

基于脉冲串模式的 ZnO 薄膜皮秒激光脉冲沉积技术

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摘要 介绍了一种基于多脉冲模式的皮秒激光脉冲沉积方法, 采用该方法在玻璃基底和单晶硅基底上沉积了透明导电氧化锌(ZnO)薄膜, 使用光谱偏振仪、原子力显微镜、扫描电子显微镜、X 射线衍射仪、分光光度计和四探针测试仪分析了激光的不同脉冲串模式对 ZnO 薄膜厚度、粗糙度、表面形貌、晶体结构、光学性能以及电学性能的影响。结果表明: 沉积速率随着子脉冲串数量的增加而减小; 随着子脉冲串数量的增加, 薄膜表面粗糙度减小, 颗粒尺寸减小, 薄膜变得更加致密光滑; 所有样品均呈现多晶结构; ZnO 薄膜的透过率在可见光区域内高于 92.95%, 且禁带宽度在 3.317~3.427 eV 范围内; 薄膜电阻率随着子脉冲数量的增加而减小。相比于单脉冲, 利用多脉冲沉积产生的薄膜具有更高的表面质量、更好的光学性能和更低的电阻率。

关键词 薄膜; 脉冲激光沉积法; 脉冲串模式; 皮秒脉冲激光; 氧化锌薄膜

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1 引言

脉冲激光沉积(PLD)技术是一种使用激光脉冲能量对靶材进行轰击, 激发出的等离子体(包括中性粒子、离子和电子)在真空中传播、沉积到基底上, 从而得到薄膜的精密制备技术。它具有成膜粒子能量高、沉积速率快、对材料没有限制等优点。近年来 PLD 技术发展迅速, 在金属、合金、陶瓷、透明电极、类金刚石和高温超导薄膜^[1]制备上已取得了显著的应用成效。传统 PLD 技术研究中主要使用纳秒激光器^[2-5]作为激发光源, 其热效应与选择性烧蚀的缺点, 容易导致薄膜质量降低、薄膜与靶材化学计量不一致等问题。虽然以上问题可以通过背景气体或调节靶材到基板的距离来解决^[6], 但是多种元素靶材则无法通过以上方法克服类似问题。为此, 定制的脉冲形状和多脉冲序列被提出, 用于改变靶材烧蚀

过程中激光与物质的相互作用^[7-9], 该技术已被成功应用于多种合成材料的制备中^[10-12]。目前, 针对多脉冲激光烧蚀的方案只能使用以共线模式释放多个脉冲的单个激光源。Piepmeier 和 Malmstadt^[13]率先使用时间间隔高达 0.5 s 的三个激光脉冲研究了铝合金等离子体的发射, 发现等离子体对激光能量的吸收很强, 并认为“多脉冲烧蚀”是进一步研究有效烧蚀靶材的好方法。Scott 等^[14]利用每秒发射 6.25 个脉冲的 Nd:YAG 激光器进行激光烧蚀, 发现在最初的烧蚀坑形成之后, 等离子体能强烈吸收激光的能量。Galbács 等^[15]发现, 使用输出为多脉冲的激光器可产生等离子体再激发现象, 其中每个激光序列都是由多个脉冲组成, 脉冲间隔为 10~100 μs, 在这种情况下, 激光脉冲是共线的, 脉冲串中随后脉冲的作用造成激光-等离子体相互作用或等离子体-等离子体相互作用, 进一步导致等离子体

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重新被激发,具体是哪一种现象,取决于烧蚀的靶材和脉冲间隔。Hartmann 等^[16]研究了三脉冲等离子体的等离子体膨胀、电子温度和电子密度的动力学特性,并与单脉冲等离子体的数据进行了比较(脉冲间隔为 0.1~80 μs),根据记录的时间分辨等离子体图像,可以发现多脉冲等离子体比单脉冲等离子体具有更大的体积和更长的寿命。Jedlinski 和 Galbács^[17]发现当激光处于发射多脉冲状态时,可以达到更高的等离子体电离水平,使等离子体具有较高的离化率和离子动能,可以促进薄膜的生长。Peñaloza-Mendoza 等^[18]使用纳秒多脉冲激光器(脉冲间隔为 45 μs)沉积二氧化钛(TiO_2)薄膜,发现在相同的总发射能量下,多脉冲模式下的生长速率低于单脉冲方式的生长速率。以上工艺都是采用纳秒脉冲激光进行烧蚀,其存在热累积效应^[19],会从靶材上喷射出熔融材料,使得沉积薄膜上存在大液滴^[20],因此具有皮秒和飞秒脉冲持续时间以及高重复频率(kHz 或 MHz 量级)的超快激光器成为 PLD 技术的新生力量。在超短 PLD 中,电子-晶格弛豫时间通常比脉冲持续时间长,晶格在脉冲作用过程中不受影响^[21-22],这种非平衡机制有利于烧蚀产物的形成,如聚集物和纳米颗粒,这在长脉冲中不容易得到^[23-24]。2020 年笔者所在课题组利用皮秒激光再生腔中普克尔盒非瞬时关闭特性,实现了振幅比可变的脉冲输出,在不同脉冲(单脉冲、等振幅双脉冲)模式下对金属 Ni 进行 PLD 对比实验,结果发现双脉冲模式下薄膜表面微粒数量明显低于单脉冲模式下的表面微粒数量^[25]。

氧化锌(ZnO)是一种具有直接带隙的宽禁带半导体材料,激子束缚能高达 60 meV^[26],具有优异的光学和电学特性,在太阳能电池、显示屏、微波器件等光子器件领域具有良好的应用前景^[27];同时, ZnO 还可以和其他材料组成复合材料,应用于表面增强拉曼散射等领域^[28]。 ZnO 薄膜的制备方法主

要分为湿化学法和物理法^[29],湿化学法具有设备简单、成本低等优势,但它制备的 ZnO 薄膜质量远不如物理法。PLD 方法作为物理法中快速发展的一种新型薄膜制备方法,能够方便、高效地沉积高质量薄膜。采用 PLD 技术生长的 ZnO 薄膜的性能受很多工艺参数的影响,大多数研究侧重于基底温度、激光频率、激光波长、背景气压等参数的分析。例如, Wisz 等^[30]、Lemlikchi 等^[31]及 Craciun 等^[3]分别证明了基底温度、氧气分压、激光波长和频率对 ZnO 薄膜结构及光电性能有重要影响。然而,目前鲜有学者研究脉冲串模式下的皮秒激光沉积对 ZnO 薄膜性能的影响。与单脉冲烧蚀模式相比,多脉冲烧蚀模式会显著影响等离子体的体积、寿命、电子温度等参数,从而进一步影响沉积薄膜的性能,因此有必要分析脉冲串模式下的皮秒激光对 ZnO 薄膜性能的影响。

本文利用多脉冲皮秒激光器在玻璃和单晶硅基底上沉积 ZnO 薄膜,并使用光谱偏振仪、X 射线衍射(XRD)仪、原子力显微镜(AFM)、扫描电子显微镜(SEM)、紫外可见分光光度计和四探针测试仪分析不同脉冲串模式下的皮秒激光沉积对薄膜厚度、晶体结构、粗糙度、表面形貌、光学性能和电学性能的影响。结果表明,多脉冲模式激光可以进一步改善 PLD 沉积薄膜的质量。

2 薄膜的制备与表征

本实验采用 PLD 技术在普通玻璃基底和单晶硅基底上沉积 ZnO 薄膜,所使用的皮秒激光器原理如图 1 所示,它主要由种子振荡器、脉冲选择器、激光放大器和功率控制器 4 部分组成。将第一个声光调制器(AOM)作为光开关,从种子振荡器产生的 30 MHz 脉冲中选择子脉冲组,经过两级行波激光放大器之后,再经过第二个声光调制器,通过调节其驱动功率,利用布拉格衍射效应来控制激光整体的

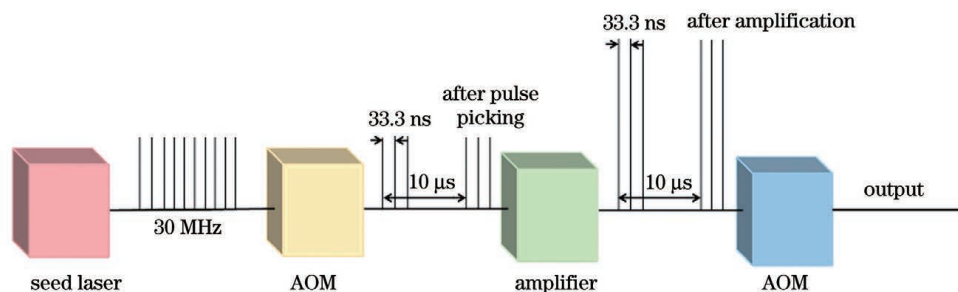


图 1 皮秒激光器的原理示意图

Fig. 1 Schematic of principle of picosecond laser

输出功率,最后以 50~1000 kHz 的重复频率产生皮秒脉冲串。不同脉冲串模式($n=1$ 为单脉冲, $n=2$ 为双脉冲, $n=3$ 为三脉冲, $n=4$ 为四脉冲)下的脉冲波形如图 2 所示,脉冲串由一定数量的脉冲组成,脉冲串的时间间隔为 10 μs ,在每个脉冲串内,相邻脉冲的时间间隔为 33.3 ns。该激光波长 $\lambda=532\text{ nm}$,脉冲持续时间为 10 ps,该实验选定每个脉冲串的激光重复

频率为 100 kHz,单脉冲模式下激光平均功率为 11.5 W,单脉冲能量为 115 μJ ,随着子脉冲数量的增加,对激光放大器的能量提取效率增大,因此激光器的功率呈线性增加。将脉冲串分别调至双脉冲、三脉冲和四脉冲时,激光平均功率分别增大至 18.26 W、21.77 W 和 23.21 W。此外,第一个子脉冲激光获得的增益最大,相比于其他脉冲,其强度略高。

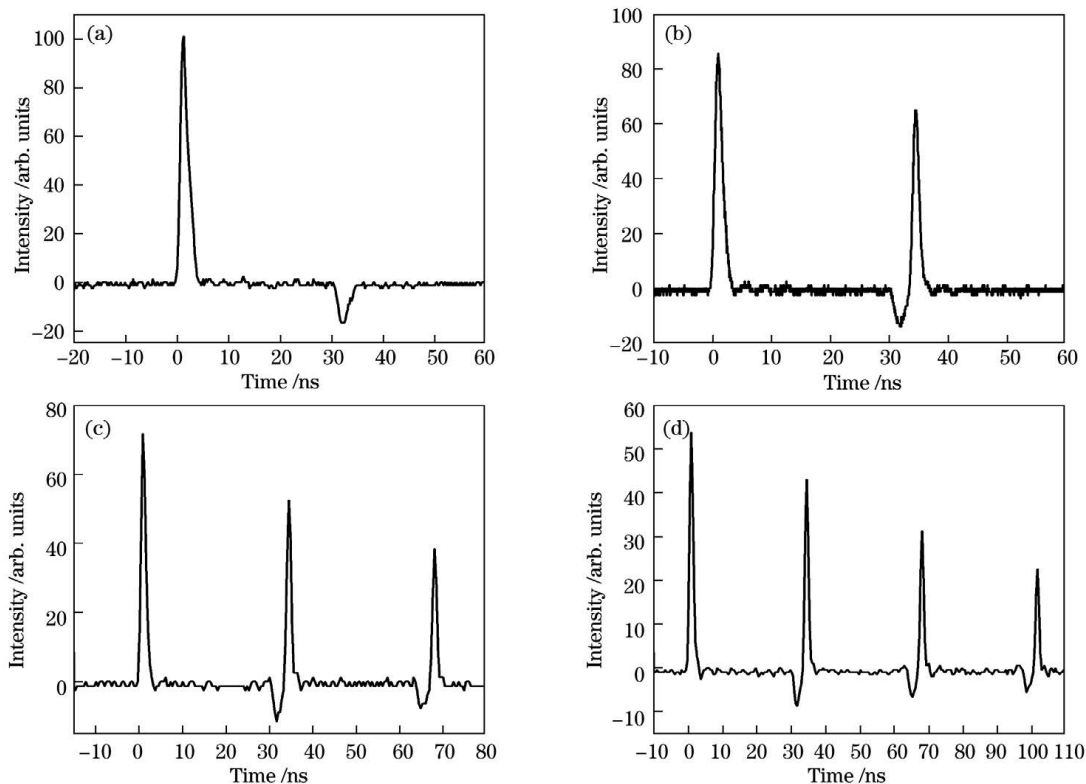


图 2 不同脉冲串模式下皮秒激光器的输出波形。(a) $n=1$; (b) $n=2$; (c) $n=3$; (d) $n=4$

Fig. 2 Output waveforms of picosecond laser deposited under different burst modes. (a) $n=1$; (b) $n=2$; (c) $n=3$; (d) $n=4$

在薄膜沉积前,依次采用去离子水、丙酮、无水乙醇溶液对玻璃和单晶硅基片超声清洗 5 min,以获得表面干净的基底。将清洗干净的基片及 ZnO 靶材(ZnO 的质量分数为 99.99%)安装到沉积室内,实验所用沉积装置与文献[32]一致,激光以 60° 入射角倾斜入射靶面,靶材法线和基底法线之间的夹角为 20° 。靶材与基底的距离为 50 mm,将沉积室的背景真空度抽到 $1.0 \times 10^{-5}\text{ Pa}$ 后,通入氧气(纯度为 99.99%)至沉积室的压强为 2 Pa。为防止靶材表面残留物污染基片,先进行预沉积 3 min,再将激光脉冲串数调制为 1、2、3、4 后进行沉积。为了获得不同的薄膜厚度,以 $6.0 \times 10^7 \sim 9.0 \times 10^7$ 个脉冲串的不同脉冲量进行沉积。

用光谱椭偏仪(Sentech 850DUV)测量薄膜的厚度;用原子力显微镜(Bruker Dimension ICON)

对薄膜表面粗糙度进行量化;用扫描电子显微镜(ZEISS GeminiSEM 300)对生长的 ZnO 薄膜表面形貌进行表征;用 X 射线衍射仪(Rigaku D/max-2500/PC)观察 ZnO 薄膜的晶体结构;用分光光度计(SoliSpec-3700 Plus)表征薄膜的光学特性;用四探针测试仪(M-3 型)表征薄膜的电阻特性。

3 分析与讨论

3.1 薄膜的粗糙度和厚度

图 3 所示为在玻璃基底上利用不同脉冲串模式沉积 ZnO 薄膜的线性沉积速率曲线,子脉冲数量范围为 1~4。表 1 为图 3 中相应薄膜的折射率和消光系数值,这两个数值与脉冲串发射数量和子脉冲数量有关。根据椭偏仪测量的厚度,可以得到薄膜的沉积速率分别为 $(0.71 \pm 0.02)\text{ nm/s}$ 、

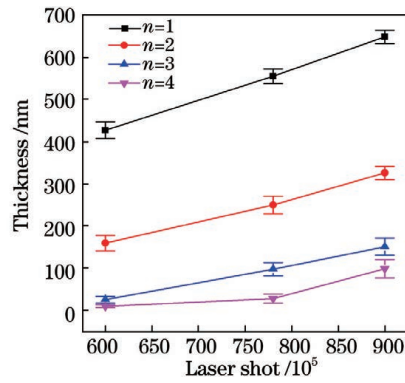


图 3 不同脉冲串模式下 ZnO 薄膜的线性沉积速率曲线

Fig. 3 Linear deposition rate curves of ZnO films deposited under different burst modes

(0.32 ± 0.02) nm/s, (0.12 ± 0.01) nm/s, (0.06 ± 0.01) nm/s。沉积速率的差异可能是因为脉冲间隔和脉冲串模式下能量分布不同的影响,在多脉冲沉积过程中脉冲间隔(33.3 ns)远小于等离子体的平均寿命^[33],纳米颗粒的平均速度约为 10^4 cm/s^[34-35],在消融过程中,第二个激光脉冲、第三个激光脉冲和第四个激光脉冲到达靶材的时间与第一个激光脉冲到达靶材时间的间隔分别为 33.3 ns、66.6 ns、99.9 ns,所以当第二个激光脉冲、第三个激光脉冲

表 1 $\lambda = 532$ nm 时不同脉冲串发射次数和不同脉冲串模式下制备的 ZnO 薄膜的折射率和消光系数Table 1 Refractive indices and extinction coefficients of ZnO films prepared with different laser shots and different burst modes at $\lambda = 532$ nm

Burst mode	Laser shot of 6.0×10^7		Laser shot of 7.8×10^7		Laser shot of 9.0×10^7	
	Refractive index	Extinction coefficient	Refractive index	Extinction coefficient	Refractive index	Extinction coefficient
$n=1$	1.632	0.021	1.623	0.017	1.618	0.005
$n=2$	1.694	0.027	1.684	0.025	1.678	0.022
$n=3$	1.786	0.040	1.766	0.039	1.763	0.032
$n=4$	1.853	0.075	1.810	0.072	1.798	0.042

如图 4 所示,在脉冲串发射数从 6.0×10^7 增加到 7.6×10^7 的过程中,单脉冲模式下在玻璃基底上沉积的 ZnO 薄膜的粗糙度增长速率大于多脉冲模式下的薄膜粗糙度增长速率。这是因为基于脉冲-离子体相互作用,等离子体吸收多脉冲发射的第二、第三和第四脉冲的部分能量,导致其等离子体动能增加。这种能量的增加表示物质被吸附在基底表面时的扩散时间会更长^[18]。随着扩散时间的延长,吉布斯自由能明显减小,有效地降低了形核势垒。且在多脉冲模式下,第一激光脉冲产生的纳米颗粒被后续激光脉冲加热分解,使得等离子体羽辉相对于单脉冲模式进一步膨胀^[36],原子/分子到达最大吸

和第四个激光脉冲到达靶材时,理论计算得到由第一个激光脉冲诱导产生的纳米颗粒离靶材仅有 $3.33 \mu\text{m}$ 、 $6.66 \mu\text{m}$ 和 $9.99 \mu\text{m}$ 。等离子体尚未完全脱离靶面,从而产生脉冲-等离子体相互作用。实际上,在第二个激光脉冲到达靶材之前,这种相互作用就开始了,在这种相互作用期间,后续脉冲能量中的一部分被等离子体中的物质吸收,因此到达靶材的激光能量变少,从靶材激发的物质也变少。这种脉冲-等离子体的相互作用也在单脉冲模式下产生,但强度要低得多,这是因为脉冲与离子的相互作用发生在后一个激光脉冲与之前激光脉冲形成的等离子体之间^[18]。而单脉冲模式的间隔为 $10 \mu\text{s}$,该时间与等离子体的平均寿命相近,从而导致这种相互作用变弱。除此之外,由图 2 可知,当脉冲模式从单脉冲变为多脉冲时,脉冲串中第一个脉冲的脉冲能量会随着脉冲串数量的增加而逐渐减少,这使得激光与靶材第一次作用的能量变少,而后续脉冲串中的脉冲又存在激光-等离子体相互作用,这都使得在多脉冲模式下存在脉冲串增加、沉积速率下降的情况。当脉冲串数量达到 5 时,沉积速率变为 0,未达到 ZnO 的烧蚀阈值,所以不存在激光沉积现象。

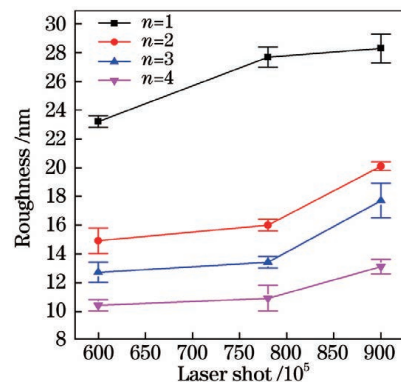


图 4 在不同脉冲串模式下制备的 ZnO 薄膜的粗糙度与脉冲串发射次数的变化关系

Fig. 4 Roughness as a function of laser shots of ZnO films made by different burst modes

收能量点的可能性也增大,从而有利于纳米层的有序生长。在同一沉积条件下,单脉冲模式下的薄膜粗糙度远大于多脉冲模式下的薄膜粗糙度,单脉冲机制下粗糙度增加的原因包括:1)在同一沉积时间条件下,随着沉积速率的增加,原子的表面扩散能减小,并且这可能在纳米层的表面产生缺陷;2)存在颗粒或飞溅物。在多脉冲模式下生长的薄膜中也存在较大的颗粒或飞溅物,但其数量远少于单脉冲模式下生长的薄膜,这些微米级颗粒在纳米层生长的初始阶段引起缺陷的累积效应,从

而导致粗糙度进一步增大。

3.2 薄膜的表面形貌分析

图 5 为在玻璃基底上利用不同脉冲串模式沉积的 ZnO 薄膜($10\ \mu\text{m} \times 10\ \mu\text{m}$)AFM 形貌图。所有的薄膜均由均匀的晶粒组成,且随着子脉冲数量的增加,薄膜表面变得更加致密、平整,这与表 1 所示的折射率变化情况相符。随着子脉冲数量从 1 增加到 4,颗粒的平均尺寸分别为 232.50 nm、204.46 nm、192.59 nm 和 163.85 nm,颗粒尺寸不断减小,且晶粒尺寸更加均匀,晶界逐渐模糊。

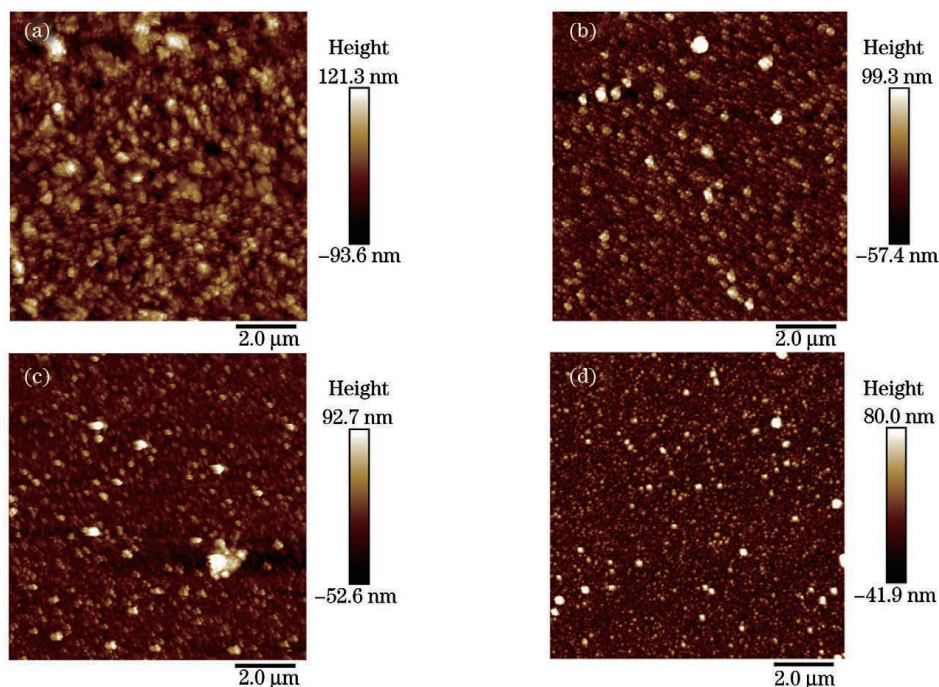


图 5 不同脉冲串模式下沉积的 ZnO 薄膜表面 AFM 图像。(a) $n=1$; (b) $n=2$; (c) $n=3$; (d) $n=4$

Fig. 5 AFM images of ZnO thin films deposited under different burst modes. (a) $n=1$; (b) $n=2$; (c) $n=3$; (d) $n=4$

图 6 为在放大 20000 倍时捕获的在单晶硅基底上利用不同脉冲串模式沉积的 ZnO 薄膜 SEM 形貌图和表面颗粒尺寸分布直方图,可以看到,薄膜表面的形态和质量通过脉冲串模式烧蚀逐步得到改善。首先,由于随着脉冲串数量的增加,以及单脉冲入射激光能量密度的降低,沉积速率下降,每次单脉冲入射时,对靶材的烧蚀作用变弱,导致靶材表面物质蒸发量变少,因此在等离子体羽流中更难引起明显的团聚,以及形成大颗粒,从而导致颗粒尺寸减小^[37]。其次,与激光-等离子体相互作用有关,在多脉冲沉积过程中,由于多脉冲对等离子体具有反复加热作用,前几个脉冲产生的颗粒会被加热分解、蒸发^[16],这都导致在多脉冲模式下,随着脉冲串数量的增加,薄膜表面颗粒尺寸减小。

3.3 薄膜的结构分析

图 7 所示为不同脉冲串模式下在玻璃基底上沉积的 ZnO 薄膜的 XRD 图谱。可以看到,所有样品的图谱都存在强度相当的(100)、(002)、(101)衍射峰,说明各个脉冲串下生长的 ZnO 薄膜都具有随机的多晶结构,而没有明显的择优取向。ZnO 的极性性质已广为人知,并且许多已有研究表明薄膜具有较强的(002)生长取向^[3,38-40]。但是,本实验选取的 PLD 合成条件有利于晶体沿(101)晶面生长,这已被之前的文献^[41-43]报道过,这些 XRD 图谱显示出相同的首选方向。已有研究证实了择优取向是受等离子体条件的影响而与基板材料无关^[41],并且不受脉冲串条件的影响^[44]。沿(101)晶面择优生长可能是由内部应力引起的,Fan 等^[43]通过使用高激光能量密度实现了沿(101)晶面择优生长,在这种情

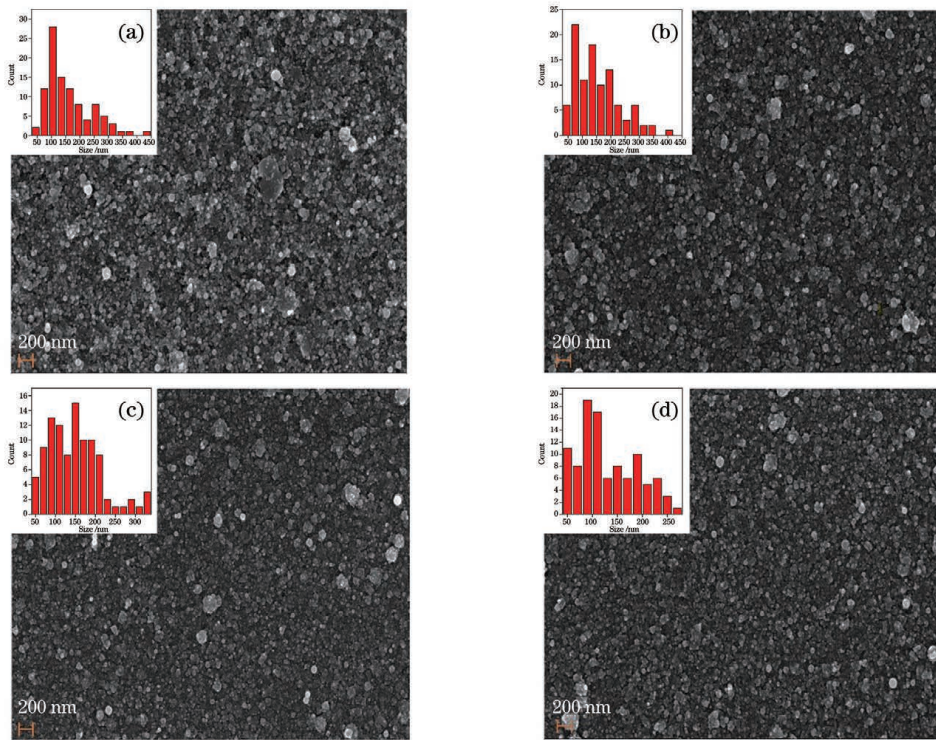


图 6 不同脉冲串模式下沉积的 ZnO 薄膜表面 SEM 形貌图和颗粒大小分布直方图。(a) $n=1$; (b) $n=2$; (c) $n=3$; (d) $n=4$
 Fig. 6 SEM morphologies and particle size distribution histograms for ZnO films deposited under different burst modes.
 (a) $n=1$; (b) $n=2$; (c) $n=3$; (d) $n=4$

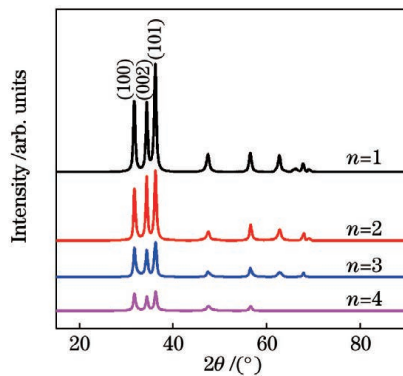


图 7 不同脉冲串模式下沉积的 ZnO 薄膜的 XRD 图谱
 Fig. 7 XRD patterns of ZnO films deposited under different burst modes

况下,等离子体本身带有一些内部应力,导致晶体

沿该晶面优先生长。一项理论研究^[45]表明应力的存在可以改变(002)和(101)取向之间的能量平衡。另一方面,在 PLD 的含氧反应气氛(>13.33 Pa)中高工作气压可能有利于形成强烈的(101)峰^[42-43,46]。此外,在激光产生的等离子体中存在的过程可能会导致可转移的生长或不常见的首选取向^[47-48]。可以看出,随着脉冲串数量的增加,一些衍射峰强度变小,一些峰消失。这是因为随着脉冲串数量的增加,薄膜的厚度迅速减小,已有研究证实了衍射峰的强度与厚度呈正向相关^[49]。在最大薄膜厚度处,衍射峰变得更加强烈和尖锐,衍射峰强度的增加总是伴随着半峰全宽的减小,这个结论与表 2 的数据变化趋势相符。如表 2 所示,半峰全宽在

表 2 不同脉冲串模式下 ZnO 薄膜的微观特性参数

Table 2 Microscopic characteristics parameters of ZnO films under different burst modes

Burst mode	$2\theta / (^\circ)$	FWHM $/ (^\circ)$	Lattice constant $c / (10^{-10} \text{ m})$	Crystal size / nm
$n=1$	36.215	0.492	5.20794	17.3
$n=2$	36.236	0.512	5.20291	16.7
$n=3$	36.256	0.509	5.19548	16.8
$n=4$	36.336	0.478	5.18967	17.9

0.478°~0.512°范围内变化,半峰全宽越小,表明结晶取向越好。所有 ZnO 薄膜的(101)衍射峰均在 36.215°~36.336°范围内,并且衍射峰的峰值强度随着脉冲串数量的增加而增大,这是因为随着脉冲串数量的增加,脉冲沉积速率下降,靶材的提取物变小,导致薄膜表面的氧含量增加,O 原子半径比 Zn 的原子半径小,引起了晶格畸变,使晶格常数比标准六角纤锌矿结构的 ZnO 薄膜的晶格常数小,从而使得衍射峰位置向大角度方向移动。薄膜的晶粒尺寸可以用谢乐公式^[40]计算得到。薄膜的晶粒尺寸会随着脉冲串数的增加先减小后增大,但晶粒尺寸总体变化不大,当脉冲串数为 4 时,晶粒的最大尺寸为 17.9 nm,结晶质量最好。

3.4 薄膜的光学特性

由于不同脉冲串模式下沉积速率不同,通过控制沉积时间,得到了相同厚度 ZnO 薄膜的透过率曲线(300~800 nm),如图 8 所示。透过率曲线的强烈上下振荡特性是由薄膜干涉所致^[50],这表明薄膜表面光滑致密且厚度均匀,成膜质量高。然而,不同的 ZnO 薄膜对光的吸收存在差异,沉积过程中对 ZnO 薄膜在可见光区域(380~800 nm)的平均透过率一般要求在 80%以上。脉冲串数为 1、2、3、4 时 ZnO 薄膜的平均透过率(T_{avg})分别为 90.31%、92.72%、93.98%、94.81%,所得薄膜的平均透过率较高,光学性能良好,可应用于光电子器件的制备。透过率随脉冲串数的增加而增大,这主要是因为随着脉冲串数的增加,薄膜的质量得到改善,进而减小了对光的散射。同时发现在 380 nm 左右,所用样品都具有一个很陡峭的吸收边,这是由 ZnO 中电子在价带与导带之间的跃迁吸收产生的^[38]。

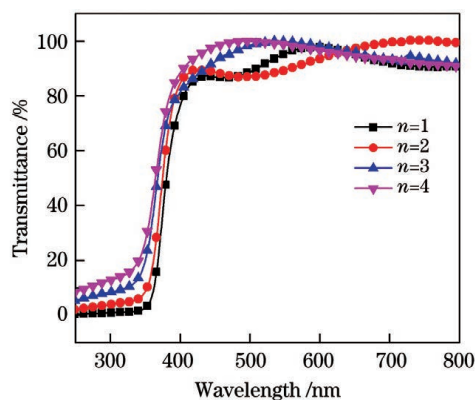


图 8 不同脉冲串模式下沉积的 ZnO 薄膜的透过率曲线
Fig. 8 Optical transmittance of ZnO thin films deposited under different burst modes

ZnO 薄膜在可见光波段具有直接带隙,则其光

吸收系数遵循 Tauc 关系^[51]

$$ahv = A(hv - E_g)^{1/2}, \quad (1)$$

式中: A 为常数; E_g 为光学带隙; a 、 h 和 v 分别为光吸收系数、普朗克常数和光子频率。根据 Lambert-Bouguer 定律^[31]计算得到

$$a = -\frac{1}{d} \ln T, \quad (2)$$

式中: d 和 T 分别为薄膜的厚度和透射率。以带隙宽度 $(ahv)^2$ 为纵坐标,光子能量 hv 为横坐标作图,如图 9 所示,对所得曲线作切线,其切线与横坐标相交的截距即为禁带宽度 E_g 。在脉冲串数为 1、2、3、4 条件下沉积的 ZnO 薄膜的 E_g 分别为 3.317、3.343、3.362、3.427 eV,与标准的 ZnO 禁带宽度(3.3 eV)相差不大。由此可见,禁带宽度随脉冲串数增加的变化趋势与图 8 所示的透过率曲线中,随着脉冲串数增加,吸收边的中心波长向短波方向移动的趋势对应。随着脉冲串数量的增多,颗粒的尺寸减小,密度变大,带隙宽度增大^[52]。

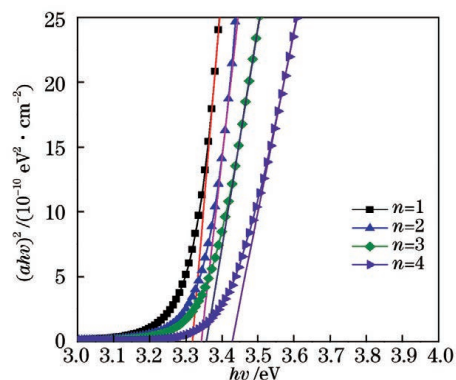


图 9 不同脉冲串模式下沉积的 ZnO 薄膜的光学带隙
Fig. 9 Optical band gaps of ZnO thin films deposited under different burst modes

3.5 薄膜的电学特性

通过控制不同脉冲串模式下的沉积时间,得到相同厚度 ZnO 薄膜电阻率随子脉冲串数量的变化关系,如图 10 所示。可以看到,薄膜的电阻率随脉冲串数量的增加而下降,原因主要是薄膜结晶质量提高,晶界变小,导致载流子在晶界表面受到的散射减弱,薄膜电阻率减小。此外,高质量的结晶表面有利于减小结构缺陷对自由电子的束缚作用,载流子浓度随之增加,薄膜电阻率也会因此下降^[50]。但其电阻率变化趋势与 XRD 分析的结晶尺寸变化趋势不太一致,这极大可能是受到薄膜厚度的影响。已有研究证明随着薄膜厚度的增加,晶粒尺寸增大。而薄膜厚度的变化也可以进一步影响薄膜的电阻率^[53-54]。因此,为了减小薄膜厚度对其电学特性的

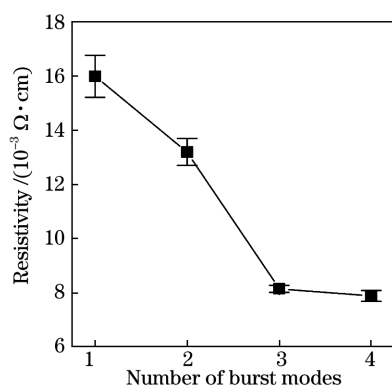


图 10 ZnO 薄膜的电阻率随脉冲串模式数的变化曲线

Fig. 10 Curve of resistivity of ZnO films as a function of number of burst modes

影响,通过控制沉积时间得到不同脉冲串模式下厚度一致的薄膜。在这样的实验条件下,得到脉冲串数为 4 时,薄膜的最小电阻率为 $7.8 \times 10^{-3} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ 。

4 结 论

利用不同脉冲串模式下(脉冲串数量从 1 增加到 4)的 PLD 技术在玻璃和单晶硅基底上制备出高质量的 ZnO 薄膜,并对这四种沉积方案下生长的 ZnO 薄膜进行薄膜厚度、粗糙度、微观样貌、晶体结构、光学特性及电学特性的表征及分析。结果表明:单脉冲烧蚀的沉积速率远大于多脉冲烧蚀的沉积速率,并且随着脉冲串数量的增加,沉积速率不断降低,这说明单脉冲对靶材的烧蚀更为有效,然而在同沉积条件下,利用多脉冲烧蚀得到的薄膜,其粗糙度更低,表面光滑致密,且纳米大颗粒更少。所制备的 ZnO 薄膜具有以(101)面为主的多晶结构,薄膜的晶粒尺寸随脉冲串数量的增多先减小后增大,且在脉冲串数为 4 时结晶质量最好,晶粒最大尺寸为 17.9 nm。此外,所制备薄膜还具有更高的透射率和更低的电阻率,透过率为 95.70%,电阻率为 $7.8 \times 10^{-3} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ 。综合以上分析结果发现,相较于单脉冲模式,多脉冲模式可以进一步改善沉积 ZnO 薄膜质量,并且当脉冲串数为 4 时,薄膜表面的粗糙度更低,颗粒尺寸更小,透射率更高,结晶质量更好,电阻率更低,这对于光学应用领域 ZnO 薄膜的制备具有重大意义。

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Picosecond Pulsed Laser Deposition Technique to Fabricate Zinc-Oxide Thin Films Through Burst Mode

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Abstract

Objective Pulsed laser deposition (PLD) is a technique, for removing material from the surface of a target that uses laser energy pulses. It has several advantages over other depositions methods, including high particle energy to form film, fast deposition rate, and no restriction on the target materials. PLD technology has advanced rapidly in recent years, and it is now widely used in the production of metals, ceramics, transparent electrodes, and high-temperature superconducting films. For traditional PLD technology, nanosecond single-pulse lasers are commonly used as excitation sources. One disadvantage of using nanosecond pulsed laser is the possibility of selective ablation, which could result in a lack of stoichiometry during the process. This is a critical challenge that nanosecond PLD (ns-PLD) technologies for scientific research and industrial applications. With the increasing availability of commercial ultrashort laser sources, in recent years, and its distinct advantage of efficient laser ablation, the ultrashort pulse PLD is gaining popularity as a method for producing thin films. Ultrashort pulse PLD demonstrates its potential capacity to control the emission of droplets due to the diverse ablation mechanisms, even though it may not be the ultimate solution in smooth film deposition. Furthermore, the pulse sequence presented in this article has the potential to change the laser-matter interaction, which can be used to improve the deposit's surface quality and optical properties.

Methods A method for pulsed deposition of picosecond laser based on different pulse burst modes is presented, consisting of four main components: seed oscillator, pulse selector, laser amplifier, and power controller (Fig. 1). The laser burst mode is set from 1 to 4 (Fig. 2) with a 532 nm output wavelength, 100 kHz laser frequency, 33.3 ns intrapulse interval, and 10 μ s interpulse string interval. Zinc oxide (ZnO) transparent conductive thin films are deposited on glass substrates and single-crystal silicon substrates via the proposed method. The effect of different pulse burst modes on the crystal structure, surface morphology, and optical properties of the ZnO film is studied thoroughly using spectroscopic ellipsometry, atomic force microscopy, X-ray diffractometry, ultraviolet-visible spectrophotometry, and scanning electron microscopy.

Results and Discussions We obtain film thickness (Fig. 3), refractive index, and extinction coefficient data (Table 1) created for various burst modes (from 1 to 4) and discover that the deposition rate decreases and are accompanied by an increase in refractive index as the number of burst modes increases. To begin, the intrapulse period in multipulse mode is set to 33.3 ns and the average plasma velocity is around 10^4 cm/s. Therefore, using a burst mode of 4, the plasma in the multipulse mode is not completely disengaged from the target when the last pulse is incident, resulting in laser-plasma contact and partial absorption of the pulsed laser energy by the plasma, and limiting target material extraction. Furthermore, the energy distribution of laser pulses is related to the fact that the first pulse energy gradually decreases as the multipulse burst mode increases in size, reducing the first energy interaction between the laser and the target. The roughness diminishes as the multipulse burst mode is increased (Fig. 4). As the laser-plasma interaction is strengthened, the plasma's kinetic energy increases, resulting in longer plasma lifetimes, longer diffusion durations on the substrate, and eventually favoring the orderly formation of thin films. In the single-pulse mode of laser deposition, large particles and droplets are present; however, the laser-plasma interaction in the multipulse mode can further heat up and break down the large particles in the plasma, resulting in fewer large particles on the film surface and smoother, denser films (Figs. 5 and 6). The crystal

structure of the prepared films is examined using XRD (Fig. 7) and the crystal structure data for different pulse burst modes (from 1 to 4) are compared, as shown in Table 1, and it is discovered that the different pulse burst mode does not affect the crystal structure. However, when the pulse burst mode is 4, it has some subtle effects on the crystal size, diffraction peak angle, and film intensity, with larger crystal size and better film quality. The transmittance curves of the films deposited in various pulse burst modes are determined (Fig. 8). In the visible range (380–800 nm), the average transmittances of the films are 90.31%, 92.72%, 93.98%, and 94.81%, respectively. The optical band gaps (Fig. 9) are 3.317, 3.343, 3.362, and 3.427 eV, which are comparable to the normal ZnO bandgap (3.3 eV), which corresponds to the tendency of the central wavelength of the absorption edge in the transmittance curve to move in the direction of short wave. Finally, we calculate resistivity curves for the deposited films under various pulse burst modes (Fig. 10) and discover that the film resistivity is lowest when the pulse burst mode is 4.

Conclusions The high-quality ZnO films are deposited on glass and silicon substrates using a laser deposition process in different burst modes, with the number of subpulses in each burst increasing from 1 to 4. The effects of different burst modes of picosecond lasers on the film thickness, roughness, surface topography, crystal structure, optical properties, and electrical properties of ZnO films are investigated. When the pulse burst mode is set to 4, the film surface has less roughness, smaller particle size, higher transmittance, better crystalline quality, and lower resistivity when compared with other burst modes. This is extremely important for relevant optical applications to the production of ZnO thin film.

Key words thin films; pulsed laser deposition method; burst mode; picosecond pulsed laser; zinc oxide film