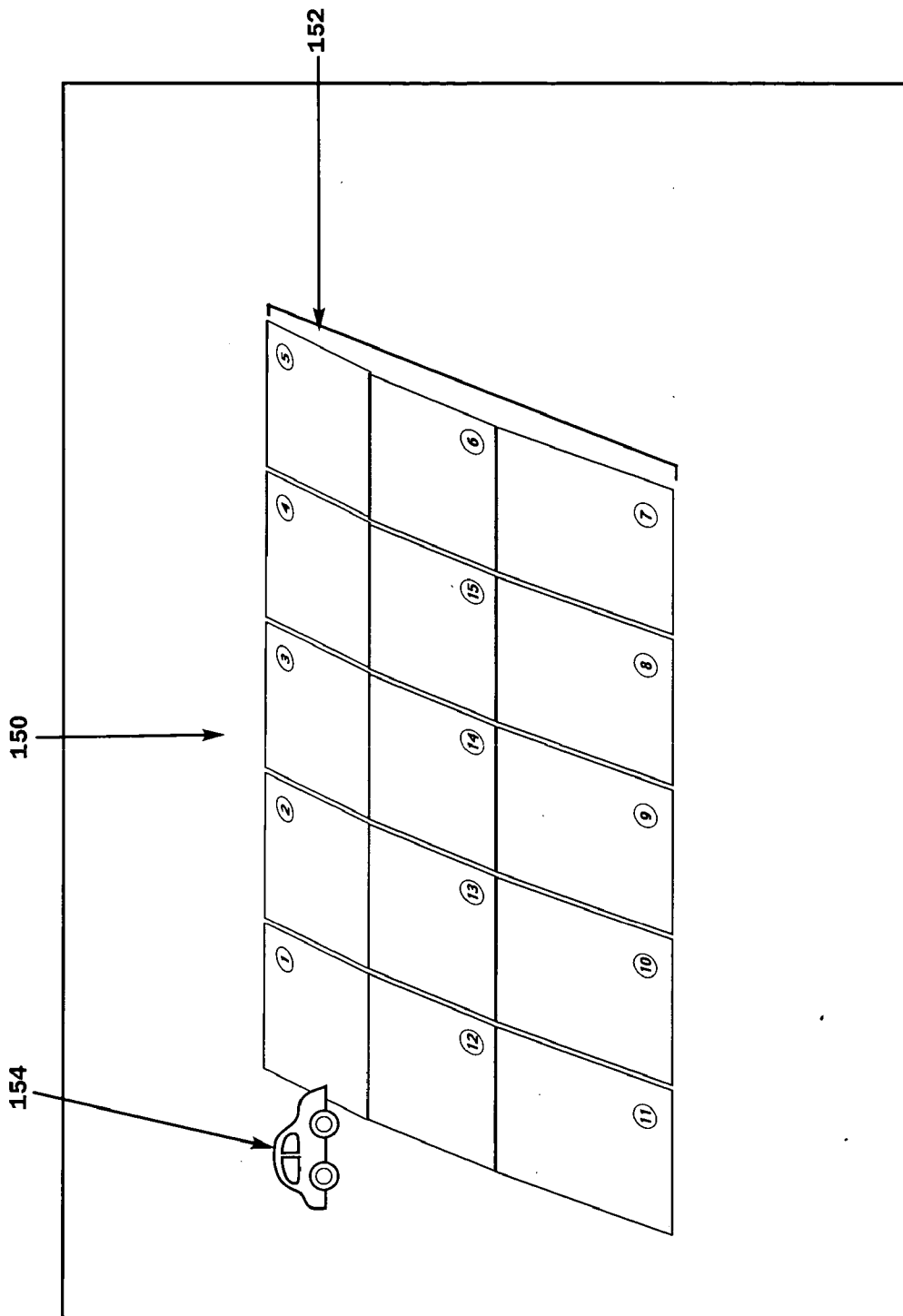
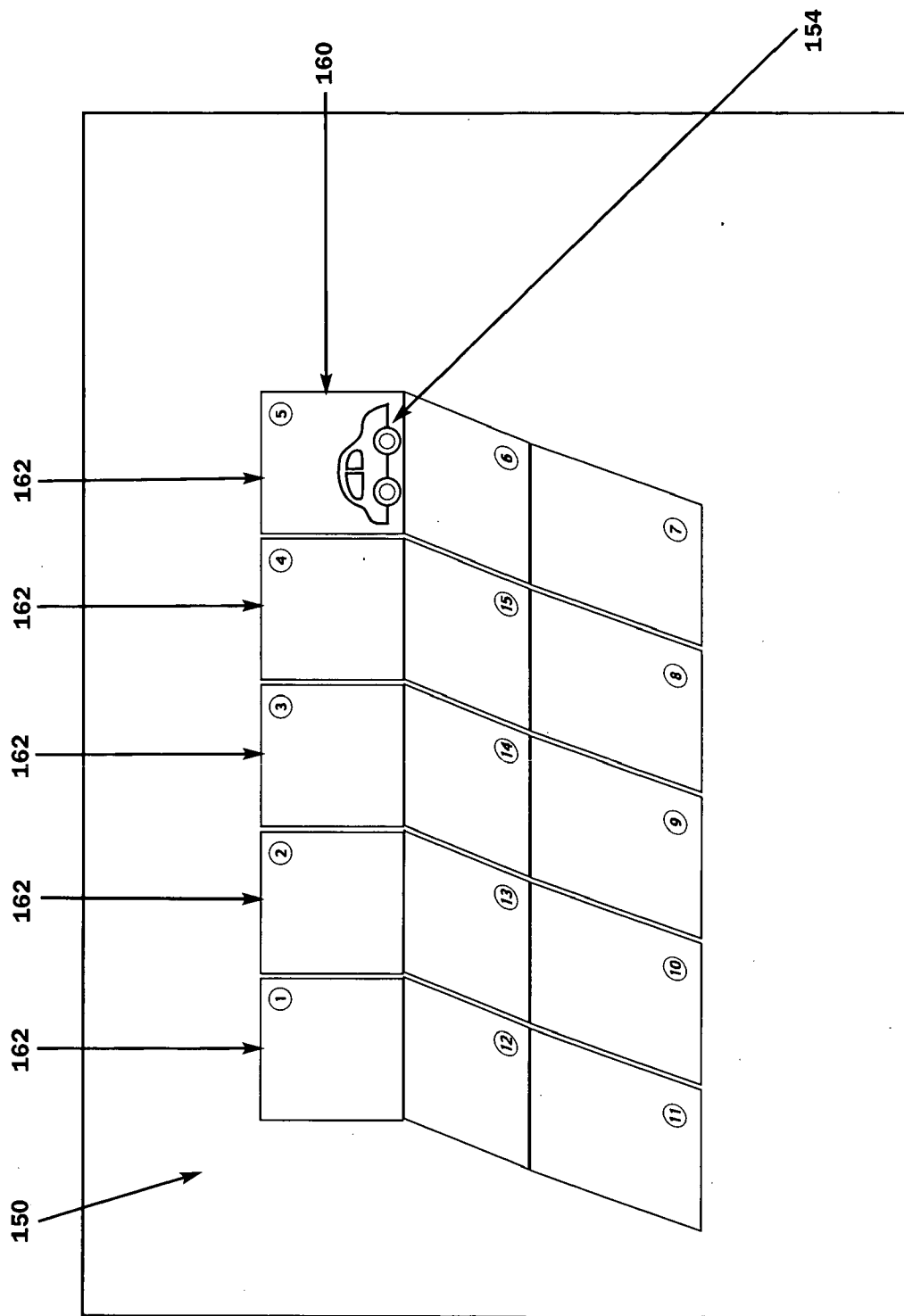


FIGURE 20



**PAYLINE SYSTEM FOR MULTILINE SLOT PLAY  
USING AN ERASING/EXPOSURE FEATURE**

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**[0001]** 1. Field of the Invention

**[0002]** The present invention relates to the field of video wagering games, particularly video slot-type machines, and particularly physical or virtual reel-appearance slot-type wagering machines that are capable of revealing reel frame symbols one-at-a-time by removing particular areas of an opaque graphic overlay layer, and evaluating the symbols revealed according to a predetermined pay table.

**[0003]** 2. Background of the Art

**[0004]** Competition in the gaming industry to attract a player and then retain the player's interest for protracted periods of time is an increasingly greater challenge. The environment in a casino is typically rich in stimulation, both visual and auditory. As a consequence, it is an ongoing effort to initially attract a player to a given machine and then to subsequently encourage the player to stay at the machine based on the machine's entertainment value.

**[0005]** Slot machines formed from a plurality of reels which rotate independently of each other, whether mechanical or video depictions of the mechanical reels, are some of the oldest types of games. Each physical reel has a reel strip. On each reel strip are designated indicia. When predetermined indicia, and especially related indicia are oriented on a "pay line" that corresponds to the symbols or predetermined sets of symbols an associated pay table displayed elsewhere on the machines, the player receive awards.

**[0006]** Such machines have evolved from having a single horizontal pay line centrally disposed on the reel to having a plurality of pay lines, some pay lines located horizontally, some diagonally, others vertically, some in corners, and some in non-linear patterns. The most common pay lines have been provided as a) three symbols in a linear pattern taken from sets of frames on reels having 3 columns and 3 rows, or b) five symbols in a row taken from a set of three rows and five columns.

**[0007]** With the advent of video capability, additional methods have been implemented to provide alternate entertainment and maintain player enjoyment.

**[0008]** U.S. Pat. No. 6,251,013 (Bennet) describes a gaming machine having a display and game control, the game control being arranged to play a game wherein a plurality of symbols are randomly selected from a predetermined set of symbols and displayed in rows on the display and if a winning combination of symbols results, the machine pays a prize. In a first aspect, a triggering event invokes a game feature in which a sprite randomly designates one or more of the symbols displayed on the display to be treated as special symbols for that particular game and a prize is awarded for any winning combinations formed with one or more of the special symbols. Embodiments of the special symbol include a wild card symbol and a scatter symbol. In a second aspect, the sprite designates the win meter or the credit meter, causing the amounts shown on the win meter and credit meter to increase.

**[0009]** Published U.S. Patent Application 20030087687 titled SLOT MACHINE WITH UNIFIED REEL SYM-

BOLS describes a slot machine that comprises a plurality of mechanical or simulated reels. Each reel bears a plurality of discrete symbols and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of the discrete symbols such that the discrete symbols are unified by the graphical element. The discrete symbols are superimposed over the graphical element. The reels are rotated and stopped to place a portion of each reel in visual association with a display area. A payout is determined based on the portion of each reel associated with the display area. In an alternative embodiment, the plurality of discrete symbols are replaced with discrete symbol positions, and a discrete symbol on each reel moves between adjacent ones of the discrete symbol positions as the reel is rotated. A payout may be accumulated based on each discrete symbol position traversed (as over a game board) by the discrete symbol.

**[0010]** U.S. Pat. No. 6,358,147 titled GAMING MACHINE WITH MULTIPLE PAYOFF MODES AND AWARD PRESENTATION SCHEMES describes a slot machine with multiple payoff modes and award presentations. The payoff modes in one embodiment are associated with a basic game and include a first and second payoff mode, the second payoff mode defining a "SUPER SCATTER" feature. Game outcomes are selected in the first and second payoff mode and symbol groups associated with the game outcomes are evaluated in the first payoff mode for symbol combinations displayed relative to one or more paylines and in the second payoff mode for symbol combinations displayed in scatter-pay format. In one embodiment, the machine operates in the first payoff mode until the occurrence of a symbol combination triggering the second payoff mode, then operates in the second payoff mode for a single spin before returning to the first payoff mode. The award presentations include a non-linear sequence of award values which in one embodiment are associated with a bonus game characterized by characters bidding upon a selected object that may be presented in irregular time intervals. The sequence of award values (bids) including a first value ("opening bid"), a number of intermediate values (bids) and a final value (a "winning" bid). A payoff is awarded based on the final winning bid.

**[0011]** U.S. Pat. No. 6,287,194 titled GAMING MACHINE describes how a gaming machine is provided with a principal variable display for displaying principal graphical information corresponding to at least one of a plurality of principal graphical elements, each such principal graphical element having a predetermined significance in a principal game of the gaming machine. A secondary display displays secondary graphical information that constitutes any combination of secondary information predictive of the results that will be obtained in the play of the principal game, a secondary game, and/or timing information. A principal controller produces first control signals that control the principal variable display to display the principal graphical information as a sequential principal progression of the principal graphical elements, and second control signals that control the secondary display to display the secondary graphical information. The secondary graphical information has a predetermined relationship to the sequential progression of the principal graphical elements. The principal graphical elements may be in the form of symbols arranged about a rotating mechanical element, such as a reel of a slot machine. The secondary graphical information is in the form of images and/or alpha-numeric data.

[0012] Published U.S. Patent Application 20020198039 titled LOGARITHMIC FUNCTIONS FOR INTERACTING OBJECTS describes a slot machine that allows the interaction of objects displayed outside a symbol matrix with objects displayed inside a symbol matrix (“Interactive Symbols”) to generate new forms of awards. Interactions include “bouncing” in which logarithmic functions accounting for the objects’ shapes, sizes, and velocities, control the result of two objects colliding inside of the symbol matrix, and “catching” in which the collision of two objects does not cause a “bounce” effect, but instead results in the disappearance of one object into the other object. Awards may be issued for each “bounce,” “catch” or other interaction of objects inside the symbol matrix, according to an Interactive Symbols award schedule.

[0013] U.S. Pat. No. 6,517,433 titled REEL SPINNER WITH SUPERIMPOSED VIDEO IMAGE describes a spinning reel slot machine comprises a plurality of mechanical rotatable reels and a video display. In response to a wager, the reels are rotated and stopped to randomly place symbols on the reels in visual association with a display area. The video display provides a video image superimposed upon the reels. The video image may be interactive with the reels and include such graphics as payout values, a pay table, pay lines, bonus game features, special effects, thematic scenery, and instructional information

[0014] Published U.S. Patent Applications 20030027624 and 20030060271 titled HYBRID SLOT MACHINE describe a hybrid slot machine controlled by a processor in response to a wager that comprises a video display and a generally flat panel mounted over the video display. The video display is operable to depict a plurality of symbol-bearing reels that are rotated and stopped to place symbols on the reels in visual association with at least one pay line. The flat panel forms one or more transmissive reel windows overlying and revealing the respective reels shown on the video display.

[0015] Published U.S. Patent Application 20020077172 titled VIRTUAL IMAGE/REAL IMAGE SUPERIMPOSING AND DISPLAYING APPARATUS AND SLOT MACHINE describes a virtual image/real image superimposing and displaying apparatus for displaying a virtual image and an actual substance includes image display for displaying an image from which a virtual image originates; a half mirror which forms the virtual image on the basis of the image displayed by the image display; a communications section which enables movement of an actual substance from a back side of the virtual image to a front side of the same so as to penetrate therethrough; and a mechanical reel portion having a plurality of spinning drums which have marks, such as numbers and symbols, printed on a circumferential surface thereof and spin independently of each other. The actual substance is paid out so as to penetrate through a virtual image from its back to front and becomes visible only when the actual substance is moved to the front side of the virtual image. An actual image may be visible only when moved from back of virtual image to the front side of the image.

[0016] Published U.S. Patent Application 20030130028 titled SLOT MACHINE describes a plurality of reels that are provided with a plurality of symbols including at least one special symbol. At least one payline is extending across the

reels. At least one electro-optical panel includes a first transparent substrate and a second transparent substrate which sandwiches an electro-optical substance therebetween. At least one of the first transparent substrate and the second transparent substrate is formed with at least one bored portion having a shape substantially coincident with an contour of the special symbol, the electro-optical panel disposed in front of each of the reels such that the bored portion is placed on the payline. A controller controls a state of the electro-optical substance in accordance with a predetermined rule to adjust a transparency of the electro-optical panel. Players stop the reels by pressing a stop button. Because less experienced players may not recognize a winning combination, a mask is put over the non-important symbols, causing them to “disappear.” Player can stop the reel easier by seeing only the potentially valuable symbols.

[0017] U.S. Pat. No. 6,494,785 and Published U.S. Patent Application 20040106444 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING A DESTINATION PURSUIT BONUS SCHEME WITH ADVANCE AND SETBACK CONDITIONS describe a gaming device with a bonus scheme which includes a plurality of locations and at least one destination location. The player moves one or more symbols from location to location with the aim of reaching the destination location. At times the player may experience setback conditions or advance conditions which hinder and aid the player’s progress, respectively. The player has the opportunity to gain one or more bonus values during the bonus round. This type of bonus scheme adds excitement to bonus rounds and increases player entertainment.

[0018] U.S. Pat. No. 6,672,960 titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING A SYMBOL COVERING FEATURE describes a gaming device and method including a covering feature. The gaming device and method includes a game using a plurality of video or virtual reels, or cards, or numbers. The device rearranges the reels, cards, or numbers, randomizing, alternating or rearranging the symbols, images, or numbers thereon, then displays the newly randomized or rearranged symbols, images, or numbers. Preferably, before the newly randomized or rearranged symbols are displayed, the gaming device obscures the reels, or cards, or numbers using a cover and provides certain movements including an exhibition, preferably related to the theme of the game. The cover is used to obscure the random event, while the exhibition entertains the player. Before newly randomized or rearranged symbols are revealed, the gaming device obscures the symbols while playing a theme and showing an “exhibition” that entertains the player.

[0019] U.S. Pat. No. 6,688,977 titled GAMING DEVICE WITH BONUS SCHEME HAVING MULTIPLE AWARD LEVELS describes a bonus scheme for a gaming device which involves multiple award levels for any game scenario having one or more events. Several award levels can be included in a single bonus round. Preferably, various game events are associated with various award levels for a variety of purposes. When an event occurs, the game derives a bonus value from an award level specifically designated for that event. Accordingly, a game can award a player with relatively high or low bonus values, depending upon which event occurs in a game. For example for consolation purposes, the game can award the player with a relatively low bonus value when a bonus round terminates. This type of bonus scheme increases player excitement and enjoyment

and generally decreases player frustration. Several award levels can be included in a single bonus round; also multiple award levels for any game scenarios.

[0020] Published U.S. Patent Application 20040014521 titled GAMING DEVICE AND METHOD describes a gaming device having a housing including a plurality of walls defining an enclosure. A moveable game element is located in the display area and is moveable in at least a first and second manner. A controller is located in the housing and is in communication with the moveable game element. The controller determines a game outcome, which may be a winning or losing outcome. The controller preferably moves the moveable game element in a first manner during game play and in a second manner after the controller determines a threshold number of consecutive outcomes of the same type.

[0021] Published U.S. Patent Application 20030195028, titled GAMING DEVICE HAVING DIRECTIONAL BONUS SCHEME describes a gaming device comprising: a game operable upon a wager by a player; a plurality of non-terminating adjacently arranged positions; at least one terminating position, wherein the terminating position is arranged adjacent to at least one of the non-terminating positions; a position indicator, wherein a plurality of directions of movement of said position indicator are each sequentially randomly determined by a processor from at least two different directions of movement independent of the arrangement of the terminating and non-terminating positions, and the position indicator sequentially moves to one of the adjacent positions for each of the determined sequential directions until said position indicator moves to one of the terminating positions; and a display device operable to display the terminating and non-terminating positions and the position indicator moving to said terminating and non-terminating positions.

[0022] Published U.S. Patent Application 20040018872 titled GAMING DEVICE WITH A BONUS SCHEME INVOLVING MOVEMENT ALONG PATHS WITH PATH CHANGE CONDITIONS describes a bonus scheme for a gaming device which involves a symbol marker which advances along one or more paths. The paths include a plurality of symbols and one or more path change conditions. If a path change condition occurs, the symbol marker moves from one path to a different path. While advancing along certain paths, the player has the opportunity to gain bonus value depending upon which symbol the symbol marker visits. This type of bonus scheme increases player excitement for gaming devices.

[0023] U.S. Pat. No. 6,746,329 titled GAME APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR PLAYING A PLURALITY OF GAME SEGMENTS DISPLAYED USING A THREE-DIMENSIONAL REPRESENTATION describes a method for a slot-type device while presenting a three-dimensional image consisting of: 1) using a three-dimensional structured layout in the game display with the primary plane or facet of the three-dimensional structured layout having central importance while leaving the secondary planes or facets with less importance; 2) displaying the basic playing structure of the game on the central plane; 3) allowing players to place bets on the central playing plane and on other numerous secondary planes, 4) starting the game with a display of moving symbols on all the different planes of the three

dimensional structure until they are stopped, and 5) awarding prizes to the players in regard to the bets placed in the game on all planes of the three-dimensional structure, therefore in regards to the different playing displays of the game.

[0024] U.S. Pat. No. 6,726,562 titled METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR A CASINO GAME describes a method for playing a game has the steps of establishing a plurality of paths, each of which have a plurality of squares including a start square, an end square, and a plurality of value squares. The player action randomly traverses the paths to afford the possibility of two or more moves to reach the end square. The player is allowed to select one of the paths. Moving along the player selected path randomly, while awarding the player the values associated with squares landed upon. The randomness is by the steps of spinning a spinner, rolling a die or dice, employing a wheel, flipping a coin, or the use of a random number generator. The step of establishing a plurality of paths, each having a plurality of squares includes using a stop square, squares which cause additional movement. The steps of establishing intersecting paths or establishing one or more squares having a game associated with them are practiced. The method is in a casino game and a bonus game for a base game.

[0025] U.S. Pat. No. 6,722,976 titled METHOD OF PLAYING GAMING DEVICE WITH INTERACTIVE DRIVING DISPLAY describes a method of operating a gaming apparatus comprising: receiving a wager; generating a first, random game outcome; displaying a first image according to the first game outcome; determining a second, random game outcome according to the first game outcome; receiving a plurality of player inputs; varying a second image in accordance with the plurality of player inputs for a time period; and varying the second image in accordance with the second, random game outcome irrespective of the player input after the time period has elapsed.

[0026] Published U.S. Patent Application 20040137981 titled GAME FOR A GAMING DEVICE HAVING DISPLAYED SYMBOLS CREATING A MAZE describes a game that may be a bonus game or a main game in a gaming machine. In one embodiment of the game, a matrix of symbols is displayed on a display screen. The matrix may be a 3.times.3 array of symbols. Each of the symbols corresponds to a single step a player takes through the matrix. Each symbol has a selectable direction indicator that points to the player's next step through the matrix or out of the matrix. There is an entrance into the matrix and multiple exits out of the matrix. The player starts at the entrance. The symbol at the start of the entrance rotates its direction indicator and randomly stops to indicate the direction of the next step (symbol) through the matrix. In one embodiment, the player stops the rotation of the symbol by touching the symbol on a touch screen. The next symbol (chosen by the direction indicator) then spins its direction indicator and stops to identify the direction of the next step through the matrix. This process continues until a combination of direction indicators leads the player out an exit of the matrix. At some or all of the exits is a displayed award. The player wins the award identified at the exit. One of the awards may be a progressive jackpot.

[0027] There is always a desire to develop new games with different programs and displays that provide additional player stimulation. This could be achieved by offering a



unique payline system which does not require the winning symbols to be exposed in standard fashions, does not require that all available symbol areas be exposed or filled (even with blank spaces), be non-contiguous or contiguous, and revealing the symbols in a new format designed to increase players' interest and anticipation.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0028] A screen is provided on which symbols may be provided for use in a slot-type wagering game. The winning symbols may or may not be in frames or areas in a symmetrical array. An initial screen is traversed by a virtual element and symbols within frames are revealed on the screen. The revealed symbols are then considered with respect to display of winning symbols or winning combinations of symbols to determine win/loss payouts. One format displays a relatively uniform initial screen (e.g., an overhead view of a lawn) which is traversed by a virtual element (e.g., lawn mower) to display frames (with or without symbols) in areas traversed by the mower (in either a random movement or row-by-row or column-by-column) to display the frames containing symbols that are to be used in the determination of a win/loss/push outcome.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0029] FIG. 1 shows the 3 row×5 column reel layout for a slot machine monitor screen display having 15 numbered symbol areas which are numbered in ascending order to show the payline path.

[0030] FIG. 2 shows the placement of a movable indicium outside the reel area.

[0031] FIG. 3 shows the path of the movable indicium across symbol areas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, stopping briefly at the end of the top row.

[0032] FIG. 4 shows the three options for the indicium's direction after the brief stop: up, down, or continuing in the same direction.

[0033] FIG. 5 shows the indicium continuing down the last column.

[0034] FIG. 6 shows the indicium moving across symbol areas 6 and 7, stopping briefly at the bottom of the column, and the options for the indicia's subsequent direction.

[0035] FIG. 7 shows the indicium turning back towards the first reel, moving across symbol areas 8, 9, 10 and 11, stopping briefly at the beginning of the bottom row, and the options for the indicium's subsequent direction.

[0036] FIG. 8 shows the indicium moving across symbol area 12, stopping briefly, and the options for the indicium's subsequent direction.

[0037] FIG. 9 shows the indicium turning to the right, moving across symbol areas 13, 14, and stopping to rest on symbol area 15.

[0038] FIG. 10 shows a sample of a completed reel spin with one symbol in each of the 15 symbol areas.

[0039] FIG. 11 shows an opaque graphic grid (representing grass) which covers the reel spin result in FIG. 10, and

a movable indicium (a riding lawnmower) outside the grid. The grid hides the reel spin result until the symbols are revealed one at a time.

[0040] FIG. 12 shows the lawnmower indicia moving across symbol areas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, "erasing" the grass to show the symbols on the reels below, and stopping briefly at the end of the top row.

[0041] FIG. 13 shows the indicium randomly turning 90° clockwise.

[0042] FIG. 14 shows the indicium moving across symbol areas 6 and 7, revealing the symbols below, and stopping briefly at the bottom of the column.

[0043] FIG. 15 shows the indicium randomly continuing in the same direction, "driving" off the grid and ending the game. The symbols revealed are then evaluated for awards according to a predetermined pay table.

[0044] FIG. 16 shows the beginning of a subsequent game.

[0045] FIG. 17 shows the result of the subsequent game, with the indicium moving across all 15 symbol areas.

[0046] FIG. 18 shows the indicium disappearing, revealing the bonus round symbol, which will get the player into one of several bonus rounds. Before the bonus round begins, the symbols revealed are evaluated for awards according to a predetermined pay table.

[0047] FIG. 19 shows a screen displaying a play format according to the present invention with the eventual frames and image shown in perspective.

[0048] FIG. 20 shows a screen displaying a play format according to the initial screen shown in FIG. 19 in which the indicium has moved across one row and that row is then displayed in an upright view.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0049] Reference to the Figures will assist in further understanding of the practice of the present invention. FIGS. 1 through 9 represent the path of the payline. FIGS. 10 through 15 represent one wagered slot game from the beginning to the end of the game. FIGS. 16 through 18 represent a second game from start to finish. The game play of the novel game described herein may be implemented on existing and commercial video gaming apparatus on any of the many available formats merely by insertion of a game card or game software effecting the selections and rules and payouts according to the present game. The game may be operated on-line, in a banked set of gaming machines or independent machines with independent processors. The game can be programmed onto MAC, PC, or LINUX operating systems (as well as other or newer commercial systems) and can be displayed with standard CRT displays, plasma displays, LCD displays and the like. The games may be operated with ticket-in/ticket-out crediting, coins, tokens, currency, credit cards, or gaming accounts as well understood by one skilled in the art. The following is intended to offer a general description of the technology of the game play and offer insight into distinctions from existing commercial and disclosed video game play. One general description of a method of playing a video wagering game or bonus

event on a video gaming apparatus as described herein is as follows. The game format of a lawnmower on a lawn will be used in the description for consistency in the analogies of the play, but the game is of course not limited to that specific imagery. Before or upon initiation of the play of a single game (by placing a wager or entering a bonus round), the system provides a display screen having an area of one or more original images within which symbols can be displayed. There may or may not be game symbols displayed on the screen at this time, and one particular embodiment has no game symbols on the screen at the beginning of the play of a game. There may be event symbols on the screen that are constantly, sporadically, and/or randomly assigned to each initial screen image. For example, a gopher hole, rock, tree or the like may appear on the initial screen (or as described later) or may appear on the basis of later events in the play of the game. These symbols, when the indicium (e.g., lawnmower) confronts them, acts as a barrier for some movement or all movement of the indicium. Non-game play symbols (event symbols) may also appear on the screen as the game progresses, such as a tree growing on the lawn, a dog "pooping" on the lawn, a sprinkler head appearing on the lawn, etc. to act as a change in the ability of the virtual indicium to continue movement. Events may even occur that recover exposed symbols, such as the lawn growing over a previously exposed symbol, or a sprinkler head washing away a symbol (e.g., to form a blank area or to expose another symbol). The indicium will virtually move across the area of the at least one image. Movement of the indicium across the area removes or exposes at least some of the one or more original images to display symbols. After completion of the movement of the indicium and the exposure of all symbols that are to be used in that particular game, the game using the symbols is then resolved according to the rules of a wagering game or bonus event. The original images generally and preferably are not used in the playing of the video wagering game or bonus event. For example, if the original image were of a grid of game symbols (e.g., 3x5 grid of fifteen symbols), an indicium would not expose seven (7) new symbols from among the fifteen symbols and leave 8 original symbols that could be used in the resolution of the game. This is what is meant by the terminology that no original symbols that may have been present in the original at least one image are used in the resolution of the video wagering game or bonus event. In the play of the method, at a beginning of a game, the area of one or more original images has at least some frame elements therein that have no game play symbols displayed therein. For example, in the scene of a lawn, there may be very few or no game play symbols that will actually be used in the resolution of the game. It is possible to have an image of a lawn, with a few game play frames already exposed as an enticement to the player, or a few event symbols or event images (e.g., the blocking tree or rock) displayed. For example, a lawn scene may be provided with a game play symbol exposed or partially exposed (e.g., a shadow image displayed through the lawn). The game play may require or not require the indicium actually pass over the game play image (and especially the shadow image) to engage that game play symbol in the resolution of the final game or bonus event based on the presence or order of symbols. The method may begin a game with the area of one or more original images having no game play symbols displayed thereon. An image of a lawn, with no playable game symbols displayed at all

would be an example of this. It is also possible to have some or all game symbols as shadow symbols partially exposed through the grass to enhance anticipation in the play of the game or bonus event.

**[0050]** The method may have events that occur in the movement of the indicium, in addition to exposure of the entire area, that will prevent further movement of the indicium according to rules of the game. As noted above, a rock can be hit by the lawnmower, a rock can be exposed by the lawnmower moving over the lawn (e.g., virtually breaking and stopping the movement of the lawnmower). Different events in other themes could have a similar effect. The method may operate in one embodiment with the indicium moving in a pattern or format of only from one frame including a game symbol exposed by movement of the indicium to an adjacent frame including a game symbol. That is, the symbol may not be able to hop over areas of the at least one image. The use of a grasshopper leaping over different areas to expose random symbols on the lawn image (e.g., until meeting a bird, sticky tape or praying mantis as a blocking event) would be an example of a non-adjacent frame-to-frame movement. As noted in the description of the method, events can occur in the movement of the indicium, in addition to exposure of the entire area, that will prevent further movement of the indicium according to rules of the game. These could include being blocked by already exposed symbols (with the indicium being present on an edge or corner of the at least one image), or by an event symbol. As noted above, one desirable game play involves a method wherein the one or more images comprises a scene and the indicium moves over the scene to expose symbols underneath the scene, as with a lawn or desert or pond or painted surface (where paint is scraped off), etc. The method may have the indicium comprise a virtual image of a device that in real operation cuts, plows, digs, clears, or removes material, and symbols are exposed upon virtual operation of the indicium on the screen. This could include, in addition to the lawn, a forest (with a chain saw as the indicium), a harvestable field (e.g., a cornfield or wheat field) with a plow or combine as the indicium, a littered floor with a vacuum cleaner moving across the floor, a barren field where a plow moves over the field, a painted barn where paint is scraped off with a scraper or sprayed paint remover, etc. Another alternative would be for the device to add material to the surface, such as a blank painter's canvas where the brush moves across the surface to lay down images (and a blocking event could be a displayed pallet being exhausted, the brush running out of ink, or a smear in the paint), a plow laying down seeds that sprout into a symbol, a truck that drops symbols onto the street scene as it moves across the screen image, etc. A standard video gaming device as known in the industry can be used to play the game. This would consist of at least a video display area and a processor. The processor would be able to execute software that enables play of the video wagering game or bonus game.

**[0051]** FIG. 1 shows the 3 rowx5 column reel layout for a slot machine monitor screen 20 display having 15 numbered symbol areas (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15) which are numbered in ascending order to show one of numerous possible payline paths.

**[0052]** FIG. 2 shows the placement of a movable indicium 30 outside the reel area of the screen 20. The indicium is shown as a small car 30, but other indicia such as a lawn

mower, tractor/combine, plow, snake, train, bicycle, motorcycle, an animal such as a cow, bird, frog, turtle or goat, dam restraining water, plane, rocket, or any other symbol that fits into a game theme.

[0053] FIG. 3 shows an arrow 40 identifying the path of the movable indicium 30 across symbol areas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, stopping briefly at the end of the top row 32 at the top of the last column 34. The actual movement does not have to have been in a single direction, but could have been a zig-zag pattern, either allowing the car 30 to pass over a single frame repeated times, or not allowing the car 30 to pass over the same frame more than once. For example, a path could have been along frames 1, 2, 13, 10, 9, 8, 15, 6, and 5 to end up at the same location (frame 5). Similarly, diagonal movements of the indicium 30 would also be allowable, with or without occupying the same frame more than once. For example, the car 30 could have traversed 1, 13, 14, 8, 15, and 5 to end up in the same frame (5). If, for example, after the car 30 had arrived at frame 5, and the car 30 had traversed frames 4, 15 and 6, a rule of the game could prevent the car 30 from moving to any more frames, as it is blocked by previously occupied frames 4, 15 and 6. This game play is, of course, optional.

[0054] FIG. 4 shows the three options 42, 44 and 46 for the indicium's direction after the brief stop: up, down, or continuing in the same direction. The movement off the screen (e.g., paths 42 and 44) would cause the car 30 to disappear off the screen and end the game, or optionally, e.g., reappear on the screen at frames 7 and 1, respectively.

[0055] FIG. 5 shows the indicium 30 continuing down the last column 34.

[0056] FIG. 6 shows the indicium 30 moving across symbol areas 6 and 7, stopping briefly at the bottom of the column 34, and the three optional paths 52, 54 and 56 for the indicia's 30 subsequent direction.

[0057] FIG. 7 shows the indicium 30 turning back towards the first reel or column 58, moving across symbol areas 8, 9, 10 and 11, stopping briefly at the beginning of the bottom row 60 and the first column 58, and the three optional paths 62, 64 and 66 for the indicium's 30 subsequent direction.

[0058] FIG. 8 shows the indicium 30 moving across symbol area 12, possibly stopping briefly, and the option a1 paths 72 and 74 for the indicium's 30 subsequent direction.

[0059] FIG. 9 shows the indicium 30 turning to the right, moving across symbol areas 13, 14, and stopping to rest on symbol area 15. The numbering of frames or symbol areas has been done here on the basis of indicium 30 traversal, and not in standard column and row numeration solely for convenience and has no bearing on the play of the game.

[0060] FIG. 10 shows a sample of a completed reel spin with one symbol in each of the 15 symbol areas that can be traversed by the car 30 in FIG. 9. All frames might have symbols displayed therein or, e.g., blanks or 'losing' symbols might be displayed.

[0061] FIG. 11 shows an opaque graphic grid 100 (representing grass) which covers the reel spin result in FIG. 10, and a movable indicium 102 (a riding lawnmower) positioned outside the grid 100. The grid hides the reel spin

result until the symbols are revealed one at a time. Again, fewer than all symbols may be traversed and revealed if desired.

[0062] FIG. 12 shows the lawnmower 102 indicia moving across symbol areas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, "erasing" the grass to show the symbols on the reels 104, 106, 108 and 110 below, and stopping briefly at the end of the top row 32. The indicium 102 may also be stopped (in addition to the blocking by previously traversed frames) by the tractor or other vehicle running out of fuel, stalling, falling into a ditch, hitting a wall, or otherwise obstructed or stopped by a thematic event (e.g., a bird being eaten by a cat symbol under the grid). Additionally, excitement could be added to the game by providing a first set of symbols such as theme related symbols on the screen, and having the indicium move across the symbols, exposing underlying symbols, until the specific symbol stymies the indicium. For example, an equestrian rider can traverse jump symbols, until a jump with five rails (or other impossible hurdle) is encountered, or a tractor can bump into a large rock symbol.

[0063] FIG. 13 shows the indicium 102 randomly turning 90° clockwise to head down the column 34.

[0064] FIG. 14 shows the indicium 102 moving across symbol areas 6 and 7, revealing the symbols below, and stopping briefly at the bottom of the column 34.

[0065] FIG. 15 shows the indicium 102 randomly continuing in the same direction off the grid 100, "driving" off the grid and ending the game. Optionally, the indicium could reappear at another point in the grid 100. The symbols revealed are then evaluated for awards according to a predetermined pay table.

[0066] FIG. 16 shows a screen 100 for the beginning of a subsequent game.

[0067] FIG. 17 shows the result of a subsequent game, with the indicium 102 moving across all 15 symbol areas and therefore exposing all fifteen symbols.

[0068] FIG. 18 shows the fifteenth frame 120 highlighting a bonus symbol 130 that is given for exposing all symbols. There may be a special bonus awarded when a bonus symbol, or unique symbol, or unique pattern is completed with the last move on the grid/screen. This format also offers a new mapping technique for the play of video games. Rather than mapping individual reels or frames, templates of indicia movement may be combined with templates of symbol arrangements. By controlling the frequency of combinations of specific (or actually all) movement templates with symbol organization templates, the frequency and amount of awards, holds, pushes, bonus and the like can be predetermined. For example, 144 (any number up to the maximum number of possible combinations of moves covering up to all frames at least once) different indicium may be provided as templates into the software. A separate 144 (and again up to any maximum number of theoretic arrangements of all symbols and blanks) may be provided as templates for display under the grid. The templates and symbols distributions may be equally weighted for selection (e.g., each having a 1/144 chance of being selected) and the payouts determined according to the percentage house hold desired for the game. Alternatively, each template may be weighted at frequencies of selection (e.g., a random number generator would select from among the 1440 templates, of

which 100 templates might be an identical template, **90** another template, **80** another template, all the way to 1 being a bonus template that would provide a super jackpot with only one of the 144 symbol distribution templates (providing odds of 144×1440 against the jackpot being won).

**[0069]** This novel templating format also provides options in the play of the game that were not heretofore available. As the templates may also define the pathway along which the indicium moves, the order in which symbols are disclosed can be important to the payout. Using the tractor as an example, a plow line can be left over the symbols. If a payout were for three specific symbols in a row, one template would plow through the symbols in a winning order, while another template would plow through two, move onto another symbol, and then return to the third symbol. Therefore a single screen may have numerous different payout potentials based upon the indicium movement template, rather than selected paylines or only the symbols present. It might also be possible for a specific number of plays (for reasons explained later, continual play under this rule would be undesirable) to be selected for a specifically appearing screen. For example, if a screen is exposed with the four required symbols for a super jackpot, but the first movement template does not expose or follow a correct path through, or complete the exposure of the bonus symbols in the last frame (as might be needed to win the super jackpot), the player could freeze that underlying symbol display for at least one more 'spin' or movement template provision, for a cost (1×, 2×, up to 100× the original spin amount) to play the same symbol display screen again, with a random pick of another movement template. This could not likely be done indefinitely for a screen symbol display, as the bonus screen display offers better odds (144×) than usual (144×1440) for the winning of the jackpot. This could be balanced somewhat by the change in the cost (e.g., 100× an original wager), but play of the game at that cost might be infrequent. The number of movement templates available during such play could also be changed (probably upwardly away from the likelihood of the bonus being awarded) during such play. Thus, the odds of winning the super bonus could be retained at about 144×1440 after the 1/1440 super jackpot bonus screen appears by increasing the number of available movement templates to 144×1440, with only one of those movement templates awarding the bonus. This can be done easily by providing 100 of the same movement templates A, **100** of the same movement templates B, . . . 100 of the movement templates N, **39** of the movement templates O, and 1 super jackpot winning movement template P.

**[0070]** One desirable element of the play is that the payouts may be based on any format desired, such as traditional rows only, columns only, non-linear lines, scatter pays and the like. It is also possible that when an obstruction occurs, a player may want to continue the game and the player may hit an extra credit button on a control panel, debit the additional credit, and the 'obstructing' symbol is removed and the indicium continues its progression. For example, in a game where four scatter pays is a large bonus, three scatter pay symbols have been revealed, and there are three squares blocked by an obstructing symbol, the player may want to overcome the frustration of the obstructing symbol, pay the additional credit(s) and expose the last three squares.

**[0071]** FIG. 19 shows a screen **150** displaying a play format according to the present invention with the eventual frames **152** and image of the indicium **154** are shown in perspective. This format provides some additional image enhancement and a definitive way of displaying revealed symbols in the frames **152** that are underneath a surface image (not shown).

**[0072]** FIG. 20 shows a screen **150** displaying a play format according to the initial screen shown in FIG. 19 in which the indicium **154** has moved across one row **160** and that row **160** is then displayed in an upright view. The presentation of the individual frames **162** in row **160** may be placed into an upright image position either in 'ripple' fashion (e.g., one frame at a time rotating into an upright position) or at the complete traversal of the row **160** (with all frames lifting into an upright position as an entire row). This offers some interesting screen display imagery. A scene of a car moving along a winding road or street (e.g., as with Lombard Street in San Francisco) could be used to show the symbols in frames under the street.

**[0073]** Although specific examples and specific images have been provided in this discussion, these specifics are intended to be only support for the generic concepts of the invention and are not intended to be absolute limits in the scope of the technology described.

What is claimed:

1. A method of playing a video wagering game or bonus event on a video gaming apparatus comprising:

providing a display screen having an area of one or more original images within which symbols can be displayed;

providing an indicium that can virtually move across the area; and

wherein movement of the indicium across the area removes at least some of the one or more original images to display symbols, and

wherein a game using the symbols is resolved according to the rules of a wagering game or bonus event and wherein the original images are not used in the playing of the video wagering game or bonus event.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein at a beginning of a game the area of one or more original images has at least some frame elements therein that have no game play symbols displayed therein.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein at a beginning of a game the area of one or more original images has no game play symbols displayed thereon.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein events can occur in the movement of the indicium, in addition to exposure of the entire area, that will prevent further movement of the indicium according to rules of the game.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the indicium moves only from one frame including a game symbol exposed by movement of the indicium to an adjacent frame including a game symbol.

6. The method of claim 2 wherein the indicium moves only from one frame including a game symbol exposed by movement of the indicium to an adjacent frame including a game symbol.

7. The method of claim 3 wherein the indicium moves only from one frame including a game symbol exposed by movement of the indicium to an adjacent frame including a game symbol.

8. The method of claim 5 wherein events can occur in the movement of the indicium, in addition to exposure of the entire area, that will prevent further movement of the indicium according to rules of the game.

9. The method of claim 6 wherein events can occur in the movement of the indicium, in addition to exposure of the entire area, that will prevent further movement of the indicium according to rules of the game.

10. The method of claim 7 wherein events can occur in the movement of the indicium, in addition to exposure of the entire area, that will prevent further movement of the indicium according to rules of the game.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein the one or more images comprises a scene and the indicium moves over the scene to expose symbols underneath the scene.

12. The method of claim 3 wherein the one or more images comprises a scene and the indicium moves over the scene to expose symbols underneath the scene.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein the one or more images comprises a scene and the indicium moves over the scene to expose symbols underneath the scene.

14. The method of claim 3 wherein the indicium comprises a virtual image of a device that in real operation cuts, plows, digs, clears, or removes material, and symbols are exposed upon virtual operation of the indicium on the screen.

15. The method of claim 7 wherein the indicium comprises a virtual image of a device that in real operation cuts, plows, digs, clears, or removes material, and symbols are exposed upon virtual operation of the indicium on the screen.

16. The method of claim 13 wherein the indicium comprises a virtual image of a device that in real operation cuts, plows, digs, clears, or removes material, and symbols are exposed upon virtual operation of the indicium on the screen.

17. A video gaming device that contains a video display area and a processor, the processor being able to execute software that enables play of the video wagering game or bonus game of claim 1.

18. A video gaming device that contains a video display area and a processor, the processor being able to execute software that enables play of the video wagering game or bonus game of claim 3.

19. A video gaming device that contains a video display area and a processor, the processor being able to execute software that enables play of the video wagering game or bonus game of claim 7.

20. A video gaming device that contains a video display area and a processor, the processor being able to execute software that enables play of the video wagering game or bonus game of claim 16.

21. A method of playing a video wagering game or bonus event on a video gaming apparatus comprising:

providing a display screen having an area presented in perspective in which one or more original images within which symbols can be displayed;

providing an indicium that can virtually move across the area; and

wherein movement of the indicium across the area removes at least some of the one or more original images to display symbols that are changed from a perspective view to a full frontal view after removal of one or more original images, and

wherein a game using the symbols is resolved according to the rules of a wagering game or bonus event and wherein the original images are not used in the playing of the video wagering game or bonus event.

22. A method of playing a video wagering game or bonus event on a video gaming apparatus comprising:

providing a display screen having an area of one or more original images within which a randomly selected distribution of symbols can be displayed;

providing an indicium that can virtually move across the area; and

wherein virtual movement of the indicium across the area removes at least some of the one or more original images to display symbols and the virtual movement is defined by a randomly selected template of movement, and

wherein a game using the symbols is resolved according to the rules of a wagering game or bonus event and wherein the original images are not used in the playing of the video wagering game or bonus event.

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