

# List of figures

<b>Fig. 1.3-1</b>	Total (solid) and multiphoton produced (dashed) electron densities are plotted along with the Gaussian pulse shape ( $I=10.95 \text{ TW/cm}^2$ , 100 fs). Seed electrons are produced by multiphoton ionization at the pulse peak after which, at the threshold, an avalanche process produces a critical density $\sim 1.74 \times 10^{21} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ . (According to [SFH1996]).....	20
<b>Fig. 1.3-2</b>	Total (solid) and decay corrected (squares) electron densities are plotted along with the $10.95 \text{ TW/cm}^2$ , 100 fs Gaussian pulse shape at 1053 nm for fused silica. Electron characteristic time for being trapped into STE's states is 150 fs [QGM99] (a value of 250 fs is given in [SaG93]). The multiphoton excitation process from the transient defect pair population was neglected, only carrier trapping has been considered.....	23
<b>Fig. 2.1-1</b>	Overall view of the experimental setup.....	30
<b>Fig. 2.1-2</b>	TOF experimental arrangement. It should be noted that the angle between the TOF detector axis and the laser was fixed at $25^\circ$ . The angle of incidence varied during the target rotation (the arrows indicate the direction of rotation, the rotation axis being perpendicular to the figure plane in the point of laser impact).....	31
<b>Fig. 2.2-1</b>	Scheme of the Wiley-McLaren linear mass spectrometer.....	33
<b>Fig. 2.2-2</b>	Non-mass resolved (top) and mass resolved acquired spectra for $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ at different extraction times. For the non-mass resolved spectra, the effect of a retarding field (RF) of 300 V is also visible allowing a certain type of mass discrimination. Pulse duration $\tau=0.2 \text{ ps}$ .....	34
<b>Fig. 2.2-3</b>	Extraction field with respect to the laser pulses. The visible spikes are electrical noise due to the high voltage application. ....	35
<b>Fig. 2.2-4</b>	Measured (points) and calculated (lines) retarding field (RF) values for different extraction times.....	36
<b>Fig. 2.2-5</b>	Calculated kinetic energies of the particles when reaching the retarding field grid as a function of their position at the moment when the extraction field is applied. The coordinates for the extraction region are between 60 and 70 mm, the acceleration region being between 70 and 130 mm. The horizontal lines represent the used retarding field values.....	37
<b>Fig. 2.3-1</b>	Schematic view of the TOF pump-probe experiment.....	39
<b>Fig. 2.3-2</b>	Schematic view of the optical scattering experiment.....	40
<b>Fig. 3.1-1</b>	Scanning electron microscope (SEM) pictures of a sapphire surface irradiated with 0.2 ps at $4.0 \text{ J/cm}^2$ (a) and 2.8 ps pulses at $4.3 \text{ J/cm}^2$ (b), the wavelength being 800 nm, and the number of pulses per site being: $N=10, 20, 30/50, 70$ . One can note the transition from the gentle to the strong etch-phase. The laser was at normal incidence. The quality of the structures is greatly decreased for ps pulses as a consequence of stress accumulation in the $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ sample. The stress load is	

## List of figures

---

	an outcome of the combined result of the enhanced thermal and self-focusing effects.....	44
<b>Fig. 3.1-2</b>	SEM pictures of the laser impact spot for sapphire at 0.2 ps pulse duration. a) Irradiation spot for $N=10$ ; gentle etch-phase (as seen in Fig. 3.1-1 first row, left column). b) Example of ripples in 0.2 ps regime; enlarged detail of a). Note the two different types of structures, dense ripples at the edge with a spacing of about 0.2 $\mu\text{m}$ , and interference ripples with a spacing related to the wavelength ( $\sim 0.8\mu\text{m}$ ). c) Enlarged view of the irradiation spot for $N=30$ (as seen in Fig. 3.1-1, third row, left column). Droplets and splintered edges are visible..	45
<b>Fig. 3.1-3</b>	Ripple formation on laser irradiated fused silica samples at different fluences and pulse durations.....	48
<b>Fig. 3.1-4</b>	Ripple orientation is polarization dependent. The arrows on the right side show the orientation of the laser electric vector.....	48
<b>Fig. 3.1-5</b>	Sub-surface/bulk modifications as a consequence of laser self-focusing at 2.8 ps. Incubation as a result of multiple irradiation or increased energy will determine the damage extension towards the surface .....	49
<b>Fig. 3.1-6</b>	Gentle to strong crossover $N$ -values for different fluences and two different pulse durations: 0.2 ps and 2.8 ps in the case of sapphire and fused silica samples. For high energy/shorter pulses the gentle to strong crossover takes place for lower $N$ . .....	50
<b>Fig. 3.1-7</b>	The relative ion yield (a), the ablation rate and the volume of the ablated material (b), and ionization efficiency (the ratio between the number of ions and the total amount of particles being ablated) versus the number of pulses at 4 $\text{J}/\text{cm}^2$ and 0.2 ps pulse duration (c). The gentle etch-phase shows higher ionization efficiency than the strong etch-phase.....	52
<b>Fig. 3.1-8</b>	Plume emission pictures under the conditions corresponding to the gentle ( $N=6$ ) and strong ablation phases ( $N=35, 48$ ) respectively.....	53
<b>Fig. 3.2-1</b>	Defect levels in sapphire (adapted from [CaC93]). .....	55
<b>Fig. 3.2-2</b>	Defect levels and structure in fused silica (adapted from [DeF86]). .....	56
<b>Fig. 3.2-3</b>	Extrapolation lines for threshold determination. The optical damage dimensions are measured for the sapphire sample at 200 fs irradiation at different number of shots per site as a function of the laser fluence (see text for details). .....	58
<b>Fig. 3.2-4</b>	Threshold defect accumulation process, based on the optical damage threshold model developed by Stuart et al. [SFH96] for 0.2 ps irradiation of sapphire and fused silica. The curves are calculated from Eq E-1.3-13 and Eq. E. 3.2-3 using the experimental values for the ablation threshold. ....	59
<b>Fig. 3.2-5</b>	Threshold defect accumulation process, based on the optical damage threshold model developed by Stuart et al. [SFH96] for 200 fs and 2.8 ps irradiation of sapphire and fused silica. The curves are calculated from Eq E 1.3-13 and Eq. 3.2-3 using the experimental values for the ablation threshold... ..	59
<b>Fig. 3.2-6</b>	Dependence of the ablation threshold for sapphire (indicated by the TOF signal) on the number of pulses for 0.2 ps and 3.7 ps. The $N$ -dependence of the ablation threshold is regarded as a measure of the degree of incubation.....	62

<b>Fig. 3.2-7</b>	Optical damage threshold values (obtained by the extrapolation of the damage dimensions to zero fluence, see text for details) for different ablation phases on sapphire at 0.2 and 2.8 ps irradiation. The fit curve is based on Eq. E 3.2-9 .....	62
<b>Fig. 3.2-8</b>	Optical damage threshold values (obtained by the extrapolation of the damage dimensions to the zero fluence, see text for details) for different ablation phases on fused silica at 0.2 and 2.8 ps irradiation. The fit curve is based on Eq. E 3.2-9. ....	63
<b>Fig. 3.2-9</b>	Dependence of the optical damage threshold ratio between the 2.8 ps and 0.2 ps irradiation regimes for sapphire and fused silica on the number of pulses. The ratios are always above 1. ....	64
<b>Fig. 3.2-10</b>	Dependence of the ablation threshold ratio between fused silica and sapphire on the number of pulses per site for 0.2 ps and 2.8 ps. ....	64
<b>Fig. 3.2-11</b>	Pulse width dependence of the threshold damage fluence for fused silica for different mechanisms considered in the rate equation Eq. 1.3-14 (see text for details).....	65
<b>Fig. 3.2-12</b>	Irradiated spot pictures showing the manifestation of the strong ablation phase in the case of sapphire at high energies: 20 J/cm <sup>2</sup> at 200 fs; 28 J/cm <sup>2</sup> at 100 fs.....	65
<b>Fig. 3.2-13</b>	The volume ablated per pulse (for the first laser pulse; $N=1$ ) versus the laser fluence. The augmentation in the ablation rate is a super-linear function, entering saturation at approx 10 J/cm <sup>2</sup> .....	66
<b>Fig. 4.1-1</b>	TOF detection geometries: Mode 1: laser at 25° incidence to the sample, TOF detector axis normal to the surface (on-axis detection-left). Mode 2: laser normal to the sample, TOF detector axis at 25° with respect to the surface normal (off-axis detection-right).....	74
<b>Fig. 4.1-2</b>	Velocity distributions for O <sup>+</sup> and Al <sup>+</sup> ions for different numbers of laser shots per site. Left hand side. Al <sup>+</sup> (circles), right hand side: O <sup>+</sup> (triangles). The Al <sup>+</sup> data are fitted by 1-D Maxwell-Boltzmann distributions (full lines). The full lines on the O <sup>+</sup> plots are the same distributions scaled according to the mass. Experimental conditions: pulse duration-100 fs, laser normal to the sample surface (off-axis detection). See text for details.....	76
<b>Fig. 4.1-3</b>	Momentum (a) and energy (b) of O <sup>+</sup> and Al <sup>+</sup> species within the plume as a function of number of laser shots. The values were calculated from the measured maxima in the velocity distributions. Circles: Al <sup>+</sup> , triangles: O <sup>+</sup> . Pulse duration-100 fs, laser normal to the sample surface (off-axis detection)....	77
<b>Fig. 4.1-4</b>	Normalized velocity distributions in the gentle phase for Al <sup>+</sup> (open circles) O <sup>+</sup> (open triangles) and O <sup>2+</sup> (closed diamonds), showing that the doubly charged oxygen ions have twice the velocity of the singly charged ions. TOF normal to surface (on-axis detection), $N=2$ , gentle ablation. Pulse duration-100 fs, fluence 3.9 J/cm <sup>2</sup> . ....	78
<b>Fig. 4.1-5</b>	Velocity distributions for O <sup>+</sup> and Al <sup>+</sup> from Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> (200 fs, 4 J/cm <sup>2</sup> ) versus $N$ . The distribution is unchanged over the whole gentle phase ( $N \leq 30$ ), then there is a shift at the crossover to the strong ablation phase. A third, lower velocity signal appears for $N=100$ . This marks the stage where a significant crater depth (on the order of the lateral dimensions of the irradiated region) has formed and the plume	

## List of figures

---

	starts to align along the laser direction. TOF at normal incidence (on-axis detection).....	79
<b>Fig. 4.1-6</b>	Velocity distributions of O <sup>+</sup> and Al <sup>+</sup> from Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> (200 fs, $N=2$ , $F=4$ J/cm <sup>2</sup> ) and for Al <sup>+</sup> from aluminium metallic target (200 fs, $N=4$ , $F=1.1$ J/cm <sup>2</sup> ). On-axis detection.....	80
<b>Fig. 4.1-7</b>	Schematic view of a planar Coulomb explosion mechanism for dielectric materials irradiated with ultrashort laser pulses.....	81
<b>Fig. 4.1-8</b>	a) Kinetic energies of Al <sup>+</sup> and O <sup>+</sup> ions calculated from the maxima of the ion velocity distributions (Fig. 4.1-5 b). Ratio of ion momenta, calculated from maxima of the velocity distributions. c) Ratio of kinetic energies. Laser parameters: 200 fs pulse duration at 4 J/cm <sup>2</sup> ; on-axis detection....	82
<b>Fig. 4.1-9</b>	Average kinetic energies ( $E_{kin}=m\langle v^2 \rangle/2$ ) of Al <sup>+</sup> and O <sup>+</sup> ions as function of number of pulses per site $N$ for 200 fs irradiation, on-axis detection (upper panel), and 100 fs irradiation, off-axis detection (bottom panel).....	83
<b>Fig. 4.1-10</b>	Velocity distributions for Al <sup>+</sup> in the gentle (black squares) and strong (open circles) ablation phases showing the absolute ion intensities. Fast ions are still present during the strong ablation but are masked by the strong thermal distribution. (Laser normal to surface, 100 fs at 5 J/cm <sup>2</sup> , off-axis detection).....	86
<b>Fig. 4.1-11</b>	The effect of various laser parameters ( $N$ , $\tau$ , $F$ ) on the velocity distributions for O <sup>+</sup> and Al <sup>+</sup> . An increase of these parameters enhances the intensity of the slow component regarded as a signature of a thermal effect. The open triangles and circles represent the experimental points for O <sup>+</sup> , respectively Al <sup>+</sup> ions for low number of shots ( $N=2$ ), short pulse duration (200 fs) and low fluence (4 J/cm <sup>2</sup> ). On-axis detection.....	87
<b>Fig. 4.1-12</b>	Normalized aluminium neutrals-velocity distribution under different conditions of irradiation. $N$ corresponds to the gentle, respectively, strong phase for the sapphire sample, and $N=4$ for the aluminium metallic sample. Pulse duration: 200 fs, fluence 4 J/cm <sup>2</sup> for sapphire and 1.1 J/cm <sup>2</sup> for aluminium. On-axis detection. ....	89
<b>Fig. 4.1-13</b>	Velocity distributions for O <sup>+</sup> and Si <sup>+</sup> ions emitted at 4.3 J/cm <sup>2</sup> , 100 fs irradiation of fused silica in the conditions of gentle and strong ablation phases. Si <sup>+</sup> ions from a silicon target are also shown ( $\sim 1$ J/cm <sup>2</sup> ). On-axis detection.....	92
<b>Fig. 4.1-14</b>	The angular distribution of the positive ions (O <sup>+</sup> and Al <sup>+</sup> species) in the plume for different number of pulses per site irradiation ( $N=4$ ; $N=30$ ) (a, b), and for 0.2 ps and 2.8 ps pulse durations (c, d). Laser fluence: 4 J/cm <sup>2</sup> for 0.2 ps and 4.3 J/cm <sup>2</sup> for 2.8 ps irradiation.....	94
<b>Fig. 4.1-15</b>	Velocity distributions for two angle values of the sample surface normal with respect to the TOF axis, 0° and 25°. The velocities of the distribution maxima are strongly angle dependent, being shifted to lower values when detected at off-axis observation angles.....	95
<b>Fig. 4.1-16</b>	Non mass-resolved TOF spectra and the effect of various laser parameters (solid line). The spectra can be resolved with the help of a retarding field. One may note the appearance of double ionized species (dot lines) when one of the following parameters is increased ( $\tau$ , $N$ , $F$ ).....	96

<b>Fig. 4.1-17</b>	Velocity distributions for $\text{Al}^+$ and $\text{O}^+$ at different pulse durations: 0.2 ps and 2.8 ps. Both measurements show the fast Coulomb explosion ion signal but the velocity distributions measured for the longer laser pulses have an additional low velocity signal from ions of thermal origin.....	97
<b>Fig. 4.1-18</b>	Ions' most probable velocity dependence on the laser fluence.....	97
<b>Fig. 4.2-1</b>	Electron TOF distribution for 200 fs, 800 nm laser irradiation of sapphire (at 4 $\text{J}/\text{cm}^2$ laser fluence and $N=5/45$ ) and metallic aluminium (at 1.1 $\text{J}/\text{cm}^2$ laser fluence, $N=4$ ). The fast, prompt, electrons and the plume, slow, electrons are visible in the upper panel, The prompt distributions representative for the conditions of gentle ( $N=5$ ) and strong ablation phases ( $N=45$ ) for sapphire are also depicted (middle panel). Prompt electrons are responsible for the Coulomb explosion mechanism. Prompt electrons extracted from the dielectric sample have smaller energies compared to the metal case as a consequence of surface charging (on-axis detection).....	99
<b>Fig. 4.2-2</b>	Prompt electron yield dependence on the laser fluence. Pulse duration-200 fs, $N=2$ .....	100
<b>Fig. 5.1-1</b>	a) Pump-probe measurement for $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ (fast $\text{Al}^+$ ion yield, $v=20300$ m/s, see text for details) with 80 fs pulses of equal pulse energy (below the threshold for $N=2$ ( $<3$ $\text{J}/\text{cm}^2$ )). b) Velocity distributions at different delay times, showing that ions produced for small pulse delay times ( $< 1$ ps) have velocities corresponding to the Coulomb explosion mechanism whereas ions produced with larger pulse delay times have lower velocities indicating a thermal mechanism.....	104
<b>Fig. 5.1-2</b>	Sketch of the neutralization process in the electron depleted region. $n$ is the electron density, $J$ is the charge flux, $\sigma$ is the electrical conductivity, $e$ is the electron charge and $D$ is the diffusivity coefficient. Note the charge flow from the excited region to the depleted region and subsequent neutralization [See91]. .....	106
<b>Fig. 5.1-3</b>	Dependence of $\text{Al}^+$ ion intensity on the delay between two laser pulses of equal fluences at 100 fs irradiation. The individual pulse fluences are below the ablation threshold but the sum lies above ( $F_{th}=3.5$ $\text{J}/\text{cm}^2$ ). Black squares: fast ions with a velocity of $\sim 20300$ m/s. Open diamonds: slow ions with a velocity of $\sim 12000$ m/s. The minimum at 70 fs is an artifact due to interference between the two overlapping laser pulses. Black circles: data on the time dependence of scattered light from material leaving the surface (mainly neutral particles), from [RAV1998], shown for comparison.....	108
<b>Fig. 5.1-4</b>	$\text{Si}^+$ ions TOF pump-probe experiments of crystalline quartz (a) and fused silica (b). Note the early contribution in the signal for fast particles and the thermal feature indicated by the slow particles. The scattered light signal is also represented.....	110
<b>Fig. 5.1-5</b>	$\text{Si}^+$ ions TOF pump-probe experiment on silicon sample (a). No fast peak is present. For comparison purposes the scattered signal is also indicated (b). .....	111
<b>Fig. 5.1-6</b>	$\text{Si}^+$ (a) and $\text{Au}^+$ (b) ions TOF yield and ablation energy threshold (signaled by the ion burst) pump-probe experiment on silicon and gold samples (see text for details).....	112

## List of figures

---

<b>Fig. 5.2-1</b>	TOF electron distribution for 100 fs laser irradiated sapphire at $3.9 \text{ J/cm}^2$ . One can note the presence of the prompt, fast electrons, as well as the delayed slow electrons accompanying the plume.....	114
<b>Fig. 5.2-2</b>	Temporal evolution of the prompt electron signal as a function of the pump-probe delay time for laser irradiated sapphire. The correlation with the temporal behavior of the fast, Coulomb explosion ions is observable. ....	115
<b>Fig. 6.1-1</b>	Schematic diagram of beam profile and possible applications illustrating three major fluences regimes for material processing in a side view perspective. Laser pulses are coming from the top. Also included is the energy distribution in the focused laser beam relative to the surface processing threshold (dashed horizontal line). a) high fluence to generate channels, b) intermediate fluence for pockets and patterns, c) low fluence (below surface damage threshold) for bulk modifications and rear side micro-holes utilizing self-focusing effects. The three experimental structures included in the schematic diagram have a diameter size of 20 to 30 $\mu\text{m}$ and were produced in fused silica with laser pulses at 800 nm and a pulse width of a) 0.1 ps (channel), b) 0.2 ps (pocket) and c) 1.4 ps (bulk micro-trace).....	118
<b>Fig. 6.1-2</b>	Development of pockets and craters in fused silica with increasing the number of shots. Pulse duration is 200 fs. One can see the characteristic narrowing of the holes from the diameter produced at the entrance surface of the sample, to a diameter much smaller than the laser focus diameter... ..	119
<b>Fig. 6.1-3</b>	Development of channels at non-normal laser incidence. Laser parameters: fluence $20 \text{ J/cm}^2$ , pulse duration 100 fs, incidence $37^\circ$ ... ..	119
<b>Fig. 6.1-4</b>	Channel length as a function of the number of pulses for different employed laser fluences at 100 fs irradiation. The asymptotic behavior is due to the channel bottom moving out of the laser focal zone.....	120
<b>Fig. 6.1-5</b>	Ablation rate versus the number of pulses. The decay is a result of the channel bottom moving away from the focal point. Pulse duration 100 fs.....	120
<b>Fig. 6.1-6</b>	Maximum channel depth versus laser fluence for 100 fs laser irradiation. ....	121
<b>Fig. 6.1-7</b>	Matrix assisted growth of Si crystals in an array of laser induced micro-holes based on self-focusing on the rear surface.....	121
<b>Fig. 6.1-8</b>	Structures drilled in glass with 200 fs, 800 nm laser pulses.....	122
<b>Fig. 6.1-9</b>	Micropores in sapphire created with ultrashort laser pulses at 800 nm, illustrating the influence of pulse duration (left 4.5 ps, right 200 fs)-same laser fluence... ..	122
<b>Fig. 6.1-10</b>	Microscopic side-view of bulk modifications in $a\text{-SiO}_2$ after 100 laser shots, with laser beam focused at the entrance surface, for three different pulse durations. The energy per pulse was $20 \mu\text{J}$ , focus diameter $920 \mu\text{m}^2$ , and $\lambda=800 \text{ nm}$ .....	123
<b>Fig. 7-1</b>	Basic processes in dielectrics upon ultrashort pulsed laser excitation. ....	125
<b>Fig. 7-2</b>	Overview of the ablation phases at ultrashort pulsed laser ablation of dielectrics. ....	127