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(43) **Pub. Date:** **Aug. 8, 2019**(54) **FLOATING IMAGE DISPLAY SYSTEM**(52) **U.S. Cl.**(71) Applicant: **Disney Enterprises, Inc.**, Burbank, CA (US)CPC **G02B 27/2292** (2013.01); **G06T 1/20** (2013.01); **G09G 3/36** (2013.01); **G09G 2358/00** (2013.01); **G09G 2320/0626** (2013.01); **G09G 2354/00** (2013.01); **G09G 3/3406** (2013.01)(72) Inventors: **Eric C. Haseltine**, Burbank, CA (US); **Michael P. Goslin**, Sherman Oaks, CA (US); **Stephen A. Thornton**, Redondo Beach, CA (US); **Jonathan R. Hsu**, Pomona, CA (US); **Elliott Baumbach**, Porter Ranch, CA (US)

(57)

ABSTRACT

According to one implementation, a floating image display system includes a computing platform including a central processing unit (CPU), a graphics processing unit (GPU), and a system memory storing a software code. The system also includes one or more display screens controlled by the GPU, and a rotor coupled to the one or more display screens and controlled by the CPU. The CPU executes the software code to render a two-dimensional (2D) graphic on the one or more display screens using the GPU, and to spin the rotor and the one or more display screens about a vertical axis parallel to a display surface of the one or more display screens at a predetermined spin rate to generate a floating image of the 2D graphic. The floating image appears to be a three-dimensional (3D) floating image of the 2D graphic to a user viewing the floating image.

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G09G 3/34	(2006.01)

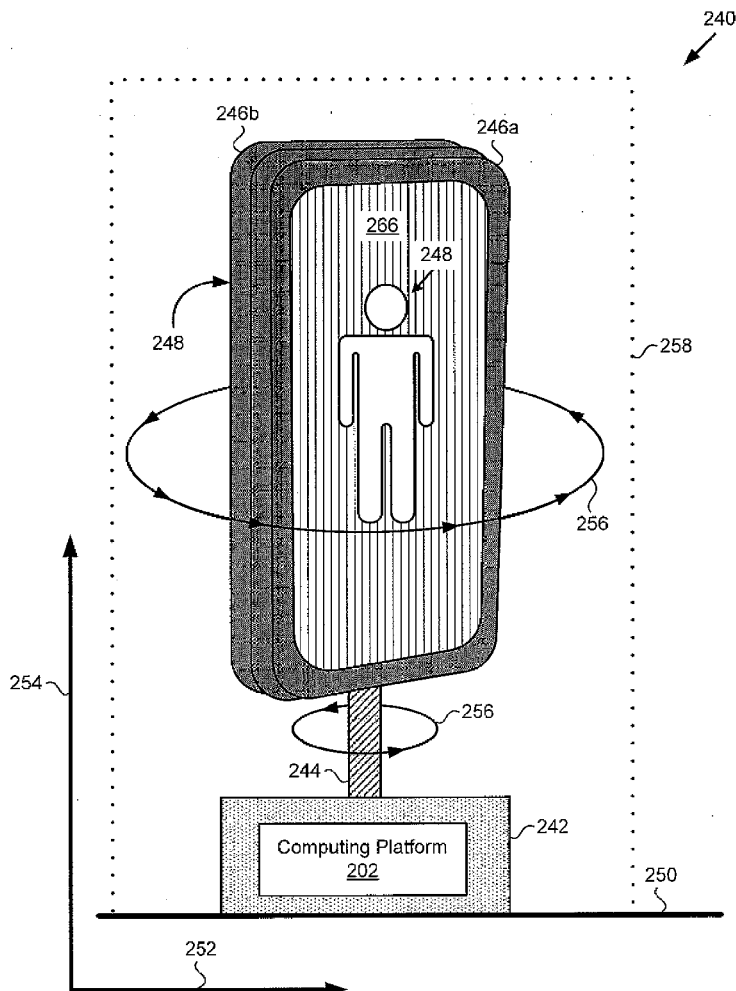


Fig. 1A

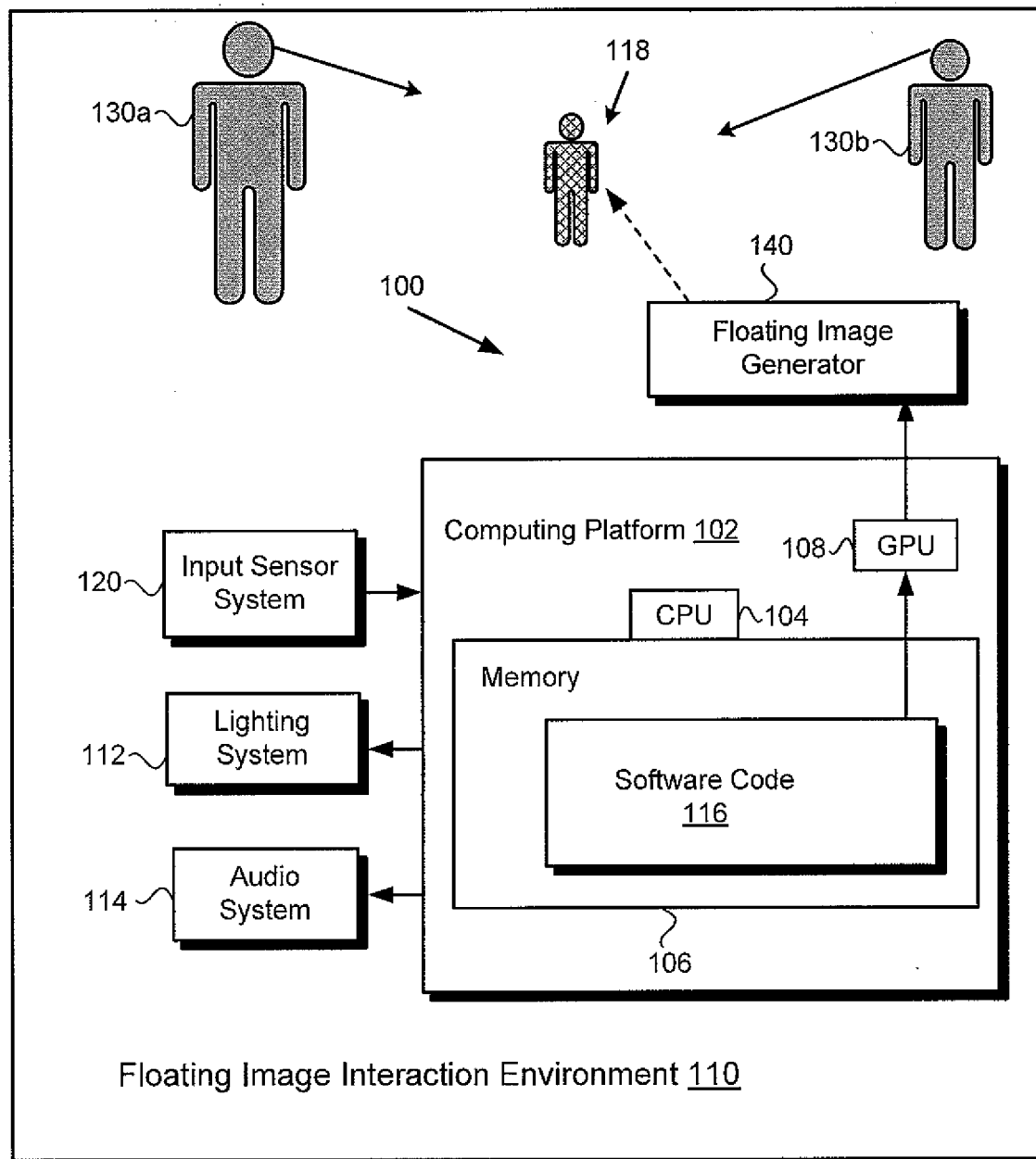


Fig. 1B

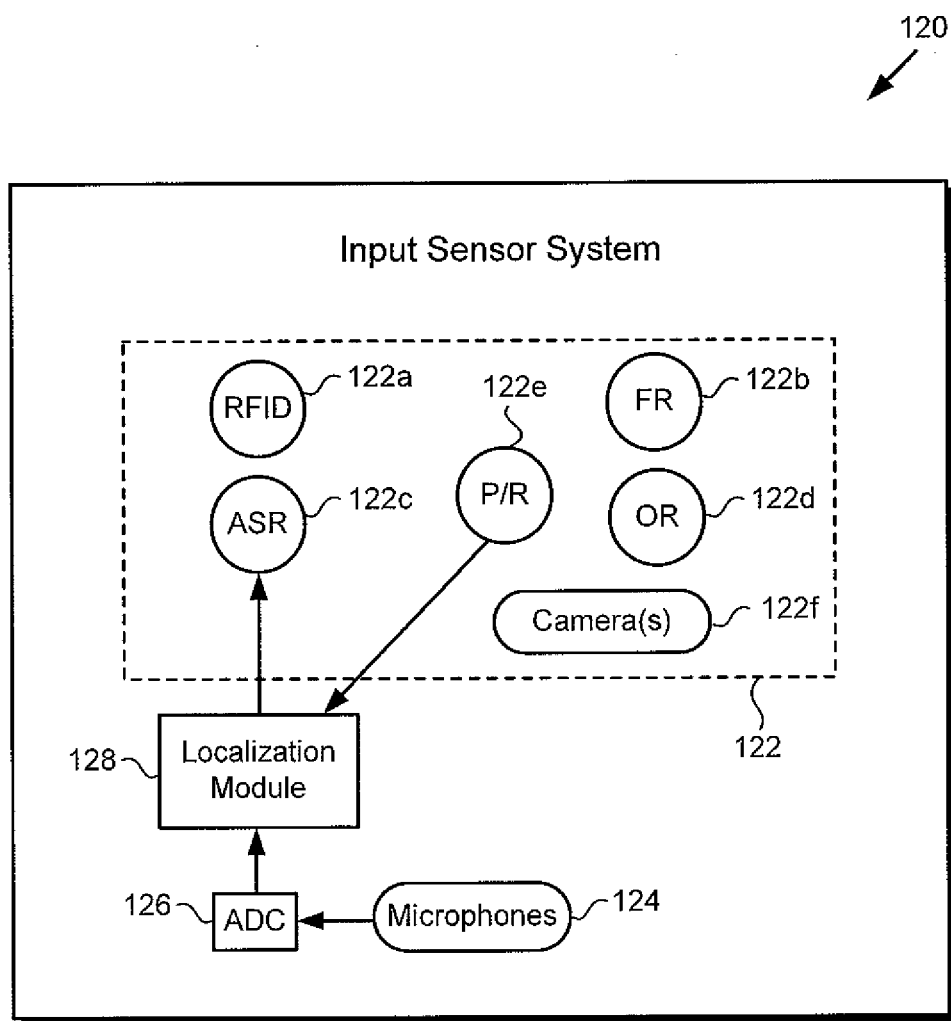
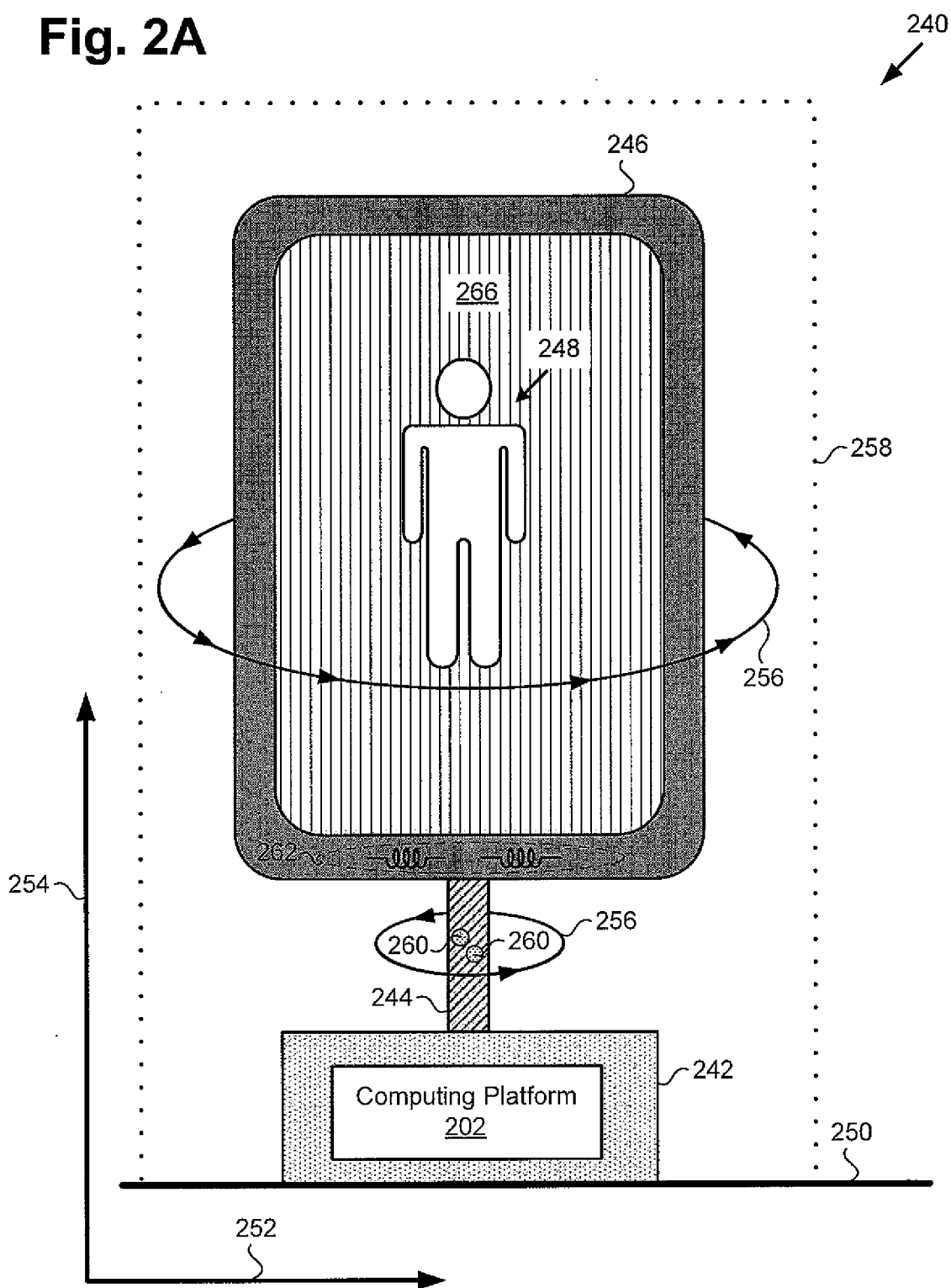


Fig. 2A



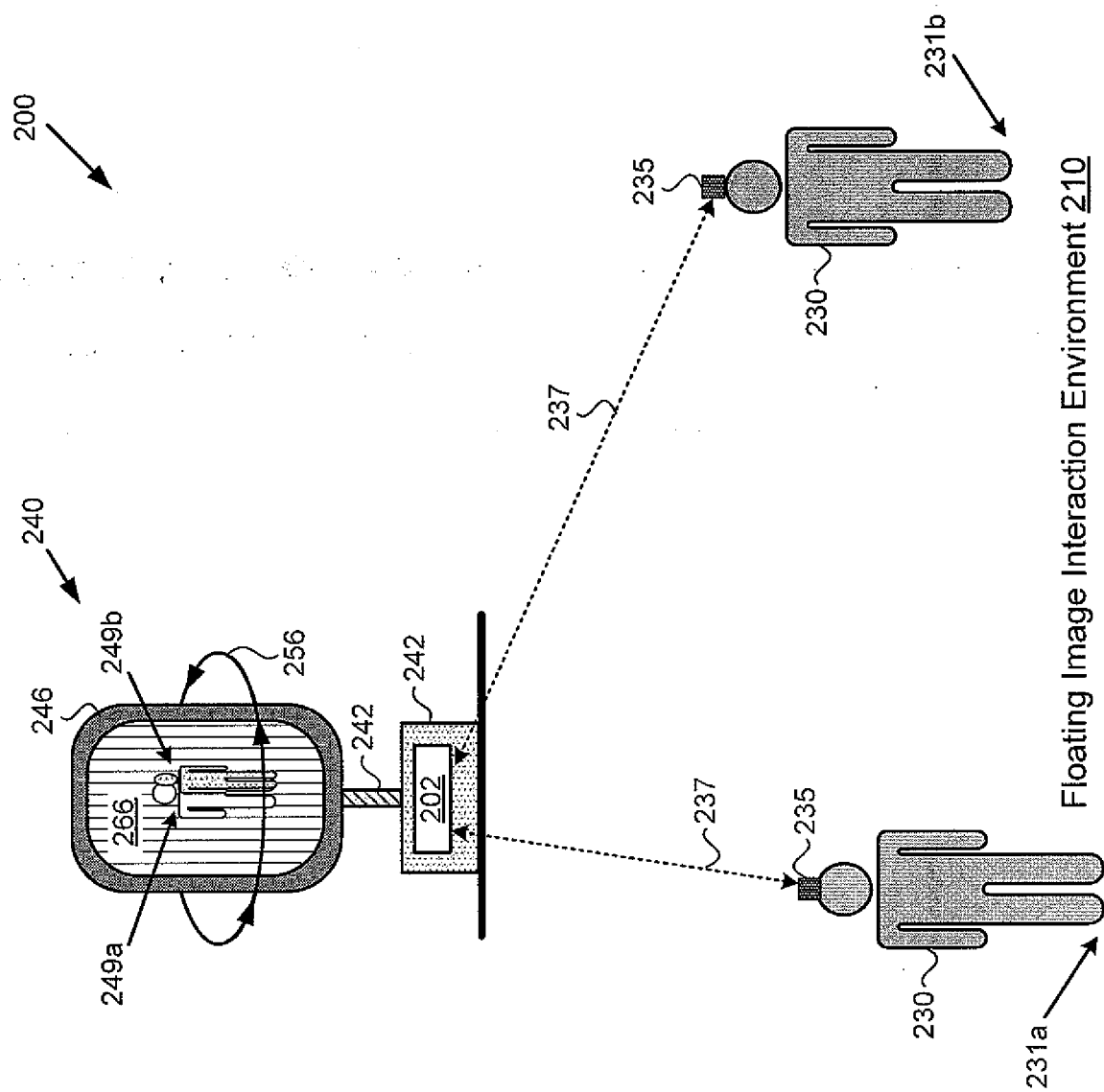


Fig. 2B

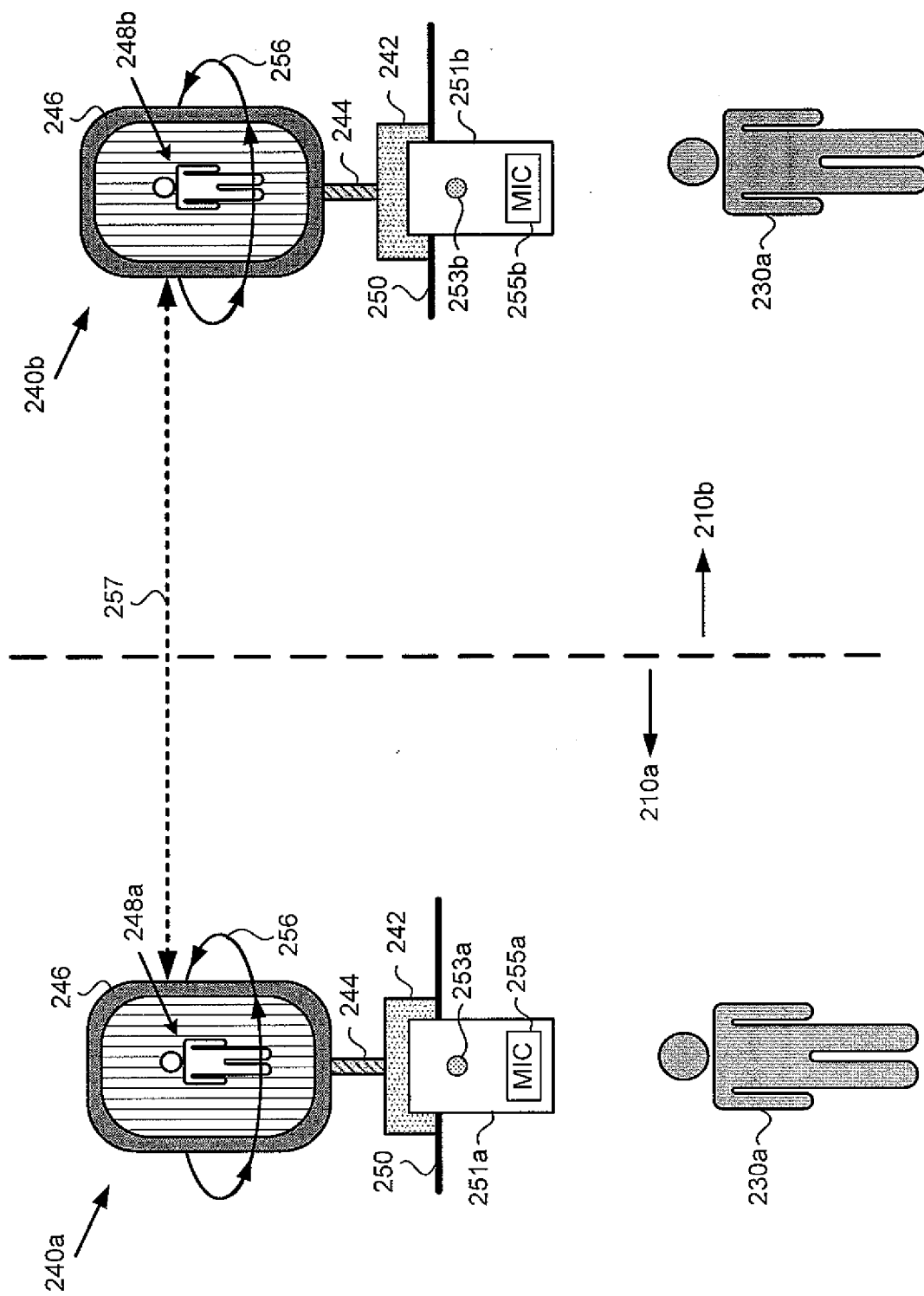
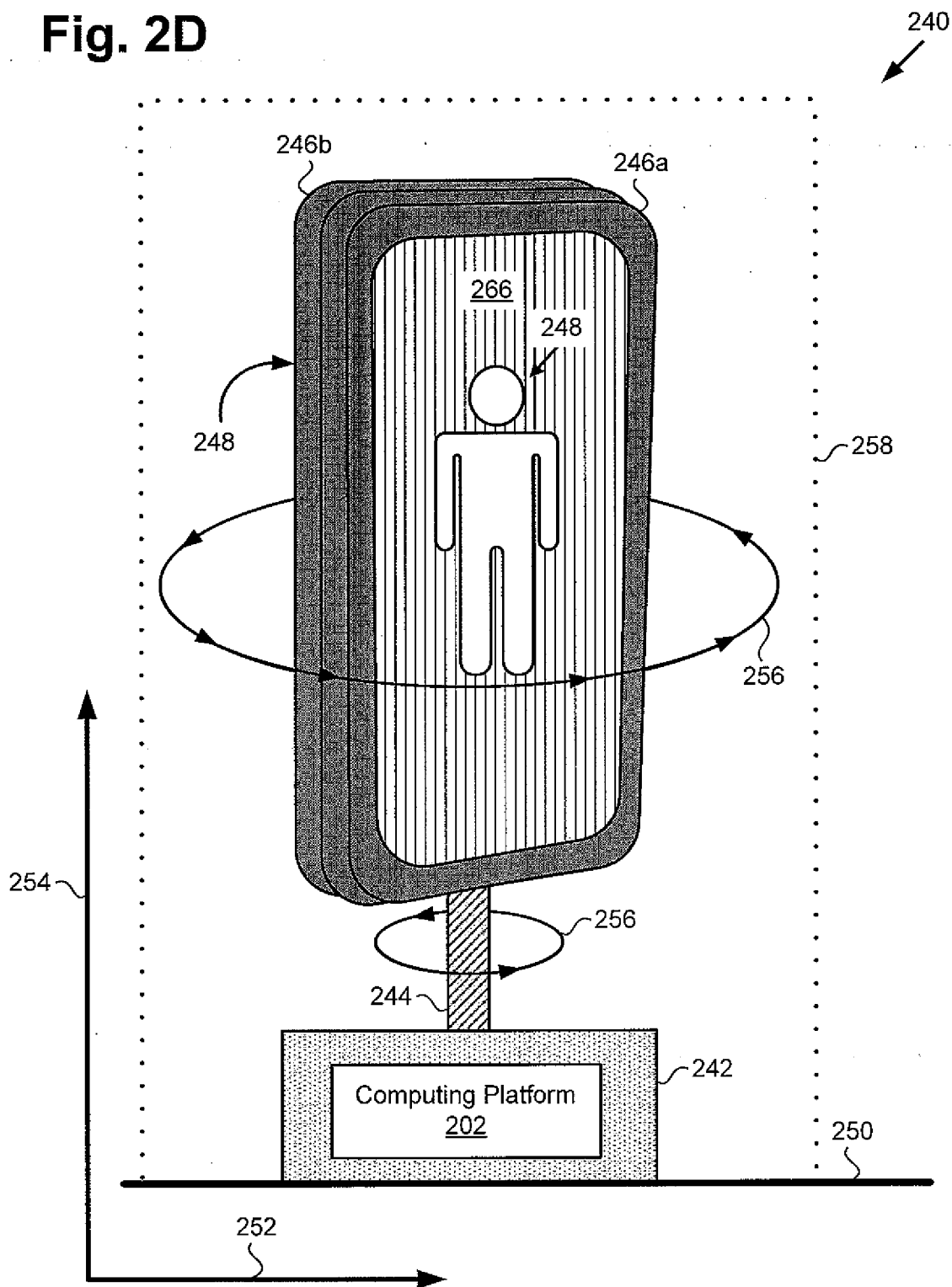


Fig. 2D



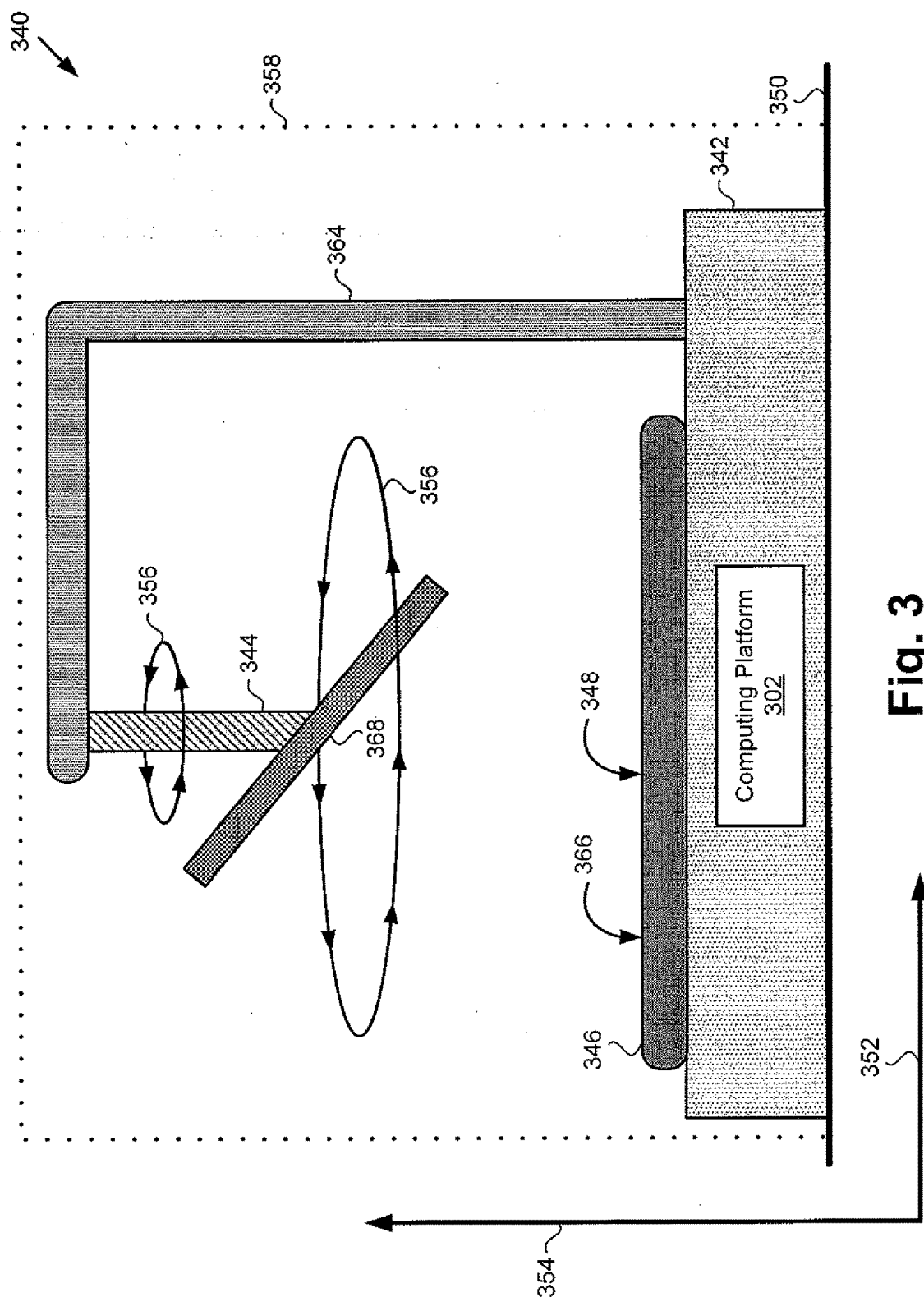


Fig. 3

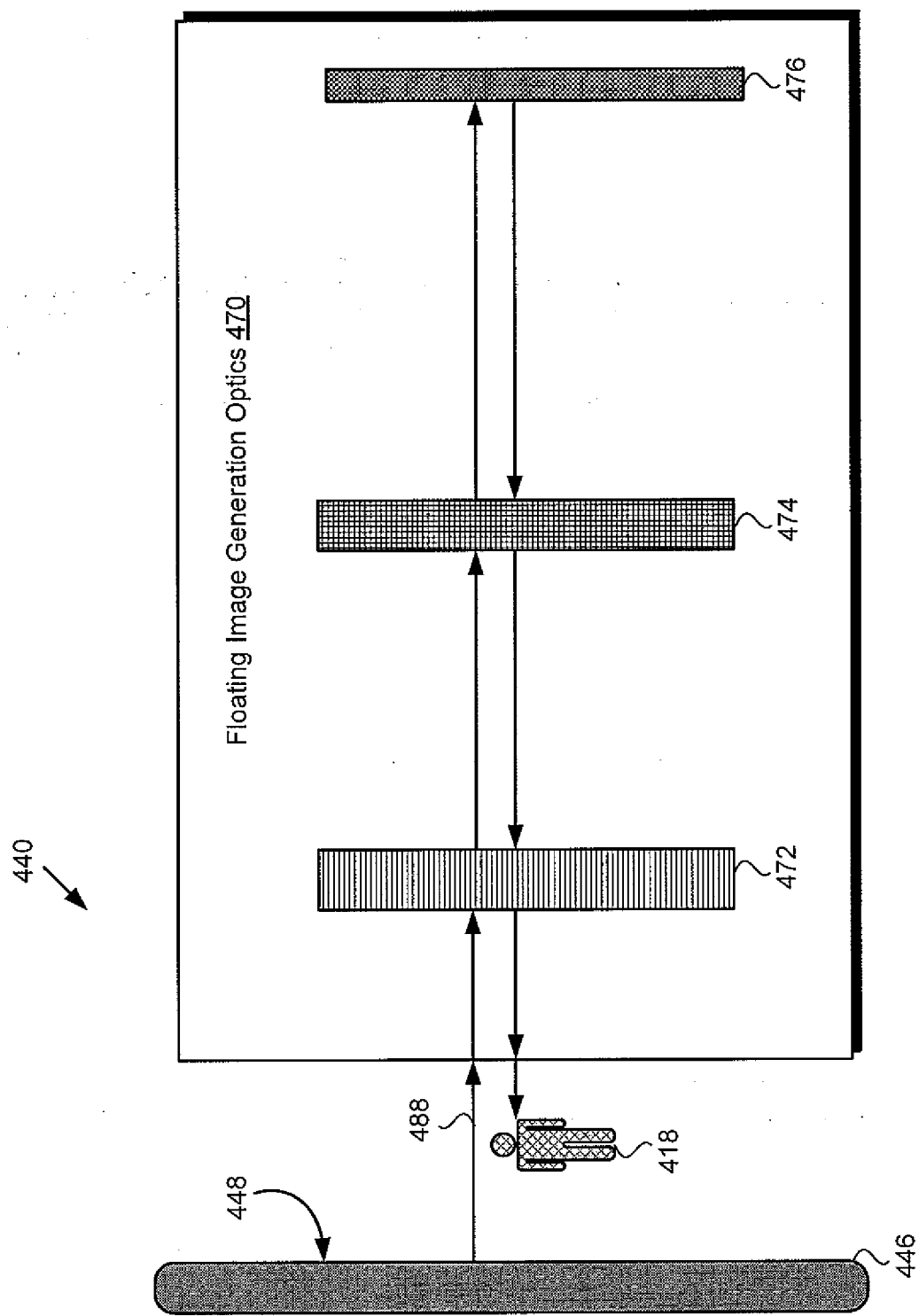


Fig. 4

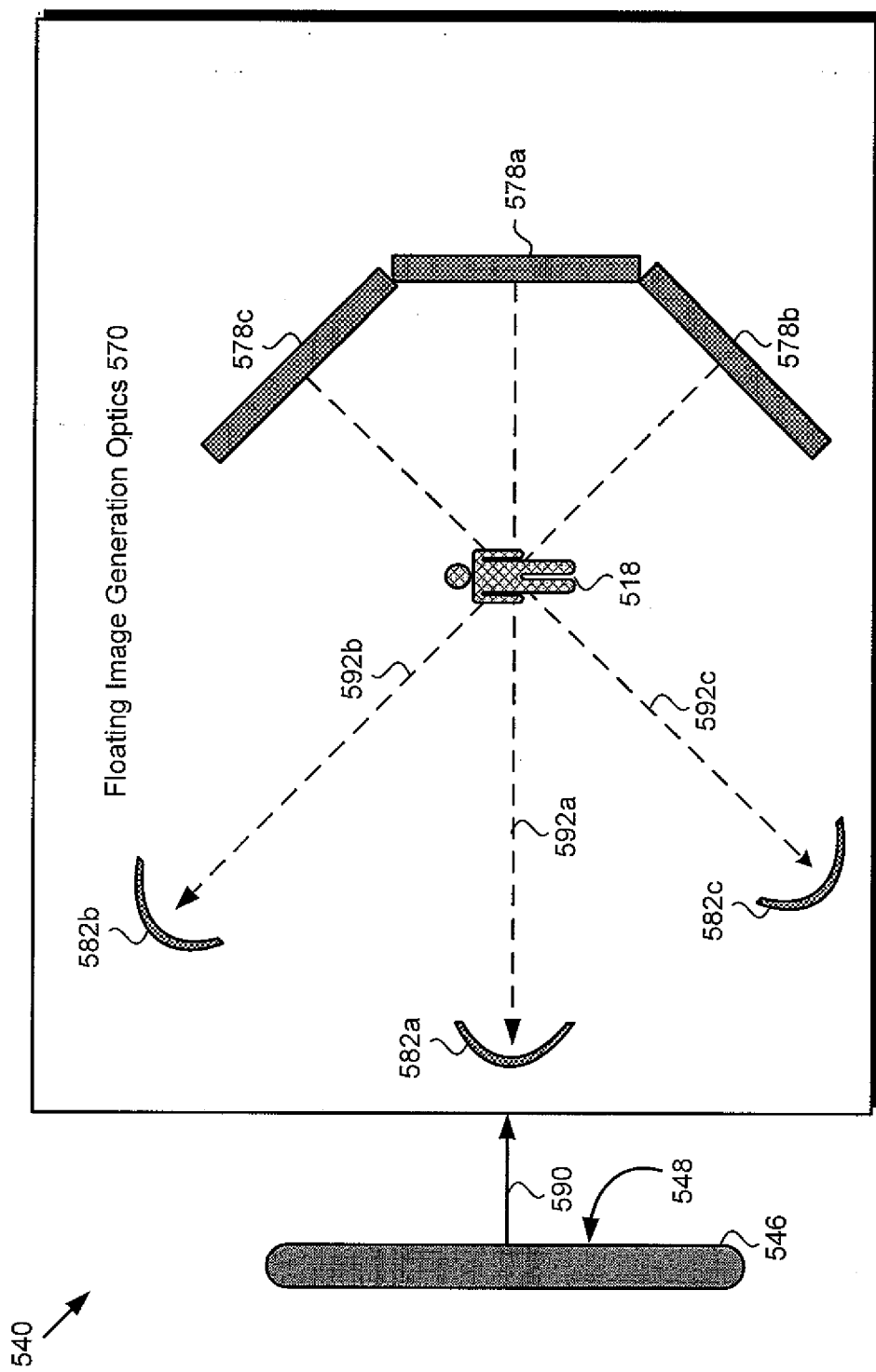


Fig. 5

FLOATING IMAGE DISPLAY SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

[0001] Advances in computer technology and software have made possible the creation of richly featured virtual characters capable of simulating interactivity with a human viewer of the virtual character. The illusion of interactivity can be further enhanced when the virtual character is displayed as a three-dimensional (3D) image, apparently independent of the display system generating it. For example, the image of the virtual character may be shown as a holographic image, or may be shown as an image that appears to float in space.

[0002] Conventional techniques for displaying holographic or floating images typically utilize sophisticated optical arrays to project the image for viewing, which can limit the environments and use cases in which providing such interactive 3D imagery is practical. Consequently, in order to make the enhanced entertainment value of interaction with a holographic or floating image more widely available, there is a need in the art for an imaging solution capable of displaying a floating image of a virtual character using readily available consumer electronics or relatively simple optical arrays.

SUMMARY

[0003] There are provided floating image display systems, substantially as shown in and/or described in connection with at least one of the figures, and as set forth more completely in the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] FIG. 1A shows a diagram of an exemplary floating image display system, according to one implementation;

[0005] FIG. 1B shows a diagram of exemplary input sensors suitable for use as part of a floating image display system, according to one implementation;

[0006] FIG. 2A shows a diagram of an exemplary floating image generator integrated with a computing platform, according to one implementation;

[0007] FIG. 2B shows a diagram of an exemplary floating image display system including the floating image generator of FIG. 2A, according to one implementation;

[0008] FIG. 2C shows an exemplary use case for the floating image generator of FIG. 2A, according to one implementation;

[0009] FIG. 2D shows a diagram of an exemplary floating image generator integrated with a computing platform, according to another implementation;

[0010] FIG. 3 shows a diagram of an exemplary floating image generator integrated with a computing platform, according to yet another implementation;

[0011] FIG. 4 shows a cross-sectional side view of an exemplary floating image generator, according to another implementation; and

[0012] FIG. 5 shows a top view of an exemplary floating image generator, according to yet another implementation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] The following description contains specific information pertaining to implementations in the present disclosure. One skilled in the art will recognize that the present disclosure may be implemented in a manner different from

that specifically discussed herein. The drawings in the present application and their accompanying detailed description are directed to merely exemplary implementations. Unless noted otherwise, like or corresponding elements among the figures may be indicated by like or corresponding reference numerals. Moreover, the drawings and illustrations in the present application are generally not to scale, and are not intended to correspond to actual relative dimensions.

[0014] The present application discloses floating image display systems that overcome the drawbacks and deficiencies in the conventional art. In some implementations, one or more display screens upon which a two-dimensional (2D) graphic is rendered is/are spun to generate a floating image that appears to be three-dimensional (3D). In an alternative implementation, the 2D graphic is rendered on a display screen and a mirror facing the display screen at an angle is spun to generate the apparently 3D floating image. In yet other implementations, a relatively simple array of optical elements can be utilized to project a 2D graphic as a floating image. Consequently, the display solutions disclosed in the present application advantageously make possible and practical the display of apparently 3D floating images in a wide variety of use cases and implementational environments.

[0015] FIG. 1A shows a diagram of exemplary floating image display system 100, according to one implementation. As shown in FIG. 1A, floating image display system 100 includes computing platform 102 interactively linked to lighting system 112, audio system 114, input sensor system 120, and floating image generator 140. As further shown in FIG. 1A, computing platform 102 has central processing unit (CPU) 104, implemented as a hardware processor, system memory 106 implemented as a non-transitory storage device storing software code 116, and graphics processing unit (GPU) 108. Also shown in FIG. 1A are floating image 118 displayed by floating image display system 100, viewers 130a and 130b of floating image 118 (also herein “users 130a and 130b”), and floating image interaction environment 110 in which floating image display system 100 is implemented.

[0016] It is noted that although FIG. 1A shows two users 130a and 130b, that representation is provided merely for conceptual clarity. More generally, users 130a and 130b may correspond to a single user, or to more or many more than two users who may be positioned so as to view floating image 118 from a variety of perspectives. For example, in some implementations, users 130a and 130b may be situated so as to view floating image 118 from a number of discrete perspectives, such as three discrete perspectives located approximately 120° apart on an imaginary 360° circle surrounding floating image 118 in floating image interaction environment 110. However, in other implementations, users 130a and 130b may be able to view floating image 118 from the perspective of any position on such an imaginary circle surrounding floating image 118.

[0017] In some implementations, one or more of users 130a and 130b may be interactively engaged with floating image 118 via floating image display system 100 including computing platform 102, lighting system 112, audio system 114, input sensor system 120, and floating image generator 140. That is to say, in those implementations, CPU of computing platform 102 may be configured to execute software code 116 to utilize lighting system 112, audio system 114, input sensor system 120, GPU 108, and floating

image generator **140** to create and/or maintain the illusion that floating image **118** is responsive to one or more of users **130a** and **130b**. For example, floating image **118** may appear to respond to one or more of the speech, appearance, posture, location, or movements of one or more of users **130a** and **130b** in floating image interaction environment **110**.

[0018] It is further noted that although FIG. 1A depicts lighting system **112**, audio system **114**, input sensor system **120**, and floating image generator **140** as communicatively coupled to, but not structurally integrated with, computing platform **102**, that representation is merely exemplary. In other implementations, one, more than one, or all of lighting system **112**, audio system **114**, input sensor system **120**, and floating image generator **140** may be structurally integrated with computing platform **102**. Thus, in various implementations, computing platform **102** can include one or more of lighting system **112**, audio system **114**, input sensor system **120**, and floating image generator **140**, in addition to CPU **104**, system memory **106** storing software code **116**, and GPU **108**.

[0019] Lighting system **112** may include lighting elements that are wholly integrated with computing platform **102**, may include lighting elements that are controlled by but remote from computing platform **102**, such as lighting elements mounted on or adjacent to a ceiling, walls, or floor of floating image interaction environment **110**, or may be partially integrated with computing platform **102** while including remote lighting elements. Lighting system **112** may include multiple light sources, and may be configured to provide light of varying intensity and varying colors, for example. For instance, lighting system **112** may include small spotlights configured to provide directional lighting that can be turned on or off, or be selectively dimmed and brightened.

[0020] Similarly, audio system **114** may be wholly integrated with computing platform **102**, may include elements, such as audio speakers, that are controlled by but remote from computing platform **102**, such as elements mounted on or adjacent to a ceiling, walls, or floor of floating image interaction environment **110**, or may be partially integrated with computing platform **102** while including remote audio elements. In one implementation, audio system **114** may be a venue wide audio system, such as a theater quality Dolby® high definition (HD) surround-sound system, for example. Moreover, audio system **114** may include a library of stored audio recordings that can be played back through audio system **114**.

[0021] In some implementations, lighting system **112** and audio system **114** may be synchronized with floating image generator **140** and the output of GPU **108** to produce an immersive multi-media experience within floating image interaction environment **110**. It is noted that input sensor system **120** is described in greater detail below by reference to FIG. 1B, while various implementations of floating image generator **140** are described below by reference to FIGS. 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 3, 4, and 5.

[0022] Floating image interaction environment **110** can correspond to a variety of leisure, entertainment, or educational venues, for example. Examples of such venues include a theme park, a shopping mall, a hotel, a casino, a hospital, or a museum, to name a few. Alternatively, floating image interaction environment **110** may correspond to a teleconferencing venue in an office complex, hospital, uni-

versity, or hotel business center, for example. In implementations in which floating image interaction environment **110** is a teleconferencing venue, for example, users **130a** and **130b** may correspond to local participants in a teleconference, while floating image **118** may provide an interactive, apparently 3D image of one or more remote participants in the teleconference.

[0023] FIG. 1B shows a more detailed exemplary implementation of input sensor system **120**, in FIG. 1A. As shown in FIG. 1B, input sensor system **120** includes multiple sensors **122**, microphones **124**, analog-to-digital converter (ADC) **126**, and localization module **128**. As further shown in FIG. 1B, sensors **122** of input sensor system **120** may include radio-frequency identification (RFID) sensor **122a**, facial recognition (FR) sensor **122b**, automatic speech recognition (ASR) sensor **122c**, object recognition (OR) sensor **122d**, position and/or rate (P/R) sensor **122e**, and one or more camera(s) **122f**.

[0024] It is noted that the specific sensors shown to be included among sensors **122** of input sensor system **120** are merely exemplary, and in other implementations, sensors **122** of input sensor system **120** may include more, or fewer, sensors than RFID sensor **122a**, FR sensor **122b**, ASR sensor **122c**, OR sensor **122d**, P/R sensor **122e**, and camera(s) **122f**. RFID sensor **122a**, FR sensor **122b**, ASR sensor **122c**, OR sensor **122d** may be implemented using any suitable sensors for those respective functions, as known in the art. For example, P/R sensor **122e** may be implemented as a Hall effect sensor, an optical encoder, or using a potentiometer or light-emitting diode (LED) and photo sensor.

[0025] One or more camera(s) **122f** may include one or more still camera(s) and/or one or more video camera(s), for example. Microphones **124** may include stationary and/or moving microphones. For example, stationary microphones of microphones **124** may be distributed in a 360° array surrounding floating image **118** to enhance directional sensing of sound, such as speech, produced by one or more of users **130a** and **130b**.

[0026] In some implementations, one or more moving microphones of microphones **124** may rotate in synchronization with a rotor of floating image generator **140**. In those implementations, P/R sensor **122e** may be used in combination with microphones **124** to identify the direction from which a sound sensed using microphones **124** is received. Whether implemented as stationary, moving, or both, microphones **124** may be configured to include acoustic waveguides to further enhance their directional sensitivity.

[0027] As indicated in FIG. 1B, in some implementations, data from P/R sensor **122e** and or data generated by ADC **126** from sounds detected by microphones **124** are processed by localization module **128** to identify the distance and/or direction of the respective sources of the sounds received by microphones **124**. In those implementations, the output from localization module **128** may be provided to ASR sensor **122c** to enhance the performance of ASR sensor **122c** in discriminating among environmental sounds, noise, and purposeful speech by one or more of users **130a** and **130b**. As a result, the advantageous illusion of interactivity by floating image **118** can be further supported by the apparently appropriate acoustic and/or visual responsiveness of floating image **118** to the speech and/or actions of one or more of users **130a** and **130b**.

[0028] FIG. 2A shows a diagram of exemplary floating image generator 240 integrated with computing platform 202, according to one implementation. As shown in FIG. 2A, floating image generator 240 includes base 242 having integrated computing platform 202, situated on surface 250, which may be a floor within floating image interaction environment 110, or another horizontal surface within floating image interaction environment 110 substantially parallel to the floor.

[0029] In addition, floating image generator 240 includes rotor 244 including optional magnets 260, display screen 246 including optional one or more induction coils 262 and having optional privacy screen 266 affixed thereon, and may further include masking shutter 258 surrounding base 242, rotor 244, and display screen 246. Also shown in FIG. 2A are horizontal axis 252 substantially parallel to surface 250, vertical axis 254 substantially perpendicular to surface 250, spin direction 256 of rotor 244 and display screen 246, and 2D graphic 248 rendered on display screen 246.

[0030] Floating image generator 240 corresponds in general to floating image generator 140, in FIG. 1A, and those features may share any of the characteristics attributed to either corresponding feature by the present disclosure. In addition, computing platform 202 corresponds in general to computing platform 102, in FIG. 1A, and those features may share any of the characteristics attributed to either corresponding feature by the present disclosure. Thus, although not explicitly shown in FIG. 2A, computing platform 202 includes features corresponding respectively to CPU 104, GPU 108, and system memory 106 storing software code 116. Moreover, like computing platform 102, computing platform 202 may be configured to control, or may have integrated therein, one or more of lighting system 112, audio system 114, and input sensor system 120.

[0031] Referring to FIGS. 1A and 2A in combination, according to the exemplary implementation shown in FIG. 2A, display screen 246 is controlled by GPU 108 of computing platform 102/202, while rotor 244 coupled to display screen 246 is controlled by CPU 104 of computing platform 102/202. CPU 104 of computing platform 102/202 is configured to execute software code 116 to render 2D graphic 248 on display screen 246 using GPU 108.

[0032] CPU 104 is further configured to execute software code 116 to spin rotor 244 and display screen 246 about vertical axis 254 parallel to a display surface of display screen 246 at a predetermined spin rate, which may be on the order of approximately one or more tens of rotations per second, such as approximately forty rotations per second for example, to generate floating image 118 of 2D graphic 248. As a result of the floating image generation performed by floating image generator 140/240, floating image 118 appears to be a 3D floating image of 2D graphic 248 to users 130a and 130b viewing floating image 118.

[0033] In some implementations, display screen 246 may be a liquid-crystal display (LCD) screen, for example. Moreover, in some implementations, display screen 246 may be provided by a mobile communication device included as part of floating image generator 140/240, coupled to rotor 244, and configured to spin with display screen 246 at the predetermined spin rate. For example, display screen 246 may be part of a smartphone or a tablet computer. It is noted that in implementations in which display screen 246 is part of a mobile communication device such as a smartphone or a tablet computer, one or more

microphones 124 and sensors 122 including camera(s) 122f of input sensor system 120 may be features built into the mobile communication device.

[0034] In the implementation shown in FIG. 2A, various features and/or techniques may be utilized to reduce flicker and/or blur of floating image 118 generated by floating image generator 140/240. For example, optional privacy screen 266 may be affixed to the display surface of display screen 246 so as to restrict viewing of display screen 246 outside of a predetermined viewing angle. Such a privacy screen may take the form of a louvered structure affixed to display screen 246, or to a privacy film covering the display surface of display screen 246.

[0035] Alternatively, or in addition, in implementations in which display screen 246 is an LCD screen, CPU 104 may be configured to execute software code 116 to strobe one or more of the frequency, intensity, and duty cycle of the LCD backlight at a predetermined strobe rate. Strobing can reduce motion blur by decreasing the time window over which the human eye and brain integrate visual information regarding spatial features. A privacy film restricts the viewing angles of display screen 246 and thereby restricts the number of spatially distinct images presented to the eye per unit of time.

[0036] Although, in some implementations, optional privacy screen 266 may be an advantageous or desirable feature for reducing flicker and/or blur, in some other implementations it may be preferable to omit optional privacy screen 266. For example, in implementations in which true volumetric images, such as surfaces of revolution, are to be displayed as floating image 118, privacy screen may be preferentially omitted. As a specific example, where 2D graphic 248 is rendered on display screen 246 as a 2D circle, spinning of display screen 246 by floating image generator 240 will result in floating image 118 appearing to users 130a and 130b as a true 3D sphere. Analogously, where 2D graphic 248 is rendered on display screen 246 as a 2D triangle, spinning of display screen 246 by floating image generator 240 will result in floating image 118 appearing to users 130a and 130b as a 3D cone.

[0037] It is noted that CPU 104 may execute software code 116 to spin rotor 244 and display screen 246 about vertical axis 254 at a varying spin rate, or at a substantially constant predetermined spin rate. It is also noted that spin direction 256 may be in either a counter clockwise direction with respect to the plane of horizontal axis 252, as shown in FIG. 2A, or in a clockwise direction with respect to that plane. Furthermore, it is emphasized that each of the viewing angle permitted by privacy screen 266, the spin rate of rotor 244, the back light duty cycle and frequency of display screen 246 when implemented as an LCD screen, and the image refresh rate of floating image display system 100, as well as the combination of those parameters, may be predetermined so as to optimize the viewing experience of users 130a and 130b.

[0038] In some implementations, the same 2D graphic 248 may be rendered on display screen 246 during the entirety of one or more integer numbers of rotations of rotor 244 and display screen 246 about vertical axis 254. In those implementations, each of users 130a and 130b will view floating image 118 from the same perspective, regardless of their location relative to floating image 118.

[0039] However, in other implementations, CPU 104 may execute software code 116 to use GPU 108 to modulate 2D

graphic 248 as rotor 244 and display screen 246 rotate, so as to generate multiple perspectives of floating image 118 appropriate respectively to the location of each of users 130a and 130b. For example, user 130a located so as to face a front side of floating image 118 and stationary at that location would consistently view floating image 118 from a frontal perspective. By contrast, user 130b located so as to face a backside of floating image 118 and stationary at that location would consistently view floating image 118 as if from the rear.

[0040] According to some implementations, and in order to reduce the inertia of rotating display screen 246, electricity for powering display screen 246 may be provided through inductive coupling of display screen 246 to base 242. Alternatively, rotor 244 may include multiple magnets, which may be rare earth magnets, for example, while display screen 246 may include one or more induction coils 262. In those alternative implementations, magnets 260 and one or more induction coils 262 may be operated as a generator for providing power to display screen 246 and/or computing platform 102/202 in base 242.

[0041] In some use cases, it may be advantageous or desirable to enhance the illusion that floating image 118 is floating in space independently of floating image generator 140/240. When implemented for those use cases, floating image generator 104/240 may further include masking shutter 258. Masking shutter 258 may be implemented as a liquid-crystal shutter, such as a polymer-dispersed liquid-crystal, or “smart glass” shutter, surrounding base 242, rotor 244, and display screen 246. In those implementations, masking shutter 258 may be controlled by computing platform 102/202 to remain opaque so as to obscure base 242, rotor 244, and display screen 246 while display screen 246 is spun up to generate floating image 118. Masking shutter 258 may then be controlled by computing platform 102/202 to transition from opaque to transparent to reveal floating image 118 as though spontaneously generated in space.

[0042] Alternatively, in some implementations, masking shutter 258 may include an opaque shield, in the form of a sleeve configured to slide up and down to respectively mask and unmask floating image 118. The moveable opaque sleeve may operate as an on/off switch such that, when floating image generator 140/240 is off and its elements would be visible to one or more of users 130a and 130b, the opaque sleeve masks those elements.

[0043] In one implementation, one of users 130a and 130b could turn on floating image generator 240 by pulling the opaque sleeve down, activating a switch that begins rotation of rotor 244 and display screen 246. The opaque sleeve may be retarded in being pulled down by a spring underlying the opaque sleeve, resulting in a slight mechanical delay that allows rotor 244 and display screen 246 to spin up without the user being able to see 2D graphic 248 as a stationary image.

[0044] FIG. 2B shows a diagram of exemplary floating image display system 200 including floating image generator 240, according to one implementation. It is noted that the features identified in FIG. 2B by reference numbers identical to reference numbers shown in FIG. 2A correspond respectively to those previously described features and may share any of the characteristics attributed to those corresponding features above. Also shown in FIG. 2B are locations 231a and 231b in floating image interaction environment 210, user 230, wearable floating image tracking sensor 235, and

wireless communication link 237. It is further noted that 2D graphic 248, shown in FIG. 2A, is shown in FIG. 2B from two different perspectives, 249a and 249b, corresponding respectively to the perspectives user 230 has of floating image 118 from locations 231a and 231b.

[0045] Floating image display system 200 corresponds in general to floating image display system 100 in FIG. 1A, and those features may share any of the characteristics attributed to either corresponding feature by the present disclosure. Moreover, in addition to the system features described above by reference to FIG. 1A, in some implementations, as shown in FIG. 2B, floating image display system 100/200 may include one or more wearable floating image tracking sensors 235.

[0046] Wearable floating image tracking sensor 235 may be implemented as a six degree of freedom tracking sensor, for example, worn by user 230 as a head-mounted tracking sensor. Wearable floating image tracking sensor 235 is shown to be in communication with computing platform 102/202, through integrated input sensor system 120, for example, via wireless communication link 237. As user 230 moves within floating image interaction environment 110/210, for example from location 231a to location 231b, wearable floating image tracking sensor 235 enables the generation of perspectives of floating image 118 appropriate respectively to locations 231a and 231b. For example, wearable floating image tracking sensor 235 enables user 230 to view floating image 118 from perspective 249a when user 230 is at location 231a, and to advantageously view floating image 118 from location appropriate different perspective 249b when user is at location 231b.

[0047] FIG. 2C shows an exemplary use case for floating image generator 240 of FIG. 2A, according to one implementation. FIG. 2C shows first floating image generator 240a implemented in first floating image interaction environment 210a utilized by user 230a, as well as second floating image generator 240b implemented in second floating image interaction environment 210b utilized by user 230b and remote from first floating image interaction environment 210a.

[0048] First and second floating image interaction environments 210a and 210b correspond in general to floating image interaction environment 110, in FIG. 1A, and those corresponding features may share any of the characteristics attributed to either corresponding feature by present disclosure. Moreover, it is noted that the features identified in FIG. 2C by reference numbers identical to reference numbers shown in FIG. 2A correspond respectively to those previously described features and may share any of the characteristics attributed to those corresponding features above.

[0049] Also shown in FIG. 2C are first and second smart devices 251a and 251b, which may take the form of smartphones or tablet computers, for example, and telecommunications link 257. Smart device 251a is shown to include video camera 253a and microphone 255a, while smart device 251b is shown to include video camera 253b and microphone 255b.

[0050] As noted above, in some implementations, floating image interaction environment 110/210a/210b may correspond to a teleconferencing venue in an office complex, hospital, university, or hotel business center, for example. In implementations in which floating image interaction environment 210a/210b is a teleconferencing venue, for example (hereinafter “local teleconferencing venue 210a” and

“remote teleconferencing venue 210b”), user 230a may correspond to a local participant in a teleconference, while user 230b may correspond to a remote participant in the teleconference.

[0051] According to the exemplary implementation shown in FIG. 2C, video and voice data of local user 230a is captured by video camera 253a and microphone 255a of smart device 251a at local teleconferencing venue 210a, and is transmitted to floating image generator 140/240b at remote teleconferencing venue 210b, via telecommunications link 257. The audio data may be broadcast to remote user 230b by audio system 114, while 2D graphic 248b of local user 230a is rendered on display screen 246 of floating image generator 240b. As a result, and due to spinning of rotor 244 and display screen 246 of floating image generator 240b, as described above, floating image 118 appears to remote user 230b as a 3D interactive floating image of local user 230a.

[0052] Substantially concurrently, video and voice data of remote user 230b can be captured by video camera 253b and microphone 255b of smart device 251b at remote teleconferencing venue 210b, and may be transmitted to floating image generator 140/240a at local teleconferencing venue 210a, via telecommunications link 257. The audio data may be broadcast to local user 230a by audio system 114, while 2D graphic 248a of remote user 230b is rendered on display screen 246 of floating image generator 240a. As a result, and due to spinning of rotor 244 and display screen 246 of floating image generator 240a, as described above, floating image 118 appears to local user 230a as a 3D interactive floating image of remote user 230b.

[0053] FIG. 2D shows a diagram of exemplary floating image generator 240 integrated with computing platform 202, according to another implementation. It is noted that the features identified in FIG. 2D by reference numbers identical to reference numbers shown in FIG. 2A correspond respectively to those previously described features and may share any of the characteristics attributed to those corresponding features above.

[0054] Floating image generator 240 corresponds in general to floating image generator 140/240 in FIGS. 1A and 2A, and those features may share the characteristics attributed to any of the corresponding features by the present disclosure. Consequently, for example, and although not shown in FIG. 2D, floating image generator 240 may include magnets 260 and one or more induction coils 262 implemented as described above by reference to FIG. 2A.

[0055] Floating image generator 240 differs from floating image generator 240 in that floating image generator 240 includes two display screens: first display screen 246a and second display screen 246b. As shown in FIG. 2D, first and second display screens 246a and 246b are situated back-to-back and are mutually coupled to rotor 244 to spin in unison at a predetermined spin rate. In addition and as further shown by FIG. 2D, each of first and second display screens 246a and 246b has 2D graphic 248 rendered thereon. Each of first and second display screens 246a and 246b corresponds in general to display screen 246, described above, and may share any of the characteristics attributed to that corresponding feature above.

[0056] Although each of first and second display screens 246a and 246b is shown to have 2D graphic 248 rendered thereon, in some implementations, first and second display screens 246a and 246b may show different respective per-

spectives of 2D graphic 248. That is to say, a first perspective of 2D graphic 248 may be rendered on first display screen 246a while a second, different, perspective of 2D graphic 248 is rendered on second display screen 246b. For example, CPU 104 may execute software code 116 to use GPU 108 to render a particular perspective of 2D graphic 248 on first display screen 246a, while substantially concurrently rendering a 180° opposite perspective of 2D graphic 248 on second display screen 246b.

[0057] The exemplary back-to-back display screen implementation shown in FIG. 2D may be used to further enable the generation of multiple perspectives of floating image 118 appropriate respectively to the location of each of users 130a and 130b in floating image interaction environment 110. For example, user 130a located so as to have a particular perspective of floating image 118 and stationary at that location would consistently view floating image 118 from that perspective. By contrast, user 130b located so as to have any different perspective of floating image 118 and stationary at that location would consistently view floating image 118 from that different perspective.

[0058] It is noted that the exemplary back-to-back display screen implementation shown in FIG. 2D also advantageously increases the brightness of floating image 118. It is further noted that the use of back-to-back first and second display screens 246a and 246b enables the predetermined spin rate utilized in the implementation of FIG. 2D to be approximately half that used in the implementation of FIGS. 2A, 2B, and 2C. In other words, rotor 244 and first and second display screens 246a and 246b may spin at a predetermined spin rate of approximately twenty rotations per second in the implementation shown in FIG. 2D.

[0059] FIG. 3 shows a diagram of exemplary floating image generator 340 integrated with computing platform 302, according to yet another implementation. As shown in FIG. 3, floating image generator 340 includes base 342 having integrated computing platform 302, situated on surface 350, which may be a floor within floating image interaction environment 310, or another horizontal surface within floating image interaction environment 310 substantially parallel to the floor.

[0060] In addition, floating image generator 340 includes display screen 346 having optional privacy screen 366 affixed thereon, plane mirror 368 facing display screen 346 at an angle, rotor 344 coupled to plane mirror 368, and rotor support structure 364. It is noted that in one implementation, plane mirror 368 may be angled at an approximately 45° angle to the display surface of display screen 346.

[0061] In some implementation, as shown in FIG. 3, floating image generator 340 may further include masking shutter 358 surrounding base 342, plane mirror 368, rotor 344, rotor support structure 364, and display screen 346. Also identified in FIG. 3 are horizontal axis 352 substantially parallel to surface 350, vertical axis 354 substantially perpendicular to surface 350, spin direction 356 of rotor 344 and plane mirror 368, and 2D graphic 348 rendered on display screen 346 (2D graphic 348 not visible as such from the perspective shown by FIG. 3).

[0062] Floating image generator 340 corresponds in general to floating image generator 140, in FIG. 1A, and those features may share any of the characteristics attributed to either corresponding feature by the present disclosure. In addition, computing platform 302 corresponds in general to computing platform 102/202, in FIGS. 1A, 2A, 2B, and 2D,

and those features may share the characteristics attributed to any of the corresponding features by the present disclosure. Thus, although not explicitly shown in FIG. 3, computing platform 302 includes features corresponding respectively to CPU 104, GPU 108, and system memory 106 storing software code 116. Moreover, like computing platform 102/202, computing platform 302 may be configured to control, or may have integrated therein, one or more of lighting system 112, audio system 114, and input sensor system 120.

[0063] Display screen 346, 2D graphic 348, and privacy screen 366 correspond respectively in general to display screen 246, 2D graphic 248, and privacy screen 266, in FIG. 2A, and those features may share any of the characteristics attributed to either corresponding feature by the present disclosure. Thus, although not visible from the perspective shown by FIG. 3, 2D graphic 348 rendered on display screen 346 may have an appearance similar to 2D graphic 248 in FIG. 2A.

[0064] Referring to FIGS. 1A, 2A, and 3 in combination, according to the exemplary implementation shown in FIG. 3, display screen 246/346 is controlled by GPU 108 of computing platform 102/202/302, while rotor 344 coupled to plane mirror 368 is controlled by CPU 104 of computing platform 102/202/302. CPU 104 of computing platform 102/202/302 is configured to execute software code 116 to render 2D graphic 248/348 on display screen 246/346 using GPU 108.

[0065] CPU 104 is further configured to execute software code 116 to spin rotor 344 and plane mirror 368 about vertical axis 354 perpendicular to a display surface of display screen 246/346 at a predetermined spin rate, which may be on the order of approximately one or more tens of rotations per second, such as approximately forty rotations per second for example, to generate substantially flicker free floating image 118 of 2D graphic 248/348. As a result of the floating image generation performed by floating image generator 140/340, floating image 118 appears to be a 3D floating image of 2D graphic 248/348 to users 130a and 130b viewing floating image 118.

[0066] As noted above, in some implementations, display screen 246/346 may be an LCD screen, for example. Moreover, in some implementations, display screen 246/346 may be provided by a mobile communication device included as part of floating image generator 140/340. For example, display screen 246/346 may be part of a smartphone or a tablet computer. It is noted that in implementations in which display screen 246/346 is part of a mobile communication device such as a smartphone or a tablet computer, one or more microphones 124 and sensors 122 including camera(s) 122f of input sensor system 120 may be features built into the mobile communication device.

[0067] In the implementation shown in FIG. 3, various features and/or techniques may be utilized to reduce flicker and/or blur of floating image 118 generated by floating image generator 140/340. For example, optional privacy screen 266/366 may be affixed to the display surface of display screen 246/346 so as to restrict viewing of display screen 246/346 outside of a predetermined viewing angle. As noted above, such a privacy screen may take the form of a louvered structure affixed to display screen 246/346, or to a privacy film covering the display surface of display screen 246/346. Alternatively, or in addition, in implementations in which display screen 246/346 is an LCD screen, CPU 104 may be configured to execute software code 116 to strobe

one or more of the frequency, intensity, and duty cycle of the LCD backlight at a predetermined strobe rate.

[0068] As noted above, strobing can reduce motion blur by decreasing the time window over which the human eye and brain integrate visual information regarding spatial features. A privacy film restricts the viewing angles of display screen 246 and thereby restricts the number of spatially distinct images presented to the eye per unit of time.

[0069] In implementations in which a rotating plane mirror is utilized, rather than a rotating display, CPU 104 will execute software code 116 to cause GPU 108 to rotate rendered 2D graphic 348 synchronously with the rotation of plane mirror 368 so as to maintain floating image 118 in an upright position. Due to the rotation of 2D graphic 348, additional motion blur effects may be generated. The features and/or techniques utilized to reduce blur in the implementation of FIG. 3 may result in narrower viewing angles for the viewing of floating image 118 than is the case for the implementations shown by FIGS. 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D.

[0070] It is noted that CPU 104 may execute software code 116 to spin rotor 344 and plane mirror 368 about vertical axis 354 at a varying spin rate, or at a substantially constant predetermined spin rate. It is also noted that spin direction 356 may be in either a counter clockwise direction with respect to the plane of horizontal axis 352, as shown in FIG. 3, or in a clockwise direction with respect to that plane. Furthermore, it is emphasized that each of the viewing angle permitted by privacy screen 266/366, the spin rate of rotor 344, the back light duty cycle and frequency of display screen 246/346 when implemented as an LCD screen, and the image refresh rate of floating image display system 100, as well as the combination of those parameters, may be predetermined so as to optimize the viewing experience of users 130a and 130b.

[0071] In some implementations, the same 2D graphic 248/348 may be rendered on display screen 346 during the entirety of one or more integer numbers of rotations of rotor 344 and plane mirror 368 about vertical axis 354. In those implementations, each of users 130a and 130b will view floating image 118 from the same perspective, regardless of their location relative to floating image 118.

[0072] However, in other implementations, CPU 104 may execute software code 116 to use GPU 108 to modulate 2D graphic 248/348 as rotor 344 and plane mirror 368 rotate, so as to generate multiple perspectives of floating image 118 appropriate respectively to the location of each of users 130a and 130b. For example, user 130a located so as to face a front side of floating image 118 and stationary at that location would consistently view floating image 118 from a frontal perspective. By contrast, user 130b located so as to face a backside of floating image 118 and stationary at that location would consistently view floating image 118 as if from the rear.

[0073] As noted above, in some use cases, it may be advantageous or desirable to enhance the illusion that floating image 118 is floating in space independently of floating image generator 140/340. When implemented for those use cases, floating image generator 104/340 may further include masking shutter 358. Masking shutter 358 may be implemented as a liquid-crystal shutter, such as a polymer-dispersed liquid-crystal, or "smart glass" shutter, surrounding base 342, rotor 344, rotor support structure 364, plane mirror 368, and display screen 246/346. In those implemen-

tations, masking shutter 358 may be controlled by computing platform 102/302 to remain opaque so as to obscure base 342, rotor 344, rotor support structure 364, plane mirror 368, and display screen 246/346 while plane mirror 368 is spun up to generate floating image 118. Masking shutter 358 may then be controlled by computing platform 102/302 to transition from opaque to transparent to reveal floating image 118 as though spontaneously generated in space.

[0074] FIG. 4 shows a cross-sectional side view of exemplary floating image generator 440, according to another implementation. As shown in FIG. 4, floating image generator 440 includes display screen 446 having 2D graphic 448 rendered thereon (2D graphic 448 not visible as such from the perspective shown by FIG. 4). In addition, and as further shown in FIG. 4, floating image generator 440 includes floating image generation optics 470 configured to generate floating image 418 of 2D graphic 448. Also shown in FIG. 4 is light 488 emitted by display screen 446 due to 2D graphic 448 being rendered thereon.

[0075] According to the exemplary implementation shown in FIG. 4, floating image generation optics 470 includes polarizing beam splitter 472, quarter-wave plate 474, and plane mirror 476 facing display screen 446. Polarizing beam splitter 472 may be situated between display screen 446 and plane mirror 476, while quarter-wave plate 474 may be situated between polarizing beam splitter 472 and plane mirror 476.

[0076] Floating image 418 and floating image generator 440 correspond in general to floating image 118 and floating image generator 140, in FIG. 1A, and those features may share any of the characteristics attributed to either corresponding feature by the present disclosure. Moreover, display screen 446 and 2D graphic 448 correspond respectively in general to display screen 246/346 and 2D graphic 248/348, in FIGS. 2A and 3, and those features may share the characteristics attributed to any of the corresponding features by the present disclosure.

[0077] Thus, although not visible from the perspective shown by FIG. 4, 2D graphic 448 rendered on display screen 446 may have an appearance similar to 2D graphic 248 in FIG. 2A. Furthermore, although not explicitly shown in FIG. 4, display screen 246/346/446 is controlled by a computing platform corresponding to computing platform 102, in FIG. 1A, and including features corresponding respectively to CPU 104, GPU 108, and system memory 106 storing software code 116. In addition, like computing platform 102, the computing platform controlling display screen 246/346/446 may be further configured to control, or may have integrated therein, one or more of lighting system 112, audio system 114, and input sensor system 120.

[0078] According to the exemplary implementation shown in FIG. 4, 2D graphic 448 may be elliptically polarized, resulting in emission of light 488 by display screen 246/346/446 as elliptically polarized light. Light 488 emitted by display screen 246/346/446 passes through polarizing beam splitter 472, which may be configured to substantially preserve the polarization of light 488. Light 488 subsequently passes through quarter-wave plate 474 before reflecting from plane mirror 476.

[0079] In implementations in which light 488 is elliptically polarized following its passage through polarizing beam splitter 472 in the direction of quarter-wave plate 474, quarter-wave plate 474 will cause light 488 to become circularly polarized (either right or left circular polariza-

tion), and reflection from plane mirror 476 will cause light 488 to reverse the direction of its circular polarization. Reflected light 488 then once again passes through quarter-wave plate 474 and beam splitting polarizer 472, and may be emitted from floating image generation optics 470 as floating image 118/418 of 2D graphic 248/348/448. It is noted that, according to the implementation shown in FIG. 4, floating image 118/418 of 2D graphic 248/348/448 may be substantially brighter than 2D graphic 248/348/448 rendered on display screen 246/346/446, such as up to approximately three times brighter, for example.

[0080] FIG. 5 shows a top view of exemplary floating image generator 540, according to yet another implementation. As shown in FIG. 5, floating image generator 540 includes display screen 546 having 2D graphic 548 rendered thereon (2D graphic 548 not visible as such from the perspective shown by FIG. 5). In addition, and as further shown in FIG. 5, floating image generator 540 includes floating image generation optics 570 configured to generate floating image 518 of 2D graphic 548. Also shown in FIG. 5 is light 590 emitted by display screen 546 due to 2D graphic 548 being rendered thereon.

[0081] According to the exemplary implementation shown in FIG. 5, floating image generation optics 570 includes first, second, and third plane mirrors 578a, 578b, and 548c facing display screen 546. It is noted that, in the exemplary implementation of FIG. 5, first plane mirror 578a is substantially parallel to the display surface of display screen 546, second plane mirror 578b is angled at approximately 45° to display screen 546, and third plane mirror 578c is angled so as to be substantially perpendicular to second plane mirror 578b. In other words, third plane mirror 578c is angled at an approximately 45° angle opposite to that of second plane mirror 578b. In addition, floating image generation optics 570 includes first, second, and third concave mirrors 582a, 582b, and 582c for projecting respective images 592a, 592b, and 592c reflected by respective first, second, and third plane mirrors 578a, 578b, and 578c.

[0082] Floating image 518 and floating image generator 540 correspond in general to floating image 118 and floating image generator 140, in FIG. 1A, and those features may share any of the characteristics attributed to either corresponding feature by the present disclosure. Moreover, display screen 546 and 2D graphic 548 correspond respectively in general to display screen 246/346/446 and 2D graphic 248/348/448, in FIGS. 2A, 3, and 4, and those features may share the characteristics attributed to any corresponding feature by the present disclosure.

[0083] Thus, although not visible from the perspective shown by FIG. 5, 2D graphic 548 rendered on display screen 546 may have an appearance similar to 2D graphic 248 in FIG. 2A. Furthermore, although not explicitly shown in FIG. 5, display screen 246/346/446/546 is controlled by a computing platform corresponding to computing platform 102, in FIG. 1A, and including features corresponding respectively to CPU 104, GPU 108, and system memory 106 storing software code 116. In addition, like computing platform 102, the computing platform controlling display screen 246/346/446/546 may be further configured to control, or may have integrated therein, one or more of lighting system 112, audio system 114, and input sensor system 120.

[0084] In some implementations, first, second, and third plane mirrors 578a, 578b, and 578c may be situated so as to face display screen 246/346/446/546 from a distance of

approximately one focal length. Moreover, first, second, and third concave mirrors **582a**, **582b**, and **582c** may be situated above display screen **246/346/446/546** and may be situated apart from display screen **246/346/446/546** by a distance of approximately two focal lengths. First, second, and third plane mirrors **578a**, **578b**, and **578c**, and first, second and third concave mirrors **582a**, **582b**, and **582c** are configured to generate floating image **118/518** of 2D graphic **248/348/448/548**. Moreover, floating image **118/518** generated by floating image generation optics **570** will appear to users **130a** and **130b** viewing floating image **118/518** to be shown from three discrete perspectives corresponding to images **592a**, **592b**, and **592c** reflected by respective first, second, and third plane mirrors **578a**, **578b**, and **578c**.

[0085] Thus, the present application discloses various implementations of a floating image display system. In some disclosed implementations, one or more display screens upon which a 2D graphic is rendered is/are spun to generate a floating image that appears to be 3D. In an alternative implementation, the 2D graphic is rendered on a display screen and a mirror facing the display screen at an angle is spun to generate the apparently 3D floating image. In yet other implementations, a relatively simple array of optical elements are utilized to project a 2D graphic as a floating image. Consequently, the display solutions disclosed in the present application advantageously make possible and practical the display of floating images in a wide variety of use cases and implementational environments.

[0086] From the above description it is manifest that various techniques can be used for implementing the concepts described in the present application without departing from the scope of those concepts. Moreover, while the concepts have been described with specific reference to certain implementations, a person of ordinary skill in the art would recognize that changes can be made in form and detail without departing from the scope of those concepts. As such, the described implementations are to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive. It should also be understood that the present application is not limited to the particular implementations described herein, but many rearrangements, modifications, and substitutions are possible without departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

What is claimed is:

1. A floating image display system comprising:
 - a computing platform including a central processing unit (CPU), a graphics processing unit (GPU), and a system memory storing a software code;
 - at least one display screen controlled by the GPU;
 - a rotor coupled to the at least one display screen, the rotor controlled by the CPU;
 - the CPU configured to execute the software code to:
 - render a two-dimensional (2D) graphic on the at least one display screen using the GPU; and
 - spin the at least one display screen about a vertical axis parallel to a display surface of the at least one display screen at a predetermined spin rate to generate a floating image of the 2D graphic;
 - wherein the floating image appears to be a three-dimensional (3D) floating image of the 2D graphic to a user viewing the floating image.
2. The floating image display system of claim 1, further comprising a privacy screen affixed to the display surface of the at least one display screen.

3. The floating image display system of claim 1, wherein the at least one display screen comprises a liquid-crystal display (LCD) screen.

4. The floating image display system of claim 3, wherein the CPU is further configured to execute the software code to strobe at least one of a frequency, an intensity, and a duty cycle of a backlight of the LCD screen at a predetermined strobe rate, resulting in a reduction in blur of the floating image.

5. The floating image display system of claim 1, wherein the rotor comprises a plurality of magnets, and the at least one display screen comprises at least one induction coil.

6. The floating image display system of claim 6, wherein the plurality of magnets comprises rare earth magnets.

7. The floating image display system of claim 1, further comprising at least one mobile communication device, the at least one mobile communication device providing the at least one display screen and configured to spin with the at least one display screen at the predetermined spin rate, wherein the at least one mobile communication device is one of a smartphone and a tablet computer.

8. The floating image display system of claim 1, further comprising a wearable floating image tracking sensor configured for wireless communication with the computing platform, the floating image display system configured to utilize the floating image tracking sensor, when worn by the user, to enable the user to view the 3D floating image from a perspective appropriate to a location of the user relative to the 3D floating image.

9. The floating image display system of claim 1, wherein the at least one display screen comprises a first display screen and a second display screen situated back-to-back.

10. The floating image display system of claim 9, wherein rendering the 2D graphic on the at least one display screen comprises rendering a first perspective of the 2D graphic on the first display screen and rendering a second perspective of the 2D graphic on the second display screen.

11. A floating image display system comprising:

- a computing platform including a central processing unit (CPU), a graphics processing unit (GPU), and a system memory storing a software code;

- a display screen controlled by the GPU;

- a plane mirror facing the display screen at an angle;

- a rotor coupled to the plane mirror, the rotor controlled by the CPU,

- the CPU configured to execute the software code to:

- render a two-dimensional (2D) graphic on the display screen using the GPU; and

- spin the plane mirror about an axis perpendicular to the display surface of the display screen at a predetermined spin rate to generate a floating image of the 2D graphic;

- wherein the floating image appears to be a three-dimensional (3D) floating image of the 2D graphic to a user viewing the floating image.

12. The floating image display system of claim 11, wherein the plane mirror is angled at approximately forty five degrees (45°) to the display screen.

13. The floating image display system of claim 11, wherein the display screen comprises a liquid-crystal display (LCD) screen.

14. The floating image display system of claim 13, wherein the CPU is further configured to execute the software code to strobe at least one of a frequency, an intensity,

and a duty cycle of a backlight of the LCD screen at a predetermined strobe rate, resulting in a reduction in blur of the floating image.

15. The floating image display system of claim **11**, further comprising a mobile communication device, wherein the mobile communication device provides the display screen, and wherein the mobile communication device is one of a smartphone and a tablet computer.

16. A floating image display system comprising:

- a computing platform including a central processing unit (CPU), a graphics processing unit (GPU), and a system memory storing a software code;

- a display screen controlled by the GPU;

- a floating image generation optics;

- the CPU configured to execute the software code to render a two-dimensional (2D) graphic on the display screen using the GPU;

- the floating image generation optics configured to generate a floating image of the 2D graphic rendered on the display screen.

17. The floating image display system of claim **16**, wherein the floating image generation optics comprises:

- a plane mirror facing the display screen;

- a polarizing beam splitter situated between the display screen and the plane mirror; and

- a quarter-wave plate situated between the polarizing beam splitter and the mirror;

- wherein the floating image of the 2D graphic is substantially brighter than the 2D graphic rendered on the display screen.

18. The floating image display system of claim **17**, wherein the 2D graphic rendered on the display screen is elliptically polarized.

20. The floating image display system of claim **16**, wherein the floating image generation optics comprises:

- first, second, and third plane mirrors facing the display screen, the first plane mirror parallel to a display surface of the display screen, the second plane mirror angled at approximately forty five degrees (45°) to the display screen, and the third plane mirror angled so as to be perpendicular to the second plane mirror;

- first, second, and third, concave mirrors configured to project respective images reflected by the first, second, and third plane mirrors;

- the first, second, and third plane mirrors, and the first, second, and third concave mirrors configured to generate the floating image of the 2D graphic;

- wherein the floating image appears to a user viewing the floating image to be shown from three discrete perspectives.

* * * * *