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(54) **POROUS STRUCTURES PRODUCED BY ADDITIVE LAYER MANUFACTURING**

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B29C 67/00 (2006.01)

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(52) **U.S. Cl.**
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(21) Appl. No.: **14/969,695**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(22) Filed: **Dec. 15, 2015**

A three-dimensional structure is formed when layers of a material are deposited onto a substrate and scanned with a high energy beam to at least partially melt each layer of the material. Upon scanning the layers at predetermined locations at least a first segment overlapping a second segment and underlapping a third segment is formed.

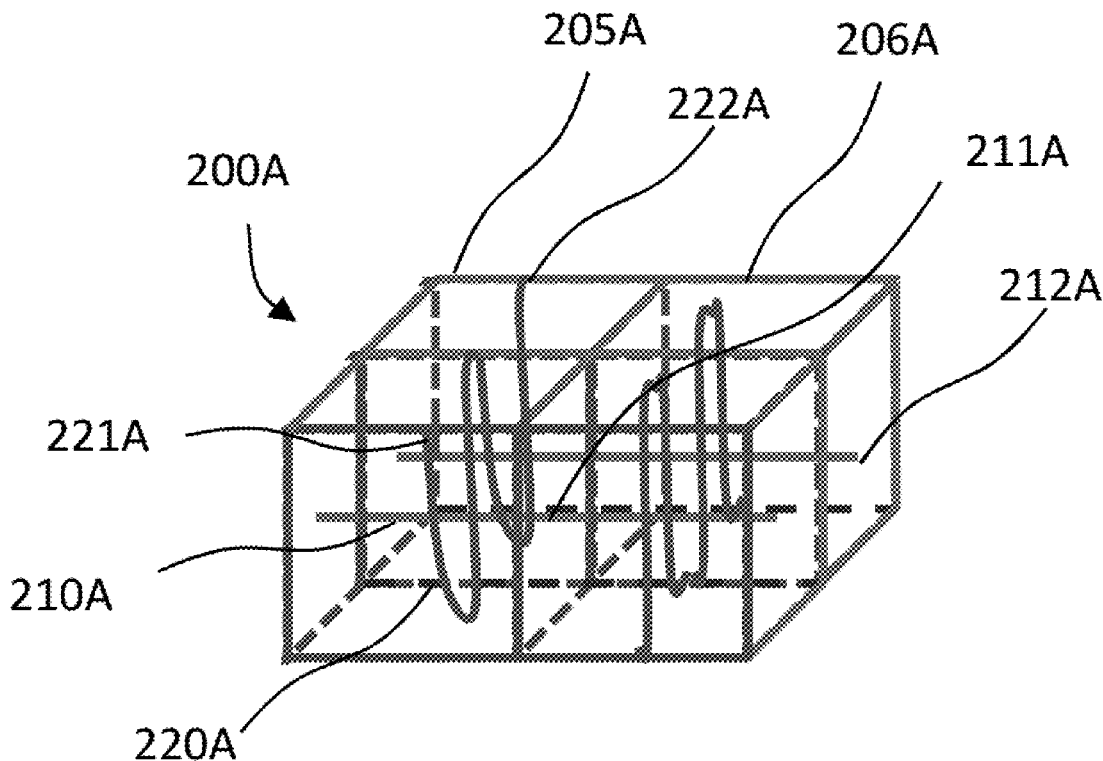
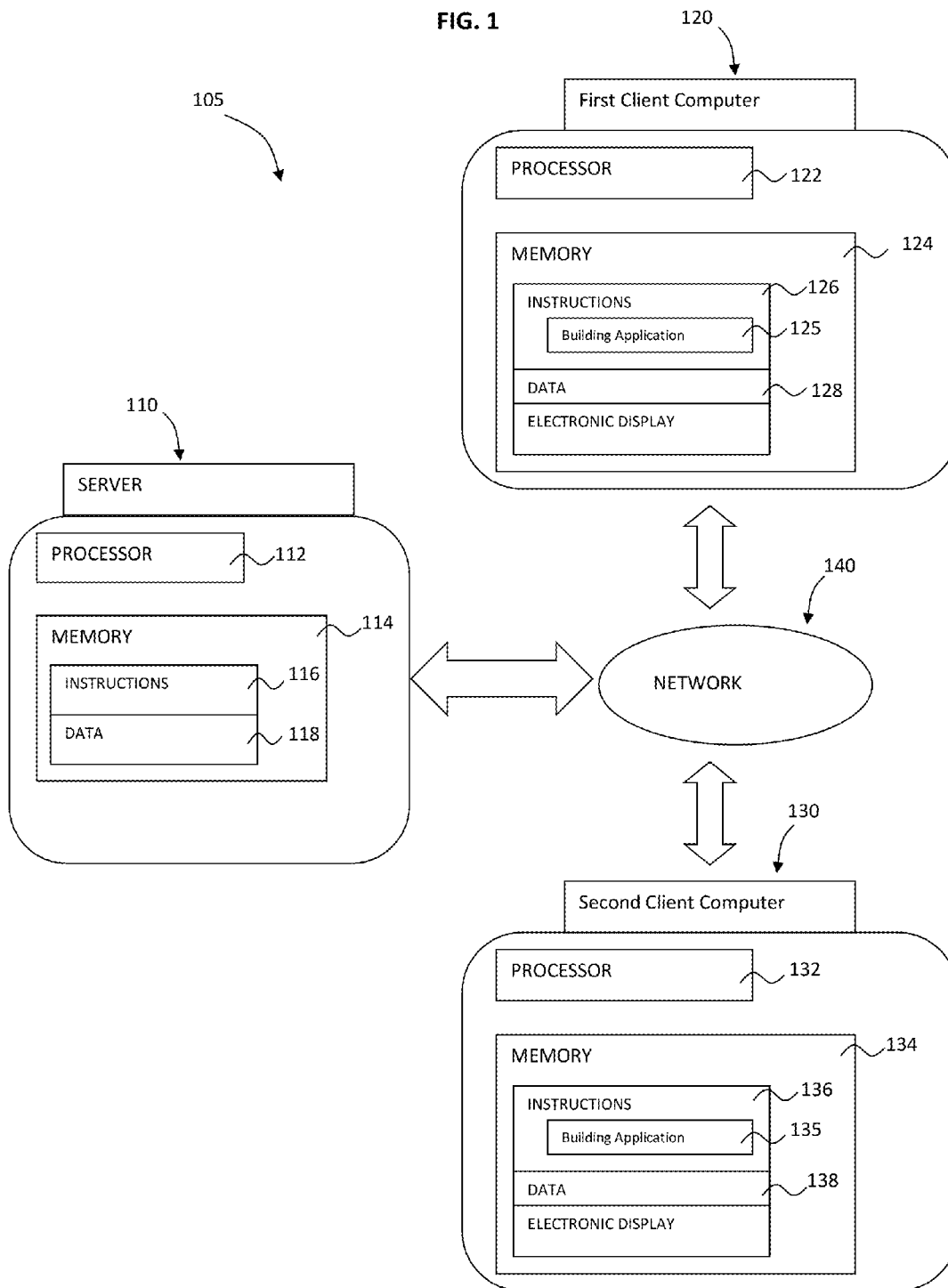
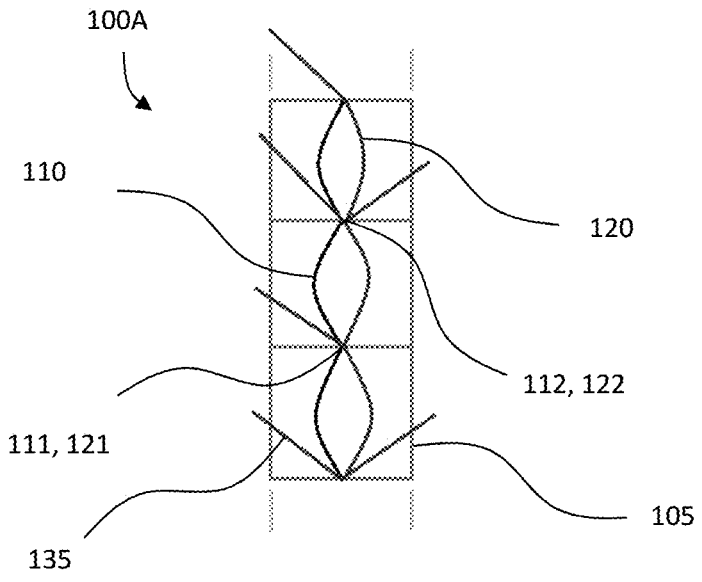
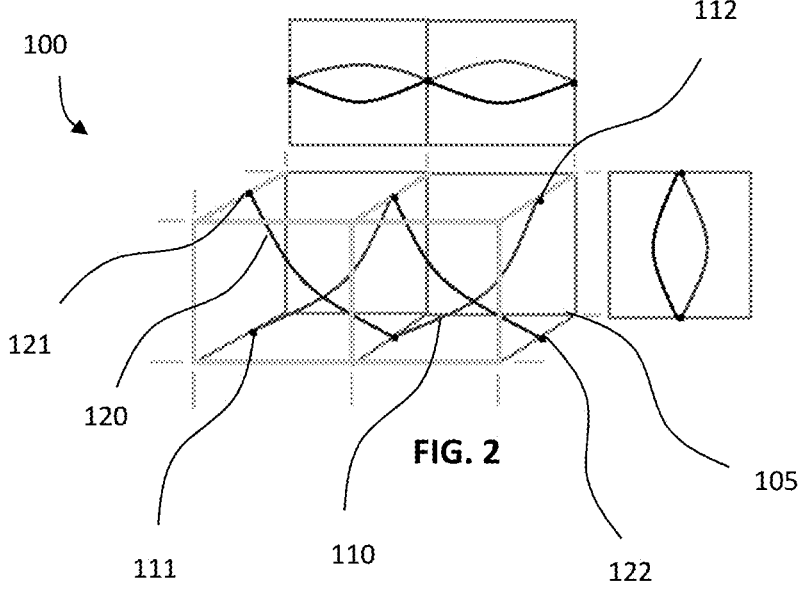


FIG. 1





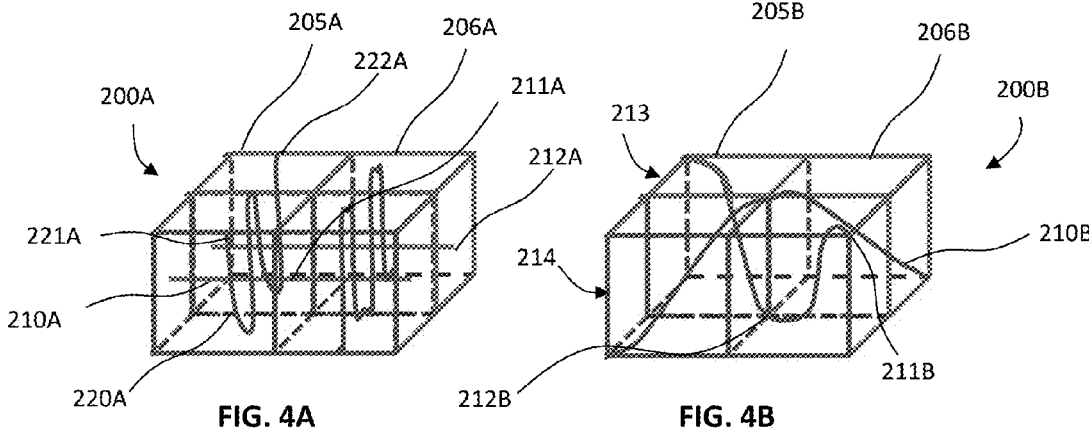


FIG. 4A

FIG. 4B

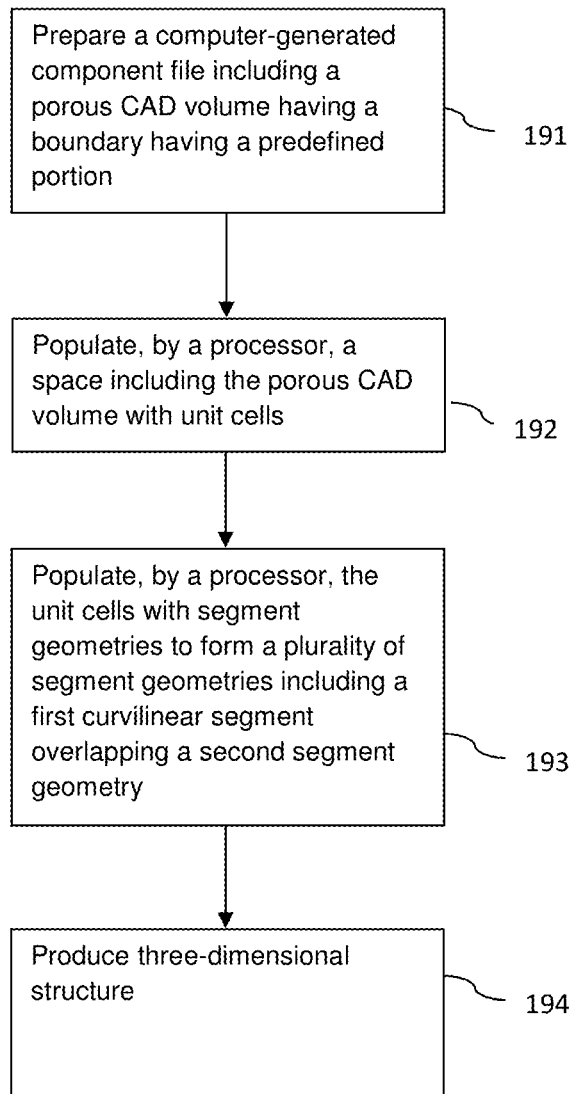


FIG. 5

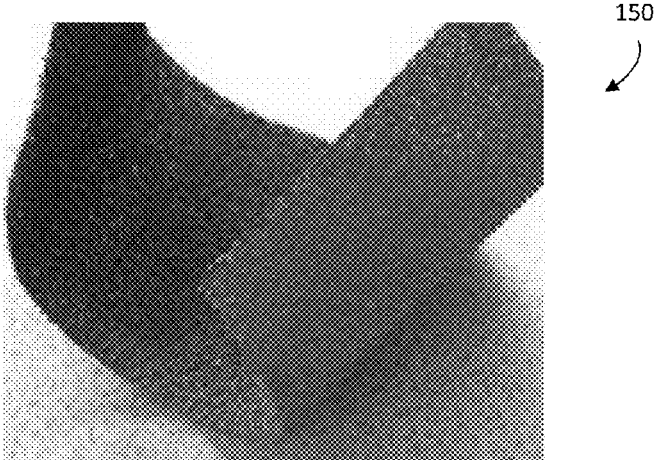


FIG. 6

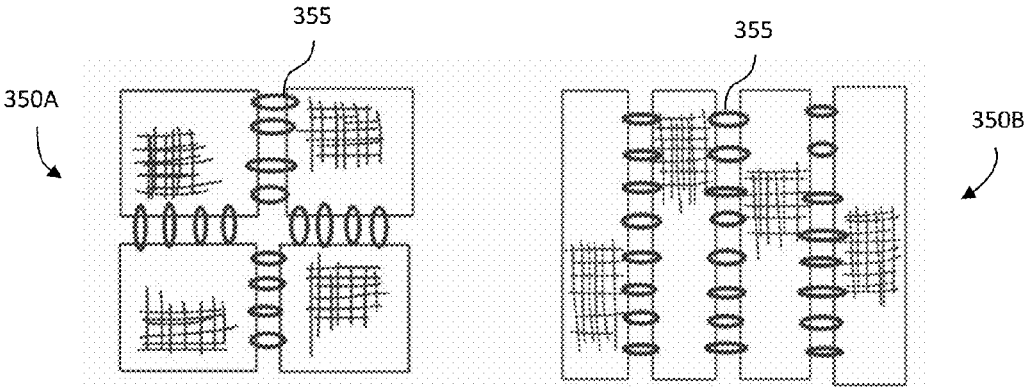


FIG. 7A

FIG. 7B

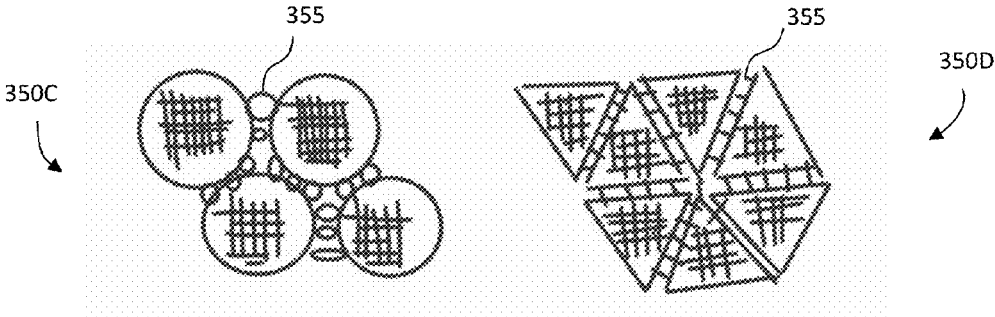


FIG. 7C

FIG. 7D

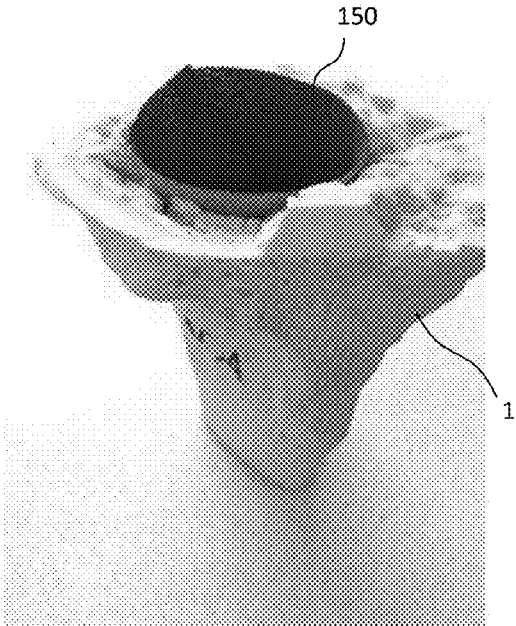


FIG. 8

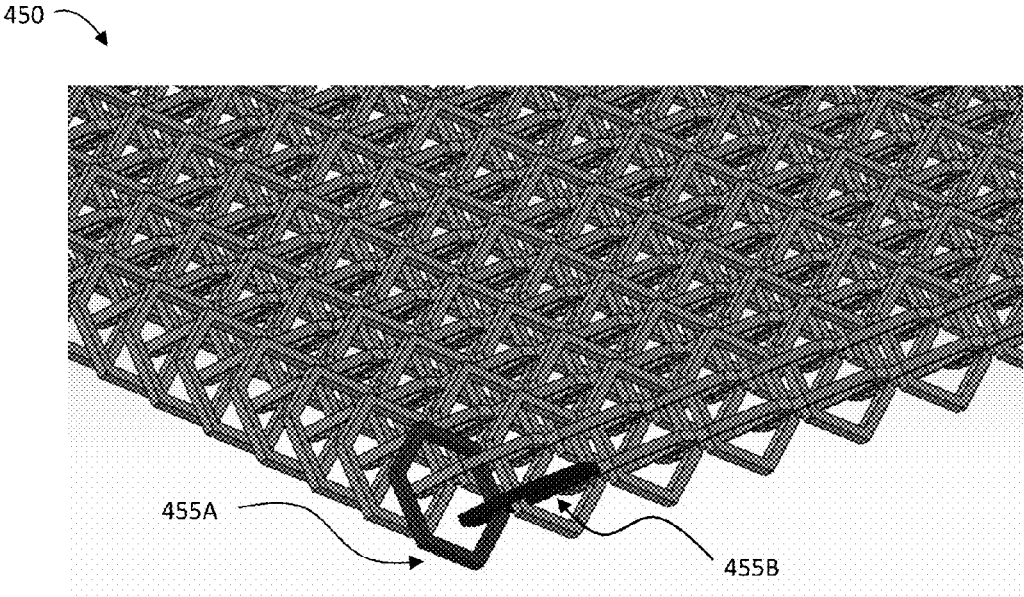


FIG. 9A

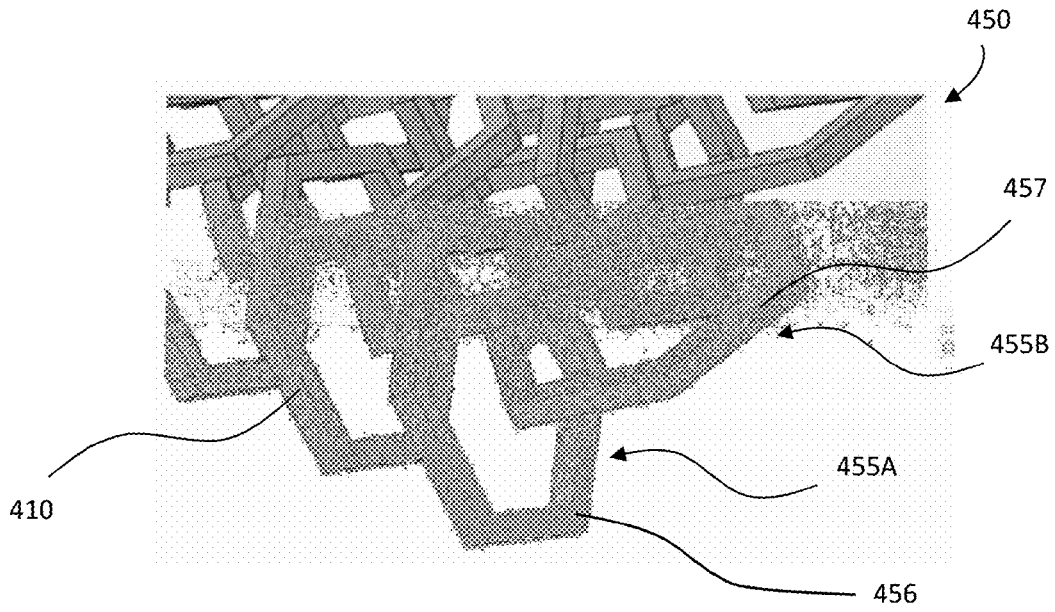


FIG. 9B

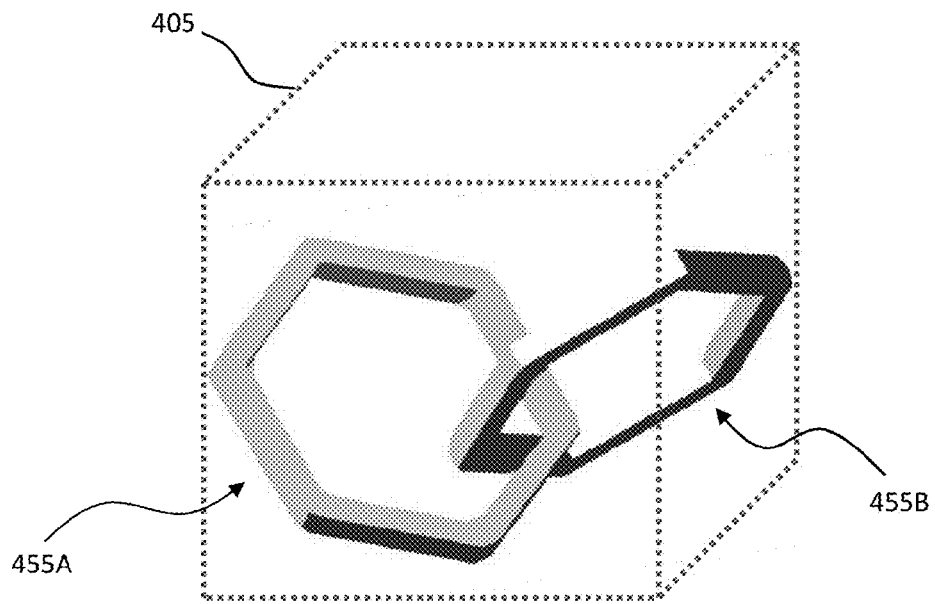


FIG. 9C

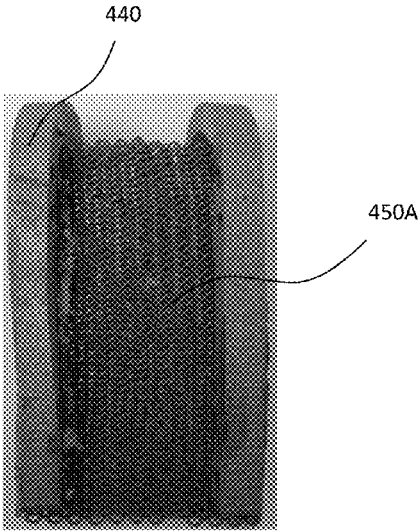


FIG. 10A

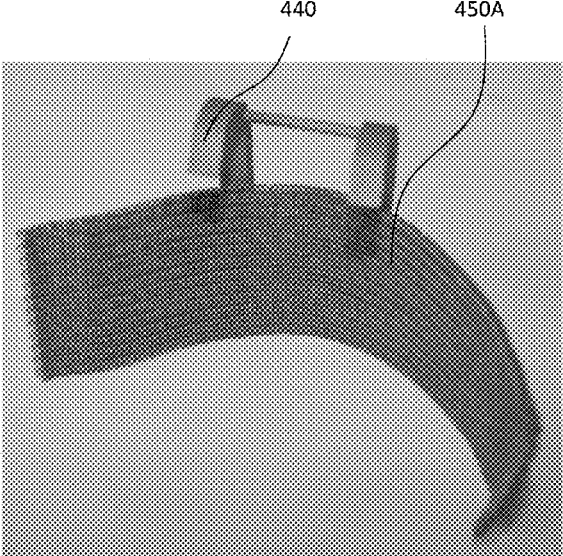


FIG. 10B

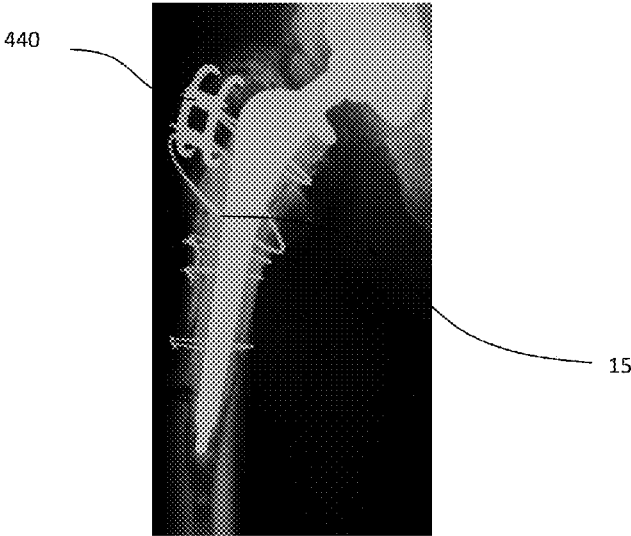


FIG. 10C



FIG. 11

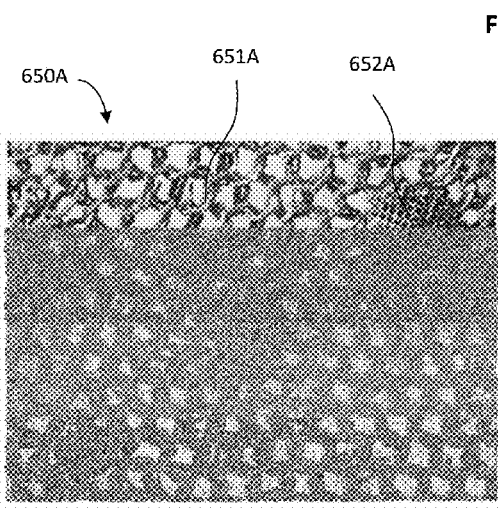


FIG. 12A

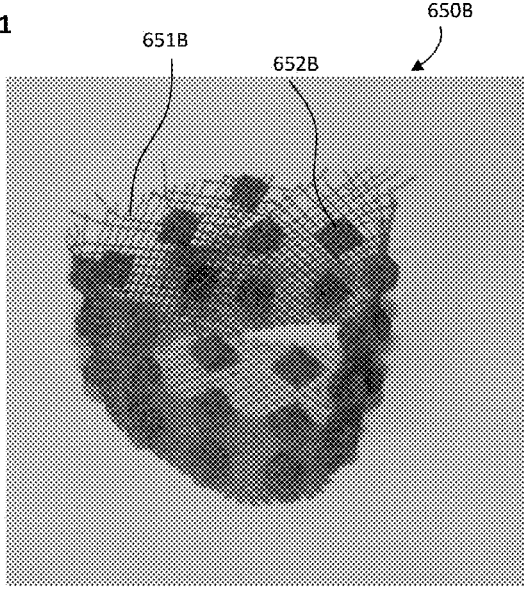


FIG. 12B

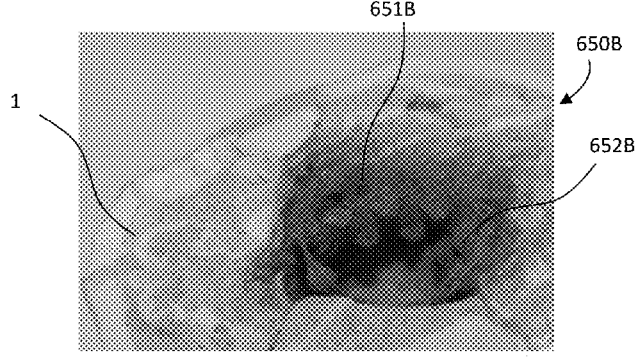


FIG. 12C

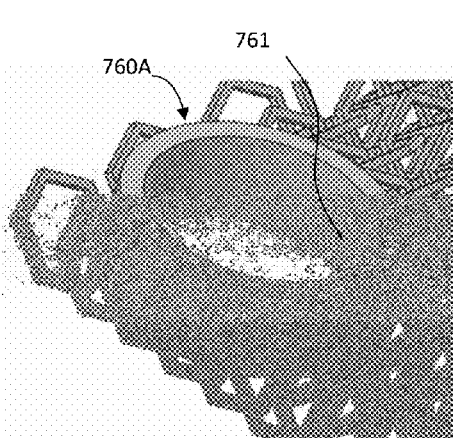


FIG. 13A

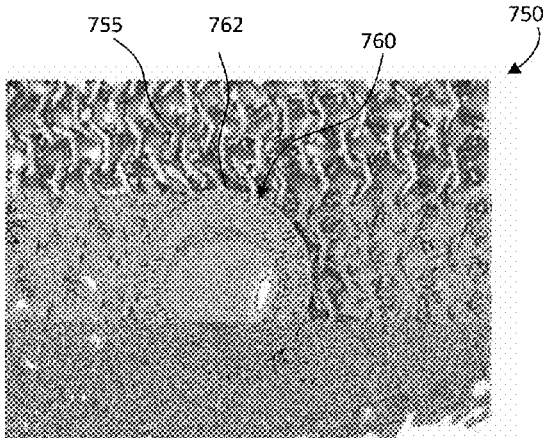


FIG. 13B

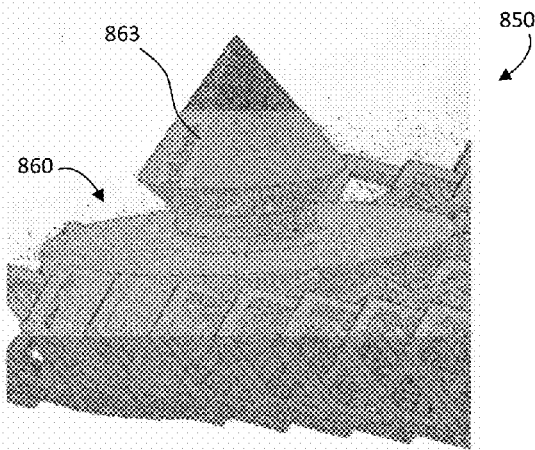


FIG. 14A

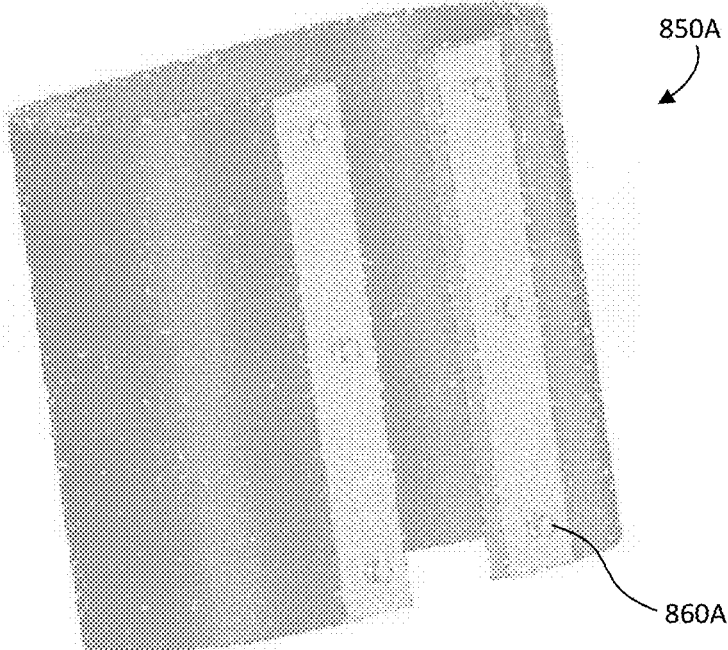


FIG. 14B

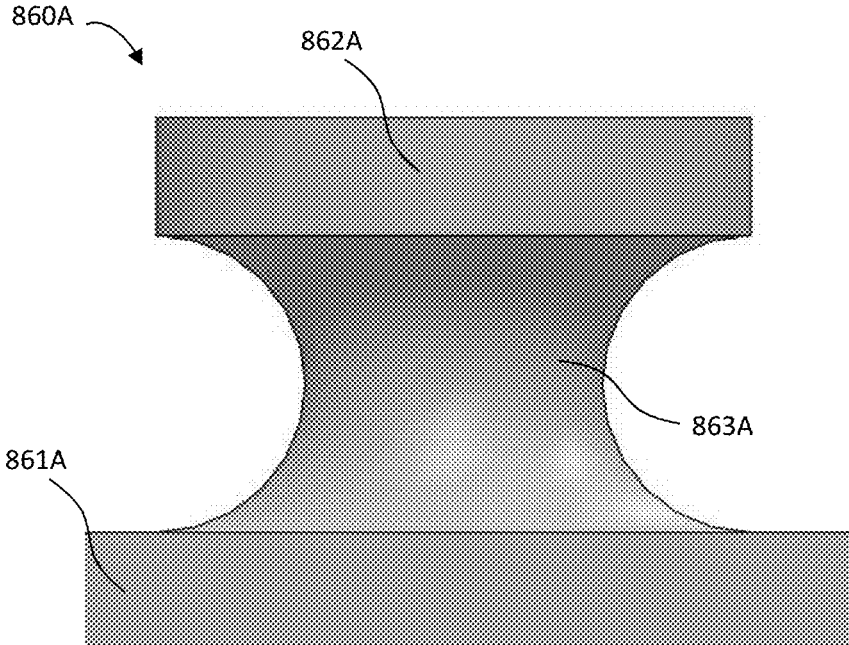


FIG. 14C

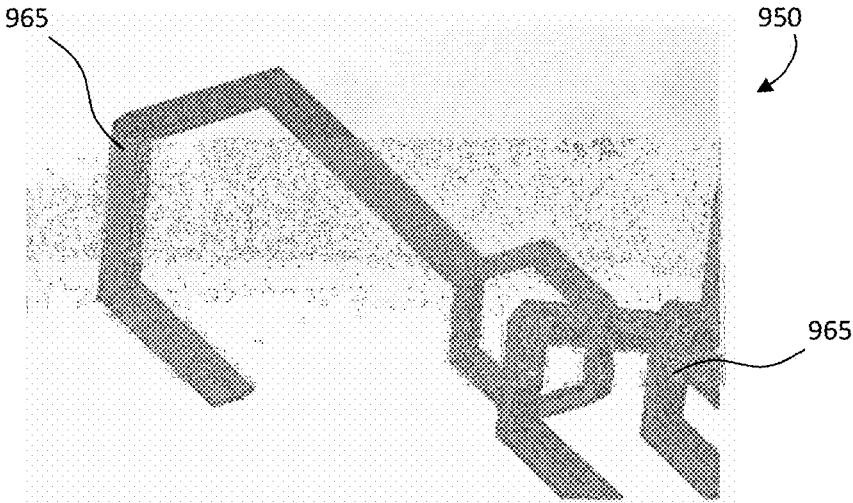


FIG. 15

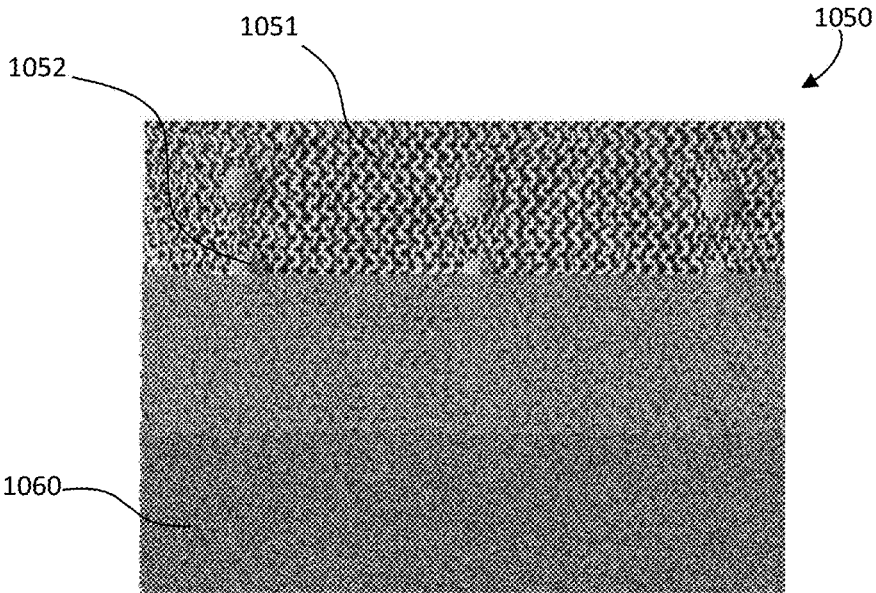


FIG. 16

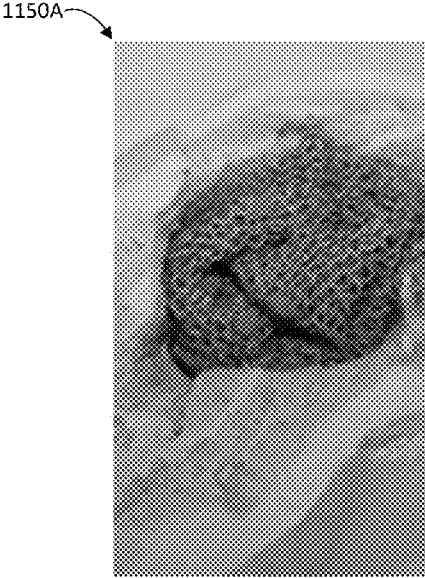


FIG. 17A

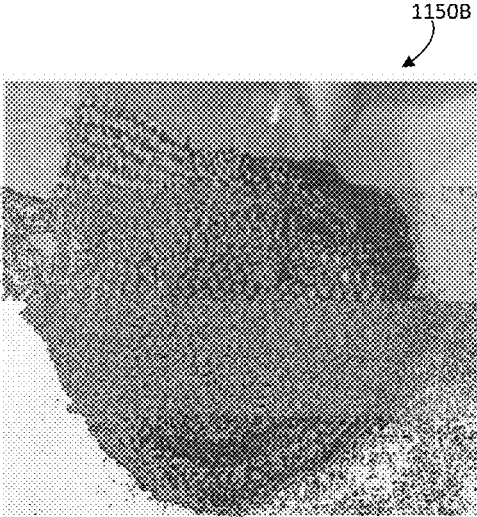


FIG. 17B

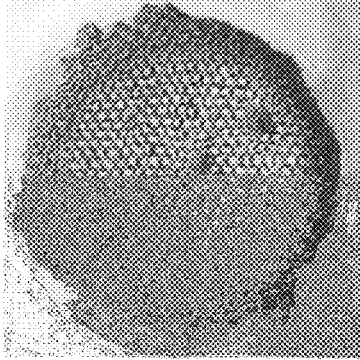


FIG. 17C

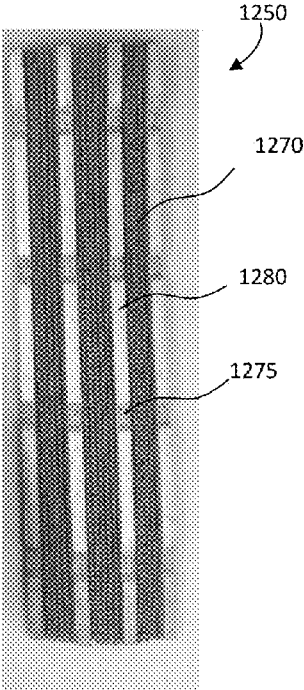


FIG. 18A

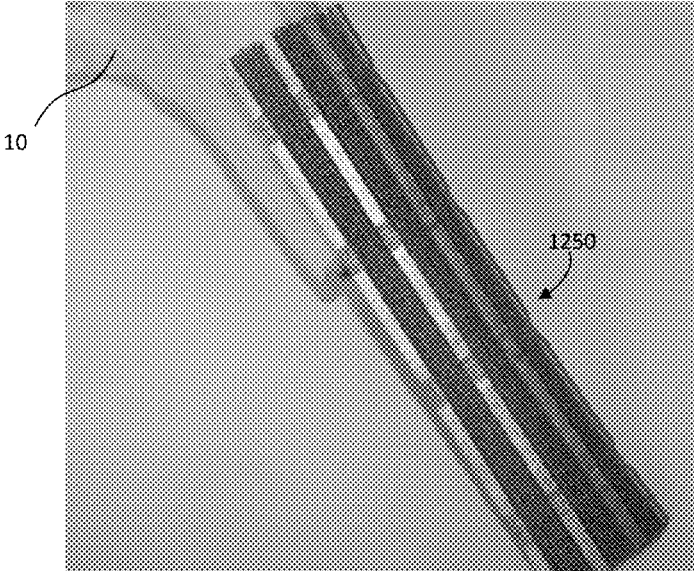


FIG. 18B

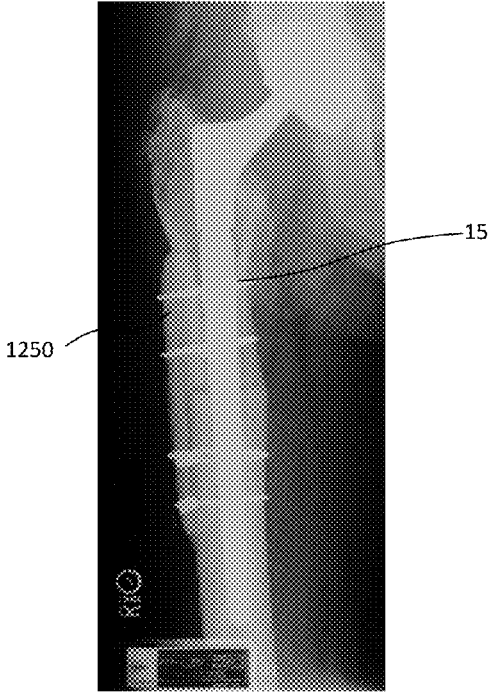


FIG. 18C

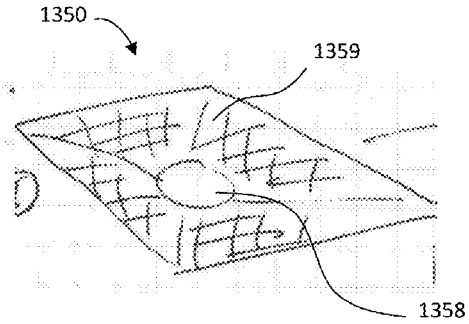


FIG. 19A

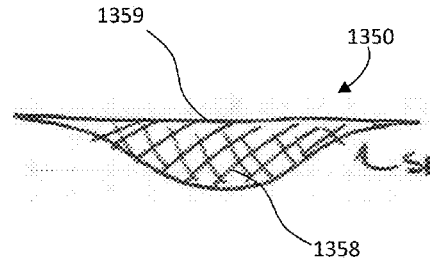


FIG. 19B

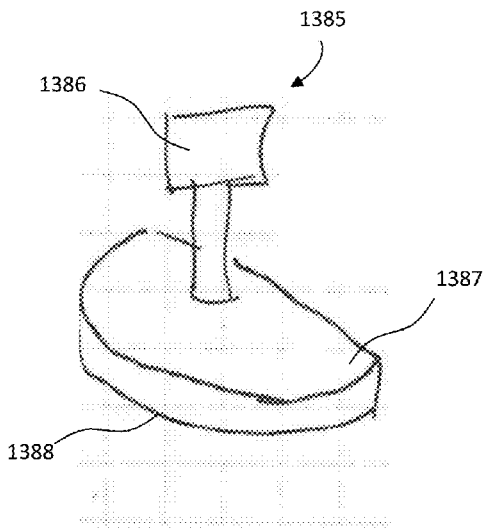


FIG. 19C

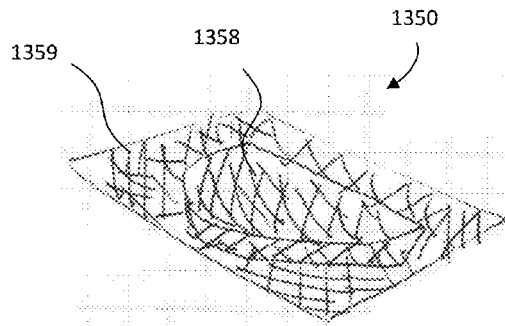


FIG. 19D

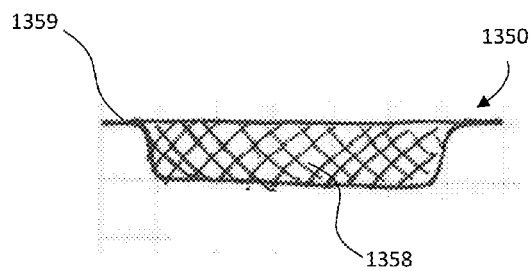


FIG. 19E

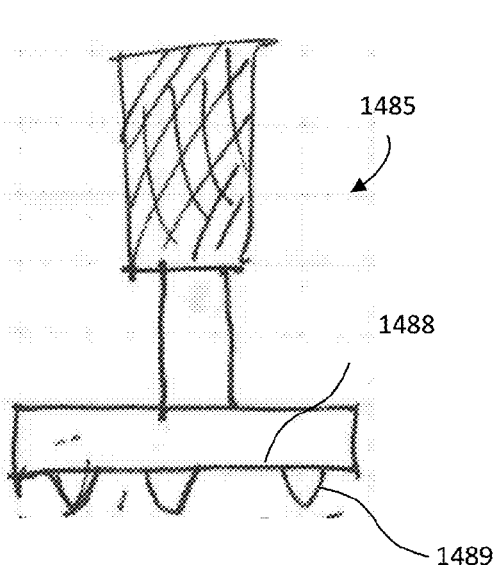


FIG. 20A

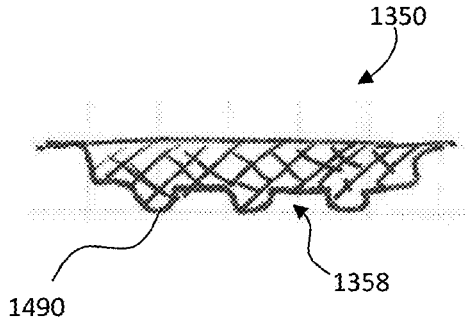


FIG. 20B

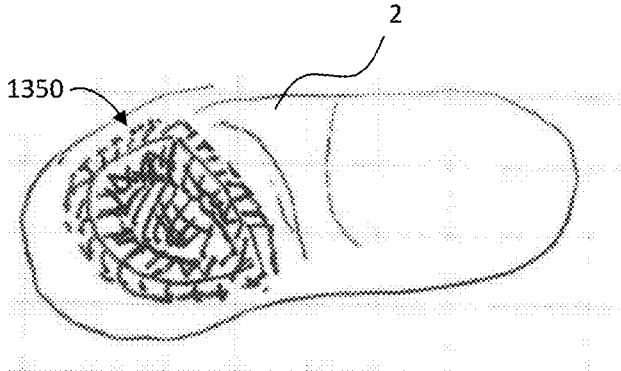


FIG. 21

FIG. 4A

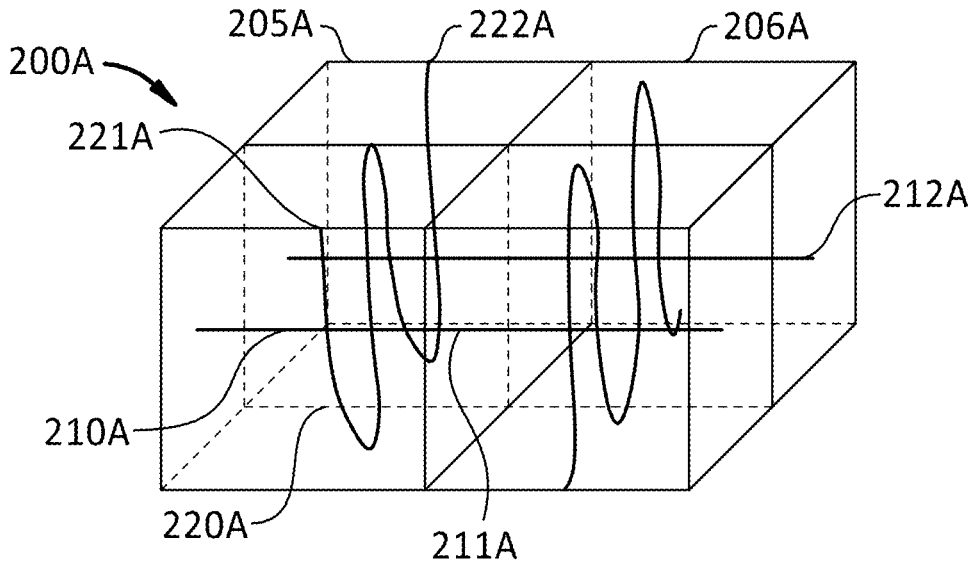


FIG. 4B

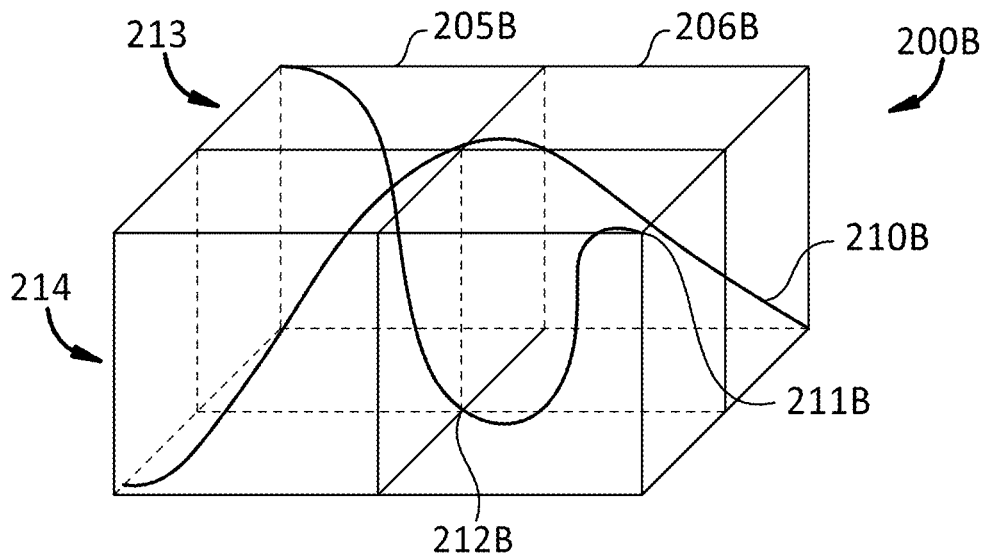


FIG. 6

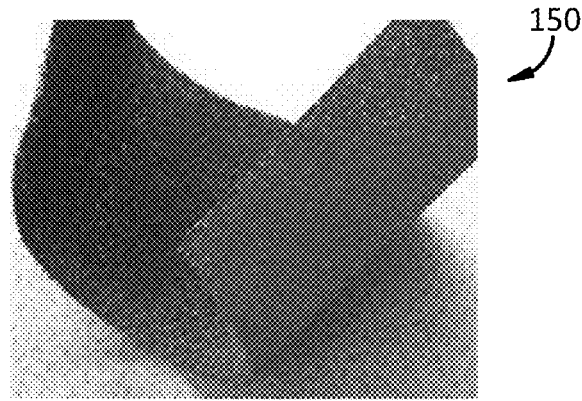


FIG. 7A

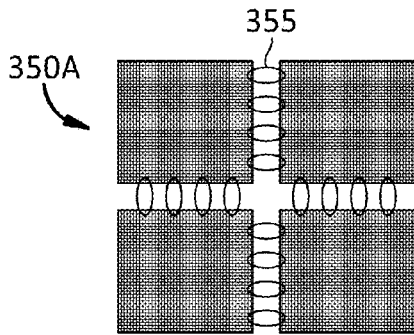


FIG. 7B

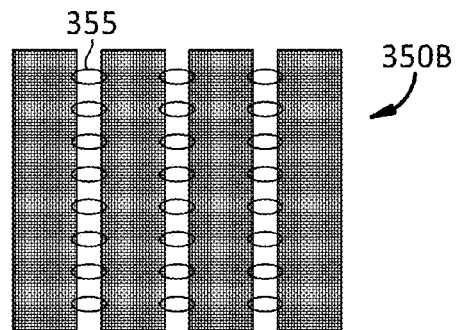


FIG. 7C

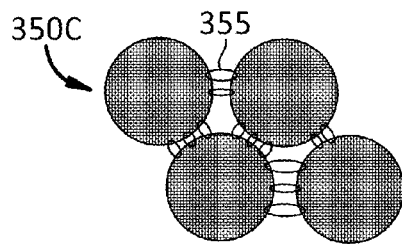


FIG. 7D

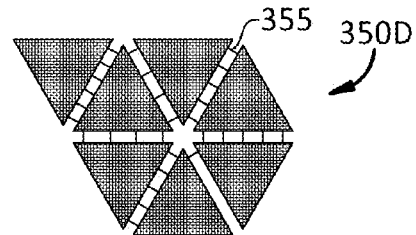


FIG. 9B

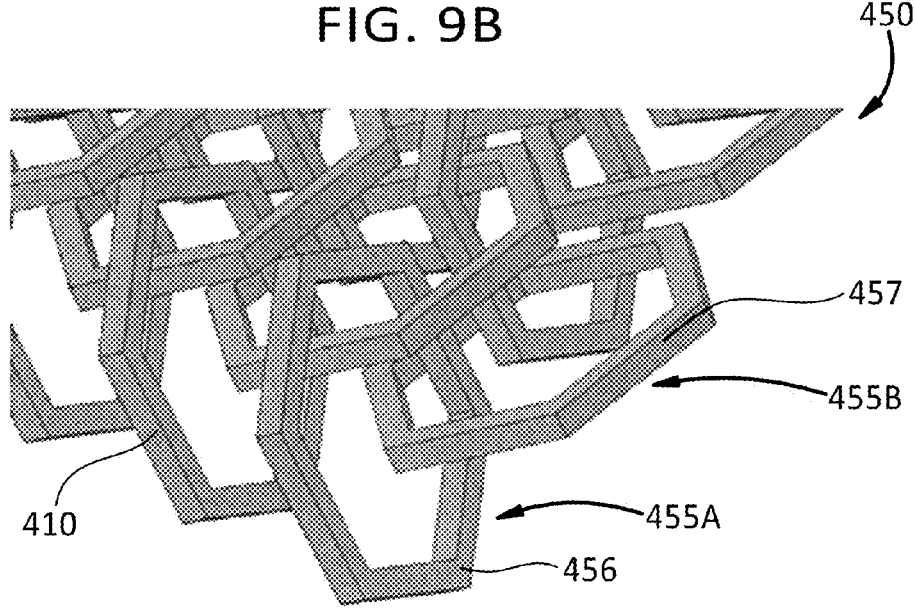


FIG. 9C

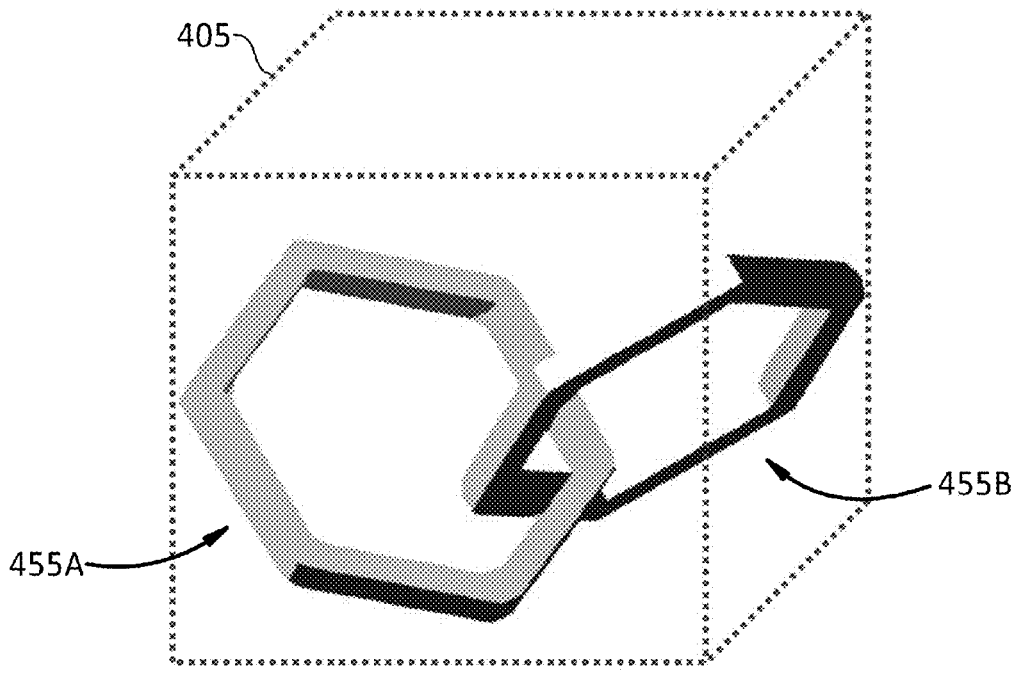


FIG. 11

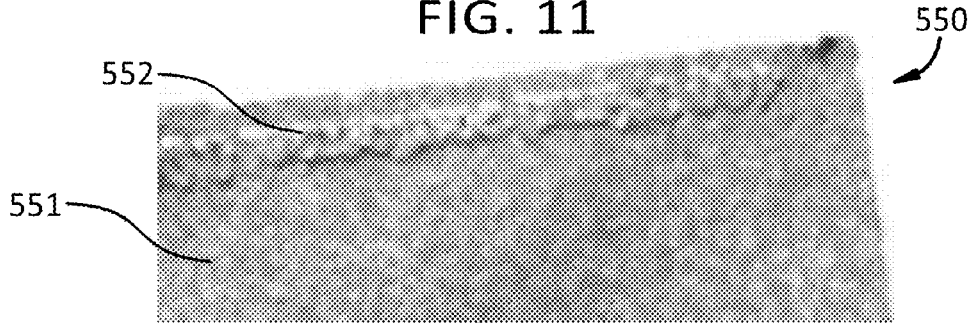


FIG. 12A

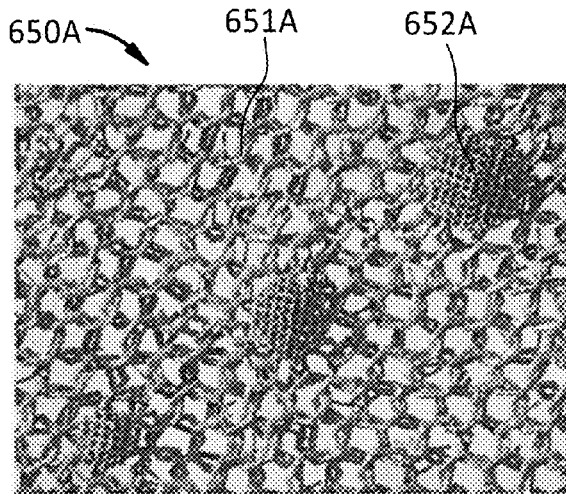


FIG. 12B

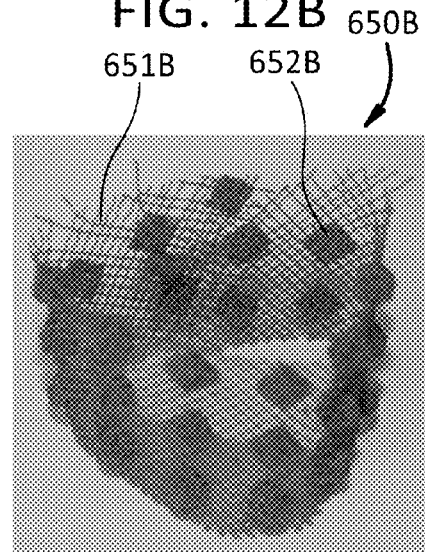


FIG. 12C

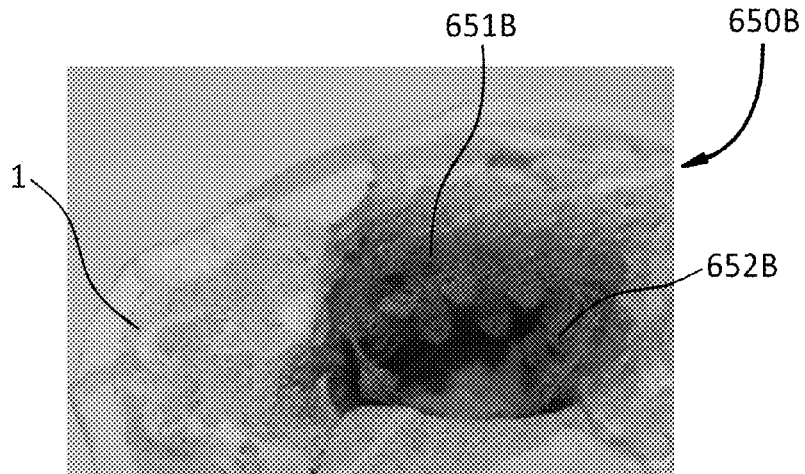


FIG. 13A

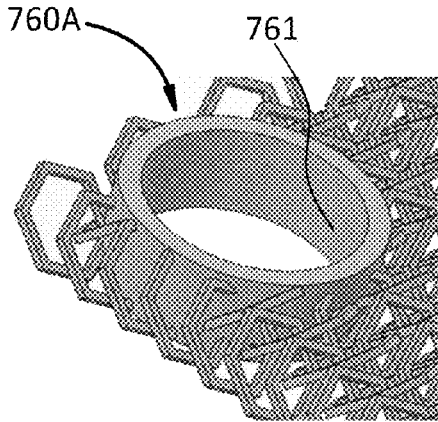


FIG. 13B

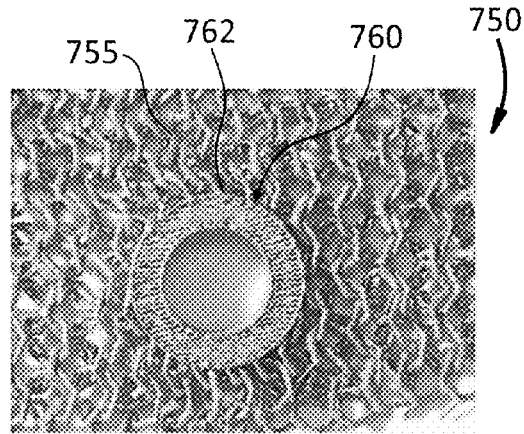


FIG. 14A

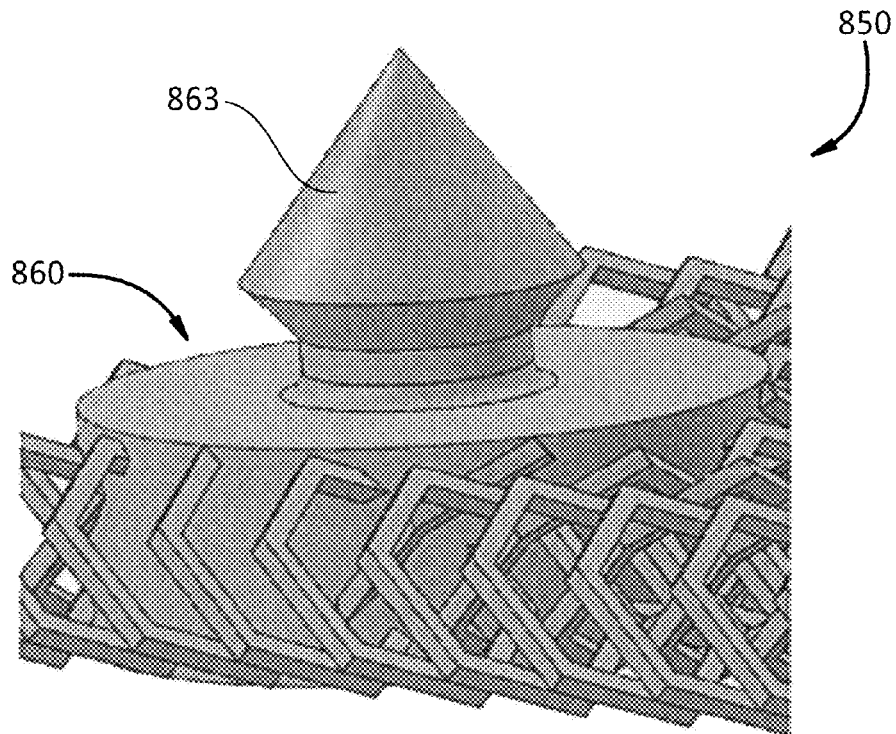


FIG. 14B

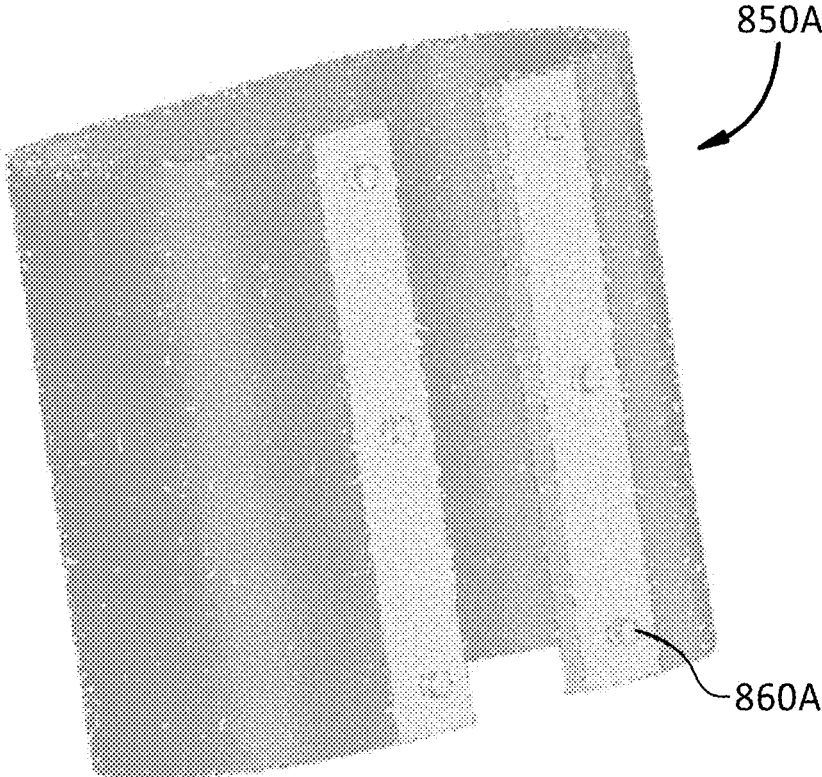


FIG. 14C

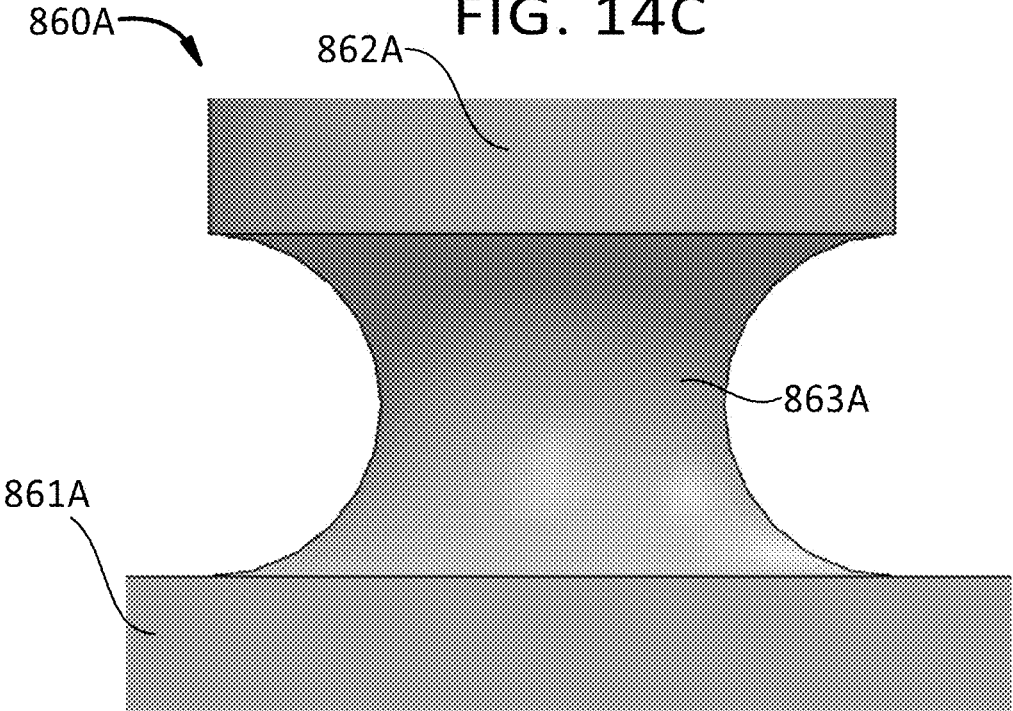


FIG. 15

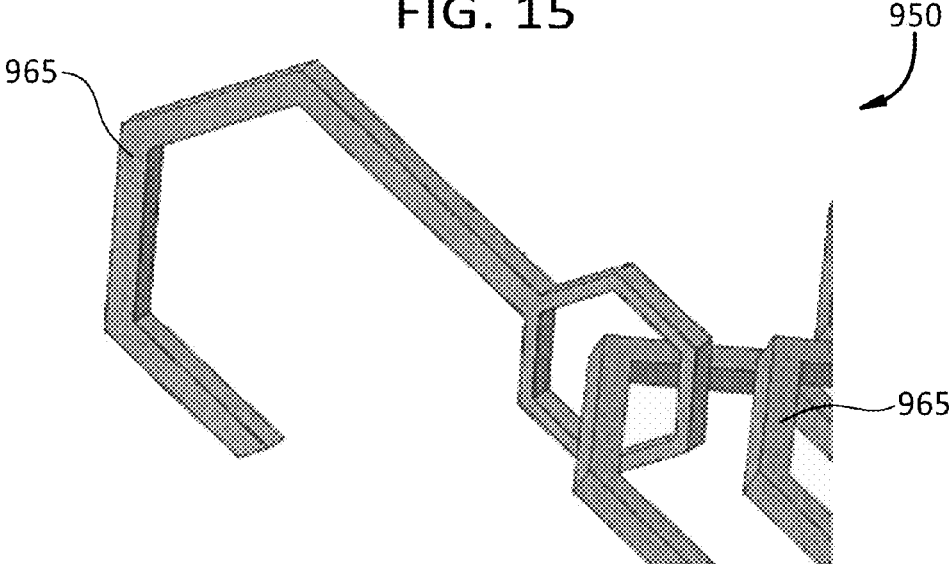


FIG. 16

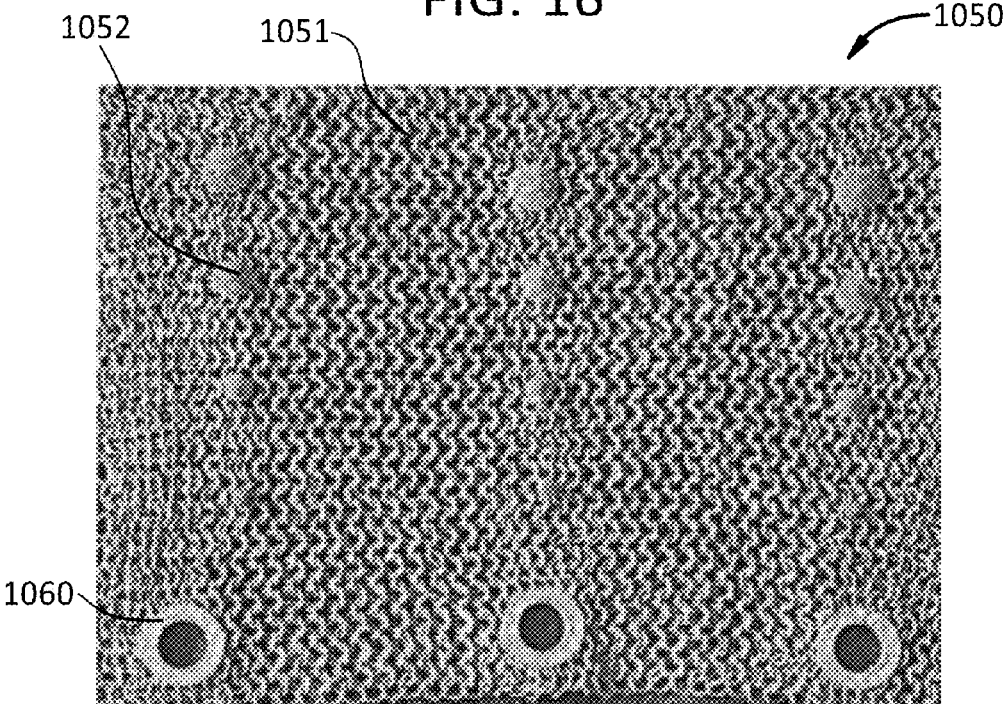
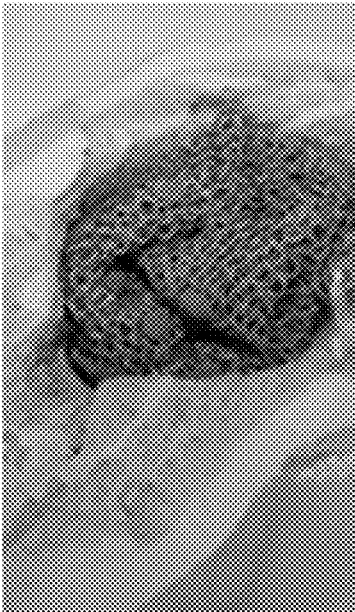
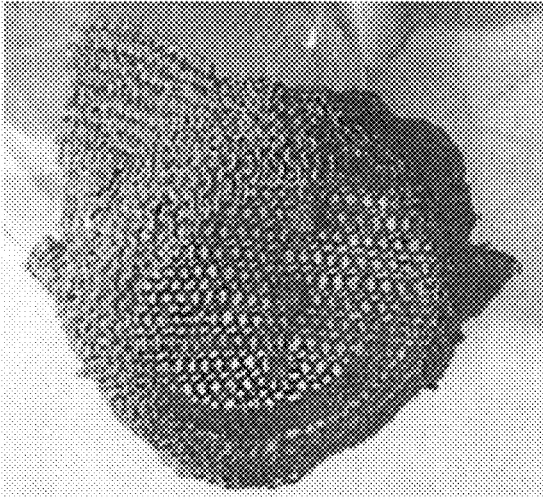


FIG. 17A



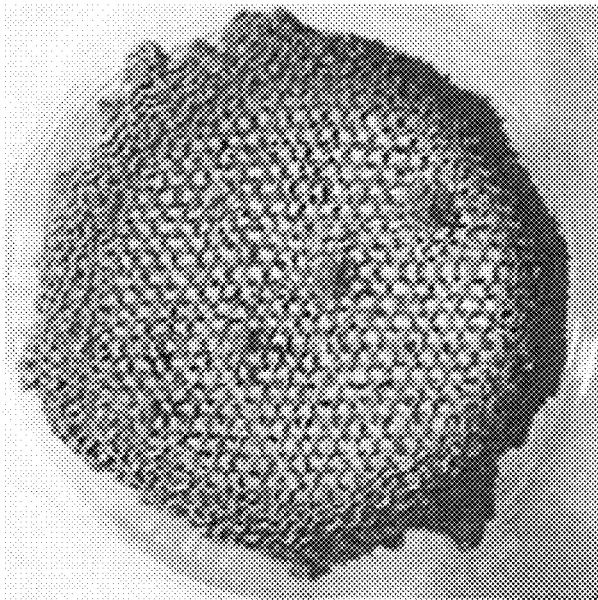
1150A

FIG. 17B



1150B

FIG. 17C



1150C

FIG. 19A

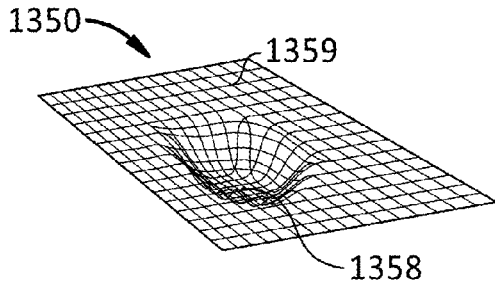


FIG. 19B

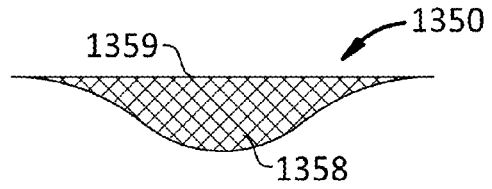


FIG. 19C

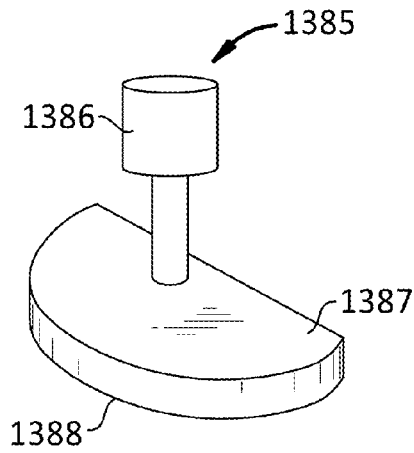


FIG. 19D

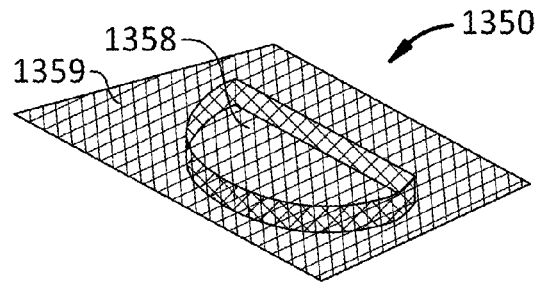


FIG. 19E

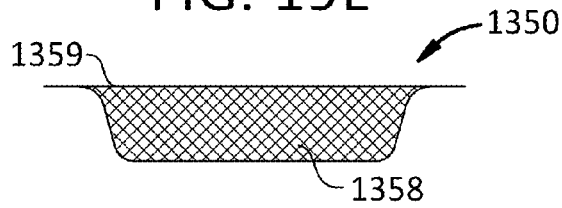


FIG. 20A

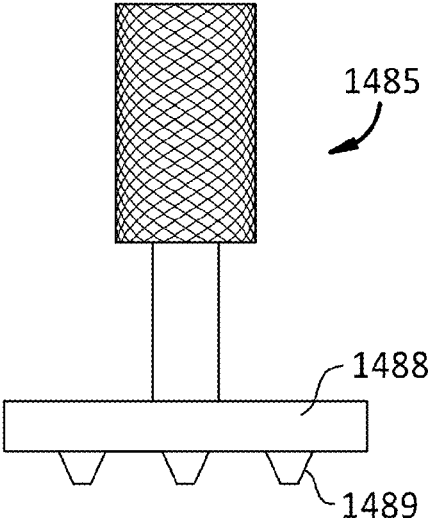


FIG. 20B

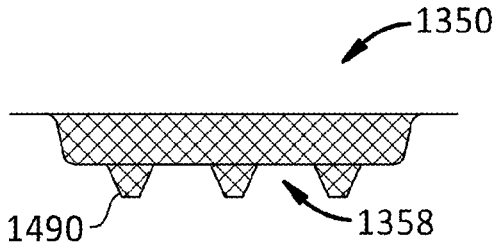
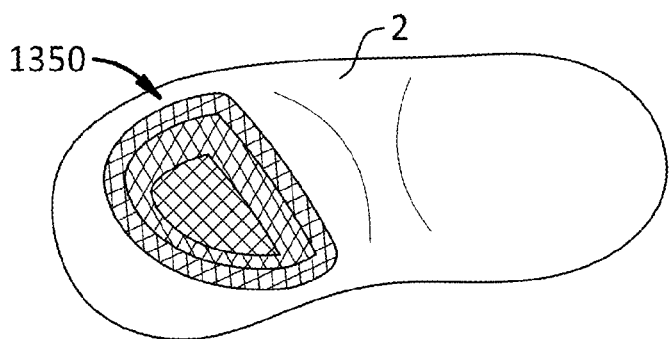


FIG. 21



POROUS STRUCTURES PRODUCED BY ADDITIVE LAYER MANUFACTURING

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to preparing porous structures, and in particular to the preparation of mesh structures by way of additive manufacturing.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The field of free-form fabrication has seen many important recent advances in the fabrication of articles directly from computer controlled databases. These advances, many of which are in the field of rapid manufacturing of articles such as prototype parts and mold dies, have greatly reduced the time and expense required to fabricate articles. This is in contrast to conventional machining processes in which a block of material, such as a metal, is machined according to engineering drawings.

[0003] Examples of modern rapid manufacturing technologies include additive layer manufacturing techniques such as electron beam melting, selective laser sintering (SLS), selective laser melting (SLM), and other three-dimensional (3-D) processes. When employing these technologies, articles are produced in layer-wise fashion from a laser-fusible powder that is dispensed one layer at a time. The powder is sintered in the case of SLS technology and melted in the case of SLM technology, by the application of laser energy that is directed in raster-scan fashion to portions of the powder layer corresponding to a cross section of the article. After the sintering or melting of the powder on one particular layer, an additional layer of powder is dispensed, and the process repeated, with sintering or melting taking place between the current layer and the previously laid layers until the article is complete. Detailed descriptions of the SLS technology may be found in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,863, 538, 5,017,753, 5,076,869, and 4,944,817, the entire disclosures of which are incorporated by reference herein. Similarly, a detailed description of the use of SLM technology may be found in U.S. Pat. No. 7,537,664 (“the ‘664 Patent”), the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference herein. The SLM and SLS technologies have enabled the direct manufacture of solid or porous three-dimensional articles of high resolution and dimensional accuracy from a variety of materials including wax, metal and metal alloys, metal powders with binders, polycarbonate, nylon, other plastics and composite materials, such as polymer-coated metals and ceramics.

[0004] Other non-powder based additive manufacturing technologies are also known to produce high resolution and dimensionally accurate articles. For example, in fused filament fabrication (FFF) or Plastic Jet Printing (PJP), strands of molten material are extruded from a nozzle to form layers onto a substrate in which the material hardens upon extrusion. Using digital light processing (DLP), photosensitive resin plastic is cured by light and built layer by layer from the bottom-up or a vat of liquid polymer is exposed to balanced levels of ultraviolet light and oxygen to produce a part often from the top-down. In inkjet 3D printing, a liquid binding material is selectively deposited across a thin layer of a powder and the process is repeated in which each new layer is adhered to the previous layer.

[0005] The invention claimed in the ‘664 Patent is one of several commonly owned by Howmedica Osteonics Corpo-

ration that relate to the additive manufacturing area. For instance, U.S. Pat. Appl. Publ. Nos. 2006/0147332 A1 (“the ‘332 Publication”) U.S. Pat. Appl. Publ. No. 2011/0014081 A1 (“the ‘081 Publication”), U.S. Pat. No. 8,992,703 (“the ‘703 Patent”), U.S. Pat. No. 9,135,374 (“the ‘374 Patent”), and U.S. Pat. No. 9,180,010 (“the ‘010 Patent”), the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein, have taught the generation and organization of a population of porous geometry, a mathematical representation of the portion of geometry of the porous structure to be built within a region defined by a predetermined unit cell or imaginary volume, to fill and form a predetermined build geometry, i.e., a model build structure, which may be used to produce a near net-shape of an intended porous tissue in-growth structure. The predetermined build geometry, or overall computer-aided design (CAD) geometry, may refer to the mathematical or pictorial representation (such as that on a computer display) of the intended physical structure to be manufactured. In the case of physical components that include both porous material and solid material, the predetermined build geometry may be an assembly of solid and porous CAD volumes that define the outer boundaries of the respective solid and porous materials intended to be manufactured. Furthermore, these applications teach the randomization of the position of interconnected nodes, or points of intersection between two struts or between a strut and a substrate, that define each of the porous geometries while maintaining the interconnectivity between the nodes. As further taught in these applications, such randomization may be accomplished by changing the coordinate positions of the nodes, in the x, y, and z directions of a Cartesian coordinate system, to new positions based on a defined mathematical function.

[0006] During surgical operations on one or more bones, orthopedic implants are generally adhered to a bony surface by bone cement. Even proper preparation of delivery of bone cement to a smooth bony surface can result in aseptic loosening of the implant and cement over time, especially when filling large void spaces such as in the proximal tibia and distal femur, requiring a revision surgery to be performed. Current implants, which typically require the use of biocompatible materials such as titanium, used to retain bone cement lack flexibility and are difficult to shape for a proper fit in a non-uniform space. Such implants are non-porous and thus lack limited surface area for contact with bone. Implants produced using additive layer manufacturing techniques have been built with strong scaffolds, but such implants are too rigid to allow for adequate deformation to fill void spaces created by bone degradation.

[0007] Thus, a new method is needed to create flexible structures which still provide mechanical strength to resist tensile and compressive forces, especially impact forces applied to bone and orthopedic implants.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] In accordance with an aspect, a three-dimensional structure may be formed. In forming the three-dimensional structure, a first layer of a material may be deposited onto a substrate. A first layer of the material may be scanned with a high energy beam to at least partially melt the first layer of the material. Successive layers of the material may be deposited onto the first layer. Each of the successive layers of the material may be scanned with the high energy beam

at predetermined locations to form at least a first segment overlapping a second segment and underlapping a third segment.

[0009] In some arrangements, any of the segments may be a curvilinear segment. In some arrangements, any of the segments may be a rectilinear segment. In some arrangements, any of the segments may include both curvilinear and rectilinear portions.

[0010] In some arrangements, the three-dimensional structure may be in the form of a mesh defined by a weave pattern or a chain-link pattern.

[0011] In some arrangements, the material may be any of titanium, a titanium alloy, stainless steel, magnesium, a magnesium alloy, cobalt, a cobalt alloy, a cobalt chrome alloy, nickel, a nickel alloy, tantalum, and niobium, polyethylene (PE) and variations thereof, polyetheretherketone (PEEK), polyetherketone (PEK), acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS), silicone, and cross-linked polymers, bioabsorbable glass, ceramics, and biological active materials including collagen/cell matrices.

[0012] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations a fourth segment spaced from the first segment, underlapping the second segment, and overlapping the third segment may be formed.

[0013] In some arrangements, the second and third segments may be spaced from each other.

[0014] In some arrangements, the third segment may be the second segment such that the first segment underlaps and overlaps the second segment. In such arrangements, the second and third segments may form part of a link, which may form a portion of a chain mail structure.

[0015] In some arrangements, the first segment may completely surround the second segment. In such arrangements, the first segment may be a link of a chain mail structure.

[0016] In some arrangements, the second segment may completely surround the first segment. In such arrangements, the second segment may be a link of a chain mail structure.

[0017] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations a plurality of segments may be formed that may completely surround the first segment.

[0018] In some arrangements, a first additional layer of the material may be deposited onto at least a predetermined location of the first segment. In some such arrangements, the first additional layer of the material may be scanned with the high energy beam at the predetermined location of the first segment. In this manner, the first additional layer of the material may be fused to the first segment at the predetermined location.

[0019] In some arrangements, successive additional layers of the material may be deposited onto the first additional layer. In some such arrangements, each of the successive additional layers may be scanned with the high energy beam at predetermined locations. In this manner, at least a first additional segment may be formed overlapping a second additional segment and underlapping a third additional segment in which the first additional segment may be fused to at least the first segment at the predetermined location of the first segment.

[0020] In some arrangements, the third additional segment may be the second additional segment such that the first additional segment underlaps and overlaps the second addi-

tional segment. In such arrangements, the second and third segments may form part of a link, which may form a portion of a chain mail structure.

[0021] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive additional layers at predetermined locations, a fourth additional segment spaced from the first additional segment, underlapping the second additional segment, and overlapping the third additional segment may be formed.

[0022] In some arrangements, when depositing the first additional layer of the material, the first additional layer of the material may be further deposited onto predetermined locations of the second, third, and fourth segments. In some such arrangements, when scanning the first additional layer of the material with the high energy beam, the first additional layer may be fused to each of the second, third, and fourth segments at the respective predetermined locations of the second, third, and fourth segments.

[0023] In some arrangements, successive additional layers of the material may be deposited onto the first additional layer. In some such arrangements in which successive additional layers of the material may be deposited onto the first additional layer, each of the successive additional layers may be scanned with the high energy beam at predetermined locations to form at least one symbol. In some such arrangements forming at least one symbol, any of such symbols may be fused to at least the first segment at the predetermined location of the first segment. In some such arrangements forming at least one symbol, any of such symbols may be an alphanumeric character.

[0024] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations, at least one barb may be formed. Any such barbs may extend from any of the first, second, and third segments.

[0025] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations, a first series of segments extending in a first direction and a second series of segments extending in a second direction transverse to the first direction may be formed. The first series of segments may include the first segment. The second series of segments may include the second and third segments. Some or all of the segments of the first series of segments may overlap a plurality of segments of the second series of segments and may underlap another plurality of segments of the second series of segments such that the first and second series of segments form a first mesh.

[0026] In some arrangements, the first mesh may be a flexible sheet. The first mesh may be foldable such that a substantially planar first portion of the first mesh lies in a plane at an angle of up to substantially 180 degrees to a plane in which a substantially planar second portion of the first mesh lies.

[0027] In some arrangements, the first mesh may be a flexible sheet formed in the shape of a cone or a frustum of a cone.

[0028] In some arrangements, the first mesh may define a pocket. The pocket of the first mesh may be stamped to form a cavity in the pocket. In some such arrangements, when the first mesh is stamped by a tool, a bottom surface of the cavity of the first mesh may conform to a bottom surface of the tool. When the first mesh is stamped by a tool having protrusions extending from a flat base, a bottom surface of the first mesh may have corresponding protrusions extending from the bottom surface upon being stamped by the tool.

[0029] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers of the material at predetermined locations, a third series of segments extending in a third direction and a fourth series of segments extending in a fourth direction transverse to the third direction may be formed. In some such arrangements, each of the segments of the third series of segments may overlap a plurality of segments of the fourth series of segments and may underlap a plurality of segments of the fourth series of segments. In this manner, the third and fourth series of segments may form a second mesh. In some such arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations, at least one segment may be formed that underlaps and overlaps at least one segment of the first and second series of segments and at least one segment of the third and fourth segments such that the first and second meshes may be rotatably attached to each other.

[0030] In some arrangements, the first and the third directions are the same. In the same or in other arrangements, the second and the fourth directions are the same.

[0031] In some arrangements, any of the first and the second meshes may have a profile substantially in the form of any of a square, a rectangle, a circle, and a triangle.

[0032] In some arrangements, the first and the second meshes may have edges adjacent and substantially parallel to each other such that upon rotation of either of the edges about the other edge, the edges do not interfere with such rotation.

[0033] In some arrangements, pluralities of the segments of the first and second series of segments may define a bore through a thickness of the scanned successive layers of the material.

[0034] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations an outer ring, and wherein ends of pluralities of the segments of the first and second series of segments are fused to an outer perimeter of the outer ring, an inner perimeter opposite the outer perimeter of the outer ring defining the bore through the thickness of the scanned successive layers of the material.

[0035] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations, an inner ring concentric with the outer ring may be formed. In some such arrangements when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations, segments fused to and between the inner perimeter of the outer ring and an outer perimeter opposite an inner perimeter of the inner ring may be formed. In such arrangements, the inner perimeter of the inner ring may define the bore through the thickness of the scanned successive layers of the material.

[0036] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations a stud or rivet may be formed. In some such arrangements, ends of pluralities of the segments of the first and second series of segments may be fused to the perimeter of the stud or rivet.

[0037] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations, a third series of segments extending in a third direction and a fourth series of segments extending in a fourth direction transverse to the third direction may be formed. In some such arrangements, each of the segments of the third series of segments may overlap a plurality of segments of the fourth series of segments and may underlap a plurality of segments of the fourth series of segments. In this manner, the third and fourth series of segments may form a second mesh. In some such

arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations, a solid section may be formed. The solid section may be fused to each of the first and second meshes. In this manner, the solid section may be movable relative to portions of each of the first and second meshes.

[0038] In some arrangements, when scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations a hook extending from the first segment may be formed.

[0039] In some arrangements, the first segment may be fused to at least one of the second and the third segments.

[0040] In some arrangements, the first segment may be fused to only one of the second and the third segments.

[0041] In accordance with another aspect, bone ingrowth may be facilitated. In facilitating such bone ingrowth, a porous tissue ingrowth structure may be formed in the shape of a mesh implant. In forming the mesh implant, a first layer of a material may be deposited onto a substrate. A first layer of the material may be scanned with a high energy beam to at least partially melt the first layer of the material. Successive layers of the material may be deposited onto the first layer. Each of the successive layers of the material may be scanned with the high energy beam at predetermined locations to form at least a first segment overlapping a second segment and underlapping a third segment. The mesh implant may be shaped into a desired shape. The mesh implant may have a porosity to promote bone ingrowth. The mesh implant may be placed against a bone portion. A bone implant may be placed against bone cement such that the bone cement contacts both the mesh implant and the bone implant. The mesh implant may prevent contact of the bone cement with bone ingrown into the mesh implant.

[0042] In accordance with another aspect, a three-dimensional structure may be formed. In forming the three-dimensional structure, a first layer of a material may be formed over at least a substrate. The first layer of the material may be scanned with a high energy beam to form a first pattern. The first pattern may include a first portion (a1) of a first solid portion (A). A second layer of the material may be deposited over the first layer of the material. The second layer of the material may be scanned with a high energy beam to form a second pattern. The second pattern may include a first portion (b1) of a second solid portion (B). A third layer of the material may be deposited over at least a substrate. The third layer of the material may be scanned with a high energy beam to form a third pattern. The third pattern may include a second portion (a2) of the first solid portion (A). A fourth layer of the material may be deposited over at least the second layer of the material. The fourth layer of the material may be scanned with a high energy beam to form a fourth pattern. The fourth pattern may include a third portion (a3) of the first solid portion (A). A fifth layer of the material may be deposited over at least the third layer of the material. The fifth layer of the material may be scanned with a high energy beam to form a fifth pattern. The fifth pattern may include a first portion (c1) of a third solid portion (C). A sixth layer of the material may be deposited over at least the fifth layer of the material. The sixth layer of the material may be scanned with a high energy beam to form a sixth pattern. The sixth pattern may include a fourth portion (a4) of the first solid portion (A). The first, second, third, and fourth portions of the first solid portion (A) may be attached to each other such that the first solid portion (A) at least partially wraps around the second solid portion (B) and the third solid portion (C).

[0043] In some arrangements, at least some of the second, third, fourth, and fifth layers may be the same layer.

[0044] In some arrangements, the second solid portion (B) is the same as the third solid portion (C) such that the first solid portion (A) forms a link.

[0045] In some arrangements, the first and third layers may be the same layer such that the third pattern is part of the first pattern. In such arrangements, the first pattern may further include a first portion (d1) and a second portion (d2) of a fourth solid portion (D). The first portion (d1) and the second portion (d2) of the fourth solid portion (D) may be offset from the first portion (a1) and the second portion (a2) of the first solid portion (A) within the first pattern. In such arrangements, the second and fifth layers may be the same layer such that the fifth pattern is part of the second pattern. In such arrangements, the first portion (b1) of the second solid portion (B) and the first portion (c1) of the third solid portion (C) may be offset from each other. In such arrangements, the fourth and sixth layers may be the same layer such that the sixth pattern is part of the fourth pattern. In such arrangements, the fourth pattern may further include a third portion (d3) and a fourth portion (d4) of the fourth solid portion (D). In such arrangements, the third portion (d3) and the fourth portion (d4) of the fourth solid portion (D) may be offset from the third portion (a3) and the fourth portion (a4) of the first solid portion (A) within the fourth pattern. In such arrangements, the first, second, third, and fourth portions of the fourth solid portion (D) may be attached to each other such that the fourth solid portion (A) weaves around the second solid portion (B) and the third solid portion (C) in the opposite manner that the first solid portion weaves around the second solid portion (B) and the third solid portion (C).

[0046] In some arrangements, at least one of the second portion (a2) and the third portion (a3) of the first solid portion (A) may be fused to at least one of the first portion (b1) of the second solid portion (B) and the first portion (c1) of the third solid portion (C).

[0047] In accordance with another aspect, a non-transitory computer-readable storage medium may have computer readable instructions of a program stored on the medium. The instructions, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform a process of preparing a computer-generated model of a three-dimensional structure constructed of unit cells. In performing the process, a computer-generated component file may be prepared. The computer-generated component file may include a porous CAD volume which may have a boundary. A space may be populated, by a processor, to include the porous CAD volume. The porous CAD volume may be populated with unit cells. Each of the unit cells may be populated, by a processor, with at least one segment geometry to form a plurality of segment geometries. A first segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries may overlap a second segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries and underlap a third segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0048] FIG. 1 is a functional diagram of a system in accordance with an embodiment;

[0049] FIGS. 2-4B are various views of three-dimensional model representations of unit cells having wireframes located therein in accordance with other embodiments;

[0050] FIG. 5 is a process flow diagram in accordance with another embodiment;

[0051] FIG. 6 is an example of a mesh sheet in accordance with another embodiment;

[0052] FIGS. 7A-7D are illustrative profile views of mesh sheets in accordance with another embodiment;

[0053] FIG. 8 is an example of an application of the mesh sheet of FIG. 6;

[0054] FIGS. 9A and 9B are perspective views of a three-dimensional model representation of a portion of a mesh sheet in accordance with an embodiment;

[0055] FIG. 9C is a perspective view of a three-dimensional model representation of a unit cell for use in preparing the three-dimensional model representation of the portion of the mesh sheet of FIG. 9;

[0056] FIGS. 10A-12C are views of applications of mesh sheets in accordance with embodiments;

[0057] FIG. 13A is a perspective view of a three-dimensional model representation of a portion of a mesh sheet in accordance with an embodiment;

[0058] FIG. 13B is an example of an application of the mesh sheet of FIG. 13A;

[0059] FIGS. 14A-15 are perspective views of three-dimensional model representations of a portion of mesh sheets in accordance with an embodiment;

[0060] FIG. 16 is an example of a mesh sheet in accordance with an embodiment;

[0061] FIGS. 17A-17C are examples of applications of mesh sheets in accordance with embodiments;

[0062] FIGS. 18A-18C are views of an application of mesh sheets in accordance with an embodiment;

[0063] FIGS. 19A and 19B are perspective and side views of a mesh sheet in accordance with an embodiment;

[0064] FIG. 19C is a perspective view of a tool for use with the mesh sheet of FIGS. 19A and 19B in accordance with an embodiment;

[0065] FIGS. 19D and 19E are perspective and side views of the mesh sheet of FIGS. 19A and 19B after deformation of the mesh sheet by the tool of FIG. 19C in accordance with an embodiment;

[0066] FIG. 20A is a side view of a tool for use with the mesh sheet of FIGS. 19A and 19B in accordance with an embodiment;

[0067] FIG. 20B is a side view of the mesh sheet of FIGS. 19A and 19B after deformation of the mesh sheet by the tool of FIG. 20A in accordance with an embodiment; and

[0068] FIG. 21 is a perspective view of an application of the deformed mesh sheets of either of FIGS. 19D and 20B.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0069] This invention relates generally to generating computer models of three-dimensional structures. These models may be used to prepare porous tissue in-growth structures in medical implants and prostheses. The models may include features corresponding to tangible structures.

[0070] FIG. 1 depicts system 105 that may be used, among other functions, to generate, store and share three-dimensional models of structures. System 105 may include at least one server computer 110, first client computer 120, and in some instances, at least second client computer 130. These computers may send and receive information via network 140. For example, a first user may generate a model at first client device 120. The model may then be uploaded to server 110 and distributed via network 140 to second client com-

puter **130** for viewing and modification by a second user, who or which may be the first user.

[0071] Network **140**, and intervening communication points, may comprise various configurations and protocols including the Internet, World Wide Web, intranets, virtual private networks, wide area networks, local networks, private networks using communication protocols proprietary to one or more companies, Ethernet, WiFi and HTTP, and various combinations of the foregoing. Such communication may be facilitated by any device capable of transmitting data to and from other computers, such as modems (e.g., dial-up, cable or fiber optic) and wireless interfaces. Although only a few devices are depicted in FIG. 1, a system may include a large number of connected computers, with each different computer being at a different communication point of the network.

[0072] Each of computers **110**, **120**, and **130** may include a processor and memory. For example, server **110** may include memory **114** which stores information accessible by processor **112**, computer **120** may include memory **124** which stores information accessible by processor **122**, and computer **130** may include memory **134** which stores information accessible by processor **132**.

[0073] Each of processors **112**, **122**, **132** may be any conventional processor, such as commercially available CPUs. Alternatively, the processors may be dedicated controllers such as an ASIC, FPGA, or other hardware-based processor. Although shown in FIG. 1 as being within the same block, the processor and memory may actually comprise multiple processors and memories that may or may not be stored within the same physical housing. For example, memories may be a hard drive or other storage media located in a server farm of a network data center. Accordingly, references to a processor, memory, or computer will be understood to include references to a collection of processors, memories, or computers that may or may not operate in parallel.

[0074] The memories may include first part storing applications or instructions **116**, **126**, **136** that may be executed by the respective processor. Instructions **116**, **126**, **136** may be any set of instructions to be executed directly (such as machine code) or indirectly (such as scripts) by the processor. In that regard, the terms “applications,” “instructions,” “steps” and “programs” may be used interchangeably herein.

[0075] The memories may also include second part storing data **118**, **128**, **138** that may be retrieved, stored or modified in accordance with the respective instructions. The memory may include any type capable of storing information accessible by the processor, such as a hard-drive, memory card, ROM, RAM, DVD, CD-ROM, write-capable, and read-only memories or various combinations of the foregoing, where applications **116** and data **118** are stored on the same or different types of media.

[0076] In addition to a processor, memory and instructions, client computers **120**, **130**, **131**, **133** may have all of the components used in connection with a personal computer. For example, the client computers may include electronic display **150**, **151** (e.g., a monitor having a screen, a touch-screen, a projector, a television, a computer printer or any other electrical device that is operable to display information), one or more user inputs **152**, **153** (e.g., a mouse,

keyboard, touch screen and/or microphone), speakers **154**, **155**, and all of the components used for connecting these elements to one another.

[0077] Instructions **126**, **136** of the first and second client devices **120**, **130** may include building applications **125**, **135**. For example, the building applications may be used by a user to create three-dimensional structures, such as those described further herein. The building applications may be associated with a graphical user interface for displaying on a client device in order to allow the user to utilize the functions of the building applications.

[0078] A building application may be a computer-aided design (CAD) 3-D modeling program or equivalent as known in the art. Available CAD programs capable of generating such a structure include Autodesk® AutoCAD®, Creo® by Parametric Technology Corporation (formerly Pro/Engineer), Siemens PLM Software NX™ (formerly Unigraphics NX), SOLIDWORKS® by SolidWorks Corporation, and CATIA® by Dassault Systemes. Such structures may be those described in the '421 Application.

[0079] Data **118**, **128**, **138** need not be limited by any particular data structure. For example, the data may be stored in computer registers, in a relational database as a table having a plurality of different fields and records, or XML documents. The data may also be formatted into any computer-readable format such as, but not limited to, binary values, ASCII or Unicode. Moreover, the data may comprise any information sufficient to identify the relevant information, such as numbers, descriptive text, proprietary codes, pointers, references to data stored in other memories (including other network locations) or information that is used by a function to calculate the relevant data. For example, data **128** of first client device **120** may include information used by building application **125** to create three-dimensional models.

[0080] In addition to the operations described above and illustrated in the figures, various other operations will now be described. It should be understood that the following operations do not have to be performed in the precise order described below. Rather, various steps may be handled in a different order or simultaneously. Steps may also be omitted or added unless otherwise stated herein.

[0081] An overall three-dimensional representation of a component may first be generated by preparing a CAD model. This overall CAD model may be comprised of one or more distinct CAD volumes that are intended to be manufactured as either solid or porous physical structures, i.e., constructs.

[0082] Solid CAD volumes, which correspond to manufactured solid physical structures, can be sliced into layers of a predetermined thickness ready for hatching, re-merging with the porous volume (post-lattice generation), and subsequent manufacture.

[0083] Porous CAD volumes, such as porous CAD volume **100** shown in the example of FIG. 2 and which correspond to manufactured porous geometries, can be processed using bespoke software. As in the example of FIG. 2, a porous geometry is made up of one or more segments **110**, **120** organized within tessellated unit cells **105**. Many designs are possible for a porous geometry which allows the porous geometry to impart various strength, surface, and/or other characteristics into the porous CAD volume. For example, porous geometries can be used to control the shape, type, degree, density, and size of porosity within the

structure. Such porous geometry shapes can be dodecahedral, octahedral, tetrahedral (diamond), as well as other various shapes.

[0084] As further shown in FIG. 2, porous CAD volume 100 is formed by a plurality of unit cells 105 which each contain curvilinear segment geometry 110 and curvilinear segment geometry 120. Curvilinear segment geometry 110 within each unit cell 105 extend from an end 111 thereof located at a center of a lower left edge of the unit cell to an end 112 thereof located at a center of an upper right edge of the unit cell, and curvilinear segment geometries 120 within each unit cell 105 extend from an end 121 thereof located at a center of an upper left edge of the unit cell to an end 122 thereof located at a center of a lower right edge of the unit cell.

[0085] Unit cells 105 are adjacent to each other such that end 112 of curvilinear segment geometry 110 within one unit cell 105 abuts, and indeed is the same as, end 121 of curvilinear segment geometry 120 within adjacent unit cell 105 and such that end 122 of curvilinear segment geometry 120 within one unit cell 105 abuts, and is the same as, end 111 of curvilinear segment geometry 110 within adjacent unit cell 105. As shown, curvilinear segment geometry 110 within each unit cell 105 curves around curvilinear segment geometry 120 within the same unit cell. In this manner, a connected pair of curvilinear segment geometry 110 and curvilinear segment geometry 120 within adjacent unit cells 105 overlaps the other connected pair of curvilinear segment geometry 110 and curvilinear segment geometry 120 within the same adjacent unit cells.

[0086] As shown in FIG. 3, porous CAD volume 100A includes unit cells 105 formed adjacent to other unit cells 105 such that ends of curvilinear segment geometries 110, 120 of one unit cell abut an end of the other curvilinear segment geometry of respective curvilinear segment geometries 110, 120 of the adjacent unit cell. As further shown, a plurality of barb geometries 135 extend from various ends 111, 112 of curvilinear segment geometries 110 and ends 121, 122 of curvilinear segment geometries 120 such that barb geometries 135 extend transversely across the curvilinear segment geometries 110, 120 corresponding to the respective ends. In this manner, a plurality of unit cells 105 may be tessellated to form the porous CAD volume 100A.

[0087] When used for medical implants, barb geometries, such as barb geometries 135, may correspond to physical barbs that encourage directional fixation of the implants. In such applications, the barbs may vary in spacing and length. Such barbs may be but are not limited to being on the order of 0.6-1.2 mm in length. Any directional barb hairs, branches, rods, and beads may also be incorporated into a porous mesh structure to encourage directional fixation with bone. As barb geometries, such as barb geometries 135, may be placed at any predetermined or, conversely, at randomly selected positions along segment geometries of a porous CAD volume, barbs corresponding to the barb geometries may be placed at any such corresponding positions on segments corresponding to segment geometries.

[0088] Referring now to FIG. 4A, porous CAD volume 200A formed by tessellation of a plurality of unit cells 205A, 206A each containing linear segment geometry 210A and curvilinear segment geometry 220A. As in this example, opposing ends 211A, 212A of linear segment geometry 210A within each unit cell 205A, 206A may extend from centers of opposite faces of the unit cell, and curvilinear

segment geometry 220A of each unit cell 205A may extend from an end 221A thereof located at a center of an upper front edge of the unit cell, around the linear segment geometry, and to an end 222A thereof located at a center of an upper rear edge of the unit cell. In this manner, segment geometries 210A, 220A form portions of mesh geometry.

[0089] A plurality of unit cells 205A and separately a plurality of unit cells 206A may be adjacent to each other such that end 221A of curvilinear segment geometry 210A of one unit cell 205A, 206A abuts end 222A of curvilinear segment geometry 220A of respective adjacent unit cell 205A, 206A. As further shown, the plurality of unit cells 206A may be inverted relative to the plurality of unit cells 205A, and end 211A of linear segment geometry 210A of one unit cell 205A may abut end 212A of linear segment geometry 210A of respective adjacent unit cell 206A. In this manner, curvilinear segment geometries 210A of each of the plurality of unit cells 205A, 206A and the linear geometries 210A of each of the plurality of unit cells 205A, 206A may collectively form a woven mesh geometry. As in the example shown, the linear segment geometries 210A of the plurality of unit cells 205A, 206A may all be parallel to each other.

[0090] Referring to FIG. 4B, porous CAD volume 200B is formed by tessellation of a plurality of unit cells 205B, 206B each containing curvilinear segment geometry 210B in which curvilinear segment geometry 210B of unit cell 206B is inverted relative to curvilinear segment geometry 210B of unit cell 205B. As in this example, opposing ends 211B, 212B of curvilinear segment geometry 210B of each unit cell 205B, 206B may extend from opposite corners of the respective unit cells. Unit cells 205B may be diagonal from each other such that they share only one common edge, and similarly, unit cells 206B may be diagonal from each other such that they share only one common edge. In this manner, ends 212B of curvilinear segment geometries 210B of each of a first set of unit cells 205B, 206B may abut ends 211B of curvilinear segment geometries 210B of each of a second set of unit cells 205B, 206B located diagonally to the first set of the unit cells. In this manner, a connected pair of curvilinear segment geometry 210B of diagonally located set of unit cells 205B overlaps a connected pair of curvilinear segment geometry 210B of diagonally located set of unit cells 206B to form mesh geometry. As shown, such mesh geometry may be in the form of a woven mesh.

[0091] A larger mesh geometry may be formed by adding further sets of the four unit cells 205B, 206B to each of the four sets of two side faces 213, 214 of adjoining unit cells 205B, 206B, i.e., to the side faces 213, 214 around the circumference of the four-cubes shown in the illustration of FIG. 4B. In alternative arrangements, the mesh geometry defined by the four curvilinear segments 210B of the four unit cells 205B, 206B shown in FIG. 4B may be arranged in a single unit cell, which may be tessellated to form a porous CAD volume.

[0092] Other variations of unit cells 105 and 205, 206 in which at least one segment geometry defining the unit cell is curved or includes angled portions, which may be in the shape of a "V," "W" or other combination of linear portions, such that the segment geometry curves or wraps around another segment geometry of the unit cell are within the scope of the present technology. Such variations could also be used to form porous CAD volumes. In other arrangements, a CAD model may be generated without forming unit

cells and thus without tessellation of features within the unit cells. Such CAD models created without tessellated unit cells may be in the form of a woven mesh, i.e., cross-hatch, geometry with overlapping and underlapping strips, i.e., ribbons. In some alternative arrangements, woven mesh geometries may have a plurality of adjacent segment geometries or set of segment geometries that overlap and underlap the same transverse corresponding segment geometries or set of segment geometries, e.g., in the form of a “double weave.” In other variations of forming mesh geometries, the ends of the segment may be at any location within a unit cell so long as the segment geometries of each unit cell, alone or in combination with segment geometries of adjacent unit cells overlap and underlap segment geometries within the same unit cell or within adjacent unit cells, i.e., in a manner similar to the overlapping and underlapping of the segment geometries shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B. For example, ends may be but are not limited to being at corners of unit cells, centers of edges of unit cells, and the centers of faces of unit cells. In some arrangements, a percentage of the junctions where segment geometries of a porous CAD volume overlap each other may be fused together. When fusion of such junctions is unevenly distributed, anisotropy in a physical mesh structure corresponding to a porous CAD volume may be created.

[0093] Referring to FIG. 5, in an example of preparing a porous CAD volume of segment geometries, a computer-generated component file is prepared at a block 191. The component file includes a porous CAD volume with a boundary having at least one predefined portion. At a block 192, a space that includes the porous CAD volume is populated, by a processor, with unit cells. Such a space may be defined by sets of coordinates, such as Cartesian, polar, or spherical coordinates. At a block 193, the unit cells are populated with one or more segment geometries to form a plurality of segment geometries. As further shown at block 193, a first curvilinear segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries overlaps a second segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries and underlaps a third segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries. In this manner, a computer-generated model of a three-dimensional structure constructed of segment geometries is prepared.

[0094] The above-described model geometries can be visualized in a number of ways, including but not limited to by voxelating the sliced output files from bespoke software that is being applied in an additive layer manufacturing machine. Utilizing developed algorithms and the output files, the data may be fed into a commercial software package, e.g., MATLAB® by MathWorks, Inc., and the images produced can be interpreted. At an optional block 194, a tangible three-dimensional structure having a shape corresponding to the computer-generated model may be produced. The shape of the three-dimensional structure may be in the form of a mesh structure, such as a mesh implant.

[0095] The approaches for generating the three-dimensional models described herein may be used for building various tangible structures and surfaces, specifically structures and surfaces for medical implants. Upon completion of a CAD model including the porous geometries and any solid geometries that may be connected to the porous geometries, an intended physical structure may be formed directly onto a substrate using a layered additive manufacturing process, including but not limited to electron beam melting (EBM),

selective laser sintering (SLS), selective laser melting (SLM), and blown powder fusion for use with metal powders. Techniques such as but not limited to SLS, three-dimensional inkjet printing (3DP), stereolithography (SLA), and fused filament fabrication (FFF) may be used with polymer powders or strands to produce plastic constructs. Cellular scaffolds may be formed using bioplotters or 3DP. Although a brief summary follows, many details of a process of melting powdered metal are given in the '332 and '081 Publications. In an example of constructing a tangible structure from a model build geometry using metal powder, a layer of metal powder may be deposited onto a substrate. The substrate may be a work platform, a solid base, or a core, with the base or core being provided to possibly be an integral part of the finished product.

[0096] The metal powder may be but is not limited to being made from any of titanium, a titanium alloy, stainless steel, magnesium, a magnesium alloy, cobalt, a cobalt alloy including a cobalt chrome alloy, nickel, a nickel alloy including a nickel titanium alloy, tantalum, and niobium. In some embodiments, individual layers of metal may be scanned using a directed high energy beam, such as a continuous or pulsed laser or e-beam system to selectively melt the powder, i.e., melt the powder in predetermined locations. Each layer, or portion of a layer, is scanned to create a plurality of predetermined porous or mesh physical constructs, and when necessary predetermined solid constructs, by point exposure to the energized beam. This leads to the production of linear, curvilinear, or other shaped struts that correspond to the segments described previously herein and eventually to a porous or mesh physical construct, as will be described below. Successive layers are deposited onto previous layers and also are scanned. The scanning and depositing of successive layers continues the building process of the predetermined porous geometries. As disclosed herein, continuing the building process refers not only to a continuation of a porous or mesh physical construct from a previous layer but also a beginning of a new porous or mesh physical construct as well as the completion of the current porous or mesh physical construct.

[0097] In alternative arrangements, non-metallic materials may be used in such additive layer manufacturing processes. These materials may include implantable plastics including but not limited to wax, polyethylene (PE) and variations thereof, polyetheretherketone (PEEK), polyetherketone (PEK), acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS), silicone, and cross-linked polymers; bioabsorbable glass, ceramics, and biological active materials such as collagen/cell matrices. Composites of any of these materials or the metals described previously herein may be made as a combination with any of bone cement, bone, soft tissue, and cellular matrices and tissue cells.

[0098] A component structure or sub-structure thereof produced by the approaches herein may be porous and if desired, the pores can be interconnecting to provide an interconnected porosity. In some embodiments, the amount and location of porosity may be predetermined, and preferably lie in the range 50% to 90% as being suitable when used as a bone ingrowth surface, and 20% to 90% as being suitable for polymer interlock surfaces. This also applies to cases where the outer porous section of a medical device is connected to host bone with bone cement or bone type adhesives for example.

[0099] When physical constructs are produced using a laser or electron beam melting process, a prefabricated base or core may act as a substrate building physical constructs. Such bases may be made of any of the materials described previously herein for us in the additive layer manufacturing processes. In some instances, such materials may be different than the materials for the successive layers built during the additive layer manufacturing processes. Thus, a mixture of desired mixed materials can be employed. By way of example, porous layers can be built onto an existing article, which itself may be porous or solid, made from any of cobalt chrome, titanium or alloy, stainless steel, tantalum or niobium. In this example, the existing article may be an orthopaedic implant. In such a manner, the approaches described herein may be exploited to produce commercially saleable implants with bone in-growth structures having porous surfaces with a predetermined scaffold structure. The constructed medical implant, which may correspond to the mesh geometries described previously herein, may have a porosity and architecture optimized, to create very favorable conditions so that bone in-growth takes place in a physiological environment and the overall outcome favors long-term stability.

[0100] Because a laser or electron beam melting process may not require subsequent heat treatment or the temperature at which this heat treatment occurs is lower than any critical phase change in the material, the initial mechanical properties of any base metal to which a porous structure is applied may be preserved.

[0101] The equipment used for additive layer manufacturing of implants could be one of many currently available, including but not limited to those manufactured by Renishaw, SLM Solutions, Realizer, EOS, Concept Laser, Arcam and the like. The laser or electron beam may also be a custom-produced laboratory device.

[0102] As shown in FIG. 6, mesh sheet 150 was produced by melting successive layers of metal powder. To produce physical constructs of this form, with reference to FIG. 3, spots corresponding to ends 111 of curvilinear segments 110 and ends 122 of curvilinear segments 120 may be formed during production of one layer of an intended physical structure corresponding to porous CAD volume 100A, spots corresponding to ends 121 of curvilinear segments 120 and ends 112 of curvilinear segments 110 may be formed using a high energy beam during production of another layer of the intended physical structure corresponding to porous CAD volume 100A, and spots corresponding to portions of curvilinear segments 110 and portions of curvilinear segments 120 may be formed during production of other layers of the intended physical structure corresponding to porous CAD volume 100A. Such spots may be formed using an SLS or SLM process in which when a laser is the high energy beam, the powder particles may have a diameter on the order of between and including 5 and 50 μm , and when an electron beam is the high energy beam, the powder particles may have a diameter on the order of between and including 75 and 150 μm . In a similar manner, the geometries of the porous CAD volumes 100, 200A, and 200B as described previously herein may be formed into mesh sheets. Similar constructions may be but are not limited to being formed using any of the other additive manufacturing processes discussed previously herein, including 3DP, SLA, FFF, and digital light processing (DLP).

[0103] Again referring to FIG. 6, mesh sheet 150 is made of titanium. Due to the rigidity of the material, mesh sheet 150 has been trimmed to size by a pair of scissors, producing little debris relative to other devices that require modification from a Midas Rex, such as with cone and sleeve augments. Mesh sheet 150 is malleable due to its minimal thickness and thus has been curled into shape. As shown, mesh sheet 150 has also been coated with a PERI-APATITE® hydroxyapatite coating but remains porous to promote bone in-growth. Although the surfaces of mesh sheet 150 are relatively rough, in alternative arrangements, at least one surface of the mesh sheet may be smooth to prevent irritation to surrounding soft tissues. Such surface may be produced using the techniques taught in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2013/0268085, now U.S. Pat. No. 9,180,010 (“the ‘010 Patent”), incorporated by reference in its entirety herein.

[0104] Referring to the illustrations of FIGS. 7A-7D, the CAD modeling and layered additive manufacturing process in accordance with the present technology can be used to form physical structures having a plurality of mesh sheets 350A, 350B, 350C, 350D connected together by one or more links 355. The mesh sheets may be but are not limited to being formed of segments corresponding to segment geometries of porous CAD volumes, such as but not limited to any of porous CAD volumes 100, 100A, 200A, and 200B or may be formed of a series of overlapping and underlapping strips prepared using a CAD model without the use of repeating unit cells, as described previously herein. During preparation of any such woven mesh patterns, the overlapping and underlapping segments or strips may be fused together at selected intersections or “cross-over” areas of the strips to impart more rigidity to the mesh at the fused areas.

[0105] In such arrangements, the physical mesh sheet constructs may have but are not limited to having a square profile such as in FIG. 7A, a rectangular profile such as in FIG. 7B, a circular profile such as in FIG. 7C, and a triangular profile such as in FIG. 7D. Links 355, which may correspond to link geometries created within a CAD model, may have closed perimeters as shown, or may have open perimeters. Links 355 may have profiles which may be but are not limited to being circular, triangular, hexagonal, and octagonal. As in the examples of FIGS. 7A-7D, links 355 may extend through openings defined by adjacent segments or strips along edges of physical mesh sheet constructs, such as mesh sheets 350A-D.

[0106] When forming such physical structures using any layered additive manufacturing process, a predetermined thickness of mesh sheets 350A, 350B, 350C, 350D and of links 355, corresponding to a slice height of a CAD model inputted into a layered additive manufacturing device, may be generated during production of a single layer of an intended physical structure. In this manner, a portion of each of mesh sheets 350A-D and of each of links 355 shown in FIGS. 6A-6D may be produced during formation of a single layer of the physical structures shown in FIGS. 7A-7D.

[0107] There are a number of useful applications for the mesh sheets. As shown in FIG. 8, mesh sheet 150 is in the form of a foil such that the mesh sheet may be press fit into a bony void space, such as that shown in bone 1. As shown, mesh sheet 150 has a coated outer surface that promotes mechanically strong bone in-growth and also has a coated inner surface that provides a textured surface to rigidly fix bone cement, when such cement is applied to the inner

surface, in the shape of the inner surface of the mesh sheet. For this type of application, mesh sheet 150 has a maximum allowable pore size to prevent seepage of the cement through the mesh sheet causing undesirable bone-to-cement contact. Below a specific pore size, bone cement is at its “dough phase,” a phase in which the cement is viscous enough not to stick to a surgeon’s glove, does not penetrate through the mesh. Randomizing the unit cell structures within a porous CAD volume may also limit the flow of bone cement.

[0108] As shown in FIGS. 9A and 9B, a CAD model of mesh sheet geometry 450 includes a set of connected link geometries 455A oriented in a vertical direction and link geometries 455B oriented in a horizontal direction. A “chain link” mesh sheet corresponding to this CAD model including a set of connected links may be formed using any of the additive layer manufacturing processes described previously herein in accordance with the present technology.

[0109] Referring again to FIG. 9, as shown, each link geometry 455A, 455B is a substantially planar open hexagon formed of six connected segments 410 which are connected to a plurality of other link geometries 455A, 455B. Each link geometry 455A, 455B has a closed perimeter such that a physically produced link corresponding to this link geometry may not be separated from other links to which the physically produced link is connected without severing one of the connected links. In alternative arrangements, at least some physically produced links may have an opening through their perimeters such that links to which a link is connected may be removed through the opening. In instances in which the opening of an open perimeter is too small, a link having such an opening may be deformed to widen such opening.

[0110] In one arrangement of forming mesh sheet geometry 450, each link geometry within a CAD model may be modeled individually without the use of tessellated unit cells. In an alternative arrangement as shown in the example of FIG. 9C, unit cell 405 may be tessellated to form mesh sheet geometry 450. As shown, unit cell 405 includes one link geometry 455A interlocked with one link geometry 455B. With reference to FIGS. 9A and 9B, upon tessellation of unit cell 405 to form a porous CAD volume containing mesh sheet geometry 450, each link geometry 455A of one unit cell becomes interlocked with link geometries 455B of adjacent unit cells, and each link geometry 455B of one unit cell becomes interlocked with link geometries 455A of adjacent unit cells. In this manner, in the example of FIGS. 9A and 9B, each link geometry 455A becomes interlocked with four link geometries 455B and each link geometry 455B becomes interlocked with four link geometries 455A.

[0111] In the example of FIGS. 9A and 9B, planes defined by a widest dimension of interlocked link geometries 455A, 455B are arranged orthogonally to each other. Interlocked link geometries 455A, 455B are spaced apart a slight distance from each other and have the same size. In alternative arrangements, interlocked link geometries may be set at any of non-orthogonal angles to each other, different spacings relative to each other, and different sizes relative to each other. Through these variations, any of the porosity and flexibility of mesh sheets corresponding to modeled mesh sheet geometries may be varied. In some alternative arrangements, unit cells, such as unit cells 405, may be offset by a distance that is different than the spacing between interlocked link geometries of each unit cell to form a non-

uniform mesh geometry. In some alternative arrangements, some regions of a mesh geometry may be different in any dimension than other regions of a mesh sheet geometry to form varying porosity, which may be a gradient porosity, within a mesh sheet corresponding to the mesh geometry.

[0112] When forming a physical structure corresponding to mesh sheet geometry 450, which may be a mesh sheet or other flexible construct such as those shown in FIGS. 12A and 13B described further herein, a bottom portion of links, such as a bottom portion of a link corresponding to vertices 456 of link geometries 455A, may be formed during preparation of a first layer of the physical structure of the mesh sheet geometry by an additive layer manufacturing device. Successive layers of the physical structure may then be prepared by the additive layer manufacturing device to form complete links corresponding to link geometries 455A, 455B in which links corresponding to link geometries 455A define planes that are aligned vertically, i.e., orthogonally, with respect to a substrate on which the physical structure is formed, and links corresponding to link geometries 455B define planes that are aligned horizontally, i.e., parallel, with respect to the substrate. In this manner, and with reference to FIG. 9, during preparation of the successive layers, only portions of links corresponding to width 457 along opposite sides of the vertically-aligned hexagonal links 455A may be formed in the layers forming links corresponding to horizontally-aligned hexagonal links 455B.

[0113] The size of the segments forming the links, which correspond to the segment geometries forming the link geometries, such as link geometries 455A, 455B, the shape of any of the segments and the links, and thus the sizes of pores defined by the links may be adjusted to suit a particular application of a physical construct such as a mesh sheet. Such variables may be used to control flexibility, range of motion, and strength of an overall construct, such as a mesh sheet as well as to control any of the amount of tissue ingrowth and the egress of contained materials, with pore size and shape optimized to pressurize doughy bone cements or morselized bone graft materials. To achieve these goals, the pore sizes preferably should be greater than 300 μm and strut sizes preferably should be greater than 100 μm . In this manner and depending on material choice, the physical construct may have any of a relatively high tensile strength, low flexion and compressive stiffness, variable tensile stiffness, variable stiffness, and ductility.

[0114] Link geometries, and thus their corresponding links in physical constructs, may be but are not limited to being in the shape of any of a hexagon, a circle, an ellipse, a square, a triangle, a rectangle, and any combination of these shapes. Links may be planar, such as links corresponding to link geometries 455A, 455B in the example of FIG. 9, as well as non-planar, in which links may extend in three dimensions, e.g., a kinked hex design. In some arrangements, the ratio of strut size to pore size for a given shape of strut corresponding to a segment in a CAD model may be varied to influence flexibility, range of motion, and strength in some or all directions. The ratio of links connected to each link may be adjusted throughout all or a portion of a flexible construct such as a mesh sheet. For example, in a preferred arrangement, a connected link ratio of 4:1 may be used to make a uniform sheet construct. In another example, a connected link ratio of 2:1 may be used to make a chain

construct, and in yet another example, odd-numbered connected link ratios may be used to create discontinuous flexible constructs.

[0115] Physical constructs formed using link geometries may have a graded porosity by varying any of link size and shape within the same construct to provide for any of variable flexibility, variable range of motion, and variable strength throughout the construct. In some arrangements, physical constructs formed using the link geometries may be formed with anisotropy by varying any of link size and shape, by varying strut size and shape, or by selectively fusing some links to each other. Links may be coated with various biocompatible substances, such as but not limited to hydroxyapatite, to facilitate biological bone ingrowth. Links may also be coated to minimize wear and also with antibiotic eluting coating in order to treat infection.

[0116] Following formation of a flexible construct such as chain link mesh constructs, mechanical and flexural properties may be adjusted by various post-processing techniques. In one arrangement, the flexible construct may be rolled into a cylinder, increasing the yield strength of the construct along the axis of the cylinder. In another arrangement, one flexible construct may be stacked onto or nested within another flexible construct such that the stacked or nested constructs interact to constrain or augment each other. In some applications, the flexible construct may be shaped, such as by rolling or flattening, such that the construct does not transmit compressive loads.

[0117] As shown in FIGS. 10A-10C, in one application of the chain link mesh sheets, mesh sheet 450A, which has been formed using an additive layer manufacturing process based on a mesh sheet geometry substantially similar to mesh sheet geometry 450, acts as a trochanteric gripper which may be placed over the trochanter of a femur to provide an ingrowth surface. Shell 440 is then placed over mesh sheet 450A and around the trochanter. Cables 15, which as shown are cerclage wires, may be wrapped around mesh sheet 450A to hold mesh 450A in place or, alternatively, may be wrapped around shell 440, such as by being passed around or through a thickness of spaced-apart arms of shell 440, to hold the assembly of the shell and mesh sheet 450A in place.

[0118] Referring now to FIGS. 11-17D, the chain link and mesh sheets may be produced along with additional features by any of the additive layer manufacturing processes described previously herein. As shown in FIG. 11, mesh sheet 550 includes a woven mesh pattern 551 and an alphanumeric pattern 552 fused to the woven mesh pattern, in which the alphanumeric pattern is formed substantially as shown and described in the '010 Patent, using an additive layer manufacturing device. During preparation of mesh sheet 550, successive layers are added to basic mesh pattern 551 to form alphanumeric pattern 552. In this manner, alphanumeric pattern may be used as product identifiers.

[0119] As shown in FIGS. 12A-12C, mesh sheets may include porous attachment components. In the example of FIG. 12A, mesh sheet 650A includes chain link pattern 651A and a porous attachment component 652A fused to the chain link pattern at spaced-apart regions of the chain link pattern. In the example of FIGS. 12B and 12C, mesh sheet 650B includes woven mesh pattern 651B and porous attachment component 652B. In these examples, porous attachment components 652A, 652B have been added to both sides of woven mesh pattern 651B during an additive layer

manufacturing process. Porous attachment components may be lattice structures such as those disclosed in the '332 Publication as in the example shown, or may be in the form of woven mesh or chain link patterns. In applications for facilitating biological attachment of bone, porous attachment components, such as porous attachment components 652A, 652B, may be used and may have a pore size in the range of approximately 100-1000 μm and a porosity which preferably may be at least 50%. Porous attachment components designed to function as scaffold cells for biological regeneration preferably may have a pore size greater than 100 μm and a porosity greater than 55%. In alternative arrangements (not shown), porous attachment components may be other types of porous structures including but not limited to woven mesh or chain link mesh structures, which may have a pore size and porosity that is different than the mesh, chain link pattern, or other pattern, which may be porous or non-porous, to which the porous attachment components may be attached.

[0120] As shown in FIG. 12C, mesh sheet 650B, acting as a foil, may be rolled into a cylindrical shape and placed or pressed into a bony void space, such as in the base of a tibia bone 1, as in this example. Although not shown, mesh sheet 650A could be placed into a bony void space in a similar fashion. In such arrangements, bone cement then may be added inside of the cylindrically-shaped mesh sheets 650A, 650B. In this manner, mesh sheets 650A, 650B may promote better mechanical rigidity between live bone and bone cement.

[0121] As shown in FIGS. 13A and 13B, eyelet 760 may be integrated into the mesh sheets, chain link mesh sheet 750 in this example, during an additive layer manufacturing process. Eyelet 760 may be modeled as solid eyelet geometry 760A as shown in FIG. 13A having inner perimeter 761A, which may act as a through bore. Depending on the parameter settings of the additive layer manufacturing device, eyelet 760 may be substantially solid or somewhat porous through its thickness, upon production of the physical structure of the eyelet, as shown in FIG. 13B. Mesh sheet 750 was built in its entirety in layers using an additive layer manufacturing process. As shown, some of hexagonal links 755 of mesh sheet 750 abut outer perimeter 762 of eyelet 760. Some of such links 755 have open perimeters in which ends of the open perimeters of the links are fused to eyelet 760. Eyelet 760 may be but is not limited to being used for screw, wire, or cable attachment of mesh sheet 750 to other objects, such as bone or other tissue.

[0122] Referring to FIG. 14A, a CAD model includes mesh sheet geometry 850 including stud geometry 860, which as shown may be a rivet, which may be used to prepare a corresponding mesh sheet with a corresponding stud. The stud corresponding to stud geometry 860 may be formed in the same manner as eyelet 760 and thus may be substantially solid or somewhat porous through its thickness and may be fused to links, with the exception that the stud may include a spike, corresponding to spike geometry 863, and may not include any type of through bore. Such studs may allow the construct to be press fit to itself or other materials, including bone. In some alternative arrangements (not shown), a stud geometry may include a through hole.

[0123] In FIG. 14B, a mesh sheet geometry 850A generated in a CAD model includes a plurality of stud geometries 860A extending outwardly near an edge of the mesh sheet geometry which may be used to prepare a corresponding

mesh sheet with a corresponding stud. As shown in FIG. 14C, each stud geometry 860A includes a lower base geometry 861A, an upper base geometry 862A, and an intermediate section geometry 863A between the lower and upper bases. The stud corresponding to each stud geometry 860A may be fused to the rest of the mesh sheet corresponding to mesh sheet geometry 850A at a lower base corresponding to lower base geometry 861A. Referring again to FIG. 14B, studs corresponding to stud geometries 860A may be formed, such as by an additive layer manufacturing process as described previously herein, on opposing ends of a mesh sheet corresponding to mesh sheet geometry 850A such that a cable may be wrapped around an intermediate section of a stud corresponding to stud geometry 860A. In this manner, such a mesh sheet may be tensioned to form a rolled construct, which in some arrangements may be used to enclose other materials, such as but not limited to bone graft material.

[0124] Referring to FIG. 15, a hook may be added to the perimeter of a link as demonstrated by hook geometry 965 attached at a vertex of hexagonal link geometry 955 at an outer perimeter of mesh sheet geometry 950. As shown, hook geometry 965 is in the form of a hexagonal link geometry having an opening at its perimeter. When prepared as a physical structure, the mesh sheet corresponding to mesh sheet geometry 950 may be attached by the hook corresponding to hook geometry 965 to other materials, including but not limited to biological and manufactured materials, or may be attached to another portion of mesh sheet itself to form a wrap or covering.

[0125] As shown in FIG. 16, mesh sheet 1050 includes a plurality of porous attachment components 1052 and eyelets 1060 fused to chain link mesh pattern 1051. Other combinations of features including but not limited to woven mesh patterns, chain link mesh patterns, porous attachment components, and eyelets may be combined into single mesh sheets in accordance with the present technology. In some arrangements, mesh sheet 1050 may be used in applications designed to facilitate biological attachment of soft tissue, including muscles, tendons, and ligaments. In such arrangements, the porous attachment components preferably may have a pore size greater than 100 μm and a porosity greater than 55%. Using components designed to facilitate attachment of a construct, such as the components described with respect to FIGS. 13A-16, the flexible constructs such as the mesh sheets described herein may be folded and attached to other media or to themselves to form a cavity that can be expanded with a flowing material such as but not limited to bone cement or a combination of bone cement and another device, such as but not limited to a hip or knee replacement, to fill a free-form bone defect.

[0126] Referring now to FIGS. 17A-17C, chain link mesh sheets provide a network of links that form structures that are both porous and highly flexible. As in the example of FIG. 17A, mesh sheet 1150A may be folded to fill a bony void cavity. As in the examples of FIGS. 17B and 17C, mesh sheets 1150B and 1150C are positioned such that a middle portion of the sheet is substantially flat and an outer portion of the sheet is draped or extended around another object. Components employing the mesh sheet or flexible constructions described previously herein may be completely manufactured in situ or may be partially manufactured for later adjustment in the field to tailor the construct as needed. In some examples, their flexible construction allows the mesh

sheets to be folded to contain another material such as bone cement or morselized bone graft where the composite structure of the mesh sheet and the contained material exhibits modified mechanical properties, e.g., enhanced rigidity when bone cement is added.

[0127] Referring now to FIGS. 18A and 18B, integrated mesh sheet 1250, which as shown may be termed a "strut graft," was produced using an additive layer manufacturing process such as those described previously herein. Mesh sheet 1250 includes spaced-apart first porous regions 1270 along an entire length of the mesh sheet, spaced-apart second porous regions 1275 across an entire width of the mesh sheet except at the locations of the first porous region 1270, and third porous regions 1280 in all other sections of the mesh sheet. In the example shown, each of porous regions 1270 and 1275 is in the form of chain link mesh patterns, as described previously herein, and has a different porosity and pore size than the other regions. As in the example shown, third porous regions 1280 may have a relatively low porosity such that the third porous regions are substantially rigid. First porous regions 1270 may have the highest porosity among the porous regions 1270, 1275, 1280 such that the first porous regions 1270 of mesh sheet 1250 are the most flexible of the porous regions. In this manner, as shown in FIG. 18B, mesh sheet 1250 may be bent about first porous regions 1270 such that the mesh sheet may be wrapped around bone 10 to aid in bone repair. Second porous regions 1275 may have a higher porosity than third porous regions 1280 but a lower porosity than first porous regions 1270 allowing for third porous regions 1280 to be bent about second porous regions 1275 as well as for compression of mesh sheet 1250 along the second porous regions such that the second porous regions may provide a groove within the mesh sheet when compressed. In this manner, with reference to the radiograph of FIG. 18C, cables 15, which as shown are cerclage wires, may be wrapped around second porous regions 1275 of mesh sheet 250 such that the second porous regions are compressed to hold the mesh sheet tightly against the bone and to form a groove to hold the longitudinal location of the cables.

[0128] In some alternative arrangements of mesh sheet 1250, holes, which may be threaded, may be provided within third porous regions 1280. In this manner, fasteners may be inserted into third porous regions 1280 to facilitate attachment of mesh sheet 1250 to large bone fragments. In some alternative arrangements of mesh sheet 1250, any of the first, second, and third porous regions may be in the form of other porous patterns, such as lattice structures disclosed in any of the '332 Publication, the '081 Publication, the '703 Patent, the '374 Patent, and the '010 Patent.

[0129] Referring now to FIGS. 19A-19E, mesh sheet 1350 is substantially in the form of a woven mesh sheet pattern similar to the patterns described previously herein, which may be produced using additive layer manufacturing techniques such as those also described previously herein. As shown in FIGS. 19A and 19B, mesh sheet 1350 includes rounded central pocket 1358 extending from flat region 1359 of the mesh sheet. As shown in FIG. 19C, stamp 1385, which as shown is a tibial base stamp, includes handle 1386 and semicylindrical base 1387 having bottom surface 1388 that is substantially flat. With reference to FIGS. 19D and 19E, stamp 1385 may be pressed into mesh sheet 1350 to form a cavity in the mesh sheet. Due to the flexibility of mesh sheet 1350, central pocket 1358 may be stretched such that the

mesh sheet has substantially the same form as semicylindrical base **1387** of stamp **1385**.

[0130] As shown in FIGS. **20A** and **20B**, in an alternative arrangement, stamp **1485** having protrusions **1489** extending from substantially flat bottom surface **1488** of the stamp may be used to press out central pocket **1358** of mesh sheet **1350**. In this manner, corresponding protrusions **1490** may be formed on a bottom of central pocket **1358**.

[0131] As shown in FIG. **21**, in one application, stamped mesh sheet **1350** may be placed into a burred out cavity of a bone, such as a tibia **2** as shown, and adhered to the cavity. In this manner, mesh sheet **1350** provides a surface for bone ingrowth to strengthen the mechanical engagement of the bone and bone cement applied into the stamped central pocket **1358** of the mesh sheet and thus aids in preventing subsidence of an onlay or inlay implant placed onto the bone cement and mesh sheet combination within the bone cavity.

[0132] There are still other useful applications of the mesh sheet flexible constructs.

[0133] It is to be understood that the disclosure set forth herein includes all possible combinations of the particular features set forth above, whether specifically disclosed herein or not. For example, where a particular feature is disclosed in the context of a particular aspect, arrangement, configuration, or embodiment, that feature can also be used, to the extent possible, in combination with and/or in the context of other particular aspects, arrangements, configurations, and embodiments of the invention, and in the invention generally.

[0134] Although the invention herein has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it is to be understood that these embodiments are merely illustrative of the principles and applications of the present invention. It is therefore to be understood that numerous modifications may be made to the illustrative embodiments and that other arrangements may be devised without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.

1. A method of forming a three-dimensional structure comprising:

- depositing a first layer of a material onto a substrate;
- scanning the first layer of the material with a high energy beam to at least partially melt the first layer of the material;
- depositing successive layers of the material onto the first layer;
- scanning each of the successive layers of the material with the high energy beam at predetermined locations to form at least a first segment overlapping a second segment and underlapping a third segment.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein the third segment is the second segment such that the first segment underlaps and overlaps the second segment.

3. The method of claim **2**, wherein the first segment completely surrounds the second segment.

4. The method of claim **3**, wherein the second segment completely surrounds the first segment.

5. The method of claim **2**, wherein the step of scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations further forms a plurality of segments completely surrounding the first segment.

- 6.** The method of claim **1**, further comprising:
- depositing a first additional layer of the material onto at least a predetermined location of the first segment; and

- scanning the first additional layer of the material with the high energy beam at the predetermined location of the first segment to fuse the first additional layer of the material to the first segment at the predetermined location.

7. The method of claim **6**, further comprising:

- depositing successive additional layers of the material onto the first additional layer;

- scanning each of the successive additional layers with the high energy beam at predetermined locations to form at least a first additional segment overlapping a second additional segment and underlapping a third additional segment, the first additional segment being fused to at least the first segment at the predetermined location thereof.

8-9. (canceled)

10. The method of claim **6**, further comprising:

- depositing successive additional layers of the material onto the first additional layer;

- scanning each of the successive additional layers with the high energy beam at predetermined locations to form at least one symbol, the at least one symbol being fused to at least the first segment at the predetermined location thereof.

11. The method of claim **10**, wherein the at least one symbol includes an alphanumeric character.

12. The method of claim **1**, wherein the step of scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations forms at least one barb extending from any of the first, second, and third segments.

13. The method of claim **1**, wherein the step of scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations further forms a first series of segments, including the first segment, extending in a first direction and a second series of segments, including the second and third segments, extending in a second direction transverse to the first direction, each of the segments of the first series of segments overlapping a plurality of segments of the second series of segments and underlapping a plurality of segments of the second series of segments such that the first and second series of segments form a first mesh.

14. The method of claim **13**, wherein the first mesh is flexible sheet formed in the shape of a cone or a frustum of a cone.

15. The method of claim **13**, wherein the first mesh defines a pocket, further comprising:

- stamping the pocket of the first mesh to form a cavity therein.

16-17. (canceled)

18. The method of claim **13**, wherein the step of scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations further forms a third series of segments extending in a third direction and a fourth series of segments extending in a fourth direction transverse to the third direction, each of the segments of the third series of segments overlapping a plurality of segments of the fourth series of segments and underlapping a plurality of segments of the fourth series of segments such that the third and fourth series of segments form a second mesh, and

wherein the step of scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations further forms at least one segment that underlaps and overlaps at least one segment of the first and second series of segments and at

least one segment of the third and fourth segments such that the first and second meshes are rotatably attached to each other.

19. (canceled)

20. The method of claim 13, wherein pluralities of the segments of the first and second series of segments define a bore through a thickness of the scanned successive layers of the material.

21-23. (canceled)

24. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations further forms a third series of segments extending in a third direction and a fourth series of segments extending in a fourth direction transverse to the third direction, each of the segments of the third series of segments overlapping a plurality of segments of the fourth series of segments and underlapping a plurality of segments of the fourth series of segments such that the third and fourth series of segments form a second mesh, and

wherein the step of scanning each of the successive layers at predetermined locations further forms a solid section fused to each of the first and second meshes such that the solid section is movable relative to portions of each of the first and second meshes.

25. (canceled)

26. The method of claim 1, wherein the first segment is fused to at least one of the second and the third segments.

27. A method of facilitating bone ingrowth comprising: forming a porous tissue ingrowth structure in the shape of a mesh implant, the mesh implant being a three-dimensional structure formed by the method of claim 1; shaping the mesh implant into a desired shape, the mesh implant having a porosity to promote bone ingrowth; placing the mesh implant against a bone portion; placing a bone implant against bone cement such that the bone cement contacts both the mesh implant and the bone implant, wherein the mesh implant prevents contact of the bone cement with bone ingrown into the mesh implant.

28. A method of forming a three-dimensional structure comprising:

depositing a first layer of a material over at least a substrate;

scanning the first layer of the material with a high energy beam to form a first pattern, the first pattern including a first portion (a1) of a first solid portion (A);

depositing a second layer of the material over the first layer of the material;

scanning the second layer of the material with a high energy beam to form a second pattern, the second pattern including a first portion (b1) of a second solid portion (B);

depositing a third layer of the material over at least a substrate;

scanning the third layer of the material with a high energy beam to form a third pattern, the third pattern including a second portion (a2) of the first solid portion (A);

depositing a fourth layer of the material over at least the second layer of the material;

scanning the fourth layer of the material with a high energy beam to form a fourth pattern, the fourth pattern including a third portion (a3) of the first solid portion (A);

depositing a fifth layer of the material over at least the third layer of the material;

scanning the fifth layer of the material with a high energy beam to form a fifth pattern, the fifth pattern including a first portion (c1) of a third solid portion (C);

depositing a sixth layer of the material over at least the fifth layer of the material;

scanning the sixth layer of the material with a high energy beam to form a sixth pattern, the sixth pattern including a fourth portion (a4) of the first solid portion (A), wherein the first, second, third, and fourth portions of the first solid portion (A) are attached to each other such that the first solid portion (A) weaves around the second solid portion (B) and the third solid portion (C).

29-32. (canceled)

33. A non-transitory computer-readable storage medium on which computer readable instructions of a program are stored, the instructions, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform a method of preparing a computer-generated model of a three-dimensional structure constructed of unit cells, the method comprising:

preparing a computer-generated component file including a porous CAD volume having a boundary;

populating, by a processor, a space including the porous CAD volume with unit cells;

populating, by a processor, each of the unit cells with at least one segment geometry to form a plurality of segment geometries, wherein a first segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries overlaps a second segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries and underlaps a third segment geometry of the plurality of segment geometries.

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