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(54) **TOWER RIDE**

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(71) Applicant: **William J Kitchen**, Windermere, FL
(US)

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(72) Inventor: **William J Kitchen**, Windermere, FL
(US)

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USPC **104/63**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(63) Continuation of application No. 13/640,009, filed on Oct. 8, 2012, now Pat. No. 8,490,549, filed as application No. PCT/US2012/039735 on May 25, 2012.

A tower ride is disclosed with suspended cars mounted on rails that form track that is a complete double helix path for the car without having to turn the car or switch tracks. The car is suspended from a four truss track, riding on the two bottom rails for stability. Another embodiment is a roller coaster track mounted on a tower.

(60) Provisional application No. 61/490,135, filed on May 26, 2011, provisional application No. 61/554,865,

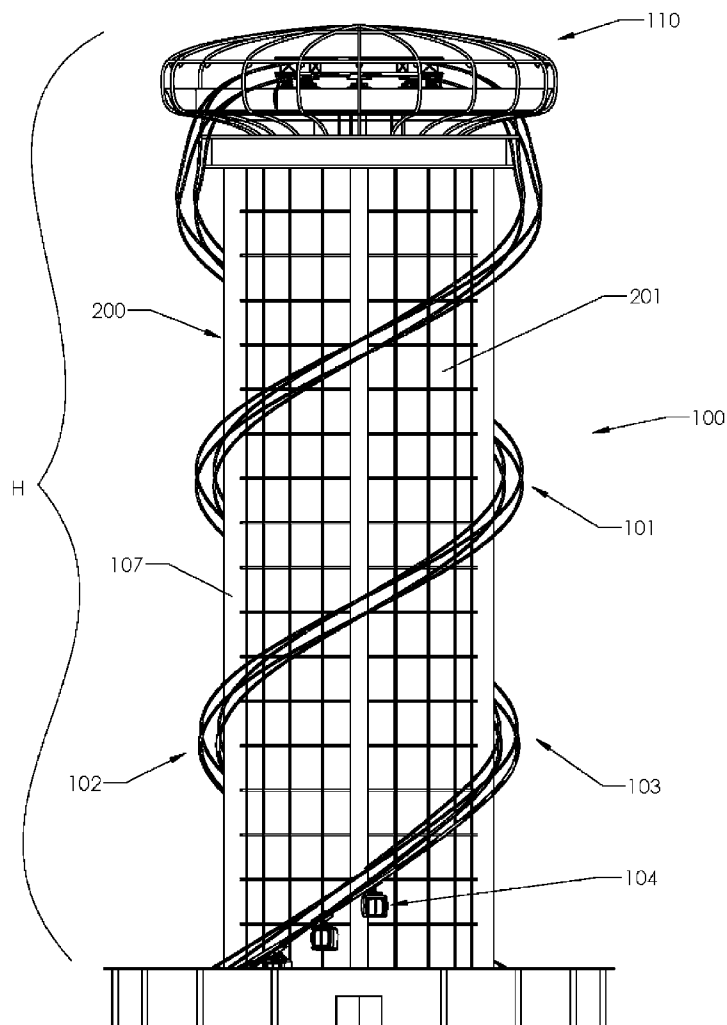


FIGURE 1

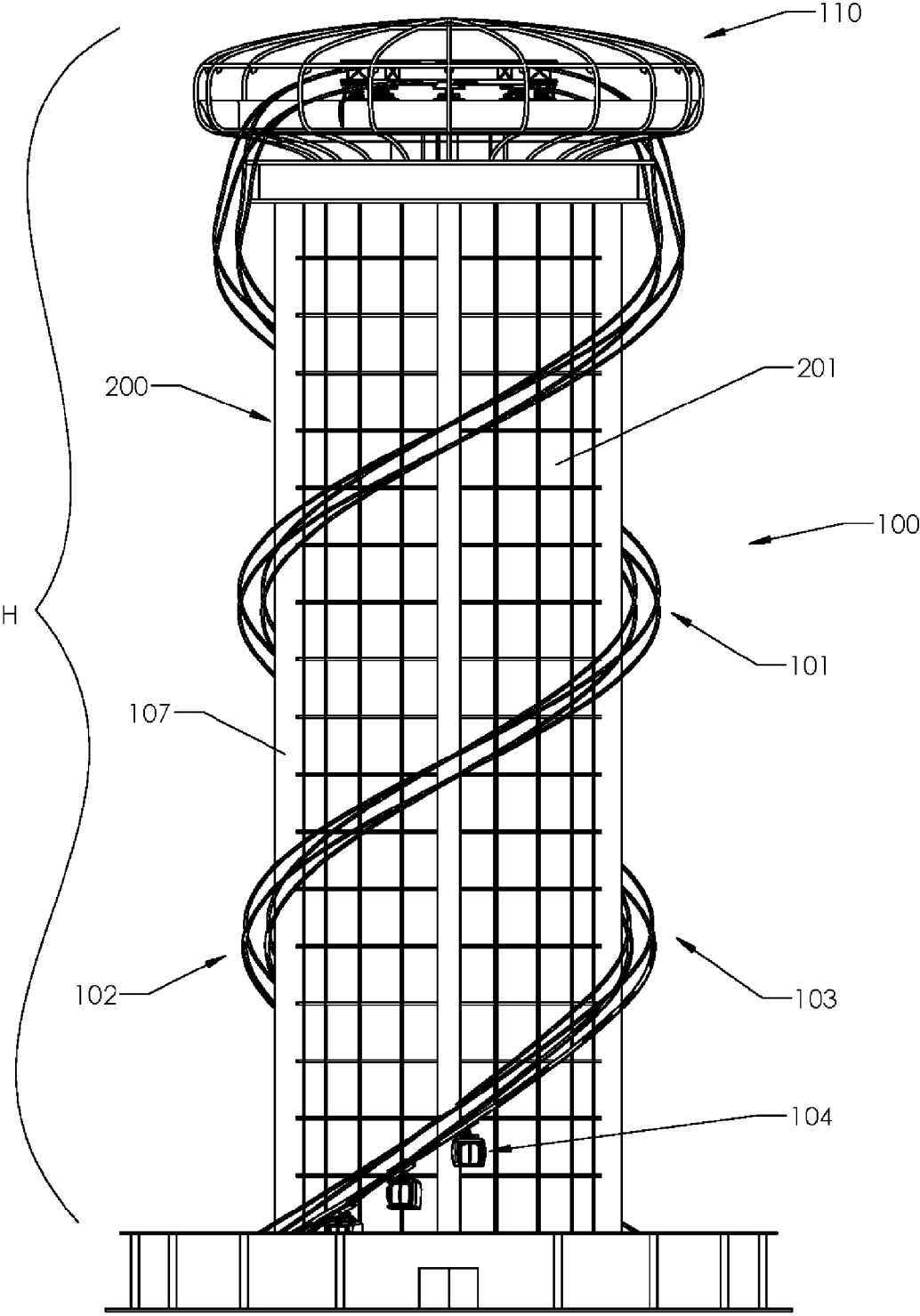
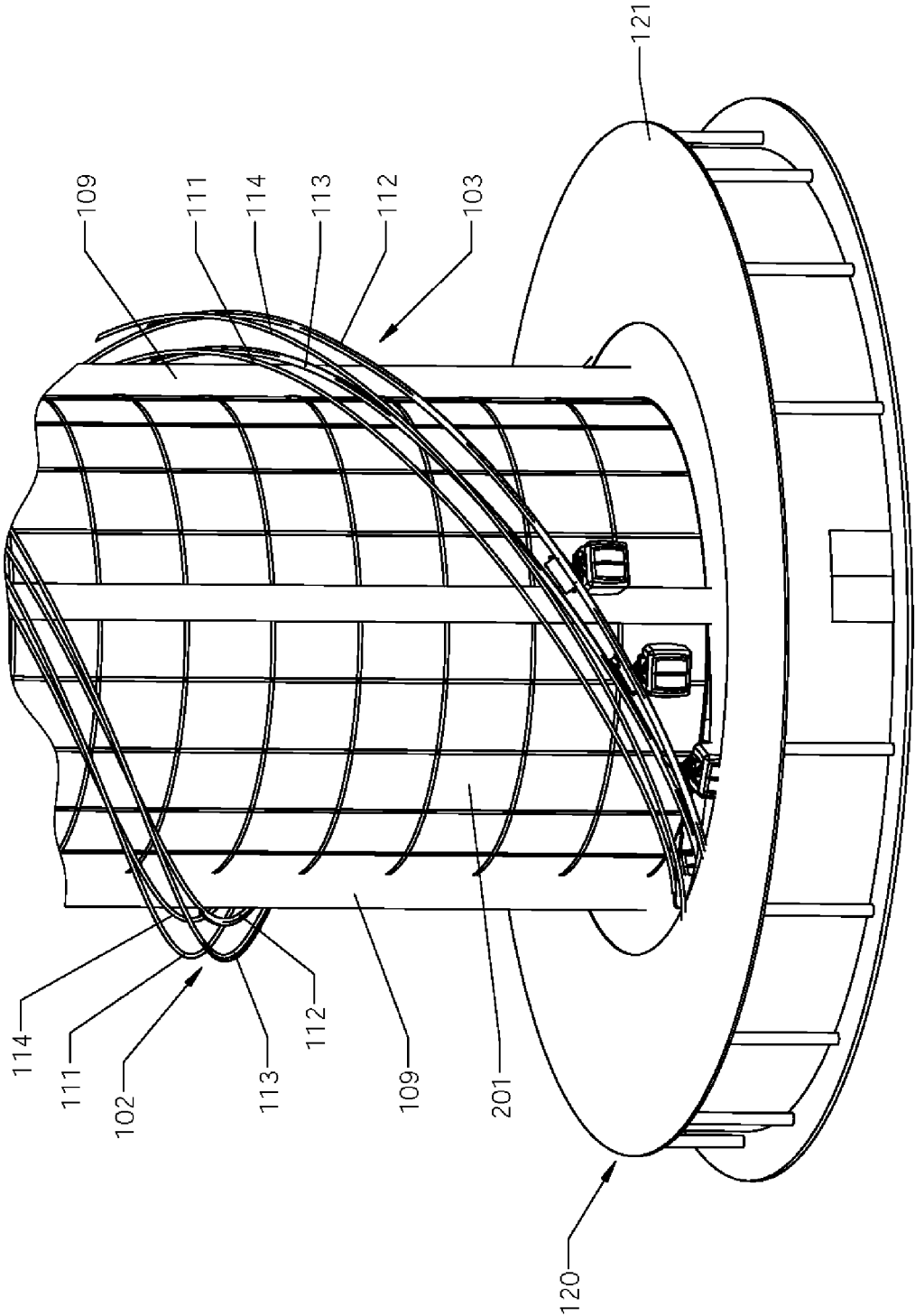


FIGURE 2



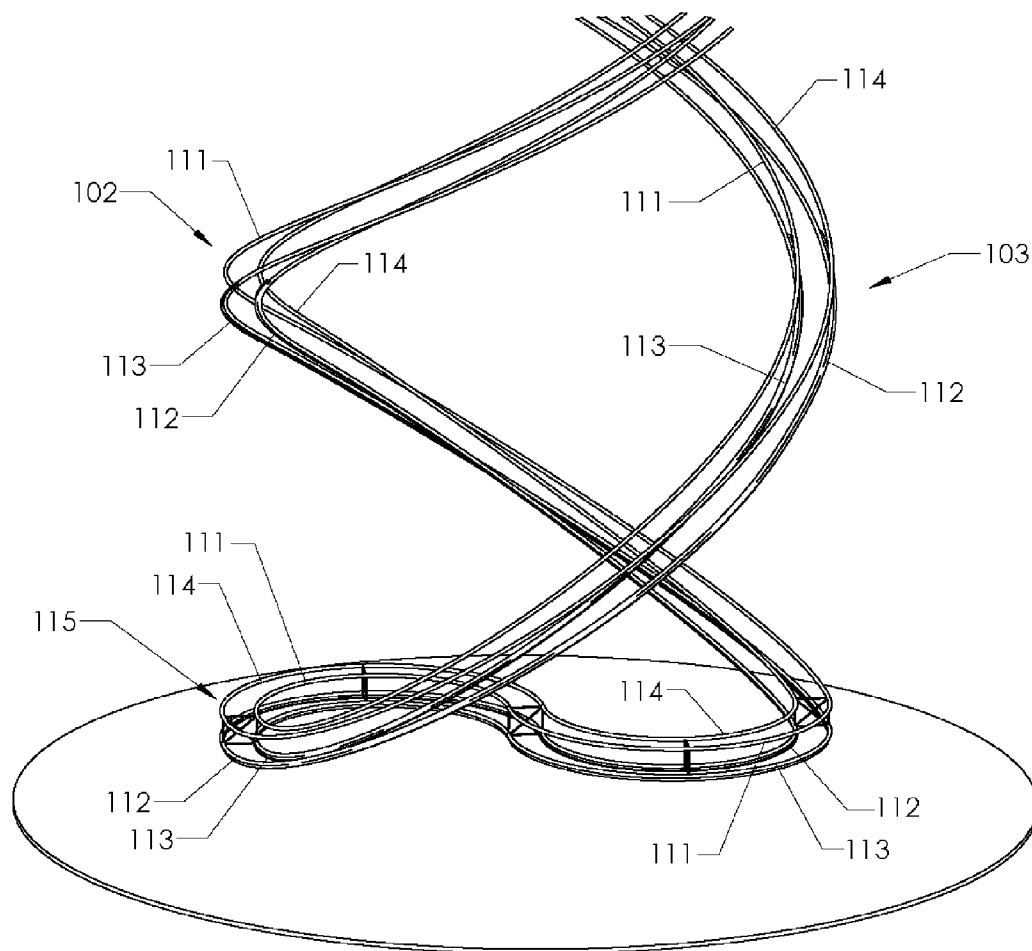


FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4

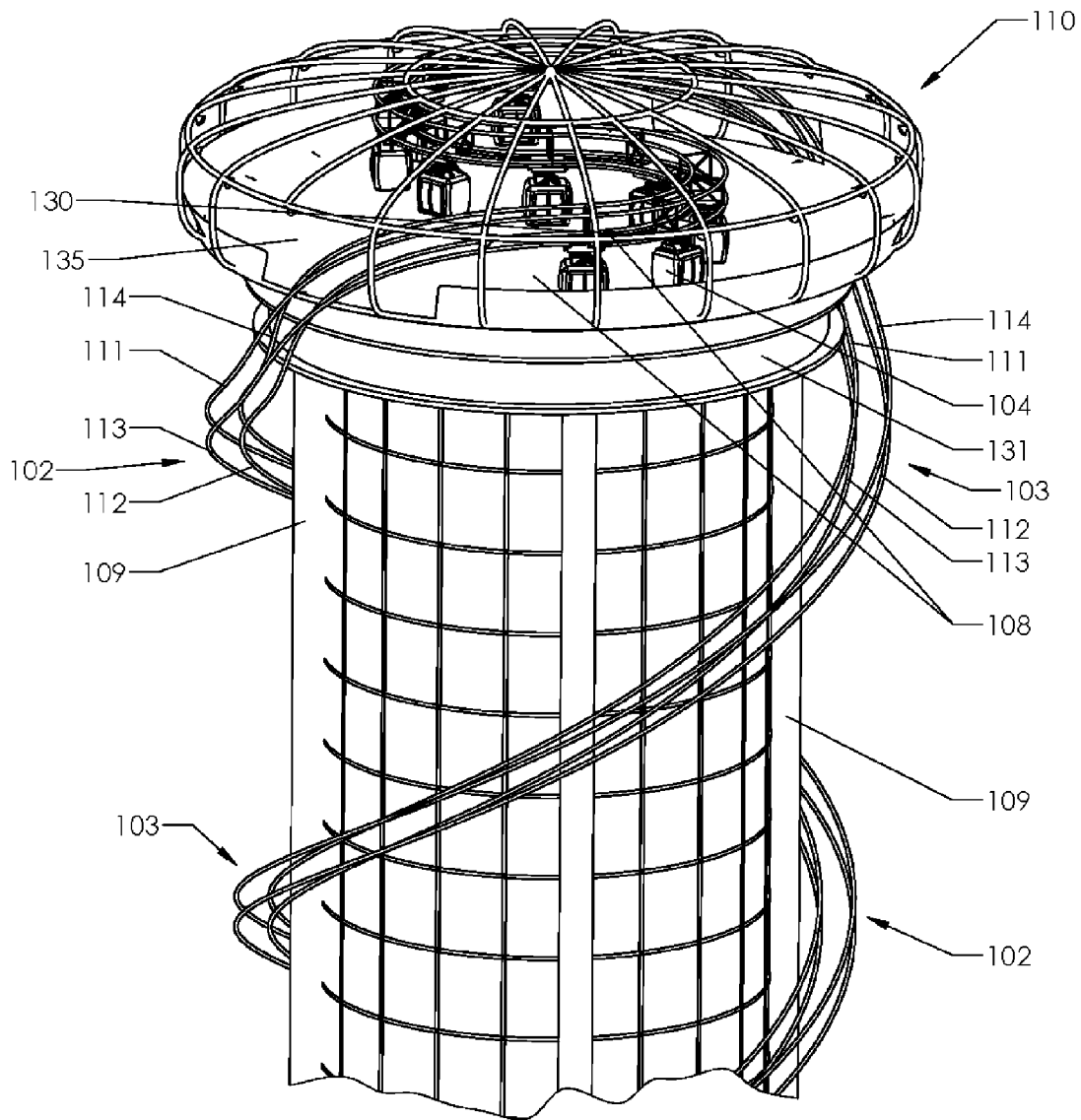
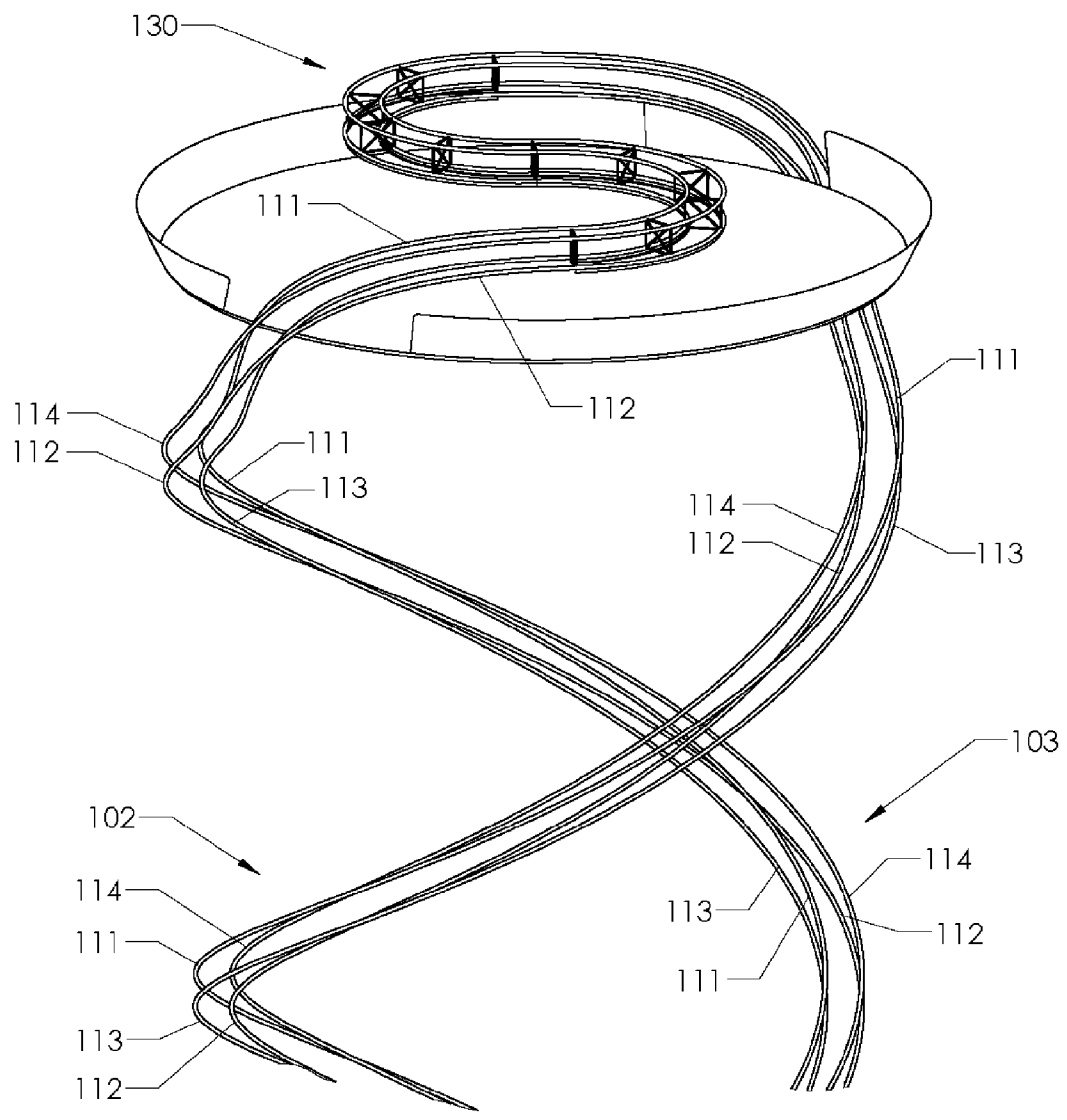


FIGURE 5



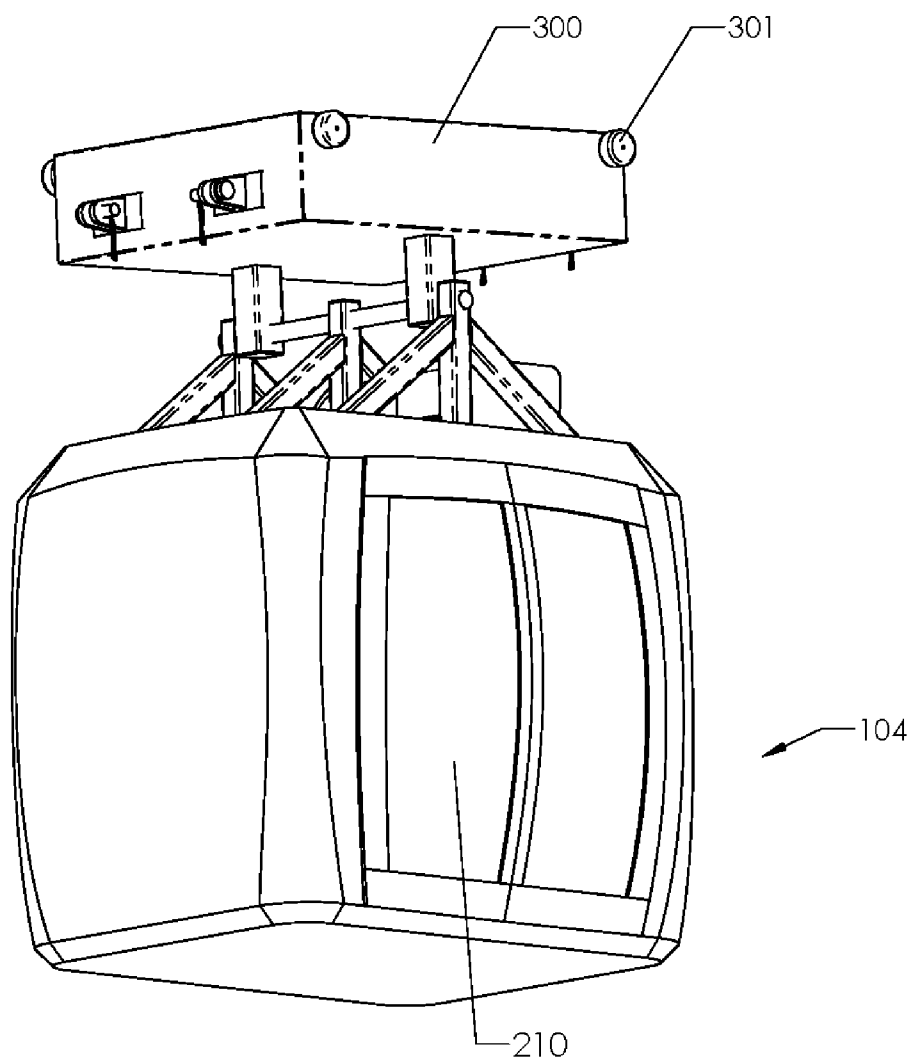


FIGURE 6

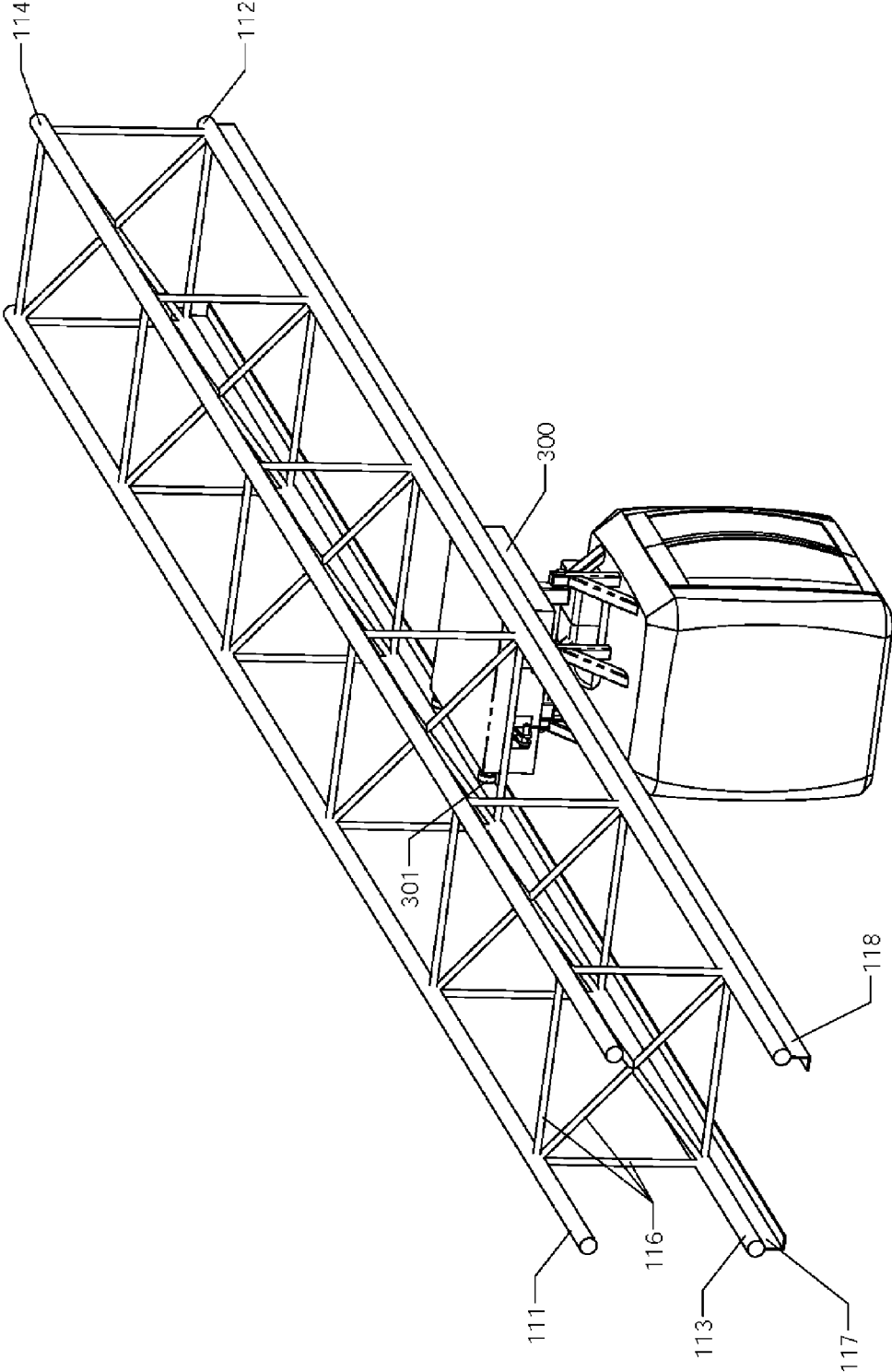


FIGURE 7

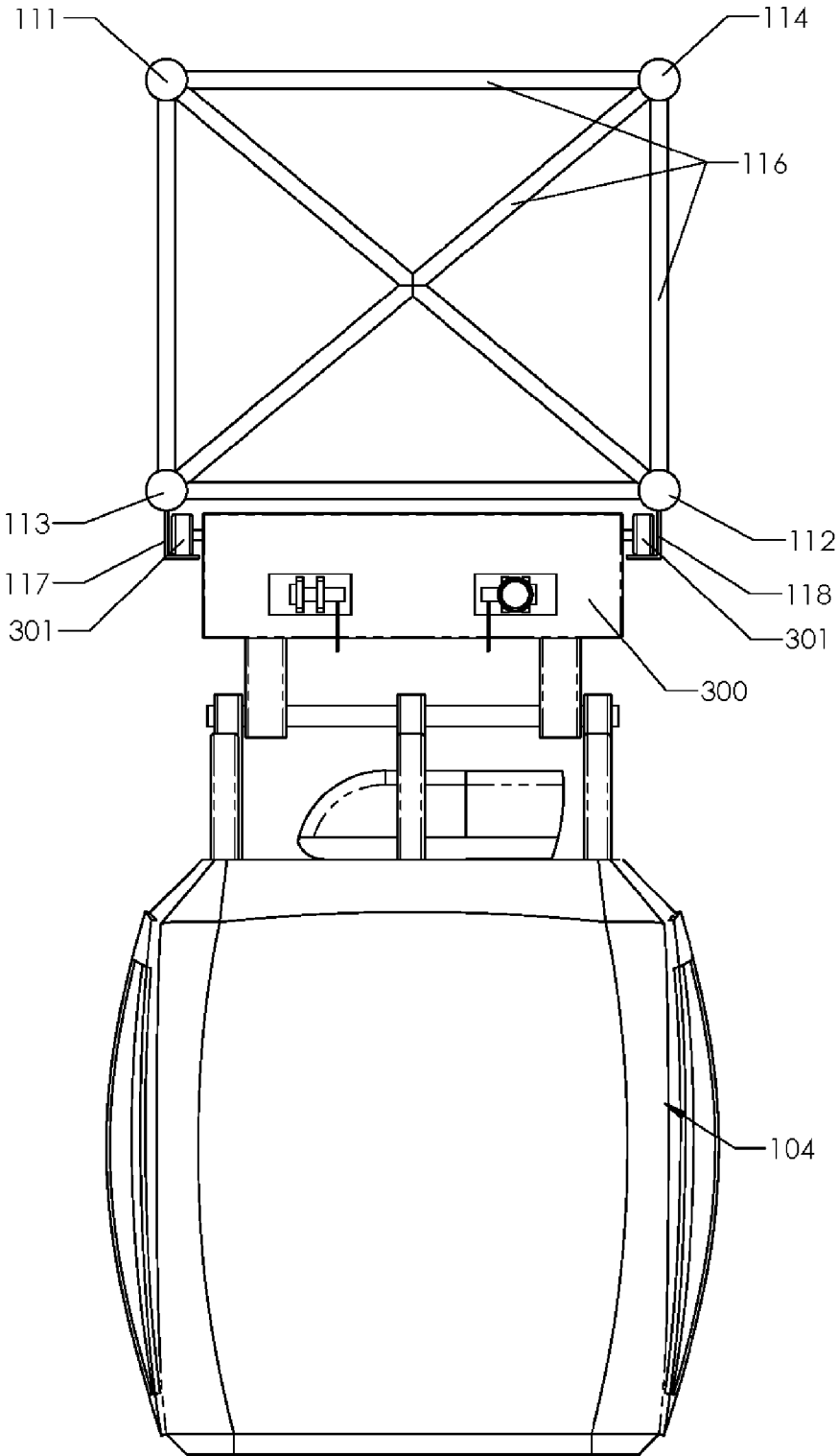


FIGURE 8

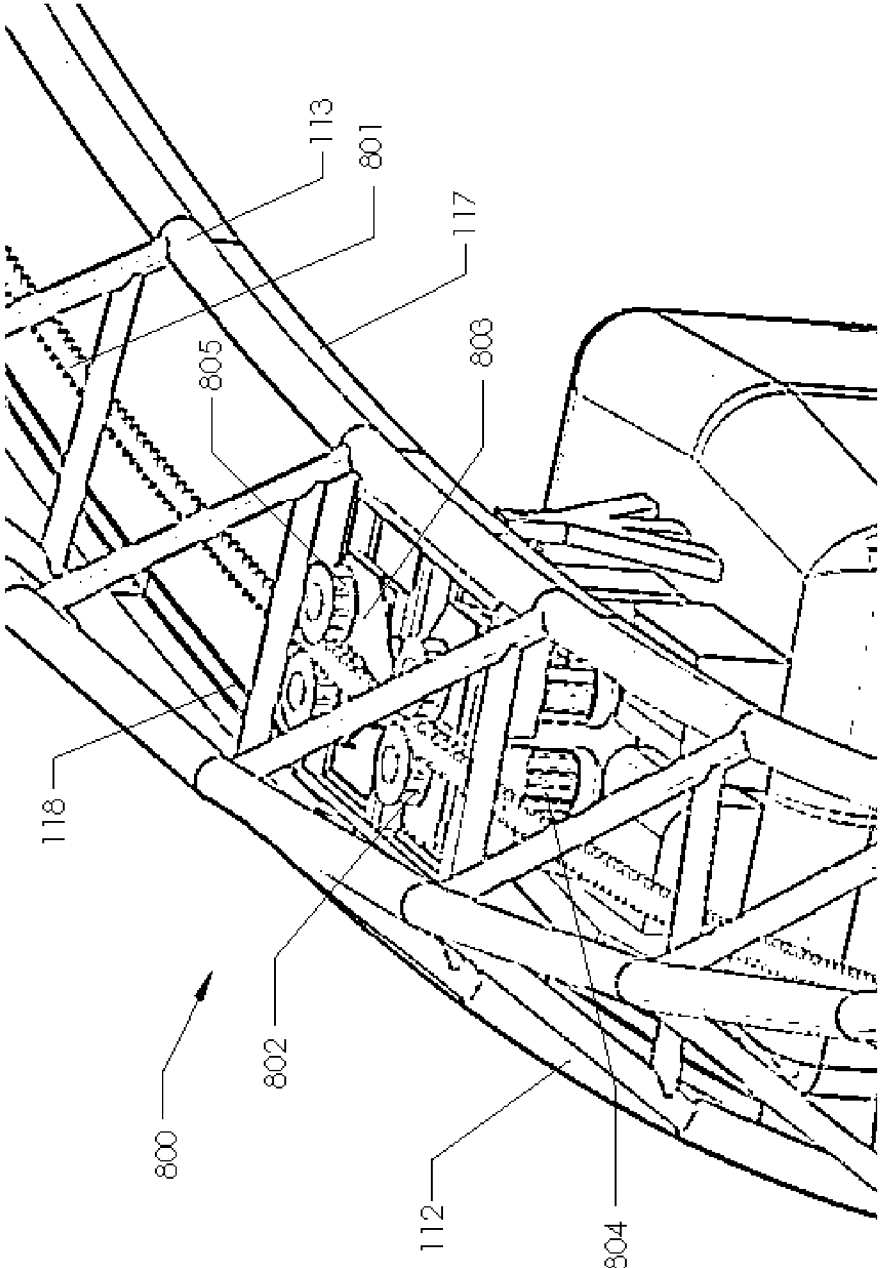


FIGURE 9

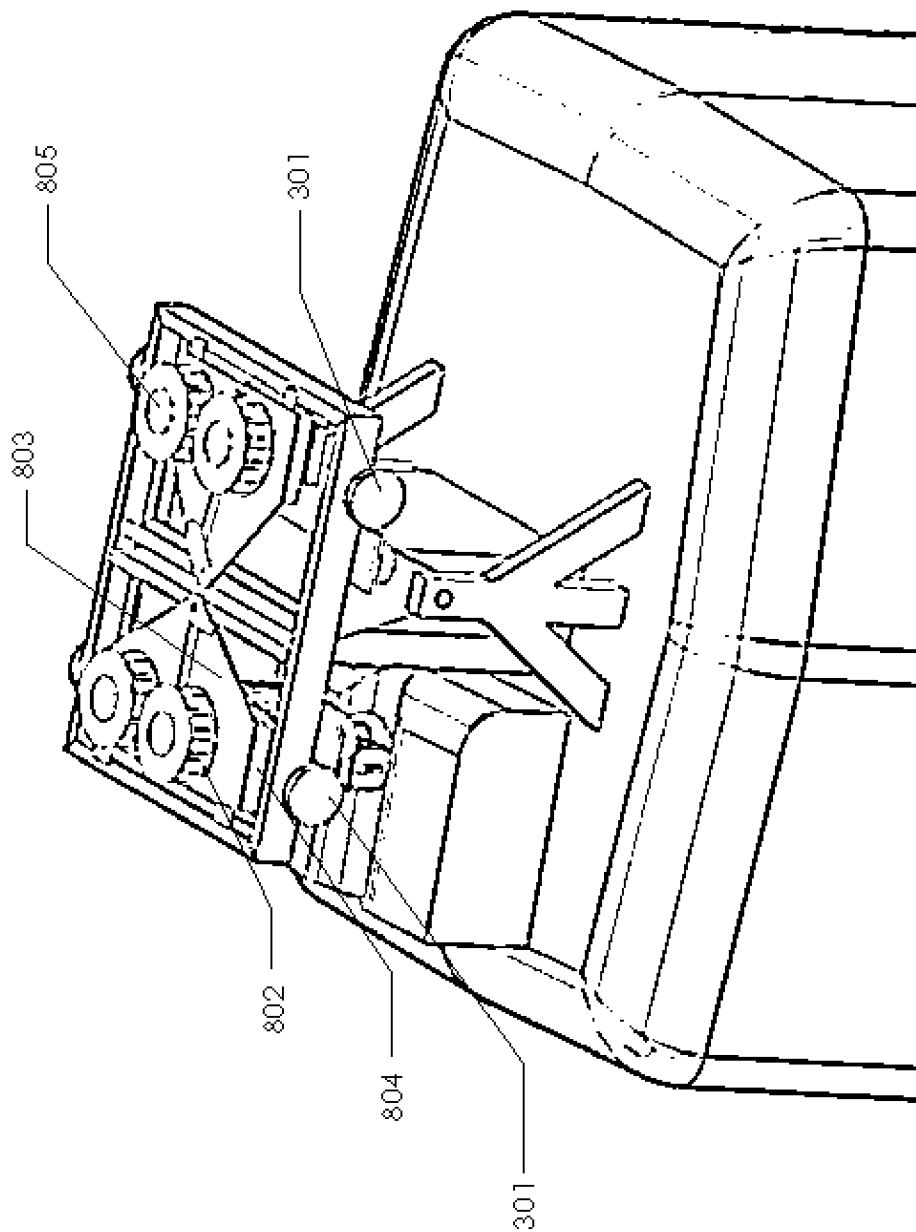


FIGURE 10

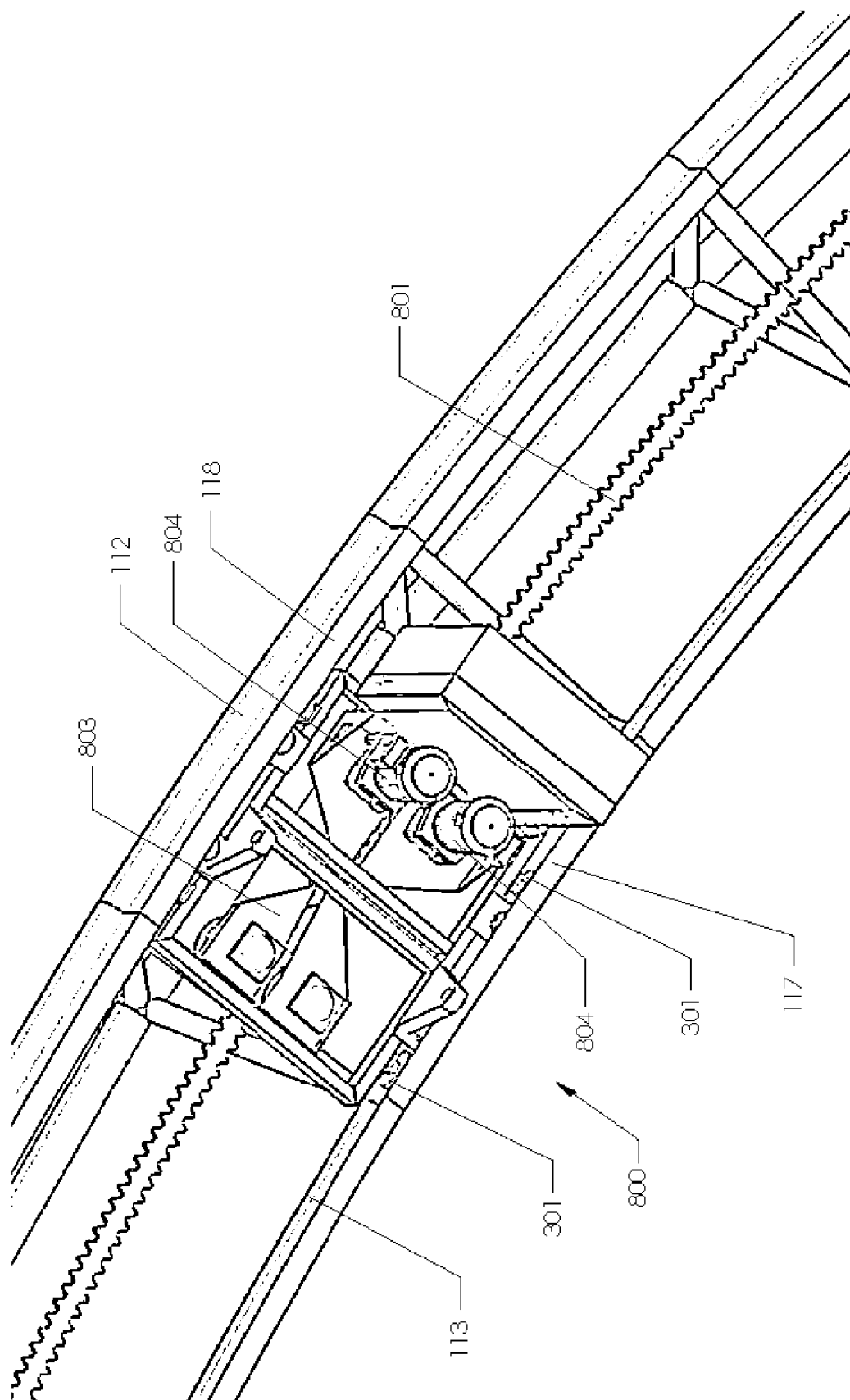


FIGURE 11

FIGURE 12

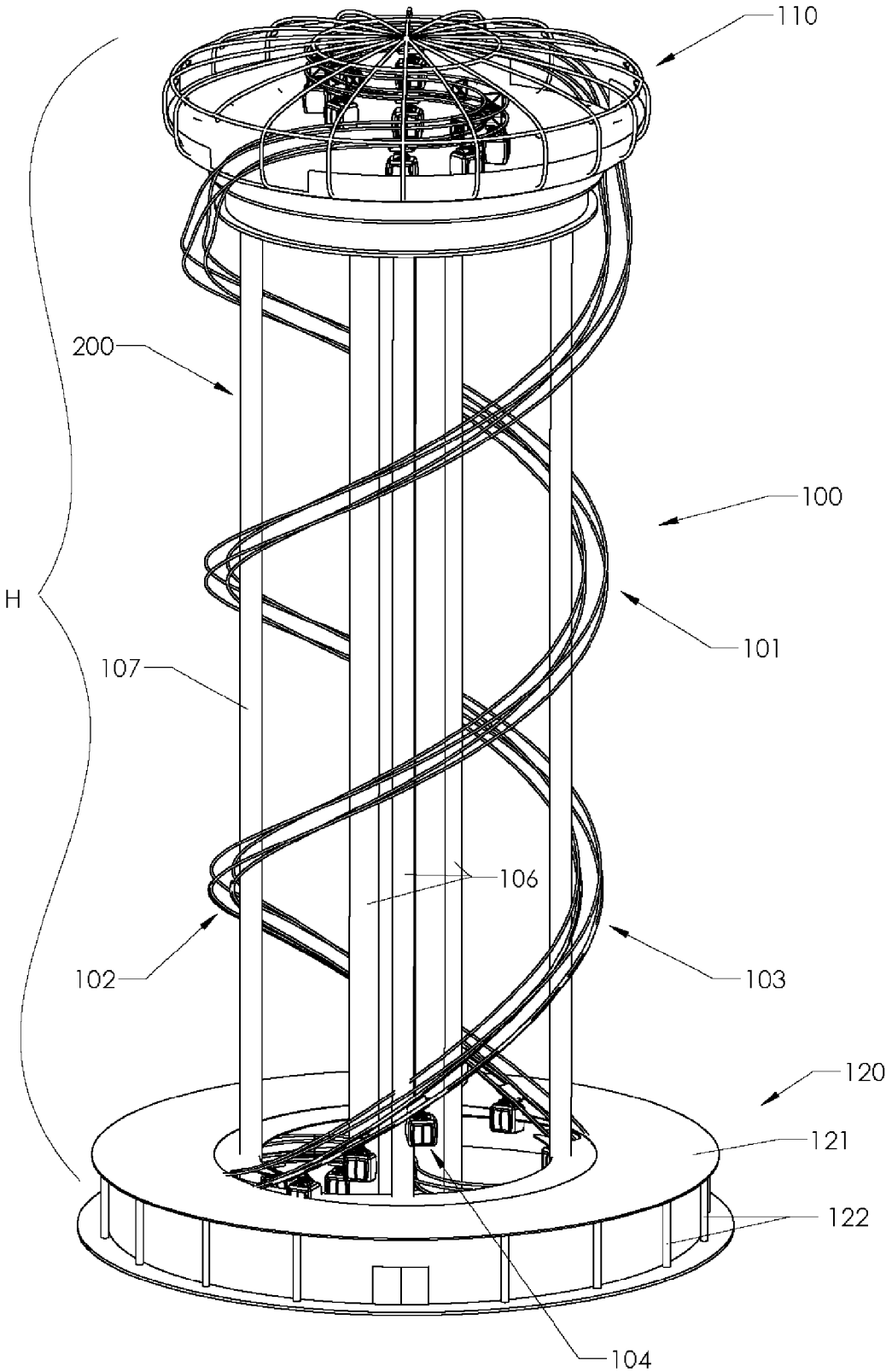


Fig. 13

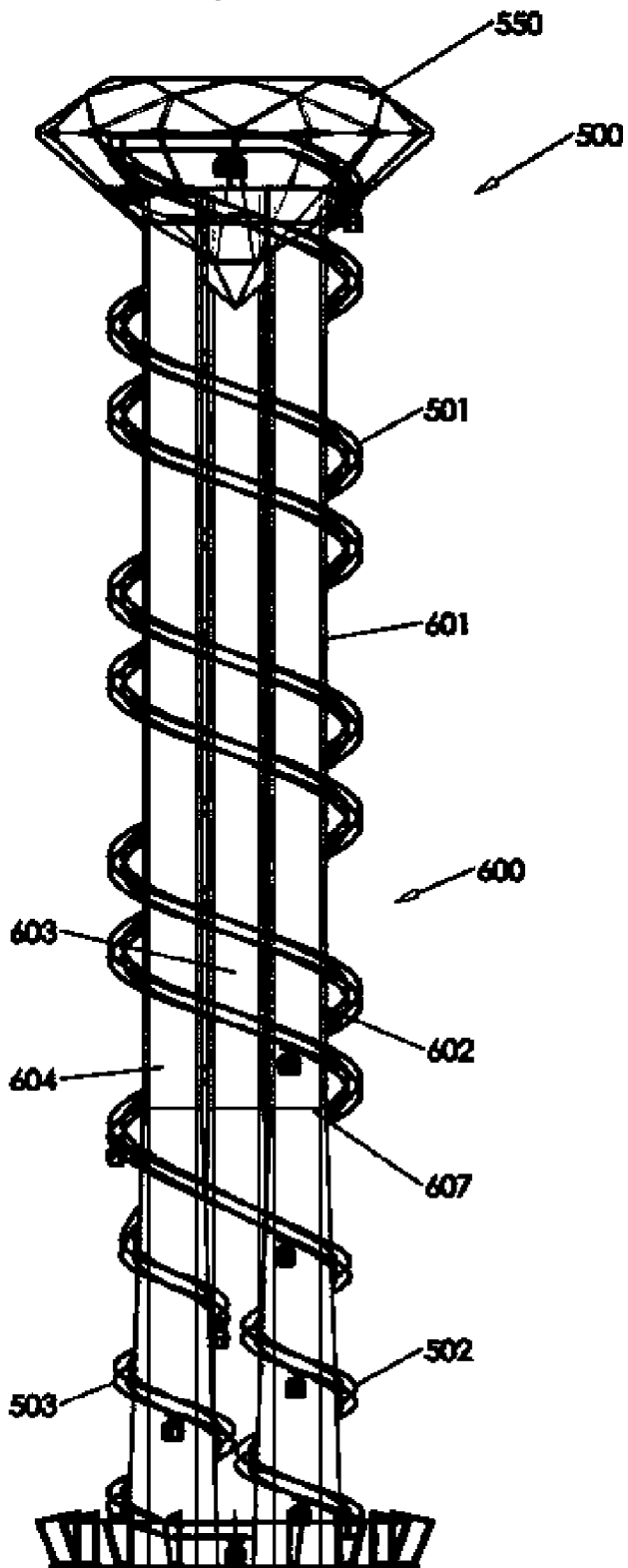


Fig. 14

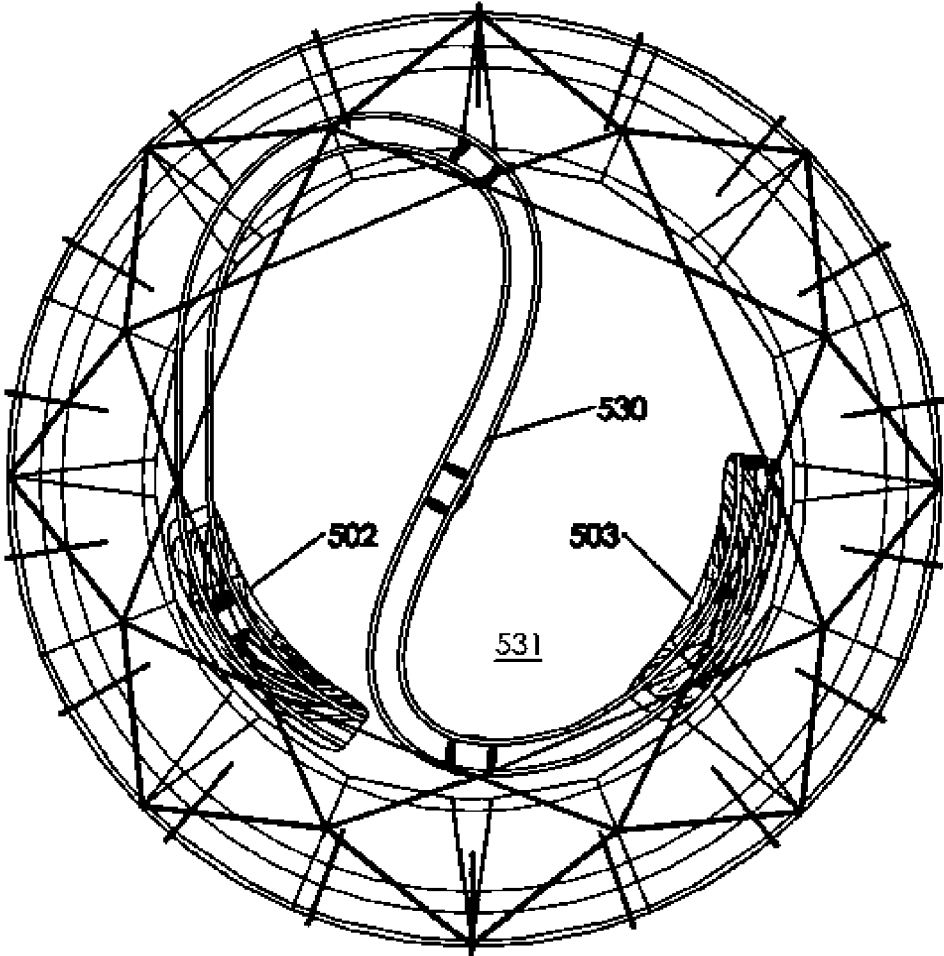


Fig. 15

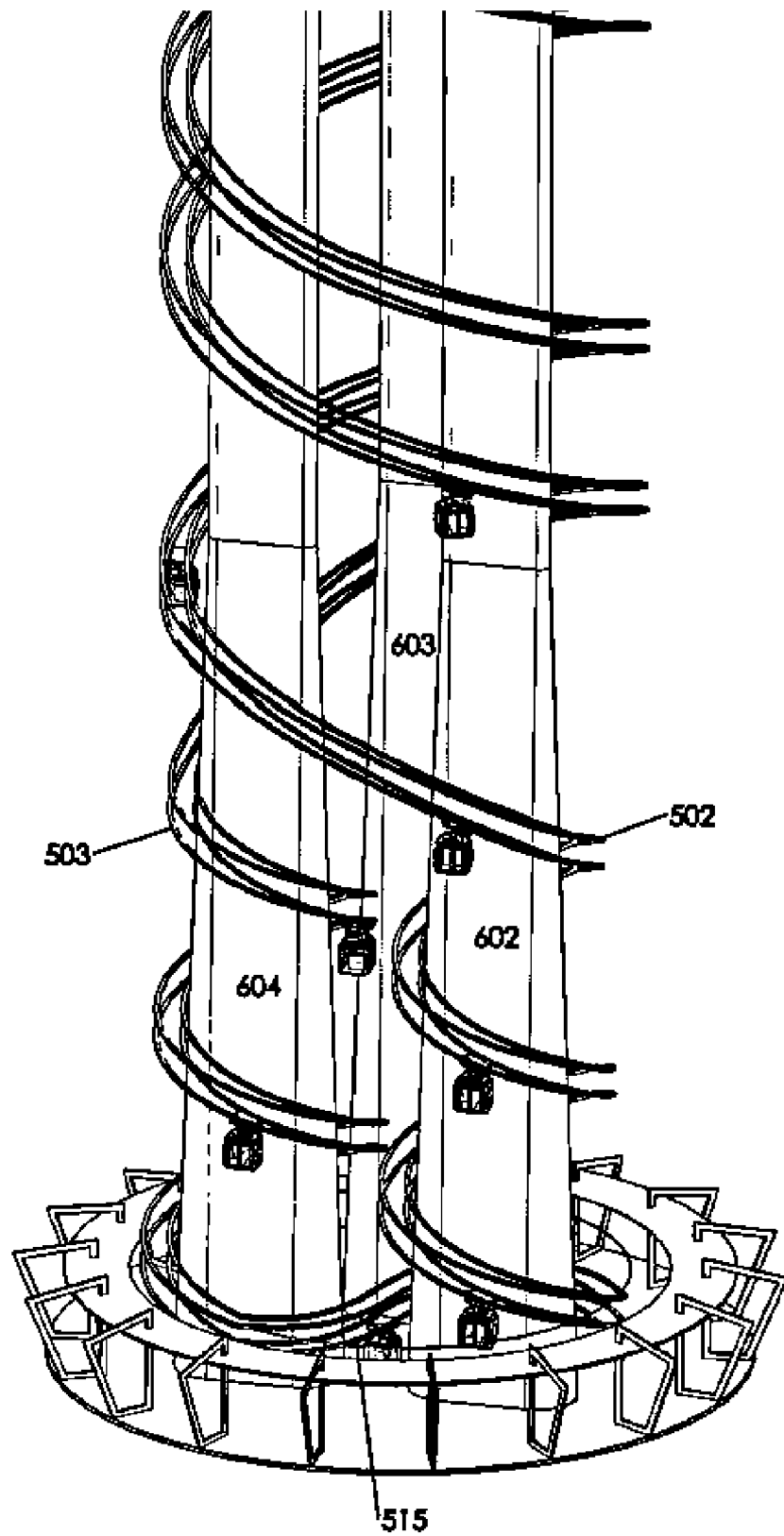


Fig. 16

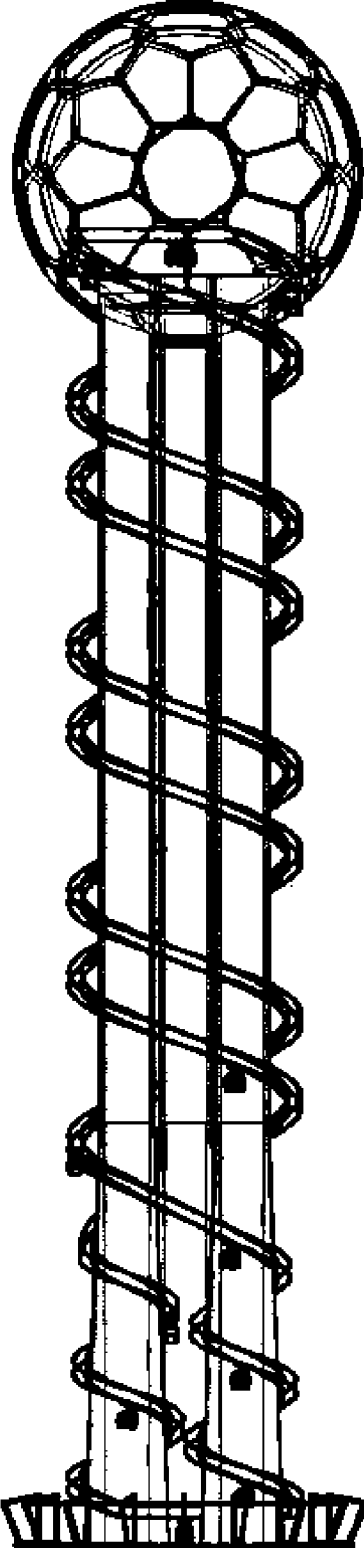
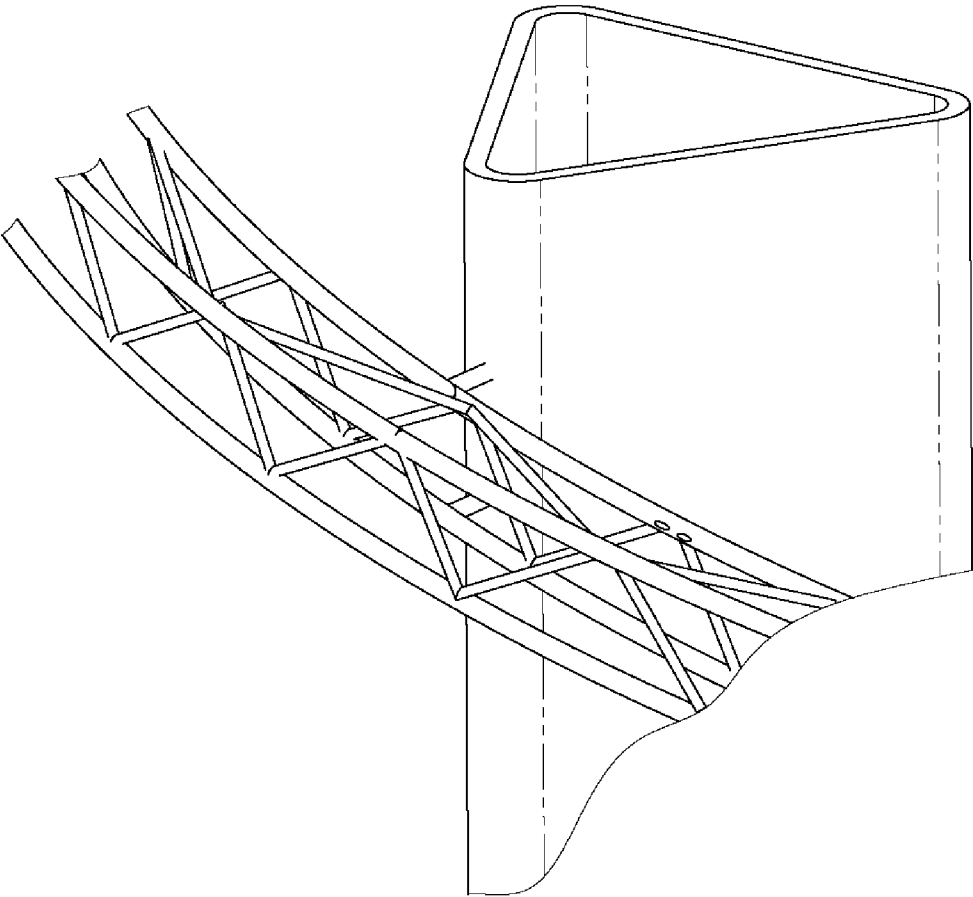
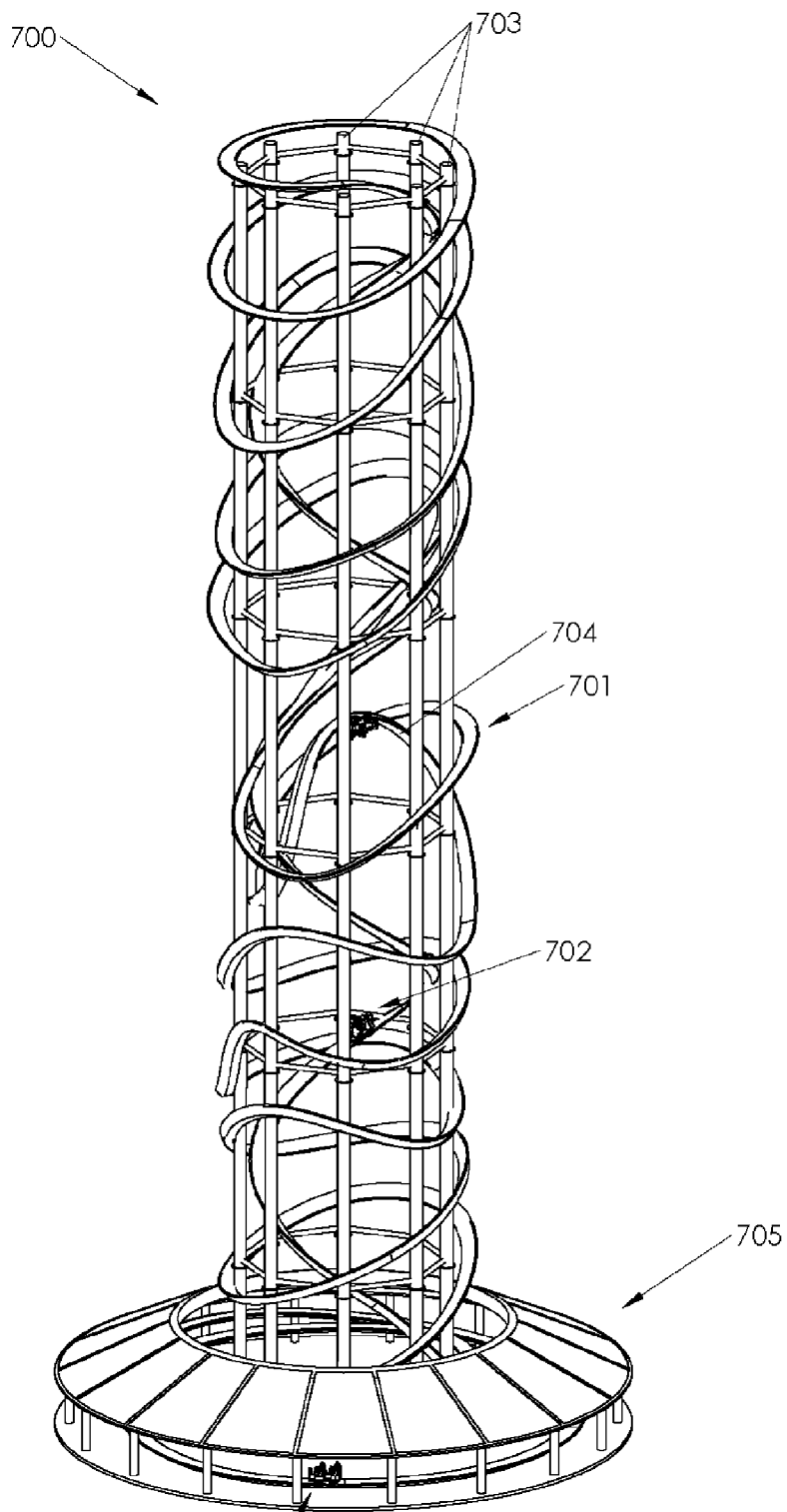


FIG. 17





706 Figure 18

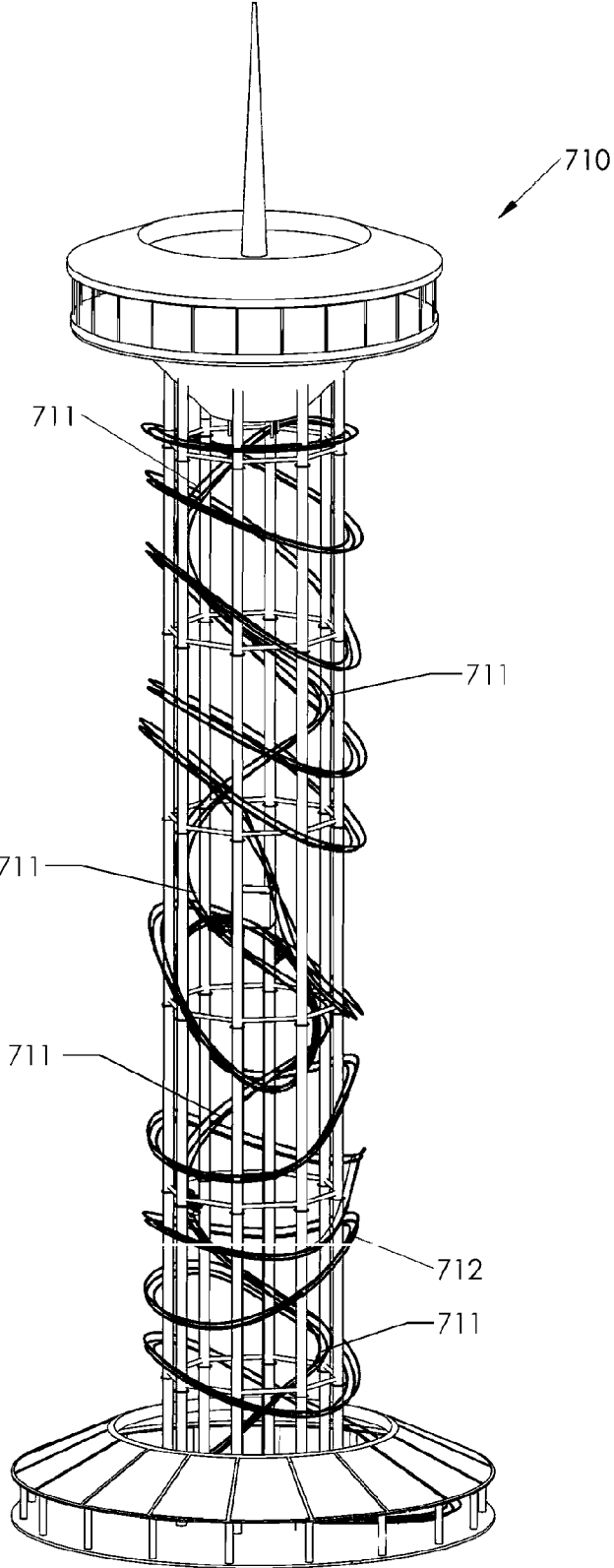


Fig. 19

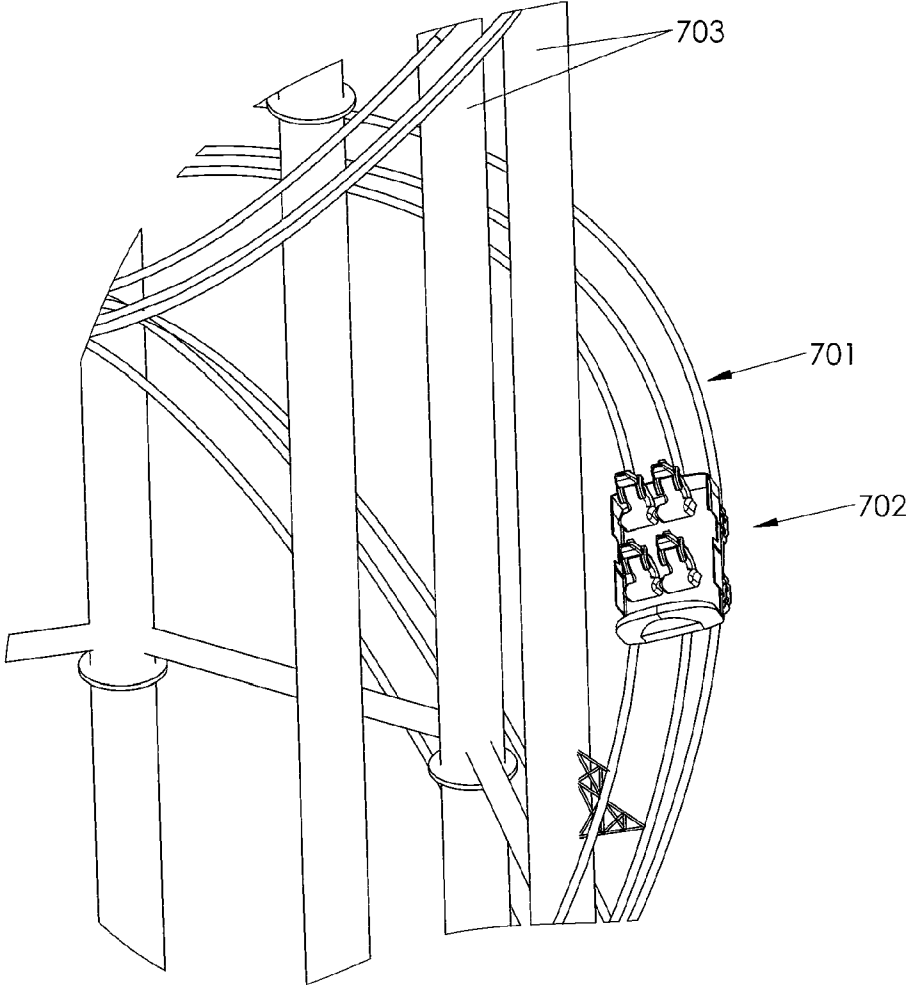


Fig. 20

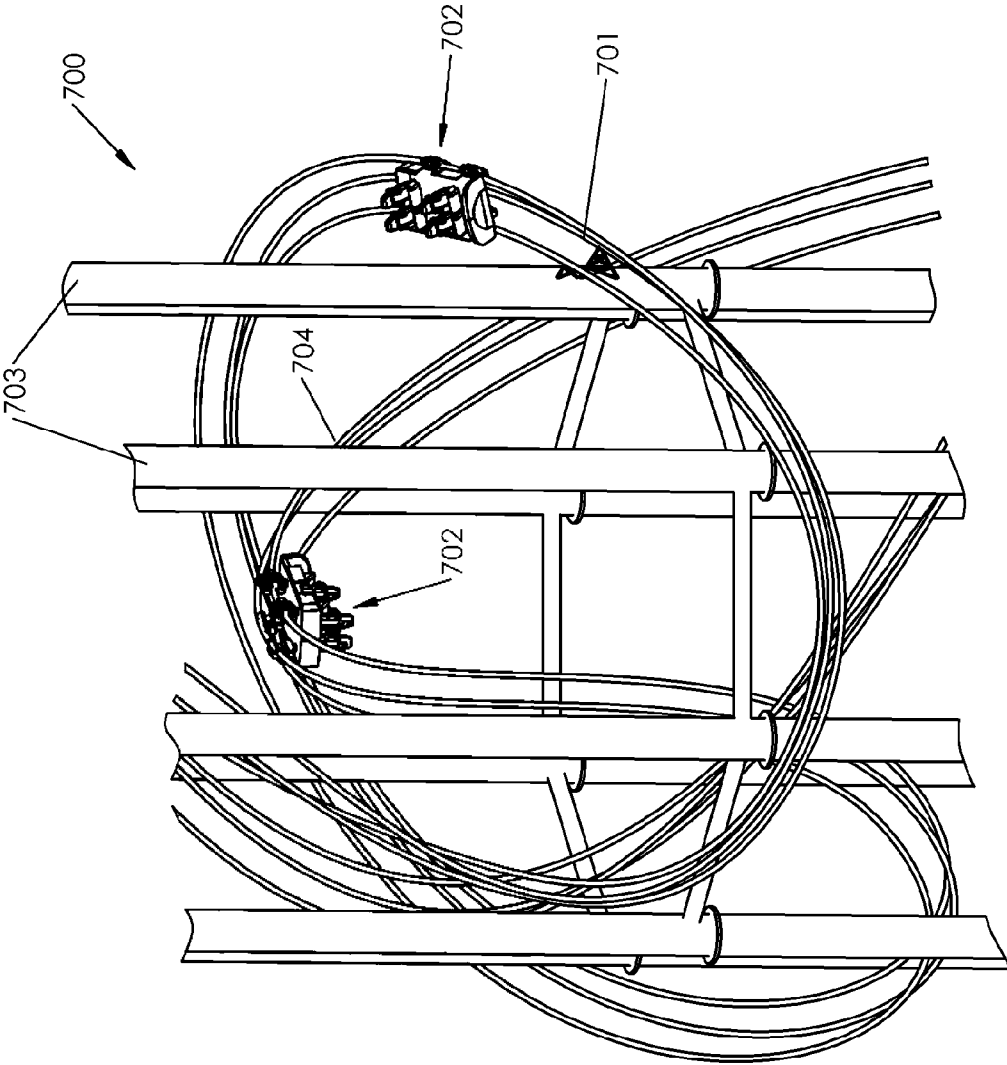


Fig. 21

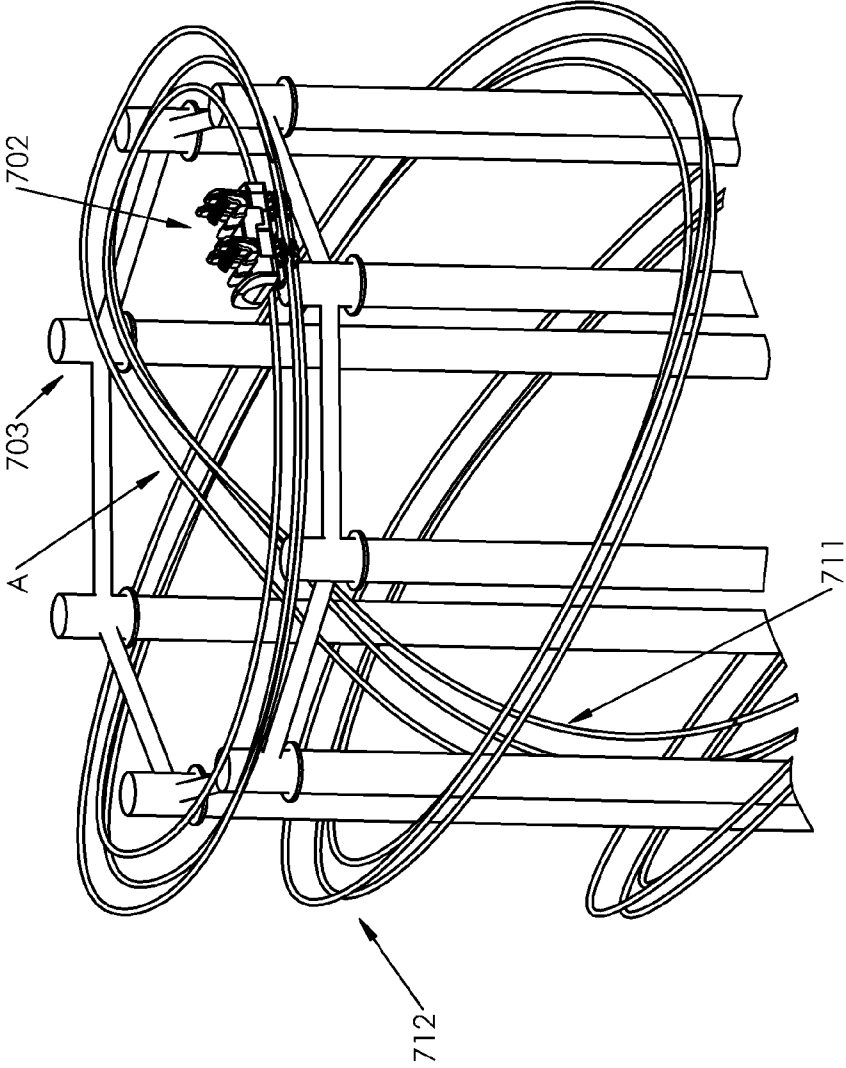


Fig. 22

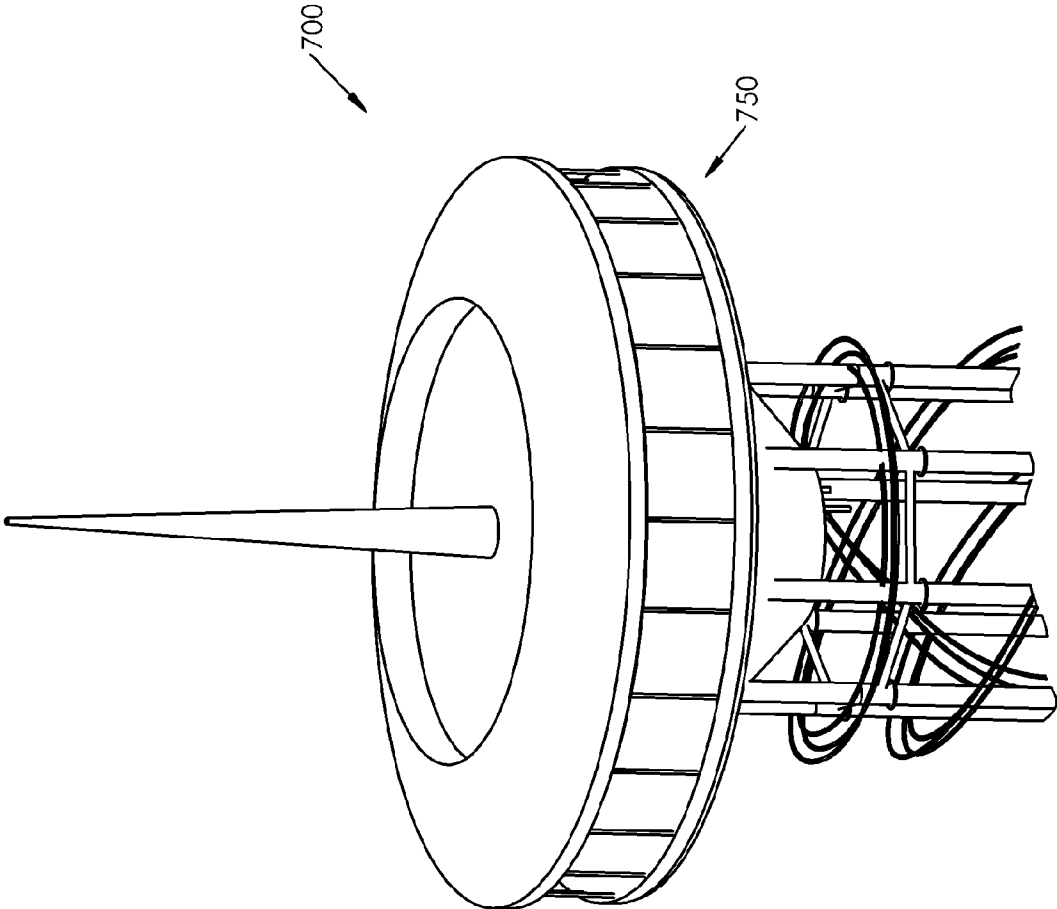


Fig. 23

TOWER RIDE

CROSS REFERENCE APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of application Ser. No. 13/640,009 filed May 25, 2012, which is a National Stage of PCT/US2012/039735 non-provisional application claiming the benefits of provisional application No. 61/490,135 filed May 26, provisional application No. 61/554,865 filed Nov. 2, 2011, and provisional application No. 61/616,585 filed Mar. 28, 2012, each of which is hereby incorporated by reference for all purposes.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Amusement rides with tracks on towers are known in the art. One of the issues with the prior art rides are that they do not have the same length of ride up the tower as down and that the tower blocks the view of the riders. One solution is to spiral the track up a tower. However, in the prior art tower rides, the difficulty of getting the car back down the tower without flipping the car or just bring the track straight down the side is presented. What would be more desirable is to have the track spiral both up and down the tower, allowing for a longer track in a small space and to allow for the possibility of having the ride up and the ride down be separate rides of equal length. Also, there is a desire to have more traditional roller coasters in as small of footprint as possible.

[0003] The foregoing example of the related art and limitations related therewith are intended to be illustrative and not exclusive. Other limitations of the related art will become apparent to those of skill in the art upon a reading of the specification and a study of the drawings.

SUMMARY

[0004] One aspect of the present disclosure is to have a tower ride that has both an upward and a downward track that spirals around the tower.

[0005] Another aspect of the present disclosure is to have a tower ride that is similar to a roller coaster.

[0006] The following embodiments and aspects thereof are described and illustrated in conjunction with systems, tool and methods which are meant to be exemplary and illustrative, not limiting in scope. In various embodiments, one or more of the above described problems have been reduced or eliminated, while other embodiments are directed to other improvements.

[0007] One embodiment of the disclosed ride is a tower ride with suspended cars that forms a complete double helix path for the car without having to turn the car or switch tracks. The car is suspended from a four truss track, riding on the two bottom rails for stability. The tightness of the helix turns can be chosen from a wide range of options to allow the designer to choose the height of the tower, speed of the cars and the total length of the ride.

[0008] Another embodiment of the disclosed tower rider is a coaster type tower rider with one section of the track being a driven section that carries the rider carriage to the top of the tower and the other section being a downward section that the rider carriages roll down as is a traditional coaster.

[0009] In addition to the exemplary aspects and embodiments described above, further aspects and embodiments will become apparent by reference to the accompanying drawings forming a part of this specification wherein like reference characters designate corresponding parts in the several views.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is a side elevation view of a tower ride on the outside of a building such as a hotel.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the base of the tower ride.

[0012] FIG. 3 is a view of the track in the base of the tower ride.

[0013] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the top of the tower ride.

[0014] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the track in the top of the tower ride.

[0015] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a rider carriage.

[0016] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of the rider carriage on a section of track.

[0017] FIG. 8 is a side elevation view of the rider carriage on the track.

[0018] FIG. 9 is a perspective view of a rack and roller pinon drive system.

[0019] FIG. 10 is a top perspective view of the rider carriage with the roller pinons.

[0020] FIG. 11 is a bottom perspective view of the drive system on the track.

[0021] FIG. 12 is a perspective view of a tower ride on a free standing tower.

[0022] FIG. 13 is a side elevation view of an alternate embodiment of a tower ride.

[0023] FIG. 14 is a top plan view of the top of FIG. 10.

[0024] FIG. 15 is a side plan view of the base of the alternate embodiment tower ride.

[0025] FIG. 16 is side plan view of a possible alternate top.

[0026] FIG. 17 is a close up view of the track attached to a pillar

[0027] FIG. 18 is a perspective view of a roller coaster embodiment of a tower ride.

[0028] FIG. 19 is a perspective view of a roller coaster embodiment of a tower ride with a spiral inner track.

[0029] FIG. 20 is a schematic view of a close up of a car on the track.

[0030] FIG. 21 schematic view of another section of track with a car on both the lower and upper sections.

[0031] FIG. 22 is a schematic view of the top of the track section.

[0032] FIG. 23 is a schematic view of the top of the tower with an observation platform.

[0033] Before explaining the disclosed embodiment of the present invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of the particular arrangement shown, since the invention is capable of other embodiments. Exemplary embodiments are illustrated in referenced figures of the drawings. It is intended that the embodiments and figures disclosed herein are to be considered illustrative rather than limiting. Also, the terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and not of limitation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0034] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a tower amusement ride 100 with a track 101 forming a double helix around the body 201 of the tower 200. In the depicted embodiment the body 201 of the tower is a building such as a hotel or other high rise building. The amusement ride 100 could also be built on an open tower structure. The track 101 has a first helix section 102 to support the rider carriages 104 going one

direction up or down on body of the tower and a second helix section **103** to support the rider carriages going the other direction on the body of the tower. In the depicted embodiment section **102** is the upward section and **103** is the downward section. However, this is for illustrative purposes only. Depending on the design of the propulsion system, it may be possible to reverse the direction of travel of rider carriages if desired. Which section **102** or **103** is set up as the upward section and which section is the downward section make no difference in the operation of the ride, unlike with prior art rides. First and second helix sections are substantially parallel to each other for a majority of the height *H* of the body of the tower in the depicted embodiment. The first helical section **102** and second helix section **103** are evenly spaced apart in the depicted embodiment, however as long as there is enough room between the two sections to prevent the rider carriages **104** from coming into contact with the track section below it, other configurations are possible, including not running the track sections parallel, allowing for a wide variety of possible design looks to the ride **100**.

[0035] The track **101** is formed on a four-cord truss in the depicted embodiment. The four-cord truss is formed of four rails **111**, **112**, **113** **114**. The four rails are linked together with supports **116**. In the majority of the views of the track **102** the supports that link the rails together are not shown to allow for easier viewing of the rails of the track. The number and spacing of the supports on the track **101** will be determined by standard engineering considerations such as weight of the rider carriages, number of rider carriages **104** on the track **101** and the maximum loading that will be allowed in the rider carriages.

[0036] Referring next to FIGS. **2** and **3**, at the base of the tower there is a loading area inside of the building **120**. Rails **112**, **113** are the first and second bottom rails of the track **101** respectively and support the rider carriage **104**. Rails **111**, **114** form the top of the track **101** and are the first and second top rails respectively. Rails **112**, **114** are the inner rails of track and rails **113** **111** are the outer rails of the track in the first helix section **102**. The outer rails are located radially outward from the inner rails and are substantially parallel to the inner rails. At the bottom of the tower the two helix sections are joined by a first S curve **115** of track that turns the orientation of the four-cord truss so that on the second helix section **103** rails **112**, **114** are the outer rails and rails **113**, **111** are the inner rails, as seen in FIG. **3**. The first bottom rail **112** becomes the outer bottom rail and the second bottom rail **113** becomes the inner bottom rail. This S curve **115** allows the two helical sections **102** and **103** to be joined together without having to switch to a different track, change the orientation of the rider carriage with respect rails **112**, **113** or any other solution shown in the prior art. The S curve is a switch back section of track that changes the orientation of the track and consequently the rider carriage. This means that a first side of the rider carriage is facing outward on the first helical section of the track and a second side of the rider carriage is facing outward on the second helical section of the track, the first and second sides of the ride carriage being opposite each other. The double helix configuration allows for a much longer track **101** in a given space, allowing for a much longer ride time. This double helix configuration allows a ride with a long ride time and significant vertical climb in a very limited ground foot print, which is often highly desirable in cities and/or amusement parks that want as many rides as possible in their limited ground space.

[0037] Referring next to FIGS. **4** and **5**, a second S curve section **130** joins the two helix sections **102**, **103** at the top of the tower. The second S curve again changes which rails are on the outside and inside of the track **101** as discussed in relation to first S curve section **115**, completing smooth loop with no changes of track needed and allowing a helical track in both directions. The area at the top of the tower **110** that the rider carriages **104** move over has a floor **135**. If desired, the ride can be configured to allow riders out at the top of the tower **110**. As a result of the S curve sections, the rider carriage will have a first side facing outward on the first helical section **102** of track and a second side facing outward on the second helical section **103** of track **101**.

[0038] FIGS. **6**, **7** and **8** show the rider carriage **104**. L shaped rails **117**, **118** are extended from the bottom of rails **112**, **113** as seen in FIGS. **7** and **8**. A tri-cord truss (not shown) could be used as well, so long as two rails of the truss formed the bottom two rails **112**, **113** with the third rail above them.

[0039] The rider carriage has a mounting section **300** with wheels **301** that ride along the L shaped rails **117**, **118**. Other methods of mounting the rider carriage to the rails could be used as well, depending on the design of the ride. In the depicted embodiment, there are four wheels **301**, but more or less could be chosen depending on the design of the ride. The rider carriage **104** is pivotally mounted below mounting section **300**. In the depicted embodiment a simple axle pivot design is shown. Other possible mounting methods could be used as well. Depending on the design of the ride, the rider carriages **104** can move at a constant speed that is slow enough for riders to board, or the rider carriages may slow down and/or stop in the loading area. The rider carriages **104** may be attached together in a continuous loop or may be separately attached to the rail with no connections between them. If they are separately attached it may be desirable to have a safety mechanism that would prevent the rider carriages **104** from getting too close together and/or running into each other. The rider carriages **104** could be individually driven around the track, driven by a chain, cable driver, rack and pinion or other driving mechanisms. The rider carriages **104** have doors **210** on both sides of the rider carriage **104**, allowing the riders to enter and/or exit from either side of the rider carriage **104**. Given the change of orientation of the rider carriage **104** as it moves through the S curves at the top and bottom of the ride, this allows the riders to always exit on the outer side of the track. In most configurations it will be desirable for riders to be exiting on the outer side of the track, as this will mean that the riders will most likely not be crossing the track, which has inherent dangers. If it was desirable at some location to have the riders enter on the inner side of the track, overpasses or under passes could be constructed in the building to get the riders to the inside of the track without having them be in the path of the rider carriages.

[0040] One example of a type of drive system is shown in FIGS. **9**, **10** and **11**. A rack and roller pinion drive system **800** is shown. A tri-cord truss track is shown in some of the figures. The system would work with either a tri-cord truss or a four cord truss and no limitation to either is intended or should be inferred. The rack **801** is mounted between the first and second bottom rail **112** and **113**. The teeth of rack **801** are best seen in FIG. **11**. Drive roller pinions **802** engage with rack **801** and are driven by motors **804**. The drive pinions **802** are mounted on an independent floating plate **803** system. The depicted motors are inline gear motors, but other motors mounted in other configurations could be used as well. A

second set of roller pinions **805** are mounted on a second set of plates to form an overspeed system. Standard pinions (not shown) could be used as well, however roller pinions are generally quieter and do not require lubrication.

[0041] Referring next to FIG. 12, the tower body **200** is made of at least four central pillars **106** which contain access mechanism either ladders or elevators (not shown). In the depicted embodiment the loading area **120** a roof **121** supported by pillars **122**. The access mechanisms allow access to the top of the tower **110** for maintenance. The track **101** is mounted on support pillars **109** which are arranged radially around the central pillars **106**. In the depicted embodiment there are four support pillars **109** around the central pillars **106**. The number of the support pillars will depend on the weight of the track, the number of rotations it makes around the circumference of the tower, the number of rider carriages the ride has and other design factors. The track **102** is attached to the support pillars **109** with braces (not shown). The size and weight of the rails, supports and braces are chosen to hold the weight of the loaded rider carriages with acceptable safety tolerances for a given installation. The top of the tower can have a viewing platform **131** that can be accessed by elevators **108**. This area can be open to the public, used for private functions or only used for maintenance access, depending on the desired uses of the installation.

[0042] FIG. 13 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of tower amusement ride **500** with a track **501** forming a double helix around the body **601** of the tower **600**. In the depicted embodiment the body **201** of the tower is three columns, **602**, **603**, **604**. The amusement ride **500** could also be built on an open tower structure. The track **501** has a first helix section **502** to support the rider carriages **104** going one direction up or down on body of the tower and a second helix section **503** to support the rider carriages going the other direction on the body of the tower. In this embodiment the track **501** starts by winding the first helix section **502** around only one of the columns **602**. At a chosen location **607** the first helix section **502** switches to wrap all the way around all three columns. Among other reasons to wrap the track this way, this makes the section of the track that does not have much view (because it is not very high) shorter, since the track is only winding around a single column. This allows the riders to get to the section of the track where they can see more panoramic views faster. The second helix section **503** wraps around column **604** below location **607**. If desired, the track could make any number of switches between winding around a single column and around the body **601** of the tower **600** with all three columns. The track **501** can wind around any of the three columns **602**, **603** and **604** before switching to winding around all three. For simplicity, the supports between the rails of the track and that attach the track to the columns have been omitted from the drawings.

[0043] In the depicted embodiment section **502** is the upward section and **503** is the downward section. However, this is for illustrative purposes only. Depending on the design of the propulsion system, it may be possible to reverse the direction of travel of rider carriages if desired. Which section **502** or **503** is set up as the upward section and which section is the downward section make no difference in the operation of the ride, unlike with prior art rides. First and second helix sections are substantially parallel to each other for a majority of the height H of the body of the tower in the depicted embodiment. The first helix section **502** and second helix section **503** are evenly spaced apart in the depicted embodi-

ment, however as long as there is enough room between the two sections to prevent the rider carriages **104** from coming into contact with the track section below it, other configurations are possible, including not running the track sections parallel, allowing for a wide variety of possible design looks to the ride **500**.

[0044] The top of the ride **550** is shaped like a jewel in the embodiment depicted in FIG. 13. FIG. 16 is a side perspective view of an alternate top with a soccer ball appearance. Many different ornamental designs of the top of the ride are possible. The columns could also be made with an ornamental appearance.

[0045] Referring next to FIGS. 14 and 15, a second S curve section **530** joins the two helix sections **502**, **503** at the top of the tower and a first S curve section **515** join the two helix section **502**, **503** as discussed above with S curve sections **115** and **130**. The S curve **515** is moved among the base of the pillars **602**, **603**, **604**. The second S curve again changes which rails are on the outside and inside of the track **501** as discussed in relation to first S curve section **115**, completing smooth loop with no changes of track needed and allowing a helical track in both directions. The area at the top of the tower **500** that the rider carriages **104** move over has a floor **534**. If desired, the ride can be configured to allow riders out at the top of the tower **500**. This would allow the ride up and the ride down the tower to be two different, ticketed rides.

[0046] FIG. 17 is a close up view of one segment of the track attached to one of the columns. One set of possible track bracing configuration is shown. The depicted embodiment has triangle cross bracing, but other possible bracing patterns could be used.

[0047] The depicted embodiments of FIGS. 1 and 9 are discuss using the tracks **101**, **501** for a viewing ride, with the rider carriages moving slowly and more or less at a continuous speed. In an alternate embodiment the tracks **101**, **501** could be used for a combined viewing ride and coaster type ride. In this embodiment the up helical section would move the rider carriages up to the top of the ride slowly, allowing for viewing. When the rider carriages reached the end of the top S curve and started down the section helical section, the rider carriages would be disengaged from the drive means (possibly a chain drive or other known drive means) and let go down the second helical section in free fall down the track as in a roller coaster. The rider carriages would most likely be in a linked chain of carriages for this embodiment. The rider carriages could either hang underneath the track as discussed above or ride mounted on the top two rails as in a standard coaster or a tri-cord truss could be used as discussed below.

[0048] Another possible embodiment would be to use the tower for supporting a more standard coaster track to create a coaster tower **700**, as seen in FIG. 18. In the majority of the views of the tower **700** the supports that link the rails together and to the tower are not shown to allow for easier viewing of the rails of the track. In a tower coaster embodiment a tri-cord truss could be used as the track **701**, or a four rail track as above (not shown). Rider carriages **702** can be run on the track singly or in linked together in trains (not shown). The number and spacing of the supports on the track **701** will be determined by standard engineering considerations such as weight of the rider carriages **702**, number of rider carriages **702** on the track **701** and the maximum loading that will be allowed in the rider carriages **702**. In this embodiment the tower is formed of eight pillars **703**. More or less pillars could be used depending on the engineering needed for the ride. No limita-

tion to the number or form of the pillars 703 is intended or should be inferred. In this embodiment the track runs on both the outside diameter of the pillars and the inside diameter of the pillars, giving more room and options to vary the angle and pitch of the track and allowing upside-down sections 704 of the track 701. In the depicted embodiment the track is a continuous loop, so one segment of track 701 would have to be a driven section of the track 701 to raise the cars from the top of the tower 700 from ground level. One rider carriage 702 is shown going up the track while another is going down. Using the known spacing and breaking technology of the coaster industry, it is expected that two or more trains of rider carriages could be used on the same track 701. In this instance the down section of the track would be a free fall section as above. At the base of the tower 705 a loading area 706 is provided to load and unload passengers.

[0049] In an alternate configuration of the tower 710 track 701, the section of the track 711 that was driven and moved the carriages upward would be in the inner diameter and would be simple spiral, as seen in FIG. 19. The outer section 712 would be loop and change pitch as shown for a coaster ride down the tower 710.

[0050] Referring next to FIG. 20, a close up of the track 701 shows the rider carriage 702 going down the track 701. In the depicted embodiment a single rider carriage 702 to simplify the drawings, as well as not showing the connectors between the rails of the track 701. No limitation to the number of cars should be inferred.

[0051] A close up of an upside-down section 704 of the track 701 is shown in FIG. 21. Two rider carriages 702 are shown going down the two sections of the track 701 at the same time. An additional embodiment of the invention would be to use elevators (not shown) or similar means to raise the rider carriages 702 to the tower and then to use the two separate sections of the track as two different downward roller coaster tracks. This could allow more riders per time hour on the ride and would allow what was essentially to separate rides to occupy the same space. If desired the two tracks could actually be placed on the outside and inside of an actual tower building, allowing for even greater differences between the two tracks and one would have an inside controlled environment with all the possibilities that allows and the other being an outside track with the view.

[0052] Referring next to FIG. 22, the top of the track 701 is shown with the track 701 coming up inside in section 711 and down the outer diameter in section 712. Since this is a roller coaster version and twisting of the orientation of the rider carriage 702 is acceptable and even desired, the tri-cord truss track can more easily be used. The switch of the track from the up to the down direction is also simplified in the roller coaster version because both the inside and the outside diameter of the tower can be used and the tracks can overlap as is seen at location A in the drawings.

[0053] If desired the top of the tower 700 could have an enclosed space 750 that would be accessed by elevators/stairs. The enclosed space 750 could be an observational platform, restaurant/shopping area or other retail space as seen in FIG. 23.

[0054] While a number of exemplary aspects and embodiments have been discussed above, those of skill in the art will recognize certain modifications, permutations, additions and sub-combinations therefore. It is therefore intended that the

following appended claims hereinafter introduced are interpreted to include all such modifications, permutations, additions and sub-combinations are within their true spirit and scope. Each apparatus embodiment described herein has numerous equivalents.

[0055] The terms and expressions which have been employed are used as terms of description and not of limitation, and there is no intention in the use of such terms and expressions of excluding any equivalents of the features shown and described or portions thereof, but it is recognized that various modifications are possible within the scope of the invention claimed. Thus, it should be understood that although the present invention has been specifically disclosed by preferred embodiments and optional features, modification and variation of the concepts herein disclosed may be resorted to by those skilled in the art, and that such modifications and variations are considered to be within the scope of this invention as defined by the appended claims. Whenever a range is given in the specification, all intermediate ranges and subranges, as well as all individual values included in the ranges given are intended to be included in the disclosure.

[0056] In general the terms and phrases used herein have their art-recognized meaning, which can be found by reference to standard texts, journal references and contexts known to those skilled in the art. The above definitions are provided to clarify their specific use in the context of the invention.

1. (canceled)
2. A roller coaster comprising:
 - a support tower;
 - a track mounted on the support tower having a first rail and a second rail, said rails being substantially parallel to each other;
 - a plurality of rider carriages moveably mounted on the rails;
 - a first section of the track being mounted on the support tower, the first section of the track having a variety of orientations and inclines, said first section of track functioning as downward roller coaster track, the plurality of rider carriages being propelled by gravity down the first section of the track;
 - a second section of the track having an elevator to raise the plurality of rider carriages from a bottom of the track to the top.
3. The roller coaster of claim 2 wherein the first section of the track includes at least one section where the rider carriages are inverted.
4. The roller coaster of claim 2 wherein at least a first portion of the track is on an outside diameter of the pillars and a second portion of the track is on an inside diameter of the pillars.
5. The roller coaster of claim 2 further comprising:
 - a third section of track being mounted on the support tower, the third section of the track having a variety of orientations and inclines said third section of track functioning as downward roller coaster track,
 - a second plurality of rider carriages, the second plurality of rider carriages being propelled by gravity down the third section of the track;
 - a fourth section of the track being an elevator to raise the second plurality of rider carriages from a bottom of the track to the top.

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