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BACKSIDE ILLUMINATION IMAGE SENSOR AND IMAGE-CAPTURING DEVICE

Abstract

A backside illumination image sensor that includes a semiconductor substrate with a plurality of photoelectric conversion elements and a read circuit formed on a front surface side of the semiconductor substrate, and captures an image by outputting, via the read circuit, electrical signals generated as incident light having reached a back surface side of the semiconductor substrate is received at the photoelectric conversion elements includes: a light shielding film formed on a side where incident light enters the photoelectric conversion elements, with an opening formed therein in correspondence to each photoelectric conversion element; and an on-chip lens formed at a position set apart from the light shielding film by a predetermined distance in correspondence to each photoelectric conversion element. The light shielding film and an exit pupil plane of the image forming optical system achieve a conjugate relation to each other with regard to the on-chip lens.

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Background/Summary

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE [0001] This is a Divisional of application Ser. No. 18/627,723 filed Apr. 5, 2024, which in turn is a Continuation of application Ser. No. 18/104,819 filed Feb. 2, 2023 (now U.S. Pat. No. 11,979,672), which is a Continuation of application Ser. No. 16/995,314 filed Aug. 17, 2020 (now U.S. Pat. No. 11,601,624), which is a Continuation of application Ser. No. 16/238,110 filed Jan. 2, 2019 (now U.S. Pat. No. 10,777,595), which is a Continuation of application Ser. No. 15/615,188 filed Jun. 6, 2017 (now U.S. Pat. No. 10,204,949), which is a Continuation of application Ser. No. 15/260,994 filed Sep. 9, 2016 (now U.S. Pat. No. 9,704,902), which is a Continuation of application Ser. No. 14/877,439 filed Oct. 7, 2015 (now U.S. Pat. No. 9,466,633), which is a Continuation of application Ser. No. 14/555,868 filed Nov. 28, 2014 (now U.S. Pat. No. 9,184,197), which is a Continuation of application Ser. No. 13/033,187 filed Feb. 23, 2011 (now U.S. Pat. No. 8,928,795), which claims the benefit of Japanese Application No. 2010-040378 filed Feb. 25, 2010. The disclosures of the prior applications are hereby incorporated by reference herein in their entireties.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a backside illumination image sensor and an image-capturing device.

2. Description of Related Art

[0003] The performance of an image sensor at low brightness is often improved by forming on-chip lenses, each in correspondence to one of the photoelectric conversion elements, and illuminating each photoelectric conversion element with condensed light. The backside illumination image sensor disclosed in Japanese Laid Open Patent Publication No. 2009-164385 captures an image as signals generated with light illuminating the back side of a semiconductor substrate, which is received at photoelectric conversion elements disposed in the semiconductor substrate, are output through a read circuit formed on the front side of the semiconductor substrate. In order to receive red-color light with a significant wavelength at high efficiency, photoelectric conversion elements (photodiodes) formed to assure a thickness of approximately 10 μm are disposed at the backside illumination image sensor. The surface of each photoelectric conversion element and the corresponding on-chip lens are set over a short distance from each other and the light having passed through the on-chip lens is condensed within the photoelectric conversion element.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The on-chip lenses in the backside illumination image sensor in the related art described above are designed by giving priority to condensing performance and regulating the amount of shading in the periphery of the image plane. However, since they are designed without fully taking into consideration the positional relationship between the backside illumination image sensor and the exit pupil of the image forming optical system, the linearity of the relationship between the aperture F number at the image forming optical system and the level of the signals output from the backside illumination image sensor cannot be kept intact, necessitating that correction be executed as part of exposure control, particularly at low F numbers.

[0005] According to the present invention, the linearity representing the relationship between the aperture F number at the image forming optical system and the level of the signals output by the backside illumination image sensor can be maintained with ease.

[0006] According to the 1st aspect of the present invention, a backside illumination image sensor that includes a semiconductor substrate with a plurality of photoelectric conversion elements formed thereat and a read circuit formed on a side where a front surface of the semiconductor substrate is present, and captures an image by outputting, via the read circuit, electrical signals generated as incident light having passed through an image forming optical system and having reached a side where a back surface of the semiconductor substrate is present, is received at the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements comprises: a light shielding film formed on a side where incident light enters the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements, with an opening formed therein in correspondence to each of the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements; and an on-chip lens formed at a position set apart from the light shielding film by a predetermined distance in correspondence to each of the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements. The light shielding film and an exit pupil plane at which an exit pupil of the image forming optical system is present achieve a conjugate relation to each other with regard to the on-chip lens.

[0007] According to the 2nd aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 1st aspect, it is preferred that a radius of curvature R of the on-chip lens, a distance D from an apex of the on-chip lens to the light shielding film and an average refractive index n of a medium present between the on-chip lens and the light shielding film achieve a relationship expressed as; $D=R \cdot n/(n-1)$.

[0008] According to the 3rd aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 2nd aspect, it is preferred that the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements are disposed in a two-dimensional grid array; and a pitch P of the two-dimensional grid array, a smallest F number F_0 of the exit pupil of the image forming optical system and the distance D achieve a relationship expressed as; $F_0 \cdot P \cdot n > D > P \cdot n/(2 \cdot (n-1))$.

[0009] According to the 4th aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image

sensor according to the 3rd aspect, it is preferred that the radius of curvature over a periphery of the on-chip lens is greater than the radius of curvature at a central area of the on-chip lens.

[0010] According to the 5th aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 1st aspect, it is preferred that the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements include a pair of focus detection photoelectric conversion elements; and the pair of focus detection photoelectric conversion elements generates a pair of focus detection signals pertaining to an image forming condition for the image forming optical system by receiving a pair of light fluxes having passed through a pair of areas in the image forming optical system.

[0011] According to the 6th aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 5th aspect, it is preferred that at least either a first opening formed with an offset toward one side relative to an optical axis of the on-chip lens, or a second opening formed with an offset toward a side opposite from the one side relative to the optical axis of the on-chip lens, is formed as the opening in the light shielding film; and the pair of focus detection signals include an electrical signal generated by one of the pair of focus detection photoelectric conversion elements by receiving one light flux in the pair of light fluxes, which passes through the first opening, and an electrical signal generated by another focus detection photoelectric conversion element in the pair of focus detection photoelectric conversion elements by receiving another light flux in the pair of light fluxes, which passes through the second opening, and the image forming condition for the image forming optical system can be detected based upon a phase difference manifested by the pair of focus detection signals.

[0012] According to the 7th aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 1st aspect, it is preferred that the backside illumination image sensor further comprises: a light shielding member that prevents entry of passing light, which is part of the incident light that passes through the on-chip lens, into a photoelectric conversion element corresponding to an adjacent on-chip lens adjacent to the on-chip lens, among the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements. The light shielding member is disposed between the on-chip lens and the light shielding film.

[0013] According to the 8th aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 7th aspect, it is preferred that the light shielding member is a barrier member disposed parallel to an optical axis of the on-chip lens; and an anti-reflection film is formed at a surface of the barrier member so as to prevent reflection of the passing light.

[0014] According to the 9th aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 7th aspect, it is preferred that the light shielding member includes a first color filter disposed near the on-chip lens and a second color filter assuming a color matching the color of the first color filter, which is disposed near the opening; and a color of the light shielding member is different from a color of a light shielding member disposed in conjunction with the adjacent on-chip lens adjacent to the on-chip lens.

[0015] According to the 10th aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 1st aspect, it is preferred that a transparent medium is filled between the on-chip lens and the light shielding film so as to not leave any unfilled gap; and the transparent medium is constituted of a material different from a material constituting the on-chip lens.

[0016] According to the 11th aspect of the present invention, in the backside illumination image sensor according to the 10th aspect, it is preferred that a color filter is disposed between the on-chip lens and the transparent medium; and a wavelength range of light transmitted through the transparent medium includes a wavelength range of light transmitted through the color filter.

[0017] According to the 12th aspect of the present invention, a backside illumination image sensor that includes a semiconductor substrate with a plurality of photoelectric conversion elements, containing a pair of focus detection photoelectric conversion elements, formed thereat and a read circuit formed on a side where a front surface of the semiconductor substrate is present, and captures an image by outputting, via the read circuit, electrical signals generated as incident light

having passed through an image forming optical system and having reached a side where a back surface of the semiconductor substrate is present, is received at the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements comprises: a light shielding film formed on a side where the incident light enters the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements, with at least either a first opening or a second opening formed therein in correspondence to each of the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements; and an on-chip lens formed at a position set apart from the light shielding film by a predetermined distance in correspondence to each of the plurality of photoelectric conversion elements. The first opening is formed with an offset toward one side relative to an optical axis of the on-chip lens; the second opening is formed with an offset toward a side opposite from the one side relative to the optical axis of the on-chip lens; the pair of focus detection photoelectric conversion elements generates a pair of focus detection signals pertaining to an image forming condition for the image forming optical system by receiving a pair of light fluxes having passed through a pair of areas in the image forming optical system; and the pair of focus detection signals include an electrical signal generated by one of the pair of focus detection photoelectric conversion elements by receiving one light flux in the pair of light fluxes, which passes through the first opening, and an electrical signal generated by another focus detection photoelectric conversion element in the pair of focus detection photoelectric conversion elements by receiving another light flux in the pair of light fluxes, which passes through the second opening, and the image forming condition for the image forming optical system can be detected based upon a phase difference manifested by the pair of focus detection signals.

[0018] According to the 13th aspect of the present invention, an image-capturing device comprises: a backside illumination image sensor according to the 1st aspect; and an optical system. The optical system is the image forming optical system that emits the incident light to be used to form an image on the backside illumination image sensor.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] FIG. 1 is a latitudinal sectional view, showing the structure of the digital still camera achieved in an embodiment.

[0020] FIG. 2 shows focus detection positions set on the photographic image plane of the interchangeable lens.

[0021] FIG. 3 is a front view showing the structure of the image sensor in detail.

[0022] FIG. 4 shows the shape of the on-chip lens included in an image-capturing pixel or a focus detection pixel.

[0023] FIG. 5 is a front view of an image-capturing pixel.

[0024] FIGS. 6A through 6D each show a focus detection pixel in a front view.

[0025] FIG. 7 is a sectional view of image-capturing pixels.

[0026] FIG. 8 is a sectional view of focus detection pixels.

[0027] FIG. 9 illustrates the relationship between the plane at which the light shielding film at the image-capturing pixels is disposed and the plane at which the exit pupil of the image forming optical system is present.

[0028] FIG. 10 illustrates the relationship between the plane at which the light shielding film the focus detection pixels is disposed and the plane at which the exit pupil of the image forming optical system is present.

[0029] FIG. 11 is a diagram that facilitates observation of the optical requirements which must be met to allow the light shielding film plane and the exit pupil plane to be conjugate with each other.

[0030] FIG. 12 is a diagram that facilitates observation of the size of an image of an aperture opening located at the exit pupil plane, which is formed on the light shielding film plane.

[0031] FIG. 13 shows light shielding members 66 disposed at the four corners of each on-chip lens so as to block stray light.

[0032] FIG. 14 is a sectional view of image-capturing pixels.

[0033] FIG. 15 is a sectional view of focus detection pixels.

[0034] FIG. 16 illustrates the two-dimensional positional relationship between the polarizers H and the polarizers V.

[0035] FIGS. 17A and 17B each show a focus detection pixel in a front view.

[0036] FIG. 18 illustrates the two-dimensional positional relationship among the color filters.

[0037] FIG. 19 is a sectional view of image-capturing pixels.

[0038] FIG. 20 is a sectional view of focus detection pixels.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0039] The following is a description of a digital still camera used in conjunction with interchangeable lenses, representing an example of an image-capturing device equipped with a backside illumination sensor (hereafter simply referred to as an “image sensor”) achieved in an embodiment of the present invention is now explained. FIG. 1 is a lateral sectional view of the structure adopted in the digital still camera in the embodiment. A digital still camera 201 achieved in the embodiment comprises an interchangeable lens 202 and a camera body 203. The interchangeable lens 202 is mounted at the camera body 203 via a mount unit 204. Namely, the interchangeable lens 202 that includes various image forming optical systems can be mounted at the camera body 203 via the mount unit 204.

[0040] The interchangeable lens 202 includes a lens 209, a zooming lens 208, a focusing lens 210, an aperture 211, a lens drive control device 206 and the like. The lens drive control device 206 is constituted with a microcomputer, a memory, a drive control circuit and the like (none shown). The lens control device 206 executes drive control of the focusing lens 210 and the aperture 211 respectively for focus adjustment and aperture opening diameter adjustment and detects the states of the zooming lens 208, the focusing lens 210 and the aperture 211. The lens drive control device 206 also engages in communication with a body drive control device 214 to be detailed later to transmit lens information to the body drive control device and receive camera information (defocus amount, aperture value and the like) from the body drive control device. The aperture 211 forms an opening with a variable opening diameter, centered on the optical axis, so as to adjust the amount of light and adjust the extent of blurring.

[0041] An image sensor 212, the body drive control device 214, a liquid crystal display element drive circuit 215, a liquid crystal display element 216, an eyepiece lens 217, a memory card 219 and the like are disposed at the camera body 203. Image-capturing pixels are two-dimensionally arrayed in image-capturing pixel rows and image-capturing pixel columns at the image sensor 212, and focus detection pixels are also built into the image sensor over areas corresponding to focus detection positions (focus detection areas). The image sensor 212 will be described in detail later.

[0042] The body drive control device 214 includes a microcomputer, a memory, a drive control circuit and the like. The body drive control device 214 repeatedly executes drive control for the image sensor 212, a read of pixel signals from the image sensor 212, a focus detection operation based upon the pixel signals from focus detection pixels, and focus adjustment for the interchangeable lens 202. It also processes and records image signals and controls operations of the digital still camera 201. In addition, the body drive control device 214 engages in communication with the lens drive control device 206 via an electrical contact point 213 to receive the lens information and transmit the camera information.

[0043] The liquid crystal display element 216 functions as an electronic viewfinder (EVF). A live view image expressed with image data read out from the image sensor 212, which is brought up on display at the liquid crystal display element 216 by the liquid crystal display element drive circuit 215, can be observed by the photographer via the eyepiece lens 217. The memory card 219 is an image storage medium in which image data expressing an image captured by the image sensor 212

are stored.

[0044] A subject image is formed on the image sensor **212** with a light flux having passed through the interchangeable lens **202**. The subject image undergoes photoelectric conversion at the image sensor **212**. Subsequently, pixel signals output from the image-capturing pixels and the focus detection pixels as a result of the photoelectric conversion are transmitted to the body drive control device **214**.

[0045] The body drive control device **214** calculates the defocus amount indicating the extent of defocusing based upon pixel signals output from the focus detection pixels at the image sensor **212** and transmits this defocus amount to the lens drive control device **206**. In addition, the body drive control device **214** generates image data by processing the pixel signals originating from the image-capturing pixels at the image sensor **212** and stores the image data thus generated into the memory card **219**. It also provides live view image signals read out from the image sensor **212** to the liquid crystal display element drive circuit **215** so as to bring up a live view image on display at the liquid crystal display element **216**. Moreover, the body drive control device **214** provides aperture control information to the lens drive control device **206** to enable opening control of the aperture **211**.

[0046] The lens drive control device **206** updates the lens information in correspondence to the current focusing state, zooming state and aperture setting state, F number for the maximum aperture number and the like. More specifically, the lens drive control device **206** detects the positions of the zooming lens **208** and the focusing lens **210** and the aperture value set for the aperture **211**. It then calculates correct lens information based upon the lens positions and the aperture value. Alternatively, it may select the lens information corresponding to the lens positions and the aperture value from a lookup table prepared in advance.

[0047] The lens drive control device **206** calculates a lens drive quantity indicating the extent to which the lens is to be driven based upon the defocus amount having been received and drives the focusing lens **210** to a focusing position based upon the lens drive quantity. The lens drive control device **206** also drives the aperture **211** in correspondence to the aperture value it has received.

[0048] Focus detection positions (focus detection areas) that may be set on the photographic image plane of the interchangeable lens **202**, at which an image is sampled on the photographic image plane for focus detection via focus detection pixel rows at the image sensor **212** as described later (focus detection areas, focus detection positions), are shown in FIG. **2**. In this example, five focus detection areas **101** through **105** are set in a rectangular photographic image plane **100**, one at the center (the position corresponding to the focus detection pixels present on the optical axis of the interchangeable lens **202**), and the other four each set on an upper side, a lower side, a left side or a right side relative to the center. Focus detection pixels are arrayed side-by-side in a straight line along the longer side of each of the focus detection areas indicated as rectangular areas. The focus detection pixels in the focus detection areas **101**, **102** and **103** are set side-by-side along the horizontal direction, whereas the focus detection pixels in the focus detection areas **104** and **105** are set side-by-side along the vertical direction.

[0049] FIG. **3** is a front view showing in detail the structure adopted in the image sensor **212**. FIG. **3** shows in detail the pixel array pattern assumed in the image sensor in an enlarged view of an area around the focus detection area **104** or **105** in FIG. **2**. The image sensor **212** includes image-capturing pixels **310** disposed in a dense two-dimensional square grid array. The image-capturing pixels **310**, which include red pixels (R), green pixels (G) and blue pixels (B), are disposed in compliance with a Bayer array pattern rule. FIG. **3** shows a focus detection pixel **313** and a focus detection pixel **314** (shown in front views in the FIGS. **6A** and **6B** respectively) assuming a pixel size matching that of the image-capturing pixels **310** and engaged in focus detection along the vertical direction, which are disposed alternately to each other in a linear iteration along the vertical direction, so as to occupy successive positions that would be normally occupied by green pixels and red pixels.

[0050] In the horizontal focus detection pixel array pattern assumed for the focus detection pixels

included in the focus detection areas **101**, **102** and **103** in FIG. 2, a focus detection pixel **315** and a focus detection pixel **316** (shown in front views in the FIGS. 6C and 6D respectively), assuming a pixel size matching that of the image-capturing pixels **310** and engaged in focus detection along the horizontal direction, are disposed alternately to each other in a linear iteration along the horizontal direction, so as to occupy successive positions that would be normally occupied by green pixels and blue pixels.

[0051] FIG. 4 shows the shape of the on-chip lenses **10** included in the image-capturing pixels **310** and the focus detection pixels **313**, **314**, **315** and **316**. The on-chip lenses **10** of the image-capturing pixels **310** and the focus detection pixels **313**, **314**, **315** and **316** assume a shape achieved by cutting out a square-shaped lens with the size thereof matching the pixel size from a round on-chip lens **1** larger than the pixels. The shape of the section of the on-chip lens **10**, taken along a diagonal passing through the optical axis, and the shape of the section of the on-chip lens **10**, taken along a horizontal line passing through the optical axis, are as shown in FIG. 4.

[0052] Three types of color filters, red (R) green (G) and blue (B) color filters, are disposed at the image-capturing pixels **310**. Each type of color filter assumes spectral sensitivity characteristics corresponding to one of the three colors; red, green and blue. The image-capturing pixels **310** each equipped with a color filter corresponding to a specific color are disposed in a Bayer array at the image sensor **212**.

[0053] FIG. 5 is a front view of an image-capturing pixel **310**. As described earlier, the on-chip lens **10** assumes a square shape. An opening **11**, formed on a light shielding film to be described later, defines a square light receiving area for the photoelectric conversion element.

[0054] White-color filters through which all the visible light is transmitted are disposed at the focus detection pixels **313**, **314**, **315** and **316** so as to enable focus detection in correspondence to all the colors. The spectral sensitivity characteristics of the white-color filters are equivalent to the sum of the spectral sensitivity characteristics of the green pixels, the red pixels and the blue pixels among the image-capturing pixels **310** described earlier. The light wavelength range corresponding to the spectral sensitivity characteristics of the white-color filters contains the individual light wavelength ranges over which the green pixels, the red pixels and the blue pixels demonstrate high spectral sensitivity characteristics.

[0055] FIGS. 6A, 6B, 6C and 6D respectively present front views of a focus detection pixel **313**, a focus detection pixel **314**, a focus detection pixel **315** and a focus detection pixel **316**. FIG. 6A shows the focus detection pixel **313** in a front view. Its on-chip lens **10** assumes a square shape. An opening **13**, formed at a light shielding film to be described later, limits the light receiving area of the photoelectric conversion element to an upper half of a square (the upper half of a square split into two equal portions along a horizontal line).

[0056] FIG. 6B shows the focus detection pixel **314** in a front view. Its on-chip lens **10** assumes a square shape. An opening **14**, formed at a light shielding film to be described later, limits the light receiving area of the photoelectric conversion element to a lower half of a square (the lower half of a square split into two equal portions along a horizontal line).

[0057] When the focus detection pixel **313** and the focus detection pixel **314** are stacked one on top of the other by aligning their on-chip lenses **10**, the openings **13** and **14** formed at the light shielding film are set side-by-side along the vertical direction and achieve a complementary relation to each other across a boundary set at the horizontal splitting line that splits the opening **11** at the image-capturing pixel **310** into two equal portions.

[0058] FIG. 6C shows the focus detection pixel **315** in a front view. Its on-chip lens **10** assumes a square shape. An opening **15**, formed at a light shielding film to be described later, limits the light receiving area of the photoelectric conversion element to a left half of a square (the left half of a square split into two equal portions along a vertical line).

[0059] FIG. 6D shows the focus detection pixel **316** in a front view. Its on-chip lens **10** assumes a square shape. An opening **16**, formed at a light shielding film to be described later, limits the light

receiving area of the photoelectric conversion element to a right half of a square (the right half of a square split into two equal portions along a vertical line).

[0060] When the focus detection pixel **315** and the focus detection pixel **316** are stacked one on top of the other by aligning their on-chip lenses **10**, the openings **15** and **16** formed at the light shielding film are set side-by-side along the horizontal direction and achieve a complementary relation to each other across a boundary set at the vertical splitting line that splits the opening **11** at the image-capturing pixel **310** into two equal portions.

[0061] FIG. 7 is a schematic sectional view of image-capturing pixels **310** present near the optical axis at the backside illumination image sensor achieved in the embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 7, a photoelectric conversion element (photodiode) **404** constituted with a high density N-type semiconductor area is formed within each of numerous unit pixel areas **403** defined in a semiconductor substrate such as a single crystal silicon layer **401**. The photoelectric conversion elements **404** in adjacent unit pixel areas **403** are separated from each other by an element separating area **402** constituted of a P-type semiconductor formed within the single crystal silicon layer **401**.

[0062] A light shielding film **30** is formed on one of the principal planes of the single crystal silicon layer **401**, i.e., on a back surface **408** located on the upper side in FIG. 7. Openings **11**, each corresponding to one of the photoelectric conversion elements **404**, are formed in the light shielding film **30**, and a transparent insulating film **31** embeds each opening **11**. An opening **11** in the light shielding film **30** defines the light receiving area of the photoelectric conversion element **404** corresponding to the particular opening **11**. It is to be noted that FIG. 7 shows the transparent insulating film **31** also embedding the area between the light shielding film **30** and the back surface **408** of the single crystal silicon layer **401**.

[0063] The light shielding film **30**, constituted of a metal such as aluminum, includes an anti-reflection film vapor-deposited onto the surface thereof. The transparent insulating film **31** is laminated so as to achieve a predetermined thickness over the light shielding film **30**, and a color filter **9** corresponding to the particular photoelectric conversion element **404** is formed on the insulating film **31**. The transparent insulating film **31** is allowed to achieve the predetermined thickness by setting the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed in a conjugate relation with the plane of the exit pupil of the image forming optical system. Color filters **9** include R-color filters (notated as “R” in the figure) through which light in the red color wavelength range is transmitted, G-color filters (notated as “G” in the figure) through which light in the green color wavelength range is transmitted and B-color filters through which light in the blue color wavelength range is transmitted. These color filters are set in a Bayer array.

[0064] The on-chip lens **10** corresponding to each photoelectric conversion element **404** is formed on a color filter **9**. The position of an optical axis **27** of the on-chip lens **10** corresponding to a given photoelectric conversion element **404** matches the position of the center of the opening **11** in the light shielding film **30** corresponding to the particular photoelectric conversion element **404**. It is to be noted that in an image-capturing pixel **310** located in a peripheral area of the image sensor **212**, the position of the optical axis **27** of the on-chip lens **10** and the position of the center of the opening **11** in the light shielding film **30** corresponding to the photoelectric conversion element **404** in the particular image-capturing pixel are slightly shifted relative to each other so as to prevent shading that tends to occur readily in the periphery of the image plane.

[0065] In addition, a barrier **8** functioning as a light shielding member ranging along a direction parallel to the on-chip lens axis is disposed so as to extend from the light shielding film **30** to the on-chip lens **10** at the boundary between each unit pixel area **403** and an adjacent unit pixel area. The barrier **8** is constituted of aluminum, which is used as a wiring material and the like, and the surfaces of the barrier **8**, i.e., the surfaces in contact with the transparent insulating films **31**, are coated with an anti-reflection film such as titanium nitride vapor-deposited thereupon.

[0066] On the side of the single crystal silicon layer **401** where the other principal plane is present,

i.e., on a surface **409** located on the lower side in FIG. 7, a read circuit **405** that reads out a signal corresponding to a signal charge having been accumulated at a specific photoelectric conversion element **404** is formed. An insulating layer **417** is formed on the read circuit **405**, with a plurality of wiring layers **418** formed inside the insulating layer **417**.

[0067] The read circuit **405** includes a readout gate portion **411** constituted with a P-type semiconductor area, a floating diffusion portion (FD portion) **412** located adjacent to the readout gate portion **411** and constituted with a high density N-type semiconductor area to which the signal charge having accumulated at the photoelectric conversion element **404** is transferred, a reset gate portion (not shown) via which the signal charge having accumulated at the FD portion **412** is cleared, a MOS circuit (not shown) connected to the FD portion **412** and constituted with a MOS transistor, which outputs the signal corresponding to the signal charge having accumulated in the FD portion **412**, and a readout electrode **413** formed on the readout gate portion **411**.

[0068] In addition, a second element separating area **414** constituted with a P-type semiconductor area and a positive charge accumulating area **415**, located adjacent to the photoelectric conversion element **404** and constituted with a high density P-type semiconductor area formed on the side where the surface **409** of the single crystal silicon layer **401** is present, are formed in the single crystal silicon layer.

[0069] The wiring layers **418** include four layers of wirings. More specifically, the wiring layers **418** include a first-layer wiring **481**, a second-layer wiring **482** formed above the first layer wiring **481** via the insulating layer **417**, a third-layer wiring **483** formed above the second layer wiring **482** via the insulating layer **417** and a fourth-layer wiring **484** formed above the third layer wiring **483** via the insulating layer **417**, all present within the insulating layer **417**, which is formed on the single crystal silicon layer **401** on the side where the surface **409** is present. It is to be noted that a flattening film constituted with a passivation film (not shown) is formed upon the insulating layer **417**, and a supporting substrate **416** is bonded onto the flattening film via an adhesive layer.

[0070] As will be explained later, the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed in an image-capturing pixel **310** of the backside illumination image sensor structured as described above, is in a conjugate relation with the plane at which the exit pupil of the image forming optical system that forms an image on the image sensor is present, with regard to the on-chip lens **10**. Light **28** having entered the on-chip lens **10** located on the side where the back surface **408** of the single crystal silicon layer **401** is present passes through the color filter **9** and achieves focus at the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed. The light **28** restricted at the opening **11** in the light shielding film **30** is ultimately guided to the photoelectric conversion element **404**. A signal charge generated and accumulated at the photoelectric conversion element **404** in correspondence to the light **28** is transferred to the FD portion **412** through the readout gate portion **411** and is accumulated in the FD portion **412** as a high voltage is applied to the readout electrode **413**. A signal corresponding to the signal charge accumulated in the FD portion **412** is then output by the MOS circuit. Once the signal has been output, the signal charge having accumulated in the FD portion **412** is reset and the next exposure session starts.

[0071] Stray light **21** with a large angle of incidence is blocked by the barrier **8** and thus does not enter the adjacent unit pixel area **403**. In addition, the anti-reflection film vapor-deposited on the surface of the barrier **8** prevents the stray light **21**, having been blocked at the barrier **8**, from being reflected off the barrier **8** and entering the opening **11** in the light shielding film **30**.

[0072] The distance from the on-chip lens **10** to the light shielding film **30** in the image sensor adopting the structure described above is greater than the distance between the on-chip lens and the light shielding film in a pixel at a backside illumination image sensor in the related art. Without the barrier **8**, even oblique light with a relatively small angle of incidence compared to the stray light **21** would be allowed to readily enter the adjacent unit pixel area **403**. In other words, the presence of a light shielding member such as the barrier **8** is crucial. In addition, since the anti-reflection film vapor-deposited on the surface of the barrier **8** prevents entry of the stray light **21** that would

otherwise be reflected off the barrier **8**, pass through the opening **11** in the light shielding film **30** and enter the photoelectric conversion element **401**, into the photoelectric conversion element **404**, the quality of the signal is improved.

[0073] FIG. **8** is a schematic sectional view of focus detection pixels **313** and **314** in the backside illumination image sensor achieved in the embodiment of the present invention. The focus detection pixels **313** and **314** in FIG. **8** differ from the image-capturing pixels **310** only in their portions above the light shielding film **30**, and accordingly, the following description focuses on these portions.

[0074] A light shielding film **30** is formed on one of the principal planes of the single crystal silicon layer **401**, i.e., on the back surface **408** on the upper side in FIG. **8**. An opening is formed in correspondence to each photoelectric conversion element **404** in the shielding film **30**. Namely, an opening **13** is formed at each focus detection pixel **313** and an opening **14** is formed at each focus detection pixel **314**, with a transparent insulating film **31** embedding the openings **13** and **14**. The openings **13** and **14** each assume a shape that is achieved by covering either the left half or the right half of the opening **11** at an image-capturing pixel **310**. The openings **13** and **14** formed in the light shielding film **30** define the light receiving areas of the photoelectric conversion elements **404** corresponding to the openings **13** and **14**. It is to be noted that FIG. **8** shows the transparent insulating film **31** also filling the area between the light shielding film **30** and the back surface **408** of the single crystal silicon layer **401**.

[0075] The light shielding film **30**, constituted of a metal such as aluminum, includes an anti-reflection film vapor-deposited onto the surfaces thereof. The transparent insulating film **31** is laminated so as to achieve a predetermined thickness on the light shielding film **30**, and a white-color filter **7** is formed on the insulating film **31** in correspondence to each photoelectric conversion element **404**. The transparent insulating film **31** is allowed to achieve the predetermined thickness by setting the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed is in a conjugate relation with the plane of the exit pupil of the image forming optical system. The on-chip lens **10** corresponding to each photoelectric conversion element **404** is formed on a white-color filter **7**.

[0076] In addition, a barrier **8** functioning as a light shielding member ranging along a direction parallel to the on-chip lens axis is disposed so as to extend from the light shielding film **30** to the on-chip lens **10** at the boundary between each unit pixel area **404** and an adjacent unit pixel area. The barrier **8** is constituted of aluminum, which is used as a wiring material and the like, and the surfaces of the barrier **8**, i.e., the surfaces in contact with the transparent insulating films **31**, are coated with an anti-reflection film such as titanium nitride vapor-deposited thereupon. Light **29** having entered the on-chip lens **10** located on the side where the back surface **408** of the single crystal silicon layer **401** is present at a focus detection pixel **313** or **314** of the backside illumination image sensor structured as described above passes through the white-color filter **7** and achieves focus at the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed. The light **29** restricted at the opening **13** or **14** in the light shielding film **30** is ultimately guided to the corresponding photoelectric conversion element **404**.

[0077] Stray light **21** with a large angle of incidence is blocked by the barrier **8** and thus does not enter the adjacent unit pixel area **403**. In addition, the anti-reflection film vapor-deposited on the surface of the barrier **8** prevents the stray light **21**, having been blocked at the barrier **8**, from being reflected off the barrier **8** and entering the opening **13** or **14** in the light shielding film **30**.

[0078] As will be detailed later, it is an essential structural requirement for the focus detection pixels **313** and **314** that they include complementary openings **13** and **14** formed in the light shielding film **30** and that focus be achieved via the on-chip lenses **10** on the light shielding film **30**. This means that the distance from each on-chip lens **10** to the light shielding film **30** is bound to be greater than the distance between the on-chip lens and the light shielding film at a pixel in a backside illumination image sensor in the related art. Without the barrier **8**, even oblique light with a relatively small angle of incidence compared to the stray light **21** would be allowed to readily

enter the adjacent unit pixel area **403**. In other words, the presence of a light shielding member such as the barrier **8** is crucial. In addition, since the anti-reflection film vapor-deposited on the surface of the barrier **8** prevents entry of the stray light **21** that would otherwise be reflected off the barrier wall **8**, pass through the opening **13** or **14** in the light shielding film **30** and enter the photoelectric conversion element **401**, into the photoelectric conversion element **404**, the quality of the signal is improved and the focus detection accuracy is thus ultimately improved.

[0079] The structures of the focus detection pixels **315** and **316** are basically identical to the structures of the focus detection pixels **313** and **314** shown in FIG. **8**, except for their orientations, as they are rotated by 90° relative to the focus detection pixels **313** and **314**.

[0080] FIG. **9** shows the relationship between the plane at which the light shielding film **30** in the image-capturing pixels **310** is disposed and the plane at which the exit pupil of the image forming optical system is present. The positions of the openings **11** formed in the light shielding film **30** in correspondence to all the image-capturing pixels **310** arrayed on the image sensor **212** each achieve a conjugate relation with the position of a common area **95** defined by all the image-capturing pixels **310** on an exit pupil plane **90**, which is set apart from the on-chip lenses **10** by a pupil distance L , with regard to the on-chip lens **10** in the corresponding image-capturing pixel **310**. Namely, an image forming relationship exists whereby the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed is in a conjugate relation with the exit pupil plane **90** with regard to the image forming plane, i.e., the apex plane at which the apex of the on-chip lens **10** is set and a signal corresponding to the intensity of an image formed on the image forming plane is output from the corresponding image-capturing pixel **310**. Under these circumstances, as the openings **11** formed in the light shielding film **30** in correspondence to the individual image-capturing pixels **310** are projected via the on-chip lenses **10** onto the exit pupil plane **10**, the projection image of the opening **11** of each image-capturing pixel **310** invariably defines the area **95**.

[0081] Accordingly, each image-capturing pixel **310** receives a light flux **71** having passed through the area **95** and the on-chip lens **10** at the particular image-capturing pixel **310**, and then outputs a signal corresponding to the intensity of the image formed with the light flux **71** on the on-chip lens **10**.

[0082] It is to be noted that the positional relationship between the position of the optical axis of the on-chip lens **10** and the center of the opening **11** is shifted for each image-capturing pixel **310** in correspondence to the image height of the particular image-capturing pixel **310**, so as to ensure that the light flux **71** having passed through the common area **95** shared by all the image-capturing pixels, defined on the exit pupil plane **90**, is received at the image-capturing pixel **310** regardless of its image height.

[0083] As described above, since the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed is in a conjugate relation with the exit pupil plane **90**, the image-capturing pixels **310** are each allowed to receive light in an amount in proportion to the area of the aperture opening on the exit pupil plane **90** and thus, better linearity is assured in the exposure control.

[0084] While the position of the exit pupil plane **90** varies among different interchangeable lenses **202** used in an interchangeable lens system, the pupil distance L may, in practice, be set based upon the average exit pupil plane position assumed in the interchangeable lens system.

[0085] FIG. **10** shows the relationship between the plane at which the light shielding film **30** at the focus detection pixels **313** and **314** is disposed and the plane at which the exit pupil of the image forming optical system is present.

[0086] The positions of the openings **13** formed in the light shielding film **30** in correspondence to all the focus detection pixels **313** arrayed on the image sensor **212** each achieve a conjugate relation with the position of a common area **93** defined by all the focus detection pixels on the exit pupil plane **90**, which is set apart from the on-chip lenses **10** by the pupil distance L , with regard to the on-chip lens **10** in the corresponding focus detection pixel **313**. Namely, an image forming relationship exists whereby the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed is in a

conjugate relation with the exit pupil plane **90** with regard to the image forming plane, i.e., the apex plane at which the apex of the on-chip lens **10** is set and a signal corresponding to the intensity of an image formed on the image forming plane is output from the corresponding focus detection pixel **313**. Under these circumstances, as the openings **13** formed in the light shielding film **30** in correspondence to the individual focus detection pixels **313** are projected via the on-chip lenses **10** onto the exit pupil plane **10**, the projection image of the opening **13** of each focus detection pixel **313** invariably defines the area **93**.

[0087] In addition, the positions of the openings **14** formed in the light shielding film **30** in correspondence to all the focus detection pixels **314** arrayed on the image sensor **212** each achieve a conjugate relation with the position of a common area **94** defined by all the focus detection pixels on an exit pupil plane **90**, which is set apart from the on-chip lenses **10** by the pupil distance L , with regard to the on-chip lens **10** in the corresponding focus detection pixel **314**. Namely, an image forming relationship exists whereby the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed is in a conjugate relation with the exit pupil plane **90** with regard to the image forming plane, i.e., the apex plane at which the apex of the on-chip lens **10** is set and a signal corresponding to the intensity of an image formed on the image forming plane is output from the corresponding focus detection pixel **314**. Under these circumstances, as the openings **14** formed in the light shielding film **30** in correspondence to the individual focus detection pixels **314** are projected via the on-chip lenses **10** onto the exit pupil plane **10**, the projection image of the opening **14** of each focus detection pixel **314** invariably defines the area **94**.

[0088] In the description given in reference to FIG. **10**, the pair of areas **93** and **94** are referred to as a pair of focus detection pupils **93** and **94**. Each focus detection pixel **313** receives a light flux **73** having passed through the focus detection pupil **93** and the on-chip lens **10** at the particular focus detection pixel **313** and outputs a signal corresponding to the intensity of the image formed with the light flux **73** on the on-chip lens **10**. Each focus detection pixel **314** receives a light flux **74** having passed through the focus detection pupil **94** and the on-chip lens **10** at the particular focus detection pixel **314** and outputs a signal corresponding to the intensity of the image formed with the light flux **74** on the on-chip lens **10**.

[0089] A combined area made up with the focus detection pupils **93** and **94** on the exit pupil **90**, through which the light fluxes **73** and **74** to be received at each pair of focus detection pixels **313** and **314** pass, matches the area **95** on the exit pupil **90**, through which the light fluxes **71** to be received at the image-capturing pixels **310** pass. The light fluxes **73** and **74** assume a complementary relationship to each other on the exit pupil **90** in relation to the light fluxes **71**.

[0090] Numerous focus detection pixels **313** and **314** structured as described above, are disposed so that a focus detection pixel **313** and a focus detection pixel **314** paired up with the focus detection pixel **313** are arrayed alternately to each other in a linear iteration. By integrating the outputs from the photoelectric conversion elements **404** of the individual focus detection pixels **313** and **314** into a pair of output groups, one corresponding to the focus detection pupil **93** and the other corresponding to the focus detection pupil **94**, information pertaining to the intensity distributions of the pairs of images formed on the focus detection pixel row (extending along the vertical direction) by the pairs of light fluxes passing through the focus detection pupil **93** and the focus detection pupil **94** is obtained. Then, image shift detection operation processing (correlation calculation processing, phase difference detection processing) of the known art is executed in conjunction with this information, so as to detect an image shift amount indicating the extent of image shift manifested by the image pairs through a method often referred to as the split pupil phase detection method. Then, the image shift amount undergoes conversion calculation executed in correspondence to a proportional relation of the distance between the gravitational centers of the pair of focus detection pupils to the focus detection pupil distance, so as to determine the extent of deviation (defocus amount) of the actual image forming plane relative to the predetermined image forming plane at the focus detection position (along the vertical direction).

[0091] The focus detection light fluxes received at each pair of focus detection pixels **315** and **316** are basically identical to the light fluxes shown in FIG. **10** except for their orientations, which are rotated by 90° relative to the orientations of the pair of focus detection pixels **73** and **74** received at the corresponding focus detection pixels **313** and **314**. A pair of focus detection pupils, rotated by 90° relative to the focus detection pixels **93** and **94**, is set in correspondence to the pairs of focus detection pixels **315** and **316**. Numerous focus detection pixels **315** and **316**, are disposed so that a focus detection pixel **315** and a focus detection pixel **316** paired up with the focus detection pixel **315** are arrayed alternately to each other in a linear iteration. By integrating the outputs from the photoelectric conversion elements **404** of the individual focus detection pixels **315** and **316** into a pair of output groups, each corresponding to one of the focus detection pupils paired up with each other, information pertaining to the intensity distributions of the pairs of images formed on the focus detection pixel row (extending along the horizontal direction) by the pairs of light fluxes passing through the pair of focus detection pupils is obtained. The extent of deviation (defocus amount) of the actual image forming plane relative to the predetermined image forming plane at the focus detection position (along the horizontal direction) can be calculated based upon the information thus obtained.

[0092] FIG. **11** facilitates observation of the optical requirements that must be fulfilled to allow the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed and the exit pupil plane **90** to achieve a conjugate relation with each other with a simplified illustration of the optical system in a unit pixel area **403** where an image-capturing pixel or a focus detection pixel is formed.

[0093] It is desirable, under normal circumstances, to achieve a sound conjugate relation by using non-spherical on-chip lenses **10**. The following description, given by assuming that the on-chip lenses disposed in the image sensor, which are extremely small, assume a spherical lens contour with a constant radius of curvature, can also be applied to non-spherical on-chip lenses **10** through optimal approximation.

[0094] R represents the radius of curvature of an on-chip lens **10**, L represents the distance between the apex T of the on-chip lens **10** to the exit pupil plane **90**, D represents the distance from the apex T of the on-chip lens **10** to the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed, n represents the average refractive index of the medium present between the on-chip lens **10** and the exit pupil plane **90**, and n₀ represents the average refractive index for the on-chip lens **10** and the medium present between the on-chip lens **10** and the light shielding film **30**.

[0095] A condition expression defining requirements for allowing the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed and the exit pupil plane **90** to achieve a conjugate relation with regard to the on-chip lens **10** is determined. The condition defined in (1) below must be satisfied for the distance D between the apex T of the on-chip lens **10** and the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed, determined through approximation; distance L >> distance D, based upon a geometric-optics paraxial imaging condition.

$$[00001] \quad D = R \cdot \text{Math. } n / (n - n_0) \quad (1)$$

[0096] Expression (2) below is obtained by assuming that the medium present between the on-chip lens **10** and the exit pupil plane **90** is air, i.e., refractive index n₀=1, in a further approximation

$$[00002] \quad D = R \cdot \text{Math. } n / (n - 1) \quad (2)$$

[0097] The condition as defined in (3) is ascertained by modifying expression (2) on the premise that the radius of curvature R is greater than half the size of the unit pixel area **403**, i.e., half the pixel pitch P. The premise that the radius of curvature R is greater than half the pixel pitch P is set forth so as to increase the light receiving efficiency by eliminating any dead zone in the photoelectric conversion element **404** where no light is received. It is to be noted that the curvature at the periphery of the on-chip lens **10** should be set more gradual compared to the curvature at the center of the on-chip lens **10** in consideration of spherical aberration, as will be described later.

$$[00003] \quad D > P \cdot \text{Math. } n / (2 \cdot \text{Math. } (n - 1)) \quad (3)$$

[0098] In addition, while the on-chip lens **10** assumes a spherical contour, focus is achieved with a light beam **62** passing through the periphery of the on-chip lens **10** at a position closer to the on-chip lens **10** due to the spherical aberration, relative to the focusing position achieved with a light beam **61** passing through an area near the center of the on-chip lens **10**. Accordingly, the radius of curvature of the on-chip lens **10** is adjusted for purposes of spherical aberration correction so that it gradually increases with the extent of the increase becoming greater further toward the periphery of the on-chip lens **10** relative to the radius of curvature assumed at the center of the on-chip lens **10**. Through these measures, the conjugate relation between the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed and the exit pupil plane **90** is sustained more rigorously, which, in turn, makes it possible to improve the focus detection accuracy and improve the linearity of the exposure control.

[0099] FIG. **12** indicates the size of the image of an aperture opening **96** set on the exit pupil plane **90**, which is formed on the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed. When the on-chip lens **10** assumes a spherical lens contour with the radius of curvature R, a light beam **63** having exited an edge of the aperture opening **96** to travel toward the curvature center **65** of the sphere with the radius of curvature R does not become refracted at the center of the spherical surface of the lens with the radius of curvature R. By geometrically graphing the light beam **63** traveling from the edge of the aperture opening **96** with a diameter Q toward the curvature center **65**, a diameter S of the image of the aperture opening **96** formed on the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed can be determined as expressed in (4) below.

$$[00004] \ S = (Q \cdot \text{Math. } (D - R)) / (L + R) \quad (4)$$

[0100] Expression (4) can be modified to expression (5) below with F representing the F number of the aperture opening, which is expressed as $F=L/Q$, through an approximation expressed as; distance $L \gg$ radius of curvature R.

$$[00005] \ S = (D - R) / F \quad (5)$$

[0101] It is assumed that P represents the pixel pitch and that the smallest F number that is valid in the interchangeable lens system is the brightest F number, i.e., F0. As long as the light beam having entered the unit pixel area does not enter an adjacent unit pixel area (as long as P is greater than S), the relationship expressed in expression (6) below, obtained by using expression (2) for substitution with regard to the radius of curvature R and simplifying the resulting expression for D, exists.

$$[00006] \ D < F0 \cdot \text{Math. } P \cdot \text{Math. } n \quad (6)$$

[0102] Accordingly, the distance D from the apex T of the on-chip lens **10** to the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed must be determined so as to satisfy the relationships defined in expressions (3) and (6). For instance, the average refractive index n for the on-chip lens **10** and the medium present between the on-chip lens **10** and the light shielding film **30**, the pixel pitch P and the smallest F number F0 may be respectively 1.5, 4 μm and 1.4. In this situation, as long as the distance D from the apex T of the on-chip lens **10** to the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed is set within a range of 6 μm to 8.4 μm, a robust conjugate relation between the exit pupil plane **90** and the plane at which the light shielding film **30** is disposed is assured and entry of stray light into the adjacent pixels can be effectively prevented.

[0103] Expressions (1) through (6) can be used even when a plurality of different types of media with varying refractive indices are present between the on-chip lens **10** and the light shielding film **30**. Namely, under such circumstances, expressions (1) through (6) can be used by assuming an average refractive index for the on-chip lens **10** and the media present between the on-chip lens **10** and the light shielding film **30**. In addition, expressions (1) through (6) can be used even when the on-chip lens **10** is constituted with a plurality of lenses, e.g., even when an inner lens is added, by approximating the lens function as that of a single lens.

[0104] As described earlier, while the curvature is set more gradual at the periphery of the on-chip lens **10**, stray light attributable to multiple reflection, which tends to occur readily at the four corners of the pixel located at the ends of the diagonals where the lens surface slopes more acutely.

FIG. 13 shows light shielding members **66** disposed at the four corners of each on-chip lens in order to prevent such stray light. The light shielding members **66** may be light absorbing members filling the valleys in the on-chip lens array made up with the plurality of on-chip lenses **10**, or they may be light absorbing members disposed at positions corresponding to those of the color filters **9** in FIG. 7 and the white-color filters **7** in FIG. 8. The light absorbing members may be constituted with, for instance, black-color filters.

[0105] In the embodiment described above, a plane conjugate with the exit pupil plane **90** of the image forming optical system, relative to the on-chip lens **10**, can be set further frontward relative to the photoelectric conversion element **404** and light entering the photoelectric conversion element **404** is restricted at the opening **11**, **13** or **14** located at the conjugate plane. As a result, the linear relationship between the aperture F number and the signal level can be kept intact with ease and unnecessary entry of oblique light into an adjacent pixel can also be prevented with ease.

[0106] The structure adopted in a backside illumination image sensor in the related art, in which the plane conjugate with the pupil is set within the photoelectric conversion elements, is not compatible with focus detection pixels engaged in focus detection through the split pupil phase detection method, since openings for splitting the pupil cannot be formed at the plane. In contrast, according to the present invention described above in reference to the embodiment, the plane conjugate with the exit pupil plane **90** of the image forming optical system relative to the on-chip lenses **10** can be positioned further frontward relative to the photoelectric conversion elements **404**, which makes it possible to form the openings **11**, **13** and **14** for splitting the pupil at the conjugate plane. Furthermore, by setting the distance D between the on-chip lenses **10** and the light shielding film **30** so as to satisfy specific requirements, focus detection pixels to be engaged in focus detection through the split pupil phase detection method, which are compatible with a backside illumination image sensor, and also assure a high level of accuracy, can be achieved while, at the same time, minimizing the adverse effects of stray light.

Other Embodiments of the Invention

(1) Embodiment in which Entry of Light into Adjacent Pixels is Prevented Via Polarizers

[0107] FIGS. 7 and 8 show the barriers **8**, each disposed at the boundary of a unit pixel area **403** to function as a light shielding member ranging along the direction parallel to the on-chip lens axis and extending from the light shielding film **30** to the on-chip lens **10**. The entry of light into adjacent unit pixel areas **403** may be prevented by adopting alternative measures.

[0108] FIGS. 14 through 16 present an example of light shielding measures taken by utilizing polarizers. FIG. 14 is a schematic sectional view of image-capturing pixels **310** disposed near the optical axis of the image forming optical system in a backside illumination image sensor achieved in the embodiment, in which the entry of light into adjacent pixels is prevented by polarizers. Since the structural elements disposed at positions lower than the light shielding film **30** among the structural elements in FIG. 14 are identical to those in FIG. 7, their explanation is not provided. Polarizers H32 and polarizers V33, to function as light shielding members, are disposed at the image-capturing pixels **310** shown in FIG. 14, in place of the barriers **8** shown in FIG. 7. A transparent insulating film **31** embeds the polarizers H32 and V33 located directly above the light shielding film **30** and the color filters **9**. In addition, the transparent insulating film **31** also embeds the space between the light shielding film **30** and the polarizers H32 and V33 and the space between the light shielding film **30** and the back surface **408** of the single crystal silicon layer **401**.

[0109] The polarizers H32 and the polarizers V33, which may be, for instance, photonic crystal polarizers configured in an array such as those disclosed in International Publication No. 2004/008196, polarize light along polarizing directions perpendicular to each other. The polarizers H32 and V33 are formed on a substrate with cyclical columns of minute grooves formed thereupon by alternately laminating a material with a high refractive index such as Si or Ta and a material with a low refractive index such as SiO₂ over multiple layers upon the substrate, with a reiterating pattern of indentations/projections formed in each layer.

[0110] FIG. 14 shows two polarizers H32, one disposed between the on-chip lens 10 of the right-hand side image-capturing pixel 310 and the corresponding color filter 9 and the other disposed at a position directly in front of the light shielding film 30. It also shows two polarizers V33, one disposed between the on-chip lens 10 of the left-hand side image-capturing pixel 310 and the corresponding color filter 9 and the other disposed at a position directly in front of the light shielding film 30.

[0111] Stray light 21 with a large angle of incidence will have to pass through one polarizer V33 and one polarizer H32 assuming polarizing directions perpendicular to each other before it ever reaches the opening 11 of the adjacent unit pixel area 403. Since the entry of the stray light 21 into the opening 11 in the adjacent unit pixel area 403 is thus prevented, color mixture (crosstalk) does not occur. As a result, an image of high quality can be generated.

[0112] FIG. 15 is a schematic sectional view of focus detection pixels 313 and 314 disposed near the optical axis of the image forming optical system in the backside illumination image sensor achieved in the embodiment, in which the entry of light into adjacent pixels is prevented by polarizers. Since the structural elements disposed at positions in the area lower than the light shielding film 30 among the structural elements in FIG. 15 are identical to those in FIG. 7, their explanation is not provided. Polarizers H32 and polarizers V33, to function as light shielding members, are disposed at the focus detection pixels 313 and 314 shown in FIG. 15, in place of the barriers 8 shown in FIG. 8. A transparent insulating film 31 embeds the polarizers H32 and V33 located directly above the light shielding film 30 and the white-color filters 7. In addition, the transparent insulating film 31 also embeds the space between the light shielding film 30 and the polarizers H32 and V33 and the space between the light shielding film 30 and the back surface 408 of the single crystal silicon layer 401.

[0113] FIG. 15 shows two polarizers H32, one disposed between the on-chip lens 10 of the focus detection pixel 314 and the white-color filter 7 and the other disposed at a position directly in front of the light shielding film 30. It also shows two polarizers V33, one disposed between the on-chip lens 10 of the focus detection pixel 313 and the white-color filter 7 and the other disposed at a position directly in front of the light shielding film 30.

[0114] Stray light 21 with a large angle of incidence will have to pass through one polarizer V33 and one polarizer H32 assuming polarizing directions perpendicular to each other before it ever reaches the opening 13 or 14 of the adjacent unit pixel area 403. Since the entry of the stray light 21 into the opening 13 or 14 in the adjacent unit pixel area 403 is thus prevented, color mixture (crosstalk) does not occur. As a result, highly accurate focus detection can be achieved.

[0115] The structures of the focus detection pixels 315 and 316 are basically identical to the structures of the focus detection pixels 313 and 314 shown in FIG. 15, except for their orientations, since they are rotated by 90° relative to the focus detection pixels 313 and 314.

[0116] FIG. 16, which corresponds to FIG. 3, indicates the two-dimensional positional relationship among the polarizers H32 and the polarizers V33 shown in FIGS. 14 and 15. With the polarizers H32 and the polarizers V33 disposed in an alternate checkered pattern, entry of stray light from pixels located above, below, to the left and to the right can be effectively prevented.

[0117] FIGS. 14 and 15 show that each unit pixel area 403 includes polarizers disposed at two positions therein. As a structural alternative, the space between the color filter 9 or the white-color filter 7 and the light shielding film 30, filled with the transparent insulating film 31 in the example presented in FIGS. 14 and 15, may instead be entirely taken up by the polarizer which is disposed at the position immediately in front of the light shielding film 30 in the example presented in FIGS. 14 and 15. Similar advantages are achieved by adopting the alternative structure as well.

(2) Embodiment with a Pair of Light Receiving Areas Formed in Each Focus Detection Pixel

[0118] In the image sensor 212 shown in a partial enlargement in FIG. 3, focus detection pixels 313 and 314, each equipped with a single photoelectric conversion element, are disposed so that each focus detection pixel 313 is paired up with an adjacent focus detection pixel 314. However, the

present invention may be adopted in conjunction with focus detection pixels each equipped with a pair of photoelectric conversion elements, such as focus detection pixels **311** and **312** shown in front views in FIGS. **17A** and **17B**.

[0119] The focus detection pixel **311** shown in FIG. **17A** fulfills the functions achieved by the pair of focus detection pixels **313** and **314** respectively shown in FIGS. **6A** and **6B**, whereas the focus detection pixel **312** shown in FIG. **17B** fulfills the functions achieved by the pair of focus detection pixels **315** and **316** respectively shown in FIGS. **6C** and **6D**. The focus detection pixel **311** in FIG. **17A** includes an on-chip lens **10** and a pair of light receiving areas **23** and **24**, whereas the focus detection pixel **312** in FIG. **17B** includes an on-chip lens **10** and a pair of light receiving areas **25** and **26**.

[0120] FIG. **18** shows the two-dimensional positional relationship among the color filters in an image sensor distinguishable from that shown in FIG. **3** in that focus detection pixels **311** are disposed in place of the focus detection pixels **313** and **314**. FIG. **18** indicates that the focus detection pixels **311** or **312**, too, include color filters disposed in the color filter array pattern matching that of the image-capturing pixels **310**. The two-dimensional positional relationship among the color filters shown in FIG. **18** is also assumed in an area of the image sensor where focus detection pixels **312** are disposed in place of the focus detection pixels **315** and **316**.

[0121] FIG. **19** is a schematic sectional view of image-capturing pixels **310** disposed near the optical axis of the image forming optical system in the backside illumination image sensor achieved in the embodiment, which includes a pair of light receiving areas formed at each focus detection pixel. Since the structural elements disposed at positions lower than the light shielding film **30** among the structural elements in FIG. **19** are identical to those in FIG. **7**, their explanation is not provided. As an alternative to the barriers **8** shown in FIG. **7**, the image-capturing pixels **310** in FIG. **19** each include a light shielding member constituted with another color filter **9** disposed at a position immediately in front of the light shielding film **30**. A transparent insulating film **31** fills the space between the color filter **9** directly above the light shielding film **30** and the color filter **9** located directly below the on-chip lens **10**. The transparent insulating film **31** also embeds the space between the color filter **9** directly above the light shielding film **30** and the light shielding film **30** itself and the space between the light shielding film **30** and the back surface **408** of the single crystal silicon layer **401**. However, the color filter **9** may be formed directly on the light shielding film **30** without a transparent insulating film **31** embedding the space above the light shielding film **30**.

[0122] In the image sensor structured as described above, stray light **21** with a large angle of incidence is bound to pass through two different types of color filters **9**, before it ever reaches the opening **11** in an adjacent unit pixel area **403**. As explained earlier, two different types of color filters **9** achieve spectral sensitivity characteristics different from each other. For this reason, the light will have been fully attenuated by the time it reaches the opening **11** of the adjacent unit pixel area **403**, and since color mixture (crosstalk) is thus prevented, an image of high quality can be generated.

[0123] FIG. **20** is a schematic sectional view of focus detection pixels **311** in the backside illumination image sensor achieved in the embodiment, which includes a pair of light receiving areas formed at each focus detection pixel. As an alternative to the barriers **8** shown in FIG. **8**, the focus detection pixels **311** in FIG. **20** each include light shielding members constituted with two color filters **9**, one disposed at a position directly behind the on-chip lens **10** and the other disposed at a position directly in front of an opening **11** in the light shielding film **30**. A transparent insulating film **31** fills the space between the color filter **9** directly above the light shielding film **30** and the color filter **9** located directly below the on-chip lens **10**. The transparent insulating film **31** also embeds the space between the color filter **9** directly above the light shielding film **30** and the light shielding film **30** itself and the space between the light shielding film **30** and the back surface **408** of the single crystal silicon layer **401**. However, the color filter **9** may be formed directly on

the light shielding film **30** without a transparent insulating film **31** embedding the space above the light shielding film **30**.

[0124] In the image sensor structured as described above, stray light **21** with a large angle of incidence is bound to pass through two different types of color filters **9**, before it ever reaches the opening **11** in an adjacent unit pixel area **403**. As explained earlier, two different types of color filters **9** achieve spectral sensitivity characteristics different from each other. For this reason, the light will have been fully attenuated by the time it reaches the opening **11** of the adjacent unit pixel area **403**, and since color mixture (crosstalk) is thus prevented, highly accurate focus detection is enabled.

[0125] Immediately to the rear of the opening **11** in the unit pixel area **403**, a pair of photoelectric conversion elements **43** and **44**, partitioned from each other by an element separating area **402** constituted with a P-type semiconductor, are disposed. On the side where the other principal plane of the single crystal silicon layer **401** is present, i.e., on the lower side where the front surface **409** is present in FIG. **20**, a read circuit **405** via which signals from the pair of photoelectric conversion elements **43** and **44** are read out and wiring layers **418** are formed, together with a second element separating area **414**, a positive charge storage area **415**, a support base **416** and an insulating layer **417**.

[0126] In the structure described above, the boundary between the light receiving areas **23** and **24** shown in FIG. **17A** is formed with an element separating area **402**, whereas the outer perimeter of the light receiving areas **23** and **24** is constituted with the opening **11**.

[0127] The structure of the focus detection pixels **312** is basically identical to the structure of the focus detection pixels **311** shown in FIG. **20**, except for their orientations, since they are rotated by 90° relative to the focus detection pixel **311**.

[0128] While a color filter **9** is disposed at a position immediately to the rear of the on-chip lens **10** in each unit pixel area **403** in the FIGS. **19** and **20**, similar advantages may be achieved by forming the on-chip lens **10** itself as a color filter.

[0129] In the example presented in FIGS. **19** and **20**, color filters **9** are disposed at two positions in each unit pixel area **403**. As a structural alternative, the entire space ranging from the on-chip lens **10** to the light shielding film **30** may be taken up by a single color filter without any transparent insulating film **31** embedding the space and similar advantages will be achieved in an image sensor adopting the alternative structure as well.

[0130] At the image sensor structured as described above, G-color component-based focus detection can be executed through phase comparison (image shift detection) of signals from the photoelectric conversion elements **43** at focus detection pixels **311** or **312** equipped with G-color filters and signals from the photoelectric conversion elements **44** at the focus detection pixels **311** or **312** equipped with G-color filters. In addition, R-color component-based focus detection can be executed through phase comparison (image shift detection) of signals from the photoelectric conversion elements **43** at focus detection pixels **311** or **312** equipped with R-color filters and signals from the photoelectric conversion elements **44** at the focus detection pixels **311** or **312** equipped with R-color filters.

[0131] At each focus detection pixel **311** or **312** equipped with a G-color filter, an image-capturing signal equivalent to an image-capturing signal that would be output at an image-capturing pixel **310** equipped with a G-color filter taking up the particular focus detection pixel position, can be generated by adding the signal from the photoelectric conversion elements **43** and the signal from the photoelectric conversion element **44**. In addition, at each focus detection pixel **311** or **312** equipped with an R-color filter, an image-capturing signal equivalent to an image-capturing signal that would be output at an image-capturing pixel **310** equipped with an R-color filter taking up the particular focus detection pixel position, can be generated by adding the signal from the photoelectric conversion elements **43** and the signal from the photoelectric conversion element **44**.

[0132] Since an image-capturing signal can be generated with a high level of accuracy in

correspondence to each focus detection pixel position in this manner, better quality is assured for the captured image.

[0133] It is to be noted that the signal value representing the sum of the signals from the pair of photoelectric conversion elements **43** and **44** may be obtained by allowing the focus detection pixel **311** or **312** to output a sum signal indicating the sum of the signals from the pair of photoelectric conversion elements **43** and **44** added together by an adding circuit. As an alternative, the signals from the photoelectric conversion element **43** and the photoelectric conversion element **44** may be read out separately and then added together in an external circuit so as to obtain the signal value representing the sum of the signals from the pair of photoelectric conversion elements **43** and **44**.

(3) Other Embodiments

[0134] The image sensors achieved in the embodiments described above include image-capturing pixels equipped with color filters disposed in a Bayer array. However, the color filters may be structured or arrayed differently from those described above, and the present invention may be adopted in conjunction with an image sensor having an array pattern other than the Bayer array pattern, such as a complementary color filter (green G, yellow Ye, magenta Mg and cyan Cy) array pattern.

[0135] Furthermore, the present invention may be adopted in a monochrome image sensor that does not include color filters.

[0136] It is to be noted that the present invention may be adopted in an image-capturing device other than a digital still camera, such as that described above, or a film-type still camera used in conjunction with interchangeable lenses that can be attached to the camera body. For instance, the present invention may be adopted in a digital still camera or a video camera with an integrated lens. The present invention may be further adopted in a compact camera module included as a built-in unit in a portable telephone or the like, a surveillance camera, a visual recognition device in a robot, an on-vehicle camera and the like.

[0137] The above described embodiments are examples, and various modifications can be made without departing from the scope of the invention.

Claims

1. An image sensor comprising: a first on-chip lens that light enters; a second on-chip lens that light enters; a first insulating film through which light from the first on-chip lens passes; a second insulating film through which light from the second on-chip lens passes; a first member for shielding incident light, the first member being disposed between the first insulating film and the second insulating film; a second member that is provided with (i) a first aperture through which light having passed through the first insulating film passes and (ii) a second aperture through which light having passed through the second insulating film passes; a semiconductor layer that is provided with (i) a first photoelectric conversion unit that converts light from the first aperture into an electric charge; (ii) a second photoelectric conversion unit that converts light from the second aperture into an electric charge; (iii) a first read circuit for reading out a signal that is based on the electric charge converted by the first photoelectric conversion unit; and (iv) a second read circuit for reading out a signal that is based on the electric charge converted by the second photoelectric conversion unit, the semiconductor layer having (i) a first surface into which light from the first aperture and light from the second aperture enters, and (ii) a second surface opposite the first surface; and a wiring layer that is disposed on a side of the second surface, the wiring layer having a plurality of wirings connected to the first read circuit and a plurality of wirings connected to the second read circuit, wherein the semiconductor layer is provided with a third photoelectric conversion unit that converts light from the first aperture into an electric charge, and a fourth photoelectric conversion unit that converts light from the second aperture into an electric charge.
2. The image sensor according to claim 1, further comprising: a first filter that is disposed between

the first on-chip lens and the first insulating film, the first filter having a first spectral characteristic; and a second filter that is disposed between the second on-chip lens and the second insulating film, the second filter having a second spectral characteristic.

3. The image sensor according to claim 2, wherein: the first member is disposed between the first filter and the second filter.

4. The image sensor according to claim 3, wherein: the first member is disposed between the first on-chip lens and the second on-chip lens.

5. The image sensor according to claim 1, further comprising: an element separating unit that is disposed between the first photoelectric conversion unit and the second photoelectric conversion unit.

6. The image sensor according to claim 1, wherein: an aperture area of the second aperture is smaller than that of the first aperture.

7. The image sensor according to claim 6, further comprising: a first filter that is disposed between the first on-chip lens and the first insulating film, the first filter having a first spectral characteristic; and a second filter that is disposed between the second on-chip lens and the second insulating film, the second filter having a second spectral characteristic.

8. The image sensor according to claim 7, wherein: the first member is disposed between the first filter and the second filter.

9. The image sensor according to claim 8, wherein: the first member is disposed between the first on-chip lens and the second on-chip lens.

10. The image sensor according to claim 6, further comprising: an element separating unit that is disposed between the first photoelectric conversion unit and the second photoelectric conversion unit.

11. An image sensor comprising: a first on-chip lens that light enters; a second on-chip lens that light enters; a first insulating film through which light from the first on-chip lens passes; a second insulating film through which light from the second on-chip lens passes; a first member for shielding incident light, the first member being disposed between the first insulating film and the second insulating film; a second member that is provided with (i) a first aperture through which light having passed through the first insulating film passes and (ii) a second aperture through which light having passed through the second insulating film passes; a semiconductor layer that is provided with (i) a first photoelectric conversion unit that converts light from the first aperture into an electric charge; (ii) a second photoelectric conversion unit that converts light from the second aperture into an electric charge; (iii) a first read circuit for reading out a signal that is based on the electric charge converted by the first photoelectric conversion unit; and (iv) a second read circuit for reading out a signal that is based on the electric charge converted by the second photoelectric conversion unit, the semiconductor layer having (i) a first surface into which light from the first aperture and light from the second aperture enters, and (ii) a second surface opposite the first surface; and a wiring layer that is disposed on a side of the second surface, the wiring layer having a plurality of wirings connected to the first read circuit and a plurality of wirings connected to the second read circuit.
