

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S1385-8947(18)31619-X
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cej.2018.08.144>
Reference: CEJ 19758

To appear in: *Chemical Engineering Journal*

Received Date: 1 June 2018
Revised Date: 12 July 2018
Accepted Date: 21 August 2018

Please cite this article as: G. Zhan, Synthetic Architecture of Integrated Nanocatalysts with Controlled Spatial Distribution of Metal Nanoparticles, *Chemical Engineering Journal* (2018), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cej.2018.08.144>



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Synthetic Architecture of Integrated Nanocatalysts with Controlled Spatial Distribution of Metal Nanoparticles

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Keywords: integrated nanocatalysts; spatial distribution; hollow; assembly; mesoporous

ABSTRACT: Integrated nanocatalysts (INCs) with high compositional and structural complexities are recognized as a new class of heterogeneous catalysts exhibiting more advantageous features than the conventional ones. In this work, we have developed a general synthetic protocol for the design and fabrication of INCs by controllable integration of hollow or non-hollow Cu_2O , noble metal nanoparticles (MNPs, $M = \text{Au}, \text{Pd}, \text{and Pt}$) and mesoporous silica ($m\text{SiO}_2$) into a single and well-defined matrix. The synthetic protocol was based on stepwise fabrication manner involving sol-gel process to coat mesoporous silica, Ostwald ripening process to generate void space, and galvanic replacement process to deposit ultrafine catalytic MNPs. As a demonstration, in total, our method gives rise to 14 different kinds of INCs with two to four components, such as $\text{Cu}_2\text{O}@M$, $\text{Au}@Cu_2O@M$, $\text{Au}@hCu_2O@M$, and $\text{Au}@hCu_2O@M@mSiO_2$, etc. Interestingly, INCs with the various spatial distributions of MNPs on $m\text{SiO}_2$ were constructed by using Cu_2O as a sacrificial template under deliberately controlled pH condition. For instance, location regulation of MNPs was achieved on the external surface of $m\text{SiO}_2$ wall or inside the $m\text{SiO}_2$ cavity due to the different redox couple of metal precursors and different dissolution rate of Cu_2O during the galvanic replacement process. The workability of the designed INCs was also examined with 4-nitrophenol reduction in the liquid phase and the enhanced catalytic activity was found with catalysts having more exposed MNPs on the external silica surface.

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