According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for processing a composition (MX1) by using a magnetic transfer probe (100), the transfer probe (100) comprising a shield (120) and a probe magnet (MAG1) movable inside the shield (120),

the method comprising:

- providing a first composition (MX1) in a vessel (VES1), wherein the composition (MX1) comprises a first liquid (LIQ1) and a plurality of magnetically responsive particles (P1), wherein the particles (P1) are arranged to selectively interact with a target substance (M1),
- positioning the transfer probe (100) into the vessel (VES1) so as to collect the particles (P1) from the first composition (MX1),
- removing the collected particles (P1) together with the transfer probe (100) from the vessel (VES1) by causing a relative vertical movement between the transfer probe (100) and the vessel (VES1), and
- releasing the collected particles (P1) from the shield (120) to a release location (LOC2) by causing a relative vertical movement between the probe magnet (MAG1) and the shield (120),

wherein the probe magnet (MAG1) is a permanent magnet, which comprises a cylindrical portion (SRF0) and a convex bottom portion (CNX1) adjoining the cylindrical portion (SRF0), the magnet has an axis of symmetry (AX1), the axis of symmetry (AX1) intersects the bottom portion (CNX1) at an intersection point (Q1), the intersection point (Q1) and the circular lower boundary (CIR2) of the cylindrical portion (SRF0) define a reference cone (REF0), and the bottom portion (CNX1) protrudes with respect to the reference cone (REF0),

wherein the material of the shield is selected such that the shield does not modify the magnetic field of the magnet, and

wherein the vessel has a tapered bottom surface.

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided an apparatus 500, comprising:

- a support (SUP1) for holding a vessel (VES1) for containing a composition (MX1), which comprises a first liquid (LIQ1) and magnetically responsive particles (P1),
- a transfer probe (100), which comprises a shield (120) and a probe magnet (MAG1) movable inside the shield (120),
- a first actuator (ACU1) for causing relative vertical movement between the probe magnet (MAG1) and the shield (120),

- a second actuator (ACU2) for causing relative vertical movement between the transfer probe (100) and the vessel (VES1),
wherein the apparatus (500) is arranged:
- to position the transfer probe (100) into the vessel (VES1) so as to collect the particles (P1) from a first composition (MX1),
- to remove the collected particles (P1) together with the transfer probe (100) from the vessel (VES1) by moving the transfer probe (100) upwards and/or by moving the vessel (VES1) downwards, and
- to release the collected particles (P1) from the shield (120) to a release location (LOC2) by moving the probe magnet (MAG1) upwards with respect to the shield (120) and/or by moving the shield (120) downwards with respect to the probe magnet (MAG1),
wherein the probe magnet (MAG1) is a permanent magnet, which comprises a cylindrical portion (SRF0) and a convex bottom portion (CNX1) adjoining the cylindrical portion (SRF0), the magnet has an axis of symmetry (AX1), the axis of symmetry (AX1) intersects the bottom portion (CNX1) at an intersection point (Q1), the intersection point (Q1) and the circular lower boundary (CIR2) of the cylindrical portion (SRF0) define a reference cone (REF0), and the bottom portion (CNX1) protrudes with respect to the reference cone (REF0),
wherein the material of the shield is selected such that the shield does not modify the magnetic field of the magnet, and
wherein the vessel has a tapered bottom surface.

The method comprises using the transfer probe to collect and/or process magnetically responsive particles of the composition. The transfer probe comprises a permanent probe magnet. The probe magnet comprises a cylindrical portion and a convex bottom portion. The probe magnet having the convex bottom may allow operation in a very small volume of the composition. The convex bottom portion of the magnet may be e.g. a hemisphere or a truncated hemisphere.

A composition may comprise a liquid component and magnetically responsive particles. The composition may be contained in a vessel. The transfer probe

CLAIMS

1. A method for processing a composition by using a magnetic transfer probe, the transfer probe comprising a shield and a probe magnet movable inside the shield,
the method comprising:
- providing a first composition in a vessel, wherein the composition comprises a first liquid and a plurality of magnetically responsive particles, wherein the particles are arranged to selectively interact with a target substance,
- positioning the transfer probe into the vessel so as to collect the particles from the first composition,
- removing the collected particles together with the transfer probe from the vessel by causing a relative vertical movement between the transfer probe and the vessel, and
- releasing the collected particles from the shield to a release location by causing a relative vertical movement between the probe magnet and the shield,
wherein the probe magnet is a permanent magnet, which comprises a cylindrical portion and a convex bottom portion adjoining the cylindrical portion, the magnet has an axis of symmetry, the axis of symmetry intersects the bottom portion at an intersection point, the intersection point and the circular lower boundary of the cylindrical portion define a reference cone, and the bottom portion protrudes with respect to the reference cone,
wherein the material of the shield is selected such that the shield does not modify the magnetic field of the magnet, and
wherein the vessel has a tapered bottom surface.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the surface of the convex bottom portion has maximum distance from the reference cone at a circular region, wherein said maximum distance is greater than or equal to 10% of the radius of the cylindrical portion.

3. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the surface of the convex bottom portion has maximum distance from the reference cone at a circular region, wherein the radius of said circular region is in the range of 10% to 90% of the radius of the cylindrical portion.

4. The method according to any of the claims 1 to 3, wherein the surface of the convex bottom portion has maximum distance from the reference cone at a circular region, wherein the vertical position of said circular region is in the range of 10% to 90% of the height of the convex bottom portion.

5. The method according to any of the claims 1 to 4, wherein the ratio of the height of the convex bottom portion to the radius of the cylindrical portion is in the range of 0.5 to 2.0, advantageously in the range of 0.7 to 1.5.

6. The method according to any of the claims 1 to 5, wherein the convex bottom portion is a hemisphere or a truncated hemisphere.

7. The method according to any of the claims 1 to 6, wherein the convex bottom portion is a half spheroid, a truncated half spheroid, a truncated cone, or a combination of two or more conical portions with different taper angles.

8. The method according to any of the claims 1 to 7, wherein the diameter of the probe magnet is in the range of 1 mm to 8 mm.

9. The method according to any of the claims 1 to 8, comprising releasing the collected particles from the shield to a liquid in a second vessel, wherein the volume of the liquid in the second vessel is in the range of 5 µl to 50 µl, advantageously in the range of 5 µl to 15 µl.

10. The method according to any of the claims 1 to 9, comprising releasing the collected particles from the shield to a surface.

11. The method according to any of the claims 1 to 10, wherein the particles are ferromagnetic particles, ferrimagnetic particles, or superparamagnetic particles, and wherein the size of the particles is in the range of 50 nm to 10 µm.

12. An apparatus, comprising:
- a support for holding a vessel for containing a composition, which comprises a first liquid and magnetically responsive particles,
- a transfer probe, which comprises a shield and a probe magnet movable inside the shield,
- a first actuator for causing relative vertical movement between the probe

magnet and the shield,
- a second actuator for causing relative vertical movement between the transfer probe and the vessel,
wherein the apparatus is arranged:
- to position the transfer probe into the vessel so as to collect the particles from a first composition,
- to remove the collected particles together with the transfer probe from the vessel by moving the transfer probe upwards and/or by moving the vessel downwards, and
- to release the collected particles from the shield to a release location by moving the probe magnet upwards with respect to the shield and/or by moving the shield downwards with respect to the probe magnet,
wherein the probe magnet is a permanent magnet, which comprises a cylindrical portion and a convex bottom portion adjoining the cylindrical portion, the magnet has an axis of symmetry, the axis of symmetry intersects the bottom portion at an intersection point, the intersection point and the circular lower boundary of the cylindrical portion define a reference cone, and the bottom portion protrudes with respect to the reference cone,
wherein the material of the shield is selected such that the shield does not modify the magnetic field of the magnet, and
wherein the vessel has a tapered bottom surface.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the convex bottom portion is a hemisphere or a truncated hemisphere.

14. The apparatus of claim 12 or 13, wherein the diameter of the probe magnet is in the range of in the range of 1 mm to 8 mm.

15. The apparatus according to any of the claims 12 to 14, comprising an array of probe magnets, wherein at least one magnet of the array has an inverted magnetic orientation with respect to at least one second magnet of the array.