Nanostructured Magnetic Thin Films from Organometallic Block Copolymers: Pyrolysis of Self-Assembled Polystyrene-*block*poly(ferrocenylethylmethylsilane)

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he ability to produce well-ordered arrays of well-defined and periodic nanostructures is critical to the advancement of high feature density technologies such as magnetic data storage and microelectronics.^{1–3} Serial procedures, often executed by top-down techniques, are currently the dominant methods of choice in these areas. The converse bottom-up approach, where parallel access to nanostructures is much more cost-effective and rapid, can outperform many top-down patterning techniques in terms of feature size, periodic length scale, and simplicity.^{4–8} Block copolymer lithography represents a very promising tool in these respects due to many recent breakthroughs.^{9–16} To date, the role of the block copolymer material has been sacrificial in most cases. Typically, selfassembled block copolymers are used to construct a template (by way of either solution-state structures capable of loading or thin films capable of site-specific modifications, or combinations thereof) that is ultimately used for negative or positive patterning of a material of interest. The use of functional block copolymers for nanolithography, where the polymer directly creates the desired nanostructured material, is rare. 17-19

Diblock copolymers, macromolecules comprised of two different polymer segments covalently linked at a common junction, spontaneously self-assemble into wellordered arrays of nanometer-sized microdomains.^{4,20} Morphologies ranging **ABSTRACT** The pyrolysis of cylinder-forming samples of the diblock copolymer polystyrene-*block*poly(ferrocenylethylmethylsilane) (PS-*b*-PFEMS) in bulk and in thin films has confirmed that these materials are useful for the generation of semi-ordered arrays of C/SiC ceramics containing Fe nanoparticles which are derived from the organometallic domains. In many cases, the ceramic mass yields were predictable and produced ceramics bearing a monomodal distribution of iron nanoparticles due to the nanoscaled structure of the preceramic PFEMS domains. The pyrolysis of thin films stabilized by cross-linking the PS domains with UV light demonstrated high areal yields, improved shape retention, and the presence of cylinder-centered magnetic nanoparticles.

KEYWORDS: self-assembly · nanomaterials · magnetic particles · nanotechnology · polyferrocenylsilane · block copolymer lithography · nanostructured ceramic

from spherical to cylindrical, gyroid, or lamellar are accessible, depending on the volume fraction of the components, φ , while the molecular weight $(M_{\rm p})$ dictates the domain size.²¹ Additional interest and opportunities arise when one of the polymer blocks is rich in transition metal centers. Metal-containing block copolymers thus exhibit novel characteristics due to the presence of the redox-active, photophysical, conductive, catalytic, or preceramic metalloblock.^{22,23} Polyferrocenylsilanes (PFS), a well-studied class of organometallic polymers with iron atoms in the main chain, are readily available via the ringopening polymerization (ROP) of ringstrained sila[1]ferrocenophane monomers.^{24–28} Additionally, PFS block copolymers can be synthesized by sequential living anionic polymerization.^{29,30} In the solid state, PFS block copolymers undergo microphase separation into iron-rich nanodomains^{31–38} and have attracted

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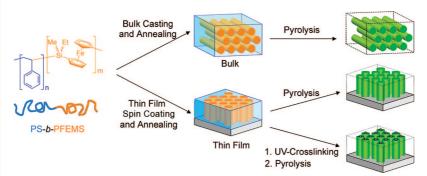
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recent attention due to their redox-induced morphology changes and their functions as precursors to magnetic or catalytic materials and as plasma etch-resistant nanotemplates.^{12,19,39–42} The focus of this study was to investigate the ability of cylinderforming polystyrene-*block*-

poly(ferrocenylethylmethylsilane) (PS-b-PFEMS) to act as a functional block copolymer capable of both templating and producing nanostructured ceramics from its constituent elements.¹⁹ Rather than conventional reactive ion etch processing, our approach makes use of a simple pyrolysis procedure capable of reducing ferrocenyl units to their metallic elemental state as well as generating a stable and inert SiC/C matrix from the preceramic polymer.43-46 In this paper we report that, for PS-b-PFEMS films: (i) the PFEMS nanodomains formed by block copolymer self-assembly function as efficient ceramic precursors; (ii) the PS segments, which are glassy at room temperature, can be easily cross-linked and therefore stabilize thin films during subsequent pyrolysis; and (iii) nanostructured magnetic ceramic arrays are easily afforded when (i) and (ii) are executed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The diblock copolymers used for pyrolysis studies were PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) and PS-b-PFEMS(0.36), where the fraction in parentheses denotes the volume ratio of PFEMS ($\phi_{\text{PFEMS}}).$ The former is composed of a PS segment with $M_n = 27400$ g/mol and a PFEMS segment with $M_{\rm p} = 11300$ g/mol, whereas the latter contains an $M_n = 40500$ g/mol PS segment and an $M_{\rm p} = 27700$ g/mol PFEMS segment. The respective polydispersity indices were 1.01 and 1.04, as determined by gel permeation chromatography (GPC) using a triple detector. Both materials afforded cylindrical morphologies in the bulk.^{37,47} To provide insight into ceramic yields from thermogravimetric analysis (TGA), we used two additional homopolymers, namely PS and PFEMS.³⁷ The molecular characteristics and morphological dimensions of the homopolymers and diblock copolymers are



Scheme 1. Generation of ceramic materials from the pyrolysis of bulk samples (top) and thin films (below) of PS-*b*-PFEMS. For the latter, UV cross-linking is investigated for the stabilization of the thin films during the pyrolysis procedure.

TABLE 1. Molecular Characteristics and Morphological Dimensions of the Homopolymers and Diblock Copolymers Used in This Study

polymer	M _n (PDI) ^a	$arphi_{PFEMS}$	$D_{c-c} (nm)^b$	d _{cyl} (nm) ^c
PS	29 300 (1.02)	0		
PFEMS	10 000 (1.01)	1		
PS-b-PFEMS(0.25), bulk	38 700 (1.01)	0.25	27.9	15.7
PS-b-PFEMS(0.36), bulk	68 200 (1.04)	0.36	42.5	28.7

^{*a*}For block copolymers, from GPC of PS aliquot sampled during synthesis and ¹H NMR data. By GPC, the standard deviations for M_n and PDI were estimated to be ~5% and ~1%, respectively. ^{*b*}Bulk periodicity, $D_{c-c} = 4\pi/(\sqrt{3}q^*)$, where q^* is the primary scattering peak as determined by small-angle X-ray scattering. ^{(Bulk} cyl-inder diameter, $d_{cyl} = 2\sqrt{(D_{c-c}^2\varphi_{\text{PFEMS}}/\pi)}$; where the volume prism defined by three cylinders contains half a cylinder in its volume.^{37,47}

summarized in Table 1. A schematic representation of our pyrolysis investigations of bulk and thin film samples of cylinder-forming PS-*b*-PFEMS block copolymers is depicted in Scheme 1.

Bulk samples of PS, PFEMS, PS-b-PFEMS(0.25), and PS-b-PFEMS(0.36) were prepared and annealed as described previously.^{37,47} A bulk sample of PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) was used for inert atmosphere (N₂ blanket) TGA, and the results were compared with those for the respective homopolymers to elucidate the pyrolysis mechanism of cylinder-forming PS-b-PFEMS (see Figure 1). A heating rate of 1 °C/min was used to pyrolyze to final temperature of 600 °C. The theoretical weight loss profile constructed from the PS and PFEMS TGA plots and according to the mass composition of PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) agreed well with the experimental TGA found for the block copolymer. On the basis of this finding, we conclude that, when cylinder-forming PS-b-PFEMS block copolymers are pyrolyzed, a rapid decomposition of the PS matrix occurs between 325 and 400 °C. This is supported by the complete loss of the bulk PS homopolymer sample. During this process, a partial mass loss of the PFEMS nanodomains in cylinderforming PS-b-PFEMS block copolymers also occurs. This corresponds to the weight loss established for bulk PFEMS homopolymer. At \sim 400 °C, the organometallic domains would be expected to transform

> into a collection of isolated inorganic ceramic objects surrounded by a void generated from the decomposition of the organic block. Based on homopolymer studies, between ~400 and 600 °C, the cylindrical ceramics should be composed of an amorphous cross-linked SiC/C matrix with Fe nanoparticles (NPs) embedded or partially embedded within.⁴⁸ Experimentally, a slight increase in mass above 400 °C was found for the nanostructured ceramic, and we proposed that surface oxidation of exposed Fe NPs readily occurs in this

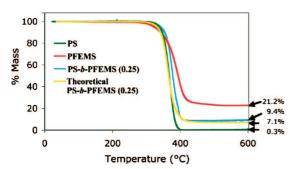


Figure 1. Thermogravimetric analysis of PS, PFEMS, and PSb-PFEMS(0.25).

case due to the very high surface area established by the block copolymer lattice.⁴⁹ With further heating at 600 °C (up to 5 h), negligible mass change (<1%) was observed for all samples. We therefore conclude that PS-*b*-PFEMS block copolymers are efficient ceramic precursors that exhibit predictable ceramic yields.

A dark field transmission electron microscopy (DF-TEM) image of the bulk morphology of PS-b-PFEMS(0.36) is shown in Figure 2A. The cylinder diameter (d_{cvl}) and periodicity (D_{c-c}) for bulk PS-b-PFEMS(0.36) were 28.7 and 42.5 nm, respectively. This sample was divided and pyrolyzed at 600 °C in a tube furnace under an atmosphere of N_2 at a high (15 °C/ min) or low (1 °C/min) heating rate. Shown in Figure 3A,B are the respective scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images of the resulting ceramics. The sample pyrolyzed at 15 °C/min produced larger, faceted iron nanoparticles which are mostly located around the cylindrical domains in the ceramic array (see Figure 3A). Based on the pyrolysis of PFS homopolymers, the composition of the array is an amorphous SiC/C matrix which houses the Fe NPs (see depiction in Figure 3C).^{45,48} The average diameter of Fe nanoparticles was estimated at 48.5 nm (see Table 2), while the values for d_{cyl} and D_{c-c} for the ceramic array were found to be 27.1 and 40.2 nm, respectively. When bulk cylinderforming PS-b-PFEMS was pyrolyzed at lower heating rates, as in the sample depicted in Figure 3B, a collection of nanometer-scaled cylindrical ceramics was found with no large Fe nanoparticles detected by SEM. The values for d_{cvl} and D_{c-c} for this ceramic lattice were 22.0 and 41.0 nm, respectively. Presumably, only small Fe NPs, <1 nm,^{41,50,51} housed within the cylindrical domains of the ceramic are present in this case and are hence not easily detected by SEM.⁴⁸ This is contrary to the aforementioned ceramic array which bore many surface-located nanoparticles. The differences in the size and the location of Fe nanoparticles as a function of the heating rate suggest that higher heating rates favor decomposition and the loss of small, volatile organic fragments from PFEMS domains, which henceforth results in the formation of larger nanoparticles. The lower heating rate favors cross-linking in the PFEMS domains and leads to a slower diffusion of free Fe atoms released from PFEMS, and thus yields smaller nanoparticles. Given that the periodicity for both lattices of nanostructured ceramics is similar to that observed in bulk and that the cylinder diameters have decreased with pyrolysis, we further confirm our proposed mechanism for the pyrolysis of cylinder-forming PS-*b*-PFEMS block copolymers. It is also important to note that, in spite of heating above the order–disorder transition (ODT) temperature of the block copolymer,³³ welldefined cylindrical domains persist in the resulting ceramic materials. The high glass transition temperature (T_g) of the PS matrix is probably critical to the preservation of well-defined cylindrical domains of the low- T_g PFEMS phase in the early stages of the pyrolysis.

For thin-film pyrolysis, well-ordered, self-assembled samples of PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) were obtained by solventannealing block copolymer-coated Si wafers (see Figure 2C).^{52,53} The film thicknesses were \sim 20 nm in all cases. A representative scanning force microscopy (SFM) image of a PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) film is shown in Figure 2C. In this case, d_{cvl} and D_{c-c} were 14 and 28 nm, respectively. These dimensions agree with those of the bulk.^{37,47} Using this as a starting material, two pyrolytic pathways were further investigated. A portion of the silicon-supported thin film of PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) was pyrolyzed at 1 °C/min to 600 °C. Shown in Figure 3D is the SFM height image of the resulting ceramic film. It should be noted that approximately half of the sample area is represented by these data. Remaining areas were essentially featureless, suggesting that significant disordering effects occur over half of the block copolymer thin film. It seems, therefore, that the suppression of disordering effects observed for the PS-b-PFEMS bulk samples is not sufficient in the pyrolysis of their thin films. Nevertheless, the inheritance of a hexagonal lattice and the inversion of contrast from Figure 2C to

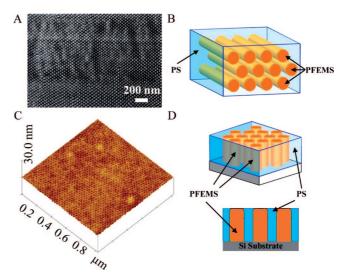
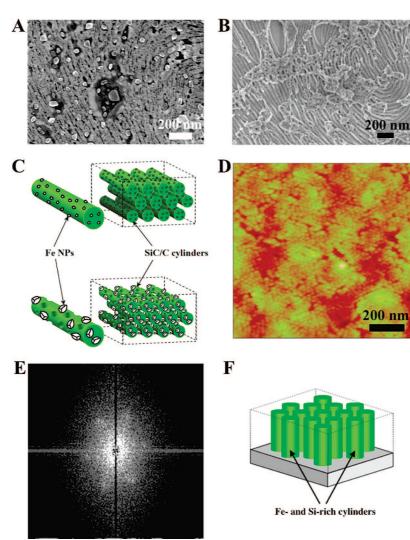
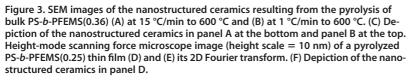


Figure 2. (A) DF-TEM image of bulk PS-*b*-PFEMS(0.36) and (B) a depiction of its bulk block copolymer structure. (C) Height-mode scanning force microscope image of annealed PS-*b*-PFEMS(0.25) thin film and (D) a depiction of its thin film structure.







some of the areas for the resulting film suggest the formation of periodic nanometer-scaled ceramics by way of (a) the volatilization of the PS matrix phase and (b) the conversion of the PFEMS domains into cylindrical iron- and silicon-rich ceramics (see Figure 3F). Shown in Figure 3E is the 2D Fourier transform of the SFM height image for pyrolyzed PS-*b*-PFEMS(0.25), which supports the formation of a hexagonal lattice and can also estimate the periodicity of the array of nanostructured ceramics. The periodicity was found to be 26 nm, a value that matches very well with its precursor film. As per our results for the bulk pyrolysis of PS-*b*-PFEMS(0.36), we assume an iron nanoparticle size of <1 nm. We attempted to investigate the magnetic properties of this sample using magnetic force microscopy (MFM). Unfortunately, no significant magnetism was detected.

It is known that PS films can be UV crosslinked.⁵⁴ To improve the shape retention in the ceramic arrays, we therefore investigated the stabilization of the self-assembled PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) film by way of cross-linking the organic block. For cross-linking of the PS matrix, a piece of the sample shown in Figure 2C was exposed to UV light under vacuum. Significant PS cross-linking was confirmed with a sacrificial sample by means of the insolubility of the material in various good solvents for the block copolymer (toluene, THF, dichloromethane). The pyrolysis of the sample shown in Figure 2C after UV crosslinking was then conducted under the same conditions mentioned previously (1 °C/min to 600 °C). Shown in Figure 4A-C are heightmode SFM, phase-mode MFM, and SEM images of the pyrolyzed film, respectively. In this case, the structures depicted in Figure 4 were found across the entire film area. UV cross-linking of the PS matrix is therefore a highly effective technique for increasing the areal yield of ceramic features. Previous studies on the pyrolysis of cylindrical PI-b-PFS (PI

= polyisoprene) block copolymer micelles showed that cross-linking of the PI corona can significantly increase the ceramic yields of the PFS block and shape retention by preventing the loss of potentially volatile PFS-derived fragmentation products.⁵⁵ Additionally, an

TABLE 2. Summary of the Dimensions of the Ceramic Arrays and the Size of the Iron Nanoparticles Produced from the Pyrolysis of PS, PFEMS, and Cylinder-Forming PS-*b*-PFEMS Block Copolymers

material	pyrolysis conditions ^a	$D_{c-c} (nm)^b$	d _{cyl} (nm) ^c	Fe NP size (nm) (SD) ^d
PS, bulk	1 °C/min to 600 °C			0
PFEMS, bulk	1 °C/min to 600 °C			\sim 17.0 (3.7), 146 (31)
PS-b-PFEMS(0.36), bulk	1 °C/min to 600 °C	41.0	22.0	<1 ^e
PS-b-PFEMS(0.36), bulk	15 °C/min to 600 °C	40.2	27.1	48.5 (12.1)
PS-b-PFEMS(0.25), thin film	1 °C/min to 600 °C	26.0	18.5	<1 ^e
PS- <i>b</i> -PFEMS(0.25), thin film	UV cross-link then 1 °C/min to 600 °C	24.7	20.5	6.5 (0.7)

^aTo ensure complete ceramic conversion, the pyrolysis included a 5 h isothermal treatment at 600 °C following the heat ramp. ^bDetermined from average value for >20 periods in an SEM image or for films, from SFM 2D Fourier transform. ^cDetermined from average value for >30 cylinders. ^dDetermined from average value for >30 nanoparticles. ^eOn the basis of the lack of particles as determined by SEM and MFM, we assume the particle size to be less than 1 nm.^{41,47,51,59,60}

interesting morphology was observed in the pyrolysis samples of UV cross-linked films where a Fe nanoparticle located on the top surface center of each ceramic cylinder (see Figure 4D). Presumably, the cross-linked PS matrix prevents the formation of NPs around the ceramic cylinders by eliminating the loss of potentially volatile PFS-derived fragmentation products. In contrast, at the unprotected top surface of the cylinder, the rapid loss of the fragments led to the Fe atom aggregation and exposure of the resulting Fe nanoparticles.⁵⁶

MFM was used to investigate the magnetism of this cylinder-centered particle. Figure 4B shows the MFM image of semi-ordered arrays of magnetic ceramic domains showing cylinder-centered Fe nanoparticles. The detected magnetization of each particle increased with particle size, which is consistent with superparamagnetic, single-domain structures (diameter <10 nm).⁵⁷ Moreover, as a part of the particles is embedded in the ceramic post, the shape of the Fe particles is not clear. The magnetic shape anisotropy may also contribute to the observed magnetization.^{57,58} Moreover, according to a 2D Fourier transform estimate of the periodicity, the ceramic lattice has been directly inherited from the diblock copolymer precursor film. In this case, d_{cvl} and D_{c-c} were 20.5 and 24.7 nm, respectively. The average size of the ceramic cylinder-centered Fe nanoparticle is 6.5 nm. All nanoparticle sizes are summarized in Table 2.

Surface oxidation of the films was indicated in TGA studies of PS-b-PFEMS (Figure 1). To characterize the oxidation state of the surface of the ceramic films, we investigated the pyrolyzed PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) films (without and with UV cross-linking) using X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS). It has been previously shown that the $Fe(2p_{1/2})$ and $Fe(2p_{3/2})$ signals for PFS homopolymers are at 721.5 and 708.8 eV, respectively.⁶¹ The iron XPS spectrum of the pyrolyzed thin film of PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) exhibits a set of split peaks at binding energies centered at \sim 725.9 and \sim 711.6 eV. A comparable spectrum was found for the UV cross-linked and pyrolyzed sample. Interestingly, Häussler et al.⁶² have found a very similar XPS spectrum for pyrolyzed hyperbranched poly(ferrocenylene)s (hb-PFcs) with cross-linkable vinylsilane spacer units, and they have identified Fe₂O₃ as a species present at the ceramic surface.^{63–65} Given the similarity between the XPS spectra of pyrolyzed PS-b-PFEMS(0.25) thin films with and without UV cross-linking and those of hb-PFcs, we reinforce our conclusions that the low pyrolysis heating rate (1 °C/min) favors the increased cross-linking of the ceramic matrix. As expected, cross-linking the PS domains by exposure to UV light therefore does not affect the surface composition of the resulting ceramics but rather improves the areal yield and shape retention during pyrolysis. This effect could be responsible for the formation of the well-defined, magnetic cylindercentered iron nanoparticles observed by SFM, MFM, and SEM.

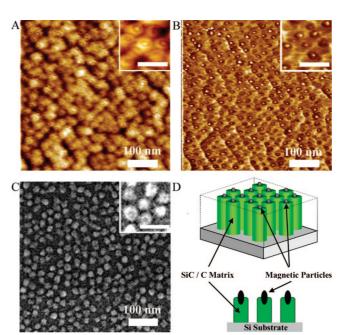


Figure 4. Height-mode scanning force (A), phase-mode magnetic force (B), and scanning electron (C) microscopy images of pyrolyzed, UV cross-linked PS-*b*-PFEMS(0.25) (1 °C/min to 600 °C for 5 h) (inset scale bars = 50 nm). (D) Depiction of the proposed structure resulting from the pyrolysis of UV cross-linked PS-*b*-PFEMS(0.25).

CONCLUSION

Detailed studies on the pyrolysis of cylinderforming PS-b-PFEMS have confirmed that these materials are useful for the generation of semi-ordered arrays of iron- and silicon-containing ceramics. The ceramic mass yields are very predictable, and the nanostructuring of the self-assembled block copolymer controls the aggregation of iron nanoparticles. Due to the well-defined and nanometer-scaled dimensions of the preceramic PFEMS domains, there is limited lateral diffusion of free Fe atoms during the pyrolysis of PS-b-PFEMS thin films, and this gives rise to a monodisperse size distribution of the nanoparticles. The presence of a spatial diffusion barrier between the nanoscaled ceramics further prevents the aggregation of the monodisperse iron nanoparticles and hinders the formation of a significant population of larger particles, as observed for the case of PFS homopolymers.45,48 When thin films of cylinder-forming block copolymers were pyrolyzed directly, low areal yields for the ceramics were observed. When the precursor film was stabilized through UV cross-linking of polystyrene, the areal yield of the inherited nanoceramics increased dramatically, leading to arrays of hexagonally packed cylinders with centered magnetic nanoparticles.

Our current efforts lie in the detailed, quantitative characterization of the magnetism generated using these thin-film processing techniques. This novel conceptual approach of producing nanostructured magnetic ceramics using a functional metal-containing block copolymer thin film as both a nanometer-scaled

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template and an efficient preceramic material offers a promising pathway for the generation of high feature density technologies. With this in mind, we are currently targeting the development of analogous approaches to the patterning of nanostructured magnetic films based on hard magnetic materials such as FePt.

EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

Synthesis of Poly(ferrocenylethylmethylsilane) Homopolymer and Polystyrene-block-poly(ferrocenylethylmethylsilane) (PS-b-PFEMS) Diblock Copolymers and Casting of Bulk Samples. Complete synthetic details concerning the synthesis of the PFEMS and PS-b-PFEMS materials used in this study have been published elsewhere.³⁷ The casting of PS, PFEMS, and PS-b-PFEMS materials was repeated as previously described.³⁷

Thin-Film Preparation and Annealing. PS-*b*-PFEMS films were prepared and annealed by solvent evaporation according to literature procedures.⁵³

Pyrolysis of Bulk and Thin Films. PS-*b*-PFEMS films were pyrolyzed in a three-zone Thermacraft Inc. tube furnace. The films were placed in a quartz boat inside a quartz tube in the furnace, which was then purged with prepurified N₂ atmosphere for 30 min (1 L/min) prior to lowering the flow to *ca.* 50 mL/min for pyrolysis. The temperature of the tube furnace was increased at a rate of 1 °C/min to 600 °C.

SEM Analysis of Products from TGA Pyrolysis. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images were obtained using a Hitachi S-5200 electron microscope with an accelerating voltage of 1–15 kV. Approximately 0.2 mL of methanol was added to the sample pan (for the TA Instruments Q500) that was used for TGA analysis of PFEMS and PS-*b*-PFEMS(0.25). This was then placed in a small glass vial and sonicated for 15 min, after which one drop was pipetted onto a Formvar-coated TEM grid used as a support. Excess methanol was removed with filter paper, and the grid was allowed to dry at ambient conditions for 1 h. The grid was then mounted in the Hitachi scanning electron microscope for electron microscopy.

UV Polystyrene Cross-Linking of Thin Films. PS-*b*-PFEMS films were placed in a quartz Schlenk tube and evacuated (10^{-3} mm Hg), followed by exposure to UV light using a UVP Sterilaire lamp, model xx-15S (115 V, 60 Hz, 0.68 A), for 30 min.

Scanning Force Microscopy. Scanning force microscopy (SFM), operated in tapping mode, was performed on a Multimedia Nanoscope IIIa SFM (Digital Instruments/Veeco-Metrology Group). The SFM tips had resonant frequencies close to 170 kHz. The samples were mounted on steel sample pucks and imaged in air using an E-scanner (nominal maximum scan size of 13.5 µm²). Image analysis was performed using the Digital Instruments Nanoscope software. All SFM/MFM data sets were collected as 512 imes 512 pixel data sets with a scan rate of 1-1.5 Hz. Magnetic force microscopy (MFM) was performed following probe magnetization on the Multimode magnet holder. MFM images were acquired in lift mode (lift height = 5 nm), using tapping-mode SFM data for the same area to ensure a constant scan height above the sample. SFM phase images were also obtained for the same area to ensure that the MFM images were the result of magnetic forces and not physical surface interactions.

X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy. The surface of selected samples was investigated by X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy.⁶⁶ The obtained spectra, corrected for a carbon 1s binding energy of 284.5 eV, were compared with those of blank Si substrates to ensure that signals were mainly from our samples.

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