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Self-assembly of Nanoparticles into Planar Modulated Superstructures MICHAEL ENGEL, University of Michigan — The advance in the synthesis of nanoparticles and colloids opens up the possibility to use them as building blocks for self-assembling novel materials. Ordered structures are especially interesting because they have unique photonic and electronic properties. Among the most complex ordered phases are commensurately and incommensurately modulated crystals. Although frequently found on the atomic scale in the bulk and as ordered structures of noble gases in adsorbed layers, modulated phases have so far not been known to self-assemble with nanoparticles. Here, we use computer simulations to study a two-dimensional system characterized by a simple isotropic interaction that could be realized in future with building blocks on the nanoscale. We find that the particles arrange themselves into planar hexagonal superstructures whose superlattice vector can be tuned reversibly by changing the temperature. Thermodynamic stability is confirmed by calculating the free energy with a combination of thermodynamic integration and the Frenkel-Ladd method. Different contributions to the free energy difference are discussed.

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