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(54) **EMBEDDED ELECTRONICS IN METAL ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING BUILDS ENABLED BY LOW-MELTING TEMPERATURE TRANSITION ZONE USING MATERIAL GRADIENTS**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
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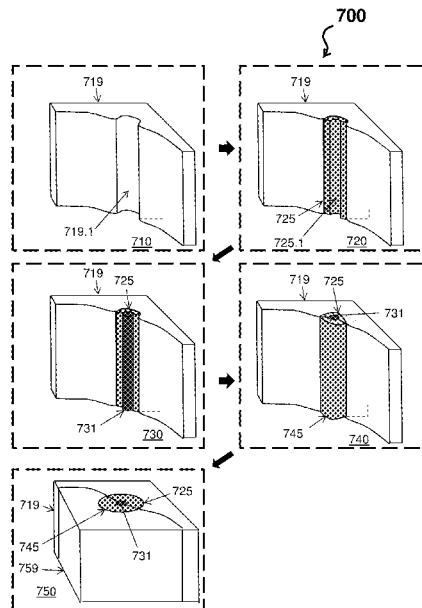
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(57) **ABSTRACT**
An additive manufacturing product is provided. The additive manufacturing product includes an embedded electronic, a transition zone, and a base material. The transition zone encases the embedded electronic. The transition zone includes transition material. The base material encases the transition zone. The transition material includes an intermediate melting point that is lower than a melting point of the base material.

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- (58) **Field of Classification Search**
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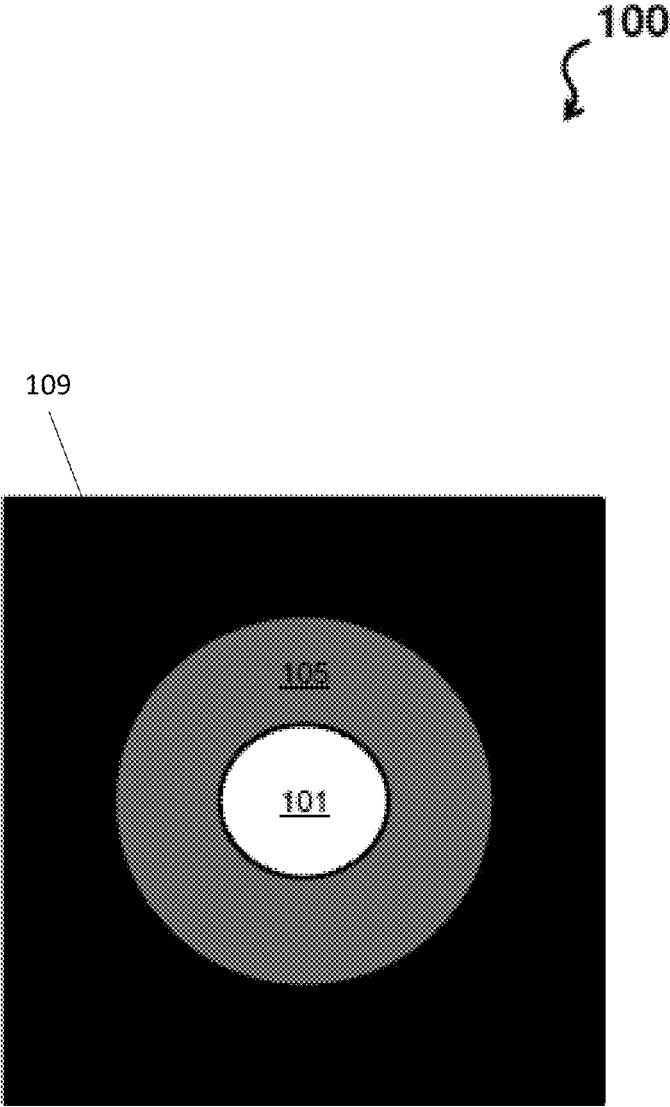


FIG. 1

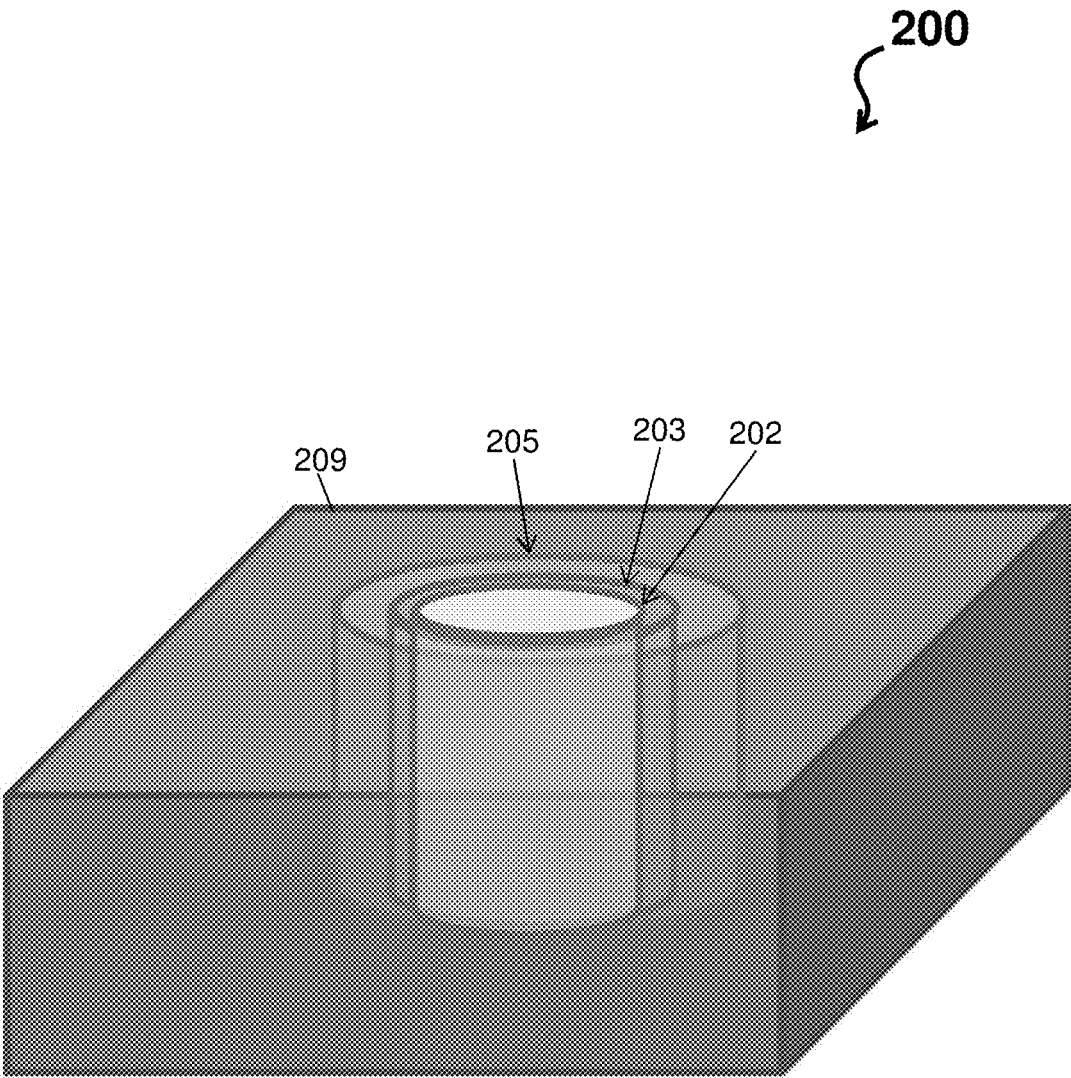


FIG. 2

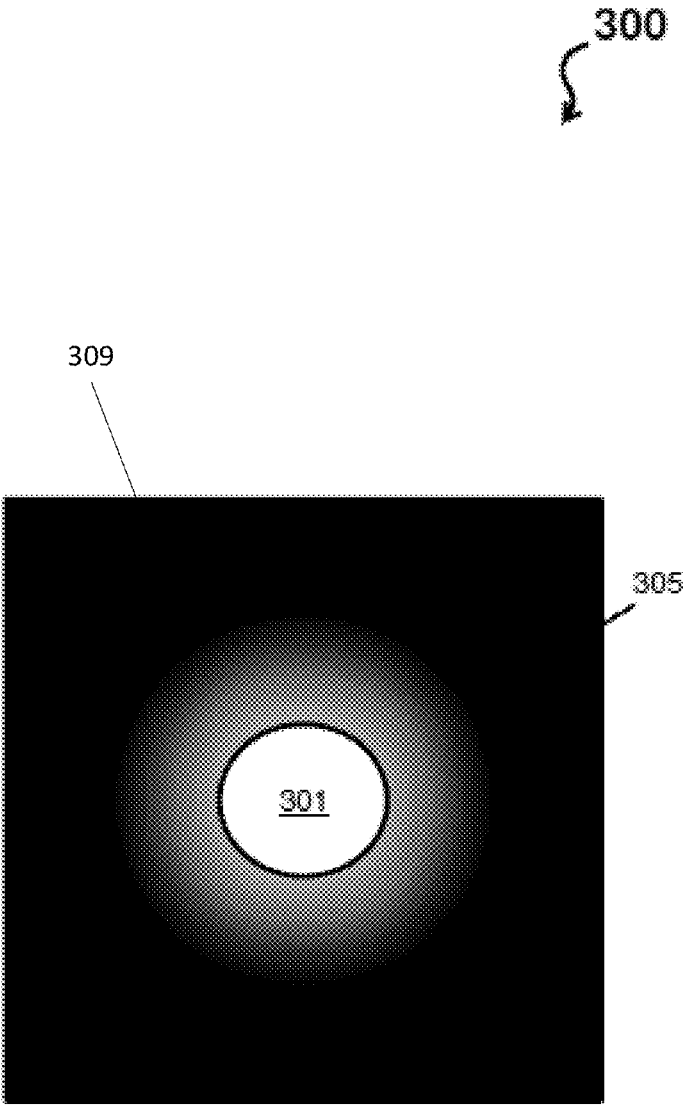


FIG. 3

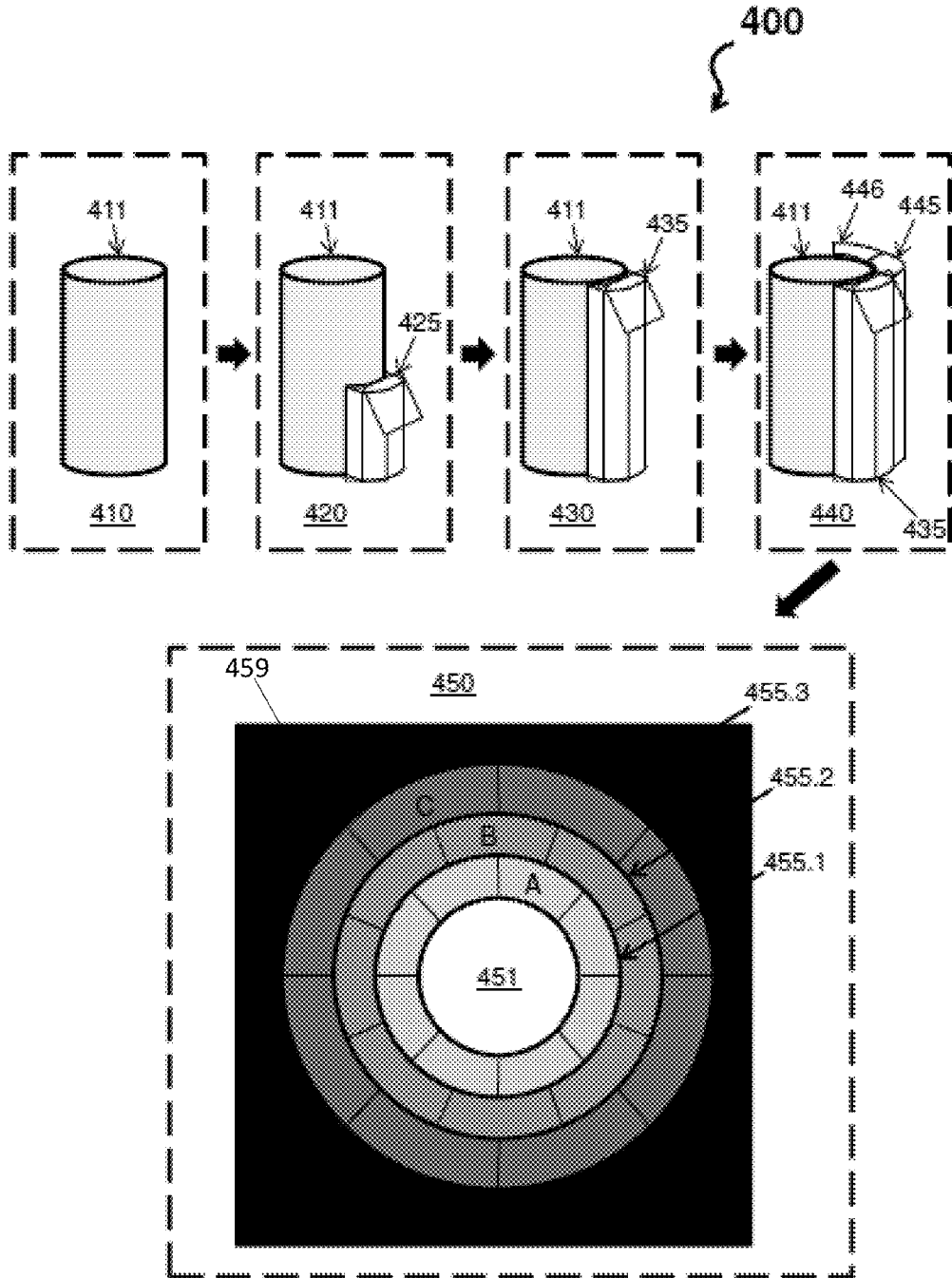


FIG. 4

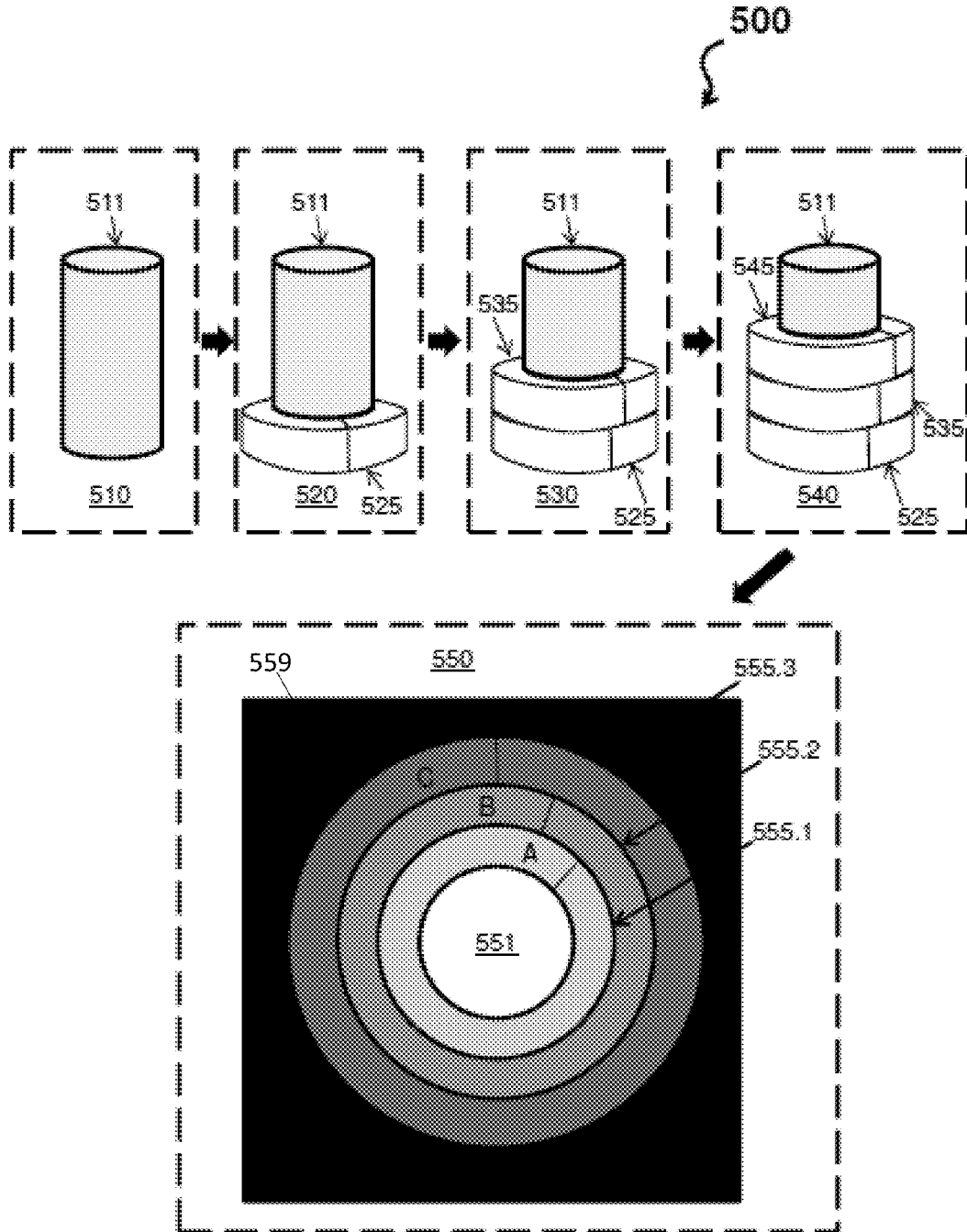


FIG. 5

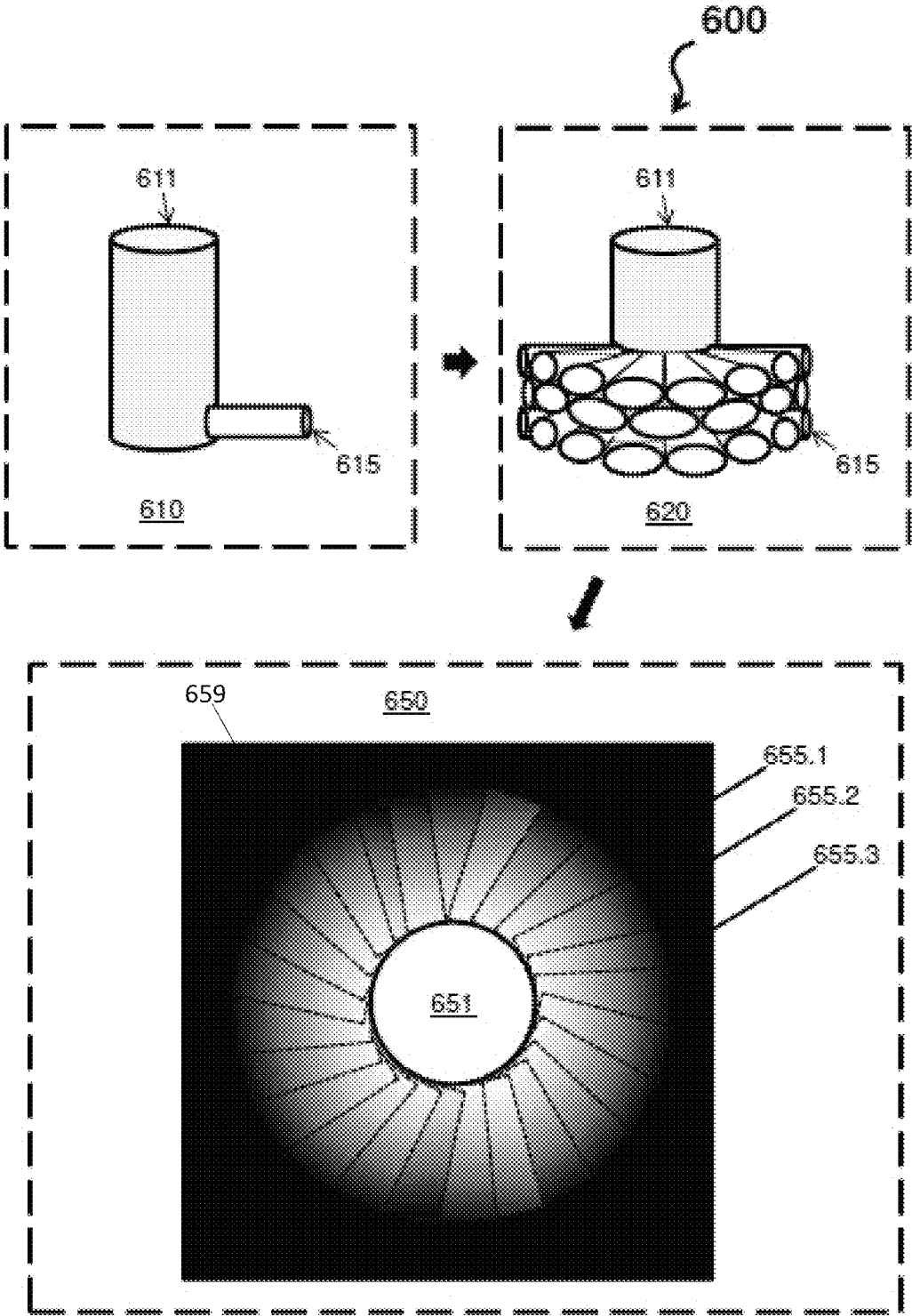


FIG. 6

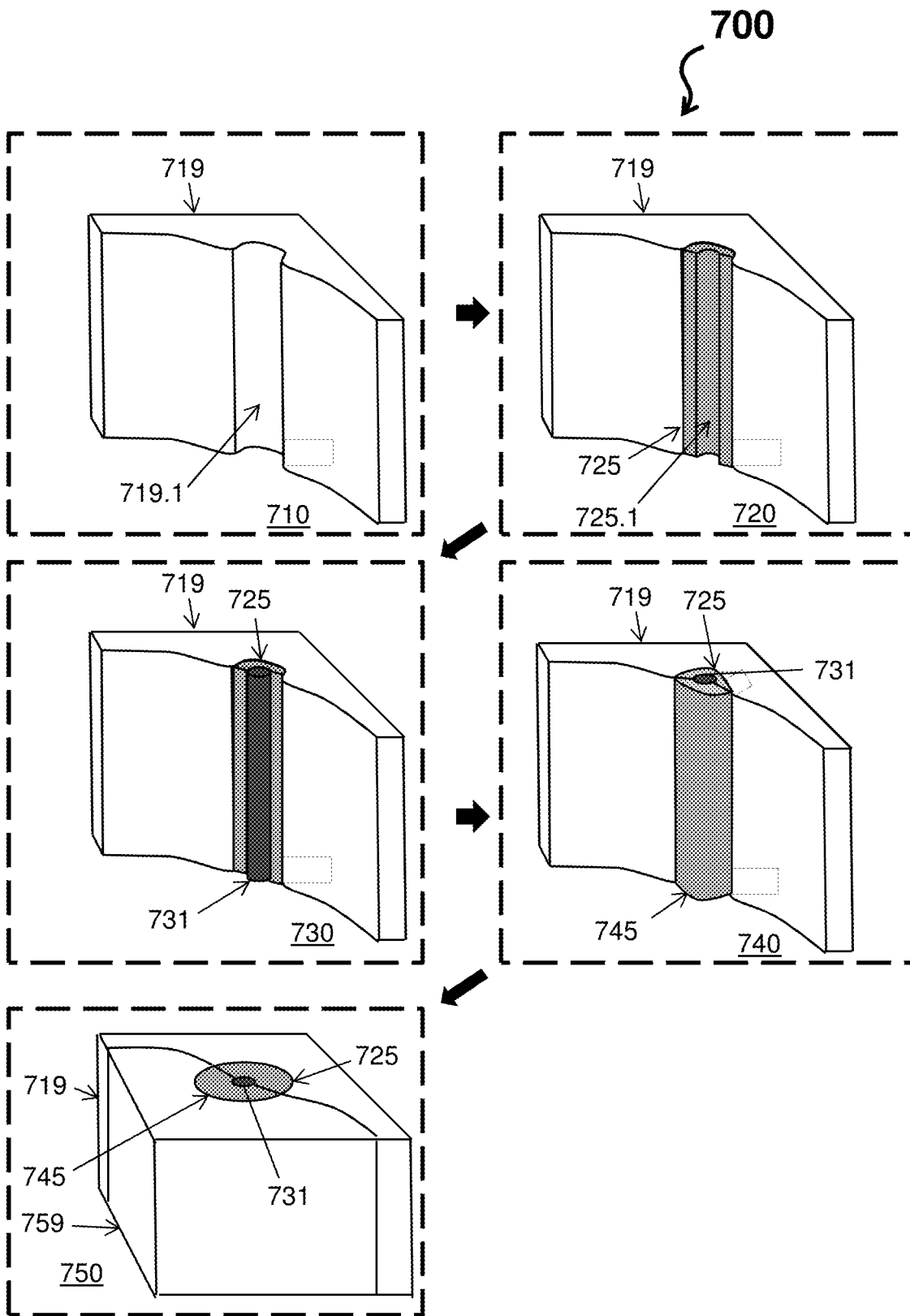


FIG. 7

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**EMBEDDED ELECTRONICS IN METAL
ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING BUILDS
ENABLED BY LOW-MELTING
TEMPERATURE TRANSITION ZONE USING
MATERIAL GRADIENTS**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS

This application is a division of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/961,491 filed Apr. 24, 2018, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

Embedded electronics, made by plastic additive manufacturing, has come into use for industries like prognostic health monitoring and feedback controls. However, metal parts cannot benefit from embedded electronics due to the high processing temperatures needed to implant the embedded electronics into the metal parts, as the high processing temperatures destroy circuitry of the embedded electronics.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

In accordance with one or more embodiments, an additive manufacturing product is provided. The additive manufacturing product includes an embedded electronic, a transition zone, and a base material. The transition zone encases the embedded electronic. The transition zone includes transition material. The base material encases the transition zone. The transition material includes an intermediate melting point that is lower than a melting point of the base material.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or the additive manufacturing product embodiment above, the intermediate melting point can enable the transition zone material to be compatible with the embedded electronics and can enable the transition zone material to bond with the metal material.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the additive manufacturing product embodiments above, the base material can comprise a metal material.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the additive manufacturing product embodiments above, the transition material can be a discrete deposit between the embedded electronic and the base material that contemporaneously forms the transition zone.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the additive manufacturing product embodiments above, the transition zone material near the embedded electronics and incrementally includes more of the base material as the transition zone moves away from the embedded electronics and towards the base material.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the additive manufacturing product embodiments above, the transition zone can comprise a plurality of columns constructed in one or more layers.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the additive manufacturing product embodiments above, the transition zone can comprise a plurality of stacked wreaths constructed in one or more layers.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the additive manufacturing product embodiments above, the transition zone can comprise a plurality of projecting columns constructed in one or more layers.

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In accordance with one or more embodiments, a method of additive manufacturing is provided. The method includes depositing a transition material from a transition zone encasing an embedded electronic. The transition material includes an intermediate melting point that is lower than a melting point of the base material. The method includes depositing a base material encasing the embedded electronic.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or the method of additive manufacturing above, the intermediate melting point can enable the transition zone material to be compatible with the embedded electronics and can enable the transition zone material to bond with the metal material.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the method of additive manufacturing embodiments above, the base material can comprise a metal material.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the method of additive manufacturing embodiments above, the transition material can be a discrete deposit between the embedded electronic and the base material that contemporaneously forms the transition zone.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the method of additive manufacturing embodiments above, the transition material can be a material gradient that starts with transition zone material near the embedded electronics and incrementally includes more of the base material as the transition zone moves away from the embedded electronics and towards the base material.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the method of additive manufacturing embodiments above, the transition zone can comprise a plurality of columns constructed in one or more layers.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the method of additive manufacturing embodiments above, the transition zone can comprise a plurality of stacked wreaths constructed in one or more layers.

In accordance with one or more embodiments or any of the method of additive manufacturing product embodiments above, the transition zone can comprise a plurality of projecting columns constructed in one or more layers.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The following descriptions should not be considered limiting in any way. With reference to the accompanying drawings, like elements are numbered alike:

FIG. 1 depicts a product of energy-based metal additive manufacturing according to one or more embodiments;

FIG. 2 depicts a product of energy-based metal additive manufacturing according to one or more embodiments;

FIG. 3 depicts a product of energy-based metal additive manufacturing according to one or more embodiments;

FIG. 4 depicts a schematic flow of energy-based metal additive manufacturing using a linear depositing technique for a transition zone according to one or more embodiments;

FIG. 5 depicts a schematic flow of energy-based metal additive manufacturing using a concentric depositing technique for a transition zone according to one or more embodiments;

FIG. 6 depicts a schematic flow of energy-based metal additive manufacturing using a pineapple depositing technique for a transition zone according to one or more embodiments; and

FIG. 7 depicts a schematic flow of energy-based metal additive manufacturing according to one or more embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A detailed description of one or more embodiments of the disclosed apparatus and method are presented herein by way of exemplification and not limitation with reference to the Figures.

According to one or more embodiments, energy-based metal additive manufacturing for embedding electronics is provided. In general, energy-based metal additive manufacturing is a three-dimensional object production process utilizing computer design file. In this regard, a variety of materials ranging from polymer composites, metals, ceramics, food, foams, gels, etc. are deposited by a tool or feeder according to the computer design file and heated by an electric beam to set the material in place. The location of the deposited materials as the tool or feeder moves according to the computer design file is referred to as a tool path.

The energy-based metal additive manufacturing described herein includes utilizing a base material, a transition zone material, and the embedded electronics. For example, the embedding electronics are comprised of circuitry and sensors set in an insulation material, the base material is a metal material, and the transition zone material is a material with an intermediate melting point that is lower than a melting point of the base material. The intermediate melting point enables the transition zone material to be compatible with the embedded electronics, as to not burn the circuitry and sensors therein, while also enabling the transition zone material to consolidate or bond with the metal material.

According to one or more embodiments, a transition zone is utilized. The transition zone can be a discrete zone, where the transition zone material is in primary use. A technical effect and benefit the transition zone includes enabling the installing of the embedded electronics in both plastic additively manufactured parts and metal additively manufactured parts. In turn, sensors, heaters, motors, and wireless transmitters can be intimately integrated into additively build hardware, reducing packaging, optimizing performance, and aiding in equipment prognostics.

Turning to FIG. 1, a product **100** of energy-based metal additive manufacturing is depicted according to one or more embodiments. The product **100** includes embedded electronics **101**, a transition zone material **105**, and a base material **109**. As shown in FIG. 1, the transition zone material **105** is contemporaneous with a transition zone of the product **100** (e.g., the transition zone can be a discrete zone, where the transition zone material **105** is in primary use). These features are further illustrated and explained with respect to FIG. 2.

FIG. 2 depicts a product **200** of energy-based metal additive manufacturing according to one or more embodiments. The product **200** is shown at a perspective view with each component being transparent to show outlines of other components. The product **200** includes a wire **202**, an insulation material **203** encasing the wire **202**, a transition zone material **205** encasing the insulation material **203**, and a base material **209** encasing transition zone material **205**. The combination of the wire **202** (e.g., circuitry and/or sensors) and the insulation material **203** can be consider an embedded electronic, such that the wire **202** is set into the insulation material **203**.

The transition zone material **205** is contemporaneous with a transition zone of the product **200**. The transition zone protects the electronic components (e.g., the wire **202**) from the encasing or surrounding high-melting base metal (e.g., the base material **209**).

For example, a common electrical insulation (e.g., the insulation material **203**) is polyimide which can sustain temperatures up to 650° C. The melting temperature of nickel, a common additive manufacturing metal (e.g., the base material **209**), is upwards of 1400° C. Nickel cannot be deposited directly on polyimide without destroying the insulation. Accordingly, embodiments herein utilize with a lower-melting temperature material (e.g., the transition zone material **205**) to encase or surround the wire insulation (e.g., the insulation material **203**) before applying/depositing the base material **209**. (e.g., the transition zone material **205**) effectively works as the transition zone. For example, the transition zone material (e.g., the transition zone material **205**) can be any metal or alloy containing metals like tin (T_m=232° C.) or aluminum (T_m=660° C.) with a base material (e.g., the base material **209**) like nickel (T_m=1453° C.). This lower-melting point material can be on par with a max operational temperature of the wire insulation, as to not damage the wire insulation or electronics therein.

According to one or more embodiments, the transition zone can also be composed of a material gradient, starting with primarily the transition zone material near the embedded electronics and incrementally including more of the base material as the transition zone moves away from the embedded electronics and towards the base material. A technical effect and benefit of the composing the transition zone of the material gradient include ensuring when a high melting temperature base material is applied during energy-based metal additive manufacturing, the transition zone will not flow uncontrollably. These features are further illustrated and explained with respect to FIG. 3.

FIG. 3 depicts a product **300** of energy-based metal additive manufacturing according to one or more embodiments. The product **300** includes embedded electronics **301**, a transition zone **305**, and a base material **309**. The transition zone **305** comprises a material gradient to avoid interface issues between a transition zone material used in the transition zone **305** and the base material **309**. For example, the material gradient can comprise starting with a transition zone metal with increasing quantities of a base metal as the transition zone **305** progresses from the embedded electronics **301** to the base material **309**. In turn, the melting point of the transition zone **305** gradually increases as the material gradient changes from the transition zone material and the base material **309**. At a side of the transition zone **305** that is opposite the embedded electronics **301** where the (pure) base material **309**, the melting point of the transition zone **305** is at its highest and the transition zone metal does not flow uncontrollably.

In view of one or more embodiments herein, toolpaths for tool or feeder constructing the transition zone including a material gradient are described with respect to various techniques including a linear depositing technique, a concentric depositing technique, and a pineapple depositing technique. The linear depositing technique and the concentric depositing technique provide a ring or shell-like approach with discrete toolpaths with decreasing concentrations of transition zone metal.

Turning now to FIG. 4, a schematic flow **400** of energy-based metal additive manufacturing using a linear depositing technique for a transition zone is depicted according to one or more embodiments. The linear depositing technique comprises repetitive straight toolpaths (along the embedded electronic) to create adjacent columns of material.

The schematic flow **400** begins with a schematic **410** showing an embedded electronic **411** (e.g., a wire encased in an insulation material). The schematic flow **400** then pro-

ceeds to schematic **420** where a transition material is in mid-process (**425**) of being deposited in a linear fashion. Next, at schematic **430**, a column **435** of the transition material is completely deposited along the embedded electronic **411**. At schematic **440**, multiple columns **445**, **446** of the transition material have been deposited along the embedded electronic **411**. As columns are continuously deposited (moving onto schematic **450**), a final product is produced from the linear depositing technique. In this regard, an embedded electronic **451** (previously embedded electronic **411**) is encased in a transition zone comprising at least three layers **455.1**, **455.2**, and **455.3**. The transition zone is further encased in a base material **459**.

As shown in FIG. 4, an interior layer **455.1** can comprise a plurality of columns constructed of transition material formed from composition A. Composition A can be primarily transition zone material (e.g., 51%-100%), with trace amounts of the base material **459** (e.g., 0%-49%). The intermediate layer **455.2** can comprise a plurality of columns constructed of composition B. Composition B can be a combination of the transition zone material (e.g., 25%-100%) and the base material **459** (e.g., 0%-75%). The outer layer **455.3** can comprise a plurality of columns constructed of composition C. Composition C can be a combination of the transition zone material (e.g., 0%-100%) and the base material **459** (e.g., 0%-100%). Thus, the compilation of the layers **455.1**, **455.2**, and **455.3** provide the material gradient. Note that while three layers **455.1**, **455.2**, and **455.3** as shown in FIG. 4, any number of layers may be utilized to produce the material gradient through the transition zone.

FIG. 5 depicts a schematic flow **500** of energy-based metal additive manufacturing using a concentric depositing technique for a transition zone according to one or more embodiments. The concentric depositing technique comprises repetitive circular toolpaths (around the embedded electronic) to create wreaths of material. Note that each wreath can correspond to a degree of rotation between other wreaths.

The schematic flow **500** begins with a schematic **510** showing an embedded electronic **511** (e.g., a wire encased in an insulation material). The schematic flow **500** then proceeds to schematic **520** where a wreath **525** of transition material is completely deposited around the embedded electronic **511**. At schematic **530**, a wreath **535** of transition material is completely deposited around the embedded electronic **511**. At schematic **540**, a wreath **545** of transition material is completely deposited around the embedded electronic **511**. As wreaths are continuously deposited (moving onto schematic **550**), a final product is produced from the concentric depositing technique. In this regard, an embedded electronic **551** (previously embedded electronic **511**) is encased in a transition zone comprising at least three layers **555.1**, **555.2**, and **555.3**. The transition zone is further encased in a base material **559**.

As shown in FIG. 5, an interior layer **555.1** can comprise a plurality of stacked wreaths of transition material formed from composition A. Composition A can be primarily transition zone material (e.g., 51%-100%), with trace amounts of the base material **559** (e.g., 0%-49%). The intermediate layer **555.2** can comprise a plurality of stacked wreaths constructed of composition B. Composition B can be a combination of the transition zone material (e.g., 25%-100%) and the base material **559** (e.g., 0%-75%). The outer layer **555.3** can comprise a plurality of stacked wreaths constructed of composition C. Composition C can be a combination of the transition zone material (e.g., 0%-100%) and the base material **559** (e.g., 0%-100%). Thus, the

compilation of the layers **555.1**, **555.2**, and **555.3** provide the material gradient. Note that while three layers **555.1**, **555.2**, and **555.3** as shown in FIG. 5, any number of layers may be utilized to produce the material gradient through the transition zone.

FIG. 6 depicts a schematic flow **600** of energy-based metal additive manufacturing using a pineapple depositing technique for a transition zone according to one or more embodiments. The pineapple depositing technique comprises repetitive linear toolpaths (extending from the embedded electronic) to create projecting columns of material. The pineapple depositing technique can be considered a true-gradient applied through a radial array of toolpaths normal to the embedded electronics.

The schematic flow **600** begins with a schematic **610** showing an embedded electronic **611** (e.g., a wire encased in an insulation material) and a column **615** of the transition material is completely deposited projecting from the embedded electronic **611**. The schematic flow **600** then proceeds to schematic **620** where a plurality of columns are projecting from the embedded electronic **611**. Note that each row of columns can correspond to a degree of rotation between other rows as shown in FIG. 6. Moving onto schematic **650**), a final product is produced from the pineapple depositing technique. In this regard, an embedded electronic **651** (previously embedded electronic **611**) is encased in a transition zone comprising a plurality of gradient projecting columns, for example, columns **655.1**, **655.2**, and **655.3**. The transition zone is further encased in a base material **659**.

Each to the plurality of gradient projecting columns is comprised of a transition material. The transition material of each gradient projecting column varies in proportions as the column moves away from the embedded electronic **651**. That is, as the tool or feeder moves along the toolpath of a projection column, the amount of the transition zone material decreases, the amount of the base material increases, and the amount of the insulation material decreases.

In accordance with one or more embodiments, the energy-based metal additive manufacturing described herein can also be created using a deposition strategy directionality around a component. For example, such that columns traverse axially along electronic component.

FIG. 7 depicts a schematic flow **700** of energy-based metal additive manufacturing according to one or more embodiments. The schematic flow **700** begins with a schematic **710** showing a first portion **719** of a base material constructed. Note that the first portion **719** of the base material comprises a groove **719.1** (e.g., a transition zone cavity). The schematic flow **700** then proceeds to schematic **720** where a first portion **725** of a transition zone is constructed. Note that the first portion **725** of the base material comprises a groove **725.1** (e.g., a wire cavity). The schematic flow **700** then proceeds to schematic **730** where an embedded electronic **731** is deposited or placed within the groove **725.1**. Next, at schematic **740**, a second portion **745** of the transition zone is constructed (e.g., encasing for wire). Next, at schematic **750**, a second portion **759** of the base zone is constructed (e.g., encasing for transition zone). Note that the first and second portions of the transition zone, **725** and **745**, can be constructed according to any of the techniques herein.

The term "about" is intended to include the degree of error associated with measurement of the particular quantity based upon the equipment available at the time of filing the application.

The terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only and is not intended to be

limiting of the present disclosure. As used herein, the singular forms “a”, “an” and “the” are intended to include the plural forms as well, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. It will be further understood that the terms “comprises” and/or “comprising,” when used in this specification, specify the presence of stated features, integers, steps, operations, elements, and/or components, but do not preclude the presence or addition of one or more other features, integers, steps, operations, element components, and/or groups thereof.

While the present disclosure has been described with reference to an exemplary embodiment or embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the scope of the present disclosure. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the present disclosure without departing from the essential scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended that the present disclosure not be limited to the particular embodiment disclosed as the best mode contemplated for carrying out this present disclosure, but that the present disclosure will include all embodiments falling within the scope of the claims.

What is claimed is:

- 1. A method of additive manufacturing, the method comprising,
 - depositing a first portion of a transition material in a first portion of a base material to form a first portion of a transition zone that defines a transition zone cavity;
 - disposing in the transition zone cavity an embedded electronic that extends from a bottom end to a top end to define a side surface;
 - after disposing the embedded electronic in the transition zone cavity depositing a second portion of the transition material on the first portion of the transition zone and on the embedded electronic such that the first and second portions of the transition zone encase the embedded electronic; and

after depositing the second portion of the transition material, depositing a second portion of the base material such that the first and second portions of the base material encase the transition material and the embedded electronic,

wherein the transition material directly contacts the side surface and covers the bottom end while completely encasing the side surface such that the base material does not directly contact the embedded electronic, and wherein the transition material comprises an intermediate melting point that is lower than a melting point of the base material.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the intermediate melting point enables the transition zone material to be compatible with the embedded electronic and enables the transition zone material to bond with a metal material.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the base material comprises a metal material.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the transition material is a discrete deposit between the embedded electronic and the base material that contemporaneously forms the transition zone.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the transition material is a material gradient that starts with transition zone material near the embedded electronics and incrementally includes more of the base material as the transition zone moves away from the embedded electronics and towards the base material.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the transition zone comprises a plurality of columns constructed in one or more layers.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the transition zone comprises a plurality of stacked wreaths constructed in one or more layers.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the transition zone comprises a plurality of projecting columns constructed in one or more layers.

* * * * *