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Nanocone-Shaped Carbon Nanotubes Field Emitter Array Fabricated by Laser Ablation

Jiuzhou Zhao^{1,2}, Zhenjun Li^{2,6}, Mattew Thomas Cole⁵, Aiwei Wang^{2,4}, Xiangdong Guo^{2,4}, Xinchuan Liu²,Wei Lyu^{1,2}, Hanchao Teng^{2,4}, Yunpeng Qv^{2,4}, Guanjiang Liu², Ke Chen^{2,4}, Shenghan Zhou^{2,4}, Jianfeng Xiao², Yi Li^{1,3,} *, Chi Li^{2,4,*} and Qing Dai^{2,4,*}

- ¹ Tianjin Key Laboratory of Molecular Optoelectronic Sciences, Department of Chemistry, School of Science, Tianjin University & Collaborative Innovation Center of Chemical Science and Engineering (Tianjin), Tianjin, 300072, China
- ² CAS Key Laboratory of Nanophotonic Materials and Devices, CAS Key Laboratory of Standardization and Measurement for Nanotechnology, CAS Center for Excellence in Nanoscience, National Center for Nanoscience and Technology, Beijing 100190, P. R. China
- ³ Joint School of National University of Singapore and Tianjin University, Fuzhou International Campus, Tianjin University, Binhai New City, Fuzhou, 350207, China
- ⁴ Center of Materials Science and Optoelectronics Engineering, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100049, P. R. China
- ⁵ Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering, University of Bath, BA27AY, UK
 - GBA Research Innovation institute for nanotechnology, Guangzhou 510700, P.R. China
- * Correspondence: daiq@nanoctr.cn(Q. Dai), lichi@nanoctr.cn(C. Li), liyi@tju.edu.cn (Yi Li)

Abstract: Nanocone-shaped carbon nanotubes field emitter array (NCNA) is a near-ideal field emit-20 ter array that combines the advantage of geometry and material. In contrast to previous methods of 21 field emitter array, laser ablation is a low cost and clean method that does not require any photoli-22 thography or wet chemistry. However, nanocone shapes are hard to be achieved through the laser 23 ablation due to the micrometer scale focusing spot. Here, we develop a ultraviolet(UV) laser beam 24 patterning technique that is capable of reliably realizing NCNA with cone-tips' radius of ~300 nm, 25 utilizing optimized beam focusing and unique carbon nanotube-light interaction properties. The 26 patterned array provided smaller turn-on fields (reduced from 2.6 V/µm to 1.6 V/µm) in emitters 27 and supported higher (increased from 10 mA/cm² to 140 mA/cm²) with a more stable emission than 28 their unpatterned counterparts. The present technique may be widely applied in the fabrication of 29 high-performance CNTs field emitter arrays. 30

Keywords: nanocone array; field emission; carbon nanotubes; laser ablation

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1. Introduction

Vertically aligned carbon nanotubes (VACNT) provide a much simpler, cheaper, as 34 well as more scalable, manufacturable and deployable platform upon which to build fu-35 ture electron sources. A variety of methods have come to the fore to achieve VACNT field 36 emitter arrays with well-defined patterns, which include the pre-patterning, commonly 37 by nanostamping[1], electron beam lithography[2], or photolithography[3] of the catalyst 38 layer. Though very successful all these approaches, costly and time-consuming additional 39 process steps before the CNT growth. Moreover, it is difficult to achieve large length-to-40 diameter ratios of > 8, and it is not possible to realize more diverse shapes that are pat-41 terned in the out-of-plane direction, such as structures with nanoscale tips. Fundamen-42 tally new approaches are required to fabricate VACNT array with nanoscale tips (nano-43 cone) that can be achieved at low cost and high throughput. 44

Post-growth, laser ablation patterning is one exciting solution that satisfies the above 45 requirements. Laser processing is a technology that uses the interaction between laser and 46

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Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). material to cut, weld, surface treatment, micromachining and so on[4-9]. The photons of 47 low wavelength ultraviolet (UV) light have high energy, and the single photons of high 48energy (>3 eV) can directly break (requires 3-10 eV) the chemical bonds of materials (pho-49 tolytic process)[9]. This is a highly nonlinear process which make it possible to process 50 materials with sharp edges. In addition, the almost perfect absorption of VACNTs[10,11] 51 for light in a wide wavelength range further reduces the heat-affected zone in the pro-52 cessing process[12]. These factors together make it possible for the laser to process in pat-53 tern micron or even nanoscale CNTs structures, which with high and stable current under 54 low electric field intensity. 55

Here, to create functionally enhanced CNT arrays, we report an ultraviolet laser pat-56 terning technique that is capable of realizing a range of well-defined emitter morphologies 57 by accurately adjusting the energy output state and action time of laser to VACNT. At the 58 optimized condition, nanocone-shaped carbon nanotube array (NCNA) were achieved. 59 Laser processed samples showed up to a 1 V/ μ m decrease in turn-on electric field, more 60 than a 97 times increase in current density over the unpatterned counterparts, and im-61 proved stability (the current decay rate reduced by more than 20%). To explore the im-62 pacts of the microscale geometry on the emission characteristics of the VACNT thin films, 63 three-dimensional finite element simulations were also undertaken on unpatterned and 64 patterned emitters. 65

2. Experimental

In brief, macroscale 2 mm x 2 mm square monoliths of VACNT thin films which were 67 ready for subsequent UV laser processing were synthesized on silicon substrate by 68 PECVD (Plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition)[13-15]. Respectively, as shown in 69 Figure 1 (a)-(b). Femtosecond laser processing has been demonstrated elsewhere though 70 commonly at different wavelengths such as 800 nm and 1064 nm[16-18], however in the 71 present work nanosecond ultraviolet laser processing platform (λ = 355 nm, Suzhou 72 Delong laser Co., Ltd, FP-D-DZS-001) was used. AutoCAD (CAD) software was used in 73 this work to create DGW files required by the laser patterning system. The CAD drawings 74outline the path of the laser in two dimensions. The coordination of various parameters 75 determines the width, depth, shape, continuity and smoothness of the ablation groove, 76 which together with the CAD drawings determines the shape of the VACNT created by 77 the laser. (Supplementary materials Figure 1 show the arrays with high aspect ratio. Sup-78 plementary Materials Figure 2 shows CAD drawings and corresponding processed 79 shape) 80

It has been shown elsewhere that micro and macro scale geometries within CNT arrays enhanced their field electron emission performances [16-18]. Thus, here we explored the use of the developed patterning technique to engineer new electron emission sources. Cubic arrays with sides of 20 μ m and spacing of 40 μ m were first fabricated on the VACNT film, then we used this as a benchmark to continuously reduce the size of the tip, and fabricated the cone arrays with the tip size of about 15 μ m, 10 μ m, 5 μ m, 2.5 μ m and 500 m on the VACNT film which were all initially 608 ±20 μ m thick.

The effects of different laser processing parameters on the carbon nanotubes had been explored, including Raman spectroscopy as a function of laser power, which were also were characterized by X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy to explore the impacts of carbon ablation on the VACNTs chemical composition and crystallography before and after processing. 92

Field emission measurements were carried in a custom-built vacuum chamber evac-93uated to a base pressure of $< 1 \times 10^{-7}$ mbar. Measurements were conducted in diode mode.94To minimize anode-induced arcing, the anode was formed from a 5 mm thick mechani-95cally polished stainless steel plate (surface roughness), with the cathode formed from ei-96ther a processed or unprocessed VACNT thin film on the stainless steel substrate, the dis-97tance between cathode and anode was $462\pm 20 \mu m$. Voltages were swept from 0-10 kV with98

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 ΔV = 50 V and a dwell/step time of 1 s. A schematic diagram of the test equipment is in the Supplementary Materials Figure 3. 100

A three-dimensional numerical calculation by Comsol Multiphysics software (V5.5) 101 was carried out to verify the influence of field screen effect on carbon nanotubes cold cath-102 ode. (See Supplementary Materials for details of the simulation.) 103

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Laser Processing

In the present work, the nanosecond UV laser optical ablation system is employed 106 which represents a cheaper and more widely available means of accessing carbon abla-107 tion, whilst benefitting from a known strong leading UV absorption edge within graphitic 108 carbon nanomaterials[10,11,19]. This will be more conducive to the realization of indus-109 trialized mass production. Compared with infrared laser processing methods which use 110 the thermal effects to burn out the VACNT[9,20,21], the high-energy ultraviolet photons 111 are more likely to directly destroy the molecular bonds of the material and make the mol-112 ecules separate from the original material[9]. In addition, the UV laser can achieve smaller 113 spot and smaller heat-affected zone, which means that it can achieve more sharp machin-114ing. The most important parameters in the processing include the lasing frequency (20-115 150 kHz), optical power (0-12 w), scanning speed (0.01-10000 mm/s), scanning times and 116 the distance between the sample and the focus (the Supplementary Materials Figure 4-5 117 shows more details of laser machining). 118

Figure 1 shows formation mechanism of the NCNA. As shown in Figure 1(c), the 119 maximum energy density and the minimum spot are obtained at the focus. After passing 120 through the focus, the energy begins to diverge and the spot slowly becomes larger. How-121 ever, due to the propagation loss of light in the air, the energy distribution of the two 122 positions symmetrical about the focus is not the same. In the radial direction of the spot, 123 the energy of the spot center is the highest and decreases to 0 along the radial direction. 124 The energy distribution law of the laser conforms to the Gaussian distribution, that is, the 125 curve shown in **Figure 1** (d). Therefore, when the laser beam hits the VACNT, the energy 126 impact on the upper surface of the VACNT should conform to the energy distribution 127 corresponding to the spot. 128

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(c)

Figure 1. Schematic of the VACNT UV laser patterning process:(a) SEM images of a typical as-synthesized PECVD VACNT thin film. (Scale bar: 1 mm, Tilt: 45°) (b)High resolution SEM image of the VACNT thin film upper surface highlighting 134 the surface disorder and residual catalyst particles (Scale bar: 500 nm, Tilt: 45 °). Inset: High resolution TEM of an individual as-grown PECVD CNT showing a wall thickness of approximately 0.12 nm, consisting of 3 graphitic side walls (Scale 136 bar: 10 nm). (c) Energy distribution diagram of the laser beam. (d) Gaussian distribution of laser beam energy. (e) The 137 process of laser beam energy acting on VACNT to form its shape. (f) Nanocone and (g) Nanocone array formation process. 138

After the first pulse, the CNT in the area where the energy is greater than the damage 139 threshold (ablation threshold of the VACNTs approximately 50 mJ·cm⁻²[22]) of VACNT 140 will be removed, leaving a shape similar to that above the damage threshold of Gaussian 141 curve on VACNT (It is assumed that the components of energy points in all directions are 142 almost uniform), which can be approximated as a triangle, as shown in Figure 1(e). The 143 second pulse will continue to act on VACNT along the shape generated by the first pulse. 144Because the laser beam energy has the characteristics of Gaussian distribution, at this time, 145 the energy impact on each point on the edge of the shape formed by the first pulse will 146 follow different Gaussian distribution curves. The formation of the final shape of the 147 groove processed on VACNT is the result of the accumulation of multiple energy points 148 with Gaussian distribution following different characteristics in space. According to our 149 research on laser processing parameters (Supplementary Materials) and the previous re-150 ports of Tang[17]et al., after multiple pulses, the shapes of grooves processed on VACNT 151 are not the same, one of which is triangular. The nanoscale edges can be obtained by ac-152 curately controlling the position of two adjacent triangular machining grooves, as shown 153

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in **Figure 1**(f). Thus, NCNA can be obtained by continuous transverse and longitudinal 154 scanning of VACNT, as shown in **Figure 1** (g). 155

According to the above discussion, the change of focus value will make the upper 156 surface of VACNT in Gaussian energy distribution with different characteristics, to 157 change the width and depth of the area that can be damaged by the first pulse energy, and 158 then affect the shape of the machining groove. The increase (decrease) of power will not 159 change the energy distribution characteristics of the upper surface of VACNT, but will 160 increase (decrease) the energy as a whole, that is, in the same Gaussian distribution char-161 acteristics, a wider (narrower) area will reach the damage threshold of VACNT, thus af-162 fecting the width and width of the machining groove. The frequency mainly changes the 163 number of pulses per unit time. Together with the scanning speed and scanning times, it 164 controls the number of pulses in the unit area. The scanning speed and scanning times 165 jointly control the residence time of the laser beam on the VACNT. The difference is that 166 if the scanning times are fixed, adjusting the laser beam residence time by adjusting the 167 scanning speed means that the thermal effect of the laser on the VACNT is more continu-168 ous. On the contrary, if the scanning speed is fixed, adjusting the scanning times may 169 reduce the accumulation of thermal effects in a certain area. To some extent, laser fre-170 quency, scanning speed and scanning times also affect the shape of the ablated groove. Of 171 course, their cooperation is particularly important. 172

3.2. Impacts on the Structure and Surface Pre- and Post-processing

To further explore the chemical and physical impacts of the UV laser ablation on the 174 processed VACNT. Raman and XPS were undertaken pre and post-processing. Figure 2 175 (a) shows the VACNT with only the right half processed. Positions 1, 2 and 3 correspond 176 to the processing position, the junction of processing and unprocessed position and un-177 processed position respectively. The Raman test results at positions 1, 2 and 3 have been 178 shown in Figure 2 (b). The D peak was mainly induced by structural defects of CNT, 179 amorphous carbon or contaminants and the G peak represents the degree of SP2 hybridi-180 zation in CNT[23]. From position 1 to 3, the intensity of the D peak increased gradually 181 and the G peak decreased gradually, with the ID/IG values of the position 1, 2, 3 being 182 0.93, 0.70, 0.48. It indicated that those positions (position 1) processed had more structural 183 defects than the unprocessed sites (position 3). During processing, high-energy ultraviolet 184 photons might directly degrade the chemical bonds within carbon nanotubes, at the same 185 time, the heat generated during processing may also destroy the chemical bond and form 186 pyrolytic carbon, broken chemical bonds combined with other elements in the air, result-187 ing in more defects and amorphous carbon[24]. Position 2 is less affected than position 1, 188so the ratio of ID to IG is slightly less than position 1. We also tested the ID/IG values of 189 groove edges with different powers, they were all higher than the unprocessed position. 190 may be because, in the process of UV laser processing, the number of defects caused by 191 photon direct cutting bonding is greater than that caused by the thermal ablation effect, 192 which makes the value of ID / IG near the ablation groove higher. (See Supplementary 193 Materials Figure 6 and Figure 7). 194

Interestingly, we found some nanoparticles at the top of the processed CNTs and the 195 junction of the processed and the unprocessed regions, as shown in Figure 2 (c). This is 196 likely residual Fe and Al catalyst materials which both, when optically excited, reacted 197 with the VACNTs and the ambient gaseous environment to form new large exotic nano-198 particles[25]. The optical coupling to these metallic nanoparticles likely enhanced the op-199 tical coupling to the VACNT system allowing us to access low power densities. This 200 shows that there is a thermal effect in the UV laser processing of carbon nanotubes. In 201 some previous reports using femtosecond laser[16], the ablated edge has fewer defects 202 than unprocessed. It has been shown elsewhere that temperatures of up to 1000 °C can be 203 effective at driving graphitization of otherwise defective nanocarbons due to their small 204 size[26]. However, there are also some findings of Hai et al[20] which have shown that 205 elevated temperatures over 525 °C can result in the combustion of carbon nanotubes that 206 further lead to material removal due to CO and CO₂ formation. It was proposed that the 207 high temperature generated in the laser processing help to burn amorphous carbons 208 away[27]. 209

XPS showed that in addition to C, there is a small amount of O in the raw VACNT. 210 Compared with the raw VACNT, the O concentration in the UV laser processed VACNT 211 was significantly increased, and there is a small amount of N and other trace elements in 212 the air. The C 1s, O 1s and N 1s peaks of processed VACNT and the C 1s and O 1s peaks 213 of unprocessed VACNT are clearly visible in the XPS survey scan spectrum (See Supple-214 mentary Materials Figure 8(a)). The O concentration in the raw VACNT is 0.97%, the O 215 and N concentrations in the processed VACNT are 7.54% and 0.88%. We examined the C 216 1s XPS peaks for processed (Figure 2(d)) and raw VACNT (See Supplementary Materials 217 Figure 8(b)). As shown in Figure 2(d), peak I represents the graphite-like C-C bonds at 218 284.4 eV, the peaks at 285.3 eV(II) and 286.4 eV(III) are the different types of the C-N 219 bones, the peak II correspond to the SP2 trigonal C-N bonding and the peak III corre-220 spond to SP3 tetrahedral C-N bonding, the last peak(IV) at 289.3 eV is attributed to C-O 221 type bonds[28-31]. The C 1s peaks of the raw VACNT only show graphite-like C-C bonds 222 and C-O type bonds. O in the unprocessed samples may be due to the oxidation of the 223 VACNTs during post-growth air exposure[29]. 224



Figure 2. (a) A typical SEM image of a patterned VACNT sample where the right side has been processed, Position 1 is the top of the laser processed array, position 2 is the junction of the processed position and the unprocessed position, and position 3 is the unprocessed position. (b) Corresponding Raman spectra at the position 1, 2, 3. (c) New large exotic nanoparticles of Al and Fe on the processed VACNT. (d) The C 1s XPS peaks for processed VACNT.

The appearance of N and other trace elements, as well as the increase in O content in 230 the samples after UV laser processing is likely due to reactions with some elements in the 231 air combine with C atoms with incomplete chemical bonds after the UV photons cut off 232 the chemical bonds, and finally doped into VACNT to form some vacancy-related defects. 233 In terms of electronic state, the presence of surface localized Oxygen molecules has played 234 a positive role in improving the field emission performance due to the generation of new 235 states induced by the O₂[32], N doping is commonly beneficial enhances electron emission 236

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due to doped nitrogen atoms could replace carbon atoms in carbon nanotubes and there-237 fore increase the electronic density [32]. In terms of structure, the O and N are all had been 238 shown to improve electron emission because they can usually make carbon nanotubes 239 form open edges, and also the engineered tip morphologies provide more small emission 240 tips on the surface of carbon nanotubes[28,33,34] Our findings suggest that the 5% com-241 position of the identified N and O tends to vary between samples, likely due to the energy 242 sensitivity, and inevitable process variability of the bond formation (XPS survey scan 243 spectrum and the C1s XPS peaks of another sample showed in Supplementary Materials 244 Figure 8(c) and (d)). 245



3.3. Field emission properties as a function of conical tip radius of curvature

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Figure 3. (a) A typical UV laser processed cuboid array with a side length of about 20 μm and (b)248500 nm consisting of 1089 elements. (c) An enlarged view of the processed array showing the formed249tips about 20 μm and (d) about 500 nm. (e) A single tip in the array with a radius of curvature of25020.9 μm and (f) 347 nm.251

To study the influence of the processed VACNT tip radius of curvature on their field 252 emission properties, cuboid arrays with a side length of about 20 µm and spacing of about 253 40 µm were firstly fabricated and UV laser processed to create tips of the engineered ra-254 dius of curvature of 20 μ m, 10 μ m, 5 μ m, 2.5 μ m, and 500 nm. Figure 3(a),(b),(c) and (d) 255 shows the morphology arrays with a side length of about 20 μ m and 500 nm, Figure 3 (e) 256 and (f) are the enlarged view of their local area and shows one of the arrays. Photographs 257 of other tip sizes and some typical samples are included in the Supplementary Materials 258 Figure 9. 259

Due to the slight jitter of the carbon nanotube film fixed on the sample table by vac-260 uum suction during the processing, the shape and size of each small array may be slightly 261 different, which is within the allowable error range. Our electron microscopy studies high-262 lighted several small (< 50 nm diameter) CNT emitters within the processed arrays which 263 we believe positively contribute to the enhanced electron emission. Further work is ongo-264 ing to investigate the kinetics associated with their formation so as to derive further con-265 trol in their placement and formation. And the emitters of some small carbon nanotubes 266 are relatively chemically stable. (Please refer to Supplementary Materials Figure 10 for 267 photos.) 268



Figure 4. (a) Current density-Applied field curves of the raw VACNT film, the cone arrays of the tip size are about 500 nm, 5 μ m, 15 μ m, the illustration is Forwer-Nordheim plots. (b) The statistical diagram of the relationship between the open field strength and the current density of the unprocessed samples and the cone array samples with different tip sizes. (c) Current-Time stability curves of the raw VACNT film, the cone arrays of the tip size are 500 nm, 5 μ m, 15 μ m. (d) The relationship between the current decay rate (12 hours) and the initial current of raw samples and cone array samples with different tip sizes was studied. (The calculated emission is 4 mm2 from Figure 4(a)-(d)).

To examine the impact of tip radius of curvature on the field electron emission per-276 formances, unprocessed and processed VACNT film cathodes were tested in a custom-277 build ultra-high vacuum environment, all tested samples had a similar height (608±20 μm) 278 and the same number of pillars. Figure 4(a) shows the current density as a function of the 279 applied global electric field for a representative raw sample and cone arrays of tip sizes 280 500 nm, 5 µm and 15 µm. The nanocone sample with a tip size of 500 nm had the best 281 performance. Its turn-on electric field (defined as reported elsewhere, specifically as the 282 electric field which stimulates an emission current of 1 μ A) is 1.6 V/ μ m, which decreased 283 by 1V/µm. Its emission current density reached up to 144.5 mA/cm² (the calculated emis-284 sion area of 500 nm nanocone array is 4 mm²) at the applied electric field of 3.2 V/ μ m. At 285 the applied field of 3.2 V/ μ m, the current density is enhanced by 97 times, compared with 286 the unprocessed sample. If only considering the area of the tips, the current density of the 287 nanocone array with a tip size of 500nm is 2.703×10⁶ mA/cm² (the calculated emission area 288 of 500 nm nanocone array is 213.8 μ m²), which are 1.814×10⁶ times higher than that of the 289

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raw sample. More than three samples for each tip diameter were tested, and the data was 290 plotted in the J-E_{on} plot In **Figure 4**(b). The observed variation in the measured performance of the processed emitters is due to the relative youthfulness of the ablation pattern-292 ing process which induces observed marginal morphological sample-to-sample variations. As FE is particularly sensitive to surface chemistry as well as emitter geometry, such 294 small variations result in somewhat larger observed variations in the J-E_{on} data. In what 295 follows we take the average value for each tip set of cone array for comparison.

Our post-emission SEM findings suggested that laser processing tended to margin-297 ally compromise the degree of adhesion of the VACNTs with the underlying substrate. 298 Figure 4(c) shows the DC temporal stability, conducted over 12 hours, of these VACNT 299 samples. Compared with the unpatterned samples, nanocone patterned samples were 300 noted to be more stable. Figure 4(d) shows the relationship between the initial current and 301 the decay rate of raw VACNT and cone arrays with different tip sizes. It can be seen that 302 the UV laser processed arrays generally have higher stability, and simultaneously achieve 303 higher total current and lower current decay. We also found, under the same experimental 304 conditions, the field emission impact damage observed on the samples of the tested UV 305 laser processed samples were significantly smaller than that of the unprocessed samples, 306 due to the lower driving voltage. (See Supplementary Materials Figure 11 for pre and 307 post field emission material characterization). 308

3.4. Simulation of electric field intensity with a different tip radius of curvature

A three-dimensional numerical calculation by Comsol Multiphysics software was 310 carried out. According to the calculation results of the three models, the screen effect of 311 the nanocone array with a tip size of 500 nm is the weakest (Figure 5 (c)), followed by the 312 arrays of tip size are 20 µm (Figure 5 (b)), and the strongest screening effect is the raw 313 VACNT film(Figure 5 (a)). The nanocone arrays of tip size are 500 nm have more regions 314 with higher electric field intensity, followed by the arrays of tip size are 20 µm. According 315 to the actual situation, each carbon nanotube has a certain field screen effect on the sur-316 rounding carbon nanotubes, and the strength of the field screen effect is related to their 317 height and the distance between them[35]. The grooves formed by laser processing of the 318 cone arrays of tip size are 500 nm and 20 µm help to reduce the field screen effect and 319 make the edge and tip carbon nanotubes obtain higher electric field strength. Moreover, 320 the sharp area is more conducive to the increase of electric field strength. Figure 5 (d) 321 shows the calculation results of the electric field strength at positions 1(The center point 322 of the upper surface of the center array, corresponds to the center point of the upper sur-323 face of VACNT), 2(The center point of the upper surface of the third array of edges, cor-324 responds to the position of the same coordinates of VACNT) and 3(The center point of the 325 upper surface of the corner array, corresponds to the same coordinate position of VACNT) 326 of the cone arrays of tip size from 0.5-20 µm and the raw VACNT. It shows the increasing 327 trend of the electric field at positions 1, 2 and 3 with the decrease of tip size and their 328 comparison with unprocessed VACNT. It also shows the comparison results at different 329 positions (positions 1, 2 and 3). 330



Figure 5. (a) The electric field strength distribution of the model of raw VACNT film. (b) The electric 332 field strength distribution of the model of the arrays with a tip size of 20 µm. (c) The electric field 333 strength distribution of the model of the nanocone arrays with a tip size of 500 nm. (d) The electric 334 field strength calculation results of the Middle-point(Position 1, The center point of the upper sur-335 face of the center array, corresponds to the center point of the upper surface of VACNT), Edge-point 336 (Position 2, The center point of the upper surface of the third array of edges, corresponds to the 337 position of the same coordinates of VACNT) and Center point (Position 3, The center point of the 338 339 upper surface of the corner array, corresponds to the same coordinate position of VACNT) of the top surface of the cone arrays of tip size from 0.5-20 µm and the raw VACNT. 340

The processed sample model has higher field strength at positions 1, 2 and 3, and the 341 field strength tends to increase with the decrease of tip size. At the same time, the field 342 strength at different positions in the same model is also different. Compared with the cen-343 ter position, the number of adjacent carbon nanotubes at the corner position is less and the shielding effect is smaller, so it has higher field strength. However, in the case of the same area, the smaller diameter means that the number of carbon nanotubes is less, which 346 means that the number of emitters is also reduced. The game between the two is the two 347 main factors that determine the field emission performance. 348

4. Results and discussion

Here we report a method of patterning VACNT thin film via inexpensive and uni-350 versal ultraviolet laser ablation. Through the study of the interaction process between la-351 ser and VACNT and the reasonable control of this process, the nanocone array are fabri-352 cated by using a micron light spot. And the impacts of this facile patterning were explored 353 with regards to the CNT metrology and the field electron emission properties. The maxi-354 mum turn-on electric field of CNT cold cathode has been shown to reduce by over $1V/\mu m$ 355 as a result of UV laser patterning, and the maximum current density increasing by more 356 than ×97(Average current of overall area). The 12-hour stability test shows that the maxi-357 mum reduction of the current attenuation rate is more than 20%, with the VACNT sam-358 ples proving to be increasingly robust, and less easily damaged by the strong electric fields 359 during emission. The results of Raman spectroscopy and XPS show that the UV laser pro-360 cessed VACNTs have more structural defects as well as increased trace elements leading 361

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to likely doping during the UV laser processing which we attribute to the in-air operation 362 of the system. This may be due to the ablation of carbon nanotubes by removing the ther-363 mal effect in processing, and high-energy photons tend to directly break the chemical 364 bonds of carbon nanotubes. Some fine carbon nanotube emitters formed by processing 365 may also be helpful for emission. Numerical simulations validated our empirical findings, 366 evidencing that the surface field strength of the processed array can be enhanced by more 367 than one order of magnitude under the same conditions, the field enhancement factor is 368 greatly improved and the shielding effect is greatly reduced. 369

In general, this method can easily manufacture a cold cathode electron source with 370 high and stable current density and low turn-on electric field on a large scale at a low cost. 371 It is hoped that the presented facile and inexpensive laser patterning strategy will open 372 up new processing opportunities for emerging nanomaterials-based technologies and in 373 doing so will accelerate adoption and integration of emerging 1D and 2D nanomaterials 374 in a range of new applications. 375

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