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Black phosphorus: a two-dimensional reductant for in situ nanofabrication

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Introduction: Since 2014, Black phosphorus (BP) has attracted tremendous research interest because of its unique properties such as layer-dependent direct bandgap, anisotropy, hinge-like structure, and quasi-one-dimensional excitonic nature, all of which contrast markedly with those of other types of two-dimensional (2D) materials. Nevertheless, BP degrades under ambient conditions as a result of the reaction with oxygen ($P \rightarrow P_xO_y$) and subsequent transformation to PO_4^{3-} in the presence of water.[1,2] Degradation leads to compromised electronic and optical performance and has generally been considered a serious obstacle hampering the application of BP. On the other hand, the high chemical reactivity of BP with respect to oxidation may be exploited and in the work, we investigate the reducibility of BP.

Materials and Methods: The BP sheets were prepared by a simple liquid exfoliation method utilizing bath sonication. The reducibility of BP was studied by reacting with $HAuCl_4$ and graphene oxide (GO) under a certain condition, respectively. The characterization was conducted by using transmission electron microscope (TEM), X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), high-resolution confocal Raman microscope and digital microscope.

Results and Discussion: The results demonstrated that the BP@Au composites can be synthesized by controlling BP-induced reduction in which only a portion of the outer BP reduces Au^{3+} to Au nanoparticles *in situ* (Figure 1) through adjusting the amount of water in the reaction. And owing to the high reducing ability of BP, the GO in the area covered by the BP sheets were gradually reduced to rGO (Figure 2). These results confirmed the controllability of the BP-induced reduction reaction.

Conclusion: The high reducing ability and unique 2D morphology not only facilitate in situ synthesis of Au nanoparticles and BP@Au composites, but also enable multiscale control in local reduction of GO to rGO. The novel 2D reductant has large potential in various *in situ* nanofabrication applications and this study also provides better understanding of the exciting properties of BP and how they can be exploited in practice.

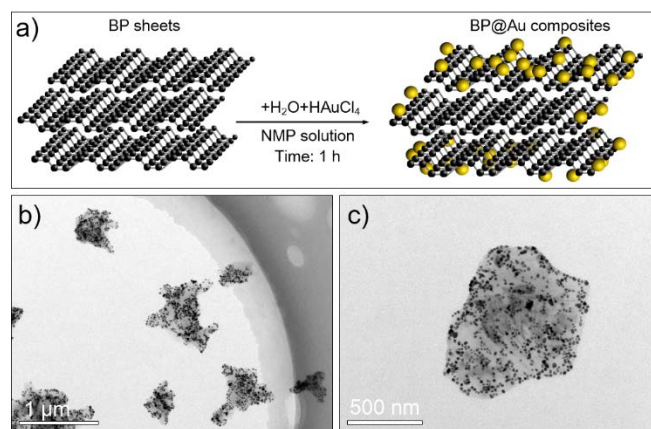


Figure 1 synthesis of BP@Au composites by controlling BP-induced reduction [3]

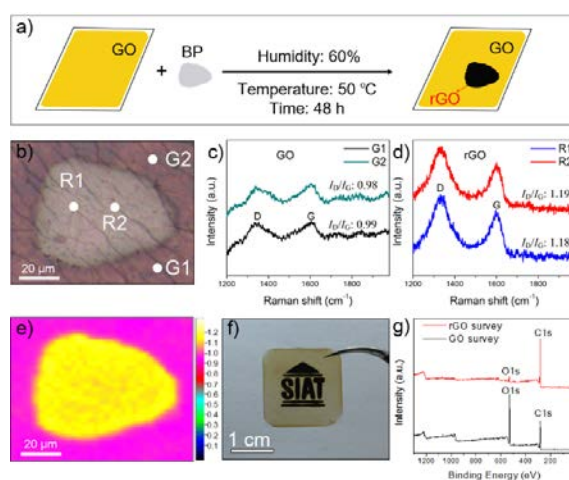


Figure 2 BP-induced local reduction of the GO film [3]

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