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2 **Photothermal dynamics of micro-glass beads coated with gold**  
3 **nanoparticles in water: fine bubble generation and fluid-induced laser**  
4 **trapping**

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9

10 Abstracts

11 In this study, gold nanoparticles were heterogeneously deposited onto the surface of glass beads through  
12 a gold ion reduction method to obtain “plasmonic beads.” The plasmonic beads in pure water were  
13 illuminated with a visible continuous-wave laser through an objective lens. Using relatively lower-  
14 powered laser, the plasmonic beads were optically trapped and aggregated the other beads over an area  
15 much greater than the focal point. On the other hand, using a high-powered laser ( $> 20 \text{ mW}/\mu\text{m}^2$ ) produced  
16 microbubbles in water. Thus, the plasmonic beads studied herein can act as optically controllable fluid  
17 and microbubble generators.

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## 1 Introduction

2 In recent decades, gold nanoparticles (AuNPs) have attracted much attention in the field of  
3 nanoscience because of their special optical properties. AuNPs absorb specific wavelengths of light  
4 through an optical phenomenon known as localized surface plasmon resonance (LSPR). This phenomenon  
5 can be tuned from visible to infrared wavelengths depending on the shape and size of the AuNPs.<sup>1-3)</sup> The  
6 LSPR enhances the Raman signals of biomolecules, known as surface-enhanced Raman scattering (SERS),  
7 and the use of SERS is ubiquitous for sensing applications.<sup>4,5)</sup>

8 According to time-resolved spectroscopy, the light absorbed by AuNP is transformed into localized  
9 heat in nanoseconds.<sup>6,7)</sup> The temperature can reach several hundred Celsius, but the quantity of heat is  
10 very small because of the tiny volume.<sup>8)</sup> The heat rapidly transfers to a neighboring medium, and the  
11 AuNP temperature immediately returns to room temperature. If the temperature of the medium becomes  
12 higher than the critical temperature, a phase transition occurs. The phase transition of water results in a  
13 plasmonic boiling bubble.<sup>9-13)</sup> A phase transition event occurring in biological cells can be used for  
14 photothermal therapy.<sup>9,14,15)</sup>

15 A heated nanoparticle produces a high temperature gradient, and this results in convection heat flow.  
16 Donner et al. reported on strong hydrodynamic convection heat flow through FEM simulation  
17 investigations.<sup>16)</sup> Namura et al. reported that the Marangoni effect was responsible for producing the strong  
18 convection flow.<sup>17)</sup> If the heat source is fixed, the fluid would affect the particles and molecules in a  
19 solution. On the other hand, it is interesting question how a freely moving nano heat source affects particles  
20 and molecules in a solution.

21 AuNPs have been utilized in dispersed liquids<sup>18,19)</sup> and by deposition or micro-patterning on a  
22 substrate.<sup>20,21)</sup> Recently, AuNPs have been deposited in micro-spaces to observe the position of AuNPs  
23 optically and for easy AuNP handling. Reinher et al. demonstrated the use of optical fibers with heated

1 biological tissues.<sup>15)</sup> Zhang et al. reported the use of plasmonic beads to detect biological macromolecules  
2 by SERS.<sup>22)</sup>

3 In this study, AuNPs were deposited on micro-glass beads for use as plasmonic nano-heaters. The  
4 plasmonic beads were illuminated with a visible continuous-wave (CW) laser and observed using an  
5 inverted optical microscope in order to investigate the photothermal bubble dynamics, plasmonic  
6 convection flow around the bead, and optical manipulations.

## 7 Materials and methods

8 Plasmonic beads were fabricated according to the method reported by Zhang et al. The micro-glass  
9 beads (3–10 and 10–30  $\mu\text{m}$  diameters) were purchased from Polysciences Inc. and washed with pure water  
10 before silane coupling treatment. The silane coupling agent was 3-(2-aminoethylamino)-  
11 propyltrimethoxysilane (AEPTS, Tokyo Chemical Industry Co., Ltd.). The beads were processed in an  
12 ethanol solution containing AEPTS for 18 h. The dispersion medium was changed to a  $\text{HAuCl}_4$  solution,  
13 followed by gold ion reduction to form the AuNPs (20 min with magnetic stirring). Thereafter, the  
14 supernatant was replaced with pure water, and the beads were allowed to rest at room temperature. Some  
15 of the synthesized beads were dropped on a glass plate and treated thermally at 300  $^\circ\text{C}$  for 3 h in an electric  
16 oven. Surface morphology and elemental characterization were explored by scanning electron microscopy  
17 (SEM) and energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS).

18 The photothermal effects of the beads were observed in situ using an inverted optical microscope (IX-  
19 71, Olympus Co.). The pure water-dispersed beads were sandwiched between two glass plates with a 1  
20 mm spacer and placed on the microscope stage. A 473 nm CW laser was introduced from the back-port  
21 of the microscope and focused on the sample through an objective lens (LUCPlanSAPO 40 $\times$  numerical  
22 aperture (NA) 0.6 or UPlanSAPO 10 $\times$  NA 0.4, Olympus Co.) to illuminate the bead from the bottom at a  
23 laser power of 1–30 mW. The beam spot size for LUCPlanSAPO 40 $\times$  on a flat glass plate was estimated

1 to be  $1 \mu\text{m}^2$ , and thus the laser power density was about  $1\text{--}30 \text{ mW}/\mu\text{m}^2$ . And the laser power density for  
2 objective lens of 10x can be calculated from the numerical aperture ratio<sup>23)</sup>, that is;

$$3 \quad \frac{I_{10x}}{I_{40x}} = \frac{\frac{P}{A_{10x}}}{\frac{P}{A_{40x}}} = \frac{w_{40x}^2}{w_{10x}^2} = \left(\frac{NA_{10x}}{NA_{40x}}\right)^2 = \frac{4}{9}$$

4 where  $I_i$ ,  $P$ ,  $A_i$ ,  $w_i$ , and  $NA_i$  represent the laser power density, the total laser power, the spot area, the  
5 minimum beam waist, and the NA for the objective lenses of  $i=10x$  and  $40x$ , respectively. Thus, the laser  
6 power density for the objective lens of UPlanSAPO 10x was lower than  $13.3 \text{ mW}/\mu\text{m}^2$ . The illuminated  
7 beads were monitored using a CCD camera at  $1\text{--}10$  frames/s. The convection flow was optically observed  
8 by exchanging pure water for a diluted colloidal suspension (100-nm silica (Fig. 4) or  $2\text{-}\mu\text{m}$  polystyrene  
9 (PS, Fig. 5)).

## 10 Results and discussion

11 First, we examined the surface morphology and composition of the synthesized beads. Figure 1 shows  
12 the SEM images of the AuNPs on a glass bead post-thermal treatment. As shown in Figs. 1(a)-1(b), the  
13 gold nanoparticles, which was analyzed by EDS (Supporting Information 1), were homogeneously  
14 distributed. AuNPs are supposed to have successfully deposited on the glass beads. Figure 1(c) shows the  
15 AuNP diameter distribution in the range of 10 to 50 nm (average 20 nm) with a number density of  $6 \times 10^2$   
16 units/ $\mu\text{m}^2$ . From the viewpoint of photothermal effects, the size of AuNP affects not only an optical  
17 absorbance by LSPR but also a heat quantity. Larger AuNPs have higher calorific value at the same  
18 temperature and produce nanobubbles even at lower-powered laser.<sup>12)</sup> When the laser power become  
19 higher, the neighbor nanobubbles unite and grow up to be a microbubble. Thus, it is important to control  
20 the size and density of AuNPS.

1 The dynamics of the plasmonic beads under CW laser illumination were observed using the optical  
2 microscope. We first demonstrated optical manipulation using a relatively low-powered CW laser (about  
3  $3 \text{ mW}/\mu\text{m}^2$ ) with irradiation from the objective lens of the lower NA (LUCPlanSAPO 10 $\times$ , NA 0.4).  
4 Figures 2(a)-2(c) (movies available in Supporting Information 2) show snapshots of plasmonic bead  
5 migration caused by CW laser trapping while moving the microscope stage. When the laser was switched  
6 on and one glass bead was illuminated, the neighboring beads aggregated immediately. Then, the  
7 aggregated beads kept their position around the focus, even while the stage was moved. This aggregation  
8 outside of a focus area phenomenon has also been reported for colloidal particles by Kudo and Wang et  
9 al.<sup>24,25</sup> Against previous works, the plasmonic bead was two orders of magnitude bigger, and the affected  
10 area was larger.

11 General optical manipulations arose from the electric field gradient, in other words, the dielectric  
12 object in the Gaussian beam laser.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, this phenomenon was not supposed to be similar to optical  
13 tweezers. The phenomenon was believed to be an attraction of other beads to the trapped bead. To observe  
14 optical gathering more, a greater number of beads were illuminated using a higher power laser. Figures  
15 2(d)-2(f) (Supporting Information 3) show snapshots of the gathering and moving of plasmonic beads at  
16 about  $8 \text{ mW}/\mu\text{m}^2$ . About 50 particles immediately aggregated when the laser was switched on. The beads  
17 gathered from distances greater than several tens of  $\mu\text{m}$ , and the aggregate remained trapped within the  
18 focus area even while the stage was moved. Note that some beads external to the bead aggregate  
19 maintained their distance of approximately  $100 \mu\text{m}$  away from the laser spots in a concentric pattern as  
20 shown in Fig. 2(f).

21 When the plasmonic beads were trapped and manipulated by the CW laser, no bubble was observed  
22 with the optical microscope. Next, we demonstrated visible microbubble generation by the laser irradiation  
23 of higher power density using a higher-powered objective lens (LUCPlanSAPO 40 $\times$ , NA 0.6). Figure 3

1 shows snapshots of the emergence of microbubbles from 30 mW CW laser irradiation. The microbubbles  
2 were generated when the laser was focused on the surface of the plasmonic bead. It was difficult to  
3 determine the laser power density criteria because the focal plane and the irradiated area of the CW laser  
4 varied with the exact bead site. However, we could observe microbubble generation even at 20 mW. Thus,  
5 we empirically defined the possible laser power density of bubble generation as  $20 \text{ mW}/\mu\text{m}^2$ .

6 The generated microbubble can be distinguished by two processes: bead surface attachment and  
7 dissociation from the bead surface with successive microbubble generations. Figures 3(a) and 3(b)  
8 (Supporting Information 4) show the optical images of the bubble growth. The CW laser illumination  
9 immediately generated one bubble at the focus. The microbubble adhered to the surface of the bead. The  
10 silane-coated surface was relatively hydrophobic and might act as a bubble-linker. To test the hypothesis,  
11 the beads were heated at  $300 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  for 3 h in an electric furnace to remove the silane residue (see Supporting  
12 Information 1). The beads gently fixed on the substrate when they were heated. Then the beads stopped  
13 their motion even under the laser irradiation. Under the condition, we could observe the microbubble  
14 motion without interruption by other beads' motion. The snapshots of the dynamics of generated  
15 microbubbles and the schematic side view are shown in Figs. 3(d), 3(e), and 3(f) (Supporting Information  
16 5). The microbubbles on the silane-free bead had larger contact angle compared to as-synthesized surface.  
17 In addition, the microbubble detached from the sample and moved upward and aggregated again. We  
18 supposed that the hydrophobicity of the bead surface can control the microbubble behavior.

19 Plasmonic bubbles were studied under various generation conditions. Freely dispersed AuNPs in  
20 solution were heated by laser pulses, and plasmonic nanobubbles that lived for nanoseconds were  
21 generated.<sup>7,13,27)</sup> Microbubbles that grew from nanobubbles incorporation were observed on the AuNP  
22 covered glass plate.<sup>6,8)</sup> By the same principle, the microbubbles in this study were generated from direct  
23 laser illumination of AuNP on the bead surface. On the other hand, microbubbles were occasionally

1 observed on the top-most surface of the glass bead. In that case, the micro-bead acted as a ball lens and  
2 changed the focal point.<sup>28)</sup> The focal point gap can be eliminated by setting the refractive index of the  
3 solution to that of the glass bead. Alternatively, the focal point can be fixed by embedding the bead into a  
4 photonic device, like an optical fiber.

5 To investigate the convection flow around the microbubble and the bead, we observed the laser-  
6 induced microbubble in a diluted colloidal suspension of colloidal silica. Figures 4(a)-4(d) show the  
7 optical images of the convection induced by the CW laser irradiation (Supporting Information 6). When  
8 the bubble generated, the convection flow was clearly observed a few second after the bubble generation  
9 as shown in Figs. 4(a) and 4(b). The bright contrast arose from the scattering light of silica colloids that  
10 aggregated during the flow. The schematic model of the flow is depicted in Fig. 4(e). The main flow  
11 seemed to start along the bubble surface as indicated by A in Fig. 4(b) and 4(c), and circulated near the  
12 surface. Namura et al reported the Marangoni effect of the bubble generated by laser irradiation of gold  
13 thin film is the driving force of the flow.<sup>29)</sup> In our system, the flow along the bubble was constantly  
14 observed and also arose from the Marangoni effect as indicated by red arrow in Fig. 4(e). On the other  
15 hand, the circulating flow occasionally changed its path as shown in Fig. 4(b) and 4(c). The flow path was  
16 turbulence and depended not only on the illuminated bead but also neighbor beads and an aqueous solution.  
17 The satellite beads in Fig. 2(f) should be caused by a localized vortex flow, however, it needs three-  
18 dimensional study to become clear how and why the flow generated.

19 Next, we also investigated the convection flow during the laser trapping, which was observed in Fig.  
20 2. Figure 5 shows the optical images of a laser trapped plasmonic bead in diluted PS colloidal suspension  
21 (Supporting Information 7). When the bead approached the focus of CW laser (wavelength; 532 nm,  
22 objective lens; x10, laser power density;  $6.7 \text{ mW}/\mu\text{m}^2$ ), the convection flow immediately generated even  
23 no microbubble generated. The PS particles circulated around the bead on the glass plate. The circulation

1 flow was very fast and larger than 500  $\mu\text{m}$  in diameter. As shown in Figs. 5(b)-5(d), a free bead was caught  
2 in the current and stayed near the trapped bead.

3 Our results indicated that the CW laser illumination of plasmonic beads produced not only thermal  
4 phenomena such as bubble generation, but also fluid phenomena such as laser manipulation and laser  
5 aggregation. We next investigated the FEM simulation of the 2D hydrodynamics around the beads using  
6 the COMSOL program. In previous studies, optifluid<sup>16)</sup> and Marangoni effects<sup>30)</sup> of the heated AuNPs  
7 were investigated on a glass plate. We started from these models and changed the substrate from a flat  
8 plate to a spherical object.

9 Figure 6a depicts the model of a part of the system around the heated AuNP. To simplify the model,  
10 only one AuNP (30 nm in diameter) was placed on the top of a glass bead. The AuNP temperature was  
11 kept at 600 K, which is near the spinodal temperature of water (550 K)<sup>31,32)</sup>. Figure 6(b) shows the  
12 temperature distribution around the AuNP. Temperature regions higher than 100  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  existed within a 200  
13 nm square, and we set the air bubble of  $\phi 200$  nm to cover the region entirely. As shown in Fig. 6(c), the  
14 temperature gradient along the bubble was on the order of  $10^8$  K/m, which is the driving force of  
15 Marangoni convection. The value was supposed to be sufficiently large to be the source of a convection  
16 flow. To investigate the interaction between neighboring glass beads, two glass beads of the same size  
17 were placed on a glass plate at a distance of 1.5  $\mu\text{m}$ , as shown in Figures 6d and 6e, and surrounded by  
18 water. The water area was  $3 \times 6 \mu\text{m}$ , and the thickness of the glass plate was 500 nm. The water was  
19 expected to display incompressible flow and obey the Navier–Stokes equation:

20

$$\rho(\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u}) = -\nabla p + \nabla \cdot (\mu(\nabla \mathbf{u} + (\nabla \mathbf{u})^T)) + \mathbf{F},$$



1 where  $\mathbf{u}$ ,  $\mu$ , and  $p$  are the fluid velocity, dynamic viscosity, and pressure, respectively. The Marangoni  
2 flow along the bubble–water interface was also considered. Marangoni flow was used in an additional  
3 heat transfer module and was calculated according to the following equation:

$$[\mu(\nabla\mathbf{u} + (\nabla\mathbf{u})^T)] \cdot \mathbf{n} = \gamma\nabla_t T$$

$$\gamma = \left| \frac{\partial\sigma}{\partial T} \right|,$$

6 where  $\sigma$  is the surface tension and  $\gamma$  is the surface tension temperature dependence.

7 Figures 6(d) and 6(e) show the pressure distribution of water with and without the bubble. As shown  
8 in Fig. 6(d), the region between the beads had a lower pressure than the outer region by approximately  $10^5$   
9 Pa. On the other hand, the pressure difference of the system without the bubble was very small ( $\sim 10^{-1}$  Pa)  
10 as shown in Fig. 6(e). This indicated that the bubble and accompanying Marangoni effects played  
11 important roles in our laser trapping results. The flow direction is shown in Fig. 6(f). The Marangoni flow  
12 maximized at the maximum temperature gradient along the bubble–water interface, and the direction of  
13 the flow was upward. Because the side beads were immobile, the flow from the side was interrupted, and  
14 the density between the beads was low. If the beads could move freely, they should have aggregated with  
15 the heated bead, which would agree with the laser trapping experiment (Fig. 2).

16 A FEM simulation study suggests that, as above stated, only nanobubble of 200 nm in diameter  
17 produced hundreds of times larger convection flow through a Marangoni effect. In addition, when we  
18 manipulated the beads, the plasmonic bead sparkled during the laser irradiation. We supposed that this  
19 was the scattering light of the plasmonic nanobubble. We concluded that the achievements in our study  
20 was due to the plasmonic nano- and micro-bubbles generated from photothermally heated AuNPs.

## 1 Conclusion

2 We fabricated plasmonic beads on which AuNPs were heterogeneously deposited through the NaBH<sub>4</sub>  
3 reduction method. The plasmonic beads were optically manipulated and generated bubbles when  
4 irradiated with visible CW laser light. Optical trapping and bead aggregation could be achieved at laser  
5 powers greater than 3 mW/μm<sup>2</sup>. A higher laser power leads to increased bead aggregation. When the laser  
6 power density was larger than 20 mW/μm<sup>2</sup>, the bubble was generated on the surface of the plasmonic  
7 bead. Microbubble growth could be divided into two categories: adhesion to the surface and immediate  
8 release from the surface depending on whether the beads were thermally treated to remove the silane  
9 coating. The observation of the convection flow and FEM simulation study suggested that the Marangoni  
10 effects induced by temperature differences at the surface of a small bubble acted as the driving force for  
11 optical confinement and optical attraction. These results suggest that plasmonic beads have potential  
12 applications as optically controllable nano-heaters, nano-bubble generators, and micro-convection  
13 generators.

14

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16

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1 **Figure captions**

2  
3 FIG. 1. (a) SEM image of a micro-glass bead covered with AuNPs whose composite characterization was confirmed by EDS.  
4 (b) Enlarged SEM image of AuNPs on the glass bead. (c) Size distribution of the AuNPs in the area of  $500 \times 500 \text{ nm}^2$  for ten  
5 beads.

6  
7 FIG. 2. (color online) Snapshots of optical manipulation of the beads: (a-c) The motion of plasmonic beads using the CW  
8 laser. During the stage was moved down and right, the beads remained confined to the area around the laser spot. (d-f) More  
9 plasmonic beads aggregation by higher power laser. When a 30 mW CW laser illuminated a specific bead, the surrounding  
10 beads immediately aggregated and also remained trapped. While moving the aggregated beads, some external beads formed  
11 concentric pattern external to the bead aggregate. Their distance from laser spot was approximately  $100 \mu\text{m}$ .

12  
13 FIG. 3. (color online) Snapshots of microbubble generation on the plasmonic bead when the laser was focused on the surface.  
14 (a, b) Microbubbles generated at the laser spot remained on the surface. When the stage was moved, the bubble also moved  
15 with rotating the bead. (d, e) Bubbles generated at the laser spot and immediately separated from the bead surface. The  
16 bubble detached from the illuminated bead surface and united in the other place. (c, f) Schematic side views of the bead and  
17 the microbubbles.

18  
19 FIG. 4. (color online) (a-d) Optical images of laser-induced convection flow around the bubble in a diluted colloidal  
20 suspension of silica. The lightness contrast that arose from the scattering light of aggregated silica colloids (d). The image  
21 contrast was enhanced using an image processing software. The spots of laser irradiation in (a-c) were represented by a x-  
22 mark. (e) Schematic model of the system. The red and the blue lines indicate the flow of the colloidal suspension.

23  
24 FIG. 5. Optical images of laser-induced convection flow around the bubble in a diluted colloidal suspension of polystyrene  
25 (PS,  $2 \mu\text{m}$  in diameter). (a) The laser irradiated the point illustrated by a cross with the laser power of  $6.7 \text{ mW}/\mu\text{m}^2$  through  
26  $\times 10$  objective lens ( $\text{NA}=0.4$ ). The bead approached the focal point by moving the stage as indicated by a gray arrow. (b) The  
27 convection flow, which was indicated by white arrow, immediately generated when the bead was irradiated. Another bead  
28 labeled by B in the figure was involved the convection and went along the flow as illustrated by white dashed arrow. (c) The  
29 PS particles circulated along with the flow illustrated by white arrows. (d) After switching off the laser, we could observe the  
30 PS particles gathering in a fan-like shape.

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3 FIG. 6. (color online) FEM simulation of the water hydrodynamics around the plasmonic bead: (a) schematic model around a  
4 heated AuNP. Region A is the supplementary vapor space that was hotter than 100 °C. (b) Thermal distribution around the  
5 AuNP when the AuNP was 600 K. (c) Temperature profile along the bubble surface indicated by arrow  $\Delta T$  in Fig. 6a. The  
6 origin of the distance indicates the contact point between the bubble and region A. Pressure distribution (d) with and (e)  
7 without the bubble. (f) The distribution of flow speed of the system under bubble-forming conditions.

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# FIGURES

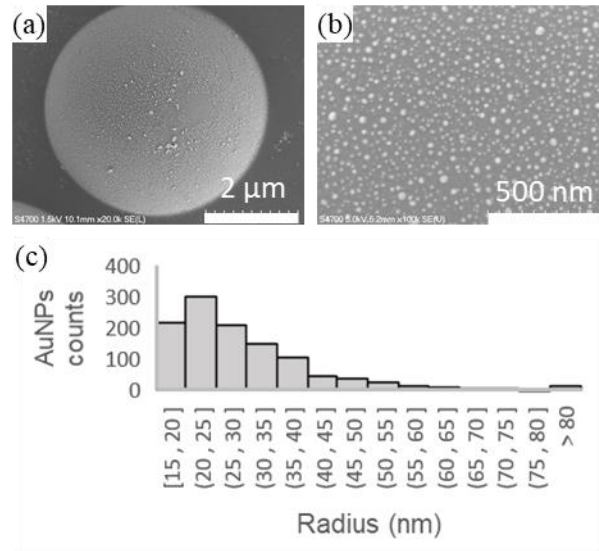


Figure 1

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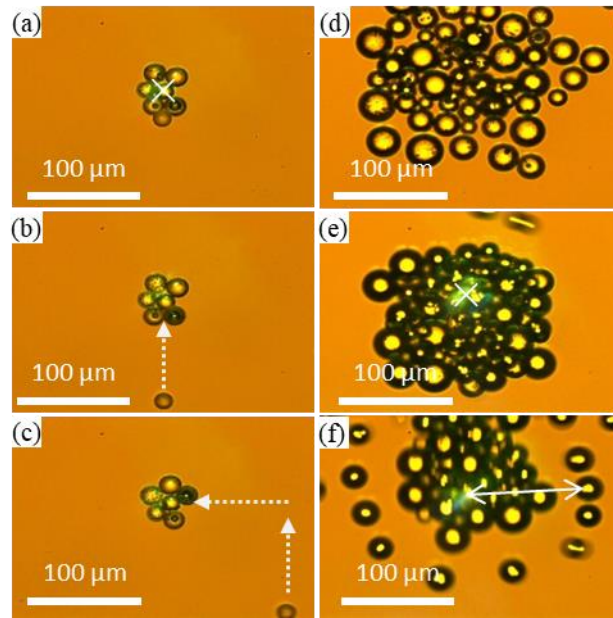


Figure 2

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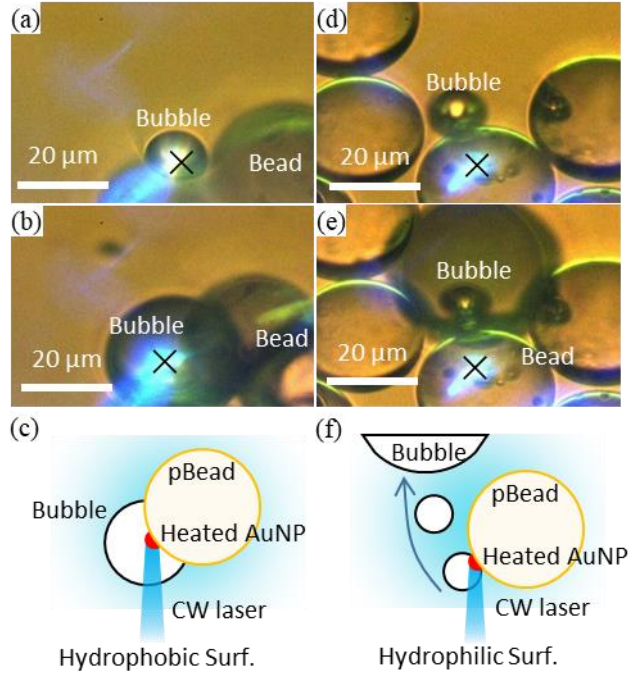


Figure 3

5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10



1  
2

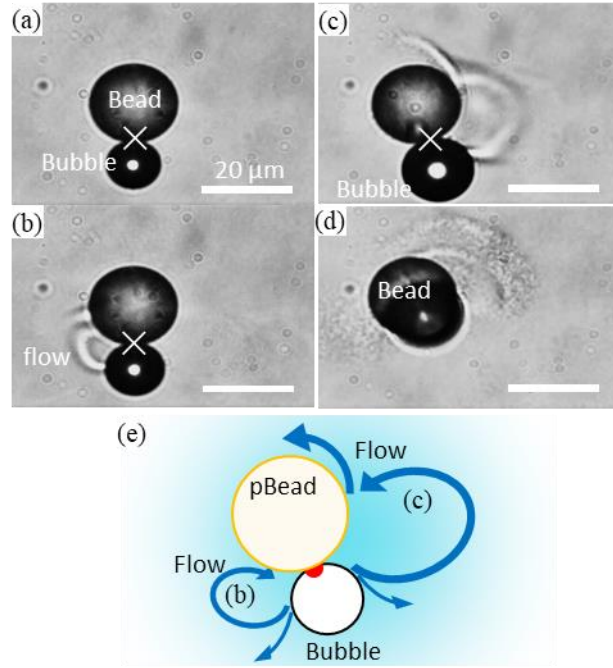


Figure 4

3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

1  
2

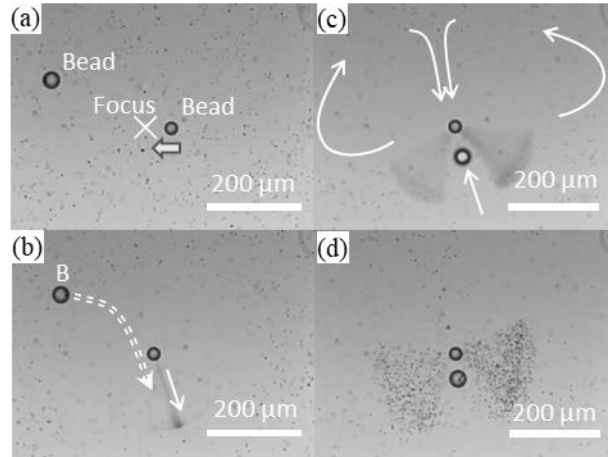


Figure 5

3  
4  
5  
6  
7

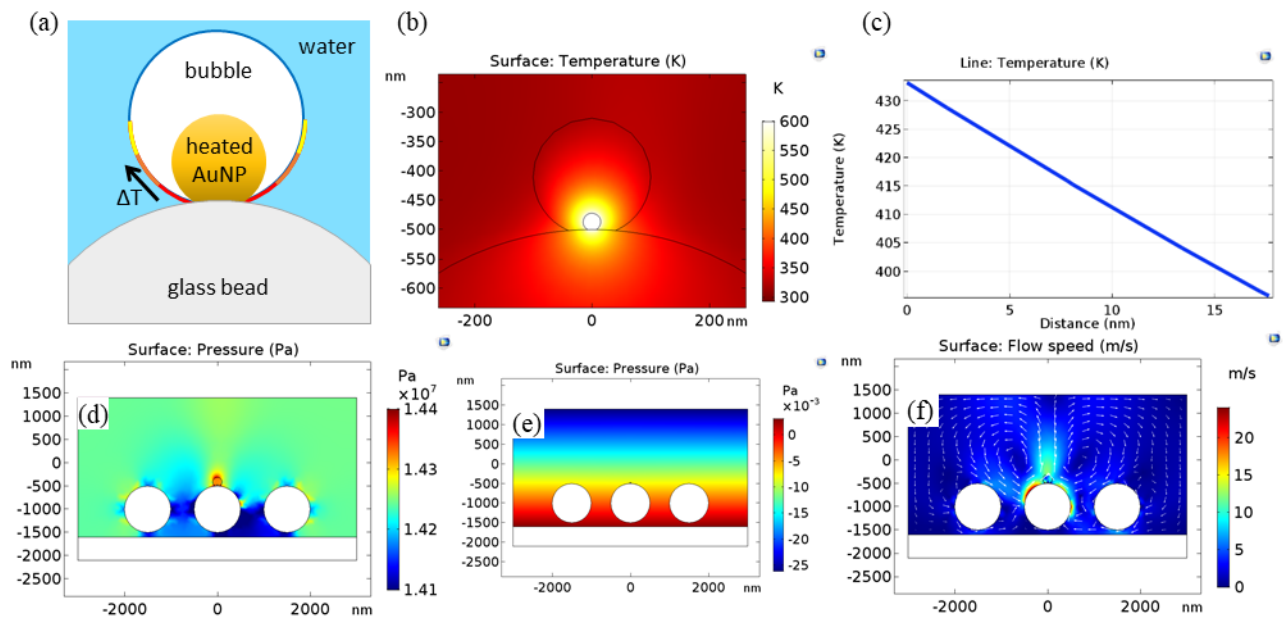


Figure 6

1  
2  
3  
4  
5