

a player can infer rules that a win is achieved when a special symbol whose contour matches the shape of the non-mask area is stopped at the payline, without detailed knowledge about the rules of a game. In other words, rules of the game can be communicated to a player intuitively without literal or linguistic descriptions of the rules. Further, the player infers rules during the course of progress in a game. Hence, the player can readily comprehend a game within a short period of time. Further, even a beginner who has no knowledge of rules can quickly enjoy playing games.

[0018] When the masking operation is performed, a symbol in each non-mask area is highlighted, whereas a symbol in each mask area becomes unnoticeable. Since a special symbol passing through the non-mask area becomes clearly discernible, even a beginner can stop special symbols on the payline. Consequently, a difference in level of skill among players is diminished, thereby enabling all players to enjoy playing games.

[0019] Moreover, a process in which special symbol is stopped at the non-mask area is analogous to a case where specific piece is fitted into predetermined holes or frames in a puzzle game. The player can feel satisfaction by completing an object by fitting the special symbol into the non-mask area. In addition, stoppage of the specific symbol in the non-mask area coincides with winning requirements of rules of the game. Hence, the invention yields a presentation effect of the ability to impart a great feeling of enjoyment to the player.

[0020] In addition, since the bored portion is formed in the electro-optical panel, and the bored portion is caused to match in shape with the geometry of the special symbol. Hence, the only requirement is to form a transparent electrode over the entire mutually-opposing surfaces of the first and second transparent substrates. Consequently, the structure of the electro-optical panel can be simplified.

[0021] Preferably, the slot machine further comprises a random number selector, which determines one of a plurality of lottery results including at least one special lottery result corresponding to the special symbol, to generate internal information indicating the determined one of the lottery results. The controller makes the electro-optical panel translucent when the internal information indicates that the determined one of the lottery results is the special lottery result.

[0022] In such a configuration, the player can be informed that a win is determined through an internal lottery. Further, the electro-optical panel is interposed between the reels and the player, and hence the mask area and the non-mask area appear in the line of sight along which the player stares during the course of a game. Consequently, the player does not need to shift his/her line of sight. The player can therefore enjoy playing games over a long period of time without involvement of eye fatigue. In addition, the player can clearly view the special symbol every time the special symbol passes through the non-mask area. Hence, the player can readily stop reels in synchronism with the timing at which the specific symbol passes through the non-mask area.

[0023] Alternatively, it is preferable that the slot machine further comprises a random number selector, which determines one of a plurality of lottery results including a

plurality of special lottery results corresponding to a plurality of special symbols, to generate internal information indicating the determined one of the lottery results. A plurality of electro-optical panels are provided in association with the plurality of special symbols. The controller makes one of the electro-optical panels associated with one of the special symbols translucent when the internal information indicates that the determined one of the lottery results is one of the special lottery results corresponding to the one of the special symbols, while the controller makes the other electro-optical panels transparent.

[0024] In such a configuration, a player can be informed that a win is determined through an internal lottery. For instance, a determination may be made as to whether or not the player is playing a super bonus big game, which may be used for informing the player of determination of a win for a small winning combination during the course of the super big bonus game.

[0025] According to the invention, there is also provided a slot machine, comprising:

[0026] a plurality of reels, each provided with a plurality of symbols including at least one special symbol;

[0027] at least one payline, extending across the reels;

[0028] an electro-optical panel, including a first transparent substrate and a second transparent substrate which sandwiches an electro-optical substance therebetween, the electro-optical panel disposed so as to cover at least one of the reels; and

[0029] a controller, which displays at least one mask image on the electro-optical panel in accordance with a predetermined rule, the mask image including a mask area and at least one non-mask area having a shape substantially coincident with an contour of the special symbol, and having a transparency higher than a transparency of the mask area, the mask image displayed such that the non-mask area is placed on the payline.

[0030] Also in such a configuration, rules of the game can be communicated to a player intuitively without literal or linguistic descriptions of the rules. Further, a difference in level of skill among players is diminished, thereby enabling all players to enjoy playing games. Moreover, the player is imparted with a feeling of satisfaction as if having completed a set-in puzzle.

[0031] Preferably, at least one of transparent electrodes formed on opposing faces of the first transparent substrate and the second transparent substrate has a shape substantially coincident with the non-mask area.

[0032] In this case, the only requirement is to set the shape of the transparent electrode so as to be coincident with the non-mask area. As compared with a case where the bored portion is formed in an electro-optical panel, the structure thereof is simplified, thereby enabling cost reduction. Simultaneously, a process for filling a space defined between the first and second substrates with the electro-optical substance can be facilitated.

[0033] Preferably, the electro-optical panel including a plurality of pixels arranged in a matrix manner, so that a