

Particle Brush Materials – Building Blocks for Multifunctional Nanocomposites With Engineered Properties

Michael R. Bockstaller

Carnegie Mellon University, Department of Materials Science and Engineering, 5000 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, 15213 PA.

Recent progress in the area of surface-initiated controlled radical polymerization (SI-CRP) has enabled the synthesis of polymer-grafted particulates with precise control over the architecture of grafted chains. The resulting 'particle brush materials' are of interest both from a fundamental as well as applied perspective because structural frustrations (that are associated with the tethering of chains to a curved surface) imply a sensitive dependence of the conformation of surface-grafted chains on the architecture of the particle brush. The opportunity to control chain conformation in hierarchically organized hybrid materials with precisely controlled microstructure renders particle brush materials intriguing building blocks for innovative material systems that could have a transformative impact on a range of 'soft material' technologies.

In the first part, this presentation will discuss experimental results that illustrate the role of polymer graft modification on the interaction between brush particles in solution and the solid state as well as the assembly characteristics of particle brushes in the solid state. In the second part, this presentation will review results of recent experimental studies that aim to harness the specific physical property changes that are imparted by polymer graft modification for applications in the areas of hybrid materials with increased thermal conductivity, moldable photonic and phononic crystal materials, and high breakdown dielectric barrier materials. The third part of this presentation will showcase ongoing work that is focused on understanding of how ligand interactions can be harnessed to organize particle blends into hierarchical superstructures (for high efficiency luminescent panels) as well as the application of particle brush based hybrids as synthons for the fabrication of nanoporous carbon/ceramic hybrids with high electrochemical and catalytic efficiency.

Michael Bockstaller received his diploma in Chemistry from the Technical University of Karlsruhe (Germany) and his Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from the Johannes Gutenberg University (Mainz, Germany). He was scientific assistant at the Max-Planck Institute for Polymer Research (Mainz, Germany) and postdoctoral associate at the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He came to Carnegie Mellon from the Technical University of Aachen (Germany) where he held a Habilitation position. He is a fellow of the American Physical Society and the Alexander von Humboldt foundation and a Emmy Noether grant recipient of the German Science Foundation.