

NAPKIN ENGINEERING

Imagine that we were not such soft flesh
that splits on rusted bolts and splinters
but something harder, that takes a sheen.
And that the lymphs, puses, chaotic

fluids that course down metastasis
freeways, or in just messy plumbing
double-park residues at every bend, that
all the viscosity bled out. Imagine,

a better us, not some tinkerer-in-slime-
molds' body building exercise, but something
engineered to last: In shiny 304
stainless steel, or vacuum melt bar

stock, a complex of traps, chambers, pumped
down manifolds (no hardened arteries here;
at 10^{-10} torr a molecule can travel
a mile before side-swiping another). This

is the efficient concept, a two-piece
clamped body design, crevice-free butt
welds to reduce the risk of contamination,
flanged fittings, easier than nuts in tight

situations. Signals come through charged
mosaic membranes, there is bell-mouthing
for our beam and ion needs, to feed those long
cool laser jets coursing past gray pump

shrouds, passing, chilled vanes, in dog leg
throttling curves' control; control, the computers
know it well. Energies need in and out, through
cooled orifice plates, reduced nipples. Custom

penetrations can be drilled on demand.
Mounting? In any position. Who needs
fantasy, this high on high vacuum.
The mechanism, self-lubricating bronze

nut of chips in the bonnet, can gate
the flux in a six-way cube cross, walk
the dog, hang the man. A speck of rust?

Imagine that! Abrade, ion gun at the ready.
Sputter up, sputter down - it's matter, thrust.

- With thanks to the exhibitors of equipment at the
32nd National Symposium of the American Vacuum Society,
Houston, November 1985