

BRANCHED FILTER AND METHOD OF USE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] In order to achieve filtration performance targets, it may be necessary to use large and/or multiple filtration devices, or use filter devices that have to be replaced more often due to an increase in pressure drop resulting from insufficient filtration area. Either alternative can result in increased cost.

[0002] Thus, there is a need for improved filters. The present invention provides for ameliorating at least some of the disadvantages of the prior art. These and other advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the description as set forth below.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] An aspect of the invention provides a filter arrangement comprising a plurality of filters in a radial arrangement, each filter comprising a plurality of filter arms, the plurality of filter arms comprising at least: a first filter arm comprising a first hollow tube, the first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a first tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; and, a second filter arm comprising a second hollow tube, the second hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a second tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; each filter further comprising: a first tube connector, comprising a first hollow body having a first hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first and second hollow tubes, wherein the first hollow body inner diameter is greater than the tube inner fluid channel inner diameters; and, a second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a second hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater than the first hollow body inner diameter.

[0004] Another aspect of the invention provides a filter arrangement comprising a plurality of curved filters in a radial arrangement, each filter comprising a plurality of curved filter arms, the plurality of curved filter arms comprising at least: a curved first filter arm comprising a curved first hollow tube, the curved first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a curved first tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; and, a curved second filter arm comprising a curved second hollow tube, the curved second hollow

tube having a first end and a second end, and a curved second tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; each curved filter further comprising: a curved first tube connector, comprising a first hollow body having a first hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the curved first and second hollow tubes, wherein the first hollow body inner diameter is greater than the tube inner fluid channel inner diameters; and, a curved second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a second hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater than the first hollow body inner diameter.

[0005] In other aspects, filter devices and methods of filtration using the filter devices are provided, the filter devices comprising filter housings having an inlet and an outlet and defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, with aspects of one or more filter arrangements arranged in the housings across the fluid flow path.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING(S)

[0006] Figure 1 shows a filter arrangement comprising a plurality of filters in a radial arrangement according to an aspect of the invention.

[0007] Figures 2A-2E show an individual filter comprising a plurality of sets of four filter arms in the filter arrangement shown in Figure 1, each arm comprising a hollow tube; the filter further comprising first tube connectors, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the hollow tubes, and a second tube connector connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first tube connectors. Figure 2A shows a top perspective view, Figure 2B shows a side cross-sectional view, Figure 2C shows a top view, Figure 2D shows a bottom view, and Figure 2E shows an enlarged side cross-sectional view of the filter along line Y-Y of Figure 2C, also showing different lengths of the hollow tubes, first connectors, and the second connector, of the filter, as well as different thicknesses of the walls of the hollow tubes, first connectors, and the second connector.

[0008] Figures 3A-3D show a filter device comprising a filter housing having an inlet and an outlet defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, with a plurality of filter arrangements shown in Figure 1 arranged in the housing across the fluid flow path according to an aspect of the invention. Figure 3A shows a top view with a partial cut-away; Figure 3B

shows a cross-sectional side view along line A-A of Figure 3A, with arrows showing the fluid flow path; Figure 3C shows an orthogonal partial cut-away view; and Figure 3D shows a bottom partial cut-away view.

[0009] Figure 4 shows a filter arrangement comprising a plurality of curved filters in a radial arrangement according to another aspect of the invention.

[0010] Figures 5A-5C show an individual curved filter comprising a plurality of sets of four filter arms in the filter arrangement shown in Figure 4, each arm comprising a curved hollow tube; the curved filter further comprising curved first tube connectors, comprising curved first hollow bodies, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the sets of curved hollow tubes; and, a curved second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a second hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow bodies. Figure 5A shows an orthogonal view; Figure 5B shows a bottom view; Figure 5C show a cross-section side view along line B-B of Figure 5B; Figure 5D shows a back view; Figure 5E shows a top view; and Figure 5F shows a front view.

[0011] Figures 6A-6D show a filter device comprising a filter housing having an inlet and an outlet defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, with a plurality of filter arrangements shown in Figure 4 arranged in the housing across the fluid flow path according to another aspect of the invention. Figure 6A shows a top view with a partial cut-away; Figure 6B shows a cross-sectional side view along line C-C of Figure 6A, with arrows showing the fluid flow path; Figure 6C shows an orthogonal partial cut-away view; and Figure 6D shows a bottom partial cut-away view.

[0012] Figure 7 shows a filter arrangement comprising a plurality of filters having first tube connectors and a second tube connector, wherein the first and second tube connectors have tapered inner diameters, in a radial arrangement according to another aspect of the invention.

[0013] Figures 8A-8D show an individual filter comprising a plurality of sets of four filter arms in the filter arrangement shown in Figure 7, each filter arm comprising a hollow tube having a tapered inner diameter, the filter further comprising: first tube connectors comprising first hollow bodies comprising tapered inner diameters, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the sets of hollow tubes; and, a second tube connector, comprising a

second hollow body having a tapered inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow bodies. Figure 8A shows a top perspective view; Figure 8B shows a top cut-away view; Figure 8C shows a side cross-section view along line AM-AM of Figure 8B, and Figure 8D shows a front view.

[0014] Figures 9A-9E show a filter device comprising a filter housing having an inlet and an outlet defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, with a plurality of filter arrangements shown in Figure 7 arranged in the housing across the fluid flow path according to another aspect of the invention. Figure 9A shows a top view with a partial cut-away; Figure 9B shows a cross-sectional side view of Figure 9A, with arrows showing the fluid flow path; Figure 9C shows an orthogonal partial cut-away view showing the top of the filter arrangement; and Figure 9D shows a bottom partial cut-away view.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0015] An aspect of the invention provides a filter arrangement comprising a plurality of filters in a radial arrangement, each of the plurality of filters comprising a plurality of filter arms, the plurality of filter arms comprising at least: a first filter arm comprising a first hollow tube, the first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a first tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; and, a second filter arm comprising a second hollow tube, the second hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a second tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; each filter further comprising: a first tube connector, comprising a first hollow body having a first hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first and second hollow tubes, wherein the first hollow body inner diameter is greater than the tube inner fluid channel inner diameters; and, a second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a second hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater than the first hollow body inner diameter.

[0016] Another aspect of the invention provides a filter arrangement comprising a plurality of curved filters in a radial arrangement, each of the plurality of filters comprising a plurality of curved filter arms, the plurality of curved filter arms comprising at least: a curved first filter arm comprising a curved first hollow tube, the curved first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a curved first tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; and, a curved second filter arm comprising a curved second hollow tube, the

curved second hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a curved second tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; each curved filter further comprising: a curved first tube connector, comprising a first hollow body having a first hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the curved first and second hollow tubes, wherein the first hollow body inner diameter is greater than the tube inner fluid channel inner diameters; and, a curved second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a second hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater than the first hollow body inner diameter.

[0017] Another aspect of the invention provides a filter arrangement comprising a plurality of filters in a radial arrangement, each of the plurality of filters comprising a plurality of filter arms, the plurality of filter arms comprising at least: a first filter arm comprising a first hollow tube, the first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a first tube inner fluid channel having a tapered inner diameter wherein the inner diameter is narrower at the first end, and wider at the second end; and, a second filter arm comprising a second hollow tube, the second hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a second tube inner fluid channel having a tapered inner diameter wherein the inner diameter is narrower at the first end, and wider at the second end; the filter further comprising: a first tube connector, comprising a first hollow body having a first end and a second end, and a first hollow body tapered inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first and second hollow tubes, wherein the first hollow body has an inner diameter that is narrower at the first end of the first tube connector where it connects with the first and second hollow tubes, and wider at the second end of the first tube connector, wherein the first hollow body inner diameter is greater at both the first end and the second end than the inner diameters at both the first end and second end of each of the first and second hollow tubes; and, a second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a first end and a second end, and a second hollow body tapered inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body, wherein the second hollow body has an inner diameter that is narrower at the first end of the second tube connector where it connects with the first tube connector, and wider at the second end of the second tube connector, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater at both the first end and the second end than the inner diameters at both the first end and second end of the first tube connector.

[0018] In accordance with some aspects of filter arrangements according to the invention, the plurality of filter arms are typically arranged parallel to one another, and the filters can be arranged vertically, horizontally, and/or at an angle.

[0019] In accordance with some aspects of filter arrangements according to the invention, the plurality of filter arms are typically arranged parallel or generally parallel to one another, and the filters can be arranged vertically, horizontally, and/or at an angle.

[0020] Aspects of the filters in the filter arrangements can include filter arms including any number of hollow tubes (including straight hollow tubes, straight hollow tubes with tapered inner diameters, or curved hollow tubes), and, if desired, any number of first tube connectors and second tube connectors (including straight, straight tapered diameters, or curved, first and second tube connectors).

[0021] Aspects of filters in the filter arrangements can have any number of sets of a plurality of filter arms, and each set can communicate with a separate first tube connector, and a plurality of separate first tube connectors can communicate with a common second tube connector.

[0022] Another aspect of the invention provides a method of filtering fluid, the method comprising passing the fluid through an aspect of the filter or filter arrangement.

[0023] In other aspects, filter devices and methods of filtration using the filter devices are provided, the filter devices comprising filter housings having an inlet and an outlet and defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, with aspects of one or more filter arrangements (preferably, two or more filter arrangements) arranged in the housings across the fluid flow path.

[0024] Preferably, each of the hollow tubes (including each of the curved hollow tubes) have porous walls, and the closed ends of the hollow tubes are also porous.

[0025] Filter devices can be arranged for outside-in filter flow, or arranged for inside-out filter flow. In some aspects, outside-in flow filter can be desirable where increased filter area is preferred, and in some other aspects, inside-out filter flow is desirable where increased strength is preferred.

[0026] Each of the components of the invention will now be described in more detail below, wherein like components have like reference numbers.

[0027] Figure 1 show an aspect of a filter arrangement 1000 comprising a plurality of filters 400 in a radial arrangement, each filter (discussed as shown in more detail in Figures 2A-2E) comprising a plurality of filter arms, each filter arm comprising a hollow tube having porous walls, each filter further comprising a first tube connector comprising a first hollow body wherein the first tube connector is connected to, and in fluid communication with, the hollow tubes, and, a second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body. The plurality of filters (ten filters are shown, filter arrangements can have any number of filters) are radially arranged around a central axis comprising a central hollow hub 700 including a central opening 702 and a plurality of hub channels 701A-700J (due to space considerations, only a few hub channels are labeled) in fluid communication with the second hollow bodies and the central opening 702 of the central hollow hub.

[0028] As illustrated in Figures 2A-2E, a filter 400 comprises 4 sets of 4 filter arms (filters can have any number of filter arms and/or sets of filter arms), each set comprising a first filter arm 101 comprising a first hollow tube 10 having a first end 11, a second end 12, a first hollow tube inner fluid channel 13 having an inner diameter 14; a second filter arm 102 comprising a second hollow tube 20 having a first end 21, a second end 22, a second hollow tube inner fluid channel 23 having an inner diameter 24; a third filter arm 103 comprising a third hollow tube 30 having a first end 31, a second end 32, a third hollow tube inner fluid channel 33 having an inner diameter 34; and a fourth filter arm 104 comprising a fourth hollow tube 40 having a first end 41, a second end 42, a fourth hollow tube inner fluid channel 43 having an inner diameter 44; and the filter further comprises, communicating with each set of 4 filter arms, a separate first tube connector 60, comprising a first hollow body 65, having a first end 61, and a second end 62, a first hollow body inner fluid channel 63 having a first hollow body inner diameter 64, wherein the first tube connector is connected to, and in fluid communication with, the second ends 12, 22, 32, 42 of the first, second, third, and fourth hollow tubes 10, 20, 30, 40 wherein the first hollow body inner diameter 64 is greater than each of the tube inner fluid channel inner diameters 14, 24, 34, and 44, wherein the filter 400 further comprises, commonly communicating with each of the 4 first tube connectors, a second tube connector 70, comprising a second hollow body 75, having a first end 71, and a

second end 72 (the second tube connector having a total length L3A as illustrated in Figure 2E), a second hollow body inner fluid channel 73 having a second hollow body inner diameter 74, wherein the first end 71 of the second tube connector 70 is connected to, and in fluid communication with, the second ends 62 of the first hollow bodies 65, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter 74 is greater than the first hollow body inner diameters 64, and the first hollow body inner diameter 64 is greater than each of the tube inner fluid channel inner diameters 14, 24, 34, and 44. In this illustrated aspect, all of the sets of 4 filter arms have the same length L1A, the first connector has a length L2A, and the second connector has a length L3A wherein $L1A > L2A > L3A$.

[0029] The relationships between the lengths of the filter arms, first connectors, and second connectors, are not limited to those as illustrated, the various lengths can be all equal, or two can be equal, or, for example, $L1A < L2A > L3A$, etc. Additionally, or alternatively, in those aspects including a plurality of filters, the relationships between the lengths of the filter arms, first connectors, and second connectors, can be different for different filters in the same filter device.

[0030] Typically, as illustrated in Figure 2E, there are different thicknesses of the walls of the hollow tubes, first connectors, and the second connector, wherein the walls of the hollow tubes (T1) are thinner than the walls of the first tube connector (T2), and the walls of the first tube connector are thinner than the walls of the second tube connector (T3).

[0031] Figure 4 show an aspect of a filter arrangement 1000' comprising a plurality of curved filters 400' in a radial arrangement, each curved filter (discussed as shown in more detail in Figures 5A-5E) comprising a plurality of curved filter arms, each curved filter arm comprising a curved hollow tube, each filter further comprising a curved first tube connector comprising a curved first hollow body wherein the curved first tube connector is connected to, and in fluid communication with, the curved hollow tubes, and, a curved second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body connected to, and in fluid communication with, the curved first hollow body. The plurality of curved filters (ten filters are shown, filter arrangements can have any number of filters) are radially arranged around a central axis comprising a central hollow hub 700' including a central opening 702' and a plurality of hub channels 701A'-700J' (due to space considerations, only a few hub channels are labeled) in

fluid communication with the second hollow bodies and the central opening 702' of the central hollow hub.

[0032] In some aspects, curved filters can provide more filter area with the same outside diameter than straight filters. In the aspect illustrated in Figure 4, the overall angle of the curved filter 400' with respect to the side of the central hollow hub 700' including hub channels is in the range of about 45° to about 90°, but a variety of angles are suitable for use in the invention.

[0033] In accordance with the aspect illustrated in Figures 5A-5F, a curved filter 400' comprises 4 sets of 4 curved filter arms (filters can have any number of curved filter arms and/or sets of curved filter arms), each set comprising a curved first filter arm 101' comprising a curved first hollow tube 10' having a first end 11', a second end 12', a curved first hollow tube inner fluid channel 13' having an inner diameter 14'; a curved second filter arm 102' comprising a curved second hollow tube 20' having a first end 21', a second end 22', a curved second hollow tube inner fluid channel 23' having an inner diameter 24'; a curved third filter arm 103' comprising a curved third hollow tube 30' having a first end 31', a second end 32', a curved third hollow tube inner fluid channel 33' having an inner diameter 34'; and a curved fourth filter arm 104' comprising a curved fourth hollow tube 40' having a first end 41', a second end 42', a curved fourth hollow tube inner fluid channel 43' having an inner diameter 44'; and the filter further comprises, communicating with each set of 4 curved filter arms, a separate curved first tube connector 60', comprising a curved first hollow body 65', having a first end 61', and a second end 62', a curved first hollow body inner fluid channel 63' having a curved first hollow body inner diameter 64', wherein the curved first tube connector is connected to, and in fluid communication with, the second ends 12', 22', 32', 42' of the curved first, second, third, and fourth hollow tubes 10', 20', 30', 40' wherein the curved first hollow body inner diameter 64' is greater than each of the curved tube inner fluid channel inner diameters 14', 24', 34', and 44', wherein the curved filter 400' further comprises, commonly communicating with each of the 4 curved first tube connectors, a curved second tube connector 70', comprising a curved second hollow body 75', having a first end 71', and a second end 72' (the curved second tube connector having a total length L3'), a curved second hollow body inner fluid channel 73' having a curved second hollow body inner diameter 74', wherein the first end 71' of the curved second tube connector 70' is connected to, and in fluid communication with, the second ends 62' of the curved first hollow

bodies 65', wherein the curved second hollow body inner diameter 74' is greater than the curved first hollow body inner diameters 64', and the curved first hollow body inner diameter 64' is greater than each of the curved tube inner fluid channel inner diameters 14', 24', 34', and 44'. In this illustrated aspect, all of the sets of 4 curved filter arms have the same length L1', the curved first connector has a length L2', and the curved second connector has a length L3' wherein $L1' > L2' > L3'$.

[0034] Similar to the discussion with respect to, for example, the aspect illustrated in Figures 2A-2E, the relationships between the lengths of the curved filter arms, curved first connectors, and curved second connectors, are not limited to those as illustrated, the various lengths can be all equal, or two can be equal, or, for example, $L1' < L2' > L3'$, etc. Additionally, or alternatively, in those aspects including a plurality of filters, the relationships between the lengths of the filter arms, first connectors, and second connectors, can be different for different filters in the same filter device.

[0035] Figure 7 show an aspect of a filter arrangement 1000" comprising a plurality of filters 400" in a radial arrangement, each filter (discussed as shown in more detail in Figures 8A-8D) comprising a plurality of filter arms, each of the plurality of filter arms comprising at least: a first filter arm comprising a first hollow tube, the first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a first tube inner fluid channel having a tapered inner diameter wherein the inner diameter is narrower at the first end, and wider at the second end; and, a second filter arm comprising a second hollow tube, the second hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a second tube inner fluid channel having a tapered inner diameter wherein the inner diameter is narrower at the first end, and wider at the second end; the filter further comprising: a first tube connector, comprising a first hollow body having a first end and a second end, and a first hollow body tapered inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first and second hollow tubes, wherein the first hollow body has an inner diameter that is narrower at the first end of the first tube connector where it connects with the first and second hollow tubes, and wider at the second end of the first tube connector, wherein the first hollow body inner diameter is greater at both the first end and the second end than the inner diameters at both the first end and second end of each of the first and second hollow tubes; and, a second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a first end and a second end, and a second hollow body tapered inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body, wherein the second

hollow body has an inner diameter that is narrower at the first end of the second tube connector where it connects with the first tube connector, and wider at the second end of the second tube connector, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater at both the first end and the second end than the inner diameters at both the first end and second end of the first tube connector. The plurality of filters (four filters are shown, filter arrangements can have any number of filters) are radially arranged around a central axis comprising a central hollow hub 700" including a central opening 702" and a plurality of hub channels 701A"-700D" (due to space considerations, only two hub channels are labeled) in fluid communication with the second hollow bodies and the central opening 702" of the central hollow hub.

[0036] In accordance with the aspect illustrated in Figures 8A-8D, a filter 400" comprises 4 sets of 4 filter arms, each set comprising a first filter arm 101" comprising a first hollow tube 10" having a first end 11", a second end 12", a first hollow tube inner fluid channel 13" having a tapered inner diameter 14", wherein the inner diameter 14"A is greater at the first end than the inner diameter 14"B at the second end; a second filter arm 102" comprising a second hollow tube 20" having a first end 21", a second end 22", a second hollow tube inner fluid channel 23" having a tapered inner diameter 24", wherein the inner diameter 24"A is greater at the first end than the inner diameter 24"B at the second end; a third filter arm 103" comprising a third hollow tube 30" having a first end 31", a second end 32", a third hollow tube inner fluid channel 33" having a tapered inner diameter 34", wherein the inner diameter 34"A is greater at the first end than the inner diameter 34"B at the second end; and a fourth filter arm 104" comprising a fourth hollow tube 40" having a first end 41", a second end 42", a fourth hollow tube inner fluid channel 43" having a tapered inner diameter 44", wherein the inner diameter 44"A is greater at the first end than the inner diameter 44"B at the second end; and the filter further comprises, communicating with each set of 4 filter arms, a first tube connector 60", comprising a first hollow body 65", having a first end 61", and a second end 62", a first hollow body inner fluid channel 63" having a first hollow body tapered inner diameter 64", wherein the inner diameter 64"A is greater at the first end than the inner diameter 64"B at the second end, wherein the first tube connector is connected to, and in fluid communication with, the second ends 12", 22", 32", 42" of the first, second, third, and fourth hollow tubes 10", 20", 30", 40" wherein the first hollow body inner diameter 64"A, 64"B is greater at each end of the first hollow body than the inner diameters 14"A, 14"B, 24"A,

24''B, 34''A, 34''B, 44''A, 44''B at each end each of the hollow tubes, wherein the filter 400'' further comprises, commonly communicating with each of the 4 first tube connectors, a second tube connector 70'', comprising a second hollow body 75'', having a first end 71'', and a second end 72'' (the second tube connector having a total length L1''), a second hollow body inner fluid channel 73'' having a second hollow body tapered inner diameter 74'', wherein the inner diameter 74''A is greater at the first end than the inner diameter 74''B at the second end; wherein the first end 71'' of the second tube connector 70'' is connected to, and in fluid communication with, the second ends 62'' of the first hollow bodies 65'', wherein the second hollow body tapered inner diameter 74''A, 74''B is greater at each end of the second hollow body than the inner diameters 64''A, 64''B at each end each of the first hollow body 65''. In this illustrated aspect, all of the sets of 4 filter arms have the same length L1'', the first connector has a length L2'', and the second connector has a length L3'' wherein $L1'' > L2'' > L3''$.

[0037] Similar to the discussion with respect to, for example, the aspects illustrated in Figures 2A-2E and 5A-5F, the relationships between the lengths of the filter arms, first connectors, and second connectors, are not limited to those as illustrated, the various lengths can be all equal, or two can be equal, or, for example, $L1'' < L2'' > L3''$, etc. Additionally, or alternatively, in those aspects including a plurality of filters, the relationships between the lengths of the filter arms, first connectors, and second connectors, can be different for different filters in the same filter device.

[0038] One or more aspects of filter arrangements are typically disposed in a housing comprising at least one inlet and at least one outlet and defining at least one fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, wherein the filter(s)/filter arrangements are across the fluid flow path, to provide a filter device. Preferably, the filter device is sterilizable. Any housing of suitable shape and providing at least one inlet and at least one outlet may be employed.

[0039] Figures 3A-3D show a filter device 600 according to another aspect of the invention, the filter device comprising a housing 605 having an inlet 601 and an outlet 602 and defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, with a plurality of filter arrangements 1000 (4 filter arrangements are shown, filter devices can have any number of filter arrangements) according to an aspect of the invention as shown in Figure 1 arranged in the housing across the fluid flow path. In this illustrated aspect, the filter device comprises a

filter cartridge 800, comprising an upper end cap 801 covering the central opening 702 of the central hollow hub 700 of the top filter arrangement 1000, the filter cartridge further comprising a hollow base 810 attached to the central hollow hub 700 of the bottom filter arrangement, wherein the hollow base has a central opening 802 allowing fluid communication between the central hollow hubs of the plurality of filter arrangements. In the aspect illustrated in Figure 3B, the hollow base has an outer wall with one or more grooves for receiving resilient members such as o-rings, for sealing against barrier 610.

[0040] Figures 6A-6D show a filter device 600' according to another aspect of the invention, the filter device comprising a housing 605' having an inlet 601' and an outlet 602' and defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, with a plurality of filter arrangements 1000' (4 filter arrangements are shown, filter devices can have any number of filter arrangements) according to an aspect of the invention as shown in Figure 4 arranged in the housing across the fluid flow path. In this illustrated aspect, the filter device comprises a filter cartridge 800', comprising an upper end cap 801' covering the central opening 702' of the central hollow hub 700' of the top filter arrangement 1000', the filter cartridge further comprising a hollow base 810' attached to the central hollow hub 700' of the bottom filter arrangement, wherein the hollow base has a central opening 802' allowing fluid communication between the central hollow hubs of the plurality of filter arrangements. In the aspect illustrated in Figure 6B, the hollow base has an outer wall with one or more grooves for receiving resilient members such as o-rings, for sealing against barrier 610'.

[0041] Figures 9A-9D show a filter device 600'' according to another aspect of the invention, the filter device comprising a housing 605'' having an inlet 601'' and an outlet 602'' and defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, with a plurality of filter arrangements 1000'' (2 arrangements are shown, filter devices can have any number of filter arrangements) according to an aspect of the invention as shown in Figure 7 arranged in the housing across the fluid flow path. In this illustrated aspect, the filter device comprises a filter cartridge 800'', comprising an upper end cap 801'' covering the central opening 702'' of the central hollow hub 700'' of the top filter arrangement 1000'', the filter cartridge further comprising a hollow base 810'' attached to the central hollow hub 700'' of the bottom filter arrangement, wherein the hollow base has a central opening 802'' allowing fluid communication between the central hollow hubs of the plurality of filter arrangements. In the

aspect illustrated in Figure 8B, the hollow base has an outer wall with one or more grooves for receiving resilient members such as o-rings, for sealing against barrier 610”.

[0042] As shown in more detail in Figures 3B, 6B, and 9B, the filter and filter arrangements are arranged for “outside-in” filtration flow.

[0043] If desired, aspects of the invention can be utilized in closed and sterile systems. As used herein, the term “closed” refers to a system that allows the collection and processing (including filtration, and, if desired, the manipulation, e.g., separation of portions, separation into components, storage, and preservation) of fluid, without exposing the contents of the system to the environment in which it is being used. A closed system can be as originally made, or result from the connection of system components of sanitary fittings including sterile docking devices.

[0044] The hollow tubes (e.g., the closed ends and side walls; and in some aspects, the walls of the first and second tube connectors) can have any suitable pore structure, e.g., a pore size (for example, as evidenced by bubble point, or by K_L as described in, for example, U.S. Patent 4,340,479, or evidenced by capillary condensation flow porometry), a mean flow pore (MFP) size (e.g., when characterized using a porometer, for example, a Porvair Porometer (Porvair plc, Norfolk, UK), or a porometer available under the trademark POROLUX (Porometer.com; Belgium)), a pore rating, a pore diameter (e.g., when characterized using the modified OSU F2 test as described in, for example, U.S. Patent 4,925,572), or removal rating media. The pore structure used depends on the size of the particles to be utilized, the composition of the fluid to be treated, and the desired effluent level of the treated fluid. In those aspects wherein the walls of the first and/or second tube connectors are porous (e.g., in some aspects wherein the hollow tubes and tube connectors are made from the same material), the pore structure of the tube connector walls is no greater than the pore structure of the walls of the hollow tubes.

[0045] A filter can have any desired critical wetting surface tension (CWST, as defined in, for example, U.S. Patent 4,925,572). The CWST can be selected as is known in the art, e.g., as additionally disclosed in, for example, U.S. Patents 5,152,905, 5,443,743, 5,472,621, and 6,074,869. Typically, the filter element has a CWST of at least about 17 dynes/cm (about 17×10^{-5} N/cm), for example, a CWST in the range of from about 17 dynes/cm to about 90 dynes/cm (about 17×10^{-5} N/cm to about 90×10^{-5} N/cm), more typically in the

range of about 50 dynes/cm to about 60 dynes/cm (about 50×10^{-5} N/cm to about 60×10^{-5} N/cm).

[0046] The surface characteristics of a filter can be modified (e.g., to affect the CWST, to include a surface charge, e.g., a positive or negative charge, and/or to alter the polarity or hydrophilicity of the surface) by wet or dry oxidation, by coating or depositing a polymer on the surface, or by a grafting reaction.

[0047] Any aspects of the filters and/or filter arrangements can include additional elements, layers, or components, that can have different structures and/or functions, e.g., at least one of any one or more of the following: prefiltration, support, drainage, spacing and cushioning. Illustratively, the filter can also include at least one additional element such as a mesh and/or a screen.

[0048] In accordance with aspects of the invention, filters and filter arrangements can have a variety of configurations, including planar, pleated, and hollow cylindrical.

[0049] Filters, and filter arrangements (including filter arms and tube connectors) and housings according to aspects of the invention are preferably monolithic, and preferably manufactured via additive manufacturing (sometimes referred to as “additive layer manufacturing” or “3D printing”). They are typically formed by repeated depositions of a metal powder bound together with an activatable binder (e.g., binder jetting, sometimes referred to as “drop on powder”), typically followed by agglomerating the powder, e.g., by sintering. Other suitable methods include extrusion (e.g., paste extrusion, fused filament fabrication and fused deposition modelling) and light polymerization (e.g., stereolithography apparatus (SLA), and digital light processing (DLP)).

[0050] Filters, filter arms, and filter arrangements and housings can be manufactured together via additive manufacturing in a continuous operation at substantially the same time.

[0051] Any suitable additive manufacturing equipment can be used, and a variety of production 3D printers are suitable and commercially available.

[0052] All references, including publications, patent applications, and patents, cited herein are hereby incorporated by reference to the same extent as if each reference were

individually and specifically indicated to be incorporated by reference and were set forth in its entirety herein.

[0053] The use of the terms “a” and “an” and “the” and “at least one” and similar referents in the context of describing the invention (especially in the context of the following claims) are to be construed to cover both the singular and the plural, unless otherwise indicated herein or clearly contradicted by context. The use of the term “at least one” followed by a list of one or more items (for example, “at least one of A and B”) is to be construed to mean one item selected from the listed items (A or B) or any combination of two or more of the listed items (A and B), unless otherwise indicated herein or clearly contradicted by context. The terms “comprising,” “having,” “including,” and “containing” are to be construed as open-ended terms (i.e., meaning “including, but not limited to,”) unless otherwise noted. Recitation of ranges of values herein are merely intended to serve as a shorthand method of referring individually to each separate value falling within the range, unless otherwise indicated herein, and each separate value is incorporated into the specification as if it were individually recited herein. All methods described herein can be performed in any suitable order unless otherwise indicated herein or otherwise clearly contradicted by context. The use of any and all examples, or exemplary language (e.g., “such as”) provided herein, is intended merely to better illuminate the invention and does not pose a limitation on the scope of the invention unless otherwise claimed. No language in the specification should be construed as indicating any non-claimed element as essential to the practice of the invention.

[0054] Preferred aspects of this invention are described herein, including the best mode known to the inventors for carrying out the invention. Variations of those preferred aspects may become apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art upon reading the foregoing description. The inventors expect skilled artisans to employ such variations as appropriate, and the inventors intend for the invention to be practiced otherwise than as specifically described herein. Accordingly, this invention includes all modifications and equivalents of the subject matter recited in the claims appended hereto as permitted by applicable law. Moreover, any combination of the above-described elements in all possible variations thereof is encompassed by the invention unless otherwise indicated herein or otherwise clearly contradicted by context.

CLAIM(S):

1. A filter arrangement comprising a plurality of filters in a radial arrangement, each of the plurality of filters comprising a plurality of filter arms, the plurality of filter arms comprising at least:

a first filter arm comprising a first hollow tube, the first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a first tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; and,

a second filter arm comprising a second hollow tube, the second hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a second tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter;

each of the filters further comprising a first tube connector, comprising a first hollow body having a first hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first and second hollow tubes, wherein the first hollow body inner diameter is greater than the first and second tube inner fluid channel inner diameters; and,

a second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a second hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater than the first hollow body inner diameter.

2. A filter arrangement comprising a plurality of curved filters in a radial arrangement, each of the plurality of curved filters comprising a plurality of curved filter arms, the plurality of curved filter arms comprising at least:

a curved first filter arm comprising a curved first hollow tube, the curved first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a curved first tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter; and,

a curved second filter arm comprising a curved second hollow tube, the curved second hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a curved second tube inner fluid channel having an inner diameter;

each of the curved filters further comprising:

a curved first tube connector, comprising a curved first hollow body having a first hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the curved first and second hollow tubes, wherein the curved first hollow body inner diameter is greater than the curved first and second tube inner fluid channel inner diameters;

and,

a curved second tube connector, comprising a curved second hollow body having a second hollow body inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the curved first hollow body, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater than the first hollow body inner diameter.

3. A filter arrangement comprising a plurality of filters in a radial arrangement, each of the plurality of filters comprising a plurality of filter arms, the plurality of filter arms comprising at least:

a first filter arm comprising a first hollow tube, the first hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a first tube inner fluid channel having a tapered inner diameter wherein the inner diameter is narrower at the first end, and wider at the second end; and,

a second filter arm comprising a second hollow tube, the second hollow tube having a first end and a second end, and a second tube inner fluid channel having a tapered inner diameter wherein the inner diameter is narrower at the first end, and wider at the second end;

each of the filters further comprising: a first tube connector, comprising a first hollow body having a first end and a second end, and a first hollow body tapered inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first and second hollow tubes, wherein the first hollow body has an inner diameter that is narrower at the first end of the first tube connector where it connects with the first and second hollow tubes, and wider at the second end of the first tube connector, wherein the first hollow body inner diameter is greater at both the first end and the second end than the inner diameters at both the first end and second end of each of the first and second hollow tubes; and,

a second tube connector, comprising a second hollow body having a first end and a second end, and a second hollow body tapered inner diameter, connected to, and in fluid communication with, the first hollow body, wherein the second hollow body has an inner diameter that is narrower at the first end of the second tube connector where it connects with the first tube connector, and wider at the second end of the second tube connector, wherein the second hollow body inner diameter is greater at both the first end and the second end than the inner diameters at both the first end and second end of the first tube connector.

4. The filter arrangement of any one of claims 1-3, wherein the plurality of filters or the plurality of curved filters are radially arranged around a central hollow hub, and the central hollow hub includes a central opening and a plurality of hub channels in fluid communication with the second hollow bodies or the curved second hollow bodies.

5. A filter device comprising a filter housing having an inlet and an outlet defining a fluid flow path between the inlet and the outlet, and at least one filter arrangement of any one of claims 1-4, arranged in the housing across the fluid flow path.

6. The filter device of claim 5, comprising two or more filter arrangements of any one of claims 1-4, arranged in the housing across the fluid flow path.

7. A method filtering a fluid, comprising passing the fluid through at least one filter arrangement of any one of claims 1-4 or the filter device of claim 5 or 6.