

United States Patent [19]

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Fink et al.

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[54] FIELD EMISSION LAMP STRUCTURES

[52] U.S. Cl. 313/495; 313/309; 313/310; 313/496

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[58] Field of Search 313/309, 310, 313/495, 422

[73] Assignee: SI Diamond Technology, Inc., Austin, Tex.

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Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Kelly K. Kordzik; Winstead Sechrest & Minick P.C.

[21] Appl. No.: 09/359,409

[57] ABSTRACT

[22] Filed: Jul. 22, 1999

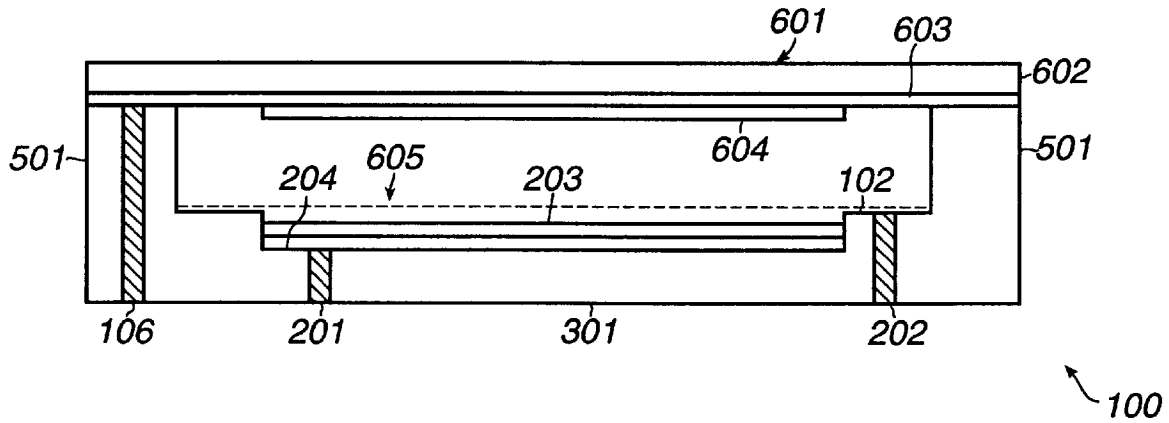
A field emission lamp, of either a diode or triode structure has a packaging whereby electrical access to the various electrodes of the lamp is provided through the rear or underside of the field emission device so that the individual lamps can be placed in close proximity to each other.

Related U.S. Application Data

[62] Division of application No. 08/845,129, Apr. 21, 1997, Pat. No. 6,008,595.

[51] Int. Cl.⁷ H01J 1/62

2 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



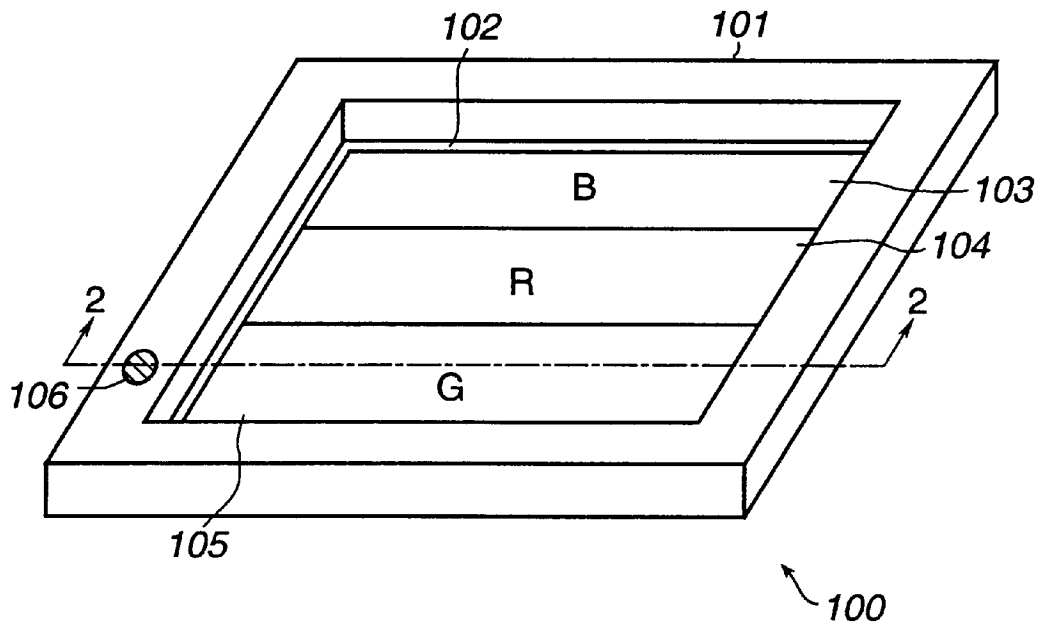


Fig. 1

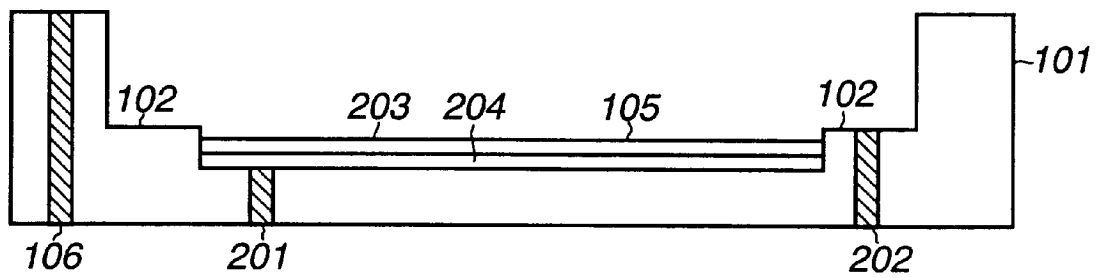


Fig. 2

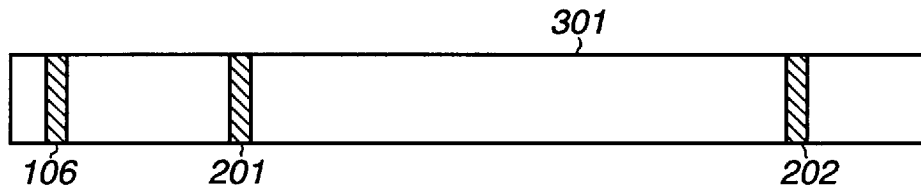


Fig. 3

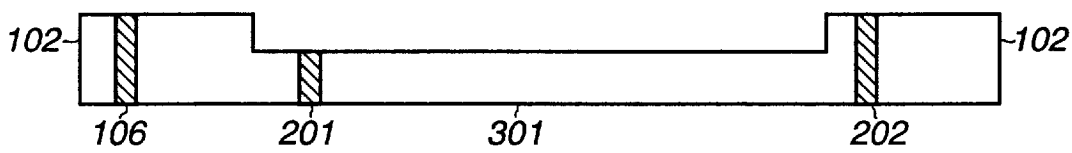


Fig. 4

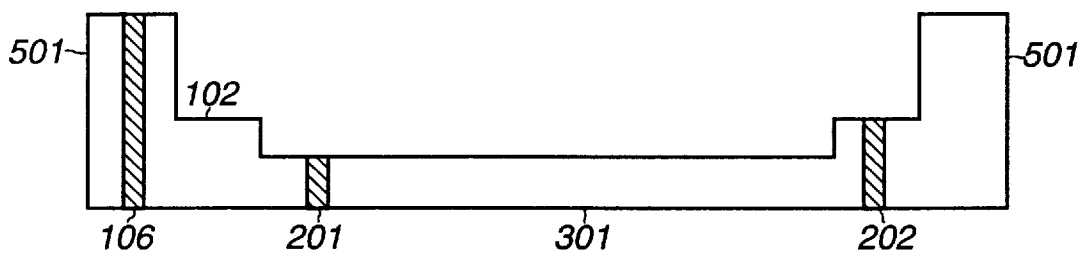


Fig. 5

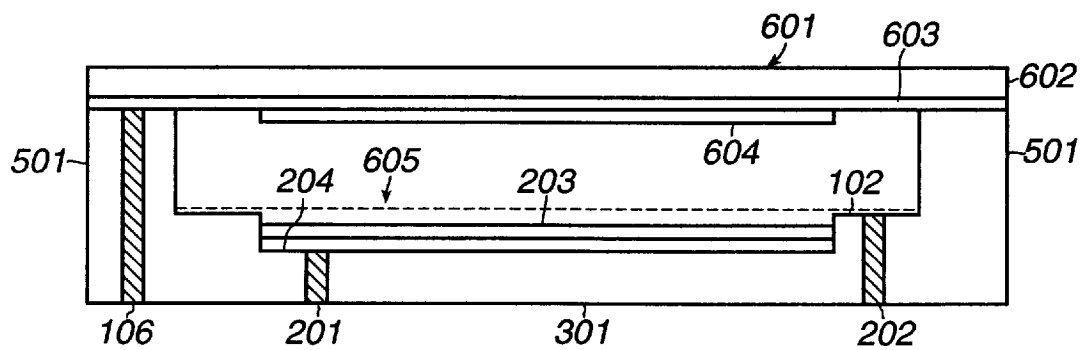


Fig. 6

100

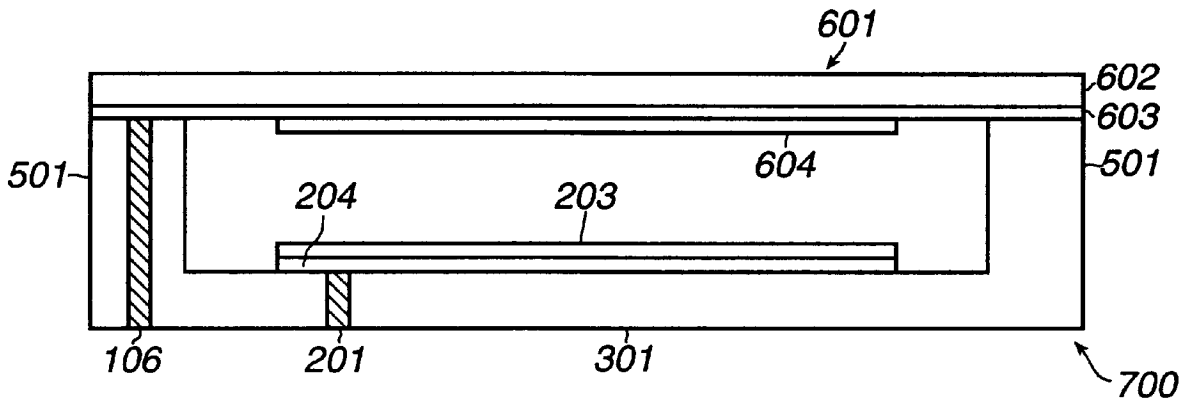


Fig. 7

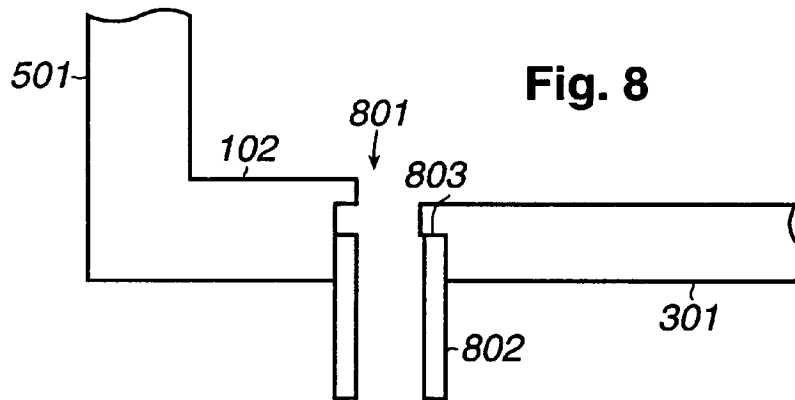


Fig. 8

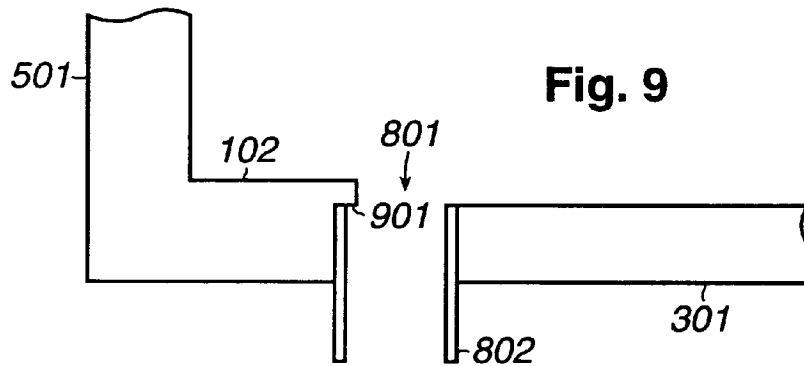


Fig. 9

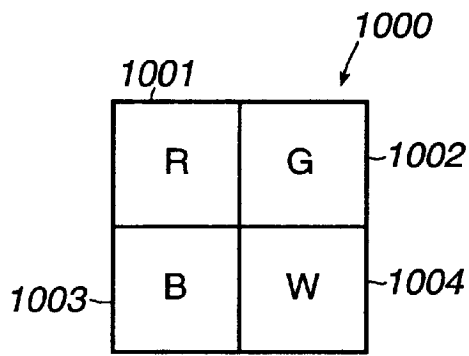


FIG. 10

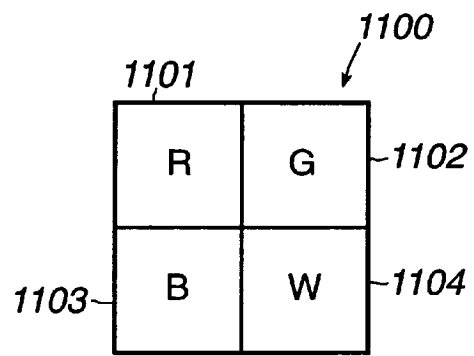


FIG. 11

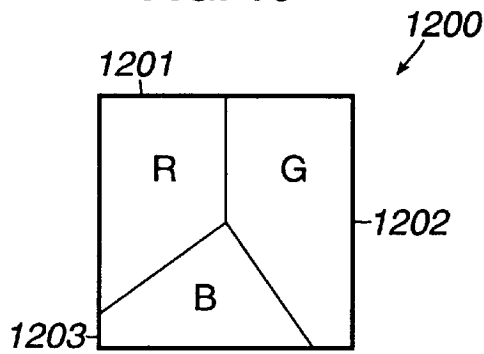


FIG. 12

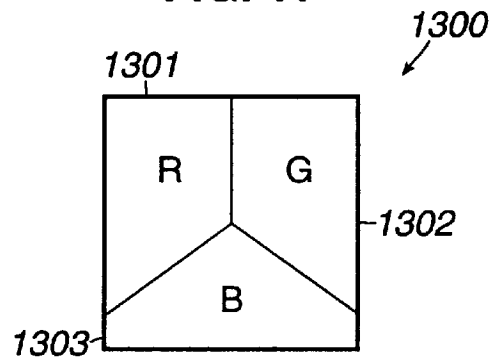


FIG. 13

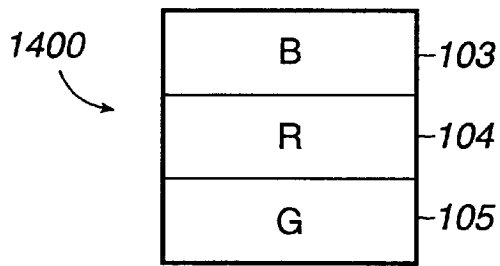


FIG. 14

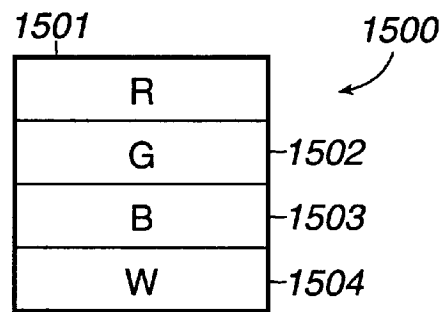


FIG. 15

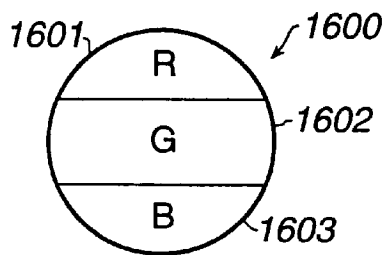


FIG. 16

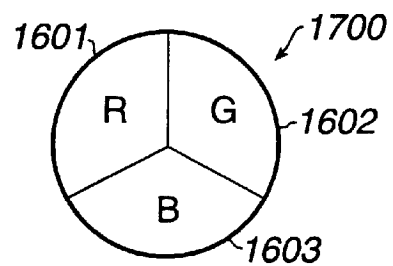


FIG. 17

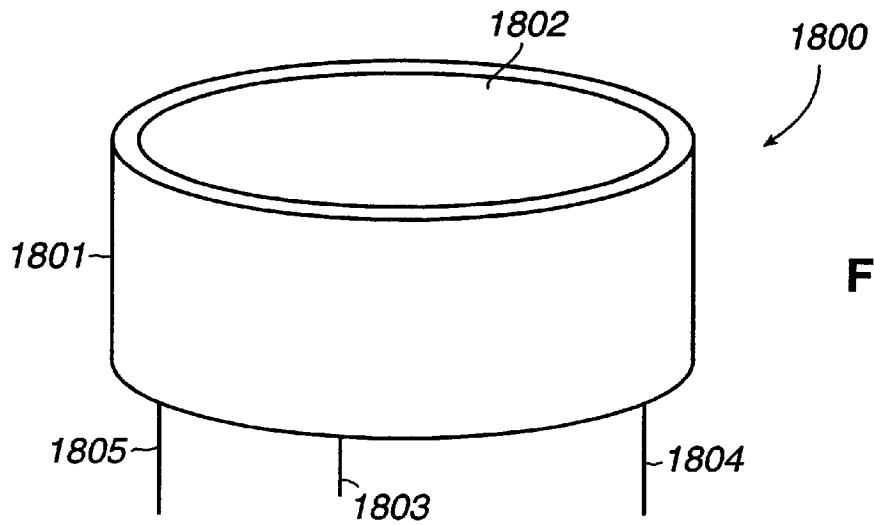


Fig. 18

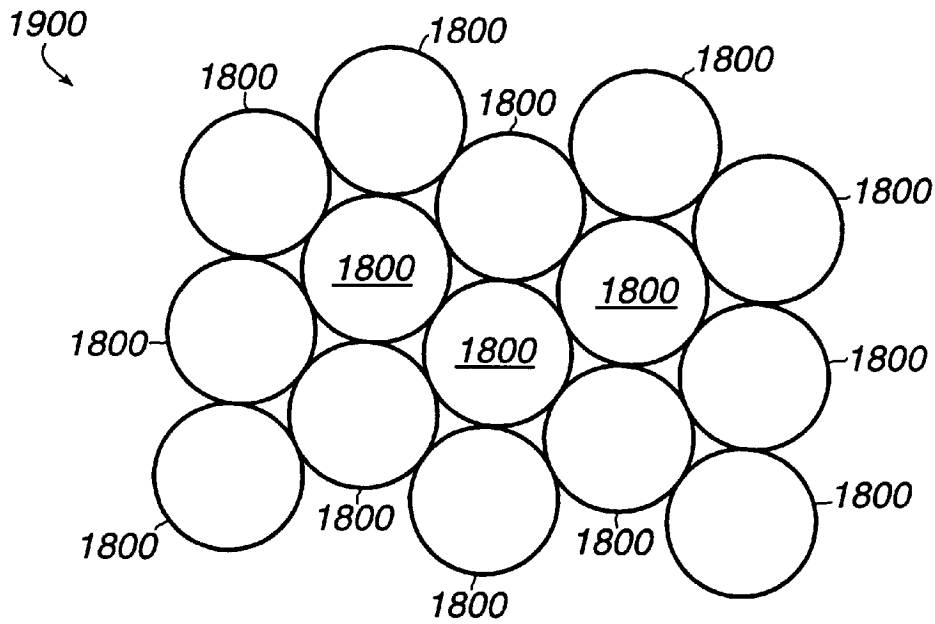


Fig. 19

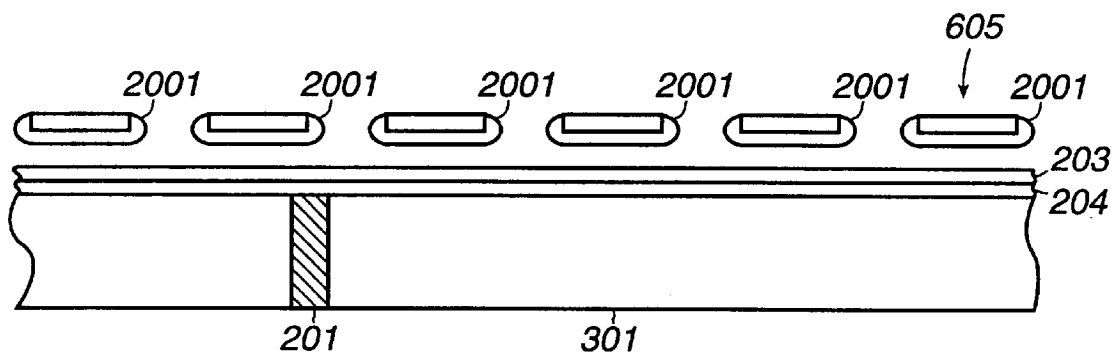


Fig. 20

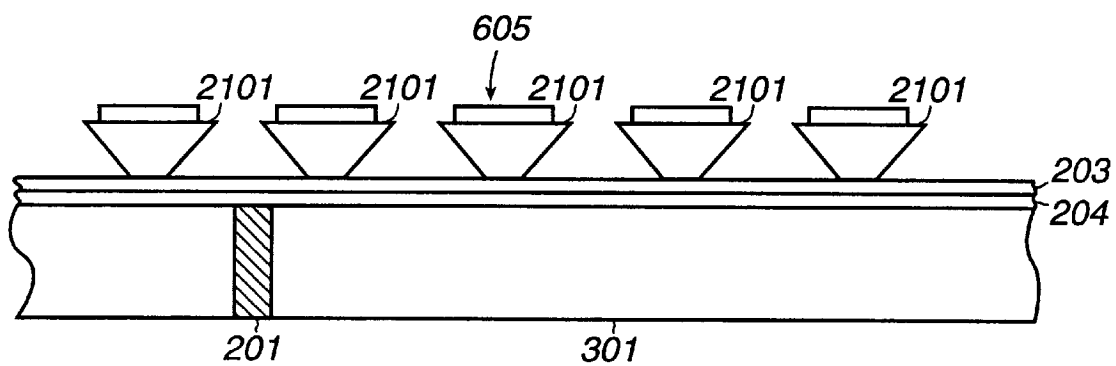


Fig. 21

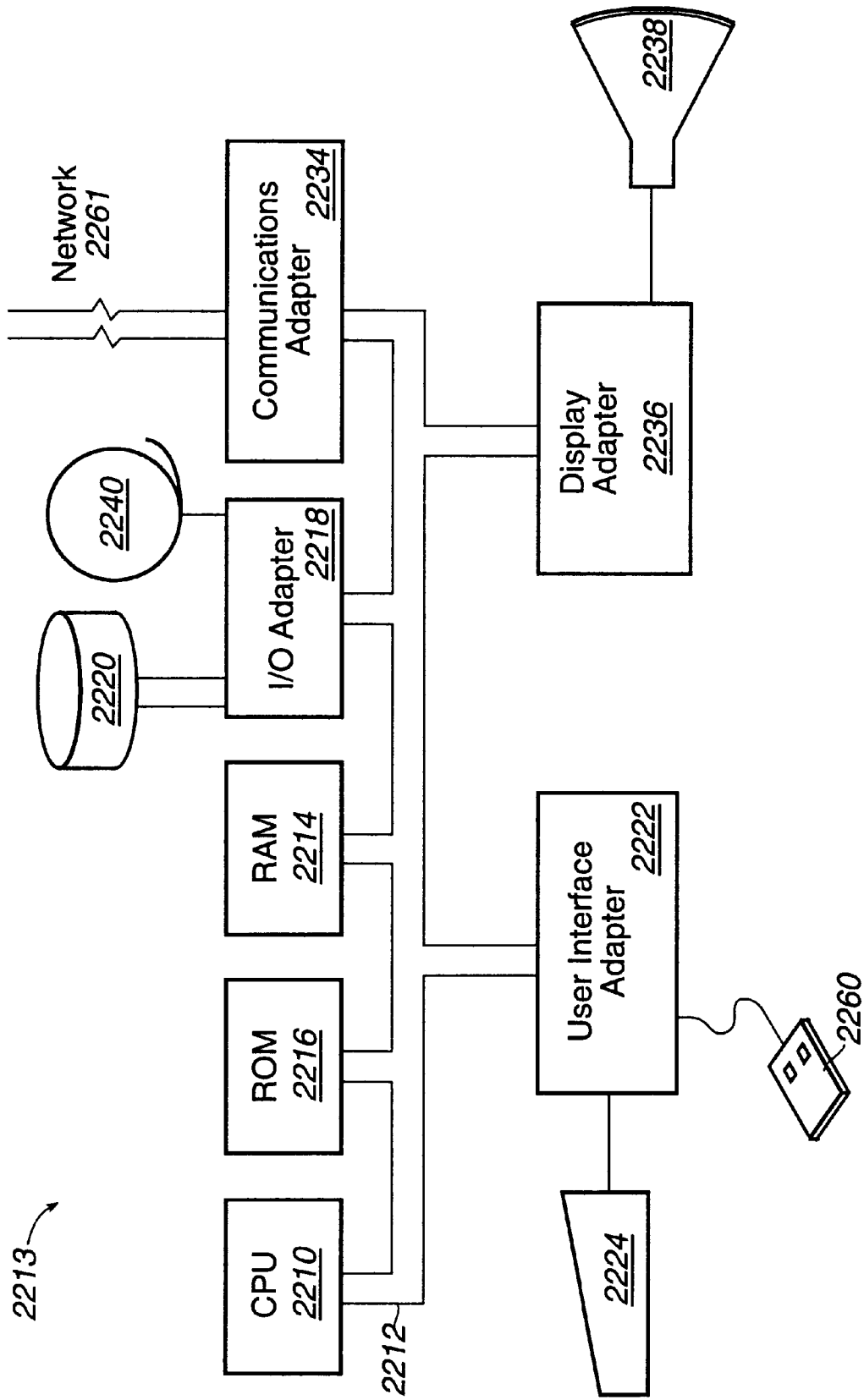


Fig. 22

FIELD EMISSION LAMP STRUCTURES

This is a division of application Ser. No. 08/845,129 filed Apr. 21, 1997 now U.S. Pat. No. 6,008,595.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates in general to field emission devices, and in particular, to a field emission lamp.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To date, display panels using field emission technology have utilized a configuration where the individual pixels of the display are addressed in a matrix-addressable manner using crisscrossing rows and columns of electrodes in order to individually activate the pixels. External access to these electrodes has been provided from the sides of the display device where driver electronics are coupled in order to drive the individual pixels.

A relatively new application for field emission devices is to produce a large display having pixels each comprised of individually packaged field emission devices. Such a configuration can produce a "billboard-type" display for use in such applications as road-side billboards and display screens within sport arenas.

One problem encountered has been that the traditional configuration for field emission displays whereby electrical access to the individual pixels is provided from the sides of the display makes it difficult to assemble the individual lamps in close proximity to each other, which would provide a higher quality displayed image.

Therefore, there is a need in the art for a field emission lamp that alleviates this problem.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention addresses the foregoing need by providing a field emission lamp structure (cathode, grid, anode) whereby electrical access to the individual components of the lamp structure, such as the cathode, anode, and grid (optional), is provided through the underneath portion of the lamp structure and not from the sides. As a result, the individual lamps can be packaged close together since all of their electrical leads emanate from the underside or rear of the lamps.

Such a field emission lamp can be configured in a diode or triode manner. Furthermore, a lamp may display a single color, or a plurality of colors, each of which can be individually activated by the driving circuitry.

A display comprising a plurality of these lamps can be driven by a data processing system in much the same manner as the individual colored pixels of a cathode ray tube (CRT) are driven on a desktop computer.

The foregoing has outlined rather broadly the features and technical advantages of the present invention in order that the detailed description of the invention that follows may be better understood. Additional features and advantages of the invention will be described hereinafter which form the subject of the claims of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of the present invention, and the advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following descriptions taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates an isometric view of a cathode in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 illustrates a sectional view of the cathode illustrated in FIG. 1;

FIGS. 3-5 illustrate various manufacturing stages for producing a cathode in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 6 illustrates a triode lamp in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7 illustrates a diode lamp in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 8 and 9 illustrate two possible embodiments for providing a getter into a lamp;

FIGS. 10-17 illustrate various possible embodiments for providing colored pixels using the lamp of the present invention;

FIG. 18 illustrates an isometric view of a lamp;

FIG. 19 illustrates a portion of a display implementing the lamps of the present invention;

FIGS. 20 and 21 illustrate an implementation of a second electron emitter within a field emission device; and

FIG. 22 illustrates a data processing system operable for driving any one of the embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. However, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without such specific details. In other instances, well-known circuits have been shown in block diagram form in order not to obscure the present invention in unnecessary detail. For the most part, details concerning timing considerations and the like have been omitted inasmuch as such details are not necessary to obtain a complete understanding of the present invention and are within the skills of persons of ordinary skill in the relevant art.

Refer now to the drawings wherein depicted elements are not necessarily shown to scale and wherein like or similar elements are designated by the same reference numeral through the several views.

Please note that the pixel of the present invention may take on any one of a number of shapes such as a square, circle, or any polygon shape. The various following figures assist in illustrating some of these embodiments. One of the advantages of the present invention is that since electrical contacts for accessing the various electrodes of the field emission devices emanate from the rear of the individual lamps, the lamps may be butted together on all sides in close proximity to each other as illustrated in one example in FIG. 19.

Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, there is illustrated cathode 100 comprising multilayer ceramic package 101. Multilayer ceramic package 101 allows for a very small package height with very good ability to hold the tolerances implemented. The ceramic packaging also allows for an easy connection to the back of the lamp, and any metal to ceramic bonds are very good for welding or bonding. Cathode 100 shows pixels 103-105 designated for displaying blue (B), red (R), and green (G) colors. Deposited within package 101 is metallic material 204 such as molybdenum, and then emitter material 203 deposited on layer 204. Emitter material 203 may be any well-known field emitter material, such as CVD diamond or amorphous diamond. Package 101 also includes shelf 102 around its periphery, which as described further below with respect to FIG. 6, is adaptable for positioning a grid layer over cathode 105. The use of a grid layer is well-known in the field emission art.

Electrical access to layer **204** is provided through feedthrough **201**, which comprises some type of conducting material. Access to the grid (not shown) is provided through feedthrough **202**. Feedthrough **106** provides access to an anode layer (see FIG. 6).

Referring next to FIGS. 3–5, there is illustrated a process for manufacturing cathode **100**. In FIG. 3, substrate layer **301** is manufactured with feedthroughs **106**, **201**, and **202** therethrough at desired locations. Substrate **301** may be a ceramic-like material or some other type of insulating structure, such as glass, fosterite, or alumina with metal feedthroughs **106**, **201**, and **202**. If substrate **301** is made of a ceramic, or ceramic-like material, then it may be cast or doctor bladed. The feedthroughs may be punched in and filled with a metal paste.

Referring next to FIG. 4, a second layer **102** of ceramic with feedthroughs is then bonded with substrate **301** in order to produce shelf **102**. Note that metal feedthroughs **106** and **202** are built upon with this second layer. The second layer **102** is manufactured in much the same way as substrate **301**. When the second layer **102** is placed upon substrate **301** it is bonded with substrate **301** through a pressing process and then fired.

Referring next to FIG. 5, a third layer **501** is applied and then bonded with the second layer. Again, feedthrough **106** is continued with this third layer. This third layer **501** will operate to provide a support for anode **601** illustrated in FIG. 6. Anode **601** includes glass substrate **602** with ITO layer **603** deposited thereon and phosphor layer **604** on ITO layer **603**. Feedthrough **106** provides electrical access to ITO layer **603** from the bottom of cathode **100**.

FIG. 6 also shows that conducting layer **204** and diamond layer **203** have been deposited thereon to complete cathode **100**. Additionally, grid **605** has been bonded to shelf **102**. To hold grid **605** tight during operation, the ceramic cathode substrate **101** could be chilled or frozen with grid **605** at room temperature, then welded in place. As the ceramic material warms up, the ceramic substrate **101** will expand to hold grid **605** in tension.

Feedthrough **202** provides electrical access to grid **605** from the bottom of cathode **100**.

Referring next to FIG. 7, there is illustrated a diode lamp comprised of anode **601** and cathode **700**, which is similar to cathode **100**, except that shelf **102** and grid **605** are not implemented in this design.

Referring next to FIG. 8, there is illustrated an alternative embodiment of the present invention where cathode **100** has hole **801** drilled therethrough so that metal or glass tube **802** can be inserted to provide a getter material. Note that in this configuration, tube **802** may be inserted up to ledge **803**.

FIG. 9 illustrates tube **802** also inserted into substrate **301**, but in this instance up to ledge **901** underneath shelf **102**.

Referring next to FIGS. 10–17, there are illustrated various pixel configurations for a lamp of the present invention.

FIG. 10 illustrates configuration **1000**, which includes equally sized red (R), green (G), blue (B), and white (W) pixels **1001**–**1004**, respectively, which could be implemented within cathode **100**.

FIG. 11 illustrates pixel configuration **1100** whereby green pixel **1102** and white pixel **1104** are of a smaller area than red pixel **1101** and blue pixel **1103**.

Note, feedthroughs through structure **101** can be added in order to provide individual access to each one of the colored pixels, such as shown in FIGS. 2–7 for one pixel, which in FIGS. 1 and 2 is green pixel **105**.

FIG. 12 shows configuration **1200** comprising only red **1201**, green **1202**, and blue **1203** pixels.

FIG. 13 illustrates configuration **1300** which is similar to configuration **1200** except that blue pixel **1303** is in more equal proportion to red pixel **1301** and green pixel **1302**.

FIG. 14 illustrates configuration **1400** which corresponds to the pixel configuration illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 15 illustrates configuration **1500** which is similar to configuration **1400** except that white pixel **1504** has been added to red pixel **1501**, green pixel **1502**, and blue pixel **1503**.

FIGS. 16 and 17 illustrate round configurations **1600** and **1700**, respectively. Configuration **1600** includes red **1601**, green **1602**, and blue **1603** pixels, while configuration **1700** illustrates the same pixels in a different geometric configuration.

Referring next to FIG. 18, there is illustrated an external view of lamp **1800** in accordance with the present invention. Shell **1801** corresponds to structure **101** shown in FIG. 1. Note that some type of protective covering may be formed onto structure **1801**. Lamp **1800** includes pixel **1802**, which may be comprised of one or more colored pixels, such as those illustrated herein. Electrical access to lamp **1800** is provided through electrical leads **1803**–**1805**, which emanate from the rear or underside of lamp **1800**. As an example, lead **1805** may provide access to feedthrough **106**, which accesses anode **601**, while feedthrough **1803** provides access to layer **204** through cathode **100**. Likewise, electrical connection **1804** may provide electrical access to grid **605** through feedthrough **202**.

FIG. 19 illustrates portion **1900** of a display comprised of a plurality of lamps **1800**. Portion **1900** illustrates how providing electrical access to the underside of each of lamps **1800** allows for the packaging of lamps **1800** in very close proximity to each other.

Referring next to FIG. 20, there is illustrated the depositing of a secondary electron emitter material **2001** onto each of grid portion **605**.

Typically, a grid structure is either metal, or coated with silicon dioxide or other insulator on the bottom. If the grid structure is coated with metal, it will take up much of the electrons that are emitted from the cathode. Coating the bottom side of the grid with silicon dioxide or another insulator may prevent the electrons from hitting the grid conducting layer, but it also may lead to charge build-up, which could cause arcing or break-down discharging and may lead to inefficient operating conditions.

To alleviate this problem, coating **2001** is applied to the grid structure (or at least the sides facing the cold cathode) with a magnesium oxide (MgO) material or some other high secondary electron emitter material. This has a number of advantages, one of which is that it may provide a diffuse source of electrons for striking the anode. A second advantage is that it may add to the emission current and not subtract from it.

Referring next to FIG. 21, there is illustrated an alternative embodiment of this feature where the grid **605** is applied onto pedestals **2101** of the secondary electron emitter material.

A representative hardware environment for practicing the present invention is depicted in FIG. 22, which illustrates a typical hardware configuration of workstation **2213** in accordance with the subject invention having central processing unit (CPU) **2210**, such as a conventional microprocessor, and a number of other units interconnected via system bus

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2212. Workstation 2213 shown in FIG. 22 includes random access memory (RAM) 2214, read only memory (ROM) 2216, and input/output (I/O) adapter 2218 for connecting peripheral devices such as disk units 2220 and tape drives 2240 to bus 2212, user interface adapter 2222 for connecting keyboard 2224, mouse 2260, and/or other user interface devices such as a touch screen device (not shown) to bus 2212, communication adapter 2234 for connecting workstation 2213 to data processing (or telecommunications) network 2261, and display adapter 2236 for connecting bus 2212 to display device 2238. CPU 2210 may include other circuitry not shown herein, which will include circuitry commonly found within a microprocessor, e.g., execution unit, bus interface unit, arithmetic logic unit, etc.

System 2213 may be configured to operate display 2238, which may comprise field emission pixel lamps as described herein, such as by utilizing a display comprising lamps 1800 in a configuration as shown in FIG. 19. The driving of the individual lamps, and even the colored pixels within each lamp, can be performed by display adapter 2236 in a well-known manner, and as similarly done with respect to matrix-addressable field emission display panels.

Although the present invention and its advantages have been described in detail, it should be understood that various changes, substitutions and alterations can be made herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A data processing system, comprising:

a processor;

an input device;

a storage device;

a display; and

a bus system coupling said processor to said input device, said storage device, and said display, wherein said display further comprises:

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a plurality of field emission lamps, wherein each one of said plurality of field emission lamps comprises:

a cathode assembly, comprising:

a substrate having a topside and an underside;

an electron emitter deposited on said topside of said substrate;

a first electrically conducting feedthrough passing through said substrate in a manner so that a first end of said first feedthrough is accessible on said topside and a second end of said first feedthrough is accessible on said underside, wherein said first feedthrough is coupled to said electron emitter, wherein said electron emitter includes an electrical conductor deposited on said topside of said substrate and an emitter material deposited on said electrical conductor;

a divider structure for positioning an anode assembly over said electron emitter; and

a second electrically conducting feedthrough passing through said substrate and said divider structure in a manner so that a first end of said second feedthrough is accessible on a topside of said divider structure and a second end of said second feedthrough is accessible on said underside of said substrate, wherein said second feedthrough couples to said anode assembly.

2. The display as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a shelf structure for positioning a grid over said electron emitter; and

a third electrically conducting feedthrough passing through said substrate and said shelf structure in a manner so that a first end of said third feedthrough is accessible on a topside of said shelf structure and a second end of said third feedthrough is accessible on said underside of said substrate, wherein said third feedthrough couples to said grid.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,111,354

DATED : August 29, 2000

INVENTOR(S) : Richard Lee Fink, et al.

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 1, Line 15, after "pixels.", replace "Exteranal" with --External--

Signed and Sealed this
Twenty-ninth Day of May, 2001

Attest:



NICHOLAS P. GODICI

Attesting Officer

Acting Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office