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(54) **LIQUID CRYSTAL DISPLAY DEVICE**

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(58) **Field of Classification Search** **349/110, 349/113, 114, 117, 129, 128, 119, 130**

See application file for complete search history.

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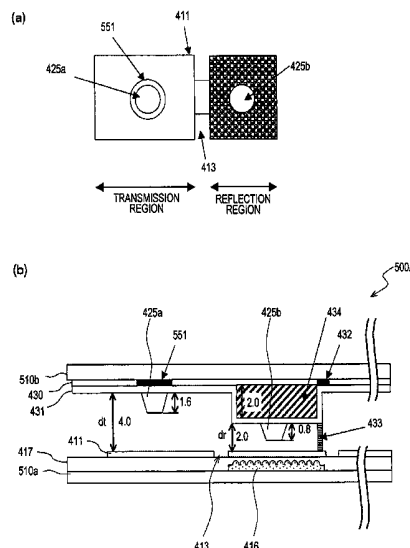
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(57)

ABSTRACT

In a liquid crystal display apparatus in which a liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation is formed in a pixel, high-quality reflection display with occurrence of an afterimage being suppressed is attained. The liquid crystal display apparatus of this invention includes a first substrate **110a**, a second substrate **110b** and a vertically aligned liquid crystal layer **120** placed therebetween, and has pixels each including a first electrode **111**, a second electrode **131** and a liquid crystal layer located therebetween. The first substrate includes a reflection layer **116** having a concave/convex surface and an insulating layer **117** formed to cover the reflection layer. The first electrode **111** is placed on the insulating layer **117** and has a shape defined to exert alignment regulating force with which at least one liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation is formed in the liquid crystal layer in a voltage applied state. The second substrate **110b** has a protrusion **125** protruding toward the liquid crystal layer in a region corresponding to the liquid crystal domain.

10 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets



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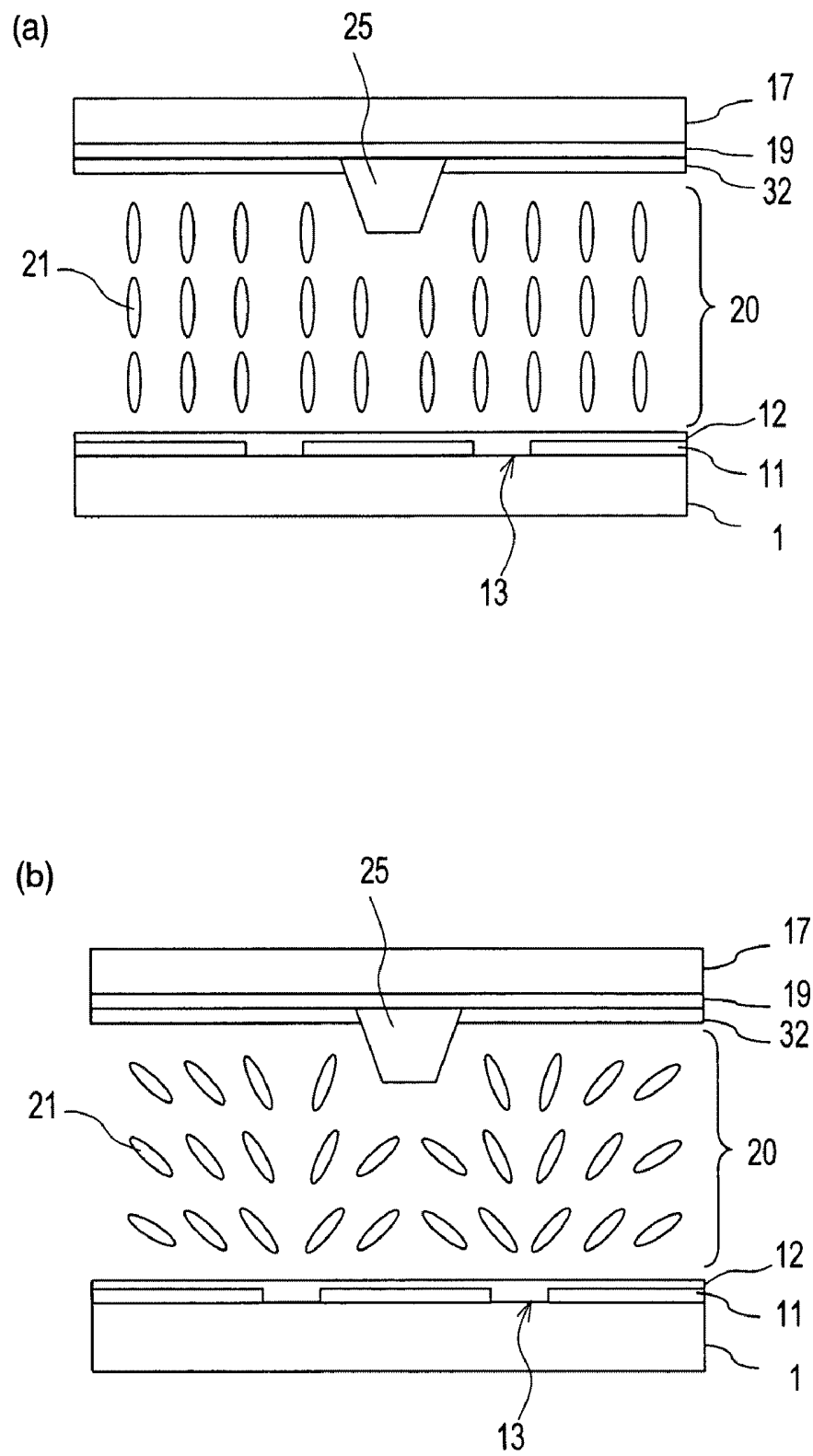
FIG. 1

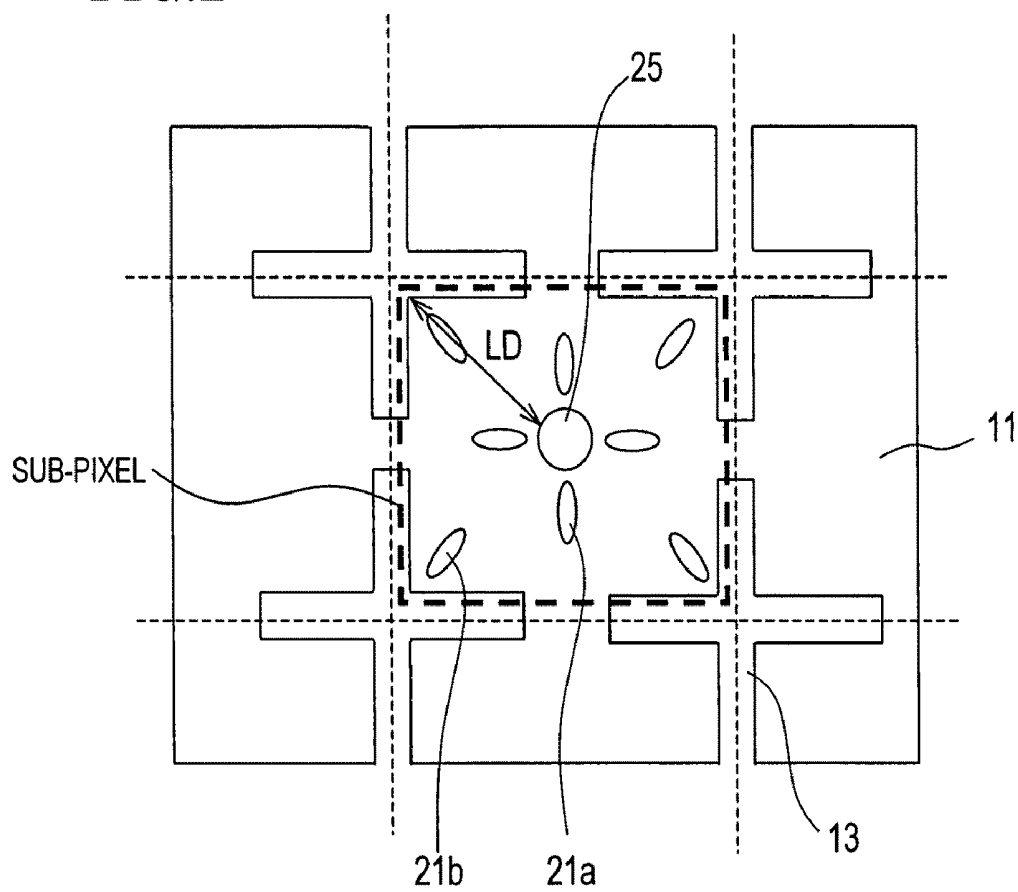
FIG. 2

FIG. 3

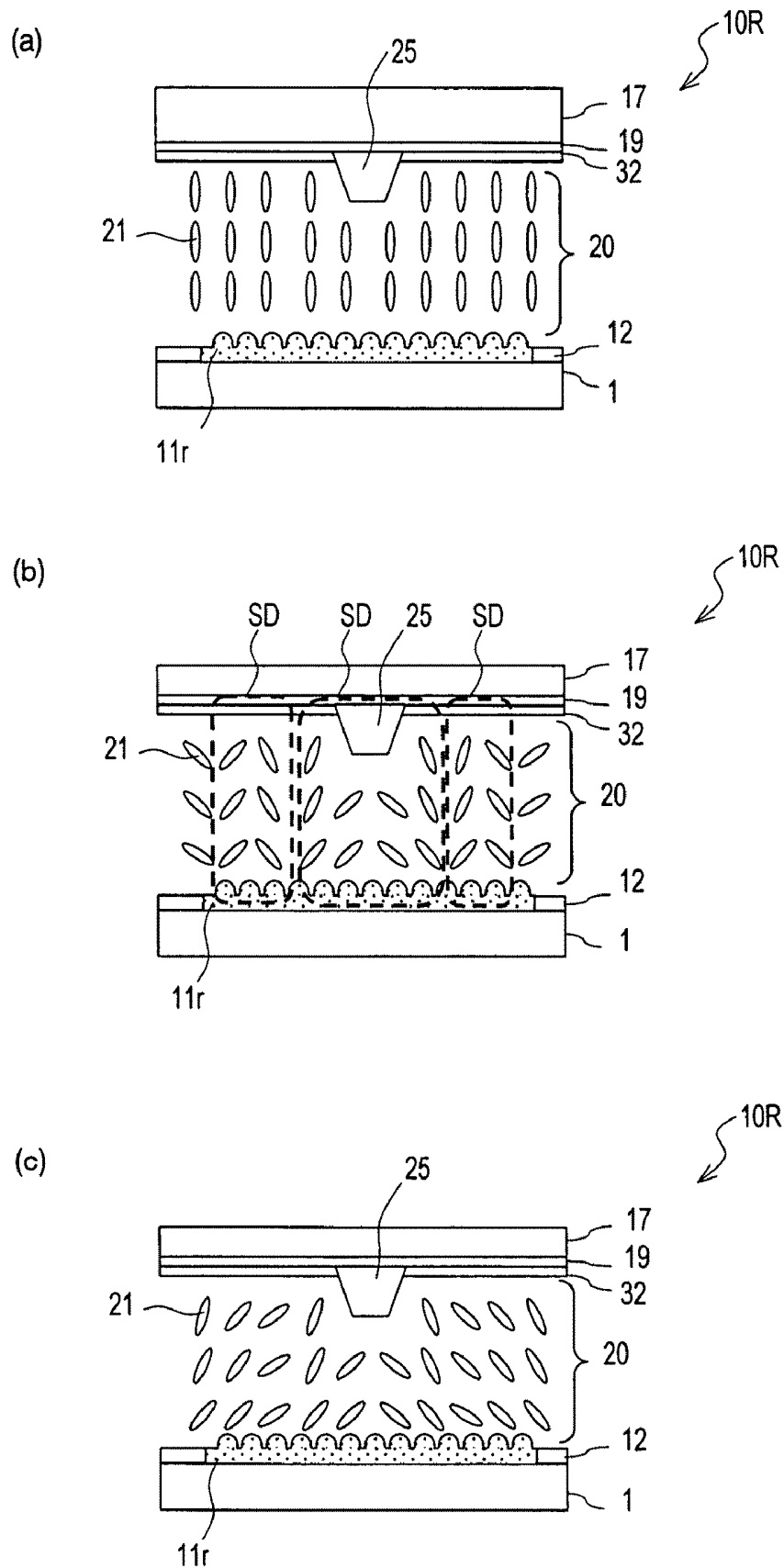


FIG. 4

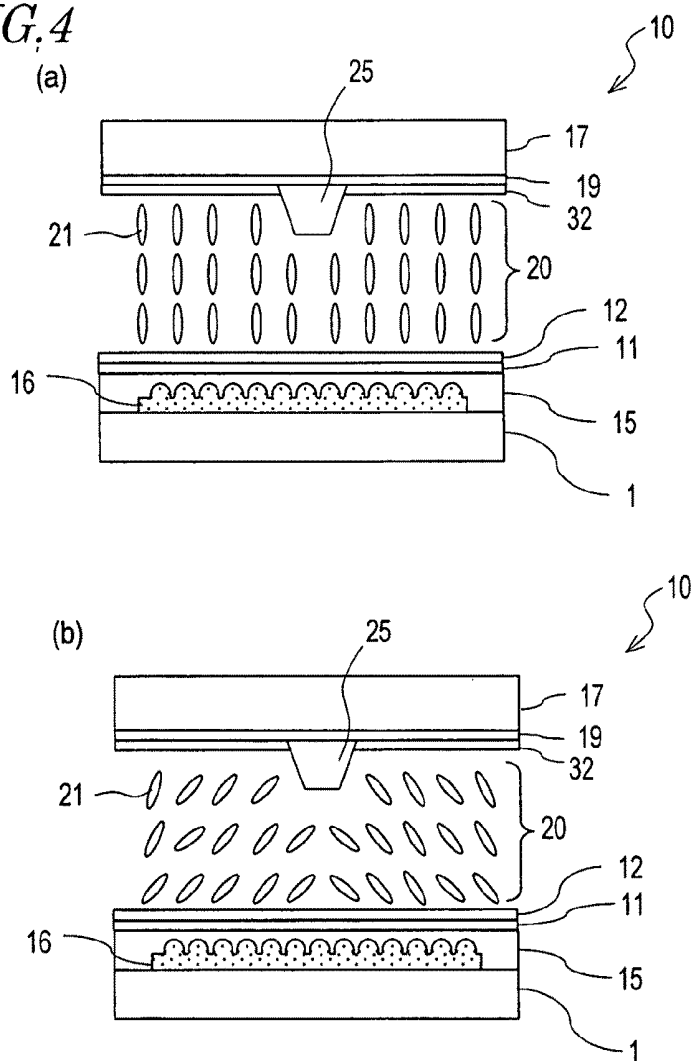


FIG. 5

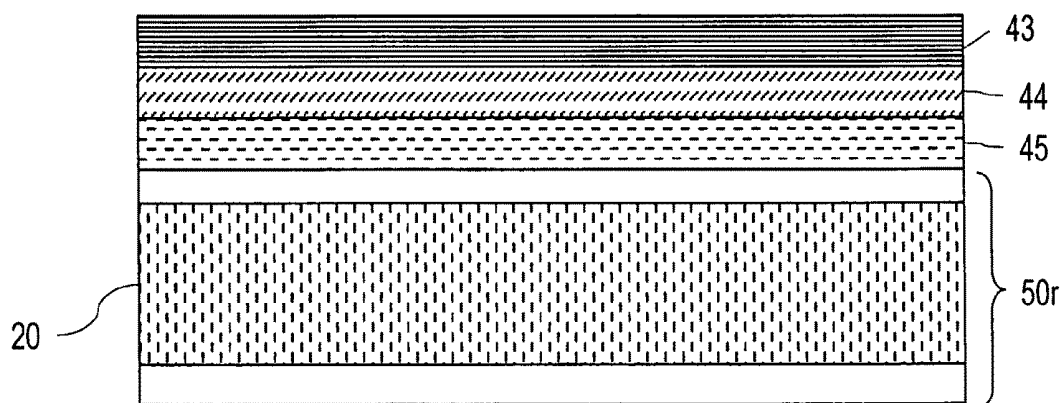


FIG. 6

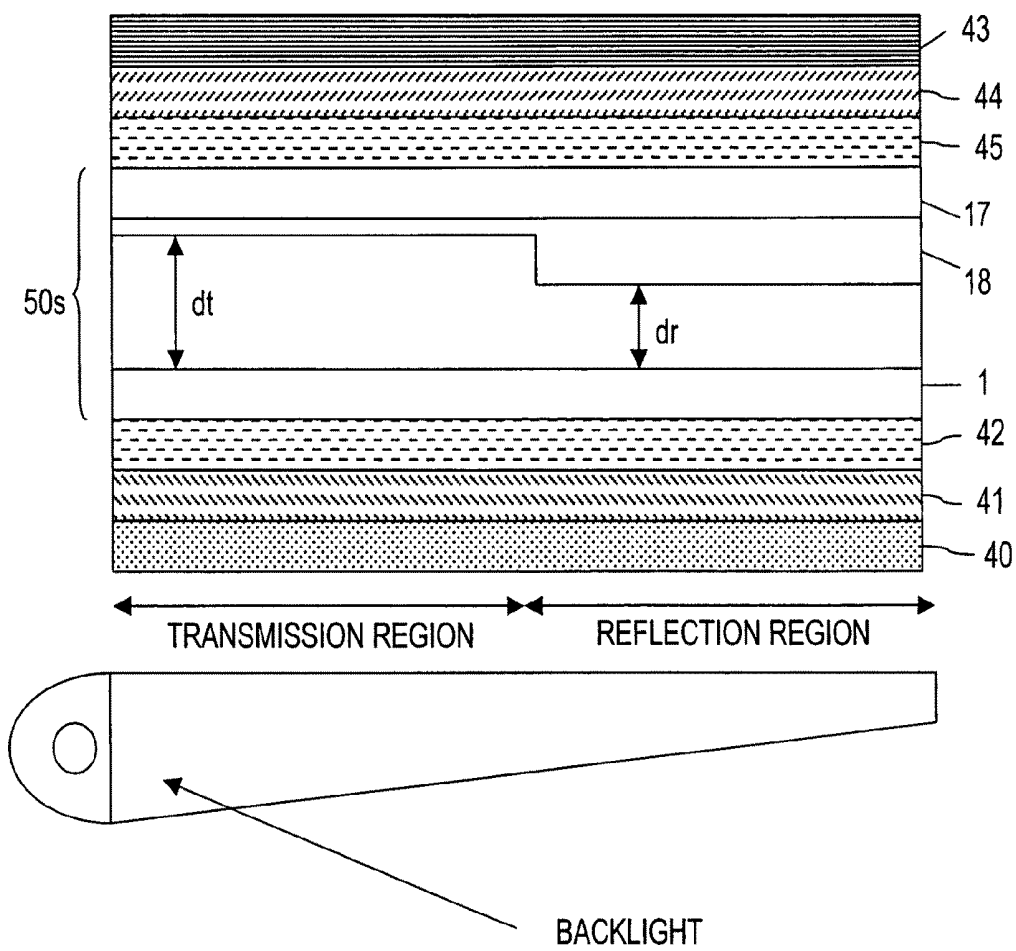
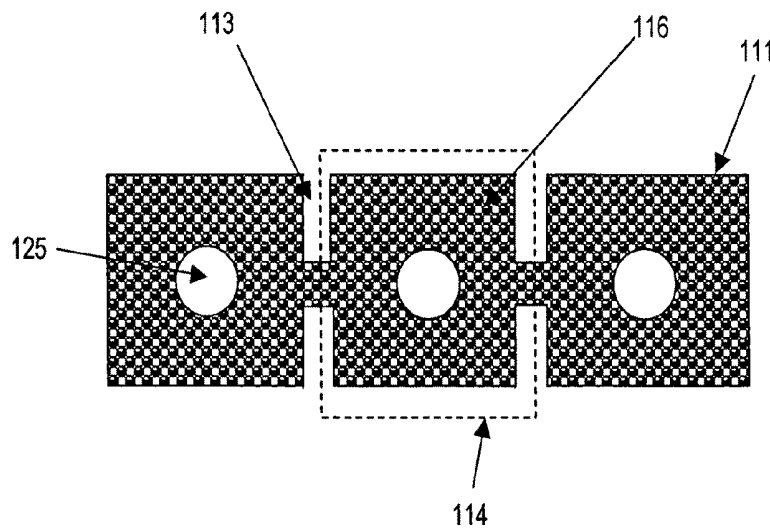


FIG. 7

(a)



(b)

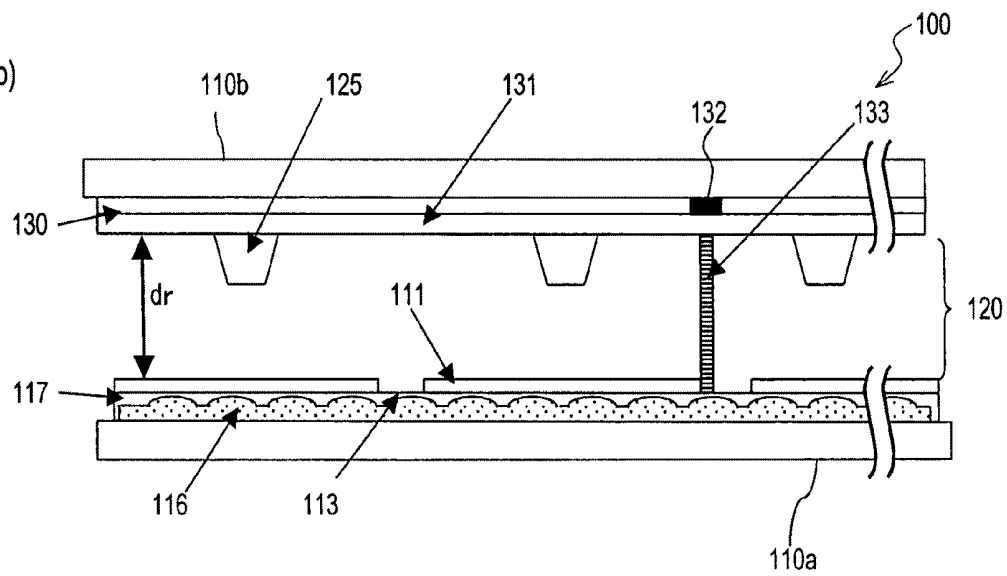


FIG. 8

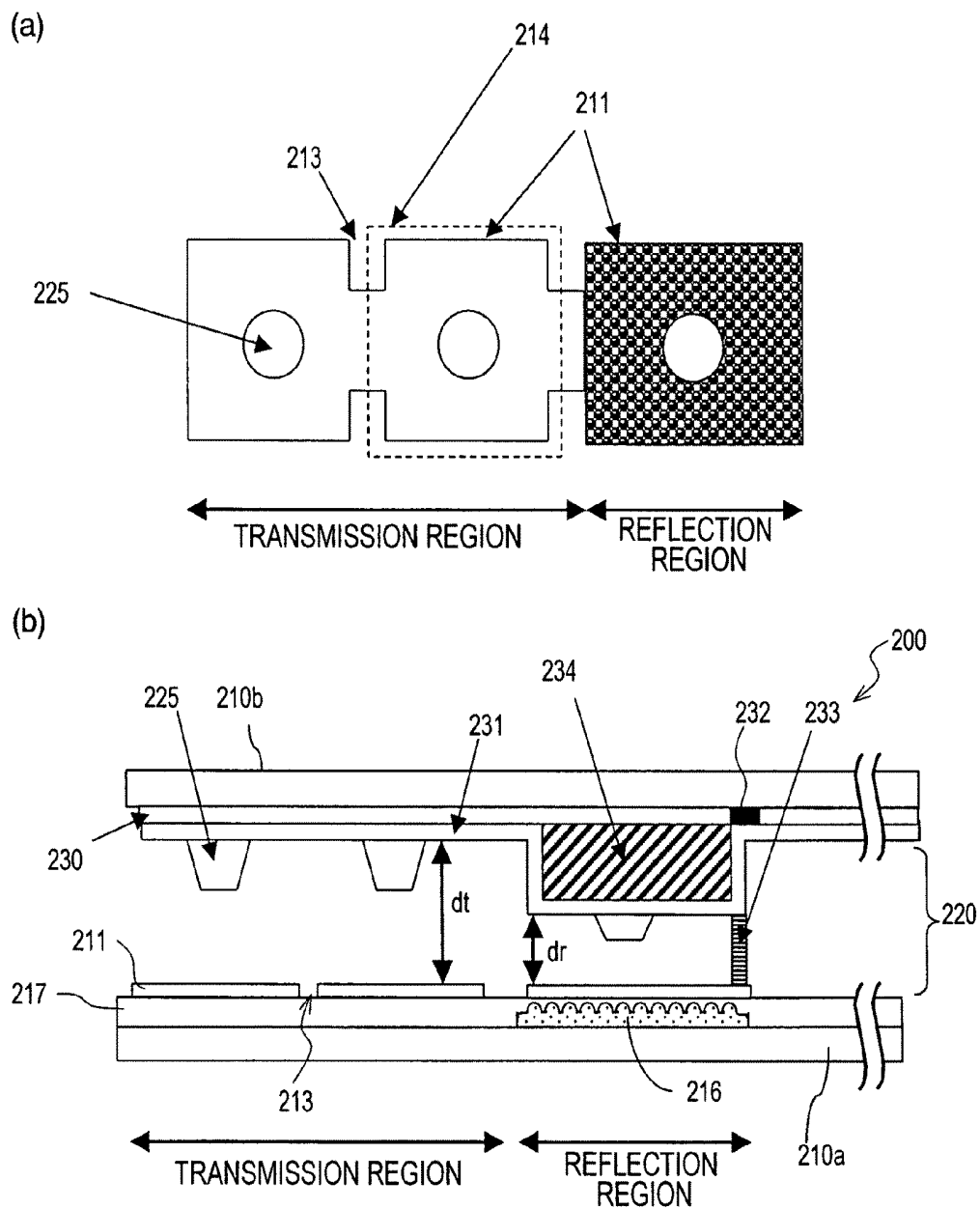


FIG.9

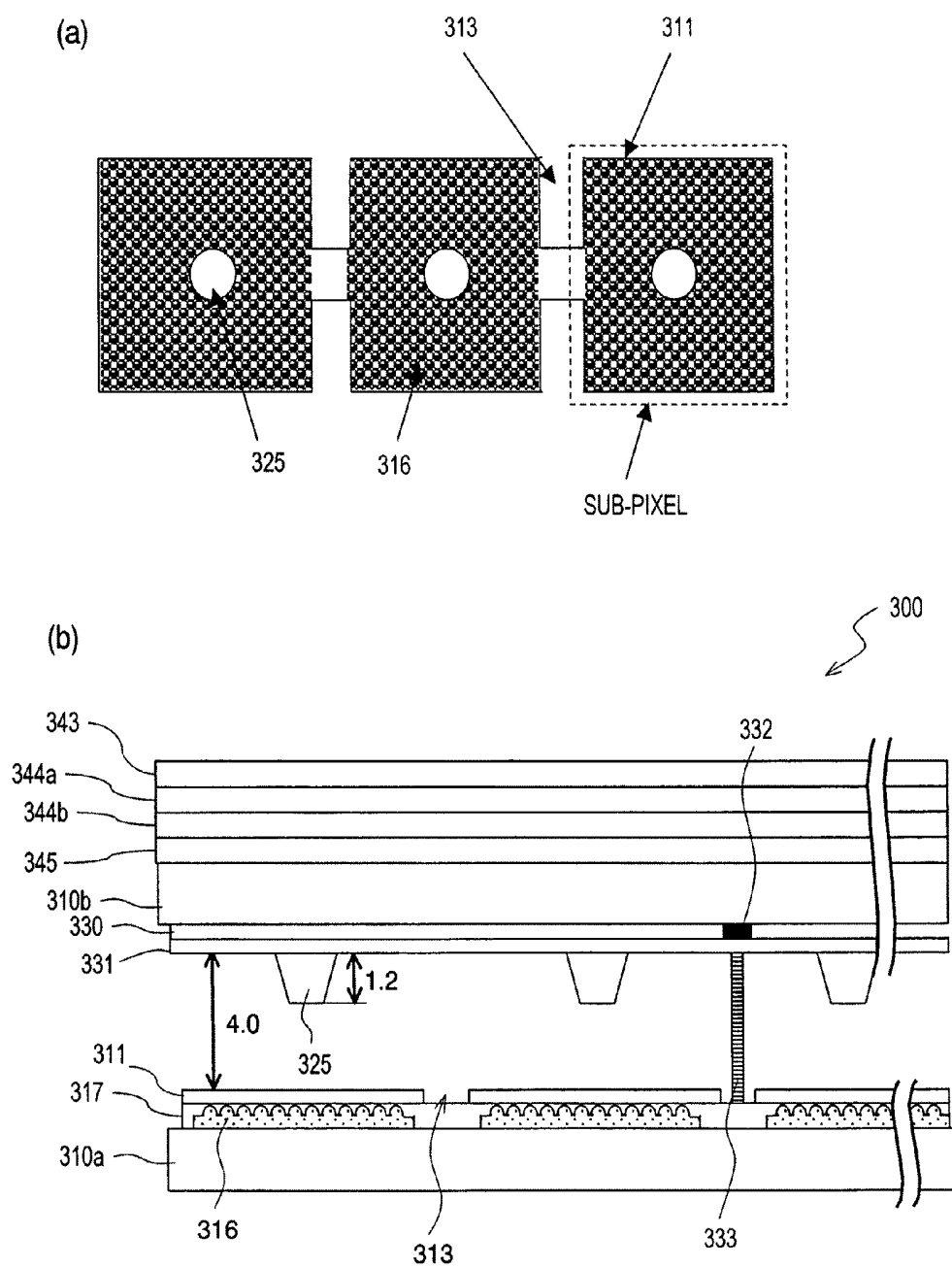
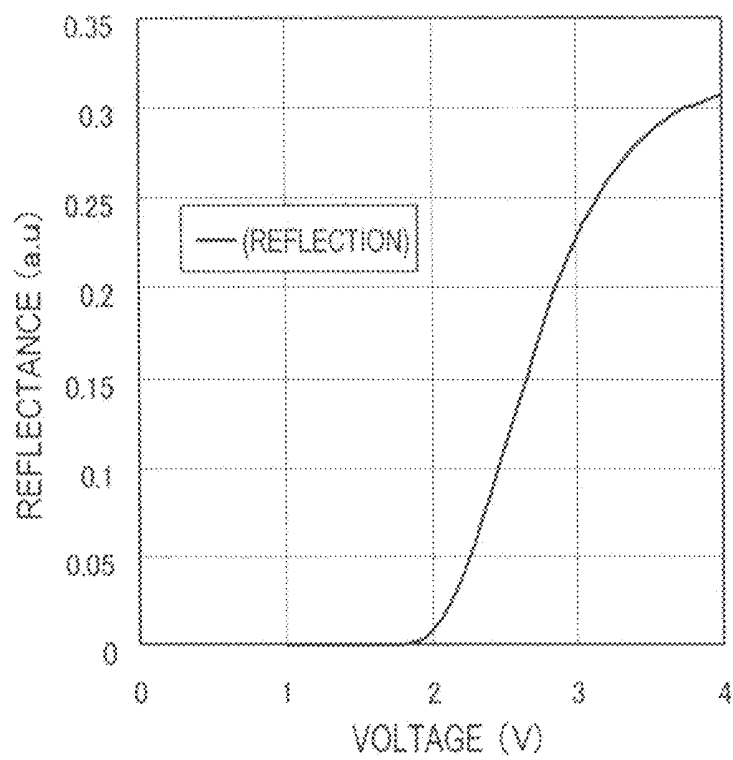


FIG. 10

(a)



(b)

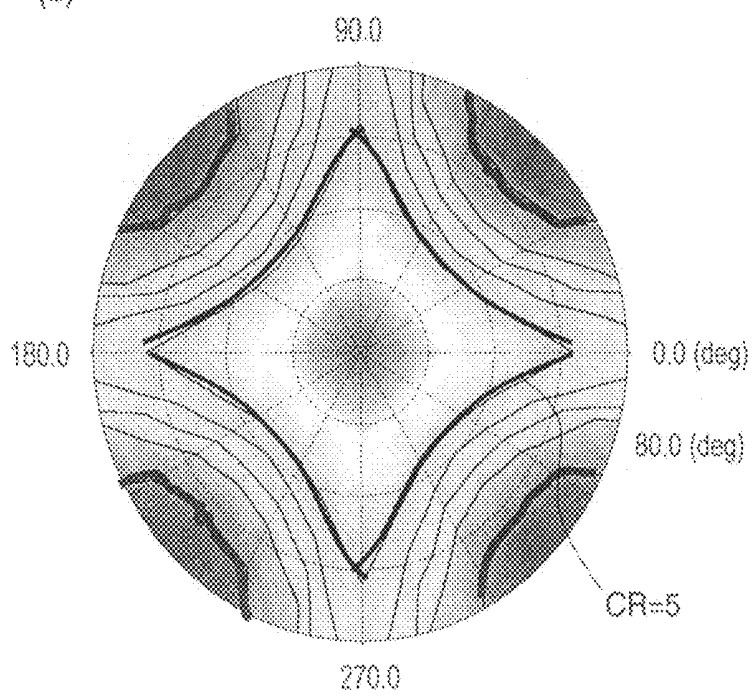
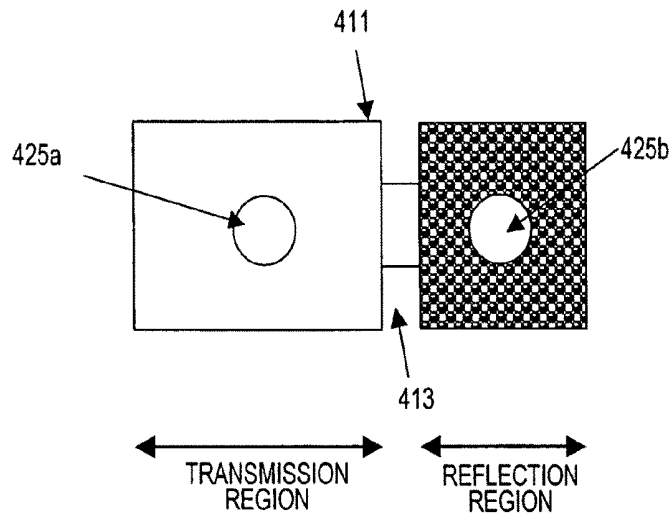


FIG. 11

(a)



(b)

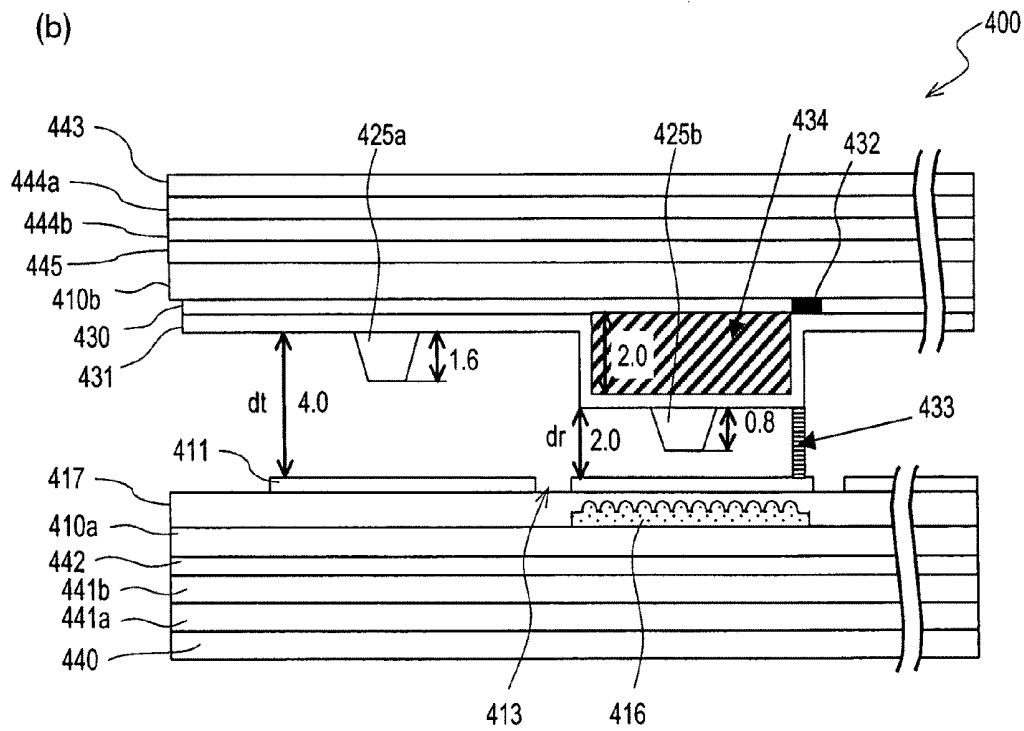


FIG. 12

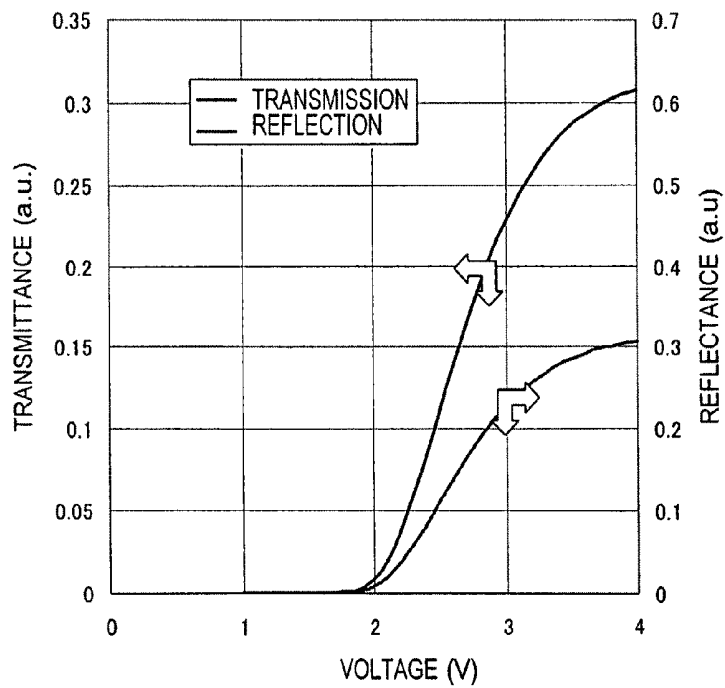


FIG. 13

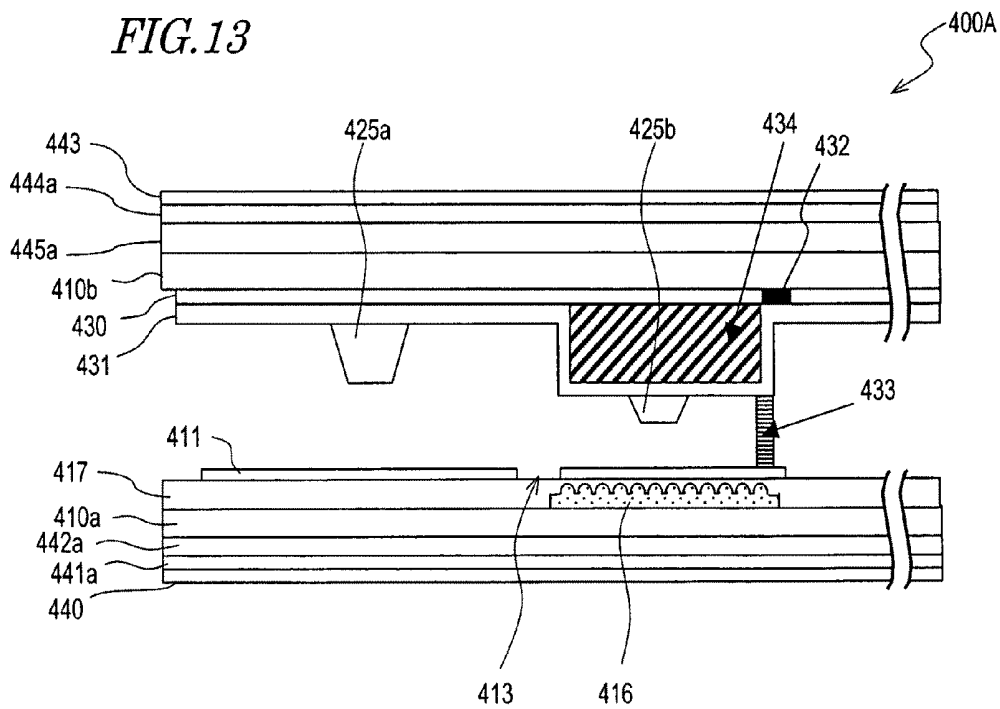
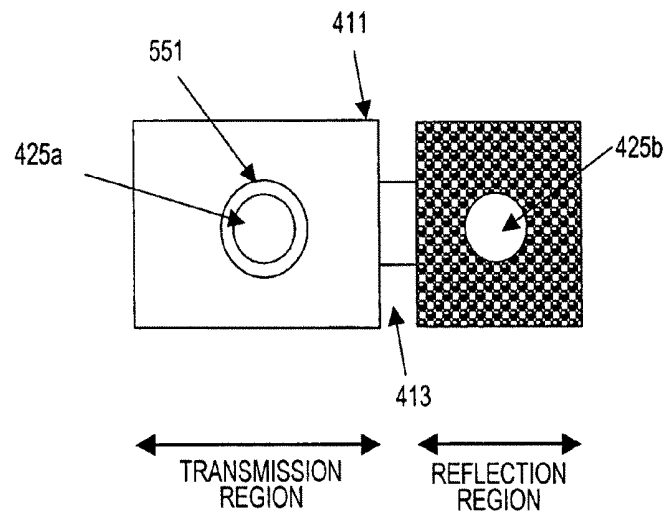


FIG. 14

(a)



(b)

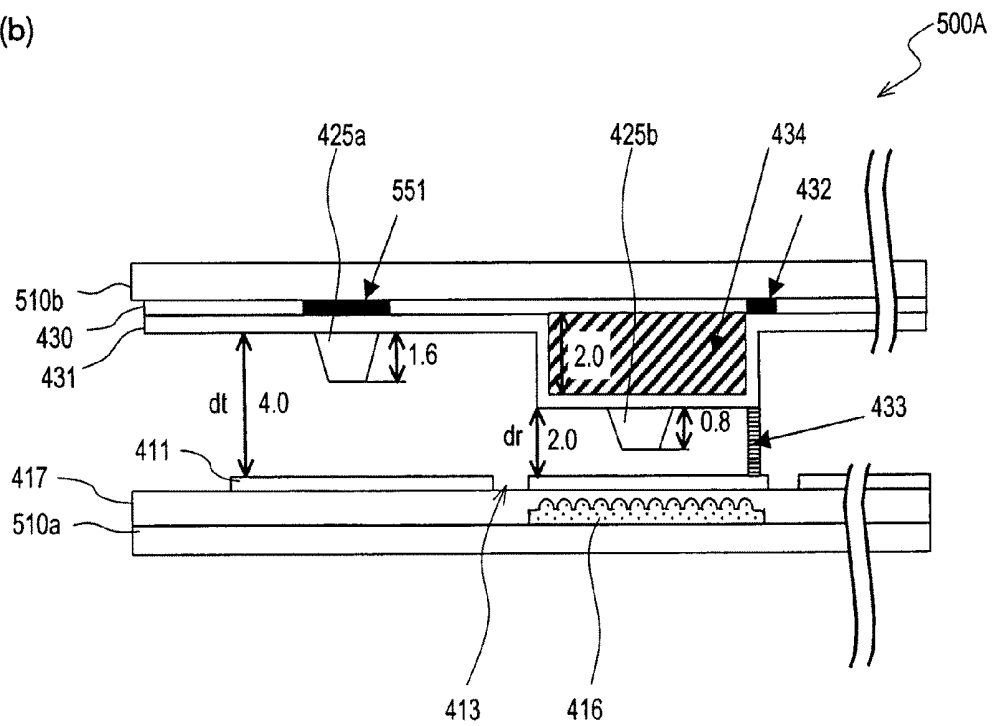
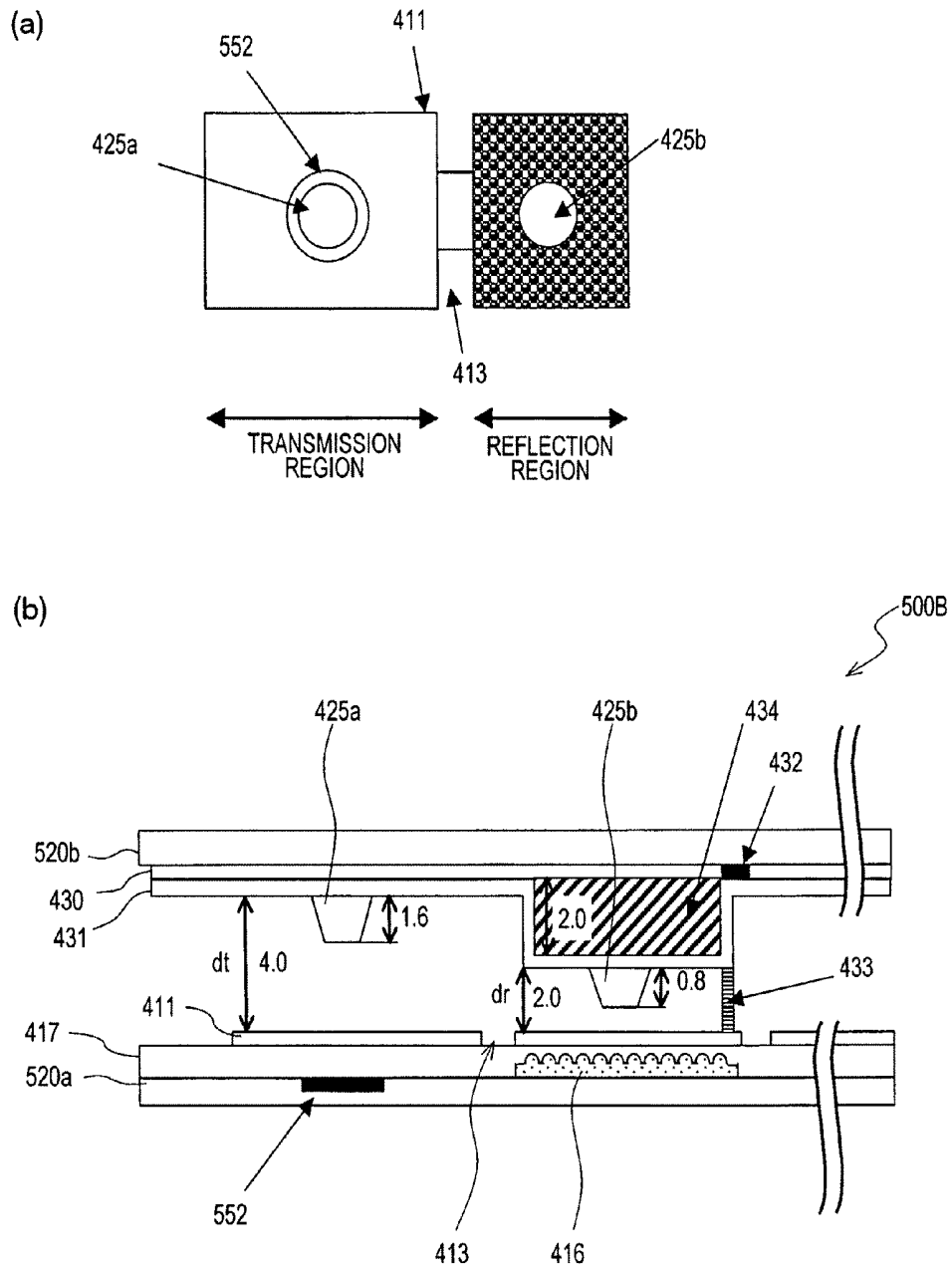


FIG. 15



LIQUID CRYSTAL DISPLAY DEVICE

This application is the U.S. national phase of International Application No. PCT/JP2006/305567, filed 20 Mar. 2006, which designated the U.S. and claims priority to Japanese Patent Application Nos. 2005-084934, filed 23 Mar. 2005, and 2005-261217, filed 8 Sep. 2005, the entire contents of each of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a liquid crystal display apparatus, and more particularly, to a liquid crystal display apparatus suitably used in portable information terminals (e.g., PDAs), mobile phones, car-mounted liquid crystal displays, digital cameras, personal computers, amusement equipment, TV sets and the like.

BACKGROUND ART

In recent years, taking advantage of their features of being thin and consuming low power, liquid crystal display apparatuses have found widespread use in notebook personal computers, mobile phones, information equipment such as electronic personal organizers, camera-integrated VTRs equipped with a liquid crystal monitor and the like.

As a display mode capable of attaining high contrast and a wide viewing angle, a vertical alignment mode using a vertically aligned liquid crystal layer has received attention. A vertically aligned liquid crystal layer is generally formed using a vertical alignment film and a liquid crystal material negative in dielectric anisotropy.

For example, Patent Literature 1 discloses a liquid crystal display apparatus in which an oblique electric field is generated at the periphery of an opening provided on a counter electrode facing a pixel electrode via a liquid crystal layer, to tilt liquid crystal molecules located around liquid crystal molecules that are in a vertically aligned state inside the opening, to thereby improve the viewing angle characteristic.

Patent Literature 1 described above has a problem that with the disclosed configuration it is difficult to generate oblique electric fields over the entire region of a pixel and as a result liquid crystal molecules may delay in response to the voltage in some portion of the pixel causing a problem of occurrence of an afterimage phenomenon.

To solve the above problem, Patent Literature 2 discloses a liquid crystal display apparatus in which openings are arranged regularly in a pixel electrode or a counter electrode to give a plurality of liquid crystal domains exhibiting radially tilted orientation in a pixel.

Patent Literature 3 discloses a technology in which a plurality of protrusions are provided regularly in a pixel to stabilize the aligned state of liquid crystal domains having radially tilted orientation that emerge around each protrusion as the center. This literature also discloses that the display characteristics can be improved by regulating the alignment of liquid crystal molecules using oblique electric fields generated with openings provided in an electrode, together with alignment regulating force of the protrusions.

In recent years, a liquid crystal display apparatus capable of presenting high-quality display both indoors and outdoors has been proposed (see Patent Literature 4 and Patent Literature 5, for example). Such a liquid crystal display apparatus, called a transmissive liquid crystal display apparatus, has a reflection region meant for display in a reflection mode and a transmission region meant for display in a transmission mode, in each pixel.

Patent Literature 6 and Patent Literature 7 disclose a technology in which a reflection electrode having a concave/convex surface is used to attain a reflection display characteristic close to paper white. Such a reflection electrode having a concave/convex surface is obtained by patterning a photosensitive resin layer by photolithography, deforming the photosensitive resin layer by heating and forming a reflection electrode on a concave/convex surface of the resultant resin layer.

Currently commercially available transmissive liquid crystal display apparatuses adopt the ECB mode, the TN mode and the like. Patent Literature 3 described above also discloses a configuration applying the vertical alignment mode, not only to transmissive liquid crystal display apparatuses, but also to transmissive liquid crystal display apparatuses. Also, Patent Literature 8 discloses a technology in which, in a transmissive liquid crystal display apparatus having a vertically aligned liquid crystal layer, the alignment (multi-axis alignment) of liquid crystal molecules is controlled with a depression that is formed on an insulating layer to make the thickness of the liquid crystal layer in a transmission region double that of the liquid crystal layer in a reflection region. This patent literature discloses a configuration in which the depression has a shape of a regular octagon, for example, and a protrusion (convex portion) or a slit (electrode opening) is formed at a position facing the depression via the liquid crystal layer (see FIGS. 4 and 16 of Patent Literature 8, for example).

Patent Literature 9 discloses a technology in which protrusions are formed on a substrate to attain radially tilted orientation of liquid crystal molecules in liquid crystal domains. This literature argues that the radially tilted orientation is stabilized, in a voltage applied state, with an alignment regulating structure provided on one substrate and the effect of the protrusions on the side of the other substrate facing a liquid crystal layer.

Patent Literature 1: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 6-301036

Patent Literature 2: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 2000-47217

Patent Literature 3: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 2003-167253

Patent Literature 4: Japanese Patent Gazette No. 2955277

Patent Literature 5: U.S. Pat. No. 6,195,140

Patent Literature 6: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 6-75238

Patent Literature 7: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 9-90426

Patent Literature 8: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 2002-350853

Patent Literature 9: Japanese Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 2003-315803

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

Problems to be Solved by the Invention

As described above, the reflection electrodes disclosed in Patent Literature 6 and Patent Literature 7 have minute concave/convex portions on the surfaces thereof to reflect incident light over a predetermined angle range. According to examinations performed by the present inventors, however, it has been found that a transient afterimage will occur if such a reflection electrode having a concave/convex surface is applied to a liquid crystal display apparatus having a vertically aligned liquid crystal layer.

In a vertically aligned liquid crystal display apparatus that forms radially tilted domains during voltage application, vertical alignment films are not rubbed, but oblique electric fields generated during voltage application and alignment regulating force of protrusions and the like provided on the side of a substrate facing a liquid crystal layer are used to form radially tilted domains. If concave/convex portions exist on the surface of a reflection electrode, the concave/convex portions also act to regulate the aligned direction of liquid crystal molecules (direction in which liquid crystal molecules fall during voltage application), resulting in formation of a number of minute liquid crystal domains in a pixel. As the voltage application continues, such minute liquid crystal domains are fused into a target radially tilted domain formed under the oblique electric fields and the alignment regulating force of the protrusions and the like, to form one stable liquid crystal domain. This process of a number of minute domains being fused into a target radially tilted domain normally requires two to three seconds. Since the distribution of aligned directions (e.g., azimuth angles) of liquid crystal molecules in minute domains is different from that of liquid crystal molecules in the radially tilted domain, the brightness appears different when observed in a slant direction. The process of fusion of a number of minute domains is therefore recognized as a transient afterimage.

In view of the above problems, an object of the present invention is providing a liquid crystal display apparatus forming a liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation in a pixel, in which high-quality reflection display suppressing occurrence of an afterimage is attained.

Means for Solving the Problems

The liquid crystal display apparatus of the present invention includes a first substrate, a second substrate placed to face the first substrate and a vertically aligned liquid crystal layer placed between the first and second substrates, wherein the liquid crystal display apparatus includes a plurality of pixels each including a first electrode formed on the first substrate, a second electrode formed on the second substrate and the liquid crystal layer located between the first and second electrodes, the first substrate further includes a reflection layer having a concave/convex surface and an insulating layer formed to cover the reflection layer, the first electrode being placed on the insulating layer and having a shape defined to exert alignment regulating force with which at least one liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation is formed in the liquid crystal layer in a voltage applied state, and the second substrate has a protrusion protruding toward the liquid crystal layer in a region corresponding to the liquid crystal domain.

In an embodiment, the first electrode has an opening or a cut portion.

In another embodiment, the insulating layer is transparent.

In yet another embodiment, the first electrode is made of a transparent conductive layer.

In yet another embodiment, each of the plurality of pixels has a transmission region adapted to display in a transparent mode and a reflection region adapted to display in a reflection mode, the reflection region includes a region in which the first electrode overlaps the reflection layer, and the transmission region includes a region in which the first electrode does not overlap the reflection layer, and each of the transmission region and the reflection region includes at least one liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation in a voltage applied state.

In yet another embodiment, the thickness dt of the liquid crystal layer in the transmission region is greater than the thickness dr of the liquid crystal layer in the reflection region.

In yet another embodiment, the second substrate further includes a light-shading layer placed on the side of the protrusion away from the liquid crystal layer, the protrusion being placed in a region corresponding to the liquid crystal domain in the transmission region.

In yet another embodiment, the light-shading layer shades the entire of the protrusion when viewed in a direction vertical to the second substrate.

In yet another embodiment, the second substrate has a color filter layer and a black matrix, and the light-shading layer is formed of the same film as the black matrix.

In yet another embodiment, the first substrate further includes an active element provided to correspond to each of the plurality of pixels, and the first electrode is a pixel electrode provided for each of the plurality of pixels and connected to the active element.

In yet another embodiment, the liquid crystal display apparatus further includes: a pair of polarizing plates placed to face each other via the first and second substrates; and at least one biaxial phase plate between the first substrate and/or the second substrate and the pair of polarizing plates.

In yet another embodiment, the liquid crystal display apparatus further includes: a pair of polarizing plates placed to face each other via the first and second substrates; and at least one uniaxial phase plate between the first substrate and/or the second substrate and the pair of polarizing plates.

Effect of the Invention

In the liquid crystal display apparatus of the present invention, the first electrode (pixel electrode, for example) formed on the first substrate has a shape defined to exert alignment regulating force with which a liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation is formed in the liquid crystal layer in a voltage applied state. The second substrate placed to face the first substrate has a protrusion protruding toward the liquid crystal layer in a region corresponding to the liquid crystal domain. The reflection layer having a concave/convex surface is covered with an insulating layer (also called a flattening layer), and the first electrode is placed on the insulating layer (on the surface thereof facing the liquid crystal layer). Thus, with the surface facing the liquid crystal layer being flattened with the insulating layer, orientation of liquid crystal molecules is not disturbed, and stable radially tilted orientation can be obtained with oblique electric fields generated with the first electrode and the alignment regulating force of the protrusion placed on the second substrate. It goes without mentioning that an excellent reflection characteristic is exhibited with the concave/convex surface of the reflection layer.

According to the present invention, the display quality in the reflection mode can be improved in reflective liquid crystal display apparatuses and in transfective liquid crystal display apparatuses adapted to both transmission mode display and reflection mode display.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIGS. 1(a)-(b) are schematic views including FIGS. 1(a)-1(b) illustrating the operation principle of a liquid crystal display apparatus of an embodiment of the present invention, in which FIG. 1(a) shows the state during non-voltage application and FIG. 1(b) shows the state during voltage application.

FIG. 2 A schematic view illustrating the operation principle of a liquid crystal display apparatus of an embodiment of the present invention, which is a plan view showing an aligned state of liquid crystal molecules during voltage application.

FIGS. 3(a)-(c) are views diagrammatically showing alignment of liquid crystal molecules in a sub-pixel of a liquid crystal display apparatus 10R including a reflection electrode having a concave/convex surface, in which FIG. 3(a) shows the state during non-voltage application, FIG. 3(b) shows the state immediately after voltage application, and FIG. 3(c) shows the state after a lapse of a sufficient time from voltage application.

FIGS. 4(a)-(b) are views diagrammatically showing alignment of liquid crystal molecules in a sub-pixel of a liquid crystal display apparatus 10 of an embodiment of the present invention, in which FIG. 4(a) shows the state during non-voltage application and FIG. 4(b) shows the state during voltage application.

FIG. 5 A diagrammatic cross-sectional view of a reflective liquid crystal display apparatus provided with optical compensation films of an embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 6 A diagrammatic cross-sectional view of a transreflective liquid crystal display apparatus provided with optical compensation films of an embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 7(a)-(b) are views diagrammatically showing a configuration of one pixel of a reflective liquid crystal display apparatus 100 of an embodiment of the present invention, in which FIG. 7(a) is a plan view and FIG. 7(b) is a cross-sectional view.

FIGS. 8(a)-(b) are views diagrammatically showing a configuration of one pixel of a transreflective liquid crystal display apparatus 200 of an embodiment of the present invention, in which FIG. 8(a) is a plan view and FIG. 8(b) is a cross-sectional view.

FIGS. 9(a)-(b) are views diagrammatically showing a configuration of one pixel of a liquid crystal display apparatus 300 of Example 1, in which FIG. 9(a) is a plan view and FIG. 9(b) is a cross-sectional view.

FIGS. 10(a)-(b) are views showing the display characteristics of the liquid crystal display apparatus 300 of Example 1, in which FIG. 10(a) is a voltage-transmittance characteristic view and FIG. 10(b) is an iso-contrast characteristic view.

FIGS. 11(a)-(b) are views diagrammatically showing a configuration of one pixel of a liquid crystal display apparatus 400 of Example 2, in which FIG. 11(a) is a plan view and FIG. 11(b) is a cross-sectional view.

FIG. 12 A voltage-transmittance/reflectance characteristic view of the liquid crystal display apparatus 400 of Example 2.

FIG. 13 A cross-sectional view diagrammatically showing a configuration of one pixel of a liquid crystal display apparatus 400A of Example 2.

FIGS. 14(a)-(b) are views diagrammatically showing a configuration of one pixel of a liquid crystal display apparatus 500A of Example 3, in which FIG. 14(a) is a plan view and FIG. 14(b) is a cross-sectional view.

FIGS. 15(a)-(b) are views diagrammatically showing a configuration of one pixel of a liquid crystal display apparatus 500B of Example 3, in which FIG. 15(a) is a plan view and FIG. 15(b) is a cross-sectional view.

DESCRIPTION OF REFERENCE NUMERALS

- 1 Transparent substrate (TFT substrate)
- 11 Pixel electrode
- 12, 32 Vertical alignment film

- 13 Cut portion
- 17 Transparent substrate (counter (CF) substrate)
- 19 Counter electrode
- 20 Liquid crystal layer
- 21 Liquid crystal molecules
- 25 Protrusion (dielectric structure)
- 50r, 50s Liquid crystal panel
- 40, 43 Polarizing plate
- 41, 44 ¼ wave plate
- 42, 45 Phase plate negative in optical anisotropy (NR plate)
- 100 Liquid crystal display apparatus
- 110a Active matrix substrate
- 110b Counter substrate (color filter substrate)
- 111 Pixel electrode
- 113 Electrode cut portion
- 116 Reflection layer having a concave/convex shape
- 117 Transparent insulating layer
- 125 Protrusion
- 130 Color filter layer
- 131 Counter electrode
- 132 Black matrix
- 133 Support
- 200 Transreflective liquid crystal display apparatus
- 210a Active matrix substrate
- 210b Counter substrate (color filter substrate)
- 211 Pixel electrode
- 213 Reflection layer
- 214 Sub-pixel range defining frame
- 225 Protrusion (dielectric structure)
- 216 Transparent insulating layer
- 230 Color filter layer
- 231 Counter electrode
- 232 Black matrix
- 233 Support
- 234 Transparent dielectric layer (step in reflection portion)

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Hereinafter, the configuration of a liquid crystal display apparatus of an embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to the relevant drawings.

First, with reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, a basic mechanism of formation of radially tilted orientation in a liquid crystal display apparatus of an embodiment of the present invention will be described.

FIG. 1 illustrates the action of alignment regulating force of cut portions formed on a pixel electrode 11, in which (a) and (b) diagrammatically show the aligned states of liquid crystal molecules during non-voltage application and during voltage application, respectively. FIG. 1(b) shows the state displaying a halftone. FIG. 2 is a view of the aligned state of liquid crystal molecules in a halftone display state as observed from the direction normal to the substrate (plan view). Openings may otherwise be formed in place of the cut portions 13, and in this case, also, substantially the same effect will be obtained.

The liquid crystal display apparatus shown in FIG. 1 includes a pixel electrode 11 having the cut portions 13 and a vertical alignment film 12 formed in this order on a transparent substrate 1. A counter electrode 19, a protrusion 25 and a vertical alignment film 32 are formed in this order on the other transparent substrate 17. Although simplified in FIG. 1, the vertical alignment film 32 is formed to cover the protrusion

25. A liquid crystal layer **20** interposed between the two substrates includes liquid crystal molecules **21** having negative dielectric anisotropy.

As shown in FIG. 1(a), during non-voltage application, the liquid crystal molecules **21** are aligned roughly vertically to the surfaces of the substrates **1** and **17** under the alignment regulating force of the vertical alignment films **12** and **32**.

During voltage application, as shown in FIG. 1(b), the liquid crystal molecules **21** having negative dielectric anisotropy are urged to be vertical in their major axes to a line of electric force. Therefore, the directions in which the liquid crystal molecules **21** fall are defined by oblique electric fields generated around the cut portions **13**. When the cut portions **13** have a shape of a cross as shown in FIG. 2, a radially tilted liquid crystal domain is formed in a region substantially surrounded by the cut portions **13**. Note that a region in which one liquid crystal domain is formed during voltage application (center axis of axially symmetric orientation), and the region shown by a bold broken line defines a sub-pixel.

In the radially tilted domain, liquid crystal directors are oriented in all directions (azimuth directions in the substrate plane), exhibiting an excellent viewing angle characteristic. The radially tilted orientation as used herein is synonymous with axially symmetric orientation, in which liquid crystal molecules are continuously aligned with no disclination line being formed around the center of the radially tilted orientation (center axis of axially symmetric orientation), and the major axes of the liquid crystal molecules are aligned radially, tangentially and helically. In either case, the radially tilted orientation has components of liquid crystal molecules whose major axes are tilted radially from the center of the orientation (components parallel to oblique electric fields).

The "region substantially surrounded by the cut portions" is not necessarily surrounded completely as long as the alignment regulating force acts on the liquid crystal molecules inside the region continuously forming one liquid crystal domain. In other words, as shown in FIG. 2, the adjacent cut portions **13** may be separated from each other as long as one liquid crystal domain is formed therein.

Although the action of the oblique electric fields formed around the cut portions **13** was described, openings may be formed in place of the cut portions **13**. Oblique electric fields will also be generated near such openings, and even near the edges of the pixel electrode **11**, to define the directions in which the liquid crystal molecules **21** tilt under the electric fields. In other words, the pixel electrode **11** may just have a shape defined so as to exhibit the alignment regulating force under which a liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation is formed in the liquid crystal layer in the voltage applied state. The oblique electric fields generated near the edges of the pixel electrode can be controlled by selecting the outline of the pixel electrode and the shape and/or placement of the cut portions. Also, formation of an opening in the pixel electrode can control an oblique electric field generated near the opening.

As described above with reference to FIGS. 1(a) and 1(b), oblique electric fields generated with the cut portions **13** formed on the pixel electrode **11** cause formation of a liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation in a region (sub-pixel) substantially surrounded by the cut portions **13**. The liquid crystal display apparatus of this embodiment further has the protrusion (dielectric structure) **25** formed on the surface of the upper substrate **17** facing the liquid crystal layer **20** at a position roughly in the center of the sub-pixel. The radially tilted orientation of the liquid crystal molecules is further stabilized under the alignment regulating force (anchoring effect) of the inclined side face (covered with the

vertical alignment film **32**) of the protrusion **25** protruding into the liquid crystal layer **20**.

As is found from FIG. 1(b), the alignment regulating force of the inclined side face of the protrusion **25** formed on the surface of the second substrate (counter substrate) **17** facing the liquid crystal layer **20** acts to align the liquid crystal molecules **21** in the same directions as the alignment regulating force of the alignment regulating structure (electrode openings and cut portions **13**) formed on the first substrate (active matrix substrate) **1**, and thus further stabilizes the radially tilted orientation of the liquid crystal molecules **21** in the sub-pixel. Also, since the radially tilted orientation is formed around the protrusion **25** placed at roughly the center of the sub-pixel as the center, the center of the radially tilted orientation can be fixed at or near the protrusion **25**.

As described above, the aligned directions of liquid crystal molecules existing mainly in the periphery of the sub-pixel are regulated with the alignment regulating structure (which may be the electrode cut portions **13** and electrode openings) formed on the first substrate **1**, and the alignment of liquid crystal molecules existing roughly in the center of the sub-pixel is regulated with the alignment regulating structure (protrusion **25**) formed on the second substrate **17**. Under such regulation, the liquid crystal molecules **21** are put in radially tilted orientation inside the region substantially surrounded by the alignment regulating structure (cut portions **21**) formed on the first substrate **1**.

While the alignment regulating force given by the oblique electric fields becomes weaker as the voltage is lower, the alignment regulating force of the inclined side face of the protrusion **25** is independent of the voltage. The protrusion **25** therefore exerts sufficient alignment regulating force even in a halftone display state, defining the directions of tilt of liquid crystal molecules stably. For this reason, the protrusion **25** is preferably formed so that the alignment regulating force thereof covers the entire sub-pixel, as is diagrammatically shown in FIG. 2. In other words, as shown in FIG. 2, the longest distance LD between the protrusion **25** and the cut portions **13** of the pixel electrode **11** (or the outermost ends of the pixel electrode **11**) is preferably smaller than the distance up to which the alignment regulating force of the protrusion **25** covers. As a result of various examinations, the longest distance LD is found preferably 25 μm or less.

The shape of the protrusion **25** may be determined appropriately depending on the shape of the pixel electrode **11**. The cross section of the protrusion **25** along the substrate plane of the substrate **17** can be of a roughly perfect circle, a rough ellipse, a rough rectangle (including a rough square), a rough cross and the like.

(Reflection Region)

Referring to FIGS. 3(a) to 3(c), why a transient afterimage occurs in a vertically aligned liquid crystal display apparatus **10R** including a reflection electrode (pixel electrode) **11r** having a concave/convex surface, as those disclosed in Patent Literature 6 and Patent Literature 7, will be described. FIGS. 3(a), 3(b) and 3(c) respectively diagrammatically show the aligned state during non-voltage application, the aligned state after a lapse of two or three seconds from immediately after voltage application and the aligned state in a stable state after a lapse of a sufficient time from the voltage application.

During non-voltage application, as shown in FIG. 3(a), the liquid crystal molecules **21** are roughly vertically aligned under the alignment regulating force of the vertical alignment film **12** on the concave/convex surface of the reflection electrode **11r** and the vertical alignment film **32** on the counter electrode **19**. Although omitted in the figures, the entire surface of the reflection electrode **11r** is covered with the vertical

alignment film 12, whose surface reflects the concave/convex shape of the reflection electrode 11r. During this time, the liquid crystal molecules 21 tilt (pre-tilt), even though slightly, under the influence of the concave/convex surface. The pre-tilt direction varies with the position on the concave/convex surface.

Since the concave/convex surface of the reflection electrode 11r also act to regulate the aligned directions of the liquid crystal molecules 21 (directions in which the liquid crystal molecules tilt during voltage application), a number of minute liquid crystal domains SD are formed in the pixel immediately after voltage application as shown in FIG. 3(b).

As the voltage application continues, the minute domains SD are fused into a target radially tilted domain formed under the alignment regulating force of the protrusion 25 (SD in the center in FIG. 3(b)), forming one stable liquid crystal domain as shown in FIG. 3(c).

The process of a number of minute domains being fused into a target radially tilted domain as described above normally requires two to three seconds, and is recognized as a transient afterimage.

Next, the configuration and operation of a liquid crystal display apparatus of an embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to FIGS. 4(a) and 4(b). FIGS. 4(a) and 4(b) respectively diagrammatically show the aligned state during non-voltage application and the aligned state during voltage application.

The liquid crystal display apparatus 10 shown in FIG. 4 includes an insulating layer 15 formed to cover a reflection layer 16 having a concave/convex surface, and the pixel electrode 11 is formed on the insulating layer 15. The insulating layer 15, made of a resin layer, for example, has a thickness large enough to absorb the concave/convex portions on the surface of the reflection layer 16 and has a flat surface. Considering that the concave/convex portions are about 0.3 μm to 1.2 μm high, the thickness of the insulating layer 15 is preferably in the range of 2 μm to 5 μm inclusive. The insulating layer 15 and the pixel electrode 11 are preferably transparent. Ambient light passing through the pixel electrode 11 and the insulating layer 15 is reflected from the concave/convex surface of the reflection layer 16 in a predetermined angle range (diffuse reflection), to permit display in the reflection mode.

The surface of the pixel electrode 11 is substantially flat and thus the surface of the vertical alignment film 12 formed thereon is also substantially flat. The orientation of the liquid crystal molecules 21 is therefore regulated with the alignment regulating force of the protrusion 25 and oblique electric fields generated near the edges of the pixel electrode 11. Thus, the vertically aligned state is exhibited during non-voltage application as shown in FIG. 4(a), and a radially tilted domain with the protrusion 25 as the center is formed during voltage application as shown in FIG. 4(b).

The present invention is widely applicable to liquid crystal display apparatuses having a reflection region adapted to display in the reflection mode. In other words, the present invention is applicable, not only to reflective liquid crystal display apparatuses, but also to transmissive/reflective (transflective) liquid crystal display apparatuses adapted to both display in the reflection mode and display in the transmission mode. In the case of transmissive application, the thickness of the liquid crystal layer in a reflection region is preferably made smaller than the thickness of the liquid crystal layer in a transmission region. Also, at least one radially tilted domain is preferably formed in each of the reflection region and the transmission region, and a protrusion is preferably formed on the surface of the counter substrate facing the liquid crystal layer at roughly the center of each radially tilted domain.

(Placement of Optical Compensation Films)

Next, referring to FIG. 5, an exemplary configuration of optical compensation films used for a reflective liquid crystal display apparatus of an embodiment of the present invention will be described. FIG. 5 is a diagrammatic cross-sectional view of the reflective liquid crystal display apparatus provided with optical compensation films.

The liquid crystal display apparatus shown in FIG. 5 includes a reflective liquid crystal panel 50r, a polarizing plate 43 placed on the observer side of the reflective liquid crystal panel 50r, a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate 44 placed between the polarizing plate 43 and the liquid crystal panel 50r and a phase plate 45 negative in optical anisotropy placed between the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate 44 and the liquid crystal panel 50r. The liquid crystal panel 50r is the same in configuration as the liquid crystal display apparatus 10 shown in FIG. 4, for example. Alternatively, it may be the same in configuration as a liquid crystal display apparatus 100 to be described later with reference to FIG. 7.

The display operation of the liquid crystal display apparatus shown in FIG. 5 will be briefly described.

In the reflection mode display, incident light from above becomes linearly polarized light after passing through the polarizing plate 43. The linearly polarized light then becomes circularly polarized light when entering the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate 44 arranged so that the angle between the transmission axis of the polarizing plate 43 and the retardation axis of the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate 44 is 45° . The circularly polarized light then passes through a color filter layer (not shown) formed on the counter substrate. Note that the phase plate 45 that is negative in optical anisotropy gives no phase difference for light incident from the normal direction.

During non-voltage application, in which liquid crystal molecules in the liquid crystal layer 20 are aligned roughly vertically to the substrate plane, the incident light is transmitted with the phase difference being roughly 0, and is reflected from the reflection layer formed on the lower substrate 1. The reflected circularly polarized light passes again through the liquid crystal layer 20 and then the color filter layer, and passes through the phase plate 45 negative in optical anisotropy again as the circularly polarized light, to reach, via the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate 44, the polarizing plate 43 as linearly polarized light having a polarizing direction orthogonal to the polarizing direction observed when the incident light first passed through the polarizing plate 43. The light therefore fails to pass through the polarizing plate 43, exhibiting black display.

During voltage application, in which liquid crystal molecules in the liquid crystal layer 20 tilt from the normal to the substrate plane, the incident circularly polarized light becomes elliptically polarized light due to birefringence of the liquid crystal layer 20, and then is reflected from the reflection layer formed on the lower substrate 1. The reflected light further changes its polarized state in the liquid crystal layer 20, and passes again through the liquid crystal layer 20, the color filter layer and then the phase plate 45 negative in optical anisotropy, to be incident on the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate 44 as the elliptically polarized light. Accordingly, when reaching the polarizing plate 43, the light is not linearly polarized light orthogonal to the polarizing direction observed when the light was first incident and thus passes through the polarizing plate 43. In other words, by adjusting the applied voltage, the tilt state of the liquid crystal molecules is controlled, and thus the amount of reflected light that can pass through the polarizing plate 43 is modulated, to thereby permit grayscale display.

Next, the display operation of a transflective liquid crystal display apparatus will be briefly described with reference to FIG. 6. FIG. 6 is a diagrammatic cross-sectional view of a

transflective liquid crystal display apparatus provided with optical compensation films of an embodiment of the present invention. The liquid crystal display apparatus shown in FIG. 6 includes a transflective liquid crystal panel **50s** in place of the reflective liquid crystal panel **50r** in FIG. 5. Also, a back-

light is provided for transmission display. Since the display operation in the reflection mode of a reflection display section (reflection region) in FIG. 6 is as described above, the display operation in the transmission mode of a transmission display section (transmission region) will be described hereinafter.

Two upper and lower polarizing plates **43** and **40** are placed so that the transmission axes thereof are orthogonal to each other. Light outputted from the backlight (light source) becomes linearly polarized light via the polarizing plate **40**. The linearly polarized light then becomes circularly polarized light when entering a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **41** placed so that the angle between the transmission axis of the polarizing plate **40** and the retardation axis of the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **41** is 45° . The circularly polarized light then passes through a phase plate **42** negative in optical anisotropy to be incident on the transmission display section (transmission region) of the lower substrate **1**. Note that the phase plate **42** gives no phase difference to light incident from the normal direction.

During non-voltage application, in which liquid crystal molecules in the liquid crystal layer **20** are aligned roughly vertically to the substrate plane, the incident light is transmitted with the phase difference being roughly 0, and is incident on the lower substrate **1** as circularly polarized light. The light then passes through the liquid crystal layer **20**, the upper substrate **17** and then the upper phase plate **45** negative in optical anisotropy as circularly polarized light, to reach the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **44**. The upper and lower $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **44** and **41** are arranged so that the retardation axes thereof are orthogonal to each other. Therefore, in the transmitted polarized light, a phase difference produced in the lower $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **41** can be canceled in the upper $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **44**, resuming the original linearly polarized light. The polarized light having passed through the upper $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **44**, which is the same linearly polarized light as that having passed through the polarizing plate **40**, is absorbed by the polarizing plate **43** whose transmission axis is orthogonal to that of the polarizing plate **40**, exhibiting black display.

During voltage application, in which liquid crystal molecules in the liquid crystal layer **20** tilt from the normal to the substrate plane, the incident circularly polarized light becomes elliptically polarized light due to the birefringence of the liquid crystal layer **20**, and passes through the upper CF substrate **17**, the upper phase plate **45** negative in optical anisotropy and then the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **44** as elliptically polarized light, to reach the polarizing plate **43**. Accordingly, the light is not linearly polarized light orthogonal to the polarized component observed when the light was first incident, and thus passes through the polarizing plate **43**. In other words, by adjusting the applied voltage, the tilt state of the liquid crystal molecules is controlled, and thus the amount of transmitted light that can pass through the polarizing plate **43** is modulated, to thereby permit grayscale display.

The phase plate negative in optical anisotropy minimizes the amount of change in phase difference occurring when the angle of view is changed in the vertically aligned state of liquid crystal molecules, and suppresses "black floating" that may occur when observed at a wide angle. In place of the combination of the negative phase plate and the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate, a biaxial phase plate obtained by integrating a phase plate negative in optical anisotropy with a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate may be used. To attain optical compensation over a wide wavelength

band, a layered structure of a $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate and a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate may be used in place of the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate.

In the case of implementing the normally black mode, in which black display is exhibited during non-voltage application while white display is exhibited during voltage application, using radially tilted domains as in the present invention, an extinction pattern caused by a polarizing plate can be removed to improve the brightness by placing a pair of $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plates on the upper and lower side of a liquid crystal display apparatus (liquid crystal panel). When implementing the normally black mode using radially tilted domains with the upper and lower polarizing plates being placed so that their transmission axes are orthogonal to each other, it is possible in principle to attain substantially the same level of black display as that obtained with a pair of polarizing plates placed under crossed nicols. Thus, a significantly high contrast ratio can be attained, and also a wide viewing angle characteristic derived from the all-directional alignment can be achieved.

(Reflective Liquid Crystal Display Apparatus)

The configuration of a reflective liquid crystal display apparatus **100** of an embodiment of the present invention will be described.

FIG. 7 diagrammatically shows a configuration of one pixel of the reflective liquid crystal display apparatus **100** of an embodiment of the present invention, in which (a) is a plan view and (b) is a cross-sectional view. Note that while FIG. 7(a) shows a configuration of forming three sub-pixels in one pixel, FIG. 7(b) shows a configuration of forming two sub-pixels in one pixel.

The liquid crystal display apparatus **100** includes a substrate (e.g., glass substrate) **110a**, a transparent substrate **110b** placed to face the substrate **110a**, and a vertically aligned liquid crystal layer **120** placed between the substrates **110a** and **110b**. Vertical alignment films (not shown) are placed on the surfaces of the substrates **110a** and **110b** facing the liquid crystal layer **120**, so that liquid crystal molecules of the liquid crystal layer **120** are aligned roughly vertically to the surface of the vertical alignment films during non-voltage application. The liquid crystal layer **120** includes a nematic liquid crystal material negative in dielectric anisotropy and, as required, a chiral agent.

The liquid crystal display apparatus **100** also includes a reflection layer **116**, a transparent insulating layer **117** and a pixel electrode **111** formed on the substrate **110a** and a counter electrode **131** formed on the transparent substrate **110b**. The pixel electrode **111**, the counter electrode **131** and the liquid crystal layer **120** located therebetween define a pixel. Circuit elements such as TFTs are formed on the substrate **110a**. The substrate **110a** and the components formed thereon are sometimes collectively called an active matrix substrate **110a**.

On the surface of the substrate **110b** facing the liquid crystal layer **120**, typically formed are a color filter **130** provided for each pixel (a plurality of color filters are sometimes collectively called a color filter layer **130** as a whole) and a black matrix (light-shading layer) **132** provided between adjacent color filters **130**, that is, between adjacent pixels. The counter electrode **131** is formed over these components. Alternatively, the color filter layer **130** and the black matrix **132** may be formed on the counter electrode **131** (on the surface thereof facing the liquid crystal layer **120**). The substrate **110b** and the components formed thereon are sometimes collectively called a counter substrate (color filter substrate) **110b**.

The pixel electrode **111** is formed of a transparent conductive layer made of ITO and the like. A region located above the

reflection layer **116** defines a reflection region. The reflection layer **116** is formed of an Al layer, an alloy layer containing Al or a multilayer film including any of these layers. The surface of the reflection layer **116** has a concave/convex shape, with which incident light can be reflected at various angles, permitting while display close to paper white. The transparent insulating layer **117** is formed over the reflection layer **116** to flatten the concave/convex surface of the reflection layer **116**. As a result, the concave/convex shape of the reflection layer **116** is prevented from affecting the directions in which liquid crystal molecules fall.

The pixel electrode **111** has cut portions **113** formed at predetermined positions, to divide the pixel into three sub-pixels with the cut portions **113**. Once a predetermined voltage is applied across the liquid crystal layer **120**, a liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation is formed in each of the three sub-pixels under the alignment regulating force of oblique electric fields generated in the periphery of the pixel electrode **111** and near the cut portions **113**.

Also, protrusions **125** are formed on the surface of the substrate **110b** facing the liquid crystal layer **120** so as to be located at roughly the center of the respective sub-pixels. With the alignment regulating force of the protrusions **125**, the orientation of the liquid crystal domains is stabilized. With the protrusion **125** located roughly at the center of each sub-pixel, the center of the orientation of the liquid crystal domain can be fixed at roughly the center of the sub-pixel, and thus the probabilities of existence of liquid crystal molecules aligned in all directions can be made roughly equal to one another. This can reduce the variation in reflectance with pixels when viewed in a slant direction and thus enables uniform display free from roughness. Although FIG. 7 shows an example of forming three liquid crystal domains in one reflection region, the present invention is not limited to this. The shape of each liquid crystal domain is preferably a rough square from the standpoint of the viewing angle characteristic and the alignment stability.

A support **133** for defining the thickness of the liquid crystal layer **120** (also called the cell gap) is preferably formed in the light-shading region because the display quality will not be lowered at this position. The support **133** can be formed by photolithography using a photosensitive resin, for example, and may be formed on either the substrate **110a** or **110b**. The support **133**, placed at a predetermined position using a photosensitive resin, is also called a photo spacer or a columnar spacer.

Although omitted in the above description, the liquid crystal display apparatus **100** further includes a pair of polarizing plates placed to face each other via the substrates **110a** and **110b**. The pair of polarizing plates are typically placed so that the transmission axes thereof are orthogonal to each other. Also, as described earlier, biaxial phase plates or uniaxial phase plates may be provided.

Next, referring to FIG. 8, a preferred configuration specific to a transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **200** permitting both display in the transmission mode and display in the reflection mode will be described. FIG. 8 diagrammatically shows a configuration of one pixel of the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **200** of an embodiment of the present invention, in which (a) is a plan view and (b) is a cross-sectional view.

The transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **200** includes a substrate (e.g., glass substrate) **210a**, a transparent substrate **210b** placed to face the substrate **210a**, and a vertically aligned liquid crystal layer **220** placed between the substrates **210a** and **210b**. Vertical alignment films (not shown) are placed on the surfaces of the substrates **210a** and

210b facing the liquid crystal layer **220**, so that liquid crystal molecules of the liquid crystal layer **220** are aligned roughly vertically to the surface of the vertical alignment films during non-voltage application. The liquid crystal layer **220** includes a nematic liquid crystal material negative in dielectric anisotropy and, as required, a chiral agent.

The transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **200** also includes a reflection layer **216**, a transparent insulating layer **217** and a pixel electrode **211** formed on the substrate **210a** and a counter electrode **231** formed on the transparent substrate **210b**. The pixel electrode **211**, the counter electrode **231** and the liquid crystal layer **220** located therebetween define a pixel. On the surface of the substrate **210b** facing the liquid crystal layer **220**, typically formed are a color filter **230** provided for each pixel (a plurality of color filters are sometimes collectively called a color filter layer **230** as a whole) and a black matrix (light-shading layer) **232** provided between adjacent color filters **230**, that is, between adjacent pixels. The counter electrode **231** is formed over these components. Alternatively, the color filter layer **230** and the black matrix **232** may be formed on the counter electrode **231** (on the surface thereof facing the liquid crystal layer **220**).

The pixel electrode **211** is formed of a transparent conductive layer made of ITO and the like. A region located above the reflection layer **216** defines a reflection region, and the remaining region defines a transmission region. The reflection layer **216** is formed of an Al layer, an alloy layer containing Al or a multilayer film including any of these layers. The surface of the reflection layer **216** has a concave/convex shape, with which incident light can be reflected at various angles, permitting while display close to paper white. The transparent insulating layer **217** is formed over the reflection layer **216** to flatten the concave/convex surface of the reflection layer **216**. As a result, the concave/convex shape of the reflection layer **216** is prevented from affecting the directions in which liquid crystal molecules fall.

While light used for display passes through the liquid crystal layer **220** twice in the reflection mode, it passes through the liquid crystal layer **220** only once in the transmission mode. Therefore, as diagrammatically shown in FIG. 8(b), the thickness dt of the liquid crystal layer **220** in the transmission region A is preferably set about twice as large as the thickness dr of the liquid crystal layer **220** in the reflection region B. With this setting, retardations imparted to light by the liquid crystal layer **220** in the two display modes can be made roughly equal to each other. It is most preferred to set $dt=0.5 dr$, but good display can be attained in the two display modes as long as $0.3 dt < dr < 0.7 dt$ is satisfied. Naturally, $dt=dr$ may be acceptable depending on the use.

In the liquid crystal display apparatus **200**, a transparent dielectric layer **234** is formed on the substrate **210b** in the reflection region B to make the thickness of the liquid crystal layer **220** in the reflection region B smaller than the thickness of the liquid crystal layer in the transmission layer A. The counter electrode **231** is preferably formed to cover the transparent dielectric layer **234** (i.e., on the surface thereof facing the liquid crystal layer **220**) as illustrated. By adopting this configuration of forming the transparent dielectric layer **234** on the counter substrate **210b**, it is unnecessary to provide a step under the pixel electrode **211** in the reflection region using an insulating film and the like, and thus the fabrication of the active matrix substrate **210a** can advantageously be simplified.

Part of the pixel electrode **211** may be used as a reflection electrode and a concave/convex shape may be given to the surface thereof to attain white display close to paper white. However, as described above, the radially tilted orientation

may not be stabilized with this configuration. Therefore, as in the case of the reflective liquid crystal display apparatus described above, the reflection layer **216** having a concave/convex shape is formed in the reflection region, the transparent insulating layer **214** is formed over the reflection layer **216**, and the transparent pixel electrode **211** is formed on the transparent insulating layer **214**, so that the reflection layer **216** will not impede formation of radially tilted orientation above the pixel electrode **211** in the reflection region. In the illustrated example, four cut portions **213** are provided at positions that will divide the pixel electrode **211** into three equal parts in the length direction, and three protrusions **225** are provided on the surface of the counter substrate **210b** facing the liquid crystal layer **220**, to form three radially tilted domains (sub-pixels) in the pixel. The positions of the cut portions **213** may be determined appropriately depending on the number and size of sub-pixels.

While light used for display passes through the color filter layer **230** only once in the transmission mode, it passes through the color filter layer **230** twice in the reflection mode. Therefore, if color filters having the same optical density are used in the transparent region A and the reflection region B, the color purity and/or the luminance in the reflection mode may decrease. To suppress occurrence of this problem, the optical density of the color filter layer in the reflection region is preferably made smaller than that of the color filter layer in the transmission region. The optical density as used herein refers to a characteristic value characterizing the color filter layer, which can be reduced by reducing the thickness of the color filter layer. Alternatively, the optical density may be reduced by reducing the density of a pigment to be added while keeping the thickness of the color filter layer unchanged.

Hereinafter, the display characteristics of a prototype liquid crystal display apparatus will be described in a concrete manner.

Example 1

A reflective liquid crystal display apparatus **300** shown in FIGS. **9(a)** and **9(b)** were prototyped. FIG. **9** diagrammatically shows a configuration of one pixel of the liquid crystal display apparatus **300** of Example 1, in which (a) is a plan view and (b) is a cross-sectional view. Note that while FIG. **9(a)** shows a configuration of forming three sub-pixels in one pixel, FIG. **9(b)** shows a configuration of forming two sub-pixels in one pixel.

A resin layer (preferably, a photoresist layer) was formed on an active matrix substrate that has signal lines and thin film transistors (TFTs) already formed thereon, and using a mask having a pattern of 6 μm dia. circles arranged randomly, a pattern of a number of columns was formed in a region corresponding to the pixel electrode **311**. The formed columns were then deformed into a hemispherical shape by heating. An Al layer was formed on the resultant concave/convex shaped resin layer (not shown) by vapor deposition, and the resultant layer was patterned to correspond to pixel electrodes, to thereby obtain a reflection layer **316**. Subsequently, a transparent insulating layer having a thickness of about 3 μm was formed to cover the reflection layer **316**, to flatten the concave/convex surface of the reflection layer **316**. A pixel electrode (ITO layer; transparent electrode) **311** was formed on the flattened surface by vapor deposition and patterning (see FIG. **9(b)**). Cut portions **313** were formed at predetermined positions of the pixel electrode **311** to divide the pixel into a plurality of sub-pixels. In the configuration shown in FIG. **9(a)**, four cut portions **313** are formed at

positions that will divide the pixel electrode **311** into three equal parts in the length direction. In the configuration shown in FIG. **9(b)**, cut portions **313** are formed at positions that will divide the pixel into two equal parts in the length direction. The positions of the cut portions **313** may be determined appropriately depending on the number and size of sub-pixels.

Also, protrusions **325** were formed on the surface of a counter substrate (color filter substrate) **310b** facing the liquid crystal layer on which a color filter layer **330**, a black matrix **332** and a counter electrode **331** were formed. The protrusions **325** were placed to be roughly in the center of the respective sub-pixels. The height of the protrusions **325** was set at 1.2 μm . A support **333** for defining the cell thickness, whose height was set at 4.0 μm , was placed outside the pixel region.

A vertical alignment agent was applied to the thus-fabricated active matrix substrate **310a** and counter substrate **310b** and then baked to form vertical alignment layers (not shown) on the substrates. The resultant active matrix substrate **310a** and counter substrate **310b** were bonded together, and a liquid crystal material having negative dielectric anisotropy ($\Delta n = 0.101$, $\Delta \epsilon = -5.0$) was injected into a space between the substrates and sealed, to thereby fabricate a liquid crystal display apparatus. Optical compensation films were then placed on both outer sides of the substrates constituting the liquid crystal display apparatus, to complete the liquid crystal display apparatus.

As shown in FIG. **9(b)**, the liquid crystal display apparatus of this example has a layered structure including, from above (observer side) in order, a polarizing plate **343**, a $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate **344a**, a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **344b**, a phase plate (NR plate) **345** negative in optical anisotropy and the liquid crystal layer (having the color filter substrate on the upper side and the active matrix substrate on the lower side). The angle between the transmission axis of the polarizing plate **343** and the retardation axis of the $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate **344a** was set at 15° , and the angle between the retardation axis of the $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate **344a** and the retardation axis of the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **344b** was set at 60° , so that the combination of the $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate **344a** and the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate **344b** could function as a wide-band $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate.

The phase plate **345** negative in optical anisotropy was set to have a phase difference of 135 nm in the directions parallel with the optical axis (vertical to the film plane) and the film plane. Note that the azimuth angle of the transmission axis of the polarizing plate with respect to the substrate is not specifically defined in this example because liquid crystal molecules are aligned in all directions.

A drive signal was applied to the liquid crystal display apparatus **300** to evaluate the display characteristics. As a result, a good voltage-reflectance characteristic was exhibited as shown in FIG. **10(a)**. FIG. **10(b)** shows the angle of view—contrast characteristic results in reflection display. The viewing angle characteristic in reflection display was found roughly all-directional and symmetrical, the region of $\text{CR} > 5$ was as wide as $\pm 40^\circ$, and the reflection contrast was as high as 25:1 or more in the front. As for the response characteristic, no afterimage was recognized when display was switched from a black-and-white checked pattern to an all-black pattern. Good display was therefore permitted.

Example 2

Transflective Liquid Crystal Display Apparatus

A transflective liquid crystal display apparatus **400** shown in FIGS. **11(a)** and **11(b)** were prototyped. FIG. **11** diagram-

matically shows a configuration of one pixel of the liquid crystal display apparatus 400 of Example 2, in which (a) is a plan view and (b) is a cross-sectional view.

First, as in Example 1, a resin layer having a concave/convex shape was selectively formed by photolithography in a portion of a pixel region of an active matrix substrate 410a that is to become a reflection region. Thereafter, a reflection layer 416 was formed on the concave/convex shaped resin layer, and then an insulating layer 417 was formed covering the reflection layer 416 to flatten the concave/convex shape. A transparent pixel electrode 411 was formed on the flat surface of the insulating layer 417.

The outline of the pixel electrode 411 was as shown in FIG. 11(a), in which two cut portions 413 were formed to divide the pixel electrode into two sub-pixels corresponding to a transmission region and the reflection region, and liquid crystal molecules were radially tilted in each region.

A color filter layer 430 and a black matrix 432 were formed on a counter substrate 410b as in Example 1, and thereafter, a transparent dielectric layer 434 having a thickness that makes the thickness (cell gap) d_r of the liquid crystal layer in the reflection region half the thickness d_t of the liquid crystal layer in the transmission region. In this example, the cell gap in the transmission region was set at 4.0 μm , and the thickness of the transparent dielectric layer 434 was set at 2.0 μm . After the formation of the transparent dielectric layer 434, a counter electrode 431 was formed. Protrusions 425a and 425b were then formed on the counter electrode 431 at positions roughly in the center of the sub-pixels. The height of the protrusion 425a in the transparent region was set at 1.6 μm , while the height of the protrusion 425b in the reflection region was set at 0.8 μm . A support 433 for defining the cell gap had a height of 2.0 μm and placed outside the display region. As illustrated, the support 433 was made to stand at a position adjoining the transparent dielectric layer 434.

Subsequent process steps were performed as described in Example 1, to fabricate the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus. Note however that the optical compensation films were set differently.

As shown in FIG. 11(b), the optical compensation films in the liquid crystal display apparatus of this example had a layered structure including, from above (observer side) in order, a polarizing plate 443, a $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate 444a, a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate 444b, a phase plate (NR plate) 445 negative in optical anisotropy, a liquid crystal layer (having the color filter substrate on the upper side and the active matrix substrate on the lower side), a phase plate (NR plate) 442 negative in optical anisotropy, a $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate 441b, a $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate 441a and a polarizing plate 440. The retardation axes of the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plates 444b and 441b located above and below the liquid crystal layer were made orthogonal to each other, and the phase difference thereof was set at 140 nm (visible light ($\frac{1}{4}$ of 560 nm)). The retardation axes of the $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plates 444a and 441a located above and below the liquid crystal layer were made orthogonal to each other, and the phase difference thereof was set at 280 nm (visible light ($\frac{1}{2}$ of 560 nm)). The angle between the transmission axis of the polarizing plate (440 or 442) and the retardation axis of the $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate (441a or 444a) was set at 15°, and the angle between the retardation axis of the $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate (441a or 444a) and the retardation axis of the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate (441b or 444b) was set at 60°, so that the combination of the $\frac{1}{2}$ wave plate (441a or 444a) and the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate (441b or 444b) could function as a wide-band $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate (441b or 444b) (the wave plates on the same side with respect to the liquid crystal layer are combined).

The phase plates 442 and 445 negative in optical anisotropy were set to have a phase difference of 135 nm in the directions parallel with the optical axis (vertical to the film plane) and the film plane. The two polarizing plates (443 on the observer side and 440 on the backlight side) were placed so that their transmission axes are orthogonal to each other.

The display (transmission/reflection) characteristics of the thus-fabricated transfective liquid crystal display apparatus were evaluated. As a result, it was found that good voltage-transmittance/reflectance characteristics were exhibited as shown in FIG. 12. In reflection display, a good viewing angle characteristic was exhibited as in Example 1. As for the response characteristic, also, no afterimage was recognized when display was switched from a black-and-white checked pattern to an all-black pattern. Good display was therefore permitted. In transmission display, also, good characteristics were exhibited as in the reflection display. That is, the angle of view—contrast characteristic was all-directional and symmetrical, and the region of $\text{CR} > 10$ was as wide as $\pm 60^\circ$ or more in the upper, lower, right and left directions. The front contrast was as high as 300:1 or more.

The combination of the negative uniaxial phase plate (442 or 445) and the $\frac{1}{4}$ wave plate (441b or 444b) in the liquid crystal display apparatus 400 may be replaced with one biaxial phase plate (442a or 445a), as in a liquid crystal display apparatus 400A shown in FIG. 13. The display characteristics of the liquid crystal display apparatus 400A were mostly the same as those in Example 2 and thus found good. The configuration of the liquid crystal display apparatus 400A is smaller in the number of layers of the optical compensation films, compared with the configuration of the liquid crystal display apparatus 400. This reduces the cost and also minimizes a displacement at film stacking. Therefore, the variation in characteristics is reduced, and thus a liquid crystal display apparatus uniform in quality can be easily fabricated.

Comparative Example 1

A liquid crystal display apparatus was prototyped in which in the active matrix substrate of the liquid crystal display apparatus 300 of Example 1 shown in FIG. 9(a), the reflection layer 316 was used as a pixel electrode, and the insulating layer 317 and the transparent pixel electrode 311 were omitted.

The display characteristics of the liquid crystal display apparatus of this comparative example was evaluated and found that, while the voltage-reflectance characteristic and the angle of view—contrast characteristic were good as in Example 1, a transient afterimage was observed when red, green and blue were sequentially displayed in turn on the entire screen. The pixel response state of this liquid crystal display apparatus was observed with a polarizing microscope. As a result, as described earlier with reference to FIG. 3, it was observed that a number of minute domains were first formed under influence of the concave/convex shape of the reflection electrode and then domains were gradually fused into one. The afterimage was observed due to part of such domains. In contrast, in the liquid crystal display apparatuses of Examples 1 and 2, in which occurrence of minute domains was suppressed, no afterimage was observed.

Example 3

Transfective Liquid Crystal Display Apparatus

Transfective liquid crystal display apparatuses 500A and 500B shown in FIGS. 14 and 15, respectively, were fabri-

cated. The transfective liquid crystal display apparatuses **500A** and **500B** are different from the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **400** of Example 2 in that a light-shading layer **551** or **552** is provided at a position corresponding to the protrusion **425a** formed in the transmission region. Common components are denoted by the same reference numerals, and description thereof is omitted for simplification. The configuration of optical compensation films is the same as that of FIG. 11 although not shown.

The transfective liquid crystal display apparatuses **500A** and **500B** of this example, which have the light-shading layer **551** or **552** at a position corresponding to the protrusion **425a** formed in the transmission region, have a contrast ratio equal to or higher than the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **400**. The reason for this will be described.

The protrusion **425a** has a face (side face) inclined with respect to the substrate plane. If liquid crystal molecules are aligned vertically to the inclined side face of the protrusion **425a**, they will be in a tilt state with respect to the substrate plane (display plane). The vertically aligned liquid crystal layer displays black in the state of liquid crystal molecules being aligned vertically to the substrate plane during non-voltage application. Accordingly, light leakage will occur near the inclined side face of the protrusion **425a**. In the case of display of a halftone, also, light leakage will occur if the tilt angle (angle from the normal) of liquid crystal molecules in the area near the inclined side face is greater than the tilt angle of liquid crystal molecules in the other area. Such light leakage will lower the contrast ratio.

In formation of a vertical alignment film (not shown) on the protrusion **425a**, the thickness of the portion of the vertical alignment film formed on the protrusion **425a** may become thin or non-uniform. In such a case, also, the orientation of liquid crystal molecules may be disturbed, causing light leakage and thus lowering the contrast ratio.

The protrusion-caused problems described above also occur with the protrusion **425b** placed in the reflection region. However, since the front contrast of the reflection region is as low as about 20:1 while that of the transmission region is as high as 300:1, the influence of such light leakage on the display will be small even if measures against light leakage is omitted in the reflection region. Naturally, a light-shading layer may also be provided to correspond to the protrusion in the reflection region.

The transfective liquid crystal display apparatuses **500A** and **500B** of Example 3 has the light-shading layer **551** or **552** to prevent light leakage occurring near the protrusion **425a** from adversely affecting the display. Thus, a contrast ratio equal to or higher than that of the liquid crystal display apparatus **400** can be obtained.

Referring to FIGS. 14(a) and 14(b), a specific configuration and fabrication method of the prototyped transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **500A** will be described. Note that description of portions common with the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **400** is omitted.

The black matrix **432** was formed on the counter substrate **510b** at a position corresponding to the boundary of adjacent pixels. In the process step of forming the black matrix **432**, the light-shading layer **551** was formed in the same layer as the black matrix **432** at a position corresponding to roughly the center of the sub-pixel constituting the transmission region. The light-shading layer **551**, which had a shape of a 22 μm -dia. circle, was formed so as to shade the entire protrusion **425a** to be formed later when viewed in the direction vertical to the counter substrate **510b**. To state specifically, the light-shading layer **551** is placed so that when viewed in the direction vertical to the counter substrate **510b**, the center of the

light-shading layer **551** roughly agrees with the center of the bottom of the protrusion **425a** and the fringe of the light-shading layer **551** coincides or surrounds the fringe of the bottom of the protrusion **425a**.

The color filter layer **430** was then formed, and in the reflection region, formed was the transparent dielectric layer **434** having a thickness that makes the thickness (cell gap) of the liquid crystal layer in the reflection region half the thickness dt of the liquid crystal layer in the transmission region. In this example, the cell gap in the transmission region was set at 4.0 μm , and the thickness of the transparent dielectric layer **434** was set at 2.0 μm . The counter electrode **431** was formed after the formation of the transparent dielectric layer **434**.

The protrusions **425a** and **425b** were then formed on the counter electrode **431** at positions roughly in the center of the sub-pixels. The protrusion **425a** in the transparent region was set to have a height of 1.6 μm and the bottom thereof had a shape of a 20 μm -dia. circle. The protrusion **425b** in the reflection region was set to have a height of 0.8 μm and the bottom thereof had a shape of a 20 μm -dia. circle. The protrusion **425a** was formed so that the center of the bottom of the protrusion **425a** would agree with the center of the light-shading layer **551** as viewed in the direction vertical to the counter substrate **510b**. With the diameter of the light-shading layer **551** being 22 μm , the fringe of the bottom of the protrusion **425a** was completely surrounded by the fringe of the light-shading layer **551**.

The support **433** for defining the cell gap had a height of 2.0 μm and was placed outside the display region. As illustrated, the support **433** was made to stand at a position adjoining the transparent dielectric layer **434**.

Thereafter, substantially the same process steps as those for the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **400** of Example 2 were performed, to obtain the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **500A**.

The thus-fabricated transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **500A**, in which the protrusion **425a** was completely shaded with the light-shading layer **551**, was free from an influence of light leakage near the protrusion **425a** and had a front contrast as high as 400:1 or more, which was higher than the front contrast of the liquid crystal display apparatus **400** of Example 2 (300:1 or more) having no such light-shading layer **551**.

The light-shading layer **551** may have the same shape as the bottom of the protrusion **425a**, and in this case reduction in pixel aperture can be minimized.

Referring to FIGS. 15(a) and 15(b), a specific configuration and fabrication method of the prototyped transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **500B** will be described. Note that description of portions common with the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus **400** will be omitted.

The liquid crystal display apparatus **500B** has an active matrix substrate **520a** and a counter substrate **520b**.

In the active matrix substrate **520a** that is substantially the same as that in the liquid crystal display apparatus **400**, the light-shading layer **552** was formed at a position corresponding to the protrusion **425a** in the transmission region. The light-shading layer **552** had a shape of a 22 μm -dia. circle.

The liquid crystal display apparatus **500B** could obtain substantially the same contrast ratio and pixel aperture as the liquid crystal display apparatus **500A** as long as no displacement occurred in positioning in the process step of bonding the active matrix substrate **520a** with the counter substrate **520b**. However, when a displacement occurred, the position of the protrusion **425a** with respect to the light-shading layer **552** deviated, failing to completely shade the protrusion **425a**.

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Light leakage was therefore observed, and thus the contrast ratio decreased. Also, reduction in pixel aperture was great compared with the liquid crystal display apparatus 500A. Considering a margin for a displacement in the bonding step, the size of the light-shading layer 552 must be set greater than the light-shading layer 551 in the liquid crystal display apparatus 500A. This reduces the pixel aperture.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

As described above, according to the present invention, in a liquid crystal display apparatus forming a liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation in a pixel, the orientation of liquid crystal molecules can be sufficiently stabilized to sufficiently improve the response characteristic, whereby high-quality display with occurrence of an afterimage being suppressed can be attained.

The present invention is suitably applied to a reflective liquid crystal display apparatus and a transfective (transmissive/reflective) liquid crystal display apparatus. In particular, the transfective liquid crystal display apparatus is suitably used as a display apparatus for mobile equipment such as mobile phones.

The invention claimed is:

1. A liquid crystal display apparatus comprising:

a first substrate, a second substrate placed to face the first substrate and a vertically aligned liquid crystal layer placed between the first and second substrates,

wherein the liquid crystal display apparatus comprises a plurality of pixels each comprising a first electrode formed on the first substrate, a second electrode formed on the second substrate and the liquid crystal layer located between the first and second electrodes,

the first substrate further comprises a reflection layer having a concave/convex surface and an insulating layer formed to cover the reflection layer, the first electrode being placed on the insulating layer and having a shape defined to exert alignment regulating force with which at least one liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation is formed in the liquid crystal layer in a voltage applied state,

the second substrate has a protrusion protruding toward the liquid crystal layer in a region corresponding to the liquid crystal domain; and

wherein the second substrate has a color filter layer and a black matrix, and a light-shading layer is formed of the

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same film as the black matrix, and wherein the light-shading layer shades the protrusion and is spaced from the black matrix.

2. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first electrode has an opening or a cut portion.

3. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 1, wherein the insulating layer is transparent.

4. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first electrode is made of a transparent conductive layer.

5. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of pixels has a transmission region adapted to display in a transparent mode and a reflection region adapted to display in a reflection mode,

the reflection region includes a region in which the first electrode overlaps the reflection layer, and the transmission region includes a region in which the first electrode does not overlap the reflection layer, and

each of the transmission region and the reflection region includes at least one liquid crystal domain having radially tilted orientation in a voltage applied state.

6. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 5, wherein the thickness dt of the liquid crystal layer in the transmission region is greater than the thickness dr of the liquid crystal layer in the reflection region.

7. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 5, wherein the second substrate further comprises the light-shading layer placed on the side of the protrusion away from the liquid crystal layer, the protrusion being placed in a region corresponding to the liquid crystal domain in the transmission region.

8. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 7, wherein the light-shading layer shades the entire of the protrusion when viewed in a direction vertical to the second substrate.

9. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 1, further comprising: a pair of polarizing plates placed to face each other via the first and second substrates; and at least one biaxial phase plate between the first substrate and/or the second substrate and the pair of polarizing plates.

10. The liquid crystal display apparatus of claim 1, further comprising: a pair of polarizing plates placed to face each other via the first and second substrates; and at least one uniaxial phase plate between the first substrate and/or the second substrate and the pair of polarizing plates.

* * * * *

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摘要(译)

在在其中在像素中形成具有径向倾斜取向的液晶畴的液晶显示装置中，实现了抑制余像发生的高质量反射显示。本发明的液晶显示装置包括第一基板110a，第二基板110b和置于其间的垂直取向的液晶层120，并具有各自包括第一电极111，第二电极131和位于其间的液晶层的像素。。第一基板包括具有凹/凸表面的反射层116和形成为覆盖反射层的绝缘层117。第一电极111放置在绝缘层117上并且具有限定的形状以施加取向调节力，利用该取向调节力，在施加电压的状态下在液晶层中形成具有径向倾斜取向的至少一个液晶畴。第二基板110b具有在对应于液晶畴的区域中朝向液晶层突出的突起125。

