Soft Sensors

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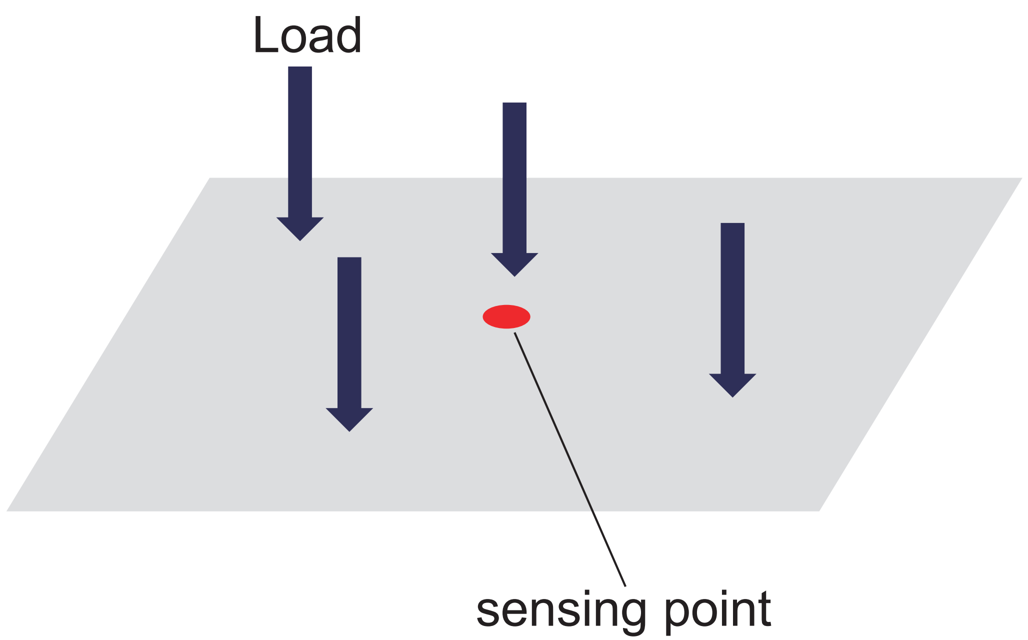
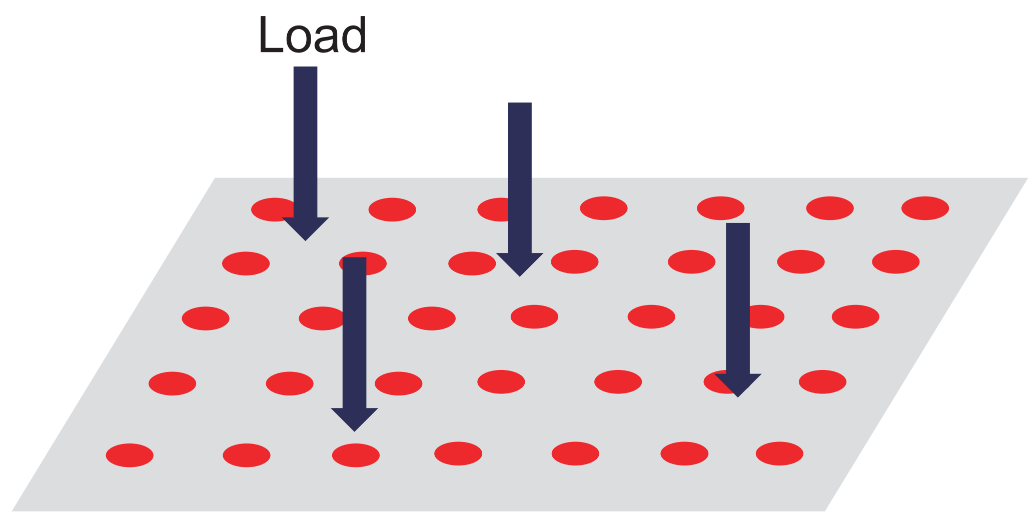
Agenda

1. Soft sensors classification
2. Resistive sensors
3. Capacitive sensors
4. Piezoelectric sensors
5. Magnetic sensors
6. Optical sensors
7. Distributed sensors for large area sensing
8. Camera based sensors

Distributed sensor for large area sensing



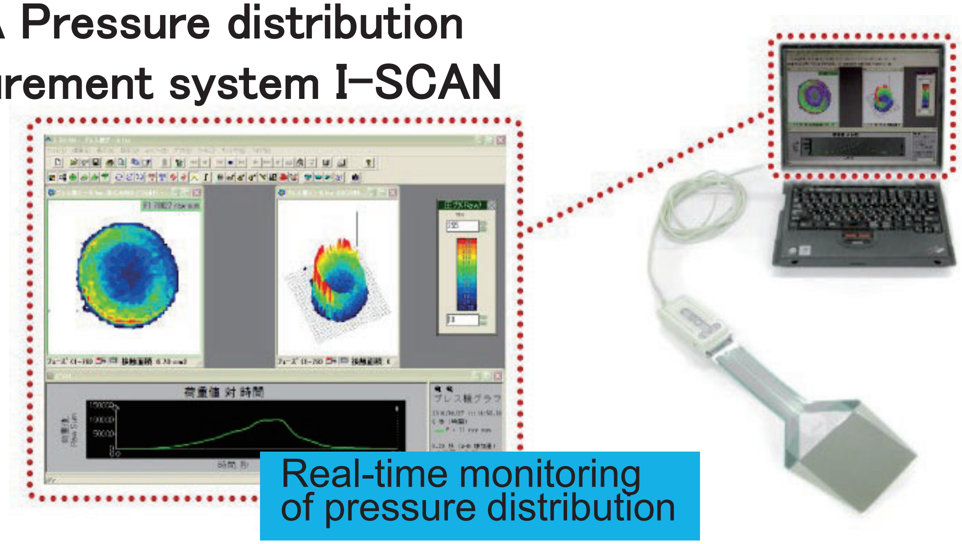


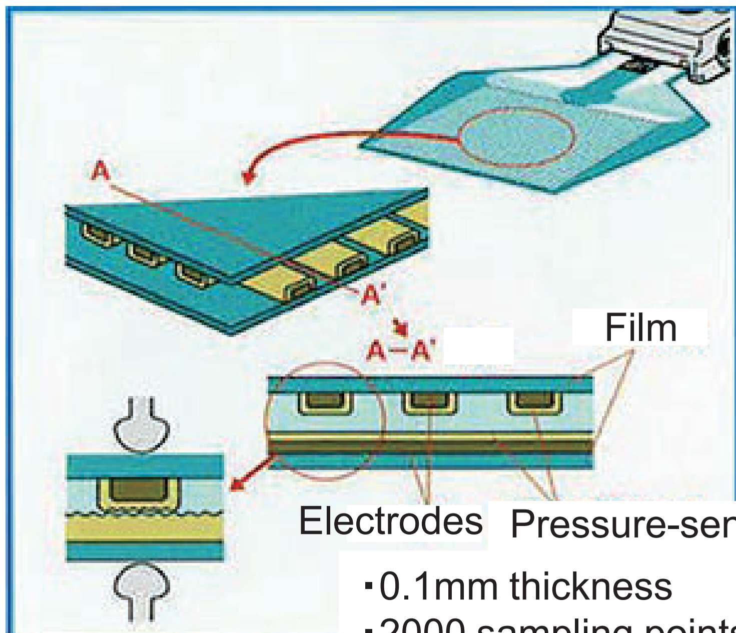
Single sensor :
- Measure the force at the single sensing point or averaged force around the sensing point
- Cover narrow area

Distributed sensor :
- Measure the force at each point and get spatial distribution of the force
- Cover large area

Examples of distributed tactile sensor

NITTA Pressure distribution measurement system I-SCAN

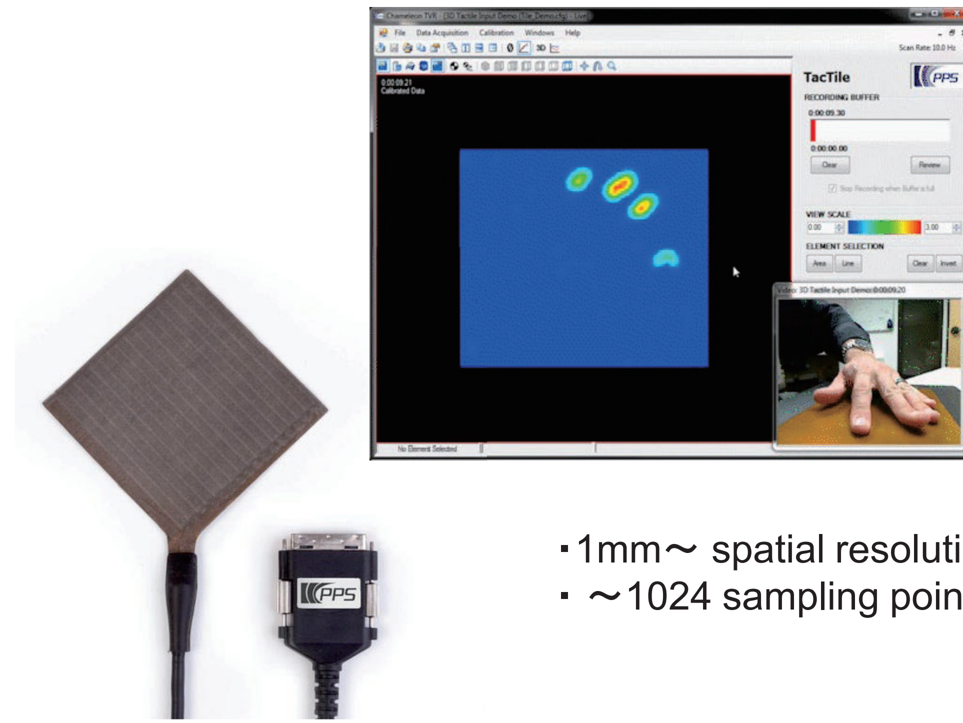




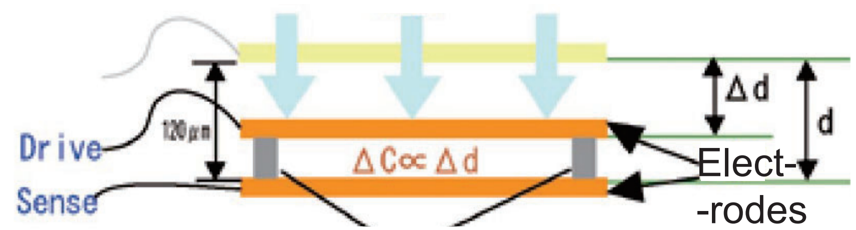
- 0.1mm thickness
- 2000 sampling points
- 100Hz sampling rate

https://www.nitta.co.jp/product/sensor/I-SCAN/

Pressure Profile Systems　Tactile array sensor



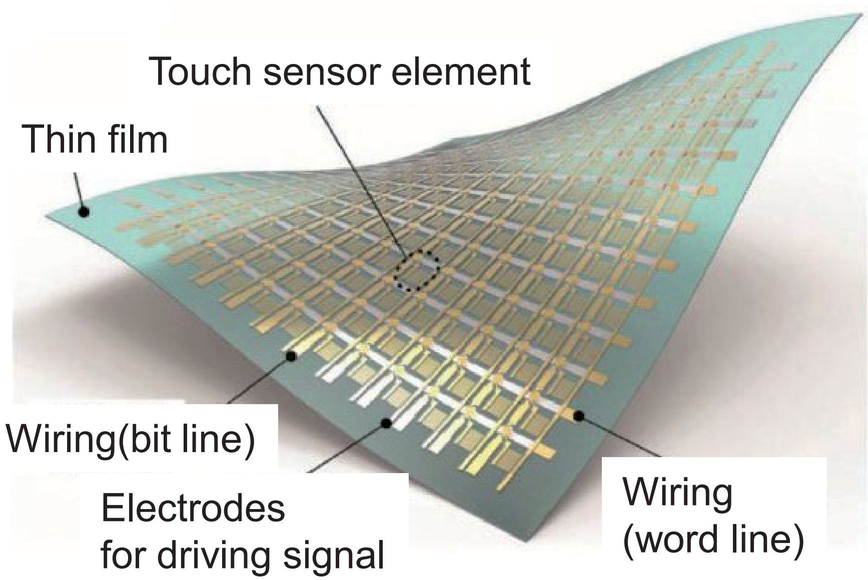
- 1mm～ spatial resolution
- ～1024 sampling points



https://syscom-corp.jp/products/syokkaku-sensor/

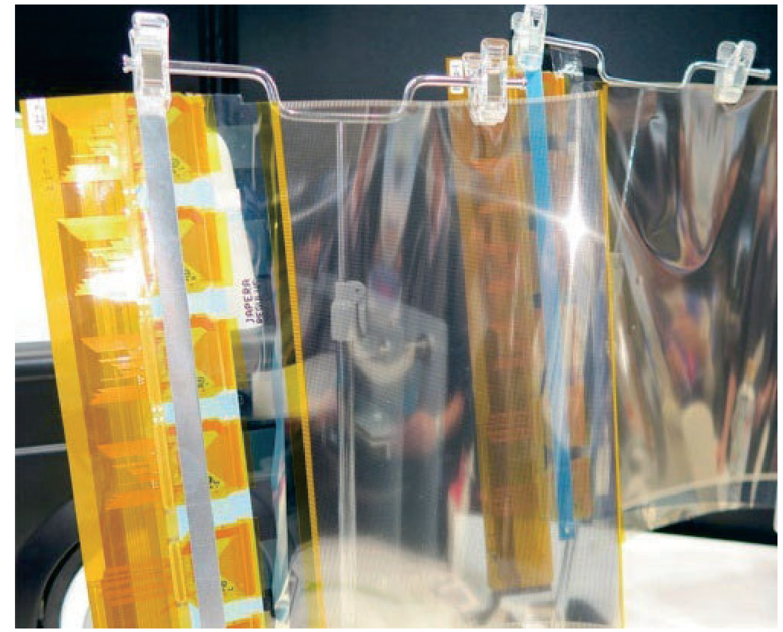
Examples of distributed tactile sensor

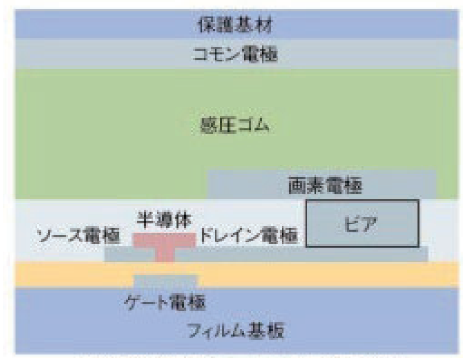
Flexible electronics and printed electronics



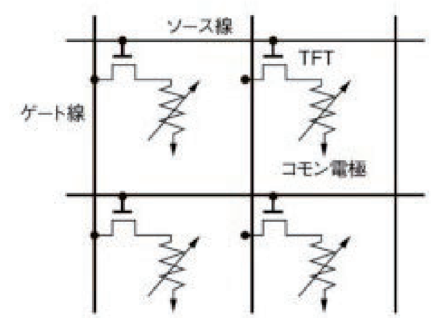
Organic transistors arranged in flexible sheet

e-skin
T.Someya, 2013





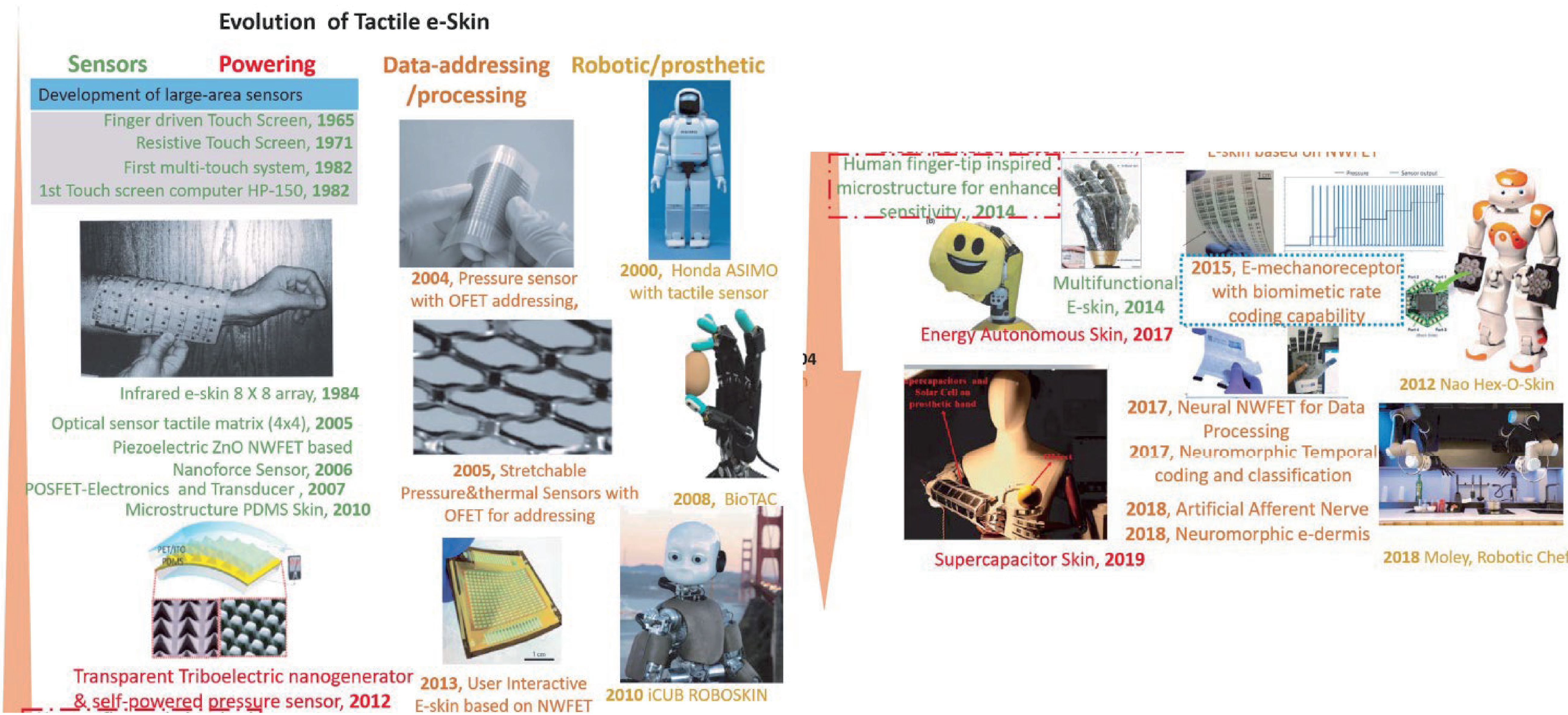
超高解像度感圧シートセンサの積層構造



センサー素子の2次元配置

Pressure-sensitive sheets with printed electronics, NEC, 2018

Large-Area Soft e-Skin: The Challenges Beyond Sensor Designs

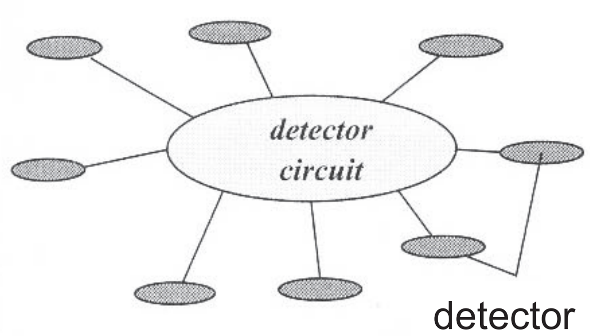


R.Dahiya et al., Proceedings of the IEEE, 2019.

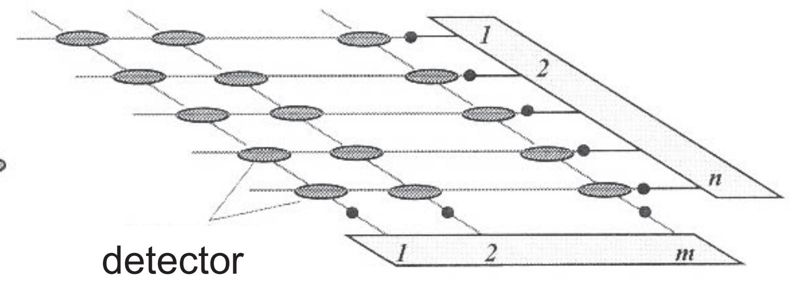
Wiring problem

In distributed sensors, wiring for control signals and output readout to many distributed detector elements can be a problem.

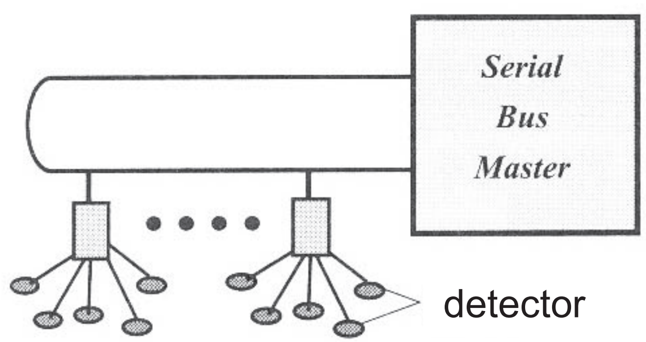
Typical wiring methods



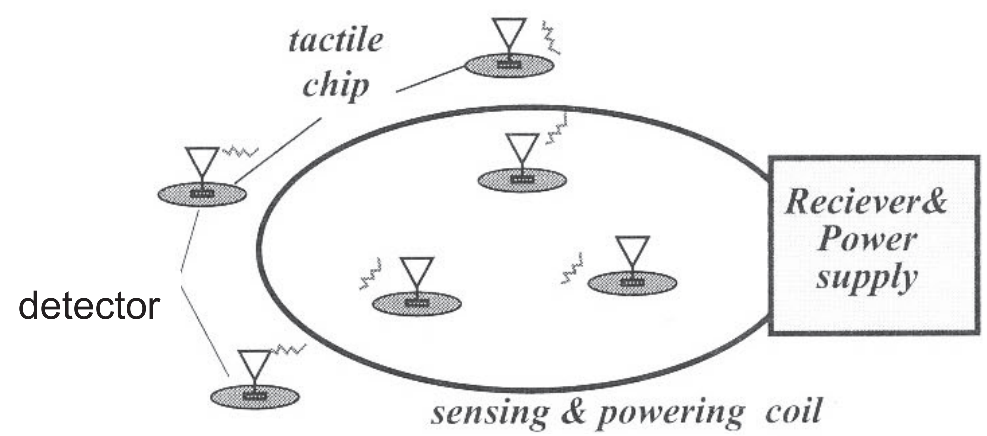
One by one wiring



Matrix wiring and scanning



Serial bus



Wireless connection

触覚認識メカニズムと応用技術，下条他編，S&T出版

Distributed Tactile Sensor Using Video Signal Output

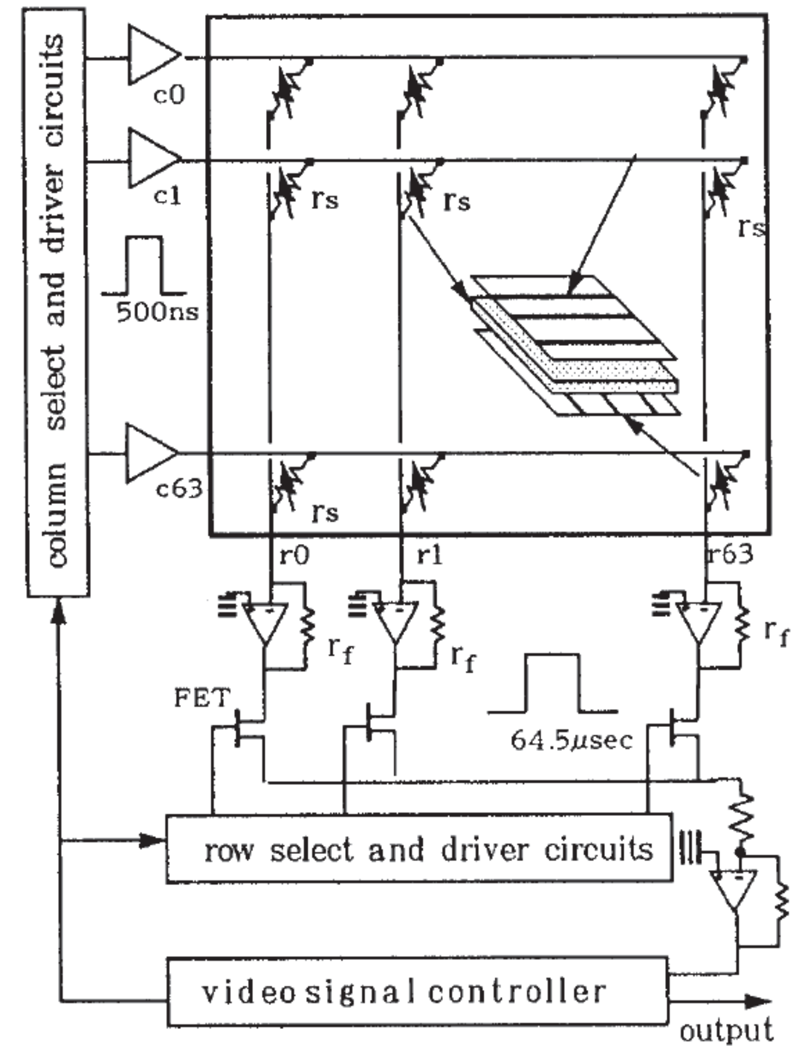
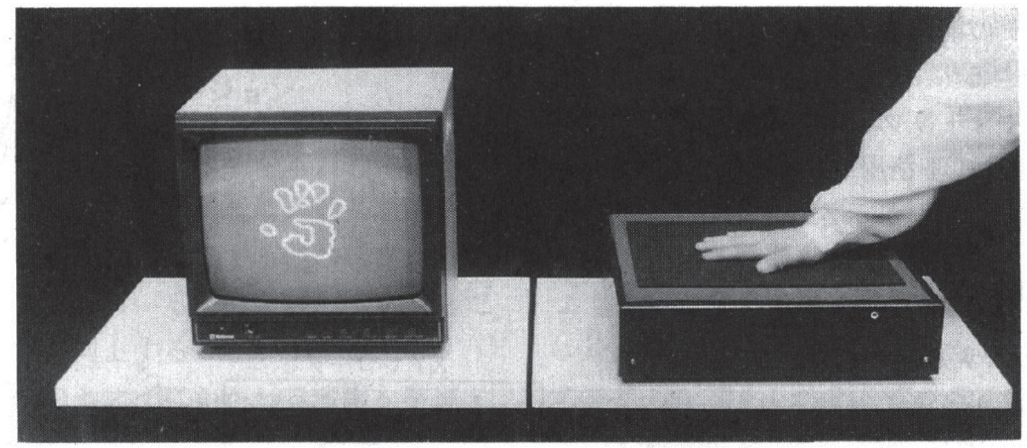
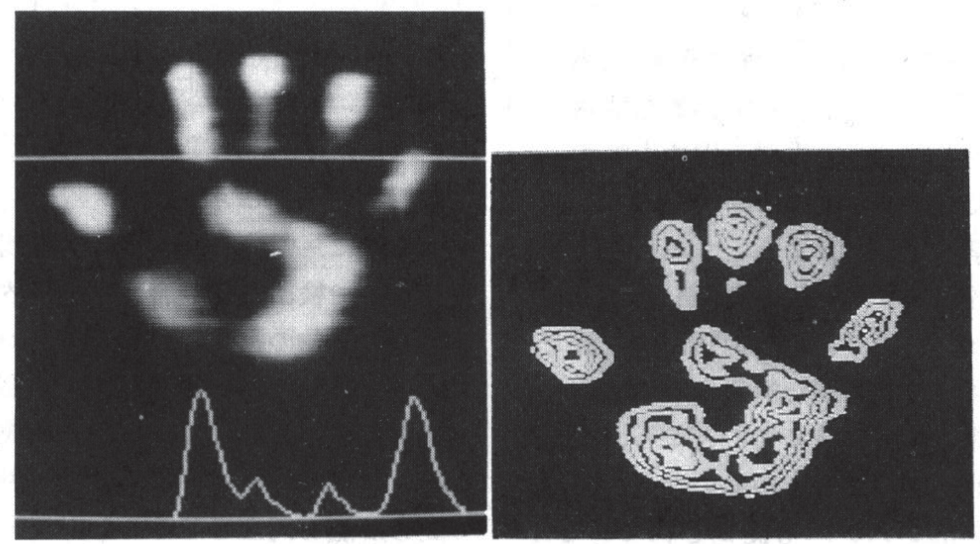


Fig. 2 Structure of the sensor and scanning circuit using zero potential method.



(a) 触覚イメージングセンサ



(b) 圧力分布像 (c) 等圧線像

図3 触覚イメージングの例 (64×64)

石川正俊, “触覚のセンシング技術, ” 精密工学会誌, vol.55, no.9, 1989.

Image sensor

Scanning circuit selects pixels one by one and read out their pixel values from an array of **millions of pixels** in **tens of milliseconds**.

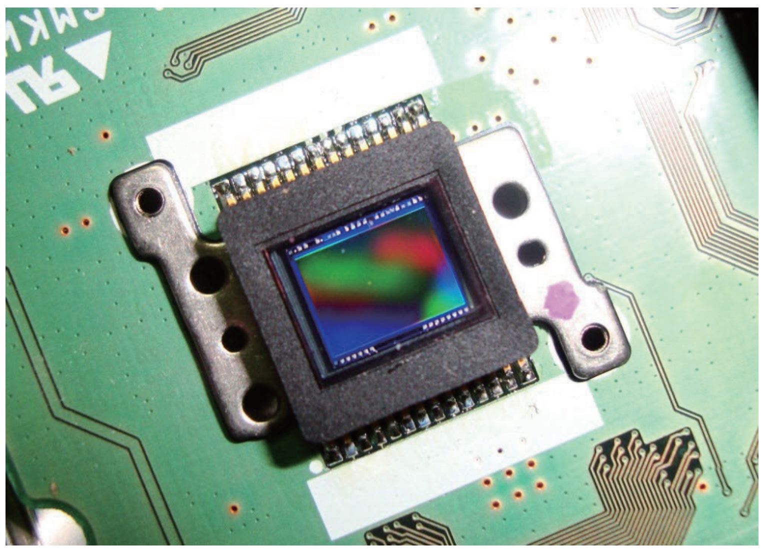
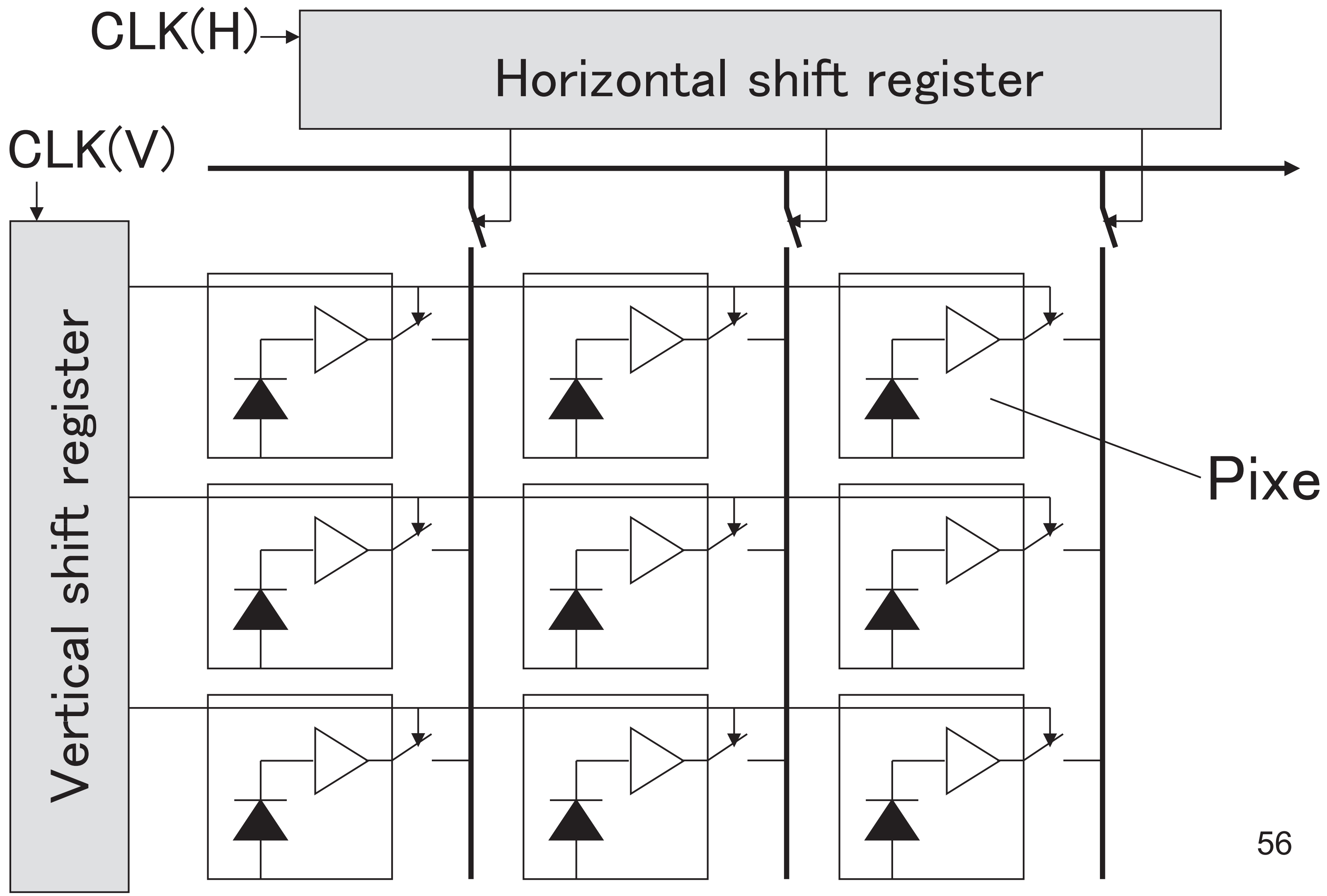


Image sensor



Distributed Tactile Sensor Using Camera

An Object Profile Detection by a High Resolution Tactile Sensor Using an Optical Conductive Plate

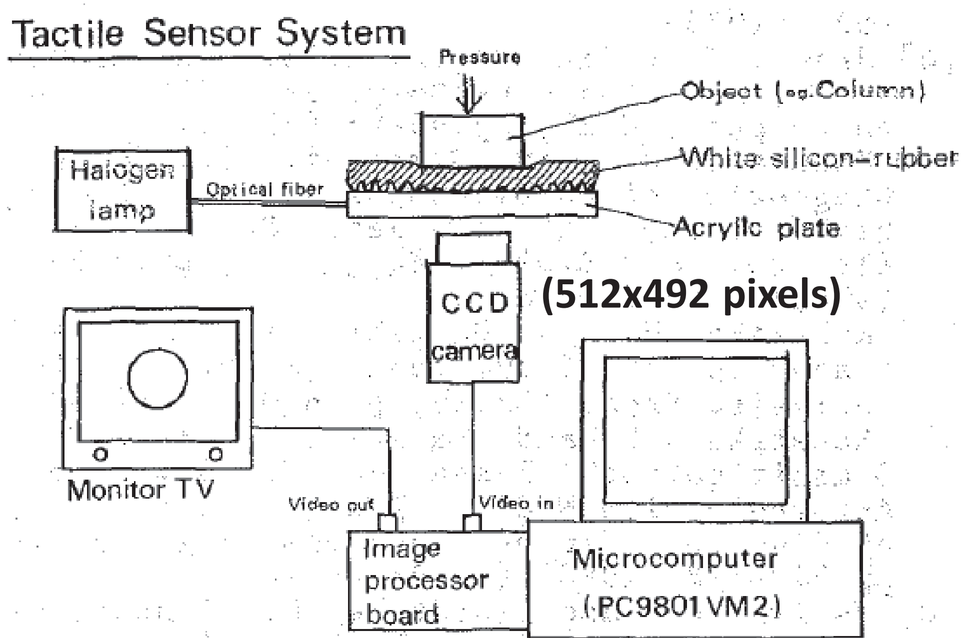


Fig.1 Genaral layout of the sensor system

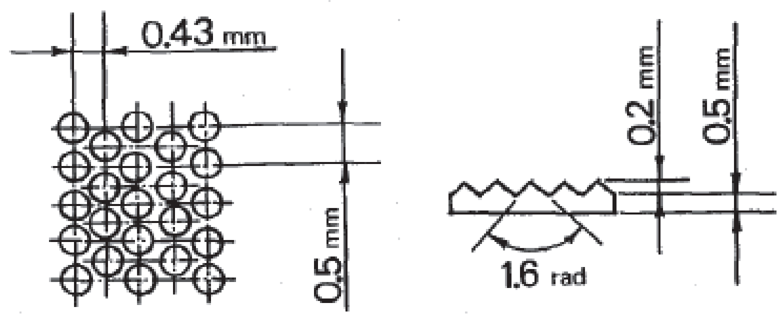
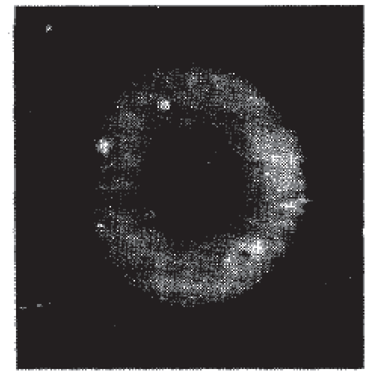
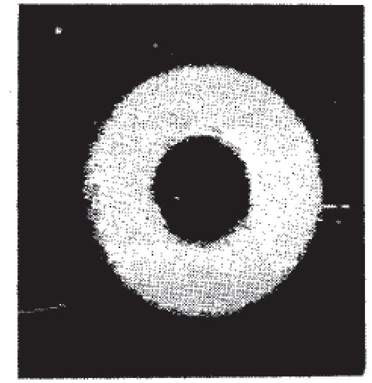


Fig.3 Structure of the sheet



(a) Enhancement



(b) Binarization

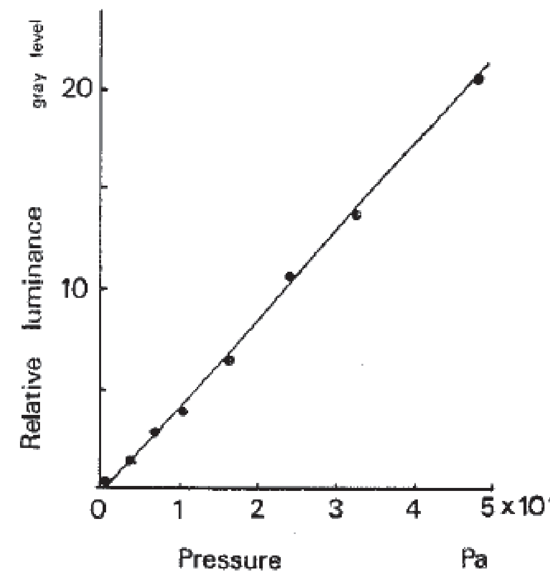
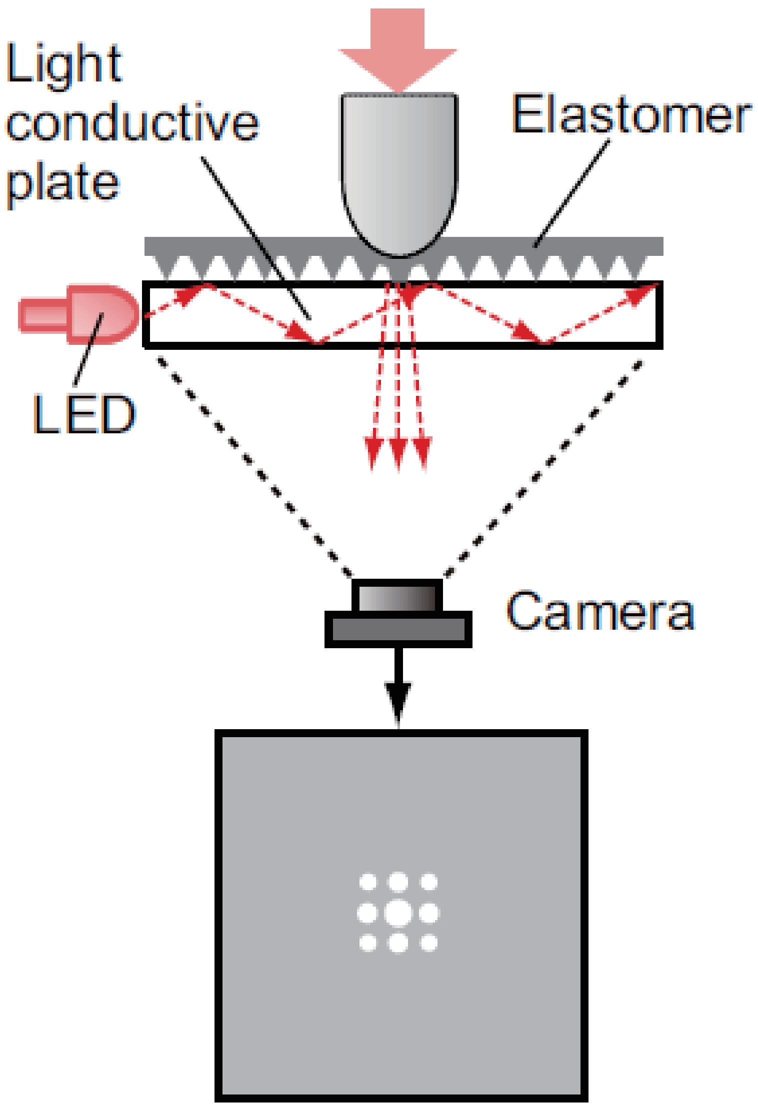


Fig.11 Relation between the applied pressure and the averaged output of the CCD

H.Hiraishi, N.Suzuki, M.Kaneko, K.Tanie, Proc.IECON'88 (1988)

Light conductive plate method



- A total reflection occurs, and light travels inside the light conductive plate while reflecting.

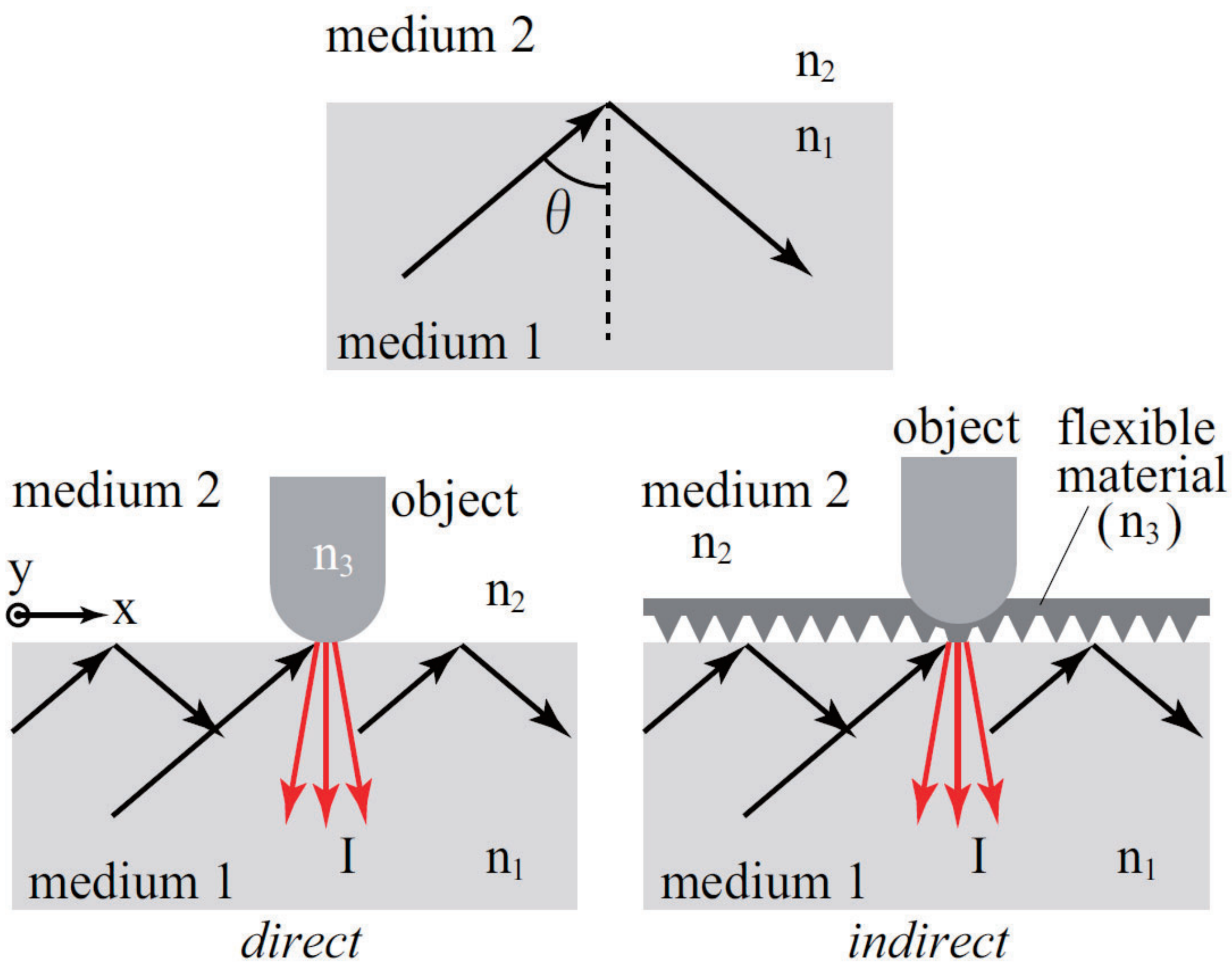
- When an object contacts the light conductive plate, light leaks from the contact area.

- By capturing this scattered light with a camera, the location of contact can be detected.

- It is suitable for detecting the contact area.

Shimonomura, *Sensors*, 2019

Light conductive plate method



Shimonomura, *Sensors*, 2019

Refractive index of the light conductive plate : n_1
Refractive index of the medium outside : n_2
Critical angle（臨界角）θ_m is

$$\theta_m = \sin^{-1}\frac{n_2}{n_1}$$

（For air and acrylic, θ_m is about 42°）

Condition of a total reflection is

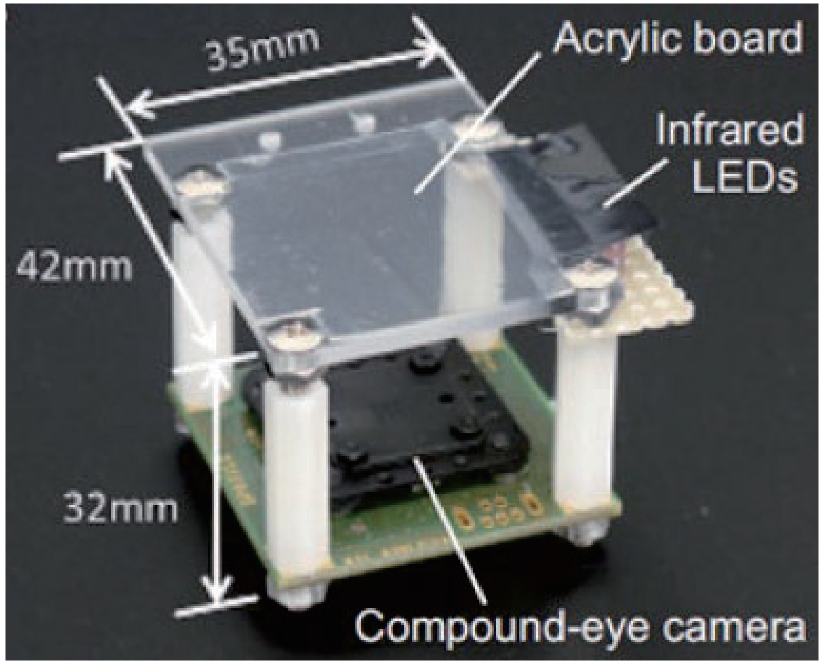
$$\theta > \theta_m$$

When an object contacts the sensor surface, light that do not satisfy the condition of total reflection at that area leak out of the light conductive plate and are reflected on the surface of the contacted object.
This light can be observed by a camera as

$$I(x,y,\lambda) = \rho(\lambda)E(x,y,\lambda)$$

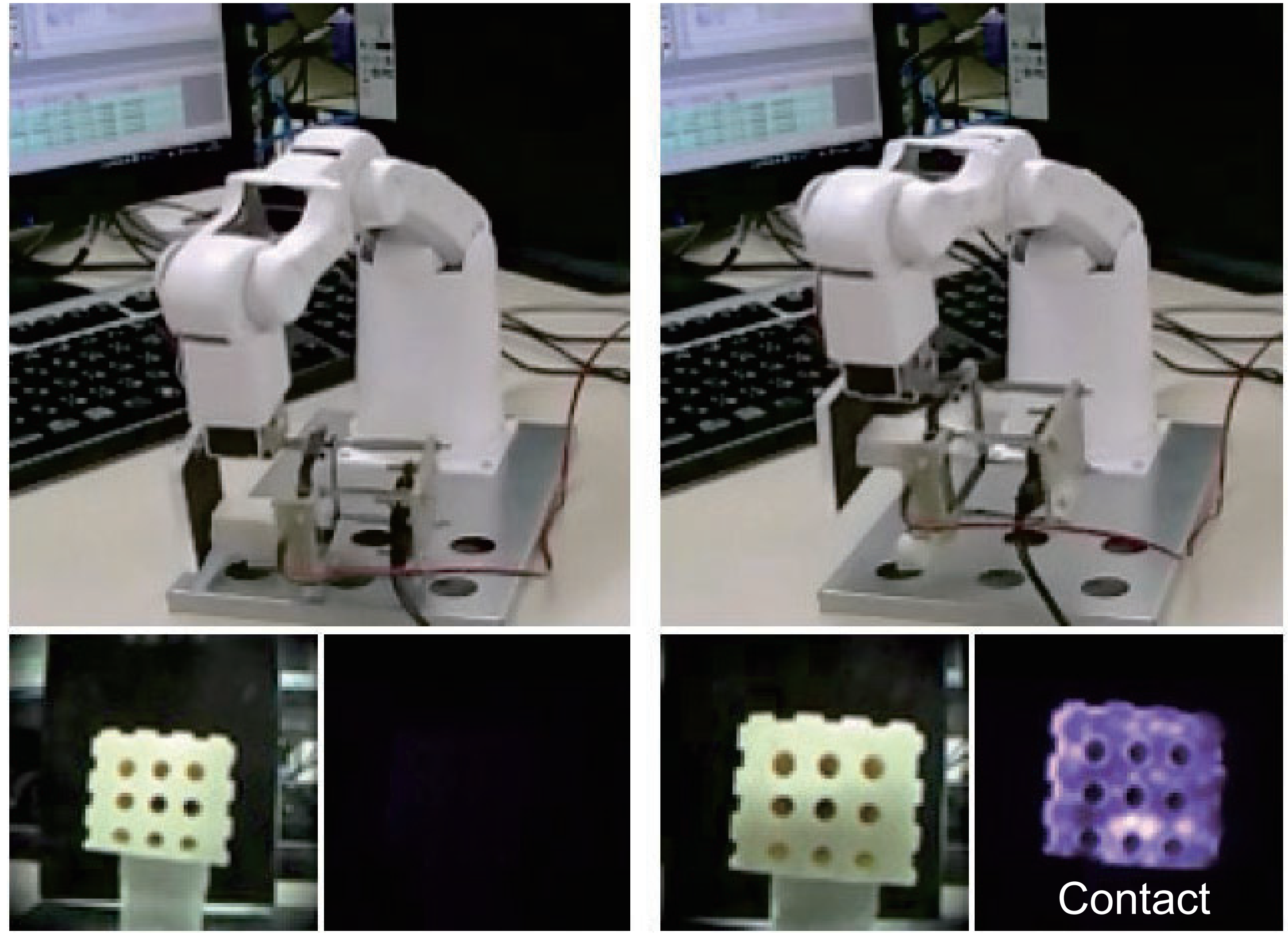
$\rho(\lambda)$: Spectral reflectance of object surface
$E(x,y,\lambda)$: Light intensity applied on the object

Tactile sensor using camera based on light conductive plate method



- Objects directly contact with the light conductive plate
- Near-infrared light is irradiated inside the light conductive plate
- Visible light image and Infrared images are acquired simultaneously

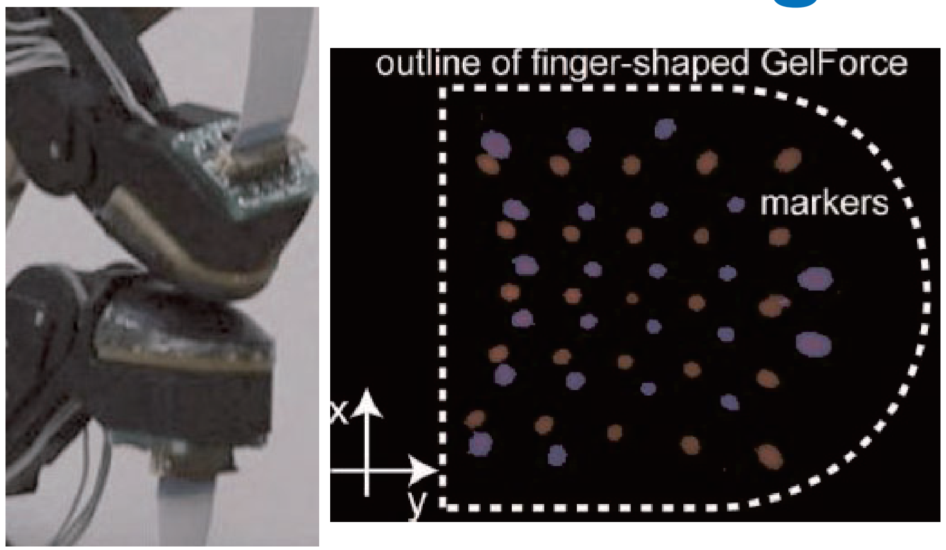
Before contact | After contact



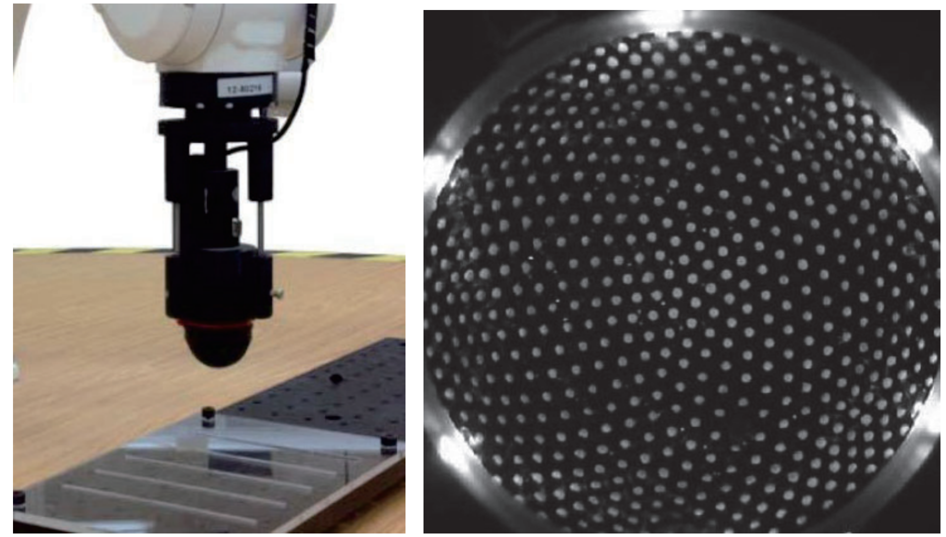
Visible light | Infrared light | Visible light | Infrared light

Shimonomura, Nakashima, *IEEE ICRA2016*

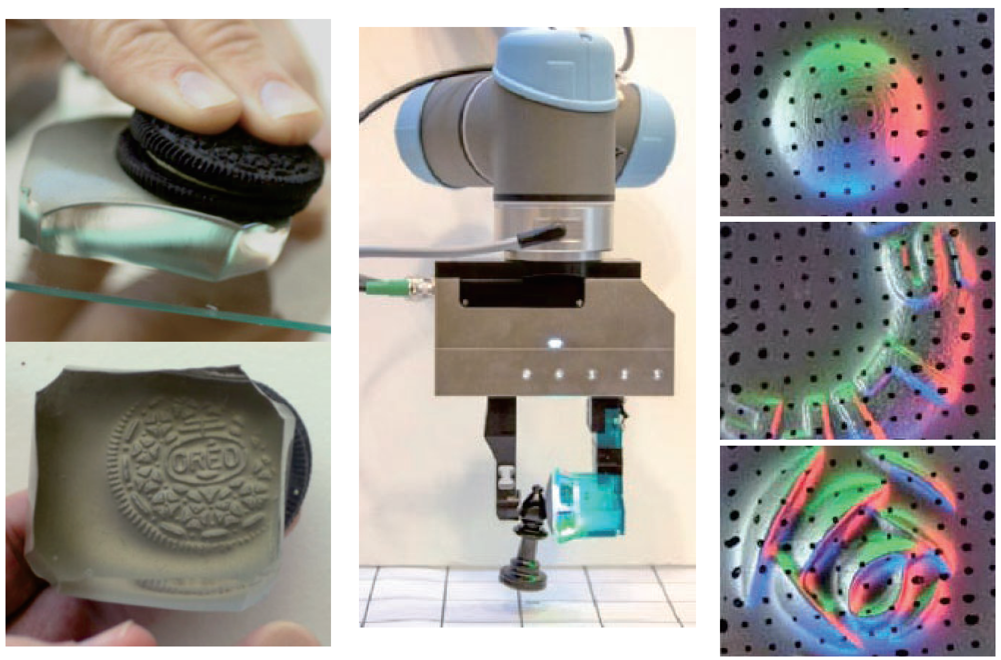
Tactile sensors using camera



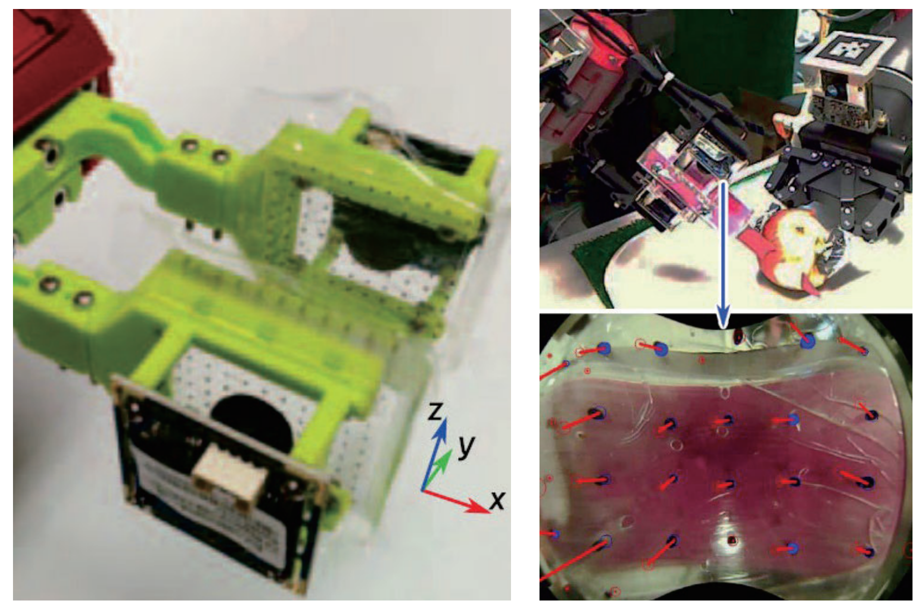
GelForce, Tachi et al., Univ. of Tokyo



TacTip, Lepora et al., Univ. of Bristol

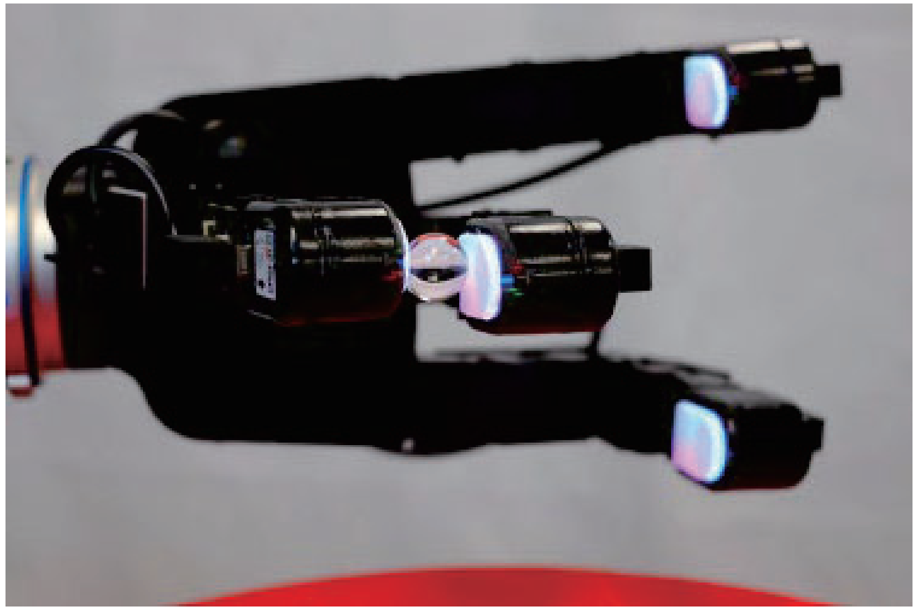


GelSight, Adelson et al., MIT



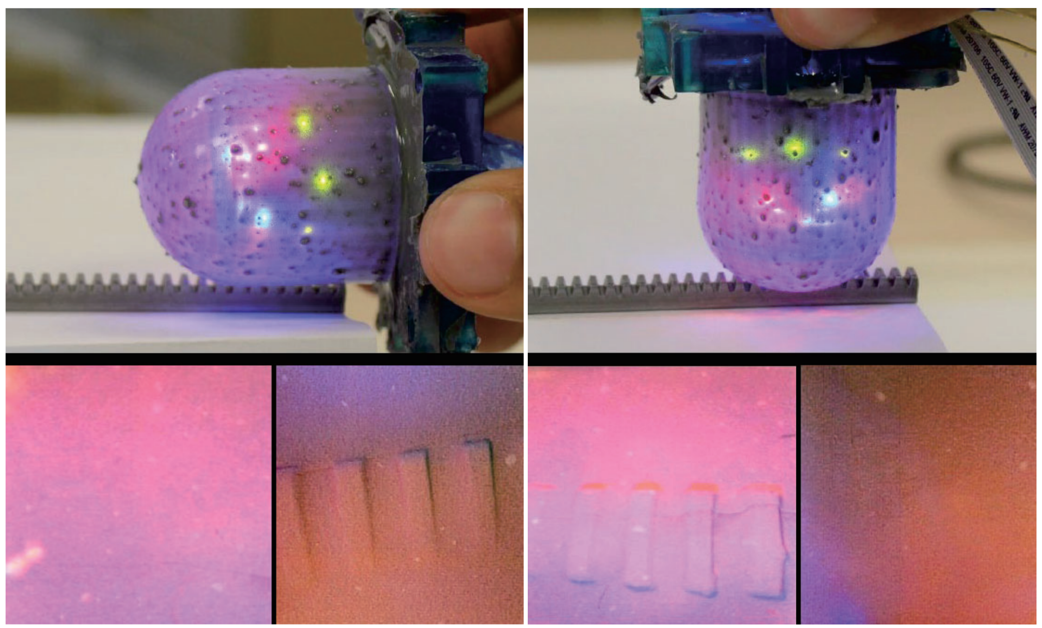
Finger Vision, Yamaguchi et al., Tohoku Univ.

Tactile sensors using camera



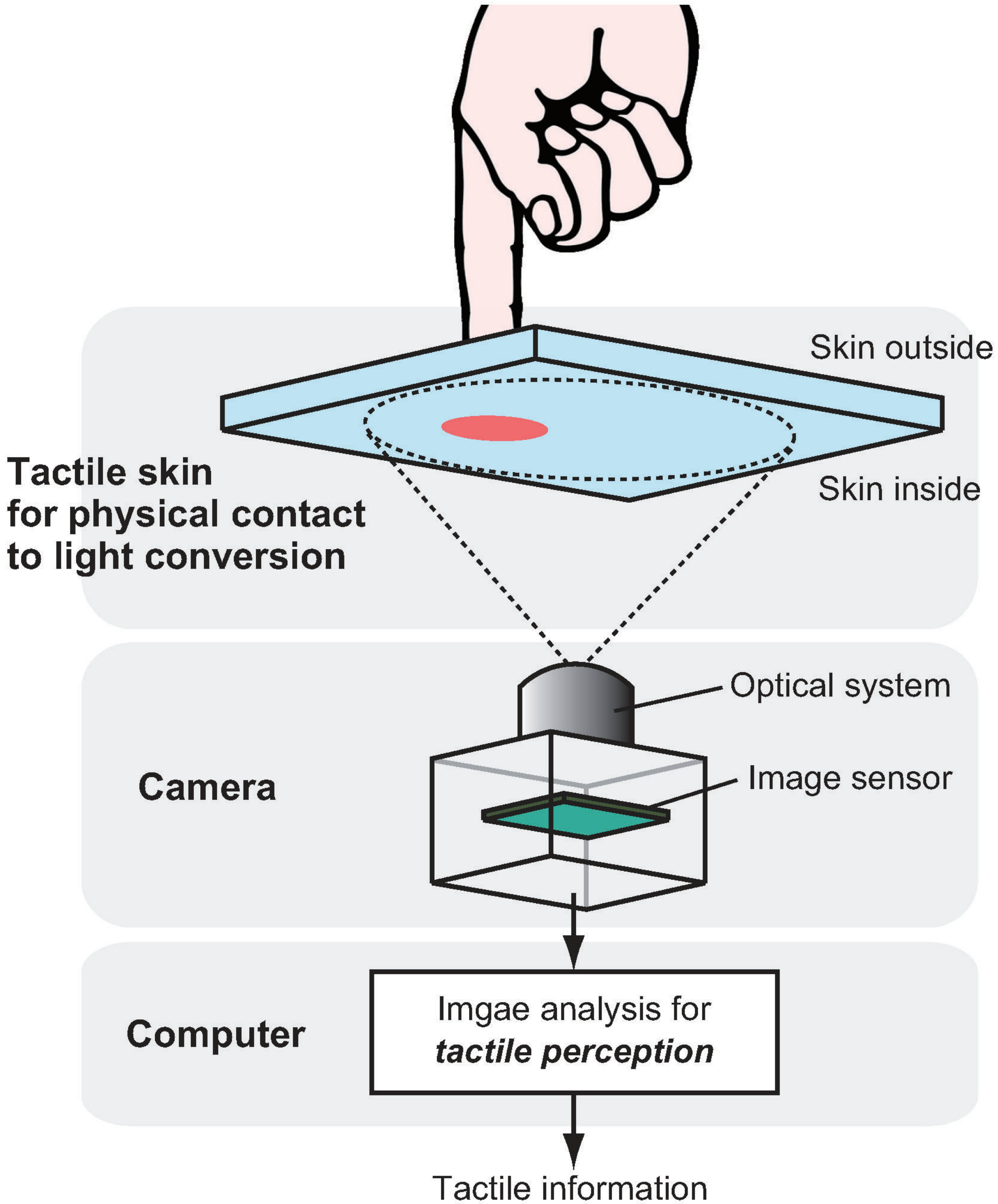
M.Lambeta et al. (Facebook), "DIGIT: A Novel Design for a Low-Cost Compact High-Resolution Tactile Sensor with Application to In-Hand Manipulation," IEEE RA-L, 2020.

N.Kuppuswamy et al. (Toyota Research Institute), "Soft-bubble grippers for robust and perceptive manipulation," IEEE/RSJ IROS2020, 2020.



A.Padmanabha et al. (UC Berkeley) "OmniTact: A Multi-Directional High-Resolution Touch Sensor," IEEE ICRA2020, 2020.

Tactile sensor using camera - Basic structure



Sensor surface (Interaction layer)

Physical contact with a contact surface is converted into optical information. Typical methods are:

- **Light conductive plate method**
- **Marker displacement method**
- **Reflective membrane method**

Camera

The sensor surface is captured from the back side. Use appropriate lighting if necessary.

Computer

The camera image is analyzed and tactile information is extracted.

Shimonomura, K.; Tactile Image Sensors Employing Camera: A Review. Sensors **2019**, 19, 3933.

Advantages of the tactile sensor using camera

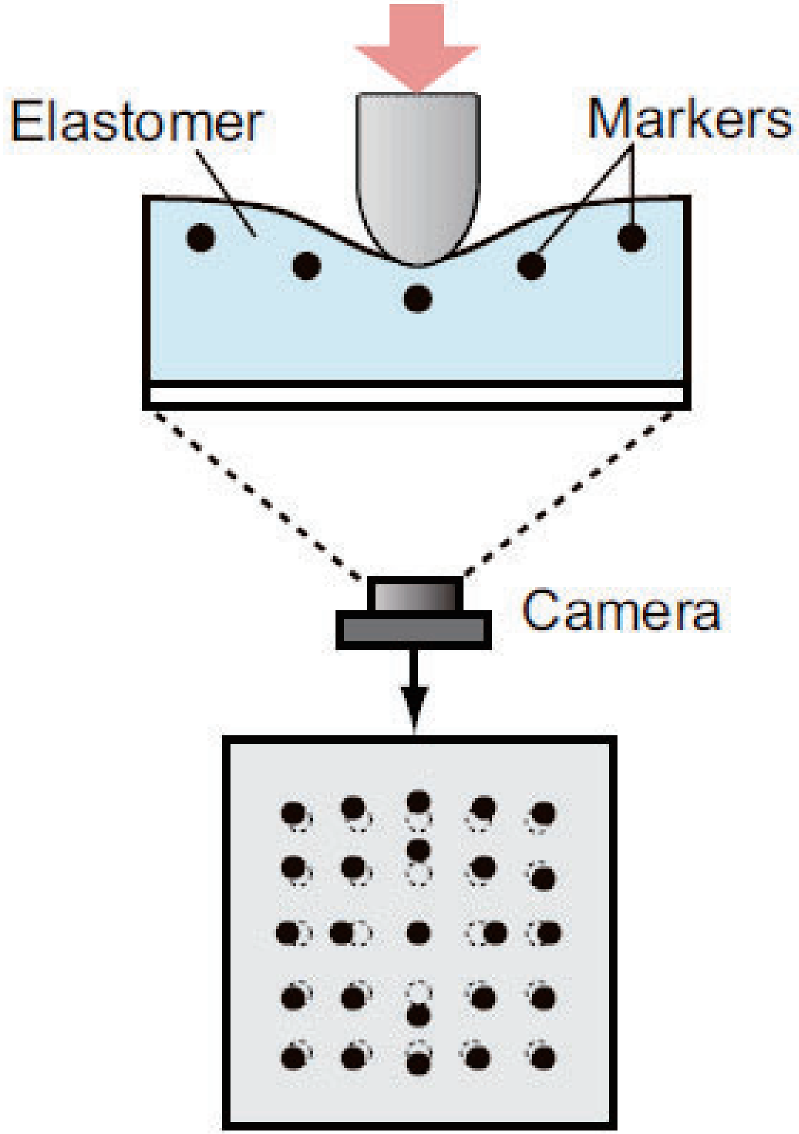
1. **High spatial resolution**
   The measurement range on the sensor surface is measured with the resolution of the number of camera pixels. Spatial resolution on the order of μm is possible.

2. **Flexible adjustment of sensing area**
   Measurement range can be easily adjusted by lens angle of view.
   In particular, it is easier to cover a large sensing area than with other methods.
   (However, there is a trade-off with thickness.)

3. **Robust against failure due to impact**
   The contact sensor surface is physically separated from the camera.
   Only the sensor surface part can be replaced.

4. **Computer vision algorithms and tools can be applied**
   Suitable for use with OpenCV and for applying image recognition methods based on deep learning.

Marker displacement method



- Embed the markers inside the transparent flexible material.

- When a force is applied to the flexible material by contact and the flexible material deforms, the marker inside changes its position.

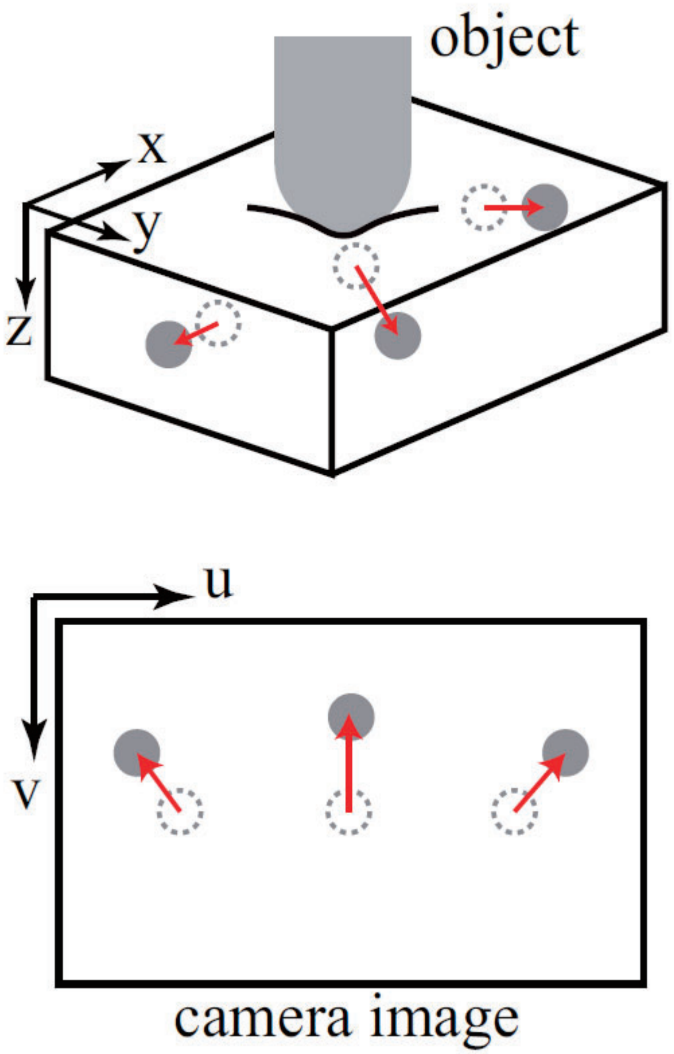
- Capture this marker displacement with a camera as image.

- The correspondence between the displacement of the markers and the desired tactile information (e.g., force) is calculated.

- Suitable for force measurement, especially in shear direction.

Shimonomura, *Sensors*, 2019

Marker displacement method



Shimonomura, *Sensors*, 2019

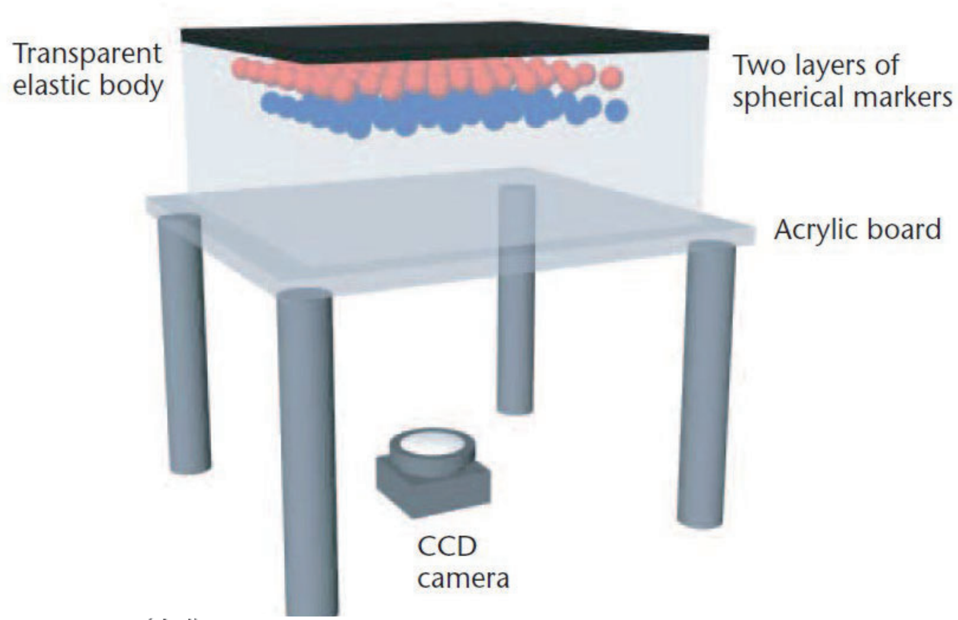
Position in the 3D coordinate of the maker i at the time t corresponds to $\boldsymbol{u}_i(t)$ in the image coordinate.
P is perspective camera matrix.

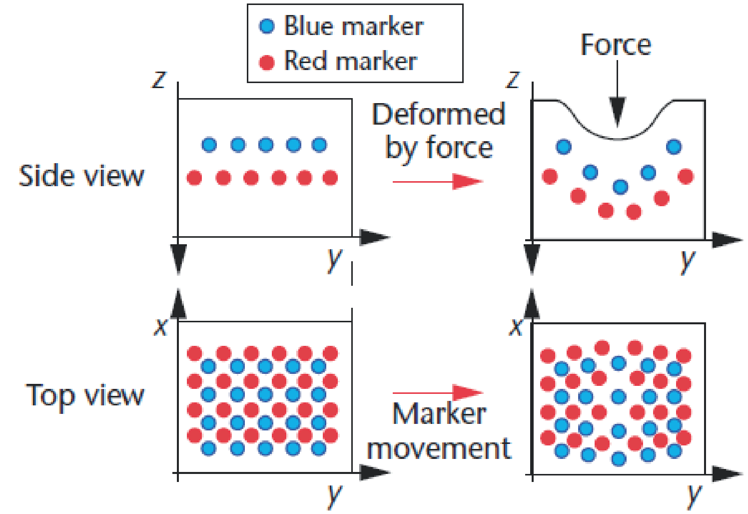
$$\boldsymbol{u}_i(t) = \begin{bmatrix} su_i(t) \\ sv_i(t) \\ s \end{bmatrix} = P \begin{bmatrix} x_i(t) \\ y_i(t) \\ z_i(t) \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

To detect the displacement in z direction, you can
- use multiple camera, or
- measure diameter change of the marker on the image

Tactile information such as contact position, force, etc. are estimated from the change of each marker from its initial position or the change between consecutive times.

Vision-Based Sensor for Real-Time Measuring of Surface Traction Fields





5 Representing depth information through color.

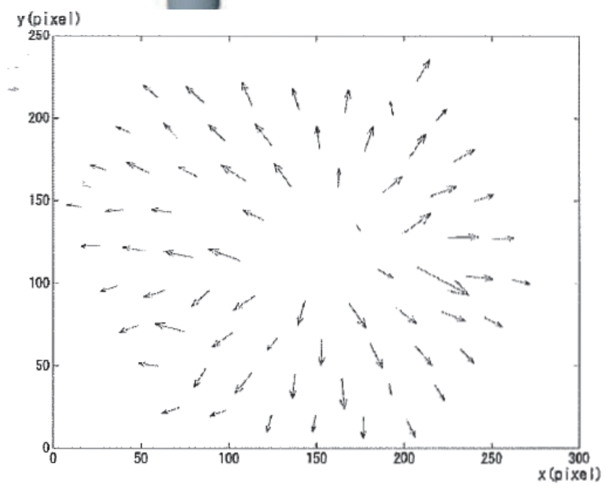


Fig. 6. Calculate movement vectors of red markers when given z-directional force

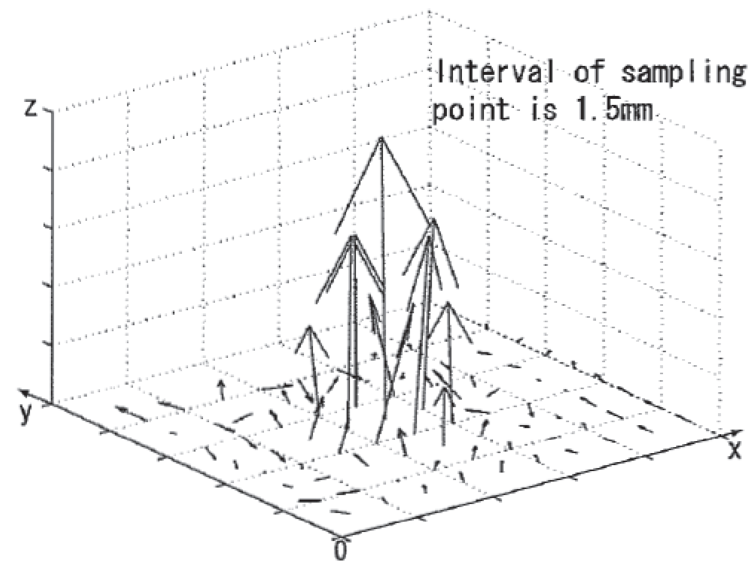
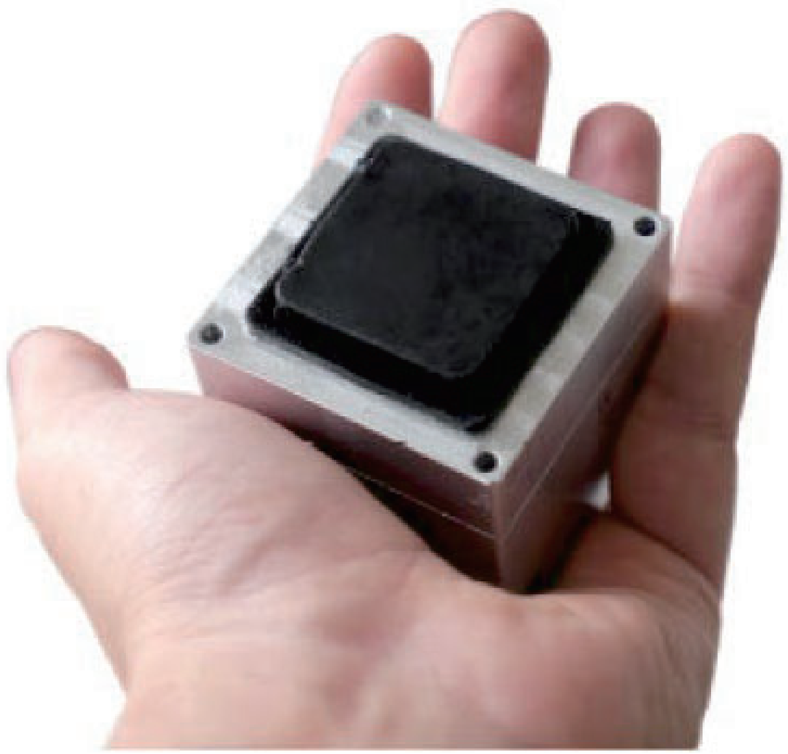
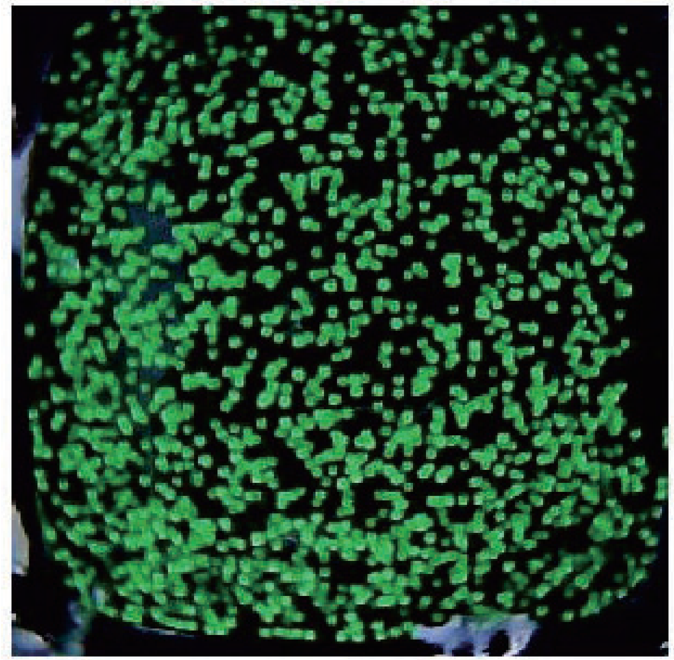


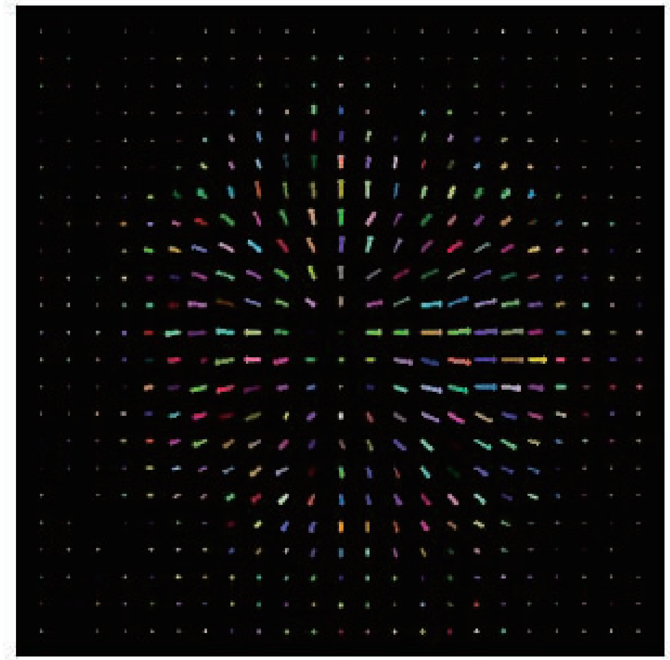
Fig. 7. Distribution of force vector using circular cylinder of 5mm diameter

K.Kamiyama, K.Vlack, T.Mizota, H.Kajimoto, N.Kawakami, S.Tachi, *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications*, (2005)

Design, Motivation and Evaluation of a Full-Resolution Optical Tactile Sensor



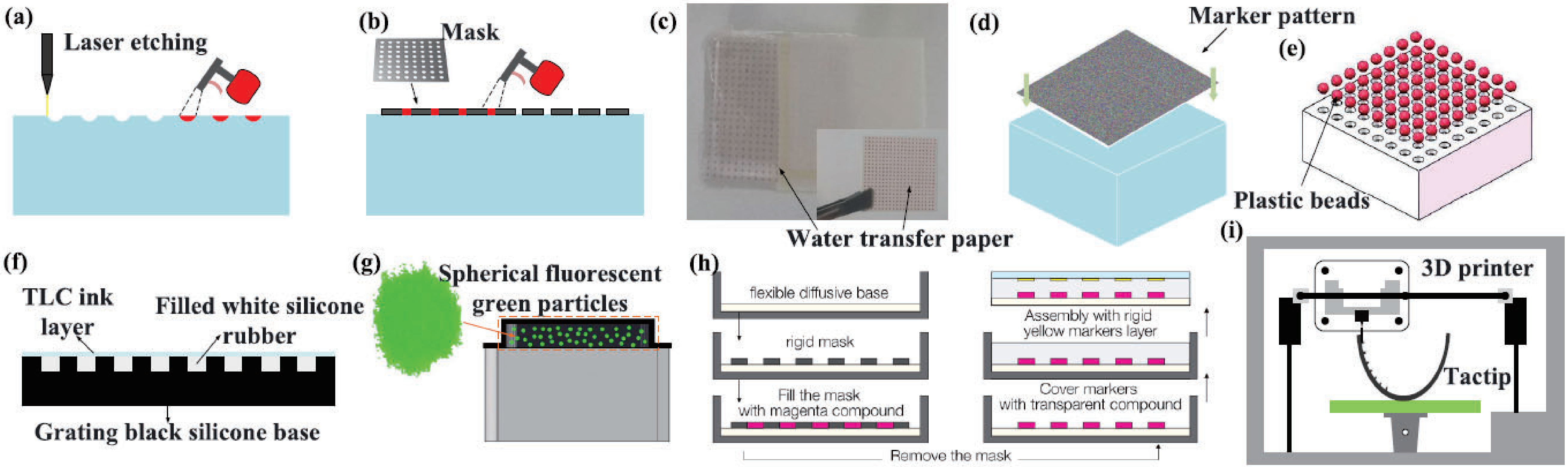




- A large number of measurement points (361 points) are realized by embedding a large number of small particles of 0.5 mm in diameter randomly and obtaining dense optical flow.
- The distribution of normal force was estimated using deep learning.

C. Sferrazza and R. D’Andrea, *Sensors*, 19, 2019

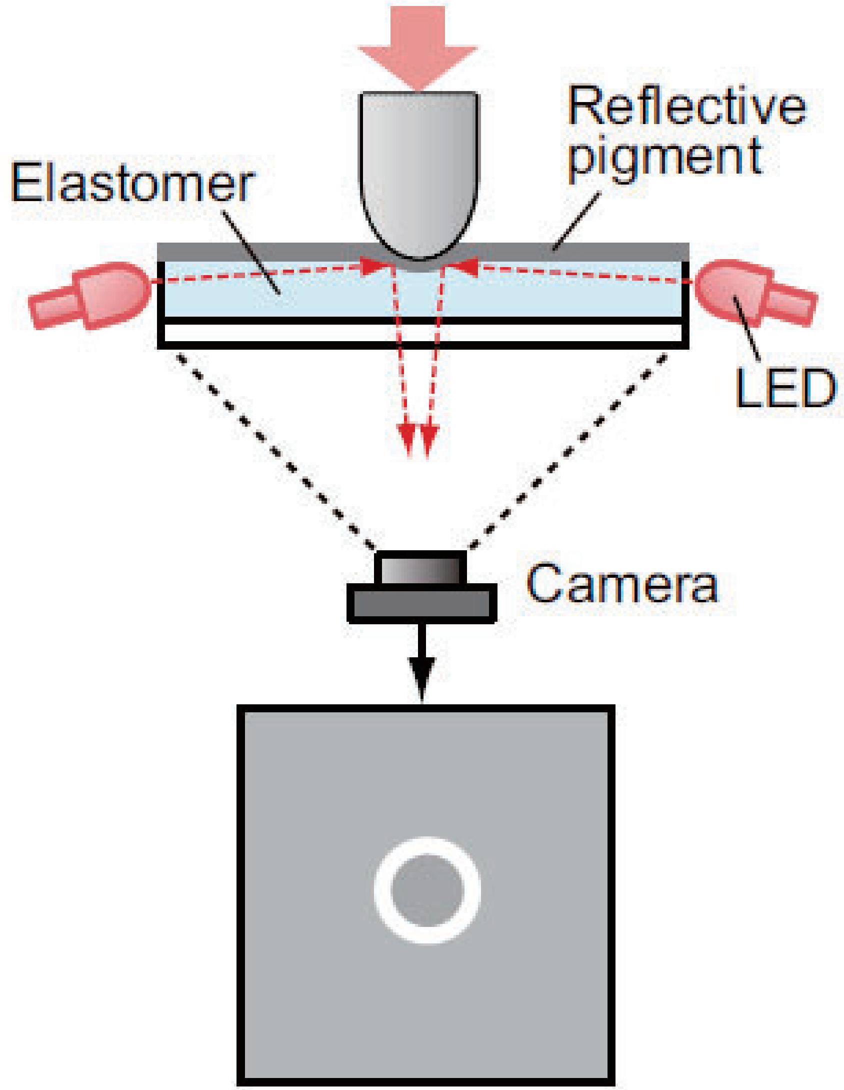
Fabrication: Marker preparation



(a) Laser etching locates marker holes and then sprays paint. **(b)** Spray paint on the template to print markers. **(c)** Attach water transfer paper to the contact surface to print markers. **(d)** Stick a semitransparent pattern of random color pixels on the contact surface. **(e)** Embed plastic beads in the holes. **(f)** White silicone is filled into the grooves. **(g)** Spherical fluorescent green particles are mixed into the contact body. **(h)** Two marker layers are separately fabricated inside the contact body. **(i)** 3-D printer prints tip and pins.

S. Zhang et al., "Hardware Technology of Vision-Based Tactile Sensor: A Review", IEEE Sensors Journal, 2022.

Reflective membrane method



- The surface of a sheet of transparent flexible material is coated with a thin reflective membrane.

- The sensor surface with the reflective membrane deforms according to the surface shape of the object in contact.

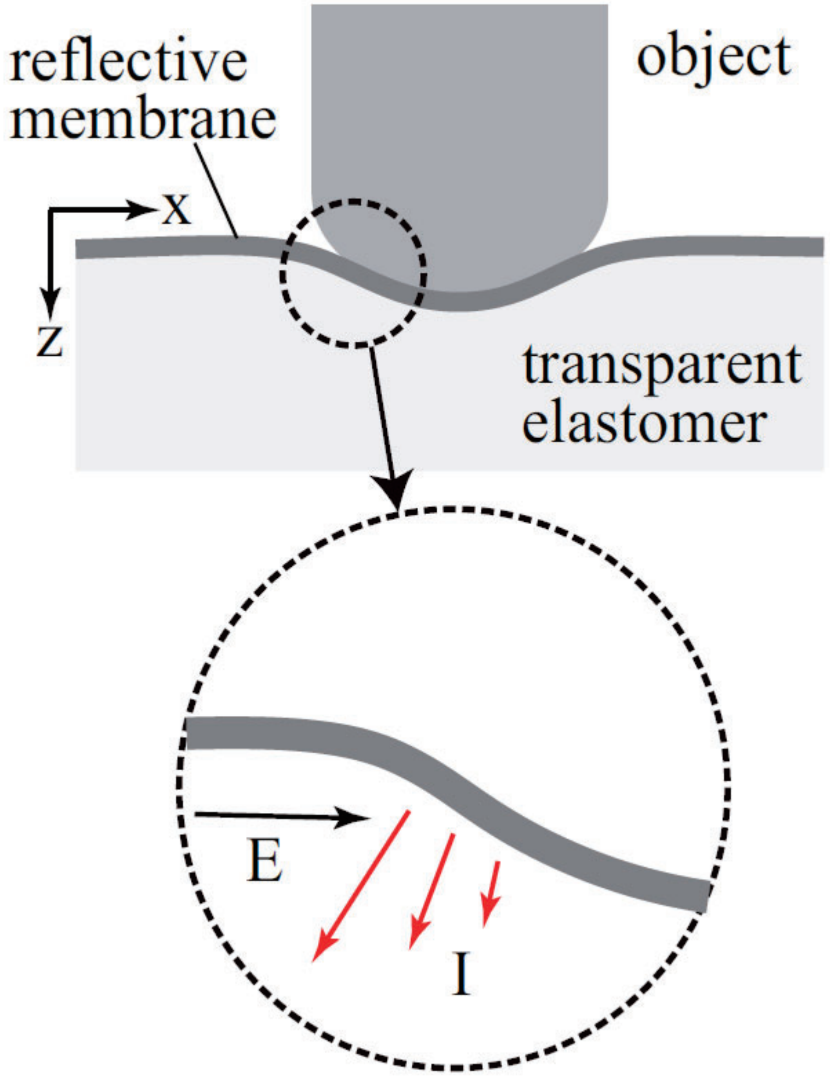
- By illuminating the backside of the reflective membrane from the side, the edges of the deformed area are illuminated and become brighter.

- Captur this reflective membrane from the backside with a camera.

- Suitable for detecting minute structure (texture) on the surface of an object.

Shimonomura, *Sensors*, 2019

Reflective membrane method



Shimonomura, *Sensors*, 2019

Height z at the point (x,y) is expressed as:

$$z = f(x, y)$$

The gradient of the surface is

$$p = \frac{\partial f}{\partial x}, \quad q = \frac{\partial f}{\partial y}$$

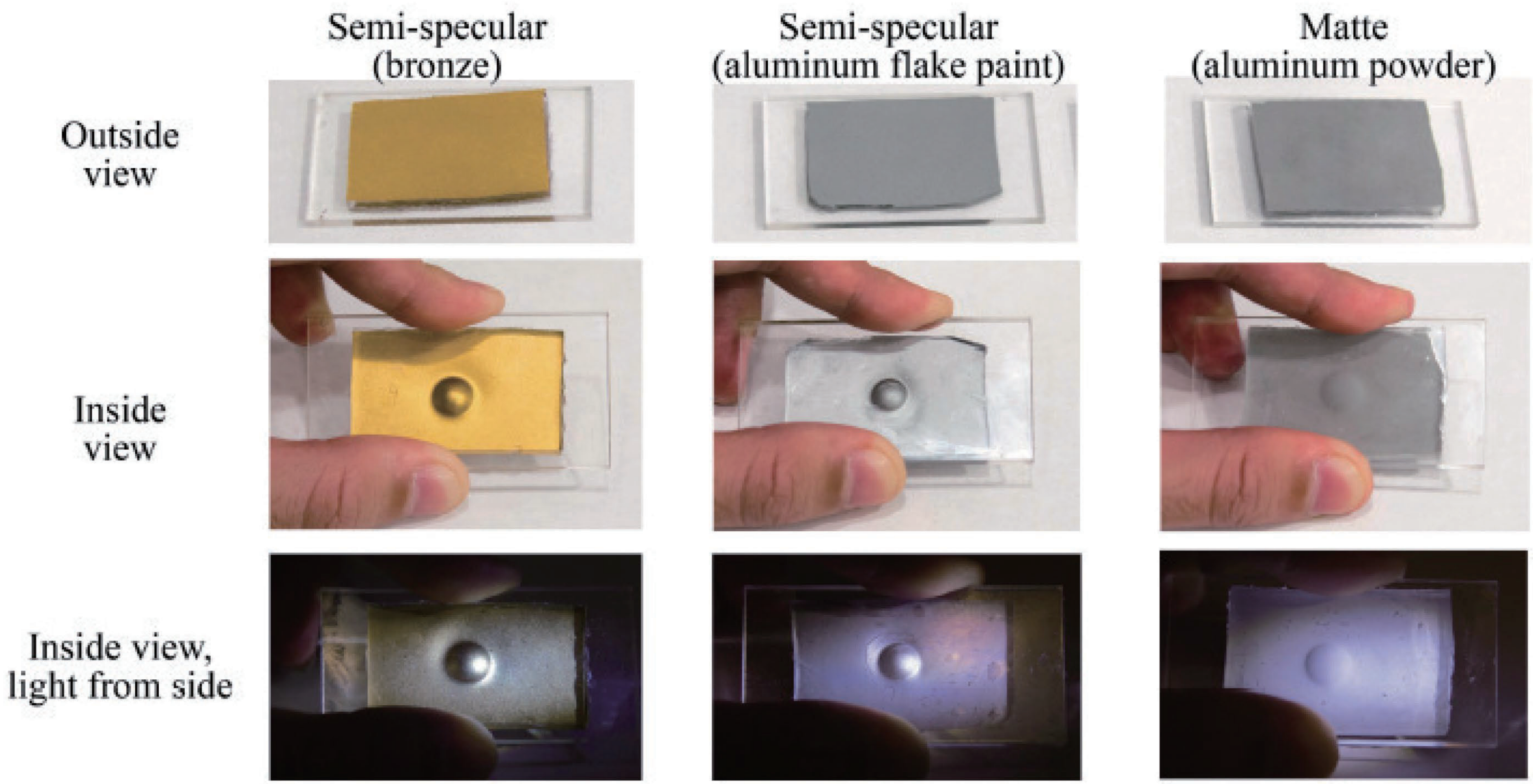
The intensity of the reflected light at the point (x,y)

$$I(x, y) = R(p, q)E(x, y)$$

where E is intensity of the illumination light,
R is reflectance map.

By illuminating the reflective membrane from the side parallel to the sensor surface, even slight bump on the backside of the sensor surface can be well visualized.

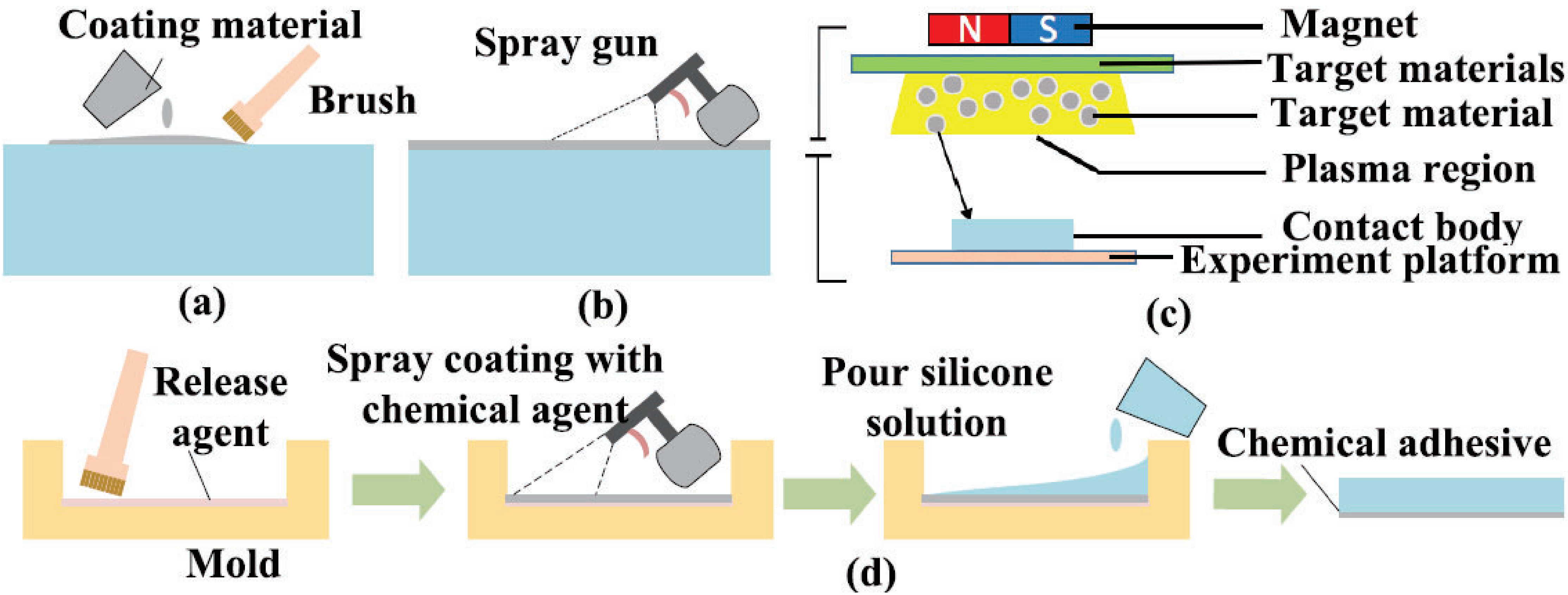
Examples of reflective membrane



To visualize a fine surface texture, a reflective membrane with a large regular reflection component is preferable.

W. Yuan, S. Dong, and E. H. Adelson, “GelSight: High-Resolution Robot Tactile Sensors for Estimating Geometry and Force,” *Sensors*, 17, 2017

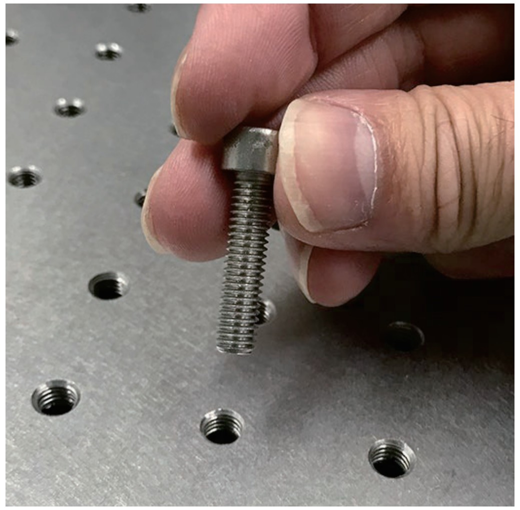
Fabrication: Reflective membrane preparation



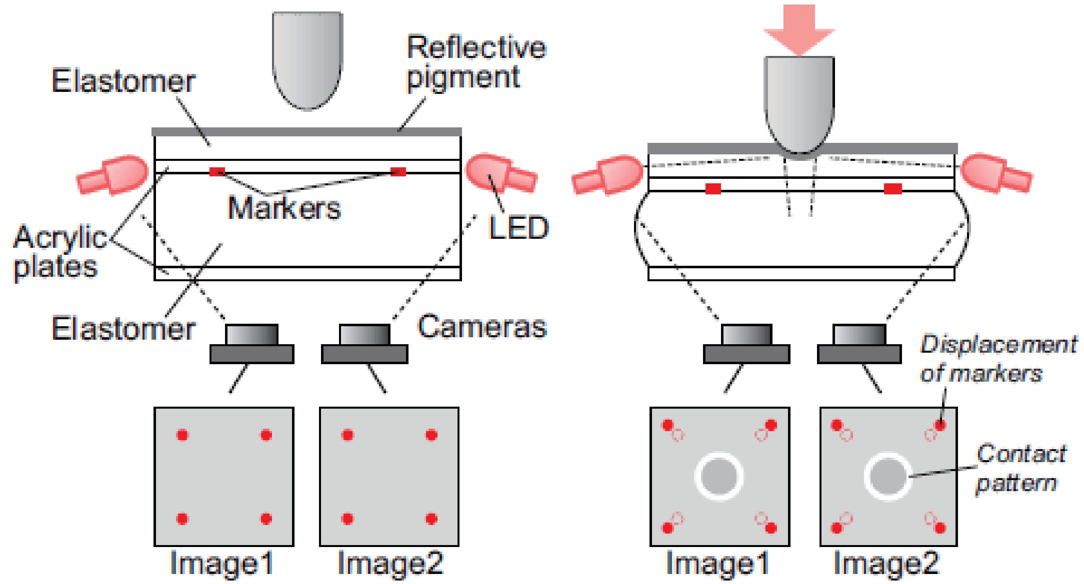
(a) Brushing paint on the contact surface is the simplest approach to fabricating a coating. However, it has low uniformity. **(b)** Spraying is an effective method to improve uniformity, but it depends on the skill and feel of the operator. **(c)** We prefer the sputtering process because it can provide a smooth coating.
It has a limitation in durability because of low adhesion between metal and silicone. **(d)** Preparation process of chemical adhesion. The uncured paint and silicone form a strong chemical bond to improve adhesion.

S. Zhang et al., “Hardware Technology of Vision-Based Tactile Sensor: A Review”, IEEE Sensors Journal, 2022.

Combined sensor for in-hand localization and force measurement



Inserting a bolt into a target hole based on tactile information.



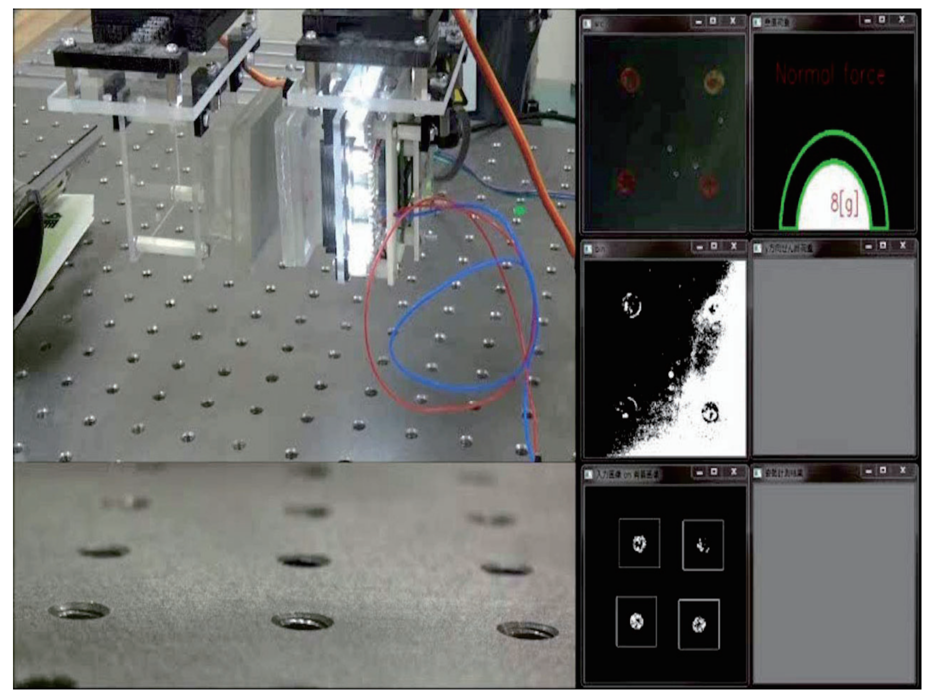
<u>In-hand localization of the bolt</u>

To align the bolt tip position and orientation with the target hole

<u>Force estimation at the tip of the bolt</u>

To know if the bolt tip has inserted the hole

→ Combine **Reflective membrane** and **Marker displacement methods**



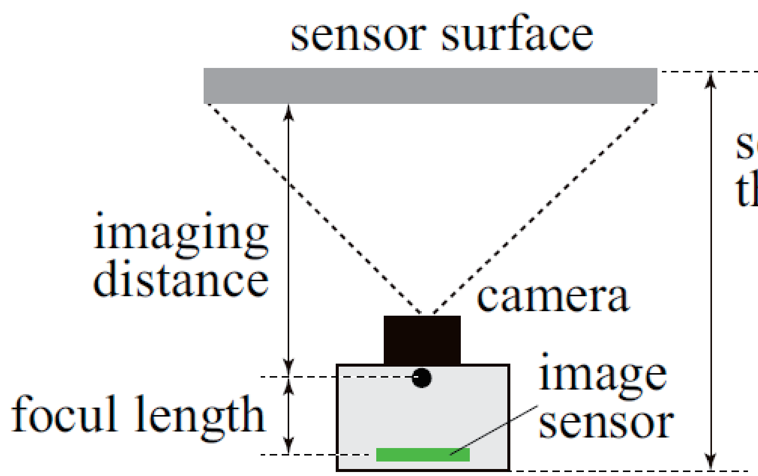
Normal force

Shear force

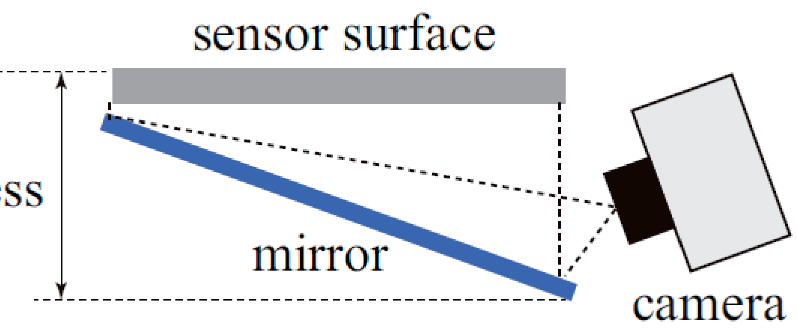
Bolt localization

Nozu, Shimonomura, *IEEE/ASME AIM2018*

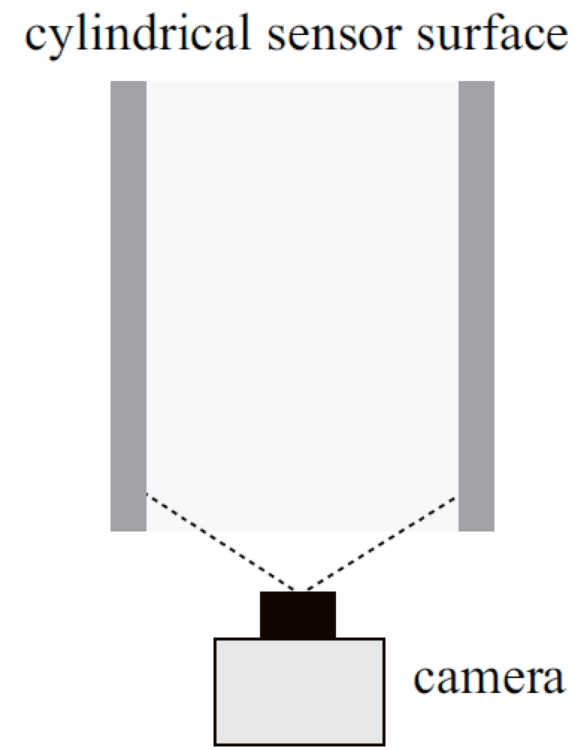
Shape of the sensor



Standard camera arrangement



Thinner sensor



Cylindrical sensor

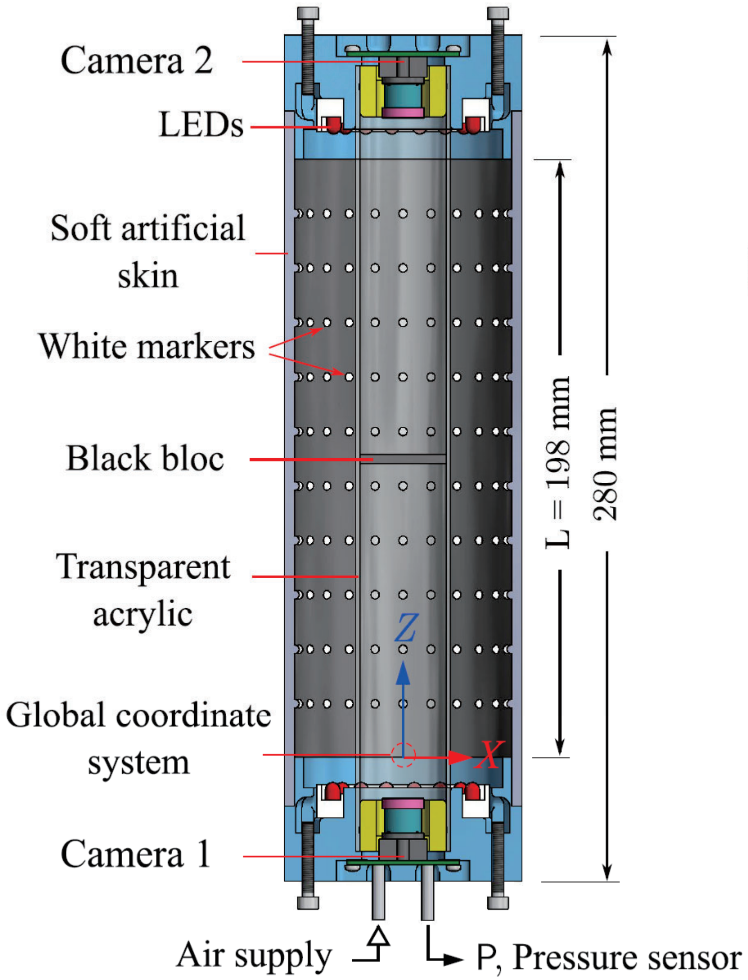
- When the sensor is attached to a finger of a gripper, the large thickness of the sensor may interfere with the gripping motion.

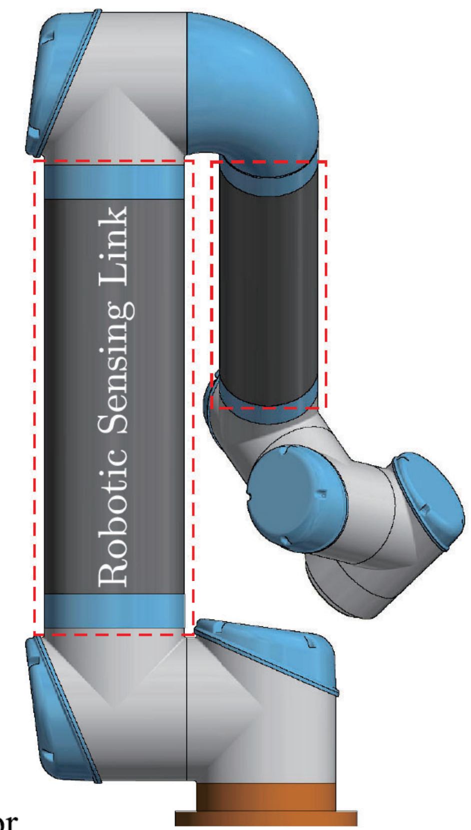
- Thinner sensor with a structure that uses a mirror to capture the reflected image of the sensor surface. （Donlon et al., *IEEE/RSJ IROS2018*）

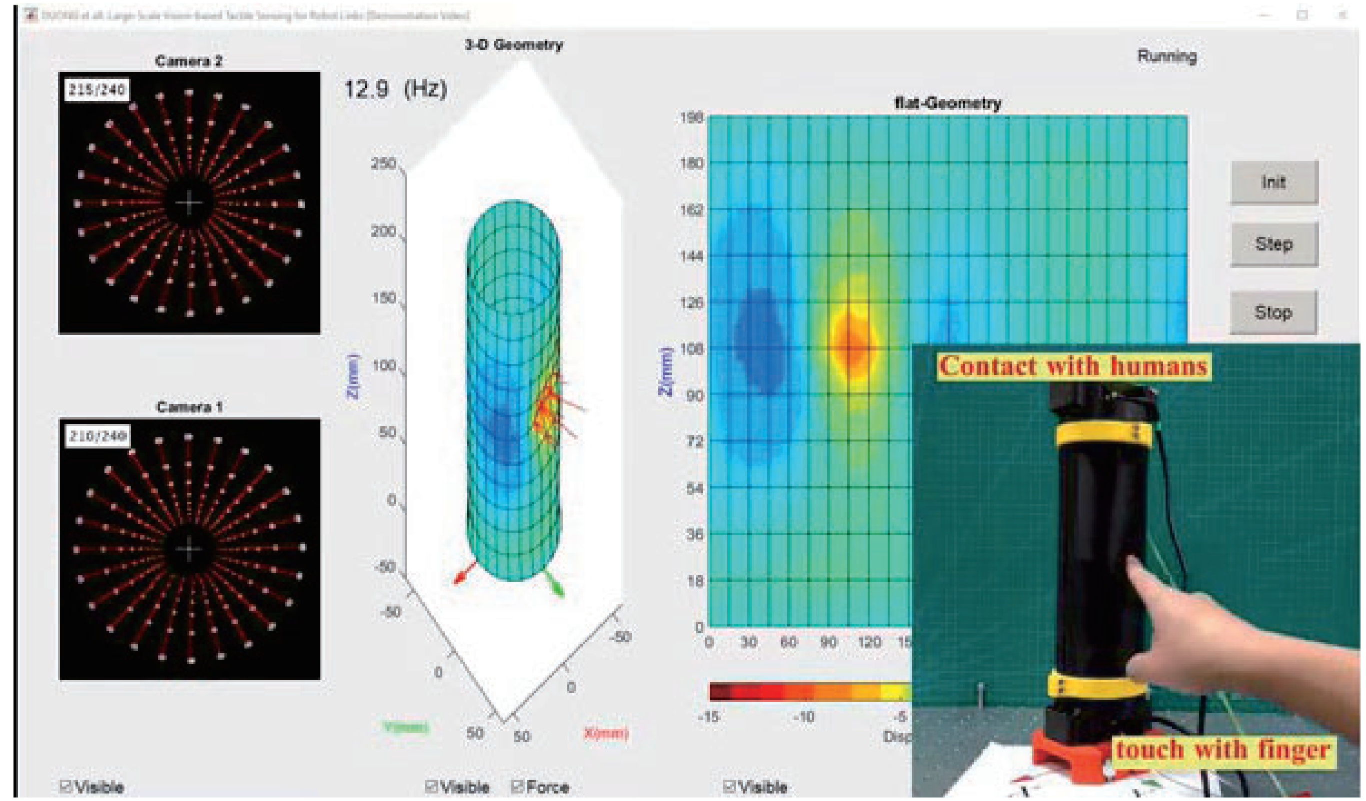
- Acquires tactile information on the entire outer surface of the cylindrical sensor body.
- Suitable for the link part of a robot arm （Duong et al., *IEEE Robosoft2019*）

Shimonomura, *Sensors*, 2019

Large-scale vision-based tactile sensing for robot links





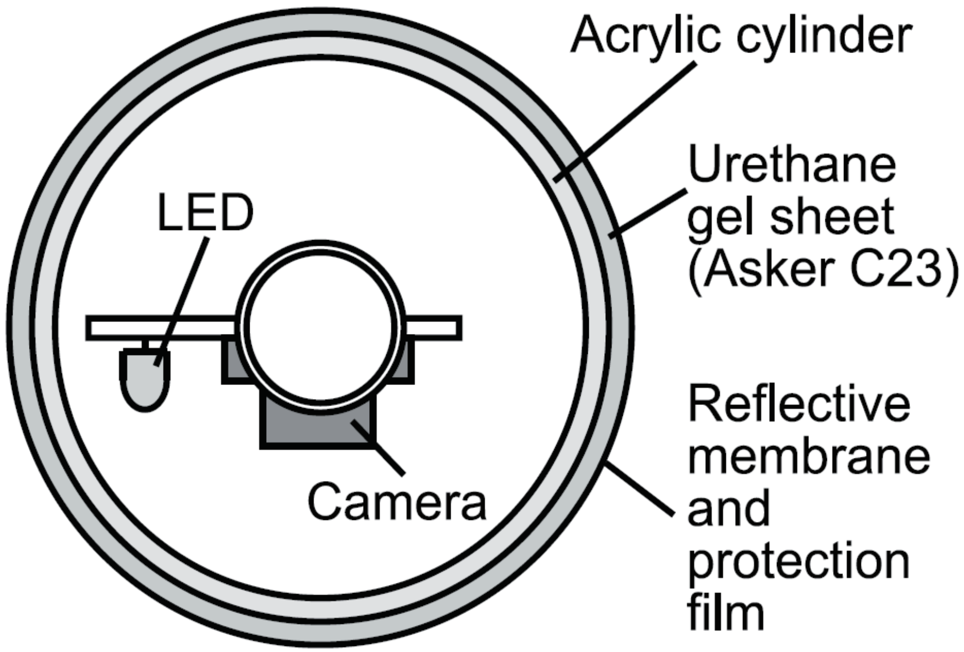


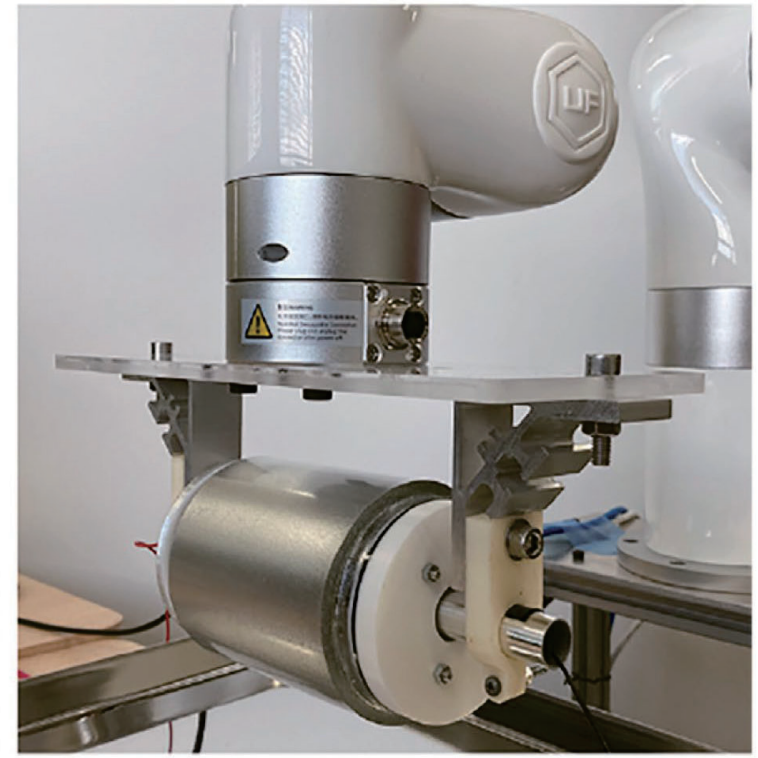
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvDtyXpf2HU

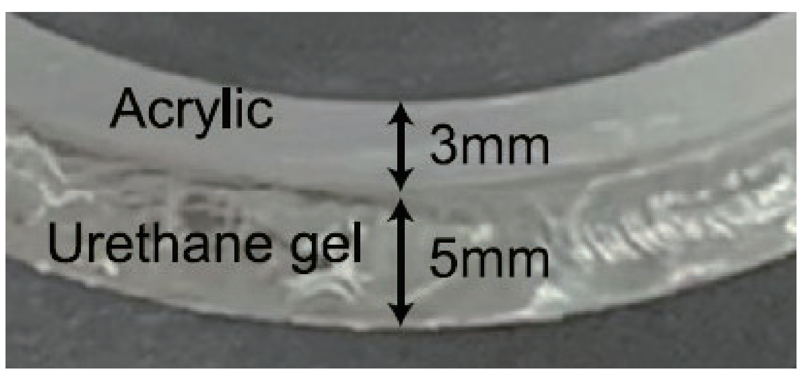
L.V.Duong et al., IEEE Trans. on Robotics, 2020.

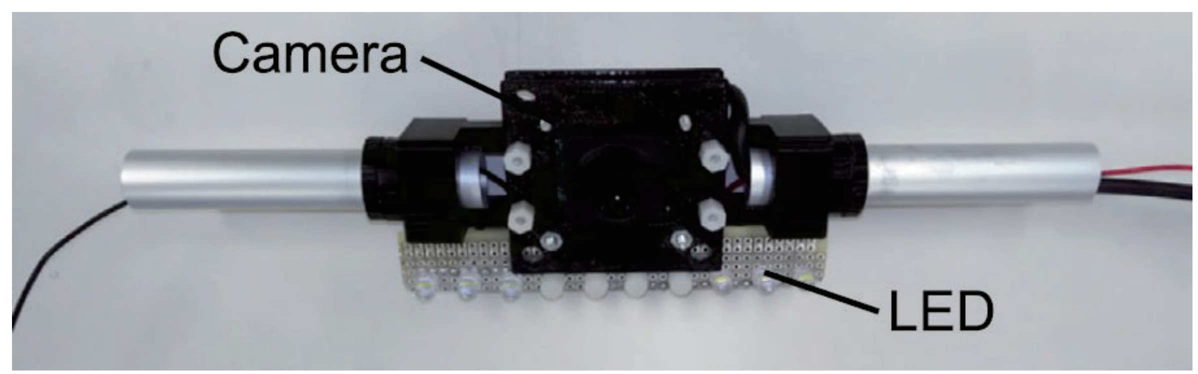
Roller tactile image sensor

The sensor surface is roller-shaped and rolls over the target surface for continuous sensing over a wide area.





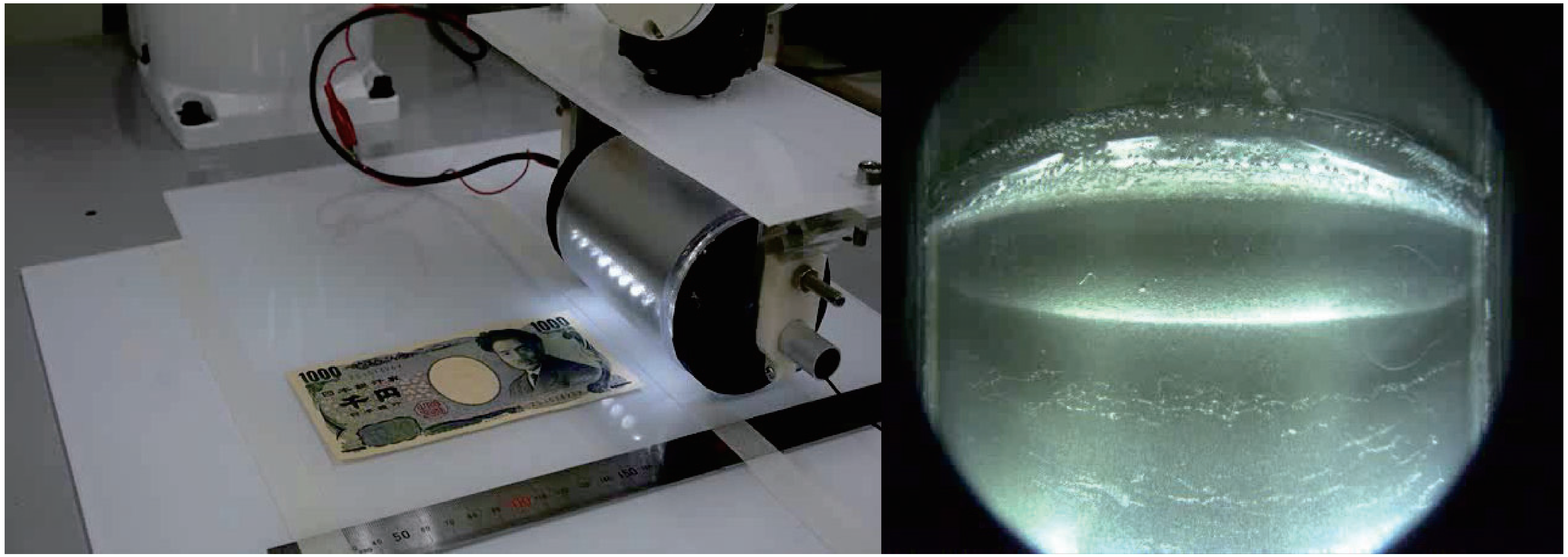




Shimonomura, Chang, Murata, ***Frontiers in Robotics and AI,*** 2021

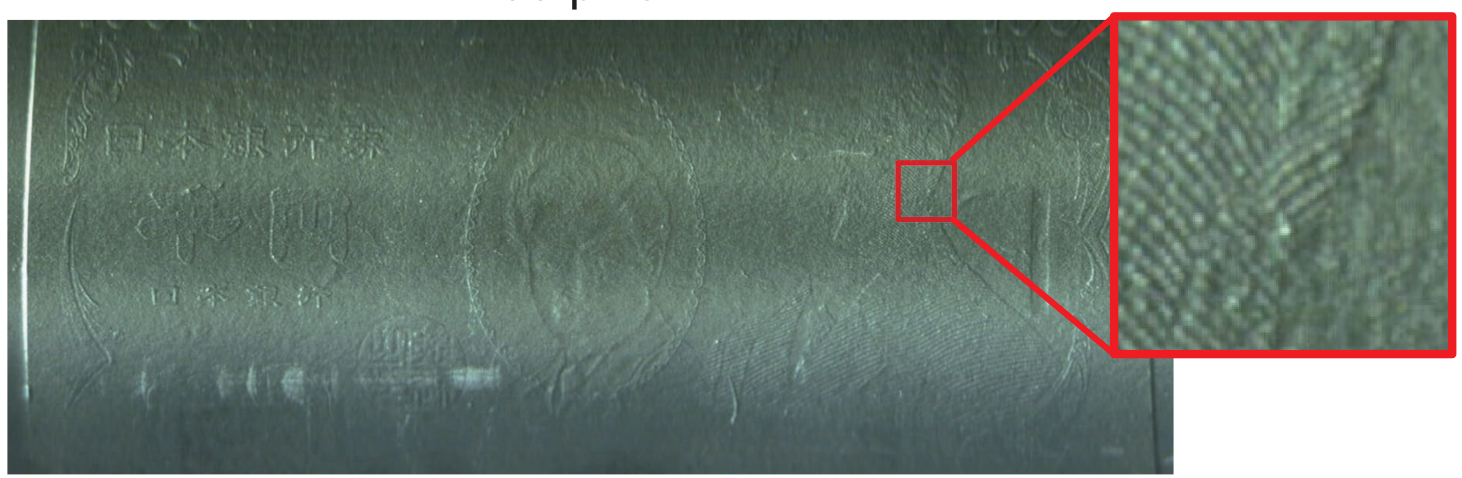
Roller tactile image sensor

The sensor surface is roller-shaped and rolls over the target surface for continuous sensing over a wide area.



4100 pixel

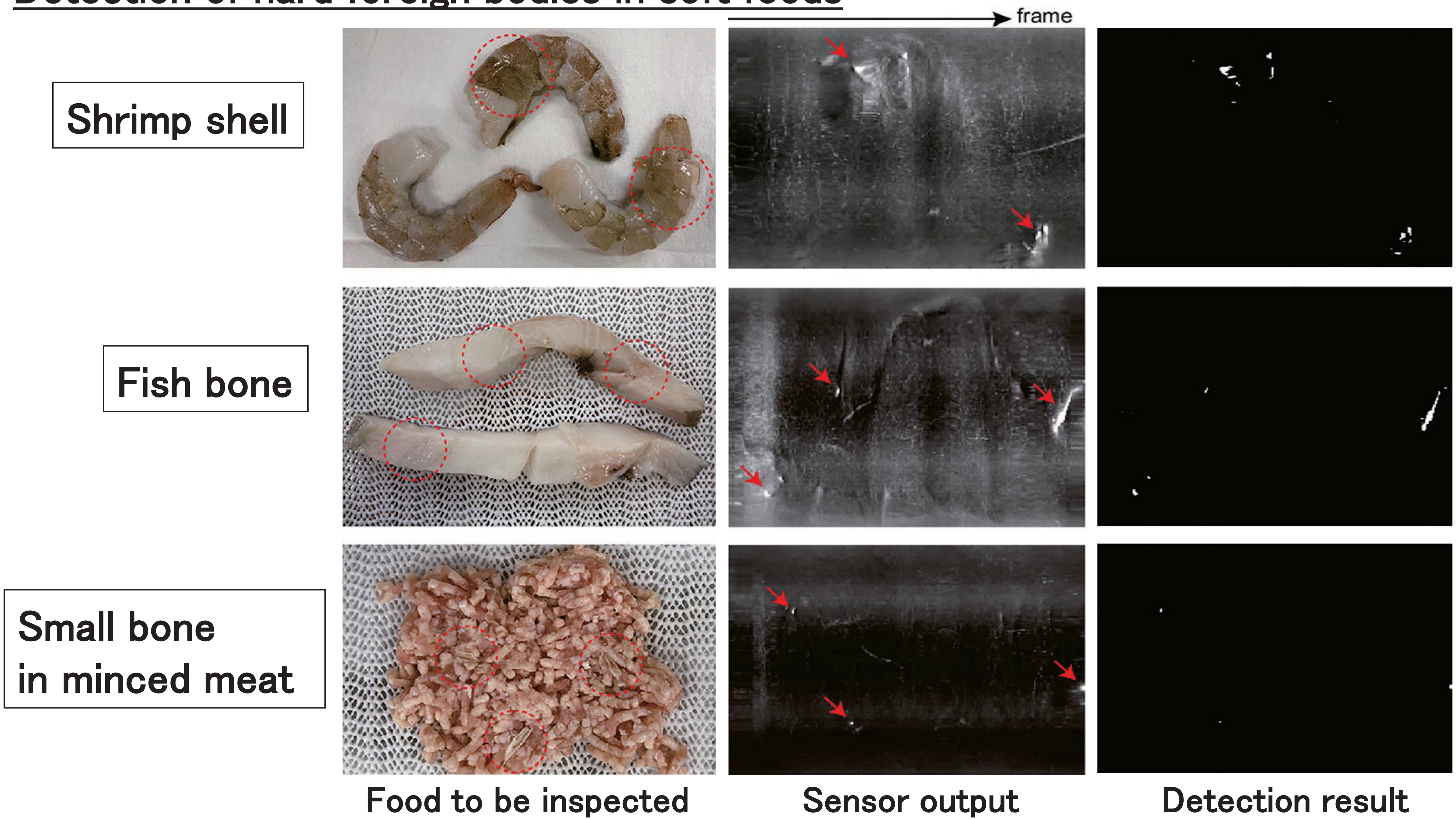
1600 pixel



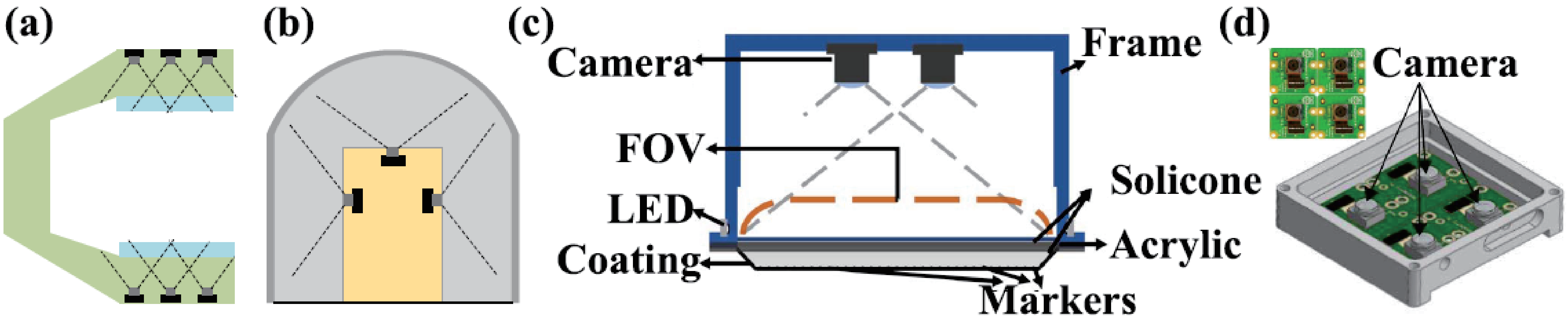
Spatial resolution 78 μm/pixel, bump with 5 μm of height can be detect

Roller tactile image sensor: Application for food inspection

Detection of hard foreign bodies in soft foods



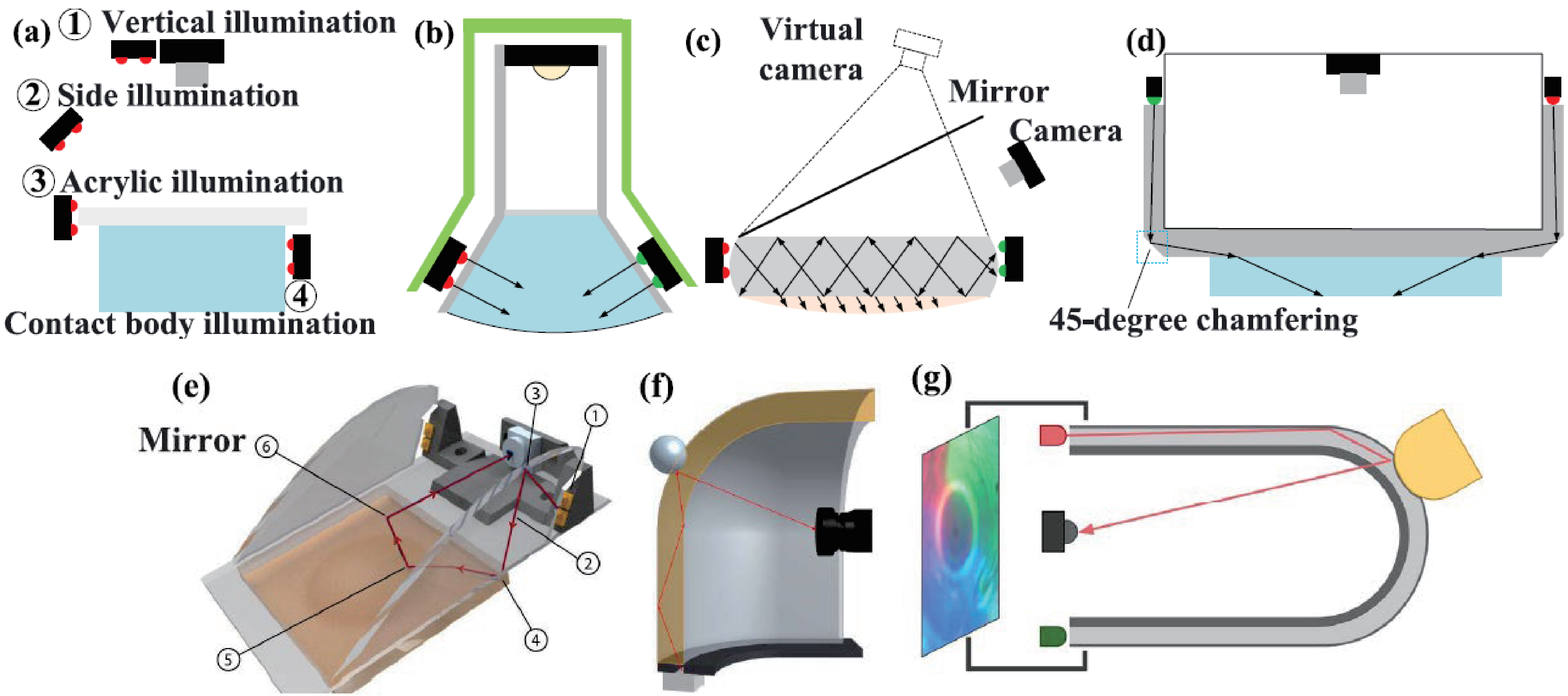
Multiple cameras installation



(a) Cameras are placed into a parallel gripper to cover the entire perception region.
(b) Cameras are spatially distributed to acquire global perception.
(c) Binocular camera is used to capture 3-D information.
(d) Four cameras can enlarge perception regions and provide 3-D information.

S. Zhang et al., “Hardware Technology of Vision-Based Tactile Sensor: A Review”, IEEE Sensors Journal, 2022.

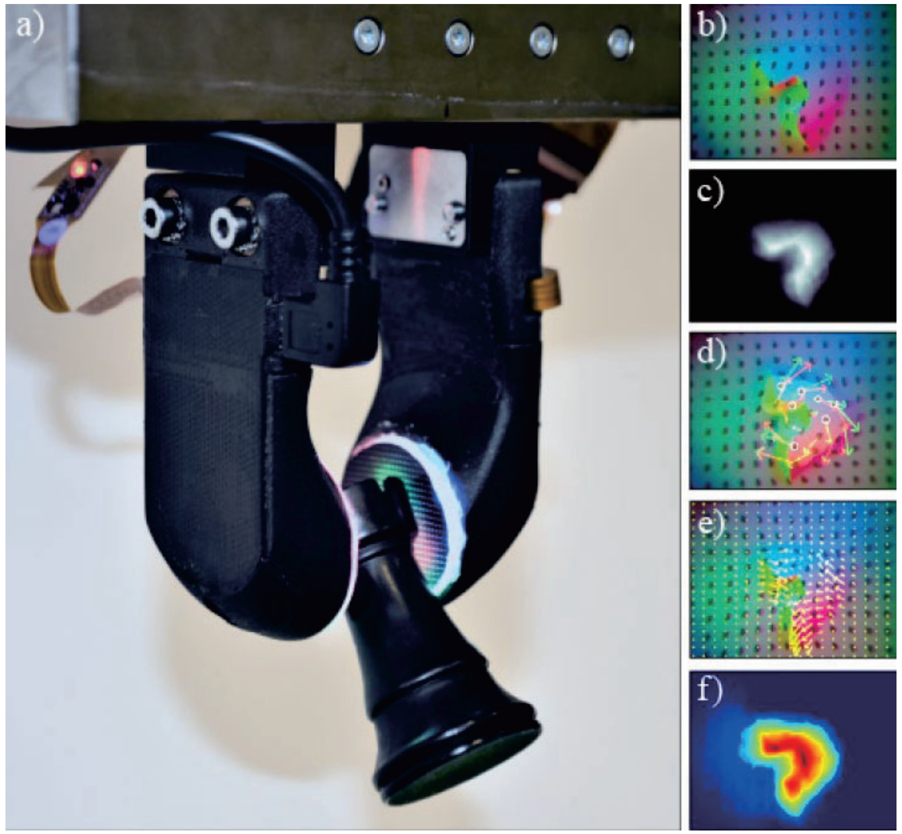
LED position and optical path design

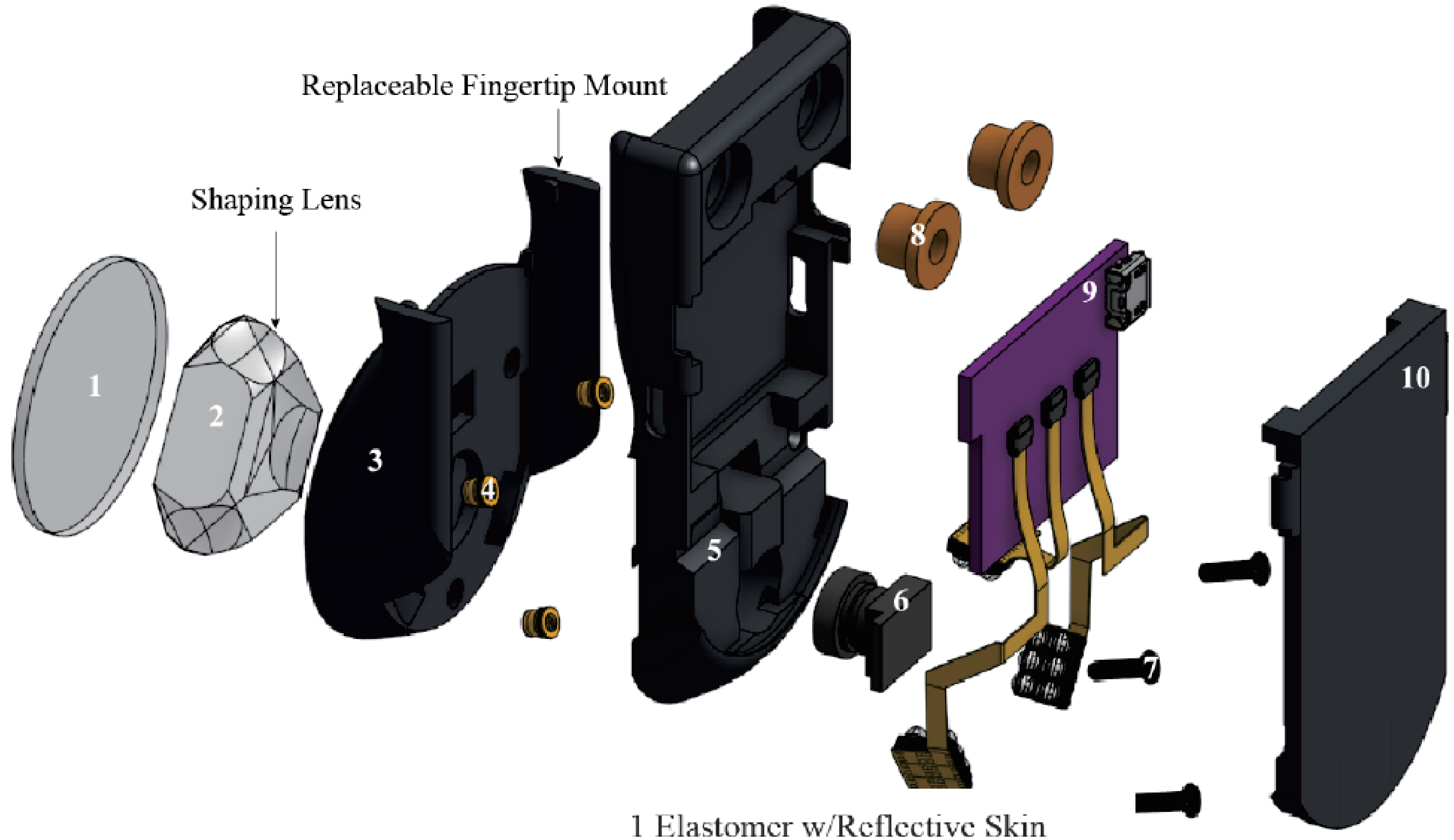


(a) Vertical illumination is limited by the sensor size. Side illumination causes edge regions to lack brightness. Acrylic and contact body illumination can provide uniform light through TIR. **(b)** and **(c)** Light is refracted through the acrylic plate into the contact surface. **(d)** 45◦ chamfering is used to change the direction of the refracted light. **(e)** Donlon et al. adopted the parabolic reflection principle and TIR to plan an optical path. **(f)** and **(g)** TIR is performed inside the contact body.
The deformation causes a change in the optical path.

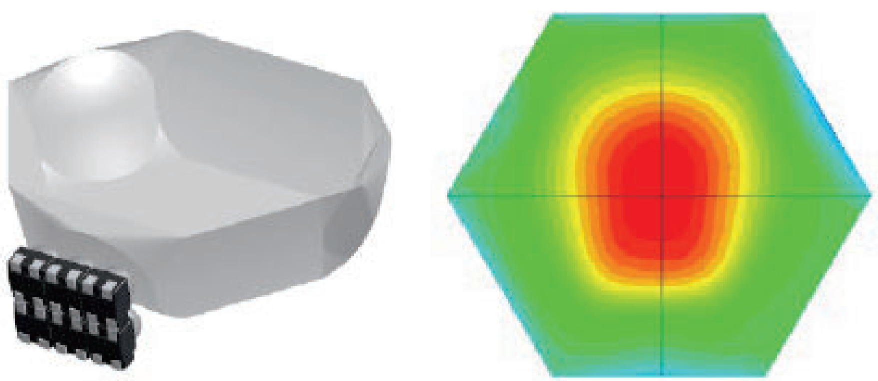
S. Zhang et al., "Hardware Technology of Vision-Based Tactile Sensor: A Review", IEEE Sensors Journal, 2022.

GelSlim 3.0: High-Resolution Measurement of Shape, Force and Slip in a Compact Tactile-Sensing Finger





1 Elastomer w/Reflective Skin
2 Acrylic Lens
3 Fingertip
4 Heat Inserts
5 Finger-Body
6 Camera Module
7 Screws
8 Mounting Bearing
9 Integrated Illumination Controller
10 Finger-Back

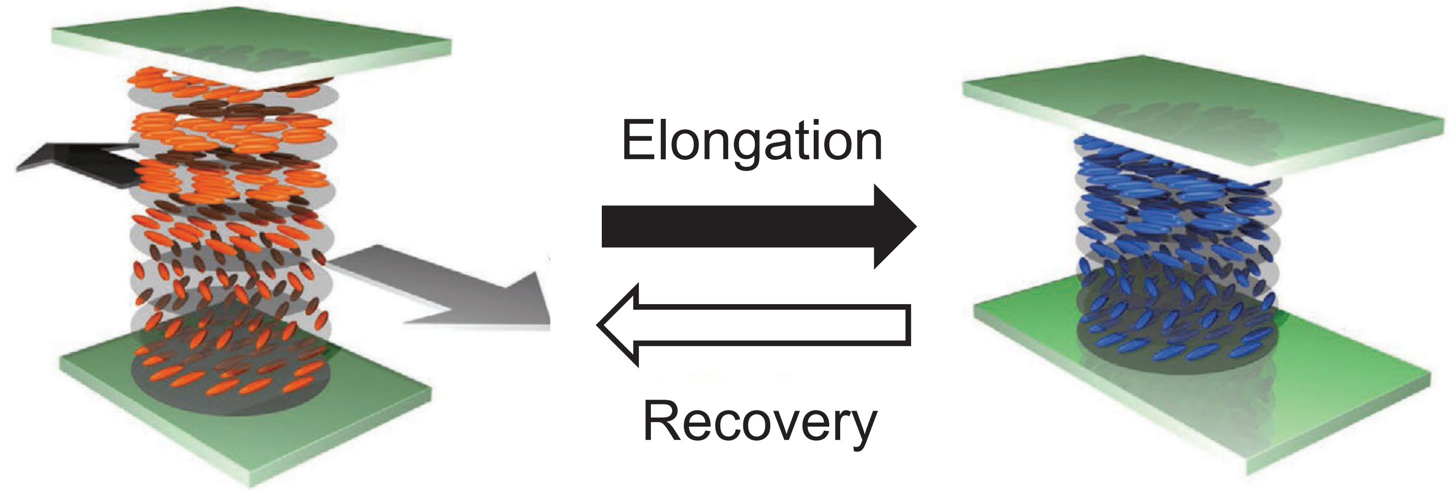


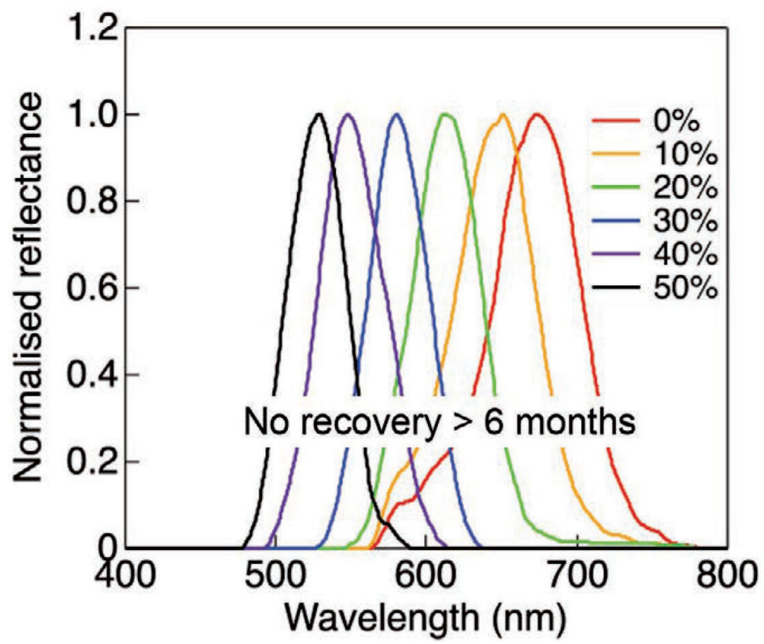
simulated radiant flux across the surface of the sensor

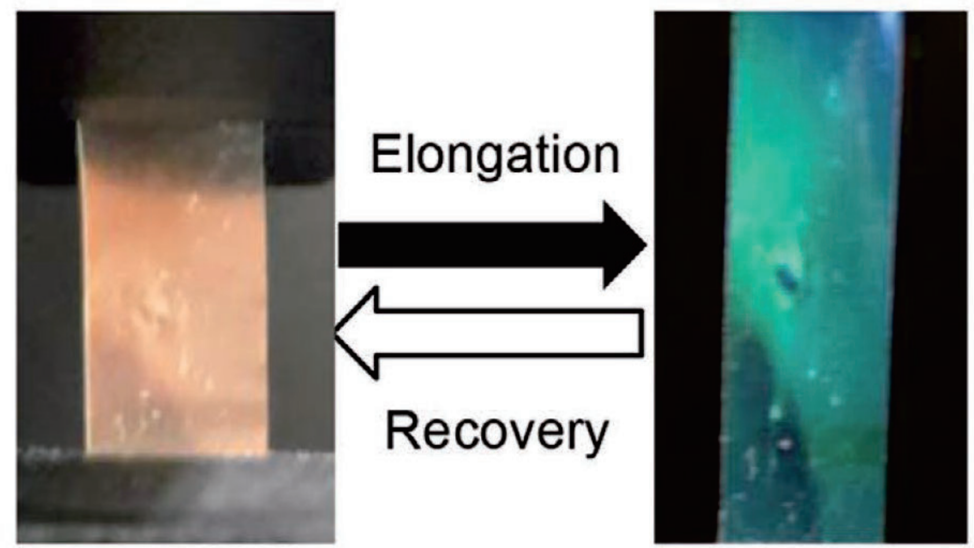
I.H. Taylor et al., ICRA2022

Strain sensing polymer

- The helical molecular arrangement of the chiral liquid crystal elastomer produces wavelength-selective reflections (Bragg reflection).
- When the pitch of the helical structure changes due to strain, the reflected wavelength changes.



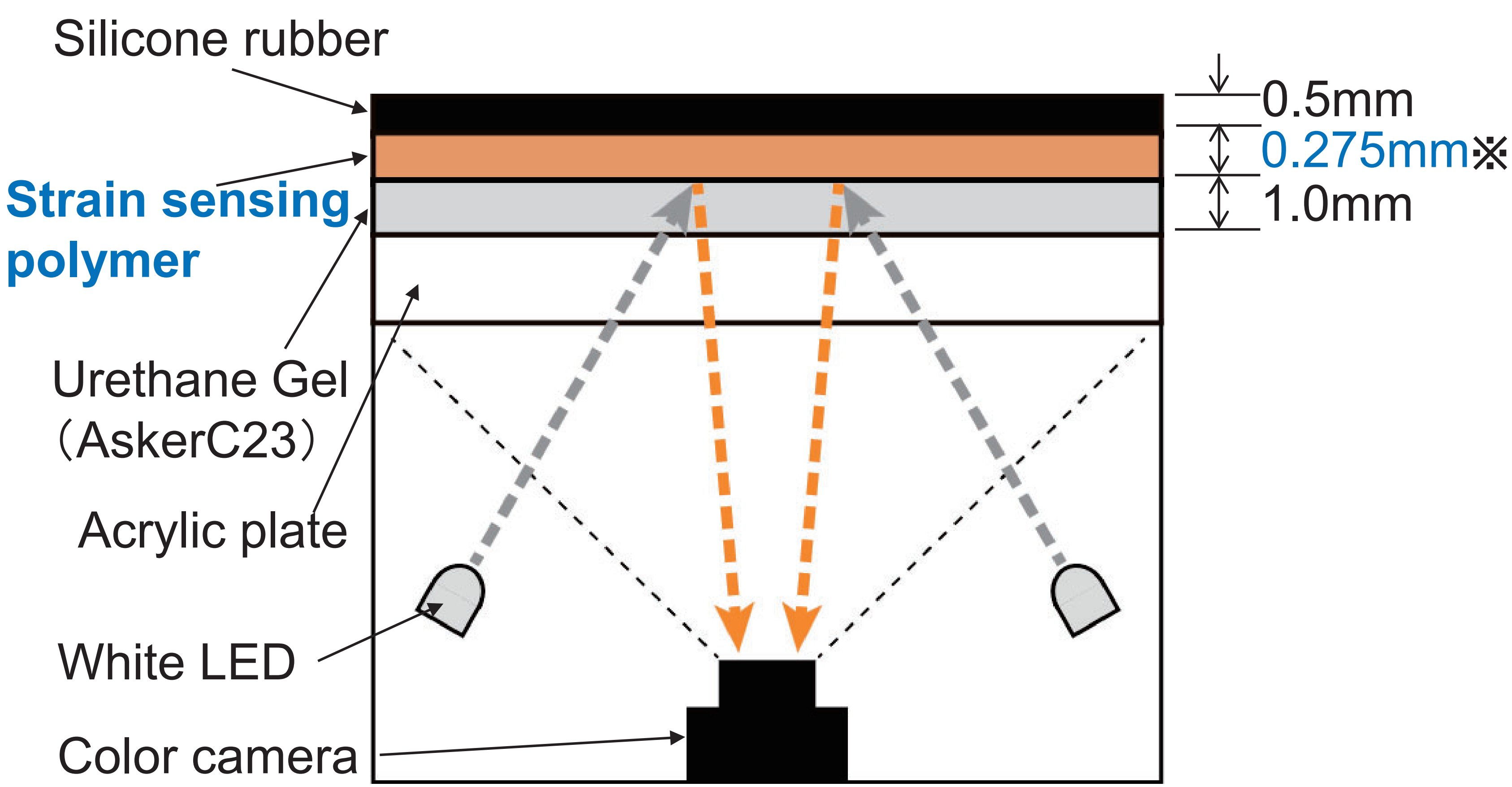


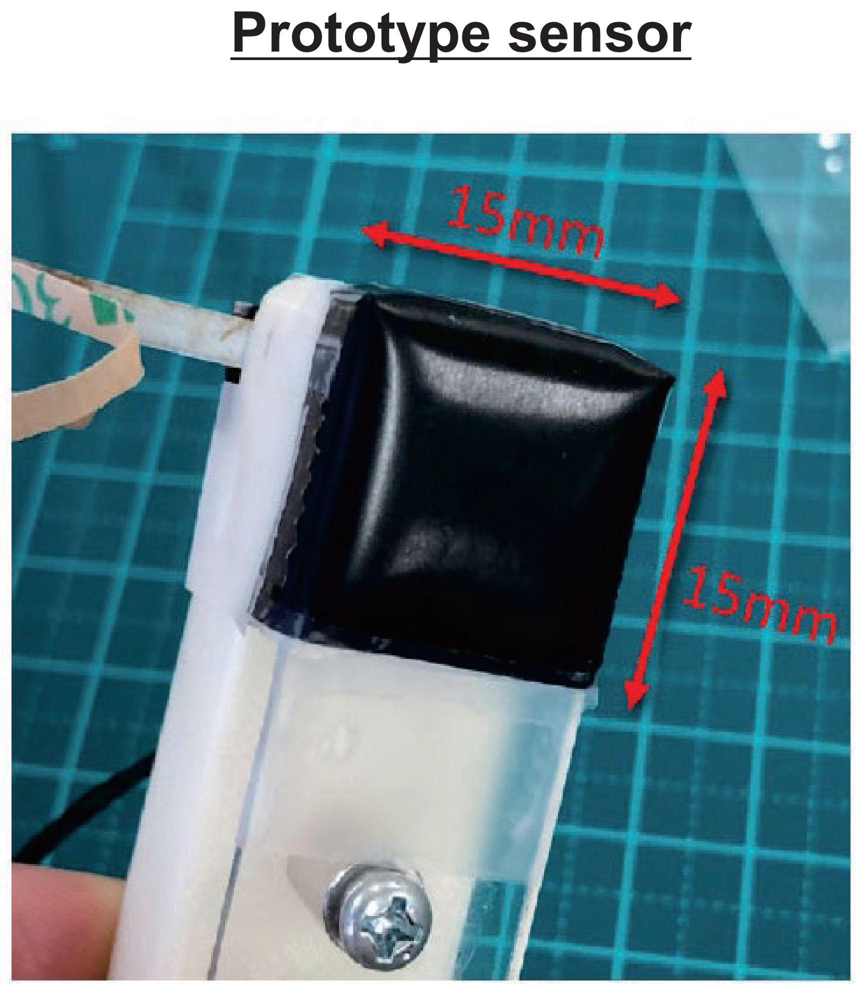


Relationship between strain and spectral reflectance **Color change by extension**

K.Hisano et al., " Mechano-Optical Sensors Fabricated with Multilayered Liquid Crystal Elastomers Exhibiting Tunable Deformation Recovery," ***Advanced Functional Materials***, 31(40), (2021).

Structure of the sensor with strain sensing polymer





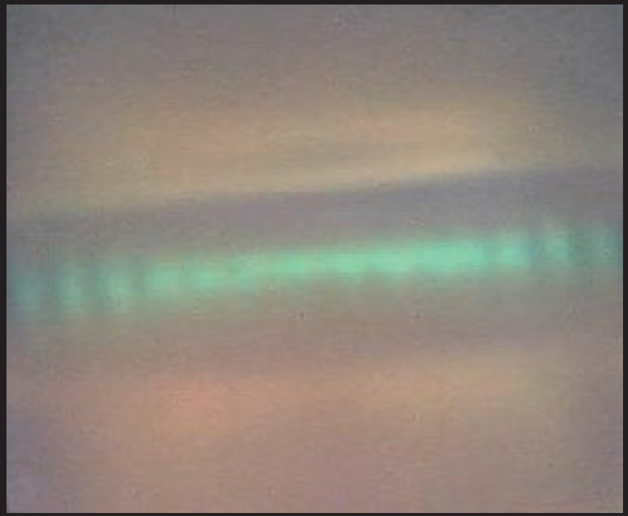
※ **Polymer sheet with** 0.055mm thickness is sandwiched by PDMS film with 0.11mm thickness

Shimonomura et al., RSJ2023

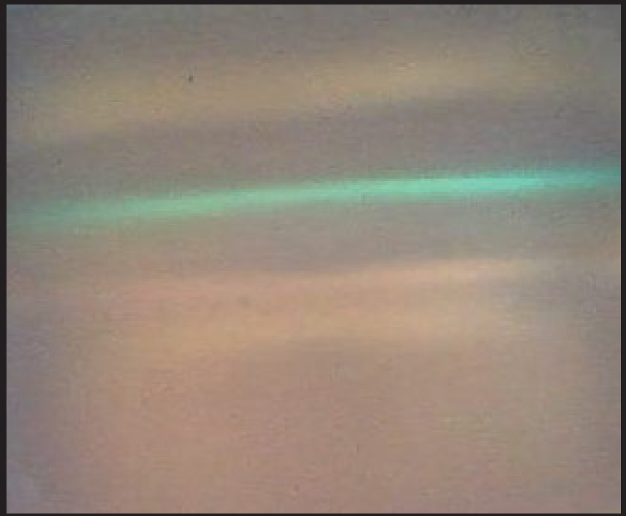
Sensor output images

Metal ball

Nut（M3）



Bolt（M6）

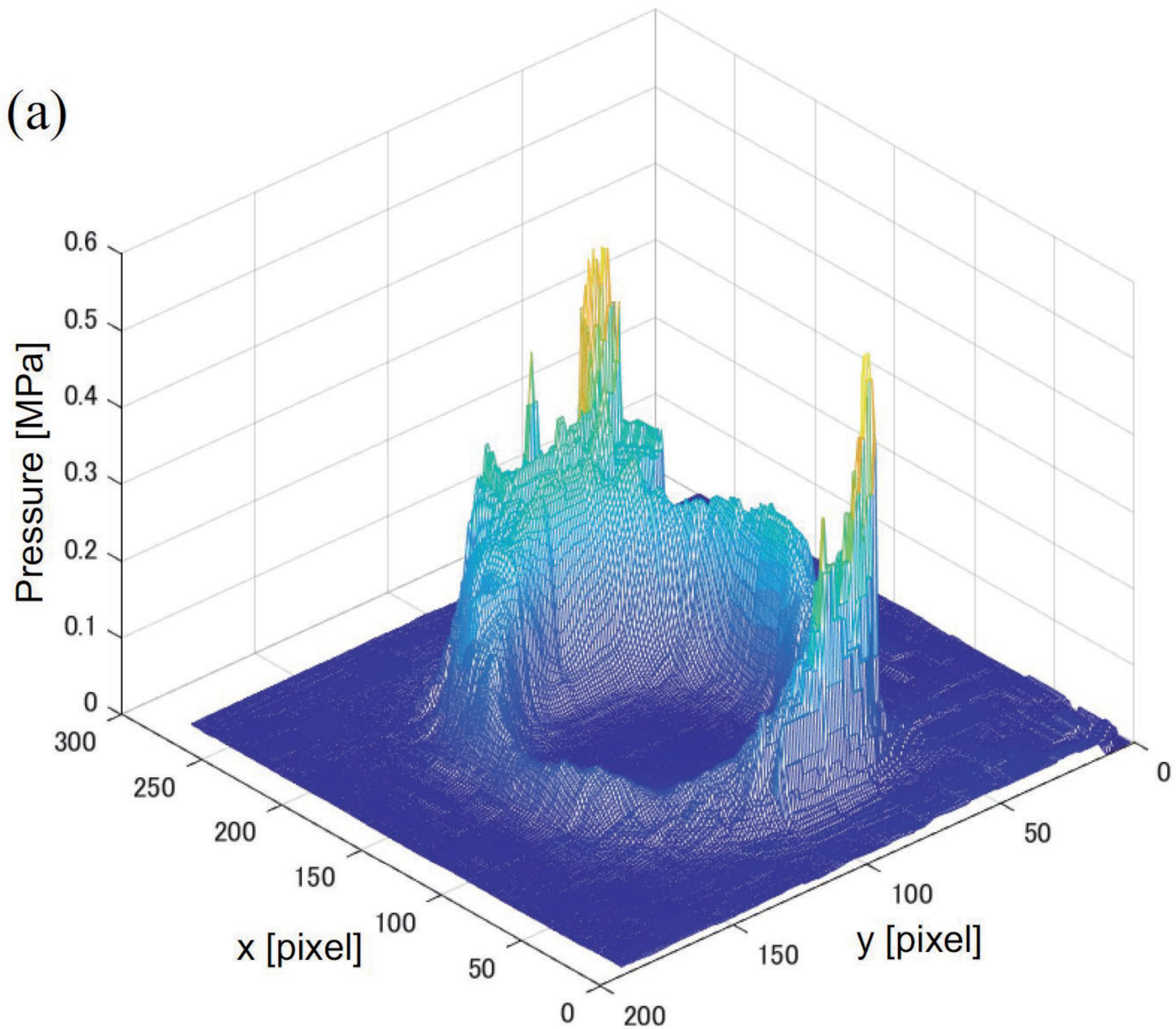


Nylon thread（Φ0.5mm）

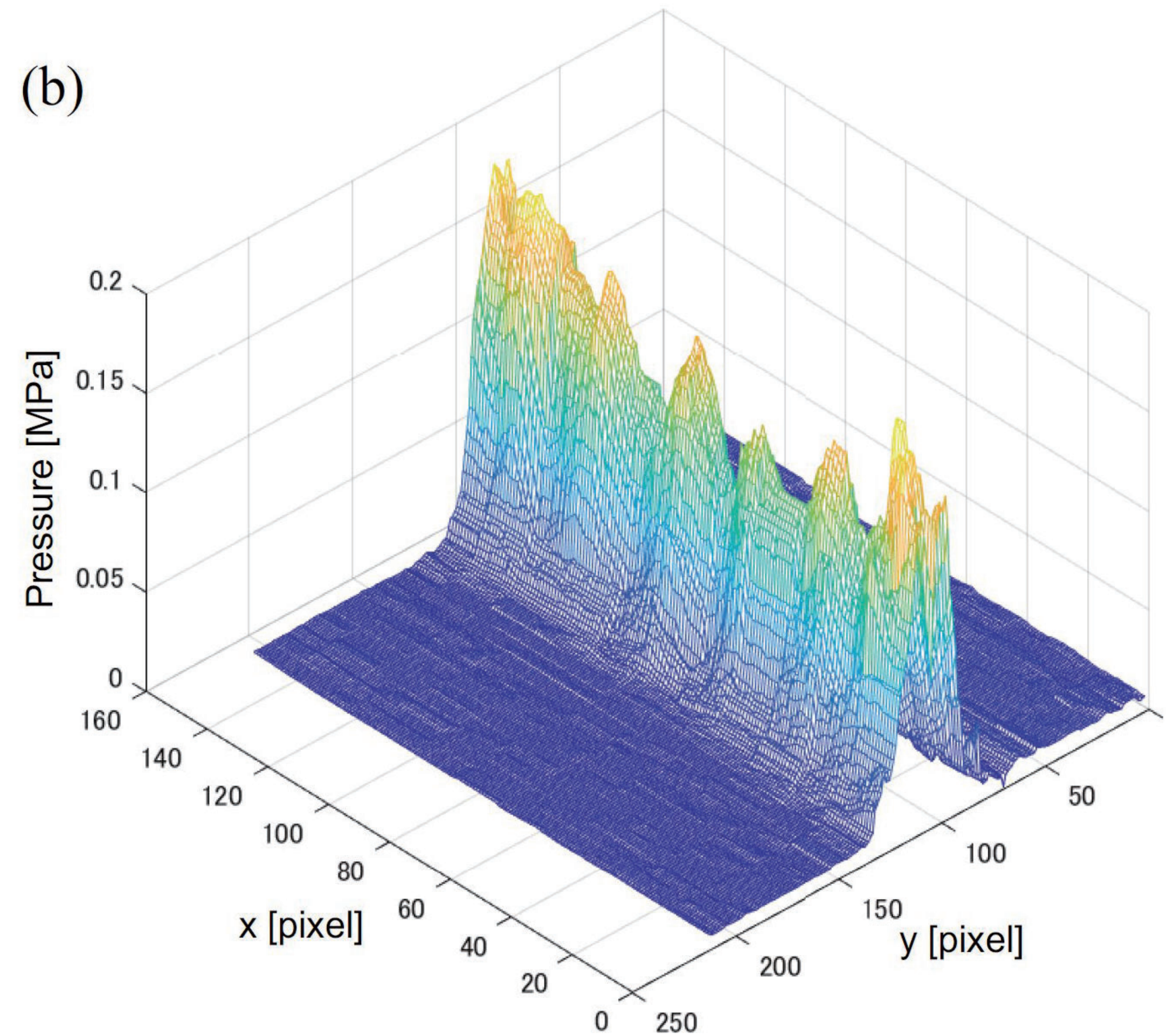
Toy block

Shimonomura et al., RSJ2023

Estimation of pressure distribution



<u>Cylindrical metal spacer</u>



<u>Screwthread of M6 Bolt</u>

Shimonomura et al., RSJ2023

Future Challenges in tactile sensor using camera

1. **Integration into grippers and robot hands**
   - Miniaturization and thinning: Elemental technologies such as optical system and illumination are important
   - Integration into multi-fingered hand

2. **Method for converting physical contact to image information**
   - Methods other than typical methods introduced here
   - It is expected to develop new methods for easy extraction of tactile information, such as materials that change color according to stress.

3. **Methods for extracting tactile information from images**
   - Deep learning based method is effective for extracting complicated information
   - For high speed sensing, image processing should be as simple as possible

4. **Application to assembly work, inspection, etc.**