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DESCRIPTION

Technical Field

[0001] The present disclosure relates to glass panel units.

Background Art

[0002] There has been known a glass panel unit in which two or more glass panels are stacked with one or more gaps in-between to form one or more hermetically enclosed spaces, and the spaces are made to be in a vacuum state. This type of glass panel unit is referred to as a multiple glass panel. This type of glass panel unit is also referred to as a vacuum insulated glass panel. This glass panel unit has high thermal insulating properties. It is important that the glass panel unit keeps the vacuum state.

[0003] There has been proposed use of spacers to keep a thickness of the evacuated space inside the glass panel unit. The spacers are materials sandwiched between the two glass panels. The spacers are required to have strength to some extent. The spacers are frequently made of metal. In contrast, US 6,541,084 B2 discloses spacers made of polymer. According to this technique, using polymer as material of spacers may give flexibility to the spacers. However, it is considered to be difficult to produce a glass panel unit excellent in strength by use of the spacers made of polymer.

[0004] US 5 124 185 A describes a vacuum insulating unit having a pair of glass sheets spaced from one another by a plurality of plastic supports, wherein the supports have one end secured to one of the sheets and a low friction material on the other end.

[0005] US 2012/08845 A1 describes a vacuum insulated glass unit comprising a first and second glass substrate, an edge seal, a plurality of pillars provided between the first and second substrate and a laminar coating provided around at least a portion of the pillars so as to impart closure stresses on the first and/or second substrate proximate to the pillars.

Summary of Invention

[0006] An object of the present disclosure would be to propose a glass panel unit with increased strength.

[0007] The glass panel unit is disclosed. The glass panel unit includes a first glass panel, a second glass panel, a seal, an evacuated space, and at least one spacer. The second glass panel is placed opposite the first glass panel. The seal with a frame shape hermetically bonds

the first glass panel and the second glass panel to each other. The evacuated space is enclosed by the first glass panel, the second glass panel, and the seal. The at least one spacer is placed between the first glass panel and the second glass panel. The at least one spacer includes a stack of two or more films including at least one or two resin films.

[0008] The glass panel unit of the present disclosure allows effective improvement of strength.

Brief Description of Drawings

[0009]

FIG. 1 is a schematic section of a glass panel unit of one example.

FIG. 2 is a schematic plan of the glass panel unit of the example.

FIG. 3 is a schematic section of the spacer of one example.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the glass panel unit at a step of a method for manufacturing the same thereof.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the glass panel unit at another step of the method for manufacturing the same.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the glass panel unit at another step of the method for manufacturing the same.

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of the glass panel unit at another step of the method for manufacturing the same.

FIG. 8 is a schematic plan of a completed assembly of the glass panel unit.

FIG. 9 is a schematic section of the completed assembly of the glass panel unit.

FIG. 10 is a perspective view of the glass panel unit at another step of the method for manufacturing the same.

FIG. 11 is a schematic section of a spacer of another example.

FIG. 12 is a schematic section of a glass panel unit of another example.

Description of Embodiments

[0010] The following disclosure relates to glass panel units. In particular, the following disclosure relates to a glass panel unit where an evacuated space is formed between a pair of

glass panels.

[0011] FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 show a glass panel unit 10 of one embodiment. The glass panel unit 10 of the present embodiment is a vacuum insulated glass unit. The vacuum insulated glass unit is a type of multiple glass panels including at least one pair of glass panels, and includes an evacuated space 50 between the pair of glass panels. Note that, in FIG. 2, to facilitate understanding of the internal structure only, the first glass panel 20 is illustrated with part (left and lower part) thereof being cutaway. Note that, upward, downward, left, and right directions in the figures are determined based on a direction of allowing reading reference numbers correctly.

[0012] The glass panel unit 10 includes the first glass panel 20, a second glass panel 30, a seal 40, the evacuated space 50, and spacers 70. The second glass panel 30 is placed opposite the first glass panel 20. The seal 40 with a frame shape hermetically bonds the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 to each other. The evacuated space 50 is enclosed by the first glass panel 20, the second glass panel 30, and the seal 40. The spacers 70 are placed between the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30. The spacers 70 each are a stack of two or more films including at least one or more resin films.

[0013] In the glass panel unit 10, the spacer 70 includes at least one resin film and thereby the spacer 70 has elasticity inherently. Thus, the glass panel unit 10 can absorb impact easily. Additionally, the spacer 70 is formed of a stack of two or more films, and therefore strength can be easily improved. Thereby, the evacuated space 50 can be formed stably. Therefore, the finely evacuated space 50 may be formed, and it is possible to produce the glass panel unit 10 with high resistance to external impact.

[0014] The first glass panel 20 includes a body 21 determining a plan shape of the first glass panel 20, and a coating 22. The body 21 is rectangular and includes a first face (external face; upper face in FIG. 1) and a second face (internal face; lower face in FIG. 1) in a thickness direction which are parallel to each other. Each of the first face and the second face of the body 21 is a flat face. Examples of material of the body 21 of the first glass panel 20 may include soda lime glass, high strain point glass, chemically strengthened glass, non-alkaline glass, quartz glass, neoceram, and physically strengthened glass. Note that, the first glass panel 20 does not need to include the coating 22. The first glass panel 20 may be constituted by the body 21 only.

[0015] The coating 22 is formed on the second face of the body 21. The coating 22 may preferably be an infrared reflective film. Note that, the coating 22 is not limited to such an infrared reflective film but may be a film with desired physical properties.

[0016] The second glass panel 30 includes a body 31 determining a plan shape of the second glass panel 30. The body 31 is rectangular and includes a first face (internal face; upper face in FIG. 1) and a second face (external face; lower face in FIG. 1) in a thickness direction which are parallel to each other. Each of the first face and the second face of the body 31 is a flat

face. Examples of material of the body 31 of the second glass panel 30 may include soda lime glass, high strain point glass, chemically strengthened glass, non-alkaline glass, quartz glass, neoceram, and physically strengthened glass. The material of the body 31 may be same as the material of the body 21. The body 31 has the same plan shape with the body 21. Stated differently, the second glass panel 30 has the same plan shape with the first glass panel 20.

[0017] The second glass panel 30 includes the body 31 only. In other words, the body 31 forms the second glass panel 30 by itself. The second glass panel 30 may include a coating. The coating may be formed on the first face of the body 31. This coating may have properties same as the coating 22 of the first glass panel 20.

[0018] The first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 are arranged so that the second face of the body 21 and the first face of the body 31 face and parallel to each other. In other words, the first face of the body 21 is directed outward from the glass panel unit 10, and the second face of the body 21 is directed inward of the glass panel unit 10. Further, the first face of the body 31 is directed inward of the glass panel unit 10, and the second face of the body 31 is directed outward from the glass panel unit 10.

[0019] A thickness of the first glass panel 20 is not limited particularly, but may be in a range of 1 to 10 mm. A thickness of the second glass panel 30 is not limited particularly, but may be in a range of 1 to 10 mm. The first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 may have the same thickness or different thicknesses. When the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 have the same thickness, formation of the glass panel unit 10 is facilitated. In a plan view, outlines of the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 are aligned with each other.

[0020] In FIG. 1 and FIG. 2, the glass panel unit 10 further includes a gas adsorbent 60. The gas adsorbent 60 is placed inside the evacuated space 50. In the present embodiment, the gas adsorbent 60 has an elongated shape. The gas adsorbent 60 is formed on a second end (left end in FIG. 2) in the lengthwise direction of the second glass panel 30 to extend along the width direction of the second glass panel 30. In summary, the gas adsorbent 60 is placed on one end of the evacuated space 50. According to this arrangement, the gas adsorbent 60 can be unlikely to be perceived. In a case of directly placing the gas adsorbent 60 on a glass panel, placement of the gas adsorbent 60 can be facilitated. Note that, the gas adsorbent 60 may be provided in any position in the evacuated space 50.

[0021] The gas adsorbent 60 is used to adsorb unnecessary gas (for example, residual gas). The unnecessary gas may include gas emitted in forming the seal 40. The unnecessary gas may further include gas intruding into an inside through a gap in the seal 40. An increase in such gas may cause a decrease in the degree of vacuum and thus a decrease in the thermal insulating properties.

[0022] The gas adsorbent 60 includes a getter. The getter is a substance having properties of adsorbing molecules smaller than a predetermined size. The getter may be an evaporative

getter. Examples of the evaporative getter may include zeolite and ion-exchanged zeolite.

[0023] The seal 40 encloses the evacuated space 50 completely and bonds the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 to each other hermetically. The seal 40 is placed between the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30. The seal 40 has a rectangular frame shape. The evacuated space 50 has a degree of vacuum equal to or lower than a predetermined value. The predetermined value may be 0.1 Pa, for example. The evacuated space 50 may be formed by evacuation. The evacuation may include forming a hole for evacuation in at least one of the first glass panel 20, the second glass panel 30, and the seal 40 and removing gas from an inside. However, it is preferable that both the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 do not include any outlet by the following evacuation. In this case, it is possible to produce the glass panel unit 10 with an improved appearance. In FIG. 1, neither the first glass panel 20 nor the second glass panel 30 includes an outlet.

[0024] The evacuated space 50 can be made to be in a vacuum state by conducting evacuation while heating. Heating may lead to an increase in the degree of vacuum. Additionally, such heating may cause formation of the seal 40. A temperature for heating to form a vacuum state may be equal to or higher than 300 °C. This condition may contribute to an increase in the degree of vacuum. A concrete method of forming the evacuated space 50 may be described later.

[0025] The seal 40 is formed of thermal adhesive. Examples of the thermal adhesive may include glass frit. Examples of the glass frit may include low-melting-point glass frit. Examples of the low-melting-point glass frit may include bismuth-based glass frit, lead-based glass frit, and vanadium-based glass frit. The seal 40 may be made of multiple thermal adhesives, as described below.

[0026] The glass panel unit 10 includes multiple spacers 70. The multiple spacers 70 are used to keep a predetermined interval between the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30. The multiple spacers 70 allow reliably ensuring the space between the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30. The number of spacers 70 may be one but preferably two or more in order to keep a thickness of a space between the glass panels. Provision of multiple spacers 70 may lead to an increase in strength of the glass panel unit 10.

[0027] The multiple spacers 70 are placed inside the evacuated space 50. In more detail, the multiple spacers 70 are placed at individual intersections of an imaginary rectangular lattice. For example, an interval between the multiple spacers 70 may be in a range of 1 to 10 cm, and in one example may be 2 cm. Note that, sizes of the spacers 70, the number of spacers 70, intervals between the spacers 70, and pattern of arrangement of the spacers 70 may be appropriately determined.

[0028] Each spacer 70 has a solid cylindrical shape with a height almost equal to the aforementioned predetermined interval (interval between the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30). For example, each spacer 70 may have a diameter ranging from 0.1

to 10 mm and a height ranging from 10 to 1000 μm . In one example, each spacer 70 may have a diameter of 0.5 mm and a height of 100 μm . Note that, each spacer 70 may have a desired shape such as a solid prismatic shape and a spherical shape. The heights of the multiple spacers 70 determine the distance between the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 which means a thickness of the evacuated space 50. The evacuated space 50 may have a thickness ranging from 10 to 1000 μm , and in one example may have a thickness of 100 μm .

[0029] Each spacer 70 is made of light-transmissive material. Thus, the multiple spacers 70 are unlikely to be perceived. Note that, each spacer 70 may be made of opaque material, providing that it is sufficiently small. Material of the spacers 70 is selected so that crush of the spacers 70 does not occur during a first melting step, an evacuating step, and a second melting step which are described later. For example, the material of the spacers 70 is selected to have a softening point (softening temperature) higher than a first softening point of a first thermal adhesive and a second softening point of a second thermal adhesive.

[0030] The spacer 70 includes a stack of two or more films 71. The two or more films 71 include at least one resin film. FIG. 1 illustrates the spacer 70 including three films 71. The three films 71 include at least one resin film.

[0031] FIG. 3 shows one example of the spacer 70. FIG. 3 is an enlarged view of part, which includes one spacer 70, of the glass panel unit 10 shown in FIG. 1 and FIG. 2. The spacer 70 illustrated in FIG. 3 can apply to the glass panel unit 10 of FIG. 1. In FIG. 3, three films 71 are used. The number of films 71 may be two or four or more. As a thickness of a resin film increases, physical properties may become unstable and strength or the like may become uneven. However, use of a stack may allow a decrease in a thickness of a single resin film. Thus, even if the stack becomes thick, physical properties can be stabilized. Accordingly, it is possible to produce the spacer 70 with stable strength or the like.

[0032] In FIG. 3, the films 71 are defined as a first film 71a, a second film 71b, and a third film 71c which are arranged in this order from the first glass panel 20 to the second glass panel 30. At least one of the first film 71a, the second film 71b, and the third film 71c is a resin film. All of the first film 71a, the second film 71b, and the third film 71c (that is, all films 71) may be resin films. In this case, formation of the spacer 70 can be facilitated. Only one of the first film 71a, the second film 71b, and the third film 71c may be a resin film. In this case, strength and resistance to impact of the spacer 70 can be improved efficiently. Only two of the first film 71a, the second film 71b, and the third film 71c may be resin films. In this case, the spacer 70 can be formed to have a structure with high resistance to impact.

[0033] In one preferable aspect, the spacer 70 may include at least two resin films. In this aspect, resistance to impact can be improved. In a more preferable aspect, the two resin films may be positioned on opposite side of the stack in the stacking direction. In this aspect, resistance to impact can be more improved. The stacking direction of the stack is identical to the thickness direction of the glass panel unit 10. When this aspect applies to FIG. 3, the first

film 71a and the third film 71c are resin films. Note that, the second film 71b may be a resin film but may not be a resin film.

[0034] When the spacers 70 includes resin films on opposite sides, films 71 adjacent to the opposite glass panels are resin films. The film 71 and the glass panel may be in direct contact or another member may be interposed therebetween. When external force is applied to the glass panel unit 10, a large load may be applied to an interface between the spacer 70 and the glass panel. At this time, when the spacer 70 has a resin film at a position closest to the glass panel, the resin film absorbs such a load, and thus impact to the glass panel can be reduced. The reason is considered to be that elasticity of the resin film causes a so-called slip effect. The same or similar effect can be obtained in a case where a resin film is present close to either one of the two glass panels. However, that effect can be drastically increased in a case where resin films are present close to both the two glass panels.

[0035] When the spacer 70 includes a film 71 other than resin films, the film 71 other than resin films may be a film 71 made of appropriate material. Films other than resin films may be treated as additional films.

[0036] The spacer 70 may preferably include one or more materials selected from glass, metal, ceramic, and graphite. Accordingly, strength of the glass panel unit 10 can be improved. Further, dimensional stability of the spacer 70 can be also improved, and thus the evacuated space 50 can be stably formed. Further, crush of the spacer 70 can be suppressed.

[0037] The additional film may preferably contain at least one material selected from glass, metal, ceramic, and graphite. The additional film may be a glass film. The additional film may be a metal film. The additional film may be a ceramic film. The additional film may be a graphite film. The glass film may be a thin glass film. Alternatively, the glass film may include glass fibers. Alternatively, the glass film may be glass woven cloth. Alternatively, the glass film may be glass non-woven cloth. The metal film may be metal foil. Alternatively, the metal film may be rolled metal. A preferable example of material of the metal film may be stainless steel (for example, SUS). Note that, aforementioned terminology "films" may be read as sheets. For example, ceramic films can be read as ceramic sheets.

[0038] In the spacer 70, the first film 71a and the third film 71c may be resin films, and the second film 71b may be an additional film, for example. In this case, preferable examples of the additional film may include a glass film, a metal film, a ceramic film, and a graphite film. Thus, resistance to impact and dimensional stability can be improved effectively.

[0039] The spacer 70 may include one resin film only. Also in this case, resistance to impact can be improved. In this case, one resin film may be positioned at a center of the stack in the stacking direction. Thus, resistance to impact can be improved effectively. When this configuration applies to FIG. 3, the second film 71b is a resin film and the first film 71 a and the third film 71c are additional films.

[0040] The films 71 are bonded with each other with bond. The bond forms a bonding layer 72. Examples of the bond may include resin bond. Examples of such resin may include thermosetting resin and ultraviolet curable resin. Stacking of the films 71 can be performed before the first glass panel 20 and the second glass panel 30 are bonded. The spacer 70 may include two or more films 71 and one or more bonding layers 72. Each bonding layer 72 may be positioned between adjacent two of the films 71.

[0041] Preferable examples of the bond for bonding the films 71 may include polyamide acid. Preferably, the two or more films 71 are bonded to each other with polyamide acid. The polyamide acid is excellent in adhesiveness, and has high resistance to heat. Preferably, the bonding layer 72 may be made of polyamide acid.

[0042] A bonding layer 72 may have a thickness in a range of 0.1 to 10 μm , for example. The bonding layer 72 may preferably have a thickness smaller than the thickness of the film 71. The thickness of the bonding layer 72 may be more preferably smaller than half of the thickness of the film 71, and most preferably be smaller than one-tenth of the thickness of the film 71. The thickness of the bonding layer 72 may be equal to or larger than 0.5 μm , and may be equal to or larger than 0.8 μm . The thickness of the bonding layer 72 may be equal to or smaller than 5 μm , and may be equal to or smaller than 3 μm .

[0043] The stack of the films 71 can be produced by stacking two or more films 71 while placing bond between adjacent two of the films 71 and then heating and pressing stacked films 71 (that is, a stack where the films are not bonded to each other yet). In this process, heating and pressing may be preferably performed by vacuum pressing. A heating temperature for pressing may be in a range of 300 to 500 $^{\circ}\text{C}$, for example. The pressure at pressing may be in a range of 8 to 12 MPa, for example. The time for pressing may be in a range of 5 minutes to 2 hours, for example.

[0044] The stack of the films 71 is prepared by bonding two or more films 71 with bond and is cut into a shape in accordance with a shape of the spacer 70. Thereby, a cut part of the stack can be used as the spacer 70. Cutting of the stack can be done by punching with a punch or the like. By cutting the stack into a circle, the circular spacer 70 can be produced. The stacking direction of the films 71 may be identical to the thickness direction of the glass panel unit 10.

[0045] Modifications of the spacer 70 may include a spacer 70 including a bonding layer 72 containing at least one material selected from glass, metal, ceramic, and graphite. In this case, a function of the spacer 70 can be improved. For example, strength of the spacer 70 can be enhanced. Or, thermal conductivity of the spacer 70 can be lowered. At least one material selected from glass, metal, ceramic, and graphite may be defined as functional material here. The functional material may be included in one or more films 71 or may be included in one or more bonding layers 72. When the functional material is included in one or more bonding layers 72, it is possible to easily produce the spacer 70 including the functional material. For example, the functional material is blended into bond, and the films 71 are bonded to each other with the prepared bond. By doing so, the bonding layer 72 containing the functional

material can be formed.

[0046] A film 71 may have a thickness in a range of 1 to 50 μm , for example. When the film 71 has a thickness in this range, resistance to impact can be improved efficiently. Additionally, when the resin film has a thickness in this range, destabilization of physical properties of resin can be suppressed and additionally it is possible to ensure a height for forming a space reserved for the evacuated space 50 efficiently. A thickness of the film 71 may be equal to or larger than 5 μm , or may be equal to or larger than 10 μm , or may be equal to or larger than 20 μm . The thicker the film 71 is, the more the film becomes suitable for ensuring the space. The thickness of the film 71 may be equal to or smaller than 45 μm , and may be equal to or smaller than 40 μm . The thinner the film 71 is, the more destabilization of resin can be suppressed.

[0047] The resin film may be preferably made of resin which has a viscoelastic coefficient at 400 °C equal to or larger than 500 MPa. As a result, the glass panel unit 10 with high strength can be produced. The resin may have a viscoelastic coefficient at 400 °C smaller than 1×10^6 MPa. As for the resin, a viscoelastic coefficient at 400 °C may be preferably larger than 1000 MPa and more preferably 1500 MPa and most preferably 2000 MPa. As for the resin, a ratio of a viscoelastic coefficient V20 at 20 °C to a viscoelastic coefficient V400 at 400 °C, which is given by $V400/V20$, may be equal to or larger than 0.1. This ratio ($V400/V20$) may be preferably equal to or larger than 0.2, and more preferably 0.3, and most preferably 0.4. Viscoelastic coefficients can be measured with viscoelasticity measuring apparatus. Examples of viscoelasticity measuring apparatus may include a DMA (dynamic mechanical analyzer) and a TMA (thermomechanical analyzer). As for the resin film, a coefficient of thermal expansion at 400 °C may be preferably smaller than 10 ppm/°C. As a result, the glass panel unit 10 with high strength can be produced. As for the resin, a coefficient of thermal expansion at 400 °C may be larger than 0.1 ppm/°C. Coefficients of thermal expansion can be measured with coefficient of thermal expansion measuring apparatus. More preferably, the resin film may be made of resin which has a viscoelastic coefficient at 400 °C larger than 500 MPa and a coefficient of thermal expansion at 400 °C smaller than 10 ppm/°C.

[0048] The resin film may preferably be a polyimide film. The polyimide film has high resistance to heat, and thus properties thereof are unlikely to change even at a temperature for bonding the glass panels. The polyimide film has high strength, and thus a space for the evacuated space 50 can be ensured easily. The polyimide film has a small coefficient of thermal expansion, and thus the evacuated space 50 can be formed stably. The polyimide film has large elasticity, and thus resistance to impact of the glass panel unit 10 can be improved. Note that, when the thickness of the polyimide film is excessively large, there may be a probability that volatilizing a solvent in production becomes not easy. This may lead to a decrease in physical properties. Thus, the polyimide film may preferably have a thickness equal to or smaller than 50 μm .

[0049] Polyimide is produced by polycondensation of diamines with tetracarboxylic acid anhydrides. The diamines may preferably include aromatic diamines. The tetracarboxylic acid

anhydrides may preferably include aromatic tetracarboxylic acid anhydrides. It is preferable to use polyimide produced by reaction of aromatic diamines and aromatic tetracarboxylic acid anhydrides. The aromatic diamines may preferably have the benzoxazole structures. Use of the aromatic diamines may preferably have the benzoxazole structures allow resultant polyimide to have the benzoxazole structures. The polyimide may preferably have the benzoxazole structures.

[0050] Concrete examples of the aromatic diamines having the benzoxazole structures may include 5-amino-2-(p-aminophenyl)benzoxazole, 6-amino-2-(p-aminophenyl)benzoxazole, 5-amino-2-(m-aminophenyl)benzoxazole, 6-amino-2-(m-aminophenyl)benzoxazole, 2,2-p-phenylenebis(5-aminobenzoxazole), 1,5-(5-aminobenzoxazo)-4-(5-aminobenzoxazo)benzene, 2,6-(4,4'-diaminodiphenyl)benzo[1,2-d:5,4-d']bisoxazole, 2,6-(4,4'-diaminodiphenyl)benzo[1,2-d:4,5-d']bisoxazole, 2,6-(3,4'-diaminodiphenyl)benzo[1,2-d:5,4-d']bisoxazole, 2,6-(3,4'-diaminodiphenyl)benzo[1,2-d:4,5-d']bisoxazole, 2,6-(3,3'-diaminodiphenyl)benzo[1,2-d:5,4-d']bisoxazole, 2,6-(3,3'-diaminodiphenyl)benzo[1,2-d:4,5-d']bisoxazole.

[0051] One type of these aromatic diamines may be used alone, or two or more types of them may be used in combination.

[0052] Examples of the aromatic tetracarboxylic acid anhydrides may include pyromellitic acid anhydrides, 3,3',4,4'-biphenyltetracarboxylic acid anhydrides, 4,4'-oxydiphthalic acid anhydrides, 3,3',4,4'-benzophenonetetracarboxylic acid anhydrides, 3,3',4,4'-diphenylsulfonetetracarboxylic acid anhydrides, 2,2-bis[4-(3,4-dicarboxyphenoxy)phenyl]propanoic acid anhydrides.

[0053] One type of these aromatic tetracarboxylic acid anhydrides may be used alone, or two or more types of them may be used in combination.

[0054] The polyimide film can be produced by materials including aromatic diamines described above and aromatic tetracarboxylic acid anhydride as described above. For example, first, these materials are condensed in a solvent to obtain a polyamide acid solution. Thereafter, the polyamide acid solution is applied onto a support and then dried to form a green film which can retain its shape. After that, the green film is imidized by thermal treatment. As a result, the polyimide film can be formed. At this time, the resultant film may be stretched, but it is preferable not to stretch it. When it is not stretched, physical properties may be stabilized. It is preferable to use the non-stretched polyimide film.

[0055] It is preferable that an area ratio of the spacer 70 to the glass panel unit 10 in a plan view be in a range of 0.01 to 0.2 %. In this case, the spacer 70 is unlikely to be perceived, and additionally strength of the glass panel unit 10 can be improved. The plan view means a view of the glass panel unit 10 in the thickness direction thereof. The thickness direction of the glass panel unit 10 is identical to the height direction of the spacer 70.

[0056] Hereinafter, a method for manufacturing the glass panel unit 10 is described with reference to FIG. 4 to FIG. 10. FIG. 4 to FIG. 10 show an example of the method for manufacturing the glass panel unit 10. The glass panel unit 10 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 3 can be produced by the method illustrated in FIG. 4 to FIG. 10. According to the method illustrated in FIG. 4 to FIG. 10, the glass panel unit 10 devoid of any outlet can be produced.

[0057] To produce the glass panel unit 10, first of all a temporary assembly 100 is prepared as shown in FIG. 4 to FIG. 6 and subsequently a completed assembly 110 shown in FIG. 7 to FIG. 9 is prepared by a predetermined process. Thereafter, as shown in FIG. 10, the glass panel unit 10 can be obtained by cutting a particular part from the completed assembly 110.

[0058] The method for manufacturing the glass panel unit 10 includes a preparation step, an assembling step, a hermetically enclosing step, and a removing step. Note that, the preparation step can be omitted.

[0059] The preparation step is a step of preparing a first glass substrate 200, a second glass substrate 300, a frame 410, a partition 420, the gas adsorbent 60, and the multiple spacers 70. According to the preparation step, an inside space 500, a gas passage 600, and an outlet 700 can be formed.

[0060] The first glass substrate 200 is a substrate to give the first glass panel 20. As shown in FIG. 9, the first glass substrate 200 includes a glass plate 210 determining a plan shape of the first glass substrate 200, and a coating 220. The glass plate 210 is a rectangular flat plate and includes a first face and a second face in a thickness direction which are parallel to each other. The coating 220 is formed on the second face of the glass plate 210. The glass plate 210 forms the body 21 of the first glass panel 20. The first face of the glass plate 210 corresponds to the first face of the body 21, and the second face of the glass plate 210 corresponds to the second face of the body 21. The coating 220 forms the coating 22 of the first glass panel 20. Note that, the coating 220 may be optional.

[0061] The second glass substrate 300 is a substrate to give the second glass panel 30. As shown in FIG. 9, the second glass substrate 300 includes a glass plate 310 determining a plan shape of the second glass substrate 300. The glass plate 310 is a rectangular flat plate and includes a first face and a second face in a thickness direction which are parallel to each other. The second glass substrate 300 serves as a base for the body 31 of the second glass panel 30. The first face of the glass plate 310 corresponds to the first face of the body 31, and the second face of the glass plate 310 corresponds to the second face of the body 31. The glass plate 310 has the same plan shape and plan size as the glass plate 210. In other words, the second glass substrate 300 has the same plan shape as the first glass substrate 200. Further, the glass plate 310 has the same thickness as the glass plate 210. The second glass substrate 300 includes the glass plate 310 only. In other words, the glass plate 310 forms the second glass substrate 300 by itself.

[0062] The second glass substrate 300 is placed opposite the first glass substrate 200. In

more detail, the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 are arranged so that the second face of the glass plate 210 and the first face of the glass plate 310 face and parallel to each other.

[0063] The frame 410 is placed between the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 to hermetically bond the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 to each other. Thereby, as shown in FIG. 6, the inside space 500 enclosed by the frame 410, the first glass substrate 200, and the second glass substrate 300 is formed.

[0064] The frame 410 is formed of thermal adhesive (the first thermal adhesive with the first softening point). Examples of the first thermal adhesive may include glass frit. Examples of the glass frit may include low-melting-point glass frit. Examples of the low-melting-point glass frit may include bismuth-based glass frit, lead-based glass frit, and vanadium-based glass frit.

[0065] The frame 410 has a rectangular frame shape. The frame 410 has the same plan shape as each of the glass plates 210 and 310, but the frame 410 has a smaller plan size than each of the glass plates 210 and 310. As shown in FIG. 4, the frame 410 is formed to extend along an outer periphery of the second glass substrate 300. In other words, the frame 410 is formed to cover an almost entire region on the second glass substrate 300.

[0066] The partition 420 is placed inside the inside space 500. As shown in FIG. 6, the partition 420 divides the inside space 500 into an evacuation space 510 and a gas passage space 520. The evacuation space 510 is a space to be evacuated later, and the gas passage space 520 is a space used for evacuating the evacuation space 510. The partition 420 is formed between a first end (right end in FIG. 4) and a center of the second glass substrate 300 in a lengthwise direction (left and right direction in FIG. 4) of the second glass substrate 300 so that the evacuation space 510 is larger than the gas passage space 520.

[0067] The partition 420 includes a wall part 421 and a pair of closing parts 422 (a first closing part 4221 and a second closing part 4222). The wall part 421 is formed to extend along a width direction of the second glass substrate 300. In FIG. 6, the width direction means a direction extending along a short side of the temporary assembly 100 with a rectangular shape. Note that, the wall part 421 has opposite ends in a lengthwise direction not in contact with the frame 410. The pair of closing parts 422 extends from the opposite ends in the lengthwise direction of the wall part 421 toward the first end in the lengthwise direction of the second glass substrate 300.

[0068] The partition 420 is formed of thermal adhesive (the second thermal adhesive with the second softening point). Examples of the second thermal adhesive may include glass frit. Examples of the glass frit may include low-melting-point glass frit. Examples of the low-melting-point glass frit may include bismuth-based glass frit, lead-based glass frit, and vanadium-based glass frit. The second thermal adhesive is same as the first thermal adhesive, and the second softening point is equal to the first softening point.

[0069] The gas adsorbent 60 is placed inside the evacuation space 510. In more detail, the gas adsorbent 60 is placed on one end of the evacuation space 510. Further, the gas adsorbent 60 is positioned away from the partition 420 and the gas passage 600. Hence, it is possible to lower a probability that the gas adsorbent 60 prevents evacuation of the evacuation space 510.

[0070] The multiple spacers 70 are already described with reference to FIG. 1, FIG. 2, and FIG. 3. Each spacer 70 may be formed of the stack of two or more films 71 shown in FIG. 3. The spacer 70 can be produced by bonding two or more films 71 with bond and then cutting the bonded films. The preparation step may further include a step of preparing spacers 70. As shown in FIG. 4, the multiple spacers 70 may be arranged at predetermined intervals in longitudinal and lateral directions.

[0071] Note that, a height of the spacer 70 which is present as a separate part before included in the glass panel unit 10 may be different from a height of the spacer 70 after the glass panel unit 10 has been formed. The spacers 70 may be compressed in the height direction due to being sandwiched by the two glass panels. When the spacer 70 contains one or more materials selected from glass, metal, ceramic, and graphite, strength of the spacer 70 can be increased and therefore excess compression of the spacer 70 can be suppressed. Therefore, it is possible to ensure the thickness of the evacuated space 50 easily. Additionally, strength of the glass panel unit 10 can be increased. Further, crush of the spacer 70 can be suppressed, and the glass panel unit 10 can have good appearance (aesthetic properties). When the spacer 70 contains polyimide, the strength can be increased, and thus excess compression of the spacer 70 can be suppressed.

[0072] The gas passage 600 interconnects the evacuation space 510 and the gas passage space 520 in the inside space 500. The gas passage 600 includes a first gas passage 610 and a second gas passage 620. The first gas passage 610 is a space formed between the first closing part 4221 and part of the frame 410 facing the first closing part 4221. The second gas passage 620 is a space formed between the second closing part 4222 and part of the frame 410 facing the second closing part 4222. As a result of placing the partition 420 as described above, the gas passage 600 is formed.

[0073] The outlet 700 is a hole interconnecting the gas passage space 520 and an outside space. The outlet 700 is used for evacuating the evacuation space 510 by way of the gas passage space 520 and the gas passage 600. Therefore, the gas passage 600, the gas passage space 520, and the outlet 700 constitute an evacuation passage for evacuating the evacuation space 510. The outlet 700 is formed in the second glass substrate 300 to interconnect the gas passage space 520 and the outside space. In more detail, the outlet 700 is positioned in a corner of the second glass substrate 300.

[0074] The preparation step is performed for the aforementioned members. The preparation step includes first to sixth steps. Note that, the order of the second to sixth steps may be modified.

[0075] The first step is a step (substrate formation step) of forming the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300. For example, in the first step, the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 are produced. The first step may include cleaning the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 if necessary.

[0076] The second step is a step of forming the outlet 700. In the second step, the outlet 700 is formed in the second glass substrate 300. Further, in the second step, the second glass substrate 300 is cleaned if necessary. Note that, the outlet 700 may be formed in the first glass substrate 200.

[0077] The third step is a step (sealing material formation step) of forming the frame 410 and the partition 420. In the third step, the material (the first thermal adhesive) of the frame 410 and the material (the second thermal adhesive) of the partition 420 are applied on to the second glass substrate 300 (the first face of the glass plate 310) with a dispenser or the like. Thereafter, the material of the frame 410 and the material of the partition 420 are dried and calcined. For example, the second glass substrate 300 where the material of the frame 410 and the material of the partition 420 are applied is heated at 480 °C for 20 minutes. Note that, the first glass substrate 200 may be heated together with the second glass substrate 300. In other words, the first glass substrate 200 may be heated under the same condition (at 480 °C for 20 minutes) as the second glass substrate 300. By doing so, it is possible to reduce a difference in degree of warp between the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300.

[0078] The fourth step is a step (spacer placement step) of placing the spacers 70. The fourth step may include placing the multiple spacers 70 in individual predetermined locations on the second glass substrate 300 with a chip moulder. Note that, the multiple spacers 70 are formed in advance. Alternatively, the multiple spacers 70 may be formed by use of known thin film formation techniques. For example, the spacers 70 can be formed by applying resin composition onto the second glass substrate 300 to form a coating and placing the additional film onto the coating.

[0079] The fifth step is a step (gas adsorbent formation step) of forming the gas adsorbent 60. In the fifth step, a solution where a power of the getter is dispersed is applied to a predetermined location on the second glass substrate 300 and then dried to thereby form the gas adsorbent 60.

[0080] When a process from the first step to the fifth step is completed, the second glass substrate 300 is obtained, on which the frame 410, the partition 420, the gas passage 600, the outlet 700, the gas adsorbent 60, and the multiple spacers 70 are formed as shown in FIG. 4.

[0081] The sixth step is a step (placing step) of placing the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300. In the sixth step, the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 are placed so that the second face of the glass plate 210 and the first face

of the glass plate 310 face and are parallel to each other. FIG. 5 shows a step of placing the first glass substrate 200 on the second glass substrate 300. Note that, in the present example, members (for example, the frame 410 and the partition 420) are placed on the second glass substrate 300. Alternatively, such members may be placed on the first glass substrate 200.

[0082] The assembling step is a step of preparing the temporary assembly 100. In more detail, in the assembling step, the temporary assembly 100 is prepared by bonding the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 to each other. In other words, the assembling step may be referred to as a step (first melting step) of hermetically bonding the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 to each other with the frame 41.

[0083] In the first melting step, the first thermal adhesive is melted once at the predetermined temperature (the first melting temperature) equal to or higher than the first softening point and thereby the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 are hermetically bonded to each other. The first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 are hermetically bonded to each other with the frame 410. In more detail, the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 are placed in a furnace and heated at the first melting temperature only for predetermined time (the first melting time).

[0084] The first melting temperature and the first melting time are selected so that the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 are hermetically bonded to each other with the thermal adhesive of the frame 410 but the gas passage 600 is not closed by the partition 420. In other words, a lower limit of the first melting temperature is equal to the first softening point, and an upper limit of the first melting temperature is however selected so as not to cause the partition 420 to close the gas passage 600. For example, when the first softening point and the second softening point are 434 °C, the first melting temperature is set to 440 °C. Further, the first melting time may be 10 minutes, for example. Note that, in the first melting step, the frame 410 may emit gas. However such gas may be adsorbed by the gas adsorbent 60.

[0085] Through the aforementioned assembling step (the first melting step), the temporary assembly 100 shown in FIG. 6 can be produced. The temporary assembly 100 includes the first glass substrate 200, the second glass substrate 300, the frame 410, the inside space 500, the partition 420, the gas passage 600, the outlet 700, the gas adsorbent 60, and the multiple spacers 70.

[0086] The hermetically enclosing step is a step of subjecting the temporary assembly 100 to the above predetermined process to obtain the completed assembly 110. The hermetically enclosing step includes the evacuating step and a melting step (the second melting step). In other words, the evacuating step and the second melting step constitute the above predetermined process.

[0087] The evacuating step is a step of converting the evacuation space 510 into the evacuated space 50 by evacuating it by way of the gas passage 600, the gas passage space

520, and the outlet 700 at the predetermined temperature (the evacuating temperature). Like this, heating may be preferably conducted in the evacuating step. This may lead to an increase in the degree of vacuum.

[0088] Evacuation can be done by a vacuum pump, for example. As shown in FIG. 6, the vacuum pump is connected to the temporary assembly 100 with the evacuation pipe 810 and a sealing head 820. The evacuation pipe 810 is bonded to the second glass substrate 300 so that an inside of the evacuation pipe 810 is connected to the outlet 700, for example. The sealing head 820 is attached to the evacuation pipe 810, and thereby an inlet of the vacuum pump is connected to the outlet 700.

[0089] The first melting step, the evacuating step, and the second melting step are performed with the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 being left in the furnace. In this regard, the frame 410, the partition 420, the gas passage 600, the outlet 700, the gas adsorbent 60, and the multiple spacers 70 are already provided to the second glass substrate 300. Therefore, an evacuation pipe 810 is bonded to the second glass substrate 300 before the first melting step at the latest.

[0090] In the evacuating step, the evacuation space 510 is evacuated by way of the gas passage 600, the gas passage space 520, and the outlet 700 at a predetermined evacuating temperature only for predetermined time (evacuation time). The evacuating temperature is set to be higher than the activation temperature (for example, 350 °C) of the getter of the gas adsorbent 60, and also is set to be lower than the first softening point and the second softening point (for example, 434 °C). The evacuating temperature may be preferably equal to or higher than 300 °C. For example, the evacuating temperature is 390 °C. According to the above settings, deformation of the frame 410 and the partition 420 is unlikely to occur. Further, the getter of the gas adsorbent 60 is activated, and thus molecules (gas) adsorbed on the getter are desorbed from the getter. Such molecules (that is, gas) desorbed from the getter are discarded through the evacuation space 510, the gas passage 600, the gas passage space 520, and the outlet 700. Therefore, in the evacuating step, the adsorbability of the gas adsorbent 60 is recovered. The evacuation time is set to obtain the evacuated space 50 having a desired degree of vacuum (for example, a degree of vacuum equal to or lower than 0.1 Pa). For example, the evacuation time is set to 120 minutes.

[0091] The second melting step is a step of forming the seal 40 enclosing the evacuated space 50 by changing the shape of the partition 420 to form the separator 42 closing the gas passage 600. In the second melting step, the second thermal adhesive is melted once at the predetermined temperature (the second melting temperature) equal to or higher than the second softening point, and thereby the partition 420 is changed in shape to form the separator 42. In more detail, the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 are heated at the second melting temperature for the predetermined time (the second melting time) in the furnace.

[0092] The second melting temperature and the second melting time are set to allow the

second thermal adhesive to soften to form the separator 42 closing the gas passage 600. A lower limit of the second melting temperature is equal to the second softening point (434 °C). Note that, differently from the first melting step, the purpose of the second melting step is to change the shape of the partition 420, and consequently the second melting temperature is set to be higher than the first melting temperature (440 °C). For example, the second melting temperature is set to 460 °C. Additionally, the second melting time is, for example, 30 minutes.

[0093] When the separator 42 is formed, the evacuated space 50 is separated from the gas passage space 520. Hence, the vacuum pump cannot evacuate the evacuated space 50. The frame 410 and the separator 42 are heated until the second melting step is finished, and therefore gas may be emitted from the frame 410 and the separator 42. However, gas emitted from the frame 410 and the separator 42 is adsorbed on the gas adsorbent 60 inside the evacuated space 50. Consequently, a decrease in the degree of vacuum of the evacuated space 50 can be suppressed. In summary, it is possible to suppress a decrease in the thermal insulating properties of the glass panel unit 10.

[0094] Also in the first melting step, the frame 410 and the separator 42 are heated. Thus, the frame 410 and the separator 42 may emit gas. Gas emitted by the frame 410 and the separator 42 is adsorbed by the gas adsorbent 60, and therefore the adsorbability of the gas adsorbent 60 may decrease due to the first melting step. However, in the evacuating step, the evacuation space 510 is evacuated at the evacuating temperature equal to or higher than the activation temperature of the getter of the gas adsorbent 60 and thereby the adsorbability of the gas adsorbent 60 is recovered. Therefore, the gas adsorbent 60 can adsorb a sufficient amount of gas emitted from the frame 410 and the separator 42 in the second melting step. In other words, it is possible to avoid an undesired situation the gas adsorbent 60 fails to adsorb a sufficient amount of gas emitted from the frame 410 and the separator 42 and thus the degree of vacuum of the evacuated space 50 decreases.

[0095] Additionally, in the second melting step, evacuation of the evacuation space 510 through the gas passage 600, the gas passage space 520, and the outlet 700 is continued from the evacuating step. In other words, in the second melting step, the separator 42 closing the gas passage 600 is formed by changing the shape of the partition 420 at the second melting temperature while the evacuation space 510 is evacuated through the gas passage 600, the gas passage space 520, and the outlet 700. By doing so, it is possible to further lower a probability that the degree of vacuum of the evacuated space 50 decreases during the second melting step. Note that, the second melting step does not necessarily include evacuating the evacuation space 510 through the gas passage 600, the gas passage space 520, and the outlet 700.

[0096] The above predetermined process includes converting the evacuation space 510 into the evacuated space 50 by evacuating the evacuation space 510 by way of the gas passage 600, the gas passage space 520, and the outlet 700 at a predetermined temperature (evacuating temperature). The evacuating temperature is higher than the activation temperature of the getter of the gas adsorbent 60. Consequently, evacuation of the evacuation

space 510 and recovery of the adsorbability of the getter can be performed simultaneously.

[0097] The above predetermined process further includes forming the seal 40 enclosing the evacuated space 50 by forming a separator 42 for closing the gas passage 600 by changing a shape of the partition 420 (see FIG. 8). The partition 420 includes the second thermal adhesive. Therefore, the separator 42 can be formed by changing the shape of the partition 420 by once melting the second thermal adhesive at a predetermined temperature (second melting temperature) equal to or higher than the second softening point. Note that, the first melting temperature is lower than the second melting temperature. Consequently, it is possible to prevent the gas passage 600 from being closed due to deformation of the partition 420 in bonding the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 with the frame 410. Note that, the partition 420 may be made of material which is more deformable than that of the frame 410 when melted.

[0098] The partition 420 is changed in shape so that the first closing part 4221 closes the first gas passage 610 and the second closing part 4222 closes the second gas passage 620. The separator 42, which is obtained by changing the shape of the partition 420 as described above, separates (spatially) the evacuated space 50 from the gas passage space 520. The separator (second part) 42 and part (first part) 41 of the frame 410 corresponding to the evacuated space 50 constitute the seal 40 enclosing the evacuated space 50.

[0099] The evacuated space 50 is obtained by evacuating the evacuation space 510 by way of the gas passage space 520 and the outlet 700 as described above. The evacuated space 50 is hermetically enclosed by the first glass substrate 200, the second glass substrate 300, and the seal 40 completely and thus is separated from the gas passage space 520 and the outlet 700.

[0100] Additionally, the seal 40 with a rectangular frame shape is formed. The seal 40 includes the first part 41 and the second part 42. The first part 41 is part of the frame 410 corresponding to the evacuated space 50. In other words, the first part 41 is part of the frame 410 facing the evacuated space 50. The first part 41 has an almost U-shape, and serves as three of four sides of the seal 40. The second part 42 is a separator formed by changing the shape of the partition 420. The second part 42 has an I-shape, and serves as a remaining one of the four sides of the seal 40.

[0101] In the evacuating step, forces may arise to move the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 close to each other. However, the spacers 70 keep the space between the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300.

[0102] Notably, the spacers 70 formed of a stack of two or more films 71 are used, and therefore it is possible to easily ensure the thickness of the evacuated space 50 compared with a case of using spacers other than the spacers 70 formed of a stack of two or more films 71. The reason is that the stack can cause improvement of resistance to heat and strength. Additionally, the stack can suppress crush of the spacer 70. When such crush occurs, the thickness of the evacuated space may decrease. Further, crush may increase a probability of a

decrease in the thermal insulating properties. Further, crush of spacers may result in a decrease in strength. Furthermore, crush of spacers may make the glass panel unit have poor appearance. Particularly, when the resin film is made of a polyimide film, crush of the spacer can be suppressed.

[0103] Through the aforementioned hermetically enclosing step, the completed assembly 110 shown in FIG. 7 to FIG. 9 is produced. The completed assembly 110 includes the first glass substrate 200, the second glass substrate 300, the seal 40, the evacuated space 50, the gas passage space 520, the gas adsorbent 60, and the multiple spacers 70. Note that, in FIG. 8, to facilitate understanding of the internal structure only, the first glass substrate 200 is illustrated with part (right and lower part) thereof being cutaway.

[0104] The removing step is a step of obtaining the glass panel unit 10 which is part including the evacuated space 50, by removing part 11 including the gas passage space 520 from the completed assembly 110. As shown in FIG. 8, in more detail, the completed assembly 110 taken out from the furnace is cut along the cutting line 900, and thereby is divided into predetermined part (glass panel unit) 10 including the evacuated space 50 and part (unnecessary part) 11 including the gas passage space 520. The unnecessary part 11 mainly includes part 230 of the first glass substrate 200 corresponding to the gas passage space 520, part 320 of the second glass substrate 300 corresponding to the gas passage space 520, and part 411 of the frame 410 corresponding to the gas passage space 520. Note that, in consideration of production cost of the glass panel unit 10, the unnecessary part 11 is preferably as small as possible. FIG. 10 shows removing the unnecessary part 11 from the completed assembly 110.

[0105] Cutting is done by an appropriate cutting device. Examples of the cutting device may include a scribe and a laser. By cutting the first glass substrate 200 and the second glass substrate 300 at the same time, the glass panel unit 10 can be cut efficiently. Note that, the shape of the cutting line 900 is set according to the shape of the glass panel unit 10. The glass panel unit 10 is rectangular, and therefore the cutting line 900 is a straight line along the lengthwise direction of the wall 42.

[0106] Through the aforementioned preparation step, assembling step, hermetically enclosing step, and removing step, the glass panel unit 10 as shown in FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 is produced. The first glass panel 20 is part of the first glass substrate 200 corresponding to the evacuated space 50. The second glass panel 30 is part of the second glass substrate 300 corresponding to the evacuated space 50. The outlet 700 for forming the evacuated space 50 is present in the part 320 of the second glass substrate 300 corresponding to the gas passage space 520, and the evacuation pipe 810 is connected to the part 320. Therefore, the outlet 700 is not present in the second glass panel 30.

[0107] Hereinafter, optional modifications relating to the glass panel unit are described. In the description relating to the modifications, the reference signs in parentheses of corresponding components are introduced.

[0108] In the above embodiment, the glass panel unit (10) is rectangular, but the glass panel unit (10) may have a desired shape such as a circular shape and a polygonal shape. Stated differently, each of the first glass panel (20), the second glass panel (30), and the seal (40) does not need to be rectangular and may have a desired shape such as a circular shape and a polygonal shape. Note that, the shapes of the first glass substrate (200), the second glass substrate (300), the frame (410), and, the separator (42) are not limited to the shapes described in the explanation of the above embodiment, and may have such shapes that the glass panel unit (10) can have a desired shape. Note that, the shape and size of the glass panel unit (10) may be determined in consideration of application of the glass panel unit (10).

[0109] Additionally, the first face and the second face, of the body (21) of the first glass panel (20) are not limited to flat faces. Similarly, the first face and the second face, of the body (31) of the second glass panel (30) are not limited to flat faces.

[0110] Additionally, the body (21) of the first glass panel (20) and the body (31) of the second glass panel (30) do not need to have the same plan shape and plan size. Further, the body (21) and the body (31) do not need to have the same thickness. Furthermore, the body (21) and the body (31) do not need to be made of the same material. Similarly, the glass plate (210) of the first glass substrate (200) and the glass plate (310) of the second glass substrate (300) do not need to have the same plan shape and plan size. Further, the glass plate (210) and the glass plate (310) do not need to have the same thickness. Furthermore, the glass plate (210) and the glass plate (310) do not need to be made of the same material.

[0111] Additionally, the seal (40) do not need to have the same plan shape with the first glass panel (20) and the second glass panel (30). Similarly, the frame (410) do not need to have the same plan shape with the first glass substrate (200) and the second glass substrate (300).

[0112] Additionally, the first glass panel (20) may include a coating which has desired physical properties and is formed on the second flat face of the body (21). Alternatively, the first glass panel (20) does not need to include the coating (22). In other words, the first glass panel (20) may be constituted by the body (21) only.

[0113] Additionally, the second glass panel (30) may include a coating with desired physical properties. For example, the coating may include at least one of thin films formed on the first flat face and the second flat face of the body (31) respectively. Examples of the coating may include a film reflective for light with a specified wavelength (for example, infrared reflective film and ultraviolet reflective film).

[0114] In the above embodiment, the frame (410) is made of the first thermal adhesive. However, the frame (410) may include other component such as a core, in addition to the first thermal adhesive. Stated differently, it is sufficient that the frame (410) includes the first thermal adhesive. In the above embodiment, the frame (410) is formed to surround an almost entire region on the second glass substrate (300). However, it is sufficient that the frame (410)

is formed to surround a predetermined region on the second glass substrate (300). In other words, there is no need to form the frame (410) so as to surround an almost entire region on the second glass substrate (300). Alternatively, the completed assembly (110) may include two or more frames (410). In other words, the completed assembly (110) may include two or more inside spaces (500). In this case, it is possible to produce two or more glass panel units (10) from one completed assembly (110).

[0115] In the above embodiment, the partition (420) is made of the second thermal adhesive. However, the partition (420) may include other component such as a core, in addition to the second thermal adhesive. Stated differently, it is sufficient that the partition (420) includes the second thermal adhesive. Further, in the above embodiment, the partition (420) has its opposite end not connected to the frame (410). And, gaps between the opposite ends of the partition (420) and the frame (410) define the gas passages (610, 620). However, the partition (420) may have only one of its opposite ends not connected to the frame (410). In this case, there is one gas passage (600) between the partition (420) and the frame (410). Alternatively, the partition (420) may have its opposite end both connected to the frame (410). In this case, the gas passage (600) may be a through hole formed in the partition (420). Alternatively, the gas passage (600) may be a gap between the partition (420) and the first glass substrate (200). Alternatively, the partition (420) may be defined as a set of two or more partitions spaced from each other. In this case, the gas passage (600) may be a gap between adjacent two of the two or more partitions.

[0116] In the above embodiment, the inside space (500) is divided into one evacuation space (510) and one gas passage space (520). Note that, the inside space (500) may be divided into one or more evacuation spaces (510) and one or more gas passage spaces (520). When the inside space (500) includes two or more evacuation spaces (510), it is possible to produce two or more glass panel units (10) from one completed assembly (110).

[0117] In the above embodiment, the second thermal adhesive is identical to the first thermal adhesive, and the second softening point is equal to the first softening point. However, the second thermal adhesive may be different material from the first thermal adhesive. For example, the second thermal adhesive may have the second softening point different from the first softening point of the first thermal adhesive. In such a case, the second softening point may be preferably higher than the first softening point. In this case, the first melting temperature can be set to be equal to or higher than the first softening point and lower than the second softening point. By doing so, it is possible to suppress undesired deformation of the partition 420 in the first melting step.

[0118] Additionally, each of the first thermal adhesive and the second thermal adhesive are not limited to glass frit, and may be selected from low-melting-point metal, hot-melt adhesive, and the like, for example.

[0119] In the above embodiment, a furnace is used to heat the frame (410), the gas adsorbent (60), and the partition (420). However, such heating can be done with appropriate heating

means. Examples of the heating means may include a laser and a thermally conductive plate connected to a heat source.

[0120] In the above embodiment, the gas passage (600) includes the two gas passages (610, 620). However, the gas passage (600) may include only one gas passage or may include three or more gas passages. Further, the shape of the gas passage (600) are not limited in particular.

[0121] In the above embodiment, the outlet (700) is formed in the second glass substrate (300). However, the outlet (700) may be formed in the glass plate (210) of the first glass substrate (200) or may be formed in the frame (410). In summary, the outlet (700) may be allowed to be formed in the unnecessary part (11).

[0122] In the above embodiment, the getter of the gas adsorbent (60) is an evaporative getter. However, the getter may be a non-evaporative getter. When the non-evaporative getter has a temperature equal to or higher than a predetermined temperature (the activation temperature), adsorbed molecules intrudes into an inside of the getter, and thus the adsorbability can be recovered. In contrast to the evaporative getter, the adsorbed molecules are not desorbed. Therefore, after the non-evaporative getter has adsorbed an amount of molecules equal to or more than a certain amount, the adsorbability is no longer recovered even if the getter is heated up to a temperature equal to or higher than the activation temperature.

[0123] In the above embodiment, the gas adsorbent (60) has an elongated shape, but may have another shape. Additionally, the gas adsorbent (60) does not necessarily need to be positioned at the end of the evacuated space (50). Further, in the above embodiment, the gas adsorbent (60) may be formed by applying a liquid containing a powder of the getter (for example, a dispersion liquid prepared by dispersing a powder of the getter in a liquid, and a solution prepared by dissolving a powder of the getter in a liquid). However, the gas adsorbent (60) may include a substrate and the getter fixed to the substrate. This type of the gas adsorbent (60) may be formed by immersing a substrate in a liquid containing the getter and drying it. Note that, the substrate may have a desired shape, but may be an elongated rectangular shape, for example.

[0124] Alternatively, the gas adsorbent (60) may be a film formed entirely or partially on the surface (first face) of the glass plate (310) of the second glass substrate (300). This type of the gas adsorbent (60) may be formed by coating the surface (first face) of the glass plate (310) of the second glass substrate (300) with a liquid containing a powder of the getter.

[0125] Alternatively, the gas adsorbent (60) may be included in the spacer (70). For example, the spacer (70) may be made of material containing the getter, and thereby the spacer (70) including the gas adsorbent (60) can be obtained. For example, the bonding layer (72) may include the getter.

[0126] Alternatively, the gas adsorbent (60) may be solid material made of the getter. This gas

adsorbent (60) tends to have a large size, and thus cannot be placed between the first glass substrate (200) and the second glass substrate (300) in some cases. In such cases, the glass plate (310) of the second glass substrate (300) may be formed to include a recess, and the gas adsorbent (60) may be placed in this recess.

[0127] Alternatively, the gas adsorbent (60) may be preliminarily placed in a package to suppress the getter from adsorbing molecules. In this case, the package may be broken after the second melting step to expose the gas adsorbent (60) to the evacuated space (50).

[0128] In the above embodiment, the glass panel unit (10) includes the gas adsorbent (60). However, the glass panel unit (10) does not need to include any gas adsorbent (60).

[0129] In the above embodiment, the glass panel unit (10) includes the multiple spacers (70). However, the glass panel unit (10) may include a single spacer (70).

[0130] The present embodiment relates to forming the glass panel unit (10) not including an outlet by removing the unnecessary part (11). In one case, the glass panel unit (10) may include an outlet. In this case, at least one of the first glass panel (20) and the second glass panel (30) may include an outlet. The outlet is closed to keep the evacuated space (50) in the vacuum state. When at least one of the first glass panel (20) and the second glass panel (30) includes such an outlet, the outlet may be closed with a cap. However, to improve an appearance, it is preferable that the glass panel unit (10) do not include the outlet.

[0131] In the description relating to the above embodiment, the spacer (70) is made of three films (71). However, the spacer (70) may be made of two films (71), four films (71), five films (71), or six or more films (71).

[0132] FIG. 11 shows a modification of the spacer 70 applying to the glass panel unit. This spacer 70 is formed of two films 71. Thus, the structure of the spacer 70 can be simplified. The two films 71 are defined as a first film 71p and a second film 71q. At least one of the first film 71p and the second film 71q is a resin film. The film 71 other than the resin film is an additional film. The additional film is already described above. The glass panel unit 10 including the spacers 70 shown in FIG. 11 is same as the glass panel unit 10 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 3 except the number of stacked films 71 is two. The same components as the glass panel unit 10 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 3 are designated by the same reference signs as the glass panel unit 10 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 3, and descriptions with reference to FIG. 1 to FIG. 3 can apply to the same components.

[0133] FIG. 12 shows a modification of the glass panel unit (referred to as a glass panel unit 10A). In the glass panel unit 10A, the second glass panel 30 includes an outlet 700. The outlet 700 is closed by a seal 81. Accordingly, the evacuated space 50 can be kept in a vacuum state. The seal 81 is made of the evacuation pipe 810. The seal 81 can be made by melting glass forming the evacuation pipe 810. There is a cap 80 disposed outside the seal 81. The cap 80 covers the seal 81. By covering the seal 81 with the cap 80, the outlet 700 can be

closed securely. Additionally the cap 80 can suppress breakage of surrounding part of the outlet 700. The glass panel unit 10A is same as the glass panel unit 10 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 3 except for the outlet 700, the seal 81, and the cap 80 being provided. The same components as the glass panel unit 10 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 3 are designated by the same reference signs as the glass panel unit 10 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 3, and descriptions with reference to FIG. 1 to FIG. 3 can apply to the same components. The glass panel unit 10A can be produced by a method in accordance with the production method of the temporary assembly 100. The glass panel unit 10A does not require removal of part including the outlet 700, and thus production therefore can be facilitated.

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

Patent documents cited in the description

- [US6541084B2 \[0003\]](#)
- [US5124185A \[0004\]](#)
- [US201208845A1 \[0005\]](#)

GLASPANELENHED

Patentkrav

1. Glaspanelenhed (10), der omfatter:

et første glaspanel (20);

et andet glaspanel (30), som er placeret modsat det første glaspanel (20);

en tætning (40) med en rammeform, der hermetisk forbinder det første glaspanel (20) og det andet glaspanel (30) med hinanden;

et evakueret rum (50), der er indesluttet af det første glaspanel (20), det andet glaspanel (30) og tætningen (40); og

mindst ét afstandsstykke (70), som er placeret mellem det første glaspanel (20) og det andet glaspanel (20), og

kendetegnet ved, at:

det mindst ene afstandsstykke (70) indbefatter en stabel af to eller flere film (71), der indbefatter mindst én eller to harpiksfilm.

2. Glaspanelenhed (10) ifølge krav 1, hvor:

det mindst ene afstandsstykke (70) indbefatter de mindst to harpiksfilm; og

de mindst to harpiksfilm er positioneret på modsatte sider i en stablingsretning for stablen.

3. Glaspanelenhed (10) ifølge krav 1 eller 2, hvor

den mindst ene eller to harpiksfilm er polyimidfilm.

4. Glaspanelenhed (10) ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1 til 3, hvor

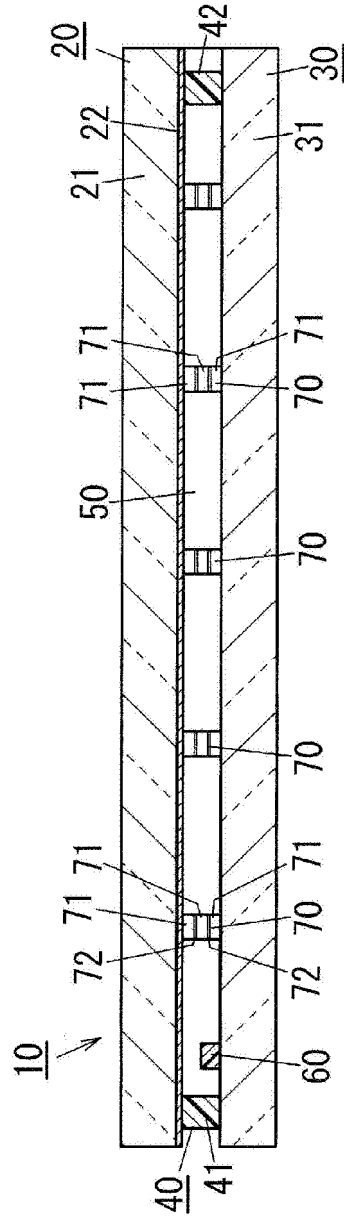
det mindst ene afstandsstykke (70) indeholder mindst ét materiale, der er valgt blandt glas, metal, keramik og grafit.

5. Glaspanelenhed (10) ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1 til 4, hvor

de to eller flere film (71) er forbundet med hinanden med polyamidsyre.

DRAWINGS

FIG. 1



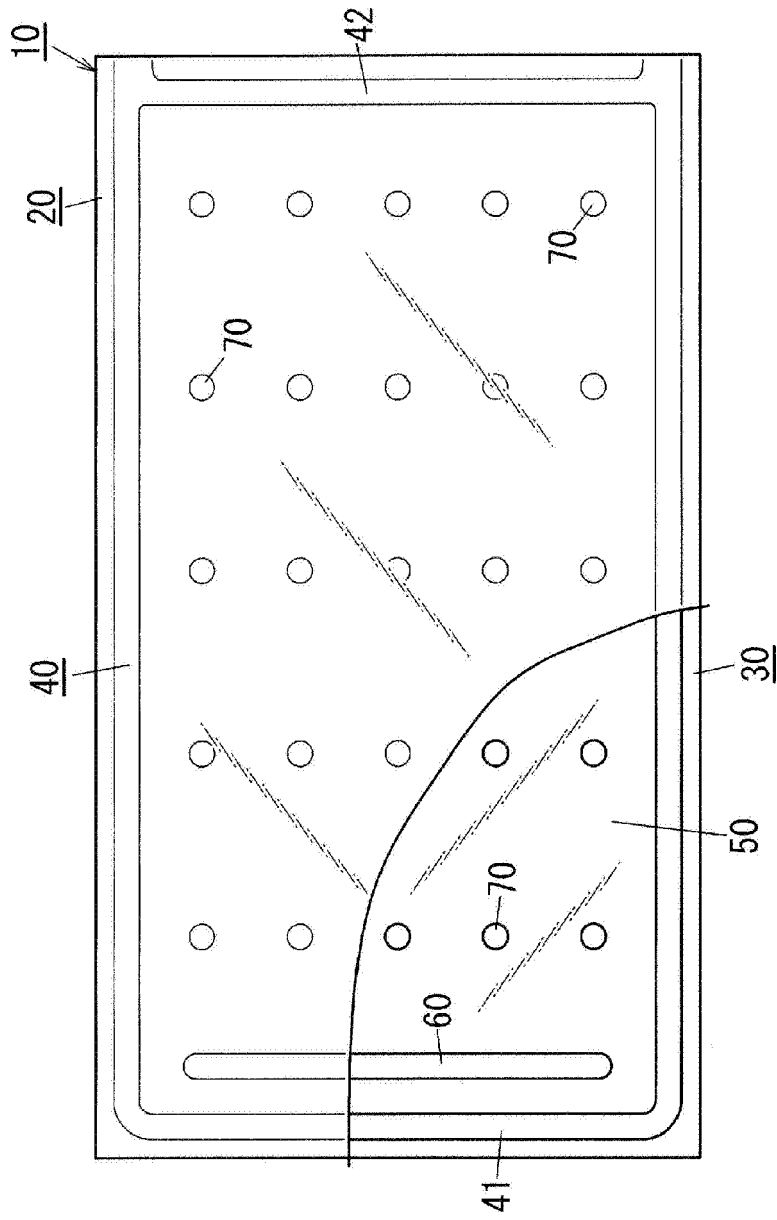


FIG. 2

FIG. 3

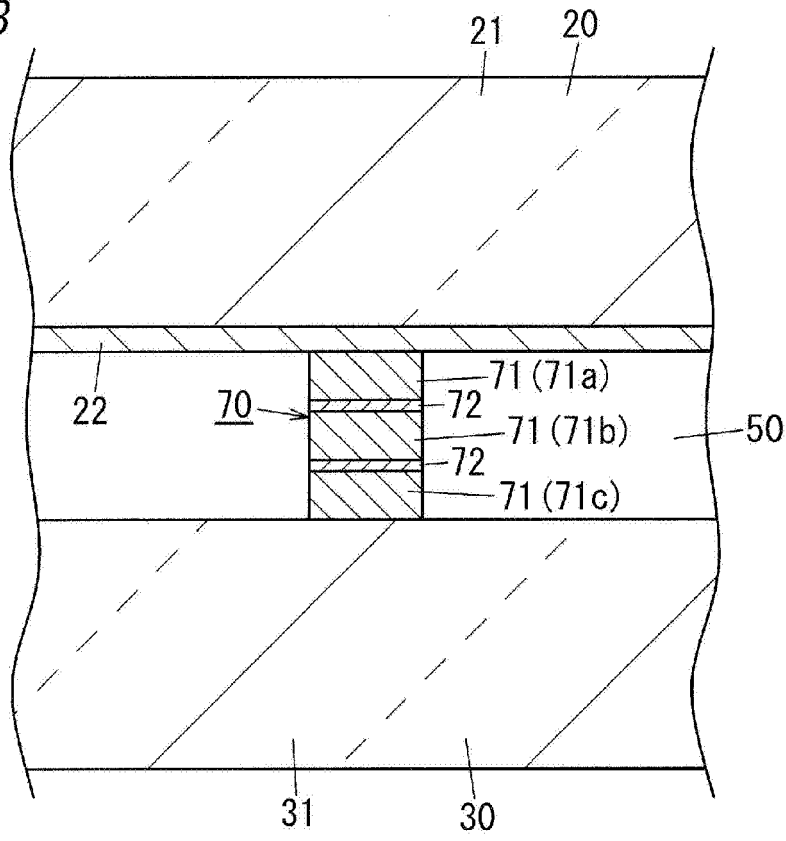


FIG. 4

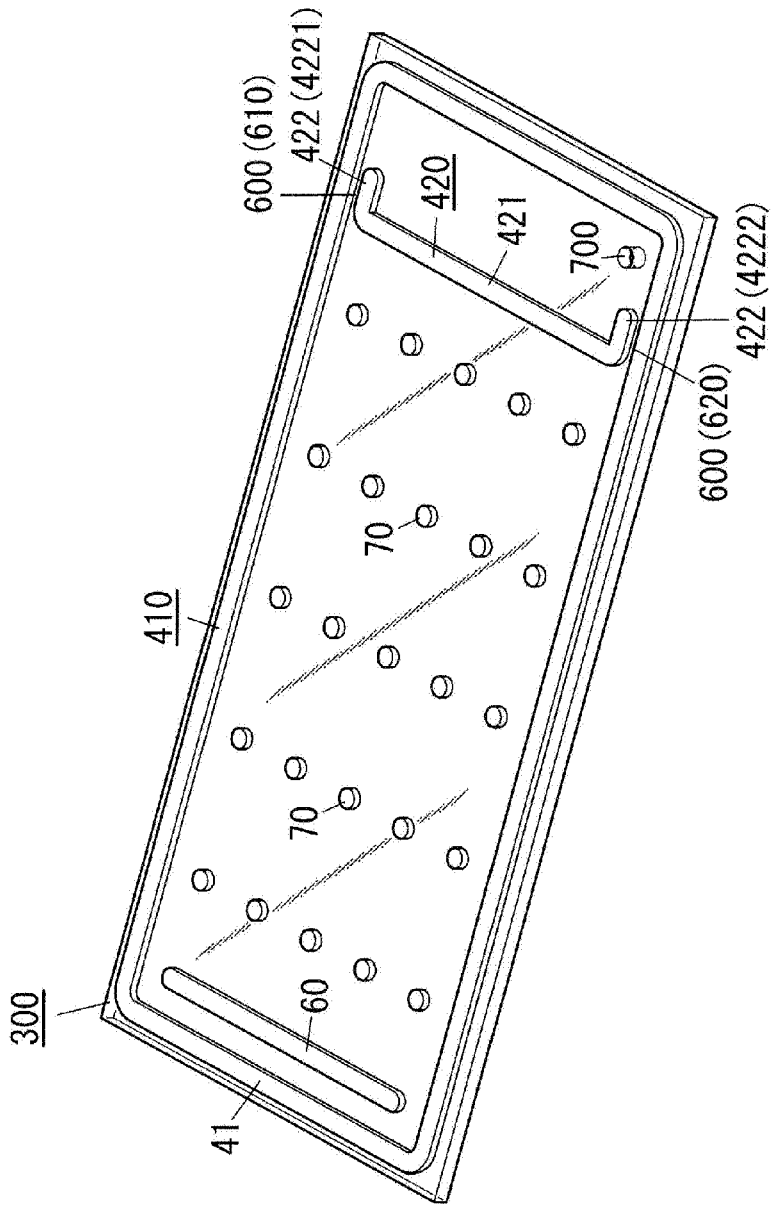


FIG. 5

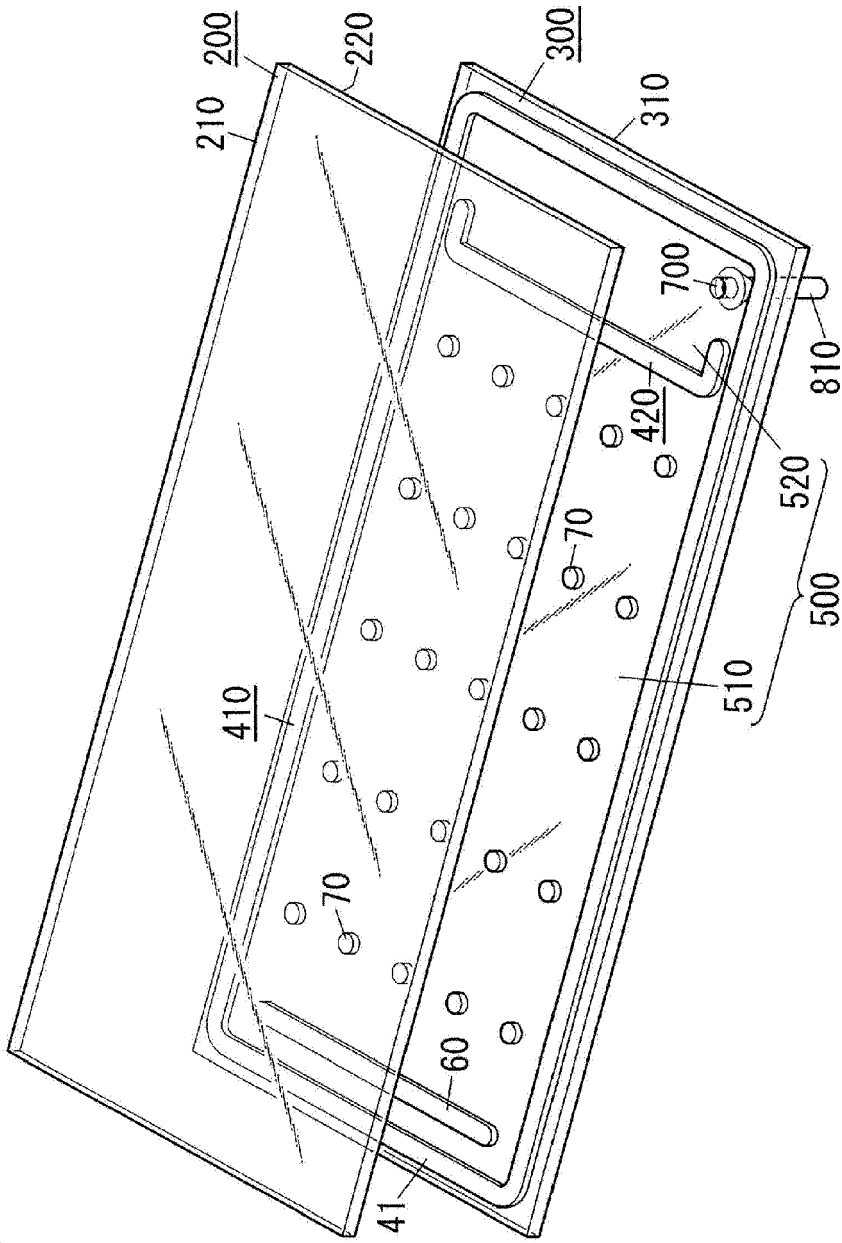


FIG. 6

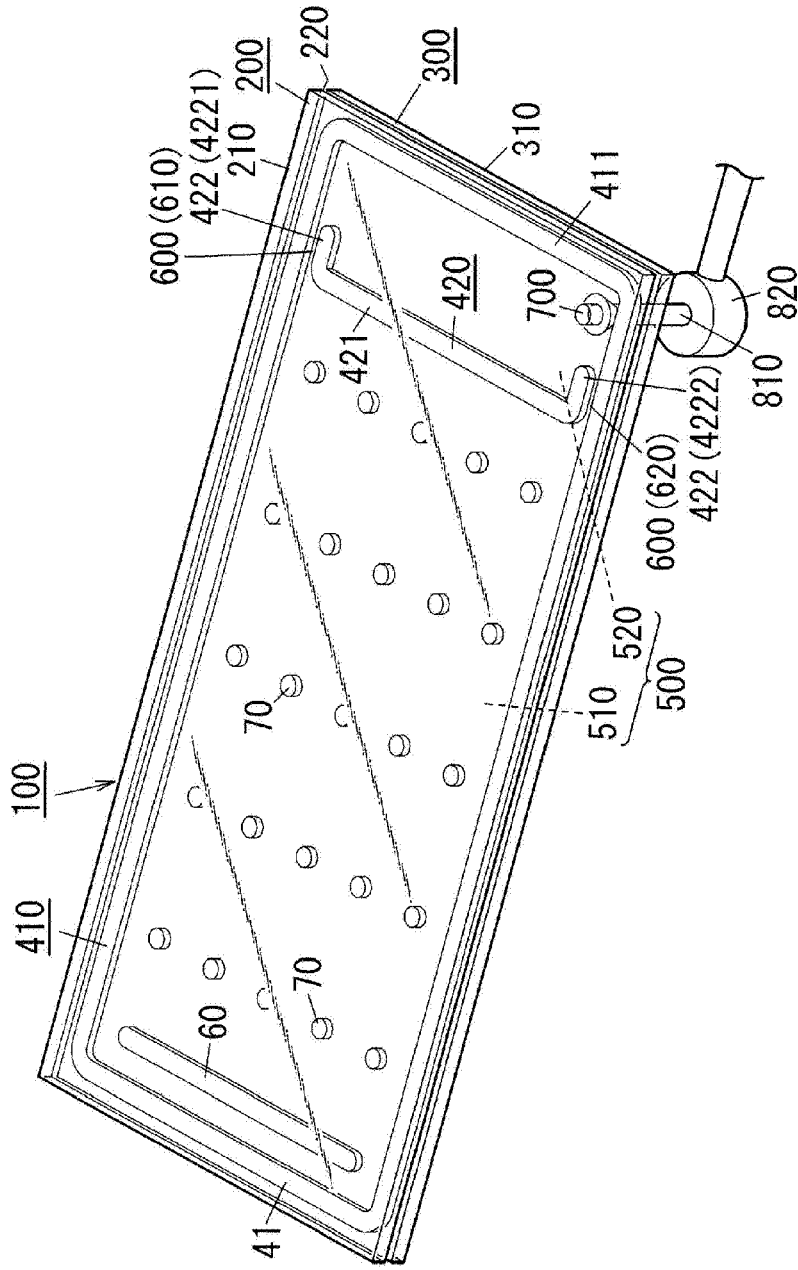


FIG. 7

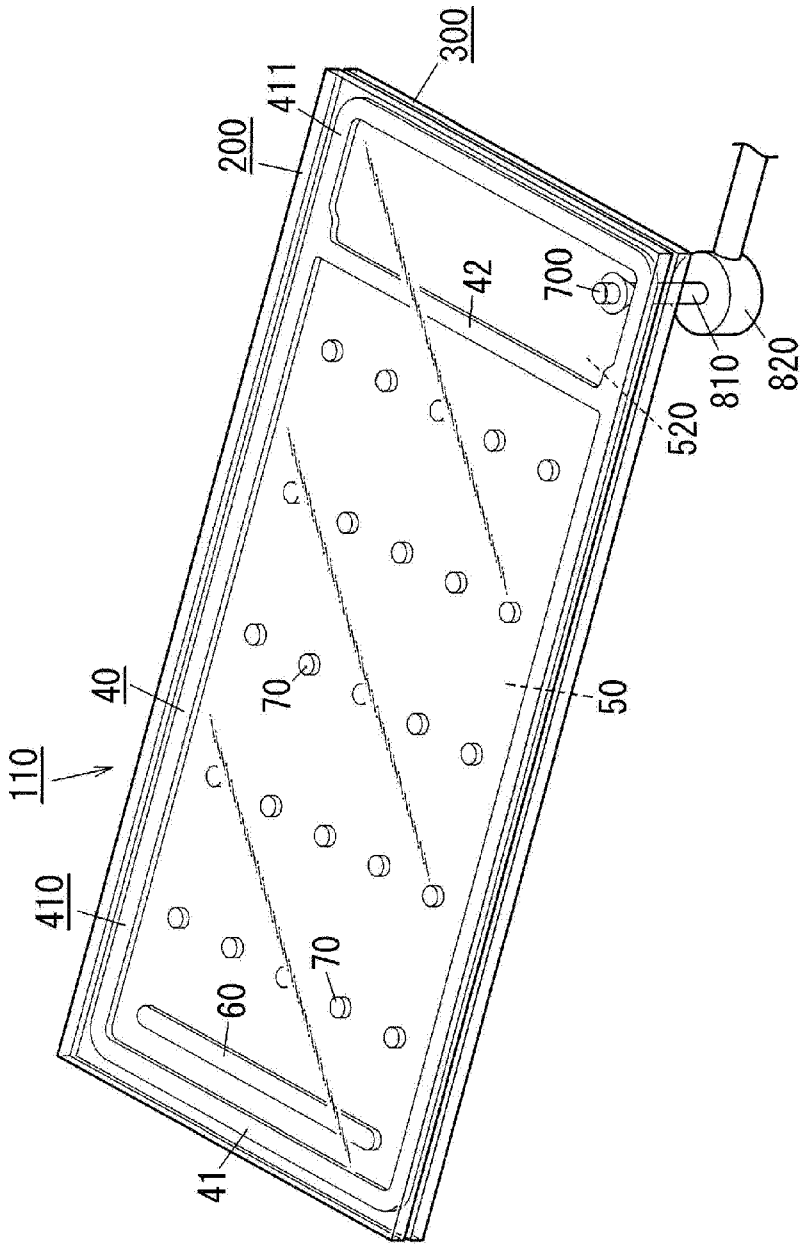


FIG. 8

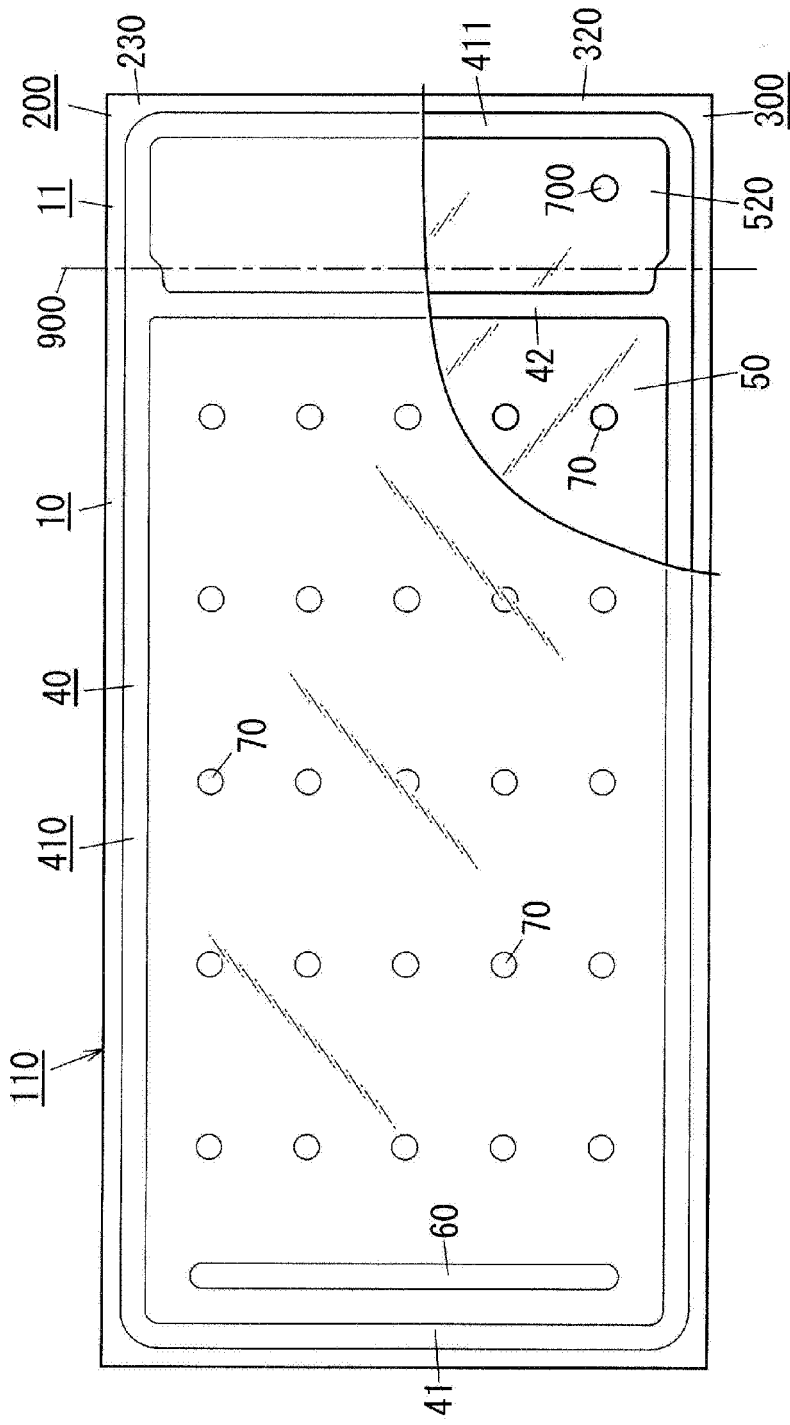


FIG. 10

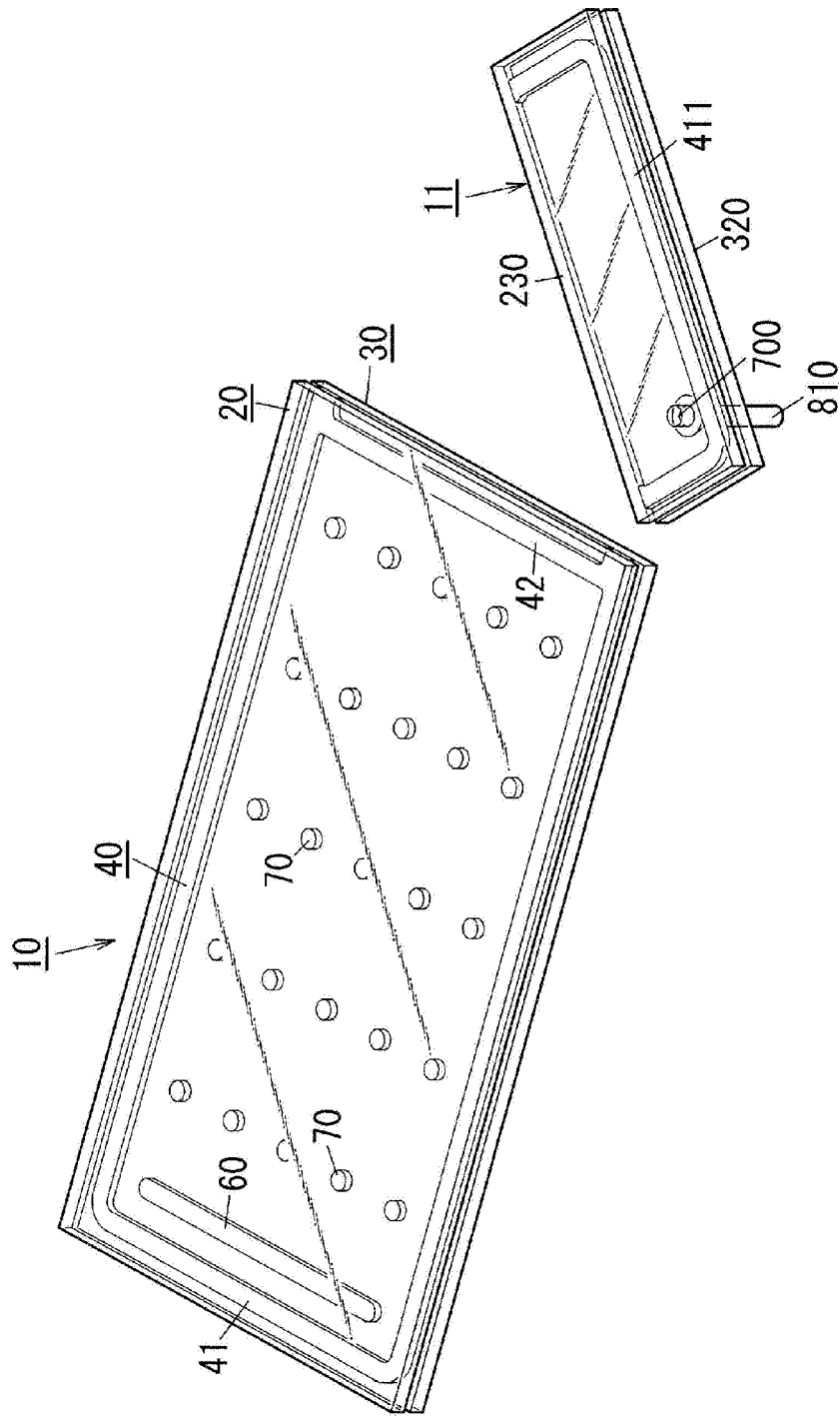


FIG. 11

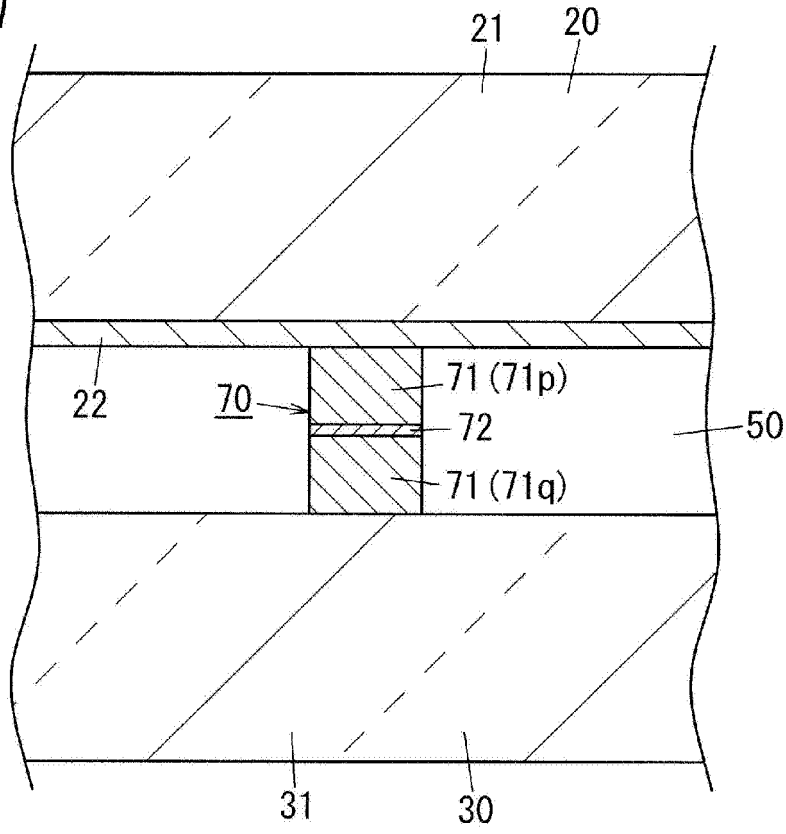


FIG. 12

