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(54) Title: A COMPUTER GRAPHICS METHOD FOR RENDERING THREE DIMENSIONAL SCENES

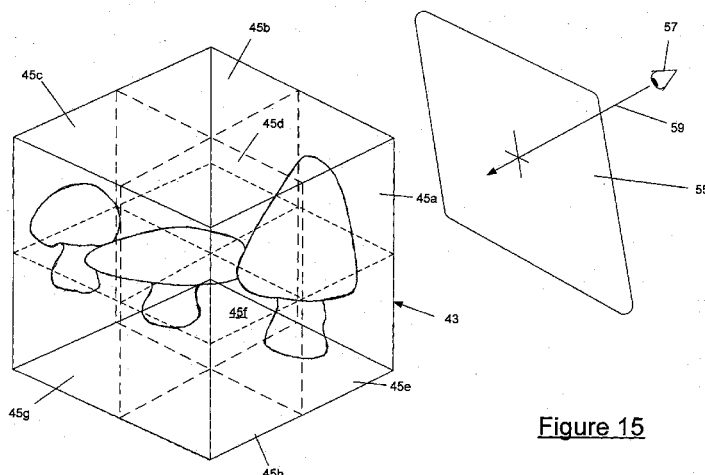


Figure 15

(57) Abstract: A computer graphics method is provided for implementation upon an electronic processor based system such as a computer, cellular phone, games console or other device. The method involves rendering a three dimensional scene i.e. by activating pixels of an electronic display device of the system, using a perspective projection for some portions of the scene and an orthogonal projection for others. Perspective projection is used in respect of those portions of the scene for which a noticeable difference would occur between rendering in perspective projection and rendering with an orthogonal projection. A far less computationally expensive orthogonal projection is used for rendering other portions of the scene which meet a predetermined condition. The method results in a rendered scene displayed by pixels of the display device that appears overall to have been realistically rendered using a perspective transformation. However, since portions of the rendered scene have been rendered using an orthogonal projection, the method is computationally less expensive than rendering using only perspective projection.



A COMPUTER GRAPHICS METHOD FOR RENDERING THREE DIMENSIONAL SCENES

TECHNICAL FIELD

- 5 The present invention concerns a computer graphics method for rendering three dimensional scenes.

BACKGROUND ART

- 10 Any references to methods, apparatus or documents of the prior art are not to be taken as constituting any evidence or admission that they formed, or form part of the common general knowledge in any country in the world.

- 15 3D computer graphics technology is used to convert data describing a three dimensional scene into a two-dimensional image for viewing on an electronic display screen. It will be understood that the term "scene" as used herein, including throughout the claims, is to be understood in a broad sense as including both very complex scenes but also those that comprise only a few or a single object or indeed at its very simplest merely a collection of one or
20 more visible points.

- One area, though by no means the only area, where intensive computer graphics development has occurred over the last two decades has been that of computer and video gaming.

- 25 The development and marketing of computer games is now a very significant proportion of the global entertainment industry. For example, in 2010 the video game *Call of Duty: Black Ops* enjoyed over US\$650 million worth of sales in its first five days of retailing.

- 30 In order to afford game players with an ever more realistic gaming experience, much development has been poured into increasing the speed and realism with which game scenes can be rendered.

During the rendering of a game scene the data which represents the scene, e.g. the positional data associated with each object in the scene, must be processed by the processors of the gaming machine to project the data from the 3D space of the scene to 2D data suitable for display by the machines display device. This transformation must take into account the position and viewing angle of the player relative to the scene. Since humans perceive perspective foreshortening in their normal visual system, the computer graphics rendering methods typically employ perspective projections.

10

Perspective projections are computationally intensive because they involve trigonometric calculations which are typically applied with operations including matrix and vector multiplications. Consequently, as the amount of detail, e.g. positional data, that is recorded in scene increases, the number of lengthy calculations that must be employed to render the scene also increases. These additional calculations may require that the game be played at a reduced frame rate.

Therefore, it will be realized that there is a tradeoff between increasing scene realism and maintaining frame rate. One widely adopted approach to addressing this problem has been to render scenes using a plurality of flat polygons. Polygon meshes are used to model the objects of the scene that it is desired to render. The corners of the polygons are then transformed from 3D to 2D and displayed to the user. In order to accommodate both increased scene detail and high frame rates manufactures such as ATI and NVIDIA develop and market dedicated graphics processor cards for incorporation into gaming machines.

However, there are many limitations associated with polygon systems as they are presently implement. For example, because polygons have linear boundaries they cannot be used to represent curved objects easily. Furthermore, even with the use of dedicated graphics processors, the human eye is still sensitive to curved objects being approximated with the straight

30

edges of polygons. Consequently, these polygon based systems are both computationally intensive to implement and also unsatisfying to discerning game players.

- 5 It would be advantageous if a computer graphics method for displaying three dimensional scenes were provided that overcame the problems of the prior art discussed above or which is at least a useful alternative to those methods that have hitherto been known.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer graphics method implemented upon an electronic processor based system having at least one processor arranged to control an electronic display device, said method comprising the steps of operating the processor to:

- 15 extract data defining a three-dimensional scene from a data structure;
render extracted data corresponding to portions of the scene satisfying a predetermined condition according to an orthogonal projection upon the electronic display device; and
render extracted data corresponding to other portions of the scene
20 according to a perspective projection upon the electronic display device;
wherein the rendered scene displayed upon said display device appears to have been entirely rendered according to the perspective projection, whereby a count of calculations performed by the electronic processor for rendering the scene is reduced relative to rendering using only
25 the perspective projection.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer graphics method to be implemented by an electronic processor based system, said method comprising:

- 30 processing a data structure containing data for a three-dimensional (3D) scene to be represented by an electronic display;
rendering portions of the scene satisfy a predetermined condition with an orthogonal projection; and

otherwise rendering the scene using a perspective projection;
whereby the number of calculations performed by the electronic processor for rendering the scene are reduced.

- 5 In a preferred embodiment the method includes testing if portions of the scene satisfy the predetermined condition taking into account dimensions of the portions, focal length of the perspective projection and resolution of said display.
- 10 Preferably the method includes:
projecting 3D points associated with the portions of the scene satisfying the predetermined condition from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and
determining projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern.
- 15 In a preferred embodiment the method includes recursively updating the 2D form pattern and determining projections of lower level sub-portions with reference to the updated form pattern.
- 20 The step of recursively updating the 2D form pattern will preferably include bit shifting values representing coordinates of vertices of the form pattern.

Alternatively, the step of recursively updating the 2D form pattern may include applying multiply-and-add (MAD) or fused multiply-and-add (FMAD)
25 operations to values representing coordinates of vertices of the form pattern. For example the step may include multiplying by 0.5 in order to halve values representing coordinates of vertices of the form pattern.

The step of recursively updating the 2D form pattern may include calculating
30 an offset from a minimum value of a bounding box about a form pattern of previous iteration of the recursion.

In a preferred embodiment the data structure comprises an Octree and the step of processing the data structure includes traversing the Octree to extract data representing the scene therefrom.

- 5 Where the data structure comprises an Octree said portions correspond to parent and child octants associated with the Octree.

10 Preferably the method involves determining a sequence for processing nodes of the Octree in front to back order relative to a predetermined viewing position.

Furthermore, the method may include testing if bounds of an octant intersect a view frustum.

- 15 Preferably the method includes performing a mask test prior to writing to said display.

The method may also include performing an occlusion test prior to writing to said display.

20 According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer graphics system including a processor in communication with a memory device storing a data structure for a three dimensional (3D) scene and arranged to control a display device, the processor being arranged to:

- 25 process the data structure to retrieve data defining said scene;
render portions of the scene satisfying a predetermined condition with an orthogonal projection; and

otherwise render the scene upon the display device using a perspective projection;

- 30 whereby the number of calculations performed by the electronic processor for rendering the scene are reduced by use of the orthogonal projection relative to rendering using only the perspective projection.

Preferably the processor of the computer graphics system is further arranged to:

- project 3D points associated with the portions of the scene satisfying the predetermined condition from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and
- 5 determine projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern.

In a preferred embodiment, the processor of the computer graphics system is further arranged to test if portions of the scene satisfy the predetermined
10 condition taking into account dimensions of the portions, focal length of the perspective projection and resolution of the display.

The processor of the computer graphics system is preferably further arranged to project 3D points associated with the portions of the scene satisfying the
15 predetermined condition from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and
determine projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern without recourse to a 3D to 2D projection.

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided a
20 computer graphics software product comprising a computer readable media bearing tangible instructions for execution by a processor for carrying out the previously described method.

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided a
25 computer graphics method to be implemented by an electronic processor based system for rendering a portion of a scene with an orthogonal projection, the method including the steps of:

- projecting 3D points associated with a bounding box about the portion from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and
- 30 determining projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern.

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer graphics software product comprising a computer readable media bearing tangible instructions for execution by a processor for carrying out the previously described method.

5

According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer graphics system including a processor in communication with a memory device storing a data structure for a three dimensional (3D) scene and arranged to control a display device, the processor being arranged to:

- 10 process the data structure to retrieve data defining said scene;
 project 3D points associated with a bounding box about a portion of the scene from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and
 produce projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern.

15

According to further aspect of the present invention there is provided
A computer graphics method for producing an image so that it appears to
have been produced with a first projection, said method being performed with
a computer system including at least one processor arranged to control pixels
20 of an electronic display device, said method including:

- generating portions of the image on said display with the first
projection; and
 while a second projection approximates the first projection generating
other portions of the image on said display with the second projection,
25 wherein the second projection is less computationally intensive than
the first projection.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided a
computer graphics method to be implemented by an electronic processor
30 based system, said method comprising:

- processing a data structure containing data for a three-dimensional
(3D) scene to be represented by an electronic display;

rendering portions of the scene satisfy a predetermined condition with an orthogonal projection; and

otherwise rendering the scene using a perspective projection;
whereby the number of calculations performed by the electronic processor for
5 rendering the scene are reduced.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred features, embodiments and variations of the invention may be discerned from the following Detailed Description which provides sufficient
10 information for those skilled in the art to perform the invention. The Detailed Description is not to be regarded as limiting the scope of the preceding Summary of the Invention in any way. The Detailed Description will make reference to a number of drawings as follows:

15 Figure 1. Illustrates a computer system for implementing a method according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2 Illustrates objects with perspective.

Figure 3 Is a wireframe cube comprising a simple scene.

Figure 4 Illustrates the perspective projection of the wireframe cube.

20 Figure 5 Is a plan view of the perspective projection of the wireframe cube.

Figure 6 Illustrates a display screen comprising a rectangular array of pixels.

Figure 7 Illustrates objects within a cube with perspective.

25 Figure 8 Illustrates the perspective projection of Figure 6 superimposed on the rectangular array of pixels of Figure 7.

Figure 9 Illustrates the rendering of the perspective projection of the cube by the screen of Figure 7.

30 Figure 10 Is a diagram comparing orthogonal (i.e. parallel) projection with perspective projection of the cube relative to a pixel display screen.

Figure 11 Illustrates the perspective projection of the cube of Figure 10 superimposed on the pixel display screen.

- Figure 12 Illustrates the orthogonal projection of the cube of Figure 10 superimposed on the pixel display screen.
- Figure 13 Illustrates the rendering of the perspective projection of the cube of Figure 10 by the pixel display screen.
- 5 Figure 14 Illustrates the rendering of the orthogonal projection of the cube of Figure 10 by the pixel display screen.
- Figure 15 Illustrates high level Octree cubes of an Octree cube structure defining an exemplary scene.
- Figure 16 Illustrates a slice through the Octree cube structure of Figure 15
- 10 illustrating lower level generations of child octants.
- Figure 17 Depicts a simple three dimensional (3D) scene for rendering according to an embodiment of the present invention.
- Figure 18 Depicts a subdivided Octree cube corresponding to the scene of Figure 17.
- 15 Figure 19 Is a node diagram of an Octree data structure corresponding to the Octree cube of Figure 18.
- Figure 20 Illustrates the 3D to 2D orthogonal projection of the highest level cube of the Octree cube of Figure 18.
- Figure 21 Illustrates the orthogonal projection of the cube of Figure 18.
- 20 Figure 22 Is a diagram used to illustrate how the projection of child cubes of the Octant can be derived from the vertices defining the projection of the higher level cube using 2D to 2D manipulations without recourse to 3D to 2D projections.
- Figure 23 Depicts the rendering of the scene of Figure 17.
- 25 Figure 24 illustrates an alternative method for calculating vertices of the 2D projection of a cube in orthogonal mode.
- Figure 25 Illustrates how vertices of the 2D projection of a cube may be calculated as offsets from an origin of the display screen.
- Figures 26 to 28 Comprise a flowchart of a method according to a
- 30 preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to Figure 1, there is shown a block diagram of an exemplary computer system 1 for carrying out a method according to an embodiment of the invention that will be described.

5

It will be understood that the computer system 1 comprises an exemplary electronic processor based system for carrying out the method. However, the method may also be readily performed with other electronic processor based systems. Such systems may include, without limitation, gaming consoles, tablet, laptop and netbook computational devices, cellular smart phones and medical imaging equipment.

10

The computer system 1 includes a main board 3 which includes circuitry for powering and interfacing to at least one onboard processor 5. The at least one onboard processor may comprise two or more discrete processors or processors with multiple processing cores.

15

A non-limiting example of a microprocessor, that is presently popular in personal computers used for playing computer games, is one of the i5 or i7 families of processors manufactured by Intel Corp.

20

The main board 3 acts as an interface between microprocessor 5 and secondary memory 7. The secondary memory 7 may comprise one or more optical or magnetic, or solid state, drives. The secondary memory 9 stores instructions for an operating system 9. The main board 3 also communicates with random access memory 11 and read only memory 13. The ROM 13 typically stores instructions for a Basic Input Output System (BIOS) which the microprocessor 5 accesses upon start up and which preps the microprocessor 5 for loading of the operating system 9.

25

30

The main board 3 also interfaces with a graphics processor unit 15. It will be understood that in some systems the graphics processor unit 15 is integrated into the main board 3.

The main board 3 will typically include a communications adapter, for example a LAN adaptor or a modem, that places the computer system 1 in data communication with a computer network such as the internet.

5

A user of the computer system 1 interfaces with it by means of keyboard 19, mouse 21 and display 17.

The user of system 1 may operate the operating system 9 to load a computer graphics related software product 29. The computer graphics related software product 29 is provided as tangible instructions borne upon a computer readable media such as optical disk 27. Alternatively it might also be downloaded via port 23.

15 The computer graphics related software product 29 includes data structures that store data defining various scenes of, for example, a game.

The software product 29 also includes instructions for the microprocessor 5 and possibly for the GPU 15 to manipulate the scene data in response to inputs received from the user via operator controls such as keyboard 19 and mouse 21.

It will be realised that there are many types of computer data structure that may be used to store scene data. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention an Octree data structure is used however while such a structure is preferred other types of data structure, for example binary-space partitioning trees (BSP-trees) might also be used.

Whatever type of data structure is used to store the positional data of the scene it will be necessary to transform that data from 3D to 2D for display upon display device 17.

30

One of the major differences between 3d and 2d graphics is the concept of perspective and size reduction due to distance from the viewpoint. In Figure 2, the objects get smaller according to their distance from the viewpoint. Calculating this distance adds significantly more work to the many
5 3d to 2d calculations associated with 3d graphics.

Referring now to Figure 3, there is depicted a wireframe cube 31 for rendering on the display 17 of the computer system 1. The display may be of any suitable type. For example Cathode Ray Tube (CRT), LCD (liquid crystal
10 display) or plasma displays are non-limiting examples of the display technology that might be used by display 17. The vertices and edge data for the cube 31 are stored in a suitable data structure of the computer system as previously described.

15 Figure 4 represents the viewing on a display screen 35 of a 2D, single point, projection of the cube 31, shown in side view.

A number of rays from the vertices of the cube 31 to the camera point 33 are shown passing through the screen 35 to represent the transformation of the
20 3D vertices and edge model of the cube onto the 2D viewing surface comprising screen 35. This transformation, or as it may also be called "projection" is carried out using standard 3D to 2D perspective projections as are well known in the field of computer graphics and explained, for example, in *Computer Graphics Principles and Practice* by Foley, van Dam, Feiner &
25 Hughes 2nd Edition published 1990 by Addison-Wesley (ISBN 0-201-12110-7), the disclosure of which is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.

As previously remarked, perspective transformations are computationally intensive because they involve trigonometric calculations.
30

Figure 5 depicts a view 37 of the cube 31 as seen from the camera point 33. Effectively this is a single point 2D perspective projection of the cube 31 onto

the viewing plane 35. To visually make the cube appear 3d, the back face of the cube is shown as being significantly smaller than the front face.

It will be noticed that the projections of the rear and front faces of the projection 37 of the cube 31 are spaced a distance T apart.

Figure 7 depicts objects present inside the cube. The objects show a difference in size as they are positioned in the front and back of the cube.

10 In the context of a computer graphics system such as system 1 of Figure 1, the screen 35 will typically comprise a display monitor or other display device, e.g. display 17 of Figure 1, including a grid of pixels 39 as represented in Figure 6.

15 Figure 8 is an enlarged view of the projection 37 of the cube 31 superimposed on the pixel grid 39. The pixels making up the grid have a notional width and height p as indicated.

In order to represent the projection 37 by means of pixels of the grid 39 those pixels over which lines of the projection 37 fall are set to a contrasting color (i.e. black, as shown in the present example). The resulting pixel image is shown in Figure 9.

It will be noted that since the distance T of the rear and front faces of the projection 37 of the cube 31 was greater than the width of three adjacent pixels, the corresponding pixel image of Figure 9 allows those rear and front faces to be distinguished from each other.

Figure 10 is a somewhat similar diagram to that of Figure 4 except that it represents the projection of a smaller 3D cube 41 (shown in plan view) onto display screen 35 for viewing from camera point 33. Since the focal length that has been used is considerably longer than for Figure 4 there is a discontinuity in linear scale indicated by the space 43. In Figure 10 the

parallel rays 45a, 45b represent an orthogonal projection of the cube 41 onto display screen 35 whereas the pairs of converging rays 47a, 47b represent a perspective projection.

- 5 It will be noted that due to the smaller size of the cube 41 and the longer focal length used in the perspective projection, the rays 45a and 45b of the orthogonal projection and the respective paired rays 47a and 47b that are associated with the perspective projection diverge by a distance that is less than a pixel width p at the display screen 35.

10

Figure 11 is a view of the perspective projection of the cube 41 in respect of camera point 33 superimposed over the pixel grid 39 of display screen 35.

- 15 Similarly, Figure 12 is a view of the orthogonal projection of the cube 41 in respect of camera point 33 superimposed over the pixel grid 39 of display screen 35.

- It will be noted that the perspective projection of Figure 11 overlays the same pixels as the orthogonal projection of Figure 12. Consequently, the actual image that is generated on the pixel grid 39 of display screen 35, and which is seen by a user of the computer system, for example a game player, is identical for each projection as shown in Figure 13 and 14. This projection is considerably smaller than that shown within Figure 9. Because of its small size, the difference between the back face and the front face is not observable and so in this diagram the cube appears to be a square.
- 20
- 25

If an object was present in this cube it would not appear to be smaller or larger depending on whether it was in the front or the back of the cube.

- 30 Technically there should always be a difference between the front and back face, but as computer monitors are grids of pixels, such a difference is too small to exist when that difference is below one pixel in size. Normally 3d calculations use perspective, but as there is no size difference between the

front and back face, different calculations are used that do not take perspective into account.

5 While the above demonstration has been made using a single point projection, the inventor has found that corresponding results apply for two and three point projections as well.

10 It will be realised from the above discussion that, depending on the size of a 3D object to be represented, and parameters such as its distance behind the viewing plane and the focal length used, there may be no observable difference on the screen between a view of the object produced using an orthogonal projection and a view of the object produced using a perspective projection. Yet, perspective projection is much more computationally expensive than orthogonal projection, i.e. the calculation count is higher for
15 perspective projection.

Furthermore, the wireframe cubes 31 and 41 may be thought of as bounding boxes. Consequently, if the bounding box may be rendered using an orthogonal projection as was the case with box 41, then any objects of a
20 scene that fall within the bounding box may also be rendered using orthogonal projection.

Therefore, the inventor has found that a scene may be rendered, i.e. by activating pixels of an electronic display device, using a perspective projection
25 in respect of those objects for which a noticeable difference would occur between rendering in perspective projection and rendering with an orthogonal projection and using an orthogonal projection for the remaining objects to thereby produce a scene which appears overall to be realistically rendered using a perspective transformation.

30

Furthermore, as will shortly be explained, in a preferred embodiment of a method of the invention, it is possible to generate the 2D projection of octants of a scene modelled with an Octree on the basis of the 2D projection of the

overall parent octant cube rather than having to project each octant individually from 3D to 2D space.

5 Figure 15 depicts a scene comprising three objects in the form of mushrooms superimposed within an overall Octree cube 43. The Octree cube is stored as a data structure in memory of the computer system illustrated in Figure 1. In the interests of clarity, only the overall parent cube 43 of the Octree, which is shown in continuous line, and its first eight child octants 45a...45h, shown in dashed line, are visible in Figure 15. However, as is known in the art of
10 computer graphics, the Octree child cubes continue to subdivide around the portions of the objects in scene which are curved to a predetermined limit of resolution. This is illustrated in Figure 16 which comprises a slice through the Octree of Figure 15 and wherein a further three levels of octants, 49, 51 and 53 can be seen.

15

A method according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to Figure 17 to Figure 23.

20 Figure 17 depicts a scene comprising three very simple objects in the form of three 3D cubes 55, 57 and 59. For the purposes of the present explanation it is desired to operate the computer system of Figure 1 to display a 2D representation of the scene of Figure 17 along the viewing angle 63 indicated in Figure 17.

25 Figure 18 depicts an overall Octree cube 61 that is subdivided into octants for modelling the scene of Figure 15. For the purposes of the present explanation it is assumed that the overall dimensions of the Octree cube 61 are such that, as explained in relation to cube 41 of Figure 10, no discernible difference will be noticed if an orthogonal projection is applied rather than a perspective
30 projection.

The overall Octree cube 61 has been subdivided into eight first level child cubes which are numbered 0 to 7. Cube 5 has in turn been subdivided into

eight second level child cubes. First level child cubes 3 and 4 and second level child cube 3 of first level child cube 5 model cubes 55, 57 and 59 of the scene that is shown in Figure 17.

- 5 The Octree cube 61 is stored in the memory of the computer system of Figure 1 in a data structure comprising the Octree shown in Figure 19.

In order to display the scene of Figure 17 the nodes of the Octree are read, that is traversed, in Front to Back order relative to the viewing angle 63.

10

A major operation associated with occlusion culling is finding the dimensions of a bounding box. In an Octree based system, this normally involves collecting the 8 values of an encompassing cube, converting those values from 3D world space to 3D screen space and then sorting those values to
15 determine the horizontal and vertical minimum and maximum values. This is a significant amount of work in a perspective based system as it would normally be calculated for every box. As mentioned earlier, the presently described method according to a preferred embodiment of the invention takes advantage of the concept of breaking up the world/object into smaller
20 orthogonal zones. Using these zones to find the bounding box dimensions can be replaced by halving the horizontal and vertical edges because the orthogonal zone bounding boxes are exactly one quarter of the size of their parents when dealing with Octree data.

- 25 As is known in the art of computer graphics, there are eight different viewing sectors from which an Octree may be viewed and tables of the order of traversing the octrees for front to back viewing can be devised depending on the sector in which the viewing angle fall. For the situation illustrated in Figure 16, wherein the view point is located in sector +x, +y, +z, the order for
30 traversing the Octree for front to back viewing is "7, 6, 5, 3, 4, 2, 1, 0".

Referring now to Figure 20, the overall Octree cube 61 which is defined by eight 3D vertex coordinates $P_0(x_0, y_0, z_0), \dots, P_7(x_7, y_7, z_7)$ is orthogonally

projected onto a desired viewing plane 65 at the viewing angle 63 to thereby generate a 2D projection 67 of the cube comprising eight 2D vertex points $P(x_0,y_0), \dots, P(x_7,y_7)$. With reference to Figure 21, the eight 2D vertex points $P(x_0,y_0), \dots, P(x_7,y_7)$ defining the vertices of this 2D projection may be termed a "form pattern" since they define the shape of the projection of the Octree. Furthermore, since the projection is orthogonal, they also define the shape, when scaled down, of the projections of the child octants, which would not be the case had a perspective projection been used.

10 In the drawing of Figure 21 the vertices are shown interconnected by edges however these edges will not appear in the final rendering of the scene of Figure 17. The form pattern vertices $P_0(x_0,y_0), \dots, P_7(x_7,y_7)$ are stored in an array in the same order as the viewing order for the Octree, i.e. $FPArray = [P_7, P_6, P_5, P_3, P_4, P_2, P_1, P_0]$.

15 The Octree of Figure 19 is then read in the Front-to-Back order, which for the view point shown in Figure 18 is 7, 6, 5, 3, 4, 2, 1, 0.

Since node 7 is empty no action is taken.

20 Since node 6 is empty no action is taken.

Since node 5 points to a child node the procedure drills down to the next level.

At the next level:

Since node 7 is empty no action is taken.

Since node 6 is empty no action is taken.

25 Since node 5 is empty no action is taken.

Since node 3 is a leaf node a Leaf Node Subroutine is called for child node 3 of child node 5. The Leaf Node Subroutine will be described shortly.

Since node 4 is empty no action is taken.

30 Since node 2 is empty no action is taken.

Since node 1 is empty no action is taken.

Since node 0 is empty no action is taken, the procedure then jumps up one level.

Since node 3 is a leaf node the Leaf Node Subroutine is called for child node 3.

Since node 4 is a leaf node the Leaf Node Subroutine is called for child node 4.

5 Since node 2 is empty no action is taken.

Since node 1 is empty no action is taken.

Since node 0 is empty no action is taken.

10 The Leaf Node Subroutine is passed the Form Pattern array, the MinPoint and MaxPoint of the bounding box and the Leaf Node information.

The top left hand corner of the bounding box (which in the present case coincides with vertex (x_0, y_0) of the projection 67 of Octree cube 61, is used as an origin point for the eight vertex points $(x_0, y_0), \dots, (x_7, y_7)$.

15

The Leaf Node Subroutine then operates on the eight vertex points $(x_0, y_0), \dots, (x_7, y_7)$ to halve them to produce eight points $(x_0, y_0)_2, \dots, (x_7, y_7)_2$ as indicated on Figure 19. The eight vertex points $(x_0, y_0)_2, \dots, (x_7, y_7)_2$ define the 2D projection of Octant 2 of the Octree cube of Figure 18 as indicated as 20 2' in Figure 22. It will be noted that this projection has been attained by dividing the points defining the vertices of the 2D projection of the overall Octant cube. It was not necessary to perform a projection of the 3D vertices of Octant 2 into the viewing plane. Consequently, these eight points $(x_0, y_0)_2, \dots, (x_7, y_7)_2$ are offsets from the minimum of the bounding box 69. A 25 bit shift operation is used to halve the values of eight vertex points $(x_0, y_0), \dots, (x_7, y_7)$ relative to the minimum of the bounding box 69. Each of the new points $(x_0, y_0)_2, \dots, (x_7, y_7)_2$ are then halved again to produce a further eight sub-points e.g. $(x_0, y_0)_3, \dots, (x_7, y_7)_3$ for each octant of the next level down. For example, as indicated by child octant cube projection 5-3' in Figure 30 22.

Where the Octree indicates that the child Octants are leaf nodes then they are shaded as shown in Figure 23 to produce a rendering of the scene that was

originally depicted in Figure 17. Provided that the dimensions of the objects, e.g. the cubes of Figure 23, are sufficiently small, then there will be no discernible difference between them being rendered using the orthogonal projection or using a perspective projection transformation for reasons
5 previously discussed in relation to Figure 1 to Figure 13.

If the form pattern method were not connected to Octree data with terminating branches, the method would render a solid cube of floating points. By connecting it to Octree data and the unfolding of the pattern when branches
10 are empty, it in effect, to use an analogy, carves the form pattern as though it were plaster. The end object has all the same characteristics and form of an object that has been made using the conventional technique of using voxels with 3D to 2D algorithms, but in terms of processing power the form pattern technique uses a fraction of the time and operations.

15

The shape of the projection of the parent cube defined by the 2D orthogonal projection points $(x_0, y_0), \dots, (x_7, y_7)$ can be termed a "form pattern" because it defines the proportions, i.e. the form, of the orthogonal projections of not only the highest level parent octant but also the descending levels of child octants.
20 There are a number of variations of the form pattern that could be implemented.

For example the vertices are usually stored as eight "x" values and eight "y" values, e.g. $(x_0, y_0), \dots, (x_7, y_7)$ as described above. However, it is also
25 possible to collect four "x" values and four "y" values and generate the remaining values by turning the collected values into offsets from a centre point that was generated by either 2-dimensionally projecting the 3 dimensional centre point of the cube that is being operated upon or by using the 2D centre point of the aforementioned bounding box (e.g. box 69 of Figure
30 21). Once these offsets have been collected some points can be generated by reversing the sign of the values. By collecting half of the discussed corner values appropriately the remaining values can be generated by use of this

method. This method of creating points by sign reversal is only accurate with a cube or prism that is orthogonally projected as illustrated in Figure 24.

5 The form pattern will usually be offsets in relation to one of the four corners of the bounding box 19. Alternatively, they could be an offset from any point within the bounding box or outside of the confines of the bounding box, they could also have no offset at all taking their values to be the unaltered values they currently hold as screen pixels. However, the use of one of the bounding box's four corners is considered to carry benefits of understanding and
10 comprehension and as such the top left hand corner (indicated as "Min" in Figure 21) coincide with the practice of treating the top left hand corner of the screen as position (0,0) as illustrated in Figure 25.

15 One of the most processor intensive parts of rendering 3D graphics is the conversion of points from a 3D world to 2D screen. Normally this process consists of a significant number of mathematical operations. The process of halving the form pattern and adding those halves to the form pattern points of the parent form pattern points gives an identical output to normal 3D to 2D conversion.

20

In the preferred embodiment, calculating the form pattern does not use multiplications, divisions or multiple complex operations. It instead replaces the whole system with a BIT SHIFT and ADD. Under the normal conditions of perspective based 3D graphics this method would not work however if the
25 object to be rendered is divided into orthogonal subsections as described above then the system can take advantage of this unusual pattern.

Referring now to Figure 26 to Figure 28, a method, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, for processing an Octree data structure containing data modelling a scene for rendering, is set out in flowchart form.
30 This method may be coded as tangible, computer readable instructions, for example upon optical disk 27 of Figure 1 so that it thereby constitutes a computer software product 29 for processing by the computer system 1.

The various processes that are performed at each box in the flowchart of Figures 26 to 28 will now be discussed.

5 At box 83, the mask buffer is cleared to zeros. The mask buffer is a series of flags, one for each pixel in the display buffer, that indicate whether a pixel has been written to that location. By virtue of the front to back ordering provided by the algorithm, each pixel need only be written to once. The mask buffer is used to disregard a node, and all its children, when all the pixels overlapping
10 the node's 2D bounding box have already been written to.

At box 84, each node may have from 0 to 8 children; once all the children present on a node have been processed the node is popped from the stack and no longer considered.

15

At box 85, for a recursive implementation, popping the top-most node from the stack is performed by simply returning from the function. In an iterative implementation the size of the stack is reduced by one.

20 At box 86, when no more nodes remain on the stack the entire model has been processed.

At box 87, the children are processed in front to back order, with each one being marked as processed to determine when the node can be discarded
25 (see box 84).

At box 88, the parent node is marked as being orthogonal mode once it or any of its parents met the criteria for orthogonal mode, see boxes 101 and 102.

30 At box 89, nodes that intersect the near viewing plane must be subdivided to avoid mathematical inaccuracies.

At box 90, the current node is pushed onto the stack ensuring its children (if present) are processed next.

At box 91, in orthogonal mode, the 2D bounding box is calculated by taking
5 the size of the 2D bounding box saved in the orthogonal buffer data and
dividing it by 2 for every level of ancestry since the orthogonal data was
generated. That is, the child of the node that met the orthogonal mode criteria
(see box 101), will have a bounding box size of exactly one half that stored in
the orthogonal data buffer. The grand-child will have a bounding box of
10 exactly one quarter, and so on. In practice, the size of the stack at the time the
orthogonal buffer data was created can be stored in the orthogonal buffer
data, and subtracted from the size of the stack giving the number of times to
divide by 2. With this value the divisions are achieved with a binary shift
operation which is much faster than a generic division. With the size of the
15 bounding box calculated, the offset is calculated by selecting the box offset
value based on the child number, and dividing that by 2 for every level of
ancestry in exactly the same way as the size, and adding that to the bounding
box position stored in the orthogonal buffer data.

20 At box 92, in perspective mode, the 2D bounding box is calculated using the
standard means of performing a full perspective transform on the 8 corner
points of the current node's 3D bounding box, to screen space. Generally this
is a 4x4 matrix by 3d vector multiplication yielding a 4d vector (x,y,z,w) whose
 w component is used as a divisor to perform the final perspective
25 transformation. It will be realised that a system according to a preferred
embodiment of the present invention is designed to avoid this step as much
as possible.

At box 93, once a 2D bounding box has been calculated, test to see if
30 overlaps any of the screen edges and if so adjust the coordinates accordingly
to reflect only the portion of the box that overlaps the display buffer. If the
bounding box is completely outside the display buffer, then the node is no

longer considered and control proceeds to box 84 to process the remaining children of the node.

5 At box 94, by virtue of the front to back drawing order, once all the pixels within any node's bounding box have been written, that node is occluded and is no longer considered. This test is achieved by testing each of the flags in the mask buffer that correspond to the area of the bounding box, if all pixels are marked as written to then the node can be discarded and control proceeds to box 84.

10

At box 95, if a node has no children at this point in the process, then the node is drawn (see box 97).

15 At box 96, if the size of the bounding box is at or below a threshold value (such as 1 pixel) then the node is drawn. This is primarily because further subdivision below the size of one pixel is unnecessary.

20 At box 97, to draw a node, each pixel corresponding to the clipped 2D bounding box is tested in the mask buffer and where a pixel has not already been written, the corresponding pixel in the colour buffer is set to the node's colour, and the mask buffer is set. Additionally, other buffers may be written to at this point to record information such as depth values and/or normal values.

25 At box 98, the current node is pushed onto the stack ensuring its children are processed next.

30 At box 99, once a node meets the criteria for orthogonal mode, all of that node's children are also implicitly orthogonal, so at this point the flag and the orthogonal buffer data are copied to propagate the orthogonal mode to the children.

At box 100, the orthogonal mode flag is set in the node if any of its ancestors met the orthogonal mode criteria.

At box 101, the criteria for orthogonal mode is tested. As has been previously discussed in relation Figure 3 to 15, in qualitative terms the criteria is that when projecting the box into screen-space with perspective, the amount that the back of the box appears smaller than the front of the box (due to perspective effect) is less than 1 pixel and thus is unnoticeable when rasterising. There are many ways to test this, but since the perspective effect is applied by dividing the vector by w (as discussed in relation to box 92), testing the ratio of w values between a transformed point at the front of the box and a transformed point at the back of the box is a convenient and simple test. The actual threshold ratio varies depending on the focal length and the dimensions of the display buffer, so it must be re-calculated whenever any of these parameters change.

Consequently, there are two parts to monitoring and implementing orthogonal mode as follows:

The first part involves pre-calculating the optimal threshold (updated whenever display size or focal-length (field-of-view) changes), and the second part involves applying the threshold during the render.

As mentioned above, the underlying logic is simple; we wish to know when the projected front and back coordinates are < 1.0 pixels apart (or other similar tolerable value).

While there may be a way to calculate this value outright, at present a binary search is used. A standard binary search is performed between nearZ and farZ, transforming the point pair nearPoint=(1,1,1) and farPoint=(1,1,-1) adding (0,0,midZ), where midZ is simply the value midway between nearZ and farZ.

If the delta of projected X,Y is less than the pixel threshold then the threshold point has been located.

Using the transformed points from the binary search (which are X, Y, Z, W), the $\text{fixedWRatio} = \text{nearW} / \text{farW}$ is then calculated.

- 5 The 8 transformed box points (X, Y, Z, W for each) are then calculated during perspective mode rendering.

The bounding box is then determined by calculating the X, Y, W Min and Max.
(note the W here)

10

The current W Ratio is then calculated as $\text{curWRatio} = \text{minW} / \text{maxW}$

if($\text{curWRatio} \geq \text{fixedWRatio}$) then orthogonal mode is entered.

- 15 It will be realised that since $1/w$ is often calculated as part of the perspective transform, it is possible to replace the divide with multiply by the reciprocal, which is a common floating point optimization.

- 20 It will also be noted that this method is somewhat different from the classic one of comparing delta x, y for a pixel threshold of say 24 (also calculated by binary search or trial and error.)

- 25 The method discussed above is superior in that it allows the octree node to enter orthogonal mode as soon as possible regardless of the relative orientation of the node to the screen. Otherwise the bounding box of a rotated node could bias the threshold test by up to 40% (i.e. $\text{sqrt}(2)$) thereby delaying entry to orthogonal mode until further subdivided.

- 30 It will be appreciated that this method also makes sense in that although the effect of projection is bounding boxes of smaller size, the cause is the x/w y/w , i.e. the relative ratio of w causing perspective to foreshorten the x, y values. Thus testing w is more logical and more accurate.

Other metrics by which the criteria can be measured include the length of one side of the cube in screen space, or the diameter of a sphere enclosing the cube in screen space.

- 5 At box 102, the orthogonal buffer data consists of the node's depth/level down the Octree (indicated by the current length of the stack), the 2D bounding box of the node, and the 8 transformed screen space points as offsets from the top left corner of the 2D bounding box.

- 10 In summary, orthogonal mode operates on nodes of the Octree data structure by dividing them and tracing the course of content containing cubes. The orthogonal mode procedure is able to bypass 3D to 2D transformations and instead scale, for example by recursively halving, a set of 2D points, i.e. a "form pattern" representing the projection of a higher level Octant in order to
15 arrive at a corresponding set of points to represent the projection of a child Octant.

Since orthogonal mode is only entered in respect of octants for which there will no discernible difference between their perspective and orthogonal
20 projections, as tested at box 88 of the procedure, a viewer of the rendered scene will perceive the scene as having been rendered using perspective transformations in totality. Although each subsection that is rendered in orthogonal mode has no internal perspective, perspective exists in the form of the relation between those subsections. So although a subsection may not
25 get smaller near the back internally the entire subsection is the appropriate size as far as its relation to the viewer is concerned.

The combination of all these different sized subsections produces a 3D image with perspective that is similar in appearance to such an image produced by
30 more mathematically intense 3D systems but with considerably fewer operations.

In compliance with the statute, the invention has been described in language more or less specific to structural or methodical features. The term "comprises" and its variations, such as "comprising" and "comprised of" is used throughout in an inclusive sense and not to the exclusion of any additional features. It is to be understood that the invention is not limited to specific features shown or described since the means herein described comprises preferred forms of putting the invention into effect. The invention is, therefore, claimed in any of its forms or modifications within the proper scope of the appended claims appropriately interpreted by those skilled in the art.

Throughout the specification and claims, unless the context requires otherwise, the term "substantially" or "about" will be understood to not be limited to the value for the range qualified by the terms.

Claims:

1. A computer graphics method implemented upon an electronic processor based system having at least one processor arranged to control an electronic display device, said method comprising the steps of operating said processor to:

extract data defining a three-dimensional scene from a data structure;

render extracted data corresponding to portions of the scene satisfying a predetermined condition according to an orthogonal projection upon the electronic display device; and

render extracted data corresponding to other portions of the scene according to a perspective projection upon the electronic display device;

wherein the rendered scene displayed upon said display device appears to have been entirely rendered according to the perspective projection, whereby a count of calculations performed by the electronic processor for rendering the scene is reduced relative to rendering using only the perspective projection.

2. A method according to claim 1, including testing if portions of the scene satisfy the predetermined condition taking into account dimensions of the portions, focal length of the perspective projection and resolution of said display.

3. A method according to claim 1, including:

projecting 3D points associated with the portions of the scene satisfying the predetermined condition from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and

determining projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern.

4. A method according to claim 3, including recursively updating the 2D form pattern and determining projections of lower level sub-portions with reference to the updated form pattern.

5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the step of recursively updating the 2D form pattern includes bit shifting values representing coordinates of vertices of the form pattern.
6. A method according to claim 5, wherein the step of recursively updating the 2D form pattern includes calculating an offset from a minimum value of a bounding box about a form pattern of previous iteration of the recursion.
7. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the data structure comprises an Octree and wherein the step of processing the data structure comprises traversing the Octree.
8. A method according to claim 7, wherein said portions correspond to parent and child octants associated with the Octree.
9. A method according to claim 7 or claim 8 including determining a sequence for processing nodes of the Octree in front to back order relative to a predetermined viewing position.
10. A method according to any one of claims 7 to 9 including testing if bounds of an octant intersect a view frustum.
11. A method according to any one of claims 6 to 10 including performing a mask test prior to writing to said display.
12. A method according to any one of claims 6 to 11 including performing an occlusion test prior to writing to said display.
13. A computer graphics system including a processor in communication with a memory device storing a data structure for a three dimensional (3D) scene and arranged to control a display device, the processor being arranged to:
 - process the data structure to retrieve data defining said scene;

render portions of the scene satisfying a predetermined condition with an orthogonal projection; and

otherwise render the scene upon the display device using a perspective projection;

whereby the number of calculations performed by the electronic processor for rendering the scene are reduced by use of the orthogonal projection relative to rendering using only the perspective projection

14. A system according to claim 13, wherein the processor of the computer graphics system is further arranged to:

project 3D points associated with the portions of the scene satisfying the predetermined condition from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and

determine projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern.

15. A system according to claim 14, wherein the processor of the computer graphics system is further arranged to test if portions of the scene satisfy the predetermined condition taking into account dimensions of the portions, focal length of the perspective projection and resolution of the display.

16. A system according to claim 14 or claim 15, wherein the processor of the computer graphics system is preferably further arranged to

project 3D points associated with the portions of the scene satisfying the predetermined condition from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and

determine projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern without recourse to a 3D to 2D projection.

17. A computer graphics software product comprising a computer readable media bearing tangible instructions for execution by a processor for carrying out a method according to any one of claims 1 to 12.

18. A computer graphics method to be implemented by an electronic processor based system for rendering a portion of a scene with an orthogonal projection, the method including the steps of:

projecting 3D points associated with a bounding box about the portion from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and

determining projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern.

19. A computer graphics software product comprising a computer readable media bearing tangible instructions for execution by a processor for carrying out the method of claim 18.

20. A computer graphics system including a processor in communication with a memory device storing a data structure for a three dimensional (3D) scene and arranged to control a display device, the processor being arranged to:

process the data structure to retrieve data defining said scene;

project 3D points associated with a bounding box about a portion of the scene from 3D to 2D to produce a 2D form pattern; and

produce projections of sub-portions of the scene based upon the 2D form pattern.

21. A computer graphics method for producing an image so that it appears to have been produced with a first projection, said method being performed with a computer system including at least one processor arranged to control pixels of an electronic display device, said method including:

generating portions of the image on said display device with the first projection; and

while a second projection approximates the first projection generating other portions of the image on said display with the second projection,

wherein the second projection is less computationally intensive than the first projection.

22. A computer graphics method to be implemented by an electronic processor based system, said method comprising:

processing a data structure containing data for a three-dimensional (3D) scene to be represented by an electronic display;

rendering portions of the scene satisfying a predetermined condition with an orthogonal projection; and

otherwise rendering the scene using a perspective projection;

whereby the number of calculations performed by the electronic processor for rendering the scene are reduced relative to rendering using only the perspective projection.

* * *

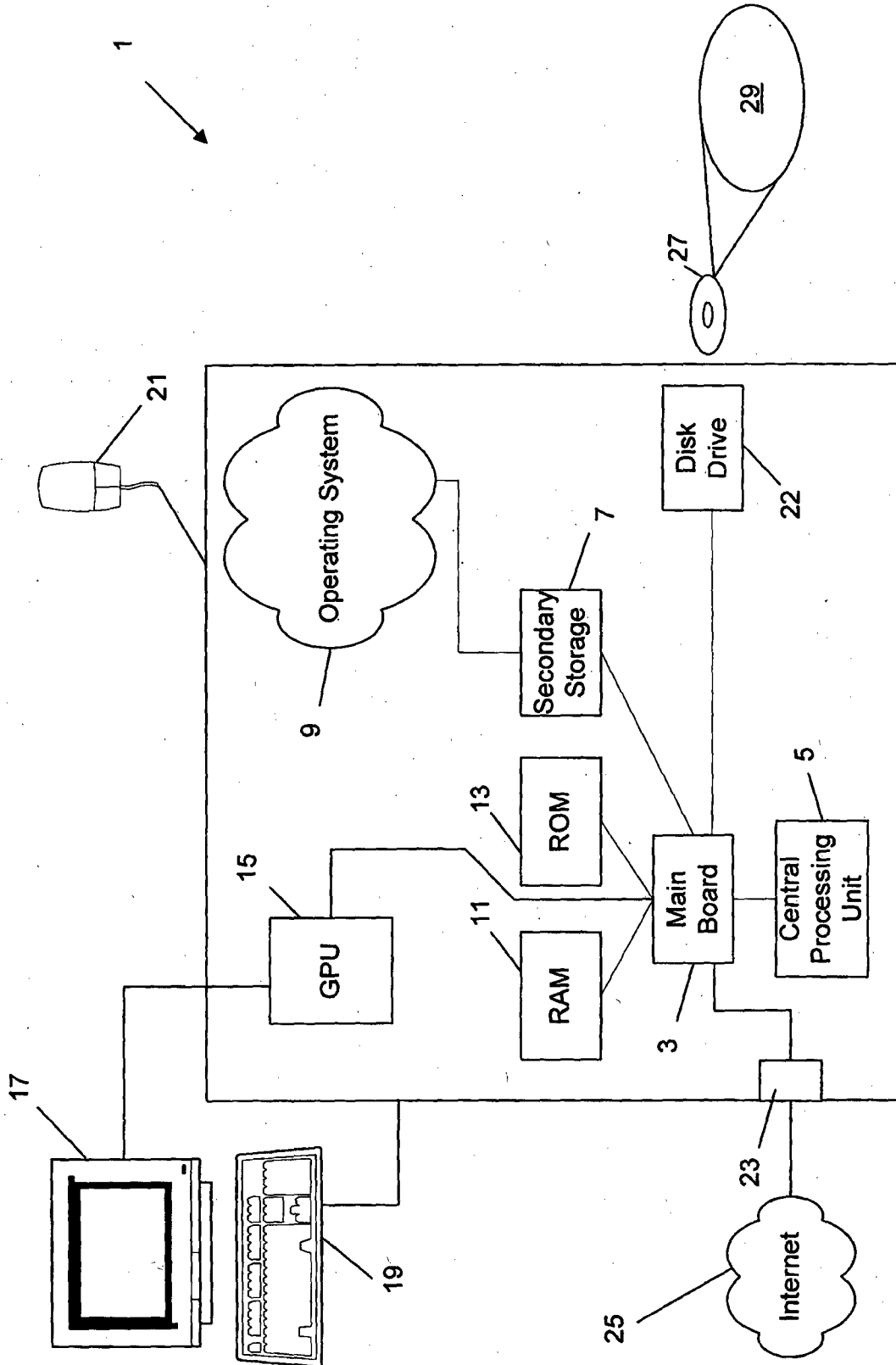


Figure 1

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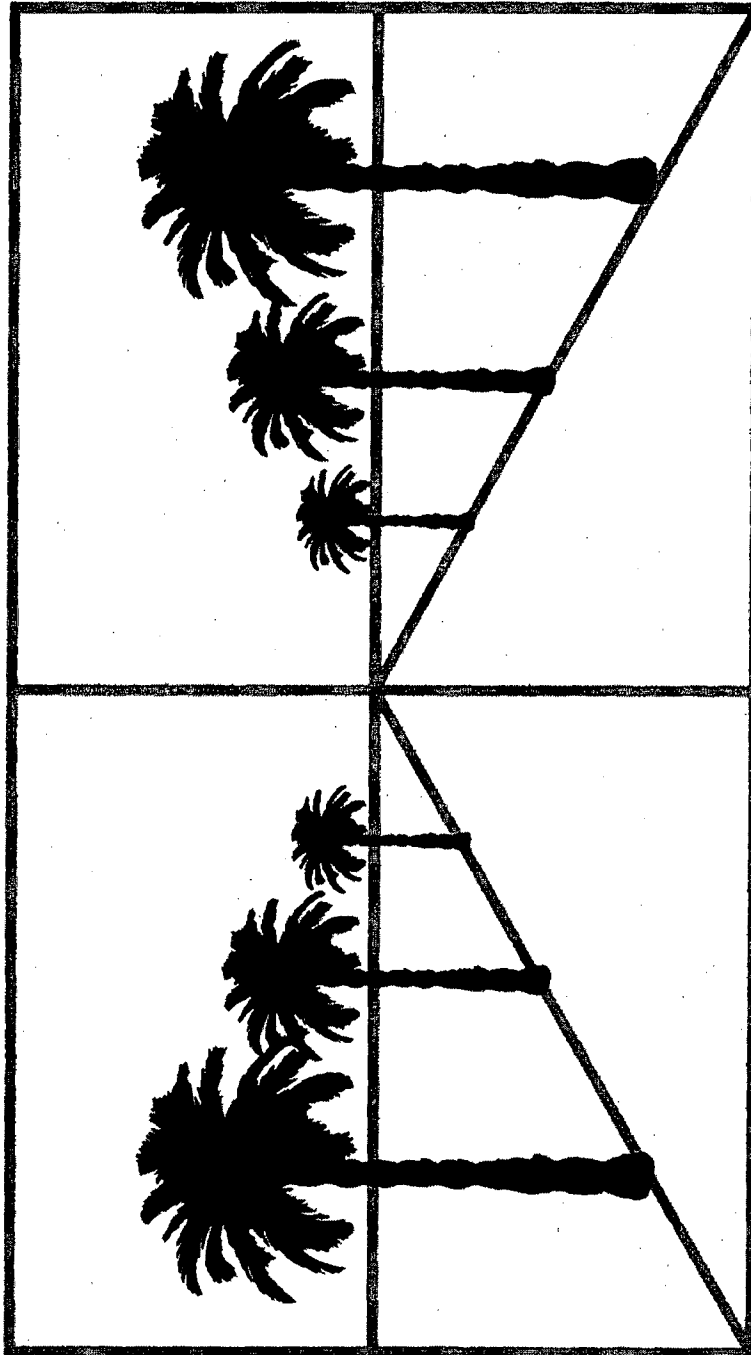


Figure 2

3/24

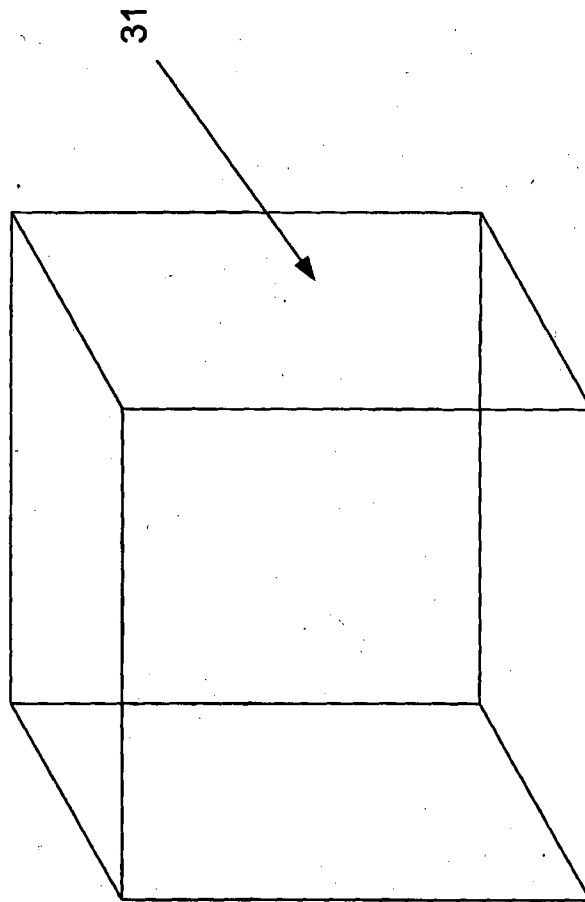


Figure 3

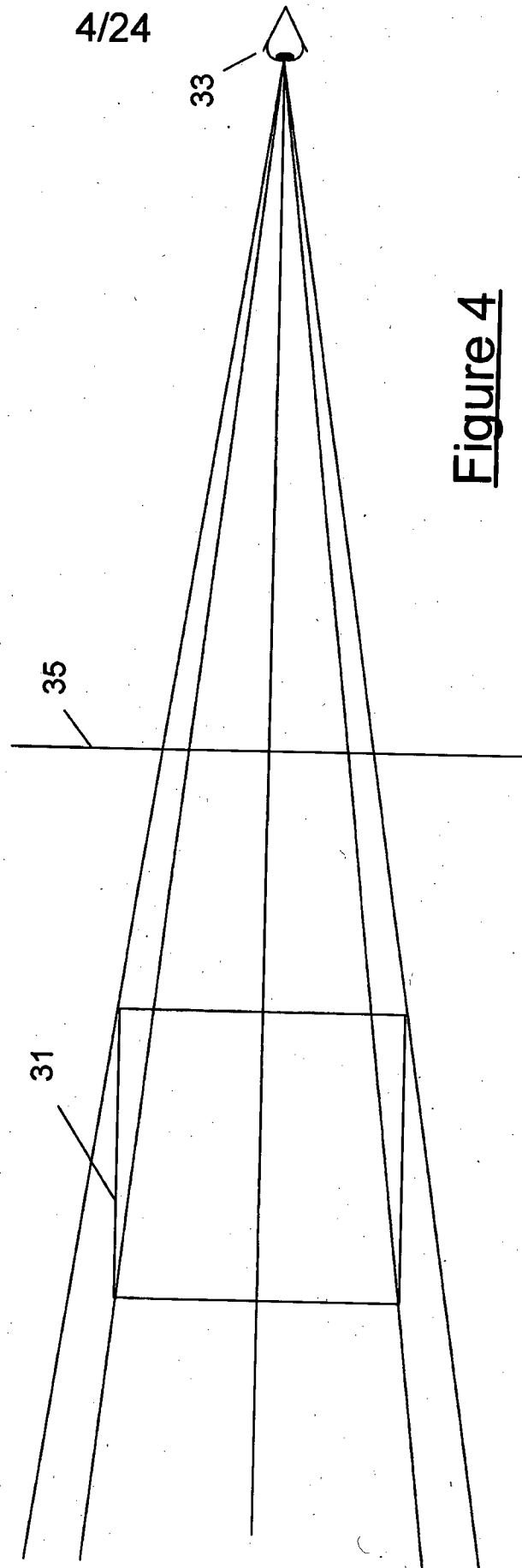


Figure 4

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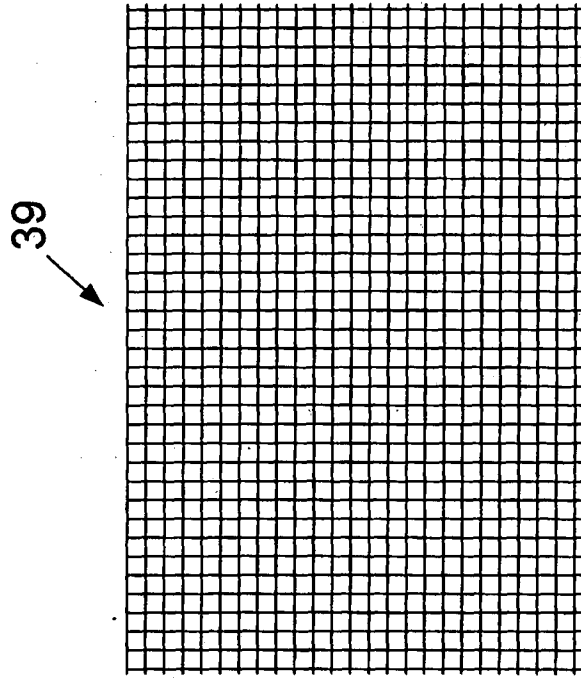


Figure 6

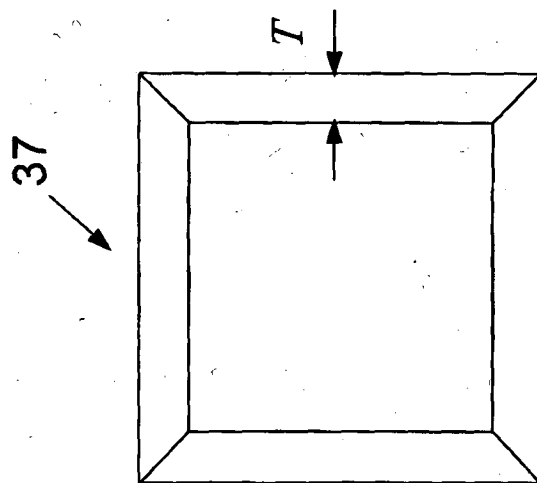


Figure 5

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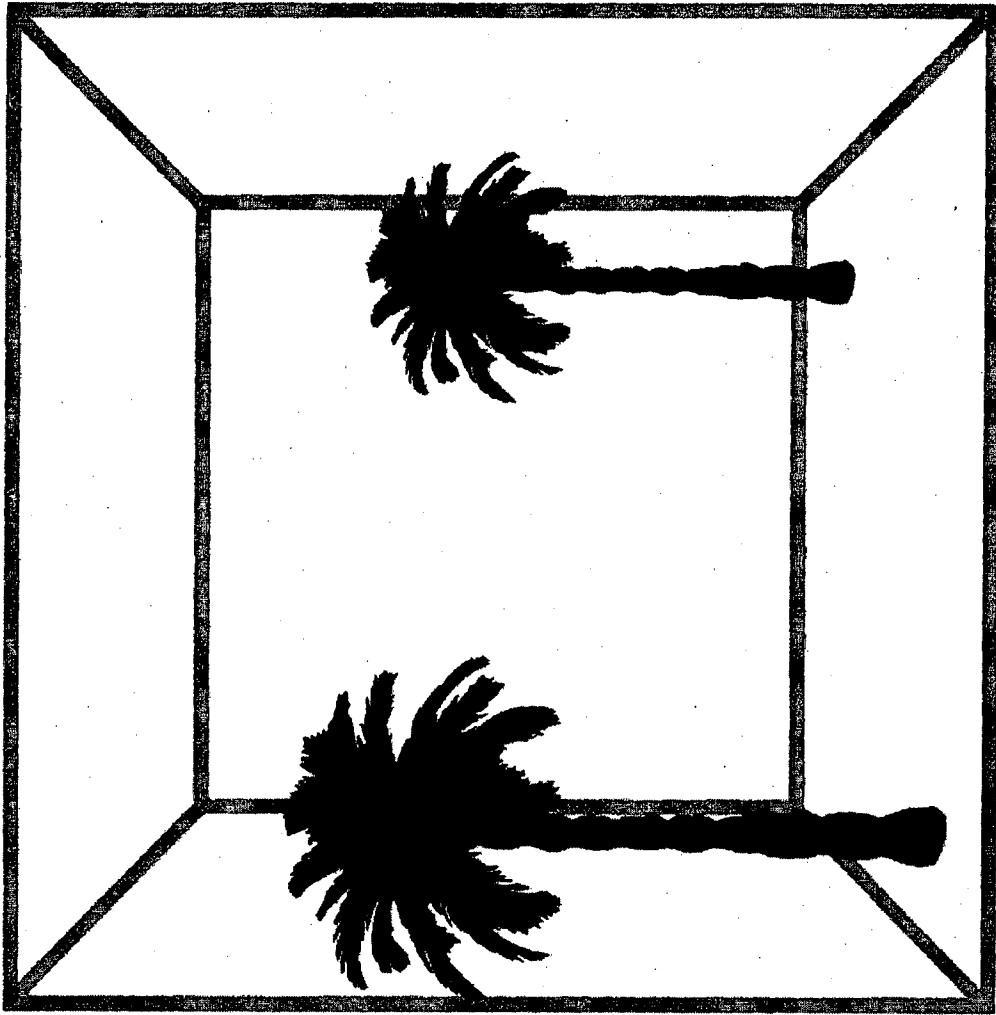


Figure 7

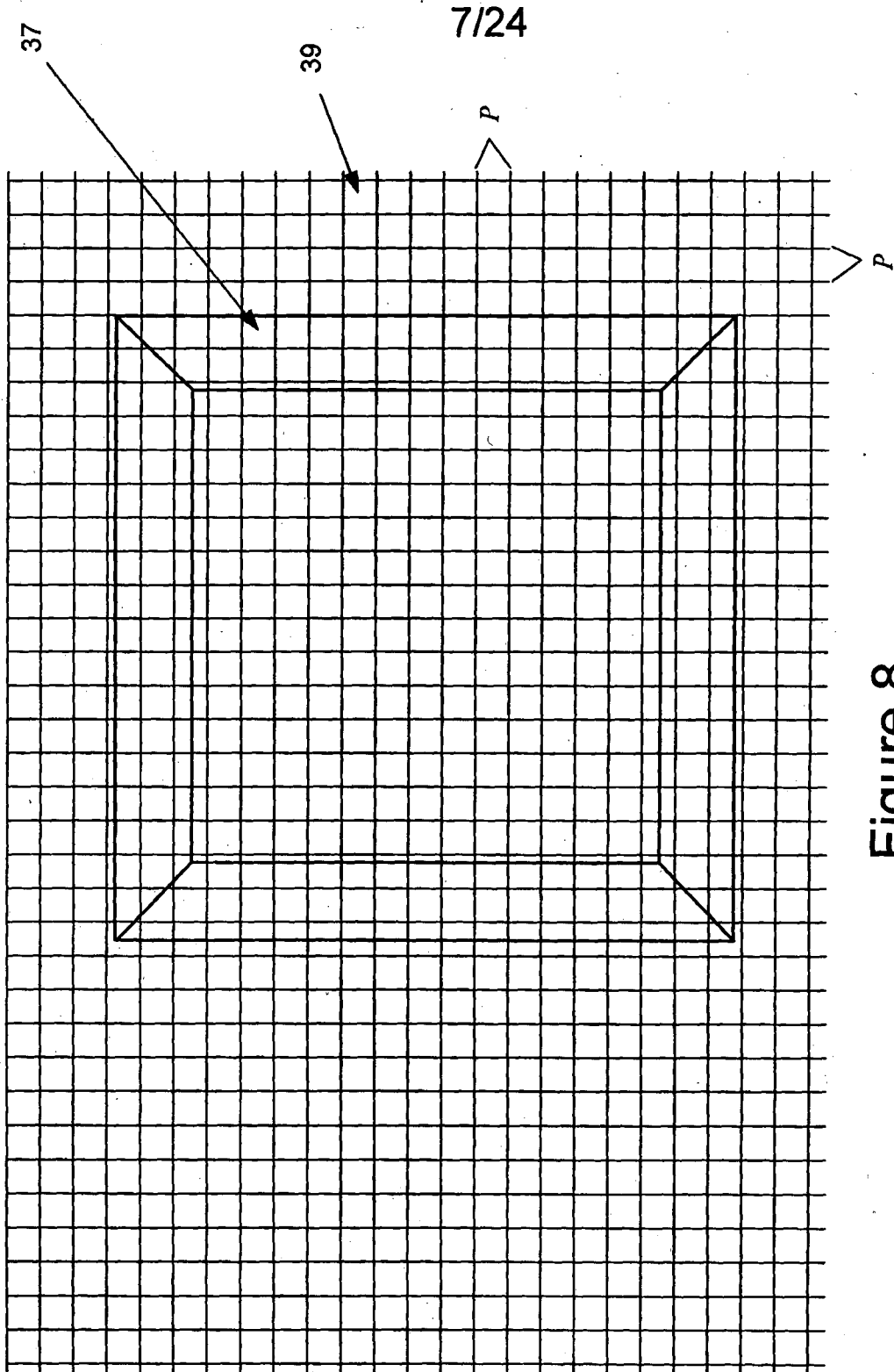


Figure 8

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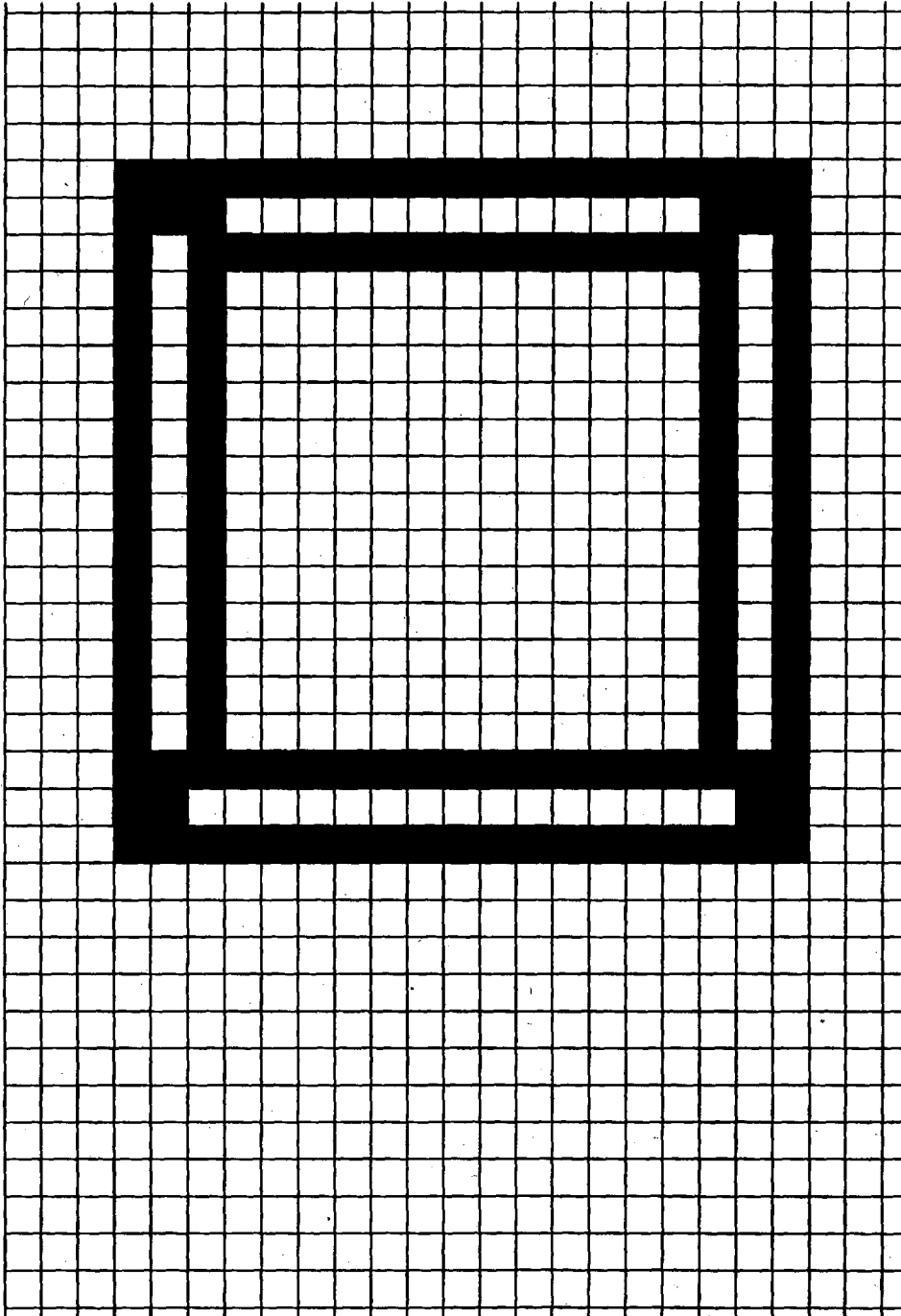


Figure 9

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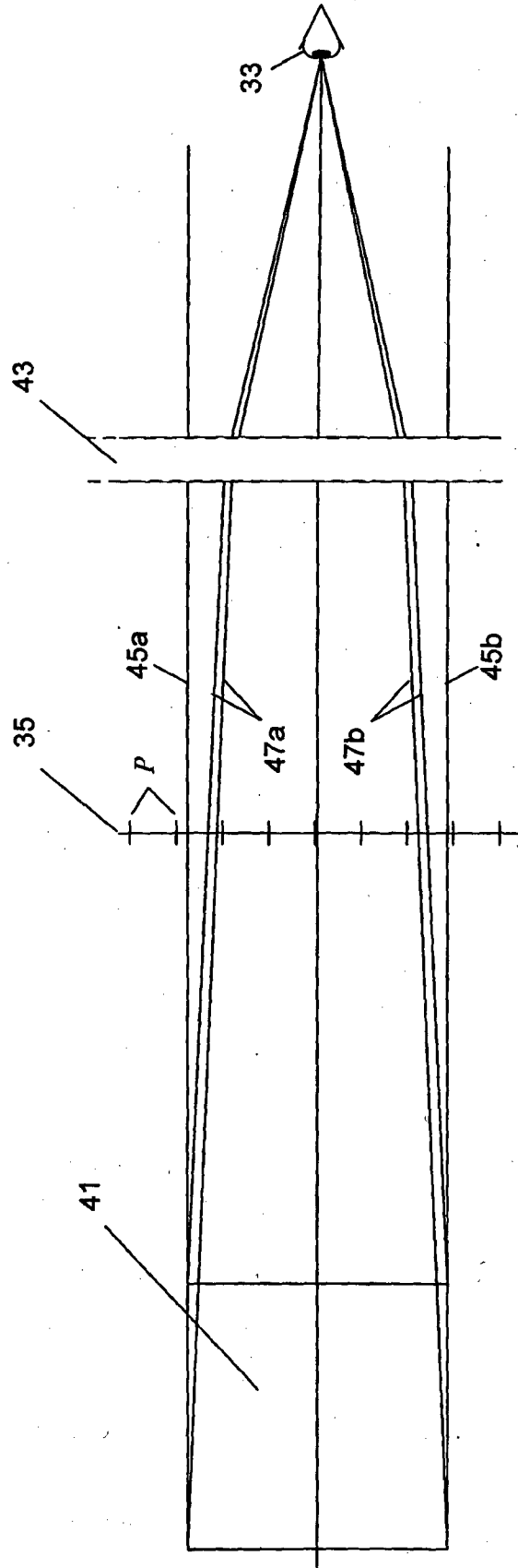


Figure 10

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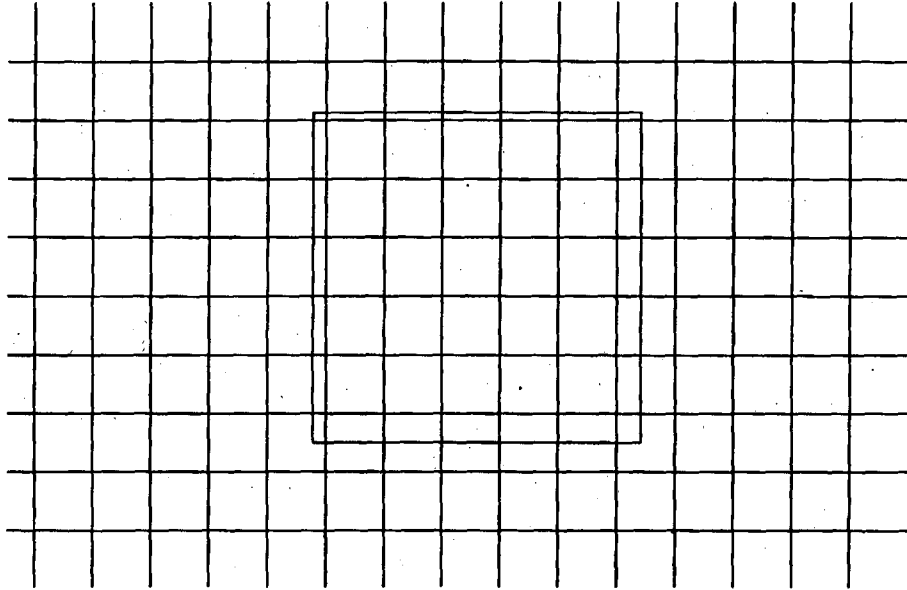


Figure 12

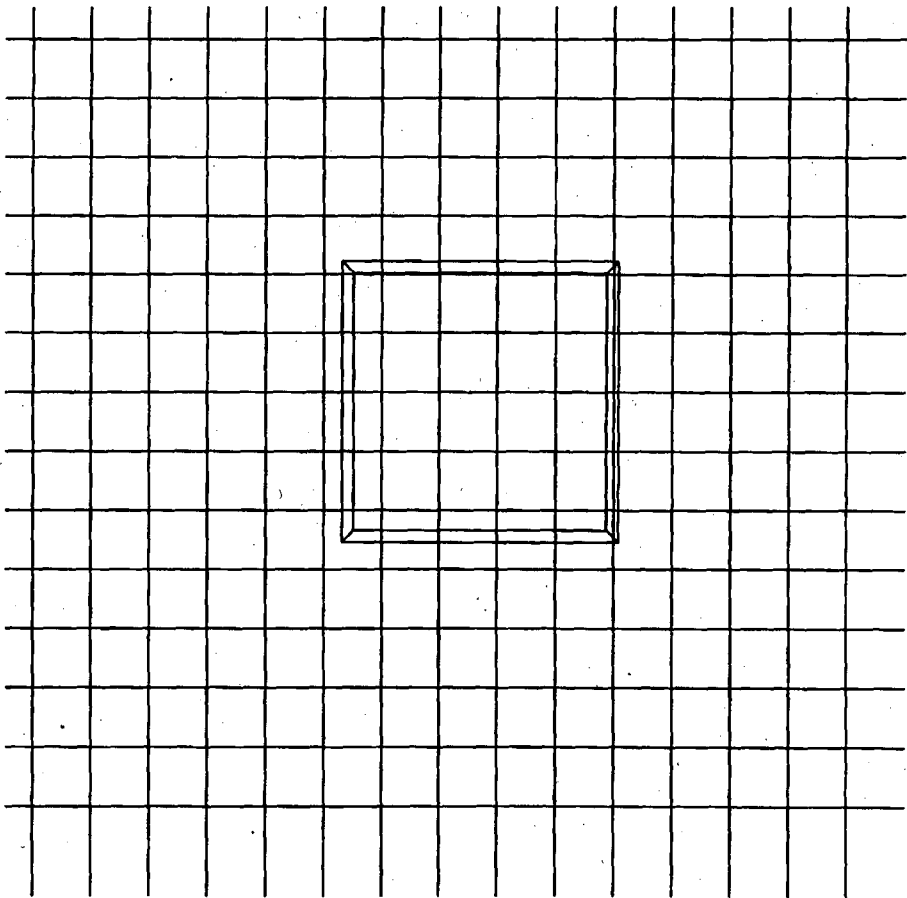


Figure 11

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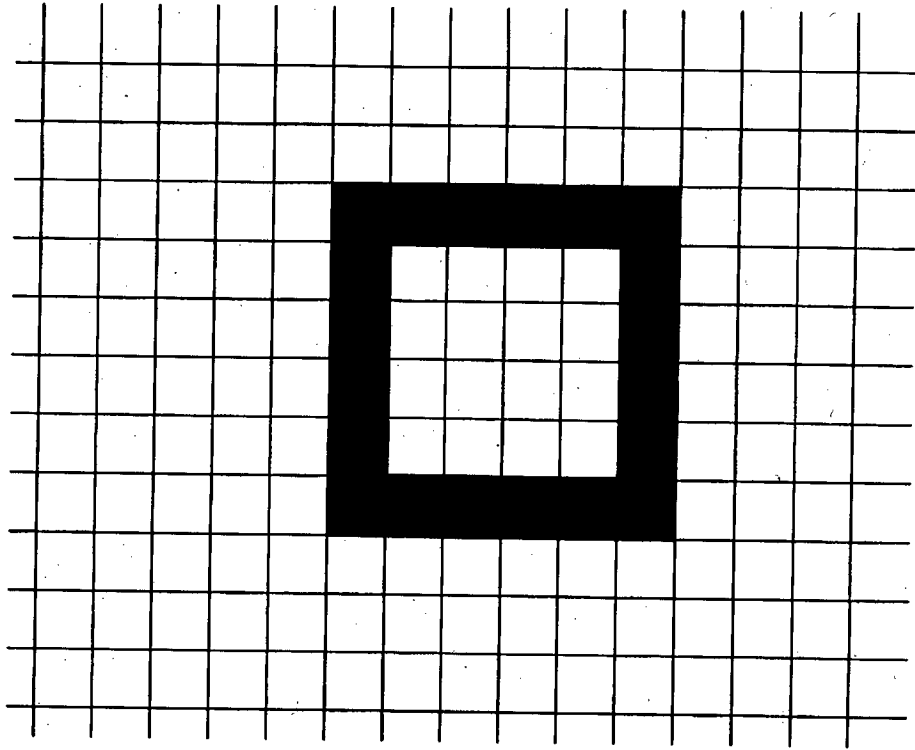


Figure 14

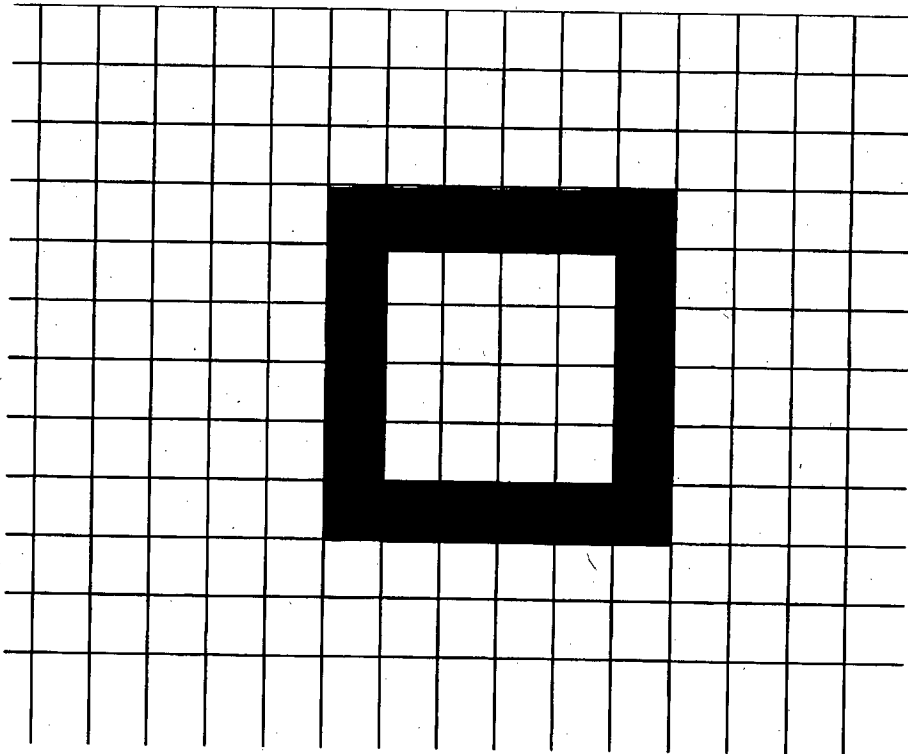


Figure 13

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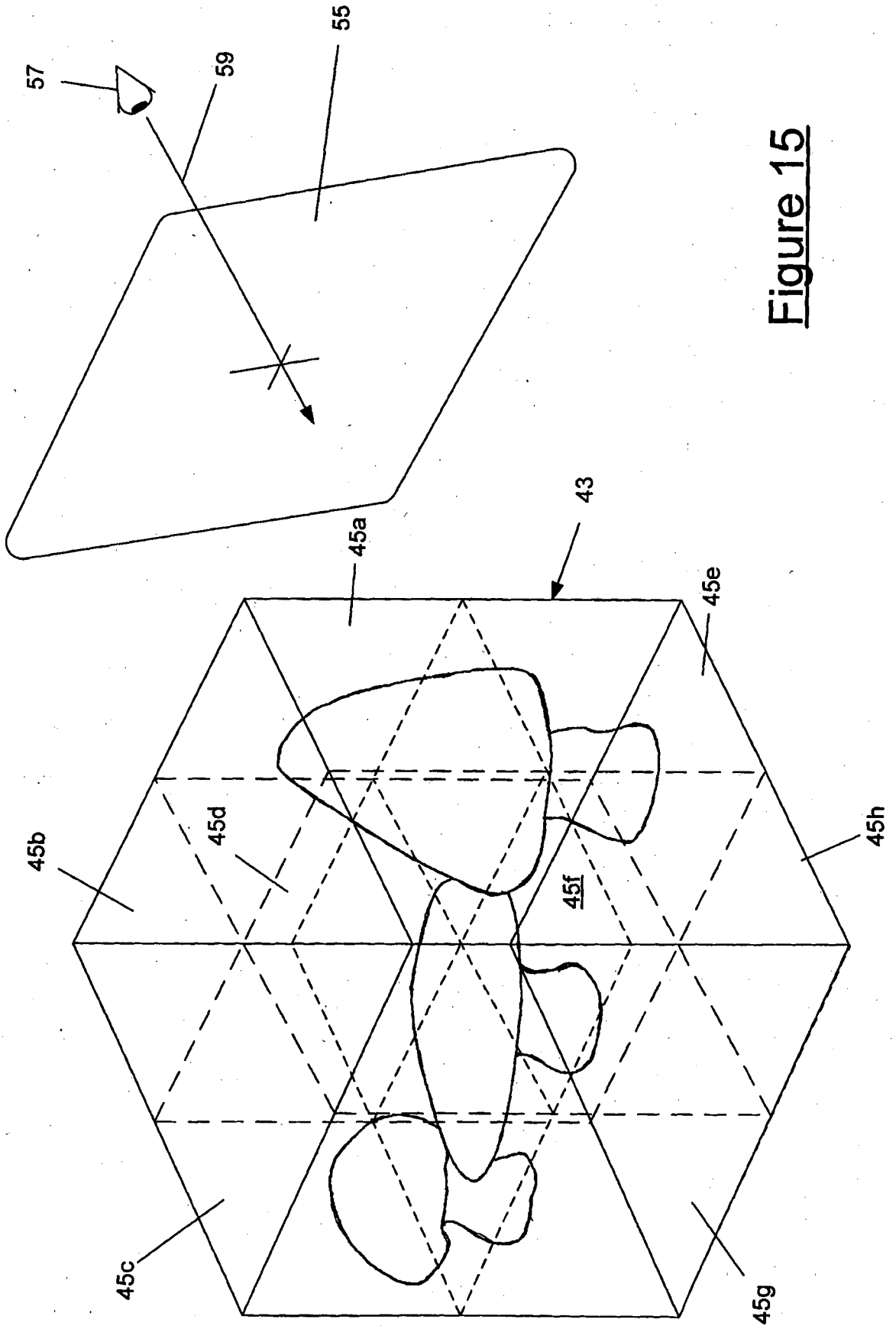


Figure 15

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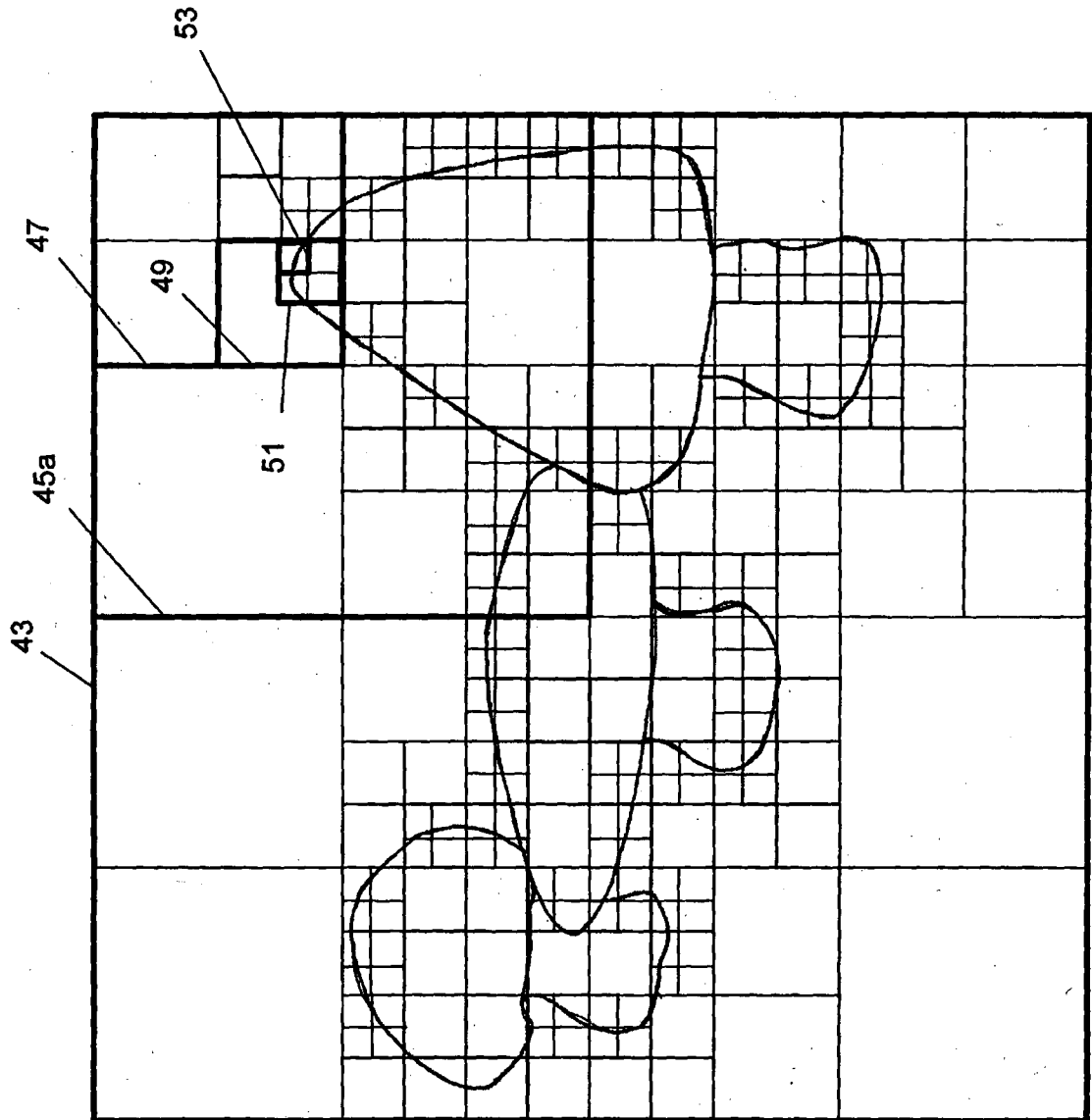


Figure 16

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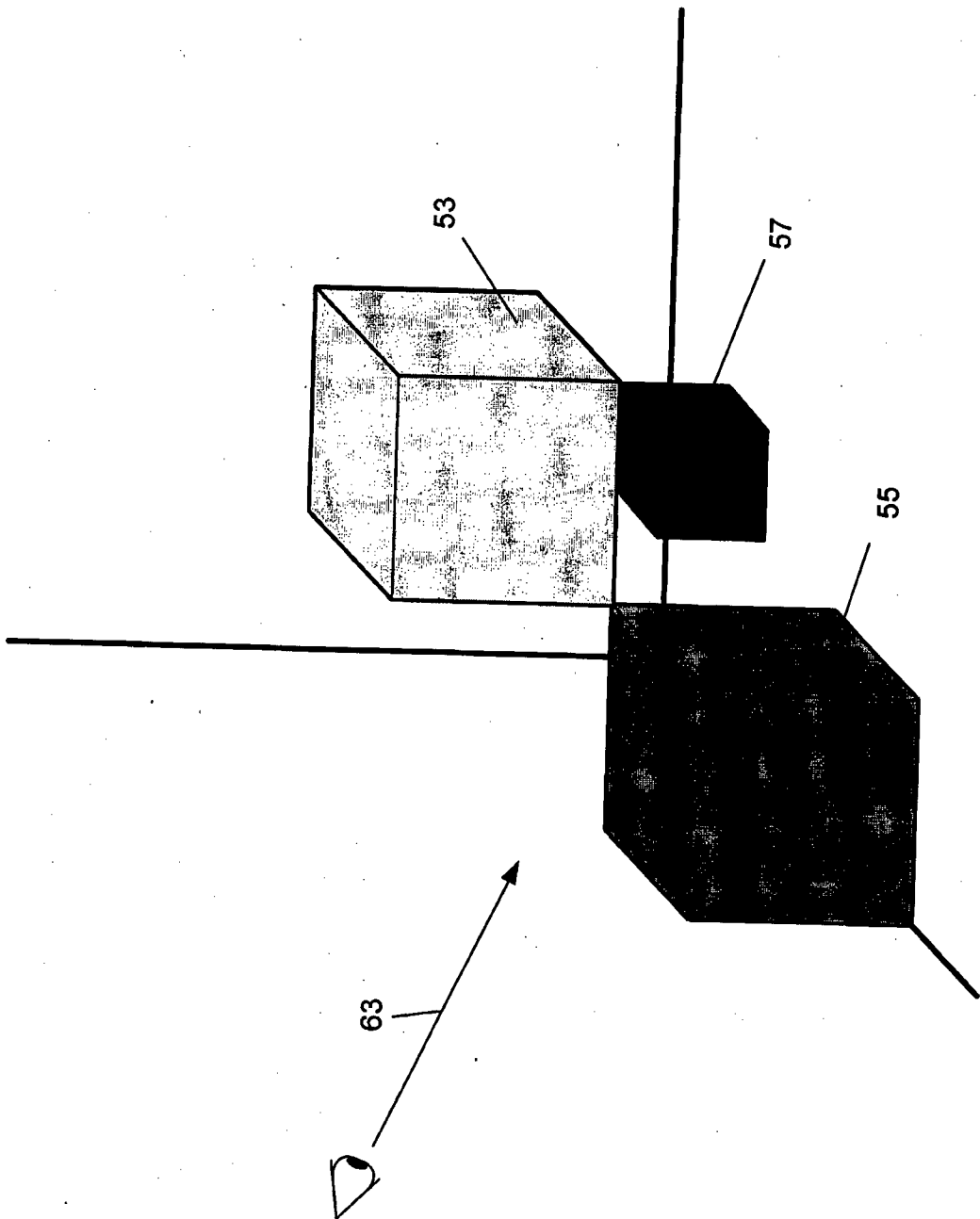


Figure 17

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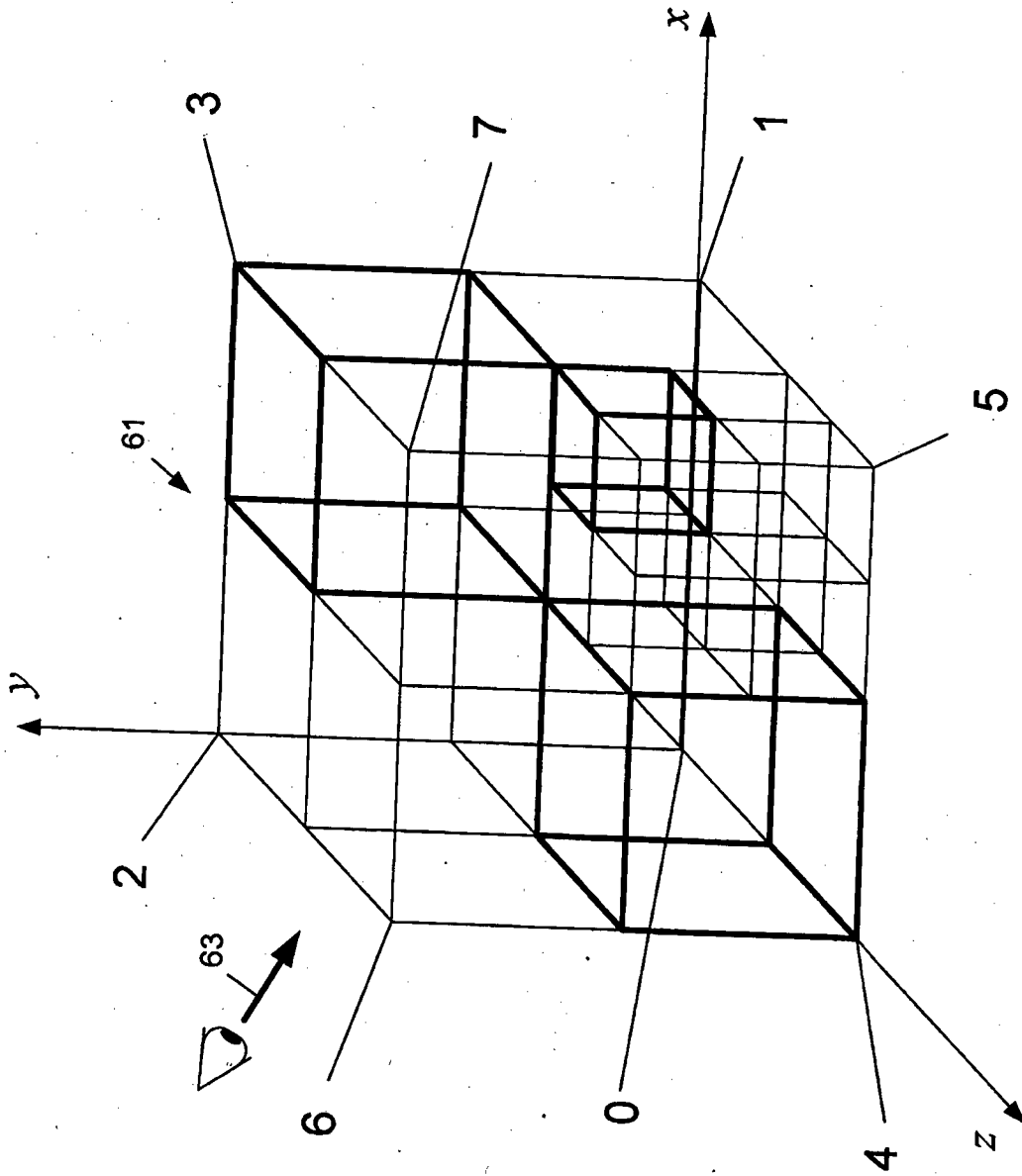


Figure 18

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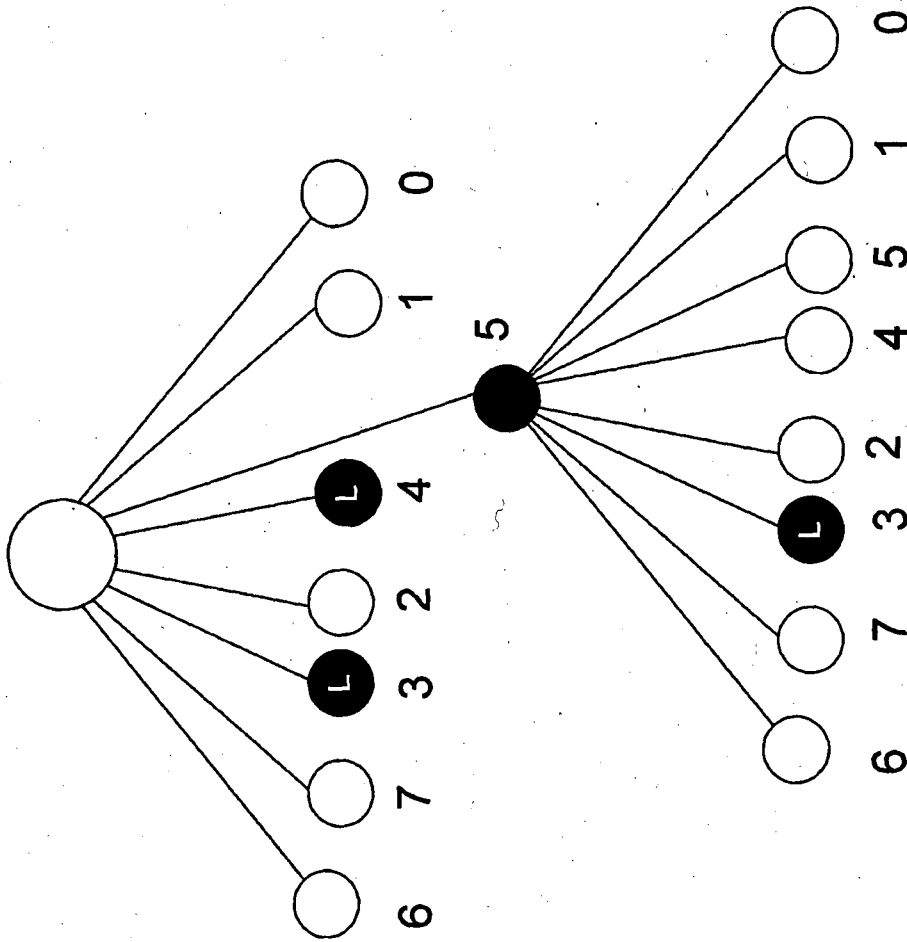


Figure 19

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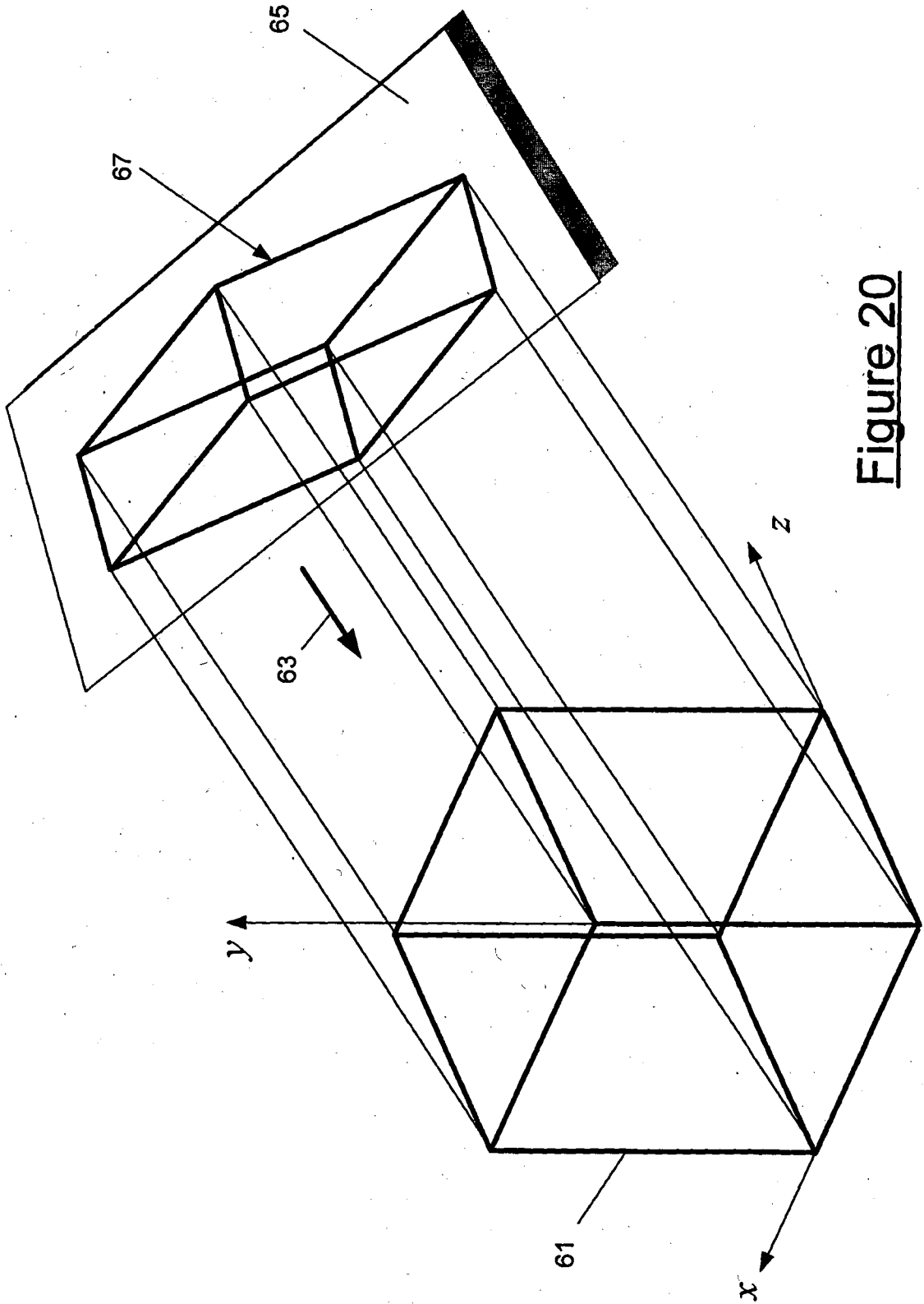


Figure 20

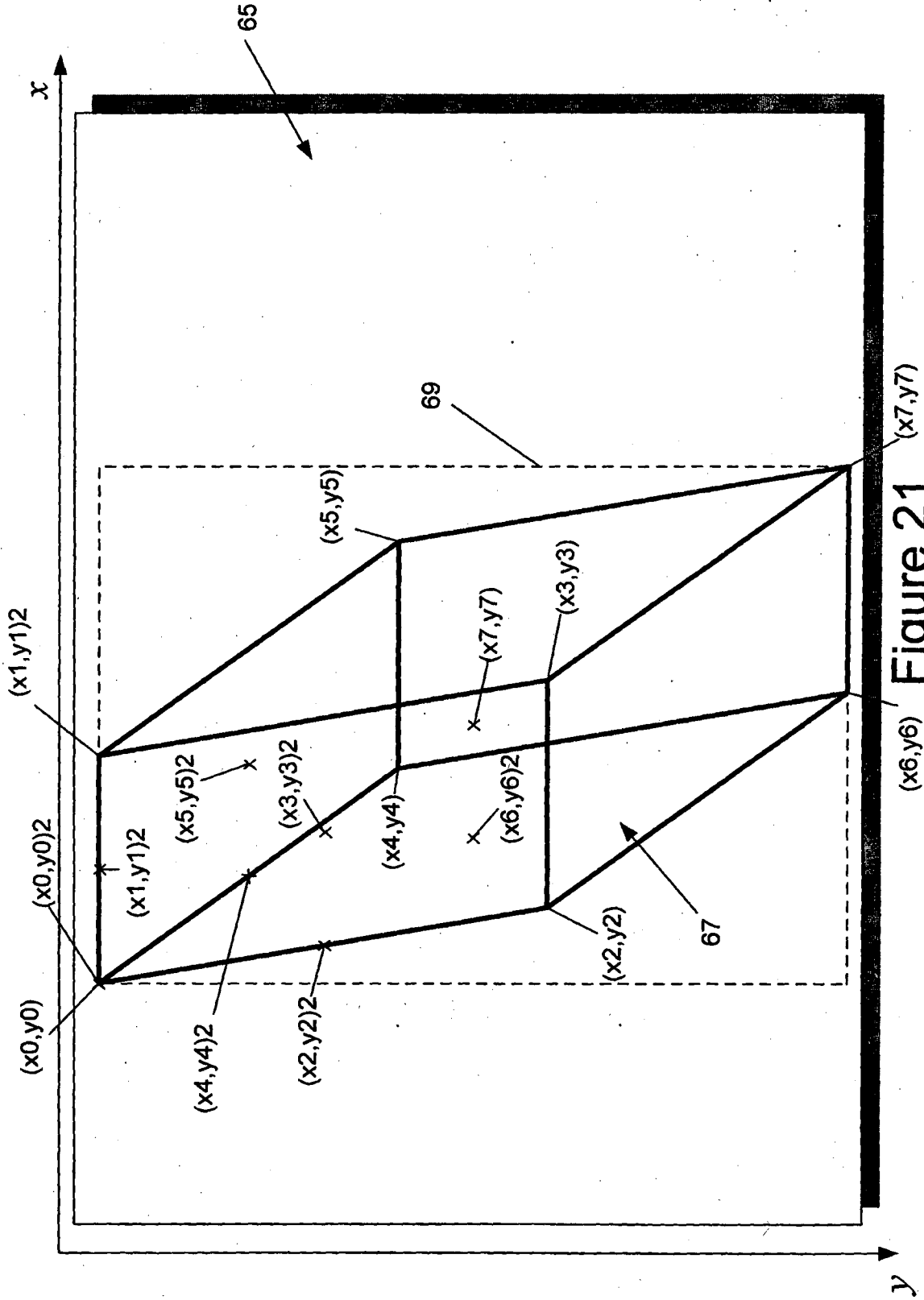


Figure 21

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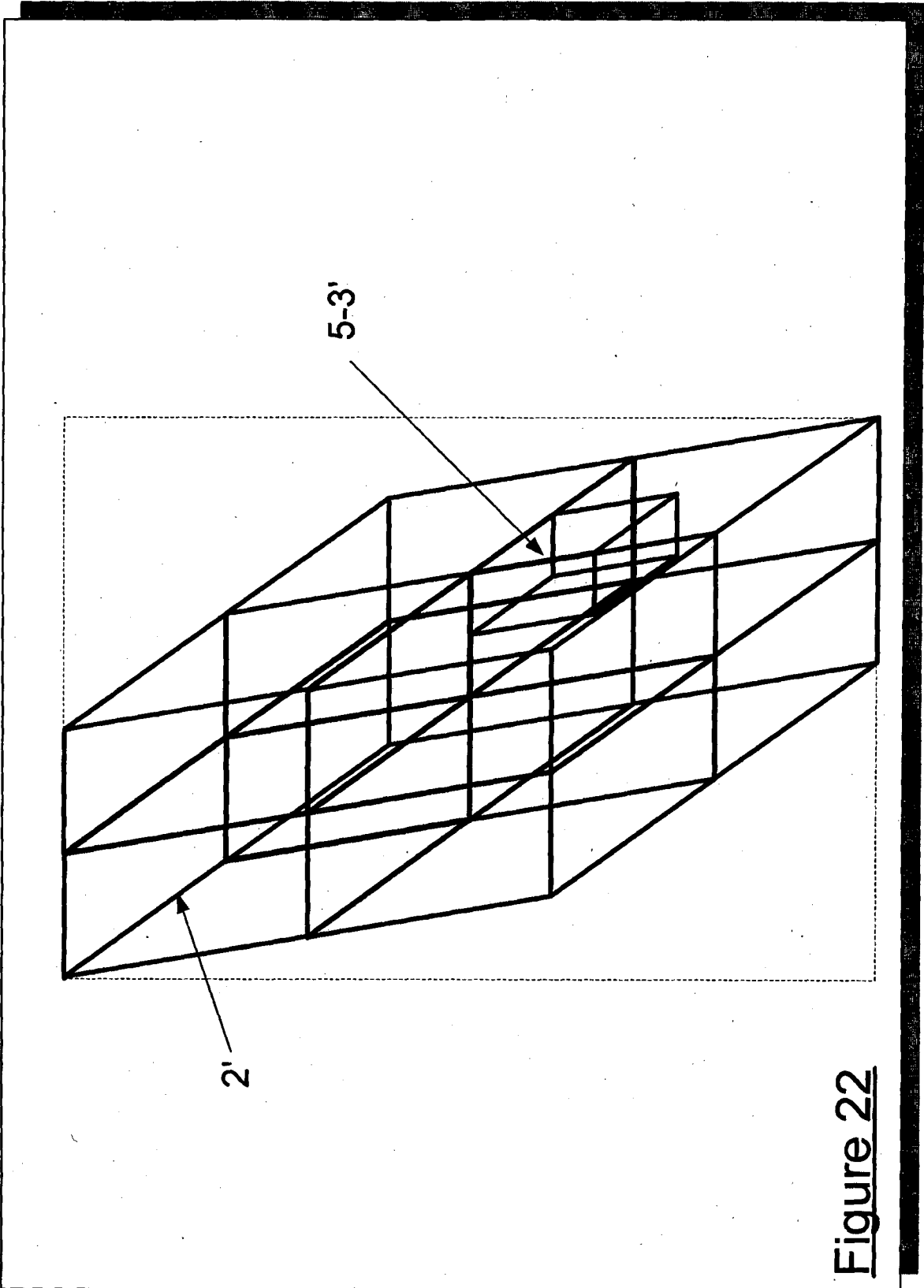


Figure 22

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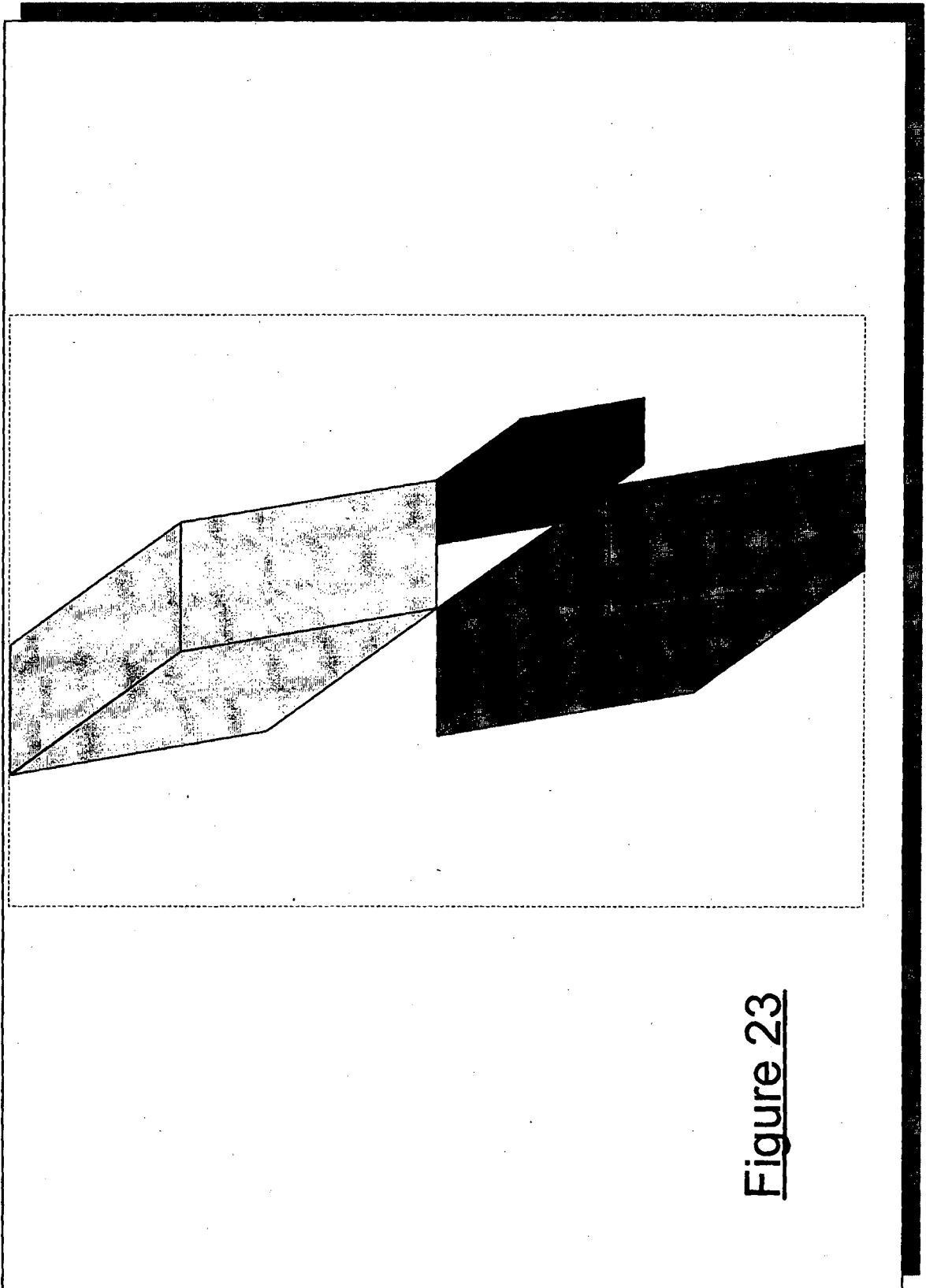


Figure 23

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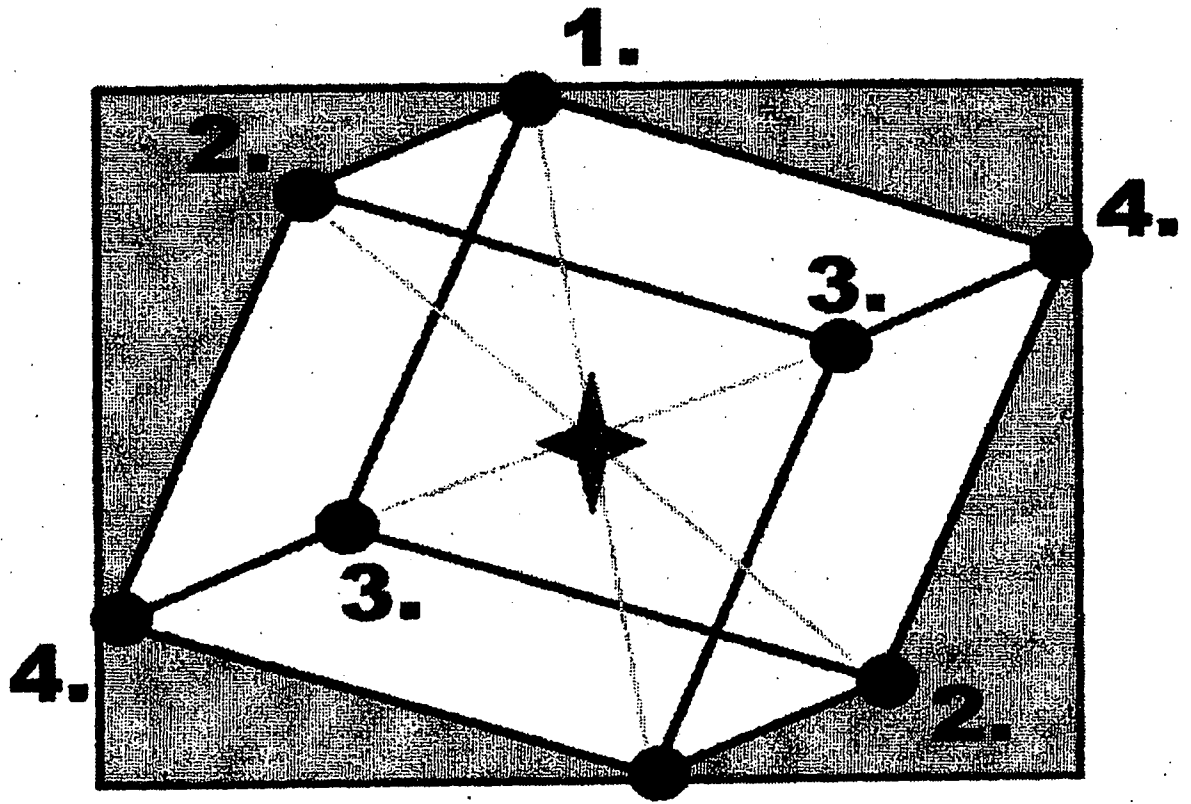


Figure 24 1.

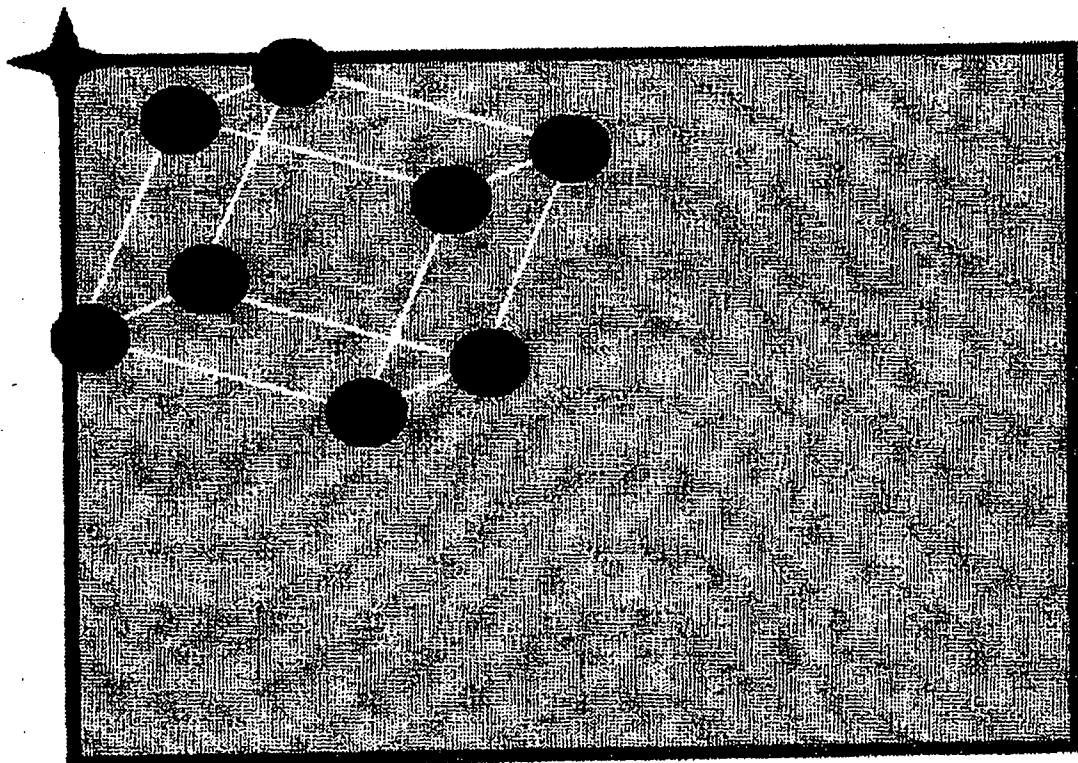


Figure 25

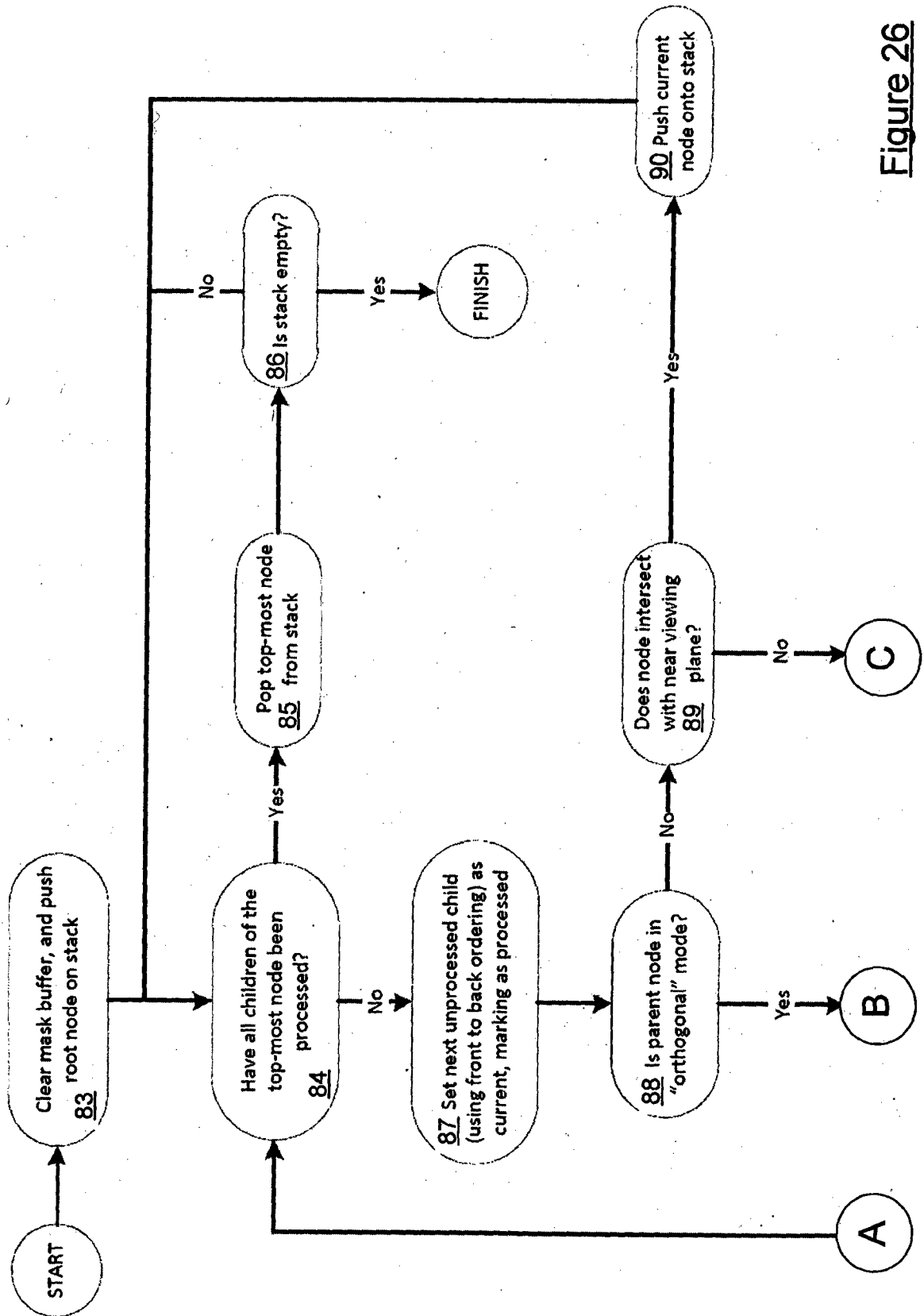


Figure 26

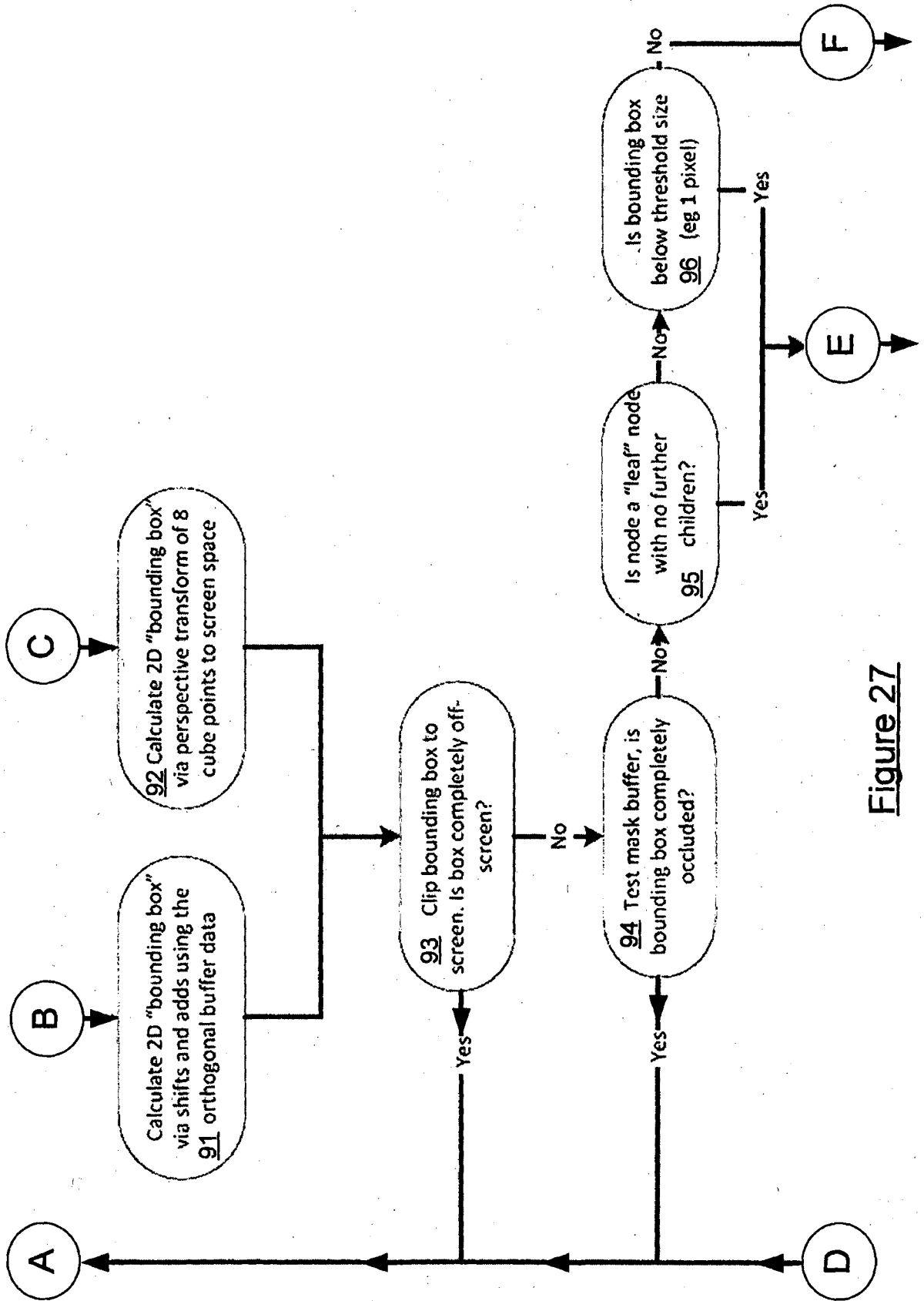


Figure 27

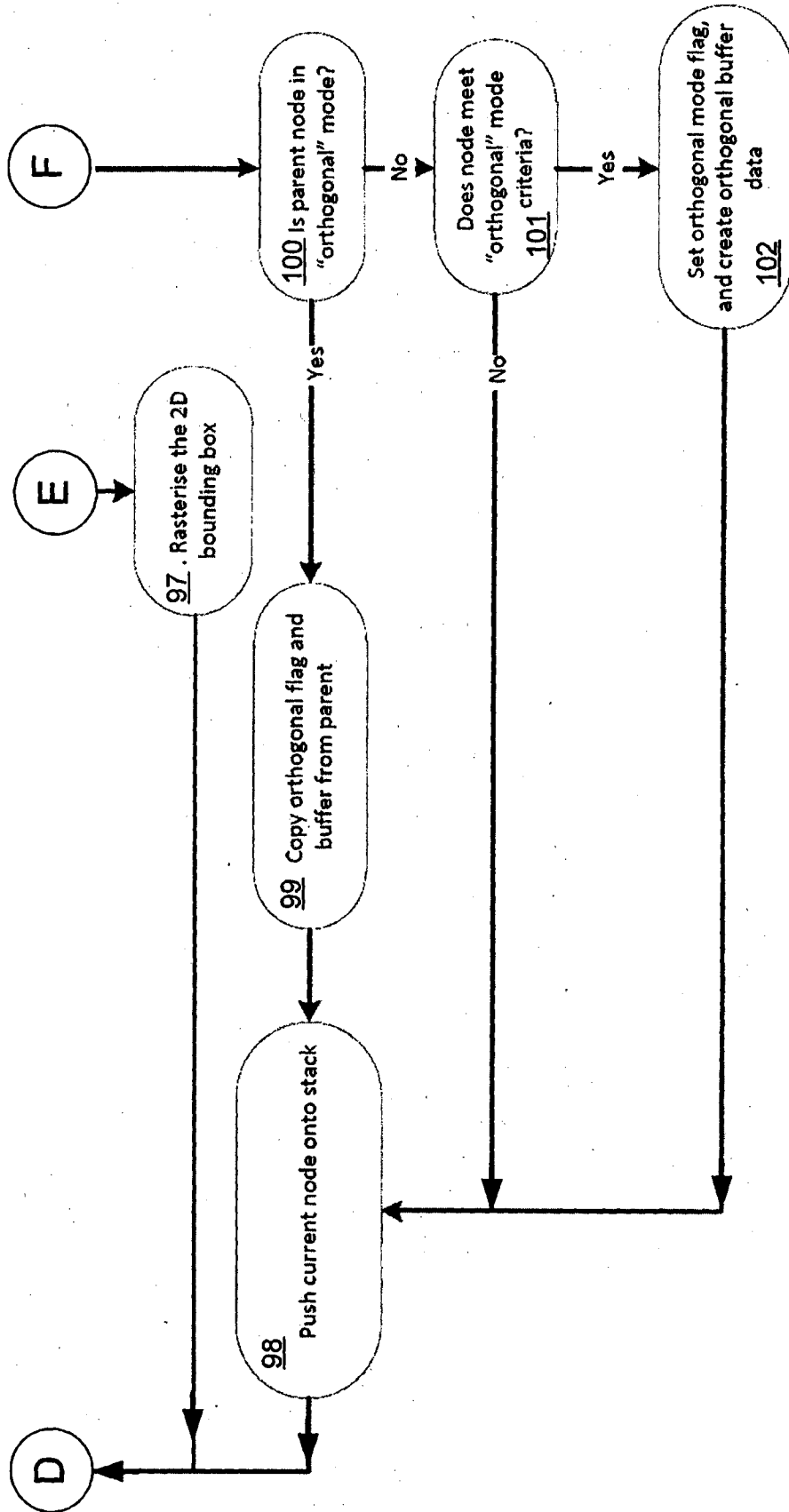


Figure 28