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(54) **GAS TURBINE ENGINE COMPOSITE VANE ASSEMBLY AND METHOD FOR MAKING SAME**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

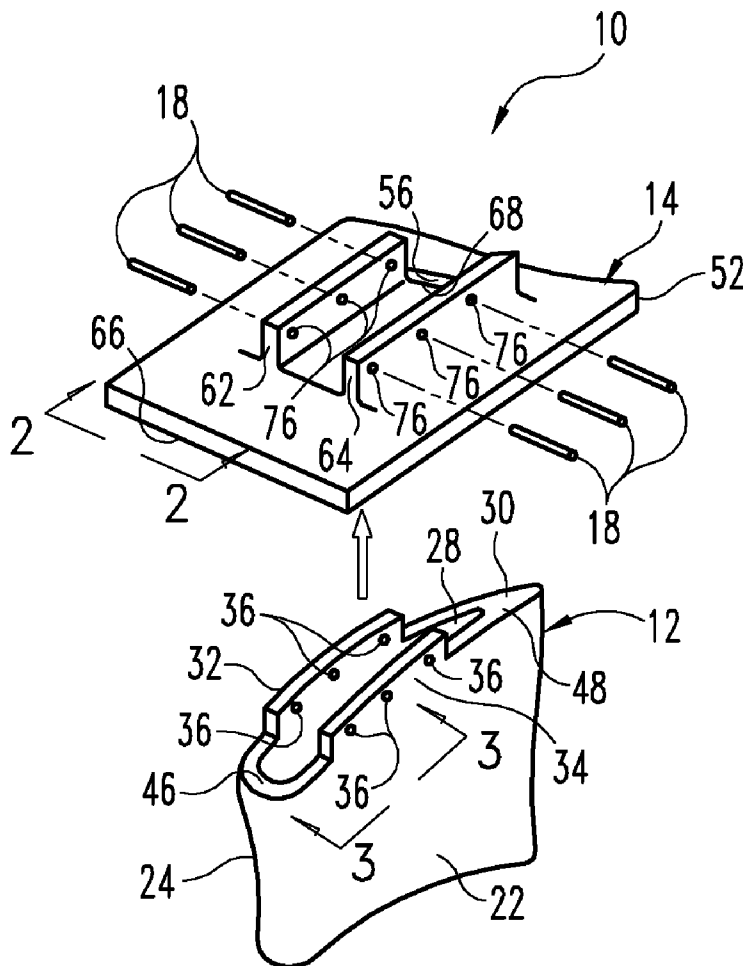
(21) Appl. No.: **14/138,725**

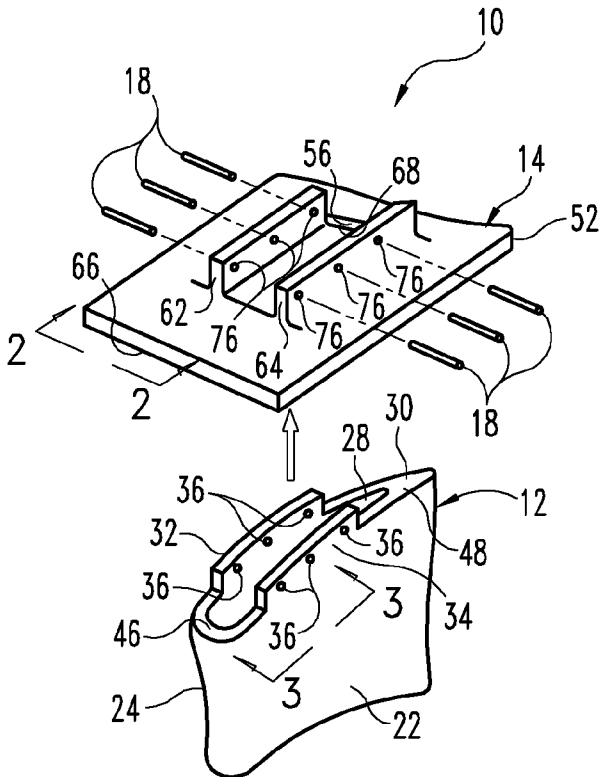
A gas turbine engine composite vane assembly and method for making same are disclosed. The method includes providing at least two gas turbine engine airfoil composite preform components. The airfoil composite preform components are interlocked with a first locking component so that mating faces of the airfoil composite preform components face each other. A filler material is inserted between the mating surfaces of the airfoil composite preform components.

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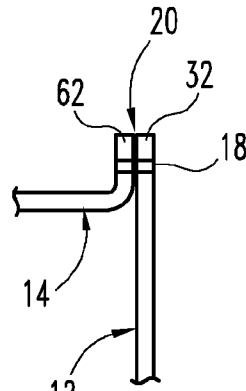
**Related U.S. Application Data**

(60) Provisional application No. 61/774,987, filed on Mar. 8, 2013.

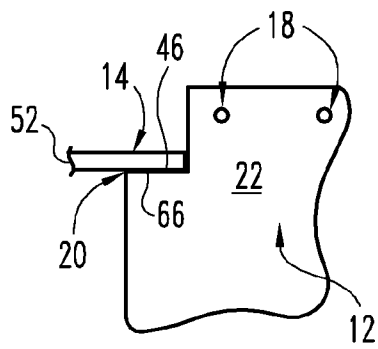




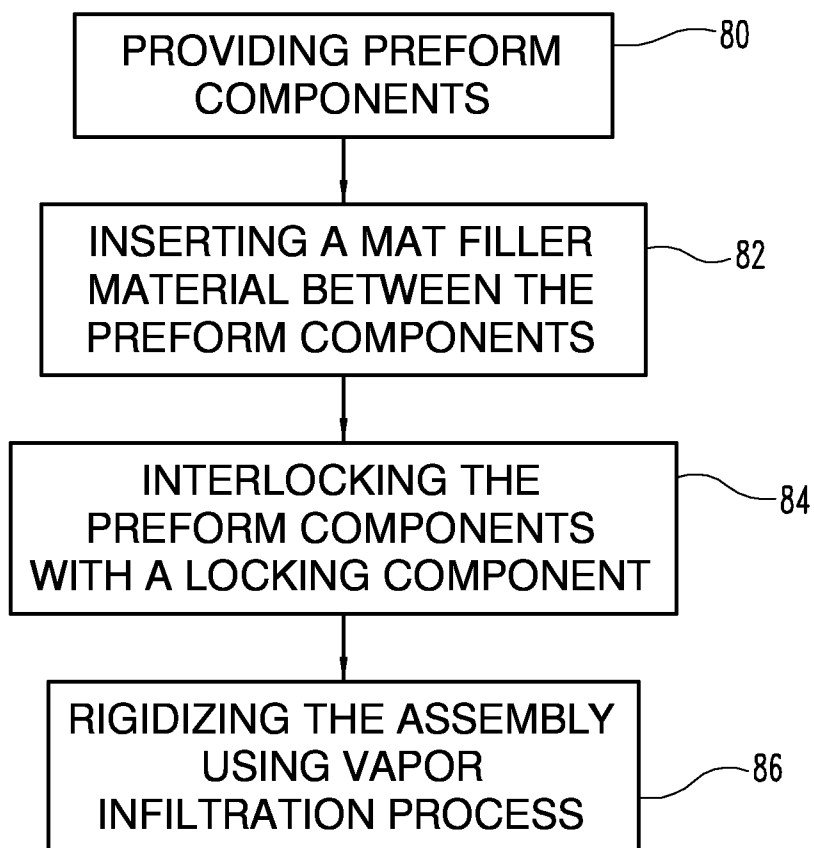
**Fig. 1**



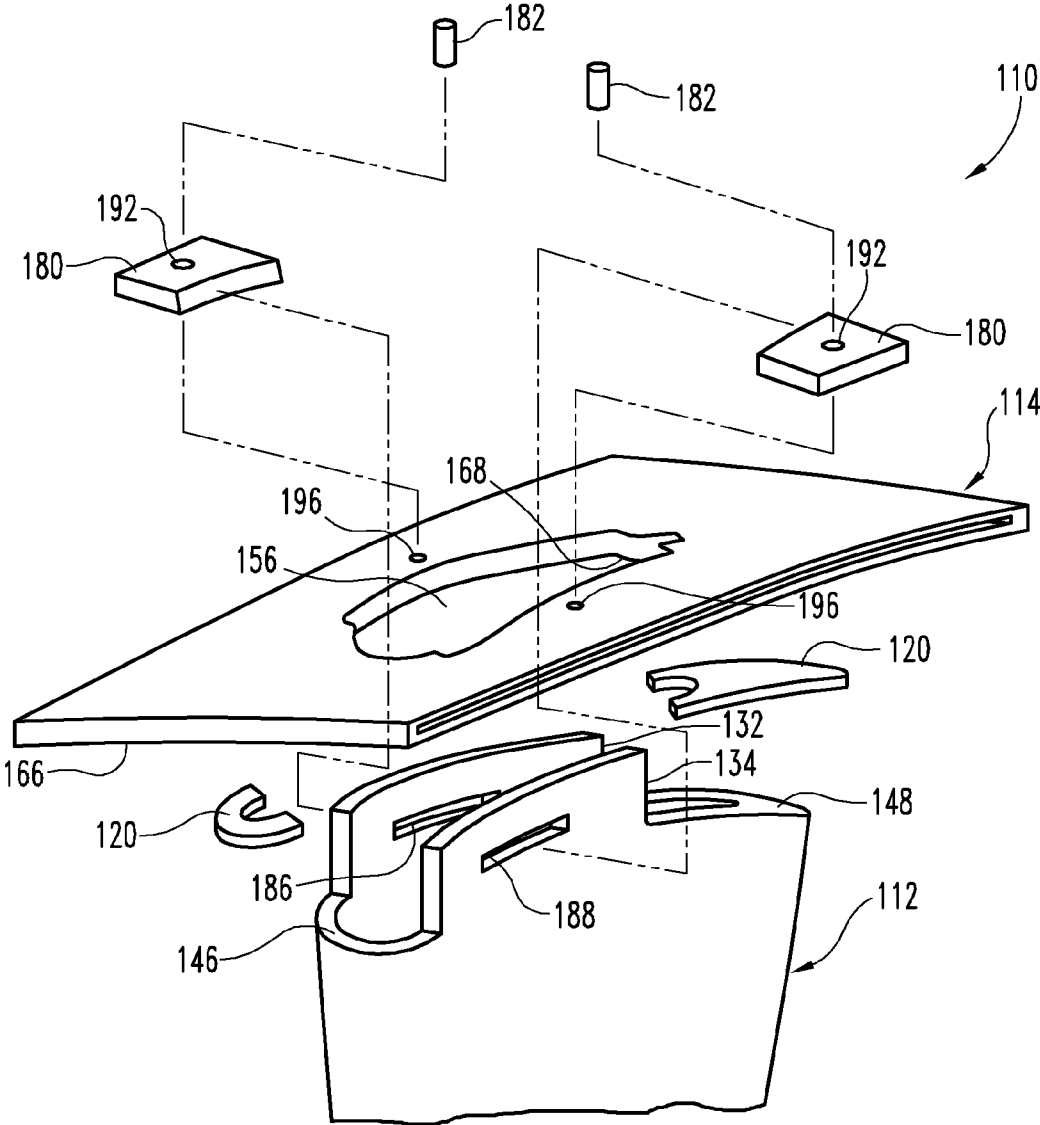
**Fig. 2**



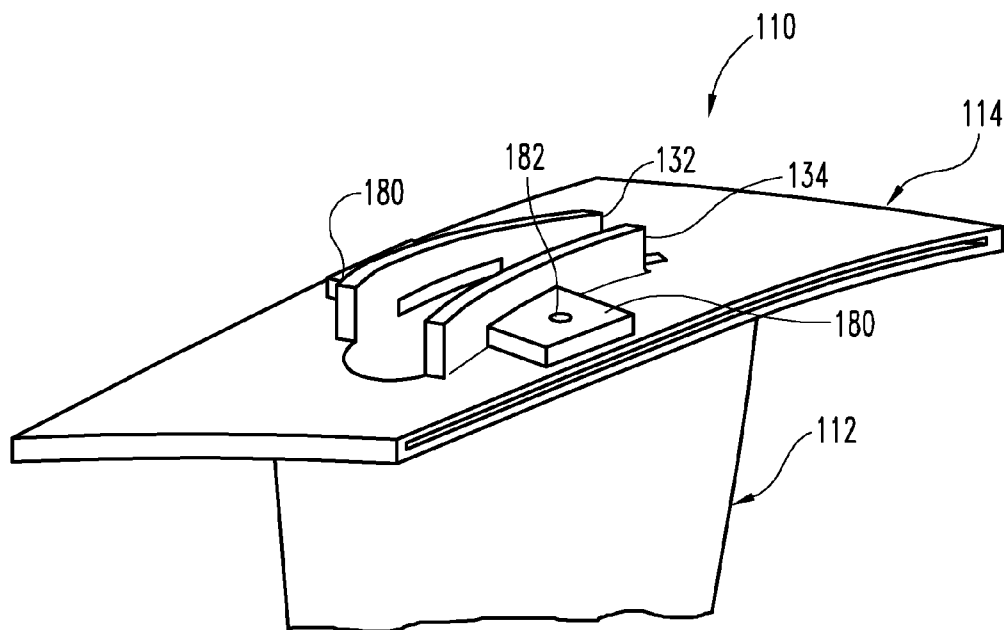
**Fig. 3**



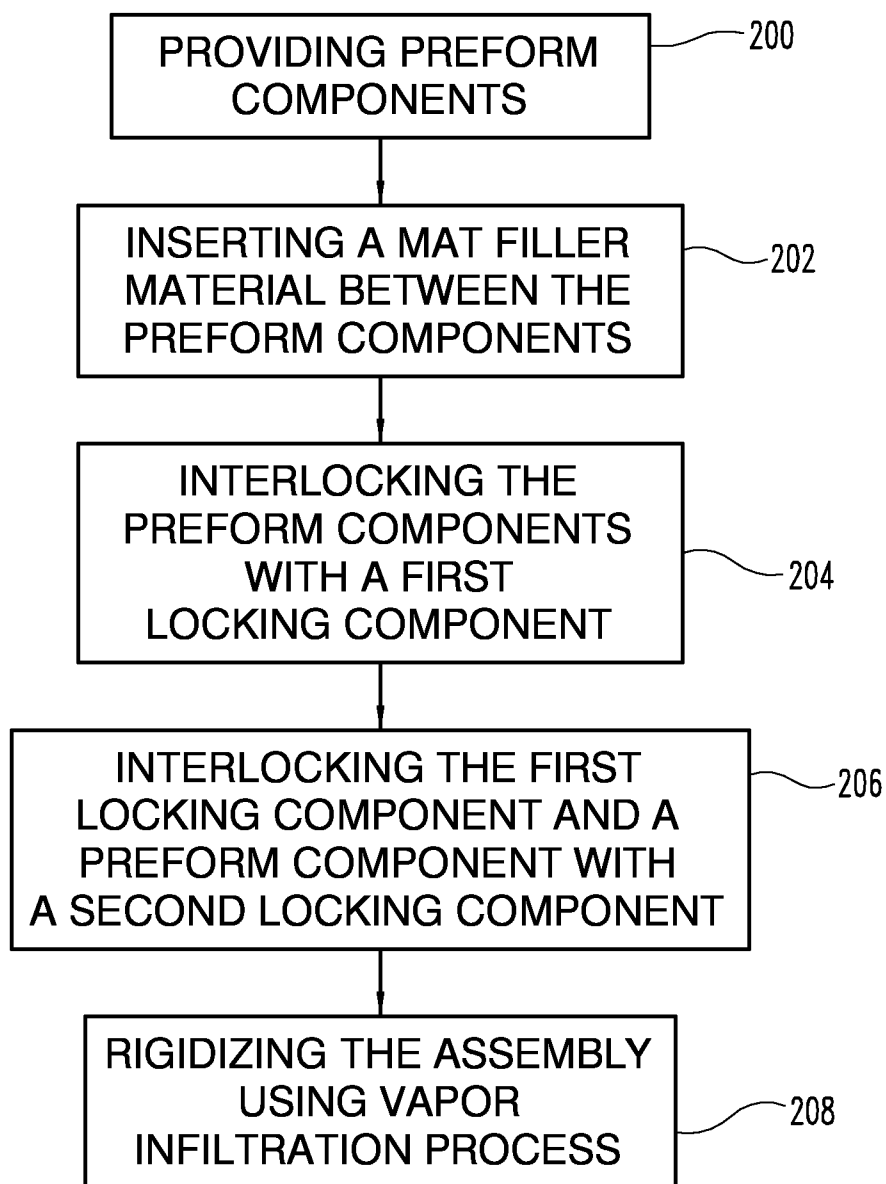
**Fig. 4**



**Fig. 5**



**Fig. 6**



**Fig. 7**

**GAS TURBINE ENGINE COMPOSITE VANE ASSEMBLY AND METHOD FOR MAKING SAME**

**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application claims priority to and the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/774,987, filed 8 Mar. 2013, the disclosure of which is now expressly incorporated herein by reference.

**STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT**

[0002] Embodiments of the present disclosure were made with United States government support under Contract No. FA8650-07-C-2803. The government may have certain rights.

**TECHNICAL FIELD**

[0003] The present application relates to gas turbine engine ceramic matrix composite vane assemblies and methods for forming same, and more particularly to multiple-component gas turbine engine CMC assemblies and methods for forming same.

**BACKGROUND**

[0004] Gas turbine engine ceramic matrix composite vane assemblies remain an area of interest. Some existing systems have various shortcomings, drawbacks, and disadvantages relative to certain applications. Accordingly, there remains a need for further contributions in this area of technology.

**SUMMARY**

[0005] One embodiment of the present disclosure is a unique method for forming a gas turbine engine ceramic matrix composite vane assembly in which, among other things, a locking component and/or mat filler material may be provided in a joint portion of the assembly. Other embodiments include unique methods, systems, devices, and apparatus for forming a CMC assembly. Further embodiments, forms, objects, aspects, benefits, features, and advantages of the present application shall become apparent from the description and figures provided herewith.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES**

[0006] Features of the application will be better understood from the following detailed description when considered in reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0007] FIG. 1 is an exploded perspective view of a ceramic matrix composite (CMC) assembly according to an embodiment.

[0008] FIG. 2 is an end elevational view of the CMC assembly of FIG. 1 taken at elevation 2-2 of FIG. 1.

[0009] FIG. 3 is a side elevational view of the CMC assembly of FIG. 1 taken at elevation 3-3 of FIG. 1.

[0010] FIG. 4 is a flowchart depicting steps according to an embodiment of a process for forming a CMC assembly.

[0011] FIG. 5 is an exploded perspective view of a ceramic matrix composite (CMC) assembly according to another embodiment.

[0012] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the CMC assembly of FIG. 4.

[0013] FIG. 7 is a flowchart depicting steps according to an embodiment of a process for forming a CMC assembly.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF REPRESENTATIVE EMBODIMENTS**

[0014] While the present invention can take many different forms, for the purpose of promoting an understanding of the principles of the invention, reference will now be made to the embodiments illustrated in the drawings and specific language will be used to describe the same. It will nevertheless be understood that no limitation of the scope of the invention is thereby intended. Any alterations and further modifications of the described embodiments, and any further applications of the principles of the invention as described herein, are contemplated as would normally occur to one skilled in the art to which the invention relates.

[0015] FIG. 1 shows an exploded perspective view of a ceramic matrix composite (CMC) assembly 10 according to an embodiment. In the FIG. 1 embodiment, the CMC assembly 10 comprises components suitable for use in a gas turbine engine, although the CMC assembly 10 is not limited as such and other embodiments are contemplated herein. For example, the CMC assembly 10 can comprise vanes and endwalls, cases with shields, or static flow components. In one form, the CMC assembly 10 can comprise ceramic matrix components for use in the hot section of a nuclear reactor.

[0016] Referring to FIG. 1, the CMC assembly 10 includes an upstanding airfoil 12, an endwall 14, locking components 18, and a mat filler material 20. As will be described in greater detail below, the locking components 18 can lock together the airfoil 12 and endwall 14, and the mat filler material 20 can serve as a bond initiator and/or joint filler to accommodate for example misalignment and/or tolerance errors at the mating faces of the airfoil 12 and the endwall 14 or at the mating faces of the locking component 18 and the airfoil 12 and/or the endwall 14.

[0017] The airfoil 12 and endwall 14 can be preform partially-rigidized or un-rigidized components. The components can be fabricated of woven or non-woven fiber. The fibers can be arranged and fixed by any suitable technique for example as by lay-up of fabrics, filament winding, braiding, knotting, or any combination of these. Further, the components can be partially or fully densified, or partially or fully infiltrated so as to fill in one or more gaps between fibers of matrix material. The components can also be of near-net shape and/or machined and/or undergo further treatments such as coating or impregnation of the matrix material, in order to, for example, provide features that constrain the CMC assembly 10 when used in conjunction with one or more locking components 18. It will be appreciated that the CMC assembly 10 can be constructed of preform components having different configurations as necessary or desired for a particular application. In the FIG. 1 embodiment, for example, the airfoil 12 and endwall 14 each comprise a preform, and are trimmed and machined.

[0018] The airfoil 12 has a pressure side 22 and a suction side 24 that define a hollow 28 therebetween. A pair of airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 can be formed and/or machined at one end 30 of the airfoil 12 to extend in the spanwise direction of the airfoil 12. The airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 each have through holes 36 that are sized to receive the locking components 18, as will be described in greater detail below. One airfoil connecting tab 32 projects outwardly from and has substantially the same contour as the pressure side 22 of the

airfoil 12. The other airfoil connecting tab 34 projects outwardly from and has substantially the same contour as the suction side 24 of the airfoil 12. At opposite ends of the connecting tabs 32, 34 in the chordwise direction of the airfoil 12, the end 30 of the airfoil 12 can be configured to form a pair of seat portions 46, 48 that interface with the endwall 14 and/or the mat filler material 20.

[0019] The endwall 14 includes a platform portion 52 having an opening 56 that is sized to receive therethrough the airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34. On opposite sides of the opening 56, a pair of endwall connecting tabs 62, 64 can be formed and/or machined in the endwall 14 to correspond to the suction side 24 and pressure side 22 of the airfoil 12 in a state where the endwall 14 is assembled to the airfoil 12 in the FIG. 1 embodiment. As illustrated in FIG. 1, the endwall connecting tabs 62, 64 can correspond substantially in size and shape to the airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 of the airfoil 12. The endwall connecting tabs 62, 64 can project in a manner that is upstanding relative to the platform portion 52 of the endwall 14 and substantially parallel relative to the airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 of the airfoil 12. Referring to FIGS. 1 and 3, at opposite ends of the opening 56 corresponding to opposite ends of the airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 in the spanwise direction of the airfoil 12, the platform portion 52 of the endwall 14 has cooperating surfaces 66, 68 (underside of the endwall 14 as shown in FIGS. 1 and 3) that rest upon or over the seat portions 46, 48, respectively, at the end 30 of the airfoil 12. The cooperative relationship between the cooperating surfaces 66, 68 and the seat portions 46, 48 resists or prevents the endwall 14 from translating down the airfoil 12, as would be the inclination in the instance where for example greater pressure is applied to the top side (as shown in FIG. 1) of the endwall 14 than the underside thereof. Like the airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34, the endwall connecting tabs 62, 64 each have through holes 76 that are sized to receive the locking components 18.

[0020] As illustrated in FIG. 2, in an assembled state the locking components 18 pass through the through holes 36, 76 in the airfoil 12 and endwall 14. When fitted in the through holes 36, 76, the locking components 18 lock the airfoil 12 into place relative to the endwall 14, preventing withdrawal of the airfoil 12 from the endwall 14 in the direction from which the airfoil 12 was inserted into the endwall 14, i.e. in the spanwise direction of the airfoil 12. The locking components 18 can take the form of locking pins, although the locking components 18 are not limited as such, and other embodiments are contemplated. For example, the locking components 18 can be sized to fit into a feature such as a through-hole or cavity in and/or between one or more of the preform airfoil and endwall components. With respect to the FIG. 1 embodiment, as shown in FIG. 2, the locking components 18 can be substantially the same length as the combined thickness of the endwall connecting tab 62, the airfoil connecting tab 32, and the mat filler material 20 therebetween. The locking components 18 can be fabricated of braided woven or non-woven fiber. Further, the locking components 18 can be partially or fully densified. The locking components 18 can also be of near-net shape and/or machined in order to, for example, provide features that facilitate constraining the preform components of the CMC assembly 10. In the FIG. 1 embodiment, for example, the locking components 18 each comprise a preform, and are trimmed and machined.

[0021] Referring now to FIGS. 2 and 3, a mat filler material 20 can be provided between the mating faces of the airfoil 12

and the endwall 14. For example, as shown in FIG. 2, the mat filler material 20 can be provided between the endwall connecting tab 62 of the endwall 14 and the airfoil connecting tab 32 of the airfoil 12. As shown in FIG. 3, the mat filler material 20 can be provided between the cooperating surface 66 of the endwall 14 and the seat portion 46 of the airfoil 12. The mat filler material 20 can serve for example as a joint filler material and/or bond initiator during for example chemical vapor infiltration (CVI) processing. The mat filler material 20 can comprise for example pre-cut pieces that substantially match for example the dimensions of the mating faces of the airfoil 12 and the endwall 14. The mat filler material 20 can be utilized for example to close unsuitable gaps between machined or near-net partially-rigidized components. The mat filler material 20 can be of non-woven material. In one example, the mat filler material 20 can be in its raw, unprocessed state. As will be appreciated, the mat filler material 20 can be of any thickness, or a varying thickness, that is necessary or desired for a particular application.

[0022] FIG. 4 is a flowchart depicting steps of a process for forming a CMC assembly according to an embodiment. The airfoil 12 and endwall 14 preform components can be provided in their un-rigidized or partially-rigidized states (Step 80). The formed or machined airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 can be pushed through the opening 56 in the endwall 14 so that the airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 are alongside the endwall connecting tabs 62, 64, as shown for example in FIG. 2, and the cooperating surfaces 66, 68 of the endwall 14 rest over or upon the seat portions 46, 48 of the airfoil 12, as shown for example in FIG. 3. The mat filler material 20 can be placed between the mating faces of the airfoil 12 and endwall 14, for example between the cooperating surface 66 and the seat portion 46, either before or after the airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 are pushed through the opening 56 (Step 82). The locking components 18 can be inserted into the through holes 36 and 76 in the respective airfoil connecting tab 32 and endwall connecting tab 62, as shown for example in FIG. 2, and into the through holes 36 and 76 in the respective airfoil connecting tab 34 and endwall connecting tab 64, to lock the airfoil 12 to the endwall 14 (Step 84). The mat filler material 20 can be placed between the mating faces of the airfoil 12 and the endwall 14, for example between the airfoil connecting tab 32 and the endwall connecting tab 62 as shown in FIG. 2, either before or after the airfoil connecting tabs 32, 34 are pushed through the opening 56, or before or after the locking components 18 are inserted into the through holes 36 and 76. The assembled airfoil 12, endwall 14, locking components 18, and mat filler material 20 can be rigidized using a vapor infiltration process (Step 86). As will be appreciated, any suitable process can be used for rigidizing the components, including for example chemical vapor infiltration, slurry/melt infiltration, polymer infiltration process, combined infiltration processes, to name just a few.

[0023] FIGS. 5 and 6 show a CMC assembly 110 according to another embodiment. Like the FIG. 1 CMC assembly 10, the CMC assembly 110 includes an airfoil 112 having airfoil connecting tabs 132, 134 that fit through an opening 156 of the endwall 114, and the endwall 114 rests over or upon seat portions 146, 148 of the airfoil 112. Further, like the FIG. 1 embodiment, the FIG. 5 embodiment can have a mat filler material 120 provided between mating faces of the airfoil 112 and endwall 114, for example, between the cooperating sur-



faces **166** and **168** of the endwall **114** (underside of the endwall **114** as shown in FIGS. **4** and **5**) and the seat portions **146** and **148** of the airfoil **112**.

**[0024]** The CMC assembly **110** has locking components **180**, **182** that lock the airfoil **112** and endwall **114** together in a manner different from that of the locking components **18** of the FIG. **1** embodiment. The locking components **180** can take the form of substantially rectangular shape locking members. As shown in FIG. **5**, the rectangular shape locking members **180** can be sized to fit into corresponding pre-machined or pre-formed substantially rectangular shape slots **186**, **188** in the respective airfoil connecting tabs **132**, **134**. The slots **186**, **188** can be positioned immediately above the endwall **114** in a state where the endwall **114** is assembled to the airfoil **112** in the FIG. **5** embodiment. When the rectangular shape locking members **180** are fitted in the slots **186**, **188**, the rear portions of the rectangular shape locking members **180** rest over or upon the endwall **114** to lock the airfoil **112** into place relative to the endwall **114**. As shown in FIG. **6**, the endwall **114** can be interlocked between the rectangular shaped locking members **180** and the seat portions **146** and **148** of the airfoil **112**, which prevents withdrawal of the airfoil **112** from the endwall **114** in the direction from which airfoil **112** was inserted into the endwall **114**, i.e. in the spanwise direction of the airfoil **112**.

**[0025]** The locking components **182** can take the form of locking pin members. Referring again to FIG. **5**, the locking pin members **182** can be sized to fit into corresponding through holes **192** in the rectangular shape locking members **180** and through holes **196** in the endwall **114**. The locking pin members **182** can be substantially the same length as the combined thickness of the endwall **114** and the rectangular shape locking member **180**. The locking pin members **182** can serve to maintain structural integrity of the CMC assembly **110** by for example preventing withdrawal of the rectangular shape locking members **180** from the slots **186**, **188** during subsequent processing or at any time during the life of the components should for example the bond between an airfoil connecting tab **132**, **134** and its corresponding rectangular shape locking member **180** fail.

**[0026]** FIG. **7** is a flowchart depicting steps of a process for making a CMC assembly according to an embodiment. The airfoil **112** and endwall **114** preform components can be provided in their un-rigidized or partially-rigidized states (Step **200**). Next, the formed or machined airfoil connecting tabs **132**, **134** can be pushed through the opening **156** in the endwall **114** so that the airfoil connecting tabs **132**, **134** project through the opening **156** and the cooperating surfaces **166**, **168** of the endwall **114** rest over or upon the seat portions **146**, **148** of the airfoil **112**, as shown for example in FIG. **6**. The mat filler material **120** can be placed between the mating faces of the airfoil **112** and endwall **114**, for example between the cooperating surface **166** and the seat portion **146**, either before or after the airfoil connecting tabs **132**, **134** are pushed through the opening **156** (Step **202**). The first locking components, that is the rectangular shape locking members **180**, can be inserted into the slots **186**, **188** in the respective airfoil connecting tabs **132**, **134**, as shown for example in FIG. **6**, to lock the airfoil **112** to the endwall **114** (Step **204**). In the illustrated embodiment, the inward facing surfaces of the rectangular shape locking members **180** are substantially aligned with, that is flush with, the corresponding inward facing surfaces of the airfoil connecting tabs **132**, **134**. The second locking components, that is, the locking pin members

**182**, can be inserted into the corresponding through holes **192** in the rectangular shape locking members **180** and the through holes **196** in the endwall **114**, as shown in FIG. **6** (Step **206**). The assembled airfoil **112**, endwall **114**, locking components **180**, **182**, and mat filler material **120** can be rigidized using a vapor infiltration process (Step **208**). As will be appreciated, any suitable process can be used for rigidizing the components, including for example chemical vapor infiltration, slurry/melt infiltration, polymer infiltration process, combined infiltration processes, to name just a few.

**[0027]** Any theory, mechanism of operation, proof, or finding stated herein is meant to further enhance understanding of embodiment of the present invention and is not intended to make the present invention in any way dependent upon such theory, mechanism of operation, proof, or finding. In reading the claims, it is intended that when words such as “a,” “an,” “at least one,” or “at least one portion” are used there is no intention to limit the claim to only one item unless specifically stated to the contrary in the claim. Further, when the language “at least a portion” and/or “a portion” is used the item can include a portion and/or the entire item unless specifically stated to the contrary.

**[0028]** While embodiments of the invention have been illustrated and described in detail in the drawings and foregoing description, the same is to be considered as illustrative and not restrictive in character, it being understood that only the selected embodiments have been shown and described and that all changes, modifications and equivalents that come within the spirit of the invention as defined herein of by any of the following claims are desired to be protected. It should also be understood that while the use of words such as preferable, preferably, preferred or more preferred utilized in the description above indicate that the feature so described may be more desirable, it nonetheless may not be necessary and embodiments lacking the same may be contemplated as within the scope of the invention, the scope being defined by the claims that follow.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for forming a gas turbine engine airfoil comprising:
  - providing at least two gas turbine engine airfoil composite preform components,
  - interlocking the airfoil composite preform components with a first locking component so that mating faces of the airfoil composite preform components face each other, and
  - inserting a filler material between the mating faces of the airfoil composite preform components.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more of the airfoil composite preform components are provided in a partially rigidized state.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the airfoil composite preform components comprise woven fiber.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the airfoil composite preform components comprise an airfoil including at least one airfoil connecting tab and an endwall including at least one endwall connecting tab, and the interlocking comprises inserting the first locking component into a through hole in the at least one airfoil connecting tab and a through hole in the at least one endwall connecting tab.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the airfoil composite preform components comprise an airfoil including at least one airfoil connecting tab providing the mating face of the airfoil, and an endwall including at least one endwall con-

necting tab providing the mating face of the endwall, and the inserting comprises inserting the filler material between the mating face of the at least one airfoil connecting tab and the mating face of the at least one endwall connecting tab.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the airfoil composite preform components comprise an airfoil including at least one airfoil connecting tab and an endwall including at least one endwall connecting tab and defining an opening substantially sized to receive therethrough the at least one airfoil connecting tab, wherein the providing comprises inserting the at least one airfoil connecting tab of the airfoil into the opening of the endwall so that the at least one airfoil connecting tab is in side-by-side relation with the at least one endwall connecting tab.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the airfoil composite preform components comprise an airfoil and an endwall, the airfoil including at least one airfoil connecting tab and a seat portion, the endwall defining an opening substantially sized to receive therethrough the at least one airfoil connecting tab, wherein the providing comprises inserting the at least one airfoil connecting tab of the airfoil into the opening of the endwall so that the endwall rests over the seat portion.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the interlocking comprises inserting the first locking component into a through hole in the at least one airfoil connecting tab so that a rear portion of the first locking component rests over a portion of the endwall to interlock the endwall between the first locking component and the seat portion.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the seat portion provides the mating face of the airfoil and the portion of the endwall over the seat portion provides the mating face of the endwall, and the inserting the filler material comprises inserting the filler material between the mating face of the airfoil and the mating face of the endwall.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising rigidizing the assembly of the airfoil composite preform components, the first locking component, and the filler material.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the rigidizing comprises using vapor infiltration.

12. A method for forming a gas turbine engine airfoil assembly, comprising:

- providing at least two gas turbine engine airfoil composite preform components,
- interlocking the airfoil composite preform components with a first locking component, and
- interlocking the first locking component and at least one of the airfoil composite preform components with a second locking component.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the airfoil composite preform components comprise an airfoil and an endwall, and the first locking component interlocks the airfoil and the endwall and the second locking component interlocks the first locking component and the endwall.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the second interlocking comprises inserting the second locking component into a through hole in the first locking component and a through hole in the endwall.

15. The method of claim 12, further comprising rigidizing the assembly of aircraft component preform components, the first locking component, and the second locking component.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the rigidizing comprises using vapor infiltration.

17. A gas turbine engine airfoil assembly, comprising:

- a composite airfoil including a pressure side and a suction side having a hollow therebetween, and an airfoil connecting tab extending from the pressure side in a spanwise direction and an airfoil connecting tab extending from the suction side in the spanwise direction, and
- a composite endwall transverse to the composite airfoil and including a pressure side endwall connecting tab extending in the spanwise direction and a suction side endwall connecting tab extending in the spanwise direction,
- pressure side locking means that prevent or inhibit relative lateral movement between the pressure side endwall connecting tab and the pressure side airfoil connecting tab, and
- suction side locking means that prevent or inhibit relative lateral movement between the suction side endwall connecting tab and the pressure side airfoil connecting tab.

18. The gas turbine engine airfoil assembly of claim 17 wherein the pressure side locking means comprises pressure side locking members that project transversely through the pressure side endwall connecting tab and the pressure side airfoil connecting tab, and the suction side locking means comprises suction side locking members that project transversely through the suction side endwall connecting tab and the pressure side airfoil connecting tab.

19. The gas turbine engine airfoil assembly of claim 18 wherein the pressure side locking members and suction side locking members comprise locking pins.

20. The gas turbine engine airfoil assembly of claim 17 comprising an integral composite structure.

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