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(54) **Ultrasound system and method for forming an ultrasound image**

(57) Embodiments of the present invention may provide an ultrasound system and a method for forming an ultrasound image. The ultrasound system includes: a diagnosis unit operable to transmit ultrasound signals to a target object and receive ultrasound signals reflected from the target object; a volume data forming unit operable to form volume data based on the received ultrasound signals; an input unit operable to receive plane selection information, region of interest (ROI) setting information and ROI reset information from a user; a processor operable to form a plane image of a plane selected in the volume data according to the plane selection information and set a ROI on the plane image based on

the ROI setting information, the image forming unit being configured to form a ROI image and a 3D image corresponding to the ROI by using the volume data; a display unit operable to display the plane image or the ROI image together with the 3D image; and a control unit operable to control that the display unit displays the plane image with displaying the 3D image in response to the ROI reset information and the processor sets a new ROI on the displayed plane image based on the ROI reset information and forms a ROI image and a 3D image corresponding to the new ROI.

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Description

[0001] The present application claims priority from Korean Patent Application No. 10-2006-0059121 filed on June 29, 2006, the entire subject matter of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

1. Field

[0002] The present invention generally relates to an ultrasound system, and more particularly to an ultrasound system and a method for forming an ultrasound image.

2. Background

[0003] An ultrasound system has become an important and popular diagnostic tool since it has a wide range of applications. Specifically, due to its non-invasive and nondestructive nature, the ultrasound system has been extensively used in the medical profession. Modern high-performance ultrasound diagnostic systems and techniques are commonly used to produce two or three-dimensional (2D or 3D) ultrasound images of internal features of an object (e.g., human organs).

[0004] In terms of operation, the ultrasound system transmits ultrasound signals to the target object and then receives ultrasound echo signals. The ultrasound system forms volume data of the target object based on the received ultrasound echo signals. Upon input of plane selection information for selecting a specific plane from the volume data is inputted through an input unit, the ultrasound system extracts data corresponding to the selected plane from the volume data. The ultrasound system forms a plane image (2D image) based on the extracted data to be displayed through a display unit.

[0005] Subsequently, if region of interest (ROI) setting information is inputted through the input unit, the ultrasound system sets the ROI on the 2D image based on the ROI setting information. The ultrasound system extracts data corresponding to the ROI from the volume data and then renders the extracted data, thereby forming the 3D image. The 3D image is displayed together with the 2D image corresponding to ROI on the display unit.

[0006] In the user of the ultrasound system, a need may arise to reset the ROI for displaying 2D and 3D images corresponding to a different portion of the target object. If ROI reset information is received through the input unit, the ultrasound system resets the ROI on the 2D image based on the ROI reset information. For setting a new ROI, a display mode displaying the 2D image together with the 3D image should be changed to a single display mode because the ROI setting can be carried out only at the single display mode for displaying only one 2D image in the conventional ultrasound system. That

is, a multi display mode for displaying the 3D image together with the 2D image should be changed to the single display mode. Therefore, since the display mode has to be changed to reset the ROI, there are problems that it is inconvenient to reset the ROI, and an amount of time needed for diagnosis increases.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] Arrangements and embodiments may be described in detail with reference to the following drawings in which like reference numerals refer to like elements and wherein:

[0008] FIG. 1 is a schematic block diagram illustrating an ultrasound diagnostic device constructed in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

[0009] FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating a method of forming an ultrasound image in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

[0010] FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram showing an example of volume data and reference planes; and

[0011] FIGS. 4 to 7 are diagrams showing examples of displaying ultrasound images in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0012] Hereinafter, the present invention will be described in detail with reference to following FIGS. 1 to 7. FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating an ultrasound system, which is constructed in accordance with the present invention. As shown in FIG. 1, the ultrasound system 100 includes a diagnosis unit 110, a volume data forming unit 120, a storing unit 130, a processor 140, a display unit 150 and a control unit 160. The ultrasound system 100 may further include an input unit (e.g., mouse, track ball, key board, touch pad, etc.) for receiving region of interest (ROI) setting information for setting a ROI from a user.

[0013] The diagnosis unit 110 includes a probe and a beam former (not shown). The probe contains a plurality of transducer elements for reciprocally converting electric signals and ultrasound signals. The probe transmits ultrasound signals to a target object and receives ultrasound echo signals reflected from the target object. The probe converts the received ultrasound echo signals into electric signals (Hereinafter, referred to as receive signals). The beam former applies delays to the receive signals, thereby producing focused receive signals.

[0014] The volume data forming unit 120 forms volume data based on the focused receive signals outputted from the diagnosis unit 110. The volume data may be stored in the storage unit 130.

[0015] If reference plane selection information for selecting a reference plane is inputted from a user, the processor 140 extracts data corresponding to the selected reference plane from the volume data stored in the storage unit 130. The processor 140 performs image signal processing based on the extracted data to form an image

signal corresponding to the selected reference plane. A reference plane image is formed based on the image signal. The reference plane may be one of A, B and C planes in the volume data 210 as shown in Fig. 3.

[0016] Subsequently, if ROI setting information is inputted through the input unit, the processor 140 sets ROI 320 on the reference plane image 310 as shown in FIG. 4 and then extracts data corresponding to the ROI 320 from the volume data. The processor 140 performs image signal processing based on the extracted data, thereby forming a ROI image signal and a 3D image signal corresponding to the ROI.

[0017] The display unit 150 receives the reference plane image signal, the ROI image signal and the 3D image signal to display the reference plane image, a ROI image and a 3D image on a display region. If a single display mode is selected in the ultrasound system, the display region is used to display one image. On the contrary, if a multi display mode is selected in the ultrasound system, the display region of the display 150 may be partitioned into a plurality of sub display regions, wherein each sub display region displays one of the reference plane image, the ROI image and the 3D image. For instance, the display region of the display unit 150 may be partitioned into a first sub display region and a second sub display region at the multi display mode. In this case, the ROI image may be displayed on the first sub display region and the 3D image may be displayed on the second sub display region.

[0018] The control unit 160 may control the processor 140 to extract the data corresponding to the ROI from the volume data stored in the storage unit 130 in response to the ROI setting information. The ROI setting information may include information associated with a size and a position of the ROI. Also, the control unit 160 may control the partitioning of the display region of the display unit 150 according to the display mode. Further, the control unit 160 may check whether ROI reset information is inputted through the input unit. If the ROI reset information is inputted, the control unit 160 controls the display unit 150 such that the reference plane image is displayed on the first sub display region instead of displaying the ROI image. Therefore, if new ROI setting information is inputted, the new ROI may be set on the reference plane image displayed on the first sub display region while the 3D image is displayed on the second sub display region.

[0019] Hereinafter, a process for forming ultrasound images will be described in detail with reference to FIGS. 2 to 7. FIG. 2 is a flowchart showing a process for forming ultrasound images in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0020] As shown, the volume data forming unit 120 forms volume data based on ultrasound echo signals received at the diagnosis unit 110 and the volume data are stored in the storage unit as step S102. If reference selection information is inputted, the processor 140 extracts data corresponding to a reference planes selected based on the plane selection information from the volume data

and then performs image signal processing based on the extracted data, thereby forming a reference plane image signal at step S104. The display unit 150 receives the reference plane image signal from the processor 140 to display a reference plane image 310 on a display region 152 as shown in FIG. 4 at step S106. The control unit 160 checks whether the ROI setting information is inputted through the input unit at step S108. If the ROI setting information is not inputted, the control unit 160 stands by until the ROI setting information is inputted.

[0021] At step S108, if it is determined that the ROI setting information is inputted by the control unit 160, the processor 140 sets the ROI 320 on the reference plane image 310 based on the ROI setting information and extracts data corresponding to the ROI 320 from the volume data stored in the storage unit 130 at step S110. The processor 140 performs image signal processing based on the extracted data, thereby forming a ROI image signal and a 3D image signal corresponding to the ROI 320 at step S112. The display unit 150 receives the ROI image signal and the 3D image signal to display a ROI image 331 and a 3D image 341 on the first and second sub display regions 152A and 152B, respectively, at the same time as shown in FIG. 5 at step S114.

[0022] Subsequently, the control unit 160 checks whether ROI reset information for resetting ROI is inputted through the input unit in real time at step S116. If the ROI reset information is not inputted, the process goes to step S126. On the other hand, if it is determined that the ROI reset information is inputted, the control unit 160 may control to the reference plane image to be displayed on the first sub display region 152A instead of displaying the ROI image at step S118. The processor 140 sets a new ROI 420 on the reference plane image displayed on the first sub display region 152A based on the ROI reset information at step S120.

[0023] Thereafter, the steps S110 to S114 are repeated to thereby display a ROI image 332 and a 3D image 342 corresponding to the new ROI on the first and second sub display regions 152A and 152B, respectively, as shown in FIG. 7.

[0024] As mentioned above, since the ROI can be easily reset in real time without changing a display mode, the user may conveniently reset ROI and time required for diagnosis can be reduced.

[0025] In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, there is provided an ultrasound system comprising: a diagnosis unit operable to transmit ultrasound signals to a target object and receive ultrasound signals reflected from the target object; a volume data forming unit operable to form volume data based on the received ultrasound signals; an input unit operable to receive plane selection information, region of interest (ROI) setting information and ROI reset information from a user; a processor operable to form a plane image based on plane data extracted from the volume data according to the plane selection information and set a ROI on the plane image based on the ROI setting information, said proc-

essor being configured to form a ROI image and a 3D image corresponding to the set ROI by using the volume data; a display unit operable to display at least one of the plane image or the ROI image together with the 3D image; and a control unit operable to control the display unit to display the plane image while the 3D image is displayed in response to the ROI reset information, and control the processor to set a new ROI on the displayed plane image based on the ROI reset information and form a ROI image and a 3D image corresponding to the new ROI.

[0026] In accordance with another embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a method for forming an ultrasound image, comprising: a) forming volume data based on ultrasound signals reflected from a target object; b) receiving plane selection information and forming a plane image based on plane data extracted from the volume data according to the plane selection information; c) receiving ROI setting information to set a ROI on the plane image; d) forming a ROI image and a 3-dimensional (3D) image corresponding to the ROI by using the volume data and displaying the ROI image together with the 3D image; e) receiving ROI reset information for resetting the ROI in real time; f) displaying the plane image while the 3D image is displayed in response to the ROI reset information; g) setting a new ROI on the displayed plane image based on the ROI reset information; and f) forming and displaying a ROI image and a 3D image corresponding to the new ROI.

[0027] Any reference in this specification to "one embodiment," "an embodiment," "example embodiment," etc., means that a particular feature, structure or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the invention. The appearances of such phrases in various places in the specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment. Further, when a particular feature, structure or characteristic is described in connection with any embodiment, it is submitted that it is within the purview of one skilled in the art to effect such feature, structure or characteristic in connection with other ones of the embodiments.

[0028] Although embodiments have been described with reference to a number of illustrative embodiments thereof, it should be understood that numerous other modifications and embodiments can be devised by those skilled in the art that will fall within the spirit and scope of the principles of this disclosure. More particularly, various variations and modifications are possible in the component parts and/or arrangements of the subject combination arrangement within the scope of the disclosure, the drawings and the appended claims. In addition to variations and modifications in the component parts and/or arrangements, alternative uses will also be apparent to those skilled in the art.

Claims

1. An ultrasound system comprising:

a diagnosis unit operable to transmit ultrasound signals to a target object and receive ultrasound signals reflected from the target object;
a volume data forming unit operable to form volume data based on the received ultrasound signals;
an input unit operable to receive plane selection information, region of interest (ROI) setting information and ROI reset information from a user;
a processor operable to form a plane image based on plane data extracted from the volume data according to the plane selection information and set a ROI on the plane image based on the ROI setting information, said processor being configured to form a ROI image and a 3D image corresponding to the set ROI by using the volume data;
a display unit operable to display at least one of the plane image or the ROI image together with the 3D image; and
a control unit operable to control the display unit to display the plane image while the 3D image is displayed in response to the ROI reset information, and control the processor to set a new ROI on the displayed plane image based on the ROI reset information and form a ROI image and a 3D image corresponding to the new ROI.

2. The ultrasound system of Claim 1, further comprising a storage unit for storing the volume data.

3. A method for forming an ultrasound image, comprising:

a) forming volume data based on ultrasound signals reflected from a target object;
b) receiving plane selection information and forming a plane image based on plane data extracted from the volume data according to the plane selection information;
c) receiving ROI setting information to set a ROI on the plane image;
d) forming a ROI image and a 3-dimensional (3D) image corresponding to the ROI by using the volume data and displaying the ROI image together with the 3D image;
e) receiving ROI reset information for resetting the ROI in real time;
f) displaying the plane image while the 3D image is displayed in response to the ROI reset information;
g) setting a new ROI on the displayed plane image based on the ROI reset information; and
f) forming and displaying a ROI image and a 3D

image corresponding to the new ROI.

4. The method of Claim 3, further comprising storing the volume data.

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5. The method of Claim 4, wherein, at the step d), the ROI image is displayed on a first display region and the 3D image is displayed on a second display region, and at step f), the plane image is displayed on the first display region instead of displaying the ROI image.

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FIG. 1

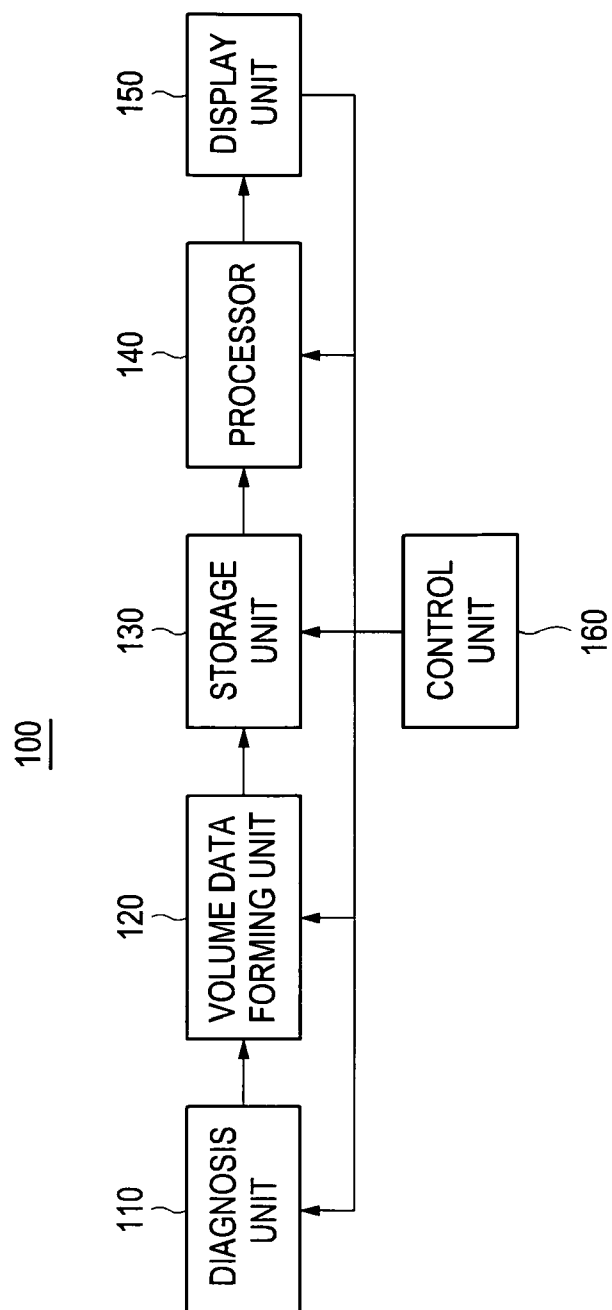


FIG. 2

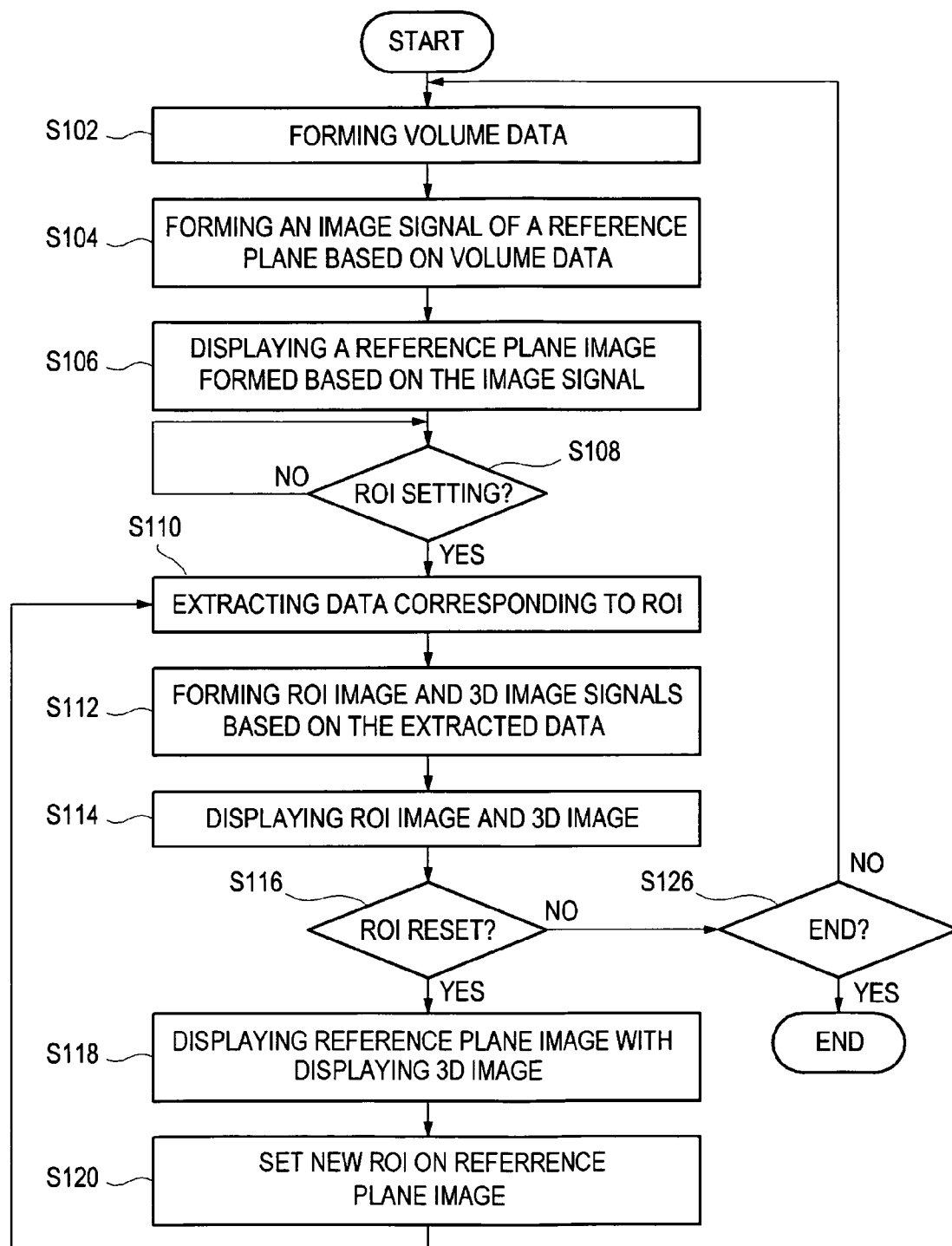


FIG. 3

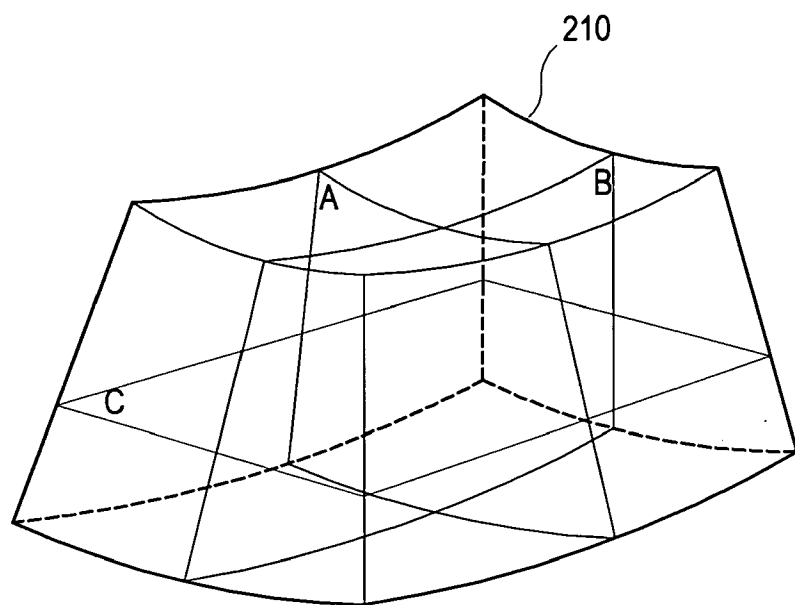


FIG. 4

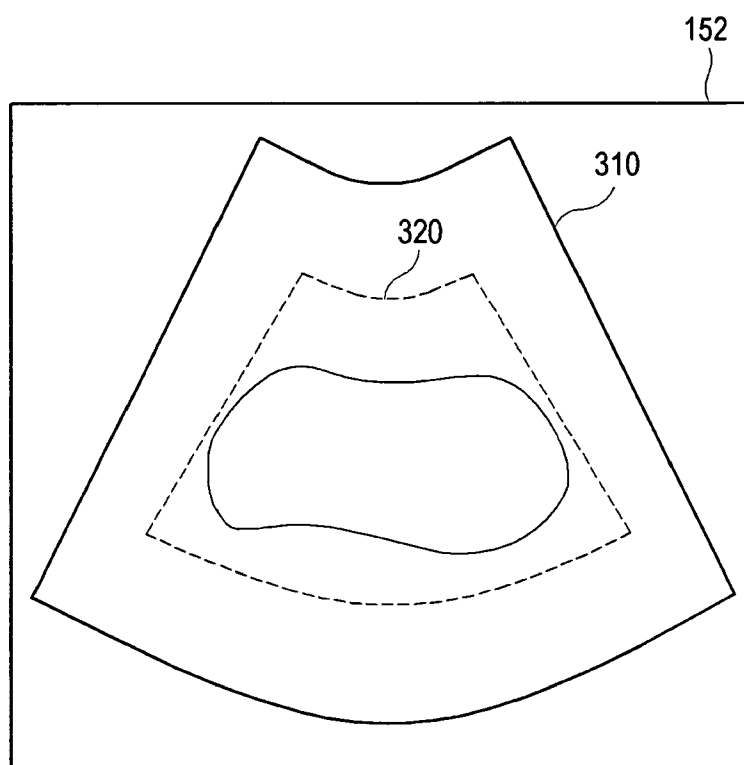


FIG. 5

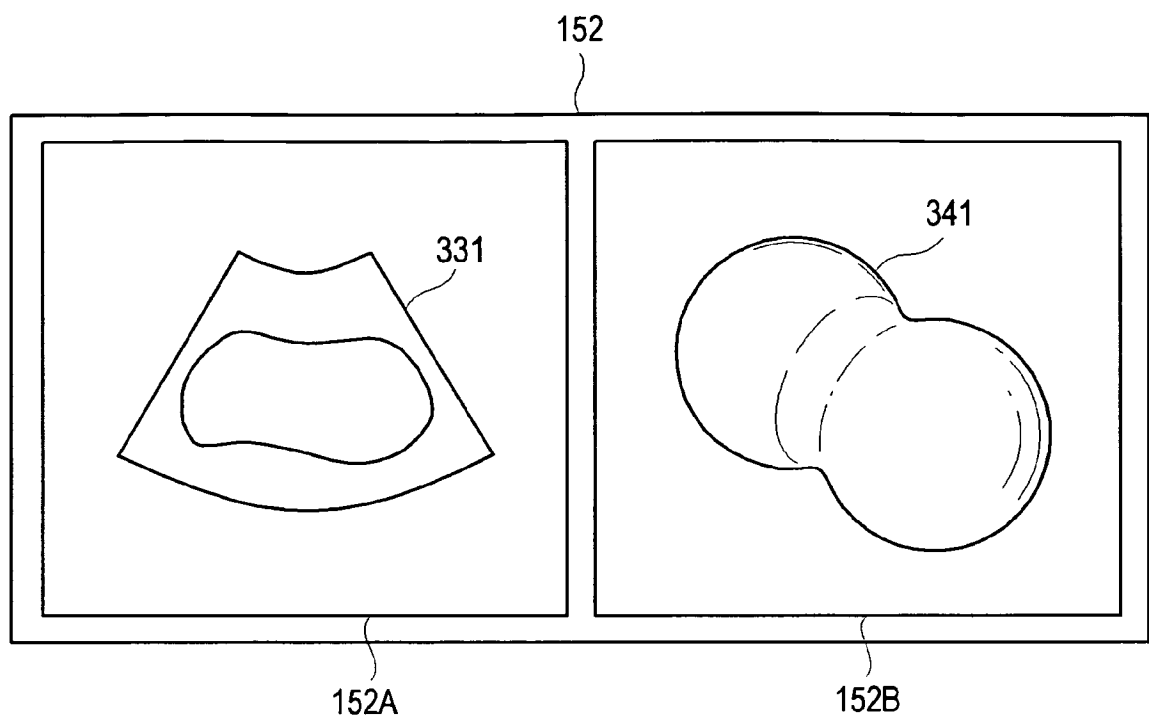


FIG. 6

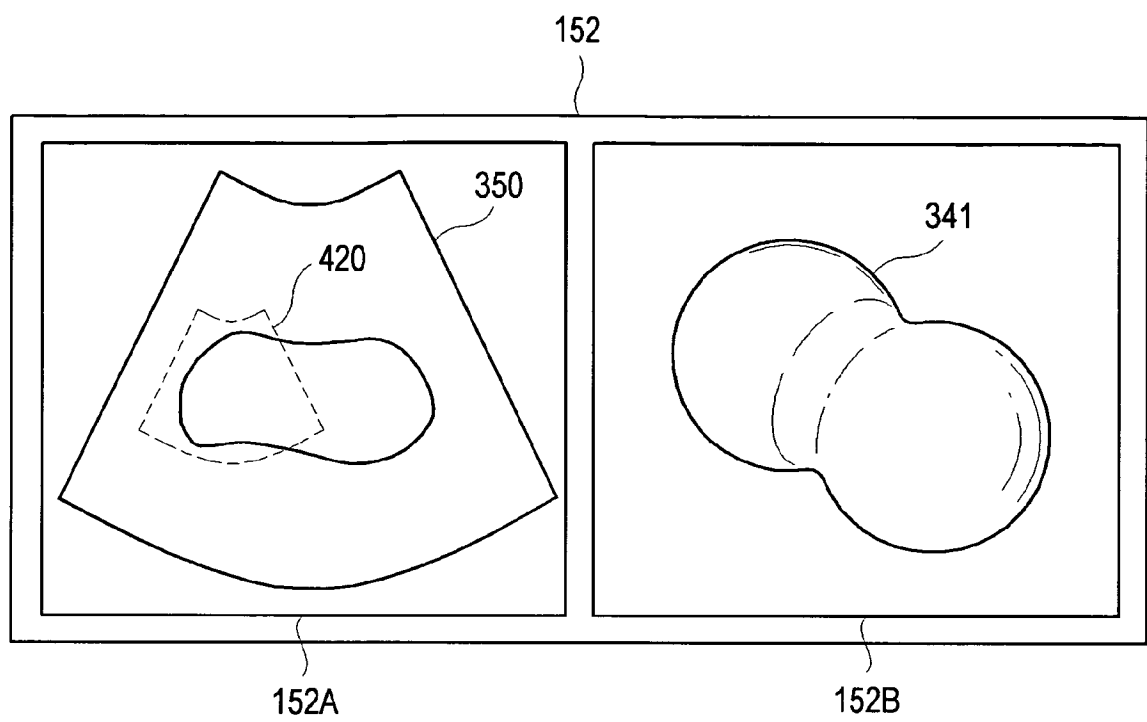
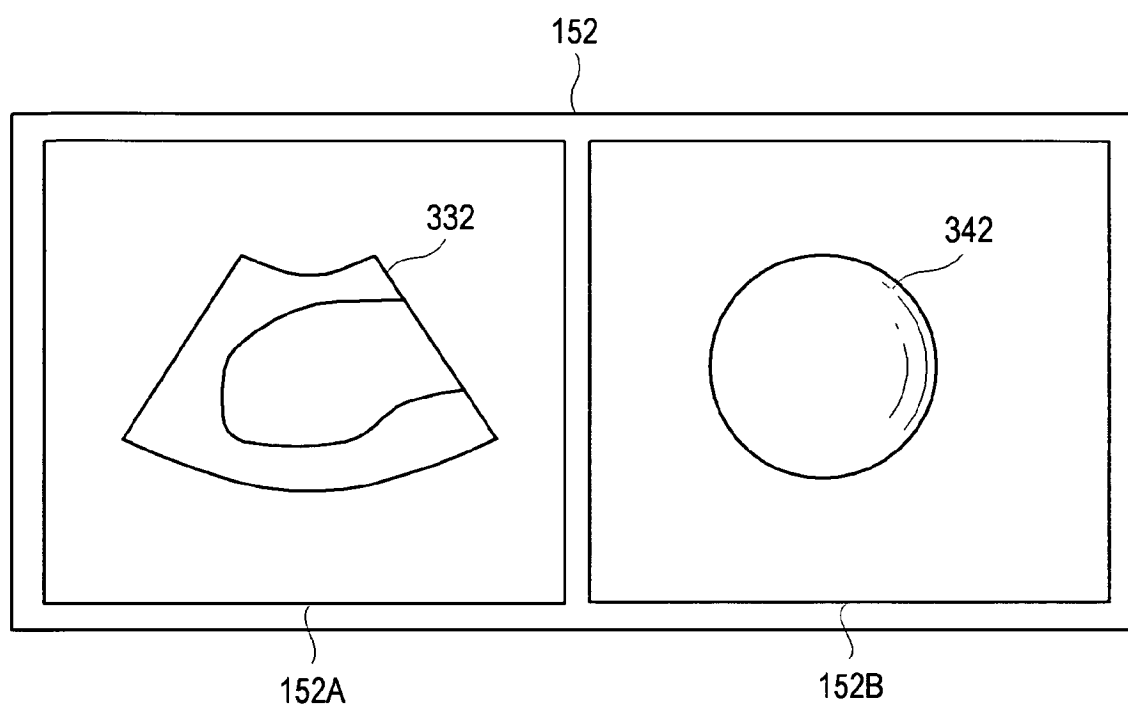


FIG. 7





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 07 01 2555

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
			A61B G01S
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
The Hague		24 October 2007	Bataille, Frédéric
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons</p> <p>& : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 07 01 2555

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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24-10-2007

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Patent documents cited in the description

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专利名称(译)	超声系统和用于形成超声图像的方法		
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摘要(译)

本发明的实施例可以提供超声系统和用于形成超声图像的方法。超声系统包括：诊断单元，可操作以将超声信号发送到目标对象并接收从目标对象反射的超声信号；体数据形成单元，用于根据接收的超声信号形成体数据；输入单元，用于从用户接收平面选择信息，感兴趣区域（ROI）设置信息和ROI重置信息；处理器，用于根据平面选择信息形成体数据中选择的平面的平面图像，并基于ROI设置信息在平面图像上设置ROI，图像形成单元用于形成ROI图像和通过使用体数据对应于ROI的3D图像；显示单元，可操作以与3D图像一起显示平面图像或ROI图像；控制单元，用于控制显示单元显示平面图像，并响应ROI重置信息显示3D图像，处理器根据ROI重置信息在显示的平面图像上设置新的ROI，并形成ROI图像以及与新ROI对应的3D图像。

FIG. 1

