

自组装银纳米环等离子激元生物传感器的制备与光学性质

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摘要 在过去的十几年中, 衍射耦合超窄共振已经发展成为一个独立的、快速扩展的研究领域。这种共振模式通常被称为表面晶格共振, 具有体积小、易集成、低功耗等特点。设计了一种性能优异且可规模化生产的表面晶格共振折射率传感器。利用时域有限差分法进行了仿真, 对结构的光学性能进行了研究。采用纳米球光刻技术以及纳米压印技术, 制备出大面积、高质量的银纳米环阵列, 结构的灵敏度为 663 nm/RIU, 品质因数为 9.2。通过改变结构的几何参数, 不仅能实现对共振波的调谐, 同时还能提高折射率灵敏度。所提传感器在生物传感领域具有潜在的应用前景。

关键词 传感器; 表面等离子激元; 纳米环型阵列; 自组装; 纳米压印; 生物传感

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1 引言

纳米光子传感器具有低功耗、高灵敏度、易集成等特点, 已成为生物检测、食品安全、物联网等领域的重要研究对象^[1-3]。表面等离子体共振(surface plasmon resonance, SPR)为实现光子的亚波长尺度调控提供了一种有效途径。近十年, 有许多性能优异的基于表面等离子体共振的结构被用于构建光电传感器, 比如纳米尺度的孔^[4-5]、圆盘^[6-7]、球^[8]、环^[9]、交叉领结^[10]、碗状^[11]、环形腔^[12]等, 展现了高灵敏度^[13-14]、高品质因子^[15]的传感特性。

在与纳米传感器相关的 SPR 研究^[16]中, 局域表面等离子体共振(localized surface plasmon resonance, LSPR)是研究热点^[17], 光场激发并驱动金属颗粒表面电子形成集体振荡, 集体电子振荡在光场力和晶格束缚平衡时形成 LSPR。2018 年, 研究者报道了一篇关于金纳米环阵列的 LSPR 折射率传感器的研究^[18], 优化后传感结构的折射率灵敏度为 577 nm/RIU, 品质因数(figure of merit, FoM)为 6.1, 表现出较宽的光谱线宽和较低的品质因数,

阻碍了 LSPR 潜在的应用。这样的纳米粒子以周期性阵列的形式排布, 单个粒子的 LSPR 在一定条件下能与相邻粒子的 LSPR 相互耦合, 从而调节谐振线宽。当阵列周期为粒子共振波长数量级时, 阵列的衍射级和每个单独粒子上的 LSPR 发生模式耦合, 这种共振模式被定义为表面晶格共振(surface lattice resonance, SLR), 具有共振波长线宽变窄的特点^[19]。SLR 波长与金属纳米粒子的大小、形状、周期和材料相关, 也与金属粒子周围环境的折射率有关, 通过改变金属颗粒的几何尺寸以及结构周期, 可以方便地将 SLR 波长调谐到任意可见及近红外波段。

众多已经报道的微纳金属结构表面等离子体共振器件受制于加工方法, 较多在实验室里制备并用于研究, 难以商业应用。2019 年, Robinson 等^[20]利用电子束光刻技术制作出周期性椭圆纳米孔阵列, 该结构的最大折射率灵敏度为 414 nm/RIU。2019 年, 研究者报道了关于 SLR 自组装单分散银立方晶体周期性阵列的制备研究^[21], 结果显示, 该结构的 FoM 可达 ~30, 但在制备模板的过程中, 采用了目

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前实验室应用较多的电子束印刷、电子束光刻等方法,加工成本高,效率低。除此之外,一些商业应用多数依靠纳米模板,而模板的制备也受上述纳米加工方法的限制,成本高昂。

2018年, Malani 等^[22]利用胶体光刻和反应离子刻蚀技术制作了关于 SLR 的金纳米孔阵列,实验所得的最大灵敏度为 470.49 nm/RIU。2019年, Chou Chau 等^[23]利用低成本的自组装及纳米球光刻技术设计了一种 LSPR 周期性金属-介质纳米棒阵列,但平均灵敏度只有 340 nm/RIU。大规模制备高性能的纳米传感器且成本低廉是当前研究的难点。

本文提出了一种基于周期性银纳米环阵列的 SLR 折射率传感器,在解决上述规模化制备问题的同时,传感器具有良好的传感性能。实验通过纳米球自组合法制备银纳米环形共轴腔模板^[24],配合纳米压印方法,形成坚固的环形 SLR 折射率传感膜。制备流程简单高效,成本低,可重复性好,所研制的传感器在生物传感、食品环境检测、色彩显示等方面

具有良好的应用前景^[25]。

2 传感结构与光学性能研究

2.1 周期性银纳米环阵列结构设计

本文提出了一种周期性银纳米环阵列的传感结构,如图 1 所示。结构的主要参数包含周期 P , 环形共轴腔模板内径 r 、外径 R 以及高度 H , 金属膜厚度 t 。图 1(b) 中虚线区域为结构的一个单元, 在 x 和 y 方向呈现周期性分布。入射光从顶部垂直入射, 被金属图案散射时形成共振模式并反射部分光。该结构的反射光谱可以通过光谱测试系统获得。本文首先取一组固定参数, 通过仿真计算分析结构的共振模式; 然后模拟不同结构参数下的反射光谱, 探究了光谱对结构参数的依赖性, 并得到优化的结构参数; 最后测试了参数优化后的结构折射率传感特性。结构的传感是通过测量相应反射光谱中共振峰(谷)的位置, 识别背景折射率的变化, 从而实现了对检测物的定量分析。

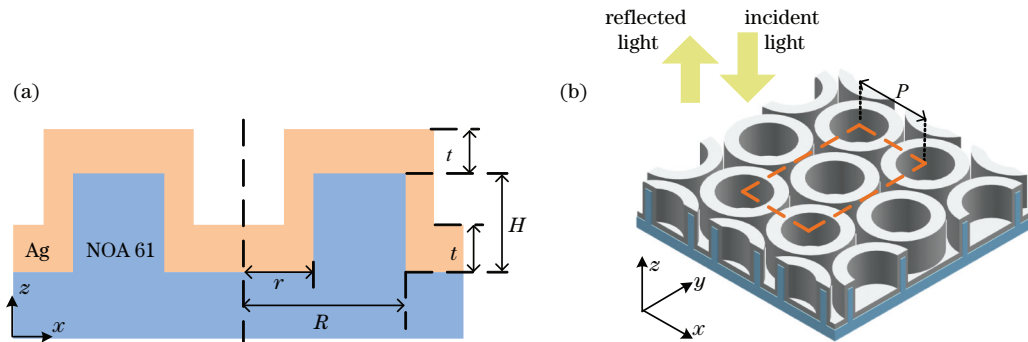


图 1 周期性银纳米环阵列结构示意图。(a) 结构平面图; (b) 结构 3D 图

Fig. 1 Structural diagrams of periodic silver nanoring array. (a) Plan of structure; (b) 3D diagram of structure

2.2 结构光学特性及共振模式分析

在探究结构参数对共振模式的依赖性之前, 需了解具体的共振模式。取一组结构参数 $P = 690 \text{ nm}$, $r = 100 \text{ nm}$, $R = 225 \text{ nm}$, $H = 50 \text{ nm}$, $t = 60 \text{ nm}$, 通过时域有限差分算法 (finite difference time domain, FDTD) 进行仿真计算^[26], 得到结构的反射、透射以及吸收光谱, 如图 2(a) 所示。在可见光波段处, 观察到波长为 $\lambda_1 = 415 \text{ nm}$ 以及 $\lambda_2 = 691 \text{ nm}$ 处的光谱能量被金属结构显著吸收。为了进一步研究两个波长处谐振形成的物理机制, 仿真计算了对应的模场及电流密度分布图, 如图 2(b)~(e) 所示。结果表明, 两个波长处的 SPR 均发生在金属/空气界面处, 区别在于 λ_1 处形成反耦合, 表现为银环激发的 LSPR; λ_2 处形成类似偶极子的振荡, 且局部电场强度的增强较 λ_1 处高出 6 倍以上。

这是由于单个银环产生的 LSPR 与整个周期阵列的衍射模式之间发生模式耦合, 反射光谱图显示出一种衍射耦合超窄共振模式, 表现为银环激发的 SLR。

2.3 结构参数对光学特性的影响

为了研究银纳米环 SLR 的可调性, 仿真计算不同结构参数下银纳米环的光谱响应。选取一组结构参数 $P = 690 \text{ nm}$, $r = 100 \text{ nm}$, $R = 225 \text{ nm}$, $H = 50 \text{ nm}$, 银膜厚度 t 以 10 nm 的间隔从 10 nm 增加至 100 nm , 模拟得到的反射光谱如图 3(a) 所示。当银膜厚度小于 40 nm 时, 由于大部分光子能量穿透结构, 反射光谱较弱, 直至 50 nm 后才趋于稳定。随着膜厚的增加, SLR 处的共振波长并未发生偏移。这是由于该处的电场增强发生在结构表面, 膜厚不改变结构整体外部形貌, 银膜厚度的增加对银

纳米环光学性能的影响不大。考虑性能和经济性，实验中银膜厚度采用 50 nm。

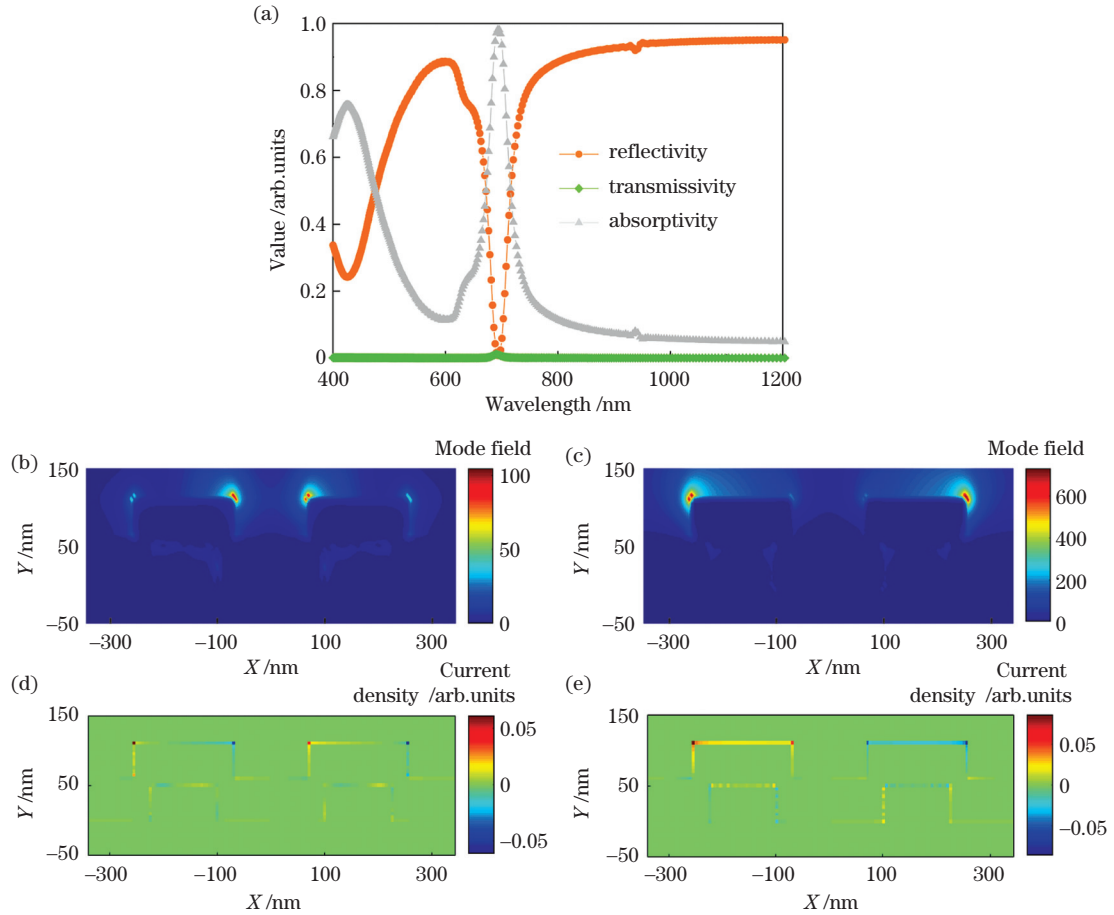


图 2 当 $P=690\text{ nm}$, $r=100\text{ nm}$, $R=225\text{ nm}$, $H=50\text{ nm}$, $t=60\text{ nm}$ 时, 计算所得的银纳米环阵列的光谱、模场及电流密度。(a) 反射、透射及吸收光谱图; 反射光谱共振波长 (b) 415 nm 和 (c) 691 nm 处的 XOZ 面模场分布; 反射光谱共振波长 (d) 415 nm 和 (e) 691 nm 处的 XOZ 面电流密度分布

Fig. 2 Spectra, mode fields and current densities of silver nanoring array calculated when $P=690\text{ nm}$, $r=100\text{ nm}$, $R=225\text{ nm}$, $H=50\text{ nm}$, and $t=60\text{ nm}$. (a) Reflection, transmission and absorption spectra; mode field distributions in XOZ plane corresponding to two resonant wavelengths of (b) 415 nm and (c) 691 nm in reflection spectrum; surface current density distributions in XOZ plane corresponding to two resonant wavelengths of (d) 415 nm and (e) 691 nm in reflection spectrum

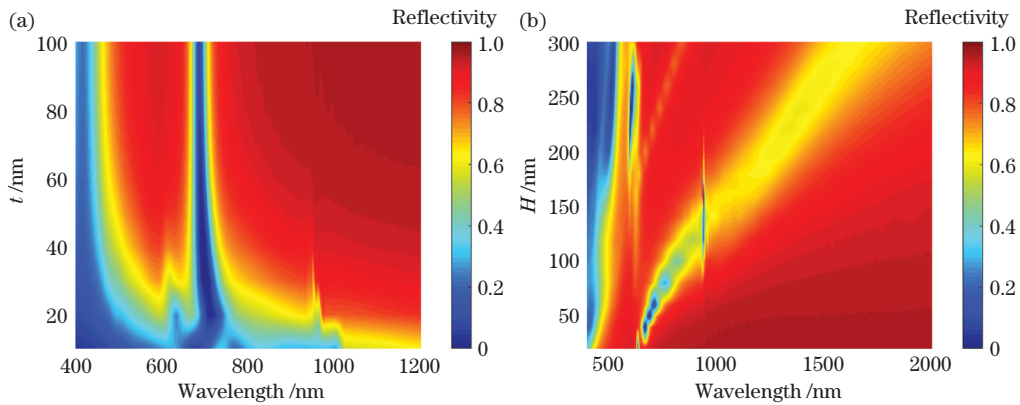


图 3 不同结构参数下银纳米环的光谱响应。(a) 不同膜厚; (b) 不同结构高度
Fig. 3 Spectral responses of silver nanorings with different structural parameters.
(a) Different film thicknesses; (b) different structural heights

通过对模板进行不同程度的氧气反应离子刻蚀,可制备不同高度的银纳米环阵列。选取结构参数 $P=690\text{ nm}$, $r=100\text{ nm}$, $R=225\text{ nm}$, $t=60\text{ nm}$, 模拟了银纳米环高度 H 在 $20\sim 300\text{ nm}$ (间隔 20 nm) 范围内的反射光谱,如图 3(b)所示。在 H 相对较小的情况下, λ_2 处主要的 SPR 模式发生在 Ag/空气界面处, Ag/诺兰光学黏合剂 (NOA) 界面处的 SPR 模式十分微弱,可忽略。随着 H 的增加,单个银纳米环产生的 LSPR 以及阵列之间的耦合 (SLR) 会发生变化,这会引起 λ_2 向长波长方向移动,发生红移,并且 λ_2 处的反射率随 H 的增加而增加,半峰全宽 (full width at half maxima, FWHM) 逐渐增加。因此可以通过调节 H 的高度,调整 λ_2 对应的谐振峰的位置,实验中为了使谐振波长主要在可见波段,一般选用较小的 H ($H=20\sim$

100 nm)。

最后研究了电场增强部分与 NOA 纳米环形模板的内外半径或周期的相关性。固定结构参数 $P=690\text{ nm}$, $H=50\text{ nm}$, $t=60\text{ nm}$, $r=100\text{ nm}$ 不变,在 $150\sim 300\text{ nm}$ 范围内调节 R (间隔 50 nm), 结构的仿真反射光谱如图 4(a)所示。结果显示,外环的增加对 λ_2 处的谐振波几乎没有影响。保持 $r=100\text{ nm}$, $R=225\text{ nm}$, $H=50\text{ nm}$, $t=60\text{ nm}$ 不变,模拟不同周期 P 下的反射光谱,如图 4(b)所示,随着 P 从 550 nm 增加至 700 nm (间隔 50 nm), 691 nm 处的谐振波发生了线性红移,这是由于 SLR 是瑞利异常 (Rayleigh anomaly) 与 LSPR 相互耦合产生的,而瑞利异常与周期呈线性关系^[27],因此 P 的改变会引起 λ_2 的改变。不仅如此,周期的增加也会使得 SLR 处的 FWHM 逐渐变小。

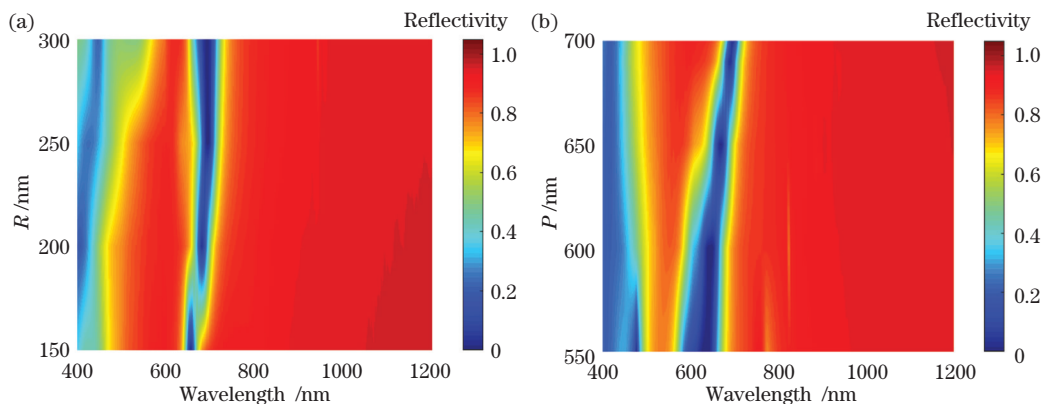


图 4 不同条件下的反射光谱。(a) 固定 r 下反射率随 R 的变化; (b) 相同银纳米环结构参数下反射率随 P 的变化

Fig. 4 Reflectance spectra under different conditions. (a) Reflectivity versus R when r is fixed; (b) reflectivity versus P for silver nanorings with same structural parameters

3 实验研究

3.1 制备流程

3.1.1 聚苯乙烯微球有序阵列的制备

取 1 mL 直径为 690 nm 的聚苯乙烯 (polystyrene, PS) 微球溶液 (质量分数为 10%) 与 1 mL 乙醇溶液混合, 搅拌 1 min 后进行 30 min 超声波预处理, 使其充分混合均匀。分散完全后的混合溶液以 $2\ \mu\text{L}/\text{min}$ 的速度注入水面, 此时 PS 微球将在空气与水的交界层形成一层致密的单层有序的六边排列的 PS 微球薄膜。取一片清洗过的载玻片, 倾斜置入水中, 如图 5 所示, 缓慢上提载玻片直至接触小球薄膜边缘, 然后匀速上移, 将这样单层有序的 PS 薄膜在保持原本六边形有序排列的基础上转移至载玻片表面, 转移后的结构如图 6(a)所示。

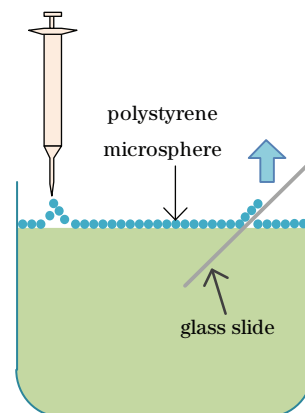


图 5 PS 薄膜转移至载玻片表面的操作示意图

Fig. 5 Operation schematic of PS film transferred to glass slide surface

3.1.2 环形共轴腔模板的制备

待载玻片上的 PS 微球薄膜充分晾干后, 在 PS 球缝隙中旋涂一层硅胶, 如图 6(b)所示。待硅胶

完全固化后,用反应离子刻蚀(reactive ion etching, RIE)对 PS 微球进行刻蚀^[28](氧气流速为 80 mL/min,工作气压为 2 Pa,工作功率为 15 W)。无法被氧刻的硅胶在刻蚀过程中充当小球的掩模,使得硅胶和残留的 PS 微球间产生缝隙,如图 6(c)所示。随后磁控溅射(氩气流速为 5 mL/min,工

作气压为 0.5 Pa,工作功率为 20 W)一层 150 nm 银纳米薄膜,形成最终需要的共轴腔模板,如图 6(d)所示。可以明显观察到,银膜之间在存在近似环形的间隙,这种模板的间隙宽度及深度可通过调节刻蚀时间和磁控溅射的时间来进行调控。

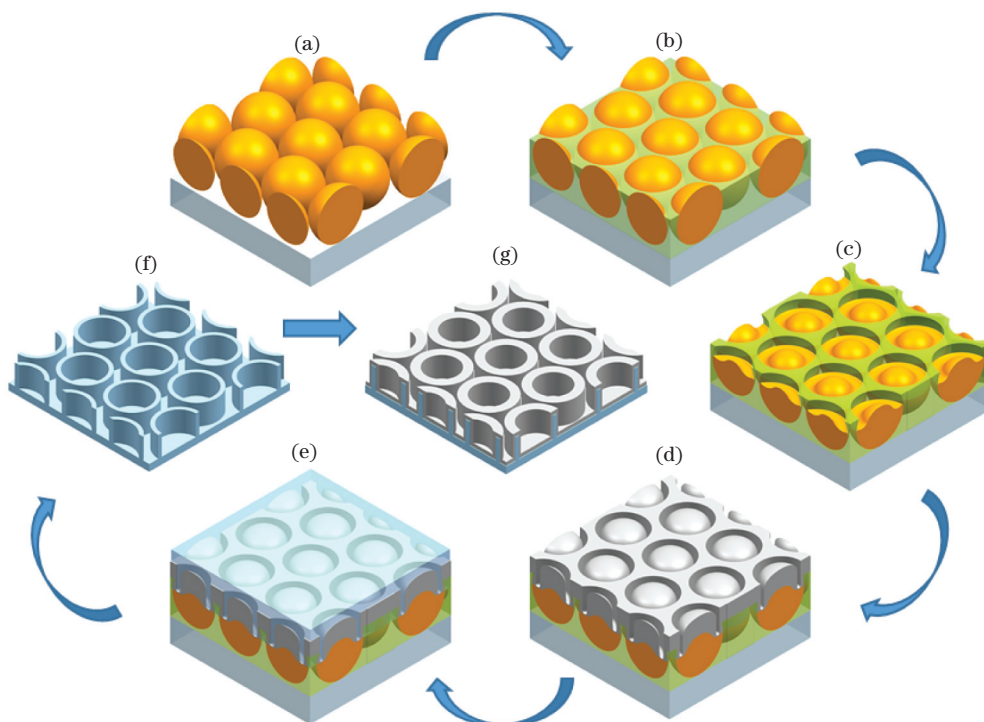


图 6 银纳米环制备流程图。(a)载玻片表面单层 PS 微球阵列图;(b)旋涂硅胶;(c)氧刻 PS 微球;(d)磁控溅射银纳米薄膜;(e)旋涂 NOA;(f)NOA 模板;(g)NOA 模板磁控溅射银纳米薄膜

Fig. 6 Flow chart of preparation of silver nanoring. (a) Single layer PS microsphere array on surface of glass slide; (b) spin coating silica gel; (c) oxygen etching PS microspheres; (d) magnetron sputtering silver nano films; (e) spin coating NOA; (f) NOA template; (g) silver nano films prepared by magnetron sputtering with NOA template

3.1.3 银纳米环阵列的制备

在图 6(d)所示银纳米环形共轴腔模板上层旋涂一层 NOA,如图 6(e)所示。接着,用紫外光照射 2~3 min,使其完全固化并撕下,撕下后与样品直接接触的面即形成纳米环阵列,如图 6(f)所示。最后,以 0.5×10^{-10} m/s 的速度在有图案的胶面上磁控溅射^[29]一层 60 nm 银纳米薄膜(氩气流速为 5 mL/min,工作气压为 0.5 Pa,工作功率为 20 W),最终得到了银纳米环阵列,结构参数如图 6(g)所示。

3.2 结构表征及测试

为了验证在实验所得参数下优化环形共轴腔模板的形貌,通过扫描电子显微镜(scanning electron microscope, SEM)对其进行表征。样品为 690 nm PS 微球制备得到,图 7(b)、(c)为实验制备的周期性 NOA 纳米环形共轴腔模板的 SEM 图。可以看

出,NOA 纳米环形共轴腔模板内径为 ~ 100 nm,外径为 ~ 225 nm。在其表面磁控溅射一层厚度为 ~ 60 nm 的银膜,得到的最终样品如图 7(a)所示。为了获取纳米环的相对高度,图 7(d)给出了样品对应的原子力显微镜(AFM)图,对图中白色实线进行高度轮廓分析,结果如图 7(e)所示。可以发现,纳米环结构高度在不同位置略有差异,平均高度为 ~ 45 nm,高度差异可能是转印过程中 NOA 脱模引起的。

将制备完成的银纳米环样品水平放置在培养皿中,用图 8 所示的带有探头的光纤耦合器,对样品的反射光谱进行采集。耦合器的另外两端分别连接白光光源和与个人计算机(PC)端相连的光谱分析仪,结构的反射光谱可通过 PC 端的光谱采集软件进行实时查看及采集。

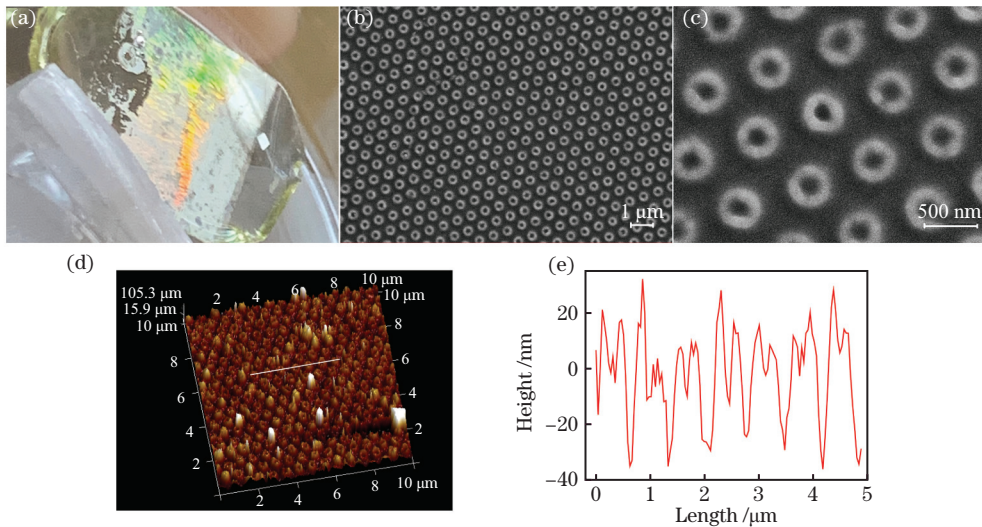


图 7 结构表征图。(a)银纳米环实物图;(b)(c) NOA 纳米环的 SEM 图;(d)银纳米环实物的 AFM 图;
(e)图 7(d)中白色剖线处结构高度的 AFM 轮廓图

Fig. 7 Characterization diagrams of structure. (a) Physical picture of silver nanoring sample; (b)(c) SEM images of NOA nanoring array; (d) AFM image of silver nanoring array sample; (e) AFM line height profile of structure in Fig. 7(d) indicated by white line

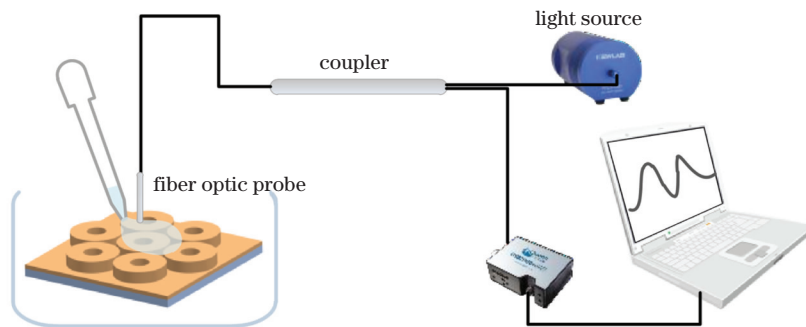


图 8 光谱采集系统图

Fig. 8 Schematic of spectral acquisition system

实验采集到的反射光谱如图 9(深色实线)所示。可以观察到,在可见光波段有两个较为明显的反射率下降形成的反射谷,分别在 415 nm 和

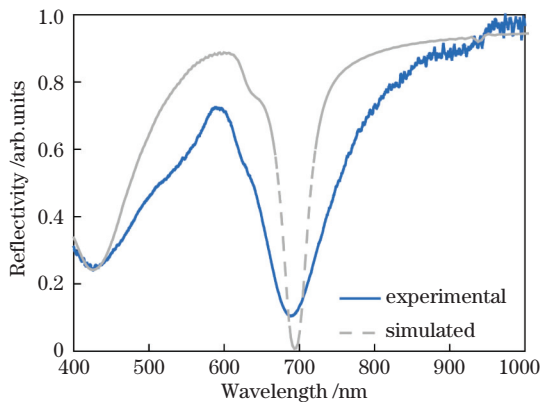


图 9 参数优化后银纳米环结构的实验及仿真反射光谱图
Fig. 9 Experimental and simulated reflectance spectra of silver nanoring structure after parameter optimization

691 nm 处。由于从 SEM 图中无法获取 H 的实际参数,根据图 3(b)进一步确认,在 H 为 ~ 45 nm 的情况下,结构反射光谱中反射率下降对应的波长与实验特征点较为一致,如图 9(浅色虚线)所示。实验中反射光谱的 FWHM 较仿真结果高出一倍,这与实验中结构的形貌、有序性以及实际测量时的损耗都有一定关系。

3.3 传感特性分析

为了研究银纳米环结构的折射率传感特性,实验选用甲醇(折射率 $n = 1.331$)、乙醇(折射率 $n = 1.361$)、异丙醇(折射率 $n = 1.3776$)、乙二醇(折射率 $n = 1.4385$)以及丙三醇(折射率 $n = 1.4722$)这五种不同折射率的溶液作为优化后银纳米环阵列 ($P = 690$ nm, $r = 100$ nm, $R = 225$ nm, $H = 50$ nm, $t = 60$ nm)的测量环境,图 10(a)为采集到的反射光谱。实验采集反射光谱时,在保持探头与

样品相对位置不变的前提下,将不同折射率的溶液加入培养皿中直至淹没样品表面,观察并记录稳定后的银纳米环结构的反射光谱,通过计算共振峰偏移大小,得到实验灵敏度。实验测试了参数优化后的银纳米环结构的折射率传感特性。通过折射率灵敏度计算公式得到银纳米环的折射率传感灵敏度:

$$R_1 = \frac{\Delta T}{\Delta n}, \quad (1)$$

式中: ΔT 表示不同折射率情况下共振波长的变化; Δn 表示共振波长对应的折射率变化^[30]。共振波长在不同环境折射率下发生偏移的波导正好位于可见

光与红外波段的交界处,实验在保持测量探头不变的情况下使用了两个波段的光谱采集设备,数据发生局部断层,但对实验结果的影响不大。图 10(b) 是在相同结构参数下仿真所得的不同折射率环境对应的反射光谱。通过记录实验和仿真的共振波偏移情况,如图 10(c) 所示,得到仿真及实验的折射率灵敏度均为 663 nm/RIU。品质因数定义为折射率灵敏度除以对应的半峰全宽,在相同灵敏度下,仿真所得的 FoM 为 18.9,明显高于实验的 FoM(9.2),说明在制备过程中仍然需要对样品的形貌以及有序性进行优化。

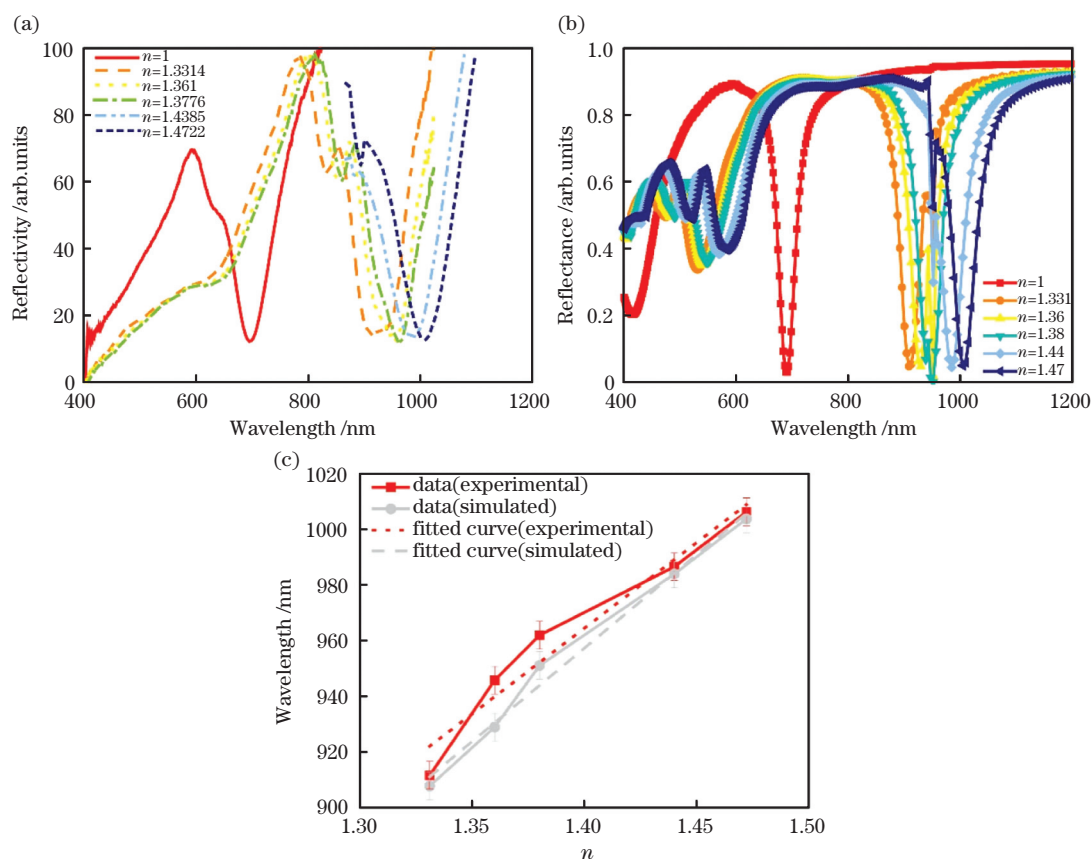


图 10 结构在不同折射率环境下的反射光谱图。(a) 实验结果;(b) 计算结果;(c) 反射率下降在低折射率环境下的偏移折线图
Fig. 10 Reflectance spectra of structures under different refractive index environments. (a) Results obtained from experiment; (b) results obtained from calculation; (c) offset line diagram of refractive index decline in low refractive index environment

为了探究结构参数对折射率灵敏度的影响,我们模拟了背景折射率从 1(空气)改变至 1.4722(丙三醇)过程中不同结构参数下的反射光谱。银膜厚度 t 以及内外环半径的变化对共振波长偏移的影响不大,共振波的位置发生近似相同程度的偏移,灵敏度也基本稳定在 660~700 nm/RIU。保持其他参数不变($P=690$ nm, $r=100$ nm, $R=225$ nm, $t=60$ nm),得到 $H=20 \sim 100$ nm 时共

振波长 λ_2 对应的折射率灵敏度,如图 11(a) 所示。模拟结果表明,随着 H 的增加,折射率灵敏度逐渐增大,当 $H=100$ nm 时可达 800 nm/RIU。最后,只改变结构周期 P ($r=100$ nm, $R=225$ nm, $H=50$ nm, $t=60$ nm),得到共振波长 λ_2 对应的折射率灵敏度,如图 11(b) 所示。模拟结果显示,随着 P 的增加,折射率灵敏度同样呈近似线性增长趋势。

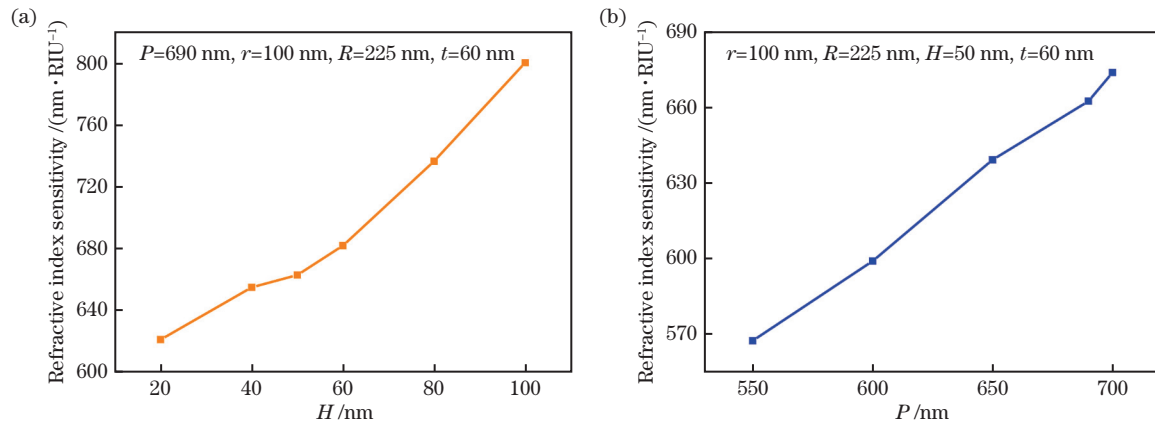


图 11 谐振波长 λ_2 对应的灵敏度。(a)不同 H 下;(b)不同 P 下

Fig. 11 Refractive index sensitivity at resonance wavelength λ_2 . (a) Under different H ; (b) under different P

环形共轴腔模板高度 H 以及结构周期 P 的增大都能提高折射率灵敏度,但 H 的增加会使得 FoM 减小,而周期 P 的增加在使得折射率灵敏度提升的同时,还使得 FoM 增高,因此可以通过增大周期 P 来提高结构的折射率灵敏度。

表 1 总结了近几年用于折射率传感的周期性金属纳米结构的加工工艺以及传感性能的结果。可以看出,本文提出的自组装 SLR 银纳米环结构折射率传感器显示了较低的加工成本以及较好的传感性能。

表 1 近几年周期性纳米结构折射率传感研究总结

Table1 Refractive index sensing research of periodic nanostructures in recent years

Reference	Structure	Process technology	Refractive index sensitivity	FoM
[18]	LSPR of periodic gold nanoring array	Laser holographic lithography technology	577 nm/RIU	6.1
[21]	SLR monodisperse Ag cuboctahedra	Electron beam	—	30
[22]	SLR of gold nanohole array	Colloidal lithography	470.49 nm/RIU	14.42
This paper	SLR of periodic silver nanoring array	Self-assembly and RIE	663 nm/RIU	9.2

4 结 论

设计了一种基于银纳米环阵列的 SLR 折射率传感器,并从仿真和实验两个方面对结构的光学性能以及传感性能进行了研究。通过光谱、模场仿真探究了纳米银环阵列的光学性能对结构参数的依赖性,得到了优化的结构参数。通过实验和表征验证了基于纳米球自组装和纳米压印方法大面积高效制备纳米环阵列的可行性,实验研究了以不同折射率的溶液作为测试环境时银纳米环阵列的折射率传感特性,实验折射率灵敏度为 663 nm/RIU,品质因数为 9.2。仿真给出了结构参数环高 H 和周期 P 对折射率灵敏度的影响,随着 H 和 P 的增加,折射率灵敏度增加。结果表明,从制备到传感特性,纳米环阵列都具有在生物传感检测等方面的潜在应用价值。

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Quantitative interpretation of the response of surface

Preparation and Optical Properties of Self-Assembled Plasmonic Biosensor Based on Silver Nanoring

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Abstract

Objective With the characteristics of low power consumption, high sensitivity, and easy integration, nanophotonic sensors have become important research targets in the fields of biological detection, food safety, and internet of things. Surface plasmon resonance (SPR) provides an effective way to control photons at the sub-wavelength scale and has been extensively studied in the field of nano-sensors. In the past decade, many excellent surface plasmon resonance-based sensing structures have been used to construct photoelectric sensors such as nanoscale arrays of holes, disks, rings, and so on. As a type of SPR, localized SPR (LSPR) shows the advantages of low cost and high sensitivity. However, the potential application of LSPR is hindered by radiation damping. Moreover, many metal micro- and nano-structured SPR devices are limited by the current laboratory applications such as electron beam printing, electron beam lithography, and other processing methods, which are difficult to commercialize. How to realize low-cost, large-scale preparation of high-performance nano sensors is a difficult point in current research. This paper proposes a surface lattice resonant refractive index sensor with an excellent performance and large-scale production. This resonance mode has the characteristic of narrowing the resonance wavelength linewidth to achieve an excellent and stable structural performance. In the aspect of simulation, the finite difference time domain method (FDTD) is used to study the optical performance of this structure. The experiment uses the nanosphere lithography and nanoimprint technologies to prepare large-area, high-quality silver nanoring arrays. The experimental results show that the sensitivity of the structure is 663 nm/RIU and the figure of merit (FoM) is 9.2. The change of structural geometric parameters can not only realize the tuning of resonance wavelengths, but also improve the refractive index sensitivity.

Methods In this paper, the plane and 3D diagrams of the periodic silver nanoring array structure used for sensing are presented in Fig. 1, and the main parameters of the structure are given. In order to explore the dependence of resonance modes on structural parameters, a set of fixed structures are selected, and the reflection, transmission and absorption spectra of the structure are obtained by using the FDTD method. The physical mechanism of two reflectivity dips is analyzed and the more obvious one is the focus of our next study, manifested as the reflection decline of the SLR mode. Then we change the parameters of the structure, get the relationship between the parameters and the SLR mode, and summarize the optimized parameter range. Finally, we give the whole experimental preparation process. Firstly, 1 mL polystyrene (PS) microsphere solution (mass fraction of 10%) with a diameter of 690 nm is mixed with 1 mL ethanol solution to obtain self-assembled polystyrene microspheres. Then through reactive ion etching, magnetron sputtering and imprinting processes, the optimized silver nanoring arrays are obtained. Finally, we change the environmental refractive index around the sample to obtain the experimental refractive index sensitivity.

Results and Discussions In the reflection spectrum of the optimized structure, the wavelength corresponding to the decrease of reflection is consistent with the simulation results, which verifies the feasibility of the experiment. In order to study the refractive index sensing characteristics of the silver nanoring structure after parameter optimization, five different refractive index solutions are selected as the measurement environment in the experiment. By recording and comparing the shifts of experimental and simulated resonance wavelengths (Fig. 10 (c)), the simulated and experimental refractive index sensitivities are both 663 nm/RIU. The FoM obtained by simulation is 18.9, which is significantly higher than the FoM of 9.2 in the experiment, indicating that the

morphology and order of the samples still need to optimize in the preparation process. In order to explore the influence of structural parameters on refractive index sensitivity, we simulate the reflection spectra under different structural parameters when the background refractive index changes from 1 (air) to 1.4722 (glycerol). The thickness of silver film and the radii of inner and outer rings have little influence on the resonance wavelength shift. The position of the resonance wave shifts to the same degree, and the sensitivity is basically stable at 660–700 nm/RIU. We keep other parameters unchanged and change the height of the ring cavity template within the optimized range to obtain template height H . In this case, the refractive index sensitivity corresponding to the resonance wavelength is shown in Fig. 11(a). The simulation results show that the refractive index sensitivity increases with the increase of template height H , and reaches the maximum sensitivity of 800 nm/RIU when $H = 100$ nm. Finally, when only the structural period changes, the refractive index sensitivity corresponding to the resonance wavelength is obtained as shown in Fig. 11(b). The simulation results show that with the increase of structural period P , the refractive index sensitivity shows an approximately linear growth trend.

The increase of template height H and structural period P can improve the refractive index sensitivity, but the increase of H reduces the FoM and the stability of the structure. Unlike H , the increase of P can at least increase the refractive index sensitivity and the FoM. Therefore, it is better to increase the P to improve the refractive index sensitivity of the structure.

Conclusions In this paper, an SLR refractive index sensor based on a silver nanoring array is designed, and the optical and sensing performances of this structure are studied from two aspects of simulation and experiment. The optical simulation software FDTD is used to calculate the reflection spectra of the structure under different parameters, explore the optical performance of the structure, and optimize the structural parameters. The experimental part includes the initial preparation and the final test using methanol, ethanol, isopropanol, ethylene glycol, and glycerol. These five solutions with different refractive indexes are used as the test environment to explore the refractive index transmission of the structure. The simulation results show that the structure can be adjusted to the resonance wavelength and refractive index sensitivity. The experimental results of the optimized structure are in good agreement with the simulation data. The final experimental refractive index sensitivity is 663 nm/RIU and the quality factor is 9.2. The proposed structure exhibits potential application value in biosensing detection in terms of preparation and performance.

Key words sensors; surface plasmons; nanoring array; self-assembly; nanoimprint; biological sensing