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P-3112

SUPERINTENDENCIA DE INDUSTRIA Y COMERCIO
DIVISION DE NUEVAS CREACIONES

E. S. D.

Re: Expediente No. **11-138.605**
Solicitud de patente a nombre de **SEERSTONE LLC**

Yo, SILVANA MARIA LOPEZ DIAZ identificada como aparece al pie de mi firma, domiciliada en la Carrera 11 No. 86-53, piso 6, obrando como apoderada sustituta de acuerdo con la sustitución adjunta, de la sociedad SEERSTONE LLC., domiciliada en Estados Unidos de América, solicitante de la patente de la referencia, en respuesta al oficio No. **1399** notificado por fijación en lista el 11 de febrero de 2014, relacionado con concepto técnico de fondo, me permito manifestar:

1. Con fundamento en la facultad que confiere el artículo 34 de la Decisión 486 al solicitante para modificar la solicitud de patente en cualquier momento del trámite, presento junto con este memorial nuevo capítulo reivindicatorio, el cual consta de 107 reivindicaciones y reemplaza completamente el capítulo presentado anteriormente. En el nuevo capítulo reivindicatorio se realizaron las siguientes modificaciones:
 - 1.1 Como primera medida, se modificaron las antiguas reivindicaciones 1-11, 14-24, 26-27, 35-37, 39-95, 97-101, y 103-109 con el fin de dar mayor claridad a la materia de la cual se desea obtener protección.
 - 1.2 Asimismo, se eliminaron las antiguas reivindicaciones 96 y 102.
 - 1.3 Adicionalmente, se modifico todo el capítulo reivindicatorio con el fin de eliminar los términos considerados como ambiguos, imprecisos, o resultados a alcanzar.

En cuanto a estas modificaciones, me permito decir que las mismas no amplían de ninguna manera la materia objeto de la presente solicitud y se realizaron con el ánimo de superar las objeciones de claridad, novedad y nivel inventivo planteadas por el examinador en su concepto técnico.

En cuanto al número de reivindicaciones, atentamente nos permitimos decir que no se adjunta tasa por reivindicaciones adicionales, toda vez que el nuevo capítulo reivindicatorio contiene el mismo número de cláusulas que el originalmente presentado y es en esencia el mismo pero más limitado.

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2. Claridad de la solicitud

Respecto a las objeciones de claridad, el solicitante manifiesta que mediante las modificaciones realizadas en el capítulo reivindicatorio quedan subsanadas la totalidad de las objeciones, de modo tal que las nuevas reivindicaciones proporcionan claridad y concisión a la invención descrita, siguiendo las recomendaciones realizadas por el examinador en su concepto técnico.

Las modificaciones realizadas se encuentran soportadas por la información incluida en el capítulo descriptivo originalmente presentado. Las modificaciones a las reivindicaciones fueron realizadas con el fin de mejorar la claridad y facilitar el entendimiento de la invención reclamada.

Es deseo del solicitante indicar que en el nuevo capítulo reivindicatorio se eliminaron términos como “predeterminado”, “controlado”, “significativamente” y “aproximadamente”, los cuales son considerados como términos ambiguos o imprecisos que no permiten distinguir las características técnicas de la presente invención del estado de la técnica. En cuanto a los términos “temperatura”, “presión” y “tiempo de residencia”, el solicitante manifiesta que no son términos de carácter general ya que son condiciones del método reclamado y se encuentran correctamente definidos en el capítulo reivindicatorio.

En cuanto a la indicación del examinador con respecto a que las reivindicaciones 14 y 15 “se repiten”, el solicitante manifiesta que se modificaron dichas reivindicaciones con el fin de que se identificara en ellas la diferente materia reclamada.

Por otra parte, se modificaron las reivindicaciones 51 y 52 de la presente solicitud con el fin de indicar que la reacción de la reivindicación 50 forma productos particulares, eliminando la falsa dependencia que implica la indicación de la “morfología deseada”.

Las expresiones indicadas por el examinador fueron eliminadas de las reivindicaciones 86 a 94, definiendo de esta forma la presente invención únicamente mediante características técnicas y esenciales. Asimismo, la expresión “para controlar el” fue eliminada del presente capítulo reivindicatorio mediante la eliminación de la reivindicación 96.

En consecuencia, nos permitimos informar que las nuevas reivindicaciones 1 a 38 se ajustan a las disposiciones del artículo 30 de la Decisión 486.

3. Novedad y Nivel Inventivo

El examinador establece en su concepto técnico que las antiguas reivindicaciones 1, 10-13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 24-29, 31, 34, 38-40, 45, 46, 48, 49-51, 77, 78, 98 y 85 de la presente solicitud carecen de novedad a la luz del documento US20050074392 (D1), y que las reivindicaciones 8, 14, 15, 19, 32, 37, 47, 52-54, 59-61, 65, 69-75, 79-90, 95, 96 y 103 de la presente solicitud carecen de nivel inventivo a la luz de D1, US20090056802 (D2) y US20060191835 (D3).

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En este sentido, me permito decir que el artículo 16 de la Decisión 486 de la Comisión de la Comunidad Andina establece que la invención se considera nueva cuando no está comprendida en el estado de la técnica. Si de acuerdo con el espíritu de la norma legal indicada, la invención no se considera como nueva si está “comprendida” en el estado de la técnica, dicha norma se está refiriendo, naturalmente, a la totalidad del invento y no a alguno o a algunos de los componentes.

Así, para que la invención pierda su calidad de novedosa, es claro que ella, TODA ELLA, ha de estar contenida en el “conjunto de conocimientos existentes que son aplicables al proceso industrial” como define el estado de la técnica el Tribunal de justicia del Acuerdo de Cartagena (Proceso No. 6-IP-89, sentencia de 31 de octubre de 1989, publicada en Jurisprudencia del Tribunal de Justicia del Acuerdo de Cartagena, Tomo 11, BID-INTAL, Buenos Aires, 1994, página 60).

Aplicando lo anterior al caso concreto, para que las razones que aduce ese despacho para desvirtuar la novedad fuesen ciertas, sería forzoso que se demostrara que la invención de mi mandante esté comprendida en el estado de la técnica, específicamente en forma individual en los documentos D1 y D2, de forma TOTAL, lo cual no sucede con la materia reclamada en el nuevo capítulo reivindicatorio.

En cuanto al nivel inventivo, me permito indicar que el artículo 18 de la Decisión 486 establece que “Se considerará que una invención tiene nivel inventivo, si para una persona del oficio normalmente versada en la materia técnica correspondiente, esa invención no hubiese resultado obvia ni se hubiese derivado de manera evidente del estado de la técnica”.

Lo anterior significa que el análisis de nivel inventivo **NO** es una comparación de los objetos de las anterioridades y la solicitud en estudio. El análisis de nivel inventivo **debe demostrar** la obviedad de la invención y establecer cómo ésta no contiene un salto cualitativo, que demuestre su altura inventiva, teniendo en cuenta que se hace **necesario demostrar** que la invención analizada carece de nivel inventivo y hubiese sido obvia para una persona versada en la materia.

Teniendo en cuenta las anteriores definiciones, es deseo del solicitante que se tengan en cuenta los siguientes argumentos que demuestran la patentabilidad de la presente invención.

i. Patentabilidad de las nuevas reivindicaciones 1 a 49

La nueva reivindicación 1, tiene nivel inventivo y novedad a la luz de los documentos D1, D2 y D3 ya que ninguno de estos documentos mencionan ni sugieren un método que comprende “mezclar una corriente de gas de óxido de carbono con una corriente de gas de reducción para formar una mezcla de gas de reacción; suministrar la mezcla de gas de reacción con una zona de reacción; hacer reaccionar la mezcla de gas de reacción en la presencia de un catalizador sólido para formar agua y un producto de carbono sólido; y separar por lo menos una porción del agua formada en la zona de reacción desde la mezcla de gas de reacción durante la reacción del óxido de”

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carbón con el agente de reducción".

Al revisar detalladamente el documento D1 se encuentra que este describe "un método para hacer crecer nanotubos de carbono de pared sencilla [que] implica preparar un catalizador (...) y poner en contacto el catalizador con una materia prima que contiene carbono gaseoso a una temperatura suficiente y durante un tiempo de contacto suficiente para hacer nanotubos de carbono de pared sencilla" (resumen). El mismo documento indica "los gases de materia prima que contienen carbono adecuados incluyen, pero no se limitan a, metano, hidrocarburos, alcoholes, monóxido de carbono y combinaciones de los mismos" (párrafo [0059]); "Metales catalíticos [O]xidados se pueden activar, (es decir, convertir a una forma en la que ellos proporcionan sitios catalíticamente activos para la reacción que forma nanotubos de carbono de pared sencilla) mediante reducción con un agente reductor. Esta reducción se puede hacer antes, o simultáneamente, de poner en contacto con, el catalizador con la materia prima que contiene carbono para hacer nanotubos de carbono de pared sencilla" (párrafo [0057]); "después de preparar el catalizador, este hace contacto con una corriente gaseosa que comprende una materia prima que contiene carbono a una temperatura suficiente y durante un tiempo de contacto suficiente para hacer un producto de carbono que comprende nanotubos de carbono de pared sencilla" (párrafo [0062]). De esta forma, es claro que el documento D1 no describe ni sugiere hacer reaccionar un óxido de carbono con un gas reductor. Por el contrario, el agente reductor en el documento D1 se describe como activación del catalizador oxidado (párrafo [0057]). El documento D1 no describe ni sugiere separar el agua formada en la zona de reacción de la mezcla de gas de reacción durante la reacción en porque ya que el documento D1 no hace referencia a reacciones de óxido de carbono que forman agua. Por el contrario, las reacciones descritas en el documento D1 están relacionada con la descomposición del metano para formar carbono e hidrógeno ("preferiblemente, la materia prima que contiene carbono gaseoso comprende metano e hidrógeno", párrafo [0059])

En cuanto al documento D2, se encuentra que dicho documento describe enseña, *inter alia*, "métodos para mejorar el diseño de herramientas mecano-sintéticas, métodos para adhesión de moléculas de herramientas mecano-sintéticas a miembros de soporte estructural, [y] métodos para mecano-síntesis de nanoestructuras precisas" (resumen). El examinador indica en su concepto técnico que el documento D2 describe el uso de gas atmosférico como una fuente de dióxido de carbono. Sin embargo, es deseo del solicitante indicar que el documento D2 no hace referencia a reacciones de óxido de carbono con un gas de reducción para formar agua y un carbono sólido, y describe la separación de agua formada en una zona de reacción. De esta forma, la información descrita en el documento D2 no supera la deficiencia del documento D1 identificado anteriormente.

El documento D3 describe, *inter alia*, un contenedor en forma de almohada (párrafo [0023]). El examinador establece en su concepto técnico que el documento D3 describe la formación de una morfología de almohada. Sin embargo, no se encuentra en el documento D3 alguna afirmación que describa reacciones de óxidos de carbono con un gas de reducción para formar agua y un carbono sólido, ni el agua formada en una zona de reacción. Por lo tanto, el documento D3 tampoco revela las deficiencias del documento D1 identificado anteriormente en comparación con el método de la presente solicitud.

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Adicionalmente, el solicitante manifiesta que el contenedor con forma de almohada descrito en el documento D3 no tiene una morfología de almohada, como se utiliza en, por ejemplo, la reivindicación 49 de la presente solicitud. Por ejemplo, en el capítulo descriptivo y en las figuras 2 y 3 de la presente solicitud se describe la morfología de almohada, y esta descripción hace claro que la morfología de almohada es una característica del carbono propiamente dicho, no la forma de un contenedor en el que se puede colocar el carbono. Por lo tanto, el documento D3 no menciona ni sugiere una morfología de almohada de carbono sólido.

Por las anteriores razones, la reivindicación 1 de la presente solicitud y sus reivindicaciones dependientes son inventivas y novedosas a la luz de las referencias citadas.

ii. Patentabilidad de las nuevas reivindicaciones 50 a 100

La nueva reivindicación 50 de la presente solicitud tiene nivel inventivo y novedad a la luz de los documentos D1, D2, y D3 al considerar que estos documentos no enseñan o sugieren un método que comprende “*mezclar una primera corriente de gas que contiene dióxido de carbono y una segunda corriente de gas que contiene un agente de reducción gaseoso para formar una mezcla de gas de reacción; suministrar la mezcla de gas de reacción a una zona de reacción; hacer reaccionar el dióxido de carbono con el agente de reducción gaseoso en la zona de reacción en la presencia de un catalizador que contiene hierro para formar agua y el producto de carbono sólido; y separar por lo menos una parte del agua formada en la zona de reacción desde la mezcla de gas de reacción durante la reacción del dióxido de carbono con el agente de reducción*”.

La reivindicación 50 tiene novedad y nivel inventivo por razones similares a las explicadas anteriormente con respecto a la reivindicación 1. En particular, ninguna de las referencias citadas, solas o en combinación, describen reacciones de óxidos de carbono con un gas de reducción para formar carbono sólido y agua, y no describen separar el agua formada en una zona de reacción.

Adicionalmente, el documento D1 no describe el dióxido de carbono como materia prima sino como un agente de oxidación “*para moderar el índice de reacción*” y “*minimizar [] la producción de carbonos extraños*” (párrafo [0063]). Así, la reivindicación 50 es adicionalmente patentable teniendo en cuenta que incluye hacer reaccionar dióxido de carbono con el agente reductor gaseoso.

Por las anteriores razones, la reivindicación 50, y sus reivindicaciones dependientes 51 a 100, tienen nivel inventivo y novedad a la luz de las enseñanzas descritas en los documentos citados por el examinador.

iii. Patentabilidad de las nuevas reivindicaciones 101 a 107

La nueva reivindicación 101, como se propone modificar tiene nivel inventivo y novedad a la luz de los documentos D1, D2, y D3 ya que estos documentos no

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describen ni sugieren una composición que comprende “*almohadas de nanotubos de carbono formadas a partir de aglomeraciones entramadas de nanotubos de carbono, los nanotubos de carbono formados al hacer reaccionar dióxido de carbono con un agente de reducción gaseoso con un agente de reducción gaseoso en la presencia de un catalizador que contiene hierro*”.

La reivindicación 101 cumple con los requisitos de patentabilidad teniendo en cuenta razones similares a las explicadas anteriormente con respecto a la reivindicación 50. En particular, ninguna de las referencias citadas, solas o en combinación, describe reacciones de dióxido de carbono con un agente de reducción para formar carbono sólido en la presencia de un catalizador que contiene hierro. Por lo tanto, las referencias citadas no enseñan composiciones de materia así formada. Así, la reivindicación 101 y sus reivindicaciones dependientes 102 a 107 tienen nivel inventivo y novedad al considerar la información descrita en los documentos D1, D2 y D3.

Teniendo en cuenta lo anterior, es claro para una persona del oficio medianamente versada en la técnica, las diferencias técnicas de los métodos y la composición reivindicados con las enseñanzas del estado de la técnica, y el paso inventivo que implicó el desarrollo de las invenciones de la presente solicitud.

Por lo tanto, las nuevas reivindicaciones 1 a 107 cumplen con los requisitos de novedad y nivel inventivo, tal como se define en los artículos 16 y 18 de la Decisión 486/00.

Adicional a lo anterior, es deseo del solicitante indicar a ese Despacho que la solicitud equivalente en Estados Unidos de América ha sido recientemente concedida el 25 de marzo de 2014 bajo el número US 8,679,444, reconociendo la Oficina Estadounidense de Patentes la novedad y el nivel inventivo de la invención. Así, aunque el solicitante reconoce la independencia de cada Oficina de Patentes, es sorprendente que otras Oficinas de Patentes reconozcan la patentabilidad de la presente invención, mientras que el examinador en su concepto técnico se aparte de dicho criterio, siendo la novedad y el nivel inventivo conceptos totalmente universales. Copia de la patente No. 8,679,444 se presente como anexo al presente memorial.

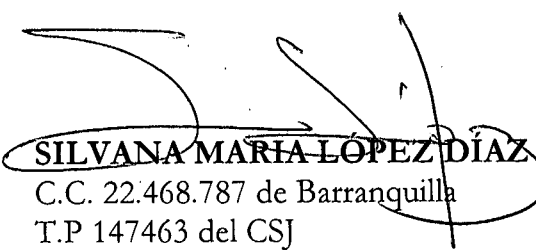
Habiendo atendido cabalmente las objeciones presentadas por ese despacho, atentamente solicitamos se conceda el privilegio de patente de invención a la solicitud en estudio o si el señor examinador considera que subsisten razones para objetar la presente invención, rogamos expedir otro examen de fondo con los debidos motivos y razones que sustenten su objeción con el fin de que nuestro mandante tenga la posibilidad de exponer sus argumentos con base en la interpretación de los artículos 45 de la Decisión 486 -el cual otorga la facultad al examinador para emitir los exámenes de fondo-, 35 y 59 del Código Contencioso Administrativo que señala que: “*habiéndose dado oportunidad a los interesados para expresar sus opiniones, y con base en las pruebas e informes disponibles, se tomará la decisión que será motivada al menos en forma sumaria si afecta a particulares*” y “*(..) deberá proferirse la decisión definitiva. Esta se motivará en sus aspectos de hecho y de derecho, y en los de conveniencia si es el caso*”, respectivamente (El subrayado es nuestro).

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En consecuencia, solicitamos a ese despacho pronunciarse en relación con todos los argumentos presentados en este memorial dando estricta aplicación al principio del debido proceso consagrado en el artículo 29 de la Constitución Nacional

Señor Superintendente,



SILVANA MARIA LÓPEZ DÍAZ

C.C. 22.468.787 de Barranquilla

T.P 147463 del CSJ

notificaciones@clarkemodet.com.co

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ANEXOS

- Patente No. US 8,679,444.

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DIVISION DE NUEVAS CREACIONES

E. S. D.

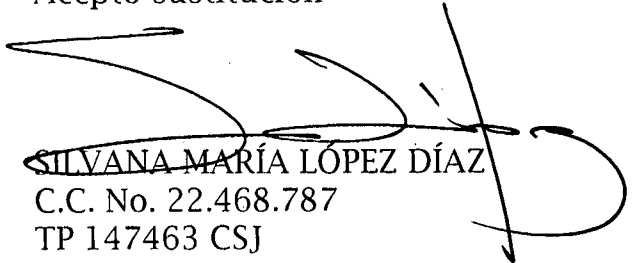
Re: Expediente No. 11-138.605
Solicitud de patente a nombre de SEERSTONE LLC

Yo, **DILIA RODRÍGUEZ D' ALEMAN**, identificada como aparece al pie de mi firma, domiciliada en Bogotá, Colombia, atentamente informo a usted que sustituyo el poder con que obro a la doctora **SILVANA MARÍA LÓPEZ DÍAZ**, domiciliada en Bogotá, identificada con la Cédula de Ciudadanía No. 22.468.787 y portadora de la tarjeta profesional No. 147.463 del CSJ, con las mismas facultades con que me fueron conferidas para este caso.

Señor Superintendente,


DILIA RODRIGUEZ D' ALEMAN
C.C. 41.654.882 de Bogotá
TP 20824 CSJ

Acepto sustitución


SILVANA MARÍA LÓPEZ DÍAZ
C.C. No. 22.468.787
TP 147463 CSJ

PRESENTACION PERSONAL

El anterior escrito fue presentado ante el
NOTARIO ONCE DEL CIRCULO DE BOGOTA, D.C.

personalmente por

quien exhibió la c.c.

y Tarjeta Profesional No.

Fecha

Rodríguez D. Alemón
44634882

2082 y C.S.J. 31 OCT 2013

[Signature]

Guillermo Chavez Cristancho
NOTARIO



[Large signature]
Guillermo Chavez Cristancho
CIRCULO DE BOGOTA D.C.

REIVINDICACIONES

1. Método para la producción de productos de carbono
5 sólido que comprende:

mezclar una corriente de óxido de carbono con una
corriente de gas reductor para formar una mezcla de gas de
reacción;

10 suministrar la mezcla de gas de reacción a una zona de
reacción;

reaccionar la mezcla de gas de reacción en la presencia de un
catalizador sólido para formar agua y un producto de carbono
sólido; y

15 separar por lo menos una porción del agua formada en la
zona de reacción de la mezcla de gas de reacción durante la
reacción del óxido de carbono con el agente reductor..

2. El método de la reivindicación 1 que comprende,
además, enfriar la mezcla de gas de reacción antes que la mezcla
de gas de reacción abandone la zona de reacción.

20 3. El método de la reivindicación 1 en donde separar
por lo menos una porción del agua formada en la zona de reacción
de la mezcla de gas de reacción durante la reacción del óxido de
carbón con el gas reductor, comprende pasar la mezcla de gas de
reacción en una zona condensadora y reciclar una porción de la
25 mezcla de gas de reacción de vuelta a la zona de reacción.

4. El método de la reivindicación 1, que comprende
además controlar una temperatura de la mezcla de gas de reacción
en la zona de reacción en un rango de 400°C a 900°C.

30 5. El método de la reivindicación 1 que comprende,
además, precalentar el óxido de carbono y reducir corrientes de
gas antes de suministrar la mezcla de gas de reacción a la zona

de reacción.

6. El método de la reivindicación 1 que comprende, además, precalentar la zona de reacción a una temperatura diferente de una temperatura de la mezcla de gas de reacción.

5 7. El método de la reivindicación 1 que comprende, además, mantener las condiciones de reacción incluyendo temperatura, presión y tiempo de residencia de los gases de reacción en la zona de reacción, y mantener el flujo de los gases de reacción a través de la zona de reacción por un periodo de
10 tiempo, para formar el producto de carbono sólido.

8. El método de la reivindicación 1 que comprende, además, transferir la mezcla de gas de reacción y producto de carbono sólido de la zona de reacción a una zona de enfriamiento, y después de la zona de enfriamiento a un proceso de separación
15 para separar el producto de carbono sólido de la mezcla de gas de reacción.

9. El método de la reivindicación 1 en donde el catalizador comprende acero, o se forma mediante la reducción de por lo menos un óxido de un elemento en acero.

20 10. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas reductor comprende hidrógeno o hidrocarburos o una mezcla de los mismos.

11. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde el catalizador es un metal seleccionado del grupo consistente de
25 metales del Grupo VI, metales del Grupo VIII y mezclas de los mismos.

12. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas de óxido de carbono es predominantemente dióxido de carbono.

30 13. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas de óxido de carbono es predominantemente

monóxido de carbono.

14. El método de la reivindicación 1, que comprende además separar la corriente de gas de óxido de carbono de una mezcla de gases.

5 15. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas de óxido de carbono comprende una mezcla de gases.

16. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas reductor comprende gas de hidrógeno.

10 17. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas reductor comprende un gas de hidrocarburos.

18. El método de la reivindicación 17, en donde el gas de hidrocarburo comprende gas natural.

15 19. El método de la reivindicación 17, en donde el gas de hidrocarburo comprende gas de síntesis.

20. El método de la reivindicación 17, en donde el gas de hidrocarburo comprende metano.

20 21. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas reductor se proporciona en una cantidad en exceso de una proporción requerida para la reducción estequiométrica de cualquier óxido de carbono disponible.

25 22. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas reductor es proporcionada en una proporción requerida para la reducción estequiométrica de cualquier óxido de carbono disponible.

23. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la corriente de gas reductor es proporcionada en una cantidad menor a una proporción requerida para la reducción estequiométrica de cualquier óxido de carbono disponible.

30 24. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde el catalizador se proporciona a la zona de reacción con un gas

transportador.

25. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde el catalizador se proporciona a la zona de reacción mediante un precursor de catalizador.

5 26. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde el catalizador comprende además átomos de un metal de transición seleccionado del grupo consistente de metales del Grupo VI, metales del Grupo VII y mezclas de los mismos.

10 27. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde el catalizador comprende además un compuesto de óxido de metal seleccionado del grupo consistente de óxido de berilio, óxido de magnesio, óxido de calcio, óxido de estroncio y óxido de bario.

 28. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde el catalizador comprende un óxido de hierro.

15 29. El método de la reivindicación 25, en donde el precursor de catalizador comprende un compuesto de un metal seleccionado del grupo consistente de metales del Grupo VI, metales del Grupo VII, y mezclas de los mismos.

20 30. El método de la reivindicación 29, en donde el compuesto es un carbonilo metálico.

 31. El método de la reivindicación 29, en donde el compuesto es un óxido metálico.

 32. El método de la reivindicación 29, en donde el compuesto es un metalloceno.

25 33. El método de conformidad con la reivindicación 1, en donde la zona de reacción es un reactor de cama fluidizado.

 34. El método de la reivindicación 24, en donde el gas transportador comprende una mezcla de uno o más de un gas inerte y óxidos de carbono.

30 35. El método de la reivindicación 25, en donde la concentración del precursor de catalizador en la mezcla de gas de

reacción está en el rango de 1 ppm a 100 ppm.

36. El método de la reivindicación 25, en donde el precursor del catalizador se proporciona a una temperatura por debajo de una temperatura de descomposición del precursor del catalizador.

37. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde un promotor de catalizador es añadido a la mezcla de gas de reacción.

38. El método de la reivindicación 37, en donde el promotor de catalizador es seleccionado del grupo consistente de tiofeno, H_2S , sulfuro heterocíclico, sulfuro inorgánico, plomo volátil, compuestos de bismuto y mezclas de los mismos.

39. El método de la reivindicación 25 comprendiendo, además, suministrar un agente de nucleación para facilitar la formación del catalizador a partir del precursor de catalizador.

40. El método de la reivindicación 39, en donde el agente de nucleación comprende un compuesto gaseoso que contiene metal.

41. El método de la reivindicación 40, en donde el compuesto gaseoso que contiene metal se selecciona a partir del grupo consistente de $Ni(CO)_4$, $W(CO)_6$, $Mo(CO)_6$, y sus mezclas.

42. El método de la reivindicación 39, en donde el agente de nucleación comprende fotones de luz láser.

43. El método de la reivindicación 1 comprendiendo, además, pasar el producto de sólido de carbono formado en la zona de reacción a través de un cultivo subsecuente y zona de recocido.

44. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde la zona de reacción es un reactor en aerosol configurado de tal forma que el catalizador puede ser introducido como un rocío en aerosol.

45. El método de la reivindicación 44, en donde el

catalizador comprende partículas preformadas que tienen un tamaño de partícula seleccionado para controlar una dimensión característica de un producto de sólido de carbono formado.

46. El método de la reivindicación 44, en donde el catalizador se forma de uno o más precursores de catalizador que se descomponen para formar el catalizador a una temperatura de reacción.

47. El método de la reivindicación 44, en donde el catalizador permanece en el rocío de aerosol y el producto de carbono sólido crece en partículas de catalizador que pasan a través de la zona de reacción.

48. El método de la reivindicación 44, en donde el catalizador es depositado del rocío de aerosol hacia una o más superficies dentro de la zona de reacción.

49. El método de la reivindicación 1, en donde reaccionar la mezcla de gas de reacción en presencia de un catalizador sólido para formar producto de carbono sólido y agua comprende formar grupos de nanotubos de carbono que tienen una morfología de almohada.

50. Un método para la producción de un producto de carbono sólido, el método que comprende:

mezclar una primer corriente de gas que contiene dióxido de carbono y una segunda corriente de gas que contiene un agente reductor gaseoso para formar una mezcla de gas de reacción;

suministrar la mezcla de gas de reacción a una zona de reacción;

reaccionar el dióxido de carbono con el agente reductor gaseoso en la zona de reacción en presencia de un catalizador que contiene hierro para formar agua y el producto de carbono sólido;

y

separar por lo menos una porción del agua formada en la zona de reacción de la mezcla de gas de reacción durante la reacción del dióxido de carbono con el agente reductor gaseoso.

51. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde
5 reaccionar el dióxido de carbono con el agente reductor en la zona de reacción en presencia de un catalizador que contiene hierro para formar agua y el producto de carbono sólido comprende formar un nanotubo de carbono de un solo muro, un nanotubo de carbono multimuros, una nanofibra de carbono, una plaqueta de
10 grafito, grafeno, negro de carbono, carbono amorfo o una combinación de los mismos.

52. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde reaccionar el dióxido de carbono con el agente reductor en la zona de reacción en presencia de un catalizador que contiene
15 hierro para formar agua y el producto de carbono sólido comprende formar aglomeraciones enredadas de nanotubos de carbono.

53. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde separar por lo menos una porción del agua formada en la zona de reacción de la mezcla del gas de reacción durante la reacción del
20 dióxido de carbono con el agente reductor gaseoso comprende:

circular la mezcla de gas de reacción desde la zona de reacción en una zona condensadora para eliminar el agua de la mezcla de gas de reacción para producir una mezcla de gas de reciclaje seca; y

25 reciclar la mezcla de gas de reciclaje seca en la zona de reacción.

54. El método de la reivindicación 53, comprendiendo, además, mezclar la mezcla de gas de reciclaje seca con la mezcla de gas de reacción.

30 55. El método de la reivindicación 50 comprendiendo, además, al menos uno de:

calentar la primera corriente de gas a una temperatura, antes de proporcionar la mezcla de gas de reacción a la zona de reacción;

5 calentar la segunda corriente de gas a una segunda temperatura, antes de proporcionar la mezcla de gas de reacción a la zona de reacción;

calentar la mezcla de gas de reacción a una tercera temperatura a, antes de proporcionar la mezcla de gas de reacción a la zona de reacción; y

10 calentar la zona de reacción a una cuarta temperatura, antes de proporcionar la mezcla de gas de reacción a la zona de reacción.

56. El método de la reivindicación 50 que además comprende:

15 mantener las condiciones de reacción en la zona de reacción;

continuar el flujo de los gases de reacción a través de la zona de reacción durante un periodo de tiempo; y

20 remover al menos una porción del producto de carbono sólido de la zona de reacción.

57. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde suministrar la mezcla de gas de reacción a la zona de reacción comprende controlar al menos uno de:

25 una temperatura de la mezcla de gas de reacción;
una temperatura de la zona de reacción;
una presión en la zona de reacción;

una presión parcial de la mezcla de gas de reacción;
30 una composición de la mezcla de gas de reacción;
una temperatura en la zona de reacción;

un tiempo de residencia de la mezcla de gas de reacción en la zona de reacción;

un tiempo de residencia del producto de carbono sólido en la zona de reacción;

5 un tamaño del catalizador;

un método de formación del catalizador; y

una forma del catalizador.

10 58. El método de la reivindicación 50 que comprende además separar la primera corriente de gas de al menos uno de gas mezclado, gases atmosféricos, gases de combustión, gases malolientes procesados, gases de escape de la manufactura del cemento Portland, o gases de pozo.

15 59. El método de la reivindicación 50 que además comprende transferir continuamente una porción de la mezcla de gas de reacción y el producto de carbono sólido desde la zona de reacción hacia un proceso de separación para separar el producto de carbono sólido de la mezcla de gas de reacción.

20 60. El método de la reivindicación 59 que además comprende regresar por lo menos una porción de la mezcla de gas de reacción a una zona de reacción, en donde la porción de la mezcla de gas de reacciones sustancialmente libre de solidos.

25 61. El método de la reivindicación 50, que comprende además terminar un flujo del gas de reacción hacia la zona de reacción, remover el gas de reacción de la zona de reacción, proporcionar un gas inerte a la zona de reacción, enfriar la zona de reacción con el producto de carbono sólido, y remover el producto de carbono sólido de la zona de reacción.

30 62. El método de la reivindicación 50 que además comprende pasar los nanotubos de carbono formados en la zona de reacción a través de una zona de cultivo y recocido.

63. El método de la reivindicación 50 que además

comprende enfriar el producto de carbono sólido.

64. El método de la reivindicación 63, en donde el enfriamiento del producto de carbono sólido comprende controlar al menos uno de una composición de gas, un tiempo de reacción, una temperatura de gas de reacción, una condición de recocido o una rampa de bajada.

65. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde el catalizador que contiene hierro comprende acero o está formado por la reducción de uno o más óxidos de un elemento en acero.

66. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde el catalizador que contiene hierro está formado principalmente de hierro en acero.

67. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde el catalizador que contiene hierro comprende un elemento del Grupo 6, 7, 8 ó 9.

68. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde el catalizador que contiene hierro comprende un compuesto metálico que incluye un elemento del Grupo 6, 7, 8 ó 9.

69. El método de la reivindicación 68, en donde el compuesto metálico comprende un óxido de hierro, un carburo de hierro o cementita.

70. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además comprende proporcionar el catalizador que contiene hierro a la zona de reacción con un gas transportador.

71. El método de la reivindicación 70, en donde el gas transportador comprende al menos uno de hidrógeno, otro gas de agente reductor, un gas inerte, un óxido de carbono o mezclas del mismo.

72. El método de la reivindicación 50 que además comprende proporcionar un precursor de catalizador a la zona de reacción.

73. El método de la reivindicación 72, en donde el precursor del catalizador comprende un compuesto metálico que incluye un elemento del Grupo 6, 7, 8 ó 9.

5 74. El método de la reivindicación 73, en donde el compuesto metálico comprende al menos uno de un carbonilo metálico, un óxido metálico, un carburo metálico o un metaloceno.

10 75. El método de la reivindicación 72, en donde el precursor del catalizador se descompone para formar un catalizador al ser expuesto a la mezcla de gas de reacción a una temperatura de descomposición.

15 76. El método de la reivindicación 72, en donde proporcionar un precursor de catalizador a la zona de reacción comprende proporcionar el precursor del catalizador en la zona de reacción está una concentración en el rango de 1 parte por millón a 100 partes por millón.

77. El método de la reivindicación 72, que comprende además proporcionar un agente de nucleación a la zona de reacción para facilitar la formación del catalizador a partir del precursor del catalizador.

20 78. El método de la reivindicación 72, que además comprende promover nucleación del catalizador a partir del precursor del catalizador mediante suministrar un compuesto gaseoso que contiene metal o luz láser pulsada.

25 79. El método de la reivindicación 50 que además comprende adicionar un promotor de catalizador a la mezcla de gas de reacción.

30 80. El método de la reivindicación 79, en donde el promotor de catalizador comprende al menos uno de un material seleccionado del grupo que consiste de compuestos de tiofeno, sulfuro de hidrógeno, sulfuro heterocíclico, sulfuro inorgánico, plomo volátil y bismuto.

81. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la segunda corriente de gas consiste esencialmente de hidrógeno.

82. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la segunda corriente de gas comprende, al menos, uno de gas de hidrocarbonos, gas natural o metano.

83. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la primera corriente de gas comprende monóxido de carbono.

84. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la primera corriente de gas consiste esencialmente de dióxido de carbono.

85. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la primera corriente de gas comprende gases atmosféricos, gases de combustión, gases malolientes procesados, gases de escape de la manufactura de cemento Portland o gases de pozo.

86. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además comprende controlar una temperatura de la mezcla de gas de reacción en la zona de reacción dentro del rango de 500°C a 550°C.

87. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además comprende controlar una temperatura de la mezcla de gas de reacción en la zona de reacción dentro de un rango de 500°C a 650°C.

88. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además comprende controlar una temperatura de la mezcla de gas de reacción en la zona de reacción dentro de un rango de 600°C a 950°C.

89. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además comprende controlar una temperatura de la mezcla de gas de reacción en la zona de reacción dentro de un rango de 800°C a 950°C.

90. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además

comprende controlar una temperatura de la mezcla de gas de reacción en la zona de reacción dentro del rango de 650 y 1500°C.

5 91. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además comprende controlar una presión en la zona de reacción dentro del rango de 0 a 1000 torr.

92. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además comprende controlar una presión en la zona de reacción dentro del rango de 1000 torr a 100 psig.

10 93. El método de la reivindicación 50, que además comprende controlar una presión en la zona de reacción dentro del rango de 100 psig a 1000 psig.

94. El método de la reivindicación 63, que además comprende remover el producto de carbono sólido dela mezcla de gas de reacción antes del enfriamiento.

15 95. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la zona de reacción comprende un reactor de cama fluidizada con partículas de catalizador que comprenden una cama de reactor.

96. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la zona de reacción comprende un reactor aerosol.

20 97. El método de la reivindicación 96, en donde el catalizador permanece en un rocío en aerosol y el producto de carbono sólido crece en partículas de catalizador que pasan a través de la zona de reacción.

25 98. El método de la reivindicación 96, que además comprende depositar el catalizador del rocío en aerosol en una o más superficies dentro de la zona de reacción.

99. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la zona de reacción comprende al menos un horno, horno de eje u horno rotatorio.

30 100. El método de la reivindicación 50, en donde la zona de reaccion comprende ya sea un reactor por lotes o un

reactor continuo.

101. Una composición de materia que comprende almohadas de nanotubos de carbono formadas de aglomeraciones enredadas de nanotubos de carbono, los nanotubos de carbono formados al reaccionar dióxido de carbono con un agente reductor gaseoso en presencia de un catalizador que contiene hierro.

102. La composición de la reivindicación 101, en donde las almohadas estan agrupadas con una dimensión característica de menos de 1 mm.

103. La composición de la reivindicación 101, en donde las almohadas comprenden bulbos o conglomeraciones ondeantes de nanotubos de carbono.

104. La composición de la reivindicación 101, en donde las almohadas comprenden nanotubos de carbono de una pluralidad de diámetros, una pluralidad de longitudes y una pluralidad de tipos.

105. La composición de la reivindicación 101 en la que las almohadas comprenden una conglomeración de nanotubos.

106. La composición de la reivindicación 101, en donde las almohadas pueden ser fácilmente hechas fieltro.

107. La composición de la reivindicación 101, en donde las almohadas comprenden diferentes límites de crecimiento configurados para unirse cuando las almohadas están dispersas en una solución de etanol revolviéndola ligeramente, y la solución después es agitada.



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(54) **METHOD FOR PRODUCING SOLID CARBON BY REDUCING CARBON OXIDES**

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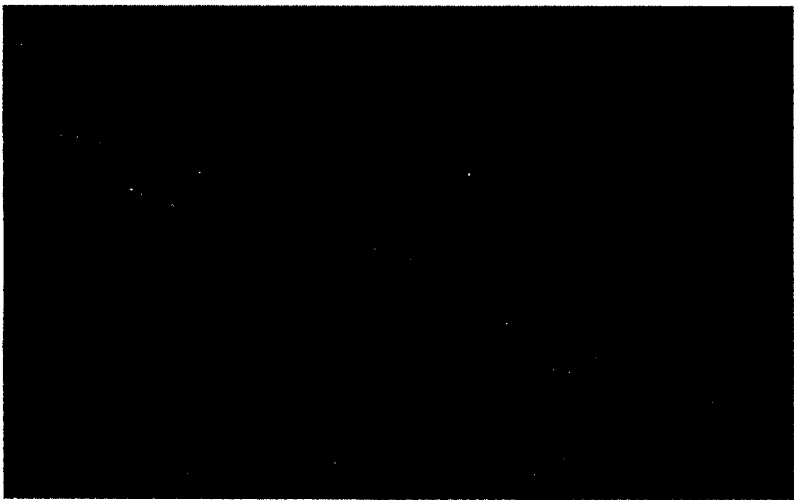
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Primary Examiner — Guinever Gregorio

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method for production of various morphologies of solid carbon product by reducing carbon oxides with a reducing agent in the presence of a catalyst. The carbon oxides are typically either carbon monoxide or carbon dioxide. The reducing agent is typically either a hydrocarbon gas or hydrogen. The desired morphology of the solid carbon product may be controlled by the specific catalysts, reaction conditions, and optional additives used in the reduction reaction. The resulting solid carbon products have many commercial applications.

23 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets



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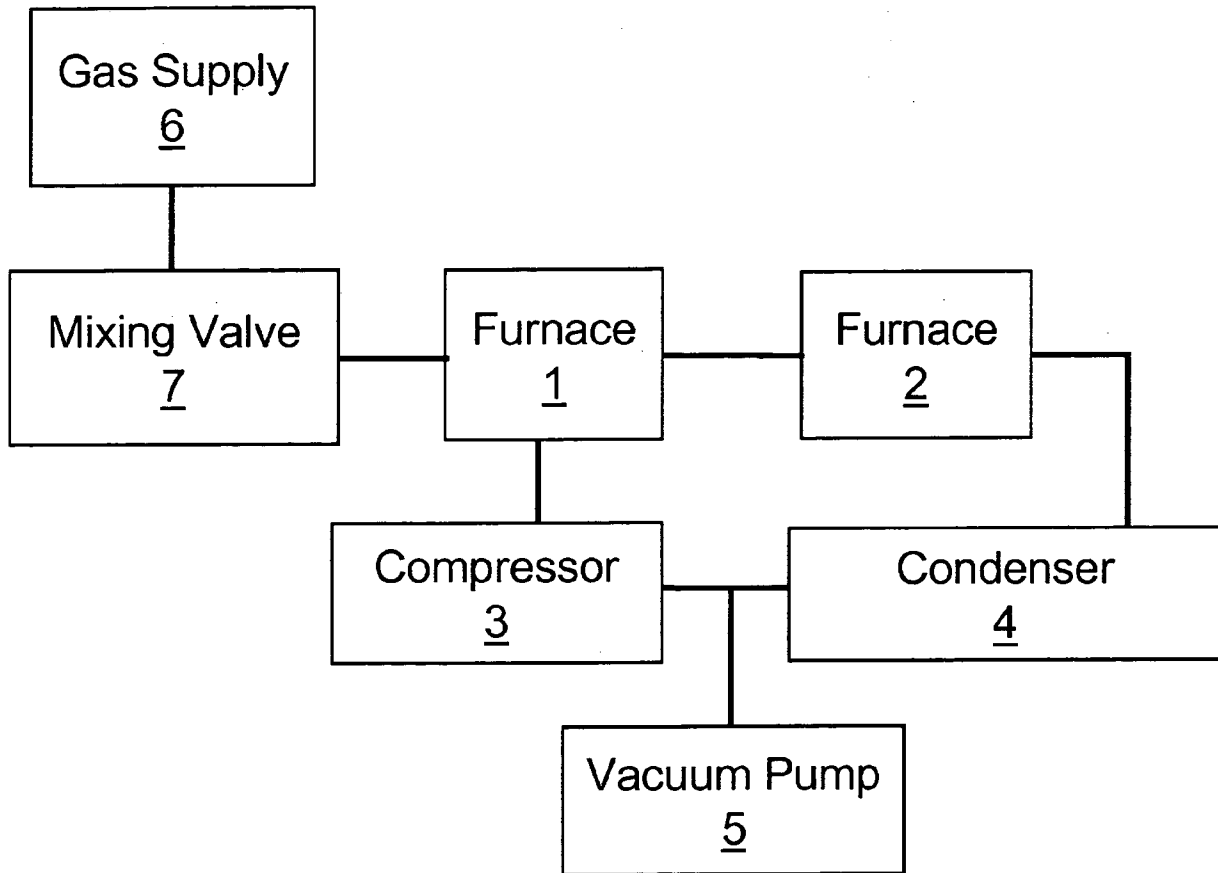


FIGURE 1

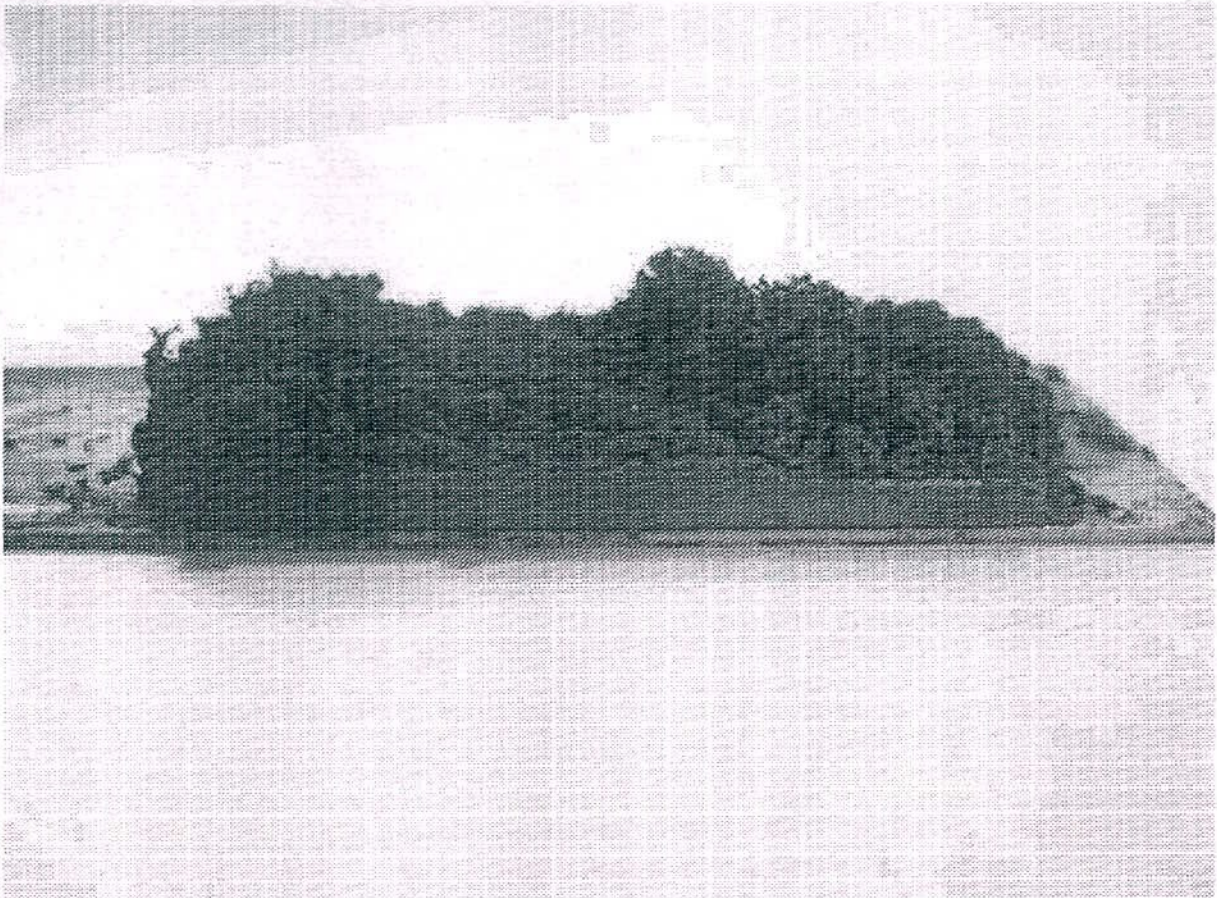


FIGURE 2

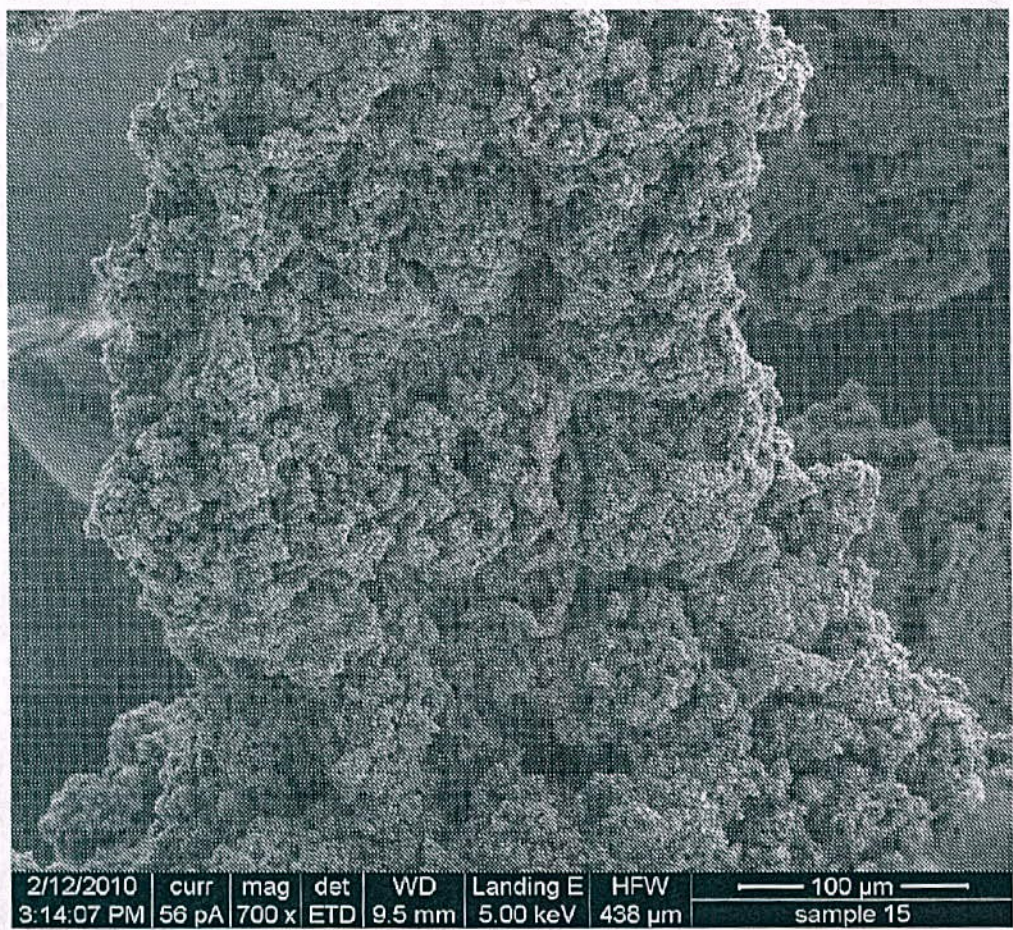


FIGURE 3

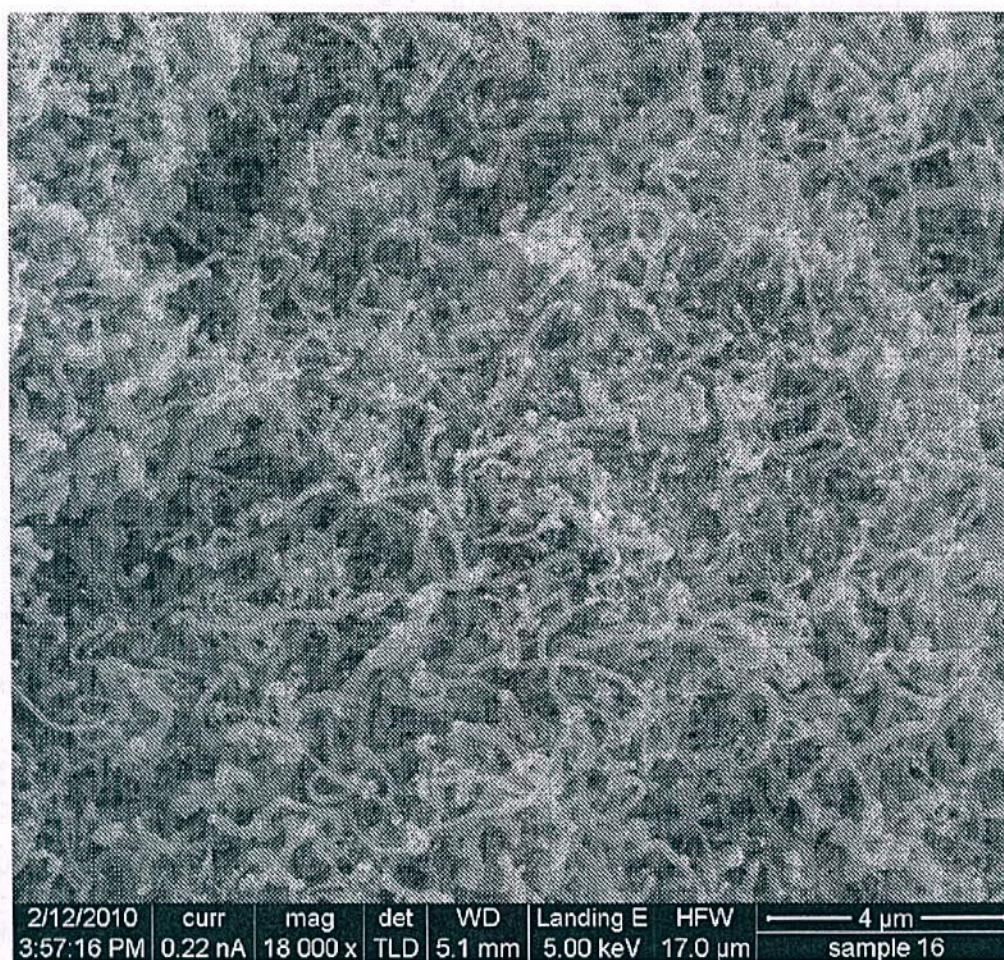
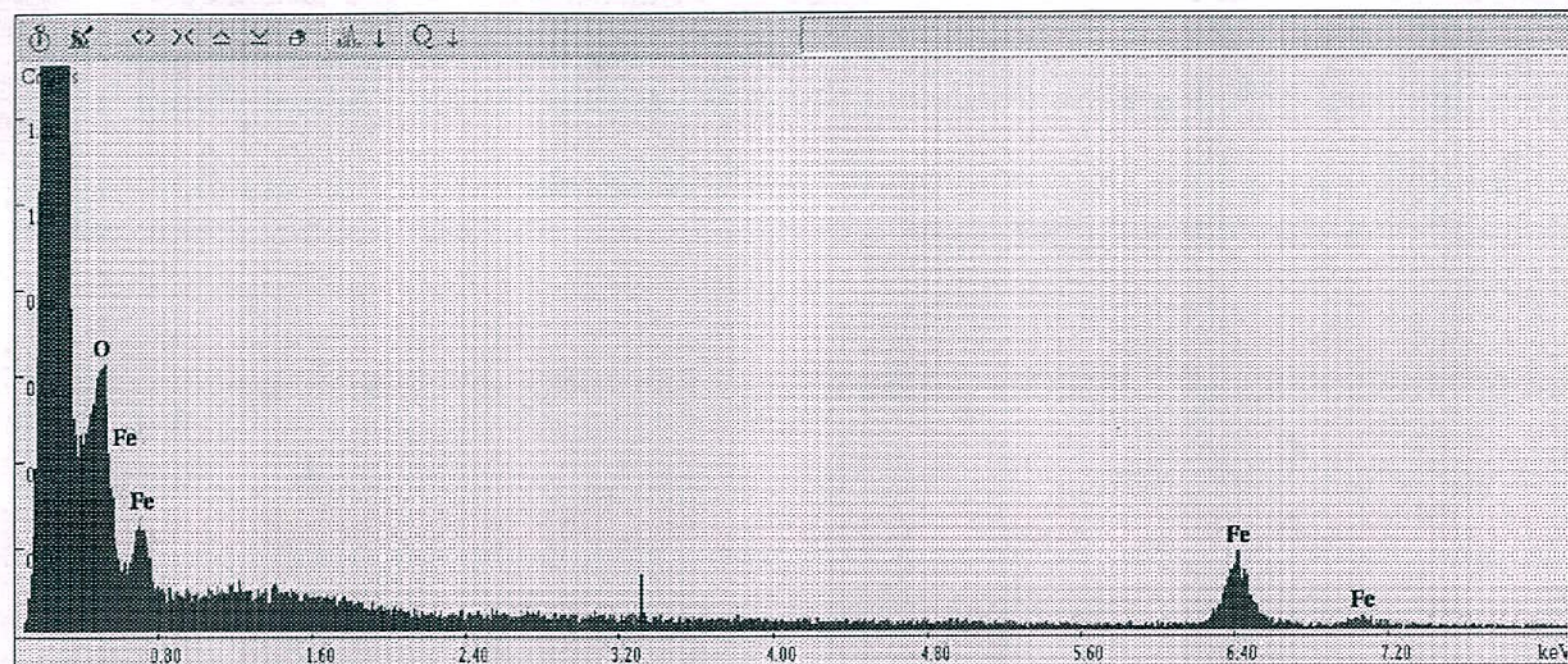


FIGURE 4



Elem	Wt	% At	% K-Ratio	Z	A	F
C	88.23	92.87	0.7208	1.0073	0.8109	1.0001
O	7.92	6.26	0.0144	0.9885	0.1836	1.0001
Fe	3.85	0.87	0.0319	0.8144	1.0165	1.0000
Total	100.00	100.00				

FIGURE 5

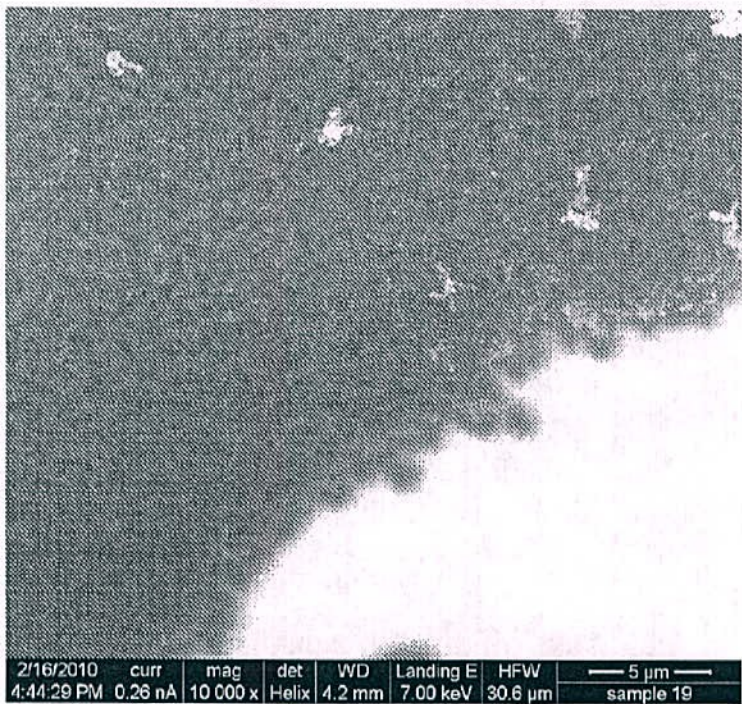


FIGURE 6

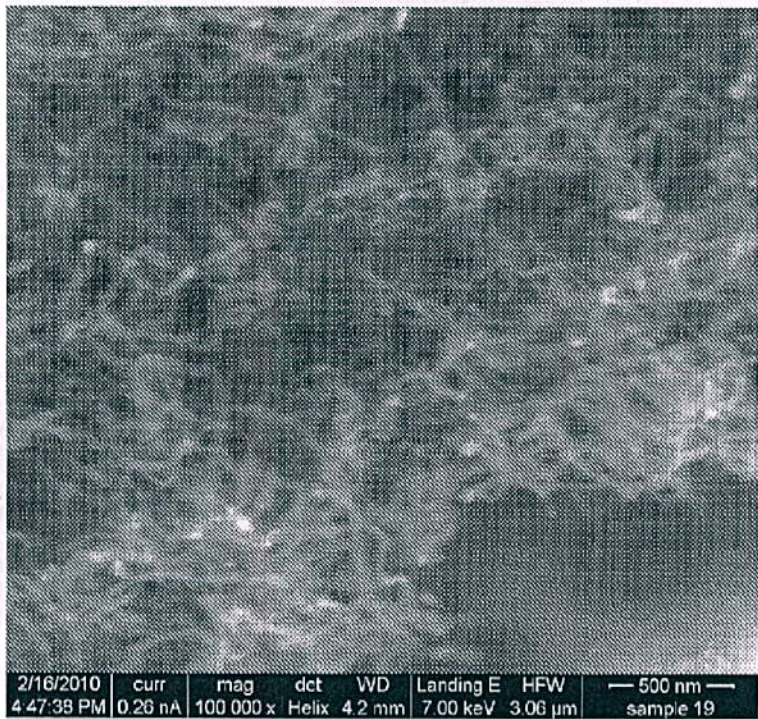


FIGURE 7

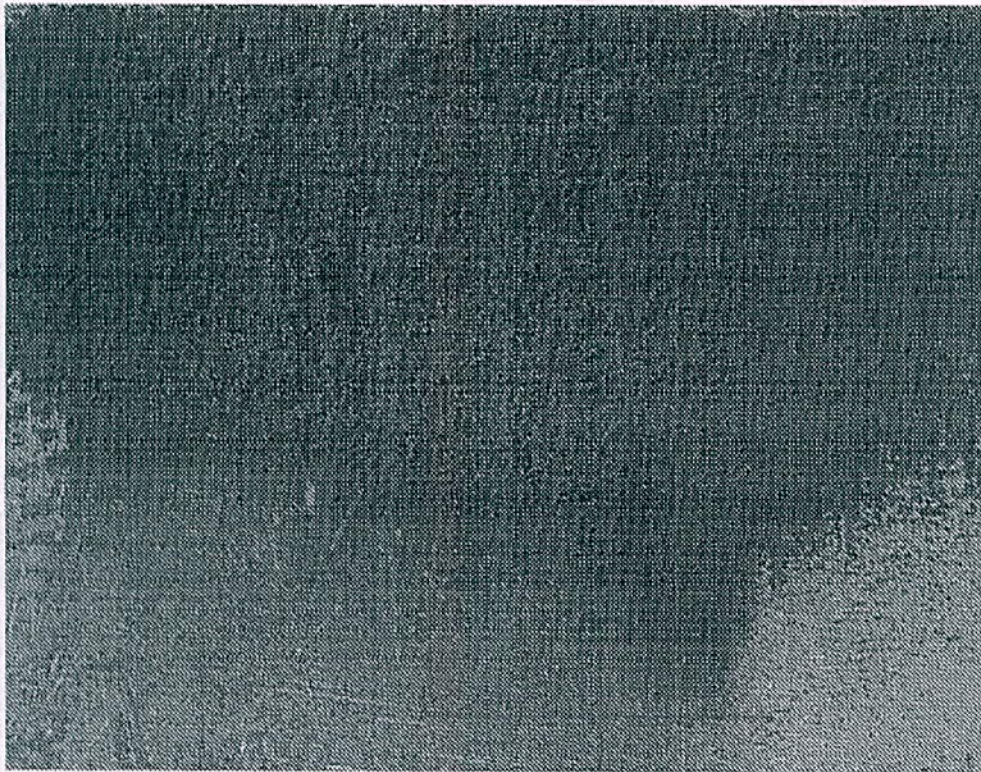


FIGURE 8

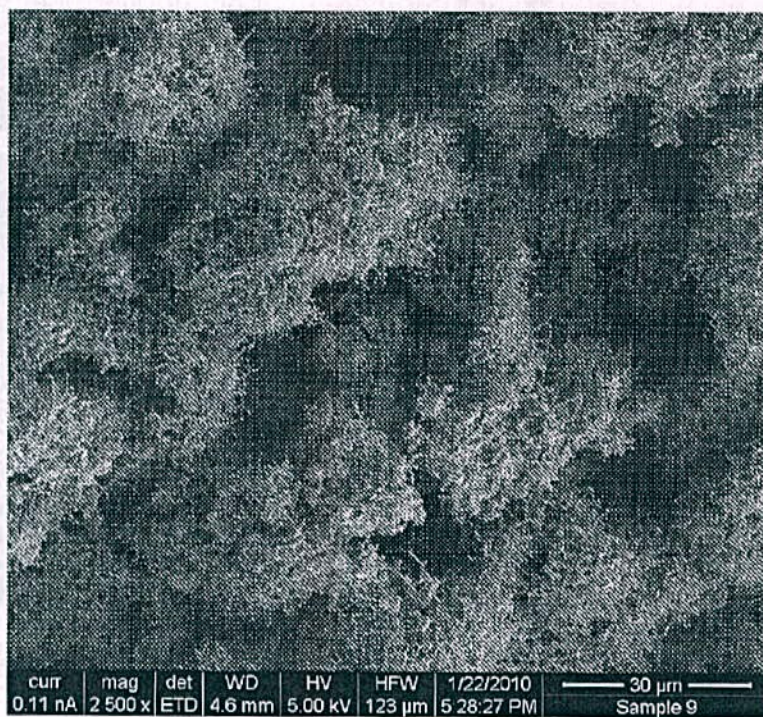


FIGURE 9

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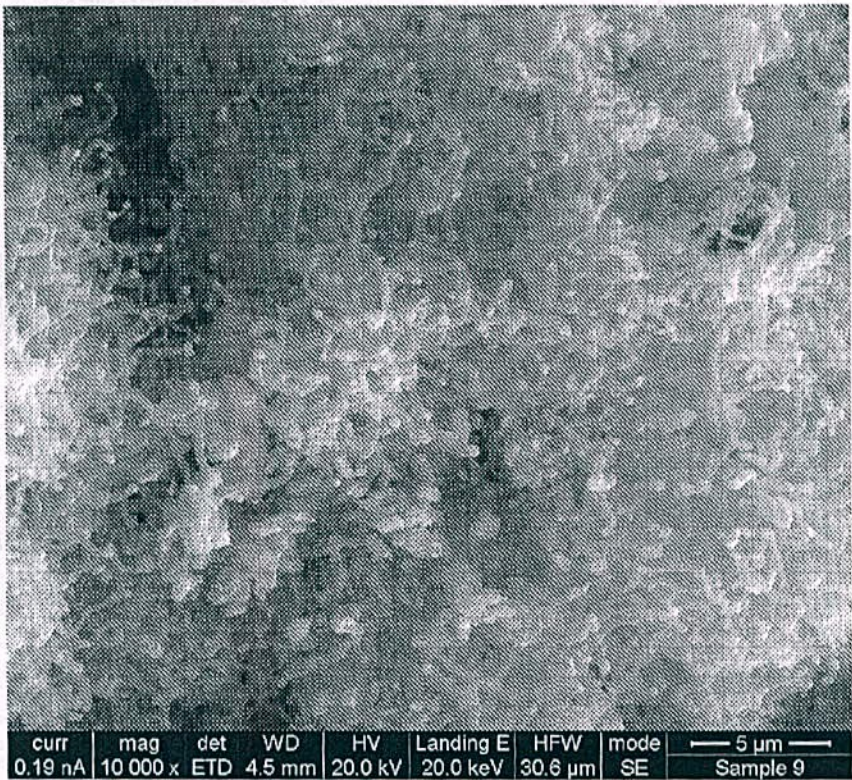


FIGURE 10

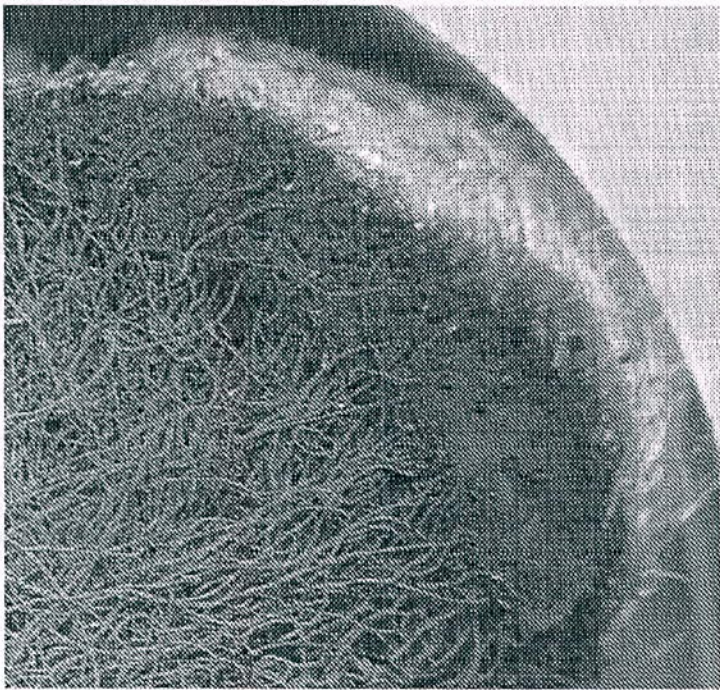


FIGURE 11

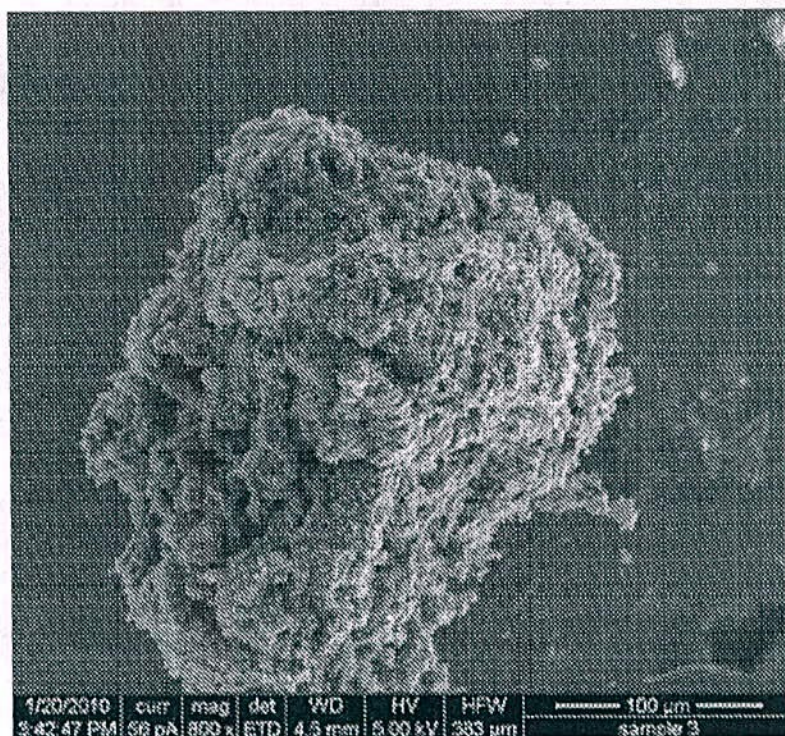


FIGURE 12

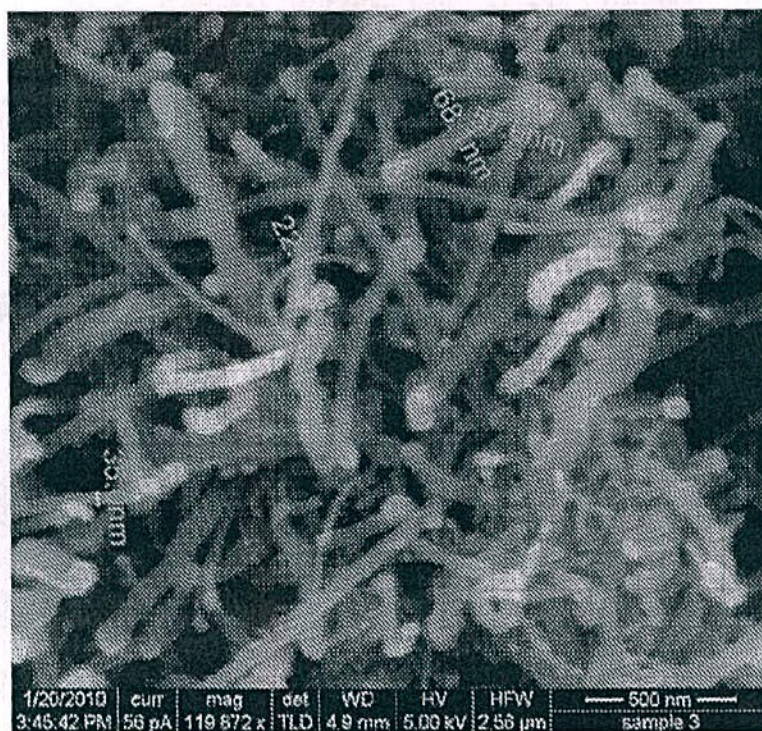


FIGURE 13

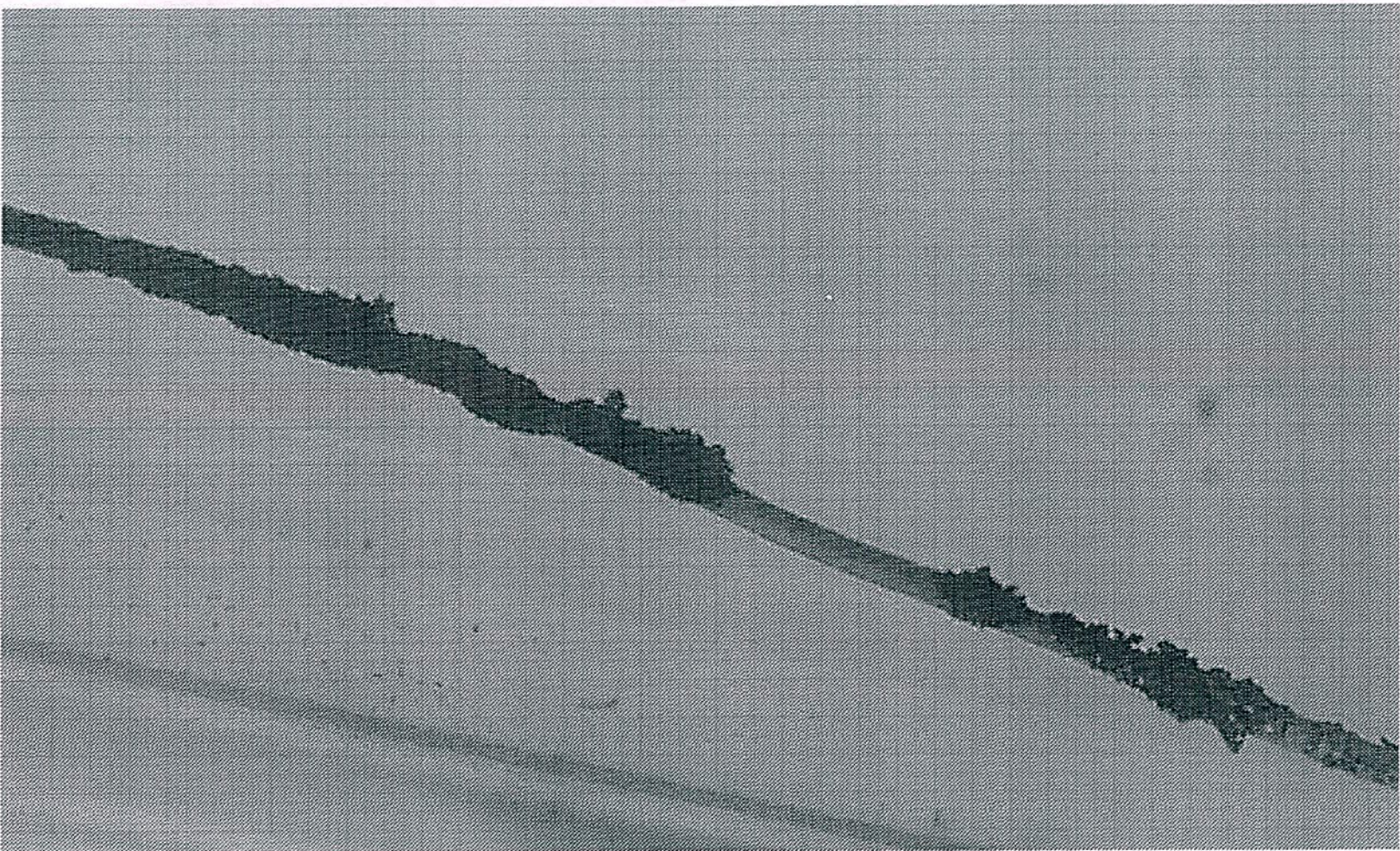


FIGURE 14

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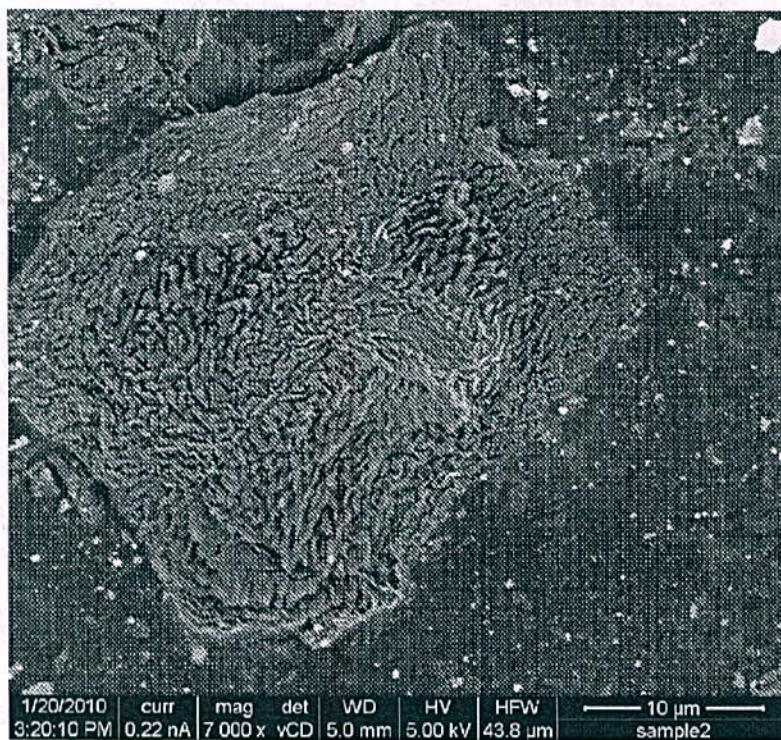


FIGURE 15

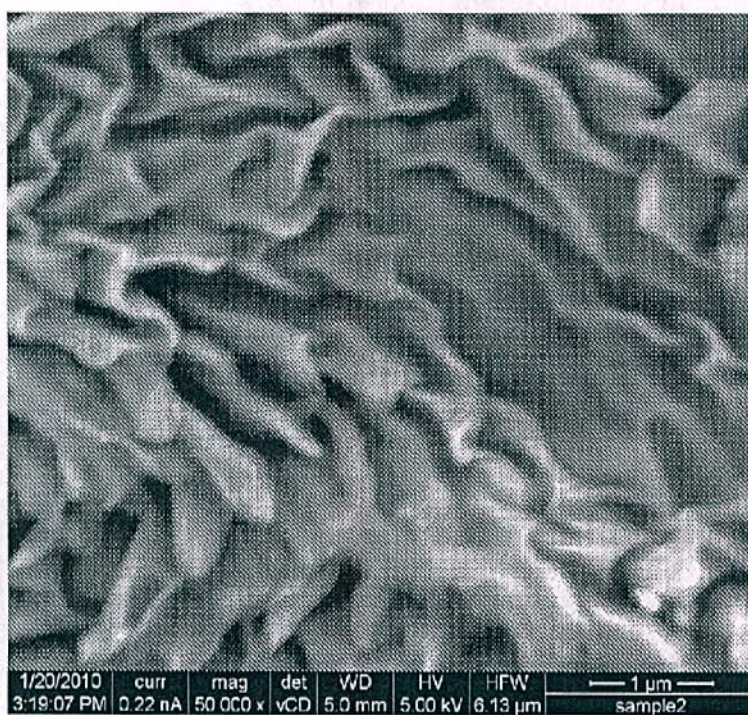


FIGURE 16

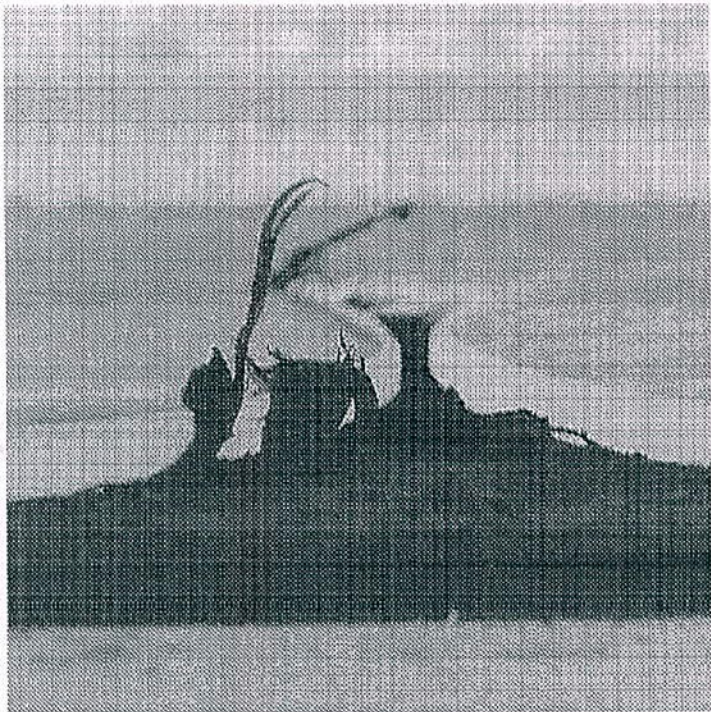
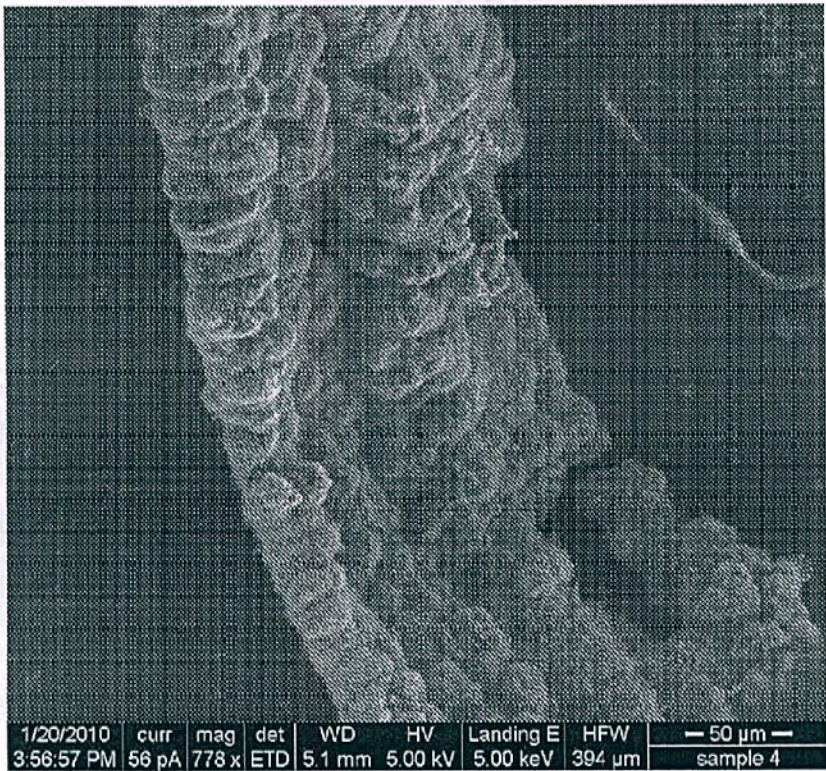


FIGURE 17



1/20/2010	curr	mag	det	WD	HV	Landing E	HPW	— 50 µm —
3:56:57 PM	56 pA	778 x	ETD	5.1 mm	5.00 kV	5.00 keV	394 µm	sample 4

FIGURE 18

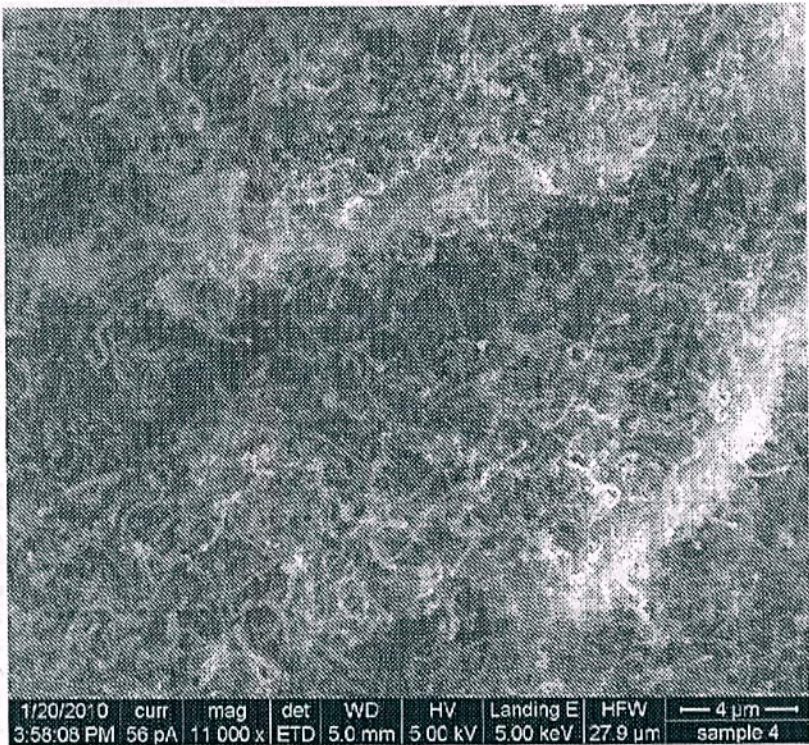


FIGURE 19

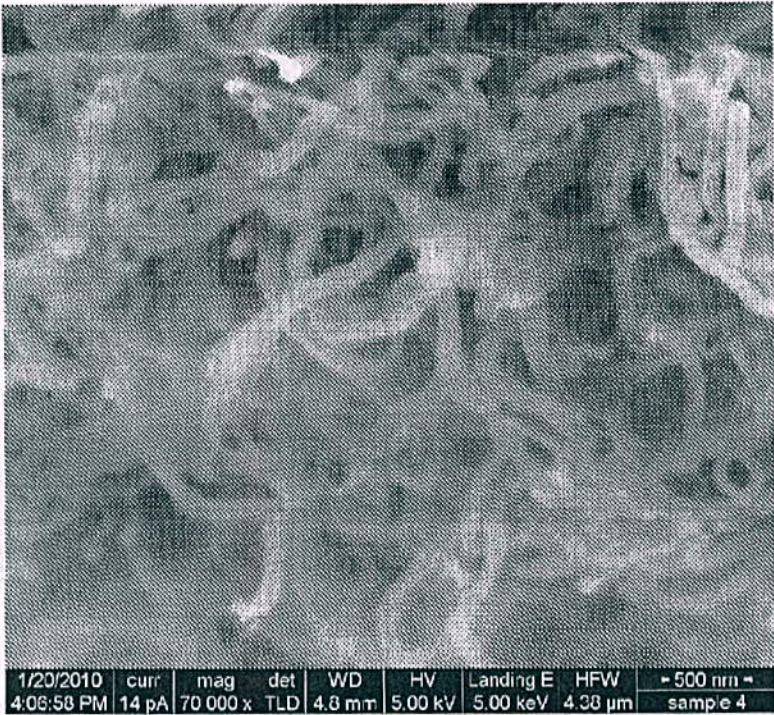
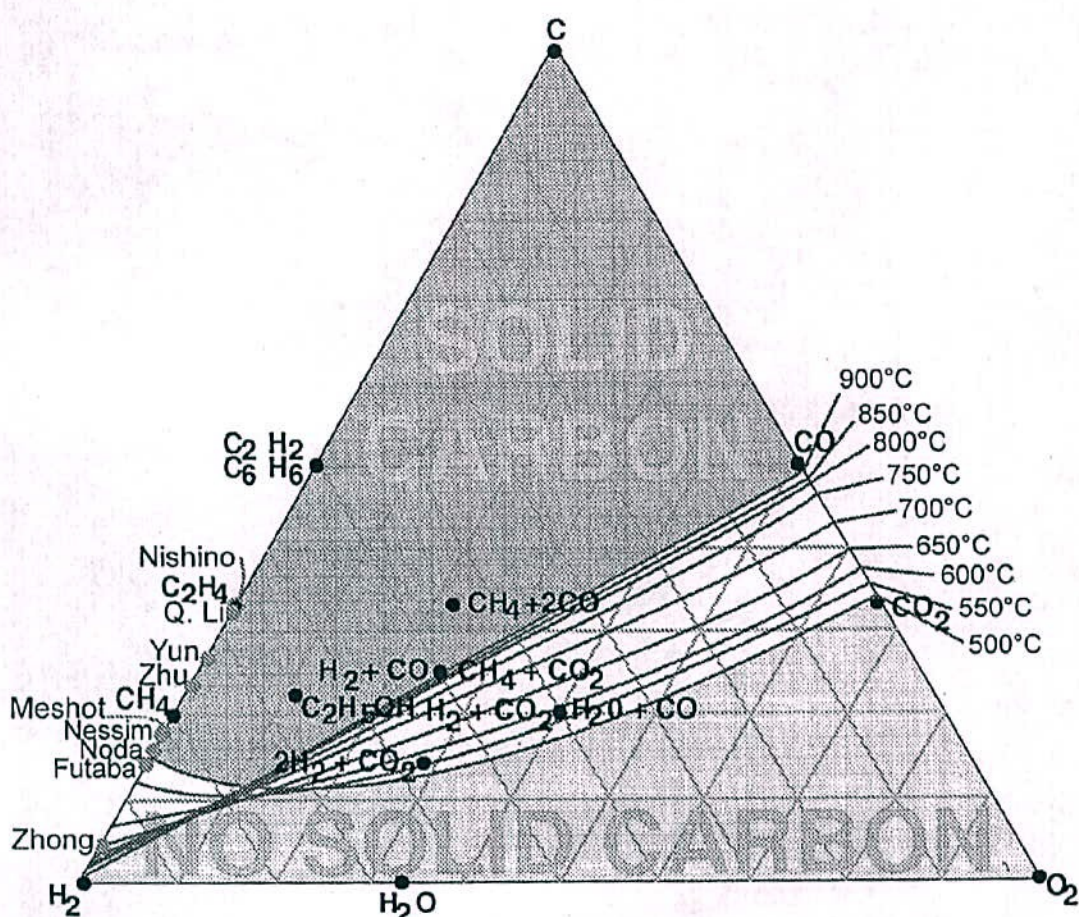


FIGURE 20

41



C-H-O EQUILIBRIUM DIAGRAM
equilibrium lines show the cutoff for solid carbon information at each temperature

FIGURE 21

42

METHOD FOR PRODUCING SOLID CARBON BY REDUCING CARBON OXIDES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims priority based on U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/170,199 filed Apr. 17, 2009, and titled "Method for Producing Solid Carbon by Reducing Carbon Oxides," the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by this reference.

BACKGROUND

This disclosure relates generally to a catalytic conversion process for reducing carbon oxides to a valuable solid carbon product and, in particular, to the use of carbon oxides (e.g., carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide) as the primary carbon source for the production of solid carbon products (such as buckminsterfullerenes) using a reducing agent (such as hydrogen or a hydrocarbon) typically in the presence of a catalyst. This method may be used for commercial manufacture of solid carbon products in various morphologies and for catalytic conversion of carbon oxides to solid carbon and water.

These methods produce carbon products from carbon oxides. The methods produce carbon products, such as buckminsterfullerenes, using carbon oxides as the primary carbon source. The methods thus involve catalytic conversion of carbon oxides (primarily carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide) to solid carbon and water. The methods may use the atmosphere, combustion gases, process off-gases, well gas, and other natural and industrial sources of carbon oxides. The carbon oxides may be separated from these sources and concentrated as needed.

Solid carbon has numerous commercial applications. These applications include longstanding uses such as uses of carbon black and carbon fibers as a filler material in tires, inks, etc., many uses for various forms of graphite (such as the use of pyrolytic graphite as heat shields), and innovative and emerging applications for buckminsterfullerenes (including buckyballs and buckytubes). Prior methods for the manufacture of various forms of solid carbon typically involve the pyrolysis of hydrocarbons (often natural gas) in the presence of a suitable catalyst. The use of hydrocarbons as the carbon source is due to historically abundant availability and low cost of hydrocarbons. The use of carbon oxides as the carbon source in reduction reactions for the production of solid carbon has largely been unexploited.

The present process uses two abundant feedstocks, carbon oxides (e.g., carbon dioxide (CO₂) and carbon monoxide (CO)) and a reducing agent. The reducing agent is preferably a hydrocarbon gas (e.g., natural gas, methane, etc.), hydrogen (H₂) gas or a mixture thereof. A hydrocarbon gas serves the dual function as both an additional carbon source and as the reducing agent for the carbon oxides. Syngas comprises primarily carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrogen (H₂) so that the gas has both the carbon oxide and the reducing gas in mixture. Syngas may be profitably used as all or a portion of the reaction gas mixture.

Carbon oxides, particularly carbon dioxide, are abundant gases that may be extracted from point source emissions, such as the exhaust gases of hydrocarbon combustion, and from some process off-gases. Carbon dioxide may also be extracted from the air. Because point source emissions have much higher concentrations of carbon dioxide than air, they are often economical sources from which to harvest the carbon

dioxide. However, the immediate availability of air may provide cost offsets by eliminating transportation costs through local manufacturing of the solid carbon products from carbon dioxide in air.

Carbon dioxide is increasingly available and inexpensive as a byproduct of power generation and chemical processes where the object is to eliminate the emission of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere by capturing the carbon dioxide and subsequent sequestration (often by injection into a geological formation). The capture and sequestration of carbon dioxide is the basis for "green" coal fired power stations, for example. In current practice, capture and sequestration of the carbon dioxide entails significant cost. The process disclosed herein considers the carbon dioxide as an economically valuable co-product instead of an undesirable waste product with associated disposal costs.

The methods disclosed may be incorporated into power production and industrial processes for sequestration of carbon oxides and converting them to valuable solid carbon products. For example, the carbon oxides in the combustion or process off-gases may be separated and concentrated to become a feedstock for this process. In some cases these methods may be incorporated directly into the process flow without separation and concentration, for example, as an intermediate step in a multi-stage gas turbine power station. The direct incorporation into the process flow is particularly suitable for oxy-combustion processes.

The present catalytic conversion process may be incorporated with fossil fuel combustion processes. Many methods for integrating the catalytic conversion process with various combustion processes and power production cycles will readily occur to the skilled practitioner. These methods include adding a catalytic converter between stages in a power production cycle so that the combustion gases are passed through a catalytic converter and at least some portion of the constituent carbon oxides in the combustion gases are converted to solid carbon, or separating the carbon oxides from all, or a portion of, the combustion process effluent gases and routing the separated gases through the catalytic converters.

Combining the catalytic conversion process with a separation process may be beneficial because it would deliver a carbon separation and sequestration unit that may be more economical than existing separation and sequestration methods. The operating efficiencies may arise from the fact that the catalytic converters may use low pressure carbon oxides, so the equipment and costs associated with compression, liquefaction and transport are reduced, and from the use of the heat produced in the catalytic converters to provide at least some of the process heat for the separation process. Specific methods for combining catalytic converters with various separation processes will readily occur to the skilled practitioner. For example, a separation process, such as amine absorption, may receive at least part of the heat required for desorption from the catalytic converter, and deliver low pressure carbon oxide gases to the catalytic converter.

There are a limited number of ways that carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen can react. There is a spectrum of reactions involving these three elements wherein various equilibria have been named. Hydrocarbon pyrolysis is the range of equilibria between hydrogen and carbon that favors solid carbon production, typically with little or no oxygen present. The Boudouard reaction, also called the carbon monoxide disproportionation reaction, is the range of equilibria between carbon and oxygen that favors solid carbon production, typically with little or no hydrogen present. The Bosch reaction is the region of equilibria where all of carbon, oxy-

gen, and hydrogen are present that favors solid carbon production. Other equilibria favor the production of carbon oxides or hydrocarbons (e.g., the Sabatier and the Fischer-Tropsch processes) with no solid carbon product.

The relationship between the hydrocarbon pyrolysis, Boudouard, and Bosch reactions may be understood in terms of a C—H—O equilibrium diagram, as shown in FIG. 21. The C—H—O Equilibrium Diagram of FIG. 21 shows various known routes to carbon nanotube ("CNT") formation. The hydrocarbon pyrolysis reactions are on the equilibrium line that connects H₂ and C, the left side of the triangle. The names on this line are of a few of the researchers who have published results validating CNT formation at various points on this line. Many patents have been issued for the use of the hydrocarbon pyrolysis reaction in the production of CNTs. The Boudouard or carbon monoxide disproportionation reactions are on the equilibrium line that connects O₂ and C, the right side of the triangle. The equilibrium lines for various temperatures that traverse the diagram show the approximate regions in which solid carbon will form. For each temperature, solid carbon will form in the regions above the associated equilibrium line, but will not form in the regions below the equilibrium line.

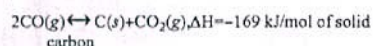
The present methods, based generally on the Bosch reaction, are in the interior region of the triangle where equilibrium is established between solid carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen in various combinations. What is disclosed here is that the central region has several points that in fact are highly favorable for the formation of CNTs and several other forms of solid carbon product, and that through careful selection of the catalysts, reaction gases, and reaction conditions, the type of solid carbon produced can be selectively controlled. Thus these methods open new routes to the production of valuable solid carbon products such as CNTs.

The Ellingham diagram defines the equilibrium formation enthalpy of solid carbon from carbonaceous gases as a function of temperature. This diagram is well known to the art and is a useful reference in understanding this range of equilibria.

The methods of the present invention employ the Bosch reaction to produce valuable solid carbon products. The Bosch reaction ($\text{CO}_2 + 2\text{H}_2 \leftrightarrow \text{C}_{\text{solid}} + 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$) reduces carbon dioxide with hydrogen for the production of solid carbon and water. The temperatures for the Bosch reaction reported in the literature range from 450° C. to over 2000° C. The reaction rates are typically enhanced and reaction temperatures reduced by the use of a catalyst such as iron.

Previously, the Bosch reaction was used with the objective of recovering oxygen from respiratory processes in enclosed isolated environments such as submarines, spacecraft and lunar or Mars bases (see, for example, U.S. Pat. No. 4,452,676, "Carbon Dioxide Conversion System for Oxygen Recovery," Birbarta et al.; and U.S. Pat. No. 1,735,925, "Process of Producing Reduction Products of Carbon Dioxide," Jaeger). Typically, the solid carbon form is specified as graphite deposited on a solid catalyst bed or collection plate, and is noted as a nuisance that fouls the catalyst and must be disposed of. There is little previous disclosure of the various forms of solid carbon that might be produced through modifications to this process, or of solid carbon as the principal desired product of these reactions.

The Boudouard reaction is also called the carbon monoxide disproportionation reaction and it proceeds as:



The present method differs from Boudouard reaction in at least three ways: i) carbon monoxide is not necessary to the

method, though it may be used as a carbon source; ii) a separate reducing agent is used to reduce the carbon monoxide to solid carbon and water; and iii) carbon dioxide is not a product of the reaction.

A recent set of patents discloses the use of carbon monoxide as the carbon source for the formation of carbon nanotubes. The production of solid carbon from carbon monoxide is via the carbon monoxide disproportionation or Boudouard reaction. Smalley (U.S. Pat. No. 6,761,870) discloses the use of the carbon monoxide disproportionation reaction in the presence of a catalyst in Gas-phase nucleation and growth of single-wall carbon nanotubes from high pressure CO for the production of single-walled carbon nanotubes.

"A Novel Hybrid Carbon Material," Nasibulin et al. (Nature Nanotechnology 2, 156-161, 2006) discloses the formation of what they term nanobuds in two different one-stop continuous methods, during which fullerenes were formed on iron-catalyst particles together with SWNTs (single-walled nanotubes) during carbon monoxide disproportionation. This use of carbon monoxide disproportionation is typical of the literature. Nasibulin further discloses in "An essential role of CO₂ and H₂O during single-walled CNT synthesis from carbon monoxide" (Chemical Physics Letters 417 (2005) 179-184) the important influences of carbon dioxide and water in the growth of carbon nanotubes, but specifically notes that at concentrations above about 15,000 ppm, the presence of CO₂ inhibits the formation of carbon nanotubes.

Tennent in U.S. Pat. No. 4,663,230, "Carbon fibrils, Method for Producing Same and Compositions Containing Same" discloses and does specify the use of carbon oxides in the production of carbon fibrils, though his reaction is specified as a reaction between the carbon-containing compound and the carbon in the specially prepared catalyst of his invention, where the catalyst was essentially a carbon particle coated with a suitable metal. Tennent specifically claims "wherein the compound capable of reacting with carbon is CO₂, H₂ or H₂O."

Resasco et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,333,016) in "Method of Producing Carbon Nanotubes," discloses carbon monoxide disproportionation in the presence of various Co:Mo catalysts. They make no claims with regard to the use and presence of a reducing agent in the reaction gas mixture.

In contrast, the present method is not limited to carbon monoxide as the carbon source gas. The present method uses a reducing agent other than a carbon oxide. Also, the present method relies on the mixing of the carbon oxide with a reducing agent in the presence of a catalyst for the production of the valuable solid carbon product.

Hydrocarbon pyrolysis is known and is commercially used in the production of carbon black and various carbon nanotube and buckminster fullerene products. Various methods exist for creating and harvesting various forms of solid carbon through the pyrolysis of hydrocarbons using temperature, pressure, and the presence of a catalyst to govern the resulting solid carbon morphology. For example, Kauffman et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 2,796,331) discloses a process for making fibrous carbon of various forms from hydrocarbons in the presence of surplus hydrogen using hydrogen sulfide as a catalyst, and methods for collecting the fibrous carbon on solid surfaces. Kauffman also claims the use of coke oven gas as the hydrocarbon source.

Wiegand et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 2,440,424) disclose an improved process for the manufacture of carbon black that comprises rapidly and thoroughly admixing a hydrocarbon gas, natural gas for example, in regulated amounts with a high velocity, highly turbulent blast flame containing oxygen substantially in excess of that required for complete combustion

of the blast gases. This blast gas is primarily for heating the pyrolysis of a secondary "make gas" of a hydrocarbon gas that is introduced into the heated chamber in quantities far in excess of the available oxygen, so that a pyrolysis reaction occurs instead of combustion.

Brownlee et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 1,478,730) discloses a method for the production of a special carbon black from hydrocarbon feedstocks that results in enhanced yields, forming the carbon particles by pyrolysis of the hydrocarbons in the gas stream (not by combustion) and rapidly cooling the gases to separate the special carbon black before it comes into contact with the regular carbon black that forms on the furnace refractory and other surfaces in the combustion zone. Brownlee claims this special carbon black as a proprietary invention.

Bourdeau et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 3,378,345) discloses a method for growing pyrolytic graphite whiskers as elongated crystals growing perpendicular to a substrate using hydrocarbon gases with non-stoichiometric quantities (50:1 ratio of hydrocarbon gas to water or carbon dioxide) of either water or carbon dioxide or a mixture thereof. The reaction occurs at low pressures (0.1 mm to 20 mm mercury) and starts at temperatures of 799° C. to 1200° C., gradually ramping (3° C. per minute) to at least 1400° C.

Diefendorf (U.S. Pat. No. 3,172,774) discloses methods for depositing pyrolytic graphite on a composite article using a low pressure (0.2 cm to 70 cm mercury) at 1450° C. to 2000° C., using a hydrocarbon gas. The low pressure is important in allowing the carbon to form on the surface of the composite article in preference to forming soot in the gas phase.

Huang et al. (U.S. Patent Publication 2006/0269466) discloses the manufacturing of carbonaceous nanofibers using hydrocarbon as the carbon source for the carbon material.

Li et al. (U.S. Patent Publication 2008/0118426) discloses the manufacture of carbon nanotubes of varied morphology using the pyrolysis of a hydrocarbon source gas. Li does not specify they type of hydrocarbon source gas, though the specification of pyrolysis at the reaction temperatures of the description implies a hydrocarbon gas.

Fujimaki et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,014,980) discloses a method for manufacturing graphite whiskers based on a reaction "mixing one or more of gasified compounds having a condensed polycyclic structure of two to five benzene rings with a large amount of inert gas containing a small amount of CO, CO₂ or H₂O." Fujimaki does not teach the use of the reduction reaction, the basis for the claimed methods, and does not teach the use of carbon oxides as the primary carbon source for the formation of the graphite whiskers.

Hydrocarbon pyrolysis is by definition the thermal decomposition of hydrocarbons. The present method is a departure from this art of using hydrocarbon pyrolysis in the manufacture of solid carbon products in that it uses carbon oxides as the carbon source for the formation of the various solid carbon morphologies. While the present method may use some hydrocarbon gases, such gases are used as a reducing agent for the carbon oxide gases with the secondary benefit of contributing carbon to the solid carbon product. Prior hydrocarbon pyrolysis typically does not mention or specify the importance of carbon oxides in the selective formation of the desired carbon product.

The Bosch reaction has been extensively studied, and several patents have been issued for applications of the reaction in environments where it is necessary or desirable to reclaim oxygen from respiration, for example in a submarine or spacecraft environment. Such reclamation is generally accomplished by passing the carbon dioxide laden air through a carbon dioxide concentrator and then transferring the con-

centrated carbon dioxide to a carbon dioxide reduction system. A number of carbon dioxide reduction processes have been used, including both chemical and electrochemical means.

Holmes et al. in "A Carbon Dioxide Reduction Unit Using Bosch Reaction and Expendable Catalyst Cartridges" (Convair Division of General Dynamics Corporation, prepared for Langley Research Center, November 1970), discloses the use of the Bosch reaction for recovery of oxygen from carbon dioxide.

Birbara et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,452,676) discloses a method of recovering oxygen from carbon dioxide using the Sabatier reaction to hydrogenate the carbon dioxide to methane and water and subsequently pyrolyze the methane and deposit the resulting solid carbon on a non-catalytic glass substrate. The methane is pyrolyzed over a high temperature stable glass surface heated to about 1000° C. to 1200° C. to produce hydrogen gas and a high density carbon, i.e., having a density greater than about 2 grams per cubic centimeter. This results in lessening of the storage problem for the carbon material because of its high density. The hydrogen gas produced is also recycled back to the incoming carbon dioxide for reaction.

NASA has sponsored research into the Bosch Reaction at various times with the view to using this process to recover oxygen from respiratory CO₂ in space ships. This work resulted in a series of reports, published papers, and dissertations. This work was focused on the production of water for oxygen recovery.

Selected documents related to the NASA sponsored research on the Bosch reaction include:

A carbon dioxide reduction unit using Bosch reaction. Methods of Water Production, a survey of methods considered for the ISS including Bosch and Sabatier reactions, Oregon State University.

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In these prior processes, the objective is the recovery of oxygen, while the solid carbon is considered to be simply a nuisance product and disposal problem. While the methods presented here use the Bosch reaction, they differ from prior methods in that the present methods are concerned with the types and quality of solid carbon that can be produced, and the methods for controlling the solid carbon morphology through the use of catalyst, gas mixtures, and process variables (e.g., temperature, pressure, and retention times) to assure economically valuable solid carbon products are produced. The present methods identify and validate the range of solid carbon products, including carbon nanotubes, that may be produced through control of the Bosch reaction.

SUMMARY

The present disclosure provides a method and apparatus for the efficient, industrial scale production of solid carbon products of various morphologies using carbon oxides as the primary carbon source through a reduction process, where the carbon oxides are reduced to the desired solid carbon product using a reducing agent in the presence of a catalyst. The type, purity, and homogeneity of solid carbon product are controlled by the reaction conditions (time, temperature, pressure, partial pressure of reactants) and the catalyst (including the size, method of formation, and form of the catalyst).

The present method uses the Bosch reaction to produce solid carbon products, including carbon nanotubes, by the reduction of carbon dioxide with any of a variety of reducing gases, such as hydrogen or methane, in the presence of a catalyst and under reaction conditions optimized for the particular desired type of solid carbon. This catalytic conversion process may be incorporated with a variety of separation technologies, and with a variety of carbon dioxide generation processes.

One of the solid carbon product morphologies of particular note are single wall carbon nanotubes. Apparently, use of a catalyst that has a dimension of approximately 1.2 to 1.6 times the diameter of the desired carbon nanotube diameter

results in production of single wall carbon nanotubes. The catalyst may be in the form of catalyst nanoparticles of the desired dimension or in the form of domains within a solid catalyst such as a stainless steel formulation, where the grain size of the steel has the characteristic dimension for the diameter of CNT desired. Catalyst nanoparticles may be formed in or near the reaction zone by injecting an aerosol solution where the concentration of catalyst precursors in each aerosol droplet is such as is required to yield the desired nanoparticle size when the solute (if any) evaporates and the catalyst precursors decompose to form the resulting catalyst nanoparticle. Typically the temperature must be decreased as the size of the catalyst particles decrease. By selecting the catalyst and the reaction conditions the process may be tuned to deliver relatively specific morphologies of carbon.

Carbon nanotubes are valuable because of their unique material properties, including strength, current carrying capacity, and thermal and electrical conductivity. Current bulk use of carbon nanotubes includes use as an additive to resins in the manufacture of composites. Research and development on the applications of carbon nanotubes is very active with a wide variety of applications in use or under consideration. One obstacle to widespread use of carbon nanotubes has been the cost of manufacture. The present methods may help reduce that cost.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from reference to the following Detailed Description taken in conjunction with the accompanying Drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 depicts a schematic view of an exemplary experimental setup for the examples disclosed in this application;

FIG. 2 depicts a side view of carbon nanotube ("CNT") "forest" growth of "pillow" morphology on a substrate produced as a result of experimental Example 1 conducted according to one embodiment of the present method;

FIG. 3 depicts a top view of a forest at 700× magnification showing a pillow morphology of CNTs produced as a result of experimental Example 1;

FIG. 4 depicts CNTs comprising pillows in the forest depicted in FIG. 3 at 18,000× magnification;

FIG. 5 depicts a graph of elemental analysis of typical pillow CNTs from forest growth;

FIG. 6 depicts a sample of CNTs produced as a result of experimental Example 2 under 10,000× magnification;

FIG. 7 depicts the sample depicted in FIG. 6 under 100,000× magnification;

FIG. 8 depicts a photograph of a 316L stainless steel wafer with CNT forest growth, taken after conducting the experiment described in experimental Example 3;

FIG. 9 depicts an image of a region of the CNT forest growth from Example 3 at 2,500× magnification;

FIG. 10 depicts an image of the CNT forest growth from Example 3 at 10,000× magnification;

FIG. 11 depicts a photograph of a steel wool sample from experimental Example 4;

FIG. 12 depicts an image of a particle of the powder from Example 4 at 800× magnification;

FIG. 13 depicts an image of a particle of the powder from Example 4 at 120,000× magnification;

FIG. 14 depicts a photograph of the stainless steel wire sample from experimental Example 5 with a surface growth of graphite platelets;

FIG. 15 depicts an image of a graphite platelet from Example 5 at 7,000× magnification;

FIG. 16 depicts an image of a graphite platelet from Example 5 at 50,000× magnification;

FIG. 17 depicts a photograph of the stainless steel wafer sample from experimental Example 6 with a fibrous growth of carbon nanotube "pillows";

FIG. 18 depicts an image of the fibrous growth from Example 6 at 778× magnification showing the "pillow" morphology as the substructure;

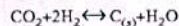
FIG. 19 depicts an image of a "pillow" from Example 6 at 11,000× magnification;

FIG. 20 depicts an image of a "pillow" from Example 6 at 70,000× magnification; and

FIG. 21 depicts a C-H-O Equilibrium Diagram.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The Bosch reaction uses hydrogen to reduce carbon oxides to solid carbon and water. This reaction occurs at temperatures in excess of approximately 650° C. in the presence of a catalyst. The reaction is mildly exothermic (heat producing) and proceeds with the stoichiometry:



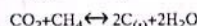
with the release of approximately 2.3×10^3 joules/gram of solid carbon ($\text{C}_{(s)}$). The reaction is reversible with the solid carbon being oxidized by the water and carbon dioxide (in an oxygen shift reaction), so although reaction temperatures above about 450° C. are necessary to produce solid carbon, if the temperature is too high the inverse reaction increases and the overall reaction rate is lower (the equilibrium of the reaction shifts to the left).

In general terms, the present method involves creation of solid carbon, and in particular carbon nanotubes of different shapes or morphologies, by forming carbon oxides by combusting a combustible mixture of a primary hydrocarbon and oxygen or by taking existing carbon oxides from some other source, and injecting the carbon oxides and a reducing agent into a reaction zone that has been preheated to the desired reaction temperature. The reaction typically occurs in the presence of a catalyst as the catalyst composition and size is of importance in controlling the morphology of the resulting solid carbon. The reaction conditions (temperature, pressure, and residence time of the reaction gases in the reaction zone) are controlled based on the characteristics of the desired solid carbon product. The reaction gas mixture is typically cycled through the reactor and passed through a condenser with each cycle to remove excess water and to control the partial pressure of the water vapor in the reaction gas mixture.

Solid carbon may be produced in many different morphologies through the carbon oxide reduction process of the present method. Some of the solid carbon morphologies that may be produced include:

- Graphite, including pyrolytic graphite;
- graphene;
- carbon black;
- fibrous carbon;
- buckminster fullerenes including buckyballs, single wall carbon nanotubes, and multi-wall carbon nanotubes.

Hydrogen is only one of the reducing agents suitable for the reduction reaction of the present method. Hydrocarbon gases may be used in the reduction reaction where they provide both the hydrogen and a portion of the carbon. A reducing gas mixture of one or more of the commonly available hydrocarbon gases such as are found in natural gas may be an economical choice in some applications. In one embodiment, the reducing gas comprises methane with the stoichiometry:



with the release of an undetermined amount of heat in the exothermic reaction.

The reaction kinetics favorable to the formation of the desired species of solid carbon may be established through the use of a suitable catalyst. For example, the reaction may be accelerated and made to operate at a lower temperature in the presence of a group VIII element (such as iron) or compound containing a group VIII element (such as iron carbide). Catalysts formed from mixtures of these elements may be designed to yield the desired solid carbon morphology. With the use of a catalyst, the reaction typically proceeds to completion in under 5 seconds, and the reaction time can be as short as a few tenths of a second under the right process conditions and catalyst.

Typically, the solid carbon formed by the Bosch reaction is in the form of graphite. According to the present method, the morphology of the solid carbon product may be controlled by the reaction conditions, and by varying the catalysts and how the catalyst is brought into contact with the hydrogen and carbon oxides. In one embodiment, the catalyst is produced in the reaction zone by chemical reactions of a catalyst precursor compound such as ferrocene or some other metallocene, or some other metal-containing precursor such as iron pentacarbonyl and coagulation of the reaction products to form the catalyst as nanoparticles entrained in the reaction gases or deposited on surfaces within the reaction zone.

Using a catalyst precursor to form the catalyst in the reaction zone tends to result in a variety of catalyst particle sizes, which in turn results in a corresponding distribution in solid carbon sizes (such as the pore size of carbon nanotubes). When a catalyst precursor is introduced into the reaction zone, some portion of the catalyst may form on the surface of solid carbon products in the reaction zone. The catalyst then tends to grow additional solid carbon particles from the surface. This leads to branched morphologies such as branched carbon nanotubes.

In some cases the catalyst on the surface of the carbon product forms a buckysphere that is partially merged with the tube structure forming a nanobud. The introduction of additional catalyst precursors at later stages in the reduction reactor with the intent of forming the desired branched or budded morphology is a variation on the present method that will readily occur to a skilled practitioner.

Catalysts can be formed from a wide variety of catalyst precursors. Such catalyst precursors decompose to form the desired catalysts. The decomposition may occur as a method of creating the catalysts, which are subsequently introduced into the reaction zone. The catalyst precursors may be selected such that their decomposition temperature is below the temperature of the reaction zone, so that when the catalyst precursors are introduced to the reaction zone, they decompose and form the catalyst particles. The use of catalyst precursors is a good way to control the size of the catalyst particles. The control of the catalyst particle or catalyst grain size is an element in controlling the morphology and diameter of the carbon nanotubes that grow on the catalyst.

Catalyst precursors are compounds containing the metals noted to be effective catalysts. For example, some of the metals noted as effective catalysts occur as metallocenes (e.g. ferrocene), as carbonyls (e.g., cobalt carbonyl), as oxides (e.g., iron oxides aka rust), etc., that decompose at temperatures below the reaction temperatures. A wide range of suitable compounds will occur to the skilled practitioner in selecting catalyst precursors and creating mixtures of catalyst precursors that result in the desired catalyst upon decomposition.

It has been noted that small amounts of substances such as sulfur added to the reaction zone tend to be catalyst promoters that accelerate the growth of carbon products on the catalysts. Such promoters may be introduced into the reactor in a wide variety of compounds. Such compounds should be selected such that the decomposition temperature of the compound is below the reaction temperature. For example, if sulfur is selected as a promoter for an iron based catalyst, the sulfur may be introduced into the reaction zone as a thiophene gas, or as thiophene droplets in a carrier gas.

The literature on buckminster fullerene and carbon nanotube growth contains many specific methods for forming suitable catalysts. For example, instructions for using catalyst precursors, catalyst promoters, hot wire gas methods, etc., are known to the art. Specific adaptations of these standard methods will readily occur to the skilled practitioner.

The nucleation of the catalyst may be promoted by the use of pulsed laser light, where the pulse passes through the decomposed, or decomposing, catalyst precursors and the resulting catalyst vapors in the gases. This use of laser light enhances the size uniformity of the resulting catalyst nanoparticles.

It appears that the optimum reaction temperature is dependent on the composition of the catalyst and on the size of the catalyst particles. Catalysts with small particle size tend to have optimum reaction temperatures at significantly lower temperatures than the same catalyst material with a larger particle size. One of skill may need to carry out specific experiments with each catalyst and each catalyst size to determine that optimum. For example, the reaction occurs at temperatures in the range of approximately 400° C. to 800° C. for iron based catalysts, depending on the particle size and composition and the desired solid carbon product. That is, in general, graphite and amorphous solid carbon form at lower temperatures, and carbon nanotubes form at higher temperatures).

In general, the reaction proceeds at a wide range of pressures from near vacuum, to significant pressures. Typically, increases in pressure increase the reaction rates. At this time, however, it is unknown if there is an upper limit to the benefit of increased pressure on the reaction.

In another embodiment, the product carbon morphology is primarily carbon nanotubes of relatively consistent diameter. The tube diameter is controlled by controlling the catalyst particle size by physical dispersion and dispersing an aerosol of pre-prepared catalyst precursor particles such as Fe₃O₄ nanoparticles into the reaction zone. This dispersion of the catalyst particles may occur in one of the reaction gases or in a carrier gas prior to injection into the reaction zone.

Carbon nanotubes grow from a nucleating site that is the catalyzing particle. This catalyzing particle may be a domain in a piece of steel or steel wool for example, or a discrete nanoparticle of iron deposited on an inert substrate such as a quartz disk. The size of the carbon nanotube will be proportional to the size of the nucleating site. The ratio between the catalyst particle size and the CNT diameter is observed to be about 1.3 to 1.6. A possible theoretical basis for the correlation of particle size and pore diameter was suggested by Nasibulin et al., in "Correlation between catalyst particle and single-walled carbon nanotube diameters," though Nasibulin's estimate of 1.6 is higher than was typically experimentally observed.

Steel is a readily available catalyst with many different formulations comprising various metals known to be effective catalysts for the Bosch reaction. With the present methods, steel and stainless steel in various grades and through various processing methods and in various forms act as a

catalyst for the growth of solid carbon, specifically for the growth of carbon nanotubes. Steels with smaller grain sizes tend to produce smaller diameter carbon nanotubes. The grain size is both a function of the chemistry of the steel and the heat treating methods under which the grains formed. Mild steels often produce carbon nanotubes with diameters over 100 nm, while stainless steels (such as 304 or 316L) produce carbon nanotubes with diameters in the range of 20 nm.

Various forms of steel act as suitable catalysts for the growth of carbon nanotubes. For example, steel wool, steel plate, and steel shot (as is used in sand blasting) have provided satisfactory growth rates and consistent quality. The morphology of the carbon nanotubes grown on steel is dependent on the chemistry of the steel and the way it was processed. This may be due to any of a number of factors not presently fully understood; however, it appears to be related to the grain size and boundary shapes within the metal, where the characteristic size of these features controls the characteristic diameter of the population of carbon nanotubes grown on the surface of such steel samples. Appropriate experiments to determine the correct chemistry for the steel and processing methods for the steel to achieve the desired carbon nanotube morphology and controlled diameter will readily occur to the skilled practitioner.

Rust on steel has been observed to be a good catalyst for the formation of carbon nanotubes by the methods disclosed. Although the mechanism is not presently understood, it may be because the iron oxides comprising the rust are in effect a catalyst precursor. As the rusted samples are heated, the iron oxides decompose and the iron atoms coalesce to form small iron particles suitable for the catalysis of carbon nanotube growth.

When using a solid catalyst, such as a wafer of steel, the carbon nanotubes appear to grow in a series of generations. While the mechanism is not fully understood, it appears that the reaction gases interact with the exposed surface particles and the carbon nanotubes begin to grow on the surface. As the growth continues it appears that a clump of neighboring tubes become entangled and lift the catalyst particles off of the surface, exposing a new layer of catalyst particles, with which reaction gases are then able to interact. As each layer lifts off of the surface, the carbon nanotubes become highly entangled in small clumps that look like "pillows" or cockleburrs under 800 to 1000 times magnification. If a sample is left in the reaction zone, these layers continue to form and lift off until the catalyst is consumed and various structures (such as forests, fibers or piles) composed of carbon nanotube "pillows" results. The observation that the pillows detach from the underlying catalyst substrate means that a fluidized bed reactor where the pillows are elutriated from the substrate, entrained in the gas flow, and subsequently harvested from the gas mixture may be an economical reactor design for growing carbon nanotube pillows.

As depicted in, for example, FIGS. 3 and 18, the pillow morphology is characterized by the presence of carbon nanotubes that are highly entangled in clusters, typically with a dimension for the clusters of under 1 mm. Hence, as depicted in the Figures, the pillows appear as numerous bulbous or billowing conglomerations of the nanotubes, not too dissimilar to the appearance of the outer periphery of cumulus clouds. The pillows may be comprised of carbon nanotubes of many different diameters, lengths and types. The pillows often appear in the form of discrete units in forests, piles, and filaments grown on a substrate. Steels of many different compositions (e.g., mild steel, 304 stainless, 316L stainless) and in many of the various forms (e.g., plate, steel wool, and steel

shot) tend to yield carbon nanotube pillows under a wide range of reaction gas mixes and reaction temperatures.

The observed carbon nanotube pillow morphology feels very easily. For example, if a sample of carbon nanotube pillows is dispersed into an ethanol solution by gentle stirring, and the solution is subsequently shaken, the pillows agglomerate and interlock so that the distinct growth boundaries of the pillows are merged and much more extensive structures are formed. The pillow morphology may be particularly suitable for forming various types of carbon nanotube paper, felts, electrodes, etc., that may be developed or under development. The potential uses of these pillows will readily occur to a person aware of the current art in the various applications of carbon nanotubes.

A wide variety of reactor designs may be used to facilitate the formation and collection of the desired solid carbon products. Aerosol and fluidized bed reactors are particularly suitable for high volume continuous production of the solid carbon product. A fluid wall reactor has the advantages of providing for the introduction of various substances (catalysts, additional reactants) and of minimizing or eliminating the accumulation of solid carbon products on the reactor walls.

The catalytic converters may employ different designs known in the art. Examples of suitable designs include:

Aerosol reactors in which the catalyst is formed in a gas phase from catalyst precursors or in which the catalyst is preformed and selected for a specific size distribution, mixed into a liquid or carrier gas solution, and then sprayed into the reactor (for example, via electrospray). The catalyst may then remain distributed in the gas phase, or deposited on solid surfaces in the reaction zone for the growth phase of the carbon product, and subsequent transport of the product out of the reaction zone.

Fluidized bed reactors in which the catalyst or catalyst coated particles are introduced into the reactor and the solid carbon is grown on the surface of the particles. The solid carbon is then either elutriated in the reactor, and carried out of the reactor entrained in the reaction gases, or the catalyst particles are harvested and the solid carbon removed from the surface.

Batch reactors in which the catalyst is either a fixed solid surface (for example, a sheet of steel, or steel wool) or is mounted on a fixed solid surface (for example, catalyst nanoparticles deposited on an inert substrate), with the solid carbon grown on the catalyst, and the catalyst and solid carbon periodically removed from the reactor.

Continuous reactors where a solid catalyst or catalyst mounted on a solid substrate is moved through the flowing gas stream, the resulting solid carbon product harvested, the solid surface prepared, and reintroduced to the reactor. The solid substrate may be the catalyst material (e.g., a stainless steel shape) or a surface on which the catalyst is mounted. Appropriate shapes for the solid surfaces include wafer, sheet, cylinder, or spheres.

In an embodiment of this method using a fluidized bed reactor, the reactor may be designed to retain the catalyst while allowing the CNTs to be entrained in the gas flow and to be lofted out of the reaction zone upon reaching a desired size, said lofting being due to the drag forces on the forming particles. This control may be achieved through the shape of the reactor, the gas flow rates, or shape and flow rates in combination, and may allow control over the residence time of the elutriates and the corresponding size of the solid carbon product (such as the length of the carbon nanotubes).

The catalytic converters may be designed as either batch or continuous reactors so that the solid carbon is deposited on at

least one solid surface where the solid surface (upon which the carbon is deposited) is the desired object of manufacture or a component thereof and where the solid carbon product may include or be entirely composed of pyrolytic graphite, or one or more species of buckminster fullerenes. The entire surface of the object of manufacture need not be coated with the carbon. The carbon deposition area on the solid surface optionally may be limited to one or more regions by masking, or by selectively depositing the catalyst or catalyst precursor to promote the formation of the solid carbon on portions of the solid surface.

The means for collecting and separating the solid carbon product from the gas stream or from solid surfaces on which they form will readily occur to the skilled practitioner and will involve known methods for separating solids from gas or liquid streams. Such methods for separating solid carbon products from the gas phase include, but are not limited to, elutriation, centrifugation, electrostatic precipitation, and filtration.

The separation of the solid product from the gas stream and the catalyst depends on the type of reactor used. For example, the solid carbon may be harvested directly from the gas stream in an aerosol reactor or the elutriates from a fluidized bed reactor, using electrophoretic or thermophoretic collectors or by various filtration methods. For a solid catalyst or solid surface mounted catalyst, the solid carbon product may be scrapped or otherwise abraded from the surface of the solid carrier material.

In some cases it may be beneficial to remove the product from the reaction gas mixture prior to cooling (for example, by withdrawing the solid carbon from the reactor through a purge chamber wherein the reaction gases are displaced by an inert purging gas such as helium). Purging prior to cooling helps reduce the deposit or growth of undesirable morphologies on the desired solid carbon product during the cooling process.

In aerosol or fluidized bed reactors, the residence time in the growth zone may be controlled by a number of forces (such as gravitational, electromagnetic, or centrifugal forces) counteracting the motion of the gas stream. These forces counterbalance the gas flow to help control the residence time, so that the size of the solid carbon product may be controlled.

In another embodiment, using an aerosol reaction, electro-spraying is an effective way to introduce preformed catalysts, or a solution of catalyst precursor, into an aerosol reactor. The electrospray uses coulomb forces to separate the catalyst particle, or the catalyst precursor solution, into small droplets from which individual particles form. The electrospray helps keep the particles separated so that they do not tend to clump or fuse. The electrospray also tends to charge the resulting carbon particles and make them easier to harvest from the aerosol using electrostatic collectors.

In aerosol reactors the catalyst may be formed by spraying catalyst precursors or preformed catalysts into a carrier gas or fluid for transport into the reaction zone. The catalyst or catalyst precursors may be preconditioned in a catalyst conditioning process prior to mixing with the reaction gases. Catalyst conditioning by heating in an inert carrier gas may promote the growth of specific chiralities of single wall carbon nanotubes, for example, helium is known to promote the growth of chiralities with metallic properties. Also, one or more substances may be introduced into the reaction zone to modify the physical properties of the desired solid carbon product either through incorporation in the solid carbon product, or by surface deposition on the solid carbon product.

In many cases the catalyst particle is removed from the surrounding matrix as the carbon nanotube grows so that the catalyst particle may be seen embedded in one of the ends of the nanotube. In scanning electron microscope images it appears that catalyst ends are significantly larger (e.g., 1.3 to 1.6 times the diameter) than the tubes that grow from them. This may be due to a carbon shell surrounding the catalyst, or it may be indicative of a fundamental relationship between the catalyst particle size and that of the carbon nanotube that grows from it, or it may be due to some other factor or even coincidence. In any case, one way to control the size of the carbon nanotubes appears to be through the control of the catalyzing particle size, with the catalyzing particle size being somewhat larger than the desired nanotube size.

In practice, the catalyst particle size may be controlled in a number of ways including as crystal domains in a metal substrate. For example, mild steel wool typically grows larger diameter carbon nanotubes than 316L stainless steel. By using preformed nanoparticles of the desired size, or by spraying droplets of catalyst precursor either onto a surface or into an aerosol from which the catalyst particle will crystallize (by adjusting the concentration of precursors and the size of the spray droplets, the size of the resulting particle may be controlled), the size of the carbon nanotubes may be adjusted.

The physical properties of the solid carbon materials may be substantially modified by the application of additional substances to the surface of the solid carbon. Many different modifications and functionalizations of the resulting solid carbon are known to the art and will readily occur to the skilled practitioner. The method of this invention contemplates adding modifying agents such as ammonia, thiophene, nitrogen gas, and surplus hydrogen to the reaction gases as those substances may result in desirable modifications to the physical properties of solid carbon, as documented in the literature. At least some of these modifications and functionalizations may be performed in the reaction zone.

Many of these modifying agents may be applied during the reaction. These substances may be introduced into the reduction reaction chamber near the completion of the solid carbon formation reaction by, for example, injecting a water stream containing the substance to be deposited such as a metal ion. The substances may also be introduced as a component of a carrier gas; for example, surplus hydrogen is known to result in the hydrogenation of the carbon lattice in some cases with the result of a significant yield of semiconductor species of the desired solid carbon product.

An advantage of this method is that it may be incorporated into power production, chemical processes, and manufacturing processes where the combustion of a primary hydrocarbon fuel source is the primary source of heat for the power or process. The resulting combustion gases contain the carbon oxides that may act as sources of carbon for the manufacture of the desired solid carbon product. The present method is scalable for many different production capacities so that, for example, plants designed with this method in mind may be sized to handle the carbon oxide emissions from the combustion processes of a large coal fired power plant or those from an internal combustion engine.

In another embodiment, the carbon oxides from a source gas mixture are separated from the source mixture and concentrated to form the carbon oxide feedstock for the reduction process. The carbon oxides in the source gases can be concentrated through many different means known to the art. In yet another embodiment, the catalytic conversion process may be employed as an intermediate step in a multi-stage power extraction process wherein the first stages cool the combustion gases to the reaction temperature of the reduction

process for the formation of the desired solid carbon product. The cooled combustion gases, at the desired temperature of the reduction reaction, may then be passed through the reduction process and subsequently passed through additional power extraction stages.

Coupling this method with a hydrocarbon combustion process for electrical power production has the additional advantage that the hydrogen required for the reduction process may be formed by the electrolysis of water using off-peak power. The oxygen that is formed in the electrolysis process may be used as at least a portion of the combustible mixture for the combustion process.

When the methods disclosed are coupled with a combustion or chemical process that uses hydrocarbons, a portion of the hydrocarbons of the process may be used as the reducing agent gas. This may include the pyrolysis of the hydrocarbons to form a hydrogen gas that is provided as the reducing agent gas. Suitable means for adapting the process of this invention to the available hydrocarbon sources will readily occur to a skilled practitioner.

The reduction process of this method results in the formation of solid carbon product and water. The water may subsequently be condensed and the latent heat extracted for heating purposes, or as part of a low pressure power extraction cycle. Options for extracting the water as a useful co-product, and profitably using the associate latent heat will readily occur to the skilled practitioner.

EXAMPLES

Although the examples described herein have been used to describe the present method, it is understood that such detail is solely for this purpose, and variations may be made therein by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the method. The following Examples are included as illustrative of the methods of this invention.

Example	Carbon Oxide	Reducing Agent	Catalyst	Conditions
Example 1 Multi-wall Carbon Nanotube Pillows	CO ₂	Hydrogen	rust on mild steel	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 680° C. Time = 1 hour
Example 2 Multi Wall Carbon Nanotubes	CO ₂	Hydrogen	304 stainless steel	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 680° C. Time = 1 hour
Example 3 Multi Wall Carbon Nanotubes	CO ₂	Hydrogen	316L stainless steel	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 680° C. Time = 1 hour
Example 4 Multi Wall Carbon Nanotubes	CO ₂	Hydrogen	Steel Wool	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 700° C. Time = 1 hour
Example 5 Graphite platelets	CO ₂	Hydrogen	304 steel	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 575° C. Time = 1 hour
Example 6 Carbon Nanotube Pillows	CO ₂	Hydrogen	304 steel	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 650° C. Time = 1 hour

Each example is explained in additional detail in the following subsection, and scanning electron microscope images of the products of each of the examples are included.

The laboratory setup used for all of the examples is illustrated in FIG. 1. The experimental apparatus includes two tube furnaces 1 and 2 with quartz tubes, connected in series. This arrangement was created to enable the concurrent running of separate tests in each of the furnaces, potentially at different reaction temperatures and with different catalysts,

but with the same reaction gas mixture and pressure. This arrangement allowed for more rapid testing when both furnaces were run. However, only a single furnace is required for effective operation: the two-furnace arrangement shown was used for experimental convenience. The samples were placed inside either of the tube furnaces. All tests were run in a batch mode. The furnaces took approximately 1 to 2 hours to come up to temperature and 4 to 6 hours to cool so that the samples could be removed. Often, the experiment was run with only one of the furnaces. All of the components illustrated in FIG. 1 together with associated piping, instrumentation, and appurtenances are collectively referred to as the "experimental apparatus" in the following description of the experimental examples.

The gases used in various combinations in the examples were:

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), research grade, PraxAir
Methane (CH₄), research grade, PraxAir
Nitrogen (N₂), standard grade, PraxAir
Helium (He), research grade, Air Liquide
Hydrogen (H₂), research grade, PraxAir

As depicted in FIG. 1, the gases were piped from a gas supply 6 to mixing valves 7 where they were metered and distributed to tube furnaces 1 and 2. The gases flowed through the tube furnaces 1 and 2, to a refrigerated condenser 4 (dew point 38° F.), then through a compressor 3 and back into the head end of the tube furnace 1. A vacuum pump 5 was used to evacuate the experimental apparatus if a particular experiment required purging the furnaces with inert gases.

The temperature of the first furnace 1 was measured by a type K thermocouple located inside the tube at approximately the centerline of the first furnace 1. The temperature of the second furnace 2 was measured by a type K thermocouple located at approximately the centerline of the second furnace 2 in a well drilled in the ceramic insulation of the furnace. The temperatures reported are the gauge temperatures as shown on these thermocouples, and while indicative of the temperature in the reaction zone, are not exceptionally accurate. Every particular experimental setup will have similar limitations in reporting accurately the reaction temperature in various regions of the reaction zone. However, the results reported are for the gauge temperature reported, and appropriate experiment and variation of the temperature in this vicinity in the specific equipment of a skilled practitioner should yield similar results in similar apparatus.

No attempt was made to measure or to control the recirculation flow rate, and the quality of the product and speed of reaction seemed to be independent of whether the high volume compressor or the low volume pump were used. This may have been because in all cases the flow rate was above a critical threshold. Flow rates are important in the optimal design and operation of production facilities, but are not particularly important in the tests reported here because the volume of the experimental apparatus was much larger than the volume of the catalyst and resulting solid carbon product. Appropriate tests to determine the optimum flow rates for a specific production design will readily occur to a skilled practitioner.

During the experiments, the pressure of the gases in the experimental apparatus would suddenly begin to rapidly drop as the temperature increased. The temperature at which the pressure began to drop varied with the catalyst and gas mixture. This drop in pressure may be an indication of the onset of formation of the solid carbon product. The pressure was then maintained by adding additional reaction gases to the experimental apparatus. After a short time, the pressure would begin to rise, at which point the addition of reaction

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gases was terminated. The pressure drop and the duration of the pressure drop appear to be a proxy for the onset of CNT growth and the duration and rate of growth.

The start-up procedure followed one of two methods: heating in inert gas (helium or nitrogen), or heating in air. In the case of heating in inert gas, the experimental apparatus was evacuated and purged for approximately 5 minutes, after which the vacuum pump 5 was turned off and the experimental apparatus was brought to atmospheric pressure with the inert gas. The inert gas was then turned off and the furnaces were turned on to begin their heating cycle. In the case of air, the furnaces were not purged at start-up. The furnaces were simply turned on and brought to temperature.

When the furnaces reached approximately the experimental set point temperature, the experimental apparatus was evacuated and purged with reaction gas mixture (typically a stoichiometric mixture of carbon dioxide and reducing gas) for five minutes. The experimental apparatus was then brought to atmospheric pressure while the reaction gases and the temperature continued to rise until the experimental apparatus gauge temperature was at the selected test temperature.

In the examples, the furnaces were operated for a fixed time (typically 1 hour), at which time the furnaces were turned off, purged and allowed to cool. After the furnaces were turned off, the vacuum pump 5 was turned on, the reaction gases evacuated and the experimental apparatus purged with an inert gas (either helium or nitrogen) for approximately 5 minutes, then the vacuum pump 5 was turned off and the experimental apparatus was brought up to atmospheric pressure with an inert purge gas and allowed to cool.

During the experiments, there were no observed differences in the quality of the product CNTs based on the inert gas used for purging and cooling. Additional testing may show that the properties of the CNTs are modified by the cooling gas mixture and rate of cooling. Implementations of continuous flow reactors based on the Examples reported here will readily occur to the skilled practitioner.

Example 1

Example	Carbon Oxide	Reducing Agent	Catalyst	Conditions
Example 1 Multi-wall CNTs on solid substrate	CO ₂	Hydrogen	rust on mild steel	P = 1 atm Temp = 680° C. Time = 1 hour

For Example 1, a sample of mild steel wafer with extensive red rust spots was used as the catalyst. The mild steel wafer was placed in Furnace 1 at approximately the center line. The vacuum pump 5 was started and helium was used to purge the experimental apparatus for five minutes. After five minutes the vacuum pump 5 was turned off, the compressor 3 was turned on, the refrigerated condenser 4 was turned on and the helium gas continued to flow until the pressure was 680 torr. at which point the gas flow was shut off. The furnace 1 was then turned on.

When the furnace 1 temperature reached the set point temperature of 680° C., the vacuum pump 5 was turned on and reaction gases in a stoichiometric mixture of carbon dioxide and hydrogen, from gas supply 6 controlled by mixing valve 7, were used to purge the experimental apparatus for five minutes. After five minutes the vacuum pump 5 was turned off. When the experimental apparatus reached a pressure of 760 torr. the reaction gases were shut off. Additional reaction

gases were added periodically to keep the experimental apparatus gauge pressure between 640 torr. and 760 torr. The test ran for 1 hour after which the furnace 1 was shut off, the vacuum pump 5 was started and the experimental apparatus was purged with helium, from gas supply 6 controlled by mixing valve 7, for 5 minutes. The vacuum pump 5 was then shut off and the helium purge gas continued to flow until the gauge pressure in the experimental apparatus was 740 torr. The furnace 1 was then left to cool.

The steel sample was removed after the furnace 1 had cooled. FIG. 2 shows a photograph of the sample after it was removed; notice the "forest" type of growth on the substrate. This forest is comprised of carbon nanotube "pillows." FIG. 3 shows a SEM image of the same sample under 700× magnification. FIG. 4 shows the same sample under 18,000× magnification and shows the details of a typical "pillow." The size of the CNTs (tens to hundreds of nanometers in diameter) indicates that they are most probably multi-wall CNTs. Note that in FIG. 4 the catalyst in the growth tip end of each carbon nanotube may be seen. The average diameter of the growth tip appears to be approximately 1.2 to 1.3 times the diameter of the associated carbon nanotube. FIG. 5 shows the elemental analysis of the CNTs in FIG. 4, indicating the CNTs are carbon with minor iron and oxygen constituents, perhaps due to the catalyst particles embedded in the growth tip of the CNTs.

Example 2

Example	Carbon Oxide	Reducing Agent	Catalyst	Conditions
Example 2 Multi Wall Carbon Nanotubes	CO ₂	Hydrogen	304 stainless steel and quartz disk	P = 1 atm Temp = 680° C. Time = 1 hour

For Example 2, a sample quartz disk was placed lying flat on a 304 stainless steel wafer, which was used as the catalyst. The 304 stainless steel catalyst wafer was placed in furnace 1 at approximately the center line. The vacuum pump 5 was started and helium was used to purge the experimental apparatus for five minutes. After five minutes the vacuum pump 5 was turned off, the compressor 3 was turned on, the refrigerated condenser 4 was turned on and the helium gas continued to flow until the pressure was 680 torr. at which point the gas flow was shut off. The furnace 1 was then turned on.

When the furnace 1 temperature reached the set point temperature of 680° C., the vacuum pump 5 was turned on and reaction gases in a stoichiometric mixture of carbon dioxide and hydrogen, from gas supply 6 controlled by mixing valve 7, were used to purge the experimental apparatus for five minutes. After five minutes the vacuum pump 5 was turned off. When the experimental apparatus reached a gauge pressure of 760 torr. the reaction gases were shut off. Additional reaction gases were added periodically to keep the experimental apparatus pressure between 640 torr. and 760 torr. The test ran for 1 hour after which the furnace 1 was shut off, the vacuum pump 5 was started and the experimental apparatus was purged with helium, from gas supply 6 controlled by mixing valve 7, for 5 minutes. The vacuum pump 5 was then shut off and the helium purge gas continued to flow until the gauge pressure in the experimental apparatus was 740 torr. The furnace 1 was then left to cool.

The steel sample was removed from the furnace 1 after the furnace 1 had cooled. A mat of CNTs grew between the quartz

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and the wafer. Portions of the CNT mat adhered to both the quartz and the steel catalyst wafer surfaces. FIG. 6 shows the sample under 10,000× magnification, and FIG. 7 shows the sample under 100,000× magnification. The size of the CNTs (tens to hundreds of nanometers in diameter) indicates that they are probably multi-wall CNTs.

Example 3

Example	Carbon Oxide	Reducing Agent	Catalyst	Conditions
Example 3 Multi Wall Carbon Nanotubes	CO ₂	Hydrogen	316L stainless steel	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 700° C. Time = 1 hour

For Example 3, a 316L stainless steel wafer was used as the catalyst. The 316L stainless steel wafer was placed in furnace 1 at approximately the center line. The compressor 3 was turned on, the refrigerated condenser 4 was turned on, the vacuum pump 5 was turned on and a purge gas comprising helium, from gas supply 6 controlled by mixing valve 7, was introduced into the experimental apparatus. After 5 minutes of purging the vacuum pump 5 was shut off and the helium purge gas continued to flow until the gauge pressure of the experimental apparatus was 680 torr, at which point the purge gas flow was shut off. The furnace 1 was then turned on.

When the furnace 1 temperature reached 700° C., the vacuum pump 5 was started and reaction gases in a stoichiometric mixture of carbon dioxide and hydrogen, from the gas supply 6 controlled by mixing valve 7, passed into the experimental apparatus. After five minutes, the vacuum pump 5 was shut off and the reaction gases continued to flow until the gauge pressure of the experimental apparatus was 730 torr., at which point the reaction gas flow rate was reduced to a lower flow rate sufficient to keep the pressure between 700 torr. and 730 torr. The experimental apparatus ran for 1 hour after which the furnace 1 was shut off, the vacuum pump 5 was started and the experimental apparatus was purged with helium from the gas supply 6, controlled by mixing valve 7, for 5 minutes. The vacuum pump 5 was then shut off and the helium purge gas continued to flow until the gauge pressure in the experimental apparatus was 760 Torr. The furnace 1 was then left to cool.

The steel sample was removed from the furnace 1 after the furnace had cooled. The 316L stainless steel wafer was removed from furnace 1 after the furnace had cooled. FIG. 8 is a photograph of the 316L stainless steel wafer. Note that solid carbon product, carbon nanotubes, grew on only a portion of the wafer. The reasons for this are unclear. FIG. 9 shows an image of a region of the CNT forest on the wafer at 2,500× magnification and FIG. 10 shows an image of the same region of the CNT forest at 10,000× magnification. The diameter of the tubes indicates that the CNTs are most likely multi-wall.

Example 4

Example	Carbon Oxide	Reducing Agent	Catalyst	Conditions
Example 4 Multi Wall Carbon Nanotubes	CO ₂	Hydrogen	Steel Wool	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 700° C. Time = 1 hour

For Example 4, a sample of mild steel wool was used as the catalyst. The mild steel wool sample was placed in the furnace 1 near the center line and heated in air. The furnace 1 was turned on, the compressor 3 was turned on and the refrigerated condenser 4 was turned on. When the furnace 1 temperature was 645° C. (that is, before the furnace 1 had come to the set point temperature of 700° C.) the vacuum pump 5 was started and a stoichiometric mixture of carbon dioxide and hydrogen, from the gas supply 6, controlled by mixing valve 7, flowed into the experimental apparatus for five minutes. At the end of five minutes the vacuum pump 5 was shut off and the gases continued to flow until the gauge pressure of the experimental apparatus was 530 torr. at which point the reaction gas flow rate was reduced to a lower flow rate sufficient to keep the pressure between 500 torr. and 530 torr. The experimental apparatus ran for 1 hour after which the furnace 1 was shut off, the vacuum pump 5 was started and the experimental apparatus was purged with helium from the gas supply 6, controlled by mixing valve 7 for 5 minutes. The vacuum pump 5 was then shut off and the helium purge gas continued to flow until the gauge pressure in the experimental apparatus was 700 torr. The furnace 1 was then left to cool.

The steel wool sample with the solid carbon product was removed after the furnace 1 had cooled. FIG. 11 is a photograph of the steel wool sample. Note the powdery black band of solid carbon product, which was sampled and examined under SEM resulting in FIG. 12 showing an image of a particle of the powder at 800× magnification. The particle is a single "pillow" of the pile of pillows comprising the powdery black band. FIG. 13 shows an image of the same "pillow" at 120,000× magnification. The diameter indicates that the CNTs are likely multi-wall.

Example 5

Example	Carbon Oxide	Reducing Agent	Catalyst	Conditions
Example 5 Graphite platelets	CO ₂	Hydrogen	304 steel wire	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 575° C. Time = 2 hour

For Example 5, a sample of 316 stainless steel wire was used as the catalyst. The 316 stainless steel wire was placed in the furnace 1 near the exit of the furnace. The furnace 1 was turned on and the refrigerated condenser 4 was turned on. The vacuum pump 5 was started and reaction gases comprising a stoichiometric mixture of carbon dioxide and hydrogen from the gas supply 6 and controlled by the mixing valve 7 was used to purge the experimental apparatus for five minutes. After five minutes the vacuum pump 5 was turned off, the compressor 3 was turned on, and the reaction gas mixture continued to flow until the gauge pressure of the experimental apparatus was 589 torr. at which point the reaction gas flow was shut off. The experimental apparatus ran for 2 hour after which the furnace 1 was shut off, the vacuum pump 5 was started and the experimental apparatus was purged with helium from the gas supply 6, controlled by mixing valve 7, for 5 minutes. The vacuum pump 5 was then shut off and the helium continued to flow until the gauge pressure in the experimental apparatus was 700 torr. The furnace 1 was then left to cool.

The steel wire was removed from the furnace 1 after the furnace 1 had cooled. FIG. 14 is a photograph of the steel wire sample with the surface growth of the solid carbon product, in this example graphite platelets. Samples of the graphite platelets were imaged using SEM resulting in FIG. 15 showing an

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image of a graphite platelet at 7,000× magnification and FIG. 16 showing an image the detail of a graphite platelet at 50,000× magnification.

Example 6

Example	Carbon Oxide	Reducing Agent	Catalyst	Conditions
Example 6 Carbon Nanotube Pillows	CO ₂	Hydrogen	304 steel	Pressure = 1 atm Temp = 650° C. Time = 1 hour

For Example 6, a 304 stainless steel wafer was used as the catalyst. Sample discs of quartz were placed on the upper surface of the steel wafer. The 304 stainless steel wafer with the sample quartz discs was placed in furnace 1 at approximately the center line. The vacuum pump 5 was started and helium from the gas supply 6, controlled by mixing valve 7, was used to purge the experimental apparatus for five minutes. After five minutes the vacuum pump 5 was turned off, the compressor 3 was turned on, the refrigerated condenser 4 was turned on and the helium gas continued to flow until the experimental apparatus pressure was 680 torr., at which point the gas flow was shut off. The furnace 1 was then turned on.

When the furnace 1 temperature reached the set point temperature of 650° C., the vacuum pump 5 was turned on and reaction gases in a stoichiometric mixture of carbon dioxide and hydrogen, from the gas supply 6 controlled by the mixing valve 7, were used to purge the experimental apparatus for five minutes. After five minutes the vacuum pump 5 was turned off. When the experimental apparatus reached a gauge pressure of 760 torr., the reaction gases were shut off. Additional reaction gases were added periodically to keep the experimental apparatus pressure between 640 torr. and 760 torr. The test ran for 1 hour after which the furnace 1 was shut off, the vacuum pump 5 was started and the experimental apparatus was purged with helium, from the gas supply 6 controlled by the mixing valve 7, for 5 minutes. The vacuum pump 5 was then shut off and the helium purge gas continued to flow until the gauge pressure in the experimental apparatus was 740 torr. The furnace 1 was then left to cool.

The steel sample was removed after the furnace 1 had cooled. FIG. 17 is a photograph of the sample with the surface growth of graphite platelets. Samples of the graphite platelets were imaged using SEM resulting in FIG. 18, showing an image of a graphite platelet at 778× magnification. FIG. 18 shows the pillows comprising the fibers. FIG. 19 shows an image of one of the pillows at 11000× magnification where the highly entangled structure of the carbon nanotubes may be seen. FIG. 20 shows a 70000× magnification showing the detail of some of the carbon nanotubes comprising the same pillow as is shown in FIG. 19.

Therefore, the present invention has several advantages over the prior methods. Although embodiments of the present methods have been described, various modifications and changes may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method for producing a solid carbon product, the method comprising:

mixing a first gas stream containing carbon dioxide and a second gas stream containing a gaseous reducing agent to form a reaction gas mixture;

supplying the reaction gas mixture to a reaction zone;

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reacting the carbon dioxide with the gaseous reducing agent in the reaction zone in the presence of an iron-containing catalyst to form water and the solid carbon product; and

separating at least a portion of the water formed in the reaction zone from the reaction gas mixture during the reaction of the carbon dioxide with the gaseous reducing agent.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein reacting the carbon dioxide with the reducing agent in the reaction zone in the presence of a catalyst to form the solid carbon product comprises forming a single-wall carbon nanotube, a multi-wall carbon nanotube, a carbon nanofiber, a graphite platelet, graphene, carbon black, amorphous carbon, or a combination thereof.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein reacting the carbon dioxide with the reducing agent in the reaction zone in the presence of a catalyst to form the solid carbon product comprises forming entangled agglomerations of carbon nanotubes.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising continuously transferring a portion of the reaction gas mixture and the solid carbon product from the reaction zone to a separation process to separate the solid carbon product from the reaction gas mixture.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising returning at least a portion of the reaction gas mixture to the reaction zone, wherein the at least a portion of the reaction gas mixture is substantially free of solids.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the iron-containing catalyst comprises steel, or is formed by the reduction of one or more oxides of an element in steel.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the iron-containing catalyst comprises an iron oxide, an iron carbide, or cementite.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the second gas stream consists essentially of hydrogen.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the second gas stream comprises at least one of a hydrocarbon gas, natural gas, or methane.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the first gas stream consists essentially of carbon dioxide.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising controlling a temperature of the reaction gas mixture in the reaction zone within a range from 400° C. to 900° C.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising controlling a pressure in the reaction zone within a range from 0 torr. to 1000 torr.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising controlling a pressure in the reaction zone within a range from 1000 torr. to 100 psig.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising controlling a pressure in the reaction zone within a range from 100 psig to 1000 psig.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising adding at least one of additional carbon dioxide or additional gaseous reducing agent to maintain a substantially constant pressure in the reaction zone after the carbon dioxide and the reducing agent begin reacting.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the iron-containing catalyst comprises a self-supporting iron-containing catalyst.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the self-supporting iron-containing catalyst comprises a carbon-containing steel.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein separating at least a portion of the water formed in the reaction zone from the reaction gas mixture during the reaction of the carbon dioxide with the gaseous reducing agent comprises condensing water.

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19. The method of claim 1, wherein separating at least a portion of the water formed in the reaction zone from the reaction gas mixture during the reaction of the carbon dioxide with the gaseous reducing agent comprises cooling the reaction gas mixture to a temperature of about 3° C. or lower. 5

20. The method of claim 1, further comprising recirculating the reaction gas mixture to the reaction zone after separating at least a portion of the water therefrom.

21. The method of claim 1, further comprising compressing the reaction gas mixture after separating at least a portion 10 of the water therefrom.

22. A method for producing a solid carbon product, the method comprising:

disposing an iron-containing catalyst in a reaction zone;
providing a reaction gas to the reaction zone, the reaction 15 gas comprising carbon dioxide and a gaseous reducing agent;

reacting the carbon dioxide with the gaseous reducing agent to form the solid carbon product and a reaction product gas comprising water; 20

removing water from the reaction product gas while recirculating a dried portion of the reaction product gas to the reaction zone;

providing at least one additional reaction gas during the formation of the solid carbon product to maintain a 25 substantially constant pressure in the reaction zone; and maintaining a temperature in the reaction zone from about 400° C. to about 900° C.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising continuously removing the reaction product gas and the solid carbon 30 product from the reaction zone.

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