

Description**Field of the Invention**

5 The present invention relates to a process for producing a liquid transfer article for use in transferring an accurately metered quantity of a liquid to another surface, for example, such as a roll for use in gravure printing processes. The present invention also relates to the article produced by the process. The liquid transfer article is produced by coating a substrate with a ceramic or metallic carbide layer having a density of greater than 95% theoretical; followed by directing a laser beam of radiation onto the coated surface to produce on the coated surface a pattern of depressions or wells adapted for receiving liquid; and then finishing the laser engraved coated surface to a roughness of less than 0.15 μm (6 micro-inches) R_a , preferably less than 0.10 μm (4 micro-inches) R_a .

Background of the Invention

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A liquid transfer article, such as an impression roll, is used in the printing industry to transfer a specified amount of a liquid, such as ink or other substance, from the liquid transfer article to another surface. The liquid transfer article generally comprises a surface with a pattern of depressions or wells adapted for receiving a liquid and in which said pattern is transferred to another surface when contacted by the liquid transfer article. When the liquid is ink and the ink is applied to the article, the wells are filled with the ink while any ink on the remaining surface or land area of the article is wiped off. Since the ink is contained only in the pattern defined by the wells, it is this pattern that is transferred to another surface.

20 In commercial practice, a wiper or doctor blade is used to remove any excess liquid from the land area of the liquid transfer article. If the surface of the coated article is too coarse, excessive liquid, such as ink, will not be completely removed from the coarse land area of the article thereby resulting in the transfer of too much ink onto the receiving surface and/or onto the wrong place of the receiving surface. Therefore, the surface of the liquid transfer article should be smooth and the wells clearly defined so that they can accept the liquid.

Gravure-type rolls are commonly used as liquid transfer rolls. Gravure-type rolls are also referred to as applicators or pattern rolls. A gravure roll is produced by cutting or engraving various sizes of wells into portions of the roll surface. These wells are filled with liquid and then the liquid is transferred to a receiving surface. The diameter and depth of the wells may be varied to control the volume of liquid transfer. It is the location of the wells that provide a pattern of the liquid to be transferred to the receiving surface while the land area defining the wells do not contain any liquid and therefore should not transfer any liquid. The land area is at a common surface level such that when liquid is applied to the surface and the liquid fills or floods the wells, excess liquid can be removed from the land areas by wiping a doctor blade across the roll surface.

30 The depth and size of the wells determines the amount of liquid which is transferred to the receiving surface. By controlling the depth and size of the wells, and the location of the wells (pattern) on the surface, a precise control of the volume of liquid to be transferred and the location of the liquid to be transferred to a receiving surface can be achieved. In addition, the liquid may be transferred to a receiving surface in a predetermined pattern to a high degree of precision having different print densities by having various depth and/or sizes of wells.

Typically, gravure rolls are a metal with an outer layer of copper. Generally, the engraving techniques employed to engrave the copper are mechanical processes, e.g., using a diamond stylus to dig the depression patterns, or photochemical processes that chemically etch the depression pattern. After completion of the engraving, the copper surface is usually plated with chrome. This last step is required to improve the wear life of the engraved copper surface of the roll. Without the chrome plating, the rolls wear quickly, and are more easily corroded by the inks used in the printing industry. For this reason, without the chrome plating, the copper rolls generally have an unacceptably low life.

40 However, even with chrome plating, the life of the rolls is often unacceptably short. This is due to the abrasive nature of the fluids and the scraping action caused by the doctor blade. In many applications, the rapid wear of the rolls is compensated by providing oversized rolls with wells having oversized depth. However, these rolls have the disadvantage of higher liquid transfer when the rolls are new. In addition, as the rolls wear, the volume of liquid transferred to a receiving surface rapidly decreases thereby causing quality control problems. The rapid wear of the chrome-plated copper rolls also results in considerable downtime and maintenance costs.

Ceramic coatings have been used for many years for anilox rolls to give extremely long life. Anilox rolls are liquid transfer rolls which transfer a uniform liquid volume over the entire working surface of the roll. Engraving of ceramic coated rolls cannot effectively be done with the conventional engraving methods used for engraving copper rolls. Consequently, ceramic coated rolls are generally engraved with a high energy beam, such as a laser or an electron beam. Laser engraving results in the formation of a well with a new recast surface above the original surface of the roll, such recast surface having an appearance of a miniature volcano crater. This is caused by solidification of the molten material thrown from the surface when struck by the high energy beam. Specifically, recast is coating material surrounding a laser-engraved well which was not vaporized by the energy beam and which material resolidifies.

Furthermore a transfer roll for use in transferring ink or other medium to a print roll, or directly to material that is being printed, is known from GB-A-2 049 102, which transfer roll has a layer of corrosion resistant metal and an outer ceramic coating which may be ground to provide a relatively smooth surface. The ceramic coating e.g. consists of aluminum oxide, titanium oxide, chromium oxide, nickel oxide, tungsten carbide, chromium carbide or boron carbide. A multiplicity of holes or depressions are formed in the ceramic layer by a pulsed laser beam. The holes can be applied in any desired pattern.

The above mentioned recast surface does not significantly effect the function of an anilox roll because the complete anilox roll is engraved and has no pattern. However, in gravure printing processes where a liquid transfer pattern is required, the recast surface causes significant problems. The major difference between a gravure roll and an anilox roll is that the entire anilox roll surface is engraved whereas with a gravure roll only portions of the roll are engraved to form a predetermined pattern. In order for the gravure roll to transfer liquid in a controlled manner determined by the pattern, fluid has to be completely wiped from the unengraved land areas by a doctor blade. Any fluid remaining on the land areas after being wiped with a doctor blade will be deposited on the receiving surface where it is not desired. With a laser engraved ceramic roll, the doctor blade cannot completely remove liquid from the land area due to the recast surfaces or porosity of the land areas which retain some of the liquid. Although the recast surfaces should be removed for most printing applications, the porosity of the land area is still a major problem since liquid can be trapped on the land area and transferred to a receiving surface. This problem is particularly severe at transition zones between adjacent wells and patterns where the liquid tends to smear onto the land areas where it should not be.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a low porosity, high density ceramic or metallic carbide coated laser-engraved liquid transfer article, such as an impression roll, which has land areas which can easily and efficiently be wiped clean of a liquid and a plurality of wells for retaining a metered amount of liquid that can be transferred to a suitable receiving surface.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a process for producing a low porosity, high density ceramic or metallic carbide coated laser-engraved liquid transfer article.

Summary of the Invention

The invention relates to a liquid transfer article coated with a material selected from the group comprising ceramic and metallic carbide, said coated surface comprising a first portion containing a plurality of laser-engraved wells adapted for receiving a liquid, and a second portion comprising land areas, characterized in that said land areas have a surface hardness of at least 800 HV_{0.3} and a density of greater than 95 % theoretical, that any recast material that may have formed around each well is removed, and that the surface of the land areas is provided with a surface roughness of less than about 0.15 μm (6 micro-inches) R_a .

Preferably the land areas have a surface hardness of at least 1000 HV_{0.3} and a density of greater than 97 % theoretical, and the surface of the land areas is provided with a surface roughness of less than about 0.10 μm (4 micro-inches) R_a . As used herein R_a is the average surface roughness measured in μm (micro-inches) by ANSI Method B46.1. 1978. In this measuring system, the higher the number the rougher the surface.

The land areas having these characteristics will exhibit little or no surface porosity and will enable liquid contacting the surface to be easily and efficiently wiped off using a conventional type doctor blade. Thus when liquid, such as ink, is deposited on the surface of the liquid transfer article, the liquid will flow into and remain in the wells while any excess liquid can be wiped off the surface of the land areas. This will insure that when the liquid transfer article is a gravure roll, the ink in the wells can be transferred to an appropriate surface while the area of the surface contacted by the land areas of the roll will be completely free of ink or ink smudges.

Another aspect of the invention relates to a method for producing a liquid transfer article for use in transferring liquid to another surface comprising the steps:

(a) coating an article with at least one layer of a material selected from the group consisting of ceramic and metallic carbide, and

(b) engraving the coated surface with a beam of energy to produce a plurality of wells in a first portion of the coated surface that are adapted for receiving a liquid with the second portion of the coated surface comprising land areas that were not contacted by the beam of energy:

characterized by

coating said article in step (a) so that the surface of the coated layer has a density of at least 95 % theoretical and the land areas have a surface hardness of at least 800 HV_{0.3}; and

(c) treating the laser-engraved coated surface to remove any recast material that may have formed around each well by the beam of energy so as to provide the surface of the land areas with a roughness of less than 0.15 μm (6 micro-inches) R_a , preferably less than about 0.10 μm (4 micro-inches) R_a .

Generally, after application of the coating and sealant if applied, it is finished by conventional grinding techniques to the desired dimensions and tolerances of the roll surface and for a roughness of about 0.5 μm (20 micro-inches) R_a or less, preferably about 0.25 μm (10 micro-inches) R_a , in order to provide an even surface for a laser treatment. After laser engraving, the recast areas are finished to or below the original surface height of the coated article prior to laser engraving and the land areas are finished to provide a roughness of 0.15 μm (6 micro-inches) R_a , preferably 0.10 μm (4 micro-inches) R_a or less. In less critical applications, small recast area may be tolerable.

As stated above a recast area is coating material surrounding a laser-engraved well which is not vaporized by the energy beam and which resolidifies. It has been found that the recast material may differ considerably from the original coating. In general, it may be denser and less porous than the original material. In multiphase coatings, the recast material typically appears to be a single phase. The removal of the recast material above the surface of the land area is generally required so as to allow a doctor blade to remove any liquid from remaining on the land areas. This will prevent unwanted liquid or liquid smudges from being transferred to a receiving surface in the wrong places.

Preferably after step (a) the following step could be added:

(a') sealing the coated article with a sealant.

A suitable sealant would be an epoxy sealant such as UCAR 100 sealant which is obtainable from Union Carbide Corporation, a New York Corporation. UCAR 100 is a trademark of Union Carbide Corporation for a thermosetting epoxy resin containing DGEBA. The sealant can effectively seal fine microporosity that may be developed during the coating process and therefore provides resistance to water and alkaline solutions that may be encountered during the use of the coated article while also providing resistance to contaminations that may be encountered during handling of the coated article.

Any suitable ceramic coating, such as a refractory oxide or metallic carbide coating may be applied to the surface of the roll. For example, tungsten carbide-cobalt, tungsten carbide-nickel, tungsten carbide-cobalt chromium, tungsten carbide-nickel chromium, chromium-nickel, aluminum oxide, chromium carbide-nickel chromium, chromium carbide-cobalt chromium, tungsten-titanium carbide-nickel, cobalt alloys, oxide dispersion in cobalt alloys, aluminium-titania, copper based alloys, chromium based alloys, chromium oxide, chromium oxide plus aluminum oxide, titanium oxide, titanium plus aluminum oxide, iron based alloys, oxide dispersed in iron based alloys, nickel and nickel based alloys, and the like may be used. Preferably chromium oxide (Cr_2O_3), aluminum oxide (Al_2O_3), silicon oxide or mixtures thereof could be used as the coating material, with chromium oxide being the most preferred.

The ceramic or metallic carbide coatings can be applied to the metal surface of the roll by either of two well known techniques, namely, the detonation gun process or the plasma coating process. The detonation gun process is well known and fully described in United States Patents 2,714,563; 4,173,685; and 4,519,840, the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference. Conventional plasma techniques for coating a substrate are described in United States Patents 3,016,447; 3,914,573; 3,958,097; 4,173,685; and 4,519,840, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference. The thickness of the coating applied by either the plasma process or D-gun process can range from 13 to 2500 μm (0.5 to 100 mils) and the roughness ranges from about 1.3 μm to about 25 μm (about 50 to about 1000 micro-inches) R_a depending on the process, i.e. D-gun or plasma, the type of coating material, and the thickness of the coating. As stated above, the ceramic or metallic

carbide coating on the roll can be preferably treated with a suitable pore sealant such as an epoxy sealant, e.g. UCAR 100 epoxy available from Union Carbide Corporation. The treatment seals the pores to prevent moisture or other corrosive materials from penetrating through the ceramic or metallic carbide coating to attach and degrade the underlying structure of the roll.

The coated roll is then finished to a roughness of $0.5\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (20 micro-inches) or less before being laser engraved using a CO_2 laser in order to produce a suitable pattern defined by laser-formed wells in the surface of the coating material.

The volume of the liquid to be transferred is controlled by the volume (depth and diameter) of each well and the number of wells per unit area. The depths of the laser-formed wells can vary from about $0.1\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (a few microns) or less to as much as 3.0 to $3.6\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (120 to 140 microns) or more. The average diameter of each well, of course, is controlled by the pattern and the number of laser-formed wells per lineal cm (inch). Preferably the area on the surface of the article is divided into two portions. One portion comprises wells in a uniform pattern, such as a square pattern, a 30 degree pattern, or a 45 degree pattern with the number of laser-formed wells per lineal cm typically being from 31 to 217 (80 to 550 per inch and the remaining second portion being free of wells (land areas). The presence of recast upon the land areas would result in ink smearing into the well-free portion of the land areas when a doctor blade is passed over the surface to remove any liquid on the land area. By removing the recast material to produce smooth land areas between the wells, this problem is avoided.

A wide variety of laser machines are available for forming wells in the ceramic or metallic carbide coatings. In general, lasers capable of producing a beam or pulse of radiation of from 0.0001 to 0.4 joule per laser pulse for a duration of 10 to 300 microseconds can be used. The laser pulses can be separated by 30 to 2000 microseconds depending on the specific pattern of well desired. Higher or lower values of the energy and time periods can be employed and other laser-engraving techniques readily available in the art can be used for this invention. After laser-engraving, the roughness should typically range from 0.5 to $25\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (20 to 1000 micro-inches) R_a and the wells can range from $0.25\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ to $7.6\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (10 microns to 300 microns) in diameter and from $0.13\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ to $6.35\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (5 microns to 250 microns) in height.

After the laser treatment of the coated surface of the liquid transfer article, such as a roll, the coated surface can be finished to less than about $0.15\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (6 micro-inches) R_a using a microfinishing (also called superfinishing) technique, such as described in "Roll Superfinishing with Coated Abrasives," by Alan P. Dinsberg, in Carbide and Tool Journal, March/April 1988 publication. Microfinishing techniques can provide a predictable, consistent surface finish over the entire length of the engraved roll, and provide a surface free of recast so that all unwanted liquid can be effectively removed from the land areas by a doctor blade.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a side elevation view of a roll showing a laser-engraved pattern on the surface of the roll.

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the roll in Figure 1 taken through line 2-2.

Figure 3 is a side elevation view of the roll shown in Figure 1 after the recast areas have been removed.

Figure 4 is a cross-sectional view of the roll in Figure 3 taken through line 4-4.

Figures 1 and 2 show a conventional type cylindrical roll 2 having a substrate 4 made of steel and having a surface coating 6 of a ceramic. A portion of the coated surface is shown with a plurality of wells 8 formed by a conventional laser engraving treatment. Specifically, the coated surface is laser engraved using a laser to produce in the coated layer a suitable pattern of wells 8 with each well 8 having a preselected volume so as to contain an amount of liquid to be transferred to a receiving surface. In practice, the number of wells would be significantly greater than that shown in the Figures and grouped together so that to the human eye they would not be identifiable. The depths of the laser-formed well can vary from a few μm or less to as much as $200\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ or more. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the laser engraving results in the formation of wells 8 with a new recast area 10 formed about each well 8. The recast surface has the appearance of a miniature volcano crater and is caused by solidification of the molten coating material that is thrown from the surface of the coated layer when the coated surface is struck by the high energy beam from the laser.

After the laser treatment of the coated surface of the liquid transfer article, the coated surface is finished to a roughness of less than about $0.15\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (6 micro-inches) R_a using a microfinishing technique as described above. The microfinishing technique provides a predictable, consistent surface finish over the entire length of the coated surface and effectively removes the recast area about each well. Figures 3 and 4 show the roll 2 of Figure 1 after the finishing treatment has been completed in which the recast areas 10 have been removed so that a smooth surface is provided. The surface area 12 which is defined as the area contained in the surface plane parallel to the longitudinal axis 14 of roll 2 is referred to as the land area. As stated above, if the land area which includes the areas between adjacent wells, does not have the proper density so that the surface has undesirable porosity, then a doctor blade may not be successful in removing liquid from the land area. Any liquid remaining on the land area may be transferred to a receiving surface as an undesirable smudge or transferred to the receiving surface in the wrong areas.

In accordance with this invention the land areas have a density of greater than 95% theoretical and a surface roughness of less than about $0.15 \mu\text{m}$ (6 micro-inches) R_a , preferably less than about $0.10 \mu\text{m}$ (4 micro-inches) R_a . With the land areas having these characteristics, any liquid contained on the land areas can be easily and effectively removed by a doctor blade so that the only liquid transferred to a receiving surface will be the liquid contained in the wells 8. This will insure that the liquid will not be transferred to the wrong area of the receiving surface and also prevent unwanted smudges on the receiving surface.

A typical means for microfinishing the laser-engraved coated roll would be to continuously move a film-backed diamond tape over the surface of the roll. The tape speed and grit could be set for the desired recast removal rate and would be typically between 3 and 4 in/min (8 to 10 cm/min). As the abrasive tape is moved over the roll, the roll could also be rotated at a rotational speed of 50 to 100 rpm. The abrasive tape could be forced against the roll by conventional means and controlled so that a specific degree of roughness is obtained on the surface of the roll. The R_a roughness on the roll could be continuously measured until a desired value is reached.

Although the preferable liquid to be transferred is ink, other suitable liquids could be employed such as liquid adhesives.

During the entire finishing process it is recommended that an accurate technique be employed that will permit constant measurement of the volume of the wells in the engraved area so that the desired liquid transfer volume of the wells in the coated roll surface be achieved. A preferred method for measuring liquid transfer volume is to apply a known volume of ink to the surface, and spread the ink over the surface to completely fill as many wells as possible. An ink impression is made of the inked area on the roll and the area of the image or ink plot on a receiving surface is then precisely measured. The known volume of the ink deposited on the roll is divided by the measured area of the transferred image with the quotient being the volumetric capacity of the roll. As a microliter of ink is one billion cubic μm , the unit is billions of cubic μm per square cm ($10^{12} \mu\text{m}^3/\text{cm}^2$) if the ink volume is in microliters, and the area in square cm, or billions of cubic μm per square inch (BCM/in^2) if the ink volume is in microliters, and the area in square inches.

Examples

In the examples below, the transfer volume was measured as follows;

1. Using a pipette draw a 25 microliter sample of a water soluble ink.
2. Deposit ink upon the surface of the roll by slowly ejecting ink on the surface of the roll. The roll is aligned with its axis horizontal with the surface being measured placed at the top. The pipette is held at about a 45 degree angle while oscillating the ink from side to side over a distance of about 19mm (three quarters of an inch) while advancing it around the roll.
3. The ink is spread by passing a doctor blade slowly and steadily over the surface around the roll in a direction perpendicular to the roll axis. The doctor blade is passed in the same direction as the depositing of the ink such that the blade contacts the large portion of the ink deposit as opposed to the trailing section.
4. The ink image upon the surface of the roll is transferred to paper by laying transfer paper down over the ink area. While holding the paper tight to prevent slippage, rub the back of the paper to transfer ink from the wells in the roll to the receiving surface. It is not necessary to transfer all of the ink in the wells, since the goal is to obtain an image of the area filled by a known ink quantity. The paper is removed and the roll surface immediately cleaned with distilled water using a stainless steel cleaning brush. If the edge of the image has a feather edge, outline the image when dry with a felt tip black pen with the outer edge of the outline half way between the point of maximum image density and the point of image fade out.
5. The area of the image is measured by tracing the outline of the image with a planimeter using standard techniques. Alternately, area measurement, a manual method using a transfer paper with a grid of about 5mm (0.2 inches), or a computerized scanning technique may be used.

Example 1

A roll with a 165 mm (6.5 inch) in diameter by 610 mm (24 inch) long cylindrical working surface was coated with Cr_2O_3 (chromium oxide) by the plasma spray process. The surface of the coating was ground to a finish of $0.46 \mu\text{m}$ (18 micro-inches) R_a . The working surface was laser engraved with a CO_2 pulsed laser. The surface was divided into two portions, a first portion with a uniform pattern of laser wells, and a second portion with no laser indentations (land areas), to form over the entire surface a pattern of laser wells. The pattern of laser wells was formed by programming the laser to operate only over the patterned

portion with the laser wells.

After forming the wells with the laser, the roll surface was microfinished using an abrasive of diamond particles upon a tape 102 mm (4 inches) in width. The abrasive tape was moved over the roll while pressure was applied. The roll was finished with 19 traversing passes of the tape across the roll surface. In Table A is shown the grit (average size in μm of the abrasive particles), the pressure at which the platen bears against the roll (measured as air pressure in a 38 mm (1.5 inch) diameter cylinder that was used to force the tape against the roll surface).

Table A

Pass	Grit (μm)	Pressure		R_a		Volume ($10^2\mu\text{m}^3$)
		(kPa)	(psi)	(μm)	(μinches)	
1	45	414	60	0.41	16	27
2	45	414	60	0.41	16	25
3	45	414	60	0.33	13	
4	45	414	60	0.33	13	23
5	30	276	40	0.18	7	
6	30	276	40	0.18	7	20
7	15	276	40	0.13	5	
8	15	276	40	0.13	5	19.5
9	9	207	30	0.10	4	
10	9	207	30	0.10	4	19.0
11	6	207	30	0.08	3	
12	6	207	30	0.08	3	19.0
13	3	138	20	0.08	3	
14	3	138	20	0.08	3	18.5
15	3	103	15	0.08	3	
16	3	103	15	0.08	3	18.5
17	3	103	15	0.05	2	
18	3	103	15	0.05	2	18

After every second pass the R_a and ink volume tests were done and the next two steps were repeated until the desired roughness was obtained. The roll was then used to transfer ink to a receiving surface and the ink transferred was only the ink contained in the wells and the area on the receiving surface corresponding to the land areas shows no sign of smudges or unwanted ink.

Sample rolls, each having its surface finished to a roughness of $0.18\mu\text{m}$ (7 micro-inches) R_a or higher (6 or fewer passes), were tested to see if a doctor blade could wipe clean the surface of each roll. In all samples where the surface roughness of each roll was $0.18\mu\text{m}$ (7 micro-inches) R_a or higher, the doctor blade left unwanted ink which could be transferred to a receiving surface in the wrong location. In other sample rolls in which each roll had its surface finished to a roughness of $0.13\mu\text{m}$ (5 micro-inches) R_a or less (7 or more passes), the doctor blade was able to wipe clean the surface of each roll so that no ink would be transferred to the receiving surface in the wrong location. When using a latex adhesive as the liquid medium, then the surface roughness should be finished in most applications to $0.10\mu\text{m}$ (4 micro-inches) R_a or less to ensure that no unwanted adhesive remains on the surface after the surface is wiped by the doctor blade.

Claims

1. A liquid transfer article (2) coated with a material selected from the group comprising ceramic and metallic carbide, said coated surface comprising a first portion containing a plurality of laser-engraved wells (8) adapted for receiving a liquid, and a second portion comprising land areas, characterized in that said land areas have a surface hardness of at least $800\text{HV}_{0.05}$ and a density of greater than 95 % theoretical, that any recast material that may have formed around each well (8) is removed, and that the surface of the land areas is provided with a surface roughness of less than about $0.15\mu\text{m}$ (6 micro-inches) R_a .

portion with the laser wells.

After forming the wells with the laser, the roll surface was microfinished using an abrasive of diamond particles upon a tape 102 mm (4 inches) in width. The abrasive tape was moved over the roll while pressure was applied. The roll was finished with 19 traversing passes of the tape across the roll surface. In Table A is shown the grit (average size in μm of the abrasive particles), the pressure at which the platen bears against the roll (measured as air pressure in a 38 mm (1.5 inch) diameter cylinder that was used to force the tape against the roll surface).

Table A

Pass	Grit (μm)	Pressure		R_a		Volume ($10^2\mu\text{m}^3$)
		(kPa)	(psi)	(μm)	(μinches)	
1	45	414	60	0.41	16	27
2	45	414	60	0.41	16	25
3	45	414	60	0.33	13	
4	45	414	60	0.33	13	23
5	30	276	40	0.18	7	
6	30	276	40	0.18	7	20
7	15	276	40	0.13	5	
8	15	276	40	0.13	5	19.5
9	9	207	30	0.10	4	
10	9	207	30	0.10	4	19.0
11	6	207	30	0.08	3	
12	6	207	30	0.08	3	19.0
13	3	138	20	0.08	3	
14	3	138	20	0.08	3	18.5
15	3	103	15	0.08	3	
16	3	103	15	0.08	3	18.5
17	3	103	15	0.05	2	
18	3	103	15	0.05	2	18

After every second pass the R_a and ink volume tests were done and the next two steps were repeated until the desired roughness was obtained. The roll was then used to transfer ink to a receiving surface and the ink transferred was only the ink contained in the wells and the area on the receiving surface corresponding to the land areas shows no sign of smudges or unwanted ink.

Sample rolls, each having its surface finished to a roughness of $0.18\mu\text{m}$ (7 micro-inches) R_a or higher (6 or fewer passes), were tested to see if a doctor blade could wipe clean the surface of each roll. In all samples where the surface roughness of each roll was $0.18\mu\text{m}$ (7 micro-inches) R_a or higher, the doctor blade left unwanted ink which could be transferred to a receiving surface in the wrong location. In other sample rolls in which each roll had its surface finished to a roughness of $0.13\mu\text{m}$ (5 micro-inches) R_a or less (7 or more passes), the doctor blade was able to wipe clean the surface of each roll so that no ink would be transferred to the receiving surface in the wrong location. When using a latex adhesive as the liquid medium, then the surface roughness should be finished in most applications to $0.10\mu\text{m}$ (4 micro-inches) R_a or less to ensure that no unwanted adhesive remains on the surface after the surface is wiped by the doctor blade.

Claims

1. A liquid transfer article (2) coated with a material selected from the group comprising ceramic and metallic carbide, said coated surface comprising a first portion containing a plurality of laser-engraved wells (8) adapted for receiving a liquid, and a second portion comprising land areas, characterized in that said land areas have a surface hardness of at least $800\text{HV}_{0.05}$ and a density of greater than 95 % theoretical, that any recast material that may have formed around each well (8) is removed, and that the surface of the land areas is provided with a surface roughness of less than about $0.15\mu\text{m}$ (6 micro-inches) R_a .



2. The liquid transfer article of Claim 1 wherein the surface roughness is less than about 0.10 μm (4 micro-inches).
3. The liquid transfer article of Claim 1 wherein the coated material is selected from the group comprising chromium oxide, aluminum oxide, silicon oxide and mixtures thereof.
4. The liquid transfer article of Claim 1 wherein the article (2) is steel coated with chromium oxide.
5. The liquid transfer article of Claim 2, 3 or 4 wherein the density of the land areas is greater than 97% theoretical.
6. The liquid transfer article of Claim 2, 3 or 4 wherein said article is a cylindrical roll (2).
7. The liquid transfer article of Claim 2, 3 or 4 wherein said article is a cylindrical gravure roll (2).
8. A method for producing a liquid transfer article (2) for use in transferring a liquid to another surface comprising the steps:
 - (a) coating an article with at least one layer (6) of a material selected from the group consisting of ceramic and metallic carbide; and
 - (b) engraving the coated surface with a beam of energy to produce a plurality of wells (8) in a first portion of the coated surface that are adapted for receiving a liquid with the second portion of the coated surface comprising land areas that were not contacted by the beam of energy; characterized by coating said article (2) in step (a) so that the surface of the coated layer (6) has a density of at least 95 % theoretical and the land areas have a surface hardness of at least 800 HV_{0.3}; and
 - (c) treating the laser-engraved coated surface to remove any recast material that may have formed around each well (8) by the beam of energy so as to provide the surface of the land areas with a roughness of less than 0.15 μm (6 micro-inches) R_a.
9. The method of Claim 8 wherein after step (a) the following step is added:
 - (a') treating the coated surface to obtain a roughness of less than 0.5 μm (20 micro-inches) R_a.
10. The method of Claim 8 wherein after step (a) the following step is added:
 - (a') treating the coated surface to obtain a roughness of less than 0.25 μm (10 micro-inches) R_a.
11. The method of Claim 8 wherein after step (a) the following step is added:
 - (a') sealing the coated article with a sealant.
12. The method of Claim 11 wherein after step (a') the following step is added:
 - (a'') treating the coated surface to obtain a roughness of less than 0.5 μm (20 micro-inches) R_a.
13. The method of Claim 12 wherein in step (c) the roughness of the land areas is less than about 0.10 μm (4 micro-inches) R_a.
14. The method of Claim 8 or 13 wherein in step (a) the coating material is selected from the group comprising chromium oxide, aluminum oxide, silicon oxide and mixtures thereof.
15. The method of Claim 8 or 13 wherein in step (a) the article is steel and the coating material is chromium oxide

Patentansprüche

1. Gegenstand (2) für die Übertragung von Flüssigkeiten, der mit einem Werkstoff beschichtet ist, der aus der keramische Werkstoffe und Metallkarbid umfassenden Gruppe ausgewählt ist, wobei die beschichtete Oberfläche mit einem ersten Abschnitt, der eine Mehrzahl von lasergravierten, zur Aufnahme einer Flüssigkeit geeigneten Vertiefungen (8) aufweist, und mit einem zweiten Abschnitt versehen ist, der Stegbereiche aufweist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Stegbereiche eine Oberflächenhärte von mindestens 800 HV_{0.3} und eine Dichte von mehr als 95 Prozent der theoretischen Dichte haben, daß



jeglicher umgeschmolzener Werkstoff, der sich möglicherweise um jede Vertiefung (8) herum gebildet hat, beseitigt ist, und daß die Oberfläche der Stegbereiche eine Oberflächenrauheit von weniger als etwa $0,15\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (6 Mikroinch) R_a aufweist.

- 5 2. Gegenstand für die Übertragung von Flüssigkeiten nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Oberflächenrauheit kleiner als etwa $0,10\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (4 Mikroinch) ist.
3. Gegenstand für die Übertragung von Flüssigkeiten nach Anspruch 1, wobei der Beschichtungswerkstoff aus der Chromoxid, Aluminiumoxid, Siliziumoxid und Gemische derselben umfassenden Gruppe ausgewählt ist.
- 10 4. Gegenstand für die Übertragung von Flüssigkeiten nach Anspruch 1, wobei der Gegenstand (2) aus Stahl besteht, der mit Chromoxid beschichtet ist.
- 15 5. Gegenstand für die Übertragung von Flüssigkeiten nach Anspruch 2,3 oder 4, wobei die Dichte der Stegbereiche größer als 97 Prozent der theoretischen Dichte ist.
6. Gegenstand für die Übertragung von Flüssigkeiten nach Anspruch 2,3 oder 4, wobei der Gegenstand eine zylindrische Walze (2) ist.
- 20 7. Gegenstand für die Übertragung von Flüssigkeiten nach Anspruch 2,3 oder 4, wobei der Gegenstand eine zylindrische Gravurwalze (2) ist.
8. Verfahren zum Herstellen eines Flüssigkeitsübertragungsgegenstandes (2) zur Verwendung beim Übertragen von Flüssigkeiten auf eine andere Fläche, bei dem:
 - 25 (a) ein Gegenstand mit mindestens einer Schicht (6) aus einem Werkstoff beschichtet wird, der aus der aus keramischen Werkstoffen und Metallkarbid bestehenden Gruppe ausgewählt ist; und
 - (b) die beschichtete Oberfläche mit einem Energiestrahle graviert wird, um in einem ersten Abschnitt der beschichteten Oberfläche eine Mehrzahl von Vertiefungen (8) auszubilden, die zur Aufnahme einer Flüssigkeit geeignet sind, wobei ein zweiter Abschnitt der beschichteten Oberfläche Stegbereiche aufweist, die von dem Energiestrahle nicht berührt werden;
 - 30 dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß
 - der Gegenstand (2) in dem Verfahrensschritt (a) so beschichtet wird, daß die Oberfläche der aufgetragenen Schicht (6) eine Dichte von mindestens 95 Prozent der theoretischen Dichte hat und die Stegbereiche eine Oberflächenhärte von mindestens $800\text{ HV}_{0,3}$ haben; und
 - 35 (c) die lasergravierte beschichtete Oberfläche behandelt wird, um umgeschmolzenen Werkstoff, der sich unter dem Einfluß des Energiestrahlens möglicherweise um jede Vertiefung (8) herum gebildet hat, zu entfernen und die Oberfläche der Stegbereiche mit einer Rauheit von weniger als $0,15\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (6 Mikroinch) R_a zu versehen.
- 40 9. Verfahren nach Anspruch 8, bei dem nach dem Verfahrensschritt (a) der folgende Verfahrensschritt eingefügt ist:
 - (a') Behandeln der beschichteten Oberfläche zur Erzielung einer Rauheit von weniger als $0,5\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (20 Mikroinch) R_a .
- 45 10. Verfahren nach Anspruch 8, bei dem nach dem Verfahrensschritt (a) der folgende Verfahrensschritt eingefügt ist:
 - (a') Behandeln der beschichteten Oberfläche zur Erzielung einer Rauheit von weniger als $0,25\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (10 Mikroinch) R_a .
- 50 11. Verfahren nach Anspruch 8, bei dem nach dem Verfahrensschritt (a) der folgende Verfahrensschritt eingefügt ist:
 - (a') Abdichten des beschichteten Gegenstandes mit einem Dichtmittel.
- 55 12. Verfahren nach Anspruch 11, bei dem nach dem Verfahrensschritt (a') der folgende Verfahrensschritt eingefügt ist:
 - (a'') Behandeln der beschichteten Oberfläche zur Erzielung einer Rauheit von weniger als $0,5\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ (20 Mikroinch) R_a .



13. Verfahren nach Anspruch 12, bei dem im Verfahrensschritt (c) die Rauheit der Stegbereiche Kleiner als etwa $0,10 \mu\text{m}$ (4 Mikrolinch) R_a ist.
14. Verfahren nach Anspruch 8 oder 13, bei dem im Verfahrensschritt (a) der Beschichtungswerkstoff aus der Chromoxid, Aluminiumoxid, Siliziumoxid und Gemische derselben bestehenden Gruppe ausgewählt wird.
15. Verfahren nach Anspruch 8 oder 13, wobei im Verfahrensschritt (a) der Gegenstand aus Stahl besteht und der Beschichtungswerkstoff Chromoxid ist.

Revendications

1. Article de transfert de liquide (2) revêtu d'une matière choisie dans le groupe comprenant une céramique et un carbure métallique, ladite surface revêtue comprenant une première partie contenant une pluralité de puits (8) gravés au laser conçus pour recevoir un liquide, et une seconde partie comprenant des zones de contact, ont une dureté de surface d'au moins $800 \text{ HV}_{0,3}$ et une densité supérieure à 95 % théoriques, que toute matière refondue pouvant s'être formée autour de chaque puits (8) est retirée et que la surface des zones de contact possède une rugosité inférieure à environ $0,15 \mu\text{m}$ (6 micro-inches) R_a .
2. Article de transfert de liquide selon la revendication 1, dans lequel la rugosité de surface est inférieure à environ $0,10 \mu\text{m}$ (4 micro-inches).
3. Article de transfert de liquide selon la revendication 1, dans lequel la matière de revêtement est choisie dans le groupe comprenant l'oxyde de chrome, l'oxyde d'aluminium, l'oxyde de silicium et leurs mélanges.
4. Article de transfert de liquide selon la revendication 1, dans lequel l'article (2) est de l'acier revêtu d'oxyde de chrome.
5. Article de transfert de liquide selon la revendication 2, 3 ou 4, dans lequel la densité des zones de contact est supérieure à 97 % théoriques.
6. Article de transfert de liquide selon la revendication 2, 3 ou 4, dans lequel ledit article est un rouleau cylindrique (2).
7. Article de transfert de liquide selon la revendication 2, 3 ou 4, dans lequel ledit article est un rouleau de gravure cylindrique (2).
8. Procédé de production d'un article de transfert de liquide (2) destiné à transférer un liquide à une autre surface et comprenant les étapes suivantes :
 - (a) revêtement d'un article par au moins une couche (6) de matière choisie dans le groupe consistant en céramique ou en carbure métallique, et
 - (b) gravure de la surface revêtue au moyen d'un faisceau d'énergie pour produire, dans une première partie de la surface revêtue, une pluralité de puits (8) qui sont conçus pour recevoir un liquide, la seconde partie de la surface revêtue comprenant des zones de contact que le faisceau d'énergie n'a pas touchées, caractérisé par le revêtement dudit article (2) à l'étape (a) de façon que la surface de la couche revêtue (6) ait une densité théorique d'au moins 95 % et que les zones de contact aient une dureté de surface d'au moins $800 \text{ HV}_{0,3}$, et
 - (c) le traitement de la surface revêtue gravée au laser pour éliminer toute matière refondue pouvant s'être formée autour de chaque puits (8) par le faisceau d'énergie de façon à donner à la surface des zones de contact une rugosité inférieure à $0,15 \mu\text{m}$ (6 micro-inches) R_a .
9. Procédé selon la revendication 8, dans lequel après l'étape (a) est ajoutée l'étape suivante :
 - (a') le traitement de la surface revêtue pour obtenir une rugosité inférieure à $0,5 \mu\text{m}$ (20 micro-inches) R_a .



10. Procédé selon la revendication 8, dans lequel après l'étape (a) est ajoutée l'étape suivante :
(a') le traitement de la surface revêtue pour obtenir une rugosité inférieure à $0,25 \mu\text{m}$ (10 micro-inches) R_a .
- 5 11. Procédé selon la revendication 8, dans lequel après l'étape (a) est ajoutée l'étape suivante consistant à :
(a') rendre étanche l'article revêtu au moyen d'un matériau d'étanchéité.
- 10 12. Procédé selon la revendication 11, dans lequel après l'étape (a') est ajoutée l'étape suivante :
(a'') le traitement de la surface revêtue pour obtenir une rugosité inférieure à $0,5 \mu\text{m}$ (20 micro-inches) R_a .
- 15 13. Procédé selon la revendication 12, dans lequel à l'étape (c) la rugosité des zones de contact est inférieure à environ $0,10 \mu\text{m}$ (4 micro-inches) R_a .
- 20 14. Procédé selon la revendication 8 ou 13 dans lequel à l'étape (a) la matière de revêtement est choisie dans le groupe comprenant l'oxyde de chrome, l'oxyde d'aluminium, l'oxyde de silicium et des mélanges de ceux-ci.
- 25 15. Procédé selon la revendication 8 ou 13, dans lequel à l'étape (a) l'article est de l'acier et la matière de revêtement est de l'oxyde de chrome.

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