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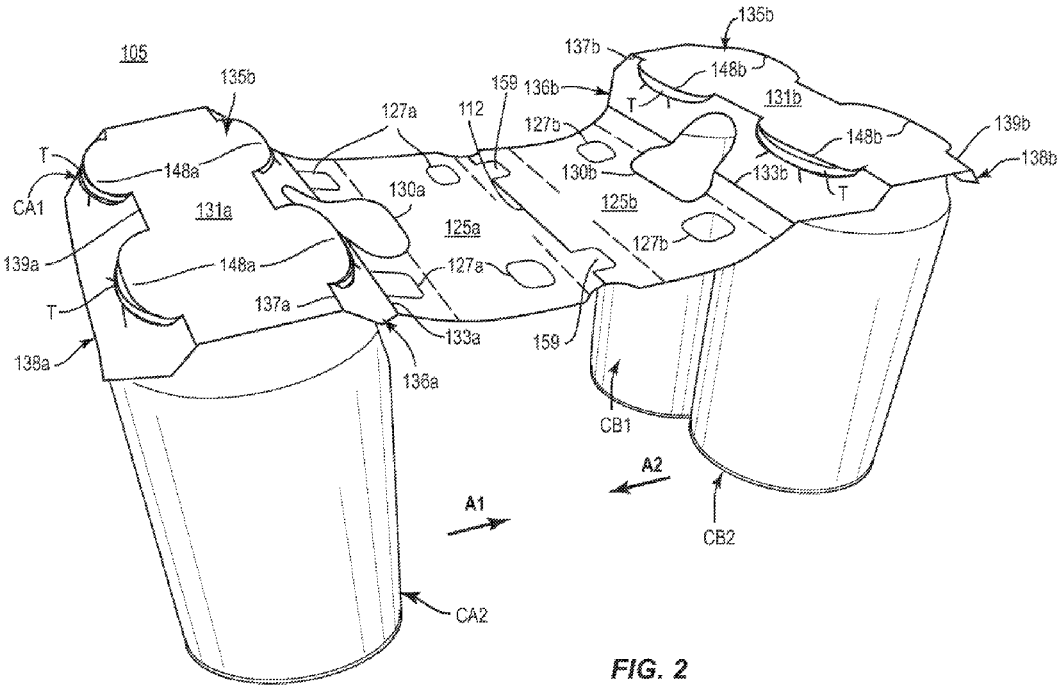


FIG. 2

(57) Abstract: A carrier for holding a plurality of containers includes a plurality of panels that includes at least one central panel and at least one attachment panel configured to receive a portion of one or more containers of the plurality of containers. The at least one central panel includes a plurality of openings and is for being positioned between and attached to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers.

WO 2020/122980 A1

[Continued on next page]

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CARRIER FOR CONTAINERS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of each of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/779,689, filed on December 14, 2018, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/783,752, filed on December 21, 2018, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/796,830, filed on January 25, 2019, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/797,585, filed on January 28, 2019, and U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/810,015, filed on February 25, 2019, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/814,412, filed on March 6, 2019, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/817,120, filed on March 12, 2019, and U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/841,449, filed on May 1, 2019.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

[0002] The disclosures of each of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/779,689, filed on December 14, 2018, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/783,752, filed on December 21, 2018, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/796,830, filed on January 25, 2019, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/797,585, filed on January 28, 2019, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/810,015, filed on February 25, 2019, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/814,412, filed on March 6, 2019, U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/817,120, filed on March 12, 2019, and U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/841,449, filed on May 1, 2019, are hereby incorporated by reference for all purposes as if presented herein in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0003] The present disclosure generally relates to cartons or carriers for holding, displaying, and/or transporting containers.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0004] According to one form of the invention there is provided a carrier for holding a plurality of containers, the carrier comprising a plurality of panels comprising a front central panel, a back central panel, a front attachment panel foldably connected to the front central panel, and a back attachment panel foldably connected to the back central panel, each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel configured to receive a portion of one or more containers

of the plurality of containers, the front central panel comprises a first plurality of openings and the back central panel comprises a second plurality of openings, each of the front central panel and the back central panel is for being positioned between and attached to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers and such that the first plurality of openings are in communication with the back central panel and the second plurality of openings are in communication with the front central panel, the front central panel and the back central panel are in at least partial face-to-face contact such that a respective portion of the back central panel is exposed through the first plurality of openings and a respective portion of the front central panel is exposed through the second plurality of openings, the respective portion of the front central panel and the respective portion of the back central panel are for receiving an adhesive, the first plurality of openings in the front central panel and the second plurality of openings in the back central panel are in respective sections of the front central panel or the back central panel that are in face-to-face contact.

[0005] According to another form of the invention there is provided a blank for forming a carrier for holding a plurality of containers, the blank comprising a front central panel, a back central panel, a front attachment panel foldably connected to the front central panel, and a back attachment panel foldably connected to the back central panel, each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel configured to receive a portion of one or more containers of the plurality of containers, the front central panel comprises a first plurality of openings and the back central panel comprises a second plurality of openings, each of the front central panel and the back central panel is for being positioned between and attached to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers when the carrier is formed from the blank and such that the first plurality of openings are in communication with the back central panel and the second plurality of openings are in communication with the front central panel when the carrier is formed from the blank, the front central panel and the back central panel are for being positioned in at least partial face-to-face contact when the carrier is formed from the blank such that a respective portion of the back central panel is exposed through the first plurality of openings and a respective portion of the front central panel is exposed through the second plurality of openings, the respective portion of the front central panel and the respective portion of the back central panel are for receiving an adhesive when the carrier is formed from the blank, the first plurality of openings in the front central panel and the second plurality of openings in the back central panel are in respective sections of the front central panel or the back central panel that are for being in face-

2019399601 24 Apr 2023

to-face contact in the carrier formed from the blank.

[0006] According to another form of the invention there is provided a method of forming a carrier for holding a plurality of containers, the method comprising obtaining a blank comprising a plurality of panels comprising a front central panel, a back central panel, a front attachment panel foldably connected to the front central panel, and a back attachment panel foldably connected to the back central panel, each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel configured to receive a portion of one or more containers of the plurality of containers, the front central panel comprises a first plurality of openings and the back central panel comprises a second plurality of openings; folding the plurality of panels such that each of the front central panel and the back central panel is positioned between adjacent containers of the plurality of containers such that the first plurality of openings are in communication with the back central panel and the second plurality of openings are in communication with the front central panel, and such that the front central panel and the back central panel are in at least partial face-to-face contact such that a respective portion of the back central panel is exposed through the first plurality of openings and a respective portion of the front central panel is exposed through the second plurality of openings, the respective portion of the front central panel and the respective portion of the back central panel are for receiving an adhesive, the first plurality of openings in the front central panel and the second plurality of openings in the back central panel are in respective sections of the front central panel or the back central panel that are in face-to-face contact; and attaching at least one container of the plurality of containers to each of the front central and the back central panel.

[0007] According to another form of the invention there is provided a package comprising a plurality of containers; and a carrier for holding the plurality of containers, the carrier comprising a plurality of panels comprising a front central panel, a back central panel, a front attachment panel foldably connected to the front central panel, and a back attachment panel foldably connected to the back central panel, each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel receiving a portion of one or more containers of the plurality of containers, the front central panel comprises a first plurality of openings and the back central panel comprises a second plurality of openings, each of the front central panel and the back central panel is positioned between and attached to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers and such that the first plurality of openings are in communication with the back central panel and the

2019399601 24 Apr 2023

second plurality of openings are in communication with the front central panel, the front central panel and the back central panel are in contact such that a respective portion of the back central panel is exposed through the first plurality of openings and a respective portion of the front central panel is exposed through the second plurality of openings, the respective portion of the front central panel and the respective portion of the back central panel are for receiving an adhesive, the first plurality of openings in the front central panel and the second plurality of openings in the back central panel are in respective sections of the front central panel or the back central panel that are in face-to-face contact.

[0008] Where any or all of the terms "comprise", "comprises", "comprised" or "comprising" are used in this specification (including the claims) they are to be interpreted as specifying the presence of the stated features, integers, steps or components, but not precluding the presence of one or more other features, integers, steps or components.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] Those skilled in the art will appreciate the above stated advantages and other advantages and benefits of various additional embodiments reading the following detailed description of the embodiments with reference to the below-listed drawing figures. It is

within the scope of the present disclosure that the above-discussed aspects be provided both individually and in various combinations.

[0010] According to common practice, the various features of the drawings discussed below are not necessarily drawn to scale. Dimensions of various features and elements in the drawings may be expanded or reduced to more clearly illustrate the embodiments of the disclosure.

[0011] Fig. 1 is a plan view of an outer surface of a blank for forming a carrier according to a first exemplary embodiment of the disclosure.

[0012] Fig. 2 is a perspective view of a partially folded configuration of a carrier formed from the blank of Fig. 1 according to the first exemplary embodiment.

[0013] Fig. 3 is a perspective view of another partially folded configuration of a carrier formed from the blank of Fig. 1 according to the first exemplary embodiment.

[0014] Fig. 4 is a front view of a carrier formed from the blank of Fig. 1 according to the first exemplary embodiment and having a container removed therefrom.

[0015] Fig. 5 is a rear view of the carrier of Fig. 4 and having a container removed therefrom.

[0016] Fig. 6 is a perspective view of a package and carrier formed from the blank of Fig. 1 according to the first exemplary embodiment.

[0017] Fig. 7 is another perspective view of the package and carrier of Fig. 6 and showing a container being removed therefrom.

[0018] Fig. 8 is a plan view of an outer surface of a blank for forming a carrier according to a second exemplary embodiment of the disclosure.

[0019] Fig. 9 is a perspective view of a package and carrier formed from the blank of Fig. 8 according to the second exemplary embodiment.

[0020] Corresponding parts are designated by corresponding reference numbers throughout the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0021] The present disclosure generally relates to carriers, packages, constructs, sleeves, cartons, or the like, for holding and displaying containers such as jars, bottles, cans, etc. The containers can be used for packaging food and beverage products, for example. The containers can be made from materials suitable in composition for packaging the particular food or beverage item, and the materials include, but are not limited to, glass; plastics such as PET, LDPE, LLDPE, HDPE, PP, PS, PVC, EVOH, and Nylon; and the like; aluminum and/or other metals; or any combination thereof.

[0022] Carriers according to the present disclosure can accommodate containers of numerous different shapes. For the purpose of illustration and not for the purpose of limiting the scope of the disclosure, the following detailed description describes beverage containers (e.g., aluminum cans) at least partially disposed within the carrier embodiments. In this specification, the terms "lower," "bottom," "upper," "top," "front," and "back" indicate orientations determined in relation to fully erected carriers.

[0023] As described herein, carriers may be formed by multiple overlapping panels, end flaps, and/or other portions of blanks. Such panels, end flaps, and/or other portions of the blank can be designated in relative terms to one another, e.g., "first", "second", "third", etc., in sequential or non-sequential reference, without departing from the disclosure.

[0024] Fig. 1 shows a plan view of an exterior side 101 of a blank 103 used to form a carrier 105 (Fig. 6) in accordance with a first exemplary embodiment of the disclosure. As shown in Fig. 5, the carrier 105 is sized to contain or support four containers, with two containers CA1, CA2 being attached to a front portion 106 of the carrier 105 and two containers CB1, CB2 being attached to a back portion 108 of the carrier 105. In the illustrated embodiment, the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2, can be beverage cans, or could be any other suitable type and size of container without departing from the disclosure. The carrier 105 can be sized and shaped to hold more or less than four containers. In one embodiment, the front portion 106 and the back portion 108 of the carrier 105 each have two containers, and in other embodiments, the front portion 106 and the back portion 108 of the carrier 105 can carry more or less than two containers without departing from the disclosure. The carrier 105 can be provided together with one or more containers as a package 110 (Fig. 6).

[0025] As shown in Fig. 1, the blank 103 has a longitudinal axis L1 and a lateral axis L2. The blank 103 has a front portion 107 for forming the front portion 106 of the carrier 105, and a back portion 109 for forming the back portion 108 of the carrier 105. The front portion 107 and the back portion 109 of the blank 103 are foldably connected at a lateral fold line 112 that forms a lateral centerline CL of the blank 103, as shown. As discussed further below, the blank 103 is at least partially formed into the carrier 105 by folding the blank 103 at the fold line 112 along the centerline CL so that the front portion 107 and the back portion 109 of the blank 103 are overlapped in at least partial face-to-face contact.

[0026] In the illustrated embodiment, the front portion 107 of the blank 103 comprises a front central panel 125a having a first front row RF1 of laterally spaced adhesive or glue openings 127a, and a second front row RF2 of the laterally spaced adhesive or glue openings 127a. The top edges of the respective glue openings 127a of the first row RF1 are spaced a longitudinal distance D1 apart from the fold line 112 that is less than a longitudinal distance D2 that the top edges of the respective glue openings 127a of the second row RF2 are spaced apart from the fold line 112. As shown, the top edges of the glue openings 127a of the second row RF2 can interrupt the fold line 133a.

[0027] A front container retention panel or front attachment panel 131a is foldably connected to the front central panel 125a at a lateral fold line 133a, and includes a container retention portion 135a that is at least partially defined between a pair of longitudinally-spaced lateral fold lines 137a, 139a that are each interrupted by a respective pair of longitudinally-spaced cuts 141a that can each include one or more curved and/or angled portions. As shown, the longitudinally-spaced cuts 141a define container retention tabs 148a that extend outwardly from the container retention portion 135a. As also shown, respective oblique cuts 143a, 145a extend outwardly from each respective cut 141a to define a plurality of reconfigurable edges of the front attachment panel 131a that face the respective container retention tabs 148a.

[0028] As shown, an interior marginal portion 136a of the attachment panel 131a is defined between the fold lines 137a, 133a, and an exterior marginal portion 138a of the attachment panel 131a is defined between the fold line 139a and a free edge of the attachment panel 131a.

[0029] The blank 103 can include handle features that include at least a handle opening 130a that interrupts the fold line 133a and extends from a portion of the front central panel 125a

into a portion of the front attachment panel 131a. As shown, the handle opening 130a can include a longitudinal section 132a extending parallel to the longitudinal axis L1 and a pair of lateral sections 134a that intersect and diverge orthogonally away from the longitudinal section 132a in substantial parallel relation with the lateral axis L2. In this regard, the sections 132a, 134a of the handle opening 130a are in communication with one another. As described further herein, the sections 132a, 134a of the handle opening 130a provide multiple engagement surfaces at which a consumer can grasp the carrier 105, in different orientations. The carrier 105 can have a different arrangement of handle features, or can be devoid of handle features, without departing from the disclosure.

[0030] In the illustrated embodiment, the back portion 109 of the blank 103 includes a back central panel 125b and a back container retention panel or back attachment panel 131b having associated features that are generally a mirror-image of the corresponding panels and flaps of the front portion 107 of the blank 103. Corresponding components (e.g., panels, flaps, fold lines, cuts, etc.) have been designated by corresponding reference numbers that differ by the "a" or "b" suffix, with the "a" components corresponding to the front portion 107 of the blank 103 and the "b" components corresponding to the back portion 109 of the blank 103.

[0031] As shown, a pair of generally U-shaped cuts 157 interrupt the fold line 112 and extend from the centerline CL to define a pair of tabs 159 that protrude from the front central panel 125a. As described further herein, a lateral portion of the respective cuts 157 defines the top edge of respective glue openings 127b of a first back lateral row RB1 of laterally spaced glue openings 127b. As shown, the top edges of the respective glue openings 127b of the first lateral row RB1 of glue openings 127b are spaced a longitudinal distance D3 apart from the fold line 112 that is less than a longitudinal distance D4 that the top edges of respective glue openings 127b of a second back lateral row RB2 of glue openings 127b are spaced apart from the fold line 112.

[0032] In this regard, the blank 103 is provided with front rows RF1 and RF2 of laterally-spaced front glue openings 127a that are spaced respective longitudinal distances D1, D2 from the centerline CL, and back rows RB1 and RB2 of laterally-spaced back glue openings 127b that are spaced respective longitudinal distances D3, D4 from the centerline CL. The glue openings 127a, 127b have a longitudinally staggered arrangement such that D2 > D4 >

D1 > D3. Upon formation of the carrier 105 from the blank 103, the longitudinal centerline CL/fold line 112 can form a bottom edge of the central panels 125a, 125b.

[0033] As described herein, the arrangement of the glue openings 127a, 127b is such that, upon erection of the carrier 105, the glue openings 127a, 127b provide access to a respective plurality of surfaces of the respective central panels 125b, 125a upon which the respective containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 can be attached to enhance retention and support of the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 by the carrier 105.

[0034] Any of the panels, flaps, fold lines, cuts, or other features could be otherwise shaped, arranged, and/or omitted from the blank 103 without departing from the disclosure. The blank 103 could be sized and/or shaped to accommodate more or less than four containers without departing from this disclosure.

[0035] As shown in Fig. 2, an interior surface or underside of the blank 103 can be placed atop the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 such that the container retention portion 135a of the front attachment panel 131a overlies the containers CA1, CA2 and such that the container retention portion 135b of the back attachment panel 131b overlies the containers CB1, CB2. Further downward positioning of the attachment panels 131a, 131b over the plurality of containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 can activate the respective container retention portions 135a, 135b to engage respective containers. For example, as the front attachment panel 131a is lowered or urged downwardly onto the containers CA1, CA2, the container retention portion 135a can at least partially separate from the remainder of the front attachment panel 131a at the cuts 141a. In such an arrangement, upper or top portions T of the respective containers CA1, CA2 can extend at least partially through respective openings formed by the respective cuts 141a such that the container retention tabs 148a can engage, for example, a recessed portion of a rim or other top structure of the respective container CA1, CA2, and such that a plurality of reconfigurable edges of the exterior marginal portion 138a can engage, for example, a rolled rim edge or other top structure of the respective container CA1, CA2.

[0036] Such reconfiguration of the corresponding portions of the back attachment panel 131b can occur as the back attachment panel 131b is lowed or urged downwardly onto the containers CB1, CB2. During the above-described engagement of the respective container retention portions 135a, 135b with the respective containers, the marginal portions 136a,

138a of the attachment panel 131a can fold at least partially downwardly at the respective fold lines 137a, 139a in such a configuration, and, similarly, the marginal portions 136b, 138b of the attachment panel 131b can fold at least partially downwardly at the respective fold lines 137b, 139b.

[0037] As also shown in Fig. 2, the front central panel 125a and the back central panel 125b can be folded at the fold line 112 in the direction of the arrows A1, A2 such that the front central panel 125a and the back central panel 125b are brought into at least partial face-to-face contact in the direction of the respective arrows A3, A4 (Fig. 3) to be positioned between respective adjacent containers and such that the respective glue openings 127a, 127b are positioned so as to be laterally aligned but longitudinally offset due to the different relative spacing of the respective rows RF1, RF2 of front glue openings 127a and the respective rows RB1, RB2 of back glue openings 127b away from the fold line 112 as described above.

[0038] In this regard, the central panels 125a, 125b are arranged such that a portion of the front central panel 125a overlaps each of the glue openings 127b and a portion of the back central panel 125b overlaps each of the glue openings 127a to provide communication between the central panels 125a, 125b and respective surfaces upon which the respective containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 can be adhered or otherwise attached, as described further herein. Such rearrangement of the central panels 125a, 125b can also cause the respective central panels 125a, 125b to be folded downwardly relative to the respective attachment panels 131a, 131b at the respective fold lines 133a, 133b.

[0039] Referring to Figs. 4 and 5, in which the respective containers CA2, CB1 are removed for clarity of illustration, an adhesive glue G can be provided to adhere the containers CA1, CA2 to respective portions of the central panel 125b exposed through the respective glue openings 127a, and the glue G can be provided to adhere the containers CB1, CB2 to respective portions of the central panel 125a exposed through the respective glue openings 127b. The arrangement of multiple rows of respective glue openings 127a, 127b provides multiple points of attachment of each respective container to the respective opposite central panel 125a, 125b such that each container is provided with a robust attachment to a respective central panel 125a, 125b. The attachment of the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 to the respective central panel 125a, 125b can provide retention and support of the respective containers, e.g., such that the containers do not detach from the carrier 105 under their own

weight, in addition to or alternative to the container retention and support provided by the respective container retention portions 135a, 135b. For example, in one embodiment, one or more of the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 can be attached to a respective central panel 125a, 125b with glue G, without additional retention and support provided by a container retention portion as described above.

[0040] The glue G described herein can be, for example, a hot melt adhesive, a high tack glue, an epoxy, a polymeric cement, etc., or combinations thereof. The glue G can have a different arrangement without departing from the disclosure. For example, in one embodiment, the glue G can be applied to one or more portions of the interior surface of the blank 103/carrier 105.

[0041] Such enhanced attachment of the respective containers to the respective central panels 125a, 125b with the glue G can also provide enhanced integrity to the carrier 105, e.g., by providing opposing adhesive forces on the respective central panels 125a, 125b such that the central panels 125a, 125b are compressed therebetween. For example, in one embodiment, as the carrier 105 is lifted, the containers CA1, CA2 can at least partially pull the portions of the back central panel 125b to which they are attached through the respective glue openings 127a toward the front central panel 125a under the at least partial weight of the containers CA1, CA2. Respective portions of the front central panel 125a can be pulled toward the back central panel 125b through the respective glue openings 127b by the containers CB1, CB2 in a similar manner.

[0042] Referring additionally to Figs. 6 and 7, a respective container CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 can be removed from the carrier 105 by disengaging the container from a respective attachment panel 131a, 131b, for example, by withdrawing the top portion T of a respective container through an opening formed by a respective cut 141a, 141b along the respective attachment panel 131a, 131b, and peeling the respective container away from the respective central panel 125a, 125b. Peeling or pulling the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 away from a respective central panel 125a, 125b can involve pulling the respective container with a force sufficient to overcome the adhesive bond of the respective container and the respective central panel 125a, 125b provided by the glue G. In one embodiment, the glue G can be selected so as to remain on a respective central panel 125a, 125b, e.g., such that substantially little or no glue G remains on the container as it is removed. One or more of the containers

CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2, in one embodiment, can be reattached to a respective central panel 125a, 125b following therefrom by pressing the container against a respective region of glue G.

[0043] It will be understood that a different number of rows or arrangements of glue openings can be provided without departing from the disclosure, and that the central panels can be sized and configured to accommodate such arrangements. In one embodiment, the central panels 125a, 125b can be devoid of glue openings such that the respective containers CA1, CA2 and CB1, CB2 are adhered only to the respective central panel 125a, 125b. In another embodiment, glue G can be provided both on portions of the respective central panels 125a, 125b exposed through the respective glue openings 127b, 127a as well as portions of the respective central panels 125a, 125b adjacent the respective glue openings 127a, 127b such that each container CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 can be adhered to portions of both central panels 125a, 125b.

[0044] Still referring to Figs. 6, the carrier 105 can be grasped by a consumer by inserting one or more of his or her fingers in either or both handle openings 130a, 130b and engaging, for example, a portion of an underside of a respective attachment panel 131a, 131b and/or an edge of the respective handle openings 130a, 130b. The divergent nature of the respective longitudinal sections 132a, 132b and the respective lateral sections 134a, 134b of the respective handle openings 130a, 130b allows a consumer multiple edges and surfaces by which to engage and lift the carrier 105 such that the consumer can engage the carrier from multiple orientations, e.g., a lateral orientation or a longitudinal orientation, or orientations therebetween.

[0045] The carrier 105/package 110 described above has a compact structure that can, for example, provide materials savings and waste reduction. Additionally, the arrangement of the glue G among the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 as well as the central panels 125a, 125b provides multiple points of attachment that results in a robust structure for holding and carrying the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2. Further, the exposure of one or more portions of the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 on exterior portions of the carrier 105/package 110 provides a consumer with a clear view of labeling or surface graphics associated with the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2, as well as providing convenient access to remove one or more of the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2 from the carrier 105/package 110.

[0046] Referring additionally to Figs. 8 and 9, a blank 203 for forming a carrier 205 according to a second exemplary embodiment of the disclosure is illustrated. The blank 203 and the carrier 205 can have one or more features that are similar to those of the blank 103 and the carrier 105 of the first exemplary embodiment, and like or similar reference numbers refer to like or similar features.

[0047] As shown, the attachment panels 131a, 131b of the blank 203 are each provided with a respective three laterally spaced cuts 141a, 141b such that the carrier 205 is sized and configured to support and retain six containers, with three containers CA1, CA2, CA3 in a front portion 206 of the carrier 205 and three containers CB1, CB2, CB3 in a back portion 208 of the carrier 205.

[0048] The blank 203 includes a pair of handle openings 230a (broadly, respective "first handle opening" and "second handle opening") that extend from a portion of the front attachment panel 131a and into the front central panel 125a, and a pair of handle openings 230b that extend from a portion of the back attachment panel 131b and into the back central panel 125b. As shown, the respective handle openings 230a, 230b have the respective longitudinal section 132a, 132b and the respective lateral sections 134a, 134b. As also shown, the central panels 125a, 125b each include a single lateral row of respective glue openings 127a, 127b, though the central panels 125a, 125b of the blank 203 can be provided with a different number or arrangement of glue openings and rows thereof without departing from the disclosure.

[0049] The blank 203 additionally includes a bevel or front side panel 255a that is foldably connected to the front attachment panel 131a at a lateral fold line 257a, and a top panel 259 that is foldably connected to the front side panel 255a at a lateral fold line 261a. The top panel 259, as shown, includes a pair of handle features (broadly, "first handle feature" and "second handle feature", respectively) that each include a pair of opposed curved cuts 263, 265 and a longitudinal cut 267 extending from the curved cut 263 to the curved cut 265 to define a pair of handle flaps 269, 271 that are foldably connected to the top panel 259 at respective lateral fold lines 273, 275. A pair of lateral lines of weakening 268 extend along a portion of each flap 269, 271 so as to provide an at least partially reconfigurable arrangement, as described further herein. Handle features of the carrier 205 include the handle features in the top panel 259, and can also include the handle openings 230a, 230b. The carrier 205 can

have a different arrangement of handle features, or can be devoid of handle features, without departing from the disclosure.

[0050] The back portion 209 of the blank 203 additionally includes a back side panel 255b foldably connected to the back attachment panel 131b at a lateral fold line 257a, and an attachment flap 277 foldably connected to the back side panel 255b at a lateral fold line 261b.

[0051] The carrier 205 and a package 210 that includes the carrier 205 and the containers CA1, CA2, CA3, CB1, CB2, CB3 can be formed in a similar manner as that described above with respect to the carrier 105/package 110, and, additionally, the front side panel 255a can be folded upwardly at the fold line 257a, for example, to be at an oblique arrangement relative to the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2, and the top panel 259 can be folded at the fold line 261a in the into at least partial face-to-face contact with at least a portion of the attachment panels 231a, 231b, as shown in Fig. 9. Similarly, the back side panel 255b can be folded upwardly at the fold line 257b into an oblique arrangement with the containers CA1, CA2, CB1, CB2, and the attachment flap 277 can be folded at the fold line 261b into at least partial face-to-face contact with the top panel 259 and/or the attachment panel 231b, as shown in Fig. 9. Such an arrangement can be maintained with an adhesive such as glue.

[0052] Still referring to Fig. 9, the respective handle flaps 269, 271 can be at least partially separated from the top panel 259 at the respective cuts 263, 265, and from each other at the respective cuts 267, and folded downwardly at the respective fold lines 273, 275 into an interior portion of the carrier 205/package 210. The handle openings 230a, 230b provide clearance for the handle flaps 269, 271 to extend downwardly in such an arrangement and the lateral fold lines 268 of each respective handle flap 269, 271 can provide the respective handle flap 269, 271 with a reconfigurable arrangement so as to, for example, contour or angle against one or more of the respective containers CA1, CA2, CA3, CB1, CB2, CB3, e.g., such that at least a central portion of the respective handle flaps 269, 271 defined between the respective fold lines 268 can be positioned between adjacent containers. Further, the marginal portions of the respective handle flaps 269, 271 defined by the respective fold lines 268 can at least partially wrap around or surround a consumer's finger, for example, to minimize or prevent contact of the consumer's finger with edges or corners of the carrier 205/package 210 and/or the respective containers. In addition, and as described above, the divergent nature of the respective longitudinal sections 132a, 132b and the respective lateral

sections 134a, 134b of the respective handle openings 230a, 230b allows a consumer multiple edges and surfaces by which to engage and lift the carrier 205 such that the consumer can engage the carrier from multiple orientations, e.g., a lateral orientation or a longitudinal orientation, or orientations therebetween.

[0053] It will be understood that the blanks and carriers described herein can be provided in different configurations without departing from the disclosure.

[0054] In general, the blank may be constructed from paperboard having a caliper so that it is heavier and more rigid than ordinary paper. The blank can also be constructed of other materials, such as cardboard, or any other material having properties suitable for enabling the carrier to function at least generally as described above. The blank can be coated with, for example, a clay coating. The clay coating may then be printed over with product, advertising, and other information or images. The blanks may then be coated with a varnish to protect information printed on the blanks. The blanks may also be coated with, for example, a moisture barrier layer, on either or both sides of the blanks. The blanks can also be laminated to or coated with one or more sheet-like materials at selected panels or panel sections.

[0055] As an example, a tear line can include: a slit that extends partially into the material along the desired line of weakness, and/or a series of spaced apart slits that extend partially into and/or completely through the material along the desired line of weakness, or various combinations of these features. As a more specific example, one type tear line is in the form of a series of spaced apart slits that extend completely through the material, with adjacent slits being spaced apart slightly so that a nick (e.g., a small somewhat bridging-like piece of the material) is defined between the adjacent slits for typically temporarily connecting the material across the tear line. The nicks are broken during tearing along the tear line. The nicks typically are a relatively small percentage of the tear line, and alternatively the nicks can be omitted from or torn in a tear line such that the tear line is a continuous cut line. That is, it is within the scope of the present disclosure for each of the tear lines to be replaced with a continuous slit, or the like. For example, a cut line can be a continuous slit or could be wider than a slit without departing from the present disclosure.

[0056] In accordance with the exemplary embodiments, a fold line can be any substantially linear, although not necessarily straight, form of weakening that facilitates folding therealong.

More specifically, but not for the purpose of narrowing the scope of the present disclosure, fold lines include: a score line, such as lines formed with a blunt scoring knife, or the like, which creates a crushed or depressed portion in the material along the desired line of weakness; a cut that extends partially into a material along the desired line of weakness, and/or a series of cuts that extend partially into and/or completely through the material along the desired line of weakness; and various combinations of these features. In situations where cutting is used to create a fold line, typically the cutting will not be overly extensive in a manner that might cause a reasonable user to incorrectly consider the fold line to be a tear line.

[0057] The above embodiments may be described as having one or more panels adhered together by glue during erection of the carrier embodiments. The term "glue" is intended to encompass all manner of adhesives commonly used to secure carrier panels in place.

[0058] The foregoing description of the disclosure illustrates and describes various exemplary embodiments. Various additions, modifications, changes, etc., could be made to the exemplary embodiments without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosure. It is intended that all matter contained in the above description or shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. Additionally, the disclosure shows and describes only selected embodiments of the disclosure, but the disclosure is capable of use in various other combinations, modifications, and environments and is capable of changes or modifications within the scope of the inventive concept as expressed herein, commensurate with the above teachings, and/or within the skill or knowledge of the relevant art. Furthermore, certain features and characteristics of each embodiment may be selectively interchanged and applied to other illustrated and non-illustrated embodiments of the disclosure.

2019399601 30 May 2023

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A carrier for holding a plurality of containers, the carrier comprising:

a plurality of panels comprising a front central panel, a back central panel, a front attachment panel foldably connected to the front central panel, and a back attachment panel foldably connected to the back central panel, each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel configured to receive a portion of one or more containers of the plurality of containers,

the front central panel comprises a first plurality of openings and the back central panel comprises a second plurality of openings, each of the front central panel and the back central panel is for being positioned between and attached to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers and such that the first plurality of openings are in communication with the back central panel and the second plurality of openings are in communication with the front central panel,

the front central panel and the back central panel are in at least partial face-to-face contact such that a respective portion of the back central panel is exposed through the first plurality of openings and a respective portion of the front central panel is exposed through the second plurality of openings, the respective portion of the front central panel and the respective portion of the back central panel are for receiving an adhesive,

the first plurality of openings in the front central panel and the second plurality of openings in the back central panel are in respective sections of the front central panel or the back central panel that are in face-to-face contact.

2. The carrier of claim 1, wherein the front central panel and the back central panel are for being adhered to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers.

3. The carrier of claim 1, wherein each of the first plurality openings and the second plurality of openings comprises a respective first row of openings and a respective second row of openings spaced apart from the first row of openings.

4. The carrier of claim 3, wherein each respective first row of openings is spaced a first distance from a bottom edge of the respective front central panel and back central panel, and each respective second row of openings is spaced a second distance from the bottom edge

of the respective back central panel, the second distance is greater than the first distance.

5. The carrier of claim 4, wherein the first row of openings of the front central panel is a first front row of openings and the second row of openings of the front central panel is a second front row of openings spaced apart from the first front row of openings, and the first row of openings of the back central panel is a first back row of openings and the second row of openings of the back central panel is a second back row of openings spaced apart from the first back row of openings.

6. The carrier of claim 5, wherein the front central panel is foldably connected to the back central panel at a fold line corresponding to the bottom edge of front central panel and the back central panel,

the first back row of openings is spaced a third distance from the fold line and the second back row of openings is spaced a fourth distance from the fold line, the fourth distance is greater than the third distance,

the second distance is greater than the fourth distance, the fourth distance is greater than the first distance, and the first distance is greater than the third distance.

7. The carrier of claim 1, wherein the first plurality of openings are offset from the second plurality of openings.

8. The carrier of claim 1, wherein each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel comprises a plurality of cuts that define edges for engaging respective containers of the plurality of containers.

9. The carrier of claim 8, wherein the respective plurality of cuts defines a respective plurality of container retention tabs,

the respective plurality of cuts are for receiving at least a portion of respective containers of the plurality of containers therethrough.

10. The carrier of claim 1, wherein at least one of the front central panel, the back central panel, the front attachment panel, and the back attachment panel includes at least one handle opening.

11. The carrier of claim 10, wherein the at least one handle opening comprises a

longitudinal section and at least one lateral section diverging away from the longitudinal section.

12. The carrier of claim 11, wherein the plurality of panels further comprises a top panel overlying at least a portion of the front attachment panel, and the back attachment panel,

the top panel comprises at least one handle feature aligned with the at least one handle opening,

the at least one handle feature comprises a first handle feature and a second handle feature, and the handle opening comprises a first handle opening and a second handle opening,

wherein at least one of the first handle feature and the second handle feature comprises a plurality of lines of weakening.

13. A blank for forming a carrier for holding a plurality of containers, the blank comprising:

a front central panel, a back central panel, a front attachment panel foldably connected to the front central panel, and a back attachment panel foldably connected to the back central panel, each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel configured to receive a portion of one or more containers of the plurality of containers,

the front central panel comprises a first plurality of openings and the back central panel comprises a second plurality of openings, each of the front central panel and the back central panel is for being positioned between and attached to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers when the carrier is formed from the blank and such that the first plurality of openings are in communication with the back central panel and the second plurality of openings are in communication with the front central panel when the carrier is formed from the blank.

the front central panel and the back central panel are for being positioned in at least partial face-to-face contact when the carrier is formed from the blank such that a respective portion of the back central panel is exposed through the first plurality of openings and a respective portion of the front central panel is exposed through the second plurality of openings, the respective portion of the front central panel and the respective portion of the back central panel are for receiving an adhesive when the carrier is formed from the blank,

the first plurality of openings in the front central panel and the second plurality of openings in the back central panel are in respective sections of the front central panel or the back

central panel that are for being in face-to-face contact in the carrier formed from the blank.

14. The blank of claim 13, wherein the at front central panel and the back central panel are for being adhered to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers.

15. The blank of claim 13, wherein each of the first plurality openings and the second plurality of openings comprises a respective first row of openings and a respective second row of openings spaced apart from the first row of openings,

each respective first row of openings is spaced a first distance from a longitudinal centerline of the blank, and each respective second row of openings is spaced a second distance from the longitudinal centerline of the blank, the second distance is greater than the first distance.

16. The blank of claim 15, wherein the first row of openings of the front central panel is a first front row of openings and the second row of openings of the front central panel is a second front row of openings spaced apart from the first front row of openings, and the first row of openings of the back central panel is a first back row of openings and the second row of openings of the back central panel is a second back row of openings spaced apart from the first back row of openings,

the front central panel is foldably connected to the back central panel at a fold line at the longitudinal centerline of the blank,

the first back row of openings is spaced a third distance from the fold line and the second back row of openings is spaced a fourth distance from the fold line, the fourth distance is greater than the third distance,

the second distance is greater than the fourth distance, the fourth distance is greater than the first distance, and the first distance is greater than the third distance.

17. The blank of claim 13, wherein the first plurality of openings are for being positioned offset from the second plurality of openings when the carrier is formed from the blank.

18. The blank of claim 13, wherein each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel comprises a plurality of cuts that define edges for engaging respective containers of the plurality of containers,

the respective plurality of cuts defines a respective plurality of container retention tabs.

19. The blank of claim 13, wherein at least one of the front central panel, the back central panel, the front attachment panel, and the back attachment panel includes at least one handle opening,

the at least one handle opening comprises a longitudinal section and at least one lateral section diverging away from the longitudinal section,

the plurality of panels further comprises a top panel,

the top panel comprises at least one handle feature for being positioned in alignment with the at least one handle opening when the carrier is formed from the blank,

the at least one handle feature comprises a first handle feature and a second handle feature, and the handle opening comprises a first handle opening and a second handle opening,

at least one of the first handle feature and the second handle feature comprises a plurality of lines of weakening.

20. A method of forming a carrier for holding a plurality of containers, the method comprising:

obtaining a blank comprising a plurality of panels comprising a front central panel, a back central panel, a front attachment panel foldably connected to the front central panel, and a back attachment panel foldably connected to the back central panel, each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel configured to receive a portion of one or more containers of the plurality of containers, the front central panel comprises a first plurality of openings and the back central panel comprises a second plurality of openings;

folding the plurality of panels such that each of the front central panel and the back central panel is positioned between adjacent containers of the plurality of containers such that the first plurality of openings are in communication with the back central panel and the second plurality of openings are in communication with the front central panel, and such that the front central panel and the back central panel are in at least partial face-to-face contact such that a respective portion of the back central panel is exposed through the first plurality of openings and a respective portion of the front central panel is exposed through the second plurality of openings, the respective portion of the front central panel and the respective portion of the back

central panel are for receiving an adhesive, the first plurality of openings in the front central panel and the second plurality of openings in the back central panel are in respective sections of the front central panel or the back central panel that are in face-to-face contact; and

attaching at least one container of the plurality of containers to each of the front central and the back central panel.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the front central panel and the back central panel are adhered to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein each of the first plurality openings and the second plurality of openings comprises a respective first row of openings and a respective second row of openings spaced apart from the first row of openings.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein each respective first row of openings is spaced a first distance from a bottom edge of the respective front central panel and back central panel, and each respective second row of openings is spaced a second distance from the bottom edge of the respective back central panel, the second distance is greater than the first distance.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the first row of openings of the front central panel is a first front row of openings and the second row of openings of the front central panel is a second front row of openings spaced apart from the first front row of openings, and the first row of openings of the back central panel is a first back row of openings and the second row of openings of the back central panel is a second back row of openings spaced apart from the first back row of openings,

the front central panel is foldably connected to the back central panel at a fold line corresponding to the bottom edge of front central panel and the back central panel,

the first back row of openings is spaced a third distance from the fold line and the second back row of openings is spaced a fourth distance from the fold line, the fourth distance is greater than the third distance,

the second distance is greater than the fourth distance, the fourth distance is greater than the first distance, and the first distance is greater than the third distance.

25. The method of claim 20, wherein the first plurality of openings are offset from the second plurality of openings.

2019399601 30 May 2023

26. The method of claim 20, wherein each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel comprises a plurality of cuts that define edges for engaging respective containers of the plurality of containers,

the respective plurality of cuts defines a respective plurality of container retention tabs,

the respective plurality of cuts are for receiving at least a portion of respective containers of the plurality of containers therethrough.

27. The method of claim 20, wherein the front central panel, the back central panel, the front attachment panel, and the back attachment panel includes at least one handle opening,

the at least one handle opening comprises a longitudinal section and at least one lateral section diverging away from the longitudinal section,

the plurality of panels further comprises a top panel overlying at least a portion of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel,

the top panel comprises at least one handle feature aligned with the at least one handle opening,

the at least one handle feature comprises a first handle feature and a second handle feature, and the handle opening comprises a first handle opening and a second handle opening,

at least one of the first handle feature and the second handle feature comprises a plurality of lines of weakening.

28. A package comprising:

a plurality of containers; and

a carrier for holding the plurality of containers, the carrier comprising:

a plurality of panels comprising a front central panel, a back central panel, a front attachment panel foldably connected to the front central panel, and a back attachment panel foldably connected to the back central panel, each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel receiving a portion of one or more containers of the plurality of containers, the front central panel comprises a first plurality of openings and the back central panel comprises a second

plurality of openings, each of the front central panel and the back central panel is positioned between and attached to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers and such that the first plurality of openings are in communication with the back central panel and the second plurality of openings are in communication with the front central panel,

the front central panel and the back central panel are in contact such that a respective portion of the back central panel is exposed through the first plurality of openings and a respective portion of the front central panel is exposed through the second plurality of openings, the respective portion of the front central panel and the respective portion of the back central panel are for receiving an adhesive,

the first plurality of openings in the front central panel and the second plurality of openings in the back central panel are in respective sections of the front central panel or the back central panel that are in face-to-face contact.

29. The package of claim 28, wherein the front central panel and the back central panel are adhered to adjacent containers of the plurality of containers.

30. The package of claim 28, wherein each of the first plurality openings and the second plurality of openings comprises a respective first row of openings and a respective second row of openings spaced apart from the first row of openings.

31. The package of claim 30, wherein each respective first row of openings is spaced a first distance from a bottom edge of the respective front central panel back central panel, and each respective second row of openings is spaced a second distance from the bottom edge of the respective back central panel, the second distance is greater than the first distance,

the first row of openings of the front central panel is a first front row of openings and the second row of openings of the front central panel is a second front row of openings spaced apart from the first front row of openings, and the first row of openings of the back central panel is a first back row of openings and the second row of openings of the back central panel is a second back row of openings spaced apart from the first back row of openings,

the front central panel is foldably connected to the back central panel at a fold line corresponding to the bottom edge of front central panel and the back central panel,

the first back row of openings is spaced a third distance from the fold line and the second back row of openings is spaced a fourth distance from the fold line, the fourth distance is greater than the third distance,

the second distance is greater than the fourth distance, the fourth distance is greater than the first distance, and the first distance is greater than the third distance.

32. The package of claim 28, wherein the first plurality of openings are offset from the second plurality of openings.

33. The package of claim 28, wherein each of the front attachment panel and the back attachment panel comprises a plurality of cuts that define edges that engage respective containers of the plurality of containers.

34. The package of claim 33, wherein the respective plurality of cuts defines a respective plurality of container retention tabs,

the respective plurality of cuts receive at least a portion of respective containers of the plurality of containers therethrough.

35. The package of claim 29, wherein at least one of the front central panel, the back central panel, the front attachment panel, and the back attachment panel includes at least one handle opening.

36. The package of claim 35, wherein the at least one handle opening comprises a longitudinal section and at least one lateral section diverging away from the longitudinal section,

the plurality of panels further comprises a top panel overlying at least a portion of the front attachment panel, and the back attachment panel,

the top panel comprises at least one handle feature aligned with the at least one handle opening,

the at least one handle feature comprises a first handle feature and a second handle feature, and the at least one handle opening comprises a first handle opening and a second handle opening,

at least one of the first handle feature and the second handle feature comprises a plurality

2019399601 30 May 2023

of lines of weakening.

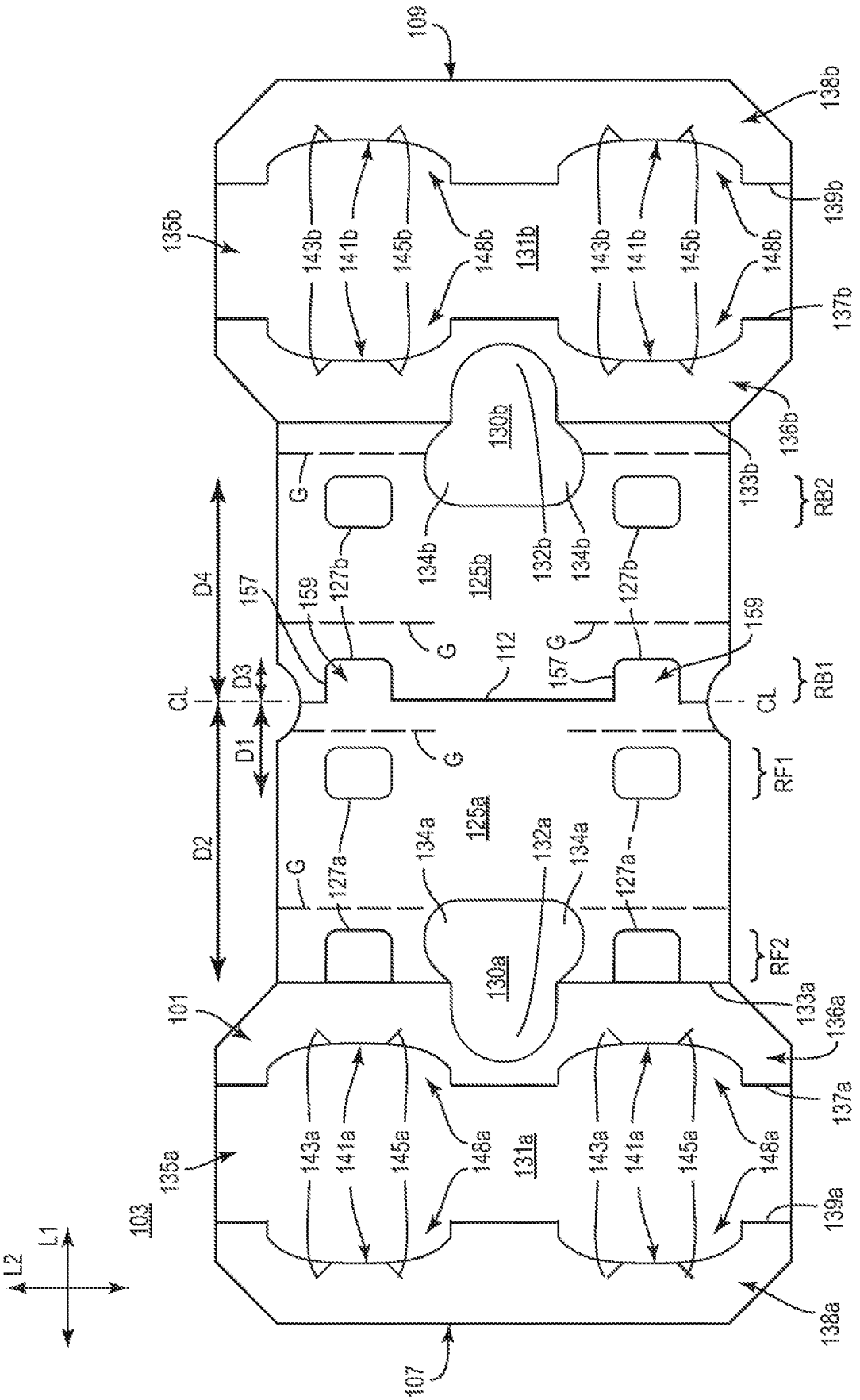

109
138b
135b
143b
141b
145b
148b
131b
139b
137b
136b
133b
130b
134b
132b
125b
127b
G
D4
157
159
112
CL
D3
D1
D2
RB2
RB1
RF1
RF2
101
103
135a
143a
141a
145a
148a
131a
139a
137a
136a
133a
130a
134a
132a
125a
127a
138a
107
L2
L1

FIG. 1

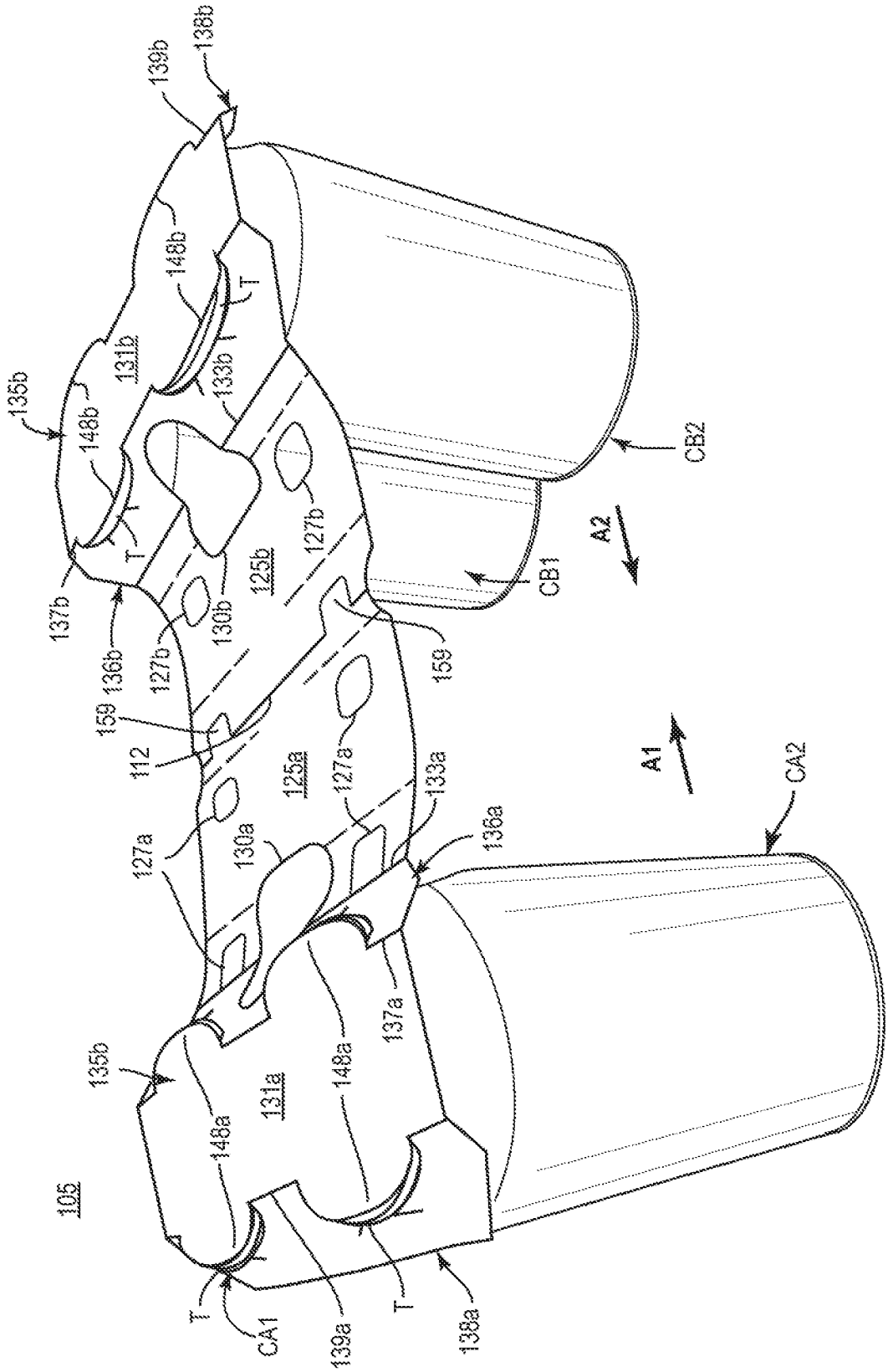

105
135b
148a
131a
148a
135b
139a
138a
T
CA1
T
T
137a
148a
133a
136a
CA2
A1
127a
130a
125a
127a
112
159
136b
127b
130b
125b
127b
159
A2
CB1
CB2
137b
148b
131b
133b
T
T
148b
139b
138b

FIG. 2

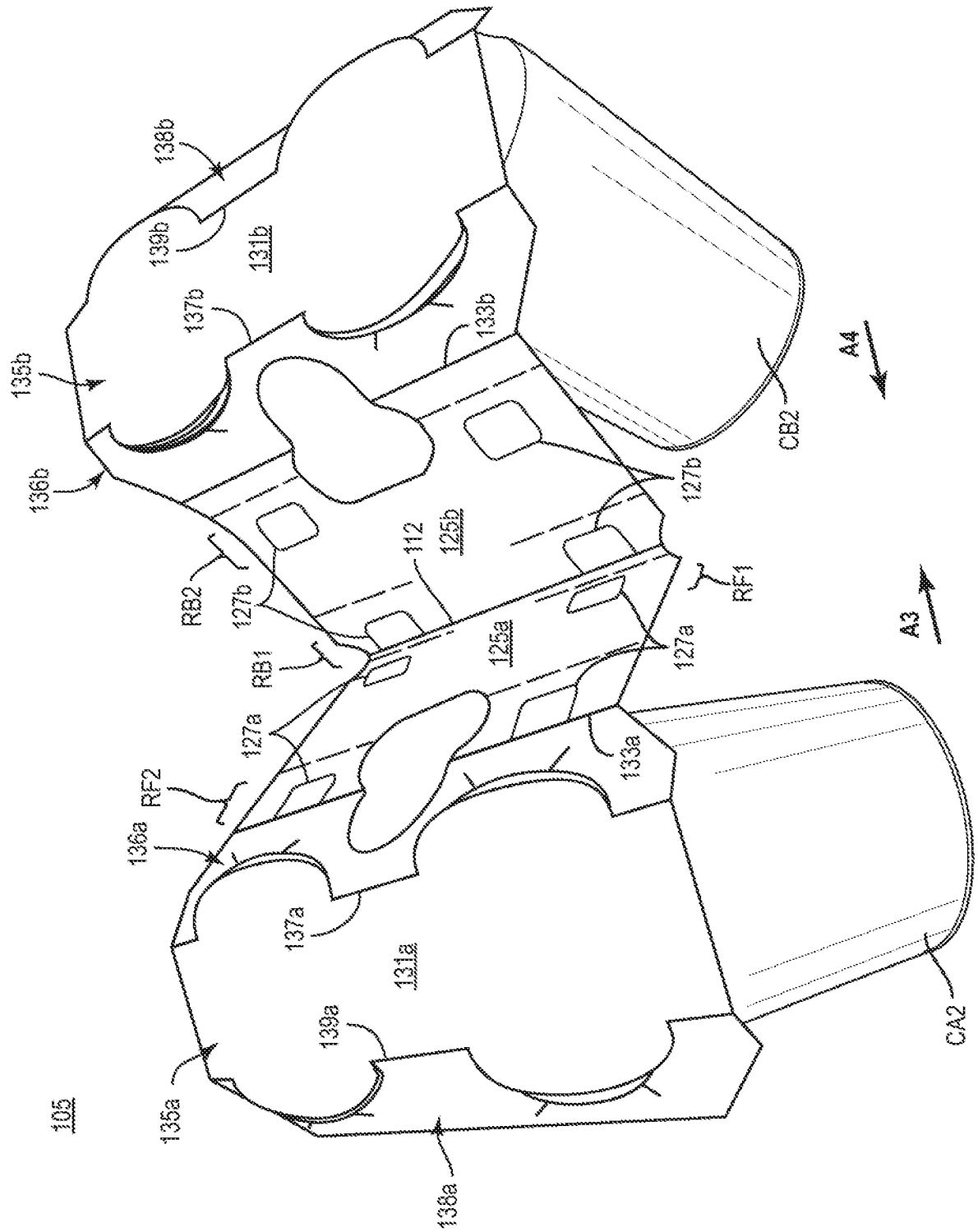

105
135a
136a
RF2
127a
RB1
127b
RB2
136b
135b
138b
139b
131b
137b
133b
CB2
A4
127b
RF1
112
125b
125a
127a
A3
133a
137a
131a
139a
CA2
138a

FIG. 3

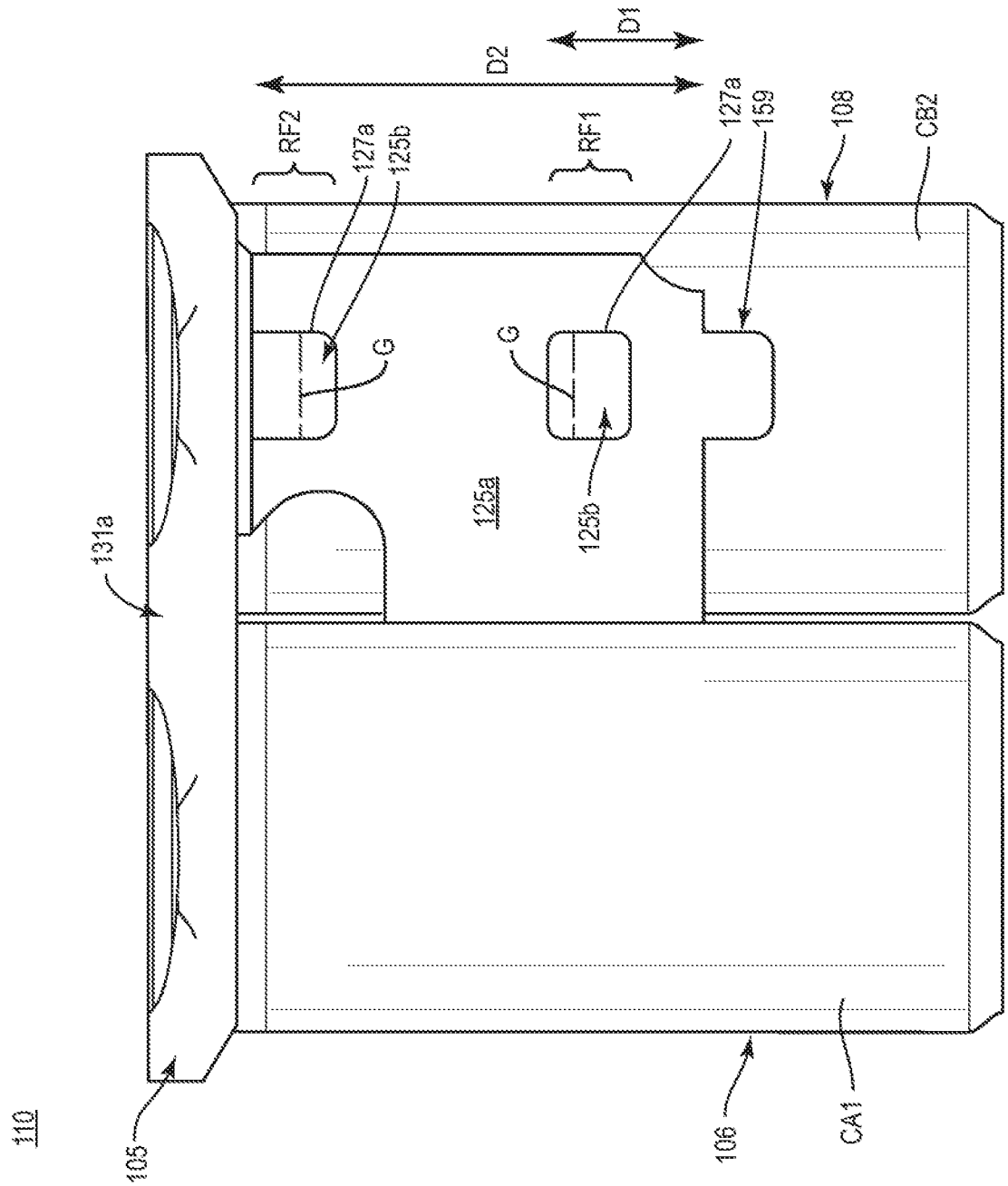

110
105
131a
RF2
127a
125b
D2
D1
RF1
127a
159
108
CB2
G
G
125a
125b
106
CA1

FIG. 4

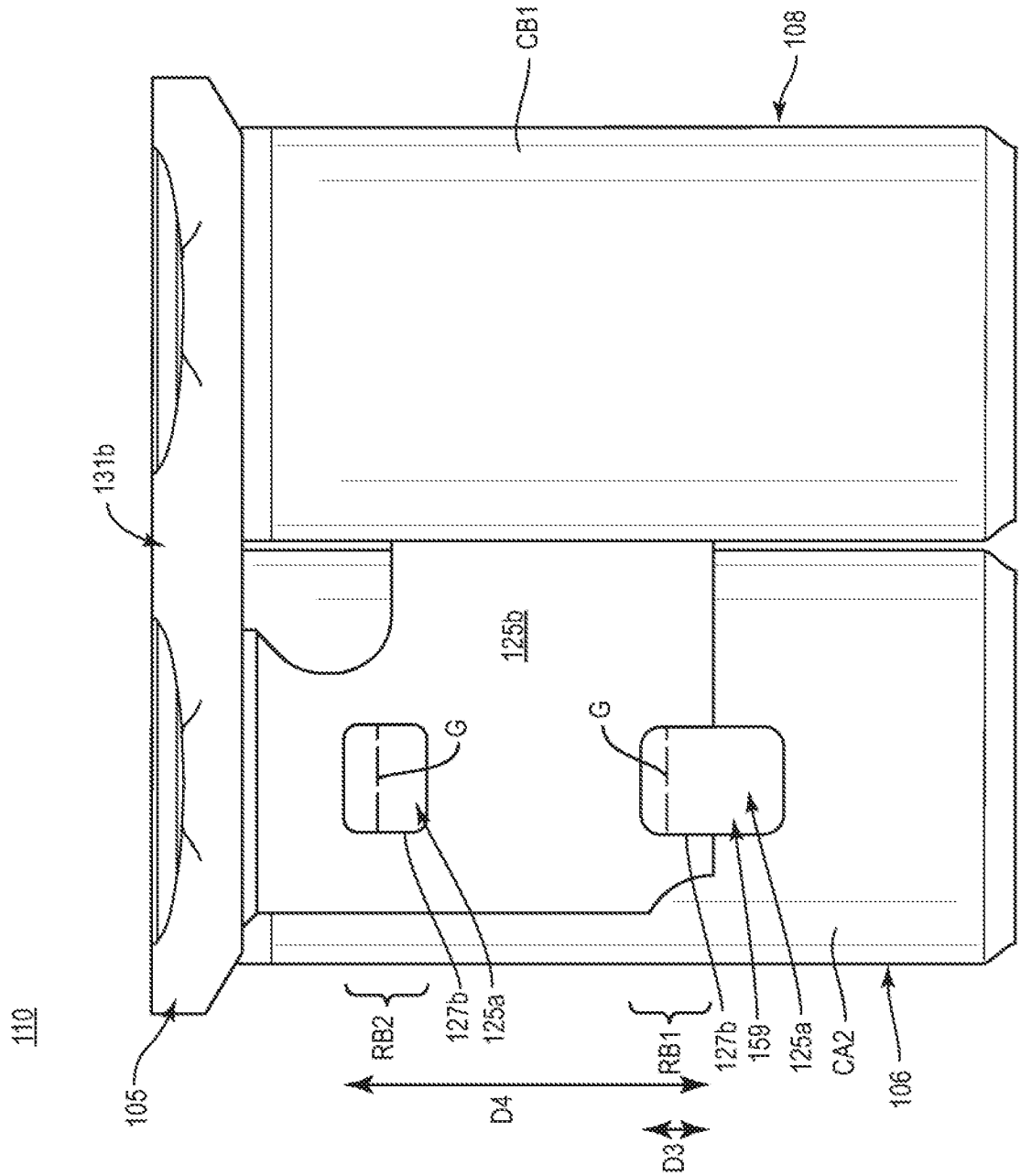

110
105
131b
CB1
108
125b
G
G
RB2
127b
125a
RB1
127b
159
125a
CA2
106
D4
D3

FIG. 5

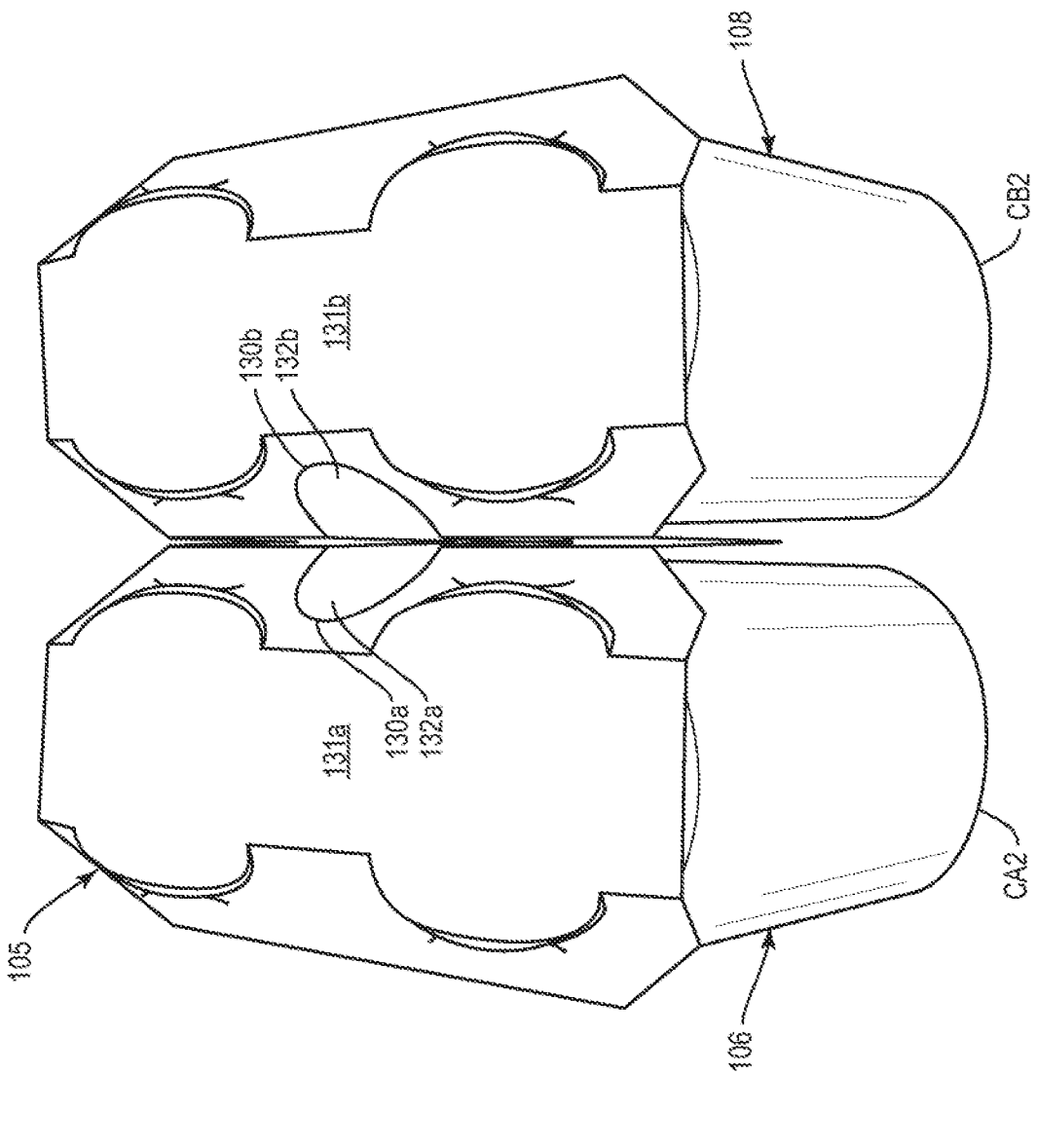


FIG. 6

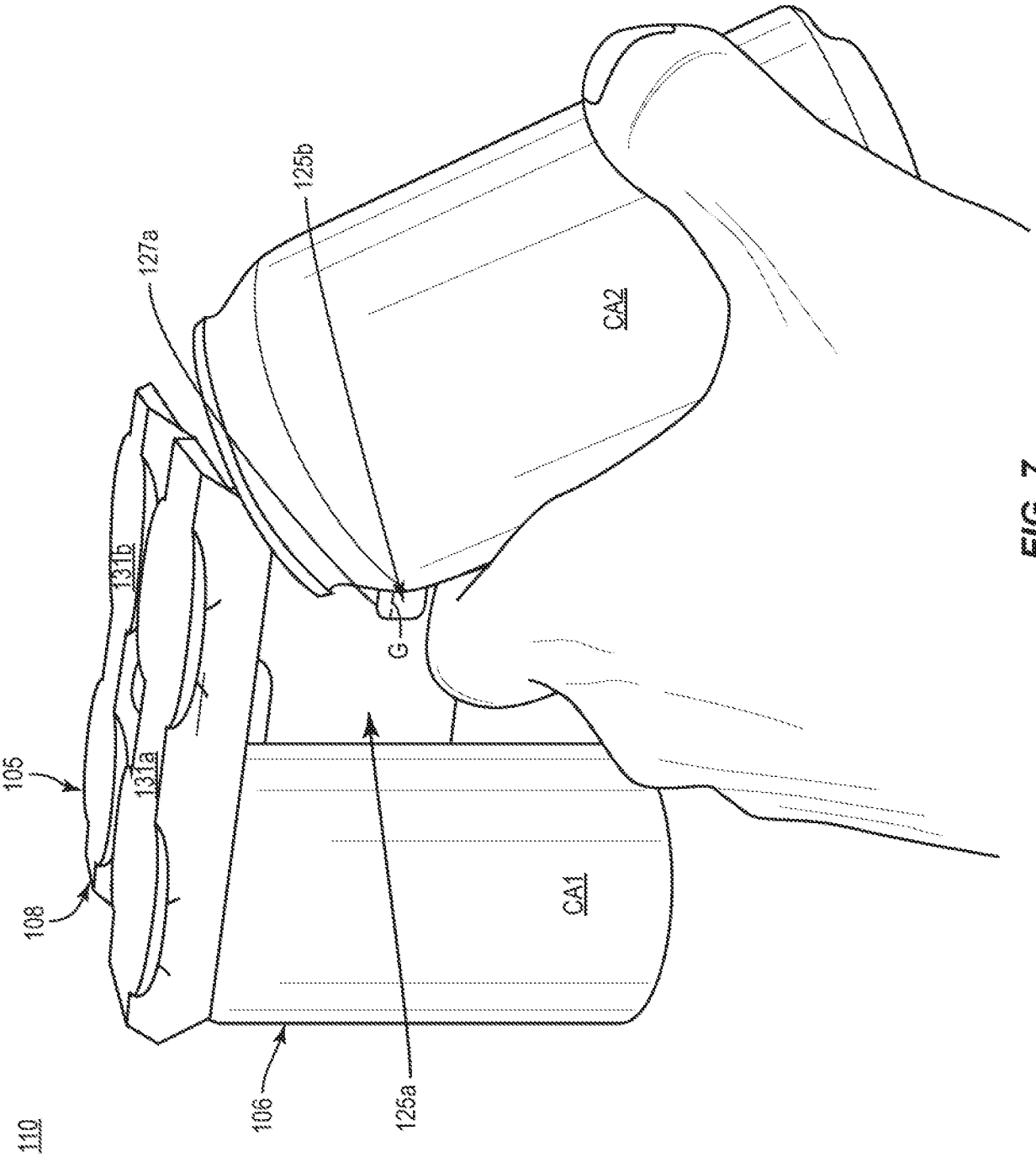


FIG. 7

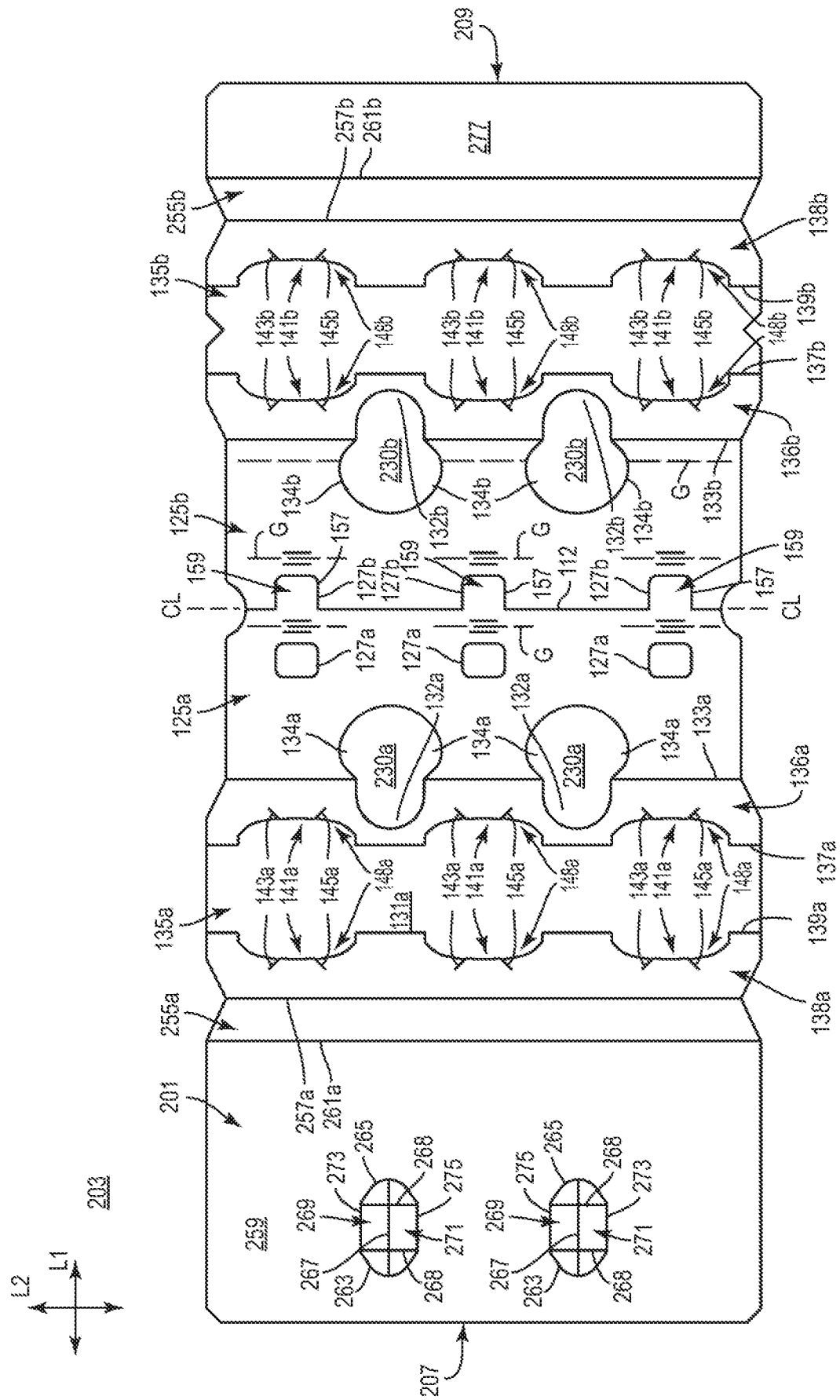

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277
257b
261b
255b
138b
135b
139b
137b
136b
125b
230b
134b
132b
133b
157
159
127b
112
CL
G
127a
125a
230a
134a
132a
133a
136a
137a
135a
139a
138a
255a
257a
261a
201
265
268
273
275
269
271
267
263
259
207
203
L1
L2

FIG. 8

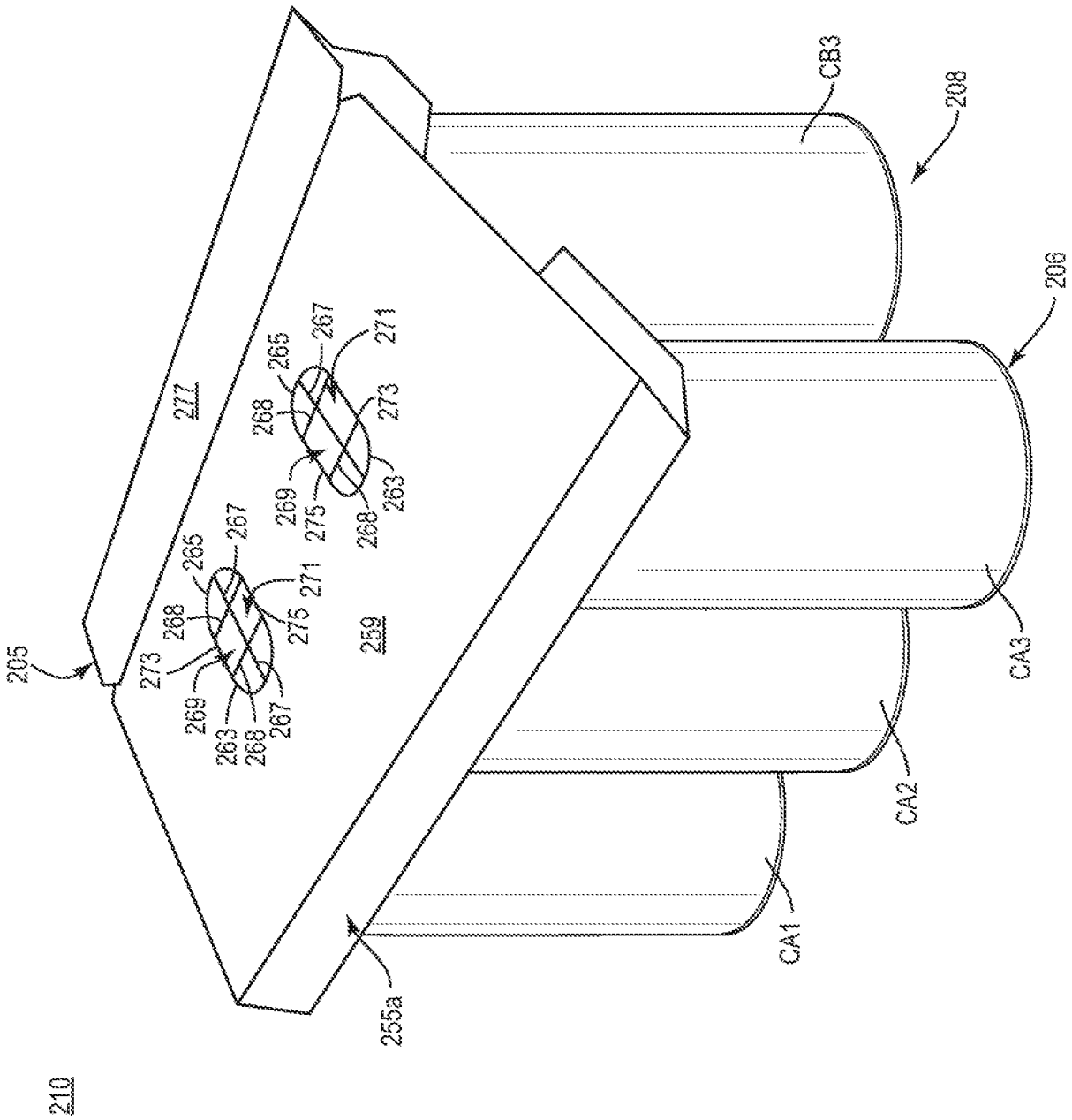

210
205
277
259
255a
CA1
CA2
CA3
206
208
CB3
263
265
267
268
269
271
273
275

FIG. 9