



(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**
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(10) **Pub. No.: US 2004/0008408 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 15, 2004**

(54) **RELAY LENS USED IN AN ILLUMINATION SYSTEM OF A LITHOGRAPHY SYSTEM**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/394,244, filed on Jul. 9, 2002.

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Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.⁷ G02B 1/00**
(52) **U.S. Cl. 359/362**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

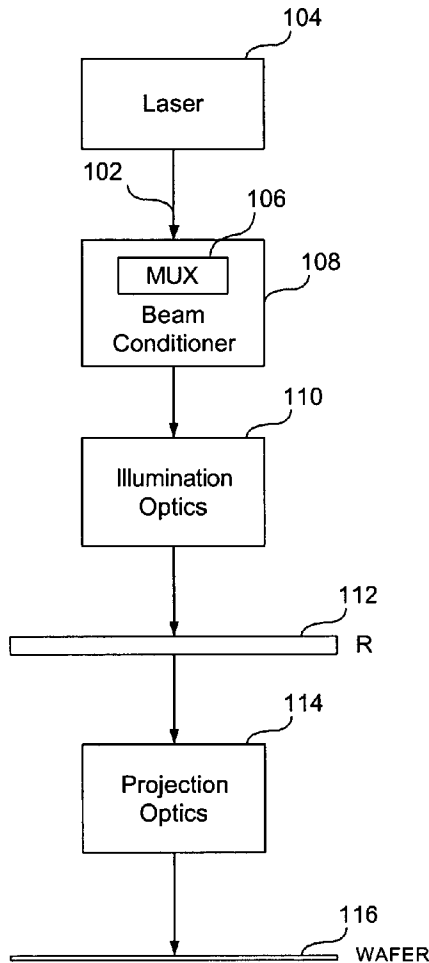
A relay lens is provided in an illumination system for use in microlithography. The relay lens can be used to uniformly illuminate a field at a reticle by telecentric light beams with variable aperture size. The relay lens can include first, second, and third lens groups. At least one of the second and third lens groups can include a single lens. This can reduce costs and increase transmission by requiring less CaF₂ because fewer optical elements are used compared to prior systems.

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(21) Appl. No.: **10/607,193**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 27, 2003**

100 →



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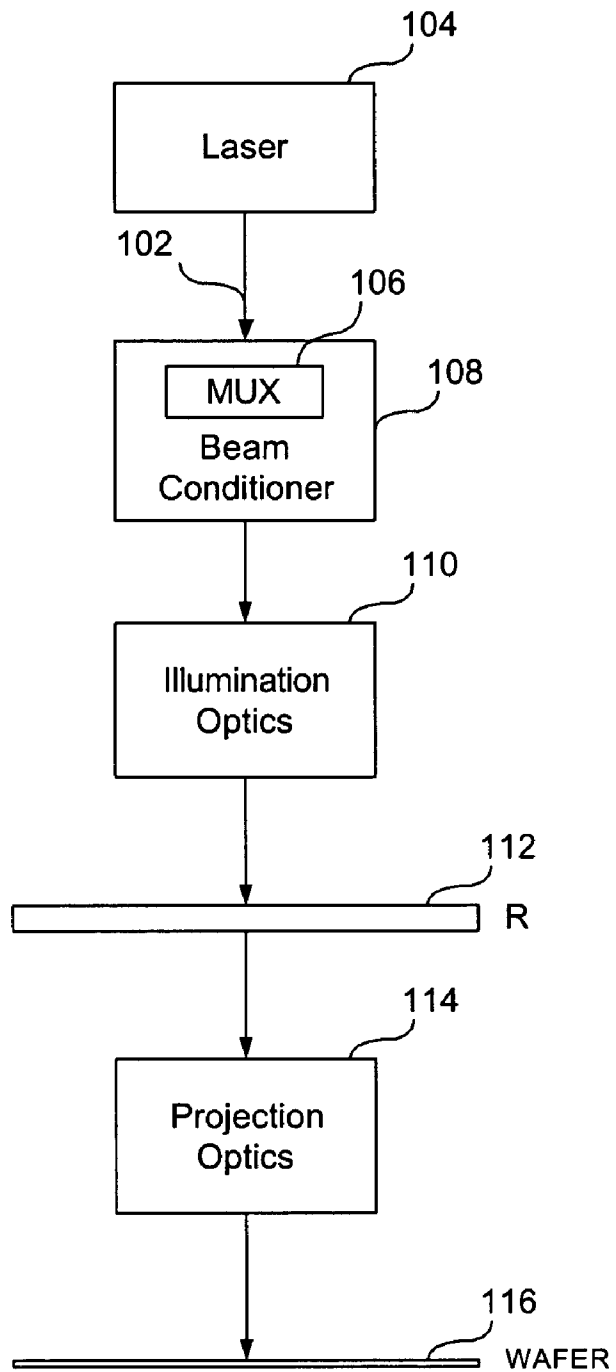


FIG. 1

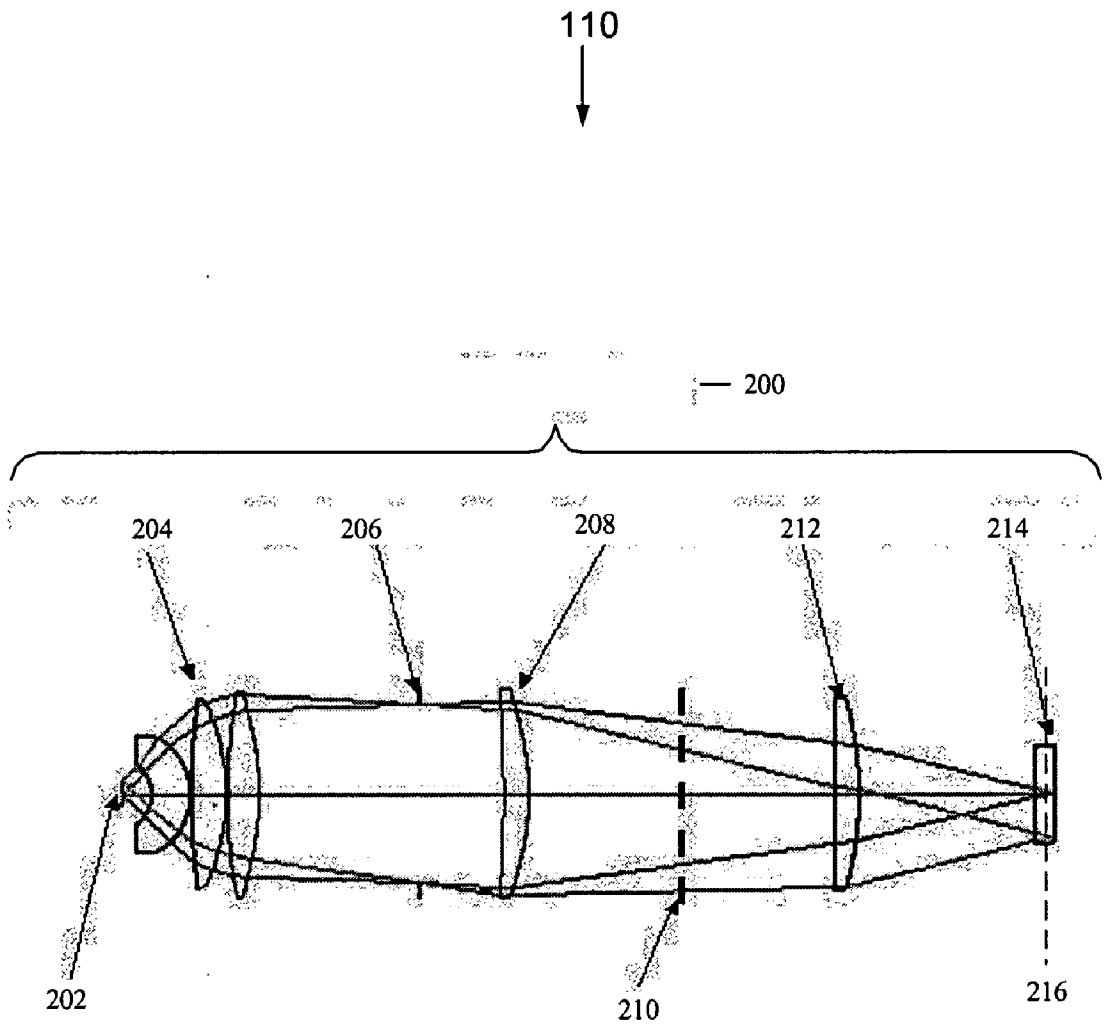


FIG. 2

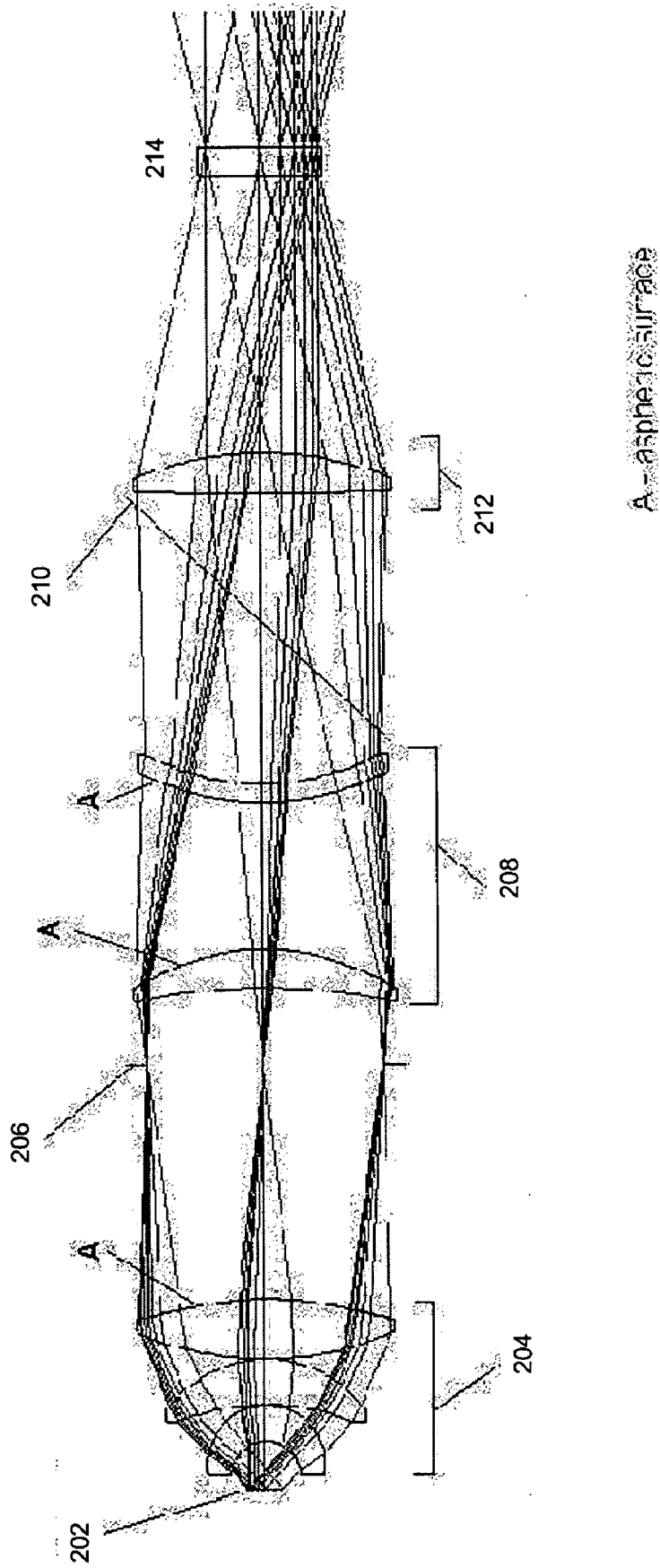


FIG. 3

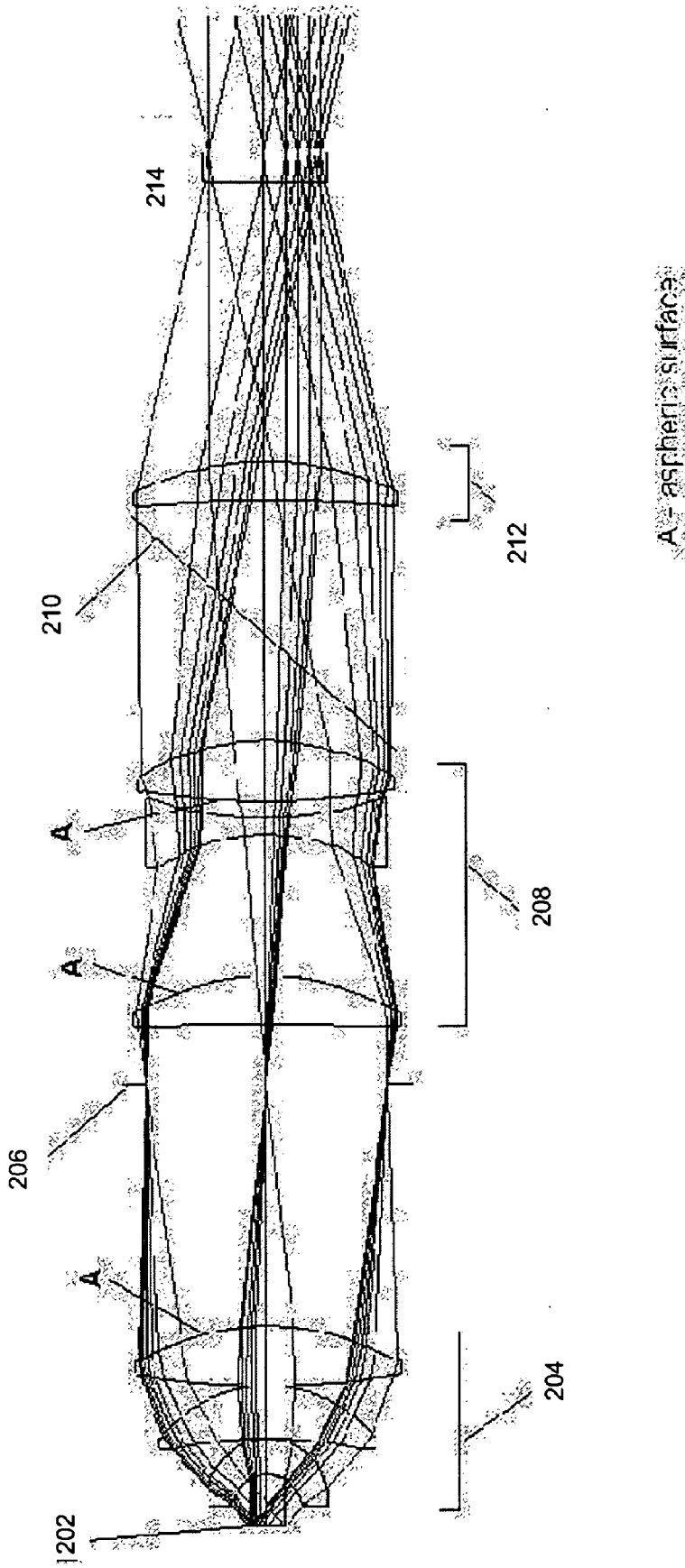


FIG. 4

RELAY LENS USED IN AN ILLUMINATION SYSTEM OF A LITHOGRAPHY SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The application claims the benefit under 35 USC 119(e) to U.S. Prov. Appl. No. 60/394,244, filed Jul. 9, 2002, which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The invention relates to a system and method for sharply illuminating a predetermined region of a reticle during exposure.

[0004] 2. Background Art

[0005] A relay objective (e.g., lens) or a reticle edge masking assembly (REMA) objective (e.g., lens) is an objective that images an intermediate plane onto a plane of a reticle. The reticle supports a mask for lithography. By using the relay lens, the region illuminated on the reticle is sharply defined. Usually, the reticle masking device is assembled with adjustable edges. Conventionally, the relay lens is utilized in microlithographic exposure systems, steppers, or scanners, although the relay lens can be used in other optical systems. Diaphragm edges, which lie in the object plane of the relay lens, must be imaged precisely onto the reticle plane. An exposed corrected pupillary intermediate image is often desired because then, at the location of the intermediate image, further diaphragms and the like can be mounted, for example, to mask parts of an alignment system.

[0006] Typically, relay lens systems have very complicated structures (e.g., from about 7 to 10 lens elements). These optical systems have high Numerical Aperture (NA) (e.g., about 0.6 to 0.7). Basically, these systems include of three parts: a front portion (this part decreases NA), an intermediate portion (for pupil aberration and pupil shape correction) and a field portion (to create essential field size on the reticle). Following the relay lens system in a lithography tool is a projection objective, which normally operates in reduction and can include an inner-lying pupillary plane for non-telecentric input. A wafer follows in an image plane. An additional task of the relay lens system is to correct telecentricity on the reticle.

[0007] Conventional systems have a plurality of the optical elements in each of the above-mentioned front, intermediate, and field parts. The front part has 3-4 lenses, the intermediate part has 2-4 lenses, and the field part has 2-4 lenses. Conventional relay lens systems have several disadvantages because of the plurality of the optical elements in each part, these are: (1) a large volume of CaF_2 is needed for 157 nm lithography systems, which is quite costly; (2) there is low transmission caused by not only glass absorption, but also reflectance on each lens surface; (3) there are alignment difficulties because too many lenses are required to be aligned, and (4) there is high cost due partially to the large volume of Ca F_2 required. These high costs are then passed on to purchasers of the systems, which can make purchasing additional or newer systems prohibitive.

[0008] What is needed is a relay lens that is a simpler, a less complex design, and that reduces costs involved in

manufacturing, and thus in customer costs, which can all be achieved by reducing optical elements in the relay lens.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] A relay lens is provided in an illumination system, possibly for use in lithography. The relay lens can be used to uniformly illuminate a field at a reticle by telecentric light beams with variable aperture size. The relay lens can include first, second, and third lens groups. At least one of the second and third lens groups can include a single lens. This can reduce costs and increase transmission by requiring less CaF_2 because fewer optical elements are used compared to prior systems.

[0010] Some advantages of embodiments of the present invention over conventional systems are simplicity of design and manufacture and reduced costs of manufacture based on reducing an amount of optical material (e.g., fewer optical elements, and thus fewer optical surfaces) to reduce the amount of CaF_2 required. This is done without effecting optical output of the illuminating system or the relay lens. A lower volume of the CaF_2 can be used (e.g., about 30-50% lower) than conventional systems. There is a higher transmission (e.g., about 30% higher) than conventional systems. Alignment difficulties are virtually eliminated because only one lens may be used in certain parts. The relay lens system is less expensive than conventional systems, while producing the same image quality.

[0011] Still other advantages of the embodiments of the present invention is that it has a simpler structure than conventional systems because intermediate and field groups can include of single lens elements, instead of plurality of the lens elements.

[0012] Further embodiments, features, and advantages of the present inventions, as well as the structure and operation of the various embodiments of the present invention, are described in detail below with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS/FIGURES

[0013] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated herein and form a part of the specification, illustrate the present invention and, together with the description, further serve to explain the principles of the invention and to enable a person skilled in the pertinent art to make and use the invention.

[0014] FIG. 1 shows an example lithography system according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0015] FIGS. 2, 3, and 4 show example relay lens systems or REMA objective lens systems in the lithography system of FIG. 1.

[0016] The present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings. In the drawings, like reference numbers may indicate identical or functionally similar elements. Additionally, the left-most digit(s) of a reference number can identify the drawing in which the reference number first appears.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0017] FIG. 1 shows a system 100 that interacts with light 102 during exposure of a substrate 116 (e.g., a wafer)

according to embodiments of the present invention. A light source **104** (e.g., a laser) can be an excimer or deep UV excimer laser, for example. In some embodiments, a multiplexer **106** in beam conditioner **108** receives light **102**. The beam conditioner **108** outputs light to illumination optics **110**, which in turn transmits light through a mask or reticle **112** onto a substrate (e.g., wafer) **116** via projection optics **114**. One embodiment for this system can be a lithography system, or the like. Another embodiment can be a holography system.

[0018] FIG. 2 shows a relay lens **200** in illuminating optics **110**, according to embodiments of the present invention. Relay lens **200** includes a delimiter plane **202**, a first lens group **204** (e.g., a front portion), an aperture stop **206** (e.g., a variable aperture stop), a second lens group **208** (e.g., an intermediate portion), a fold mirror **210**, a third lens group **212** (e.g., a field portion), and a reticle **214** having a reticle plane **216**. First lens group **204** can include a meniscus lens and a lens with an aspherical surface. In the embodiments shown in FIG. 2, second and third lens groups **208** and **212** each have only a single lens element. Second lens group **208** can have a single lens with one aspherical surface, which can be a convex surface. Third lens group **212** can have a single lens that has a spherical surface.

[0019] With continuing reference to FIG. 2, first lens group **204** (e.g., a front portion of relay lens **200**) includes three lenses: a front thick meniscus lens with a first surface concentric to an object axial point, which can be used for Petzval sum correction, and two other lenses, which can be used for NA decrease. Second lens group **208** (e.g., an intermediate portion of relay lens **200**) includes one lens (or two to three lenses in the embodiments shown FIGS. 3-4 discussed below) with an aspheric surface. This one lens in second lens group **208** is located after aperture stop **206** and it can perform one or more of the following functions: pupil aberration correction, pupil shape correction (ellipticity), and telecentricity correction in the reticle space. Third lens group **212** (e.g., a field portion of relay lens **200**) can include one lens. This one lens in third lens group **212** can perform one or more of the following functions: creating essential field size at the reticle plane and if, this lens has an aspheric surface, correcting telecentricity.

[0020] Again, with reference to FIG. 2, in operation, a light beam is received at delimiter plane **202** and expanded and collimated with first lens group **204**. A size of the expanded and collimated beam can be controlled by aperture stop **206**. A focus position on reticle **214** of the expanded and collimated beam can be controlled by second lens group **208**, third lens group **212**, or both second and third lens groups **208** and **212**.

[0021] To manufacture relay lens **200** in a more compact and economical manner, a folding mirror **210** can be used. In some embodiments it can be optional. Relay lens **200** images delimiter plane **202** onto reticle plane **216** with a predetermined magnification. Telecentric beams from delimiter plane **202** can be converted to telecentric beams on reticle **214**. Relay lens **200** can provide uniformity of illumination of the reticle plane and non-ellipticity of pupil shape.

[0022] In one example, a relay lens **200** can be constructed according to the following data:

Surface #	Surface Type	Y Radius	Thickness	Glass	Refract Mode	Y Semi-Aperture
Object	Sphere	Infinity	40.5759		Refract	0
1	Sphere	-38.8954	48.5861	CaF2	Refract	34.3792
2	Sphere	-70.4454	1.0000		Refract	64.7896
3	Asphere	1056.8762	55.0000	CaF2	Refract	103.1220
4	Sphere	-175.1412	1.0000		Refract	108.0828
5	Sphere	336.3331	37.7241	CaF2	Refract	120.1833
6	Asphere	-840.2127	13.6072		Refract	119.9937
7	Sphere	Infinity	84.3426		Refract	119.5076
8	Sphere	Infinity	133.4129		Refract	117.1521
Stop	Sphere	Infinity	55.9768		Refract	113.4723
10	Sphere	1784.7806	35.1455	CaF2	Refract	122.2680
11	Asphere	-339.0580	93.6409		Refract	123.0736
12	Sphere	Infinity	310.7213		Refract	119.7255
13	Sphere	Infinity	85.0612		Refract	110.6886
14	Sphere	417.5797	31.2151	CaF2	Refract	107.8689
15	Sphere	-1616.3317	224.6563		Refract	106.3382
16	Sphere	Infinity	28.3500	CaF2	Refract	56.8430
17	Sphere	Infinity	0.0000		Refract	53.0694
Image	Sphere	Infinity	0.0000	Air	Refract	53.0694

[0023] Depending on the specifications of system **100**, it is possible in alternative embodiments of the present invention that only one of second lens group **208'** or **208''** and the third lens group **212** may have only one lens. Although, preferably both the second and third lens groups **208** and **212**, respectively, have only one lens each. When specifications dictate either second or third lens group **208** or **212**, respectively, to have more than one lens, preferably, third lens group **212** will continue to have only one lens. FIGS 3 and 4 show two possible example alternative configurations.

[0024] In FIG. 3, the second lens group **208'** has two lenses, which can have at least one aspheric surface on each lens.

[0025] In FIG. 4, second lens group **208''** has three lenses. At least two of the three lenses in second lens group **208''** can have at least one aspheric surface.

[0026] Even in these alternative embodiments dictated by desired specifications of system **100**, relay lens **200** can continue to have fewer optical elements compared to conventional systems, which keeps the cost down. It is to be appreciated that still other configurations based on other desired specifications are possible, and all are contemplated within the scope of the present invention.

[0027] Conclusion

[0028] While various embodiments of the present invention have been described above, it should be understood that they have been presented by way of example only, and not limitation. It will be apparent to persons skilled in the relevant art that various changes in form and detail can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Thus, the breadth and scope of the present invention should not be limited by any of the above-described exemplary embodiments, but should be defined only in accordance with the following claims and their equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A relay lens comprising:
 - a first lens group having a plurality of lenses;
 - an aperture stop;
 - a second lens group having one lens;
 - a fold mirror; and
 - a third lens group having one lens.
2. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein the first lens group comprises three lenses.
3. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein the first lens group comprises a meniscus lens.
4. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein the first lens group comprises an aspherical lens.
5. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein the one lens in the second lens group comprises one aspherical surface.
6. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein the one lens in the second lens group comprises one convex surface.
7. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein the one lens in the third lens group comprises two spherical surfaces.
8. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein the second lens group comprises a second lens.
9. The relay lens of claim 8, wherein the second lens group comprises a third lens.
10. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein:
 - the first lens group forms a front part of the relay lens;
 - the second lens group forms an intermediate part of the relay lens; and
 - the third lens group forms a field part of the relay lens.
11. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein:
 - the second lens group includes a second lens.
12. The relay lens of claim 11, wherein the lens and the second lens each have an aspheric surface.
13. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein:
 - the second lens group includes second and third lenses.
14. The relay lens of claim 13, wherein at least two lenses in the second lens group have at least one aspheric surface.
15. The relay lens of claim 1, wherein the relay lens is constructed according to the following data:

Surface #	Surface Type	Y Radius	Thickness	Glass	Refract Mode	Y Semi-Aperture
Object	Sphere	Infinity	40.5759		Refract	0
1	Sphere	-38.8954	48.5861	CaF2	Refract	34.3792
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6	Asphere	-840.2127	13.6072		Refract	119.9937
7	Sphere	Infinity	84.3426		Refract	119.5076
8	Sphere	Infinity	133.4129		Refract	117.1521

-continued

Surface #	Surface Type	Y Radius	Thickness	Glass	Refract Mode	Y Semi-Aperture
Stop	Sphere	Infinity	55.9768		Refract	113.4723
10	Sphere	1784.7806	35.1455	CaF2	Refract	122.2680
11	Asphere	-339.0580	93.6409		Refract	123.0736
12	Sphere	Infinity	310.7213		Refract	119.7255
13	Sphere	Infinity	85.0612		Refract	110.6886
14	Sphere	417.5797	31.2151	CaF2	Refract	107.8689
15	Sphere	-1616.3317	224.6563		Refract	106.3382
16	Sphere	Infinity	28.3500	CaF2	Refract	56.8430
17	Sphere	Infinity	0.0000		Refract	53.0694
Image	Sphere	Infinity	0.0000	Air	Refract	53.0694

16. A lithography system, comprising:

- a light source;
- a reticle; and
- a relay lens positioned between the light source and the reticle, relay lens including,
 - a first lens group has a plurality of lenses;
 - an aperture stop;
 - a second lens group has one lens;
 - a fold mirror; and
 - a third lens group has one lens.

17. The lithography system of claim 16, wherein the relay lens is constructed according to the following data:

Surface #	Surface Type	Y Radius	Thickness	Glass	Refract Mode	Y Semi-Aperture
Object	Sphere	Infinity	40.5759		Refract	0
1	Sphere	-38.8954	48.5861	CaF2	Refract	34.3792
2	Sphere	-70.4454	1.0000		Refract	64.7896
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7	Sphere	Infinity	84.3426		Refract	119.5076
8	Sphere	Infinity	133.4129		Refract	117.1521
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15	Sphere	-1616.3317	224.6563		Refract	106.3382
16	Sphere	Infinity	28.3500	CaF2	Refract	56.8430
17	Sphere	Infinity	0.0000		Refract	53.0694
Image	Sphere	Infinity	0.0000	Air	Refract	53.0694

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