CLAIMS

1. A composition comprising microspherical particles, the particles comprising:

a) a hydrophobic liquid core, and;

b) an amphiphilic compound covalently linked to a ligand, the amphiphilic compound forming a layer on the surface of the particles such that the ligand is capable of binding to a receptor for the ligand.

2. The composition of Claim 1 wherein the core further comprises a water-insoluble dye.

3. A method for detecting a receptor for a ligand comprising:

a) capturing the receptor by binding to a first ligand for the receptor;

b) contacting the bound receptor with a tracer composition comprising microspherical particles, the particles comprising a liquid silicone core, and a layer on the surface of the core comprising an amphiphilic compound covalently linked to a second ligand for the receptor such that the second ligand is capable of binding to the receptor;

c) binding the particles to the bound receptor through binding of the second ligand, and;

d) detecting the receptor by means of a water-insoluble dye contained in the core of the bound particles.

4. The method of Claim 3 wherein the bound receptor binds to particles comprising:

a) a core selected from the group consisting of polydimethyldiphenyl siloxanes and fluorosilicones, and;

b) a layer comprising phospholipids selected from the group consisting of phosphatidyl choline, phosphatidyl glycerol, phosphatidyl ethanolamine and distearoyl derivatives thereof.

5. A method for detecting a first ligand comprising:

a) combining a sample suspected of containing the first ligand with a tracer composition comprising microspherical particles, the particles comprising a liquid silicone core and a layer on the surface of the core comprising an amphiphilic