

# Diverse Alkyl–Silyl Cross-Coupling via Homolysis of Unactivated C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O Bonds with the Cooperation of Gold and Amphoteric Oxides

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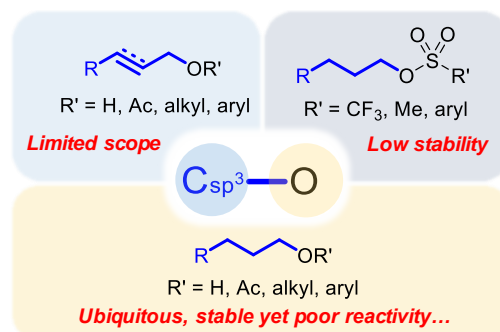
**ABSTRACT:** Since C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds are a ubiquitous chemical motif in both natural and artificial organic molecules, the universal transformation of C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds will be a key technology for achieving carbon neutrality. We report herein that gold nanoparticles supported on amphoteric metal oxides efficiently generated alkyl radicals via homolysis of unactivated C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds, which consequently promoted C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si bond formation to give diverse organosilicon compounds. A wide array of esters and ethers which are either commercially available or easily synthesized from alcohols participated in the heterogeneous gold-catalyzed silylation by disilanes to give diverse alkyl-, allyl-, benzyl- and allenylsilanes in high yields. In addition, this novel reaction technology for C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bond transformation could be applied to the upcycling of polyesters, i.e., the degradation of polyester and the synthesis of organosilanes were realized concurrently by the unique catalysis of supported gold nanoparticles. Mechanistic studies corroborated the notion that the generation of alkyl radicals is involved in C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si coupling and the cooperation of gold and an acid-base pair on amphoteric oxides is responsible for the homolysis of stable C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds. The high reusability and air-tolerance of the heterogeneous gold catalysts as well as a simple, scalable, and green reaction system not only enabled the practical synthesis of diverse organosilicon compounds, but also contributed to the progress toward carbon neutrality.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Carbon–oxygen (C–O) bonds are a ubiquitous chemical motif that is found in both native and artificial organic molecules. Especially, the C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bond is often found not only in oxygenated chemical feedstock such as alcohols, ethers, and esters, but also in natural biomass compounds and functional polyesters. Accordingly, the universal transformation of abundant C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds should be a key technology for achieving carbon neutrality while rapidly upgrading chemical raw materials and diversifying molecular complexity as well as the degradation of chemical wastes.<sup>1</sup> Remarkable progress in bond activation technology based on organic and organometallic chemistry over the past half century has revealed several strategies for activating robust C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds (Scheme 1).<sup>2</sup> The use of allyl and propargyl compounds, i.e., the introduction of  $\pi$  moieties at the beta-gamma C–C bond of alkyl groups, facilitates cleavage of C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds thanks to the interaction between Lewis acids and substrates or to the high stability of the resulting allyl and propargyl fragments.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, connection with strong electron-withdrawing groups, such as sulfonyl groups, decreases the energy of C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds.<sup>4</sup> However, the general strategy for enabling alcohols, ethers, and stable esters, such as alkyl acetates, as a carbon electrophile to accommodate in cross-coupling reactions remains underdeveloped.<sup>5</sup>

Alkyl-silyl coupling to synthesize alkylsilanes is a typical example of the limitations of cross-coupling reactions (Scheme

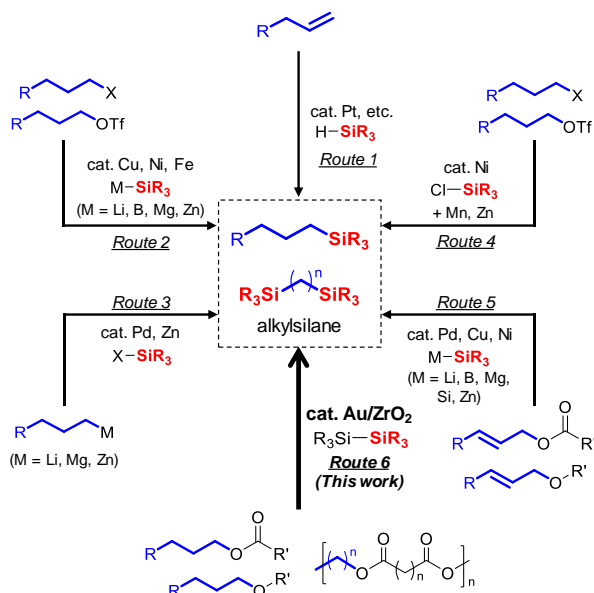
**Scheme 1.** Reactivity of C–O bonds



2).<sup>6</sup> Alkylsilanes are important scaffolds in materials chemistry as well as intermediates in organic synthesis for synthesizing high value-added molecules such as pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals and functional materials.<sup>7</sup> Although the hydrosilylation of alkenes is a well-established method for accessing alkylsilanes (Scheme 2, Route 1),<sup>8</sup> the control of regioselectivity in the reaction of 1,2-disubstituted alkenes is still a significant challenge. Transition metal-catalyzed cross-coupling of an alkyl electrophile with a silyl-metal nucleophile has emerged as an alternative tool for the regioselective formation of C–Si bonds (Scheme 2, Route 2).<sup>9</sup> In addition, alkyl metal reagents obtained via the umpolung reaction of alkyl halides are useful for the alkylation of silicon electrophiles under the influence of transition-metal catalysis (Scheme 2, Route 3).<sup>10</sup> More recently,

cross-electrophile coupling reactions by Ni catalyst in the presence of stoichiometric amount of metallic reductant have appeared efficient way to synthesize alkylsilanes (Scheme 2, Route 4).<sup>11</sup> However, metallic reagents and alkyl triflates suffer from instability against air, moisture and high temperature, which hinders the use of such C–Si coupling as a convenient and scalable tool in both the laboratory and industrial settings. While transition-metals catalyze silylation of allyl and propargyl esters to afford synthetically useful allylsilanes<sup>12</sup> and allenylsilanes<sup>13</sup> (Scheme 2, Route 5), the development of a universal method that enables the formation of a variety C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si bonds is still a significant challenge.

**Scheme 2.** Synthetic route to alkylsilanes



On the other hand, heterogeneous catalysts, especially supported metal catalysts, are widely used for manufacturing not only bulk chemicals but also fine chemicals in the chemical industry, thanks to their high stability and insolubility in organic and inorganic media.<sup>14</sup> Recent studies on the cooperation between the redox properties of metal nanoparticles and the acid-base function of the support explored novel perspectives on supported catalysts toward selective molecular transformations.<sup>15</sup> The results imply that heterogeneous catalysts are not only attractive tools for the sustainable synthesis of value-added organic compounds, but also promising materials for unprecedented bond activations. Herein, we report that supported gold catalysts efficiently promoted alkyl-silyl cross coupling (Scheme 2, Route 6). A series of esters and ethers bearing unactivated C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds underwent silylation by disilanes to give diverse alkyl-, allyl-, benzyl- and allenylsilanes in high yields. Furthermore, the present Au-catalyzed silyl cross coupling enabled the concurrent degradation of polyester and the synthesis of organosilanes, i.e., upcycling of polyesters. Mechanistic studies corroborated that the generation of alkyl radicals is involved in C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si coupling and the cooperation of gold and an acid-base pair on amphoteric oxides is responsible for the homolysis of stable C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds for generating alkyl radicals, which consequently promote C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si bond formation to give diverse organosilicon compounds. The high reusability and air-tolerance of the heterogeneous gold catalysts as well as the simple, scalable, and green reaction system not only enable the practical synthesis of diverse organosilicon compounds, but also contribute to progress in carbon neutrality.

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Optimization of catalyst and reaction condition.** We initially examined the catalytic activity of a series of metal nanoparticle supported on ZrO<sub>2</sub> toward the cross-coupling of decyl acetate (**1a**) with hexamethyldisilane (**2a**) (Table 1). The reaction in toluene with 1.0 mol% of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> catalyst at 100 °C gave the corresponding alkylsilane (**3**) in 88% yield (entry 1). In contrast, the replacement of Au with Ni, Cu, Pd and Pt resulted in no conversion of **1a** (entry 2). Toluene was found to be the solvent of choice, whereas the reaction-rate was greatly reduced with the use of 1,4-dioxane, DMF and acetonitrile (entries 3 and 4). The supporting materials for Au nanoparticles had a dramatic impact on their catalytic activity. In sharp contrast to the comparable catalytic activities of Au/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub>, the use of SiO<sub>2</sub>, TiO<sub>2</sub>, or Nb<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>-supported catalysts showed a quite low activity (entries 5–8). Cationic Au complexes, which are often used as catalysts for organic synthesis, showed no activity for the title reaction. While a prolonged reaction period was required, **3** was obtained in high yield even at 80 °C (entry 10). Notably, Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> still showed remarkable catalytic performance under air in sharp contrast to previous C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si coupling with the use of organometallic reagents, which suffers in the presence of air or moisture. Thanks to this robustness of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub>, the reaction could be performed on a large scale, thereby giving alkylsilane **3** at a gram-scale (1.08 g, 84%).

**Table 1.** Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub>-catalyzed silylation of C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bond<sup>a</sup>

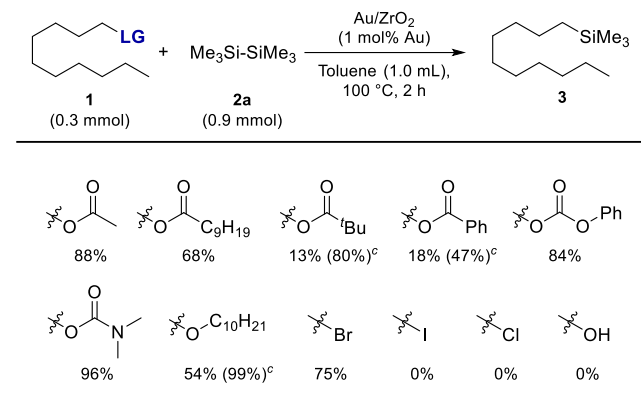
Entry	Variation from the standard condition	Yield of <b>3</b> (%) <sup>b</sup>
1	none	88
2	Ni, Cu, Pd, Ag or Pt instead of Au	0
3	1,4-dioxane instead of toluene	37
4	DMF or CH <sub>3</sub> CN instead of toluene	0
5	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> instead of ZrO <sub>2</sub>	69
6	SiO <sub>2</sub> instead of ZrO <sub>2</sub>	12
7	TiO <sub>2</sub> instead of ZrO <sub>2</sub>	6
8	Nb <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> instead of ZrO <sub>2</sub>	0
9	Me <sub>2</sub> SAuCl instead of Au/ZrO <sub>2</sub>	0
10	at 80 °C for 8 h	84
11	Under open air	93
12	Gram scale reaction (5.0 mmol of <b>1a</b> ) for 8 h	84

<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: **1a** (0.30 mmol), **2a** (0.9 mmol), catalyst (1.0 mol% as metal), toluene (1.0 mL), at 100 °C for 2 h. <sup>b</sup>Yields were determined by GC analysis by using biphenyl as internal standard.

**Effect of leaving groups.** An array of leaving groups of alkyl electrophile were acceptable for C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si coupling by Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> catalysts (Table 2). Along with acetate, carboxylate with a long alkyl chain, namely decanoate, could be used as a good leaving group. In contrast, bulky <sup>t</sup>Bu and Ph groups significantly impeded the reaction, which implies that steric hindrance around the carbonyl functionality is a factor for dominating the reaction rates (vide infra). Conversely, phenyl carbonate and dimethyl carbamate were found to be good leaving groups to furnish **3**. We were delighted to find that the Au catalyst allowed alkyl ether to act as an alkyl electrophile in C–Si coupling to afford

3. Additionally, we evaluated the possibility of alkyl halides as a carbon electrophile, and found that only alkyl bromide underwent silylation to provide **3**. Although a direct conversion of C–OH bonds is an ideal cross-coupling, the reaction of decanol delivered a silyl group not at carbon, but rather at oxygen to give silyl ether. This also indicates that a trimethylsilyloxy group was not a suitable leaving group for Au-catalyzed C–Si coupling.

**Table 2.** Silylation of a series of alkyl electrophiles<sup>a,b</sup>



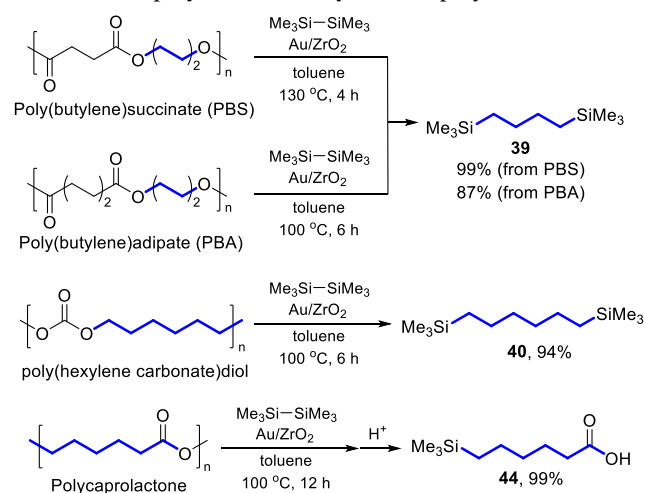
<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: **1** (0.30 mmol), **2a** (0.9 mmol), catalyst (1.0 mol% as metal), toluene (1.0 mL), at 100 °C for 2 h. <sup>b</sup>Yields were determined by GC analysis by using biphenyl as an internal standard. <sup>c</sup>Reaction for 18 h.

**Reaction scope: Alkyl esters to alkylsilanes.** With the optimized reaction conditions and catalysts in hand, we next explored the scope of the Au-catalyzed C–Si coupling reaction (Table 3). The coupling of decyl acetate with a wide variety of disilanes bearing different substituents proceeded smoothly to give structurally diverse alkylsilanes. As in the previous metal-catalyzed C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si coupling, alkyl and aryl moieties were compatible with silyl groups to give the corresponding alkylsilanes (**3–7**). While substrates bearing Si–O bonds have hardly been used for C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si coupling, and Au catalysts promoted the reaction of disilanes bearing alkoxy and siloxy groups to give the corresponding alkylsilanes (**8** and **9**). Although hydrosilylation requires the use of gaseous olefins in the case of the introduction of short alkyl chains, such as methyl and ethyl groups, the present Au catalyst delivered ethyl and trideuteriomethyl groups at silyl groups (**10** and **11**) with the use of easily-handled liquid esters. Evaluation of functional group tolerance during the Au-catalyzed C–Si coupling revealed that internal and terminal alkene, alkyne, chloro and amino moieties were compatible with the corresponding alkylsilanes (**12–19**). C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si bond formation also occurred at a secondary carbon to furnish alkylsilanes (**20–25**) bearing a branched alkyl chain. The reaction of allylic acetates also took place to give allylsilanes (**26–29**) in good to high yields. Various functional groups at an aromatic ring were tolerated during silylation at a benzylic carbon (**30–34**). Although C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bond underwent silylation with a Au catalyst, C(sp<sup>2</sup>)–O and C(sp<sup>2</sup>)–B bonds remained intact (**35** and **36**). Introduction of an alkoxy silyl moiety by C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si coupling has scarcely been explored due to the low stability of Si–O bonds, whereas the present Au catalyst gratifyingly provided the corresponding alkoxy silanes (**37** and **38**) without a significant loss of Si–O fragments. Additionally, diesters derived from  $\alpha,\omega$ -alkanediols underwent silylation at both C–O bonds to furnish the corresponding bis(silyl)alkanes

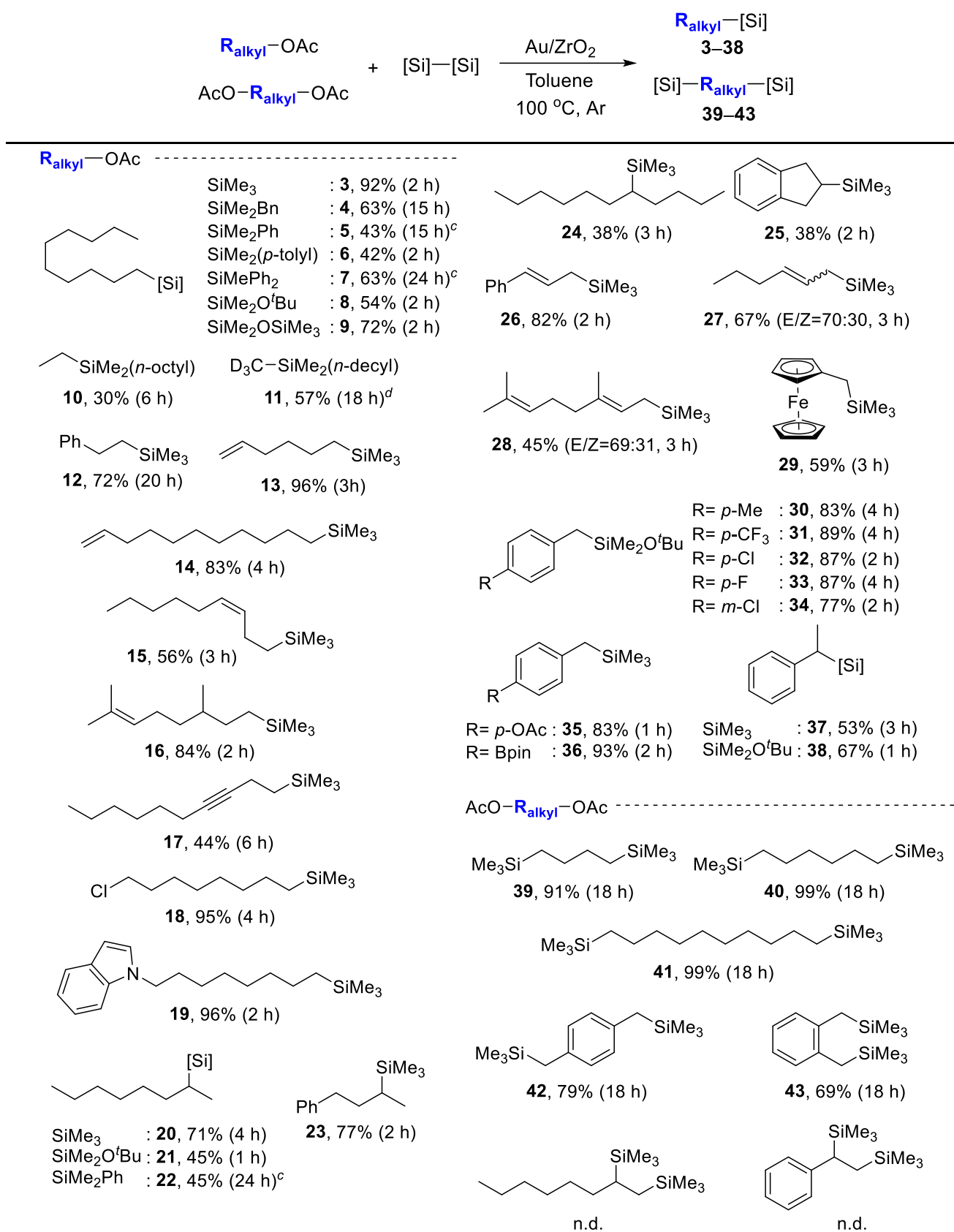
(**39–43**) in excellent yields. Unfortunately, the reaction of vicinal diacetates resulted in no formation of disilylalkanes.

**Reaction scope: Depolymerizative silylation of polyesters.** The fact that the supported Au catalysts were effective for the transformation of various C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds in alkyl esters into C–Si bonds allowed us to devise a depolymerizative silylation of polyesters. Since the accumulation of waste plastics is recognized as a serious modern environmental issue,<sup>16</sup> considerable attention has been focused on the discovery of novel methods for the degradation of plastics.<sup>17</sup> Even though the hydrolysis of polyesters by the use of a stoichiometric amount of strong base can deconstruct their robust structure into monomers,<sup>18</sup> this process provides only the starting substances, namely diols and dicarboxylic acids. Furthermore, neutralization of alkali salts into carboxylic acids by acids has a considerable negative impact on the environment and reaction facility. Although hydrogenolysis of C<sub>acyl</sub>–O bonds in esters under the influence of transition-metals is an alternative way for the decomposition of polyesters,<sup>19</sup> the reactions under harsh conditions causes excessive reduction of carboxylic acids to alcohols. Accordingly, the development of a catalytic process that can realize the depolymerizative transformation of polyesters into value-added chemicals under neutral and mild conditions provides a novel carbon circular pathway, which should be a key technology for achieving carbon neutrality. Gratifyingly, the supported Au catalyst successfully promoted depolymerizative silylation of polyesters to give disilylalkanes without the use of basic additives (Scheme 3). For instance, the reaction of poly(1,4-butylene) succinate (PBS; 0.30 mmol per diol unit) with **2a** in the presence of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> at 130 °C efficiently proceeded to furnish 0.28 mmol of **39** (99% yield based on diol). Furthermore, this process accompanied the quantitative formation of bis(trimethylsilyl) succinate, which undergoes hydrolysis to give succinic acid just by the addition of a protic solvent, such as water or methanol. This reaction can also be applied to the depolymerizative silylation of poly(1,4-butylene) adipate (PBA) to **39** and adipic acid. Moreover, poly(hexylene carbonate) diol underwent C–O bond cleavage at 100 °C to afford bis(silyl)hexane **40** quantitatively. C–O bonds in polycaprolactone were also smoothly converted to C–Si bonds, and subsequent protonation of a silyl ester moiety finally gave an alkylsilane with carboxylic acid on an opposite side (**44**) as a sole product.

**Scheme 3.** Depolymerizative silylation of polyesters.



**Table 3:** Scope of alkyl acetate<sup>a,b</sup>

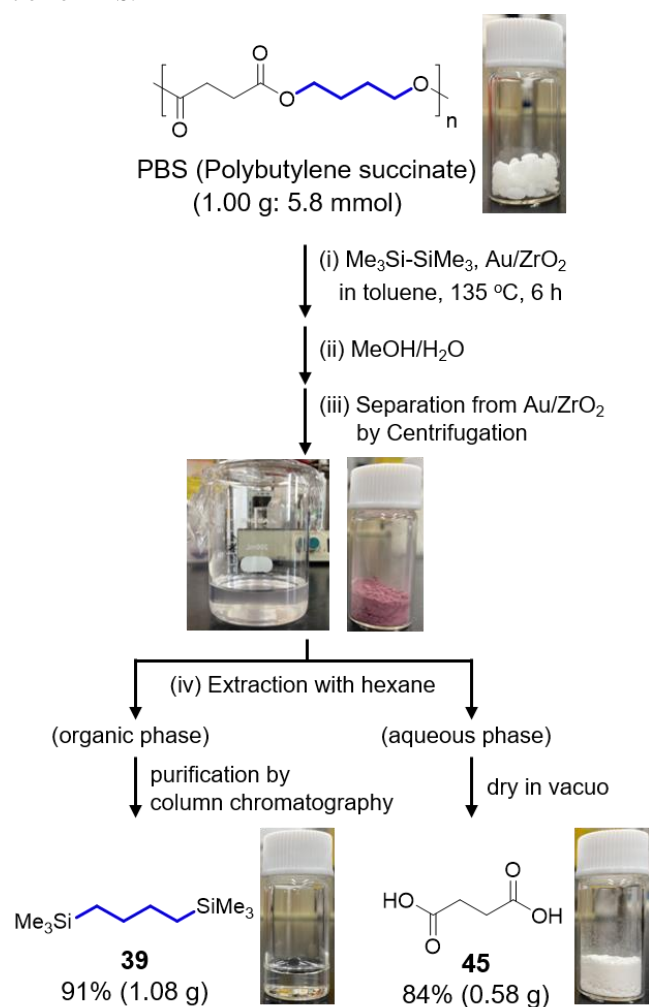


<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: **1** (0.30 mmol), **2** (0.9 mmol), Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> (3.0 mol% as metal), toluene (1.0 mL), at 100 °C. <sup>b</sup>Isolated yields are given. <sup>c</sup>Reaction was carried out at 130 °C in mesitylene. <sup>d</sup>Methyl-*d*<sub>3</sub> benzoate was used instead of Methyl-*d*<sub>3</sub> acetate.



To evaluate the practicality of the system based on a supported Au catalyst, depolymerizative silylation of PBS was performed under a gram-scale conditions (Scheme 4). After all of the C(sp<sup>3</sup>)-O bonds of PBS were consumed as determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR, methanol was added to the reaction mixture for the desilylation of bis(trimethylsilyl)succinate. Extraction of the resulting reaction mixture with hexane and water transferred bis(silyl)alkane **39** and succinic acid **45** into the organic and aqueous phase, respectively. Drying and/or purification by column chromatography isolated both monomers in high yields. Consequently, this simple operation and the fact that atomic absorption spectroscopy revealed that there was no leaching of Au species into the reaction mixture surely proved that the Au-catalyzed upcycling of polyesters can be performed in a practical manner.

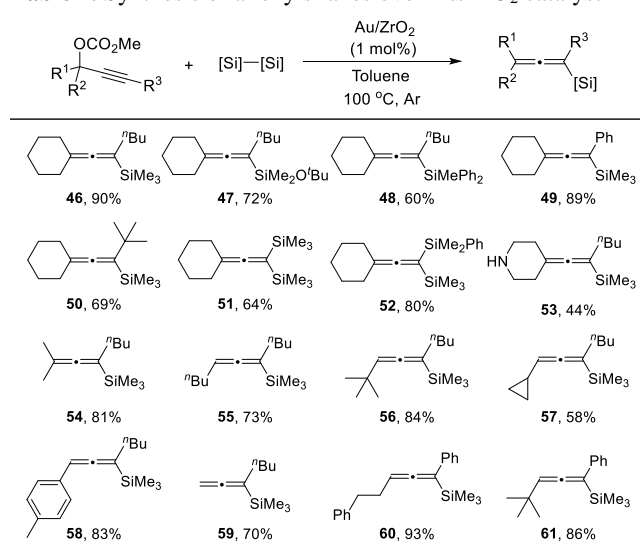
**Scheme 4.** Procedure for gram-scale depolymerizative silylation of PBS.



**Reaction scope: Propargyl esters to allenyl silanes.** We next turned our attention to the cross-coupling of propargyl esters with disilanes to access allenylsilanes. The reactions of propargyl electrophiles with silicon nucleophiles, such as silylboranes and silylzinc, have been demonstrated under the influence of Cu and Rh catalysts,<sup>13</sup> whereas broadening of the substrate scope is still desirable due to the limited scope of substituents at silicon

and the alkyne terminus. In this regard, Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> efficiently delivered various silyl groups at an allene scaffold via the coupling of propargyl carbonates with disilanes as silyl nucleophiles (Table 4). Trimethylsilyl, dimethyl-*tert*-butoxysilyl and diphenylmethylsilyl groups were compatible with the corresponding allene derivatives (**46–48**). In the Cu- and Rh-catalyzed synthesis of allenylsilanes, bulky substituents on the alkyne terminus hindered silylation at the  $\gamma$ -position probably because their reaction pathways involve the insertion of metal-boryl species into alkyne moiety.<sup>13b,13d</sup> In contrast, the Au-catalyzed reaction allowed aryl, *tert*-butyl, trimethylsilyl and dimethylphenylsilyl groups to be acceptable as substituents for allenylsilanes (**49–52**). Besides, Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> catalyst enabled the synthesis of a wide array of allenylsilanes bearing aryl and alkyl groups (**53–61**) via C-Si coupling of secondary and tertiary propargyl esters and disilanes.

**Table 4.** Synthesis of allenylsilanes over Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> catalyst<sup>a,b</sup>



<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: propargyl carbonate (0.50 mmol), disilane (1.5 mmol), Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> (1.0 mol%), toluene (1 mL), at 100 °C for 1 h. <sup>b</sup>Isolated yields are given.

**Reaction scope: Alkyl ethers to alkylsilanes** As shown in Table 2, the Au catalyst enabled the cross-coupling of dialkyl ether and disilane to furnish alkylsilane, which to the best of our knowledge, is the first example of the use of acyclic alkyl ethers as alkyl electrophiles for the synthesis of organosilanes.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we investigated the scope of silylation of alkyl ethers (Table 5). The C(sp<sup>3</sup>)-O bond of an acyclic symmetrical alkyl ether was readily transformed into C(sp<sup>3</sup>)-Si and O-Si bonds, thus providing the corresponding alkylsilane **62** in 98% yields. The ring-opening silylation of tetrahydrofuran bearing substituents at a C2 carbon took place predominantly at a CH<sub>2</sub>-O bond to furnish linear alkylsilanes with a functional group on an opposite side (**63–66**). Meanwhile, various functional groups were tolerated during C(sp<sup>3</sup>)-Si bond formation. For instance, halo-methyl tetrahydrofuran afforded alkylsilanes with a haloalcohol moiety (**63** and **64**), which are readily transformed into epoxides (see Scheme 5c). As with the reaction of alkyl ester, disilane with a Si-O bond could be used in the ring-opening silylation of a cyclic ether to give **67**. In addition, 2-tetrahydrofuroic acid was converted to a lactic acid bearing a silylalkyl group **68** in excellent yield. Selective cleavage of a C(sp<sup>3</sup>)-O bond occurred in the reaction of dihydrobenzofuran to give **69**. On the other

hand, a cyclic ether with a tertiary alkyl group resulted in no formation of alkylsilane. Six-membered cyclic ethers, namely tetrahydropyran and morpholine, could also be used as alkyl electrophiles to give the corresponding alkylsilanes with halogen, acetoxy and amino functionalities (**70–72**). The coupling of dihydropyran with **2a** afforded alkane bearing silyl and silyl enol ether groups both at its terminus, whereas hydrolytic Si–O cleavage during purification through column chromatography gave silyl alkanal **73** as a final product. In contrast, silylation by a bis-*tert*-butoxy disilane provided a stable silyl enol ether **74** in 78% yield.

**Table 5.** Alkyl ethers to alkylsilanes.<sup>a</sup>

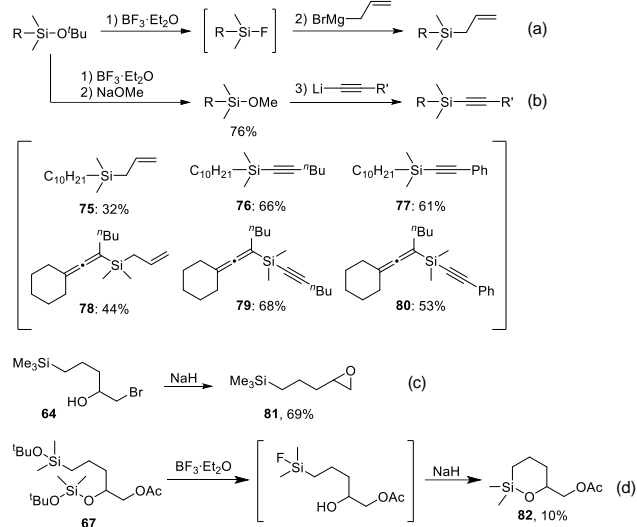
Entry	Substrate	Product	Yield (%) <sup>b</sup>
1	$C_8H_{17}-O-C_8H_{17}$	$C_8H_{17}-SiMe_3$ <b>62</b>	98
2		$Me_3Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-X$ <b>63</b> , X=Cl	82
3		<b>64</b> , X=Br	46 <sup>c</sup>
4		$Me_3SiO-CH_2-CH_2-X$ <b>65</b> , X=OAc	95
5		<b>66</b> , X=CN	11
6		$(tBuO)Me_2Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-OAc$ <b>67</b>	31
7		$Me_3Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-COOH$ <b>68</b>	90
8		$Me_3Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-$ <b>69</b>	79
9		$Me_3Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-$ <b>70</b>	0
10		$Me_3Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-Cl$ <b>70</b>	83
11		$Me_3Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-OH$ <b>71</b>	81
12		$Me_3Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-N(Ph)-CH_2-CH_2-OH$ <b>72</b>	80
13		$Me_3Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-CHO$ <b>73</b>	81
14		$tBuOMe_2Si-CH_2-CH_2-CH_2-CH=CH-OSiMe_2O^tBu$ <b>74</b>	78

<sup>a</sup>Reaction condition: ether (0.3 mmol), **2** (0.9 mmol), Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> (3 mol%), toluene (1.0 mL), 100 °C, under Ar. <sup>b</sup>Isolated yields are given. <sup>c</sup>Product was isolated as an alcohol.

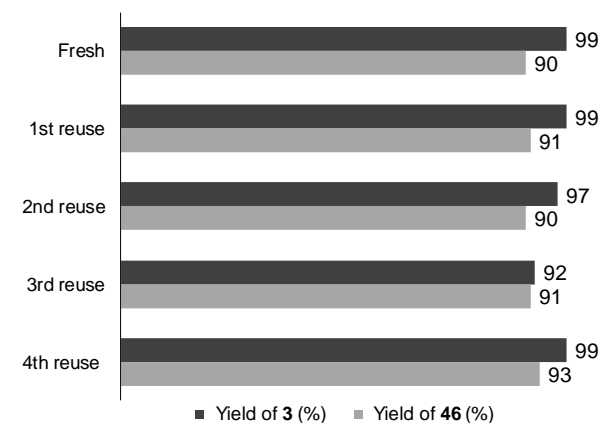
**Synthetic application.** Subsequently, we explored the derivatization of organosilanes, which are synthesized by the Au-catalyzed silylation of C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds, into value-added molecules (Scheme 5). As demonstrated above, the present Au catalytic system enables the synthesis of alkyl and allenyl *tert*-butoxysilanes. Si–O<sup>*t*</sup>Bu was converted into Si–F by treatment with BF<sub>3</sub>·Et<sub>2</sub>O, and subsequent nucleophilic allylation provided allylsilanes **75** and **78** (Scheme 5a). Moreover, the treatment of BF<sub>3</sub>·Et<sub>2</sub>O and sodium methoxide transformed Si–O<sup>*t*</sup>Bu into Si–OMe, which underwent alkylation to furnish alkylnylsilanes

(**76**, **77**, **79** and **80**) (Scheme 5b). Alkylsilane **64** with a 1,2-bromo alcohol moiety, which is obtained via ring-opening silylation of a tetrahydrofuran derivative, underwent a base-mediated ring-closing reaction to afford alkylsilane bearing an epoxy group **81** (Scheme 5c). The treatment of **67** with BF<sub>3</sub>·Et<sub>2</sub>O and NaH gave a six-membered silylether **82** (Scheme 5d).

**Scheme 5.** Synthetic application of alkylsilanes.



**Reusability of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> catalyst.** Another significant characteristic of heterogeneous Au catalysts is their reusability, which is potentially superior to those of homogeneous catalysts. No significant decreases in product yields were observed in four consecutive catalytic runs for the cross-coupling of **2a** with both alkyl acetate and propargyl carbonate (Figure 1). Furthermore, hot filtration of the solid Au catalyst completely retarded further progress of the reaction (Supporting Information Figure S3), clearly indicating that the reaction system satisfies the essential requirements for realizing the sustainable and practical synthesis of organosilicon compounds.

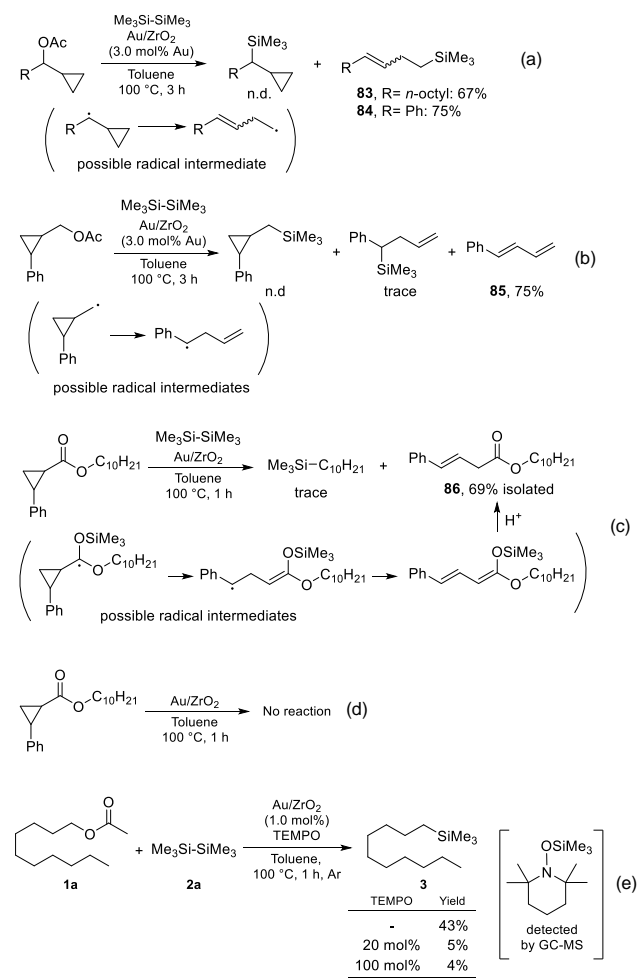


Reaction conditions: alkyl acetate or propargyl carbonate (0.5 mmol), **2a** (1.5 mmol), Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> (3.0 or 1.0 mol%), toluene (2 mL), 100 °C, 2 h. Yields were determined by GC.

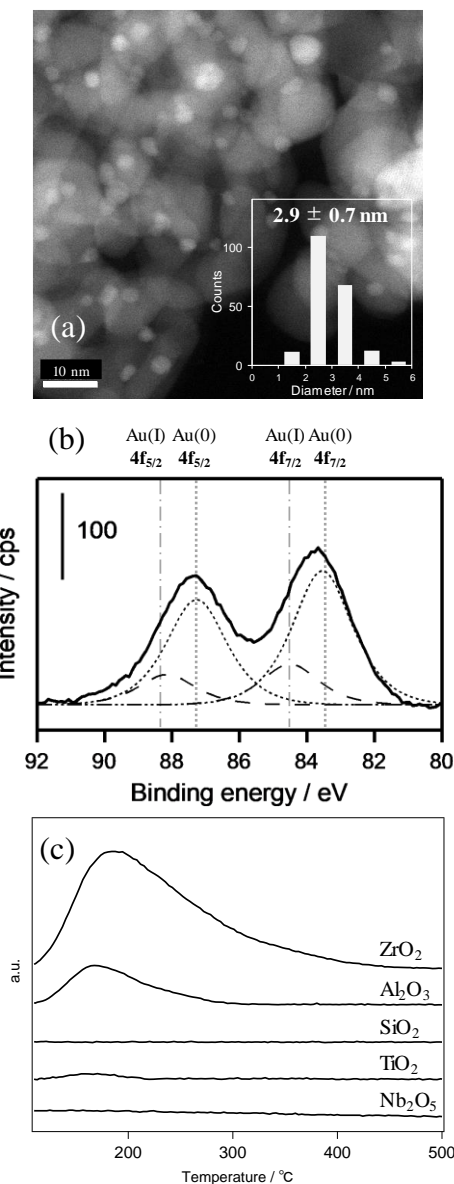
**Figure 1.** Reusability of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> catalyst for C–Si bond formation.

**Mechanistic studies.** We next turned our attention into the elucidation of the reaction mechanism as well as the effects of Au nanoparticles and the support. The cross-coupling of **2a** with secondary alkyl acetates bearing a cyclopropyl moiety at the  $\alpha$ -position gave homoallylic silanes **82** and **83** in high yields (Scheme 6a). Although a secondary alkylsilane was not obtained, similar ring-opening took place to give a diene **85** in the reaction of primary cyclopropylmethyl acetates (Scheme 6b). These findings indicate that C–Si cross-coupling includes the formation of a cyclopropylmethyl radical intermediate via the homolysis of C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bonds. Furthermore, the reaction of **2a** with alkyl cyclopropane carboxylate caused ring-opening of cyclopropane group to give **86** as a sole product, which allows us to deduce that a silyl acetal radical was formed by the addition of a silyl radical to ester (Scheme 6c). In contrast, the cyclopropane structure was maintained when the reaction with Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> was carried out in the absence of **2a**, unambiguously proving that disilanes functioned as a source of silyl radical or single electron to generate an alkyl radical intermediate (Scheme 6d). Furthermore, a radical trap experiment using 2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidine 1-oxyl radical (TEMPO) significantly impeded the progress of the alkyl-silyl coupling, and silylated TEMPO was detected by GC-MS analysis (Scheme 6e). This result supports the generation of silyl radical.

#### Scheme 6. Mechanistic studies.



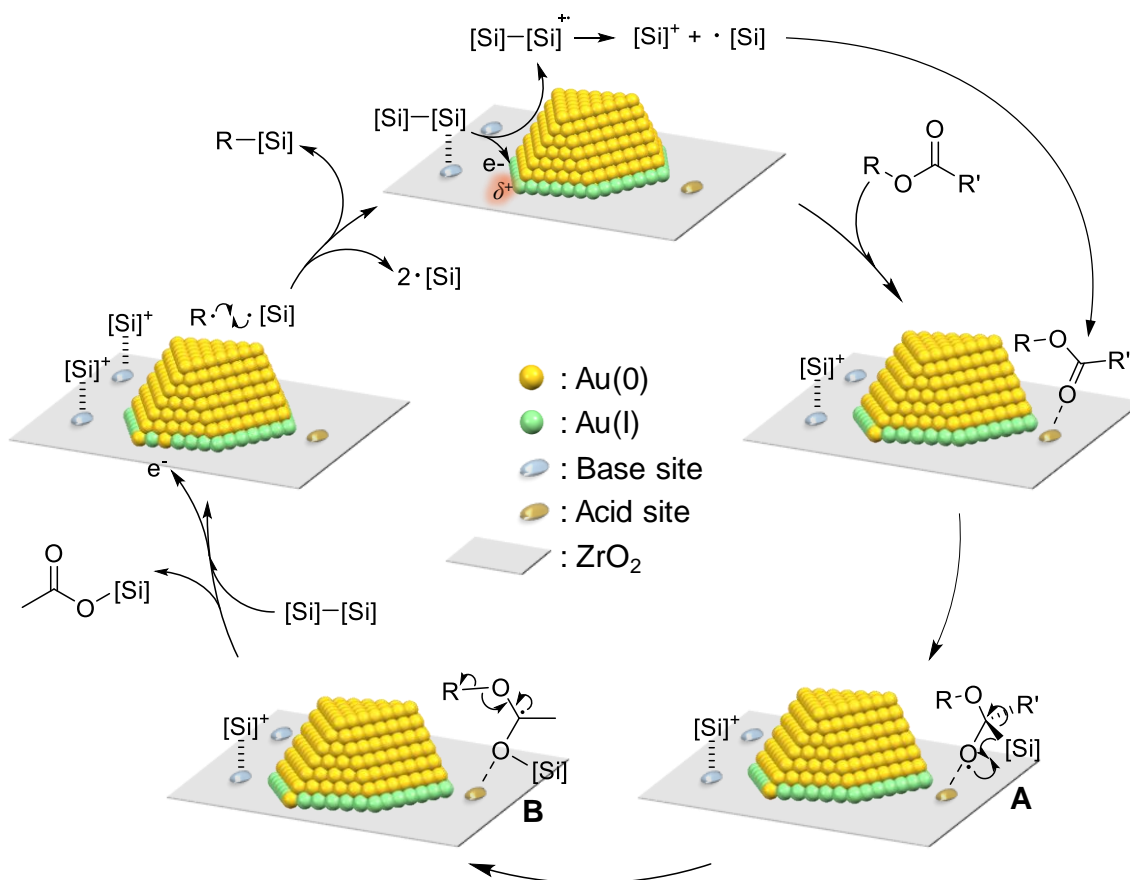
On the other hand, Studer and coworkers reported that nucleophilic silyl radicals were generated via single-electron oxidation



**Figure 2.** (a) HAADF-STEM image of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> and Au particle size distribution; (b) XP spectra of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub>; (c) CO<sub>2</sub>-TPD profiles of supported Au catalysts.

of disilanes by Ir-based photo-redox catalysts under visible light irradiation.<sup>21</sup> Even though Au has a thermodynamically stable metallic state, cationic Au species with a high oxidation potential ( $E^{\text{Au(0)/Au(I)}} = +1.69$  V vs. SHE)<sup>22</sup> are known to form at the interface between their nanoparticles and metal oxides.<sup>23</sup> As HAADF-STEM image of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> shown in Figure 2a, Au nanoparticles are highly dispersed at the surface of ZrO<sub>2</sub> with their mean diameter of 2.9 nm. Furthermore, a curve-fitting analysis of XP spectrum of Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> before the catalytic reaction revealed that the presence of a non-negligible amount of Au(I) species (ca. 20% in all surface Au species) at the surface of the catalyst (Figure 2b). While the oxidation potential of hexamethyldisilane **2a** ( $E^{1/2} = +1.71$  V vs. SHE) was almost similar to that of Au(I) species, the fact that the oxidation potential of disilane can be reduced by the assistance of bases<sup>21</sup> turned our attention to the positive effect of an amphoteric oxide support on the activation of disilanes. An evaluation of basicity based on CO<sub>2</sub>-temperature programmed desorption (CO<sub>2</sub>-TPD) revealed

**Scheme 7.** Possible reaction mechanism for alkyl–silyl cross coupling by Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub>.



that significant desorption bands appeared in the TPD profiles of ZrO<sub>2</sub> and Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> whereas low-reactive SiO<sub>2</sub>, TiO<sub>2</sub>, and Nb<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> had scarce basicity (Figure 3c). This suggests that the basic nature of ZrO<sub>2</sub> and Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> facilitates the generation of disilane cation radicals via the single-electron transfer of disilanes to cationic Au. On the other hand, the reaction orders with respect to alkyl acetate and disilane were 1.1 and 0.1, which forces us to anticipate that the catalytic cycle includes the activation of alkyl acetates by the catalyst. Accordingly, we deduce that the activation of acetate by a Lewis acid site of amphoteric oxides facilitates the addition of nucleophilic silyl radical to form silyl acetal radicals.<sup>24</sup> As shown in Table 2, the fact that steric hindrance at around the carbonyl moiety impeded the formation of alkylsilyl implies that the nucleophilic attack of silyl radical is favored to occur at electrophilic carbon.

Based on these mechanistic investigations, we propose the possible reaction mechanism of alkyl–silyl cross coupling over Au catalysts supported on amphoteric oxides in Scheme 7. Initially, disilane adsorbs at a Lewis basic site of the support, which triggers single-electron transfer from disilane to Au NPs to form its cation radical, followed by Si–Si cleavage to generate silyl radical and silyl cation. Although the bulkiness at around a carbonyl group remarkably retarded the reaction (Table 2), the activation of alkyl esters by a Lewis acidic site of the support facilitated the attack of silyl radical to form hemiacetal radical **A**. After 1,2 Brook rearrangement of **A** affords silyl acetal radical **B**, homolysis of a C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bond gives alkyl radical with a liberation of silyl acetate. Recently, the MacMillan group reported similar homolysis of C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–O bond of an amino acetal radical

which is generated via single-electron oxidation by a photo-excited Ir complex.<sup>5b</sup> On the other hand, the reaction of unsymmetrical disilane and a cyclic ester, namely  $\epsilon$ -caprolactone, gave four different products (Scheme S3 in Supporting Information). Furthermore, the same reaction outcome was obtained in the coupling of two different symmetrical disilanes with the cyclic ester (Scheme S3). These control experiments unambiguously suggest that two disilane molecules participate in the present reaction to form an alkylsilyl. Thus, alkyl radical finally couples with another silyl radical formed from the second disilane to give alkylsilyl. The resulting two silyl cations are probably reduced by two electrons abstracted by Au NPs from disilane to generate silyl radicals, which are consumed in another catalytic cycle. Thus, efficient silylation proceeds on the supported gold catalyst, the key to which is the proximity of the acid–base site to the Au NPs causing efficient single-electron oxidation of disilane and electrophilic activation of alkyl acetate on the solid surface. The addition of 4-dimethylaminopyridine (DMAP) or Y(OTf)<sub>3</sub> as an external base or acid to the reaction with Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> remarkably inhibited the reaction (Scheme S3), which is probably because DMAP or Y(OTf)<sub>3</sub> deactivated the acid or base sites over ZrO<sub>2</sub>. This strongly suggests that the use of amphoteric oxides which possess fixed acid–base sites on their surface is essential for the reaction to proceed.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Diverse and practical C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–Si coupling by amphoteric oxide-supported Au catalysts was described. A variety of alkyl esters, and others participated in the heterogeneous Au-catalyzed cross



coupling to give the corresponding alkyl, allyl, benzyl and allenyl silanes. Furthermore, the present C(sp<sup>3</sup>)-O bond activation technology was successfully applied to upcycling of various polyesters, i.e., Au/ZrO<sub>2</sub> catalyst enabled depolymerizative silylation of PBS to give disilyl butane and succinic acid in excellent yields. Mechanistic studies corroborated that the homolysis of stable C(sp<sup>3</sup>)-O bonds of alkyl esters proceeded to generate alkyl radicals. The cooperation of Au nanoparticles and the amphoteric nature of the support are responsible for the generation of silyl radical and subsequent formation of alkyl radicals, thereby enabling efficient alkyl-silyl coupling to furnish diverse alkylsilanes. Several important sustainable features of supported Au catalysts, such as high reusability and air-tolerance of the heterogeneous gold catalysts as well as the simple and scalable reaction system enable the practical synthesis of diverse organosilicon compounds. Furthermore, the present technology for the activation of stable C(sp<sup>3</sup>)-O bonds will be an essential tool for realizing carbon neutrality.

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

**Supporting Information.** Experimental procedures, characterization of supported Au catalysts, and <sup>1</sup>H NMR, <sup>13</sup>C NMR of the products are provided in the Supporting Information.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

H.M. designed the studies and conceived the main idea. H.M., M.D., Y.Y. and Y.M. performed all the experiments. H.N. and M.D. analyzed the physical properties of catalysts. H.M. wrote the manuscript with input from all the authors and discussion with T.S. All the authors discussed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare no competing interests.

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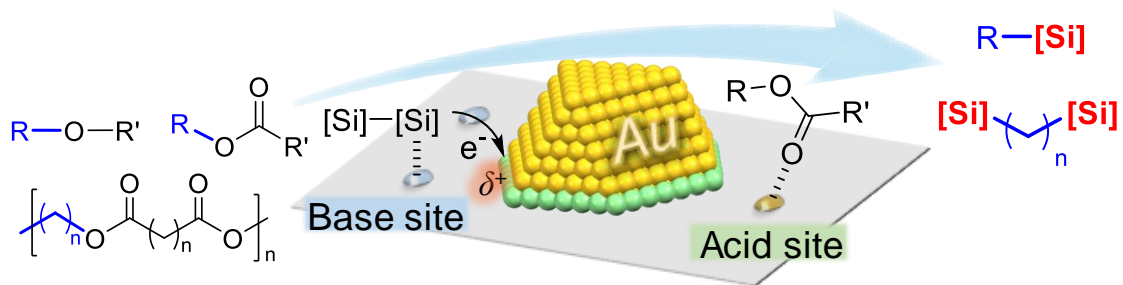


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