

1 **Rapid 3D-STORM imaging of diverse molecular targets in tissue**

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3 *Running title: Nanoscale neuron imaging with RAIN-STORM*

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24

25 **Abstract**

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The precise organization of fine scale molecular architecture is critical for the nervous system and other biological functions and would benefit from nanoscopic imaging methods with improved accessibility, throughput, and native tissue compatibility. Here, we report RAIN-STORM, a rapid and scalable imaging approach that enables three-dimensional nanoscale target visualization for multiple subcellular and intracellular targets within tissue at depth. RAIN-STORM utilizes conventional tissue samples, readily available reagents in optimized formulas, requires no specialized sample handling, and is suitable for commercial instrumentation. To illustrate RAIN-STORM's ability for quantitative high-resolution nanoscopic tissue imaging, we utilized the well-organized but structurally complex retina. We show that RAIN-STORM is rapid and versatile, enabling 3D nanoscopic imaging of over 20 distinct targets to reveal known and novel nanoscale features of synapses, neurons, glia, and vascular. Further, imaging parameters are compatible with a wide range of tissue sources and molecular targets across a spectrum of biological structures. Finally, we show that this method can be applied to clinically derived samples and reveal the nanoscale distribution of molecular targets within human samples. RAIN-STORM thus enables rapid 3D imaging for a range of molecules, paving the way for high throughput studies of nanoscopic molecular features in intact tissue from diverse sources.

## 46 **Introduction**

47           The advent of single-molecule localization microscopy (SMLM) techniques have  
48 greatly increased the ability to resolve the location, density, and nanoscale spatial  
49 relationships of diverse molecules (Bates et al., 2007). Yet, largescale adoption of these  
50 techniques for tissue analysis remains limited, in part because most SMLM approaches  
51 are challenging to apply to thick samples where aberrations and background can limit  
52 imaging. As a result, most analysis of tissue molecular architecture continues to rely on  
53 immunofluorescence microscopy, immunoelectron microscopy, and fluorescent protein  
54 reporters. These powerful tools have shown that cellular and tissue function intimately  
55 depends on small-scale arrangements of proteins and cells, but how nanoscale  
56 biological structures are organized, and their relative molecular composition, remain  
57 unknown for most targets, cell types, and tissue sources.

58           To help address this challenge a number of bespoke SMLM solutions have been  
59 developed. These include in-house, specialized microscopy and optical systems,  
60 customized analysis software, and advanced sample preparation techniques. For  
61 example, cultured cells have been visualized in three-dimensional volumes using  
62 astigmatism (Huang et al., 2008), biplane imaging (Juetten et al., 2008), an engineered  
63 point spread function (Pavani et al., 2009), and 4pi-imaging (Bewersdorf et al., 2006) ,  
64 while tissue has been visualized using adaptive optics (Mlodzianoski et al., 2018),  
65 biplane imaging (Bewersdorf et al., 2006), self-interfering point spread functions (Bon et  
66 al., 2018), light-sheet approaches (Greiss et al., 2016), and ultrathin physical sample  
67 sectioning (Sigal et al., 2015). While these methods have greatly advanced 3D SMLM  
68 capability in the field and led to numerous discoveries (Bowler et al., 2019; Chamma et

69 al., 2016; Leterrier et al., 2015; Sigal et al., 2015; Suleiman et al., 2013; van den Dries  
70 et al., 2013), significant challenges remain. The first is accessibility. Most 3D SMLM  
71 approaches rely on techniques, systems, and expertise that are available only to a  
72 handful of specialists. The second is simplicity and throughput. For instance, one useful  
73 approach called serial-section STORM uses ultrathin sectioning and reconstruction, but  
74 the labor and imaging time for this technique make it best suited for deep imaging of  
75 small sample numbers. The third is target compatibility within native tissue  
76 environments. Most current methods report imaging capabilities using only a small  
77 number of antibodies (Mikhaylova et al., 2015; Mönkemöller et al., 2015), and  
78 approaches such as expansion microscopy are not always suitable for low density  
79 targets (Chen et al., 2015; Ku et al., 2016; Tillberg et al., 2016).

80         We set out to develop a new imaging method that would complement and  
81 combine the strengths of currently available methods for nanoscopic tissue imaging in  
82 general and for neural circuits specifically. Our criteria for this method were to improve  
83 the accessibility, throughput, and compatibility of 3D nanoscopic tissue imaging so that  
84 it can be broadly and readily applied to diverse tissue sources and target types. Toward  
85 this goal, we present Rapid Imaging of tissues at the Nanoscale (RAIN-STORM), a  
86 method for utilizing standard tissue samples to generate SMLM data at depth for a wide  
87 range of molecular targets using commercially available reagents and imaging systems.  
88 To achieve this goal, we optimized labeling and imaging conditions from 125 distinct  
89 tested parameters for over 20 molecular targets in murine tissue and validated methods  
90 in four additional species. We show that RAIN-STORM is rapid and versatile, enabling  
91 3D nanoscopic imaging with a 24-hour turnaround. Further, these imaging parameters



92 are compatible with a wide range of tissue sources and a large number of molecular  
93 targets across a spectrum of biological structures. Finally, we show that this method can  
94 be applied to clinically derived samples and reveal the nanoscale distribution of  
95 molecular targets within human samples. RAIN-STORM thus enables rapid 3D STORM  
96 for a range of molecules, paving the way for high throughput studies of nanoscopic  
97 molecular features in intact tissue from diverse sources.

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## 100 **Results**

101 A central criterion for our method is compatibility with standard tissue preparation  
102 protocols that require little special tissue handling. To test this, we used the mouse  
103 retina because it has a highly defined laminar structure that provides endogenous  
104 fiducials for evaluating the labeling precision of multiple molecular targets (Sanes &  
105 Zipursky, 2010). To begin, retinas were harvested from wildtype adult mice and  
106 processed with a standard tissue preparation protocol (Albrecht et al., 2018) that  
107 involves a short primary fixation, cryoprotection, embedding in tissue freezing medium,  
108 sectioning at 10  $\mu\text{m}$  on a cryostat, and mounting on coated glass slides (**Figure 1a**).  
109 Using this basic framework, we tested and adapted variations for each preparatory step  
110 to find ideal conditions suitable for SMLM-based imaging. Sample preparation thus does  
111 not require labor-intensive handling, and results in staining ready slides within hours of  
112 tissue harvest. For turnkey nanoscopic imaging, we utilized a commercial SMLM  
113 imaging system, the Vutara 352 (Bruker, Billerica MA), together with associated  
114 commercial image analysis software. This system enables multicolor STORM imaging

115 within a 40 $\mu$ m-by-40 $\mu$ m planar region of interest and achieves single molecule imaging  
116 of individual emitters by recording the point spread function (PSF) in two imaging planes  
117 simultaneously (**Figure 1 – figure supplement 1**). Single-molecule localization in 3D is  
118 based on calibration data generated from fiducial imaging.

119 We selected the calcium buffering protein Calbindin (Calb1) and the synapse  
120 protein PSD95 (Postsynaptic density protein 95, also known as Dlg4) to optimize our  
121 labeling and imaging parameters. Since Calbindin specifically and densely fills the cell  
122 body and neurite terminals of retina horizontal neurons (Celio, 1990; Uesugi et al.,  
123 1992), while PSD95 moderately labels synapses (Hunt et al., 1996; Koulen et al., 1998),  
124 we reasoned that optimizing our imaging processes around these targets would enable  
125 us to evaluate the efficacy of our method across a range of cell structures and protein  
126 densities. Moreover, because Calbindin and PSD95 are found in other central nervous  
127 system regions (Celio, 1990; Hunt et al., 1996) preparation methods compatible with  
128 these targets may extend to other tissue types.

129 Significant image aberration and background in STORM tissue imaging can  
130 result from suboptimal sample preparation, imaging buffer, and image acquisition  
131 conditions. We reasoned that tuning these parameters for 3D STORM imaging could  
132 markedly improve nanoscale image quality. We focused on the following features:  
133 preservation of tissue structure, epitope integrity, reduced background fluorescence,  
134 high labeling specificity, uniform antibody penetration, and increased localization density  
135 within samples. We performed STORM imaging following precise manipulation of 80  
136 fixation and staining variations and 45 buffer conditions, resulting in a total of 125 test  
137 conditions (**Figure 1b, Supplemental Table 1, and Figure 1 – figure supplement 2**).

138 We chose the best performing conditions based on the following criteria: 1) The total  
139 number of localizations acquired (**Figure 1d**), 2) epitope and morphological detail  
140 preservation, 3) the relative background level (noise) observed as isolated localizations  
141 or spurious antibody signal (**Figure 1e**), and 4) the calculated resolution across planar  
142 (XY, **Figure 1f**) and axial (XZ, **Figure 1g**) image dimensions using Fourier Ring  
143 Correlation (FRC) metrics (Nieuwenhuizen et al., 2013). Samples were obtained from  
144 three independently prepared animals, giving three independent measurements per  
145 condition tested. Within this parameter space, we first investigated the effects of primary  
146 fixation on tissue quality and imaging. We found that autofluorescence could generally  
147 be lowered by reducing fixative concentrations, and that temperature played an  
148 important role in limiting structural distortions and preserving epitopes. A cold fixation  
149 (4°C) at a relatively low concentration of paraformaldehyde (2% PFA) yielded the best  
150 labeling density and imaging metrics (**Supplemental Table 1** and **Figure 1 – figure**  
151 **supplement 2**). Second, we tested diverse fixation quenching reagents, staining buffer  
152 components, primary and secondary antibody concentrations, and both post-fixation  
153 and post-fixation quenching methods. Of these, we found that variations in post-fixation  
154 and fixation quenching conditions had the largest effects on tissue integrity and final  
155 image quality (e.g.,  $47.6 \pm 2.8$  nm for those with post-fixation versus  $72.8 \pm 3.0$  nm for  
156 those without, **Supplemental Table 1**). Image resolution was further increased, and  
157 background fluorescence decreased, by quenching in 100mM NH<sub>4</sub>Cl for 30min ( $50.5 \pm$   
158  $2.1$  nm for treated versus  $72.8 \pm 3.0$  nm for untreated samples, **Supplemental Table 1**)  
159 We then tested multiple dilutions for a range of primary and secondary antibodies  
160 to identify the concentrations that resulted in the highest signal-to-noise ratio.

161 **(Supplemental Table 1)**. We found that many of our targets benefitted from using  
162 increased primary and secondary antibody concentrations relative to standard  
163 histological preparations (e.g., anti-Calbindin primary antibody is optimal at 1.0 ug/ml in  
164 STORM compared to 0.1 ug/ml in diffraction-limited microscopy). For secondary  
165 antibodies, we found a significant difference between conditions, with high  
166 concentrations (5.0 µg/ml) providing increased labeling density relative to standard  
167 confocal dilutions (0.5 µg/ml,  $\sim 12.4 \times 10^6$  vs.  $\sim 7.2 \times 10^6$ , localizations respectively) though  
168 both were sufficient to image primary-labeled structures for all tested fluorophores  
169 **(Supplemental Table 1)**.

170 Finally, we undertook a thorough examination of imaging buffer conditions and  
171 tested the effects of 1) oxygen-scavenging enzymes, 2) catalase concentration, 3) the  
172 ratio of thiols [ $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol (BME) versus ethanolamine (MEA)], and 4) triplet-  
173 state quenching [cyclooctatetraene (COT)]. Results from these tests are summarized in  
174 **Supplemental Table 1**. For example, we found that the use of pyranose oxidase was  
175 preferable to glucose oxidase as it provided a more stable and longer-lived imaging  
176 environment. In addition, we determined that the addition of 2mM COT led to an  
177 increase in the total number of localizations across both channels (**Supplemental Table**  
178 **1 and Figure 1 – figure supplement 2**). The final sample preparation and imaging  
179 method was chosen from all tested parameters using the best performing parameters  
180 from each optimization step. This selection considered whether balanced data  
181 acquisition and quality could be achieved, the total number of localizations acquired,  
182 and the absolute image resolution for each fluorophore. Our final preparation and  
183 imaging method is termed RAIN-STORM and is comprised of readily accessible

184 reagents and six simple steps that include a moderate initial fixation (2% PFA for one  
185 hour at 4°C), quenching of autofluorescence (100 mM Glycine for one hour at 4°C),  
186 primary and secondary staining using a serum-based blocking and permeabilization  
187 buffer (5% serum, 0.3% Triton-X100), post-fixation (4% PFA for 30 min at 4°C), and a  
188 final round of quenching (100 mM NH<sub>4</sub>Cl for 30min, **Figure 1b**).

189       To illustrate RAIN-STORM's ability we reconstructed horizontal cells in 3D. We  
190 found our methods markedly improved quantitative resolution of nanoscopic cellular  
191 features (**Figure 1 h-i**). For example, we were able to observe distinct neurites of  
192 diverse morphologies arising from the cell body, which terminated in a high number of  
193 postsynaptic invaginations. These synaptic terminals were easily resolved and  
194 structurally separated from their neighbors, demonstrating markedly improved spatial  
195 resolution ( $31.2 \pm 0.4\text{nm}$  and  $61.1 \pm 2.9\text{nm}$  for Calbindin labeled with CF568 and  
196 AF647, respectively, compared to ~200-250nm resolution for typical confocal  
197 microscopy). RAIN-STORM also provides improved resolution at along the Z axis at  
198 depth, suggesting it is well suited for 3D super-resolution imaging of molecular targets  
199 within tissue volumes. To assess this, we computed the resolution of RAIN-STORM as  
200 a function of image depth at discrete imaging planes throughout the image volume. As  
201 expected, we found that planar resolution was improved closer to the objective relative  
202 to further away ( $30.0 \pm 1.5\text{nm}$  versus  $42.3 \pm 4.8\text{nm}$ , **Figure 1 – figure supplement 3**).

203 To accommodate biological variability and nonhomogeneous structures, we report the  
204 aggregate resolution across the entire 10 $\mu\text{m}$  image stack. We achieve a Z-axis  
205 resolution of  $42.2 \pm 1.2\text{nm}$  and  $79.3 \pm 0.3\text{nm}$  for CF568 and AF647, respectively. RAIN-  
206 STORM thus offers the advantage of improved spatial resolution and can be used to

207 visualize nanoscopic neural structures in large-field 3D volumes across the imaging  
208 plane to reconstruct all processes arising from a single cell (**Figure 1, Video 1**).

209 RAIN-STORM is also versatile, enabling nanoscopic imaging of a diverse array  
210 of molecular targets. To assess this, we took advantage of the wide spectrum of specific  
211 antibody markers available in the retina (Sanes & Zipursky, 2010) and tested the  
212 robustness of this approach across 22 validated molecular targets (**Supplemental**  
213 **Table 2, Figure 2** and **Figure 2 – figure supplement 1**). These included diverse cell  
214 structures, types, and molecular targets, such as synapse proteins (Bassoon, Bsn;  
215 RIBEYE, Ctbp2; Connexin 43, Gja1; Dystrophin, Dmd; Piccolo, Pclo; PSD95,Dlg4),  
216 vasculature markers (CD31, Pcam1; Collagen IV, Col4A1; Desmin, Des; CSPG4,  
217 Cspg4), glia (Iba1, Aif1; GFAP, Gfap; GS, Glul), excitatory interneurons (PKC $\alpha$ , Prkca;  
218 SCGN, Scgn), presynaptic photoreceptors (CAR, Arr3), and intracellular proteins and  
219 structures (Tau, Mapt; Tomm20, mitochondria, **Figure 2** and **Figure 2 – figure**  
220 **supplement 2**). We found that approximately 90% of the commercially available  
221 antibodies tested were compatible with RAIN-STORM and could be used to  
222 successfully obtain SMLM images of individual targets at depth within intact tissue  
223 slices (**Figure 2, Videos 1-3**). Further, in all cases labeling of the proper cell type or  
224 structure at the proper location was observed (**Figure 2 – Figure Supplement 1 and**  
225 **2**). In addition, our results resolve novel nanoscale structural features and molecular  
226 distributions. For example, we observed that astrocyte end feet form fine (~100-200nm)  
227 filamentous structures and what appears to be a mesh of fibers interdigitating the  
228 ganglion cell layer (**Video 3**). We also resolved individual dystrophin puncta in the outer  
229 retina synapse layer, which are thought to interact with actin filaments to enable contact

230 formation between photoreceptors and ON-bipolar cells (Schmitz & Drenckhahn, 1997)  
231 (**Figure 2a**). Finally, we observed vascular associated interpericyte tunneling nanotubes  
232 (IP-TNTs, **Figure 2b**, **Video 2**). These ~500nm diameter structures enable pericyte  
233 driven neurovascular coupling (Alarcon-Martinez et al., 2020) but their molecular  
234 composition is largely unknown. We show that Collagen IV comprises the core of these  
235 tubes, forming a solid filament connecting two hollow blood vessels (**Video 2**). These  
236 results suggest that RAIN-STORM is effective to image many targets, resolves  
237 biologically relevant protein localization, and can be used to discover unknown  
238 nanoscopic cellular structures with high fidelity.

239 Multicolor RAIN-STORM imaging is also robust across both multiple intracellular  
240 targets and in tissue from diverse species (**Figure 3**). We observed robust imaging with  
241 multiple target combinations. These include a neuron subtype marker together with  
242 synapse antibodies, staining for two distinct post-synaptic neuron types, as well as co-  
243 staining for vascular markers and astrocytes (**Figure 3a-c**). Using these combinations,  
244 we were able to resolve contact sites, overlapping and non-overlapping cellular  
245 structures, and fine cellular interactions. For example, astrocytes and blood vessel co-  
246 staining revealed fine astrocytic filaments enshrouding and forming close contacts with  
247 neighboring vessels (**Figure 3b**). Further, RAIN-STORM imaging was compatible with  
248 tissue from diverse species, revealing both conserved and unique nanoscopic features  
249 across mouse, rabbit, macaque, and pig tissues (**Figure 3d-i**). For instance, co-staining  
250 for rod bipolar cells and their synapses (PKC $\alpha$  and PSD95, respectively) in adult  
251 macaque, rabbit, and pig retina showed that despite similar functions and molecular  
252 identities, rod bipolar cells have incredibly diverse dendritic structures (**Figure 3d-f**).

253 Rabbit rod bipolar cell bodies were rounder and less elongated relative to pig, macaque,  
254 and mouse, with arbors that branched closer to the cell body. Notably, PSD95 labeling  
255 was confined to the outer layer of rod bipolar dendrites across species, suggesting  
256 presynaptic contacts are restricted to this region independent of species type. These  
257 data indicate that RAIN-STORM is suitable for 3D multicolor imaging in tissue from a  
258 range of species to simultaneously visualize diverse molecular targets.

259 RAIN-STORM can also be used to visualize, quantify, and measure features of  
260 small structures, including synapses. To assess this, we imaged retina ribbon synapses  
261 in the outer plexiform layer (**Figure 4a**). This region has two advantages. First, the  
262 architecture and composition of outer retina synapses have been well-characterized,  
263 allowing validation of our method. Second, because each photoreceptor forms  
264 connections at one distal location, the relationship between the structure and of both  
265 pre- and postsynaptic neurons relative to their connectivity can be directly examined. To  
266 resolve both murine ribbon synapses and their postsynaptic partners, we applied  
267 antibodies against the synapse scaffolding protein RIBEYE (Moser et al., 2020) together  
268 with the postsynaptic bipolar marker PKC $\alpha$  (**Figure 4a-c**) and used CF568- and  
269 AlexaFluor647 (AF647)-conjugated secondary antibodies to serially visualize both  
270 targets. We reconstructed individual RIBEYE labeled ribbons and assessed their shape,  
271 2D-projected length, and 2D-projected area. RIBEYE showed a rich variety of ribbon  
272 morphologies, including many that appeared in a horseshoe shape and others that  
273 appear flatter, consistent with the more elongated contacts of basally located rods (Li et  
274 al., 2016) Measurements taken of individual ribbons (n = 844) across four adult mice  
275 showed an average ribbon length of  $1.92 \pm 0.30\mu\text{m}$  and a 2D projected area of  $0.52 \pm$



276 0.13  $\mu\text{m}^2$  (**Figure 4d-f** and **Video 4**). Notably, these values are comparable to those  
277 obtained using Structured Illumination Microscopy (Dembla et al., 2020) (SIM,  $1.25 \pm$   
278  $0.05 \mu\text{m}$  to  $1.95 \pm 0.07 \mu\text{m}$  in length), validating the specificity and accuracy of RAIN-  
279 STORM for measuring cellular structures. Together, these data suggest that RAIN-  
280 STORM can be used to reconstruct and measure defined neuron and synapse types at  
281 nanoscale resolution within tissue.

282 Finally, we found that RAIN-STORM is compatible with human tissue. Ribbon  
283 synapses are also present in the human outer retina (Moser et al., 2020), but their  
284 relative size and organization have not been well mapped. Eyes from two adult human  
285 donors (aged 40 and 58 years) were processed for RAIN-STORM with similar  
286 parameters to those in mouse and stained with antibodies against RIBEYE and PKC $\alpha$ .  
287 As above, images were acquired using sequential imaging for each of the two channels.  
288 Reconstruction and quantification of human RIBEYE-labeled synapses showed an  
289 average length of  $1.81 \pm 0.03\mu\text{m}$ , which is similar in size to mouse ribbon synapses.  
290 Human ribbons also displayed a similar variety in shape and morphology as those found  
291 in mouse (**Figure 3g-i, Video 5**). Of note, we did observe fewer synapses in the human  
292 samples relative to the mouse, although this may be due to the inherent delay in human  
293 post-mortem sample collection rather than a biologically relevant difference.

294

## 295 **Discussion**

296 In this paper we introduce RAIN-STORM, a rapid and scalable imaging approach  
297 that enables 3D nanoscale target visualization for multiple subcellular and intracellular  
298 targets within tissue at depth. We took advantage of the well-organized but structurally

299 complex retina circuit to demonstrate that RAIN-STORM can resolve nanoscale  
300 features for a wide range of cell types and structures. This enabled us to validate known  
301 nanoscale structures as well as map novel cellular features of neurons, glia, and the  
302 vasculature. In addition, we visualized and quantified hundreds of single human and  
303 mouse synapses across multiple individuals. The acquisition of this dataset was  
304 facilitated by the high throughput nature of RAIN-STORM, and we show that this  
305 method is practical for analyzing specimens from multiple samples and species. Finally,  
306 because RAIN-STORM was developed to be compatible with a commercial imaging  
307 system and standard tissue processing, it is open to a range of researchers,  
308 applications, and clinical samples.

309 RAIN-STORM offers a number of advantages relative to existing 3D SMLM  
310 methods, including its experimental accessibility. We maximized its availability by using  
311 a user-friendly commercial imaging system so that this method could be readily adopted  
312 by the wider scientific community. With these advances, 3D tissue RAIN-STORM  
313 imaging has the capacity to be as routine as confocal imaging in many laboratories. In  
314 contrast, other 3D STORM imaging approaches, while excellent (Huang et al., 2008;  
315 Nehme et al., 2020; Punge et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2015), rely on custom built  
316 microscopes and require optics expertise and resources that are largely unavailable to  
317 most researchers. Also of note, the optimal  $R_{x,z}$  resolution achieved with RAIN-STORM  
318 ( $R_{x,z} = 61.1 \pm 2.9; 79.3 \pm 0.3$ ) approaches, and in some cases exceeds, that of bespoke  
319 systems (e.g. SELFIE,  $R_{x,z} = 68 \pm 20; 115 \pm 32$ nm). RAIN-STORM is also rapid. We  
320 developed our method for use with conventionally prepared tissue samples, requiring  
321 only standard reagents and tools. Unlike serial array tomography EM (Micheva & Smith,

2007), serial section SMLM (Nanguneri et al., 2012) or related (Li et al., 2016) approaches, RAIN-STORM does not require time intensive ultrathin sectioning, successive section imaging, alignment, or reconstruction. Due to the straightforward nature of sample preparation and the relatively large field of view of our system, extensive datasets can be acquired quickly. For instance, in our study of human and mouse outer retina synapses, each dataset consisted of hundreds of synapses and was acquired with a 24-hour turnaround from sample collection to image ready tissue, followed by approximately 8 hours of imaging time per species. RAIN-STORM is thus uniquely suitable for large sample numbers and the acquisition and quantitative analysis of extensive datasets

While improvements in accessibility, speed, and target compatibility were major motivations for the development of RAIN-STORM, several optimized parameters were uncovered that could be useful in other nanoscopic imaging applications. Toward this end, we report quantitative imaging metrics for all 125 tested parameters as a resource for the community. Among these, some unexpected advantages of various conditions were discovered. For example, including a post-fixation step once primary and secondary antibody staining had been performed improved resolution by ~20nm. We also found that the ratio of BME to MEA could be used to tune fluorophore switching properties, and that BME (140 mM) combined with MEA (40 mM) was most suitable to induce balanced blinking of fluorophores in both imaging channels. Given these results, we anticipate that many of the parameters that we report will be useful to other SMLM approaches.

344 RAIN-STORM also offers new opportunities for the discovery of novel  
345 nanoscopic structures or molecular components. A diverse array of targets could be  
346 readily visualized across a range of cell types and subcellular structures, with ~90% of  
347 tested commercial antibodies showing good labeling and resolution. By comparison,  
348 most current 3D STORM methods have been developed using a handful of molecular  
349 targets (<5), many of which are cytoskeletal (Chamma et al., 2016; Mikhaylova et al.,  
350 2015; Mönkemöller et al., 2015; Stahley et al., 2016; van den Dries et al., 2013). RAIN-  
351 STORM is thus suitable for biologic discovery of new nanoscopic structures or mapping  
352 the distribution or localization of a diverse array of molecular components.

353 RAIN-STORM may also be useful for the study of molecules and structures  
354 beyond those described here. As with other SMLM methods, the relative density of a  
355 given protein and the specificity of available antibodies are key factors in determining  
356 good targets for RAIN-STORM. As expected, the relative density of an individual target  
357 influences the degree of structural filling. Because single molecules are visualized with  
358 this approach, the relative labeling density of a given target can report on the location  
359 and area of individual substructures, as we demonstrated for ribbon synapses. For  
360 imaging the shape and structure of individual cell types, the relative density of a given  
361 protein and the availability of high-quality antibodies can make some targets more  
362 useful than others. For example, PKC $\alpha$  densely and specifically labels rod bipolar cells  
363 and reliably reveals the entirety of the bipolar cellular architecture at the nanoscale,  
364 while Iba1, a microglia marker, appears less dense and fills microglia structures  
365 incompletely. Notably, RAIN-STORM parameters performed consistently well across  
366 molecular targets and species, suggesting RAIN-STORM methods should provide a

367 good baseline for imaging of additional molecular targets and tissue types not tested  
368 here.

369         The many technical advantages of RAIN-STORM enable access to important  
370 aspects of glia and neural circuit molecular architecture that were previously difficult to  
371 visualize and measure within tissue. For instance, RAIN-STORM provides easy and  
372 rapid quantification of individual PSD95 and Ribeye labeled synapses in 3D volumes of  
373 neuropil in both mouse and human clinical specimens. Using this approach, we were  
374 also able to validate the existence of IP-TNTs and map new molecular features of these  
375 structures. This includes the presence of a what appears to be a solid collagen IV core  
376 filament that may provide stability to these small structures. Future studies will shed  
377 light on how this collagen filament resides within the nanotube and whether it  
378 participates in IP-TNT-mediated neurovascular coupling (Alarcon-Martinez et al., 2020).  
379 In addition, we documented ~100-200nm filaments arising from astrocytes in the  
380 ganglion cell layer. Various roles for retinal astrocytes have been described, including  
381 vascular patterning (O'Sullivan et al., 2017; Tao & Zhang, 2016), but our data hint that  
382 they may also physically interact with and perhaps modulate adult retinal neurons  
383 through nanoscale structural interactions (Arizono et al., 2020). Given that changes in  
384 the numbers and densities of synapses, neurovascular coupling, and in neuron-glia  
385 interactions are thought to be central to many neurological and cognitive disorders (Lian  
386 and Zheng, 2016; Kempuraj et al., 2018; Verdugo et al., 2019), the potential of  
387 rigorously and rapidly measuring such features is an important advance. In addition,  
388 because RAIN-STORM is readily compatible with human tissue, this method will also be  
389 useful for clinical specimens and comparisons between human disease and animal

390 models. Finally, since RAIN-STORM can be leveraged together with genetic reporters  
391 and viral labeling strategies to obtain directed co-imaging of various targets, these  
392 methods may offer additional combinatorial advances for overlaying molecular  
393 information on cellular ultrastructure. Such investigations of neural circuits and other  
394 tissues will help continue to drive discovery of novel nanoscale biological features in  
395 native tissue environments in healthy and diseased states.

396

## 397 **Materials and Methods**

398

### 399 **Coverslip Preparation**

400 Small batches of #1.5H 22mm round glass coverslips (Neuvitro #GG-25-1.5H) were  
401 cleaned via sonication. Coverslips were then submerged in 5M sodium hydroxide  
402 (Fisher Scientific #1310-73-2) for 30 minutes and serially washed three times in  
403 deionized water. Coverslips were next washed in serial dilutions of ethanol (70%, 90%,  
404 100%) for 30 minutes each and then allowed to dry. Once dry, coverslips were dipped in  
405 a solution of 0.5% (m/v) Gelatin A, 7mM Chromium(III) Potassium Sulfate in PBS and  
406 again were allowed to dry again before storing up to one month at room temperature.

407

### 408 **Experimental Model and Subject Details**

409 For mouse tissue, retinas were collected from four 6 to 8-week-old C57BL/6J animals.  
410 Experiments were carried out in male and female mice in accordance with the  
411 recommendations in the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals of the NIH  
412 under protocols approved by the BCM Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

413 Macaque (N = 2), rabbit (N =2), and pig (N = 3) retinal tissue were obtained via the  
414 Baylor College of Medicine Center for Comparative Medicine veterinary from unrelated  
415 surgical procedures. Human donor eyes (N = 2) were obtained in collaboration with the  
416 Lions Eye Bank of Texas at Baylor College of Medicine. Informed consent was acquired  
417 from all patients and/or participating family members in accordance with EBAA and FDA  
418 regulatory standards. Subjects were 40 and 58 years old and had no documented  
419 history of eye disease.

420

#### 421 **Tissue preparation**

422 Details for tissue preparation and staining methods are provided for the optimized  
423 RAIN-STORM protocol. Tested variations on this protocol are listed in **Supplemental**  
424 **Table 1**. Briefly, tested parameters included both 25°C and 4°C fixations, PFA  
425 concentrations of 1%, 2%, and 4%, Glutaraldehyde preparations with PFA (2% PFA,  
426 0.3% GA), or glutaraldehyde by itself (0.3% GA), each prepared in phosphate buffered  
427 saline (PBS), with fixation times of 30, 60, or 120 minutes. Quenching conditions  
428 included ammonium chloride (10mM, 100mM), glycine (10mM, 100mM) or sodium  
429 borohydride (0.1%, 0.5% w/v). For the final selected tissue preparation condition,  
430 mouse eyes were enucleated and placed in 2% paraformaldehyde for 1 hour at 4°C,  
431 then subsequently rinsed in 100mM glycine solution for 1 hour at 4°C. Samples were  
432 then washed in PBS for 30 minutes and stored in PBS. Eye cups were then dissected,  
433 removing the cornea and the lens. Samples were then allowed to fully equilibrate in  
434 30% sucrose until the tissue sank (~45-60 minutes). Tissue was serially washed by  
435 hand in Optimal Cutting Temperature (OCT) compound to remove excess sucrose and

436 subsequently placed into molds filled (OCT) compound (Sakura, Torrance, CA).  
437 Embedded tissue was then frozen using methyl butane chilled on dry ice. Human eyes  
438 were prepared using our final selected fixation condition of 2% PFA at 4°C but were  
439 fixed for 4 hours given the increase in tissue thickness. All other conditions were  
440 identical to those detailed above. All blocks were then stored at -80°C until ready for  
441 use. Tissue was sectioned at 10µm and mounted on prepared coverslips.

442

443

#### 444 **Antibody Staining**

445 For quantification and final images, slides were incubated in the optimized blocking  
446 solution (5% normal donkey serum and 0.3% Triton X-100 in PBS) for 1 hour and then  
447 with primary antibodies diluted in blocking solution (Table 1) for a minimum of 12 hours  
448 at 4°C. Other tested conditions include variations in concentrations of Triton-X100  
449 (0.1%, 0.3%, 0.5%, 1.0%, 2.0%), Saponin (0.1%, 0.3%, 0.5%, 1.0%, 2.0%), and Normal  
450 Donkey Serum (1%, 3%, 5%, 10%, 15%). Samples were washed with PBS three times  
451 for 20 minutes and then incubated with commercial dye- conjugated secondary  
452 antibodies diluted in blocking solution (AF647-conjugates from Jackson  
453 ImmunoResearch Laboratories, West Grove, PA, and CF568-conjugates from Biotium,  
454 Fremont, CA) for 1 hour at room temperature. Slides were then washed with PBS three  
455 times for 20 minutes prior to applying a 4% PFA solution as a postfix for 30 minutes.  
456 Slides were washed with PBS three times for 20 minutes each, 100mM NH<sub>4</sub>Cl was  
457 applied for 30min, and slides were again washed with PBS three times for 20 minutes  
458 each. Samples were stored in PBS until imaging.



459

## 460 **Imaging Buffer**

461 Imaging buffer for use in STORM was prepared using stock solutions of one of three  
462 oxygen scavenging enzymes: pyranose oxidase (0.5 U/ $\mu$ L, Millipore Sigma #P4234-  
463 250UN), glucose oxidase (Millipore Sigma #G2133-50KU), or protocatechurate 3,4-  
464 dioxygenase (PCD, Millipore Sigma #P8279-25UN). Each oxygen-scavenging enzyme  
465 was used to name the associated buffer formulation. Tested imaging buffers also  
466 contained bovine-derived catalase (100 U/ $\mu$ L, Millipore Sigma #C1345-10G),  
467 cysteamine hydrochloride (MEA, 1 M, Chem-Impex International #02839), and 2-  
468 mercaptoethanol (BME, Millipore Sigma #M6250-250ML). When PCD was used, its  
469 substrate protocatechuic acid (PCA, 3,4-dehydroxybenzoic acid, Millipore Sigma  
470 #37580-25G-F) was also included. For a given buffer formulation, one of the  
471 components was varied by concentration, keeping all others constant. Once this was  
472 performed for each buffer-enzyme combination, the final selected buffer was tested with  
473 either cyclooctatetraene (COT, Millipore Sigma #138924-1G) or trolox (Millipore Sigma  
474 #238813-1G) in varied concentrations (1mM, 2mM, or 5mM). Stock solution aliquots  
475 were kept frozen at -80°C until just prior to use. Aliquots were thawed at room  
476 temperature and added to a freshly prepared solution of 30% (m/v) glucose in PBS.  
477 Once prepared, imaging buffer was allowed to equilibrate for 20 minutes and then used.

478

## 479 **Imaging and Image Processing**

480 Image acquisition was performed on a Bruker Vutara 352 (Bruker, Billerica, MA) using a  
481 water objective (UPLSAPO60XW). Stained samples were mounted in a collared well

482 (Thermofisher Scientific #A7816), and 1mL of imaging buffer was added on top in an  
483 open well configuration. All images were acquired at 200nm axial steps using a  
484 framerate of 67 Hz for AF647 and 40Hz for CF568 across the full 10 $\mu$ m thickness of  
485 tissue using three sequential cycles of 250 frame-captures for each channel, yielding a  
486 total of 38250 frames per probe per sample. Between each cycle a timed pause was  
487 included to allow for the imaging buffer to re-equilibrate. 3D nanoscopic imaging  
488 volumes were thus 40 $\mu$ m by 40 $\mu$ m by 10 $\mu$ m (16,000  $\mu$ m<sup>3</sup>). For the 640nm, 561nm and  
489 405nm excitation lasers, laser powers of ~98-110mW (6125-6875 W/cm<sup>2</sup>), ~90-100mW  
490 (5625-6250 W/cm<sup>2</sup>), and ~2-6mW (125-375 W/cm<sup>2</sup>), were measured at the sample  
491 using a 40 $\mu$ m by 40 $\mu$ m field of view. Data were then clustered to determine associated  
492 and contiguous structures within the image using the Ordering Points to Identify the  
493 Clustering Structure (OPTICS) algorithm. To analyze images, a general particle  
494 distance of 0.16  $\mu$ m and a particle count of 25 was used for all channels on all images.  
495 The particle distance refers to the maximum allowed distance that a particle can be from  
496 another particle in order to be included in a given cluster while the particle count reflects  
497 the minimum required number of particles required to form a cluster. Any non-clustered  
498 localizations were removed from the image. Once filtering and clustering were  
499 complete, an FRC analysis was performed to determine the global aggregate resolution  
500 of the sample in the XY and XZ dimensions for each target imaged using three repeat  
501 measurements for curve smoothing.

## 502 **Data availability**

503 All data are available on reasonable request from the authors.

504

505 **Figure 1: Nanoscale 3D imaging of neurons in tissue. a**, Schematic of the RAIN-  
506 STORM workflow. Eyes are enucleated, and retina cups are dissected, fixed, and  
507 quenched. Retinal cups are then cryopreserved and embedded in OCT prior to  
508 sectioning and mounting onto prepared coverslips. Samples are stained with primary  
509 and secondary antibodies, post-fixed and quenched, and finally mounted in open wells  
510 containing imaging buffer. **b**, Schematic of tested parameters with the number of  
511 variations tested for each category. **c**, Optimized RAIN-STORM parameters and  
512 associated preparation timeline. **d-g**, Representative quantifications for six exemplar  
513 tested parameters representing three different stages of sample preparation, staining,  
514 and imaging. The total localizations acquired (**d**) impacts the final localization density,  
515 while the total removal of non-structured localizations (**e**) measures the  
516 noise/background for each condition. Calculated resolutions are also provided for the  
517 XY-plane (**f**) and XZ-plane (**g**) for each condition using FRC. Among these conditions,  
518 low levels of PFA and Trolox and moderate levels of normal donkey serum provided the  
519 best image quality metrics and the least unwanted signal. **h**, Unoptimized STORM  
520 image of a horizontal cell labeled with Calbindin. Putative synapses are indistinct with  
521 little defining morphology or contiguous structure. **i**, RAIN-STORM image of a Calbindin-  
522 labeled horizontal cell using optimized parameters demonstrates clear structural detail  
523 across the neuronal arbor. Distinct synaptic terminals are visible together with the  
524 connecting stalk arising from the neuron. N = 3 animals. Scale bars = 10 and 1  $\mu\text{m}$ .  
525 Data are represented as the mean  $\pm$  the s.e.m.  
526  
527

528 **Figure 2: RAIN-STORM delivers robust imaging for a diverse array of molecular**  
529 **targets. a**, RAIN-STORM imaging of synaptic proteins PSD95, a marker for  
530 photoreceptor terminals, dystrophin, a synaptic structural protein in the outer plexiform  
531 layer, and RIBEYE, a scaffolding protein present in ribbon synapses. Individual synapse  
532 terminals can be observed with all three markers. **b**, RAIN-STORM imaging of  
533 vasculature proteins Collagen IV, a marker for blood vessels, Desmin, a filament protein  
534 that marks subsets of pericytes and vascular associated smooth muscle cells, and  
535 CSPG4, a pericyte marker. Vasculature associated interpericyte tunneling nanotubes  
536 are visible with both Collagen IV and CSPG4 (arrows). **c**, RAIN-STORM imaging of glial  
537 proteins GFAP, a marker for astrocytes, and GS, a marker for Müller glia. In each case,  
538 fine features of these cell types can be observed, including filament-like protrusions  
539 from astrocytes. **d**, RAIN-STORM imaging of excitatory neurons, SCGN, a marker for  
540 subsets of cone bipolar cells, and PKC $\alpha$ , a marker for rod bipolar cells. In each case,  
541 fine features of these images are representative of those acquired from N = 3 animals.  
542 Scale bars = 10 and 1  $\mu$ m.

543

544 **Figure 3: RAIN-STORM enables dual-channel super resolution imaging among**  
545 **diverse species.**

546 **a-c**, RAIN-STORM imaging of two independent molecular target, including **(a)** cones  
547 (CAR, magenta, AF647) and synaptic terminals (PSD95, cyan, CF568), **(b)** vasculature  
548 (Collagen IVa, magenta, AF647) and astrocyte (GFAP, cyan, CF568) interactions, and  
549 **(c)** cone bipolar cells (SCGN, magenta, AF647) and rod bipolar cells (PKC $\alpha$ , cyan,  
550 CF568). **d-f**, RAIN-STORM imaging can be extended to diverse species. Retinas from

551 **(d)** macaque (N = 2 animals), **(e)** rabbit (N = 2 animals), and **(f)** pig (N = 3 animals)  
552 were labeled with antibodies to rod bipolar cells (PKC $\alpha$ , magenta, AF647) and rod  
553 photoreceptor terminals (PSD95, cyan, CF568). **g**, The total number of localizations that  
554 were acquired pre- and post-processing for images in **d-f**. **h** are displayed together with  
555 the XY planar resolutions of both AF647 (PKC $\alpha$ , magenta) and CF568 (PSD95, cyan).  
556 Scale bars = 10 and 1  $\mu$ m. Data are represented as the mean  $\pm$  the s.e.m.

557

558 **Figure 4: RAIN-STORM quantifies structural and molecular features of synapses.**

559 **a**, Schematic of retina outer plexiform synapse organization. Rod photoreceptors  
560 terminals (cyan) are presynaptic to invaginating post-synaptic horizontal cells (grey) and  
561 bipolar cells (magenta). **b-c**, Diffraction-limited imaging of murine (**b**) and human (**c**)  
562 retina outer plexiform synapses. Presynaptic photoreceptor terminals are labeled with  
563 RIBEYE (cyan) while postsynaptic bipolar cells are labeled with PKC $\alpha$  (magenta). **d**,  
564 Dual color RAIN-STORM imaging of murine rod bipolar cells (PKC $\alpha$ ) and ribbon  
565 synapses (RIBEYE) allows individual quantification of ribbons and shows a rich variety  
566 of morphologies. **e-f**, Individual outer retina synapses (n = 844) were reconstructed from  
567 adult mice (N = 4), and the largest 2D projected length (**e**,  $1.92 \pm 0.30 \mu$ m) and total  
568 area (**f**,  $0.52 \pm 0.13 \mu$ m<sup>2</sup>) were quantified for each synapse. **g**, RAIN-STORM imaging of  
569 human rod bipolar cells (PKC $\alpha$ , magenta) and ribbon synapses (RIBEYE, cyan)  
570 resolves interactions between pre- and postsynaptic neurons. **h-i**, Individual outer retina  
571 synapses (n = 263) were reconstructed from human adult donors aged 40-58y (N = 2),  
572 and the largest 2D projected length (**h**,  $1.81 \pm 0.03 \mu$ m) and total area (**i**,  $0.43 \pm 0.01$

573  $\mu\text{m}^2$ ) were quantified for each synapse. Scale bars = 10  $\mu\text{m}$ , 1  $\mu\text{m}$ , and 500 nm. Data  
574 are represented as the mean  $\pm$  the s.e.m.

575

576 **Supplemental Table 1: Summary of condition variations tested for RAIN-STORM.**

577

578 **Supplemental Table 2: Primary antibodies used.**

579

580 **Video 1: RAIN-STORM-imaged horizontal cell shows striking neuronal arbor**

581 **detail.** Tissue was prepared for RAIN-STORM, and Calbindin-labeled horizontal cells  
582 were imaged across 10 $\mu\text{m}$ . The image is colored depth by depth, with colors indicating  
583 the axial position throughout the stack (blue 0 $\mu\text{m}$  to yellow 10 $\mu\text{m}$ ). Fine neurite  
584 structural detail is observed, and individual synapses are clearly visible.

585

586 **Video 2: RAIN-STORM-imaged blood vessel shows an interpericyte tunneling**

587 **nanotube bridging two vessels.** Tissue was prepared for RAIN-STORM, and collagen  
588 IV-labeled vessels were imaged across 10 $\mu\text{m}$ . The image is colored depth by depth,  
589 with colors indicating the axial position throughout the stack (blue 0 $\mu\text{m}$  to yellow 10 $\mu\text{m}$ ).  
590 The structure and morphology of hollow vessels are well preserved, and cross-vessel  
591 nanotube connections are apparent.

592

593 **Video 3: RAIN-STORM-imaged astrocytes demonstrate fine filamentous**

594 **structures and a mesh of interacting fibers.** Tissue was prepared for RAIN-STORM,  
595 and GFAP labeled astrocytes were imaged across 10 $\mu\text{m}$ . The image is colored depth by

596 depth, with colors indicating the axial position throughout the stack (blue 0 $\mu$ m to yellow  
597 10 $\mu$ m). The structure and morphology of astrocyte filamentous fibers was observed,  
598 which appear to form a highly branched network.

599

600 **Video 4: RAIN-STORM imaging of mouse bipolar neurons and ribbon synapses**

601 **reveals pre- and postsynaptic neural interactions.** Tissue was prepared for RAIN-

602 STORM, and mouse bipolar neurons in the outer plexiform layer were labeled with

603 PKC $\alpha$  (magenta) and pre-synaptic ribbons were labeled with RIBEYE (cyan). The image

604 is colored depth by depth, with colors indicating the axial position throughout the stack

605 (blue 0 $\mu$ m to yellow 10 $\mu$ m). Individual neurite tips can clearly be observed invaginating

606 individual presynaptic ribbons.

607

608 **Video 5: RAIN-STORM imaging of human bipolar neurons and ribbon synapses**

609 **shows bipolar cell interactions with ribbon synapses.** Human retina was prepared

610 for RAIN-STORM, and human bipolar neurons in the outer plexiform layer were labeled

611 with PKC $\alpha$  (magenta) and pre-synaptic ribbons were labeled with RIBEYE (cyan). The

612 image is colored depth by depth, with colors indicating the axial position throughout the

613 stack (blue 0 $\mu$ m to yellow 10 $\mu$ m). As in mouse sample, individual human bipolar neurite

614 tips interact with and invaginating individual presynaptic ribbons. While fewer synapses

615 were observed in the human samples relative to the mouse, it is likely that this decrease

616 is due to the inherent delay in human post-mortem sample collection rather than a

617 biologically relevant difference.

618

619 **Figure 1 – figure supplement 1: Optical Diagram of Vutara.**

620 Layout and optical design of the Bruker Vutara SRX352, which allows 3D STORM  
621 imaging and PSF localization via a bipplane module in place of a cylindrical lens. **M**:  
622 Mirror, **DM**: Dichroic mirror, **ND**: Neutral density filter, **L**: lens, **BS**: Beam splitter, **I**:  
623 iris/aperture, **OL**: Objective lens, **EF**: Emission filter.

624

625 **Figure 1 – figure supplement 2: Modifying sample conditions improves visual**

626 **quality and image metrics. a-b**, Representative primary data metrics (**a**) and  
627 corresponding unprocessed and processed images (**b**) are shown for variations in  
628 primary fixation concentrations. A small increase in total localizations acquired was  
629 observed with increasing concentrations of PFA, though the gain in localizations was  
630 offset by background localizations at these concentrations. Based on these parameters,  
631 2% PFA was selected for optimized imaging. **c-d**, Representative primary data metrics  
632 (**c**) and corresponding unprocessed and processed images (**d**) are shown for variations  
633 in blocking buffer serum concentrations. In general, the best image metrics were  
634 obtained for mid-level serum concentrations (e.g. 3-5% NDS), while the lower (e.g. 1%  
635 NDS) and higher (e.g. >10%) serum concentrations resulted in either increased filtered  
636 localizations or decreased resolution overall and poorer image quality. **e-f**,  
637 Representative primary data metrics (**e**) and corresponding unprocessed and processed  
638 images (**f**) are shown for variations in imaging buffer formulations using Trolox.  
639 Increasing the Trolox concentration reduced the total amount of data collected resulting  
640 in poorer image quality relative to low Trolox concentrations (e.g. 1mM). Images are  
641 representative of those acquired from N=3 animals. Calbindin, magenta; PSD95; cyan.



642 Scale bars = 10  $\mu$ m. Data are represented as the mean  $\pm$  the s.e.m. Both unprocessed  
643 (blue) and processed (red, OPTICS algorithm) data are shown for each dataset.

644

645 **Figure 1 – figure supplement 3: RAIN-STORM resolution as a function of sample**  
646 **depth.**

647 **a**, Schematic of three image planes used to calculate sample resolution. Resolution was  
648 compared in: 1) single-micron slices at the bottom of the image (nearest the objective),  
649 the middle of the image stack, or at the top of the image; 2) 5 $\mu$ m slices from the bottom  
650 of the image to the midpoint; and 3) the entirety of the 10 $\mu$ m stack. **b**, Sample resolution  
651 quantification as a function of the three calculation methods schematized in (**a**). Planar  
652 resolution (XY dimension) varies from  $30.0 \pm 1.6$  nm to  $42.5 \pm 4.8$  nm while resolution in  
653 the axial dimensions (XZ and YZ) ranges from  $46.3 \pm 3.3$  nm nearest the objective to  
654  $65.7 \pm 8.5$  nm farthest from the objective. N = 3. Data are represented as the mean  $\pm$   
655 the s.e.m.

656

657 **Figure 2 – figure supplement 1: Confocal imaging verifies antibody specificity in**  
658 **RAIN-STORM imaging.** Representative confocal images of antibodies used in this  
659 study. Cellular structure and labeling patterns from confocal imaging were used as a  
660 baseline with which to compare the effectiveness of RAIN-STORM imaging for various  
661 targets. Scale bars = 20  $\mu$ m.

662

663 **Figure 2 – figure supplement 2: RAIN-STORM imaging can be applied to diverse**  
664 **array of molecular targets.** RAIN-STORM imaging of  $\alpha$ -Tubulin, a marker for

665 cytoskeletal tubulin in the murine retina, cone arrestin, a marker for cone  
666 photoreceptors, CD31, a marker for select blood vessel structures, Connexin 43, a gap  
667 junction protein, Iba1, a marker for microglia, Islet1, which stains a variety of neuron cell  
668 bodies, Tau, a microtubule-associated protein, Tomm20, a mitochondrial marker, and  
669 VGlut1, a glutamate transporter marker for specific subsets of cells. These stains  
670 demonstrate a wide variety of protein types and targets that are amenable to imaging  
671 with RAIN-STORM. N = 3 animals. Scale bars = 10 and 1µm.

672

673

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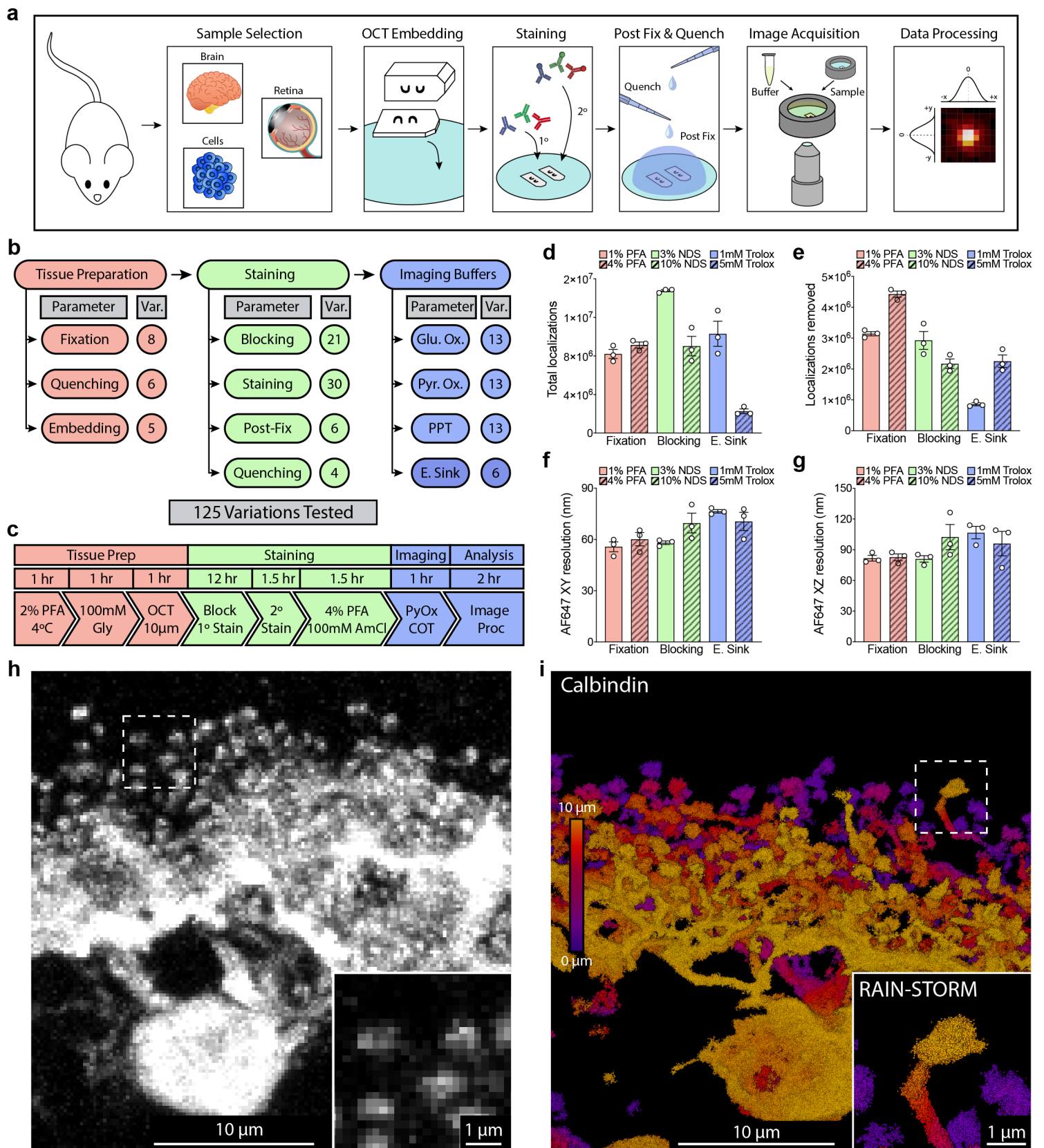


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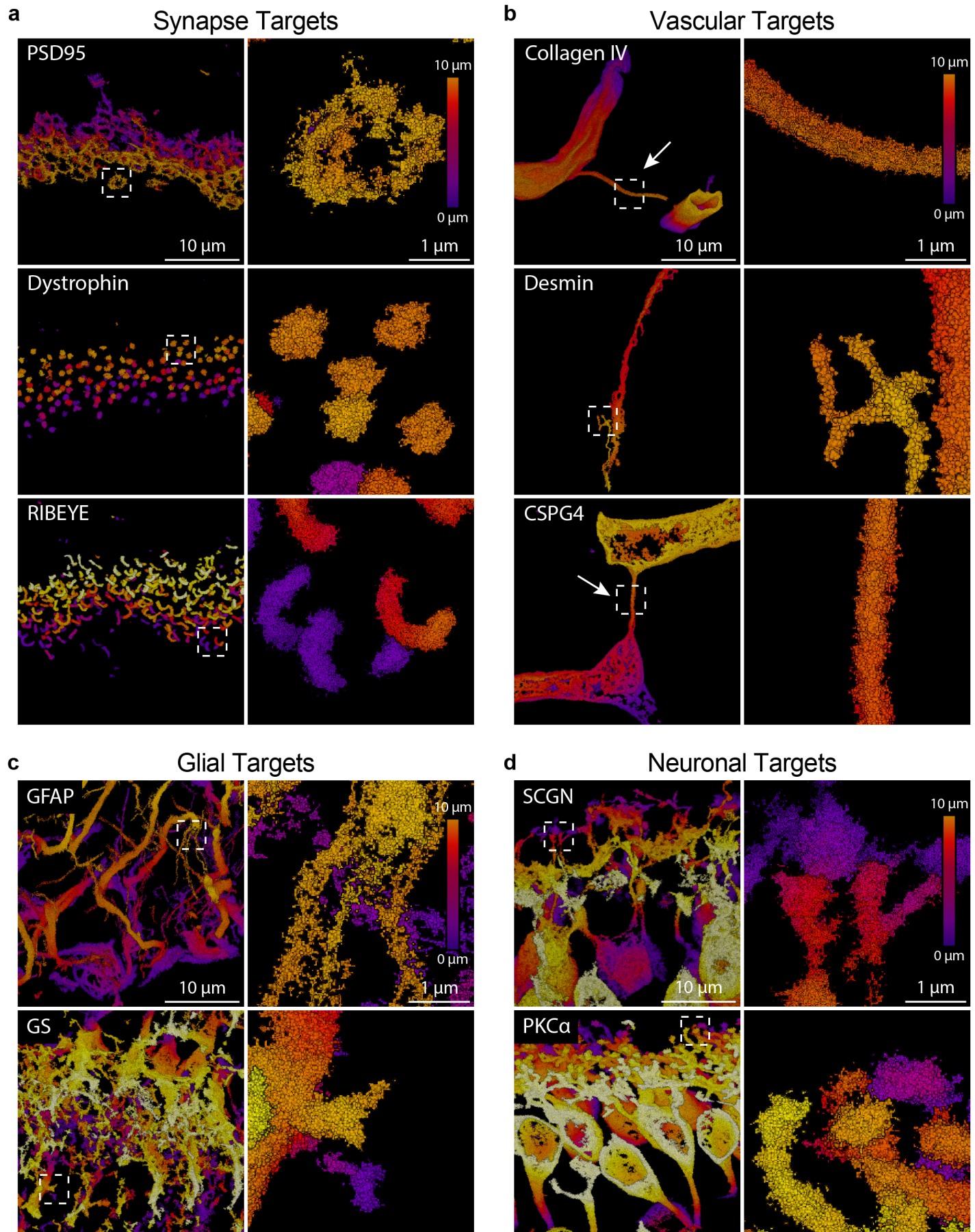
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827

# Figure 1: 3D Imaging of neurons in tissue.

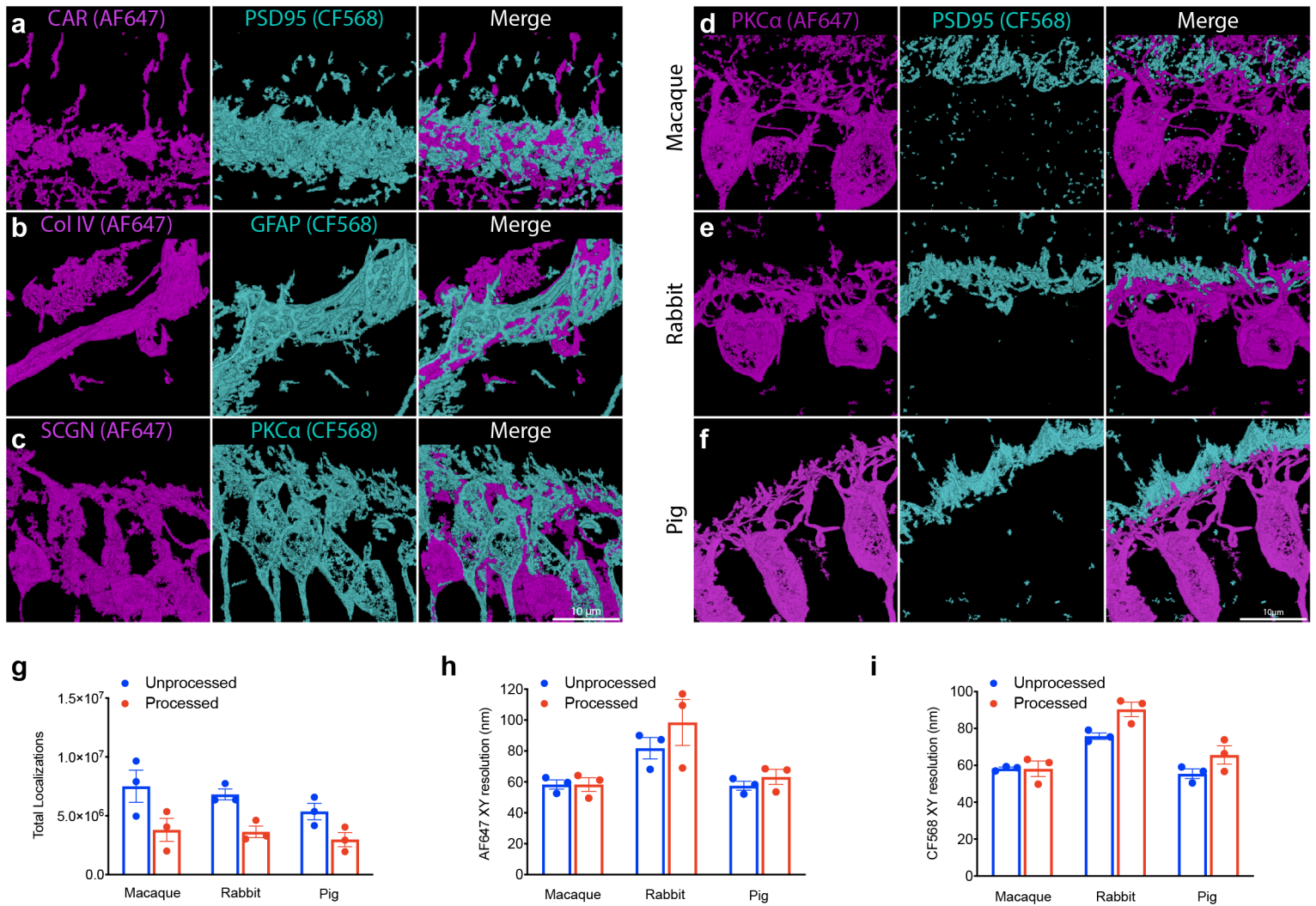


## Figure 2: RAIN-STORM delivers robust imaging for a diverse array of molecular targets in tissue.

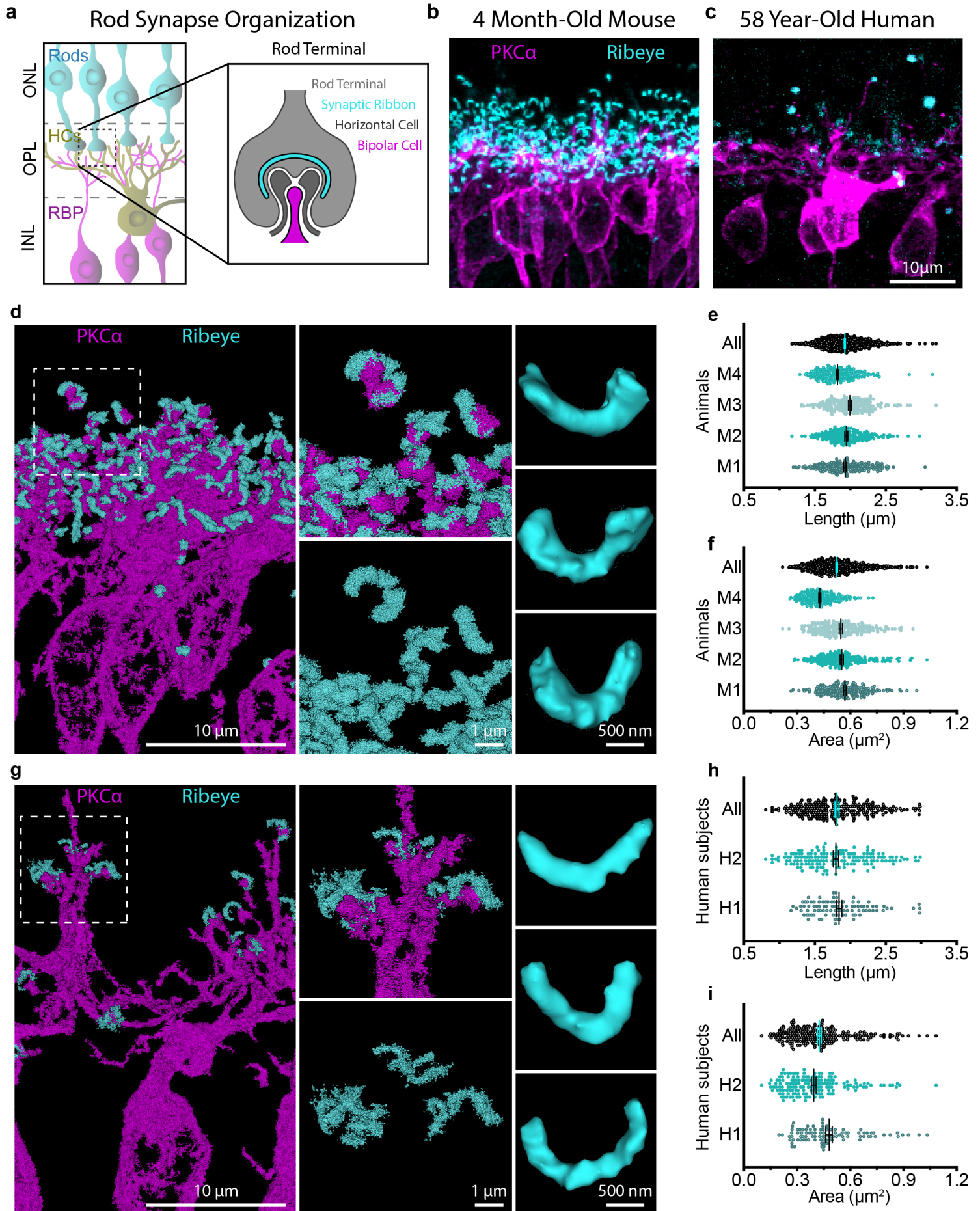




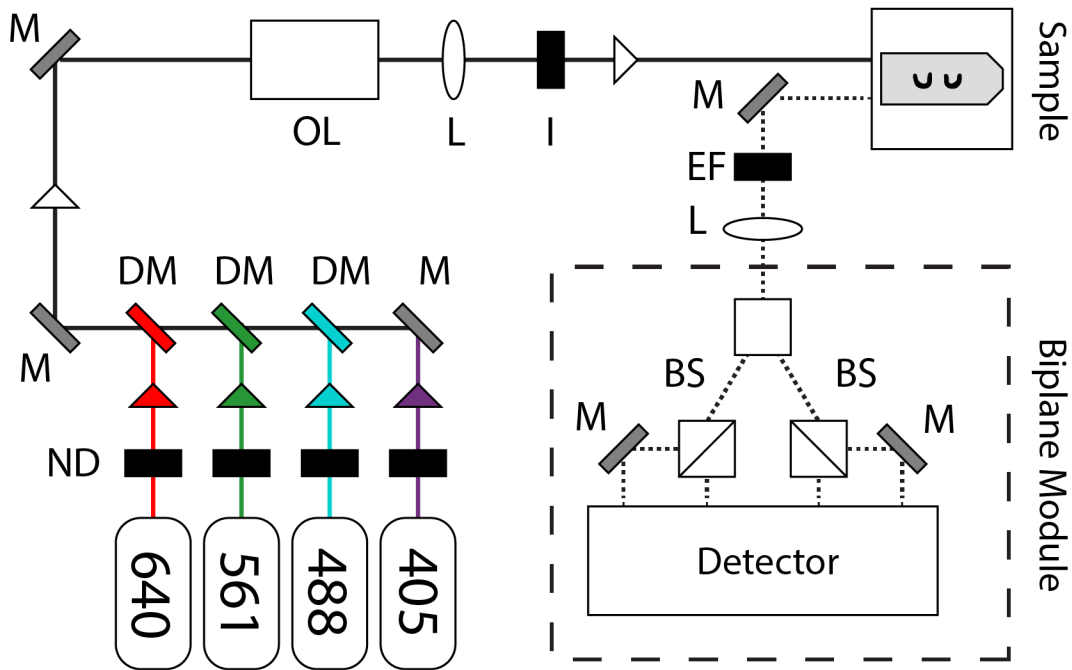
## Figure 3: RAIN-STORM enables dual-channel super resolution imaging among diverse species.



## Figure 4: RAIN-STORM resolves structural and molecular features of synapses.

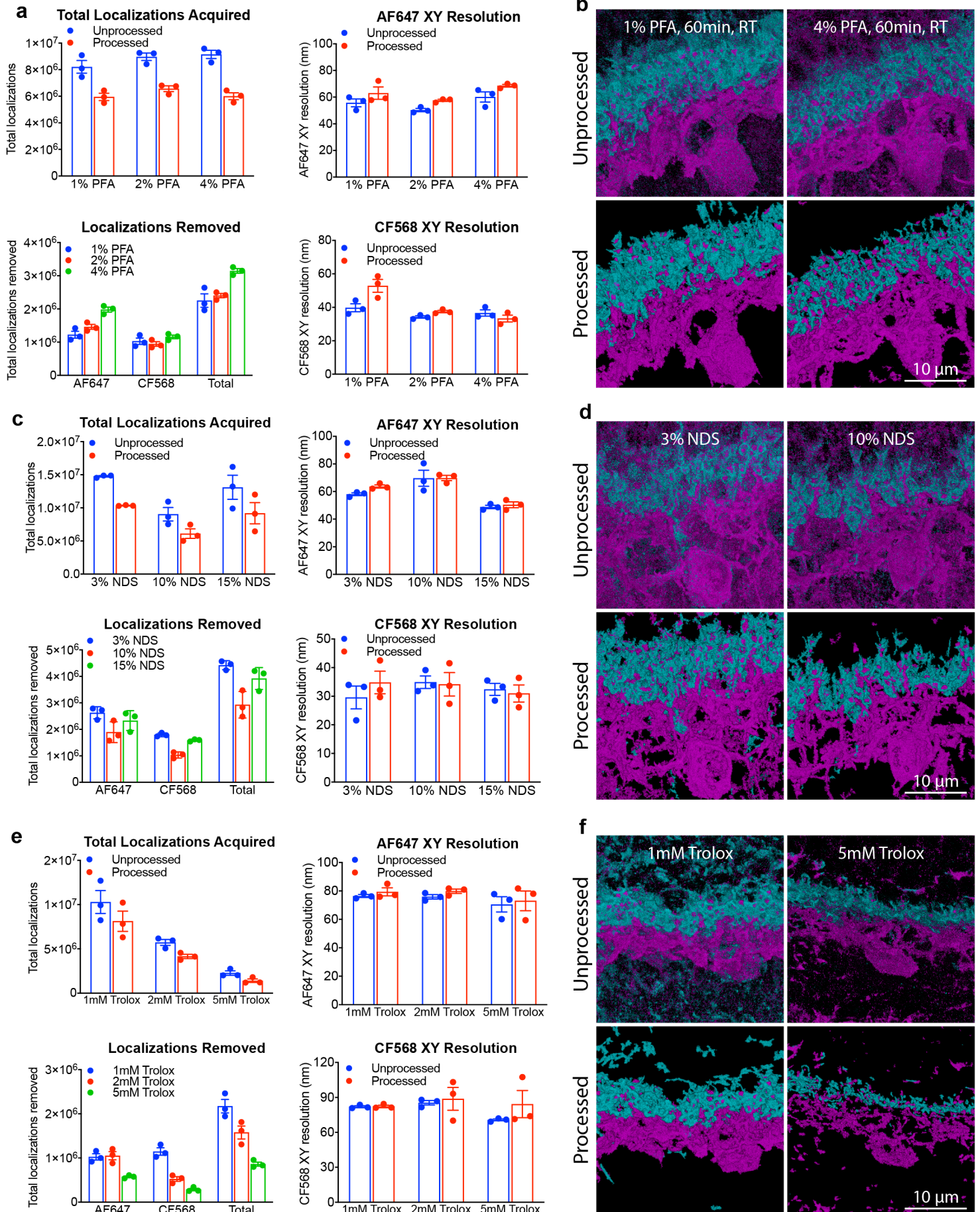


# Figure 1 - Figure Supplement 1: Optical Diagram of Vutara.

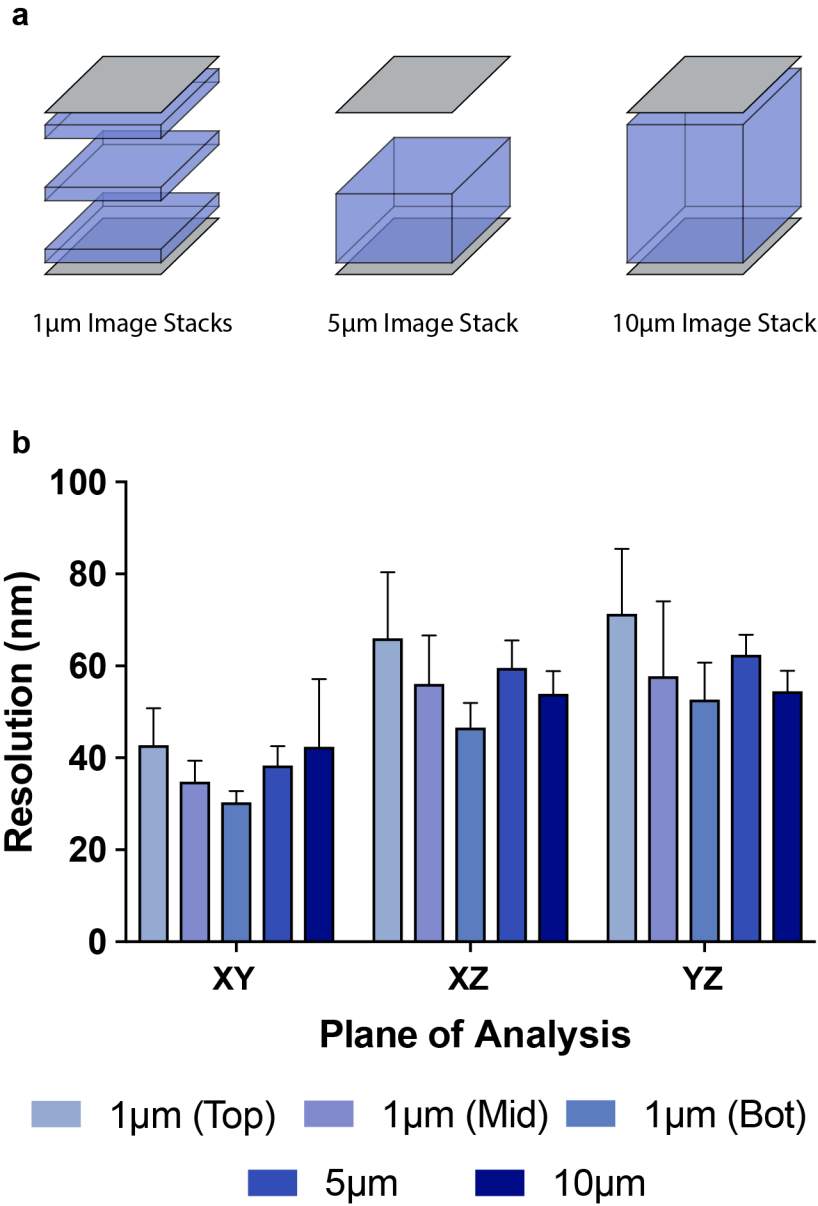




# Figure 1 - Figure Supplement 2: Modifying sample conditions improves visual quality and image metrics.

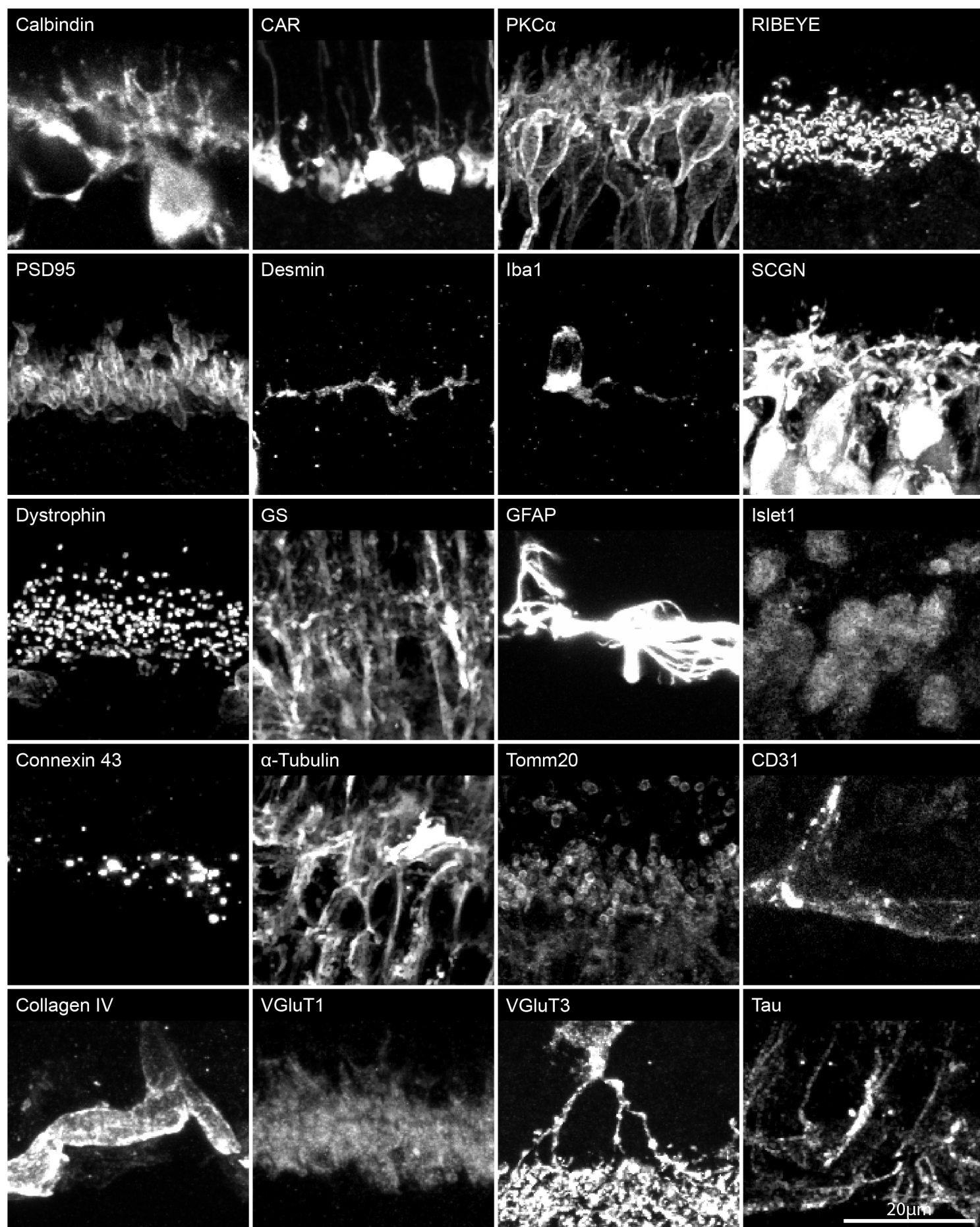


# Figure 1 - Figure Supplement 3: RAIN-STORM resolution as a function of sample depth.

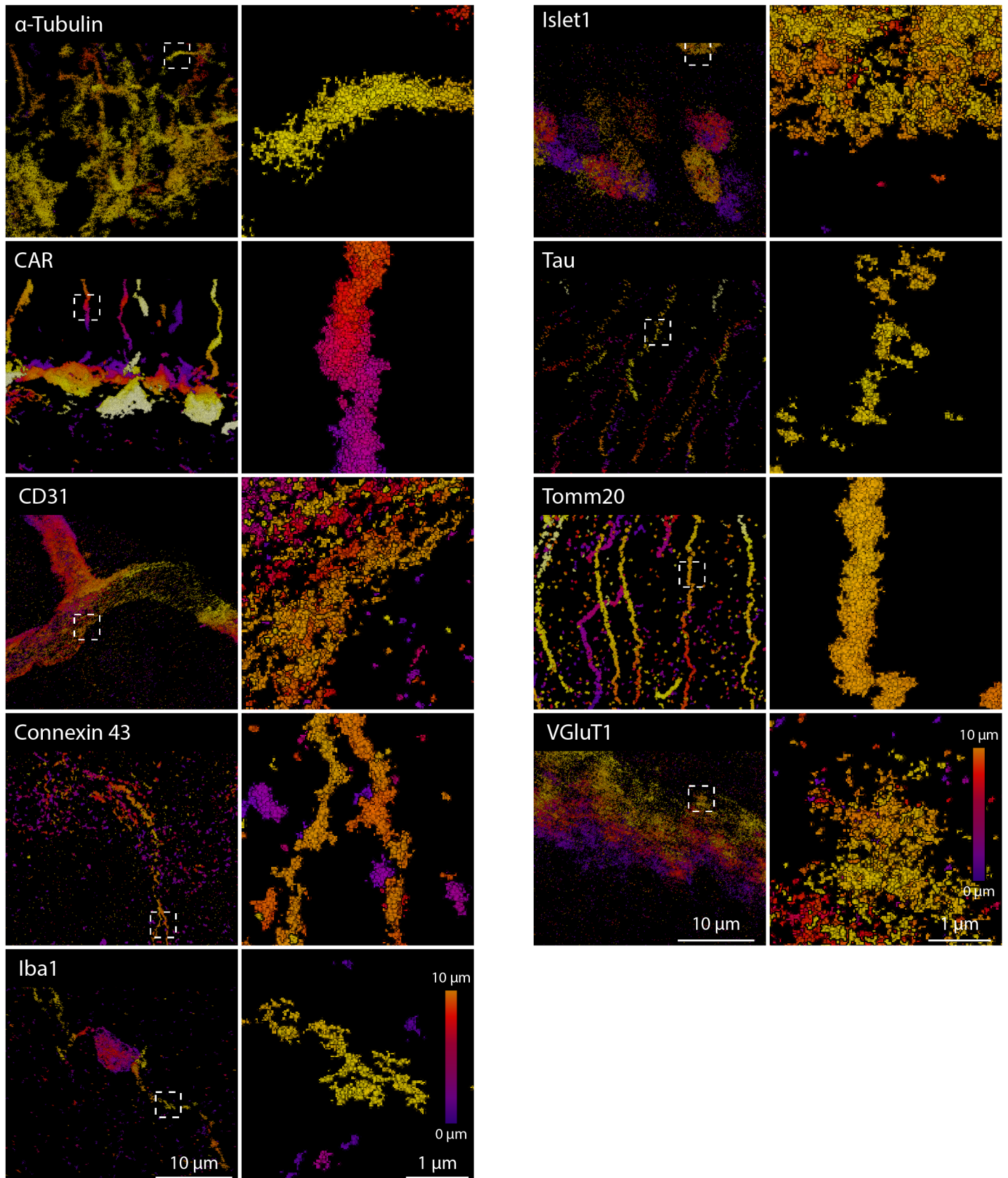




## Figure 2 - Figure Supplement 1. Confocal imaging verifies antibody specificity in RAIN-STORM imaging.



## Figure 2 - Figure Supplement 2: RAIN-STORM imaging can be applied to a diverse array of molecular targets.





Supplemental Table 1. Summary of condition variations tested for RAIN STORM

Stage	Parameter	Condition specification					
Fixation	Conc./Temp	1% PFA RT 60min 2% PFA RT 60min 4% PFA RT 60min					
	Primary Fixation	Conc./Temp	0.1% PFA 48, 60 min 0.1% PFA 90 min 0.1% PFA 30 min				
		Timing	0.1% PFA RT 60 min 4% PFA RT 120 min				
			Conc./Temp	100mM Glycine 100mM NaHCO <sub>3</sub>			
	Quenching	Conc./Temp	0.1% NaBH <sub>4</sub> 0.1% NaBH <sub>4</sub> 0.1% NaBH <sub>4</sub>				
		Embedding Method	Thickness	30um 70um 1% NiDS 5% NiDS 10% NiDS			
			Blocking Buffer	Permeabilizer Type	0.5% Triton 0.5% Triton 2.0% Triton		
					Permeabilizer Type	0.3% Saponin 0.5% Saponin 2.0% Saponin	
						Blocking Step	Time Temp/Tme Temp/Tme
			Staining	Primary Antibody			Protein Targets
Secondary Antibody					Fluorophore/Conc.		
					Post-Fixation	Conc./Tme Conc./Tme Conc./Tme	
						Post-Quenching	Conc./Temp
							GLGX
	MEA				Glucose Ox. MEA BME		
		PCD			PCD MEA PCD		
					Imaging	MEA PCD BME	
	Pyransox					MEA BME PCD	
		Electron Sinks				MEA PCD BME	

Optimized RAIN STORM: 120mM Glycine, 0.5% NiDS, 0.5% Triton, 60min RT Block, 1:1000 Ph D12 hr, 1:1000 Sec Di 60min, No Postfix, No Postfix Quench, 20U Glu. Ox, 71.5mM BME, 100U Catalase, 20mM MEA, 200mM Step size 250.1, 3 cycle, 0.16um, 25p



Abbreviations: RT: room temperature, UI: units

Supplemental Table 2: Primary antibodies used

Antigen	Labeling specificity	Source	Dilution (confocal)	Dilution (RAIN-STORM)
Calbindin D-28K	Horizontal cells, subsets of amacrine cells, and retinal ganglion cells	Swant, Cat# CB38a, RRID: AB_10000340	1:5000	1:1000
CD31	Blood vessels, endothelial cells	Fisher, Cat# BDB5500274, RRID: AB_393571	1:200	1:50
Cone arrestin	Cone photoreceptors	Millipore, Cat# AB15282, RRID: AB_11210270	1:2000	1:1000
Collagen IV	Blood vessels	Millipore, Cat# AB769, RRID: AB_92262	1:1000	1:500
Connexin 43	Pericyte gap junctions	Sigma, Cat#C6219, RRID: AB_476857	1:1000	1:500
Desmin	Pericytes	Thermo Fisher, Cat# MA513259, RRID: AB_11000611	1:500	1:500
Dystrophin	Photoreceptor synapses	Abcam, Cat# ab15277, RRID: AB_301813	1:200	1:100
Glutamine synthetase (GS)	Muller glia	BD Biosciences, Cat# 610517, RRID: AB_397879	1:1000	1:500
GFAP	Astrocytes	Sigma, Cat# G3893, RRID: AB_477010	1:500	1:500
Iba1	Microglia	Abcam, Cat# ab5076, RRID: AB_2224402	1:500	1:500
Islet1	ON bipolar cells, starburst amacrine cells, subset of retinal ganglion cells	R&D system, Cat# AF1837, RRID: AB_2126324	1:2000	1:1000
NG2	Pericytes	Abcam, Cat# ab129051, RRID: AB_2877152	1:1000	1:500
PKC $\alpha$	Rod bipolar cells	Abcam, Cat# ab31, RRID: AB_303507	1:500	1:500
PSD95	Photoreceptor terminals	Abcam, Cat# ab12093, RRID: AB_298846	1:500	1:500
RIBEYE	Ribbon synapses	Synaptic system, Cat#192103, RRID: AB_2086775	1:500	1:500
Secretagogin (SCGN)	Cone bipolar cells	BioVendor, Cat# RD181120100, RRID: AB_2034060	1:1000	1:500
Tau	Microtubule-associated protein	Proteintech, Cat#66499-1-ig, RRID: AB_2881863	1:1000	1:500
$\alpha$ -Tubulin	$\alpha$ -Tubulin protein	Sigma, Cat#T5168-2ML, RRID: AB_477579	1:1000	1:500
Tom20	Mitochondria	Abcam, Cat# ab78547, RRID: AB_2043078	1:1000	1:500
Tyrosine hydroxylase (TH)	Dopaminergic amacrine cell subset	EMD Millipore, Cat# AB1542, RRID: AB_90755	1:2000	1:500
Vesicular glutamate transporter 1 (VGLut1)	Photoreceptor ribbon synapses	Abcam, Cat# ab77822, RRID: AB_2187677	1:500	1:250
Vesicular glutamate transporter 3 (VGLut3)	Subset of amacrine cells	Millipore, Cat#AB5421, RRID: AB_2187832	1:1000	1:500