LIGA – Lithographie, Galvanof ormung, Äbf ormung (Lithography, Electroplating and Moulding) and its potential application to High Power Laser Science

Graham Arthur

Scitech Precision Limited, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell Oxford, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 0QX UK

*Corresponding author E-mail address: graham.arthur@scitechprecision.com

ABSTRACT

LIGA (German acronym for Lithographie, Galvanof ormung, Äbf ormung – lithography, electroplating and moulding) is the ultimate lithography technique for making high aspect-ratio microstructures. A synchrotron x-ray source is used for exposure, and resist walls with the ultimate in wall straightness and smoothness are obtained. Exposures in resist with thickness in excess of 1 millimetre and aspect ratios up to 100:1 are possible. The resulting structure is used as a mould for subsequent electroplating to form a metallic structure which can either be used “as is” or can be used as the master for mass production by injection moulding. This presentation describes the basic LIGA process and some early-stage research being carried out by Scitech Precision in collaboration with Diamond Light Source with the objective of producing high aspect-ratio pinholes in gold.

INTRODUCTION

The LIGA process consists of six basic steps, as shown in Figure 1.

X-ray lithography and electrodeposition were combined at IBM as early as 1975[1], devising the “LIG” part of LIGA (i.e. without the moulding step). This final step was realised at the Karlsruhe Nuclear Research Centre in 1982[2]. LIGA processing was carried out in the UK by STFC in the 1990s and utilised the SRS at Daresbury Laboratory. A schematic of the set-up used by STFC is shown in Figure 2. The deep x-ray beam at the beamline on SRS is approximately 10mm x 100mm and by translating the mask/substrate pair up and down many times, uniform exposure over a 4-inch wafer was achieved. A simulation of how the x-rays pass through the various components is shown in Figure 3. Using PMMA, the optimum exposure dose is ~4500J/cm² at the bottom of the resist, which ideally should not be less than one-quarter of the dose at the top. Some examples of the possible structures are shown in Figure 4 below.

APPLICATION TO HIGH POWER LASER SCIENCE

Researchers using high power lasers (or synchrotron radiation) have requirements for devices such as pinholes which are compatible with high energy x-rays. The early-stage research reported here has the objective of creating 25um diameter pinholes through 1mm of gold (A/R = 40:1) and, like [1], will utilise the “LIG” steps of the full LIGA process. A 3-inch wafer set-up has been used. In addition, the x-ray spectrum required the gold “blocker” on the x-ray mask to be 25um thick instead of 10um as used on SRS. This mask is made using a combination of optical lithography and gold electrodeposition into a 30um optical resist film. The finished mask is shown in Figure 5 and the exposure set-up on beamline B16 is shown in Figure 6.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Figure 7 shows a PMMA/Si wafer substrate after x-ray exposure, development and Pt flash-coating for SEM examination. Each 1cm² block has had a different exposure dose in order to find the optimum. Figure 8 shows an SEM close-up of one block showing the high aspect ratio structures.

There early results show that these high aspect ratio structures can be created with a relatively modest set-up. Upcoming beamtime will allow further optimization of the exposure and development stages prior to electrodeposition of the 1mm thick gold layer giving finished pinholes (and other structures).

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REFERENCES