by the reader **900**. FIG. **1**B is a diagram showing the control circuitry of the reader of FIG. **1**A in greater detail. In FIG. **1**A, a case **902** is shown which in principle can be any convenient enclosure or frame for supporting the various components in suitable mutual orientation, and in some embodiments is a case adapted to be held in a hand of a user, as described in greater detail hereinbelow in conjunction with FIGS. **5***a* and **5***b*. The reader **900** comprises sources of illumination **904**, **906** that can be operated in various circumstances to illuminate a target and to provide an aiming signal. The illumination source **904** is in general a source comprising one or more light sources such as lamps or LEDs that provide illumination at a convenient wavelength, such as red or green illumination, for illuminating a target whose image is to be acquired. The aimer source **906** in some embodiments is a second LED with appropriate imaging optics to image a slit, or alternately is a laser diode operating at a different wavelength from the illumination source **904** (for example, red illumination), so that it is easily distinguished therefrom. The aimer source **906** is used by an operator of the reader **900** to ascertain what the reader is aimed at. Optics **908** are provided for distributing the illumination from illumination source **904** in a pattern calculated to illuminate a target. In a preferred embodiment the target is illuminated optimally. A collimation lens **910** and a diffractive element **912** are optionally provided to collimate the light from the aimer source **906**, and to spread or diffract the light from the aimer source **906** in a predefined pattern, respectively. As can be seen in FIG. **1**A, an object **914** to be imaged is situated on an object plane **916** located at a distance q_1 from the reader **900**. The object **914** is for example a bar code affixed to a surface, namely the object plane **916**. For purposes of discussion, there is also shown in FIG. **1**A a second object plane **916'** located at a greater distance q_2 from the reader **900**, and having thereon an object **914'** (which can also be a bar code). The surface **916**, **916'** is preferably illuminated, either by light from the illumination source **904**, or by ambient light, or a combination thereof. As can be seen in FIG. **1**A, the aimer **906**, the collimation lens **910** and the diffractive element **912** in combination provide a locator pattern **918**, comprising **5** elements **918***a*-**918***e* in FIG. **1**A, that identify for a user where the reader **900** is aimed, so that a desired target can be made to fall within the aiming area of the reader **900**. Light reflected from the target (or alternatively, light generated at the target) is captured by the reader using a lens **920**, which in some embodiments comprises a fluid lens and possibly one or more fixed lenses, and is conveyed via the fluid lens to an imager **922**. The imager **922** in various embodiments is a 1D or 2D semiconductor array sensor, constructed using any convenient processing technology, such as a CMOS sensor, a CCD sensor, or the like. The imager **922** converts the optical signals that it receives into electrical signals that represent individual pixels of the total image, or frame, or a portion thereof. In various embodiments, the imager can be any of a color CCD imager and a color CMOS imager.

[**0038**] The reader **900** also includes various hardware components, shown in a single control element **930** for controlling and for acquiring signals from the reader **900** in FIG. **1**A. The details of control element **930** are shown in FIG. **1**B. An illumination control **931** is provided to control the intensity and timing of illumination provided by the illumination source **904**. The illumination control **931** is in electrical communication with illumination source **904** by way of a cable **905**. An aimer control **932** is provided to control the intensity and timing of illumination provided by the aimer source **906**. The aimer control **932** is in electrical communication with aimer source **906** by way of a cable **907**. An imager control **934** is provided to control the timing and operation of the imager **922**, for example by providing clocking signals to operate the imager, reset signals, start and stop signals for capturing illumination, and synchronization signals for providing electrical output as data indicative of the intensity of illumination received at any pixel of the imager array **922**, which data may be provided as analog or as digital data. The imager control **934** is in electrical communication with imager **922** by way of a cable **923**. A lens controller **936** is provided to control the behavior of the fluid lens **920**. The lens controller **938** and the fluid lens **920** are in electrical communication by way of a cable **921**.

[**0039**] An analog-to-digital converter **938** is provided for converting analog signals output by the imager **922** to digital signals. In some embodiments, a DMA controller **940** is provided to allow direct transfer of digital data to a memory for storage. In general, any and all of illumination control **930**, aimer control **932**, imager control **934**, A/D **938** and DMA **940** are connected to a general purpose programmable computer **942** by way of one or more buses **945**, which buses **945** may be serial buses or parallel buses as is considered most convenient and advantageous. The general purpose programmable computer **942** comprises the usual components, including a CPU **943** which can in some embodiments be a microprocessor, and memory **944** (for example semiconductor memory such as RAM, ROM, magnetic memory such as disks, or optical memory such as CD-ROM). The general purpose computer can also communicate via one or more buses **947** with a wide variety of input and output devices. For example, there can be provided any or all of an output device **946** such as a display, a speaker **948** or other enunciator, devices for inputting commands or data to the computer such as a keyboard **950**, a touchpad **952**, a microphone **954**, and bidirectional devices such as one or more I/O ports **956** which can be hardwired (i.e., serial, parallel, USB, firewire and the like) or can be wireless (i.e., radio, WiFi, infra-red, and the like). The general purpose programmable computer **942** can also comprise, or can control, indicators **960** such as LEDs for indicating status or other information to a user.

[**0040**] As shown in FIG. **1**A, the reader **900** and/or the general purpose computer **942** (as shown in FIG. **1**B) can comprise one or more trigger switches **964** that allow a user to indicate a command or a status to the reader **900**. In addition, the entire system is provided with electrical power by the use of one or more of a power supply **970**, batteries **972** and a charger **974**. Any convenient source of electrical power that can be used to operate the reader **900** and its associated general purpose programmable computer **942** (as shown in FIG. **1**B) is contemplated, including the conventional electrical grid (which can be accessed by connection to a conventional wall plug), and alternative power sources such as emergency generators, solar cells, wind turbines, hydroelectric power, and the like.

[**0041**] As may be seen from FIG. **1**A, the distance at which the reader of the invention can operate, or equivalently, a focal length of the optical system of the reader, can vary as the distance q from the lens to the object to be

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imaged varies. The focal length for a specific geometrical situation can be determined from the formula

$$1/f=1/p+1/q$$

in which f is the focal length of a lens, p is the distance from the lens to a surface at which a desired image is observed (such as an imaging sensor or a photographic film), and q is a distance between the lens and the object being observed.

[0042] Consider the two objects situated at a nearer distance q_1, and a farther distance q_2 from the reader lens (e.g., $q_2>q_1$). In a system that is less expensive and more convenient to construct, the distance p (from the lens **920** to the imaging sensor **922**) is fixed. One can image objects lying at the distance q_1, from the lens with a focal length given by $1/f_1=1/p+1/q_1$, and one can image objects lying at the distance q_2 from the lens with a focal length given by $1/f_2=1/p+1/q_2$. Since $q_2>q_1$, and p is constant, we have $f_1<f_2$. In particular, for a reader comprising a fluid lens that can provide a minimum focal length of f_1 and a maximum focal length of f_2, for a fixed value of p, one would have the ability to observe in proper focus objects at distances ranging at least from q_1 to q_2, without consideration for issues such as depth of field at a particular focal length setting of the lens. By way of example, q_1 might be a short distance such as 4 inches (approximately 10 cm) so that one can image a target object having much detail (such as a high density bar code) with recovery or decoding of all of the detail present in the object. On the other hand, q_2 might be a longer distance, such as 12 inches (approximately 30 cm) or more, whereby a reader can image an object at longer distance with lesser density (e.g., fewer pixels of resolution per unit of length or area observed at the target object). Accordingly, a reader of the invention comprising a particular imaging sensor can be configured to perform at either extreme of high density/short distance or of low density/long distance (or any variant intermediate to the two limits) by the simple expedient of controlling the focal length of the fluid lens such that an object at the intended distance d in the range $q_2 \cong d \cong q_1$ will be imaged correctly.

[0043] FIG. **2** is a block diagram of an optical reader showing a general purpose microprocessor system that is useful with various embodiments of the invention. Optical reader **1010** includes an illumination assembly **1020** for illuminating a target object T, such as a 1D or 2D bar code symbol, and an imaging assembly **1030** for receiving an image of object T and generating an electrical output signal indicative of the data optically encoded therein. Illumination assembly **1020** may, for example, include an illumination source assembly **1022**, together with an illuminating optics assembly **1024**, such as one or more lenses, diffusers, wedges, reflectors or a combination of such elements, for directing light from light source **1022** in the direction of a target object T. Illumination assembly **1020** may comprise, for example, laser or light emitting diodes (LEDs) such as white LEDs or red LEDs. Illumination assembly **1020** may include target illumination and optics for projecting an aiming pattern **1027** on target T. Illumination assembly **1020** may be eliminated if ambient light levels are certain to be high enough to allow high quality images of object T to be taken. Imaging assembly **1030** may include an image sensor **1032**, such as a 1D or 2D CCD, CMOS, NMOS, PMOS, CID OR CMD solid state image sensor, either black-and-white or color, together with an imaging optics assembly **1034** for receiving and focusing an image of object T onto image sensor **1032**. The array-based imaging assembly shown in FIG. **2** may be replaced by a laser array based scanning assembly comprising at least one laser source, a scanning mechanism, emit and receive optics, at least one photodetector and accompanying signal processing circuitry.

[0044] A partial frame clock out mode is readily implemented utilizing an image sensor which can be commanded by a control module to clock out partial frames of image data or which is configured with pixels that can be individually addressed. Using CMOS fabrication techniques, image sensors are readily made so that electrical signals corresponding to certain pixels of a sensor can be selectively clocked out without clocking out electrical signals corresponding to remaining pixels of the sensor, thereby allowing analysis of only a partial frame of data associated with only a portion of the full imager field of view. CMOS image sensors are available from such manufacturers as Symagery, Omni Vision, Sharp, Micron, STMicroelectronics, Kodak, Toshiba, and Mitsubishi. A partial frame clock out mode can also be carried out by selectively activating a frame discharge signal during the course of clocking out a frame of image data from a CCD image sensor. A/D **1036** and signal processor **1035** may individually or both optionally be integrated with the image sensor **1032** onto a single substrate.

[0045] Optical reader **1010** of FIG. **2** also includes programmable control circuit (or control module) **1040** which preferably comprises an integrated circuit microprocessor **1042** and an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC **1044**). The function of ASIC **1044** could also be provided by a field programmable gate array (FPGA). Processor **1042** and ASIC **1044** are both programmable control devices which are able to receive, to output and to process data in accordance with a stored program stored in memory unit **1045** which may comprise such memory elements as a read/write random access memory or RAM **1046** and an erasable read only memory or EROM **1047**. Other memory units that can be used include EPROMs and EEPROMs. RAM **1046** typically includes at least one volatile memory device but may include one or more long term non-volatile memory devices. Processor **1042** and ASIC **1044** are also both connected to a common bus **1048** through which program data and working data, including address data, may be received and transmitted in either direction to any circuitry that is also connected thereto. Processor **1042** and ASIC **1044** differ from one another, however, in how they are made and how they are used. The processing module that is configured to extract information encoded by the encoded indicium employs some or all of the capabilities of processor **1042** and ASIC **1044**, and comprises the hardware and as necessary, software and or firmware, required to accomplish the extraction task, including as necessary decoding tasks to convert the raw data of the image to the information encoded in the encoded indicium.

[0046] More particularly, processor **1042** is preferably a general purpose, off-the-shelf VLSI integrated circuit microprocessor which has overall control of the circuitry of FIG. **2**, but which devotes most of its time to decoding image data stored in RAM **1046** in accordance with program data stored in EROM **1047**. ASIC **1044**, on the other hand, is preferably a special purpose VLSI integrated circuit, such as a programmable logic array or gate array that is programmed to

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devote its time to functions other than decoding image data, and thereby relieves processor **1042** from the burden of performing these functions.

[**0047**] The actual division of labor between processors **1042** and **1044** will naturally depend on the type of off-the-shelf microprocessors that are available, the type of image sensor which is used, the rate at which image data is output by imaging assembly **1030**, etc. There is nothing in principle, however, that requires that any particular division of labor be made between processors **1042** and **1044**, or even that such a division be made at all. This is because special purpose processor **1044** may be eliminated entirely if general purpose processor **1042** is fast enough and powerful enough to perform all of the functions contemplated by the present invention. It will, therefore, be understood that neither the number of processors used, nor the division of labor there between, is of any fundamental significance for purposes of the present invention.

[**0048**] With processor architectures of the type shown in FIG. **2**, a typical division of labor between processors **1042** and **1044** will be as follows. Processor **1042** is preferably devoted primarily to such tasks as decoding image data, once such data has been stored in RAM **1046**, recognizing characters represented in stored image data according to an optical character recognition (OCR) scheme, handling menuing options and reprogramming functions, processing commands and data received from control/data input unit **1039** which may comprise such elements as a trigger **1074** and a keyboard **1078** and providing overall system level coordination.

[**0049**] Processor **1044** is preferably devoted primarily to controlling the image acquisition process, the A/D conversion process and the storage of image data, including the ability to access memories **1046** and **1047** via a DMA channel. The A/D conversion process can include converting analog signals to digital signals represented as 8-bit (or gray scale) quantities. As A/D converter technology improves, digital signals may be represented using more that 8 bits. Processor **1044** may also perform many timing and communication operations. Processor **1044** may, for example, control the illumination of LEDs **1022**, the timing of image sensor **1032** and an analog-to-digital (A/D) converter **1036**, the transmission and reception of data to and from a processor external to reader **1010**, through an RS-232, a network such as an Ethernet or other packet-based communication technology, a serial bus such as USB, and/or a wireless communication link (or other) compatible I/O interface **1037**. Processor **1044** may also control the outputting of user perceptible data via an output device **1038**, such as a beeper, a good read LED and/or a display monitor which may be provided by a liquid crystal display such as display **1082**. Control of output, display and I/O functions may also be shared between processors **1042** and **1044**, as suggested by bus driver I/O and output/display devices **1037'** and **1038'** or may be duplicated, as suggested by microprocessor serial I/O ports **1042A** and **1042B** and I/O and display devices **1037"** and **1038"**. As explained earlier, the specifics of this division of labor is of no significance to the present invention.

[**0050**] FIG. **3** is a flow chart **1100** showing a process for operating a system having an adjustable focus system comprising feedback, for example a system having components as described in FIG. **1A**. The process begins at step **1110**, where a command to capture an image is generated, for example by a user depressing a trigger, or by an automated system issuing a capture image command in response to a specified condition, such as an object being sensed as coming into position for imaging. Once an image is captured at step **1110**, the image focus is assessed, as indicated at step **1120**. Focus assessment can comprise comparison of the image quality with a specified standard or condition, such as the sharpness of contrast at a perceived edge of a feature in the image, or other standards.

[**0051**] Another procedure for performing an autofocus operation using a flatness metric includes the following steps:

[**0052**] 1. capturing a gray scale image (i.e., capture an image with the hand held reader and digitize the image using at least two bit resolution, or at least 4 discrete values);

[**0053**] 2. optionally sampling the gray scale image (i.e., extract from the image a line or a series of points, or alternatively, the sampled image can be the captured image if it is a windowed frame comprising image data corresponding to selectively addressed pixels);

[**0054**] 3. creating a histogram by plotting number of occurrences of data points having a particular gray scale value, for example using the X axis to represent gray scale values and the Y axis to represent frequency of occurrence;

[**0055**] 4. processing the histogram to provide a flatness measurement as output;

[**0056**] 5. determining a focus level (or quality of focus) based on the flatness measurement; and

[**0057**] 6. in the event that the quality of focus as determined from the flatness metric is less than desired, changing the focus and repeating steps 1 through 5.

[**0058**] The flatness of an image refers to the uniformity of the distribution of different gray scale values in the histogram. A flat distribution is one with little variation in numbers of observations at different gray scale values. In general, poorly focused images will be "flatter" than better focused images, i.e. there will be a relatively even incidence of gray scale values over the range of gray scale values. Generally, a histogram for a well focused image has many pixels with high gray scale values, many pixels with low gray scale values, and few pixels in the middle. The use of historical information for various types of images, such as bar codes, including information encoded in look up tables, or information provided using the principles of fuzzy logic, are contemplated

[**0059**] At step **1130**, the outcome of the focus assessment is compared to an acceptable criterion, such as sharpness (or contrast change) of a specified amount over a specified number of pixels. Images that are digitized to higher digital resolutions (e.g., using a range defined by a larger number of bits) may support more precise determinations of acceptable focus. If the result of the assessment of focus is negative, the process proceeds to step **1140**, where the focus of the lens **920** of FIG. **1A**, is modified. After adjusting the focus, the operation of the process returns to step **1110**, and a new image is captured, and is assessed. When an image is

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captured that is found to have suitable focus, the process moves from step **1130** to step **1150**, wherein the image with suitable focal properties is processed, and a result is made available to a user or to the instrumentality that commanded the capturing of the image, and/or the result is stored in a memory. Optionally, as indicated at step **1160**, the system can be commanded to obtain another image, that is to loop back to the step **1110**, and to repeat the process again.

[**0060**] FIG. **4** is a flow chart showing a process for operating a system having an adjustable focus system that does not comprise feedback. At step **1210** a command to capture an image is generated, for example by a user depressing a trigger, or by an automated system issuing a capture image command in response to a specified condition, such as an object being sensed as coming into position for imaging. At step **1215**, the lens **920** is driven with a first fluid lens control signal corresponding to a first condition, such as a default condition, for example causing the lens **920** to operate by approximation with a focus position q_1 of 10 cm. Using this focus condition, an image is captured and processed at step **1220**. At step **1225**, the information retrieved from the captured image is examined to determine if a valid decoding of a bar code has been achieved. If the decoding is valid, the information or data represented by the decoded image is reported as indicated at step **1260**, and the process stops, as indicated at step **1270**. A later command to repeat the process can be given as may be necessary or advantageous.

[**0061**] If at step **1225** it is determined that a good decode has not been achieved, the process continues to step **1230**, at which time the fluid lens control signal applied to the lens **920** is adjusted to a first alternative value, for example causing the lens **920** to focus by approximation at a distance q_2 of 30 cm. Using this focus condition, an image is captured and processed at step **1235**. At step **1240**, the information retrieved from the captured image is examined to determine if a valid decoding of a bar code has been achieved. If the decoding is valid, the information or data represented by the decoded image is reported as indicated at step **1260**, and the process stops, as indicated at step **1270**.

[**0062**] If at step **1240** it is determined that a good decode has not been achieved, the process continues to step **1245**, at which time the fluid lens control signal applied to the lens **920** is adjusted to a second alternative value, for example causing the lens **920** to focus by approximation at a distance q_3 of 100 cm. Using this focus condition, an image is captured and processed at step **1250**. At step **1255**, the information retrieved from the captured image is examined to determine if a valid decoding of a bar code has been achieved. If the decoding is valid, the information or data represented by the decoded image is reported as indicated at step **1260**, and the process stops, as indicated at step **1270**. If a valid decoding of a bar code is still not achieved, the process returns to step **1215**, and the process is repeated to try to identify a valid bar code value. In other embodiments, after a specified or predetermined number of iterative loops have occurred without a successful outcome, or after a specified or predetermined time elapses, the process can be aborted by a supervisory control device, which in some embodiments can operate according to a computer program. Although the process depicted in FIG. **4** uses three discrete conditions to drive the lens **920** in the search for a suitable focus condition, it is possible to use more or fewer than three predefined drive conditions as components of such a process. For example, one can define a process in which the focal distance changes by a predefined distance, or a predefined percentage. Alternatively, one can define a process in which the adjustment is based upon a quantity determined from the information obtained in assessing whether the captured image is in focus (as described hereinabove) or from the quality of the decoded information (e.g., whether the information is completely garbled or incorrectly formatted, or is close to being valid). In general, the distances specified may not be attained to absolute precision (for example, a distance of 30 cm may not be measured to a precision of 30.000 cm but merely to 30 cm to within one tenth of a centimeter), but rather the test is that the lens operates adequately at the distance that is identified. In the laboratory, precise distances may be set up for experiments, but in actual use in the field, distances are measured less accurately than in the laboratory.

[**0063**] As discussed hereinbefore, fluid lenses may have aberrations, such as spherical aberration and/or color aberration. In the reader of the invention, additional lenses, such as positive or negative lenses, can be used in conjunction with a fluid lens such as lens **920** to correct one or more of spherical, color, or higher order aberrations. In some embodiments, the materials of construction of the additional lenses can be chosen so as to compensate for optical imperfections and aberrations introduced by the fluid lens.

[**0064**] It is expensive to manufacture devices that require high levels of mechanical precision, with regard to making the components of the device, assembling the components with the required precision, and testing the assemble product to assure compliance with the intended design specifications. There are cost and manufacturability advantages that accrue if one is not required to assemble a device with high precision, and can reduce or omit the testing of the assembled device. Accordingly, using the systems and methods of the invention, the incorporation of a fluid lens **920** in the reader **900** can in some embodiments permit one or more of relaxed design tolerances, relaxed assembly tolerances, and substitution of a calibration step for a testing step. In some instances, devices that would otherwise have been rejected as being outside of design specifications can be appropriately operated by the simple expedient of operating the fluid lens so as to provide an acceptable level of performance. In particular, one way to assure such a condition is to deliberately design a reader in which the baseline operation of the optical system of the reader is set for a condition of operation of the fluid lens at an operating point intermediate in the range of operation of the fluid lens. In such an instance, the fluid lens is first driven at the default (or design) condition, and upon calibration, an "adjusted operating condition" different from the default condition can be identified that causes the specific reader being calibrated to most closely match the design condition. This "adjusted operating condition" is then recorded as the condition that the reader should use as its initial operating state in general operation, and information identifying the "adjusted operating condition" can be save for future reference, for example in a non-volatile memory. By the application of these design principles (e.g., baseline operation at an intermediate point in the range of operation of the fluid lens), and the associated calibration procedure, readers that might have been rejected as failing a quality assurance test if the design criterion were tighter, and/or if the fluid lens was designed

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to operate at an extremum of its operating range, can be used satisfactorily by adjusting the base operating condition of the fluid lens in a required direction within the range. Examples of readers in which such fluid lens systems can be employed are the IT 4000, the IT 4600, the IT 5600, and the PDT 9500, all available from Hand Held Products, Inc. of Skaneateles Falls, N.Y. Similar functionality could also be implemented in the smaller form factors as one associates with the PDA products. An example of such a product would be the Zire 72 with imager, sold by PalmOne.

[0065] FIGS. 5*a* and 5*b* are drawings of hand held readers that embody features of the invention. FIG. 5*a* shows a hand held reader **1500** comprising a case having a substantially linear shape. The handheld reader **1500** comprises circuitry as has been described with regard to FIG. **2**, including data processing capability and memory. The hand held reader **1500** comprises an input device **1510**, such as a key pad, for use by a user, one or more buttons of which may also be used as a trigger **1534** to allow a user to provide a trigger signal. The hand held reader **1500** comprises an output device **1512**, such as a display, for providing information to a user. In some embodiments, the display **1512** comprises a touch screen to allow a user to respond to prompts that are displayed on the display **1512**, or to input information or commands using any of icons or graphical symbols, a simulated keypad or keyboard, or through recognition of handwritten information. Hand held reader **1500** can also comprise a touch pad or touch screen that can display information as an output and accept information as an input, for example displaying one or more icons to a user, and accepting activation of one of the icons by the user touching the touch pad or touch screen with a finger or with a stylus **1508**. The hand held reader **1500** also comprises a bar code image engine **1514** that includes a fluid lens. The image engine **1514** acquires images of objects of interest that the hand held reader **1500** is employed to read. The fluid lens provides the ability to adjust a focal distance, as is described in more detail herein. The hand held reader **1500** also comprises a card reader **1520** that is configured in various embodiments to read cards bearing information encoded on a magnetic strip, such as is found on credit cards, and information encoded in a semiconductor memory, such as found in PC, PCMCIA or smart cards. The hand held reader **1500** also comprises a wireless communication device **1530** such as a radio transceiver and/or an infrared transceiver for communication with a remote base station, a computer-based data processing system, a second hand held reader **1500'**, or a device such as a PDA. The hand held reader **1500** also comprises an RFID transceiver **1532** for communicating with an RFID tag. As used herein, the term "RFID tag" is intended to denote a radio-frequency identification tag, whether active or passive, and whether operating according to a standard communication protocol or a proprietary communication protocol. An RFID transceiver can be programmed to operate according to a wide variety of communication protocols. FIG. 5*a* also depicts a card **1540** that in different embodiments includes information encoded on at least one of a magnetic stripe, a semiconductor memory, smart card, and in RFID tag. An example of a hand held reader **1500** in which such fluid lens systems can be employed is the PDT 9500, available from HandHeld Products, Inc. of Skaneateles Falls, N.Y. In one embodiment, the CMOS image array can be implemented with a Micron image sensor such as the Wide VGA MT9V022 image sensor from Micron Technology, Inc., 8000 South Federal Way, Post Office Box 6, Boise, Id. 83707-0006. The MT9V022 image sensor with full frame shutter is described in more detail in the product MT9V099 product flyer available from Micron Technology (www.micron.com), for example at http://download.micron.com/pdf/flyers/mt9v022_(mi-0350)_flyer.pdf. The ICM105T CMOS progressive imager available from IC Media, 5201 Great America Pkwy, Suite 422, Santa Clara, Calif. 95054. The imager is shown at website http://www.ic-media.com/products/view.cfm?product=ICM%2D105T. This imager uses a rolling shutter. Although both imagers cited are progressive imagers, as is well known in the art, interleaved imagers will also function properly in these systems.

[0066] FIG. 5*b* shows another embodiment of a hand held reader **1550** which comprises components as enumerated with respect to hand held reader **1500**, including specifically input **1510**, output **1512**, image engine and fluid lens **1514**, card reader **1520**, radio **1530**, and RFID transceiver **1532**. The handheld reader **1550** comprises circuitry as has been described with regard to FIG. **2**, including data processing capability and memory. For hand held reader **1550**, the case **1560** comprises a "pistol grip" or a portion disposed at an angle, generally approaching **90** degrees, to an optical axis of the imaging engine and fluid lens of the reader **1550**. Hand held reader **1550** also comprises a trigger **1534**, for example situated on the pistol grip portion of the reader **1550**, and located so as to be conveniently operated by a finger of a user. Hand held reader **1550** also comprises a cable or cord **1570** for connection by wire to a base station, a computer-based data processing system, or a point of sale apparatus. Examples of readers **1550** in which such fluid lens systems can be employed are the IT 4600 comprising a 2D image sensor array, and the IT 5600 comprising a ID image sensor array, all available from Hand Held Products, Inc. of Skaneateles Falls, N.Y.

[0067] In some embodiments, the hand held readers **1500** and **1550** are deployed at a fixed location, for example by being removably secured in a mount having an orientation that is controlled, which may be a stationary mount or a mount that can be reoriented. Examples of such uses are in a commercial setting, for example at a point of sale, at the entrance or exit to a building such as an office building or a warehouse, or in a government building such as a school or a courthouse. The hand held readers of the invention can be used to identify any object that bears an identifier comprising one or more of a bar code, a magnetic stripe, an RFID tag, and a semiconductor memory.

[0068] In some embodiments, the hand held reader **1500**, **1550** can be configured to operate in either a "decode mode" or a "picture taking" mode. The hand held reader **1500**, **1550** can be configured so that the decode mode and picture taking mode are user-selectable. For example, the reader can be configured to include a graphical user interface (GUI) for example on a touch pad or key pad that is both an input and an output device as depicted in FIG. 5*a* or a trigger as depicted in FIG. 5*b* enabling a user to select between the decode mode and the picture taking mode. In one embodiment, the decode mode is selected by clicking on an icon displayed on a display such as display **1512** of FIG. 5*a* whereby the reader is configured with a decode mode as a default. Alternatively, the mode of operation (either "decode mode" or "picture taking mode") can be set by a commu-

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nication from a remote device, or by default upon initial activation of the reader, as part of a power-up sequence. Thus, the reader is configured to operate in the decode mode on the next (and subsequent) activation of trigger **1534** to generate a trigger signal. In the decode mode, the hand held reader **1500**, **1550** in response to the generation of the trigger signal captures an image, decodes the image utilizing one or more bar code decoding algorithms and outputs a decoded out message. The decoded out message may be output, e.g., to one or more of a memory, a display **1512** or to a remote device, for example by radio communication or by a hard-wired communication.

[0069] In one embodiment, the "picture taking mode" is selected is selected by clicking on icon (which can be a toggle switch), and hand held reader **1500**, **1550** is configured in a "picture taking mode" as the default mode. Thus, the hand held reader **1500**, **1550** is configured to operate in the "picture taking mode" on the next (and subsequent) activation of trigger **1534** to generate a trigger signal. The hand held reader **1500**, **1550** in response to the generation of the trigger signal captures an image and outputs an image to one or more of a memory, to a display **1512**, or to a remote device.

[0070] The hand held reader **1500**, **1550** can be configured so that when the image capture mode is selected, the hand held reader **1500**, **1550** avoids attempting to decode captured images. It is understood that in the process of capturing an image for decoding responsively to receipt of a trigger signal, the hand held reader **1500**, **1550** may capture a plurality "test" frames, these may be full frames or only partial frames as discussed above, for use in establishing imaging parameters (e.g., exposure, gain, focus, zoom) and may discard frames determined after decode attempts to not contain decodable symbol representations. Likewise in the process of capturing an image for image output responsively to receipt of a trigger signal in a picture taking mode, the hand held reader **1500**, **1550** may capture test frames, these may be full frames or only partial frames as discussed above, for use in establishing imaging parameters and may also discard images that are determined to be unsuitable for output. It is also understood that in the "picture taking mode" the images captured may be archived for later analysis, including decoding of bar codes or other encoded indicia that may be present in the images, for example for use in providing evidence of the condition of a package at the time of shipment from a vendor for insurance purposes (which image may never be decoded if the package arrives safely). Other examples of similar kind can be a photograph of a loaded truck, for example with a license plate, an identifying number or similar indication of which of many possible trucks is the subject of the photograph, optionally including a date and time, and possibly other information that can be stored with the image, such as the identity of the photographer (e.g., a name, an employee number, or other personal identifier).

[0071] In an alternative embodiment, the hand held reader **1500**, **1550** displays a plurality of icons (at least one for decode mode and one for picture taking mode) whereby activation of an icon both configures the hand held reader **1500**, **1550** to operate in the selected operating mode (decoding or picture taking) and results in a trigger signal automatically being generated to commence an image capture/decode (decode mode) or image capture/output image process (picture taking mode). Thus, in the alternative embodiment, the trigger **1534** need not be actuated to commence image capture after an icon is actuated.

[0072] FIG. **6** is a diagram **1600** of a handheld reader of the invention in communication with a computer. In FIG. **6**, a hand held reader **1550** of the type described hereinabove is connected by way of a cable **1570** to a computer **1610**, which in the embodiment depicted is a laptop or portable computer. The computer **1610** comprises the customary computer components, including an input **1612**, which may include a keyboard, a keypad and a pointing device such as a mouse **1608**, an output **1614** for use by a user, such as a display screen, and software **1630** recorded on one or more machine-readable media. Examples of software that operate on the computer **1610** are a QuickView program 1632 (available from Hand Held Products of Skaneateles Falls, N.Y.) that provides a display of the image as "seen" by the image engine and fluids lens in the hand held reader **1550** on the display **1614** of the computer **1610**, and a interactive program **1634**, for example provided on a machine readable medium, (not shown) that allows a user to control the signal applied to the fluid lens and to observe that response of the fluid lens thereto, for example as a representation in a graph or as a representation of one or more images read by the reader as the fluid lens control signal is varied. As used herein, "signal" refers to an input, controlled by a user, the signal operating in turn on a control system or element such as a solenoid, voice coil, electrostatic motor or MEMs pump, artificial muscle or polymer [CHECK THIS PARA AT THE END!]. In FIG. **6**, there are also shown a plurality of test targets **1620**, **1622**, **1624**, which in some embodiments are optical test targets conforming to a test target known as the United States Air Force ("USAF") 1951 Target (or 1951 USAF Resolution Target) as shown and described at the web site http://www.sinepatterns.com/USAF_labels.htm, and provided commercially in a variety of forms by SINE PATTERNS LLC, 1653 East Main Street, Rochester, N.Y. 14609, a manufacturer of the 1951 USAF Target and many other types of targets and visual patterns, as further indicated at the web site http://www.sinepatterns.com/i_Stdrds.htm.

[0073] The example depicted in FIG. **6** shows a target at each of three distances or positions relative to the hand held reader **1550**. In one embodiment, the three targets lie along a single optical axis at discrete, different distances. Each target **1620**, **1622**, **1624** presents an object, such as a known test pattern of defined geometry, that the hand held reader **1550** can image. By controlling the behavior of the fluid lens in the hand held reader **1550**, it is possible to calibrate the operation of the fluid lens by recording the observed control signal (such as a voltage or impressed electric potential) that is required to obtain an acceptable (e.g., an image within an acceptable range of image quality or one that can be correctly decoded to retrieve information encoded therein), and preferably optimal, image of the target at each location or position.

[0074] FIG. **7** is a flow chart **1700** of a calibration process useful for calibrating an apparatus embodying features of the invention. In FIG. **7**, the calibration is initiated, as shown at step **1705**, by initializing the system, including performing all power-on-sequence tests to assure that the system components are operating properly. At step **1710**, a test target bearing a pattern or encoded symbol is positioned at a first test position. When in the first test position, the target will

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in general be a defined distance and orientation relative to the hand held reader comprising a fluid lens. At step **1715**, the fluid lens control signal (which in some embodiments is a voltage) is adjusted to obtain an acceptable, and preferably an optimal, focus condition for the target. At step **1720**, the distance and orientation of the target and the fluid lens control signal parameters are recorded for future use in a non-volatile memory, for example in a table.

[**0075**] One can iteratively repeat the process steps of locating the target at a new location and orientation, controlling the fluid lens control signal applied to the fluid lens to obtain a satisfactory, and preferably optimal, focus, and recording in a memory the information about the target location and the fluid lens control signal parameters, so as to provide a more complete and detailed set of calibration parameters. The number of iterations is limited only by the amount of time and effort one wishes to expend performing calibration steps, and the amount of memory available for recording the calibration parameters observed. In the example presented in FIG. **6**, a calibration according to the flow diagram of FIG. **7** would include performing calibration steps as described by steps **1710**, **1715** and **1720** at three distinct positions for the target. The information obtained in calibration tests can be used when operating the corresponding imager (or in some instances, another imager of similar type) either by using the calibration information as an initial setting for operation in a closed loop mode as explained in connection with FIG. **3**, or as fixed operating conditions for discrete points in an open loop operating mode as explained in connection with FIG. **4**.

[**0076**] FIG. **8** is a diagram **1800** showing calibration curves for a plurality of exemplary hand held readers. In FIG. **8**, the horizontal axis **1802** represents a fluid lens control signal parameter, such as voltage, and the vertical axis **1804** represents an optical property of the fluid lens, such as optical power. One can also represent other optical properties of a fluid lens that are relevant for its operation, such as focal length and f-number. In FIG. **8**, three curves **1810**, **1812**, **1814** are shown, each curve representing a response (e.g., optical power) of a specific fluid lens to an applied fluid lens control signal (e.g., voltage). As seen in FIG. **8**, the curve **1810**, representing the behavior of a first fluid lens, reaches an optical power P **1820** at an applied voltage V_1 **1830**. However, other fluid lenses may behave slightly differently, such that a second fluid lens, represented by curve **1812**, attains optical power P at an somewhat larger voltage V_2 **1832**, and a third fluid lens, represented by curve **1814**, attains optical power P at yet a larger voltage V_3 **1834**. Accordingly, one can extract from the information in FIG. **8** a relation between the fluid lens control signal that is to be applied to the first fluid lens and the second fluid lens to attain the same optical power P, for example for operating two hand held readers under substantially similar conditions, or for operating a binocular reader or other device that uses two fluid lenses simultaneously, for example to generate a stereoscopic view of a target. At power P, there exists a difference in drive voltage between the first lens and the second lens given by V_2–V_1, where the difference has a magnitude given by the absolute value of V_2–V_1 and a sign which is positive if V_2 exceeds V_1 in magnitude, negative if V_1 exceeds V_2 in magnitude, and zero if V_2–V_1. In operation, in order to attain optical power P in both of the first and second fluid lenses, one can provide a fluid lens control signal equal to V_1 to both the first and second fluid lenses, and a differential signal equal to the signed difference of V_2–V_1 to the second fluid lens. Alternatively, one could use two power supplies that provide signals V_1 and V_2 to the first and second fluid lenses, respectively. As the optical power required for operation of a fluid lens changes, the fluid lens control signal changes, and can be deduced or read from the appropriate curve of FIG. **8**. Since one in general does not measure the parameters of a fluid lens or other device at all possible values within a range, a curve such as **1810** can also be obtained by measuring a discrete number of pairs of optical parameter and associated fluid lens control signal, and fitting a curve to the data, or interpolating values between adjacent data points, as may be most convenient to prepare a suitable calibration curve. In some instances, only a single calibration point per fluid lens module may be required. Rather than creating curves for different fluid lenses, one can measure the same fluid lens at different temperatures. Then the appropriate operating point can be determined at the various temperatures. Other operating points may be determined by either extrapolation or interpolation, by suitable curve fitting relationships, or by deducing a representation of the behavior in the form of an equation.

[**0077**] FIGS. **9***a*-**9***e* are cross-sectional diagrams of another prior art fluid lens that can be adapted for use according to the principles of the invention. FIG. **9***a* is a cross-sectional view of a prior art fluid lens having no control signal applied thereto and exhibiting divergence of transmitted light. FIG. **9***b* is a cross-sectional view of a prior art fluid lens having a control signal applied thereto and exhibiting convergence of transmitted light. FIGS. **9***c*, **9***b*, and **9***e* are cross-sectional images of fluid lenses having convex, flat and concave interface surfaces as viewed from a position above each lens, respectively.

[**0078**] Using a device comprising a fluid lens, an image sensor, and a suitable memory, it is possible to record a plurality of frames that are observed using the fluid lens under one or more operating conditions. The device can further comprise a computation engine, such as a CPU and an associated memory adapted to record instructions and data, for example for processing data in one or more frames. The device can additionally comprise one or more control circuits or control units, for example for controlling the operation of the fluid lens, for operating the image sensor, and for controlling sources of illumination. In some embodiments, there is a DMA channel for communicating data among the image sensor, the CPU, and one or more memories. The data to be communicated can be in raw or processed form. In some embodiments, the device further one or more comprises communication ports adapted to one or more of hard-wired communication, wireless communication, communication using visible or infra-red radiation, and communication employing networks, such as the commercial telephone system, the Internet, a LAN, or a WAN.

[**0079**] In this embodiment, by applying suitable selection criteria, one can use or display only a good frame or alternatively a most suitable frame of the plurality for further data manipulation, image processing, or for display. According to this aspect of the invention, the device can obtain a plurality of frames of data, a frame being an amount of data contained within the signals that can be extracted from the imager in a single exposure cycle. The device can assess the quality of each of the frames against a selection criterion,

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which can be a relative criterion or an absolute criterion. Examples of selection criteria are an average exposure level, an extremum exposure level, a contrast level, a color or chroma level, a sharpness, a decodability of a symbol within a frame, and a level of compliance of an image or a portion thereof with a standard. Based on the selection criterion, the device can be programmed to select a best or a closest to optimal frame from the plurality of frames, and to make that frame available for display, for image processing, and/or for data manipulation. In addition, the operating conditions for the device can be monitored by the control circuit, so that the conditions under which the optimal frame was observed can be used again for additional frame or image acquisition.

[0080] In alternative embodiments, it is possible to use the plurality of frames as a range finding system by identifying which frame is closest to being in focus, and observing the corresponding focal length of the fluid lens. In such an embodiment, the fluid lens can be operated so as to change its plane of optimum focus from infinity to an appropriate near position. The device can obtain one or more frames of data for each focus position that is selected, with the information relating to each focus position being recorded, or being computable from a defined algorithm or relationship, so that the focal length used for each image can be determined. Upon a determination of an object of interest within a frame (or of an entire frame) that is deemed to be in best focus from the plurality of frames, the distance from the device to the object of interest in the frame can be determined from the information about the focal length setting of the fluid lens corresponding to that frame. In some instances, if two adjacent frames are deemed to be in suitable focus, the distance may be taken as the average of the two focal lengths corresponding to the two frames, or alternatively, additional frames can be observed using focal lengths selected to lie between the two adjacent frames, so as to improve the accuracy of the measurement of distance.

[0081] In a second embodiment, apparatus and methods are provided to counteract changes in the environment that surrounds an apparatus comprising a fluid lens. In one embodiment, the apparatus additionally comprises a temperature sensor with a feed back (or feed forward) control circuit, to provide correction to the fluid lens operating signal as the temperature of the fluid lens (or of its environment) is observed to change.

[0082] Feedback systems rely on the principle of providing a reference signal (such as a set point) or a plurality of signals (such as a minimum value and a maximum value for a temperature range) that define a suitable or a desired operating parameter (such as a temperature or a pressure), and comparing a measured value of the parameter to the desired value. When a deviation between the observed (or actual) parameter value and the desired parameter value is measured, corrective action is taken to bring the observed or actual value into agreement with the desired parameter value. In the example of temperature, a heater (such as a resistance heater) or a cooling device (such as a cooling coil carrying a coolant such as water) can be operated to adjust an actual temperature. Using a feedback loop, the apparatus is made to operate at the desired set point, or within the desired range. Feedback loops can be provided using either or both of digital and analog signal processing, and using one or more of derivative, integral and proportional ("D-I-P") controllers.

[0083] In some embodiments, a feed-forward system can be used, in which a change (or a rate of change) of a parameter such as actual or observed temperature is measured. Corrective action is taken when it is perceived that a condition outside of acceptable operating conditions likely would be attained if no corrective action were to be applied and the observed change (or rate of change) of the parameter were allowed to continue unabated for a further amount of time. Feed-forward systems can be implemented using either or both of digital and analog signal processing. In some systems, combinations of feedback and feed-forward systems can be applied. In some embodiments, multiple feedback and feed-forward controls can be implemented.

[0084] In the embodiment contemplated, the operating parameter, such as temperature, of the apparatus comprising a fluid lens, or of the environment in which it is situated, is monitored, and the observed parameter is compared to one or more pre-defined values. The one or more predefined values may fixed (such as a maximum tolerable temperature above which a substance begins to degrade at one atmosphere of pressure) or the one or more predefined values may depend on more than one parameter, such as the combination of pressure and temperature, for example using relationships in a pressure-temperature-composition phase diagram (for example, that a substance or chemical composition in the fluid lens apparatus undergoes a phase change if the pressure and temperature vary such that a phase boundary is crossed, or undergoes a change from covalent to ionic character, or the reverse).

[0085] In another embodiment, a system comprising a fluid lens additionally comprises a non-adjustable lens component configured to correct one or more specific limitations or imperfections of the fluid lens, such as correcting for color, spherical, coma, or other aberrations of the fluid lens itself or of the fluid lens in conjunction with one or more other optical components. By way of example, a fluid lens may exhibit dispersive behavior or color error. In one embodiment, a second optical element is added that provides dispersion of the sign opposite to that exhibited by the fluid lens, so as to correct the dispersive error introduced by the fluid lens. In one embodiment, the dispersive element is a diffraction element, such as an embossed grating or an embossed diffractive element. As will be understood, different optical materials have different dispersive characteristics, for example, two glass compositions can have different dispersion, or a composition of glass and a plastic material can have different dispersion. In the present invention, a material having a suitable dispersive characteristic, or one made to have suitable dispersive characteristics by controlling the geometry of the material, such as in a grating or other diffractive element, can be used to correct the errors attributable to the fluid lens and/or the other components in an optical train.

[0086] The aberrations that are possible in a fluid lens can in principle be of any order, much as the aberrations that are possible in the lens or the cornea of a human eye. Both a human eye and a fluid lens operate using interfaces between two or more dissimilar fluids. In the human eye, there are membranes that are used to apply forces to the fluids adjacent the membranes, by application of muscle power controlled by signals cried by the nervous system. In a fluid lens, there are forces that are applied, in some instances to the fluid or fluids directly by electromagnetic signals, and in

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some instances by forces applied to transparent membranes that are adjacent the fluids. Both kinds of systems can be affected by external forces, such as the force of gravity and other accelerative forces, changes in ambient or applied pressure, and changes in ambient or applied temperature.

[0087] In another embodiment, there is provided a calibration tool, process, or method for calibrating a fluid lens. As one example, a system comprising a fluid lens is operated at one or more known conditions, such as one or more magnifications or one or more focal lengths. For each known operating condition, an operating parameter, such as a value of the driving voltage, is observed or measured. The observed or measured data is stored in a memory. The data in memory is then used to provide calibration data for application to the operation of the fluid lens.

[0088] Even if two or more nominally identical fluid lenses are provided, there can be differences that exist in the two fluid lenses themselves, as has been explained hereinbefore. When intrinsic differences between two nominally identical fluid lenses exist, application of a substantially identical fluid lens control signal to the two lenses can result in different operative behavior for each lens. A default calibration can be provided, for example based on a calibration performed under controlled or defined conditions. The default calibration data can be recorded and used at a later time to operate the fluid lens for which the calibration was obtained. Using such calibrations is an effective and efficient way to operate a given fluid lens over a defined operating range. For many purposes, such information is well worth having and helps to provide a fluid lens that is conveniently operated in a predictable manner. Between calibration points, interpolation can be used to achieve an improved resolution. Similarly extrapolation may be used to estimate the attributes of a feature beyond the range of measured calibration data.

[0089] In addition, as has been indicated, differences may be externally imposed, such as applied voltage, ambient or applied pressure, ambient or applied temperature, and accelerative forces. These forces may, individually and in combination, cause one fluid lens to operate somewhat differently that a nominally identical fluid lens. When such differences in operating conditions exist, application of a substantially identical fluid lens control signal to the two lenses can result in different operative behavior for each lens. Accordingly, it can be helpful to provide a simple and readily applied calibration method for a fluid lens, so that each lens can be calibrated and provided with suitable fluid lens control signals to operate in a desired fashion under the particular conditions obtaining for that fluid lens.

[0090] Yet a third reason for providing calibration capabilities relates to changes in operation of a given fluid lens over time. The operation of an individual fluid lens relies on one or more of the chemical, mechanical, and electrical properties of the components of the fluid lens, which properties may change with time and with use. For example, as indicated hereinabove, a fluid lens operating in response to electrical signals may undergo electrochemically driven reactions in one or more fluids. In addition, a fluid may change properties over time as a result thermal history, such as of repeated heating and cooling cycles or exposure to extremes of temperature. As will be understood, as a property of one or more components of a fluid lens changes with time, it may be advantageous to calibrate the operating conditions of interest.

[0091] In another embodiment, an inertial device such as an accelerometer is provided to determine an orientation of a fluid lens, which orientation information is used to self-calibrate the fluid lens. Gravitational and other accelerative forces can cause fluids to move and change shape at a free boundary, or a boundary where two fluids come into mutual contact. By way of example, consider a fluid lens that comprises two fluids having slightly different densities. Different density implies that equal volumes of the two fluids will have proportionately different masses, because density=mass/volume. Therefore, since Force (F)=mass× acceleration, the equal volumes of the two fluids will experience slightly different forces under equal acceleration, such as the acceleration of gravity, or of an external accelerative force applied to a container holding the two fluids. One consequence of such an applied acceleration can be a change in the relative locations of the fluids, and as a result, a change in the shape of the interface defined by the surface of contact between the two fluids. In addition, the direction of application of the acceleration will also have a bearing on the response of the fluids. For example, an acceleration applied normal to a flat interface between the two fluids may have much less of an effect than an acceleration parallel to, or tangent to, a surface component of the interface between the two fluids. Since the accelerative force in general can be applied at any angle with regard to an interface between the two fluids, there will in general be differences in response depending on the precise orientation of the applied accelerative force. Inertial sensors such as accelerometers and gyroscopes can be useful in determining and in tracking the position of an object over time. Through the use of such inertial sensors, it is possible to discern an orientation of an object, and to measure the magnitudes and directions of applied accelerative forces. It is possible to calculate or to model how the fluids present in the lens will respond to the forces operating on the lens with knowledge of the orientation of a fluid lens and of the external forces, including that of gravity. While the description presented hereinabove may be understood to describe linear accelerative forces such as gravity, it is also possible to perform both the tracking and the calculation of the responses of fluids to forces having non-linear components, forces having rotational components, or time-varying forces. In some embodiments, using appropriate sensors for various forces, one can determine the relative orientation of the applied force and the interface between two fluids, and compute what response would be expected. As a result of the computation, information is provided for the timely application of a restorativesignal. In one embodiment, solid state accelerometer sensors are provided that operate at sufficiently high rates as to determine the magnitude and orientation of an external force. Accelerometers having response rates of at least 10,000 Hz are available from Crossbow Technology, Inc. located at 4145 N. First Street, San Jose, Calif. 95134.

[0092] In another embodiment, in an apparatus comprising a fluid lens, the fluid lens is operated to provide corrective properties with regard to such distortions as may be caused by vibration, location or orientation of the lens, chromatic aberration, distortions caused by higher order optical imperfections, and aberrations induced by environmental factors, such as changes in pressure. As has been explained herein-

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before, using accelerative forces as an example, the fluid lens may in some instances be subjected to various distorting forces or to forces that cause degradation of the operation of the fluid lens from that which is desired. In other instances, the fluid lens may have inherent imperfections, such as chromatic aberration or higher order optical imperfections. It is possible to analyze such optical imperfections in various ways, such as the use of a calibrated imaging system comprising a source, at least one image sensor, and hardware and/or software configured to analyze optical information to assess whether errors or imperfections exist in an optical component under test. The calibrated imaging system in some instances can be a laboratory setting in which highly sophisticated equipment is employed to perform tests. In other instances, the calibrated test system can comprise a source that provides a known optical signal that is passed through an optical component under test, and the analysis of the resulting signal that emerges from the optical component under test. The calibrated test system in some embodiments is a system or device suitable for use in the field, so that periodic calibration can be performed in a convenient and efficient manner, if necessary by personnel who are not familiar with all of the sophistications of optical testing in a laboratory setting.

[0093] In one embodiment, the optical component can be modeled in the frequency domain as a transfer function, wherein a known applied input signal I(s) is provided and an observed output signal O(s) is measured. An observed transfer function $H_{obs}(s)=O(s)/I(s)$ is determined. $H_{obs}(s)$ can then be compared to a desired transfer function H(s), to determine a corrective factor or relation C(s) that should be applied to the system under test to cause it to perform as desired, where $C(s)H_{obs}(s)=H(s)$, or $C(s)=H(s)/H_{obs}(s)$. Once the corrective factor or relation C(s) has been determined, it (or its time domain equivalent) can be applied to drive the fluid lens so as to reduce the observed imperfection or imperfections. Transfer function concepts, discrete time mathematical procedures, digital filters and filtering methods, and circuitry (including hardware and software) that can handle the required detection, analysis and computation, and can be used to apply corrective action are described in many texts on real time digital signal processing. Hardware such as digital signal processors are commercially available from multiple vendors.

[0094] FIGS. **10**A and **10**B are diagrams that show an LED die **3010** emitting energy in a forward direction through a fluid lens **3020**. The divergence of the emitted light is modified with the fluid lens. In FIG. **10**A the divergence of the emitted light is modified because of the optical power of the fluid lens. In the example shown the light exiting the fluid lens could be considered to approximate collimated light even though the light exiting the LED is diverging. In a situation where the curvature of the fluid lens is more extreme than is shown in FIG. **10**A, the light may be focused on a small region, or even down to a point of light. In FIG. **10**B the power of the fluid lens has been reduced to approximately zero so that the divergence of the light emitted by the LED is substantially unchanged. The comparison of the light patterns in FIGS. **10**A and **10**B indicates that such systems can be used to control the coverage (in area) and intensity of illumination at a target of interest, for example a bar code that one is interested in reading with a hand held reader or imager. In some embodiments, one or more windows on a reader or scanner may also be used to protect the optical system including the fluid lens from adverse environmental conditions.

[0095] It should be appreciated that although the details may change, this concept also applies to encapsulated LEDs, as well as to fluid lens assemblies that may contain additional optical elements such as spherical, aspherical and cylindrical lens elements.

[0096] In one embodiment, such a system is expected to more efficiently utilize a higher fraction of light emitted by the LEDs. For example when viewing bar code patterns near the imager, a more diverging illumination pattern is desirable in order to be assured that larger bar code patterns are illuminated over their entire extent and when viewing bar code patterns at a larger distance from the imager, a more converging illumination pattern is desirable so that illumination is not wasted by falling outside the optical field of interest.

[0097] FIGS. **11**A and **11**B show diagrams of a laser scanner comprising a laser **3110**, a collimating lens **3120**, and a fluid lens **3130** in various configurations. In FIG. **11**A the fluid lens is configured to have a first optical power and a first focal length. The light beam emanating from the fluid lens **3130** is focused to have a narrowest beam width at a plane **3140** situated at a first distance D1 from the fluid lens **3130**. In FIG. **11**B the fluid lens is configured to have a second optical power and a second focal length. In FIG. **11**B, the light beam emanating from the fluid lens **3130** is focused to have a narrowest beam width at a plane **3140** situated at a first distance D2 from the fluid lens **3130**, such that D2 is greater than D1

[0098] Fluid zoom lens configurations can be used in bar code scanners to enable imaging of different bar codes at various distances from the bar code scanner. In bar code scanners manufactured today, often a large working distance is achieved by stopping down the lens aperture to increase the optical depth of field. However this has two disadvantages: First, when the lens stop is smaller, the optical system point spread function increases thereby making it more difficult to scan bar code patterns with narrow bar code elements. Second, when the lens stop is smaller, less light enters the lens thereby reducing the signal-to-noise ratio of the system. The lower SNR requires the operator to hold the reader still for longer period of time. The effect is that the bar code scanner has an increased sensitivity to hand motion. In addition, because longer periods of time are required, the user is more likely to become fatigued.

[0099] These disadvantages can be significantly reduced using a zoom lens to change both the optical power of the lens system and also the plane of optimum focus. This additional control of the operating parameters of the reader or imager would allow the use of a lens system with a larger numerical aperture. In the examples given by Welch Allyn workers, the bar code scanner imager (CCD, CMOS, or color imager) would take the place of the physician's eye (or imager in some systems) and the bar code would replace the patient's eye.

[0100] Object distance measurements can be made if the range of, or the distance to, the object is known. A fluid lens system can be used to implement a range finding system. In one embodiment, the fluid lens would be focused at a number of focus positions and the position with the best

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focus, as determined by any of a number of metrics, would be associated with that fluid lens position. By knowing the fluid lens drive signal that caused the fluid lens to have an optimally focused image, and using a table look-up, the associated distance from the system for that specific fluid lens operating signal can be determined. By knowing the range, the magnification can be calculated and thus the object width associated with a given number of pixels at the imager is known or can be deduced. In this way a system such as a bar code reader or imager can calculate the width of a specific object features, such as bar code element widths or the dimensions of a package.

[0101] A fluid lens variable aperture can be added to a bar code system. In some embodiments, the aperture would be used in the portion of the optical system that receives light and would allow the system to optimally trade light efficiency against point spread function width and depth of field. When a small aperture is used, the optical system will have a larger depth of field, but adversely the optical throughput of the system is reduced (i.e., less light gets through the system) and the point spread function (proportional to the minimal element size that can be resolved) is also reduced. In some embodiments, a bar code system is expected to be configured to initially have the optical system set for an optimum light throughput, and if a good read is not achieved then the aperture size could be reduced in order to extend the depth of field in an effort to decode any bar code pattern that may be within the bar code scanner field of view.

[0102] By having more than one lens element configured as a fluid lens, the optical aberrations present in a single element can be reduced for the assemblage of lenses and this would result in a higher quality optical image. The techniques for optimizing a triplet are well known in the lens design art. However, it is typically the case that any given lens is optimized for a given focal length system. Typically, if a lens is optimized for one combination of optical elements, it is not optimally configured when one of the lens surfaces is changed as would happen when a single fluid element is operated to change an optical parameter, such as a focal length. By adding a second fluid lens, the combination of the first lens and the second lens can be optimized to minimize total system aberrations. For different settings of the first lens, corresponding changes in the settings of the second lens can be made to obtain an optimal combination. These optimized relationships between the two fluid lens surfaces curvatures, i.e. surface optical power, and thus also the control voltages, can be contained for example in a table that is recorded in a machine readable memory. Thus for any given setting of desired system optical power, the appropriate drive signals for the two fluid lenses can be developed, and applied in accordance with the recorded values. Where desirable or advantageous, the fineness of the table resolution may be increased through use of linear or higher order interpolation and extrapolation.

[0103] Other prior art fluid lens systems that operate using mechanical forces to control the shape and properties of a fluid lens are described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,514,048 to Rogers, which has already been incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. Additional disclosure relevant to variable focus lenses is presented in the following U.S. Patents: U.S. Pat. No. 2,300,251 issued Oct. 17, 1942 to Flint, U.S. Pat. No. 3,161,718 issued Dec. 15, 1964 to DeLuca, U.S. Pat. No. 3,305,294 issued Feb. 21, 1967 to Alvarez, and U.S. Pat. No. 3,583,790 issued Jun. 8, 1971 to Baker, all of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein in their entirety.

[0104] An approach to controlling the shape of the lens is the use of an electronic fluid lens pump or micropump. This approach may additionally be implemented in such a manner as to close or seal the otherwise exposed face of the fluid lens, thereby preventing fluid loss, as from evaporation or wicking, as well as contamination. This is important because in some fluid lenses, surface tension is used to maintain a given lens curvature, and any contact with the lens surface may cause contamination and/or wicking of the lens material to the contacting material. In addition, the exposed lens surface may lose mass, and hence volume, to evaporation, resulting in unwanted or unintentional changes in lens curvature.

[0105] These problems may be prevented by using a sealed or closed system as described herein. In particular, a closed lens configuration is contemplated having front window F and optional rear window R, which will generally be formed of transparent optical plastic or glass, as shown in FIG. **12**, which depicts the front and rear cavities of the lens structure. Front window F partially bounds a space or chamber volume C between the front window and the surface of the fluid lens. Chamber volume C contains air or a second Fluid **2**, in contrast to a first Fluid **1** comprising the lens itself, that is, comprising lens volume L. Fluid **1** has a refractive index N_1, and Fluid **2** has a refractive index N_2, with $N_1 \neq N_2$. The front and rear windows prevent contamination, evaporation, or wicking away of the lens fluid. This is of particular importance when the lens is formed by surface tension of a hydraulic fluid. In a sealed system, the hydraulic fluid volume in the lens volume L is changed, causing the lens surface curvature to change. This causes the lens power to change; a change in the curvature of meniscus M will cause a change in the radius of curvature R_C, which is the radius of a circle of which meniscus M represents an arc, either increasing the radius or decreasing it up to and including transition to a negative radius of curvature, in which the meniscus inverts from convex to concave. However, if the cavity were sealed without a way for the non-pumped side of the curved surface to accommodate the change in volume, the fluid in this non-pumped volume would have to be compressed. In one embodiment, it may be desirable to develop a pump that is connected to both sides of the lens surface—that is, to both lens volume L and chamber volume C—such that the volumes of both sides of the lens surface are changed by the some amount. Two pump configurations are shown that accomplish this.

[0106] FIG. **13** depicts a plunger pump that may be used with alternate sides of the plunger being connected to alternate sides of the fluid lens cavity. As shown, the left side of the pump is connected to chamber (first) volume C of FIG. **12**, while the right side connects to the lens (second) volume L. The plunger is moved to change the lens curvature. Movement of the plunger to the left as shown in FIG. **13** will pull fluid from the lens volume L while pushing air into the chamber volume C, causing the radius of curvature, R, to increase. Conversely, movement of the plunger to the right will pull air from the chamber volume C while pushing fluid into the lens volume L, thereby causing the radius of curvature, R, to decrease. If chamber C is filled with air

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(Fluid **2**), and chamber L is filled with water (Fluid **1**), decreasing the radius of curvature will result in a decrease in the focal length for the lens.

[**0107**] Alternatively, as shown in FIG. **14**, an electrostatic pump may be used to change the location of a fluid-to-fluid interface (where one of the fluids may be a gas such as air) in a parallel group of small capillary tubes by applying a potential difference between the two ends of the capillaries. By changing the relative potential between the two set of electrodes on opposite sides of the pump, the position of the Fluid **1**/Fluid **2** interface can be changed. (Each electrode is wired to a power source, in parallel on each side of the capillary array; in FIG. **14** the wires for the top pair of electrodes only are shown for illustrative purposes only.) When connected to the fluid lens structure of FIG. **12**, a change in the position of this interface results in a fluid lens radius of curvature change for the Fluid **1**/Fluid **2** interface. The diameter of these microchannels are on the order of several micrometers.

[**0108**] In both embodiments the two fluid volumes, namely volume C between the front window and the front surface of the fluid lens, and volume L represented by the material of the fluid lens itself, are operably connected through the pump; that is, movement or actuation of the pump mechanism to cause a change in one volume will thereby cause a corresponding change in the other volume.

[**0109**] Of course, it is not essential that the change in volume of Fluid **1** be offset by a corresponding reduction in the quantity of Fluid **2**. If, for example, Fluid **2** is sufficiently compressible under the force applied to Fluid **1**, lens volume L may be increased at least partially by compressing Fluid **2** rather than by removing a corresponding quantity of Fluid **2** from chamber volume C through the pump system. Depending on the system configuration and choice of materials, it may be possible to increase lens volume L with no removal of Fluid **2** from chamber volume C, that is, lens volume L may be increased solely though compression of Fluid **2**. This applies equally to a reduction of lens volume L; rather than adding a corresponding amount of Fluid **2** to chamber volume C, the decrease in lens volume L may be accompanied by an expansion of Fluid **2**, either in part or in whole. In other words, an increase or decrease of lens volume L may be accompanied by an increase or decrease in the pressure in chamber volume C. For example, chamber volume C and lens volume L may not be operably linked, and instead be separately controlled by separate pump systems, or the two volumes may each be sealed with both, or only one, subject to control by a pump system. Operation of a single pump system on only one volume would change the pressure of that volume, and hence the pressure exerted by that volume on the second volume, changing the radius of curvature of the meniscus in the process.

[**0110**] The above discussion and accompanying figures are primarily directed to a fluid lens system in which there is a single lens having optically clear windows at front and back. This configuration may readily be adapted to systems having plural lenses, preferably independently operable, such as by plural pump systems. One representative embodiment is provided in FIG. **15**, which essentially comprises two lens systems of the type shown in FIG. **12** back-to-back in mirror image. It is contemplated, in this and other plural lens systems, that the respective lenses may have different diameters as well. Changes in the diameter will affect the rate of change to the radius of curvature in response to a given change or rate of change in the pressure/volume of any fluid. Further embodiments will be readily apparent to those of skill in the art.

[**0111**] FIG. **16** presents another embodiment of the pump/lens system of the present invention. In this unitary embodiment, Fluid **1** and Fluid **2** are separated by interface i. The lens is positioned between a first optically clear window w_1 and second optically clear window w_2. A rectangular pump channel c is located within the body of the pump/lens system, the channel having length **1**, separation s, and width w. By way of non-limiting example, channel length **1** may be about 1 mm, separation s may be about 1 μm, and width w may be about 5 mm; however, in any event at least one such dimension of the pump channel should be less than about 10 microns. Metal electrodes disposed at each end and on either side of the pump channel are used to control pressure on the fluid in the channel, moving the interface in either direction and changing the radius of curvature of the lens accordingly. (As in FIG. **14**, wires are shown only for the upper electrodes for illustrative purposes only, the wires/electrodes being used to create a potential difference V therebetween.)

[**0112**] In characterizing how the lens is affected by changes in the fluid volumes, whether of quantity, pressure, or both, reference may be made to the radius of curvature of the lens, the location of the surface of the meniscus, the shape of the meniscus, and the diameter of the lens/meniscus. By way of example, the fluid lens itself may be in the shape of a meniscus, having by approximation a spherical surface, as shown in FIGS. **12** and **16**. The diameter of the lens is fixed in a channel or receptacle, while the meniscus portion may expand or contract in response to changes in the volume/pressures of the fluids forming the lens system, including the fluid forming the lens itself. The edge or perimeter of the meniscus, where the domed portion meets the sidewalls, remains constant, with a fixed diameter. The meniscus is analogous to a flexible membrane whose diameter has been sealed to a closed volume into which air may be added or removed, thereby expanding or deflating the membrane. Inflation causes the membrane to expand, causing the radius of curvature to decrease. Similarly, allowing gas to escape from an expanded membrane causes it to contract with a corresponding increase in the radios of curvature. Any such change causes physical parameters of the membrane to change, including its radius of curvature. Similarly, any change to the fluid lens effected by the control mechanisms of the present invention will result in certain physical changes, such as the radius of curvature of the meniscus.

[**0113**] FIG. **17** provides a closer view of one embodiment of the fluid lens itself, showing possible alternative radii of curvatures that the lens surface, or meniscus, might assume depending on the movements of, and/or pressures on, the fluids brought about by the control systems as described herein. For example, taking the changes in position/shape of the meniscus as shown in FIG. **17**, and effecting those changes to the fluid lens shown in FIG. **12**, operation of the pump causes a first fluid movement in direction A, which will cause a movement of the surface of the meniscus shown in FIG. **12** to the left, while operation in direction B will move it to the right, of the position in which it is presented

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in FIG. **12**. Solid line L_1 represents a possible resting or default state of the meniscus that forms the surface of the lens, and whose position relative to the frame and radius of curvature affect the focal length of the lens. Dotted line L_2 shows movement of the meniscus outward or upward relative to the default or resting position. This change in position would result in a decrease in the radius of curvature, and for the case shown in FIG. **17** with $N_1>N_2$, the focal length of the lens will be decreased. Dotted line L_3 shows movement of the meniscus inward or downward relative to the default or resting position, which still maintaining a convex curvature, while having a larger radius of curvature than L_2. Dotted line L_4 shows further movement of the meniscus inward or downward relative to the default or resting position L_1, in this case resulting in transition of the meniscus from the convex to the concave. This change in shape and position of the meniscus would result in a lens having a negative focal length.

[**0114**] FIGS. **18**A-**18**D represent various lens structures and control systems or mechanisms for control of the fluid lens. In particular, FIG. **18**C represents an electromagnetic solenoid control mechanism that may be used to actuate the plunger, and FIG. **18**D represents an electrostatic plunger control mechanism consisting of a dielectric plunger between two capacitor plates.

[**0115**] It may also be desirable to include, in effect, a safety valve such that, for example, a change in one of the volumes will not produce a change, or at least not a corresponding change, in the other volume. This could be accomplished by providing a safety valve or functionally similar device that will come into play if there is a change in one or both volumes that does not take place in response to deliberate actuation of the pump mechanism. Examples would include thermal expansion or contraction of the fluid, and mechanical shock.

[**0116**] Machine-readable storage media that can be used in the invention include electronic, magnetic and/or optical storage media, such as magnetic floppy disks and hard disks; a DVD drive, a CD drive that in some embodiments can employ DVD disks, any of CD-ROM disks (i.e., read-only optical storage disks), CD-R disks (i.e., write-once, read-many optical storage disks), and CD-RW disks (i.e., rewriteable optical storage disks); and electronic storage media, such as RAM, ROM, EPROM, Compact Flash cards, PCMCIA cards, or alternatively SD or SDIO memory; and the electronic components (e.g., floppy disk drive, DVD drive, CD/CD-R/CD-RW drive, or Compact Flash/PCMCIA/SD adapter) that accommodate and read from and/or write to the storage media. As is known to those of skill in the machine-readable storage media arts, new media and formats for data storage are continually being devised, and any convenient, commercially available storage medium and corresponding read/write device that may become available in the future is likely to be appropriate for use, especially if it provides any of a greater storage capacity, a higher access speed, a smaller size, and a lower cost per bit of stored information. Well known older machine-readable media are also available for use under certain conditions, such as punched paper tape or cards, magnetic recording on tape or wire, optical or magnetic reading of printed characters (e.g., OCR and magnetically encoded symbols) and machine-readable symbols such as one and two dimensional bar codes.

[**0117**] Many functions of electrical and electronic apparatus can be implemented in hardware (for example, hard-wired logic), in software (for example, logic encoded in a program operating on a general purpose processor), and in firmware (for example, logic encoded in a non-volatile memory that is invoked for operation on a processor as required). The present invention contemplates the substitution of one implementation of hardware, firmware and software for another implementation of the equivalent functionality using a different one of hardware, firmware and software. To the extent that an implementation can be represented mathematically by a transfer function, that is, a specified response is generated at an output terminal for a specific excitation applied to an input terminal of a "black box" exhibiting the transfer function, any implementation of the transfer function, including any combination of hardware, firmware and software implementations of portions or segments of the transfer function, is contemplated herein.

[**0118**] While the present invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to the structure and methods disclosed herein and as illustrated in the drawings, it is not confined to the details set forth and this invention is intended to cover any modifications and changes as may come within the scope and spirit of the following claims.

What I/We claim is:

1. An imager for use in a data collection device, said imager comprising a fluid lens system for focusing light received by said data collection device from a target image, said fluid lens system comprising:

a) an optical, clear front window,

b) a fluid lens having a front surface and a rear surface,

c) a first volume bounded by said front window and said front surface of said fluid lens;

d) an optical, clear rear window; and,

e) a second volume bounded by the front surface of said fluid lens and said rear window,

wherein said first volume and said second volume are operably linked through a pump that, in combination with said first volume and said second volume, forms a sealed system.

2. The imager as defined by claim 1, wherein said optical, clear front window is composed of a material selected from the group consisting of optical clear glass and optical clear plastic.

3. The imager as defined by claim 1, wherein said first volume contains a fluid having a diffractive index N_2 and said second volume contains a fluid having a diffractive index N_1, further wherein $N_2 \neq N_1$.

4. The imager as defined by claim 1, wherein said first volume and said second volume are operably linked by a first channel connecting said first volume to said pump and a second channel connecting said second volume to said pump, wherein said pump comprises a plunger, electrostatic electrodes, or piezoelectric material.

5. The imager of claim 4, said pump comprising a seal separating said first and said second fluids, further wherein operation of said pump to effect a first change in the quantity of fluid in either of said first volume or said second volume results in a corresponding second change in the quantity of fluid in the other of said first volume or said second volume.

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6. The imager of claim 5, wherein said corresponding second change in the quantity of fluid in the other of said first volume or said second volume is equal but opposite to said first change in the quantity of fluid in either of said first volume or said second volume.

7. The imager as defined in claim 4, wherein said pump is an electrostatic pump, further wherein said electrostatic pump comprises an interface between said first and second fluids, said interface being located within a capillary channel and being selectively moveable in response to changes in electric potential.

8. The imager as defined by claim 7, wherein said changes in electric potential are created by electrodes positioned adjacent either end of said capillary channel.

9. The imager as defined by claim 7, wherein said capillary channel has one dimension that is less than 10 microns.

10. The imager as defined by claim 8, further comprising a plurality of said capillary channels, each of said capillary channels having electrodes positioned adjacent either end thereof.

11. The imager as defined by claim 10, wherein said plurality of said capillary channels are substantially parallel to each other.

12. The imager of claim 1, further comprising means to prevent a corresponding second change in the quantity of fluid in the other of said first volume or said second volume in response to a first change in the quantity of fluid in either of said first volume or said second volume when said first change is not in response to deliberate actuation of said pump.

13. The imager of claim 12, wherein said means comprises a safety valve.

14. The imager of claim 12, wherein said first change is the result of thermal expansion of at least one of said first volume or said second volume.

15. The imager of claim 12, wherein said first change is the result of thermal contraction of at least one of said first volume or said second volume.

16. The imager of claim 12, wherein said first change is the result of mechanical shock to at least one of said first volume or said second volume.

17. The imager of claim 12 wherein said imager further comprises a fluid lens control module and a temperature sensor for measuring a temperature in a vicinity of said fluid lens, said fluid lens control module being configured to apply to said fluid lens a fluid lens control signal based on information output by said temperature sensor.

18. A data reader for reading an indicium, said data reader comprising a case configured to be held in a hand of a user of the data reader, said case configured to house components of said data reader, said components comprising:

a) a lens system for focusing illumination representing an image of said indicum, said lens system comprising a fluid lens;

b) a fluid lens control module configured to apply a fluid lens control signal to said fluid lens to control an operational parameter thereof;

c) an image sensor configured to receive said focused illumination representing said image of said indicium;

d) an image sensor control module configured to operate said image sensor to capture data comprising at least a portion of a frame of image data from said focused illumination representing said image of said indicium; and

e) a processing module configured to process said at least a portion of said frame of image data to extract therefrom information by the indicium, said lens system further comprising;

f) an optical, transparent front window,

g) a fluid lens having a front surface and a rear surface,

h) a first volume bounded by said front window and said front surface of said fluid lens,

i) an optical, clear rear window, and

j) a second volume bounded by the front surface of said fluid lens and said rear window,

wherein said first volume and said second volume are operably linked through a pump that, in combination with said first volume and said second volume, forms a sealed system.

* * * * *

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US005905530A

United States Patent [19]

Yokota et al.

[11] Patent Number: 5,905,530

[45] Date of Patent: May 18, 1999

[54] **IMAGE PICKUP APPARATUS**

[75] Inventors: **Hideo Yokota**; **Hiroyuki Hamano**; **Masaharu Suzuki**; **Yasuhiro Tamekuni**; **Takashi Kato**, all of Kanagawa-ken; **Katsumi Azusawa**, Saitama-ken; **Hidekage Sato**, Kanagawa-ken, all of Japan

[73] Assignee: **Canon Kabushiki Kaisha**, Tokyo, Japan

[21] Appl. No.: **08/598,140**

[22] Filed: **Feb. 7, 1996**

Related U.S. Application Data

[63] Continuation of application No. 08/103,091, Aug. 6, 1993, abandoned.

[30] **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Aug. 24, 1992	[JP]	Japan	4-223994
Nov. 18, 1992	[JP]	Japan	4-331204
Nov. 18, 1992	[JP]	Japan	4-331205
Dec. 11, 1992	[JP]	Japan	4-352358
Dec. 11, 1992	[JP]	Japan	4-352359

[51] **Int. Cl.**[6] **H04N 5/262**; H04N 5/217; H04N 5/232

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **348/240**; 348/241; 348/347; 348/358; 348/369; 396/76; 396/87

[58] **Field of Search** 348/207, 345, 348/347, 333, 240, 241, 151, 169, 187, 231, 360, 578, 222, 224, 228, 358, 369; 354/400, 402; 369/680, 708; 358/906, 909.1; 396/72, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 85, 87; H04N 5/225, 5/232, 5/335, 5/262, 5/217

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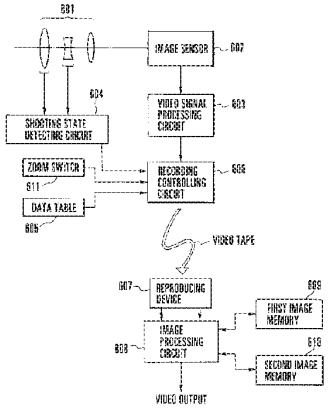
Rebiai et al. Image Distortion from Zoom Lenses: Modeling and Digital Correction, Jul. 3–7, 1992, IBC Conf. Publ. No. 358 PTO 93–2414 Translation of JPI–238283.

Primary Examiner—Wendy Garber
Assistant Examiner—Ngoc-Yen Vu
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Fitzpatrick, Cella, Harper & Scinto

[57] **ABSTRACT**

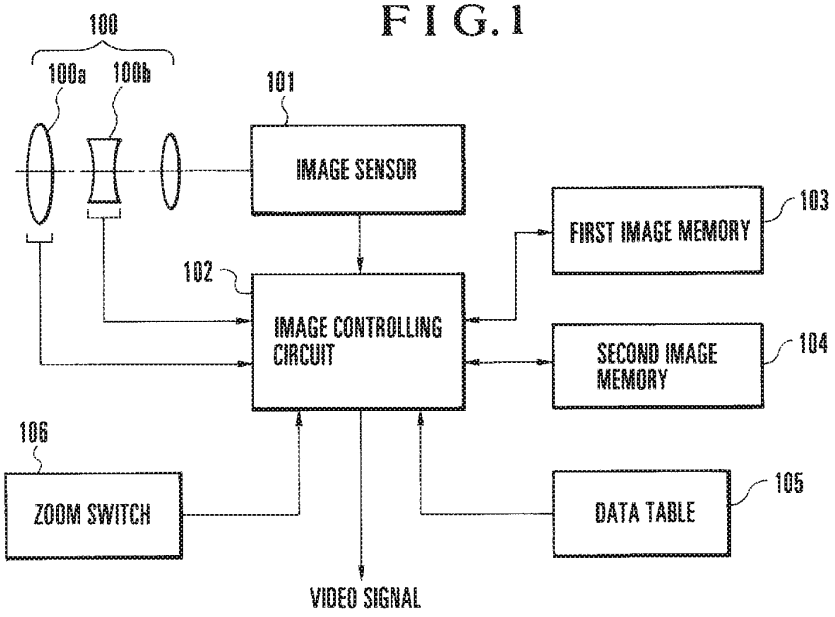
An image pickup apparatus is disclosed which is provided with a distortional-aberration memorizing element for memorizing distortional-aberration information about an objective lens, a state-of-objective-lens detecting circuit for detecting a state of the objective lens, an image correcting circuit for reading out distortional-aberration information about distortional aberration occurring during photography from the distortional-aberration memorizing element on the basis of information supplied from the state-of-objective-lens detecting circuit, and electrically correcting a distortion of an image due to the objective lens with a predetermined image height in a photographed image selected as a datum.

1 Claim, 48 Drawing Sheets



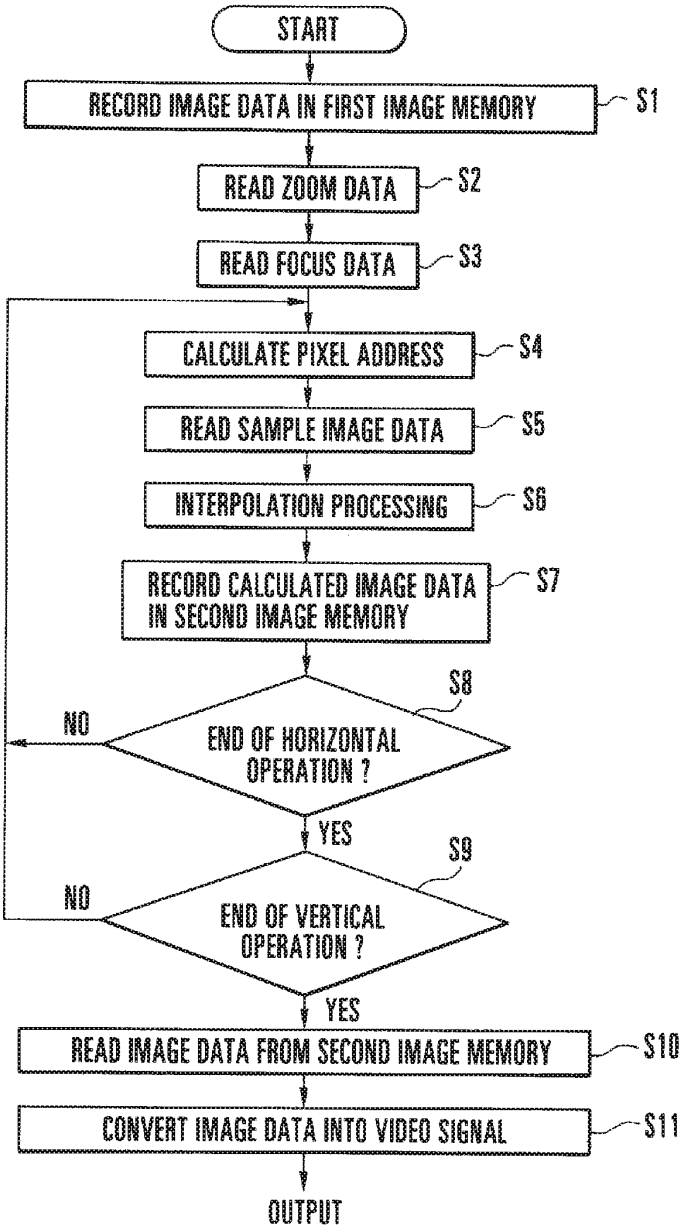
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FIG.1



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FIG.2



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FIG.3

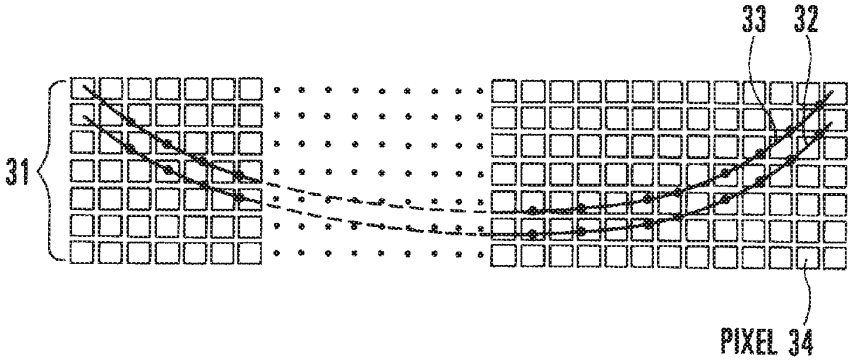
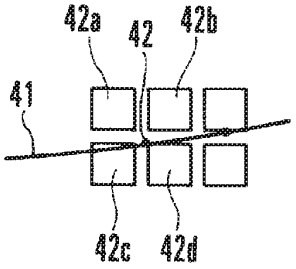
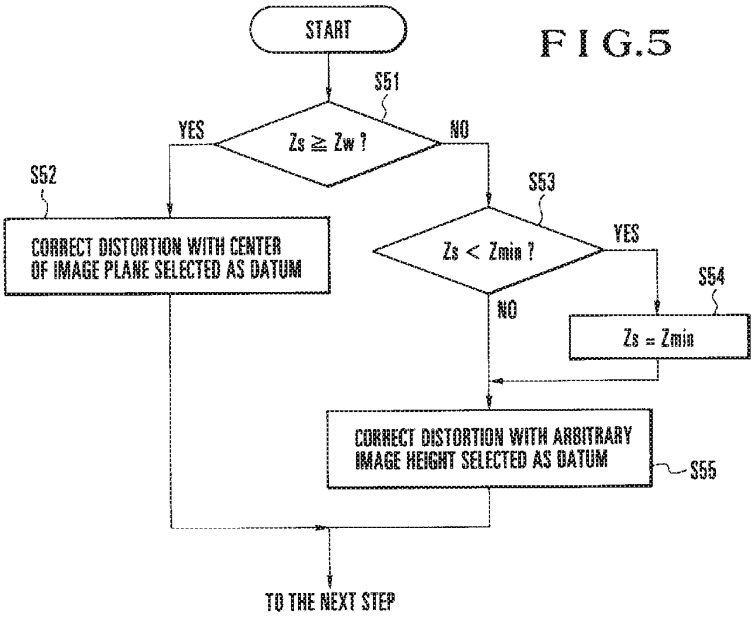


FIG.4



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FIG.5



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FIG.6(a) FIG.6(b) FIG.6(c)

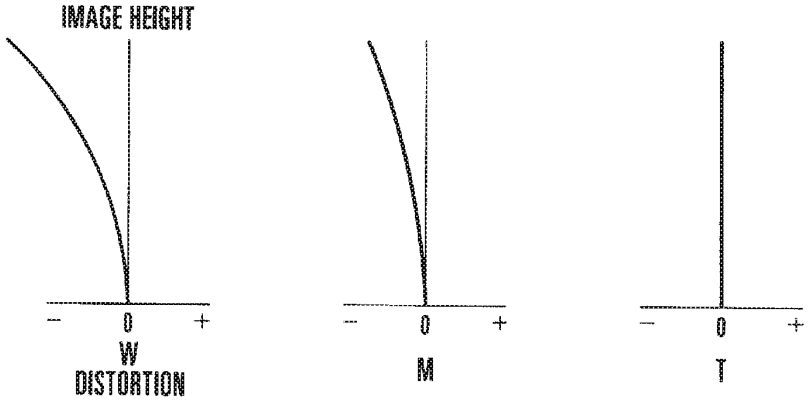
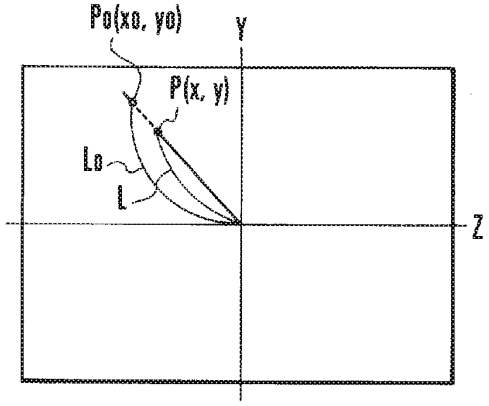


FIG.7



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.8

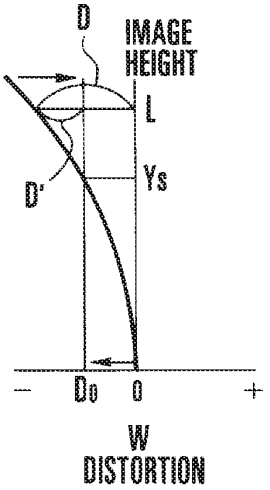
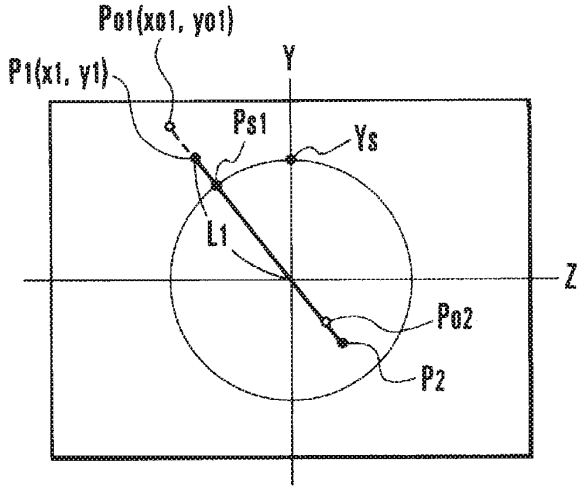


FIG.9



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EX. 1014

FIG.10

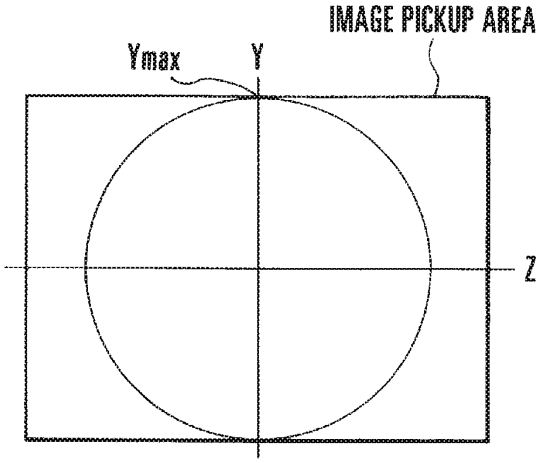
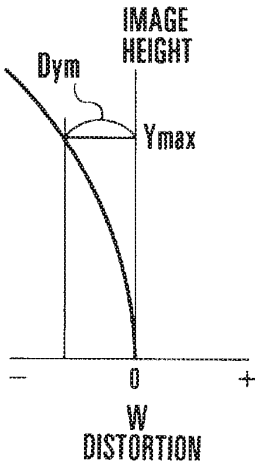
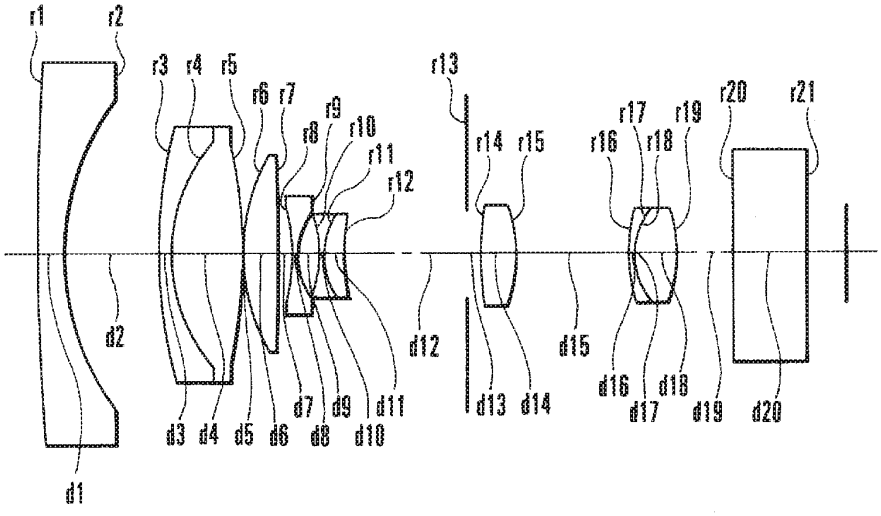


FIG.11



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG. 12



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

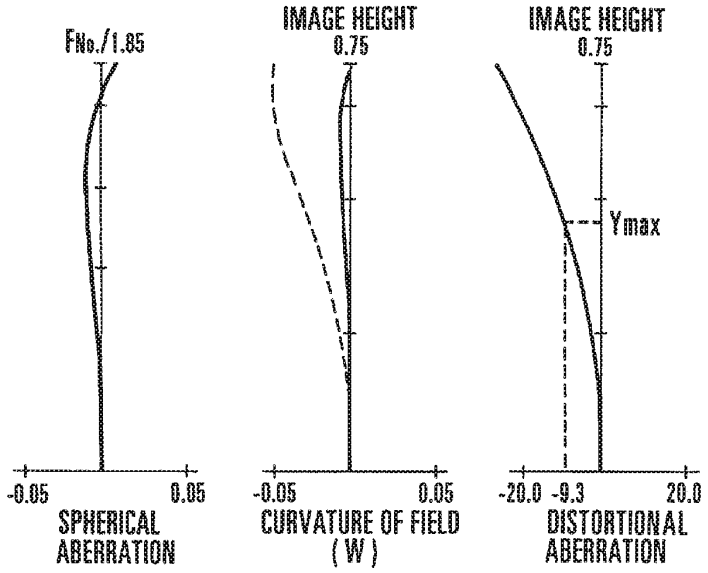


FIG.13(a) FIG.13(b) FIG.13(c)

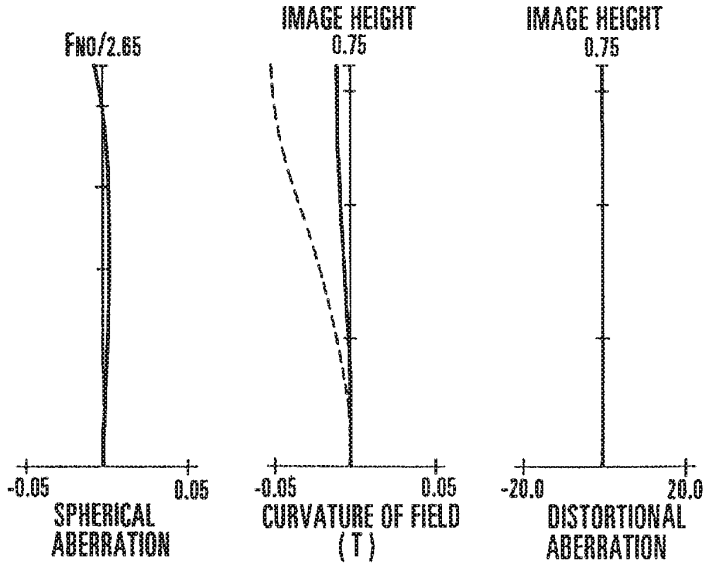


FIG.14(a) FIG.14(b) FIG.14(c)

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EX. 1014

FIG.15(a)

< NUMERICAL EXAMPLE >

F=1~5.66		FNO=1:1.85 ~2.85		IMAGE HEIGHT 0.75	
r 1=	99.5653	d 1=	0.4977	n 1= 1.60311	v 1= 60.7
r 2=	5.7183	d 2=	1.9912		
r 3=	9.6933	d 3=	0.2986	n 2= 1.80518	v 2= 25.4
r 4=	3.9454	d 4=	1.4931	n 3= 1.58913	v 3= 61.3
r 5=	-14.0451	d 5=	0.0498		
r 6=	4.3647	d 6=	0.6968	n 4= 1.80400	v 4= 46.6
r 7=	193.8973	d 7=	VARIABLE		
r 8=	-7.1644	d 8=	0.1244	n 5= 1.88300	v 5= 40.8
r 9=	1.4701	d 9=	0.5147		
r10=	-3.3919	d10=	0.1244	n 6= 1.51742	v 6= 52.4
r11=	1.5737	d11=	0.4106	n 7= 1.84666	v 7= 23.8
r12=	6.6811	d12=	VARIABLE		
r13=	0.0000 (STOP)	d13=	0.2986		
* r14=	9.9724	d14=	0.7217	n 8= 1.58313	v 8= 59.4
r15=	-3.6206	d15=	VARIABLE		
r16=	3.0913	d16=	0.1244	n 9= 1.84666	v 9= 23.8
r17=	1.5845	d17=	0.0105		
r18=	1.6097	d18=	0.9332	n10= 1.58313	v10= 59.4
* r19=	-3.7395	d19=	VARIABLE		
r20=	0.0000	d20=	1.6175	n11= 1.51633	v11= 64.2
r21=	0.0000				

* ASPHERIC

PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.15(b)

VARIABLE SEPARATION	FOCAL LENGTH		
	1.00	2.55	5.66
d 7	0.32	1.99	2.97
d 12	2.68	1.01	0.03
d 15	2.46	1.53	0.99
d 19	1.24	2.18	2.71

FIG.15(c)

ASPHERIC COEFFICIENT

SURFACE	B	C	D
r 14	-9.4890×10^{-3}	-9.5313×10^{-4}	-3.5873×10^{-5}
r 19	-1.5696×10^{-3}	-1.4025×10^{-3}	-9.1864×10^{-5}

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EX. 1014

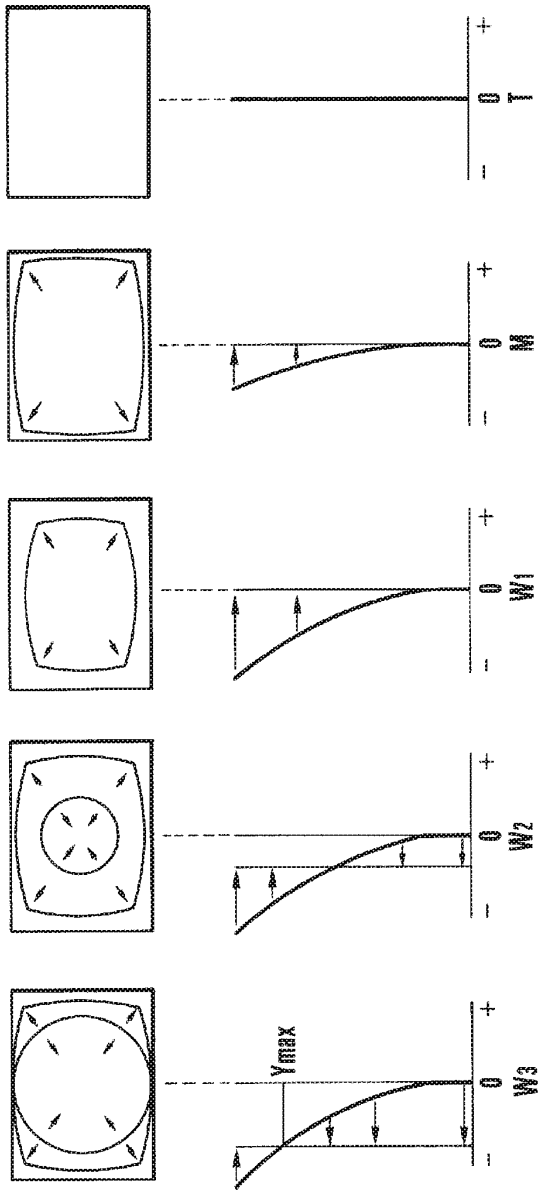


FIG.16(a) FIG.16(b) FIG.16(c) FIG.16(d) FIG.16(e)

PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.17

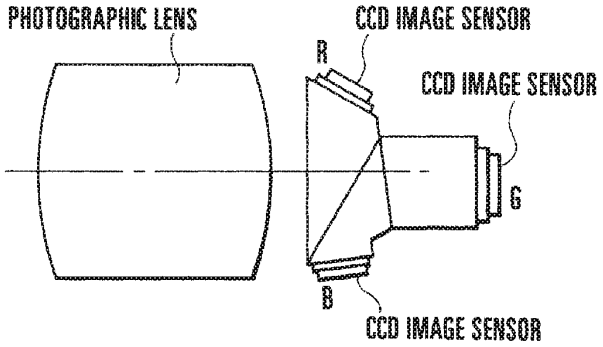
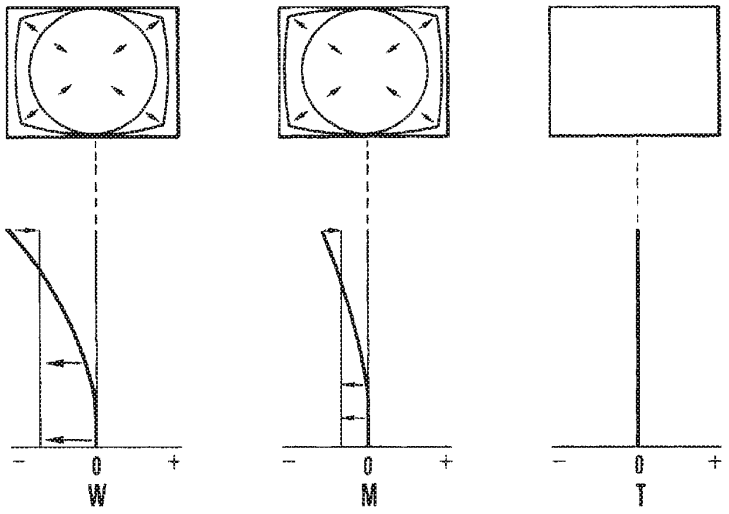
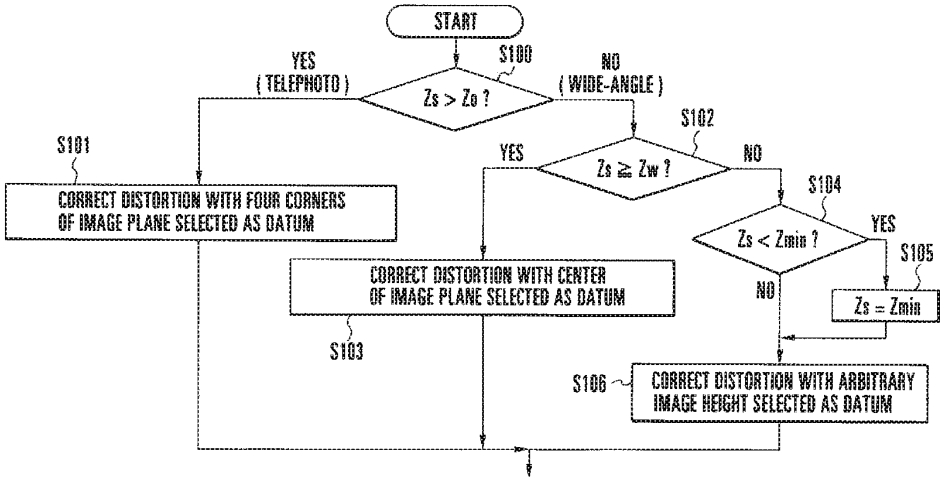


FIG.18(a) FIG.18(b) FIG.18(c)



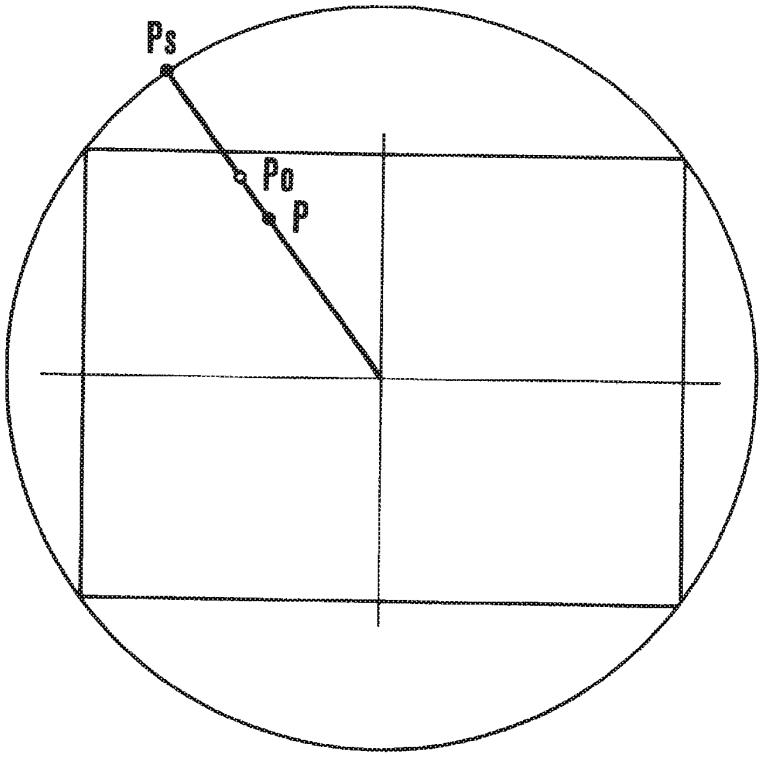
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.19



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.20



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.21

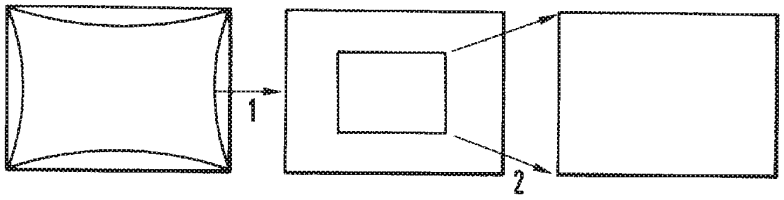
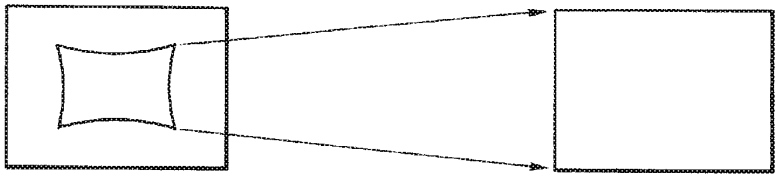
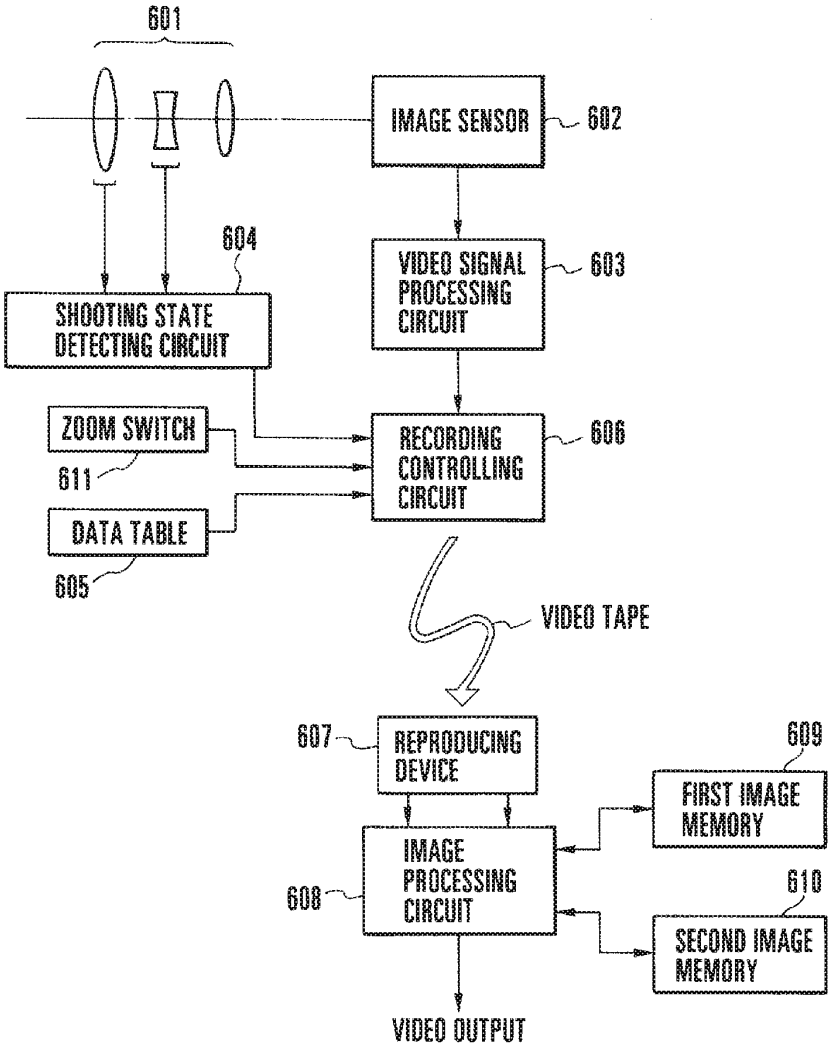


FIG.22



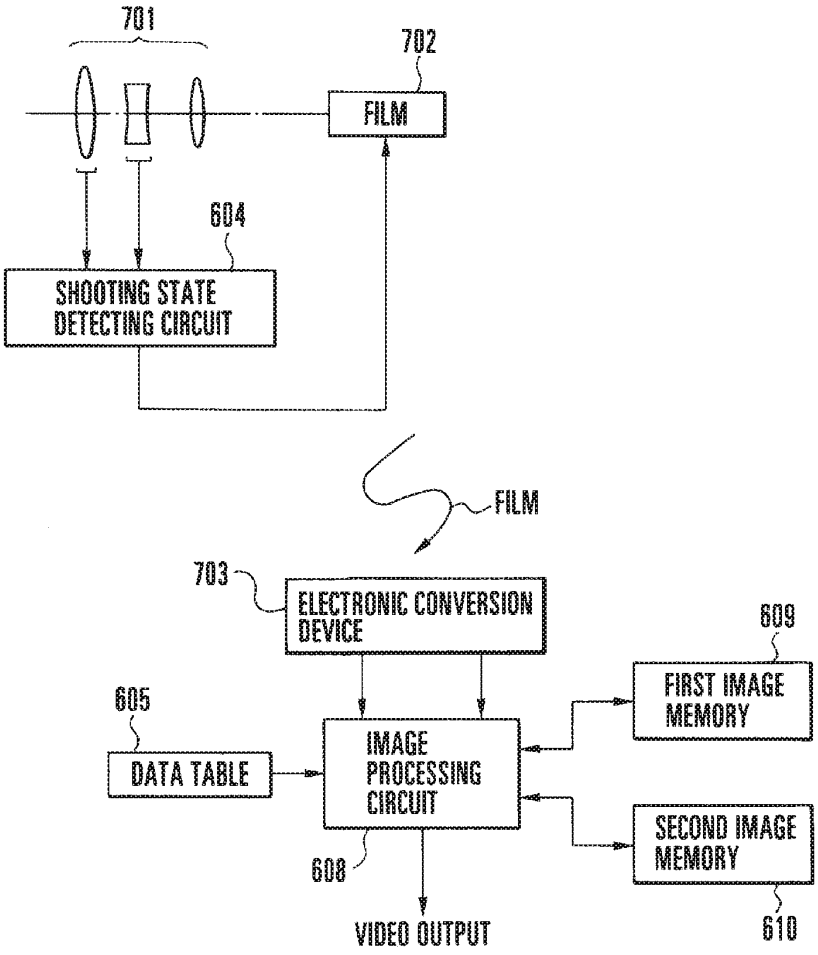
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.23



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.24



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.25(a)
RELATED ART

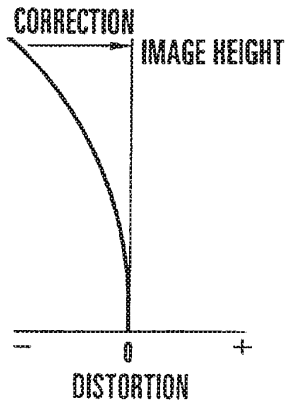


FIG.25(b)
RELATED ART

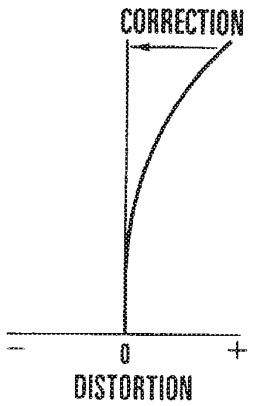


FIG.26(a)
RELATED ART

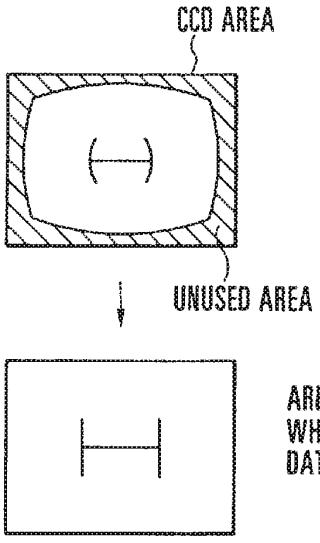
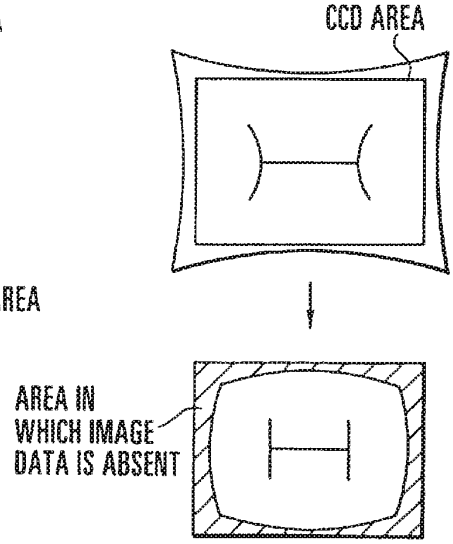


FIG.26(b)
RELATED ART



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.27(a)-2

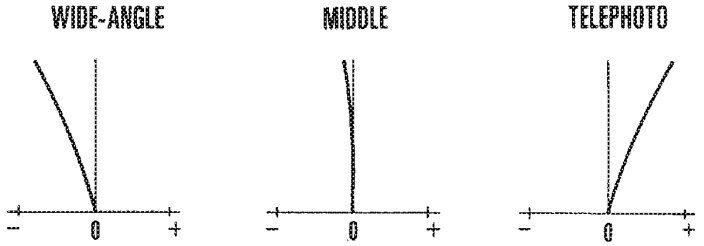


FIG.27(a)-1

FIG.27(a)-3

FIG.27(b)-2

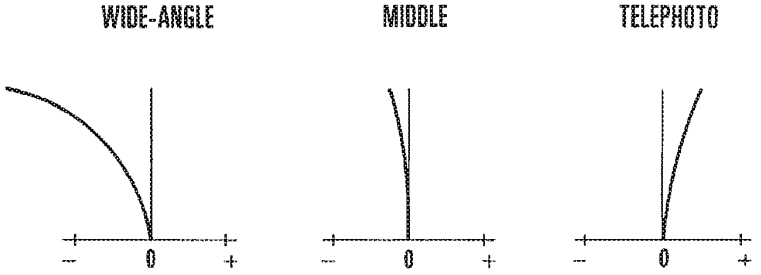
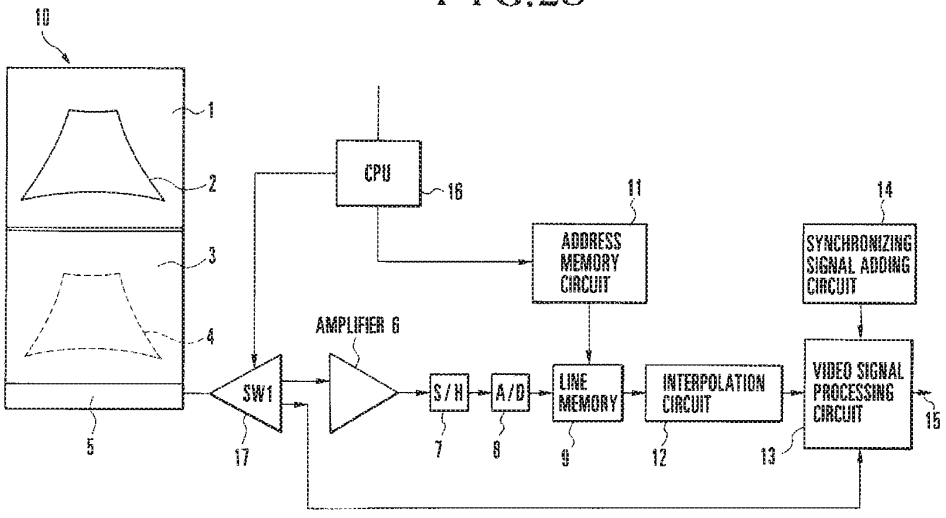


FIG.27(b)-1

FIG.27(b)-3

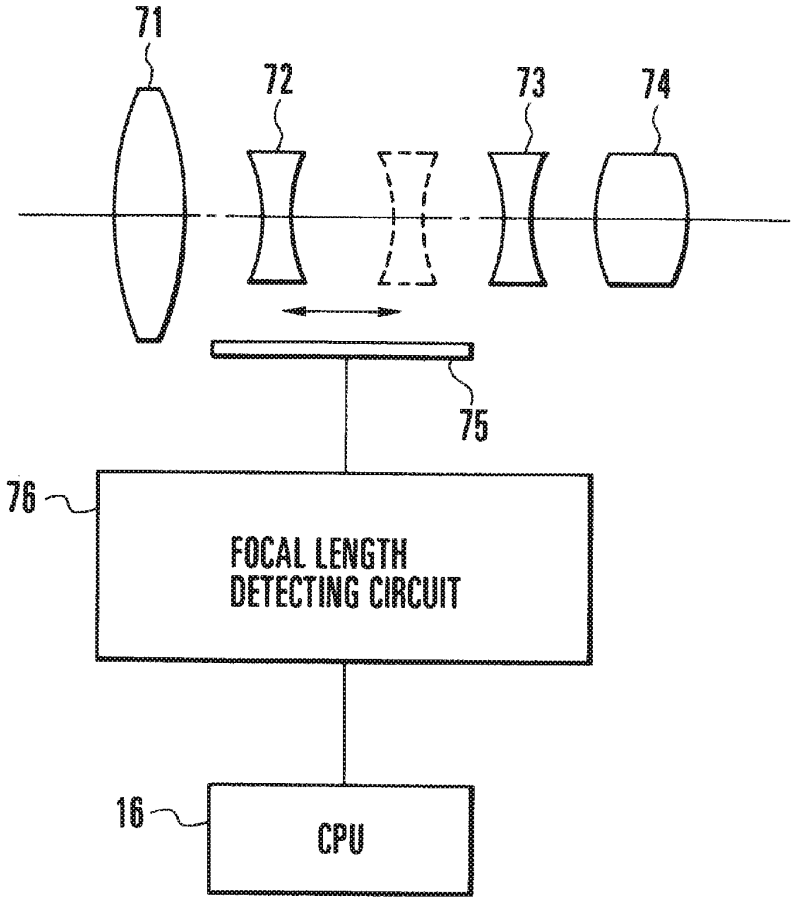
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.28



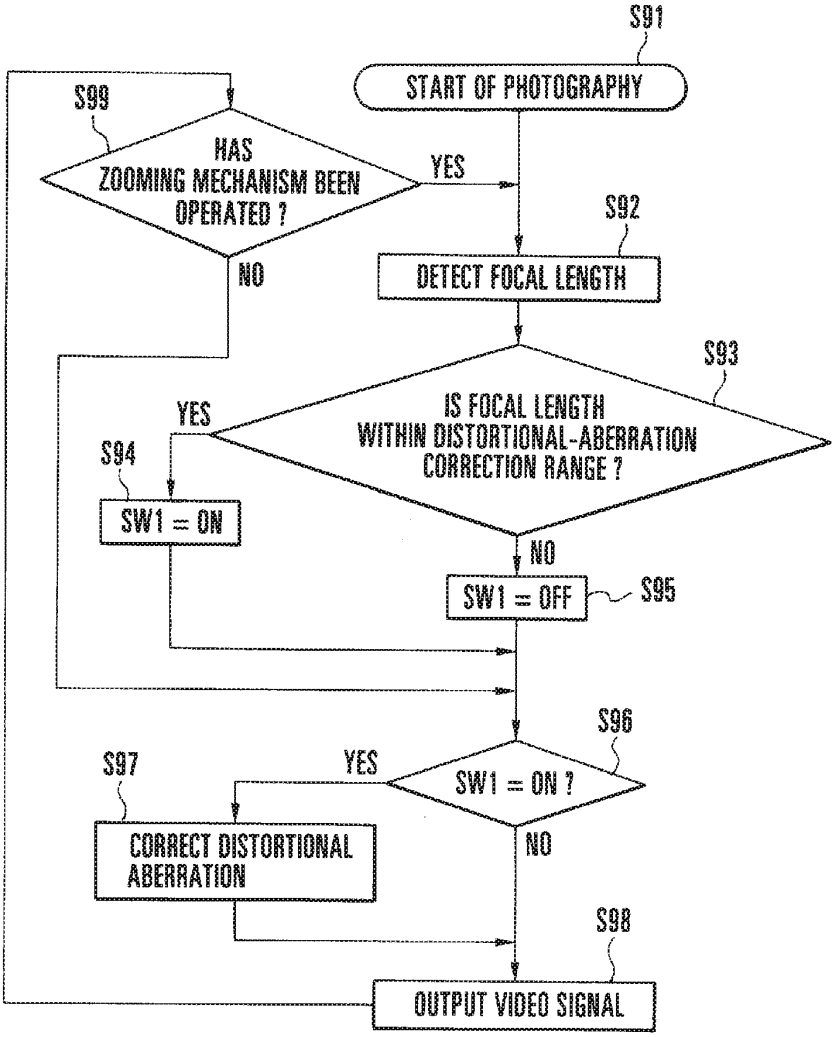
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.29



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.30



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.31

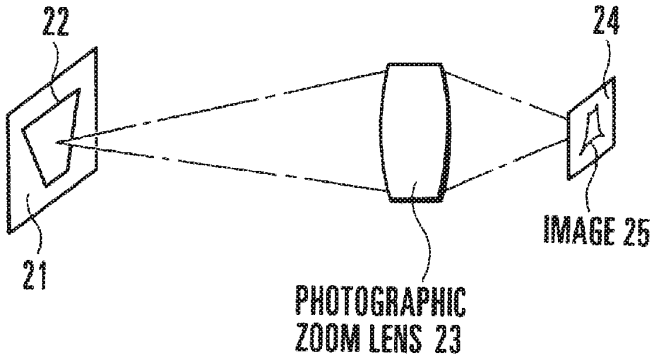
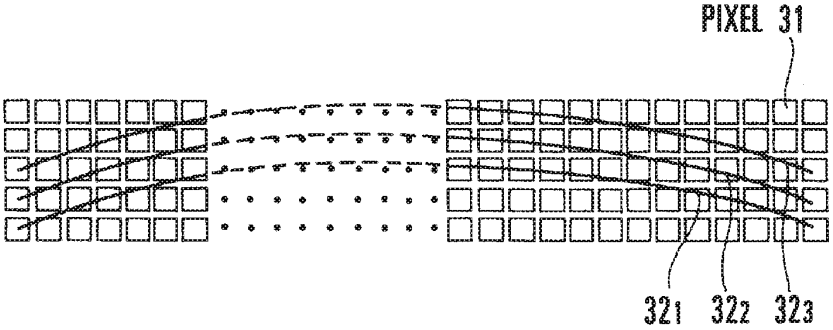


FIG.32



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.33

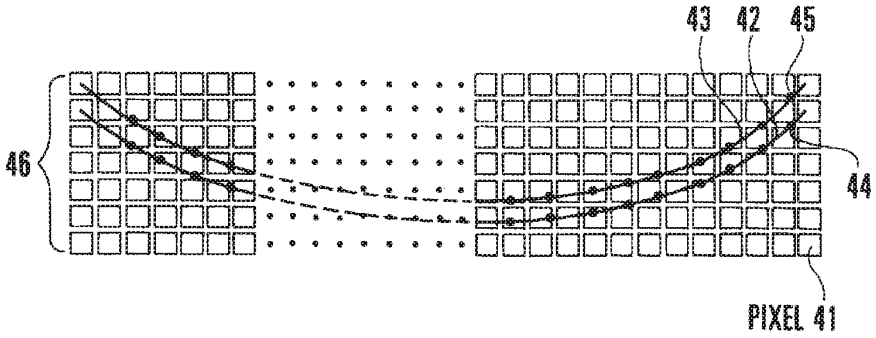
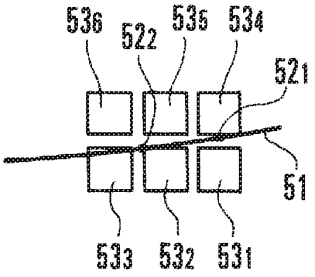
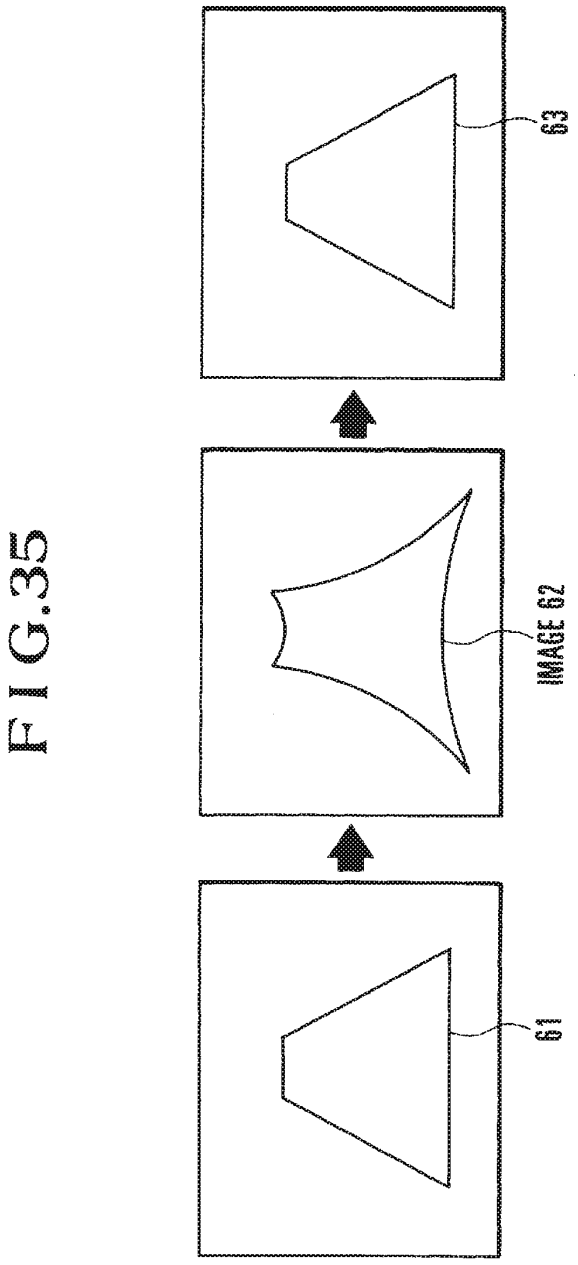


FIG.34

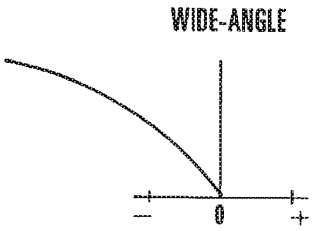


PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

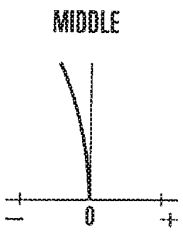
FIG.35



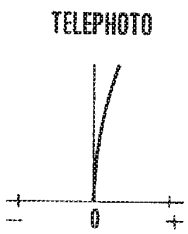
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014



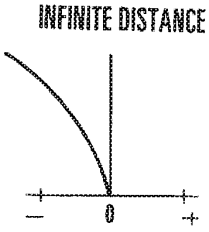
F I G.36(a)



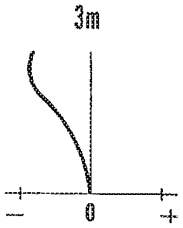
F I G.36(b)



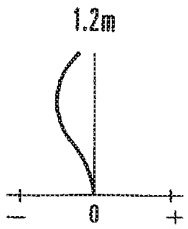
F I G.36(c)



F I G.37(a)



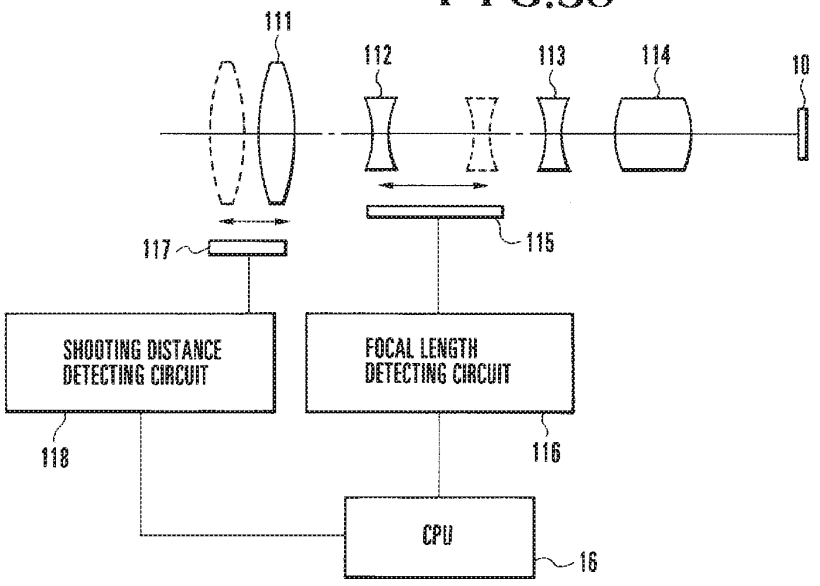
F I G.37(b)



F I G.37(c)

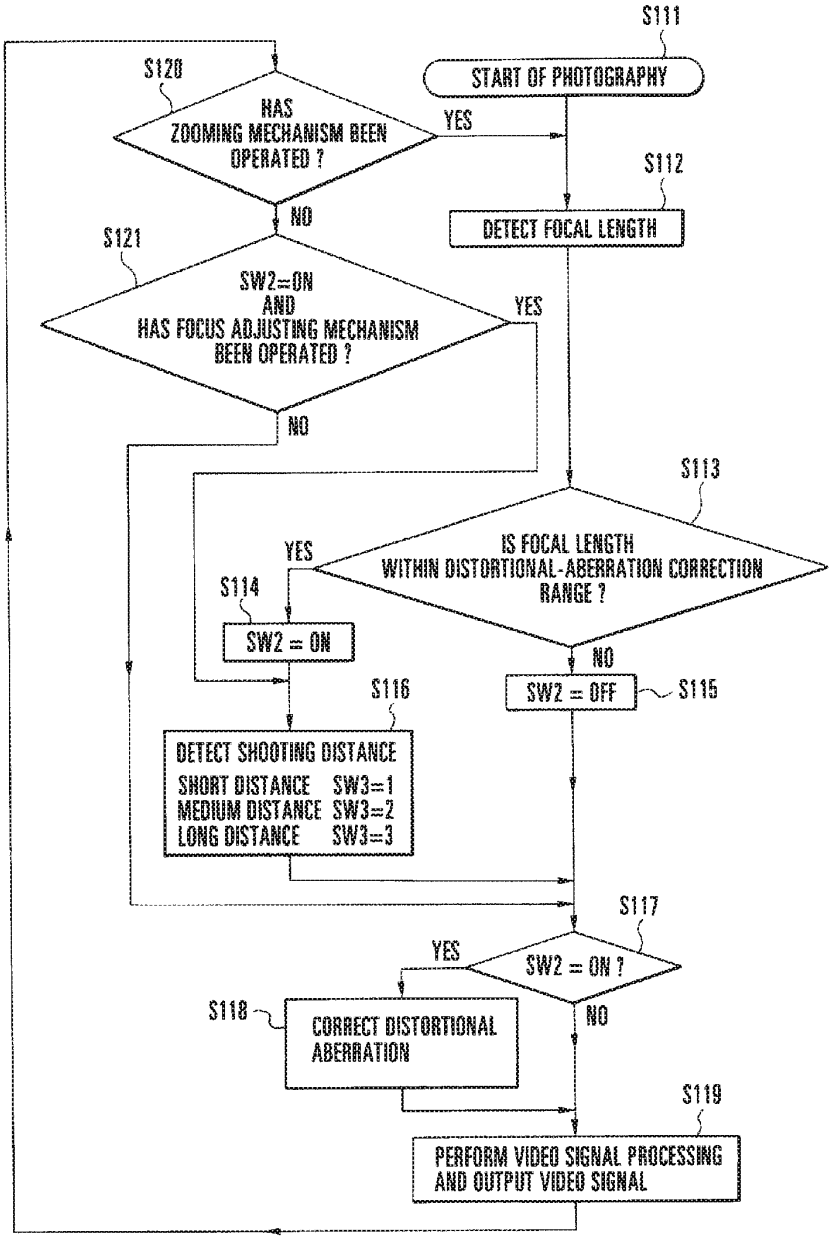
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.38



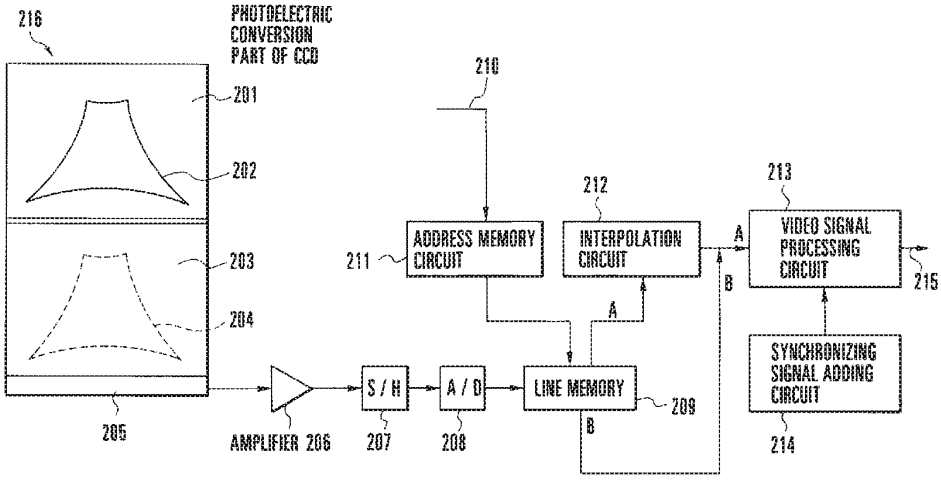
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG. 39



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.40



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.41

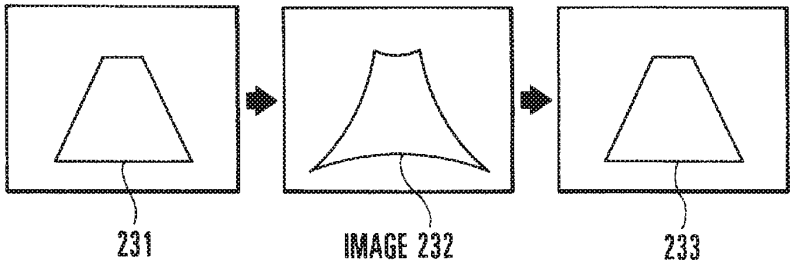
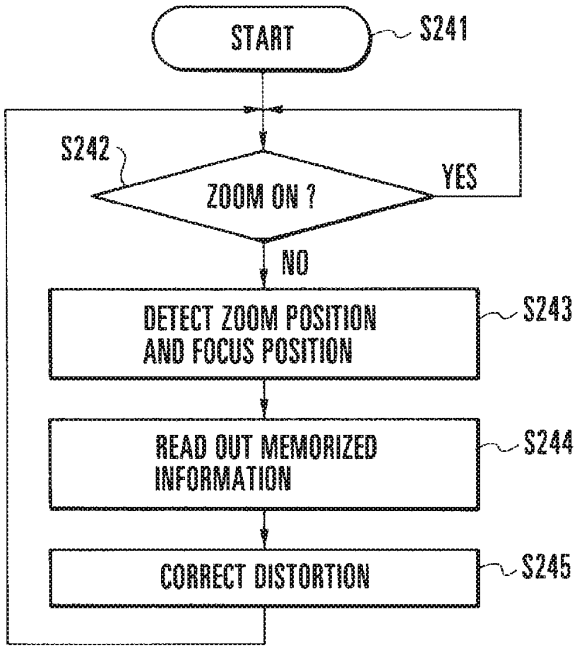


FIG.42



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.43

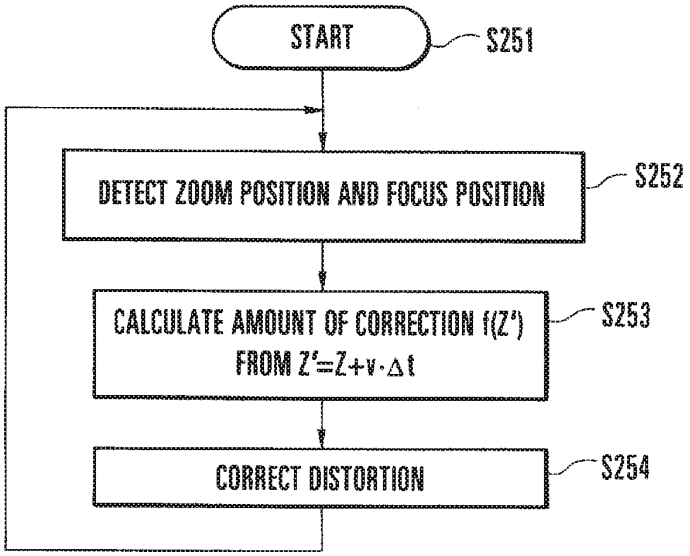
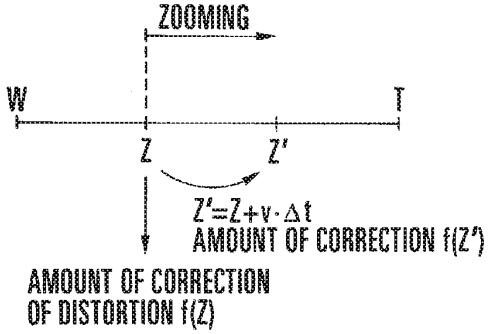
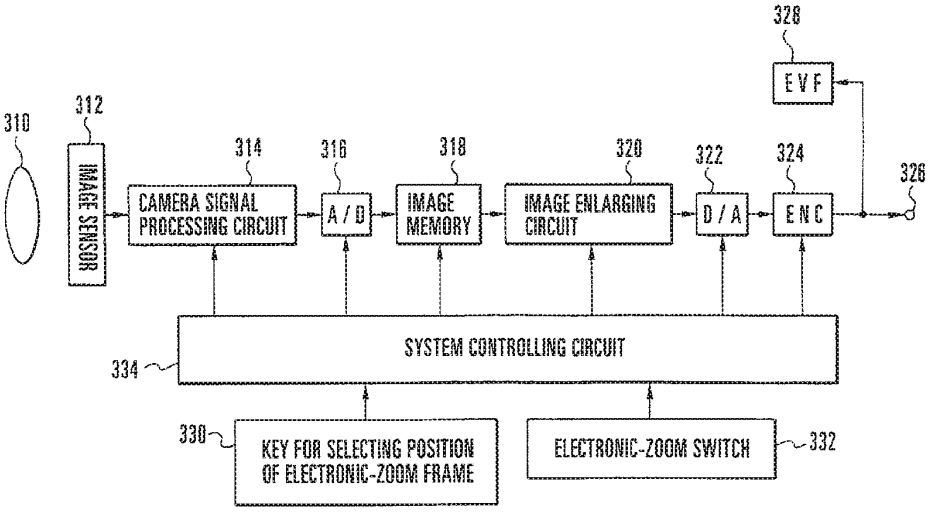


FIG.44



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.45



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1014

FIG.46

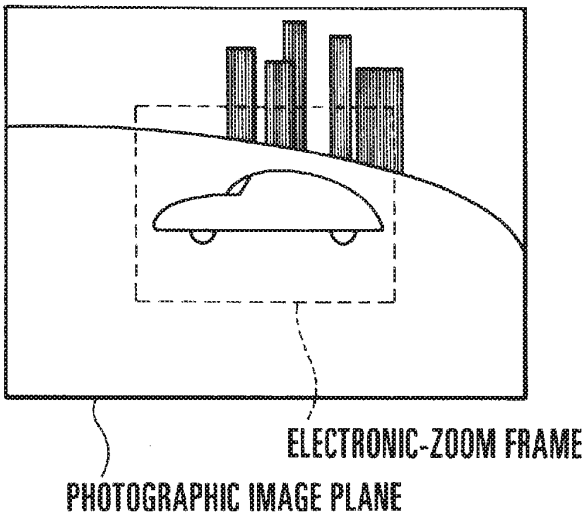
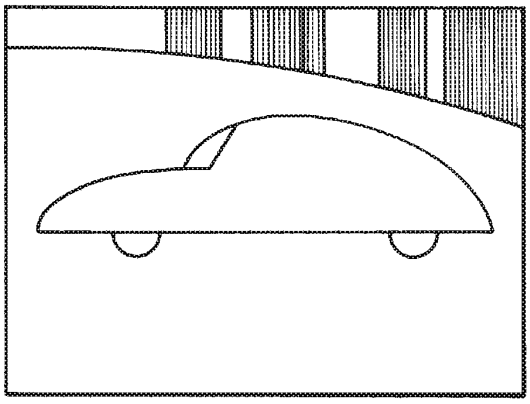
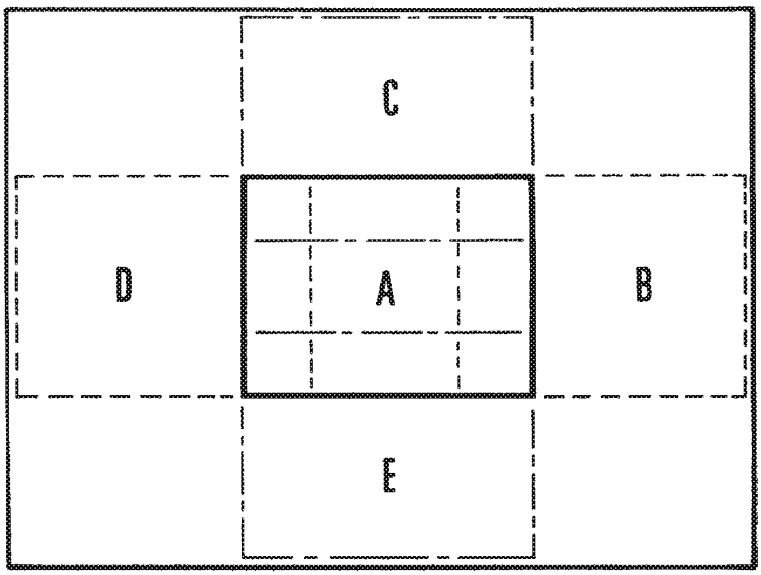


FIG.47



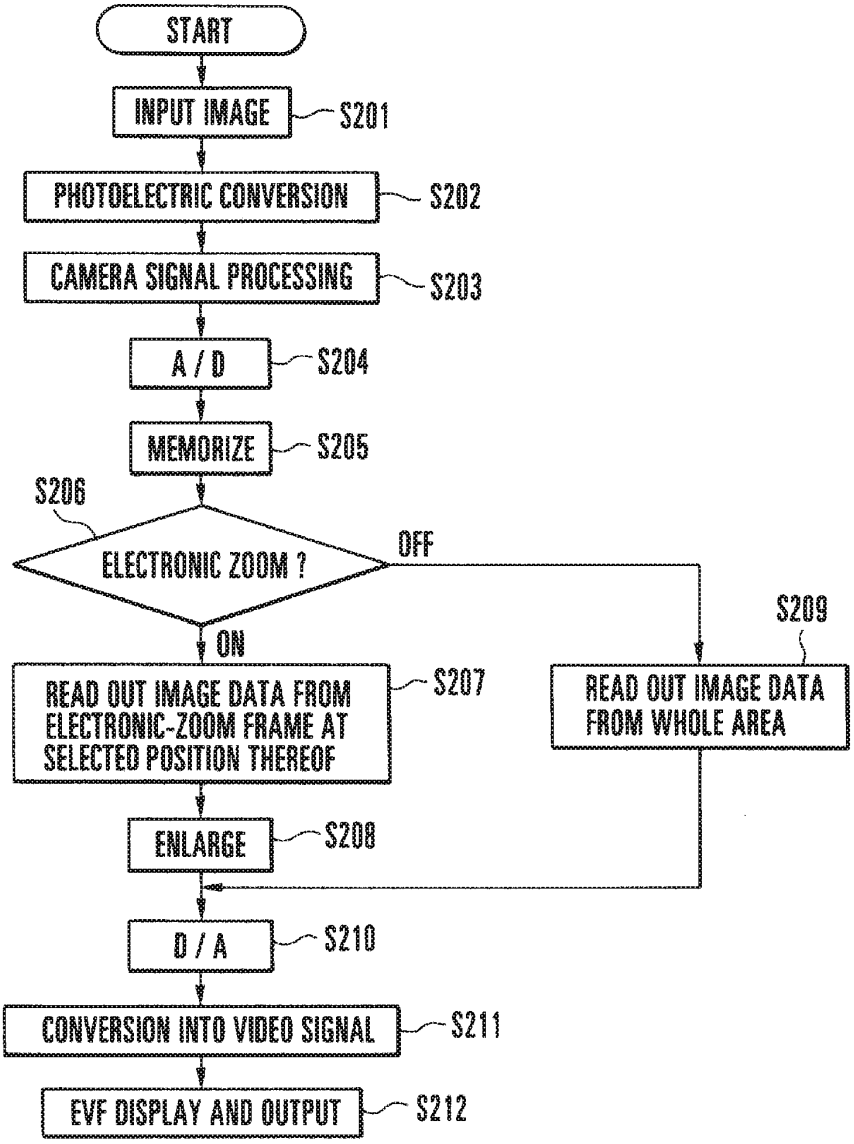
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FIG.48



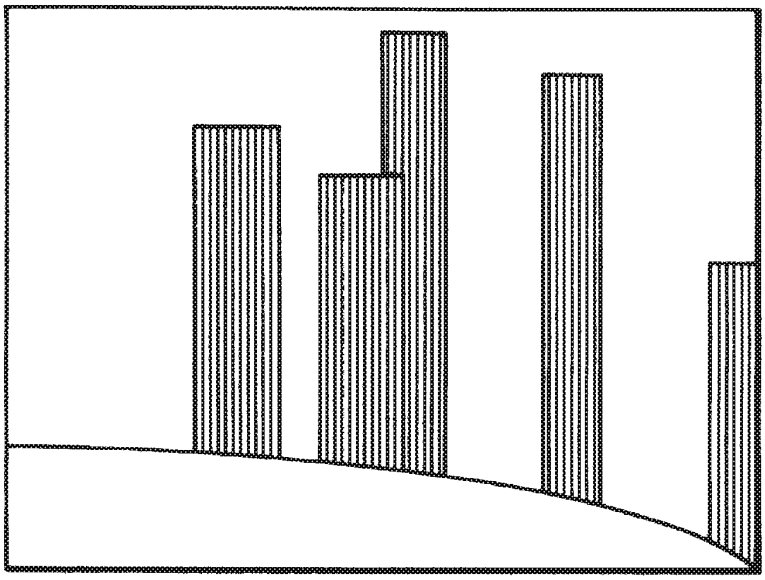
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FIG.49



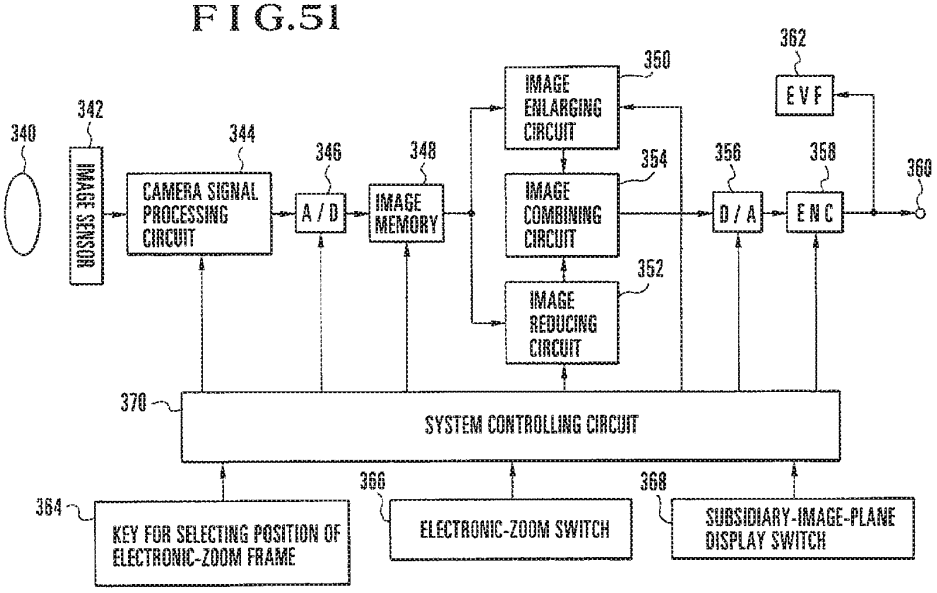
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FIG.50



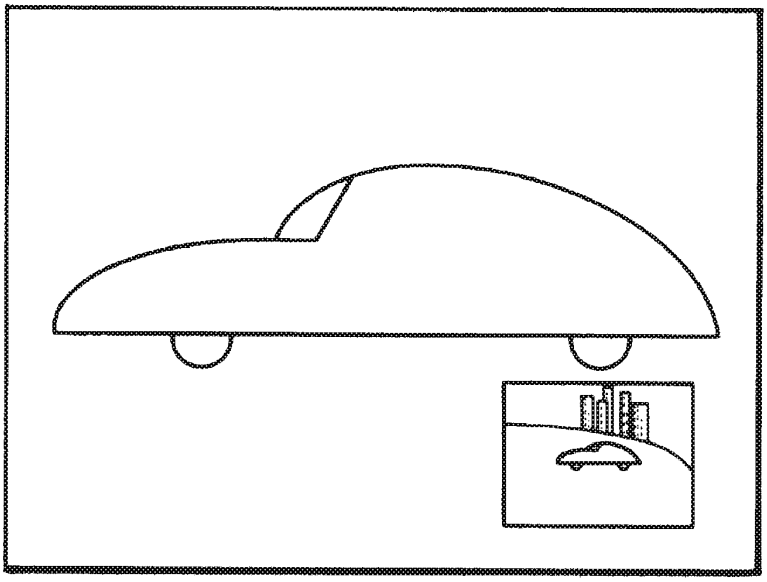
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FIG.51



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FIG.52



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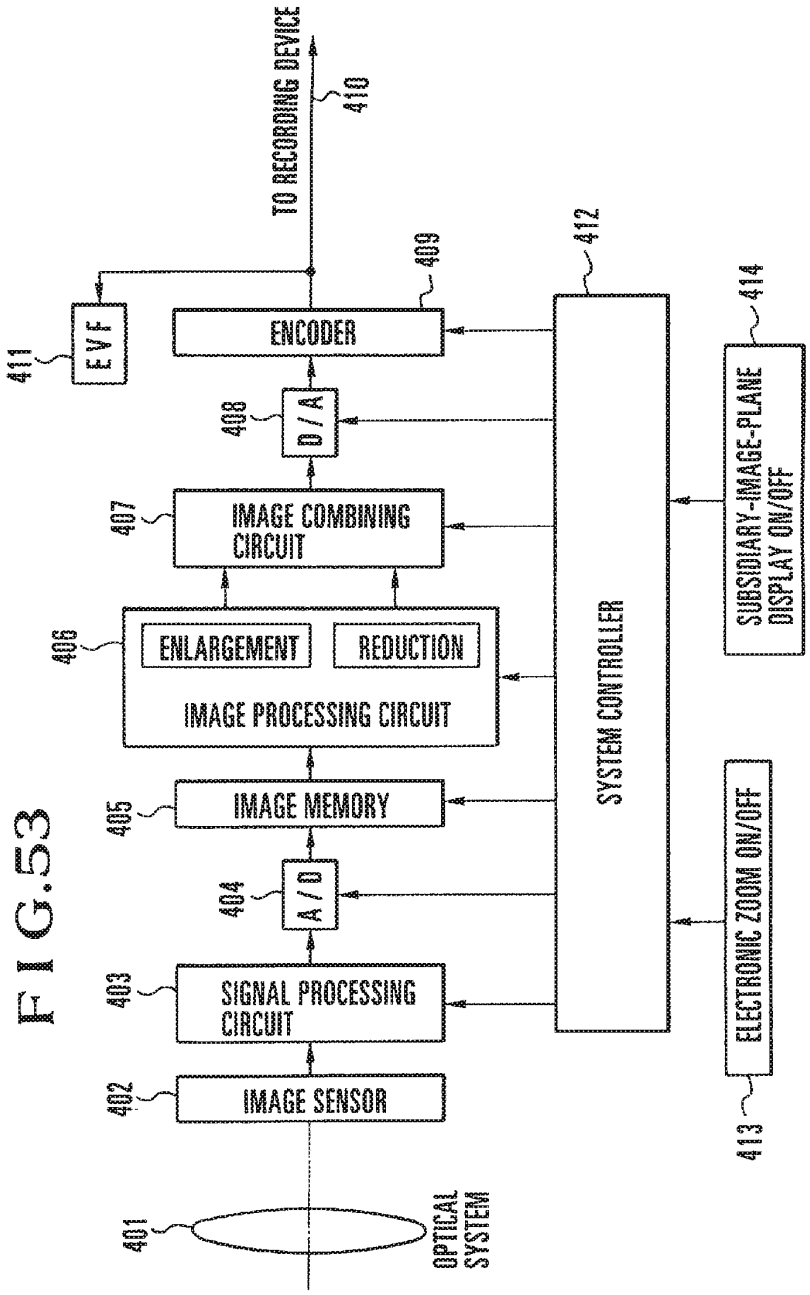
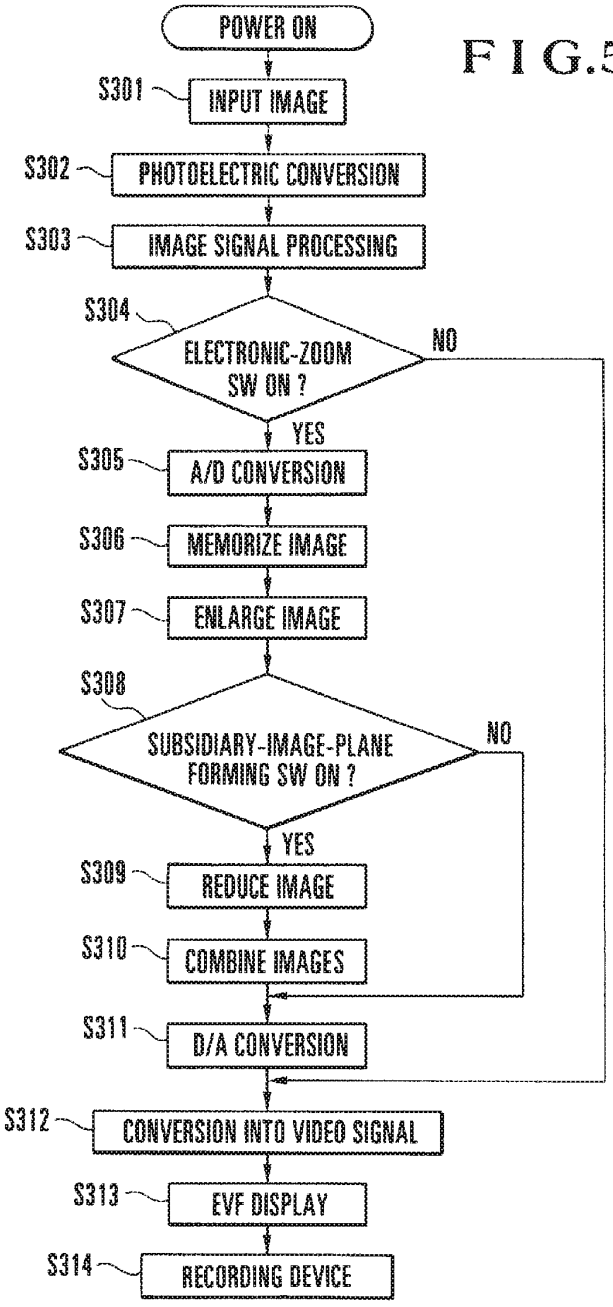


FIG.53

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FIG.54



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FIG.55

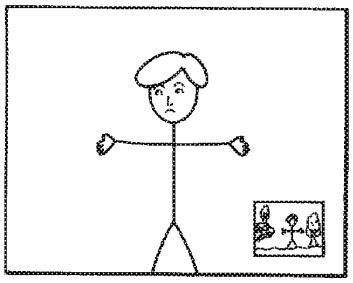
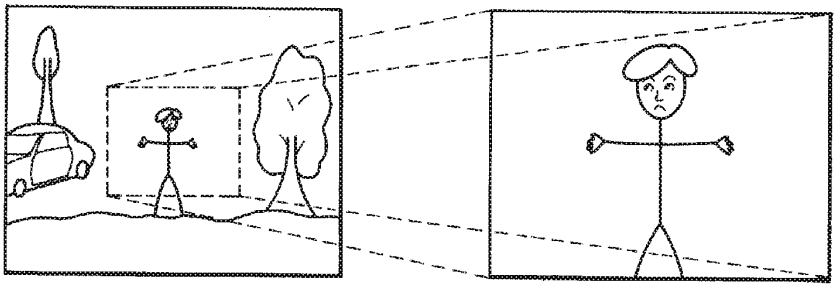
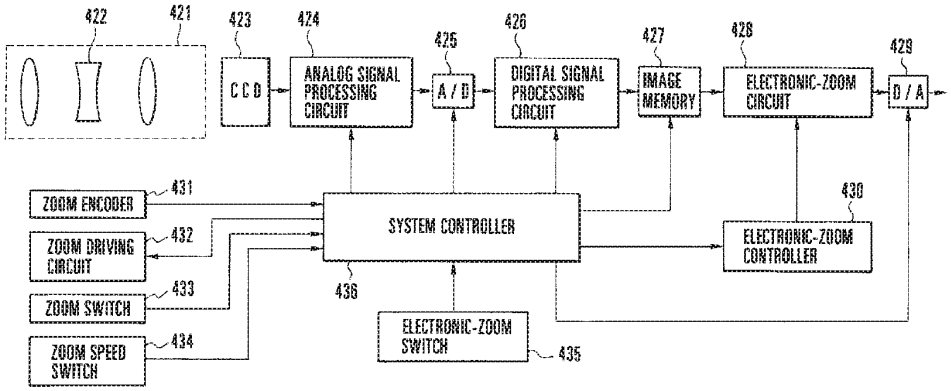


FIG.56
PRIOR ART



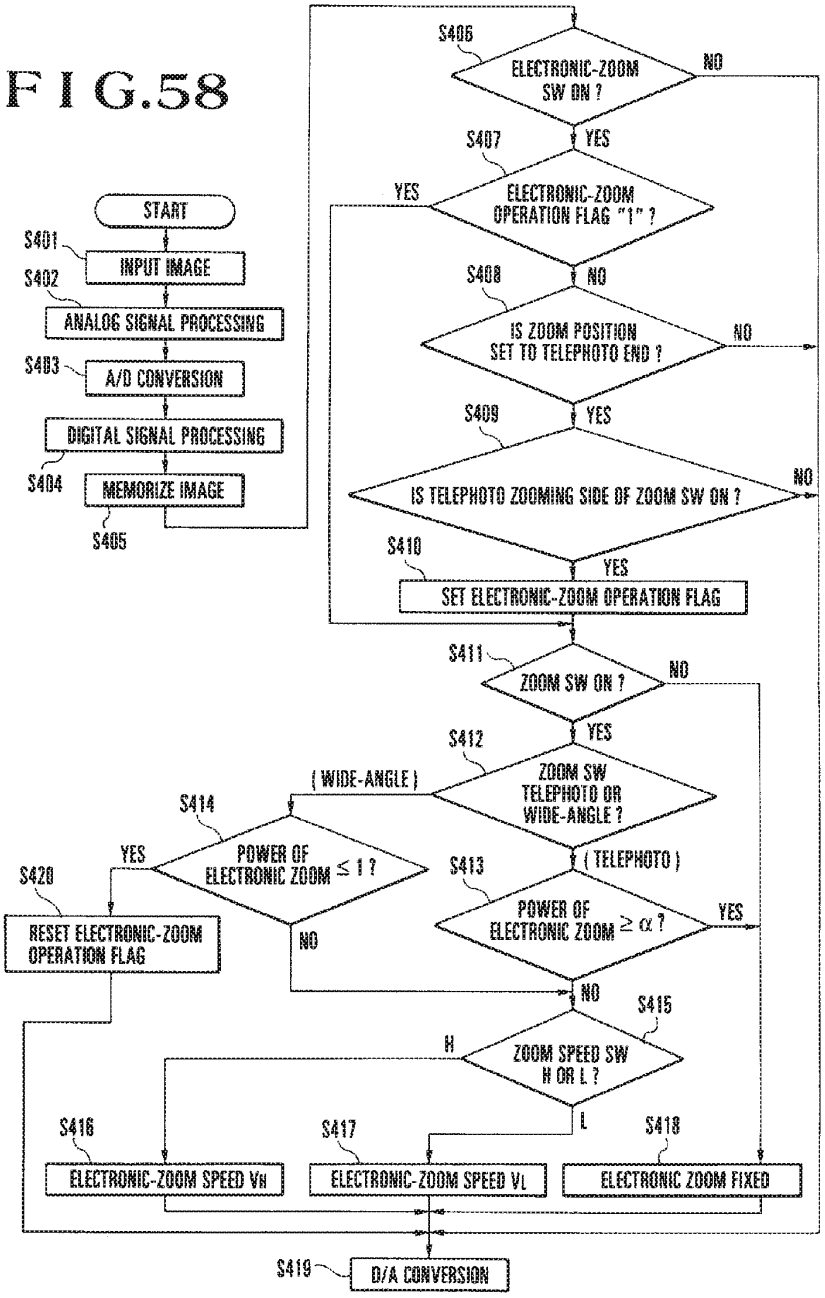
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FIG.57



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FIG.58



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FIG.59(a)

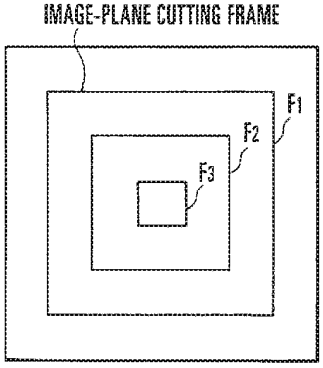
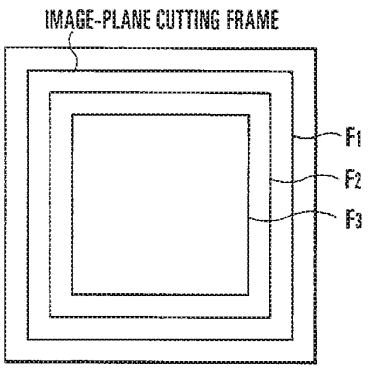
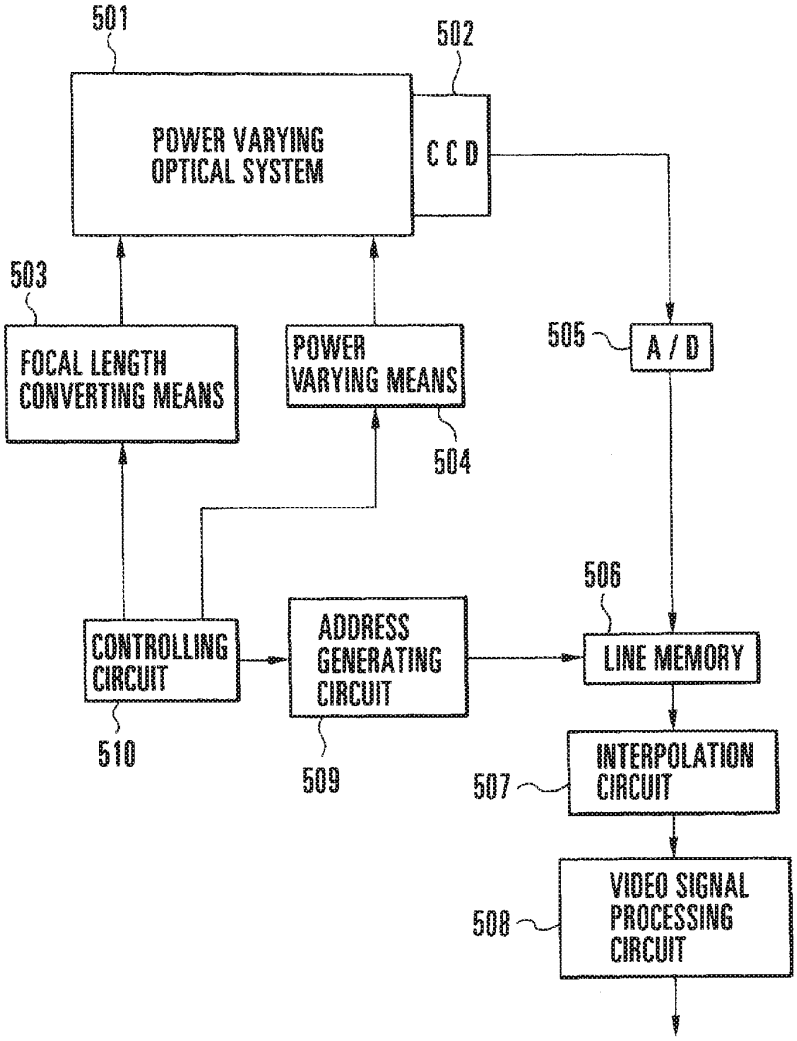


FIG.59(b)



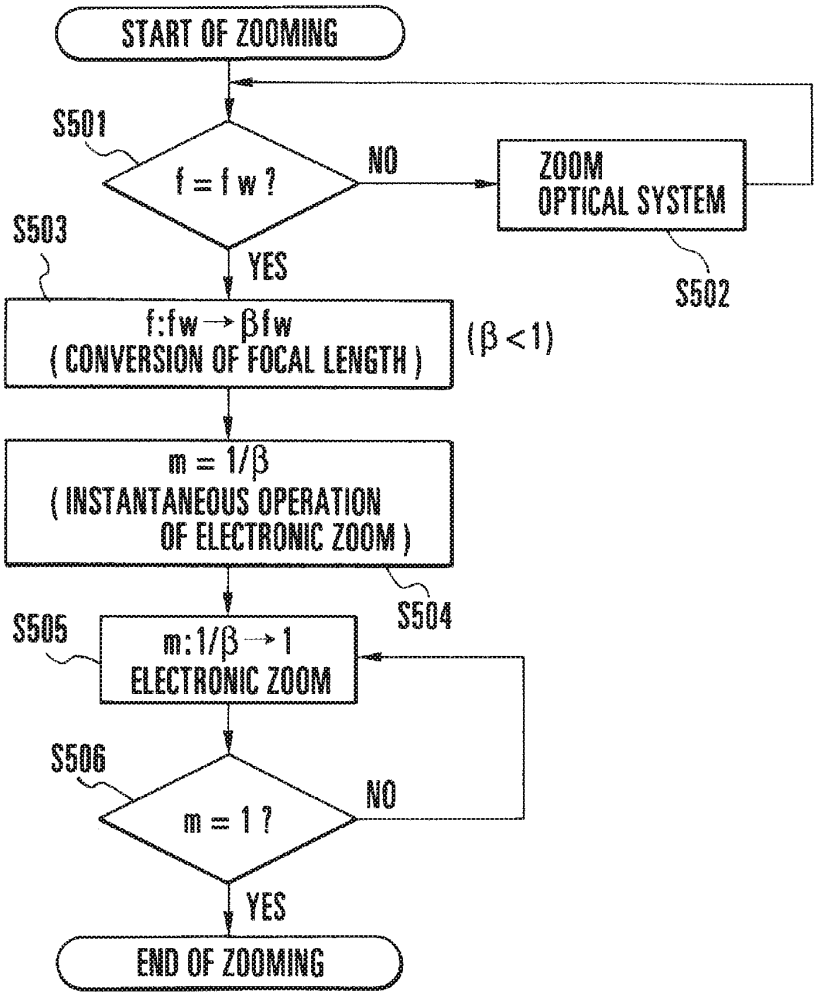
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FIG.60



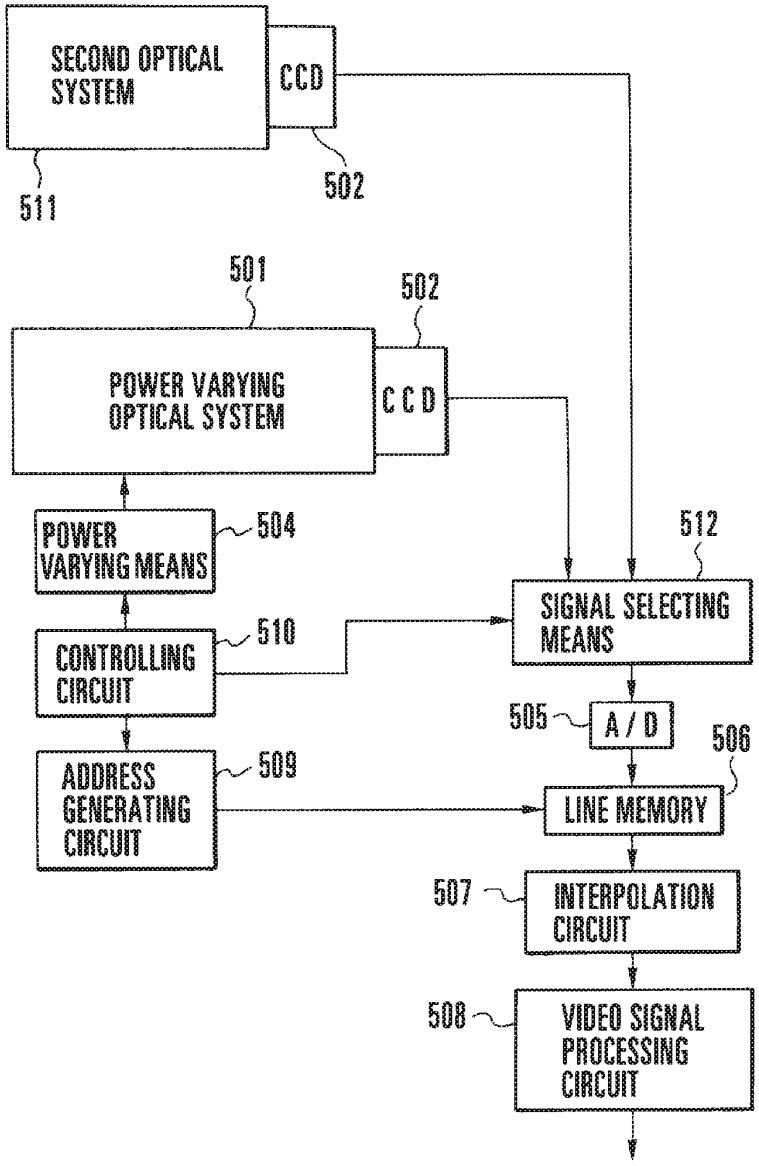
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FIG.61



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FIG.62



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IMAGE PICKUP APPARATUS

This application is a continuation of application Ser. No. 08/103,091 filed Aug. 6, 1993, now abandoned.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to improvements in an image pickup apparatus such as a video camera, a still camera or a silver-halide camera, an image reproducing apparatus for reproducing an image recorded by such an image pickup apparatus, and a video system formed by a combination of these apparatus.

2. Description of the Related Art

Conventionally, in an image pickup apparatus, the distortion of a photographic image occurs due to the distortional aberration of each individual photographic lens and a distortion which cannot be completely eliminated in every stage of the design of the photographic lens remains in an image as a residual distortional aberration. As one method for electronically eliminating the residual distortional aberration, it is known that an electron beam is made to scan in distorted form on the basis of the distortional aberration of a photographic lens in an image pickup apparatus using an image pickup tube such as the Plumbicon.

Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. Hei 2-252375 discloses another proposal to obtain image data from an image pickup device such as a CCD and correct the image data in the form of a digital signal.

However, the above-described conventional example has a number of problems. For example, since correction of image data is performed with the center (optical axis) of an image plane selected as a datum, on the basis of the focal length of the photographic lens, i.e., as shown in FIGS. **25**(*a*) and **25**(*b*), no image data present in the peripheral portion of the image plane is employed in the case of correction of a negative (barrel form) distortion, as shown in FIG. **26**(*a*). In contrast, in the case of correction of a positive (pincushion form) distortion, image data present in the peripheral portion of the image plane is lost as shown in FIG. **26**(*b*).

Another distortional-aberration correcting method has been proposed with respect to a camera provided with a solid-state image pickup device. According to this method, pixel signals are read out from the solid-state image pickup device in accordance with the geometrical deformation of an image which occurs in a photographic lens, and the read-out pixel signals are subjected to interpolation so that the distortional aberration of the image is corrected. However, in a case where a zoom lens is used as the objective lens, if correction of the distortional aberration of the zoom lens is to be performed at each photographing position thereof by using signal processing, an enormous amount of computing processing and an extremely long computing time as well as a large-scale signal processing circuit are needed for the signal processing. For this reason, although the utilization of this proposal is considered in an extremely limited field, such as a broadcasting station, which needs high-quality images, the aforesaid proposal has not currently been popular.

An art of carrying out electronic zooming by performing signal processing of a signal obtained from an image pickup device, such as a CCD, has also heretofore been known.

According to the known art, since it is necessary to position an image of an object to be electronically zoomed, in an electronic-zoom frame provided in the center of an image plane, the electronic zooming is not very useful in photographing a moving object to which the electronic zooming seems able to be advantageously applied. This is because it is necessary to move the entire image pickup apparatus in accordance with the movement of the object so that an image of the moving object can be positioned in the electronic-zoom frame at all times, with the result that an image shake easily occurs due to the movement of the entire image pickup apparatus.

For example, such an image pickup apparatus having an electronic-zoom function is arranged to perform coordinate transformation so as to enlarge an original image which is not electronically zoomed, as shown in the left-hand portion of FIG. **56**, to a size equivalent to an electronic-zoom frame in which an object selected as a target is to be positioned. By performing the coordinate transformation, the image pickup apparatus can provide an enlarged image such as that shown in the right-hand portion of FIG. **56**.

However, the above-described conventional example has the following problem. Since a photographer cannot obtain image information outside of the electronic-zoom frame while the electronic-zoom function is operating, the photographer encounters the problem that an object, particularly a moving object, occasionally leaves the image plane or that another foreign object suddenly enters the electronic-zoom frame and appears in the image plane. For this reason, it is difficult for the photographer to fully utilize the electronic-zoom function.

As is known in the art, the so-called electronic zoom is intended to achieve an apparent increase in the telephoto effect of an optical system when the optical system is set to its telephoto end, and to attain a large zoom effect without increasing the size of the optical system.

By sequentially executing the electronic zoom and optical zoom (or an optical zooming operation) capable of varying the focal length of the optical system, it is possible to achieve an effect equivalent to the zoom range of a zoom lens having a zoom ratio equal to a multiplication of the zoom ratio of the optical zoom and that of the electronic zoom.

For example, if the optical system has focal lengths of 8–80 mm and the electronic has a zoom ratio of 2 times, it is possible to obtain a lens having focal lengths equivalent to 8–160 mm.

However, in such an electronic zoom, although it is possible to enlarge an image, it is impossible to enlarge an angle of view. Accordingly, although it is possible to achieve "an increase in the telephoto effect", it is impossible to realize "an increase in a wide-angle effect".

Although a lens system may be beforehand designed to have a wide angle of view, there is the problem that the lens system becomes large.

A plurality of means for shifting the focal length of the lens system toward its wide-angle side have recently been proposed in light of the problem.

One well-known method for shifting the focal length of the lens system toward the wide-angle side is disclosed in, for example, Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. Sho 59-204817. In this method, an afocal converter made up of lenses having negative and positive refractive powers is disposed forward of the optical system so that the wide-angle effect of the lens system can be increased.

However, since the afocal converter is made up of two or three lenses, there is the problem that if the afocal converter is disposed forward of the optical system, the entire lens system increases in size.

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According to another known method, a negative lens is inserted forward of a principal optical system, and the close-up photography capability of the principal optical system is utilized to achieve an increase in the wide-angle effect of the lens system.

However, if the focal length of the lens system is discontinuously converted from its wide-angle end toward a far wider-angle side, there is the problem that no photography can be performed at any angle of view between the wide-angle end and the far wider-angle side.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is, therefore, a first object of the present invention to provide an apparatus for performing signal processing of an image signal obtained from an image pickup device and deforming an image into a desired form and enlarging the image up to a desired size.

A second object of the present invention is to provide an apparatus for correcting a distortion of an image necessarily occurring due to a photographic lens, i.e., distortional aberration, by using an electrical method.

A third object of the present invention is to provide an control device for controlling a so-called electronic zoom which is arranged to cause an image pickup device to receive an optical image formed by a photographic lens, perform signal processing of a signal output of the image pickup device, and vary the size of an image.

A fourth object of the present invention is to provide an image pickup apparatus which permits a photographer to confirm image information outside of an electronic-zoom frame during electronic zooming, thereby expanding a photographic opportunity and enabling the photographer to securely use the electronic zoom.

A fifth object of the present invention is to provide an image pickup apparatus capable of smoothly varying an angle of view during switching from optical zoom to electronic zoom or during switching from electronic zoom to optical zoom.

A sixth embodiment of the present invention is to provide a camera provided with a zoom function capable of continuously varying an angle of view from a wide-angle end toward an ultra-wide-angle side so that a photographer can smoothly perform photography even during zooming through the angles of view between the wide-angle end and the ultra-wide-angle side.

The above and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of preferred embodiments of the present invention, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of an image pickup apparatus according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **2** is a flowchart showing the operation of the image controlling circuit **102**;

FIG. **3** is a view showing distorted scanning lines;

FIG. **4** is a fragmentary schematic view which serves to explain pixels used for interpolation processing;

FIG. **5** is a flowchart showing a distortion correcting operation according to the first embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. **6**(*a*), **6**(*b*) and **6**(*c*) are views aiding in explaining the manner of correction of distortional aberration with reference to FIG. **5**;

FIG. **7** is a view aiding in explaining the manner of correction of distortional aberration with reference to FIG. **5**;

FIG. **8** is a view aiding in explaining the manner of correction of distortional aberration with reference to FIG. **5**;

FIG. **9** is a view aiding in explaining the manner of correction of distortional aberration with reference to FIG. **5**;

FIG. **10** is a view aiding in explaining the manner of correction of distortional aberration with reference to FIG. **5**;

FIG. **11** is a view aiding in explaining the manner of correction of distortional aberration with reference to FIG. **5**;

FIG. **12** is a cross sectional view of a lens, suitable for image correction, which produces a large negative distortional aberration on its wide-angle side;

FIGS. **13**(*a*)–**13**(*c*) are views showing aberrations which occur at the wide-angle end of the lens shown in FIG. **12**,

FIGS. **14**(*a*)–**14**(*c*) are views showing aberrations which occur at the telephoto end of the lens shown in FIG. **12**;

FIGS. **15**(*a*) to **15**(*c*) are views showing a numerical example of the lens shown in FIG. **12**;

FIGS. **16**(*a*) to **16**(*e*) are views diagrammatically showing the manner of distortion correction performed according to the first embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **17** is a view schematically showing the essential portions of an image pickup apparatus to which the first embodiment of the present invention can be applied and which is arranged to separate incident light into three color components and pick up a color image;

FIGS. **18**(*a*) to **18**(*c*) are views diagrammatically showing the manner of distortion correction performed according to the second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **19** is a flowchart showing a distortion correcting operation according to the second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **20** is a view aiding in explaining the manner of correction of distortional aberration with reference to FIG. **19**;

FIG. **21** is a schematic view showing the manner of distortion correction which is performed by an arrangement in which an electronic-zoom function is added to the apparatus according to the third embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **22** is a schematic view showing the manner of another distortion correction which is performed by the arrangement in which the electronic-zoom function is added to the apparatus according to the third embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **23** is a block diagram showing a video system according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **24** is a video system in which the imaging apparatus of FIG. **23** is replaced with a silver-halide camera;

FIGS. **25**(*a*) and **25**(*b*) are views which serve to explain distortion correction performed in a conventional image pickup apparatus;

FIGS. **26**(*a*) and **26**(*b*) are views which serve to explain problems involved in the distortion correction performed in the conventional image pickup apparatus;

FIGS. **27**(*a*)-**1**, **27**(*a*)-**2**, and **27**(*a*)-**3**, and FIGS. **27**(*b*)-**1**, **27**(*b*)-**2**, and **27**(*b*)-**3**, are views respectively showing the optical performance of a photographic zoom lens according to a fifth embodiment of the present invention and that of a general photographic zoom lens;

FIG. **28** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of a solid-state image pickup camera according to the fifth embodiment of the present invention;

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FIG. **29** is a mechanism diagram showing the photographic zoom lens and a focal length detecting part of the solid-state image pickup camera shown in FIG. **28**;

FIG. **30** is a flowchart showing the operation of the solid-state image pickup camera shown in FIG. **28**;

FIG. **31** is a schematic view which serves to explain the operation of the photographic zoom lens shown in FIG. **28**;

FIG. **32** is a schematic diagram showing the relationship between the pixels of a CCD and an image formed thereon;

FIG. **33** is a schematic view showing the relationship between pixels of the line memory shown in FIG. **28** and scanning lines;

FIG. **34** is a schematic view showing interpolation processing performed by the interpolation circuit shown in FIG. **28**;

FIG. **35** is a schematic view which serves to explain distortional-aberration correcting processing according to the fifth embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. **36**(*a*)–**36**(*c*) are views showing one example of the optical performance of a photographic zoom lens used in a sixth embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. **37**(*a*)–**37**(*c*) are views showing one example of a variation in distortional aberration depending on shooting distance, in the neighborhood of the wide-angle end of the photographic zoom lens used in the sixth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **38** is a block diagram schematically showing the focal length detecting part and the shooting distance detecting part of a solid-state image pickup camera according to the sixth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **39** is a flowchart showing the operation of the solid-state image pickup camera shown in FIG. **38**;

FIG. **40** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of a solid-state image pickup camera according to a seventh embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **41** is a view which serves to explain distortional-aberration correcting processing according to the seventh embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **42** is a flowchart showing the distortion correcting operation of the solid-state image pickup camera according to the seventh embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **43** is a flowchart showing the distortion correcting operation of a solid-state image pickup camera according to an eighth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **44** is an explanatory view which serves to explain the manner of calculation of the amount of correction performed in Step S**253** of FIG. **43**;

FIG. **45** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of a ninth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **46** shows one example of a photographic image;

FIG. **47** shows an image example obtainable by electronically enlarging a central portion of the image shown in FIG. **46**;

FIG. **48** shows an area to which an electronic-zoom frame is to be moved according to the ninth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **49** is a flowchart of the operation of the ninth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **50** shows an electronically zoomed image obtainable when the electronic-zoom frame is moved to the area C shown in FIG. **48**;

FIG. **51** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of a tenth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **52** shows a combined image according to the tenth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **53** is a block diagram showing the circuit arrangement of an image pickup apparatus according to an eleventh embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **54** is a flowchart showing the operation of the image pickup apparatus shown in FIG. **53**;

FIG. **55** is a view showing one example obtained by displaying an original image, which is not electronically zoomed, in the form of an subsidiary image plane within an electronically zoomed image plane in accordance with the eleventh embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **56** is a view showing an original image which is not electronically zoomed and an image obtainable by enlarging a portion of the original image by electronic zoom;

FIG. **57** is a block diagram showing the circuit arrangement of an image pickup apparatus according to a twelfth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **58** is a flowchart showing the operation of the image pickup apparatus shown in FIG. **57**;

FIGS. **59**(*a*) and **59**(*b*) are views showing variations in an image-plane cutting frame for the purpose of varying the speed of the electronic zoom according to the twelfth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **60** is a block diagram showing the circuit arrangement and the optical system of a camera having a zoom function according to a thirteenth embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. **61** is a flowchart showing the operation of performing zooming from a telephoto end to a wide-angle side (an ultra-wide-angle end) in the thirteenth embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. **62** is a block diagram showing the circuit arrangement and the optical system of a camera having a zoom function according to a fourteenth embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described below in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

FIG. **1** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of an image pickup apparatus according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

The arrangement shown in FIG. **1** includes a photographic lens **100** which is formed as a lens assembly provided with a focusing lens **100***a* and a variator lens **100***b* and capable of zooming, an image sensor **101** such as a CCD, an image controlling circuit **102** for performing control of various operations, such as correction of image distortion, a first image memory **103** for memorizing image data obtained from the image sensor **101**, a second image memory **104** for memorizing image data the distortion of which is corrected, a data table **105** on which distortional-aberration information about the photographic lens **100** is memorized, and a zoom switch **106** for converting a zoom instruction given by a photographer into an electrical signal.

FIG. **2** is a flowchart showing the operation of the image controlling circuit **102**. The operation will be described below with reference to the flowchart.

[Step S**1**] The image controlling circuit **102** converts image data supplied from the image sensor **101** into a video signal and converts the video signal into a digital image

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signal by means of an A/D conversion circuit. The image controlling circuit **102** causes the first image memory **103** to memorize the digital image signal for one frame. The image obtained at this time is an image distorted by the distortional aberration of the photographic lens **100**.

[Step S2] The focal length, i.e., the zoom position, of the photographic lens **100** is detected from the position of the variator lens **100***b* which is one constituent element of the photographic lens **100**, and a zoom position which is aimed at by the photographer is read from the zoom switch **106**.

The process of obtaining zoom information from the position of the variator lens **100***b* and the zoom switch **106** in this manner is intended to perform correction of image distortion with a datum in the correction of the image distortion arbitrarily set as will be described later.

[step S3] An object distance is detected from the focusing lens **100***a* which is one constituent element of the photographic lens **100**.

This step is needed to perform image correction according to the status of the photographic lens **100** since the distortional aberration of the photographic lens **100** varies due to zooming and focusing.

[Step S4] The addresses of distorted pixels at which the addresses of undistorted pixels are located are calculated on the basis of data indicative of the amount of distortion which are memorized on the data table **105**. The data indicative of the amount of distortion may be memorized in the form of raw data relative to each zoom position and each focus position, or may also be memorized in the form of the coefficient of a function which approximates the amount of distortional aberration. It is to be noted that the data indicative of the amount of distortion are prepared as values peculiar to the photographic lens **100**.

The scanning lines of an undistorted image are typically formed as curved lines on a distorted image as shown in FIG. **3**. Since the pixels on the undistorted image do not correspond to individual pixels on the distorted image, for example, a pixel **42***a* located on the top left in FIG. **4** is selected from the pixel **42***a* and pixels **42***b*, **42***c* and **42***d* which surround a corresponding position **42** of undistorted image data, and the address of the pixel **42***a* is calculated.

In FIG. **3**, reference numeral **31** denotes a digital image data array, reference numerals **32** and **33** denote the scanning lines of the undistorted image, and reference numeral **34** denotes the position of image data corresponding to one pixel. In FIG. **4**, reference numeral **41** denotes one scanning line of the undistorted image, and reference numeral **42** denotes the corresponding position of the undistorted image data.

[Step S5] A plurality of data (sample image data) for use in generating undistorted image data are copied to another memory on the basis of the pixel address calculated in Step S4. In the example shown in FIG. **4**, data indicative of the pixels **42***a*, **42***b*, **42***c* and **42***d* are copied.

[Step S6] Data indicative of an undistorted image are generated, as by linear interpolation, from the coordinates of the respective pixels copied in Step S5 and the coordinates of newly generated pixels.

[Step S7] The image data generated in Step S6 are sequentially memorized into the second image memory **104**.

[Step S8] It is determined whether all the operations which are executed in Steps S4 to S7 in the horizontal scanning direction have ended. If they have not yet ended, the process proceeds to Step S4. If it is determined that they have ended, the process proceeds to Step S9.

[step S9] It is determined whether all the operations which are executed in Steps S4 to S7 in the vertical scanning direction have ended. If they have not yet ended, the process proceeds to Step S4. If it is determined that they have ended, the process proceeds to Step S10.

[Step S10] The image data memorized in the second image memory **104** is read out, and the process proceeds to Step S11.

[Step S11] The image data is converted into a video signal conforming to the NTSC system or the like, and the video signal is outputted to an electronic viewfinder (not shown) and to an image recording device (not shown).

In the first embodiment, although an area memory is used as the second image memory **104**, a line memory capable of storing image data for one horizontal scanning line may be substituted for the area memory. If the line memory is used, it is possible to adopt an arrangement in which each time generation of image data for one horizontal scanning line has ended, the image data is converted into a video signal, and which executes control so that this processing operation is repeated for all the vertical scanning lines. Such an arrangement is capable of providing a substantial memory saving.

An algorithm for calculating pixel addresses will be described below with reference to FIG. **5**.

In the following description of the algorithm, it is assumed that the distortional aberration of the photographic lens **100** is "0" at the telephoto end and the distortional aberration becomes more negative toward the wide-angle end, and that image correction is performed with respect to the negative distortional aberration. It is also assumed that Z represents the zoom position of the photographic lens **100** and Zw and Zt (Zw<Zt) represent the zoom positions of the photographic lens **100** at the wide-angle end and the telephoto end, respectively. It is also assumed that Zs represents the zoom position specified by the photographer through the zoom switch **106** and Zmin represents a virtual zoom position at the wide-angle end which is acceptable in terms of the effect of image correction.

The relationship between Zs and Z is Zs=Z until the photographic lens **100** mechanically reaches the wide-angle position.

[Step S51] A comparison is made between the zoom position Zs which is aimed at by the photographer and the zoom position Zw which can be taken by the photographic lens **100** at the wide-angle end. If Zs is not less than Zw, i.e., in the case of the relationship of Zs≧Zw, the process proceeds to Step S52. In the case of the relationship of Zs<Zw, the process proceeds to Step S53.

[Step S52] Since the relationship of Zs≧Zw is established, distortion correction is performed with the center of an image plane selected as a datum. The process proceeds to the next step.

If it is determined in Step S51 that the relationship of Zs<Zw is established, it is determined that the zoom position of the photographic lens **100** has entered the area of the virtual zoom position, and the process proceeds to Step S53 as described previously.

[Step S53] It is determined whether the zoom position Zs which is aimed at by the photographer is less than the virtual zoom position Zmin at the wide-angle end which is acceptable in terms of the effect of image correction. If the zoom position Zs is less than the virtual zoom position Zmin, i.e., in the case of the relationship of Zs<Zmin, the process proceeds to Step S54. In the case of the relationship of Zs≧Zmin, the process proceeds to Step S55.

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[Step S54] Since the zoom position Zs which is aimed at by the photographer is less than the virtual zoom position Zmin at the wide-angle end which is acceptable in terms of the effect of image correction, the value of Zmin is substituted into Zs, and the process proceeds to Step S55.

[Step S55] Distortion correction is performed with an arbitrary image height selected as a datum.

A distortional aberration D occurring due to the photographic lens **100** is approximated by a function, i.e., a quadratic function of the image height, and if a coefficient "a" of the quadratic function is a linear function of the zoom position Z of the photographic lens **100**, the following relationships are obtained:

$$D=D(L)=a*L^2$$

$$a=a(Z)=b*Z$$

These relationships are shown in FIGS. **6**(*a*) to **6**(*c*). In FIGS. **6**(*a*) to **6**(*c*), W, M and T respectively represent distortional aberrations occurring at the wide-angle end, a middle angle position, and the telephoto end when photographic lens **100** is set to the zoom position Z.

An optical distortional aberration (D %) is defined as the following value:

$$D\ \% = \{(L-L_0)/L_0)\} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

$$= \{(L/L_0 - 1)) \times 100$$

where L_0 represents an ideal image height and L represents an actual image height.

In the distortion correction (Step S52) which is performed with the center of the image plane selected as a datum, if $P_0(x_0, y_0)$ represents the ideal image point of an arbitrary point P(x, y) on the image plane as shown in FIG. **7**, the ratio of the distance between the ideal image point $P_0(x_0, y_0)$ and the center of the image plane to the distance between the arbitrary point P(x, y) and the center of the image plane becomes an expansion-to-contraction ratio α:

$$\alpha = L_0/L \quad (2)$$

$$= (1+D/100)^{-1}$$

From the expression (2), the coordinates of the ideal image point P_0 are calculated as follows:

$$x_0=\alpha x$$

$$y_0=\alpha y \quad (3)$$

In practice, an inverse form of function for obtaining the coordinates of an actual image point from the coordinates of an ideal image point is prepared to determine an actual pixel address which corresponds to the scanning of a pixel point.

The distortion correction which is performed with an arbitrary image height selected as a datum (the operation of Step S55) will be described below with reference to FIGS. **8** and **9**.

If an image height used as a datum is Ys, the distortion correction performed with an arbitrary image height selected as a datum is defined as distortion correction which is performed so that the amount of distortion correction is made "0" along the circumference of a circle of radius Ys about the center of the image plane. FIG. **8** is an aberration diagram showing this distortion correction. As shown in FIG. **8**, if the amount of distortional aberration at the image height Ys is represented as D_0, the image is corrected so that the amount of distortional aberration occurring at each image height can be made equal at the position of D_0. In other words, correction is performed in such a manner that, as shown in FIG. **9**, the image-point area outside of the circle of radius Ys is expanded, whereas the image-point area inside of the circle of radius Ys is contracted.

If D represents the optical distortional aberration at that time and D' represents the corrected distortional aberration, the following relationship is established from FIG. **8**:

$$D'=D-D_0 \quad (4)$$

If L_1 represents the distance (image height) on the image plane of an arbitrary image point $P_1(x_1, y_1)$ from the center of the image plane and $Ps_1(xs_1, ys_1)$ represents an intersection point of the circle of radius Ys and a straight line which connects the center of the image plane and the image point P_1, the coordinates of $Ps_1(xs_1, ys_1)$ are as follows:

$$xs_1=(Ys/L_1)\cdot x_1$$

$$ys_1=(Ys/L_1)\cdot y_1 \quad (5)$$

Since this intersection point forms a datum point for expansion and contraction, an expansion-to-contraction ratio α' is as follows:

$$\alpha'=(1+D'/100)^{-1} \quad (6)$$

The coordinates $P_{01}(x_{01}, y_{01})$ of an ideal image height are as follows:

$$x_{01}=xs+\alpha'\cdot\Delta x_1$$

$$y_{01}=ys+\alpha'\cdot\Delta y_1 \quad (7)$$

where

$$\Delta x_1=x_1-xs_1$$

$$\Delta y_1=y_1-ys_1 \quad (8)$$

Although an image point P_2 is an image point inside of the circle of radius Ys, an ideal image point P_{02} is obtained in a similar manner.

If distortion correction is to be performed with the center of the image plane selected as a datum, "0" is substituted into D_0 so that the expressions (7) become the same as the expressions (3). Accordingly, whether distortion correction is performed with the center of the image plane selected as a datum or with an arbitrary image height selected as a datum, the amount of correction of distortion aberration can be obtained through processing utilizing the same function which uses D_0 as a parameter.

By selecting an arbitrary image height as a datum for distortion correction, it is possible to reduce the amount of correction of the negative distortional aberration. Accordingly, an image whose distortion is corrected becomes an image which covers a wider area on an image pickup plane than an image whose distortion is corrected with the center of the image plane selected as a datum. This signifies that a photographic angle of view is apparently widened toward the wide-angle side.

The distortion correction performed with an arbitrary image height selected as a datum reaches its maximum limit when an image pickup area is inscribed in a circle selected as the datum, as shown in FIG. **10**. The zoom position in this case is a virtual wide-angle end. If the radius of the circle in

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this case is represented as Ymax (maximum datum image height), an ideal image height $Ymax_0$ relative to this image height Ymax becomes as follows:

$$Ymax_0=(1+Dym/100)^{-1}\cdot Ymax \quad (9)$$

where Dym represents the amount of distortional aberration occurring at the image height Ymax (refer to FIG. **11**).

The maximum image height in the Y direction which is based on distortion correction performed with the center (optical axis) of the image plane selected as a datum is Ymax, and an angle of view which can be photographed is expanded by $Ymax_0$/Ymax times by performing the above-described distortion correction.

From the expression (9), "$Ymax_0$/Ymax" is determined by the amount of distortional aberration occurring at the image height Ymax. Accordingly, it will be understood that the amount of expansion of the photographic angle of view is determined by the amount of distortional aberration occurring at the wide-angle end of a photographic lens and the angle of view expands as the negative value of the distortional aberration becomes larger.

A design example of a lens which produces, at its wide-angle end, a large negative distortional aberration suitable for the above-described image correction will be described below.

FIG. **12** is a cross sectional view of the lens, and FIGS. **13**(*a*)–**13**(*c*) and **14**(*a*)–**14**(*c*) are aberration diagrams respectively showing aberrations which occur at the wide-angle end and the telephoto end of the lens.

FIGS. **15**(*a*) to **15**(*c*) show a numerical example.

In the numerical example, "ri" represents the radius of curvature of the i-th lens surface as viewed from an object side, "di" represents the i-th lens thickness or air separation as viewed from the object side, and "ni" and "vi" respectively represent the refractive index and the Abbe number of the glass of the i-th lens element as viewed from the object side.

In the numerical example, r**20** and r**21** represent a glass block such as a face plate. If the z axis is taken in the direction of the optical axis; the H axis is taken in the direction perpendicular to the optical axis; the direction of propagation of light is positive; R represents the radius of the osculating sphere; and B, C, D and E represent aspheric coefficients, respectively, the shape of the aspheric surface is represented as the following expression:

$$X=(1/R)H^2/\left[1+\sqrt{\{1-(H/R)^2\}}\right]+BH^4+CH^8+DH^5+EH^{10}$$

In this numerical example, an optical angle of view ω_0 is a total of approximately 74°. In the case of an image sensor having an image size of 4:3, the above-described maximum datum image height Ymax is represented as:

$$Ymax=\text{maximum image height}\times 0.6$$

Since the amount of distortional aberration Dym at this time is −9.3%, the following relationship is obtained:

$$Ymax_0/Ymax=(1+Dym/100)^{-1}$$
$$=1.10$$

Thus, the photographic angle of view becomes 10% wider, and the maximum angle of view is approximately 81° in total.

FIGS. **16**(*a*) to **16**(*e*) diagrammatically show the manner of distortion correction performed according to the first embodiment.

Although the above description of the first embodiment has referred to the image pickup apparatus using a single image sensor, the present invention is also applicable to an image pickup apparatus arranged to separate incident light into R, G and B components and pick up R, G and B images as shown in FIG. **17**.

In such an arrangement, since different image distortions occur in the respective color components, data indicative of the amounts of distortion corresponding to the respective color components are prepared, and image processing for distortion correction is performed for each of the color components. By converting the result of the image processing into a video signal, not only the distortion of the image plane but also lateral chromatic aberration is corrected so that a far higher-quality image can be picked up.

A second embodiment of the present invention will be described below.

Although the arrangement of the second embodiment is substantially identical to that of the first embodiment, the second embodiment adopts a image processing method different from that of the first embodiment.

The first embodiment adopts an algorithm according to which an angle of view is first widened by using a photographic lens and, after the photographic lens has reached its wide-angle end, the angle of view is widened to a further extent by using image processing. In contrast, the second embodiment adopts an algorithm according to which if a negative distortional aberration occurs in the photographic lens, not only distortion correction but also widening of the angle of view is performed. FIGS. **18**(*a*) to **18**(*c*) diagrammatically show the manner of the distortion correction.

For example, if an arbitrary image height which is selected as a datum for distortion correction is fixed to the maximum datum image height Ymax and correction is sequentially performed, to whichever zoom position the photographic lens is set, the image pickup area can be utilized to the maximum extent.

The adoption of this method makes it possible to prevent the amount of distortion correction from varying to extremes. In the case of the above-described image processing, during zooming, as the angle of view of the photographic lens approaches the wide-angle end, the rate at which the angle of view widens increases. In this case, it is desirable that as the angle of view of the photographic lens approaches the wide-angle end, the speed of zooming of the photographic lens be decreased so that it is possible to achieve zooming which is felt smooth by the photographer.

A third embodiment of the present invention will be described below.

The third embodiment relates to an example which is arranged to perform distortion correction of a photographic lens which produces a positive distortional aberration on its telephoto side. The arrangement of the apparatus is substantially identical to that of the first embodiment.

FIG. **19** is a flowchart showing an algorithm for calculating addresses according to the third embodiment. It is assumed that Z_0 represents the zoom position at which the distortional aberration of the photographic lens is "0".

[step S**100**] It is determined whether the zoom position of the photographic lens is closer to the wide-angle end or the telephoto end with respect to Z_0. If the zoom position of the photographic lens is closer to the wide-angle end, i.e., in the case of the relationship of $Zs \leqq Z_0$, the process proceeds to Step S**102**. If the zoom position of the photographic lens is closer to the telephoto end ($Zs > Z_0$), the process proceeds to Step S**101**.

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[Step S101] Distortion correction is performed with the four corners of the image plane selected as a datum (as will be described later in more detail).

[Step S102] A comparison is made between the zoom position Zs which is aimed at by the photographer and the zoom position Zw which can be taken by the photographic lens **100** at the wide-angle end. If Zs is not less than Zw, i.e., in the case of the relationship of Zs≧Zw, the process proceeds to Step S103. In the case of the relationship of Zs<Zw, the process proceeds to Step S104.

[Step S103] Since the relationship of Zs≧Zw is established, distortion correction is performed with the center of the image plane selected as a datum, in a manner similar to that executed in Step S52 described previously in connection with the first embodiment. The process proceeds to the next step.

If it is determined in Step S102 that the relationship of Zs<Zw is established, it is determined that the zoom position of the photographic lens **100** has entered the area of the virtual zoom position, and the process proceeds to Step S104 as described previously.

[Step S104] It is determined whether the zoom position Zs which is aimed at by the photographer is less than the virtual zoom position Zmin at the wide-angle end which is acceptable in terms of the effect of image correction. If the zoom position Zs is less than the virtual zoom position Zmin, i.e., in the case of the relationship of Zs<zmin, the process proceeds to Step S105. In the case of the the relationship of Zs≧Zmin, the process proceeds to Step S106.

[step S105] Since the zoom position Zs which is aimed at by the photographer is less than the virtual zoom position Zmin at the wide-angle end which is acceptable in terms of the effect of image correction, the operation of substituting the value of Zmin into Zs is performed.

[Step S106] Distortion correction is performed with an arbitrary image height selected as a datum, in a manner similar to that executed in step S55 described previously in connection with the first embodiment.

The "distortion correction with the four corners of the image plane selected as a datum", which is executed in Step S101, will be described below with reference to FIG. **20**.

If distortion correction with the center of an image plane selected as a datum is performed when a positive distortional aberration occurs, image data in the peripheral portion of the image plane is lost so that an imperfect image occurs, as described previously in the description of the related art. To prevent the occurrence of the imperfect image, the circle referred to in the first embodiment, which is used as a datum for distortion correction, is replaced with a circle which circumscribes a photographic area, and if the coordinates of the ideal image point $P_0(x_0, y_0)$ are represented as follows:

$$x_0=(1+D/100)^{-1}\cdot(x-x_S)+x_S$$

$$y_0=(1+D/100)^{-1}\cdot(y-y_S)+y_S \quad (10)$$

the coordinates can be calculated through the expressions used in the first embodiment. In this case, since the sign of the distortional aberration is reversed, the image inside of the circle is expanded in a manner reverse to that described previously in connection with the first embodiment.

Electronic zoom is known as a method for enlarging an image beyond the zoom range of a photographic lens when the zoom position of the photographic lens is set to its telephoto side. The electronic zoom can be effectively combined with a method of correcting telephoto-side distortion according to the present invention. FIG. **21** shows the manner of this combination method. First, the above-described distortion correction with four corners selected as a datum is performed, and the resultant image data is partially trimmed and absent image data is prepared by linear interpolation processing, so that it is possible to obtain an image which is virtually zoomed up.

According to another method, if Zr represents a virtual zoom-up ratio, it is possible to simultaneously perform calculations on distortion correction and electronic zoom-up by replacing (x_0, y_0) in the above-described expressions (10) with $(x_0/Zr, y_0/Zr)$ and determining "x" and "y". FIG. **22** shows the manner of the distortion correction and the electronic zoom-up performed by this method.

A fourth embodiment of the present invention will be described below.

FIG. **23** is a block diagram showing the arrangement of an apparatus according to the fourth embodiment of the present invention, and shows a video system arranged to perform the above-described distortion correction during reproduction of an image.

The arrangement shown in FIG. **23** includes a photographic lens **601** which is formed as a lens assembly capable of zooming, an image sensor **602** such as a CCD, a video signal processing circuit **603** for converting an image pickup signal into a video signal, a shooting state detecting circuit **604** for detecting the shooting state of the photographic lens **601** from the position of a variator lens or the position of a focusing lens, and a data table **605** on which data about distortional aberrations according to the shooting state of the photographic lens **601** are recorded.

A recording controlling circuit **606** is provided for simultaneously recording, on a recording medium such as a video tape, a video signal and an audio signal as well as an information signal for use in performing distortion correction of a recorded video image frame with an arbitrary image height selected as a datum, which information signal is obtained from information about a shooting state supplied from the shooting state detecting circuit **604**, information about a zoom position which is aimed at by the photographer, which information is inputted from a zoom switch **611**, and information about distortional aberration memorized on the data table **605**.

The shown arrangement also includes a reproducing device **607** for reproducing from the recording medium the video signal, the audio signal and the information signal for use in performing distortion correction of a video image frame with an arbitrary image height selected as a datum, an image processing circuit **608** for correcting the distortion of an image, a first image memory **609** for memorizing the image data obtained from the reproducing device **607**, and a second image memory **610** for memorizing image data indicative of the image whose distortion is corrected.

The recording controlling circuit **606** takes out information about distortional aberration from the data table **605** in the form of a coefficient (distortion coefficient) obtained from approximation using a function, on the basis of the information about the shooting state supplied from the shooting state detecting circuit **604**, and makes a comparison between the information about the zoom position supplied from the shooting state detecting circuit **604** and the information about the zoom position which is aimed at by the photographer, supplied from the zoom switch **611**. Thus, the recording controlling circuit **606** obtains an image height which is used as a datum in distortion correction (datum image height), and records a distortion coefficient and a datum image height.

The reproducing device **607** reads out the distortion coefficient and the datum image height, and sends them to

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the image processing circuit **608** together with a video signal. In the image processing circuit **608**, an undistorted image is formed according to the sequence of the above-described distortion correction.

The recording medium may also be a magnetic disk or an optical disk. A subject to be recorded is not limited to a moving image, and a still image such as a still video image can also be recorded.

A similar system can also be constructed as shown in FIG. **24**. According to the system shown in FIG. **24**, in a silver-halide camera, data is recorded on a film on which an image is recorded, by optical or magnetic means. The image recorded on the film is converted into a digital signal by a scanner or the like and the recorded data is read out from the film at the same time or by a separate readout device. A video output may be converted into a video signal conforming to the NTSC or HDTV system so that it can be displayed on a display device, or may be outputted as an image copy from a color printer.

Incidentally, in FIG. **24**, reference numeral **701** denotes a photographic lens, reference numeral **702** denotes a film and reference numeral **703** denotes an electronic conversion device. In FIG. **24**, the other reference numerals which are identical to those shown in FIG. **23** denote circuits having functions identical to those of the corresponding circuits shown in FIG. **23**.

According to the arrangement shown in FIG. **24**, the information about the shooting state is recorded on the recording medium, and the information about the distortional aberration is recorded on the data table **605** of the reproducing device. However, similarly to FIG. **23**, the data table on which the information about the distortional aberration is recorded may be provided in a photographic apparatus or in a lens barrel which is separable from the photographic apparatus.

The information about the shooting state of the distortional-aberration information may be recorded not on the recording medium (film) but in another memory device of the photographic apparatus.

According to the first to fourth embodiments, since an image is corrected with an arbitrary image height from the center (optical axis) of an image plane selected as a datum, an image obtained from a photographic lens can be effectively used to photograph an image of quality which exceeds the specifications of a photographic lens.

As is apparent from the above description, according to the first to fourth embodiments, one preferred form of arrangement is provided with distortional-aberration memorizing means for memorizing distortional-aberration information about a photographic lens, state-of-photographic-lens detecting means for detecting a state of the photographic lens, distortional-aberration detecting means for detecting distortional-aberration information about distortional aberration occurring during photography, on the basis of information supplied from the state-of-photographic-lens detecting means, and image correcting means for correcting a distortion of an image due to the photographic lens with an arbitrary image height in a photographed image selected as a datum.

Another preferred form of arrangement includes an image pickup apparatus which is provided with distortional-aberration memorizing means for memorizing distortional-aberration information about a photographic lens; state-of-photographic-lens detecting means for detecting a state of the photographic lens; distortional-aberration detecting means for detecting distortional-aberration information about distortional aberration occurring during photography, on the basis of information supplied from the state-of-photographic-lens detecting means; and distortional-aberration recording means for recording the distortional-aberration information supplied from the distortional-aberration detecting means on a recording medium, and an image reproducing apparatus which is provided with distortional-aberration readout means for reading out the distortional-aberration information recorded on the recording medium and image correcting means for correcting a distortion of an image due to the photographic lens with an arbitrary image height in a photographed image selected as a datum.

Yet another preferred form of arrangement includes an image pickup apparatus which is provided with state-of-photographic-lens detecting means for detecting a state of a photographic lens; and state-of-photographic-lens information recording means for recording state-of-photographic-lens information supplied from the state-of-photographic-lens detecting means on a recording medium, and an image reproducing apparatus which is provided with state-of-photographic-lens readout means for reading out the state-of-photographic-lens information recorded on the recording medium; distortional-aberration memorizing means for memorizing distortional-aberration information about the photographic lens; distortional-aberration detecting means for detecting distortional-aberration information about distortional aberration occurring during photography, on the basis of the state-of-photographic-lens information supplied from the state-of-photographic-lens readout means; and image correcting means for correcting a distortion of an image due to the photographic lens with an arbitrary image height in a photographed image selected as a datum, on the basis of the distortional-aberration information supplied from the distortional-aberration detecting means.

According to any of the aforesaid preferred forms, the amount of distortion of an image is corrected on the basis of the distortional-aberration information about the photographic lens with an arbitrary image height from the center (optical axis) of the image plane of the photographic lens selected as a datum.

Accordingly, the image obtained from the photographic lens can be effectively used to provide an image of quality which exceeds the specifications of the photographic lens.

An embodiment of a control device will be described below which electronically corrects the distortion of an image not over the entire zoom range but in a particular zoom range in which an outstanding distortional aberration occurs, so that zoom speeds can be prevented from being substantially influenced.

FIGS. **27**(*a*)-**1**, **27**(*a*)-**2**, and **27**(*a*)-**3**, and FIGS. **27**(*b*)-**1**, **27**(*b*)-**2**, and **27**(*b*)-**3** are views respectively showing the optical performance of a photographic zoom lens according to a fifth embodiment of the present invention and that of a general photographic zoom lens.

FIGS. **27**(*b*)-**1**, **27**(*b*)-**2**, and **27**(*b*)-**3**, show the distortional aberration of the general zoom lens. As shown, when the zoom lens is set to a wide-angle position, a large distortional aberration occurs on the negative side, whereas when the zoom lens is set to a telephoto position, a distortional aberration occurs on the positive side.

If a zoom lens is to be designed so that requirements such as reduced size, reduced weight and compactness can be satisfied, it is extremely difficult to reduce distortional aberrations at the wide-angle end and the telephoto end of the zoom lens. For this reason, the zoom lens is generally designed in such a way that its distortional aberration is distributed so that the amount of distortional aberration at

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the wide-angle end and the amount of distortional aberration at the telephoto end become approximately equal to each other. As a result, the absolute amount of the distortional aberration of the zoom lens is not reduced. However, as can be seen from FIG. **27**(*b*)-**1**, **27**(*b*)-**2** and **27**(*b*)-**3**, although the distortional aberration is large in the neighborhood of the wide-angle end and the telephoto end, the distortional aberration occurring in a middle angle position varies substantially monotonously and is small compared to the distortional aberration occurring at either of the wide-angle end and the telephoto end.

For this reason, according to the fifth embodiment, optical design is adopted which is capable of concentrating the distortional aberration on a particular photographing position as shown in FIG. **27**(*a*)-**1**, **27**(*a*)-**2**, and **27**(*a*)-**3**. More specifically, the design is such that, as described above, the amount of distortional aberration at the wide-angle end and the amount of distortional aberration at the telephoto end are made approximately equal to each other and the distortional aberration at middle focal lengths varies monotonously.

During a photographic operation, the photographing position of a photographic zoom lens which is being operated is detected. If it is determined that the photographing position is close to a photographing position in which a large distortional aberration occurs, which photographing position is memorized in a memory part, a geometrical deformation of an image which has occurred due to the photographic zoom lens is interpolated on the basis of image data read out from a solid-state image sensor in accordance with the geometrical deformation. Thus, the distortional aberration is corrected so that an image free of distortional aberration can be obtained.

In other words, according to the fifth embodiment, a photographing position in which correction is to be performed of distortional aberration is specified in advance, and the optical design of a zoom lens is determined while taking account of the specified photographing position. During a photographic operation, a detection is made as to the photographing position of the zoom lens which is currently being operated, and only if correction of the distortional aberration of the zoom lens is needed (in the fifth embodiment, correction is performed of a distortional aberration occurring only in the neighborhood of the wide-angle end and the telephoto end), pixel data for a plurality of lines are used to calculate the pixel signals of each scanning line affected by the geometrical deformation, thereby correcting the distortional aberration due to the photographic zoom lens. Accordingly, it is possible to achieve high image quality by using a comparatively inexpensive lens.

FIG. **28** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of a solid-state image pickup camera provided with a photographic zoom lens having the above-described optical performance.

The arrangement shown in FIG. **28** includes a CCD **10** which is a solid-state image sensor, and the CCD **10** is made up of a photoelectric conversion part **1**, a storage part **3** and a shift register **5**. Reference numeral **2** denotes an example of an image pattern formed on the photoelectric conversion part **1**, and reference numeral **4** denotes a charge pattern.

The shown arrangement also includes a switch **17** for selectively transmitting a signal supplied from the CCD **10**, in accordance with a command from a CPU **16**, an amplifier **6**, a sample-and-hold (S/H) circuit **7**, an analog/digital (A/D) converter **8**, and a line memory **9** having a memory capacity capable of memorizing an output for several lines from the CCD **10**.

An address memory circuit **11** contains two kinds of address information for use in executing readout from the line memory **9**, and either of the two kinds is memorized for correction of distortional aberration at the wide-angle end, while the other kind is memorized for correction of distortional aberration at the telephoto end. The address memory circuit **11** has the function of causing the line memory **9** to send out data (information indicative of the amount of correction of distortional aberration) (by outputting address information to the line memory **9**). The CPU **16** controls the operation of the present system, and applies to the switch **17** (SW1) ON-OFF information indicating whether a distortional-aberration correcting operation is to be performed, on the basis of focal length information indicative of the current focal length of a photographic zoom lens. If the distortional-aberration correcting operation is to be performed, the CPU **16** selects information indicative of the amount of correction of distortional aberration at the wide-angle or telephoto end via the address memory circuit **11**, and causes the line memory **9** to send out the corresponding data.

The shown arrangement also includes an interpolation circuit **12**, a video signal processing circuit **13** and a synchronizing signal adding circuit **14**. Reference numeral **15** denotes a video signal outputted from the video signal processing circuit **13**.

Although the operation of each of the above-described circuits is controlled by a timing controlling circuit, an illustration of the timing controlling circuit, control signals and the like is omitted for the sake of simplicity.

FIG. **29** is a mechanism diagram showing the photographic zoom lens and a focal length detecting part of the above-described solid-state image pickup camera.

The photographic zoom lens shown in FIG. **29** includes a first lens group (focusing lens) **71** for focus adjustment, a second lens group (variator lens) **72** having a zooming function, a third lens group (compensator lens) **73** for correcting a focus position, and a fourth lens group **74** having an image forming function.

The focal length detecting part shown in FIG. **29** includes a position detector **75** for detecting the position of the variator lens **72** having the zooming function, and a focal length detecting circuit **76** for calculating a focal length from the position information supplied from the position detector **75** (position information about the variator lens **72**) and sending out the resultant focal length information to the CPU **16**.

FIG. **30** is a flowchart showing the operation of the solid-state image pickup camera according to the fifth embodiment of the present invention. The operation of the solid-state image pickup camera will be described below with reference to the flowchart.

[Step S91] A photographic operation is started.

[Step S92] Focal length information is detected via the focal length detecting circuit **76**, and the current focal length information is obtained.

[Step S93] It is determined whether the focal length information corresponds to a focal length which lies within a predetermined distortional-aberration correction range in the neighborhood of the wide-angle end or the telephoto end. If the focal length information corresponds to the focal length which lies within the predetermined distortional-aberration correction range, the process proceeds to Step S94. Otherwise, the process proceeds to Step S95.

[Step S94] Since the current focal length information about the photographic zoom lens (to be exact, the variator lens **72**) corresponds to the focal length which lies within the predetermined distortional-aberration correction range, a variable SW1 is turned on. Thus, the switch Sw1 is turned on and a signal from the CCD **10** is coupled to the amplifier **6**.

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[Step S95] Since the current focal length information about the photographic zoom lens corresponds to a focal length which lies outside the predetermined distortional-aberration correction range, the variable SW1 is turned off. Thus, the switch SW1 is turned off and a signal from the CCD **10** is directly coupled to the video signal processing circuit **13**.

[step S96] It is determined whether the variable SW1 is on or off. If it is on, the process proceeds to Step S97, whereas if it is off, the process proceeds to Step S98.

[Step S97] A distortional-aberration correcting circuit which is made up of the amplifier **6**, the circuit **7**, the A/D converter **8**, the line memory **9** and the interpolation circuit **12** is activated to perform distortional-aberration correction on the basis of the signal from the CCD **10** and address information from the address memory circuit **11**. (The operation of each of these circuits will be described later in detail.) Then, the process proceeds to Step S98.

[Step S98] The video signal processing circuit **13** is operated to generate a video signal on the basis of the signal from the aforementioned distortional-aberration correcting circuit or the CCD **10**, and outputs the video signal.

[Step S99] It is determined whether an operation of a zooming mechanism has been performed. If the operation of the zooming mechanism has been performed, there is a possibility that the zooming mechanism may have been operated during the above-described computations and the focal length may have been varied from that obtained in Step S92. Accordingly, the process returns to Step S92 in which focal length information is newly detected, and the operations subsequent to Step S92 are performed. On the other hand, if the operation of the zooming mechanism has not been performed, it is determined that the focal length has not varied, and the process returns to Step S96 and the operations subsequent to Step S96 is performed.

FIG. **31** is a schematic diagram which serves to explain the operation of the photographic zoom lens.

In FIG. **31**, reference numeral **21** denotes an object plane, and reference numeral **22** denotes an object. Reference numeral **23** denotes the photographic zoom lens made up of the aforementioned lens groups shown in FIG. **29**. Reference numeral **24** denotes an image surface, and reference numeral **25** denotes an image.

An image of the object **22** in the object plane **21** is formed as the image **25** on the image surface **24** by the photographic zoom lens **23**. The CCD **10** which is the solid-state image sensor is disposed on the image surface **24** for performing photoelectric conversion of the image **25**. The photographic zoom lens **23** has a distortional aberration which is set to a value larger than a normal allowable value. Accordingly, the image **25** is distorted compared to the object **22** as shown in FIG. **31**.

However, in lens design, it is well known that if the allowable value of a particular aberration is made greater than those of the other aberrations, it is possible to facilitate correction of the other aberrations. Accordingly, it is possible to achieve various advantages such as a reduction in the size of the photographic zoom lens **23**, a reduction in the number of lens elements to be incorporated therein, and utilization of an inexpensive glass material.

Referring again to FIG. **28**, the image pattern **2** corresponding to the image **25** formed by the photographic zoom lens **23** is produced on the photoelectric conversion part **1** of the CCD **10**. The CCD **10** used in the fifth embodiment is of a frame transfer type. More specifically, the image pattern **2** obtained by photoelectric conversion in the photoelectric conversion part **1** is transferred to the storage part **3** as the charge pattern **4**, and the charge pattern **4** is read out by the shift register **5** on line-by-line basis.

FIG. **32** is a schematic diagram showing the relationship between the image and the CCD.

In FIG. **32**, reference numeral **31** denotes each pixel of the CCD **10**, and reference numerals 32_1, 32_2 and 32_3 denote first, second and third scanning lines, respectively.

The first to third scanning lines 32_1, 32_2 and 32_3 represent the first three scanning lines. Although they should originally constitute straight lines, they are formed as curved lines by the influence of distortional aberration. In other words, the shape of each of these curved lines corresponds to the shape of a curved line which occurs due to distortional aberration when an image of a horizontal straight line which extends in the object plane **21** of the photographic zoom lens **23** is formed on the image surface **24**.

The charge pattern **4** is sequentially read out on line-by-line basis and on pixel-by-pixel basis for each line. Regarding the manner of reading out the pixels **31**, the rightmost pixel on the lowermost line (as viewed in FIG. **32**) is first read out, and the left-hand adjacent pixel is then read out. Thus, the pixels for one line are sequentially read out. Then, the pixel signals on the second lowermost line are sequentially read out from the rightmost pixel. A similar readout operation is performed on the third lowermost line et seqq.

Referring to FIG. **28**, the pixel signals read out from the shift register **5** of the CCD **10** are, as described above, directly sent to the video signal processing circuit **13** if the switch SW1 is off.

If the switch SW1 is on, the switch SW1 outputs the pixel signals to the distortional-aberration correcting circuit. That is to say, the pixel signals are amplified by the amplifier **6**, and the amplified pixel signals are held in the S/H circuit **7**. The output from the S/H circuit **7** is digitized by the A/D converter **8**, and the digital output from the A/D converter **8** is supplied to and memorized in the line memory **9**. The pixel signals for a plurality of lines of the CCD **10** are stored in the line memory **9** before a readout operation is started. This storing operation is carried out to read out pixel signals along a curved scanning line because the curved scanning line extends across a plurality of pixel lines.

The CCD **10** sends the kind of data required for distortional-aberration correction to the address memory circuit **11** on the basis of focal length information about the photographic zoom lens **23**, and the address memory circuit **11** reads out shape data about a scanning line and generates address information for use in reading out the pixel signals memorized in the line memory **9**. The shape data about the scanning line may be obtained by directly sampling the scanning line, or may be obtained as a coefficient by performing appropriate approximation using a function. The shape data about the scanning line which corresponds to the state of the photographic zoom lens **23** is obtained during the process of designing the photographic zoom lens **23** or by optical measurement performed after a trial production.

Since the positions of pixels at the CCD **10** generally do not coincide with those of pixels on such curved scanning lines, the positions of the pixels on the curved scanning line need to be subjected to interpolation processing. Accordingly, data for a plurality of pixels are read out from the line memory **9** and supplied to the interpolation circuit **12**, in which the value of one pixel on the scanning line is calculated.

The memory capacity of the line memory **9** is determined in the following manner.

FIG. **33** is a view showing the relationship between the pixels of the line memory **9** and the scanning line.

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In FIG. **33**, each pixel is denoted by reference numeral **41**. The pixels **41** correspond to the pixels of the CCD **10** in one-to-one relation. Reference numeral **42** denotes the most curved scanning line, i.e., a scanning line which extends across a greater number of pixel lines of the line memory **9** than any other scanning line. Reference numeral **43** denotes a scanning line next to the most curved scanning line **42**. Reference numeral **44** denotes each pixel of the most curved scanning line **42**, and reference numeral **45** denotes each pixel of the scanning line **43** next to the scanning line **42**. In the shown example, it is necessary to calculate the values of pixel data at the position of each pixel **44** represented as a black dot on the most curved scanning line **42** and at the position of each pixel **45** represented as a black dot on the next scanning line **45**.

The size of the line memory **9** is indicated at **46**. The size **46** of the line memory **9** is selected as a memory capacity capable of memorizing data indicative of the pixels **31** of the CCD **10** which can be used to calculate the values of all the pixels **44** of the most curved scanning line **42**. In other words, the size **46** of the line memory **9** corresponds to the number of lines obtained by adding, if necessary, the number of adjacent lines required for interpolation processing to the number of the pixels **31** of the CCD **10** across which the most curved scanning line **42** extends. Of course, the size **46** of the line memory **9** may be greater than the aforesaid number of lines.

If the line memory **9** has a memory capacity for the size **46**, the values of all the pixels **44** on the most curved scanning line **42** can be calculated from the pixels **41** of the line memory **9**.

When the values of the pixels **45** on the next scanning lines **43** are to be calculated, the pixel data on the lowermost line in the line memory **9** are discarded and the next line which has not yet memorized in the line memory **9**, for example, pixel data on the uppermost line in FIG. **32**, are read from the CCD **10**. Since the size **46** of the line memory **9** is selected so that the line memory **9** can memorize a sufficient amount of pixel data **41** to calculate the values of all the pixels on any scanning line, the values of all the pixels **45** on the next scanning line **43** are also calculated. Similarly, the values of all the pixels on the other scanning lines are calculated.

If the shape of a scanning line differs from the above-described one, it may not be necessary to read out new pixel data before calculating the values of the pixels, or it may be necessary to read out pixel data for two or more lines. A timing controlling circuit (not shown) adjusts the manner of reading out pixel data in response to a signal from the address memory circuit **11**. If the final output signal of the solid-state image pickup camera is a video signal, it is necessary to output pixel data for each line on line-by-line basis at intervals of a predetermined time period. Accordingly, as the case may be, it is also preferable to adopt an arrangement in which the line memory **9** is provided with a buffer memory for timing adjustment.

The interpolation processing performed by the interpolation circuit **12** will be described below with reference to FIG. **34**.

In FIG. **34**, reference numeral 52_1 denotes a scanning line, and reference numerals 52_2 and 53_5 denote pixels of the scanning line 52_1. Reference numerals 53_1 53_2, . . . , 53_5 denote pixels of the line memory **9**.

To calculate the values of the pixels of the scanning line **51**, since the positions of the pixels 52_1 and 52_2 differ from those of the pixels 53_1 to 53_5 of the line memory **9**, it is necessary to calculate the values of the pixels 52_1 and 52_2 as interpolated values. The simplest method is to select pixels closest to the respective pixels 52_1 and 52_2 from the pixels 53_1 to 53_5 of the line memory **9** and obtain the values of the closest pixels as the values of the pixels 52_1 and 52_2. Specifically, the values of the pixels 52_1 and 52_2 of the scanning line **51** are respectively obtained as the values of the pixels 53_4 and 53_2 of the line memory **9**. It is also preferable to adopt an arrangement in which, in the above-described processing, the address memory circuit **11** is made to determine appropriate addresses so that the interpolation processing is performed during a readout from the line memory **9**. With such an arrangement, the special interpolation circuit **12** can be omitted.

Another approximation method is to calculate interpolated values from adjacent four pixels in the line memory **9** by linear approximation. Specifically, the values of the pixels 52_1 and 52_2 of the scanning line **51** are respectively calculated by sending the four pixels 53_1, 53_2, 53_4, 53_5 and the four pixels 53_2, 53_3, 53_5, 53_4 to the interpolation circuit **12** and performing linear approximation using the corresponding four pixels.

Still another approximation method is a "cubic convolution method". The cubic convolution method is a method of performing interpolation on the basis of the value of neighboring pixels by using a cubic spline curve. In this method, sixteen neighboring pixels are needed for calculation of one pixel.

Referring again to FIG. **28**, the output signal from the interpolation circuit **12** is sent to the video signal processing circuit **13**, in which the signal is converted into a signal of predetermined format, such as an NTSC television signal or a high-definition television signal. A synchronizing signal is supplied from the synchronizing signal adding circuit **14** to the video signal processing circuit **13**, whereby a final video signal is formed. The video signal **15** outputted from the video signal processing circuit **13** is displayed on a monitor, supplied to the succeeding processing circuit, and so on, according to the entire system arrangement.

Distortional-aberration correcting processing will be described below with reference to FIG. **35**.

In FIG. **35**, an object is indicated by reference numeral **61**, and an image of the object **61** is indicated by reference numeral **62**. The image **62** is obtained through the photographic zoom lens **23**, and a charge pattern on the CCD **10** also has the same shape as the image **62**. Reference numeral **63** denotes an image formed by an output video signal.

In FIG. **35**, the three patterns **61**, **62** and **63** are exaggeratedly depicted in such a manner that the relationship in size between the three patterns **61**, **62** and **63** differs from the relationship between the actual scales of them.

The image **62** is distorted with respect to the object **61** by the distortional aberration of the photographic zoom lens **23**. However, since distortional-aberration correction is electrically performed as described previously, the image **63** formed by the output video signal **15** is obtained as an image similar to the object **61** as shown in FIG. **35**.

FIGS. **36**(*a*)–**36**(*c*) are views showing one example of the optical performance of a photographic zoom lens used in a sixth embodiment of the present invention.

As shown in FIGS. **36**(*a*)–**36**(*c*), the photographic zoom lens used in the sixth embodiment has a distortional aberration the amount of which is extremely large at its wide-angle end and approximately equivalent at the telephoto end and the middle angle position. The distortional aberration monotonously varies over the focal lengths between the middle angle position and the telephoto end. For this reason, in the sixth embodiment, correction is performed of a

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distortional aberration occurring in the neighborhood of the wide-angle end.

FIGS. **37**(*a*)–**37**(*c*) are views showing one example of a variation in distortional aberration depending on shooting distance in the neighborhood of the wide-angle end. FIGS. **37**(*a*)–**37**(*c*) show from the left-hand side distortional aberrations occurring in photography at infinity, at an object distance of 3 m, and at the shortest shooting distance (1.2 m).

It is understood from FIGS. **37**(*a*)–**37**(*c*) that even if the same focal length is selected, the distortional aberration greatly varies depending on the shooting distance. For this reason, in the sixth embodiment, as will be described below, not only focal length information but also shooting distance information is used as discrimination information for distortional-aberration correction.

FIG. **38** is a block diagram schematically showing the focal length detecting part and the shooting distance detecting part of a solid-state image pickup camera according to the sixth embodiment of the present invention. Since the arrangement of the other constituent elements is similar to that shown in FIG. **28**, an illustration thereof is omitted.

The photographic zoom lens shown in FIG. **38** includes a first lens group (focusing lens) **111** having a focus-position adjusting function, a second lens group (variator lens) **112** having a zooming function, a third lens group (compensator lens) **113** having a focus-position correcting function, and a fourth lens group **114** having an image forming function.

The arrangement shown in FIG. **29** also includes a detector **115** for detecting the position of the variator lens **112**, and a focal length detecting circuit **116** for calculating a focal length from the position of the variator lens **112** and sending out the resultant focal length information to the CPU **16**, a detector **117** for detecting the position of the focusing lens **111**, and a shooting distance detecting circuit **118** for calculating a shooting distance from the position of the focusing lens **111** and sending out the resultant shooting distance information to the CPU **16**.

FIG. **39** is a flowchart showing the operation of the above-described solid-state image pickup camera. The operation thereof will be described below with reference to the flowchart.

[Step S111] A photographic operation is started.

[Step S112] Detection of a focal length is performed by the focal length detecting circuit **116**, and the current focal length information is obtained.

[Step S113] It is determined whether the focal length information corresponds to a focal length which lies within a predetermined distortional-aberration correction range in the neighborhood of the wide-angle end. If the focal length information corresponds to the focal length which lies within the predetermined distortional-aberration correction range, the process proceeds to Step S114. Otherwise, the process proceeds to Step S115.

[Step S114] Since the current focal length information about the photographic zoom lens (to be exact, the variator lens **112**) corresponds to the focal length which lies within the predetermined distortional-aberration correction range, a variable SW2 is turned on. Thus, the switch SW2 is turned on and a signal from the CCD **10** is coupled to the amplifier **6**. Then, the process proceeds to Step S116.

[Step S115] Since the current focal length information about the photographic zoom lens corresponds to a focal length which lies outside the predetermined distortional-aberration correction range, the variable SW2 is turned off. Thus, the switch SW2 is turned off and a signal from the CCD **10** is directly coupled to the video signal processing circuit **13**. Then, the process proceeds to Step S117.

[Step S116] The current shooting distance information is detected by the shooting distance detecting circuit **118**, and it is determined to which of a predetermined shooting distance zone the shooting distance corresponds. The result of this decision is memorized as a variable SW3. Then, the process proceeds to Step S117.

In Step S116, a decision result indicative of short distance is memorized as the variable SW3=1, a decision result indicative of medium distance is memorized as the variable Sw3=2, and a decision result indicative of long distance is memorized as the variable SW3=3.

[Step S117] It is determined whether the variable SW2 is on or off. If it is on, the process proceeds to Step S118, whereas if it is off, the process proceeds to Step S119.

[Step S118] The distortional-aberration correcting circuit which is made up of the amplifier **6**, the circuit **7**, the A/D converter **8**, the line memory **9** and the interpolation circuit **12** is activated to perform distortional-aberration correction on the basis of the signal from the CCD **10** and address information selected on the basis of the shooting distance data (the kind of signal of the variable SW3). Then, the process proceeds to Step S119.

[Step S119] The video signal processing circuit **13** is operated to generate a video signal on the basis of the signal from the aforementioned distortional-aberration correcting circuit or the CCD **10**, and outputs the video signal. Then, the process proceeds to Step S120.

[Step S120] It is determined whether an operation of a zooming mechanism has been performed. If the operation of the zooming mechanism has been performed, there is a possibility that after the video signal has been outputted, the zooming mechanism may have been operated to vary the focal length. Accordingly, the process returns to Step S112 in which focal length information is newly detected, and the operations subsequent to Step S112 are performed. On the other hand, if the operation of the zooming mechanism has not been performed, the process proceeds to Step S121.

[Step S121] It is determined whether the variable SW2 is on (i.e., whether the focal length is within the distortional-aberration correction range) and whether a focus adjusting mechanism is in operation. If both conditions are satisfied, the process proceeds to Step S116. If both conditions are not satisfied, the process proceeds to Step S117 and the operations subsequent to Step S117 are performed.

The above-described operations are repeatedly performed.

According to the above-described fifth and sixth embodiments, during optical design, the photographic zoom lens is designed so that photographic conditions under which to perform distortional-aberration correction during photography are restricted to extremely limited photographic patterns selected from all possible photographic patterns. During photography, the photographing position of the photographic zoom lens which is being operated is detected, and only when distortional-aberration correction is needed, i.e., only when the focal length is within the distortional-aberration correction range, correction is performed of a distortional aberration due to the photographic zoom lens. Accordingly, it is possible to reduce the scale of a signal processing circuit which is used for performing the distortional-aberration correction during photography, and it is possible to materially improve the signal processing capability to perform various signal processings during photography. Further, it is possible to design a light-weight, compact photographic zoom lens which uses a reduced number of lens elements, whereby it is possible to provide a far more inexpensive solid-state image pickup camera of further reduced size.

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FIG. **31** is a schematic diagram showing a photographic zoom lens according to a seventh embodiment of the present invention.

In FIG. **31**, reference numeral **21** denotes an object plane, and reference numeral **22** denotes an object. Reference numeral **23** denotes the photographic zoom lens made up of the aforementioned lens groups shown in FIG. **29**. Reference numeral **24** denotes an image surface, and reference numeral **25** denotes an image.

An image of the object **22** in the object plane **21** is formed as the image **25** on the image surface **24** by the photographic zoom lens **23**. A CCD **216** which is a solid-state image sensor to be described later is disposed on the image surface **24** for performing photoelectric conversion of the image **25**. The photographic zoom lens **23** has a distortional aberration which is set to a value larger than a normal allowable value. Accordingly, the image **25** is distorted compared to the object **22** as shown in FIG. **31**.

However, in lens design, it is well known that if the allowable value of a particular aberration is made greater than those of the other aberrations, it is possible to facilitate correction of the other aberrations. Accordingly, it is possible to achieve various advantages such as a reduction in the size of the photographic zoom lens **23**, a reduction in the number of lens elements to be incorporated therein, and utilization of an inexpensive glass material.

FIG. **40** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of a solid-state image pickup camera provided with the above-described photographic zoom lens.

The arrangement shown in FIG. **40** includes the CCD **216** which is a solid-state image sensor, and the CCD **216** is made up of a photoelectric conversion part **201**, a storage part **203** and a shift register **205**. Reference numeral **202** denotes an example of an image pattern formed on the photoelectric conversion part **201**, and reference numeral **204** denotes a charge pattern.

The shown arrangement also includes an amplifier **206**, a sample-and-hold (S/H) circuit **207**, an analog/digital (A/D) converter **208**, and a line memory **209** having a memory capacity capable of memorizing an output for several lines from the CCD **216**. A lens state signal **210** indicates the current state of the photographic zoom lens **23** (i.e., the lens state), and contains information about the state of zooming, the state of focus, a zooming speed and the like. The shown arrangement also includes an address memory circuit **211** for outputting address information for use in executing readout from the line memory **209**, an interpolation circuit **212**, a video signal processing circuit **213** and a synchronizing signal adding circuit **214**. An output video signal is denoted by reference numeral **215**.

Although the operation of each of the above-described circuit elements is controlled by a timing controlling circuit, an illustration of the timing controlling circuit, control signals and the like is omitted for the sake of simplicity.

The operation of the above-described solid-state image pickup camera will be described below.

Referring to FIG. **40**, signals indicative of pixels of the CCD **216**, which are read out from the shift register **205**, are amplified by the amplifier **206**. The amplified signals are supplied to and held by the S/H circuit **207**. The output from the S/H circuit **207** is digitized by the A/D converter **208**, and the digital output from the A/D converter **208** is supplied to and memorized in the line memory **209**. The signals for a plurality of lines of the CCD **216** are stored in the line memory **209** before a readout operation is started. This storing operation is carried out to read out pixel signals along a curved scanning line because the curved scanning line extends across a plurality of pixel lines. If the lens state signal **210** is inputted to the address memory circuit **211**, the address memory circuit **211** can detect the current lens state.

The address memory circuit **211** includes a built-in ROM (read-only memory) in which shape data about scanning lines corresponding to various lens states are memorized. The shape data about scanning lines corresponding to various lens states may be obtained by directly sampling the scanning lines, or may be obtained as a coefficient by performing appropriate approximation using a function. The shape data about the scanning lines which correspond to the states of the photographic zoom lens **23** are obtained during the process of designing the photographic zoom lens **23** or by optical measurement performed after a trial production.

If zooming is inoperative, the address memory circuit **211** reads out data from the aforesaid ROM in accordance with the state of the photographic zoom lens **23**, and generates from the read-out data an address for reading out a pixel signal from the line memory **209**. The read-out pixel signal is outputted to the video signal processing circuit **213** as a corrected version of the signal obtained at the CCD **216**.

Since the positions of pixels obtained at the CCD **216** generally do not coincide with those of pixels on a curved scanning line, the positions of the pixels on the curved scanning line need to be subjected to interpolation processing. Accordingly, data for a plurality of pixels are read out from the line memory **209** and supplied to the interpolation circuit **212**, in which the value of one pixel on the scanning line is calculated.

FIG. **41** is an explanatory view of distortional-aberration correcting processing.

In FIG. **41**, an object is indicated by reference numeral **231**, and an image of the object **231** is indicated by reference numeral **232**. The image **232** is obtained through the photographic zoom lens **23**, and a charge pattern on the CCD **216** also has the same shape as the image **232**. Reference numeral **233** denotes an image formed by the output video signal **215**.

In FIG. **41**, the three patterns **231**, **232** and **233** are exaggeratedly depicted in such a manner that the relationship in size between the three patterns **231**, **232** and **233** differs from the relationship between the actual scales of them.

The image **232** is distorted with respect to the object **231** by the distortional aberration of the photographic zoom lens **23**. However, since distortional-aberration correction is electrically performed as described previously, the image **233** formed by the output video signal **15** is obtained as an image similar to the object **231** as shown in FIG. **41**.

During a zooming operation, the above-described image-distortion correcting data which is part of the ROM data is not used and, hence, no interpolation is performed, so that a distorted image obtained at the CCD **216** is outputted along a path B.

The above-described distortion correcting operation will be described below with reference to the flowchart of FIG. **42**.

[Step S241] A photographic operation is started.

[Step S242] It is determined whether the zoom is on or off. If the zoom is on, since no distortion correction is performed, the process stays in Step S242. If the zoom is off, the process proceeds to Step S243 to perform distortion correction.

[Step S243] A zoom position and a focus position are detected, and the process proceeds to Step S244.

[Step S244] Shape data about a scanning line which corresponds to the aforesaid lens state is taken out, and the process proceeds to Step S245.

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[Step S245] Interpolation processing is performed on the basis of the shape data about the scanning line, thereby performing the distortion correction.

It is to be noted that although the distortional aberration has been referred to herein as a geometrical distortion by way of example, the seventh embodiment can, of course, be applied to another kind of geometrical aberration.

It is also preferable to adopt an arrangement in which when the zoom is on, an image formed at the CCD **216** is directly outputted to the video signal processing circuit **213** by an analog circuit.

According to the above-described seventh embodiment, since no distortion correction is performed during a zooming operation, it is possible to achieve simplified computing processing and rapid zooming.

FIG. **43** is a flowchart showing the distortion correcting operation of a solid-state image pickup camera according to an eighth embodiment of the present invention. FIG. **44** is a view which serves to explain the manner of calculation of the amount of correction in Step S253 of FIG. **43**.

When the zoom is off, if a focal length f is f=Z, distortion correction is performed from scanning-line shape data based on the lens state at that time by means of the interpolation circuit.

However, if the zoom is on, the amount of correction, f(Z'), for a focal length Z' to which the current focal length Z will have varied with the elapse of Δt owing to zooming is beforehand obtained by:

$$Z' = Z + v \cdot \Delta t$$

where v represents a zooming speed and Δt represents the time required for distortion correction computation processing. When the focal length Z' is reached during the zooming, distortion correction is performed at the same time.

Steps S251 to S254 of FIG. **43** show the above-described operation performed when the zoom is on.

By performing the above-described control, it is possible to solve, without decreasing the zooming speed, the degradation of image quality due to the problem that distortion correction occasionally becomes unable to follow the zooming speed during zooming.

According to the above-described eighth embodiment, since distortion correction is performed on the basis of the zooming speed during zooming, it is possible to provide an undistorted image at real time.

As described above, in accordance with the fifth to eighth embodiments of the present invention, there is provided an arrangement which includes a photographic zoom lens which is formed in such a manner that its distortional aberration is concentrated on a specific photographing position, detecting means for detecting a photographing position of the photographic zoom lens, and correcting means for correcting, if the detecting means detects that the photographing position of the photographic zoom lens during photography is located within a position where a large distortional aberration occurs, a geometrical deformation of an image occurring due to the photographic zoom lens by reading out image data from the solid-state image sensor on the basis of the geometrical deformation. During optical design, the photographic zoom lens is formed in such a manner that the distortional aberration is concentrated on the specific shooting position. During photography using the photographic zoom lens, if the photographing position of the photographic zoom lens enters the position where the large distortional aberration occurs, the image data is read out from the solid-state image pickup device on the basis of the geometrical deformation of the image occurring due to the photographic zoom lens, and distortional-aberration correction is performed of the geometrical deformation.

Accordingly, it is possible to improve image quality and to provide not only an inexpensive photographic zoom lens but also a low-cost image pickup circuit.

Also, control means is provided for switching the manner of correction of the geometrical deformation according to whether a zooming operation is being performed, so that, during the zooming operation, the operation of correcting the geometrical deformation is not performed or the operation of correcting the deformation is performed by using zooming speed information.

Accordingly, it is possible to improve the zooming speed and to provide an undistorted output image.

An embodiment which will be described later discloses a control device which is arranged to display, during electronic zooming, a video image corresponding to the entire area of the image sensor on a portion of a display so that a user can visually confirm which portion of the entire image plane corresponds to an object image picked up by electronic zooming.

FIG. **45** is a block diagram schematically showing the arrangement of a ninth embodiment of the present invention. The shown arrangement includes a photographic lens **310**, an image sensor **312** for converting an optical image formed by the photographic lens **310** into an electrical signal, a camera signal processing circuit **314** for subjecting the output of the image sensor **312** to camera signal processing such as gamma correction or color adjustment and outputting luminance and color-difference signals (or RGB signals), and an A/D converter **316** for converting the analog output of the camera signal processing circuit **314** into a digital signal.

The shown arrangement also includes an image memory **318** having a memory capacity for at least one image plane for temporarily memorizing image data outputted from the A/D converter **316**, and an image enlarging circuit **320** for electrically enlarging a specified area of an image memorized in the image memory **318** to a predetermined size by means of coordinate transformation. Incidentally, if the specified area corresponds to the entire size of the image plane, the image enlarging circuit **320** provides an output of equal magnification.

The shown arrangement also includes a D/A converter **322** for converting the output data of the image enlarging circuit **320** into an analog signal, and a video encoder **324** for converting the image signal outputted from the D/A converter **322** into a predetermined video format, for example, a video signal conforming to the NTSC system. The output of the video encoder **324** is applied to an output terminal **326** and to an electronic viewfinder (EVF) **328**. A video image recording device, such as a video tape recorder or a video cassette recorder, is connected to the output terminal **326**.

An electronic-zoom frame position selecting key **330** is provided for selecting a position of an electronic-zoom frame within a photographic image plane displayed in the electronic viewfinder **328**, and is formed by, for example, a key switch for inputting an instruction indicative of any of upward, downward, rightward and leftward movements. An electronic-zoom switch **332** is provided for turning on or off an electronic zoom. A system controlling system **334** controls the entire arrangement and, specifically, controls the electronic realized by the image memory **318** and the image enlarging circuit **320**, in accordance with the electronic-zoom frame position selecting key **330** and the electronic-zoom switch **332**.

According to the ninth embodiment, as shown in FIG. **48**, five areas A, B, C, D and E are set in the photographic image

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plane, and the electronic-zoom frame can be moved to any of the five areas A, B, C, D and E. The areas A, B, C, D and E may have the same size or different sizes. The reason why the electronic-zoom frame is made to move to any of the aforesaid fixed positions is to simplify a control system. Of course, it is possible to adopt an arrangement capable of continuously moving the electronic zoom within the photographic image plane. In this arrangement, the key switch **330** may be replaced with an operating member such as a cross-shaped lever which is easier to operate.

As a matter of course, it is also possible to adopt an arrangement capable of recognizing or memorizing the feature of an object and causing the electronic-zoom frame to move automatically so as to track a specific object.

The operation of the ninth embodiment will be described below with reference to FIG. **49**. When a power supply is turned on, the image sensor **312** converts an optical image formed by the photographic lens **310** into an electrical signal (Steps S**201** and S**202**), and the camera signal processing circuit **314** subjects the output of the image sensor **312** to camera signal processing (Step S**203**). The output of the camera signal processing circuit **314** is converted into a digital signal by the A/D converter **316** (Step S**204**), and the digital signal is temporarily memorized in the image memory **318** in units of one image plane (Step S**205**).

If it is determined in Step S**206** that the electronic-zoom switch **332** is on, the system controlling circuit **334** determines which of the areas A, B, C, D and E is to be electronically zoomed, on the basis of the state of the electronic-zoom frame position selecting key **330**. The image enlarging circuit **320** reads out, from the image memory **318**, image data indicative of the image contained in the electronic-zoom frame located in a specified position, and displays the image data as an image enlarged up to a predetermined image size, for example, as shown in FIG. **47** (steps S**207** and S**208**). On the other hand, if it is determined in Step S**206** that the electronic-zoom switch **332** is off, the image enlarging circuit **320** reads out image data corresponding to the entire image plane from the image memory **318** and outputs the image data without modification (Step S**209**).

The D/A converter **322** converts the digital output of the image enlarging circuit **320** into an analog signal (step S**210**), and the video encoder **324** converts the output of the D/A converter **322** into a video signal of predetermined format (Step S**211**). The output of the video encoder **324** is applied to the electronic viewfinder **328** and is also outputted through the output terminal **326** to an external circuit (Step S**212**). The output video signal of the video encoder **324** becomes, when the electronic zoom is on, a signal representative of an enlarged video image of the image contained in the electronic-zoom frame located in the specified position.

For example, if the electronic-zoom frame is moved to the area C, the enlarged image shown in FIG. **50** is obtained from the photographic image shown in FIG. **46**.

In the ninth embodiment, it is also possible to adopt an arrangement in which when the electronic-zoom switch **332** is off, the output of the camera signal processing circuit **314** is directly supplied to the video encoder **324**, while if the electronic-zoom switch **332** is on, the output of the camera signal processing circuit **314** is made to pass through the circuits **316** to **322**.

According to the ninth embodiment, if the electronic zoom is in operation, it is impossible to obtain image information outside of the electronic-zoom frame from the photographic image plane displayed in the electronic viewfinder **328** or the signal outputted from the output terminal **326**. The image information outside of the electronic-zoom frame is occasionally needed as a material for determining whether the electronic zoom is to be turned off.

A tenth embodiment which satisfies such a demand will be described below. FIG. **51** is a block diagram showing the arrangement of the tenth embodiment. The shown arrangement includes a photographic lens **340**, an image sensor **342**, a camera signal processing circuit **344**, an A/D converter **346** for converting the analog output of the camera signal processing circuit **344** into a digital signal, and an image memory **348**. These elements **340** to **348** are substantially identical to the elements **310** to **318** shown in FIG. **45**.

The shown arrangement also includes an image enlarging circuit **350** for electronically enlarging a specified area of an image memorized in the image memory **348** to a predetermined size through coordinate transformation, and an image reducing circuit **352** for reducing the image memorized in the image memory **348** to a predetermined size. The image enlarging circuit **350** provides an output of equal magnification if the specified area corresponds to the entire size of the image plane. The shown arrangement also includes an image combining circuit **354** for combining (or selecting either one of) the output of the image enlarging circuit **350** and the output of the image reducing circuit **352**.

The shown arrangement also includes a D/A converter **356** for converting the output data of the image combining circuit **354** into an analog signal, and a video encoder **358** for converting the image signal outputted from the D/A converter **356** into a predetermined video format, for example, a video signal conforming to the NTSC system. The output of the video encoder **358** is applied to an output terminal **360** and to an electronic viewfinder (EVF) **362**. A video image recording device, such as a video tape recorder or a video cassette recorder, is connected to the output terminal **326**.

The shown arrangement also includes an electronic-zoom frame position selecting key **364** similar to the electronic-zoom frame position selecting key **330**, an electronic-zoom switch **366** similar to the electronic-zoom switch **332**, a subsidiary-image-plane display switch **368** for specifying whether to display a photographic image in the form of a subsidiary image plane, and a system controlling circuit **370** for controlling the entire arrangement. Specifically, the system controlling circuit **370** controls the electronic zoom in accordance with the electronic-zoom frame position selecting key **364** and the electronic-zoom switch **366**, and also controls the subsidiary-image-plane display of the photographic image in accordance with the subsidiary-image-plane display switch **368**.

Referring to the feature of the tenth embodiment, when the electronic-zoom switch **366** is turned on, the image enlarging circuit **350** electronically enlarges the image contained in the area specified by the electronic-zoom frame position selecting key **364**, in a manner similar to that explained in connection with the embodiment shown in FIG. **45**. The image enlarging circuit **350** reduces the entire photographic image memorized in the image memory **348** to a predetermined size.

When the subsidiary-image-plane display switch **368** is turned on, the image combining circuit **354** combines a reduced image outputted from the image reducing circuit **352** with a predetermined portion of an enlarged image outputted from the image enlarging circuit **350**, and outputs the combined image. When the subsidiary-image-plane display switch **368** is turned off, the image combining circuit **354** outputs the output image of the image enlarging circuit **350** without modification.

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When both the electronic-zoom switch **366** and the subsidiary-image-plane display switch **368** are turned on, the image enlarging circuit **350**, the image reducing circuit **352** and the image combining circuit **354** cooperate to cause the image combining circuit **354** to output an image such as that shown in FIG. **52**. A user can obtain image information outside of the electronic-zoom area through the subsidiary image plane.

If a video signal indicative of only an electronically zoomed video image is to be outputted from the output terminal **360** to an external circuit, it is preferable to adopt an arrangement in which the output of the image enlarging circuit **350** is converted into a video signal conforming to the NTSC system or the like by another video encoder so that the output of this video encoder and the output of the video encoder **358** can be selectively supplied to the output terminal **360**.

If a frame line corresponding to the electronic-zoom frame which is set is displayed in the subsidiary image plane, the usability of the electronic zoom is improved. To display such a frame line in the subsidiary image plane, it is preferable to write frame-line data into a portion in the image memory **348** which corresponds to an electronic-zoom frame position selected by the electronic-zoom frame position selecting key **364**.

The ninth and tenth embodiments described above are arranged in such a manner that the position of the electronic-zoom frame can be altered. However, it is also possible to adopt an arrangement which is provided with means for setting the size of the electronic-zoom frame so that the size of the electronic-zoom frame can be altered.

As will be readily understood from the above description, according to the ninth and tenth embodiments, since the electronic-zoom frame can be moved, it is possible to track the movement of an object by moving not the entire image pickup apparatus but the electronic-zoom frame, whereby it is possible to suppress an image shake due to the image pickup apparatus. Accordingly, it is possible to utilize the electronic zoom more effectively.

FIG. **53** is a block diagram showing the circuit arrangement of an image pickup apparatus according to an eleventh embodiment of the present invention.

The arrangement shown in FIG. **53** includes an optical system **401** for forming an object image on the surface of an image sensor which will be described later, an image sensor **402** for performing photoelectric conversion of the object image provided by the optical system **401**, a signal processing circuit **403** for processing a time-series signal relative to the object image, which is obtained from the image sensor **402**, an A/D converter **404** for converting an electrical signal (analog signal) processed by the signal processing circuit **403** into a digital signal, and an image memory **405** for memorizing image data supplied from the A/D converter **404**.

The shown arrangement also includes an image processing circuit **406** for enlarging and reducing an image, an image combining circuit **407** for combining an enlarged image and a reduced image, a D/A converter **408** for restoring a digital signal subjected to the above-described image processing to an analog signal, an encoder **409** for converting the analog signal obtained by the D/A conversion into a standard video signal **410** conforming to the NTSC system, and an electronic viewfinder (EVF) **411** for confirmation of a photographic image plane displayed therein.

A system controller **412** is provided for checking the operational state of each selecting member which will be described later and controlling each constituent element in accordance with the checked operational state, and can be easily realized by using a general-purpose microprocessor. An electronic-zoom function selecting member **413** is provided for specifying whether to make an electronic-zoom function operative (on) or inoperative (off), and a subsidiary-image-plane display selecting member **414** for specifying whether to display (on) an original image which is not enlarged, in the form of a subsidiary image plane or to inhibit display of the subsidiary image plane (off).

FIG. **54** is a flowchart showing the operation of the image pickup apparatus having the above-described arrangement.

When a power switch (not shown) of the apparatus is turned on, an object image is inputted to the image sensor **402** through the optical system **401** (Step **S301**). The object image formed on the image sensor **402** is converted into an electrical signal by the image sensor **402** (Step **S302**). The signal processing circuit **403** which has received the electrical signal converts the signal into a time-series signal relative to the object image (Step **S303**).

Then, the system controller **412** checks the state of the electronic-zoom function selecting member **413** and determines whether the electronic-zoom function is on (Step **S304**). If it is determined that the electronic-zoom function is off, the process proceeds to Step **S312**. If it is determined that the electronic-zoom function is on, the process proceeds to Step **S305**, in which the time-series analog signal relative to the object image is converted into a digital signal by the A/D converter **404**. Then, information for one image plane is temporarily memorized in the image memory **405** (Step **S306**), and the image processing circuit **406** performs the image processing of selecting a digital image signal indicative of the image contained in the electronic-zoom frame from the memorized digital signal and enlarging the image up to the full size of the image plane (Step **S307**).

The variation of the image at that time will be described below with reference to FIG. **56**. The image contained in the electronic-zoom frame is selected from an image for one image plane, such as that shown in the left-hand part of FIG. **56**, and is enlarged up to the full size of the image plane so that the image shown in the right-hand part of FIG. **56** is formed. This image processing can be easily realized by performing coordinate transformation radially from the center of the electronic-zoom frame toward the outside thereof. Accordingly, detailed description of the image processing is omitted herein.

Then, the system controller **412** checks the state of the subsidiary-image-plane display selecting member **414** for displaying an original image plane, which is not enlarged up to an electronically zoomed image plane, as a subsidiary image plane, and checks whether a subsidiary-image-plane display function for displaying the original image plane which is not enlarged is on (Step **S308**). If it is determined that the subsidiary-image-plane display function is off, the process proceeds to Step **S311**. If it is determined that the subsidiary-image-plane display function is on, the process proceeds to Step **S309**. In Step **S309**, the image processing circuit **406** performs the image processing of reducing the image signal memorized in the image memory **405** at a predetermined ratio. Then, the image combining circuit **407** combines the image obtained in Step **S309** and the image obtained in Step **S307** so that the subsidiary-image-plane display signal indicative of the original image which is not electronically zoomed is made to overlap the electronically zoomed image (Step **S310**).

The state of the image at that time is shown in FIG. **55**. The aforesaid image processing can be realized by performing coordinate transformation radially toward the center of the electronic-zoom frame.

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Then, the combined digital image signal is converted into an analog signal by the D/A converter **408** (Step S311), and the analog signal is restored to the standard video signal **410** by the encoder **409** (Step S312). The thus-obtained image is displayed in the EVF **411** (Step S313), and a photographer confirms this image. Also, the image is recorded by the recording device (not shown) (Step S314).

If it is determined in Step S304 that the electronic-zoom function is off, the process proceeds to Step S312 as described previously and the time-series analog signal relative to the object image is immediately restored to the standard video signal **410** by the encoder **409**. The thus-obtained normal image is supplied to the EVF **411** and to the recording device (Steps S313 and S314).

If it is determined in Step S308 that the subsidiary-image-plane display selecting member **414** is off, the process proceeds to Step S311, in which the enlarged-image digital signal is converted into an analog signal by the D/A converter **408**. The analog signal is converted into the standard video signal **410** by the encoder **409** (Step S312). The thus-obtained image is supplied to the EVF **411** and to the recording device (Steps S313 and S314).

There is a great possibility that a temporally varying foreign object which is contained in image information outside of the electronic-zoom frame may enter the electronic-zoom frame. Also, if such a temporally varying foreign object enters the electronic-zoom frame, it will affect the movement of a target object within the electronic-zoom frame. Accordingly, during the image reducing processing of Step S309, it is also preferable to detect the temporally varying foreign object, as by selecting temporally immediately previous information and making a comparison. In this case, after the photographer has been informed of the detected portion, as by blinking or a variation in color, the process may proceed to Step S310.

According to the eleventh embodiment, the image pickup apparatus is provided with means for enlarging an image, means for reducing an image and means for combining image signals processed by the respective means, and is arranged so that a photographer can perform photography while confirming, in the EVF **411**, image information outside of the electronic-zoom frame during the operation of the electronic-zoom function. Accordingly, it is possible to realize electronic-zoom photography capable of expanding an photographic opportunity, and the photographer can securely use the electronic zoom.

FIG. **57** is a block diagram showing the circuit arrangement of an image pickup apparatus according to a twelfth embodiment of the present invention.

The arrangement shown in FIG. **17** includes a photographic lens **421** which is formed as a lens assembly provided with a variator lens **422**, a CCD **423** which is an image sensor for performing photoelectric conversion of an object image passing through the photographic lens **421**, an analog signal processing circuit **424** for processing an analog signal supplied from the CCD **423**, an A/D converter **425** for converting an analog signal supplied from the analog signal processing circuit **424** into a digital signal, a digital signal processing circuit **426** for processing an input digital signal, and an image memory **427** for temporarily storing, as image data, a signal supplied from the digital signal processing circuit **426**.

An electronic-zoom circuit **428** is controlled by an electronic-zoom controller **430**, and has the function of cutting out a predetermined area (image frame) from the image data memorized in the image memory **427** and enlarging the image data contained in the predetermined area up to the full size of an image plane. The electronic-zoom circuit **428** also has the function of outputting the memorized image data from the image memory **427** without performing an enlarging operation.

A D/A converter **429** converts the digital signal from the electronic-zoom circuit **428** into an analog signal, and outputs the analog signal to an electronic viewfinder (EVF) (not shown) and to a recording device (not shown).

A system controller **436** controls the analog signal processing circuit **424**, the A/D converter **425**, the digital signal processing circuit **426** and the image memory **427**. Further, the system controller **436** detects the state of a zoom switch **433** and the state of a zoom speed switch **434** and controls a zoom driving circuit **432** to cause the variator lens **422** to move in the direction of the optical axis thereof, thereby executing optical zooming. Also, the system controller **436** detects the state of an electronic-zoom switch **435**. If the electronic-zoom switch **435** is off, the system controller **436** does not execute electronic zooming, whereas if the electronic-zoom switch **435** is on, the system controller **436** controls the electronic-zoom controller **430** in accordance with the respective states of a zoom encoder **431**, the zoom switch **433** and the zoom speed switch **434**, thereby executing electronic zooming according to each individual condition.

FIG. **58** is a flowchart showing the operation of the image pickup apparatus having the above-described arrangement.

First, an image is inputted to the CCD **423** through the photographic lens **421** (Step S401), and the electrical signal formed by photoelectric conversion in the CCD **423** is processed by the analog signal processing circuit **424** (Step S402). The signal outputted from the analog signal processing circuit **424** is converted into a digital signal by the A/D converter **425** (Step S403). The digital signal is processed by the digital signal processing circuit **426** (step S404), and the resultant digital signal is memorized in the image memory **427** (Step S405).

In Step S406, it is checked whether the electronic-zoom switch **435** is on or off. If the electronic-zoom switch **435** is off, the process proceeds to Step S419, in which no electronic zooming is performed and the image data memorized in the image memory **427** in Step S405 is immediately converted into an analog signal by the D/A converter **429**. The image data is outputted to the electronic viewfinder (EVF) (not shown) and to the recording device (not shown).

On the other hand, if it is determined in Step S406 that the electronic-zoom switch **435** is on, the process proceeds to Step S407. In Step S407, it is checked whether the electronic zoom is in its operative state, by making reference to the state of an electronic-zoom operation flag. If the electronic zoom is in the operative state, the process proceeds to Step S411. If the electronic zoom is not in the operative state, the process proceeds to Step S408, in which it is determined whether the zoom position (the position of the variator lens **422**) is a telephoto end, through the zoom encoder **431**. If the current zoom position is not the telephoto end, the process proceeds to Step S419, in which the image data memorized in the image memory **427** in Step S405 is converted into an analog signal by the D/A converter **429**. The image data is outputted to the electronic viewfinder (EVF) (not shown) and to the recording device (not shown). On the other hand, if it is determined in Step S408 that the current zoom position is the telephoto end, the process proceeds to Step S409, in which it is checked whether the zoom switch **433** is operated so that further driving toward the telephoto side can be executed. If the zoom switch **433** is not operated so that further driving toward the telephoto side can be

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executed, the process proceeds to Step S419, in which, as described above, the image data memorized in the image memory 427 in Step S405 is converted into an analog signal by the D/A converter 429. The image data is outputted to the electronic viewfinder (EVF) (not shown) and to the recording device (not shown). If the zoom switch 433 is operated so that further driving toward the telephoto side can be executed, the process proceeds to Step S410, in which the electronic-zoom operation flag is set.

Then, in Step S411, it is determined whether the zoom switch 433 has been pressed. If the zoom switch 433 has not been pressed, the process proceeds to Step S418, in which electronic zooming is executed at the same enlargement ratio as the previous one. If the zoom switch 433 has been pressed, the process proceeds to Step S412, in which it is checked whether the zoom switch 433 is operated so that driving toward the telephoto side can be executed or so that driving toward the wide-angle side can be executed. If the zoom switch 433 has been pressed so that driving toward the telephoto side can be executed, the process proceeds to Step S413, in which it is determined whether the power of electronic zooming at that time is not less than a predetermined power α. If the power of electronic zooming at that time is not less than the predetermined power α, the process proceeds to Step S418, in which the enlargement ratio is set to an enlargement ratio corresponding to the electronic-zooming power α.

If the zoom switch 433 has been pressed so that driving toward the wide-angle side can be executed, the process proceeds to Step S414, in which it is determined whether the power of electronic zooming at that time is not greater than "1". If the power of electronic zooming at that time is not greater than "1", the process proceeds to Step S420, in which the electronic-zoom operation flag is reset. Then, the process proceeds to Step S419.

If it is determined in Step S413 that the electronic-zoom power is less than α, or if it is determined in Step S414 that the electronic-zoom power exceeds "1", the process proceeds to Step S415. In Step S415, the state of the zoom speed switch 434 is checked to determine which of a high speed V_H and a lower speed V_L has been selected as the zoom speed. If the high speed V_H has been selected as the zoom speed, the process proceeds to Step S416, in which the speed of electronic zooming (power varying) is increased. If the zoom speed switch 434 is set for the low speed V_L, the process proceeds to Step S417, in which the speed of electronic zooming (power varying) is decreased.

Then, the process proceeds to Step S419 from any of Steps S416, S417, S418 and S420 to Step S419, in which the electronically zoomed image is converted into an analog signal by the D/A converter 429. The analog signal is outputted to the electronic viewfinder (EVF) (not shown) and to the recording device (not shown).

The (power-varying) speed of the electronic zoom can be varied by changing the rate of variation of an image cutting frame, as shown in FIGS. 59(*a*) and 59(*b*). That is, it is possible to increase the power-varying speed of the electronic zoom by increasing the rate of variation of the image cutting frame (refer to FIG. 59(*a*)), while it is possible to decrease the power-varying speed of the electronic zoom by increasing the rate of variation of the image cutting frame (refer to FIG. 59(*b*)), it is possible to increase the power-varying speed of the electronic zoom.

In the twelfth embodiment, although two different optical-zoom speeds are used, n optical-zoom speeds may be employed. If n optical-zoom speeds are employed, n electronic-zoom speeds may be prepared or the number of electronic-zoom speeds may be set to n/2, n/3 and so on.

According to the above-described twelfth embodiment, the image pickup apparatus is provided with a function which causes the zoom speed of the electronic zoom to vary according to the driving speed of the optical zoom which is variable in two or more steps in zoom speed. Accordingly, it is possible to smoothly vary the angle of view during a switching from the optical zoom to the electronic zoom or during a switching from the electronic zoom to the optical zoom.

As described above, according to the above-described eleventh embodiment, the image pickup apparatus is provided with image reducing means for electronically reducing to a predetermined size an image for one image plane formed by an image signal supplied from signal processing means, and image combining means for combining the image reduced by the image reducing means with a portion of an image enlarged by electronic-zoom means and outputting a combined image to display means, so that an original image plane which is not electronically zoomed is displayed at real time in the form of a subsidiary image plane on a portion of an image enlarged by electronic zooming.

Accordingly, the eleventh embodiment makes it possible for a photographer to confirm image information outside of the electronic-zoom frame during electronic zooming. Accordingly, it is possible to realize electronic-zoom photography capable of expanding an photographic opportunity, and the photographer can securely use the electronic zoom.

According to the twelfth embodiment, the image pickup apparatus is provided with electronic-zoom speed setting means for varying, if the optical zoom is switched to the electronic zoom, the zoom speed of the electronic-zoom means in accordance with a zoom speed detected by state-of-optical-zoom detecting means, so that the electronic-zoom speed can be varied according to the driving speed of the optical zoom which can be varied in zoom speed.

Accordingly, it is possible to smoothly vary the angle of view during a switching from the optical zoom to the electronic zoom or during a switching from the electronic zoom to the optical zoom.

FIG. 60 is a block diagram showing the circuit arrangement and the optical system of a camera having a zoom function according to a thirteenth embodiment of the present invention.

The arrangement shown in FIG. 60 includes a power varying optical system 501 whose focal length is variable, an image sensor 502 such as a CCD, focal-length converting means 503, such as a wide-angle attachment, for discontinuously converting the focal length, power varying means 504 having the function of continuously varying the focal length of the power varying optical system 501, an A/D conversion circuit 505 for converting an analog signal into a digital signal, a line memory 506, an interpolation circuit 507, a video signal processing circuit 508, an address generating circuit 509 for generating a readout address, and a control circuit 510 for controlling the focal-length converting means 503, the power varying means 504, the address generating circuit 509 and other associated elements.

In the above-described arrangement, a signal from the image sensor 502 is converted into a digital signal by the A/D conversion circuit 505, and the digital signal is stored in the line memory 506.

If a portion of an image plane is to be cut out and used in an enlarged state, i.e., if so-called electronic zooming is to be performed, the address generating circuit 509 generates an address information signal for reading out a required area in accordance with a signal outputted from the control circuit 510.

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On the basis of the address information, the information memorized in a required portion of the line memory **506** is outputted to the interpolation circuit **507**, in which the information is subjected to appropriate interpolation. The output of the interpolation circuit **507** is converted into a video signal by the video signal processing circuit **508**, and the video signal is supplied to a recording system (not shown).

FIG. **61** is a flowchart showing the operation of the camera during zooming from its telephoto end to its wide-angle side (its ultra-wide-angle end). Such an operation will be described below with reference to the flowchart of FIG. **61**.

Ordinary zooming is performed by the power varying means **504** until the power varying optical system **501** reaches the wide-angle end (Steps **S501→S502→S501**). When the power varying optical system **501** reaches the wide-angle end, the focal length is discontinuously and instantaneously varied from the wide-angle end toward a far wider-angle side (the ultra-wide-angle side) by the focal-length converting means **503** (Step **S503**). As means for instantaneously varying the focal length, a wide-angle attachment may be inserted before the front face of the power varying optical system **501** or an arrangement for moving a part different from an ordinary power varying part may also be adopted.

In Step **S503**, if nothing but the above-described processing is done, the angle of view will vary discontinuously.

For this reason, at the same time, the electronic zoom is instantaneously operated so that the angle of view of the electronic zoom is made equal to the angle of view at the wide-angle end (steps **S504→S505→S506**). Accordingly, it is possible to prevent discontinuity from occurring in the variation of the angle of view during zooming.

In practice, however, since a slight time is required to vary the focal length from the wide-angle end to the ultra-wide-angle end, there is the problem that an image is disturbed during this time. To solve the problem, it is desirable that, during the predetermined time required to vary the focal length, an image obtained before the variation of the focal length be held in a memory and the output of the memory be used as an image representative of the variation of the angle of view.

By performing zooming from the wide-angle end toward the ultra-wide-angle end by means of the electronic zoom, it is possible to vary continuously the angle of view from the wide-angle end to the ultra-wide-angle end.

On the other hand, if zooming from the ultra-wide-angle side to the wide-angle side is to be performed, zooming from the ultra-wide-angle end to the angle of view equivalent to the wide-angle end is performed by using the electronic zoom. When the wide-angle end is reached, the electronic zoom is switched to optical zooming based on the power varying optical system **501** and the electronic zoom is cancelled. Subsequently, the optical zooming toward the telephoto end is performed by the power varying means **504**.

As is apparent from the above description, by effectively combining focal length converting means capable of discontinuously varying a focal length with an electronic-zoom function, it is possible to achieve a field-of-view varying effect equivalent to the effect of the variable angle of view of a zoom lens which can optically zoom up to an ultra-wide-angle range. Accordingly, a user can smoothly perform photography even during zooming between the wide-angle end and the ultra-wide-angle side.

FIG. **62** is a block diagram showing the circuit arrangement and the optical system of a camera having a zoom function according to a fourteenth embodiment of the present invention. In FIG. **62**, the same reference numerals are used to denote parts which are identical to those shown in FIG. **60**.

The arrangement shown in FIG. **62** includes a second optical system **511** having a focal length shorter than the focal length of the power varying optical system **501** which is set to the wide-angle end, and signal selecting means **512** for selecting either one of the output signals of the two optical systems **501** and **511** as a signal to be processed.

If a user selects zooming from the wide-angle end toward a far wider-angle side during the use of the power varying optical system **501**, the output of the second optical system **511** is selected by the signal selecting means **512**.

However, this output is not a signal output indicative of the whole of the scene photographed by the second optical system **511**, but is a signal output which has been electronically zoomed up to a size which is equivalent to the size of a video image which is provided by the power varying optical system **501** at the wide-angle end thereof.

If zooming toward a far wider-angle side is be performed, the power of the electronic zoom may be progressively decreased.

On the other hand, if zooming from the ultra-wide-angle side toward the telephoto side is to be performed, the electronic zoom is used to perform zooming from the ultra-wide-angle side up to an angle of view equivalent to that of the second optical system **511** at the wide-angle end. When the angle of view equivalent to that of the second optical system **511** at the wide-angle end is reached, the electronic zoom is switched to the power varying optical system **501** so that optical zooming up to the telephoto end can be continuously performed by the power varying means **504**.

As is apparent from the above description, by effectively combining two optical systems having discontinuously different focal lengths with an electronic-zoom function, it is possible to continuously vary the angle of view between the ultra-wide-angle side and the telephoto side. Accordingly, the user can smoothly perform photography even during zooming between the wide-angle end and the ultra-wide-angle side.

Of course, it is also possible to adopt an arrangement capable of performing zooming from the telephoto end toward an ultra-telephoto side by means of the electronic zoom.

It is to be noted that, in the above-described fourteenth embodiments, it is necessary to satisfy the following expression:

$$1/\beta \leqq z \tag{11}$$

where $\beta(<1)$ represents the ratio of the focal length of the power varying optical system **501** at the wide-angle end thereof to the focal length of the second optical system **511** at the wide-angle end thereof or the magnification required for conversion between the focal lengths of the two optical systems **501** and **511**, and $Z(>1)$ represents the power of the electronic zoom.

If the power of the electronic zoom is smaller than the lower limit of the expression (11), it is impossible to continuously vary the angle of view even with the electronic zoom.

As is apparent from the above description, according to the thirteenth embodiment, there is provided an arrangement which is provided with control means for causing, if zooming from the wide-angle end of a power varying optical system toward a far wider-angle side is specified, focal

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length varying means to function to set a focal length to an ultra-wide-angle side and, at the same time, causing electronic-zoom means to operate to vary the power of an electronic zoom continuously up to the ultra-wide-angle side in the state of keeping the size of an output image equal to that of an image obtainable from the power varying optical system. The electronic-zoom means is combined with means for varying discontinuously and instantaneously the focal length from the wide-angle end toward a far wider-angle side (ultra-wide-angle side), so that zooming between a telephoto end and the ultra-wide-angle side can be continuously performed.

According to the fourteenth embodiment, there is provided an arrangement which is provided with control means for selecting, if zooming toward a far wider-angle side from the wide-angle end of a first optical system having a power varying function is specified, an image obtained from a second optical system having a focal length shorter than the focal length of the first optical system at the wide-angle end thereof and, at the same time, causing electronic-zoom means to operate to vary the power of an electronic zoom continuously up to the ultra-wide-angle side in the state of keeping the size of an output image equal to that of an image obtainable from the first optical system. The electronic-zoom means is combined with a second optical system having a focal length shorter than the focal length of the first optical system at the wide-angle end thereof, so that zooming between a telephoto end and the ultra-wide-angle side can be continuously performed.

Accordingly, it is possible to continuously vary the angle of view between the wide-angle end and the ultra-wide-angle side, so that the user can smoothly perform photography even during zooming between the wide-angle end and the ultra-wide-angle side.

What is claimed is:

1. An image pickup apparatus comprising:

an image pickup device for generating an electrical signal from an optical image formed by a zoom lens;

aberration information memorizing means for memorizing distortional aberration information about the zoom lens;

focal length detection means for detecting a focal length of the zoom lens, and

signal processing means for processing the electrical signal based on the distortional aberration information and the focal length so as to correct distortional aberration based on a center of an image plane when the zoom lens is in a predetermined focal length zone, and to correct the distortional aberration based on an arbitrary image height when the zoom lens is not in the predetermined focal length zone.

* * * * *

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 5,905,530

DATED : May 18, 1999

INVENTOR(S) : Hideo YOKOTA, et al. Page 1 of 2

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

COLUMN 6:

Line 10, "an" (first occurrence) should read --a--.

COLUMN 12:

Line 21, "a" should read --an--.

COLUMN 13:

Line 27, "zmin" should read --Zmin--.
Line 28, "the the" should read --the--.

COLUMN 19:

Line 35, "is" should read --are--.

COLUMN 26:

Line 57, "[step S241]" should read --[Step S241]--.

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 5,905,530

DATED : May 18, 1999

INVENTOR(S) : Hideo YOKOTA, et al. Page 2 of 2

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

COLUMN 33:

Line 45, "an" should read --a--.

Signed and Sealed this

Sixth Day of February, 2001

Attest:

Q. TODD DICKINSON

Attesting Officer

Director of Patents and Trademarks

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US007590305B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Steinberg et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 7,590,305 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: *Sep. 15, 2009**

(54) **DIGITAL CAMERA WITH BUILT-IN LENS CALIBRATION TABLE**

(75) Inventors: **Eran Steinberg**, San Francisco, CA (US); **Yury Prilutsky**, San Mateo, CA (US); **Peter Corcoran**, Clargalway (IE); **Adrian Zamfir**, Bucuresti (RO); **Petronel Bigioi**, Galway (IE)

(73) Assignee: **FotoNation Vision Limited**, Galway (IE)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 806 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **10/842,244**

(22) Filed: **May 10, 2004**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2005/0068452 A1 Mar. 31, 2005

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 10/676,820, filed on Sep. 30, 2003.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04N 5/225 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **382/275**; 348/335

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 348/335; 382/275

See application file for complete search history.

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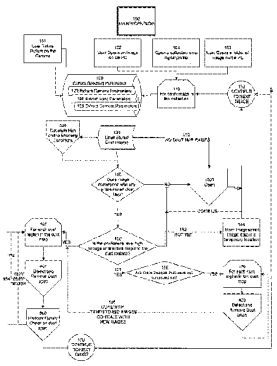
(Continued)

Primary Examiner—Charles Kim
Assistant Examiner John W Lee
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Andrew V. Smith

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A digital camera that automatically corrects dust artifact regions within acquired images by compiling a dust map includes an optical system for acquiring an image with a corresponding dust calibration table for such optical system, including a lens assembly and an aperture stop, in which the corresponding dust calibration map can reside. A transformation between the dust map and the specific lens calibration table, enables the use for a single dust map in multiple instances of lenses and focal length, without the need to recalibrate the digital camera for each instance.

22 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



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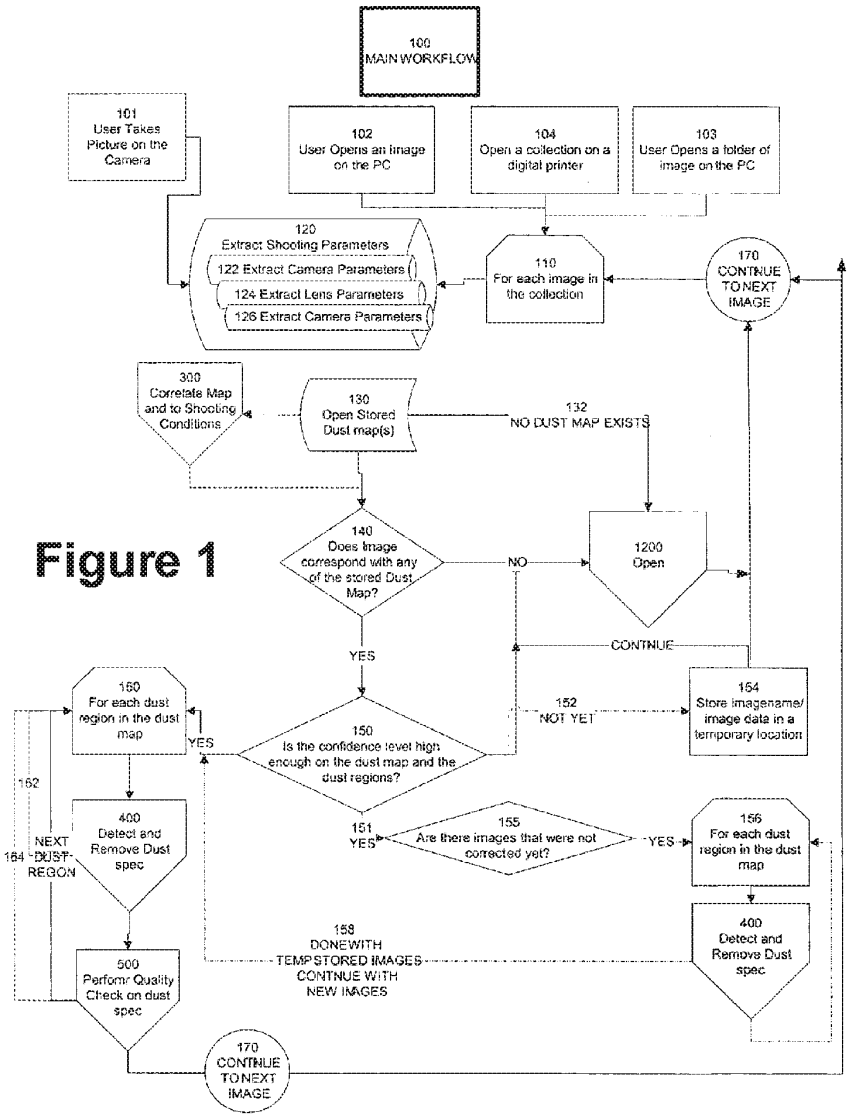


Figure 1

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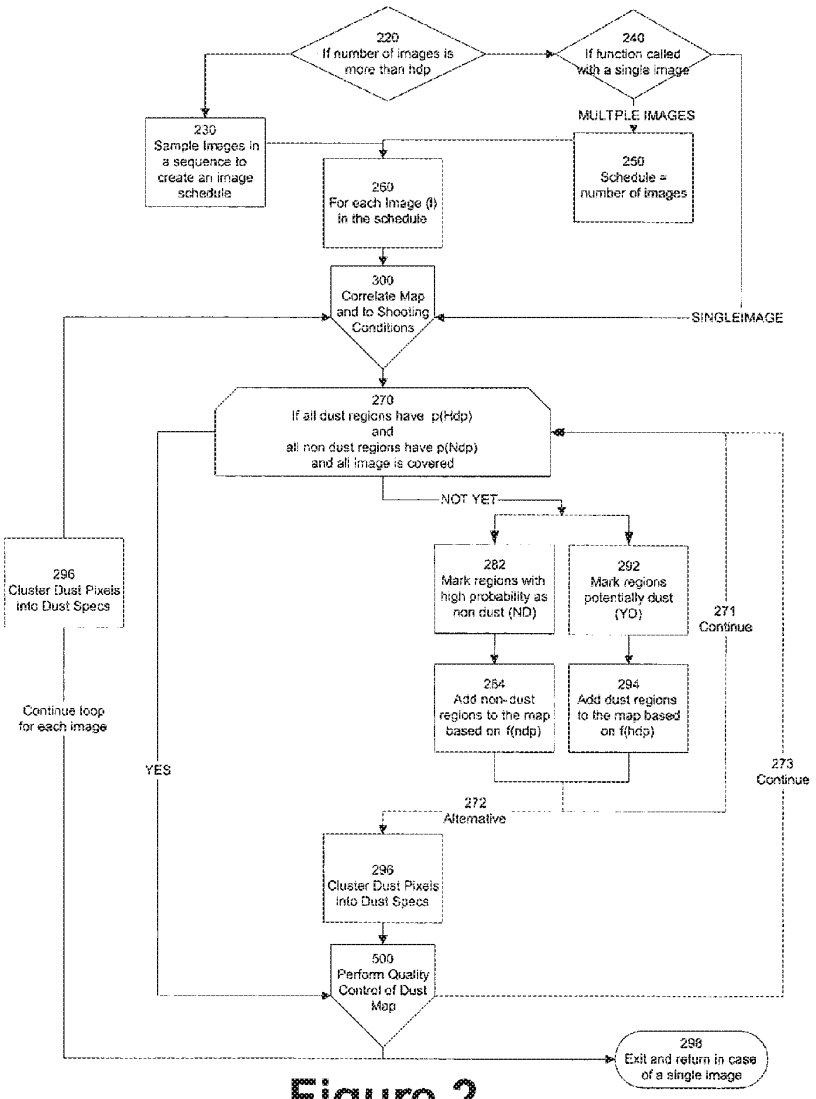


Figure 2

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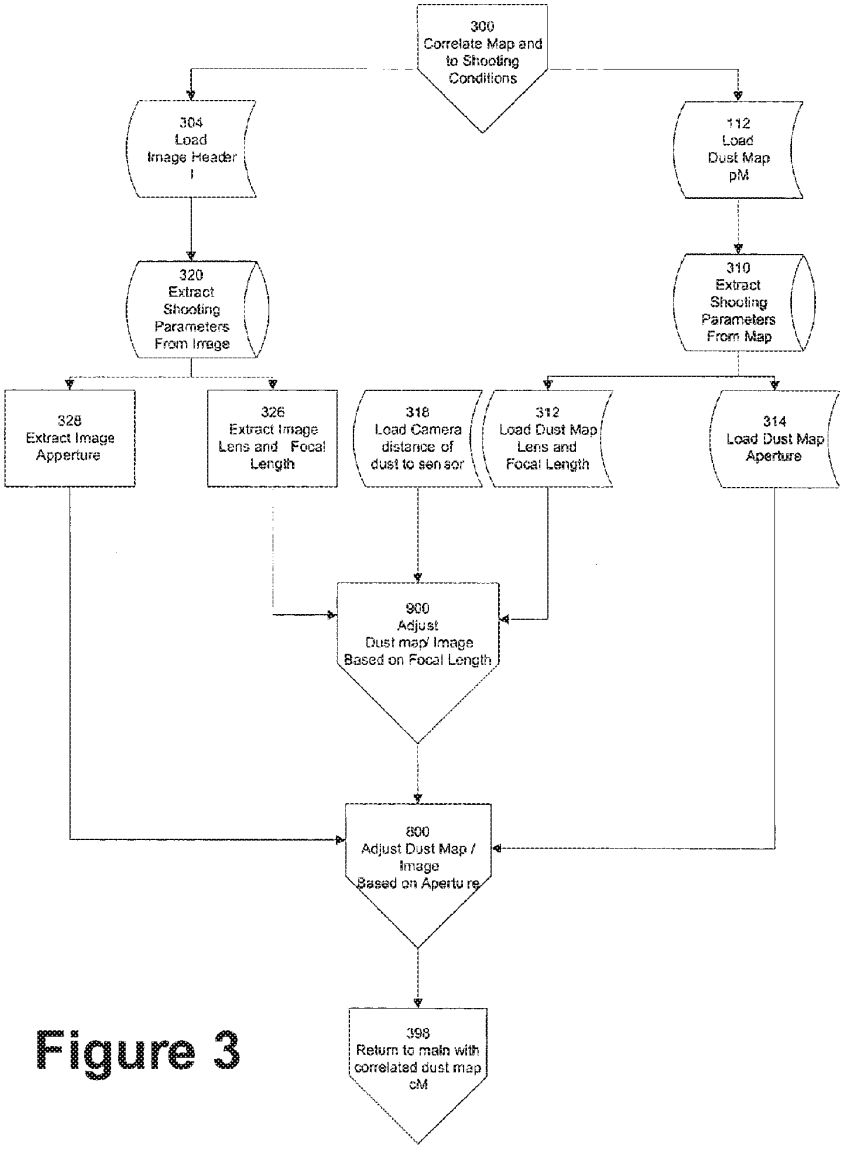


Figure 3

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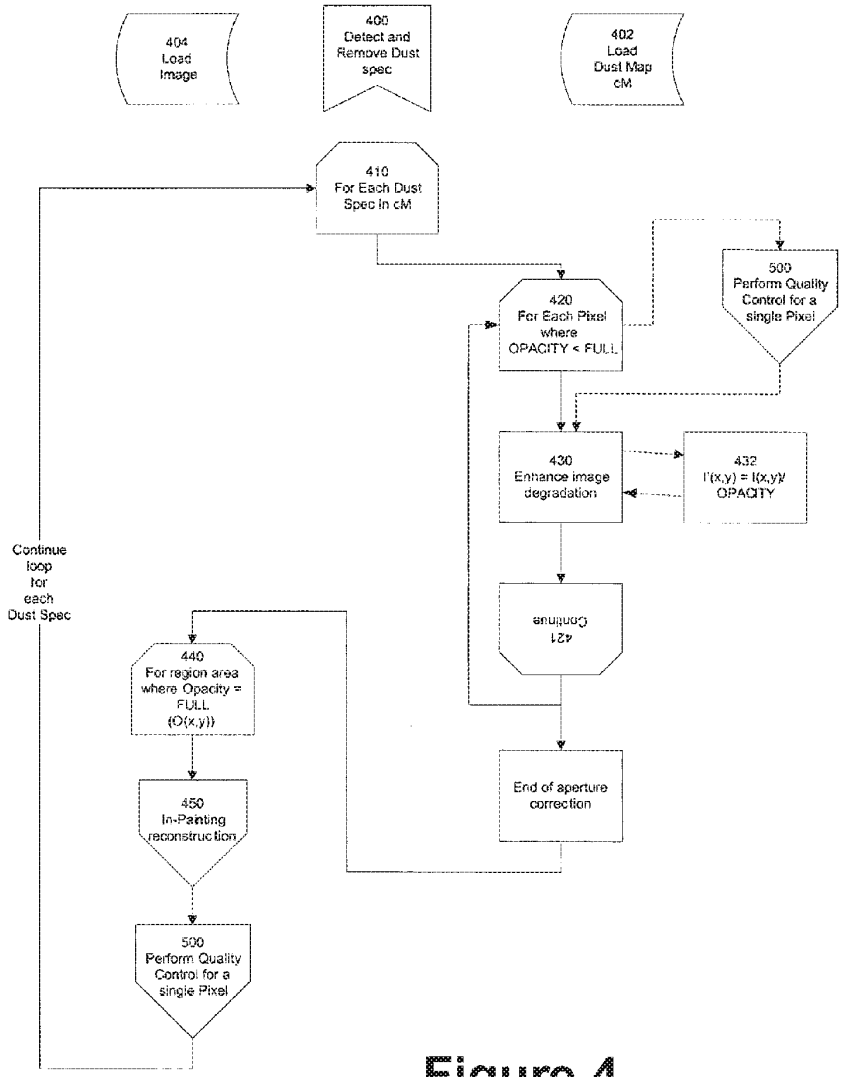


Figure 4

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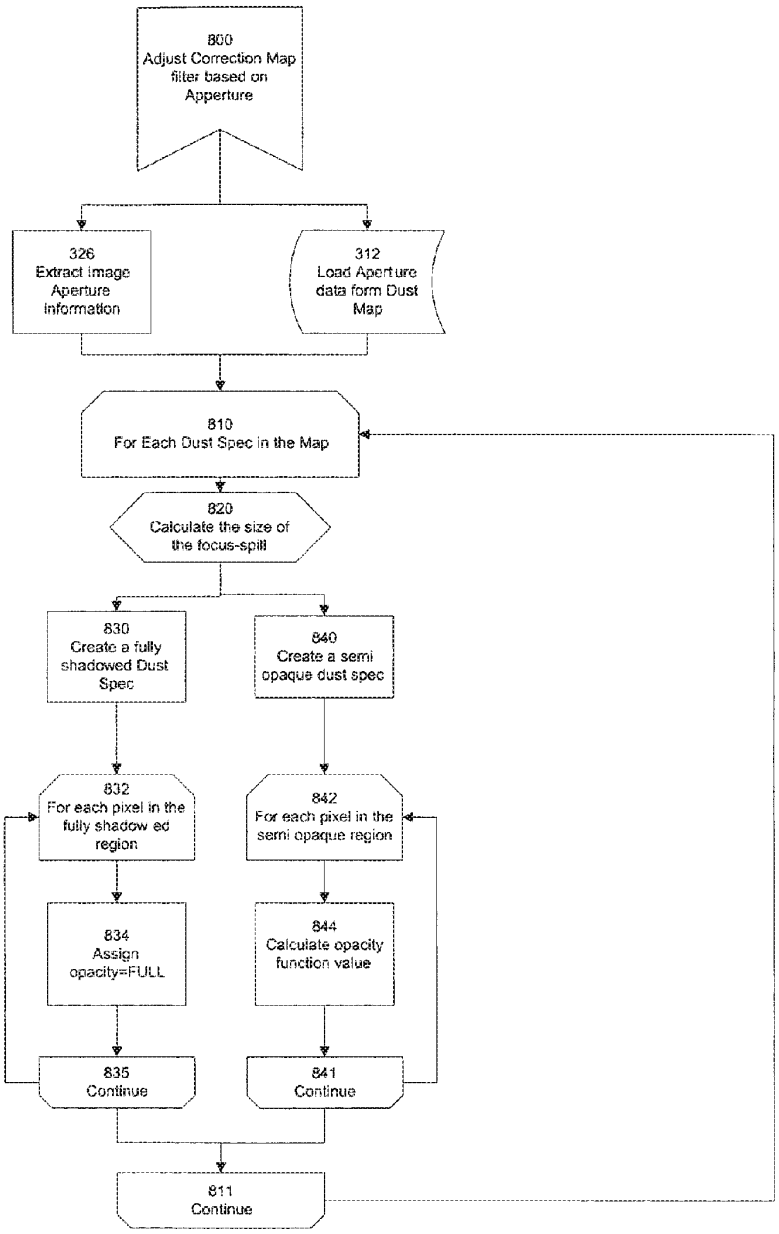


Figure 5

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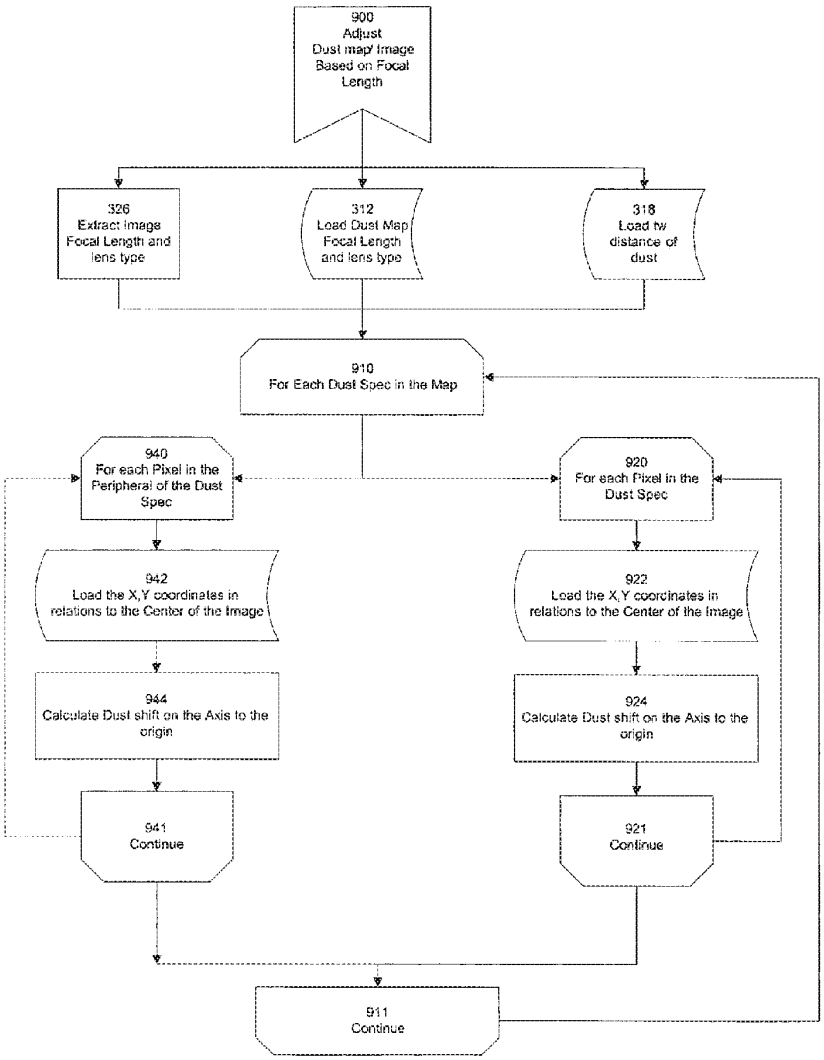


Figure 6

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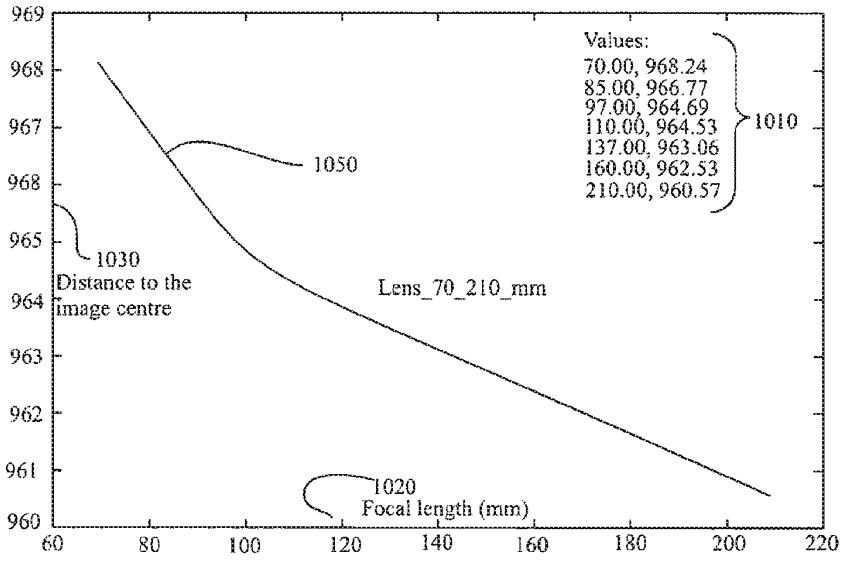


Figure 7

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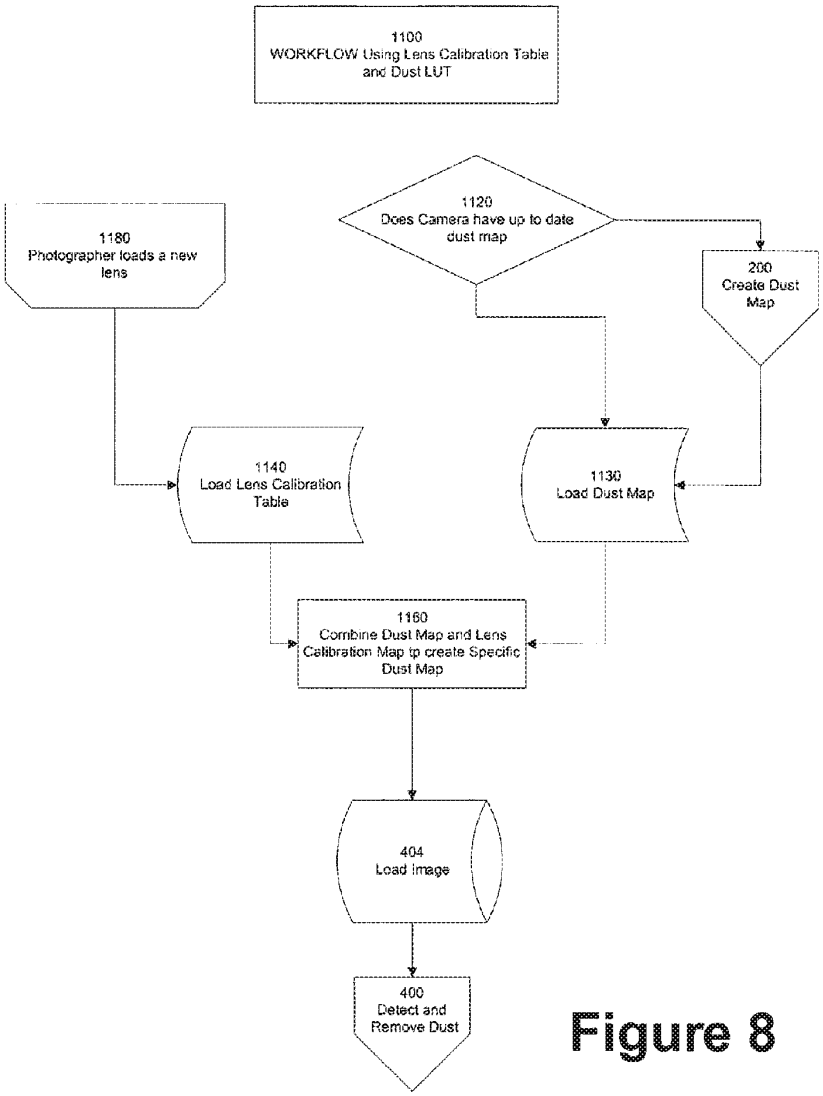


Figure 8

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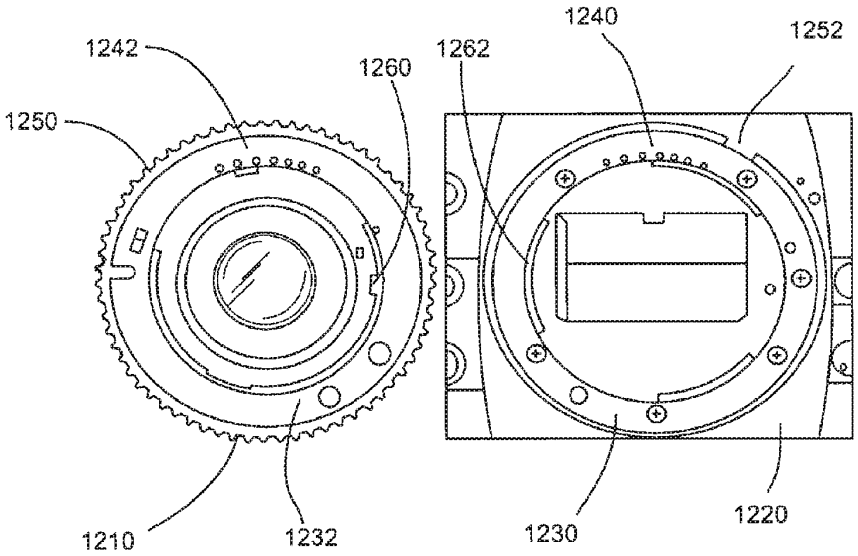


Figure 9

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DIGITAL CAMERA WITH BUILT-IN LENS CALIBRATION TABLE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation in part for application Ser. No. 10/676,820, filed on Sep. 30, 2003, entitled, "Determination Of Need To Service A Camera Based On Detection of Blemishes in Digital Images", which is related to a family of patent applications filed on the same day, including U.S. application Ser. No. 10/676,823, entitled, "Automated Statistical Self-Calibrating Detection and Removal of Blemishes in Digital Images Based On Multiple Occurrences Of Dust In Images"; U.S. application Ser. No. 10/677,134, entitled, "Automated Statistical Self-Calibrating Detection and Removal of Blemishes in Digital Images Based on a Dust Map Developed From Actual Image Data"; U.S. application Ser. No. 10/677,139, entitled, "Automated Statistical Self-Calibrating Detection and Removal of Blemishes in Digital Images Dependent Upon Changes in Extracted Parameter Values"; U.S. application Ser. No. 10/677,140, entitled, "Automated Statistical Self-Calibrating Detection and Removal of Blemishes in Digital Images Based on Determining Probabilities Based On Image Analysis Of Single Images"; U.S. application Ser. No. 10/676,845, entitled, "Method Of Detecting and Correcting Dust in Digital Images Based On Aura And Shadow Region Analysis"; U.S. application Ser. No. 10/676,716, entitled, "Digital Camera"; and U.S. application Ser. No. 10/676,835, entitled, "Digital Image Acquisition And Processing System", which are all hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Invention

This invention related to digital photography and in particular, automated means of in-camera removal of blemish artifacts from images captured and digitized in a digital process.

2. Description of the Related Art

Many problems are caused by dust in particular and blemishes in general on imaging devices in general and digital imaging devices in particular. In the past, two distinct forms of image processing included providing means to detect and locate dust, scratches or similar defects and providing means to remedy the distortions caused by the defects to an image. It is desired to have an advantageous system that combines these functions, and can automatically detect and correct for the effects of dust, scratches and other optical blemishes.

Image correction has been studied in relation to display devices, output apparatuses such as printers, and digital sensors. Image correction of dust artifacts can be used to recreate missing data, also referred to as in-painting or restoration, or undoing degradation of data, which still remains in the image, also referred to as image enhancement. It is desired to have a system including a digital camera and an external device or apparatus that can facilitate a defect detection and/or correction process involving sophisticated and automated computerized programming techniques.

The manifestation of the dust in a digital image is a function of several optical parameters representing the dust. It is desired to create a system that can automatically take into account changes in such parameters without the need to manually recalibrate the camera system.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A digital camera is provided that automatically corrects dust artifact regions within acquired images by compiling a statistical dust map from multiple images acquired under different image acquisition conditions. An optical system that acquires an image includes a lens assembly and an aperture stop. The optical system may include the lens specific calibration information in the lens. An electronic sensor array is disposed approximately at an image focal plane of the optical system for collecting image data according to spectral information associated with multiple pixels that collectively correspond to the image. Digital processing electronics include a processor for converting the image data to digital data and processing the digital data according to programming instructions. A memory has programming instructions stored therein for performing a method of automatic image correction of dust defect regions.

The specific dust map can be converted between different lenses and between different focal lens setting of the same lens, using a numerical formulae. By doing so, only a single dust map needs to be maintained.

The further digitally-acquired images may include different images than the originally acquired images. The method may further include correcting pixels corresponding to correlated dust artifact regions within each of the original images based on the associated statistical dust map. The method may include correcting pixels corresponding to correlated dust artifact regions within the original images based on the associated statistical dust map. The method may include digitally-acquiring additional images with the digital camera, repeating the determining and associating, and updating the statistical dust map including updating the mapped dust regions based on the additional dust artifact determining and associating.

The image correction method may be performed on a processed image after being converted from raw format to a known red, green, blue representation. The correcting may include replacing pixels within the one or more digitally-acquired images with new pixels. The correcting may include enhancing the values of pixels within the one or more digitally-acquired images.

The dust artifact determining may include loading the statistical dust map, loading extracted parameter information of a present image, performing calculations within the statistical dust map having extracted parameter variable-dependencies, and comparing dust artifact detection data with the extracted parameter dependent statistical dust map data. The dust artifact determining may also include loading the statistical dust map, loading extracted parameter information of a present image, loading extracted parameters regarding the optical system, performing a calculation for relating the statistical dust map with the present image according to a selected value of an extracted parameter which is otherwise uncorrelated between the present image and the dust map, and comparing dust artifact detection data with the now correlated statistical dust map data. The suspected dust artifact regions of at least two images may include shadow regions and aura regions, and wherein the method may include a first comparison of the shadow regions and a second comparison of the aura regions.

The method may include digitally-acquiring further images with the digital camera, repeating the determining and associating, and updating the statistical dust map including updating the mapped dust regions based on the further dust

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artifact determining and associating. The determining may include determining probabilities that certain pixels correspond to dust artifact regions within the acquired images based at least in part on a comparison of suspected dust artifact regions within two or more digitally-acquired images, or on a pixel analysis of the suspected dust artifact regions in view of predetermined characteristics indicative of the presence of a dust artifact region, or both. The determining may be based at least in part on a comparison of suspected dust artifact regions within two or more digitally-acquired images.

The correcting may further include replacing the pixels within the one or more digitally-acquired images with new pixels. The correcting may include enhancing the values of pixels within the one or more digitally-acquired images.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** illustrates a main workflow of a dust removal process in accordance with a preferred embodiment.

FIG. **2** illustrates the creation of a dust map.

FIG. **3** outlines a correlation of a dust map to image shooting parameters.

FIG. **4** illustrates a procedure for detecting and removing dust from images in accordance with a preferred embodiment.

FIG. **5** illustrates an adjustment of the dust map based on aperture.

FIG. **6** illustrates an adjustment of a dust map based on focal length.

FIG. **7** illustrates the plot describing a the dust movement as a function of a lookup table for a hypothetical map.

FIG. **8** describes the workflow of correcting and detecting the dust images based on a lens lookup table and a dust map.

FIG. **9** schematically illustrates coupling components of a lens assembly with a housing of a digital image acquisition device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF TABLES

Table 1 lists potential Extracted Lens Parameters.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Some Definitions

Dust specs: The preferred embodiment takes advantage of the fact that many images may have repetitive manifestation of the same defects such as dust, dead-pixels, burnt pixels, scratches etc. Collectively, for this specifications all possible defects of this nature are referred to in this application as dust-specs or dust defects. The effects of those dust specs on digital images are referred to herein as dust artifacts.

Acquisition device: the acquisition device may be a a multi-functional electronic appliance wherein one of the major functional capabilities of the appliance is that of a digital camera. Examples can be include digital camera, a hand held computer with an imaging sensor, a scanner, a hand-set phone, or another digital device with built in optics capable of acquiring images. Acquisition devices can also include film scanners with a area-capture CCDs, as contrasted, e.g., with a line scan mechanism. D-SLR: Digital Single Lens Reflex Camera. A digital camera where the viewfinder is receiving the image from the same optical system as the sensor does. Many D-SLR, as for SLR cameras have the capability to interchange its lenses, this exposing the inner regions of the camera to dust.

A few parameters are defined as part of the process:

N Number of images in a collection.

Hldp Number of images for occurrence to be high dust probability

HSdp Number of recurring specs for label a region to be high dust probability

p(hsdp) Probability threshold for high confidence of a dust spec.

N dp Number of images to determine that a region is not dust

p(ndp) Probability threshold to determine that a region is not a dust region.

Most likely Hldp<=HSdp

I—is a generic image

I(x,y) pixel in location x horizontal, y vertical of image I

pM is a continuous tone, or a statistical representation of a dust map

dM is a binary dust map created form some thresholding of pM.

Mathematical Modeling of the Optical System

Prior to understanding the preferred embodiments described herein, it is helpful to understand the mathematical modeling of the camera optical system. This model is defined in application No. 10/676,820 filed on Sep. 30, 2003, which is incorporated by reference. With this modeling, the preferred embodiments may advantageously utilize a single dust map for dust detection and/or correction techniques rather than creating a dust map for each instance of dust artifact having its own shape and opacity depending on extracted parameters relating to the imaging acquisition process. With an ability to model the optical system and its variability, a single map may suffice for each lens or for multiple lenses, and for multiple focal lengths, multiple apertures, and/or other extracted parameters as described in more detail below. This information, which is typical to a lens and a camera combination may be stored in an external application, in the camera processing memory and or inside the lens.

The main workflow of detecting and removing the dust from an image is illustrated in FIG. **1**. The preferred embodiment is activated in four different cases. In general, this preferred embodiment works for removing dust form a collection of images having the same acquisition device. Specifically, a user may acquire a picture on her digital camera (as illustrated in Block **101**). Alternatively (**102**), a user may open a single image on a external device such as a personal computer, open (**103**) a folder of images on an external device or open a collection of images on a digital printing device (**104**).

The preferred embodiment then extracts the shooting parameters (**120**). Such parameters include, but not limited to data about: the generic device parameters such as Camera parameters (**122**) such as Camera name, Model, and conversion data specific for the camera, Lens parameters (**124**) such as Lens brand, lens type, lens focal length, and lens calibration tables; as well as parameters specific to the image (**126**) such as focal length at acquisition, aperture range, aperture at acquisition.

In addition, some parameter, in particular on the lens (**126**) and the camera (**124**) may be also stored in the device, which is the acquisition device such as the digital camera or the processing device such as the personal computer or digital printer. Such information, which may include parameters such as exit pupil, exit pupil distance regarding the lens, or distance of dust to sensor for the camera. Currently lenses store some data in the lens which can communicate this information to the camera processor. In one embodiment of

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this invention the specific lens calibration tables can may be stored as part of the lens assembly. By doing so, the introduction of new lenses to the market may automatically be supported with the shipping lenses.

A table with such data may look like:

TABLE 1

Extracted Lens Parameters

Field	Example of data	Category
Lens Manufacturer	Nikon	lens
Lens Type	AF 24 mm-45 mm f2.8-f3.5	lens
Focal Length	38 mm	Acquisition data
Aperture	f-16	Acquisition data
Dust distance	0.156 mm	Camera data
Exit pupil	19 mm	Lens data
Exit pupil distance	230 mm	Lens data

Alternatively, the information may be related to the resulting dust shift, as opposed to the theoretical parameters such as an exit pupil, of which the shift is calculated. Such can be in a form of a lookup table or a analytical formulae.

FIG. **7** describes the graph created by such an analytical formulae or a lookup table describing the dust movement as a function of the focal length for a specific hypothetical lens. This plot describes a 70-210 mm zoom lens (**1000**). The interpolated values based on measured 7 points **1010**. The X-axis, **1020** defines the focal length in mm of the lens. The plot describes a dust spot in a distance of roughly 960-970 away from the optical center of the lens, as illustrated in the Y-axis, **1030**. As can be seen, the dust shifts as a function of the focal length. This extrapolated empirical result, **1050**, corroborates the analytical explanation provided in FIG. **6**. It is important to note that the plot may and is different based on the actual lens configuration and is neither predictable by the mere focal length nor is monotonicity guaranteed.

The dust map may also include meta-data that are different the list of extracted parameters. Moreover, that which is described as being extracted parameter dependent or encoded with extracted parameter value data or based on a value of an extracted parameter can be broadened to include other meta-data than just the extracted parameters listed in Table 1. For example, certain meta-data are dependent on parameters existing at the time of acquisition of the image, and can be camera-specific or not. The amount of ambient light available will depend on whether there is artificial lighting nearby or whether it is a cloudy day. Discussion of meta-data as it relates to image acquisition is found in more detail at U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/608,810, filed Jun. 26, 2003, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

In the case that the system deals with multiple images (as defined in **102**, **103**, and **104**), the algorithm describes a loop operation on all images (**110**). The first step is to open a dust map (**130**). If non exists (**132**) the system will create a new dust map (**200**) as further described in FIG. **2**. In the case that the system has a few dust maps (**130**) the software will try to correlate one of the maps (**300**) to the image. This process is further illustrated in FIG. **3**. In particular this correlation refers to the adjustment of the shooting conditions to some accepted standard. The acquisition conditions in particular refer to the aperture and the focal length. The correlation process is interchangeable and can be done by adjusting the image to the map or adjusting the map to the image. In some cases both acquired image and dust map should be adjusted to some common ground. Such an example may happen when the ma is calculated based on a aperture that the lens does not reach or a different lens than the one used wit different optical configuration. Alternatively, such as in the case of a new lens, this process (**300**) as called by **130**, may be used to adjust the map onto a new map and from that stage onwards continue with a single map.

If no dust map corresponds with the image (**140**), a new dust map is created (**200**). When a dust map does correspond (**140**) to the image, the preferred embodiment checks if the dust specs as defined in the dust map are of high enough confidence level to being dust regions (**150**). The statistical decision as to the way such confidence level is calculated for the dust map in general and for the individual dust specs, is further discussed with reference to FIG. **2** and FIG. **3**. If the confidence level is low, the image is added to the updating of the dust map (**200**). If after the image is added, the confidence level is high enough (**152**) the software continues to the dust removal process (**160**). Otherwise, the software progresses to the next image (**170**).

For example, a dust map is considered valid after 10 images are analyzed, and a dust spec is considered valid after a dust is detected in 8 images. In this case, after analyzing 9 images, the software may continue to the stage of updating the dust map (**200**) but upon completion (10 images) there is a valid dust map, and the software will continue to the correction (**160**) stage. If however the loop (**110**) is only on its 1st to 8th image, no correction will be done.

As an additional embodiment, images can be corrected retroactively after the dust map reached high enough confidence. This can be used for batch processing or off line processing or processing where the information is gathered in parallel to the needed correction. In this embodiment, when the confidence level is not enough (**152**, NOT-YET) the images, a pointer to them, or a list of them, or a representation of them, that were used to create the dust map are stored in temporary location (**154**) and when the dust map is ready (**151**-YES), the software will retroactively remove the dust from all those images (**156**). In this fashion, all images, including ones that originally did not hold sufficient statistical information, may be corrected.

Referring to the dust detection and correction process (**160**). This process may be executed as a loop on every dust spec in the dust map, with a stage of detection and correction (**400**, followed by **166** and **168**). Alternatively, the process can be implemented where all dust specs are detected first (**162**) and then all dust specs are corrected (**164**). The decision as to the sequence of operations varies based on implementation criteria such as what regions of the image are in memory, and should not affect the nature of the preferred embodiment. In the case where the lens specific calibration table is in the lens, there is a need for a intermediate step which converts the dust map via those tables. By having this functionality, a single dust map may suffice to accommodate changes in lenses and changes in the focal length of a single zoom lens.

This workflow is illustrated in FIG. **8** which describes the workflow of correcting and detecting the dust images based on a lens lookup table and a dust map. If a dust map exists (**1120**) the system will load the dust map (**1130**). Otherwise, a new dust map needs to be created as described in FIG. **2** (**200**). The lens calibration is then loaded (**1140**). Such map can exist in the software, or as part of the lens memory, or in the camera. Together with the dust map, a specific manifestation of the dust for the specific camera, lens combination is created (**1160**). This is the dust map that will be used to remove dust specs (**400**) from an image (**404**) that was captured using the specific lens on the specific camera. In this

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scenario, if a user lads a new lens, **1180**, there is no need for a new calibration stage, but rather a computational step (**1160**) is preferred to calculate the new Specific Dust Map.

Referring to FIG. **2** where the Dust map creation and updating is defined: this process can receive a collection of images as defined by FIG. **1**. blocks **108** and **109**) or one image at a time is refereed to this process, as defined by FIG. **1** block **110**. If the function is called with a single image (**220**-SINGLE IMAGE) the image is directly provided to the calculations (**270**). If multiple images are provided (240 MULTIPLE IMAGES), then an initial step is to define if there are more than enough images for defining the map. This step is designed to optimize the creation process for dust in case of large amount of images.

The sequence of the images that are to be referenced based on the original collection of N images as defined in FIG. **1** blocks **102**, **103** or **104**. The sequence of images is based on a few criteria such as: giving more weight to images shot last, and if images are shot in a relatively small time frame, allocate the sequence is large distances to try and assure minimal repetitiveness between similar images that may have been taken of the same object with little movement. The sequence will not be limited to the number of images (HDP) because it may well be that some regions will not have enough data in them to evaluate the dust. This may happen in cases where part of the image is very dark in some of the images.

As an example: if N (number of images in a selection)=30; and HSdp (number of images needed to determining map)=10; and all images were shot in a space of an hour; then a potential sequence may be:

30,27,24,21,18,15,12,9,6,3,29,26,25 . . . ,2,28,25 . . . 1

Alternatively if the same 30 images were taken over a period of a month it may be beneficial to select images sequentially (last one shot is the first to be calculated):

30,29,28 . . . 20,19 . . . 2,1

And in some cases this process of sampling the series (**270**) may also decide not to use images that are taken too long from the last image. In this case, for example if image **1-15** were taken in July and **16-30** were taken in November, this process may limit the new map to **16-30** or even create two different maps, one for images **1-15** and the other for **16-30**.

In a different criteria, the parameters as extracted from the images will determine the sequence and the number of dust maps that are to be calculated. For example if a folder contains N=30 images, where 15 were taken with one camera and 15 with another, the sampling step (**270**) may create two map sets.

Another criteria for creating a new set or checking for new dust is the type of lens. If a lens is changed, it means that the CCD-cavity was exposed to potential new dust. This may trigger a new set of images to be looked at. It may also be an indication that the camera was serviced, or that the photographer cleaned the camera. Of course, if there is a parameter that defines when a camera was serviced, this will trigger the creation of a new dust map.

Those familiar in the art may be able to determine the right combinations of creating this sequence based on the nature of the dust, the camera and the lens. The next loop (**270**-**271**) defines the marking of each region and the addition of the region to the dust map if it is not already there. There are three type of regions in an image, the first are images with sufficient information to detect whether they are of dust nature. As an example, dark regions surrounded by a light background. Other criteria may be regions with a relatively small color saturation. The second group are regions that are definitely non-dust. Such regions are for example all clear, or of high color saturation. Other regions are inconclusive such as a very dark segment of the image. In this case, it will be hard to detect the dust even if it was part of the image. Alternatively when looking for over exposed or "dead pixels" the criteria may be reversed, if the pixels appear as a white spec in the image.

The criteria may be also a function of the acquisition parameter. For example an image with a open aperture may all be marked as in-decisive, because the dust may not appear on the image. Regions that are potentially dust are marked (**292**) and then added to the dust mask (**294**). The addition may be the creation of a new dust spec on the map or the modification of the probability function or the confidence level counter for the region. Regions that are most likely non-dust are marked (**282**) and then added to the dust mask (**284**). The addition may be the creation of a new dust spec on the map or the modification of the probability function or the confidence level counter for the region. The additions of the regions needs to be normalized to the shooting conditions as defined by the dust map (**300**) if this step was not performed prior to entering this function, as optionally defined in FIG. **1**.

This loop continues over all regions of the image (**271**). Alternatively (**272**), each region is compared (**500**) with the map dust to se if there is no case where the monotonicity is broken, i.e. a region that was of high probability to be dust is now non dust.

FIG. **3** illustrates the process of correlating the image to a default settings of the dust map. This process defines correlating the image o the dust map, the dust map to a new dust map of the dust map to the mage. In particular this correlation refers to the adjustment of the shooting conditions to some accepted standard. The acquisition conditions in particular refer to the aperture and the focal length. The correlation process is interchangeable and can be done by adjusting the image to the map or adjusting the map to the image. In some cases both acquired image and dust map may be adjusted to some common ground. Such an example may happen when the ma is calculated based on a aperture that the lens does not reach or a different lens than the one used wit different optical configuration. Alternatively, in case of a new lens, this process (**300**) may be used to adjust the map onto a new map and from that stage onwards continue with a single map.

To begin with, the dust map is being loaded (**112**) and the default data on which the map was generated is extracted (**310**). Such data may include the lens type, the aperture and the focal length associated wit the default state. In concurrence, the information form the acquired image (**304**) is extracted (**320**) and compared to the one of the dust map.

A explained in the mathematical model of the optical system, the two main adjustments between the dust map and the image are based on focal length, and on aperture, each creating a different artifact that should be addressed. Knowledge of the phenomena may assist in creating a better detection and correction of the dust artifact. Alternatively, in a separate embodiment, analysis of the image and the modification of the dust as changed by aperture and focal length, may provide the necessary mathematical model that describes transformation that defines the changes to the dust as a function of change in the lens type, the focal length and the aperture.

Referring to FIG. **3**, after extracting the data, the following step is modification of the map and or the image based no focal length (**900**), and based on aperture (**800**). The following steps are further defined with reference to FIG. **6** and FIG. **5**, respectively.

Following the two steps (**800** and **900**), the Image and the Dust Map are considered to be correlated. The correlated map cM is no longer binary because it defines both the shift and the

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fall off which is continuous. FIG. **4** defines the preferred process of detecting and removing the dust from the image. The input is the image I is loaded, if it is not already in memory (**404**) and the correlated dust map is cM is loaded (**402**) if already not in memory.

The process of detecting and removing the dust is done per dust spec. This process is highly parallelized and can be performed as a single path over the image, or in strips. The flexibility of performing the operation on the entire image, or in portions, combined with the correlation or as a separate process, enables a flexible implementation of the algorithm based on external restrictions defined by the hardware, the run time environment, memory restrictions and processing speed.

The acquisition information and the corresponding dust map default setup are extracted in blocks **326** and **312** respectively. Then, for each dust spec in the image **810**, the size of the region that is still obscured by the dust is calculated, as defined by mathematical model. In some cases, when the aperture is very open, this region may decline to 0. In others, where the aperture is still very close, the size may be close to the size of the dust. Alternatively, This step, **820**, may be done as a preparation stage, and kept in a database, which can be loaded.

The process then splits in two. The fully obscured region will be marked in **834** pixel by pixel **832** in a loop **834**, **835** and will be treated by the in-painting process as defined in FIG. **4**. A semi opaque dust map, is created in the loop **840**, **841** for each pixel. Each of the pixels **842**, is assigned an OPACITY value **844**, based on the mathematical model as described previously. The dust spec that is only partially attenuated will go through a inverse filtering of the information already there, as described in FIG. **4** block **430**, with a specific embodiment in block **432**. The process of the inverse filtering may take into account the signal to noise ratio to avoid enhancing data which is not part of the original image. For example, the region around the dust may have a overshoot similar to a high pass filter, which may manifest itself in the form of an aura around the dust. This aura should to be taken into account before enhancing the regions.

FIG. **6** describes the adjustment of the Dust Map based on the Focal length, and the specific lens. As described before, the shift of the dust spec as a function of focal length for a specific lens is a function of equation (13 the thickness of the window tw, which is constant for a given camera and exit pupil position—Pe, which varies based on the lens system and the variable focal length in case of a zoom lens. Given an image and a dust map, the pertinent information is loaded, as described in FIG. **3**, namely the focal lens and lens type of the camera, **326**, the focal length and lens type in the dust map **312** and the camera distance of dust to the sensor **318**.

The process then goes through all knows dust specs in the image **910** and calculates the shift of the dust. The coordinates of the pixel are calculated from the center of the optical path, **922**, and the shift is calculated **924**. Alternatively to going through each pixel, in order to speed the process, only the periphery of the dust spec can be calculated and the rest will be filled in. Moreover, because the shift is a function of the location (x,y) of the dust, in the case where dust is far enough from the origin, the dust shape will not change. It is then sufficient to calculate only a shift of a single point and displace the entire dust spec accordingly. The regions, which are only partially attenuated due to the change in aperture, may be calculated in this stage **940**, **941**, if calculated already as illustrated in FIG. **8**, or alternatively, the displacement can be calculated first as explained in blocks **942**,**944**.

In some cases, it is impossible to get the data on the exit pupil, nor the distance the dust is from the sensor. Such cases may be when the application has no a-priori knowledge of the camera or the lens that was used.

FIG. **9** schematically illustrates coupling components of a lens assembly with a housing of a digital image acquisition device, such as a Digital Single Lens Reflex Camera, or D-SLR. The lens assembly **1310** includes various optical, mechanical, electrical and/or signal connector or coupling components for coupling with a camera housing **1320** or other digital image acquisition device housing or component. In FIG. **9**, the components **1310** and **1320** are illustrated as if the lens **1310** has been uncoupled from the camera **1320** and rotated 180° about an axis running vertically within the plane of the drawing between the components **1310** and **1320**.

The physical or mechanical coupling between the lens assembly **1310** and the camera body **1320** is preferably via a bayonet type mount where the grooves on the lens bayonet mount **1332** fit into the camera body mount **1330**. When the lens is correctly held within the camera bayonet, electrical connectors **1342** on the back of the lens align and couple with the camera electrical connectors **1340** on the camera body. FIG. **9** also shows a further coupling component pair including a meter coupling ridge **1350** and an Ai coupling lever **1352**. In addition, an aperture indexing post **1360** of the lens **1310** is shown which couples with an aperture control coupling lever **1362** of the camera **1320**. Although not shown in the illustration of FIG. **9**, the interface of the camera **1320** and the lens **1310** may preferably include several other coupling or related optical system components including a focal length indexing ridge and focal length indexing pin pair, a lens-type signal notch and a lens-type signal pin pair, and a lens speed indexing post and a lens speed indexing lever pair. One or more of these coupling component pairs may be including within the electrical connectors **1340**, **1342**, or may be otherwise disposed at the interface. Moreover, an AF coupling on the lens **1310** may be coupled with an AF coupler on the camera body **1320**, e.g., in a exemplary Auto focus lens Nikkor® AF lens-type and Nikon® F4 body configuration.

Through these connectors, information may be communicated to and from the lens **1310** to the camera **1320**. Such information may include details about the lens type, magnification and/or focal length. Other parameters may include aperture size or F-number. Conversely, the camera **1320** may send information to the lens **1310** such as for setting up a focus ring or otherwise initializing or calibrating with the camera **1220** or other digital image acquisition device **1220**. The connectors illustrated at FIG. **13** and/or those just described above, may also serve to transfer lens calibration data relevant to dust or dust artifact within images. The lens parameter data may be entirely digitally-stored in a permanent memory of the lens assembly, and may be made accessible by a camera micro-processor upon electrical, optical or other signal coupling. This data may be in the form of analytical parameters, such as exit pupil dimension, exit pupil distance regarding the lens or distance of dust to the sensor (which may often include a thickness of a protective CCD sensor cover material, such as an anti-aliasing or an optical spacer), or other parameters, and may be a table, e.g., a look up table, describing the dust movement as a function of the focal length, etc., as discrete points, or a mathematical formula describing this relationship, or otherwise as set forth above or below herein. The lens calibration may include other data such as the effect of the aperture on the dust.

Values of extracted parameters relating to the optical system including the lens assembly may be embedded within the lens system, wherein by "embedded" it is meant that the information is stored or contained in whatever form within or on or in connection with the lens assembly. This embedded

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information may preferably be within a Flash or EEPROM memory chip. RAM is an alternative, but is "volatile" and would utilize a back-up battery to retain data storage when powered down. Preferably, the lens system would use the power of the camera when coupled thereto, and only alternatively would have its own separate power supply or back-up battery. In that case, the battery may be charged when coupled to the camera.

Therefore, relevant data is advantageously digitally-stored in an optical calibration table, or otherwise, within a chip or other digital storage component of the lens holder **1310**, optical mount **1310** or the lens **1310** itself. The table is made accessible to a camera-resident micro-processor through the electrical or other signal connections **1340**, **1342**. When the lens is mechanically coupled to the camera, it is also electrically and/or optically coupled specifically so that the camera can access the table. There may be an automatic focusing that is facilitated by this communication, or other advantage involving this feature of camera-lens communication. The lens parameter data may be entirely digitally-stored in the table that is made accessible by the camera micro-processor upon coupling, although it may be made accessible by a switch that turns on the connection or by opening the shutter or by other preparation for taking a picture.

There are many alternatives to the preferred embodiments described above that may be incorporated into a image processing method, a digital camera, and/or an image processing system including a digital camera and an external image processing device that may be advantageous. For example, an electronic circuit may be designed to detect maximum and minimum dust detection probability thresholds while acquiring pixels in an image (see also U.S. Pat. No. 5,065,257 to Yamada, hereby incorporated by reference). Such a circuit can produce signals that may be used in processing to eliminate regions, which lie outside the expected range of signal values due to the presence of dust particles or similar optical defects, or alternatively to accept, maintain or eliminate regions as dust artifact regions based on whether a probability determination exceeds, high or low, a certain threshold or thresholds. A technique may be used to detect and provide a remedy for the effects of dust on a digitally-acquired image (see also U.S. Pat. No. 5,214,470 to Denber, hereby incorporated by reference). An image may be recorded within a digital camera or external processing device such as may be signal coupled with a digital camera for receiving digital output image information or a device that acquires or captures a digital image of a film image. The digital image may be compared with the film image, e.g., through a logical XOR operation, which may be used to remove dust spots or blemishes picked up in the acquisition of the digital image from the film image.

Multiple images may be processed and stationary components, which are common between images, may be detected and assigned a high probability of being a defect (see also U.S. Pat. No. 6,035,072 to Read, hereby incorporated by reference). Additional techniques, which may be employed to modify defect probability, may include median filtering, sample area detection and dynamic adjustment of scores. This dynamic defect detection process allows defect compensation, defect correction and alerting an operator of the likelihood of defects.

Dark field imaging may be employed to determine the location of defects in digital images from digital cameras or film scanners (see U.S. Pat. No. 5,969,372 to Stavely et al., and U.S. patent application 2001/0035491 to Ochiai et al., each hereby incorporated by reference). A normal imaging of a object with normal illumination may be followed by a second imaging using different wavelengths, e.g., infrared illumination. Dust, fingerprints, scratches and other optical defects are typically opaque to infrared light. Thus the second image produces an image with dark spots indicating the position of dust particles or other defects.

A process may involve changing any of a variety of extracted parameters (see elsewhere herein), angle of sensor relative to image plane, distance of image plane or sensor from dust specks (e.g., on window of sensor), etc., and imaging a same object with the digital camera. A comparison of the images reveals with enhanced probability the locations of dust artifact. In a camera application, the unique location of the actual dust relative to the object and to the image plane provide information about extracted parameter-dependent characteristics of dust artifact in the images. The analysis for the digital camera application depends on the "transmission"-based optical parameters of the system, i.e., the fact that light travels from a scene through the camera lens and onto the camera sensor, and not involving any substantial reflective effects. It is possible to make determinations as to where the dust actually is in the system by analyzing multiple images taken with different extracted parameters, e.g., on the sensor window, or in an image of an original object which itself is being images such as in film imaging.

In a scanning application, this technique can be use the face that a speck of dust will cast a shadow of a different color, geometry location, etc. with changes in extracted parameters, e.g., with a different color with increasing elongation of the shadow for each parallel row of pixels (a "rainbow" shadow, as it were). Multiple scans taken from various angles of illumination may be employed to produce an image which identifies dust defects from their shadows and the colors thereof (see U.S. Pat. No. 6,465,801 to Gann et al. and U.S. patent applications 2002/0195577 and 2002/0158192 to Gann et al, hereby incorporated by reference). A linear scanning element moves across a document (or the document is moved across the scanning element) and an image of the document is built up as a series of rows of pixels. This differs from the physical configuration of a camera in which a shutter illuminates a X-Y sensor array with a single burst of light. In both cases, though, dust may lie close to the imaging plane of the sensor.

Technique may be applied as part of a photofinishing process to eliminate blemishes on a film image obtained by a digital camera (see also U.S. patent application 2001/0041018 to Sonoda, hereby incorporated by reference). Such techniques may import previous acquired information about defects in images from a blemish detection procedure. A technique for correcting image defects from a digital image acquisition device such as a digital camera may involve repeated imaging of an object or other image, where each successive image-acquisition involves different properties or extracted parameters or meta-data related properties, such as variable angles of incidence or variable lighting or contrast parameters, and the results of these repeated scans may be combined to form a reference image from which defect corrections are made (see also U.S. patent application 2003/0118249 to Edgar, hereby incorporated by reference).

A decision on whether a defect in a image acquired by a field-based digital camera is to be corrected or not may be based on a balancing of considerations. For example, the likely damage to surrounding defect-free portions of the image may be balanced against the likelihood of successfully achieving correction of the defect.

Image processing means may be employed where the detection or correction of defects in a digital image may be based solely on analysis of the digital image, or may employ techniques directly related to the image acquisition process,

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or both. Anomalous image regions may be determined based on the difference between the gradient of an image at a set of grid points and the local mean of the image gradient (e.g., see U.S. Pat. No. 6,233,364 to Krainiouk et al., hereby incorporated by reference). Such technique can reduce the number of false positives in "noisy" regions of an image such as those representing leaves in a tree, or pebbles on a beach. After determining an initial defect list by this means, the technique may involve culling the list based on a one or more or a series of heuristic measures based on color, size, shape and/or visibility measures where these are designed to indicate how much an anomalous region resembles a dust fragment or a scratch.

Techniques and means to correct scratches in a digitized images may employ a binary mask to indicate regions requiring repair or noise removal, and sample and repair windows to indicate (i) the region requiring repair and/or (ii) a similar "sample" area of the image (see also U.S. Pat. No. 5,974,194 to Hirani et al., hereby incorporated by reference). Data from a sample window may be converted to a frequency domain and combined with frequency domain data of the repair window. When a low-pass filter is applied, it has the effect to remove the sharp, or high-frequency, scratch defect.

Techniques and means of detecting potential defect or "trash" regions within an image may be based on a comparison of the quadratic differential value of a pixel with a predetermined threshold value (see U.S. Pat. No. 6,125,213 to Morimoto, hereby incorporated by reference). The technique may involve correcting "trash" regions within an image by successively interpolating from the outside of the "trash" region to the inside of this region.

Techniques and means to automate the removal of narrow elongated distortions from a digital image may utilize the characteristics of image regions bordering the distortion (see also U.S. Pat. No. 6,266,054 to Lawton et al., hereby incorporated by reference). User input may be used to mark the region of the defect, or automatic defect detection may be employed according to a preferred embodiment herein, while the process of delineating the defect is also preferably also performed automatically.

Techniques and means to allow automatic alteration of defects in digital images may be based upon a defect channel having a signal proportional to defects in the digital image (see also U.S. Pat. No. 6,487,321 to Edgar et al., hereby incorporated by reference). This allows areas of strong defect to be more easily excised without causing significant damage to the area of the image surrounding the defect.

Techniques and means may be employed to generate replacement data values for an image region (see also U.S. Pat. No. 6,587,592 to Georgiev et al., hereby incorporated by reference) Image defect may be repaired as facilitated by the replacement data. Moreover, the repairing of the unwanted image region may preserves image textures within the repaired (or "healed") region of the image.

Techniques and means may be employed to detect defect pixels by applying a median filter to an image and subtracting the result from the original image to obtain a difference image (see also U.S. patent application 2003/0039402 and WIPO patent application WO-03/019473, both to Robins et al., each hereby incorporated by reference). This may be used to construct at least one defect map. Correction of suspected defect pixels may be achieved by replacing those pixel values with pixel values from the filtered image and applying a smoothing operation. User input may or may not be utilized to further mitigate the effects of uncertainty in defect identification.

Techniques and means for retouching binary image data which is to be presented on a view-screen or display apparatus may be employed to eliminate local screen defects such as dust and scratch artifacts (see also U.S. patent application 2002/0154831 to Hansen et al., hereby incorporated by reference). The production of visible moiréeffects in the retouched image data may be avoided by the replacement of small areas.

A digital video camera with sensor apparatus may incorporate a defect detecting mode (see also U.S. Pat. No. 5,416,516 to Kameyama et al., hereby incorporated by reference). The locations of detected defect pixels may be retained in the memory of the camera apparatus and replacement pixel values may be interpolated by processing algorithms, which convert the sensor data into digital image pixel values. Techniques may be employed to automatically detect and compensate for defective sensor pixels within a video camera (see also U.S. Pat. No. 5,625,413 to Katoh et al., hereby incorporated by reference). The camera may perform a dark current measurement on start-up when the camera iris is closed and by raising the gain can determine pixels which exhibit abnormally high dark current values. The location of these pixels is recorded in camera memory as a LUT with associated threshold brightness values associated with each pixel depending on its dark current value; defect compensation depends on input image brightness and ambient temperature.

An image pickup apparatus, such as a digital camera, may have a detachable lens (see also U.S. patent application 2003/0133027 to Itoh, hereby incorporated by reference). The camera may incorporate a defect detecting section and a compensation section for sensor defects. Further the defect detection operation may become active when the camera lens is detached so that the user will not miss an opportunity to take a picture due to the operation of the defect detection process.

The techniques of the preferred and alternative embodiments described herein may be applied to cameras with interchangeable lens units (see also U.S. patent application Ser. No. 5,003,399 to Masayoshi et. al., hereby incorporated by reference). The camera and lens have first and second computers in the camera body and lens device, respectively, which are programmed so that, in an initial communication sequence there between after the selected lens device is mounted on the camera body, the second microcomputer transmits optical characteristic data for the respective lens device to the first microcomputer in response to a data transmission request signal from the latter.

The techniques of the preferred and alternative embodiments described herein may be applied to printers and to imaging devices such as a digital cameras which incorporate a focusing lens system. A process may be employed for detecting and mapping dust on the surface of a photographic element (see also U.S. Pat. No. 5,436,979 to Gray et al., hereby incorporated by reference). This may be applied in the context of a verification procedure to follow a cleaning process for a range of photographic elements including film negatives and slides. Statistical information may be obtained and presented to an operator to allow control of the cleaning process. Detailed location information may be also recorded and/or correction means may be also provided for dust defects on a photographic element.

Techniques and means to create a defect map for a digital camera or similar imaging device may use an all-white reference background (see also U.S. patent application 2002/0093577 to Kitawaki et al., hereby incorporated by reference). The location of any dust or scratch defects may be recorded in the memory of the imaging apparatus when the camera is in a dust detection mode and when a dust correction circuit is active any image data co-located with a defect may be corrected for the presence of dust by elimination, color

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correction or interpolation based on the surrounding pixels. Further, where the position of a dust defect changes with f-stop of the camera a list of dust locations corresponding to f-stop settings is pre recorded at the time of manufacturing in a LUT in the camera memory. Any effect of different focal length may be simplified to the effect of the change in dust due to magnification of the lens. In addition, techniques for dynamically obtaining a defect map based on the processing of a plurality of images may be employed with this technique.

Techniques may be also employed involving correcting for dust defects based on the geometry of said dust or of the camera. Further techniques may involve utilizing camera metadata to enhance the detection and correction processes for defects. Further techniques may involve alerting the user that the camera requires servicing due to excessive levels of dust contamination, or the fact that it is not only magnification but the actual lens that is mounted.

A method of filtering dust artifacts form an acquired digital image including multiplicity of pixels indicative of dust, the pixels forming various shapes in the image, may be employed. The method may include analyzing image information including information describing conditions under which the image was acquired and/or acquisition device-specific information. One or more regions may be determined within the digital image suspected as including dust artifact. Based at least in part on said meta-data analysis, it may be determined whether the regions are actual dust artifact.

A method may further include analyzing the images in comparison to a predetermined dust map to establish the validity of the dust over progressions of time. The method may further involve mapping the acquired image to a predetermined default acquisition condition based on a lens and camera calibration tables, as a function of the lens type and the focal length that was used at acquisition.

A method may further include mapping a dust spec as depicted in the dust map and the suspected dust specs in the acquired image based on a calculated transformation of the dust as a function of the lens and the aperture, or other extracted parameter, used to acquire the image. The actual removal of dust artifacts from an image may include a step where missing data as obscured by the dust specs is regenerated and in-painted based on analysis of the region in the image surrounding the dust spec. The actual removal of the dust artifacts from the image may also include a step where deteriorated regions primarily in the periphery of the dust spec are enhanced and restored based on knowledge of the deterioration function. The actual image retouching may include both in-painting and restoration or either one of these operations, or another image correction technique as may be understood by those skilled in the art.

A method of detecting and removing dust artifacts may be performed in the acquisition device as a post-processing stage prior to saving the image. This method may further include an analysis of the image in its raw format immediately followed by the acquisition stage. The method of detecting and removing dust artifacts can be performed on an external device as part of a download or capture process. Such external device may be a personal computer, a storage device, and archival device, a display or a printing device or other device. The method of detecting and removing dust artifacts can be performed in part in the acquisition device and the external device.

A dust detection and/or correction technique may be applied post priori to a collection of images, or individually to images as they are added to a collection. The map may be generated a priori to the introduction of an image, or dynamically and in concurrence to the introduction of new images. The method may further include steps of providing a statistical confidence level as to the fact that a certain region is indeed part of a dust spec. The method may further provide tools to determine whether the acquisition device may benefit from some maintenance. A method may be employed that may be implemented as part of a digitization process, such as correcting defects on scanning device, whether flat bed or drum, whether for hard copy documents or for film digitization. A method may be further applied to other recurring image imperfections such as dead pixels on the sensor, burnt pixels on the sensor, scratches, etc. A method of automatically determining whether to recommend servicing a digital image acquisition system including a digital camera based on dust analysis may be advantageously employed. A method of calculating parameters of an optical system may be based on analysis of the dust.

While an exemplary drawings and specific embodiments of the present invention have been described and illustrated, it is to be understood that that the scope of the present invention is not to be limited to the particular embodiments discussed. Thus, the embodiments shall be regarded as illustrative rather than restrictive, and it should be understood that variations may be made in those embodiments by workers skilled in the arts without departing from the scope of the present invention as set forth in the claims that follow and their structural and functional equivalents.

In addition, in methods that may be performed according to preferred embodiments herein, the operations have been described in selected typographical sequences. However, the sequences have been selected and so ordered for typographical convenience and are not intended to imply any particular order for performing the operations, unless a particular ordering is expressly provided or understood by those skilled in the art as being necessary.

Many references have been cited above herein, and in addition to that which is described as background, the invention summary, brief description of the drawings, the drawings and the abstract, these references are hereby incorporated by reference into the detailed description of the preferred embodiments, as disclosing alternative embodiments of elements or features of the preferred embodiments not otherwise set forth in detail above. A single one or a combination of two or more of these references may be consulted to obtain a variation of the preferred embodiments described in the detailed description above.

What is claimed is:

1. A digital camera that automatically corrects dust artifact regions within acquired images, comprising:

(a) an optical system for acquiring an image including a lens assembly and an aperture stop;

(b) an electronic sensor array for collecting image data with multiple pixels that collectively correspond to the acquired image;

(c) a lens calibration table corresponding to said optical system that includes information describing dust location and appearance as a function of optical parameters at least including exit pupil dimension of the lens assembly, or distance of dust from a surface of the electronic sensor array that corresponds to a focal plane of the lens assembly, or both;

(d) a master dust map describing a physical manifestation of dust artifacts on said sensor array;

(e) a manifestation of the master dust map for a specific lens and focal length, calculated as a transformation of the master dust map based on the lens calibration table; and

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(f) digital processing electronics including a processor for converting processing the digital data according to programming instructions; and

(g) wherein said dust artifacts are corrected for said acquired image based on the manifestation of the master dust map.

2. The camera of claim 1, wherein said lens calibration table comprises processor-readable digital code embedded within a memory component that is located inside the lens.

3. The camera of claim 1, wherein said lens calibration table is located in an external application.

4. The camera of claim 1, wherein said lens calibration table is downloadable from a server.

5. The camera of claim 1, wherein said master dust map comprises a statistical dust map.

6. The camera of claim 5, wherein additional images are digitally-acquired with said digital camera, and said statistical dust map is dynamically updated.

7. The camera of claim 6, wherein said statistical map comprises probabilities based on comparisons with suspected equivalent dust artifact regions within said additional images.

8. The camera of claim 7, wherein determining of said probabilities is based on a pixel analysis of the suspected dust artifact regions in view of predetermined characteristics indicative of the presence of a dust artifact region.

9. The camera of claim 5, wherein whether said additional digitally-acquired images have non-contradicting data that said probability that certain pixels correspond to dust artifact regions within said images is validated prior to correcting pixels corresponding to correlated dust artifact regions within said images based on the manifestation of said master statistical dust map.

10. The camera of claim 1, wherein said dust artifacts are corrected on a image from raw format.

11. The camera of claim 1, wherein said dust artifacts are corrected on a processed image after being converted from raw format to a known red, green, blue representation.

12. The camera of claim 1, wherein said dust artifacts are corrected by replacing said pixels within said one or more digitally-acquired images with new pixels.

13. The camera of claim 1, wherein said dust artifacts are corrected by enhancing values of pixels within said one or more digitally-acquired images.

14. A method performed within a digital image acquisition device including a sensor array that is coupled with a lens assembly including optical and signal coupling, the method for automatically correcting dust artifact within images acquired by the device, comprising:

(a) acquiring one or more initial digital images within said digital acquisition device;

(b) determining that certain pixels correspond to dust artifact regions within said mages;

(c) receiving through said signal coupling one or more values of one or more extracted parameters relating to the optical system that are embedded within the lens assembly at least including exit pupil dimension of the lens assembly, or distance of dust from a surface of the electronic sensor array that corresponds to a focal plane of the lens assembly, or both;

(d) based on a master dust map describing a physical manifestation of dust artifacts on the sensor array, generating manifestation of the master dust map for a specific lens and focal length, calculated as a transformation of the master dust map based on the extracted parameters; and

(e) correcting pixels corresponding to correlated dust artifact regions within further digitally-acquired images based on the determining and the one or more extracted parameter values.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein said receiving further comprises receiving data based on a lens calibration table corresponding to said lens assembly that includes information describing the dust location and appearance as a function of the extracted parameters relating to the optical system.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the one or more extracted parameters comprise magnification, lens type, or focal length, or combinations thereof.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein the correcting comprises:

(i) associating dust artifact regions with one or more values of one or more extracted parameters relating to the optical system of the digital acquisition device when the images were acquired; and

(ii) forming a statistical dust map including mapped dust regions based on the dust artifact determining and associating,

(iii) wherein the correcting is based on the statistical dust map.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the correcting further comprises:

(i) loading the statistical dust map;

(ii) loading extracted parameter information of a present image;

(iii) performing calculations within the statistical dust map having extracted parameter variable-dependencies; and

(iv) comparing dust artifact detection data with the extracted parameter dependent statistical dust map data.

19. A method performed within a digital image acquisition device including a sensor array that is coupled with a lens assembly including optical and signal coupling, the method for automatically correcting imaging artifacts within images acquired by the device, comprising:

(a) acquiring one or more initial digital images within said digital acquisition device;

(b) determining that certain pixels correspond to artifact regions within said images;

(c) receiving through said signal coupling data based on a lens calibration table corresponding to said lens assembly that includes information describing artifact location and appearance as a function of one or more values of one or more extracted parameters relating to the optical system that are embedded within the lens assembly at least including exit pupil dimension of the lens assembly, or distance of dust from a surface of the electronic sensor array that corresponds to a focal plane of the lens assembly, or both;

(d) based on a master dust map describing a physical manifestation of dust artifacts on the sensor array, generating a manifestation of the master dust map for a specific lens and focal length, calculated as a transformation of the master dust map based on the extracted parameters; and

(e) correcting pixels corresponding to correlated artifact regions within further digitally-acquired images based on the determining and the one or more extracted parameter values.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the one or more extracted parameters comprise magnification, lens type, or focal length, or combinations thereof.

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21. The method of claim 19, wherein the correcting comprises:

(i) associating artifact regions with one or more values of one or more extracted parameters relating to the optical system of the digital acquisition device when the images were acquired; and

(ii) forming a statistical map including mapped artifact regions based on the artifact determining and associating,

(iii) wherein the correcting is based on the statistical map.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the correcting further comprises:

(i) loading the statistical map;

(ii) loading extracted parameter information of a present image;

(iii) performing calculations within the statistical map having extracted parameter variable-dependencies; and

(iv) comparing artifact detection data with the extracted parameter dependent statistical map data.

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 7,590,305 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 10/842244
DATED : September 15, 2009
INVENTOR(S) : Steinberg et al.

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

On the Title Page:

The first or sole Notice should read --

Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 1349 days.

Signed and Sealed this

Twenty-first Day of September, 2010

David J. Kappos

David J. Kappos
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

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US007245319B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Enomoto

(10) **Patent No.: US 7,245,319 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent: Jul. 17, 2007**

(54) **DIGITAL IMAGE SHOOTING DEVICE WITH LENS CHARACTERISTIC CORRECTION UNIT**

(75) Inventor: **Jun Enomoto**, Kanagawa (JP)

(73) Assignee: **Fujifilm Corporation**, Tokyo (JP)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/330,096**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 11, 1999**

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04N 5/228 (2006.01)
H04N 5/217 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **348/222.1**; 348/241

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 348/360, 348/355, 96, 97, 105, 222.1, 241, 335, 231.99, 348/231.6, 231.3; 382/298, 300; 235/462.05, 235/462.11

See application file for complete search history.

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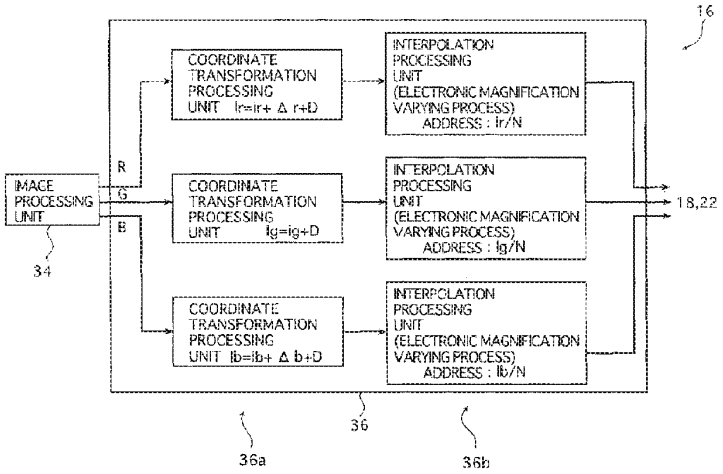
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Primary Examiner—Vivek Srivastava
Assistant Examiner—Justin Misleh
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Birch, Stewart, Kolasch & Birch, LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

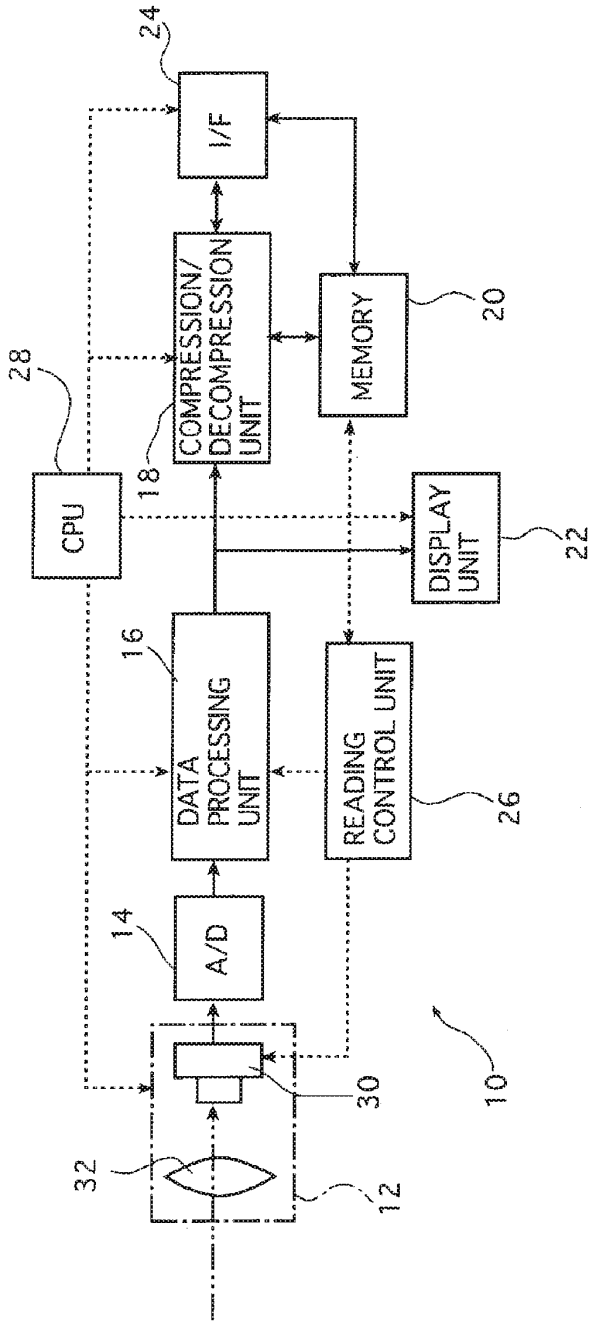
The digital image shooting device is composed of an image forming lens, an image sensor element, a data processing unit for processing an output signal from the image sensor element into digital image data, an image memory for storing the digital image data; and a lens characteristic correction unit for performing a process of correcting a deterioration of an image quality derived from the image forming lens upon the digital image data by using a lens characteristic of the image forming lens and a position of a frame image photographed. The digital image shooting device is capable of obtaining the image quality which is high enough for the utilization even by using the comparatively low-price lens which does not exhibit a high performance.

12 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



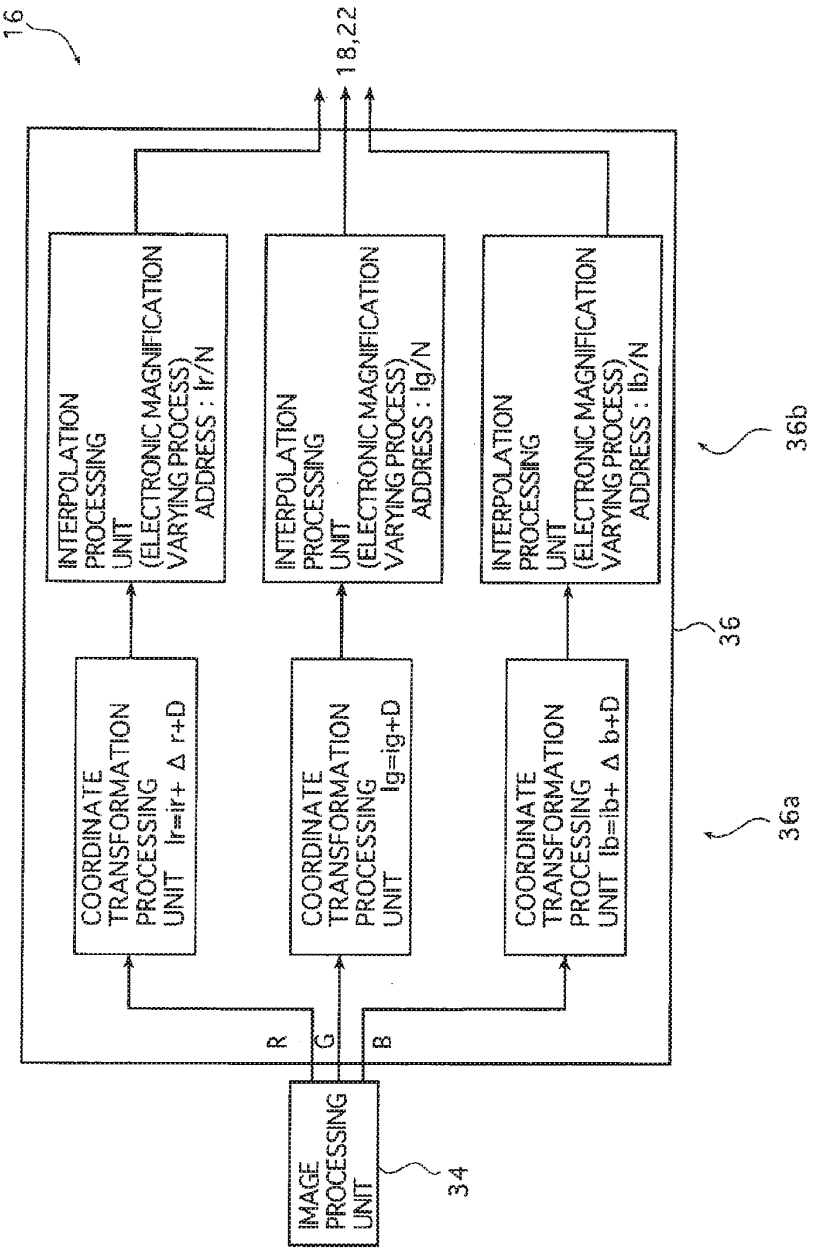
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FIG. 1



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FIG. 2



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FIG. 3A



FIG. 3B

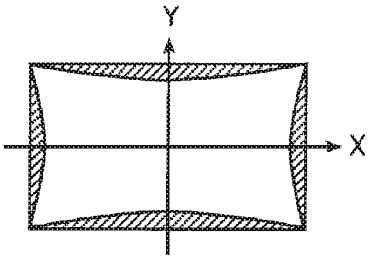
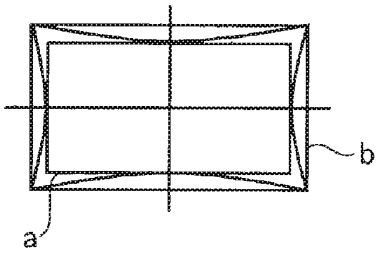


FIG. 3C



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DIGITAL IMAGE SHOOTING DEVICE WITH LENS CHARACTERISTIC CORRECTION UNIT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to a technical filed of a digital image shooting device such as a digital camera, and more particularly to a digital image shooting device capable of photographing (outputting) a high-quality image of which aberrations are corrected even in a case of incorporating a comparatively low-price lens which performance is not so good.

A digital camera, which had initially a small number of pixels and of which representation was in monochrome, has therefore been limited its use to a special application. With a remarkable decrease in costs for the electronic parts of CCD sensors, etc., however, a color representation becomes possible easily, and the application of image data processing expands with a spread of a personal computer. Under such circumstances, the digital camera sharply decreases in price and seems to be popularized.

Recently, a high quality digital camera of which pixel number exceeds 1,000,000 have been commercialized one after another, and also with regard to a memory for storing (recording) the image, there is a tendency of the digital camera to shift from a type of being built in the body of it to a type of using a removable storage medium having a larger capacity.

In the latter type of the digital camera using the removable storage medium, a process of taking the recorded image data into a personal computer becomes highly simple.

As explained above, an enhancement of the image quality in the digital camera is largely influenced by, in addition to an increase in the number of recordable pixels, a performance improvement of an image forming lens, and an improvement of an image processing technology of the photographed image data.

For instance, some of the digital cameras (DS-300 made by Fuji Photo Film Co.,Ltd.) use a 3-powered zoom lens as an image forming lens, of which a lens configuration is based on 3 lens units containing 9 lens elements, and this type of the digital camera becomes substantially equal to a compact camera in terms of the image quality.

However, by using the high-accuracy and high-performance lens, the digital camera which can output the high-quality image can be realized and, while on the other hand, it might be a factor for raising the costs of the digital camera.

conversely, by using the comparatively low-price lens, it is possible to decrease the costs of the digital camera. However it can not be denied that the low-price lens is inferior in performance so that for example, there might occur a chromatic aberration of magnification, a distortion aberration and a decrease in marginal lumination, and quality of the image falls down such that a distortion and a density gradient occur with the outputted image.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention has been accomplished under these circumstances and has as an object providing a low cost digital image shooting device capable of obtaining the image quality which is high enough for the utilization even by using the comparatively low-price lens which performance is not so high.

In order to attain the object described above, the invention provides a digital image shooting device comprising: an image forming lens; an image sensor element; a data processing unit for processing an output signal from the image sensor element into digital image data; an image memory for storing the digital image data; and a lens characteristic correction unit for performing, by using a lens characteristic of the image forming lens and a position of a frame image photographed, a process of correcting a deterioration of an image quality derived from the image forming lens upon the digital image data.

It is preferable that the image quality deterioration corrected by the lens characteristic correction unit is at least one of a chromatic aberration of magnification, a distortion aberration, defocusing and a decrease in marginal lumination.

It is also preferable that the lens characteristic correction unit corrects the deterioration of the image quality before a process of compressing the digital image data.

It is further preferable that the lens characteristic correction unit performs the correction before the photographing of a next frame or during the photographing of the next frame onward, and the digital image data of the frame which is performed the correction by the lens characteristic correction unit is stored in the image memory.

It is also further preferable that the image memory is a built-in image recording medium or a removable image recording medium.

It is still further preferable that the digital image shooting device of the invention further comprises an image display unit for displaying the photographed image, wherein an image based on the digital image data which is or is not performed the correction process in the lens characteristic correction unit, is displayed on the image display unit, and the digital image data performed the correction process in the lens characteristic correction unit, is stored in a memory.

It is also still further preferable that an image of a region larger than a photographic region confirmed by a photographer is formed on the image sensor element in accordance with missing of pixels which is caused as a result of the correction by the lens characteristic correction unit.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the accompanying drawings:

FIG. **1** is a block diagram schematically showing one example of the digital camera according to the present invention,

FIG. **2** is a block diagram schematically showing a data processing unit of the digital camera shown in FIG. **1**; and

FIGS. **3**A, **3**B and **3**C are conceptual diagrams each showing an image deformation by aberration correction.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The digital image shooting device of the present invention will hereinafter be described in details based on a preferred embodiment which will be illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

FIG. **1** is a block diagram showing one example of the digital camera according to the present invention.

Referring to FIG. **1**, a digital camera **10** includes an image shooting unit **12**, an A/D (analog-to-digital) converter **14**, a data processing unit **16**, a data compressing unit (which is hereinafter simply termed a compression unit) **18**, an image memory **20**, a display unit **22**, an I/F (interface) unit **24**, a reading control unit **26**, and a CPU **28** for managing and controlling these units and the whole digital camera **10**.

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Note that solid lines indicate a flow of image signals (image data), and dotted lines indicate a flow of control signals respectively in FIG **1**.

The image shooting unit **12**, which shoots a photographic subject (a scene) and outputs signals after photoelectric conversion, has a color CCD sensor (hereinafter simply referred to as a sensor) **30** for photoelectrically reading the image by separating the image into three primary colors red (R), green (G) and blue (B), an image forming lens **32** for forming the subject image on the sensor **30** and, in addition, though not illustrated, a variable stop for controlling a quantity of light beams incident in the sensor **30**, and an amplifier for amplifying output signals from the sensor **30**.

The output signals (the image signals) from the imaging unit **12** are converted to digital image signals by the A/D converter **14**, and thereafter transmitted to the data processing unit **16**.

Note that the reading control unit **26** controls such as an image reading (sampling) timing of the sensor **30**, an electronic shutter speed (a storage time), and a processing timing of the image signal in the data processing unit **16**, corresponding thereto.

The data processing unit **16**, which makes a predetermined data processing on the digital image signals converted by the A/D converter **14** and outputs it as an output image data (hereinafter simply referred to as image data) to the compression unit **18** and the display unit **22**, as illustrated in FIG. **2**, includes an image processing unit **34** and a lens characteristic correction unit **36** that is particular to the present invention. It is to be noted that a processing condition in the data processing unit **16** is set by, e.g., the CPU **28**.

The image processing unit **34** makes a variety of image processes such as a conversion of the image signal into the image (density) data, white balance control of the image, gray balance control thereof, density control thereof, color balance control thereof and a sharpness (sharpening) process.

On the other hand, the lens characteristic correction unit (hereinafter be simply called a characteristic correction unit) **36** corrects deterioration of image quality origination in lens characteristics of the image forming lens **32** by using the lens characteristics of the image forming lens **32** an image position. The characteristic correction unit **36**, in the embodiment illustrated herein, corrects a chromatic aberration of magnification and a distortion aberration originating in the lens characteristic and, more preferably, corrects aberrations such as a decrease in marginal lumination and defocusing.

As known well, a color image is formed of the three primary colors of R, G and B, however, a refractive index (an image forming magnification) of the lens is subtly different depending on a wavelength, and therefore the image forming magnifications of light of R, G and B is different, viz., the chromatic aberration of magnification occurs. Hence, if the image formed on the sensor **30** is just reproduced as a visible image, a color deviation occurs on the obtained image.

Further, it is required for obtaining a high-quality photographic image that a plane perpendicular to the optical axis is formed on the image forming plane corresponding thereto. In a lens which performance is not so good, however, a deviation of the image forming position occurs in the optical-axis direction and a distortion i.e. distortion aberration occurs on the formed image. Consequently, if the image formed on the sensor **30** is just reproduced as the visible image, the distortion might occur on the obtained image.

As described above, if the image containing the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration is shown on a display, and just reproduced as the visible image in the form of a hardcopy or etc., on outputted image becomes an image which has a color deviation, a peripheral distortion, a decrease in the marginal lumination and defocusing and so on.

Therefore, the digital camera **10** according to the present invention includes the characteristic correction unit **36** to correct the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration originating in the lens characteristics so that even when using a low-price lens, the digital camera **10** is able to output the high-quality image with a stability that there is neither the distortion nor the color deviation, and a cost for the digital camera can be remarkably reduced.

The characteristic correction unit **36** memorizes the lens characteristics of the image forming lens **32** incorporated into the digital camera **10**, and corrects the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration, etc. of the image on the basis of the lens characteristics.

The lens characteristics is not limited particularly. However, generally the characteristics of the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration of the lens and the characteristics of the aberrations such as the decrease in the marginal lumination and the defocusing, can be approximated to some extent by a cubic function which uses a distance (which is expressed by, e.g., x-y) from the optical axis of the lens, i.e., from the center of the image as a parameter. Hence, corresponding to the image forming lens **32** mounted on the camera, a function representing the characteristic of the chromatic aberration of magnification and a function representing the distortion aberration corresponding thereto, may be stored as lens characteristics.

The characteristic correction unit **36** performs the process of correcting the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration by use of the above-mentioned lens characteristics and the image position i.e., an information of the position of the image data (pixels), e.g., a coordinate position (pixel number from the center) from the center of the image.

Note that the coordinates in this case may be the x-y coordinates or the polar coordinates. Further, the information of the position of the image data is not restricted to the center of the image as a basis, but various kind of things can be used. For example, a corner portion (such as a left upper corner, etc.) of the image and a certain pixel (e.g., a pixel of a pixel number No.1) may be set as a basis. Namely, according to the present invention, the various kind of position information can be used, which detects the position of the image (pixels) relatively.

Herein, however, if the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration are separately corrected by using the lens characteristics and the position information (hereinafter referred to as pixel position), the calculation takes a long time and an interpolating calculation needs to be done a plurality of times so that there arises a problem that the image quality might be deteriorated.

Therefore, in the embodiment illustrated herein, a preferable mode is that image magnifications of R and B are converted with "G" being normally a basic color among the three primary colors of R, G, and B, the chromatic aberration of magnification is corrected by matching the R and B images with the G image, and thereafter the distortion aberration is corrected. A proper position of each pixel is thereby calculated, and the image data of each pixel is subjected to the interpolating calculation, thereby making it feasible to obtain the image data in which the chromatic

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aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration of the photographed image are corrected.

Accordingly, the calculation for the G image may suffice for the distortion aberration, and hence the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration can be corrected under a more preferable condition because of a reduction in quantity of normal and interpolating calculations.

The characteristic correction unit **36** for carrying out the correcting method described above, as shown in the conceptual diagram in FIG. **2**, includes a coordinate transformation processing unit **36***a* and an interpolation processing unit **36***b*.

Incidentally, referring to FIG. **2**, Ir, Ig and Ib designate the pixel positions (addresses) of the image data (input image data) supplied from the image processing unit **34**, ir, ib and ib represent the pixel positions of the image data of which the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration are corrected, Δr and Δb denote the deviation quantities (i.e., the correction quantities) of the R- and B-pixel positions from the G-pixel position due to the chromatic aberration of magnification, and D designates the deviation quantity of the G-pixel position due to the distortion aberration.

The characteristic correction unit **36**, when supplied with the image data from the image processing unit **34**, makes the coordinate transformation processing unit **36***a* calculate the deviation quantities Δr and Δb of the pixel values ir and ib of the R- and B-image data from the G-image data ig due to the chromatic aberration of magnification by use of the lens characteristics described above, and further calculate the deviation quantity D of the input G-image data ig due to the distortion aberration.

Next, as shown in FIG. **2**, the coordinate transformation processing unit **36***a* calculates the pixel position Ir of the R-image data of which the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration are corrected by adding Δr and D to each pixel position ir of the input R-image data. Then, the coordinate transformation processing unit **36***a* calculates the pixel position Ib of the B-image data of which the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion are corrected by adding Δb and D to each pixel position ib of the input B-image data. Further, the coordinate transformation processing unit **36***a* calculates the pixel position Ig of the G-image data of which the distortion is corrected by adding D to each pixel position ig of the input G-image data.

That is, the calculation proceeds such as correcting the chromatic aberrations of magnification of the R- and B-images with the G-image as a basis, making the positional alignment of the whole images with the G-image, correcting the distortion aberration of the whole by use of the deviation quantity D of the G-image due to the distortion aberration, and thus calculating the pixel positions of the R- G- and B-images of which the chromatic aberrations of magnification and the distortion aberration are corrected.

The interpolation processing unit **36***b* calculates the image data of which the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration are corrected by executing a data interpolating process (N-times interpolation), which involves the use of the pixel positions Ir, Ig and Ib with the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration being corrected in the coordinate transformation processing unit **36***a*, and supplies the thus calculated image data to a decompression unit **18** and/or a display unit **22**. Namely, according to this method, the deviation quantity of the pixel position which is attributed to the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration, is calculated, thereby recognizing which position each pixel (the image data concerned) should normally exist in. Then, the interpolating (calculating) process of the image data is executed in accordance with that proper position, thereby obtaining the image data of which the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration are corrected.

The interpolation processing method is not particularly limited, and a variety of known methods such as, e.g., a bilinear interpolation and a spline interpolation, etc. can be utilized.

There have been in recent years many types of digital cameras **10**, to which a zooming function is added, capable of the photography to form an image by changing the magnification through a zoom lens.

The zooming photography is optically conducted by principally changing the image forming magnification of the image forming lens **32**. If the optical variable power of the image forming lens **32** is not sufficient enough to cover a photographic magnification variable range, however, an electronic magnification varying process based on the image data is executed, thereby enlarging or reducing the image.

Note that if photographed by use of the zoom lens, the aberrations described above may be corrected preferably based on the lens characteristics corresponding to each focal length. In this case, it is preferable to store the lens characteristics at a plurality of focal lengths of the zoom lens, convert the lens characteristics at the plurality of focal lengths with the focal length when photographed, and obtain the lens characteristic at the focal length when photographed through the lens. Herein, as for the lens characteristics, each of the lens characteristics at switchable focal lengths may be held (stored), or the lens characteristic at each focal length exhibiting a high photographic probability, may respectively be stored, or the lens characteristics on the order of three stages such as T (Telephoto), M (Middle, or Standard) and W (Wide-angle) may be stored. Note that a lens characteristic at a focal length which is not stored can be obtained by effecting the interpolating calculation from the lens characteristics at focal lengths anterior and posterior to that non-stored focal length.

On the other hand, the digital cameras **10** each having an interchangeable lens has been recently put on the market, and the interchangeable lens of the conventional camera using the photographic film is usable in some of those cameras. In the case of taking a photo using such an interchangeable lens, there are required the lens characteristics of the interchangeable lens. Therefore, the lens characteristics corresponding to lens data are stored for every usable interchangeable lens, the interchangeable lens data are received from the interchangeable lens on the occasion of the photography, and the aberrations described above may be corrected based on the lens characteristics.

Incidentally, the distortion aberration normally takes a bobbin winder shape shown in FIG. **3**B at the telephoto, and a barrel shape in contrast with the bobbin winder at the wide angle, and may be corrected in both cases. The chromatic aberration of magnification is not, however, conspicuous at the wide angle, and therefore the correcting process may be omitted.

Thus, in the case of performing the photography using the zoom lens and the interchangeable lens, it is preferable that the image aberrations derived from the lens through which the subject image is photographed be corrected by using the data on the focal length of the lens when photographing the subject image, the lens characteristics at that focal length, and the positional data of the image. It is also preferable on the occasion of correcting the aberrations described above

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that the lens characteristics at the plurality of focal lengths stored are converted with the focal length when photographing, the lens characteristic at the focal length when photographing through this lens are obtained, or the lens characteristic at the focal length of the interchangeable lens used are obtained, there is calculated using the obtained lens characteristic the deviation quantities, attributed to the chromatic aberration of magnification, of the image positions of the colors other than the color which is fiducial for the three primary colors, a proper position of each image of which the distortion aberration and the chromatic aberration of magnification are corrected is calculated by use of the deviation quantity due to the chromatic aberration of magnification and the deviation quantity of the fiducial color image position which is attributed to the distortion aberration, and the distortion aberration and the chromatic aberration of magnification are corrected using this proper position, or the electronic magnification varying process is executed using this proper position.

Such processes being thus implemented, in the case of even the subject image photographed by a comparatively low-price digital camera using the lens which does not exhibit a high lens performance, it is feasible to correct the deterioration of the image quality by executing the image processing, which is derived from the image aberration, viz., the image quality deterioration induced from the aberration of the lens, and output stably the high-quality image with no distortion and no color deviation, depending on neither the photographic magnification nor the focal length.

As known well, the electronic magnification varying process is executed by effecting the interpolating process on the image data, however, the interpolating process is followed by the deterioration of the image quality, and therefore it is preferable that the number of interpolating processes be minimized.

Accordingly, the interpolation processing unit **36***b* in the embodiment illustrated herein, by way of a preferable mode on the occasion of executing the electronic magnification varying process, controls a magnification (N-powered interpolation) in the interpolating calculation in accordance with an electronic magnification varying rate when effecting the interpolating process for obtaining the image data of which the above-mentioned aberrations are corrected, and simultaneously executes the electronic magnification varying process. It is feasible in this embodiment to correct the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration, and execute the electronic magnification varying process by performing the interpolating process once.

Incidentally, as discussed above, the image exhibiting neither the color deviation nor the distortion can be obtained after correcting the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration. When these aberrations are corrected, however, there might be a case where a configuration and a size of the image change.

For instance, if the image before being corrected presents the bobbin winder shaped distortion aberration as shown in FIG. **3**A, the image after the correction, as illustrated in FIG. **3**B, takes a configuration that the central portions of face-to-face sides of the rectangular shape largely shrink from both side ends toward the center in X- and Y-directions, wherein there might occur so-called vignetting which corresponds to oblique-line regions where the image can not be reproduced.

The digital camera **10** performs the photographing while confirming the photographic region on the display device **22**. In this case, however, when displaying on the display device **22** the image whose aberrations have been corrected, the image containing the vignetting as shown in FIG. **3**B is displayed thereon, and it follows that the image to be outputted outside similarly becomes the vignetted image.

Therefore, in the digital camera **10** of the present invention, assuming previously the vignetting caused as a result of correcting the aberrations, as illustrated in FIG. **3**C, it is preferable that a region **1** of the image data to be taken in after being actually photographed (after forming the image on the sensor **30**) is set larger than an image region a (a visual field of a viewfinder) to be reproduced on the display device **22**, and that the image region to be outputted outside is coincident with the image region a to be reproduced on the display device **22**. Alternatively, the image region to be reproduced on the display device **22** may be set smaller than the region to be actually photographed, and the same outside outputting may be carried out. Further, the image after being corrected is displayed, and the image vignetted region and a cut-out region may be framed.

Moreover, the interpolating magnification in the interpolation processing unit **36***b* is set corresponding to a degree of the vignetting, and the slightly-enlarged image may be displayed and/or outputted outside.

According to the device in the embodiment illustrated herein, the characteristic correction unit **36** corrects both of the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration by way of the preferable mode, however, the present invention is not limited to this mode. The characteristics of any one of the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration are stored as the lens characteristics, and any one of these aberrations may be corrected by use of the lens characteristics and the image position.

Furthermore, there are stored the information (data) about not only at least one of the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration but also the defocusing (PSF: Point Spread Function), the decrease in the marginal lumination, etc. attributed to the lens characteristics, and at least one of the chromatic aberration of magnification and the distortion aberration is corrected. In addition to or instead of this correction, the decrease in the marginal lumination and the defocusing may also be corrected.

Another option is that whether or not the correction pertaining to those lens characteristics should be conducted is set selectable, and the correction to be carried out may also be set selectable.

The image data processed by the interpolation processing unit **36***b* of the data processing unit **16** are supplied to the compression unit **18** and/or the display unit **22**.

The compression unit **18** compresses the image data and supplies the image memory **20** and the I/F unit **24** with the compressed image data. The image data are thus stored in the image memory **20**, and outputted from the I/F unit **24** to an outside personal computer, a TV, and outside recording mediums (a drive thereof) such as a floppy disk and an MO (magneto-optical) disk, etc. A method and a form of compressing the image data in the compression unit **18** are not particularly restricted, and the data compression may be executed by any methods and in any forms. The conventionally known methods and forms may be adopted. There may be adopted typical image data compression forms such as, e.g., JPEG, GIF and FlashFix. A selection of which form is adopted among those typical image data compression forms may be properly made corresponding to an image quality (a data quantity per frame) requested of the target image and a capacity of the image memory **20**.

Note that the compression unit **18** is not limited to what compresses the image data supplied from the data process-

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ing unit **16**, and may also be what rereads the compressed image data from the image memory **20** and decompresses the image data in order to display on the display unit **22** the compressed image data stored in the image memory **20**.

It is also to be noted that the image data compression may preferably be done after the lens characteristic correction unit **36** in the data processing unit **16** has corrected the aberrations originating in the lens. This is because the compression forms such as JPEG and FlashPix which are normally frequently used are classified as an irreversible compression form, wherein if the aberration is corrected after the compression, the correction of the aberration must be done in such a state that some pieces of the image data are missed, and the proper aberration correction is unable to be implemented.

The image memory **20** is not particularly restricted and any kinds of image recording mediums are usable but the image recording medium is capable of recording the digital image data of the subject image photographed. The recording medium may be a built-in memory so implemented in the digital camera **10** as not to be removable therefrom such as, for example, a non-volatile memory such as a flash memory, an EPROM and an EEPROM, and a RAM, or may be a removable memory such as a smart media and a card memory like a PCMCIA (PC card), an ATA card and a compact flash card, or may also be an image recording medium such as a floppy disk and an MO (magneto-optical) disk. Incidentally, it is required in the case of the built-in memory that the image data will be transmitted serially or in parallel via a cable in order for the image recording device such as a personal computer and a digital photo printer to take in the image data. In the case of the removable memory, however, the memory itself may simply be set in a slot of the image recording device such as the personal computer and the digital photo printer, which is preferable because of no necessity for transferring the image data and the handling being simple.

Note that the number of photographic frames in the digital camera **10** is determined by a compression rate of the image data in the compression unit **18** and by a recording capacity of the image memory **20**. In the digital camera **10**, it is preferable that the recording capacity of the image memory **20** is larger because of a greater number of photographic frames. If the recording capacity is large, however, a physical size of the image memory **20** becomes large, and hence it is preferable to properly select the recording capacity of the image memory **20** in accordance with the physical size and the required number of photographic frames.

The display unit **22** displays as a visible image the image data (image) processed by the data processing unit **16**, and as described above, it is used as the viewfinder when in the photographing.

The display unit **22** has no limit, there are a variety of usable known display devices such as a liquid crystal display utilized in the digital camera **10**.

Herein, in the digital camera **10** of the present invention, the image displayed on the display unit **22** may be an image processed by both of the characteristic correction unit **36** and the image processing unit **34** of the data processing unit **16**, or may be an image processed by only the image processing unit **34** without the correction of the aberrations. These settings may be properly made corresponding to a photographing speed requested to the digital camera **10**, or may preferably be selectable.

It is, however, preferable that the image stored in the image memory **20** and the image outputted outside from the I/F unit **24** are performed the correction of the aberrations in the characteristic correction unit **36**, and the image performing no correction of the aberrations or the like may be combined with the data required for the correction of the lens characteristics and then stored in the image memory **20** or outputted outside from the I/F unit **24**.

In the thus constructed digital camera **10** according to the present invention, after the one frame image has been photographed, the data processing unit **16** may process the image data of this frame and stores the image data in the image memory **20** then the next frame image may be photographed, or the data processing unit **16** may perform the image data processing during the photographing of the next frame onward.

The mode of performing the process during the photographing of the next frame image onward has an advantage of being capable of quick photographing (consecutive photographing) on one hand, and is disadvantageous in terms of costs because of requiring the memory for storing the frame images photographed during the image processing on the other hand.

Further, in the digital camera **10**, the image photographed is displayed on the display unit **22**, then stored in the image memory **20** and outputted from the I/F unit **24**. Besides, the image data temporarily stored in the image memory **20** may be decompressed by the compression unit **18** and then displayed on the display unit **22**, or alternatively the image data may be received from the I/F unit **24** and displayed on the display unit **22** or stored in the image memory **20**.

In the above example, the digital camera have been explained as a representative example of the digital image shooting device of the present invention. However, the present invention is not limited to the above mentioned example, as the digital image shooting device of the present invention, for instance, products in the form of the camera such as a digital video camera, and, in addition, a digital image shooting device which includes an image forming lens and an image sensor element in part is not the form of camera itself such as a computer which includes a function of a camera partially and various kinds of image forming devices and image pickup devices.

One embodiment of the digital image shooting device of the present invention has been discussed so far, however, the present invention is not limited to the above embodiment but may be changed and modified in a variety of forms without deviating from the scope of the present invention.

As discussed above in details, according to the present invention, it is feasible to attain the digital image shooting device capable of obtaining the quality which is high enough for the utilization even by using the comparatively low-price lens which does not exhibit a high performance.

What is claimed is:

1. A digital image shooting device comprising:

an image forming lens;

an image sensor element;

a data processing unit for processing an output signal from said image sensor element into digital image data;

an image memory for storing the digital image data and a lens characteristic relating to the image forming lens; and

a lens characteristic correction unit for performing, by using the stored lens characteristic of said image forming lens and a position of a frame image photographed, a process of correcting a deterioration of an image quality derived from said image forming lens upon the digital image data, to obtain processed image data, before a shooting of a next frame of an image, in which the processed image data is stored in said image

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memory prior to the shooting of the next frame, or during the shooting of the next frame onward, in which the processed image data is stored in said image memory during or after the shooting of the next frame,

wherein the digital image data comprises three primary color-based image data; and wherein the lens characteristic correction unit calculates a first deviation quantity of a first color-based image data due to the deterioration of the image quality, the first color-based image data selected among the three primary color-based image data, and calculates second deviation quantities of two color-based image data other than the first color-based image data on a basis of the calculated first deviation quantity, the second deviation quantities representing relative quantities to the first deviation quantities, and performs the process of correcting the deterioration of the image quality using the first deviation quantity and the second deviation quantities.

2. The digital image shooting device according to claim 1 wherein said image quality deterioration further includes a distortion aberration.

3. A digital image shooting device according to claim 1, wherein said lens characteristic correction unit corrects the deterioration of the image quality before a process of compressing the digital image data.

4. A digital image shooting device according to claim 1, wherein said lens characteristic correction unit performs the process of correcting a deterioration of an image quality before the shooting of the next frame or during the shooting of the next frame onward, wherein the digital image data of the frame on which the correction process is performed, and the processed image data obtained by the correction process of the lens characteristic correction unit are stored in said image memory.

5. A digital image shooting device according to claim 1, wherein said image memory is a built-in image recording medium or a removable image recording medium.

6. A digital image shooting device according to claim 1, further comprising an image display unit for displaying the photographed image,

wherein an image based on the digital image data which is or is not performed the correction process in said lens characteristic correction unit, is displayed on said image display unit, and the digital image data performed the correction process in said lens characteristic correction unit, is stored in a memory.

7. A digital image shooting device according to claim 1, wherein an image of a region larger than a photographic region confirmed by a photographer is formed on said image sensor element in accordance with missing of pixels which is caused as a result of the correction by said lens characteristic correction unit.

8. The digital image shooting device according to claim 1, wherein said image forming lens comprises a plurality of lens and said image memory stores a plurality of lens characteristics pertaining thereto.

9. The digital image shooting device of claim 1, wherein the lens is a zoom lens and the lens characteristic relates to a plurality of focal lengths of the zoom lens,

wherein the lens characteristic is converted at the plurality of focal lengths to the focal length when the image is photographed.

10. The digital image shooting device of claim 1, wherein said image quality deterioration corrected by said lens characteristic correction unit is at least one of a chromatic aberration of magnification, defocusing and a decrease in marginal rumination.

11. The digital image shooting device according to claim 1, wherein the deterioration of the image quality comprises a distortion aberration and a chromatic aberration and,

the first deviation quantity due to the distortion aberration and the second deviation quantities are deviation quantities due to both the distortion aberration and the chromatic aberration.

12. A digital image shooting device comprising:

an image forming lens;

an image sensor element optically coupled to said lens;

a data processing unit connected to said image sensor and receiving an output signal from said image sensor element and converting the output signal into digital image data;

an image memory connected to said data processing unit, the digital image data and a lens characteristic relating to the image forming lens being stored in said image memory; and

a lens characteristic correction unit connected to said image memory, said lens characteristic correction unit correcting a deterioration of an image quality derived from said image forming lens upon the digital image data, to obtain processed image data, by using the stored lens characteristic of said image forming lens and a position of a frame image photographed before a shooting of a next frame of an image, in which the processed image data is stored in said image memory prior to the shooting of the next frame, or during the shooting of the next frame onward, in which the processed image data is stored in said image memory during or after the shooting of the next frame,

wherein the image quality deterioration corrected by the lens characteristic correction unit is a distortion aberration and a chromatic aberration of magnification,

wherein the digital image data comprises three primary color-based image data; and wherein the lens characteristic correction unit calculates a first deviation quantity of a first color-based image data due to the deterioration of the image quality, the first color-based image data selected among the three primary color-based image data, and calculates second deviation quantities of two color-based image data other than the first color-based image data on a basis of the calculated first deviation quantity, the second deviation quantities representing relative quantities to the first deviation quantities, and performs the process of correcting the deterioration of the image quality using the first deviation quantity and the second deviation quantities.

* * * * *

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(54) **IMAGE RECORDING APPARATUS AND IMAGE PROCESSING SYSTEM**

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(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

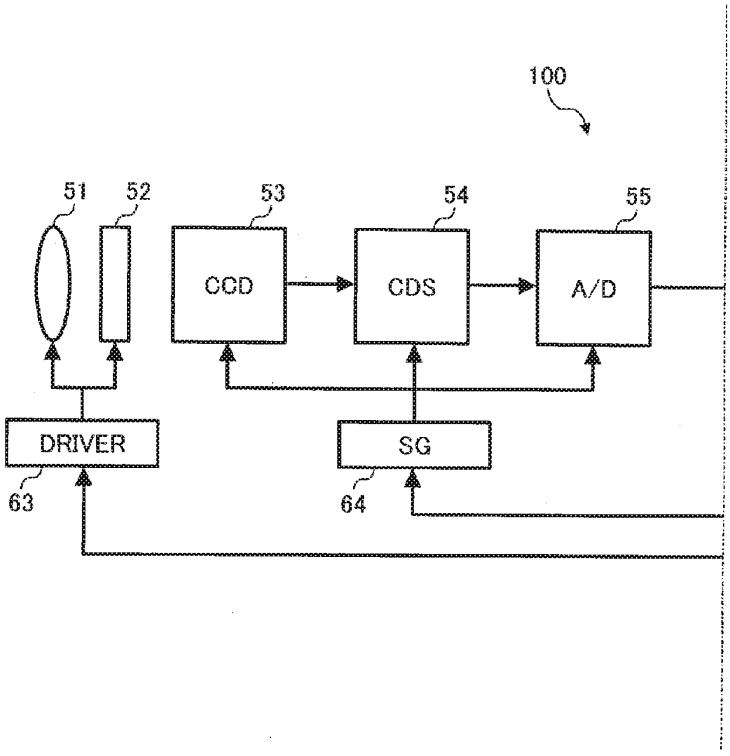
Jun. 16, 2004 (JP) 2004-178855
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Apr. 27, 2005 (JP) 2005-130585

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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **358/448**; 358/471

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An image processing system (**200, 201**) (image recording apparatus (**100, 101**)) including: image data keeping structure (image recording device (**4, 20**)/image producing device (**57, 80**)) for having image data and process information added to the image data; and image processing structure (image processing device (**1, 11, 57, 80**)) for receiving the image data to which the process information is added, the image processing structure (**1, 11, 57, 80**), executing an image process on the image data based on the added process information.



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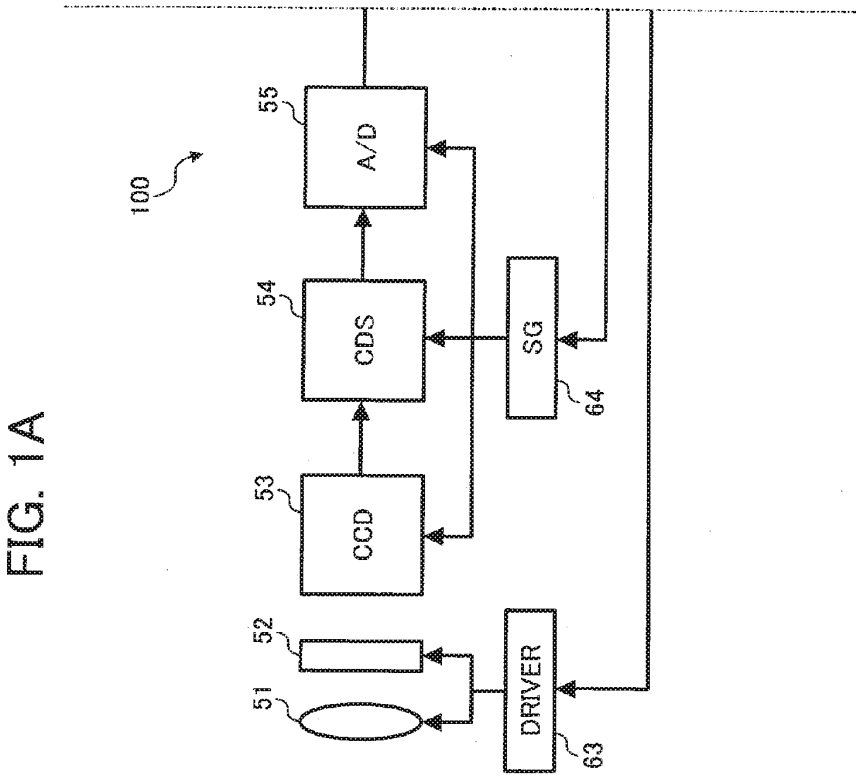


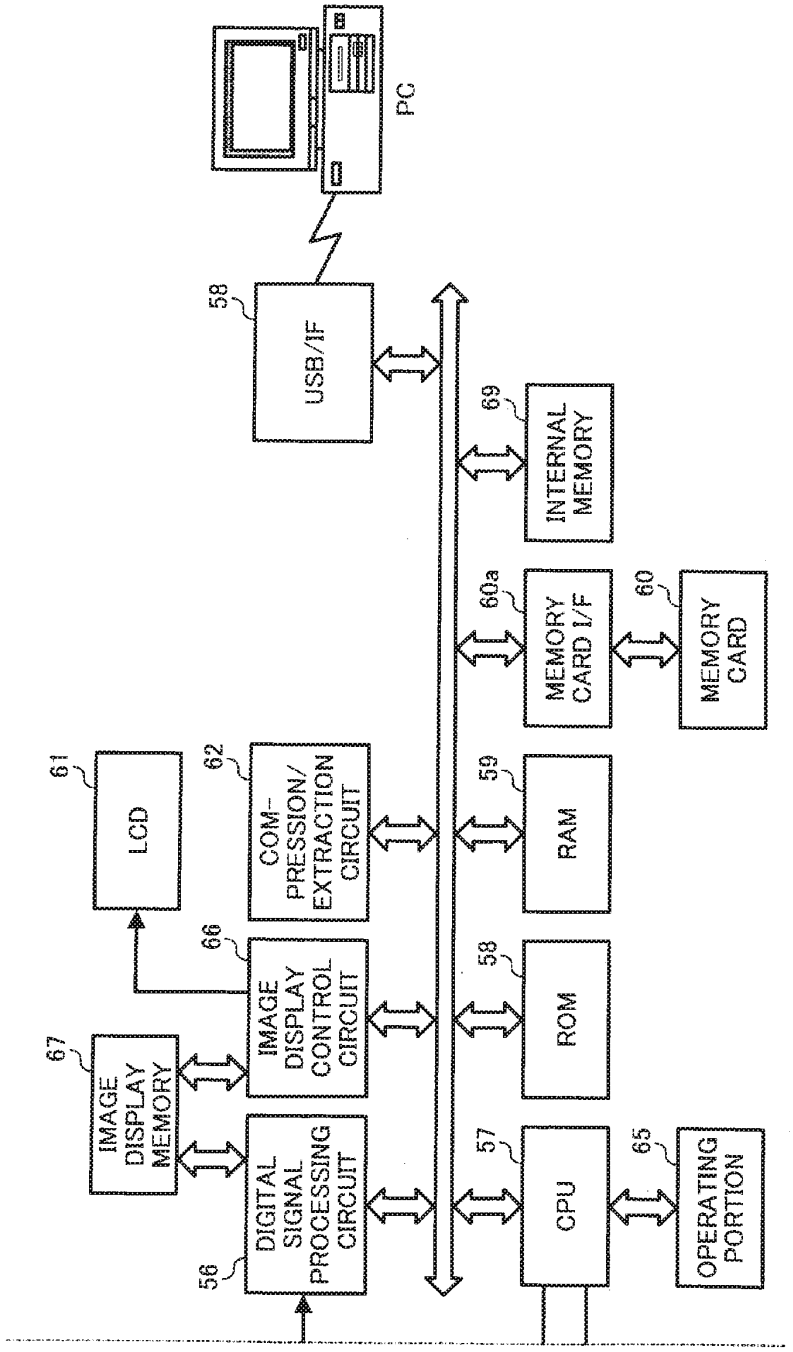
FIG. 1A

FIG. 1

FIG. 1A
FIG. 1B

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FIG. 1B



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FIG. 2

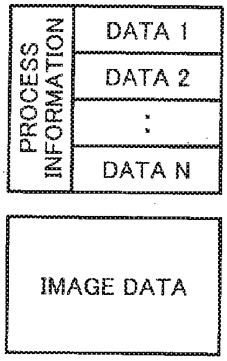
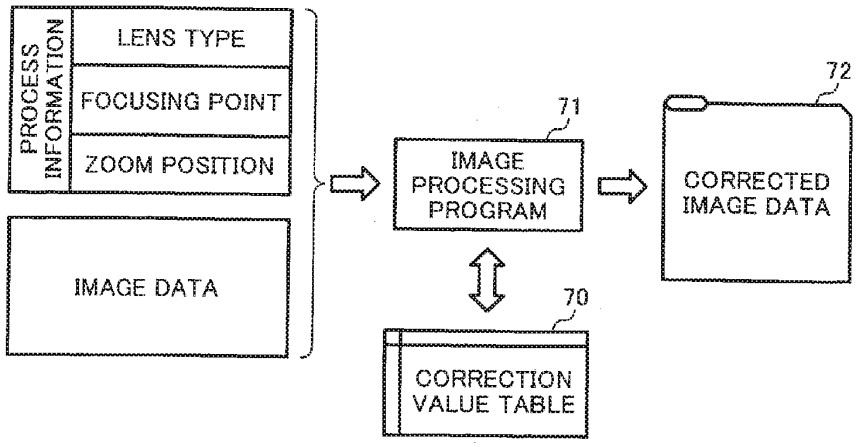
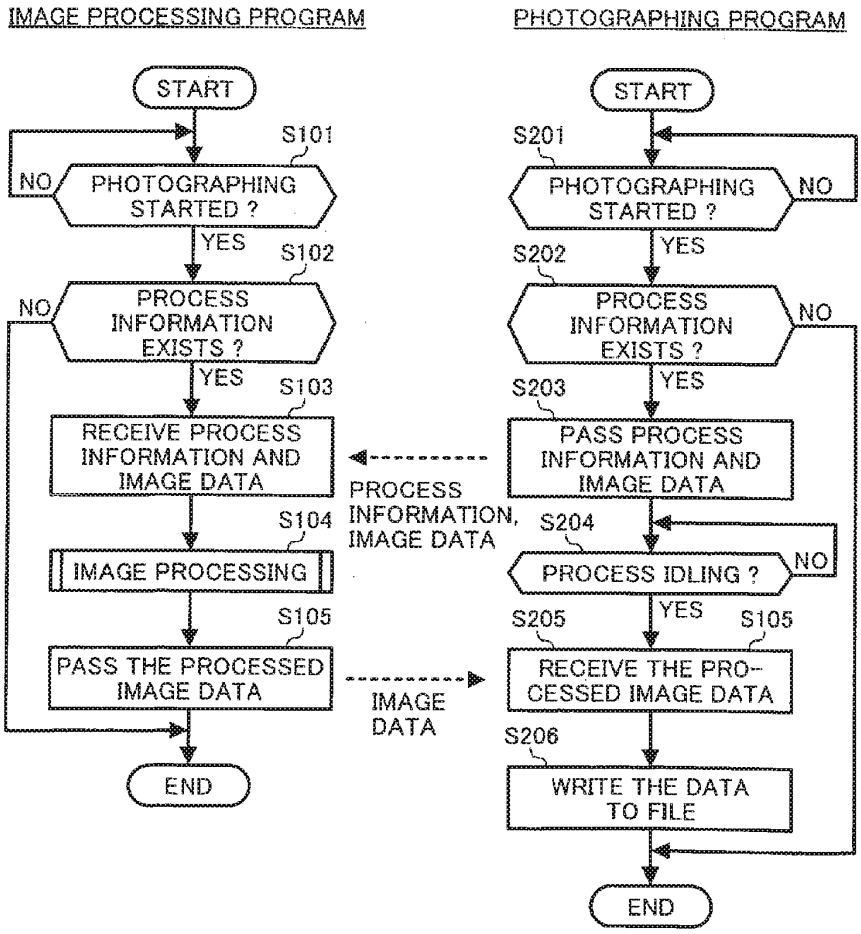


FIG. 3



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FIG. 4



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FIG. 5

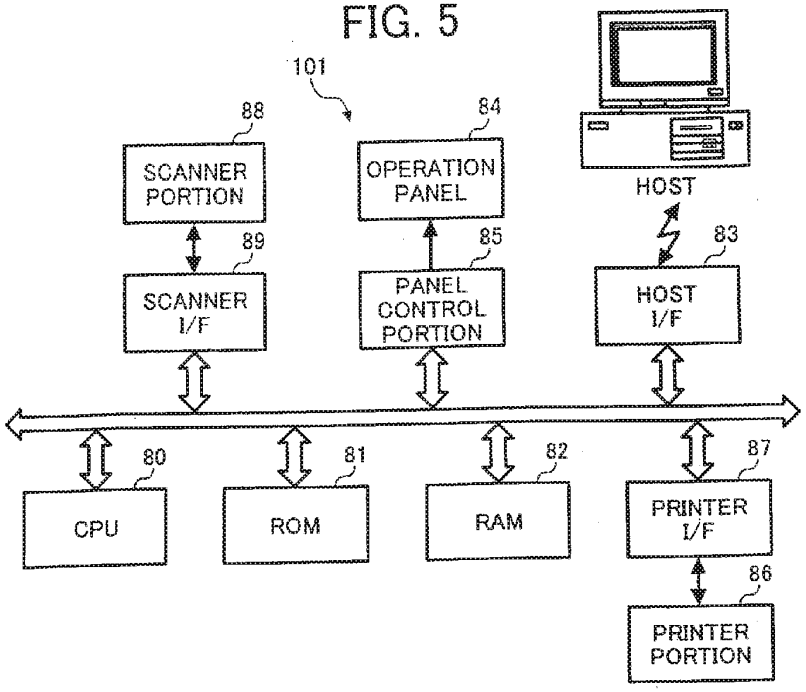
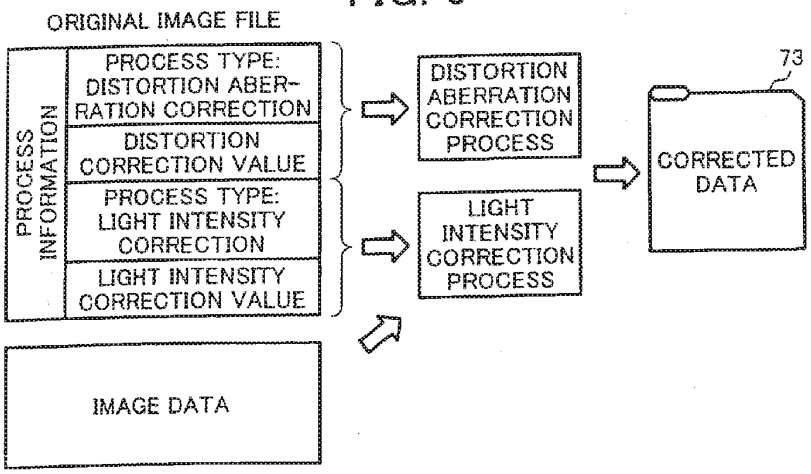
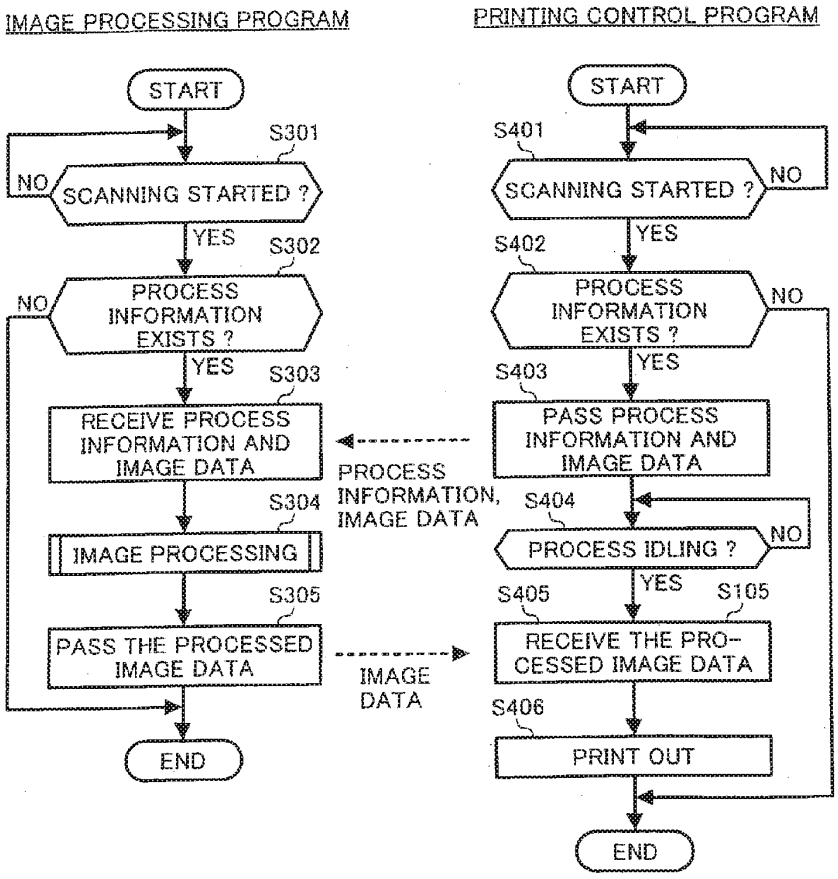


FIG. 6



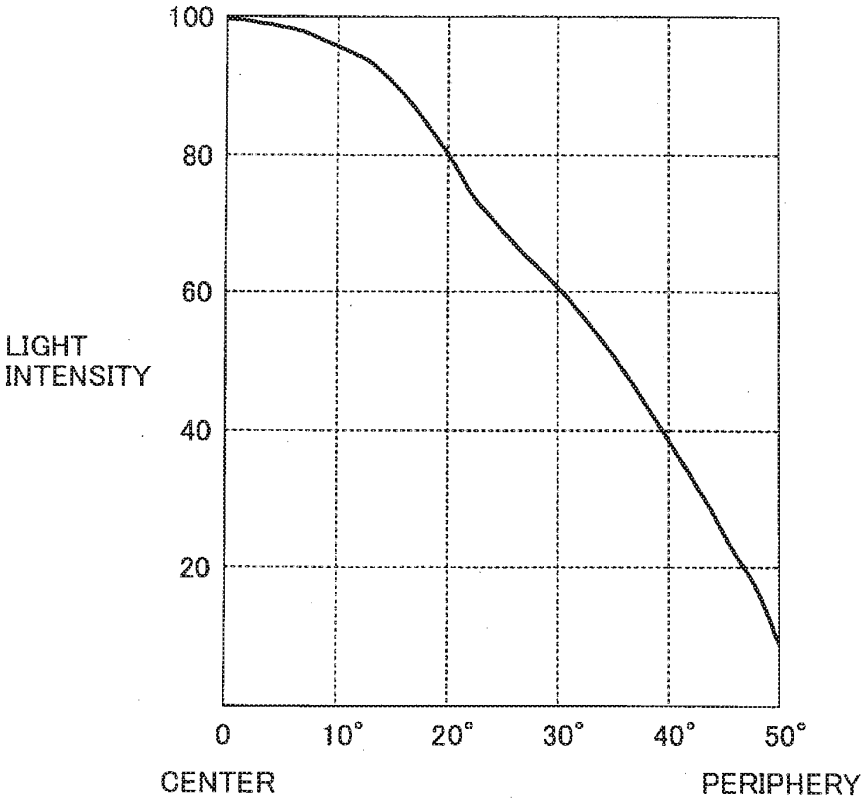
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FIG. 7



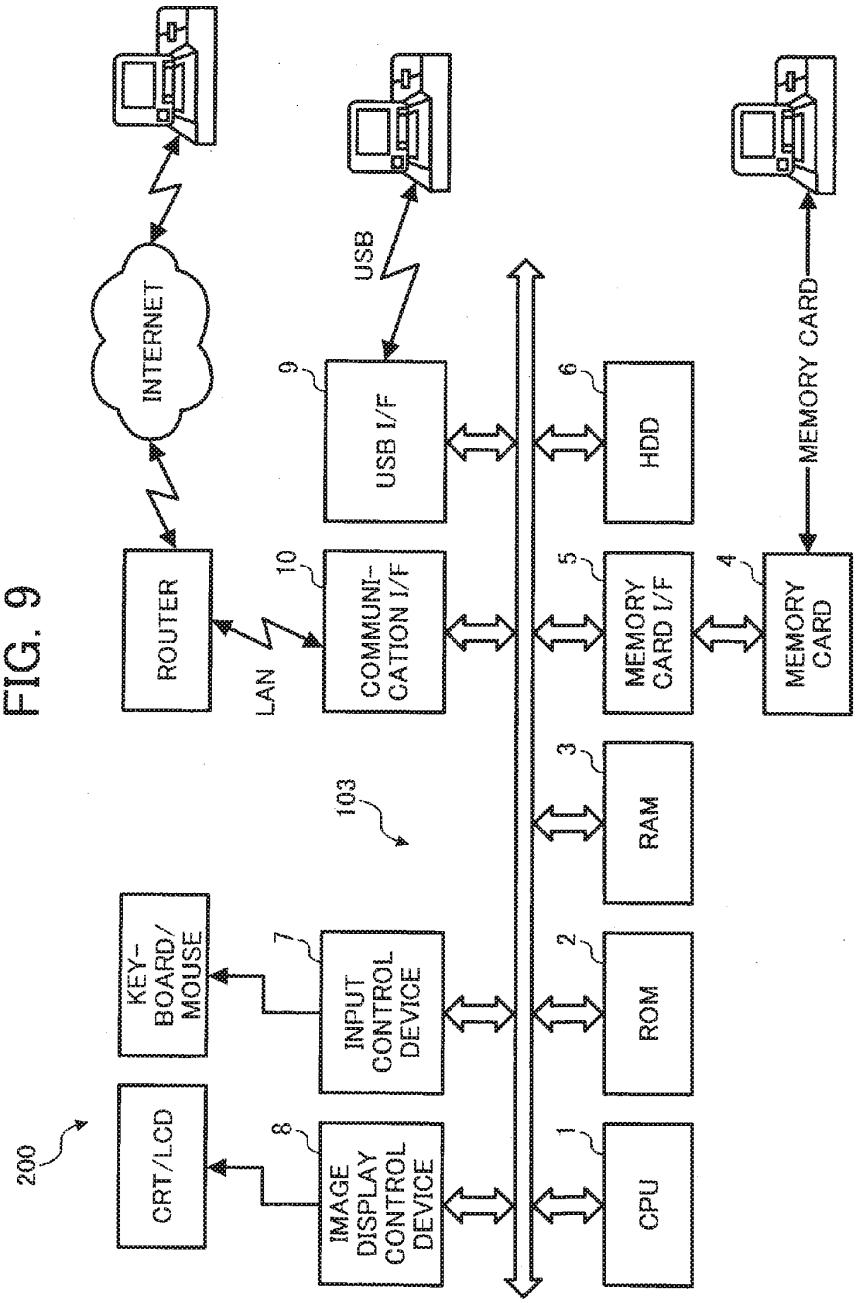
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FIG. 8



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FIG. 9



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FIG. 10

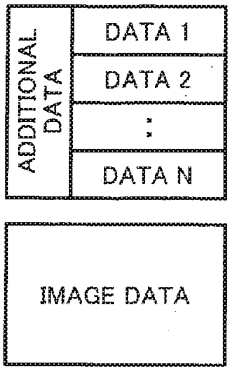
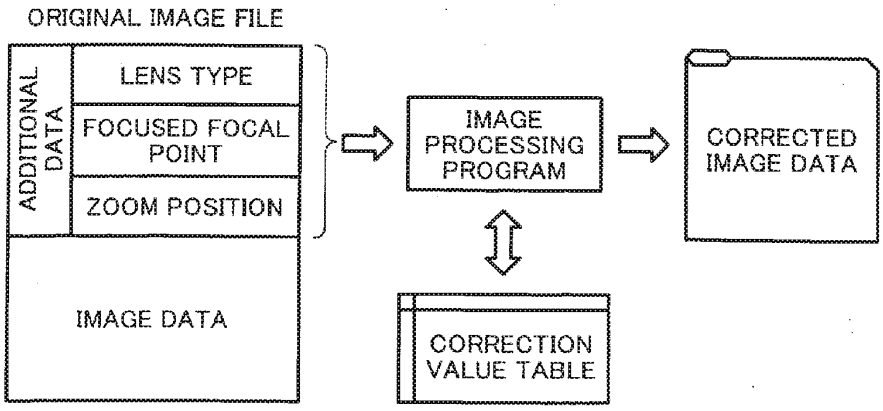


FIG. 11



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FIG. 12

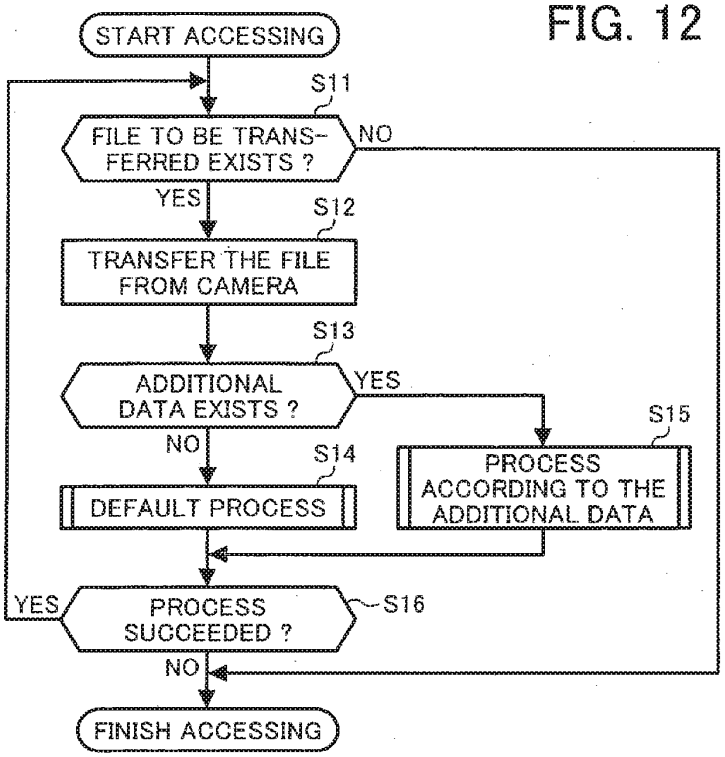
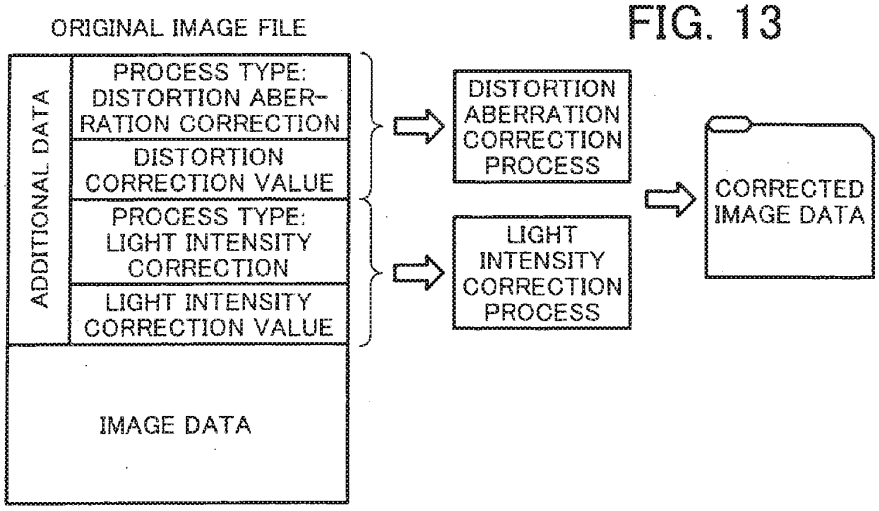


FIG. 13



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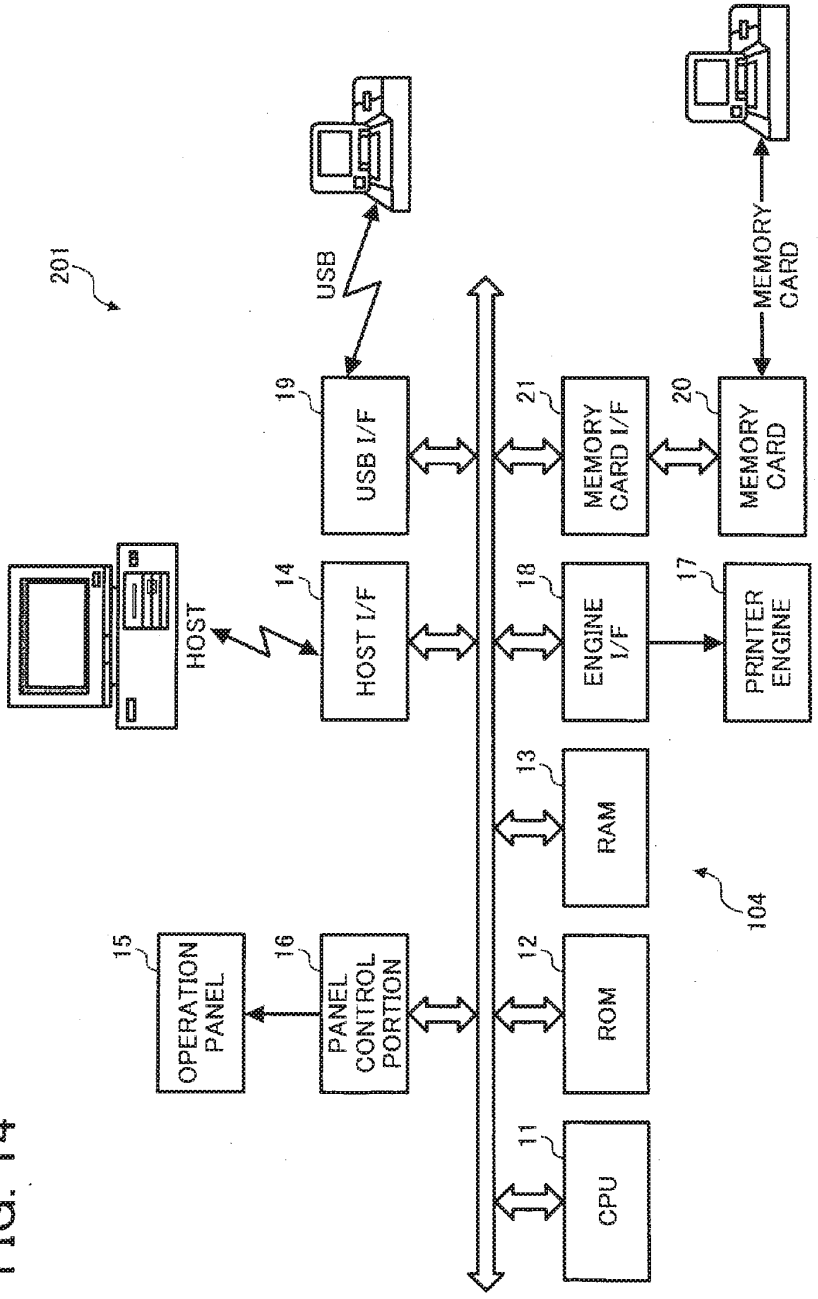
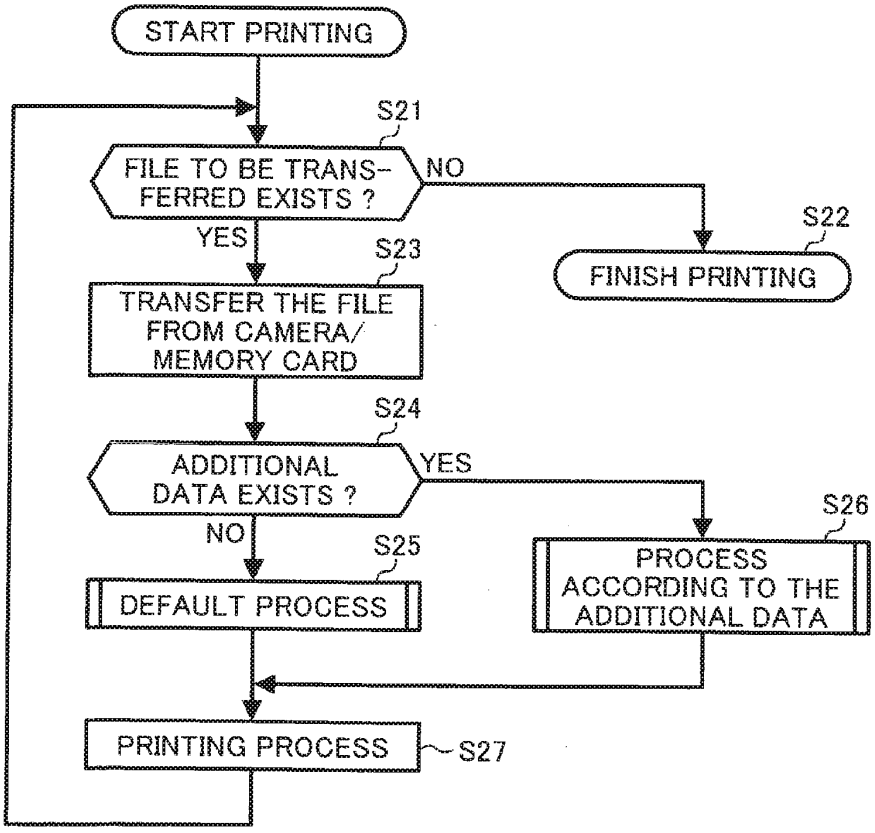


FIG. 14

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FIG. 15



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IMAGE RECORDING APPARATUS AND IMAGE PROCESSING SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to an image recording apparatus for executing an image process on read image data and for storing the executed image data, and an image processing system including an image processing apparatus such as a personal computer or a printer capable of responding to direct printing. Particularly, the present invention relates to an image recording apparatus and an image processing system capable of automatically and simply executing an image process such as distortion aberration correction or peripheral light intensity correction.

[0003] 2. Description of Related Art

[0004] Digital still cameras which are capable of recording a photographed object as digital data have been hitherto known. According to an apparatus like the digital camera, it is common that photographed image data are stored in a memory located in a body of the apparatus and are picked up as circumstances demand, as described in Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 2001-230999 (hereinafter referred to as "reference 1"). That is, image data can be transferred to and from an external device by way of transmission.

[0005] Conventionally, in image recording apparatuses for executing an image process on read image data and for recording the processed data, various image processes are executed on the image data to record the processed data.

[0006] A process such as distortion aberration correction or peripheral light intensity correction may be executed on image data as need arises. As a distortion aberration correction process, generally known is a table look-up method where a lens distortion aberration rate is predetermined at each focusing point and zoom position, as described in Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. H9-294225 (hereinafter referred to as "reference 2"). In the reference 2, it is described that a plural set of corresponding photographed points are detected from plural images including common patterns, which are photographed at one spot by means of an image pick-up apparatus such as a digital camera, then angles formed by these correspondent photographed points and the optical axis of the image pick-up system of the image pick-up apparatus are calculated, then parameters for correcting distortion of the image is estimated based on the information of the calculated angles.

[0007] Further, as described in Japanese Patent No. 3461061 (hereinafter referred to as "reference 3"), a correction process which uses the cosine fourth law known as an extinction rate is generally known as a peripheral light intensity correction process. In the reference 3, it is described that an apparatus includes a diaphragm control means for controlling a diaphragm stop in a photographic lens system, a compensating filter located in the photographic lens system, capable of variably controlling density applied to a neighborhood of a center of an image circle, and a filter control means for controlling the compensating filter in conjunction with the a diaphragm control means in order to compensate degradation of peripheral light intensity caused by degradation of aperture efficiency at a neighborhood of opening diaphragm.

[0008] However, in these conventional apparatuses and processes there exists a disadvantage where process data need to be transmitted between apparatuses and consequently the process becomes complicated. That is, in the conventional process for transmitting image data from an image recording apparatus to an image processing apparatus, a user manually selects an image file and process software for the image processing apparatus, so that it takes trouble in executing the process.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The present invention has been made in consideration of above mentioned actualities, thus one object of the invention is to provide an image recording apparatus and an image processing system capable of executing automatically and simply an image data process (e.g. an image process such as distortion aberration correction or peripheral light intensity correction).

[0010] It is an aspect of the present invention that an image processing system comprises image data keeping structure for keeping image data and process information added to the image data, and an image processing structure for receiving the image data to which the process information is added, wherein the image processing structure executes an image process on the image data based on the added process information.

[0011] It is another aspect of the present invention that an image recording apparatus for executing an image process on read image data and for recording the image-processed image data comprises an image producing device for obtaining the image data, an image processing device for executing an image process based on process information transmitted from the image producing device, together with the image data, and a recording device for recording the image data image-processed by the image processing device.

[0012] It is another aspect of the present invention that an image recording apparatus for reading image data, for executing an image process on the image data, and for storing the image-processed image data comprises an image producing device for obtaining the image data, an image processing device for executing an image process based on process information transmitted from the image producing device, together with the image data, and a print control device for controlling outputting and printing the image data image-processed by the image processing device.

[0013] Further, it is another aspect of the present invention that an image processing system comprises an image recording apparatus including a recording device capable of adding additional information to an image in an image file and of recording the image to which the additional information is added, an image processing apparatus including an image processing device for reading the additional information and for processing the image, and an image file transfer device for transferring the image file between the image recording apparatus and the image processing apparatus, wherein the image processing apparatus executes an image process on the image included in the image file transferred by the image file transfer device, based on the additional information added thereto.

[0014] These and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be appreciated upon reading of the description of the invention when in conjunction with the attached drawings, with the understanding that some modifications, variations and changes of the invention could be easily made by the skilled person in the art to which the invention pertains without departing from the spirit of the invention or the scope of the claims.

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[0015] The present application claims the benefit of priority to Japanese Patent Application Nos. JP2004-178855, filed on Jun. 16, 2004, JP2004-233872, filed on Aug. 10, 2004, JP2005-130584, filed on Apr. 27, 2005, and JP2005-130585, filed on Apr. 27, 2005, all of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] For a better understanding of the invention, reference is made to the attached drawings, wherein:

[0017] **FIG. 1** is a schematic block diagram showing a first embodiment of an image recording apparatus according to the present invention.

[0018] **FIG. 2** is a diagram showing an example of a data structure to be processed by the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 1**.

[0019] **FIG. 3** is an explanatory diagram showing a process for a more specific data structure to be processed by the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 1**.

[0020] **FIG. 4** is a flow chart showing relation between a photographing operation and an image processing operation of the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 1**.

[0021] **FIG. 5** is a schematic block diagram showing an alternative to the first embodiment of an image recording apparatus according to the present invention.

[0022] **FIG. 6** is an explanatory diagram showing a process for a data structure to be processed by the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 5**.

[0023] **FIG. 7** is a flow chart showing relation between a print control operation and an image processing operation of the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 5**.

[0024] **FIG. 8** is a graph showing degradation of light intensity of a peripheral portion grounded on the cosine fourth law.

[0025] **FIG. 9** is a block diagram showing a key part of an image processing apparatus employed in an image processing system as a second embodiment of the present invention.

[0026] **FIG. 10** is a schematic diagram showing a basic structure of a file.

[0027] **FIG. 11** is a schematic diagram showing a first example of additional data.

[0028] **FIG. 12** is a flow chart showing a processing operation of the image processing system as the second embodiment of the present invention.

[0029] **FIG. 13** is a schematic diagram showing a second example of additional data.

[0030] **FIG. 14** shows a block diagram of a printer which employed in the image processing system as the second embodiment of the present invention.

[0031] **FIG. 15** is a flow chart showing a processing operation of the printer.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRD EMBODIMENTS

A First Embodiment of the Present Invention

[0032] According to the first embodiment of the present invention, in an image processing device image data are image-processed based on process information transmitted together with the image data from an image producing device, then the image-processed image data are recorded on a recording medium. By way of this, an image process such as distortion aberration correction, peripheral light intensity correction, etc. can be executed automatically and simply.

[0033] The first embodiment of the present invention will be described in detail below by referring to the accompanying drawings.

[0034] **FIG. 1** shows a schematic block diagram of a first embodiment of an image recording apparatus according to the present invention.

[0035] As shown in **FIG. 1**, a digital camera **100** as the image recording apparatus is provided with a lens **51**, a mechanical structure **52** having an auto focus mechanism, a CCD (Charge Coupled Device) **53**, a CDS (Correlated Double Sampling) circuit **54**, an A/D converter **55**, a digital signal processing circuit **56**, a CPU **57**, a ROM **58**, a RAM **59**, a memory card **60**, a memory card I/F **60***a*, an LCD **61**, an image compression/extraction circuit **62**, a driver **63**, an SG (Control Signal Generator) **64**, an operating portion **65**, an image displaying control circuit **66**, an image displaying memory **67**, a transmission I/F **68**, an internal memory **69**, and so forth.

[0036] A lens unit includes the lens **51**, the mechanical structure **52** including the auto focus (AF) mechanism, a diagram and a filter portion, and so forth. A mechanical shutter of the mechanical structure **52** shields light during reading out charge stored on a CCD-type image photographing device.

[0037] The CCD **53** is a circuit for converting an image inputted through the lens unit to electrical signals (analogue image data), and the CDS circuit is a circuit for reducing noise for the CCD-type image photographing device. Further, the A/D converter converts analogue image data imputed from the CCD **53** through the CDS circuit **54**, to digital image data. That is, output signals from the CCD **53** pass through the CDS circuit **54** and are converted by the A/D converter to digital signals at optimum sampling frequency (e.g. an integral multiple of sub-carrier frequency of an NTSC signal).

[0038] In addition, the digital signal processing circuit **56** sorts out the image data inputted from the A/D converter **55** into color-difference data and brightness data, and executes various processes, correction and a data process for image compressing/extracting. The image compression/extraction circuit **62** performs, for example, orthogonal transformation/inverse orthogonal transformation which is one process of compression/extraction in conformity with the JPEG, Huffman coding/decoding which is another process of compression/extraction in conformity with the JPEG, and so forth.

[0039] The ROM **58** stores programs, data necessary for executing programs, etc., and the RAM **59** temporarily stores data to be processed by the CPU **57**. Compressed image data are stored in the memory card **60** and the internal memory **69**, as image data files.

[0040] The image displaying control circuit **66** displays a monitor image or a reproduced image on the LCD **61**, and a set state of the digital still camera, for example, a set mode display, an error display and so forth.

[0041] The operating portion **65** has buttons for selecting a function, ordering photographing, and configuring other various settings from outside. In one example, a release

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button generally used at the time of photographing, a zoom key, a mode dial, a strobe button, a macro button, a menu key for displaying guidance on a screen and carrying out a function by operation, up/down/left/right cursor keys, an enter key, a cancel key, a select key, a power button for turning on/off the digital camera, and so forth are employed. Each button may perform other functions according to each operation mode such as a photographing mode, a reproducing mode, a transmission mode, and so forth.

[0042] Based on a control program stored in the ROM **58** the CPU **57** controls operation of each part of the digital still camera according to an external instruction, etc. from an operating portion **65** by way of an photographing program in the control program, and processes image data by way of an image processing program in the control program. For example, the CPU **57** executes recording operation control of image data for the memory card **60**, reproducing operation control of an image data file recorded in the memory card **60**, a connection process on image data, a correction process on image data, and so forth. That is, the CPU **57** functions as an image producing device (photographing device), a reproducing control device, a communication device, an image processing device, and so forth.

[0043] The image displaying memory **67** stores plural planes, and image display control is carried out in the form of a composite display by way of superposing each plane. While superposing each plane a display position, a display magnification, brightness, a transparent attribute, etc. are controlled on a plane to plane basis.

[0044] A data structure to be processed by the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 1** will be explained below.

[0045] **FIG. 2** is a diagram showing an example of a data structure processed by the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 1**, and **FIG. 3** is an explanatory diagram showing a process executed on a more specific data structure.

[0046] As shown in **FIG. 2**, various data (data 1-data N) are added to image data as process information. As these process information, for example, information relative to lens characteristic (i.e. information relative to distortion aberration in terms of distortion aberration correction), information of peripheral light intensity as information relative to peripheral light intensity correction, and so forth are stored.

[0047] In addition, as shown in **FIG. 3**, if information of a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position are added to the data **1**, data **2** and data **3** respectively, and if tables **70** including distortion aberration correction values and peripheral light intensity correction values in accordance with focusing points and zoom positions are prepared in advance on a lens to lens basis, then the CPU determines a table according to a lens type and determines correction values according to a focusing point and a zoom position, and image data **72** is obtained in compliance with the correction values. That is, an image process can be selected by way of selecting various data (data 1-data N) according to need.

[0048] By way of this, data results from produced image data on which a distortion aberration correction process is executed according to distortion aberration information, data results from produced image data on which a peripheral light intensity correction process is executed according to peripheral light intensity information, and so forth can be recorded.

[0049] Further, data results from produced image data on which a distortion aberration correction process is executed according to a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position, data results from produced image data on which a peripheral light intensity correction process is executed according to a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position, and so forth can be recorded.

[0050] Specifically, it is known that the distortion rate D (%) is represented by the following formula.

$$D=(Y-H)/H\times 100$$

[0051] "Y" designates an actual height of a (photographed) image.

[0052] "H" designates an ideal height of an image.

[0053] In the case where the formula above is known in advance, an ideal image height H can be determined for an actual (photographed) image height Y to be corrected, and thus distortion rate can be corrected by way of correcting a height of image.

[0054] The cosine fourth low means a phenomenon where when a object to be photographed on an optic axis shifts toward right angle to the optic axis, although brightness of the object stays the same brightness, brightness of an imaging surface decreases proportional to the fourth power of the cosine of the angle between the optical axis and the principal ray from the object.

[0055] **FIG. 8** is a graph showing degradation of light intensity of a peripheral portion based on the cosine fourth law.

[0056] By way of correcting brightness of a peripheral portion of an image according to the cosine fourth law so that it may be substantially the same brightness of the center portion, the light intensity of the peripheral portion of the image can be corrected.

[0057] The relation between a photographing operation and an image processing operation will be described below by referring to the **FIG. 4**.

[0058] According to the first embodiment of the present invention, if the release button is pushed and the photographing program is initiated, then image data are produced and the image data are transferred together with process information to the image processing program, and after completion of a predetermined correction process in conformity with the process information the image data on which the correction process is executed is transferred to the photographing program and is recorded on the memory card **60**.

[0059] Further to this, in the image recording apparatus of this embodiment, the CPU **57** constitutes an image producing device by controlling each part of the apparatus according to the photographing program, and the CPU **57** also constitutes an image processing device by controlling each part of the apparatus according to the image processing program constitute.

[0060] **FIG. 4** is a flow chart showing relation between a photographing operation and an image processing operation of the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 1**. In this embodiment, the CPU **57** executes the image processing program and the photographing program.

[0061] If the operation of both the image processing program and the photographing program is started, then whether photographing is started or not is judged (Step **101** and Step **201**), and then whether process information for processing an image exists or not is judged (Step **102** and

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Step **202**). In the photographing program if it is determined that a process to be executed exists ('YES' in the Step **202**), then the process information and the image data are transferred to the image processing program side (Step **203**).

[**0062**] In the image processing program, the process information and the image data transferred to the image processing program side are received (Step **103**), an image process is executed on the image data in accordance with the process information (Step **104**), and the processed image data are transferred to the photographing program side (Step **105**).

[**0063**] In the photographing program, after transferring the process information and the image data to the image processing program side in the Step **203** whether a process is idling or not is judged (Step **204**), in the case it is determined that process to be executed exists ('YES' in the Step **204**), then the processed data transferred to the photographing program side is received (Step **205**), and the processed data are recorded on a file, i.e. the memory card **60** (Step **206**).

[**0064**] By so doing, an image process such as distortion aberration correction or peripheral light intensity correction can be executed automatically and simply according to the process information added to the image data.

[**0065**] [Alternative]

[**0066**] An alternative to the first embodiment of the image recording apparatus in accordance with the present invention will be described below.

[**0067**] **FIG. 5** is a schematic block diagram showing the alternative to the first embodiment of an image recording apparatus according to the present invention.

[**0068**] As shown in **FIG. 5**, an MFP (Multifunction Printer) **101** as the image recording apparatus is provided with a CPU **80** for executing processes by way of programs, a ROM **81** for storing programs and font data, a RAM **82** for temporarily storing print data and video data converted to a print pattern, a host I/F **83** for connecting a host machine such as a PC, a panel control portion **85** and a operation panel **84** for performing an interface function of converting control operations, a printer I/F **87** and a printer portion **86** for performing a printing operation, a scanner I/F **89** and a scanner portion **88** for performing a scanning operation, and so forth. Further, a facsimile controller, a memory card interface, a USB port for directly connecting a digital camera, and so forth can be employed.

[**0069**] A data structure to be processed by the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 5** will be explained below.

[**0070**] **FIG. 6** is an explanatory diagram showing a process on a data structure processed by the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 5**.

[**0071**] As shown in **FIG. 6**, process information is added to image data. In this case, for example, the process information is relative to a process type of distortion aberration correction, a correction value concerning distortion aberration, a process type of peripheral light intensity correction, and a correction value concerning peripheral light intensity. Thus, the CPU **80** executes a distortion aberration correction process and a peripheral light intensity correction process according to the image correction processing program **71**, then corrected image data **73** is obtained by way of the correction process. That is, an image process can be selected by way of selecting various data according to need. By way of this, the data on which a correction process is executed based on a correction value and a process type of correction for the produced image can be recorded.

[**0072**] Further to this, the process information described in the first embodiment may be applied to this alternative. Also, the process information described in this alternative may be applied to the first embodiment.

[**0073**] The relation between a printing operation and an image processing operation will be described below by referring to the **FIG. 7**.

[**0074**] According to the alternative of the first embodiment of the present invention, if the print start button is pushed and the print control program is initiated, then image data are produced and the image data are transferred together with process information to the image processing program, and after completion of a predetermined correction process in conformity with the process information the image data on which the correction process is executed is transferred to the print control program, then a printing operation is performed.

[**0075**] Further to this, the CPU **80** constitutes a print control device by controlling each part of the apparatus according to the print control program, and also, the CPU **80** constitutes an image processing device by controlling each part of the apparatus according to the image processing program.

[**0076**] **FIG. 7** is a flow chart showing relation between a print control operation and an image processing operation of the image recording apparatus of **FIG. 5**. The image processing program and the print control program are configured to be executed by the CPU **80**.

[**0077**] If the operation of both the image processing program and the print control program are started, then whether scanning operation is started or not is judged (Step **301** and Step **401**), and then whether process information for processing an image exists or not is judged (Step **302** and Step **402**). In the print control program if it is determined that a process to be executed exists ('YES' in the Step **402**), then the process information and the image data are transferred to the image processing program side (Step **403**).

[**0078**] In the image processing program, the process information and the image data transferred to the image processing program side are received (Step **303**), then an image process is executed on the image data in accordance with the process information (Step **304**), and the processed image data are transferred to the print control program side (Step **305**).

[**0079**] In the print control program, after transferring the process information and the image data to the image processing program side in the Step **403** whether a process is idling or not is judged (Step **404**), in the case it is determined that process to be executed exists ('YES' in the Step **404**), then the processed data transferred to the print control program side is received (Step **405**), and the processed data are transferred to the printer portion **86**, and is outputted and printed out (Step **406**).

[**0080**] By so doing, as described above, an image process such as distortion aberration correction or peripheral light intensity correction can be automatically and simply executed by way of the process information added to the image data.

[**0081**] Although as an image recording apparatus a digital camera **100** and an MFP **101** are cited and are explained as

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an example in the embodiments above, each of them is only an example, and the present invention can be applied to an image forming apparatus such as a copying apparatus, a printer, a facsimile, and so forth.

A Second Embodiment of the Present Invention

[0082] In the second embodiment of the present invention, when an image processing apparatus loads an image from an image recording device, the image processing apparatus is configured to execute an image process based on additional information added to the image in an image file. By way of this, when an image is loaded a process to be executed can be automatically selected and a file can be processed, thus a process on image data can be simply executed.

[0083] An image processing system as the second embodiment of the present invention will be described in detail below by referring to drawings. The image processing system explained here is capable of transferring image data and additional data to and from a digital still camera etc. having a function which makes the additional data such as a memorandum or information for executing an instructed process be embedded within (be added to) the image, and also capable of transferring to and from, in this example, a personal computer as an image processing apparatus. By photographing after a photographer selects desired entry contents with an LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) of the digital still camera (image recording apparatus), the entry contents are embedded in (are added to) an image data file as additional data and are recorded. Alternatively, entry contents may be selected and embedded during reproducing an image. Concerning entering a memorandum, sound and/or image data may be embedded in an additional data area in the interest of saving trouble.

[0084] **FIG. 9** is a block diagram showing a key part of an image processing apparatus **103** employed in an image processing system **200** as a preferred embodiment for carrying out the present invention. As shown in **FIG. 9**, the image processing apparatus **103** is provided with a CPU **1** which execute a process according to a program, a ROM **3** and a RAM **3** which store programs, a memory card **4** which stores data, a memory card I/F **5**, an HDD **6**, a input control device **7** including a keyboard and/or a mouse, an image display device **8** which controls an image displayed on an LCD or a CRT, a USB I/F **9** which performs transmission with an external apparatus, a communication I/F **10**. In this connection, for acquiring data at least one way such as transfer by means of the memory card **4** or communication by means of a USB, a LAN and so forth may be employed.

[0085] They can be constituted of a personal computer (PC) **110** and image acquiring software (SW). An operating system (OS) is installed in the PC **110**, and the SW is executed by a function of the OS. A recording apparatus such as an HDD, etc. is installed in the PC **110**, and the recording apparatus is managed as recording areas by a file system (FS) as a function of the OS. Application software can access the recording areas by a function provided by the OS, and a recording area is assigned with a file-pass name consists of a drive name, a folder name and a file name. With such a constitution, an image file transfer device which transfers an image file to and from a digital still camera is performed in the PC **110**.

[0086] **FIG. 10** is a schematic diagram showing a basic structure of a file. Information relating to a lens characteristic is stored as additional data, and based on this information a distortion aberration correction process and/or a peripheral light intensity correction process are performed in accordance with the operation flow described later. The structure of a file may be a structure where additional data are stored in an option area of a standardized format such as EXIF (Exchangeable Image File Format), etc. With operation based on the additional information concerning a lens characteristic a distortion aberration correction process and/or a peripheral light intensity correction process can be performed at the time of acquiring an image. Thus, since a file is automatically selected and processed at the time of acquiring an image, the process on the image data can be simply executed. In this connection, a table look-up method where a lens distortion aberration rate at each focusing point and zoom position is determined in advance and so forth are known as a distortion aberration correction process (See the reference 2).

[0087] As mentioned above, in the case where the distortion rate D (%) is known in advance, an ideal image height H can be determined for an actual (photographed) image height Y to be corrected, and thus distortion rate can be corrected by way of correcting a height of image.

[0088] If table data are made in advance for each focusing point and zoom position with the formula above, distortion aberration correction can be performed.

[0089] As a peripheral light intensity correction process, a correction process using the above mentioned cosine fourth law which is known as an extinction rate and so forth are generally known (See the reference 3).

[0090] By way of correcting brightness of a peripheral portion of an image according to the cosine fourth law so that it may be substantially the same brightness of the center portion, the light intensity of the peripheral portion of the image can be corrected.

[0091] **FIG. 11** is a schematic diagram showing a first example of additional data. In the **FIG. 11** is shown a case where a lens characteristic, a focusing point and a zoom position at the time of recording are treated as additional information. A lens characteristic, a focusing point at the time of photographing, and a zoom position are respectively configured as data **1**, data **2**, and data **3**, for a distortion aberration correction process. The image processing apparatus has correction value tables for each lens, as to distortion aberration and peripheral light intensity on the basis of focusing points and zoom positions, and thus the image correction processing program can read out the additional data in the image file, determine a correction value table in conformity with the lens type, and determine a correction value in conformity with the focusing point and the zoom position.

[0092] **FIG. 12** is a process flow showing the operation where a process is executed based on additional data in the image processing system **200** as a preferred embodiment for carrying out the present invention. In this operation flow, an image data file to which process control data are added by way of a memory card **4** or a USB I/F **9** is received, then in step **S11** whether a file to be transferred exists or not is confirmed, and reading out is finished in the case no file exists. In the case a file exists, then the flow proceeds to step **S12**, the file is transferred from the camera, and whether additional data exist or not is confirmed in step **S13**, in the case no additional data exists, then a predetermined default process is executed in step **S14**, and in the case additional data exist, then a process according to the additional data are executed in the step **S15**. After the step **S14** or the step **S15**

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the flow proceeds to step S16 and whether the process succeeds or not is confirmed, in the case the process succeeds, then the flow returns to the step S11, and in the case the process fails, the loading of the data are completed. By way of this, in the case the additional data includes lens characteristic information such as a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position, an image process for distortion aberration correction and/or peripheral light intensity correction can be executed. Thus, since at the time of loading an image a process to be executed is automatically selected and then a file is processed, a process on image data can be simply executed.

[0093] FIG. 13 is a schematic diagram showing a second example of additional data. This is the case where a correction value and a process type of correction for an image are treated as additional information. A process type of distortion aberration correction, a correction value concerning distortion aberration, a process type of peripheral light intensity correction, and a correction value concerning peripheral light intensity are respectively configured as data 1, data 2, data 3, and data 4. The correction values are stored in the image recording apparatus, and additional information can be embedded by a recording person at the time of recording. By so doing, the recording person can provide instruction whether a process to be executed exists or not. By executing a process based on the FIG. 13, a correction process can be executed in accordance with correction type information and correction value information at the time of loading an image. Thus, since a process to be executed can be automatically selected and a file can be processed at the time of loading an image, the process on image data can be simply executed.

[0094] An alternative to the second embodiment of the present invention, wherein a printer is employed as an image processing apparatus, will be described below. This printer employed in this image processing system is provided with a memory card I/F, so that printing out can be performed without a PC, by being inserted a memory card therein, which is recorded by a digital still camera. In this connection, the printer may be provided with a USB I/F, so that printing can be performed without a PC by connecting a digital camera thereto with a USB cable.

[0095] A block diagram of the printer 104 of the image processing system 201 is shown in FIG. 14. The printer 104 is provided with a CPU 11 for executing processes based on programs, a ROM 12 for storing programs and font data, a RAM 12 for temporarily storing print data and video data converted to a print pattern, a host I/F 14 for connecting a host machine such as a PC, a panel control portion 16 for controlling a operation panel 15 which performs an interface function and converts control operations, an engine I/F 18 which works in cooperation with a printer engine for performing a printing operation, a USB I/F 19 for directly connecting a digital camera thereto, a memory card I/F 21 for reading out an image from a memory card 20.

[0096] FIG. 15 is a flow chart showing an operation of the printer 104. If a memory card 20 is inserted or if a digital camera is connected, then a print program for image files is initiated. Whether a file to be printed exists or not is confirmed in step S21, and in the case no file exists, then the printing operation is finished in step S22. In the case a file exists, then the flow proceeds to step S23, and the file is transferred from the camera/memory card 20, then whether additional data exist or not is confirmed in step S24, and in the case no additional data exists, a predetermined process is executed in step S25. In the case additional data exist, a process is executed based on the additional data in step S26. After the step S25 or the step S26, the flow proceeds to step S27 and a printing process is performed. By way of this, in the case the additional data includes lens characteristic information such as a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position, a printing operation can be performed after an image process for distortion aberration correction and/or peripheral light intensity correction are executed. Thus, at the time of loading an image, a process to be executed is automatically selected and then a file is processed, thus a process on image data can be simply executed.

What is claimed is:

1. An image processing system, comprising:

an image data keeping structure for having image data and process information added to the image data; and

an image processing structure for receiving the image data to which the process information is added,

wherein the image processing structure executes an image process on the image data based on the added process information.

2. An image recording apparatus for executing an image process on read image data and for recording the image-processed image data, comprising:

an image producing device for obtaining the image data;

an image processing device for executing an image process based on process information transmitted from the image producing device, together with the image data; and

a recording device for recording the image data image-processed by the image processing device on a recording medium.

3. An image recording apparatus for reading image data, for executing an image process on the image data, and for storing the image-processed image data, comprising:

an image producing device for obtaining the image data;

an image processing device for executing an image process based on process information transmitted from the image producing device, together with the image data; and

a print control device for controlling outputting and printing the image data image-processed by the image processing device.

4. The image recording apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising a selection device for selecting the process information to be processed.

5. The image recording apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising a selection device for selecting the process information to be processed.

6. The image recording apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the process information comprises information of distortion aberration at the time of producing the image and the image processing device executes a distortion aberration correction process based on the information of distortion aberration.

7. The image recording apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the process information comprises information of distortion aberration at the time of producing the image and

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the image processing device executes a distortion aberration correction process based on the information of distortion aberration.

8. The image recording apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the process information comprises information of peripheral light intensity at the time of producing the image and the image processing device executes a peripheral light intensity correction process based on the information of distortion aberration.

9. The image recording apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the process information comprises peripheral light intensity information at the time of producing the image and the image processing device executes a peripheral light intensity correction process based on the information of distortion aberration.

10. The image recording apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the process information comprises information of a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position at the time of producing the image, and the image processing device executes a distortion aberration correction process based on the information of the lens type, the focusing point and the zoom position at the time of producing the image.

11. The image recording apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the process information comprises information of a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position at the time of producing the image, and the image processing device executes a distortion aberration correction process based on the information of the lens type, the focusing point and the zoom position at the time of producing the image.

12. The image recording apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the process information comprises information of a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position at the time of producing the image, and the image processing device executes a peripheral light intensity correction process based on the information of the lens type, the focusing point and the zoom position at the time of producing the image.

13. The image recording apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the process information comprises information of a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position at the time of producing the image, and the image processing device executes a peripheral light intensity correction process based on the information of the lens type, the focusing point and the zoom position at the time of producing the image.

14. The image recording apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the process information comprises information of a correction value and a type of a correction process for the produced image, and the image processing device executes a correction process based on the information of the correction value and the type of the correction process for the produced image.

15. The image recording apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the process information comprises information of a correction value and a type of a correction process for the produced image, and the image processing device executes a correction process based on the information of the correction value and the type of the correction process for the produced image.

16. An image processing system comprising:

an image recording apparatus including a recording device capable of adding additional information to an image in an image file and of recording the image to which the additional information is added;

an image processing apparatus including an image processing device for reading the additional information and for processing the image; and

an image file transfer device for transferring the image file between the image recording apparatus and the image processing apparatus,

wherein the image processing apparatus executes an image process on the image included in the image file transferred by the image file transfer device, based on the additional information added thereto.

17. The image processing system according to claim 16, wherein the additional information includes lens characteristic information at the time of recording and the image processing apparatus executes a distortion aberration correction process.

18. The image processing system according to claim 16, wherein the additional information includes lens characteristic information at the time of recording and the image processing apparatus executes a peripheral light intensity correction process.

19. The image processing system according to claim 16, wherein the additional information includes information of a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position at the time of recording, and the image processing apparatus executes a distortion aberration correction process.

20. The image processing system according to claim 16, wherein the additional information includes information of a lens type, a focusing point and a zoom position at the time of recording, and the image processing apparatus executes a peripheral light intensity correction process.

21. The image processing system according to claim 16, wherein the additional information includes information of a correction value and a type of a correction process for the image, and the image processing apparatus executes a correction process according to the additional information.

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(54) **CONFIGURABLE HARDWARE BASED DIGITAL IMAGING APPARATUS**

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See application file for complete search history.

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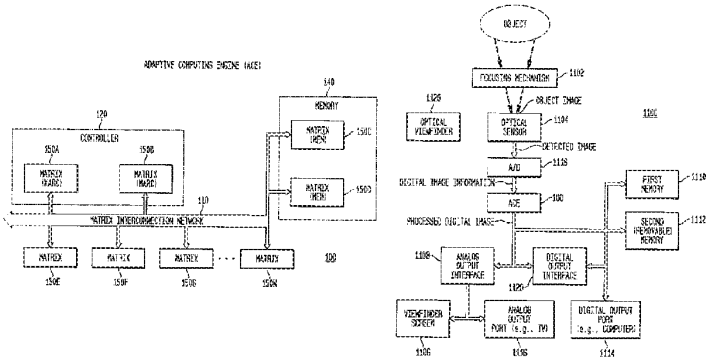
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention provides a digital imaging apparatus having an optical sensor, an analog-to-digital converter, a plurality of computational elements, and an interconnection network. The optical sensor converts an object image into a detected image, which is then converted to digital image information by the analog-to-digital converter. The plurality of computational elements includes a first computational element having a first fixed architecture and a second computational element having a second, different fixed architecture. The interconnection network is capable of providing a processed digital image from the digital image information by configuring and reconfiguring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a plurality of different imaging functions. The invention may be embodied, for example, as a digital camera, a scanner, a printer, or a dry copier.

35 Claims, 25 Drawing Sheets



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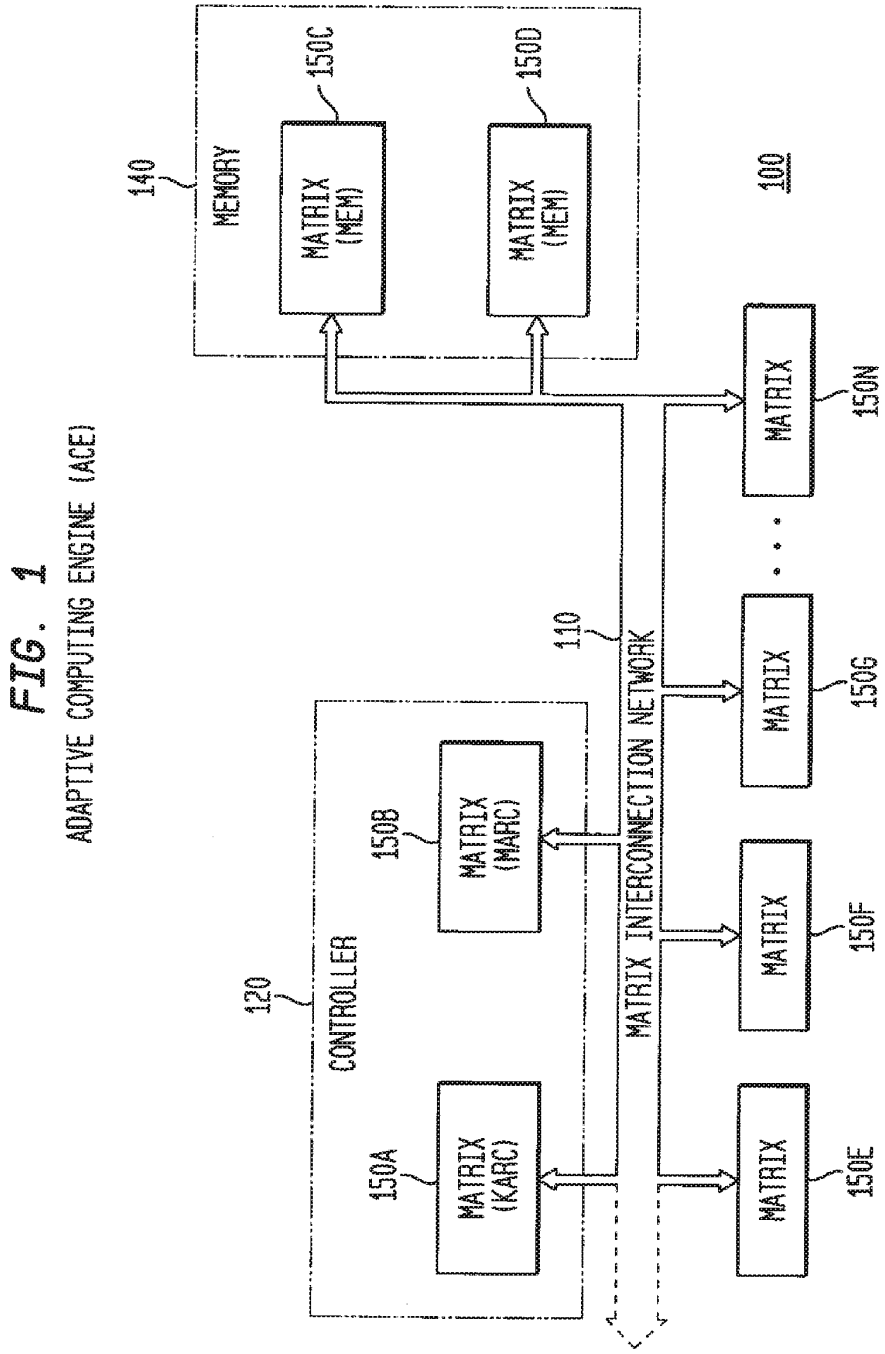
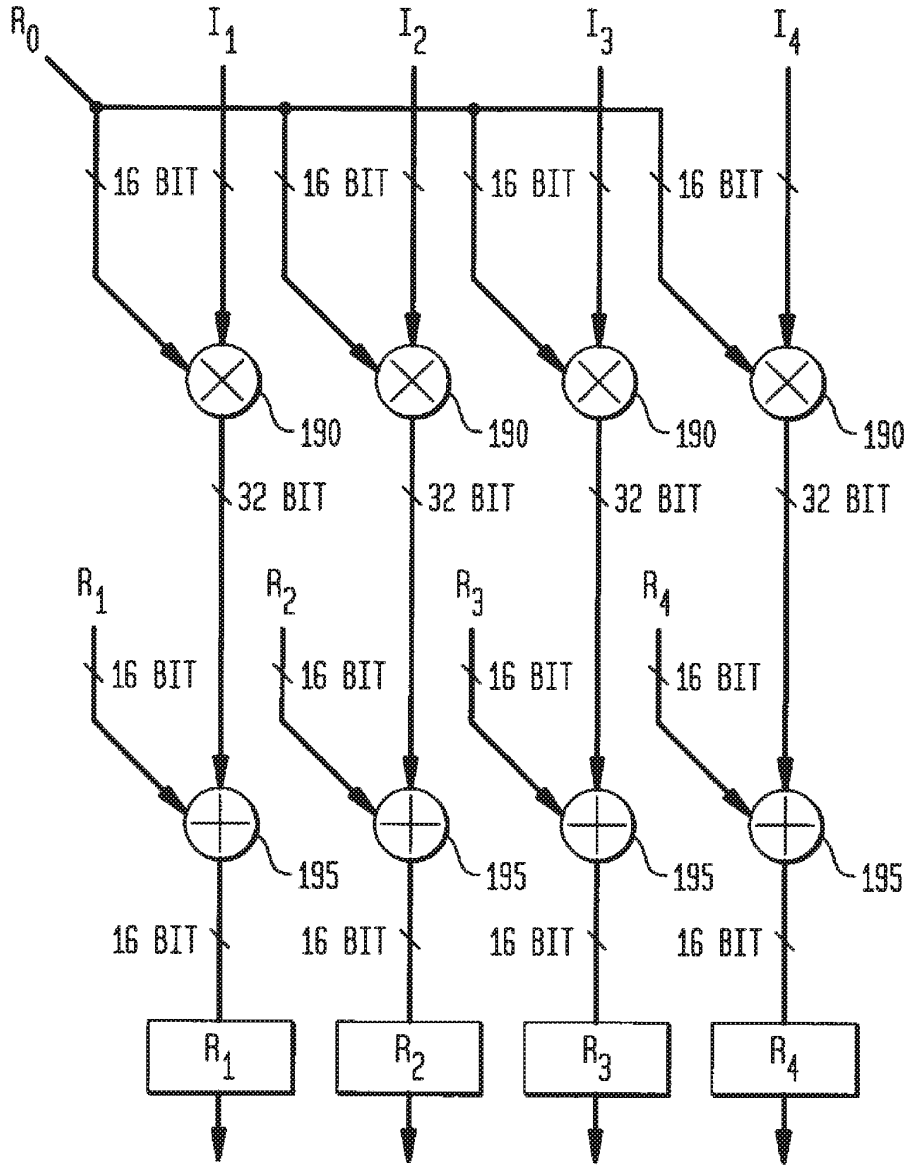


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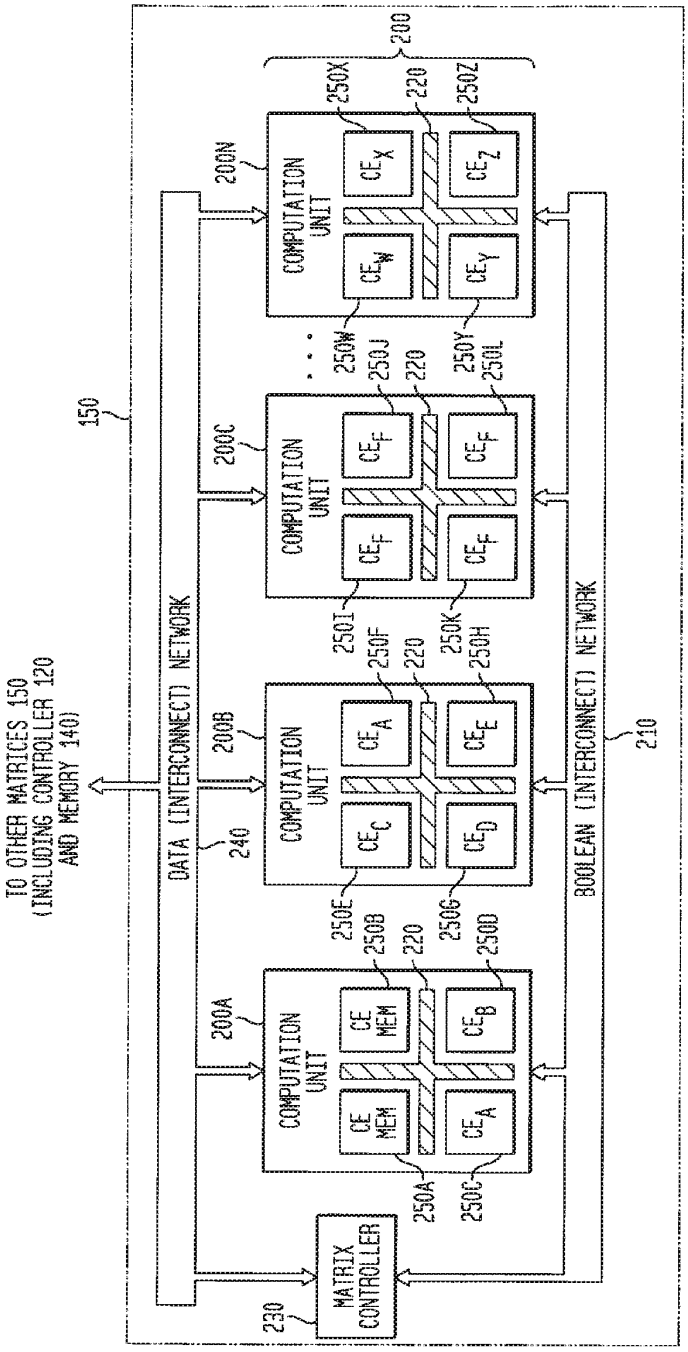
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FIG. 2



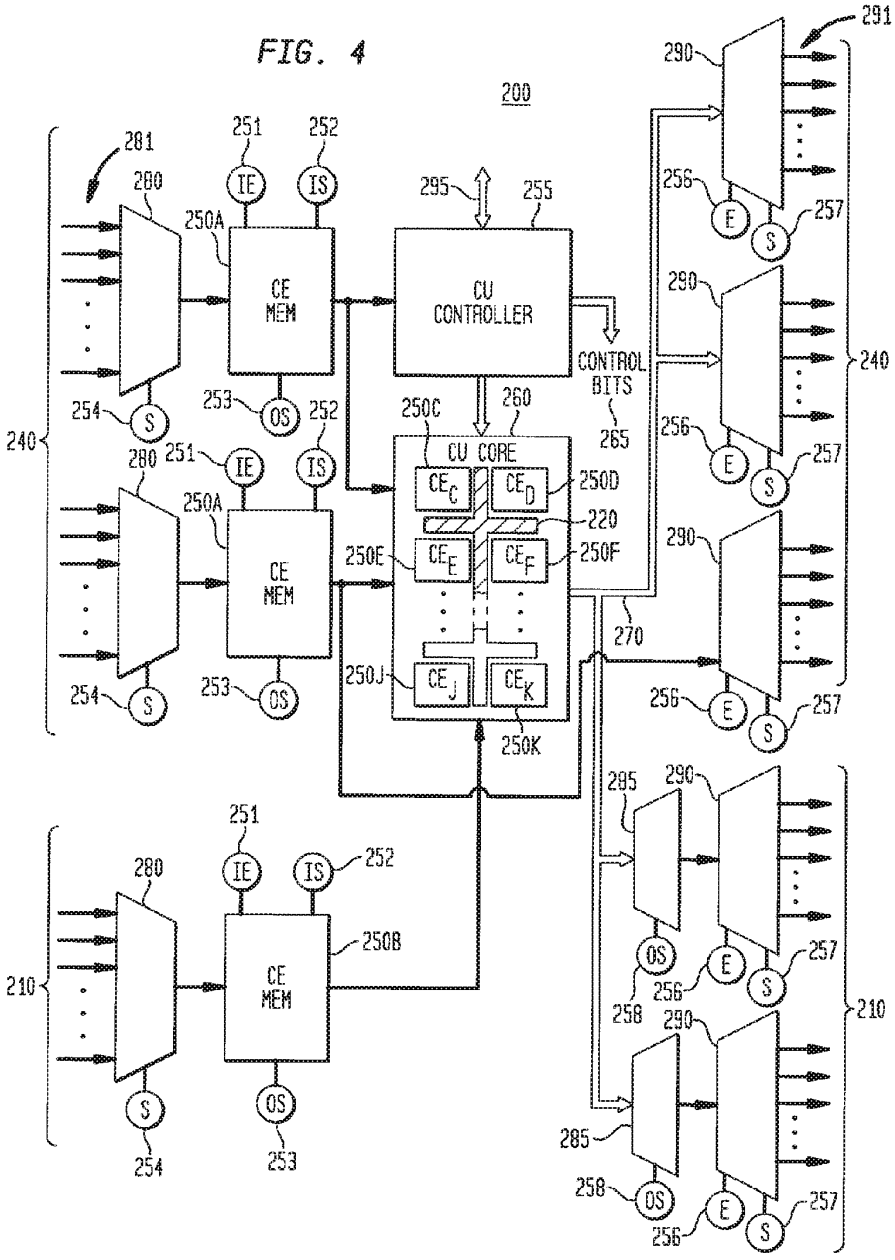
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FIG. 3



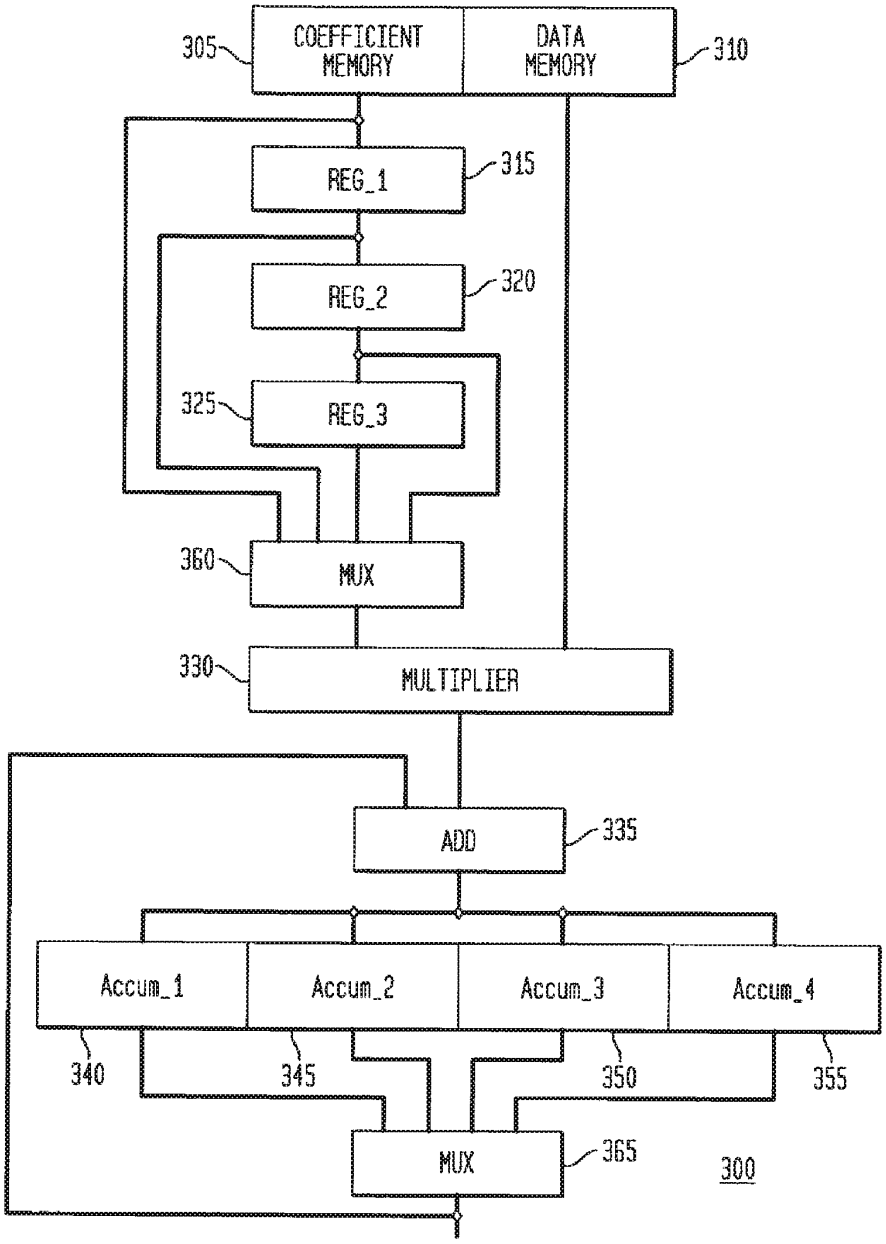
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FIG. 4



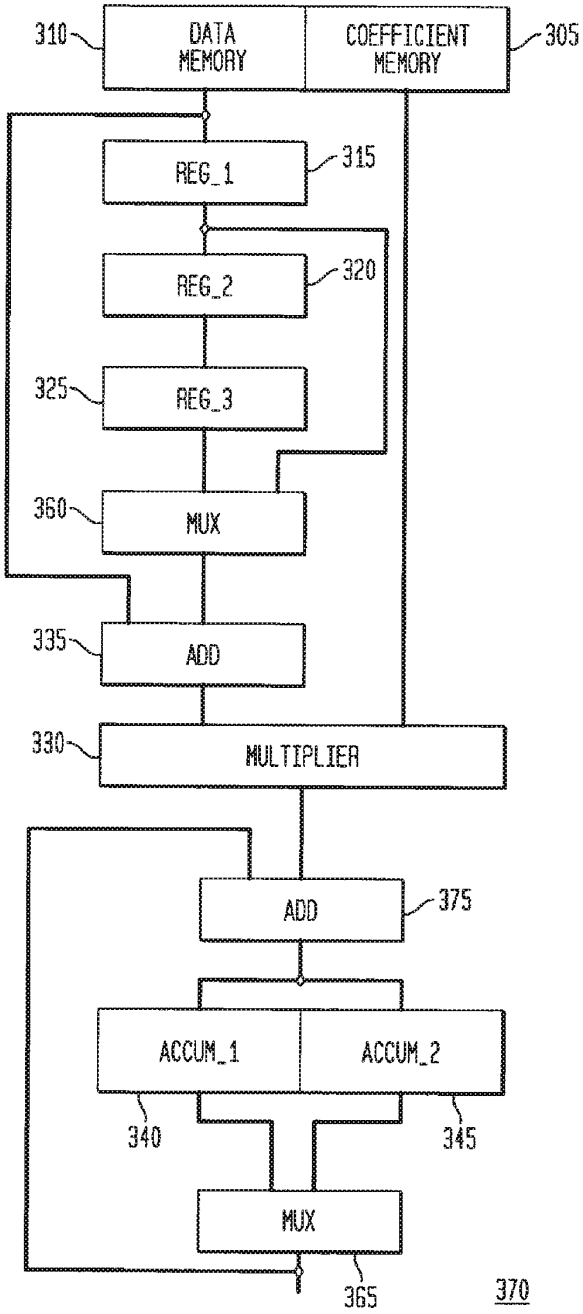
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FIG. 5A



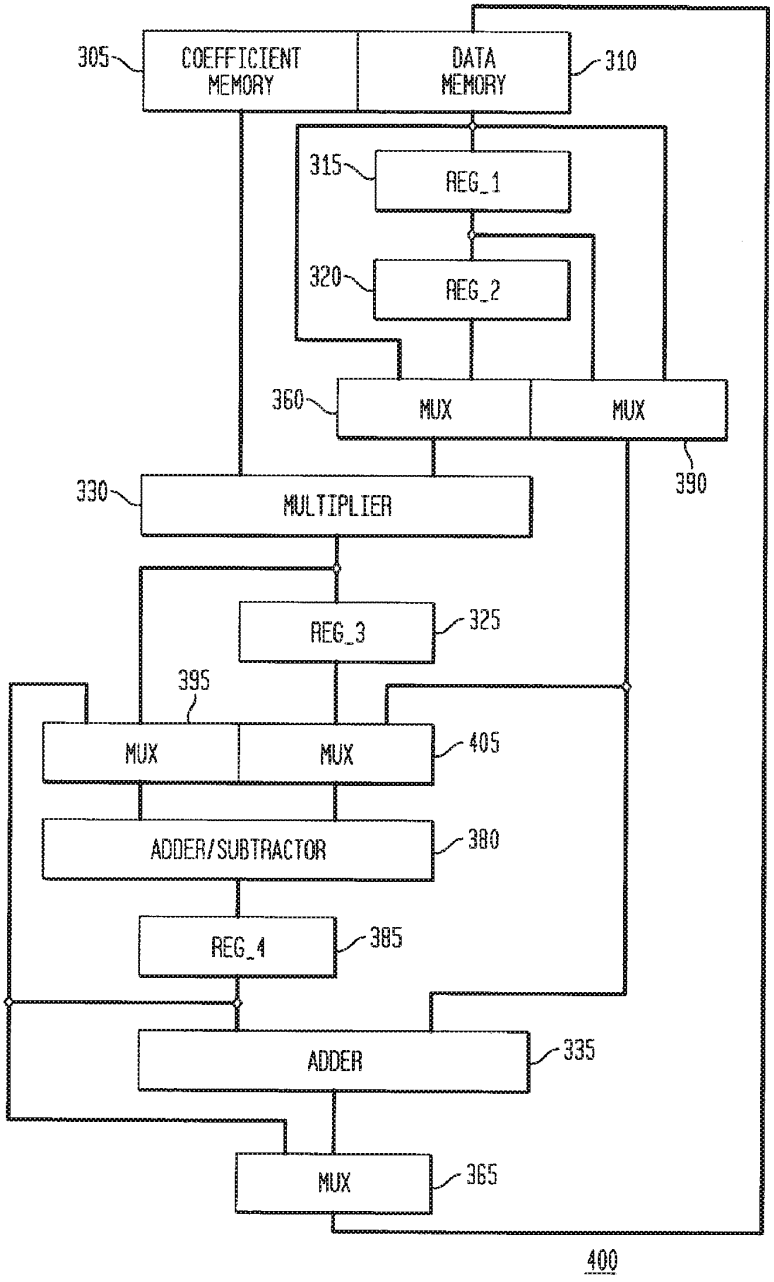
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FIG. 5B



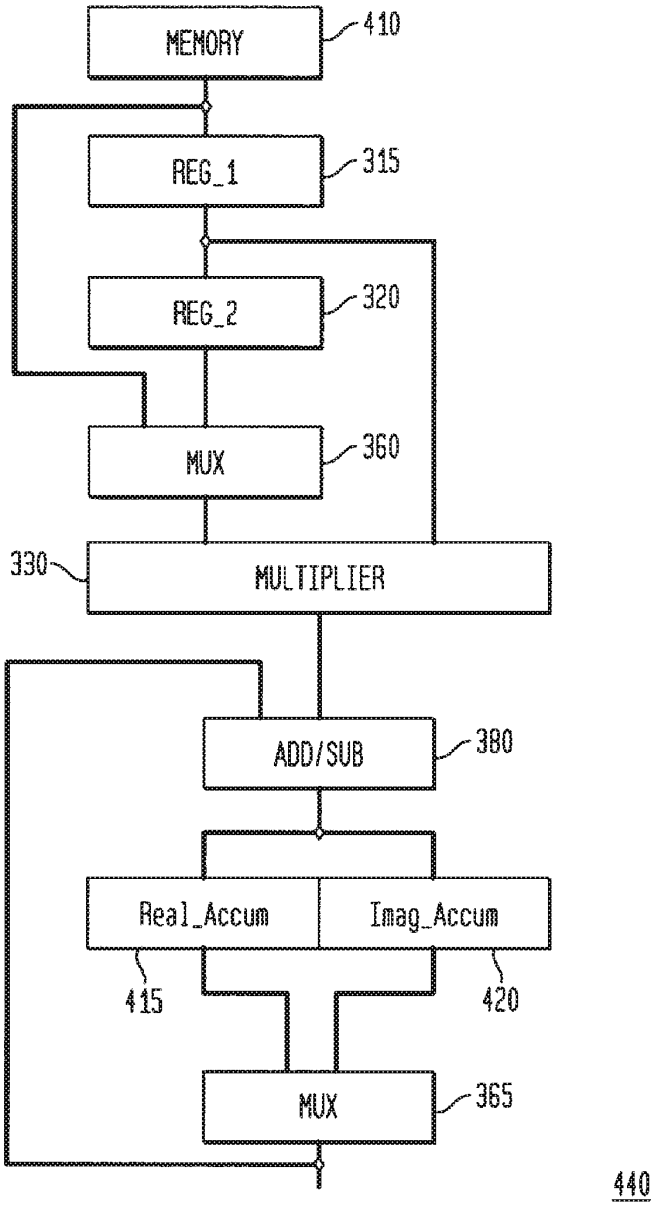
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FIG. 5C



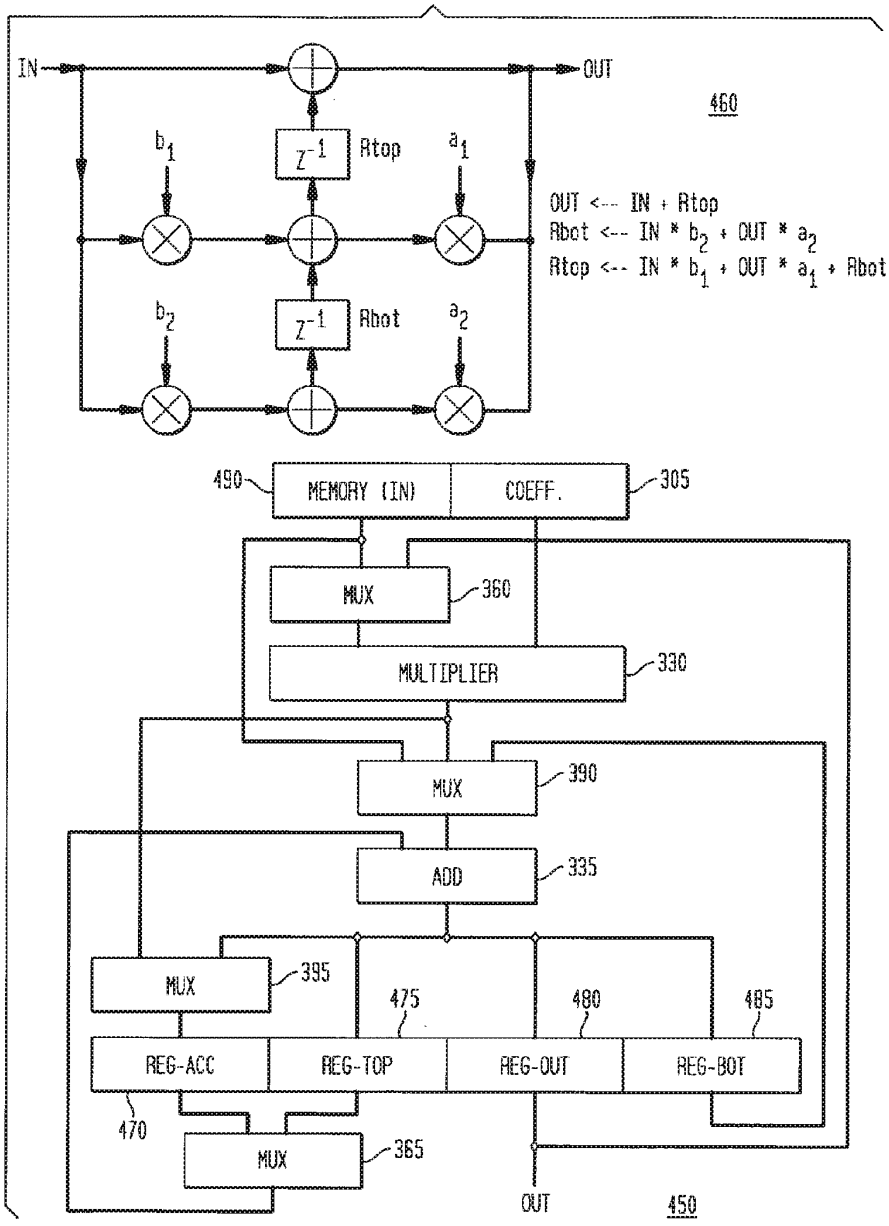
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FIG. 5D



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FIG. 5E



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FIG. 6

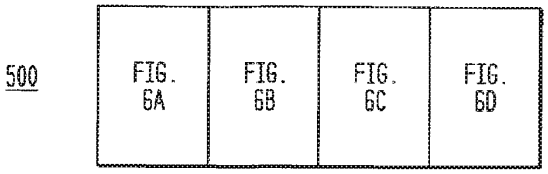
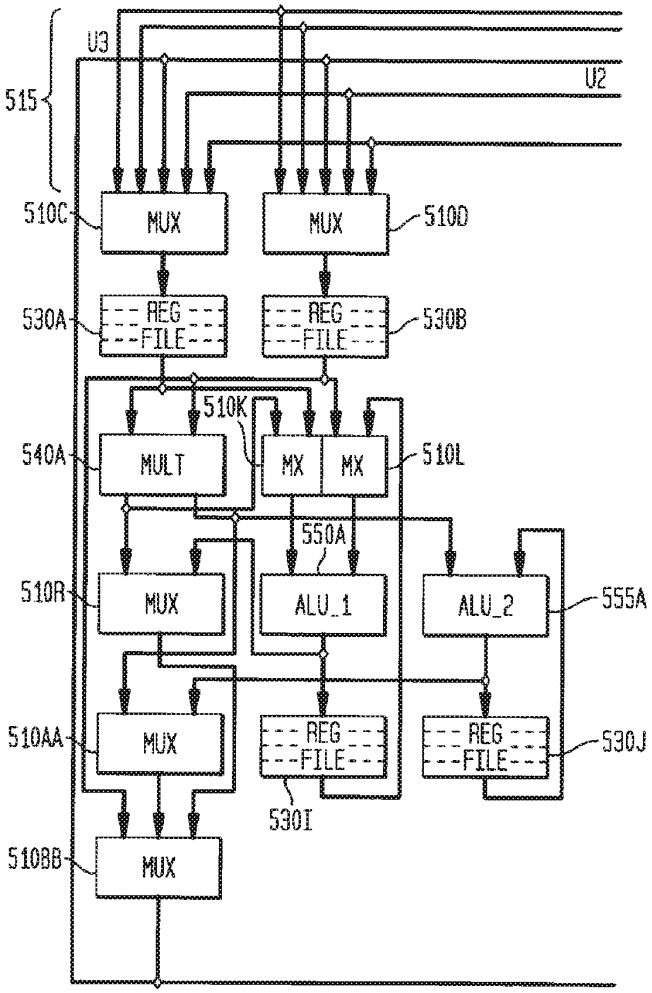


FIG. 6A



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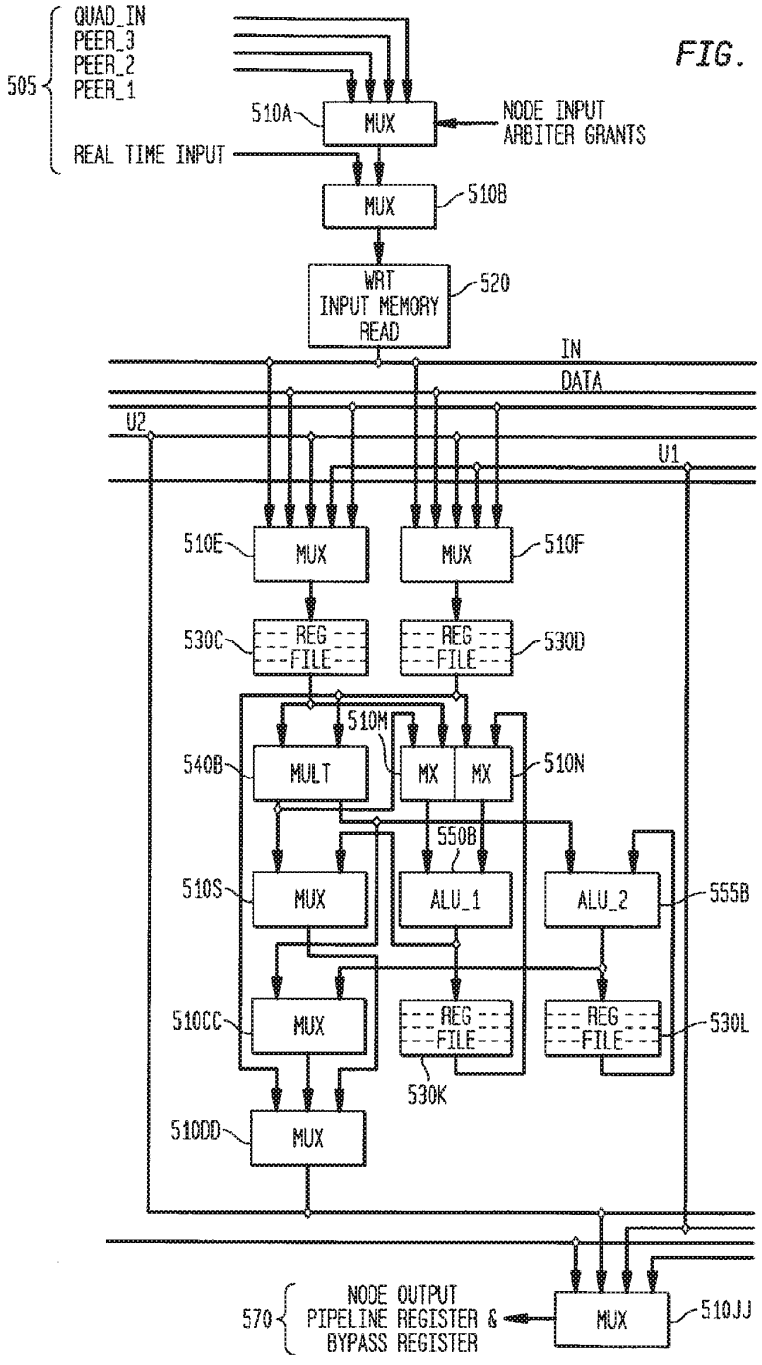
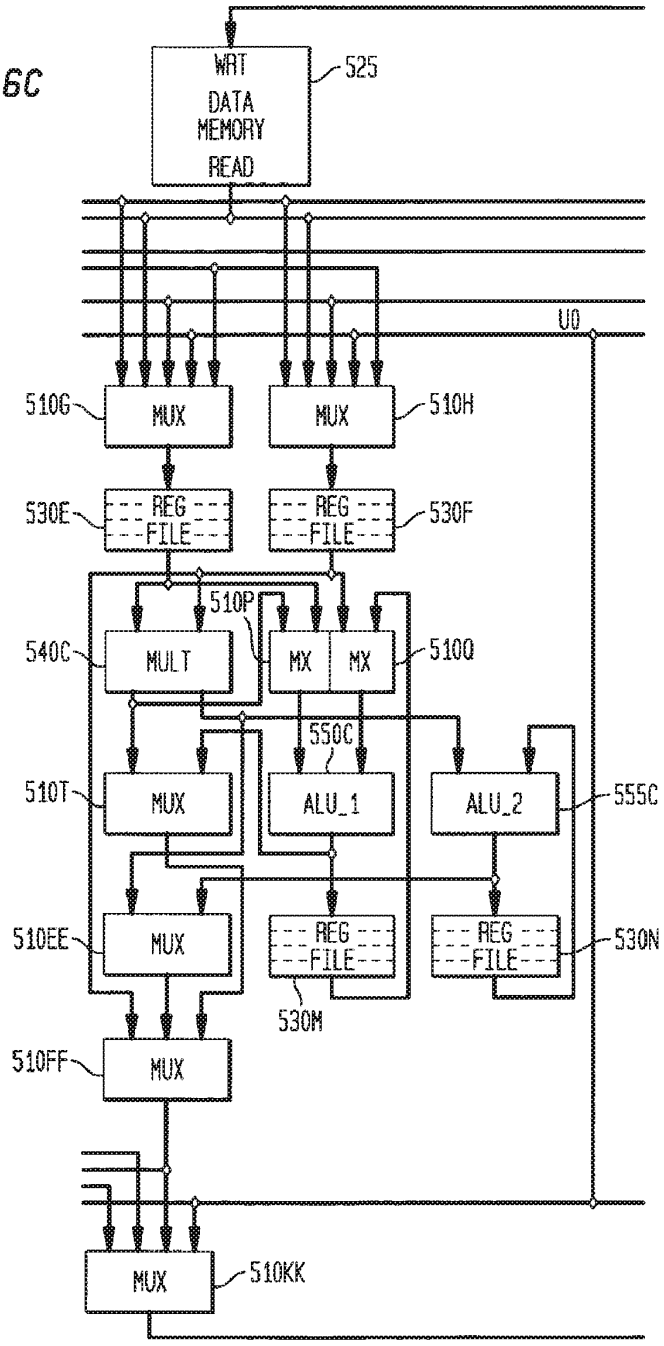


FIG. 6B

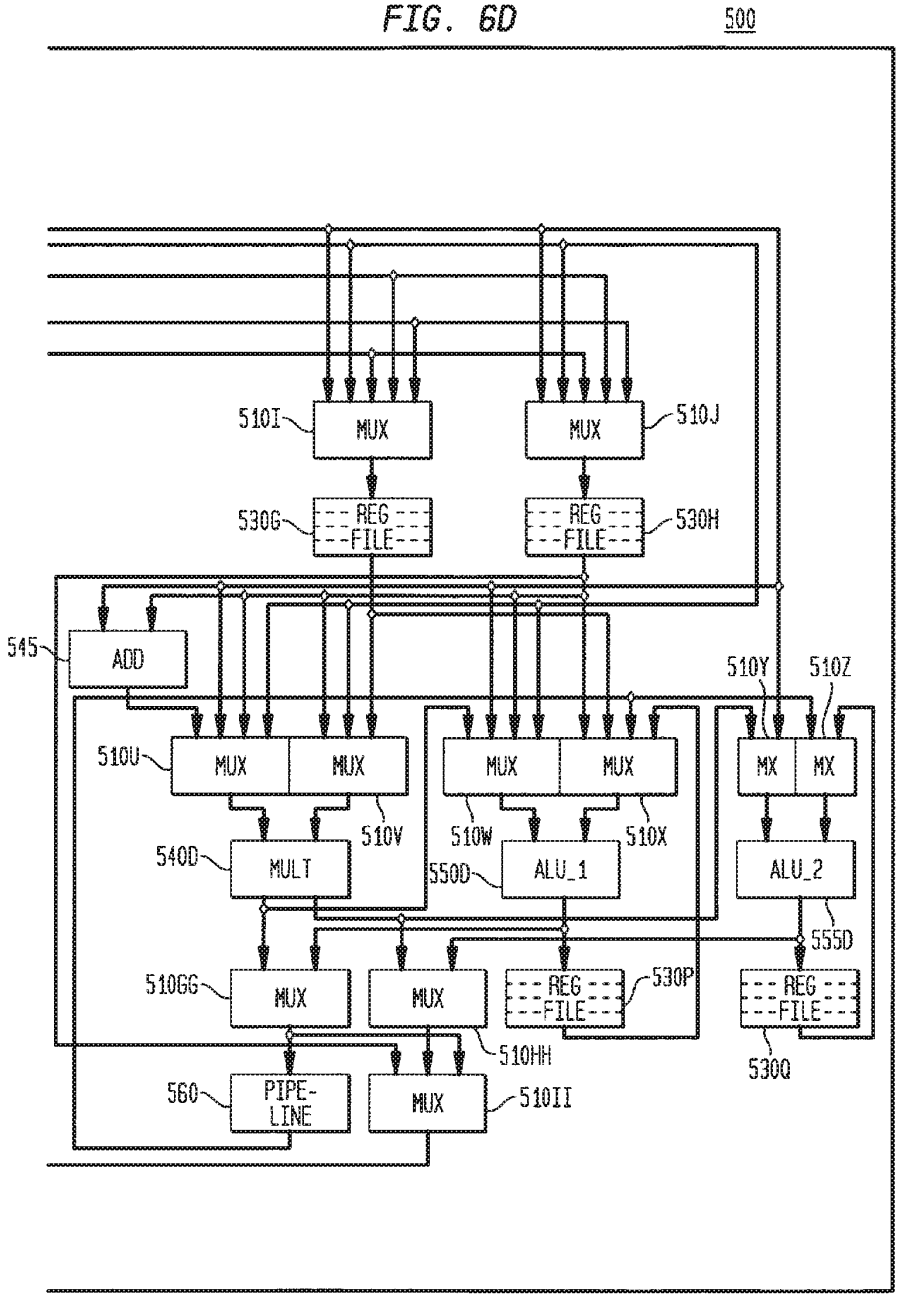
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FIG. 6C



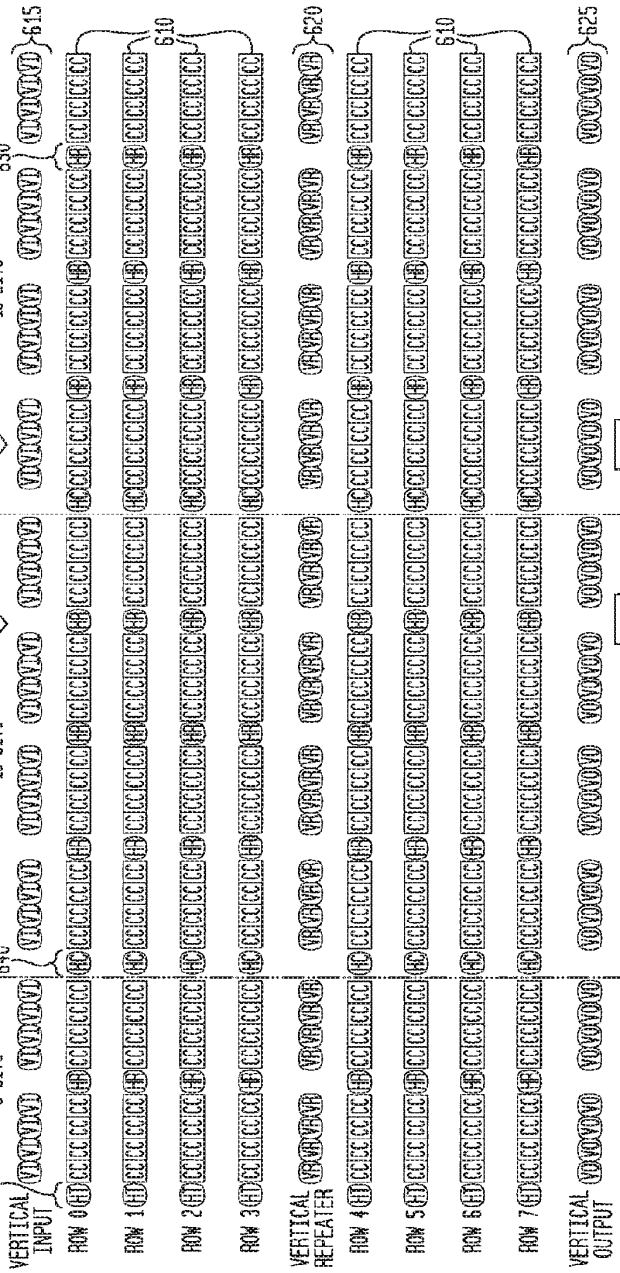
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FIG. 6D



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FIG. 7



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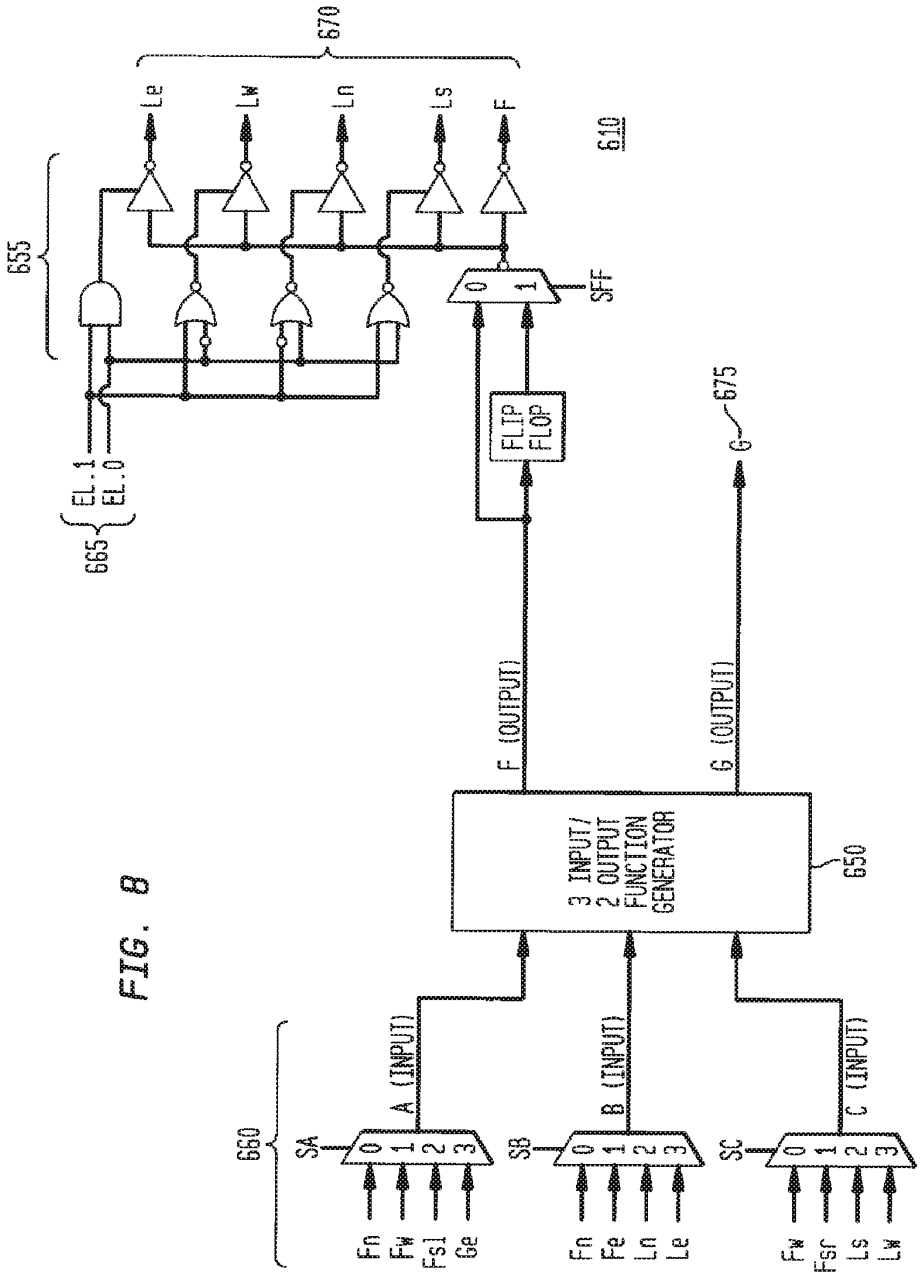


FIG. 8

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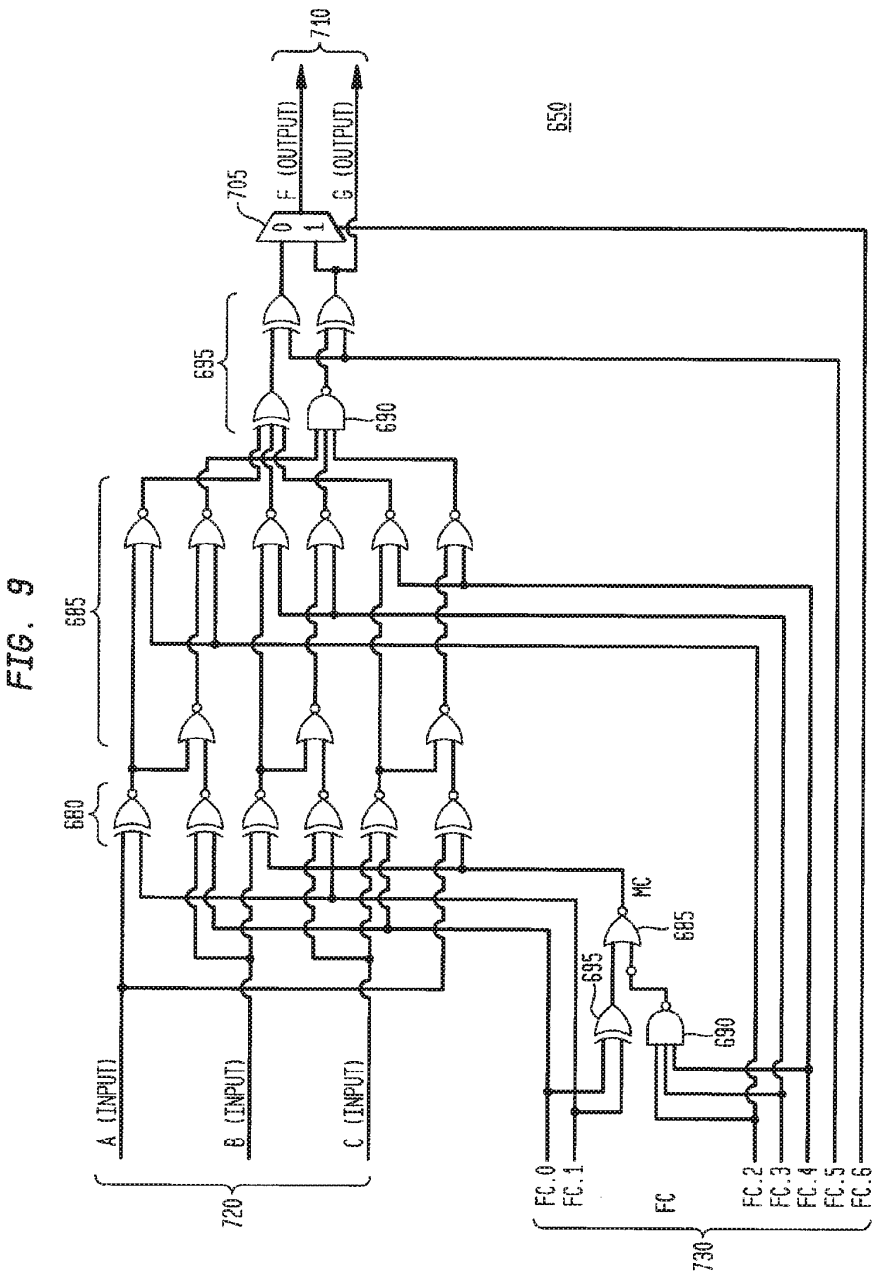
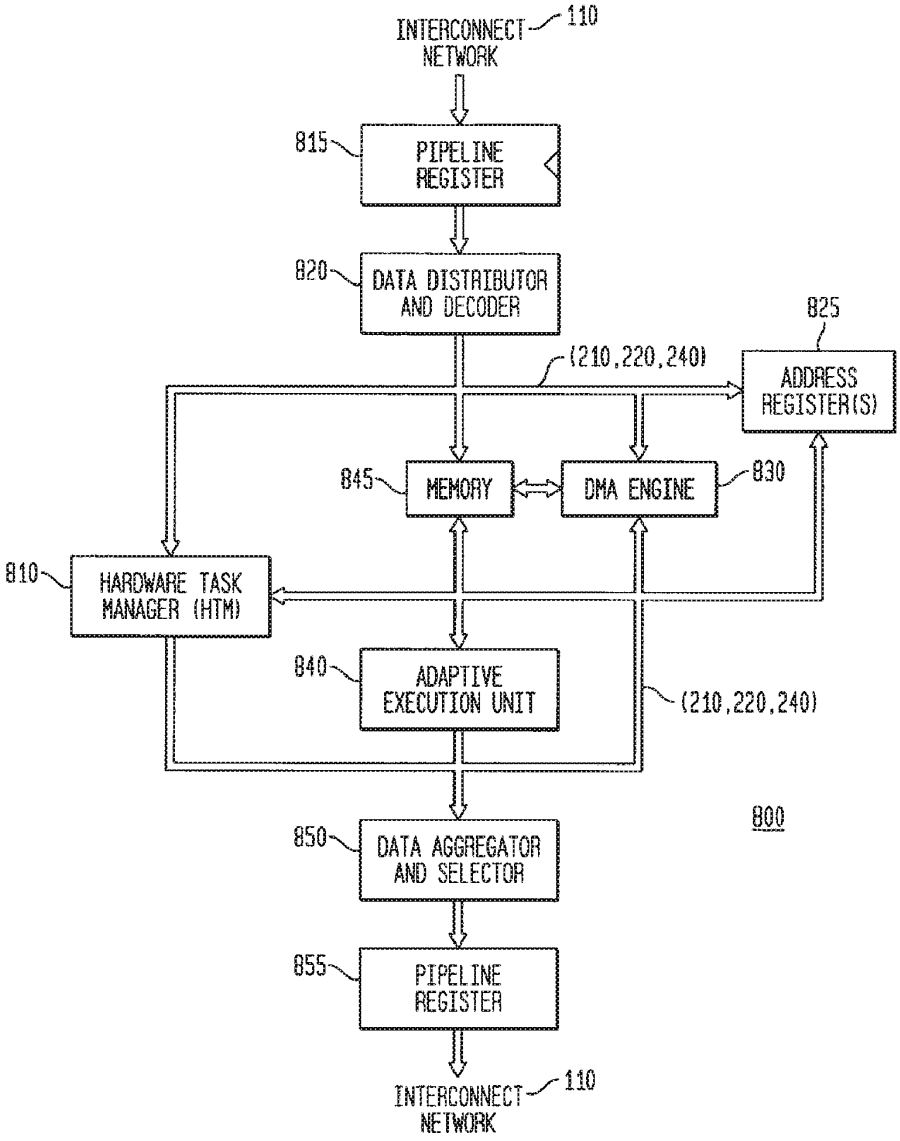


FIG. 9

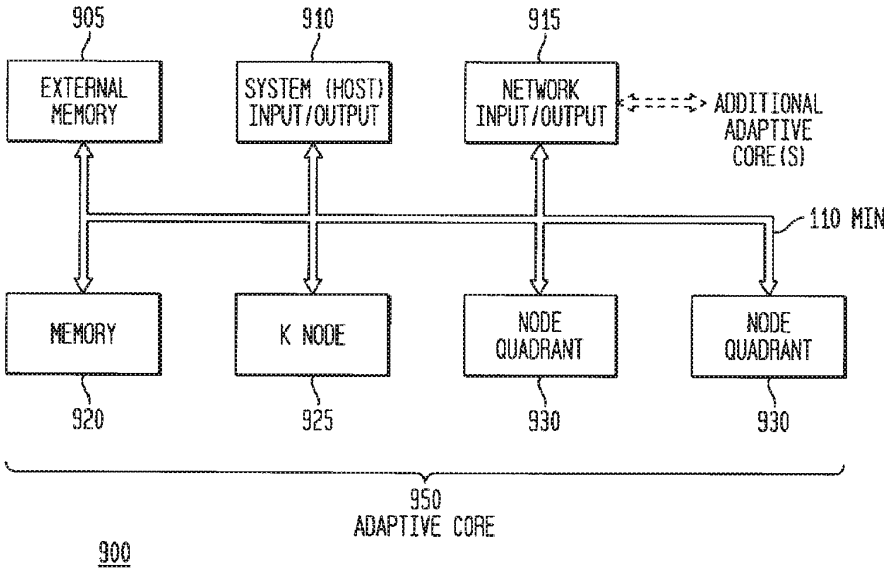
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FIG. 10



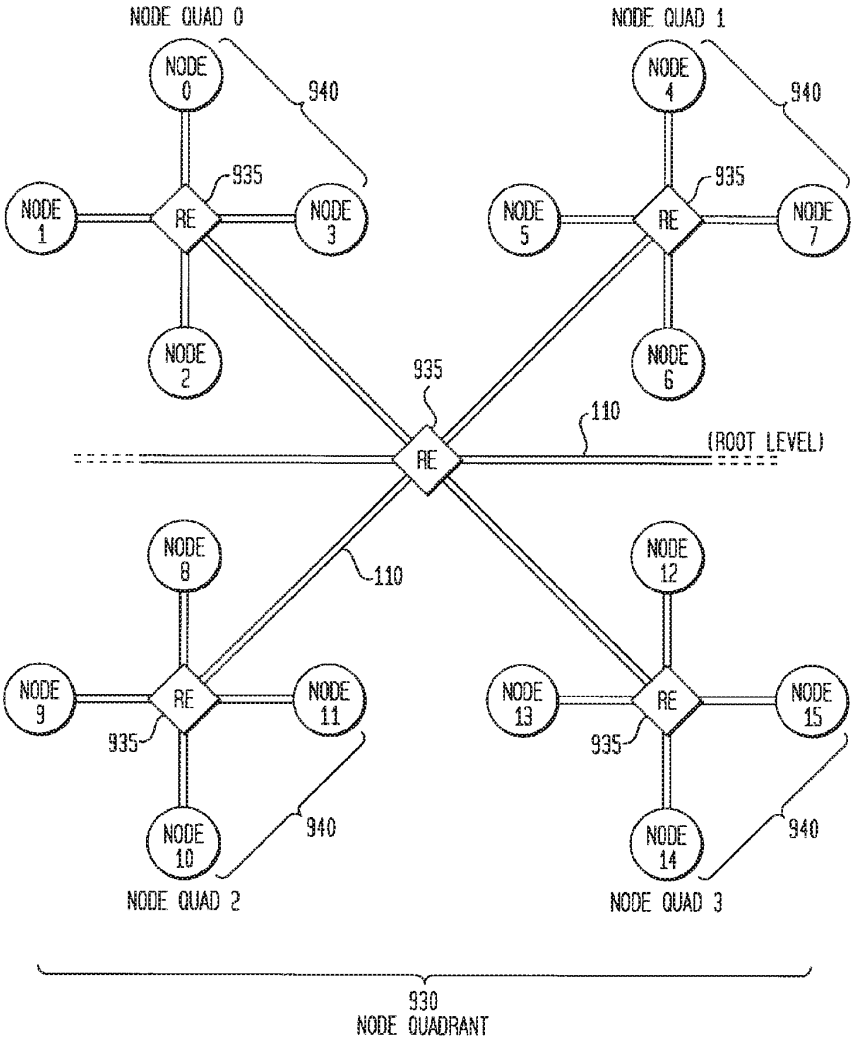
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FIG. 11



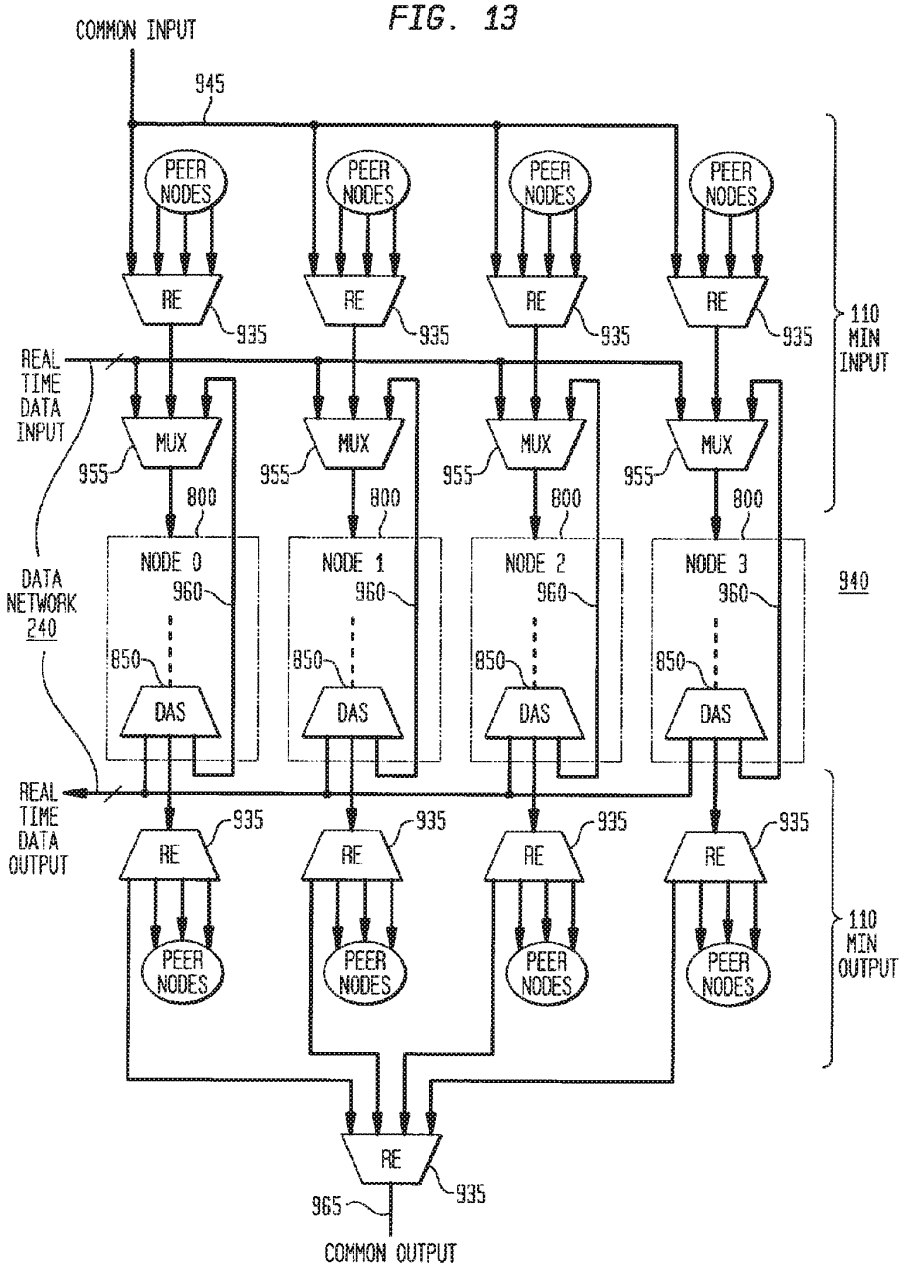
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FIG. 12



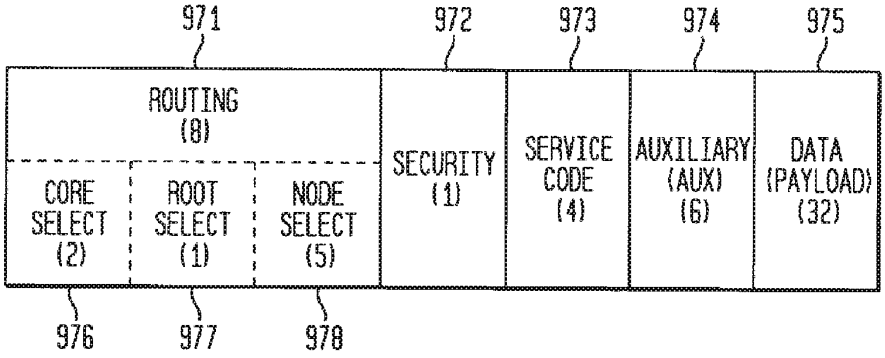
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FIG. 13



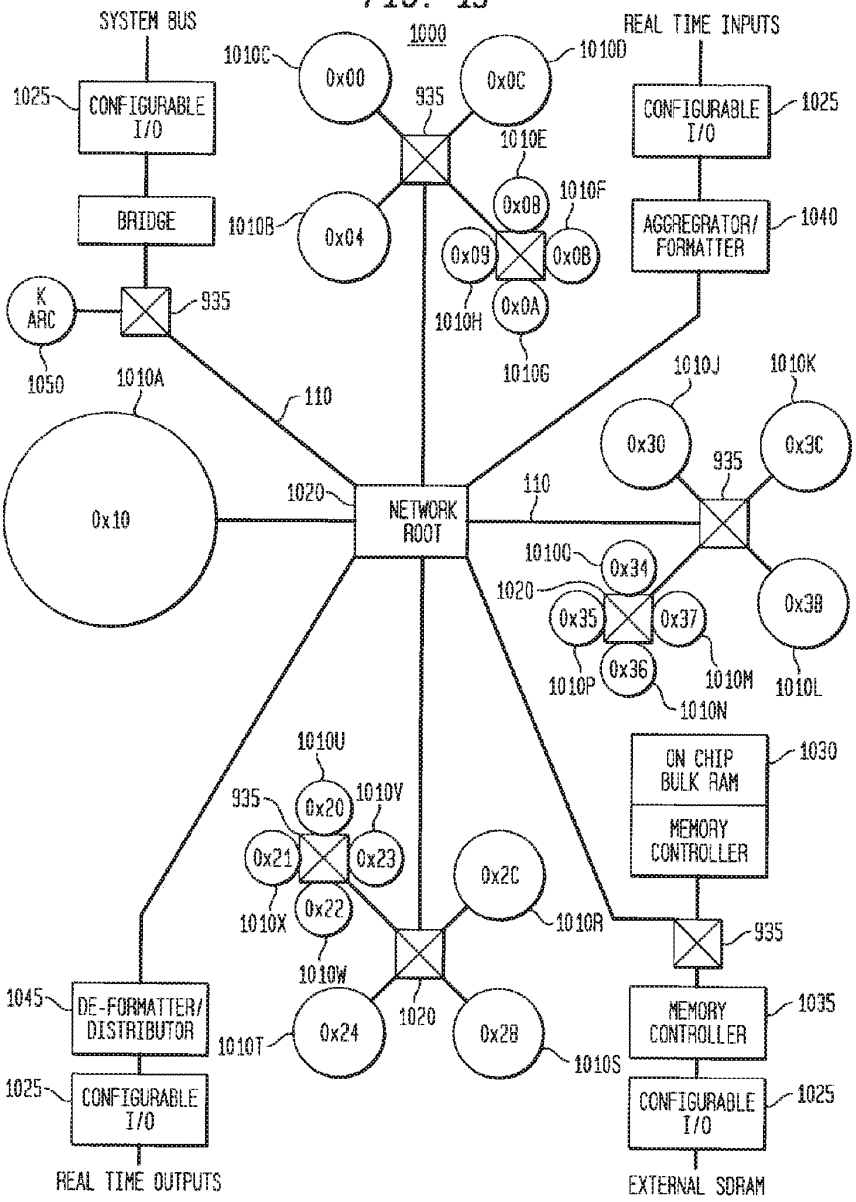
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FIG. 14



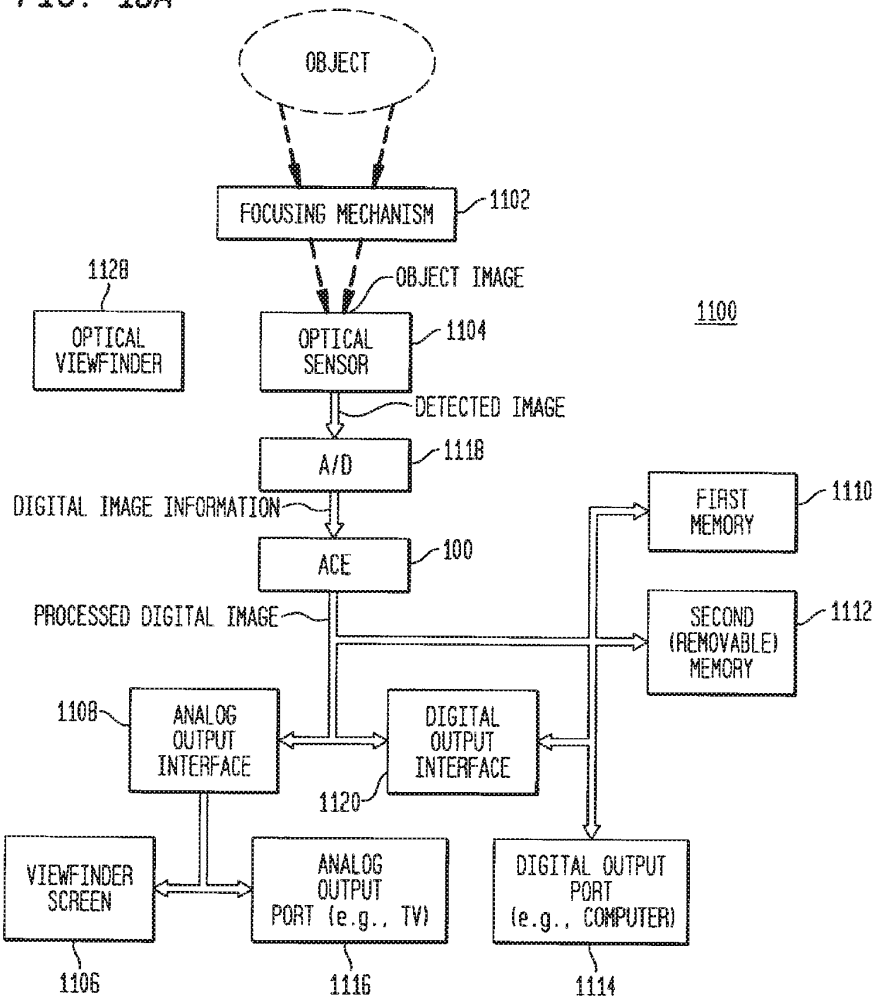
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FIG. 15



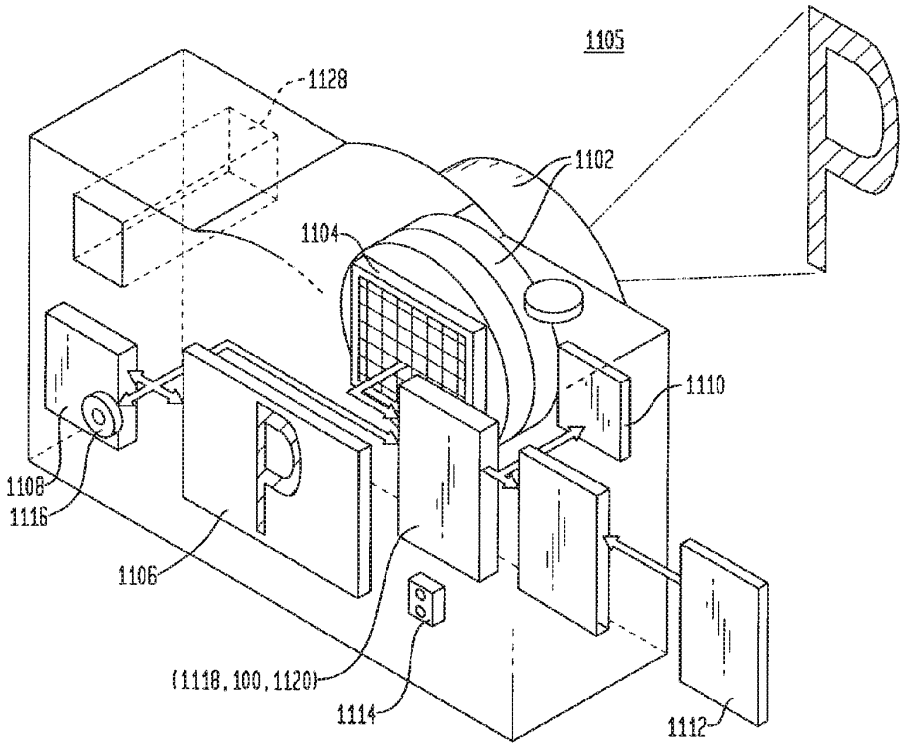
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FIG. 16A



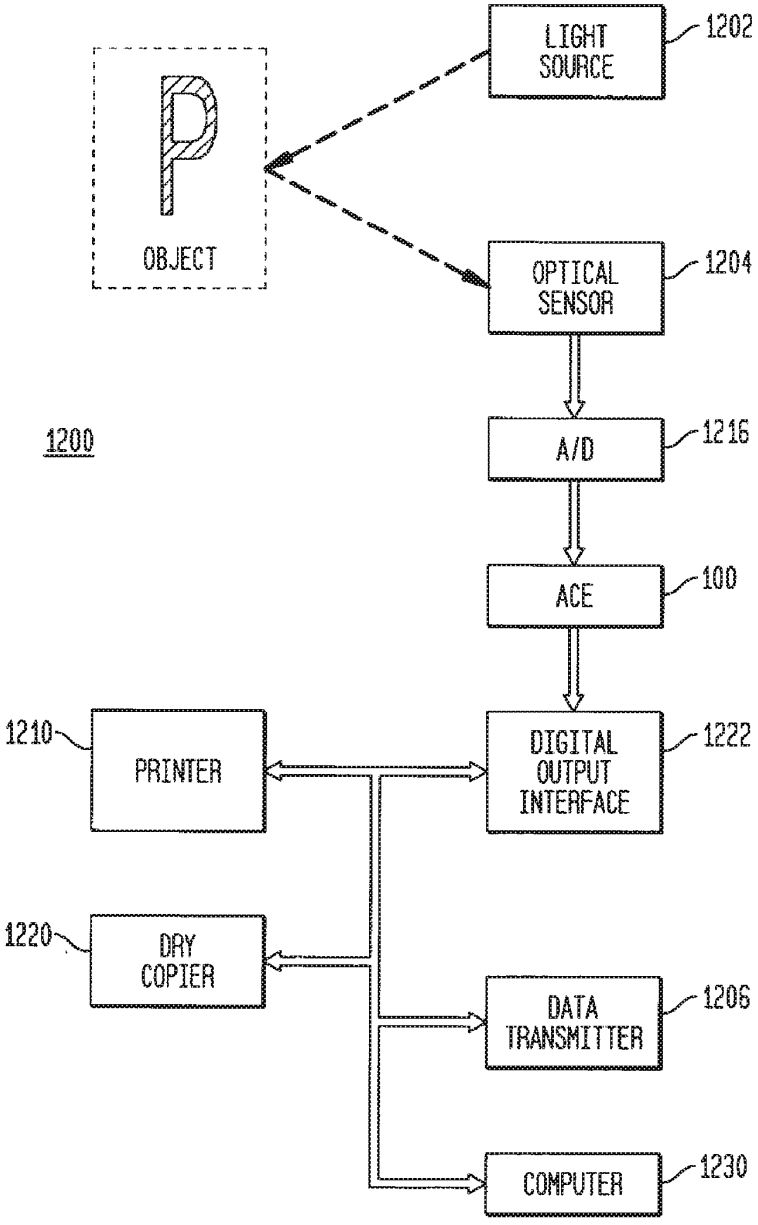
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FIG. 16B



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FIG. 17



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CONFIGURABLE HARDWARE BASED DIGITAL IMAGING APPARATUS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO A RELATED APPLICATION

This application is related to a Paul L. Master et al., U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/384,486, entitled "Adaptive Integrated Circuitry With Heterogeneous And Reconfigurable Matrices Of Diverse And Adaptive Computational Units Having Fixed, Application Specific Computational Elements", filed Mar. 7, 2003, commonly assigned to QuickSilver Technology, Inc., and incorporated by reference herein, which is a continuation-in-part of Paul L. Master et al., U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/815,122, entitled "Adaptive Integrated Circuitry With Heterogeneous And Reconfigurable Matrices Of Diverse And Adaptive Computational Units Having Fixed, Application Specific Computational Elements", filed Mar. 22, 2001, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,836,839, commonly assigned to QuickSilver Technology, Inc.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates, in general, to digital imaging and, more particularly, to digital imaging and other optical applications using adaptive integrated circuitry with heterogeneous and reconfigurable matrices of diverse and adaptive computational units having fixed, application specific computational elements.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The related application discloses a new form or type of integrated circuit, referred to as an adaptive computing engine ("ACE"), which is readily reconfigurable, in real time, and is capable of having corresponding, multiple modes of operation.

The ACE architecture for adaptive or reconfigurable computing, includes a plurality of different or heterogeneous computational elements coupled to an interconnection network. The plurality of heterogeneous computational elements include corresponding computational elements having fixed and differing architectures, such as fixed architectures for different functions such as memory, addition, multiplication, complex multiplication, subtraction, configuration, reconfiguration, control, input, output, and field programmability. In response to configuration information, the interconnection network is operative in real time to adapt (configure and reconfigure) the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements for a plurality of different functional modes, including linear algorithmic operations, non-linear algorithmic operations, finite state machine operations, memory operations, and bit-level manipulations.

The ACE architecture provides a single IC, which may be adapted in real time, using these fixed and application specific computational elements, to perform a wide variety of tasks. For example, utilizing differing configurations over time of the same set of heterogeneous computational elements, the ACE architecture may implement functions such as finite impulse response filtering, fast Fourier transformation, discrete cosine transformation, and with other types of computational elements, may implement many other high level processing functions for advanced communications and computing.

Digital image processing is a comparatively recent field, and includes devices such as digital cameras, digital scanners, facsimile (fax) machines, and copying machines. Conventional digital image processing, however, utilizes conventional processing technology, such as digital signal processors ("DSPs"), microprocessors, or application-specific integrated circuits ("ASICs"). As a consequence, a need remains for digital image processing using an adaptive computing circuit architecture, such as using the ACE architecture of the related application.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a digital imaging apparatus which may be embodied, for example, as a digital camera, a scanner, a printer, a dry copier, or otherwise utilized in digital imaging applications. The digital imaging apparatus of the invention includes an optical sensor, an analog-to-digital converter, a plurality of computational elements, and an interconnection network. The optical sensor is capable of converting an object image into a detected image. The analog-to-digital converter is coupled to the optical sensor and is capable of converting the detected image to digital image information. The plurality of computational elements includes a first computational element having a first fixed architecture and a second computational element having a second fixed architecture, with the first fixed architecture being different than the second fixed architecture. The interconnection network is coupled to the plurality of computational elements and to the analog-to-digital converter, and is capable of providing a processed digital image from the digital image information by configuring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a first imaging function of a plurality of imaging functions in response to first configuration information, and by reconfiguring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a second imaging function of the plurality of imaging functions in response to second configuration information, with the first imaging function being different than the second imaging function.

The digital imaging apparatus may also include focusing means capable of providing the object image to the optical sensor, such as a focusing assembly having a lens, a shutter, an aperture, and a focusing motor. The optical sensor is at least one of a plurality of optical sensors, such as a charge coupled device (CCD), a charge injection device (CID), an optical complementary metal oxide silicon (CMOS) array, an optical bipolar junction transistor (BJT) array, a photogate array, or a photodiode array.

The digital imaging apparatus, in various embodiments, may also include an analog output interface coupled to the interconnection network, the analog output interface capable of converting the processed digital image to an analog form; a viewfinder screen coupled to the analog output interface, the viewfinder screen capable of visually displaying the analog form of the processed digital image; and an analog output port coupled to the analog output interface, the analog output port capable of outputting the analog form of the processed digital image, such as for connection to a television or other video display. The digital imaging apparatus may also include a digital output port coupled to the interconnection network, the digital output port capable of outputting the processed digital image, such as for connection to a computer or a data transmission device.

The processed digital image may also be provided as a plurality of processed digital image data packets. In this embodiment, the digital imaging apparatus may also include a digital output interface coupled to the interconnection network, with the digital output interface capable of selecting a plurality of processed digital image data words from the plurality of processed digital image data packets and assem-

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bling the plurality of processed digital image data words to form the processed digital image.

The digital imaging apparatus also may be included within or coupled to, for example: a printer capable of printing the processed digital image on a tangible medium; a dry copier capable of transferring the processed digital image to a tangible medium; a data transmitter capable of transmitting the processed digital image to a remote location; a scanner capable of transferring the processed digital image to a storage medium, to a computer, and so on.

In the various embodiments, the plurality of imaging functions may include one or more of the following functions: linear filtering; nonlinear filtering; morphological filtering; median filtering; local weighted median filtering; center weighted median filtering; vector weighted median filtering; multichannel image recovery; multiframe image restoration; iterative image restoration; motion detection; motion estimation; low pass filtering; multirate filtering; wavelet-based multirate filtering; autofocusing; contrast enhancement; blur removal.

Also in the various embodiments, the first fixed architecture and the second fixed architecture of the a plurality of computational elements may be selected from a plurality of specific architectures, such as those architectures having the following corresponding functions: linear filtering, non-linear filtering, memory, addition, multiplication, complex multiplication, subtraction, synchronization, queuing, over sampling, under sampling, adaptation, configuration, reconfiguration, control, input, output, and field programmability.

Various types of memory may be included within the digital imaging apparatus. For example, a first memory may be couplable to the interconnection network and capable of storing the processed digital image, and this first memory may be a selectively removable flash memory. A second memory may also be included, coupled to the interconnection network, and be capable of storing the first configuration information and the second configuration information, such as synchronous dynamic random access memory (SDRAM).

In another embodiment, the digital imaging apparatus includes an optical sensor, an analog-to-digital converter, an input pipeline register, a first memory, a hardware task manager, a data distributor, an adaptive execution unit, a data selector, and an output pipeline register. The optical sensor is also capable of converting an object image into a detected image. The analog-to-digital converter is coupled to the optical sensor and is capable of converting the detected image to a plurality of digital image information data packets. The input pipeline register is coupled to the analog-to-digital converter and is capable of receiving the plurality of digital image information data packets, while the first memory is capable of storing the plurality of digital image information data packets. The hardware task manager is capable of processing a plurality of imaging tasks and determining that a first imaging task from the plurality of imaging tasks is capable of being performed and that a second imaging task from the plurality of imaging tasks is capable of being performed, with the first imaging task being different than the second imaging task. The data distributor is coupled to the input pipeline register, to the first memory, and to the hardware task manager, and is capable of distributing the plurality of digital image information data packets to the first memory. The adaptive execution unit is coupled to the hardware task manager and to the first memory, and is capable of configuring to perform the first imaging task and capable of performing the first imaging task using the plurality of digital image information data packets, the adaptive execution unit further capable of reconfiguring to perform the second imaging task and capable of performing the second imaging task, and the adaptive execution unit further capable of generating a corresponding plurality of processed digital image data packets from the performance of the first imaging task and the second imaging task. The data selector is coupled to the hardware task manager, to the adaptive execution unit and to the first memory, and is capable of determining routing for the corresponding plurality of processed digital image data packets. The output pipeline register is coupled to the data selector, and is capable of receiving the corresponding plurality of processed digital image data packets.

In this embodiment, the adaptive execution unit includes a plurality of computational elements and a plurality of switching elements coupled to the plurality of computational elements. In the plurality of computational elements, a first computational element has a first fixed architecture and a second computational element has a second fixed architecture, with the first fixed architecture being different from the second fixed architecture. The plurality of switching elements are capable of configuring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a first imaging function of a plurality of imaging functions in response to first configuration information, and are further capable of reconfiguring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a second imaging function of the plurality of imaging functions in response to second configuration information, with the first imaging function being different than the second imaging function.

Numerous other advantages and features of the present invention will become readily apparent from the following detailed description of the invention and the embodiments thereof, from the claims and from the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary first apparatus embodiment in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **2** is a schematic diagram illustrating an exemplary data flow graph.

FIG. **3** is a block diagram illustrating a reconfigurable matrix (or node), a plurality of computation units, and a plurality of computational elements.

FIG. **4** is a block diagram illustrating, in greater detail, a computational unit of a reconfigurable matrix.

FIGS. **5**A through **5**E are block diagrams illustrating, in detail, exemplary fixed and specific computational elements, forming computational units.

FIG. **6** is a block diagram illustrating, in detail, an exemplary multi-function adaptive computational unit having a plurality of different, fixed computational elements.

FIG. **7** is a block diagram illustrating, in detail, an adaptive logic processor computational unit having a plurality of fixed computational elements.

FIG. **8** is a block diagram illustrating, in greater detail, an exemplary core cell of an adaptive logic processor computational unit with a fixed computational element.

FIG. **9** is a block diagram illustrating, in greater detail, an exemplary fixed computational element of a core cell of an adaptive logic processor computational unit.

FIG. **10** is a block diagram illustrating a second exemplary apparatus embodiment in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **11** is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary first system embodiment in accordance with the present invention.

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FIG. **12** is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary node quadrant with routing elements in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **13** is a block diagram illustrating exemplary network interconnections in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **14** is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary data structure embodiment in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **15** is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary second system embodiment in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **16**A is a block diagram of an exemplary digital camera in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **16**B is a perspective view of the exemplary digital camera in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **17** is a block diagram of an exemplary facsimile, scanner, or photocopier machine in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

While the present invention is susceptible of embodiment in many different forms, there are shown in the drawings and will be described herein in detail specific embodiments thereof, with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the principles of the invention and is not intended to limit the invention to the specific embodiments illustrated.

The present invention provides digital image processing using an adaptive computing architecture such as the ACE architecture. The adaptive computing architecture of the invention uses a plurality of computational elements, which themselves have fixed architectures, in conjunction with an interconnection network, to configure and reconfigure the same computational elements to perform a wide variety of functions and operations which, in this case, pertain to digital image processing. The ACE architecture, for example, may be configured and reconfigured to process an optically detected image to provide a processed digital image, such as for use in a digital camera, a video camera, video telephony applications, digital TV, digital cinema, a fax machine, a photocopier, or any number of other devices that create or reproduce an image from visible spectrum (light) signals.

FIG. **1** is a block diagram illustrating a first apparatus **100** embodiment in accordance with the present invention. The apparatus **100**, referred to herein as an adaptive computing engine ("ACE") **100**, is preferably embodied as an integrated circuit, or as a portion of an integrated circuit having other, additional components. In the first apparatus embodiment, and as discussed in greater detail below, the ACE **100** includes one or more reconfigurable matrices (or nodes) **150**, such as matrices **150**A through **150**N as illustrated, and a matrix interconnection network **110**. Also in the first apparatus embodiment, and as discussed in detail below, one or more of the matrices (nodes) **150**, such as matrices **150**A and **150**B, are configured for functionality as a controller **120**, while other matrices, such as matrices **150**C and **150**D, are configured for functionality as a memory **140**. The various matrices **150** and matrix interconnection network **110** may also be implemented together as fractal subunits, which may be scaled from a few nodes to thousands of nodes.

A significant departure from the prior art, the ACE **100** does not utilize traditional (and typically separate) data, direct memory access (DMA), random access, configuration and instruction busses for signaling and other transmission between and among the reconfigurable matrices **150**, the controller **120**, and the memory **140**, or for other input/output ("I/O") functionality. Rather, data, control and configuration information are transmitted between and among these matrix **150** elements, utilizing the matrix interconnection network **110**, which may be configured and reconfigured, in real time, to provide any given connection between and among the reconfigurable matrices **150**, including those matrices **150** configured as the controller **120** and the memory **140**, as discussed in greater detail below.

The matrices **150** configured to function as memory **140** may be implemented in any desired or preferred way, utilizing computational elements (discussed below) of fixed memory elements, and may be included within the ACE **100** or incorporated within another IC or portion of an IC. In the first apparatus embodiment, the memory **140** is included within the ACE **100**, and preferably is comprised of computational elements which are low power consumption random access memory (RAM), but also may be comprised of computational elements of any other form of memory, such as flash, DRAM, SRAM, SDRAM, FeRAM, MRAM, ROM, EPROM or E^2PROM. In the first apparatus embodiment, the memory **140** preferably includes DMA engines, not separately illustrated.

The controller **120** is preferably implemented, using matrices **150**A and **150**B configured as adaptive finite state machines, as a reduced instruction set ("RISC") processor, controller or other device or IC capable of performing the two types of functionality discussed below. (Alternatively, these functions may be implemented utilizing a conventional RISC or other processor.) The first control functionality, referred to as "kernel" control, is illustrated as kernel controller ("KARC") of matrix **150**A, and the second control functionality, referred to as "matrix" control, is illustrated as matrix controller ("MARC") of matrix **150**B. The kernel and matrix control functions of the controller **120** are explained in greater detail below, with reference to the configurability and reconfigurability of the various matrices **150**, and with reference to the exemplary form of combined data, configuration and control information referred to herein as a "silverware" module. The kernel controller is also referred to as a "K-node", discussed in greater detail below with reference to FIGS. **10** and **11**.

The matrix interconnection network ("MIN") **110** of FIG. **1**, and its subset interconnection networks separately illustrated in FIGS. **3** and **4** (Boolean interconnection network **210**, data interconnection network **240**, and interconnect **220**), collectively and generally referred to herein as "interconnect", "interconnection(s)" or "interconnection network(s)", may be implemented generally as known in the art, such as utilizing FPGA interconnection networks or switching fabrics, albeit in a considerably more varied fashion. In the first apparatus embodiment, the various interconnection networks are implemented as described, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,218,240, U.S. Pat. No. 5,336,950, U.S. Pat. No. 5,245,227, and U.S. Pat. No. 5,144,166, and also as discussed below and as illustrated with reference to FIGS. **7**, **8** and **9**. These various interconnection networks provide selectable (or switchable) connections between and among the controller **120**, the memory **140**, the various matrices **150**, and the computational units **200** and computational elements **250** discussed below, providing the physical basis for the configuration and reconfiguration referred to herein, in response to and under the control of configuration signaling generally referred to herein as "configuration information". In addition, the various interconnection networks (**110**, **210**, **240** and **220**) provide selectable or switchable data, input, output, control and configuration paths, between and among the controller **120**, the memory **140**, the various matrices **150**, and the computational units **200** and computational elements **250**, in

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lieu of any form of traditional or separate input/output busses, data busses, DMA, RAM, configuration and instruction busses. In the second apparatus embodiment, the various interconnection networks are implemented as described below with reference to FIGS. **12** and **13**, using various combinations of routing elements, such as token rings or arbiters, and multiplexers, at varying levels within the system and apparatus embodiments.

It should be pointed out, however, that while any given level of switching or selecting operation of or within the various interconnection networks (**110**, **210**, **240** and **220**) may be implemented as known in the art, the combinations of routing elements and multiplexing elements, the use of different routing elements and multiplexing elements at differing levels within the system, and the design and layout of the various interconnection networks (**110**, **210**, **240** and **220**) are new and novel, as discussed in greater detail below. For example, varying levels of interconnection are provided to correspond to the varying levels of the matrices **150**, the computational units **200**, and the computational elements **250**, discussed below. At the matrix **150** level, in comparison with the prior art FPGA interconnect, the matrix interconnection network **110** is considerably more limited and less "rich", with lesser connection capability in a given area, to reduce capacitance and increase speed of operation. Within a particular matrix **150** or computational unit **200**, however, the interconnection network (**210**, **220** and **240**) may be considerably more dense and rich, to provide greater adaptation and reconfiguration capability within a narrow or close locality of reference.

The various matrices or nodes **150** are reconfigurable and heterogeneous, namely, in general, and depending upon the desired configuration: reconfigurable matrix **150**A is generally different from reconfigurable matrices **150**B through **150**N; reconfigurable matrix **150**B is generally different from reconfigurable matrices **150**A and **150**C through **150**N; reconfigurable matrix **150**C is generally different from reconfigurable matrices **150**A, **150**B and **150**D through **150**N, and so on. The various reconfigurable matrices **150** each generally contain a different or varied mix of adaptive and reconfigurable computational (or computation) units (**200**); the computational units **200**, in turn, generally contain a different or varied mix of fixed, application specific computational elements (**250**), discussed in greater detail below with reference to FIGS. **3** and **4**, which may be adaptively connected, configured and reconfigured in various ways to perform varied functions, through the various interconnection networks. In addition to varied internal configurations and reconfigurations, the various matrices **150** may be connected, configured and reconfigured at a higher level, with respect to each of the other matrices **150**, through the matrix interconnection network **110**, also as discussed in greater detail below.

Several different, insightful and novel concepts are incorporated within the ACE **100** architecture and provide a useful explanatory basis for the real time operation of the ACE **100** and its inherent advantages.

The first novel concepts concern the adaptive and reconfigurable use of application specific, dedicated or fixed hardware units (computational elements **250**), and the selection of particular functions for acceleration, to be included within these application specific, dedicated or fixed hardware units (computational elements **250**) within the computational units **200** (FIG. **3**) of the matrices **150**, such as pluralities of multipliers, complex multipliers, and adders, each of which are designed for optimal execution of corresponding multiplication, complex multiplication, and addition functions. Given that the ACE **100** is to be optimized, in the first apparatus embodiment, for low power consumption, the functions for acceleration are selected based upon power consumption. For example, for a given application such as mobile communication, corresponding C (C# or C++) or other code may be analyzed for power consumption. Such empirical analysis may reveal, for example, that a small portion of such code, such as 10%, actually consumes 90% of the operating power when executed. On the basis of such power utilization, this small portion of code is selected for acceleration within certain types of the reconfigurable matrices **150**, with the remaining code, for example, adapted to run within matrices **150** configured as controller **120**. Additional code may also be selected for acceleration, resulting in an optimization of power consumption by the ACE **100**, up to any potential trade-off resulting from design or operational complexity. In addition, as discussed with respect to FIG. **3**, other functionality, such as control code, may be accelerated within matrices **150** when configured as finite state machines.

Next, algorithms or other functions selected for acceleration are converted into a form referred to as a "data flow graph" ("DFG"). A schematic diagram of an exemplary data flow graph, in accordance with the present invention, is illustrated in FIG. **2**. As illustrated in FIG. **2**, an algorithm or function useful for CDMA voice coding (QCELP (Qualcomm code excited linear prediction) is implemented utilizing four multipliers **190** followed by four adders **195**. Through the varying levels of interconnect, the algorithms of this data flow graph are then implemented, at any given time, through the configuration and reconfiguration of fixed computational elements (**250**), namely, implemented within hardware which has been optimized and configured for efficiency, i.e., a "machine" is configured in real time which is optimized to perform the particular algorithm. Continuing with the exemplary DFG of FIG. **2**, four fixed or dedicated multipliers, as computational elements **250**, and four fixed or dedicated adders, also as different computational elements **250**, are configured in real time through the interconnect to perform the functions or algorithms of the particular DFG. Using this data flow model, data which is produced, such as by the multipliers **190**, is immediately consumed, such as by adders **195**.

The third and perhaps most significant concept, and a marked departure from the concepts and precepts of the prior art, is the concept of reconfigurable "heterogeneity" utilized to implement the various selected algorithms mentioned above. As indicated above, prior art reconfigurability has relied exclusively on homogeneous FPGAs, in which identical blocks of logic gates are repeated as an array within a rich, programmable interconnect, with the interconnect subsequently configured to provide connections between and among the identical gates to implement a particular function, albeit inefficiently and often with routing and combinatorial problems. In stark contrast, within computation units **200**, different computational elements (**250**) are implemented directly as correspondingly different fixed (or dedicated) application specific hardware, such as dedicated multipliers, complex multipliers, accumulators, arithmetic logic units (ALUs), registers, and adders. Utilizing interconnect (**210** and **220**), these differing, heterogeneous computational elements (**250**) may then be adaptively configured, in real time, to perform the selected algorithm, such as the performance of discrete cosine transformations often utilized in mobile communications. For the data flow graph example of FIG. **2**, four multipliers and four adders will be configured, i.e., connected in real time, to perform the particular algorithm. As a consequence, different ("heterogeneous") computational elements (**250**) are configured and reconfigured, at any given time, to

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optimally perform a given algorithm or other function. In addition, for repetitive functions, a given instantiation or configuration of computational elements may also remain in place over time, i.e., unchanged, throughout the course of such repetitive calculations.

The temporal nature of the ACE **100** architecture should also be noted. At any given instant of time, utilizing different levels of interconnect (**110**, **210**, **240** and **220**), a particular configuration may exist within the ACE **100** which has been optimized to perform a given function or implement a particular algorithm. At another instant in time, the configuration may be changed, to interconnect other computational elements (**250**) or connect the same computational elements **250** differently, for the performance of another function or algorithm. Two important features arise from this temporal reconfigurability. First, as algorithms may change over time to, for example, implement a new technology standard, the ACE **100** may co-evolve and be reconfigured to implement the new algorithm. For a simplified example, a fifth multiplier and a fifth adder may be incorporated into the DFG of FIG. **2** to execute a correspondingly new algorithm, with additional interconnect also potentially utilized to implement any additional bussing functionality. Second, because computational elements are interconnected at one instant in time, as an instantiation of a given algorithm, and then reconfigured at another instant in time for performance of another, different algorithm, gate (or transistor) utilization is maximized, providing significantly better performance than the most efficient ASICs relative to their activity factors.

This temporal reconfigurability of computational elements **250**, for the performance of various different algorithms, also illustrates a conceptual distinction utilized herein between adaptation (configuration and reconfiguration), on the one hand, and programming or reprogrammability, on the other hand. Typical programmability utilizes a pre-existing group or set of functions, which may be called in various orders, over time, to implement a particular algorithm. In contrast, configurability and reconfigurability (or adaptation), as used herein, includes the additional capability of adding or creating new functions which were previously unavailable or nonexistent.

Next, the ACE **100** also utilizes a tight coupling (or interdigitation) of data and configuration (or other control) information, within one, effectively continuous stream of information. This coupling or commingling of data and configuration information, referred to as a "silverware" module, is the subject of a separate, related patent application. For purposes of the present invention, however, it is sufficient to note that this coupling of data and configuration information into one information (or bit) stream helps to enable real time reconfigurability of the ACE **100**, without a need for the (often unused) multiple, overlaying networks of hardware interconnections of the prior art. For example, as an analogy, a particular, first configuration of computational elements at a particular, first period of time, as the hardware to execute a corresponding algorithm during or after that first period of time, may be viewed or conceptualized as a hardware analog of "calling" a subroutine in software which may perform the same algorithm. As a consequence, once the configuration of the computational elements **250** has occurred (i.e., is in place), as directed by the configuration information, the data for use in the algorithm is immediately available as part of the silverware module. The same computational elements may then be reconfigured for a second period of time, as directed by second configuration information, for execution of a second, different algorithm, also utilizing immediately available data. The immediacy of the data, for use in the configured computational elements **250**, provides a one or two clock cycle hardware analog to the multiple and separate software steps of determining a memory address and fetching stored data from the addressed registers. This has the further result of additional efficiency, as the configured computational elements may execute, in comparatively few clock cycles, an algorithm which may require orders of magnitude more clock cycles for execution if called as a subroutine in a conventional microprocessor or DSP.

This use of silverware modules, as a commingling of data and configuration information, in conjunction with the real time reconfigurability of a plurality of heterogeneous and fixed computational elements **250** to form adaptive, different and heterogeneous computation units **200** and matrices **150**, enables the ACE **100** architecture to have multiple and different modes of operation. For example, when included within a hand-held device, given a corresponding silverware module, the ACE **100** may have various and different operating modes as a cellular or other mobile telephone, a music player, a pager, a personal digital assistant, and other new or existing functionalities. In addition, these operating modes may change based upon the physical location of the device; for example, when configured as a CDMA mobile telephone for use in the United States, the ACE **100** may be reconfigured as a GSM mobile telephone for use in Europe.

Referring again to FIG. **1**, the functions of the controller **120** (preferably matrix (KARC) **150**A and matrix (MARC) **150**B, configured as finite state machines) may be explained: (1) with reference to a silverware module, namely, the tight coupling of data and configuration information within a single stream of information; (2) with reference to multiple potential modes of operation; (3) with reference to the reconfigurable matrices **150**; and (4) with reference to the reconfigurable computation units **200** and the computational elements **150** illustrated in FIG. **3**. As indicated above, through a silverware module, the ACE **100** may be configured or reconfigured to perform a new or additional function, such as an upgrade to a new technology standard or the addition of an entirely new function, such as the addition of a music function to a mobile communication device. Such a silverware module may be stored in the matrices **150** of memory **140**, or may be input from an external (wired or wireless) source through, for example, matrix interconnection network **110**. In the first apparatus embodiment, one of the plurality of matrices **150** is configured to decrypt such a module and verify its validity, for security purposes. Next, prior to any configuration or reconfiguration of existing ACE **100** resources, the controller **120**, through the matrix (KARC) **150**A, checks and verifies that the configuration or reconfiguration may occur without adversely affecting any pre-existing functionality, such as whether the addition of music functionality would adversely affect pre-existing mobile communications functionality. In the first apparatus embodiment, the system requirements for such configuration or reconfiguration are included within the silverware module, for use by the matrix (KARC) **150**A in performing this evaluative function. If the configuration or reconfiguration may occur without such adverse affects, the silverware module is allowed to load into the matrices **150** of memory **140**, with the matrix (KARC) **150**A setting up the DMA engines within the matrices **150**C and **150**D of the memory **140** (or other stand-alone DMA engines of a conventional memory). If the configuration or reconfiguration would or may have such adverse affects, the matrix (KARC) **150**A does not allow the new module to be incorporated within the ACE **100**. Additional functions of the kernel controller, as a K-node, are discussed in greater detail below.

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Continuing to refer to FIG. **1**, the matrix (MARC) **150**B manages the scheduling of matrix **150** resources and the timing of any corresponding data, to synchronize any configuration or reconfiguration of the various computational elements **250** and computation units **200** with any corresponding input data and output data. In the first apparatus embodiment, timing information is also included within a silverware module, to allow the matrix (MARC) **150**B through the various interconnection networks to direct a reconfiguration of the various matrices **150** in time, and preferably just in time, for the reconfiguration to occur before corresponding data has appeared at any inputs of the various reconfigured computation units **200**. In addition, the matrix (MARC) **150**B may also perform any residual processing which has not been accelerated within any of the various matrices **150**. As a consequence, the matrix (MARC) **150**B may be viewed as a control unit which "calls" the configurations and reconfigurations of the matrices **150**, computation units **200** and computational elements **250**, in real time, in synchronization with any corresponding data to be utilized by these various reconfigurable hardware units, and which performs any residual or other control processing. Other matrices **150** may also include this control functionality, with any given matrix **150** capable of calling and controlling a configuration and reconfiguration of other matrices **150**. This matrix control functionality may also be combined with kernel control, such as in the K-node, discussed below.

FIG. **3** is a block diagram illustrating, in greater detail, a reconfigurable matrix (or node) **150** with a plurality of computation units **200** (illustrated as computation units **200**A through **200**N), and a plurality of computational elements **250** (illustrated as computational elements **250**A through **250**Z), and provides additional illustration of the exemplary types of computational elements **250** and a useful summary. As illustrated in FIG. **3**, any matrix **150** generally includes a matrix controller **230**, a plurality of computation (or computational) units **200**, and as logical or conceptual subsets or portions of the matrix interconnect network **110**, a data interconnect network **240** and a Boolean interconnect network **210**. The matrix controller **230** may also be implemented as a hardware task manager, discussed below with reference to FIG. **10**. As mentioned above, in the first apparatus embodiment, at increasing "depths" within the ACE **100** architecture, the interconnect networks become increasingly rich, for greater levels of adaptability and reconfiguration. The Boolean interconnect network **210**, also as mentioned above, provides the reconfiguration and data interconnection capability between and among the various computation units **200**, and is preferably small (i.e., only a few bits wide), while the data interconnect network **240** provides the reconfiguration and data interconnection capability for data input and output between and among the various computation units **200**, and is preferably comparatively large (i.e., many bits wide). It should be noted, however, that while conceptually divided into reconfiguration and data capabilities, any given physical portion of the matrix interconnection network **110**, at any given time, may be operating as either the Boolean interconnect network **210**, the data interconnect network **240**, the lowest level interconnect **220** (between and among the various computational elements **250**), or other input, output, or connection functionality. It should also be noted that other, exemplary forms of interconnect are discussed in greater detail below with reference to FIGS. **11**-**13**.

Continuing to refer to FIG. **3**, included within a computation unit **200** are a plurality of computational elements **250**, illustrated as computational elements **250**A through **250**Z (individually and collectively referred to as computational elements **250**), and additional interconnect **220**. The interconnect **220** provides the reconfigurable interconnection capability and input/output paths between and among the various computational elements **250**. As indicated above, each of the various computational elements **250** consist of dedicated, application specific hardware designed to perform a given task or range of tasks, resulting in a plurality of different, fixed computational elements **250**. Utilizing the interconnect **220**, the fixed computational elements **250** may be reconfigurably connected together into adaptive and varied computational units **200**, which also may be further reconfigured and interconnected, to execute an algorithm or other function, at any given time, such as the quadruple multiplications and additions of the DFG of FIG. **2**, utilizing the interconnect **220**, the Boolean network **210**, and the matrix interconnection network **110**. For example, using the multiplexing or routing capabilities discussed below, the inputs/outputs of a computational element **250** may be coupled to outputs/inputs of a first set of (other) computational elements **250**, for performance of a first function or algorithm, and subsequently adapted or reconfigured, such that these inputs/outputs are coupled to outputs/inputs of a second set of (other) computational elements **250**, for performance of a second function or algorithm.

In the first apparatus embodiment, the various computational elements **250** are designed and grouped together, into the various adaptive and reconfigurable computation units **200** (as illustrated, for example, in FIGS. **5**A through **9**). In addition to computational elements **250** which are designed to execute a particular algorithm or function, such as multiplication or addition, other types of computational elements **250** are also utilized in the first apparatus embodiment. As illustrated in FIG. **3**, computational elements **250**A and **250**B implement memory, to provide local memory elements for any given calculation or processing function (compared to the more "remote" memory **140**). In addition, computational elements **250**I, **250**J, **250**K and **250**L are configured to implement finite state machines (using, for example, the computational elements illustrated in FIGS. **7**, **8** and **9**), to provide local processing capability (compared to the more "remote" matrix (MARC) **150**B), especially suitable for complicated control processing, and which may be utilized within the hardware task manager, discussed below.

With the various types of different computational elements **250** which may be available, depending upon the desired functionality of the ACE **100**, the computation units **200** may be loosely categorized. A first category of computation units **200** includes computational elements **250** performing linear operations, such as multiplication, addition, finite impulse response filtering, and so on (as illustrated below, for example, with reference to FIGS. **5**A through **5**E and FIG. **6**). A second category of computation units **200** includes computational elements **250** performing non-linear operations, such as discrete cosine transformation, trigonometric calculations, and complex multiplications. A third type of computation unit **200** implements a finite state machine, such as computation unit **200**C as illustrated in FIG. **3** and as illustrated in greater detail below with respect to FIGS. **7** through **9**), particularly useful for complicated control sequences, dynamic scheduling, and input/output management, while a fourth type may implement memory and memory management, such as computation unit **200**A as illustrated in FIG. **3**. Lastly, a fifth type of computation unit **200** may be included to perform bit-level manipulation, such as for encryption, decryption, channel coding, Viterbi decoding, and packet and protocol processing (such as Internet Protocol processing).

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In the first apparatus embodiment, in addition to control from other matrices or nodes **150**, a matrix controller **230** may also be included within any given matrix **150**, also to provide greater locality of reference and control of any reconfiguration processes and any corresponding data manipulations. For example, once a reconfiguration of computational elements **250** has occurred within any given computation unit **200**, the matrix controller **230** may direct that that particular instantiation (or configuration) remain intact for a certain period of time to, for example, continue repetitive data processing for a given application.

As indicated above, the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements **250** may be configured and reconfigured, through the levels of the interconnect network (**110**, **210**, **220**, **240**), for performance of a plurality of functional or operational modes, such as linear operations, non-linear operations, finite state machine operations, memory and memory management, and bit-level manipulation. This configuration and reconfiguration of the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements **250** through the levels of the interconnect network (**110**, **210**, **220**, **240**), however, may be conceptualized on another, higher or more abstract level, namely, configuration and reconfiguration for the performance of a plurality of algorithmic elements.

At this more abstract level of the algorithmic element, the performance of any one of the algorithmic elements may be considered to require a simultaneous performance of a plurality of the lower-level functions or operations, such as move, input, output, add, subtract, multiply, complex multiply, divide, shift, multiply and accumulate, and so on, using a configuration (and reconfiguration) of computational elements having a plurality of fixed architectures such as memory, addition, multiplication, complex multiplication, subtraction, synchronization, queuing, over sampling, under sampling, adaptation, configuration, reconfiguration, control, input, output, and field programmability.

When such a plurality of fixed architectures are configured and reconfigured for performance of an entire algorithmic element, this performance may occur using comparatively few clock cycles, compared to the orders of magnitude more clock cycles typically required. The algorithmic elements may be selected from a plurality of algorithmic elements comprising, for example: a radix-2 Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT), a radix-4 Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT), a radix-2 inverse Fast Fourier Transformation (IFFT), a radix-4 IFFT, a one-dimensional Discrete Cosine Transformation (DCT), a multi-dimensional Discrete Cosine Transformation (DCT), finite impulse response (FIR) filtering, convolutional encoding, scrambling, puncturing, interleaving, modulation mapping, Golay correlation, OVSF code generation, Haddamard Transformation, Turbo Decoding, bit correlation, Griffiths LMS algorithm, variable length encoding, uplink scrambling code generation, downlink scrambling code generation, downlink despreading, uplink spreading, uplink concatenation, Viterbi encoding, Viterbi decoding, cyclic redundancy coding (CRC), complex multiplication, data compression, motion compensation, channel searching, channel acquisition, and multipath correlation. Numerous other algorithmic element examples are discussed in greater detail below with reference to FIG. **10**.

In another embodiment of the ACE **100**, one or more of the matrices (or nodes) **150** may be designed to be application specific, having a fixed architecture with a corresponding fixed function (or predetermined application), rather than being comprised of a plurality of heterogeneous computational elements which may be configured and reconfigured for performance of a plurality of operations, functions, or algorithmic elements. For example, an analog-to-digital (A/D) or digital-to-analog (D/A) converter may be implemented without adaptive capability. As discussed in greater detail below, common node (matrix) functions also may be implemented without adaptive capability, such as the node wrapper functions discussed below. Under various circumstances, however, the fixed function node may be capable of parameter adjustment for performance of the predetermined application. For example, the parameter adjustment may comprise changing one or more of the following parameters: a number of filter coefficients, a number of parallel input bits, a number of parallel output bits, a number of selected points for Fast Fourier Transformation, a number of bits of precision, a code rate, a number of bits of interpolation of a trigonometric function, and real or complex number valuation. This fixed function node (or matrix) **150**, which may be parametizable, will typically be utilized in circumstances where an algorithmic element is used on a virtually continuous basis, such as in certain types of communications or computing applications.

For example, the fixed function node **150** may be a microprocessor (such as a RISC processor), a digital signal processor (DSP), or a co-processor, and may or may not have an embedded operating system. Such a controller or processor fixed function node **150** may be utilized for the various KARC **150**A or MARC **150**B applications mentioned above, such as providing configuration information to the interconnection network, directing and scheduling the configuration of the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements **250** of the other nodes **150** for performance of the various functional modes or algorithmic elements, or timing and scheduling the configuration and reconfiguration of the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements with corresponding data. In other applications, also for example, the fixed function node may be a cascaded integrated comb (CIC) filter or a parameterized, cascaded integrated comb (CIC) filter; a finite impulse response (FIR) filter or a finite impulse response (FIR) filter parameterized for variable filter length; or an A/D or D/A converter.

FIG. **4** is a block diagram illustrating, in greater detail, an exemplary or representative computation unit **200** of a reconfigurable matrix **150**. As illustrated in FIG. **4**, a computation unit **200** typically includes a plurality of diverse, heterogeneous and fixed computational elements **250**, such as a plurality of memory computational elements **250**A and **250**B, and forming a computational unit ("CU") core **260**, a plurality of algorithmic or finite state machine computational elements **250**C through **250**K. As discussed above, each computational element **250**, of the plurality of diverse computational elements **250**, is a fixed or dedicated, application specific circuit, designed and having a corresponding logic gate layout to perform a specific function or algorithm, such as addition or multiplication. In addition, the various memory computational elements **250**A and **250**B may be implemented with various bit depths, such as RAM (having significant depth), or as a register, having a depth of 1 or 2 bits.

Forming the conceptual data and Boolean interconnect networks **240** and **210**, respectively, the exemplary computation unit **200** also includes a plurality of input multiplexers **280**, a plurality of input lines (or wires) **281**, and for the output of the CU core **260** (illustrated as line or wire **270**), a plurality of output demultiplexers **285** and **290**, and a plurality of output lines (or wires) **291**. Through the input multiplexers **280**, an appropriate input line **281** may be selected for input use in data transformation and in the configuration and interconnection processes, and through the output demultiplexers **285** and **290**, an output or multiple outputs may be placed on

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a selected output line **291**, also for use in additional data transformation and in the configuration and interconnection processes.

In the first apparatus embodiment, the selection of various input and output lines **281** and **291**, and the creation of various connections through the interconnect (**210**, **220** and **240**), is under control of control bits **265** from a computational unit controller **255**, as discussed below. Based upon these control bits **265**, any of the various input enables **251**, input selects **252**, output selects **253**, MUX selects **254**, DEMUX enables **256**, DEMUX selects **257**, and DEMUX output selects **258**, may be activated or deactivated.

The exemplary computation unit **200** includes the computation unit controller **255** which provides control, through control bits **265**, over what each computational element **250**, interconnect (**210**, **220** and **240**), and other elements (above) does with every clock cycle. Not separately illustrated, through the interconnect (**210**, **220** and **240**), the various control bits **265** are distributed, as may be needed, to the various portions of the computation unit **200**, such as the various input enables **251**, input selects **252**, output selects **253**, MUX selects **254**, DEMUX enables **256**, DEMUX selects **257**, and DEMUX output selects **258**. The CU controller **255** also includes one or more lines **295** for reception of control (or configuration) information and transmission of status information.

As mentioned above, the interconnect may include a conceptual division into a data interconnect network **240** and a Boolean interconnect network **210**, of varying bit widths, as mentioned above. In general, the (wider) data interconnection network **240** is utilized for creating configurable and reconfigurable connections, for corresponding routing of data and configuration information. The (narrower) Boolean interconnect network **210**, while also utilized for creating configurable and reconfigurable connections, is utilized for control of logic (or Boolean) decisions of the various data flow graphs, generating decision nodes in such DFGs, and may also be used for data routing within such DFGs.

FIGS. **5**A through **5**E are block diagrams illustrating, in detail, exemplary fixed and specific computational elements, forming computational units. As will be apparent from review of these Figures, many of the same fixed computational elements are utilized, with varying configurations, for the performance of different algorithms.

FIG. **5**A is a block diagram illustrating a four-point asymmetric finite impulse response (FIR) filter computational unit **300**. As illustrated, this exemplary computational unit **300** includes a particular, first configuration of a plurality of fixed computational elements, including coefficient memory **305**, data memory **310**, registers **315**, **320** and **325**, multiplier **330**, adder **335**, and accumulator registers **340**, **345**, **350** and **355**, with multiplexers (MUXes) **360** and **365** forming a portion of the interconnection network (**210**, **220** and **240**).

FIG. **5**B is a block diagram illustrating a two-point symmetric finite impulse response (FIR) filter computational unit **370**. As illustrated, this exemplary computational unit **370** includes a second configuration of a plurality of fixed computational elements, including coefficient memory **305**, data memory **310**, registers **315**, **320** and **325**, multiplier **330**, adder **335**, second adder **375**, and accumulator registers **340** and **345**, also with multiplexers (MUXes) **360** and **365** forming a portion of the interconnection network (**210**, **220** and **240**).

FIG. **5**C is a block diagram illustrating a subunit for a fast Fourier transform (FFT) computational unit **400**. As illustrated, this exemplary computational unit **400** includes a third configuration of a plurality of fixed computational elements, including coefficient memory **305**, data memory **310**, registers **315**, **320**, **325** and **385**, multiplier **330**, adder **335**, and adder/subtracter **380**, with multiplexers (MUXes) **360**, **365**, **390**, **395** and **405** forming a portion of the interconnection network (**210**, **220** and **240**).

FIG. **5**D is a block diagram illustrating a complex finite impulse response (FIR) filter computational unit **440**. As illustrated, this exemplary computational unit **440** includes a fourth configuration of a plurality of fixed computational elements, including memory **410**, registers **315** and **320**, multiplier **330**, adder/subtracter **380**, and real and imaginary accumulator registers **415** and **420**, also with multiplexers (MUXes) **360** and **365** forming a portion of the interconnection network (**210**, **220** and **240**).

FIG. **5**E is a block diagram illustrating a biquad infinite impulse response (IIR) filter computational unit **450**, with a corresponding data flow graph **460**. As illustrated, this exemplary computational unit **450** includes a fifth configuration of a plurality of fixed computational elements, including coefficient memory **305**, input memory **490**, registers **470**, **475**, **480** and **485**, multiplier **330**, and adder **335**, with multiplexers (MUXes) **360**, **365**, **390** and **395** forming a portion of the interconnection network (**210**, **220** and **240**).

FIG. **6** is a block diagram illustrating, in detail, an exemplary multi-function adaptive computational unit **500** having a plurality of different, fixed computational elements. When configured accordingly, the adaptive computation unit **500** performs each of the various functions previously illustrated with reference to FIGS. **5**A though **5**E, plus other functions such as discrete cosine transformation. As illustrated, this multi-function adaptive computational unit **500** includes capability for a plurality of configurations of a plurality of fixed computational elements, including input memory **520**, data memory **525**, registers **530** (illustrated as registers **530**A through **530**Q), multipliers **540** (illustrated as multipliers **540**A through **540**D), adder **545**, first arithmetic logic unit (ALU) **550** (illustrated as ALU_1s **550**A through **550**D), second arithmetic logic unit (ALU) **555** (illustrated as ALU_2s **555**A through **555**D), and pipeline (length 1) register **560**, with inputs **505**, lines **515**, outputs **570**, and multiplexers (MUXes or MXes) **510** (illustrates as MUXes and MXes **510**A through **510**KK) forming an interconnection network (**210**, **220** and **240**). The two different ALUs **550** and **555** are preferably utilized, for example, for parallel addition and subtraction operations, particularly useful for radix 2 operations in discrete cosine transformation.

FIG. **7** is a block diagram illustrating, in detail, an exemplary adaptive logic processor (ALP) computational unit **600** having a plurality of fixed computational elements. The ALP **600** is highly adaptable, and is preferably utilized for input/output configuration, finite state machine implementation, general field programmability, and bit manipulation. The fixed computational element of ALP **600** is a portion (**650**) of each of the plurality of adaptive core cells (CCs) **610** (FIG. **8**), as separately illustrated in FIG. **9**. An interconnection network (**210**, **220** and **240**) is formed from various combinations and permutations of the pluralities of vertical inputs (VIs) **615**, vertical repeaters (VRs) **620**, vertical outputs (VOs) **625**, horizontal repeaters (HRs) **630**, horizontal terminators (HTs) **635**, and horizontal controllers (HCs) **640**.

FIG. **8** is a block diagram illustrating, in greater detail, an exemplary core cell **610** of an adaptive logic processor computational unit **600** with a fixed computational element **650**. The fixed computational element is a 3 input-2 output function generator **550**, separately illustrated in FIG. **9**. The preferred core cell **610** also includes control logic **655**, control inputs **665**, control outputs **670** (providing output intercon-

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nect), output **675**, and inputs (with interconnect muxes) **660** (providing input interconnect).

FIG. **9** is a block diagram illustrating, in greater detail, an exemplary fixed computational element **650** of a core cell **610** of an adaptive logic processor computational unit **600**. The fixed computational element **650** is comprised of a fixed layout of pluralities of exclusive NOR (XNOR) gates **680**, NOR gates **685**, NAND gates **690**, and exclusive OR (XOR) gates **695**, with three inputs **720** and two outputs **710**. Configuration and interconnection is provided through MUX **705** and interconnect inputs **730**.

FIG. **10** is a block diagram illustrating a prototypical node or matrix **800** comprising the second apparatus embodiment. The node **800** is connected to other nodes **150** within the ACE **100** through the matrix interconnection network **110**. The prototypical node **800** includes a fixed (and non-reconfigurable) "node wrapper", an adaptive (reconfigurable) execution unit **840**, and a memory **845** (which also may be variable). This fixed and non-reconfigurable "node wrapper" includes an input pipeline register **815**, a data decoder and distributor **820**, a hardware task manager **810**, an address register **825** (optional), a DMA engine **830** (optional), a data aggregator and selector **850**, and an output pipeline register **855**. These components comprising the node wrapper are generally common to all nodes of the ACE **100**, and are comprised of fixed architectures (i.e., application-specific or non-reconfigurable architectures). As a consequence, the node or matrix **800** is a unique blend of fixed, non-reconfigurable node wrapper components, memory, and the reconfigurable components of an adaptive execution unit **840** (which, in turn, are comprised of fixed computational elements and an interconnection network).

Various nodes **800**, in general, will have a distinctive and variably-sized adaptive execution unit **840**, tailored for one or more particular applications or algorithms, and a memory **845**, also implemented in various sizes depending upon the requirements of the adaptive execution unit **840**. An adaptive execution unit **840** for a given node **800** will generally be different than the adaptive execution units **840** of the other nodes **800**. Each adaptive execution unit **840** is reconfigurable in response to configuration information, and is comprised of a plurality of computation units **200**, which are in turn further comprised of a plurality of computational elements **250**, and corresponding interconnect networks **210**, **220** and **240**. Particular adaptive execution units **840** utilized in exemplary embodiments, and the operation of the node **800** and node wrapper, are discussed in greater detail below.

FIG. **11** is a block diagram illustrating a first system embodiment **900**. This first system **900** may be included as part of a larger system or host environment, such as within a computer or communications device, for example. FIG. **11** illustrates a "root" level of such a system **100**, where global resources have connectivity (or otherwise may be found). At this root level, the first system **900** includes one or more adaptive cores **950**, external (off-IC or off-chip) memory **905** (such as SDRAM), host (system) input and output connections, and network (MIN **110**) input and output connections (for additional adaptive cores **950**). Each adaptive core **950** includes (on-IC or on-chip) memory **920**, a "K-node" **925**, and one or more sets of nodes (**150**, **800**) referred to as a node quadrant **930**. The K-node **925** (like the kernel controller **150**A) provides an operating system for the adaptive core **950**. Generally, each node quadrant **930** consists of 16 nodes in a scalable by-four (×4) fractal arrangement. At this root level, each of these (seven) illustrated elements has total connectivity with all other (six) elements. As a consequence, the output of a root-level element is provided to (and may drive) all other root-level inputs, and the input of each root-level input is provided with the outputs of all other root-level elements. Not separately illustrated, at this root-level of the first system **900**, the MIN **110** includes a network with routing (or switching) elements (**935**), such as round-robin, token ring, cross point switches, or other arbiter elements, and a network (or path) for real time data transfer (or transmission) (such as a data network **240**).

FIG. **12** is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary node quadrant **930** with routing elements **935**. From the root-level, the node quadrant **930** has a tree topology and consists of 16 nodes (**150** or **800**), with every four nodes connected as a node "quad" **940** having a routing (or switching) element **935**. The routing elements may be implemented variously, such as through round-robin, token ring, cross point switches, (four-way) switching, (¼, ⅓ or ½) arbitration or other arbiter or arbitration elements, or depending upon the degree of control overhead which may be tolerable, through other routing or switching elements such as multiplexers and demultiplexers. This by-four fractal architecture provides for routing capability, scalability, and expansion, without logical limitation. The node quadrant **930** is coupled within the first system **900** at the root-level, as illustrated. This by-four fractal architecture also provides for significant and complete connectivity, with the worst-case distance between any node being $\log_4$ of "k" hops (or number of nodes) (rather than a linear distance), and provides for avoiding the overhead and capacitance of, for example, a full crossbar switch or busses.

The node quadrant **930** and node quad **940** structures exhibit a fractal self-similarity with regard to scalability, repeating structures, and expansion. The node quadrant **930** and node quad **940** structures also exhibit a fractal self-similarity with regard to a heterogeneity of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes **800**, heterogeneity of the plurality of heterogeneous computation units **200**, and heterogeneity of the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements **250**. With regard to the increasing heterogeneity, the adaptive computing integrated circuit **900** exhibits increasing heterogeneity from a first level of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable matrices, to a second level of the plurality of heterogeneous computation units, and further to a third level of the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements. The plurality of interconnection levels also exhibit a fractal self-similarity with regard to each interconnection level of the plurality of interconnection levels. At increasing depths within the ACE **100**, from the matrix **150** level to the computation unit **200** level and further to the computational element **250** level, the interconnection network is increasingly rich, providing an increasing amount of bandwidth and an increasing number of connections or connectability for a correspondingly increased level of reconfigurability. As a consequence, the matrix-level interconnection network, the computation unit-level interconnection network, and the computational element-level interconnection network also constitute a fractal arrangement.

Referring to FIGS. **11** and **12**, and as explained in greater detail below, the system embodiment **900** utilizes point-to-point service for streaming data and configuration information transfer, using a data packet (or data structure) discussed below. A packet-switched protocol is utilized for this communication, and in an exemplary embodiment the packet length is limited to a single word (of length 51 bits) to obviate any need for data buffering. The routing information within the data packet provides for selecting the particular adaptive core **950**, followed by selecting root-level (or not) of the selected adaptive core **950**, followed by selecting a particular node (**110** or **800**) of the selected adaptive core **950**. This

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selection path may be visualized by following the illustrated connections of FIGS. **11** and **12**. Routing of data packets out of a particular node may be performed similarly, or may be provided more directly, such as by switching or arbitrating within a node **800** or quad **940**, as discussed below.

FIG. **13** is a block diagram illustrating exemplary network interconnections into and out of nodes **800** and node quads **940**. Referring to FIG. **13**, MIN **100** connections into a node, via a routing element **935**, include a common input **945** (provided to all four nodes **800** within a quad **940**), and inputs from the other (three) "peer" nodes within the particular quad **940**. For example, outputs from peer nodes **1**, **2** and **3** are utilized for input into node **0**, and so on. At this level, the routing element **935** may be implemented, for example, as a round-robin, token ring, arbiter, cross point switch, or other four-way switching element. The output from the routing element **935** is provided to a multiplexer **955** (or other switching element) for the corresponding node **800**, along with a feedback input **960** from the corresponding node **800**, and an input for real time data (from data network **240**) (to provide a fast track for input of real time data into nodes **800**). The multiplexer **955** (or other switching element) provides selection (switching or arbitration) of one of 3 inputs, namely, selection of input from the selected peer or common **945**, selection of input from the same node as feedback, or selection of input of real time data, with the output of the multiplexer **955** provided as the network (MIN **110**) input into the corresponding node **800** (via the node's pipeline register **815**).

The node **800** output is provided to the data aggregator and selector ("DAS") **850** within the node **800**, which determines the routing of output information to the node itself (same node feedback), to the network (MIN **110**) (for routing to another node or other system element), or to the data network **240** (for real time data output). When the output information is selected for routing to the MIN **110**, the output from the DAS **850** is provided to the corresponding output routing element **935**, which routes the output information to peer nodes within the quad **940** or to another, subsequent routing element **935** for routing out of the particular quad **940** through a common output **965** (such for routing to another node quad **940**, node quadrant **930**, or adaptive core **950**).

FIG. **14** is a block diagram illustrating an exemplary data structure embodiment. The system embodiment **900** utilizes point-to-point data and configuration information transfer, using a data packet (as an exemplary data structure) **970**, and may be considered as an exemplary form of "silverware", as previously described herein. The exemplary data packet **970** provides for 51 bits per packet, with 8 bits provided for a routing field (**971**), 1 bit for a security field (**972**), 4 bits for a service code field (**973**), 6 bits for an auxiliary field (**974**), and 32 bits (one word length) for data (as a data payload or data field) (**975**). As indicated above, the routing field **971** may be further divided into fields for adaptive core selection (**976**), root selection (**977**), and node selection (**978**). In this selected 51-bit embodiment, up to four adaptive cores may be selected, and up to 32 nodes per adaptive core. As the packet is being routed, the routing bits may be stripped from the packet as they are being used in the routing process. The service code field **973** provides for designations such as point-to-point inter-process communication, acknowledgements for data flow control, "peeks" and "pokes" (as coined terminology referring to reads and writes by the K-node into memory **845**), DMA operations (for memory moves), and random addressing for reads and writes to memory **845**. The auxiliary (AUX) field **974** supports up to 32 streams for any of up to 32 tasks for execution on the adaptive execution unit **840**, as discussed below, and may be considered to be a configuration information payload. The one word length (32-bit) data payload is then provided in the data field **975**. The exemplary data structure **970** (as a data packet) illustrates the interdigitation of data and configuration/control information, as discussed above.

Referring to FIG. **10**, in light of the first system **900** structure and data structure discussed above, the node **800** architecture of the second apparatus embodiment may be described in more detail. The input pipeline register **815** is utilized to receive data and configuration information from the network interconnect **110**. Preferably, the input pipeline register **815** does not permit any data stalls. More particularly, in accordance with the data flow modeling of the present invention, the input pipeline register **815** should accept new data from the interconnection network **110** every clock period; consequently, the data should also be consumed as it is produced. This imposes the requirement that any contention issues among the input pipeline register **815** and other resources within the node **800** be resolved in favor of the input pipeline register **815**, i.e., input data in the input pipeline register has priority in the selection process implemented in various routing (or switching) elements **935**, multiplexers **955**, or other switching or arbitration elements which may be utilized.

The data decoder and distributor **820** interfaces the input pipeline register **815** to the various memories (e.g., **845**) and registers (e.g., **825**) within the node **800**, the hardware task manager **810**, and the DMA engine **830**, based upon the values in the service and auxiliary fields of the 51-bit data structure. The data decoder **820** also decodes security, service, and auxiliary fields of the 51-bit network data structure (of the configuration information or of operand data) to direct the received word to its intended destination within the node **800**.

Conversely, data from the node **800** to the network (MIN **110** or to other nodes) is transferred via the output pipeline register **855**, which holds data from one of the various memories (**845**) or registers (e.g., **825** or registers within the adaptive execution unit **840**) of the node **800**, the adaptive execution unit **840**, the DMA engine **830**, and/or the hardware task manager **810**. Permission to load data into the output pipeline register **855** is granted by the data aggregator and selector (DAS) **850**, which arbitrates or selects between and among any competing demands of the various (four) components of the node **800** (namely, requests from the hardware task manager **810**, the adaptive execution unit **840**, the memory **845**, and the DMA engine **830**). The data aggregator and selector **850** will issue one and only one grant whenever there is one or more requests and the output pipeline register **855** is available. In the selected embodiment, the priority for issuance of such a grant is, first, for K-node peek (read) data; second, for the adaptive execution unit **840** output data; third, for source DMA data; and fourth, for hardware task manager **810** message data. The output pipeline register **855** is available when it is empty or when its contents will be transferred to another register at the end of the current clock cycle.

The DMA engine **830** of the node **800** is an optional component. In general, the DMA engine **830** will follow a five register model, providing a starting address register, an address stride register, a transfer count register, a duty cycle register, and a control register. The control register within the DMA engine **830** utilizes a GO bit, a target node number and/or port number, and a DONE protocol. The K-node **925** writes the registers, sets the GO bit, and receives a DONE message when the data transfer is complete. The DMA engine **830** facilitates block moves from any of the memories of the

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node **800** to another memory, such as an on-chip bulk memory, external SDRAM memory, another node's memory, or a K-node memory for diagnostics and/or operational purposes. The DMA engine **830**, in general, is controlled by the K-node **925**.

The hardware task manager **810** is configured and controlled by the K-node **925** and interfaces to all node components except the DMA engine **830**. The hardware task manager **810** executes on each node **800**, processing a task list and producing a task ready-to-run queue implemented as a first in-first out (FIFO) memory. The hardware task manager **810** has a top level finite state machine that interfaces with a number of subordinate finite state machines that control the individual hardware task manager components. The hardware task manager **810** controls the configuration and reconfiguration of the computational elements **250** within the adaptive execution unit **840** for the execution of any given task by the adaptive execution unit **840**.

The K-node **925** initializes the hardware task manager **810** and provides it with set up information for the tasks needed for a given operating mode, such as operating as a communication processor or an MP3 player. The K-node **925** provides configuration information as a stored (task) program within memory **845** and within local memory within the adaptive execution unit **840**. The K-node **925** initializes the hardware task manager **810** (as a parameter table) with designations of input ports, output ports, routing information, the type of operations (tasks) to be executed (e.g., FFT, DCT), and memory pointers. The K-node **925** also initializes the DMA engine **830**.

The hardware task manager **810** maintains a port translation table and generates addresses for point-to-point data delivery, mapping input port numbers to a current address of where incoming data should be stored in memory **845**. The hardware task manager **810** provides data flow control services, tracking both production and consumption of data, using corresponding production and consumption counters, and thereby determines whether a data buffer is available for a given task. The hardware task manager **810** maintains a state table for tasks and, in the selected embodiment, for up to 32 tasks. The state table includes a GO bit (which is enabled or not enabled (suspended) by the K-node **925**), a state bit for the task (idle, ready-to-run, run (running)), an input port count, and an output port count (for tracking input data and output data). In the selected embodiment, up to 32 tasks may be enabled at a given time. For a given enabled task, if its state is idle, and if sufficient input data (at the input ports) are available and sufficient output ports are available for output data, its state is changed to ready-to-run and queued for running (transferred into a ready-to-run FIFO or queue). Typically, the adaptive execution unit **840** is provided with configuration information (or code) and two data operands (x and y).

From the ready-to-run queue, the task is transferred to an active task queue, the adaptive execution unit **840** is configured for the task (set up), the task is executed by the adaptive execution unit **840**, and output data is provided to the data aggregator and selector **850**. Following this execution, the adaptive execution unit **840** provides an acknowledgement message to the hardware task manager **810**, requesting the next item. The hardware task manager **810** may then direct the adaptive execution unit **840** to continue to process data with the same configuration in place, or to tear down the current configuration, acknowledge completion of the tear down and request the next task from the ready-to-run queue. Once configured for execution of a selected algorithm, new configuration information is not needed from the hardware task manager **810**, and the adaptive execution unit **840** functions effectively like an ASIC, with the limited additional overhead of acknowledgement messaging to the hardware task manager **810**. These operations are described in additional detail below.

A module is a self-contained block of code (for execution by a processor) or a hardware-implemented function (embodied as configured computational elements **250**), which is processed or performed by an execution unit **840**. A task is an instance of a module, and has four states: suspend, idle, ready or run. A task is created by associating the task to a specific module (computational elements **250**) on a specific node **800**; by associating physical memories and logical input buffers, logical output buffers, logical input ports and logical output ports of the module; and by initializing configuration parameters for the task. A task is formed by the K-node writing the control registers in the node **800** where the task is being created (i.e., enabling the configuration of computational elements **250** to perform the task), and by the K-node writing to the control registers in other nodes, if any, that will be producing data for the task and/or consuming data from the task. These registers are memory mapped into the K-node's address space, and "peek and poke" network services are used to read and write these values. A newly created task starts in the "suspend" state.

Once a task is configured, the K-node can issue a "go" command, setting a bit in a control register in the hardware task manager **810**. The action of this command is to move the task from the "suspend" state to the "idle" state. When the task is "idle" and all its input buffers and output buffers are available, the task is added to the "ready-to-run" queue which is implemented as a FIFO; and the task state is changed to "ready/run". Buffers are available to the task when subsequent task execution will not consume more data than is present in its input buffers or will not produce more data than there is capacity in its output buffers.

When the adaptive execution unit **840** is not busy and the FIFO is not empty, the task number for the next task that is ready to execute is removed from the FIFO, and the state of this task is "run". In the "run" state, the task (executed by the configured adaptive execution unit **840**) consumes data from its input buffers and produces data for its output buffers.

The adaptive execution units **840** will vary depending upon the type of node **800** implemented. Various adaptive execution units **840** may be specifically designed and implemented for use in heterogeneous nodes **800**, for example, for a programmable RISC processing node; for a programmable DSP node; for an adaptive or reconfigurable node for a particular domain, such as an arithmetic node; and for an adaptive bit-manipulation unit (RBU). Various adaptive execution units **840** are discussed in greater detail below.

For example, a node **800**, through its execution unit **840**, will perform an entire algorithmic element in a comparatively few clock cycles, such as one or two clock cycles, compared to performing a long sequence of separate operations, loads/stores, memory fetches, and so on, over many hundreds or thousands of clock cycles, to eventually achieve the same end result. Through its computational elements **250**, the execution unit **840** may then be reconfigured to perform another, different algorithmic element. These algorithmic elements are selected from a plurality of algorithmic elements comprising, for example: a radix-2 Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT), a radix-4 Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT), a radix-2 Inverse Fast Fourier Transformation (IFFT), a radix-4 Inverse Fast Fourier Transformation (IFFT), a one-dimensional Discrete Cosine Transformation (DCT), a multi-dimensional Discrete Cosine Transformation (DCT), finite impulse response (FIR) filtering, convolutional encoding, scrambling, puncturing,

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interleaving, modulation mapping, Golay correlation, OVSF code generation, Haddamard Transformation, Turbo Decoding, bit correlation, Griffiths LMS algorithm, variable length encoding, uplink scrambling code generation, downlink scrambling code generation, downlink despreading, uplink spreading, uplink concatenation, Viterbi encoding, Viterbi decoding, cyclic redundancy coding (CRC), complex multiplication, data compression, motion compensation, channel searching, channel acquisition, and multipath correlation.

In an exemplary embodiment, a plurality of different nodes **800** are created, by varying the type and amount of computational elements **250** (forming computational units **200**), and varying the type, amount and location of interconnect (with switching or routing elements) which form the execution unit **840** of each such node **800**. In the exemplary embodiment, two different nodes **800** perform, generally, arithmetic or mathematical algorithms, and are referred to as adaptive (or reconfigurable) arithmetic nodes (AN), as AN1 and AN2. For example, the AN1 node, as a first node **800** of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprises a first selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements to form a first reconfigurable arithmetic node for performance of Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT) and Discrete Cosine Transformation (DCT). Continuing with the example, the AN2 node, as a second node **800** of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprises a second selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements to form a second reconfigurable arithmetic node, the second selection different than the first selection, for performance of at least two of the following algorithmic elements: multi-dimensional Discrete Cosine Transformation (DCT), finite impulse response (FIR) filtering, OVSF code generation, Haddamard Transformation, bit-wise WCDMA Turbo interleaving, WCDMA uplink concatenation, WCDMA uplink repeating, and WCDMA uplink real spreading and gain scaling.

Also in the exemplary embodiment, a plurality of other types of nodes **800** are defined, such as, for example:

A bit manipulation node, as a third node of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprising a third selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements, the third selection different than the first selection, for performance of at least two of the following algorithmic elements: variable and multiple rate convolutional encoding, scrambling code generation, puncturing, interleaving, modulation mapping, complex multiplication, Viterbi algorithm, Turbo encoding, Turbo decoding, correlation, linear feedback shifting, downlink despreading, uplink spreading, CRC encoding, de-puncturing, and de-repeating.

A reconfigurable filter node, as a fourth node of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprising a fourth selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements, the fourth selection different than the first selection, for performance of at least two of the following algorithmic elements: adaptive finite impulse response (FIR) filtering, Griffith's LMS algorithm, and RRC filtering.

A reconfigurable finite state machine node, as a fifth node of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprising a fifth selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements, the fifth selection different than the first selection, for performance of at least two of the following processes: control processing; routing data and control information between and among the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements **250**; directing and scheduling the configuration of the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements for performance of a first algorithmic element and the reconfiguration of the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements for performance of a second algorithmic element; timing and scheduling the configuration and reconfiguration of the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements with corresponding data; controlling power distribution to the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements and the interconnection network; and selecting the first configuration information and the second configuration information from a singular bit stream comprising data commingled with a plurality of configuration information.

A reconfigurable multimedia node, as a sixth node of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprising a sixth selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements, the sixth selection different than the first selection, for performance of at least two of the following algorithmic elements: radix-4 Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT), multi-dimensional radix-2 Discrete Cosine Transformation (DCT); Golay correlation; adaptive finite impulse response (FIR) filtering; Griffith's LMS algorithm; and RRC filtering.

A reconfigurable hybrid node, as a seventh node of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprising a seventh selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements, the seventh selection different than the first selection, for performance of arithmetic functions and bit manipulation functions.

A reconfigurable input and output (I/O) node, as an eighth node of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprising an eighth selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements, the eighth selection different than the first selection, for adaptation of input and output functionality for a plurality of types of I/O standards, the plurality of types of I/O standards comprising standards for at least two of the following: PCI busses, Universal Serial Bus types one and two (USB1 and USB2), and small computer systems interface (SCSI).

A reconfigurable operating system node, as a ninth node of the plurality of heterogeneous and reconfigurable nodes, comprising a ninth selection of computational elements **250** from the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements, the ninth selection different than the first selection, for storing and executing a selected operating system of a plurality of operating systems.

FIG. **15** is a block diagram illustrating a second system embodiment **1000** in accordance with the present invention. The second system embodiment **1000** is comprised of a plurality of variably-sized nodes (or matrices) **1010** (illustrated as nodes **1010**A through **1010**X), with the illustrated size of a given node **1010** also indicative of an amount of computational elements **250** within the node **1010** and an amount of memory included within the node **1010** itself. The nodes **1010** are coupled to an interconnect network **10**, for configuration, reconfiguration, routing, and so on, as discussed above. The second system embodiment **1000** illustrates node **800** and system configurations which are different and more varied than the quadrant **930** and quad **940** configurations discussed above.

As illustrated, the second system embodiment **1000** is designed for use with other circuits within a larger system and, as a consequence, includes configurable input/output (I/O) circuits **1025**, comprised of a plurality of heterogeneous computational elements configurable (through correspond-

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ing interconnect, not separately illustrated) for I/O functionality. The configurable input/output (I/O) circuits **1025** provide connectivity to and communication with a system bus (external), external SDRAM, and provide for real time inputs and outputs. A K-node (KARC) **1050** provides the K-node (KARC) functionality discussed above. The second system embodiment **1000** further includes memory **1030** (as on-chip RAM, with a memory controller), and a memory controller **1035** (for use with the external memory (SDRAM)). Also included in the apparatus **1000** are an aggregator/formatter **1040** and a de-formatter/distributor **1045**, providing functions corresponding to the functions of the data aggregator and selector **850** and data distributor and decoder **820**, respectively, but for the larger system **1000** (rather than within a node **800**).

Referring again to FIG. **10**, as previously mentioned, the node **800** can be tailored, via varying the configuration of the adaptive execution unit **840** and the size of the memory **845**, to perform one or more particular applications or algorithms. By varying the type and amount of computational elements **250** and by varying the type, amount and location of interconnect (**110**, **210**, **220**, **240**), any number of different types of nodes **800** may be created. For example, it may be desirable to configure the adaptive execution unit **840** and the memory **845** in one or more nodes **800** of an ACE **100** to perform optical data processing to produce a processed digital image, such as for use in a digital camera, a video camera, video telephony applications, digital TV, digital cinema, a fax machine, a photocopier, or any number of other devices that create or reproduce an image from visible spectrum (light) signals.

Typical conventional cameras, including both single lens reflex (SLR) and compact camera types, are DSP or microprocessor-based devices. In general, one or more optical sensors, such as a charge-coupled device ("CCD"), detect the amount of light entering the camera. That amount of light varies depending on the object image captured by the lens system of the camera. The resulting data produced by the camera's optical sensor, herein referred to as a detected image of the object, is processed by the microprocessor or DSP and used to adjust camera settings, such as for proper exposure and focus (e.g., lens aperture size, shutter speed, flash charge, autofocus, etc.). In the case of a conventional digital camera, the resulting (analog) data from the CCD is converted to digital data and is processed by the microprocessor or DSP to produce a digital form of the original, detected image, referred to herein as a processed digital image. As previously mentioned, however, microprocessors are comparatively inefficient in the performance of actual algorithmic operations---in this case, algorithms used to adjust camera settings and algorithms to produce a digitized image---and consequently consume significantly more IC area and significantly more power compared to other types of ICs such as the ACE **100**.

FIG. **16**A is a block diagram of an exemplary digital camera **1100** in accordance with the present invention. FIG. **16**B is a perspective view of the exemplary digital camera **1100** in accordance with the present invention. The exemplary digital camera **1100** utilizes the adaptive computing engine (ACE) **100** to process and provide a processed digital image to a variety of outputs, and to adjust any applicable camera settings. The digital camera **1100** includes a focusing means **1102** (e.g., a lens, shutter, aperture, filters, motor, and so on); an optical sensor **1104** of which a CCD is a type; an analog-to-digital ("A/D") converter **1118** (which also may be included within the ACE **100**); the ACE **100** (e.g., one or more nodes **800**); one or more memories such as a memory IC **1110** and a removable memory or storage medium **1112** (e.g., flash, DRAM, SRAM, SDRAM, FeRAM, MRAM, ROM, EPROM and/or E^2PROM); an analog output interface **1108** to interface the digital output of the ACE **100** (a processed digital image or a plurality of processed digital image data packets) with one or more analog output ports, such as a television output port **1116** and a view (viewfinder) screen **1106**; a digital output interface **1120**, in some embodiments, to interface the digital output of the ACE **100** (as a plurality of processed digital image data packets) with one or more digital output ports, such as a computer output port **1114** (or, not separately illustrated, a printer port, a data transmission port, etc.); and an optional optical viewfinder **1118**. The viewfinder screen **1106** of the exemplary digital camera **1110** is preferably a color liquid crystal display (LCD) screen, although other types of suitable screens may be used. In addition, although flash memory is typically used as the removable memory **1112** for storing processed digital images created by the exemplary digital camera **1110**, processed digital images may also be stored on any other form of memory such as other memory ICs, diskettes, CDs, PC or PCMCIA cards (or any other suitable storage medium having physical size, weight, aspect, and other properties suitable for the design of the particular imaging device, such as suitable for the portability of a hand-held camera, and so on).

Instead of capturing images on film, which undergoes a chemical change when exposed to light, the digital camera **1100** uses an optical sensor **1104** having a light sensitive array (organized or typically referred to as pixels) which creates an electrical signal of some kind for each pixel or element, that is subsequently converted to digital form. Light transmitted or reflected from an object is projected or focused (by focusing means **1102**), as an object image, onto the optical sensor (**1104**, **1204**). Optical sensing in the digital camera **1100** typically maybe performed by a charge-coupled device (CCD), from the object image projected onto the optical sensor **1104**, to produce a detected image. For example, when embodied as a CCD, the optical sensor **1104** is a semiconductor material in which charge is transferred through storage areas. The charge (i.e., electrical signals) output from the optical sensor **1104** is then provided to the A/D converter **1108**. The A/D converter **1118** samples and converts the electric signals into a digital form (i.e., provides a digital value corresponding to the level of charge on each optical sensor element), providing digital image information representing the detected image (which was detected from the object image projected onto the optical sensor **1104** by the focusing means **1102**). Depending upon the selected embodiment, this digital image information from A/D converter **1118** may also be provided (to a node **800**) as a plurality of digital image information data packets, such as digital image information data packets having a data structure illustrated in FIG. **14**.

The digital image information (or plurality of digital image information data packets) is provided to the ACE **100** where it is processed to produce a processed digital image (or, equivalently, a plurality of processed digital image data packets). From the ACE **100**, the processed digital image (or the plurality of processed digital image data packets) is provided to the various outputs, for example: to the memory **1110**; to the removable (or replaceable) memory **1112** (possibly via the a digital output interface **1120**) for long term storage or for use to print a digital photograph from the processed digital image; to the digital output interface **1120** (optionally); to various digital ports (such as computer port **1114** or a printer port, not separately illustrated); and to the analog output interface **1108**, for conversion to an analog form suitable for

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display on the either the view (viewfinder) screen **1106** or a television screen (via an analog output port such as the television output port **1116**).

As indicated above, data is generally transferred on the MIN **110** in the form of data packets, such as data packets having the structure illustrated in FIG. **14**. As a consequence, depending upon the selected embodiment, the digital image information from the A/D converter **1118** may have the form of a plurality of digital image information data packets, which are provided to the input pipeline register **815** of a node **800**.

Also depending on the selected embodiment, such as when a plurality of nodes **800** are utilized to form the ACE **100**, the various nodes **800** provide output data packets via output pipeline register **855**. For digital imaging, these output data packets have a data payload of a plurality of data words comprising the processed digital image, i.e., the output data packets are a plurality of processed digital image data packets. A digital output interface (**1120** or **1222** in FIG. **17**) may then assemble the data words of the plurality of processed digital image data packets to form the overall or entire processed digital image (which then may be printed, copied, stored, converted to an analog form, and so on). In other embodiments, the various digital imaging applications may be able to directly utilize the plurality of processed digital image data packets and, if so, use of such a digital output interface to assemble a processed digital image from the plurality of processed digital image data packets is not required in the apparatus **1100**. Similarly, for an analog output, an analog output interface **1108** that converts the processed digital image to an analog form (such as digital-to-analog ("D/A") conversion) may similarly provide such assembly of a processed digital image from the data word payloads of the plurality of processed digital image data packets (then followed by conversion to an analog form).

Designs of an optical sensor **1104** (such as a CCD) used in the exemplary digital camera **1100** (or the optical sensor **1204**, discussed below) may vary from application to application; for purposes of the present invention, the optical sensor need only convert light signals projected or reflected from an object (generally through focusing means **1102**) to an electrical form (such as a stored charge or voltage) which may be processed, and all such optical sensors are within the scope of the present invention. Optical sensors **1104**, **1204** will typically be solid state IC devices, such as a CCD, a charge injection device ("CID"), optical CMOS (passive or active pixel sensors), optical bipolar junction transistors ("BJTs"), photogate or photodiode arrays, any of which may be linear or full frame arrays, have any type of charge or other information readout capability, and may include dark pixels and anti-bloom drains, microlenses, color filter arrays, and so on. In addition, other types of optical sensors utilizing different detector arrays are used in a variety of optical sensor applications. For example, an optical sensor configured to convert brightness variations, captured from a page of text or graphics, into electrical signals may be utilized to perform xerography (i.e., dry copying) commonly associated with photocopiers, scanners and fax machines, discussed in greater detail below. Use of optical sensors in this context enables photoconductivity (i.e., certain substances that are resistant to the passage of electric current become more conductive when exposed to light) to be applied to textual and graphic material to generate the multiple copies of textual and graphic material.

FIG. **17** is a block diagram of an exemplary facsimile, scanner, or photocopier machine **1200** in accordance with the present invention. The exemplary facsimile/scanner/photocopier machine **1200** utilizes the adaptive computing engine (ACE) **100** (e.g., one or more nodes **800**) to process digital image information to produce a processed digital image. Various embodiments also convert the processed digital image for display on a tangible medium, such as by printing or dry copying onto paper. The exemplary facsimile/scanner/photocopier machine **1200** generally includes a light source **1202**; an optical sensor **1204**; an A/D converter **1216** (which also may be included within the ACE **100**); an ACE **100** (e.g., one or more nodes **800**); a digital output interface (or port) **1222** (depending upon the selected embodiment); a printer (or printing means) **1210** such as a laser, inkjet or other printer (including a laser, inkjet or other print head, and depending upon the selected embodiment, other printing mechanisms such as a drum-charging electrode, a revolving drum, and so on); a dry copier **1220** (such as xerography or other dry copying mechanisms or means); and a data transmitter **1206** such as an analog, digital, DSL, or cable modem (which also may include an ACE **100**) (for faxing or other data transmission). In selected embodiments, the apparatus **1200** may also include focusing mechanisms, as described above.

The various printing mechanisms **1210** or dry copier (xerography) mechanisms **1220** may be implemented as known or as becomes known in the art, and generally include components for storing and feeding paper or other media, collating, user interfacing, and physical image production (e.g., a print head (laser, inkjet), toner cartridges, drum, charging electrode, and so on). The data transmission mechanism **1206** may also include a wireless link (such as a radio frequency (RF) link), a wireline or other bus link, an Ethernet link, or a public network link such as the Internet. The exemplary facsimile/scanner/photocopier machine **1200** may also be coupled to a computer **1230**, such as for scanning. It should be noted that there are a wide variety of possible implementations of the exemplary facsimile/scanner/photocopier machine **1200** which are within the scope of the present invention. For these various embodiments, the present invention requires an optical sensor (**1104** or **1204**) and an ACE **100** (e.g., one or more nodes **800**); these components may then be included within one or more printers **1210**, dry copiers (or, equivalently, xerography means) **1220**, or data transmitters **1206**, to form the selected embodiment.

The exemplary facsimile/scanner/photocopier machine **1200** operates to capture an image (and transmit or generate one or more copies of textual or graphic material): the optical sensor **1204** receives (as an object image) light reflected from an object (shown here as a large "P"), using the light source **1202**, and registers light and dark areas of the object image as varying voltages (or charges) (to form a detected image). Much like the exemplary digital camera **1100** described in FIG. **16**, the voltage (or charge) variations correlate to the light and dark areas captured by an array of light sensitive pixels of the optical sensor **1204**, as the detected image. The optical sensor **1204** may be any type of optical sensor as previously discussed with reference to optical sensor **1104**. An analog electrical signal output from the optical sensor **1204** is composed of a series of electrical voltages (or charges) representing the brightness variations of the detected image (and corresponding to the brightness variations of the object image). The analog electrical signal is converted to a stream of digital bits by an A/D converter **1216**, or a plurality of digital image information data packets, as previously discussed. The stream of digital bits, also referred to herein as the digital image information (or, equivalently, the plurality of digital image information data packets) is then received and processed by the ACE **100** to produce a processed digital image or a plurality of processed digital image data packets (corresponding to the object image projected or reflected onto

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the optical sensor **1204**) suitable for use in faxing, display as a scanned image, for printing or dry copying as a photocopy. As will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art, any of the optical sensor **1204**, the ACE **100** or the A/D converter **1216** may be co-located or integrated on the same semiconductor (IC) as a system on a chip ("SOC") embodiment or on several ICs coupled on a circuit board (e.g., a printed circuit board).

Upon completion of processing by the ACE **100**, the processed digital image (from either apparatus **1100** or **1200**) may be physically embodied on a tangible medium or otherwise displayed through a wide variety of mechanisms, including printed via printer **1210** and dry copied via dry (xerography) copier **1220**, or transmitted via the data transmission mechanism **1206** to any number of locations for use in any number of applications. For example, the processed digital image may be transmitted to a receiving end of a remote facsimile machine, to a printer, to a wireless cell phone, to a computer for display on a computer screen, or to a network (such as the Internet). Also for example, the data transmission mechanism **1206** may include one or more modems **1304**, a radio frequency (RF) link **1306**, a wired bus link **1308**, an Ethernet link **1310**, or a public network link **1312** such as the Internet. A receiving device may include one or more computers **1314** that may be a laptop, a desktop, or a handheld computer, a wireless cell phone **1316**, a printer **1318**, or a receiving facsimile machine **1320**, or any other device that displays or prints the final copy (from the processed digital image) corresponding to the object image (and, presumably, the object).

For example, referring again to FIG. **17**, if the receiving device is the receiving facsimile machine, a laser beam turns on and off in response to the incoming stream of digital bits (representing the processed digital image), discharging areas of a revolving drum, previously charged by the drum-charging electrode, that correspond to light areas of the image. A pixilated final copy of the original object image is reproduce on a medium, for example, paper, output at the receiving end. It will be apparent to those of skill in the art that any suitable type of printing or xerography (dry copying) means may be utilized, and all are within the scope of the present invention.

In general, in accordance with the present invention, an optical sensor for detecting an object image, such as capturing an object image of a scene or textual or graphic material, may be used in conjunction with an ACE **100** for generating a processed digital image in any digital imaging application, including still and moving image photography, printing, scanning, copying, television, video, video telephony, digital TV, digital cinema, and so on. As indicated above, although the analog-to-digital converters **1118** and **1216** are illustrated separately, it is contemplated that the conversion of the optical sensor output (the detected image) to digital image information may be performed by an A/D converter co-located or integrated with the ACE **100** on the same IC or SOC. In addition, depending upon the type of optical sensor utilized, the optical sensor may also be co-located or integrated on the same IC with the ACE **100** and/or A/D converter. For example, the various nodes **800** comprising an ACE **100** may be co-located or integrated with an optical sensor and A/D converter at the root level (illustrated in FIG. **11**), with the digital image information (output from the A/D converter) embodied in the form of data packets transmitted on the MIN **110**. In other embodiments, the optical sensor (potentially with the A/D converter) may be or considered to be one or more fixed function nodes **800** (e.g., comprised of a plurality of optical sensing and A/D converting computational elements **250**) which are used in conjunction with one or more reconfigurable nodes **800** that perform digital image processing. (As a fixed function optical node, however, the optical sensor may not require many of the components of the node wrapper discussed above.) It is also contemplated that optical sensors may be developed which directly provide a quantized, digital readout, which are also within the scope of the present invention.

In these various integrated (SOC) or non-integrated embodiments, it is implicit herein that the optical sensor may produce either an analog output (when embodied solely as a CCD or optical CMOS, for example) or a digital output (when embodied in combination as a CCD or optical CMOS integrated with A/D conversion functionality). As a consequence, as used herein, the optical sensor may be considered more generally to convert an object image (such as from the focusing means or reflected from an object) to "image information" suitable for further processing by a configured and reconfigured plurality of computational elements; in the event the image information is analog, then intervening A/D conversion is implicit (transforming an analog detected image into digital image information). In addition, to provide the processed digital image suitable for one or more imaging applications, such as digital photography, copying or printing, using the image information (or digital image information), the plurality of computational elements are configured for a first imaging function or algorithm, and reconfigured for performance of a second imaging function or algorithm, with the first imaging function or algorithm being different than the second imaging function or algorithm.

Image sensing, or photo-detection, performed by the optical sensor **1104**, **1204** is generally accomplished by an array of millions of light-sensitive cells commonly referred to as pixels or picture elements ("pels") that convert light into varying analog electrical signals represented as a series of electrical charges (or voltages). Each light-sensitive cell of the array of millions detects an amount of light from (or corresponding to) an object image. In color applications, the light-sensitive cell will detect an amount of light corresponding to a particular color (or frequency band) as well. As a result, the analog electrical signals produced by the optical sensor **1104**, **1204** correspond to the varying amount of light that strikes the array of light-sensitive cells. After detecting the light, the optical sensor **1104**, **1204** transfers the electrical charges in a sequential fashion to an output amplifier of the optical sensor (discussed below), which is subsequently converted to a digital image information stream (or a plurality of digital image information data packets) and ultimately processed by the ACE **100**.

The central building block of the optical sensor **1104**, **1204** is generally a metal insulator semiconductor material. In one embodiment, the optical sensor **1104**, **1204** utilizes a complementary metal-oxide semiconductor (CMOS) IC that may be configured to include, for example, either an array of photodiodes or an array of photogates. When light falls on the light sensitive pixels of the optical sensor **1104**, **1204**, energy (in the form of photons) is absorbed which then releases or provides excited electrons in the semiconductive silicon layer. The more intense the light on a pixel, the more electrons are released and the bigger the resulting charge for that pixel.

The charges (or voltages) from each pixel are then read out (or moved) from the array into corresponding registers, depending upon the type of array (such as linear or full frame), such as reading out columns, transferring charge from one gate to the next per clock cycle, and into a horizontal serial readout row register, for example. This is accomplished by manipulating gate voltages of the array (columns and rows of CMOS gates) in a systematic manner, causing the electrons

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to be transferred from one gate to the next, in a sequential fashion. At the end of each column of CMOS gates, the horizontal rows of pixels are collected one row at a time by the serial readout row register and then transported to an output amplifier (to provide an amplified output) for subsequent conversion to digital information (e.g., by an A/D converter **1118**, **1216**). This process creates a serial data stream, digital image information, that represents a two dimensional image associated with the image being photographed, copied or transmitted. In the various embodiments, this digital image information also may be provided in data packets, as a plurality of digital image information data packets, for transmission on the MIN **110** to various nodes **800**, such as in the data payload portion of the exemplary data structure illustrated in FIG. **14**.

For example, for a CCD having a 3×3 array of image pixels with three MOS gates per image pixel, an electronic image is created on the nine pixels when the CCD is illuminated. Next, each of the columns of the 3×3 array are shifted down in parallel, one gate at a time, one clock pulse at a time. After reaching the serial readout row register, the pixels are shifted out to the output amplifier, one row at a time. The entire serial row is clocked out before the next row of pixel contents (i.e., charges) is transferred into the serial readout row register. This process continues until charge transfer of all of the image pixels to the output amplifier is complete.

Although the optical sensor described above is a simple pixel array of columns and rows, the optical sensor **1104**, **1204** may also be configured as a linear one-line array, a full frame transfer array, a frame transfer array (i.e., two identical arrays; one for image pixels, one for storage), or a interline transfer array (i.e., photodiodes separated by vertical transfer registers). Further, optical sensors **1104**, **1204** can be fabricated using any suitable technology with any suitable transistor structure such as, for example, a neuron-bipolar junction transistor (vBJT) structure or a silicon on sapphire CMOS structure.

For ease of discussion, the exemplary digital camera **1100** of FIGS. **16**A and **16**B will be used to illustrate a number of ACE **100** configurations that can be used in conjunction with optical sensors to produce a processed digital image, with corresponding operation occurring in the exemplary facsimile, scanner, or photocopier machine **1200**. As will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art, however, other devices that utilize optical sensors in their operation may be similarly configured with an ACE **100**, such as a facsimile device, copier, scanner, projector, video camera, etc.

Referring again to operation of the exemplary digital camera **1100** of FIGS. **16**A and **16**B, upon completion of analog processing (the charge read-out and amplification discussed above), the detected image (as the optical sensor **1104** output) is converted into digital image information by the analog-to-digital converter **1118**. The analog-to-digital converter **1118** samples and quantizes the optical sensor output to convert the analog electrical signal into digital image information (i.e., a series of high and low voltages, or logic 1's and 0's, which may be a serial bit stream or one or more digital image information data packets). The digital image information is then processed by the ACE **100** (discussed below) to produce a processed digital image (or, equivalently, a plurality of processed digital image data packets) suitable for use in any number of applications, for example, in a digital camera application, a copying application, a printing application, a faxing or other data transmission application, and so on, where it may be displayed or stored on a tangible medium, such as displayed on a computer screen, displayed on a television screen, saved to the memory **1112**, stored on a CD or disk, viewed on the viewfinder screen **1106**, printed as a photograph by a laser or inkjet printer, dry copied onto paper, or transmitted over a wireline or wireless link, and so on. As mentioned above, when the processed digital image is provided as a plurality of processed digital image data packets, the packets may be assembled to form the processed digital image for use in any of these applications, such as through a digital output interface, or directly by the application.

The processed digital image may also be used in multi-frame applications (e.g., moving image photography, a video cassette recorder (VCR)), multichannel applications (e.g., positron emission tomography (PET) scans), or it may be transmitted to a remote receiver for remote display via a facsimile machine, a computer, etc.

Referring again to FIGS. **16**A and **16**B, if provided in the exemplary digital camera **1100**, an autofocus system also utilizes the optical sensor **1104** and the ACE **100** to cause a small motor (not separately illustrated) to adjust or move the focusing means **1102** to automatically provide a focused object image as input to the optical sensor **1104**. Utilizing digital image information provided by the A/D converter **1118** (and the optical sensor **1104**), the ACE **100** first detects "edge points" (i.e., areas with a large change in contrast, such as where a white shirt meets a black background). At the edge points, one pixel will have one value (e.g., representing black) while an adjacent pixel will have a very different value (e.g., representing white). Based on the values associated with the detected edge points, the ACE **100** causes the motor to adjust the focusing means **1104** so that the difference between the values at the edges is maximized. In other words, an incorrect adjustment to the focusing means **1104** (e.g., adjusting in from the image rather than out towards the image) by the ACE **100**, would yield a smaller difference between the values of the adjacent pixels.

In addition, if provided in the exemplary digital camera **1100** of FIGS. **16**A and **16**B (or any other apparatus having an optical sensor and an ACE **100**), an optical image stabilizer system utilizes the ACE **100** coupled to a motion sensor (not separately illustrated) to cause a lens actuator (not separately illustrated) to move the lens **1104** up or down, or from side-to-side, to compensate for camera movements.

In general, because of imperfections in the image capturing or detection process, without additional processing, the recorded image usually represents a distorted or degraded version of the original image or object. As a consequence, image enhancement is generally needed in the imaging process as an image is converted from one form to another, from acquisition of the object image to generation of the processed digital image, as many types of distortions, artifacts, noise or noise-like degradations can be introduced into the image (e.g., as the image is acquired, copied, scanned, digitized, transmitted, displayed, printed, or compressed). For instance, various distortions are introduced in image detection, and when the detected image (as an analog signal) is converted by the A/D converter **1118**, the resulting digital signal generally contains quantization distortion or noise. Similarly, when an image is transmitted through a communication channel, the received image contains channel noise, and so on. Thus, as used herein, the term "image enhancement" refers to one or more processes, functions or algorithms applied to the recorded image (such as to the detected image or the digital image information) which enhances or highlights some aspect of the information contained in the image, or which minimizes irregularities (e.g., blurring), distortions or noise due to errors in signal acquisition that may have corrupted the image.

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Because the various nodes **800** can be tailored to perform one or more selected algorithms, the ACE **100** may be configured to perform many of the image detection, restoration and enhancement functions or operations useful in digital imaging applications such as in cameras, facsimile machines, copier machines, etc. The ACE **100** may be configured to perform a number of image restoration algorithms (e.g., deblurring, debugging) including, for example: (1) linear filtering utilizing low pass filters to suppress high frequency noise; (2) non-linear filtering utilizing morphologic and median filters to reduce distortion in (de-noise) the image; and (3) wavelet-based distortion reduction utilizing multirate filter banks. In wavelet-based distortion reduction, a discrete wavelet transform ("DWT") compacts image energy into a small number of DWT coefficients having large amplitudes, spreads the energy of the noise over a large number of DWT coefficients having small amplitudes, and removes the noise and other distortions via an adjustable threshold filter.

For instance, underexposure and low-light conditions in photography lead to images with "grain noise", which, together with the image signal itself, are captured during the digitization process. The grain noise is generally present because of some physical randomness of image acquisition systems using optical sensors **1104**. Linear filtering image enhancement may be used to remove such distortions and other noise, as discrete-space image signals can be expressed as a sum of weighted, shifted impulses with each weighted impulse comprising one of the pixels of the image. The nodes **800** of the ACE **100** can be configured to filter out the noise from the impulses to yield a less distorted image.

Also for example, one or more of the nodes **800** can be configured to perform low pass filtering to reject the high frequency content of white noise or broadband noise responsible for image corruption. The nodes **800** may also be configured to provide ideal low-pass filtering or Gaussian filtering for the digitized image. Further, due to temporal nature of the ACE **100**, the filtering capability of the ACE **100** can be virtually "real-time" optimized, depending on the image conditions, to perform filtering and minimize image content degradation.

In another example, one or more of the nodes **800** may be configured to provide weighted median ("WM") filters for non-linear filtering, or smoothing, of the digitized image to improve the appearance of the image. In general, rather than using linear combinations of pixel values within a local window, WM filters use the local weighted median. By selecting an appropriate configuration for the computational elements **250** and configuring the computational units **200** and interconnect to achieve a median filter configuration, the ACE **100** can provide impulse noise removal (e.g., by a center WM filter where not all samples are equally weighted), image enlargement and zooming with little edge degradation, and image analysis including execution of edge-detection algorithms. Further, center weighted median smoothing may be provided by the ACE **100** (configured with weighted median filters) which allows for emphasizing and deemphasizing specific input samples. The center sample of a window is emphasized by tuning the center weight, while keeping the weighted values of all other samples at unity. This concept can be extended to include color images via the inclusion of vector weighted median filters in the ACE **100**.

In yet another example, one or more of the nodes **800** may be configured to provide morphological filters for image detection and enhancement, otherwise known as morphological image processing. Morphological image detection and enhancement refers to a broad collection of nonlinear filters (e.g., morphological filters), design methodologies, and algorithms to enhance the visibility and perceptibility of the various regions into which an image can be partitioned. Essentially, the mathematical morphology for image analysis aims to quantitatively describe the geometrical structure of image objects. For example, morphological filters (i.e., morphological signal transformation) which are more suitable than linear filter for shape analysis, play a major role for geometry-based enhancement and detection. Morphological filters are also well suited for non-Gaussian noise suppression.

In some cases, the images acquired by the optical sensor **1104** are used in multichannel or multiframe applications where, after digital processing, the multiple frames or channels are assembled, or recovered, to form a restored image. Accordingly, the nodes **800** of the ACE **100** may be configured to perform multichannel image recovery algorithms for multichannel image applications (i.e., applications where a there is a collection of images that are not identical but exhibit strong between-channel correlations). Such image recovery algorithms compute an image from observed data that alone does not uniquely define the desired image. Multichannel image recovery algorithms may include algorithms for image distortion reduction (de-noising), image deblurring, decoding of compressed images, and medical image reconstruction. For example, implicit multichannel recovery can be performed by the ACE **100** to provide multichannel reconstruction of medical image sequences obtained using positron emission tomography (PET).

Similarly, the nodes **800** of the ACE **100** may be configured to perform multiframe image restoration algorithms to improve imagery acquired in the presence of varying degradations due to, for example, undersampling image data acquired by the optical sensor **1104**. Undersampling may result from a tradeoff between the field of view and the pixel size, as the pixel size for the CCD **1104** becomes larger as the field of view increases. A microscanning algorithm, where a sequence of undersampled image frames is processed to restore image resolution, is one type of multiframe image restoration algorithm that may be performed by the ACE **100** to overcome possible undersampling problems.

Other algorithms that may be provided or performed by the ACE **100** include, without limitation, iterative image restoration algorithms, motion detection and estimation algorithms for recorded images sequences (e.g., video, moving images captured with a still digital camera), video enhancement and restoration algorithms, 3D reconstruction, and image sequence stabilization algorithms. As will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art, the type or kind of image processing for which the ACE **100** may be configured is virtually limitless, and all such image processing algorithms for performance by one or more nodes **800** of the ACE **100** are within the scope of the present invention.

In summary, the present invention provides a digital imaging apparatus which may be embodied, for example, as a digital camera, a scanner, a printer, a dry copier, or otherwise utilized in digital imaging applications. The digital imaging apparatus of the invention includes an optical sensor, an analog-to-digital converter, a plurality of computational elements, and an interconnection network. The optical sensor is capable of converting an object image into a detected image. The analog-to-digital converter is coupled to the optical sensor and is capable of converting the detected image to digital image information. The plurality of computational elements includes a first computational element having a first fixed architecture and a second computational element having a second fixed architecture, with the first fixed architecture being different than the second fixed architecture. The interconnection network is coupled to the plurality of computa-

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tional elements and to the analog-to-digital converter, and is capable of providing a processed digital image from the digital image information by configuring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a first imaging function of a plurality of imaging functions in response to first configuration information, and by reconfiguring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a second imaging function of the plurality of imaging functions in response to second configuration information, with the first imaging function being different than the second imaging function.

The digital imaging apparatus may also include focusing means capable of providing the object image to the optical sensor, such as a focusing assembly having a lens, a shutter, an aperture, and a focusing motor. The optical sensor is at least one of a plurality of optical sensors, such as a charge coupled device (CCD), a charge injection device (CID), an optical complementary metal oxide silicon (CMOS) array, an optical bipolar junction transistor (BJT) array, a photogate array, or a photodiode array.

The digital imaging apparatus, in various embodiments, may also include an analog output interface coupled to the interconnection network, the analog output interface capable of converting the processed digital image to an analog form; a viewfinder screen coupled to the analog output interface, the viewfinder screen capable of visually displaying the analog form of the processed digital image; and an analog output port coupled to the analog output interface, the analog output port capable of outputting the analog form of the processed digital image, such as for connection to a television or other video display. The digital imaging apparatus may also include a digital output port coupled to the interconnection network, the digital output port capable of outputting the processed digital image, such as for connection to a computer or a data transmission device.

The processed digital image may also be provided as a plurality of processed digital image data packets. In this embodiment, the digital imaging apparatus may also include a digital output interface coupled to the interconnection network, with the digital output interface capable of selecting a plurality of processed digital image data words from the plurality of processed digital image data packets and assembling the plurality of processed digital image data words to form the processed digital image.

The digital imaging apparatus also may be included within or coupled to, for example: a printer capable of printing the processed digital image on a tangible medium; a dry copier capable of transferring the processed digital image to a tangible medium; a data transmitter capable of transmitting the processed digital image to a remote location; a scanner capable of transferring the processed digital image to a storage medium, to a computer, and so on.

In the various embodiments, the plurality of imaging functions may include one or more of the following functions: linear filtering; nonlinear filtering; morphological filtering; median filtering; local weighted median filtering; center weighted median filtering; vector weighted median filtering; multichannel image recovery; multiframe image restoration; iterative image restoration; motion detection; motion estimation; low pass filtering; multirate filtering; wavelet-based multirate filtering; autofocusing; contrast enhancement; blur removal.

Also in the various embodiments, the first fixed architecture and the second fixed architecture of the a plurality of computational elements may be selected from a plurality of specific architectures, such as those architectures having the following corresponding functions: linear filtering, non-linear filtering, memory, addition, multiplication, complex multiplication, subtraction, synchronization, queuing, over sampling, under sampling, adaptation, configuration, reconfiguration, control, input, output, and field programmability.

Various types of memory may be included within the digital imaging apparatus. For example, a first memory may be couplable to the interconnection network and capable of storing the processed digital image, and this first memory may be a selectively removable flash memory. A second memory may also be included, coupled to the interconnection network, and be capable of storing the first configuration information and the second configuration information, such as synchronous dynamic random access memory (SDRAM).

Also in summary, in another embodiment, the digital imaging apparatus includes an optical sensor, an analog-to-digital converter, an input pipeline register, a first memory, a hardware task manager, a data distributor, an adaptive execution unit, a data selector, and an output pipeline register. The optical sensor is also capable of converting an object image into a detected image. The analog-to-digital converter is coupled to the optical sensor and is capable of converting the detected image to a plurality of digital image information data packets. The input pipeline register is coupled to the analog-to-digital converter and is capable of receiving the plurality of digital image information data packets, while the first memory is capable of storing the plurality of digital image information data packets. The hardware task manager is capable of processing a plurality of imaging tasks and determining that a first imaging task from the plurality of imaging tasks is capable of being performed and that a second imaging task from the plurality of imaging tasks is capable of being performed, with the first imaging task being different than the second imaging task. The data distributor is coupled to the input pipeline register, to the first memory, and to the hardware task manager, and is capable of distributing the plurality of digital image information data packets to the first memory. The adaptive execution unit is coupled to the hardware task manager and to the first memory, and is capable of configuring to perform the first imaging task and capable of performing the first imaging task using the plurality of digital image information data packets, the adaptive execution unit further capable of reconfiguring to perform the second imaging task and capable of performing the second imaging task, and the adaptive execution unit further capable of generating a corresponding plurality of processed digital image data packets from the performance of the first imaging task and the second imaging task. The data selector is coupled to the hardware task manager, to the adaptive execution unit and to the first memory, and is capable of determining routing for the corresponding plurality of processed digital image data packets. The output pipeline register is coupled to the data selector, and is capable of receiving the corresponding plurality of processed digital image data packets.

In this embodiment, the adaptive execution unit includes a plurality of computational elements and a plurality of switching elements coupled to the plurality of computational elements. In the plurality of computational elements, a first computational element has a first fixed architecture and a second computational element has a second fixed architecture, with the first fixed architecture being different from the second fixed architecture. The plurality of switching elements are capable of configuring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a first imaging function of a plurality of imaging functions in response to first configuration information, and are further capable of reconfiguring the plurality of computational elements for performance of a second imaging function of the plurality of imaging functions

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in response to second configuration information, with the first imaging function being different than the second imaging function.

Numerous advantages of the present invention may be readily apparent to those of skill in the art. First, the reconfigurability of the computational elements to perform a plurality of different imaging or optical functions and algorithms readily allows for ready implementation of any new or changed algorithms. Second, once a particular configuration is in place for the performance of an imaging optical algorithm, the various nodes have a very high efficiency and corresponding low latency, comparable to that of an ASIC, while maintaining flexibility of implementation. In addition, the present invention is also capable of implementations which provide considerable savings of IC area and power consumption.

From the foregoing, it will be observed that numerous variations and modifications may be effected without departing from the spirit and scope of the novel concept of the invention. It is to be understood that no limitation with respect to the specific methods and apparatus illustrated herein is intended or should be inferred. It is, of course, intended to cover by the appended claims all such modifications as fall within the scope of the claims.

It is claimed:

1. A digital imaging apparatus, comprising:

an optical sensor converting an object image into a detected image;

an analog-to-digital converter coupled to the optical sensor, the analog-to-digital converter converting the detected image to digital image information;

a plurality of heterogeneous computational units processing the digital image information to produce a processed digital image, the plurality of heterogeneous computational units including a first computational unit having a first architecture of a first plurality of computational elements each including algorithmic logic for simple computations, a data input and a data output, and a second computational unit having a second digital signal processing architecture of a second plurality of computational elements each including algorithmic logic for digital signal processing, a data input and a data output; and

an interconnection network coupled to the plurality of heterogeneous computational units and to the analog-to-digital converter, the interconnection network providing the digital image information to the plurality of heterogeneous computational units, configuring the plurality of heterogeneous computational units for performance of a first imaging function on the digital imaging information in response to configuration information that configures interconnections between at least the first plurality of computational elements and simultaneously in response to different configuration information to configure interconnections between the second plurality of computational elements, and reconfiguring the plurality of heterogeneous computational units for performance of a second imaging function on the digital image information in response to configuration information that reconfigures the interconnections between at least the first plurality of computational elements, the first imaging function being different than the second imaging function.

2. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, further comprising: focusing means providing the object image to the optical sensor.

3. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **2**, wherein the focusing means comprises a focusing assembly, the focusing assembly further comprising: a lens; a shutter; an aperture; and a focusing motor.

4. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, wherein the optical sensor is at least one of a charge coupled device (CCD), a charge injection device (CID), an optical complementary metal oxide silicon (CMOS) array, an optical bipolar junction transistor (BJT) array, a photogate array, or a photodiode array.

5. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, further comprising:

an analog output interface coupled to the interconnection network, the analog output interface converting the processed digital image to an analog form; and

a viewfinder screen coupled to the analog output interface, the viewfinder screen visually displaying the analog form of the processed digital image.

6. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, further comprising:

an analog output interface coupled to the interconnection network, the analog output interface converting the processed digital image to an analog form; and

an analog output port coupled to the analog output interface, the analog output port outputting the analog form of the processed digital image.

7. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, further comprising: a first memory couplable to the interconnection network, the first memory storing the processed digital image.

8. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **7**, wherein the first memory is selectively removable flash memory.

9. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **7**, further comprising: a second memory coupled to the interconnection network, the second memory storing the first configuration information and the second configuration information.

10. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **9**, wherein the second memory is synchronous dynamic random access memory (SDRAM).

11. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **9**, wherein the first memory and the second memory are at least one of flash memory, DRAM, SRAM, SDRAM, FeRAM, MRAM, ROM, EPROM and E^2PROM.

12. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, further comprising: a digital output port coupled to the interconnection network, the digital output port outputting the processed digital image.

13. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, wherein the processed digital image is provided as a plurality of processed digital image data packets.

14. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **13**, further comprising:

a digital output interface coupled to the interconnection network, the digital output interface selecting a plurality of processed digital image data words from the plurality of processed digital image data packets and assembling the plurality of processed digital image data words to form the processed digital image.

15. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, wherein the digital image information is provided as a plurality of digital image information data packets.

16. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, further comprising: a light source providing light for reflection from an object to form the object image.

17. The digital imaging apparatus of claim **1**, further comprising: a printer coupled to the interconnection network, the printer printing the processed digital image on a tangible medium.

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18. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 1, further comprising: a dry copier coupled to the interconnection network, the dry copier transferring the processed digital image to a tangible medium.

19. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 1, further comprising: a data transmitter coupled to the interconnection network, the data transmitter transmitting the processed digital image to a remote location.

20. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 19, wherein the data transmitter is at least one of an analog (voice band) modem; a digital modem; a digital subscriber line modem; and a cable modem.

21. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 1, wherein the plurality of imaging functions comprises at least two of linear filtering; nonlinear filtering; morphological filtering; median filtering; local weighted median filtering; center weighted median filtering; vector weighted median filtering; multichannel image recovery; multiframe image restoration; iterative image restoration; motion detection; motion estimation; low pass filtering; multirate filtering; wavelet-based multirate filtering; autofocusing; contrast enhancement; and blur removal.

22. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 1, wherein the algorithmic logic of the first and second plurality of computational elements each perform different functions including at least two of linear filtering, non-linear filtering, memory, addition, multiplication, complex multiplication, subtraction, synchronization, queuing, over sampling, under sampling, adaptation, configuration, reconfiguration, control, input, output, and field programmability.

23. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 1, wherein the detected image comprises an electrical signal corresponding to brightness and color variations of the object image.

24. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 1, wherein the digital imaging apparatus is embodied as at least one integrated circuit.

25. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 1, wherein the digital imaging apparatus is embodied as a digital camera.

26. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 1, wherein the digital imaging apparatus is embodied as one or more of a scanner, a printer, or a dry copier.

27. A digital imaging apparatus, comprising:

an optical sensor converting an object image into a detected image;

an analog-to-digital converter coupled to the optical sensor, the analog-to-digital converter convening the detected image to a plurality of digital image information data packets;

a plurality of heterogeneous computational units including a first computational unit having a first architecture of a first plurality of computational elements each including algorithmic logic for simple computations, a data input and a data output, and a second computational unit having a second digital signal processing architecture of a second plurality of computational elements each including algorithmic logic for digital signal processing, a data input and a data output;

an interconnection network coupled to the plurality of heterogeneous computational units and to the analog-to-digital converter, the interconnection network providing the plurality of digital image information data packets, configuring the plurality of heterogeneous computational units for performance of a first imaging function in response to configuration information that configures the interconnections between at least the first plurality of computational elements and simultaneously in response to different configuration information to configure interconnections between the second plurality of computational elements, and by reconfiguring the plurality of heterogeneous computational units for performance of a second imaging function in response to configuration information that reconfigures interconnections between at least the first plurality of computational elements, the first imaging function being different than the second imaging function thereby providing a plurality of processed digital image data packets based on at least the first or second imaging function; and

a digital output interface coupled to the interconnection network, the digital output interface selecting a plurality of processed digital image data words from the plurality of processed digital image data packets and assembling the plurality of processed digital image data words to form a processed digital image.

28. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 27, wherein the optical sensor is at least one of a charge coupled device (CCD), a charge injection device (CID), an optical complementary metal oxide silicon (CMOS) array, an optical bipolar junction transistor (BJT) array, a photogate array, or a photodiode array.

29. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 27, further comprising:

an analog output interface coupled to the interconnection network, the analog output interface convening the processed digital image to an analog form;

a viewfinder screen coupled to the analog output interface, the viewfinder screen visually displaying the analog form of the processed digital image;

an analog output port coupled to the analog output interface, the analog output port outputting the analog form of the processed digital image; and

a digital output port coupled to the interconnection network, the digital output port outputting the processed digital image.

30. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 27, wherein the plurality of imaging functions comprises linear filtering; nonlinear filtering; morphological filtering; median filtering; local weighted median filtering; center weighted median filtering; vector weighted median filtering; multichannel image recovery; multiframe image restoration; iterative image restoration; motion detection; motion estimation; low pass filtering; multirate filtering; wavelet-based multirate filtering; autofocusing; contrast enhancement; and blur removal.

31. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 27, wherein the algorithmic logic of the first and second plurality of computational elements each perform different functions including at least two of: linear filtering, non-linear filtering, memory, addition, multiplication, complex multiplication, subtraction, synchronization, queuing, over sampling, under sampling, adaptation, configuration, reconfiguration, control, input, output, and field programmability.

32. The digital imaging apparatus of claim 27, wherein the digital imaging apparatus is embodied as a digital camera.

33. A method of processing a digital image comprising:

convening an object image into a detected image via an analog-to-digital converter;

convening the detected image to digital image information;

providing a plurality of heterogeneous computational units including a first simple computational unit having a first architecture of a first plurality of computational elements each including algorithmic logic for simple computations, a data input and a data output, and a second digital signal processing computational unit having a second architecture of a second plurality of computa-

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tional elements each including algorithmic logic for digital signal processing, a data input and a data output;

providing an interconnection network coupled to each of the plurality of computational elements and to the analog-to-digital converter;

configuring the plurality of computational units via the interconnections between at least the first plurality of computational elements and simultaneously in response to different configuration information to configure interconnections between the second plurality of computational elements for performance of a first imaging function; and

reconfiguring the plurality of computational units for performance of a second imaging function in response to second configuration information by changing the interconnections between at least the first plurality of computational elements, the first imaging function being different than the second imaging function.

34. A digital imaging apparatus, comprising:

a digital image information input;

a plurality of heterogeneous computational units to process digital image information to produce a processed digital image, the plurality of heterogeneous computational units including a first simple computational unit having a first architecture of a first plurality of computational elements each including algorithmic logic for simple computations, a data input and a data output, and a second computational unit having a second digital signal processing architecture of a second plurality of computational elements each including algorithmic logic for digital signal processing, a data input and a data output; and

an interconnection network coupled to the plurality of heterogeneous computational units, the interconnection network providing the digital image information to the plurality of heterogeneous computational elements and configuring the plurality of heterogeneous computational units to perform a first imaging function by simultaneous providing different configuration information to interconnections between the first plurality of computational elements and the interconnections between the second plurality of computational elements, and reconfiguring the plurality of heterogeneous computational units for performance of a second imaging function in response to providing configuration information that reconfigures the interconnections between at least some of the first plurality of heterogeneous computational elements.

35. The image apparatus of claim **34**, further comprising:

an optical sensor converting an object image into a detected image; and

an analog-to-digital converter coupled to the optical sensor, the analog-to-digital converter converting the detected image to the digital image information, the converter coupled to the digital image input.

* * * * *

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 7,609,297 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 10/606031
DATED : October 27, 2009
INVENTOR(S) : Master et al.

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

On the Title Page:

The first or sole Notice should read --

Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 1332 days.

Signed and Sealed this

Twelfth Day of October, 2010

David J. Kappos

David J. Kappos
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

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Niikawa (43) Pub. Date: Sep. 26, 2002

(54) IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS

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(21) Appl. No.: 10/102,146

(22) Filed: Mar. 19, 2002

(30) Foreign Application Priority Data

Mar. 26, 2001 (JP) 2001-088015

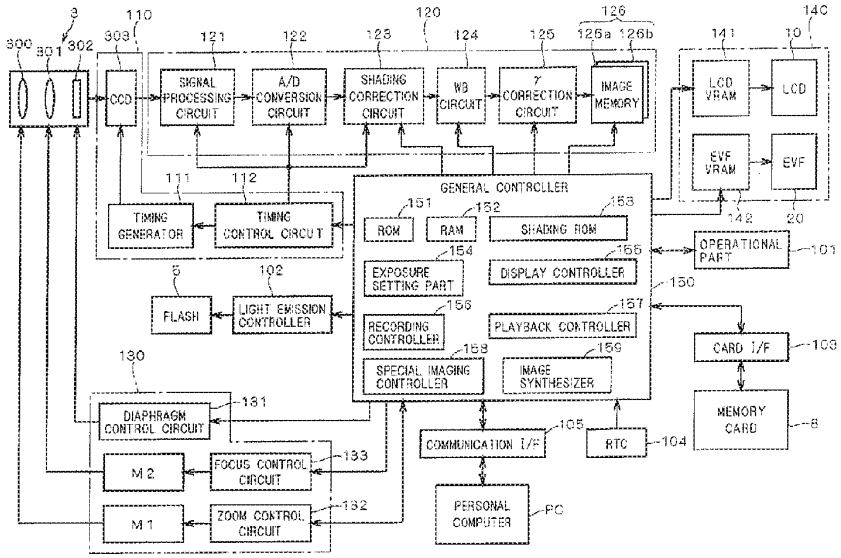
Publication Classification

(51) Int. Cl.[7] H04N 9/64

(52) U.S. Cl. 348/251

(57) ABSTRACT

A digital camera which is an image processing apparatus is controlled so that a first image and a second image are acquired for the same subject in different timings. A plurality of correction tables for use in shading correction are prepared in advance in a shading ROM of the digital camera. When a first image and a second image are acquired, multiplication of one correction table is performed on both images by a shading correction circuit. As a result of this, a shading correction is effected on both images. The first image and the second image that have been subjected to the shading correction are taken into respective image memories, and after being subjected to a positioning process by a general controller, they are synthesized to generate a synthesized image.



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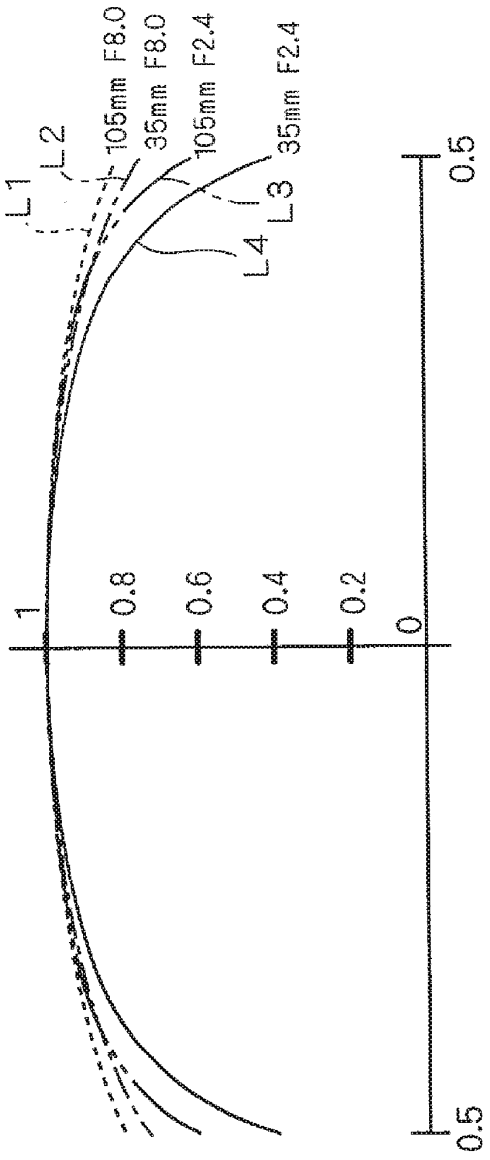


FIG. 1

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FIG. 2

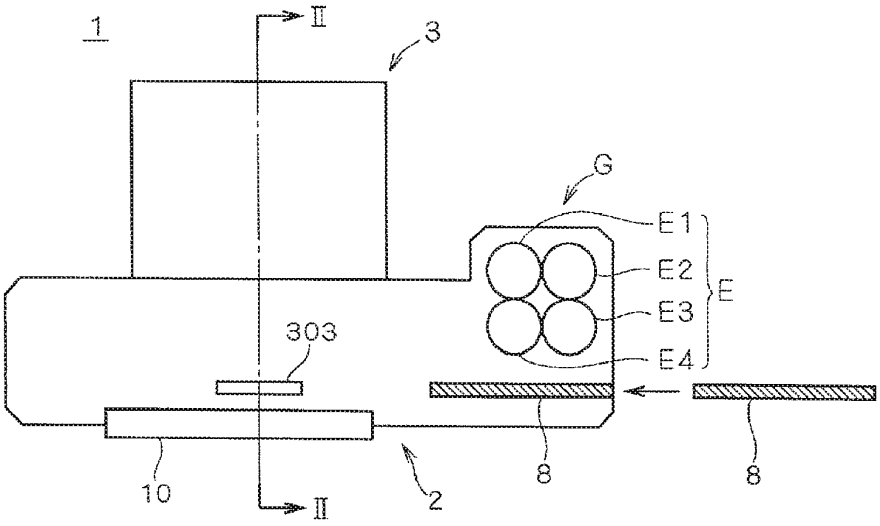
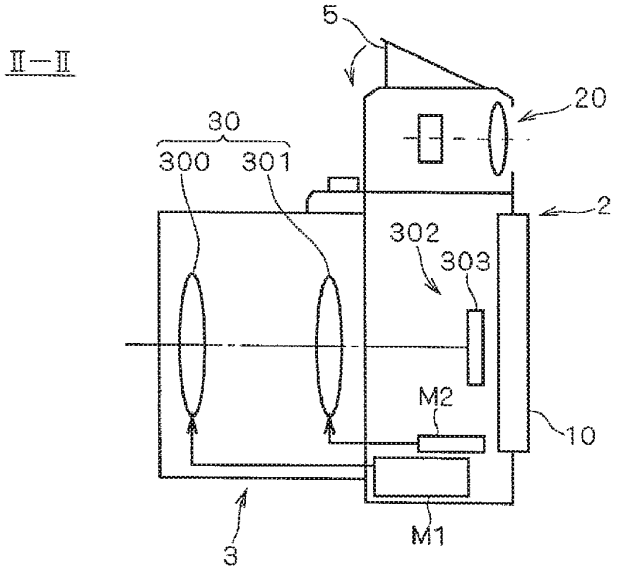
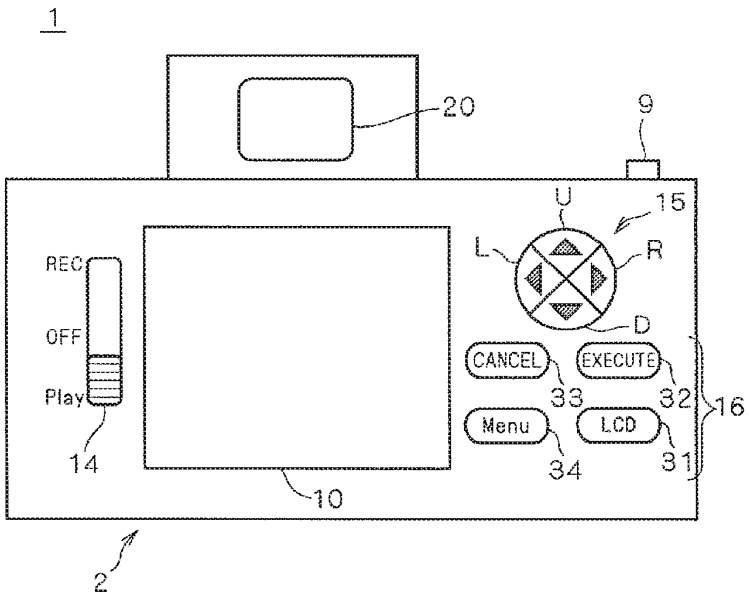


FIG. 3



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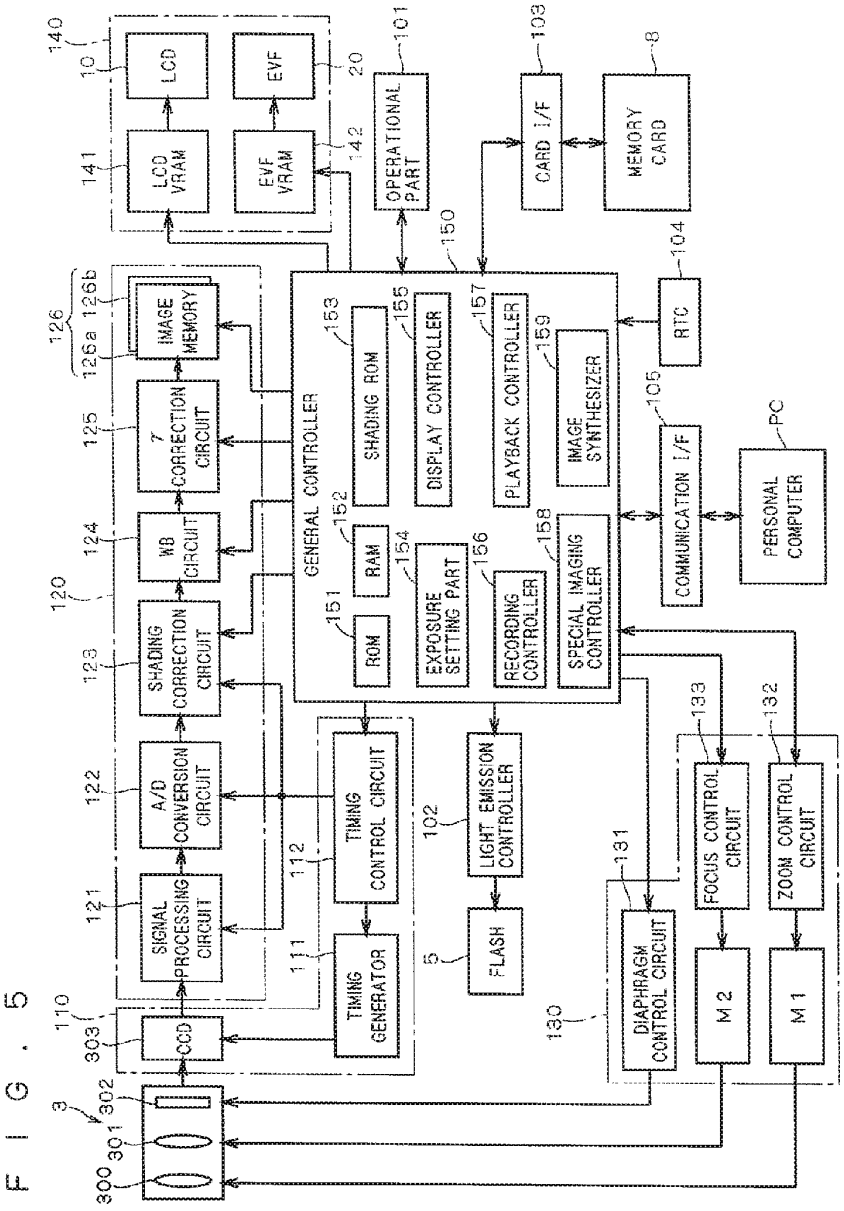
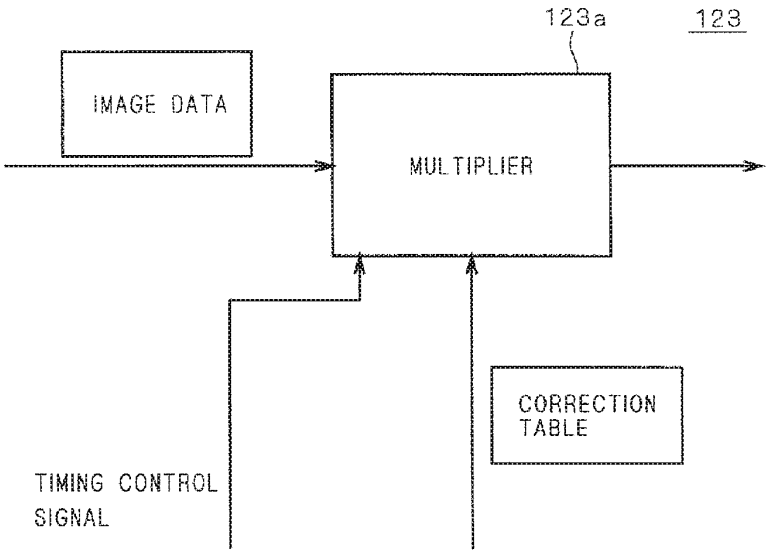


FIG. 5

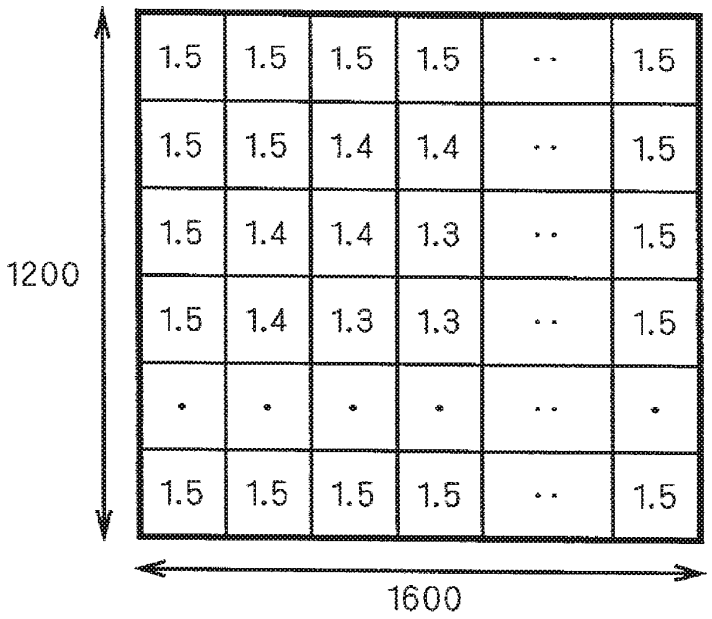
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FIG. 6



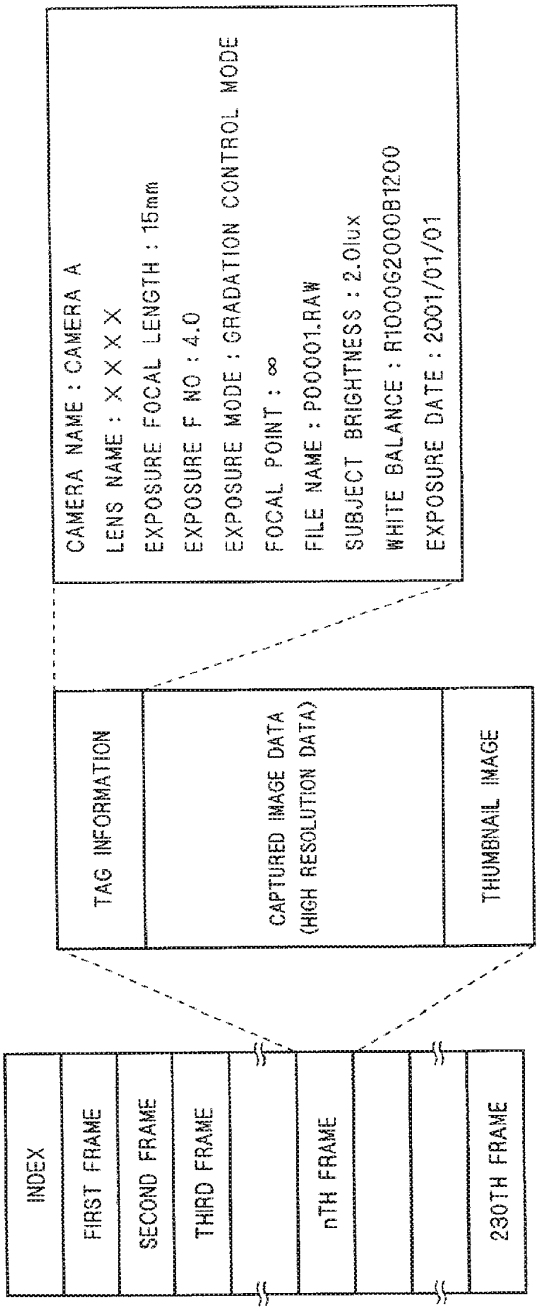
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FIG. 7



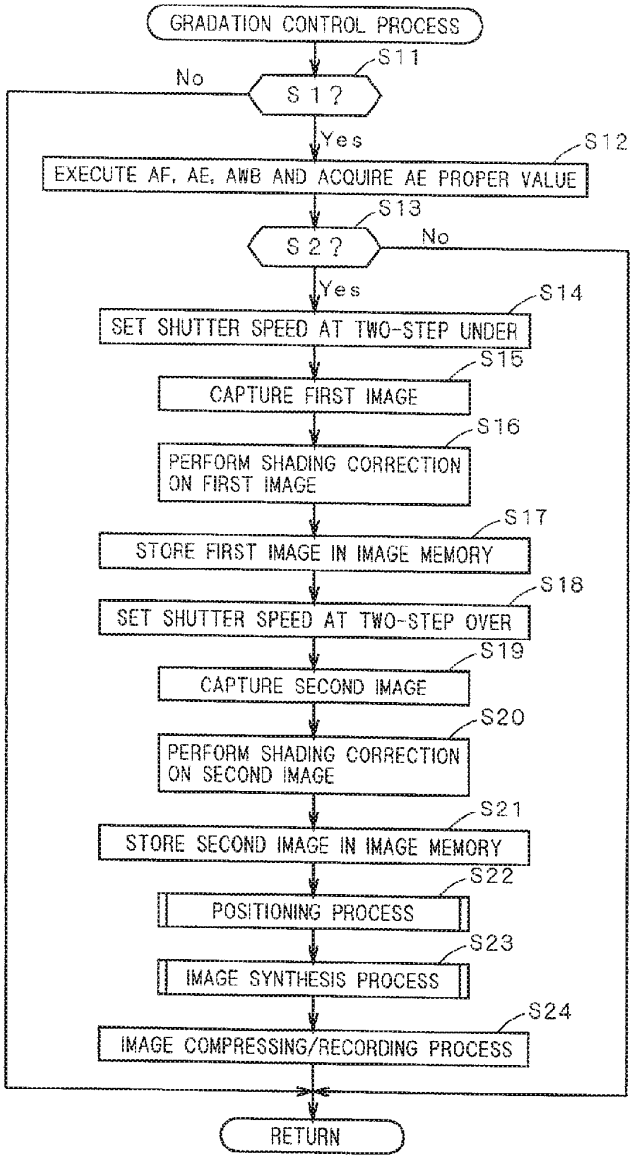
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FIG. 8



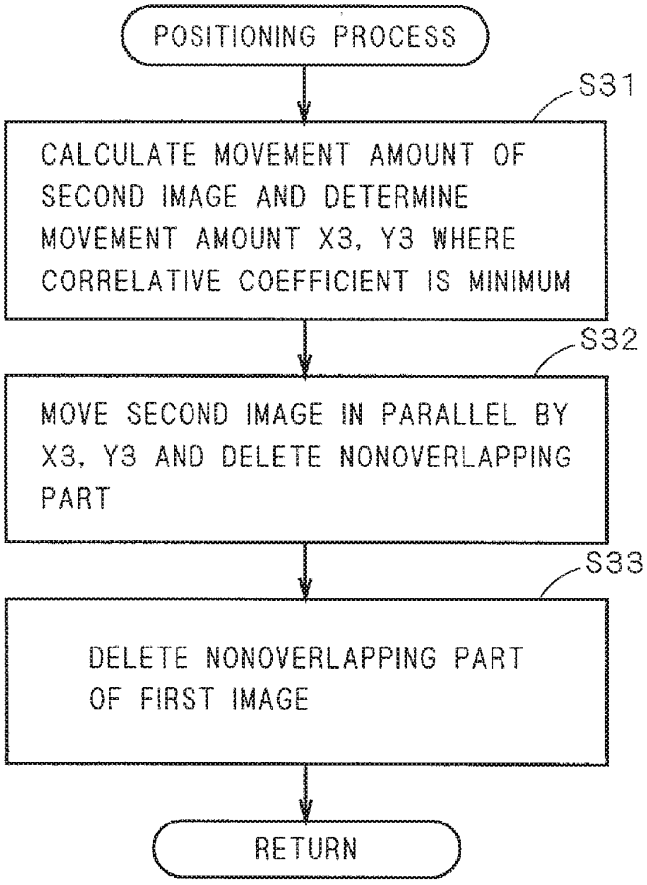
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FIG. 9



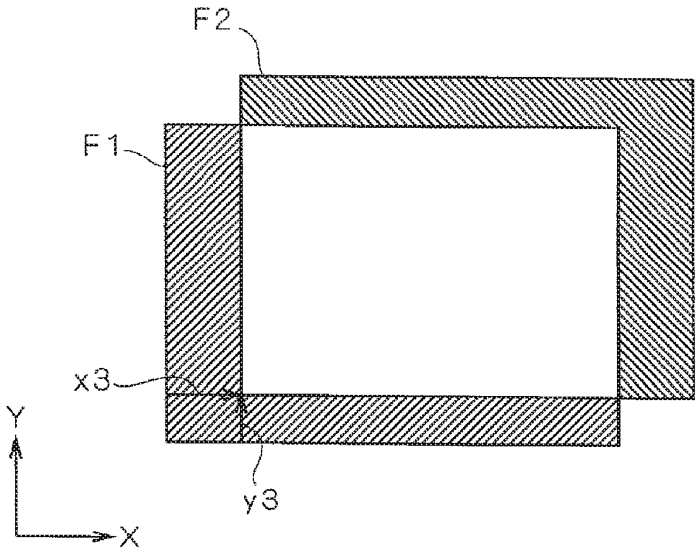
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FIG. 10



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FIG. 11



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FIG. 12A

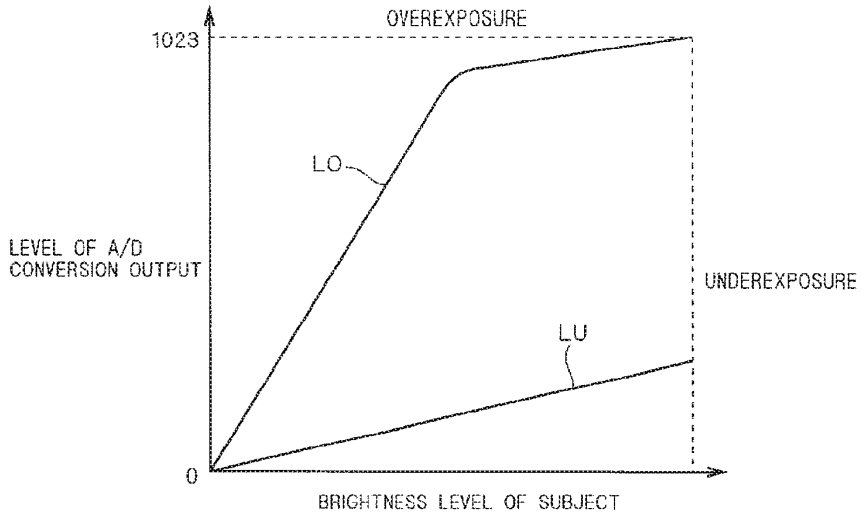
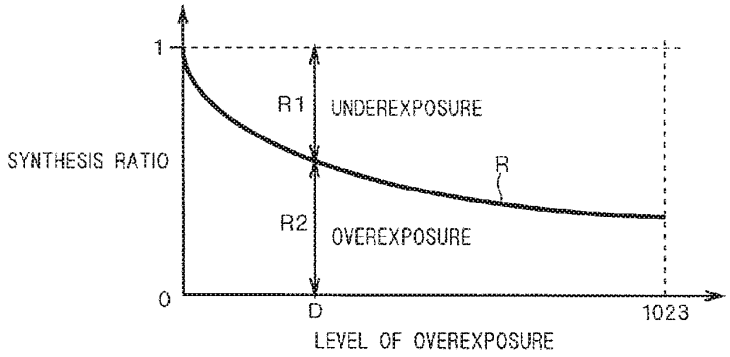
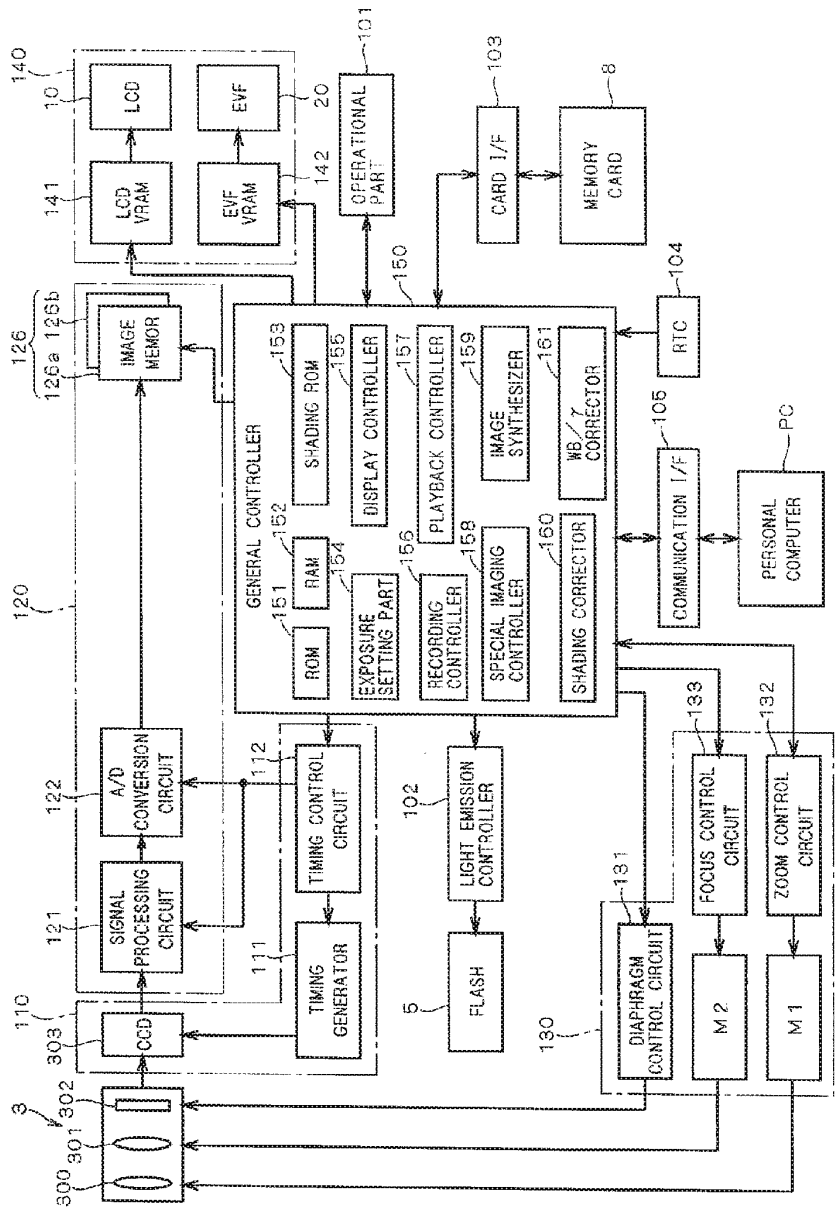


FIG. 12B



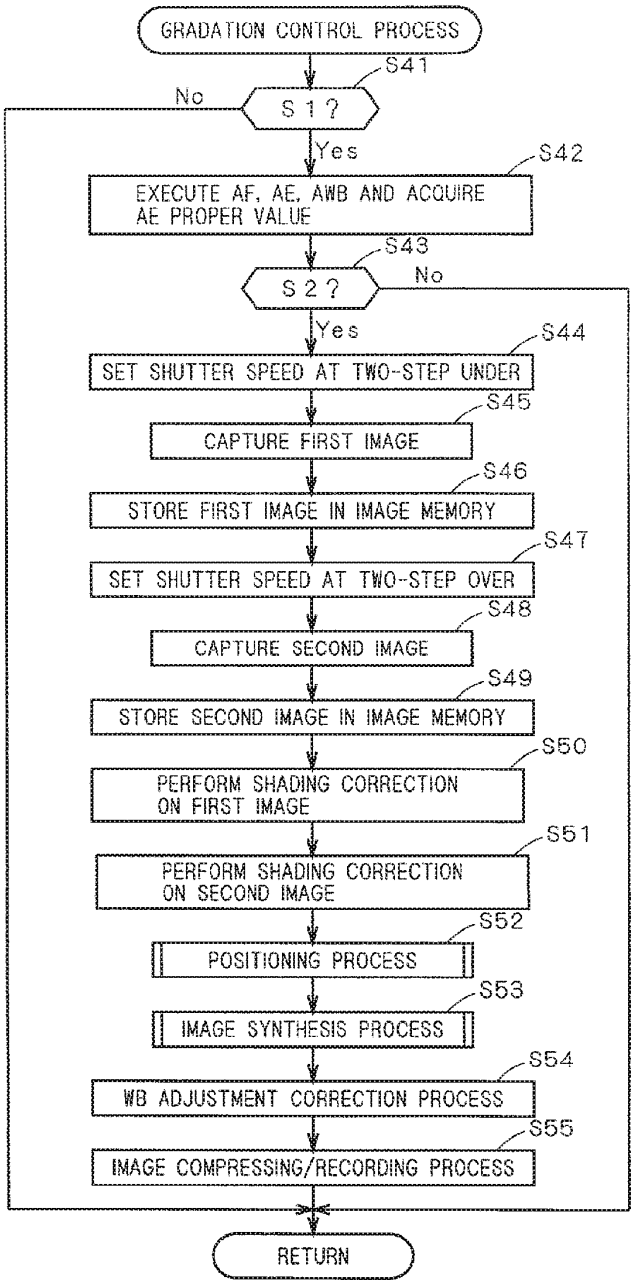
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FIG. 13



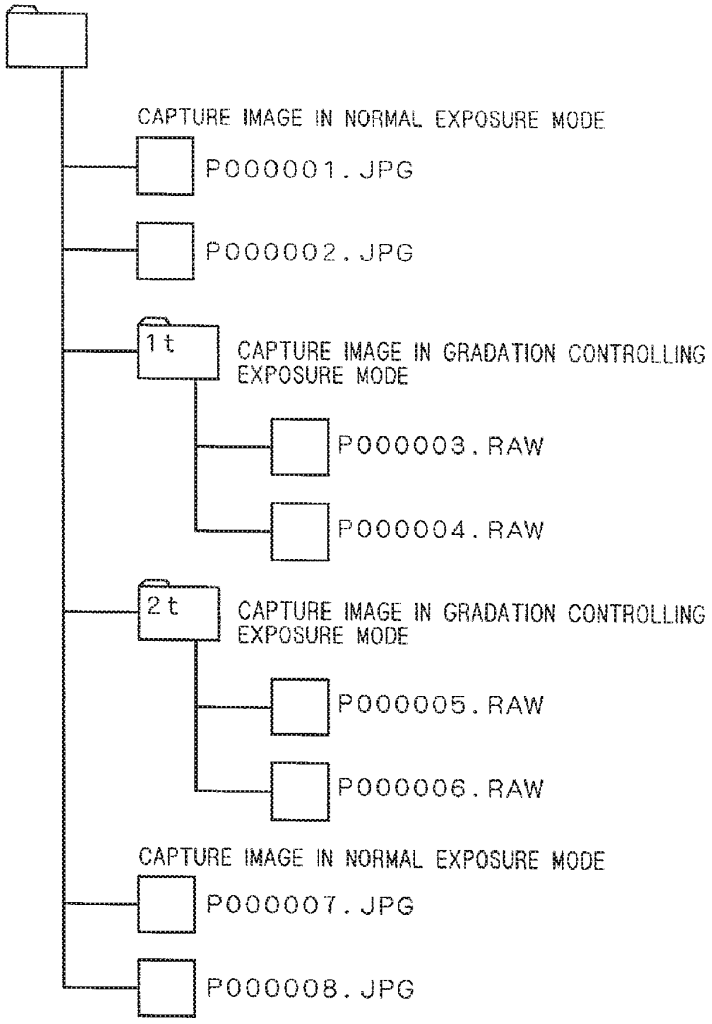
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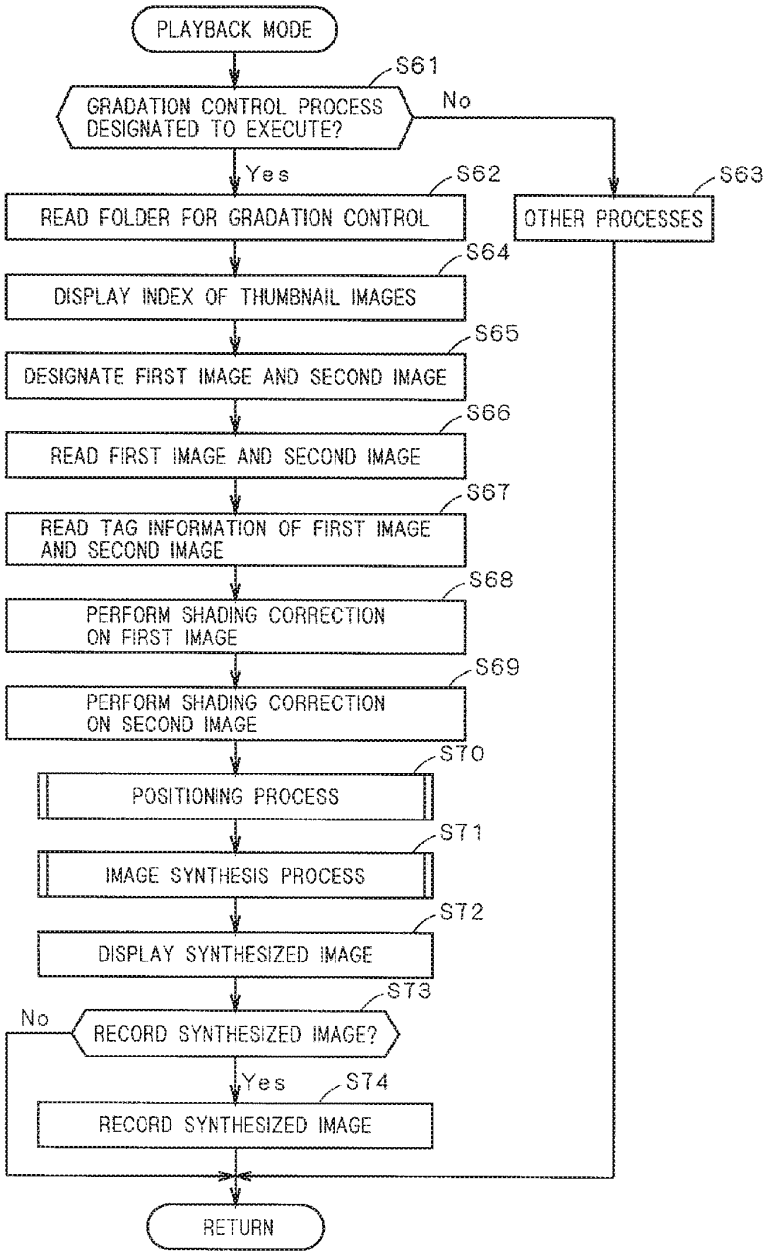
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FIG. 15



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FIG. 16



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FIG. 17A

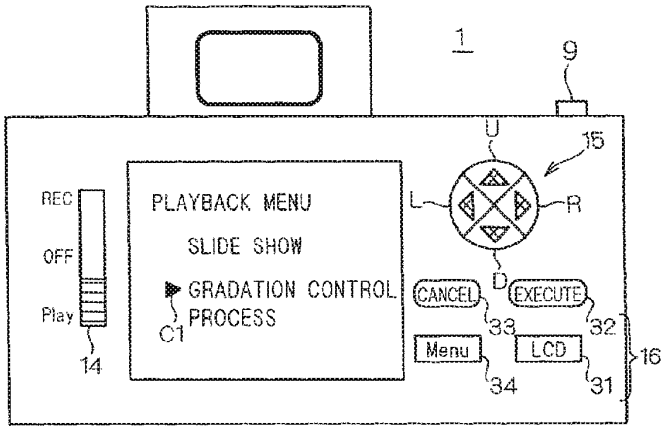
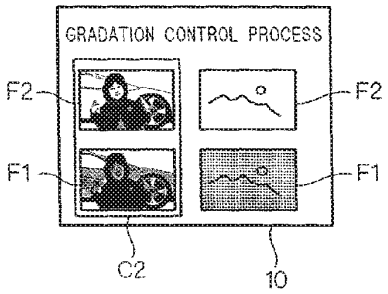
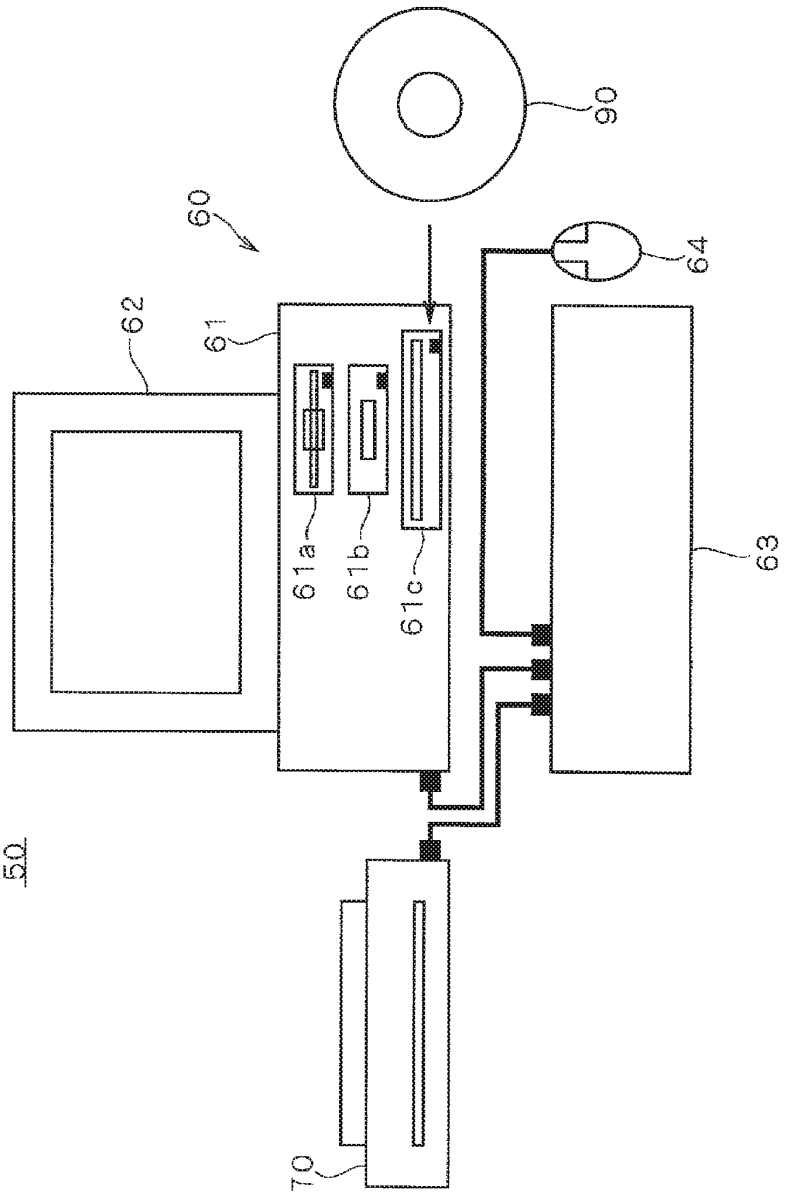


FIG. 17B



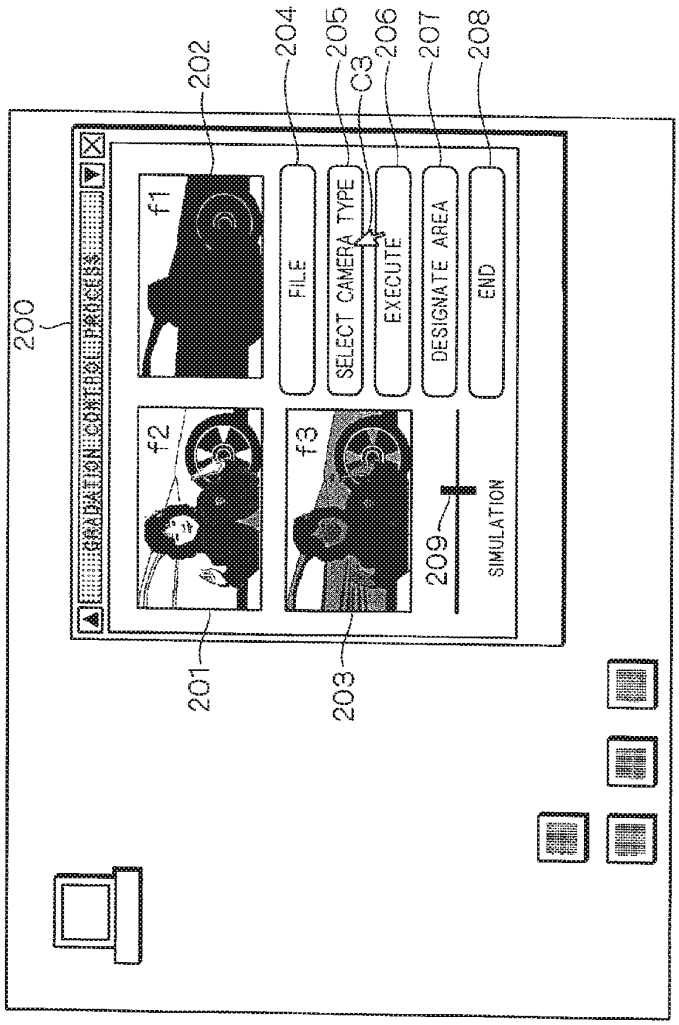
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FIG. 18



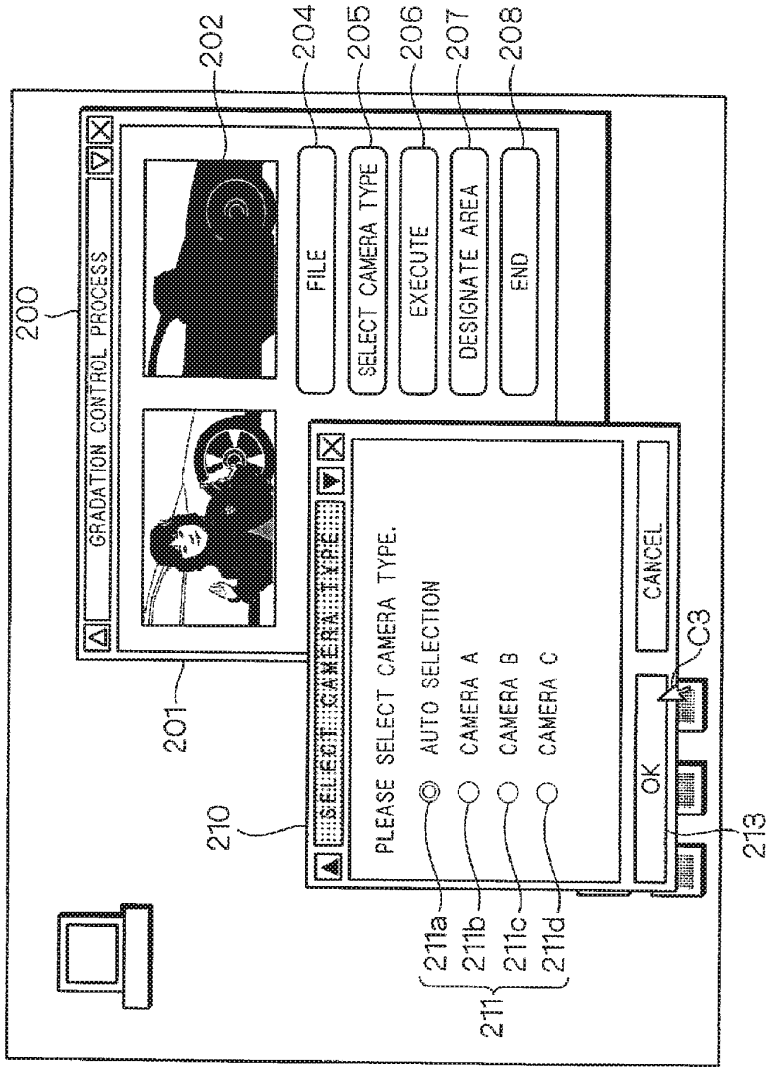
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FIG. 19



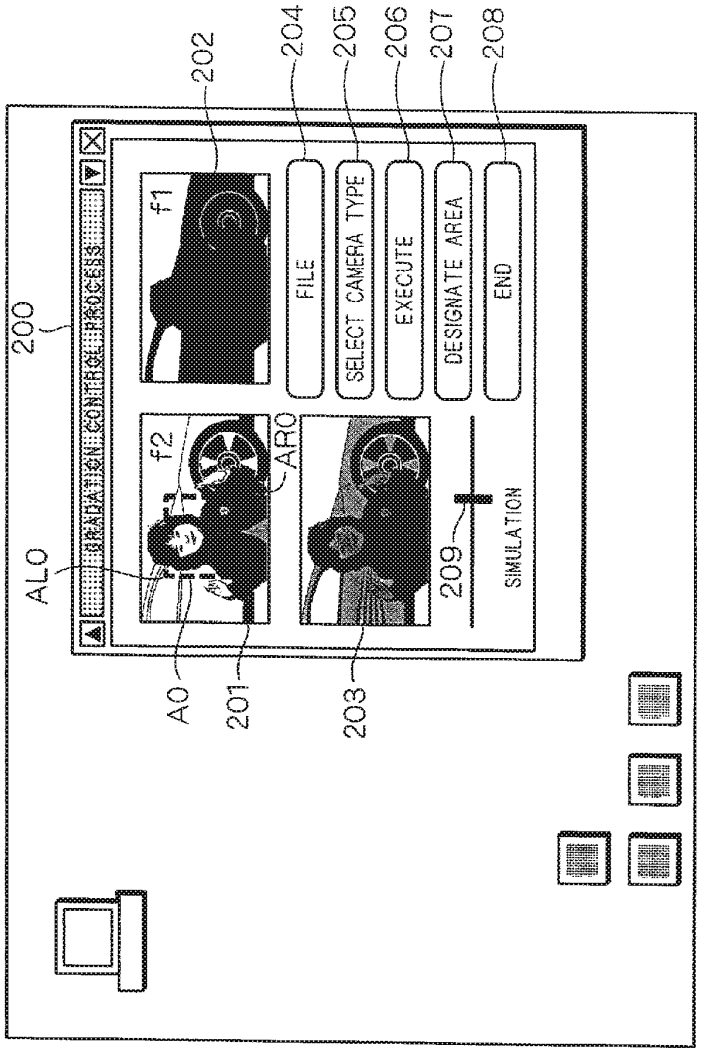
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FIG. 20



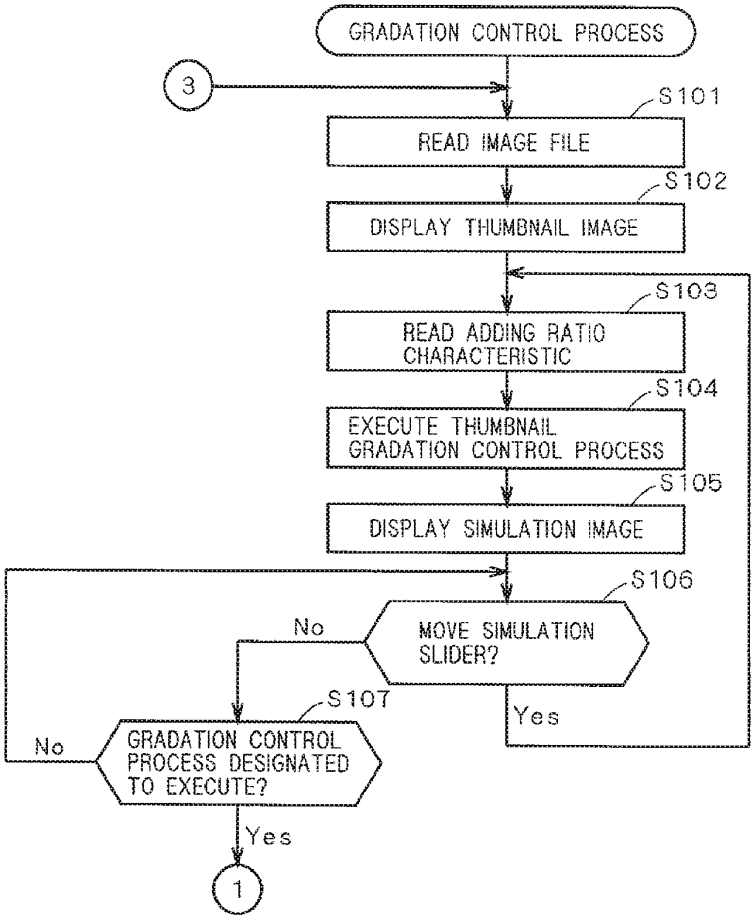
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FIG. 21



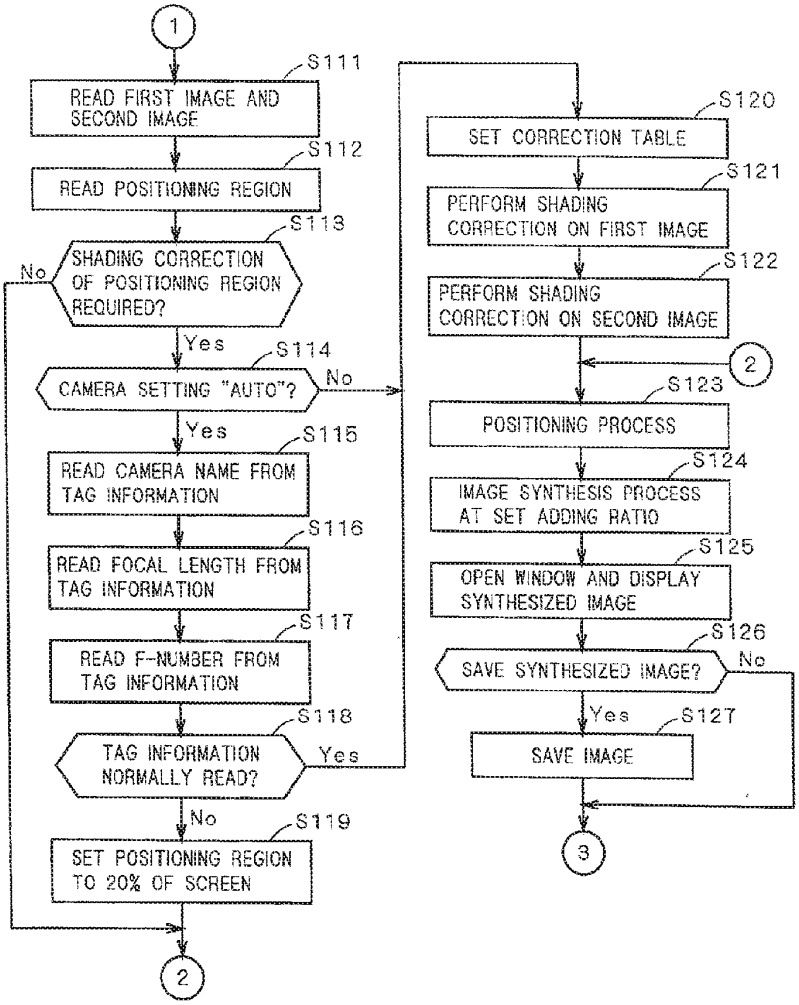
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FIG. 22



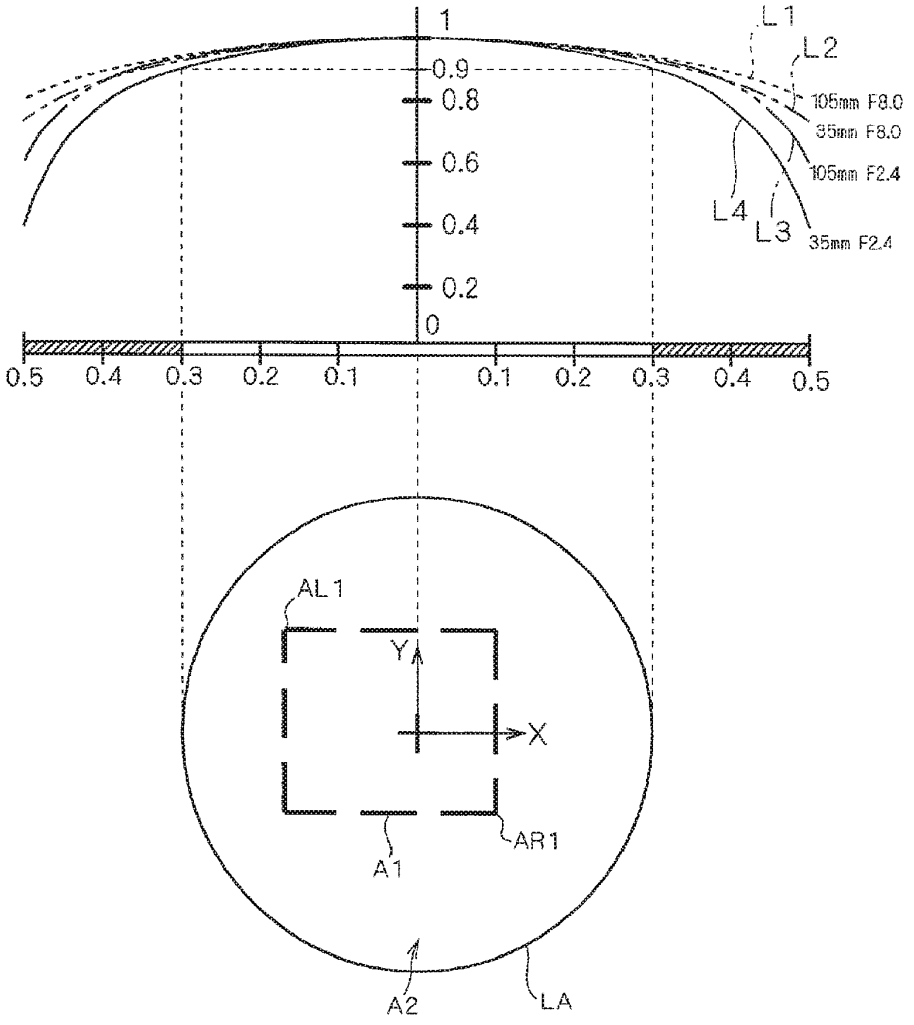
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FIG. 23



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FIG. 24



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FIG. 25

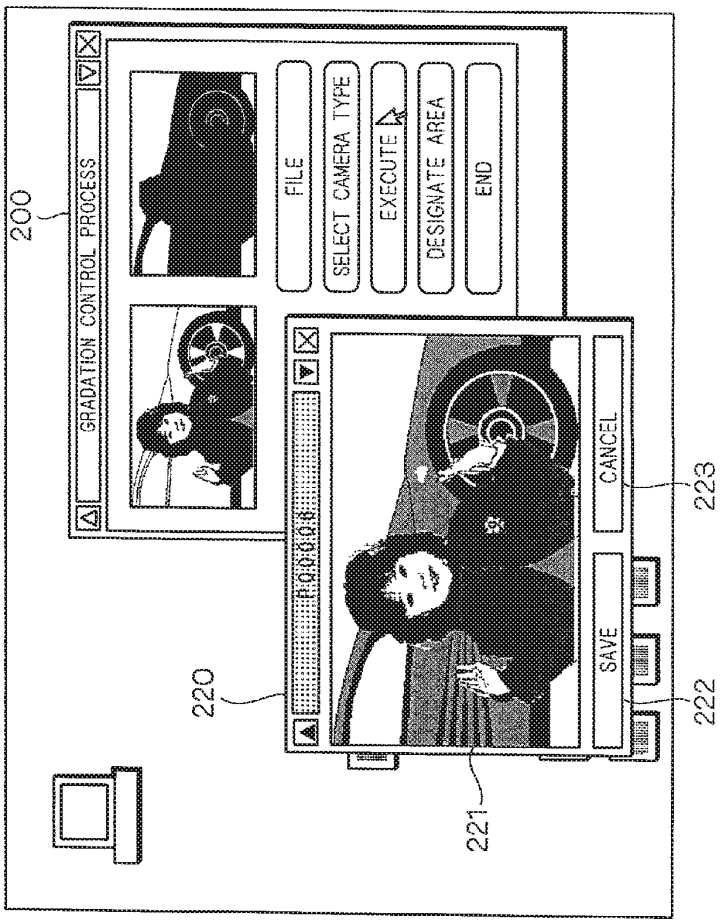
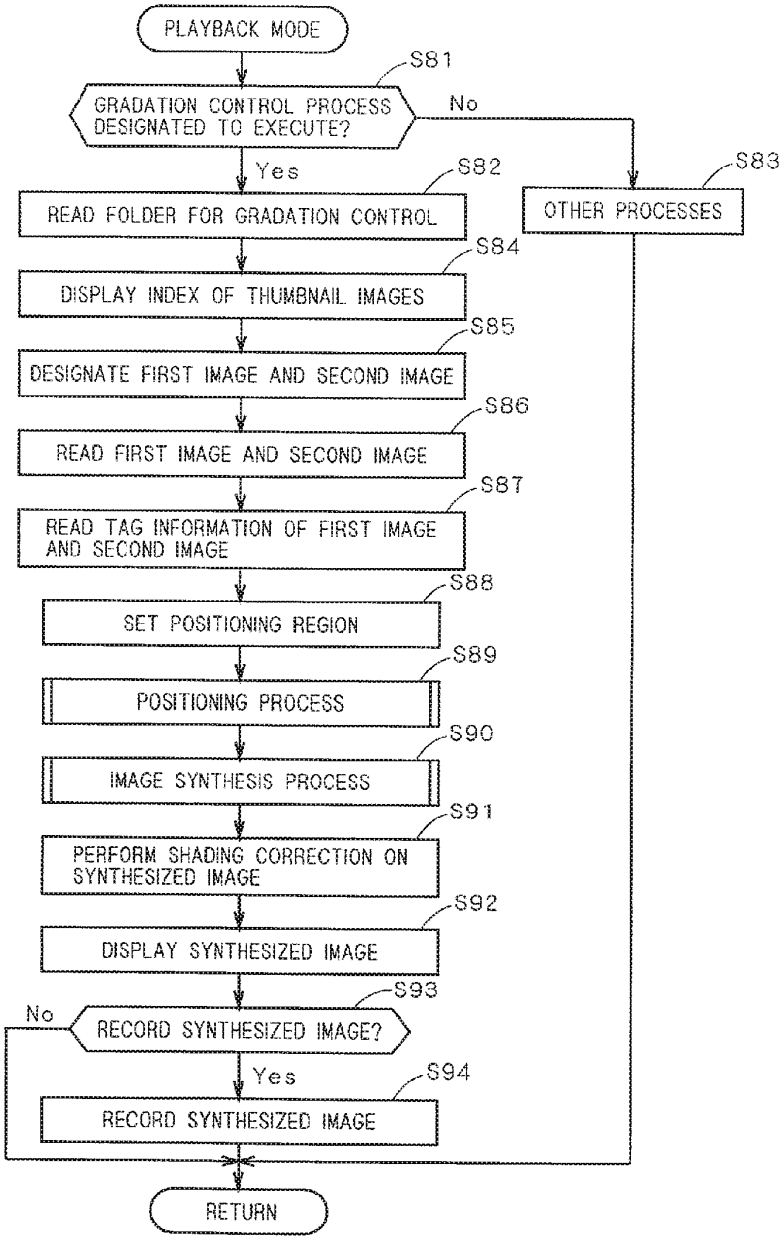

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GRADATION CONTROL PROCESS
FILE
SELECT CAMERA TYPE
EXECUTE
DESIGNATE AREA
END
CANCEL
SAVE
220
221
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223

FIG. 26



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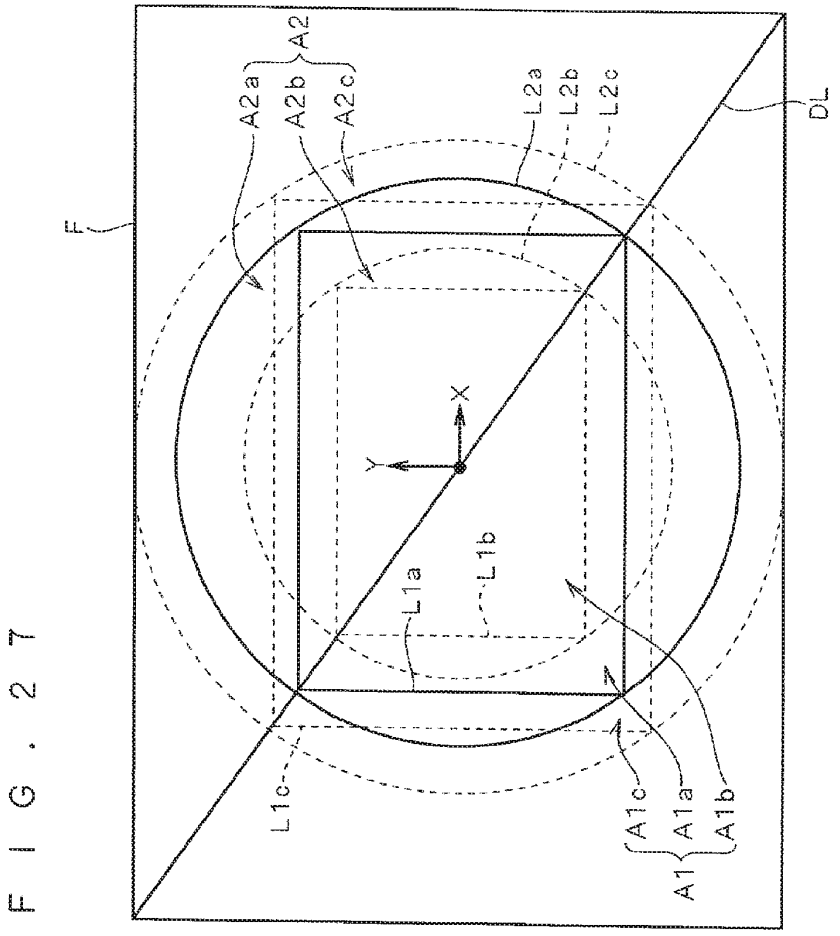


FIG. 27

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FIG. 28A

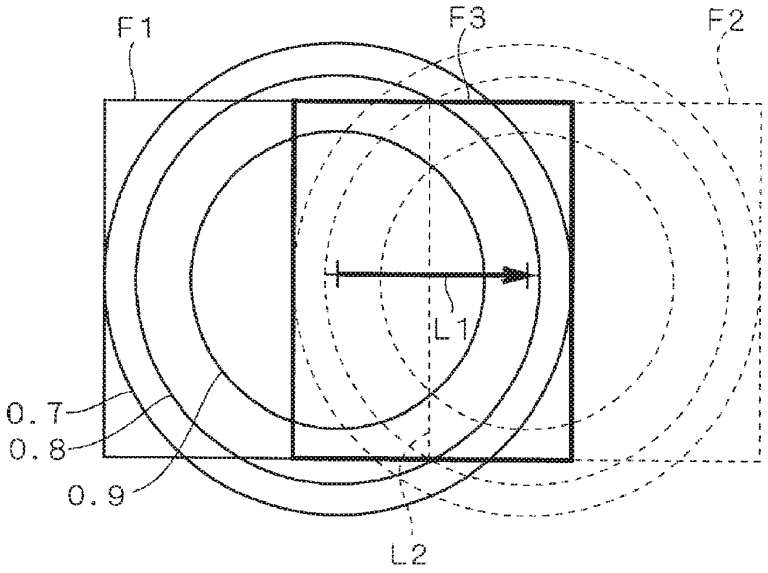
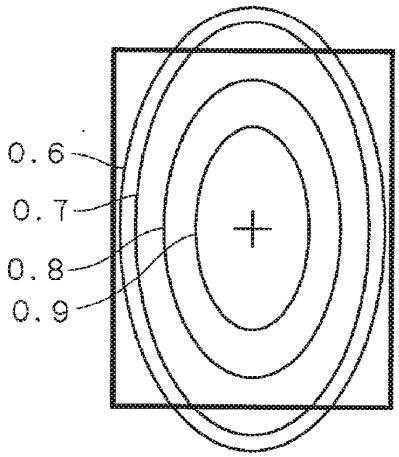


FIG. 28B



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IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS

[0001] This application is based on application No. 2001-088015 filed in Japan, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to an image processing technique for obtaining a synthesized image having improved image quality and graphic effect by synthesizing two images.

[0004] 2. Description of the Background Art

[0005] Conventionally, there have been proposed image processing techniques wherein using two images of different image qualities that have been captured for the same subject, an image having improved image quality and graphic effect compared to the original images is synthesized.

[0006] As one example according to the conventional art, a technique for correcting a blur wherein a plurality of images that have been captured at a shutter speed which is short enough so as not to be influenced by a blur are additively synthesized in accordance with the amount of blur is known.

[0007] As another example according to the conventional art, it is known that image data wherein any subjects at different positions are in focus can be obtained by synthesizing image data that has been obtained by capturing images while changing the focus position.

[0008] Further, U.S. Pat. No. 5,162,914 publication discloses a camera having a substantially widened dynamic range by capturing odd fields and even fields while changing the exposure time and synthesizing unblurred parts of these fields.

[0009] Further, U.S. Pat. No. 5,402,171 publication discloses a technique for improving resolution of image by synthesizing an image from image data captured while moving the image pickup device.

[0010] Practically, in the case of capturing two images for the same subject with a digital camera or the like, the images are captured at different timings and a small movement of the subject or movement of the camera itself will occur in this time lag of exposure. For this reason, a small difference in position arises between these two captured images.

[0011] In the case of synthesizing the above-mentioned two images, it is necessary to carry out positioning on these two images prior to synthesizing the images while taking such a positional difference between these images into consideration. If these images are synthesized without carrying out such positioning accurately, which leads rather deterioration of image.

[0012] Furthermore, it is general that when an image is captured via a lens in a digital camera or the like, so-called "shading" that the level of image data decreases with distance from the center of the image to the periphery. However, conventionally, in the case of synthesizing the above-mentioned two images, positioning of images was carried out without taking an influence of shading into account, so that deterioration in image quality resulted due to unsatisfactory positioning between images in some scenes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0013] The present invention is directed to an image processing apparatus which synthesizes a plurality of images.

[0014] According to the present invention, this image processing apparatus comprises: an image acquiring part for acquiring a first image and a second image; a shading corrector for performing a shading correction on each of the first image and the second image acquired by the image acquiring part; a position adjuster for performing positioning of the first image and the second image that have been subjected to the shading correction by the shading corrector; and an image generator for generating a synthesized image of the first image and the second image that have been subjected to the positioning by the position adjuster.

[0015] It is possible to perform accurate positioning while taking an influence of shading into consideration, and hence it is possible to prevent an image quality from deteriorating during the image synthesis process.

[0016] According to one aspect of the present invention, the image processing apparatus further comprises: an image memory capable of storing a plurality of images; and a controller for controlling the image memory to store a shading-corrected image that has been subjected to a shading correction by the shading corrector whenever each of the first image and the second image is acquired, wherein the position adjuster performs positioning in response to that either one of the first image and the second image that is acquired later is stored in the image memory as the shading-corrected image.

[0017] Since the positioning process is performed in response to that the image captured later from the first image and the second image is stored in the image memory as an image that has been subjected to the shading correction, it is possible to achieve optimization of the process.

[0018] According to another aspect of the present invention, the processing apparatus further comprises: an image memory capable of storing a plurality of images; and a controller for controlling the image memory to store each of the first image and the second image acquired in the image acquiring part; wherein the shading corrector performs a shading correction on each of the first image and the second image stored in the image memory.

[0019] After the first image and the second image are stored in the image memory, the shading correction is for each of the first image and the second image, with the result that it is possible to reduce the interval of the exposures for the first image and the second image.

[0020] According to yet another aspect of the present invention, the image acquiring part is an image sensor for capturing the first image and the second image for the same subject in different timings.

[0021] It is possible to synthesize two images acquired for the same subject in different timings while taking an influence of shading into consideration.

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[0022] Also the present invention is directed to a program product containing a program for executing an image processing.

[0023] Therefore, it is an object of the present invention to make it possible to synthesize two images with high accuracy in consideration of an influence of shading

[0024] These and other objects, features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description of the present invention when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0025] **FIG. 1** is a view showing an example of an influence by shading in an image.

[0026] **FIG. 2** is a plan view showing an image processing apparatus according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0027] **FIG. 3** is a section view showing an image processing apparatus according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0028] **FIG. 4** is a front view showing an image processing apparatus according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0029] **FIG. 5** is a block diagram showing a functional configuration of an image processing apparatus according to the first preferred embodiment.

[0030] **FIG. 6** is a view showing a coefficient processing hardware circuit for performing a shading correction.

[0031] **FIG. 7** is a view showing one example of a correction table used for a shading correction.

[0032] **FIG. 8** is a view showing a recording method of an image file to a memory card.

[0033] **FIG. 9** is a view showing a processing procedure of a gradation control process in the first preferred embodiment.

[0034] **FIG. 10** is a view showing a processing procedure of a positioning process.

[0035] **FIG. 11** is a view showing movement of an image in a positioning process.

[0036] **FIG. 12A** is a view showing respective gradation characteristics of an overexposed image and an underexposed image.

[0037] **FIG. 12B** is a view showing a synthesis ratio of an overexposed image and an underexposed image in a gradation control process.

[0038] **FIG. 13** is a block diagram showing a functional configuration of an image processing apparatus in the second preferred embodiment.

[0039] **FIG. 14** is a view showing a processing procedure of a gradation control process in the second preferred embodiment.

[0040] **FIG. 15** is a view showing a configuration example of image file stored in a memory card.

[0041] **FIG. 16** is a view showing a processing procedure of a gradation control process in the third preferred embodiment.

[0042] **FIG. 17A** is a view showing a selection screen for an image to be subjected to a gradation control process in the playback mode.

[0043] **FIG. 17B** is a view showing a playback screen in the playback mode.

[0044] **FIG. 18** is an appearance view showing a configuration of an image processing apparatus according to the fourth preferred embodiment.

[0045] **FIG. 19** is a view showing one example of a work window displayed on the display in the case where a gradation control program is executed.

[0046] **FIG. 20** is a view showing an example of a camera selection window displayed on the display.

[0047] **FIG. 21** is a view showing an example of designating a positioning area using thumbnail images displayed on the display.

[0048] **FIGS. 22 and 23** are views each showing a processing procedure of a gradation control program.

[0049] **FIG. 23** is a view showing a processing procedure of a gradation control program.

[0050] **FIG. 24** is a view showing an influence of shading and a non-shading area in captured image data.

[0051] **FIG. 25** is a view showing an example of a process result display window displayed on the display.

[0052] **FIG. 26** is a view showing a processing procedure of a gradation control process in the fifth preferred embodiment.

[0053] **FIG. 27** is a view showing an example of a non-shading area in accordance with a focal length and an f-number at the time of exposure.

[0054] **FIGS. 28A and 28B** are views showing curves each having a constant distribution of correction coefficients used for shading correction in captured image data and a synthesized image.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0055] Before explaining concrete configurations and operations of the preferred embodiments of the present invention, the background of the present invention will be explained by way of a concrete example.

[0056] When a subject is photographed by using an image pickup device such as CCD in an image processing apparatus such as digital camera equipped with an imaging lens, a phenomenon that the level of image data decreases with the distance from the center of the image to the periphery, so-called "shading" occurs.

[0057] **FIG. 1** is a view showing an example of an influence of shading on an image captured by means of a certain digital camera. The image depicted in **FIG. 1** is such that all the pixels constituting the image receive incident light from the subject of the uniform brightness. The horizontal axis represents distance from the optical axis of each

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image data, in a relative distance with the distance of diagonal line of the image being 1. That is, the center point of the image which is image data of the optical axis is the origin point. The vertical axis represents level of each image data, in a relative value with the level of image data of the optical axis being 1. It is contemplated that this relative value represents a decrease rate of level of image data due to shading at each pixel position.

[0058] The respective curves denoted by the reference numerals L1 to L4 represent decrease rates in level of image data when the focal length and the diaphragm of the imaging lens are changed while using the same digital camera and the same imaging lens. The curve L1 represents the case where the focal length is 105 mm (converted value in a 35 mm film camera) and the f-number is 8.0, the curve L2 represents the case where the focal length is 35 mm and the f-number is 8.0, the curve L3 represents the case where the focal length is 105 mm and the f-number is 2.4, and the line L4 represents the case where the focal length is 35 mm and the f-number is 2.4.

[0059] As shown in this drawing, the longer the distance from the center point of the image which is the optical axis to the periphery, the lower the level of image data. That is, the closer to the periphery the image data exists, the more the image is likely to be influenced by shading (larger decrease rate of level).

[0060] Furthermore, in the case of using the same digital camera and the same imaging lens, the influence of shading varies with the focal length and the amount of exposure light. As shown in the drawing, the shorter the focal length (wide side), the larger the influence of shading (influence range and decrease rate of level), whereas the longer the focal length (tele side), the smaller the influence of shading. Furthermore, in the same manner, the larger the amount of exposure light, the larger the influence of shading, whereas the smaller the amount of exposure light, the smaller the influence of shading. As can be seen in the drawing, the smaller the f-number (the smaller the f-stop number of diaphragm), the larger the influence of shading, whereas the larger the f-number (the larger the f-stop number of diaphragm), the smaller the influence of shading.

[0061] By the way, when a subject is photographed by a digital camera or the like, a phenomenon sometimes occurs that light portions in the subject image are too white, while dark portions in the subject image are too black. This phenomenon results from a narrow dynamic range of a general image pickup device and causes deterioration in image quality. For eliminating such a phenomenon, it has been supposed that an image whose dynamic range is substantially widened is generated by capturing two images of different exposures for the same subject in different timings and synthesizing them to conduct a gradation control process.

[0062] In the case of capturing two images in different timings for obtaining a synthesized image, a small difference in position occurs between these two images thus captured because of the difference in timing. For this reason, in synthesizing two images, it is necessary to effect positioning for these two images prior to synthesizing the images while taking such a positional difference between these images into consideration. However, it is impossible to effect accurate positioning without taking such an influence of shading as described above into consideration. In preferred embodiments as will be described below, the above-mentioned influence of shading is taken into consideration when effecting the positioning on such two images.

[0063] In the following, preferred embodiments of the present invention will be explained in detail while referring to the attached drawings.

[0064] <1. First Preferred Embodiment>

[0065] FIGS. **2** to **4** show schematic configurations of an appearance of a digital camera **1** which is an image processing apparatus according to the first preferred embodiment of the present invention. **FIG. 2** is a plan view of the digital camera **1**, **FIG. 3** is a cross section view viewed from the position II-II of **FIG. 2**, and **FIG. 4** is a rear view of the digital camera **1**.

[0066] As shown in these drawings, the digital camera **1** comprises a camera main body **2** which is a nearly rectangular parallelepiped and an imaging lens **3** which is detachably attached to the camera main body **2**. As shown in **FIG. 2**, the digital camera **1** is adapted to detachably accommodate a memory card **8** for recording a captured image. The digital camera **1** uses a power battery E in which four AA cells E1 to E4 are serially connected as a driving source.

[0067] As shown in **FIG. 3**, the imaging lens **3** which is a zoom lens having a macro function comprises a lens group **30** including a zoom lens **300** and a focus lens **301**. On the other hand, inside the camera main body **2** are provided a zoom motor M1 for changing the zoom ratio of the zoom lens **300** and a focus motor M2 for driving the focus lens **301** to achieve focusing. Also, behind the lens group **30** of the imaging lens **3** is provided a color image pickup device **303** at an appropriate position. The color image pickup device **303** is configured by a single-sheet type color area sensor in which colors filters of R(red), G(green) and B(blue) are bonded in a checker on the surface of each pixel of the area sensor formed of a CCD. The color image pickup device (hereinafter, referred to as "CCD") **30** has, for example, a total of 1,920,000 pixels of 1,600 pixels in the horizontal direction and 1,200 pixels in the vertical direction.

[0068] On the front surface of the camera main body **2** is provided a grip portion G as shown in **FIG. 2**, and at an appropriate position of the upper end of the camera main body **2** is provided an integrated flash of hop-up type. Further, as shown in **FIG. 4**, a shutter button **9** is provided on the top surface of the camera main body **2**. The shutter button **9** has a function of detecting and discriminating a half-pressed state (S1) to be used as a trigger for focus adjustment and a full-pressed state (S2) to be used as a trigger for exposure for recording.

[0069] On the other hand, the rear surface of the camera main body **2** is provided with an electronic viewfinder (hereinafter, referred to as "EVF") **20** and a liquid crystal display (hereinafter, referred to as "LCD") **10**. In contrast with the case of the optical finder, the EVF **20** and the LCD **10** serve as a finder for performing a live view display of an image signal from the CCD **303** in the image standby state.

[0070] Also the LCD **10** can display a menu screen for setting an exposure mode, an imaging condition or the like in the recording mode and reproducing and displaying a captured image recorded on the memory card **8** in the playback mode.

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[0071] In the left part on the rear surface of the camera main body **2** is provided a power switch **14**. This power switch **14** also serves as a mode setting switch for switching the mode between a recording mode (mode for executing photographing) and a playback mode (mode for reproducing a recorded image on the LCD **10**). To be more specific, the power switch is formed of a three-position slide switch wherein when the contact is slid to the center "OFF" position, the power is turned off, when the contact is slid to the upper "REC" position, the power is turned on and the recording mode is effected, and when the contact is slid to the lower "PLAY" position, the power is turned on and the playback mode is effected.

[0072] In the light part on the rear surface of the camera main body **2** is provided a four-gang switch **15**. The four-gang switch **15** has a circular operational button which enables various operations to be made by pressing buttons U, D, L and R provided in the right, left, upward and downward directions in this operational button. For example, this four-gang switch **15** serves as a switch for changing the item selected on the menu screen displayed on the LCD **10** and for changing the frame to be reproduced which is selected on an index screen. Furthermore, the left and right buttons L, R serve as switches for changing the zoom ratio in the recording mode. When the right switch R is pressed down, the zoom lens **300** continuously moves to the wide side being driven by the zoom motor M1 and when the left switch L is pressed down, the zoom lens **300** continuously moved to the tele side by being driven by the zoom motor M1.

[0073] Also, below the four-gang switch **15** is provided a switch group **16** including a cancel switch **33**, an execute switch **32**, a menu display switch **34**, a LCD display switch **31** and the like. The cancel switch **33** is a switch for canceling the content that has been selected on the menu screen. The execute switch **32** is a switch for confirming or executing the content that has been selected on the menu screen. The menu display switch **34** is a switch for displaying a menu screen on the LCD **10** or changing the contents of the menu screen. The LCD display switch **31** is an ON/OFF changeover switch of the display on the LCD **10**.

[0074] A user can open the menu screen for selection of exposure mode and select an exposure mode by operating the four-gang switch **15**, the switch group **16** and the like. The exposure mode includes a normal exposure mode in which an exposure is made one by one in the usual manner and a gradation control processing mode. The gradation control processing mode refers to a mode intended for obtaining a synthesized image with substantially widened dynamic range by capturing two images having different exposures for the same subject in different timings, and synthesizing these images in an appropriate adding ratio. A single operation of the shutter button **9** triggers two exposures while changing the exposure condition so as to obtain two images.

[0075] Next, an internal configuration of the digital camera **1** will be explained. **FIG. 5** is a schematic block diagram showing an internal configuration of the digital camera **1**.

[0076] The imaging lens **3** has therein a diaphragm **302** for adjusting an amount of light transmission, as well as the zoom lens **300** and the focus lens **301**.

[0077] An image capturer **110** photoelectrically converts a subject light source entered via the imaging lens **3** into an image signal and captures the image signal, and is provided with a timing generator **111** and a timing control circuit **112** as well as the CCD **303**. The CCD **303** receives the light of the subject light source for a predetermined exposure time based on a drive control signal inputted from the timing generator **111** to convert it to an image signal, and outputs the image signal to a signal processor **120** by using a readout control signal inputted from the timing generator. At this time, the image signal is outputted to the signal processor **120** while being divided into each of the color components R, G and B.

[0078] The timing generator **111** generates a drive control signal on the basis of a control signal inputted from the timing control circuit **112**, as well as generates a readout signal on the basis of a reference clock to output it to the CCD **303**. The timing control circuit **112** controls the imaging operation of the image capturer **110**. The timing control circuit **112** generates an imaging control signal on the basis of a control signal inputted from a general controller **150**. Examples of the imaging control signal include a control signal for photographing a subject, a reference clock, a timing control signal (synchronous clock) for processing an image signal outputted from the CCD **303** at the signal processor **120**. The timing control signal is inputted to a signal processing circuit **121**, an A/D conversion circuit **122**, a shading correction circuit **123** and the like in the signal processor **120**.

[0079] The signal processor **120** executes a predetermined analogue signal processing and digital signal processing with respect to an image signal outputted from the CCD **303**. The signal processing of image signal is executed for every light reception signal of each pixel constituting the image data. The signal processor **120** has the signal processing circuit **121**, the A/D conversion circuit **122**, the shading correction circuit **123**, an WB circuit **124**, a γ correction circuit **125** and an image memory **126**.

[0080] The signal processing circuit **121** is designed to execute analogue signal processing, mainly configured by a CDS (correlation double sampling) circuit and an AGC (auto gain control) circuit, and serves to reduce the sampling noise and adjust the signal level for the image signal outputted from the CCD **303**. The gain control in the AGC circuit includes the case where a level shortage of the captured image is compensated when a correct exposure is not obtained by the f-number of the diaphragm **302** and the exposure time of the CCD **303**.

[0081] The A/D conversion circuit **122** is designed to convert an image signal which is an analogue signal outputted from the signal processing circuit **121** to image data which is a digital signal. The A/D conversion circuit **122** converts image signals received by the respective pixels into, for example, digital signals of **10** bits to render image data having gradation values of 0 to 1023.

[0082] The shading correction circuit **123** corrects a shading due to optical system with respect to the image data that has been subjected to A/D conversion. The shading correction circuit has a multiplier **123***a* as shown in **FIG. 6**, and receives a timing control signal inputted from the timing control circuit **112** and performs multiplication of image data converted in the A/D conversion circuit **122** and a correction table inputted from the general controller **150**.

[0083] **FIG. 7** is a view showing one example of the correction table. As shown in **FIG. 7**, the correction table

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has 1,920,000 correction coefficients (actually, inverses of correction coefficients) for corresponding to the respective 1,920,000 pixels of 1,600 pixels×1,200 pixels of the CCD **303**. Each correction coefficient corresponds to the rate of decrease in level of each pixel data shown in **FIG. 1**, and the inverse of the correction coefficient is held in the correction table in advance. When each pixel shown in the curve of **FIG. 1** is multiplied by the inverse of the correction coefficient, the curve is converted to a straight line in which the levels of image data are constantly **1**. That is, by subjecting every pixel data to the multiplication by the inverse of the correction coefficient (coefficient process), the shading can be corrected. In the case where overflow occurs in this multiplication process, the level of the image data is set at the maximum value of 1023.

[0084] A plurality of correction tables for different parameters which are the optical conditions such as focal length and f-number at the time of imaging are prepared and stored in a shading ROM **153** provided in the general controller **150**. The general controller **150** performs selection of correction table from the shading ROM **153** in accordance with the optical condition such as focal length and f-number at the time of imaging. Therefore, the shading correction circuit **123** can perform a shading correction in accordance with the optical condition.

[0085] In the above correction table, since the correction coefficients are set for every pixel, the data size is enormous. For this reason, for example, it is also possible to set one correction data for each block unit of 4 pixels×4 pixels and perform correction for each pixel block. Furthermore, it is also possible to set a correction data of each block unit as a reference value of the block, and determine a correction coefficient of each pixel by weights of reference values of the block to which the object pixel belongs and the peripheral blocks with the position (distance) of the pixel. In this case, it is possible to reduce the data size of the correction table to 1/16 in comparison with the case where correction coefficients are prepared for every pixel.

[0086] Referring again to **FIG. 5**, the WB circuit **124** adjusts a white balance of captured image. The WB circuit **124** adjusts a white balance of captured image by converting the level of image data of each color component R, G, B with the use of a level conversion table inputted from the general controller **150**. The γ correction circuit **125** corrects a γ characteristic of image data. The γ correction circuit **125** corrects the level of each image data using the γ correction table which is preliminarily set.

[0087] The image memory **126** is a memory for temporarily storing image data for which image processing has been completed. The image memory **126** has two memory areas, concretely a first memory **126***a* and a second memory **126***b* so as to be capable of storing image data of two frames. The first memory **126***a* and the second memory **126***b* each have a memory capacity capable of storing image data of one frame. In the present preferred embodiment, since the number of pixels is **1,920,000**, each of them has a capacity that can store image data of 1,920,000 pixels.

[0088] A light emission controller **102** controls light emission of the flash **5** on the basis of a light emission control signal inputted from the general controller **150**. The light emission control signal includes an indication for making preparation for light emission, a light emission timing and an amount of light emission.

[0089] A lens controller **130** controls drivings of the zoom lens **300**, the focus lens **301** and the diaphragm **302** in the imaging lens **3**. The lens controller **130** has a diaphragm control circuit **131** for controlling an f-number of the diaphragm **302**, a zoom control circuit **132** for controlling driving of the zoom motor **M1** and a focus control circuit **133** for controlling driving of the focus motor **M2**.

[0090] On the basis of an f-number inputted from the general controller **150**, the diaphragm control circuit **131** drives the diaphragm **302** and sets the amount of aperture at that f-number. The focus control circuit **133** controls the amount of drive of the focus motor **M2** on the basis of an AF control signal inputted from the general controller **150** and sets the focus lens **301** at the in-focus position. The zoom control circuit **132** drives the zoom motor **M1** on the basis of the zoom control signal inputted from the general controller **150** and causes the zoom lens **300** to move in the direction designated by the four-gang switch **15**.

[0091] A display part **140** achieves display on the LCD **10** and the EVF **20**. The display part **140** has a LCD VRAM **141** serving as a buffer memory for image data to be reproduced and displayed on the LCD **10** and an EVF VRAM **142** serving as a buffer memory for image data to be reproduced and displayed on the EVF **20**, as well as the LCD **10** and the EVF **20**.

[0092] In the imaging standby state, each image data of images taken every 1/30 (sec.) by the CCD **303** is temporarily stored in the image memory **126** after being subjected to a predetermined signal processing by the signal processor **120**. Then, the image data is read out by the general controller **150**, transferred to the LCD VRAM **141** and the EVF VRAM **142** after being subjected to data size adjustment, and displayed on the LCD **10** and the EVF **20** in the form of a live view display. This allows the user to visually recognize the subject image. On the other hand, in the playback mode, an image read out from the memory card **8** is transferred to the LCD VRAM **141** after being subjected to a predetermined signal processing by the general controller **150** to be reproduced and displayed on the LCD **10**.

[0093] An RTC **104** is a clock circuit for controlling the date and time of exposure. The date and time of exposure thus obtained is stored in the memory card **8** while being associated with the captured image data.

[0094] An operational part **101** inputs operational information from the above-mentioned operational members relating to exposure and playback provided on the camera main body **2** to the general controller. The operational information inputted from the operational part **101** includes operational information of each operational member such as shutter button **9**, power switch **14**, four-gang switch **15** and switch group **16**.

[0095] The general controller **150** is implemented by a microcomputer and performs centralized control of the exposure function and playback function. The general controller **150** is connected with the memory card **8** via a card interface **103**. Also a personal computer PC is externally connected via a communication interface **105**.

[0096] The general controller **150** has a ROM **151** which stores processing programs for executing a variety of concrete processings in the exposure function and the playback function and control programs for controlling drivings of the

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above-mentioned members of the digital camera **1**, and a RAM **152** which is a work area for executing a number of operations in accordance with the processing programs and the control programs. Also, it is so configured that program data recorded on a memory card **8** which is a recording medium can be read out via the card interface **103** to be stored in the ROM **151**. Therefore, these processing programs and control programs can be installed into the digital camera **1** from the memory card **8**. The processing programs and the control programs may be installed from the personal computer PC via the communication interface **105**.

[0097] In **FIG. 5**, an exposure setting part **154**, a display controller **155**, a recording controller **156**, a playback controller **157**, a special imaging controller **158** and an image synthesizer **159** represent functions implemented by the processing programs of the general controller **150** in the forms of functional blocks.

[0098] The exposure setting part **154** for executing an exposure control process and determines a brightness of the subject using image data of G color component of the live view image and calculates an exposure control value based on the determination result.

[0099] The display controller **155** for executing an image display process performs the above-mentioned display operation of the display part **140**, that is, it performs an operation of reading image data temporarily stored in the image memory **126** and transferring the image data to the LCD VRAM **141** or the EVF VRAM **142** after adjusting the image size to adapt to the image size of the display destination as is necessary.

[0100] The recording controller **156** executes a recording process. In the normal exposure mode, the recording controller **156** reads out the image data that has been temporarily stored in the image memory **126** after an instruction for exposure is made, and performs predetermined processes based on the JPEG system such as two-dimensional DCT conversion and Huffman coding to generate image data for use recording as captured image data. Furthermore, a thumbnail image is generated by reading out the image data every **8** pixels in each of the vertical and the horizontal directions from the image memory **126** to the RAM **152**. Moreover, tag information relating to the captured image data which to be recorded in association with these captured image data is generated. Then, the recording controller **156** generates an image file in which tag information is attached to compressed captured image and thumbnail image, and records the image file onto the memory card **8**. In the case where two images are captured in the gradation control processing mode, the same recording process as described above is performed on the synthesized image having subjected to synthesis process by the image synthesizer **159**.

[0101] **FIG. 8** is a view showing a recording method of image file onto the memory card **8**. In the top recording area of the memory card, an index area for storing folder information and information of image files belonging to the respective folder is provided, and in subsequently areas, image files are sequentially stored in the order of being captured. The recording area of each image file in the memory card **8** is composed of three areas and tag information, captured image data and thumbnail image are sequentially stored in these three areas from upstream. As shown in the drawing, the tag information includes a camera name, a lens name, a focal length at the time of exposure, an f-number at the time of exposure, an exposure mode, a focal position, a file name, a subject brightness, a white balance adjustment value and a date and time of exposure. The imaging mode represents information whether the image is captured in the normal exposure mode or in the gradation control processing mode.

[0102] The playback controller **157** performs reproducing process of a captured image recorded on the memory card **8** on the LCD **10**. The playback mode is set by the power switch **14**, and then the playback controller **157** reads out thumbnail images from each image file recorded on the memory card **8** and stores them sequentially in the LCD VRAM **141** according to a predetermined index form. As a result of this, thumbnail images are index displayed on the LCD **10**. When a thumbnail image to be reproduced is designated from the index displayed thumbnail images by the four-gang switch **15** and the switch group **16**, the playback controller **157** reads out the captured image data from the image file and after performing a predetermined elongation process on compressed captured image data, the playback controller **157** transfers it to the LCD VRAM **141** to make the LCD **10** display it.

[0103] The special imaging controller **158** controls the exposure operation of the CCD **303** when the shutter button **9** is pressed all the way down (S2) in the condition that the exposure mode is set at the gradation control mode. When the shutter button **9** is brought into the S2 state, for capturing images for synthesis to which the gradation control process is to be effected, the special imaging controller **158** changes the exposure time of the CCD **303** which corresponds to the shutter speed, thereby achieving the control such that exposure operation is repeated twice at a predetermined interval.

[0104] The image synthesizer **159** performs a synthesis process of data of two images with different exposure amounts that have been captured in the gradation control processing mode. In this synthesis processes, positioning (positioning process) is performed between two images, and a process for generating an actual synthesized image (image synthesis process) by adding these at an appropriate adding ratio is performed, the detail of which will be described later.

[0105] Next, exposure operation in the gradation control processing mode of the digital camera **1** configured as described above will be explained. **FIG. 9** is a flow chart showing a procedure of image capturing operation in the gradation control processing mode.

[0106] In step S11, when the shutter button **9** is pressed half way down, a focal point of the lens group **30** of the imaging lens **3** is adjusted for a main subject, an exposure control value is calculated by using a live view image and a white balance adjustment value is set. The exposure control value which is calculated at this time is a value to provide correct exposure, and concretely, a shutter speed and an f-number which are correct values are obtained (step S12).

[0107] Next, when the shutter button **9** is pressed all the way down in step S13, the shutter speed is set at a shutter speed which is at two steps under the shutter speed which is a correct value (step S14). Then, the CCD **303** is exposed to the light for an exposure time corresponding to this shutter speed, and thereby a first image F1 of the subject is captured (step S15). After exposure, an image signal outputted from

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the CCD **303** is subjected to a predetermined analogue signal processing in the signal processing circuit **121**, and converted into pixel data of 10 bits in the A/D conversion circuit **122**.

[0108] Next, in the shading correction circuit **123**, correction of shading is executed (step **S16**). At this time, a correction table which corresponds to the optical conditions of focal length and f-number at the time of exposure is selected and inputted to the shading correction circuit **123** by the general controller **150**. The shading correction circuit **123** performs shading correction by executing multiplication process of image data outputted from the A/D conversion circuit **122** and the inputted correction table (see **FIG. 6**).

[0109] After that, predetermined processes are executed by the WB circuit **124** and the γ correction circuit **125**, and stored in the first memory **126***a* of the image memory **126** (step **S17**). As for this first image F1, since the exposure time of the CCD **303** is set shorter than the proper value, the image is in general dark because of less amount of light exposure compared to images captured in the normal exposure mode. Furthermore, since the shading correction is performed in the shading correction circuit **123**, an influence of shading is eliminated.

[0110] Next, from the shatter speed which is a proper value, a shutter speed over two steps is set (step **S18**), and the CCD **303** is exposed to the light for an exposure time corresponding to this shutter speed, and a second image F2 of the subject is captured (step **S19**). After the exposure, as is the same with the first image F1, an image signal outputted from the CCD **303** is subjected to a predetermined analogue signal processing in the signal processing circuit **121**, converted into pixel data of **10** bits in the A/D conversion circuit **122**, subjected to a shading correction in the shading correction circuit **123**, subjected to predetermined processes in the WB **123** and the **7** correction circuit **125**, and stored in the second memory **126***b* of the image memory (steps **S20**, **S21**). As for this second image F2, since the exposure time of the CCD **303** is set longer than the proper value, the image is in general light because of the amount of light exposure is larger in comparison with images captured in the normal exposure mode. Furthermore, as is the same with the first image F1, since the shading correction is performed in the shading correction circuit **123**, an influence of shading is eliminated.

[0111] Next, in response to that the second image F2 is stored in the second memory **126***b* of the image memory, the image synthesizer **159** of the general controller **150** reads out the captured first image **F1** and the second image F2 from the image memory and performs positioning of these images (step **S22**). This positioning process is such that both of the images to be synthesized are positioned so as to synthesize the same patterns in the image accurately in the image synthesis process. In this positioning process, the second image F2 is moved while referring the first image F1 as a reference image. **FIG. 10** is a flow chart showing a flow of this positioning process.

[0112] In step **S31**, a movement amount of the second image F2 in the rectangular XY plane coordinate system is calculated. This can be achieved by determining a movement amount by which the correlative coefficient C (ξ,η) represented by the following Expression **1** is minimum, assuming that the second image F2 is moved in parallel in the X direction and the Y direction.

$$C(\xi,\eta)=\Sigma\Sigma\{P1\ (x,y)-P2\ (x-\xi,y-\eta)\}^2 \quad [1]$$

[0113] In the above expression, x, y represent coordinate variables in the rectangular XY plane coordinate system whose origin is the center of the image, P1 (x, y) represents levels of image data at the coordinate points (x, y) of the first image F1, and P2 (x−ξ,y−η) represents levels of image data at the coordinate points (x−ξ, y−η) of the second image F2. That is, the correlative coefficient C (ξ,η) expressed by the Expression 1 is obtained by squaring a difference in level between corresponding image data of two images, and calculating a total sum of the resultant values for all pixel data. And, when (ξ, η) which represents movement amount of the second image F2 is changed, the (ξ, η) at which the correlative coefficient C becomes minimum will be a movement amount of the second image F2 when the both images are best matched.

[0114] In the present preferred embodiment, (ξ, η) at which the correlative coefficient C becomes minimum is calculated as (x3, y3), for example, by changing ξ representing movement amount regarding the X coordinate of the second image F2 from −80 to +80, and η representing movement amount regarding the Y coordinate of the second image F2 from −60 to +60. It is to be noted that in the gradation control mode, since the first image F1 and the second image F2 are captured while changing the exposure time of the CCD **303**, there is a difference in brightness level of entire image between the first image F1 and the second image F2. Therefore, it is preferred to determine the correlative coefficient C after normalization by dividing both image data by the respective average brightness's.

[0115] Furthermore, in this positioning process, only G color component which exerts a large influence on the resolution from the view point of the human visual characteristic may used. In such a case, as for the R, B color components which exert a little influence on the resolution from the view point of the human visual characteristic, positioning processes can be simplified by utilizing the movement amount calculated for the G color component.

[0116] Next, in step **S32**, as shown in **FIG. 11**, the second image F2 is moved in parallel by the calculated movement amount (x3, y3). Then, after completion of the parallel movement, the part not overlapping with the first image F1 is deleted from the image data of the second image 12 resulting from parallel movement. Next, in step **S33**, also in the first image **F1**, the part of the image data not overlapping with the second image **F2** is deleted. In this way, image data of the part not required for synthesizing images (represented by hatching in **FIG. 11**) is deleted, and image data necessary for synthesis having been subjected to accurate positioning can be obtained.

[0117] Since the first image F1 and the second image F2 have been subjected to shading correction by the shading correction circuit **123** at the time of capturing of images, positioning of images can be achieved without being influenced by a shading.

[0118] Next, synthesis process of images having been subjected to positioning process is performed by the image synthesizer **159** of the general controller **150** (**FIG. 9**, step **S23**). Now, A/D conversion output level with respect to the brightness level of the subject in the first image F1 and the second image F2 will be explained. As shown in **FIG. 12A**,

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since the exposure amount is suppressed for the underexposed first image F1, the gradation characteristic is as shown by the characteristic LU, such that the A/D conversion output level is suppressed to low with respect to the brightness level of the subject. On the other hand, as for the overexposed second image F2, the exposure amount is excess, and hence the gradation characteristic will be such that the A/D conversion output level is emphasized to be high with respect to the brightness level of the subject as shown by the characteristic LO.

[0119] In the image synthesis process, by adding the image data of the first image F1 and the image data of the second image F2 for every pixel at an appropriate adding ration, image data having desired gradation characteristic within the range interposed between the gradation characteristic LU and the gradation characteristic LO in **FIG. 12A** is generated. **FIG. 12B** is a view showing a curve R representing adding ratios at various levels on the basis of the level of the overexposed second image F2. As shown in the drawing, the adding ratios are not constant regardless of the level of the image data, and as the level of the overexposed second image F2 decreases, the adding ratio of the overexposed second image F2 increases. The adding ratio of the overexposed second image F2 is made large as described above for making it easier to view dark portions of the subject.

[0120] To be more specific, if the level P2 (i, j) of the pixel data at the coordinate point (i, j) of the second image F2 is D as shown in the drawing, for example, the level P2 (i, j) of the pixel data and the level P1 (i, j) of the pixel data at the coordinate point (i, j) of the first image F1 are added to each other by R2:R1 to generate the level P3 (i, j) of the pixel data of the synthesized image under gradation control. In this way, by adding all the pixel data at the adding ratio in accordance with the level of the pixel data of the overexposed second image F2, all pixel data of the synthesized image under gradation control is generated. As a result, a gradation-controlled synthesized image having an intermediate gradation characteristic between the gradation characteristic of the first image F1 and the gradation characteristic of the second image F2.

[0121] Next, in the recording controller **156** of the general controller **150**, a predetermined compression process is effected on the generated synthesized image to generate captured image data. In addition to this, data for thumbnail image and tag information is generated. Then, an image file is generated from the captured image data of synthesized image thus generated and the data for thumbnail image and tag information, and recorded onto the memory card **8** (**FIG. 9**, step S24).

[0122] In the above, explanation was made for the first preferred embodiment, and in the present preferred embodiment, at the time of capturing image data of two images to be used for synthesis, each of these image data is subjected to shading correction by the shading correction circuit **123** which is a counter processing hardware circuit. Therefore, it is possible to achieve the subsequent positioning process without being influenced by a shading. In addition, since the shading correction is implemented by a special hardware circuit, it is possible to perform the shading correction with relatively high speed.

[0123] In the present preferred embodiment, each of two images is subjected to the shading correction at the time of capturing image data. However, it is also possible to make control so that shading correction is effected on only the second image F2 exposed with a large amount of light without effecting shading correction for both of the captured two images.

[0124] To be more specific, at the time of capturing the data of the first image F1 which is two-step underexposed with a smaller amount of light, the image data having subjected to A/D conversion is inputted to the WB circuit **124** and subjected to a predetermined process rather than being inputted to the shading correction circuit **123**. That is, the shading correction process of step S16 in **FIG. 9** may be omitted.

[0125] In such a case, as described above, by configuring so that the two-step underexposed first image F1 which is exposed with a relatively small amount of light is priorly captured, shading correction process between the first image F1 and the second F2 is not effected, so that it is possible to reduce the exposure interval. Therefore, it is possible to reduce the positional difference due to the difference in timing of exposure time, and hence to achieve more accurate positioning.

[0126] <2. Second Preferred Embodiment>

[0127] Next, the second preferred embodiment of the present invention will be explained. In the first preferred embodiment, the shading correction is executed by a count processing hardware circuit which is a special circuit at the time of capturing image data, however, the present invention differs from the first preferred embodiment in that the image data is directly stored in the image memory and the shading correction is executed by software. The image processing apparatus according to the present preferred embodiment is as same as the digital camera **1** shown in the schematic views of appearance in FIGS. **2** to **4**.

[0128] **FIG. 13** is a schematic block diagram showing an internal configuration of the digital camera **1** which is the image processing apparatus according to the present invention. In this drawing, those having the same functions as in the first preferred embodiment are denoted by the same reference numerals and detail description thereof will be omitted.

[0129] The digital camera **1** of the present preferred embodiment has a shading corrector **160** implemented by a processing program of the general controller **150** and for performing a shading correction by software, in place of the shading correction circuit **123**.

[0130] The shading corrector **160** implements the process as same as the process executed by the shading correction circuit **123** in the first preferred embodiment. That is, it performs shading correction by multiplying obtained image data and the correction table stored in the shading ROM **153**. Shading correction is effected on the image data that having been subjected to A/D convention in the first preferred embodiment, however, the present preferred embodiment differs from the first preferred embodiment in that shading correction is effected on the image data stored in the image memory **126**.

[0131] Also in the same manner, the white balance adjustment process and γ correction process are implemented by software. Therefore, a WB/γ corrector **161** is provided as a

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function implemented by processing programs in the general controller **150** in place of the WB circuit **124** and the γ correction circuit **125**. The processes in this WB/γ corrector **161** are as same as the processes in the WB circuit **124** and the γ correction circuit **125**. In the normal exposure mode, this WB/γ corrector **161** performs a predetermined process on the image data having been subjected to the shading correction in the shading corrector **160**. On the other hand, in the gradation control processing mode, a predetermined process is effected on the synthesized image resulting from the synthesis process by the image synthesizer **159**.

[0132] Furthermore, in the first preferred embodiment, the image memory **126** stores image data outputted from the CCD **303** for which a predetermined signal process has completed. To the contrary, in the present preferred embodiment, image data of the CCD-RAW form which has been outputted from the CCD **303** and just subjected to the A/D conversion is stored. The general controller **150** reads out the image data of the CCD-RAW form and performs the above-mentioned processes such as shading correction.

[0133] Next, an image capturing operation in the gradation control processing mode of the digital camera **1** configured as described above will be explained. **FIG. 14** is a flow chart showing a procedure of image capturing operation in the gradation control processing mode.

[0134] First, in step **S41**, when the shutter button is pressed half way down, as preparation for image capturing, a focal point of the lens group **30** of the imaging lens **3** is adjusted for a main subject, an exposure control value is calculated by using a live view image and a white balance adjustment value is set. The exposure control value which is calculated at this time is a value to provide correct exposure, and concretely, a shutter speed and an f-number which are correct values are obtained (step **S42**).

[0135] Next, when the shutter button **9** is pressed all the way down in step **S43**, the shutter speed is set at a shutter speed which is at two steps under the shutter speed which is a correct value (step **S44**). Then, the CCD **303** is exposed to the light for an exposure time corresponding to this shutter speed, and thereby a first image **F1** of the subject is captured (step **45**).

[0136] After the exposure, an image signal outputted from the CCD **303** is subjected to a predetermined analogue signal processing in the signal processing circuit **121**, and converted into pixel data of **10** bits in the A/D conversion circuit **122**. Then, the A/D converted first image **F1** is stored in the first memory **126***a* in the image memory **126** in the CCD-RAW form (step **S46**). As for this first image F1, since the exposure time of the CCD **303** is set shorter than the proper value, the image is in general dark because of less amount of light exposure compared to images captured in the normal exposure mode.

[0137] Next, from the shutter speed which is a proper value, a shutter speed of two steps over is set (step **S47**), and the CCD **303** is exposed to the light for an exposure time corresponding to this shutter speed, and a second image F2 of the subject is captured (step **S48**). After exposure, as is the same with the first image **F1**, an image signal outputted from the CCD **303** is subjected to a predetermined analogue signal processing in the signal processing circuit **121**, converted into pixel data of **10** bits in the A/D conversion circuit **122**, and stored in the second memory **126***b* of the image memory in the CCD-RAW form (step **S49**). As for this second image F2, since the exposure time of the CCD **303** is set longer than the proper value, the image is in general light because of the amount of light exposure is larger in comparison with images captured in the normal exposure mode.

[0138] Next, the shading corrector **160** of the general controller **150** reads out the first image F1 from the first memory **126***a* of the image memory **126** and performs shading correction (step **S50**). This process can be achieved by executing the same multiplication process of the image data and the correction table in the first preferred embodiment by software. Then, the shading corrector **160** stores the first image F1 that has been subjected to shading correction in the first memory **126***a* again. In the same manner, the shading corrector **160** reads out the second image F2 from the second memory **126***b* of the image memory **126**, performs shading correction, and stores again in the second memory **126***b* (step **S51**).

[0139] Next, the image synthesizer **159** of the general controller **150** reads out the shading corrected first image F1 and the second image F2 from the image memory and performs positioning and synthesis processes of these images (step **S52**, **S53**). These processes are as same as those in the steps **S22** and **S23** in **FIG. 9**. Also in the present preferred embodiment, the shading correction is effected before performing the positioning process, it is possible to perform the positioning process without being influenced by a shading.

[0140] Next, the WB/γ corrector **161** of the general controller **150** performs adjustment of white balance and γ correction on the generated synthesized image (step **S54**). The following process of step **S55** is as same as in step **S24** of **FIG. 9**.

[0141] In the above, explanation was made for the second preferred embodiment, and in the present preferred embodiment, at the time of capturing image data of two images to be used for synthesis, each of these image data is subjected to shading correction by way of software. Therefore, it is possible to achieve the subsequent positioning process without being influenced by a shading.

[0142] In addition, since any image processing such as shading correction is not executed between exposures of the first image F1 and the second image F2, it is possible to reduce the exposure interval. Therefore, it is possible to achieve more accurate positioning by reducing a positional difference between images due to a difference in exposure timing.

[0143] Also, it is possible to control so that the shading correction is not effected on the first image F1 that has been two-step underexposed with a relatively small amount of light. That is, step **S50** of **FIG. 14** is omitted. As a consequence of this, it is possible to reduce the total time before generating a gradation-controlled synthesized image.

[0144] <3. Third Preferred Embodiment>

[0145] Next, the third preferred embodiment of the present invention will be explained. In the second preferred embodiment, an image is synthesized while performing a shading correction and a synthesized image having been subjected to

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the gradation control process is stored in the memory card **8** in the recording mode, and the present preferred embodiment differs form the second preferred embodiment in that two images captured in the recording mode are stored in the memory card **8** as they are, and image synthesis process can be executed in the playback mode.

[0146] The image processing apparatus according to the present preferred embodiment is a digital camera **1** having a similar appearance to the schematic configurationally views of FIGS. **2** to **4**, and having a similar internal configuration to the schematic block diagram shown in **FIG. 13**.

[0147] The exposure mode of the digital camera **1** of the present preferred embodiment has a gradation control exposure mode, as well as a normal exposure mode for normally capturing an image one by one. In contrast to the aforementioned gradation control processing mode in the above preferred embodiment, the gradation control exposure mode is a mode limited to capturing two images of different exposures for the same subject in different timings, and recording the respective images onto the memory card **8**.

[0148] In the gradation control exposure mode, since the recording controller **156** of the general controller **150** uses the obtained image data for the subsequent image synthesis or the like, the data is directly stored as the captured image data without performing compression which may deteriorate the image quality. That is, the image data of the CCD-RAW form stored in the image memory **126** and just A/D converted is directly subjected to the recording process as the captured image data. Since two captured image data of different exposures are generated by a single shutter operation in the gradation control exposure mode, an image file wherein tag information is attached to the captured image data of the CD-RAW form and a thumbnail image is generated for each of the two images, and the image files are stored in the memory card **8**. To the exposure mode of the tag information of the generated image file, information making it possible to recognizing the captured image for gradation control such as "gradation control exposure mode ½" is given. This "gradation control exposure mode ½" represents that it is the first image file captured in the gradation control exposure mode.

[0149] **FIG. 15** shows an example of configuration of an image file stored in the memory card **8**. In **FIG. 15**, "P000001.JPG", "P000002.JPG" and the like represent the names of image files. In the present preferred embodiment, the name of image file is expressed by "PL.M" and "L" in the "PL.M" represent a 6-order number indicating the order that the image file is generated, and "M" represents an extension indicating the form of the captured image data. In "M", "JPG" represent captured image data compressed in the JPEG form and recorded, and "RAW" represents captured image data recorded in the CCD-RAW form. The captured image data captured in the normal exposure mode is represented by the extension "JPG", and the captured image data captured in the gradation control exposure mode is represented by the extension "RAW".

[0150] In the gradation control exposure mode, data of two images are continuously captured, and image files are generated for each of these captured image data, so that the both image files are stored in the same folder in the memory card **8** according to the present preferred embodiment. In the drawing, "**1***f*", "**2***f*" and the like represent folder names of image files captured in the gradation control exposure mode. In the present preferred embodiment, a folder name is represented by "Nf", and "N" shows captured order in the gradation control exposure mode.

[0151] Next, a gradation control process in the playback mode of the digital camera **1** thus configured will be explained. **FIG. 16** is a view showing a flow of the gradation control process in this playback mode.

[0152] When the playback mode is selected by the power switch **14**, and the menu display switch **34** is pressed down, a playback menu screen as shown in **FIG. 17A** is displayed on the LCD **10**. On the playback menu screen, it is possible to select special playback methods other than the normal playback display of captured image. These special playback methods include a gradation control process. The user operates the four-gang switch **15** to move a cursor C1 displayed on the LCD **10** so as to point at the gradation control process, and presses down the execute switch **32** to give a direction for the gradation control process to the digital camera **1** (step **S61**).

[0153] On this playback menu screen, when a special playback method such as slide show other than the gradation control process is designated, a predetermined process according to the designated special playback method will be executed (step **S63**).

[0154] Next, the playback controller **157** of the general controller **150** searches only the folder of the image file captured in the gradation control exposure mode from captured images stored in the memory card **8**, and reads out a thumbnail image (step **S62**). To be more specific, folders represented by the folder name "Nf" are sequentially searched from the memory card **8**, and only thumbnail images of the first image F1 and the second image F2 included in the folder are read out.

[0155] Next, the playback controller **157** stores the thumbnail images in the LCD VRAM **141** according to such an index form that four thumbnail images are two-dimensionally arranged in **2** x **2** per one page of the screen of the LCD **10**. As a result of this, two sets of combination of two thumbnail images captured in the gradation control exposure mode are displayed on the LCD **10** as shown in **FIG. 17B** (step **S64**).

[0156] When the image captured in the gradation control exposure mode is displayed, the user operates the four-gang switch **15** and the switch group **16** to move a cursor C2 displayed on the LCD **10** and designate the first image F1 and the second image F2 to which the gradation control process is to be executed (step **S65**). In the case of designating an image that has been captured in the gradation control exposure mode, this cursor C2 for selecting an image can designate either combination of two thumbnail images. That is, the user can designate any first image F1 and second image F2 by a single designating operation.

[0157] When the first image F1 and the second image F2 to which the gradation control process is to be executed are designated, the playback controller **157** reads out designated two captured image data of the CCD-RAW form and stores them in the image memory **126** so as to allow the subsequent process to be executed (step **S66**). Furthermore, the playback controller **157** reads out the respective tag information of the designated two image files, and stores them in the RAM **152** (step **S67**).

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[0158] Next, the shading corrector **160** of the general controller **150** reads out the first image F1 from the image memory **126** and performs shading correction thereon (step S68). This process is achieved by multiplication of the image data and the correction data by using software as is the same with the second preferred embodiment. The correction table used in this shading correction is selected from the shading ROM **153** using the tag information read out from the file of the first image F1. Since the tag information includes the focal length and the f-number at the time of exposure, it is possible to select the correction table that is suited for the optical condition at the time of exposure. The shading corrector **160** stores the first image F1 that has been subjected to the shading correction in the image memory **126** again, and reads out the second image F2 from the image memory **126** and performs shading correction in the same manner as described above (step S69).

[0159] Next, the image synthesizer **159** of the general controller **150** reads out the first image F1 and the second image F2 that have been subjected to the shading correction from the image memory **126**, and performs positioning and synthesis of these images to generate a gradation-controlled synthesized image. These processes are as same as steps **22** and **23** in **FIG. 9** (steps S70, S71). The generated synthesized image is displayed on the LCD **10**, and the user confirms the result of the synthesis process by referring to the LCD **10** (step S72). Also in the present preferred embodiment, since the shading correction is performed before executing the positioning process, it is possible to achieve positioning of images without being influenced by a shading.

[0160] Next, when a predetermined time has elapsed after the synthesized image was displayed on the LCD **10**, LCD **10** displays a screen which enables the user to select whether or not the generated synthesized image is to be recorded. When the user gives an instruction to record the image on this screen, the recording controller **156** of the general controller **150** performs recording process of the generated synthesized image. That is, while a captured image data is generated by performing a predetermined compressing process, the data is recorded on the memory card **8** as an image file with the data of thumbnail image and tag information being added thereto (step S73, S74).

[0161] In the above, the third preferred embodiment was explained, and in the present preferred embodiment, an image is read out from the memory card **8** and a shading correction is performed by software before executing the synthesis process. Therefore, the subsequent positioning can be executed without being influenced by a shading.

[0162] Furthermore, processes such as shading correction, positioning and image synthesis generally require a long time, and if these processes are executed in the recording mode, a processing time from image capturing to recording to the memory card **8** would be elongated. In the present preferred embodiment, these processes can be performed at user's convenient time.

[0163] <4. Fourth Preferred Embodiment>

[0164] Next, the fourth preferred embodiment of the present invention will be explained. In the above third preferred embodiment, the gradation control process such as synthesis process with respect to the recorded captured image data is performed in the digital camera, however, according to the present preferred embodiment, the gradation control process is performed by an image processing apparatus configured by a personal computer or the like. That is, an image processing apparatus such as digital camera having image pickup means just makes continuous exposures of two images to be used for synthesis, and an image processing apparatus configured by a personal computer or the like performs gradation control process such as positioning of these two images and image synthesis process.

[0165] The two images used for the gradation control process are images captured in the gradation control exposure mode of the digital camera according to the third preferred embodiment. That is, the captured image data underexposed than the correct exposure (the first image F1) and the captured image data overexposed than the correct exposure (the second image F2) that have been subjected to only the A/D conversion and recorded in the CCD-RAW form are used. In addition, it is preferred to use image files in each of which tag information including optical conditions at the time of exposure and a thumbnail image are added to the captured image data of the CCD-RAW form.

[0166] **FIG. 18** is an appearance view showing a configuration of the image processing apparatus according to the present preferred embodiment. As shown in **FIG. 18**, the image processing apparatus **50** has a personal computer **60** and a printer **70** which is an output device thereof.

[0167] The personal computer **60** has a computer main body **61**, a display **62** for making various displays, a keyboard **63** and a mouse **64** for receiving an entry from a user. Furthermore, the computer main body **61** has a reading devices **61***a*,**61***c* for reading out various data from a recording medium **90** such as magneto-optic disc, and a memory card reader **61***b* for performing read of a memory card.

[0168] The personal computer **60** stores a plurality of correction tables used for the shading correction in a stationary disk which is a predetermined memory device in the computer main body **61**. These correction tables each are associated in advance with the type of digital camera that is assumed to capture images for use in the gradation control process (digital camera having a function of capturing two images while varying the exposure amount for the same subject, hereinafter, referred to as "assumed camera"). Furthermore, a plurality of correction tables are stored for each of parameters or optical conditions such as focal length and f-number at the time of capturing an image in an assumed camera. That is, by designating the camera which the two captured image data to be subject to the gradation control process and the optical conditions at the time of capturing those captured image data (hereinafter, referred to as "correction table selecting condition"), it is possible to select an optimum correction table for use in the shading correction.

[0169] Furthermore, the personal computer **60** stores a gradation control program for synthesizing data of two captured images of different amounts of light exposure in a stationary disk inside the computer main body **61** and generating a synthesized image having a desired gradation. The personal computer **60** functions as an image processing apparatus that performs the gradation control process by reading out the gradation control program from the stationary disk and executing the program. This gradation control

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program is in advance installed in the computer main body **61** via a reader **61***a* or **61***b* from a recording medium such as a magneto-optic disk on which that program is recorded. Also, this gradation control program may be installed by downloading the same over a communication line such as the Internet from a predetermined server storage device.

[0170] **FIG. 19** is a view showing one example of a work window displayed on the display **62** when the personal computer **60** executes the gradation control program. In a work window **200** are displayed three display regions **201** to **203** for displaying thumbnail images of image data related to the gradation control process, and command buttons **204** to **208** for designating the process contents, process conditions and the like.

[0171] The display region **201** and the display region **202** are arranged on the upper side of the screen, and a thumbnail image f2 of the overexposed second image F2 is displayed in the display region **201**, and a thumbnail image f1 of the underexposed first image F1 is displayed on the display region **202**. Furthermore, the display region **203** is arranged on the lower side of the display region **201**, and a thumbnail image f3 resulted from synthesis of the thumbnail image f1 and the thumbnail image f2 and gradation control simulation.

[0172] Furthermore, the command buttons **204** to **208** are vertically arranged on the lower side of the display region **202**. It is possible to designate predetermined process assigned to the respective command buttons by clicking these command button with a mouse cursor C3.

[0173] The command button displayed "FILE" (hereinafter, "file button") is intended for designating an image file. This file button **204** is clicked, and then a file designating window opens, allowing designation of image files of the first image F1 and the second image F2 to be subjected to the gradation control process from a memory card or the like attached to the memory card reader **61***b*. In the case where an image file captured using the digital camera of the third preferred embodiment is used, since the image files of the first image F1 and the second image F2 are included in the same folder "N1", both of the image files can be designated by designating the folder.

[0174] The command button displayed "EXECUTE" (hereinafter, "execute button") **206** is intended for actually executing the gradation control process by using data of two captured images of different amounts of light exposure. Details of the gradation control process will be described later.

[0175] The command button displayed "SELECT CAMERA TYPE" (hereinafter, "camera selection button") **205** is intended for designating a camera with which the data of two captured images to be subjected to the gradation control process, and an optical condition at the time of capturing that data of captured images. That is, by operating this camera selection button **250**, it is possible to designate the condition for selecting a correction table.

[0176] The camera selection button **205** is selected, and then a camera selection window **210** as shown in **FIG. 20** is displayed on the display **62**. The camera selection window **210** includes an optional button group **211** having an auto selection button **211** a and assumed camera buttons **211***b* to **211***d* to which names of assumed cameras are assigned. The assumed camera buttons **211***b* to **211***d* are displayed in the same number as the number of types of assumed cameras registered in advance, though three buttons are displayed in the present drawing. The user can select desired one of the auto selection button **211** a or assumed camera buttons **211***b* to **211***d* by clicking it by means of the mouse cursor C2.

[0177] In the case where the selection condition of correction table is manually inputted, a corresponding camera name is designated from the assumed camera buttons **211***b* to **211***d*. Either one of the assumed camera buttons **211***b* to **211***d* is designated and an "OK" button **213** is clicked, and then an optical condition inputting window for inputting a focal length and an f-number. In the optical condition inputting window, the user enters a focal length and an f-number at the time of capturing an image via the keyboard **63**. Through such an operation, a correction table selection condition is manually designated.

[0178] On the other hand, in the case of using an image file to which tag information is attached, the auto selection button **211***a* is selected. Tag information previously describes exposure condition information including a camera name, a focal length and an f-number as described above, and by automatically reading these, it is possible to set these as a correction table selecting condition. Therefore, when the auto selection button **21** la is selected, it is not necessary for the user to manually input the correction table selecting condition. It is to be noted that when designations of camera and optical condition at the time of capturing an image is not made by operating the camera selection button **205**, this auto selection button **211***a* is selected by default.

[0179] Returning to **FIG. 19**, the command button displayed "DESIGNATE AREA" (hereinafter "area designation button") **207** is intended for designating a positioning area A1 for use in positioning of two captured image data. In the present preferred embodiment, when the abovementioned correlative coefficient C in the positioning process is calculated, pixel data in the designated positioning area A1 is summed rather than summing all pixel data, to determine the correlative coefficient C.

[0180] Designation of this positioning area is achieved by designating the area corresponding to the positioning area in the real captured image data as a positioning temporary area **A0** by using the thumbnail image f2 displayed on the display region **201** as shown in **FIG. 21**. Based on the positioning temporary area **A0** designated by this thumbnail image f2, the positioning area A1 of the real captured image data is set at the time of gradation control process. The rectangular positioning temporary area **A0** is defined by the positions of point AL**0** which is the left top end point and the point AR**0** which is the right bottom end point in a rectangular XY plane coordinate in which the center of the image is an origin point. Concretely, the point that the user first clicks in the thumbnail image f2 is designated as the coordinate point of the left top end point AL**0**, and the point that the user clicks next is designated as the coordinate point of the right bottom end point AR**0**.

[0181] Returning to **FIG. 19**, the command button displayed "END" (hereinafter, "end button") **208** is provided for ending execution of the gradation control program. The user clicks this END button to end all the processes.

[0182] Further, a slider **209** is displayed on the lower part of the display region **203** of the work window **200**. This

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slider **209** is intended for setting a synthesis ratio between the thumbnail image f1 and the thumbnail image f2 in the simulation for gradation adjusting process using the thumbnail images. The term "synthesis ratio" used herein is a synthesis ratio of the general thumbnail image f1 and the thumbnail image f2 rather than the adding ratio of each level of overexposed image data shown in **FIG. 12B**. In **FIG. 12B**, it resembles the area ratio between the upper area partitioned by the curve R representing the adding ratio characteristic (the area where the underexposed first image F1 is added) and the lower area (the area where the overexposed second image is added).

[0183] Therefore, by moving the slider **209** in the right and left direction using the mouse cursor C3, the curve R representing the adding ratio characteristic in **FIG. 12B** is shifted in the up and down direction, and thereby the synthesis ratio is desirably set. Concretely, as the slider **209** is moved to the right from the center point, the synthesis ratio of the overexposed second image F2 increases, whereas as the slider **209** is moved left, the synthesis ratio of the underexposed first image F1 increases.

[0184] Next, a gradation control process in this image processing apparatus **50** configured as described above will be explained. **FIGS. 22 and 23** are flow charts showing procedures of the gradation control process.

[0185] First, the user designates two image files for use in the gradation control process. Image files are designated by clicking the file button **204**, and the thumbnail images f1, f2 are read from the respective designated image file and displayed on the display region of the work window **200** (steps **S101**, **S102**).

[0186] Next, an adding ratio characteristic is read from the set position of the slider **209** (step **S103**), and a gradation control simulation by thumbnail image is performed using that adding ratio characteristic (step **S104**).

[0187] In the gradation control simulation, first a positioning process is performed using all pixel data of the two thumbnail images f1, f2. This positioning process is as same as that of step **S22** in **FIG. 9**. Though the positioning process is performed using all the pixel data, the process can be done with relatively high speed because thumbnail images consisting of a small number of pixel data. Next, based on the set adding ratio characteristic, the thumbnail image f1 and the thumbnail image f2 are synthesized, and the result of the synthesis is displayed in the display region **203** (step **S105**).

[0188] Upon completion of the gradation control simulation by thumbnail images, whether or not the slider **209** is moved is determined (step **S106**). If the slider is moved, the process returns to step **S103**, and a gradation control simulation by thumbnail images is performed (steps **S103** to **S105**).

[0189] On the other hand, if the slider **209** is not moved, whether or not the execute button **206** is operated is determined (step **S107**). If movement of the slider **209** and operation of the execute button **206** are not made, the process returns to step **S106** to enter a standby state with the simulation result of gradation adjustment by thumbnail images being displayed. Designation of the correction table selection condition by the camera selection button **205** and designation of the positioning temporary area **A0** by the area designation button **207** can be made in this standby state.

[0190] If the execute button **206** is operated in step **S107**, the process proceeds to step **S111** in **FIG. 23**, and each of the captured image data (underexposed first image F1 and overexposed second image F2) is read out from the two designated image files.

[0191] Next, the positioning area A1 for use in the positioning of the captured image data of the first image F1 and the second image F2 is set (step **S112**). As for this positioning area, if the user does not previously set the positioning temporary area **A0** in the thumbnail image f2 as shown in **FIG. 12**, the entire captured image data is set as the positioning area A1. If the positioning temporary area **A0** is previously designated, the coordinate point in the thumbnail image f2 is converted to the coordinate point in the captured image data and set. For example, if the thumbnail image is generated while reducing the size of the captured image data to 1/n, the coordinate point of the left top end point AL1 of the positioning area A1 is (n·l, n·m) provided that the coordinate point of the left top end point AL**0** of the positioning temporary area **A0** is (l, m). In the same manner, the coordinate point of the right bottom end point AR1 of the positioning area A1 is set.

[0192] Next, whether or not the set positioning area A1 requires a shading correction is determined (step **S113**). Now, determination of whether or not a shading correction is necessary will be explained with reference to **FIG. 24**. The upper half of **FIG. 24** shows an example of influence by shading as same as **FIG. 1**. That is, the horizontal axis shows a distance from the center point of captured image data of each pixel data in terms of relative distance provided that the length of the diagonal like of the captured image data is 1. Also, the vertical axis shows a level of each pixel data in terms of relative value. In this context, a predetermine threshold which is considered as not being influenced by shading is set, for example, not less than 0.9 in terms of relative value of the level of the image data. In the same drawing, regardless of the optical conditions such as focal length and f-number, the relative value of the level of the image data is not less than 0.9 in the area within a distance range of 0.3 from the center of the captured image data. That is, it can be considered that an influence by shading will not exert in the area within a distance range of **30%** of the length of the diagonal line regardless of the optical condition.

[0193] The lower half of **FIG. 24** is a view showing an area which is not influenced by shading in the captured image data (hereinafter, "non-shading area") A2 in the rectangular XY plane coordinate whose origin is the center of the captured image data. The boundary curve LA between the non-shading area A2 and the area influenced by shading is nearly circular because of the same distance from the center of the captured image data. In the drawing, the center side area of the boundary curve LA is the non-shading area A2, and the peripheral side area of the boundary curve LA is the area influenced by a shading. If all the pixel data constituting the positioning area A1 is included in this non-shading area A2, it is determined that the positioning area A1 does not require a shading correction. Concretely, if the relative distance from the origin of the coordinate point of the left top end point AL1 of the positioning area A1 and the relative distance from the origin of the coordinate point of the right bottom end point AR1 is not more than 0.3, provided that the length of the diagonal line of the captured image data is 1, it is determined that a shading correction is

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not required. On the contrary, if the left top end point AL1 or the right bottom end point AR1 is not included in the non-shading area A2, it is determined that a shading correction is required.

[0194] Through such a process, if it is determined that a shading correction is not required for the positioning area A1 (No in step S113), the process proceeds to step S123 and a positioning process is performed without performing a shading correction.

[0195] If it is determined that a shading correction for the positioning area A1 is required (Yes in step S113), subsequently, whether or not the mode of camera selection is auto selection is determined (step S114). At this time, if the mode of camera selection is not auto selection, that is, if the user manually designates the correction table selecting condition on the screen shown in FIG. 20, it is possible to select the correction table in accordance with this correction table selecting condition. Therefore, the process proceeds to step S120 where a correction table is selected.

[0196] On the other hand, if the camera selection mode is auto selection, that is, if the auto selection button 211 a is selected on the screen shown in FIG. 20 as described above, information of exposure condition such as camera name, focal length and f-number is read while referring to the tag information of the image files to be used (step S115, S116, S117). By reading the exposure condition information from the tag information, the correction table selecting condition is automatically determined.

[0197] Next, whether or not the exposure condition information is successfully read from the tag information is determined (step S118), and if it is successfully read, the process proceeds to step S120 where a correction table is selected.

[0198] On the other hand, if the exposure condition information is not read successfully, it is impossible to set the correction table selecting condition, and hence it is impossible to perform a shading correction and perform a correct positioning process. Therefore, the positioning area A1 for use in the positioning process is reduced so that it is within the range that is not influenced by a shading (step S119). This range not influenced by a shading is, for example, a distance range of 30% of the length of the diagonal line of the image from the center of the image as shown in the example of FIG. 24.

[0199] In the present preferred embodiment, for realizing a correct positioning process, the size of the positioning area A1 is set at 20% of the size of the captured image data. That is, for the captured image data constituted by the image data of 1600×1200 pixel data, the positioning area A1 is set so that it is constituted by 320×240 pixel data. The center point of the captured image data and the center point of the positioning area A1 coincide with each other. In the case where the positioning area A1 is reduced so that it is within the area not influenced by a shading, it is not necessary to perform a shading correction, so that the process proceeds to step S123 where the positioning process is performed.

[0200] In steps S114 to S118, if the correction table selecting condition is set, the correction table is selected in accordance with this correction table selecting condition (step S120). Next, by multiplying the captured image data and the correction table, a shading correction is effected on each of the first image F1 and the second image F2 (steps S121, S122).

[0201] In the present preferred embodiment, this shading correction process is performed on only the positioning area A1. That is, the shading correction is performed by multiplying the pixel data only included in the positioning area A1 of the captured image data with inverses of the corresponding correction coefficients. This makes it possible to perform the shading correction on the positioning area A1 and perform the subsequent positioning process accurately, as well as reducing the process time of the shading correction.

[0202] Next, in step S123, a positioning process is performed using only the positioning area A1. In this positioning process, pixel data of the positioning area A1 is summed for calculating the movement amount (x3, y3) where the correlative coefficient C (ξ, η) of the second image F2 as described above is minimum. Then, in the same manner as shown in FIG. 11, the entire second image F2 is moved in parallel by the calculated movement amount (x3, y3). Then the pixel data of the part not overlapping with the first image F1 after being moved in parallel and the pixel data of the part not overlapping with the second image F2 in the first image F1 are deleted. As described above, by determining the correlative coefficient C using only the positioning area A1, it becomes possible to achieve accurate positioning with respect to the image position requested by the user, and reduce the process time of the positioning process.

[0203] Subsequently, an image synthesis process of the first image F1 and the second image F2 is performed in accordance with the adding ratio characteristic set by the slider 209 (step S124). Then, a process result display window 220 is displayed on the display 62 as shown in FIG. 25, and a synthesized image is displayed on the display region 221 (step S125). This process result display window 220 includes a save button 222 and a cancel button 223, and by clicking the save button 222 with the mouse cursor C3, the generated synthesized image can be saved in a predetermined memory means (steps S126, S127). When the cancel button 223 is clicked, the image is not saved.

[0204] In the above, the fourth preferred embodiment was explained, and according to the present invention, the positioning area A1 is designated, and a shading correction is performed only when the positioning area A1 requires a shading correction. This configuration makes it possible to simplify the processes of shading and positioning and to reduce the process time.

[0205] The above preferred embodiment uses the camera type, focal length and f-number were used as correction table selection conditions, however, also the type of imaging lens used at the time of exposure may be set as well.

[0206] Furthermore, in the present preferred embodiment, the process was performed in the image processing apparatus in which a personal computer executes the gradation control program, however, the above process may be performed by making a digital camera execute the like gradation control program.

[0207] <5. Fifth Preferred Embodiment>

[0208] Next, the fifth preferred embodiment of the present invention will be explained. In the above preferred embodi-

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ment, the positioning process and the image synthesis process were performed after performing the shading correction, however, the shading corrector **160** according to the fifth preferred embodiment performs positioning and image synthesis of the first image F1 and the second image F2, and thereafter performs a shading correction.

[0209] Among these, calculation of the correlative coefficient C at the time of positioning process uses the positioning area A1 as a limited area, and this area A1 is automatically set by the image synthesizer **159** in the general controller **150**.

[0210] Assuming that relative spatial movement amounts of the images F1, F2 where the contents of images mutually match (conform) with each other on the basis of the frame coinciding condition of the first image F1 and the second image F2 are referred to as "conforming movement amount", the distribution of the shading correlative coefficients varies with the conforming movement amounts. This is because, though the influence of shading in each of the original two images F 1, F2 is matched in the synthesized image, the magnitude of the influence varies with the conforming movement amount.

[0211] Other basic configuration of the image processing apparatus according to the present preferred embodiment is as same as the configuration of the digital camera which is the image processing apparatus of the third preferred embodiment. It is also possible to perform the image processings such as positioning process and image synthesis process using the captured image data of the CCD-RAW form stored in the memory card **8** in the playback mode.

[0212] Next, a gradation control process in the playback mode of the digital camera **1** of the present preferred embodiment will be explained. **FIG. 26** is a flow chart showing a flow of the gradation control process in the playback mode.

[0213] The processes in steps **S81** to **S87** are as same as steps **S61** to **S67** of **FIG. 16**. At the time of completion of step **S87**, the captured image data of the CCD-RAW form of each of the first image F1 and the second image F2 for use in the gradation control process has been read, and stored in the image memory **126**. Further, respective tag information of these two image files have been read and stored in the RAM **152**.

[0214] Next, a positioning process is performed in the image synthesizer **159** of the general controller **150**. In the present preferred embodiment, each of the first image F1 and the second image F2 is not subjected to a shading correction. Therefore, if the positioning process is performed on the entire captured image data, a shading will influence on it, so that the positioning process cannot be conducted accurately. Therefore, before performing the positioning process, the positioning area A1 for use in the positioning process is set from the area not influenced by a shading (non-shading area A2) (step **S88**).

[0215] For setting this positioning area A1, first, a non-shading area A2 of the captured image data to be subjected to the positioning is acquired, and the positioning area A1 is set that the all pixel data is included in the acquired non-shading area A2. As described above, the influence range of shading varies with the focal length and f-number of the imaging lens **3**. That is, the non-shading area A2 varies with the focal length and f-number at the time of exposure of the captured image data. Therefore, for acquiring the non-shading area A2, a correction table is referred in which the focal length and the f-number at the time of exposure are parameters. Concretely, a correction table is selected based on the focal length and the f-number at the time of exposure of the captured image data to be subjected to the positioning, and the area where the correction coefficient set in the correction table is, for example, not less than 0.9 is acquired as the non-shading area A2. The information of the focal length and the f-number to be used for selecting the correction table is acquired from the tag information stored in the ROM **151**.

[0216] **FIG. 27** is a view showing an example of the non-shading area A2 acquired in accordance with the focal length and the f-number at the time of exposure in the rectangular XY plane coordinate system in the captured image data F. As shown in **FIG. 27**, the boundary curves L2*a* to L2*c* of the non-shading area A2 is nearly circular centered at the center point of the captured image data. That is, the center side area of these boundary curves L2*a* to L2*c* is the non-shading area A2 and the peripheral side area thereof is the area influenced by a shading.

[0217] The area A2*a* surrounded by the solid line L2*a* in the drawing represents the non-shading area A2 acquired in the case of the captured image data captured in the initial condition of the digital camera **1**. The initial condition of the digital camera means a condition that the focal length and the f-number of the imaging lens **3** are the initial values (values when the power is turned ON).

[0218] Furthermore, the areas A2*b*, A2*c* surrounded by the dotted lines L2*b*, L2*c* represent the non-shading area A2 acquired in the case of the captured image data captured with different focal length and f-number from the initial values. As described above, when the focal length and the f-number are varied from the initial values, the non-shading area A2 in which the area is varied for the area A2*a* is acquired. That is, the more the focal length tilts from the initial value to the wide side, the narrower the non-shading area A2 as is the area A2*b*, while on the other hand, the more the focal length tilts from the initial value to the tele side, the wider the non-shading area A2 as is the area A2*c*. Likewise, the smaller the f-number than the initial value, the narrower the non-shading area A as is the area A2*b*, while on the other hand, the larger the f-number, the wider the non-shading area A2 as is the area A2*c*.

[0219] After acquiring the non-shading area A2 corresponding to the focal length and the f-number as described above, the image synthesizer **159** sets the rectangular positioning area A1. This setting of positioning area A1 is achieved by setting two intersecting points between the boundary curves L2*a* to L2*c* of the non-shading area A2 and the diagonal line DL of the captured image data as the left top end point and the right bottom end point of the positioning area A1, respectively. Therefore, all pixel data of the set positioning area A1 is included in the non-shading area A2.

[0220] The area A1*a* surrounded by the solid line L1*a* shown in **FIG. 27** represents the positioning area A1 set for the case of the captured image data captured in the initial condition of the digital camera **1**. Furthermore, the areas A1*b*, A1*c* surrounded by the dotted lines L1*b*, L1*c* repre-

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sents the positioning area A1 set for the captured image data captured after the focal length or the f-number has been changed from the initial value.

[0221] Since the positioning area A1 is set in accordance with the size of the non-shading area A2, when the focal length or the f-number is changed from the initial value, the positioning area A1 whose width is changed with respect to the area A1*a* in accordance with the change of the focal length or the f-number. That is, the more the focal length tilts to the wide side from the initial side, the narrower the positioning area A1 is set as is the area A1*b*, while on the other hand, the more the focal length tilts to the tele side from the initial value, the wider the positioning area A1 is set as is the area A1*c*. Likewise, the smaller the f-number than the initial value, the narrower the positioning area A1 is set as is the area A1*b*, while on the other hand, the larger the f-number than the initial value, the wider the positioning area A1 is set as is the area A1*c*.

[0222] In this connection, the non-shading area A2 in the case where of "the focal length is wide end" and "the f-number is open" is the narrowest among the non-shading areas A2 of any optical conditions of focal length and optical condition. That is, by setting so that the positioning area A1 is included in the non-shading area A2 in the case of "the focal length is wide end" and "the f-number is open", it will be necessarily included in the non-shading area A2 in any optical conditions. In other words, that positioning area A1 can be used in any optical conditions. Therefore, the area included in the non-shading area A2 in the case of "the focal length is wide end" and "the f-number is open" may be set as a fixed positioning area A1 without changing the positioning area A1 in accordance with the focal length and the f-number as described above.

[0223] By setting the positioning area A1 by way of such a process, the image synthesizer **159** can perform the positioning process of the first image F1 and the second image F2 using this positioning area A1 (step S89). This positioning process is the same process as step S123 of **FIG. 23**. And, a synthesis process of the first image F1 and the second image F2 (step S90) is performed. This synthesis process is as same as step S23 of **FIG. 9**.

[0224] Subsequently, as the synthesized image is generated, the shading corrector **160** performs a shading correction on the generated synthesized image (step S91). In this shading correction, the shading correction is performed using a correction coefficient corresponding to the movement amount by which the first image F 1 and the second image F2 are relatively moved from the frame coincidence condition in the positioning process.

[0225] **FIG. 28A** shows curves each having a constant distribution of correction coefficients used for the shading correction in the case where the second image F2 is moved in the positioning process from the condition that frames of the first image F1 and the second image F2 coincide with each other before performing the positioning process. In the drawing, the moved second image F2 is denoted by the dotted line, the synthesized image F3 obtained by a synthesis process after the positioning process is denoted by the bold line.

[0226] In addition, the movement line L1 shown in **FIG. 28A** represents relative displacement between the respective centers of the first image F1 and the second image F2 in the image matching condition. The length of this movement line L1 represents a relative moving amount of the second image F2 on the basis of the frame coincidence condition of the first image F1 and the second image F2, and the position corresponding to ½ of the moving amount from the original center on the movement line L1 coincides with the center point of the synthesized image F3.

[0227] As shown in **FIG. 28A**, the curves in which distribution of correction coefficient is constant are nearly circular centered at the respective center points of the first image F1 and the second image F2. By the way, assuming the normal L2 to the movement line L1 at the center point of the synthesized image F3, the correction coefficients for the part of the synthesized image F3 are distributed symmetrically with respect to this normal L2. That is, the curves in which distribution of correction coefficients with respect to the synthesized image F3 is constant are nearly oval-like curves whose short diameter lies in the moving direction of the second image F2 as shown in **FIG. 28B**. By performing the shading correction using such correction coefficients, it is possible to perform the shading correction on the synthesized image.

[0228] By the way, a spatial distribution of correction coefficients used for the shading correction of the first image F1 or the second image F2 is represented by the function S (sqrt (x^2+y^2)) depending on the distance from the center point of the captured image data sqrt (x^2+y2) wherein "sqrt" represents square root. And in the case where the first image F1 and the second image F2 are addingly synthesized in the ratio of k:(1−k) (0<k<1), the correction coefficient used for the shading correction of the synthesized image F3 is preferably determined on the basis of the weighed mean value using the function S.

$$k\cdot S(r)+(1-k)\cdot S(r') \quad (A)$$

[0229] provided that

[0230] r=sqrt (x^2+y^2);

[0231] r'=sqrt $\{(x-\delta x)^2+(y-\delta y)^2\}$;

[0232] x, y represent coordinate variables in the rectangular XY plane coordinate system whose origin point is the center point of image of either one of the first image F1 and the second image F2; and δx, δy represent X, Y component values of conforming movement amount.

[0233] Subsequent steps S92 to S94 are as same as steps S72 to S74 of **FIG. 16**.

[0234] In the above description, the fifth preferred embodiment was explained, and in the present preferred embodiment, since the positioning area A1 is set in accordance with the influence of shading, it is possible to perform a positioning process without carrying out the shading correction.

[0235] It is to be noted that though the synthesized image is subjected to the shading correction in the present preferred embodiment, the shading correction may not be performed since the positioning process can be accurately carried out by setting the positioning area A1 in consideration of the influence of shading.

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[0236] <6. Other Preferred Embodiments>

[0237] In the above preferred embodiment, the synthesized image that has been subjected to gradation control is obtained by capturing two images of different exposures for the same subject in different timings and synthesizing these two images in an appropriate adding ratio, however, the present invention is not limited to this. For example, such a process is also possible that a first image focused at the main subject and a second image focused at the background of the main subject are synthesized to obtain a desirably blurred synthesized image. Furthermore, such a process is also possible that a first image and a second image in which exposure positions for the subject are slightly different from each other, and a synthesized image having a higher resolution than the original images is acquired. That is, the present invention may be applicable to any processes insofar as they capture two images in different timing and synthesize these images.

[0238] While the invention has been shown and described in detail, the foregoing description is in all aspects illustrative and not restrictive. It is therefore understood that numerous modifications and variations can be devised without departing from the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An image processing apparatus comprising:

an image acquiring part for acquiring a first image and a second image;

a shading corrector for performing a shading correction on each of said first image and said second image acquired by said image acquiring part;

a position adjuster for performing positioning of said first image and said second image that have been subjected to the shading correction by said shading corrector; and

an image generator for generating a synthesized image of said first image and said second image that have been subjected to the positioning by said position adjuster.

2. The image processing apparatus according to claim 1,

wherein said shading corrector comprises:

a shading memory for holding a correction table on which coefficients for shading correction are registered; and

a coefficient processing hardware circuit for performing a coefficient process using said correction table with respect to the images acquired by said image acquiring part.

3. The image processing apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising:

an image memory capable of storing a plurality of images; and

a controller for controlling said image memory to store a shading-corrected image that has been subjected to a shading correction by said shading corrector whenever each of said first image and said second image is acquired,

wherein said position adjuster performs positioning in response to that either one of said first image and said second image that is acquired later is stored in said image memory as the shading-corrected image.

4. The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

an image memory capable of storing a plurality of images; and

a controller for controlling said image memory to store each of said first image and said second image acquired in said image acquiring part,

wherein said shading corrector performs a shading correction on each of said first image and said second image stored in said image memory.

5. The image processing apparatus according to claim 4,

wherein said shading corrector comprises:

a shading memory for holding a correction table in which coefficients for shading correction are registered; and

a processor for performing an operational process on an image stored in said image memory using said correction table.

6. The image processing apparatus according to claim 1,

wherein said image acquiring part is an image sensor for capturing said first image and said second image for the same subject in different timings

7. The processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

an image memory for storing a plurality of images; and

an image designator for allowing a user to designate said first image and said second image among the plurality of images stored in said image memory,

wherein said image acquiring part acquires said first image and said second image that have been designated by said image designator from said image memory.

8. An image processing apparatus comprising:

an image sensor for acquiring a first image and a second image for the same subject in different timings;

an exposure controller for controlling said image sensor so that said first image and said second image differ in amount of exposure from each other;

an image generator for generating a synthesized image using said first image and said second image; and

a shading corrector for performing a shading correction on an image acquired in said image sensor,

wherein said shading corrector performs a shading correction on either one of said first image and said second image that has been exposed with a larger amount of light.

9. The image processing apparatus according to claim 8, further comprising:

a controller for controlling said image sensor to acquire either one of said first image and said second image that has been exposed with a smaller amount of light earlier than the other.

10. A program product containing a program for enabling an image processing, in which execution of said program by a computer allows said computer to execute the steps of:

acquiring a first image and a second image;

performing a shading correction on each of acquired said first image and said second image;

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performing a positioning of said first image and said second image that have been subjected to the shading correction; and

generating a synthesized image of said first image and said second image that have been subjected to the positioning.

11. The program product according to claim 10, in which execution of said program by said computer allows said computer to execute the further step of:

allowing a user to designate an area to be used for positioning of said first image and said second image.

12. The program product according to claim 11,

wherein said step of performing a shading correction is executed only for said designated area to be used for positioning.

13. The program product according to claim 11, in which execution of said program by said computer allows said computer to execute the further step of:

determining whether or not it is necessary to perform a shading correction on said designated area to be used for positioning,

wherein when it is determined that a shading correction is not necessary, said step of performing a shading correction is not executed..

14. A program product according to claim 10, in which execution of said program by said computer allows said computer to execute the further step of:

allowing a user to designate a correction table to be used for a shading correction in accordance with an apparatus by which said first image and said second image are acquired.

15. The program product according to claim 10, in which execution of said program by said computer allows said computer to execute the further steps of:

acquiring information relating to exposure condition associated with each of said first image and said second image; and

selecting a correction table to be used for shading correction in accordance with the acquired said information relating to exposure condition.

16. The program product according to claim 15, in which execution of said program by said computer allows said computer to execute the further step of:

narrowing the area to be used for positioning said first image and said second image when said information relating to exposure condition cannot be acquired.

17. An image processing apparatus comprising:

an image acquiring part for acquiring a first image and a second image;

a position adjuster for specifying an area where an influence of shading is ignorable for each of said first image and said second image acquired by said image acquiring part, and performing a positioning of said first image and said second image contained in said area where an influence of shading is ignorable thus specified; and

an image generator for generating a synthesized image of said first image and said second image that have been subjected to positioning by said position adjuster.

18. The image processing apparatus according to claim 17,

wherein said first image and said second image each consist of a center side area and a peripheral side area, and

said area where an influence of shading is ignorable is the center side areas of said first image and said second image.

19. The image processing apparatus according to claim 17, further comprising:

an imaging lens of which focal length is variable,

wherein said position adjuster changes the area to be used for positioning in accordance with the focal length of said imaging lens.

20. The image processing apparatus according to claim 19,

wherein said position adjuster widens said area to be used for positioning as said focal length increases.

21. The image processing apparatus according to claim 17, further comprising:

an imaging lens of which focal length is variable,

wherein said position adjuster specifies the area in the case where the focal length of said imaging lens is a wide angle end as an area to be used for positioning.

22. The image processing apparatus according to claim 17, further comprising:

an imaging lens of which f-number is variable,

wherein said position adjuster changes the area to be used for positioning in accordance with an f-number of said imaging lens.

23. The image processing apparatus according to claim 22,

wherein said position adjuster widens the area to be used for positioning as said f-number increases.

24. The image processing apparatus according to claim 17, further comprising:

an imaging lens of which f-number is variable,

wherein said position adjuster specifies the area in the case where the f-number of said imaging lens is open value as an area to be used for positioning.

25. A program product containing a program for executing an image processing, in which execution of said program by a computer allows said computer to execute the steps of:

acquiring a first image and a second image;

specifying an area where an influence of shading is ignorable for each of acquired said first image and said second image;

performing positioning of said first image and said second image included in said specified area where an influence of shading is ignorable; and

generating a synthesized image of said first image and said second image that have been subjected to positioning.

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26. An image processing apparatus comprising:

an image acquiring part for acquiring a first image and a second image;

a position adjuster for performing positioning of said first image and said second image acquired in said image acquiring part;

an image generator for generating a synthesized image of said first image and said second image that have been subjected to positioning by said position adjuster; and

a shading corrector for performing a shading correction of said synthesized image using a shading correction coefficient in accordance with a relative amount of movement of said first image and said second image at the time of positioning by said position adjuster.

27. The image processing apparatus according to claim 26,

wherein curves each having a constant distribution of said shading correction coefficients of each of said first image and said second image are nearly circular curves; and

curves each having a constant distribution of said shading correction coefficients in accordance with the amount of movement are nearly oval curves each with a shorter diameter extending along the direction of movement.

28. The image processing apparatus according to claim 26,

wherein said image generator additively synthesizes said first image and said second image in a ratio of:

k: (1-k), provided that 0<k<1, and

said shading correction coefficient in accordance with the amount of movement is determined based on a weighed mean value using a predetermined function S as follows:

$k \cdot S(r)+(1-k) \cdot s(r')$,

provided that

$r=\mathrm{sqrt}(x^2+y^2)$;

$r'=\mathrm{sqrt}\{(x-\delta x)^2+(y-\delta y)^2\}$;

"sqrt" represents square root;

x, y represent coordinate variables in the rectangular XY plane coordinate system whose origin point is the center of image of either one of said first image and said second image; and

δx, δy represent said amounts of movement in the X coordinate direction and the Y coordinate direction, respectively.

29. A program product containing a program for executing an image processing, in which execution of said program by a computer allows said computer to execute the steps of:

acquiring a first image and a second image;

performing positioning on acquired said first image and said second image;

generating a synthesized image of said first image and said second image that have been subjected to positioning; and

performing a shading correction on said synthesized image using a shading correction coefficient in accordance with a relative amount of movement of said first image and said second image at the time of positioning.

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(54) IMAGE CAPTURING APPARATUS

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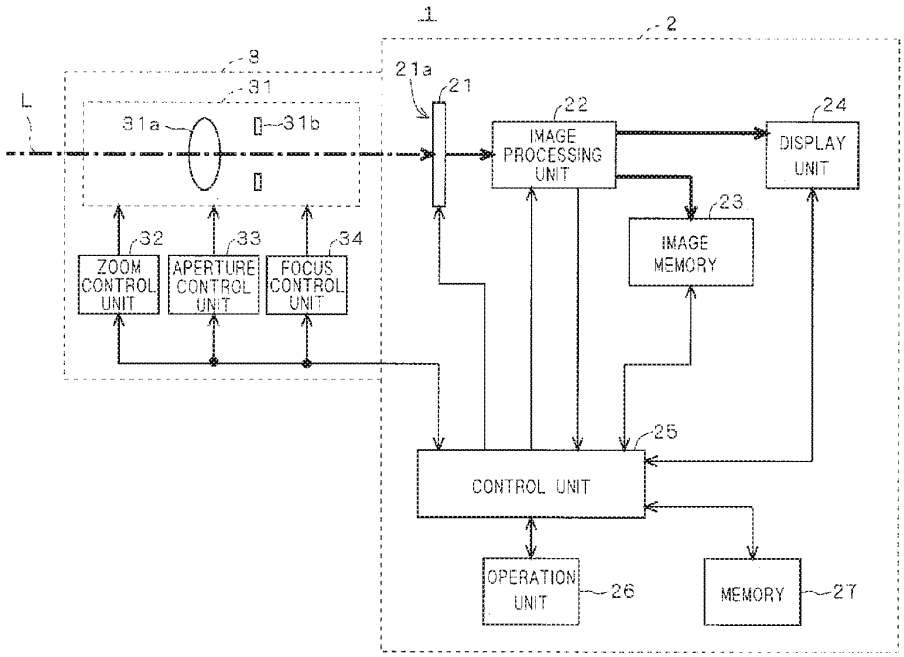
Publication Classification

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(52) U.S. Cl. 348/272

(57) ABSTRACT

An object of the present invention is to realize an image processing technique of making chromatic aberration correction excellently function and capable of efficiently correcting a chromatic aberration and to reduce storage capacity of parameters used for the chromatic aberration correction. It is constructed so that an image processing unit concurrently performs a chromatic aberration correcting process of correcting a chromatic aberration by an image capturing optical system and a color interpolating process of interpolating a dropout color component pixel by pixel on an image signal obtained from an image capturing device. On the basis of position information of a pixel to be processed obtained from the image processing unit, a control unit determines an image filter to be applied to the pixel. For example, an image filter is generated by combining a filter for chromatic aberration correction and a filter for color interpolating process. The image filter is applied, filter computation is performed on the image signal, and the chromatic aberration correcting process and the color interpolating process are concurrently performed.



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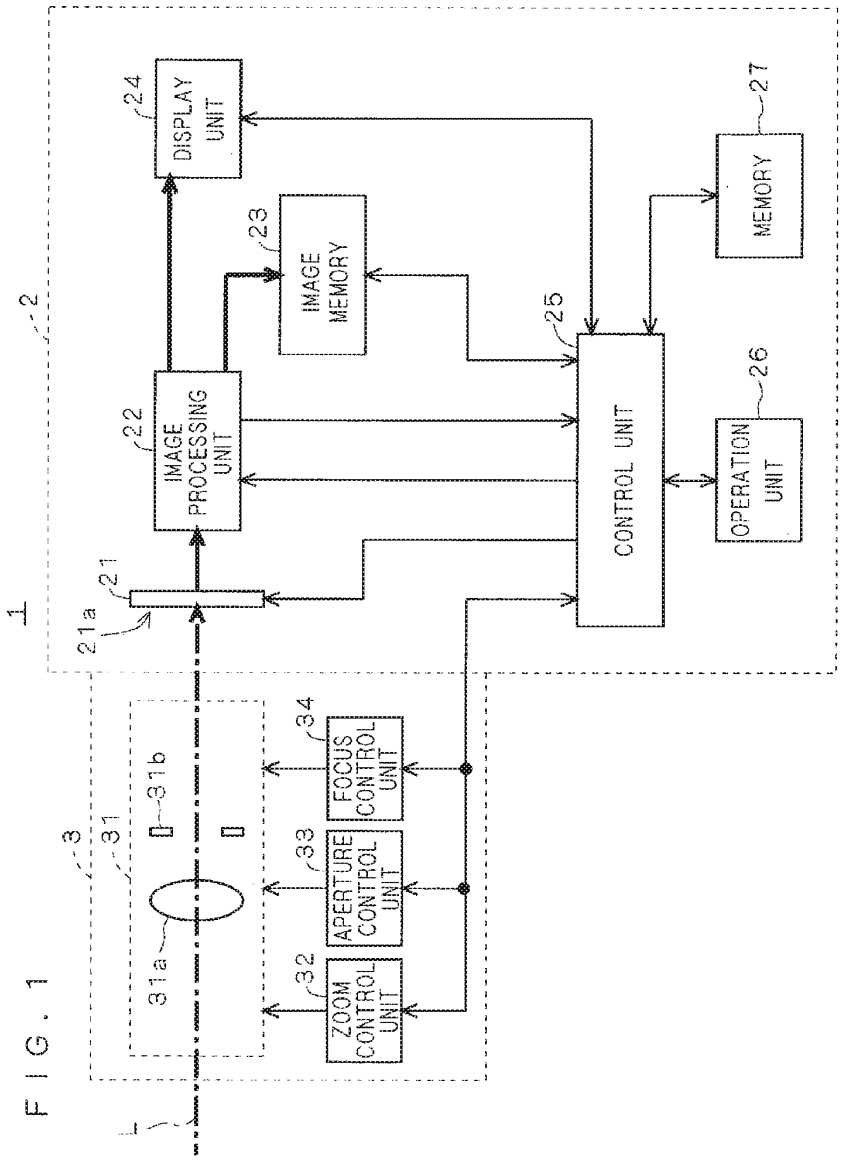
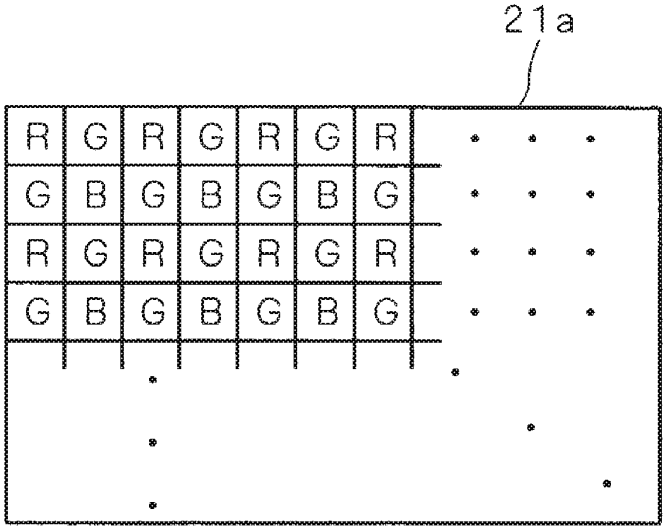


FIG. 1

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FIG. 2



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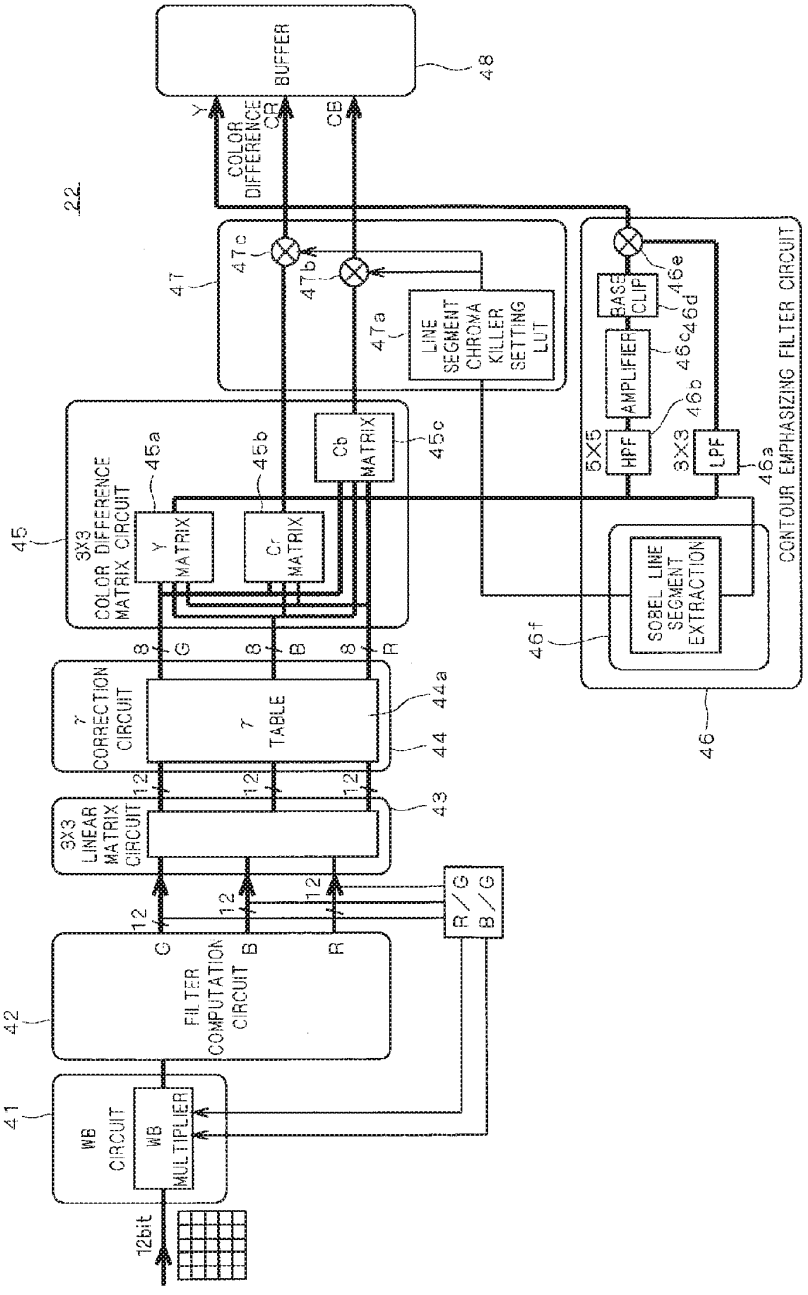


FIG. 3

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FIG. 4

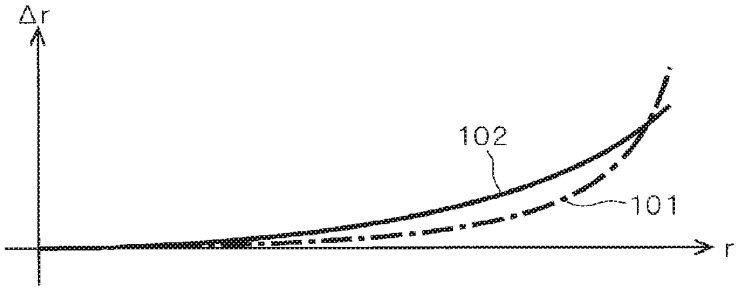


FIG. 5

201

1	2	1
2	4	2
1	2	1

FIG. 6

202

0	0	0	1	1
0	0	0	1	1
0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0

FIG. 7

203

0	0	0	1	3	3	1
0	0	0	3	9	9	3
0	0	0	3	9	9	3
0	0	0	1	3	3	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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FIG. 8

IMAGE CAPTURING CONDITIONS			COEFFICIENTS OF APPROXIMATION FUNCTION			
FOCAL LENGTH	PHOTOGRAPHING DISTANCE	f-NUMBER	a	b	c	d
5~10mm	2~5m	F2	1.234	0.123	2.345	0
		F4	2.345	0.234	3.456	0.001
		F8	3.456	0.345	4.567	0.002
	5~10m	F2	1.357	0.135	0.246	0.003
		:	:	:	:	:
	10m~	F2	3.579	0.357	0.468	0.004
		:	:	:	:	:
10~30mm	2~5m	F2	2.345	0.234	0.357	0.005
		:	:	:	:	:

FIG. 9

IMAGE CAPTURING CONDITIONS			COEFFICIENTS OF APPROXIMATION FUNCTION			
FOCAL LENGTH	PHOTOGRAPHING DISTANCE	f-NUMBER	a	b	c	d
5~10mm	2~5m	F2	-1.234	-0.123	-2.345	0
		F4	-2.345	-0.234	-3.456	-0.001
		F8	-3.456	-0.345	-4.567	-0.002
	5~10m	F2	-1.357	-0.135	-0.246	-0.003
		:	:	:	:	:
	10m~	F2	-3.579	-0.357	-0.468	-0.004
		:	:	:	:	:
10~30mm	2~5m	F2	-2.345	-0.234	-0.357	-0.005
		:	:	:	:	:

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FIG. 10

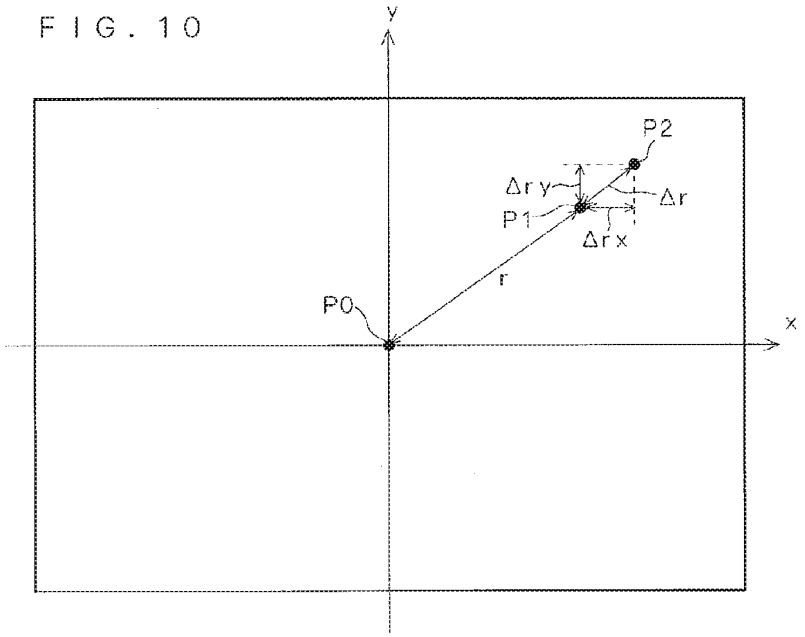
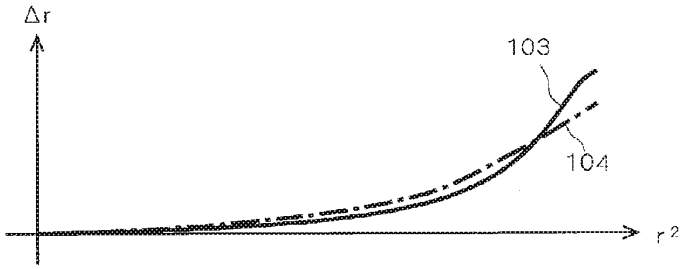


FIG. 11



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FIG. 12

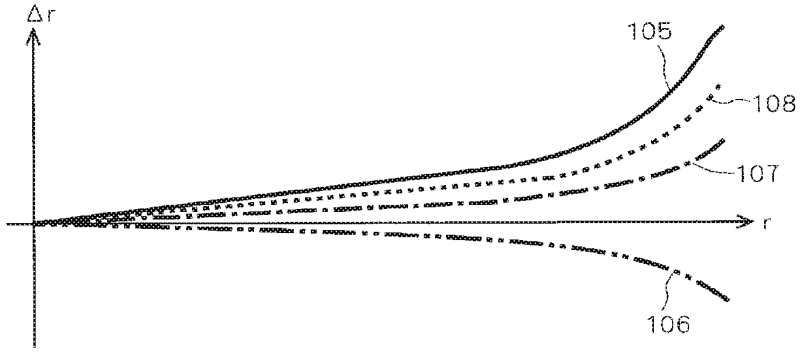


FIG. 13

0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	3	3	1	0	0	0
3	9	9	3	0	0	0
3	9	9	3	0	0	0
1	3	3	1	0	0	0

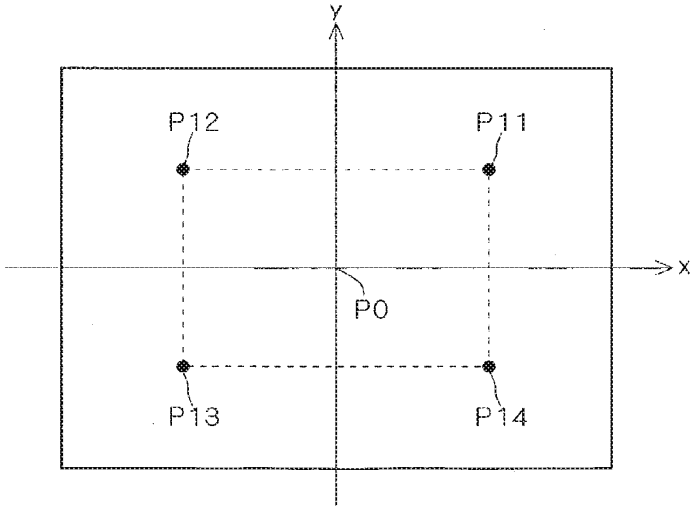
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FIG. 14

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COORDINATES OF POSITION OF IMAGE TO BE PROCESSED		MOVEMENT AMOUNT BY CHROMATIC ABERRATION	
x	y	Δrx	Δry
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
1324	256	1.33	0.88
1324	257	1.32	0.87
1324	258	1.32	0.86
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮

FIG. 15



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FIG. 16B

204

1	3	3	1	0	0	0
3	9	9	3	0	0	0
3	9	9	3	0	0	0
1	3	3	1	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

FIG. 16A

203

0	0	0	1	3	3	1
0	0	0	3	9	9	3
0	0	0	3	9	9	3
0	0	0	1	3	3	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

FIG. 16C

205

0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	3	3	1	0	0	0
3	9	9	3	0	0	0
3	9	9	3	0	0	0
1	3	3	1	0	0	0

FIG. 16D

206

0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	1	3	3	1
0	0	0	3	9	9	3
0	0	0	3	9	9	3
0	0	0	1	3	3	1

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FIG. 17

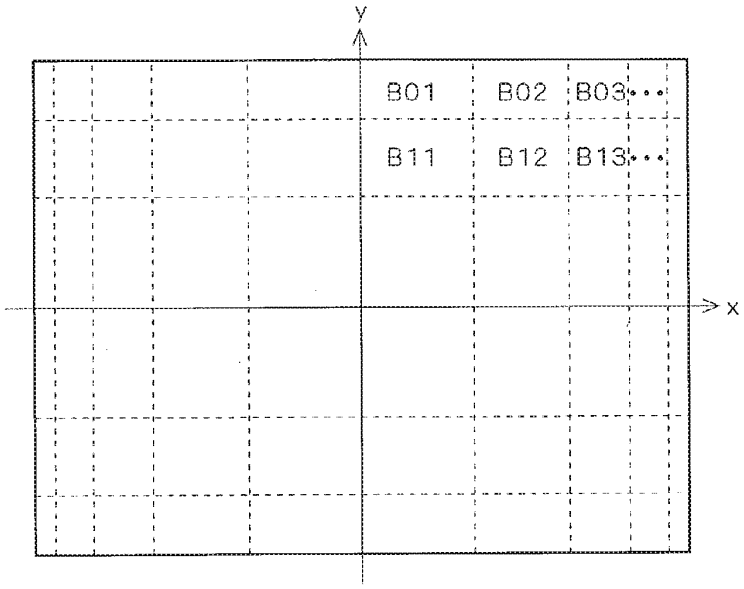


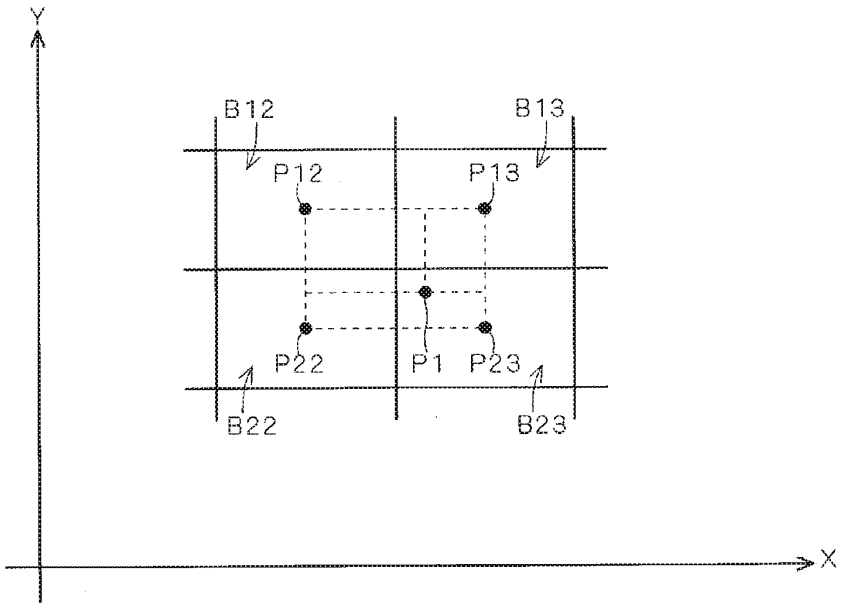
FIG. 18

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NUMBER OF CORRECTION BLOCK	MOVEMENT AMOUNT BY CHROMATIC ABERRATION	
	Δ r x	Δ r y
B01	0.00	0.42
B02	0.13	0.47
B03	0.56	0.56
B04	0.82	0.76
⋮	⋮	⋮

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FIG. 19



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FIG. 20A

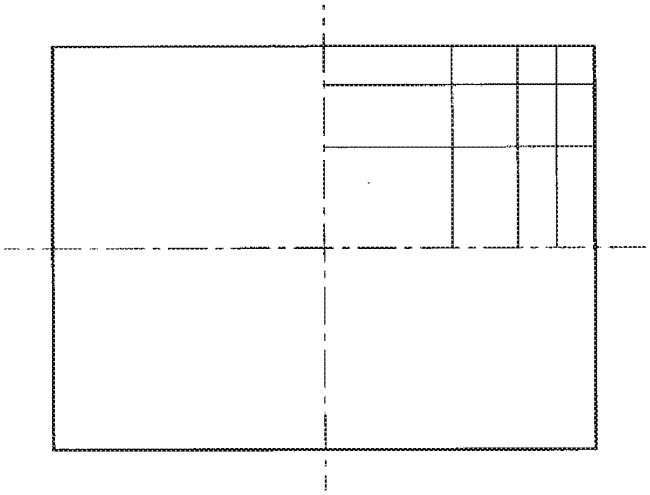
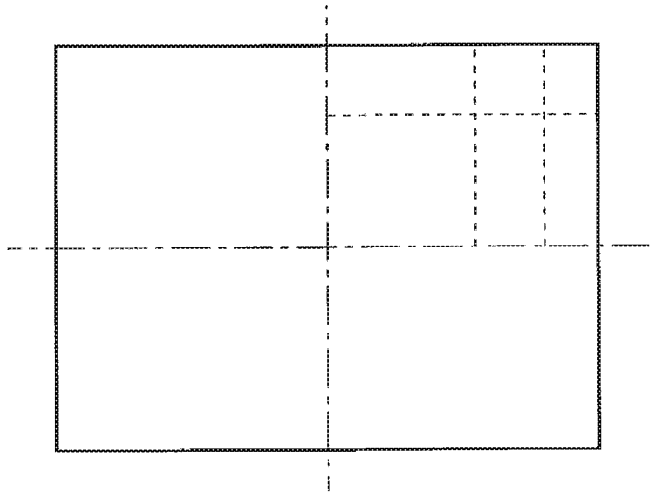


FIG. 20B



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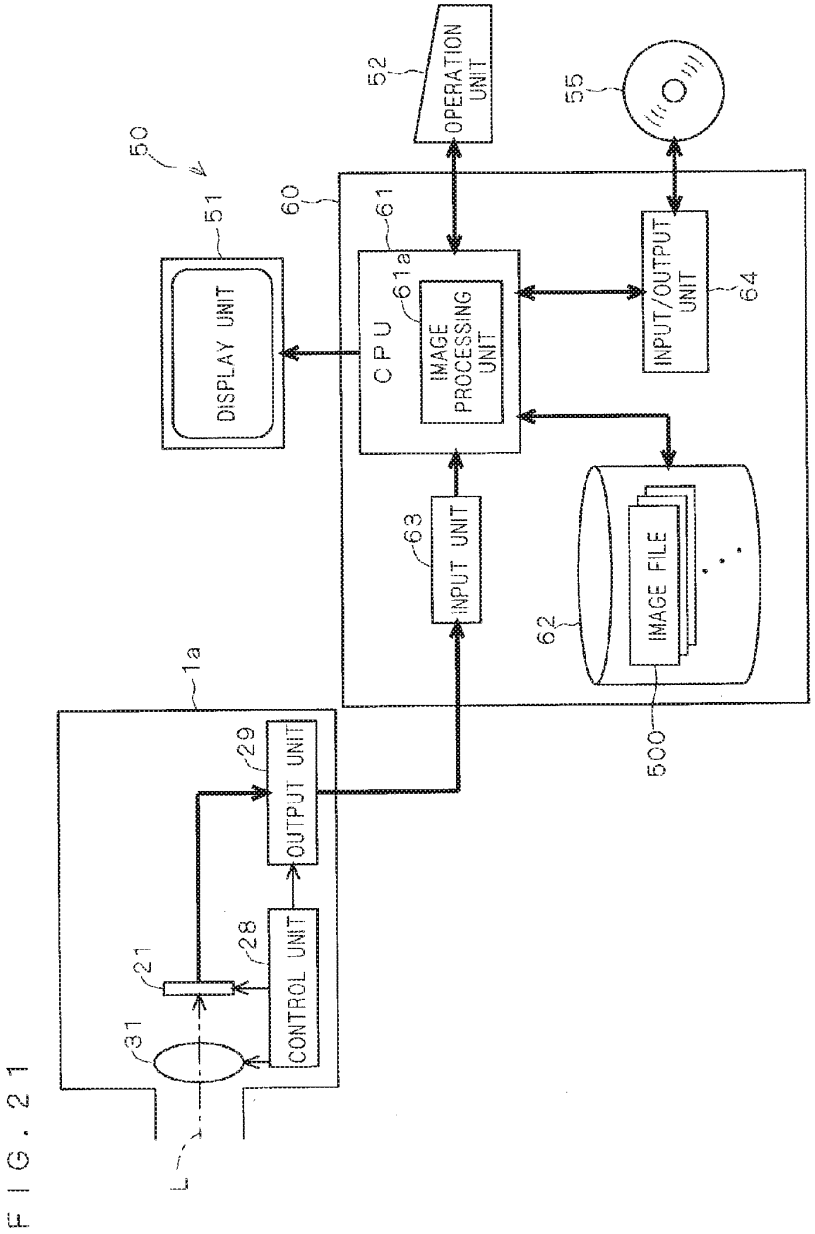
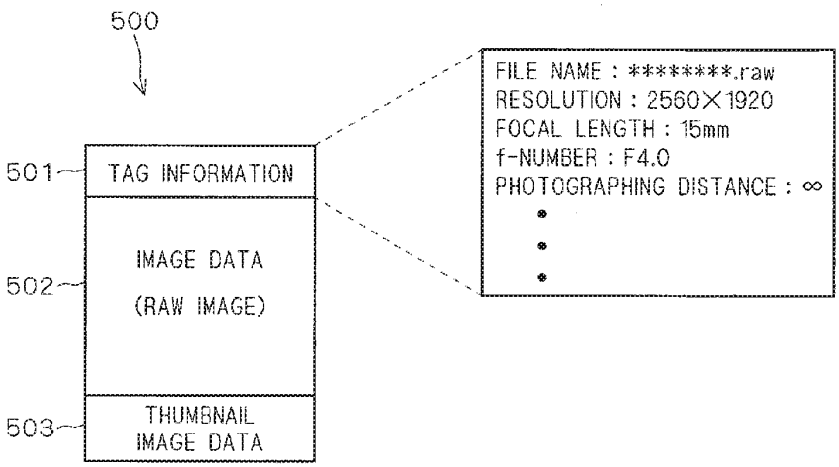


FIG. 21

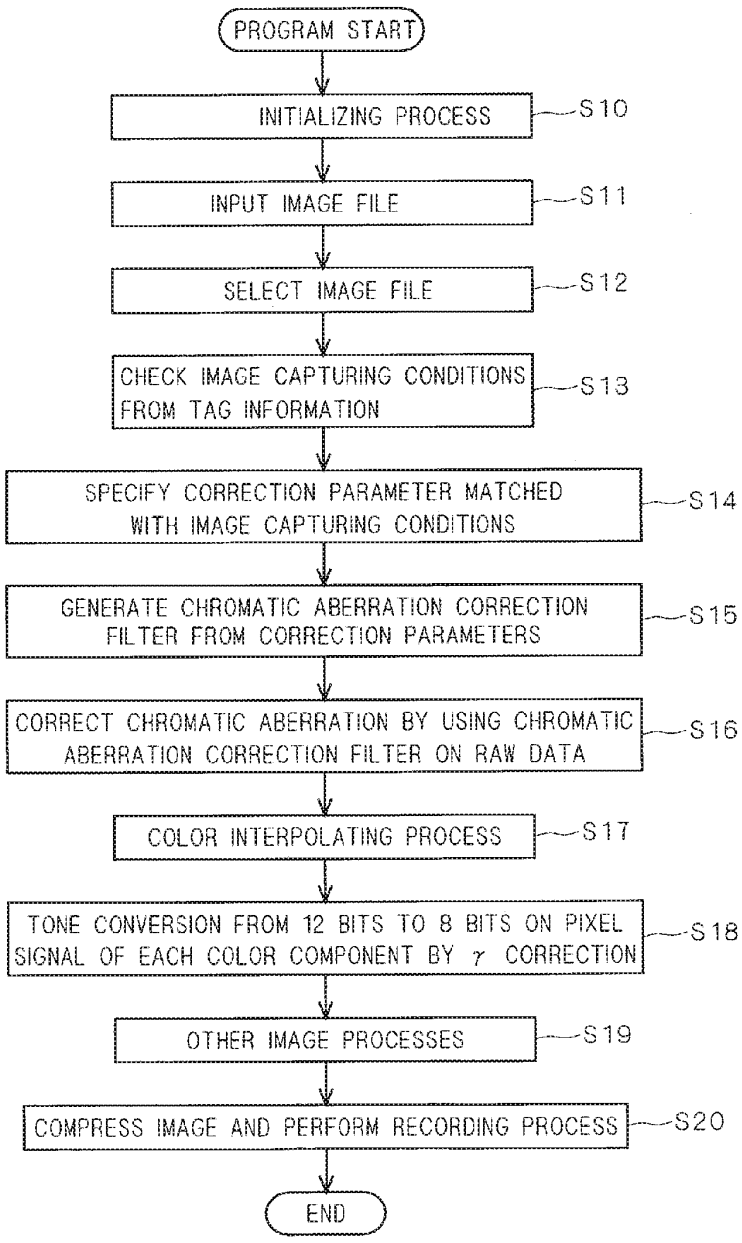
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FIG. 22



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FIG. 23



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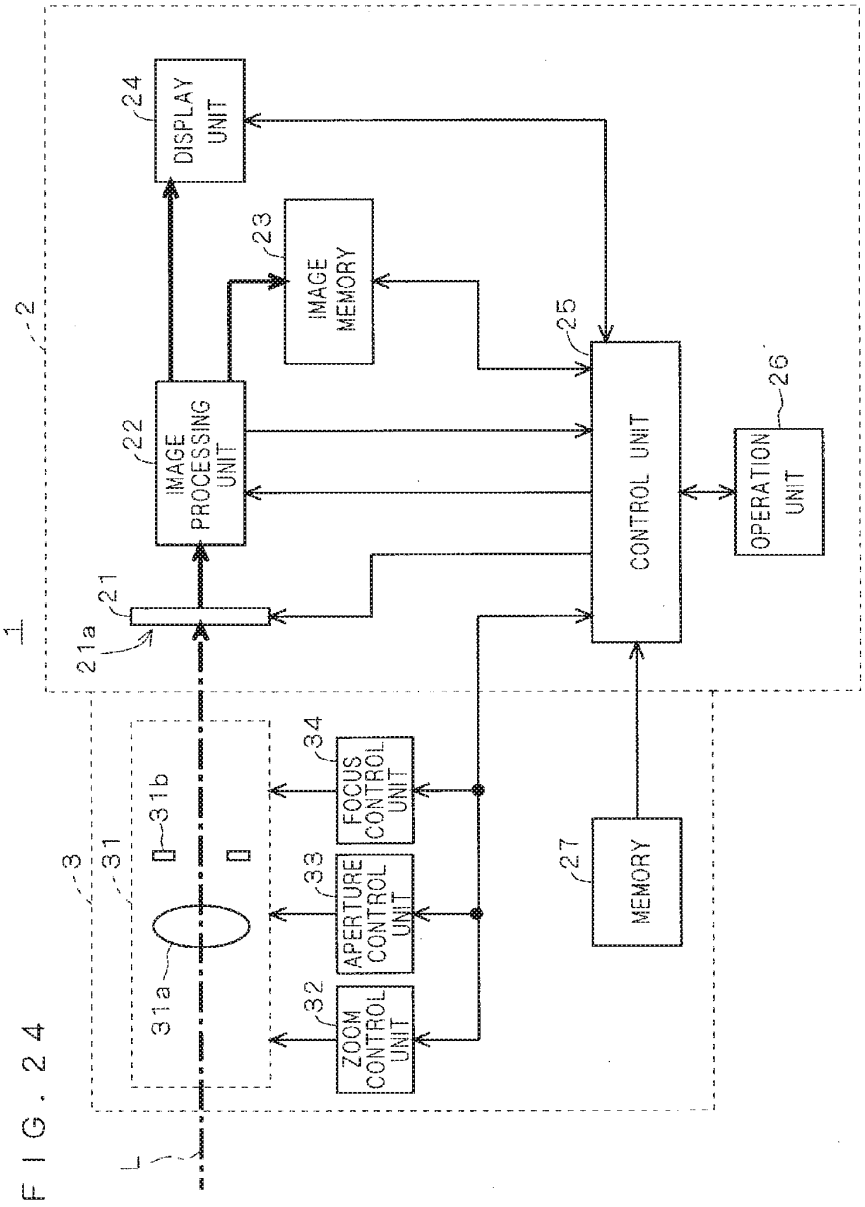


FIG. 24

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IMAGE CAPTURING APPARATUS

[0001] This application is based on application No. 2003-028306 filed in Japan, the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to an image processing technique in an image capturing apparatus, an image processing apparatus or the like, and more particularly to a technique of correcting a chromatic aberration caused by an image capturing optical system on an image signal obtained by photoelectrically converting a light image entered via the image capturing optical system.

[0004] 2. Description of the Background Art

[0005] In an image capturing apparatus such as a digital camera, a light image from the subject is led to an image capturing device such as a CCD via an image capturing optical system (taking lens).

[0006] In recent years, as reduction in the size of an image capturing device and increase in pixel resolution advance, aberration correction conditions requested for an image capturing optical system are becoming severer from the viewpoint of designing. In addition, miniaturization is demanded also for the image capturing optical system and designing of the optical system is becoming severer.

[0007] A particularly obtrusive aberration among the aberrations of the image capturing optical system is a magnification chromatic aberration (hereinafter, also simply referred to as chromatic aberration). Examples of known techniques of correcting a magnification chromatic aberration by image processing include a technique of correcting a magnification chromatic aberration by storing outputted image signals for each of color components of R (red), G (green) and B (blue) into a memory and moving and synthesizing the image signal on a pixel unit basis in accordance with the state of zooming and focusing of a taking lens (for example, Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 5-3568 (1993) (hereinafter, referred to as Patent Literature 1)), and a technique of constructing an image capturing device by four CCDs and correcting a magnification chromatic aberration in accordance with the position of each CCD (for example, Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 6-350904 (1994) (hereinafter, referred to as Patent Literature 2).

[0008] As disclosed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2002-209224 (hereinafter, referred to as Patent Literature 3), when a single-chip color image capturing device such as a CCD is used as an image capturing device, only a charge corresponding to one of primary color components of the three primary colors is accumulated in each pixel. Consequently, in order to obtain signals of color components of all of R, G and B with respect to each pixel, a color interpolating process (pixel interpolating process) has to be performed.

[0009] Even any of the techniques of Patent Literatures 1 and 2 is used, the following problem occurs. Specifically, in any of the techniques of Patent Literatures 1 and 2, a chromatic aberration correcting process is performed after a color interpolating process. After a color interpolating process is performed on an image including a chromatic aberration, the chromatic aberration correcting process is performed. It is therefore difficult to make the chromatic aberration correction properly and sufficiently function. As a result, although the chromatic aberration correcting process is performed also in the conventional techniques, a problem such that a chromatic aberration is still conspicuous in a reproduced image occurs.

[0010] Conventionally, it is not considered to reduce a storage amount at the time of storing parameters and the like used at the time of correcting a chromatic aberration. When the pixel density of an image capturing device is conspicuously increasing as in recent years, the capacity necessary to store parameters and the like becomes enormous. It hinders reduction in the size of an apparatus and also causes a problem such as an increase in cost.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] The present invention is directed to an image capturing apparatus.

[0012] According to an aspect of the present invention, an image capturing apparatus comprises: an image capturing optical system; a color image sensor for converting a light image obtained by said image capturing optical system to an image signal having a color component which varies according to a pixel; and an image processor for concurrently performing a chromatic aberration correcting process of correcting a chromatic aberration of said image capturing optical system and a color interpolating process of interpolating a dropout color component pixel by pixel on an image signal generated by said color image sensor.

[0013] With the configuration, chromatic aberration correction can be made excellently function and high-precision chromatic aberration correction can be performed. Since the chromatic aberration correcting process and the color interpolating process are concurrently performed, processing efficiency is improved.

[0014] According to another aspect of the present invention, an image capturing apparatus comprises: an image capturing optical system; a color image sensor for converting a light image obtained by said image capturing optical system into an image signal having a color component which varies according to a pixel; a divider for dividing an image signal generated by the color image sensor into a plurality of blocks; a memory for storing a parameter for chromatic aberration correction applied to each block divided by the divider; and an image processor for correcting a chromatic aberration caused by said image capturing optical system by the block on the basis of the parameter stored in said memory on an image signal generated by said color image sensor.

[0015] Consequently, the number of parameters to be stored in a memory may be the number corresponding to the number of blocks. Therefore, it becomes unnecessary to store parameters of all of pixels, so that an amount of information stored in the memory can be excellently reduced.

[0016] According to still another aspect of the present invention, an image capturing apparatus comprises: an image capturing optical system; a color image sensor for converting a light image obtained by said image capturing

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optical system into an image signal of a color component which varies according to a pixel; a memory for storing a parameter for approximating a chromatic aberration caused by said image capturing optical system; and an image processor for performing a chromatic aberration correcting process on an image signal generated by said color image sensor by performing computation with an approximation function by using the parameter stored in said memory.

[0017] With this configuration, since a deviation amount can be estimated by using an approximation function, while maintaining correction precision in a predetermined range, the storage capacity of parameters can be reduced as compared with the case of storing an accurate deviation amount for each pixel.

[0018] Further, the present invention is also directed to an image processing apparatus for performing an image process on an image signal which is generated on the basis of a light image received via an image capturing optical system and has a color component which varies according to a pixel, and a program product in which a program of allowing a computer to perform a predetermined process on an image signal which is generated on the basis of a light image received via an image capturing optical system and has a color component which varies according to a pixel.

[0019] As described above, an object of the present invention is to realize an image processing technique of making chromatic aberration correction excellently function and capable of efficiently correcting a chromatic aberration, and to provide a technique of reducing storage capacity of parameters used for the chromatic aberration correction.

[0020] These and other objects, features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description of the present invention when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0021] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram showing a schematic configuration of an image capturing apparatus;

[0022] **FIG. 2** is a diagram showing a light-receiving face of an image capturing device;

[0023] **FIG. 3** is a block diagram showing an example of the detailed configuration of an image processing unit;

[0024] **FIG. 4** is a diagram showing a magnification chromatic aberration of an image capturing optical system under an image capturing condition;

[0025] **FIG. 5** is a diagram showing an example of an image filter applied to a color interpolating process;

[0026] **FIG. 6** is a diagram showing an example of an image filter applied to a chromatic aberration correcting process;

[0027] **FIG. 7** is a diagram showing an example of an image filter for concurrently performing the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correcting process;

[0028] **FIG. 8** is a diagram showing an example of the relationship between image capturing conditions and coefficients of an approximation function stored with respect to an R component;

[0029] **FIG. 9** is a diagram showing an example of the relationship between image capturing conditions and coefficients of an approximation function stored with respect to a B component;

[0030] **FIG. 10** is a diagram showing an image plane of an image obtained from the image capturing device;

[0031] **FIG. 11** is a diagram showing an example of a chromatic aberration characteristic in the case where the square of distance is an argument;

[0032] **FIG. 12** is a diagram showing a chromatic aberration characteristic by the image capturing optical system;

[0033] **FIG. 13** is a diagram showing an example of a filter of a B component obtained from the filter of **FIG. 7**;

[0034] **FIG. 14** is a diagram showing an example of a lookup table stored in a memory;

[0035] **FIG. 15** is a diagram showing an image plane;

[0036] **FIGS. 16A** to **16D** are diagrams for describing conversion of filter coefficients;

[0037] **FIG. 17** is a diagram showing an example of dividing an image plane of an image obtained from the image capturing device into blocks;

[0038] **FIG. 18** is a diagram showing an example of a lookup table stored in a memory;

[0039] **FIG. 19** is a diagram for describing concept of weighted average;

[0040] **FIGS. 20A and 20B** are diagrams showing an example of dividing an image plane into blocks differently with respect to R and B components;

[0041] **FIG. 21** is a diagram showing the configuration of an image processing system;

[0042] **FIG. 22** is a diagram showing an example of an image file;

[0043] **FIG. 23** is a flowchart showing a processing sequence in a computer; and

[0044] **FIG. 24** is a block diagram showing a schematic configuration of an image capturing apparatus in which a memory is provided on a lens unit side.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0045] Hereinafter, preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the drawings.

1. First Preferred Embodiment

[0046] A first preferred embodiment will be described. In the present preferred embodiment, an example of a configuration for excellently performing chromatic aberration correction in an image capturing apparatus such as a digital camera will be described.

[0047] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram showing a schematic configuration of an image capturing apparatus **1**. As shown in **FIG. 1**, the image capturing apparatus **1** has a body **2** and a lens unit **3**. The lens unit **3** is constructed so that it can be separated from the body **2**.

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[0048] The lens unit **3** has an image capturing optical system **31**, a zoom control unit **32**, an aperture control unit **33** and a focus control unit **34**. The image capturing optical system **31** has a lens **31***a* and an aperture member **31***b* disposed on an optical axis L to lead a light image of a subject to the body **2**. The zoom control unit **32** changes a focal length by driving the image capturing optical system **31**, thereby changing a magnification. The aperture control unit **33** adjusts the opening diameter of the aperture member **31***b* included in the image capturing optical system **31**. The focus control unit **34** drives the image capturing optical system **31** so that a proper focus state is realized in accordance with the distance between the subject and the image capturing apparatus. Each of the zoom control unit **32**, aperture control unit **33**, and focus control unit **34** drives and controls the image capturing optical system **31** on the basis of a control signal supplied from a control unit **25** of the body **2**.

[0049] The body **2** includes an image capturing device **21**, an image processing unit **22**, an image memory **23**, a display unit **24**, the control unit **25**, an operation unit **26** and a memory **27**.

[0050] The image capturing device **21** takes the form of, for example, a single-chip CCD image sensor and has a structure in which a plurality of pixels are disposed two-dimensionally on a light-receiving face **21***a* perpendicular to the optical axis L. The image capturing device **21** is disposed so that the center of the light-receiving face **21***a* coincides with the center of the optical axis L. **FIG. 2** is a diagram showing the light-receiving face of the image capturing device **21**. As shown in **FIG. 2**, a color filter array of a so-called Bayer matrix is disposed on the light-receiving face of the image capturing device **21**. Each pixel receives light of the color component of any one of the three primary colors of R, G and B. Consequently, charges according to a light amount of the color component received are accumulated in each pixel. In the image capturing device **21**, a color component which varies according to a pixel out of the three primary colors of R, G and B is detected pixel by pixel and pixel signals are generated. Color image signals of one frame are generated by a collection of a plurality of the pixel signals. The image capturing device **21** has, therefore, the function of photoelectrically converting a light image entering via the image capturing optical system **31** into image signals of different color components pixel by pixel. The image signal obtained is converted to, for example, a 12-bit digital signal by a not-shown A/D converter, and the digital signal is outputted to the image processing unit **22**.

[0051] In the image signal outputted to the image processing unit **22**, each pixel has information of the color component of any of the three primary colors of R, G and B. The image signal is an image signal including a chromatic aberration caused by the image capturing optical system **31**.

[0052] Generally, the chromatic aberration caused by the image capturing optical system **31** increases with distance from the center of the optical axis L in the light-receiving face of the image capturing device **21**. **FIG. 4** is a diagram showing a magnification chromatic aberration under certain image capturing conditions of the image capturing optical system **31**. It shows the relationship between a distance "r" from the center of an image (center of the optical axis L) and a deviation amount (Δr) of an image formation position of light of an R component from an image formation position of light of a G component. A chromatic aberration **101** of the R component light is obtained by optical simulation or actual measurement as a deviation in the radial direction from the center of the optical axis as a reference on an image of the R component light from the G component. The chromatic aberration **101** increases with distance from the center of the optical axis L. In other words, even when light is from the same position of the subject, the image formation position of the G component and that of the R component do not coincide with each other and the deviation amount increases toward the peripheral portion of the image.

[0053] The above is similarly applied to light of the B component. Generally, when the G component is used as a reference, the aberration of light of the B component appears on the side opposite to the aberration of light of the R component (that is, −Δr side in **FIG. 4**). In a manner similar to the R component, the aberration of the B component light increases with distance from the center of the optical axis L.

[0054] Therefore, the image processing unit **22** is constructed so as to correct the chromatic aberration which is caused by the image capturing optical system **31**. As will be described later, the image processing unit **22** is constructed so as to perform not only the chromatic aberration correcting process but also other various image processes.

[0055] An image signal subjected to the image process in the image processing unit **22** is outputted to at least one of the image memory **23** and the display unit **24**. The image memory **23** is a recording medium such as a semiconductor memory for recording image signals. The image memory **23** may be constructed like a memory card so as to be removable from the image capturing apparatus **1**. The display unit **24** is a display device provided on the rear face side or the like of the body **2** and is, for example, a liquid crystal display.

[0056] The operation unit **26** is operation members such as a switch and a button provided for the user to enter operation instructions for the image capturing apparatus **1**. An operation instructed to the operation unit **26** is converted to an electric signal and the electric signal is supplied to the control unit **25**.

[0057] The control unit **25** is a function realized when a CPU provided in the body **2** executes a predetermined program. The control unit **25** controls various members provided for the body **2** and also controls the state of the image capturing optical system **31** by transmitting control signals to the zoom control unit **32**, aperture control unit **33** and focus control unit **34** provided for the lens unit **3**. For example, when the user operates the operation unit **26** to change the magnification, the control unit **25** transmits a control signal of changing the focal length of the zoom control unit **32** on the basis of the operation amount. Consequently, the control unit **25** can identify the state of the image capturing optical system at the time of photographing (hereinafter, referred to as the image capturing condition).

[0058] The control unit **25** determines an image filter (hereinafter, simply referred to as a filter) applied when the color interpolating process and chromatic aberration correcting process are performed in the image processing unit **22** and supplies the filter to the image processing unit **22**. In order to determine the filter, the memory **27** is provided in

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the body **2**. In the memory **27**, various parameters based on the optical characteristics of the image capturing optical system **31** and the image capturing conditions at the time of photographing are stored. Therefore, the control unit **25** is constructed to determine a filter by referring to information stored in the memory **27**.

[**0059**] The image processing unit **22** performs filter computation by using the filter supplied from the control unit **25** at the time of performing the color interpolating process and chromatic aberration correcting process on an image signal obtained from the image capturing device **21**.

[**0060**] **FIG. 3** is a block diagram showing an example of the detailed configuration of the image processing unit **22**. In the image processing unit **22**, an image signal obtained from the image capturing device **21** is inputted to a WB (white balance) circuit **41** where level conversion of R, G and B is performed, thereby adjusting white balance.

[**0061**] After the adjustment of white balance, the image signal is inputted to a filter computation circuit **42**. By filter computation using a filter, a color interpolating process and also a chromatic aberration correcting process for correcting a chromatic aberration caused by the image capturing optical system **31** are performed on each pixel.

[**0062**] Since each pixel has information of the primary color component of only one of R, G and B, the color interpolating process estimates information of the other primary color components dropped in each pixel on the basis of values of peripheral pixels. By the color interpolating process, information of 12 bits of each of R, G and B is given to each pixel.

[**0063**] Generally, in the color interpolating process, a filter **201** having filter coefficients as shown in **FIG. 5** is applied. By performing the filter computation while selecting a filter coefficient from the filter **201** in accordance with a color component to be interpolated of the pixel to be processed, the information of the dropped color components of the pixel can be obtained by being estimated from color components of the peripheral pixels. Filter coefficient can be set in various well-known ways. By way of example, the details of setting of filter coefficients of the filter **201** and the filter action are disclosed in the Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2000-287219.

[**0064**] The chromatic aberration correcting process is a process for correcting a chromatic aberration caused by the image capturing optical system **31** and is to correct a deviation between the image formation position of the G component and that of each of the R and B components, which is conspicuous particularly in an image peripheral portion.

[**0065**] Generally, in the chromatic aberration correcting process, an asymmetric filter **202** in which filter coefficients are distributed in an unbalanced manner as shown in **FIG. 6** is applied. The filter **202** has a filter structure for correcting a chromatic aberration of the case where the image formation position of the R component is deviated to the right upper direction by 1.5 pixels from the G component. Information of the R component regarding a pixel to be processed (pixel in the center of the filter) can be estimated from four pixels positioned in the right upper direction. In other words, the filter **202** has the function of moving a pixel signal of which image formation position was moved by a chromatic aberration to the center of the image. The filter **202** is a filter capable of correcting a chromatic aberration by moving a pixel signal. The details of setting of filter coefficients of the filter **202** and the filter action are disclosed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 5-3568 (1993) (Patent Literature 1). Such a filter **202** is obtained for each of the R and B components.

[**0066**] In the filter computation circuit **42**, filter computation is performed by using a filter **203** as shown in **FIG. 7** obtained by combining the filter **201** of **FIG. 5** and the filter **202** of **FIG. 6** by convolution computation or the like in order to simultaneously perform the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correcting process. The filter applied in the filter computation circuit **42** is changed for each pixel on the basis of an instruction from the control unit **25**. Consequently, the filter computing circuit **42** is constructed so as to transmit position information of a pixel to be processed is notified to the control unit **25**. On the basis of the position information, the control unit **25** determines a filter (filter obtained by combining the filter for color correcting process and the filter for correcting chromatic aberration) adapted to the process on the pixel with respect to each of the R component and the B component, and supplies the filter to the filter computing circuit **42**. A method of determining a filter applied in the filter computing circuit **42** in the control unit **25** will be described later.

[**0067**] After the color interpolating process and chromatic aberration correcting process are performed in the filter computing circuit **42**, each of pixel signals (R, G and B) is subjected to a predetermined correcting process in a linear matrix circuit **43** and, the resultant is inputted to a γ correction circuit **44**. In the γ correction circuit **44**, the pixel signals (R, G and B) are corrected in accordance with reproduction characteristics of a display with a γ correction table (RGB gamma LUT) **44***a*. Further, a 12-bit signal of each pixel is compressed to an 8-bit signal in the γ correction circuit **44**.

[**0068**] Then, the pixel signal (R, G and B) compressed to 8 bits is inputted to a color difference matrix circuit **45**. The color difference matrix circuit **45** has a Y matrix **45***a*, a Cr matrix **45***b* and a Cb matrix **45***c* matrixes for conversion, and a color space having the primary color components of R, G and B is converted into a color space having a luminance component (Y) and color difference components (Cr and Cb).

[**0069**] The luminance signal Y outputted from the color difference matrix circuit **45** is inputted to a contour emphasizing filter circuit **46**. In the contour emphasizing filter circuit **46**, the luminance signal Y is split to three signals. One of the three split luminance signals Y passes through an HPF (High-Pass Filter) **46***b*, one of them passes through an LPF (Low-Pass Filter) **46***a*, and the other is inputted to a line segment extracting circuit **46***f*.

[**0070**] From the luminance signal Y passed through the HPF **46***b*, a high frequency component is detected. The detected high frequency component is inputted to an amplifier **46***c* where it is amplified. Further, in a base clip **46***d*, only a high frequency component of a predetermined value or larger is detected and outputted.

[**0071**] In an adder **46***e*, the high frequency component of the predetermined value or larger outputted from the base

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clip **46***d* is added to the luminance signal Y passed through the LPF **46***a*, thereby performing contour emphasis on the luminance signal Y, and the resultant signal is outputted.

[**0072**] In the line segment extracting circuit **46***f*, by using a Sobel line segment extraction filter, a line segment component is extracted from the luminance signal Y. The luminance signal Y inputted to the line segment extracting circuit **46***f* is stored in a buffer (not shown). On the basis of the luminance signal Y stored in the buffer, a line segment extracting process of a pixel to be processed is performed. For example, the line segment extraction filter is expressed by a matrix form of three rows and three columns, and the line segment extracting process is performed by using the luminance signal Y of the target pixel and the luminance signals Y of eight pixels adjacent to the target pixel. Therefore, at least the luminance signals Y of nine pixels have to be stored in the buffer. With respect to each of the luminance signals Y of nine pixels in the three rows and three columns, by performing a pattern matching with the line segment extraction filter, whether the target pixel is a line segment component or not is determined. If the target pixel is a line segment component, the detection level of the line segment component is detected. As concrete processes in the line segment extracting circuit **46***f*, for example, the processes described in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2002-209224 (Patent Literature 3) can be applied.

[**0073**] After the line segment extracting circuit **46***f* extracts the line segment component, position information of the pixel determined as a line segment component and the detection level of the line segment component in the pixel are inputted to a line segment chroma killer circuit **47**.

[**0074**] The line segment chroma killer circuit **47** performs a suppressing process of a color difference signal (in the following description, electric signals of color difference components are properly expressed as color difference signals Cr and Cb) for the color difference components Cr and Cb on the basis of the detection level of an inputted line segment component. Specifically, the line segment chroma killer circuit **47** obtains the degree of suppression of the color difference signals Cr and Cb by referring to a line segment chroma killer setting lookup table (line segment chroma killer setting LUT) **47***a* on the basis of the detection level of an inputted line segment component, and performs a process of suppressing the color difference signals Cr and Cb according to the degree of suppression by multipliers **47***b* and **47***c*. As concrete processes in the line segment chroma killer circuit **47**, for example, processes disclosed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2002-209224 (Patent Literature 3) can be applied. In the line segment chroma killer circuit **47**, the degree of suppression control is changed according to the detection level of the line segment component, and an image process is performed so that an output image does not become unnatural.

[**0075**] An image signal constructed by the luminance signal Y subjected to the contour emphasizing process and the color difference signals Cr and Cb subjected to the suppression control, which is outputted by the process is temporarily stored in a buffer **48**. As shown in **FIG. 1**, at the time of displaying an image, an image signal is outputted from the buffer **48** to the display unit **24**. At the time of recording an image, an image signal is outputted from the buffer **48** to the image memory **23**. For example, when an image is displayed, the image signal stored in the buffer **48** is converted to a predetermined video signal, and the video signal is outputted. When an image is recorded, a predetermined compressing process such as JPEG encoding is performed on the image signal stored in the buffer **48**, and the compressed image signal is outputted.

[**0076**] A process of specifying a filter in the control unit **25** will now be concretely described.

[**0077**] As shown in **FIG. 4**, in the case where the image capturing optical system **31** is under an image capturing condition, the chromatic aberration **101** of the R component with respect to the G component can be preliminarily specified according to the characteristics of the image capturing optical system **31** by optical simulation or actual measurement. An approximation function **102** for approximating the actual chromatic aberration **101** of the R component in the case where the image capturing optical system **31** is under the certain image capturing conditions is preset in the control unit **25** (see **FIG. 4**). For example, in the case of approximating the approximation function **102** by a cubic function, when the distance from the center of an image (position coinciding with the center of the optical axis L) is set as "r" and a deviation amount between the R component and the G component in the distance "r" is set as f(r), the approximation function **102** can be expressed as follows.

$$f(r)=ar^3+br^2+cr+d \qquad \text{Equation 1}$$

[**0078**] In equation 1, a, b, c and d are coefficients of approximation function and are values determined by the image capturing conditions of the image capturing optical system **31**. The coefficients a, b, c, and d are prestored in the memory **27** for each of different image capturing conditions.

[**0079**] **FIG. 8** is a diagram showing an example of the relation between the image capturing conditions and the coefficients a, b, c and d stored in the memory **27**. As shown in **FIG. 8**, the coefficients a, b, c and d of the approximation function **102** vary according to the image capturing conditions specified by the focal length, photographing distance and f-number. When the image capturing conditions are determined, each of the coefficients a, b, c and d is specified accordingly. When the position of a pixel to be processed differs, the relation as shown in **FIG. 8** also becomes different. Consequently, the relationship between the image capturing conditions and the approximation function **102** is stored for each pixel in the memory **27**.

[**0080**] The B component is processed in a manner similar to the R component. Specifically, light of the B component is deviated in the direction opposite to the direction of deviation of the R component when the G component is used as a reference. Consequently, with respect to the B component, the relation between the image capturing conditions and the approximation function is stored in signs opposite to those in the case of the R component into the memory **27** as shown in **FIG. 9**.

[**0081**] **FIG. 10** is a diagram showing an image plane of an image obtained from the image capturing device **21** and shows a case where the center of the image coincides with the center of the optical axis L. As shown in **FIG. 10**, when the center **P0** of an image is set as a reference (0, 0), the X-axis is determined in the horizontal direction and the Y-axis is determined in the vertical direction. When the pixel to be processed is P1, the control unit **25** obtains position

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information (X, Y) of the present pixel P1 to be processed from the filter computation circuit **42**, and computes the distance "r" between the center P0 of the image and the pixel P1 to be processed. That is, the distance "r" is obtained by computing the following equation.

$$r=\sqrt{(X^2+Y^2)} \quad \text{Equation 2}$$

[**0082**] The control unit **25** reads out the coefficients a, b, c and d according to the image capturing conditions from the memory **27** and executes computation by substituting the distance "r" for Equation 1, thereby obtaining the deviation amount $\Delta r=f(r)$. It is known that by executing such computation, as shown in **FIG. 10**, light of the R component in the pixel P1 to be processed is moved to a pixel position P2 by a chromatic aberration.

[**0083**] When movement components parallel to the X-axis and Y-axis are obtained on the basis of the movement amount Δr to the pixel position P2, a movement component Δrx parallel to the X-axis can be expressed as follows.

$$\Delta rx=\Delta r\cdot X/r \quad \text{Equation 3}$$

[**0084**] A movement component Δry parallel to the Y-axis can be expressed as follows.

$$\Delta ry=\Delta r\cdot Y/r \quad \text{Equation 4}$$

[**0085**] X in the right side of Equation 3 denotes an X coordinate of the pixel P1 to be processed and Y in the right side of Equation 4 denotes a Y coordinate of the pixel P1 to be processed.

[**0086**] Therefore, from the positional information (X, Y) of the pixel P1 to be processed, the deviation amount Δr of the image formation position due to chromatic aberration is obtained and, further, the X component (Δrx) and the Y component (Δry) of the deviation amount Δr can be derived. At the time of obtaining a signal value of the R component of the pixel P1 to be processed, by referring to information of the pixel P2 in a position deviated from the position (X, Y) of the pixel P1 to be processed by Δrx in the X direction and Δry in the Y direction, a chromatic aberration can be corrected properly.

[**0087**] The filter **202** shown in **FIG. 6** shows a case where each of the deviation amounts due to the chromatic aberration in the X-axis and the Y-axis is 1.5 pixels by the computation as described above. Specifically, since a pixel having proper information does not exist in the position moved from the pixel P1 to be processed in both of the X direction and the Y direction each by 1.5 pixels in the image plane, the filter of **FIG. 6** is constructed to generate information of the pixel P1 to be processed from information of four pixels positioned around the pixel P1 to be processed.

[**0088**] That is, generally, the control unit **25** determines a filter for correcting chromatic aberration so as to generate information of the pixel P1 to be processed by referring to information of pixels in a deviated position in accordance with the deviation amounts in the X and Y directions.

[**0089**] Further, the control unit **25** executes convolution computation or the like on the basis of the filter **201** for processing color interpolation process (see, for example, **FIG. 5**) prestored in the memory **27** and the filter **202** for correcting chromatic aberration determined as described above (see, for example, **FIG. 6**), thereby generating the filter **203** (see, for example, **FIG. 7**) for simultaneously executing the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correcting process. The filter **203** is outputted to the filter computing circuit **42** in the image processing unit **22**.

[**0090**] At the time of outputting the filters for obtaining signal values of the R and B components with respect to the pixel P1 to be processed, to the filter computation circuit **42**, the control unit **25** obtains the filter derived by combining the filter for color interpolating process with respect to each of the R and B components and the filter for correcting chromatic aberrations with respect to the R and B components. With respect to the G component, it is regarded in the present preferred embodiment that no chromatic aberration occurs. Consequently, the filter for color interpolating process with respect to the G component is output as it is to the filter computing circuit **42**.

[**0091**] The filter computation circuit **42** performs filter computation by applying the filters supplied from the control unit **25**. Particularly, at the time of obtaining signal values of the R component and the B component of the pixel P1 to be processed, the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correcting process are concurrently performed.

[**0092**] Although the case where the approximation function **102** is expressed by a cubic function using the distance "r" as an argument has been described above, alternately, the approximation function **102** may be expressed by a cubic function using the square (r^2) of distance as an argument. **FIG. 11** is a diagram showing an example of an aberration characteristic in the case where a distance r^2 is an argument. Even when the distance r^2 is an argument as shown in **FIG. 11**, a chromatic aberration **104** of the R component becomes almost the same form as that of the chromatic aberration **101** in **FIG. 4**. As shown in **FIG. 11**, an approximation function **103** is defined by setting the square (r^2) of the distance as an argument. For example, the approximation function is specified as follows.

$$f(r)=a(r^2)^3+b(r^2)^2+c(r^2)+d \quad \text{Equation 5}$$

[**0093**] In this case, at the time of obtaining an argument from position information (X, Y) of the pixel P1 to be processed, it becomes unnecessary to perform root computation as shown in Equation 2 and an argument can be obtained efficiently.

[**0094**] As described above, in the image capturing apparatus **1** of the present preferred embodiment, the chromatic aberration correcting process of correcting chromatic aberration caused by the image capturing optical system **31** and the color interpolating process of interpolating a dropout color component of each pixel are concurrently performed on image signals obtained from the image capturing device **21**. Thus, chromatic aberration correction can be made function at high precision. That is, when the color interpolating process is performed prior to the chromatic aberration correction as in the conventional technique, an influence of chromatic aberration is exerted on peripheral pixels, so that excellent chromatic aberration correction cannot be performed. However, by performing the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correction concurrently, such a problem does not occur and the chromatic aberration correction can be made excellently. Since the chromatic aberration is corrected by the image process, the image capturing optical system **31** is not burdened with

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severe design conditions and the flexibility in designing of the image capturing optical system **31** is improved.

[**0095**] The image capturing apparatus **1** of the present preferred embodiment is constructed so that each of the pixels in the image capturing device **21** detects one of the color components of the three primary colors of R, G and B. The image processing unit **22** performs, as the chromatic aberration correcting process, different filter computations for at least two color components of the three primary colors, thereby performing the process of moving pixel signals of at least two color components to the center of an image. Specifically, by performing the filter computation with a filter adapted to each of the R and B components, a chromatic aberration in the case of using the G component as a reference is corrected. Consequently, without making design of a high order for the image capturing optical system **31**, a chromatic aberration can be excellently corrected by the conventionally known image processing computation referred to as filter computation. Thus, a chromatic aberration can be corrected relatively easily.

[**0096**] The image processing unit **22** of the image capturing apparatus **1** is constructed to perform the filter computation with, as a filter applied for filter computation, a filter having coefficients obtained by combining filter coefficients for performing the color interpolating process and filter coefficients for moving a pixel signal (that is, filter coefficients for performing the chromatic aberration correcting process). Therefore, the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correcting process can be performed concurrently.

[**0097**] The image capturing apparatus **1** of the present preferred embodiment stores a plurality of filters for correcting chromatic aberrations caused by the image capturing optical system **31** in the memory **27**, applies an approximation function according to the position of a pixel to be processed to thereby specify a filter applied to chromatic aberration correction from the plurality of filters stored in the memory **27**, and performs chromatic aberration correction on an image obtained from the image capturing device **21** by using the specified filter. Consequently, it is unnecessary to execute complicated calculation for movement in order to correct a chromatic aberration, and a chromatic aberration can be corrected by relatively easy filter computation.

[**0098**] The image capturing apparatus **1** of the present preferred embodiment stores a parameter for approximating a chromatic aberration caused by the image capturing optical system **31** into the memory **27**, obtains a parameter from the memory **27** in accordance with the position of a pixel to be processed and the image capturing conditions at the time of photographing of the image capturing optical system **31**, executes computation with the approximation function **102**, thereby estimating a deviation amount of the chromatic aberration of the image capturing optical system **31**. The chromatic aberration correction on an image obtained from the image capturing device **21** is carried out in accordance with the estimated deviation amount. Therefore, since the chromatic aberration is specified by the approximation function **102**, as compared with the case of registering all of patterns of the chromatic aberrations caused by the image capturing optical system **31** in the memory **27**, the amount of information to be stored in the memory **27** can be reduced and, accordingly, the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be reduced. As a result, reduction in the cost and size of the image capturing apparatus **1** can be realized.

[**0099**] Since the approximation function **102** is an approximation function using the distance "r" from the center of an image of a pixel to be processed as an argument, the amount of parameters stored in the memory **27** can be reduced. For example, in the case of storing parameters for each of the position coordinates (X, Y) of the pixel P1 to be processed, parameters have to be specified with respect to all of coordinates in the image plane. By using the distance "r" from the center of an image as an argument as in the present preferred embodiment, the same parameter can be applied to pixels in equal distances from the center of an image, so that the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be reduced.

[**0100**] By expressing the approximation function **102** by an approximation function of which argument is the square of the distance "r" from the center of an image of a pixel to be processed, computation efficiency is improved, and chromatic aberration correction can be performed efficiently.

[**0101**] Further, the image capturing apparatus **1** of the present preferred embodiment can change parameters for performing chromatic aberration correction in accordance with image capturing conditions so that proper chromatic aberration correction can be conducted even in the case where the image capturing conditions (focal length, photographing distance, f-number and the like) of the image capturing optical system **31** are changed.

[**0102**] Although the case where the control unit **25** obtains a filter applied in the image processing unit **22** has been described in the present preferred embodiment, the above-described filter determining function of the control unit **25** may be realized by the image processing unit **22**.

2. Second Preferred Embodiment

[**0103**] A second preferred embodiment will now be described. The configuration of the image capturing apparatus **1** of the second preferred embodiment is similar to that in the first preferred embodiment.

[**0104**] In the first preferred embodiment, the case where the control unit **25** executes computation based on the approximation function on each of the R and B components has been described. However, since the wavelength of the B component and that of the R component have a reverse relation, when the G component is set as a reference, the chromatic aberration which occurs in the B component often appears on the side opposite to the chromatic aberration which occurs in the R component. In the present preferred embodiment, therefore, the case of obtaining the parameter of the B component from the parameter of the R component without separately storing the parameter of the B component will be described.

[**0105**] **FIG. 12** is a diagram showing a chromatic aberration characteristic caused by the image capturing optical system **31**. A chromatic aberration **105** of the R component appears on the side opposite to a chromatic aberration **106** of the B component. The chromatic aberration **106** of the B component becomes a chromatic aberration **107** when the diagram is folded around the r-axis as a center. In the present preferred embodiment, an approximation function **108** obtained by a weighted average between the chromatic

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aberrations **105** and **107**, as an approximation function which can be applied to both the R and B components is approximated with a cubic function. The degree of weighted average is preset so that, for example, the ratio of the chromatic aberration **105** of the R component becomes 0.5 to 1 in consideration of a coloring characteristic and the like of the image capturing optical system **31**. The coefficients (the parameters of a, b, c and d) of the approximation function **108** which is set in such a manner are stored in the memory **27**. With such a configuration, it becomes unnecessary to store independent parameters of the R and B components in the memory **27**, so that the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be reduced.

[**0106**] When the control unit **25** obtains a filter to be outputted to the filter computing circuit **42** with respect to the R component, the parameters stored in the memory **27** are obtained and computation based on the approximation function **108** is executed, thereby determining a chromatic aberration (deviation amount) with respect to the pixel P1 to be processed, and the filter **203** for output (see **FIG. 7**) is determined on the basis of the deviation amount.

[**0107**] In the case where the pixel P1 to be processed is the same by applying the same approximation function **108** to both of the R and B components, a chromatic aberration (deviation amount) obtained by computation based on the approximation function **108** becomes the same value. Consequently, when the filter **203** for output as shown in **FIG. 7** is obtained with respect to the R component, if a filter having filter coefficients symmetrical with respect to the position of the pixel P1 to be processed (that is, the filter center position) as a reference is generated as the filter **203** of **FIG. 7**, the control unit **25** can obtain the filter for output which can be applied to the B component.

[**0108**] **FIG. 13** is a diagram showing an example of the filter of the B component obtained from the filter of **FIG. 7**. As shown in **FIG. 13**, when the filter **203** for output as shown in **FIG. 7** is obtained with respect to the R component, by moving filter coefficients symmetrically with respect to the filter center position as a reference, the filter **204** for output shown in **FIG. 13** can be obtained.

[**0109**] Therefore, the image capturing apparatus **1** of the present preferred embodiment specifies an approximation function which can be applied to the chromatic aberrations of both the R and B components, generates a filter applied to a filter computation by executing computation based on the approximation function **108** with respect to either the R or B component, and moves the filter coefficient with respect to the other component symmetrically without performing the computation based on the approximation function, thereby generating a filter applied to the filter computation. Therefore, it is unnecessary to store parameters for generating filters in the memory **27** with respect to the other color component, so that the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be reduced. By executing the computation on one of the color components, for the other color component, a final filter can be generated without performing complicated computation. Thus, computation efficiency for generating filters can be improved.

3. Third Preferred Embodiment

[**0110**] A third preferred embodiment will now be described. The configuration of the image capturing apparatus **1** in the third preferred embodiment is also similar to that in the first preferred embodiment.

[**0111**] In the first and second preferred embodiments, a deviation amount of a chromatic aberration is obtained by performing computation with an approximation function by using the distance "r" from the image center of the pixel P1 to be processed as an argument, and the filter applied to the filter computing circuit **42** is obtained on the basis of the deviation amount. However, the approximation function is obtained by optical characteristics of the image capturing optical system **31**, so that the approximation function can be preliminarily applied to each of pixels positions in an image plane and computation can be executed. In the third preferred embodiment, therefore, a case of prestoring a deviation amount obtained by applying an approximation function to each of the pixel positions in an image plane in a lookup table in the memory **27** in order to improve computation efficiency will be described.

[**0112**] The argument "r" in Equation 1 can be unconditionally obtained from the pixel position (X, Y) as in Equation 2. Since each of the coefficients a, b, c and d in Equation 1 is predetermined by the image capturing conditions of the image capturing optical system **31**, deviation amounts Δrx and Δry in the X and Y directions derived by applying the approximation function are preliminarily computed, and the relation is stored in the memory **27**.

[**0113**] **FIG. 14** is a diagram showing an example of a lookup table **301** stored in the memory **27**. As shown in **FIG. 14**, when the position coordinates (X, Y) of a pixel to be processed are designated from an input address, the lookup table **301** is constructed so as to output movement amounts (deviation amounts) Δrx and Δry due to chromatic aberrations corresponding to the pixel position.

[**0114**] By setting the lookup table **301** as shown in **FIG. 14** for each image capturing condition, a movement amount due to a chromatic aberration under a specific image capturing condition can be promptly obtained without performing a computing process. By setting the lookup table **301** with respect to each of the R and B components, the movement amount due to a chromatic aberration under a specific image capturing condition can be promptly obtained without performing a computing process with respect to each of the R and B components.

[**0115**] As a result, time required to determine a filter to be finally outputted to the filter computation circuit **42** is shortened, so that efficient filter computation is executed.

[**0116**] In this case, by setting the image center coinciding with the center of the optical axis L as the coordinate origin, the amount of information to be stored in the memory **27** can be reduced. **FIG. 15** is a diagram showing an image plane. As shown in **FIG. 15**, an XY coordinate system in which the image center **P0** coincides with the center of the optical axis L and which specifies a pixel position by using the image center **P0** as the origin is set.

[**0117**] Attention is paid to a pixel P11 included in a first quadrant in the coordinate system, and it is assumed that the coordinate position of the pixel P11 is (X1, Y1). The pixel position of a pixel P12 symmetrical to the pixel P11 with respect to the Y-axis is (−X1, Y1), the pixel position of a pixel P13 symmetrical to the pixel P12 with respect to the X-axis is (−X1, −Y1), and the pixel position of a pixel P14

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symmetrical to the pixel P13 with respect to the Y-axis (the pixel is also symmetrical to the pixel P11 with respect to the X-axis) is (X1, −Y1). The four pixels P11, P12, P13 and P14 are in the equidistance from the pixel center P0. The absolute value of the deviation amount in the X direction and that in the Y direction in the case where the pixels are pixels to be processed are equal to each other.

[0118] Specifically, when the deviation amount in the pixel P11 is (Δrx1, Δry1), the deviation amount in the pixel P12 is (−Δrx1, Δry1), and the deviation amount in the pixel P13 is (−Δrx1, −Δry1), and the deviation amount in the pixel P14 is (Δrx1, −Δry1).

[0119] Therefore, as the lookup table **301** to be stored in the memory **27**, for example, it is preferable to divide an image plane into four quadrants by using the image center as a reference and store only parameters related to the first quadrant. In the case where a pixel to be processed is included in the first quadrant, the deviation amounts in the X and Y directions can be immediately obtained by referring to the lookup table **301**. In the case where a pixel to be processed is positioned in any of the second to fourth quadrants in an image plane, by referring to the lookup table **301** on the basis of absolute values of coordinate values of the pixel to be processed, deviation amounts in the X and Y directions are obtained. By assigning a sign according to the coordinate position of the pixel to be processed to the deviation amount obtained, a proper deviation amount can be obtained.

[0120] In the present preferred embodiment, it is therefore preferable to store only parameters in the case where a pixel to be processed is included in the first quadrant of an image plane. When the pixel to be processed is included in a region other than the first quadrant, a proper parameter is obtained by using the parameter stored in the memory **27** and the sign is inverted in consideration of symmetry of the coordinates by using the parameters stored in the memory **27**. With such a configuration, the amount of information to be stored in the memory **27** becomes ¼ of that of information with respect to the whole image plane. Thus, it can contribute to reduction in the storage capacity.

[0121] Although the case of storing the relationship between the pixel position and the deviation amount as a lookup table into the memory **27** has been described in the present preferred embodiment, the present invention is not limited to the case. For example, it is also possible to store a filter for chromatic aberration correction as a lookup table in the memory **27** in correspondence with each of the deviation amounts in the X and Y directions. In this case, the control unit **25** can determine the filter for chromatic aberration correction only by reading a filter for chromatic aberration correction from the memory **27** on the basis of the deviation amount in each of the X and Y directions and the efficiency of the computing process required to determine a filter can be increased.

[0122] As obvious from Equation 1, after the image capturing conditions are determined, the deviation amounts in the X and Y directions are unconditionally determined from a pixel position. Consequently, it is possible to preliminarily obtain the deviation amounts and store the filter for chromatic aberration correction as a lookup table in correspondence with the image capturing conditions and the pixel position into the memory **27**.

[0123] With respect to each of the R and B components, a preliminarily obtained filter for output (filter obtained by combining the filter for color interpolating process and the filter for chromatic aberration correction) in correspondence with the image capturing condition and the pixel position may be stored as a lookup table into the memory **27**. In this case, it is unnecessary to execute complicated computation to determine a filter for output in the control unit **25** and a filter for output can be obtained most efficiently.

[0124] In those cases as well, only filters applied for filter computation and applied to image components included in the first quadrant obtained by using the image center as a reference are stored in the memory **27**. When a pixel to be processed is included in the first quadrant, a filter applied to the filter computation is immediately obtained by referring to the memory **27**. On the other hand, when a pixel to be processed is not included in the first quadrant, by obtaining a filter stored in the memory **27** and performing conversion of a filter coefficient, a filter applied to the filter computation can be obtained.

[0125] The filter coefficient conversion will be described by referring to **FIGS. 16A** to **16D**. It is assumed that, by referring to the memory **27** with respect to the pixel **P11** (see **FIG. 15**) included in the first quadrant of an image plane, the filter **203** as shown in **FIG. 16A** is obtained. In this case, the filter **203** is outputted as it is to the filter computing circuit **42**. On the other hand, in the case of generating a filter for the pixel P12 (see **FIG. 15**) included in the second quadrant of the image plane, by referring to the memory **27**, the filter **203** as shown in **FIG. 16A** is obtained. Consequently, the filter coefficient is moved symmetrically on the basis of the symmetry of the coordinates of the first and second quadrants, the filter coefficient is converted, thereby generating the filter **204** as shown in **FIG. 16B**. The control unit **25** is also constructed so as to output the filter **204** to the filter computing circuit **42**. The case where a pixel exists in the third or fourth quadrant is similar to the above (for example, the pixels P13 and P14 in **FIG. 15**). By performing symmetrical movement of filter coefficients on the basis of symmetry of coordinates on the filter **203** obtained from the memory **27**, filters **205** and **206** as shown in **FIGS. 16C and 16D** are generated and outputted to the filter computing circuit **42**.

[0126] Since such conversion of a filter coefficient can be relatively easily performed, while suppressing time required to generate a filter, the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be effectively reduced.

[0127] In the present preferred embodiment as well, as described in the second preferred embodiment, it is also possible to store parameters of either the R or B component in the memory **27** and, for the other component, to generate a proper filter by converting the parameter obtained from the memory **27** (for example, symmetrical movement of a filter coefficient). As an example, filters in the case where the pixel to be processed is positioned in the first quadrant will be described. Only filters applied to the R component are stored in the memory **27** and a filter applied to the B component and a filter applied to the R component in the case where a pixel to be processed is positioned in the other area may be generated by converting the filter coefficient for the filter stored in the memory **27**. With such a configuration, the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be reduced.

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Concretely, as compared with the case of storing parameters in the whole image area with respect to both the R and B components into the memory **27**, the storage capacity can be reduced to ⅛.

[**0128**] As described above, in the image capturing apparatus **1** of the present preferred embodiment, with respect to filters applied to the filter computation, a filter applied to an image component included in the first quadrant when the image center is a reference is stored in the memory **27**. In the case where a pixel signal to be processed is not included in the first quadrant, the filter stored in the memory **27** is converted, thereby obtaining a filter applied to filter computation. Consequently, it becomes sufficient to store information in which the pixel position and a filter are associated with each other with respect to only the region which is ¼ of an image plane into the memory **27**. Thus, the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be reduced.

[**0129**] In the present preferred embodiment, with respect to filters applied to filter computation, in the case of storing only filters applied to a specific color in the three primary colors of R, G and B in the memory **27** and performing the process for a color component other than the specific color, by converting a filter stored in the memory **27**, a filter adapted to the color component is obtained. Therefore, as compared with the case of storing proper filters for the R and B components of the two colors out of the three primary colors of R, G and B, the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be effectively reduced.

[**0130**] In the present preferred embodiment as well, the filter applied to filter computation has to be changed according to the image capturing conditions of the image capturing optical system **31**. For this purpose, a lookup table is prepared for each of image capturing conditions.

4. Fourth Preferred Embodiment

[**0131**] A fourth preferred embodiment will now be described. In the fourth preferred embodiment as well, the configuration of the image capturing apparatus **1** is similar to that described in the first preferred embodiment.

[**0132**] In the fourth preferred embodiment, a method of reducing the storage capacity of the memory **27** more than the third preferred embodiment will be described. **FIG. 17** is a diagram showing an image plane of an image obtained from the image capturing device **21**. In the fourth preferred embodiment, as shown in **FIG. 17**, a plurality of blocks B**01**, B**02**, B**03**, . . . are specified for an image obtained from the image capturing device, and chromatic aberrations (deviation amounts) of pixels signals included in blocks are stored in the memory **27** on the block unit basis.

[**0133**] The control unit **25** obtains position information of the pixel P**1** to be processed from the filter computing circuit **42**, determines a block in which the pixel P**1** to be processed is included from the plurality of blocks, and obtains a deviation amount determined for the block from the memory **27**.

[**0134**] **FIG. 18** is a diagram showing an example of a lookup table **302** stored in the memory **27** in the present preferred embodiment. As shown in **FIG. 18**, the lookup table **302** is constructed so that when the number of a block including the pixel to be processed is designated by an input address, the movement amounts (deviation amounts) Δrx and Δry caused by chromatic aberrations corresponding to the block number are outputted.

[**0135**] By setting the lookup table **302** as shown in **FIG. 18** for each of the image capturing conditions, the movement amount caused by a chromatic aberration under a specific image capturing condition can be promptly obtained. By setting the lookup table **302** for each of the R and B components, the movement amount caused by the chromatic aberration under the specific image capturing condition with respect to each of the R and B components can be promptly obtained without executing the computing process.

[**0136**] Although similar chromatic aberration corrections are applied on the block unit basis in the present preferred embodiment, it is also possible to apply similar chromatic aberration corrections within the same block to a degree that the chromatic aberration is inconspicuous. At the time of dividing an image plane into blocks, it is sufficient to make a division setting so that an actual deviation amount in each block lies within a predetermined range.

[**0137**] By dividing the image plane into a plurality of blocks and setting parameters stored in the memory **27** on the block unit basis, the amount of information to be stored in the memory **27** can be largely reduced, and the present invention can be excellently adapted to increase in the number of pixels of the image capturing device **21**.

[**0138**] Since the chromatic aberration increases with distance "r" from the image center (center of the optical axis L), at the time of specifying each block, it is desirable that a block of a relatively large size be specified in a center portion of the image and the size of block decreases toward the periphery of the image as shown in **FIG. 17**. By employing such a block configuration, chromatic aberration correction can be made excellently function also in the peripheral portion of an image where the chromatic aberration conspicuously appears. In the center portion of an image where the chromatic aberration is inconspicuous, a large area to which the same parameter is applied can be assured. Thus, an amount of information to be stored in the memory **27** can be efficiently reduced.

[**0139**] The control unit **25** obtains the deviation amount with respect to the pixel P**1** to be processed from the memory **27**, determines a filter for chromatic aberration correction on the basis of the deviation amount, and combines the determined filter with a filter for color interpolating process, thereby obtaining a filter for output. The filter for output is outputted to the filter computing circuit **42** where the filter computation is performed, and the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correcting process are concurrently carried out. In the filter computing circuit **42**, the process of correcting the chromatic aberration which occurs in the image capturing optical system **31** is performed as a similar process on the block unit basis.

[**0140**] In the case where the process is performed on the block unit basis, mismatching of parameters occurs in the border of blocks, and there is the possibility that discontinuity of images is visually conspicuous in the border of the blocks. Consequently, it is more preferable to generate a parameter to be applied to filter computation by performing weighted averaging according to a pixel position by using not only the parameter of a block to be processed but also the parameters of peripheral blocks.

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[0141] **FIG. 19** is a diagram for describing the concept of weighted averaging. As shown in **FIG. 19**, for a block B12, the chromatic aberration (deviation amount) of a representative pixel P12 is stored in the memory **27**. For blocks B13, B22 and B23, chromatic aberrations (deviation amounts) of representative pixels P13, P22 and P23 are stored in the memory **27**, respectively. In this case, if the pixel P1 to be processed is positioned in the block B23 (see **FIG. 19**), the pixel P1 to be processed is surrounded by four representative pixels P12, P13, P22 and P23. Consequently, at the time of obtaining a deviation amount of the pixel P1 to be processed, only the deviation amount stored in the block B23 is not used. The deviation amounts stored with respect to the four blocks B12, B13, B22 and B23 positioned near the pixel P1 to be processed are read from the memory **27** and weighted averaging is performed in consideration of the positional relations between the pixel P1 to be processed and the representative pixels P12, P13, P22 and p23, thereby obtaining the chromatic aberration (deviation amount) in the pixel P1 to be processed. For the setting of weighting, for example, the technique disclosed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 5-3568 (1993) (Patent Literature 1) can be applied.

[0142] As described above, by constructing the image capturing apparatus **1** to obtain a parameter for the pixel P1 to be processed by performing weighted averaging with the parameters stored in adjacent blocks, discontinuity in the border of blocks can be eliminated. Without deteriorating the picture quality, excellent chromatic aberration correction can be made.

[0143] Although the case where the parameter stored in the memory **27** is a chromatic aberration (deviation amount) caused by the image capturing optical system **31** has been described. However, the parameter stored in the memory **27** is not limited to the chromatic aberration but may be the filter for chromatic aberration correction applied to each block or the filter for output to be outputted to the filter computing circuit **42**.

[0144] As described above, the image capturing apparatus **1** in the present preferred embodiment is constructed so that a plurality of blocks are specified for an image plane of an image obtained from the image capturing device **21**, and the parameter for chromatic aberration correction applied to each block is stored in the memory **27**. For an image signal obtained from the image capturing device **21** at the time of photographing, the parameter is read from the memory **27**, and the process of correcting the chromatic aberration which is caused by the image capturing optical system **31** is performed on a block unit basis. Thus, chromatic aberration correction can be excellently performed while reducing the storage capacity of the memory **27**.

[0145] Since blocks specified for the image plane of an image obtained from the image capturing device **21** are set so that the size decreases with distance from the center of an image, a chromatic aberration in the peripheral portion of an image can be excellently corrected while reducing the storage capacity of the memory **27**.

[0146] At the time of performing the process of correcting a chromatic aberration on the block unit basis, a parameter to be applied to a peripheral block is read in accordance with the position of a pixel to be processed, a weighted parameter is obtained, and the process of correcting a chromatic aberration is performed by using the weighted parameter. Thus, images can be prevented from being discontinued at the border of blocks.

[0147] Division of an image plane into blocks may be set for, for example, each of the R and B components. **FIGS. 20A and 20B** are diagrams showing an example of performing different block dividing operations for the R and B components. **FIG. 20A** shows block division for correcting a chromatic aberration on an image of B components, and **FIG. 20B** shows block division for correcting a chromatic aberration on an image of R components. **FIGS. 20A and 20B** show that a chromatic aberration appears on the image of the B components larger than that on the image of the R components. The image plane of the B component is divided into the larger number of blocks as compared with block division of the R component. As described above, the blocks specified for the image plane obtained from the image capturing device **21** may be specified differently with respect to color components on each of which chromatic aberration correction is made. In this case, the chromatic aberration which varies according to a color component can be excellently corrected. Correction precision can be increased and, moreover, the storage capacity of the memory **27** can be reduced.

[0148] In the present preferred embodiment, the filter applied to the filter computation has to be changed according to the image capturing conditions of the image capturing optical system **31**. Consequently, it is preferable to set block division and the parameter to be stored in the memory **27** be set for each image capturing condition.

[0149] At the time of storing parameters of each area divided in blocks into the memory **27**, as described in the third preferred embodiment, only the part of the first quadrant of the image plane is stored in the memory **27**. If a pixel to be processed is positioned in other areas, a parameter applied to the first quadrant is read to perform a converting process according to the position of the pixel to be processed, thereby generating a parameter applied to the pixel to be processed.

5. Fifth Preferred Embodiment

[0150] A fifth preferred embodiment will now be described. In the first to fourth preferred embodiments, the case where the image process is performed in the image capturing apparatus and the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correcting process are performed in the image process was described. In the fifth preferred embodiment, an example of the configuration in the case where an image signal obtained by the image capturing device **21** is outputted from the image capturing apparatus **1** as it is to external devices and the color interpolating process and the chromatic aberration correcting process are performed in external devices will be described.

[0151] **FIG. 21** is a diagram showing the configuration of an image processing system according to the fifth preferred embodiment. The system is constructed so that data communication can be performed between an image capturing apparatus **1***a* and a computer **50** in a wired or wireless communication form. The image capturing apparatus 1a receives light from the subject entering via the image capturing optical system **31** by the image capturing device **21** and generates a color image signal of the subject. The

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image capturing optical system **31** and the image capturing device **21** are similar to those described in the first preferred embodiment.

[**0152**] A control unit **28** controls the image capturing optical system **31** and the image capturing device **21** and controls the image capturing operation in a centralized manner. Consequently, the control unit **28** can grasp the image capturing condition of the image capturing optical system **31**.

[**0153**] An image signal generated by photoelectric conversion in the image capturing device **21** is converted into, for example, a 12-bit digital signal and the digital signal is supplied to an output unit **29**. Therefore, the image signal (image data) supplied from the image capturing device **21** to the output unit **29** is a signal obtained by digitizing the signal as it is, which is outputted from the image capturing device **21** and is so-called RAW data (RAW image data). The output unit **29** generates an image file on the basis of the image signal obtained from the image capturing device **21**.

[**0154**] **FIG. 22** is a diagram showing an example of an image file generated by the output unit **29**. As shown in **FIG. 22**, an image file **500** includes tag information **501**, image data **502** and thumbnail image data **503**. The tag information **501** includes information regarding image capturing conditions obtained from the control unit **28** by the output unit **29**. Specifically, the information such as resolution at the time of photographing of the image capturing device **21**, and focal length, an f-number and photographing distance at the time of photographing of the image capturing optical system **31** is included as the tag information **501** in the image file **500**. The image data **502** is an image signal (that is RAW data) inputted from the image capturing device **21**. The thumbnail image data **503** is generated by the output unit **29** on the basis of the RAW data. In the present preferred embodiment, the thumbnail image data **503** is not necessarily included in the image file **500**.

[**0155**] The output unit **29** is constructed to transmit the image file **500** as shown in **FIG. 22** to the computer **50**.

[**0156**] The computer **50** is constructed by a body **60**, a display unit **51** and an operation unit **52**. The display unit **51** is a display device such as a CRT or a liquid crystal display. The operation unit **52** is a device for inputting operations, such as a keyboard or a mouse.

[**0157**] The body **60** is constructed by a CPU **61**, a storing unit **62**, an input unit **63** and an input/output unit **64**. The input/output unit **64** can access the recording medium **55** such as a CD-ROM to read/record information from/to the recording medium **55**. Consequently, the CPU **61** can obtain a program (including an image processing program) stored in the recording medium **55** via the input/output unit **64** and execute the program.

[**0158**] By executing a predetermined image processing program by the CPU **61**, the function of performing the chromatic aberration correcting process in the computer **50** described in the foregoing preferred embodiments is realized. That is, the CPU **61** functions as an image processing unit **61***a*.

[**0159**] The CPU **61** receives an image file from the image capturing apparatus **1***a* via the input unit **63** and temporarily stores the image file into the storing unit **62** such as a magnetic disk drive.

[**0160**] The image processing unit **61***a* functions and an image file as an object of an image process is read out from the plurality of image files **500** stored in the storing unit **62**. While referring to tag information included in the image files **500**, the chromatic aberration correcting process, color interpolating process, and the like are performed on image data (RAW data), thereby generating image data of each of the color components of R, G and B.

[**0161**] Specifically, the image processing unit **61***a* determines an image center (the center position of the light axis L) from resolution included in the tag information, and sets an image plane of the RAW image. The image processing unit **61***a* obtains a chromatic aberration caused by the image capturing optical system from the image capturing conditions (focal length, f-number and photographing distance) of the image capturing optical system **31** and determines a chromatic aberration correcting filter for correcting the chromatic aberration. By performing a filter computing process on the RAW image data by using the filter for chromatic aberration correction, chromatic-aberration-corrected image data is generated.

[**0162**] An image subjected to chromatic aberration correction is displayed on the display unit **51** or stored in the storing unit **62**. Alternately, the image may be outputted from the computer **50** to an external device.

[**0163**] **FIG. 23** is a flowchart showing a processing sequence in the computer **50** constructed as described above. When the CPU **61** starts an image processing program in the computer **50**, a process of initializing the components is performed (step S**10**). After the initializing process is finished, the computer **50** inputs an image file from the image capturing apparatus **1***a* (step S**11**). In the case of performing an image process on an image file already stored in the storing unit **62**, it is unnecessary to input an image file at this stage.

[**0164**] The CPU **61** displays an image file selection screen on the display unit **51** and extracts an image file to be processed from the storing unit **62** on the basis of a selecting operation of the user (step S**12**). The CPU **61** checks image capturing conditions from the tag information included in the image file (step S**13**) and specifies a parameter for correcting a chromatic aberration on the basis of the image capturing conditions (step S**14**). It is assumed that information indicative of optical characteristics of an image capturing optical system as the image capturing apparatus **1***a* connected to the computer **50** is preliminarily registered in the storing unit **62**.

[**0165**] The filter for chromatic aberration correction is generated on the basis of the parameters obtained in step S**13** (step S**15**), a filter computation is performed on the RAW data with the filter for chromatic aberration correction, thereby correcting the chromatic aberration (step S**16**).

[**0166**] After correcting the chromatic aberration, the CPU **61** performs a color interpolating process (step S**17**). The color interpolating process is performed by the filter computation to which, for example, the filter **201** shown in **FIG. 5** is applied. That is, in the present preferred embodiment, the chromatic aberration correcting process is performed prior to the color interpolating process on RAW data. Consequently, the chromatic aberration correcting process can be made function excellently, and high-precision chro-

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matic aberration correction can be performed. In the present preferred embodiment as well, the chromatic aberration correcting process and the color interpolating process can be performed concurrently as described in the foregoing preferred embodiments.

[0167] By performing the chromatic aberration correcting process and the color interpolating process, an image signal (image data) including information of the color component of each of R, G and B in each pixel is generated. γ correction is performed on the image data to decrease the number of bits of the pixel signal of each color component from 12 bits to 8 bits (step S18). By the γ correction, in addition to general γ correction, a tone decreasing process is simultaneously performed.

[0168] Other image processes such as a color space converting process and a line segment extracting process are performed (step S19). Further, image compression is carried out and a process of recording a resultant image to the storing unit 62 is performed (step S20).

[0169] The computer 50 functions as an image processing apparatus as described above and is constructed so as to perform the chromatic aberration correcting process of correcting a chromatic aberration caused by the image capturing optical system 31 on an image signal entered from the image capturing apparatus 1*a* prior to the color interpolating process for interpolating a dropout color component pixel by pixel. Therefore, chromatic aberration correction can be made at high precision.

[0170] At the time of inputting an image signal, the image capturing condition information at the time of capturing the image is also inputted, and parameters applied to the chromatic aberration correcting process are determined on the basis of the image capturing condition information. Consequently, the optical conditions of an image as an object of the image process can be grasped, and proper chromatic aberration correction can be performed so as to be adapted to the optical conditions at the time of image capturing.

6. Modifications

[0171] Although the preferred embodiments of the present invention have been described above, the present invention is not limited to the above.

[0172] For example, the case where the image center is disposed so as to coincide with the center position of the optical axis L of the image capturing optical system 31 has been described in each of the foregoing preferred embodiment. However, when the image center and the center position of the optical axis L do not coincide with each other, a parameter such as a deviation amount may be specified on the basis of the center position of the optical axis L.

[0173] In the case where the lens unit 3 is exchangeable in the image capturing apparatus 1 of FIG. 1, when the memory 27 is disposed in the body 2, the parameter for chromatic aberration correction has to be stored in the memory 27 for each lens unit. Consequently, as shown in FIG. 24, the memory 27 may be disposed on the lens unit 3 side. In FIG. 24, the same reference numerals as those in FIG. 1 are assigned to the same members.

[0174] While the invention has been shown and described in detail, the foregoing description is in all aspects illustrative and not restrictive. It is therefore understood that numerous modifications and variations can be devised without departing from the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An image capturing apparatus comprising:

an image capturing optical system;

a color image sensor for converting a light image obtained by said image capturing optical system to an image signal having a color component which varies according to a pixel; and

an image processor for concurrently performing a chromatic aberration correcting process of correcting a chromatic aberration of said image capturing optical system and a color interpolating process of interpolating a dropout color component pixel by pixel on an image signal generated by said color image sensor.

2. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said color image sensor generates color image signals of three primary colors, and

said image processor performs a chromatic aberration correcting process by moving image signals of at least two colors out of said color image signals of three primary colors by different amounts with respect to an optical axis.

3. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein

said image processor performs filter computation of coefficients which vary according to colors.

4. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 3, wherein

said image processor employs, as a filter applied to said filter computation, a filter having filter coefficients for performing said color interpolating process and filter coefficients for moving an image signal with respect to the optical axis.

5. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising

a memory for storing a filter applied to a specific pixel, wherein

said image processor performs a chromatic aberration correcting process on a pixel in a position symmetrical to said specific pixel with respect to the optical axis by converting the filter stored in said memory.

6. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising

a memory for storing a filter applied to a specific color out of said three primary colors, wherein

said image processor performs a chromatic aberration correcting process on colors other than said specific color by converting the filter stored in said memory.

7. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said image processor performs a process which varies according to an image capturing condition as said chromatic aberration correcting process.

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8. An image capturing apparatus comprising:

an image capturing optical system;

a color image sensor for converting a light image obtained by said image capturing optical system into an image signal having a color component which varies according to a pixel;

a divider for dividing an image signal generated by said color image sensor into a plurality of blocks;

a memory for storing a parameter for chromatic aberration correction applied to each block divided by said divider; and

an image processor for correcting a chromatic aberration caused by said image capturing optical system by the block on the basis of the parameter stored in said memory on an image signal generated by said color image sensor.

9. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

said block specified to an image signal becomes finer with distance from an optical axis of said image capturing optical system.

10. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

said image processor performs chromatic aberration correction by using parameters applied to peripheral blocks onto an image signal to be processed.

11. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

said block specified to an image signal is specified so as to be varied according to a color component generated by said color image sensor.

12. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

said parameter is a deviation amount of a chromatic aberration.

13. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

said image processor also performs a color interpolating process of interpolating a dropout color component pixel by pixel.

14. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

said image processor performs a chromatic aberration correcting process which varies according to an image capturing condition.

15. An image capturing apparatus comprising:

an image capturing optical system;

a color image sensor for converting a light image obtained by said image capturing optical system into an image signal of a color component which varies according to a pixel;

a memory for storing a parameter for approximating a chromatic aberration caused by said image capturing optical system; and

an image processor for performing a chromatic aberration correcting process on an image signal generated by said color image sensor by performing computation with an approximation function by using the parameter stored in said memory.

16. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein

said approximation function is a function corresponding to position of a pixel of which chromatic aberration is to be corrected and a function of which argument is a distance from an optical axis of said image capturing optical system.

17. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein

said approximation function is a function corresponding to position of a pixel of which chromatic aberration is to be corrected and a function of which argument is the square of a distance from an optical axis of said image capturing optical system.

18. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein

said image processor performs a chromatic aberration correcting process of generating a filter according to a deviation amount of a chromatic aberration obtained by performing computation with said approximation function and performing filter computation based on said filter.

19. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein

said image processor further performs a color interpolating process of interpolating a dropout color component pixel by pixel.

20. The image capturing apparatus according to claim 15, wherein

said image processor performs a chromatic aberration correcting process which varies according to an image capturing condition.

21. An image processing apparatus for performing an image process on an image signal which is generated on the basis of a light image received via an image capturing optical system and has a color component which varies according to a pixel, comprising:

an input unit for inputting said image signal; and

an image processor for concurrently performing a chromatic aberration correcting process of correcting a chromatic aberration of said image capturing optical system and a color interpolating process of interpolating a dropout color component pixel by pixel on said image signal inputted to said input unit.

22. A program product in which a program of allowing a computer to perform a process on an image signal which is generated on the basis of a light image received via an image capturing optical system and has a color component which varies according to a pixel, the process comprising the steps of:

inputting said image signal; and

concurrently performing a chromatic aberration correcting process of correcting a chromatic aberration of said image capturing optical system and a color interpolating process of interpolating a dropout color component pixel by pixel on said inputted image signal.

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(54) SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR DECIDING WHEN TO CORRECT IMAGE-SPECIFIC DEFECTS BASED ON CAMERA, SCENE, DISPLAY AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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(21) Appl. No.: **09/957,013**

(22) Filed: **Sep. 20, 2001**

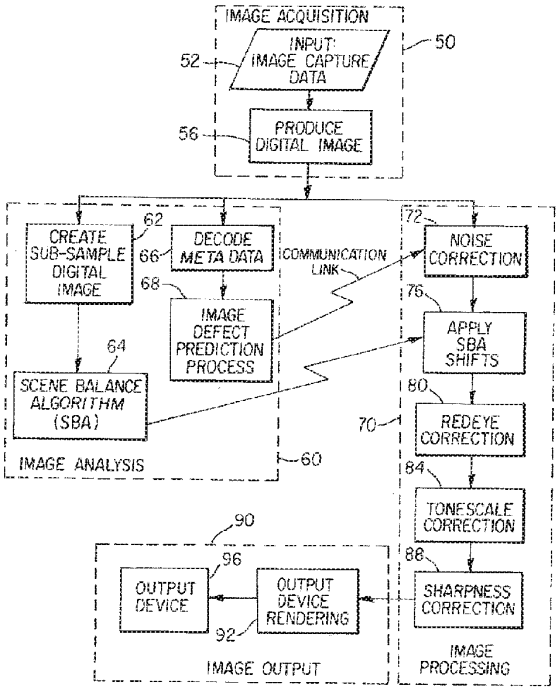
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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **348/241**; 382/275; 348/211.5; 348/231.6; 396/158; 348/222.1

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A captured image is processed with one or more correction processes selected from a plurality of such processes, each associated with correction of a specific type of image defect, in order to improve the appearance of a viewed image generated from the captured image. Preliminary to the image processing, meta data related to image capture is obtained that is unique to each captured image, where the meta data is capable of indicating whether the specific types of image defects are likely to be present in the viewed image generated from the captured image. The processing then involves predicting the presence of the image defects based at least in part on the meta data, thereby generating process application criteria which indicate a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the viewed image; selecting one or more correction processes to employ on the captured image based on the process application criteria; and applying the one or more selected correction processes to the captured image to generate the viewed image.



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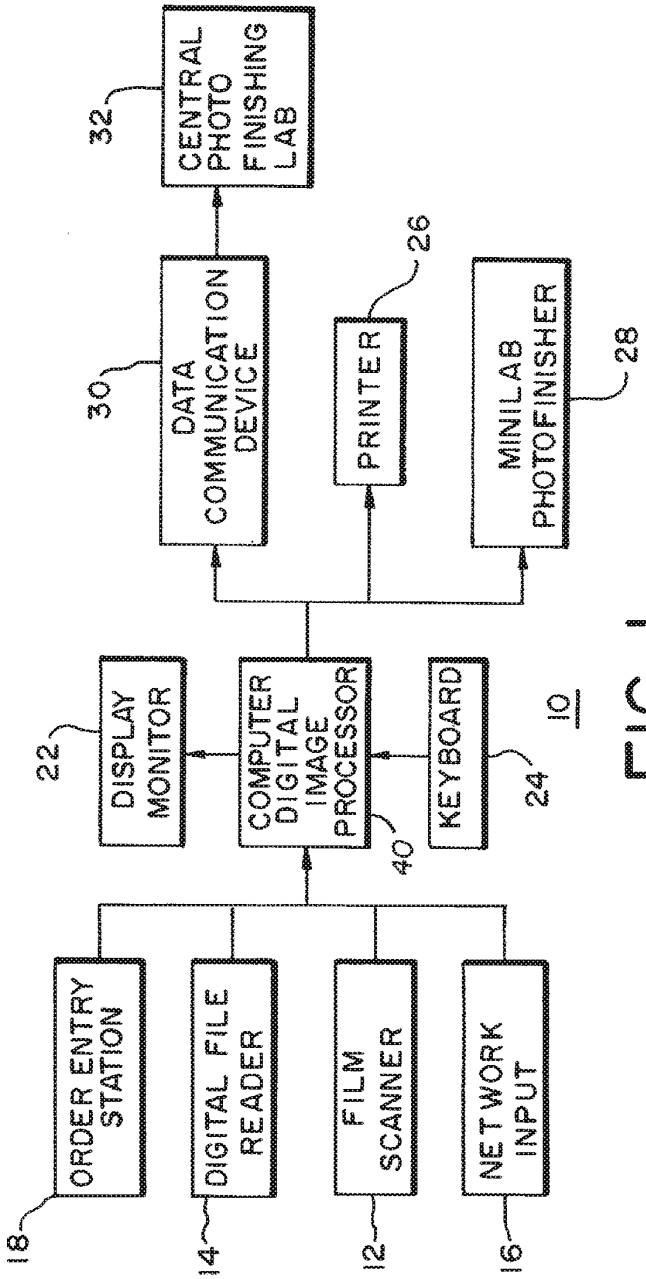


FIG. 1

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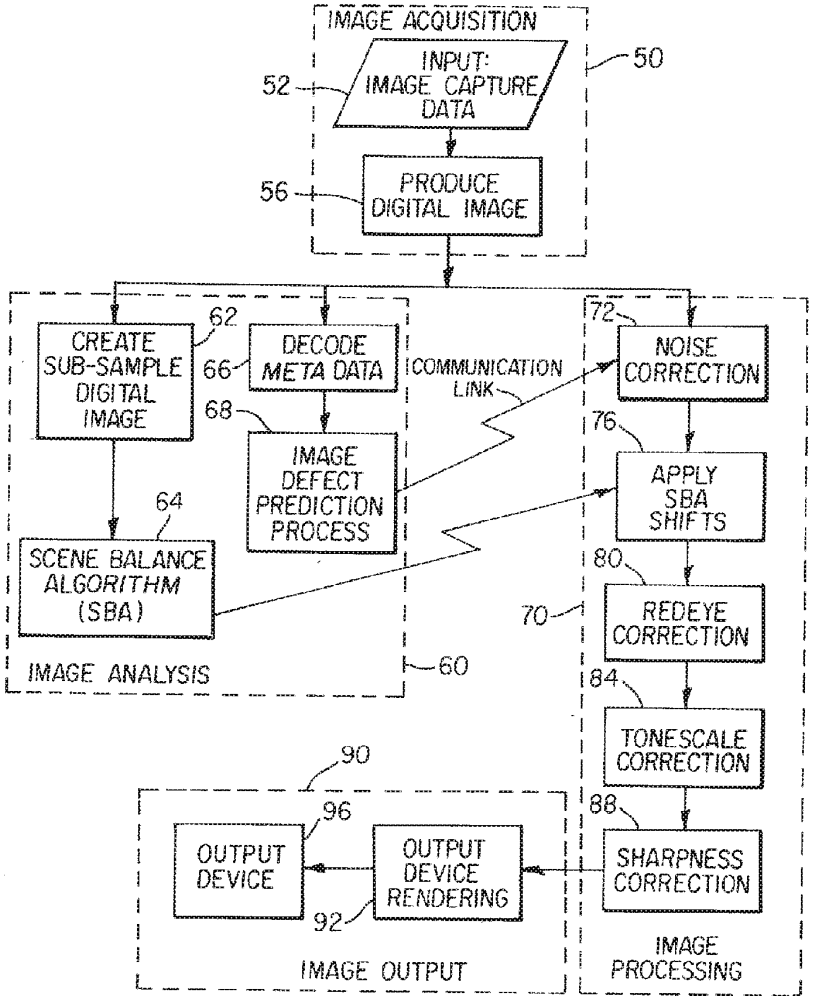


FIG. 2

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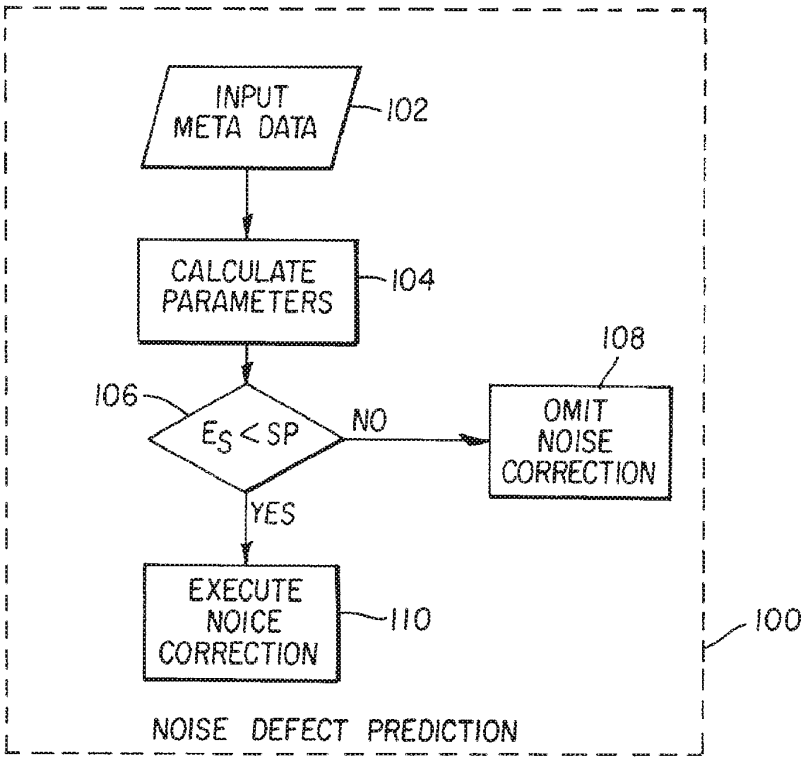


FIG. 3

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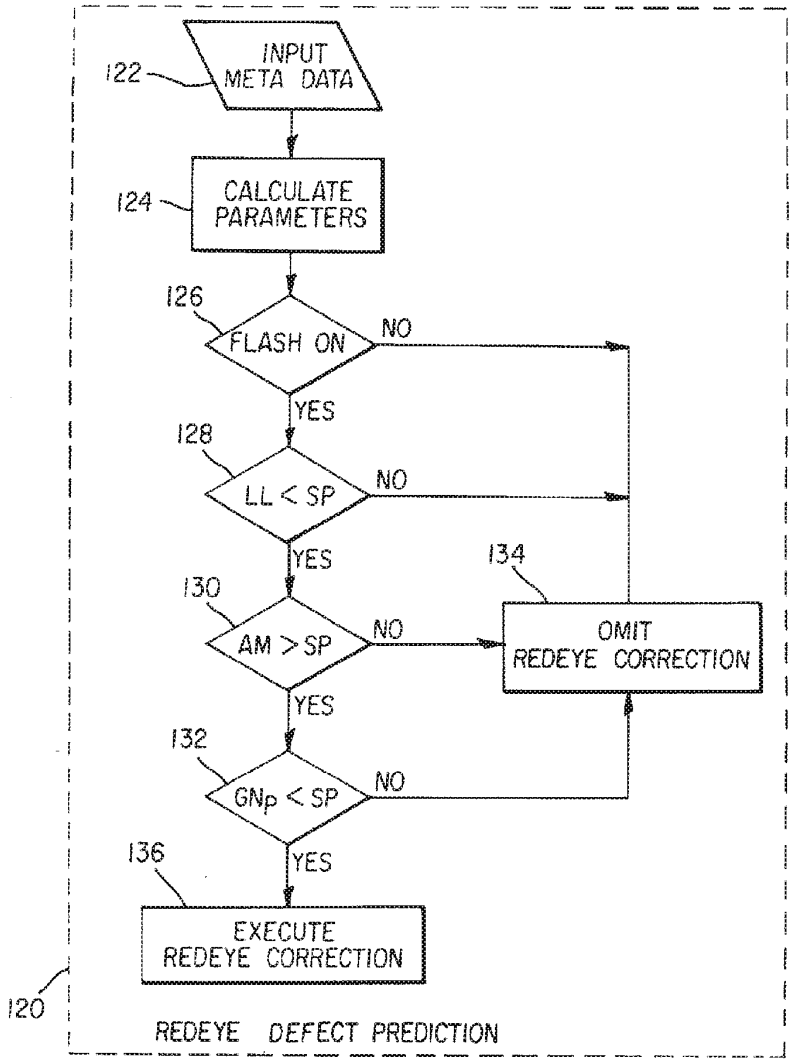


FIG. 4

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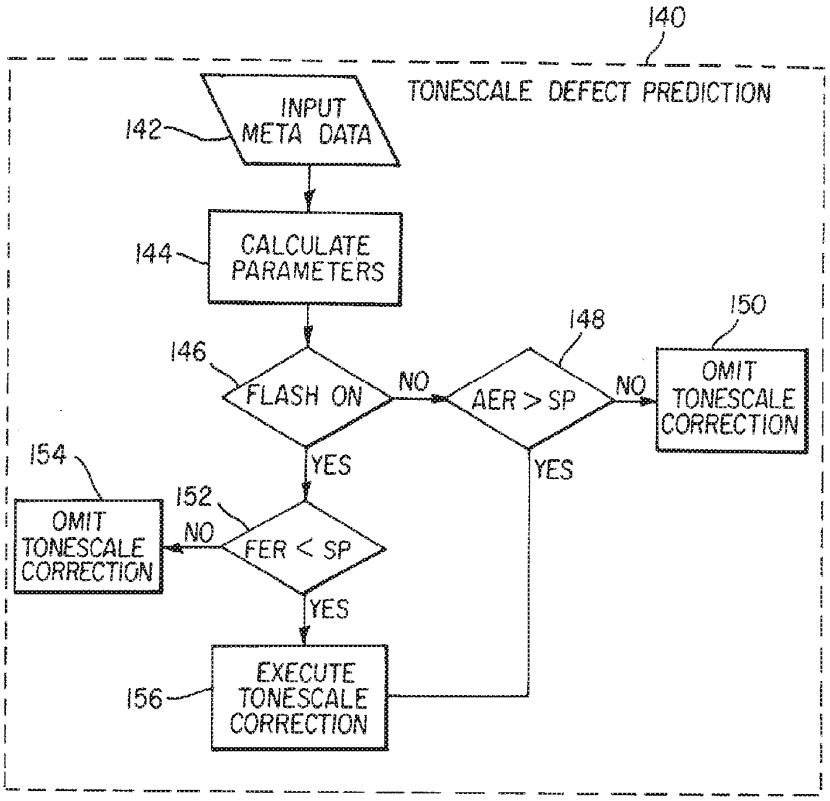


FIG. 5

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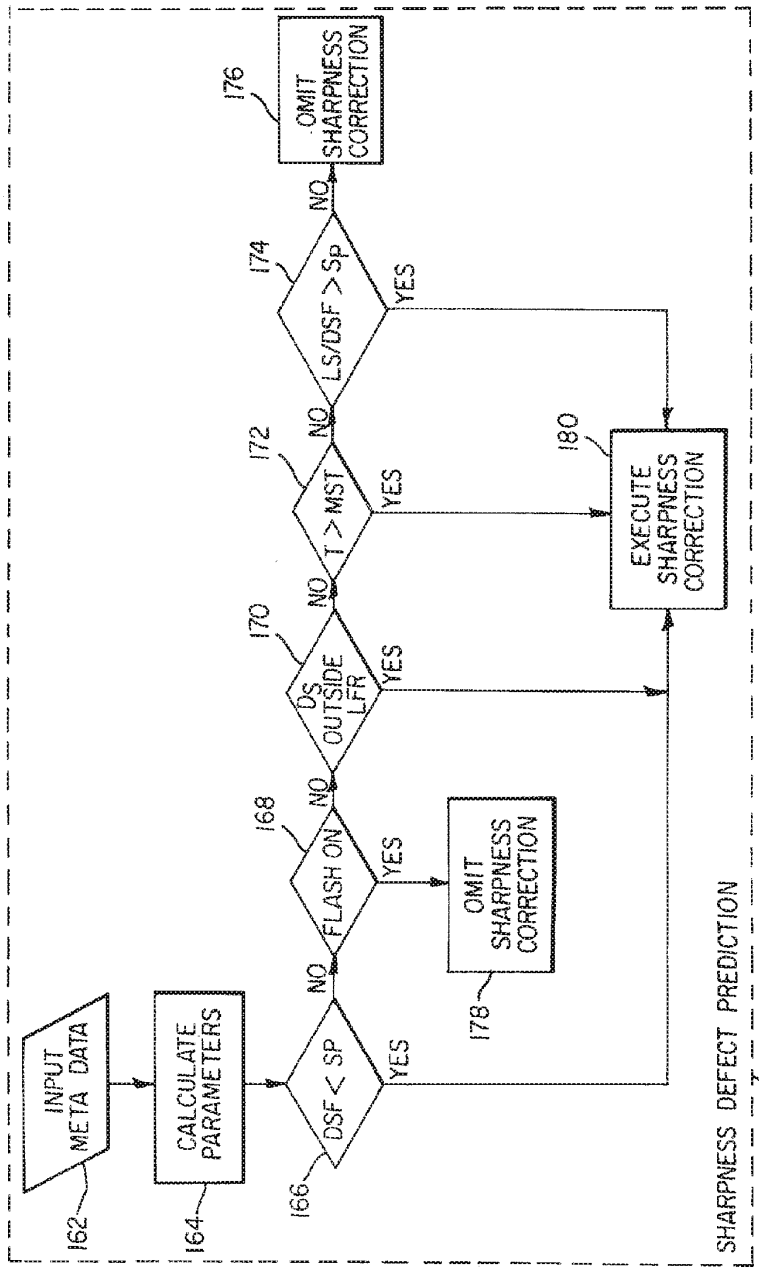


FIG 6

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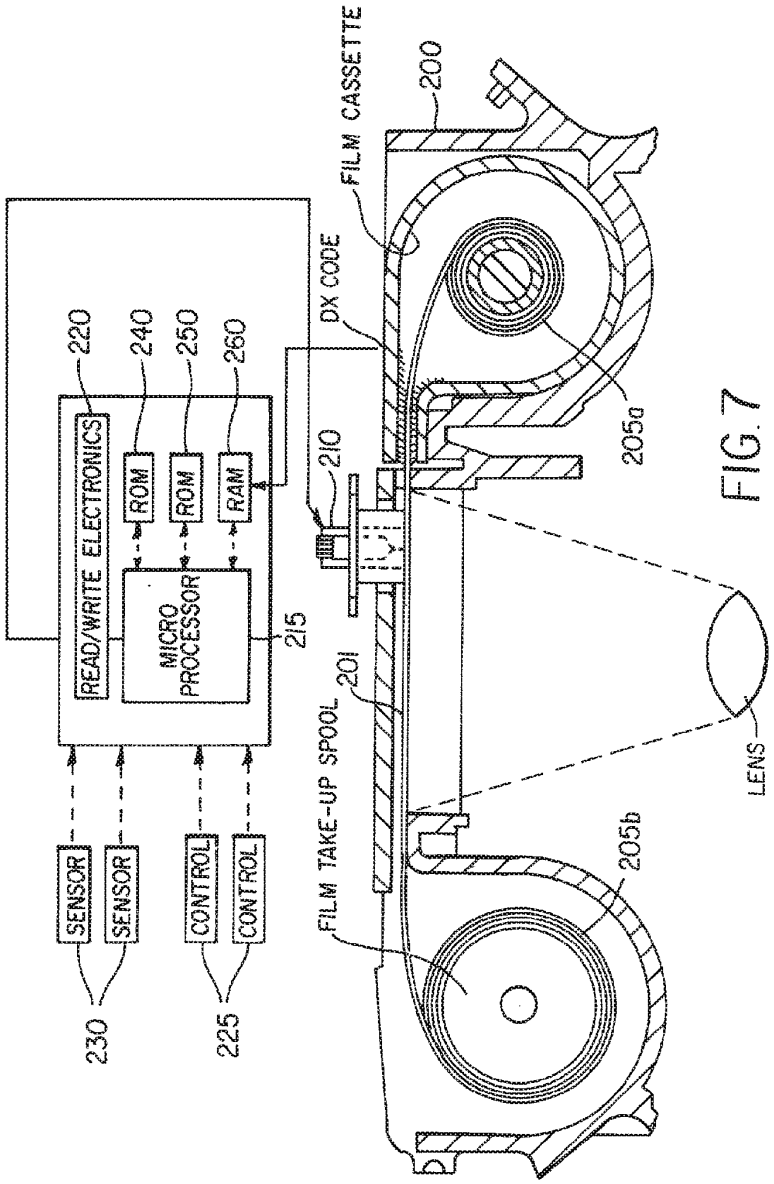


FIG. 7

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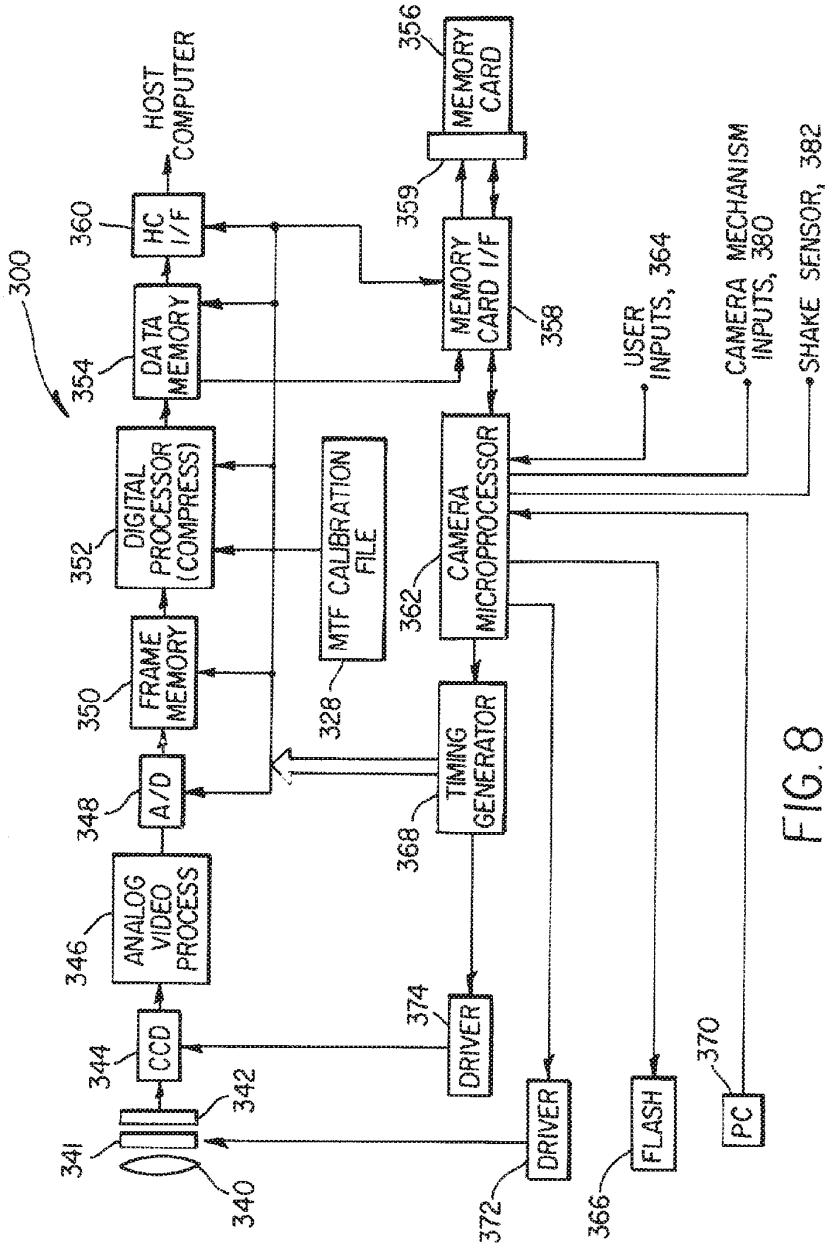


FIG. 8

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR DECIDING WHEN TO CORRECT IMAGE-SPECIFIC DEFECTS BASED ON CAMERA, SCENE, DISPLAY AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates generally to the field of digital image processing, and, in particular, to the prediction and correction of image defects in a photograph.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Photographic systems produce a wide range of image quality when operated by amateur, often referred to as "point-and-shoot", photographers. If the photographic environment for a given scene is well suited to the image capture system (e.g. subjects are stationary and within the focus range, ambient light level is uniform and of sufficient intensity, and lens magnification is appropriate for the subject matter), good results are typically obtained. However, when these conditions are not present, image defects may be introduced due to failures in the capture or reproduction system, thereby reducing the quality of the final viewed image. To minimize the effects of suboptimal image capture conditions, camera designers have attempted to compensate by adding features intended to expand the range of light levels and distances where images can be captured. Unfortunately, these features often solve the primary problem, but add a secondary, sometimes severe, image defect.

[0003] For example, if the intensity of the ambient light is insufficient to provide adequate exposure, and the primary subject is located less than 20 feet from the camera, most built-in electronic flash units are able to provide auxiliary illumination sufficient to at least partially expose the primary subject. However, even if the primary subject now receives adequate illumination, the flash may introduce image defects.

[0004] As is well known in the art, the image defect known as redeye may occur when the angle between a narrow light source, the photographic subject, and the camera lens is less than approximately three degrees. This criterion is frequently met in flash exposures from compact cameras. The light from the flash enters the pupil nearly on-axis and propagates to the fundus of the eye, where it is reflected back out of the eye, having been colored red by the blood vessels in the fundus. The light exits the eye in a narrow cone, and if the camera lens falls within that cone, the red reflection will be recorded, and may appear in the final image as a red glow in the pupils, which is very undesirable in terms of image quality.

[0005] Redeye is more objectionable when the size of the pupil in the viewed image is larger and when the red saturation of the pupil is greater. The former may occur when the pupil is dilated, as occurs at low ambient light levels, or when the subject is rendered at a larger size in the image, for example due to shorter camera to subject distance, longer camera lens focal length, higher printing magnification (including zoom and crop), and/or shorter viewing distance. The primary techniques used in the camera to reduce or eliminate redeye are: increasing flash to lens separation; firing a preflash to transiently stop down the pupil in response to the bright light; and decreasing lens focal length and/or electronic zoom.

[0006] While all these methods are efficacious, all have associated disadvantages. Increased flash-lens separation may lead to more expensive and bulkier cameras and produces more noticeable shadows due to the farther off-axis lighting. After a preflash is fired, the eye requires half a second or more to respond fully, and during this delay between the preflash fire and the image capture, facial expressions of the subject often change in an undesirable fashion due to the annoyance and surprise of the preflash. The preflash also increases camera cost, reduces the power available during the main flash pulse, and increases battery consumption. Finally, restriction of optical or electronic zoom factors interferes with the photographer's ability to obtain the desired composition, with the subjects appearing large enough in the image to provide a pleasing rendition.

[0007] Given the disadvantages of the in-camera redeye reduction techniques summarized above, and the increased availability of digital printing devices capable of making corrections to selected portions of individual images, considerable effort has been directed towards the development of techniques for locating and correcting the redeye defect during the photofinishing (digital printing) process.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 5,748,764 issued May 5, 1998 teaches a method of locating and correcting the redeye image defect in an image. U.S. Pat. No. 5,892,837 issued Apr. 6, 1999, and related commonly assigned US. Pat. No. 6,292,574 issued Sep. 18, 2001 and U.S. Pat. No. 6,151,403 issued Nov. 21, 2000 generally describe additional methods suitable for locating human eyes in an image, and specifically describe locating and correcting the appearance of human eyes with the redeye image defect. These digital redeye removal techniques, while effective, are computationally intensive, and therefore increase the time required to optimally render and reproduce copies of captured images. The time required to perform these operations may in some cases be the rate limiting step in automated high speed printing operations. If the redeye defect location and correction processes are applied to every image in a customer order, even though only a portion of those images actually contain the defect, productivity and profit may be reduced. In addition, if computational time is spent searching for redeye defects in every image, other beneficial image processing operations such as tone scale mapping, digital noise reduction and sharpening may not be possible in the time interval allocated for each image. It is therefore desirable to be able to predict when redeye will occur, and to invoke the redeye location and correction processes only when needed.

[0009] From an extensive study to determine whether it is possible to predict from data collected at the time the original scene is photographed, the probability and severity of the redeye defect that will be present in the final image, it was discovered that the extent of the redeye defect depends primarily on the following factors: subject race, subject age, preflash illumination level, flash-to-lens separation, camera to subject distance, ambient light level, camera lens focal length, reproduction magnification, and final image viewing distance. In the present invention these factors are used to predict, on an image by image basis, the severity of the redeye defect, and that information is transferred from the camera to the photofinishing system where it commands the automatic printer control system, or in the case of human assisted printers, alerts the operator, to apply

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redeye defect location and correction techniques only when warranted, thereby improving picture quality and enhancing photofinishing productivity.

[0010] In addition to the redeye image defect, it is well-known that the physics of light intensity loss as a function of distance from a narrow source, such as an electronic flash tube, often leads to a defect in lighting contrast and consequently distorted tone reproduction in the final viewed image. Specifically, with every doubling of camera-to-subject distance, the light intensity per unit area on the subject drops by a factor of four. For example, if the primary subject is located 6 feet from the camera and the background is located 12 feet from the camera, the captured image of the background has an exposure level only one quarter that of the image of the primary subject. This causes the background to appear much darker than the primary subject does in the final viewed image. Because light falls off according to this squared function with respect to distance, the exposure difference between the primary subject and the background are often larger than illustrated above, particularly when images are captured outdoors at night or in large rooms. When presented with an image having a large exposure range (high contrast scene) with no knowledge of which portion of the scene is the primary subject, the exposure control system in the printer often calculates an average or area-weighted exposure that may excessively lighten the primary subject. This defect is particularly detrimental in pictures of people, whose faces are washed out and lack proper flesh reproduction.

[0011] If images of high contrast scenes universally contained overexposed primary subjects and underexposed backgrounds, as illustrated above, it would be practical to introduce a darken bias when printing all high contrast scenes. Unfortunately, there is a class of scenes known as backlight that are high in contrast, but have a subject-to-background exposure ratio that is opposite that of flash scenes. In the case of backlight scenes the illumination source is often behind the primary subject, or the primary subject is shaded by another object, such as a tree or a building, and therefore receives only a fraction of the ambient illumination. Consequently, the primary subject is underexposed relative to the background. In this case if the darkening bias needed to correct harsh flash scenes was applied, the already dark primary subject would be rendered even darker, having the effect of further reducing the image quality.

[0012] The information exchange (IX) feature of the Advanced Photo System offered by Eastman Kodak Company may make use of information collected at the time of image capture and passed to the printer to indicate whether, for the current image, the electronic flash was employed. (The Advanced Photo System specifications documents can be found at http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/APS/redBook/specsIndex.shtml.) If the flash was fired, and a high contrast scene is inferred from the scanned image densities, a darkening bias can be applied to the image during printing. This information helps discriminate between backlight and harsh flash shots, and increases the probability that the primary subject will be printed to the proper lightness. However, because in both backlight and harsh flash scenes the dynamic range of the scene may exceed the tonal range of the print material, the primary subject and background can not be simultaneously rendered properly by invoking a full-image-field darken (in the case of harsh flash) or lighten (in the case of backlight) printing correction. This means that optical (analog) printing systems, which are only capable of producing full-field exposure corrections, can not produce optimal renditions of high contrast scenes.

[0013] Recent advances in digital image processing make practical methods for digitally segmenting the image field, analyzing the dynamic range, and adjusting tone reproduction (lightening or darkening) on an image area specific basis. By remapping the tone reproduction in this fashion, both the overexposed and underexposed portions of high contrast scenes can be rendered within the tonal range of the print material, thereby making the information in both regions visible in the final image. These digital area-specific tone scale remapping techniques, while effective, are computationally intensive, and therefore increase the time required to optimally render and reproduce copies of captured images. The time required to perform these operations may in some cases be the rate limiting step in automated high speed printing operations. If the tone scale remapping techniques are applied to every image in a customer order, even though only a portion of those images actually contain the defect, productivity and profit may be reduced. In addition, if computational time is spent searching for tone scale defects in every image, other beneficial image processing operations such as redeye location and correction, digital noise reduction and sharpening may not be possible in the time interval allocated for processing each image. It is therefore desirable to be able to predict when tone scale defects will be present, and to invoke tone scale remapping processes only when needed.

[0014] From a study to determine whether it is possible to predict from data collected at the time the original scene is photographed, the probability and severity of the tone scale defect that will be present in the final image, it was discovered that the extent of the tone scale defect depends primarily on the following factors: flash state (full,fill,off), primary subject light level, background light level, primary subject distance, background distance, and if available, state of the manual or automatic camera backlight exposure compensation control. In the present invention, these factors are used to predict, on an image by image basis, the severity of the tone scale defect, and that information is transferred from the camera to the photofinishing system where it commands the automatic printer control system, or in the case of human assisted printers, alerts the operator, to apply tone scale defect location and correction techniques only when warranted, thereby improving picture quality and enhancing photofinishing productivity.

[0015] If the ambient light level is not sufficient to provide adequate exposure, and the flash is deactivated or the primary subject is located beyond the maximum flash range, the image capture system will produce an underexposed image. In the case of film-based camera systems underexposure leads to latent image formation in primarily the most sensitive (fastest) layer, comprised of the largest silver halide grains. When processed and printed, images comprised of these fast, large grains permit a reproduction of the scene to be created, but the final viewed image typically contains noticeable grain structure, which masks fine detail and lowers the perceived image quality. The appearance of the grain, referred to more generally as image noise,

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becomes more objectionable when the reproduction magnification is increased, for example, in enlargements, pseudo-panoramic or pseudo-telephoto print formats.

[0016] In the case of digital still cameras (DSCs) with, for example, CCD or CMOS image sensors, the photographic sensitivity (exposure index) of the sensor may be adjusted automatically or manually, by the photographer, in response to the scene light level, to attempt to maintain adequate tone reproduction. The photographic sensitivity is adjusted by changing the gain of the sensor signal amplifier, taking into account the color temperature (white balance) of the ambient illuminant. When the ambient light level is high (bright scene), the amplifier gain is low, thereby producing a high (favorable) signal-to-noise ratio (SNR). When the ambient light level is low (dim scene), the amplifier gain is increased, which produces a low (unfavorable) SNR. When the gain is increased in this fashion, the tone reproduction of the image is improved relative to the standard amplifier gain; however, due to the low SNR, the final viewed image will typically contain noticeable noise, analogous to the grain in under-exposed film images, which masks fine detail and lowers the perceived image quality. The appearance of noise defects becomes more objectionable when the reproduction magnification is increased, for example, in enlargements, pseudo-panoramic or pseudo-telephoto (electronic zoom) print formats.

[0017] Techniques such as those exemplified in The Sigma filter, described by Jong-Sen Lee in the journal article *Digital Image Smoothing and the Sigma Filter,* Computer Vision, Graphics, and Image Processing Vol 24, p. 255-269, 1983, are useful as noise reduction algorithms to enhance the visual appearance of the processed digital image. These digital area-specific noise reduction techniques, while effective, are computationally intensive, and therefore increase the time required to optimally render and reproduce copies of captured images. The time required to perform these operations may in some cases be the rate limiting step in automated high speed printing operations. If the digital noise reduction techniques are applied to every image in a customer order, even though only a portion of those images actually contain the defect, productivity and profit may be reduced. In addition, if computational time is spent searching for and correcting noise defects in every image, other beneficial image processing operations such as redeye location and correction, tone scale remapping and sharpening may not be possible in the time interval allocated for processing each image. It is therefore desirable to be able to predict when noise defects will be present, and to invoke digital noise reduction processes only when needed.

[0018] From an extensive study to determine whether it is possible to predict from data collected at the time the original scene is photographed, the probability and severity of the noise defect that will be present in the final image, it was discovered that the extent of the noise defect depends primarily on the following factors: Reproduction magnification; final image viewing distance; baseline exposure index film noise, or, in the case of DSCs, baseline exposure index sensor noise and the state of the manual or automatic DSC (R,G,B) exposure index control, which determines the sensor amplifier gain level; and the film or the sensor exposure level. In the present invention these factors are used to predict, on an image by image basis, the severity of the noise defect, and that information is transferred from the camera to the photofinishing system where it commands the automatic printer control system, or in the case of human assisted printers, alerts the operator, to apply noise defect location and correction techniques only when warranted, thereby improving picture quality and enhancing photofinishing productivity.

[0019] Even if the photographic environment provides ambient light that is uniform and of sufficient intensity to provide an exposure level that obviates the need for electronic flash or high-noise ambient captures, and the primary subject is within the focus range of the camera, the camera lens magnification provided by the normal lens (often defined as the diagonal dimension of the image capture frame) may be insufficient to capture an image of the primary subject that is the preferred size in the final viewed image. The size of the primary subject in the final viewed image is proportional to a quantity known as the angular magnification (AM) of the system, which can be characterized by the following equation:

$$AM=[(Fl)(Mr)]/Vd$$

[0020] Where:

[0021] Fl=camera lens focal length (specified in inches)

[0022] Mr=reproduction magnification (ratio of image to display size)

[0023] Vd=final image viewing distance (specified in inches)

[0024] The eye-to-display separation (viewing distance) has been found to vary with respect to final display size according to the following formula disclosed by the present inventors, in columns 43-44 of commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 5,323,204:

$$Vd=3.64+11.34[\log_{10}(D)]$$

[0025] Where:

[0026] D=the diagonal dimension of the final display (specified in inches)

[0027] The most common method for increasing the AM involves the inclusion of telephoto or variable (zoom) focal length image capture optics on the camera. This approach produces larger subjects in the final viewed image by increasing the image capture magnification and maintaining a standard (full frame) printing magnification. Other methods involving pseudo-telephoto optical printing or electronic zoom digital printing are well known in the art. These techniques produce larger subjects in the final viewed image by increasing the printing magnification and cropping out a portion of the image frame, while retaining the standard print size (e.g. 4×6 inch) and the standard image capture lens focal length. Finally, by simply producing a larger (e.g. 8×10 inch) final image size, the reproduction magnification is increased, and therefore the AM and perceived subject size, even after including the longer final viewing distance, are also larger. The increase in AM provided by the aforementioned techniques may lead to a more pleasing composition, however, it also magnifies image blur resulting from inadequate lens depth-of-field, subject motion, and photographer hand tremor. The magnified image blur causes sharpness defects to be visible in the final viewed image.

[0028] Recent advances in digital image sharpness enhancement, as exemplified in U.S. Pat. No. 5,398,077,

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teach methods for digitally segmenting the image field, analyzing the content to separate signal and noise components, and boosting the sharpness on an image area specific basis. These digital area-specific sharpening techniques, while effective, are computationally intensive, and therefore increase the time required to optimally render and reproduce copies of captured images. The time required to perform these operations may in some cases be the rate limiting step in automated high speed printing operations. If the digital sharpening techniques are applied to every image in a customer order, even though only a portion of those images actually contain the defect, productivity and profit may be reduced. In addition, if computational time is spent searching for and correcting sharpness defects in every image, other beneficial image processing operations such as redeye location and correction, tone scale remapping and noise reduction may not be possible in the time interval allocated for processing each image. It is therefore desirable to be able to predict when sharpness defects will be present, and to invoke digital sharpening processes only when needed.

[0029] From an extensive study to determine whether it is possible to predict from data collected at the time the original scene is photographed, the probability and severity of the sharpness defect that will be present in the final image, it was discovered that the extent of the sharpness defect depends primarily on the following factors: reproduction magnification, final image viewing distance, camera lens focal length, DSC resolution or camera film speed, shutter time, subject motion, photographer hand tremor, and subject distance if outside of focus range. In the present invention, these factors are used to predict, on an image by image basis, the severity of the sharpness defect, and that information is transferred from the camera to the photofinishing system where it commands the automatic printer control system, or in the case of human assisted printers, alerts the operator, to apply sharpness defect location and correction techniques only when warranted, thereby improving picture quality and enhancing photofinishing productivity.

[0030] One proposal for optimizing multiple image processing operations is described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,694,484, issued Dec. 2, 1997, to Cottrell et al. Cottrell et al. disclose an image processing system that proposes to optimize the perceptual quality of images undergoing a series of image-processing operations selected by an operator. The system consists of a set of selected image-processing operations, an architecture, and a control system. These elements take into consideration profiles of source characteristics from which the images are generated, profiles of output device characteristics, and the impact that image processing operations (individually or in concert) will have on perceived image quality. Control parameters for the individual image processing operations are modified by optimizing an image quality metric (a single numerical quality) based on mathematical formulas relating objective metrics (such as sharpness, grain, tone, and color) with perceived image quality. In the method described by Cottrell et al., the values for the individual control parameters are varied over useful ranges until the image quality metric achieves an optimal value. Besides involving significant computation resources to evaluate the multitude of parameter permutations, this method requires operator intervention to select the set of image processing operations that will be applied in each case.

[0031] In U.S. Pat. No. 5,835,627, issued Nov. 10, 1998 to Higgins, Hultgren and Cottrell, the process described above in the '484 patent is refined with the addition of an algorithm selector that tries each possible sequence of image processing operations and a customer satisfaction index (CSI), which proposes to balance the perceived image quality and the image processing time, as exhibited by the different image processing sequences. As was the case in U.S. Pat. No. 5,694,484, the image quality estimate is based on device profiles that are constant value inputs for each image source and downstream device, and that are typically generated during calibration of the individual devices in a factory or laboratory setting (see U.S. Pat. No. 5,835,627, col. 3, line 60-5). Besides involving significant computation resources to evaluate the multitude of parameter permutations as in the '484 patent, this refinement increases the amount of computation by causing the process to iterate through each new sequence until an optimal CSI is obtained.

[0032] Despite the elaborate methodology disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,694,484 and 5,835,627, such systems fail to recognize the importance and use of capture-specific data, that is, variable data collected at the time of image capture, to predict on an image by image basis the best selection of image defect correction algorithms to apply. In particular, it would be desirable to make advantageous use of scene- and exposure-specific data to predict the best selection of image defect correction algorithms to apply.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0033] It is an object of the present invention to improve the quality and efficiency of digital printing by applying image defect location and correction processes only when the current image is predicted to have a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

[0034] It is a further object to make use of camera, scene, and demographic data collected at the time of image capture to predict on an image by image basis the best selection of image defect correction algorithms to apply.

[0035] The present invention is directed to overcoming one or more of the problems set forth above. Briefly summarized, according to one aspect of the present invention, the invention resides in a system and method for processing a captured image with one or more correction processes selected from a plurality of such processes, each associated with correction of a specific type of image defect, in order to improve the appearance of a viewed image generated from the captured image. The inventive method includes the steps of (a) collecting meta data related to image capture that is unique to each image that is captured, wherein the meta data is capable of indicating whether the specific types of image defects are likely to be present in the viewed image generated from the captured image; (b) predicting the presence of the image defects based at least in part on the meta data, thereby generating process application criteria which indicate a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the viewed image; (c) selecting one or more correction processes to employ on the image based on the process application criteria; and (d) applying the one or more selected correction processes to the image to generate the viewed image.

[0036] The meta data, which may be collected at the time of image capture or at some other time to the extent possible,

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such as at a photofinishing kiosk, includes scene, camera or demographic data specifically related on an image-by-image basis to the image capture. Moreover, the step of predicting the presence of the image defects may also predict the severity of the defects and the strength of the corresponding correction process can be altered in response to the degree of severity. In addition, the collection of meta data may further include the collection of display parameters of the viewed image generated from each image that is captured, wherein such display parameter meta data is also capable of indicating whether the different types of image defects are likely to be present in the viewed image.

[0037] Advantageous Effect of the Invention

[0038] The present invention is advantageous in that it improves the quality and efficiency of digital photofinishing processes, whether fully automated or operator assisted. Specifically, the advantage is realized by applying image defect location and correction processes only when needed for the current scene, thereby eliminating time consuming operations that would fail to substantially improve the quality of the current image.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0039] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram of a digital image reproduction system according to the invention;

[0040] **FIG. 2** is a functional block diagram of an image processing system illustrating the image analysis, image defect prediction, image processing (defect correction), and image output steps of the present invention;

[0041] **FIG. 3** is a logic diagram illustrating one technique of using data captured at the time of image capture to decide when to apply noise defect location and correction processes in digital image reproduction apparatus;

[0042] **FIG. 4** is a logic diagram illustrating one technique of using data captured at the time of image capture to decide when to apply redeye defect location and correction processes in digital image reproduction apparatus;

[0043] **FIG. 5** is a logic diagram illustrating one technique of using data captured at the time of image capture to decide when to apply tonescale defect location and correction processes in digital image reproduction apparatus;

[0044] **FIG. 6** is a logic diagram illustrating one technique of using data captured at the time of image capture to decide when to apply sharpness defect location and correction processes in digital image reproduction apparatus.

[0045] **FIG. 7** is a diagram illustrating a film camera adapted to write meta data on a photographic film.

[0046] **FIG. 8** is a diagram illustrating a digital camera adapted to write meta data on a digital record.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0047] Because image processing systems employing defect recognition and correction are well known, the present description will be directed in particular to attributes forming part of, or cooperating more directly with, system and method in accordance with the present invention. System and method attributes not specifically shown or described herein may be selected from those known in the art. In the following description, a preferred embodiment of the present invention would ordinarily be implemented as a software program, although those skilled in the art will readily recognize that the equivalent of such software may also be constructed in hardware. Given the system as described according to the invention in the following materials, software not specifically shown, suggested or described herein that is useful for implementation of the invention is conventional and within the ordinary skill in such arts. If the invention is implemented as a computer program, the program may be stored in conventional computer readable storage medium, which may comprise, for example; magnetic storage media such as a magnetic disk (such as a floppy disk or a hard drive) or magnetic tape; optical storage media such as an optical disc, optical tape, or machine readable bar code; solid state electronic storage devices such as random access memory (RAM), or read only memory (ROM); or any other physical device or medium employed to store a computer program.

[0048] Prior to providing a detailed description of each embodiment of the present invention, the methods used to set the image quality switch-points for activating the image defect location and correction processes will be discussed. Because it is the purpose of this invention to predict from data collected at the time of image capture the presence and severity of image defects, to determine which correction processes to employ, each of the defects must be assessed with respect to the same image quality standard. To accomplish this goal, perceptually relevant image quality assessment and modeling techniques disclosed by the present inventors in the proceedings of The Society for Imaging Science and Technology (IS&T), Image Processing Image Quality Image Capture Systems (PICS 2000) Conference, ISBN: 0-89298-227-5, are employed. Specifically, the papers entitled "*Characterization and Prediction of Image Quality*" by B. W. Keelan, and "*Use of System Image Quality Models to Improve Product Design*" by R. B. Wheeler, which are incorporated herein by reference, should be consulted for additional background information. The image quality scale is based on just-noticeable-difference (JND) units of quality. In experiments, a JND is defined as the smallest image quality difference that can be detected by 50% of observers in forced-choice (no ties allowed) paired image comparisons. Stated another way, when two images are separated by exactly one JND, 50% of human observers will perceive the quality advantage of the better image and rate it best. The other 50% of the human observers will not perceive the difference, but will guess correctly half the time. Consequently, in a forced-choice comparison between two images that differ by exactly one JND, the higher quality image will be rated better 75% of the time. As the quality difference between image pairs becomes larger there will be nearly universal agreement as to which one is better; as a result, a scale covering a wide range of quality is composed of many JNDs. For example, when cast in subjective quality terms such as excellent, very good, good, fair, poor, etc., we have found that a difference of about 6 JNDs constitutes a full quality category.

[0049] While it is possible to set image quality switch-points for activating image defect location and correction processes at different absolute quality levels without departing from the spirit of the invention, the preferred embodiment employs a three JND (one-half quality category) criteria. This provides a reasonable balance between image

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quality enhancement and photofinishing throughput (images processed per unit of time). If the image quality switch-point is set at a lower JND value (e.g. one JND of degradation), the image defect location and correction processes will be invoked more frequently, which may lead to higher average image quality, but lower throughput due to extended image processing time. If the quality switch-point is set at a higher JND value (e.g. 6 JNDs of degradation), the image defect location and correction processes will be invoked less frequently, which may lead to lower average image quality, but higher throughput due to shortened image processing time.

[0050] In the detailed description of our preferred embodiments, image defect correction switch-points are defined that either activate or deactivate the image defect location and correction processes. It is to be understood that while this description pertains to correction processes that are applied in the same manner every time the quality loss due to an image defect is equal to or greater than the switch-point (e.g. 3 JNDs), the strength of the image defect correction processes can be altered in response to the degree of image quality loss predicted for the current scene.

[0051] For example, in the case of sharpness correction, as the predicted level of the image defect becomes worse the gain of the spatial filter applied in the sharpening operation can be increased. Similarly, in the case of noise defect correction, customized noise correction tables can be applied in response to the predicted magnitude of the image defect. In addition, the preferred embodiment of the present invention can be used to determine which image defect correction processes should be activated, and the strength of the corrections employed in those activated processes can be determined by analyzing the image pixel data using a series of pixel data predictors that correlate with the degree of the degradation caused by the defect. For example, the gradient of edges can be used to estimate the strength of the spatial filtering needed to correct sharpness defects.

[0052] As noted previously, the inventive process uses information collected at the time of image capture, which is referred to as meta data, to predict the presence of image defects in a photograph, and to subsequently decide when to apply image defect correction processes in digital photofinishing. A variety of meta data describing the scene and camera conditions used to capture the current image, can be recorded by the camera and transferred to photofinishing equipment, as is described in commonly assigned U.S. Pat. No. 5,229,810, which is incorporated herein by reference. In the case of cameras employing silver halide based films containing an integral magnetic layer, commonly referred to as Advanced Photo System (APS) films, the information recording device preferably comprises a magnetic recording head for magnetically encoding data on the surface of the film. Alternatively, in the case of film cameras without magnetic writing capability, latent image bar code data may be exposed outside the area of the primary image frame, and later decoded in the photofinishing equipment. In the case of DSCs, other known data recording techniques may also be utilized such as optical or magnetic recording on separable media such as disks or integrated circuit cards. In the detailed description of the embodiments that follows, it is understood that the method by which information is exchanged between the image capture device and the photofinishing equipment, while not specifically identified in each case, can be accomplished with any of the aforementioned well-known methods.

[0053] In **FIG. 1**, a general digital image processing system **10** useful in the practice of the invention is shown in which input pictorial image data and related image classification parameters are provided by means of one of a variety of indicated devices. The illustrated input devices include a photographic film scanner **12** which optically scans the image frames on a film strip and converts the scanned signals into digital image data. If the scanner is capable of reading APS film, then the scanner will typically read from the magnetic layer or optical bar code on the film, information encoded in the APS meta data information exchange (IX) and manufacturer data areas. Such meta data may include film type, camera settings, scene conditions, intended print format, and other data fields. Other possible image input devices include a digital file reader **14** which may contain data from a variety of sources, including digital cameras or a picture disk reader, a network input (e.g. modem) **16** which receives digital file data from a remote, central source, as in the case of Kodak Picture Network, or an order entry station input device **18** located at a retail store which scans a customers film, reads digital disks, and accepts order instructions, including print aspect ratio, size, zoom, crop and magnification instructions. This data is then input to an image processing computer **40** which may also include a display monitor **22** and a user data input device such as a keyboard **24**. In the case of a home-based personal computer, for example, the key board may be used to input some of the scene, camera, and output size related data mentioned above. Included in the image processing functions of the computer **40**, in accordance with the present invention is a process that makes use of camera, scene, and demographic factors to predict the presence of image defects in a photograph and subsequently to applies image defect correction means only when needed.

[0054] The output of the image processing computer **40** is applied to an appropriate output path for generation of hardcopy images. Representative output paths are illustrated and include a printer **26**, such as a thermal dye printer or inkjet printer which are exemplary of printers useful for home computer use. Alternatively, the output path may comprise retail photofinisher equipment **28**, such as a Noritsu 2711 Series Printer. Yet another exemplary output path comprises data communications device **30** which communicates with, for example, a remote commercial photofinishing laboratory **32** using a CRT or other photographic printer. Alternatively, the essential functions of image processing system **10**, such as film scanning and conversion of scan data to digital image files, reading of digital camera image files, reading of information pertaining to camera, scene, and output parameters, and making use of camera, scene, and demographic data to predict the presence of image defects in a photograph, and subsequently applying image defect correction means only when needed, can be incorporated in an integrated apparatus such as a retail photofinisher unit.

[0055] An important feature of the system shown in **FIG. 1** is the collection of meta data at the time of image capture indicating, or capable of indicating, whether a defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image. In the preferred embodiments, this is accomplished with data col-

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lected by either a film camera or a digital camera, although some of the meta data (e.g., demographic data and display parameters) could be collected at the order entry station **18** or some other location subsequent (or prior) to the time of capture. In a typical film camera embodiment, as shown in **FIG. 7**, a film camera **200** transports a film strip **201** between the reels **205***a,b* of a film cartridge and a take-up sprocket respectively. The camera **200** includes a magnetic read/write head **210** facing a magnetic layer on the unsensitized side of the film strip **201**. A microprocessor **215** controls magnetic data recording or playback by the head **210** through head electronics **220**.

[0056] The microprocessor **215** may accept meta data to be magnetically recorded on the film strip **100** from the camera user or the camera mechanisms themselves through camera controls **225**, such information pertaining, for example, to the desired display parameters, lens parameters (e.g., focal length, F-number, camera lens focus range), shutter speed, autofocus distance measurements of subject and background, backlight and flash fire state indicators, and the like, for ultimate use by the photofinisher. If a suitable input device is provided, for example a keypad, demographic data could be generated at this time. The microprocessor **215** may also accept scene related information from scene sensors **230** to be magnetically recorded on the film strip **100** for ultimate use by the photofinisher. Such information may include the ambient light level of the primary subject and background, and the like.

[0057] The advantage of the longitudinal dedicated track format is that magnetic recording of data on the film strip **201** may be performed by the camera using a relatively stationary head (i.e. the head **210**) by buffering all of the data to be recorded in a particular frame in a particular camera track and then transmitting the data to the head just as the film is being wound to the next frame.

[0058] The microprocessor **215** includes a read only memory **240** containing instructions sufficient to ensure that each type of information received is recorded in the correct one of the dedicated camera tracks in accordance with a universal pre-arrangement common to both the camera and the photofinisher. (The aforementioned APS information exchange (IX) specifications illustrate dedicated camera tracks for meta data storage and information exchange. Section 10, "Writing and Reading Magnetic Information", and more specifically Section 10.4 "Data Dictionary", contain the relevant information.) For this purpose, the microprocessor sorts and buffers each piece of information in compliance with the instructions stored in the read only memory **240**. The microprocessor also includes a ROM **250** with other camera-specific data, such as main flash and preflash guide number and camera to flash separation (if the flash is integral with the camera), lens-specific data (e.g., focal length and focus range, if the lens is integral with the camera), and the like, as well as a RAM **260** for storing film-specific information read from the film cassette, such as film ISO speed read from the DX coding on the film cassette. The meta data in the ROM **250** and the RAM **260** is then magnetically recorded on the film strip **100** for ultimate use by the photofinisher.

[0059] In a typical digital camera embodiment, such as shown in **FIG. 8**, a digital camera **300** includes a lens **340** that directs image light from a subject (not shown) through an aperture/shutter controller **341** and an anti-aliasing filter **342** upon an image sensor, which is typically a CCD or CMOS sensor **344**. The sensor **344** generates an image signal that is processed by an analog video processor **346** before being converted into a digital image signal by an analog to digital (A/D) converter **348**. The digitized image signal is temporarily stored in a frame memory **350**, and then compressed by a digital signal processor **352**. The compressed image signal is then stored in a data memory **354** or, if a memory card **356** is present in a memory card slot of the camera, transferred through a memory card interface **358** to the memory card **356**. In this embodiment, the memory card is adapted to some appropriate interface standard, such as the PCMCIA card interface standard as described in the *PC Card Standard, Release* 2.0, published by the Personal Computer Memory Card International Association, Sunnyvale, Calif., September, 1991.

[0060] Electrical connection between the memory card **356** and the camera **300** is maintained through a card connector **359** positioned in the memory card slot. The card interface **358** and the card connector **359** provide, e.g., an interface according to the aforementioned PCMCIA card interface standard. The compressed image signal may also be sent to a host computer, which is connected to the camera **300** through a host computer interface **360**. A camera micro-processor **362** receives user inputs **364**, such as from a shutter release, and initiates a capture sequence by triggering a flash unit **366** (if needed) and signaling a timing generator **368**. The timing generator **368** is connected generally to the elements of the camera **300**, as shown in **FIG. 8**, for controlling the digital conversion, compression, and storage of the image signal. The microprocessor **362** also processes a signal from a scene sensor (photodiode) **370** for determining a proper exposure, and accordingly signals an exposure driver **372** for setting the aperture and shutter speed via the aperture/shutter controller **341**. The CCD sensor **344** is then driven from the timing generator **368** via a sensor driver **374** to produce the image signal.

[0061] The microprocessor **362** may accept meta data to be recorded on the digital record from the camera user inputs **364** or from camera mechanism inputs **380**, such information pertaining, for example, to the desired display parameters, lens parameters (e.g., focal length, F-number, camera lens focus range), shutter speed, autofocus distance measurements of subject and background, backlight and flash fire state indicators, and the like, for ultimate use by the photofinisher. The user inputs **364** can also include the resolution setting and gain factor of the camera (number of pixels in the captured image and the sensor-based ISO speed, if such is settable). If a suitable input device is provided, for example a keypad or a voice-actuated input, demographic data could be generated at this time by operator input of the information, although other techniques may be employed without limitation. The microprocessor **362** may also accept scene related information from the scene sensors **370** to be recorded on the digital record for ultimate use by the photofinisher. Such information may include the ambient light level of the primary subject and background, and the like. The microprocessor **362** may also accept camera shake data (measure of handheld stability of the camera) from a shake sensor **382**.

[0062] Certain camera meta data may be contained in the camera PROM **328**, which is connected to the digital signal

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processor **352**. The camera PROM **328** includes camera-specific data, such as main flash and preflash guide number, camera to flash separation, sensor ISO speed, resolution setting, camera shake factor, and the like. Such camera-specific data may be variable (for example, if the flash unit is separable, movable, or otherwise adjustable) or invariant (for example, if the flash is non-movable and integral with the camera). Likewise, the sensor ISO speed may be the base ISO speed and the resolution setting may be the native setting, if this data is invariant. Different data structures may be used to transfer the meta data and the image data from the camera. For example, the digital signal processor **352** may write the meta data into a camera header, followed by individual image trailer records. In another data structure, the meta data is written into individual camera headers together with individual image trailer records. Alternatively, certain of the meta data, such as the camera-specific data stored in the PROM **328** may be contained in a computer file **330** (instead of, or in addition to being, in the PROM **328**), which is provided as a floppy disk or the like in combination with the camera **300**. This meta data is then accessed by the host computer through a conventional disk drive interface (not shown) when the user loads the disk into the interface. The meta data may also be embedded with the image data in a form of digital watermarking, e.g., as taught in U.S. Pat. No. 6,044,156, entitled "Method for Generating an Improved Carrier for Use in an Image Data Embedding Application", which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0063] It should be understood from the foregoing description of meta data creation in connection with film and digital cameras that other forms of meta data pertaining to camera, scene, demographic and display factors would be known to those of skill in this art, and are intended to be within the ambit of this invention. Likewise, other structures and mechanisms for the transfer of such meta data to subsequent utilization devices, such as digital photofinishers, would be clear to the skilled person and are intended to be within the scope of this invention. In addition, while the capture devices are described as film and digital cameras, it is possible that other capture devices such as a linear or area scanner could benefit from the invention, and to that extent are also included within the inventive concept.

[0064] In the case of the film or digital camera, the camera, scene or demographic factors can be directly recorded on the output medium, or the microprocessor **215** (film) or **362** (digital) may be employed to perform image processing upon the factors, for instance to determine if the current image will have a level of defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image. Consequently, in the latter case, the microprocessors **215** and **362** may perform some, or all, of the image processing performed by the digital image processor **40** shown in **FIG. 1**, that is, to predict the presence of image defects in a photograph and subsequently to enable image defect correction means only when needed.

[0065] The present invention can be implemented in computer hardware. For example, **FIG. 2** represents a functional block diagram of a digital photofinishing system where the image acquisition block **50** includes image data and meta (e.g. APS IX) data from a capture device **52** such as the conventional photographic film camera **200** shown in **FIG. 7** for recording a scene on color negative or reversal film, and a film scanner device for scanning the developed image on the film and producing a source digital image **56** and extracting the image meta data. Another example of an image capture device **52** is the digital camera **300** shown in **FIG. 8** that has the ability to produce a source digital image **56** directly. The formed digital image file and associated meta data is transferred to the image analysis block **60**, where the meta data decoder **66** extracts the information to be used in the image defect prediction process block **68**. The primary purpose of the image defection correction process block **68** is to analyze available meta data pertaining to camera, scene, demographic, and image display factors, predict the presence of image defects in the final image display, and subsequently to activate only those correction processes in image processing block **70** that will improve the quality of the current image.

[0066] Prior to providing a detailed description of image defect prediction process block **68**, the other functions of the image analysis **60**, image processing **70**, and image output **90** blocks will be described.

[0067] In the image analysis block, the full resolution digital image containing the red, green, and blue pixel data is subsampled in block **62** to create a smaller, for example 24×36 pixel, image that is analyzed by the scene balance algorithm **64**. Scene balance algorithms use analog or digital processing to obtain the correct color balance and overall lightness for each image. The algorithms are commonly known as "white-balance," "color-constancy" or "scene-balance" algorithms. These algorithms can work on a single image, several images, or an entire set of images. An example of a suitable scene balance algorithms is described by E. Goll et al., "*Modern Exposure Determination for Customizing Photofinishing Printer Response*", Journal of Applied Photographic Engineering, 2, 93 (1979), which is incorporated herein by reference. Further improvements in scene-balance algorithms include setting a degree of illuminant chromatic correction using inferential illuminant detection, as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,133,983, which is incorporated herein by reference. Additional information on the film can help to characterize the variability of the chemical process that was used to develop the film. For example, as taught in U.S. Pat. No. 5,649,260, which is incorporated herein by reference, at least one or more gray reference patches with known exposure could have been exposed on the film during manufacturing, and then used to provide full-order film color balance calibration information to the scene balance algorithm.

[0068] The present invention may be practiced with any scene balance module such as the one described by Cok et al. in U.S. Pat. No. 4,945,406, which is incorporated herein by reference. The scene balance module calculates the pixel values of a theoretical 20% gray card corresponding to the exposure of the scene digital image. A look-up-table is calculated and applied to the scene state digital image, which results in a balanced digital image. Although no scene balance module performs perfectly at the task of compensating the digital image for variations in exposure and illumination color effects, the scene balance module does improve the accuracy of the color representation of the digital image. Because the scene balance algorithm is needed for nearly all images, due to imperfections in image capture exposure and/or illuminant color balance, and the scene balance algorithm is computationally efficient, due to

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the use of a smaller subsampled image, it is applied to every image in the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0069] However, in accordance with the invention, and as noted earlier, the remaining image processing steps, which are located in the image processing block **70**, are selectively applied based on the output of the image defect prediction process **68**. For this purpose, the digital image produced in block **56** is provided in separate chrominance and luminance channels, as needed, for the subsequent image processing steps.

[0070] If activated by the image defect prediction process **68**, the noise correction process **72** is applied prior to the scene balance shift **76** to make use of the unbalanced color channel specific exposure information of the capture. The Sigma filter, described by Jong-Sen Lee in the aforementioned journal article *Digital Image Smoothing and the Sigma Filter*, which is incorporated herein by reference, is a noise reduction algorithm to enhance the visual appearance of the processed digital image. The values of the pixels contained in a sampled local region, n by n pixels where n denotes the length of pixels in either the row or column direction, are compared with the value of the center pixel, or pixel of interest. Each pixel in the sampled local region is given a weighting factor of one or zero based on the absolute difference between the value of the pixel of interest and the local region pixel value. If the absolute value of the pixel value difference is less or equal to a threshold, the weighting factor is set to one. Otherwise, the weighting factor is set to zero. The numerical constant ϵ is set to two times the expected noise standard deviation. Mathematically the expression for the calculation of the noise reduced pixel value is given as:

$$q_{mn}=\Sigma_{ij}a_{ij}p_{ij}/\Sigma_{ij}a_{ij} \quad \text{EQ. 1}$$

[0071] and

[0072] $a_{ij}=1$ if $|p_{ij}-p_{mn}|<=\epsilon$

[0073] $a_{ij}=0$ if $|p_{ij}-p_{mn}|>\epsilon$

[0074] where p_{ij} represents the ij^{th} pixel contained in the sampled local region, p_{mn} represents the value of the pixel of interest located at row m and column n, a_{ij} represents a weighting factor, and q_{mn} represents the noise reduced pixel value. Typically, a rectangular sampling region centered about the center pixel is used with the indices i and j varied to sample the local pixel values.

[0075] The signal dependent noise feature is incorporated into the expression for ϵ given by:

$$\epsilon=Sfac\ \sigma_n(p_{mn}) \quad \text{EQ. 2}$$

[0076] where σ_n represents the noise standard deviation of the source image evaluated at the center pixel value p_{mn}. The parameter Sfac is termed a scale factor can be used to vary the degree of noise reduction. The calculation of the noise reduced pixel value q_{mn} as the division of the two sums is then calculated. The process is completed for some or all of the pixels contained in the digital image channel and for some or all the digital image channels contained in the digital image. The noise reduced pixel values constitute the noise reduced digital image.

[0077] A median filter may also be used as a noise reduction algorithm to reduce the noise present in a digital image. The noise reduced pixel value produced with a median filter is typically derived by calculating the statistical mean of values taken from a sampling region centered about the pixel of interest. Typically an n by n square window size is chosen where n denotes the length of pixels in either the row or column direction. The degree of noise reduction is controlled by the size of the window. Larger window sizes result in more noise removed from the digital image.

[0078] If activated by the image defect prediction process **68**, the redeye correction process **80** locates and removes eye color defects. The present invention may be practiced with a variety of methods which locate and correct redeye defects. One suitable method is disclosed by Benati et al. in U.S. Pat. No. 5,748,764, which issued May 5, 1998 and which is incorporated herein by reference. This method locates redeye defects in an image and provides separate corrections for body, border, and glint pixels in the pupil of the affected eye. The redeye defect detection process involves defining a spatial region within the digital image in which one or more eye color defects may exist, which includes at least a portion of the subject's head, sampling the color content of the pixels within the spatial region and comparing the sampled pixels with threshold values indicative of redeye defect pixels; segmenting the potentially defective pixels into contiguous groups; calculating a first score for each pixel of each group based on a plurality of features including group size, group shape, coloration, and brightness to identify redeye defect candidates; selecting a seed pixel based on its score from each identified eye color defect group candidate and determining all of the neighboring pixels which are within a predetermined score range of their neighboring pixels and those pixels which represent a significant pixel score transition indicative of the outer boundary of the redeye defect. Each of the three redeye defect pixel types (body, border, glint) is rendered differently to remove the defect and create a natural appearing correction.

[0079] An alternative embodiment of the present invention employs a method of applying a redeye defect location and correction process disclosed by Schildkraut et al. in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 6,292,574 issued Sep. **18**, **2001**, entitled *A Computer Program Product for Redeye Detection*. This process is advantageously used in conjunction with the method disclosed in commonly-assigned U.S. Pat. No. 6,151,403 issued Nov. 21, 2000 entitled *Method for Automatic Detection of Human Eyes in Digital Images* by Jiebo Luo. Both patents are incorporated herein by reference.

[0080] Many natural scenes photographed under ambient lighting conditions result in photographic images which have a luminance dynamic range that far exceeds the dynamic range of conventional display systems. For example, photographic images taken in sunny outdoor conditions can have 10 or more photographic stops of recorded information while photographic paper can reproduce approximately seven photographic stops of information. In addition, as noted above, electronic flash illumination, by virtue of the distance-induced exposure difference between the main subject and background, can also produce dynamic range that exceeds the capacity of the chosen display. In digital imaging systems scene dependent tone scale function algorithms may be employed to reduce the dynamic range of

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the source digital image thus providing a better match of the processed digital image to the dynamic range capabilities of the output medium.

[0081] If a high dynamic range scene is anticipated by the image defect prediction process **68**, the scene dependent tonescale correction process **84** is employed. The tone scale correction process **84** uses the pixels in the balanced digital image to calculate a tone scale function, i.e., a single valued mathematical equation or transformation that has a single output value corresponding to each input value. The present invention implements the tone scale function as a look-up-table for computation efficiency. The result of the application of the tone scale processing produces a tone scale adjusted digital image such that the tone scale, or brightness and contrast, of the digital image is enhanced without modification of the color content.

[0082] The present invention may be practiced with a variety of methods that generate tone scale functions. The preferred embodiment of the present invention uses the methods disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,731,671 and 5,822,453, which are both incorporated herein by reference. These methods are employed by the present invention to produce two individual tone scale functions. These two tone scale functions are then cascaded into single tone scale function which is used to adjust the brightness and contrast of the balanced digital image.

[0083] In U.S. Pat. No. 5,822,453, Lee and Kwon disclose a method of calculating a tone scale function using the pixel values of a digital image, and involving the estimation of the scene contrast from the digital image. The method taught by Lee and Kwon involves calculating a Laplacian filtered version of the digital image, forming a histogram of the Laplacian signal; determining from the Laplacian histogram two threshold values which when applied to the Laplacian signal substantially eliminate uniform areas; sampling pixels from the digital image which are based on the thresholds; forming a histogram from the sampled pixels; computing a standard deviation of the sampled histogram; and estimating contrast of the digital image by comparing the computed standard deviation with a predetermined contrast for determining contrast of the input image in relationship with the predetermined contrast. The method described by Lee and Kwon is used to calculate a first tone scale function.

[0084] In U.S. Pat. No. 4,731,671, Alkofer discloses a method of calculating a tone scale function using the pixel values of a digital image based on normalizing the histogram of a digital image. This method involves determining the contrast of the digital image by calculating the standard deviation of a sample of pixel values. The second tone scale function is calculated by normalizing a histogram of the sample of pixel values. The sample of pixel values is selected from one of a plurality of samples of pixel values corresponding to a plurality of contrast intervals based upon the shape of the histogram of the selected sample of pixel values. To facilitate the adjustment of contrast, the tone scale function is constructed to produce values in units of a standard normal variate Z. These Z values are then multiplied by a constant, which is a function of the standard deviation of the sample of pixel values to determine the contrast of the processed digital image.

[0085] The first and second tone scale functions are combined into a final tone scale function using the mathematical formula:

$$LUT_f=LUT_2[LUT_1[j]] \quad \text{EQ.3}$$

[0086] where LUT_2 represents the second tone scale function, LUT_1 represents the first tone scale function, and LUT_f represents the final tone scale function. The j variable represent the index of pixel values of the digital image to be processed. The final tone scale function LUT_f is calculated by evaluating the expression of equation 3 for the range of possible pixel values.

[0087] The final tone scale function LUT_f and the balanced digital image is received by the tone scale correction block **84**. The present invention applies the final tone scale function to the luminance digital image channel of the balanced digital image to adjust the brightness and contrast attributes of the digital image. The preferred embodiment of the present invention applies the final tone scale function, in the form of a look-up-table, directly to the pixels of the luminance digital image channel of the balanced digital image. This method is preferred primarily for its computational efficiency properties.

[0088] An alternative embodiment of the present invention employs a method of applying a tone scale function disclosed by Lee et al. in U.S. Pat. No. 5,012,333, which is incorporated herein by reference, for improved image quality results. Although Lee et al. describe a method for interactively modifying image attributes, the present invention employs the method of applying tone scale functions to digital images based on spatial filtering techniques. This method involves spatially filtering the luminance digital image channel resulting in two spatial frequency components (high and low frequency components), applying the tone scale function to the low spatial frequency component, and combining the tone scale modified low spatial frequency component with the high spatial frequency component. This approach, employing frequency separable tone scale manipulation and sharpening, is superior to methods such as those disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,739,924, which involve emphasizing the outline and the contrast of the subject based on subject brightness, and subject distance.

[0089] In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, if a scene with sharpness problems is anticipated by the image defect prediction process **68**, the sharpness correction process **88** is employed. The sharpness correction block **88** receives the tone scale adjusted digital image from the tone scale module **84** and applies a spatial filter to the tone scale adjusted digital image to adjust spatial modulation content. The present invention may be practiced with a variety of different spatial filters; however, a key aspect of the present invention relies on the combination of the method of manipulation of the color, tone and spatial detail attributes of a digital image. An example of a spatial filter that may be used is described by Kwon et al. in U.S. Pat. No. 5,398,077, which is incorporated herein by reference. Kwon et al teach a method of spatially processing a digital image involving transforming a red-green-blue image into a luminance chrominance domain and applying an adaptive filter to the luminance channel. The adaptive filter employs a method of calculating a statistical measure of local spatial activity and varying the sharpness of the image detail structure based on the statistical measure. The result of the application of the

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spatial filter produces a tone scale adjusted digital image with modified values such that the spatial detail of the digital image is enhanced without modification of the color content.

[0090] The image output block **90** receives the modified digital image from the sharpness correction block **88**. The digital image processing steps conducted within the output device rendering block **92** involve transforming the pixel values of the modified digital image into a corresponding set of device code values to account for the color manipulation characteristics of the output device and media. The transformation between device code values and the colorimetry of the colors reproduced by a particular device/media combination can be obtained by a device characterization. An example of a device characterization is a procedure that involves generating and printing or displaying a suitable array of device code values in the form of color patches of a size large enough for subsequent measurement. These patches can be measured using a calorimeter, a spectrophotometer or a telespectroradiometer, depending on the nature of the display. If spectra are measured, CIE XYZ values and other related quantities such as CIELAB or CIELUV values can be calculated for the display illuminant using standard calorimetric procedures. This data set can be used to construct the appropriate sequence of one-dimensional look-up tables, multidimensional look-up tables, matrices, polynomials and scalars that accomplishes that transformation of the digital representation of the scene resulting from the combined processing operations performed in the output device rendering block **92** into a set of device code values that produces this desired visual representation of the scene. Another example of the implementation of this transformation is an ICC profile that maps the specifications of the desired visual reproduction, encoded in profile connection space (PCS), to device code values.

[0091] This operation may also include gamut mapping. The color gamut characteristics of the modified digital image are determined by the set of primaries that was used for encoding the data. Examples include the primaries corresponding to the color-matching functions of the CIE 1931 Standard Colorimetric Observer or any linear combinations thereof. Gamut mapping is performed between the gamut defined by this encoding and the gamut of the output device/media combination. The preferred gamut mapping algorithms used in combination with this invention are those that maintain hue.

[0092] From an imaging processing point of view, the data transformation performed by the output device rendering block **92**, whether dedicated to neutral balance or color gamut functions can be combined to form a single set of one-dimensional look-up tables, multidimensional look-up tables, matrices, polynomials and scalars in any sequence. Reproductions according to the specifications of this invention can be produced by a variety of technologies. Reproductions can be obtained on silver halide or other light-sensitive materials.

[0093] The light-sensitive material, as used by an image output device **96**, may be transparent film, reflective paper, or semi-transparent film. These materials are exposed by visible or infrared light derived from many different sources. The materials may be designed for typical photofinishing applications or they may be specially designed for digital printing applications. The photo-sensitive materials respond primarily to three different spectral regions of incident light. Typically, these are red (600-720 nm), green (500-600 nm), and blue (400-500 nm) light. However, any combination of three different spectral sensitivities can be used. These could include green, red, and infrared light or red, infrared 1, and infrared 2 light, or 3 infrared lights of different wavelengths. Or a material sensitive to the three primary wavelengths of visible light may be false sensitized so that the color of the exposing light does not produce image dye of the complementary hue, such as red, green, and blue sensitivity producing magenta, yellow, and cyan dye, respectively. Printing can be effected by exposing all pixels sequentially, by exposing a small array of pixels at the same time, or by exposing all the pixels in the image at the same time.

[0094] Devices which can be used to print on light-sensitive materials include CRT, LED (Light Emitting Diode), LVT (Light Valve Technology), LCD, Laser, as well as any other controlled optical light generating device. All these devices have the ability to expose 3 or more light-sensitive layers in a light-sensitive material to produce a colored image. They differ mainly in the technology on which the devices are based. A suitable embodiment of a CRT printer is the Kodak Digital Science LF CRT Color Printer which can be used in combination with Kodak Professional Digital III Color Paper.

[0095] Non-light-sensitive imaging materials are conveniently used by electronic printing processes to produce high-quality reproductions. The printing process can be based on many technologies. The method of image formation can be half-tone, continuous tone, or complete material transfer. The imaging material can be transparent film, reflective paper, or semi-transparent film. The materials can be written on to produce pictorial images by thermal dye transfer, ink jet, wax, electrophotographic, or other pixel-wise writing techniques. These processes use three or more colorants to create colored pictorial representations of pictorial scenes. The colorants may be dyes, toner, inks, or any other permanent or semi-permanent colored material. A suitable embodiment of a thermal printer is the Kodak XLS 8650 thermal dye transfer printer.

[0096] In addition to hardcopy viewed images, it is also possible with the current invention to efficiently create projected images. Many technologies are appropriate for this kind of image generation. All these techniques rely on producing color images with two or more colored lights. These are typically red, green, and blue in nature although they can be any set of primaries. Devices which can be used to create the preferred viewed reproduction include CRT, LCD, EL (Electro-Luminescence), LED, OLED (organic LEDs), light bulbs, lasers, plasma display panels, or any other three or more colored lighting apparatus capable of pixelwise illumination. The images can be created by display within the device, projection, or backlighting. Many devices create an image on a screen or display area which is physically a part of the mechanical unit. However, images can also be created by optically projecting the image in the form of light rays from behind or in front of the viewer toward a screen which is in front of a viewer or by projecting a reversed image toward the viewer onto a screen between the viewer and the projecting device. A suitable embodiment of a CRT display is a Sony Trinitron CRT.

[0097] This concludes the detailed description of the functions of the image analysis **60**, image processing **70**, and

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image output **90** blocks. A detailed description of the image defect prediction process block **68**, that controls the state (active or inactive) of each of the previously detailed image defect correction processes in the image processing block **70**, will now be provided.

[0098] After the meta data associated with the current image is decoded in block **66**, a number of intermediate parameters are calculated in the image defect prediction block **68** from the decoded data and subsequently used in the Noise Defect Prediction Block **100** shown in **FIG. 3**, the Redeye Defect Prediction Block **120** shown in **FIG. 4**, the Tonescale Defect Prediction Block **140** shown in **FIG. 5**, and the Sharpness Defect Prediction Block **160** shown in **FIG. 6**. Other parameters such as Flash Fire State (on/off) can be used directly, and still other parameters may require units conversion; for example, ambient light level, which is converted from camera BV (brightness value) to luminance units in foot lamberts. The intermediate parameter values, calculated from decoded meta data, and used in multiple defect prediction blocks, are calculated once and shared among the defect prediction blocks **100**,**120**,**140**,**160**. However, for purposes of illustrating the functionality of each of the defect prediction blocks, the processing steps (**104**,**124**, **144**,**164**) that follow the meta data input block show the creation of each of the intermediate parameters.

[0099] This section defines the meta data items and shows the manner in which the intermediate parameters are calculated from the meta data items in the preferred embodiment. Those skilled in the art will understand that the units of distance, exposure, flash output, system magnification, and image defect level can be recast without departing from the intent of the teachings of the present invention. In the preferred embodiment the following meta data items, or a subset thereof, collected by camera sensors and/or manual photographer input are employed in the image defect prediction blocks (**100**,**120**,**140**,**160**):

[0100] General Parameters:

[0101] Subject Demographic Data includes: subject race and age

[0102] User-Specified or Camera-Measured Parameters:

[0103] BL: Camera Backlight Indicator State (on/off; on=high contrast scene)

[0104] CSF: Camera Shake Factor (measure of hand-held stability of camera)

[0105] D: Diagonal Dimension of the Final Display (inches)

[0106] DG: DSC Gain Factor (multiple of sensor base ISO speed)

[0107] DR: DSC Resolution Setting (number of pixels in captured image)

[0108] Ds: Camera-to-Subject Distance (feet)

[0109] Db: Camera-to-Background Distance (feet)

[0110] f: Camera Lens F-number

[0111] FL: Camera Lens Focal Length (inches)

[0112] FF: Flash Fire State (on/off)

[0113] FLS: Flash-to-Camera Lens Separation (center-to-center, inches)

[0114] GNm: Main Flash Output (Guide Number, Current ISO, feet)

[0115] GNp: Preflash Output (Guide Number, Current ISO, feet)

[0116] K: ANSI Lens Exposure Constant (default=3.91)

[0117] LFR: Camera Lens Focus Range (inside or outside of range)

[0118] LS: Linear Smear (in mm at capture plane during exposure)

[0119] LLs: Ambient Light Level of Primary Subject (camera light meter reading in foot lamberts)

[0120] LLb: Ambient Light Level of Background (camera light meter reading in foot lamberts)

[0121] Mc: Current Reproduction (e.g. printing) Magnification

[0122] Ms: Standard Reproduction (e.g. printing) Magnification

[0123] Mn: Non-Standard (e.g. enlargement) Magnification

[0124] S: Film or DSC Sensor ISO Speed

[0125] T: Camera Shutter Speed (seconds)

[0126] Intermediate Parameters:

[0127] In the preferred embodiment, a number of intermediate parameters are calculated from the meta data listed above and employed in the image defect prediction blocks (**100**,**120**,**140**,**160**).

[0128] The intermediate parameters quantifying the degree of exposure of the main subject and the background, which have been found to be useful in the noise defect prediction **100** and tonescale defect prediction **140** blocks, are calculated as follows:

[0129] Es: Exposure on Subject ($\log_{10}$E Units)

$$Esf \text{ for flash illumination} = \log_{10}[(GNm/Ds)/f]^2 \quad \text{EQ. 4}$$

$$Esa \text{ for ambient illumination} = \log_{10}[LLs/LLn] \quad \text{EQ. 5}$$

[0130] Where LLn (EQ. 6) is defined as the light level (foot lamberts) where an ISO normal exposure occurs with the current camera settings, and is found with the following equation, set forth in the ISO/ANSI standard for general-purpose photographic exposure meters ANSI 3.49-1987

$$LLn = (K)(f^2)/(S)(T) \quad \text{EQ. 6}$$

FLASH ILLUMINATION EXAMPLE

[0131] Let camera main flash GN=48 for ISO 200 film

[0132] Ds (subject distance)=6 feet

[0133] f (lens f-number)=5.6

[0134] $Esf = \log_{10}[(48/6)/5.6]^2 = 0.30$ log E (one-stop over exposed)

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AMBIENT (NATURAL) ILLUMINATION EXAMPLE

[0135] Let LLs (light level of subject)=4 foot lamberts

[0136] K=3.91

[0137] f (lens f-number)=4

[0138] S (ISO film speed)=400

[0139] T (shutter time, seconds)=0.01

[0140] LLn=[(3.91)(4²)]/[(400)(0.01)]=16 foot lamberts

[0141] Esa=log10(4/16)=−0.6 log E (two-stops under exposed)

[0142] The flash and ambient exposures for the background are calculated in the same fashion, but in this case the measured camera-to-background distance data and background illuminance levels are used in the equations.

[0143] Eb: Exposure on Background ($\log_{10}$E Units)

$$Ebf \text{ for flash illumination} = \log_{10}[(GNm/Db)/f] \quad \text{EQ. 7}$$

$$Eba \text{ for ambient illumination} = \log_{10}[LLb/LLn] \quad \text{EQ. 8}$$

[0144] Where LLn (EQ. 6) is defined as the light level (foot lamberts), in this case for the background portion of the scene, where an ISO normal exposure occurs with the current camera settings.

[0145] The intermediate parameters, hereafter identified as FER (Flash Exposure Ratio) and AER (Ambient Exposure Ratio), which quantify the ratio between the exposure on the main subject and the background, and have been found to be useful in the Tonescale Defect Prediction Block **140**, are calculated as follows:

FER: Flash Exposure Ratio

$$FER = 10^{[|Esf - Ebf|]} \quad \text{EQ. 9}$$

AER: Ambient Exposure Ratio

$$AER = 10^{[|Esa - Eba|]} \quad \text{EQ. 10}$$

[0146] The absolute value signs are needed in the exponent term of EQ. 9 and EQ. 10 to reflect the fact that the magnitude of the exposure ratio, whether the subject or background is receiving the dominant exposure, is the key parameter.

[0147] The intermediate parameters quantifying the format and subject reproduction magnifications as perceived in the final display, which have been found to be useful in the Noise Defect Prediction Block **100**, the Redeye Defect Prediction Block **120**, and the Sharpness Defect Prediction Block **160**, are calculated as follows:

[0148] AM: Angular Magnification of Subject

[0149] In the Sharpness Defect Prediction Block **160**, at decision point **172**, the AM parameter has been found to be a useful predictor for determining the maximum handheld shutter time required to minimize hand-tremor-induced blur for the average photographer. And in the Redeye Defect Prediction Block **120**, at decision point **130**, the AM is a useful predictor in that it correlates with the size of the subject's eyes, and therefore contributes to the perceived severity of the redeye image defect.

$$AM = [(FL)(Mc)]/Vd \quad \text{EQ. 11}$$

[0150] Where:

[0151] Vd: Final Image Viewing Distance (Specified in Inches)

[0152] As disclosed in columns 43-44 of U.S. Pat. No. 5,323,204, which issued Jun. 21, 1994 to the present assignee and which is incorporated herein by reference, and contrary to conventional wisdom, human observers do not view photographs at distances that are linearly related to the display size. In this regard, empirical-based perceptual measurements of eye-to-display separation suggest that the average viewing distance (Vd) for handheld prints of varying sizes can be characterized as follows:

$$Vd = 3.64 + 11.34[\log_{10}(D)] \quad \text{EQ. 12}$$

[0153] Where:

[0154] D=the diagonal dimension of the final display (specified in inches)

[0155] Viewing Distance Examples

[0156] Vd for 4 by 6 inch print=3.64+11.34 [$\log_{10}$(7.2)]=13.4 inches

[0157] Vd for 8 by 12 inch print=3.64+11.34 [$\log_{10}$(14.4)]=16.8 inches

[0158] MST: Maximum Handheld Shutter Time (Seconds)

[0159] The maximum handheld shutter time is an intermediate parameter that specifies for the current camera lens focal length, reproduction magnification, and final image viewing distance, the longest handheld shutter time that can be employed by a person with average hand tremor with out causing noticeable blur to be perceived in the final image. The MST is affected by the camera shake factor (CSF), which specifies the stability of the camera. The CSF is one of the items that may be included in the general camera meta data. If the CSF is not available, the default value of unity, appropriate for typical 35 mm point-and-shoot cameras is used. We have found that interchangeable lens (SLR) cameras are more stable and typically have CSF values of about 1.4.

$$MST = [(0.169)(Vd)(CSF)]/[(FL)(25.4)(Mc)] \quad \text{EQ. 13}$$

[0160] Where, the constant 0.169 is needed to fit the experimental data such that the result of the MST equation is the longest exposure time that will not produce significant image blur. The value of this constant was derived by rating the quality of images shot by a representative population of photographers, where the exposure times were systematically varied. The constant 25.4 converts the camera lens focal length from inches to mm.

[0161] Maximum Handheld Shutter Time Examples

[0162] 35-mm format SLR camera, 35 mm lens, 4×6 inch print:

[0163] FL=1.38 inch

[0164] Mc=4.44

[0165] Vd=13.36 inch

[0166] CSF=1.4

[0167] MST=[(0.169)(13.36)(1.4)]/[(1.38)(25.4)(4.44)]=0.02 second

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[0168] APS point-and-shoot camera, 25 mm lens, 4×10 inch panoramic print:

[0169] FL=0.98 inch

[0170] Mc=10.6

[0171] Vd=15.35 inch

[0172] CSF=1.0

[0173] MST=[(0.169)(15.35)(1.0)]/[(0.98)(25.4)(10.6)]=0.01 second

[0174] These examples show that a shorter exposure time is needed to maintain an acceptable level of hand-tremor-induced blur with higher reproduction magnification and less stable (lower CSF) cameras.

[0175] DSF: Display Size Factor

[0176] The present authors disclose the Display Size Factor (DSF) in columns 44-45 of the aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 5,323,204, which quantitatively accommodates the independent selection of display size and reproduction magnification. The DSF was conceived in order to account for the differences between full-frame reproductions and cropped image reproductions where the final display size is not the product of the capture media format size and the reproduction magnification. This occurs when pseudo-panoramic or pseudo-telephoto (electronic zoom) features, which are popular on APS and DSC cameras, are selected by the photographer and/or when a device such as a Kodak Picture Maker is used to selectively zoom and crop a portion of a full-frame image to create a new composition. DSF has been found to be advantageous when predicting the severity of defects that vary in response to the reproduction and viewing magnifications, rather than the subject reproduction magnification, as was the case with the AM parameter. For example, the DSF parameter is used in the Noise Defect Prediction Block **100** to create lookup tables for decision point **106**, and in the Sharpness Defect Prediction Block **160** at decision point **166**.

[0177] These are cases where the perceived quality loss due to the image defect is correlated with the degree to which the structure of the image is magnified.

$$DSF=(Ms/Mn)(Vdn/Vds) \quad \text{EQ. 14}$$

[0178] Where:

[0179] Vds is the viewing distance for the standard display size

[0180] Vdn is the viewing distance for the non-standard display size

[0181] Display Size Factor Examples

[0182] 35-mm format camera, 4×6 inch full-frame print:

[0183] Ms=4.44

[0184] Mn=4.44

[0185] Vds=13.4 inches

[0186] Vdn=13.4 inches

[0187] DSF=(4.44)/(4.44)(13.4/13.4)=1.0

[0188] 35-mm format camera, 8×12 inch full-frame print:

[0189] Ms=4.44

[0190] Mn=8.88

[0191] Vds=13.4 inches

[0192] Vdn=16.8 inches

[0193] DSF=(4.44/8.88)(16.8/13.4)=0.63

[0194] 35-mm format camera, 2× electronic zoom (EZ) 4×6 inch print:

[0195] Ms=4.44

[0196] Mn=8.88

[0197] Vds=13.4 inches

[0198] Vdn =13.4 inches

[0199] DSF=(4.44/8.88)(13.4/13.4)=0.5

[0200] These examples show that the DSF decreases when the reproduction magnification increases and the viewing distance decreases. For example, the full-frame 8×12 inch case and the 2× EZ 4×6 inch print case have the same reproduction magnification (Mn), but the 2× EZ case produces a smaller print and therefore a closer viewing distance that leads to a smaller DSF, which correlates with lower perceived image quality.

[0201] As outlined in the Background section, each of the image defects included in the inventive process was studied to determine the relationship between the amount of defect present and the perceived image quality loss. The image quality loss data was correlated with scene, camera, demographic, and display parameters to develop the predictors employed in Image Defect Prediction Blocks **100**,**120**,**140** and **160**, which were found to be useful in determining when to activate the digital image defect correction processes contained in Blocks **72**,**80**,**84** and **88**. The empirical studies leading to the development of the predictors involved the generation of images of a variety of scene types containing camera, illumination, display, and subject characteristics spanning the range encountered in consumer photography. By varying the imaging system and scene characteristics in this fashion, a population of images containing a wide range of image defects was produced. These images were visually rated for quality using the perceptually uniform JND scale previously described, and their associated capture and display characteristics were analyzed to develop the final parameters suitable for predicting the probability and severity of image defects.

[0202] SP: Switch Point (on/off) Values for Decision Points

[0203] From this perceptually-derived image quality data, the predictor values, hereafter denoted as switch-point (SP) values, are selected for each decision point parameter **106**, **128**,**130**,**132**,**148**,**152**,**166**,**170**,**172**,**174** that correspond with 3 JNDs of image quality loss. As discussed at the beginning of this section, the 3 JND value, which corresponds with about one-half of a subjective image quality category, was selected for the preferred embodiment because it provides a good balance between image processing efficiency (number of images processed per unit time) and image quality improvement. The SP values in the table should cover the range of conditions encountered in consumer photography. If a general or intermediate parameter falling outside of the

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current SP values in the decision tables is encountered, the table value closest to the current parameter is applied in the decision process. If a general or intermediate parameter falling between the current SP values in the decision tables is encountered, intermediate values may be obtained by well-known interpolation techniques.

[0204] A detailed description of the processes contained in Image Defect Prediction Blocks **100**,**120**,**140** and **160** will now be provided. To illustrate the functionality of the Image Defect Prediction Blocks in the preferred embodiments of the present invention, SP parameter values for traditional film (e.g. AgX-based media) will be shown. However, it should be appreciated that the inventive image defect prediction processes are equally applicable to other capture media, whether based on chemical or electronic capture technologies. In the description that follows, the points in the process where specific parameter values vary depending on the image capture modality will be highlighted.

[0205] **FIG. 3**. Noise Defect Prediction Block **100**

[0206] Block **102**: Meta Data Input List

[0207] Camera Model Data

[0208] K,Ms,Mn,D,LLs,f,T,GNm

[0209] Block **104**: Processes

[0210] Calculate Vd EQ. 12

[0211] Calculate DSF EQ. 14

[0212] Calculate Esf EQ. 4

[0213] Calculate Esa EQ. 5

[0214] Select a switch point from the SP Table appropriate for current display size factor (DSF) and Film Speed (S).

[0215] Block **106**: Decision Point

[0216] Compare the calculated Es and SP Values.

[0217] If calculated Es>=SP, omit noise correction process **108**;

[0218] If calculated Es<SP, execute noise correction process **110**;

[0219] In cases where the noise level of the current capture media and DSF combination does not require noise correction at any exposure (Es) level, an SP value substantially below any obtainable by the system (e.g. −100) is entered in the table. In cases where the noise level of the current capture media and DSF combination requires noise correction at every exposure (Es) level, an SP value substantially above any obtainable by the system is entered in the table.

TABLE 1

SP (Es) Values for Block 106 (3 JND Level)

Speed S ->	ISO 100	ISO 200	ISO 400
Es @ DSF = 1.00	−100	−0.52	−0.30
Es @ DSF = 0.85	−0.48	−0.13	0
Es @ DSF = 0.63	+0.25	+1.08	+100

[0220] Table 1 shows the Es ($\log_{10}$ Exposure units) SP values for three display sizes and three film speeds. In this example, the DSF values are appropriate for a full-frame 35-mm format consumer grade color negative film frame enlarged to make a 4×6 inch print (DSF 1.0), a full-frame 35-mm format consumer grade color negative film frame enlarged to make a 5×7 inch print (DSF=0.85), and a full-frame 35-mm format consumer grade color negative film frame enlarged to make a 8×12 inch print (DSF=0.63). Since the noise versus exposure relationship may vary depending on the film technologies selected by the manufacturer, it may be necessary to employ different SP values for other film types. This is easily verified by shooting an exposure series on the new film and assessing the noise level in the final images. In the preferred embodiment, the SP Table includes all of the DSF possibilities for the particular image processing apparatus. For example, some digital printers may only produce prints with fixed magnifications, as shown in the current example, while others may offer a wide range of print sizes and intermediate zoom ratios. In these more versatile printers, the Noise SP Table preferably contains DSF entries corresponding to each print size and zoom magnification. Alternatively, intermediate SP values can be obtained by interpolating between values in the table.

[0221] The Noise SP Table for digital still cameras (DSCs) also varies with respect to DSF; however, rather than loading in films with different sensitivities, as shown above, the photographer or camera exposure control selects a Digital Gain Factor (DG) appropriate for the current scene. Therefore, the DSC Noise SP Table lists DSF versus DG. The 3 JND quality loss values populating the DSC Noise SP Table can be derived with the empirical photographic testing and perceptual evaluations referenced above, alternatively, the values can be generated using the methods referenced by the present inventors in the aforementioned articles entitled "*Characterization and Prediction of Image Quality*" by B. W. Keelan, and "*Use of System Image Quality Models to Improve Product Design*" by R. B. Wheeler.

[0222] **FIG. 4**: Redeye Defect Prediction Block **120**

[0223] Block **122**: Meta Data Input List

[0224] Demographic Data (user-specified or region-specific)

[0225] Camera Model Data

[0226] FF,FLS,LLs,FL,Mc,D,GNp,Ds

[0227] The severity of redeye is a strong function of demographic classification of the subject photographed, due to two effects. First, more highly pigmented races tend to have more melanin in their pupils, which attenuates the light propagating through the pupil via absorption, and reduces the amount of red light exiting the eye. Second, as people age, the maximum diameter to which their pupil will dilate at low light levels decreases. Consequently, young people exhibit larger pupil sizes than older people under the conditions in which flash photographs are typically taken. The dramatic nature of the dependence of redeye severity on demographics is demonstrated in Table 2, which shows the frequency of occurrence of noticeable redeye in over one hundred subjects belonging to different demographic groups and photographed under rigidly controlled conditions (0.016 foot-candles ambient light; 2.6 inch flash-to-lens separation; subject distance 6 feet; no preflash; focal length 80 mm; normally viewed 4×6 inch print from 35-mm format film).

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TABLE 2

Effect of Demographics on Frequency of Redeye

Demographic Group	Caucasian Youth	Caucasian Adult	Hispanic	Asian	African-American
Frequency of Occurrence	82%	70%	41%	15%	9%

[0228] Both the pigmentation and age affects are evident in this data, although the age effect is more obvious at larger flash-to-lens separation (e.g. at 3.8 inches, with other parameters the same), where Caucasian adults exhibit redeye only 20% of the time, but Caucasian youth show redeye in 67% of photographs.

[0229] The SP Tables employed in Redeye Defect Prediction Block **120** at points **128**, **130** and **132** may contain different values depending on the demographic characteristics supplied. If no demographic data is available, the SP Tables for Caucasian Adult, which are shown hereafter in the preferred embodiment, are used as the default.

[0230] The flash-to-lens separation (FLS) has a significant impact on the level of redeye defect. However, FLS is a fixed value in most cameras (flash is stationary); therefore, the SP Tables employed in Redeye Defect Prediction Block **120** at points **128**, **130** and **132** would typically contain SP values derived from the quality evaluation of images produced with the FLS of the current camera. To accommodate cameras capable of changing the FLS in response to the photographer's lens focal length (FL) selection, for example, as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,331,362, which issued Jul. 19, 1994 and is incorporated herein by reference, the current invention employs a separate SP Table for each FL (zoom setting) selected by the photographer.

[0231] Table 3 shows the affect of FLS on image quality (JNDs) for the following system: Caucasian adult population, 0.5 foot lamberts ambient light; subject distance 10 feet; no preflash; unit angular magnification; normally viewed 4×6 inch print from 35-mm format film.

TABLE 3

Effect of FLS on Redeye Defect Level

FLS (inches)	1.0	1.5	2.5	3.5
Quality Loss (JND Units)	−4.9	−3.25	−1.4	−0.4

[0232] The SP Tables employed in Redeye Defect Prediction Block **120** at points **128**, **130** and **132** are loaded with values that correspond to the specific FLS value supplied in the meta data.

[0233] Empirical studies show that the quality loss due to the redeye image defect is greatest at an intermediate camera-to-subject distance (Ds), which falls within the range commonly occurring in consumer photography. This is due to the competition of two opposing effects: (1) At longer camera-to-subject distance, the angular separation of the flash and lens is reduced, leading to greater red saturation of the pupil, and, (2) At longer distances, the pupil size in the final image is diminished, reducing redeye severity. To a crude approximation, as distance increases, the redeye becomes more intensely red but the pupil size in the image decreases. The former effect dominates at short distances and the latter at longer distances, leading to an extremum in the relationship at intermediate distances. As a result of this finding, the SP Tables employed in Redeye Defect Prediction Block **120** at points **128**, **130** and **132** in the preferred embodiment are populated with values corresponding to the critical camera-to-subject distance, which is defined as the distance producing the most severe defect level. This approach ensures that Redeye Correction Process **80** is applied when the probability of redeye is high but Ds meta data is not available. If Ds meta data is available, and added predictive accuracy is desired, SP Tables for each distance can be advantageously applied.

[0234] Block **124**: Processes

[0235] Calculate Vd EQ. 12

[0236] Calculate AM EQ. 11

[0237] Select switch points from SP Tables appropriate for current demographic group and flash-to-lens separation (FLS).

[0238] Block **126**: Decision Point

[0239] Determine the flash fire state (FF):

[0240] If FF is no (off), omit redeye correction process **134**;

[0241] If FF is yes (on), proceed to Block **128**;

[0242] Block **128**: Decision Point

[0243] Compare the actual LL and SP Values:

[0244] If actual LL>=SP, omit redeye correction process **134**;

[0245] If actual LL<SP, proceed to Block **130**;

TABLE 4

SP (LL) Values for Block 128 (3 JND Level)

FLS (inches)	1.0	1.5	2.5	3.5
LL (foot lamberts)	2.50	1.04	0.48	0.19

[0246] Table 4 shows SP value (LL in foot Lamberts) for the critical distance for each FLS with AM at 1.5, which is a demanding case of the sort found on typical 3× zoom cameras. If FLS is not supplied in meta data, a value of one inch (smallest separation found on consumer cameras) is assumed.

[0247] Block **130**: Decision Point

[0248] Compare the calculated AM and SP Values:

[0249] If calculated AM=<SP, omit redeye correction process **134**;

[0250] If calculated AM>SP, proceed to Block **132**;

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TABLE 5

SP (AM) Values for Block 130 (3 JND Level)

LL (foot lamberts)	2.5	1.0	0.5	0.2
AM	1.5	0.82	0.62	0.43

[0251] Table 5 shows SP value for FLS of 1.0 inches and the critical distance for each AM. If LL is not supplied in meta data, a value of 0.2 foot lamberts is assumed.

[0252] Block **132**: Decision Point

[0253] Compare the actual GNp and SP Values:

[0254] If actual GNp>=SP, omit redeye correction process **134**;

[0255] If actual GNp<SP, execute noise correction process **136**->**80**;

TABLE 6

SP (GNp) Values for Block 132 (3 JND Level)

AM	1.5	1.2	0.9	0.43
GNp	160	70	15	0

[0256] Table 6 shows SP value for FLS of 1.0 inches, at the minimum light level for typical flash pictures (0.2 foot lamberts), and the critical distance for each AM. When the AM is above 1.2, the preflash guide number (GNp) values needed to produce less than 3 JNDs of quality loss indicate higher output than is typically found on consumer cameras; whereas, when the AM is below 0.43, the quality loss due to the redeye defect will be less than 3 JNDs with no preflash applied.

[0257] **FIG. 5**: Tonescale Defect Prediction Block **140**

[0258] Block **142**: Meta Data Input List

[0259] Camera Model Data

[0260] FF,GNm,S,f,T,K,LLs,LLb,Ds,Db

[0261] Block **144**: Processes

[0262] Calculate Esa EQ. 5

[0263] Calculate Eba EQ. 8

[0264] Calculate Esf EQ. 4

[0265] Calculate Ebf EQ. 7

[0266] Calculate AER EQ. 10

[0267] Calculate FER EQ. 9

[0268] Block **146**: Decision Point

[0269] Determine the flash fire state (FF):

[0270] If FF is no (off), proceed to Block **148**;

[0271] If FF is yes (on); proceed to Block **152**;

[0272] Block **148**: Decision Point

[0273] Compare the calculated AER and SP Values:

[0274] If actual AER=<SP, omit tonescale correction process **150**;

[0275] If actual AER>SP, execute tonescale correction process **156**;

[0276] Alternatively, if the AER parameter is not available, but the backlight indicator (BL) is on, execute tonescale correction process **156**.

[0277] Block **152**: Decision Point

[0278] Compare the calculated FER and SP Values:

[0279] If actual FER=<SP, omit tonescale correction process **154**;

[0280] If actual FER>SP, execute tonescale correction process **156**;

[0281] Where SP=2.8, which corresponds to a 1.5 stop exposure ratio.

[0282] The preferred value for AER and FER was derived from a review of numerous images with a wide range subject and background exposure ratios, together with learning from the optimization of fill-flash algorithms, as disclosed by the present inventors in columns 50-58 of the aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 5,323,204. The SP value of 2.8 was selected because we found that it provides a reasonable balance between image quality enhancement and photofinishing throughput (images processed per unit of time). If the values for AER and FER are set to a lower JND value, the tonescale image defect location and correction processes will be invoked more frequently, which may lead to higher average image quality, but lower throughput due to extended image processing time. If the values for AER and FER are set to a higher JND value, the image defect location and correction processes will be invoked less frequently, which may lead to lower average image quality, but higher throughput due to shortened image processing time.

[0283] **FIG. 6**: Sharpness Defect Prediction Block **160**

[0284] Block **162**: Meta Data Input List

[0285] Camera Model Data

[0286] Ms,Mn,Mc,LFR,FL,T,CSF,LS

[0287] Block **164**: Processes

[0288] Calculate DSF EQ. 14

[0289] Calculate Vds EQ. 12

[0290] Calculate Vdn EQ. 12

[0291] Calculate AM EQ. 11

[0292] Calculate MST EQ. 13

[0293] Block **166**: Decision Point

[0294] Compare the display size factor (DSF) and SP:

[0295] If actual DSF>=SP, proceed to Block **168**;

[0296] If actual DSF<SP, execute sharpness **180**;

[0297] Where SP=0.65, which produces about 3 JNDs of quality loss for typical consumer imaging systems.

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[0298] Block **168**: Decision Point

[0299] Determine the flash fire state (FF):

[0300] If FF is no (off), proceed to Block **170**;

[0301] If FF is yes (on), omit sharpness correction process **178**;

[0302] Block **170**: Decision Point

[0303] Determine the lens focus range state (LFR):

[0304] If Ds is not outside LFR; proceed to Block **172**,

[0305] If Ds is outside LFR; execute sharpness correction process **180**;

[0306] Block **172**: Decision Point

[0307] Compare the actual exposure time T and MST:

[0308] If T is =<MST, proceed to Block **174**;

[0309] If T is >MST, execute sharpness correction process **180**;

[0310] Block **174**: Decision Point

[0311] Measure the linear smear at image capture plane (LS):

[0312] If LS/DSF is =<SP, omit sharpness correction process **176**;

[0313] If LS/DSF is >SP, execute sharpness correction process **180**;

[0314] Where LS=0.04 mm at image capture plane, which produces about 3 JNDs of quality loss with unit DSF.

[0315] Linear smear may be determined in a variety of ways, including the following. The aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 5,323,204 described in element **225** of **FIG. 2**, and the hardware description beginning in column **26**, line **38**, an accelerometer-based camera shake detector capable of measuring linear smear. Alternatively, linear smear at the image plane can be acquired by taking temporally separated autofocusing system readings and comparing the linear translation of the signal patterns (e.g. quantifying the displacement of matching signal profiles as a function of acquisition time).

[0316] The image defect prediction processes **100**,**120**, **140**,**160**, as described above, have shown the preferred embodiments, but it is to be understood that they may be advantageously applied, even if all of the data is not available. For example, the hierarchy is purposefully set so the most readily available data is required earliest in each process, and if data is missing, the decision of the last block containing data has priority. For example, if after the first decision point, the data suggests that there is a probability of an image defect, but no additional data is available, the defect correction process will be executed. This is acceptable, because a "mistake" based on omission of data, simply means that a defect correction may be occasionally applied when not needed. This will not reduce the image quality, but merely lead to a slight reduction in the throughput advantage produced by the preferred embodiment.

[0317] The invention has been described with reference to a preferred embodiment. However, it will be appreciated that variations and modifications can be effected by a person of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the scope of the invention. For instance, while the foregoing description discloses an image processing system incorporating a plurality of image defect location and correction processes that are each associated with correction of a different type of image defect, the invention is intended to encompass an image processing system incorporating a plurality of image defect location and correction processes that are each associated with a specific type of image defect, where the specific type may be a different type or the same defect. The latter situation may apply when two or more processes are applied in series to the same defect depending on severity levels, or different processes may be applied individually for different severity levels of the same type of defect or depending upon the source of the defect.

Parts List

[0318] **10** image processing system

[0319] **12** film scanner

[0320] **14** digital file reader

[0321] **16** network input

[0322] **18** order entry station

[0323] **22** display monitor

[0324] **24** keyboard

[0325] **26** printer

[0326] **28** photofinishing equipment

[0327] **30** data communication device

[0328] **32** photofinishing lab

[0329] **40** computer

[0330] **50** image acquisition block

[0331] **52** capture device/film scanner

[0332] **56** source digital image

[0333] **60** image analysis block

[0334] **62** sub-sampling block

[0335] **64** scene balance algorithm

[0336] **66** meta data decoder

[0337] **68** image defect prediction process

[0338] **70** image processing block

[0339] **72** noise correction process

[0340] **76** scene balance shift

[0341] **80** redeye correction process

[0342] **84** scene dependent tonescale correction

[0343] **88** sharpness correction process

[0344] **90** image output block

[0345] **92** output device rendering

[0346] **96** image output device

[0347] **100** noise defect prediction block

[0348] **102** meta data input list

[0349] **104** parameter calculation

[0350] **106** subject exposure switch point

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[0351] **108** omit noise correction
[0352] **110** execute noise correction
[0353] **120** redeye defect prediction block
[0354] **122** meta data input list
[0355] **124** parameter calculation
[0356] **126** flash determination
[0357] **128** light level switch point
[0358] **130** angular magnification switch point
[0359] **132** flash output switch point
[0360] **134** omit redeye correction
[0361] **136** execute redeye correction
[0362] **140** tonescale defect prediction block
[0363] **142** meta data input list
[0364] **144** parameter calculation
[0365] **146** flash determination
[0366] **148** ambient exposure ratio switch point
[0367] **150** omit tonescale correction
[0368] **152** flash exposure ratio switch point
[0369] **154** omit tonescale correction
[0370] **156** execute tonescale correction
[0371] **160** sharpness defect prediction block
[0372] **162** meta data input list
[0373] **164** parameter calculation
[0374] **166** display size factor switch point
[0375] **168** flash determination
[0376] **170** lens focus range switch point
[0377] **172** actual exposure time switch point
[0378] **174** linear smear switch point
[0379] **176** omit sharpness correction
[0380] **178** omit sharpness correction
[0381] **180** execute sharpness correction
[0382] **200** film camera
[0383] **201** film strip
[0384] **205***a* film reel
[0385] **205***b* film reel
[0386] **210** read/write head
[0387] **215** microprocessor
[0388] **220** head electronics
[0389] **225** camera controls
[0390] **230** scene sensors
[0391] **240** ROM
[0392] **250** ROM
[0393] **260** RAM
[0394] **300** digital camera
[0395] **340** lens
[0396] **341** aperture/shutter controller
[0397] **342** blur filter
[0398] **344** CCD sensor
[0399] **346** analog video processor
[0400] **348** A/D converter
[0401] **350** frame memory
[0402] **352** digital signal processor
[0403] **354** data memory
[0404] **356** memory card
[0405] **358** memory card interface
[0406] **359** card connector
[0407] **360** host computer interface
[0408] **362** camera microprocessor
[0409] **364** user inputs
[0410] **366** flash unit
[0411] **368** timing generator
[0412] **370** scene sensor
[0413] **372** exposure driver
[0414] **374** sensor driver
[0415] **380** camera mechanism inputs
[0416] **382** shake sensor input

What is claimed is:

1. A method for processing a captured image with one or more correction processes selected from a plurality of such processes, each associated with correction of a specific type of image defect, in order to improve the appearance of a viewed image generated from the captured image, said method comprising the steps of:

collecting meta data related to image capture that is unique to each image that is captured, wherein the meta data is capable of indicating whether the specific types of image defects are likely to be present in the viewed image generated from the captured image;

predicting the presence of the image defects based at least in part on the meta data, thereby generating process application criteria which indicate a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the viewed image;

selecting one or more correction processes to employ on the captured image based on the process application criteria; and

applying the one or more selected correction processes to the captured image to generate the viewed image.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the meta data includes scene, camera or demographic data related to the image capture.

3. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of predicting the presence of the image defects also predicts the

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severity of the defects and the strength of the corresponding correction process can be altered in response to the degree of severity.

4. The method as claimed as in claim 1 wherein the meta data related to image capture is collected at the time of image capture.

5. The method as claimed as in claim 1 wherein the meta data related to image capture is collected at a time other than the time of image capture.

6. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the image defect is a noise defect and the meta data is selected from the group consisting of a lens exposure constant, standard (printing) reproduction magnification, non-standard (enlargement) magnification, diagonal dimension of a final display, ambient light level of the primary subject, exposure time, camera lens f-number, and main flash guide number.

7. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the image defect is a red-eye defect due to flash illumination of a subject and the meta data is selected from the group consisting of a use (on-off) of the flash illumination, illumination level of the primary subject, subject distance, flash-to-camera lens separation, focal length of camera lens, current reproduction (printing) magnification, diagonal dimension of final display, and preflash guide number.

8. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the image defect is a tone scale defect and the meta data is selected from the group consisting of respective illumination levels of the subject and background, subject distance, background distance, exposure time, camera lens f-number, use (on/off) of flash illumination, guide number of a main flash, lens exposure constant and ISO speed of a capture device.

9. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the image defect is a sharpness defect and the meta data is selected from the group consisting an exposure time, standard reproduction (printing) magnification, non-standard (enlargement) magnification, current reproduction (printing) magnification, camera lens focus range, camera lens focal length, camera shake factor and linear smear.

10. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising the step of collecting meta data related to display parameters of the viewed image generated from each image that is captured, wherein said meta data is capable of indicating whether the specific types of image defects are likely to be present in the viewed image.

11. A computer storage medium having instructions stored therein for causing a computer to perform the method of claim 1.

12. An image processing method incorporating a plurality of image defect location and correction processes, each associated with correction of a specific type of image defect, that are selectively and automatically applied to an image only when the image is predicted from specific capture variables associated with image capture to have a level of image defect, treatable by one or more of the processes, that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

13. The method as claimed in claim 12 wherein the image capture is a film capture on a film capture device and the capture variables includes at least one variable selected from the group consisting of an ISO rating of the film used, exposure time of an optical system used in the capture device, a f-number of the optical system, a distance of a subject from the capture device, a distance of a background from the capture device, an illumination level on the subject, an illumination level on the background, a distance between a flash illuminator and the optical system, an indication of whether the flash illuminator was used, a guide number for the flash illuminator, an indication of camera shake and an indication that a backlight indicator was turned on.

14. The method as claimed in claim 12 wherein the image capture is an electronic capture on a digital capture device and the capture variables includes at least one variable selected from the group consisting of an ISO equivalent rating of an image sensor used by the capture device, exposure time of an optical system used in the capture device, a f-number of the optical system, a distance of a subject from the capture device, a distance of a background from the capture device, an illumination level on the subject, an illumination level on the background, a distance between a flash illuminator and the optical system, an indication of whether the flash illuminator was used, a guide number for the flash illuminator, an indication of camera shake, an indication that a backlight indicator was turned on, a gain factor for the image sensor and a resolution setting of the capture device.

15. The method as claimed in claim 14 wherein the electronic capture is obtained with a digital camera.

16. The method as claimed in claim 14 wherein the electronic capture is obtained with a digital scanner.

17 The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a image defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system at least one of said parameters;

c) employing in the photofinishing control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters and current printing parameters, whether the image will have a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, image defect location and correction means, when said prediction means indicates a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

18. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a image defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) employing in a camera control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters, and from predefined or photographer-selected printing parameters, whether the current image will have a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image;

c) storing and later transferring to the photofinishing control system a value indicating whether or not image defect location and correction means should be applied in photofinishing; and

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d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, image defect location and correction means, when said image defect prediction value indicates a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

19. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a noise defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system at least one of said parameters;

c) employing in the photofinishing control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters and current printing parameters, whether the image will have a level of noise defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, noise defect location and correction means, when said noise defect prediction means indicates a level of noise defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

20. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a noise defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) employing in a camera control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters, and predefined or photographer-selected printing parameters, whether the image will have a level of noise defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image;

c) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system a value indicating whether or not noise defect location and correction means should be applied in photofinishing; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, noise defect location and correction means, when said noise defect prediction value indicates a level of noise defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

21. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a redeye defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system at least one of said parameters;

c) employing in the photofinishing control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters and current printing parameters, whether the image will have a level of redeye defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, redeye defect location and correction means, when said redeye defect prediction means indicates a level of redeye defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

22. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a redeye defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) employing in a camera control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters, and predefined or photographer-selected printing parameters, whether the image will have a level of redeye defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image;

c) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system a value indicating whether or not redeye defect location and correction means should be applied in photofinishing; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, redeye defect location and correction means, when said redeye defect prediction value indicates a level of redeye defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

23. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a tone scale defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system at least one of said parameters;

c) employing in the photofinishing control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters and current printing parameters, whether the image will have a level of tone scale defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, tone scale defect location and correction means, when said tone scale defect prediction means indicates a level of tone scale defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

24. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a tone scale defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) employing in a camera control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture

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parameters, and predefined or photographer-selected printing parameters, whether the image will have a level of tone scale defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image;

c) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system a value indicating whether or not tone scale defect location and correction means should be applied in photofinishing; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, tone scale defect location and correction means, when said tone scale defect prediction value indicates a level of tone scale defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

25. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one parameter known to indicate whether a sharpness defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system at least one of said parameters;

c) employing in the photofinishing control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters and current printing parameters, whether the current image will have a level of sharpness defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, sharpness defect location and correction means, when said sharpness defect prediction means indicates a level of sharpness defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

26. The image processing method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

a) recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a sharpness defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

b) employing in a camera control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters, and predefined or photographer-selected printing parameters, whether the image will have a level of sharpness defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image;

c) storing and later transferring to a photofinishing control system a value indicating whether or not sharpness defect location and correction means should be applied in photofinishing; and

d) applying to the image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, sharpness defect location and correction means, when said sharpness defect prediction value indicates a level of sharpness defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

27. An image processing method incorporating an image defect location and correction process that is applied to an image only when a demographic characteristic of the image is predicted to cause a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

28. The method as claimed in claim 27 wherein the image defect is a red-eye defect due to flash illumination of a human subject and the image defect location and correction process is a red-eye correction process.

29. The method as claimed in claim 28 wherein the demographic characteristic of the image includes the age or race of the human subject.

30. A system for processing a captured image with one or more correction processes selected from a plurality of such processes, each associated with correction of a specific type of image defect, in order to improve the appearance of a viewed image generated from the captured image, said system comprising:

a data recording stage for collecting and recording meta data related to image capture that is unique to each image that is captured, wherein the meta data is capable of indicating whether the specific types of image defects are likely to be present in the viewed image generated from the captured image;

a digital image processor for (a) predicting the presence of the image defects based at least in part on the meta data, thereby generating process application criteria which indicate a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the viewed image and (b) selecting one or more correction processes to employ on the captured image based on the process application criteria; and

means for applying the one or more selected correction processes to the captured image to generate the viewed image.

31. The system as claimed in claim 30 wherein the meta data includes scene, camera or demographic data related to the image capture.

32. The system as claimed in claim 30 wherein the digital signal processor also predicts the severity of the defects based at least in part on the meta data and said means for applying the selected correction process alters the strength of the corresponding correction process in response to the degree of severity.

33. The system as claimed as in claim 30 wherein the data recording stage is part of an image capture device and the meta data related to image capture is collected at the time of image capture.

34. The system as claimed as in claim 30 wherein the data recording stage is separated from image capture and the meta data related to image capture is collected at a time other than the time of image capture.

35. The system as claimed in claim 30 further comprising means for collecting meta data related to display parameters of the viewed image, wherein said meta data related to display parameters is capable of indicating whether the specific types of image defects are likely to be present in the viewed image.

36. A system for processing a captured image with one or more correction processes selected from a plurality of such processes, each associated with correction of a specific type of image defect, in order to improve the appearance of a final viewed image generated from the captured image, said system comprising:

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a) an image capture device utilizing a camera control system to capture the image;

b) a photofinishing system utilizing a photofinishing control system to produce the final viewed image;

c) means for recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether an image defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

d) means for storing and later transferring to the photofinishing control system at least one of said parameters;

e) means for employing in the photofinishing control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters and current printing parameters, whether the captured image will have a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image; and

f) means for applying to the captured image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, image defect location and correction means, when said prediction means indicates a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

37. A system for processing a captured image with one or more correction processes selected from a plurality of such processes, each associated with correction of a specific type of image defect, in order to improve the appearance of a final viewed image generated from the captured image, said system comprising:

a) an image capture device utilizing a camera control system to capture the image;

b) a photofinishing system utilizing a photofinishing control system to produce the final viewed image;

c) means for recording at the time each image is captured, at least one image capture parameter known to indicate whether a image defect is likely to be present in the final viewed image;

d) means for employing in the camera control system a means for predicting from at least one of said image capture parameters, and from predefined or photographer-selected printing parameters, whether the captured image will have a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image;

e) means for storing and later transferring to the photofinishing control system a value indicating whether or not image defect location and correction means should be applied in photofinishing, and

f) means for applying to the captured image via automated or operator-assisted techniques, image defect location and correction means, when said image defect prediction value indicates a level of image defect that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

38. An image processing system incorporating a plurality of image defect location and correction processes, each associated with correction of a specific type of image defect, that are selectively and automatically applied to an image only when the image is predicted from specific capture variables associated with image capture to have a level of image defect, treatable by one or more of the processes, that if left untreated would reduce the perceived quality of the final viewed image.

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(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2007/0171288 A1**

Inoue et al. (43) **Pub. Date: Jul. 26, 2007**

(54) **IMAGE CORRECTION APPARATUS AND METHOD, IMAGE CORRECTION DATABASE CREATING METHOD, INFORMATION DATA PROVISION APPARATUS, IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS, INFORMATION TERMINAL, AND INFORMATION DATABASE APPARATUS**

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§ 371(c)(1),
(2), (4) Date: **Sep. 25, 2006**

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Jun. 23, 2004 (JP) 2004-185659
Nov. 12, 2004 (JP) 2004-329826

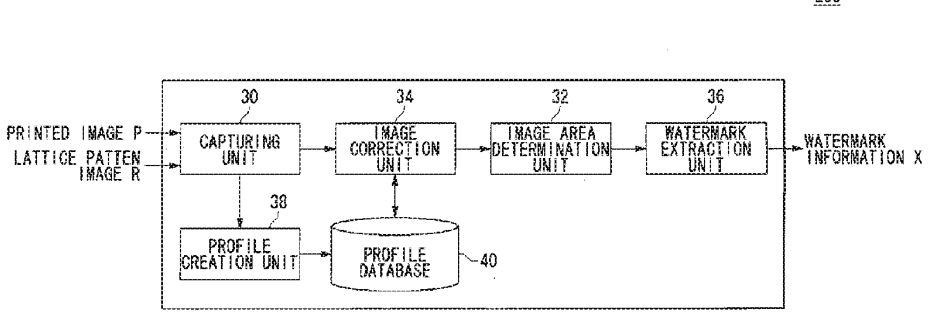
Publication Classification

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H04N 5/217 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **348/241**

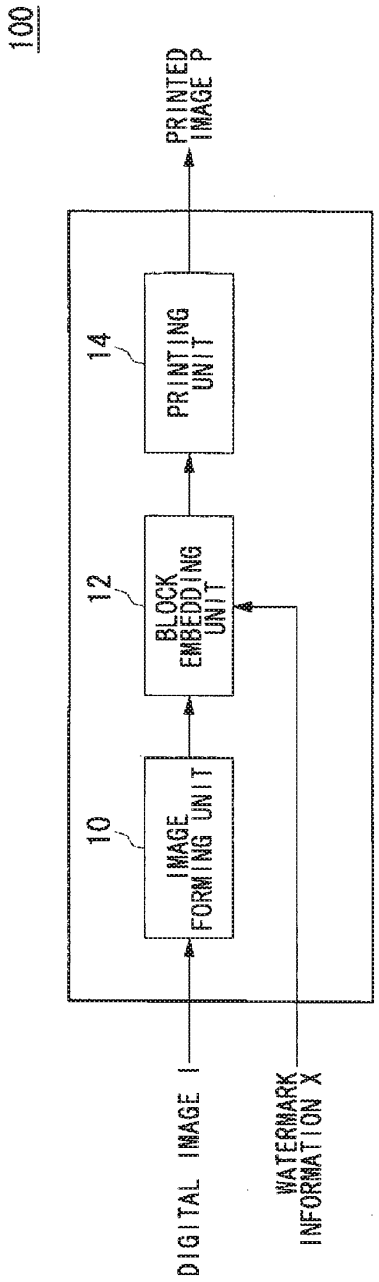
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A capturing unit captures and digitizes a printed image having an electronic watermark embedded therein and a lattice pattern image. A profile creation unit detects position deviations of intersections in the lattice pattern images captured at respective different zoom magnifications, generates correction information on distortion occurring in the images, and registers the correction information into a profile database in association with the zoom magnifications. An image correction unit selects correction information corresponding to a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of the printed image from the profile database, and corrects distortion occurring in the captured image of the printed image. An image area determination unit determines an original image area in the distortion-corrected captured image. A watermark extraction unit extracts watermark information from the original image area in the distortion-corrected captured image.



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FIG.1



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FIG.2A

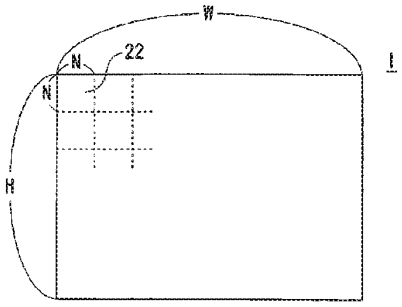


FIG.2B

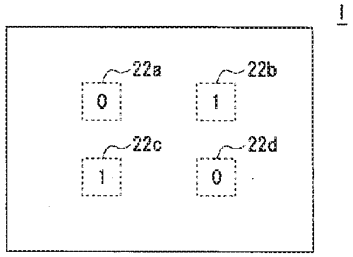


FIG.2C

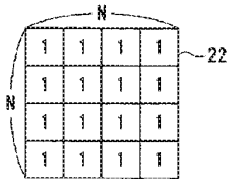
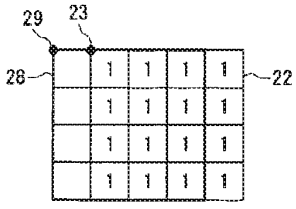
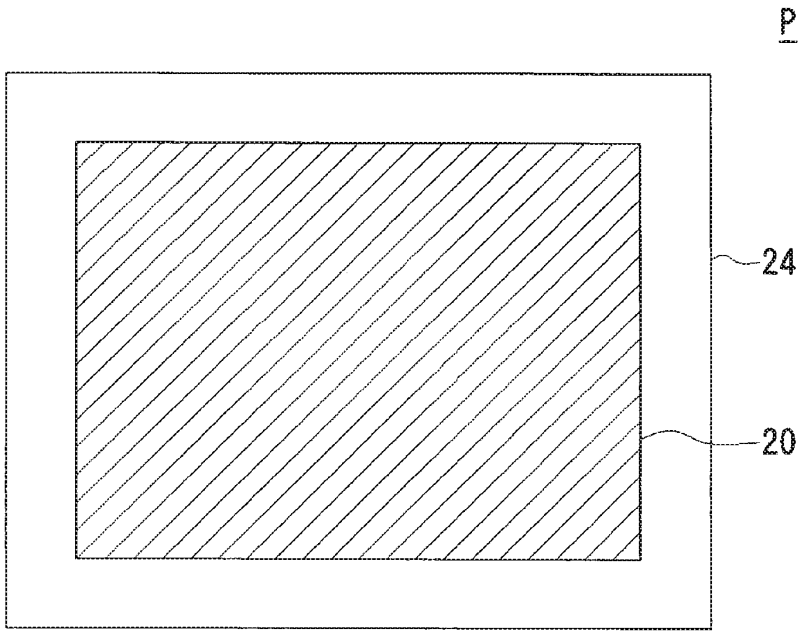


FIG.2D



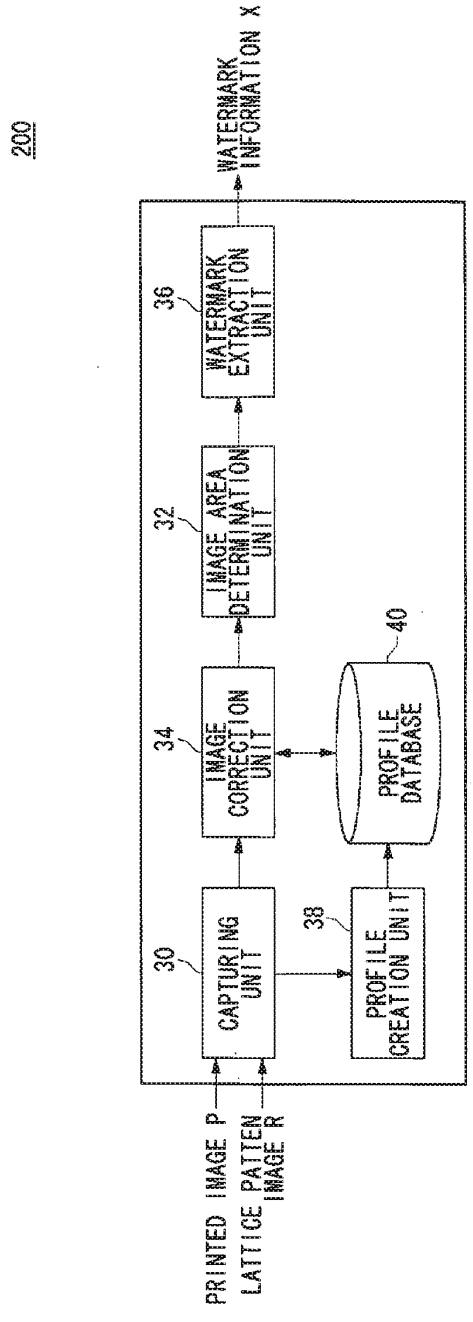
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FIG.3



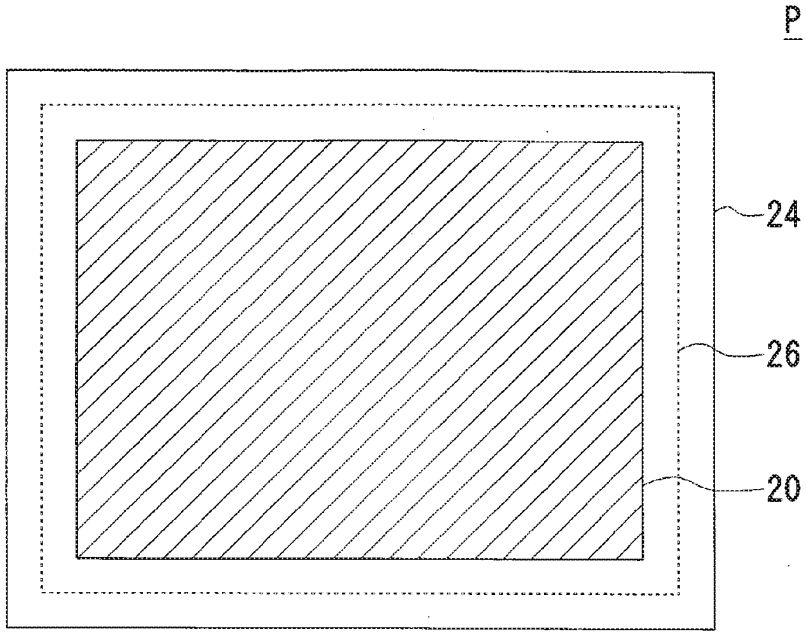
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FIG.4



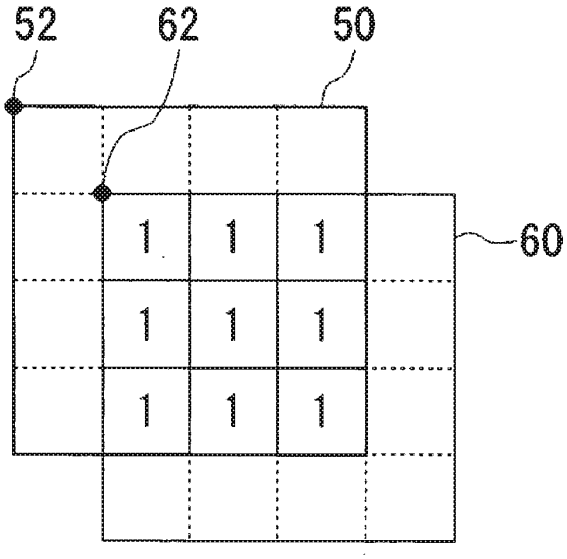
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FIG.5



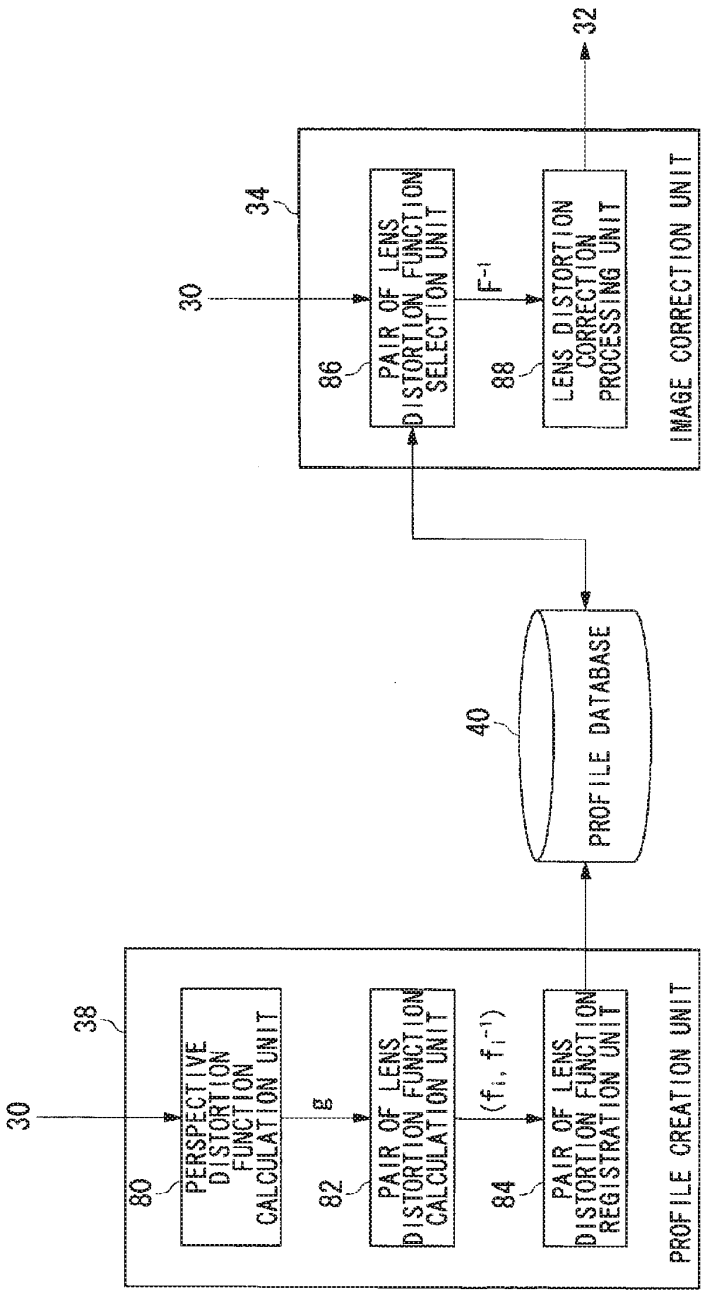
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FIG.6



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FIG.7



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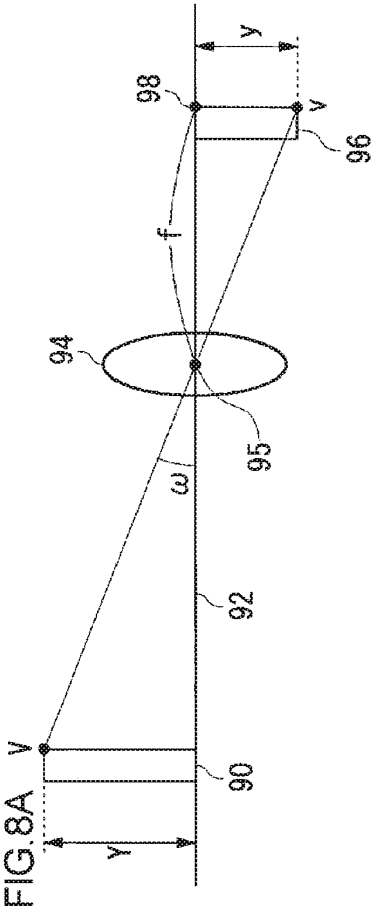


FIG.8A

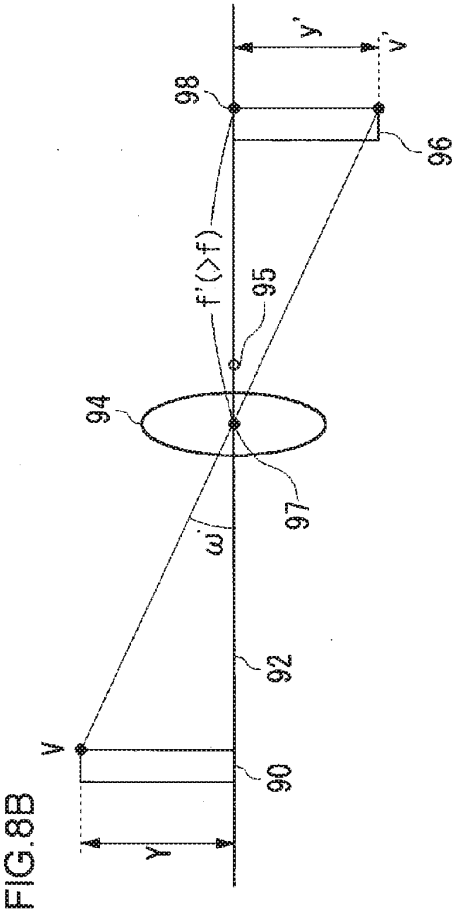


FIG.8B

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FIG.9A

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MODEL NAME	PAIR OF LENS DISTORTION FUNCTION
A	(f_A, f_A^{-1})
B	(f_B, f_B^{-1})
⋮	⋮

FIG.9B

44

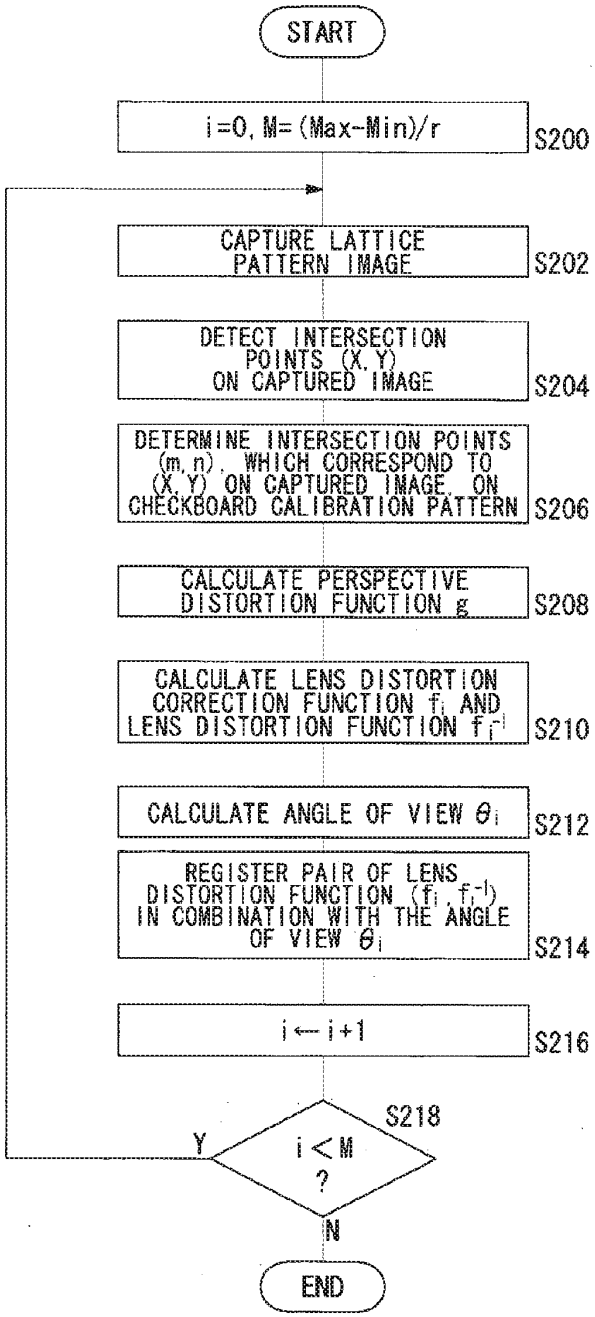
MODEL NAME	CCD DIAGONAL LENGTH	POINTER
A	d_A	●
B	d_B	
⋮	⋮	⋮

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LABEL	ANGLE OF VIEW	LENS DISTORTION FUNCTION PAIR
⋮	⋮	⋮
i	θ_i	(f_i, f_i^{-1})
i+1	θ_{i+1}	(f_{i+1}, f_{i+1}^{-1})
i+2	θ_{i+2}	(f_{i+2}, f_{i+2}^{-1})
⋮	⋮	⋮

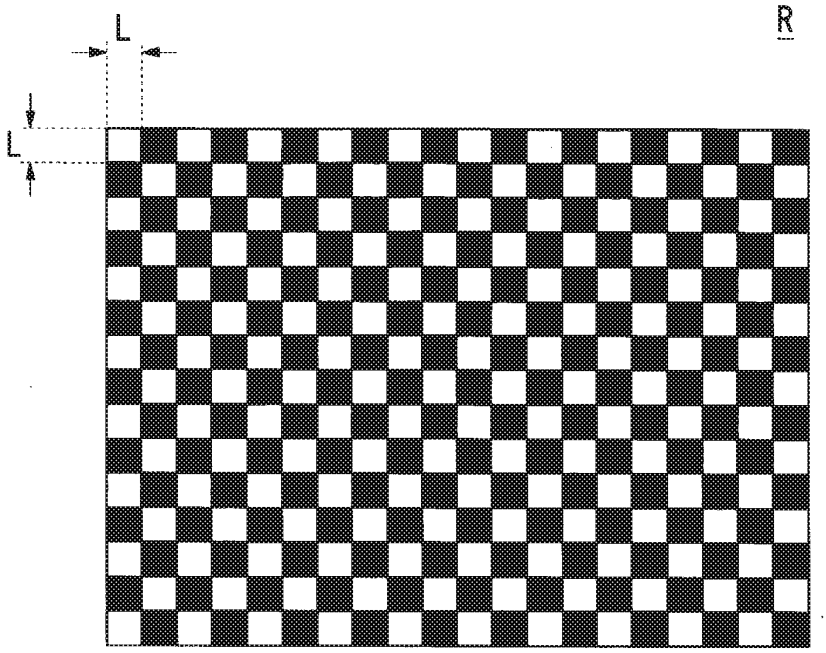
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FIG.10



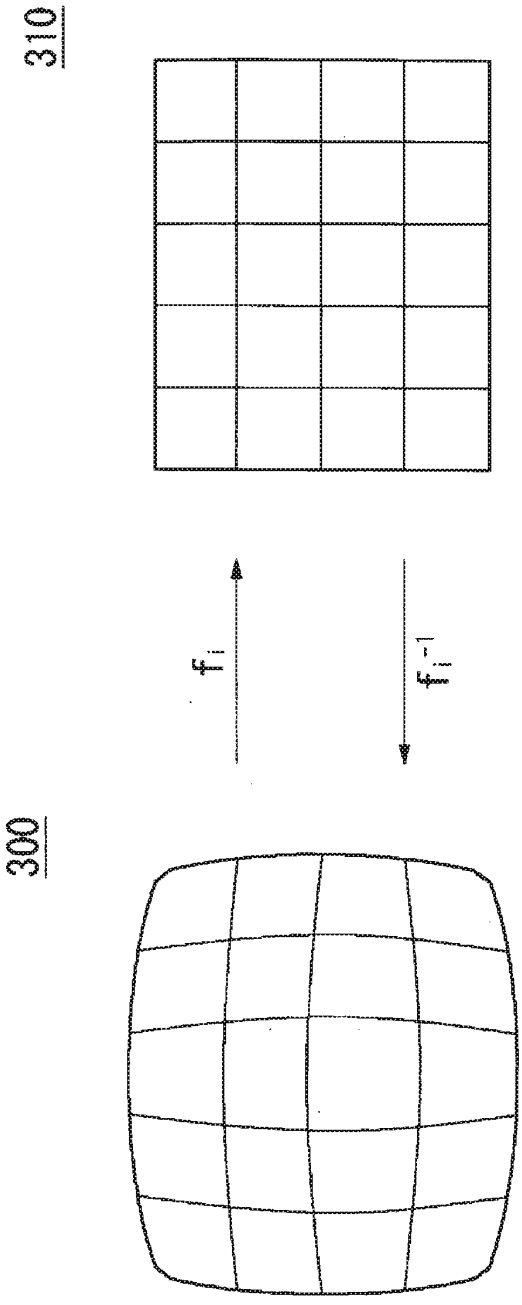
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FIG.11



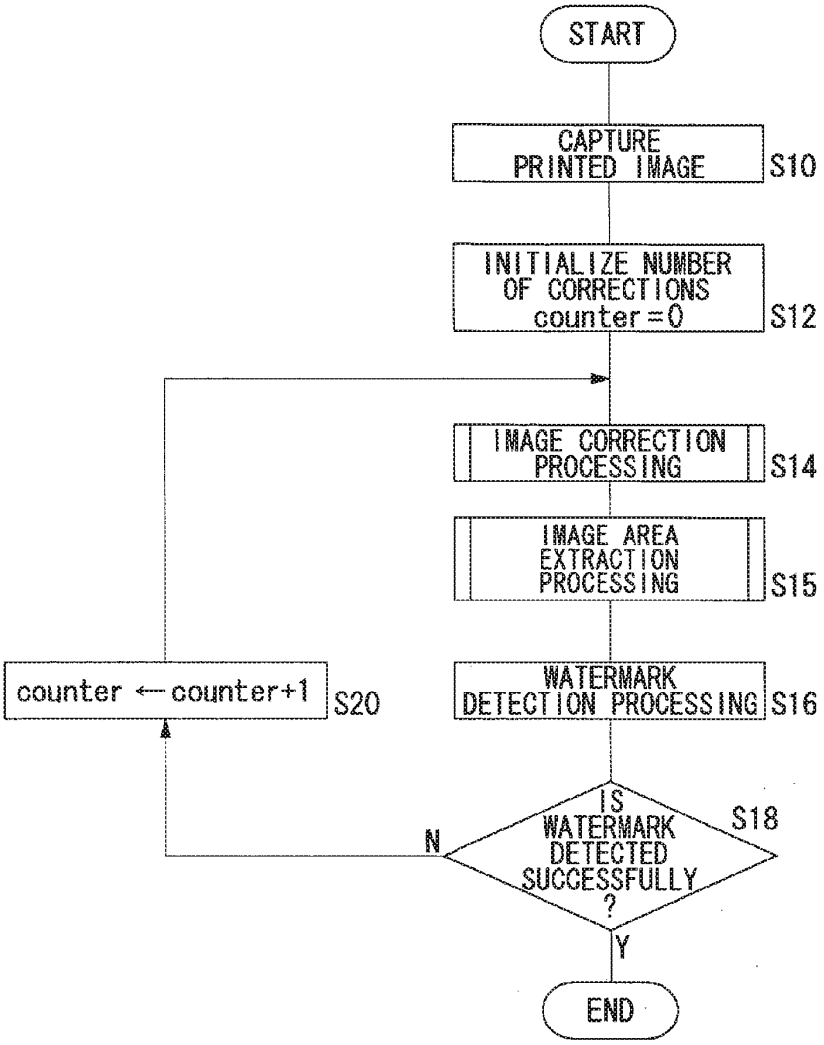
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.12



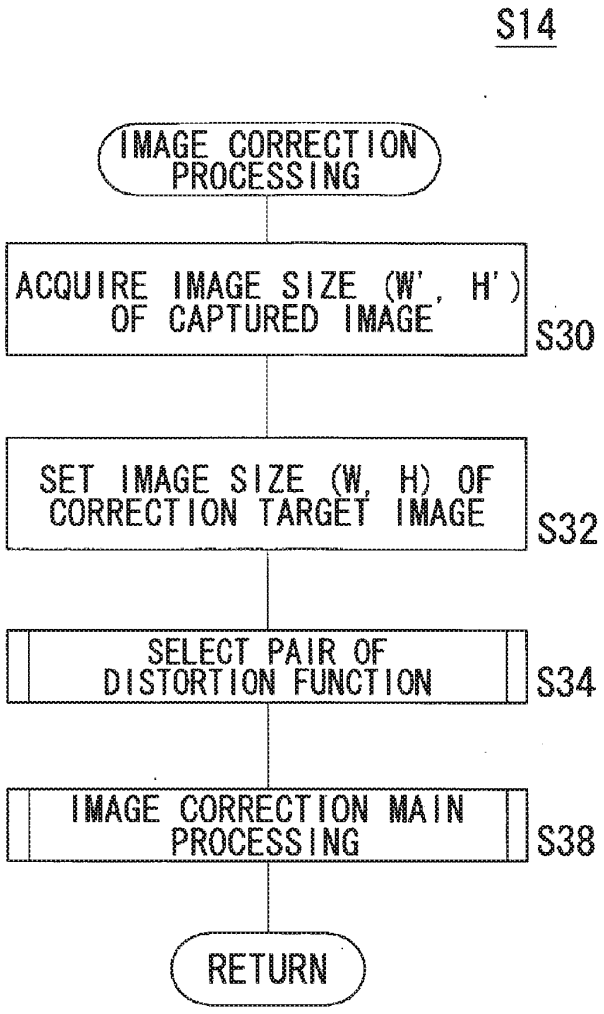
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.13



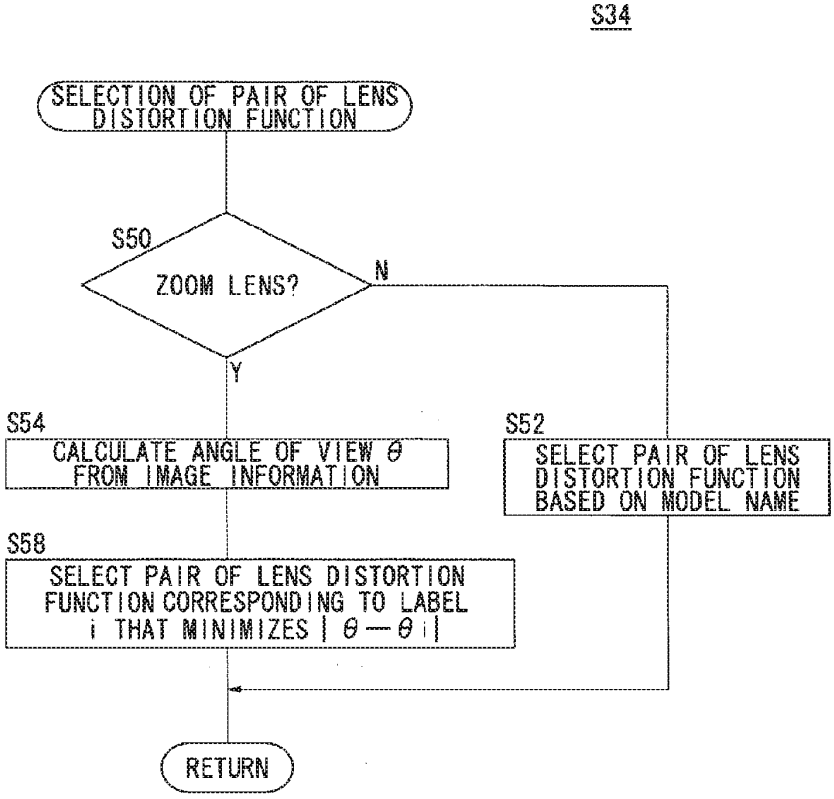
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.14



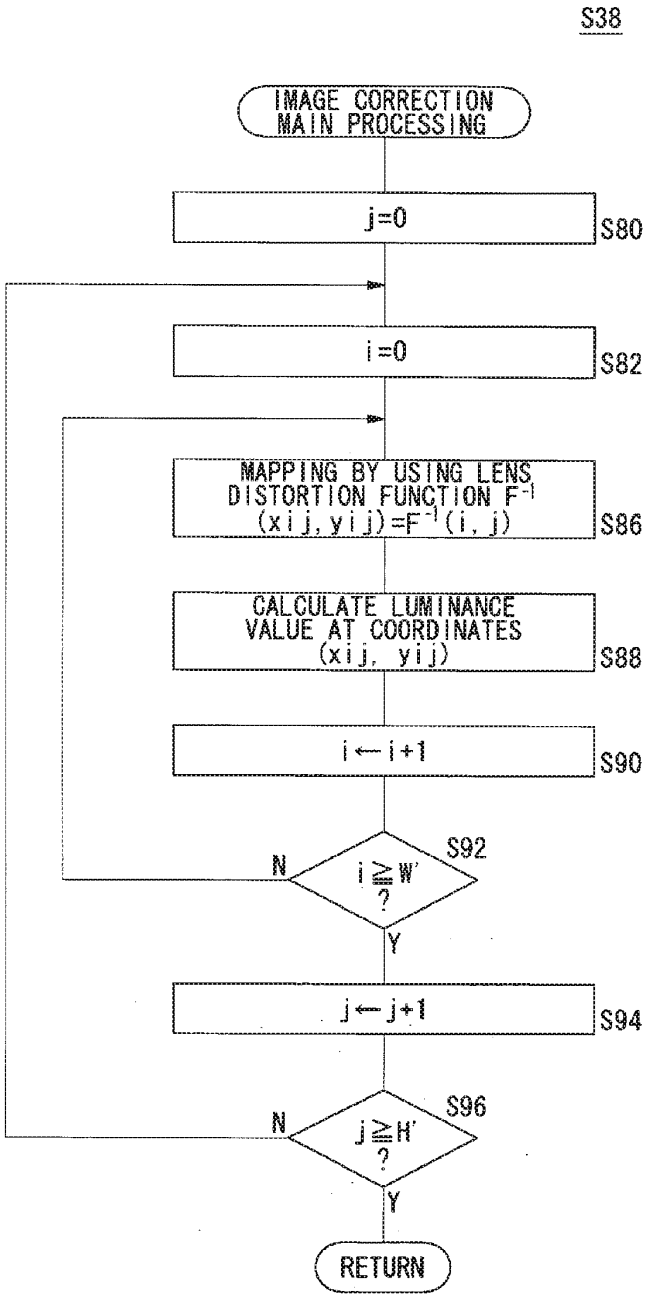
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.15



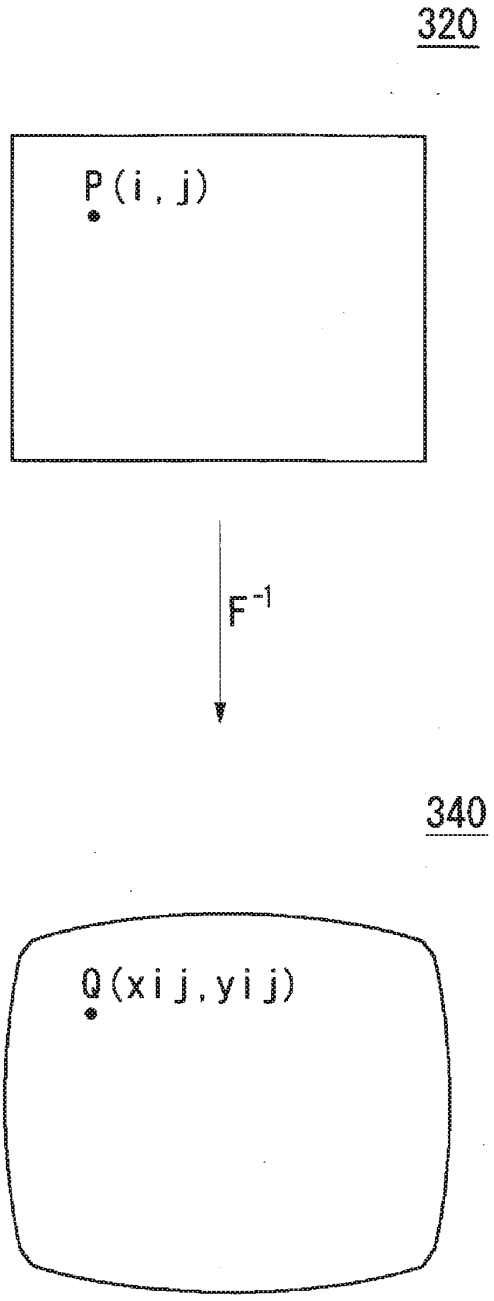
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.16



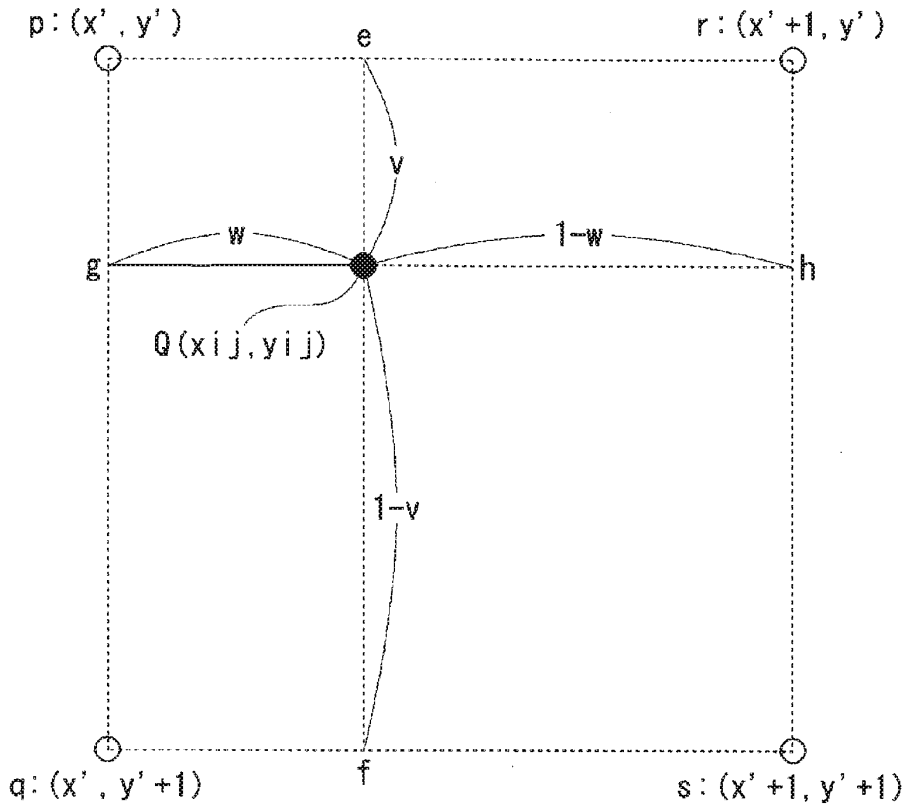
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.17



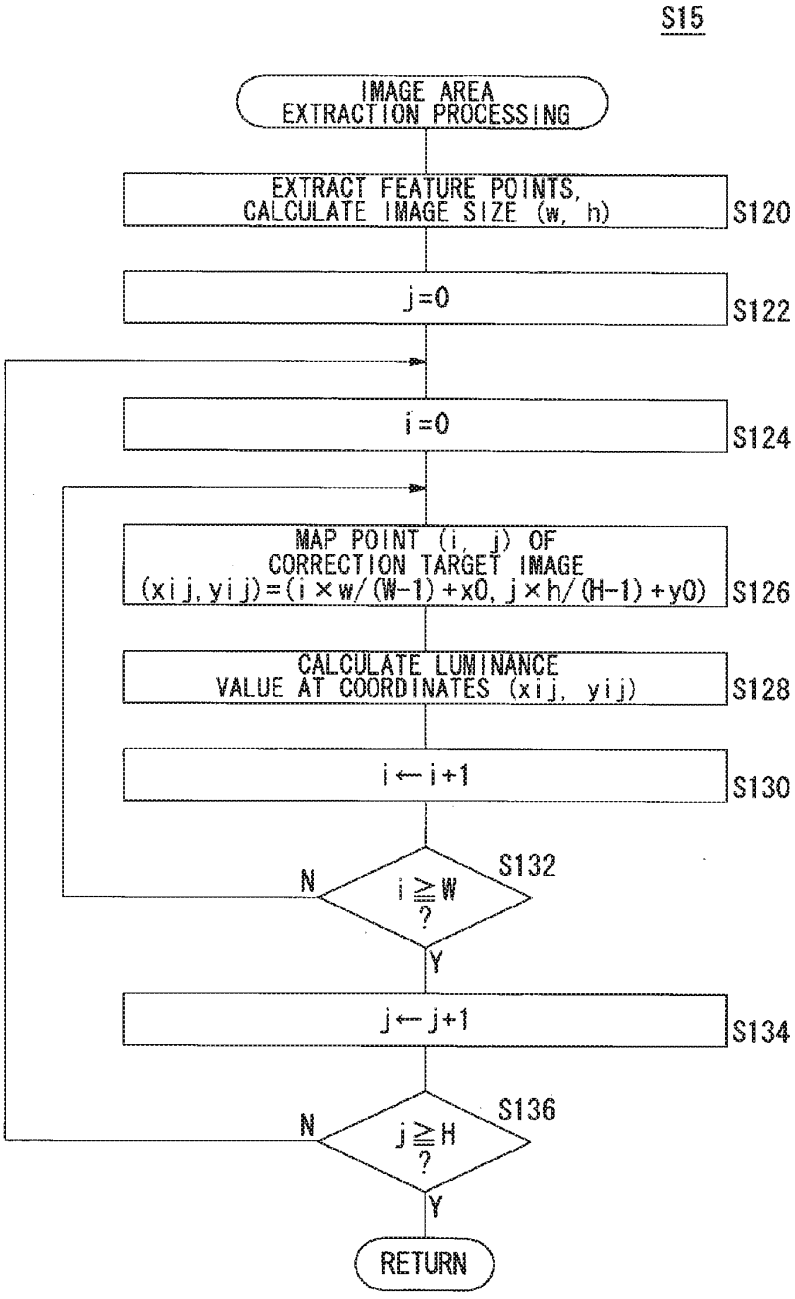
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.18



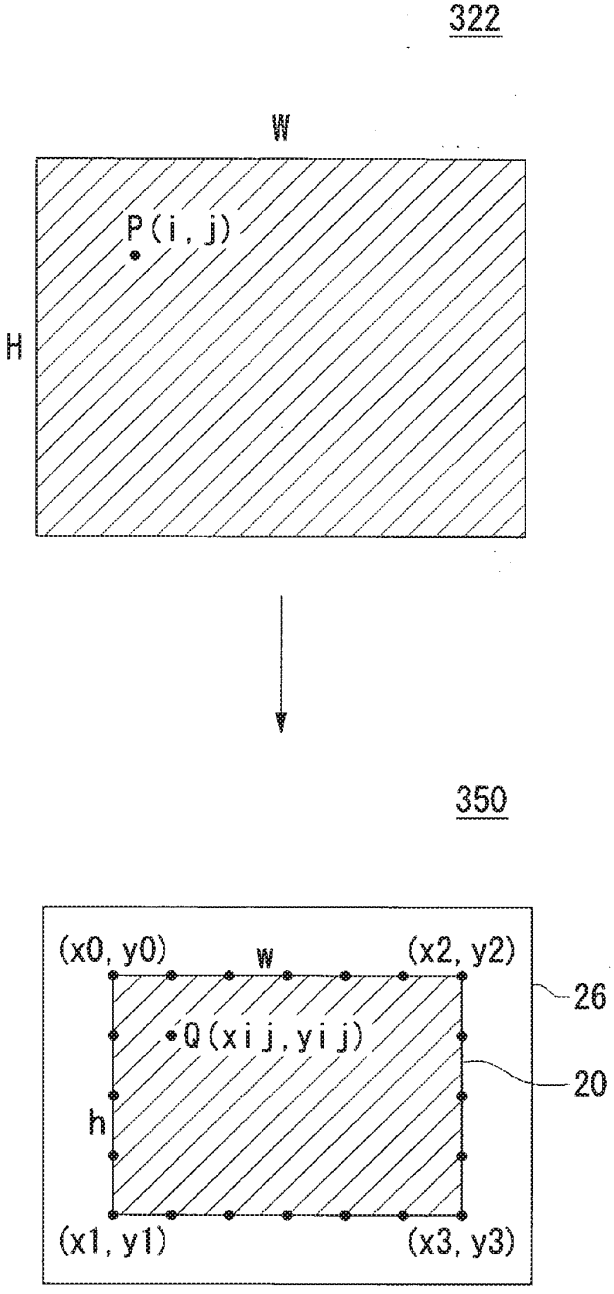
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.19



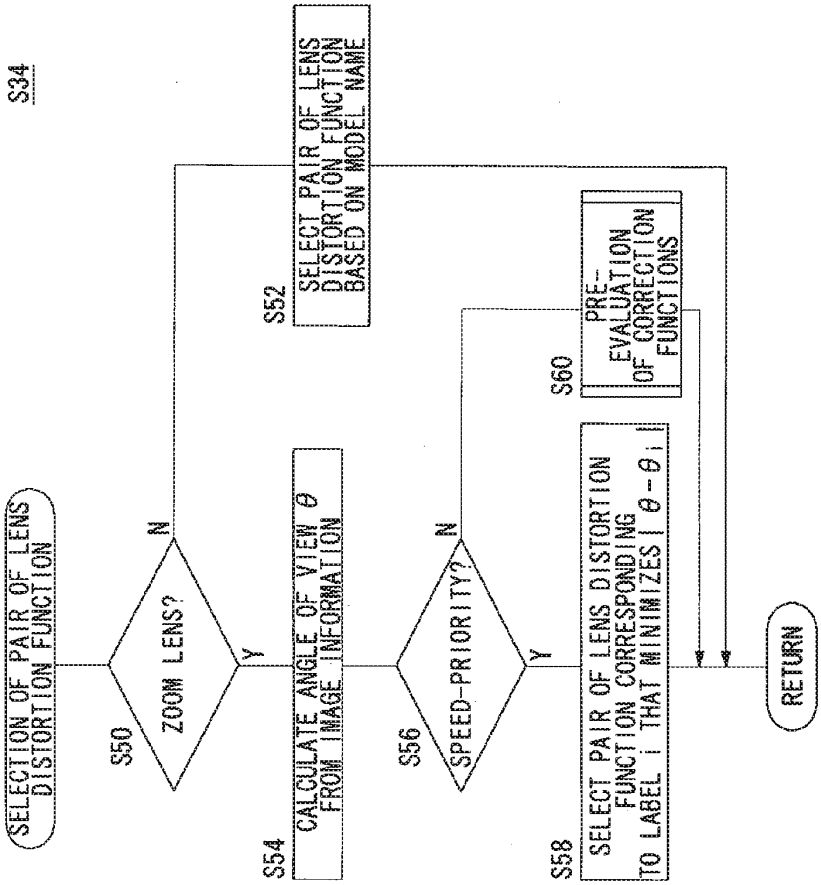
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.20



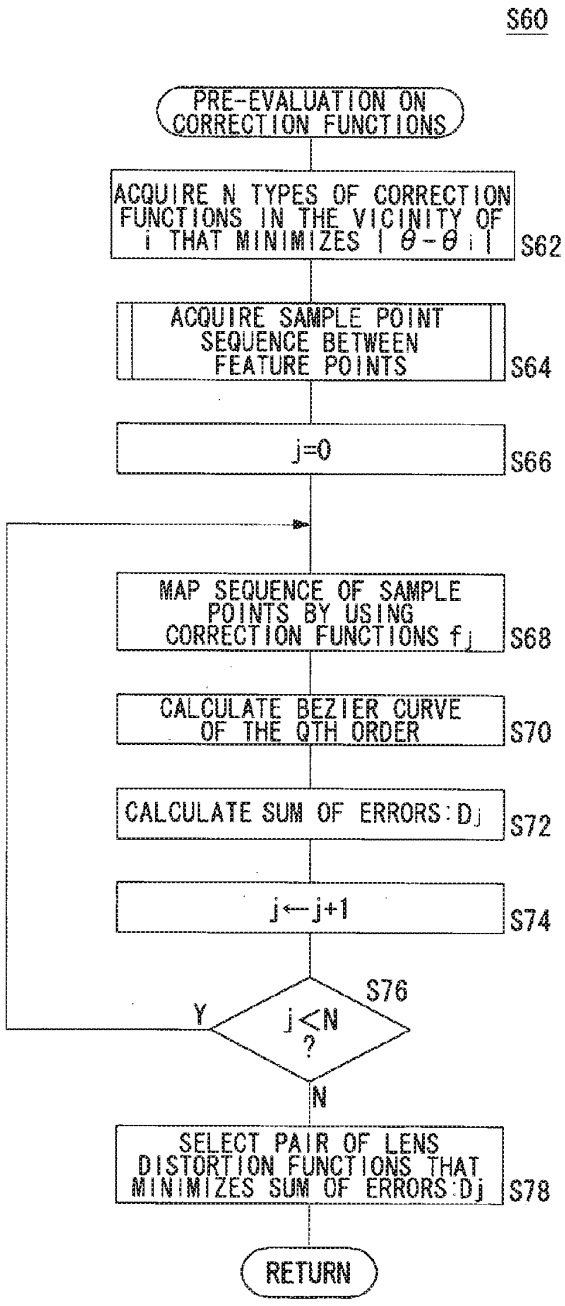
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.21



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EX. 1030

FIG.22



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.23A

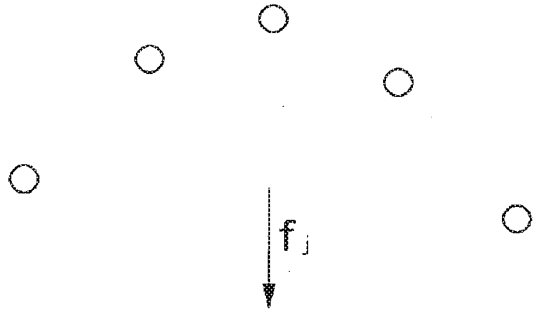


FIG.23B

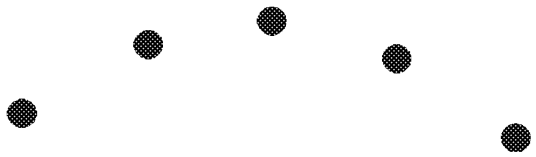
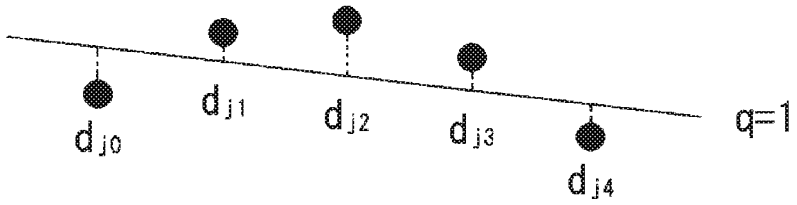
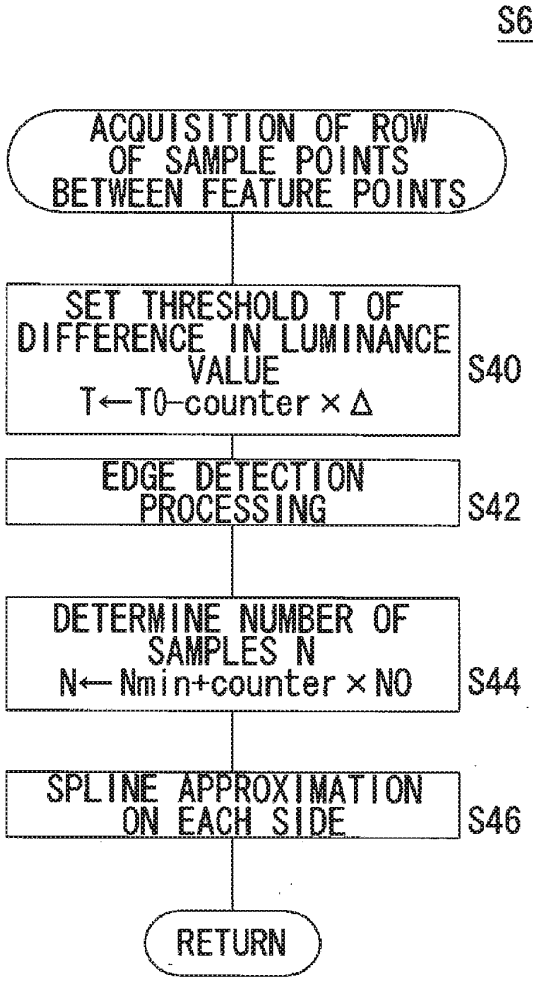


FIG.23C



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.24



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EX. 1030

FIG.25A

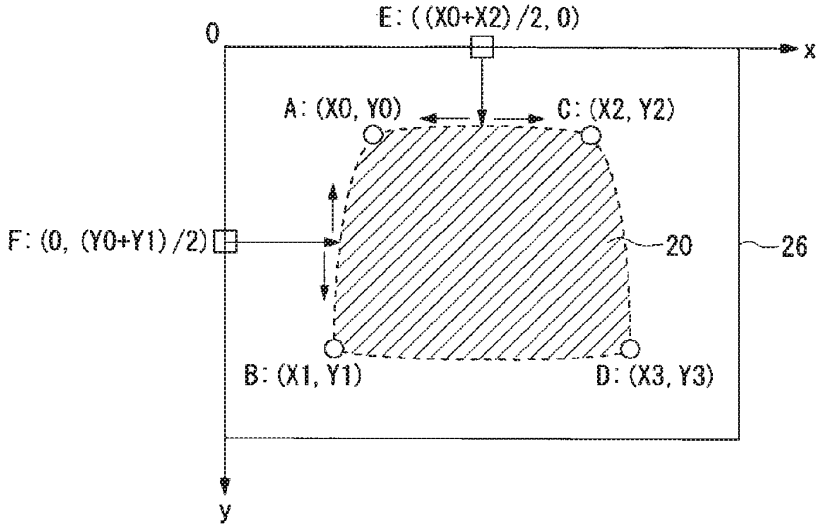
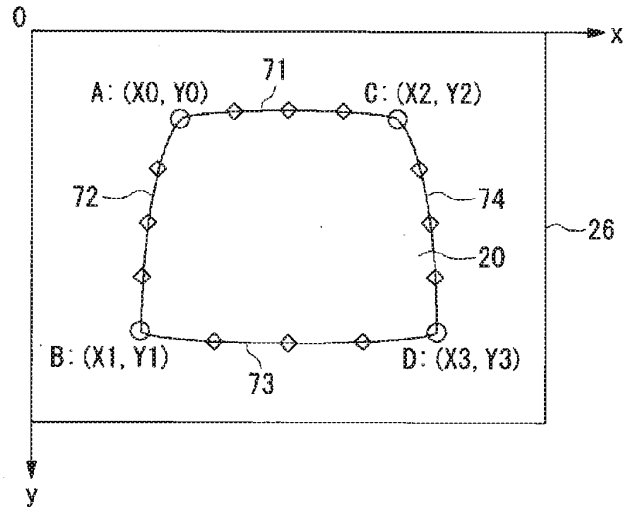
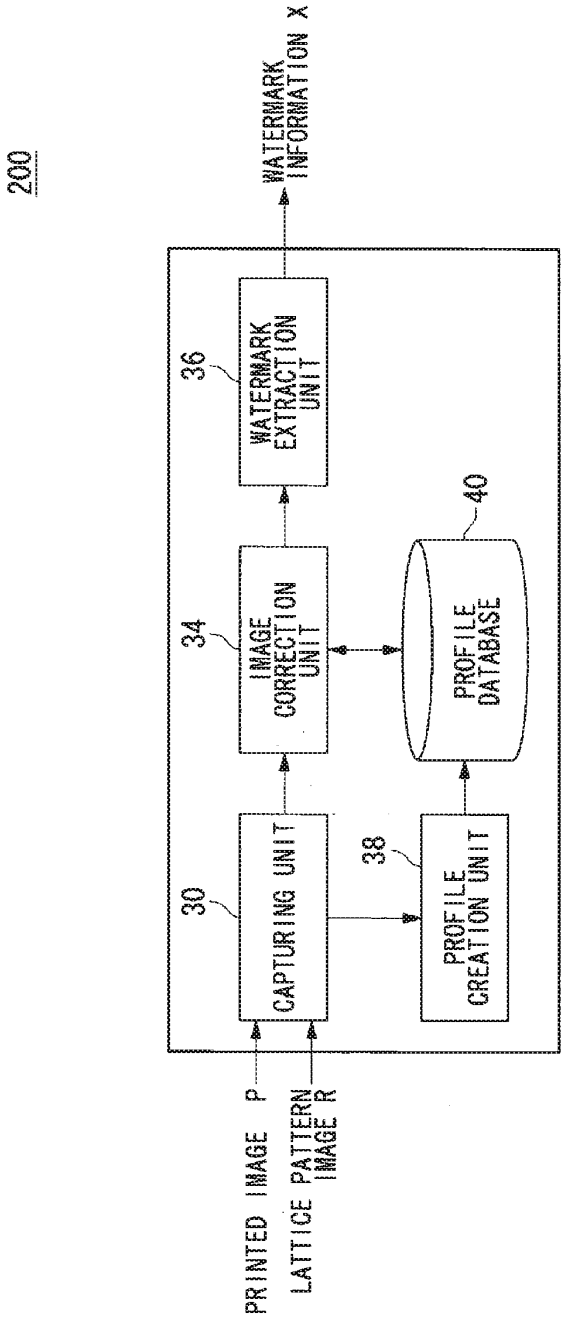


FIG.25B



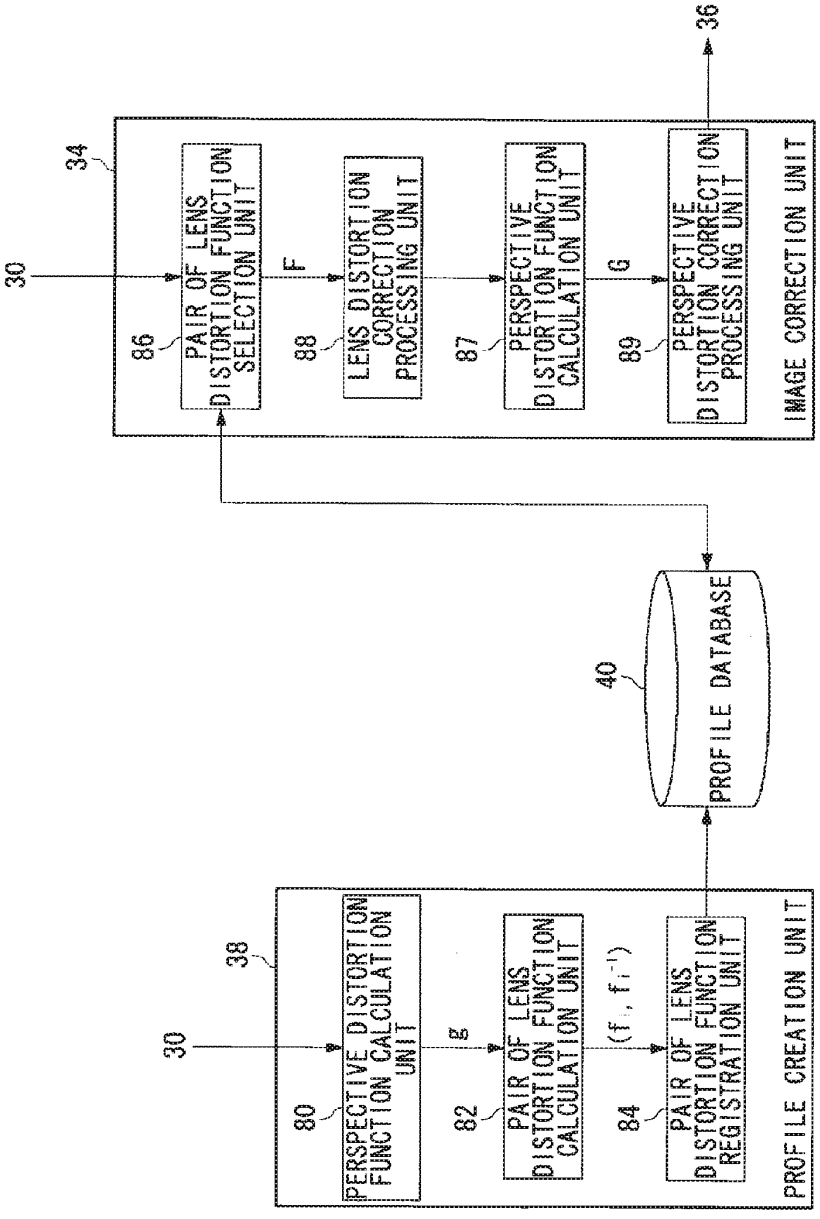
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.26



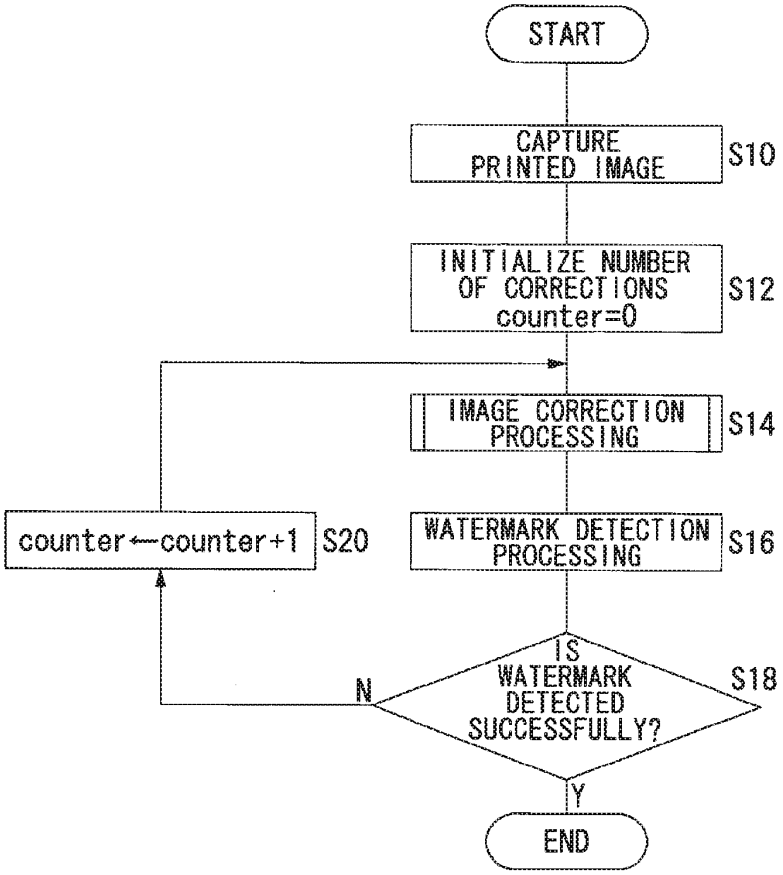
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.27



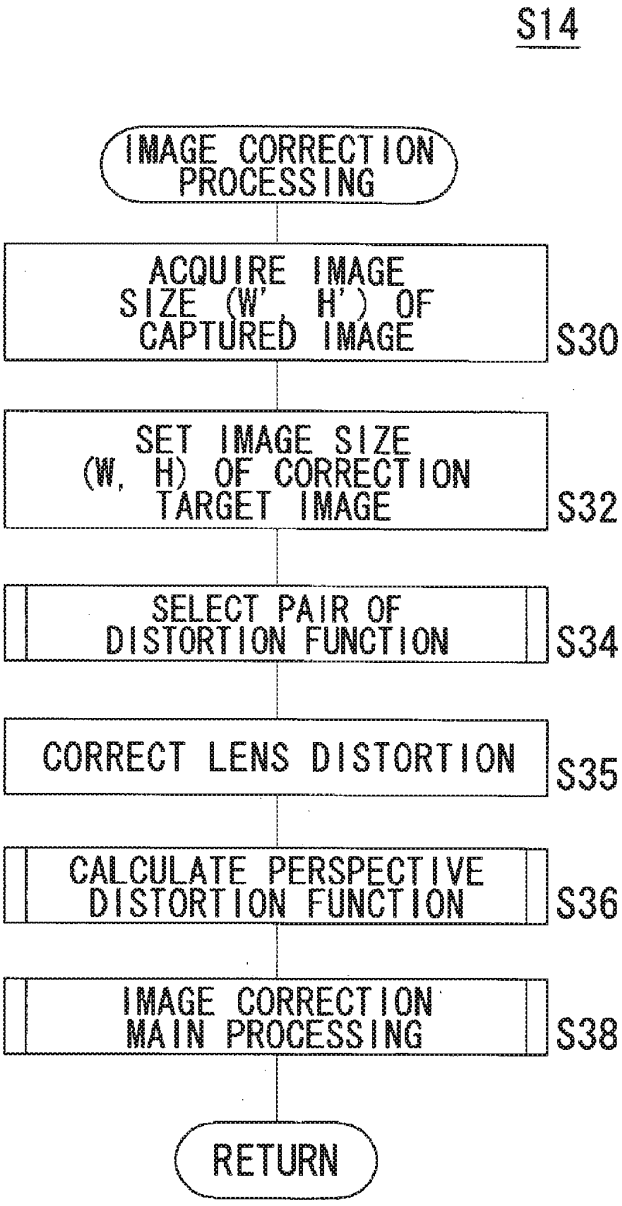
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.28



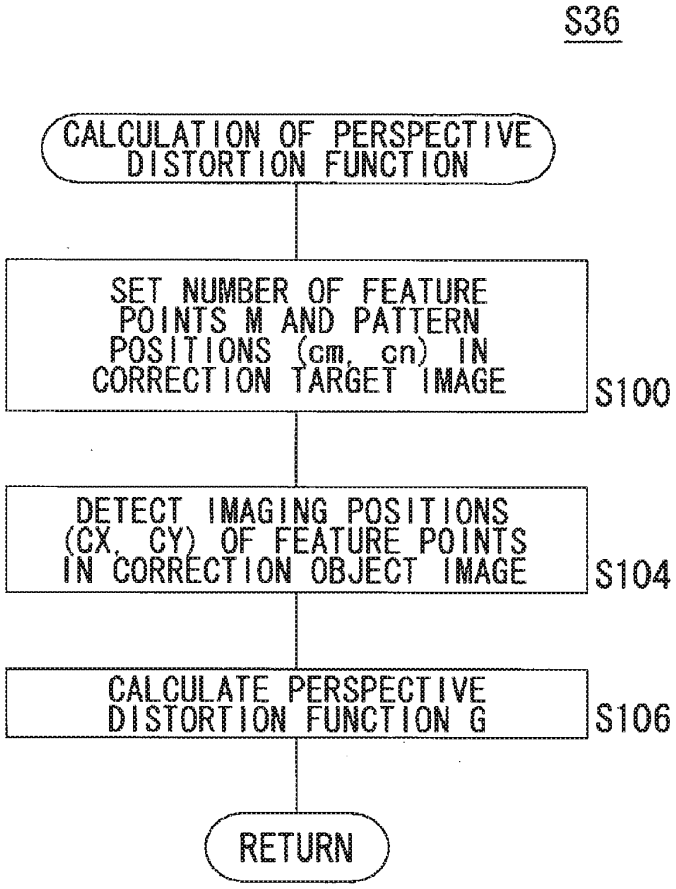
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.29



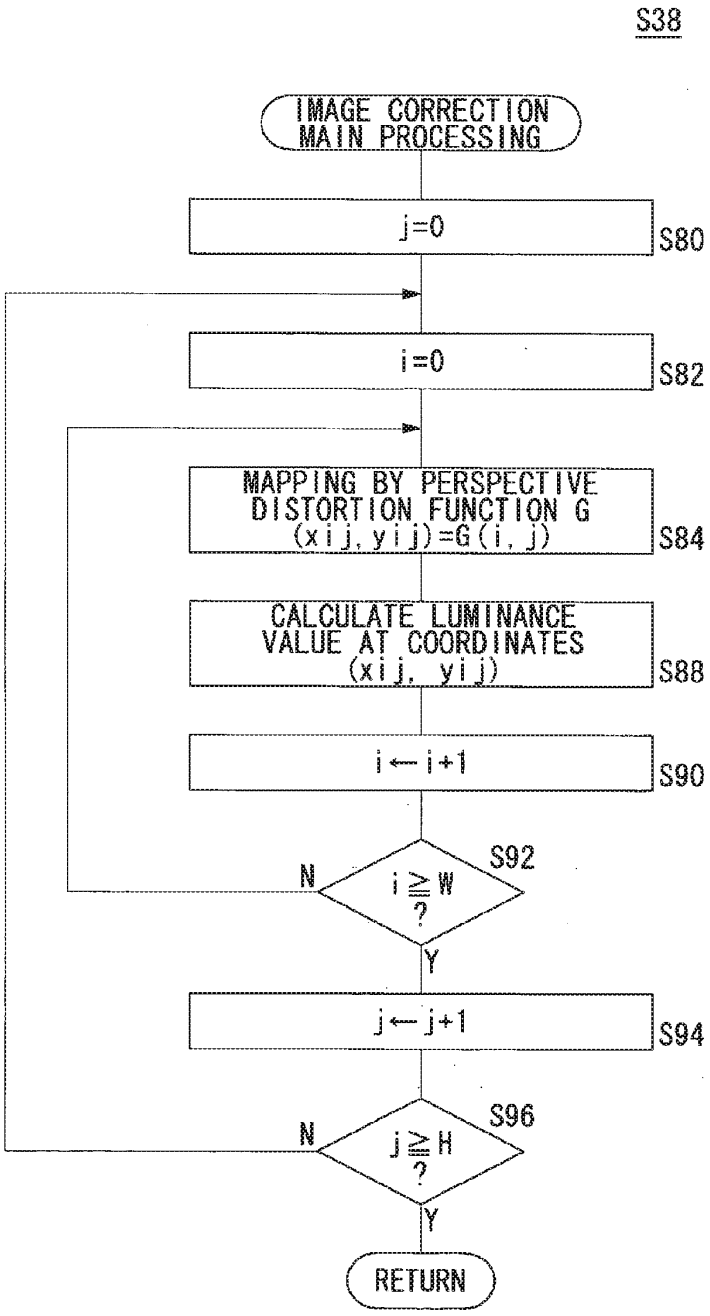
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EX. 1030

FIG.30



PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.31



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EX. 1030

FIG.32A

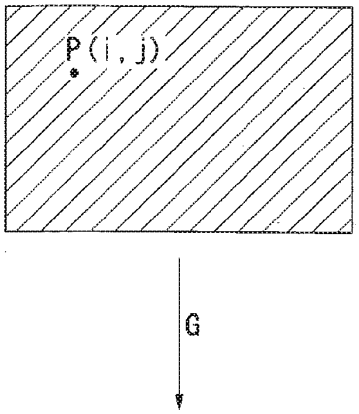


FIG.32B

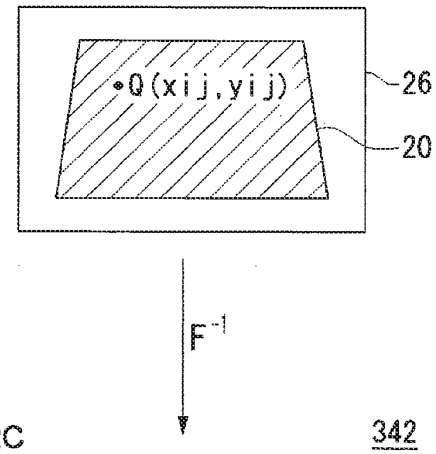
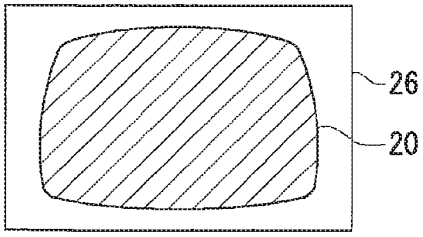
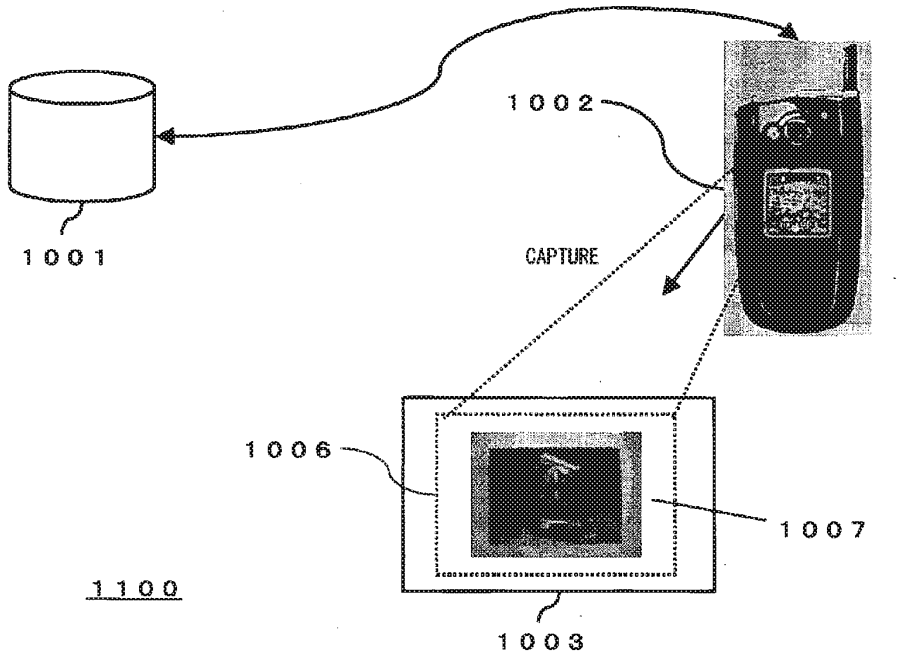


FIG.32C



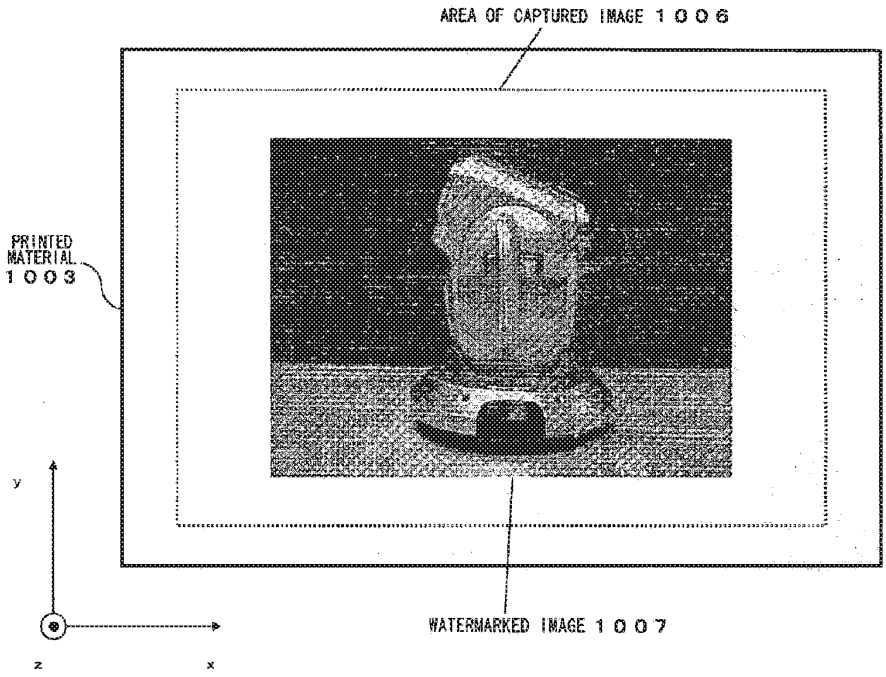
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EX. 1030

FIG.33



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EX. 1030

FIG.34



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EX. 1030

FIG.35A

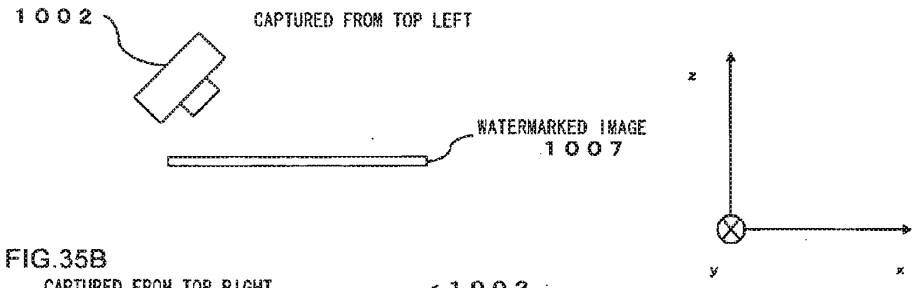


FIG.35B

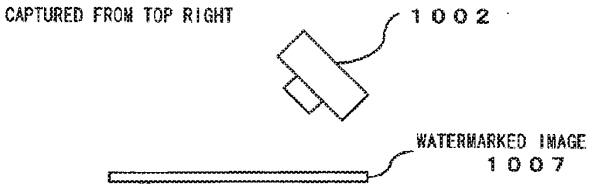
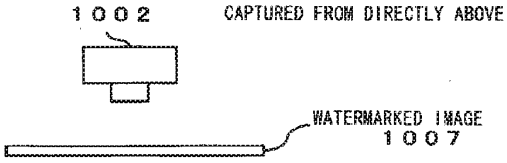
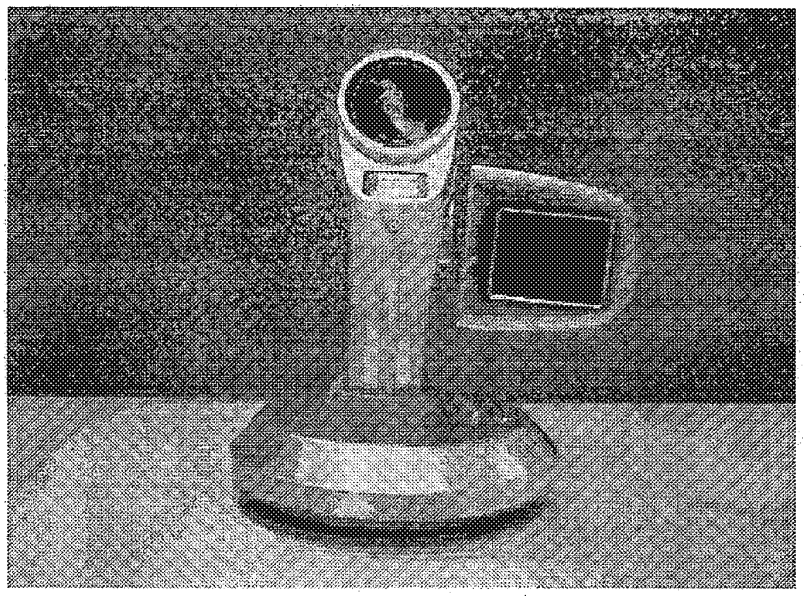


FIG.35C



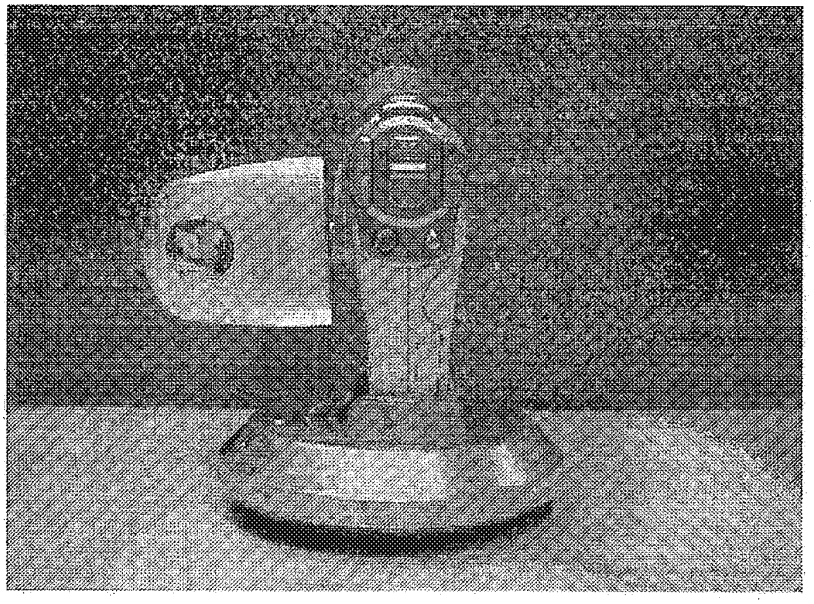
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.36



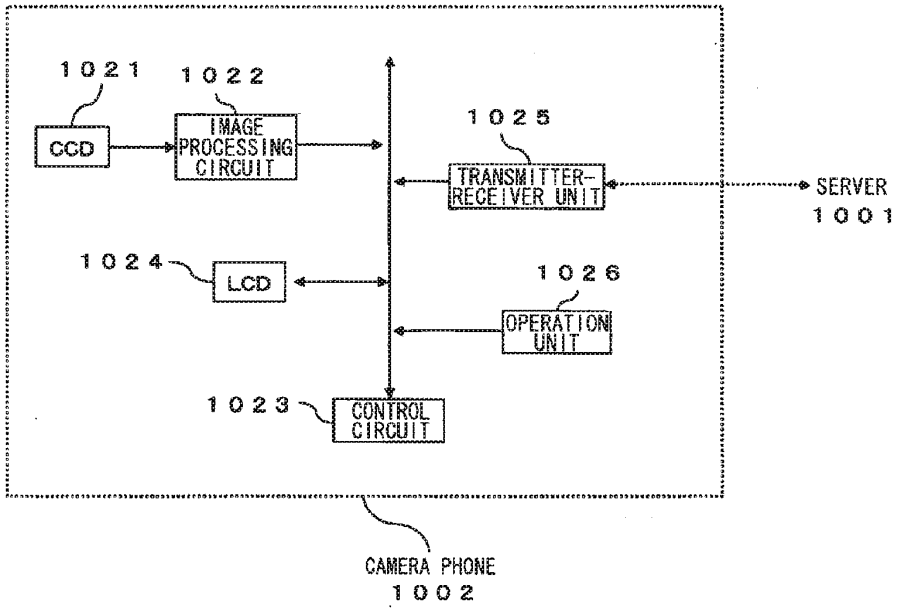
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.37



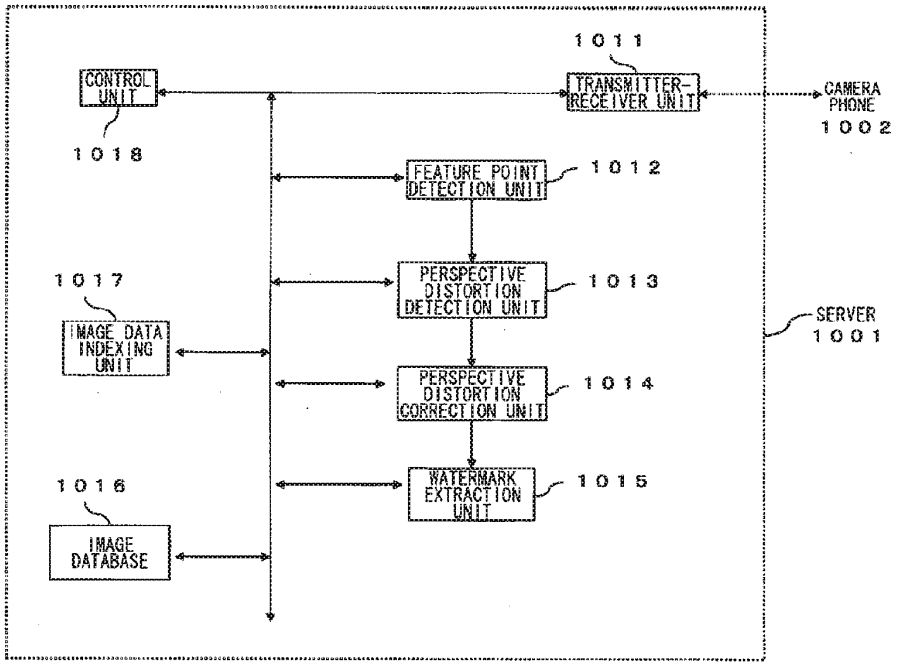
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.38



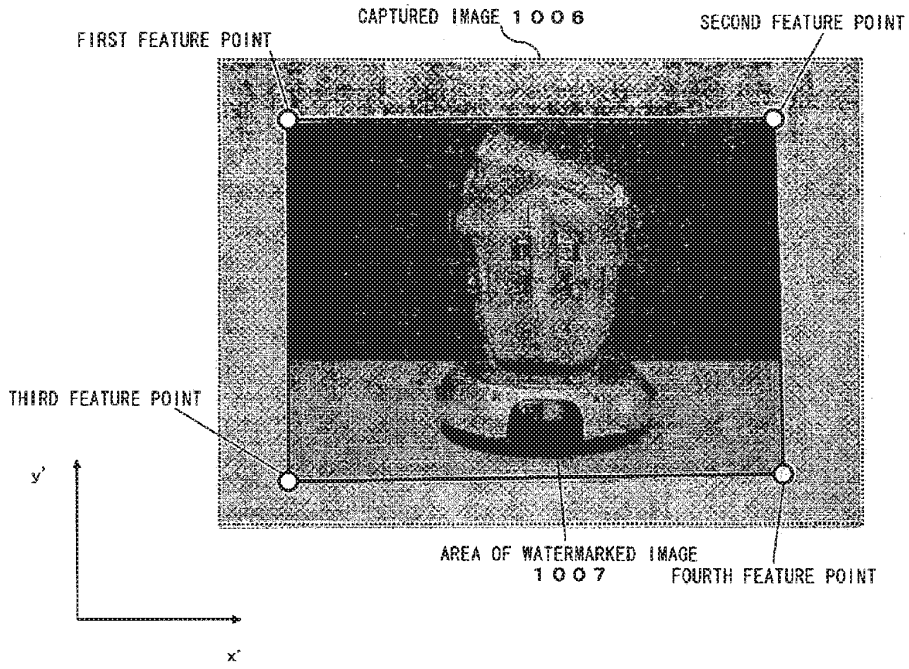
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
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FIG.39



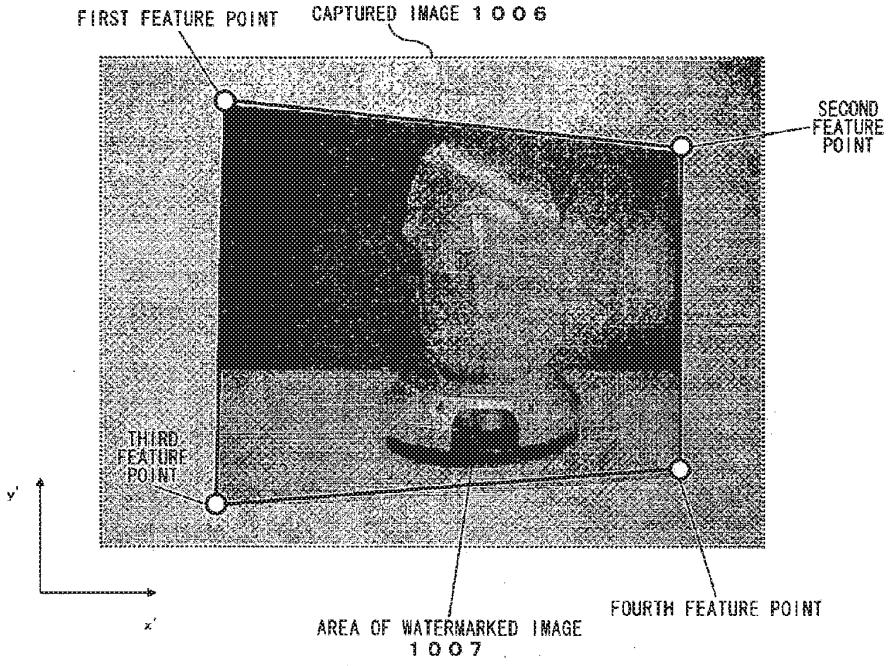
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.40



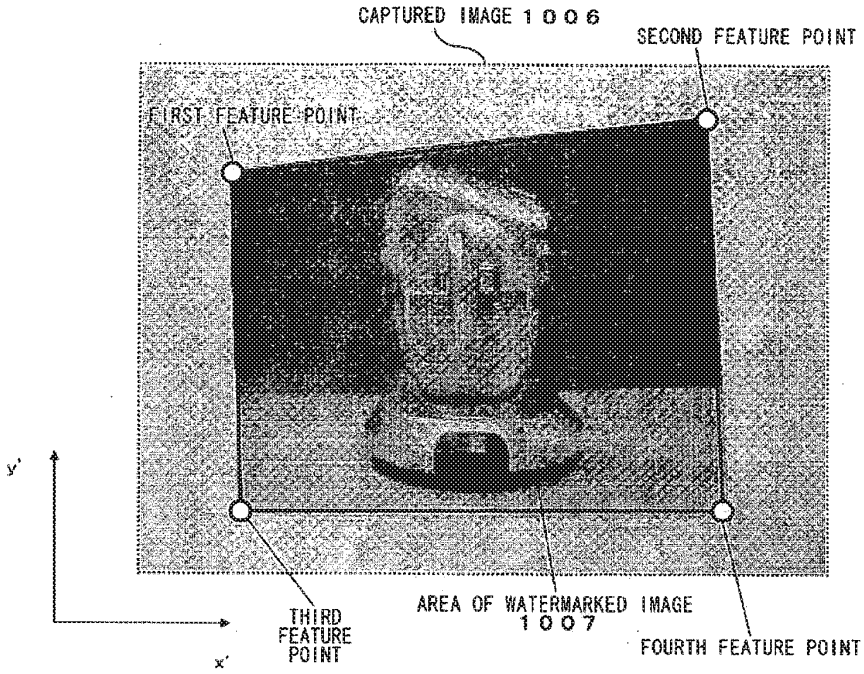
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.41



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EX. 1030

FIG.42



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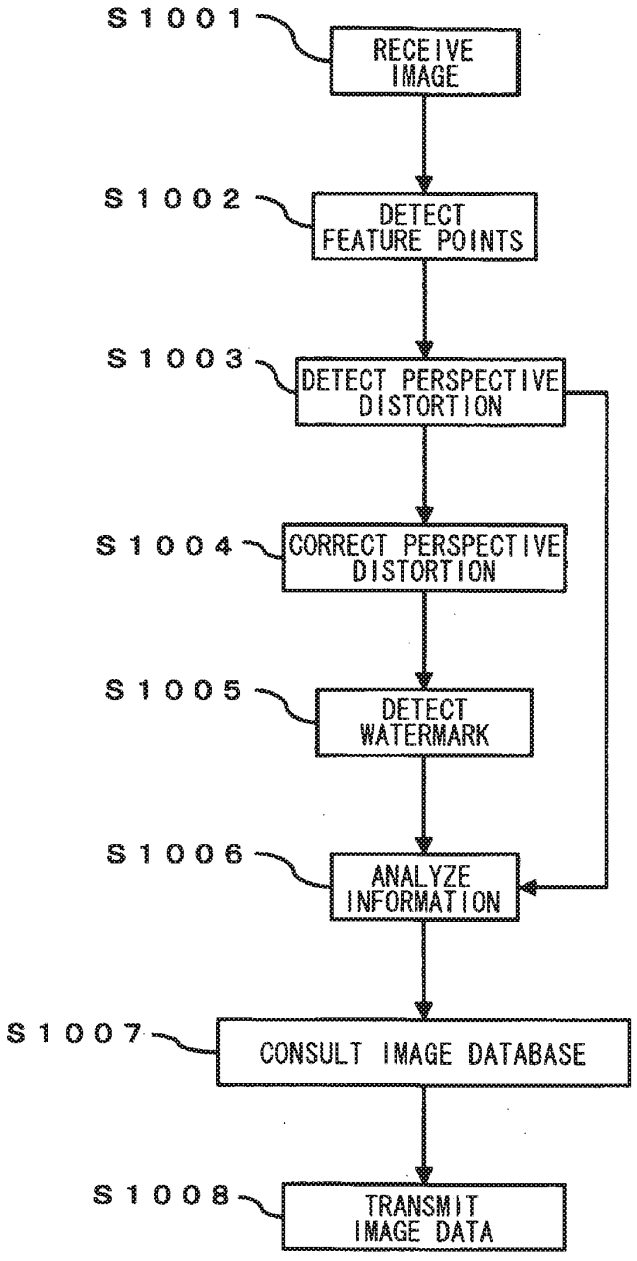
FIG.43

IMAGE DATA INDEXING UNIT 1017

PRODUCT ID	PERSPECTIVE DISTORTION INFORMATION	CONTENTS OF IMAGE DATA	TOP ADDRESS OF IMAGE DATA
0001	1	DETAILED FRONT VIEW OF PRODUCT A	100
0001	2	DETAILED BACK VIEW OF PRODUCT A	200
0001	0	DETAILED SIDE VIEW OF PRODUCT A	300
0002	1	DETAILED FRONT VIEW OF PRODUCT B	700
.....	.....	.....	
0026	2	DETAILED BACK VIEW OF PRODUCT Z	1400

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EX. 1030

FIG.44



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EX. 1030

FIG.45A

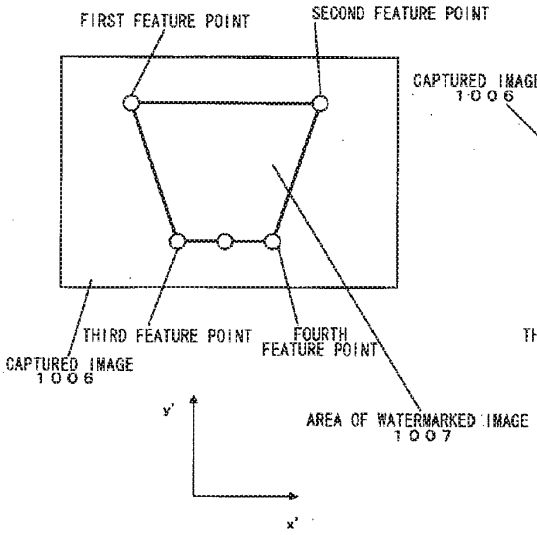
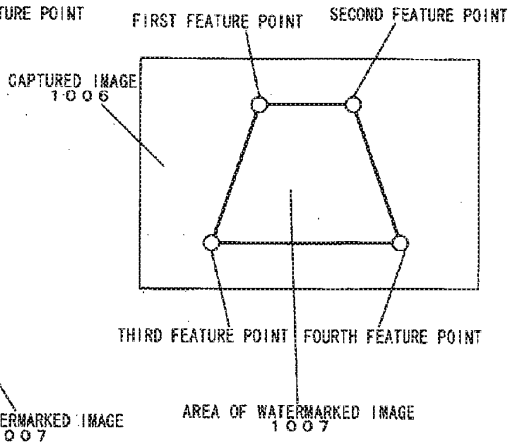
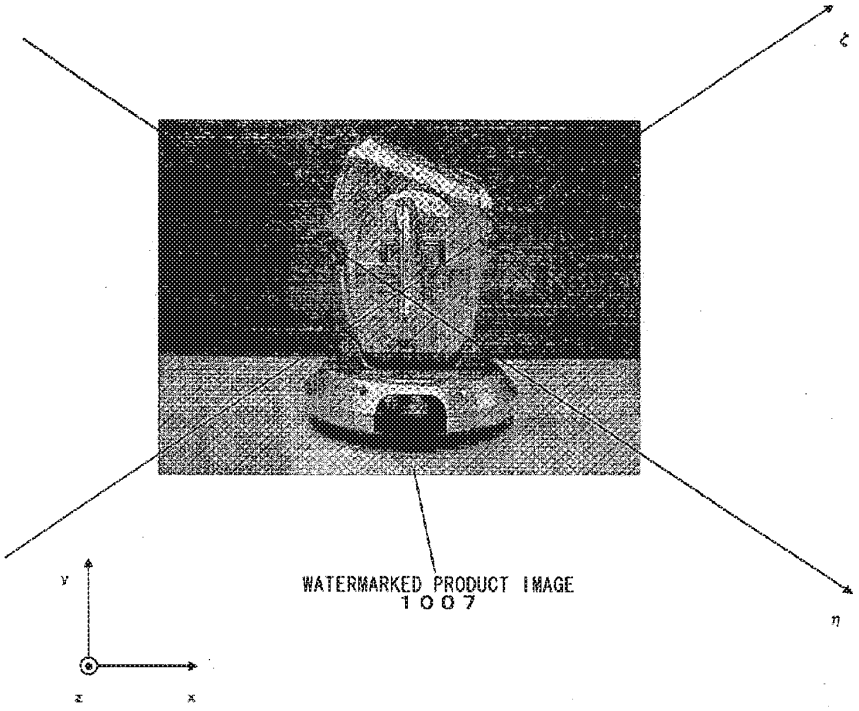


FIG.45B



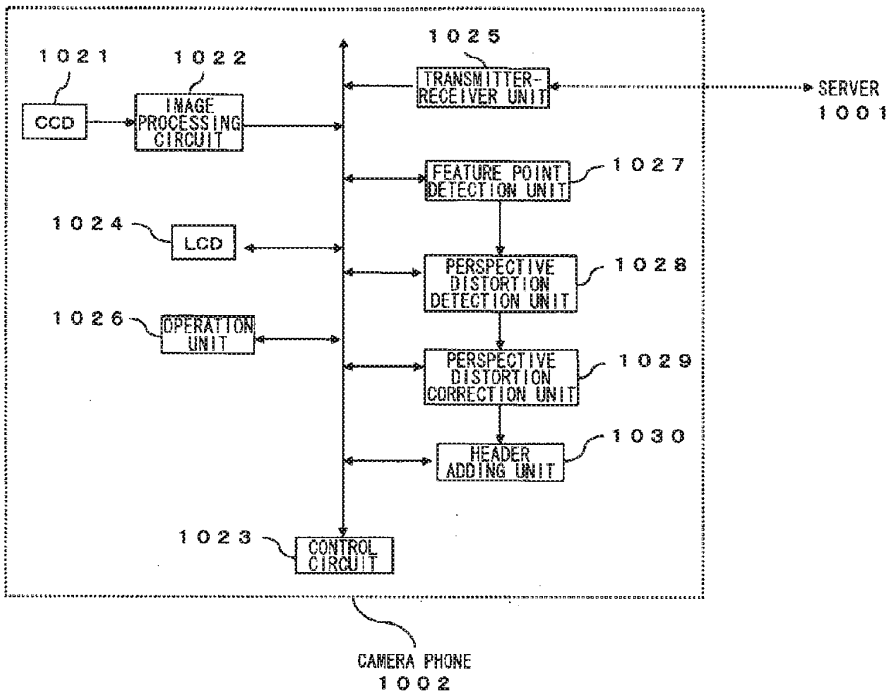
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.46



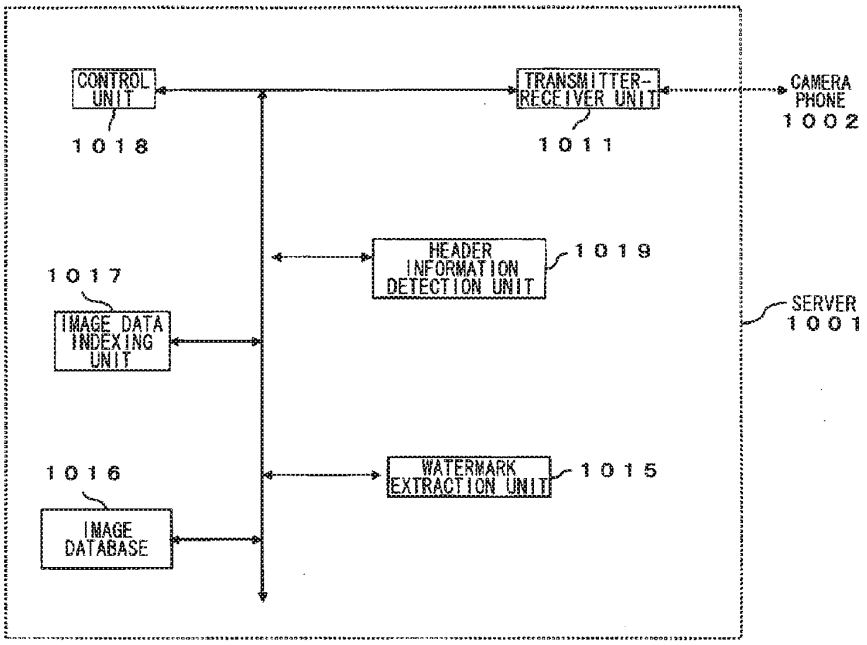
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.47



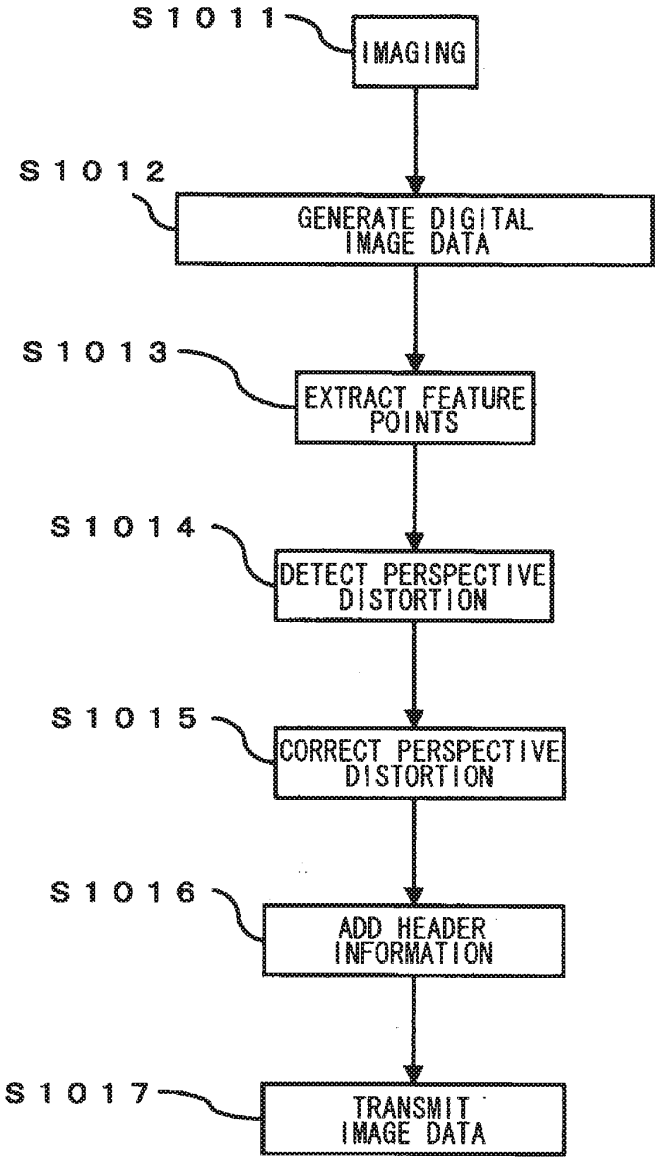
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.48



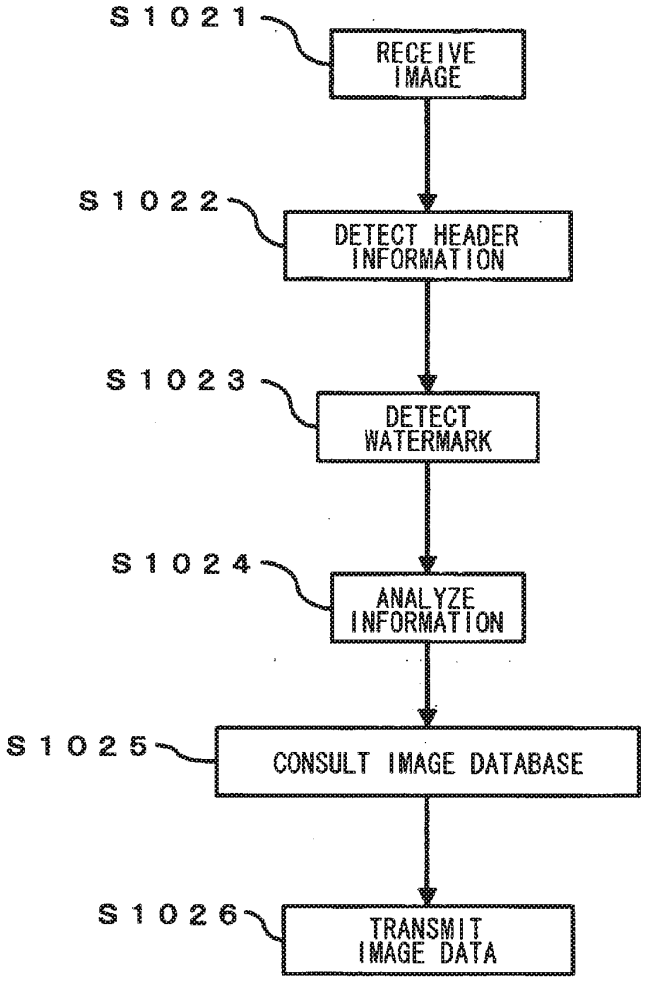
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.49



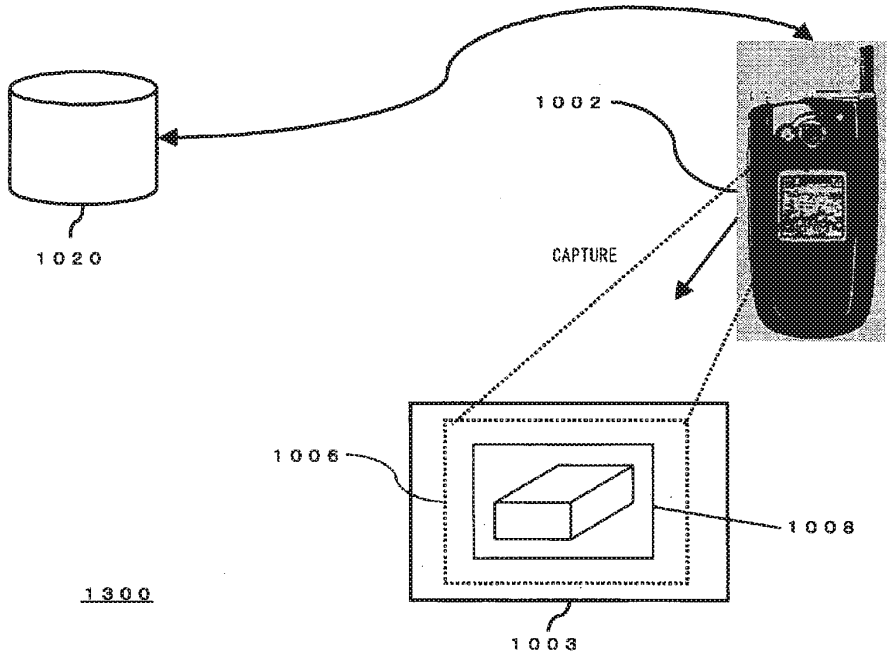
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EX. 1030

FIG.50



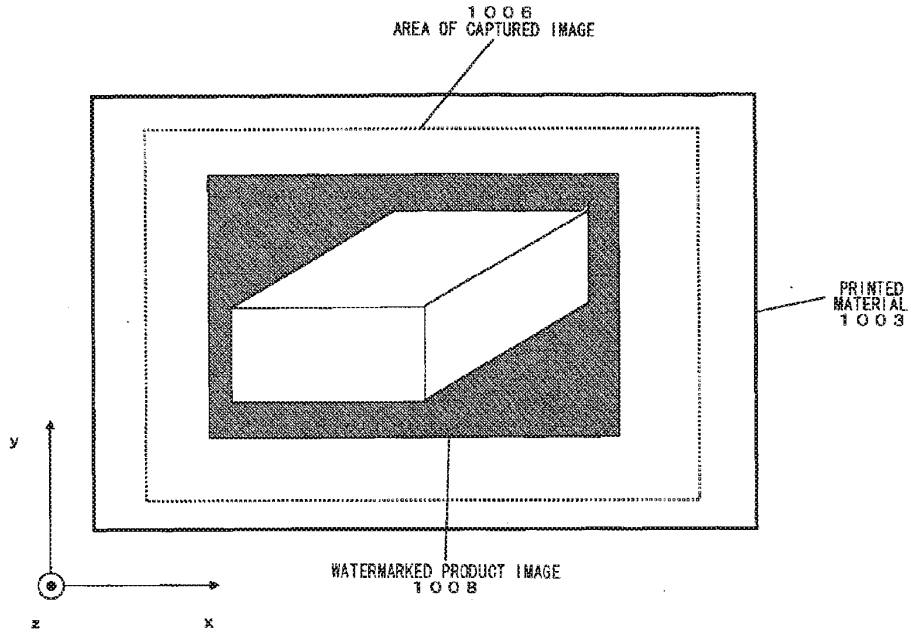
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.51



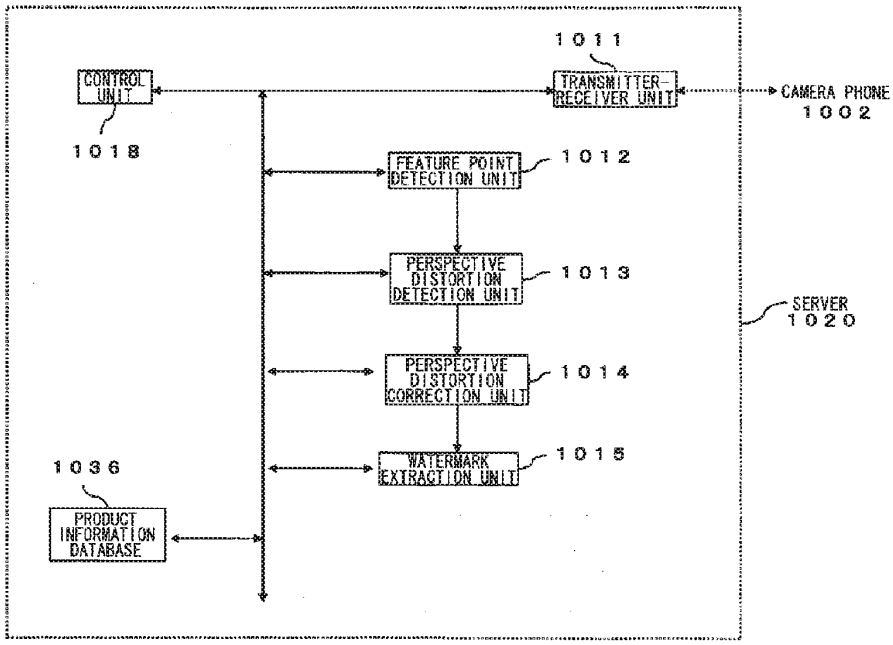
PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.52



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EX. 1030

FIG.53



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EX. 1030

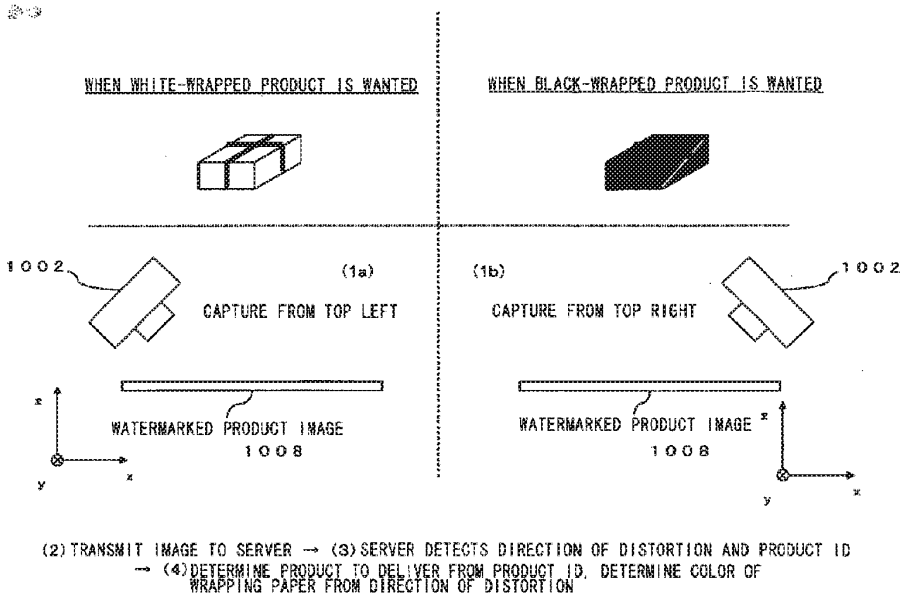
FIG.54

PRODUCT DATABASE 1036

PRODUCT ID	PERSPECTIVE DISTORTION INFORMATION	USER-REQUESTED PRODUCT AND WRAPPING
1001	1	PRODUCT A, WHITE WRAPPING
1001	2	PRODUCT A, BLACK WRAPPING
1001	0	PRODUCT A, NO WRAPPING
1002	1	PRODUCT B, BLUE WRAPPING
.....	.....	.....

PETITIONER CANON, INC.
EX. 1030

FIG.55



(2) TRANSMIT IMAGE TO SERVER → (3) SERVER DETECTS DIRECTION OF DISTORTION AND PRODUCT ID → (4) DETERMINE PRODUCT TO DELIVER FROM PRODUCT ID, DETERMINE COLOR OF WRAPPING PAPER FROM DIRECTION OF DISTORTION

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EX. 1030

FIG.56A

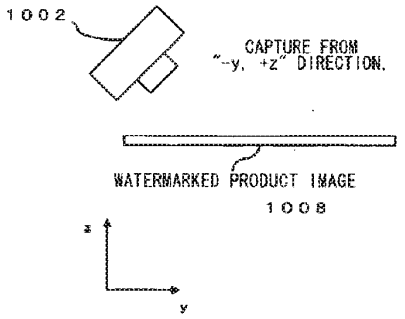
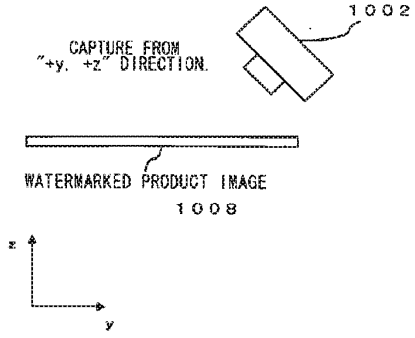
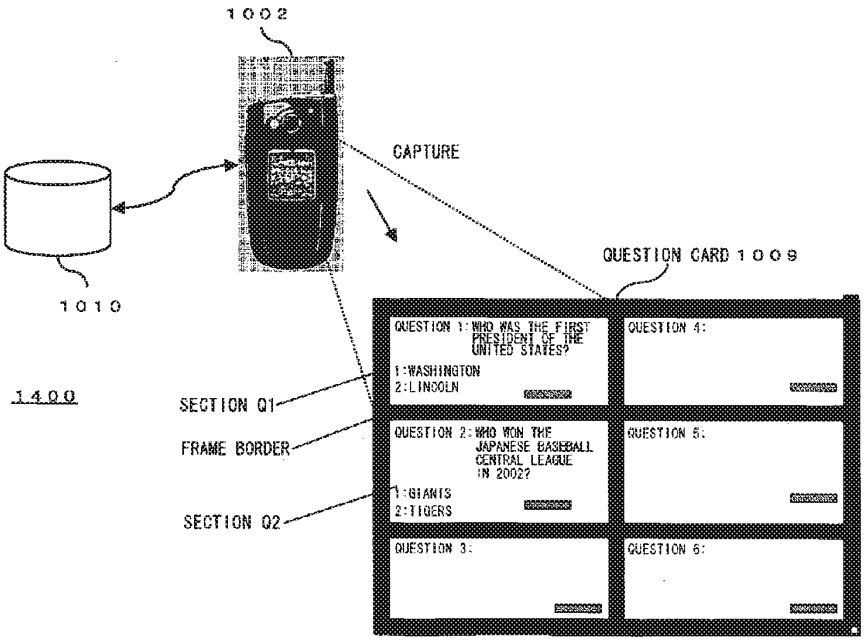


FIG.56B



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FIG.57



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FIG.58A

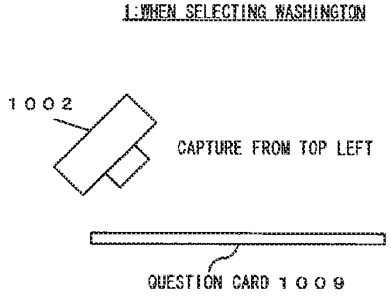
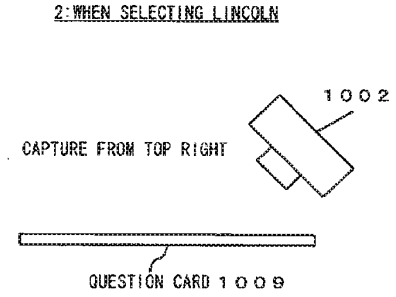
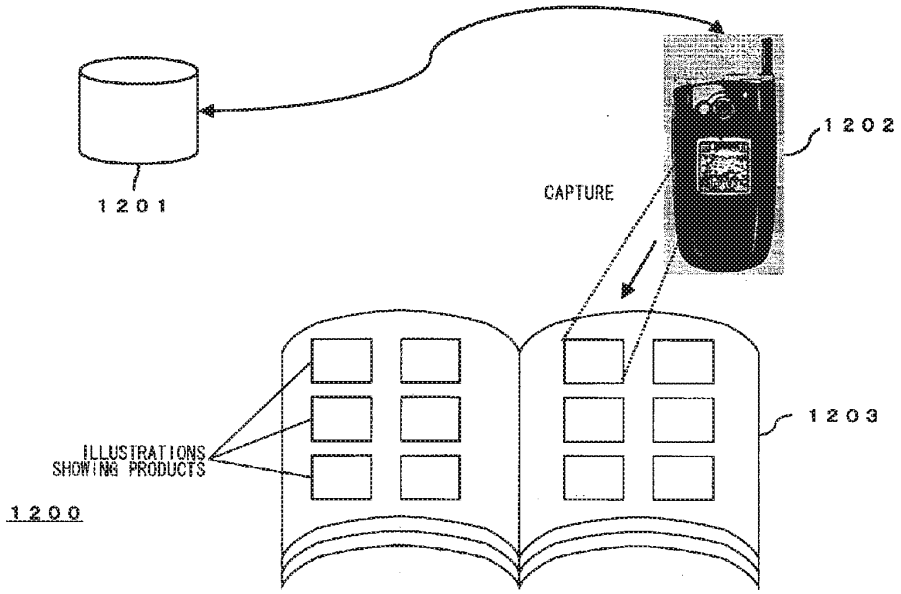


FIG.58B



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FIG.59



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IMAGE CORRECTION APPARATUS AND METHOD, IMAGE CORRECTION DATABASE CREATING METHOD, INFORMATION DATA PROVISION APPARATUS, IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS, INFORMATION TERMINAL, AND INFORMATION DATABASE APPARATUS

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The invention relates to image processing technologies, and more particularly to an image correction apparatus and a method for correcting images, and an image correction database creating method of that apparatus. The present invention also relates to an information data provision apparatus, an image processing apparatus, an information terminal, and an information database apparatus.

BACKGROUND TECHNOLOGY

[0002] There are systems in which digital images having electronic watermarks embedded therein are printed on printing media, and the printed images are captured by a digital camera, a scanner, or the like and re-digitized to detect the embedded electronic watermarks. For example, when issuing tickets or cards to users, identification information on the issuers and/or the users is embedded into images in the form of electronic watermarks and printed on the tickets or cards so as not to be visually detectable. When the tickets or cards are used, the electronic watermarks can be detected to avoid counterfeiting, unauthorized acquisition, and other frauds. Besides, unauthorized duplication of copyrighted materials, securities, and the like can be precluded by embedding copyright information, device identification information, and the like as electronic watermarks when printing images with copy machines or printers.

[0003] In general, when printed images are captured and digitized by a digital camera or a scanner, lens distortion and perspective distortion occur in the captured images. Here, the lens distortion depends on the shape and focal length of the lens of the capturing device, and the perspective distortion is ascribable to a tilt of the optical axis at the time of capturing. As a result, the printed images and the captured images cause pixel deviation therebetween. This makes it difficult for electronic watermarks embedded in the printed images to be extracted from the captured images properly, and thus requires distortion correction on the captured images.

[0004] The patent document 1 discloses an image correction apparatus which performs the following processing: generating a mapping function pertaining to perspective distortion based on position deviations of feature points of a calibration pattern near a screen center; evaluating differences between ideal positions of the feature points and actual positions of the same on an image across the entire screen by using the mapping function; calculating a correction function for correcting lens distortion; and correcting image data.

[0005] Moreover, there are systems in which information embedded as electronic watermarks is extracted from digital image data transmitted from clients, and services (such as contents download services and product sales services) are provided to the clients based on the extracted information (for example, see patent document 2).

[0006] FIG. **59** is a block diagram of a product sales system **1200**, an example of such a system. The product sales system **1200** comprises a server **1201**, a camera with communication facilities (camera-equipped cellular phone **1202**), and a catalog (a printed material **1203**). Various illustrations showing products are printed on the printed material **1203**. These illustrations and the sales products correspond on a one-to-one basis. In each illustration, identification information on the product (such as product ID) is invisibly embedded in the form of an electronic watermark.

[0007] In such a product sales system **1200**, when a client captures an illustration on the printed material **1203** with his/her camera-equipped cellular phone **1202**, the data on the captured image generated by the camera-equipped cellular phone **1202** is transmitted to the server **1201**. The server **1201** extracts the information embedded as an electronic watermark from data on the captured image, and determines from the extracted result the product the client wants to purchase. [Patent document 1] Japanese Patent Publication No. 2940736 [Patent document 2] Japanese Publication of PCT International Application No. 2002-544637

[0008] To correct image distortion ascribable to capturing, it is necessary to acquire information on the distortion characteristics of the capturing device and information on the tilt of the optical axis at the time of capturing, and apply geometric transform to the captured image. Fine distortion correction can be made by using profile data that shows the detailed distortion characteristics of the lens, whereas the profile data requires a large storage capacity and takes long to process.

[0009] In addition, how finely image distortion must be examined and corrected depends on the tolerance of watermarks to image distortion. When the watermarks have relatively high tolerance to image distortion, fine distortion correction is wasteful. With low tolerance to image distortion, on the other hand, the watermarks cannot be detected properly by rough distortion correction. A mismatch between the tolerance of watermarks when embedded and the precisions of image correction when extracting the watermarks can thus deteriorate the detection accuracy and the detection efficiency of the watermarks.

[0010] Moreover, when selling products of the same model but different colors in the foregoing product sales system **1200**, the printed material **1203** must carry illustrations of the products of the same model as many as the number of color variations. This produces a problem of increased space of the printed material **1203**.

[0011] The print space can be reduced by preparing product images separately from images in which only color information is embedded (for example, for eight color variations, eight images are prepared separately). For example, when purchasing a product in red, two images, i.e., the illustration of the product and an image for representing red are captured in succession. The number of images required here is only the number of products plus the number of types of color information, being smaller than with the method where color information is given to each individual product (the number of images required is the number of products multiplied by the number of colors). The print space thus decreases significantly. In this case, however, the server **1201** is put under high load since it must process both the product images and the color information images.

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[0012] Then, instead of printing illustrations corresponding to the number of color variations on the printed material **1203**, illustrations corresponding to the products alone may be printed on the printed material **1203** so that the client presses accompanying buttons on the capturing device to select desired product colors.

[0013] More specifically, the client initially captures the illustration of a desired product with the camera-equipped cellular phone **1202**. Next, the client presses an accompanying button on the camera-equipped cellular phone **1202** to select the desired color of the product. The data on the captured image and the information selected by button depression are then transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1202** to the server **1201**.

[0014] Such a method, however, requires that the client make a burdensome selecting operation by button depression after the capturing operation.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

[0015] The present invention has been achieved in view of the foregoing. It is thus an object of the present invention to provide an image correction technology capable of correcting image distortion efficiently with high precision. Another object of the present invention is to provide an information processing technology of high convenience, using electronic watermarks.

[0016] To solve the foregoing problems, an image correction apparatus according to one of the aspects of the present invention comprises: a lens distortion calculation unit which calculates lens distortion correction information with respect to each zoom magnification, based on known images captured at respective different zoom magnifications; and a memory unit which stores the lens distortion correction information in association with the zoom magnifications.

[0017] As employed herein, "storing the lens distortion correction information in association with the zoom magnifications" shall not only refer to the cases where the lens distortion correction information is stored in association with the zoom magnifications themselves, but also cover the cases where it is stored substantially in association with the zoom magnifications. For example, given that the CCD (Charge-Coupled Device) surface or film surface for subject images to be formed on has a constant longitudinal length, the angle of view and the focal length both vary in accordance with the zoom magnification. Thus, the expression "storing . . . in association with the zoom magnifications" shall also cover the cases where the lens distortion correction information is stored in association with the angles of view or focal lengths.

[0018] Another aspect of the present invention also provides an image correction apparatus. This apparatus comprises: a memory unit which contains lens distortion correction information in association with zoom magnifications of a lens; a selector unit which selects lens distortion correction information corresponding to a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of an input captured image from the memory unit; and a distortion correction unit which corrects distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the lens distortion correction information selected.

[0019] The selector unit may select from the memory unit a plurality of candidate pieces of lens distortion correction information in accordance with the zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing, and correct a row of sample points forming a known shape in the captured image by using each of the plurality of pieces of lens distortion correction information for error pre-evaluation. Thereby, the selector unit may select one piece of lens distortion correction information from among the plurality of pieces of lens distortion correction information.

[0020] As employed herein, "a row of sample points forming a known shape" refers to the cases where the shape the row of sample points are supposed to form if without any capturing distortion is known. For example, a row of sample points assumed on the image frame of a captured image are known to fall on a straight line if there is no capturing distortion. In another example, a row of sample points assumed on the outline of a person's face captured are known to fall at least on a smooth curve.

[0021] Yet another aspect of the present invention also provides an image correction apparatus. This apparatus comprises: a lens distortion calculation unit which calculates based on known images captured at respective different zoom magnifications a lens distortion correction function for mapping points in a lens-distorted image onto points in an image having no lens distortion and a lens distortion function, or an approximate inverse function of the lens distortion correction function, with respect to each lens magnification; and a memory unit which stores the pairs of lens distortion correction functions and lens distortion functions in association with the zoom magnifications.

[0022] As employed herein, "storing the pairs of lens distortion correction functions and lens distortion functions in association with the zoom magnifications" is not limited to the cases of storing such information as functional expressions and coefficients. It also covers the cases where the correspondence between input values and output values of these functions are stored in the form of a table. For example, the correspondence between coordinate values in an image and coordinate values mapped by these functions may be stored as a table.

[0023] Yet another aspect of the present invention also provides an image correction apparatus. This apparatus comprises: a memory unit which contains pairs of lens distortion correction functions for mapping points in a lens-distorted image onto points in an image having no lens distortion and lens distortion functions, or approximate inverse functions of the lens distortion correction functions, in association with respective zoom magnifications of a lens; a selector unit which selects the lens distortion function corresponding to a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of an input captured image from the memory unit; and a distortion correction unit which corrects distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the lens distortion function selected. According to this configuration, it is possible to correct lens distortion ascribable to capturing.

[0024] Yet another aspect of the present invention also provides an image correction apparatus. This apparatus comprises: a memory unit which contains lens distortion functions for mapping points in an image having no lens distortion onto points in a lens-distorted image in association with respective zoom magnifications of a lens; a selector unit which selects the lens distortion function corresponding

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to a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of an input captured image from the memory unit; a perspective distortion calculation unit which calculates a perspective distortion function for mapping points in an image having no perspective distortion onto points in a perspective-distorted image, by using an image whose lens distortion is corrected by the lens distortion function selected; and a distortion correction unit which corrects distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the perspective distortion function calculated by the perspective distortion calculation unit. According to this configuration, it is possible to correct perspective distortion and lens distortion ascribable to capturing.

[0025] Yet another aspect of the present invention provides an image correction database creating method. This method comprises: calculating based on known images captured at respective different zoom magnifications a lens distortion correction function for mapping points in a lens-distorted image onto points in an image having no lens distortion and a lens distortion function, or an approximate inverse function of the lens distortion correction function, with respect to each lens magnification; and registering the pairs of lens distortion correction functions and lens distortion functions into a database in association with the zoom magnifications.

[0026] Yet another aspect of the present invention provides an image correction method. This method comprises: consulting a database in which pairs of lens distortion correction functions for mapping points in a lens-distorted image onto points in an image having no lens distortion and lens distortion functions, or approximate inverse functions of the lens distortion correction functions, are registered in association with respective zoom magnifications of a lens, and selecting the lens distortion function corresponding to a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of an input captured image; and correcting distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the lens distortion function selected.

[0027] Yet another aspect of the present invention also provides an image correction method. This method comprises: consulting a database in which lens distortion functions for mapping points in an image having no lens distortion onto points in a lens-distorted image are registered in association with respective zoom magnifications of a lens, and selecting the lens distortion function corresponding to a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of an input captured image; calculating a perspective distortion function for mapping points in an image having no perspective distortion onto points in a perspective-distorted image, by using an image whose lens distortion is corrected by the lens distortion function selected; and correcting distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the perspective distortion function calculated.

[0028] An information provision apparatus according to yet another aspect of the present invention comprises: an electronic watermark extraction unit which extracts information embedded by electronic watermark technology from imaging data obtained by an imaging device; a distortion detection unit which detects image distortion from the imaging data; an information data storing unit which stores information data; a selector unit which selects information data stored in the information data storing unit based on the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology, extracted by the electronic watermark extraction unit, and the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit; and an output unit which outputs the information data selected by the selector unit to exterior.

[0029] The foregoing information data refers to text data, image data, moving image data, voice data, etc.

[0030] An information provision apparatus according to yet another aspect of the present invention comprises: an electronic watermark extraction unit which extracts information embedded by electronic watermark technology from imaging data obtained by an imaging device; a distortion detection unit which detects image distortion from the imaging data; an information data storing unit which stores information data; a selector unit which selects information data stored in the information data storing unit based on the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology, extracted by the electronic watermark extraction unit, and the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit; and a display unit which displays contents of the information data selected by the selector unit.

[0031] An image processing apparatus according to yet another aspect of the present invention comprises: an electronic watermark extraction unit which extracts information embedded by electronic watermark technology from imaging data obtained by an imaging device; a distortion detection unit which detects image distortion from the imaging data; an image data storing unit which stores image data; and a selector unit which selects image data stored in the image data storing unit based on the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology, extracted by the electronic watermark extraction unit, and the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit.

[0032] An image processing apparatus according to yet another aspect of the present invention comprises: a distortion detection unit which detects image distortion from imaging data obtained by an imaging device; a distortion correction unit which corrects the image distortion of the imaging data based on the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit; an electronic watermark extraction unit which extracts information embedded by electronic watermark technology from the imaging data whose image distortion is corrected by the distortion correction unit; an image data storing unit which stores image data; and a selector unit which selects image data stored in the image data storing unit based on the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology, extracted by the electronic watermark extraction unit, and the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit.

[0033] An information terminal according to yet another aspect of the present invention comprises: an imaging unit; a distortion detection unit which detects image distortion from imaging data obtained by the imaging unit; a distortion correction unit which corrects the image distortion of the imaging data based on the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit; and a transmission unit which transmits the imaging data whose image distortion is corrected by the distortion correction unit and information on the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit to exterior.

[0034] An image processing apparatus according to yet another aspect of the present invention comprises: a recep-

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tion unit which receives imaging data and information on image distortion transmitted from an information terminal; an electronic watermark extraction unit which extracts information embedded by electronic watermark technology from the imaging data; an information data storing unit which stores information data; and a selector unit which selects information data stored in the information data storing unit based on the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology, extracted by the electronic watermark extraction unit, and the information on the image distortion received by the reception unit.

[0035] An information terminal according to yet another aspect of the present invention comprises: an imaging unit; a distortion detection unit which detects image distortion from imaging data obtained by the imaging unit; a distortion correction unit which corrects the image distortion of the imaging data based on the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit; an electronic watermark extraction unit which extracts information embedded by electronic watermark technology from the imaging data whose image distortion is corrected by the distortion correction unit; and a transmission unit which transmits the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology, extracted by the electronic watermark extraction unit, and information on the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit to exterior.

[0036] An information database apparatus according to yet another aspect of the present invention comprises: a distortion detection unit which detects image distortion from imaging data obtained by an imaging device; an information data storing unit which stores information data; and a selector unit which selects information data stored in the information data storing unit based on the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit.

[0037] A data structure according to yet another aspect of the present invention is one to be transmitted from an information terminal having an imaging unit, the data structure containing information on image distortion detected from imaging data obtained by the imaging unit.

[0038] It should be appreciated that any combinations of the foregoing components, and any conversions of expressions of the present invention from/into methods, apparatuses, systems, recording media, computer programs, and the like are also intended to constitute applicable aspects of the present invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0039] FIG. **1** is a block diagram of an electronic watermark embedding apparatus according to a first embodiment;

[0040] FIGS. **2**A to **2**D are diagrams for explaining a block embedding method of the block embedding unit of FIG. **1**;

[0041] FIG. **3** is a diagram for explaining a printed image output from the electronic watermark embedding apparatus of FIG. **1**;

[0042] FIG. **4** is a block diagram of an electronic watermark extracting apparatus according to the first embodiment;

[0043] FIG. **5** is a diagram for explaining a printed image captured by the electronic watermark extracting apparatus of FIG. **4**;

[0044] FIG. **6** is a diagram for explaining a pixel deviation due to capturing;

[0045] FIG. **7** is a diagram for explaining the detailed configuration of the profile creation unit and the image correction unit of FIG. **4**;

[0046] FIGS. **8**A and **8**B are diagrams for explaining the relationship between the angle of view and the focal length of a zoom lens;

[0047] FIGS. **9**A and **9**B are diagrams for explaining lens distortion function pairs to be stored in the profile database of FIG. **7**;

[0048] FIG. **10** is a flowchart for explaining the steps by which the electronic watermark extracting apparatus creates a profile database;

[0049] FIG. **11** is a diagram for explaining a lattice pattern image to be used as a calibration pattern;

[0050] FIG. **12** is a diagram for explaining a lens distortion function pair;

[0051] FIG. **13** is a flowchart showing an overall flow of the steps for extracting an electronic watermark according to the first embodiment;

[0052] FIG. **14** is a flowchart for showing a general flow of the image correction processing of FIG. **13**;

[0053] FIG. **15** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps for selecting a lens distortion function pair in FIG. **14**;

[0054] FIG. **16** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps of the image correction main processing of FIG. **14**;

[0055] FIG. **17** is a diagram for explaining how a point in a correction target image is mapped onto a point in a correction object image;

[0056] FIG. **18** is a diagram for explaining the method of calculating the luminance value at a point mapped by a lens distortion function;

[0057] FIG. **19** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps of the image area determination processing of FIG. **13**;

[0058] FIG. **20** is a diagram for explaining how feature points are extracted from a lens-distortion-corrected image;

[0059] FIG. **21** is a flowchart for showing the detailed steps for selecting a lens distortion function pair, where a method of selection for a speed-priority system and a method of selection for a precision-priority system can be switched;

[0060] FIG. **22** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps for the pre-evaluation of correction functions of FIG. **21**;

[0061] FIGS. **23**A to **23**C are diagrams for explaining how approximation errors of a Bezier curve are evaluated;

[0062] FIG. **24** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps for acquiring a row of sample points between feature points in FIG. **22**;

[0063] FIG. **25**A is a diagram for explaining how edge detection processing is performed on an original image area, and FIG. **25**B is a diagram for explaining spline approximation on each side of the original image area;

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[0064] FIG. **26** is a block diagram showing the electronic watermark extracting apparatus according to a second embodiment;

[0065] FIG. **27** is a diagram for explaining the detailed configuration of the profile creation unit and the image correction unit of FIG. **26**;

[0066] FIG. **28** is a flowchart showing an overall flow of the electronic watermark extracting steps according to the second embodiment;

[0067] FIG. **29** is a flowchart for showing a general flow of the image correction processing of FIG. **28**;

[0068] FIG. **30** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps for the calculation of a perspective distortion function of FIG. **29**;

[0069] FIG. **31** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps of the image correction main processing of FIG. **29**;

[0070] FIGS. **32**A to **32**C are diagrams for explaining how a point in a correction target image is mapped onto a point in a correction object image;

[0071] FIG. **33** is a block diagram of an image data provision system according to a third embodiment;

[0072] FIG. **34** is a conceptual rendering of a watermarked product image;

[0073] FIGS. **35**A to **35**C are diagrams showing directions in which a client captures the watermarked product image in the third embodiment;

[0074] FIG. **36** is an image of a digital camera, or an example of the product, as viewed from the front;

[0075] FIG. **37** is an image of the digital camera, or an example of the product, as viewed from behind;

[0076] FIG. **38** is a block diagram of a camera-equipped cellular phone according to the third embodiment;

[0077] FIG. **39** is a block diagram of a server according to the third embodiment;

[0078] FIG. **40** is a captured image when the watermarked product image is captured from directly above ("+z" side of FIG. **34**);

[0079] FIG. **41** is a captured image when the watermarked product image is captured from top left ("+z, −x" side of FIG. **34**);

[0080] FIG. **42** is a captured image when the watermarked product image is captured from top right ("+z, +x" side of FIG. **34**);

[0081] FIG. **43** is a diagram showing the contents of the image data indexing unit of the server according to the third embodiment;

[0082] FIG. **44** is a flowchart showing the processing of the server **1001** according to the third embodiment;

[0083] FIGS. **45**A and **45**B are diagrams showing captured images according to a modification of the third embodiment;

[0084] FIG. **46** is a diagram for explaining ξ-axis and η-axis with reference to the watermarked product image according to the third embodiment;

[0085] FIG. **47** is a block diagram of a camera-equipped cellular phone according to a fourth embodiment;

[0086] FIG. **48** is a block diagram of a server according to the fourth embodiment;

[0087] FIG. **49** is a flowchart showing the processing of the camera-equipped cellular phone according to the fourth embodiment;

[0088] FIG. **50** is a flowchart showing the processing of the server according to the fourth embodiment;

[0089] FIG. **51** is a block diagram of a product purchase system according to a fifth embodiment;

[0090] FIG. **52** is a diagram showing a watermarked product image according to the fifth embodiment;

[0091] FIG. **53** is a block diagram of a server in the product purchase system according to the fifth embodiment;

[0092] FIG. **54** is a diagram showing the contents of the product database of the server according to the fifth embodiment;

[0093] FIG. **55** is a conceptual diagram of the product purchase system according to the fifth embodiment;

[0094] FIGS. **56**A and **56**B are conceptual diagrams of the product purchase system according to a modification of the fifth embodiment;

[0095] FIG. **57** is a diagram showing the configuration of a quiz answering system according to a sixth embodiment;

[0096] FIGS. **58**A and **58**B are diagrams showing directions in which a client captures the watermarked product image according to the sixth embodiment; and

[0097] FIG. **59** is a block diagram of a product sales system which uses electronic watermarks.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

First Embodiment

[0098] An electronic watermark system according to a first embodiment of the present invention includes an electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100** as shown in FIG. **1** and an electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** as shown in FIG. **4**. The electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100** generates printed images having electronic watermarks embedded therein. The electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** captures the printed images and extracts the embedded electronic watermarks. For example, the electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100** is used to issue tickets and cards, and the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** is used to detect counterfeit tickets and cards. Both the apparatuses may be configured as a server to be accessed from network terminals.

[0099] FIG. **1** is a block diagram of the electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100** according to the first embodiment. In terms of hardware, these components can be achieved by an arbitrary computer CPU, a memory, and other LSIs. In terms of software, they can be achieved by programs or the like that are loaded on a memory and have the functions for processing images and embedding electronic watermarks. The functional blocks shown here are

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achieved by the cooperation of these. It will thus be understood by those skilled in the art that these functional blocks may be achieved in various forms including hardware alone, software alone, and a combination of these.

[0100] An image forming unit **10** converts an input digital image I into a printing resolution of W pixels in the horizontal direction (also referred to as x-axis direction) and H pixels in the vertical direction (also referred to as y-axis direction). For example, the image sizes W=640 and H=480.

[0101] A block embedding unit **12** embeds watermark information X into the digital image I having the printing resolution, converted by the image forming unit **10**. Here, the block embedding unit **12** divides the digital image I into square blocks of predetermined size, and embeds identical watermark bits into some blocks redundantly. This method of embedding the watermark information X into the digital image I is referred to as "block embedding method." The blocks of the digital image I where the watermark bits are embedded are referred to as "embedded blocks." For example, the block size N is four.

[0102] FIGS. **2**A to **2**D are diagrams for explaining the block embedding method of the block embedding unit **12**. FIG. **2**A is a diagram for explaining how the digital image I is divided into blocks. The digital image I having a matrix of W×H pixels is divided into embedded blocks **22** of N×N pixels.

[0103] The block embedding unit **12** selects embedded blocks **22** of the digital image I for respective watermark bits constituting the watermark information X to be embedded into. The block embedding unit **12** embeds identical watermark bits into the respective embedded blocks **22** redundantly. FIG. **2**B is a diagram for explaining the digital image I in which watermark bits are embedded. The diagram will deal with an example where the watermark information X consists of a watermark bit string (0, 1, 1, 0). From the digital image I, the block embedding unit **12** selects an embedded block **22***a* intended for the first watermark bit "**0**" to be embedded into, an embedded block **22***b* for the second watermark bit "**1**" to be embedded into, an embedded block **22***c* for the third watermark bit "**1**" to be embedded into, and an embedded block **22***d* for the fourth watermark bit "**0**" to be embedded into. The block embedding unit **12** then embeds the watermark bits into the respective blocks **22***a* to **22***d* redundantly.

[0104] FIG **2**C is a diagram for explaining watermark bits embedded in an embedded block **22**. Here, description will be given of an example where the block size N is four and the watermark bits are "1." As shown in the diagram, 16 watermark bits "**1**" are embedded into the embedded block **22** redundantly.

[0105] FIG. **2**D is a diagram for explaining a pixel deviation to occur while extracting the watermark bits, and its influence on the detection of the watermark bits. Suppose that an embedded block **28** detected from a captured image has an actual endpoint **29** that is horizontally one pixel off an ideal endpoint **23** of the embedded block **22** in the original image as shown in the diagram. Even in this case, 12 identical watermark bits "**1**" are detected redundantly from the area where the embedded block **22** of the original image and the embedded block **28** of the captured image overlap with each other. As a result, it is possible to detect the correct watermark bit by a majority vote within the block. The block embedding method can thus improve the tolerance for pixel deviations.

[0106] A printing unit **14** prints the digital image I having the watermark information X embedded by the block embedding unit **12** onto a printing medium, thereby generating a printed image P. It should be noted that while the diagram shows the printing unit **14** as being one of the components of the electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100**, the printing unit **14** may be configured as a printer which lies outside the electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100**. In that case, the electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100** and the printer are connected with a peripheral connection cable or over a network.

[0107] FIG. **3** is a diagram for explaining the output printed image P. The digital image I having an electronic watermark embedded therein (also referred to as original image) is printed on a printing medium **24**. The area **20** where the original image is printed on (hereinafter, referred to simply as original image area **20**) is typically surrounded by margins of the printing medium **24**.

[0108] FIG. **4** is a block diagram showing the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** according to the first embodiment. A capturing unit **30** captures printed images P having electronic watermarks embedded therein or lattice pattern images R, thereby converting the same into an electronic form. A profile creation unit **38** detects position deviations of lattice points in the lattice pattern images R captured at different zoom magnifications, and generates correction information on distortion occurring in the images. The correction information is stored into a profile database **40** in association with the zoom magnifications. An image correction unit **34** selects correction information corresponding to a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing a printed image P from the profile database **40**, and corrects distortion occurring in the captured image of the printed image P. An image area determination unit **32** determines the original image area **20** in the distortion-corrected captured image. A watermark extraction unit **36** divides the original image area **20** in the distortion-corrected captured image into blocks, and detects watermark bits embedded in the respective blocks to extract watermark information X. These components can also be achieved in various forms, including any combinations of hardware such as a CPU and a memory and pieces of software having the functions for processing images and extracting electronic watermarks.

[0109] The profile creation unit **38**, the image correction unit **34**, and the profile database **40** of the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** constitute an example of the image correction apparatus according to the present invention.

[0110] The capturing unit **30** captures printed images P generated by the electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100**, and digitizes the printed images P. While the diagram shows the capturing unit **30** as being one of the components of the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200**, the capturing unit **30** may be configured as a digital camera or scanner which lies outside the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200**. In that case, the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** and the digital camera or scanner are connected with a peripheral connection cable or over a

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network. When the digital camera has wireless communication facilities in particular, images captured by the digital camera are transmitted to the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** by wireless.

[0111] FIG. **5** is a diagram for explaining a printed image P captured. When the capturing unit **30** captures the printed image P, it captures the entire original image area **20** of the printing medium **24**, typically with the margins around the original image area **20**. That is, the captured area **26** is typically wider than the original image area **20** on the printing medium **24**. Since the image captured by the capturing unit **30** thus includes margins on the printing medium **24**, the original image area **20** must be cut out after the distortion of the captured image is corrected.

[0112] The image correction unit **34** performs a distortion correction on the entire captured image. When the printed image P is captured by the capturing unit **30**, a lens distortion and a perspective distortion can occur in the captured image. The image correction unit **34** corrects the distortions occurring in the image so that the embedded electronic watermark can be extracted properly. The distortion correction uses functions intended for correcting distortion, which are stored in the profile database **40**.

[0113] The image area determination unit **32** applies edge extraction and other processing to the captured image whose distortion is corrected by the image correction unit **34**, and determines the area of the original image. This cuts out the original image area **20**, removing the margins from the captured area **26** of FIG. **5**.

[0114] The watermark extraction unit **36** divides the original image area **20** determined by the image area determination unit **32** into blocks of N×N pixels, and detects watermark bits from respective blocks to extract the watermark information X. When detecting the watermark bits embedded by the block embedding method, distortion of the embedded blocks, if any, can make the watermark detection difficult. Since the distortion is corrected by the image correction unit **34**, however, the accuracy of the watermark detection is guaranteed. Moreover, even if some pixel deviation remains after the distortion correction, it is possible to detect correct watermark bits since the watermark bits are embedded redundantly in the respective blocks.

[0115] FIG. **6** is a diagram for explaining a pixel deviation due to capturing. Suppose that an embedded block **60** of the captured image does not match with the embedded block **50** of the original image as shown in the diagram. With respect to an endpoint **52** of the embedded block **50** in the original image, the endpoint **62** of the embedded block **60** in the captured image is one pixel off in both horizontal and vertical directions. Even in such situations, identical watermark bits (here, shown by "1") are detected redundantly from the area where the embedded block **50** of the original image and the embedded block **60** of the captured image overlap with each other. The watermark extraction unit **36** can thus detect the proper watermark bit.

[0116] FIG. **7** is a diagram for explaining the detailed configuration of the profile creation unit **38** and the image correction unit **34**. The profile creation unit **38** includes a perspective distortion function calculation unit **80**, a lens distortion function pair calculation unit **82**, and a lens distortion function pair registration unit **84**. The image correction unit **34** includes a lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** and a lens distortion correction processing unit **88**.

[0117] Initially, description will be given of how correction information is registered into the profile database **40**. To measure lens distortion, the capturing unit **30** captures the lattice pattern image R, and supplies it to the profile creation unit **38**. When a zoom lens is used for capturing, the zoom magnification is changed to capture the lattice pattern image R with a plurality of angles of view θ_i. The perspective distortion function calculation unit **80** of the profile creation unit **38** accepts input of the image area of the lattice pattern image R, and detects position deviations of the intersections in the pattern of the lattice pattern image R ascribable to perspective distortion. The perspective distortion function calculation unit **80** thereby calculates a perspective distortion function g for mapping points in an image having no perspective distortion onto points in a perspective-distorted image.

[0118] The lens distortion function pair calculation unit **82** accepts input of the perspective distortion function g calculated by the perspective distortion function calculation unit **80**, and detects position deviations of the intersections in the pattern of the lattice pattern image R in consideration of the perspective distortion. The lens distortion function pair calculation unit **82** thereby calculates a lens distortion correction function f_i and a lens distortion function f_i^{-1} at an angle of view θ_i. Here, the lens distortion correction function f_i is one for mapping points in a lens-distorted image onto points in an image having no lens distortion. The lens distortion function f_i^{-1} is an approximate inverse function of the lens distortion correction function f_i, and maps points in an image having no lens distortion onto points in a lens-distorted image. The pair of the lens distortion correction function f_i and the lens distortion function f_i^{-1} will be referred to as a lens distortion function pair (f_i, f_i^{-1}).

[0119] The lens distortion function pair registration unit **84** registers the lens distortion function pair (f_i, f_i^{-1}) calculated by the lens distortion function pair calculation unit **82** into the profile database **40** in association with the angle of view θ_i.

[0120] Next, description will be given of the image correction using the foregoing profile database **40**. The capturing unit **30** supplies a captured printed image P to the image correction unit **34**. The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** of the image correction unit **34** accepts the input of the captured image of the printed image P, and determines the angle of view θ employed at the time of capturing from image information. The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** then selects a lens distortion function pair (F, F^{-1}) corresponding to the angle of view θ employed at the time of capturing from the profile database **40**, and supplies the lens distortion function F^{-1} to the lens distortion correction processing unit **88**. The lens distortion correction processing unit **88** corrects the lens distortion of the entire captured image by using the lens distortion function F^{-1}, and supplies the corrected captured image to the image area determination unit **32**.

[0121] FIGS. **8**A and **8**B are diagrams for explaining the relationship between the angle of view and the focal length of a zoom lens. FIG. **8**A shows the state where a lens **94** is focused on a subject **90**. The vertex V of the subject **90**

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corresponds to the vertex v of the subject image on the imaging area of a CCD **96**. Here, the principle point **95** lies at the center of the lens **94**, and the focal length f is the distance between the principle point **95** and a single point (referred to as focus) into which parallel light incident in the normal direction of the lens converges. The optical axis **92** is a straight line that passes the principle point **95** and has a gradient in the normal direction of the lens **94**. The angle ω formed between the optical axis **92** and a straight line that connects the principle point and the vertex V of the subject **90** is called a half angle of view, and twice ω is called the angle of view. As employed herein, the half angle of view ω will be referred to simply as "the angle of view."

[0122] The height of the subject **90** to be focused will be referred to as Y, and the height of the subject image on the imaging area of the CCD **96** as y. The magnification m is the ratio of the height y of the subject image formed on the CCD **96** with respect to the actual height Y of the subject **90**, and is given by m=y/Y. Here, a perfect in-focus state will be defined as follows:

[0123] Definition 1: A Subject is in Perfect Focus

[0124] That a subject is in perfect focus refers to situations where the straight line that connects the vertex of the subject and the vertex of the subject image formed on the CCD surface passes the principle point, and the distance from the principle point to the CCD surface in the normal direction of the lens is equal to the focal length.

[0125] Under the perfect in-focus state in terms of definition 1, the point at which the optical axis **92** and the imaging area of the CCD **96** cross each other will be referred to as a focus center **98**.

[0126] Lenses are broadly classified into two types, or single-focus lenses and zoom lenses. Single-focus lenses are incapable of changing their focal length f. In contrast, zoom lenses are composed of a combination of two or more lenses each, and can change the focal length f, the principle point, and the like freely by adjusting the distances between the lenses and the distances from the respective lenses to the imaging area of the CCD **96**. Description will now be given of how to change the magnification of a subject by using a zoom lens. Initially, a change in magnification will be defined as follows:

[0127] Definition 2: A Change in Magnification

[0128] A change in magnification shall refer to changing the height of the subject image formed on the CCD surface without changing the distance between the subject plane and the CCD surface, while maintaining the perfect in-focus state.

[0129] What are significant are "without changing the distance between the subject plane and the CCD surface" and "while maintaining the perfect in-focus state." For example, a person who holds a camera can move away from a subject to make the image formed on the CCD surface smaller, whereas this does not apply to a change in magnification since the distance between the subject plane and the CCD surface varies.

[0130] FIG. **8**B shows an example where the focal length of the lens **94** is changed from f to f' with a change in magnification by definitions 1 and 2. Changing the focal length moves the principle point **97** of the lens **94**. The straight line that connects the vertex V of the subject **90** and the vertex v' of the subject image formed on the imaging area of the CCD **97** passes the principle point **97** of the lens **94** after the focal length is changed. The distance between the subject **90** and the CCD **96** is the same as in FIG. **8**A, i.e., is in perfect focus in terms of definition 1.

[0131] Here, the height of the subject image formed on the imaging area of the CCD **96** varies from y to y' (>y), so that the magnification is changed into m=y'/Y. The angle of view is also changed from ω to ω' (>ω). It should be noted that in actual cameras, a zoom lens is composed of a combination of two or more lenses. The distances between the lenses and the distances from the respective lenses to the CCD surface are adjusted to adjust the focal length and the position of the principle point, thereby changing the magnification.

[0132] It is known that lens distortion or distortion aberration to be corrected depends on the angle of view ω. This property is described in "KOGAKU NYUMON (User Engineer's Guide to Optics)" KISHIKAWA Toshio, Optronics Books, 1990. For a single-focus lens which is incapable of changing its focal length and thus makes no change in the angle of view, it is only necessary that a single lens distortion function pair be prepared and registered in the profile database **40**. With a zoom lens, on the other hand, it is necessary to determine lens distortion function pairs (f_i, f_i^{-1}) at various angles of view θ_i by changing the magnification while maintaining the perfect in-focus state, and register them in the profile database **40**.

[0133] FIGS. **9**A and **9**B are diagrams for explaining lens distortion function pairs to be stored in the profile database **40**. FIG. **9**A shows the structure of the database on lens distortion function pairs for a single-focus lens. With a single-focus lens, the profile database **40** contains a table **42** in which the model names of cameras are stored in association with respective lens distortion function pairs. Here, the model name A is associated with a lens distortion function pair (f_A, f_A^{-1}), and the model name B a lens distortion function pair (f_B, f_B^{-1}).

[0134] FIG. **9**B shows the structure of the database on lens distortion function pairs for a zoom lens. With a zoom lens, the profile database **40** contains a table **44** in which the model names of cameras are stored in association with the diagonal lengths of the CCDs of the cameras and pointers to lens distortion function pair tables. Here, the model name A is associated with a diagonal length d_A and a pointer to a lens distortion function pair table **46**.

[0135] The lens distortion function pair table **46** is one for situations where the zoom lens of the camera having the model name A is changed in magnification. Labeling the angles of view with i, the lens distortion function pair table **46** contains labels i, the angles of view θ_i, and lens distortion function pairs (f_i, f_i^{-1}) in association with one another. This lens distortion function pair table **46** may contain the lens distortion function pairs (f_i, f_i^{-1}) in association with focal lengths or zoom magnifications instead of the angles of view. In that case, the diagonal lengths d of the CCDs need not be stored in the database since a lens distortion function can be selected uniquely based on the focal length even without arithmetically calculating θ_i to select the lens distortion function pairs.

[0136] FIG. **10** is a flowchart for explaining the steps by which the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** creates the profile database **40**.

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[0137] The profile creation unit **38** initializes a variable i to 0, and determines the value of a constant M by the equation M=(Max−Min)/r (S**200**). Here, Min and Max are the minimum magnification and maximum magnification of the zoom lens, respectively, and r is the minimum unit of change in magnification. For a single-focus lens, M=0.

[0138] The capturing unit **30** captures a lattice pattern image R (S**202**). FIG. **11** is a diagram for explaining the lattice pattern image R to be used as a calibration pattern. For example, the lattice pattern image R has a checkered pattern, consisting of checks having a size of L×L pixels. The lattice size L of the lattice patterned image R is about the same as the block size N of the watermark according to the block embedding method employed by the electronic watermark embedding apparatus **100**. For example, when the block size N is eight, the lattice size L may be eight or so. It should be noted that the block size N shall be set uniformly throughout this electronic watermark system, or be notified to the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** in some way in advance.

[0139] The lattice pattern image R is captured under the following condition:

[0140] [Capturing Condition]

[0141] (1) The image of the lattice pattern image R formed on the CCD surface has a height equal to the diagonal length d of the CCD, an inherent value of the capturing apparatus. In other words, the lattice pattern image R is imaged on the entire CCD surface so that the lattice pattern image R is displayed on the entire display screen of the capturing apparatus.

[0142] (2) The plane that includes the lattice pattern image R is in perfect focus in terms of definition 1.

[0143] When capturing the lattice pattern image R with a camera, it is difficult to capture the image from exactly right above. There occurs some perspective distortion due to deviations of the optical axis. Then, processing for correcting the perspective distortion is performed initially.

[0144] The perspective distortion function calculation unit **80** detects the imaging positions of the intersections in the lattice pattern of the captured image of the lattice pattern image R (S**204**). Suppose that the number of intersections in the lattice pattern detected is N, and the coordinates of the respective intersections are (X_k, Y_k) (k=0, . . . , N−1).

[0145] Next, the perspective distortion function calculation unit **80** determines pattern positions (m_k, n_k) on the lattice pattern image R (k=0, . . . , N−1) corresponding to the detected intersections (X_k, Y_k) (k=0, . . . , N−1), respectively (S**206**). The pattern positions (m_k, n_k) show the coordinates of the intersections in the lattice pattern on the distortion-free lattice pattern image R. Since the lattice arrangement of the lattice pattern image R is known in advance, it is easily possible to determine the pattern positions (m_k, n_k) corresponding to the coordinates (X_k, Y_k) of the intersections on the captured image of the lattice pattern image R.

[0146] The perspective distortion function calculation unit **80** calculates a perspective distortion function g based on the relationship between the positions (X_k, Y_k) of the intersections on the captured image of the lattice pattern image R and the corresponding pattern positions (m_k, n_k) (S**208**). Here, the perspective distortion function g is determined not by using all the intersections but by using only intersections lying near the center of the captured image of the lattice pattern image R. For example, a fourth of all the intersections are used as the intersections lying near the center. The reason for this is that the areas closer to the center are less susceptible to lens distortion, and the perspective distortion function g can thus be determined more accurately.

[0147] It is known that the imaging positions (X_k, Y_k) of the intersections on the captured image of the lattice pattern image R and the corresponding pattern positions (m_k, n_k) have the following relationship. This property is described in "GAZO RIKAI, 3JIGEN-NINSHIKI NO SURI (Image Understanding: A Mathematical Approach to 3D Recognition)" KANAYA Ken'ichi, Morikita Shuppan, 1990.

$$X_k=(cm_k+dn_k+e)/(am_k+bn_k+1), \text{ and}$$

$$Y_k=(fm_k+gn_k+h)/(am_k+bn_k+1).$$

[0148] Given pairs of corresponding points $\{(X_k, Y_k)\}$ and $\{(m_k, n_k)\}$, where k=0, . . . , (N−1)/4, the coefficients a to h in the foregoing equations are determined by using a least-square method as follows:

$$J=\Sigma_{k=0}^{(N-1)/4}\{(X_k(am_k+bn_k+1)-(cm_k+dn_k+e))^2+(Y_k(am_k+bn_k+1)-(fm_k+gn_k+h))^2\}\rightarrow\min.$$

[0149] The coefficients a to h that minimize J can be determined by solving the foregoing equation for $\partial J/\partial a=0, \ldots, \partial J/\partial h=0$.

[0150] Consequently, the perspective distortion function g for mapping the pattern positions (m_k, n_k) onto the reference positions (X_k', Y_k') of the intersections on the captured image of the lattice pattern image R is determined:

$$(X_k', Y_k')=g(m_k, n_k), \text{ where } k=0, \ldots, N-1$$

[0151] Next, processing for determining a lens distortion function pair is performed based on the perspective distortion function g calculated. The lens distortion function pair calculation unit **82** maps all the pattern positions (m_k, n_k) (k=0, . . . , N−1) by using the calculated perspective distortion function g, thereby determining the reference positions (X_k', Y_k') (k=0, . . . , N−1).

[0152] The imaging positions (X_k, Y_k) of the intersections on the captured image of the lattice pattern image R are off the original positions due to both perspective distortion and lens distortion. Meanwhile, the reference positions (X_k', Y_k') onto which the pattern positions (m_k, n_k) are mapped by using the perspective distortion function g are off the original positions due to the perspective distortion alone. That is, the deviations between the reference positions (X_k', Y_k') and the imaging positions (X_k, Y_k) of the intersections on the captured image are ascribable to the lens distortion. The relationship therebetween can thus be examined to determine the lens distortion correction function f_i for resolving the lens distortion.

[0153] Based on the pairs of corresponding points $\{(X_k', Y_k')\}$ and $\{(X_k, Y_k)\}$ (k=0, . . . , N−1), the lens distortion function pair calculation unit **82** calculates the lens distortion correction function f_i (S**210**) by the following polynomial equations:

$$X_k'=a_1X_k^4+b_1X_k^3Y_k+c_1X_k^2Y_k^2+d_1X_kY_k^3+e_1Y_k^4+g_1X_k^3+h_1X_k^2Y_k+i_1X_kY_k^2+j_1Y_k^3+k_1X_k^2+l_1X_kY_k+m_1Y_k^2+n_1X_k+o_1Y_k+p_1,$$

and

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$$Y_k=a_0X_k^4+b_0X_k^3Y_k+c_0X_k^2Y_k^2+d_0X_kY_k^3+e_0Y_k^4+g_0X_k^3+h_0X_k^2Y_k+i_0X_kY_k^2+j_0Y_k^3+k_0X_k^2+l_0X_kY_k+m_0Y_k^2+n_0X_k+o_0Y_k+p_0.$$

[0154] Here, the coefficients a_1 to p_1 and a_2 to p_2 are calculated by a least-square method as follows:

$$J=\Sigma_{k=0}^{N-1}[(X_k-a_1X_k^4-b_1X_k^3Y_k-c_1X_k^2Y_k^2-d_1X_kY_k^3-e_1Y_k^4-g_1X_k^3-h_1X_k^2Y_k-i_1X_kY_k^2-j_1Y_k^3-k_1X_k^2-l_1X_kY_k-m_1Y_k^2-n_1X_k-o_1Y_k-p_1))^2+(Y_k-a_2X_k^4-b_2X_k^3Y_k-c_2X_k^2Y_k^2-d_2X_kY_k^3-e_2Y_k^4-g_2X_k^3-h_2X_k^2Y_k-i_2X_kY_k^2-j_2Y_k^3-k_2X_k^2-l_2X_kY_k-m_2Y_k^2-n_2X_k-o_2Y_k-p_2))^2]\rightarrow\min.$$

[0155] Consequently, the lens distortion correction function f_i for expressing the relationship between the positions (X_k, Y_k) of the intersections on the captured image and the reference positions (X_k', Y_k') is obtained. Then, since the image correction requires two-way calculations, the lens distortion function f_i^{-1}, or an approximate inverse function of the lens distortion correction function f_i, is also determined. As is the case with the lens distortion correction function f_i, the lens distortion function f_i^{-1} is calculated by using a least-square method:

$$(X_k', Y_k')=f_i(X_k, Y_k), \text{ where } k=0, \ldots, N-1, \text{ and}$$

$$(X_k, Y_k)=f_i^{-1}(X_k', Y_k'), \text{ where } k=0, \ldots, N-1.$$

[0156] FIG. **12** is a diagram for explaining a lens distortion function pair (f_i, f_i^{-1}). In general, captured images are deformed in a barrel shape or pincushion shape due to lens distortion. An image **300** having lens distortion ascribable to capturing is transformed into an image **310** having no lens distortion by the lens distortion correction function f_i. Conversely, the image **310** having no lens distortion is transformed into the lens-distorted image **300** by the lens distortion function f_i^{-1}.

[0157] Return now to FIG. **10**. The lens distortion function pair calculation unit **82** determines the angle of view θ_i employed at the time of capturing from the focal length f_i and the diagonal length d of the CCD surface (S**212**) by using the following equation. If the captured image of the lattice pattern image R is provided in EXIF (Exchangeable Image File Format), the focal length f_i at the time of capturing can be acquired from the EXIF information included in the image data:

$$\theta_i=\tan^{-1}(d/2f_i).$$

[0158] The lens distortion function pair registration unit **84** registers the lens distortion function pair (f_i, f_i^{-1}) into the profile database **40** (S**214**) in association with the angle of view θ_i (S**214**).

[0159] The variable i is incremented by one (S**216**). If the variable is smaller than M (Y at S**218**), the processing returns to step S**202**. The lattice pattern image R is captured again with a zoom magnification of the next level, followed by the processing of calculating the perspective distortion function g and the lens distortion function pairs (f_i, f_i^{-1}). If the variable i is not smaller than M (N at S**218**), the processing for creating the profile database **40** ends.

[0160] Consequently, in the case of a single-focus lens, a single lens distortion function pair (f, f_i^{-1}) is registered in the profile database **40**. With a zoom lens, the angles of view θi and the lens distortion function pairs (f_i, f_i^{-1}) at respective magnifications are registered in the profile database **40** in association with each other.

[0161] Description will now be given of the steps by which the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** having the foregoing configuration extracts an electronic watermark.

[0162] FIG. **13** is a flowchart showing the overall flow of the steps for extracting an electronic watermark. The capturing unit **30** captures a printed image P (S**10**). The image correction unit **34** initializes the number of corrections "counter" so that counter=0 (S**12**).

[0163] The image correction unit **34** performs image correction processing to be detailed later on the image of the printed image P captured by the capturing unit **30** (S**14**). Hereinafter, distorted images to be corrected will be referred to as "correction object images." Distortion-free images to be the targets of the correction will be referred to as "correction target images." In the image correction processing S**14**, coordinates (i, j) on the correction target image are transformed into coordinates (x_{ij}, y_{ij}) on the correction object image by using a lens distortion function stored in the profile database **40**. Luminance values in the respective coordinates (x_{ij}, y_{ij}) are then determined by bi-linear interpolation or the like, and set as the luminance values in the original coordinates (i, j) on the correction target image.

[0164] The image area determination unit **32** determines the original image area **20** in the captured image whose distortion is corrected by the image correction unit **34** (S**15**). The watermark extraction unit **36** performs processing for detecting watermark information X from the original image area determined by the image area determination unit **32** (S**16**). This watermark detection processing is performed by detecting watermark bits from the original image area **20** in units of blocks. The watermark extraction unit **36** checks if significant watermark information X is obtained, thereby determining whether a watermark is detected successfully or not (S**18**).

[0165] If a watermark is detected successfully (Y at S**18**), the processing ends. If the watermark detection fails (N at S**18**), the number of corrections counter is incremented by one (S**20**). The processing returns to step S**14** to repeat the image correction processing and try watermark detection again. Here, thresholds and other parameters are adjusted to select a lens distortion function from the profile database **40** again before the image correction processing is performed to retry the watermark detection. The number of corrections counter is incremented while the image correction processing and the watermark detection processing are repeated until a watermark is detected successfully.

[0166] FIG. **14** is a flowchart for showing a general flow of the image correction processing S**14** of FIG. **13**. The image correction unit **34** acquires the image size (W', H') of the correction object image, assuming that the entire captured image of the printed image P as the correction object image (S**30**). Next, the image correction unit **34** sets the image size (W, H) of the correction target image (S**32**). The distortion correction will eventually transform the captured image into an image having W pixels in the horizontal direction and H pixels in the vertical direction.

[0167] The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** of the image correction unit **34** makes an inquiry to the profile database **40**, thereby acquiring the lens distortion function pair corresponding to the angle of view employed at the time of capturing (S**34**). The lens distortion correction processing unit **88** performs image correction main processing by using the lens distortion function acquired by the lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** (S**38**).

[0168] FIG. **15** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps for selecting a lens distortion function pair at S**34** of FIG. **14**.

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Initially, the lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** determines if the lens of the camera used for capturing is a zoom lens (S**50**). This determination can be made depending on whether or not the EXIF information included in the correction object image contains any item pertaining to the focal length.

[**0169**] If not a zoom lens (N at S**50**), the lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** acquires the model name of the camera used for capturing from the EXIF information on the correction object image. The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** makes an inquiry to the profile database **40** with the model name as a key, acquires the lens distortion function pair associated with the model name (S**52**), and ends the processing.

[**0170**] If a zoom lens (Y at S**50**), the lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** calculates the angle of view θ from the EXIF information included in the correction object image (S**54**). The angle of view θ is calculated on the assumption that the following precondition holds:

[**0171**] [Precondition]

[**0172**] The subject is in perfect focus.

[**0173**] That is, pictures out of focus can cause errors when corrected. Under the foregoing precondition, the lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** acquires the diagonal length d of the CCD of the camera from the profile database **40**, and acquires the capturing focal length f from the EXIF information of the correction object image. The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** then calculates the angle of view θ by the following equation:

$$\theta=\tan^{-1}(d/2f).$$

[**0174**] The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** searches the profile database **40** with the model name obtained from the EXIF information and the angle of view θ calculated at step S**54** as a key. The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** thereby selects the lens distortion function pair (f_i, f_i^{-1}) corresponding to a label i that minimizes the difference $|\theta-\theta_i|$ between the angle of view θ_i registered in the profile database **40** and the angle of view θ calculated (S**58**), and ends the processing.

[**0175**] Hereinafter, a lens distortion function pair that the lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** thus acquires from the profile database **40** will be denoted as (F, F^{-1}).

[**0176**] FIG. **16** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps of the image correction main processing S**38** of FIG. **14**. The lens distortion correction processing unit **88** initializes the y-coordinate value j of the correction target image to 0 (S**80**). Next, it initializes the x-coordinate value i of the correction target image to 0 (S**82**).

[**0177**] The lens distortion correction processing unit **88** maps a point P(i, j) in the correction target image onto a point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ in the correction object image (S**86**) by using the lens distortion function F^{-1}:

$$(x_{ij}, y_{ij})=F^{-1}(i, j).$$

[**0178**] FIG. **17** is a diagram for explaining how a point in a correction target image is mapped onto a point in a correction object image. A correction target image **320** is an image having no lens distortion. A correction object image **340** is a lens-distorted image. The point P(i, j) in the correction target image **320** is mapped onto the point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ in the correction object image **340** by the lens distortion function F^{-1}.

[**0179**] The lens distortion correction processing unit **88** calculates the luminance value $L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ at the point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ by interpolating the luminance values of peripheral pixels by using a bi-linear interpolation method or the like. The luminance value $L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ calculated is set as the luminance value at the point P(i, j) of the correction target image (S**88**).

[**0180**] FIG. **18** is a diagram for explaining the method of calculating the luminance value $L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ at the point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ which is mapped by the lens distortion function F^{-1}. Suppose that four pixels p, q, r, and s lie in the vicinity of the point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$, and have coordinates (x', y'), (x', y'+1), (x'+1, y'), and (x'+1, y'+1), respectively. The feet of perpendiculars drawn from the point Q to the sides pr and qs will be represented by points e and f, respectively. The feet of perpendiculars drawn from the point Q to the sides pq and rs will be represented by points g and h, respectively.

[**0181**] The point Q is one that divides the segment ef at an internal division ratio of v:(1−v), and divides the segment gh at an internal division ratio of w:(1−w). The luminance value $L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ at the point Q is determined from the luminance values L(x', y'), L(x', y'+1), L(x'+1, y'), and L(x'+1, y'+1) at the four points p, q, r, and s by bi-linear interpolation as shown by the following equation:

$$L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})=(1-v)\times\{(1-w)\times L(x', y')+w\times L(x'+1, y')\}+v\times\{(1-w)\times L(x', y'+1)+w\times L(x'+1, y'+1)\}.$$

[**0182**] While the luminance value at the point Q is determined by interpolating the luminance values of four pixels nearby, the method of interpolation is not limited thereto. More than four pixel points may be also used for interpolation.

[**0183**] Referring to FIG. **16**, after the processing of step S**88**, the x-coordinate value i is incremented by one (S**90**). If the x-coordinate value i is smaller than the width W' of the correction object image (N at S**92**), the processing returns to step S**86**. The processing for determining the luminance value of a pixel is thus repeated while increasing the coordinate value in the x-axis direction.

[**0184**] If the x-coordinate value i reaches or exceeds the width W' of the correction object image (Y at S**92**), it means that the luminance values of the pixels at the current y-coordinate value j are obtained through the x-axis direction. The y-coordinate value j is then incremented by one (S**94**). If the y-coordinate value j reaches or exceeds the height H' of the correction object image (Y at S**96**), the processing ends since the luminance values are obtained of all the pixels of the correction target image. If the y-coordinate value j is smaller than the height H' of the correction object image (N at S**96**), the processing returns to step S**82**. The x-coordinate value is thus initialized to zero again, and the processing for determining the luminance value of a pixel is repeated while the coordinate value is increased in the x-axis direction under the new y-coordinate value j.

[**0185**] FIG. **19** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps of the image area determination processing S**15** of FIG. **13**. The image area determination unit **32** extracts feature points from the image whose lens distortion is corrected by the image correction unit **34**, and calculates an image size (w, h) (S**120**).

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[0186] FIG. **20** is a diagram for explaining how feature points are extracted from a lens-distortion-corrected image **350**. A correction target image **322** of the diagram corresponds to the original image area **20** of the lens-distortion-corrected image **350**, and has a size of W in width and H in height. The image area determination unit **32** detects vertexes at the four corners of the original image area **20** and points on each side, which are shown by dots, as feature points of the lens-distortion-corrected image **350**. Since its lens distortion is eliminated by the image correction unit **34**, the lens-distortion-corrected image **350** has four sides of straight shape which can be detected easily by edge extraction processing or the like. The coordinate values of the vertexes at the four corners, or (x0, y0), (x1, y1), (x2, y2), and (x3, y3), can be determined accurately from the rows of feature points detected. Using the coordinate values of these vertexes at the four corners, the width w and the height h of the original image area **20** can be calculated by the following equations:

$$w=x2-x0=x3-x1, \text{ and}$$

$$h=y1-y0=y3-y2.$$

[0187] The image area determination unit **32** initializes the y-coordinate value j of the correction target image to 0 (S**122**). Next, it initializes the x-coordinate value i of the correction target image to 0 (S**124**).

[0188] The image area determination unit **32** maps a point P(i, j) in the correction target image onto a point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ in the lens distortion corrected image as shown in FIG. **20** (S**126**) by the following equations:

$$x_{ij}=i\times w/(W-1)+x0, \text{ and}$$

$$y_{ij}=j\times h/(H-1)+y0.$$

[0189] The image area determination unit **32** calculates the luminance value $L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ at the point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ by interpolating the luminance values of peripheral pixels by using a bi-linear interpolation method or the like. The luminance value $L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ calculated is set as the luminance value at the point P(i, j) of the correction target image (S**128**).

[0190] The image area determination unit **32** increments the x-coordinate value i by one (S**130**). If the x-coordinate value i is smaller than the width W of the correction target image (N at S**132**), the image area determination unit **32** returns to step S**126**. The processing for determining the luminance value of a pixel is thus repeated while increasing the coordinate value in the x-axis direction.

[0191] If the x-coordinate value i reaches or exceeds the width W of the correction target image (Y at S**132**), it means that the luminance values of the pixels at the current y-coordinate value j are obtained through the x-axis direction. The y-coordinate value j is then incremented by one (S**134**). If the y-coordinate value j reaches or exceeds the height H of the correction target image (Y at S**136**), the processing ends since the luminance values are obtained of all the pixels of the correction target image. If the y-coordinate value j is smaller than the height H of the correction target image (N at S**136**), the processing returns to step S**124**. The x-coordinate value is thus initialized to zero again, and the processing for determining the luminance value of a pixel is repeated while the coordinate value is increased in the x-axis direction under the new y-coordinate value j.

[0192] Description will now be given of a modification of the present embodiment. When selecting a lens distortion function pair at S**34** of FIG. **15**, it is actually rare for the precondition that the subject is in perfect focus to hold. The angle of view θ calculated at step S**54** thus has some errors. Errors can also occur during the calculation of the lens distortion function. Due to these system errors, selecting a lens distortion function pair corresponding to the calculated angle of view θ from the profile database **40** does not necessarily ensure that the selected lens distortion function pair is optimum one. For this reason, the method of making an inquiry to the profile database **40** by using the calculated angle of view θ as a key is selected from between the following two, depending on system requirements and the method of embedding electronic watermarks:

[0193] [Method of Selection for a Speed-Priority System]

[0194] This method applies when the foregoing system errors are allowable. To give priority to the processing speed, simply select the lens distortion function pair (f_i, f_i^{-1}) corresponding to a label i that minimizes the difference $|\theta-\theta_i|$ between the angle of view θ_i registered in the profile database **40** and the angle of view θ calculated, similarly to step S**58** shown in FIG. **15**.

[0195] [Method of Selection for a Precision-Priority System]

[0196] This method applies when the system errors are not allowable. With reference to the angle of view θ calculated, acquire a plurality of lens distortion function pairs as candidates from the profile database **40**. Pre-evaluate which of the lens distortion function pairs can best correct the image, and then select the lens distortion function pair of the highest evaluation.

[0197] For example, the method of selection for a speed-priority system is used when the size N of the watermark embedded blocks is large and the system errors have only a small impact. The method of selection for a speed-priority system is used when the size N of the watermark embedded blocks is small and the system errors have a significant impact. Alternatively, either of the methods may be specified depending on the characteristics of applications to which the present invention is applied. For example, in entertainment applications, the speed-priority method is selected since the response rate has a higher priority than the watermark detection rate. In the meantime, examples of applications for which the precision-priority method is selected include a ticket authentication system.

[0198] FIG. **21** is a flowchart for showing the detailed steps for selecting a lens distortion function pair (S**34**), where the method of selection for a speed-priority system and the method of selection for a precision-priority system can be switched. Description will be given only of differences from FIG. **15**. The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** determines whether priority is given to speed or not (S**56**). For example, the lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** selects either one of the speed-priority method and the precision-priority method automatically, depending on the size N of the watermark embedding blocks. Alternatively, either one of a speed-priority mode and a precision-priority mode may be specified by the user.

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[0199] If priority is given to speed (Y at S56), step S58 is executed as in FIG. 15. If priority is not given to speed (N at S56), pre-evaluation is performed on correction functions (S60)

[0200] FIG. 22 is a flowchart showing the detailed steps for the pre-evaluation on correction functions at S60 of FIG. 21. The lens distortion function pair selection unit 86 acquires lens distortion correction functions f_j (j=0, 1, . . . , N−1) corresponding to N successive labels across a label i as candidates (S62). Here, the label i is one that minimizes the difference $|\theta-\theta_j|$ between the angle of view θ_j registered in the profile database 40 and the angle of view θ calculated.

[0201] M feature points are defined on the correction object image, and a row of P sample points (X_m, Y_m) (m=0, 1, . . . , P−1) are acquired between the feature points of the correction object image (S64). For example, when the correction object image is an oblong rectangular in shape, the feature points are the vertexes at the four corners. The row of sample points includes points sampled on each of the sides which connect the adjoining vertexes. Here, the row of sample points shall include the feature points lying on both ends. That is, both (X_0, Y_0) and (X_{P-1}, Y_{P-1}) are feature points. In another example, a row of points on the edge of an object in the correction object image, such as a personal figure, may be acquired as the row of sample points. For example, a row of sample points may be defined on the outline of a person's face or eye.

[0202] The number of sample points P is determined with reference to the lattice size L of such a lattice pattern image R as a checker pattern. For example, L takes on such values as 16 and 32. Since a row of sample points is determined between two feature points selected from among M feature points, the maximum possible number of combinations of feature points is ${}_MC_2$. These combinations are not applicable unless the lines connecting the feature points form a known shape.

[0203] The variable j is initialized to zero (S66). The row of sample points (X_m, Y_m) (m=0, 1, . . . , P−1) are mapped by the lens distortion correction function f_j (S68). The row of sample points mapped by the lens distortion correction function f_j shall be denoted as (X_m^j, Y_m^j) (m=0, 1, . . . , P−1):

$$(X_m^j, Y_m^j)=f_j(X_m, Y_m), \text{ where } m=0, 1, \ldots, P-1.$$

[0204] Next, a Bezier curve H' of qth order is calculated with the row of mapped sample points (X_m^j, Y_m^j) (m=0, 1, . . . , P−1) as control points (S70). The order q is determined depending on what kind of line the row of sample points between the feature points are supposed to fall on if without lens distortion. When the correction target image is an oblong rectangular and the feature points are the vertexes at the four corners, the row of sample points between the feature points are supposed to fall on the sides of the oblong rectangular. In this case, the order is determined to be q=1. By the definition of Bezier curves, a Bezier curve of first order forms a straight line which connects between feature points.

[0205] The sum D_j of errors between the calculated Bezier curve and the control points is calculated (S72) by the following equation:

$$D_j=\Sigma_{m=0}^{P-1}[(Y_m^j-(H'(X_m^j)))^2]$$

The foregoing equation is one for evaluating approximation errors of the Bezier curve when sampled in the x direction.

[0206] FIGS. 23A to 23C are diagrams for explaining how approximation errors of a Bezier curve are evaluated. FIG. 23A shows five sample points. FIG. 23B shows a row of sample points of FIG. 23A mapped by a lens distortion correction function f_j. FIG. 23C shows the state where a Bezier curve of q=1, i.e., a straight line is applied to the row of mapped sample points. The sample points have errors d_{j0} to d_{j4}, respectively. The sum D_j of errors is given by $D_j=d_{j0}+d_{j1}+d_{j2}+d_{j3}+d_{j4}$.

[0207] Return now to FIG. 22. The variable j is incremented by one (S74). If j is smaller than N (Y at S76), the lens distortion function pair selection unit 86 returns to step S68 and performs the processing for calculating the sum D_j of errors as to the next lens distortion correction function f_j. If j is not smaller than N (N at S76), the lens distortion function pair selection unit 86 selects the lens distortion function pair (f_j, f_j^{-1}) corresponding to a label j that minimizes the sum D_j of errors (j=0, 1, . . . , N−1) (S78), and ends the processing.

[0208] FIG. 24 is a flowchart showing the detailed steps for acquiring a row of sample points between feature points at S64 of FIG. 22. For example, the following description will deal with a method in which the image frame of the correction object image, i.e., the original image area 20 is detected to extract a row of sample points.

[0209] Initially, at step S40, a threshold T intended for edge determination is set. Here, the threshold T is given by T=T0−counter×Δ. As can be seen from the flowchart of FIG. 13, counter is the number of corrections. T0 is the threshold for the first correction. That is, each time the number of corrections increases, the threshold T is decreased by Δ and the processing of steps S14, S15, and S16 of FIG. 13 is performed.

[0210] For example, suppose that a pixel A lying at the end of a margin has a luminance value of 200, a pixel B lying at the end of the original image area 20 next to the foregoing pixel A has a luminance value of 90, T0 is 115, and Δ is 10. When a difference between the luminance values of the pixels A and B is greater than the threshold T, the pixels A and B shall be determined to have an edge therebetween. In the first correction (counter=0), the pixels A and B are determined not to have an edge therebetween since the difference between the luminance values is 110 and the threshold T is 115. In the second correction (counter=1), however, the pixels A and B are determined to have an edge therebetween since the threshold T falls to 105.

[0211] Next, at step S42, the image correction unit 34 performs edge detection processing. Here, the luminance difference between adjoining pixels is compared with the threshold T set at step S40, and if the difference is greater, the corresponding pixel is considered as an edge. FIG. 25A is a diagram for explaining how the edge detection processing is performed on the original image area 20. The coordinate system has an x-axis in the horizontal direction and a y-axis in the vertical direction, with the top left vertex of the captured area 26 as the point of origin. The original image area 20 shown hatched has four vertexes A, B, C, and D at coordinates (X0, Y0), (X1, Y1), (X2, Y2), and (X3, Y3), respectively. Starting from a point E((X0+X2)/2, 0) on the x-axis, pixels are scanned in the y-axis direction. If the luminance values of two pixels adjoining in the y-axis direction have a difference greater than the threshold T, the

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border between the two pixels is determined to be an edge. Then, starting from that point, pixels are scanned to the right and to the left in the x-axis direction, thereby searching for locations where a difference between the luminance values of two pixels adjoining in the y-axis direction exceeds the threshold T likewise. This detects the horizontal edges of the original image area **20**.

[0212] Vertical edges are also detected likewise. Starting from a point F(0, (Y0+Y1)/2) on the y-axis, pixels are scanned in the x-axis direction. Locations where a difference between the luminance values of two pixels adjoining in the x-axis direction exceeds the threshold T are thus searched for, thereby detecting vertical edges of the original image area **20**.

[0213] It should be noted that the foregoing has dealt with the case where the vertical or horizontal edges of the original image area **20** are detected based on a difference between the luminance values of two pixels adjoining in the y-axis or x-axis direction. Instead, edges may be detected by using edge detection templates. For example, edges may be detected based on the results of comparison between matching calculations obtained by using a Prewitt edge detector and a threshold T.

[0214] Note that the threshold T decreases from the initial value **T0** as the number of corrections counter increases in value. The criterion for edge detection thus relaxes gradually with the increasing number of corrections. Extracting edges by using higher thresholds T can sometimes fail to detect edges properly due to noise in the captured image. In such cases, the value of the threshold T is lowered to detect edges with a relaxed criterion.

[0215] Returning to FIG. **24**, the image correction unit **34** determines the number of samples N for making a curve approximation to each of the sides of the original image area **20**. For example, N is set so that N=Nmin+counter×N0. Here, Nmin is a value to be determined depending on the order of the spline curve, and **N0** is a constant. As the number of corrections counter increases, the number of samples N increases. This enhances the approximation accuracy on each side. The image correction unit **34** selects sample points as many as the fixed parameter N from among a row of edge-points detected at step **S42**, and makes a spline approximation to each side of the original image area **20** (**S46**). A row of sample points are obtained by sampling the points on the spline curve determined thus. Alternatively, the N sample points or control points of the spline curve may be used simply as a row of sample points.

[0216] FIG. **25**B is a diagram for explaining the spline approximation to each side of the original image area **20**. Sides **71**, **72**, **73**, and **74** of the original image area **20** are each approximated, for example, with a cubic spline curve $a_3x^3+b_3x^2+c_3x+d$ by using three points on each side and two vertexes on both ends as the sample points. Here, the spline curve has four parameters, and Nmin is set so that Nmin=2. As the number of corrections increases, the image correction unit **34** may increase the number of samples N and the order of the spline curve as well. The order can be increased to obtain more accurate shapes of the respective sides of the original image area **20** on the captured printed image P.

[0217] As has been described, according to the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** of the present embodiment, lens distortion function pairs for respective angles of view are prepared in the database in advance. Then, lens distortion is corrected by using a lens distortion function pair corresponding to the angle of view employed at the time of capturing. The distortion occurring in the image can thus be corrected with high precision, which can increase the frequency of detection of electronic watermarks.

[0218] The angle of view calculated and the lens distortion correction functions registered contain some errors, whereas the lens distortion correction functions can be pre-evaluated to select more suitable lens distortion correction functions. Moreover, whether or not to make a pre-evaluation on the lens distortion correction functions can be determined depending on the size of the embedded blocks of electronic watermarks. Since image distortion can thus be corrected with precision suited to the tolerance of the electronic watermarks for image distortion, it is possible to avoid needless distortion correction processing while maintaining the detection accuracy of the watermarks.

Second Embodiment

[0219] The first embodiment has been dealt with the case of performing a lens distortion correction alone, on the assumption that the correction object image has no perspective distortion or the effect of perspective distortion is as small as negligible. In the second embodiment, in contrast, the perspective distortion of the correction object image will also be corrected. Since the rest of the configuration and operation are the same as in the first embodiment, description will be given only of differences from the first embodiment.

[0220] FIG. **26** is a block diagram showing the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** according to the second embodiment. In the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** according to the first embodiment shown in FIG. **4**, the image correction unit **34** corrects the lens distortion of the captured image before the image area determination unit **32** cuts out the original image area **20** from the lens-distortion-corrected image. The present embodiment, on the other hand, is configured without the image area determination unit **32**. The reason for this is that the image correction unit **34** also performs the processing of cutting out the original image area **20** while performing correction processing on perspective distortion. Consequently, in the present embodiment, the image correction unit **34** supplies the lens- and perspective-distortion-corrected original image area **20** to the watermark extraction unit **36** directly. The watermark extraction unit **36** then extracts watermark information X embedded in the distortion-corrected original image area **20**.

[0221] FIG. **27** is a diagram for explaining the detailed configuration of the profile creation unit **38** and the image correction unit **34** according to the second embodiment. The profile creation unit **38** has the same configuration as that of the profile creation unit **38** of the first embodiment shown in FIG. **7**.

[0222] The image correction unit **34** according to the present embodiment includes a lens distortion function pair selection unit **86**, a lens distortion correction processing unit **88**, a perspective distortion function calculation unit **87**, and a perspective distortion correction processing unit **89**.

[0223] The capturing unit **30** supplies a captured printed image P to the image correction unit **34**. The lens distortion

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function pair selection unit **86** of the image correction unit **34** accepts the input of the captured image of the printed image P, and determines from the image information the angle of view θ employed at the time of capturing. The lens distortion function pair selection unit **86** then selects a lens distortion function pair (F, F^{-1}) corresponding to the angle of view θ from the profile database **40**, and supplies the lens distortion correction function F to the lens distortion correction processing unit **88**.

[**0224**] The lens distortion correction processing unit **88** corrects lens distortion occurring in the captured image by using the lens distortion function F^{-1}, and supplies the lens-distortion-corrected image to the perspective distortion function calculation unit **87**. Using the lens-distortion-corrected image, the perspective distortion function calculation unit **87** calculates a perspective distortion function G which expresses the perspective distortion of the original image area **20** in the captured image, and then supplies the calculated perspective distortion function G to the perspective distortion correction processing unit **89**.

[**0225**] The perspective distortion correction processing unit **89** corrects the perspective distortion of the original image area **20** by using the perspective distortion function G, and supplies the corrected original image area **20** to the watermark extraction unit **36**.

[**0226**] FIG. **28** is a flowchart showing the overall flow of the electronic watermark extraction steps. A difference from the electronic watermark extraction steps according to the first embodiment shown in FIG. **13** consists in that the image area determination processing S**15** for extracting the original image area **20** is not included. In other respects, the steps are the same as in the first embodiment. According to the present embodiment, the original image area **20** is extracted while the perspective distortion is corrected in the image correction processing S**14**.

[**0227**] FIG. **29** is a flowchart for showing a general flow of the image correction processing S**14** by the image correction unit **34** of the present embodiment. Differences from the image correction processing S**14** of the first embodiment shown in FIG. **14** consist in that: the selection of a lens distortion function pair (S**34**) is followed by the correction of lens distortion (S**35**); after the lens distortion is corrected, a perspective distortion function is calculated further (S**36**); and in the image correction main processing S**38**, image correction is performed by using the perspective distortion function.

[**0228**] Description will now be given of the step for correcting lens distortion at S**35**. As in the procedure described in FIG. **16** of the first embodiment, the lens distortion correction processing unit **88** performs mapping by using the lens distortion function F^{-1}, thereby correcting the lens distortion occurring in the entire correction object image.

[**0229**] FIG. **30** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps for calculating a perspective distortion function at S**36** of FIG. **29**. Using the entire captured image of the printed image P as the correction object image, the image correction unit **34** sets the number of feature points M and pattern positions (cm_k, cn_k) (k=0, 1, . . . , M−1) of the same in the correction target image (S**100**). The positions of the feature points in the correction target image shall be known. For example, when vertexes at four corners of a rectangular correction target image are set as feature points, M=4 and the feature positions fall on (0, 0), (W−1, 0), (0, H−1), and (W−1, H−1). In another example, each side of a rectangular correction target image may be marked at regular intervals for feature points. Points on the edge of such an object as a personal figure in the correction target image may be used as the feature points.

[**0230**] Based on the information on the feature points set at step S**100**, the perspective distortion function calculation unit **87** performs processing for detecting corresponding feature points in the correction object image whose lens distortion is corrected. The perspective distortion function calculation unit **87** thereby determines the imaging positions (CX_k, CY_k) (k=0, 1, . . . , M−1) of the feature points in the correction object image (S**104**). Take, for example, the case of detecting vertexes at the four corners of the correction object image, or original image area **20**, as feature points. Here, the vertexes of the original image area **20** are found by tracing the edges of the original image area **20** by using an edge filter or other techniques. Pixels near the vertexes are then Fourier-transformed to detect the phase angles for accurate positioning of the vertexes. When feature points consist of points on each side of the correction object image, the perspective distortion function calculation unit **87** performs processing for detection marks lying on the image frame of the original image area **20**.

[**0231**] The perspective distortion function calculation unit **87** calculates a perspective distortion function G from the relationship between the feature points (CX_k, CY_k) detected at step S**104** and the corresponding pattern positions (cm_k, cn_k) in the correction target image by using a least-square method (S**106**). This perspective distortion function G is calculated by the same steps as with the calculation of the perspective distortion function g at S**208** of FIG. **10**. That is, since the feature points (CX_k, CY_k) detected from the correction object image whose lens distortion is corrected are unaffected by lens distortion, deviations between the detected feature points (CX_k, CY_k) and the corresponding pattern positions (cm_k, cn_k) of the correction target image are ascribable to perspective distortion. The relationship therebetween thus satisfies the equations of the perspective distortion described in the calculation of the perspective distortion function g at S**208** of FIG. **10**. By determining the coefficients of these perspective distortion equations, the perspective distortion function calculation unit **87** can calculate the perspective distortion function G.

[**0232**] FIG. **31** is a flowchart showing the detailed steps of the image correction main processing S**38** according to the present embodiment. The perspective distortion correction processing unit **89** initializes the y-coordinate value j of the correction target image to 0 (S**80**). Next, it initializes the x-coordinate value i of the correction target image to 0 (S**82**).

[**0233**] The perspective distortion correction processing unit **89** maps a point P(i, j) of the correction target image by using the perspective distortion function G (S**84**). The point mapped by the perspective distortion function G will be denoted as $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$:

$$(x_{ij}, y_{ij})=G(i, j)$$

[**0234**] FIGS. **32**A to **32**C are diagrams for explaining how a point in a correction target image is mapped onto a point

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in a correction object image. FIG. **32**A shows a correction target image **322** which corresponds to the original image area **20** in the captured image. The correction target image **322** has a size of W in width and H in height. FIG. **32**C shows a correction object image **342** which is a captured image having both lens distortion and perspective distortion. The entire captured area **26**, including the original image area **20**, is lens- and perspective-distorted. At step S**35** of FIG. **29**, the lens distortion correction processing unit **88** corrects the lens distortion of the correction object image **342** of FIG. **32**C by using the lens distortion function F^{-1}. This transforms the correction object image **324** into a lens-distortion-corrected image **330** of FIG. **32**B. In the lens-distortion-corrected image **330**, the lens distortion of the entire captured area **26** including the original image area **20** is eliminated, whereas the perspective distortion still remains.

[**0235**] At step S**84** of FIG. **31**, the point P(i, j) in the correction target image **322** is mapped onto the point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ in the lens-distortion-corrected image **330** which has the perspective distortion, by using the perspective distortion function G as shown in FIG. **32**.

[**0236**] The perspective distortion correction unit **89** calculates the luminance value $L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ at the point $Q(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ by interpolating the luminance values of peripheral pixels by a bi-linear interpolation method or the like. The luminance value $L(x_{ij}, y_{ij})$ calculated is set as the luminance value at the point P(i, j) of the correction target image (S**88**).

[**0237**] The x-coordinate value i is incremented by one (S**90**). If the x-coordinate value i is smaller than the width W of the correction target image (N at S**92**), the processing returns to step S**84**. The processing for determining the luminance value of a pixel is thus repeated while increasing the coordinate value in the x-axis direction.

[**0238**] If the x-coordinate value i reaches or exceeds the width W of the correction target image (Y at S**92**), it means that the luminance values of the pixels at the current y-coordinate value j are obtained through the x-axis direction. The y-coordinate value j is then incremented by one (S**94**). If the y-coordinate value j reaches or exceeds the height H of the correction target image (Y at S**96**), the processing ends since the luminance values are obtained of all the pixels of the correction target image. If the y-coordinate value j is smaller than the height H of the correction target image (N at S**96**), the processing returns to step S**82**. The x-coordinate value is initialized to zero again, and the processing for determining the luminance value of a pixel is repeated while the coordinate value is increased in the x-axis direction under the new y-coordinate value j.

[**0239**] As described above, the electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** according to the present embodiment can utilize lens distortion correction functions to detect the position deviations of feature points ascribable to perspective distortion, and determine the perspective distortion function accurately upon each capturing. Consequently, even when an image has perspective distortion aside from lens distortion, the lens distortion and the perspective distortion can be processed separately for accurate distortion correction.

[**0240**] Up to this point, the present invention has been described in conjunction with an embodiment thereof. The foregoing embodiment has been given solely by way of illustration. It will be understood by those skilled in the art that various modifications may be made to combinations of the foregoing components and processes, and all such modifications are also intended to fall within the scope of the present invention.

[**0241**] The foregoing embodiment has deal with the case where a perspective distortion function is calculated for the purpose of correcting perspective distortion. Instead, in one modification, profile data on lattice configurations that show several patterns of perspective distortion may be stored in the profile database **40** in advance. For example, when capturing the lattice pattern image R, the optical axis is tilted in various directions and angles so that a plurality of lattice patterns having perspective distortion are captured and stored in the profile database **40** in advance. Then, during image correction, perspective distortion is corrected by using the most suitable one of the lattice patterns.

[**0242**] The foregoing description has dealt with the case where the lens distortion function pairs are registered in the profile database **40**. Nevertheless, the correspondence between the points in the correction target image and the points in the correction object image may be stored in the profile database **40** in the form of tables, not functions. In this case, the correction target image may be sectioned into lattices according to the size of the embedded blocks of the watermark. The correspondence between the lattice points alone is then stored into the profile database **40** as profile data on lens distortion.

[**0243**] In the foregoing steps of detecting a watermark, if watermark detection fails, the threshold and other parameters are adjusted and the image correction processing is repeated to retry the watermark detection. Nevertheless, if watermark detection fails or if the number of corrections exceeds a predetermined number, the image correction unit **34** may request the capturing unit **30** to capture the printed image P again.

[**0244**] The data on the lens distortion function pairs may be stored in the profile database **40** as classified by the models of capturing devices including digital cameras and scanners. The electronic watermark extracting apparatus **200** may acquire model information on the capturing device, and select and use the data on lens distortion function pairs suited to the model that is used when capturing the printed image P.

[**0245**] The foregoing embodiment has dealt with the case where image correction is performed on the original image area **20** of an image in which an electronic watermark is embedded by the "block embedding method." Nevertheless, this is just an example of embodiment of the image correction technology of the present invention. According to the configuration and processing steps described in the foregoing embodiment, it is possible to correct images in which electronic watermarks are embedded by other methods. Moreover, according to the configurations and processing steps of image correction described in the foregoing embodiment, it is possible to correct ordinary images having no electronic watermark embedded therein. For example, the image correction technology of the present invention is not limited to the correction of captured images of printed images, but may also be applied to the correction of images obtained by photographing actual subjects such as a personal figure and a landscape with a camera.

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Third Embodiment

[0246] FIG. **33** is a block diagram of an image data provision system **1100** to which the present invention is applied. This image data provision system **1100** is intended to provide two-dimensional images of a product (here, digital camera), or a three-dimensional object, taken from various points of view to clients.

[0247] The product image data provision system **1100** comprises a server **1001**, a camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**, and a printed material **1003**. A watermarked product image **1007** is printed on the printed material **1003**.

[0248] FIG. **34** shows a conceptual rendering of the watermarked product image **1007**. This watermarked product image **1007** is a side view of the product (here, digital camera), a three-dimensional object. Identification information corresponding to the product is embedded in this image in the form of an electronic watermark.

[0249] In the following description of the present embodiment, as shown in the diagram, the horizontal direction of the watermarked product image **1007** will be referred to as x direction and the vertical direction of the watermarked product image **1007** as y direction. The direction perpendicular to the watermarked product image **1007**, piercing the image from the back to the front, will be referred to as z direction.

[0250] A client captures the watermarked product image **1007** with the camera (camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**) tilted according to the desired point of view of a two-dimensional image of the product. The digital image data obtained by this capturing is transmitted to the server **1001**.

[0251] Receiving this image data, the server **1001** corrects perspective distortion that occurs in the image data since the camera is tilted by the client when capturing. Next, the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology is detected from the corrected image data. Based on the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology and perspective distortion information obtained during correction, two-dimensional image data on the corresponding product, taken from a point of view (such as obliquely above and obliquely sideways), is selected from an image database of the server **1001**. The two-dimensional image data selected from the image database is returned to the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**.

[0252] For example, as shown in FIG. **35**A, when the client captures the watermarked product image **1007** from top left ("+z, −x" side), the server **1001** transmits two-dimensional image data of the product as viewed from the front (FIG. **36**) to the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** of the client.

[0253] When the client captures the watermarked product image **1007** from top right ("+z, +x" side) as shown in FIG. **35**B, the server **1001** transmits two-dimensional image data of the product as viewed from behind (FIG. **37**) to the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** of the client.

[0254] When the client captures the watermarked product image **1007** from directly above ("+z" side) as shown in FIG. **35**C, the server **1001** transmits high-resolution two-dimensional image data of the product as viewed sideways (not shown) to the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** of the client.

[0255] FIG. **38** is a block diagram of the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** according to the present embodiment. The camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** includes a CCD **1021**, an image processing circuit **1022**, a control circuit **1023**, an LCD **1024**, a transmitter-receiver unit **1025**, an operation unit **1026**, etc. It should be noted that the diagram shows only those components of the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** that are necessary for camera facilities and communications with the server **1001**. The rest of the configuration is omitted from the diagram.

[0256] Imaging data on a captured image **1006** (see FIG. **34**) captured by the CCD **1021** is digitally converted into digital image data by the image processing circuit **1022**.

[0257] The transmitter-receiver unit **1025** performs data communication processing with exterior. Specifically, it transmits the digital image data to the server **1001** and receives data transmitted from the server **1001**.

[0258] The LCD **1024** displays the digital image data and data transmitted from exterior.

[0259] The operation unit **1026** has buttons for making a call, as well as a shutter button and the like necessary for capturing.

[0260] The image processing circuit **1022**, the LCD **1024**, the transmitter-receiver unit **1025**, and the operation unit **1026** are connected with the control circuit **1023**.

[0261] FIG. **39** is a block diagram of the server **1001** according to the present embodiment. The server **1001** comprises such components as a transmitter-receiver unit **1011**, a feature point detection unit **1012**, a perspective distortion detection unit **1013**, a perspective distortion correction unit **1014**, a watermark extraction unit **1015**, an image database **1016**, an image data indexing unit **1017**, and a control unit **1018**.

[0262] The transmitter-receiver unit **1011** performs transmission and reception processing with exterior. Specifically, it receives digital image data transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**, and transmits information data to the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**.

[0263] The feature point detection unit **1012** performs processing for detecting feature points from the digital image data received by the transmitter-receiver unit **1011**. Here, the feature points are ones intended for cutting out the area of the watermarked product image **1007** (for example, four feature points lying at the four corners of the frame of the watermarked product image **1007**). The method for detecting these feature points is described, for example, in the specification of a patent application filed by the applicant (Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-418272).

[0264] The feature point detection unit **1012** also performs image decoding processing, if necessary, before the feature point detection processing. For example, when the digital image data is JPEG image data, the feature point detection processing must be preceded by decoding processing for converting the JPEG image data into a two-dimensional array of data that expresses level values at respective coordinates.

[0265] The perspective distortion detection unit **1013** detects perspective distortion from the digital image data transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**.

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Then, based on this perspective distortion, it estimates the capturing direction in which the image is captured by the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**. Now, the method of estimating the capturing direction will be described below.

[**0266**] FIG. **40** shows a captured image **1006** of the watermarked product image **1007** when captured from directly above (the "+z" side of FIG. **34**). FIG. **41** shows the captured image **1006** of the watermarked product image **1007** when captured from top left (the "+z, −x" side of FIG. **34**). FIG. **42** shows the captured image **1006** of the watermarked product image **1007** when captured from top right (the "+z, +x" side of FIG. **34**). In FIGS. **40** to **42**, the horizontal direction of the captured image **1006** will be referred to as x' direction, and the vertical direction as y' direction.

[**0267**] Referring to FIG. **40** (or FIG. **41**, FIG. **42**), the capturing direction is detected based on the relationship between a distance d_{13} and a distance d_{24}. Here, d_{13} is the distance between a first feature point which falls on the top left corner ("−x', +y'" side) of the area of the watermarked product image **1007** and a third feature point which falls on the bottom left ("−x', −y'" side) of the same. Then, d_{24} is the distance between a second feature point which falls on the top right corner ("+x', +y'" side) of the area of the watermarked product image **1007** and a fourth feature point which falls on the bottom right corner ("+x', −y'" side) of the same.

[**0268**] Referring to FIG. **40**, when the watermarked product image **1007** is captured from directly above, $d_{13}=d_{24}$. Thus, if the distances between the feature points detected by the feature point detection unit **1012** have the relationship $d_{13}=d_{24}$, the perspective distortion detection unit **1013** recognizes that the captured image **1006** is one obtained when the watermarked product image **1007** is captured from directly above (the "+z" side of FIG. **34**).

[**0269**] Referring to FIG. **41**, when the watermarked product image **1007** is captured from top left, $d_{13}>d_{24}$. Thus, if the distances between the feature points detected by the feature point detection unit **1012** have the relationship $d_{13}>d_{24}$, the perspective distortion detection unit **1013** recognizes that the captured image **1006** is one obtained when the watermarked product image **1007** is captured from top left (the "+z, −x" side of FIG. **34**).

[**0270**] Referring to FIG. **42**, when the watermarked product image **1007** is captured from top right, $d_{13}<d_{24}$. Thus, if the distances between the feature points detected by the feature point detection unit **1012** have the relationship $d_{13}<d_{24}$, the perspective distortion detection unit **1013** recognizes that the captured image **1006** is one obtained when the watermarked product image **1007** is captured from top right (the "+z, +x" side of FIG. **34**).

[**0271**] It should be appreciated that the perspective distortion detection unit **1013** need not necessarily make determinations as mentioned above, or:

[**0272**] if $d_{13}=d_{24}$, the image is captured from above;

[**0273**] if $d_{13}<d_{24}$, the image is captured from top right; and

[**0274**] if $d_{13}>d_{24}$, the image is captured from top left.

Instead, the perspective distortion detection unit **1013** may assume a certain positive value a and make determinations as follows:

[**0275**] if $d_{13}-d_{24}|<\alpha$, the image is captured from above;

[**0276**] if $d_{24}-d_{13}\geqq\alpha$, the image is captured from top right; and

[**0277**] if $d_{13}-d_{24}\geqq\alpha$, the image is captured from top left.

Here, α is a parameter for allowing deviations in perspective distortion occurring at the time of capturing.

[**0278**] The perspective distortion detection unit **1013** may also assume a certain positive value β (where $\beta>\alpha$), so that

$$\text{if } |d_{13}-d_{24}|>\beta,$$

it aborts the subsequent processing of the digital image data, determining that the subsequent correction of the perspective distortion or the detection of a watermark is impossible.

[**0279**] The perspective distortion correction unit **1014** corrects the perspective distortion of the digital image data detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1013**. The method of correcting perspective distortion is described, for example, in the specification of a patent application filed by the applicant (Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-397502).

[**0280**] From the digital image data whose perspective distortion is corrected by the perspective distortion correction unit **1014**, the watermark extraction unit **1015** extracts information embedded by the electronic watermark technology. The method of extracting this electronic watermark information is described, for example, in the publication of an unexamined patent application filed by the applicant (Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication No. 2003-244419).

[**0281**] The image database **1016** contains two-dimensional image data obtained by capturing a variety of products, or three-dimensional objects, from various angles.

[**0282**] The image data indexing unit **1017** contains index information on the two-dimensional image data stored in the image database **1016**. More specifically, referring to FIG. **43**, the image data indexing unit **1017** contains information on the contents of the two-dimensional image data and information on the top addresses of the two-dimensional image data in the image database **1016**, with product ID indicating the product model/model number and perspective distortion information as two index keys. The product ID corresponds to the electronic watermark information embedded in digital image data, extracted from the digital image data by the watermark extraction unit **1015**. The information on the top addresses is used to index the images. Any information may be used as long as the images can be identified uniquely.

[**0283**] The perspective distortion information corresponds to the perspective distortion detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1013**, i.e., the capturing direction at the time of capturing by the client. When the client captures the watermarked product image **1007** from directly above, the perspective distortion information will be "0." When the client captures the watermarked product image **1007** from top left, the perspective distortion information will be "1."

When the client captures the watermarked product image **1007** from top right, the perspective distortion information will be "2."

[**0284**] The control unit **1018** controls the components of the server **1001**.

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[0285] It should be noted that in terms of hardware, these components can be achieved by an arbitrary computer CPU, a memory, and other LSIs. In terms of software, they can be achieved by programs or the like that are loaded on a memory and have the functions for processing images and embedding electronic watermarks. The functional blocks shown here are achieved by the cooperation of these. It will thus be understood by those skilled in the art that these functional blocks may be achieved in various forms including hardware alone, software alone, and a combination of these.

[0286] FIG. **44** is a flowchart showing the processing of the server **1001** according to the present embodiment.

[0287] At step S**1001**, the transmitter-receiver unit **1011** receives digital image data transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**. At step S**1002**, the feature point detection unit **1012** performs processing for detecting feature points intended for cutting out the area of the watermarked product image **1007** (for example, four feature points lying at the four corners of the frame of the watermarked product image **1007**) from the digital image data received by the transmitter-receiver unit **1011**. If necessary, the feature point detection unit **1012** performs image decoding processing before the feature point detection processing.

[0288] At step S**1003**, the perspective distortion detection unit **1013** detects perspective distortion of the digital image data transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**. The method of detecting the perspective distortion is as described above.

[0289] At step S**1004**, the perspective distortion correction unit **1014** corrects the perspective distortion detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1013**.

[0290] At step **1005**, the watermark extraction unit **1015** extracts information embedded by the electronic watermark technology, from the digital image data whose perspective distortion is corrected by the perspective distortion correction unit **1014**.

[0291] At step S**1006**, the image data indexing unit **1017** is consulted with the information extracted by the watermark extraction unit **1015** and the perspective distortion information detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1013** as index keys. In consequence, the type of two-dimensional image data requested by the user is identified.

[0292] At step S**1007**, the image database **1016** is consulted to acquire the two-dimensional image data identified at the foregoing step S**1006**.

[0293] At step S**1008**, the transmitter-receiver unit **1011** performs the processing of transmitting the two-dimensional image data acquired from the image database **1016** to the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**.

[0294] According to the present embodiment, the client can transfer a plurality of pieces of information (the product to view and the desired point of view) to the server of the image database by a single capturing operation. Conventionally, the client had to select the desired point of view by pressing a button down after capturing the watermarked image of the product to view. Otherwise, the administrator of the image database had to provide a number of watermarked images corresponding to the combinations of products and the points of view.

[0295] According to the present embodiment, it is therefore possible to reduce the operation burden on the client and improve the economic efficiency for the administrator of the image database as well.

Modification 1 of Third Embodiment

[0296] The third embodiment has dealt with the case where the watermarked product image **1007** is captured with the camera tilted according to the desired point of view of the two-dimensional image of the product, a three-dimensional object. The capturing directions, however, are not limited to the three directions in the foregoing example.

[0297] Suppose, for example, that the client wants to view an image of the product taken from the top (the ceiling side). Then, the client can acquire the image taken from the ceiling side from the server **1001** by capturing the watermarked product image **1007** from the "+z, +y" side of FIG. **34**.

[0298] Suppose also that the client wants to view an image of the product taken from the bottom (the floor side). Then, the client can acquire the image taken from the floor side from the server **1001** by capturing the watermarked product image **1007** from the "+z, −y" side.

[0299] In such cases, referring to FIGS. **45**A and **45**B, the capturing direction is detected based on the relationship between a distance d_{12} and a distance d_{34}. Here, d_{12} is the distance between the first feature point which falls on the top left corner ("−x', +y'" side) of the area of the watermarked product image **1007** and the second feature point which falls on the top right corner ("+x', +y'" side) of the same. Then, d_{34} is the distance between the third feature point which falls on the bottom left corner ("−x', −y'" side) of the area of the watermarked product image **1007** and the fourth feature point which falls on the bottom right corner ("+x', −y'" side) of the same.

[0300] More specifically:

[0301] i) if $d_{12}>d_{34}$, the server **1001** recognizes that the image is captured from the "+z, +y" side, and that the client wants the image of the product taken from the top (the ceiling side); and

[0302] ii) if $d_{12}<d_{34}$, the server **1001** recognizes that the image is captured from the "+z, −y" side, and that the client wants the image of the product taken from the bottom (the floor side).

Modification 2 of Third Embodiment

[0303] As shown in FIG. **46**, the two diagonals of the watermarked product image **1007** will now be referred to as ξ-axis and η-axis, respectively. If the client wants an image of the rear of the product as viewed from the ceiling side, he/she can capture the watermarked product image **1007** from the "+z, +ξ" side to obtain the corresponding image. If the client wants an image of the rear of the product as viewed from the floor side, he/she can capture the watermarked product image **1007** from the "+z, +η" side to obtain the corresponding image.

[0304] In such cases:

[0305] iii) if $d_{12}>d_{34}$ and $d_{13}<d_{24}$, the server **1001** recognizes that the image is captured from the "+z, +ξ" side; and

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[0306] iv) if $d_{12}<d_{34}$ and $d_{13}<d_{24}$, the server **1001** recognizes that the image is captured from the "+z, +η" side.

Modification 3 of Third Embodiment

[0307] The foregoing examples have dealt with a system for providing images of a digital camera, a three-dimensional object, taken from respective points of view to clients. Nevertheless, the present invention may also be applied to a system for providing images of a passenger vehicle, a three-dimensional object, taken from respective points of view to clients.

Experomental Example of Third Embodiment

[0308] A system having the same configuration as that of the image data provision system **1100** described in the third embodiment was constructed and subjected to an experiment. In this experiment, the diagonal length of a subject image (corresponding to the watermarked product image **1007** of the third embodiment) was 70.0 mm, the diagonal length of the CCD was 8.86 mm (1/1.8 inch), the focal length of the camera lens was 7.7 mm, and the distance from the subject to the lens center was set to range from 70 to 100 mm.

[0309] As a result, even if the subject image was captured with perspective distortion, it was possible to correct the perspective distortion and extract the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology unless the angle formed between the normal to the subject image and the optical axis of the camera exceeded 20°.

[0310] The present invention would have poor practicability if information embedded by the electronic watermark technology could not be extracted from images that were captured at angles considerably off from directly above. In fact, as shown from the foregoing experimental result, the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology can be extracted even when the images are captured at angles off from directly above as largely as 20°. The present invention thus has high practicability.

[0311] In this experiment, the testing system was set to make the following determinations: if the angle formed between the normal to the subject image and the optical axis of the camera was below 5°, the subject image was captured from directly above, and if the angle formed between the normal to the subject image and the optical axis of the camera reaches or exceeds 5°, the subject image was captured obliquely . In this experiment, misrecognition of the capturing direction was not observed at all.

Fourth Embodiment

[0312] The third embodiment has dealt with the case where the perspective distortion of the digital image transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** is detected and corrected by the server **1001**.

[0313] In the present embodiment, on the other hand, the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** performs perspective distortion detection and correction before transmitting digital image data to the server **1001**. The information on the perspective distortion detected is stored in a header area of the digital image data. The data area of the digital image data contains the image data whose perspective distortion is corrected.

[0314] FIG. **47** is a block diagram of the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** according to the present embodiment.

[0315] The camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** includes a CCD **1021**, an image processing circuit **1022**, a control circuit **1023**, an LCD **1024**, a transmitter-receiver unit **1025**, an operation unit **1026**, a feature point detection unit **1027**, a perspective distortion detection unit **1028**, a perspective distortion correction unit **1029**, a header adding unit **1030**, etc. It should be noted that the diagram shows only those components of the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** that are necessary for camera facilities, perspective distortion correcting functions, and communications with the server **1001**. The rest of the configuration is omitted from the diagram.

[0316] The CCD **1021**, the image processing circuit **1022**, the control circuit **1023**, the LCD **1024**, and the operation unit **1026** are the same as those of the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** according to the third embodiment. Detailed description thereof will thus be omitted.

[0317] The feature point detection unit **1027** performs processing for detecting feature points of the area of the watermarked product image **1007** from the digital image data generated by the image processing circuit **1022**. As employed here, the feature points shall refer to four feature points lying at the four corners of the frame of the watermarked product image **1007**.

[0318] The perspective distortion detection unit **1028** detects perspective distortion of the digital image data. The method of detecting the perspective distortion is the same as with the perspective distortion detection unit **1013** of the server **1001** according to the third embodiment. Detailed description will thus be omitted.

[0319] The perspective distortion correction unit **1029** corrects the perspective distortion detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1028**. As with the perspective distortion correction unit **1014** of the server **1001** according to the third embodiment, the examples of the correction method include the technology described in the specification of Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-397502.

[0320] The header adding unit **1030** adds the information on the perspective distortion detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1028** to the header area of the digital image data.

[0321] The digital image data accompanied with the information on the perspective distortion is transmitted from the transmitter-receiver unit **22** to the server **1001**.

[0322] It should be appreciated that the information on the perspective distortion detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1028** may be displayed on the LCD **1024**. This makes it possible for the client to check if his/her own choice is reflected on his/her capturing operation before transmitting the digital image data to the server **1001**.

[0323] It should be noted that in terms of hardware, these components can be achieved by an arbitrary computer CPU, a memory, and other LSIs. In terms of software, they can be achieved by programs or the like that are loaded on a memory and have the functions for processing images and embedding electronic watermarks. The functional blocks shown here are achieved by the cooperation of these. It will thus be understood by those skilled in the art that these

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functional blocks may be achieved in various forms including hardware alone, software alone, and a combination of these.

[0324] FIG. **48** is a block diagram of the server **1001** according to the present embodiment. The server **1001** includes a transmitter-receiver unit **1011**, a watermark extraction unit **1015**, an image database **1016**, an image data indexing unit **1017**, a control unit **1018**,a header information detection unit **1019**, etc.

[0325] As in the server **1001** of the third embodiment, the transmitter-receiver unit **1011** performs data transmission and reception processing.

[0326] The watermark extraction unit **1015** extracts information embedded by the electronic watermark technology from digital image data received by the transmitter-receiver unit **1011**.

[0327] The header information detection unit **1019** detects perspective distortion information stored in the header area of the digital image data transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**.

[0328] As in the server **1001** of the third embodiment, the image database **1016** contains two-dimensional image data obtained by capturing a variety of products, or three-dimensional objects, from various angles.

[0329] The image data indexing unit **1017** also contains index data on the two-dimensional image data stored in the image database **1016** as in the server **1001** of the third embodiment (see FIG. **43**). Nevertheless, a difference from the server **1001** of the third embodiment lies in that the perspective distortion information, an index key, is detected by the header information detection unit **1019**.

[0330] It should be noted that in terms of hardware, these components can also be achieved by an arbitrary computer CPU, a memory, and other LSIs. In terms of software, they can be achieved by programs or the like that are loaded on a memory and have the functions for processing images and embedding electronic watermarks. The functional blocks shown here are achieved by the cooperation of these. It will thus be understood by those skilled in the art that these functional blocks may be achieved in various forms including hardware alone, software alone, and a combination of these.

[0331] FIG. **49** is a flowchart showing the processing of the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** according to the present embodiment.

[0332] When the client presses down a shutter button on the operation unit **1026**, the CCD **1021** performs imaging processing (step **S1011**). At step **S1012**, the image processing circuit **1022** performs digital conversion processing on the imaging data.

[0333] At step **S1013**, the feature point detection unit **1027** performs processing for detecting feature points of the area of the watermarked product image **1007** (here, four feature points lying at the four corners of the frame of the watermarked product image **1007**) from the digital image data generated by the image processing circuit **1022**.

[0334] At step **S1014**, the perspective distortion detection unit **1028** detects perspective distortion of the digital image data. At step **S1015**, the perspective distortion correction unit **1029** corrects the perspective distortion of the digital image data detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1028**.

[0335] At step **S1016**, the header adding unit **1030** adds the information on the perspective distortion detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1028** to the header area of the digital image data whose perspective distortion is corrected by the perspective distortion correction unit **1029**.

[0336] At step **S1017**, the transmitter-receiver unit **1025** performs processing for transmitting the digital image data having the information on the perspective distortion added by the header adding unit **1030** to the server **1001**.

[0337] FIG. **50** is a flowchart showing the processing of the server **1001** according to the present embodiment.

[0338] At step **S1021**, the transmitter-receiver unit **1011** receives digital image data transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**. At step **S1022**, the header information detection unit **1019** detects perspective distortion information stored in the header area of the digital image data transmitted from the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**.

[0339] At step **S1023**, the watermark extraction unit **1015** extracts information embedded by the electronic watermark technology from the digital image data received by the transmitter-receiver unit **1011**.

[0340] At step **S1024**, the image data indexing unit **1017** is consulted with the information extracted by the watermark extraction unit **1015** and the information perspective distortion information detected by the header information detection unit **1019** as index keys. In consequence, the type of two-dimensional image data requested by the user is identified.

[0341] At step **S1025**, the image database **1016** is consulted to acquire the two-dimensional image data identified at the foregoing step **S1024**.

[0342] At step **S1026**, the transmitter-receiver unit **1011** performs the processing for transmitting the two-dimensional image data acquired from the image database **1016** to the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**.

[0343] According to the present embodiment, perspective distortion is detected and corrected by the client terminal. As compared to the third embodiment, this can reduce the load on the server which is in charge of watermark detection.

Modification 1 of Fourth Embodiment

[0344] In the fourth embodiment, the client terminal performs both detection and correction of perspective distortion. Instead, the client terminal may perform detection of perspective distortion alone, so that the correction is committed to the server side. In such cases, when the terminal determines that the perspective distortion included in the digital image data is too high, it may display a message on the LCD, requesting the client to recapture, instead of transmitting the image data to the server.

Modification 2 of Fourth Embodiment

[0345] In the fourth embodiment, perspective distortion is detected and corrected by the client terminal while electronic watermarks are extracted on the server side. Instead,

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the extraction of electronic watermarks may also be performed by the client terminal. Here, the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology (product identification information) and the information on the detected perspective distortion (information corresponding to the desired point of view of the client) are transmitted from the client terminal to the server. The server determines the type of two-dimensional image data to provide to the client based on the product identification information and the information on the desired point of view of the client which are transmitted from the client terminal.

Modification 3 of Fourth Embodiment

[0346] The client terminal according to the foregoing modification 2 of the fourth embodiment may further comprise an image database. Then, based on the information embedded by the electronic watermark technology (product identification information) and the information on the detected perspective distortion (information corresponding to the desired point of view of the client), the client terminal may select an image from the image database and display the selected image on its display unit. Alternatively, a thumbnail of the selected image may be displayed on the display unit.

Fifth Embodiment

[0347] In the third and fourth embodiments, the client can acquire two-dimensional image data on a product as viewed from a desired point of view by capturing a watermarked product image while tilting the camera according to the point of view.

[0348] In the present embodiment, the client can select optional features of a product to purchase (the type of wrapping paper) by capturing a watermarked product image.

[0349] FIG **51** is a block diagram of a product purchase system **1300** according to the present embodiment. The product purchase system **1300** comprises a server **1020**, a camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**, and a printed material **1003**.

[0350] Referring to FIG. **52**, a watermarked product image **1008** is printed on the printed material **1003**. In the following description of the present embodiment, as in the third embodiment, the horizontal direction of the watermarked product image **1008** will be referred to as x direction, and the vertical direction of the watermarked product image **1008** as y direction. The direction perpendicular to the watermarked product image **1008**, piercing the image from the back to the front, will be referred to as z direction.

[0351] FIG **53** is a block diagram of the server **1020** according to the present embodiment. The server **1020** comprises such components as a transmitter-receiver unit **1011**, a feature point detection unit **1012**, a perspective distortion detection unit **1013**, a perspective distortion correction unit **1014**, a watermark extraction unit **1015**, a product information database **1036**, and a control unit **1018**. The transmitter-receiver unit **1011**, the feature point detection unit **1012**, the perspective distortion detection unit **1013**, the perspective distortion correction unit **1014**, the watermark extraction unit **1015**, and the control unit **1018** are the same as those of the server **1001** according to the third embodiment. Detailed description thereof will thus be omitted.

[0352] FIG. **54** shows the contents of the product database **1036** in the server **1020** of the present embodiment. The product database **1036** contains product-related information with product ID and perspective distortion information as two index keys. In the present embodiment, the products shall be gift products. Product IDs are ones corresponding to the types of the products (models, forms, or the like). The perspective distortion information pertains to the colors of wrapping paper for wrapping the products. FIG. **55** is a conceptual diagram of the product purchase system **1300** according to the present embodiment. When a client who wants to purchase a product wants the product wrapped in white wrapping paper, the client captures the watermarked product image **1008** placed on the x-y plane from top left ("−x, +z" side) by using a camera with communication facilities (the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**) (see FIG. **55**(1*a*)). The watermarked product image **1008** contains a product ID which is embedded in the form of an electronic watermark.

[0353] When the client who wants to purchase the product wants the product wrapped in black wrapping paper, the client captures the watermarked product image **1008** from top right ("+x, +z" side) by using the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** (see FIG. **55**(1*b*)).

[0354] The captured image is subjected to digital conversion processing, and the resulting digital image data is transmitted to the server **1001** (see FIG. **55**(2)). The perspective distortion correction function **1014** of the server **1020** corrects perspective distortion of the digital image data based on the information on the perspective distortion detected by the perspective distortion detection unit **1013**. Next, the watermark extraction unit **1015** extracts the information on the product ID embedded in the form of the electronic watermark from the perspective-distortion-corrected digital image data (see FIG. **55**(3)). Then, based on the product ID information and the perspective distortion information, the server **1020** consults the product information database **1036** and determines the product to deliver to the client and its wrapping method (see FIG. **55**(4)).

[0355] In this way, the product purchase system **1300** according to the present embodiment makes it possible for clients to select the colors of wrapping paper for products by means of the capturing angles.

Modification of Fifth Embodiment

[0356] In the foregoing embodiment, the client selects the color of the wrapping paper for the product, whether black or white, by capturing the printed mater **1003** from obliquely above (in either one of two directions). The client who uses the product purchase system **1300** may also select the color of the wrapping paper other than black and white by capturing the printed material **1003** in directions other than described in the foregoing embodiment.

[0357] For example, when the client who wants to purchase the product wants the product wrapped in blue wrapping paper, he/she captures the watermarked product image **1008** from "+z, −y" side by using the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** (see FIG. **56**A). When the client who wants to purchase the product wants the product wrapped in red wrapping paper, the client captures the watermarked product image **1008** from "+z, +y" side by using the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** (see FIG. **56**B).

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[0358] In these cases, the capturing direction can be detected by the same method as in modification 1 of the third embodiment, described with reference to FIG. **45**.

Sixth Embodiment

[0359] The capturing angle of a camera may be utilized as a means for indicating client's intention in an interactive system.

[0360] FIG. **57** is a diagram showing the configuration of a quiz answering system **1400**, which is an example of such an interactive system. The quiz answering system **1400** comprises such components as a server **1010**, a camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**, and a question card **1009**.

[0361] The client changes the capturing angle of the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002** when capturing the question card **1009**, thereby answering the quiz printed on the question card **1009**. The question cars **1009** has quiz questions printed thereon, and is divided into sections corresponding to the questions. For example, question 1 is printed on the section Q1 of the question card **1009**. Question 2 is printed on the section Q2 of the question card **1009**. In each of the sections Q1, Q2, . . . , the identification number of the question card **1009** and the number of the quiz question are embedded in the form of electronic watermarks. For example, the identification number of the question card **1009** and the information indicating that the quiz question number is 1 are embedded in the section Q1 in the form of electronic watermarks.

[0362] Each section of the question card is bordered with a thick frame, so that the server **1010** can detect perspective distortion of the captured image from the distortion of the frame appearing on the captured image.

[0363] Description will now be given of an example of client operations in such a quiz answering system **1400**. For question 1 of the question card **1009** in FIG. **57**, asking "Who was the first president of the United States?", the client captures the section Q1 of the question card **1009** from top left as shown in FIG. **58**A when selecting "1: Washington." When selecting "2: Lincoln," the client captures the section Q1 of the question card **1009** from top right as shown in FIG. **58**B.

[0364] The digital image data on the question card **1009**, captured by the camera-equipped cellular phone **1002**, is transmitted to the server **1010**. The server **1010** corrects perspective distortion of the digital image data, and stores the direction of distortion (the number of the answer selected by the client) that is detected during this distortion correction. Then, the server **1010** extracts the identification number of the question card **1009** and the quiz question number embedded in the form of electronic watermarks from the distortion-corrected digital image data.

[0365] Furthermore, the server **1010** consults a database (a database that contains question numbers and the numbers of the corresponding right answers) based on the quiz question number extracted and the answer number detected, thereby determining if the answer from the client is correct.

[0366] Note that the foregoing example has dealt with the case where the question card **1009**, a printed material, contains both text information for showing quiz questions and electronic watermark information including quiz question numbers. Instead, the text information for showing quiz questions and the electronic watermark information such as quiz question numbers may appear not on a printed material but on a TV broadcasting screen. According to such an embodiment, it is possible to realize an online quiz show of audience participation type. Moreover, such an embodiment may be applied to telephone polling questionnaires in TV programs.

OTHER MODIFICATIONS

[0367] Other possible modifications include the following:

[0368] (1) Application for a restaurant menu: Watermark information is embedded in the pictures of dishes and provisions. The restaurant menu can be captured to display detailed information on dishes, guest reviews, etc. Other information such as the scent of the dishes is also applicable.

[0369] (2) Application for a museum guidebook: A museum guidebook can be captured to provide voice or visual descriptions on collections.

[0370] In both of the foregoing applications (1) and (2), description languages such as English, Japanese, and French can be switched depending on the capturing angle. For example, an identical watermarked image can be captured obliquely from the front to show Japanese description, and obliquely from behind to show English description. This has the advantage that menus and pamphlets need not be prepared for each individual language.

[0371] The foregoing embodiments disclosed herein are to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive. The scope of the invention is indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description of the embodiments, and all changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

[0372] The foregoing embodiments have dealt with the cases where the client captures a watermarked product image obliquely. Nevertheless, the client may put the camera directly above a watermarked image and capture the image with the camera tilted. For example, suppose that the client captures the image while holding the camera as tilted the left side up and the right side down. Then, in the captured image, the left edge of the area of the watermarked image (in FIG. **42**, between the first and third feature points) becomes smaller in length than the right edge (in FIG. **42**, between the second and fourth feature points). In such cases, the server determines that the client captures the watermarked image from top right ("+z, +x" direction of FIG. **34**).

[0373] The foregoing embodiments have dealt with the cases where the client captures in oblique directions an image in which product information is embedded by the electronic watermark technology. Instead, the client may obliquely capture a printed material in which product information is embedded in the form of a one- or two-dimensional barcode. In this case, the electronic watermark extraction unit of the present invention is replaced with a one- or two-dimensional barcode reader.

[0374] An information database apparatus may also be provided, comprising: a distortion detection unit for detecting image distortion from imaging data obtained by an imaging device; an information data storing unit for storing

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information data; and a selector unit for selecting information data stored in the information data storing unit based on the image distortion detected by the distortion detection unit.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

[0375] The present invention is applicable to the field of image processing.

1. An image correction apparatus comprising:

a lens distortion calculation unit which acquires information on zoom magnifications contained in data of known images captured at respective different zoom magnifications, and calculates lens distortion correction information with respect to each zoom magnification; and

a storing unit which stores the lens distortion correction information in association with the zoom magnifications.

2. An image correction apparatus comprising:

a storing unit which contains lens distortion correction information in association with zoom magnifications of a lens;

a selection unit which acquires from data of an input captured image, information on a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of the captured image, and selects lens distortion correction information corresponding to the zoom magnification from the storing unit; and

a distortion correction unit which corrects distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the lens distortion correction information selected.

3. The image correction apparatus according to claim 2, wherein

the selection unit selects from the storing unit a plurality of candidate pieces of lens distortion correction information in accordance with the zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing, and correct a row of sample points forming a known shape in the captured image by using each of the plurality of pieces of lens distortion correction information for error pre-evaluation, and thereby selects one piece of lens distortion correction information from among the plurality of pieces of lens distortion correction information.

4. An image correction apparatus comprising:

a lens distortion calculation unit which acquires information on zoom magnifications contained in data of known images captured at respective different zoom magnifications, and calculates a lens distortion correction function for mapping points in a lens-distorted image onto points in an image having no lens distortion and a lens distortion function, or an approximate inverse function of the lens distortion correction function, with respect to each lens magnification; and

a storing unit which stores the pairs of lens distortion correction functions and lens distortion functions in association with the zoom magnifications.

5. An image correction apparatus comprising:

a storing unit which contains pairs of lens distortion correction functions for mapping points in a lens-distorted image onto points in an image having no lens distortion and lens distortion functions, that are approximate inverse functions of the lens distortion correction functions, in association with respective zoom magnifications of a lens;

a selection unit which acquires from data of an input captured image, information on a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of the captured image, and selects from the storing unit the lens distortion function corresponding to the zoom magnification; and

a distortion correction unit which corrects distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the lens distortion function selected.

6. The image correction apparatus according to claim 5, wherein

the selector unit selects from the memory unit a plurality of candidate lens distortion correction functions in accordance with the zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing, and corrects a sequence of sample points forming a known shape in the captured image by using each of the plurality of lens distortion correction functions for error pre-evaluation, and thereby selects one of the plurality of lens distortion functions.

7. An image correction apparatus comprising:

a storing unit which contains lens distortion functions for mapping points in an image having no lens distortion onto points in a lens-distorted image in association with respective zoom magnifications of a lens;

a selection unit which acquires from data of an input captured image, information on a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of the captured image, and selects the lens distortion function corresponding to the zoom magnification from the storing unit;

a perspective distortion calculation unit which calculates a perspective distortion function for mapping points in an image having no perspective distortion onto points on a perspective-distorted image, by using an image whose lens distortion is corrected by the lens distortion function selected; and

a distortion correction unit which corrects distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the perspective distortion function calculated by the perspective distortion calculation unit.

8. The image correction apparatus according to claim 7, wherein

the selector unit selects from the memory unit a plurality of candidate lens distortion correction functions in accordance with the zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing, and corrects a sequence of sample points forming a known shape in the captured image by using each of the plurality of lens distortion correction functions for error pre-evaluation, and thereby selects one of the plurality of lens distortion functions.

9. An image correction database creating method comprising:

acquiring information on zoom magnifications contained in data of known images captured at the respective

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different zoom magnifications, and calculating a lens distortion correction function for mapping points on a lens-distorted image onto points on an image having no lens distortion and a lens distortion function, or an approximate inverse function of the lens distortion correction function, with respect to each lens magnification; and

registering the pairs of lens distortion correction functions and lens distortion functions into a database in association with the zoom magnifications.

10. An image correction method comprising:

consulting a database in which pairs of lens distortion correction functions for mapping points in a lens-distorted image onto points in an image having no lens distortion and lens distortion functions, that are approximate inverse functions of the lens distortion correction functions, are registered in association with respective zoom magnifications of a lens, acquiring from data of an input captured image, information on a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of the captured image, and selecting the lens distortion function corresponding to the zoom magnification; and

correcting distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the lens distortion function selected.

11. The image correction method according to claim 10, wherein

the correcting of the distortion includes:

mapping a point in a target image having no distortion ascribable to capturing onto a point in a lens-distorted captured image by using the lens distortion function selected which was selected from the image correction database; and

determining a pixel value at the point in the target image by interpolating pixel values near the mapped point in the captured image.

12. The image correction method according to claim 10 or 11, wherein

the selecting of the lens distortion function includes: selecting a plurality of lens distortion correction functions as candidates in accordance with the zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing; correcting a row of sample points having a known shape in the captured image by each of the plurality of lens distortion correction functions for error pre-evaluation; and selecting one from among the plurality of lens distortion functions.

13. An image correction method comprising:

consulting a database in which lens distortion functions for mapping points in an image having no lens distortion onto points in a lens-distorted image are registered in association with respective zoom magnifications of a lens, and acquiring from data of an input captured image, a zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing of the captured image and selecting the lens distortion function corresponding to the zoom magnification;

calculating a perspective distortion function for mapping points in an image having no perspective distortion onto points in a perspective-distorted image, by using an image whose lens distortion is corrected by the lens distortion function selected; and

correcting distortion of the captured image ascribable to capturing based on the perspective distortion function calculated.

14. The image correction method according to claim 13, wherein

the correcting of the distortion includes:

mapping a point in a target image having no distortion ascribable to capturing onto a point in a perspective-distorted captured image by using the perspective distortion function calculated; and

determining a pixel value at the point in the target image by interpolating pixel values near the mapped point in the captured image.

15. The image correction method according to claim 13 or 14, wherein

the selecting of the lens distortion function includes: selecting a plurality of lens distortion correction functions as candidates in accordance with the zoom magnification employed at the time of capturing; correcting a row of sample points having a known shape in the captured image by each of the plurality of lens distortion correction functions for error pre-evaluation; and thereby selecting one from among the plurality of lens distortion functions.

16-24. (canceled)

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(12) **United States Patent**
Solomon

(10) **Patent No.: US 7,612,805 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: Nov. 3, 2009**

(54) **DIGITAL IMAGING SYSTEM AND METHODS FOR SELECTIVE IMAGE FILTRATION**

(76) Inventor: **Neal Solomon**, P.O. Box 21297, Oakland, CA (US) 94620

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **11/825,521**

(22) Filed: **Jul. 6, 2007**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
H04N 5/228 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **348/222.1**; 348/273; 348/342; 348/208.11; 348/333.08; 348/335; 348/340

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 348/222.1, 348/231.99, 224.1, 273, 342, 208.11, 333.08, 348/335, 340

See application file for complete search history.

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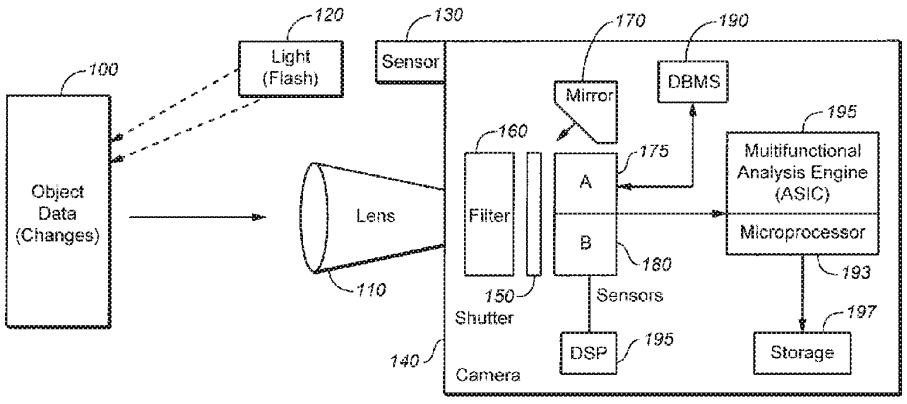
* cited by examiner

Primary Examiner—Jason Chan
Assistant Examiner—Usman Khan

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system is disclosed for the automated correction of optical and digital aberrations in a digital imaging system. The system includes digital filtration and digital system corrections to optical and digital aberrations. The system addresses issues in still and video photography that are presented in the digital imaging environment.

32 Claims, 19 Drawing Sheets



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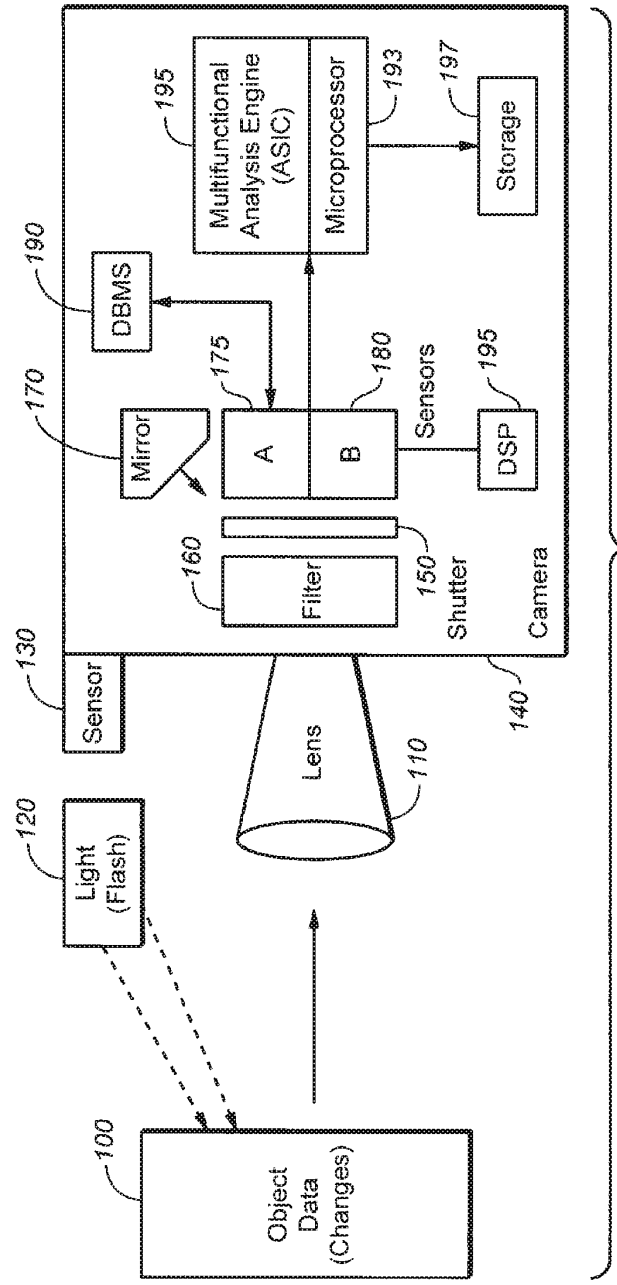


FIG. 1

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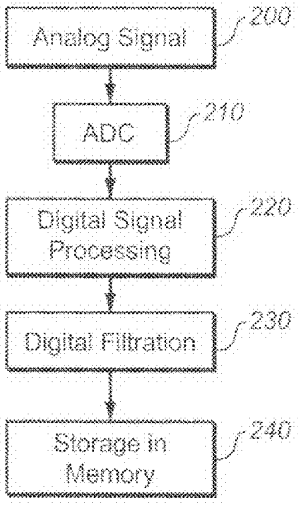


FIG. 2

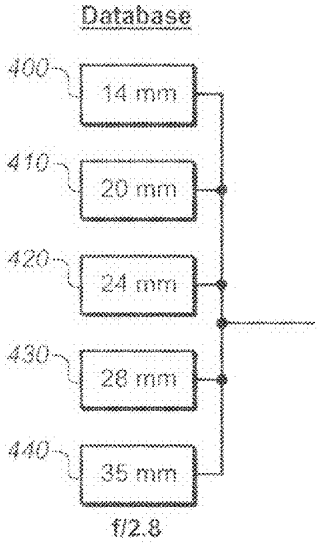


FIG. 4

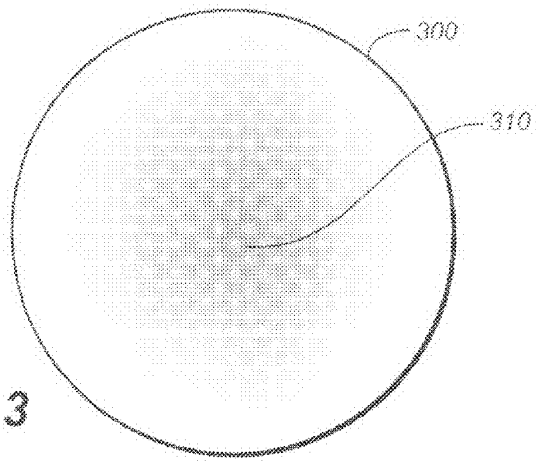


FIG. 3

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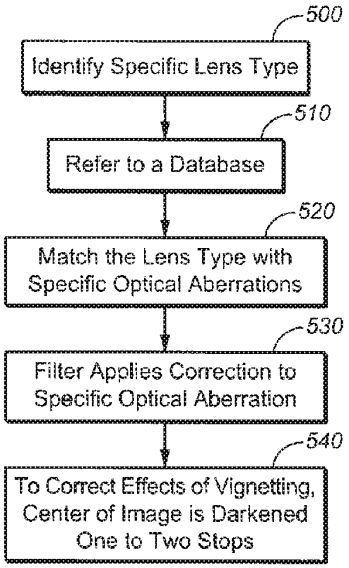


FIG. 5

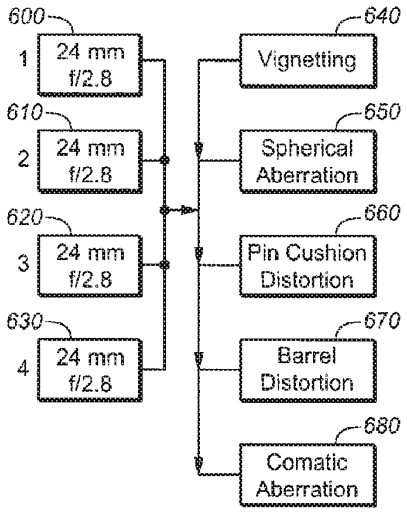


FIG. 6

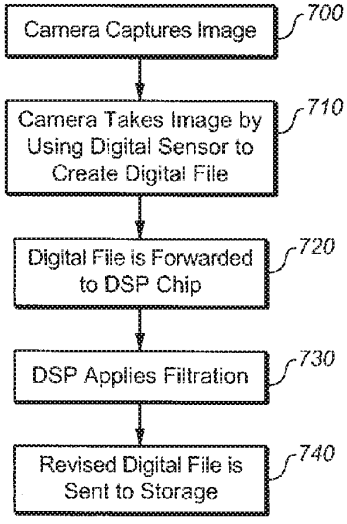


FIG. 7

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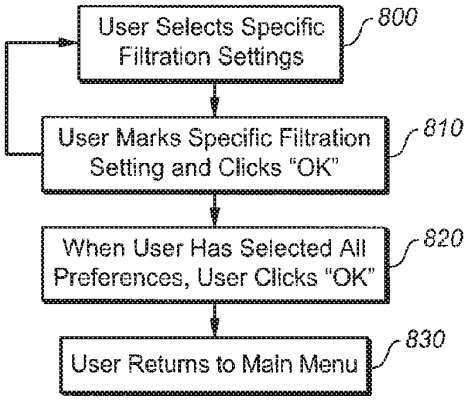


FIG. 8

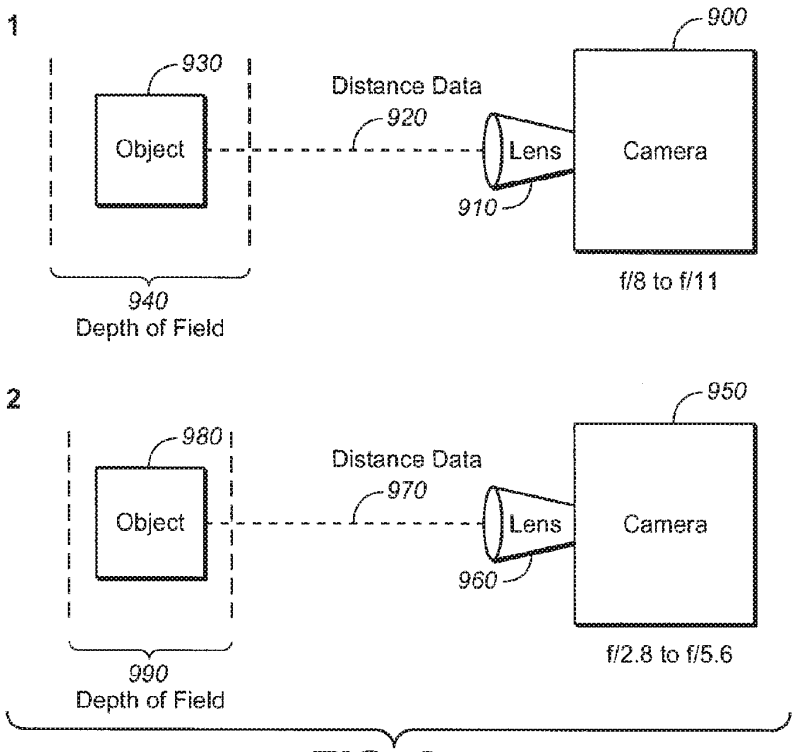


FIG. 9

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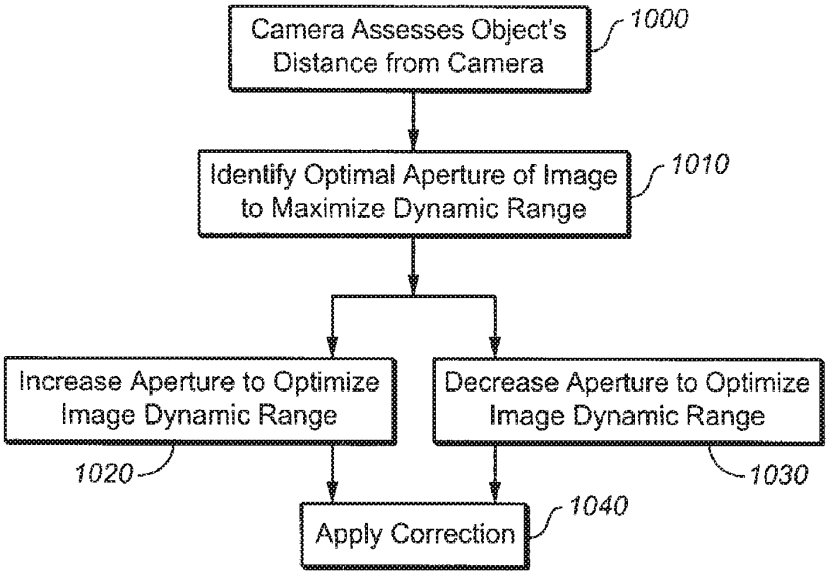


FIG. 10

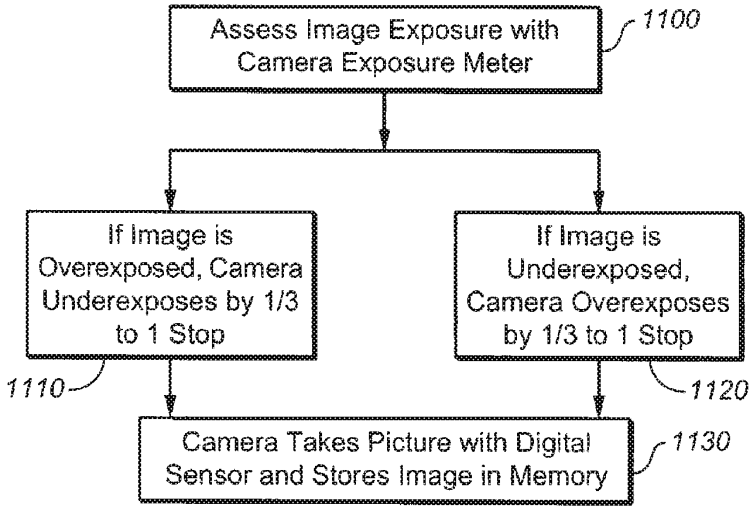


FIG. 11

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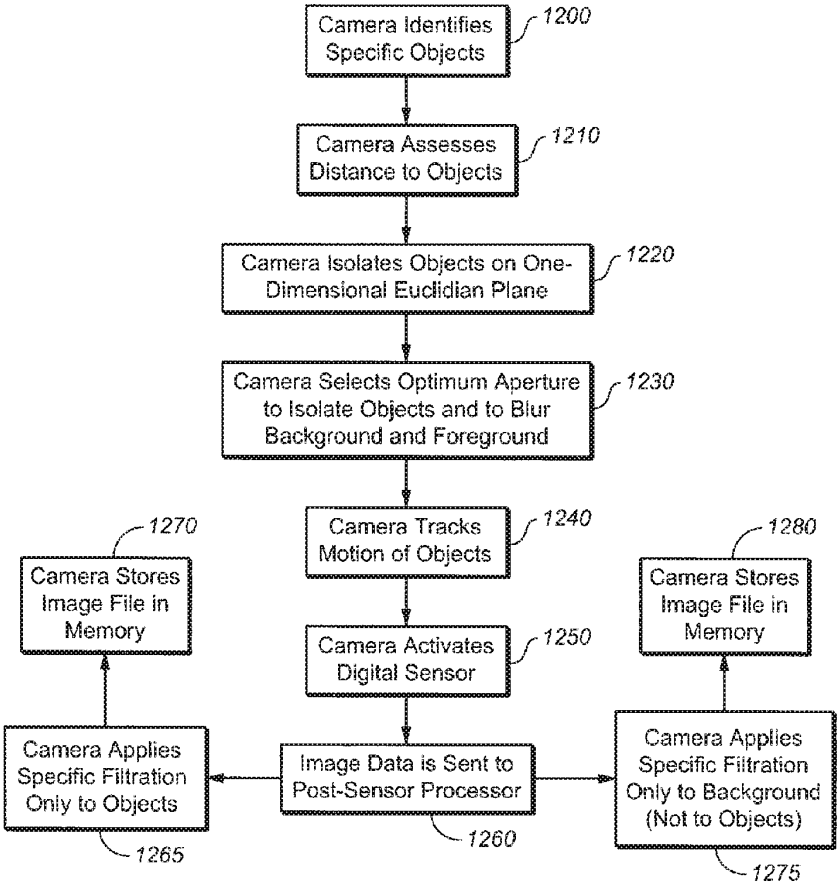


FIG. 12

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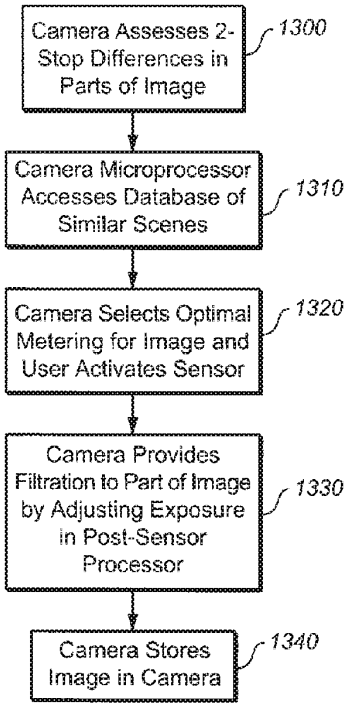


FIG. 13

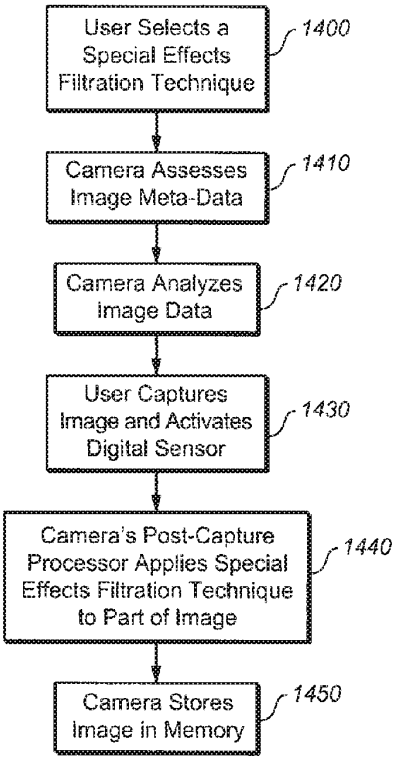


FIG. 14

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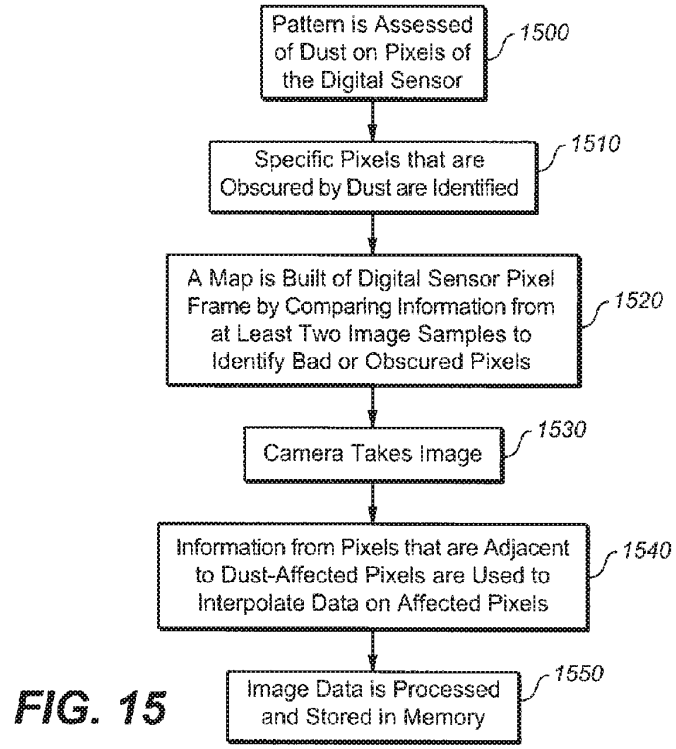


FIG. 15

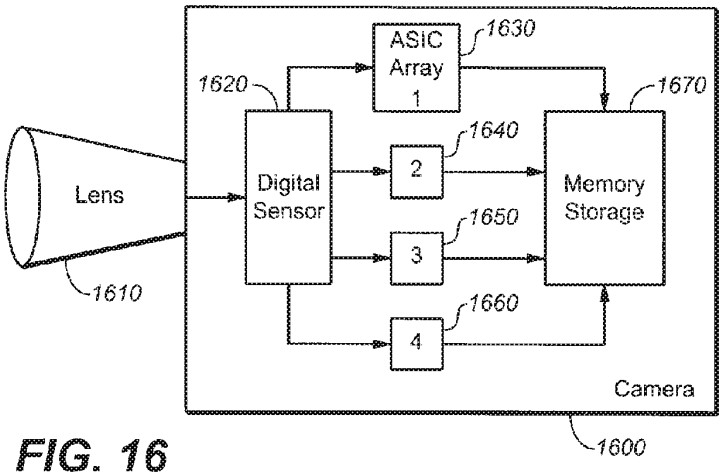


FIG. 16

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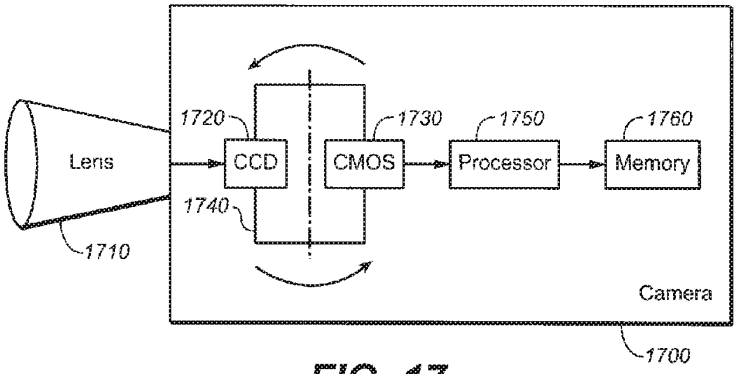


FIG. 17

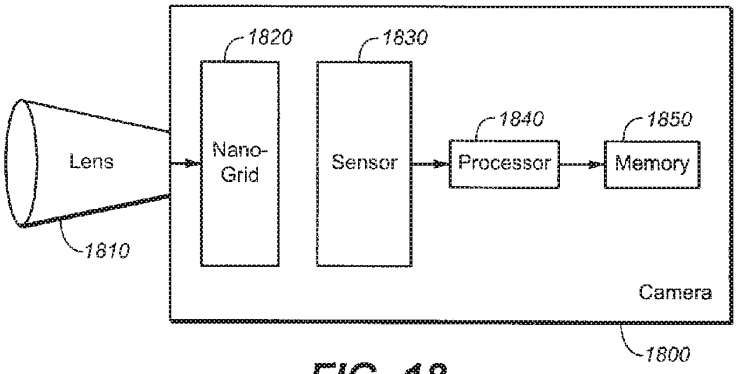


FIG. 18

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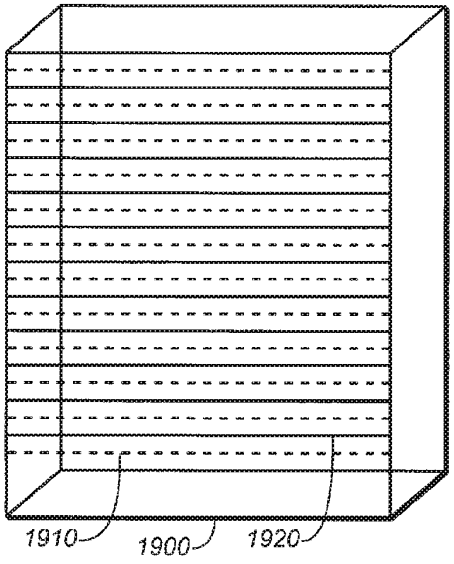


FIG. 19

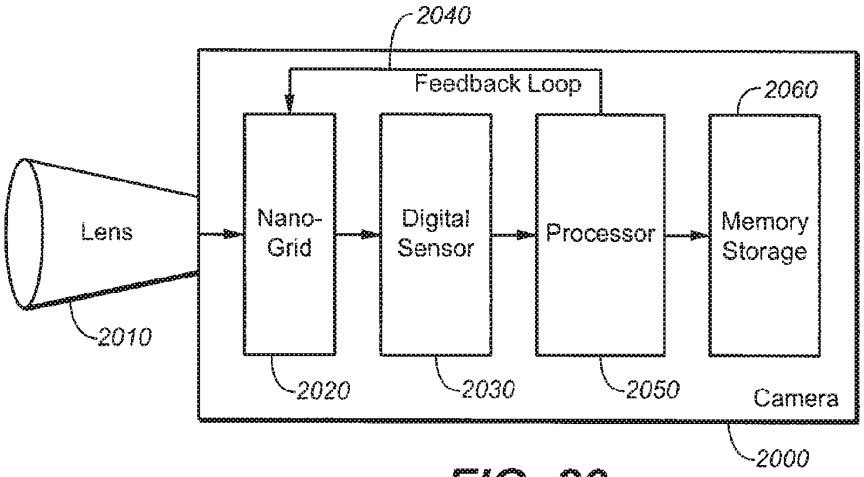


FIG. 20

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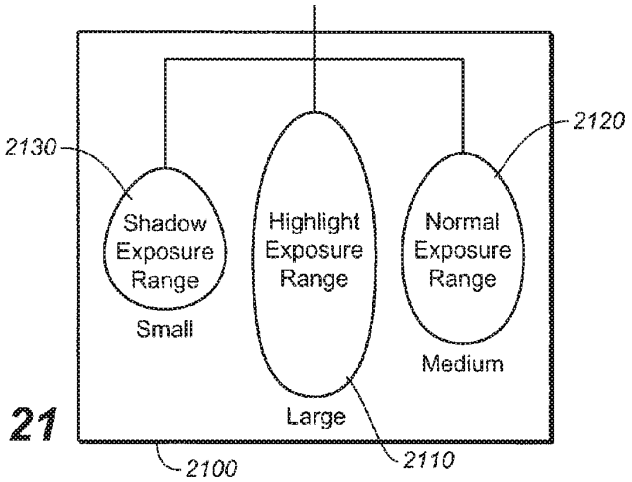


FIG. 21

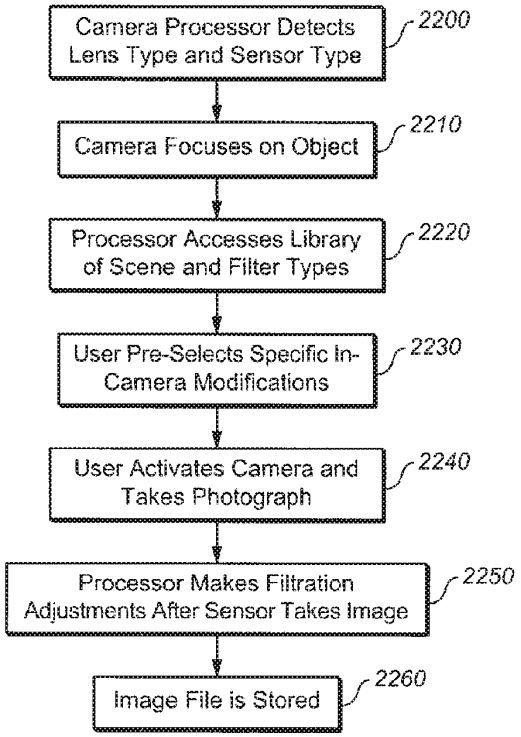


FIG. 22

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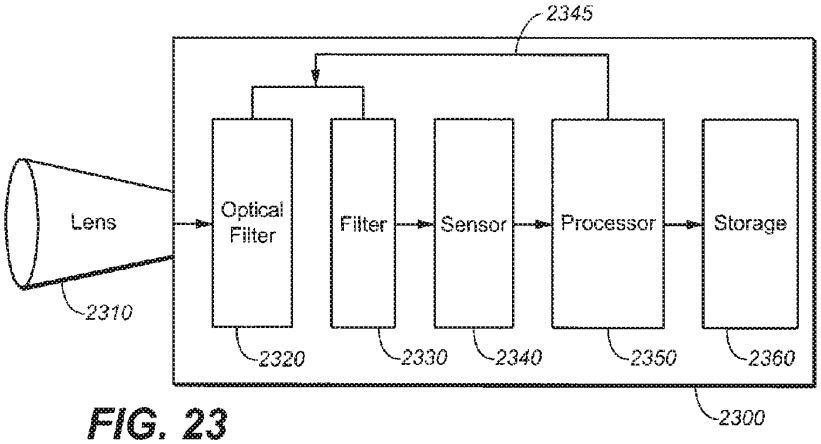


FIG. 23

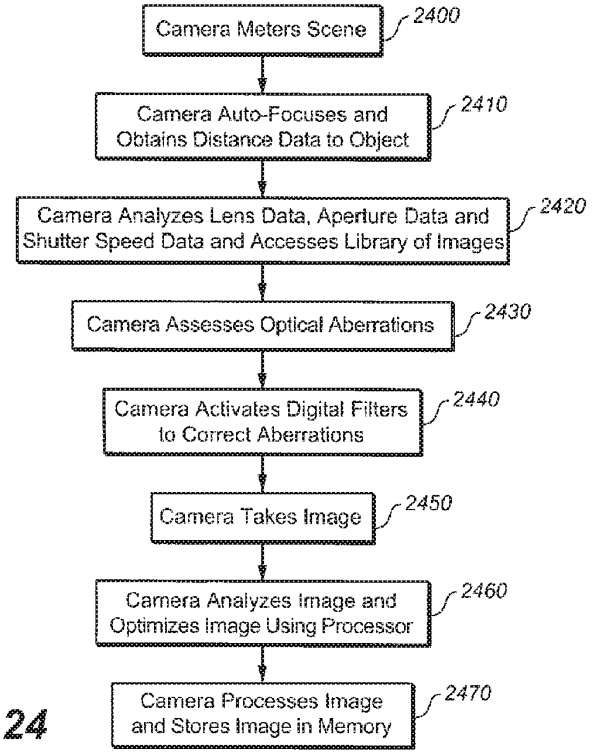


FIG. 24

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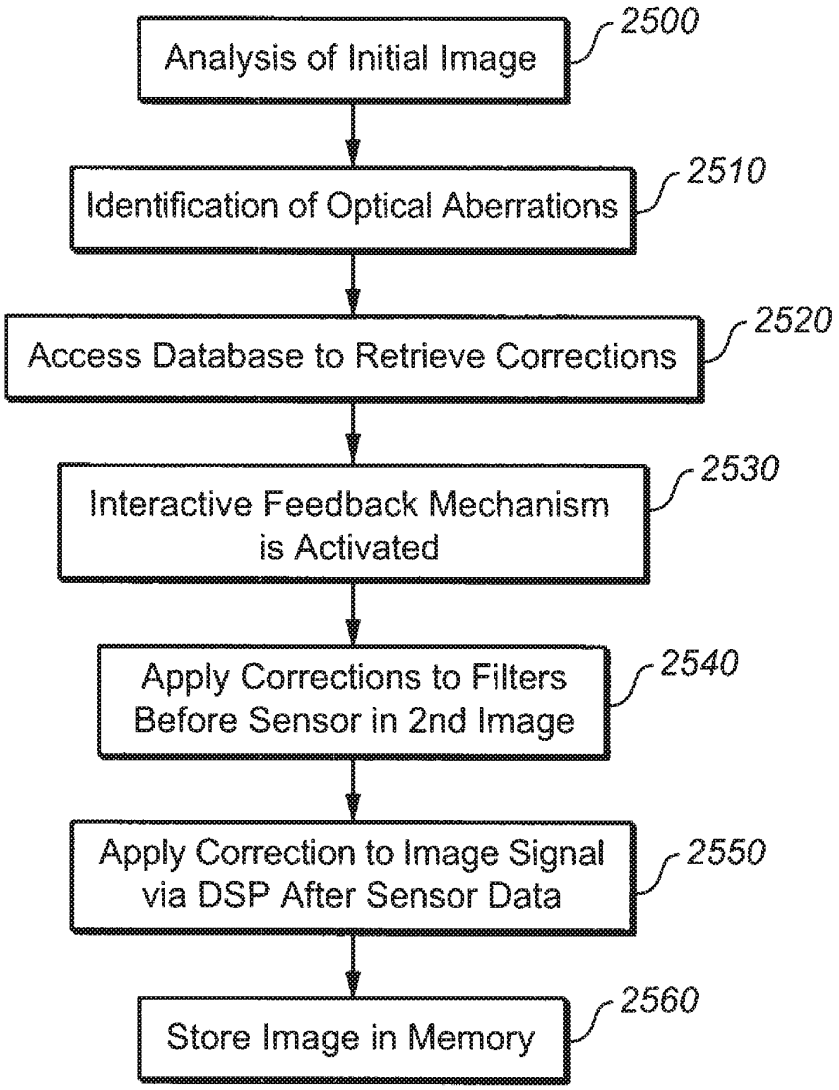


FIG. 25

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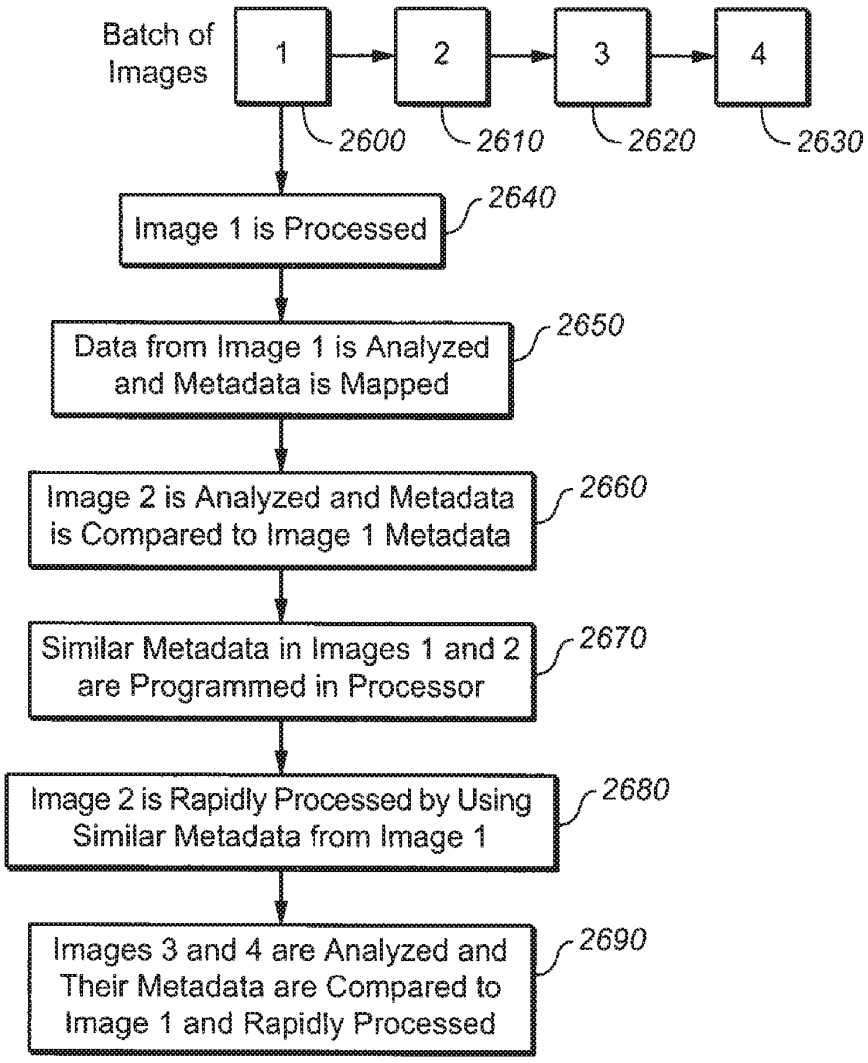


FIG. 26

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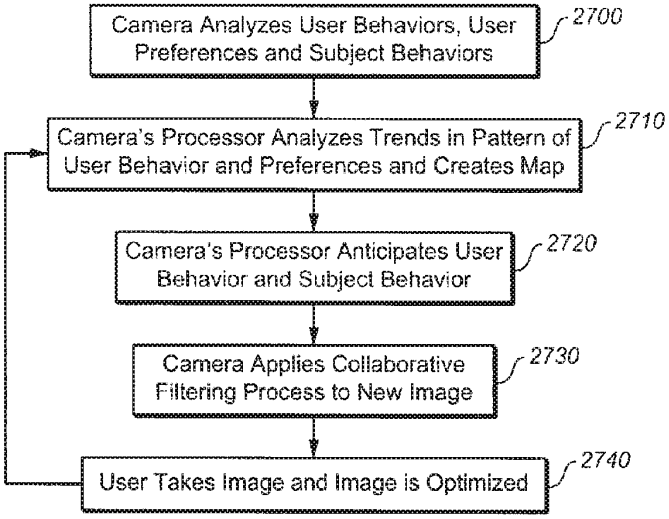


FIG. 27

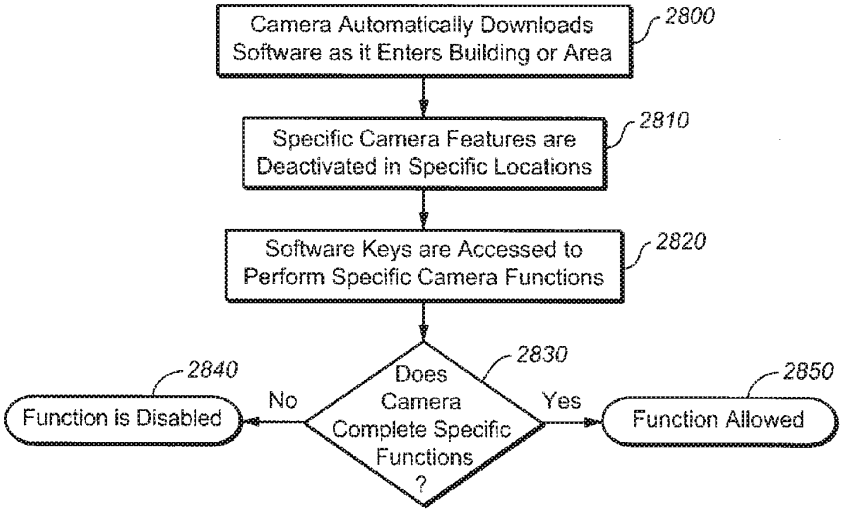


FIG. 28

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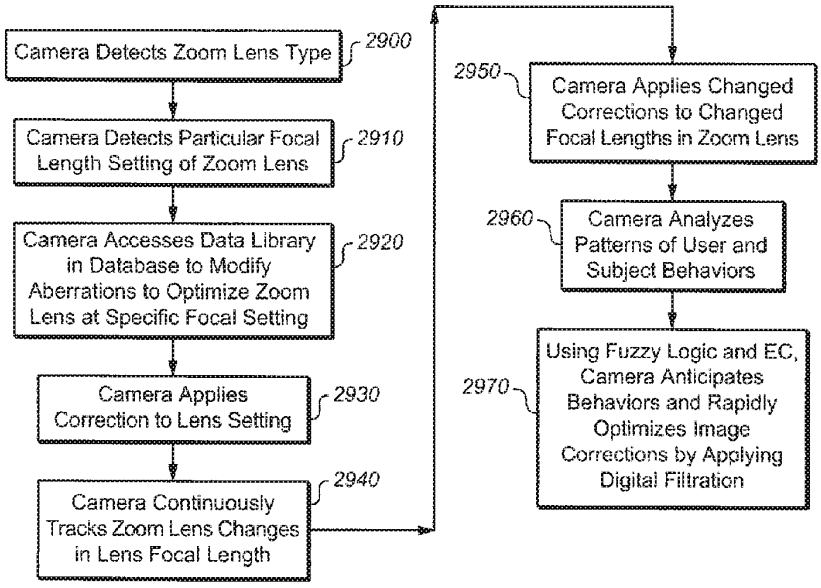


FIG. 29

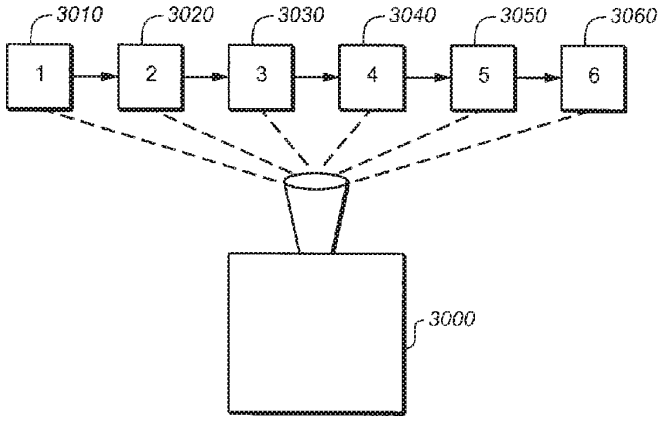


FIG. 30

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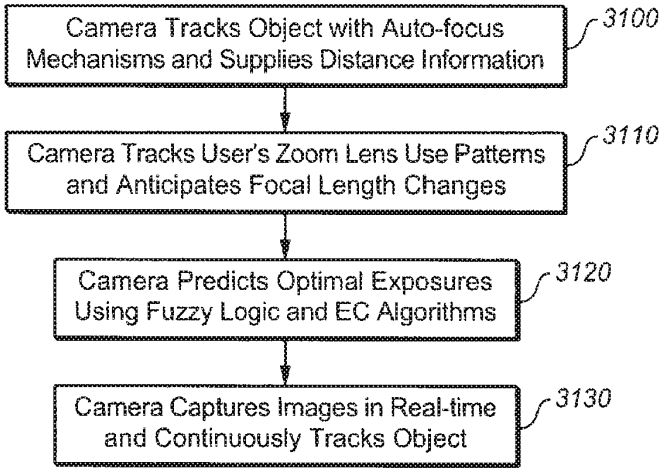


FIG. 31

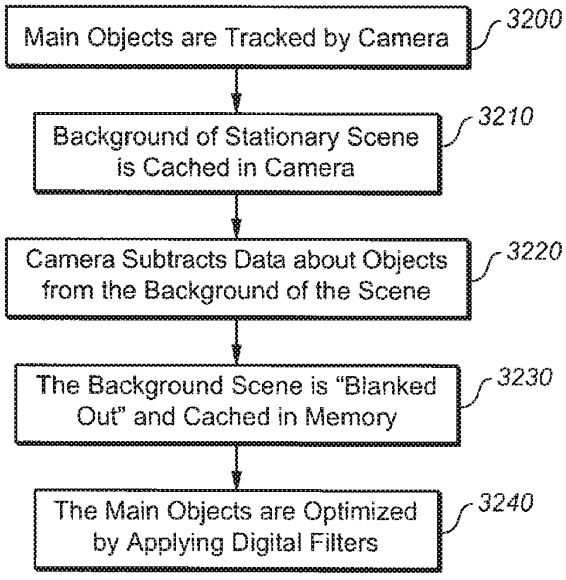


FIG. 32

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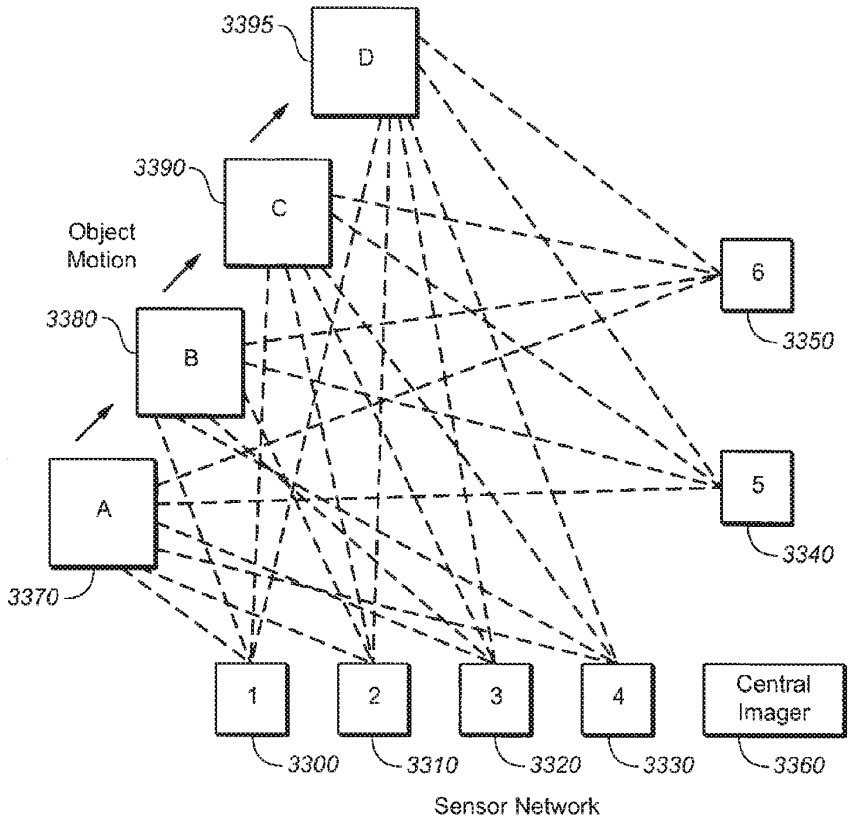


FIG. 33

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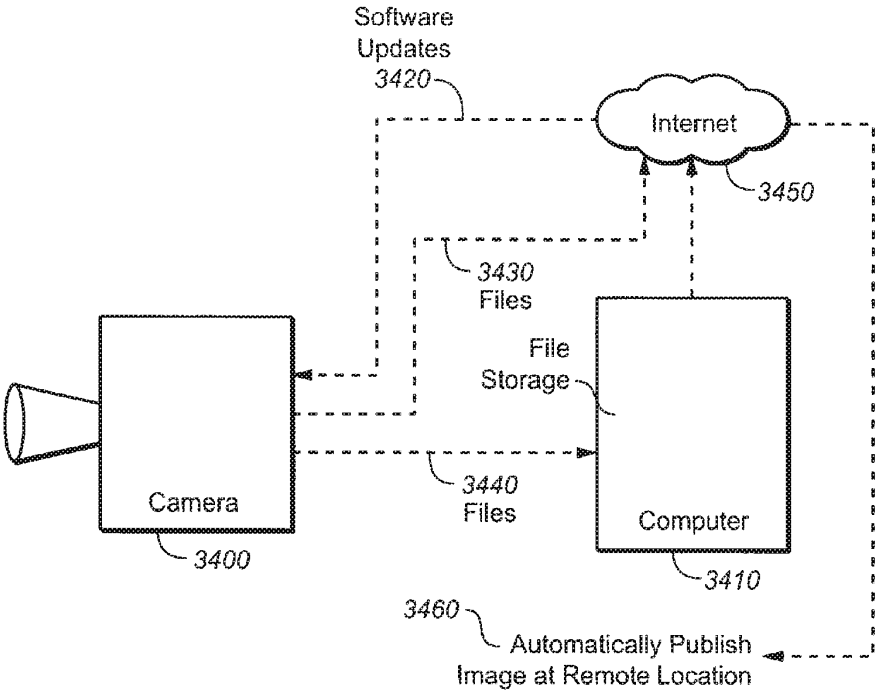


FIG. 34

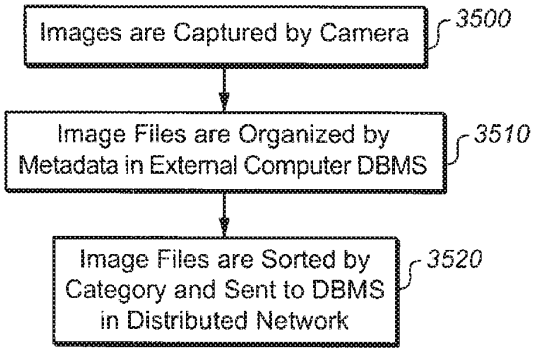


FIG. 35

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DIGITAL IMAGING SYSTEM AND METHODS FOR SELECTIVE IMAGE FILTRATION

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application claims the benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C. section 119 from U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/807,065, filed on Jul. 11, 2006, the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety for all purposes.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention pertains to imaging systems. The invention presents electronic methods to optimize optical processing, the digital capture of light and post-capture image organization of digital data sets. The system may be used in any device that captures, records, replicates, scans, reproduces, accesses, organizes, modifies, edits or stores images digitally. The invention applies to any imaging system that includes interaction between optics, digital image sensors, post-capture integrated circuits and digital storage components. The system includes self-organizing apparatus for optical image collection, electronic organization and optimization of digital data using integrated circuits and software applications. The system applies to consumer and professional still and video photography, including cinematography, to the processing of images with digital sensors, and to copying and scanning technologies. The system also applies to complex grids of multiple video cameras and satellites for surveillance and reconnaissance.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The history of photography in the twentieth century is a story of finding solutions for optimizing optical problems. The main challenges have involved improving lens configurations to optimize image quality for film capture. As an example of this, lens aberrations have been reliably corrected by creating aspherical lens elements in wide-angle lenses and by creating apochromatic lens elements in telephoto lenses. The use of lens element coatings has also improved optical quality. Similarly, the evolution of zoom lenses has included improvement in optical quality via the combining of complex optical element configurations; as the optical quality of zoom lenses improved dramatically, their simplicity and utility led them to dominate lens sales. Complex computer-aided design (CAD) software has been used to test a broad range of possible lens configurations so as to optimize the optical performance in terms of clarity and contrast of each lens type, as much as optically possible within economic constraints.

In the last twenty-five years, an additional revolution has occurred with the advent of auto-focus (AF) technology in still photographic and video cameras. Invented by Minolta in the early 1980s, AF technology was a photographic application of technology developed for the U.S. military. The AF system used an infrared light sensor to reflect light onto an object that allowed a camera's lens to focus on the object by employing a motor in the camera. Canon eventually developed improved methods of auto focus by using electronic means (viz., micro ultrasonic motors) to increase speed and accuracy. This AF technology was integrated with automatic exposure (AE) technology which developed complex algorithms in a "program" mode to combine shutter and aperture data to match each lens with particular subject matter, as well as an aperture-priority exposure mode and a shutter-priority exposure mode. Of course, the photographer could use manual focus and manual exposure at any time, but these improvements increased the creative process and the competitive advantages of camera makers and photographers that employed them. Ultimately, the combination of these developments allowed ordinary photographers to achieve high quality standards.

AE was improved by Nikon, particularly with the use of a "3D color matrix" system, which included a library of pre-programmed image types. The combination of the improved AF and AE subsystems allowed a dramatic simplification of photographic imaging because the photographer no longer labored over the time-consuming focus and the exposure variables. Automated film advance, in the form of built in motor drives, increased the working speeds of camera operation as well. Nearly all consumer and professional cameras became automated to some degree by the mid-1990s, including formats beyond the 35 mm film standard.

In the last decade, a new technology of image stabilization (IS) has emerged to help correct the problem of vibrations caused camera shake that lead to image blur. This technology is implemented in lenses by the use of gyros to reorient the light plane to compensate for camera shake; when combined with the earlier automated camera technologies such as AF and AE, IS further improves the photographic experience, particularly for larger lenses.

In addition to these advances in camera automation, technologies improved in the category of artificial flash as well. With microprocessors and sensors employed to measure minute variances, the development of photographic flash systems allowed the photographer to control the lighting in an environment to some degree. Nikon's use of distance information in its flash system advanced the state of the art in flash photography. The combination of AF and AE with automated flash mechanisms provided increased efficiency and simplicity in image capture processes.

The last several years have witnessed a revolution in digital photography. Because of its simplicity, potential quality improvement, immediate feedback and cost savings, digital photography has captured an increasing market share relative to film-based cameras. Kodak holds a number of patents involving the charge coupled device (CCD) for converting and recording light into electronic format. A competing technology for digital capture is complementary metal-oxide semiconductor (CMOS) which, though developed by Fairchild Semiconductor over forty years ago, is predominantly used in photographic cameras by Canon. Although there are trade-offs in the application of CCD and CMOS digital sensors for image capture, they both find wide acceptance in the market.

In order to correct for digital artifacts in image capture mechanisms, anti-aliasing filters are placed in front of digital sensors. Despite this improvement, digital imaging still has some challenges to overcome in competing with the image quality of film.

At the present time, the most recent advances in digital imaging for professional still photography have come from Hasselblad, which offers a Phase One camera back with a 39 MP digital sensor from Kodak. This system uses software that automatically corrects for digital capture limitations to produce a quality image. Their "digital APO correction" (DAC) technology performs an analysis of meta-data to color-correct the digital capture resulting in moiré-free images.

At the limits of current technology, a Canadian company, Dalsa, has produced a 111MP (10,560 by 10,560 pixels) CCD digital sensor that measures four inches square. This technology must be mated with large format-type lenses with large

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image area, and may be used for satellite surveillance applications and for other astronomical applications.

With both the larger sensor surface area of a medium format camera system and the high-quality fixed focal-length lenses of Zeiss, Schneider and Rodenstock, the quality of even the top optics will be a limiting barrier to advanced digital sensors' ability to perceive maximum resolution. Without new improvements in optical and digital technologies, further progression of photographic camera systems will be limited.

Photographic Problems

Though every major advance in photography has solved an important problem, there are still remaining photographic problems to be solved in order to meet the goals of optimizing optical imaging quality while increasing simplicity and efficiency and lowering cost. Despite the advent and evolution of digital imaging, a number of problems have emerged in the digital realm in addition to earlier problems involving optics. Nevertheless, an opportunity exists to solve some of these problems via digital approaches. These problems are generally categorized as optical or digital.

Optical Problems

In the case of optics, lens aberrations are characterized according to lens type, with wide-angle lens problems differentiated from telephoto lens problems. Some of the problems affecting wide-angle lenses arose from the creation of the single lens reflex (SLR) camera. Before the SLR, the rear element of a lens could be placed in a rangefinder to protrude to a point immediately in front of the film plane in order to correct for aberrations. While the advantages of the mirror mechanism include ability to see exactly what one is photographing, because the mirror of the SLR flips up during exposure, the rear element of the lens must be placed in front of the mirror's plane of movement. This mechanical fact limits lens designs in most 35 mm and medium-format camera systems and particularly affects wide-angle lens configurations.

It is very difficult to control the five aberrations of Seidel—spherical aberration, distortion (barrel distortion and pin cushion distortion), comatic aberration, astigmatism and curvature of field. In wide-angle SLR lenses as they are currently designed, these aberrations are particularly prominent.

For wide-angle lenses, optical vignetting affects peripheral illumination. Though optical vignetting will affect even retrofocus wide-angle lenses in rangefinders, it is particularly prominent in SLR cameras. According to the Cosine law, light fall-off in peripheral areas of an image increases as the angle-of-view increases. While optical vignetting can be reduced by stopping down the lens, the aberrations in rectilinear wide-angle lenses generally exhibit more distortion the wider the lens.

In the case of wide-angle lenses, the depth of field range is much broader, with close focusing causing aberrations without stopping down the aperture. To solve this problem, close-distance focusing is improved by the creation of floating groups of lens elements. The rear lens group elements float to correct close-distance aberrations. With wide-angle lenses that have wide apertures, floating lens elements improve lens aberrations in focusing on distance points also.

Modulation transfer function (MTF) curves represent a quantitative methodology used to assess the resolution and contrast of lens performance at specific apertures. Each lens type has a specific lens element composition, formula and behavior as measured by MTF. In general, MTF measures lens sharpness to 30 lines/mm and contrast to 10 lines/mm.

Because different colors of the visible light spectrum behave uniquely, the goal of lens design is to have all colors accurately hit a film plane or digital sensor plane. The particular challenge for telephoto lenses is that the red and green light colors strike the film plane at different times than blue light colors; thus a compensation must be made in the lens configuration to adjust for chromatic aberrations. Camera lens manufacturers have used extra low dispersion glass and fluorite glass elements in telephoto lenses primarily to adjust the red color light spectra to the film plane. In addition, telephoto lenses use carefully designed lens coatings to limit light diffraction-based aberrations.

Due to their construction, super-telephoto lenses are very large and heavy. While modifying the materials used in the lens barrels could reduce size and weight problems, a technological improvement in telephoto lens design was developed by Canon with the addition of diffractive optical (DO) elements, which behave as a sort of highly-refined fresnel lens magnifier. Though the MTF analyses of wide-angle lenses show dramatic latitude in performance of even high quality SLR lenses, with particular loss in resolution and contrast toward the edges of the image, high quality telephoto lenses show control of aberrations. However, the price of these lenses is prohibitively high.

In the case of zoom lenses, as many as four distinct groups of lens elements correct various optical aberrations. These lens element groups include (a) a focusing group, (b) a magnification variation group, (c) a correction group and (d) an image formation group. Modulating the focal length range of a zoom lens enables the lens to perform within the scope of operation, yet the zoom lens architecture has limits. In particular, the zoom lens configuration sacrifices resolution and wide potential aperture. Generally, the degree of resolution and contrast at the smaller angle of view is traded away in favor of competence at a wider angle of view, or vice-versa. This explains why MTF analyses of zoom lenses generally show a dramatic lowering in resolution and contrast relative to excellent fixed focal length lenses.

Digital Problems

Digital photography has built on the edifice of film camera systems. For instance, the size of the sensor is generally limited to the size of the optical circumference of a lens system. In the case of 35 mm lenses that are designed for a specific angle of view, the largest that a digital sensor in a 35 mm lens system could be, is 24 mm by 36 mm, with a corresponding maximum image circle of 43 mm. In the case of medium format lenses, the largest digital sensors would duplicate the corresponding film plane size, whether 6×4.5 cm, 6×6 cm, 6×7 cm, 6×8 cm, 6×9 cm, 6×12 cm or 6×17 cm (which results in an effective image circle as large as 7 inches).

Digital sensors that are smaller than the limits of a corresponding lens system have been introduced. For example, Nikon digital sensors are smaller than 24 mm×36 mm, or advanced photo system (APS) size. Efficient stacking of pixels allows a smaller sensor to eventually match the performance of a corresponding film system, while using the smaller circumference of the same lenses. Since the outside edges of the lens typically degrade resolution and contrast, this model using the smaller digital sensor can have an advantage of using primarily the centralized "sweet spot" of the image area. However, this smaller sensor size sacrifices the peripheral effects of a wide-angle lens, so a 14 mm becomes a 21 mm in a 1.5× conversion-sized sensor in a 35 mm lens system. On the other hand, with telephoto lenses, the angle of view is limited to the center 65% of the image. This gives the

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appearance of upconverting a telephoto lens by 1.5× and thus provides an impression of increased magnification; a 400 mm f/2.8 lens appears as a 600 mm f/2.8 lens on a camera with a cropped digital sensor. Ultra-wide-angle lenses have been introduced with smaller image areas than 35 mm to compensate for smaller sensor size.

Though invented over thirty years ago by Dr. Bayer, the charge coupled device (CCD) that is used in many digital cameras generally emulates the behavior of film. Specifically, since most photographic film has three layers of green, red and blue, with green representing fifty percent of the emulsion and red and blue twenty-five percent each, the CCD architecture also configured pixels to capture fifty percent of the green photonic visible light spectrum and twenty-five percent each for pixels recording red and blue light. Human eyes see more green than red and blue, so both film and digital sensors seek to emulate the way that we see. Each light color is captured by a different pixel in the CCD, just as there are three emulsion layers of film. In recent years, Foveon has developed a digital sensor for image capture that further seeks to emulate film by structuring the pixels into three layers, again with fifty percent capturing green light and twenty-five percent each capturing red and blue light.

Unfortunately, unwanted artifacts are also captured by the digital image capture process. These include banding and moiré effects that present false patterns and colors. Moiré patterns are created because the dot pattern of a sensor will intermittently overlap with the pattern of a subject to create a third pattern: these effects are optically-generated digital distortions that represent the effect of light hitting a pixel without correction. In order to compensate for these effects, digital sensors have employed low pass filters consisting of liquid crystal structures; however, these filters tend to have the effect of softening image resolution. Additionally, RGB or CMYG color filters are placed in front of digital sensors to ensure the accurate capture of colors.

CMOS digital sensors present an alternative to CCDs. By employing alternating positive and negative transistor networks, the CMOS sensors use less power. While they do not have the low noise ratio of the CCD, they do have greater light exposure latitude, in both range of ISO and dynamic range of detail in highlight and shadow. More importantly, CMOS sensors contain the circuitry, including analog to digital converter (ADC) and digital to analog converter (DAC), for post-processing digital images on the chip itself and enabling increased micro-miniaturization of the digital imaging process. An increase in the bit rate of the CMOS chip up to 32-bit makes possible a much richer color palate and level of detail than with earlier generation CCDs.

CMOS sensors can be full-frame, matching the lens specifications for the camera systems for which they are designed. A relatively bigger sensor has a wider depth of field capability, so the background can appear as a blur to set apart the main subject. Given these capabilities, one problem that emerges is that a digital sensor's enhanced capabilities to capture details may exceed the maximum optical resolution capabilities of many lenses. Nevertheless, CMOS sensors still require an anti-aliasing filter to be used in front of the sensor, which marginally degrades resolution.

Over the years, cameras have gotten smaller. While in the 19th century cameras were 11×14 or 8×10, literally capturing images on large emulsion plates, cameras of today are smaller and more automated. Yet the larger the film size, the bigger the enlargement potential and the increase in relative detail in the overall image. Similarly in digital photography, the larger the sensor, the more detail available and the bigger the output print can be enlarged. Because of this correspondence of digital sensor to film, the evolution of digital photography has been restricted to respective film camera systems, with 35 mm and medium format systems dominating the field because well-developed lens systems have already been organized for these camera formats. The potential exists, however, to develop 35 mm camera system digital sensors that rival film-based medium format or large format camera system quality or to surpass the limits of 35 mm camera systems with medium format camera system digital sensors. The relative size, cost and automation advantages of 35 mm camera systems generally show that these systems not only are competitive, but that these markets are increasingly accelerated relative to larger format systems. For example, the development of large aperture lenses, super-telephotos, rapid auto-focus, refined automated exposure and image stabilization systems in 35 mm systems has solved various problems that have emerged in the last century and has improved image quality and camera system efficiency.

However, in the digital imaging realm additional problems have emerged, including the need to improve color (hue and saturation) quality, exposure highlight range, contrast range and other tonal adjustments. In addition, digital image capture brings its own set of aberrations, including moiré and banding effects and noise and ISO range limits. Additional aberrations are linked to the unique design of each type of digital sensor, with trade-offs presented between types of CCDs or CMOS chips. Moreover, there are still optical problems in the digital realm, namely, a range of optical aberrations created particularly by wide-angle and zoom lenses as well as the limits of very large, costly and heavy super-telephoto lenses.

In order to transcend the optical and digital limits of present camera systems, software systems have been developed that deal with the problems in post-production. While the most notable of these post-production digital editing software programs is Adobe Photoshop, each camera manufacturer has its own proprietary program. In the main, these post-production software programs are limited to color correction and sharpening/softening of images. Additionally, some of these software programs are able to emulate specific artificial filter techniques to produce creative modifications of an original image. Nevertheless, manipulating unfiltered RAW image files in post-production processes is time-consuming and expensive and requires considerable skill.

One unintended effect of using digital sensors to capture images in digital photography is that dust accumulates on the sensor surface and thereby obstructs a clear optical image. The vacuum behavior of increasingly ubiquitous zoom lenses moves dust in lenses that are not internally sealed and the existence of dust is a prevalent feature of digital photography. Dust on the sensor is a non-trivial problem that requires tedious post-production correction for each image. The existence of dust on a digital sensor is an inconvenient impediment to achievement of optical imaging quality.

What is needed to correct these various optical and digital aberrations and unfiltered image files is in-camera modification capability for each specific image problem. The present invention describes a digital imaging system to optimize optical results.

Applications of the Present Invention

The present invention has several practical applications. The digital imaging system applies to consumer and professional still and video camera technologies, to cellular telephones and to personal digital assistants (PDAs). Since video technologies are evolving into digital formats, including HDTV and its successors, the present invention would be

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applicable to these technologies. The present invention also applies to networks of remote camera sensors for surveillance. The system also applies to native digital cinematography and telecine conversion from analogue to digital media. The system may be applied to image scanning and image copying technologies. Finally, the present system may be applied to any optical digital capture, processing and storage sub-system technologies, including groups of sensors or satellites.

Advantages of the Present Invention

There are several important advantages of the present invention. The present system dramatically improves image quality. This digital imaging system eliminates, or minimizes, post-production processes. In addition, the system presents substantial cost savings as well as time savings relative to existing digital imaging systems because of the automation of integrated in-camera optical and digital corrections of aberrations.

With the present system, in-camera digital filters will largely replace optical filters. With less distortion, cost and weight/size than current optical filters and with far more control and quality results, the present system demonstrates that in-camera digital filtration out-performs better than external filters. The in-camera filter system is also an improvement over post-production digital filter systems which require substantial time, cost and skill to implement.

By using the present invention, users will be able to use lens apertures that are wider open, because lens aberrations will be corrected. In turn, this increased latitude will allow more efficient (2+ stops) use of available light and will allow slower lenses to achieve quality images that have traditionally been in the domain of expensive fast lenses. The process of photography will be made generally more efficient.

The present system allows camera manufacturers to design different, predominantly smaller, lenses. Moreover, with providing a system for digital corrections, camera lenses may use less expensive optics and still obtain good results. This process will, in turn, accelerate the adoption of low-cost digital photographic systems and, in the aggregate, increase the overall size of the digital photographic market. Similarly, there will be an increase in the effectiveness of zoom lenses, which are already becoming popular. With the present system, 35 mm optics may obtain the quality typically recognized by 4×5 film camera systems. The present system will thus facilitate photographic digital imaging to supplant the film era.

Its application to digital scanning and copying will allow the present system to become ubiquitous as a system to improve imaging.

Because the system presents an integration of several critical subsystems that are centered on digital imaging processes, the system has applications to video photography, satellite systems and surveillance systems. The dynamics of the operation of the subsystems of the present digital imaging system reveal the refinement, efficiency and optimization of the digital photographic paradigm.

Importantly, since the present system uses apparatus and methods that are implemented with software processes, in-camera software can be constantly upgraded and remotely downloaded, while image files can be automatically uploaded, organized and published.

If the goal of the evolution of photographic technology is to increase the number and quality of excellent images, the present system will revolutionize photography.

Solutions to Digital Imaging Problems that the Present System Presents

The present system provides in-camera digital corrections to both optical and digital aberrations. In the case of optical aberrations, distinct lens-specific imperfections are caused by wide-angle, telephoto and zoom lens types. In the case of digital aberrations, specific digital artifacts, such as aliasing and dust, must be corrected.

The present invention also designs specific improvements to digital sensor design. These hardware architecture modifications allow digital imaging to maximize both optical resolution and image exposure range.

Post-capture in-camera filtration is only part of the solution. There is also a need to modify the digital sensor, whether CCD or CMOS, with specific filtration in some cases, including a low pass anti-aliasing filter and a polarizing filter. This post-optic pre-sensor filtration works with post-sensor in-camera filtration processes.

In the context of specific complex processes, such as in zoom lens modifications of focal length and in full-motion video processing, additional corrections are performed using the digital imaging system which continuously optimizes performance.

Finally, the present system reveals approaches to improve network coordination and wireless external storage and publication capabilities for digital imaging systems.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is divided into several main subsystems: (1) digital filters to correct optical and digital aberrations; (2) digital sensor improvements and nano-grids; (3) digital system improvements that link multiple digital corrections; (4) dynamic digital imaging system improvements that apply to zoom lenses and video imaging; and (5) digital image network improvements. There are several distinct improvements for each category of sub-system listed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a schematic drawing of a digital imaging system.

FIG. **2** is a flow chart of an analog to digital signal process.

FIG. **3** is an image of the vignetting corrective filter in an optical lens.

FIG. **4** is a list of wide angle 35 mm lens types.

FIG. **5** is a flow chart of the digital corrective process.

FIG. **6** is a schematic diagram of different types of optical aberrations in different configurations of the same lens.

FIG. **7** is a flow chart of the process of digital image capture, processing and storage.

FIG. **8** is a flow chart illustrating the process of selecting filtration settings.

FIG. **9** is a pair of diagrams showing the varied depth of field optimization at different apertures.

FIG. **10** is a flow chart showing exposure optimization using digital correction in camera.

FIG. **11** is a flow chart illustrating the use of in-camera special effects filtration.

FIG. **12** is a flow chart showing the selective in-camera filtration of specific objects.

FIG. **13** is a flow chart describing the exposure adjustment of an image using in-camera filtration.

FIG. **14** is a flow chart showing the process of in-camera special effects filtration.

FIG. **15** is a flow chart showing the process of in-camera digital correction for sensor dust.

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FIG. **16** is a diagram showing a digital camera with an ASIC array.

FIG. **17** is a diagram illustrating a digital camera with interchangeable CCD and CMOS sensors.

FIG. **18** is a diagram of a digital camera with a nano-grid before the sensor.

FIG. **19** is a diagram of a nano-grid.

FIG. **20** is a diagram showing the feedback loop connecting the processor and the nano-grid.

FIG. **21** is a diagram illustrating the tri-pixel architecture in a digital sensor.

FIG. **22** is a flow chart showing the pre-programmed modules for in-camera functionality.

FIG. **23** is a diagram showing the pre-sensor modification process in a digital camera.

FIG. **24** is a flow chart showing the integration of optical and digital corrections with feedback.

FIG. **25** is a flow chart showing the interactive feedback mechanism of integrated corrections.

FIG. **26** is a flow chart describing the adaptive user pattern learning process to process images.

FIG. **27** is a flow chart describing the feedback process in filtering images.

FIG. **28** is a flow chart showing software privacy function in a digital imaging system.

FIG. **29** is a flow chart showing the dynamics of zoom lens corrections in digital imaging.

FIG. **30** is a diagram illustrating object tracking in dynamic changes in video corrections.

FIG. **31** is a flow chart showing object tracking of a digital imaging system.

FIG. **32** is a flow chart showing the caching process of an object in motion in a stationary scene.

FIG. **33** is a diagram showing network coordination of fixed sensor grid tracking multiple objects.

FIG. **34** is a diagram showing the wireless communication features of the digital imaging system.

FIG. **35** is a flow chart showing an image organization system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

(I) Digital Filters to Correct Optical and Digital Aberrations

(1) Lens-Specific Digital Correction of Fixed Focal-Length Lens for Specific Optical Aberrations in Camera.

Each lens has some sort of aberrations because of the trade-offs involved in producing lenses of usable size and practical commercial cost. The challenge of building lenses for SLR camera systems lies in accounting for particular restrictions and compromises, particularly for wide-angle and zoom lenses. In the case of wide-angle fixed focal length lenses, several main kinds of aberrations occur, including spherical aberration, distortion (pin cushion distortion and barrel distortion), astigmatism, curvature of field (manifesting as the reduced corner exposure of vignetting) and comatic aberration (a distortion evident with long exposures). The extremes of each of these aberrations have to be corrected in post-production.

In the case of vignetting, a type of aberration in which the corners of an image are exposed a stop less than the image's center area, software can digitally emulate a center-neutral density filter to compensate for the light fall-off on the edges. This operation identifies the degree of light fall-off for each specific lens and adjusts the brighter areas in the center of the lens by appropriate exposure compensation. A consequence of this digital equivalent of the traditional optical solution to vignetting is that the image will require exposure metering of the subject at a level consistent with the outside edges of the image rather than the typical inner section. In the present system, the camera will use pre-set calculations compensating (generally one stop) for the specific gradations of the curvature of the field for each lens, with an increasing compensation correlated to an increased angle of view. Similarly, barrel distortion and pin-cushion distortion, which also manifest in image corners, are corrected using processes of employing pre-set calculations, to compensate for optical distortion, particularly in wide-angle and zoom lenses.

In addition to integrating into the camera the traditional process of image correction for exposure gradations of vignetting, the present invention offers two further embodiments. First, instead of darkening the center to match the darker corners, the in-camera digital compensation system will lighten the corners to match the exposure of the center of the image. In the second embodiment, the in-camera digital compensation system will both lighten the corners somewhat and darken the center of the image somewhat, to produce a more pleasing and realistic effect. The in-camera digital corrections of the vignetting problem dramatically improve the traditional optical solution of a center-weighted neutral density filter, which typically degrades image quality as it evenly illuminates the full image.

Since each lens has specific aberrations, depending on manufacturer and even differences in the specimens themselves, the camera software system will have preprogrammed general corrections for each specific lens type. For instance, while a 20 mm f2.8 lens varies among manufacturers, the general optical aberrations will be similar. An effective software solution is one which brings the optical image quality to a level consistent with a benchmark as measured by low MTF curves for each lens in its class in terms of both resolution and contrast throughout the image. To exemplify this benchmark, retrofocus rangefinder lens performance results of wide-angle lenses, which lack a shutter mechanism to design around, can be used for comparison. To accommodate the mirror in the SLR design type, the rear nodal point in SLR lenses are shifted forward, creating distortion. In contrast, the present system suggests applying a digital solution to compensate for this problem.

In a general sense, this process of correction is similar to correcting an ocular astigmatism with reading glasses. However, rather than using an optical solution to an ocular problem, the present system reveals a digital solution to an optical problem.

In the process, the camera identifies a specific lens and refers to a database that matches the lens type with the specific aberrations. The aberrations are consistent throughout all images for each formula of a specific prime lens type and are thus corrected by adjusting for each specific aberration category. Generally, the larger the angle of view of a lens, the greater the distortion and the greater the need for in-camera digital corrections.

In addition to the kinds of distortions created in wide-angle lenses, other types of distortion occur primarily in large aperture telephoto lenses, most notably chromatic aberrations that require apochromatic corrections. Rather than employing large, heavy and expensive extra dispersion glass, such as fluorite elements, the present system allows each lens type to be digitally corrected for these types of aberrations. The in-camera digital process works by identifying a specific lens and comparing the lens pattern to an internal database. Mathematical calculations compensate for the shift in red and green light that apochromatic corrections require for very low

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MTF curves registering high standards of resolution and contrast by emulating the optical benefits of extra low dispersion glass elements.

Since lenses of the same focal length but with different maximum apertures represent completely different lens designs, modifications of their aberrations will vary relative to each specific lens type. For example, a 24 mm f/2.8 lens will have a different optical formula than a 24 mm f1.4 lens in a 35 mm camera system. Similarly, a 28 mm f/2.8 will differ from both a 28 mm f/2 lens and a 28 mm f1.4 lens and will thus each require different adjustments for vignetting, spherical aberration, pin cushion distortion, barrel distortion and coma. In other words, each lens with a unique optical formula will have specific aberrations, the corrections for which will be accessible in a database.

Another type of optical aberration that affects lenses involves flare, which is a sort of specific reflection of light sources. While improvements in lens coatings have been used to correct for flare, high refractive glass also eliminates flare. The present system uses digital processes to emulate these flare reduction functions on lenses even at maximum apertures.

In addition to the lens-specific types of corrections that are supplied by in-camera software, a function that optimizes contrast provided by limited reflected light is required. In general, lens hoods reduce reflected light. However, in the absence of a lens hood, scattered light will adversely affect contrast in all lenses. Thus, a general digital solution will optimize contrast from reflected light by emulating the effects of a lens hood.

Because the pixels on a digital sensor behave as neutral intermediaries to record light, the aberrations on specific fixed focal length lenses will be prominent. It is therefore necessary to filter out various optical impurities. In all cases, the digital in-camera software program emulates specific filters to effectively correct specific optical aberrations.

By digitally adjusting for optical distortions, the present system advances the state of the art for fixed focal length lens optics, beyond any opportunities available in film cameras. The following chart illustrates a list of optical distortions that are corrected by in-camera digital solutions.

	Fixed Focal Length		Zoom Lens Type		
Specific	Lens Type		Wide-	Wide-	Tele-
Aberrations	Wide-angle	Telephoto	angle	to-Tele	photo
Spherical	X		X	X	
Comatic	X	X	X	X	X
Astigmatism	X		X		
Distortion (Pin Cushion and Barrel Distortion	X		X		
Curvature of Field	X		X		
Chromatic		X		X	X
Flare	X	X	X	X	X
Scattered light (Unpolarized)	X	X	X	X	X
Color Accuracy	X	X	X	X	X
No Lens Coatings	X	X	X	X	X

(2) Multivariate Digital Correction Using Matrix Filter System in Camera

Since typically several distinct aberrations exist in a lens, it is necessary to correct each of the aberrations. For this multi-dimensional problem there is a multivariate digital in-camera software correction solution. The problem of correcting multiple aberrations presents the additional challenge of requiring acceleration to complete multiple tasks rapidly. In most cases, the hardware employed in a camera's chip set will include an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC) which processes a particular program rapidly. It is appropriate to facilitate the combination of corrections to multiple simultaneous aberrations with an ASIC or multiple ASICs.

There is a need to optimize both resolution and contrast across the image area for accurate light reproduction. One way to do this is to stop down the lens to an optimum aperture of about f/8. However, this solution sacrifices the advantages of a fast lens design and capability, namely, limited depth of field and bokeh (smooth out-of-focus area). Though resolution is typically improved by stopping down a lens, digital sensors are generally still restricted in their latitude of contrast. Therefore, regarding both resolution and contrast, it is necessary to provide multiple adjustments of the native image with in-camera digital corrections.

While it is possible to produce mathematical algorithms for automatic correction of optical aberrations, it is also useful to have manually adjustable variables. Therefore, the present system includes a function whereby one may omit a specific correction in an image by using a lens with multiple aberrations in order to induce a particular creative effect. This factor may involve a lack of exposure compensation, a lack of correction for spherical aberration or an improperly or partially corrected apochromatic modification.

In one example of the use of multiple corrections, simultaneous application of multiple digital filters concurrently corrects multiple aberrations. In effect, this is like adding layers of different eye glasses to repair multiple types of astigmatisms for each specific ocular condition. The dynamics of correcting multiple simultaneous aberrations may be complex, but since the number and type of aberrations are constrained to a specific lens type, a centralized database may be accessed with specific corrections for each respective aberration. For example, lenses with multiple complex aberrations, such as in very wide-angle lenses, will require multiple corrections. These combinations of corrections become complex as focal length modes change in zoom lenses and as aperture changes.

The following is a list of filter types that provide digital methods of correcting image problems or creating specific effects. The list is not intended to be comprehensive or systematic.

Filter Type in Digital App.	Most Common Uses	Other Filter Types
UV (and Sky)	General Use	Polarizer
Color-enhancing (and warming)	17 mm-200 mm (in 35 mm)	Close-up
Contrast	17 mm-200 mm (in 35 mm)	Special effects filters
Black and White (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green)	17 mm-200 mm (in 35 mm)	
Infrared	17 mm-200 mm (in 35 mm)	
Color Graduated (Neutral Density)	17 mm-200 mm (in 35 mm)	
Diffusion (Soft, mist/fog, star, streak)	24 mm-135 mm (in 35 mm)	
Combinations (Neutral density and enhancing, Polarizer and UV)	17 mm-200 mm (in 35 mm)	

In the past, these optical filtration processes were added after the production process via editing software such as

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Photoshop. However, in the present system, these combinations of processes are performed in-camera by user-adjusted settings. In the case of artificial color changes to an image, digital processes emulate specific optical filters by adding a specific color or a combination of colors. On the other hand, in the case of diffusion filtration, the in-camera digital process creates an emulation of optical filters. The classic example of this diffusion approach is the soft filter, which is used for portraiture. In this case, various user-adjustable settings in the camera digitally manipulate soft filtration.

(3) Depth-of-Field Optimization Using Digital Correction in Camera

In addition to correcting optically-generated aberrations with in-camera digital processes, the present system allows in-camera depth-of-field (DOF) optimization by affecting the aperture of the lens that is used.

DOF in an image is dependent on the aperture setting in a lens, in which a moderate DOF range—allowing a subject to be isolated in an image—can be manipulated, that is, extended or narrowed, by the camera's digital processing capability. In the film paradigm, one obtains a specific aperture, and thus the corresponding DOF, that is preset by the photographer. However, in the digital paradigm, by contrast, one can narrow an image's surplus DOF range in-camera by manipulating the aperture. This process can only be done in the camera, because once the digital file is sent to post-production editing, the aperture and DOF is already set and incapable of being changed. The aperture is narrowed in camera by isolating the subject and shifting the field of view (forward from the rear range of DOF and backward from the front range of the DOF). Distance information is used to recalculate an optimal DOF. In another embodiment, the camera provides feedback from an internal computational analysis that results in a specification of less DOF and takes another image (or images) with a larger aperture to accomplish reduced DOF at a specific focus point.

The camera will effectively identify a type of subject and provide an optimal aperture for this subject. For instance, for a portrait, the camera will select a shallow DOF around the subject. In the case of a distant landscape, the camera will focus on a distance at infinity and provide a nominal aperture to correspond to shutter speed that will fit the available light as matched to a specific lens. A near landscape photographed with a wide-angle lens will, on the other hand, have a near focus and a maximum DOF; specific subjects will be highlighted with ample DOF. The camera will also have the capability to bracket exposures in several successive images based on DOF variations.

The DOF manipulation thus depends on a combination of data sets including the particular lens used (wide-angle lenses have greater DOF at moderate distances than telephoto lenses), the distance information and the unique combinations of aperture and shutter speed. DOF will narrow with less distance, with use of a telephoto lens and a fast aperture; contrarily, DOF will expand with a further distance, with use of a wide-angle lens and a slower aperture.

In another embodiment of this process, test images are taken and analyzed, then later images taken with new settings optimize DOF for each image type.

(4) Exposure Optimization Using Digital Correction in Camera

One phenomenon that film currently records better than digital photo technology is exposure latitude. Film is capable of greater exposure latitude than either CCD or CMOS digital sensors, though each digital sensor type has strengths and weaknesses. For the crucial detail recorded in a scene, film provides far more depth of tonal range. Yet some of this problem—caused by the limits of digital sensors themselves and the way that photons are recorded by electrically charged pixels—can be digitally corrected and optimized in-camera.

The problem derives equally from the method of measuring exposure as well as the method of image capture by a digital sensor. In general, since there is less exposure latitude in digital sensors, as compared to film, the maximum scope is two or three stops in the image tonal range. Consequently, the camera must meter the image within constraints of the tonal range of the digital sensor, with the sacrifice of either shadow detail or highlight detail. In an image with broad exposure range, then, the image will generally be either too light or too dark because metering for one area sacrifices the other tonal category.

One way to solve this problem is to manipulate the lens aperture, because increased aperture within an optimal limit generally increases detail. An optimal aperture of f/8 provides more detail and clarity than at f/2 or at f/32. The in-camera processor may thus seek out more detail in the image by manipulating the aperture to the optimal range of f/5.6 to f/11, depending on the type of subject and the availability of light. With more detail in the original image, it is possible to interpolate the digital data in the image file by increasing both shadow and highlight detail and to gain an additional stop or two of tonal range.

In another embodiment, the tonal range of an image data set is enhanced in-camera by using meta-data to sample the range of shadow and highlight detail. The data sets are interpolated to add requested shadow detail and/or highlight detail. Obviously, some subjects require more or less shadow or highlight (or both), which the camera can correspondingly adjust. These tonal range corrections are user-adjustable.

In an additional embodiment of in-camera tonal range corrections, exposure data are bracketed by manipulating the aperture and shutter speed to lower or raise the overall exposure in one-third to one-half stop increments. This bracketing method may be correspondingly limited to a specific image type. For instance, in a portrait, the extraneous background, which ought to be out of focus, is not emphasized in the exposure data, while the main subject is carefully nuanced for balancing an optimum of both highlight and shadow, or for an exclusive emphasis on either highlight or shadow.

The overall problem of limited tonal range in digital photography stems from mismatched exposure-metering mechanisms of digital sensors with substantially restricted tonal range capabilities. One interesting example of this problem occurs in scenes with two or more stops of difference, such as a landscape with sky on top and earth on bottom. A filtration process will operate on the key parts of such an image, as described above regarding the vignetting phenomenon; the overexposed top half of the scene will be gradually underexposed while the lower half of the scene will be gradually overexposed. This scene-specific adjustment of exposure greatly increases the tonal range of digital images and is made possible via analysis of the scene and comparison to a database of typical scenes categorized by the in-camera digital processor which effects correction using the methods described herein. In this example, the corrective process emulates the use of neutral-density optical filters.

(5) Special Effects Digital Filtration of Specific Objects

Though there are several main categories of special effects optical filters, including color enhancing, infrared and diffusion, the use of diffusion filters appears to elicit the most dramatic effect. Diffusion filters are categorized as soft effect, mist/fog, black mist, gold diffusion, and star and streak, with

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various degrees of diffusion producing lesser or greater distortions. In effect, rather than removing optically-generated distortions, we are deliberately creating photographically desirable distortions. It is possible to reproduce these special effects by using the digital post-capture production processes in the camera. In this case, the camera digitally emulates the special effect by applying user-adjustable filter settings.

Portraits have traditionally used some sort of soft effect filtration approach which is producible in the camera using the methods described here. After the image is captured, the camera analyzes the image's meta-data and applies a correction by interpolating the data with specific filter emulation. In the past, specific camera lenses, such as the 135 mm soft effects (also called "defocus control") lenses performed this function optically with an included adjustable lens element. This defocus control lens type will focus on the main subject and a lens element setting of the telephoto lens to produce a soft filter effect. In addition, because this lens type uses a nine blade aperture, the background that is out of focus has a pleasing bokeh in which the gradations of tone are evenly smooth. Nevertheless, a sophisticated digital camera is able to produce the same results with more information provided by a normal telephoto lens, using the method of emulating special effects in-camera.

Another novel special effect that is a further embodiment of the system is the ability of the in-camera digital corrective system to use complex data sets contained and analyzed in an image to create a three dimensional (3-D) representation of the image. The camera creates a 3-D image by arranging the DOF in a way that optimizes the aperture by using distance information and autofocus data to isolate a subject. By removing the foreground and background of the image as a center of subject focus, the DOF will emphasize the subject only as 3-D. The key to this effect is the application of specific exposure data as indicated above, because it is in the increased extension of the range of highlight and shadow that the subject in the image will attain a 3-D quality in contrast to its out of focus foreground and background.

An additional embodiment of the present system would extend the still photography in-camera special effects to video with full-motion ranges of filtration actions.

Finally, it is possible to combine different user-programmable special effects in-camera by adding the various types of diffusion methods for a specific image.

(6) Selective In-Camera Filtration of Specific Objects

The combination of sophisticated auto-focus technologies and in-camera auto-exposure systems provides the opportunity to isolate a subject by focusing on the subject and narrowing the DOF range by manipulating the aperture. In a further extension of the subject-isolating capabilities of these technologies, it is possible to digitally filter out specific objects in a scene in-camera while focusing on other selected objects that are in a specific range of DOF. In other words, one may apply filtration to correct aspects of a single object or only the background of a scene to the exclusion of an isolated object, rather than correcting a whole scene. Selective filtering of specific objects in an image by in-camera digital processing affords greater creative flexibility.

Because the camera uses distance information to isolate a specific object by focusing on the object within a range of DOF, it is possible to isolate a particular object for the purposes of applying a specific filtration preference, such as manipulating the color, correcting the optical aberration (say, if the object is in a corner of the image of a wide-angle lens), providing a special effect (such as a soft effect only on a specific object rather than the scene as a whole) or using some combination of these corrections. Once the camera isolates the selected object (using auto-focus mechanisms and distance information), the user selects programmable correction features to perform a corrective function only on the specific object (or only on the parts of the scene that are exclusive of the object). In a further embodiment, contrastively, once the object is isolated, only the background may be selectively manipulated with filtration, achieving pleasing effects. This in-camera corrective feature provides a powerful tool to rapidly manipulate an image without using post-production editing software tools.

These object-specific in-camera selective filtration capabilities are particularly dramatic with fast-moving action photography in which split-second timing produces the preferred complex effects. Selectively identifying a particular object for intensive combinations of filtration is a highlight of the present system.

(7) Digital Correction In-Camera of Intermittent Aberrations Caused by Dust on Digital Sensor

Dust on a digital sensor is a major concern for photographers. The use of zoom lenses compounds this condition, because as the zoom lens changes focal-length positions, air is transmitted, which results in the proliferation and diffusion of sensor dust. Unless photography is isolated to a clean room, the problem of dust on a digital sensor will remain prevalent. The present system provides a method to correct for this phenomenon.

In the case of dust on a sensor, a specific consistent pattern emerges on each image captured by the digital sensor. Consequently, information from various images is analyzed, and the pixels affected by dust are identified. Information from the consistent fixed pixel positions that are affected by the dust are then isolated. The specific positions with the dust are then analyzed by comparing the immediate areas surrounding the dust that are not affected by it. These unaffected areas are analyzed, and the affected areas are interpolated to provide a continuous tone. In effect, the images identify the locations with dust by using caching technology. The continuity of the location of the dust between multiple images provides information to the in-camera image processor to detect the specific pixel locations. The camera will then apply a corrective process to the isolated dust locations with adjoining exposures by interpolating these distinct locations for each specific image configuration.

In another embodiment of the present system, "hot" (too bright) or "dead" (too dark) pixels are interpolated out of the scene using the method described above. Unlike hot or dead pixels, dust is a similar but temporary version of the same problem of an artifact that requires in-camera modification. In effect, a map is built to discover, isolate and interpolate bad pixels, which are a permanent problem revealing a key limit in digital sensor technology. Separate maps are constructed for permanent pixel dysfunctions and temporary pixel aberrations (viz., dust). In both cases, the camera works from these maps to correct the aberrations on a pixel-level.

In a further embodiment of the present system, Monte Carlo analysis is applied to the problem of identifying the location of dust on specific pixels (or partial pixels) by randomly creating an initial map from information of at least two contaminated images.

In still another embodiment of the present system, the process of modifying pixel aberrations (either permanent or temporary) uses a sequence of operation which begins by correcting the major aberrations first, then repairing the minor aberrations, thereby maximizing efficiency. This is done by

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starting the corrective process in a specific location of the image and moving to other positions in an efficient pattern.

(8) Sequence of Corrections for Multiple (Optical and Digital) Types of Aberrations in Camera

Since it is evident that multiple digital filtration approaches may be used for specific types of problems or aberrations or to achieve specific effects, it is clear that a combination of the techniques may be employed simultaneously on specific images. The present invention allows the various optical and digital corrections to be performed in camera in a sequence of actions. The user selects the various combinations of functions required to be performed, inspects the effects, and chooses the most effective combination of effects. Thus the invention offers a combinatorial optimization of the totality of corrective filtration approaches.

After the images have been taken, it is possible to inspect them in the camera using the camera's image read-out. This makes it possible to create new files, or to adapt a RAW file, in real time, by manipulating the various corrections in sequence. This post-image-capture in-camera editing process allows multiple corrections to be applied to a range of optical and digital aberrations by combining various specific corrective techniques.

In some cases, the user can pre-set specific corrections. For instance, to correct for optical aberrations, a user may leave this function on permanently. In other cases, such as selective filtration of a specific object or optimization for DOF or exposure, there may be discriminating use of specific corrective functions. In the case of selective user choice, it is possible, by using the present invention, to select a priority sequence of corrections in layers. While specific select layers may be permanently activated, for example to automatically adjust specific optical aberrations, additional sets of layers may be manually selected in order to modify the specific aspects of each image, particularly to adjust or correct digital aberrations. This process can be performed with a single microprocessor, multiple microprocessors, multiple ASICs or a combination of microprocessors and ASICs.

An additional embodiment of the system provides multiple combinations of corrections and effects via multiple independent ASICs, which only perform specific functions, working in parallel. The various tasks are divided into specific-function ASICs for rapid processing. The advantage of this approach is accelerated processing speed in performing multiple simultaneous functions.

(II) Digital Sensor Improvement and Nano-Grids

(9) Interchangeable Digital Sensor System Using Both CCD and CMOS to Optimize Best Results

Because the main digital sensor types of CCD and CMOS, like film types, each have benefits and detriments, it is sometimes advantageous to provide the utility of both sensor types in a camera system. With the exception of a video camera, which employs three CCDs, the use of multiple sensors has not been adopted. Two generations ago, however, the idea of using a twin reflex camera for medium format photography was implemented. In this case, though focus was coupled between the lenses, one lens was used to see the subject, while the other lens took the picture. This method was used to obtain the benefits of a rangefinder camera with a single lens reflex camera.

The use of two types of sensors in a camera is compelling, because the user benefits from the strengths of both. In the present invention, one sensor is selected from among at least two different types of sensors that are rotated to an active position by the user. One advantage of this approach is that if one sensor experiences a problem, there is a reserve sensor available at the push of a button.

This capability usefully exploits the strengths of each particular sensor. For instance, in situations in which high resolution is required, a CCD may be preferable, while in cases in which increased tonal range or low noise is preferable, a CMOS sensor may be preferable. With this approach, a customer does not need to choose between different types of sensors.

The process of interchanging the two chips is performed by placing the two chips on either façade of a plane that "flips" over (i.e., rotates 180 degrees) upon demand to obtain the requirements of the chosen chip type. This mechanism would fit behind an SLR's mirror and could easily be performed as long as the mirror is in the "up" position. In another embodiment, the chip exchange process can occur by sliding alternating chips into a sleeve from a single location and replacing the non-utilized chip(s) into the reserve compartment. In either event, the camera will detect the chip exchange and will automatically reprogram software functions and settings for the usable chip.

(10) Nano-Grids for Selected Pixels on CCD or CMOS Integrated Circuits to Optimize Selective Modifications of Exposure, ISO and Aberrations in Digital Photography

Digital sensors consist of arrays of pixels, arranged in rows, which behave as tiny buckets for converting photons to electrons. As the pixels fill up with light, they are able to discern slight differences in color and exposure and transfer the energy, in the form of electrons, to storage. Charge coupled devices (CCDs) have been the predominant form of digital sensor because they use a form of electronic charge which creates the behavior of a bucket brigade of transferring data, once the buckets in a row are filled up, to successive rows for digital data storage of the electronic charge sets. CMOS digital sensors may be structured with larger bucket pixels, which can increase the depth of the light captured and thus the latitude of light exposure that is stored. However, for the relatively larger buckets to provide increased photon capture capacity, it is necessary to control the width of the opening in the top and the width of the buckets so that the amount of light captured may be modulated.

The present invention introduces a key advance in the ability of digital sensors, particularly CMOS sensors, to modulate the size of the openings of the pixels. Specifically, the present system provides for a nano-grid, or a very small matrix of filaments, which fits over the sensor. The nano-grid is carefully calibrated to match the rows of pixels on the sensor so as to limit the amount of light that each of the buckets may receive. Use of the nano-grid allows a selective closing of the large buckets in order for photons to be restricted. Selective modification of specific pixels on the neutral grid makes it possible to identify specific sets of pixels to correct for various exposure or lens aberrations.

In this embodiment of the present system, data about a specific lens are provided to the camera in order to correct specific lens aberrations, while exposure data is used to modify image capture using nano-grids for optimum image performance.

Nano-grids may be selectively switched at different pixel sites, akin to continuously programmable field programmable gate array (CP-FPGA) semiconductors, which modify architecture in order to optimize effective operation by constantly manipulating the chip's gates.

Nano-grids may be used for specific image modes, for example, nocturnal imaging, which requires more time to read a sufficient amount of light. In this case, a specific

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software module may provide lens and exposure data to the camera, which then determine the precise composition of nano-grid correction to provide to specific sets of pixels on the digital sensor. In effect, nano-filaments move to positions to effectively block out the full capacity of the pixel buckets and thus change the pixel effects. With use of preset nano-grid positions for particular applications, the identification of specific vectors of nano-filaments is performed, and exposure adjustments are made on specific images in hardware.

The nano-grid is overlaid over the surface of the pixel architecture. The nano-grid is used not only in specific pre-set positions, but it also provides feedback to the post-capture system for analysis and repositioning to achieve the desired effects. One effect of the nano-grid is to manually expand or narrow the range of a set of pixel buckets; this process in turn effectively modifies not only the exposure range but also sharpness at high ISO, thereby dramatically reducing noise. Consequently, it becomes possible, by modifying the pixel bucket width and height, to obtain extremely sharp images with excellent contrast and tonal range even in poor lighting, a feat heretofore impossible.

The nano-grid performs these mechanical functions by moving the nano-filaments in an arc, like expandable windshield wipers. Though nano-grids are particularly useful in CMOS chips, they are also useful with CCDs. In fact, with the advent of nano-grids, CCD pixel size (and density in pixel-rows which will affect the overall sensor size) may be expanded and thus made substantially more versatile.

In a further embodiment of the present invention, multiple screens, or grids, would be placed over the digital sensor. The use of multiple nano-grids provides increased capacity to perform the function of closing off the pixel buckets and, in fact, to completely close off selected pixels to make the image effect completely dark. The combinations of nano-grids behave as multiple screens that move left and right to achieve the desired effect. Although there is a need to periodically calibrate the screens to effect their precise positions, this system will employ an electric charge to push the nano-filaments to the desired locations.

Nano-filaments move to block the space allowing photons to hit the pixel in order to limit the amount of light capacity available to the pixel. The complete darkening of the pixel will result in a total black color in the resulting image.

Exposure data feedback is provided to the digital sensor to effect the precise positioning of the nano-grid(s). In a further aspect of the present system, the camera's computer will anticipate the exposure data by statistically extrapolating from the pattern created by at least three data sets. A microprocessor (or ASIC) controlled nano-grid mechanism will use the feedback to anticipate specific nano-grid positions in order to optimize the exposure and corrective functions.

In one application of the nano-grid, the problem of vignetting in wide-angle lenses may be solved by activating nano-filaments in nano-grid(s) primarily in the corners to correct for the darkening from the limits of the optical aberrations, while still maintaining very low noise in a high ISO (low light) photographic situation. The use of the nano-grid would thus contribute to solving multiple problems.

Nano-grids will also be useful in accurately correcting for both color and exposure detail. In fact, with nano-grids, the capacity of digital sensors' range should be substantially increased, because the chips' pixel bucket sizes can be modulated. Therefore, not only will the lighting and color be accurate, but sharpness and optical aberrations will also be optimized, in ways not possible before.

(11) Integrated Nano-Grids in Digital Sensor

In a further embodiment of the system, nano-grids may be integrated into the digital sensor. In this form of the nano-grid, the nano-filaments are constructed within the pixel buckets in order to increase their accuracy and responsiveness. The nano-filaments mechanically move in various directions to perform the main operation of modulating light into their respective pixels. This method of organizing nano-grids and nano-filaments increases the rapidity of response to feedback. In effect, each pixel has a mask, or flexible lid, contained in it, which may open and close, to allow more or less light into the pixel bucket.

The integrated nano-filaments are activated by oscillation between positive and negative charges. In the context of a CMOS sensor, the transistor networks oscillate between positive and negative charges. This architecture allows a "push-pull" design of nano-filaments in which the negative charge "pulls" and the positive charge "pushes" the activation of the nano-filaments. This charge-enabled nano-grid (CENG) advantageously allows modulating gates (i.e., filaments) integrated into the pixel to reduce spaces between pixels, thereby allowing more pixels to be packed on the same surface area. The net benefit of the use of integrated CENG filaments is that specific sets of nano-filaments will produce specific effects on-demand and allow far more tonal detail than has been possible before.

In a further embodiment of the present system, sophisticated digital sensors may contain combinations of nano-grids that appear on top of the sensor as well as nano-grids that are integrated into the digital sensor. This combination will provide maximum latitude for processing the greatest effect available.

(12) Combinations of Nano-Grids and Digital Corrections Applied to Digital Imaging System

Whereas it is possible to exclusively implement nano-grids to control the amount of light penetrating specific pixels, and it is possible to exclusively provide digital corrections as specified above regarding correcting optical or digital aberrations, a further embodiment of the present invention combines the two processes in order to optimize imaging.

Combining these two complex processes makes it possible to modify pixel capacity to maximize exposure latitude, to expand exposure modification and to apply digital correctives for optical and digital aberrations. Hence selective exposure far beyond the limits of present film or digital photography is made possible. The restrictions of film can thus be transcended by using the present system, whereas use of a static and limited digital system would not be sufficient to facilitate these complex corrections.

The unique combinations of these processes also illustrate a complex system that provides feedback from both the environment and the photographer. The photographer may select preset exposure settings that will activate a range of options in both the nano-grids and the digital corrective system, while the lens aberration corrective system is automatically implemented. Once the camera detects specific conditions, such as a broad range of exposure latitude, from very bright to very dark, in the scene, it computes the precise number and location of nano-grids needed to modulate the pixels for optimum exposure with highlight and shadow detail and extreme sharpness, even in relatively low light. The dynamics of these multiple processes present trade-offs in selecting the best available set of selected modifications.

(13) Tri-Well Pixels

As indicated above, one of the key problems with current digital sensors involves dynamic range. There is a need to

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limit the scope of the space in the pixel well, into which light is captured, then converted into electrons. The challenge with current technologies is to balance details in shadow and highlight areas, particularly to achieve low noise at relatively high ISO speeds.

In addition to the concept of nano-grids, both in surface screen and integrated embodiments, as specified in (10) to (11) above, the present system introduces the notion of three side-by-side differentially-sized buckets within each pixel intended to optimize dynamic range for increased sensitivity. In the most common configuration, the three different-sized buckets are arranged with the largest bucket (in both width and height) in the center, with the second and third largest buckets on either side. The buckets are elliptical and concave in architecture to increase efficiency of fitting together in a round pixel structure. Their structures are semi-circular and elongated. The largest and tallest bucket will be tasked with maintaining the details in highlights, and the smallest will be tasked with maximizing the details in shadows, while the mid-sized bucket will be tasked with maintaining the middle range of exposure details. The pixel will have data from all three buckets available, but will select the data from one or more buckets depending on the exposure details.

The system is analogous to the high fidelity sound technology in speakers with crossovers, whose several frequencies are used by the tweeters, mid-range(s) and woofers; the crossover point at which the frequency changes from one component to another can be modified based on the specific mechanics of each component.

In the case of the multiple buckets in a single pixel, the buckets are connected by filaments to a central grid which captures and stores the electrons. When the photographic scene displays increased light, image data from the larger buckets are selected to be recorded by the processor, while in cases of darkness and increased need for sensitivity, the smaller buckets are selected to be recorded; the mid-sized bucket is used in normal light situations of most cases. Further, this multi-aspect architecture can use pixels in varying positions on the sensor differently, particularly to facilitate processing far more dynamic range and to produce uniform tonal range in scenes that vary more than two or three stops. This novel multi-aspect model solves a number of key problems involving exposure dynamics in digital photography.

In another embodiment of the system, there may be more than three buckets in a pixel, so as to divide out the functions further and create even finer tonal continuity. In a further embodiment of the system, several pixels in a super-pixel allow red, green and blue colors to be segregated by each sub-pixel. This approach will be useful particularly in CCD semiconductors because of limits of this architecture, which require coupling circuitry between pixels to pass a charge between rows of pixels. In this case, outputs will vary between the micro-pixels to facilitate the differential processing required.

While cases of two side-by-side pixels might solve these exposure latitude problems, they represent an inadequate solution, much as a speaker with only two components limits the dynamic range output dramatically in contrast with a speaker with five components. This is similar to comparing a diode and a transistor.

(III) Digital System Improvements that Link Multiple Digital Corrections

(14) Auto Pre-Programmed Modules for Specific Functions in Digital Imaging System

To process the functions specified in this integrated digital imaging system, it is necessary for automated pre-programmed modules to detect the specific lens type and the specific digital sensor(s) used to assess the appropriate corrections or alterations. The purpose of the pre-programmed modules is to access a preset library of (a) typical corrections of lenses, (b) typical scene types with appropriate exposure modes, (c) specific effects that may be selected and (d) specific sensor functions. It is important to match a particular lens to a particular sensor type so that adjustments are calibrated to this pairing. The processing software is stored in either a microprocessor or an ASIC in order to process the images after they are captured by the sensor but before they are transferred to storage on a memory device.

In another embodiment, the system processes image corrections after the digital data is stored and constantly accesses the original stored data file in the production of a corrected file. This process allows for immediate data processing and storage which affords more time to accomplish specific corrective functions. There are thus cases when real-time correctives are neither necessary nor possible. Such increased processing capability may also facilitate a more complete corrective task.

In an additional embodiment, because similar correctives and effects may be provided to images that share the specific combination of lens and sensor, in order to accelerate the process of optimizing the images, batches of similar images may be processed together. This batch processing method may include the creation of duplicate images for each image captured, including a RAW image that contains no changes to the native image capture and a simultaneous auto-corrected image. The optimized image may be simultaneously compressed, to maximize storage capabilities, while the RAW image may be left uncompressed so as to maintain original detail.

(15) Apparatus and Process for Affecting Pre-Sensor Optical and Digital Corrections in Digital Imaging System

Given the nature of light transmission, not all optical corrections are optimized by modification after the image is captured by the sensor. Though a range of important corrections and effects may be made after image capture, such as correction for optical or digital aberrations, there are several types of corrections that are required to be made before the light reaches the sensor. One example of this pre-sensor digital correction involves the use of a low-pass or anti-aliasing filter that resides in front of the digital sensor to minimize moiré and aliasing digital problems (although the use of this filter adversely affects image sharpness).

In the case of optical corrections, one class of filter that requires use before the digital sensor is the polarizing filter, because once light is captured on the digital sensor, the polarizing effect will not be available. Another type of correction that involves use of a filter or lens before the digital sensor is the close-up filter. This latter solution allows a lens's closest focusing plane to be closer to the front of a lens and has the effect of diminishing the rear plane of the depth of field. The close-up filter may be optimized for use with floating rear-element group lenses which allow increasingly close focusing. In one embodiment of the system, specific pre-sensor optical filters may be used to provide polarization and close up corrections. The use of in-camera optical (circular) polarization would help standardize this valuable process and eliminate the need to maintain several external polarizer filters for each lens mount.

Since the present system entails an embodiment which uses nano-grids to perform specific exposure modifications before the light hits the digital sensor, it is possible to use

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these nano-grids for the applications of polarization and close-up filter. These filtration capabilities occur between the lens and the digital sensor.

In order to optimize the use of pre-sensor filtration, an image is initially tested and analyzed before the optimized corrections are activated and the pre-sensor changes are made. This process is analogous to the use of automated flash photography in which a feedback mechanism is provided; a scene is evaluated, and the initial flash data analyzed and modified to correspond to the correct exposure before a final flash is produced.

Because the camera system processes post-capture data, in order to optimize images for optical and digital problems, as well as continuously makes changes to pre-sensor filtration, multiple ASICs work in parallel to make the conversion of the image after capture. The use of parallel ASICs to perform specific correction processes solves the problem of capturing images and making post-capture corrections while simultaneously adapting the pre-sensor filtration system.

As an alternative embodiment of the system, a microprocessor (and software) may perform specific pre-sensor adjustments while the ASIC(s) performs specific corrective functions. In another embodiment, the ASIC(s) may perform the specific pre-sensor adjustments while a microprocessor (and software) will perform the specific corrective functions.

(16) Integrated Digital Imaging System for Optical and Digital Corrections with Feedback Dynamics

Because the present system consists of, and uses, complex sub-systems, including an auto-focus mechanism, an auto-exposure mechanism, a shutter mechanism, an automatic flash mechanism, a digital sensor mechanism, a digital processing mechanism and a digital storage mechanism, it is possible to realize interaction dynamics that contain feedback. The interactive process of operating these sub-systems involves a learning progression. The image is analyzed, solutions are tested and an optimal solution is selected and implemented, all in real time. By choosing a specific logic vector in a decision tree involving an initial variable, the process begins again with another key variable in real-time until the final image is captured and optimized.

In order to accomplish these complex processes, specific variables, such as aperture data, shutter speed data, lens data, digital sensor data and subject type are registered and analyzed by the camera. As environmental data changes, the camera mechanisms adapt to the environmental and the photographer's situation.

In order to accelerate these processes, the camera learns to anticipate the user's behaviors, the user's preferences and the subject's behaviors. By providing user-adjusted setting modifications for optical and digital corrections, the camera establishes a reference point for processing rapid image changes. In particular, the camera's software will analyze trends in the user's pattern of behaviors and preferences as well as pattern changes in the subject's behaviors. Anticipation processes are programmed into the autofocus and automated flash systems because of the extremely rapid reaction-time requirements of these specific mechanisms.

In one embodiment of the system, a method of processing a chain of rapid image captures is to employ computer-caching techniques in which a first image is processed in a normal way while later images are processed in an accelerated way. This is possible because the first image provides data to the system to analyze; these data then allow the system to anticipate further similar images and to use similar auto-focus and auto-exposure data. The optical and digital corrections are performed in a batch fashion by applying similar changes to near-identical image problems in order to dramatically accelerate the processing speed of a chain of images. This caching and anticipation approach is very useful in fast-paced action photography.

Another embodiment of the process of rapidly capturing a chain of images in sequence employs multi-threading techniques. Dividing the functions between specific subsystem ASICs allows multiple corrections to be performed in a parallel cascade for efficient task completion. One advantage of breaking down functions to specific processors is the acquired ability to start on one function and, while the system is in the process of completing a task, to begin other tasks. This process eliminates the lag between the specific subsystems.

(17) Adaptive User Pattern Learning with User-Programmable Functions in Digital Imaging System

In order to optimize its functions, the camera needs to learn about the user's preferences. When the user uses the camera, the camera evaluates the use patterns. Since the camera is programmed with a database of common user patterns, it can identify common uses and anticipate common uses of similar users by employing a "collaborative filtering" mechanism (i.e., if you like this camera setting, you should like this other setting because similar users who have liked the first setting have also liked the second setting). By anticipating common uses of each camera user, the camera optimizes its functions for each use and for each user. In effect, the camera's learning of user preferences is a sort of guided process of experimentation. Evolving algorithms learn about the user from actual use patterns.

One positive effect of this learning process of the camera about the user's patterns of behavior is that the filtration process becomes adaptive. The camera builds an initial map of the user's preferences from the user's actual selections. From the starting point of common types of personal selections, the camera uses standard templates of main types of uses that are fulfilled for each user's applications. For instance, if a photographer typically takes portraits with a traditional portrait lens, the camera will be aware of this and will activate filtration processes that are optimal for this type of portraiture photography, such as instilling limited depth of field on a subject and out-of-focus foreground and background. Contrarily, if landscape images are selected, depth of field will be increased substantially and the lens focused on either infinity or a medium point depending on the specific type of subject matter. The camera builds a model for each user based on the accumulation of experience.

In order for the camera to learn about the preferences of a specific user, the camera must adjust to each particular user, much as each individual identity must log onto a computer network privately.

Since the dynamics of the combined subsystems are complex, and adaptive, it is necessary that automated adjustments be interactive. Once detection of the lens type, the sensor type, the exposure settings, the user and the subject is made, optical and digital distortions are identified and specific combinations of corrections are applied both before and after the digital sensor in order to optimize the image. All of this is accomplished in less time than the blink of an eye.

(18) Software Privacy Function in Digital Imaging System

Because digital camera systems are able to use software and wireless mechanisms for their operation, it is possible to activate aspects of the camera remotely. Conversely, it is possible to disable operations of the camera remotely.

The present invention embodies a capability to externally disable the camera remotely in specific locations that require privacy, such as secret government areas (courthouses), pri-

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vate homes or businesses that are image-free zones. In these cases, a signal from an external source is provided to disable the shutter from firing. This black-out capability will allow external control of access to specific sites. As a condition of access, only a camera with this feature may be admitted to public buildings, so that even if the camera is permitted to operate, permission is only conditional. For instance, the owner of the building may allow the camera to function only in a specific set of rooms but not in others. Cameras without this feature may not be allowed in private spaces where control must be externally restricted.

This blocking feature will require the addition of specific blocking software, which may be automatically downloaded as one enters specific buildings. Similarly, in order to be granted permission to access the camera, or specific functions of the camera, the downloading of a "key" may be required.

Moreover, a further embodiment of the system may make it necessary to download software keys to get access to filtration capabilities in the camera in order to obtain optimum images. For example, the user may be required to pay a fee to download software in real time that will permit her to access a particular function in the camera to obtain a critical image. A spectrum of quality and complexity in filtration capabilities may be made obtainable for a range of fees on-demand. Therefore, the external downloading of software for the camera need not be limited to a black out function.

(IV) Dynamic Digital Imaging System Improvements that Apply to Zoom Lenses and Video Imaging

(19) Dynamics of Zoom Lens Corrections in Digital Imaging System

Whereas the optical aberrations of prime (fixed focal length) lenses were discussed above, the modulation of optical aberrations of zoom lenses is another problem to consider. As a wholly different species of lens, zoom lenses have become extremely complex optical mechanisms consisting of multiple groups of lens elements. The general problem with zoom lenses is the trade-off that must be made: To minimize the distortions of the widest possible focal length, distortions become maximized at the longest possible focal length, and vice-versa. Consequently, zoom lens architecture is inherently compromised on image quality. Over the years, lens designers have developed lens formulas that have dramatically improved image quality and that compete with typical prime lenses. As an example of this evolution in quality, the class of 70-200 f/2.8 35 mm zoom lenses, now in their sixth generation, has supplied substantial improvements over earlier telephoto zooms. However, in general, zoom lenses have more aberrations than primes and thus require increased optical corrections. The need to solve the problem of zoom lens aberration correction is accentuated by their increased use in photography because of their simplicity and versatility.

The dynamics of the zooming process present specific difficulties for the purposes of correcting optical aberrations in digital imaging systems. With fixed-focal length lenses, the camera can detect the lens and provide an immediate consistent modification for a varying range of apertures. In the case of zooms, however, where the focal-length is not fixed, the adjustments must correlate to the changes in the focal length. In effect, this condition presents a continuous resampling process. When combined with changing scenes, the zooming process requires far faster responses to changing inputs by the camera system. This process resembles the tracking of a kaleidoscope's changing image structures as the wheel on the device is constantly turned.

In order to solve the problem of distortion at the wide-angle part of select zoom lenses, manufacturers have been using aspherical elements which are complex shapes that require special production techniques. On the other hand, in order to solve the problem of chromatic aberration in select telephoto lenses, manufacturers have used extra low dispersion glass elements, particularly at the front of the zoom lens. Since there are generally three main classes of zoom lenses—wide-angle to wide-angle, wide-angle to telephoto and telephoto to telephoto—aspherical elements have been used in wide-angle zoom lenses, while extra low dispersion glass has been used in the telephoto zoom lenses and both kinds of lens elements have been included in the wide-angle to telephoto zoom lenses.

The changing focal lengths of zoom lenses add a variable to the complex set of variables of the interacting sub-systems in the digital imaging system. The digital camera system must therefore track the movement of the changes in the focal lengths in zoom lenses and continuously make modifications to the varied optical aberrations in these types of lenses. Unlike in fixed focal length lenses, the aberrations change at different focal lengths in zoom lenses, and the camera must track these changes.

The present system is designed to make the corrections to these changing aberrations in zoom lenses by noting the changed focal length at specific times of each lens. For a fixed focal length lens, the camera refers to a database of information to provide information to correct specific types of aberrations; for a zoom lens, the camera's database contains multiplex information for each focal length in each respective zoom lens type. This is as if each zoom lens contains a combination of multiple lenses of specific focal lengths. When the zoom is moved to a new focal position, the camera reads the lens as a specific focal length and makes corrections to aberrations based on this specific setting. Although the camera reads the zoom lens at a specific moment in time and adjusts the necessary modifications to correct for aberrations at that specific focal length at that time, overall the zoom lens requires the camera to rapidly make these adjustments.

Since zoom lenses employ dynamic processes of change, it is possible to track a moving subject in real-time by changing focal length from a stationary vantage. These changed focal length positions are tracked by the auto-focus system, but also by the auto-exposure system in the camera. The present system thus allows for zoom tracking in order to anticipate the direction of zoom lens changes, much as the focus on the moving subject involves focus tracking mechanisms. These systems use fuzzy logic and evolutionary algorithms to anticipate the movement of the subject and thus of the focal length change of zoom lens. In this way it is possible to accelerate the lens aberration correction process using zoom lenses.

Because the zoom lenses typically increase aberrations precisely because of the lens design compromises, these types of lenses are ideally suited to the present digital imaging system. The present system allows the zoom lens to be used at high quality without needing to stop down the aperture, thereby resulting in superior photographic opportunities.

(20) Dynamic Changes in Video Corrections of Digital Imaging System

While the zoom lens presents the need to provide a dynamic solution to the process of making corrections to optical aberrations, video photography provides another case of a process that requires dynamic solutions. The same principles that apply to still photography apply to video: auto-focus variability, aperture and depth-of-field variability aspects, shutter speed variability aspects, differences in lens focal length and artificial lighting variability suggest that video be viewed as merely a very rapid (30 to 60 frames per

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second) application of still photography. Nonetheless, video presents new classes of dynamic problems, most notably regarding the matter of tracking changing subjects in real time.

The process of shifting subject positions, even if the camera is stationary, presents a change of multiple variables that require the automated subsystems (auto-focus, auto-exposure, auto-flash, etc.) to be integrated. Feedback is presented by subjects in the external environment with changing focus and exposure variables. In these cases, even with a modulating shutter speed, the three main variables of change are a zoom lens to continuously change the focal length, auto-focus to track a subject and aperture modifications to continuously change depth-of-field.

The unique dynamics of these complex sub-systems presents particular challenges for a digital imaging system to produce rapid results with the use of advanced ASICs and microprocessors. By incorporating techniques that track objects with advanced auto-focus mechanisms, anticipate zoom lens changes and predict optimal exposures as well as make automatic corrections to both optical and digital aberrations in real time, the present system continuously optimizes the video imaging process.

(21) "Stationary-Scene Object-Motion" Caching Process, with Application to Video, in Digital Imaging System

Because video imaging processes employ full motion activity, particularly of subjects in the environment, tracking a subject in a video system is problematic. Once a subject is identified and selected, the subject is automatically tracked with auto-focus and auto-exposure mechanisms by a zoom lens apparatus. There is a particular need to identify and track a subject within a broad stationary scene.

The present system accomplishes this task by using anticipatory object-trajectory tracking. The parts of the stationary scene that are not being tracked are cached. In other words, precisely because the background of the scene is stationary, this part of the scene is not tracked for focus or exposure. On the other hand, the object in motion is identified and tracked by subtracting the extraneous data of the stationary scene. Multiple objects are tracked by comparing data about these combinations of objects and their relations and determining the appropriate exposure and focus settings.

While Monte Carlo processes use random settings to self-organize an initial map, which are useful as a baseline for the purpose of anticipating tracking data sets, the present system subtracts the known information about the specific object(s) being tracked from the stationary background in the environment. In other words, the background data is "blanked out" in a caching process while the main subject(s) are tracked. By so using these techniques, the camera system can efficiently calculate the modifications needed to optimize the video scene.

In a further embodiment of the system, a chip-set is enabled in video display devices (i.e., video monitors) to implement select corrections for optical and digital distortions. The user may modify settings for automating the process of achieving optimum video images.

(V) Digital Image Networking

(22) Network Coordination of Fixed Sensor Grid to Track Multiple Objects in Digital Video Imaging System

While the previous discussion has focused on employing a single camera to capture images, the present system is also useful for networking sensors in a sensor grid in order to track multiple objects. Specifically, the present system may be used in surveillance and reconnaissance situations to track objects over time. Using a grid of image sensors with overlapping range parameters makes it possible to organize a complex network of sensors for surveillance activities.

After selecting specific objects to track, the system follows the objects as they move from location to location, appropriately modulating the focus, the lens focal length, the ISO and the exposure settings. As the subject moves from one section of a grid to another, the sensors are coordinated to "hand off" the object to other sensors on the grid, much like a cellular phone network hands off calls between cells.

In another embodiment of the present system, the cameras in the network may be mobile instead of stationary in a fixed sensor grid. In this case, self-organizing aspects of the mobile sensor grid track mobile objects in real time. One application of this complex system, which draws on earlier work in collective robotics, is in cinematography, which requires multiple transportable perspectives of mobile subjects. The complex dynamics of a mobile sensor network provides complex feedback in this manifestation of the present system.

(23) Automatic Wireless Off-Porting of Back-Up Images to External Data Bank

Because the present system uses digital files, it is possible to move these files to an external site for storage. The present system has capabilities to off-port images to an external data bank automatically. This feature is valuable in order to preserve on-board storage capability.

Whether implemented in a local area network (LAN) or a wide area network (WAN), by using a built-in wireless router, the present digital imaging system may be set to send data files directly and automatically to hard-drive storage either in a device in the same room or uploaded to the Internet for storage around the world. This capability is critical for managing massive files of large sensor data sets and preserving valuable in-camera storage space. When automatically sending data files to a nearby computer, the computer may act as a data-port relay to automatically resend the images to an Internet site for storage. The system will maintain the option of keeping some images in the camera and sending duplicate copies of digital files of images to another site for storage as a backup. This automatic back-up process provides insurance for the photographer.

In another embodiment of the system, just as image files are off-loaded to external storage, software files are periodically downloaded to the camera in order to update the camera settings and the database system. For example, as the camera manufacturer provides new lenses for the camera, it becomes necessary to load new updated settings to accommodate corrections for the new lenses. Similarly, as the camera requires new software updates with improved algorithms to further optimize the corrective functions of both the optical and digital mechanisms, the camera will automatically accept these. This feature is particularly important to both manufacturer and user because the ability to update software capability periodically will protect a user from needing to upgrade major hardware such as with a lens replacement.

(24) Image Organization System

The present digital imaging system does not merely allow for the storage of image data files on external storage. Because of the problems of protecting storage and the need to make multiple back-ups in the digital sphere, it is also necessary to store digital image files in multiple database locations. The images are organized in a main database by various criteria, such as time, location, subject-type, etc., and then rerouted to various locations around the world for safe storage. While specific sets of images may be stored together, the

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need to identify the locations is less important than the need to have control of the main database list which identifies the locations.

In order to maintain security, the digital imaging files may periodically be rotated randomly between locations. Only the main database list, which is constantly updated, maintains information on their location. In fact, specific digital bits of a single image may be maintained at different locations in order to maintain further security. Thus, on many computers around the world bits of each image may be stored, and continuously rotated, with constantly updated registries maintaining their complex hybrid whereabouts. These rotation storage functions are performed by a randomizer logic engine.

In a further embodiment of the present system, once the digital files are off-loaded from the camera system to external storage, specific images may be automatically identified and further specific corrections automatically provided.

In yet another embodiment of the system, the images that are off-loaded from the camera to the external storage system are organized according to various criteria, such as accuracy of focus or exposure or quality of image type, in order to be automatically prioritized. The camera, with the assistance of an initial setting of user priorities, will automatically order new images with a higher or lower priority relative to other images and camera settings. Thus, at the end of a day, the images may be displayed in an order preferred by the user. Lesser images will be automatically routed to a lower position as they do not meet specific criteria, and better images will be routed to a relatively higher position in the organization of files. This feature of automatically assisting in the organization of the digital image files is a very useful one which will save photographers time.

(25) Wireless Digital Image System Automatically Generating Prints from Image Capture

The present digital imaging system not only automatically off-loads digital image files to remote locations for storage; the system also will allow one to photograph an image (or sequence of images) in one location (i.e., Paris) and instantly print it in another location (i.e., Los Angeles) for publication in real time. In addition, an image may be captured by the camera and instantly uploaded to a pre-programmed Web site for publication by using wireless technologies. In addition, it is possible to automatically print the digital image file anywhere in the world virtually the moment the image is taken. This system makes this instantaneity particularly possible precisely because the image corrections are automated in-camera. Since there is no need in most cases to further edit the image files, they are thus generally ready for immediate release.

General Architecture and Dynamics

FIG. **1** illustrates the overall structure of the system. Object data (**100**) in the domain of objects being photographed by the camera constantly change. In some cases, the lighting changes, while in other cases, the positions of the objects change. At **120** the flash will artificially light the objects. Flashes may be either on the camera or remote from the camera. A camera sensor (**130**) will detect external data changes. An optical lens (**110**) feeds analogue imaging data to the digital sensor(s) (**175** and **180**). In some cases, a mirror (**170**) will swivel in order to directly input imaging data to the digital sensor after the shutter (**150**) is fired. In some cases, a filter (**160**) stands between the lens and the digital sensor(s). A digital signal processor (DSP) (**195**) is connected to at least one sensor (A or B). A database (**190**) is connected to at least one sensor (A or B) as well. The digital sensors are connected to an ASIC (**195**) and/or a microprocessor (**193**) in order to process the image and control the camera. The digital image data is passed from the digital sensor to either the ASIC or microprocessor and then stored in memory (**197**). The presence or absence of specific elements of this mechanism is not required for the correct functioning of this system. Consequently, a number of the drawings contained herein will focus only on specific sub-assemblies of the overall digital imaging system mechanism.

The present invention is intended to operate with a spectrum of camera types. These camera categories include digital still cameras without a mirror mechanism or without an optical interface. The present system applies to cameras with single lens reflex mechanisms. In addition, the present system applies to video cameras, both with or without mirror mechanisms, including camcorders. Finally, many of the functions disclosed in the present system are integrated into specific imaging sensors. The system applies to image sensors that are integrated with complex system functions, including those described herein, with "system on a chip" (SoC) capabilities in a single microelectronic integrated circuit. The invention also applies to networks of sensors, networks of cameras or integrated networks of both sensors and cameras.

FIG. **2** describes digital image signal processing. After an analog signal (**200**) is captured, it is converted to a digital signal by an analog-to-digital converter (**210**). The signal is then forwarded to the digital signal processor (**220**) and filtered (**230**). The digital signal is then stored in memory (**240**).

In FIG. **3**, the correction to the optical vignetting problem is shown. In vignetting, the lens (**300**) makes the edges of the image significantly darker as the light falls off, a phenomenon particularly prominent on wide angle lenses. As represented here, the concentric circles of filtration correction are darker in the middle (**310**) of the image in order to counteract the vignetting effect. The overall image aperture is reduced from one half to two stops in order to compensate for the maximum light fall off depending on the amount of vignetting effect from each lens type.

FIG. **4** shows a list of several different wide angle lenses in a database. In the 35 mm domain, the 14 mm (**400**), 20 mm (**410**), 24 mm (**420**), 28 mm (**430**) and 35 mm (**440**) lenses, each with f/2.8 apertures are listed in the database. Each lens type presents a distinct formulation involving different sets of optical data that require different aberration corrections.

The digital corrective process is described in FIG. **5**. After a specific lens type is identified (**500**) and a database is referenced (**510**), the lens type is matched with the specific optical aberrations (**520**). The digital filter then applies a correction to specific optical aberrations (**530**). As an example, the vignetting effect is corrected by gradually darkening the center of the image in concentric rings (**540**).

FIG. **6** shows the database configuration of several different types of 24 mm f/2.8 lenses (**600** to **630**) with different optical configurations. Each lens type has a different set of manifestations of optical aberrations including vignetting (**640**), spherical aberration (**650**), pin cushion distortion (**660**), barrel distortion (**670**) and comatic aberration (**680**). For each lens, there will be a unique combination of optical aberrations compared to each lens type from different optical configurations. The database is accessed to provide the multi-objective optimization solution for correcting several different optical aberrations for each specific lens formula.

In FIG. **7**, after a camera captures an image (**700**) and uses a digital sensor to create a digital file (**710**), the digital file is forwarded to the digital signal processor semiconductor (**720**). The DSP applies the filtration (**730**) to correct the optical aberrations from the lenses. The revised digital file is then sent to storage (**740**).

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Digital filtration is performed by employing the DSP hardware as well as specific software in order to attain specific aberration corrections. In an optical filter, which typically sits at the front of a lens and performs a single function of modifying the optical characteristics of the lens, the electronic filter will process the image after it is converted from an analogue representation to a digital signal. Common digital filters include a low pass filter or anti-ahasing filter. In most cases digital imaging filtration is a discrete time application and is processed in a time-signal sequence.

One example of a digital filtration process is a fast Fourier transform (FFT). The digital signal is modified by applying an algorithm to extract the frequency spectrum. The original function is then reconstructed by an inverse transformation of the original signal. The signal can be manipulated to perform various conversions. This process is used to sharpen or soften an image. For instance, by differentiating the frequency spectrum, the high frequency can be emphasized by limiting the low frequency, as in a high pass filter. Digital filtration is typically performed by the DSP after the image is captured and before the image file is stored. However, in the present system, there is some filtration before the digital sensor that captures the image as well as some filtration processing after the sensor sends the file to the DSP.

In order to accelerate the filtration process, the digital file will be broken into parts, with each part processed simultaneously. Filtering a one-dimensional image will treat data from each column of a digital sensor separately. When the data is treated like a two dimensional image, the data file may be treated with different techniques. For instance, different quadrants of the image may be analyzed and filtered separately. In addition, the highlights and the shadows in the varied frequency range may be analyzed and filtered separately as well. Similarly, a two dimensional image file may be analyzed by starting in a corner and working in each contiguous quadrant in a circular (clockwise or counterclockwise) order. Further, the filtration process may begin in the corners and work inwards or begin in the center of the image and work outwards. For instance, in wide angle lens filtration to correct optical aberrations, the outer edges will be the most prominent distortions that will require the most corrections; therefore, the filtration process will work by starting on the corners first.

The present invention also addresses the multi-functional corrections in an image by applying multiple simultaneous techniques. This is done either by performing a sequential filtration process or a simultaneous filtration process. In either case, the image is re-filtered to make more than one pass in order to correct different types of aberrations.

Different types of aberrations require different types of filtration. In the case of pin cushion distortion and barrel distortion, which are inverse appearing aberrations, the filtration process will adjust the edges of affected digital files captured with wide-angle lenses. The optimized images will be accessed by the database and compared to the actual image files. The filtration will be applied to each image file to closely correct the distortions bit by bit. In effect, the corrected digital images will be reverse engineered to discover the unique distortions as they establish a pattern by comparing the input digital images and the database of optimized images. The digital image correction will be applied once the aberration is assessed.

Each lens provides data to the camera microprocessor and DSP about its unique characteristics. The lens is pre-programmed with aberration data pertaining to that lens type and even to each particular lens (ascertained through a testing process). The lens then provides this specific data to the camera for processing of optical aberrations. In one additional embodiment, the lens will also contain software to correct its aberrations that will also be sent to the camera processors in order to be applied to specific digital file filtration. As information and techniques are made available, new software to ascertain and correct each lens's unique optical aberrations will be forwarded to the camera and stored in the lens, thereby providing an upgrade path to continuously improve the optical qualities of lenses by employing a sort of after-manufacture digital correction.

FIG. **8** shows the process of selecting filtration settings. After the user selects the specific filtration settings (**800**), the user marks the specific filtration setting and accepts the setting (**810**). The user may continue to select multiple settings. When the user has selected all preferences (**820**) and accepts the settings the user returns to the main menu.

In FIG. **9** varied depth of field optimization at different apertures is described. In the first drawing, the object (**930**) has a depth of field (**940**) that has a broad range of clarity around the object. The camera (**900**) evaluates the distance data (**920**) and the object to establish an optimal depth of field range between f/8 and f/11. In the second drawing, the object (**980**) has a narrower depth of field range (**990**) based on distance data (**970**) and object data from the camera (**950**) to determine an optimal depth of field range between f/2.8 and f/5.6. The camera's automatic alteration of the aperture to narrow the depth of field is based on a range of factors, including the focus on the object, the object's motion, the distance to the camera, shutter speed constraints and the light on the object. Modulating aperture automatically in the camera provides a blurring of the background and the foreground so that the object can stand out without distraction.

Exposure optimization using digital correction is shown in FIG. **10**. After the camera assesses an object's distance from the camera (**1000**) and identifies the optimal aperture of the image to maximize the dynamic range (**1010**), the aperture is either increased (**1020**) or decreased (**1030**) and the correction applied (**1040**).

In-camera special effects filtration is illustrated in FIG. **11**. Once the image exposure is assessed by using the camera exposure meter (**1100**), the camera corrects the image by either underexposing the image by one third stops to one stop if the image is overexposed (**1110**) or overexposing the image by one third stops to one stop if the image is underexposed (**1120**). The camera finally takes a picture and stores the image (**1130**).

FIG. **12** shows the selective in-camera filtration of specific objects. After the camera identifies specific objects (**1200**), the camera assesses distance to the objects (**1210**). This is done by sending out an infrared light signal, bouncing it off the object, and measuring the distance data from the camera to the object. The camera isolates the objects on a one-dimensional Euclidian plane (**1220**) and then selects the optimum aperture to isolate objects and to blur the background and foreground (**1230**). The camera tracks the motion of objects (**1240**) and activates a digital sensor (**1250**) thereby capturing the image. The image data is sent to a post-sensor processor (**1260**) where the camera applies specific filtration only to the designated objects (**1265**) and stores the file in memory (**1270**). Alternatively, the camera will apply specific filtration only to the background (not to the objects) (**1275**) and then stores the file in memory (**1280**). The effect of only applying filtration to an object or to its background is to isolate the subject. The type and degree of special effects, which are selected by user-adjustable in-camera software, will be determined by the user's palate of filtration choices.

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Image exposure adjustment using in-camera filtration is described in FIG. **13**. Once the camera assesses a two stop difference in parts of the image (**1300**), the camera's microprocessor accesses the database of similar scenes (**1310**) and then selects the optimal metering for the image and the user activates the digital sensor (**1320**), capturing an image. The camera provides the filtration to part of the image by adjusting the exposure in the processor (**1330**) and then stores the image (**1340**). In scenes such as sky on top, a neutral density filter is often required to remove the two stop difference between the bright top of the image and the darker bottom of the image. By reducing the brightness at the top, the exposure is evened out. By using the present system, this process is accomplished in the camera.

In-camera special effects filtration is described in FIG. **14**. After a user selects a special effects filtration technique (**1400**), the camera assesses image meta-data (**1410**), analyzes image data (**1420**) and the user captures the image (**1430**). The camera's post-capture processor applies special effects filtration technique to part of the image (**1440**) and the camera stores the image in memory (**1450**).

Digital correction for sensor dust is described in FIG. **15**. The pattern of dust on the pixels of a digital sensor (**1500**) is assessed. The specific pixels that are obscured by the dust are identified (**1510**) and a map is built of a digital sensor pixel frame by comparing information from at least two image samples to identify obscured pixels (**1520**) and the camera takes an image (**1530**). Information from pixels that are adjacent to dust-affected pixels are used to interpolate data on affected pixels (**1540**) and image data is processed and stored in memory (**1550**).

FIG. **16** shows an ASIC array in a digital imaging system. Once the digital sensor (**1620**) captures an image, the digital file is sent to multiple application specific integrated circuits (**1630**, **1640**, **1650** and **1660**) for processing of several digital signals simultaneously. In one embodiment of the invention, each ASIC corrects a single optical aberration. In another embodiment, the ASICs will divide the digital file and perform specific functions on parts of the image file and reunite the file before storing the completed image in memory (**1670**).

In FIG. **17**, the camera is illustrated with multiple interchangeable digital sensors. The CCD (**1720**) is shown in the forward position capturing the digital image in this drawing. However, the CMOS (**1730**) digital imaging sensor may swivel around (**1740**) to replace the position of the CCD in order to be used to capture the image. The image is then processed (**1750**) and stored in memory (**1760**). The advantages of interchanging the digital sensors are to have the opportunity to benefit from the strengths of each sensor type without sacrificing the weaknesses of either. In some cases, the scene will be optimized for the exposure range of a CMOS digital sensor, while at other times, the scene will be optimized for the detail of the CCD.

In FIG. **18**, the nano-grid (**1820**) appears in front of the digital sensor (**1830**). The lens will send analog image data to the sensor through the nano-grid. Once the digital data from the sensor is processed (**1840**) it is sent to memory (**1850**). FIG. **19** shows a nano-grid (**1900**). Nanofilaments are shown at **1920**. The modulation effects of the nanofilaments are shown at **1910**. Nanofilaments will change their position in order to allow more or less light through the system. Nano-grids fit before, or in some cases, adjacent to and on top of the digital sensor. Nano-grids behave as adjustable screens and may be used to polarize light between the lens and the digital sensor. Nano-grids are activated by electrical charge pulses sent to nanofilaments.

In FIG. **20**, the feedback loop connecting the processor and the nano-grid is shown. Analog optical data passes through the nano-grid (**2020**) to the digital sensor (**2030**) to the processor (DSP) (**2040**). A feedback loop (**2050**) is created by analyzing the data at the processor and modulating the performance of the nano-grid. For example, the image may be very bright initially, but the DSP will require that the image needs to be darker in order to be properly exposed. In this case, it will activate the nano-grid to modulate its grid structure in order to darken the image so as to let less light through the filaments by adjusting the filament structure. Once properly exposed, the camera will capture a digital image and send the file to memory (**2060**) for storage.

In FIG. **21**, a tri-pixel architecture is described. The large (deeper) oval bucket in the center (**2110**) will capture highlight exposure, the medium sized oval bucket at the right (**2120**) will capture a normal exposure range and the small (shallower) oval bucket at the left (**2130**) will capture the shadow exposure range. These three separate wells are contained within each pixel. In most cases, a pixel well is like a bucket, capturing light data and passing the data sets to the digital processor. By splitting the exposure range into three distinct wells within each pixel, the data is more accurately captured and organized in order to accommodate the broader range of exposure data. This system will be able to increase the range of digital imaging up to four stops, from the typical two stops. By maximizing the range of exposure data, the image collection will display more tonal range that is more associated with films' broader exposure range.

FIG. **22** shows the pre-programmed module for in-camera functionality. After the camera detects the lens type and the sensor type (**2200**), the camera focuses on an object (**2210**) and the processor accesses the library of scene and filter types (**2220**). The user pre-selects specific in-camera modifications (**2230**) and activates the camera to capture an image (**2240**). The processor makes filtration adjustments after the sensor takes the image (**2250**) and the image file is stored (**2260**) in memory.

Much like the nano-grid that is present before the digital image sensor, the pre-sensor modification to an image is shown in FIG. **23**. An optical filter (**2320**) such as a polarizer filter is shown in a position between the lens and the digital sensor (**2340**). The image is captured and the optical filter is activated by the processor (**2350**), which determines whether to activate the filter after analyzing a particular scene. Other filtration (**2330**), such as the use of the nano-grid, is also interchangeable with the optical filter in a position before the digital sensor. In another embodiment of the present invention, the filter assembly is sequential, with both, or multiple, filters being activated in order so as to obtain the maximum filtration effect. The DSP will compute the optimal combination of filtration resources based on the available resources in the camera. In another embodiment, the optical filter assembly will fit out of the line of sight between the lens and the digital sensor and will be activated by the DSP on-demand to swing into the optical image path much like a mirror mechanism.

FIG. **24** shows the integration of optical and digital corrections with feedback. Once the camera meters a scene (**2400**), the camera auto-focuses and obtains distance data to the object (**2410**), analyzes the lens data, the aperture data and the shutter speed data and accesses the library of images (**2420**). The camera assesses the optical aberrations (**2430**), activates the digital filters to correct aberrations (**2440**) and takes the picture (**2450**). The camera analyzes the image and optimizes the image using the processor (**2460**). This is performed by comparing the image data to the library of images and assess-

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ing the needed filtration required to optimize the image. The image is then stored in memory (**2470**).

The interactive feedback mechanism of integrated correction is described in FIG. **25**. After an analysis of the initial image (**2500**), the identification of optical aberrations (**2510**) is made. The camera's database is accessed to retrieve the corrections (**2520**) and the interactive feedback mechanism is activated (**2530**). Corrections to filters are applied before the sensor captures the next image (**2540**). In addition, correction to the image signal via the DSP is made after the sensor data is captured (**2550**) and the image is stored in memory (**2560**).

The adaptive user pattern learning process is shown as images are processed in FIG. **26**. A batch of images (**2600**, **2610**, **2620** and **2630**) is shown. The first image is processed (**2640**) and data from image **1** is analyzed and metadata is mapped (**2650**). Image **2** is then analyzed and its metadata is compared to the image **1** metadata (**2660**). Similar metadata in images **1** and **2** programmed in the processor (**2670**) and image **2** is rapidly processed by using similar metadata from image **1** (**2680**). Images **3** and **4** are analyzed and their metadata are compared to image **1** and rapidly processed (**2690**).

In FIG. **27**, the feedback process of filtering images is shown. After the camera analyzes the user behaviors, user preferences and subject behaviors (**2700**), the camera's processor analyzes trends in the pattern of user behavior and preferences and creates a map (**2710**). The camera's processor anticipates the user behavior and subject behavior (**2720**) by applying evolutionary computation and fuzzy logic algorithms. The camera's processor then applies a collaborative filtering process to a new image (**2730**) and the user takes and optimizes the image (**2740**).

FIG. **28** shows a software privacy function in a digital imaging system. The camera automatically downloads software as it enters a building or specified area (**2800**). The camera's features are deactivated in specific locations by the software (**2810**) while allowing the camera to perform specific camera functions by accessing software keys (**2820**). The camera then performs specific functions (**2830**) that are available in the restricted area while other specific functions are disabled (**2850**).

In FIG. **29**, the dynamics of zoom lens corrections are described. After a lens detects a zoom lens type (**2900**), the camera detects a particular focal length setting of the zoom lens (**2910**) and accesses a data library in the database to modify aberrations to optimize the zoom lens at a specific focal setting (**2920**). The camera applies a correction to a lens setting (**2930**) and continuously tracks the lens changes in the lens focal length (**2940**). The camera then applies the changed corrections to the changed focal lengths in the zoom lens (**2950**) and analyzes patterns of the user and subject behaviors (**2960**). Using fuzzy logic and evolutionary computation, the camera anticipates behaviors and rapidly optimizes image corrections by applying digital filtration (**2970**).

FIG. **30** shows object tracking in the dynamic changes of video corrections. An object moves from position **1** (**3010**) to position **6** (**3060**) in sequence. The camera (**3000**) is stationary, yet it records the object's motion as it is moving within the field of vision.

In FIG. **31**, object tracking is described. Once the camera tracks an object with auto-focus mechanisms and supplies distance information (**3100**), it tracks the user's zoom lens use patterns, anticipates the focal length changes (**3110**) and, using evolutionary computation and fuzzy logic algorithms, predicts optimal exposures (**3120**) and captures images in real time, continuously tracking the object (**3130**).

FIG. **32** shows the caching process of a moving object in a stationary scene. After the main objects are tracked by the camera (**3200**), the background of a stationary scene is cached in the camera (**3210**). The camera subtracts the data about objects from the background of the scene (**3220**). The background scene is then "blanked out" and cached in memory (**3230**) and the main objects are optimized by applying digital filters.

FIG. **33** describes the network coordination of a fixed sensor grid tracking multiple objects. The object in motion is represented in positions A through D (**3370**, **3380**, **3390** and **3395**). The fixed sensors are at positions **1-6** (**3300**, **3310**, **3320**, **3330**, **3340** and **3350**). The image data is fed remotely into the central imager (**3360**). The sensors track the object by taking image data at each fixed sensor position in the network. As the object moves through the field of the network, each sensor records the object.

In FIG. **34**, wireless communication features of the digital imaging system are described. The camera (**3400**) sends digital image data files wirelessly to a computer (**3410**). Files are also uploaded from the camera to the Internet in accessible locations (**3450**), while software files are downloaded from the Internet to the camera, both automatically and through manual intervention. Files are automatically downloaded if the user sets the camera to receive automated software updates. One advantage of loading files automatically to the Internet is that the images are then automatically published (**3460**) at a remote location, or locations, for viewing.

FIG. **35** describes an image organization system. After images are captured by the camera (**3500**), the image files are organized according to metadata in an external computer database (**3510**). The image files are then sorted by category and sent to the database of a distributed network (**3520**) for off-site storage.

Reference to the remaining portions of the specification, including the drawings and claims, will realize other features and advantages of the present invention. Further features and advantages of the present invention, as well as the structure and operation of various embodiments of the present invention, are described in detail below with respect to accompanying drawings.

It is understood that the examples and embodiments described herein are for illustrative purposes only and that various modifications or changes in light thereof will be suggested to persons skilled in the art and are to be included within the spirit and purview of this application and scope of the appended claims. All publications, patents, and patent applications cited herein are hereby incorporated by reference for all purposes in their entirety.

What is claimed is:

1. A digital imaging system for image filtration comprising:

a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;

wherein the optical lens mechanism is a fixed focal length;

wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and the digital signal processor;

wherein the microprocessor is used to provide digital and optical data to the digital signal processor;

wherein the system software is organized to identify specific optical aberrations and to access the database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;

wherein the system software forwards the data from the digital sensor to the digital processor;

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wherein the digital signal processor selects a specific procedure to optimize the image and corrects the aberrations;

wherein the data are forwarded from the digital sensor to the digital signal processor by an application specific integrated circuit;

wherein the digital signal processor applies a fast Fourier transform to a data file in order to satisfy a user specified special effects function;

wherein the digital signal processor modifies the data file by applying the special effects function, and

wherein the modified data file consisting of the digital data optimized from the aberrations that are corrected from the original optical image is stored in memory.

2. The system of claim 1:

wherein the special effects function is a color enhancing function.

3. The system of claim 1:

wherein the special effects function is a diffusion function of soft effect.

4. A digital imaging system for image filtration comprising:

a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;

wherein the optical lens mechanism is a fixed focal length;

wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor;

wherein the microprocessor is used to provide digital and optical data to the digital signal processor;

wherein the system software is organized to identify specific optical aberrations and to access the database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;

wherein the system software forwards the data from the digital sensor to the digital processor;

wherein the digital signal processor selects a specific procedure to optimize the image and corrects the aberrations;

wherein the data are forwarded from the digital sensor to the digital signal processor;

wherein a data file is analyzed by the microprocessor to separate specific objects in the image using the differentiation of the depth-of-field;

wherein the digital signal processor applies filtration only to specific objects in the image;

wherein the aberrations of the specific objects are corrected; and

wherein the digital signal processor forwards the modified date file to storage in memory.

5. The system of claim 4:

wherein the subject is isolated by focusing on the subject and narrowing the depth of field range by manipulating the aperture.

6. The system of claim 4:

wherein filtration is applied only to the background of an image exclusive of specific selected objects.

7. The system of claim 4:

wherein specific color filtration is applied to objects.

8. The system of claim 4:

wherein specific filtration applied to specific objects is soft effects.

9. A digital imaging system for image filtration comprising:

a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;

wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and the digital signal processor;

wherein the microprocessor is used to provide digital and optical data to the digital signal processor;

wherein the system software is organized to identify specific optical aberrations and to access the database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;

wherein the system software forwards the data from the digital sensor to the digital processor;

wherein the digital signal processor selects a specific procedure to optimize the image and corrects the aberrations;

wherein the lens type is a zoom lens;

wherein the lens focal length alternates from specific fixed focal length lens settings in a succession of steps;

wherein optical aberrations are corrected with digital filtration to modify multiple images from different focal lengths in a succession of data files; and

wherein the modified data file consisting of the digital data optimized from the aberrations that are corrected from the original optical image is stored in memory.

10. The system of claim 9:

wherein as the zoom lens changes focal length positions, the system anticipates the direction of zoom lens changes to accelerate the filtration modifications.

11. A digital imaging system for image filtration comprising:

a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;

wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and the digital signal processor;

wherein the microprocessor is used to provide digital and optical data to the digital signal processor;

wherein the system software is organized to identify specific optical aberrations and to access the database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;

wherein the system software forwards the data from the digital sensor to the digital processor;

wherein the digital signal processor selects a specific procedure to optimize the image and corrects the aberrations;

wherein the system uses a video camera to capture moving objects;

wherein the type of filtration applied by the digital signal processor is applied to specific moving objects;

wherein the digital image that is captured is forwarded from the digital sensor to the digital signal processer;

wherein a data file is analyzed by the microprocessor to separate specific objects in the image using the temporal differentiation of caching in which successive images share geometric elements;

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wherein the digital signal processor applies filtration only to a specific continuous object that is isolated and is in motion; and

wherein the digital signal processor forwards the modified data file to be stored in memory.

12. The system of claim **11**:

wherein a specific continuous object is selectively filtered with soft effects.

13. The system of claim **11**:

wherein the background of the image is filtered independently of the moving objects.

14. The system of claim **11**:

wherein multiple moving objects are tracked and differentiation between objects is made by changing the depth of field of the objects.

15. A digital imaging system for image filtration comprising:

a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, digital sensors, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;

wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor;

wherein the microprocessor is used to provide digital and optical data to the digital signal processor;

wherein the system software is organized to identify specific optical aberrations and to access the database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;

wherein the system software forwards the data from the digital sensor to the digital processor;

wherein the digital signal processor selects a specific procedure to optimize the image and corrects the aberrations;

wherein a network of digital imaging sensors is linked together in a fixed structure;

wherein the network is coordinated to track specific objects that are within its collective field of vision;

wherein the network captures images of objects using the digital imaging sensors;

wherein the individual digital imaging sensors forward the imaging data to a central digital signal processor;

wherein the digital signal processor selects a specific procedure to optimize the imaging data and corrects the aberrations;

wherein a data file is analyzed by the microprocessor to separate specific objects in the image using the temporal differentiation of caching in which successive images share geometric elements;

wherein the digital signal processor applies filtration only to specific continuous objects that are isolated and are in motion; and

wherein the modified data file consisting of the data optimized from the aberrations that are corrected from the original optical image is stored in memory.

16. The system of claim **15**:

wherein as an object moves through the sensor network, the system sensors are coordinated to hand off the object to other sensors on the grid.

17. The system of claim **15**:

wherein the background of the image in the sensor network is selectively filtered.

18. A method of image filtration which comprises:

a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;

wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and the digital signal processor, the method consisting of;

forwarding the data from a digital sensor to a digital signal processor by an application specific integrated circuit;

providing digital and optical data to the digital signal processor;

identifying specific optical aberrations and accessing a database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;

selecting a specific procedure from the database using the microprocessor to optimize the image and correct the aberrations;

applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor to correct digital or optical aberrations;

applying a fast Fourier transform to a data file in order to satisfy a user specified special effects function;

modifying the data file by applying the special effects function using the digital signal processor; and

storing the data file in memory.

19. The method of claim **18** further comprising the step of:

applying the special effects function as a color enhancing function.

20. The method of claim **18** further comprising the step of:

applying the special effects function as a diffusion function of soft effect.

21. A method of image filtration which comprises:

a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;

wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor, the method consisting of;

forwarding the data from a digital sensor to a digital signal processor;

analyzing a data file by the microprocessor to separate specific objects it the image using the differentiation of the depth-of-field;

providing digital and optical data to the digital signal processor;

identifying specific optical aberrations and accessing a database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;

selecting a specific procedure from the database using the microprocessor to optimize the image and correct the aberrations;

applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor to correct digital or optical aberrations;

correcting the aberrations of the specific objects in the image by applying the digital signal processor filtration; and

forwarding the modified data file from the digital signal process to storage in memory.

22. The method of clam **21** further comprising the step of:

applying specific color filtration to objects.

23. The method of claim **21** further comprising the step of:

applying soft effects filtration to specific objects.

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24. A method of image filtration comprising:
a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;
wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor, the method consisting of;
alternating the lens focal length of a zoom lens from specific fixed focal length lens settings in a succession of steps;
creating data files corresponding to each focal length lens setting;
forwarding the data from a digital sensor to the digital signal processor;
providing digital and optical data to a digital signal processor;
identifying specific optical aberrations and accessing a database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;
selecting a specific procedure from the database using the microprocessor to optimize the image and correct the aberrations;
applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor to correct digital or optical aberrations;
correcting optical aberrations with digital filtration to modify multiple images from different focal lengths in a succession of data files; and
storing the modified data files in memory.

25. The method of claim 24 further comprising:
wherein as the zoom lens changes focal length positions, anticipating the direction of zoom lens changes to accelerate the filtration modifications.

26. A method for image filtration comprising:
digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;
wherein the aberrations from the optical lens mechanism are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor, the method consisting of;
capturing moving objects using a video camera;
forwarding the data that are captured from the digital sensor to a digital signal processor;
providing digital and optical data to a digital signal processor;
identifying specific optical aberrations and accessing a database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;
selecting a specific procedure from the database using the microprocessor to optimize the image and correct the aberrations;
analyzing a data file by the microprocessor to separate specific objects in the image;
using the temporal differentiation of caching in which successive images share geometric elements;
applying filtration only to a specific continuous object that is isolated and is in motion by using the digital signal processor;
correcting optical aberrations with digital filtration; and
storing the modified data file in memory by forwarding the data file from the digital signal processor.

27. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of:
filtering with soft effects a specific continuous object.

28. The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of:
filtering the background of the image independently of the moving objects.

29. The method of claim 26 further comprising:
tracking multiple moving objects: and
differentiating between objects by changing the depth of field of the objects.

30. A method for image filtration comprising:
a digital camera mechanism, an optical lens mechanism, digital sensors, a microprocessor, a digital signal processor, an application specific integrated circuit, system software, a database management system and a memory storage sub-system;
wherein the aberrations from the optical system are corrected by applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor, the method consisting of:
linking a network of digital imaging sensors together in a fixed structure;
coordinating the network to track specific objects that are within its collective field of vision;
capturing the network images of objects using the digital imaging sensors;
forwarding the imaging data from individual digital imaging sensors to a central digital signal processor;
analyzing the data in the images in the digital signal processor by using the microprocessor to separate specific images in the network;
providing digital and optical data to the digital signal processor;
identifying specific optical aberrations and accessing a database to identify specific corrections to the aberrations;
selecting a specific procedure to optimize the image and correct the aberrations;
applying digital filtration by using the application specific integrated circuit and digital signal processor to correct digital or optical aberrations;
modifying a data file by correcting optical aberrations with digital filtration;
analyzing the data file by using the microprocessor to separate specific objects in the image using the temporal differentiation of caching in which successive images share geometric elements;
applying filtration by the digital signal processor only to specific continuous objects that are isolated and are in motion; and
forwarding the consolidated data file to storage in memory.

31. The method of claim 30 further comprising the step of:
coordinating the hand off of the object to other sensors on the grid as objects move through the sensor network.

32. The method of claim 30 further comprising the step of:
filtering the background of the image in the sensor network by differentiating the objects.

* * * * *

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EX. 1001

Electronic Acknowledgement Receipt

EFS ID:	40477939
Application Number:	16692972
International Application Number:	
Confirmation Number:	7825
Title of Invention:	DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER
First Named Inventor/Applicant Name:	Neal Solomon
Customer Number:	21186
Filer:	Robert Mark Hirning/Jamie Johnson
Filer Authorized By:	Robert Mark Hirning
Attorney Docket Number:	5311.001US5
Receipt Date:	04-SEP-2020
Filing Date:	22-NOV-2019
Time Stamp:	14:06:08
Application Type:	Utility under 35 USC 111(a)

Payment information:

Submitted with Payment	no

File Listing:

Document Number	Document Description	File Name	File Size(Bytes)/ Message Digest	Multi Part /.zip	Pages (if appl.)
1	Non Patent Literature	0053b_20200720__ipr2020013 21__1024_exhibit__ex_1024_v ol_002_gonzalez_woods_digit al_image_pr-3.pdf	14374952 09d52b71d335903ed9f16e15f974a7050e5 3f9d0	no	186

Warnings:

Information:					
2	Non Patent Literature	0054a_20200720_ipr20200132 1_1008exhibit_ex_1008_vol_0 01_johncruss_the_image_proc essing_hand.pdf	18923114 2739b74c8ed89148382108dba761f871371 f8abd	no	150
Warnings:					
Information:					
3	Non Patent Literature	0054b_20200720_ipr20200132 1_1008exhibit_ex_1008_vol_0 01_johncruss_the_image_proc essing_hand-2.pdf	14997738 da9746260ebd53e386f7f692fe71681bdc30 458c	no	144
Warnings:					
Information:					
4	Non Patent Literature	0055a_20200720_ipr20200132 1_1008exhibit_ex_1008_vol_0 02_russ_the_image_processin g_handbook_.pdf	14478933 79518fe3cd7a8125c0f31174f8ee07f7f94f5c df	no	135
Warnings:					
Information:					
5	Non Patent Literature	0055b_20200720_ipr20200132 1_1008exhibit_ex_1008_vol_0 02_russ_the_image_processin g_handbook_-2.pdf	16650881 8156e0e9d47fca9fdd500dba2ef8718e280f b1af	no	133
Warnings:					
Information:					
6	Non Patent Literature	0056_20200720_ipr202001321 _1008exhibit_ex_1008_vol_00 3_russ_image_processing_han dbook_crc_.pdf	21696894 2542fbee019c4365e401515d94340f5d9c5f b50f	no	183
Warnings:					
Information:					
7	Non Patent Literature	0009_20200720__ipr20200132 1__1023_exhibit__ex_1023_a_ certified_translation_of_jp2000 _18424.pdf	712142 e0c845e70dd433f2b1648b7ae470d7c7a70 86809	no	13
Warnings:					
Information:					
		Total Files Size (in bytes):	101834654		

This Acknowledgement Receipt evidences receipt on the noted date by the USPTO of the indicated documents, characterized by the applicant, and including page counts, where applicable. It serves as evidence of receipt similar to a Post Card, as described in MPEP 503.

New Applications Under 35 U.S.C. 111

If a new application is being filed and the application includes the necessary components for a filing date (see 37 CFR 1.53(b)-(d) and MPEP 506), a Filing Receipt (37 CFR 1.54) will be issued in due course and the date shown on this Acknowledgement Receipt will establish the filing date of the application.

National Stage of an International Application under 35 U.S.C. 371

If a timely submission to enter the national stage of an international application is compliant with the conditions of 35 U.S.C. 371 and other applicable requirements a Form PCT/DO/EO/903 indicating acceptance of the application as a national stage submission under 35 U.S.C. 371 will be issued in addition to the Filing Receipt, in due course.

New International Application Filed with the USPTO as a Receiving Office

If a new international application is being filed and the international application includes the necessary components for an international filing date (see PCT Article 11 and MPEP 1810), a Notification of the International Application Number and of the International Filing Date (Form PCT/RO/105) will be issued in due course, subject to prescriptions concerning national security, and the date shown on this Acknowledgement Receipt will establish the international filing date of the application.

Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

CPC - Searched*		
Symbol	**Date**	**Examiner**
(H04N5/357 | H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/374 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20).CPC.	01/13/2020	M. Camargo
(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	01/16/2020	M. Camargo
(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	06/06/2020	M. Camargo
(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	09/26/2020	M. Camargo

CPC Combination Sets - Searched*		
Symbol	**Date**	**Examiner**

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

US Classification - Searched*			
Class	Subclass	Date	Examiner
348	241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349	01/13,16/2020	M. Camargo
382	167,254,255,264,263,266,275	01/13,16/2020	M. Camargo
359	16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676	01/13,16/2020	M. Camargo
348	241,231.99,222.1,240.99,335,333.08,340,342,240.1,208.11,207.99,345,346-350,355,240.3,349	06/06/2020	M. Camargo
382	167,254,255,264,263,266,275	06/06/2020	M. Camargo
359	16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676	06/06/2020	M. Camargo
348	241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
382	167,254,255,264,263,266,275	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
359	16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676	09/26/2020	M. Camargo

* See search history printout included with this form or the SEARCH NOTES box below to determine the scope of the search.

Search Notes		
Search Notes	Date	Examiner

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

(H04N5/357 | H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/374 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20).CPC. and the results text limited- see attached search history printout.	01/13/2020	M. Camargo
(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and the results text limited - see attached search history printout.	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
EAST as BRS	14/13/2020- 01/19/ 2020	M. Camargo
inventor	01/13/2020	M. Camargo
assignee	01/13/2020	M. Camargo
searched 13/691805, 12/932520 and 12/932865 for possible double patent	01/13/2020	M. Camargo
(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and the results text limited - see attached search history printout.	06/06/2020- 06/07/ 2020	M. Camargo
EAST - updated	06/06/2020	M. Camargo
inventor - updated	06/06/2020	M. Camargo
assignee - updated	06/06/2020	M. Camargo
Google & Google Patents	06/06/2020- 06/07/ 2020	M. Camargo
(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and the results text limited - see attached search history printout.	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
EAST - updated	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
inventor - updated	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
assignee - updated	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
Google and Google Patents	09/20/2020- 09/26/ 2020	M. Camargo

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

Interference Search			
US Class/CPC Symbol	**US Subclass/CPC Group**	**Date**	**Examiner**
EAST		01/18,19/2020	M. Camargo
inventor		01/18/2020	M. Camargo
assignee		01/18/2020	M. Camargo
348	241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
382	167,254,255,264,263,266,275	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
359	16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
CPC	(H04N5/357 | H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/374 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20).CPC.	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
CPC	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
claim (US PAT/US PG Pub)	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and ((" in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with data$base))).clm.	01/18/2020	M. Camargo

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

claim	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image $1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software))).clm.	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
claim	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat $3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and (user with (adjust$4 with variable$1))))).clm.	01/18/2020	M. Camargo
claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with algorithm $1)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (" in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat $3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	01/19/2020	M. Camargo

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera " or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	01/19/2020	M. Camargo
claim	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image $1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	01/19/2020	M. Camargo
EAST		06/07/2020	M. Camargo
inventor		06/07/2020	M. Camargo
assignee		06/07/2020	M. Camargo
348	241,231.99,222.1,240.99,335,333.08,340,342,240. 1,208.11,207.99,345,346-350,355,240.3,349	06/07/2020	M. Camargo
382	167,254,255,264,263,266,275	06/07/2020	M. Camargo
359	16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676	06/07/2020	M. Camargo
CPC	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/ 2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/ 04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	06/07/2020	M. Camargo

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

claim (US PAT/ US PG Pub)	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	06/07/2020	M. Camargo
claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with algorithm $1)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat $3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	06/07/2020	M. Camargo
claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera " or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	06/07/2020	M. Camargo
claim	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image $1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	06/07/2020	M. Camargo

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and ((" in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat $3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))).clm.	06/07/2020	M. Camargo
claim	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image $1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))).clm.	06/07/2020	M. Camargo
EAST		09/26/2020	M. Camargo
inventor		09/26/2020	M. Camargo
assignee		09/26/2020	M. Camargo
348	241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,3 40,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
382	167,254,255,264,263,266,275	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
359	16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
CPC	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/ 2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/ 04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
Claim (US PAT / US PG Pub)	((((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and ((" in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat $3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))).clm.	09/26/2020	M. Camargo

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Search Notes	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	Art Unit
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image $1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1))))).clm.	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image $1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))))).clm.	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
claim	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image $1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))))).clm.	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
claim	((((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera " or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))).clm.	09/26/2020	M. Camargo
claim	((((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))).clm.	09/26/2020	

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

EAST Search History

EAST Search History (Prior Art)

Ref #	Hits	Search Query	DBs	Default Operator	Plurals	Time Stamp
S1	0	16/692972	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:46
S2	0	13/691805	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:47
S3	2	12/586221	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:47
S4	4	11/825521	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:47

			IBM_TDB			
S5	104	((("SOLOMON") near3 ("Neal"))).INV.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; EPO; JPO; DERWENT	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:48
S6	0	((("OPTIMUM") near3 ("IMAGING") near3 ("TECHNOLOGIES") near3 ("LLC"))).AS,AANM.	USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:48
S7	17	(neal with solomon).in. and (correct$4 with aberration$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:49
S8	522	(marly with camargo).xa,xp.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:49
S9	18	(marly with camargo).xa,xp. and (correct$4 with aberration$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:50
S10	54	("6483941" | "7346210" | "7656444" | "7667738" | "8189075").PN. OR ("8305458").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:53

S11	12	("20020079370" | "20040096118" | "20040165090" | "20060232681" | "20080031610" | "20080212168" | "3971065" | "5359185" | "8305458" | "8339462" | "8437539" | "8988590").PN. OR ("9253393").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:55
S12	88	("20020012054" | "20020114532" | "20030002735" | "20030108245" | "20040120598" | "20040218813" | "20060093234" | "20080137947" | "20080170124" | "20080181495" | "20080219585" | "20120070083" | "4605956" | "4642678" | "4663655" | "5220620" | "5398124" | "5778106" | "5982953" | "6356672" | "6621595" | "6621937" | "6625329" | "6650795" | "6671401" | "6724702" | "6754279" | "6791609" | "6829016" | "6914628" | "6915024" | "7057659" | "7330209" | "7460728" | "7587099" | "7657123" | "7751619" | "7920146" | "8090199" | "8098294" | "8115820" | "8144984" | "8155441").PN. OR ("8437539").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/13 14:58
S13	12	(aberration$1 with digital with database)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/13 15:08
S14	34,600	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 15:18
S15	23,944	382/167,254,255,264,263,266,275.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 15:18
S16	5,422	359/16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWE	OR	ON	2020/01/13 15:18

			NT; IBM_TDB			
S17	132,232	(H04N5/357 | H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/374 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20).CPC.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 15:19
S18	386	("1269422" | "20030098952" | "20040008853" | "20040218283" | "20040227063" | "20040228003" | "20050002113" | "20050014306" | "20050100270" | "20050212952" | "20050218231" | "20060072915" | "20060076540" | "20060086596" | "20070063048" | "20070080280" | "20070116858" | "20080144185" | "20080144186" | "20080245872" | "20090072037" | "2062468" | "2300251" | "3161718" | "3305294" | "3583790" | "3761157" | "3778170" | "4134393" | "4191594" | "4210121" | "4249516" | "4261655" | "4286839" | "4289379" | "4312709" | "4407567" | "4487659" | "4514048" | "4783153" | "4783155" | "4784479" | "4802746" | "5091801" | "5150234" | "5305356" | "5389222" | "5396144" | "5684637" | "5892625" | "5917657" | "5973852" | "6081388" | "6109852" | "6188526" | "6212015" | "6368954" | "6369954" | "6376971" | "6399954" | "6437925" | "6449081" | "6475639" | "6529620" | "6538823" | "6542309" | "6545815" | "6545816" | "6586859" | "6628040" | "6702483" | "6715876" | "6734903" | "6747806" | "6762210" | "6806621" | "6806988" | "6809462" | "6812624" | "6882086" | "6891317" | "6934090" | "6936809" | "7169822" | "7224106" | "7301708" | "7416125" | "RE39874").PN. OR ("8027095").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 16:20
S19	0	(digital with camera$1 or video$1) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and (updat$3 or upgrad$3) and (in$camera with (hardware or software)) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 17:02

S20	0	(digital with camera$1 or video$1) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and (updat$3 or upgrad$3) and ("in-camera" with (hardware or software)) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 17:03
S21	0	(digital with camera$1 or video$1) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and (updat$3 or upgrad$3) and ("in-camera" with (hardware or software))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 17:04
S22	3,196	(digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 17:04
S23	66	(digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 17:06
S24	64	(digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO;	OR	ON	2020/01/13 17:08

		with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software))	DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S25	49	("20030038957" | "20040150732" | "20040227978" | "20050162532" | "20060061664" | "20060062562" | "20060232681" | "20070103744" | "4466018" | "5713053" | "6788822" | "6807299" | "6822762" | "6862373" | "7088388" | "7158686" | "7973850" | "8089555" | "8194136").PN. OR ("8654240").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 17:24
S26	8	("20070236574" | "20080174678").PN. OR ("8395668").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/13 17:25
S28	10	(aberration$1 with digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/15 10:49
S30	42	((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/15 16:12
S31	3	("20080174678").PN. OR ("8395682").URPN.	US-PGPUB;	OR	ON	2020/01/15 16:22

			USPAT; USOCR			
S32	6	("20070236574" | "20080174678").PN. OR ("8395668").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/15 16:26
S33	0	(11/278268).APP.	USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/15 16:28
S34	109	("6642956" | "20020145671" | "5580728" | "5748491" | "5751861" | "6154574" | "6927922" | "20030169944" | "5867410" | "20030057353" | "5535291" | "6240219" | "20050117114" | "7365326" | "4532548" | "5748371" | "6567570" | "5003618" | "6567570" | "20020118457" | "5307175" | "6545714" | "7065256" | "5696850" | "5023641" | "6525302" | "4691366" | "6069738" | "6094467" | "6333990").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:08
S35	22	("20050117114" | "5003618" | "5696850" | "6567570" | "6642956" | "7365326").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:18
S36	37,324	348/241,231.99,222.1,240.99,335,333.08,340,342,240.1,208.11,207.99,345,346-350,355,240.3,349.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:34
S37	21,831	382/275,252,321,167,253,264,263,266.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWE	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:35

			NT; IBM_TDB			
S38	5,422	359/16,637,665,666,207.2,354,676.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:36
S39	151,021	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:41
S40	22	S36 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:42
S41	16	S37 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:46
S42	0	S38 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:48

		(correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S43	62	S39 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:48
S44	0	S36 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:55
S45	0	S37 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:56
S46	0	S38 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:56

S47	0	S39 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:57
S48	64	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:57
S49	0	S36 and S48	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:58
S50	0	S37 and S48	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:58
S51	0	S38 and S48	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:59

			DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S52	0	S39 and S48	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:59
S53	66	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 10:59
S54	0	S36 and S53	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:00
S55	0	S37 and S53	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:00
S56	0	S38 and S53	US-PGPUB; USPAT;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:00

			USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S57	0	S39 and S53	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:00
S58	42	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:01
S59	12	S36 and S58	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:02
S60	0	S37 and S58	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:03

			IBM_TDB			
S61	1	382/$.ccls. and S58	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:03
S62	7	359/$.ccls. and S58	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:04
S63	56	("20020110320" | "20020126591" | "20020162973" | "4750022" | "4779135" | "4845352" | "5051770" | "5198653" | "5204770" | "5291008" | "5430807" | "5559629" | "5574536" | "5710430" | "5719620" | "5737084" | "5757425" | "5876327" | "5973844" | "6005916" | "6008945" | "6020988" | "6078390" | "6084991" | "6088097" | "6124974" | "6128068" | "6178346" | "6195213" | "6248988" | "6249360" | "6268918" | "6285811" | "6344893" | "6448556" | "6711283" | "7053942" | "7379758" | "H001060").PN. OR ("7863552").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:05
S64	202	("3013467" | "4509826" | "4802748" | "4927254" | "5065008" | "5067805" | "5081349" | "5248876" | "5452090" | "5532874" | "5557452" | "5563702" | "5586058" | "5587832" | "5594235" | "5612818" | "5737084").PN. OR ("6248988").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:09
S65	12	S36 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:12

S66	8	S39 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:34
S67	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:36
S68	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:37
S69	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:37
S70	14	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1).clm.)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:38

			DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S71	2	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:42
S72	271	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:47
S73	271	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:49
S74	271	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:51
S75	0	S36 and(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and	US-PGPUB; USPAT;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:53

		(wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)))	USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S76	0	S36 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:54
S77	5	348/$.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:55
S78	7	382/$.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:57
S79	0	359/$.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 11:59

			IBM_TDB			
S80	13	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 12:00
S81	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 12:03
S82	59	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and (user with (adjust$4 with variable$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 12:06
S83	76	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 12:07
S84	308	("20010009973" | "20020036750" | "20020064341" | "20020072658" | "20020109819" | "20020124843" | "20030007124" | "20030009156" | "20030071969" |	US-PGPUB;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 12:12

		"20030081170" | "20030187503" | "20030210378" | "20040085648" | "20040114242" | "20040129949" | "20040130783" | "20040136570" | "20040151466" | "20040254438" | "20040257958" | "20050015120" | "20050122475" | "20050159662" | "20050244476" | "20050246783" | "20050280777" | "20050286019" | "20060033992" | "20060114411" | "20060114585" | "20060152525" | "20060159395" | "20060186325" | "20070010748" | "20070027442" | "20070121120" | "20070139613" | "20070200927" | "20070236661" | "20080091250" | "20080117289" | "20080117384" | "20080124787" | "20080137031" | "20080212738" | "20080213904" | "20080218685" | "20080277601" | "20080309879" | "20090024191" | "20090030299" | "20090036955" | "20090073428" | "20090082829" | "20090153796" | "20090182291" | "20090219486" | "20090231545" | "20090268162" | "20100004537" | "20100033676" | "20100069775" | "20100149073" | "20100201944" | "20100214635" | "20100220914" | "20100283969" | "20110007277" | "20110018903" | "20110063571" | "20110109877" | "20110118556" | "20110178815" | "20110218456" | "20110242306" | "20110267663" | "20110276312" | "20110299027" | "20120019703" | "20120069413" | "20120083718" | "20120113092" | "20120127062" | "20120127426" | "20120133890" | "20120147038" | "20120147163" | "20120172854" | "20120188637" | "20120194781" | "20120206485" | "20120212399" | "20120226267").PN. OR ("20120236257" | "20120249956" | "20120274897" | "20120293773" | "20120307203" | "20120330387" | "20130004485" | "20130016292" | "20130023966" | "20130070338" | "20130072916" | "20130082922" | "20130100401" | "20130125027" | "20130144137" | "20130169930" | "20130177883" | "20130184554" | "20130245505" | "20130250207" | "20130250430" | "20130250431" | "20130253330" | "20130257312" | "20130285885" | "20130286053" | "20130296710" | "20130308094" | "20130314793" | "20130321265" | "20130322810" | "20140003762" | "20140009741" | "20140016093" | "20140039309" | "20140043320" | "20140046291" | "20140055746" | "20140058483" | "20140063005" | "20140068513" | "20140071539" | "20140098010" | "20140129259" | "20140152531" | "20140160283" | "20140168783" | "20140177023" | "20140178861" | "20140186348" | "20140194702" | "20140194740" | "20140198017" | "20140218468" | "20140240842" | "20140275935" | "20140285429" | "20140285769" | "20140306866" | "20140306874" | "20140313484" | "20140340390" | "20140354514" | "20140368793" | "20140372944" | "20140375790" | "20150016777" | "20150018781" | "20150035744" | "20150038869" | "20150088546" | "20150103306" | "20150124073" | "20150146301" | "20150150444" |	USPAT; USOCR			

		"20150178923" | "20150178939" | "20150182118" | "20150185503" | "20150205126" | "20150222883" | "20150222884" | "20150234188" | "20150238362" | "20150241614" | "20150248169" | "20150248170" | "20150248788" | "20150248793" | "20150257735" | "20150262424" | "20150265146" | "20150268415").PN. OR ("20150277121" | "20150281630" | "20150289762" | "20150302652" | "20150313949" | "20150326570" | "20150346490" | "20150346495" | "20150351690" | "20150356781" | "20150356782" | "20160008169" | "20160011375" | "20160011419" | "20160026253" | "20160033771" | "20160066780" | "20160067087" | "20160077338" | "20160089023" | "20160104453" | "20160106591" | "20160116979" | "20160159276" | "20160216515" | "20160256086" | "20160270648" | "20160270656" | "20160287153" | "20160324403" | "20160324416" | "20160379593" | "20170000324" | "20170000325" | "20170000326" | "20170000330" | "20170000331" | "20170000332" | "20170000333" | "20170000334" | "20170000335" | "20170000337" | "20170000340" | "20170000341" | "20170000342" | "20170000343" | "20170000345" | "20170000454" | "20170000683" | "20170001032" | "20170007111" | "20170007115" | "20170007116" | "20170007122" | "20170007123" | "20170007182" | "20170007450" | "20170007799" | "20170007843" | "20170010469" | "20170010470" | "20170017083" | "20170078652" | "20170112666" | "20170127932" | "20170135896" | "20170205618" | "20170299869" | "20180011324" | "20180136471" | "20180136486" | "20180279870" | "3724938" | "4065208" | "4573982" | "4669836" | "4826308" | "4848898" | "5166778" | "5223971" | "5491492" | "5537162" | "5776068" | "5997141" | "6003991" | "6045515" | "6151167" | "6235014" | "6251101" | "6386706" | "6447119" | "6490319" | "6579235" | "6736510" | "6850221" | "6975898" | "7036931" | "7425067" | "7883505" | "8128606" | "8279544").PN. OR ("8348429" | "8721572" | "8820931" | "8824779" | "8909327" | "8950867" | "8956396" | "9125724" | "9215293" | "9295388" | "9310559" | "9348143" | "9417452" | "9462262" | "9462945" | "9489044" | "9671566" | "9720238" | "9791700" | "9874749" | "D758367").PN. OR ("10345590").URPN.				
S85	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and (user with (adjust$4 with variable$1))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/01/16 12:16

			IBM_TDB			
S86	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1)).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 12:17
S87	156	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 14:45
S88	104	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with software) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/16 14:47
S89	10	"7590305".pn. | "7738015".pn. | "5905530".pn. | "7936392".pn.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/17 09:03
S90	127	("0725567" | "20020159030" | "20030117511" | "20030156077" | "20050080602" | "4383170" | "4661986" | "4694185" | "5076687" | "5282045" | "5610390" | "5748371" | "5757423" | "6023523" | "6028606" | "6097394" | "6201899" | "6320979" |	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/17 09:13

		"6483535" | "6577342" | "6842297" | "7034866").PN. OR ("7936392").URPN.				
S91	35	(US-20030210343-$ | US-20050219391-$ | US-20080174678-$ | US-20110096176-$ | US-0062546-$ | US-0064649-$ | US-6023977-$ | US-6055330-$ | US-6508764-$ | US-6850272-$ | US-7245319-$ | US-7321685-$ | US-7406182-$ | US-7551205-$ | US-7612805-$ | US-7619663-$ | US-7636111-$ | US-7701484-$ | US-7764874-$ | US-8106976-$ | US-8451339-$ | US-5905530-$ | US-7590305-$ | US-7738015-$ | US-7936392-$ | US-20020163586-$ | US-20050099507-$ | US-20060285761-$ | US-20070002158-$ | US-20070236574-$ | US-20080151069-$ | US-20100073508-$ | US-20040150732-$).DID.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/17 09:42
S92	4	(TO-030212-$ | TO-042709-$ | TO-082312-$ | TO-121208-$ | AI-20060285761-$ | HI-1313250-$ | HI-1313250119-$ | JP-2004343358-$ | JP-20001842476-$ | JP-20021909797-$ | JP-20021994107-$ | JP-2004328506-$ | JP-20060726803-$ | ZR-706560-$).DID.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/17 09:43
S93	4	(11/825521 | 12/586221 | 13/691805).APP.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/17 09:51
S94	64	(US-20030210343-$ | US-20050219391-$ | US-20080174678-$ | US-20110096176-$ | US-0062546-$ | US-0064649-$ | US-6023977-$ | US-6055330-$ | US-6508764-$ | US-6850272-$ | US-7245319-$ | US-7321685-$ | US-7406182-$ | US-7551205-$ | US-7612805-$ | US-7619663-$ | US-7636111-$ | US-7701484-$ | US-7764874-$ | US-8106976-$ | US-8451339-$ | US-5905530-$ | US-7590305-$ | US-7738015-$ | US-7936392-$ | US-20020163586-$ | US-20050099507-$ | US-20060285761-$ | US-20070002158-$ | US-20070236574-$ | US-20080151069-$ | US-20100073508-$ | US-20040150732-$).DID.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/17 09:52
S95	65	(US-0062546-$ | US-0064649-$ | US-10237485-$ | US-6023977-$ | US-6055330-$ | US-6508764-$ | US-6850272-$ | US-7245319-$ | US-7321685-$ | US-	US-PGPUB; USPAT;	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:15

		7406182-$ | US-7551205-$ | US-7612805-$ | US-7619663-$ | US-7636111-$ | US-7701484-$ | US-7764874-$ | US-8106976-$ | US-8451339-$ | US-9077842-$ | US-9998652-$ | US-7936392-$ | US-20020163586-$ | US-20040071318-$ | US-20050219391-$ | US-20070002158-$ | US-20070236574-$ | US-20070247672-$ | US-20080174678-$ | US-20100033604-$ | US-20110096176-$ | US-20010008418-$ | US-20030095197-$ | US-20040150732-$ | US-20040207733-$).DID.	USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S96	4	(11/825521 | 12/586221 | 13/691805 | 16/692972).APP.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:15
S97	12	(TO-011520-$ | TO-030212-$ | TO-042709-$ | TO-082312-$ | TO-111519-$ | TO-121208-$ | HI-1313250-$ | HI-1313250119-$ | JP-2004343358-$ | JP-20021994107-$ | JP-2000184247-$ | JP-20001842476-$ | JP-2002190979-$ | JP-20021909797-$ | JP-2002199410-$ | JP-2004328506-$ | JP-2006072660-$ | JP-20060726603-$ | SD-200300-$ | WD-2005093653-$ | ZR-300200-$ | ZR-706560-$).DID.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:16
S98	156	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:17
S99	0	S95 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWE	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:19

		or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	NT; IBM_TDB			
S100	0	S96 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:20
S101	0	S97 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:20
S102	0	S95 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:21
S103	0	S96 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:21
S104	0	S97 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR;	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:21

		(correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S105	3	S95 and (aberration$1 with digital with database)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:22
S106	3	S96 and (aberration$1 with digital with database)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:22
S107	0	S97 and (aberration$1 with digital with database)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:22
S108	42	((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:23
S109	4	S95 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:23
S110	4	S96 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:24

			IBM_TDB			
S111	0	S97 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:24
S112	76	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:25
S113	0	S95 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:25
S114	0	S96 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:26
S115	0	S97 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS;	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:26

		provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1)))	EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S116	0	348/$.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:27
S117	0	382/$.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:27
S118	0	359/$.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:28
S119	0	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:31

		with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))				
S120	8	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:33
S121	42	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:35
S122	0	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:35
S123	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:36
S124	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS;	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:36

		(correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with data$base))).clm.	EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S125	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:37
S126	13	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:41
S127	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:43
S128	0	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:44

			IBM_TDB			
S129	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and (user with (adjust$4 with variable$1)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:46
S130	0	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and ((((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:47
S131	151,075	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:48
S132	0	S131 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and user and (adjust$4 with variable$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:49

S145	104	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or scren or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 10:32
S146	4	09/957013	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 10:48
S147	31	("20030076420" | "20040135889" | "5461440" | "5671297" | "6115104" | "6219446" | "6323934" | "6657658" | "6935521" | "6937370" | "7065255" | "7151564").PN. OR ("7327390").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/19 10:49
S148	11	("20020041383" | "20070024714" | "20110069180" | "6437823" | "6940664" | "7224392" | "7327390" | "7623274" | "8203602" | "8675988" | "9224205").PN. OR ("10210602").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/19 10:51
S149	31	("20030076420" | "20040135889" | "5461440" | "5671297" | "6115104" | "6219446" | "6323934" | "6657658" | "6935521" | "6937370" | "7065255" | "7151564").PN. OR ("7327390").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:23
S150	19	S145 and ("20030076420" | "20040135889" | "5461440" | "5671297" | "6115104" | "6219446" | "6323934" | "6657658" | "6935521" | "6937370" | "7065255" | "7151564").PN. OR ("7327390").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:27
S151	0	S145 and ("20020041383" | "20070024714" | "20110069180" | "6437823" | "6940664" | "7224392" | "7327390" | "7623274" | "8203602" | "8675988" | "9224205").PN. OR ("10210602").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:27

S152	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with algorithm$1)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or scren or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:30
S153	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with algorithm$1)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or scren or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:30
S154	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or scren or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:32
S155	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or scren or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:33
S156	64	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO;	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:37

		(program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S157	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:40
S158	0	348/$.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:41
S159	0	382/$.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:42
S160	0	359/$.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:42
S161	0	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 |	US-PGPUB; USPAT;	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:43

		H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S162	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:43
S163	7	("20080174678" | "20090263012").PN. OR ("8570381").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/01/19 14:18
S167	0	16/692939	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/01/27 10:44
S168	0	16/692972	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:03
S169	0	13/691805	US-PGPUB; USPAT;	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:03

			USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S170	104	((("SOLOMON") near3 ("Neal"))).INV.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; EPO; JPO; DERWENT	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:04
S171	0	((("OPTIMUM") near3 ("IMAGING") near3 ("TECHNOLOGIES") near3 ("LLC"))).AS,AANM.	USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:05
S172	17	(neal with solomon).in. and (correct$4 with aberration$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:05
S173	12	(aberration$1 with digital with database)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:20
S174	34,599	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:21
S175	24,041	382/167,254,255,264,263,266,275.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS;	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:21

			EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S176	5,428	359/16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:22
S177	161,463	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:23
S178	37,329	348/241,231.99,222.1,240.99,335,333.08,340,342,240.1, 208.11,207.99,345,346-350,355,240.3,349.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:23
S179	31	("20020012054" | "20030039402" | "20040150726" | "20050030394" | "20050261849" | "20060120599" | "20070103744" | "20070252074" | "20080291447" | "20100106841" | "20120106841" | "8194136").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:24

S180	22	(US-10674046-$ | US-16692972-$ | US-20030039402-$ | US-20040150726-$ | US-20050030394-$ | US-20050261849-$ | US-20060120599-$ | US-20070103744-$ | US-20070252074-$ | US-20080291447-$ | US-20100106841-$ | US-20120106841-$ | US-8194136-$).DID.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:28
S181	0	(IO-232008-$ | II-212008-$ | AI-20030039402-$ | AI-20040150726-$ | AI-20050030394-$ | AI-20050261849-$ | AI-20060120599-$ | AI-20070103744-$ | AI-20070252074-$ | AI-20080291447-$ | AI-20100106841-$ | AI-20120106841-$ | VA-223131450-$).DID.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/06 15:29
S182	65	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 10:20
S183	20	(marly with camargo).xa,xp. and (correct$4 with aberration$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 10:32
S184	5	("20060228097" | "8395677" | "9077842" | "9392176" | "9998652").PN. OR ("10237485").URPN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR	OR	ON	2020/06/07 10:38
S185	19	("20040150732" | "20040218813" | "20050179788" | "20080007630" | "20080240709" | "20080291447" | "20090009633" | "20090052769" | "20090167925" |	US-PGPUB;	OR	ON	2020/06/07 10:45

		"20090202171" | "20090262231" | "20120300112" | "5227832" | "6646760" | "6747757" | "7321685" | "7425988").PN. OR ("9077842").URPN.	USPAT; USOCR			
S186	67	(digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 10:53
S187	43	((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 10:54
S188	0	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 10:59
S189	21	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:00
S190	19	382/167,254,255,264,263,266,275.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR;	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:01

		(result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S191	0	359/16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:02
S192	64	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:03
S193	0	382/167,254,255,264,263,266,275.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:06
S194	0	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:07

		database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))				
S195	182	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:07
S196	0	359/16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676.ccls. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:08
S197	0	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:09
S198	200	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:10

S199	0	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:11
S200	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with algorithm$1)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:12
S201	0	("20020012054" | "20030039402" | "20040150726" | "20050030394" | "20050261849" | "20060120599" | "20070103744" | "20070252074" | "20080291447" | "20100106841" | "20120106841" | "8194136").PN. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:13
S202	0	(US-10674046-$ | US-16692972-$ | US-20030039402-$ | US-20040150726-$ | US-20050030394-$ | US-20050261849-$ | US-20060120599-$ | US-20070103744-$ | US-20070252074-$ | US-20080291447-$ | US-20100106841-$ | US-20120106841-$ | US-8194136-$).DID. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:14
S203	22	348/241,231.99,222.1,240.99,335,333.08,340,342,240.1,208.11,207.99,345,346-350,355,240.3,349.ccls. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO;	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:15

		and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S204	0	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:19
S205	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with algorithm$1)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:20
S206	2	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:21
S207	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:27

S208	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:28
S209	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:30
S222	13	("20030002735" | "20040120598" | "20040252906" | "20080170124" | "20160314565" | "7688337").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/23 13:19
S223	0	("20030002735" | "20040120598" | "20040252906" | "20080170124" | "20160314565" | "7688337").PN. and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/23 13:20
S224	1	S222 and (correct$4 with aberration$1)	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO;	OR	ON	2020/06/23 13:21

			DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S225	0	("20030002735" | "20040120598" | "20040252906" | "20080170124" | "20160314565" | "7688337").PN. and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/06/23 13:22
S226	1	16/692972	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 13:42
S227	109	((("SOLOMON") near3 ("Neal"))).INV.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; EPO; JPO; DERWENT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 13:43
S228	0	((("OPTIMUM") near3 ("IMAGING") near3 ("TECHNOLOGIES") near3 ("LLC"))).AS,AANM.	USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 14:54
S229	51	(US-10282822-$ | US-6888571-$ | US-8395677-$ | US-9843710-$ | US-4903204-$ | US-5905530-$ | US-7245319-$ | US-7590305-$ | US-7609297-$ | US-7612805-$ | US-7738015-$ | US-7936392-$ | US-8451339-$ | US-20050078173-$ | US-20070189757-$ | US-20090167925-$ | US-20100321537-$ | US-20140333971-$ | US-20160028921-$ | US-20170339334-$ | US-20170339340-$ | US-20200267286-$ | US-20200267287-$ | US-20200267289-$ | US-20200267290-$ | US-20020135688-$ | US-20030095197-$ | US-20070171288-$).DID.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 15:14

S231	34,560	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:03
S232	24,046	382/167,254,255,264,263,266,275.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:05
S233	5,427	359/16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:05
S234	166,908	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:08
S235	0	S231 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO;	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:09

		or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S236	0	S232 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:10
S237	0	S233 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:10
S238	1	S234 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:11
S239	69	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:17
S240	0	S231 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with	US-PGPUB; USPAT;	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:21

		(correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S241	0	S232 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:25
S242	0	S233 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:26
S243	2	S234 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:26
S244	31	("20020012054" | "20030039402" | "20040150726" | "20050030394" | "20050261849" | "20060120599" | "20070103744" | "20070252074" | "20080291447" | "20100106841" | "20120106841" | "8194136").PN.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:27

			IBM_TDB			
S245	0	S244 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:28
S246	1	(US-10282822-$ | US-6888571-$ | US-8395677-$ | US-9843710-$ | US-4903204-$ | US-5905530-$ | US-7245319-$ | US-7590305-$ | US-7609297-$ | US-7612805-$ | US-7738015-$ | US-7936392-$ | US-8451339-$ | US-20050078173-$ | US-20070189757-$ | US-20090167925-$ | US-20100321537-$ | US-20140333971-$ | US-20160028921-$ | US-20170339334-$ | US-20170339340-$ | US-20200267286-$ | US-20200267287-$ | US-20200267289-$ | US-20200267290-$ | US-20020135688-$ | US-20030095197-$ | US-20070171288-$).DID. and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:29
S247	21	S231 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:29
S248	19	S232 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:31

			IBM_TDB			
S249	0	S233 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:39
S250	62	S234 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:39
S251	0	S231 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:45
S252	0	S232 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:46
S253	0	S233 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS;	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:46

		database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S254	2	S234 and ((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:47
S255	341	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:48
S256	0	S231 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:49
S257	0	S232 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:50

S258	0	S233 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:50
S259	17	S234 and (((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:51
S260	48	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:53
S261	12	S231 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:53
S262	0	S232 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO;	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:55

			DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S263	0	S233 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 21:55
S264	13	S234 and (((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:01
S265	3	((((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:04
S266	3	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:10
S267	0	((((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or	US-PGPUB; USPAT;	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:11

		internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))))).clm.	USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB			
S268	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:13
S269	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:14
S270	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:15
S271	0	((((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT;	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:16

		database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))))).clm.	IBM_TDB			
S272	1	((((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT; USOCR; FPRS; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:18

EAST Search History (Interference)

Ref #	Hits	Search Query	DBs	Default Operator	Plurals	Time Stamp
S133	96	((("SOLOMON") near3 ("Neal"))).INV.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:38
S134	0	(((("OPTIMUM") near3 ("IMAGING") near3 ("TECHNOLOGIES") near3 ("LLC"))).AS,AANM.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:38
S135	21,404	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:39
S136	15,418	382/167,254,255,264,263,266,275.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:39
S137	3,017	359/16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:39
S138	42,175	(H04N5/357 | H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/374 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20).CPC.	US-PGPUB;	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:39

			USPAT			
S139	0	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:40
S140	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with data$base))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:41
S141	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:43
S142	0	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:44
S143	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (correction data) and (user with (adjust$4 with variable$1)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:46
S144	47,849	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/18 20:48
S164	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with algorithm$1)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:30

		transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or scren or LCD))).clm.				
S165	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or scren or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:33
S166	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/01/19 11:41
S210	96	((("SOLOMON") near3 ("Neal"))).INV.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:17
S211	0	((("OPTIMUM") near3 ("IMAGING") near3 ("TECHNOLOGIES") near3 ("LLC"))).AS,AANM.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:17
S212	23,249	348/241,231.99,222.1,240.99,335,333.08,340,342,240.1,208.11,207.99,345,346-350,355,240.3,349.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:18
S213	15,422	382/167,254,255,264,263,266,275.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:18
S214	3,017	359/16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676.ccls.	US-PGPUB;	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:18

			USPAT			
S215	50,039	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:18
S216	0	(((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:19
S217	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with algorithm$1)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:20
S218	2	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:26
S219	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)) and ((updat$3 or upgrad$3) with (program$1 or software)) and format$4 and ((external or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:27
S220	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:29

		updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))).clm.				
S221	0	((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/06/07 11:31
S273	101	((("SOLOMON") near3 ("Neal"))).INV.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:07
S274	4	((("OPTIMUM") near3 ("IMAGING") near3 ("TECHNOLOGIES") near3 ("LLC"))).AS,AANM.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:07
S275	21,413	348/241,231.99,222.1,335,240.99,240.1,240.3,333.08,340,342,208.11,345,346-350,355,349.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:08
S276	15,425	382/167,254,255,264,263,266,275.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:08
S277	3,017	359/16,637,666,665,207.2,354,676.ccls.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:09
S278	52,273	(H04N5/217 | H04N5/2253 | H04N5/238 | H04N5/2254 | H04N5/76 | H04N5/225 | H04N5/228 | H04N5/357 | H04N5/374 | H04N5/3572 | H04N9/04517 | H04N1/00872 | H04N3/23 | H04N5/208 | G06K9/36 | G06K9/40 | G01J1/20 | G01J1/0411 | G01J3/0208).CPC.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:09
S279	0	((((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:12

S280	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database) and (captur$3 with image$1) and (plurality with (correct$4 with algorithm$1)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:13
S281	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:14
S282	0	(((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and (improv$4 with (algorithm$1 or procedure$1)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:16
S283	0	((((digital with camera$1 or video$1) and (digital$4 with process$4) and (captur$3 with imag$3) and plural$4 and (receiv$4 with (updat$4 with software)) and (correct$4 with algorithm$1) and (("in-camera" or internal) with process$4) and (wireless$3 with (transmit$4 or transmission)) and (result$3 with (correct$4 image$1)) and provid$3 and provid$4 and ((improv$4 or upgrad$4 or updat$3) with ((algorithm$1 or procedure$1 or method$1)) with correct$4) and ((stor$3 imag$3) with database))and ((external$3 or outside or exterior) with (monitor or screen or LCD)))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:17
S284	1	((((digital or optical) with aberration$1) and (digital with database) and vignet$5 and (integrat$3 with circuit$3) and (lens with mechanism) and identif$5 and (imag$3 with file$1) and video and (modif$4 or chang$3 or alter$4) and (stor$4 with (original with video$1 or image$1)) and (algorithm$1 or procedure$1))).clm.	US-PGPUB; USPAT	OR	ON	2020/09/26 22:18

9/27/2020 3:02:39 PM
C:\Users\mcamargo\Documents\EAST\Workspaces\16692972.wsp

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United States Patent and Trademark Office
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P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
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BIB DATA SHEET

CONFIRMATION NO. 7825

SERIAL NUMBER	FILING or 371(c) DATE RULE	CLASS	GROUP ART UNIT	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.
16/692,972	11/22/2019	348	2697	5311.001US5

APPLICANTS
Optimum Imaging Technologies LLC, Austin, TX;

INVENTORS
Neal Solomon, Oakland, CA;

**** CONTINUING DATA ***************************
This application is a CON of 13/691,805 12/02/2012
which is a CON of 12/586,221 09/18/2009 PAT 8451339
which is a CON of 11/825,521 07/06/2007 PAT 7612805
which claims benefit of 60/807,065 07/11/2006

**** FOREIGN APPLICATIONS ***************************

**** IF REQUIRED, FOREIGN FILING LICENSE GRANTED **** ** SMALL ENTITY **
12/16/2019

Foreign Priority claimed ❑ Yes ☑ No 35 USC 119(a-d) conditions met ❑ Yes ☑ No Verified and Acknowledged /MARLY S.B. CAMARGO/ Examiner's Signature	❑ Met after Allowance Initials	STATE OR COUNTRY	SHEETS DRAWINGS	TOTAL CLAIMS	INDEPENDENT CLAIMS
		CA	19	30	2

ADDRESS
SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402
UNITED STATES

TITLE
DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER

FILING FEE RECEIVED		
1285	FEES: Authority has been given in Paper No._____ to charge/credit DEPOSIT ACCOUNT No._____ for following:	❑ All Fees ❑ 1.16 Fees (Filing) ❑ 1.17 Fees (Processing Ext. of time) ❑ 1.18 Fees (Issue) ❑ Other _____ ❑ Credit

BIB (Rev. 05/07).

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NOTICE OF ALLOWANCE AND FEE(S) DUE

21186 7590 09/30/2020
SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402

EXAMINER	
CAMARGO, MARLY S.B.	
ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2697	

DATE MAILED: 09/30/2020

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
16/692,972	11/22/2019	Neal Solomon	5311.001US5	7825

TITLE OF INVENTION: DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER

APPLN. TYPE	ENTITY STATUS	ISSUE FEE DUE	PUBLICATION FEE DUE	PREV. PAID ISSUE FEE	TOTAL FEE(S) DUE	DATE DUE
nonprovisional	SMALL	$500	$0.00	$500.00	$0	12/30/2020

THE APPLICATION IDENTIFIED ABOVE HAS BEEN EXAMINED AND IS ALLOWED FOR ISSUANCE AS A PATENT. PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS CLOSED. THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWANCE IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS. THIS APPLICATION IS SUBJECT TO WITHDRAWAL FROM ISSUE AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE OFFICE OR UPON PETITION BY THE APPLICANT. SEE 37 CFR 1.313 AND MPEP 1308.

THE ISSUE FEE AND PUBLICATION FEE (IF REQUIRED) MUST BE PAID WITHIN THREE MONTHS FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS NOTICE OR THIS APPLICATION SHALL BE REGARDED AS ABANDONED. THIS STATUTORY PERIOD CANNOT BE EXTENDED. SEE 35 U.S.C. 151. THE ISSUE FEE DUE INDICATED ABOVE DOES NOT REFLECT A CREDIT FOR ANY PREVIOUSLY PAID ISSUE FEE IN THIS APPLICATION. IF AN ISSUE FEE HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN PAID IN THIS APPLICATION (AS SHOWN ABOVE), THE RETURN OF PART B OF THIS FORM WILL BE CONSIDERED A REQUEST TO REAPPLY THE PREVIOUSLY PAID ISSUE FEE TOWARD THE ISSUE FEE NOW DUE.

HOW TO REPLY TO THIS NOTICE:

I. Review the ENTITY STATUS shown above. If the ENTITY STATUS is shown as SMALL or MICRO, verify whether entitlement to that entity status still applies.

If the ENTITY STATUS is the same as shown above, pay the TOTAL FEE(S) DUE shown above.

If the ENTITY STATUS is changed from that shown above, on PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL, complete section number 5 titled "Change in Entity Status (from status indicated above)".

For purposes of this notice, small entity fees are 1/2 the amount of undiscounted fees, and micro entity fees are 1/2 the amount of small entity fees.

II. PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL, or its equivalent, must be completed and returned to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) with your ISSUE FEE and PUBLICATION FEE (if required). If you are charging the fee(s) to your deposit account, section "4b" of Part B - Fee(s) Transmittal should be completed and an extra copy of the form should be submitted. If an equivalent of Part B is filed, a request to reapply a previously paid issue fee must be clearly made, and delays in processing may occur due to the difficulty in recognizing the paper as an equivalent of Part B.

III. All communications regarding this application must give the application number. Please direct all communications prior to issuance to Mail Stop ISSUE FEE unless advised to the contrary.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Maintenance fees are due in utility patents issuing on applications filed on or after Dec. 12, 1980. It is patentee's responsibility to ensure timely payment of maintenance fees when due. More information is available at www.uspto.gov/PatentMaintenanceFees.

PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL

Complete and send this form, together with applicable fee(s), by mail or fax, or via EFS-Web.

By mail, send to: Mail Stop ISSUE FEE
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

By fax, send to: (571)-273-2885

INSTRUCTIONS: This form should be used for transmitting the ISSUE FEE and PUBLICATION FEE (if required). Blocks 1 through 5 should be completed where appropriate. All further correspondence including the Patent, advance orders and notification of maintenance fees will be mailed to the current correspondence address as indicated unless corrected below or directed otherwise in Block 1, by (a) specifying a new correspondence address; and/or (b) indicating a separate "FEE ADDRESS" for maintenance fee notifications.

CURRENT CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS (Note: Use Block 1 for any change of address)

21186 7590 09/30/2020
SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402

Note: A certificate of mailing can only be used for domestic mailings of the Fee(s) Transmittal. This certificate cannot be used for any other accompanying papers. Each additional paper, such as an assignment or formal drawing, must have its own certificate of mailing or transmission.

Certificate of Mailing or Transmission

I hereby certify that this Fee(s) Transmittal is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage for first class mail in an envelope addressed to the Mail Stop ISSUE FEE address above, or being transmitted to the USPTO via EFS-Web or by facsimile to (571) 273-2885, on the date below.

(Typed or printed name)
(Signature)
(Date)

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
16/692,972	11/22/2019	Neal Solomon	5311.001US5	7825

TITLE OF INVENTION: DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER

APPLN. TYPE	ENTITY STATUS	ISSUE FEE DUE	PUBLICATION FEE DUE	PREV. PAID ISSUE FEE	TOTAL FEE(S) DUE	DATE DUE
nonprovisional	SMALL	$500	$0.00	$500.00	$0	12/30/2020

EXAMINER	ART UNIT	CLASS-SUBCLASS
CAMARGO, MARLY S.B.	2697	348-241000

1. Change of correspondence address or indication of "Fee Address" (37 CFR 1.363).

❑ Change of correspondence address (or Change of Correspondence Address form PTO/SB/122) attached.

❑ "Fee Address" indication (or "Fee Address" Indication form PTO/SB/47; Rev 03-09 or more recent) attached. **Use of a Customer Number is required.**

2. For printing on the patent front page, list
(1) The names of up to 3 registered patent attorneys or agents OR, alternatively,
(2) The name of a single firm (having as a member a registered attorney or agent) and the names of up to 2 registered patent attorneys or agents. If no name is listed, no name will be printed.

1_____
2_____
3_____

3. ASSIGNEE NAME AND RESIDENCE DATA TO BE PRINTED ON THE PATENT (print or type)

PLEASE NOTE: Unless an assignee is identified below, no assignee data will appear on the patent. If an assignee is identified below, the document must have been previously recorded, or filed for recordation, as set forth in 37 CFR 3.11 and 37 CFR 3.81(a). Completion of this form is NOT a substitute for filing an assignment.

(A) NAME OF ASSIGNEE (B) RESIDENCE: (CITY and STATE OR COUNTRY)

Please check the appropriate assignee category or categories (will not be printed on the patent) : ❑ Individual ❑ Corporation or other private group entity ❑ Government

4a. Fees submitted: ❑Issue Fee ❑Publication Fee (if required) ❑Advance Order - # of Copies _____

4b. Method of Payment: *(Please first reapply any previously paid fee shown above)*

❑ Electronic Payment via EFS-Web ❑ Enclosed check ❑ Non-electronic payment by credit card (Attach form PTO-2038)

❑ The Director is hereby authorized to charge the required fee(s), any deficiency, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. _____

5. **Change in Entity Status** (from status indicated above)

❑ Applicant certifying micro entity status. See 37 CFR 1.29

❑ Applicant asserting small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27

❑ Applicant changing to regular undiscounted fee status.

NOTE: Absent a valid certification of Micro Entity Status (see forms PTO/SB/15A and 15B), issue fee payment in the micro entity amount will not be accepted at the risk of application abandonment.
NOTE: If the application was previously under micro entity status, checking this box will be taken to be a notification of loss of entitlement to micro entity status.
NOTE: Checking this box will be taken to be a notification of loss of entitlement to small or micro entity status, as applicable.

NOTE: This form must be signed in accordance with 37 CFR 1.31 and 1.33. See 37 CFR 1.4 for signature requirements and certifications.

Authorized Signature _____ Date _____

Typed or printed name _____ Registration No. _____

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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
16/692,972	11/22/2019	Neal Solomon	5311.001US5	7825

21186 7590 09/30/2020

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P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402

EXAMINER	
CAMARGO, MARLY S.B.	
ART UNIT	**PAPER NUMBER**
2697	

DATE MAILED: 09/30/2020

Determination of Patent Term Adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154 (b)
(Applications filed on or after May 29, 2000)

The Office has discontinued providing a Patent Term Adjustment (PTA) calculation with the Notice of Allowance.

Section 1(h)(2) of the AIA Technical Corrections Act amended 35 U.S.C. 154(b)(3)(B)(i) to eliminate the requirement that the Office provide a patent term adjustment determination with the notice of allowance. See Revisions to Patent Term Adjustment, 78 Fed. Reg. 19416, 19417 (Apr. 1, 2013). Therefore, the Office is no longer providing an initial patent term adjustment determination with the notice of allowance. The Office will continue to provide a patent term adjustment determination with the Issue Notification Letter that is mailed to applicant approximately three weeks prior to the issue date of the patent, and will include the patent term adjustment on the patent. Any request for reconsideration of the patent term adjustment determination (or reinstatement of patent term adjustment) should follow the process outlined in 37 CFR 1.705.

Any questions regarding the Patent Term Extension or Adjustment determination should be directed to the Office of Patent Legal Administration at (571)-272-7702. Questions relating to issue and publication fee payments should be directed to the Customer Service Center of the Office of Patent Publication at 1-(888)-786-0101 or (571)-272-4200.

OMB Clearance and PRA Burden Statement for PTOL-85 Part B

The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995 requires Federal agencies to obtain Office of Management and Budget approval before requesting most types of information from the public. When OMB approves an agency request to collect information from the public, OMB (i) provides a valid OMB Control Number and expiration date for the agency to display on the instrument that will be used to collect the information and (ii) requires the agency to inform the public about the OMB Control Number's legal significance in accordance with 5 CFR 1320.5(b).

The information collected by PTOL-85 Part B is required by 37 CFR 1.311. The information is required to obtain or retain a benefit by the public which is to file (and by the USPTO to process) an application. Confidentiality is governed by 35 U.S.C. 122 and 37 CFR 1.14. This collection is estimated to take 30 minutes to complete, including gathering, preparing, and submitting the completed application form to the USPTO. Time will vary depending upon the individual case. Any comments on the amount of time you require to complete this form and/or suggestions for reducing this burden, should be sent to the Chief Information Officer, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, U.S. Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450. DO NOT SEND FEES OR COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND TO: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450. Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Privacy Act Statement

The Privacy Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-579) requires that you be given certain information in connection with your submission of the attached form related to a patent application or patent. Accordingly, pursuant to the requirements of the Act, please be advised that: (1) the general authority for the collection of this information is 35 U.S.C. 2(b)(2); (2) furnishing of the information solicited is voluntary; and (3) the principal purpose for which the information is used by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is to process and/or examine your submission related to a patent application or patent. If you do not furnish the requested information, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office may not be able to process and/or examine your submission, which may result in termination of proceedings or abandonment of the application or expiration of the patent.

The information provided by you in this form will be subject to the following routine uses:

1. The information on this form will be treated confidentially to the extent allowed under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) and the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C 552a). Records from this system of records may be disclosed to the Department of Justice to determine whether disclosure of these records is required by the Freedom of Information Act.
2. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, in the course of presenting evidence to a court, magistrate, or administrative tribunal, including disclosures to opposing counsel in the course of settlement negotiations.
3. A record in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a Member of Congress submitting a request involving an individual, to whom the record pertains, when the individual has requested assistance from the Member with respect to the subject matter of the record.
4. A record in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a contractor of the Agency having need for the information in order to perform a contract. Recipients of information shall be required to comply with the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(m).
5. A record related to an International Application filed under the Patent Cooperation Treaty in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization, pursuant to the Patent Cooperation Treaty.
6. A record in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to another federal agency for purposes of National Security review (35 U.S.C. 181) and for review pursuant to the Atomic Energy Act (42 U.S.C. 218(c)).
7. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the Administrator, General Services, or his/her designee, during an inspection of records conducted by GSA as part of that agency's responsibility to recommend improvements in records management practices and programs, under authority of 44 U.S.C. 2904 and 2906. Such disclosure shall be made in accordance with the GSA regulations governing inspection of records for this purpose, and any other relevant (i.e., GSA or Commerce) directive. Such disclosure shall not be used to make determinations about individuals.
8. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the public after either publication of the application pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 122(b) or issuance of a patent pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 151. Further, a record may be disclosed, subject to the limitations of 37 CFR 1.14, as a routine use, to the public if the record was filed in an application which became abandoned or in which the proceedings were terminated and which application is referenced by either a published application, an application open to public inspection or an issued patent.
9. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency, if the USPTO becomes aware of a violation or potential violation of law or regulation.

Notice of Allowability	Application No. 16/692,972	Applicant(s) Solomon, Neal	
	Examiner MARLY S CAMARGO	Art Unit 2697	AIA (FITF) Status No

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☑ This communication is responsive to RCE field on 09/04/2020.
   ☐ A declaration(s)/affidavit(s) under **37 CFR 1.130(b)** was/were filed on _____.

2. ☐ An election was made by the applicant in response to a restriction requirement set forth during the interview on _____; the restriction requirement and election have been incorporated into this action.

3. ☑ The allowed claim(s) is/are 2-31 . As a result of the allowed claim(s), you may be eligible to benefit from the **Patent Prosecution Highway** program at a participating intellectual property office for the corresponding application. For more information, please see **http://www.uspto.gov/patents/init_events/pph/index.jsp** or send an inquiry to **PPHfeedback@uspto.gov.**

4. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

   Certified copies:

   a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some *c) ☐ None of the:

   1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
   2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____ .
   3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

   * Certified copies not received: _____ .

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.
THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

5. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
   ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____ .

   Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).

6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☑ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO/SB/08), Paper No./Mail Date _____.
3. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material _____.
4. ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No./Mail Date. _____.
5. ☐ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
6. ☑ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
7. ☐ Other _____.

/MARLY S CAMARGO/
Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697

Notice of Pre-AIA or AIA Status

The present application is being examined under the pre-AIA first to invent provisions.

Change in Art Unit Designation for Your Application

1. The Art Unit designation of your application in the USPTO has changed from 2699 to 2697. The examiner assigned to this application remains the same. To aid in correlating any papers for this application, all further correspondence regarding this application should be directed to Art Unit 2697.

Detailed Action

Response to Amendment

2. In response Applicant RCE filed on September 04, 2020, the Examiner acknowledges the following:

- Claims 2 – 31 remain the same.
- Claim 1 was previously canceled by Applicant
- Currently claims 1 – 31 are pending. Claim 1 was previously canceled; therefore, claims 2 – 31 are being considered for examination.

Information Disclosure Statement

3. The information disclosure statement (IDS) document submitted on 09/04/2020 is acknowledged by the Examiner.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

4. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 09/04/2020 has been entered.

Allowable Subject Matter

5. Claims 2 – 31 (renumbered as 1 – 30) are allowed.

6. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The closest art of record teaches: 1) a digital imaging system with optical lens mechanism, a digital sensor, a CPU, system software, a communication circuit and a memory sub-system. The system further includes an external computer with a digital processor and a database management system and storage sub-system, wherein the CPU sends an image to the external computer, which accesses the database management system and applies a specific algorithm to modify the optical and digital aberrations in the digital image file and wherein the digital signal processor DSP of camera is upgraded by download software algorithms (Solomon - US 2012/0229655 A1). The prior art of record also discloses an image processing system for receiving an input image taken by a converging lens group having an optical zoom mechanism and for correcting distortion of the image, the image processing system comprising: zoom position acquiring means for acquiring a zoom

position indicating a lens position condition of the optical zoom mechanism on taking an input image; zooming-direction encoding means for compressing correction parameters for distortion correction, which correspond to each of a lens position condition by utilizing zoom petitioning points at which lens position conditions in the optical zoom mechanism are serially partitioned between a wide-end and a tele-end into plural levels including both the ends, wherein the image processing system corrects distortions of the image based on the correction parameters and wherein the correction parameters are updated (Nose – US 2008/0175514 A1). The prior art of record also teaches system and method of operation for reducing image degradation due to image capture problems, a method utilizes image data corresponding to a captured image and image capture metadata that refers specifically to information that is associated with capture of the image. A database of correction parameters is provided in order to reduce degradation present in the captured image, whereby each correction parameter is associated with particular image capture metadata. The method involves using the image capture metadata to determine whether the database contains one or more correction parameters associated with that image capture metadata, and then producing correction parameters from the database of correction parameters when the database contains correction parameters associated with the image capture metadata (Gallagher – US 7,327,390 B2). Another prior art teaches a system and method for correcting distortions that occur in image capture systems (Lewis – US 2002/0041383 A1). A further prior art teaches an aberration correcting method for an image pickup apparatus comprising: a lens apparatus comprising: an image taking optical system for guiding a beam from an object to a camera apparatus; and a memory unit that stores, as correcting data, a correcting amount with respect to an image height

for correcting aberration caused by the image taking optical system, the lens apparatus being attached to the camera apparatus detachably (Natsume – US 9,077,842 B2). Osamato – US 2002/0012054 A1 – cited in a previous IDS) teaches a method of interpolation for a complementary-color-filtered array image, comprising the steps of: (a) provide a complementary-color-filtered array of pixel values with yellow pixel values Ye on a first subarray, cyan pixel values Cy on a second subarray, magenta pixel values Mg on a third subarray, and green pixel values G on a fourth subarray; (b) interpolating the subarray of yellow pixel values to form a yellow array; (c) interpolating the subarray of cyan pixel values to form a cyan array; (d) interpolating the subarray of magenta pixel values to form a magenta array; (e) interpolating the subarray of green pixel values to form a green array; (f) adjusting the color values for each pixel by (i) subtracting a quantity (Ye+Cy-2*G-Mg)/4 from Ye to generate the pixel's adjusted yellow value where Ye is the pixel's yellow value from step (b), Cy is the pixel's cyan value from step (c), Mg is the pixel's magenta value from step (d), and G is the pixel's green value from step (e); (ii) subtracting the quantity (Ye+Cy-2*G-Mg)/4 from Cy to generate the pixel's adjusted cyan value; (iii) adding the quantity (Ye+Cy-2*G-Mg)/4 to Mg to generate the pixel's adjusted magenta value; and (iv) adding the quantity (Ye+Cy-2*G-Mg)/8 to G to generate the pixel's adjusted green value, wherein the system allows for upgrading the software to conform to new standards or improve image pipeline quality.

Even though, Solomon, Nose, Gallagher, Lewis, Natsume and Osamato teach some of the features of the current invention, all either alone or in combination fail to teach or to fairly suggest the combination of limitations as in the independent claims 2 and 23 as it follows below.

Regarding Claim 2:

The combination of Solomon, Nose, Gallagher, Lewis, Natsume and Osamato fails to explicitly disclose *a method for processing one or more images* with a camera comprising *digitally processing at least one captured image the processing using in-camera hardware and software, configured to perform a plurality of image correction algorithms, process image correction data stored in a database system, receive updated software and image correction data, and upgrade the digital camera with the updated software and image correction data; storing in memory one or more corrected images resulting from digitally processing the at least one captured image; and wirelessly transmitting at least one of the one or more corrected images, wherein the in-camera software and database system are upgradable to provide improved algorithms and correction data for correction of images.*

Therefore, as discussed above, claim 2 is allowable over the prior art of record.

Regarding Claims 3 – 22 and 29 – 31:

Claims 3 – 22 and 29 – 31 depend directly or indirectly to claim 2 and they require the same limitations as claim 2 which are allowable over the prior art of record. Therefore, claims 3 – 22 and 29 – 31 are allowable for the same reasons as claim 2.

Regarding Claim 23:

The combination of Solomon, Nose, Gallagher, Lewis, Natsume and Osamato fails to explicitly disclose *a method of displaying one or more images captured*

by a digital camera on an external monitor, comprising: digitally processing at least one captured image to produce one or more corrected image, the processing using in-camera hardware and software that is configured to: perform a plurality of image correction algorithms, process image correction data stored in a database system, store updated software or image correction data or both, and upgrade the digital camera with the updated software or image correction data or both; and wirelessly transmitting at least one of the one or more corrected images in a format that the external monitor can receive, wherein the in-camera software and database system are upgradable to provide improved algorithms and correction data for correction of images.

Therefore, as discussed above, claim 23 is allowable over the prior art of record.

Regarding Claims 24 –28:

Claims 24 – 28 depend directly or indirectly to claim 23 and they require the same limitations as claim 23 which are allowable over the prior art of record. Therefore, claims 24 – 28 are allowable for the same reasons as claim 23.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled “Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance.”

Contact

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MARLY CAMARGO whose telephone number is (571)270-3729. The examiner can normally be reached on 6:00AM - 10PM, M-F, EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Lin Ye can be reached on (571)272-7372. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/MARLY S CAMARGO/
Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697

Issue Classification	Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination
	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	**Art Unit**
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

CPC						
Symbol					**Type**	**Version**
G02B	/	27	/	0025	F	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	238	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	2254	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	23212	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	23296	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	3572	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	23203	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	2353	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	243	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	35563	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	2171	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	2258	I	2013-01-01
G06T	/	7	/	194	I	2017-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	232125	I	2018-08-01
H04N	/	5	/	35721	I	2018-08-01
H04N	/	5	/	217	I	2013-01-01
H04N	/	5	/	2253	I	2013-01-01

CPC Combination Sets								
Symbol					**Type**	**Set**	**Ranking**	**Version**
	/		/					

NONE		**Total Claims Allowed:**	
(Assistant Examiner)	(Date)	30	
/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	27 September 2020	O.G. Print Claim(s)	O.G. Print Figure
(Primary Examiner)	(Date)	2	1

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office — Part of Paper No.: 20200927

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	16/692,972	Solomon, Neal
	Examiner	**Art Unit**
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION				
CLAIMED				
H04N	/	5	/	217
H04N	/	5	/	225
H04N	/	5	/	238
H04N	/	5	/	357
H04N	/	5	/	76
H04N	/	5	/	374
H04N	/	9	/	04
G06K	/	9	/	36
G06K	/	9	/	40
G01J	/	1	/	04
G01J	/	3	/	02
G01J	/	1	/	20
H04N	/	1	/	00
	/		/	

NON-CLAIMED				
	/		/	

US ORIGINAL CLASSIFICATION	
CLASS	**SUBCLASS**

CROSS REFERENCES(S)						
CLASS	**SUBCLASS (ONE SUBCLASS PER BLOCK)**					
348	222.1	241	231.99	335	333.08	208.11
382	275	167	254	255	263	264
359	16	637	666	665	676	354

NONE (Assistant Examiner) (Date)	**Total Claims Allowed:** 30	
/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697 (Primary Examiner) 27 September 2020 (Date)	O.G. Print Claim(s) 2	O.G. Print Figure 1

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	Examiner	**Art Unit**
	MARLY S CAMARGO	2697

☑ Claims renumbered in the same order as presented by applicant ☐ CPA ☐ T.D. ☐ R.1.47

CLAIMS

Final	Original	Final	Original	Final	Original	Final	Original	Final	Original	Final	Original	Final	Original	Final	Original
	1	9	10	17	19	30	28								
1	2	10	11	19	20	22	29								
2	3	11	12	20	21	23	30								
3	4	12	13	21	22	24	31								
4	5	13	14	25	23										
5	6	14	15	26	24										
6	7	16	16	27	25										
7	8	18	17	28	26										
8	9	15	18	29	27										

NONE		**Total Claims Allowed:**	
(Assistant Examiner)	(Date)	30	
/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	27 September 2020	O.G. Print Claim(s)	O.G. Print Figure
(Primary Examiner)	(Date)	2	1

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Substitute for form 1449A/PTO **INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT** (Use as many sheets as necessary)	*Complete if Known*	
	Application Number	16/692,972
	Filing Date	November 22, 2019
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Group Art Unit	2697
	Examiner Name	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO
Sheet 1 of 5	Attorney Docket No: 5311.001US5	

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Examiner Initial *	Foreign Document Number	Publication Date	Name of Patentee or Applicant of cited Document	T 1

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	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Group Art Unit	2697
	Examiner Name	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO
Sheet 2 of 5	Attorney Docket No: 5311.001US5	

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Examiner Initial *	Include name of the author (in CAPITAL LETTERS), title of the article (when appropriate), title of the item (book, magazine, journal, serial, symposium, catalog, etc.), date, page(s), volume-issue number(s), publisher, city and/or country where published.	T 1
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	Filing Date	November 22, 2019
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Group Art Unit	2697
	Examiner Name	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO
Sheet 3 of 5	Attorney Docket No: 5311.001US5	

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	Examiner Name	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO
Sheet 4 of 5	Attorney Docket No: 5311.001US5	

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	"Steinberg, US 7,590,305 B2, Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1022", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 23 pgs.	

EXAMINER /MARLY S CAMARGO/ DATE CONSIDERED 09/27/2020

* EXAMINER: Initial if reference considered, whether or not citation is in conformance with MPEP 609. Draw line through citation if not in conformance and not considered. Include copy of this form with next communication to applicant. 1 Applicant is to place a check mark here if English language Translation is attached

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Modified form PTO/SB/08A(04-07) OMB 651-0031
US Patent & Trademark Office: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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Substitute for form 1449A/PTO **INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT** (Use as many sheets as necessary)	*Complete if Known*	
	Application Number	16/692,972
	Filing Date	November 22, 2019
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Group Art Unit	2697
	Examiner Name	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO
Sheet 5 of 5	Attorney Docket No: 5311.001US5	

	"Steinberg, US 7,738,015 B2, Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1021", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 23 pgs.	
	"Taylor Francis Group, LLC Customer Service Publication Confirmation, Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1044", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 2 pgs.	
	"The Nikon Guide to Digital Photography with the CoolPix 7900 5900 Digital Camera, Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1042", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 165 pgs.	
	"USPTO File History for US 7,612,805, Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1037", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 288 pgs.	
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	"Wheeler, US20030095197A1, Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1032", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 32 pgs.	
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	GONZALEZ, RAFAEL C, et al., "Digital Image Processing, 2nd Ed., Prentice Hall (2002), Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1024 – VOL. 1", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 442 pgs.	
	GONZALEZ, RAFAEL C, et al., "Digital Image Processing, 2nd Ed., Prentice Hall (2002), Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1024 – VOL. 2", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 373 pgs.	
	RUSS, JOHN C, "The Image Processing Handbook, 4th Ed., CRC Press (2002), Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1008 - VOL. 1", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 294 pgs.	
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	RUSS, JOHN C, "The Image Processing Handbook, 4th Ed., CRC Press (2002), Petitioner Canon, Inc., Ex. 1008 – VOL. 3", IPR2020-01321, US Patent No. 7,612,805; IPR2020-01322, US Patent No. 8,451,339, Canon, Inc. v. Optimum Imaging Technology, LLC, (07-20-2020), 183 pgs.	

EXAMINER /MARLY S CAMARGO/ DATE CONSIDERED 09/27/2020

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Inventor(s):	Neal Solomon	Examiner:	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO
Serial No.:	16/692,972	Group Art Unit:	2697
Filed:	November 22, 2019	Docket:	5311.001US5
Customer No.:	21186	Confirmation No.:	7825
Title:	DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER		

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT UNDER 37 CFR 1.97(i)

MS Amendment
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

In compliance with the duty imposed by 37 C.F.R. § 1.56, and in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.97 *et. seq.*, the enclosed materials are brought to the attention of the Examiner for consideration in connection with the above-identified patent application. U.S. 6,301,440 was cited by Exr. Camargo in related application Ser. No. 16/692,939 in an Office Action of Oct. 2, 2020. Kindly place this submission in the file in accordance with USPTO procedure. MPEP 609.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.97(b), it is believed that no fee or statement is required with the Information Disclosure Statement to be entered into the record. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the required fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0743 if deemed necessary.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.98(a)(2), copies of cited U.S. Patents and Published Applications, and Non-Published Applications identifiable by USPTO Serial Number, are no longer required to be provided to the Office. Applicant acknowledges the requirement to submit copies of foreign patent documents and non-patent literature in accordance with 37 C.F.R § 1.98(a)(2).

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated if there are any questions regarding this communication.

Respectfully submitted,

SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. Box 2938
Minneapolis, MN 55402
(612) 373-6912

Date 10/23/2020 By /Timothy E. Bianchi/
Timothy E. Bianchi
TEB:jj Reg. No. 39,610

Electronic Acknowledgement Receipt

EFS ID:	40929688
Application Number:	16692972
International Application Number:	
Confirmation Number:	7825
Title of Invention:	DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER
First Named Inventor/Applicant Name:	Neal Solomon
Customer Number:	21186
Filer:	Robert Mark Hirning/Jamie Johnson
Filer Authorized By:	Robert Mark Hirning
Attorney Docket Number:	5311.001US5
Receipt Date:	23-OCT-2020
Filing Date:	22-NOV-2019
Time Stamp:	13:19:07
Application Type:	Utility under 35 USC 111(a)

Payment information:

Submitted with Payment	no

File Listing:

Document Number	Document Description	File Name	File Size(Bytes)/ Message Digest	Multi Part /.zip	Pages (if appl.)
1		16692972_SIDS_10-23-2020.pdf	198145 f29c07433974e5a2146c69e6e1bad83acd8c62bb	yes	4

	Multipart Description/PDF files in .zip description				
	Document Description		**Start**	**End**	
	Miscellaneous Incoming Letter		1	1	
	Transmittal Letter		2	3	
	Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Form (SB08)		4	4	
Warnings:					
Information:					
2	Non Patent Literature	0001_2_npl_5311001us3_noar_09162020_f.pdf	824933 8690c368f5df76342cad6cc1575fc46a96c56b55	no	14
Warnings:					
Information:					
3	Non Patent Literature	0002_2_npl_5311001us4_oarn_10022020_f.pdf	1211109 e237d8abacf8f14c4bebde2720dbd6139bfba069	no	24
Warnings:					
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4	Non Patent Literature	0003_2_npl_5311001us6_aarf_20200929_f.pdf	503802 55e9b9008485466f308aca238937bfcf9f82a963	no	11
Warnings:					
Information:					
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New Applications Under 35 U.S.C. 111

If a new application is being filed and the application includes the necessary components for a filing date (see 37 CFR 1.53(b)-(d) and MPEP 506), a Filing Receipt (37 CFR 1.54) will be issued in due course and the date shown on this Acknowledgement Receipt will establish the filing date of the application.

National Stage of an International Application under 35 U.S.C. 371

If a timely submission to enter the national stage of an international application is compliant with the conditions of 35 U.S.C. 371 and other applicable requirements a Form PCT/DO/EO/903 indicating acceptance of the application as a national stage submission under 35 U.S.C. 371 will be issued in addition to the Filing Receipt, in due course.

New International Application Filed with the USPTO as a Receiving Office

If a new international application is being filed and the international application includes the necessary components for an international filing date (see PCT Article 11 and MPEP 1810), a Notification of the International Application Number and of the International Filing Date (Form PCT/RO/105) will be issued in due course, subject to prescriptions concerning national security, and the date shown on this Acknowledgement Receipt will establish the international filing date of the application.

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US Patent & Trademark Office: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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Substitute for form 1449A/PTO **INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT** (Use as many sheets as necessary)	*Complete if Known*	
	Application Number	16/692,972
	Filing Date	November 22, 2019
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Group Art Unit	2697
	Examiner Name	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO
Sheet 1 of 1	Attorney Docket No: 5311.001US5	

US PATENT DOCUMENTS			
	USP Document Number	Publication Date	Name of Patentee or Applicant of cited Document
	US-6,301,440	10/09/2001	Bolle, Rudolf M, et al.

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS				
Examiner Initial *	Foreign Document Number	Publication Date	Name of Patentee or Applicant of cited Document	T 1

OTHER DOCUMENTS – NON PATENT LITERATURE DOCUMENTS		
Examiner Initial *	Include name of the author (in CAPITAL LETTERS), title of the article (when appropriate), title of the item (book, magazine, journal, serial, symposium, catalog, etc.), date, page(s), volume-issue number(s), publisher, city and/or country where published.	T 1
	"Application Serial No. 13/691,805, Notice of Allowance mailed 09-16-20", 14 pgs	
	"Application Serial No. 16/692,939, Non Final Office Action mailed 10-02-20", 24 pgs	
	"Application Serial No. 16/694,838, Response filed 09-29-20 to Final Office Action mailed 07-29-20", 11 pgs.	
	"Application Serial No. 16/694,850, Notice of Allowance mailed 10-15-20", 15 pgs	

EXAMINER DATE CONSIDERED

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Inventor(s): Neal Solomon
Title: DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER

Docket No.:	5311.001US5	Serial No.:	16/692,972
Filed:	November 22, 2019	Due Date:	N/A
Examiner:	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO	Group Art Unit:	2697
Customer No.:	21186	Confirmation No.:	7825

Mail Stop Amendment
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

We are transmitting herewith the following attached items (as indicated with an "X"):

X Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement under 37 C.F.R. § 1.97(i) (2 pgs.), Form 1449 (1 pg.)
Copies of Cited References (4).

If not provided for in a separate paper filed herewith, please consider this a PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME for sufficient number of months to enter these papers and please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743. If applicable, any papers or fees supplied herewith are considered to be timely filed pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.7(a), the response period falling on a Federal Holiday, Saturday or Sunday being extended to the next succeeding business day.

SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
Customer No.: 21186

By: /Timothy E. Bianchi/
Timothy E. Bianchi
Reg. No. 39,610

Doc code: IDS
Doc description: Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed

PTO/SB/08a (01-10)
Approved for use through 07/31/2012. OMB 0651-0031
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT (Not for submission under 37 CFR 1.99)		
	Application Number	16692972
	Filing Date	2019-11-22
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Art Unit	~~2699~~ 2697
	Examiner Name	M. Camargo
	Attorney Docket Number	5311.001US5

U.S.PATENTS						
Examiner Initial*	Cite No	Patent Number	Kind Code[1]	Issue Date	Name of Patentee or Applicant of cited Document	Pages,Columns,Lines where Relevant Passages or Relevant Figures Appear
	1	10674046		2020-06-02	Solomon, Neal	
	2	8194136		2012-06-05	Askey, Philip, et al.	
	3	8194136		2012-06-05	Askey, Philip, et al.	
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Examiner Initial*	Cite No	Publication Number	Kind Code[1]	Publication Date	Name of Patentee or Applicant of cited Document	Pages,Columns,Lines where Relevant Passages or Relevant Figures Appear
	1	20020012054	A1	2002-01-31	Osamoto, Akira	
	2	20030039402	A1	2003-02-27	Robins, David R, et al.	
	3	20040150726	A1	2004-08-05	Gallagher, Andrew C	

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INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT (Not for submission under 37 CFR 1.99)		
	Application Number	16692972
	Filing Date	2019-11-22
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Art Unit	~~2699~~ 2697
	Examiner Name	M. Camargo
	Attorney Docket Number	5311.001US5

	4	20050030394	A1	2005-02-10	Mendis, Sunetra K, et al.	
	5	20050261849	A1	2005-11-24	Kochi, Nobuo, et al.	
	6	20060120599	A1	2006-06-08	Steinberg, Eran, et al.	
	7	20070103744	A1	2007-05-10	Chiba, Takuya	
	8	20070252074	A1	2007-11-01	Ng, Yi-ren, et al.	
	9	20080291447	A1	2008-11-27	Vakrat, Dudi, et al.	
	10	20100106841	A1	2010-04-29	Barnert, Andrew	
	11	20120106841	A1	2012-05-03	Tzur, Yochay, et al.	

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FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

Examiner Initial*	Cite No	Foreign Document Number[3]	Country Code[2] i	Kind Code[4]	Publication Date	Name of Patentee or Applicant of cited Document	Pages,Columns,Lines where Relevant Passages or Relevant Figures Appear	T[5]
	1							☐

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INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT (Not for submission under 37 CFR 1.99)		
	Application Number	16692972
	Filing Date	2019-11-22
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Art Unit	~~2628~~ 2697
	Examiner Name	M. Camargo
	Attorney Docket Number	5311.001US5

NON-PATENT LITERATURE DOCUMENTS			
Examiner Initials*	Cite No	Include name of the author (in CAPITAL LETTERS), title of the article (when appropriate), title of the item (book, magazine, journal, serial, symposium, catalog, etc), date, pages(s), volume-issue number(s), publisher, city and/or country where published.	T[5]
	1	"Application Serial No. 13 691,805, Notice of Allowance mailed 01-29-20", 13 pages.	☐
	2	"Application Serial No. 16 692,939, Non Final Office Action mailed 02-04-20", 22 pages.	☐
	3	"Application Serial No. 16 694,838, Non Final Office Action mailed 02-13-20", 21 pages.	☐
	4	"Application Serial No. 16 694,850, Non Final Office Action mailed 03-04-20", 25 pages.	☐
	5	"Application Serial No. 13 691,805, Corrected Notice of Allowability mailed 03-18-20", 2 pages.	☐
	6	"Application Serial No. 16 692,939, Examiner Interview Summary mailed 05-06-20", 4 pages.	☐
	7	"Application Serial No. 16 692,939, Response to Non Final Office Action mailed 02-04-20 filed 05-04-20", 12 pages.	☐
	8	"PCTUS2007015544 Published International Application 10-23-2008", (10 23 2008), 3 pages.	☐
	9	"PCTUS2007015544 Notification Recording Change 11-21-2008", (11 21 2008), 1 page.	☐

ALL REFERENCES CONSIDERED EXCEPT WHERE LINED THROUGH. /M.S.C/

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT (Not for submission under 37 CFR 1.99)		
	Application Number	16692972
	Filing Date	2019-11-22
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Art Unit	~~2690~~ 2697
	Examiner Name	M. Camargo
	Attorney Docket Number	5311.001US5

	10	"PCTUS2007015544 Written Opinion ISA 01-11-2009", (1 11 2009), 7 pages.	☐
	11	"PCTUS2007015544 IPRP 01-13-2009", (1 13 2009), 8 pages.	☐
	12	"Application Serial No. 16 694,838, Examiner Interview Summary mailed 05-13-20", 4 pages.	☐
	13	"Application Serial No. 16 694,850, Examiner Interview Summary mailed 05-13-20", 4 pages.	☐
	14	"PCTUS2007015544 Documents 1-17-2008", (1 17 2008), 147 pages.	☐

If you wish to add additional non-patent literature document citation information please click the Add button

EXAMINER SIGNATURE

Examiner Signature	/MARLY S CAMARGO/	Date Considered	06/07/2020

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[1] See Kind Codes of USPTO Patent Documents at www.USPTO.GOV or MPEP 901.04. [2] Enter office that issued the document, by the two-letter code (WIPO Standard ST.3). [3] For Japanese patent documents, the indication of the year of the reign of the Emperor must precede the serial number of the patent document. [4] Kind of document by the appropriate symbols as indicated on the document under WIPO Standard ST.16 if possible. [5] Applicant is to place a check mark here if English language translation is attached.

ALL REFERENCES CONSIDERED EXCEPT WHERE LINED THROUGH. /M.S.C/

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT (Not for submission under 37 CFR 1.99)		
	Application Number	16692972
	Filing Date	2019-11-22
	First Named Inventor	Neal Solomon
	Art Unit	~~2699~~ 2697
	Examiner Name	M. Camargo
	Attorney Docket Number	5311.001US5

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

Please see 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98 to make the appropriate selection(s):

☐ That each item of information contained in the information disclosure statement was first cited in any communication from a foreign patent office in a counterpart foreign application not more than three months prior to the filing of the information disclosure statement. See 37 CFR 1.97(e)(1).

OR

☐ That no item of information contained in the information disclosure statement was cited in a communication from a foreign patent office in a counterpart foreign application, and, to the knowledge of the person signing the certification after making reasonable inquiry, no item of information contained in the information disclosure statement was known to any individual designated in 37 CFR 1.56(c) more than three months prior to the filing of the information disclosure statement. See 37 CFR 1.97(e)(2).

☐ See attached certification statement.

☐ The fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17 (p) has been submitted herewith.

☒ A certification statement is not submitted herewith.

SIGNATURE

A signature of the applicant or representative is required in accordance with CFR 1.33, 10.18. Please see CFR 1.4(d) for the form of the signature.

Signature	/Timothy E. Bianchi/	Date (YYYY-MM-DD)	2020-05-15
Name/Print	Timothy E. Bianchi	Registration Number	39,610

This collection of information is required by 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98. The information is required to obtain or retain a benefit by the public which is to file (and by the USPTO to process) an application. Confidentiality is governed by 35 U.S.C. 122 and 37 CFR 1.14. This collection is estimated to take 1 hour to complete, including gathering, preparing and submitting the completed application form to the USPTO. Time will vary depending upon the individual case. Any comments on the amount of time you require to complete this form and/or suggestions for reducing this burden, should be sent to the Chief Information Officer, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, U.S. Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450. DO NOT SEND FEES OR COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. **SEND TO: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.**

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Privacy Act Statement

The Privacy Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-579) requires that you be given certain information in connection with your submission of the attached form related to a patent application or patent. Accordingly, pursuant to the requirements of the Act, please be advised that: (1) the general authority for the collection of this information is 35 U.S.C. 2(b)(2); (2) furnishing of the information solicited is voluntary; and (3) the principal purpose for which the information is used by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is to process and/or examine your submission related to a patent application or patent. If you do not furnish the requested information, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office may not be able to process and/or examine your submission, which may result in termination of proceedings or abandonment of the application or expiration of the patent.

The information provided by you in this form will be subject to the following routine uses:

1. The information on this form will be treated confidentially to the extent allowed under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) and the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a). Records from this system of records may be disclosed to the Department of Justice to determine whether the Freedom of Information Act requires disclosure of these record s.

2. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, in the course of presenting evidence to a court, magistrate, or administrative tribunal, including disclosures to opposing counsel in the course of settlement negotiations.

3. A record in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a Member of Congress submitting a request involving an individual, to whom the record pertains, when the individual has requested assistance from the Member with respect to the subject matter of the record.

4. A record in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a contractor of the Agency having need for the information in order to perform a contract. Recipients of information shall be required to comply with the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(m).

5. A record related to an International Application filed under the Patent Cooperation Treaty in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization, pursuant to the Patent Cooperation Treaty.

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7. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the Administrator, General Services, or his/her designee, during an inspection of records conducted by GSA as part of that agency's responsibility to recommend improvements in records management practices and programs, under authority of 44 U.S.C. 2904 and 2906. Such disclosure shall be made in accordance with the GSA regulations governing inspection of records for this purpose, and any other relevant (i.e., GSA or Commerce) directive. Such disclosure shall not be used to make determinations about individuals.

8. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the public after either publication of the application pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 122(b) or issuance of a patent pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 151. Further, a record may be disclosed, subject to the limitations of 37 CFR 1.14, as a routine use, to the public if the record was filed in an application which became abandoned or in which the proceedings were terminated and which application is referenced by either a published application, an application open to public inspections or an issued patent.

9. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency, if the USPTO becomes aware of a violation or potential violation of law or regulation.

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Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
16/692,972	11/22/2019	Neal Solomon	5311.001US5	7825

21186 7590 10/27/2020

SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402

EXAMINER
CAMARGO, MARLY S.B.

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2697	

NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE
10/27/2020	ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

SLW@blackhillsip.com
uspto@slwip.com

Corrected ***Notice of Allowability***	**Application No.** 16/692,972	**Applicant(s)** Solomon, Neal	
	Examiner MARLY S CAMARGO	**Art Unit** 2697	**AIA (FITF) Status** No

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☑ This communication is responsive to attorney's secretary call about missing IDS of 5/15/2020.
   ☐ A declaration(s)/affidavit(s) under **37 CFR 1.130(b)** was/were filed on _____.

2. ☐ An election was made by the applicant in response to a restriction requirement set forth during the interview on _____; the restriction requirement and election have been incorporated into this action.

3. ☑ The allowed claim(s) is/are 2-31 . As a result of the allowed claim(s), you may be eligible to benefit from the **Patent Prosecution Highway** program at a participating intellectual property office for the corresponding application. For more information, please see **http://www.uspto.gov/patents/init_events/pph/index.jsp** or send an inquiry to **PPHfeedback@uspto.gov.**

4. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

   Certified copies:

   a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some *c) ☐ None of the:

   1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
   2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____ .
   3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

   * Certified copies not received: _____ .

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.
THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

5. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
   ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____ .

   Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).

6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☑ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO/SB/08), Paper No./Mail Date _____.
3. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material _____.
4. ☑ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No./Mail Date. _____.
5. ☐ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
6. ☐ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
7. ☐ Other _____.

/MARLY S CAMARGO/
Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697

Applicant-Initiated Interview Summary	**Application No.** 16/692,972	**Applicant(s)** Solomon, Neal	
	Examiner MARLY S CAMARGO	**Art Unit** 2697	**AIA (FITF) Status** No

All participants (applicant, applicants representative, PTO personnel):

(1) MARLY S.B.. CAMARGO. (3) _____.

(2) Mr. Bianchi secretary. (4) _____.

Date of Interview: 21 October 2020.

Type: ☑ Telephonic ☐ Video Conference
☐ Personal [copy given to: ☐ applicant ☐ applicant's representative]

Exhibit shown or demonstration conducted: ☐ Yes ☑ No.
If Yes, brief description: _____.

Issues Discussed ☐101 ☐112 ☐102 ☐103 ☑Others
(For each of the checked box(es) above, please describe below the issue and detailed description of the discussion)

Claim(s) discussed: n/a.

Identification of prior art discussed: n/a.

Substance of Interview
(For each issue discussed, provide a detailed description and indicate if agreement was reached. Some topics may include: identification or clarification of a reference or a portion thereof, claim interpretation, proposed amendments, arguments of any applied references etc...)

Mr. Bianchi (Applicant's representative) secretary called about that the ids filed on May 15, 2020 with the Examiner's signature was missing and that they did not receive it. The Examiner checked it up and the IDS was signed and annotated. They want to pay the fee but were waiting to get the copy of the annotated IDS. The Examiner informed that she will do a corrected Notice of Allowance and attach the IDS to it..

Applicant recordation instructions: The formal written reply to the last Office action must include the substance of the interview. (See MPEP section 713.04). If a reply to the last Office action has already been filed, applicant is given a non-extendable period of the longer of one month or thirty days from this interview date, or the mailing date of this interview summary form, whichever is later, to file a statement of the substance of the interview.

Examiner recordation instructions: Examiners must summarize the substance of any interview of record. A complete and proper recordation of the substance of an interview should include the items listed in MPEP 713.04 for complete and proper recordation including the identification of the general thrust of each argument or issue discussed, a general indication of any other pertinent matters discussed regarding patentability and the general results or outcome of the interview, to include an indication as to whether or not agreement was reached on the issues raised.

☐ Attachment

/MARLY S CAMARGO/ Primary Examiner , Art Unit 2697	

Summary of Record of Interview Requirements

Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP), Section 713.04, Substance of Interview Must be Made of Record
A complete written statement as to the substance of any face-to-face, video conference, or telephone interview with regard to an application must be made of record in the application whether or not an agreement with the examiner was reached at the interview.

Title 37 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1.133 Interviews
Paragraph (b)

In every instance where reconsideration is requested in view of an interview with an examiner, a complete written statement of the reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action must be filed by the applicant. An interview does not remove the necessity for reply to Office action as specified in §§ 1.111, 1.135. (35 U.S.C. 132)

37 CFR §1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.
All business with the Patent or Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.

The action of the Patent and Trademark Office cannot be based exclusively on the written record in the Office if that record is itself incomplete through the failure to record the substance of interviews.

It is the responsibility of the applicant or the attorney or agent to make the substance of an interview of record in the application file, unless the examiner indicates he or she will do so. It is the examiners responsibility to see that such a record is made and to correct material inaccuracies which bear directly on the question of patentability.

Examiners must complete an Interview Summary Form for each interview held where a matter of substance has been discussed during the interview by checking the appropriate boxes and filling in the blanks. Discussions regarding only procedural matters, directed solely to restriction requirements for which interview recordation is otherwise provided for in Section 812.01 of the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure, or pointing out typographical errors or unreadable script in Office actions or the like, are excluded from the interview recordation procedures below. Where the substance of an interview is completely recorded in an Examiners Amendment, no separate Interview Summary Record is required.

The Interview Summary Form shall be given an appropriate Paper No., placed in the right hand portion of the file, and listed on the "Contents" section of the file wrapper. In a personal interview, a duplicate of the Form is given to the applicant (or attorney or agent) at the conclusion of the interview. In the case of a telephone or video-conference interview, the copy is mailed to the applicants correspondence address either with or prior to the next official communication. If additional correspondence from the examiner is not likely before an allowance or if other circumstances dictate, the Form should be mailed promptly after the interview rather than with the next official communication.

The Form provides for recordation of the following information:
- Application Number (Series Code and Serial Number)
- Name of applicant
- Name of examiner
- Date of interview
- Type of interview (telephonic, video-conference, or personal)
- Name of participant(s) (applicant, attorney or agent, examiner, other PTO personnel, etc.)
- An indication whether or not an exhibit was shown or a demonstration conducted
- An identification of the specific prior art discussed
- An indication whether an agreement was reached and if so, a description of the general nature of the agreement (may be by attachment of a copy of amendments or claims agreed as being allowable). Note: Agreement as to allowability is tentative and does not restrict further action by the examiner to the contrary.
- The signature of the examiner who conducted the interview (if Form is not an attachment to a signed Office action)

It is desirable that the examiner orally remind the applicant of his or her obligation to record the substance of the interview of each case. It should be noted, however, that the Interview Summary Form will not normally be considered a complete and proper recordation of the interview unless it includes, or is supplemented by the applicant or the examiner to include, all of the applicable items required below concerning the substance of the interview.

A complete and proper recordation of the substance of any interview should include at least the following applicable items:
1) A brief description of the nature of any exhibit shown or any demonstration conducted,-
2) an identification of the claims discussed,
3) an identification of the specific prior art discussed,
4) an identification of the principal proposed amendments of a substantive nature discussed, unless these are already described on the Interview Summary Form completed by the Examiner,
5) a brief identification of the general thrust of the principal arguments presented to the examiner,
(The identification of arguments need not be lengthy or elaborate. A verbatim or highly detailed description of the arguments is not required. The identification of the arguments is sufficient if the general nature or thrust of the principal arguments made to the examiner can be understood in the context of the application file. Of course, the applicant may desire to emphasize and fully describe those arguments which he or she feels were or might be persuasive to the examiner.)
6) a general indication of any other pertinent matters discussed, and
7) if appropriate, the general results or outcome of the interview unless already described in the Interview Summary Form completed by the examiner.

Examiners are expected to carefully review the applicants record of the substance of an interview. If the record is not complete and accurate, the examiner will give the applicant an extendable one month time period to correct the record.

Examiner to Check for Accuracy

If the claims are allowable for other reasons of record, the examiner should send a letter setting forth the examiners version of the statement attributed to him or her. If the record is complete and accurate, the examiner should place the indication, Interview Record OK on the paper recording the substance of the interview along with the date and the examiners initials.

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
16/692,972	11/22/2019	Neal Solomon	5311.001US5	7825

7590 10/30/2020

SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402

EXAMINER	
CAMARGO, MARLY S.B.	

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2697	

NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE
10/30/2020	ELECTRONIC

NOTICE OF NON-COMPLIANT INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

An Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed 10/23/2020 in the above-identified application fails to meet the requirements of 37 CFR 1.97(d) for the reason(s) specified below. Accordingly, the IDS will be placed in the file, but the information referred to therein has not been considered.

The IDS is not compliant with 37 CFR 1.97(d) because:

☒ The IDS lacks a statement as specified in 37 CFR 1.97(e).

☐ The IDS lacks the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(p).

☐ The IDS was filed after the issue fee was paid. Applicant may wish to consider filing a petition to withdraw the application from issue under 37 CFR 1.313(c) to have the IDS considered. See MPEP 1308.

/TC/
571-272-4200 or 1-888-786-0101
FOR Application Assistance Unit
Office of Data Management

FORM PTOM327-B (Rev. 02/08)

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Inventor(s): Neal Solomon
Title: DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER

Docket No.:	5311.001US5	Serial No.:	16/692,972
Filed:	November 22, 2019	Due Date:	December 30, 2020
Examiner:	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO	Group Art Unit:	2697
Customer No.:	21186	Confirmation No.:	7825

Notice of Allowance Date: September 30, 2020

Mail Stop Issue Fee
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

We are transmitting herewith the following:

X Issue Fee Transmittal (Form PTOL-85).
X Request to Apply Previously Paid Issue Fee (1 pg.)
X Communication Re: Fee Address (1 page).

Please charge any additional required fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743.

SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A. By /Timothy E. Bianchi/
Customer No.: 21186 Timothy E. Bianchi
TEB:CMG:kap Reg. No. 39,610

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8: The undersigned hereby certifies that this correspondence is being filed using the USPTO's electronic filing system EFS-Web, and is addressed to: Mail Stop Issue Fee, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on this 26th day of October, 2020.

Kimberlie Pates /Kimberlie Pates/
Name Signature

PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL

Complete and send this form, together with applicable fee(s), by mail or fax, or via EFS-Web.

By mail, send to: Mail Stop ISSUE FEE
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

By fax, send to: (571)-273-2885

INSTRUCTIONS: This form should be used for transmitting the ISSUE FEE and PUBLICATION FEE (if required). Blocks 1 through 5 should be completed where appropriate. All further correspondence including the Patent, advance orders and notification of maintenance fees will be mailed to the current correspondence address as indicated unless corrected below or directed otherwise in Block 1, by (a) specifying a new correspondence address; and/or (b) indicating a separate "FEE ADDRESS" for maintenance fee notifications.

CURRENT CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS (Note: Use Block 1 for any change of address)

21186 7590 09/30/2020
SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402

Note: A certificate of mailing can only be used for domestic mailings of the Fee(s) Transmittal. This certificate cannot be used for any other accompanying papers. Each additional paper, such as an assignment or formal drawing, must have its own certificate of mailing or transmission.

Certificate of Mailing or Transmission

I hereby certify that this Fee(s) Transmittal is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage for first class mail in an envelope addressed to the Mail Stop ISSUE FEE address above, or being transmitted to the USPTO via EFS-Web or by facsimile to (571) 273-2885, on the date below.

Kimberlie Pates	(Typed or printed name)
/Kimberlie Pates/	(Signature)
October 26, 2020	(Date)

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
16/692,972	11/22/2019	Neal Solomon	5311.001US5	7825

TITLE OF INVENTION: DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER

APPLN. TYPE	ENTITY STATUS	ISSUE FEE DUE	PUBLICATION FEE DUE	PREV. PAID ISSUE FEE	TOTAL FEE(S) DUE	DATE DUE
nonprovisional	SMALL	$500	$0.00	$500.00	$0	12/30/2020

EXAMINER	ART UNIT	CLASS-SUBCLASS
CAMARGO, MARLY S.B.	2697	348-241000

1. Change of correspondence address or indication of "Fee Address" (37 CFR 1.363).

☐ Change of correspondence address (or Change of Correspondence Address form PTO/SB/122) attached.

☒ "Fee Address" indication (or "Fee Address" Indication form PTO/SB/47; Rev 03-09 or more recent) attached. **Use of a Customer Number is required.**

2. For printing on the patent front page, list
(1) The names of up to 3 registered patent attorneys or agents OR, alternatively,
(2) The name of a single firm (having as a member a registered attorney or agent) and the names of up to 2 registered patent attorneys or agents. If no name is listed, no name will be printed.

1 Schwegman Lundberg
2 & Woessner, P.A.
3

3. ASSIGNEE NAME AND RESIDENCE DATA TO BE PRINTED ON THE PATENT (print or type)

PLEASE NOTE: Unless an assignee is identified below, no assignee data will appear on the patent. If an assignee is identified below, the document must have been previously recorded, or filed for recordation, as set forth in 37 CFR 3.11 and 37 CFR 3.81(a). Completion of this form is NOT a substitute for filing an assignment.

(A) NAME OF ASSIGNEE: Optimum Imaging Technologies LLC

(B) RESIDENCE: (CITY and STATE OR COUNTRY): Austin, Texas

Please check the appropriate assignee category or categories (will not be printed on the patent) : ☐ Individual ☒ Corporation or other private group entity ☐ Government

4a. Fees submitted: ☒ Issue Fee ☐ Publication Fee (if required) ☐ Advance Order - # of Copies _____

4b. Method of Payment: *(Please first reapply any previously paid fee shown above)*

☒ Electronic Payment via EFS-Web ☐ Enclosed check ☐ Non-electronic payment by credit card (Attach form PTO-2038)

☒ The Director is hereby authorized to charge the required fee(s), any deficiency, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 190743

5. **Change in Entity Status** (from status indicated above)

☐ Applicant certifying micro entity status. See 37 CFR 1.29

☐ Applicant asserting small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27

☐ Applicant changing to regular undiscounted fee status.

NOTE: Absent a valid certification of Micro Entity Status (see forms PTO/SB/15A and 15B), issue fee payment in the micro entity amount will not be accepted at the risk of application abandonment.
NOTE: If the application was previously under micro entity status, checking this box will be taken to be a notification of loss of entitlement to micro entity status.
NOTE: Checking this box will be taken to be a notification of loss of entitlement to small or micro entity status, as applicable.

NOTE: This form must be signed in accordance with 37 CFR 1.31 and 1.33. See 37 CFR 1.4 for signature requirements and certifications.

Authorized Signature /Timothy E. Bianchi/ Date Nov. 17, 2020

Typed or printed name Timothy E. Bianchi Registration No. 39,610

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Inventor(s):	Neal Solomon	Examiner: MARLY S.B. CAMARGO	
Serial No.:	16/692,972	Group Art Unit: 2697	
Filed:	November 22, 2019	Docket No.: 5311.001US5	
Customer No.:	21186	Confirmation No.: 7825	
Title:	DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER		

REQUEST TO APPLY PREVIOUSLY PAID ISSUE FEE

Mail Stop Issue Fee
Commissioner for Patents
P.O.Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

An issue fee for the above-identified application was previously paid on April 24, 2020. A petition under 37 CFR 1.313(c)(2) to withdraw the above-identified application from issue after payment of the issue fee was subsequently filed on May 15, 2020. Applicant received a decision, dated, granting the petition to withdraw.

Applicant respectfully requests that the above-identified previously-paid issue fee be applied toward the fee required by the new Notice of Allowance dated September 30, 2020.

This request is being submitted together with the new Issue Fee Transmittal Form PTOL-85, as well as a copy of the above-identified decision granting the petition to withdraw. Please charge any additional required fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743. Please direct any inquiries to the undersigned attorney at (612) 373-6912.

Respectfully submitted,

SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. Box 2938
Minneapolis, MN 55402
(612) 373-6912

Date Nov. 17, 2020

By /Timothy E. Bianchi/
Timothy E. Bianchi
Reg. No. 39,610

TEB:CMG:kap

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Inventor(s):	Neal Solomon	Examiner:	MARLY S.B. CAMARGO
Serial No.:	16/692,972	Group Art Unit:	2697
Filed:	November 22, 2019	Docket No.:	5311.001US5
Customer No.:	21186	Confirmation No.:	7825
Title:	DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER		

COMMUNICATION RE: FEE ADDRESS

Mail Stop Issue Fee
Commissioner for Patents
P.O.Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

In response to the Notice of Allowance and Issue Fee Due, please record the Fee Address under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.363 as the following:

Customer Number 21186

Please direct any inquiries to the undersigned attorney at (612) 373-6912.

Respectfully submitted,

SCHWEGMAN LUNDBERG & WOESSNER, P.A.
P.O. Box 2938
Minneapolis, MN 55402
(612) 373-6912

Date Nov. 17, 2020

By /Timothy E. Bianchi/
Timothy E. Bianchi
Reg. No. 39,610

TEB:CMG:kap

Electronic Acknowledgement Receipt

EFS ID:	41147063
Application Number:	16692972
International Application Number:	
Confirmation Number:	7825
Title of Invention:	DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER
First Named Inventor/Applicant Name:	Neal Solomon
Customer Number:	21186
Filer:	James D. Hallenbeck/Kimberlie Pates
Filer Authorized By:	James D. Hallenbeck
Attorney Docket Number:	5311.001US5
Receipt Date:	17-NOV-2020
Filing Date:	22-NOV-2019
Time Stamp:	15:36:48
Application Type:	Utility under 35 USC 111(a)

Payment information:

Submitted with Payment	no

File Listing:

Document Number	Document Description	File Name	File Size(Bytes)/ Message Digest	Multi Part /.zip	Pages (if appl.)
1		5311001US5_IFEE.pdf	287537 ad865aa3c23cae5055861350479efff4d20ca46d	yes	4

	Multipart Description/PDF files in .zip description		
	Document Description	**Start**	**End**
	Miscellaneous Incoming Letter	4	4
	Miscellaneous Incoming Letter	3	3
	Issue Fee Payment (PTO-85B)	2	2
	Transmittal Letter	1	1
Warnings:			
Information:			
	Total Files Size (in bytes):	287537	

This Acknowledgement Receipt evidences receipt on the noted date by the USPTO of the indicated documents, characterized by the applicant, and including page counts, where applicable. It serves as evidence of receipt similar to a Post Card, as described in MPEP 503.

New Applications Under 35 U.S.C. 111
If a new application is being filed and the application includes the necessary components for a filing date (see 37 CFR 1.53(b)-(d) and MPEP 506), a Filing Receipt (37 CFR 1.54) will be issued in due course and the date shown on this Acknowledgement Receipt will establish the filing date of the application.
National Stage of an International Application under 35 U.S.C. 371
If a timely submission to enter the national stage of an international application is compliant with the conditions of 35 U.S.C. 371 and other applicable requirements a Form PCT/DO/EO/903 indicating acceptance of the application as a national stage submission under 35 U.S.C. 371 will be issued in addition to the Filing Receipt, in due course.
New International Application Filed with the USPTO as a Receiving Office
If a new international application is being filed and the international application includes the necessary components for an international filing date (see PCT Article 11 and MPEP 1810), a Notification of the International Application Number and of the International Filing Date (Form PCT/RO/105) will be issued in due course, subject to prescriptions concerning national security, and the date shown on this Acknowledgement Receipt will establish the international filing date of the application.

Best Available Copy

PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL

Complete and send this form, together with applicable fee(s), by mail or fax, or via EFS-Web.

OPAP
NOV 17 2020

By mail, send to: Mail Stop ISSUE FEE
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

By fax, send to: (571)-273-2885

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Certificate of Mailing or Transmission

I hereby certify that this Fee(s) Transmittal is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage for first class mail in an envelope addressed to the Mail Stop ISSUE FEE address above, or being transmitted to the USPTO via EFS-Web or by facsimile to (571) 273-2885, on the date below.

Kimberlie Pates	(Typed or printed name)
/Kimberlie Pates/	(Signature)
October 26, 2020	(Date)

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
16/692,972	11/22/2019	Neal Solomon	5311.001US5	7825

TITLE OF INVENTION: DIGITAL CAMERA WITH WIRELESS IMAGE TRANSFER

APPLN. TYPE	ENTITY STATUS	ISSUE FEE DUE	PUBLICATION FEE DUE	PREV. PAID ISSUE FEE	TOTAL FEE(S) DUE	DATE DUE
nonprovisional	SMALL	$500	$0.00	$500.00	$0	12/30/2020

EXAMINER	ART UNIT	CLASS-SUBCLASS
CAMARGO, MARLY S.B.	2697	348-241000

1. Change of correspondence address or indication of "Fee Address" (37 CFR 1.363).

☐ Change of correspondence address (or Change of Correspondence Address form PTO/SB/122) attached.

☒ "Fee Address" indication (or "Fee Address" Indication form PTO/SB/47; Rev 03-09 or more recent) attached. **Use of a Customer Number is required.**

2. For printing on the patent front page, list
(1) The names of up to 3 registered patent attorneys or agents OR, alternatively,
(2) The name of a single firm (having as a member a registered attorney or agent) and the names of up to 2 registered patent attorneys or agents. If no name is listed, no name will be printed.

1 Schwegman Lundberg
2 & Woessner, P.A.
3

3. ASSIGNEE NAME AND RESIDENCE DATA TO BE PRINTED ON THE PATENT (print or type)

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(A) NAME OF ASSIGNEE: Optimum Imaging Technologies LLC

(B) RESIDENCE: (CITY and STATE OR COUNTRY): Austin, Texas

Please check the appropriate assignee category or categories (will not be printed on the patent) : ☐ Individual ☒ Corporation or other private group entity ☐ Government

4a. Fees submitted: ☒ Issue Fee ☐ Publication Fee (if required) ☐ Advance Order - # of Copies _____

4b. Method of Payment: *(Please first reapply any previously paid fee shown above)*

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☒ The Director is hereby authorized to charge the required fee(s), any deficiency, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 190743

5. **Change in Entity Status** (from status indicated above)

☐ Applicant certifying micro entity status. See 37 CFR 1.29

☐ Applicant asserting small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27

☐ Applicant changing to regular undiscounted fee status.

NOTE: Absent a valid certification of Micro Entity Status (see forms PTO/SB/15A and 15B), issue fee payment in the micro entity amount will not be accepted at the risk of application abandonment.
NOTE: If the application was previously under micro entity status, checking this box will be taken to be a notification of loss of entitlement to micro entity status.
NOTE: Checking this box will be taken to be a notification of loss of entitlement to small or micro entity status, as applicable.

NOTE: This form must be signed in accordance with 37 CFR 1.31 and 1.33. See 37 CFR 1.4 for signature requirements and certifications.

Authorized Signature /Timothy E. Bianchi/ Date Nov. 17, 2020

Typed or printed name Timothy E. Bianchi Registration No. 39,610

PTOL-85 Part B (08-18) Approved for use through 01/31/2020 OMB 0651-0033 U.S. Patent and Trademark Office: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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ISSUE NOTIFICATION

The projected patent number and issue date are specified above.

Determination of Patent Term Adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154 (b)
(application filed on or after May 29, 2000)

The Patent Term Adjustment is 0 day(s). Any patent to issue from the above-identified application will include an indication of the adjustment on the front page.

If a Continued Prosecution Application (CPA) was filed in the above-identified application, the filing date that determines Patent Term Adjustment is the filing date of the most recent CPA.

Applicant will be able to obtain more detailed information by accessing the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) WEB site (http://pair.uspto.gov).

Any questions regarding the Patent Term Extension or Adjustment determination should be directed to the Office of Patent Legal Administration at (571)-272-7702. Questions relating to issue and publication fee payments should be directed to the Application Assistance Unit (AAU) of the Office of Data Management (ODM) at (571)-272-4200.

APPLICANT(s) (Please see PAIR WEB site http://pair.uspto.gov for additional applicants):

Neal Solomon, Oakland, CA;
Optimum Imaging Technologies LLC, Austin, TX;

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IR103 (Rev. 10/09)