

Supporting Information

Photothermally-activated suspending aerogel triggers biphasic interface reaction for high-efficiency and additive-free hydrogen generation

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Experimental Methods

Preparation of the Pd/rGO aerogel

Firstly, Na_2PdCl_4 (0.02 M, 4.5 mL) was added into the GO aqueous solution (1.43 mg/mL, 35.0 mL) with magnetic stirring at room temperature for 2 h. Subsequently, 4.0 g of glucose was added to the homogeneous GO solution under vigorous stirring at room temperature to obtain a uniform solution mixture. After that, the mixture was dropped into a reaction still for hydrothermal reaction (1200 min, 120°C), forming a columniform gel with a diameter of 2 cm. Finally, the gel was washed several times with distilled water and reduced by immersion in a NaBH_4 (100.0 mM, 1.0 mL) solution for 12 h. After 6 h of freeze-drying treatment, Pd/rGO aerogel was fabricated. It is noted that the thickness of the aerogel can be controlled by regulating the amount of glucose.

Characterizations

X-ray diffraction patterns were obtained on a Rigaku Ultima IV diffractometer with $\text{Cu K}\alpha$ radiation using a current of 100 mA and a voltage of 40 kV. Scanning electron microscopy images were obtained on a field-emission scanning electron microscope (TESCAN MIRA LMS) with an accelerating voltage of 5 kV. Transmission electron microscopy mapping images were obtained on a transmission electron microscope (Tecnai F30, FEI). Solar absorption spectra were collected using a UV-vis-NIR spectrophotometer (PE Lambda1050).

Pure FA dehydrogenation test

The aerogel was cut into a circle of 1.5 cm in diameter according to the size of the lab-scale nanoreactor (Figure 4a). In a typical reaction, the aerogel is arranged above the liquid FA level, and the gas gap is set as 10 mm. Before being irradiated by a solar simulator (71S0503A, Sofn, China), N_2 was passed through the nanoreactor to drain air. An optical power meter (S310C, Thorlabs, USA) was employed to ensure the optical density of simulated solar illumination (1 kW/m^2). The generated gas product is first fed into a

condenser to wipe off the rest of the FA or water vapors. Then, the gas products were collected by gas bag and were determined by a gas chromatograph (Agilent 7890B).

Theoretical calculation

Calculations were conducted based on Density Functional Theory. The dispersion-corrected DFT-D3 schemes were employed to describe the possible Van der Waals interactions. The cut-off energy was set to be 400 eV, and the total energy convergence was set to be $<10^{-5}$ eV. According to the XRD and HRTEM characterization results, Pd (111) crystallographic planes that are easily exposed is evidenced as the main active sites. Thus, we modeled the Pd (111) surface as a 4×4 slab with four layers, where the top two layers were relaxed and the bottom two layers were kept fixed. Structures were considered converged when the maximum forces on all atoms were below 0.02 eV/Å. The Brillouin zone was sampled with a $3 \times 3 \times 1$ Monkhorst-Pack k-point mesh. The periodic images were separated by 10 Å of vacuum in the c-direction to avoid periodic interactions (Figure S10). For the liquid FA dehydrogenation, we constructed the HCOOH molecule with surrounding three H₂O molecules as adsorbates adsorbed on the Pd (111) surface (Figure S11). For the gaseous FA dehydrogenation, we constructed a bimolecular hydrogen-bonded complex model (HCOOH-HCOO*) as the adsorbate adsorbed on the Pd (111) surface (Figure S12). The atomic structures were analyzed via the VESTA code. The reaction energy barrier for each elementary reaction step is evaluated using the climbing image nudged elastic band (CINEB) method with four interpolated images between the initial and final states. The transition states (TS) were similarly optimized until the forces on all atoms were below 0.05 eV/Å and were confirmed using vibrational analysis by the presence of a single imaginary mode.

Equations

Equation S1. The calculation of thermal radiation flux of the aerogel at 70°C according to Planck's law.

$$\mu(\lambda, T) = \frac{8\pi hc}{\lambda^5} \cdot \frac{1}{e^{\frac{hc}{\lambda kT}} - 1}$$

where h is Planck's constant, T is the thermodynamic temperature, and k is Boltzmann's constant.

Equation S2. The calculation of initial turnover frequency.

$$TOF = \frac{P_{atm} V_{H_2} / RT}{n_{Pd} t}$$

where P_{atm} is the atmospheric pressure (101325 Pa), V_{gas} is the generated total hydrogen volume when the conversion reaches 20%, R is the universal gas content (8.314 m³ Pa mol⁻¹ K⁻¹), T is room temperature (298 K), and t is the reaction time when the conversion reaches 20%. n_{Pd} is the total mole number of Pd in the aerogel (0.0746 mg), which is obtained by the inductively coupled plasma-mass spectroscopy (ICP-MS) characterization of the aerogel.

Equation S3. The calculation of liquid FA diffusion flux (N_l) according to Fick law.

$$N_l = D_l^T \frac{c_l^{sat}}{H}$$

where D_l^T is the diffusion coefficient (1.52×10⁻⁹ m²/s) of liquid FA at 298 K,^{31, 32} c_g^{sat} is the saturated liquid FA concentration, and H is the diffusion distance in the BTS.

Equation S4. The calculation of gaseous FA diffusion flux (N_g) according to Fick law.

$$N_g = D_g^T \frac{c_g^{sat}}{H}$$

where D_g^T is the diffusion coefficient at 316 K (1.20×10⁻⁵ m²/s),³³ c_g^{sat} is the saturated gaseous FA concentration, and H is the diffusion distance, which is also named as the gas gap in the SBS.

Equation S5. The calculation of hydrogen gas diffusion coefficient D_L in a liquid-phase environment.

$$D_L = 7.4 \times 10^{-8} \frac{T(\psi_{FA})^{0.5}}{\mu_{FA} V_{H_2}^{0.6}}$$

where T is the temperature (K), ψ_{FA} (=1.33) is the “association” parameter of FA that represents the degree of the aggregation of FA molecules,³⁴ M_{FA} and μ denote the molecular mass and viscosity of formic acid, respectively, and V_{H_2} is the molar volume of hydrogen ($\text{cm}^3 \text{mol}^{-1}$).

Equation S6. The calculation of hydrogen gas diffusion coefficient D_G in a gas-phase environment.³⁵

$$D_G = \frac{1.86 \times 10^{-3} * T^{1.5} \sqrt{M_{H_2}^{-1} + M^{-1}}}{P * \sigma^2 * \Omega}$$

$$\sigma = \frac{1}{2} (\sigma_{H_2} + \sigma_{FA}), \quad \Omega = \frac{kT}{\sqrt{\varepsilon_{H_2} \varepsilon_{FA}}}$$

$$\varepsilon = 0.75kT_c, \quad \sigma = \frac{5}{6} \times 10^{-8} V_c^{1/3}$$

where M is the molar mass, P is the system pressure, σ is the average collision diameter, Ω is a temperature-dependent collision integral, and k is the Boltzmann constant. ε and σ are estimated using the well-known critical parameters for a given substance, where T_c and V_c are the critical temperature (K) and the critical molar volume (cm^3/mol), respectively.

Equation S7. The calculation of Gibbs free energy.

$$\Delta G = \Delta E + \Delta E_{ZPE} - T\Delta S$$

where ΔE is the HCOOH adsorption energy, ΔE_{ZPE} is the difference in zero-point energy, T is reaction temperature, and ΔS is the difference in entropy between the adsorbed species and free species in the gas phase.

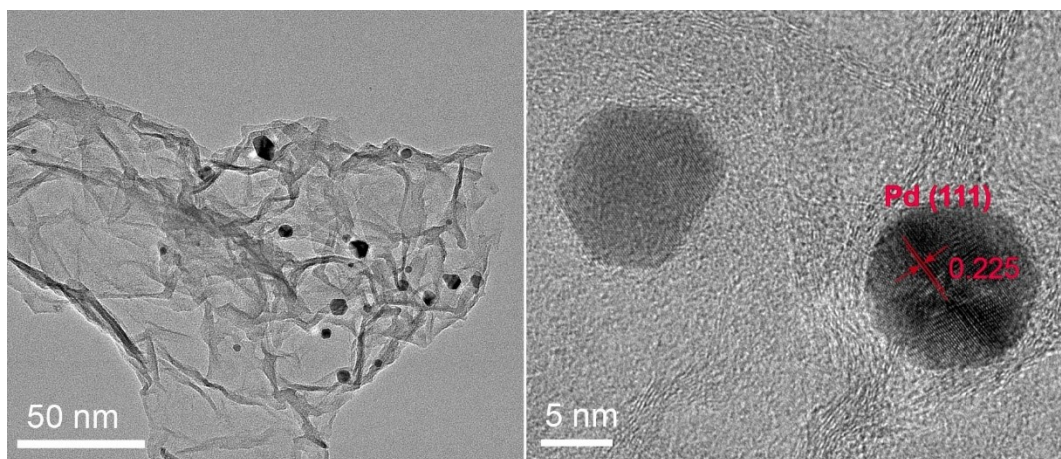


Figure S1. The TEM image of the Pd/rGO aerogel with highly dispersed Pd nanoparticles and the HRTEM image of Pd nanoparticles.

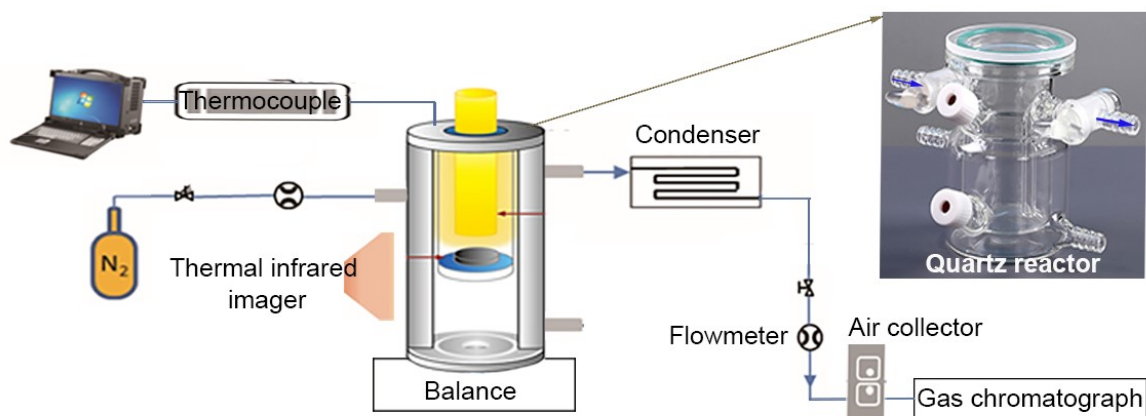


Figure S2. The experimental setup of the SBS.

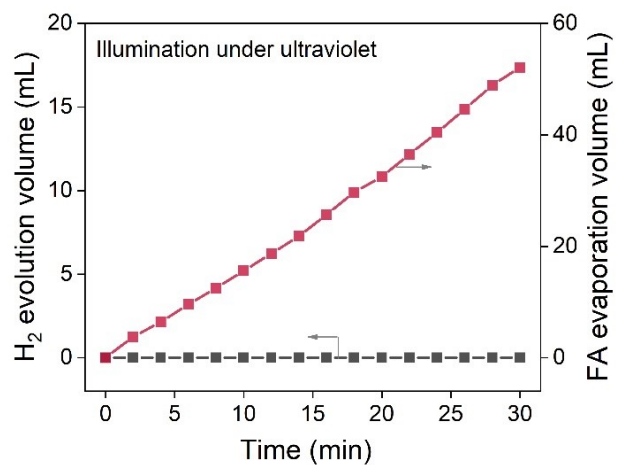


Figure S3. The H₂ evolution volume and FA evaporation volume of the Pd/rGO aerogel under ultraviolet illumination.

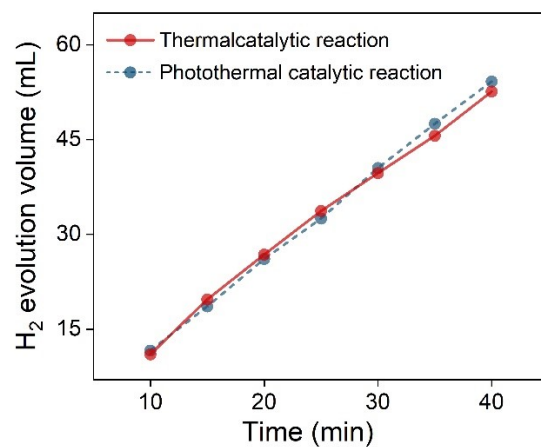


Figure S4. The H₂ evolution volume of the Pd/rGO aerogel under the conditions of thermal-driven reaction and photothermal-driven reactions.

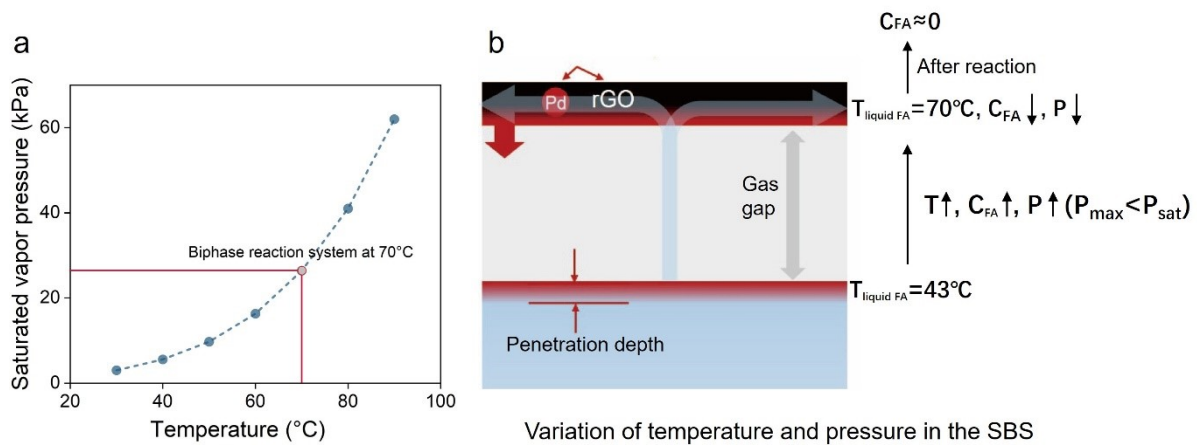


Figure S5. (a) Curve of the FA saturated vapor pressure with temperature, (b) Variation of temperature and pressure in the SBS.

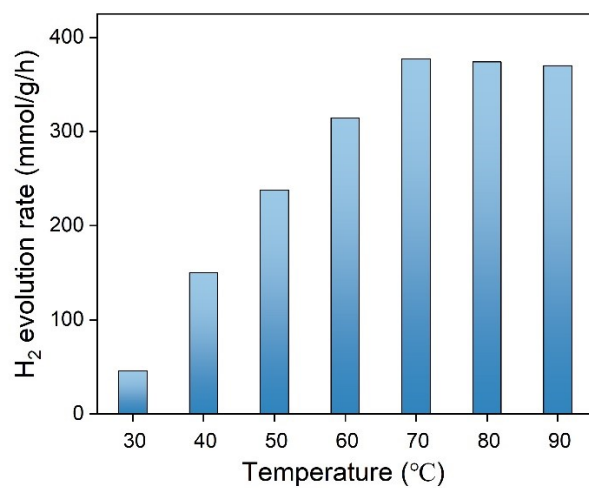


Figure S6. The H₂ evolution rate of the SBS under different reaction temperatures.

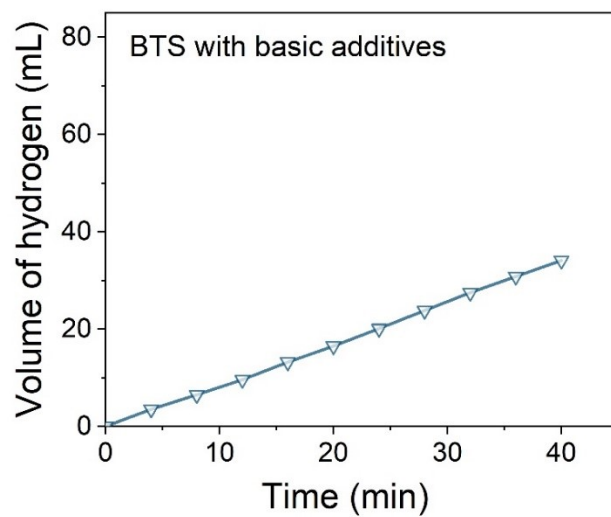


Figure S7. The hydrogen evolution performance of the BTS in the presence of liquid basic additive (HCOONa).

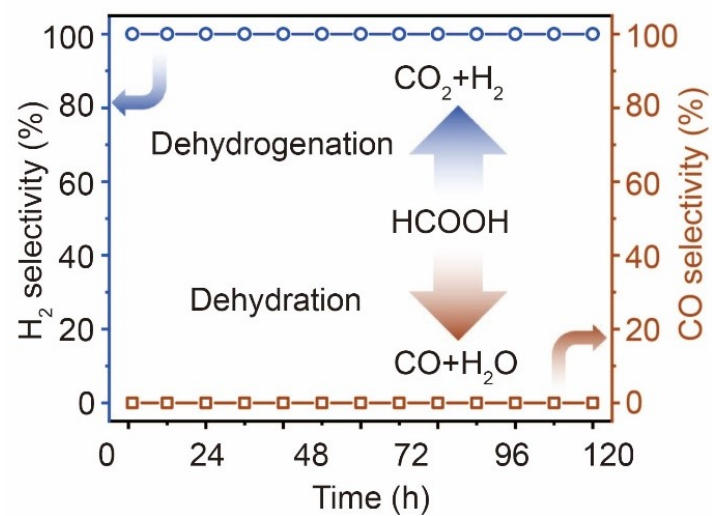


Figure S8. H₂ and CO selectivity of the SBS.

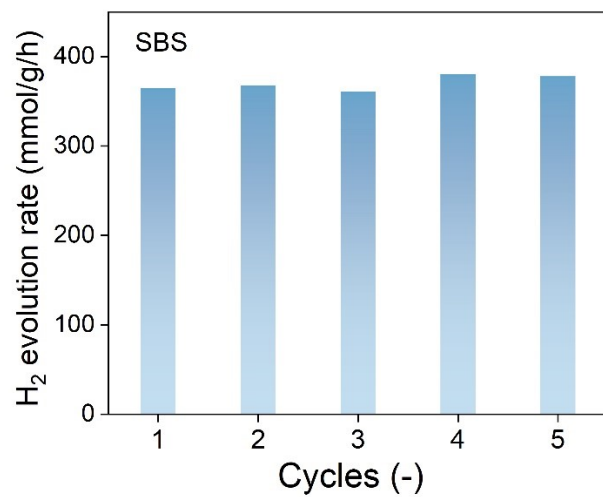


Figure S9. The H₂ evolution rate of the SBS in five cycles.

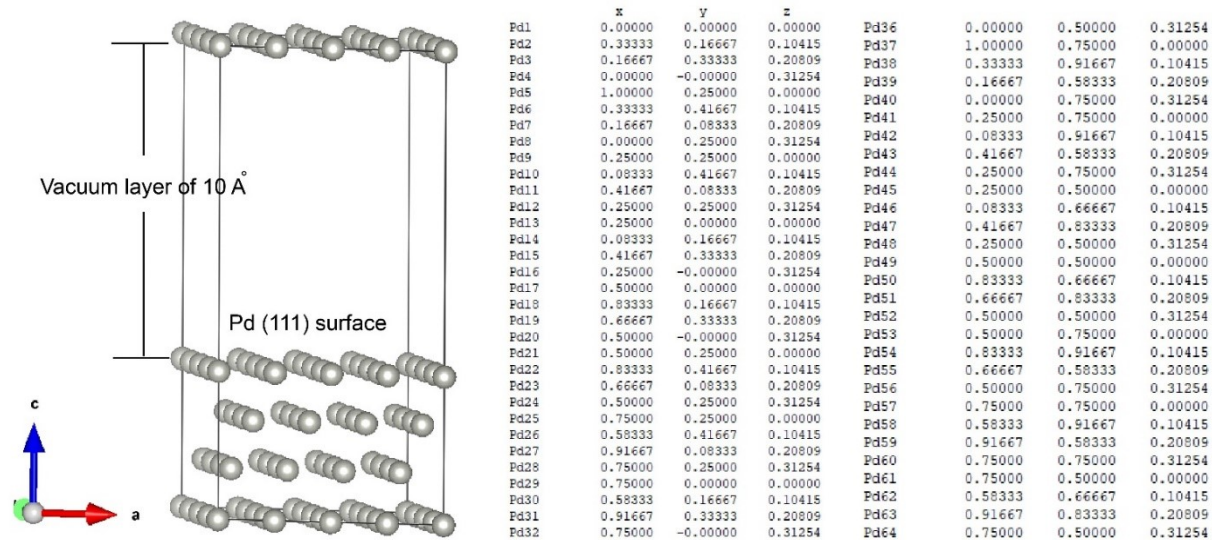
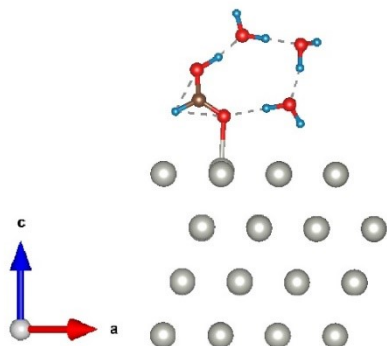


Figure S10. The optimized computation model of Pd (111) surface and its atom coordinates.

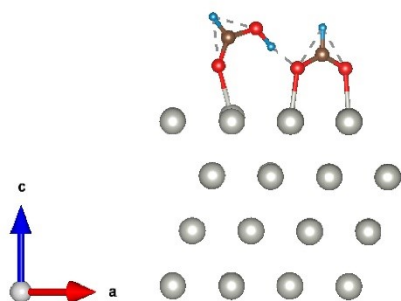
HCOOH-H₂O adsorption on the Pd (111) surface



	x	y	z				
Pd1	0.00620	0.00705	0.00052	Pd38	0.33906	0.92351	0.10290
Pd2	0.33886	0.17356	0.10453	Pd39	0.17266	0.59022	0.20634
Pd3	0.17339	0.33972	0.20895	Pd40	0.00617	0.75733	0.31091
Pd4	0.00448	0.00579	0.31087	Pd41	0.25574	0.75675	0.99981
Pd5	0.00609	0.25651	0.00061	Pd42	0.08925	0.92393	0.10321
Pd6	0.33871	0.42299	0.10465	Pd43	0.42275	0.59129	0.20662
Pd7	0.17346	0.09198	0.20881	Pd44	0.25632	0.75758	0.31075
Pd8	0.00456	0.25781	0.31104	Pd45	0.25591	0.50620	0.00059
Pd9	0.25599	0.25672	0.00136	Pd46	0.08897	0.67342	0.10289
Pd10	0.08919	0.42304	0.10334	Pd47	0.42271	0.84064	0.20625
Pd11	0.42302	0.09038	0.20689	Pd48	0.25674	0.50978	0.31115
Pd12	0.25743	0.25839	0.31794	Pd49	0.50546	0.50618	0.00064
Pd13	0.25615	0.00687	0.00027	Pd50	0.83903	0.67342	0.10278
Pd14	0.08926	0.17349	0.10445	Pd51	0.67269	0.84049	0.20630
Pd15	0.42103	0.33960	0.20911	Pd52	0.50845	0.50987	0.31125
Pd16	0.25650	0.00577	0.31108	Pd53	0.50582	0.75653	0.99989
Pd17	0.50565	0.00676	0.99985	Pd54	0.83894	0.92351	0.10288
Pd18	0.83891	0.17315	0.10294	Pd55	0.67262	0.59035	0.20632
Pd19	0.67235	0.34051	0.20655	Pd56	0.50653	0.75802	0.31107
Pd20	0.50664	0.00758	0.31104	Pd57	0.75599	0.75654	0.99987
Pd21	0.50561	0.25642	0.00058	Pd58	0.58890	0.92336	0.10273
Pd22	0.83895	0.42326	0.10297	Pd59	0.92260	0.59046	0.20646
Pd23	0.67267	0.09055	0.20631	Pd60	0.75624	0.75753	0.31093
Pd24	0.50850	0.25798	0.31161	Pd61	0.75613	0.50655	0.99988
Pd25	0.75585	0.25670	0.00010	Pd62	0.58888	0.67351	0.10303
Pd26	0.58843	0.42303	0.10349	Pd63	0.92297	0.84081	0.20624
Pd27	0.92214	0.09022	0.20672	Pd64	0.75661	0.50809	0.31125
Pd28	0.75630	0.25780	0.31097	O1	0.19956	0.21137	0.41604
Pd29	0.75590	0.00657	0.99986	O2	0.35897	0.35821	0.48615
Pd30	0.58883	0.17320	0.10308	O3	0.53663	0.53332	0.41129
Pd31	0.92280	0.34036	0.20639	O4	0.74096	0.73834	0.41021
Pd32	0.75579	0.00742	0.31091	C1	0.24197	0.25114	0.46881
Pd33	0.00585	0.50669	0.00002	C2	0.64140	0.63704	0.43642
Pd34	0.33901	0.67354	0.10276	H1	0.42398	0.42035	0.45136
Pd35	0.17271	0.84089	0.20631	H2	0.17638	0.19219	0.50825
Pd36	0.00621	0.50785	0.31102	H3	0.64353	0.63630	0.48728
Pd37	0.00601	0.75660	0.99981				

Figure S11. The optimized computation model of HCOOH-H₂O molecules adsorption and its atom coordinates.

HCOOH-HCOO adsorption on the Pd (111) surface



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Pd8	0.00456	0.25781	0.31104	Pd45	0.25591	0.50620	0.00059
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Pd25	0.75585	0.25670	0.00010	Pd62	0.58888	0.67351	0.10303
Pd26	0.58843	0.42303	0.10349	Pd63	0.92287	0.84081	0.20624
Pd27	0.92214	0.09022	0.20672	Pd64	0.75661	0.50809	0.31125
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Pd30	0.58883	0.17320	0.10308	O3	0.53663	0.53332	0.41129
Pd31	0.92280	0.34036	0.20639	O4	0.74096	0.73834	0.41021
Pd32	0.75579	0.00742	0.31091	C1	0.24197	0.25114	0.46881
Pd33	0.00585	0.50669	0.00002	C2	0.64140	0.63704	0.43642
Pd34	0.33901	0.67354	0.10276	H1	0.42388	0.42035	0.45136
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Pd37	0.00601	0.75660	0.99981				

Figure S12. The optimized computation model of HCOOH-HCOO complexes adsorption and its atom coordinates.

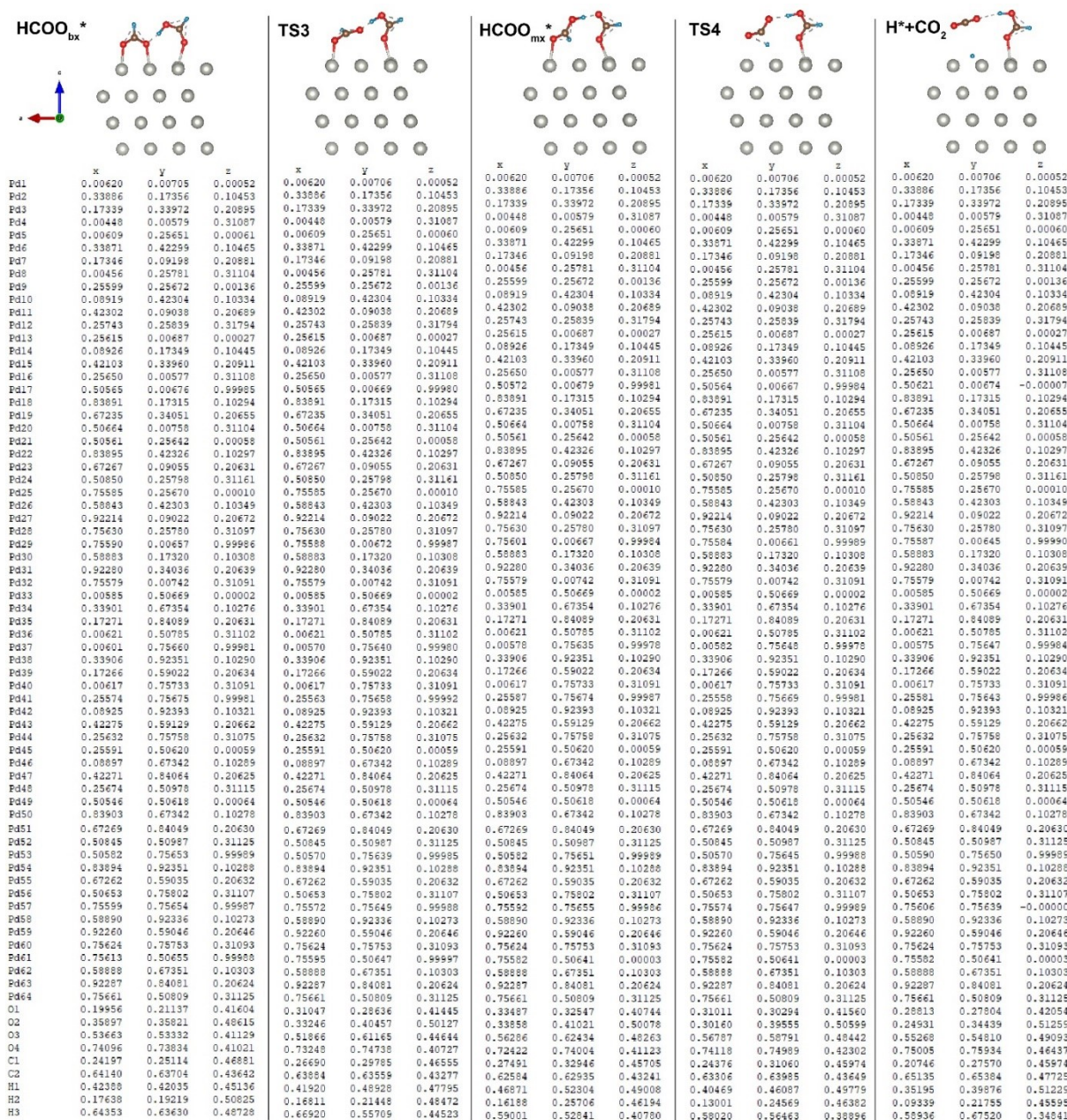


Figure S14. The atom coordinates of computation models in the Figure 4f.

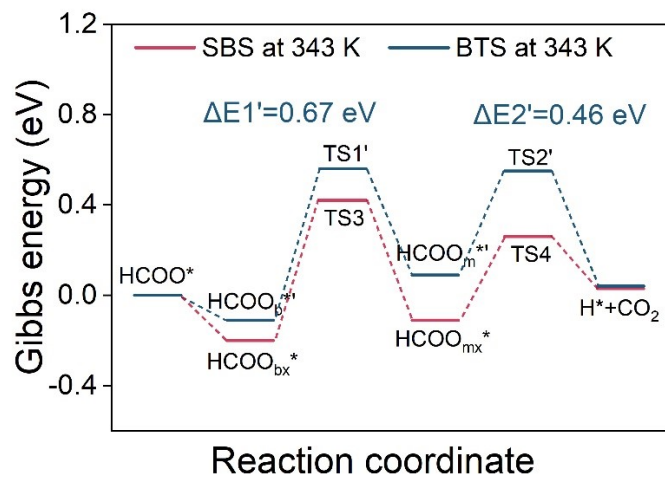


Figure S15. Gibbs free energies of the SBS and the BTS at the same temperature of 343 K.

Table S1. The comparison of reaction conditions between our work and other catalytic systems.

Ref.	FA concentration	Additives	Solvents	Catalysts	TOF
1	1 mol L ⁻¹ (wt. 4.6%)	None	H ₂ O	NiPd/NH ₂ -N-rGO	954.3 h ⁻¹
2	1 mol L ⁻¹ (wt. 4.6%)	None	H ₂ O	PdAu/HPC-NH ₂	3763 h ⁻¹
3	2 mol L ⁻¹ (wt. 9.2%)	None	H ₂ O	DHBP-Ir	2800 h ⁻¹
4	1 mol L ⁻¹ (wt. 4.6%)	None	H ₂ O	PdCl ₂ Acet./Cdarco	4888 h ⁻¹
5	1 mol L ⁻¹ (wt. 4.6%)	None	H ₂ O	CrPd/MIL-101-NH ₂	2009 h ⁻¹
6	1 mol L ⁻¹ (wt. 4.6%)	None	H ₂ O	AgPd/NH ₂ -SBA-15	1166 h ⁻¹
Our work	>21.3 mol L⁻¹ (wt. >98%)	None	None	Pd/rGO aerogel	4672 h⁻¹

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