Laser Induced Microexplosions and Applications in Laser Micromachining

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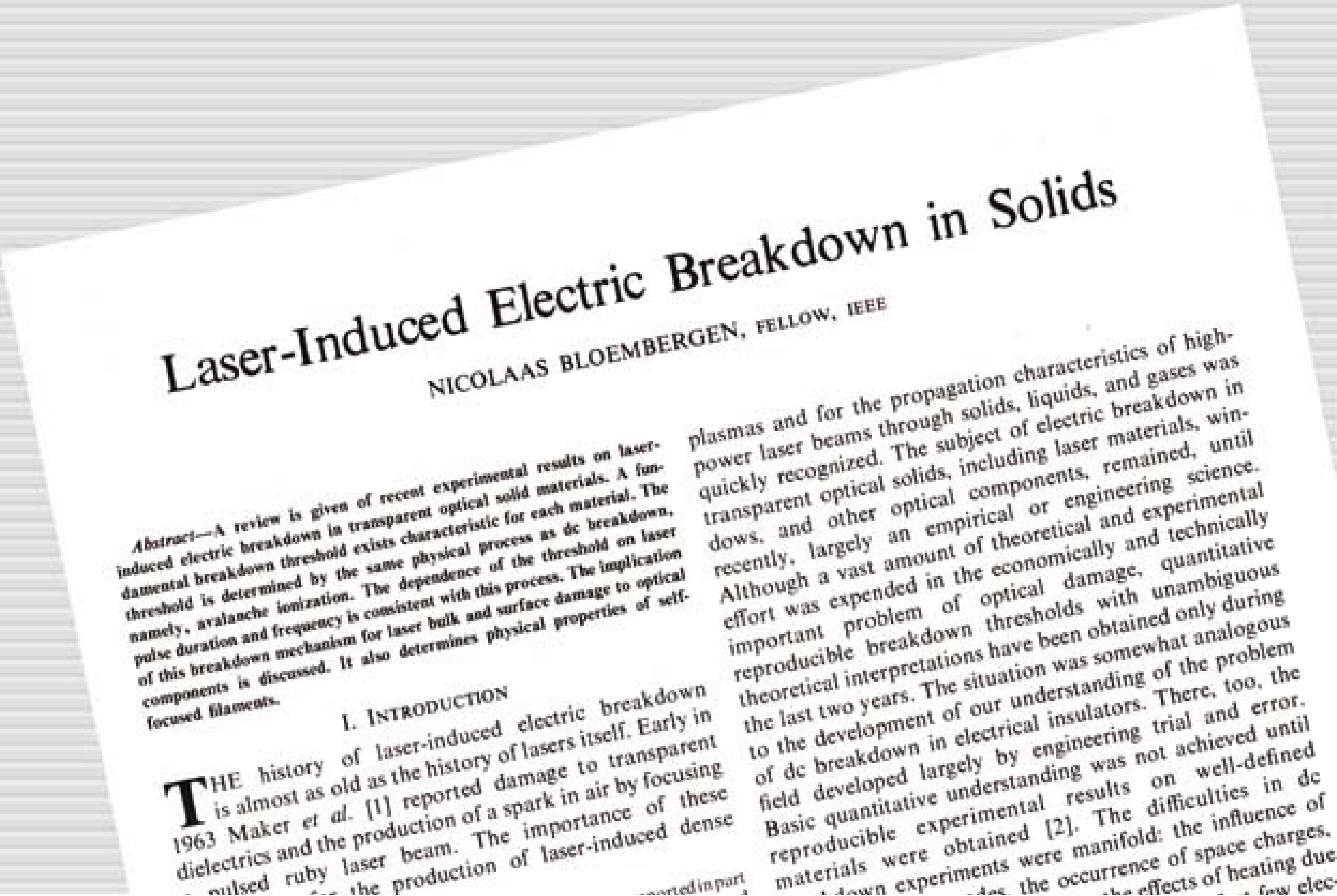
2002 Ultrafast Phenomena
Vancouver, 16 May 2002

Introduction



Laser-Induced Electric Breakdown in Solids

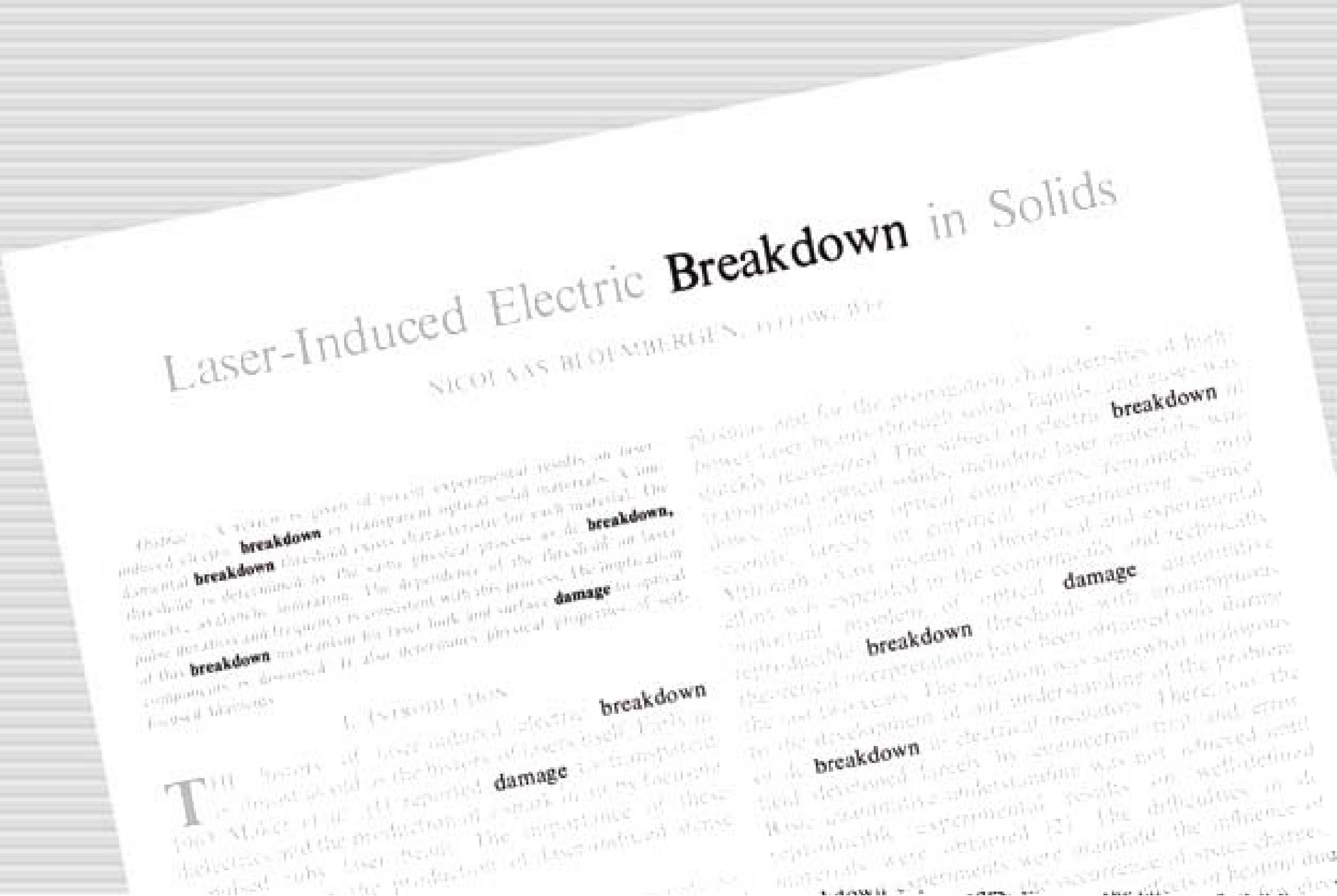
NICOLAAS BLOEMBERGEN, FELLOW, IEEE

Abstract—A review is given of recent experimental results on laser-induced electric breakdown in transparent optical solid materials. A fundamental breakdown threshold exists characteristic for each material. The threshold is determined by the same physical process as dc breakdown, namely, avalanche ionization. The dependence of the threshold on laser pulse duration and frequency is consistent with this process. The implication of this breakdown mechanism for laser bulk and surface damage to optical components is discussed. It also determines physical properties of self-focused filaments.

I. Introduction

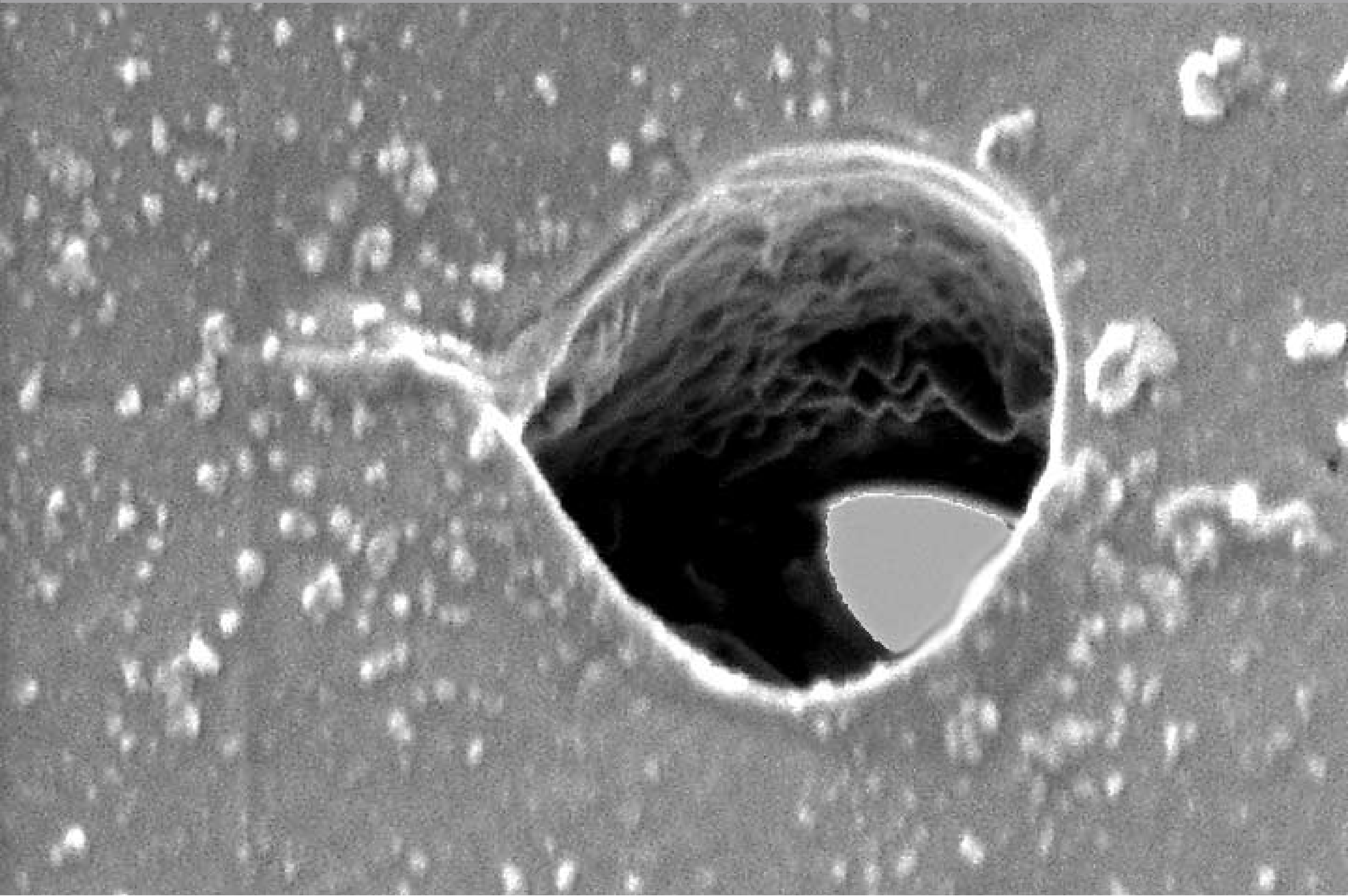
THE history of laser-induced electric breakdown is almost as old as the history of lasers itself. Early in 1963 Maker *et al.* [1] reported damage to transparent dielectrics and the production of a spark in air by focusing a pulsed ruby laser beam. The importance of these ... the production of laser-induced dense plasmas and for the propagation characteristics of high-power laser beams through solids, liquids, and gases was quickly recognized. The subject of electric breakdown in transparent optical solids, including laser materials, windows, and other optical components, remained, until recently, largely an empirical or engineering science. Although a vast amount of theoretical and experimental effort was expended in the economically and technically important problem of optical damage, quantitative reproducible breakdown thresholds with unambiguous theoretical interpretations have been obtained only during the last two years. The situation was somewhat analogous to the development of our understanding of the problem of dc breakdown in electrical insulators. There, too, the field developed largely by engineering trial and error. Basic quantitative understanding was not achieved until reproducible experimental results on well-defined materials were obtained [2]. The difficulties in dc breakdown experiments were manifold: the influence of ... the occurrence of space charges, ... the effects of heating due ... few elec-

Introduction


Laser-Induced Electric Breakdown in Solids

Introduction

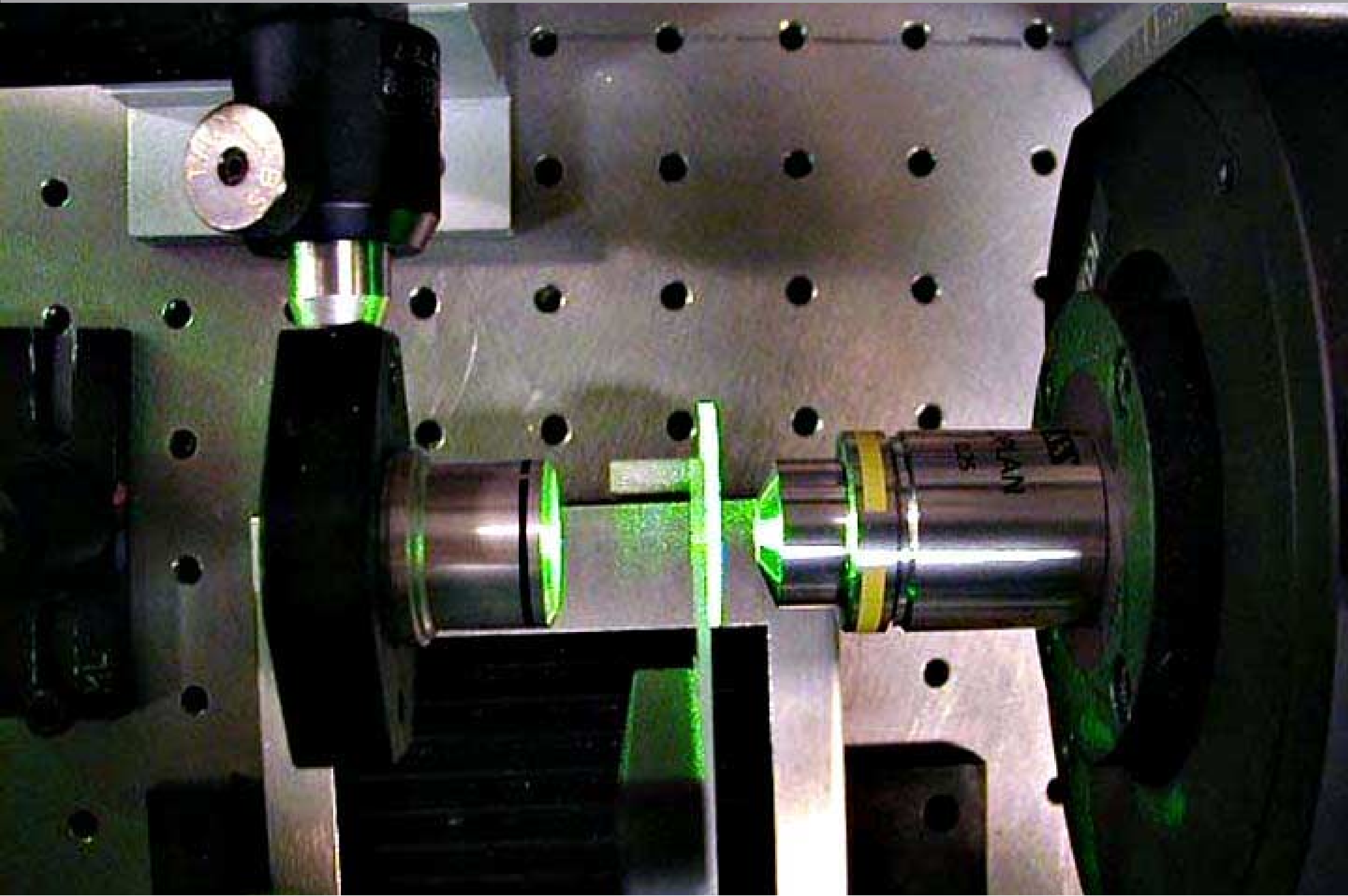
Introduction



Introduction

use damage for processing!

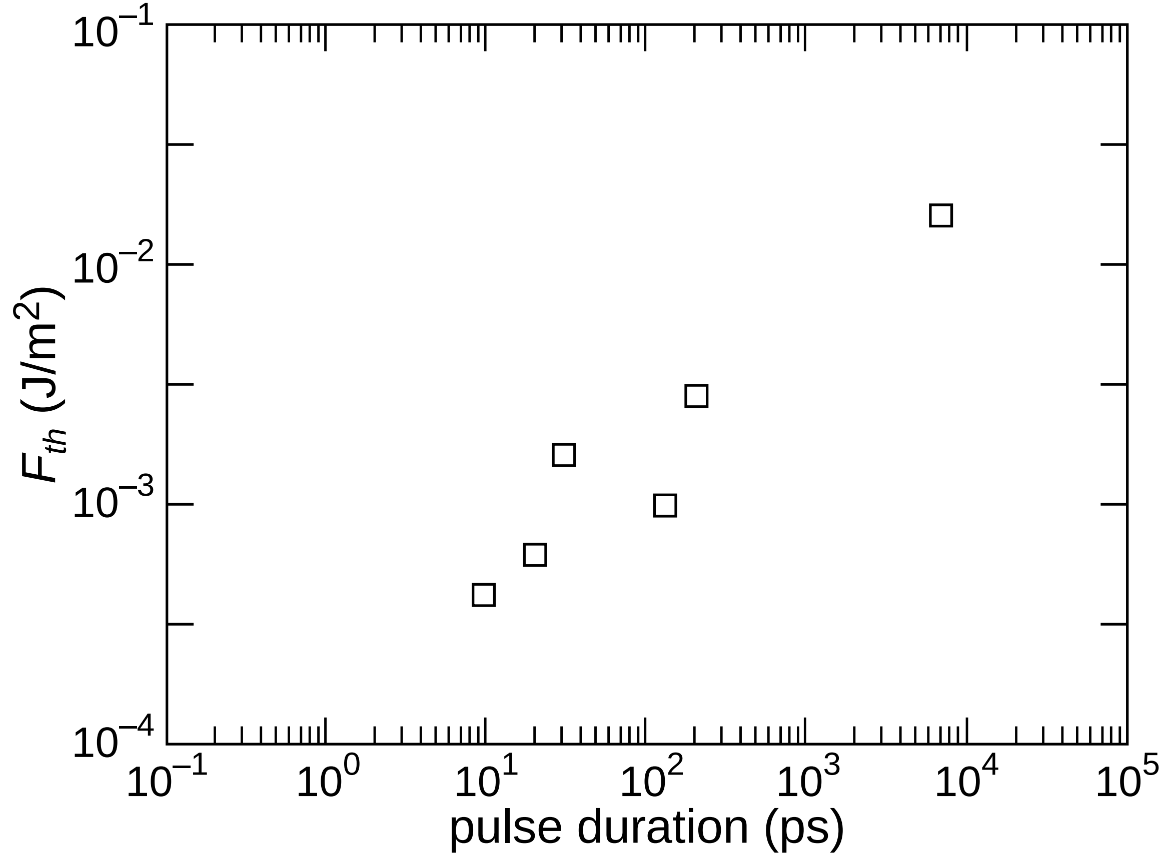
Outline



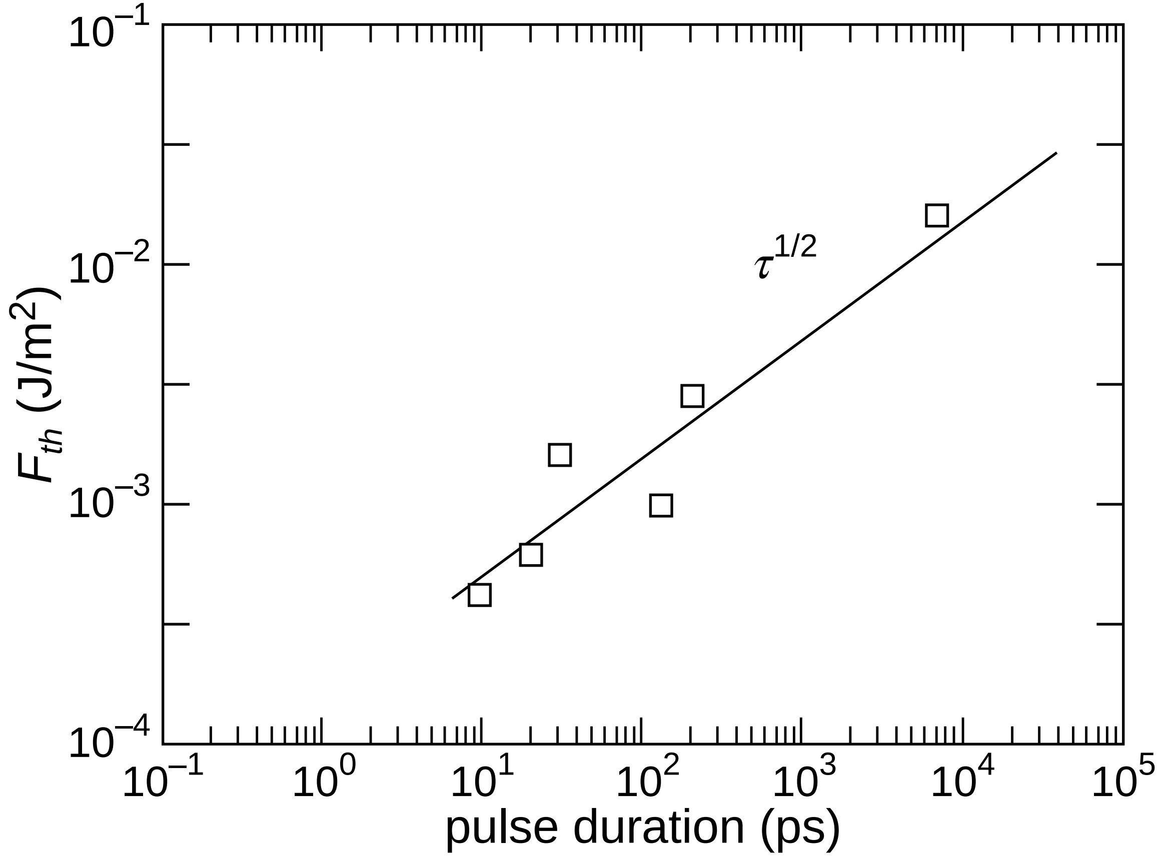
Outline

- Processing with fs pulses
- Role of focusing
- Low-energy processing

Processing with fs pulses



Processing with fs pulses



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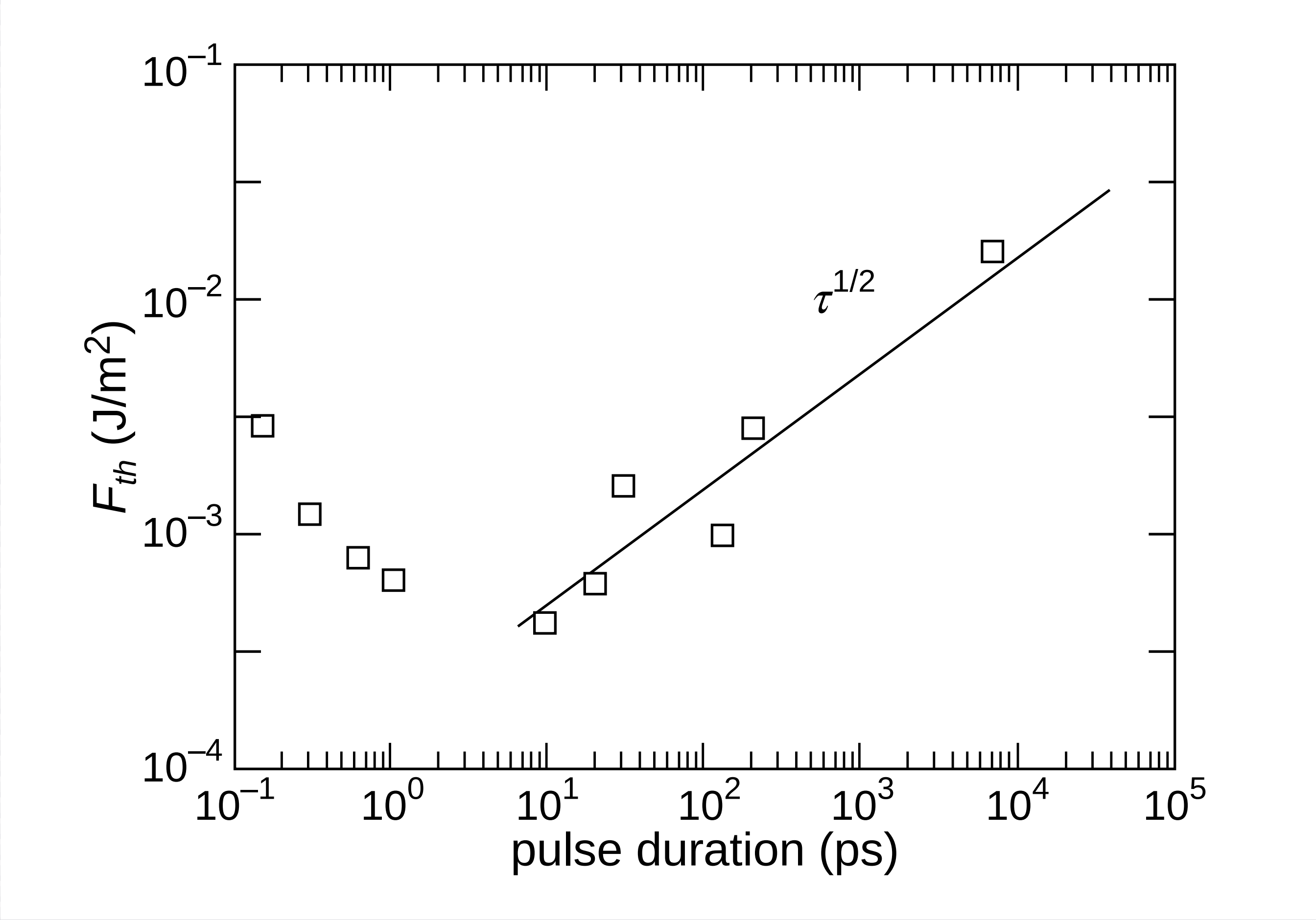
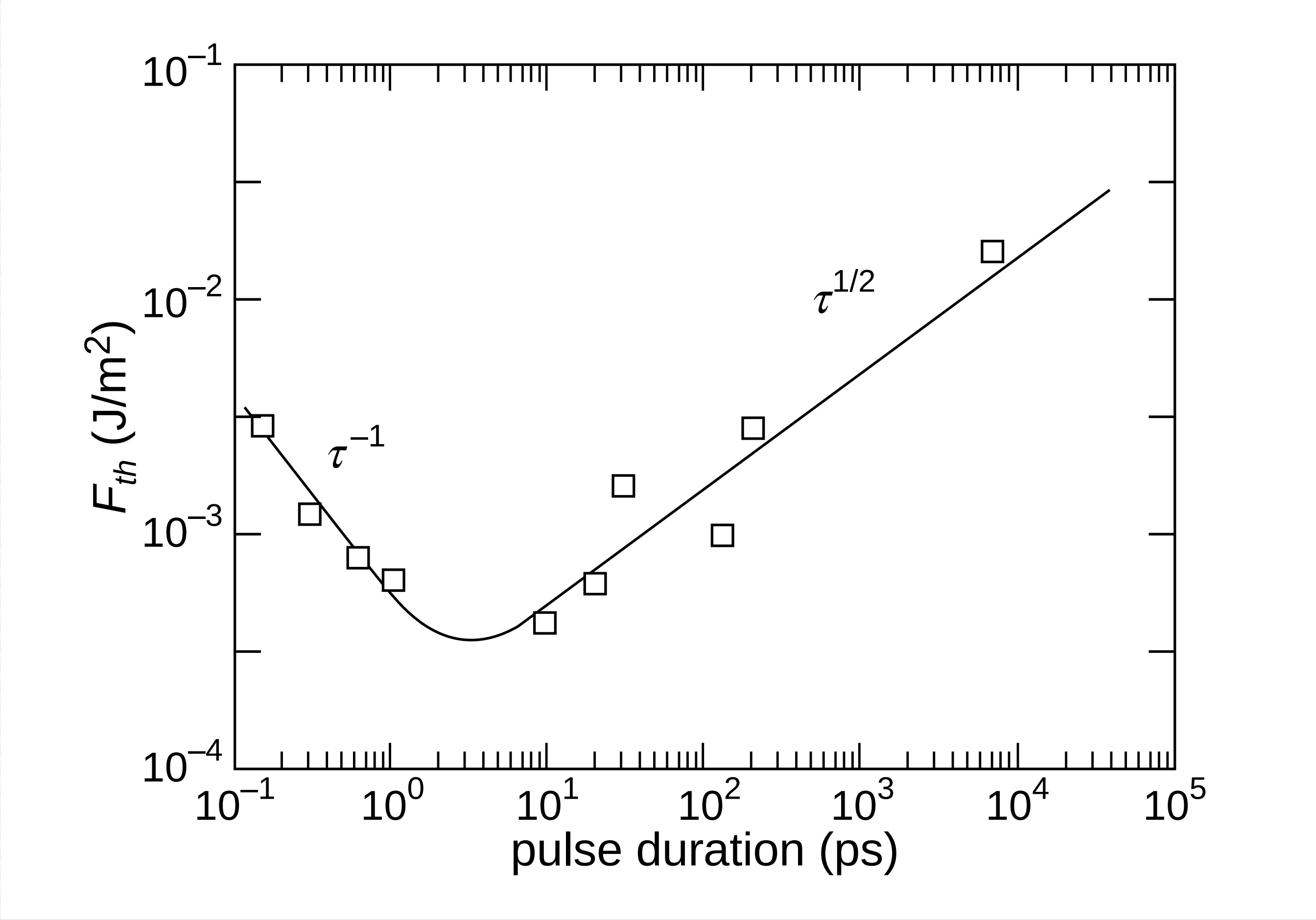


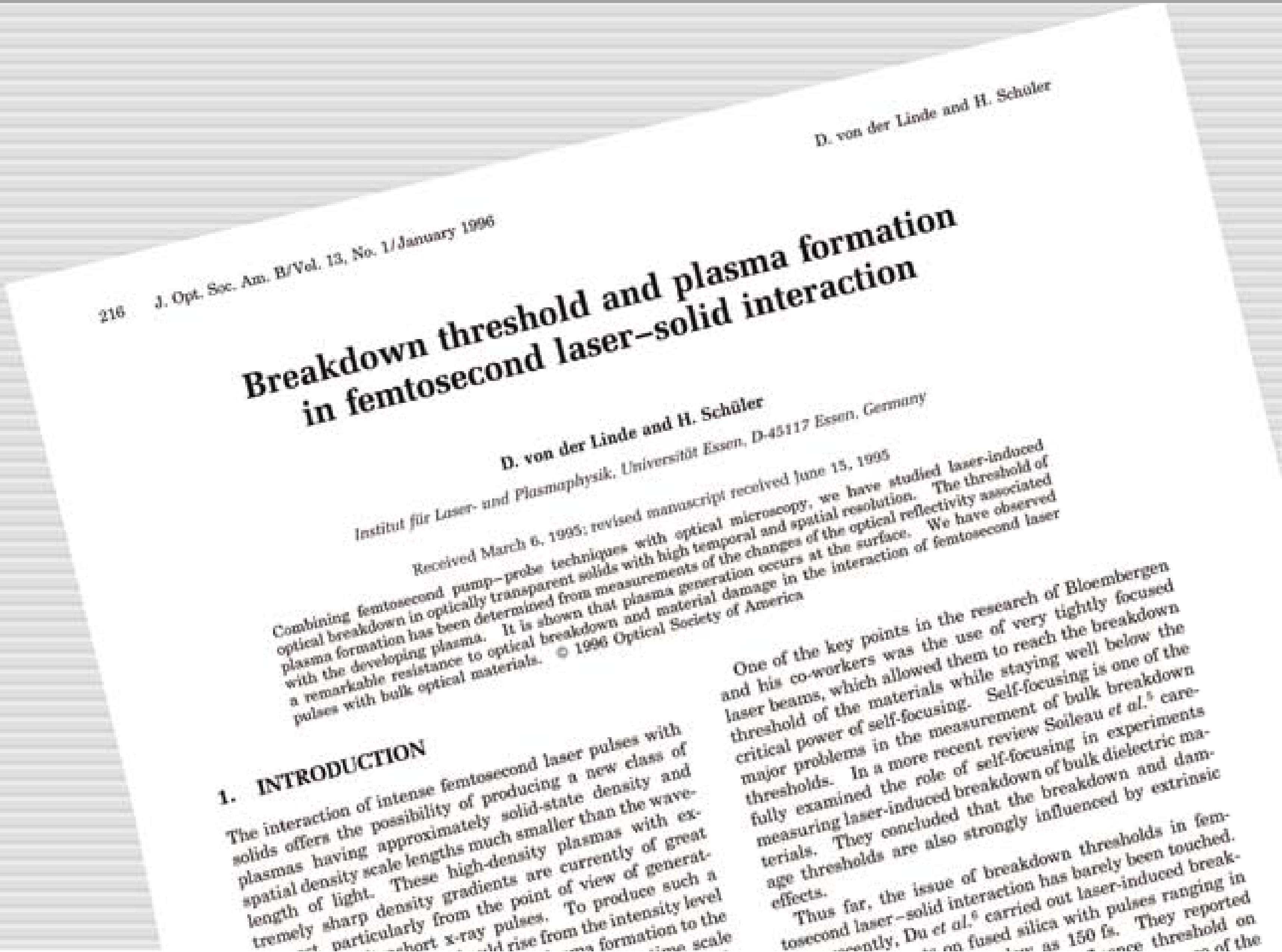
Du *et al.*, *Appl. Phys. Lett.* 64, 3071 (1994)

Processing with fs pulses



Du *et al.*, *Appl. Phys. Lett.* 64, 3071 (1994)

Processing with fs pulses



Breakdown threshold and plasma formation in femtosecond laser–solid interaction

D. von der Linde and H. Schüler
Institut für Laser- und Plasmaphysik, Universität Essen, D-45117 Essen, Germany

Received March 6, 1995; revised manuscript received June 15, 1995

Combining femtosecond pump–probe techniques with optical microscopy, we have studied laser-induced optical breakdown in optically transparent solids with high temporal and spatial resolution. The threshold of plasma formation has been determined from measurements of the changes of the optical reflectivity associated with the developing plasma. It is shown that plasma generation occurs at the surface. We have observed a remarkable resistance to optical breakdown and material damage in the interaction of femtosecond laser pulses with bulk optical materials. © 1996 Optical Society of America

1. INTRODUCTION

The interaction of intense femtosecond laser pulses with solids offers the possibility of producing a new class of plasmas having approximately solid-state density and spatial density scale lengths much smaller than the wavelength of light. These high-density plasmas with extremely sharp density gradients are currently of great interest, particularly from the point of view of generating ultrashort x-ray pulses. To produce such a

One of the key points in the research of Bloembergen and his co-workers was the use of very tightly focused laser beams, which allowed them to reach the breakdown threshold of the materials while staying well below the critical power of self-focusing. Self-focusing is one of the major problems in the measurement of bulk breakdown thresholds. In a more recent review Soileau *et al.*[5] carefully examined the role of self-focusing in experiments measuring laser-induced breakdown of bulk dielectric materials. They concluded that the breakdown and damage thresholds are also strongly influenced by extrinsic effects.

Thus far, the issue of breakdown thresholds in femtosecond laser–solid interaction has barely been touched. Recently, Du *et al.*[6] carried out laser-induced breakdown

Processing with fs pulses

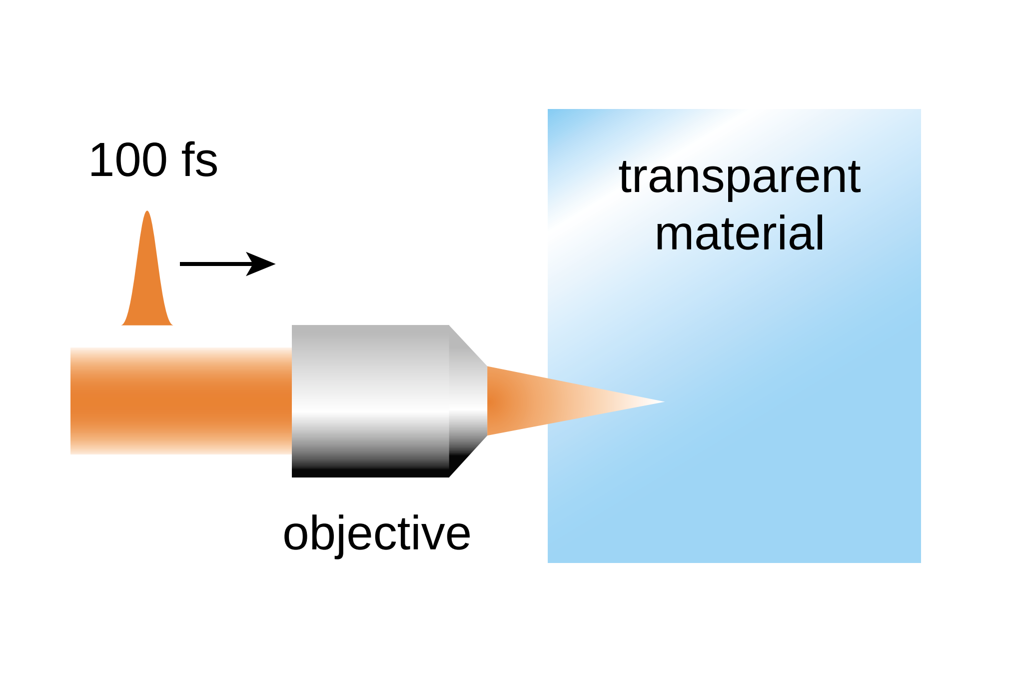
"… clear evidence that no bulk plasmas …

[and] … no bulk damage could be produced

with femtosecond laser pulses."

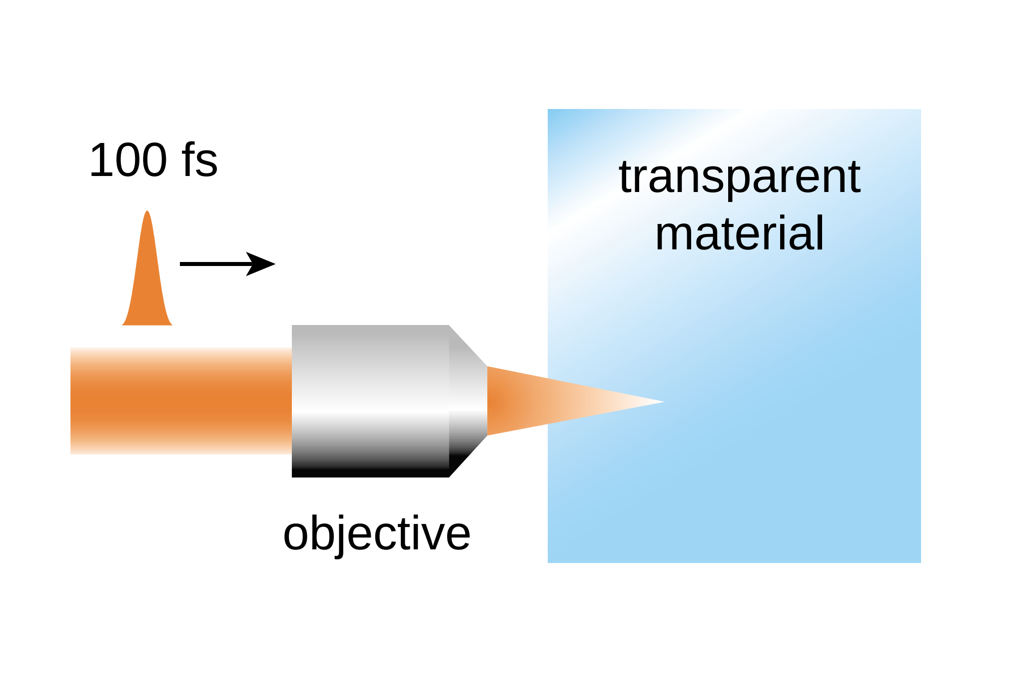
von der Linde, *et al.*, *J. Opt. Soc. Am.* 13, 216 (1996)

focus laser beam inside material



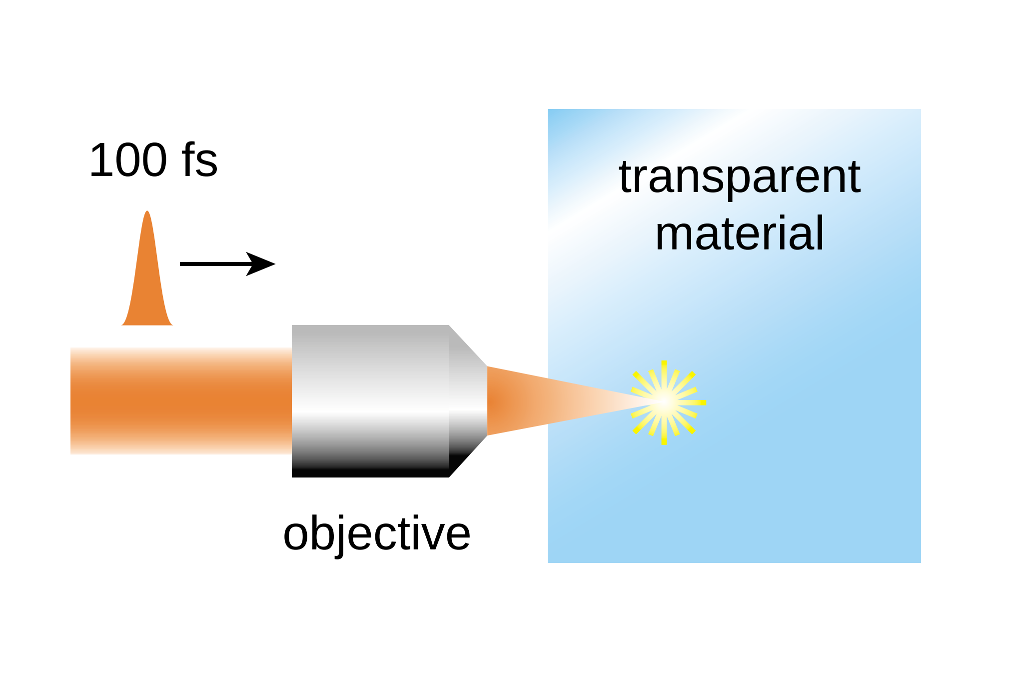
Glezer, *et al.*, *Opt. Lett.* 21, 2023 (1996)

Processing with fs pulses



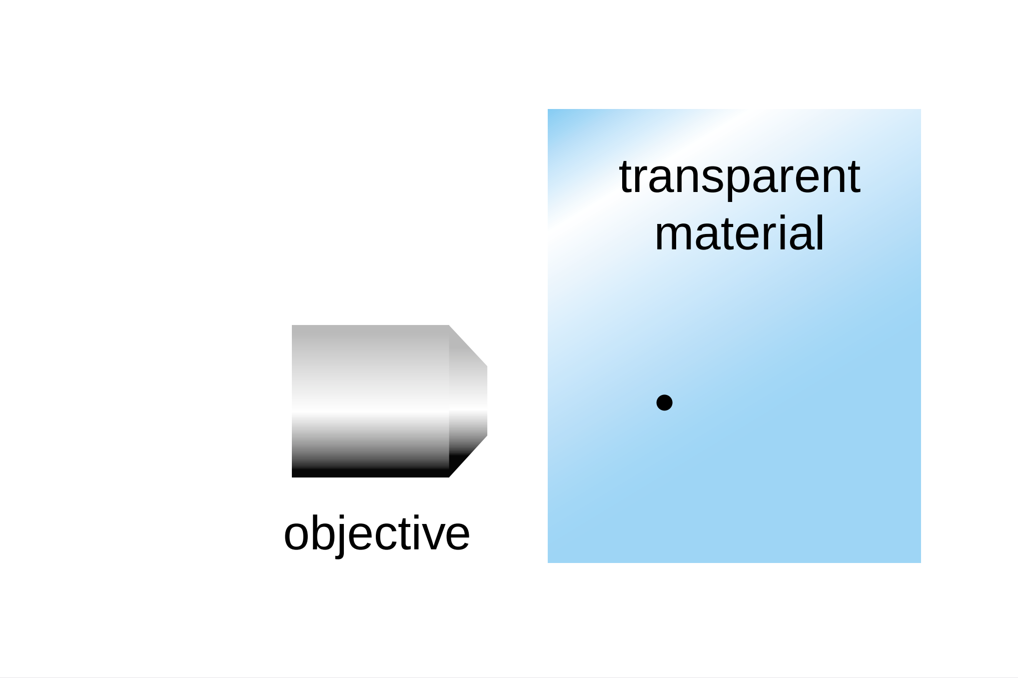
high intensity at focus…

Processing with fs pulses



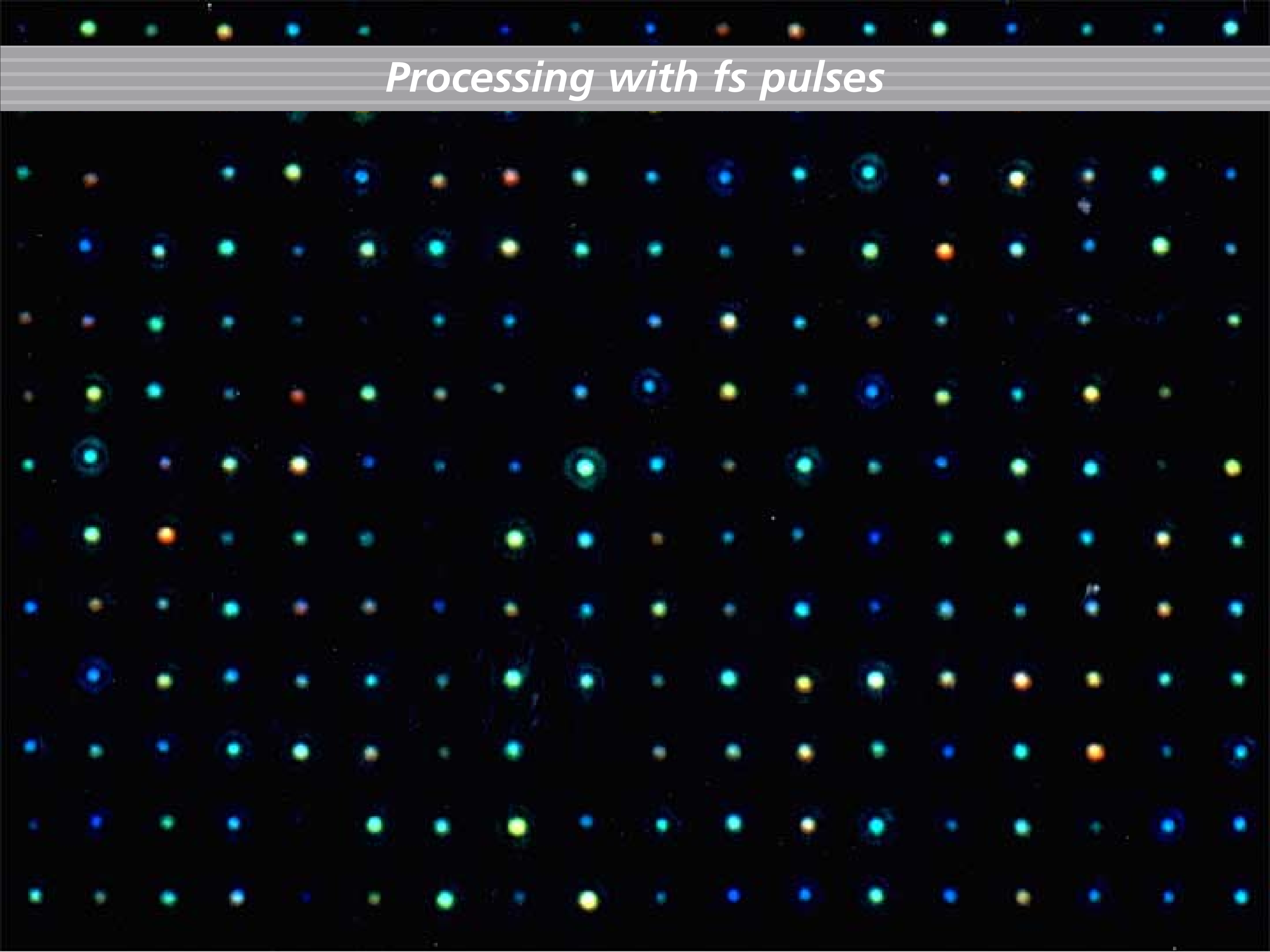
… causes nonlinear ionization…

Processing with fs pulses

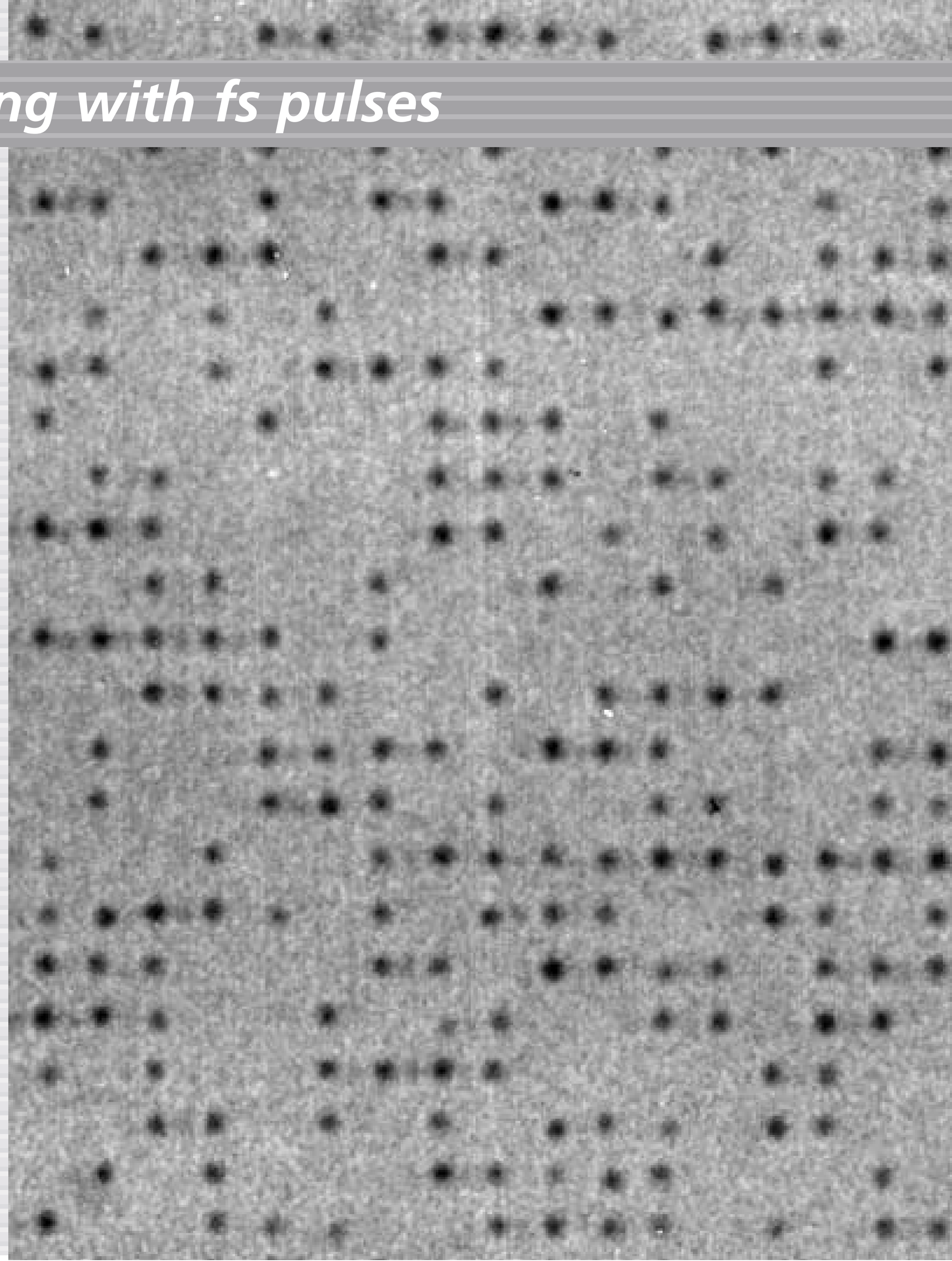


and ‘microexplosion’ causes microscopic damage

Processing with fs pulses



Processing with fs pulses



2 x 2 μm array

fused silica, 0.65 NA

0.5 μJ, 100 fs, 800 nm

***Opt. Lett.* 21, 2023 (1996)**

Processing with fs pulses

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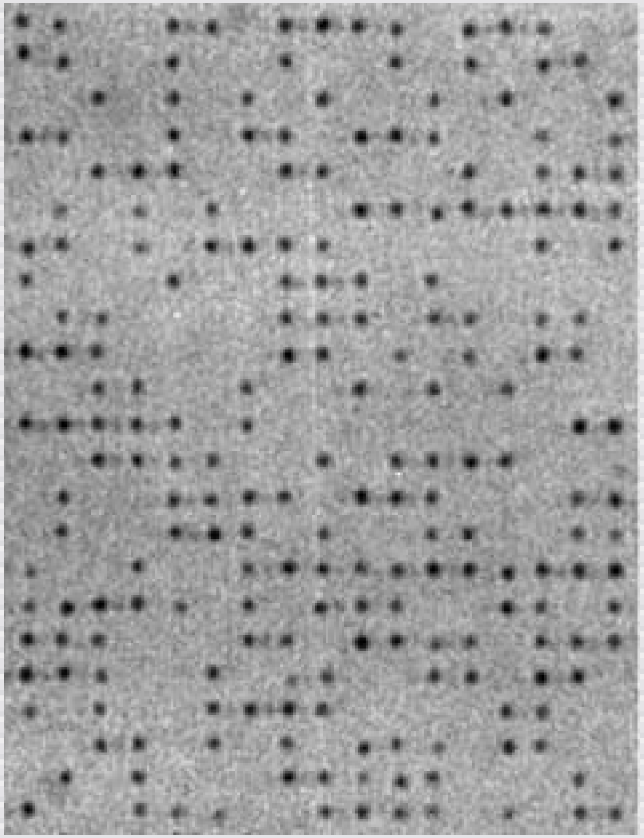

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Processing with fs pulses

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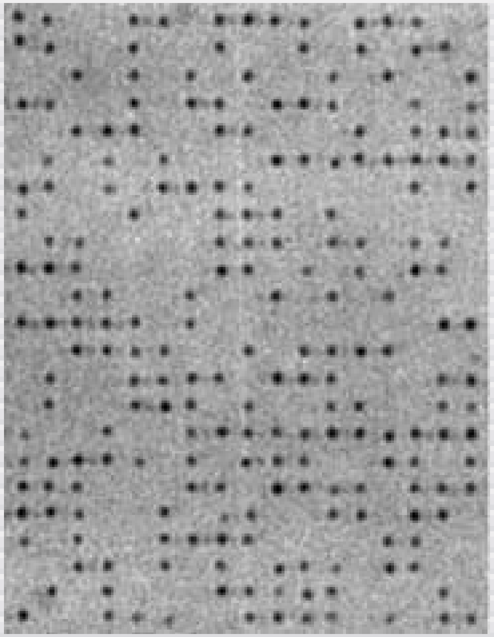

***Opt. Lett.* 21, 2023 (1996)**

Processing with fs pulses

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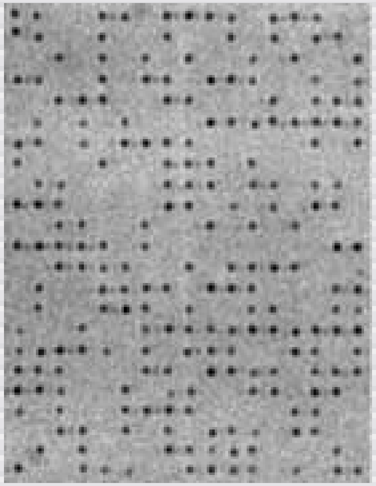
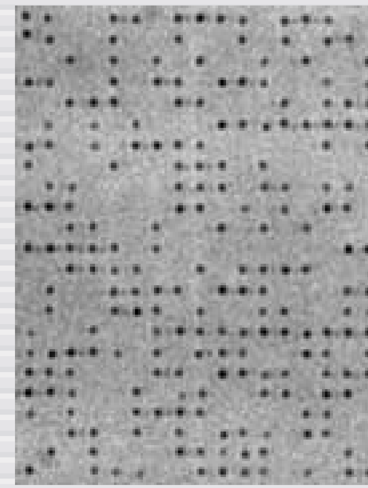


***Opt. Lett.* 21, 2023 (1996)**

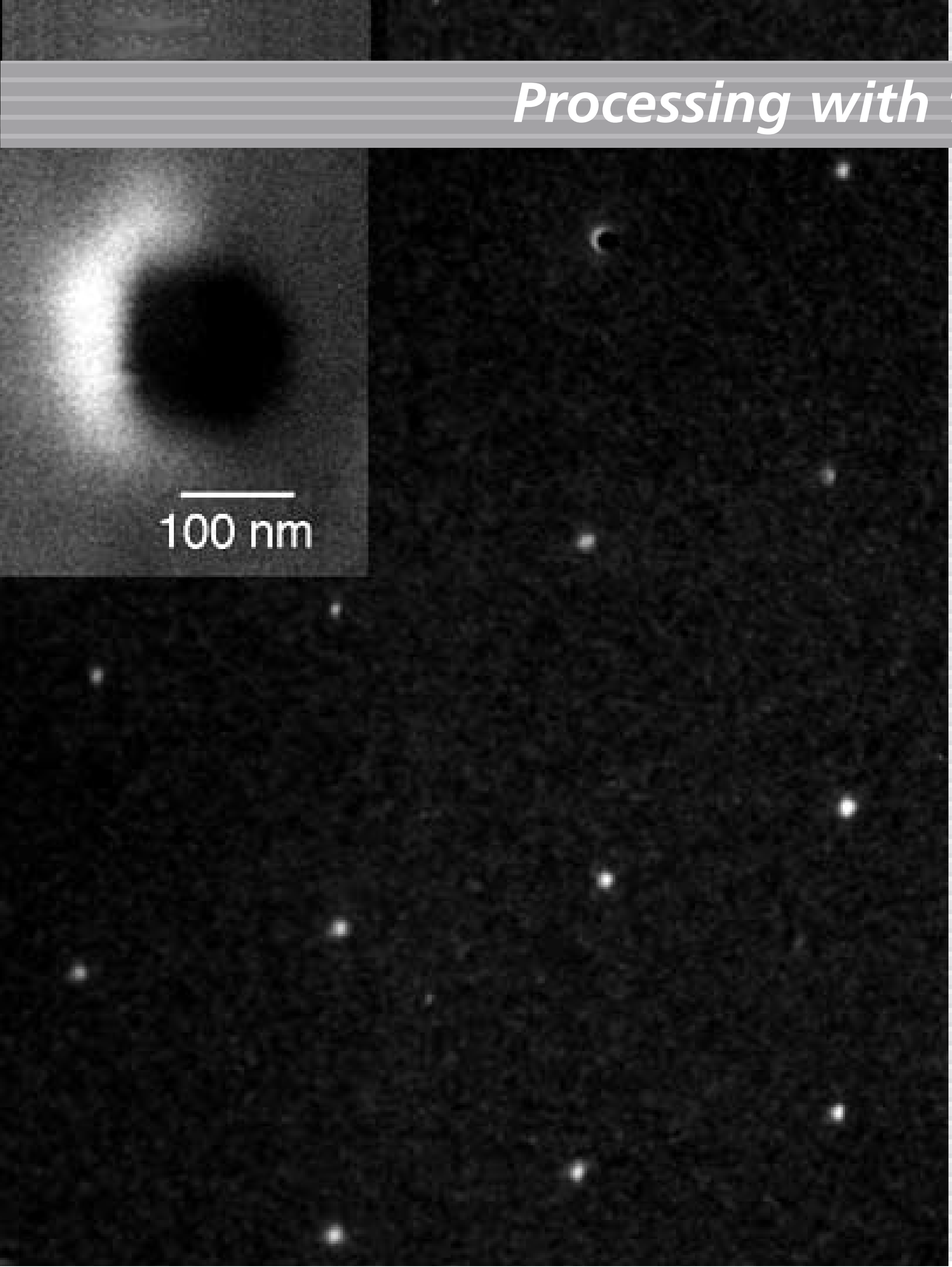
Processing with fs pulses

200 ps
9 µJ



100 fs
0.5 µJ

Processing with fs pulses



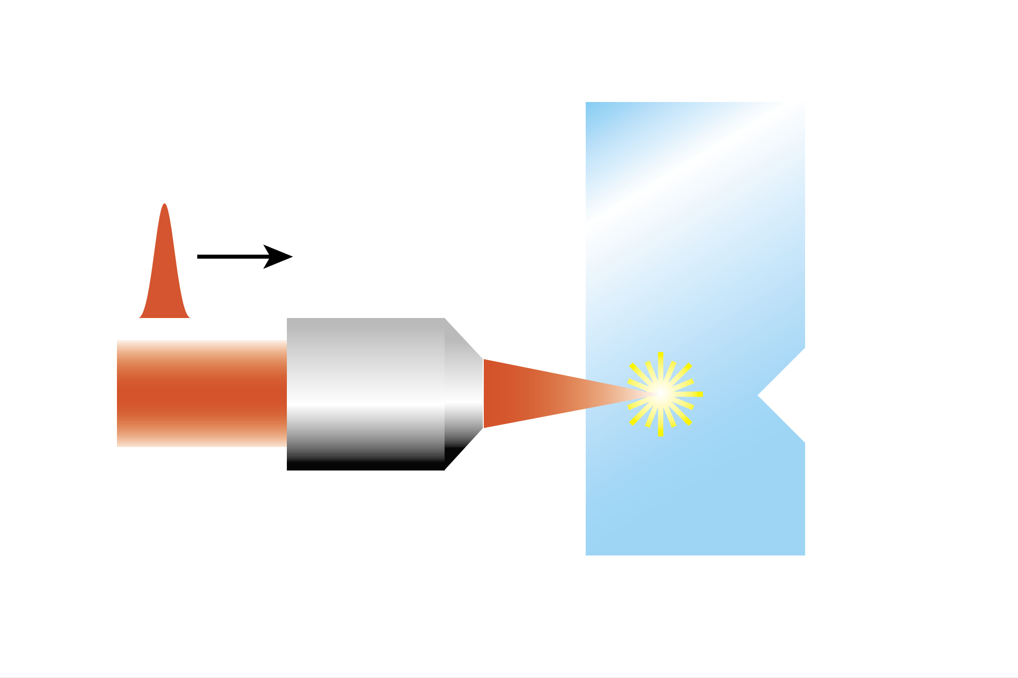
5 x 5 µm array

fused silica, 0.65 NA

0.5 µJ, 100 fs, 800 nm

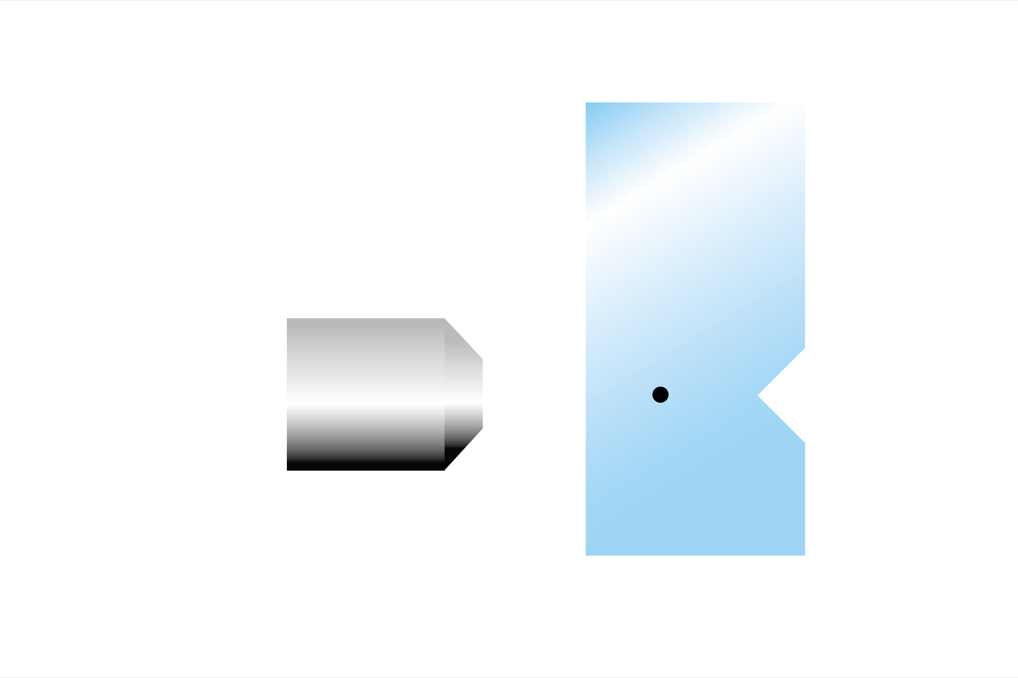
Opt. Lett. **21, 2023 (1996)**

Processing with fs pulses



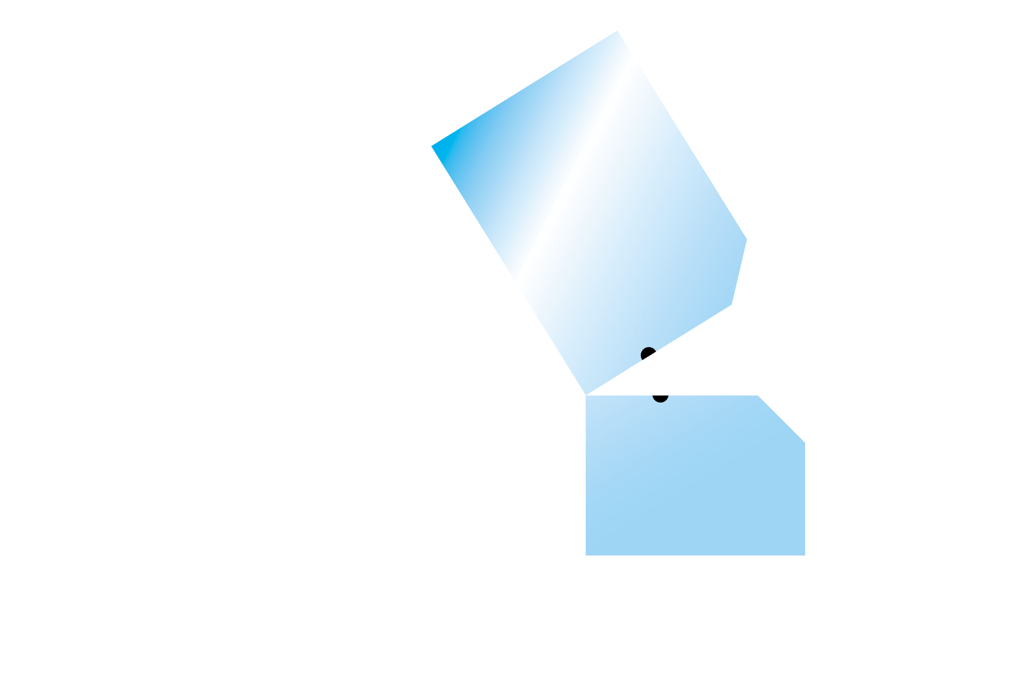
microstructure scribed sample

Processing with fs pulses



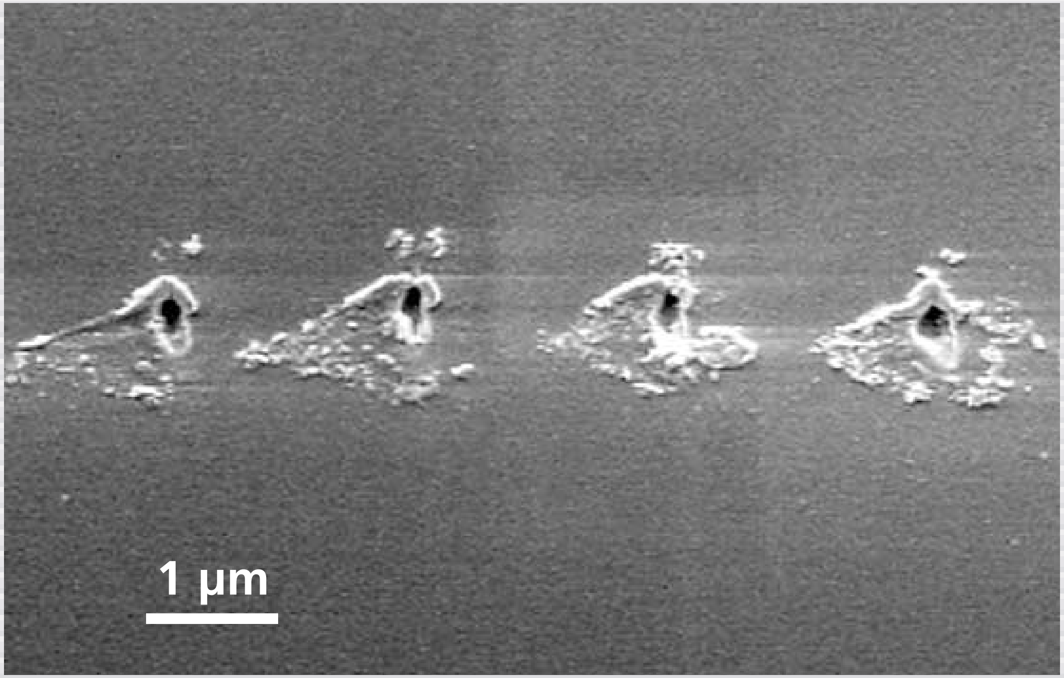
microstructure scribed sample

Processing with fs pulses



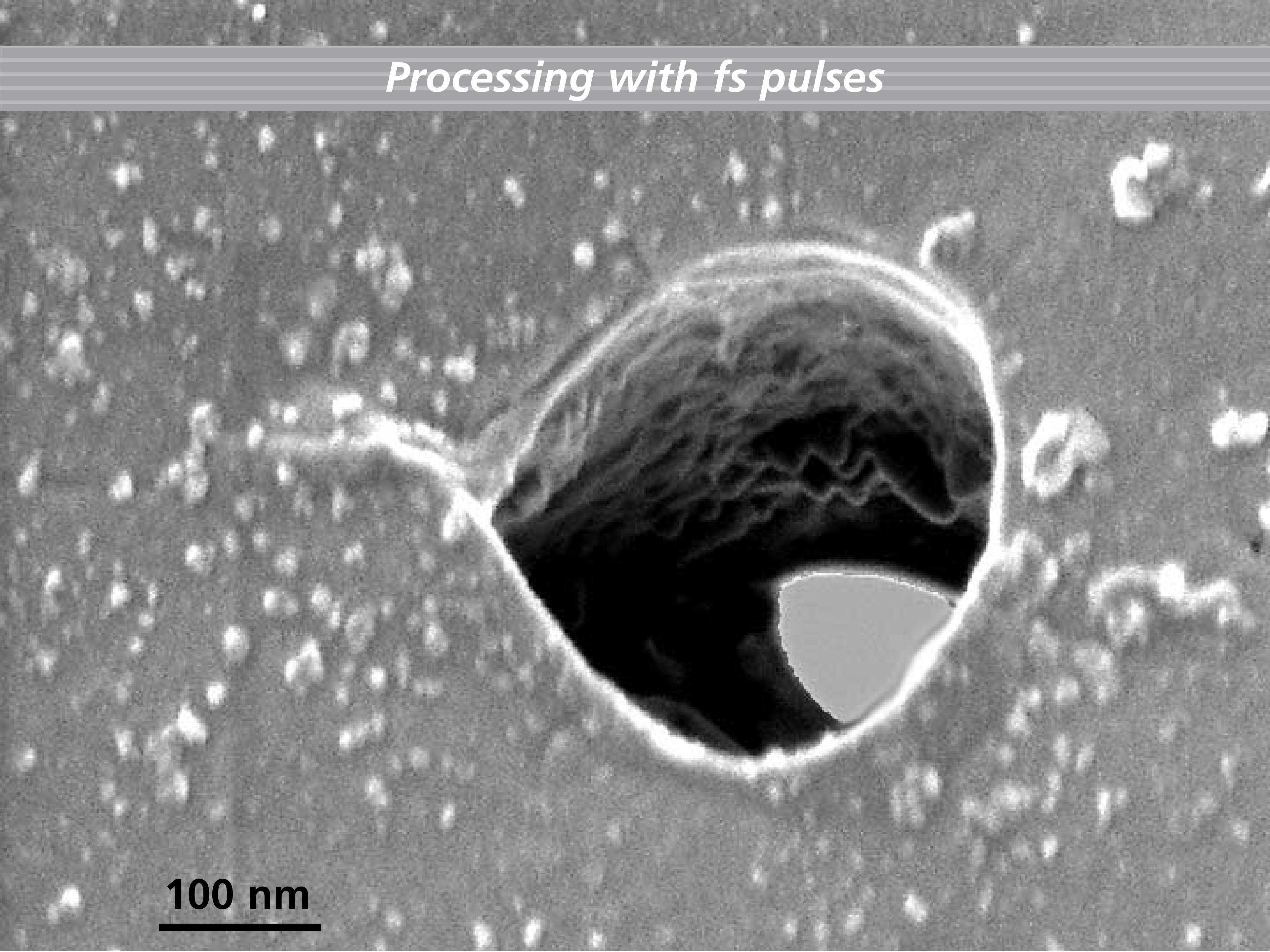
fracture along scribe line

Processing with fs pulses



Corning 0211
1.4 NA, 140 nJ

Processing with fs pulses



Processing with fs pulses

Points to keep in mind:

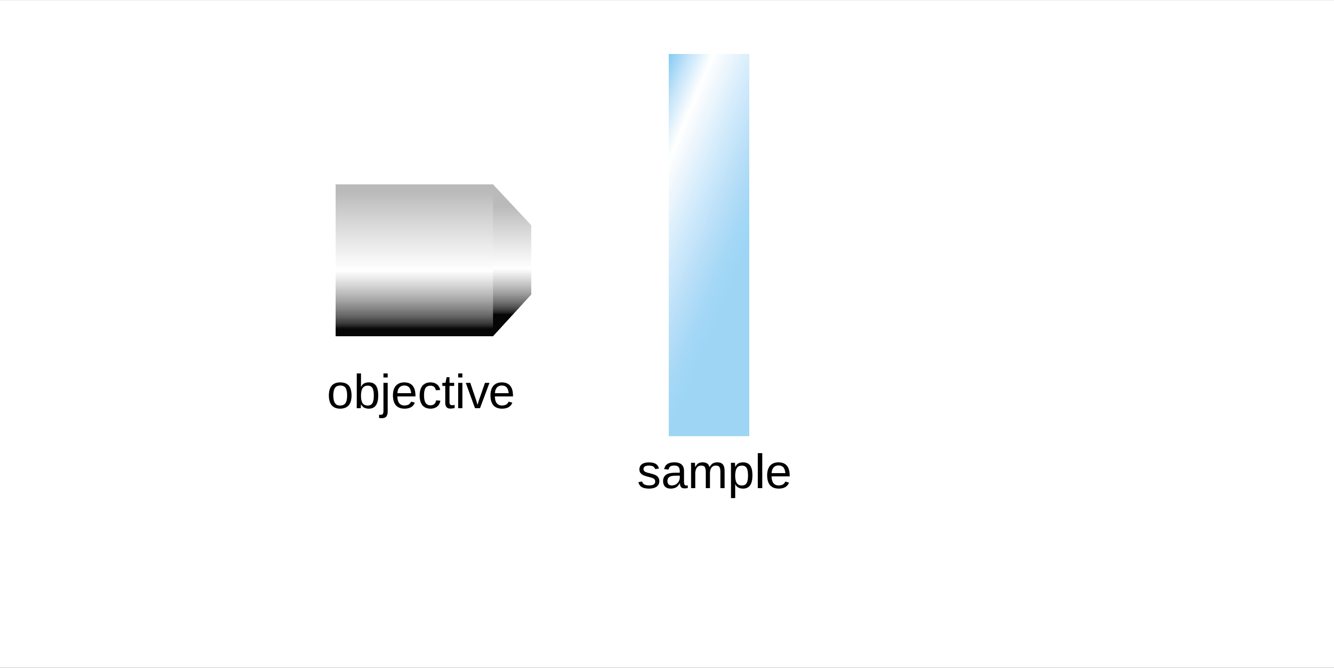
- **fs laser processing works**
- **focusing very important**
- **no collateral damage**

Outline

- Processing with fs pulses
- **Role of focusing**
- Low-energy processing

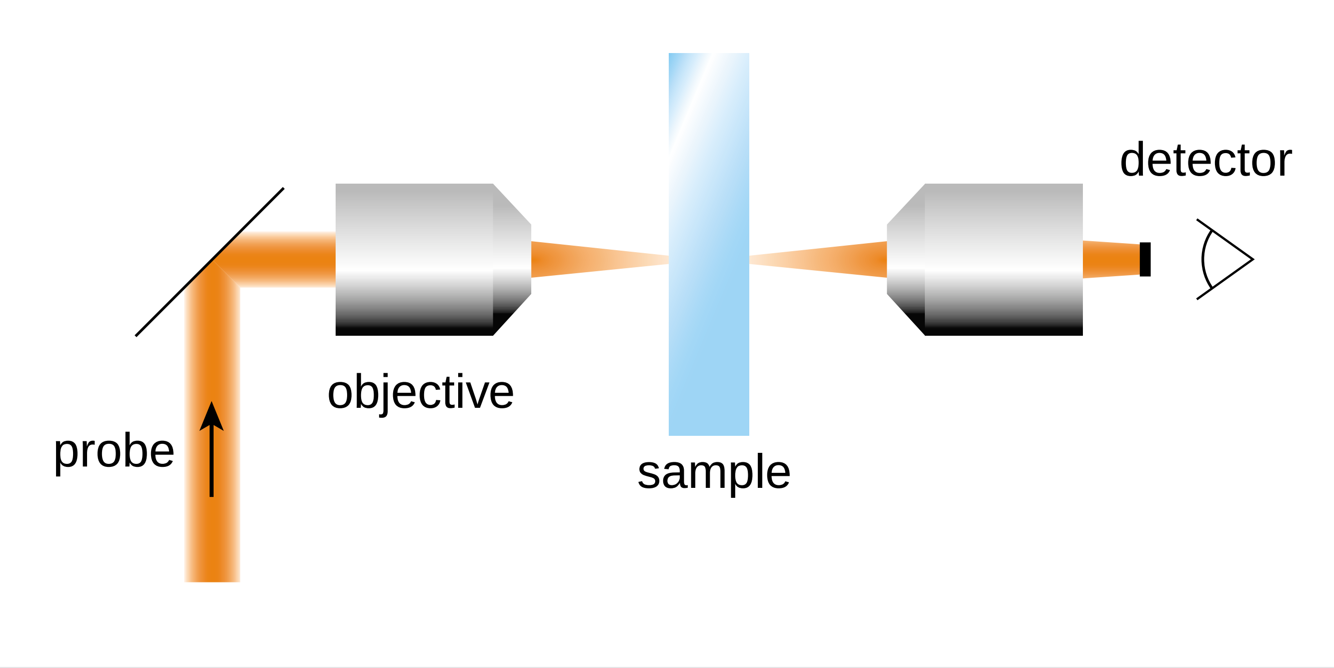
Role of focusing

Dark-field scattering



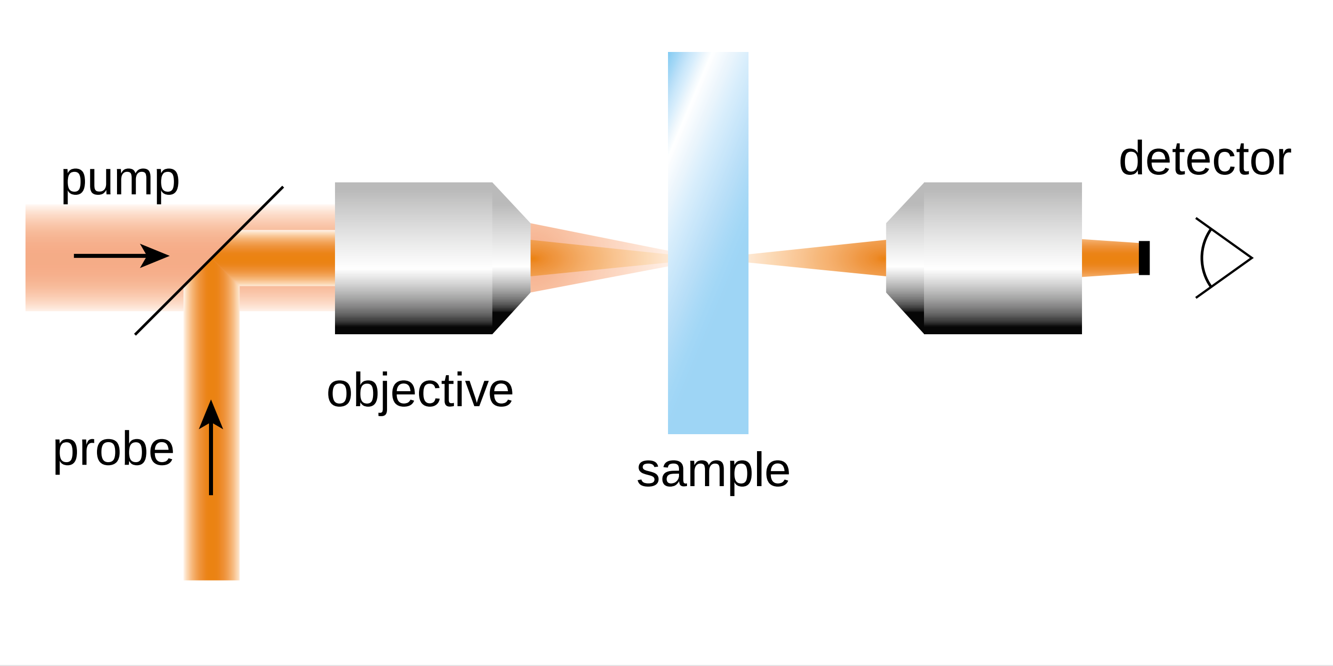
Role of focusing

block probe beam…



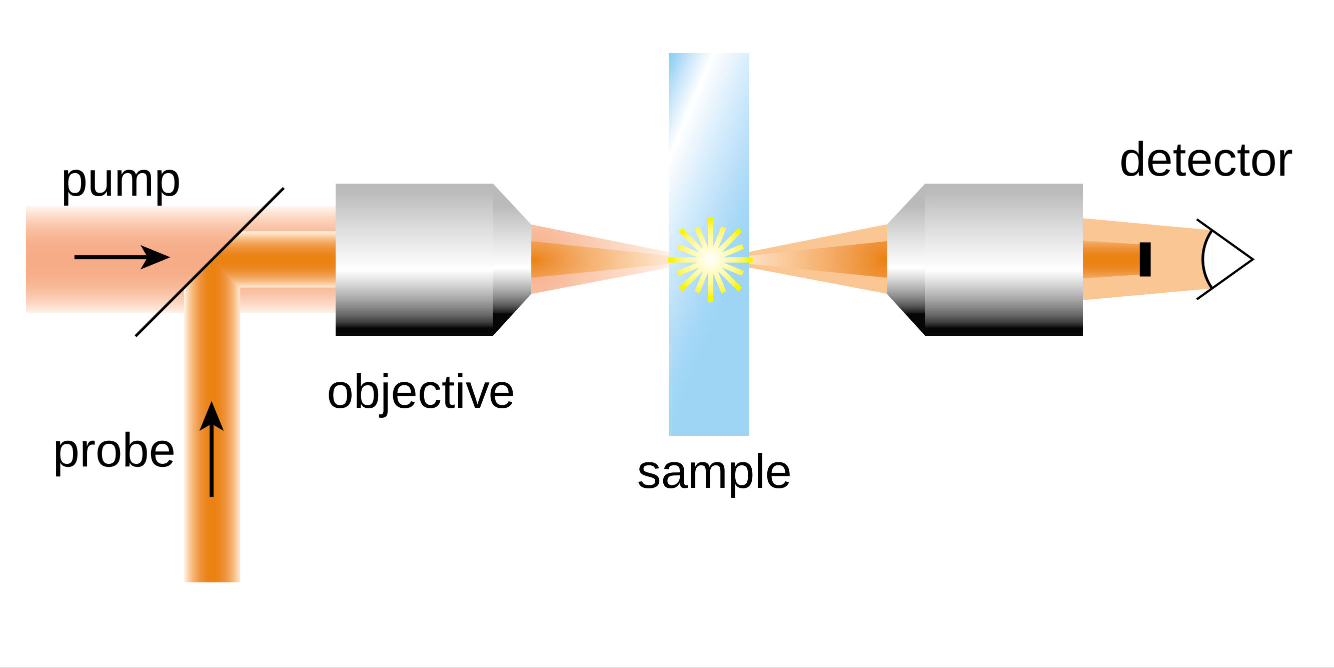
Role of focusing

… bring in pump beam…

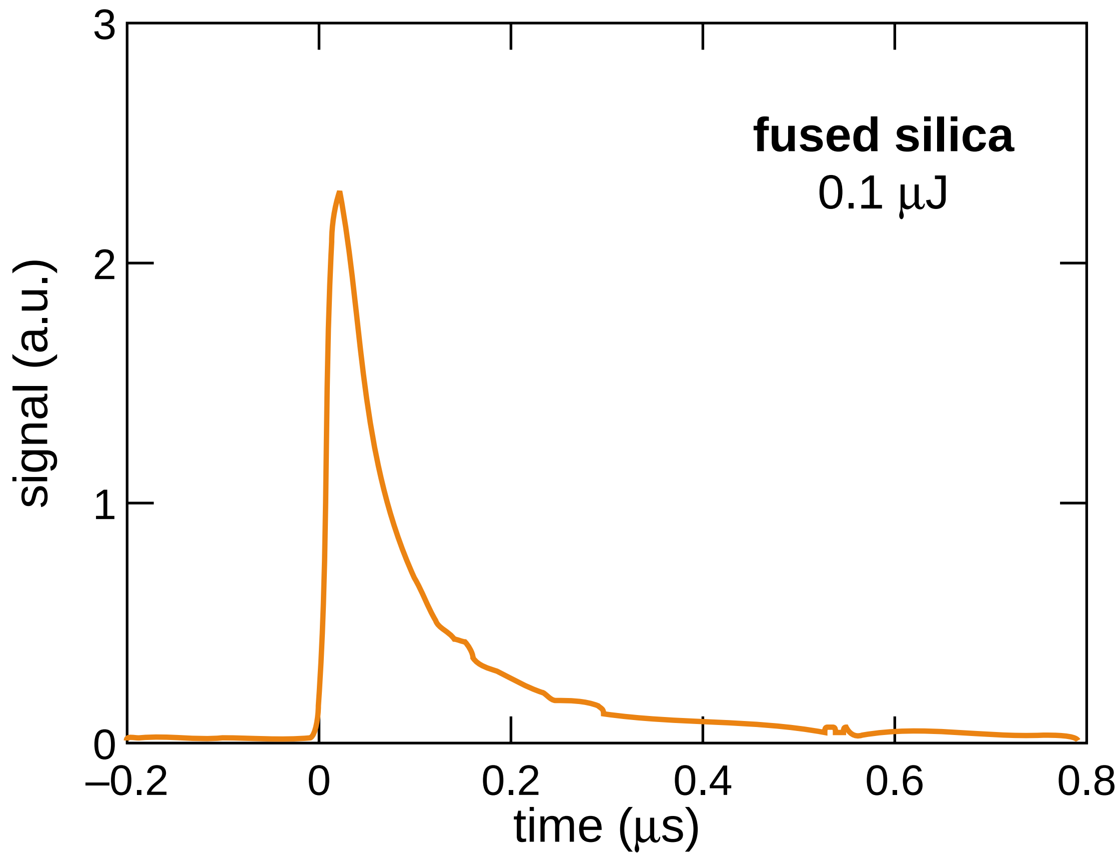


Role of focusing

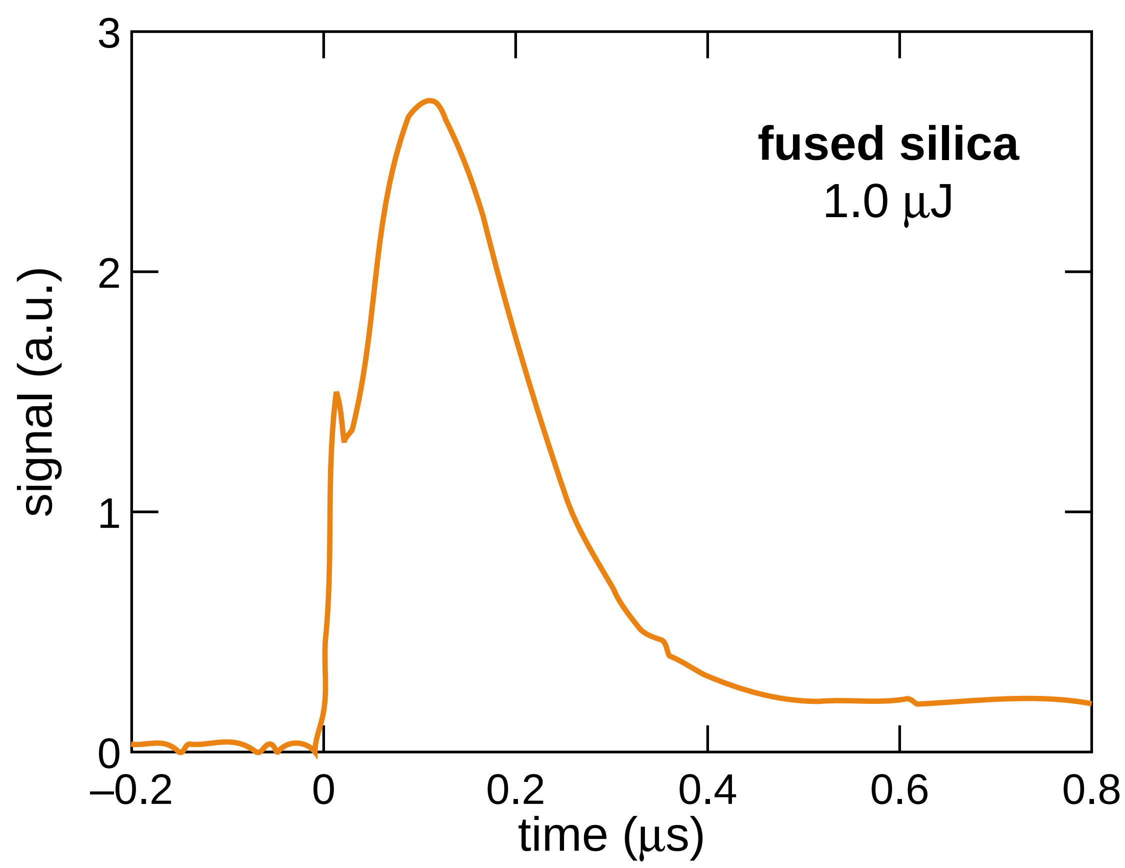
… damage scatters probe beam



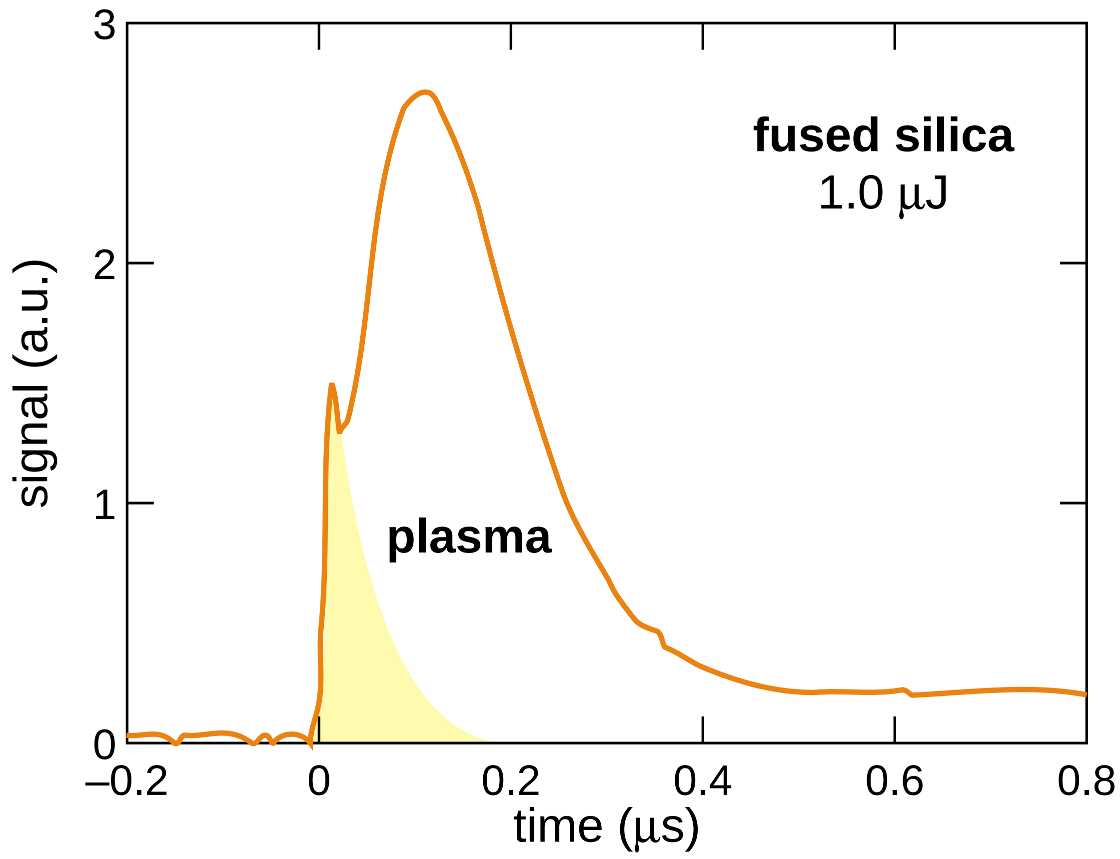
Role of focusing



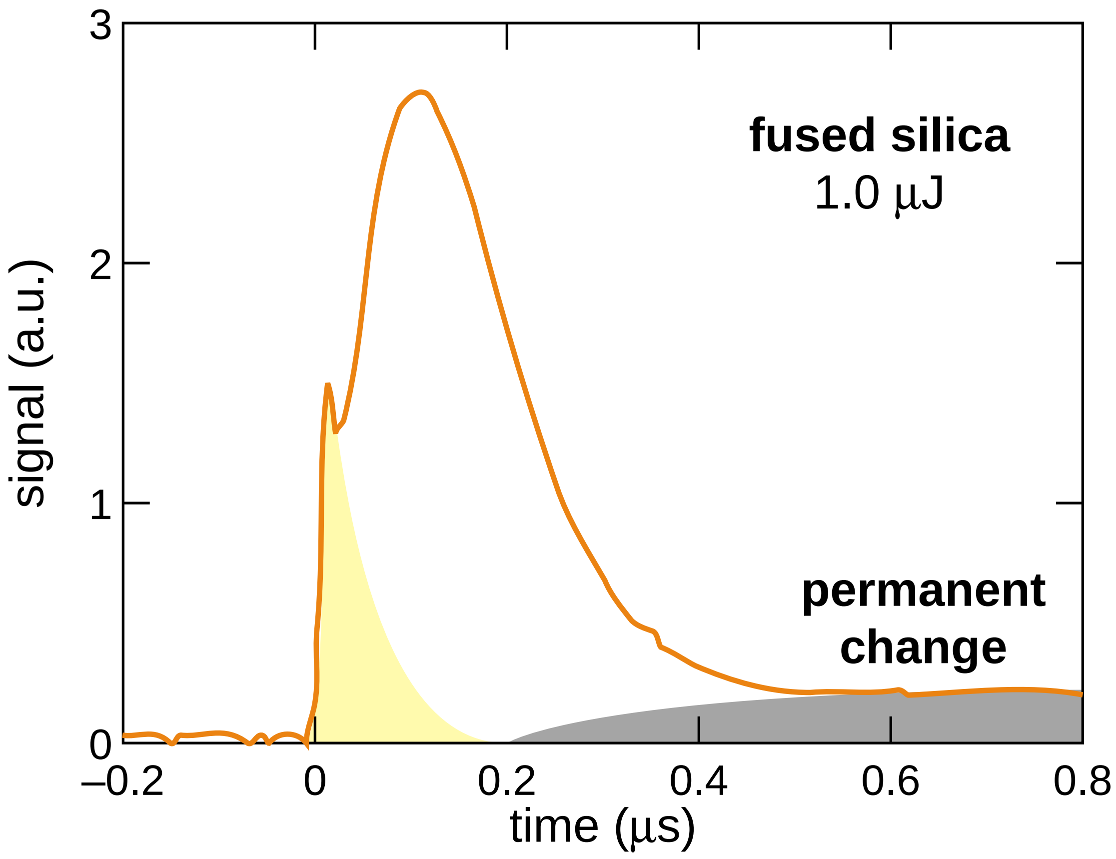
Role of focusing



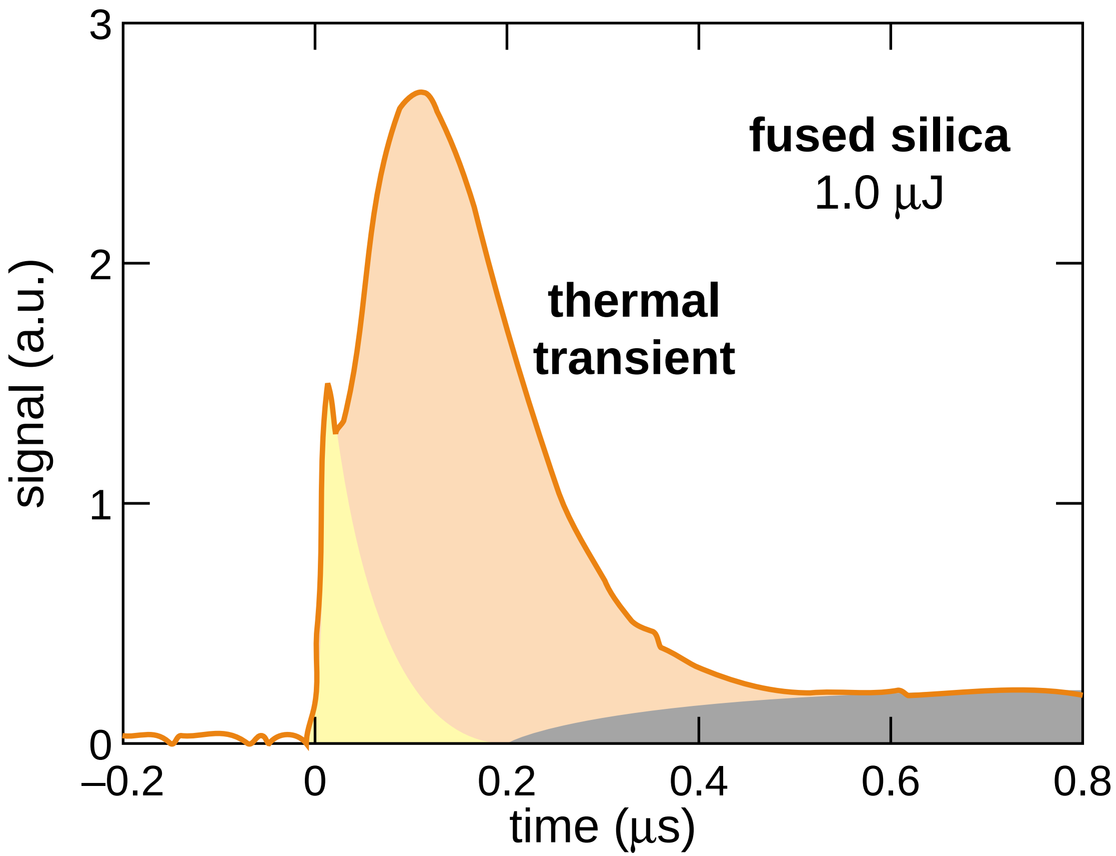
Role of focusing



Role of focusing

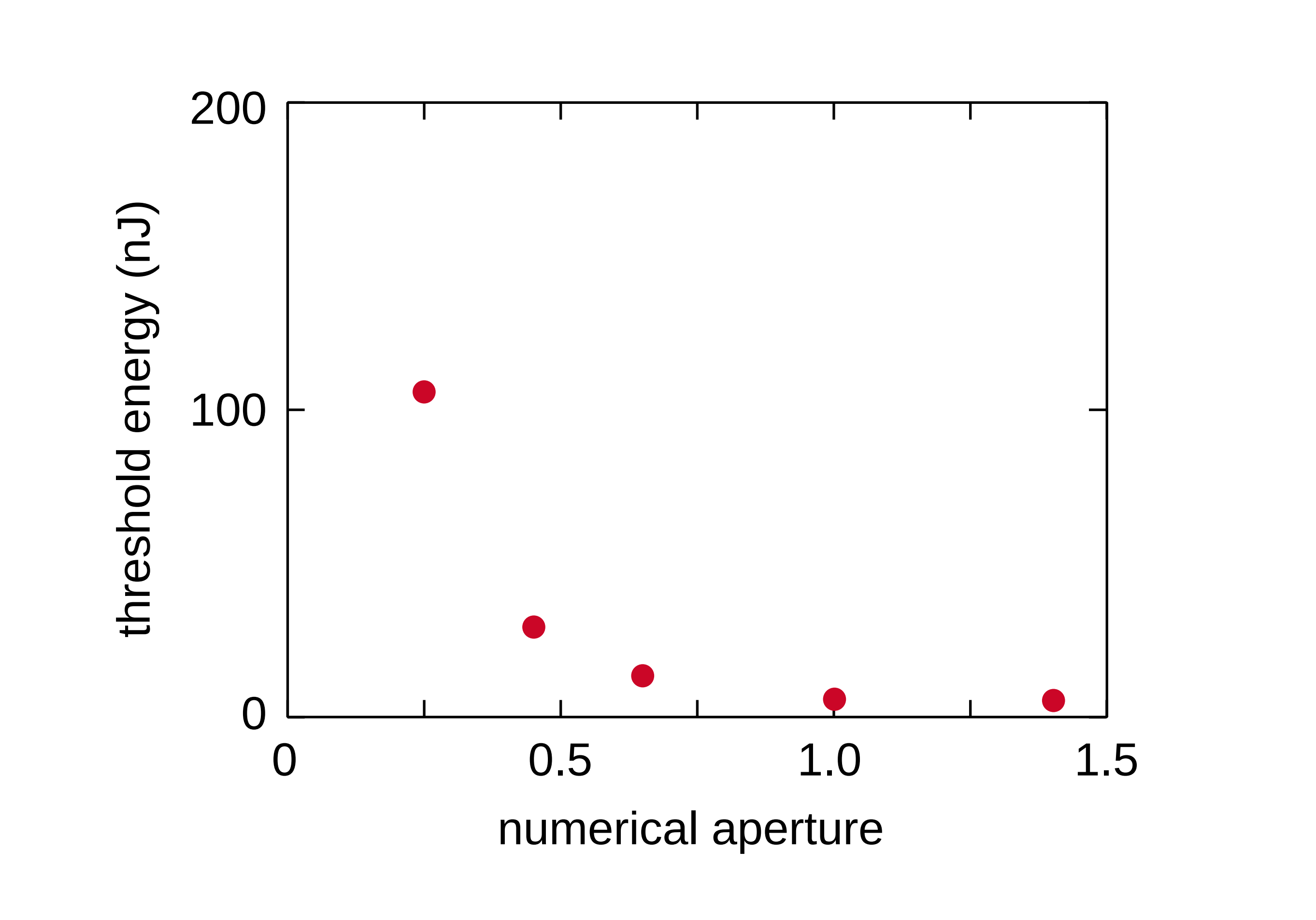


Role of focusing

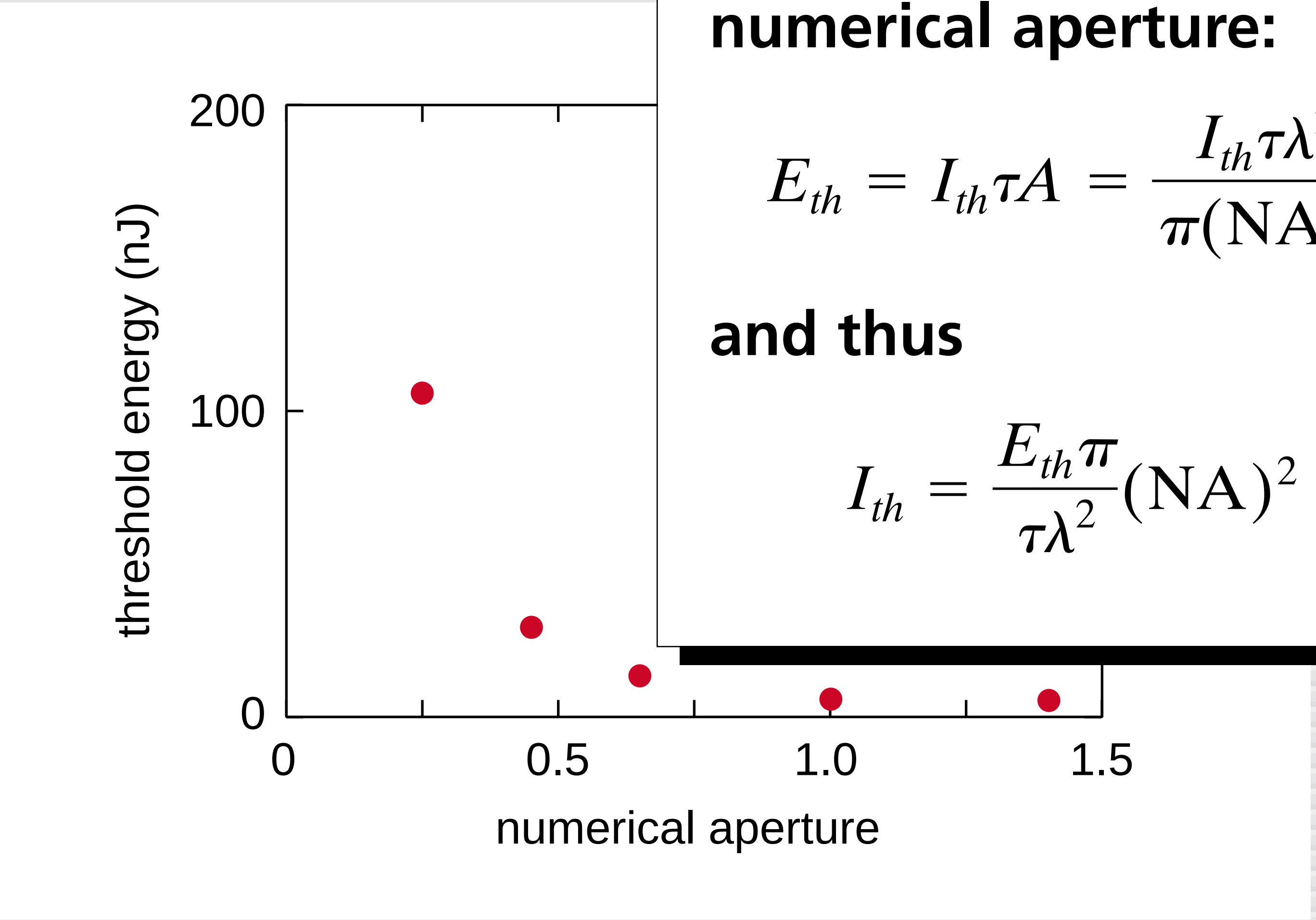


Role of focusing

vary numerical aperture in Corning 0211



Role of focusing



spot size determined by numerical aperture:

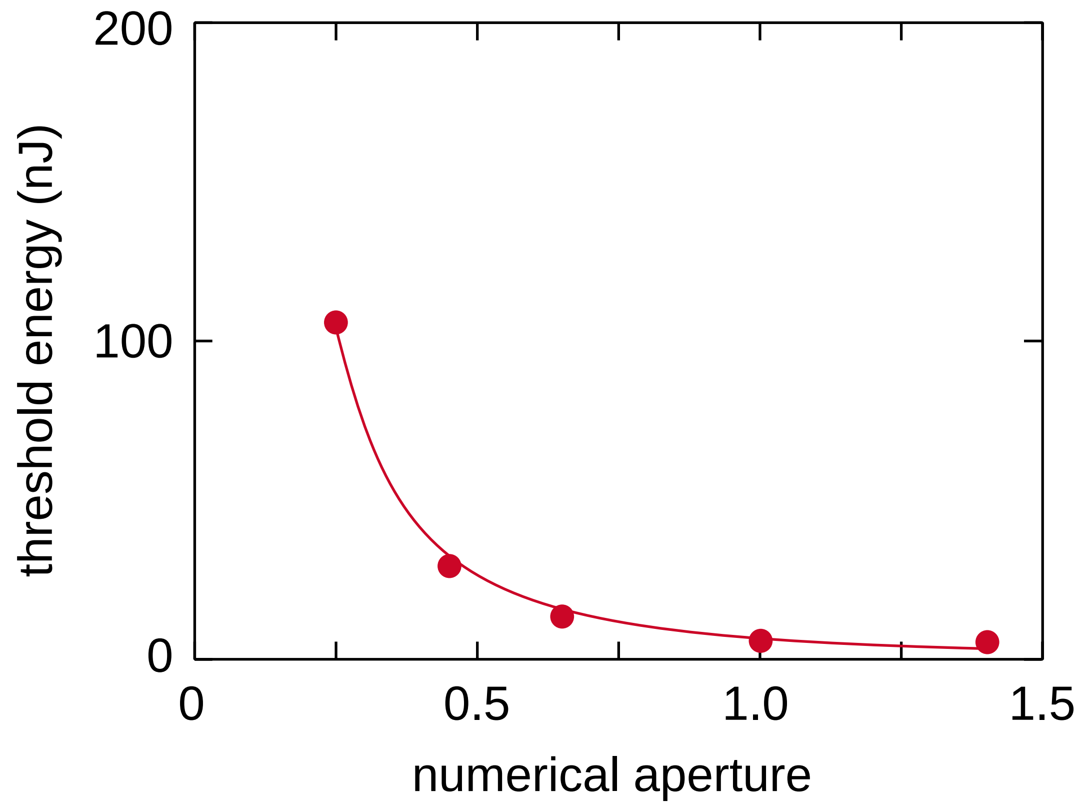
$$E_{th} = I_{th}\tau A = \frac{I_{th}\tau\lambda^2}{\pi(\mathrm{NA})^2}$$

and thus

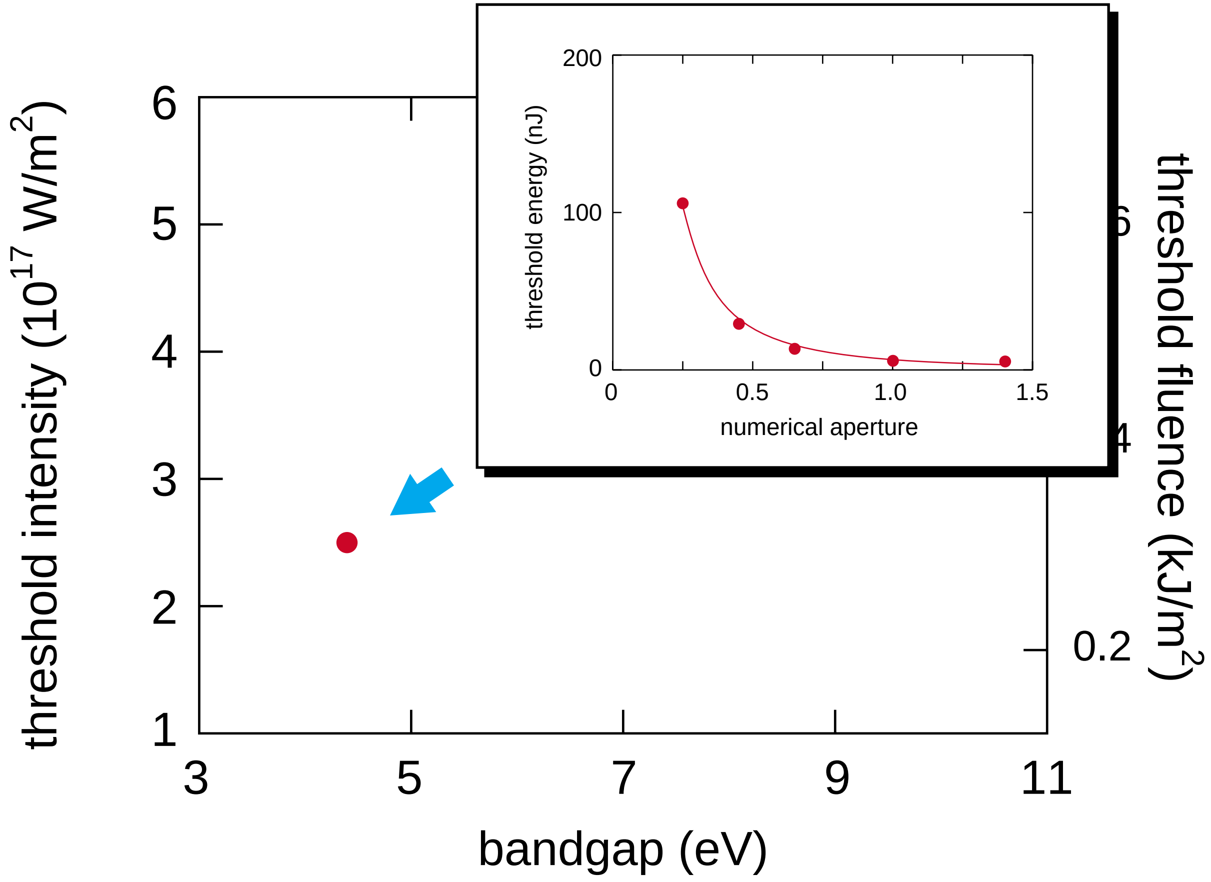
$$I_{th} = \frac{E_{th}\pi}{\tau\lambda^2}(\mathrm{NA})^2$$

Role of focusing

fit gives threshold intensity: I_{th} = 2.5 x 10^{17} W/m^2

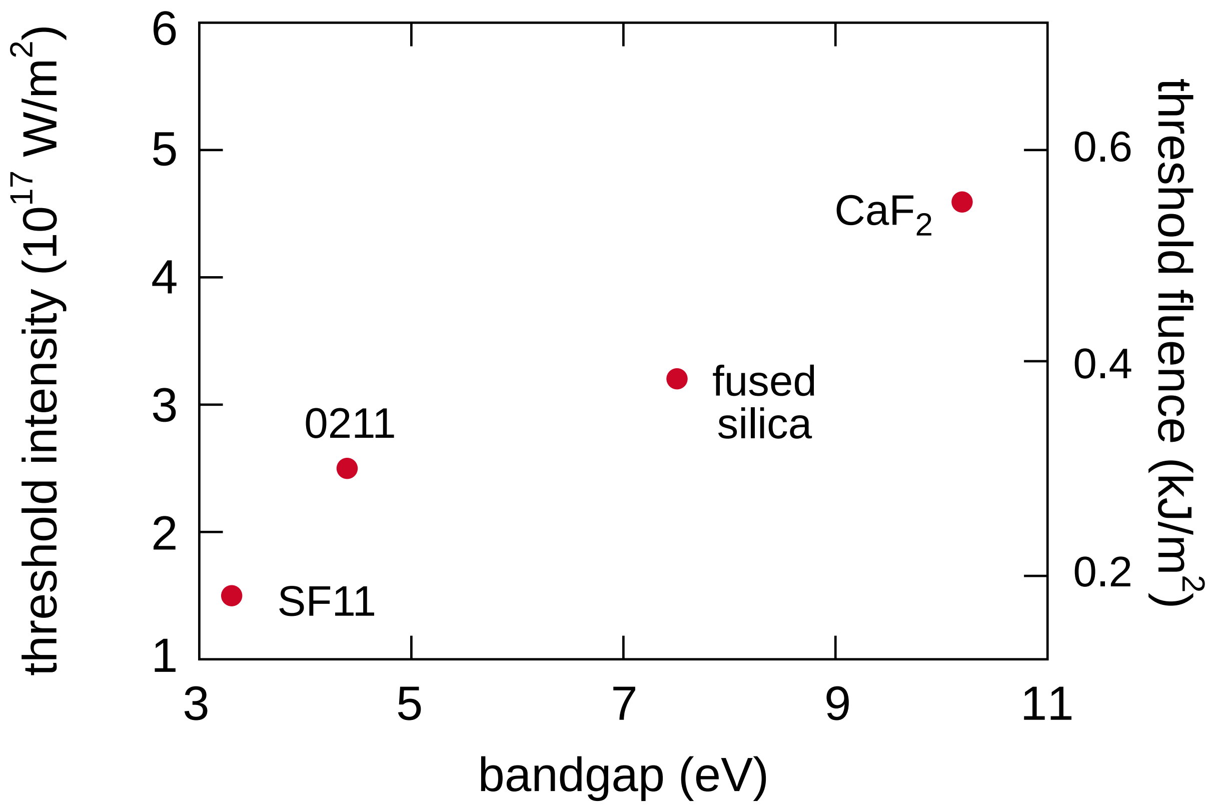


Role of focusing



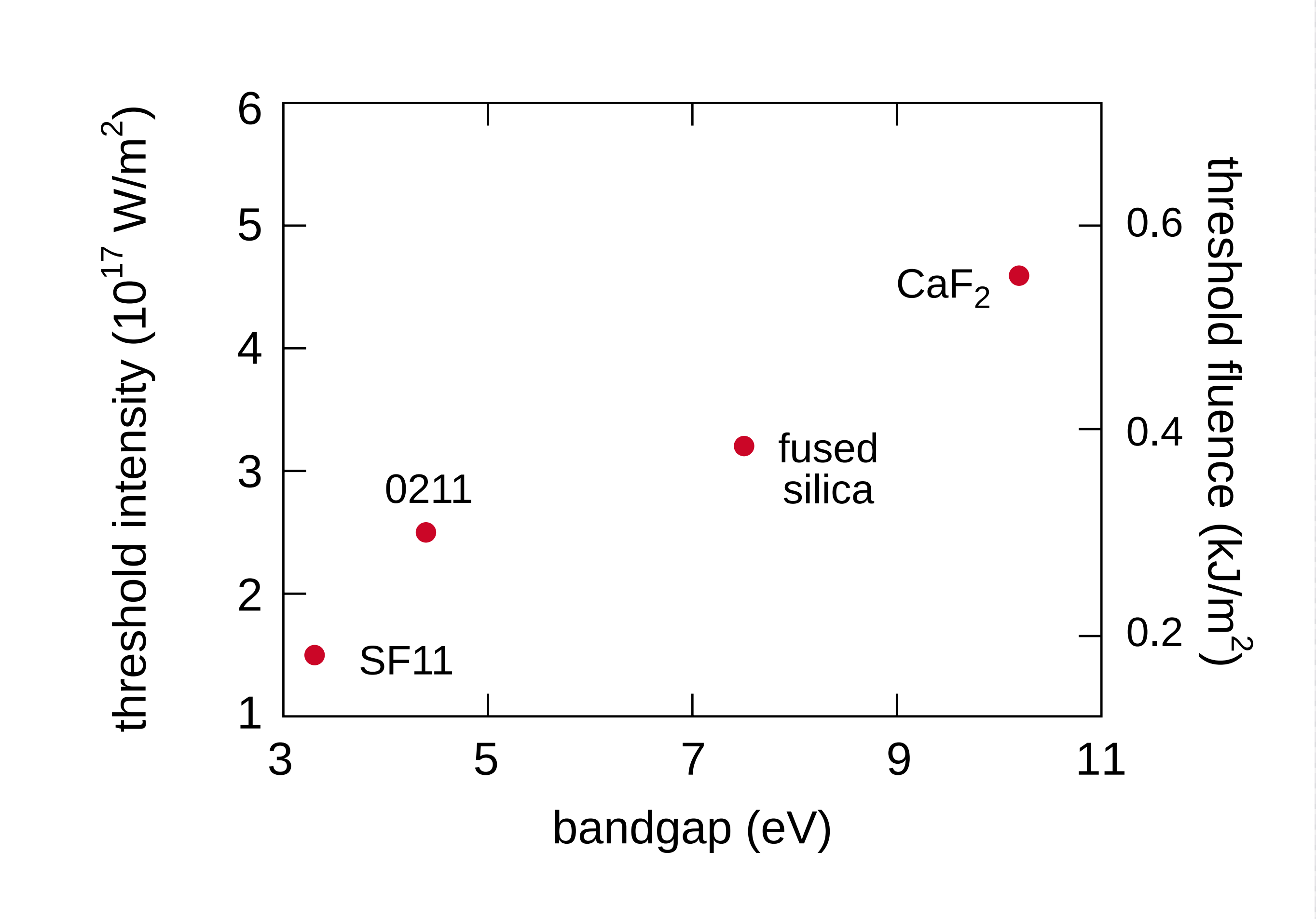
Role of focusing

vary material…



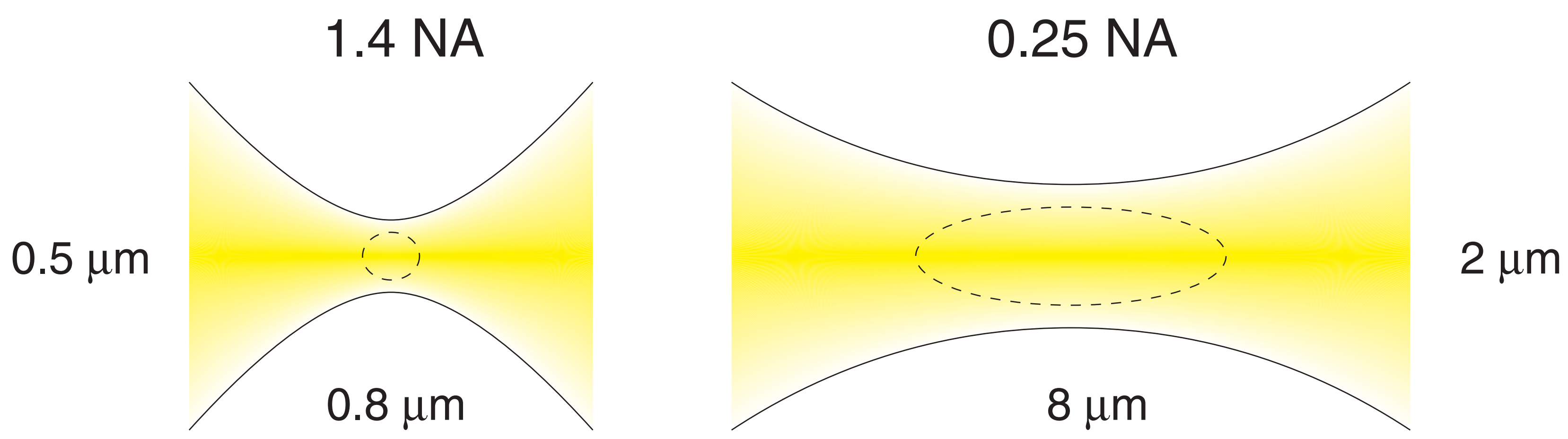
Role of focusing

threshold varies with bandgap



Role of focusing

aspect ratio better at high NA



Role of focusing

Points to keep in mind:

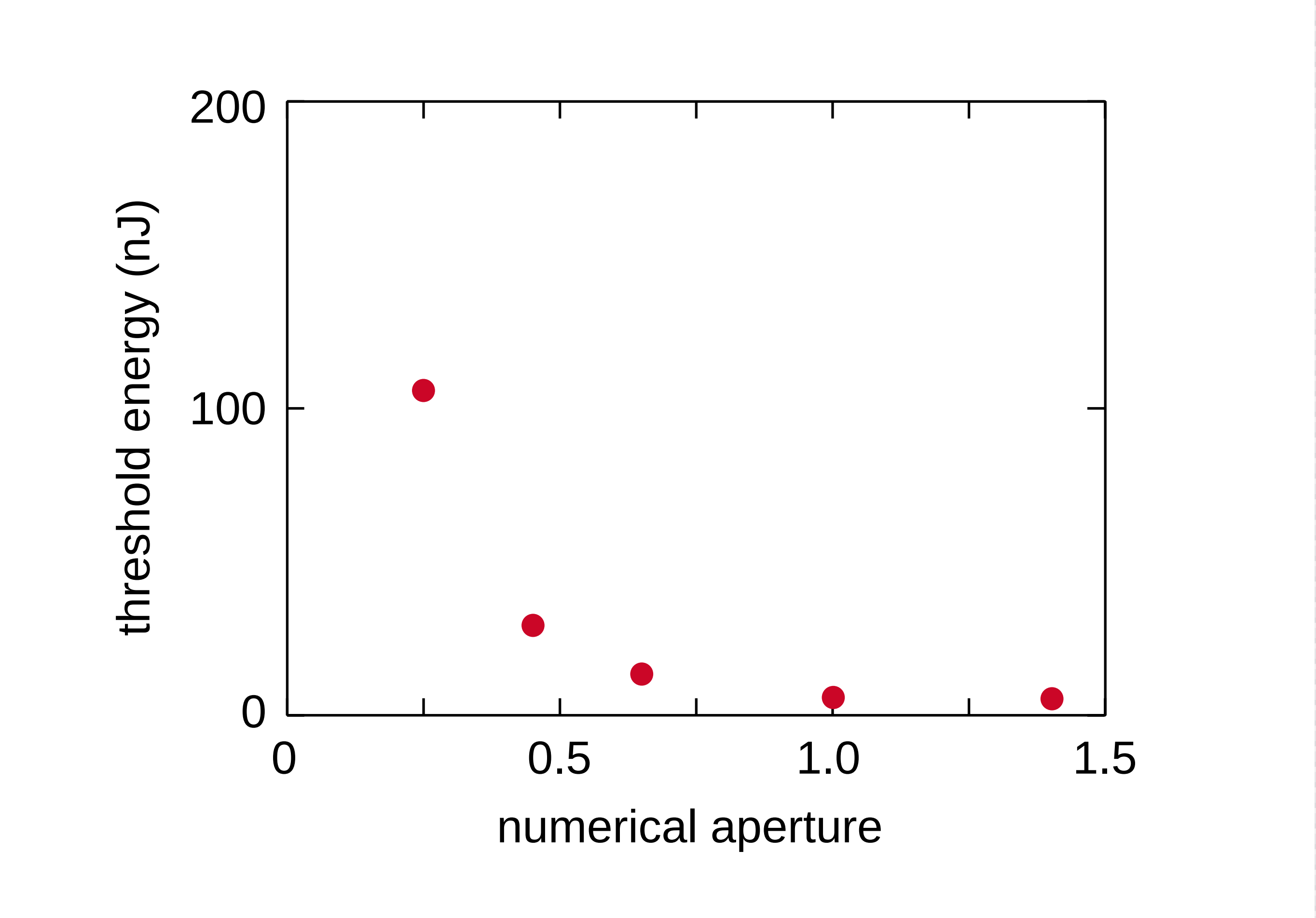
- **threshold critically dependent of NA**
- **surprisingly little material dependence**
- **avalanche ionization important**

Outline

- Processing with fs pulses
- Role of focusing
- **Low-energy processing**

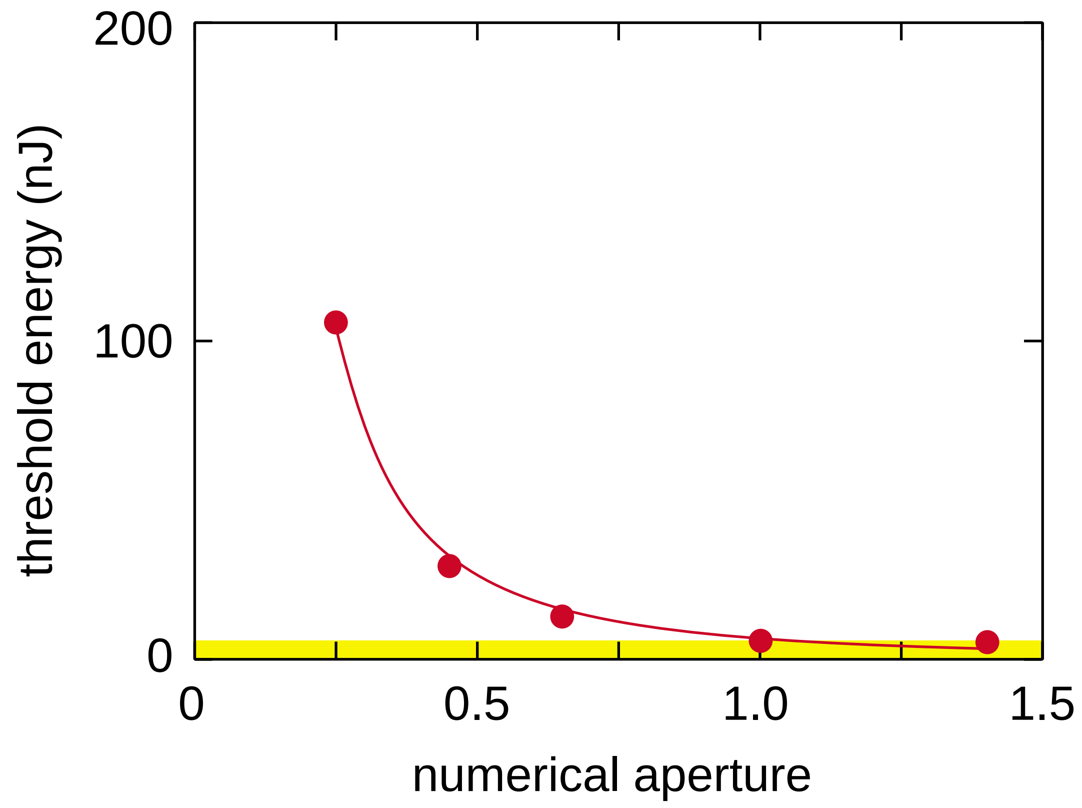
Low-energy processing

threshold decreases with increasing numerical aperture



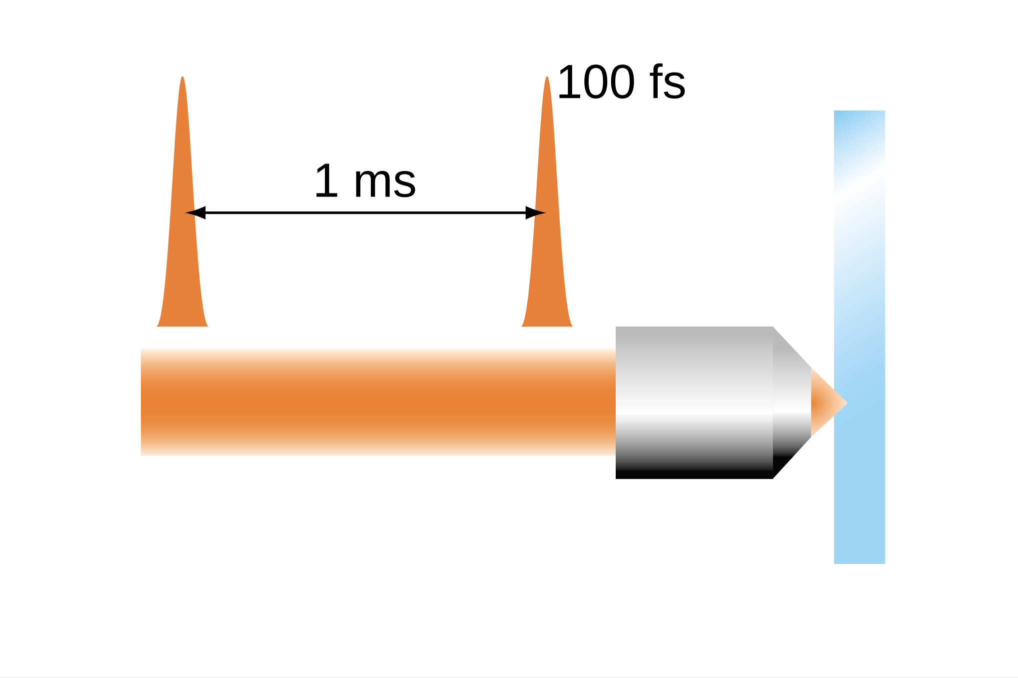
Low-energy processing

less than 10 nJ at high numerical aperture!



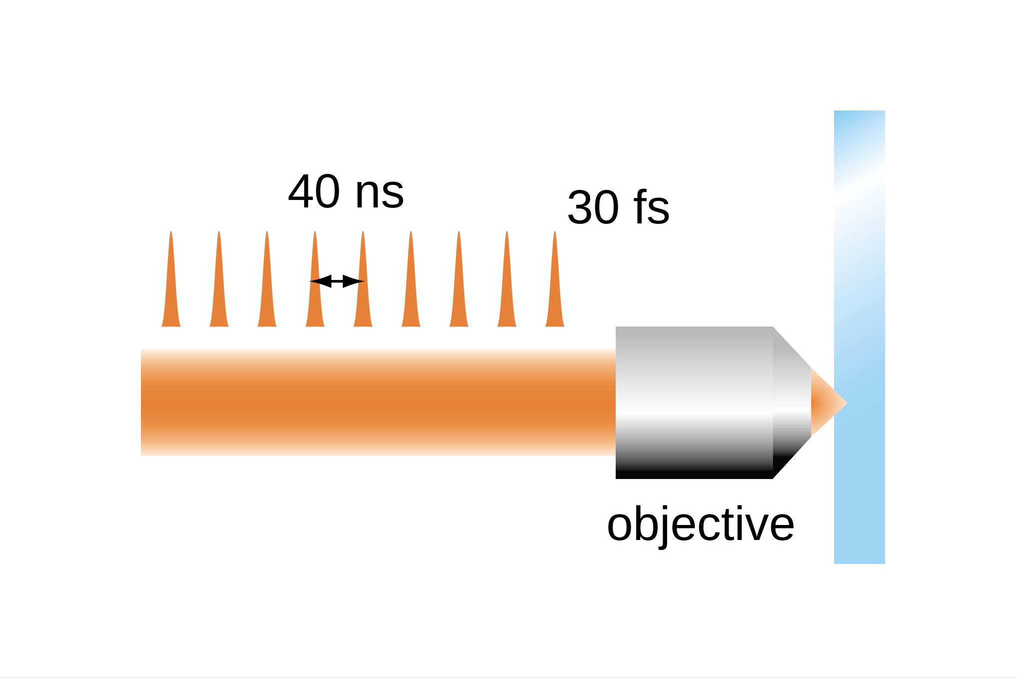
Low-energy processing

amplified laser



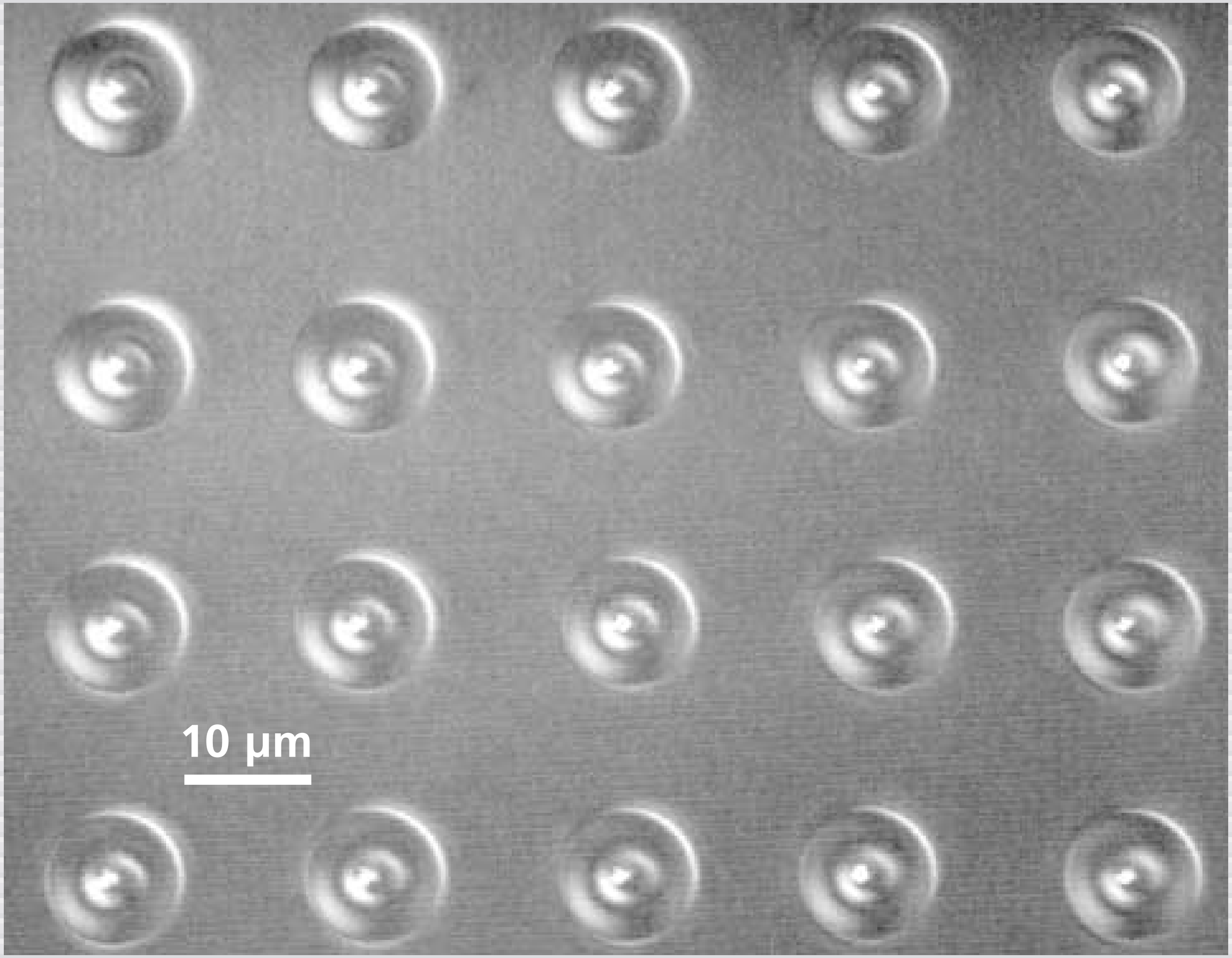
heat-diffusion time: $\tau_{diff} \approx 1\ \mu s$

long-cavity Ti:sapphire oscillator

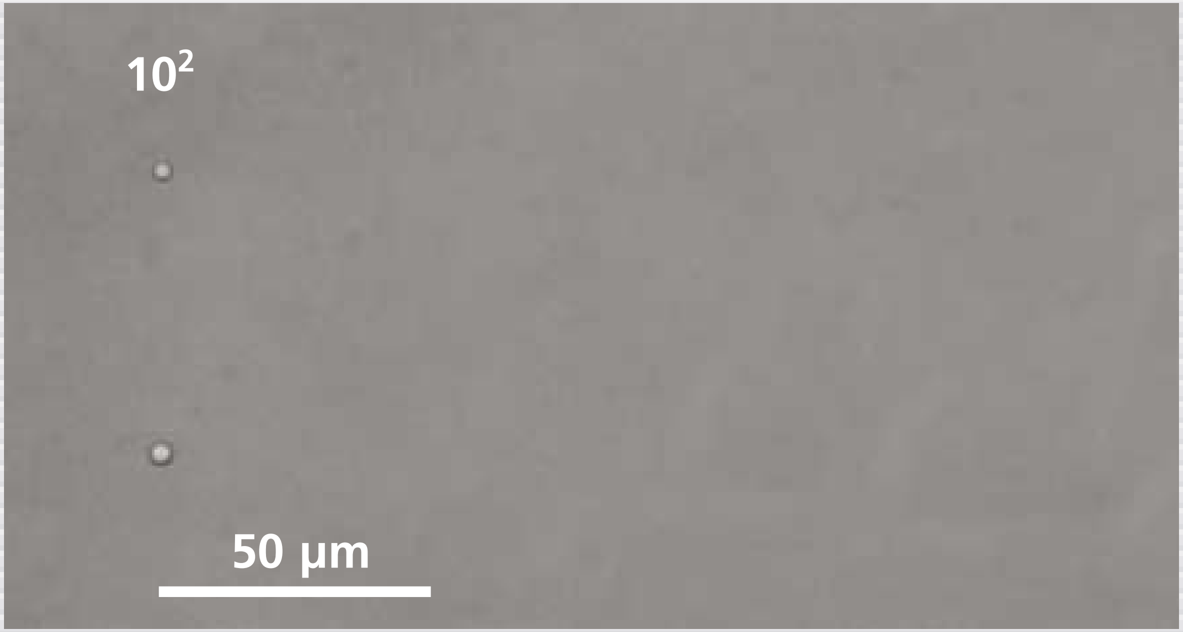


heat-diffusion time: $\tau_{diff} \approx 1\ \mu s$

Low-energy processing



Low-energy processing



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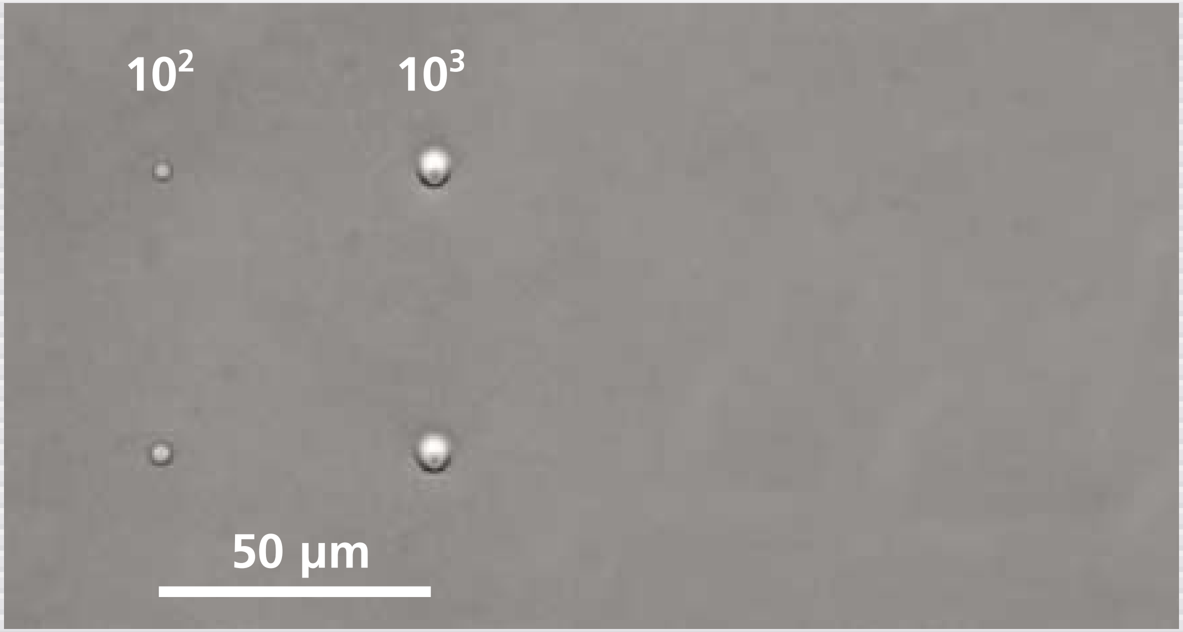
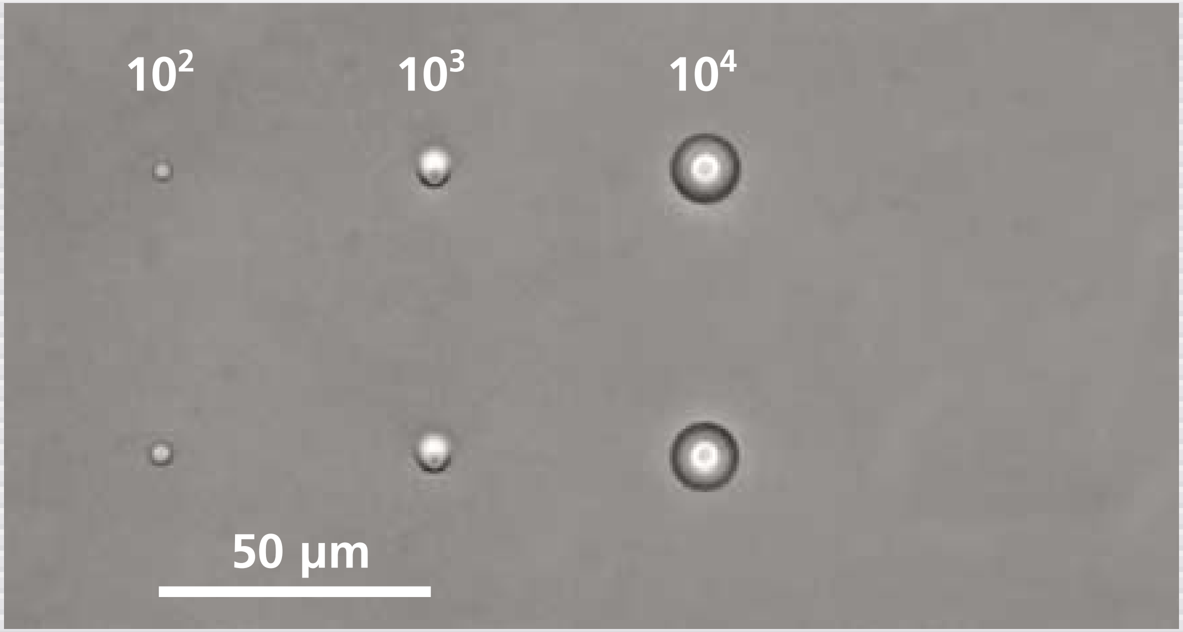


Low-energy processing



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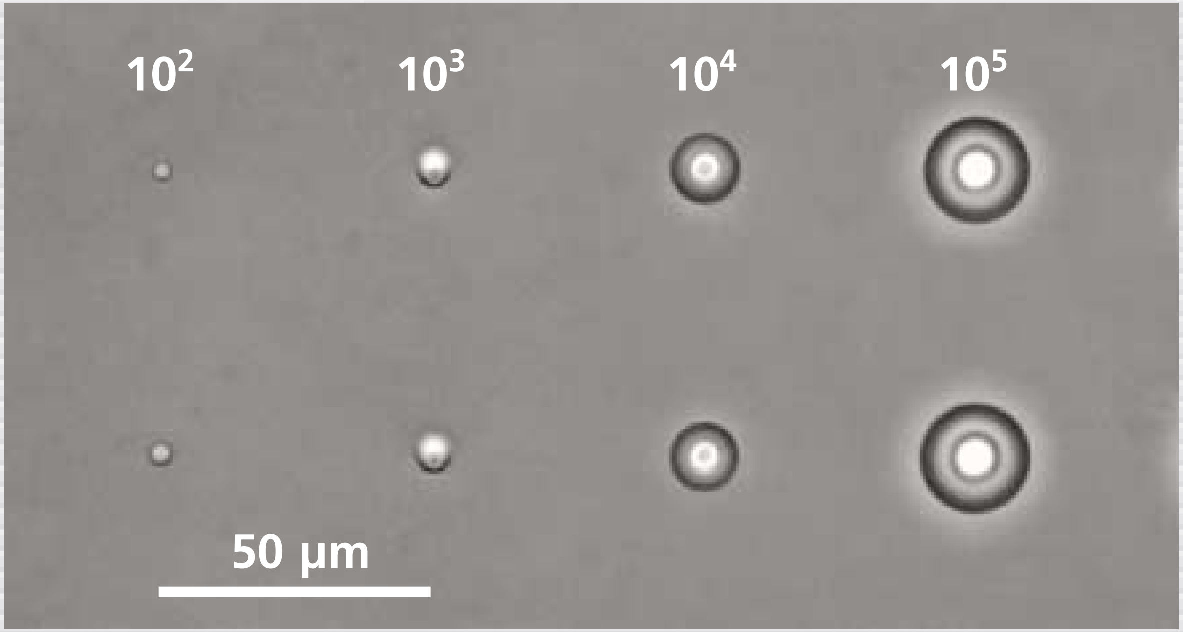

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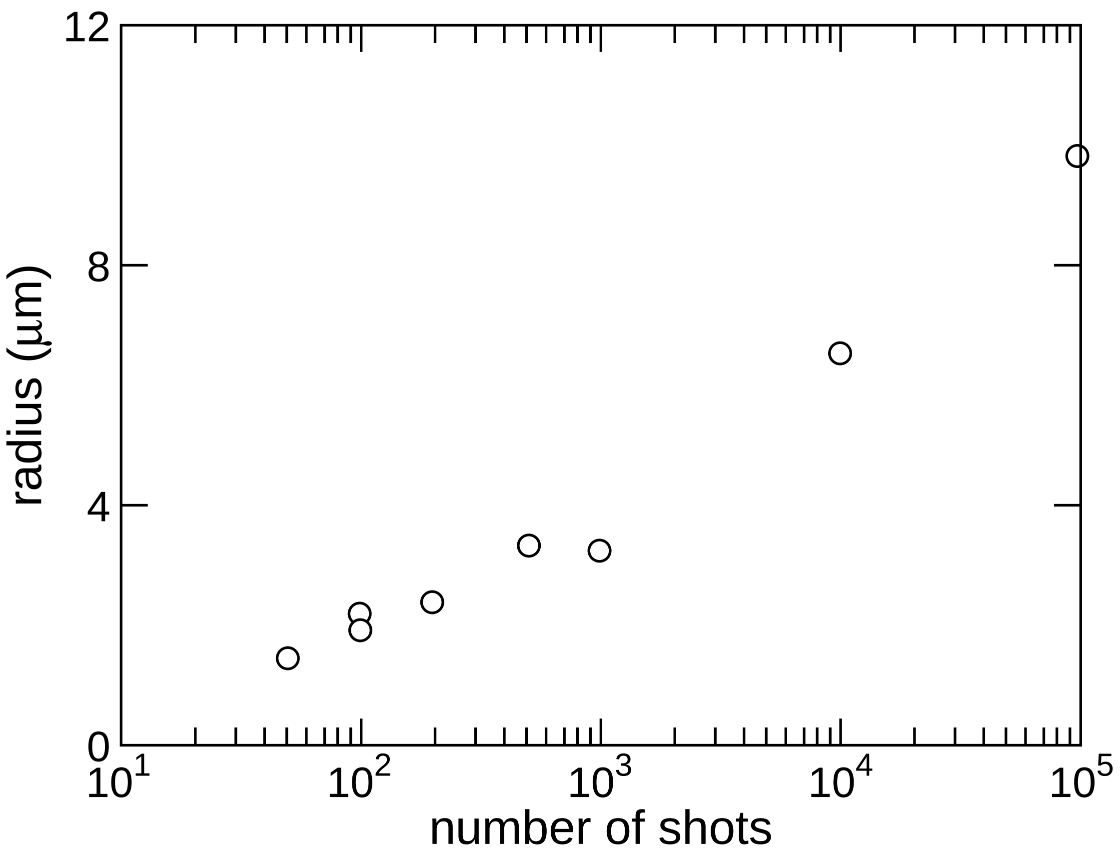
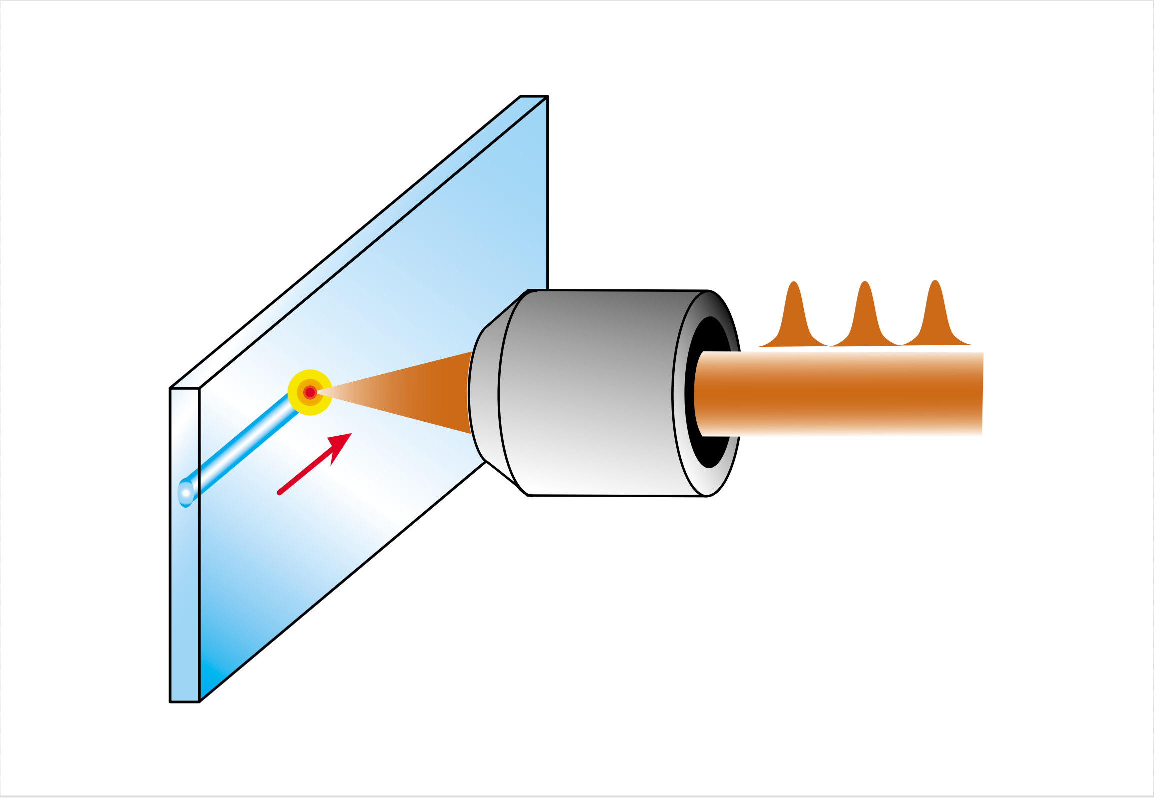


Low-energy processing

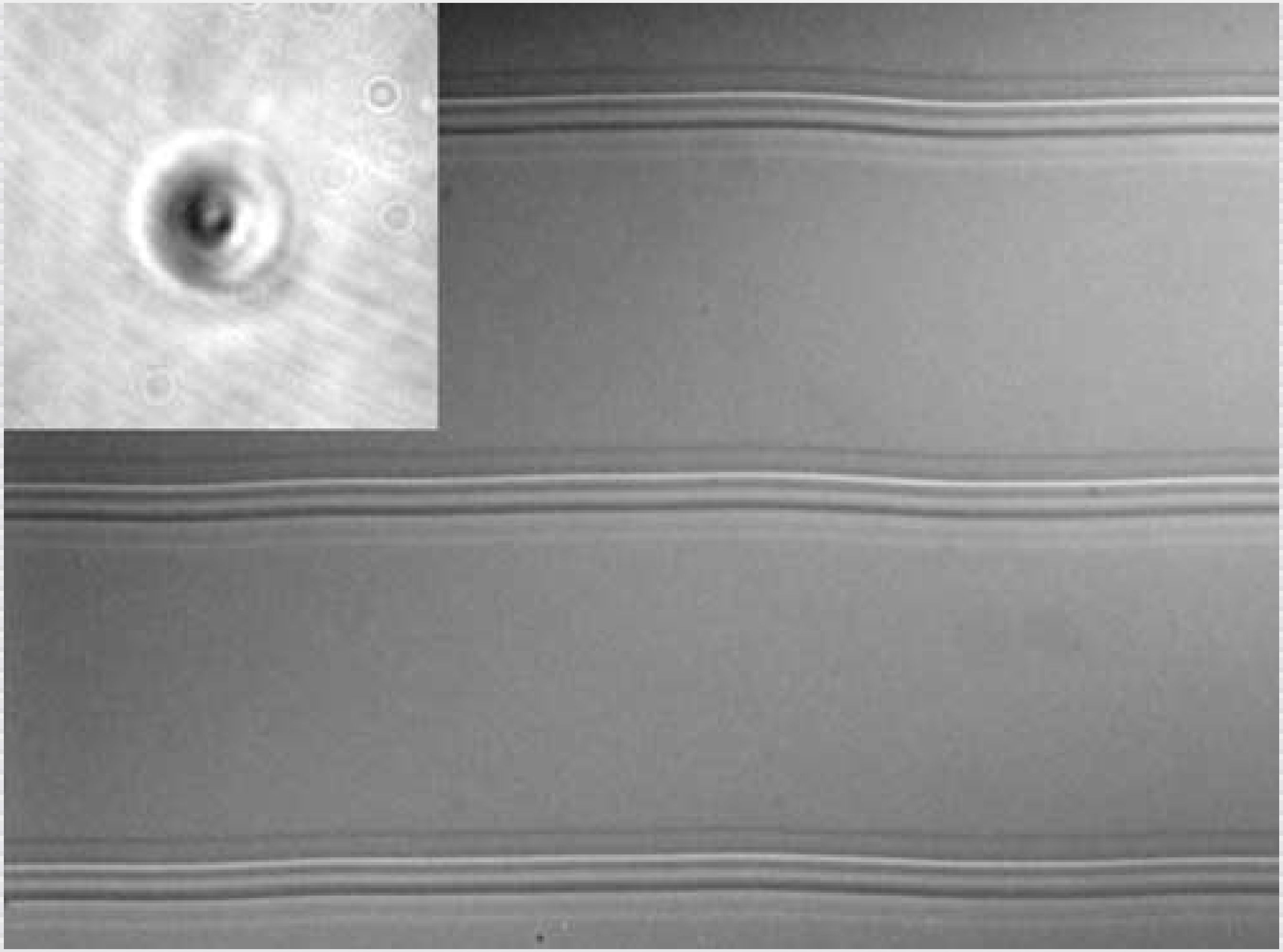
	waveguide machining	
	amplified	non-amplified
size	< 10 μm	< 50 μm
shape	elliptical	spherical
speed	< 10 μm/s	> 20 mm/s
Δn	1.5×10^{-2}	1.5×10^{-3}
loss	?	0.4–2 dB/cm

Low-energy processing

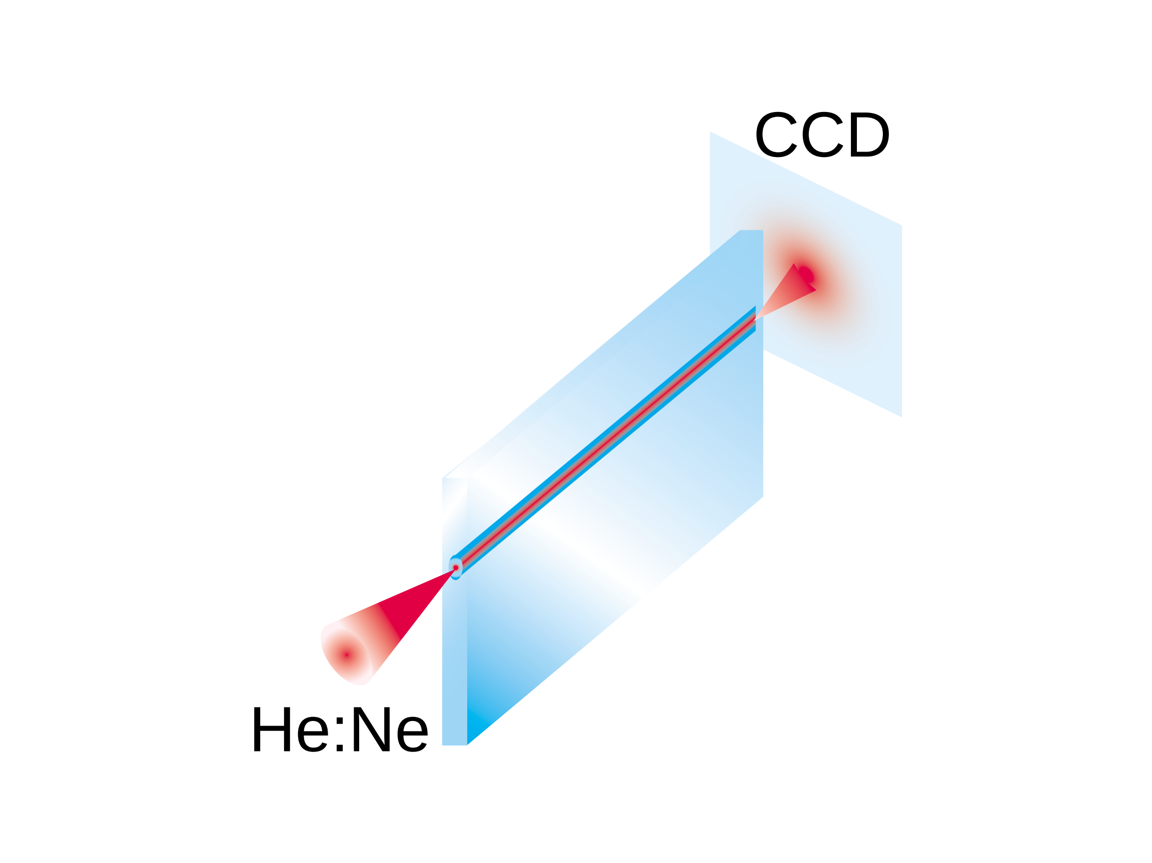
waveguide machining



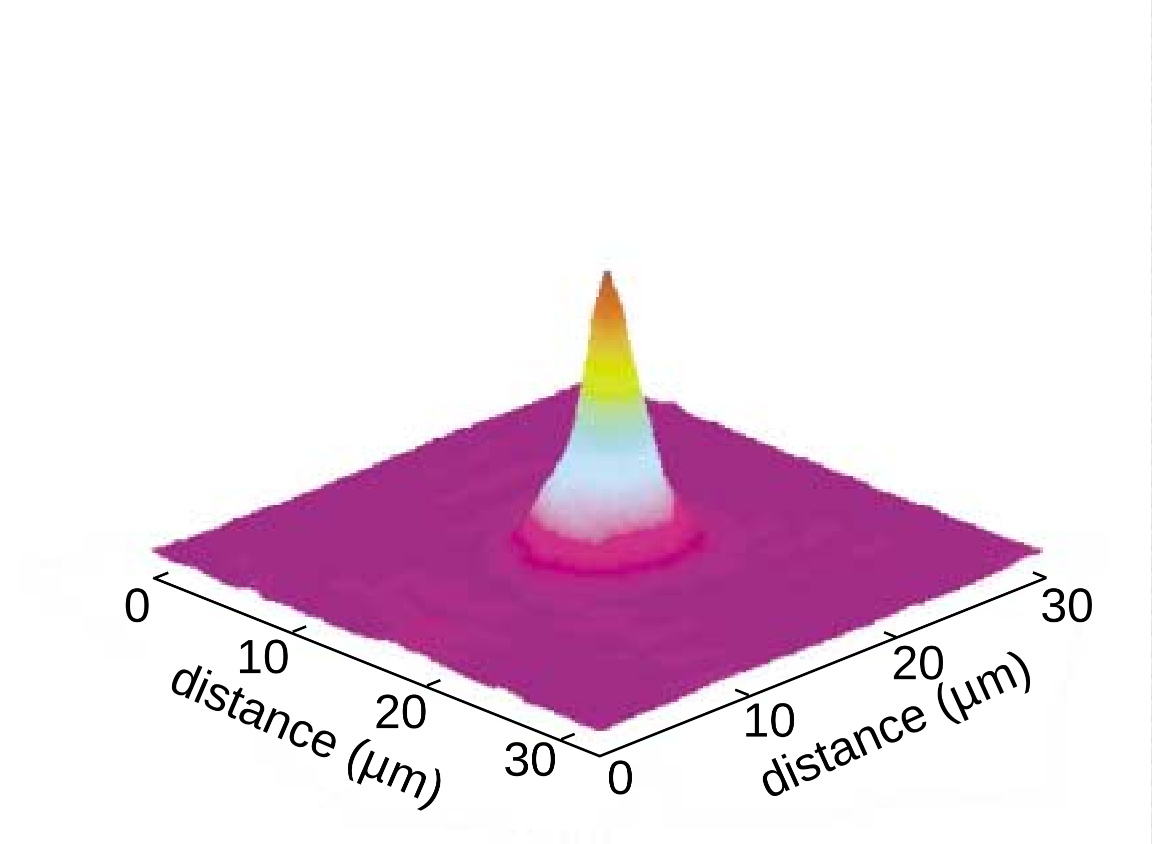
waveguide machining



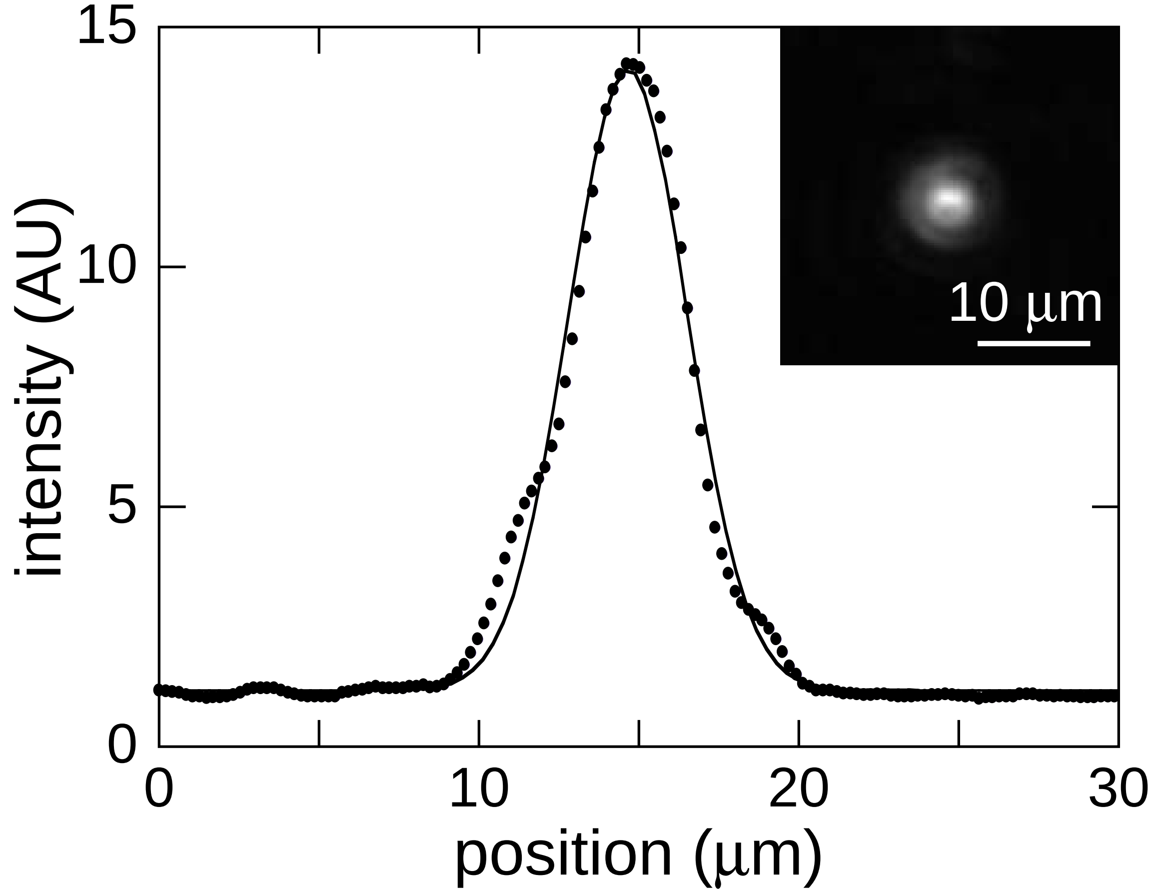
waveguide mode analysis



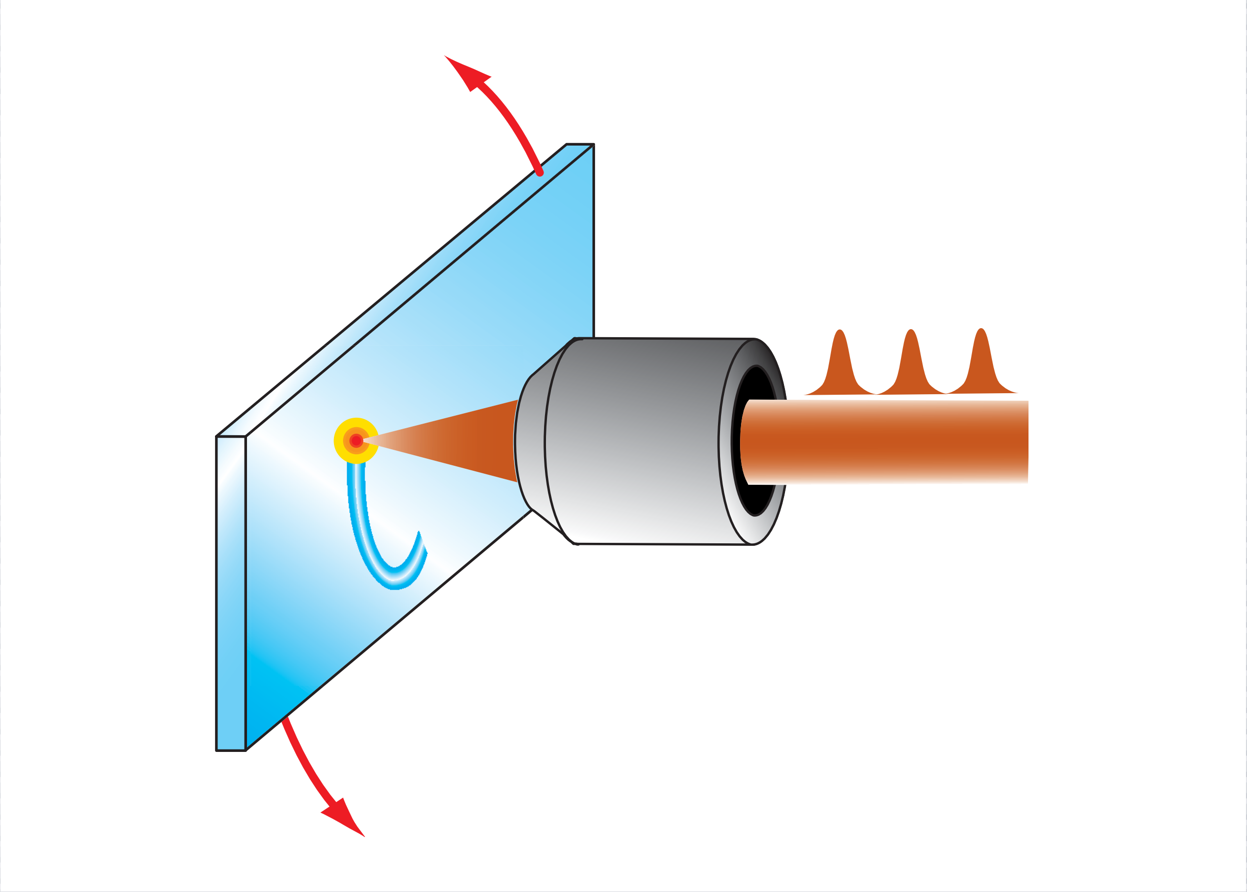
near field mode



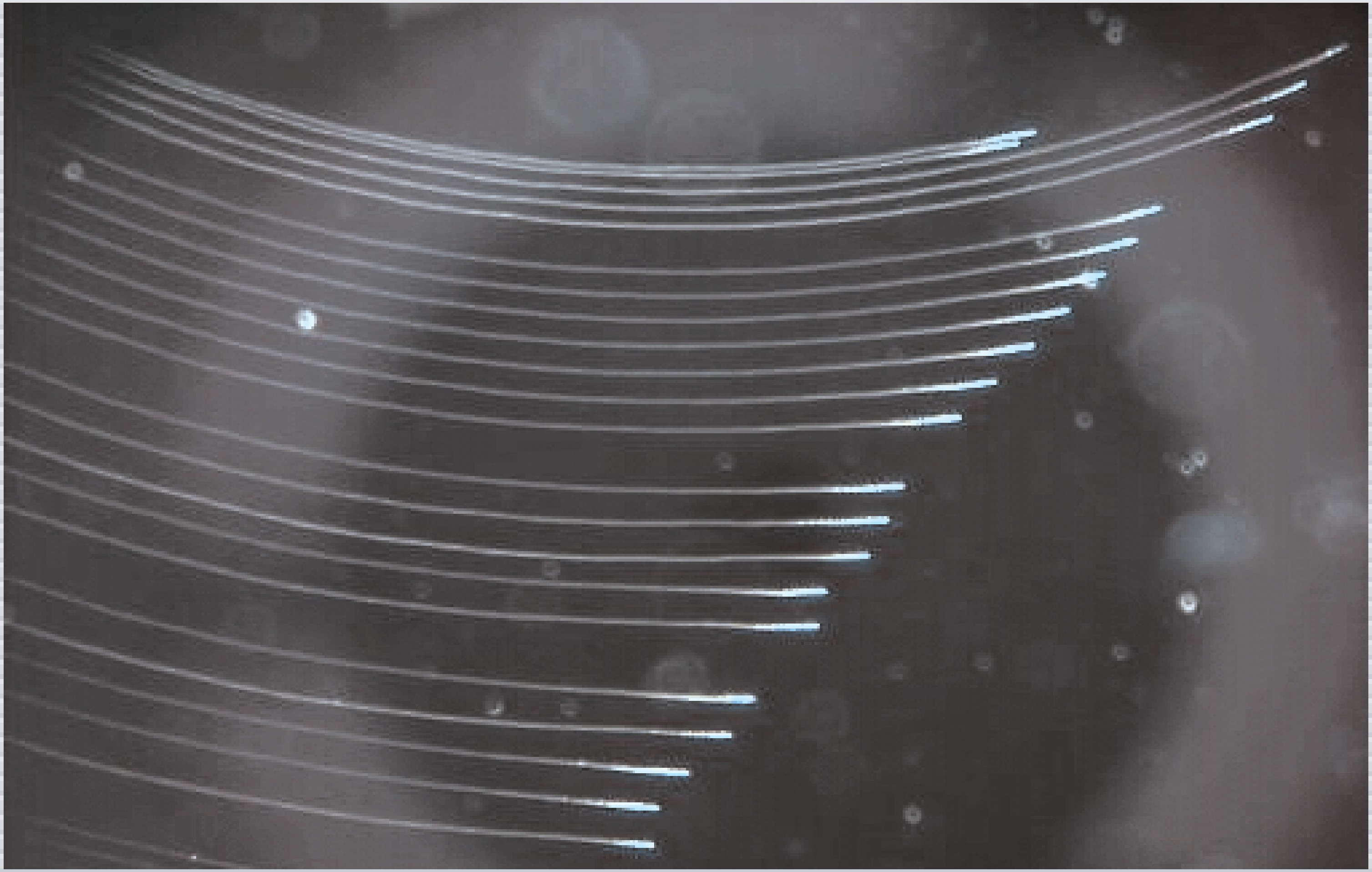
near field mode



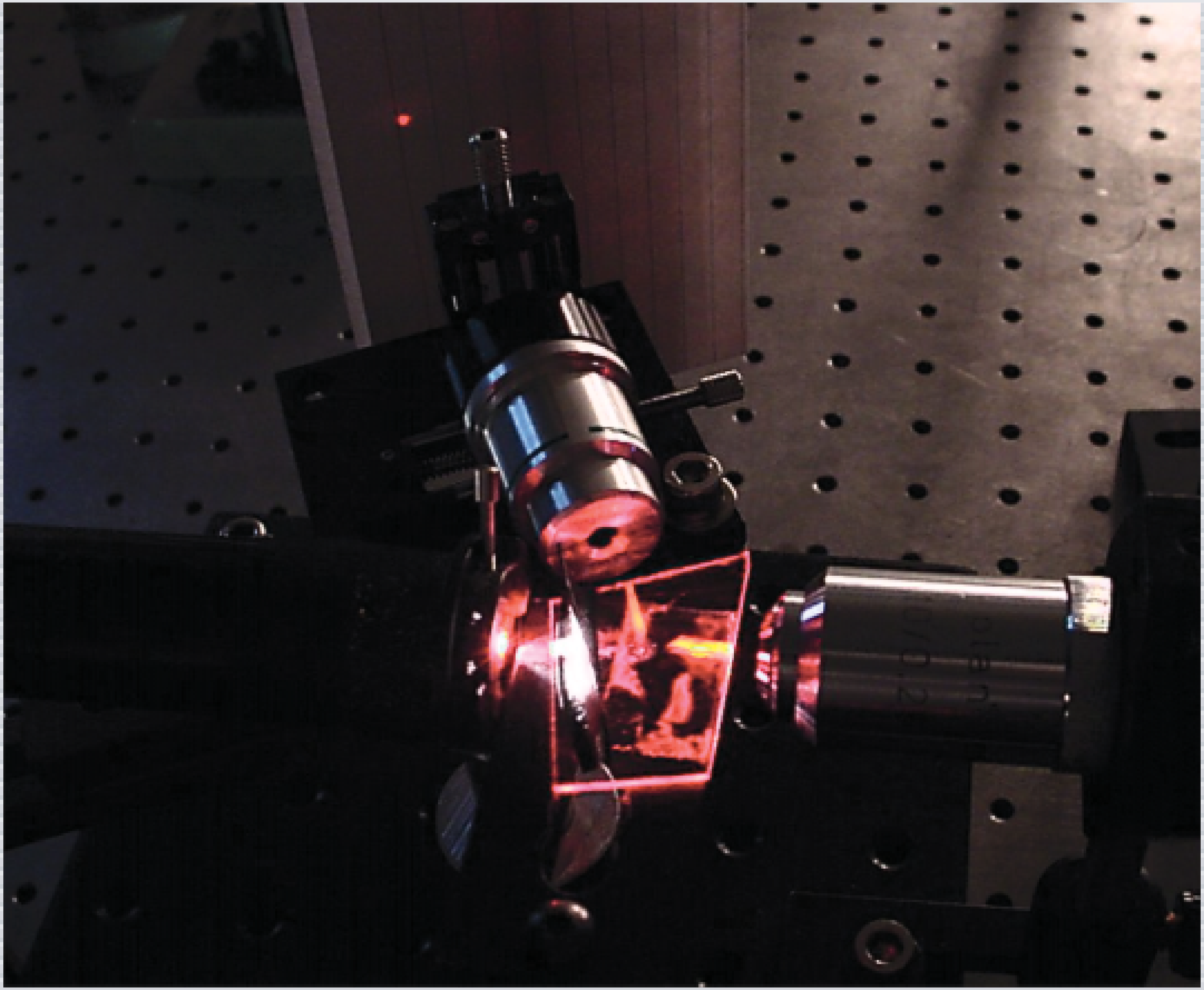
curved waveguides



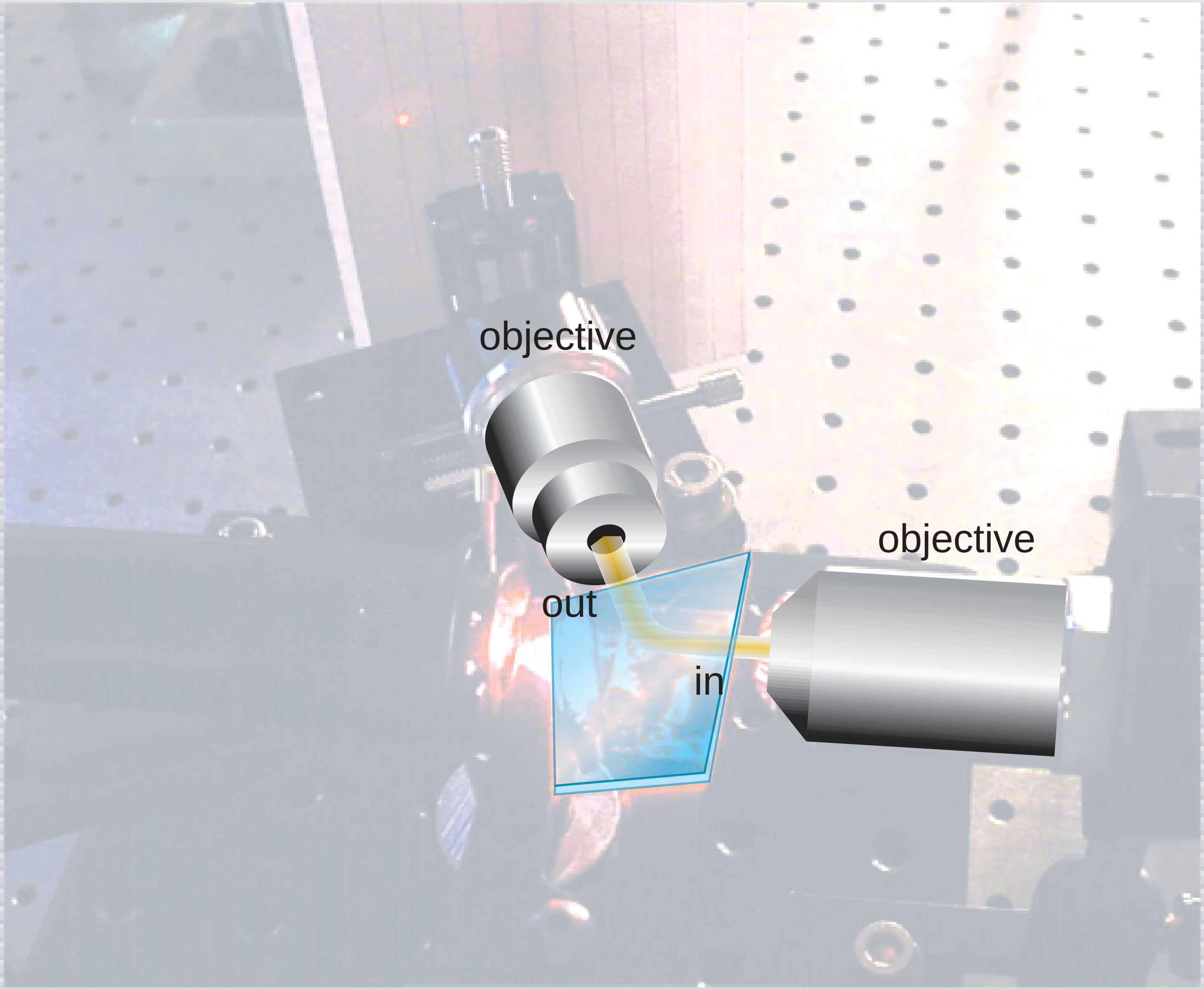
curved waveguides



Low-energy processing



Low-energy processing



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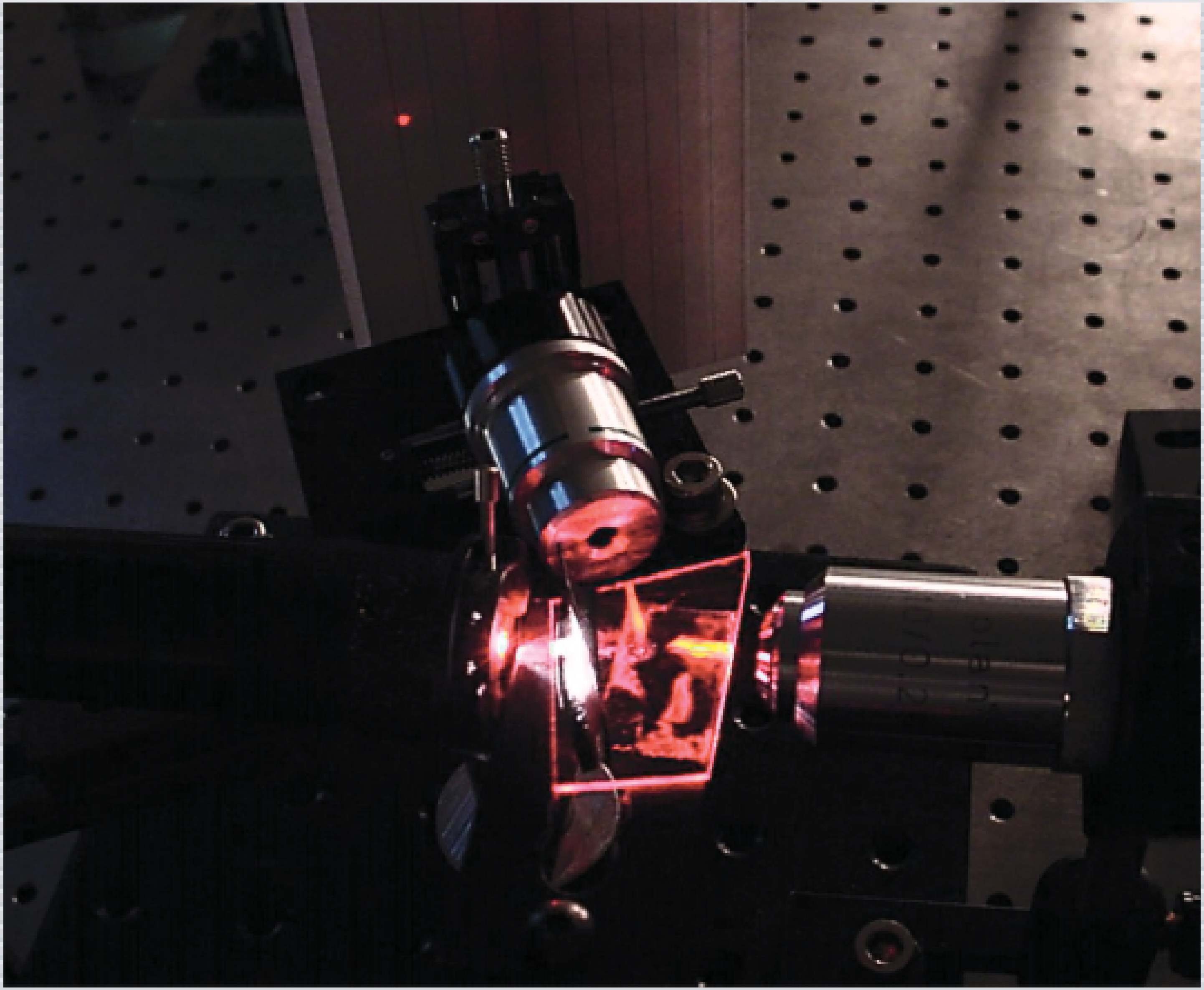
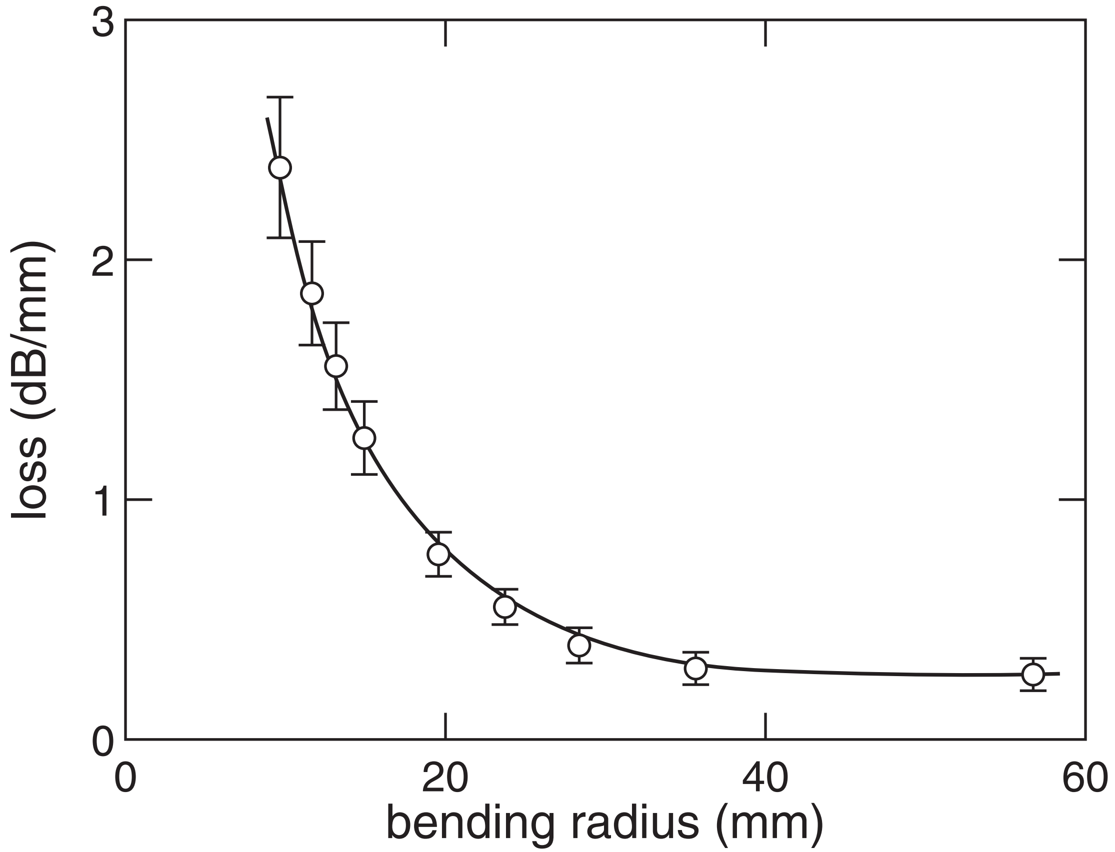
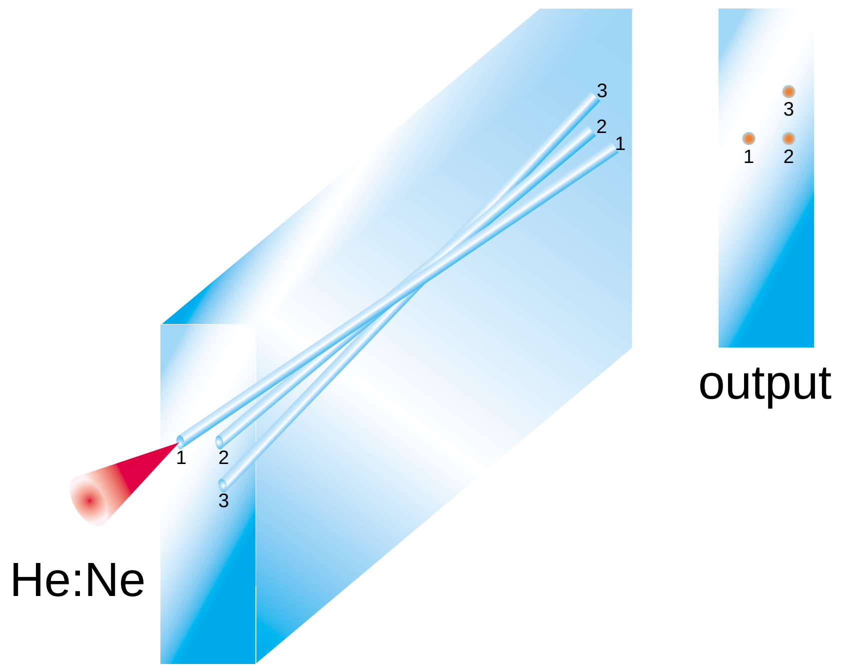


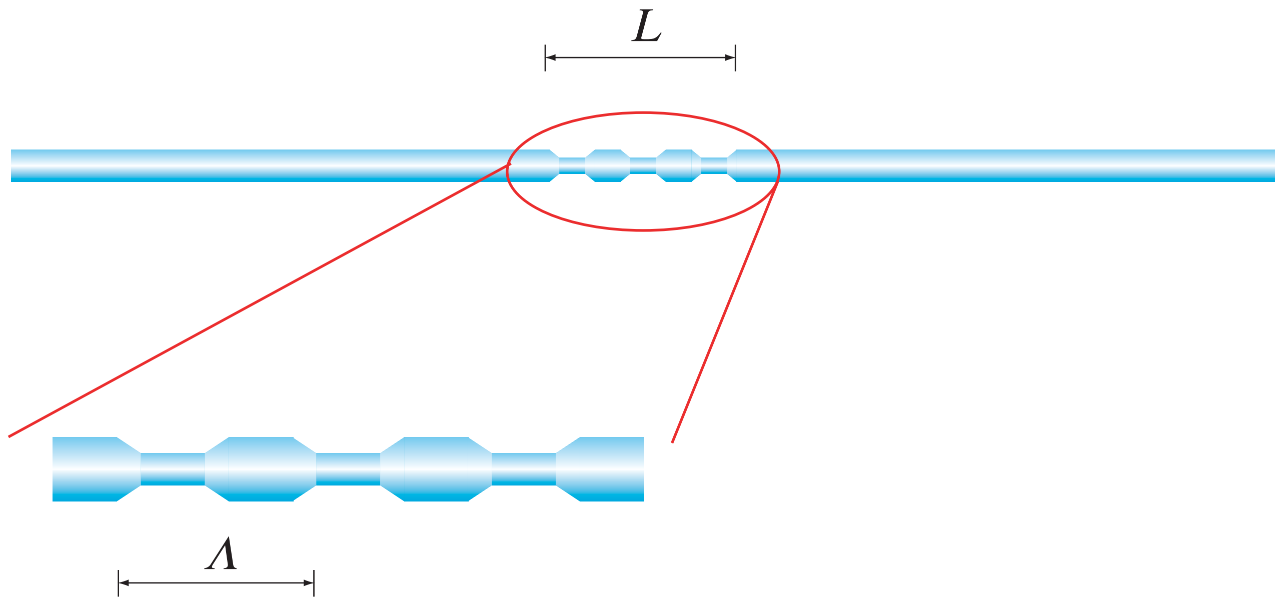
bending losses



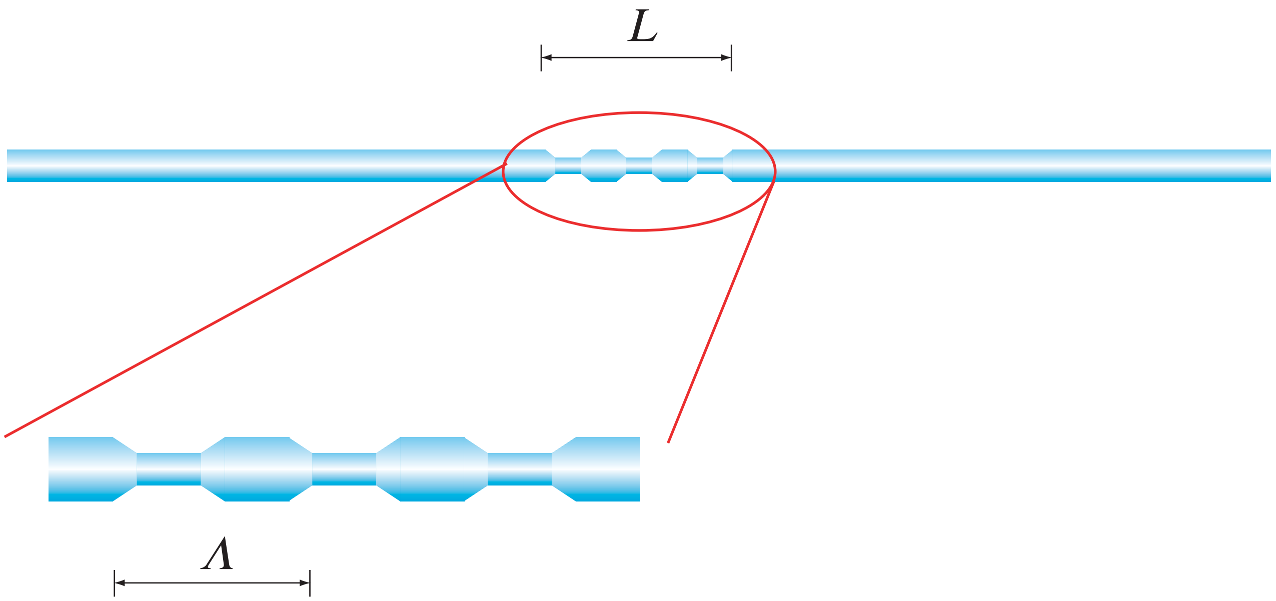
3D wave splitter



Bragg grating



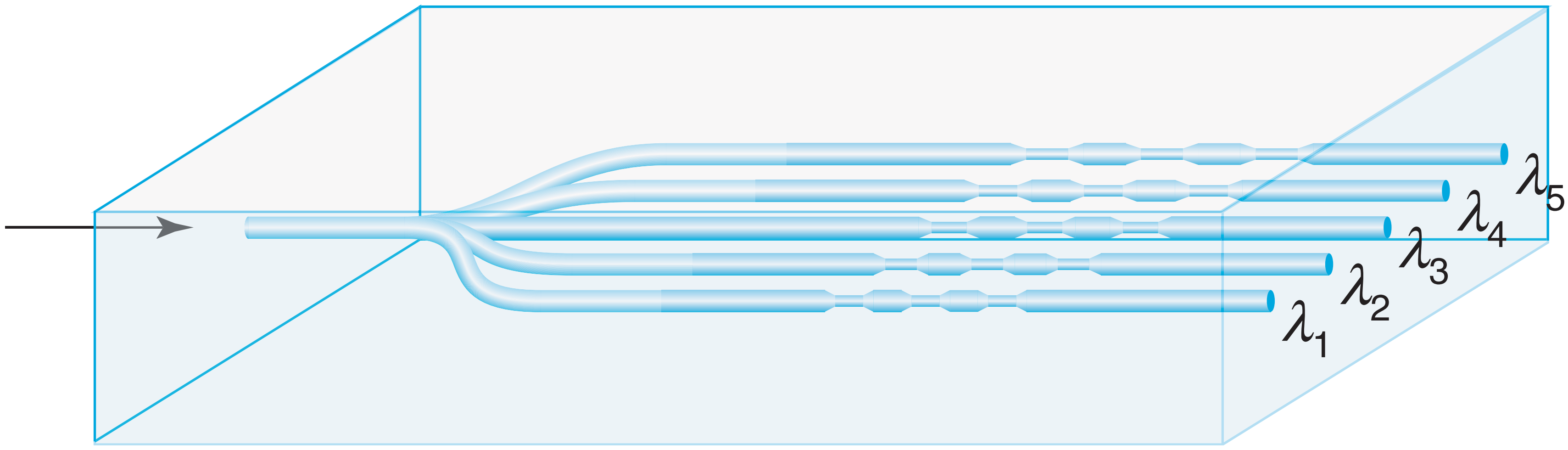
Bragg grating



L = 5 mm, Λ = 5 µm, Δn = 10^{-3} → R = 0.93 for λ =1.5 µm

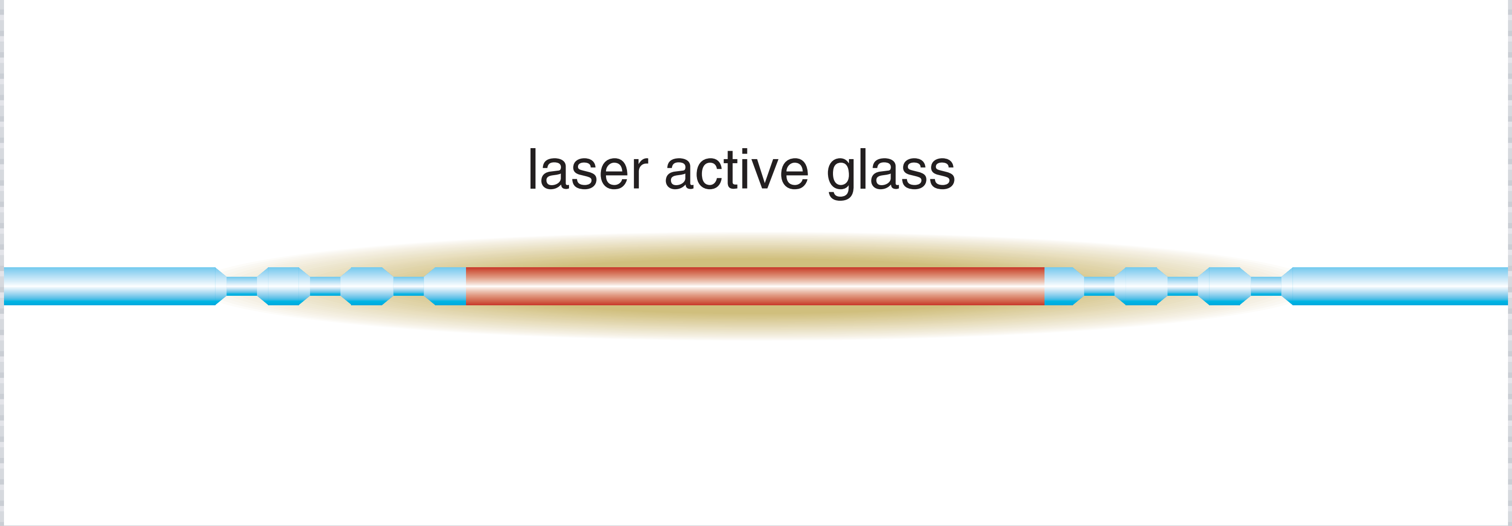
Low-energy processing

demultiplexer



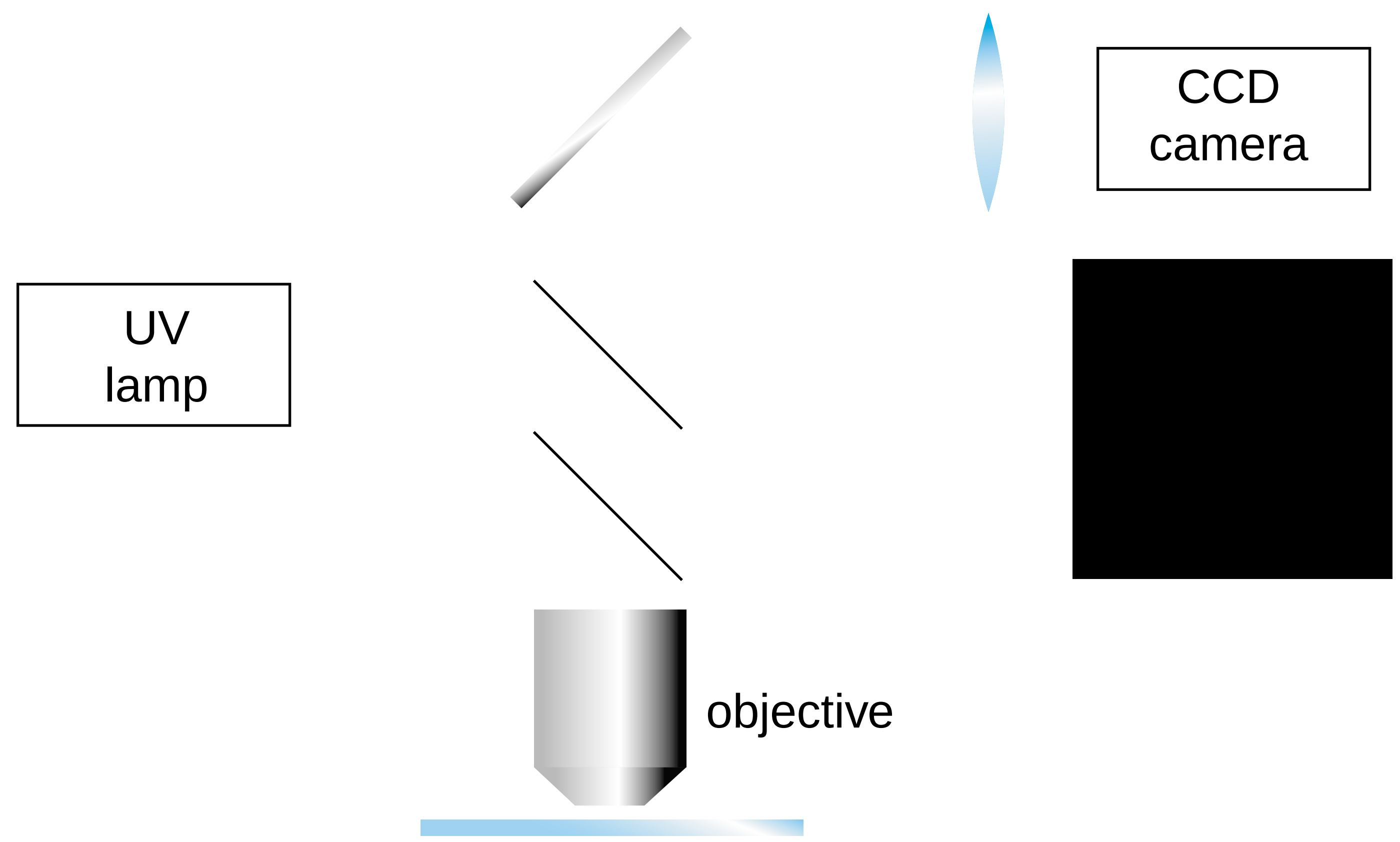
Low-energy processing

resonator/amplifier



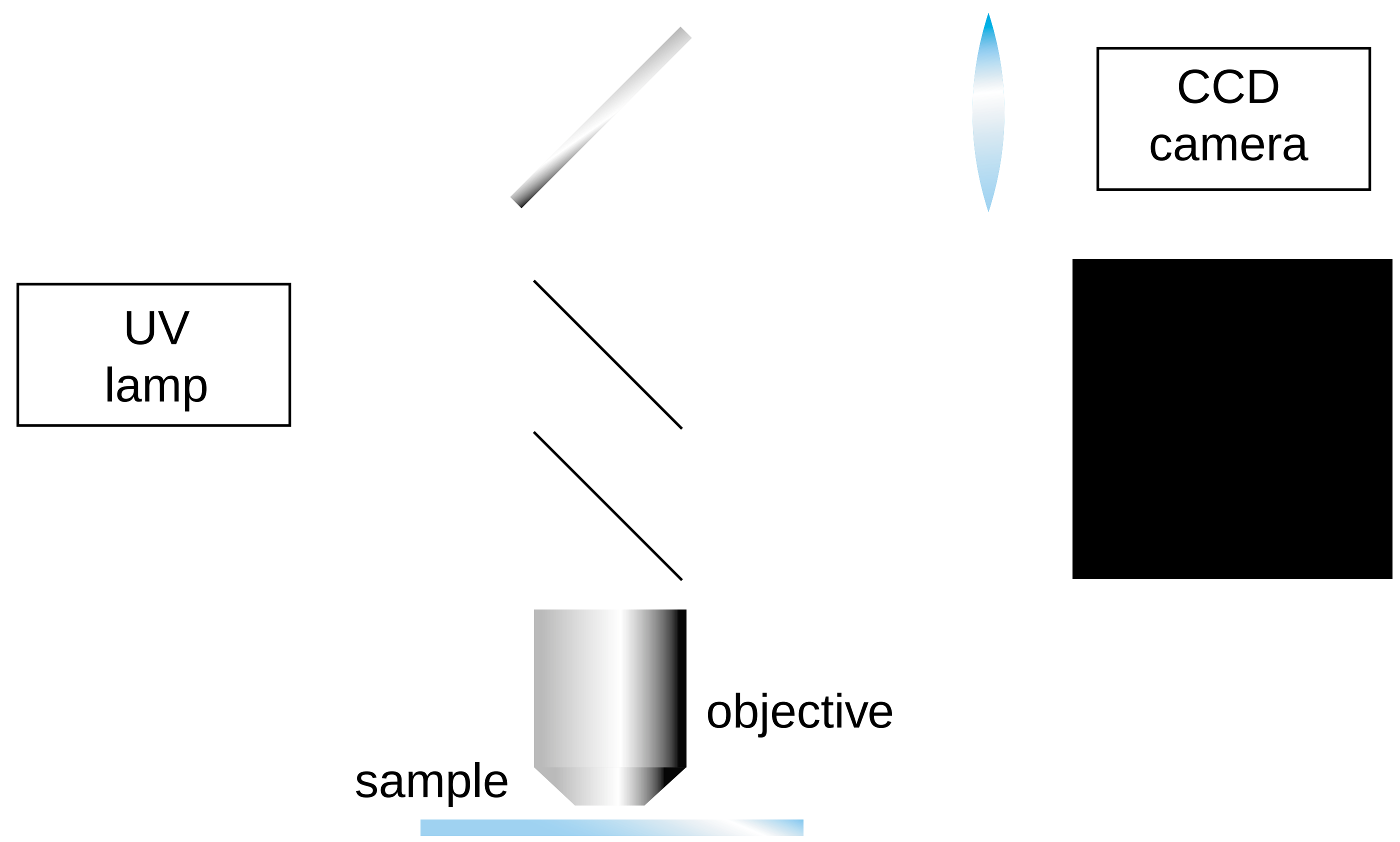
Low-energy processing

epi-fluorescence microscope

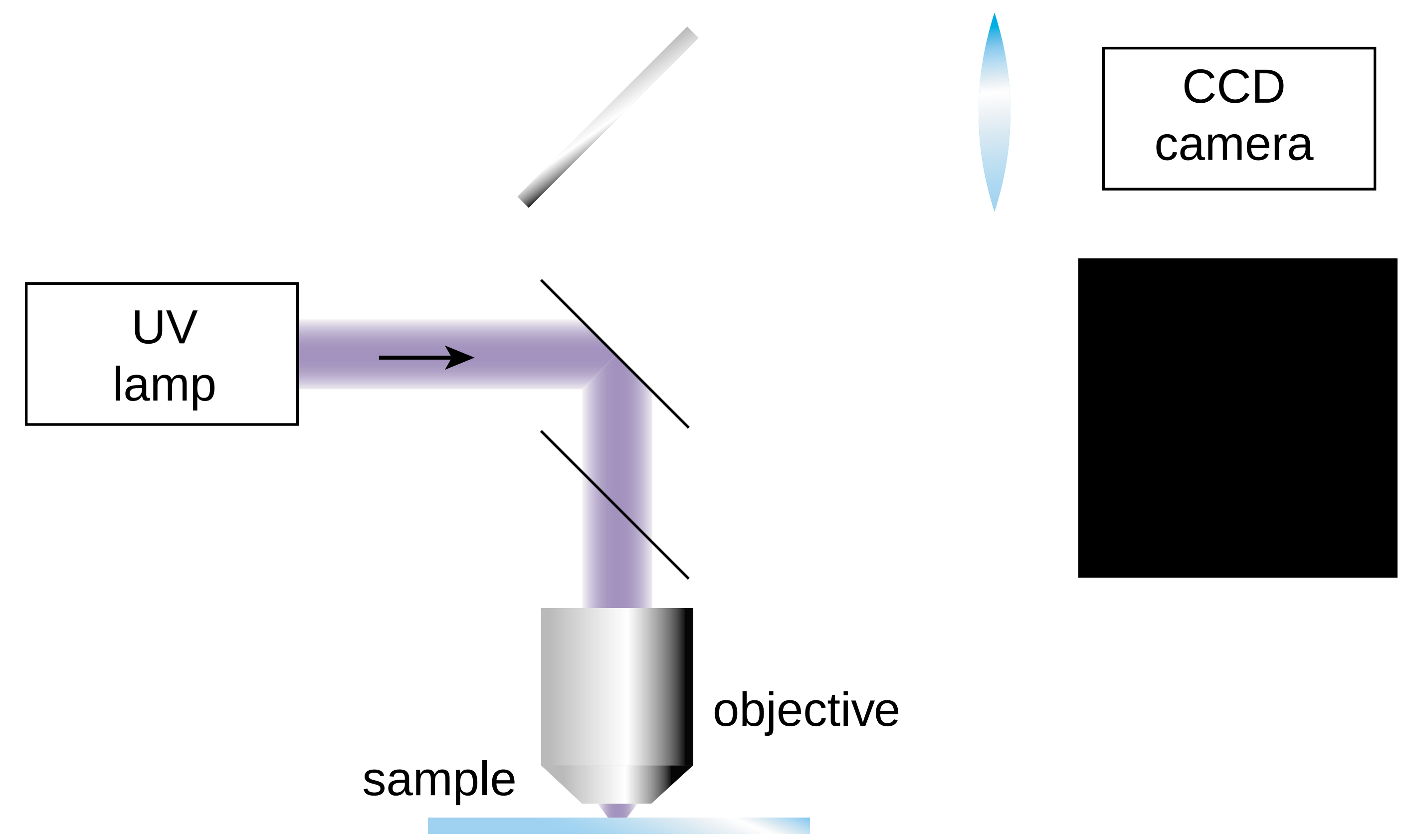


Low-energy processing

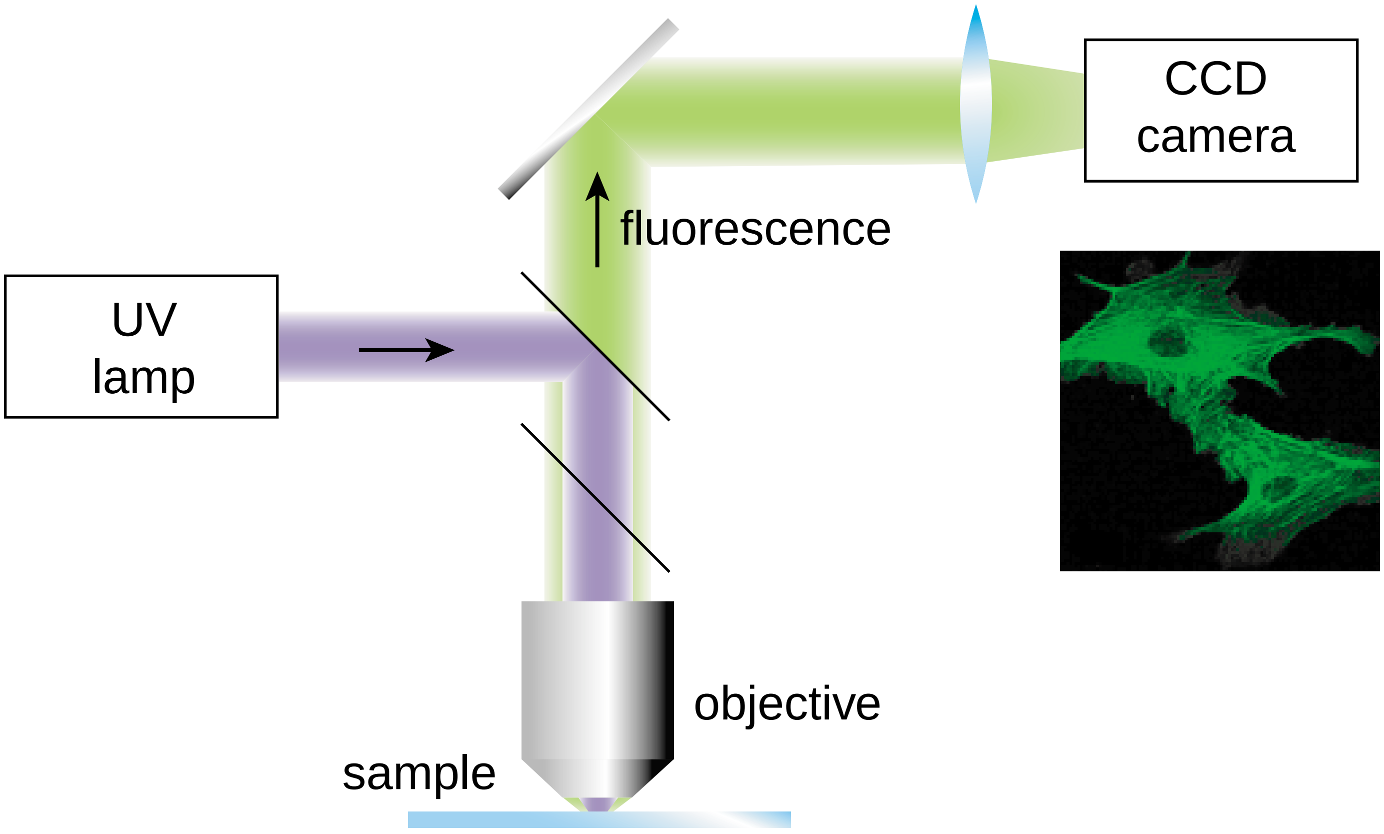
mount fluorescently tagged sample



UV illumination…

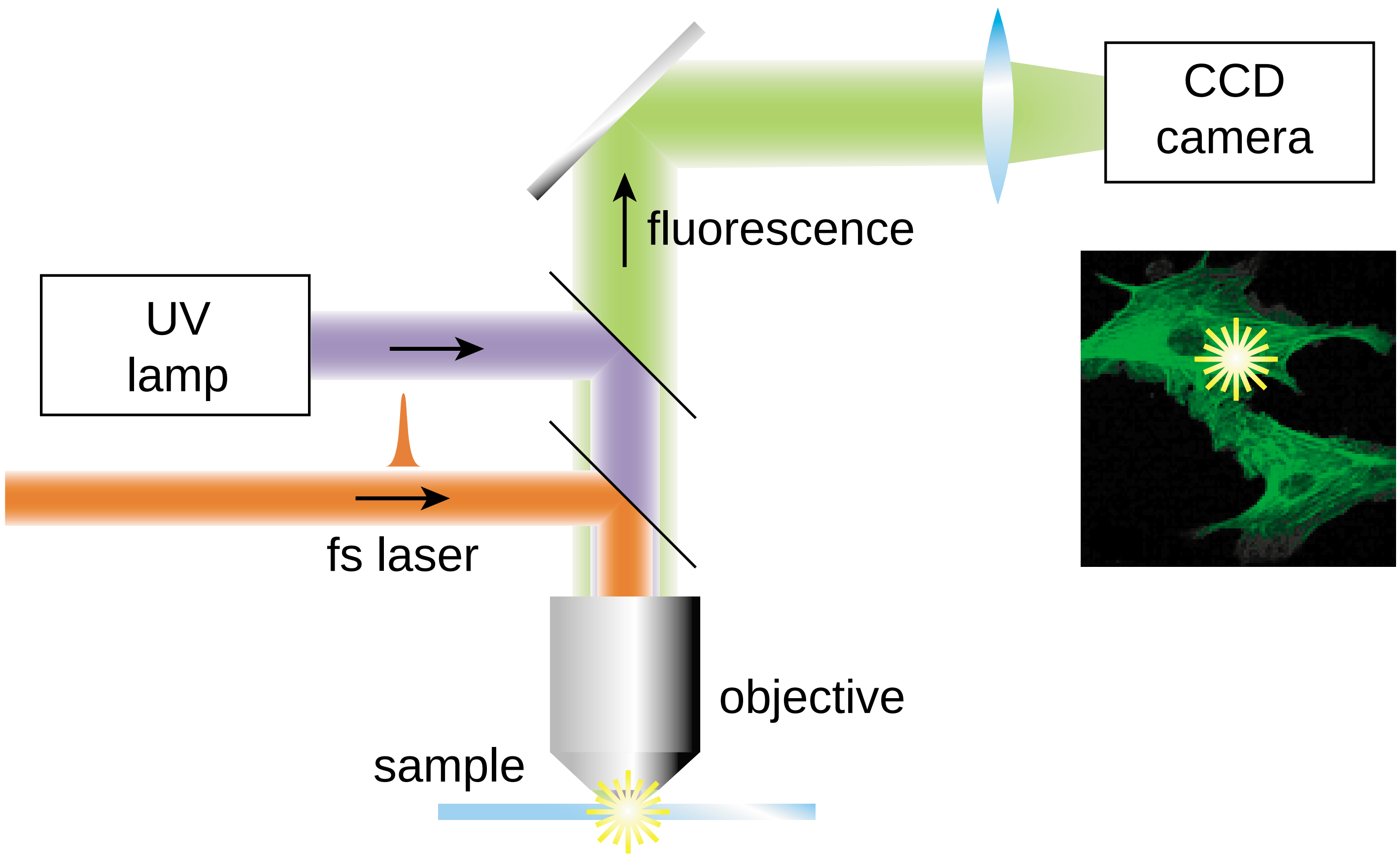


… causes fluorescence

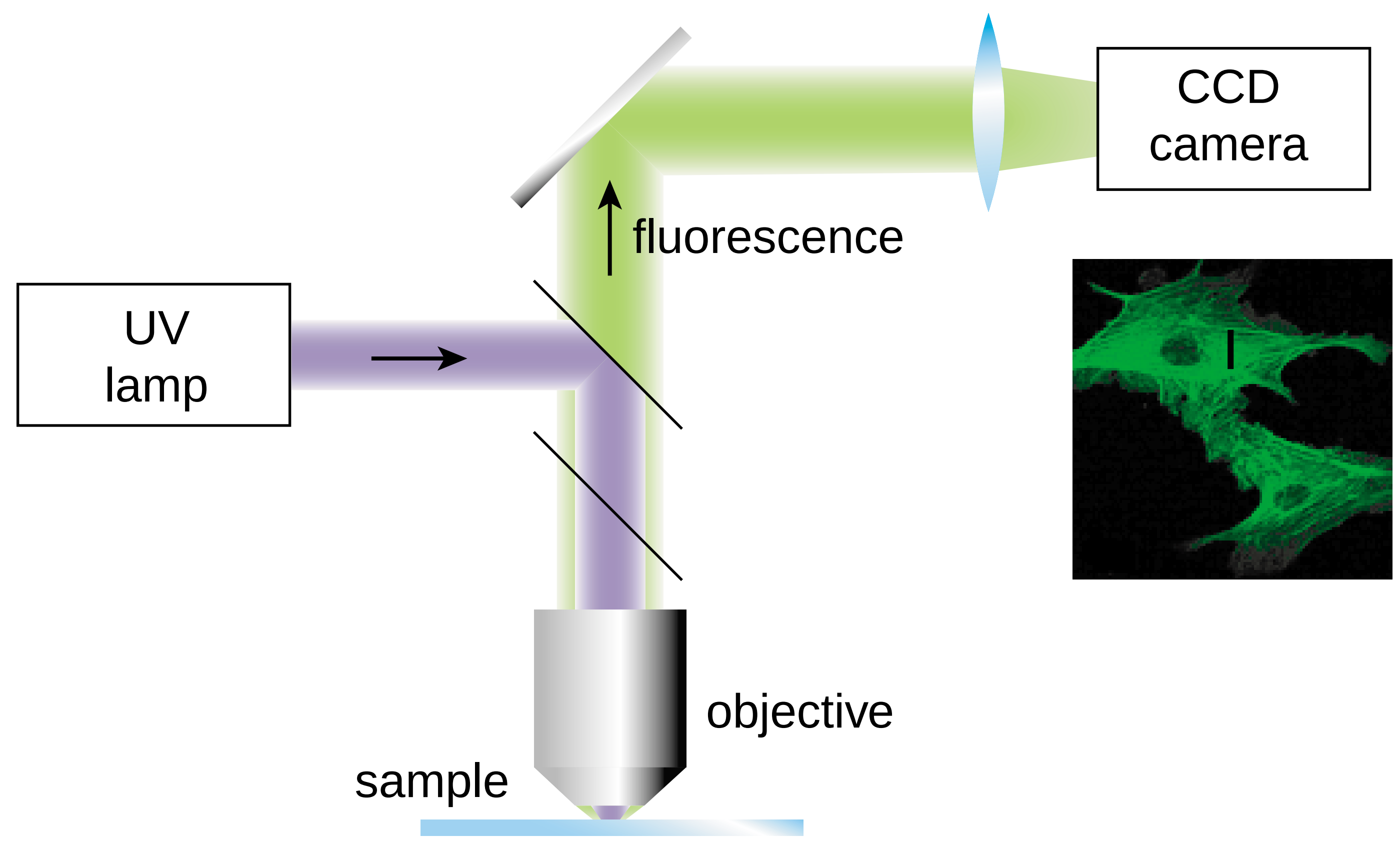


Low-energy processing

process with fs laser beam

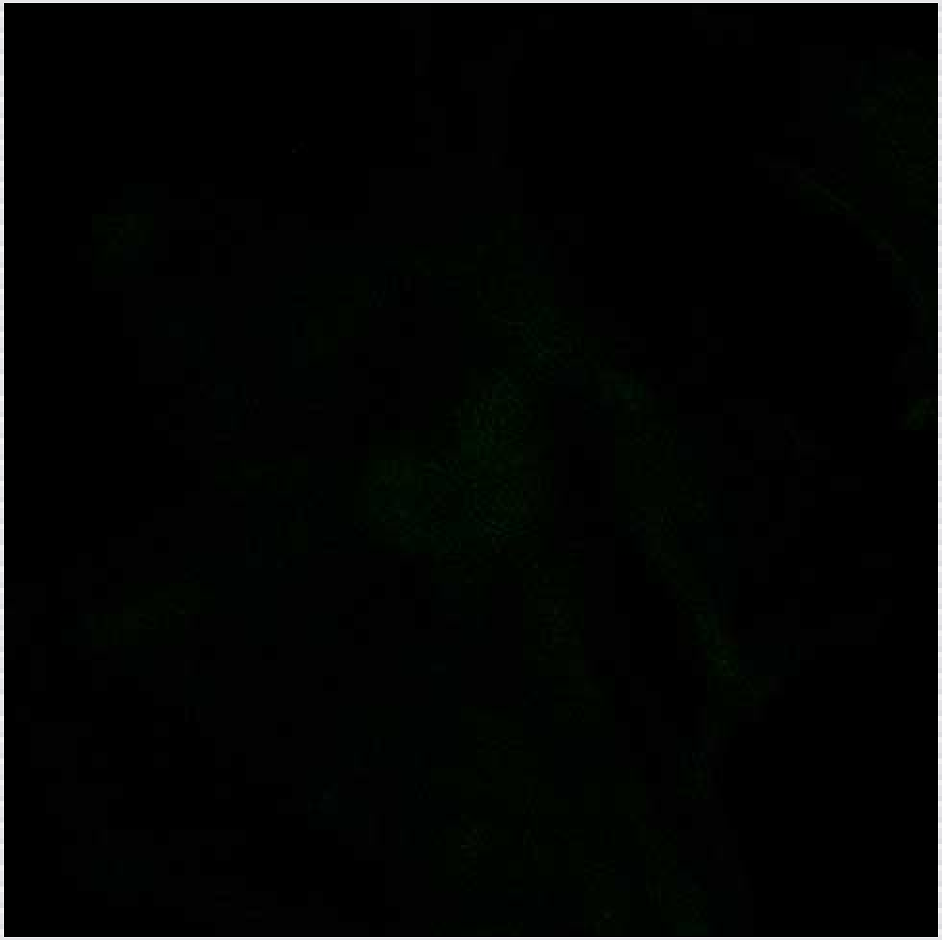


Low-energy processing

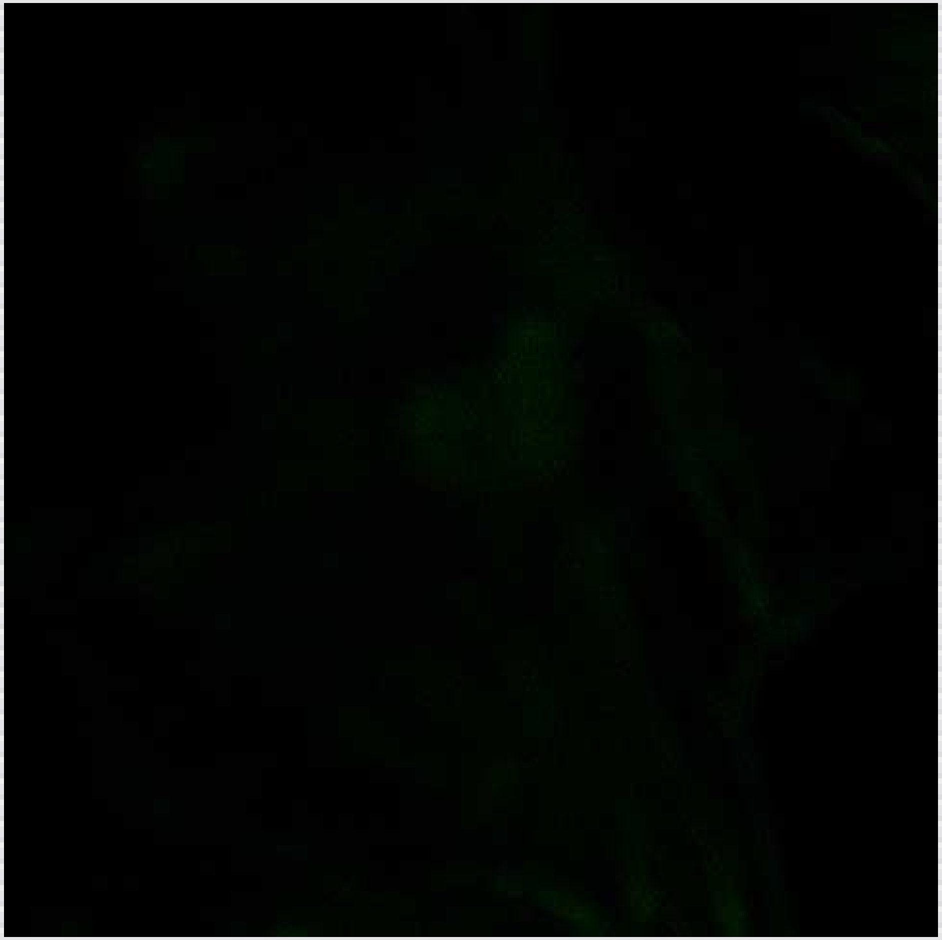


Low-energy processing

before



after

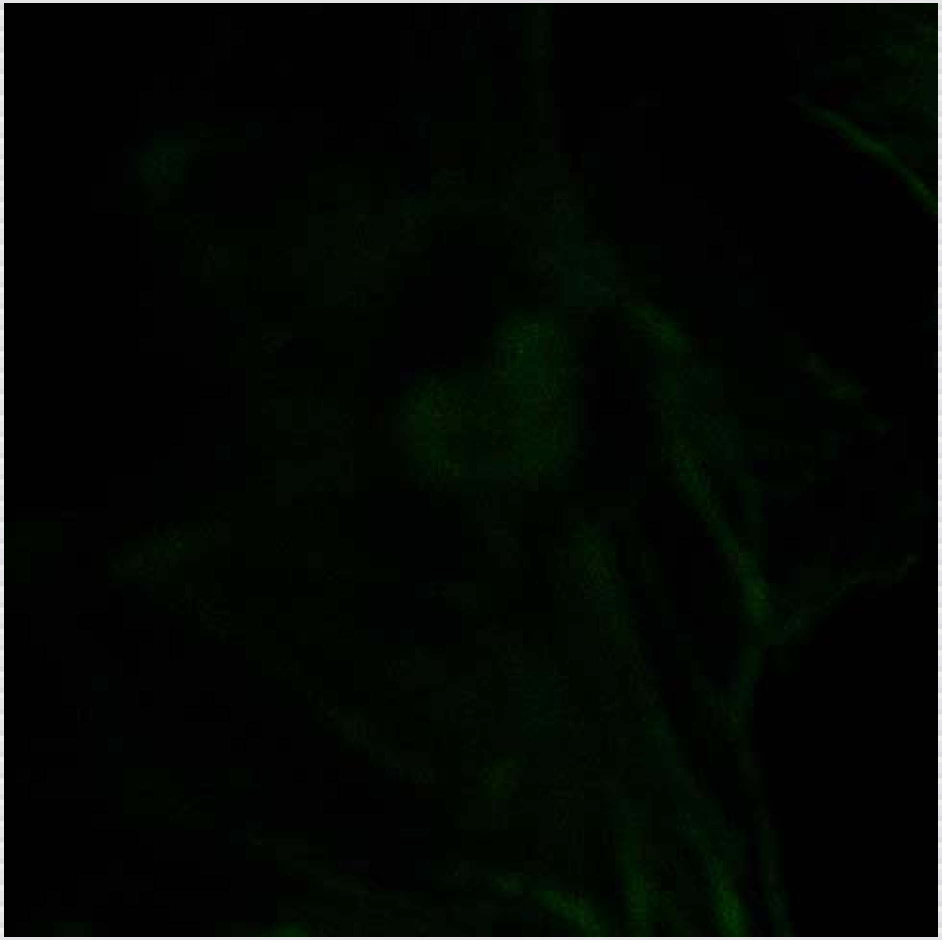


examine in confocal microscope

Low-energy processing

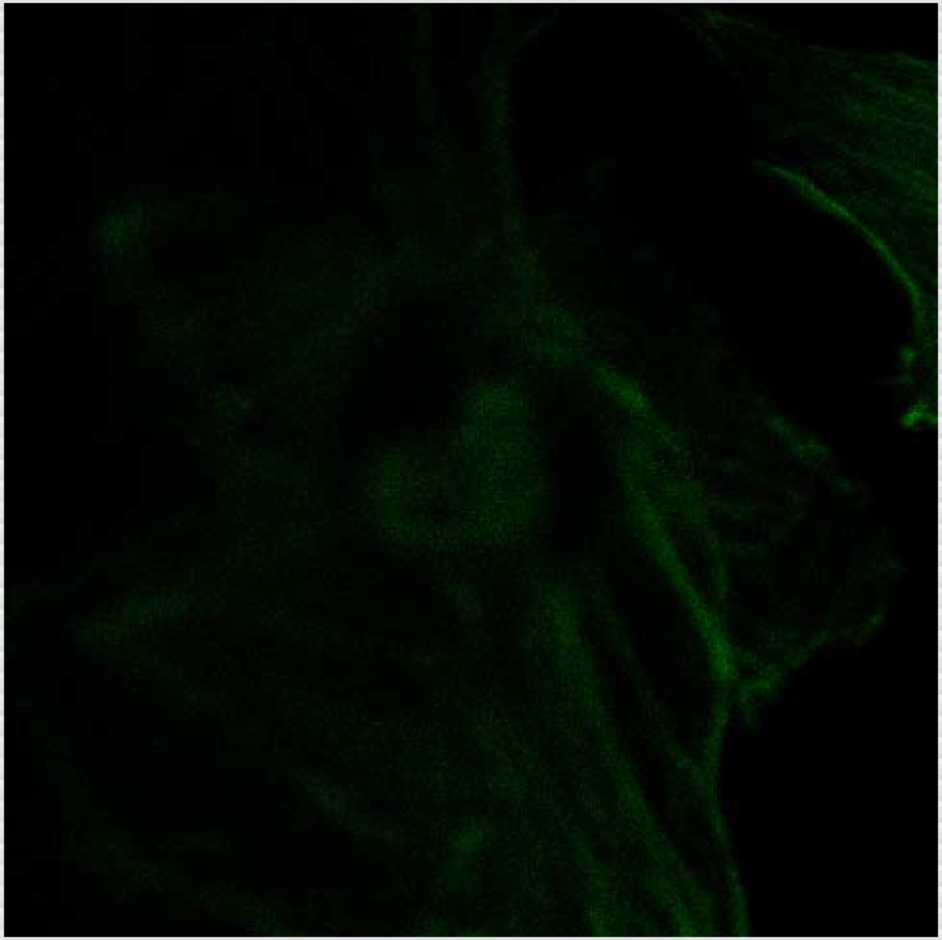
before

after



Low-energy processing

before



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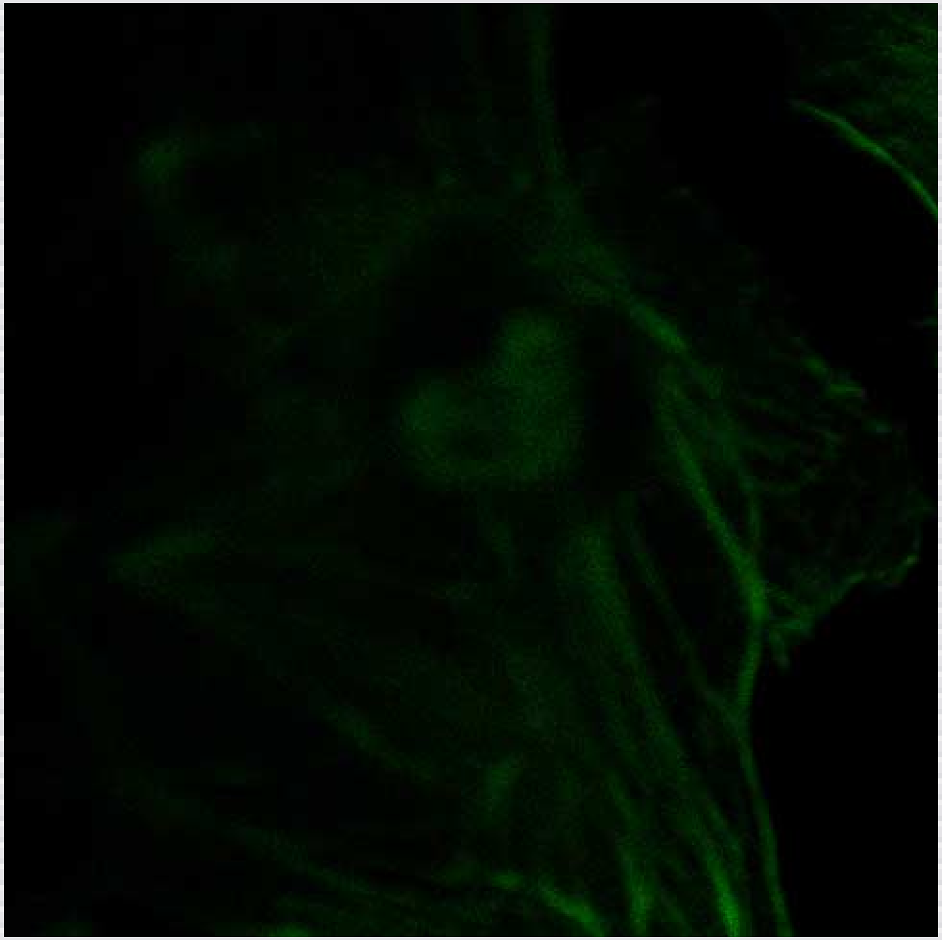
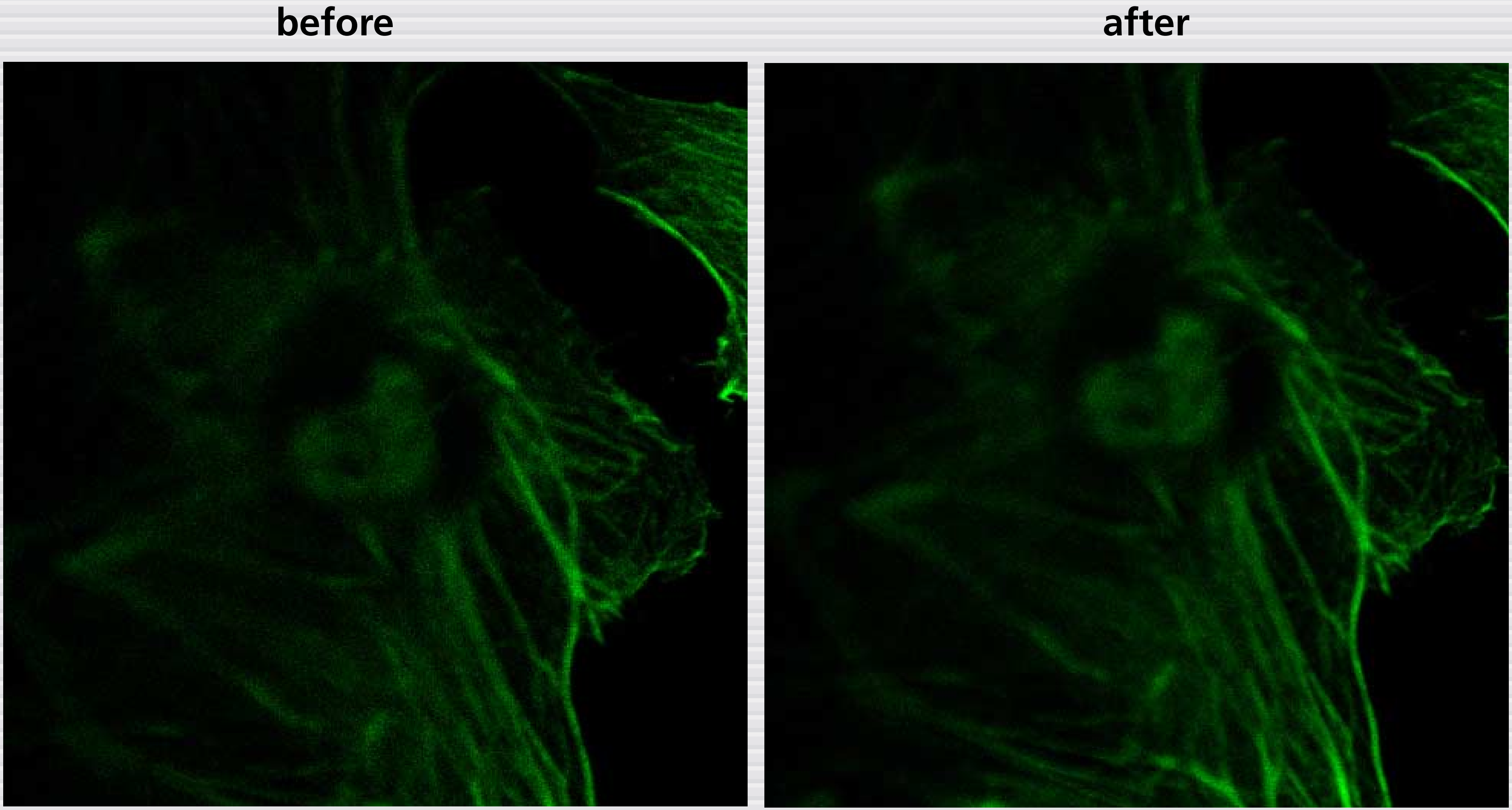
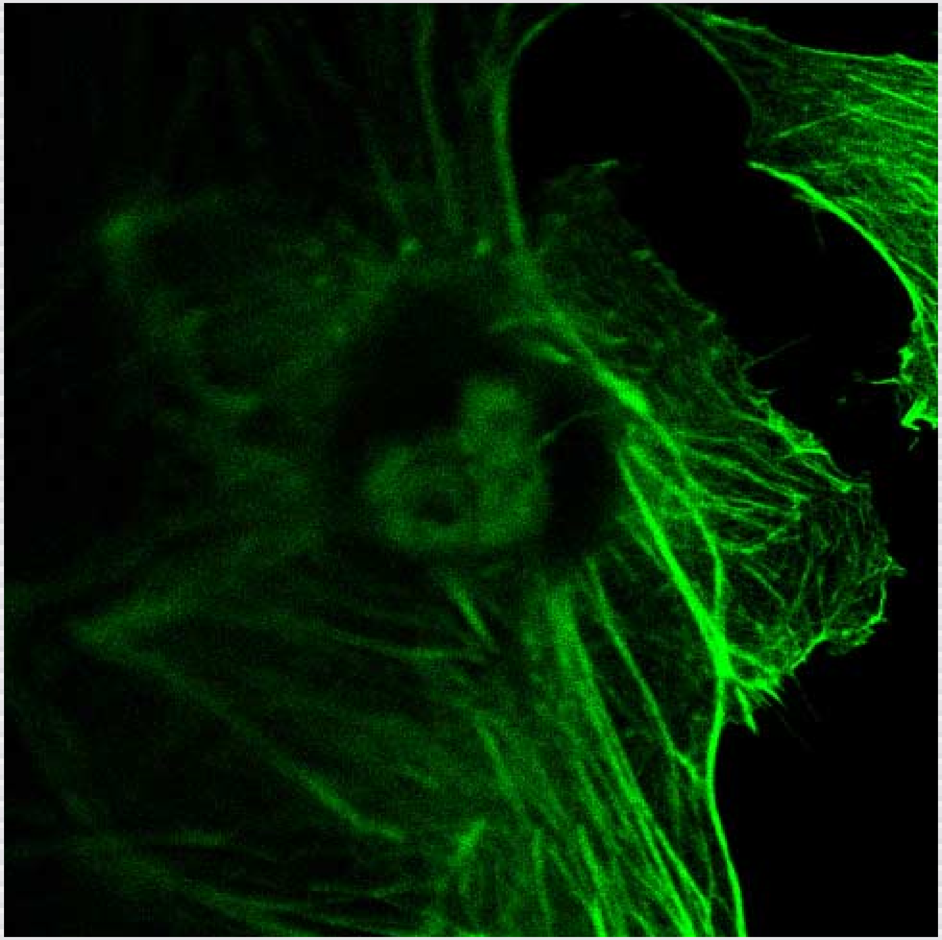


Low-energy processing



Low-energy processing

before



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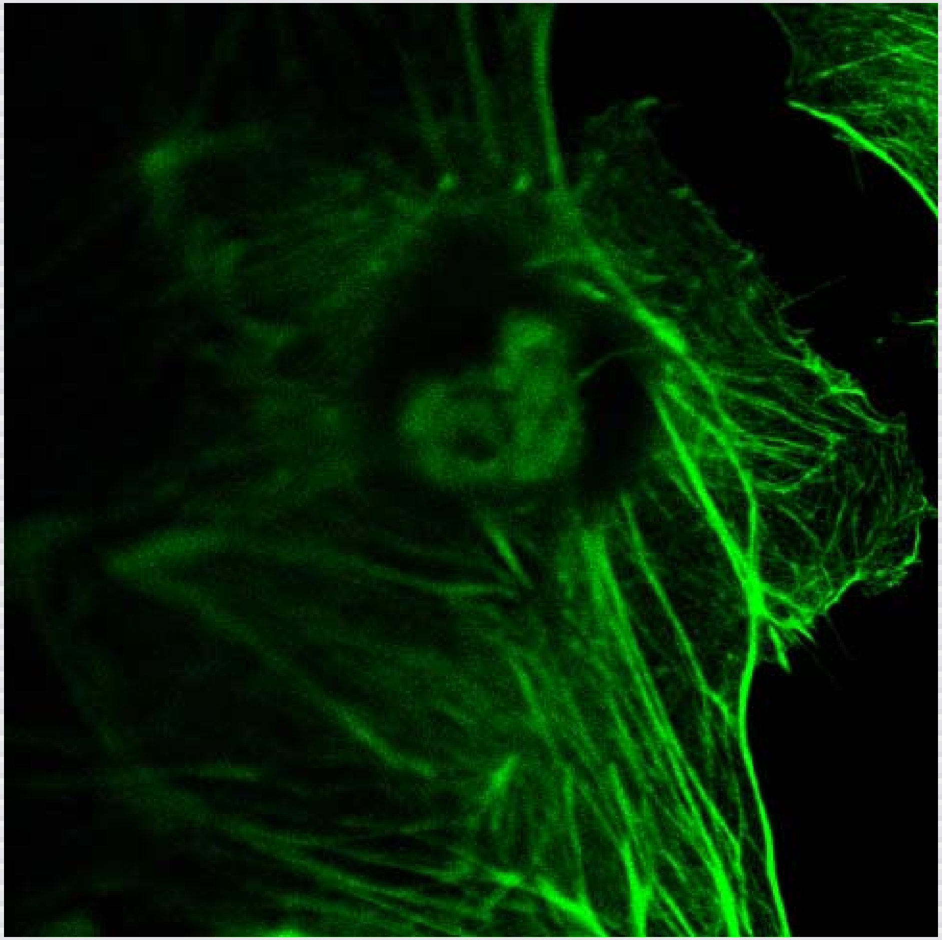
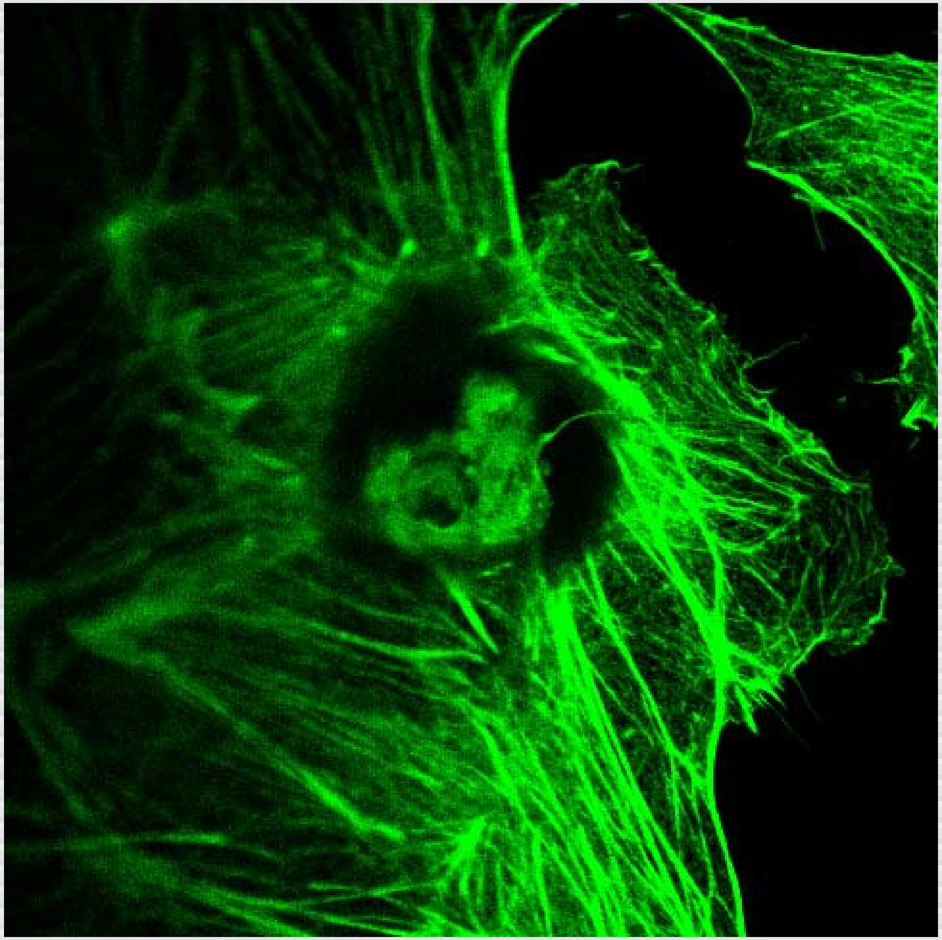


Low-energy processing

before



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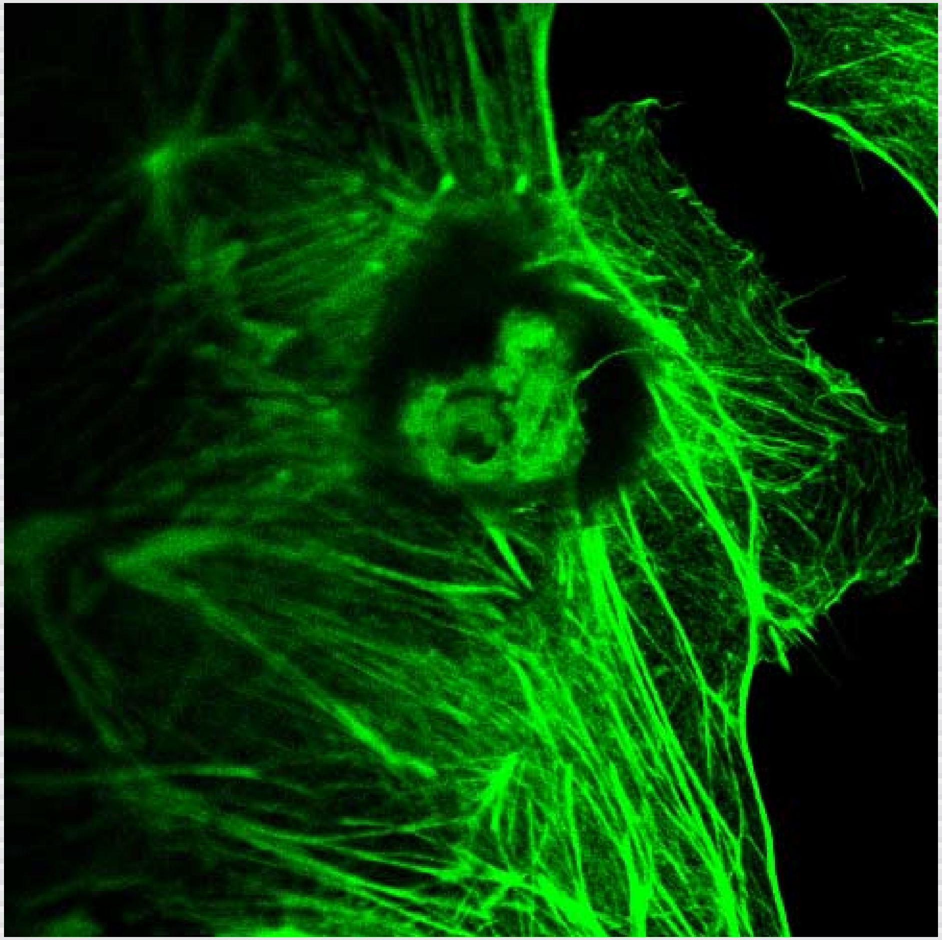
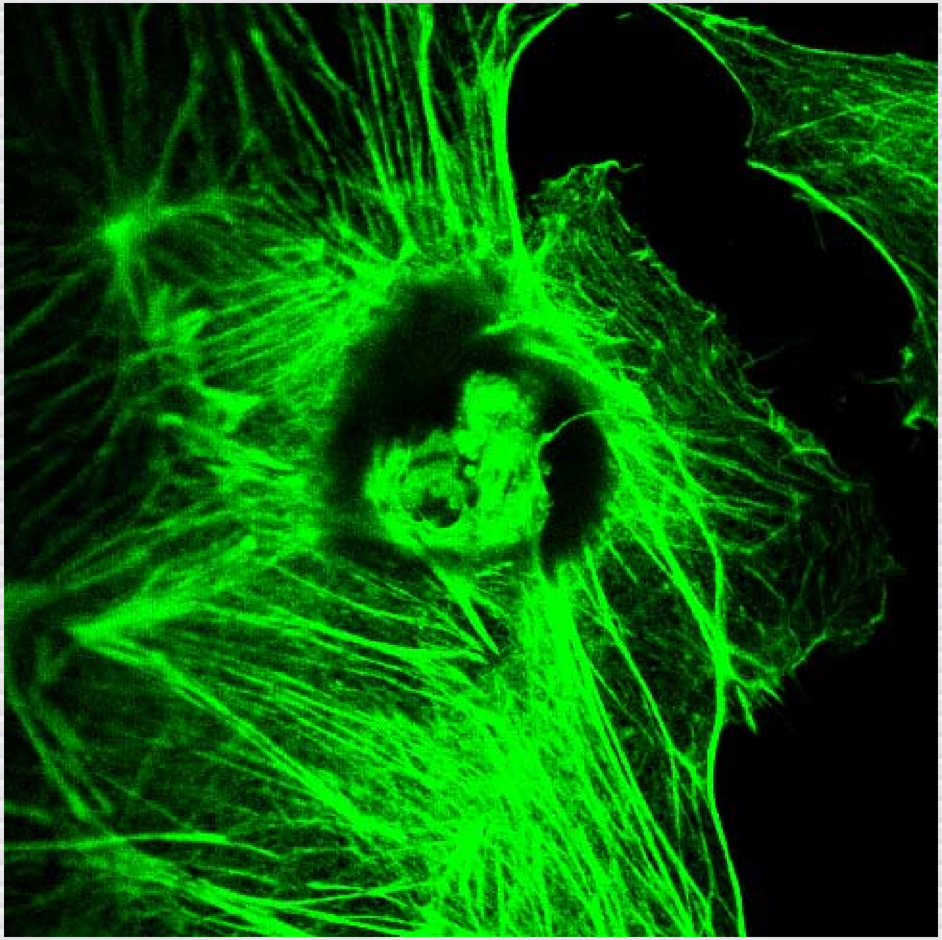


Low-energy processing

before



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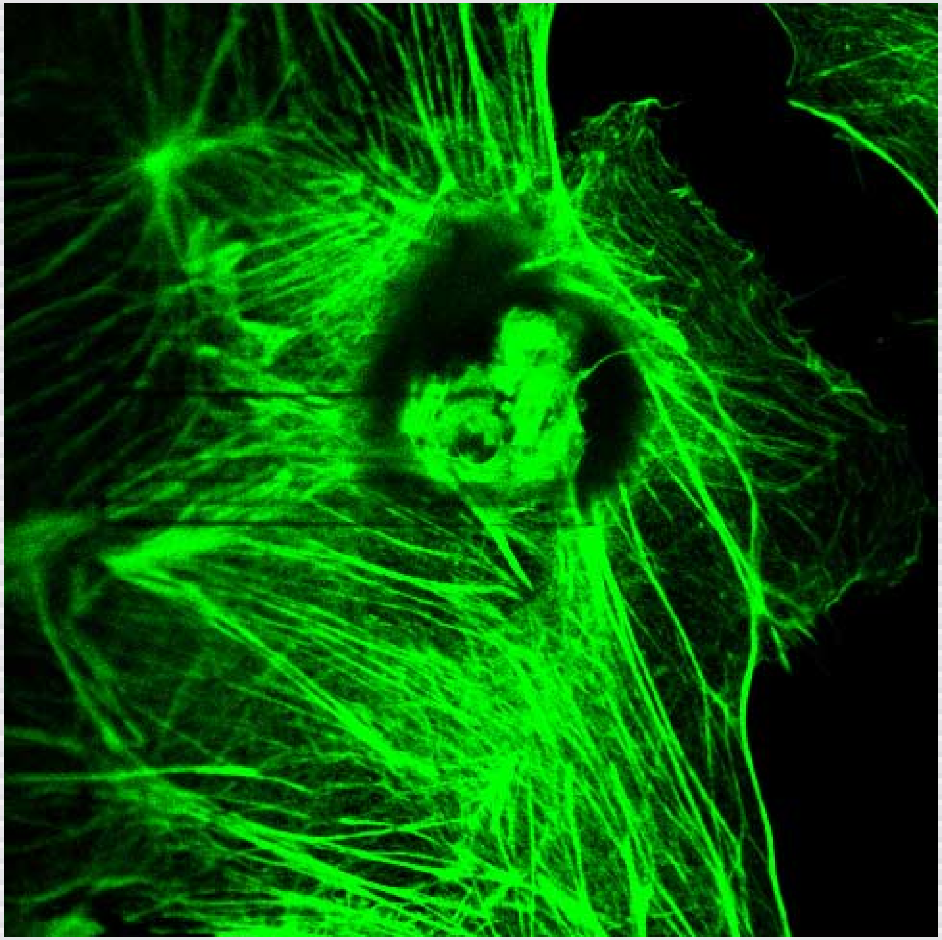
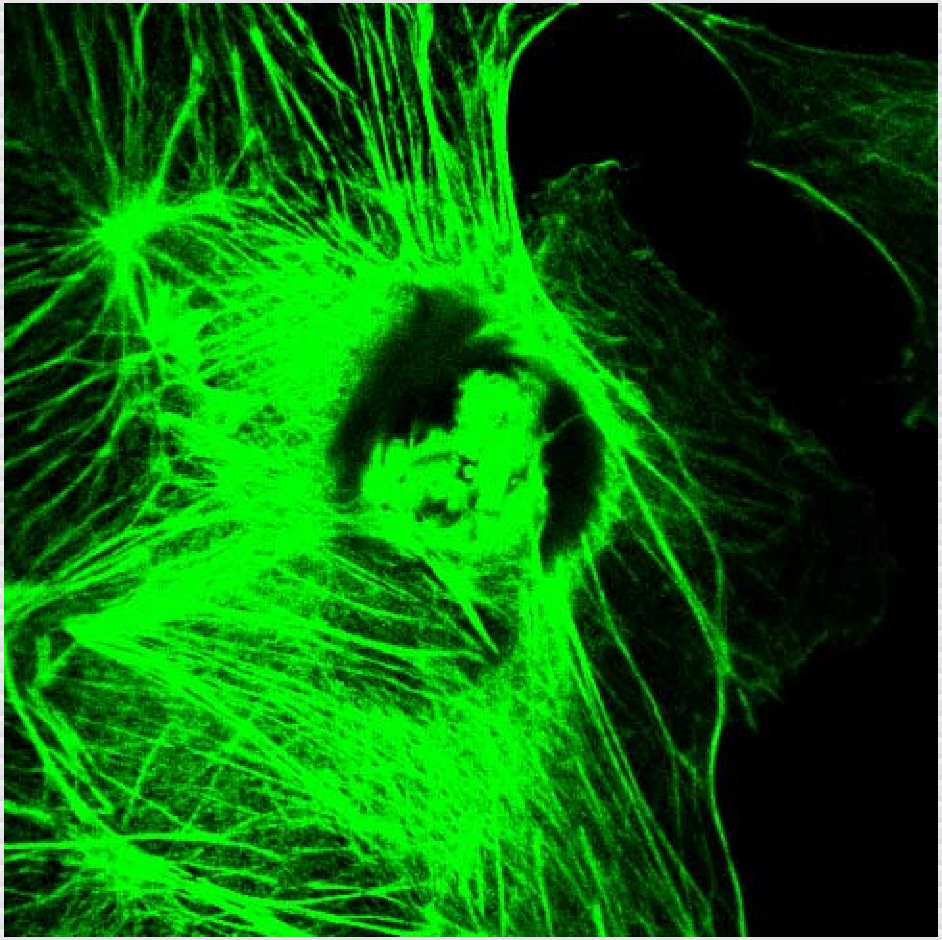


Low-energy processing

before



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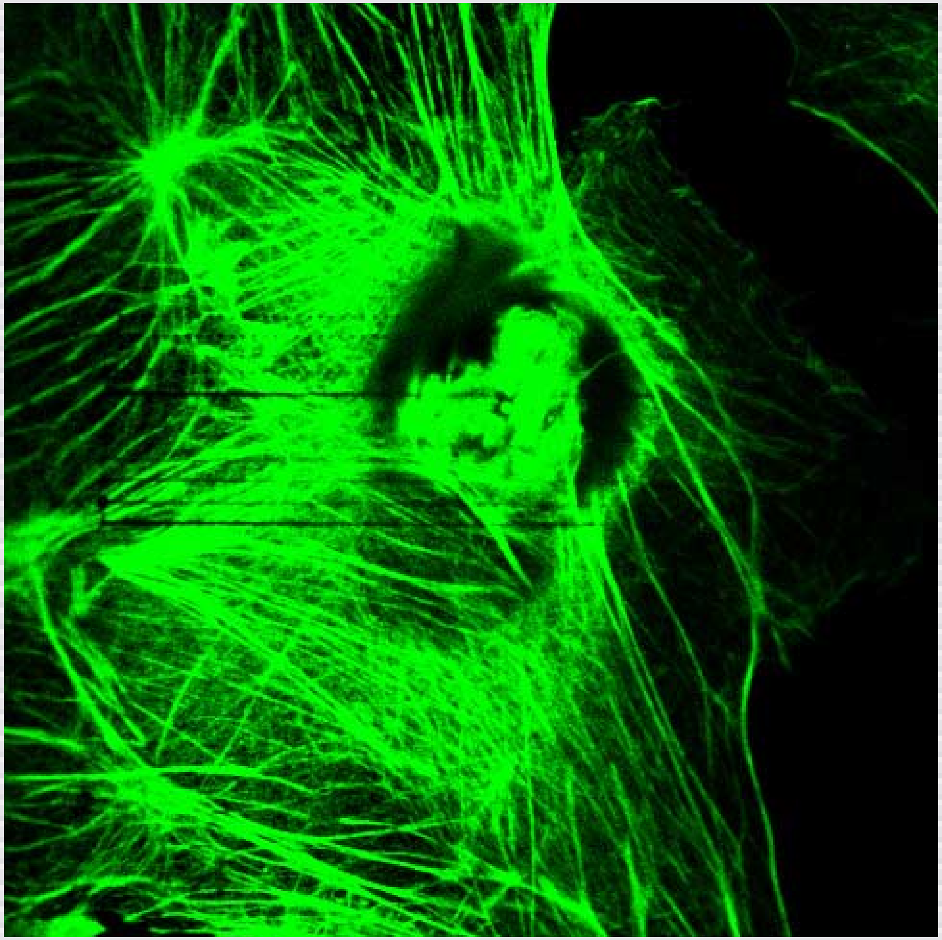
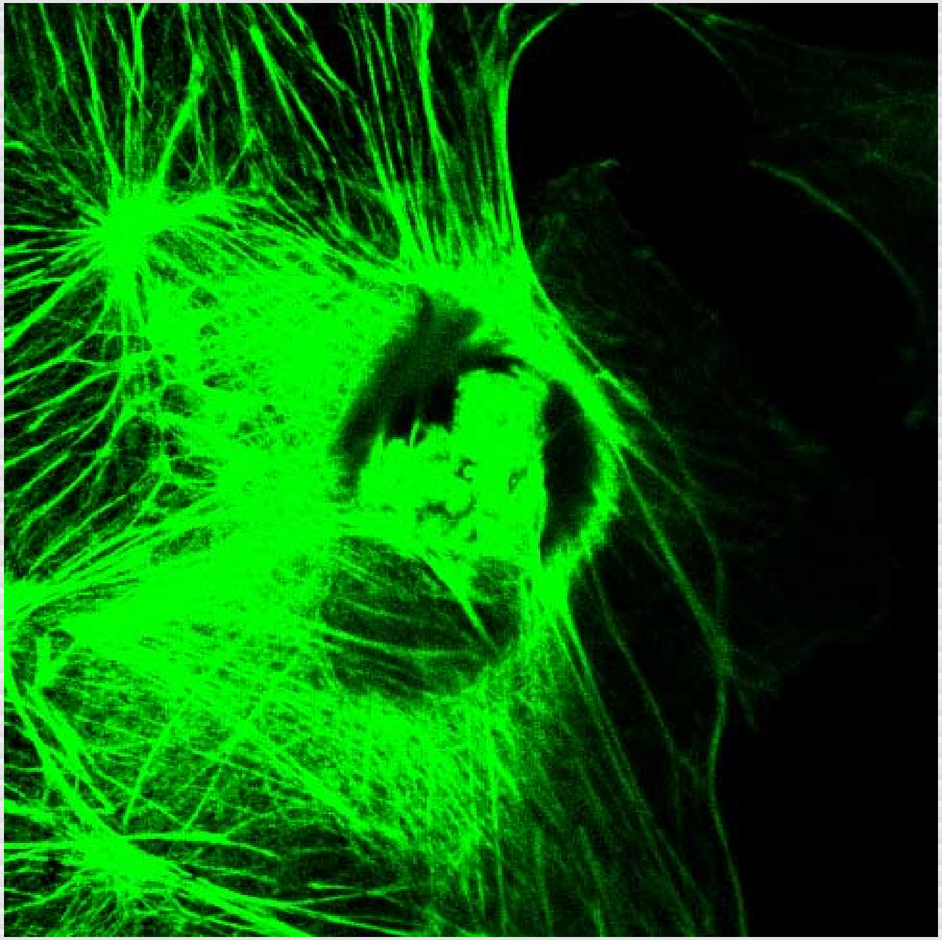


Low-energy processing

before



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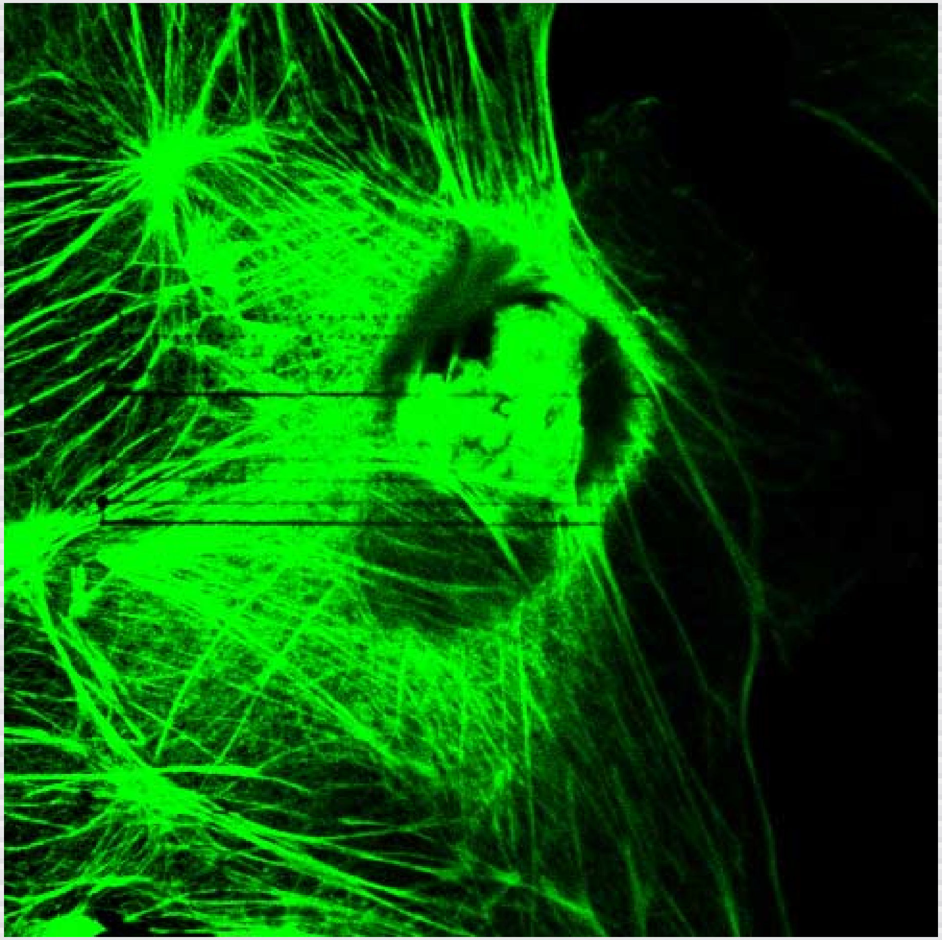
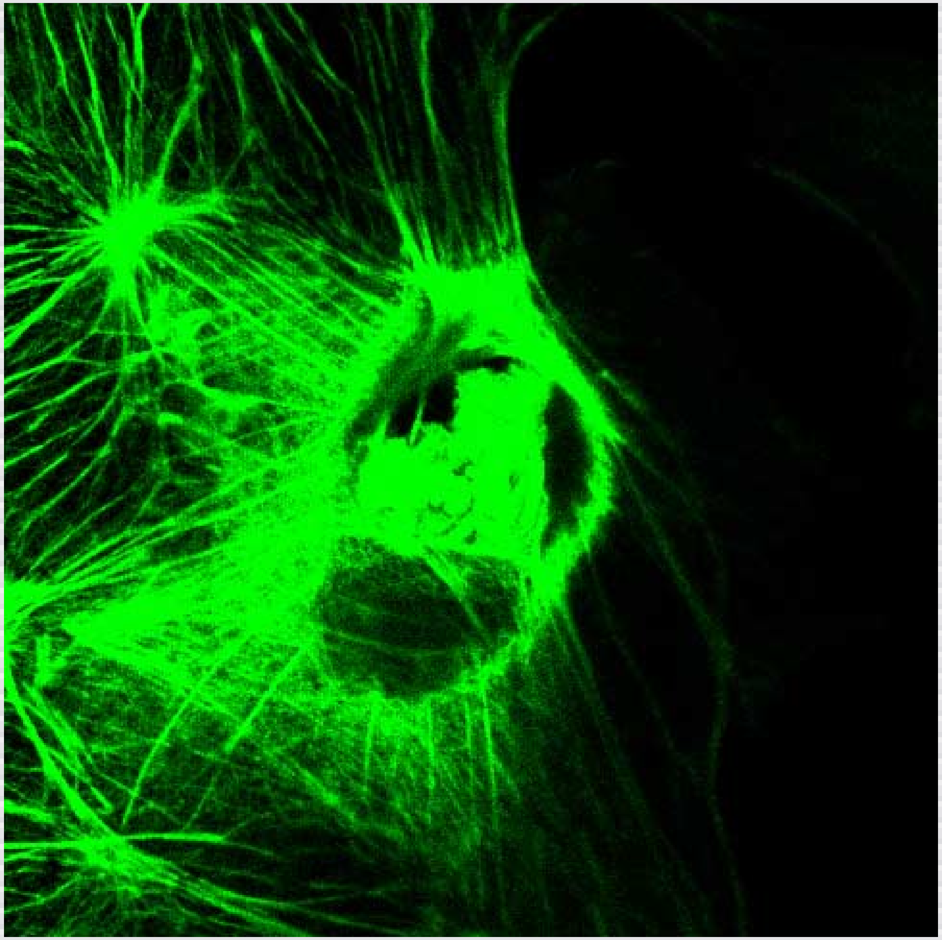


Low-energy processing

before



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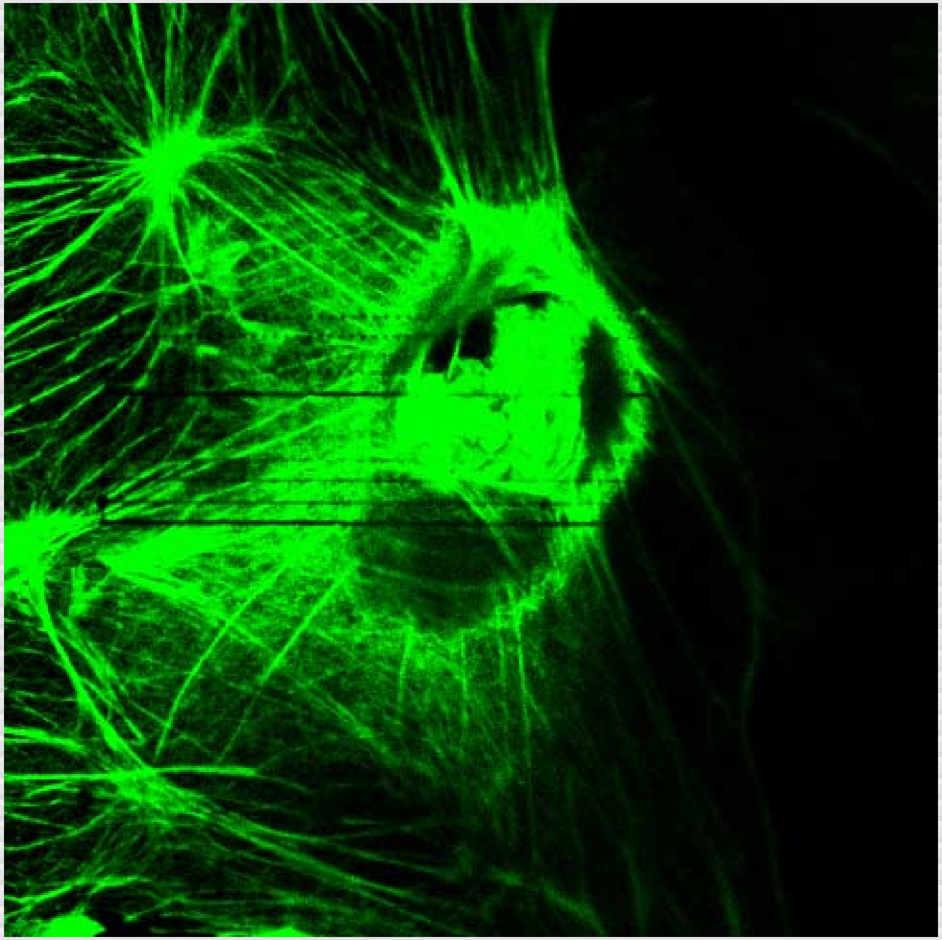

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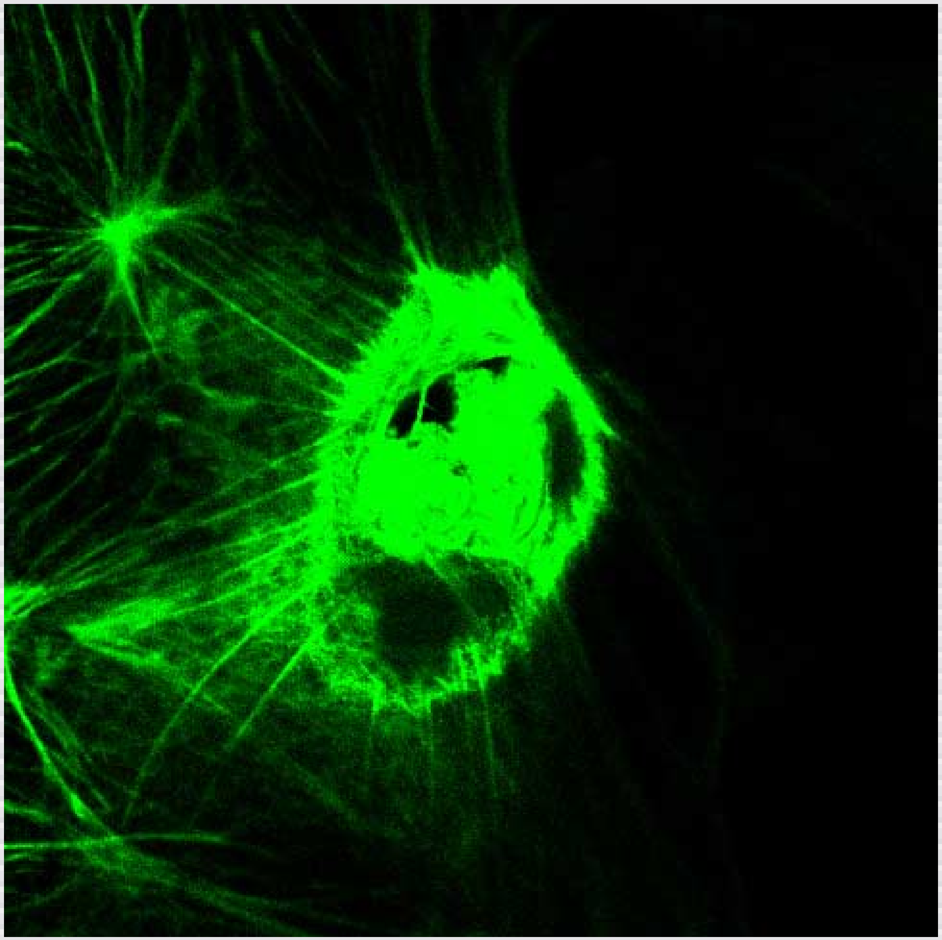

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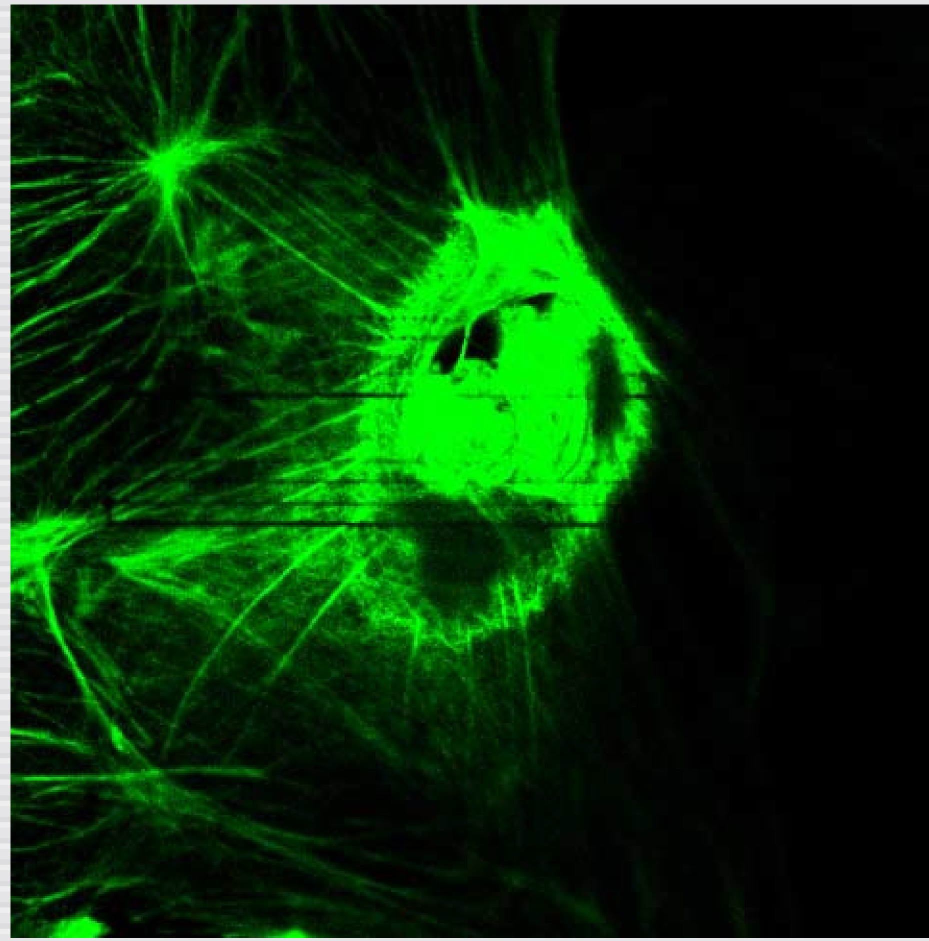
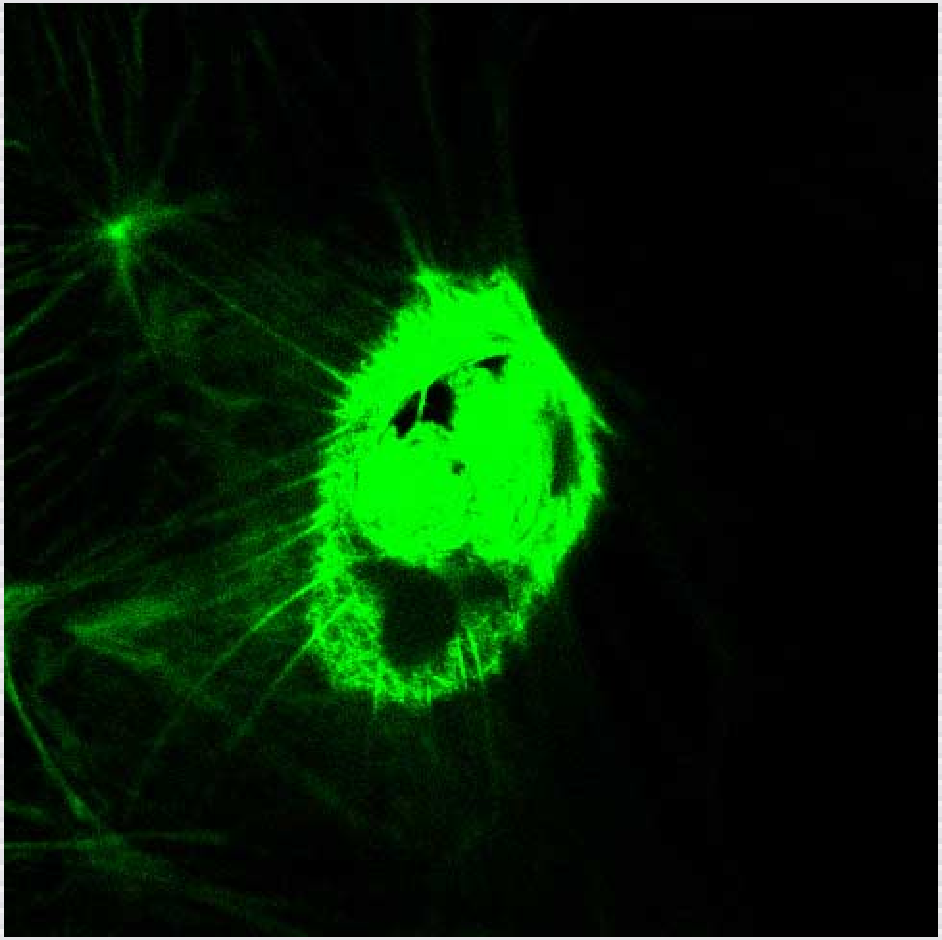


Low-energy processing

before



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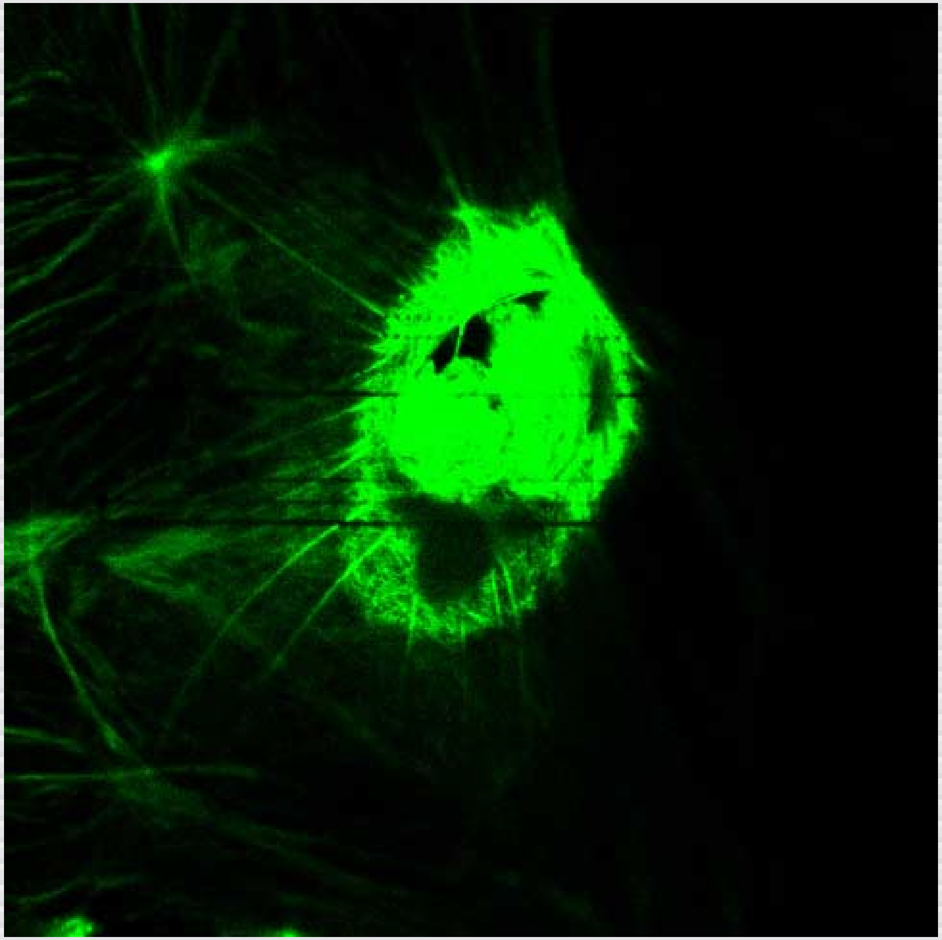

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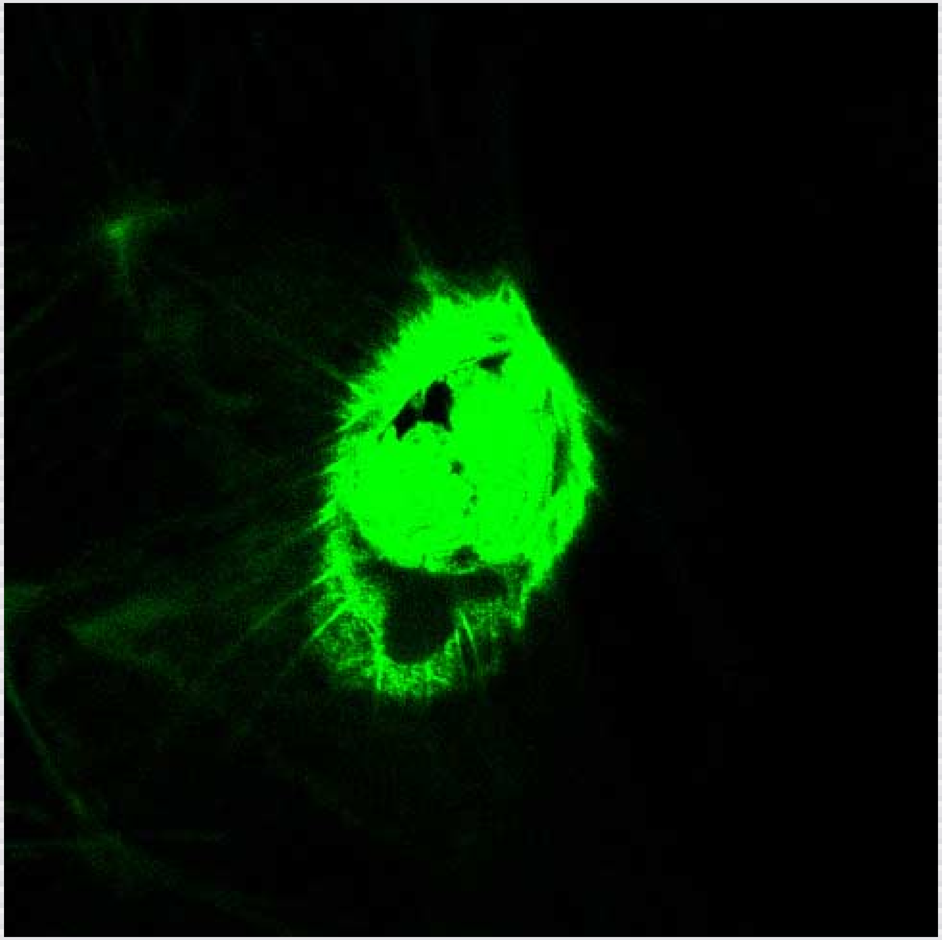

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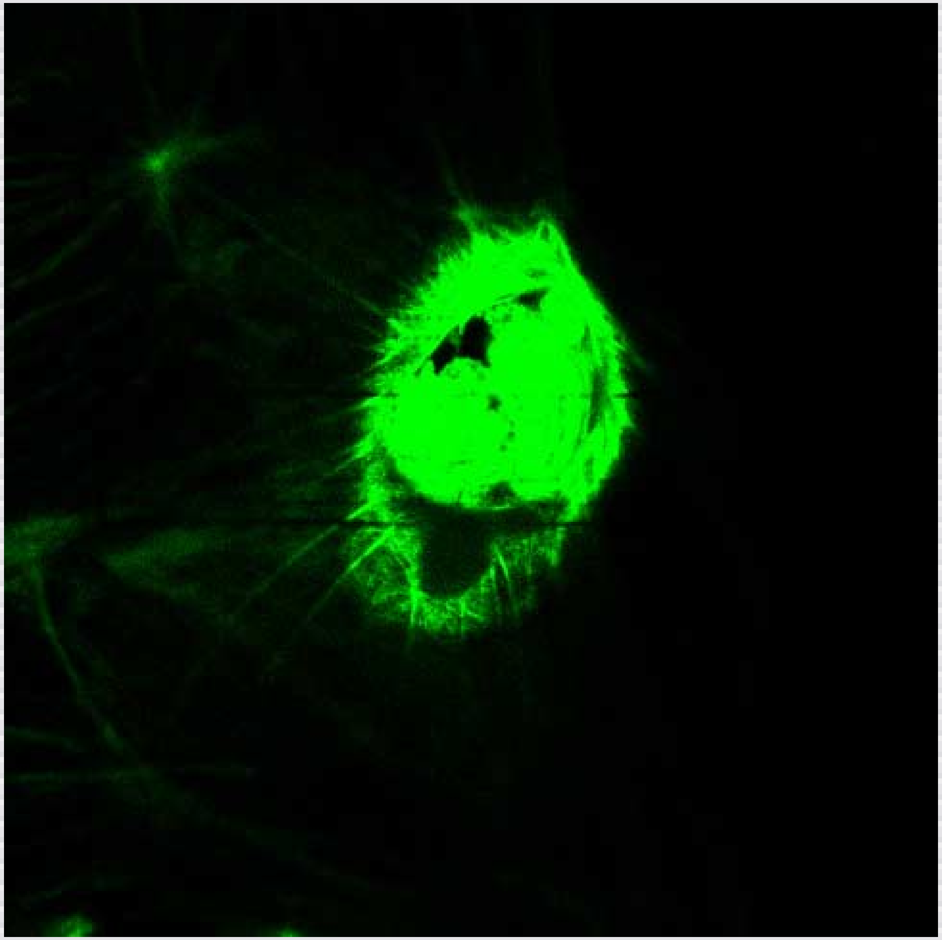

Low-energy processing

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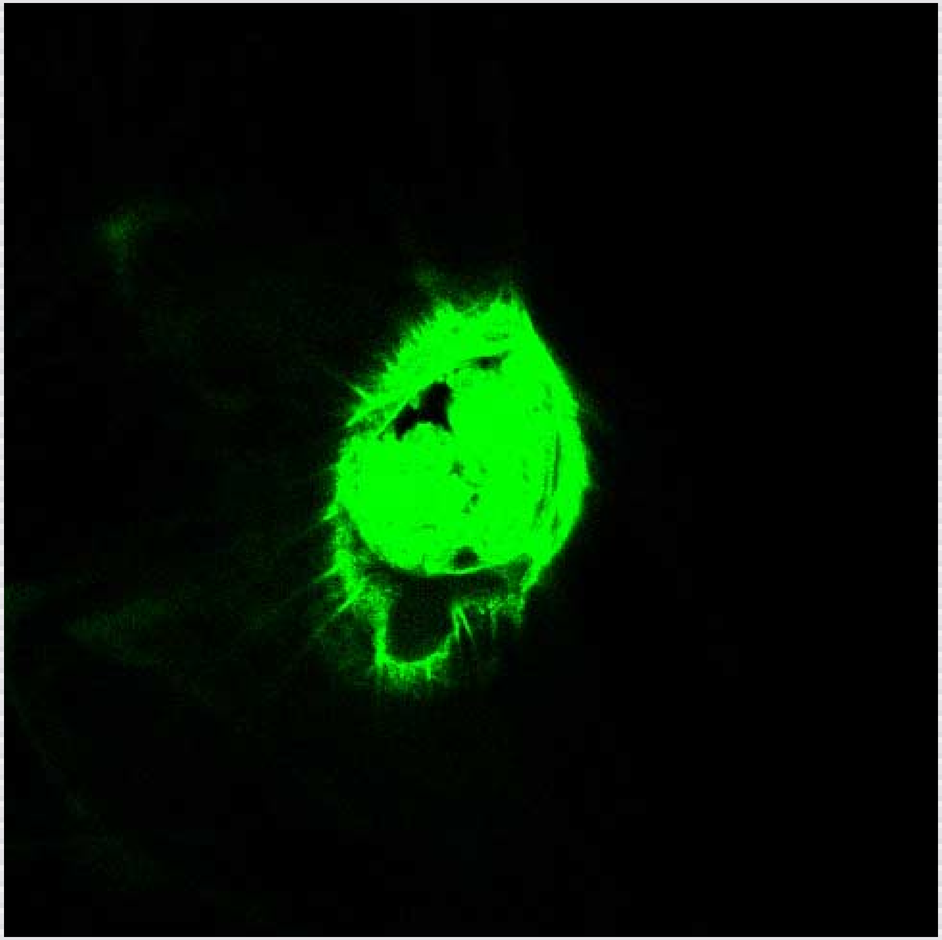

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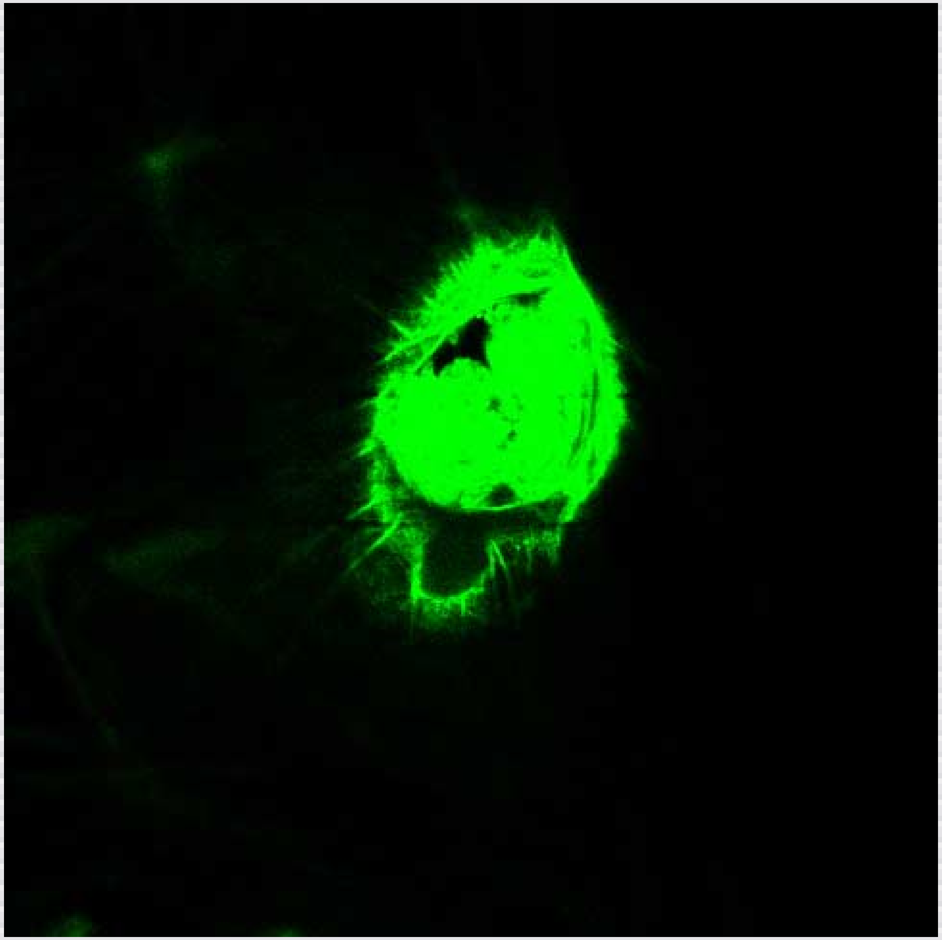

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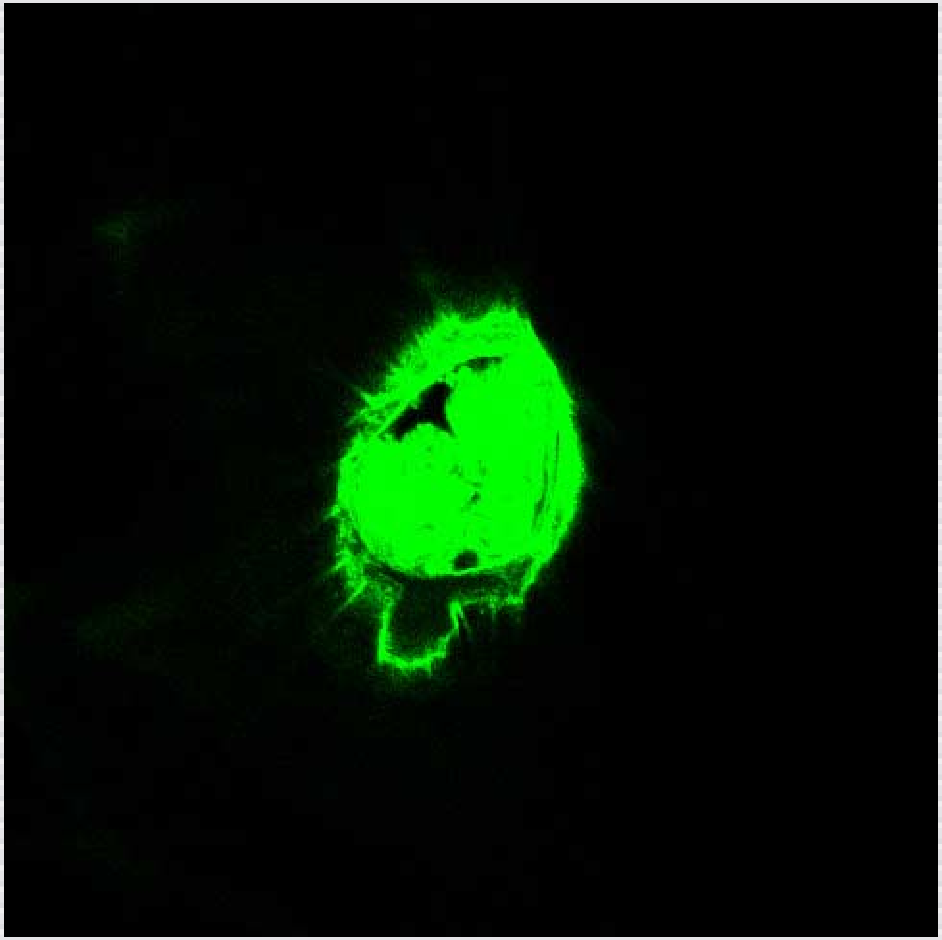

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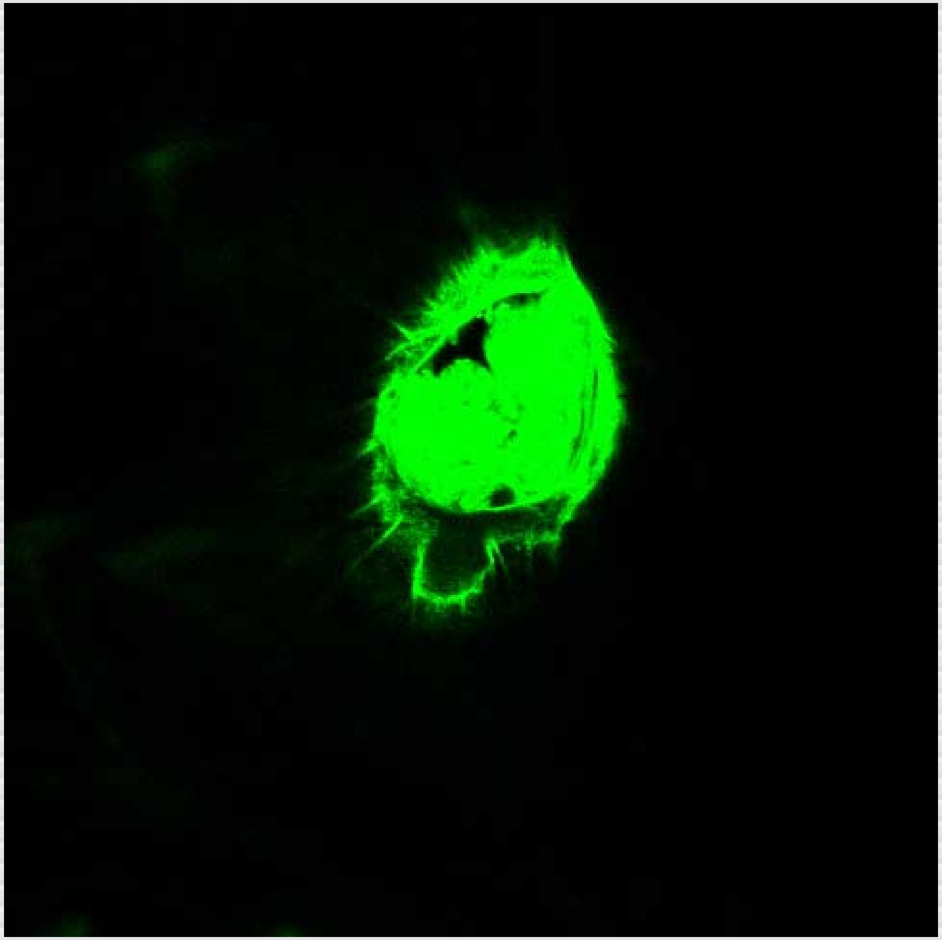

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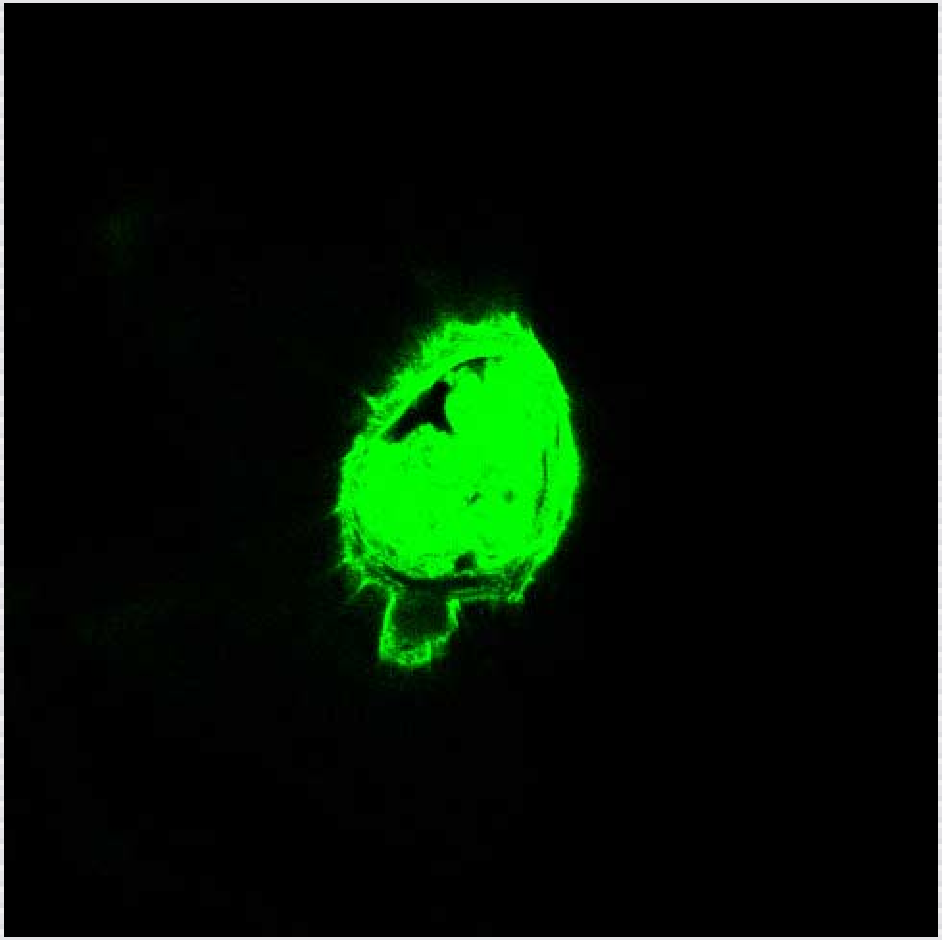
before



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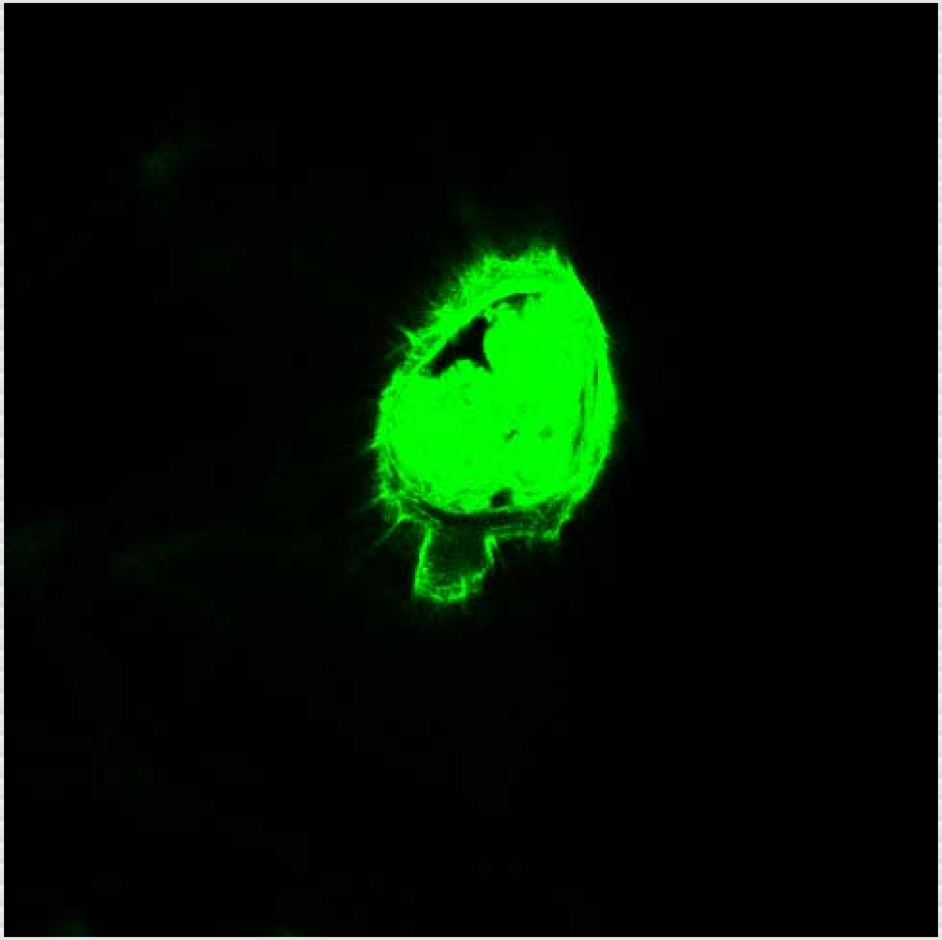

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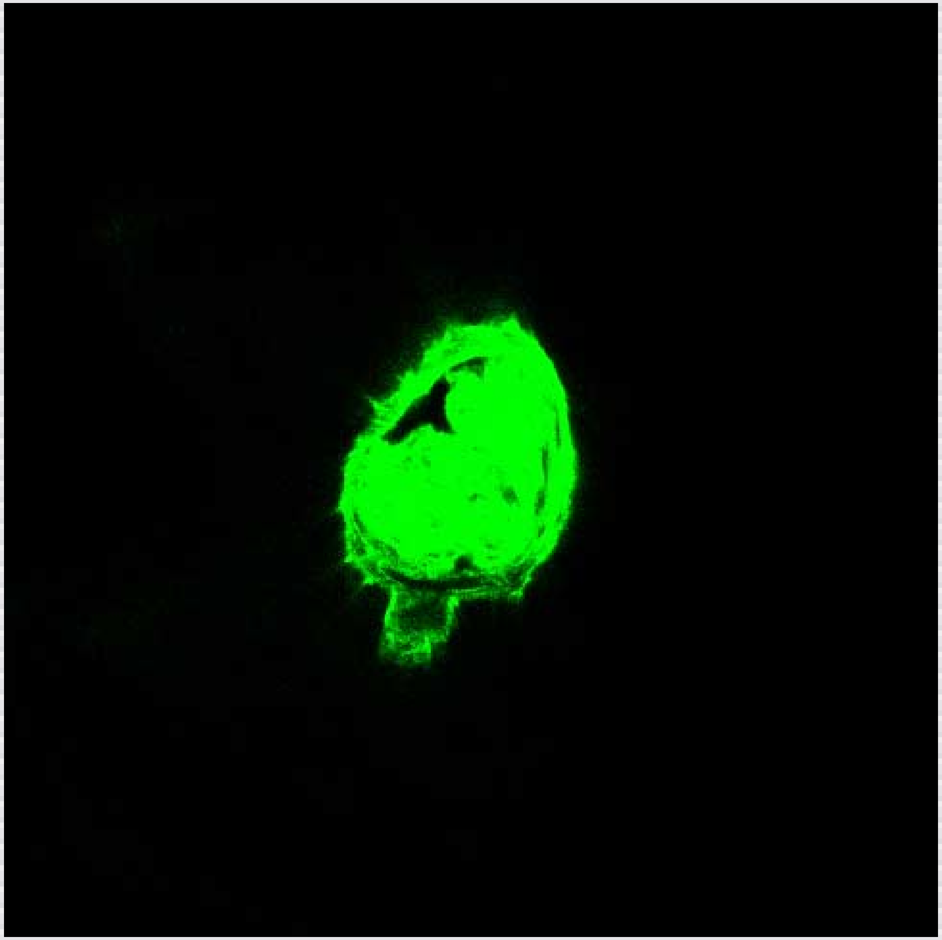
before



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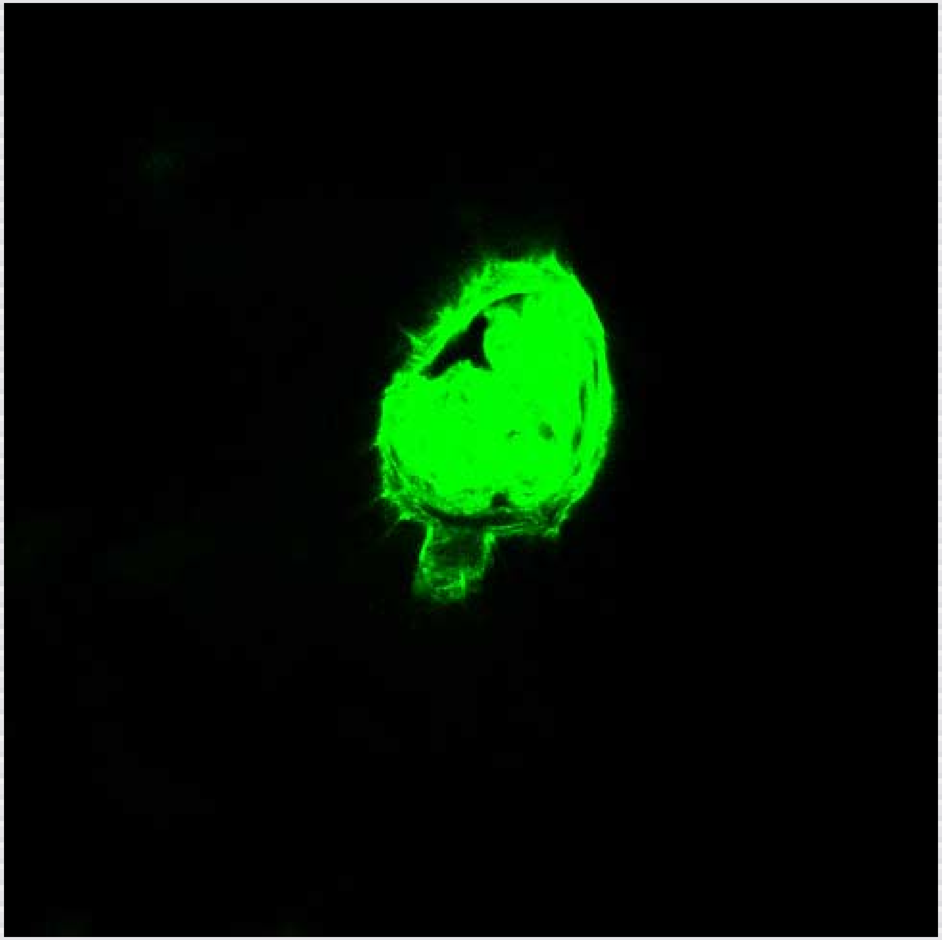

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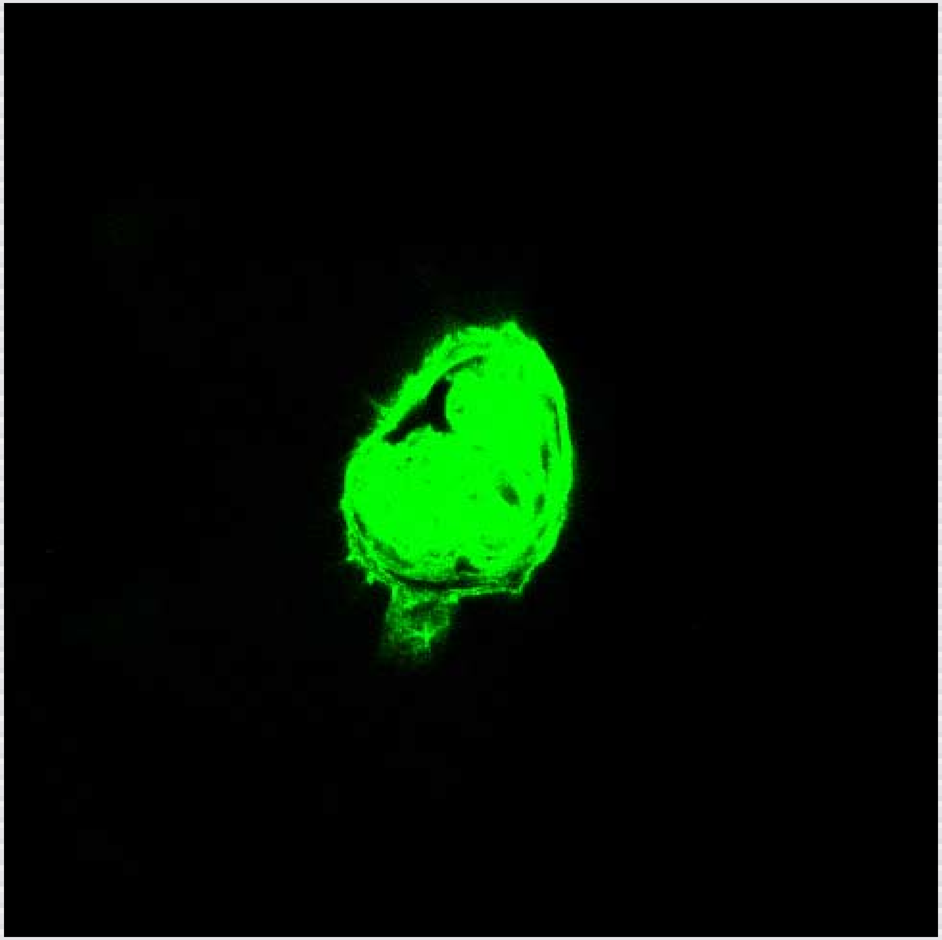
before



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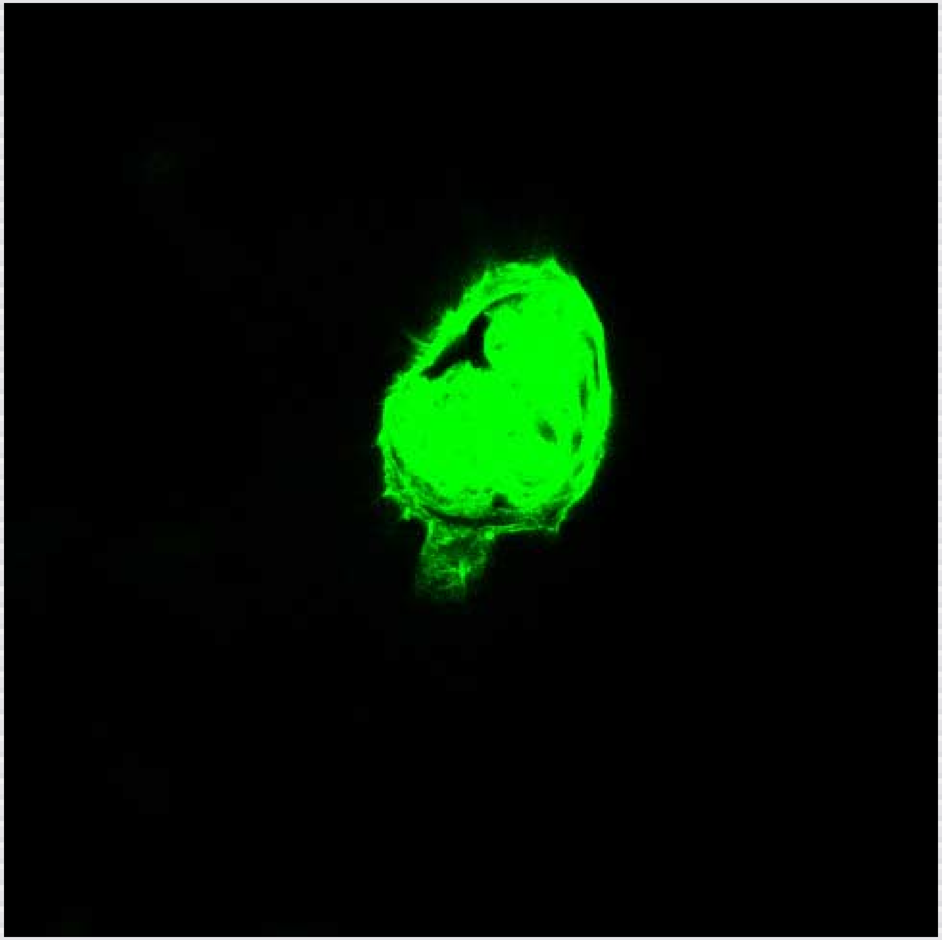
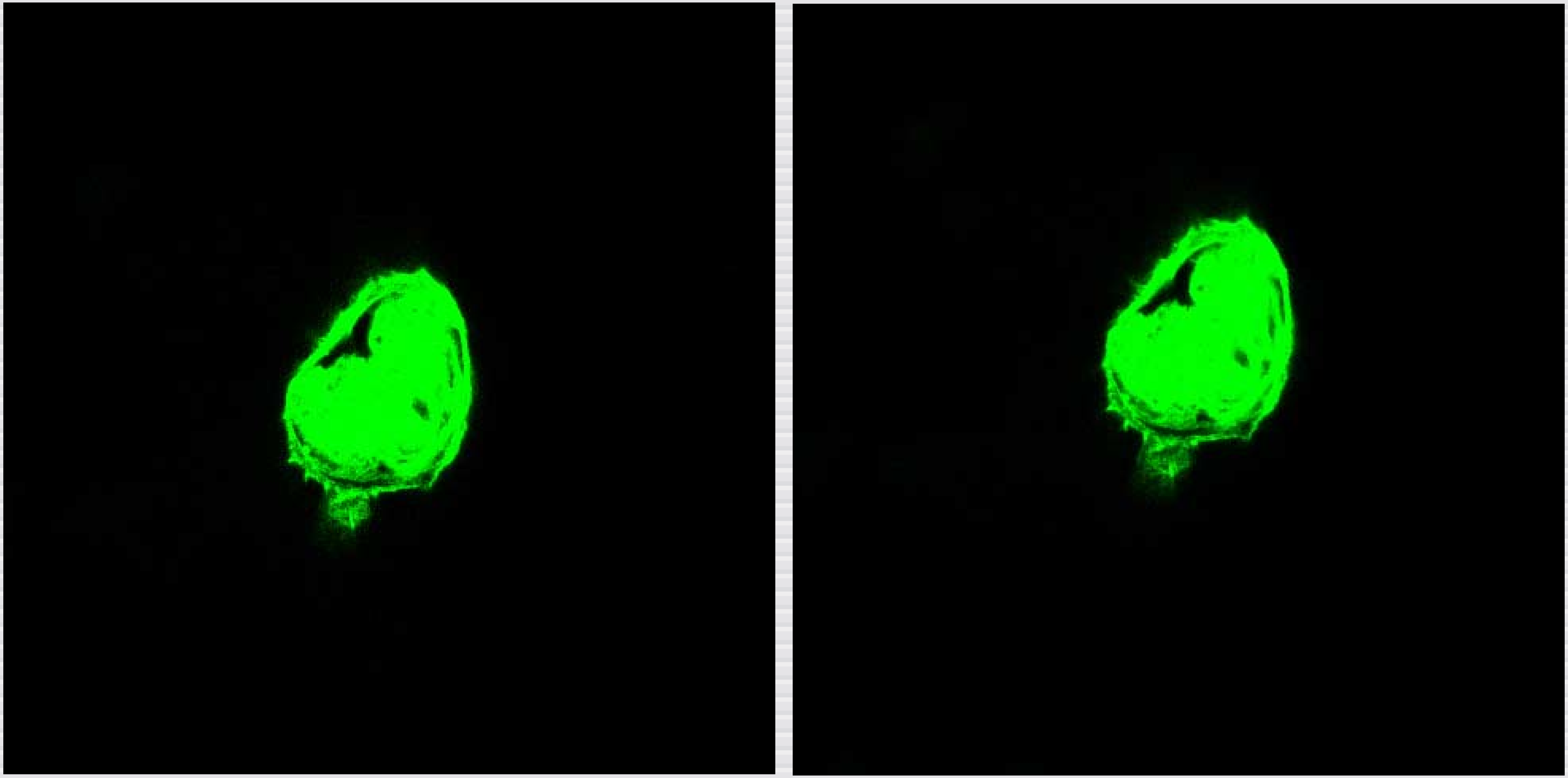


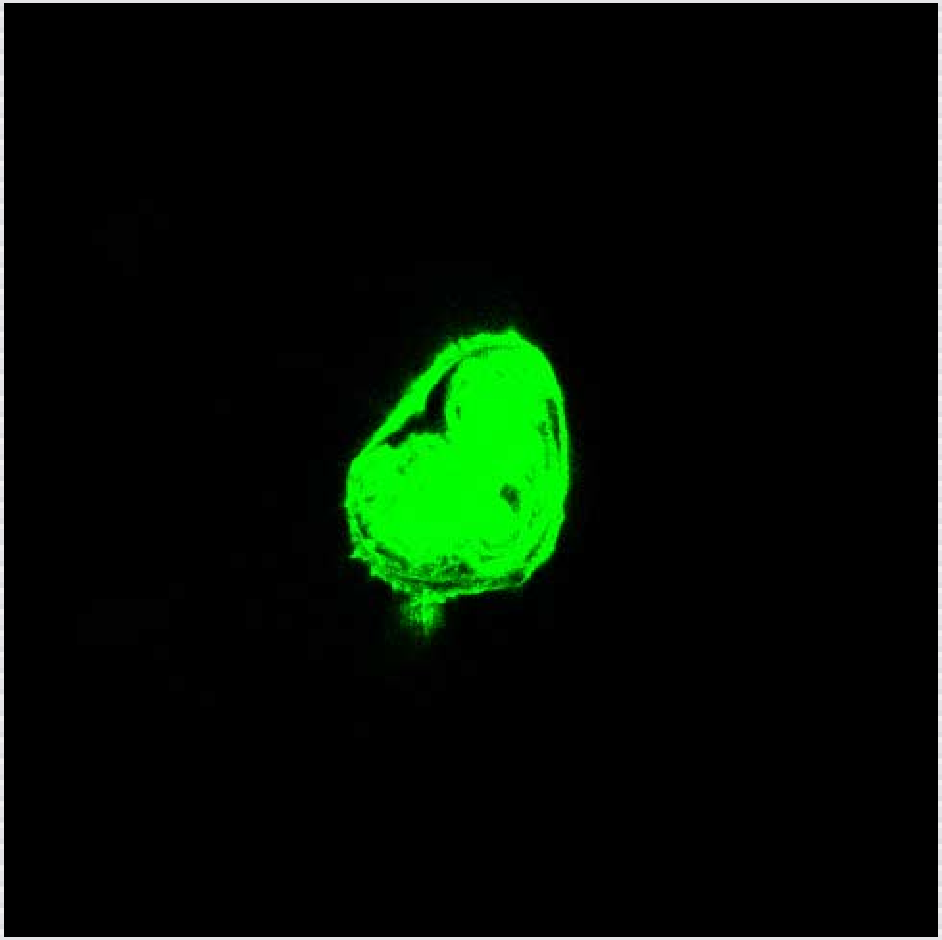
Low-energy processing

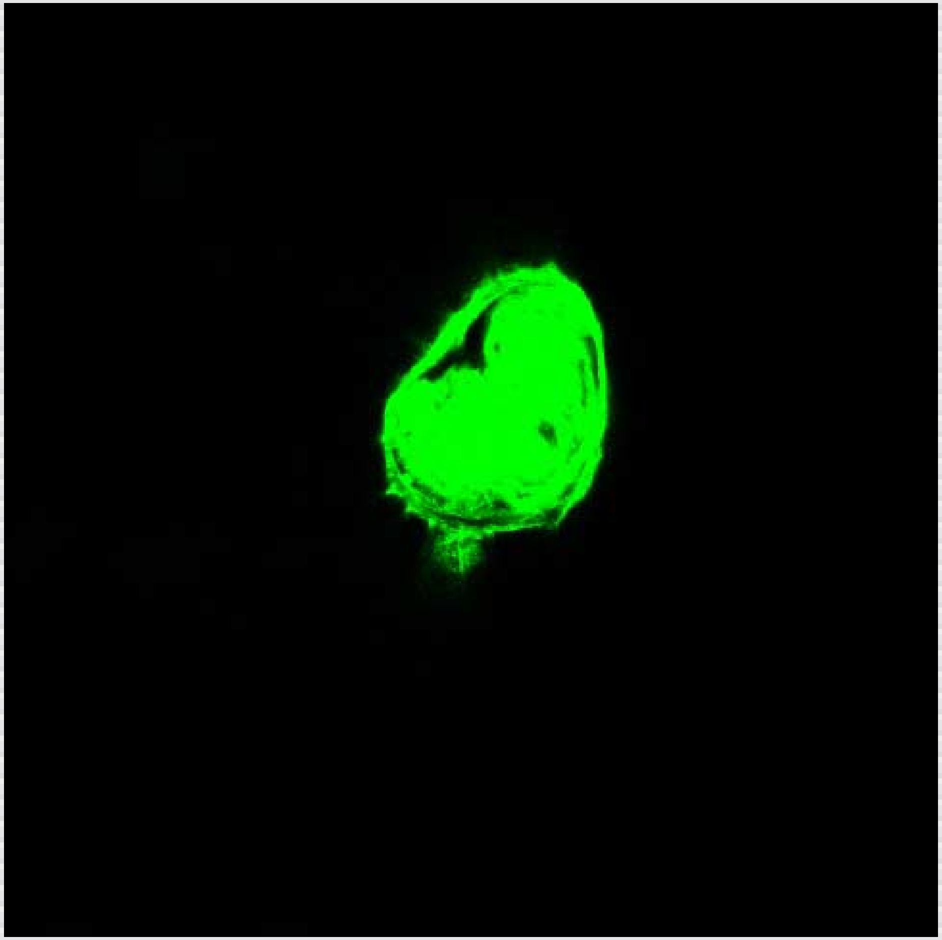
before | after



Low-energy processing

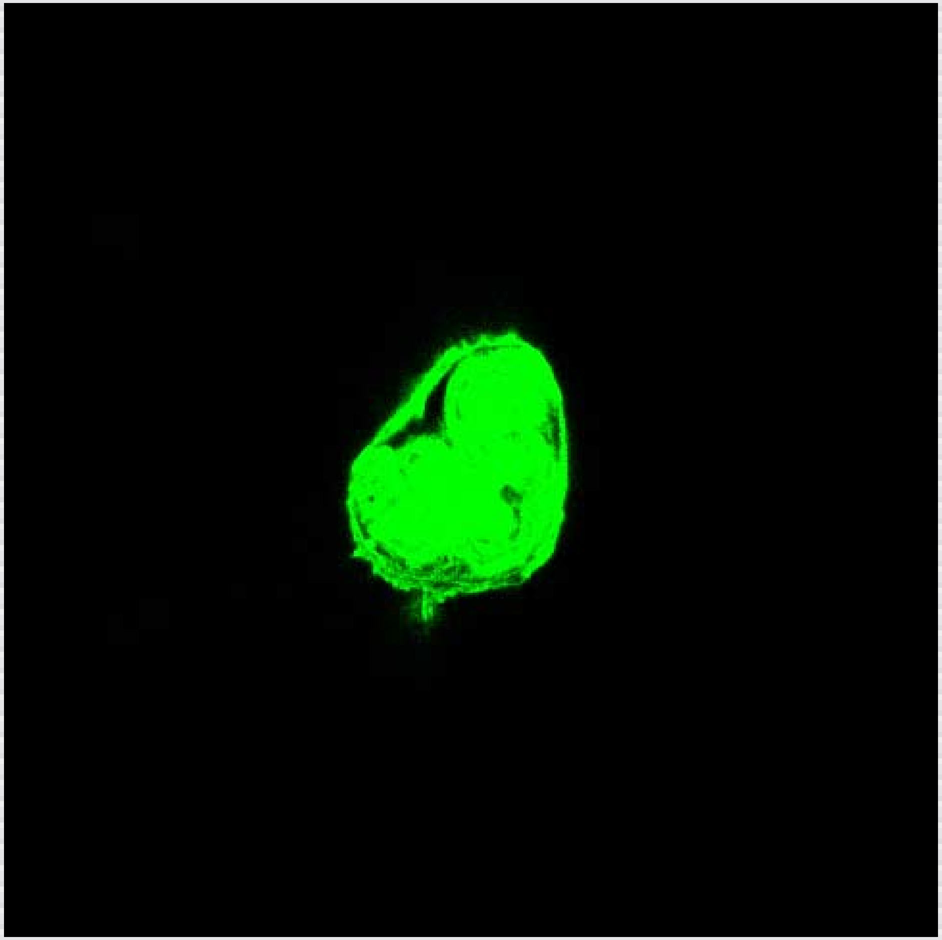
before **after**

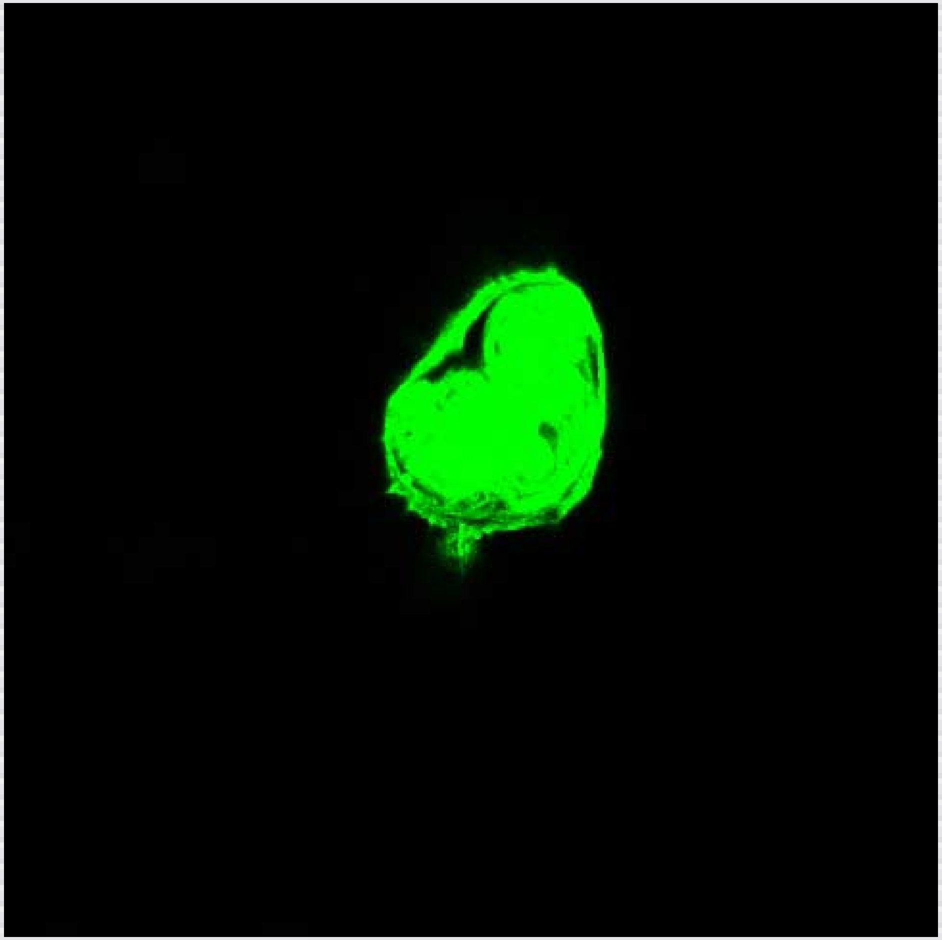




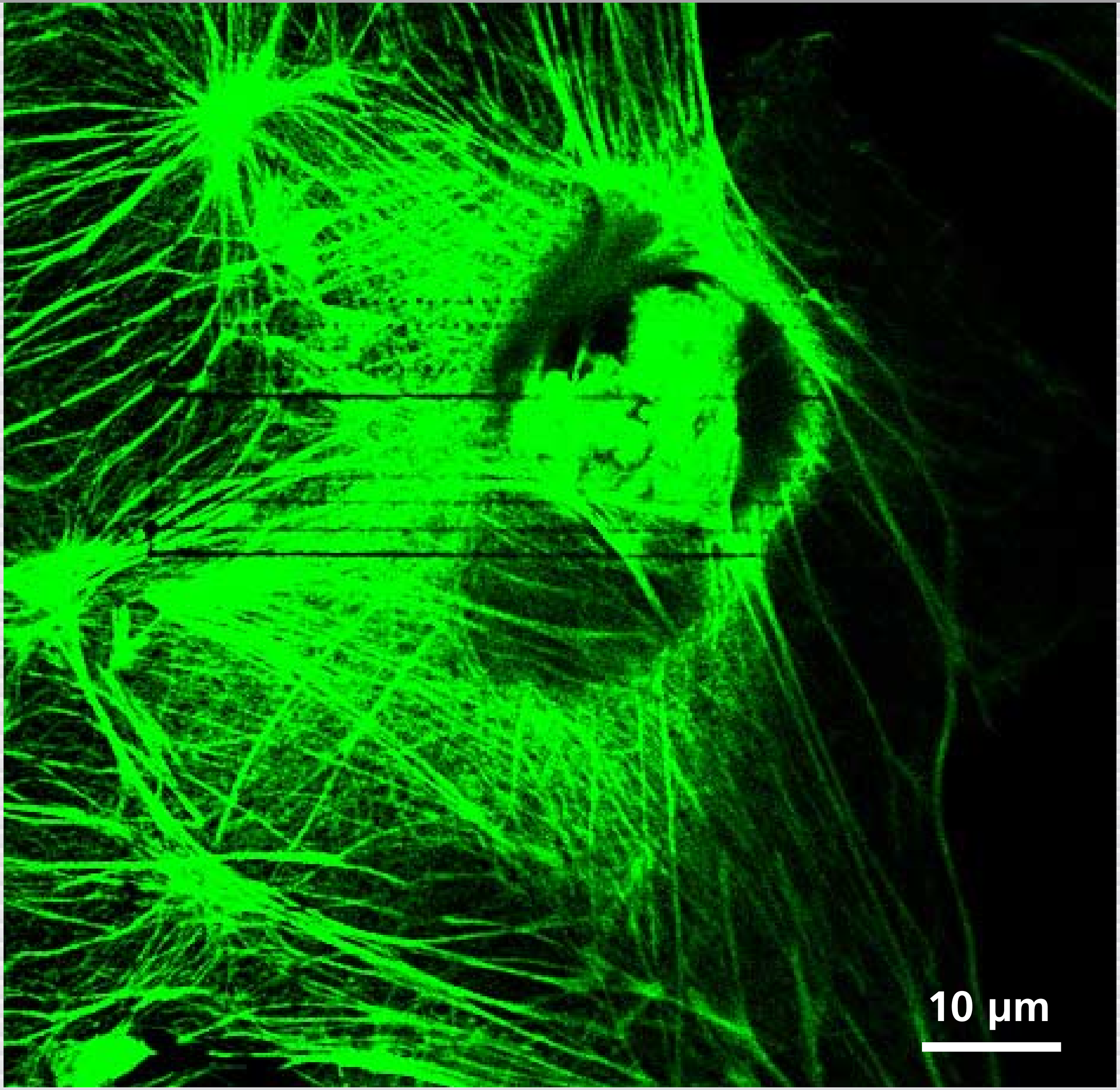
Low-energy processing

before **after**

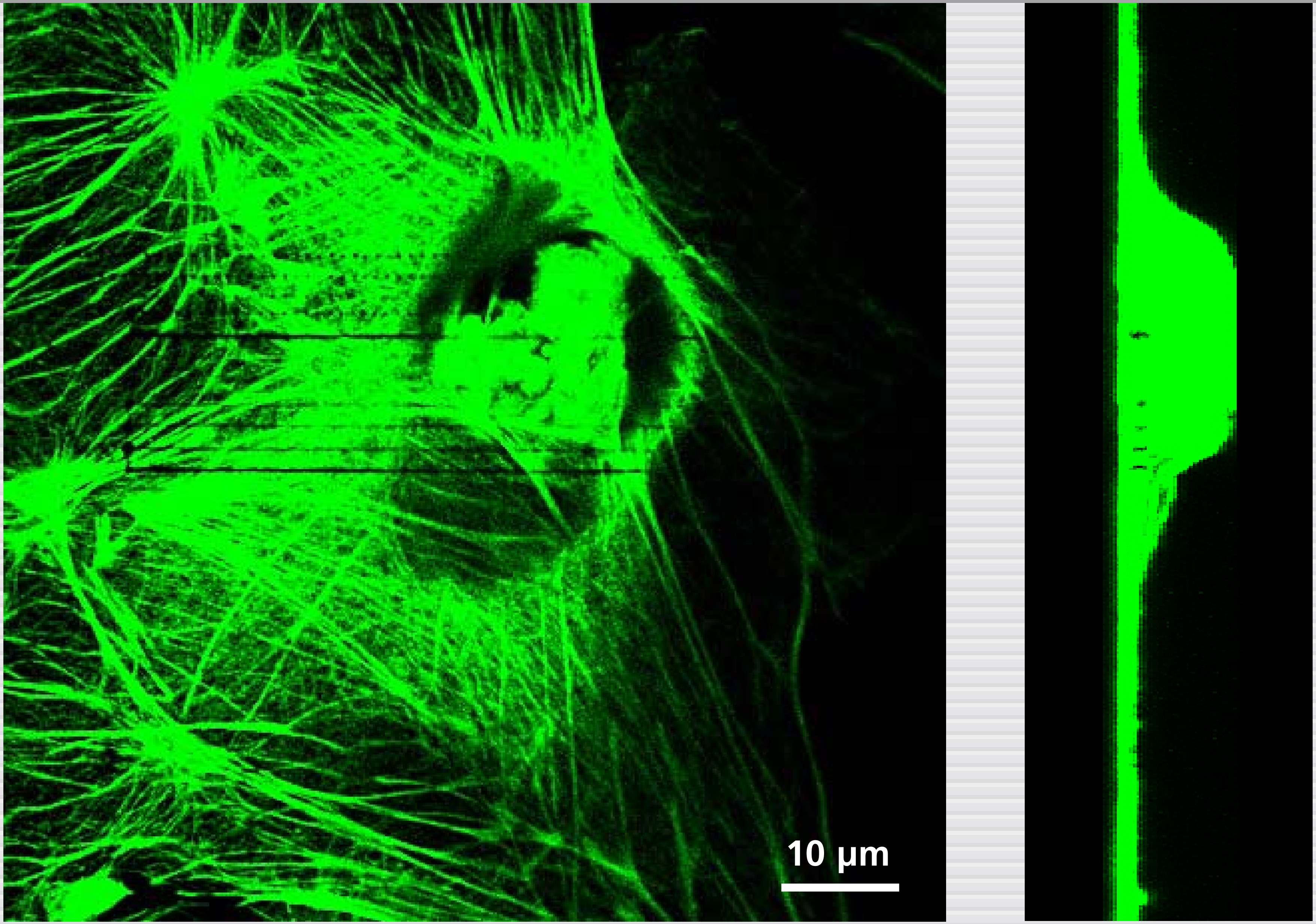




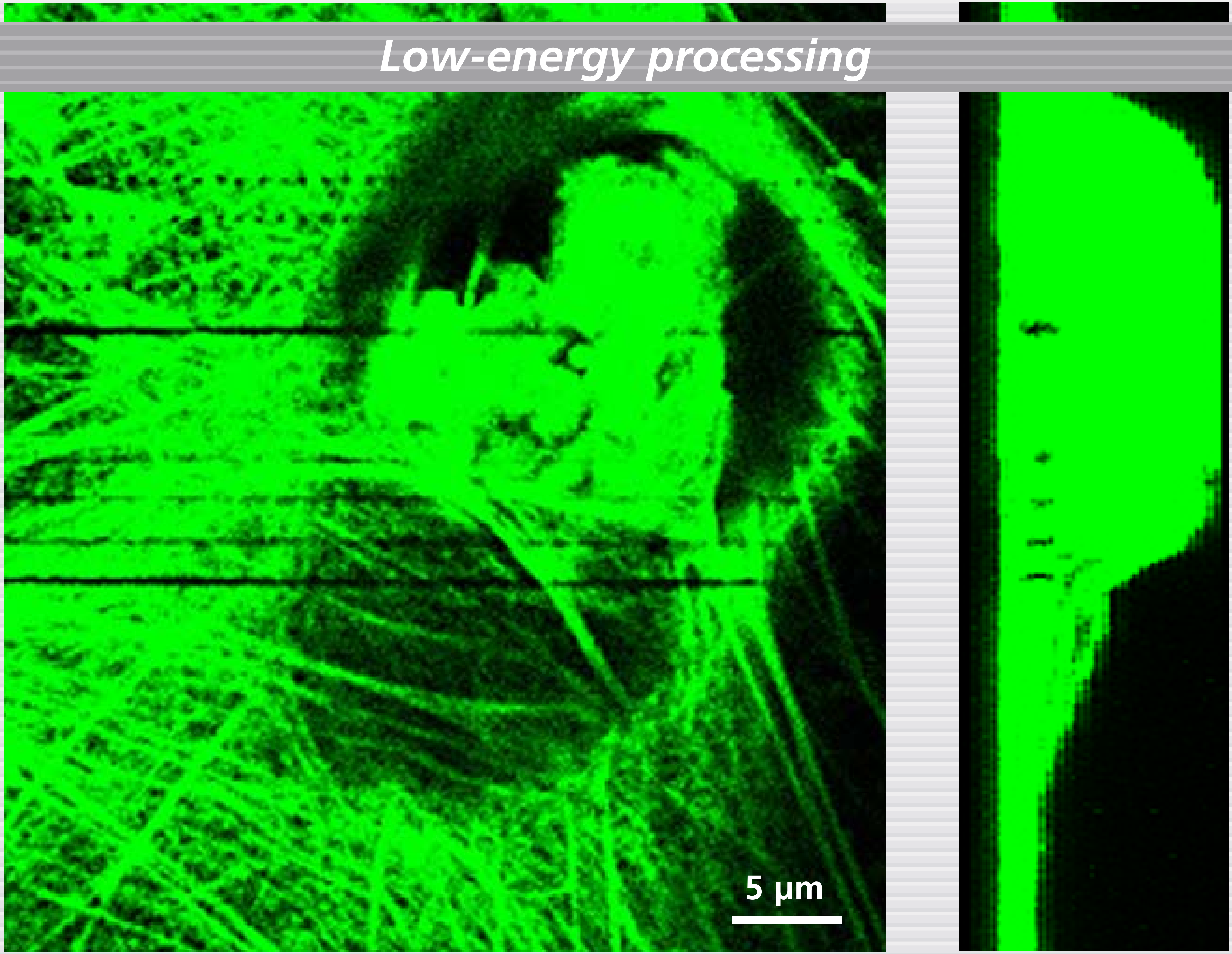
Low-energy processing



Low-energy processing



Low-energy processing



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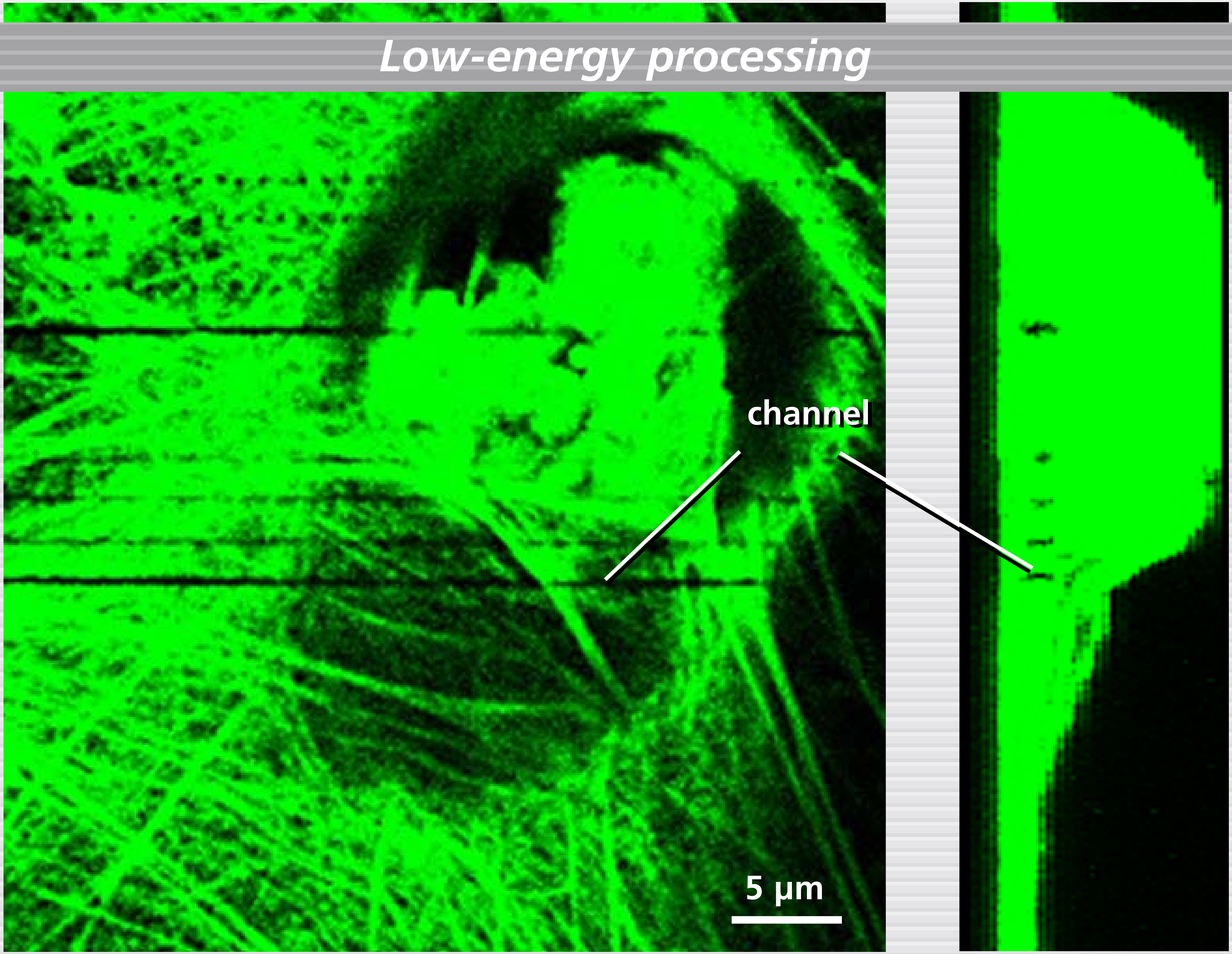

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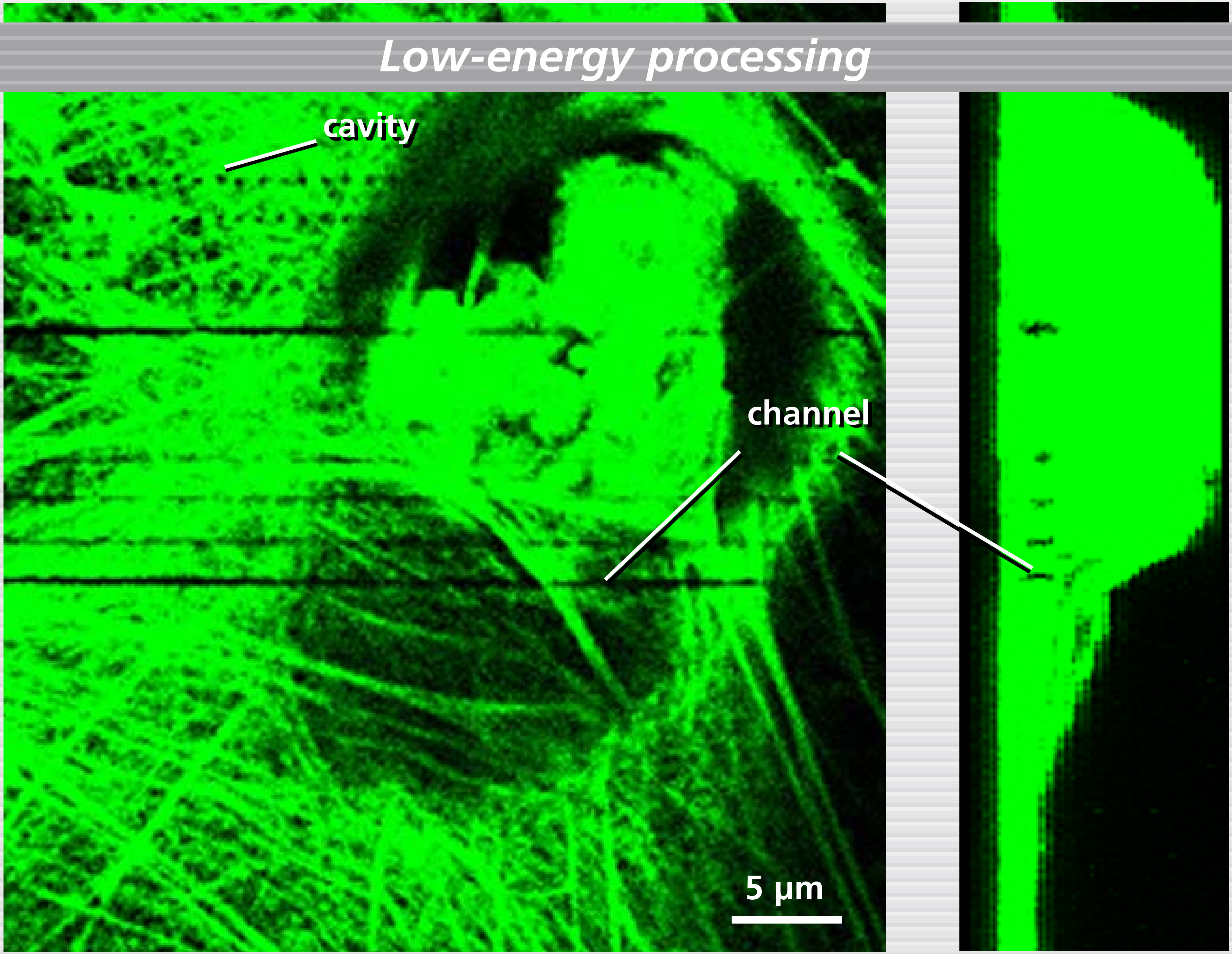

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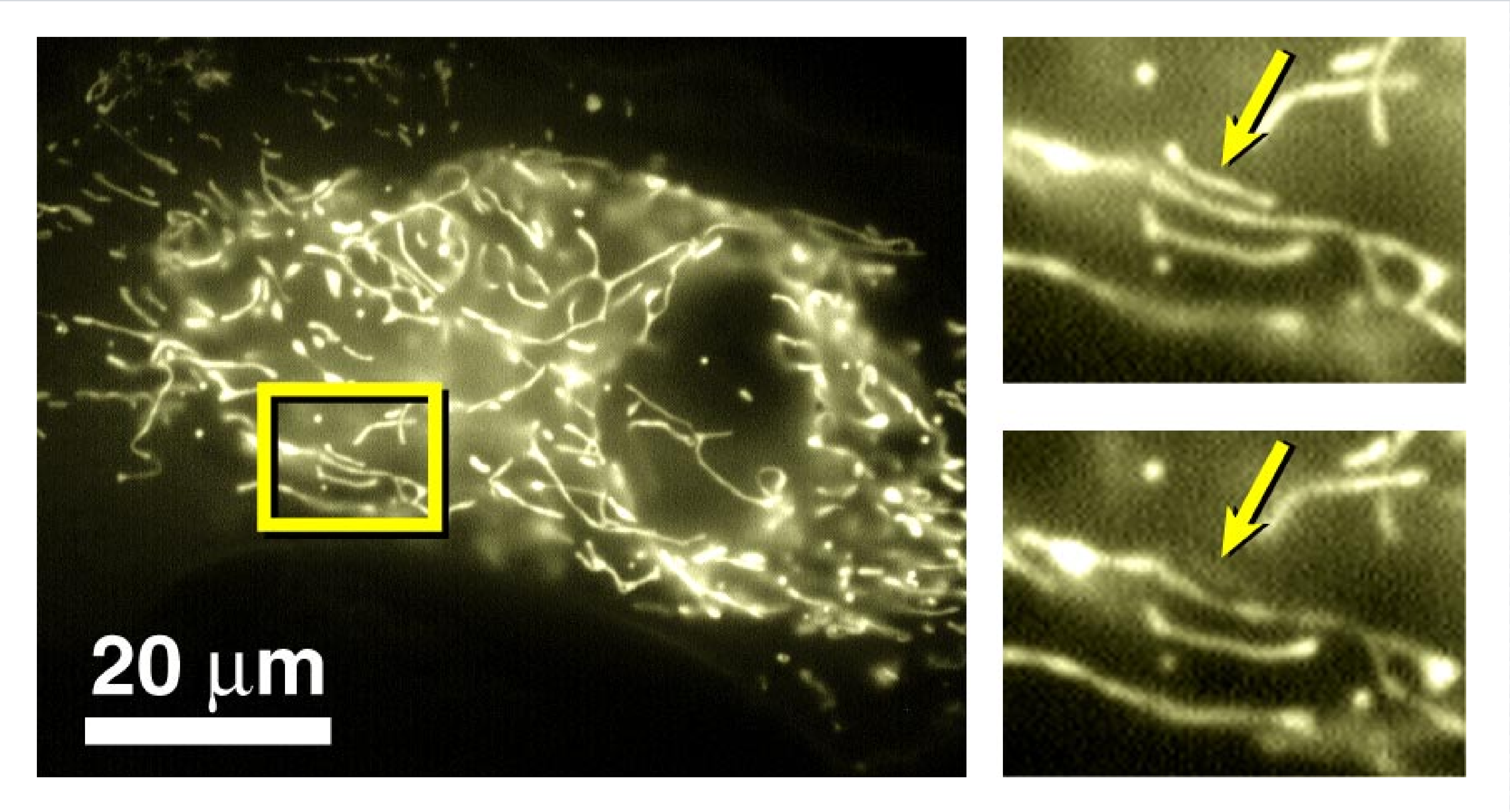
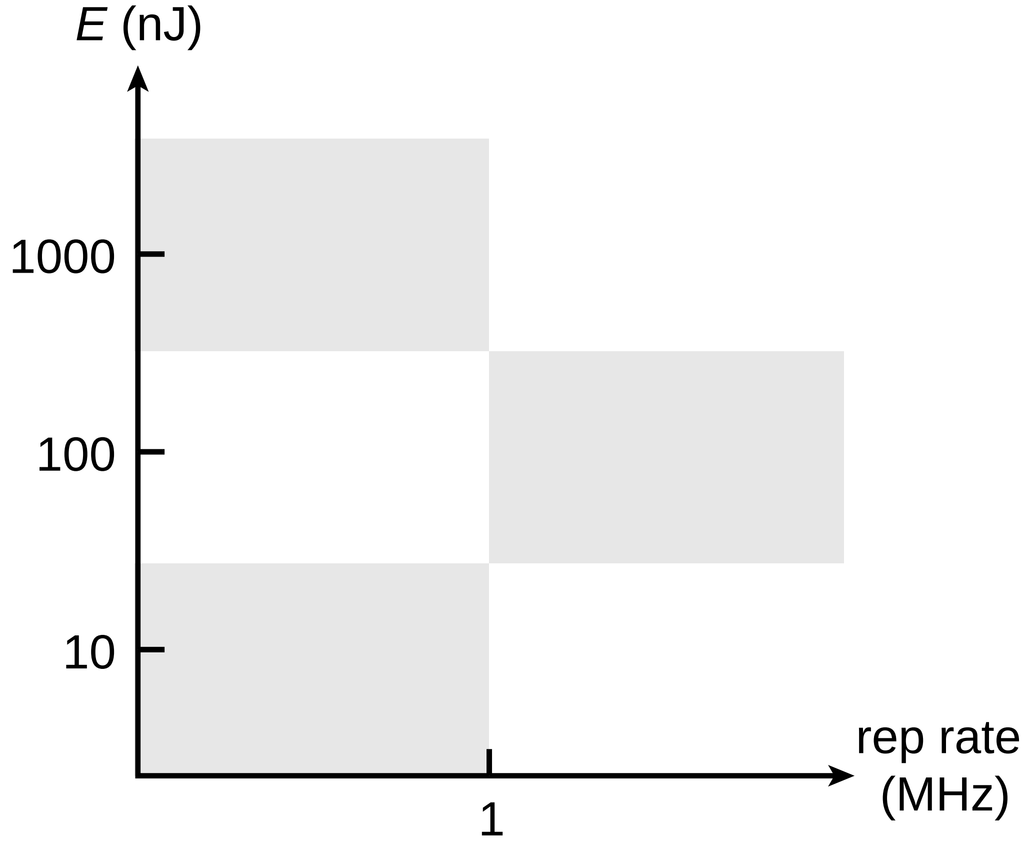
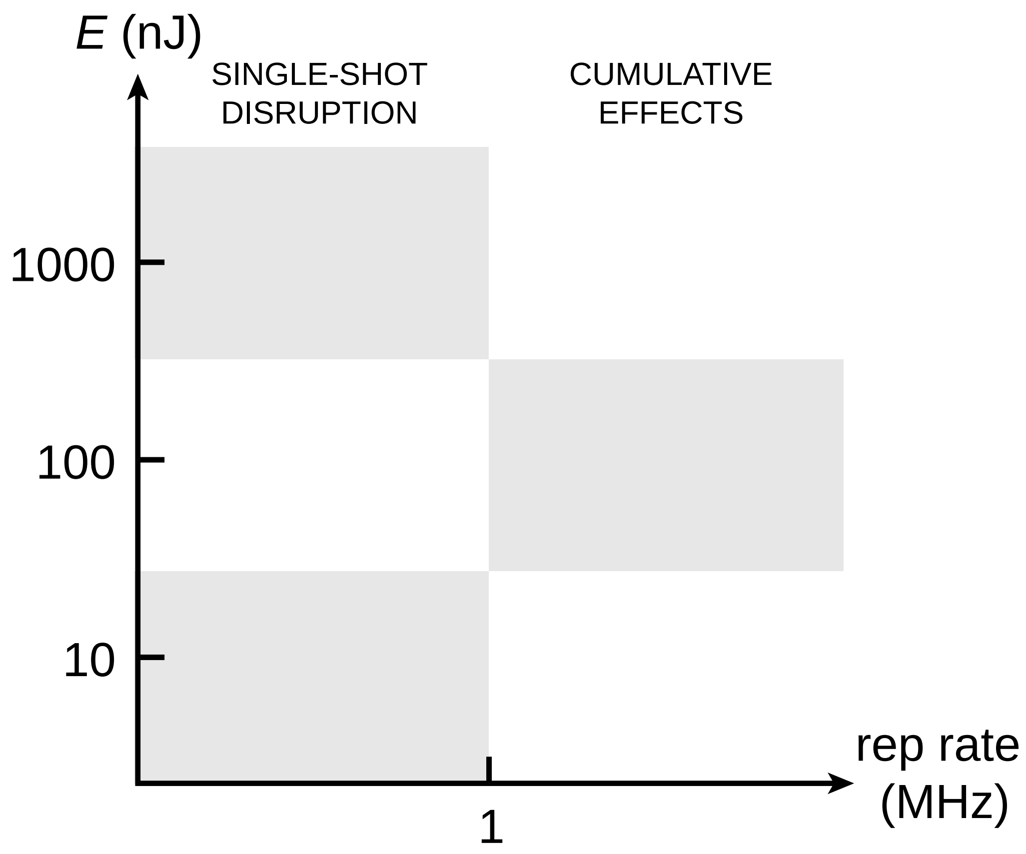


Summary

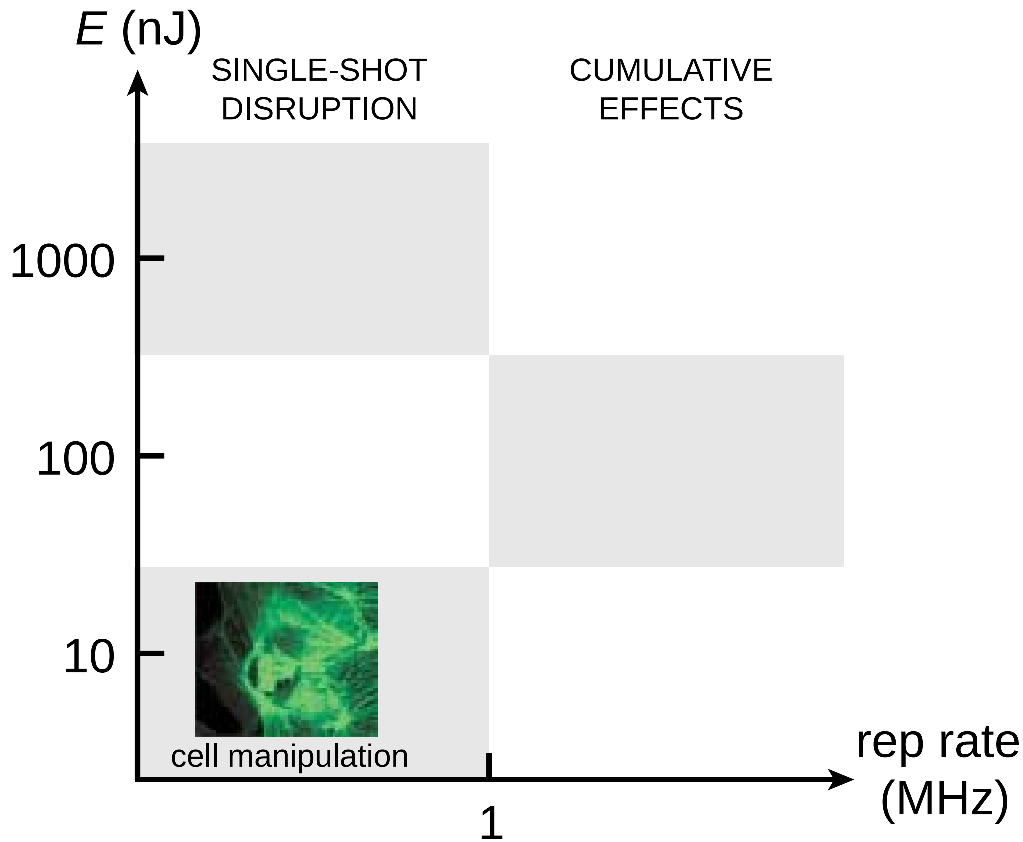


Summary

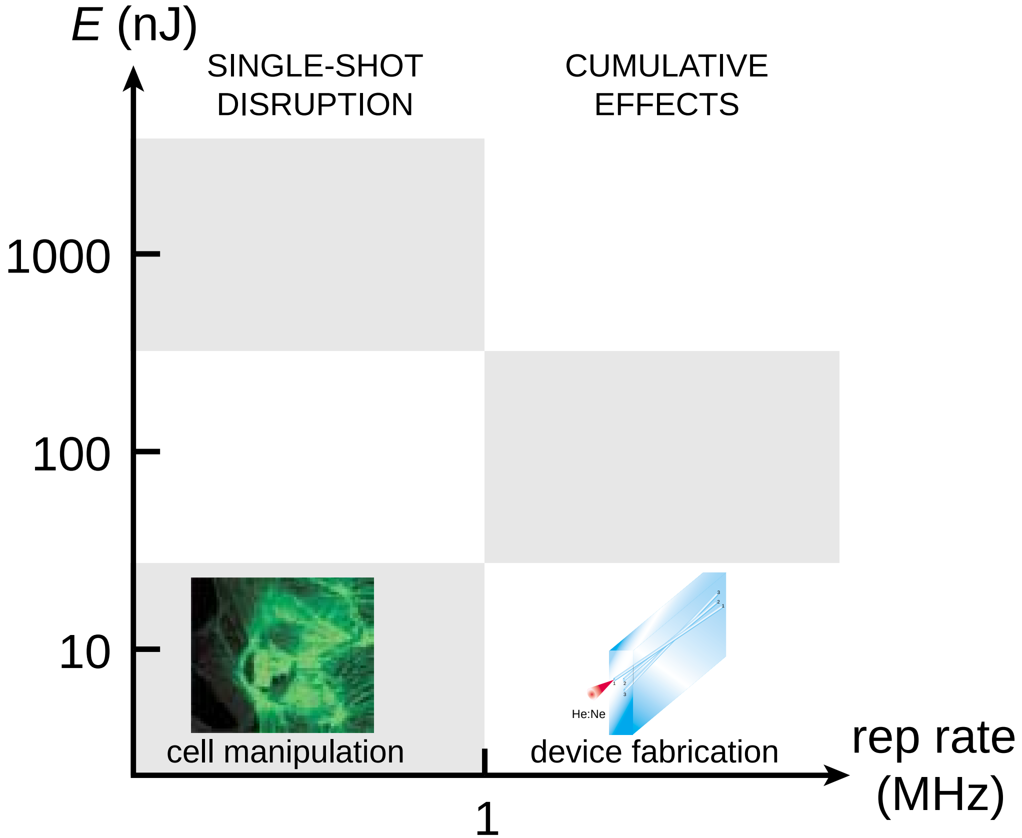


E (nJ)
SINGLE-SHOT
DISRUPTION
CUMULATIVE
EFFECTS
1000
100
10
1
rep rate
(MHz)

Summary

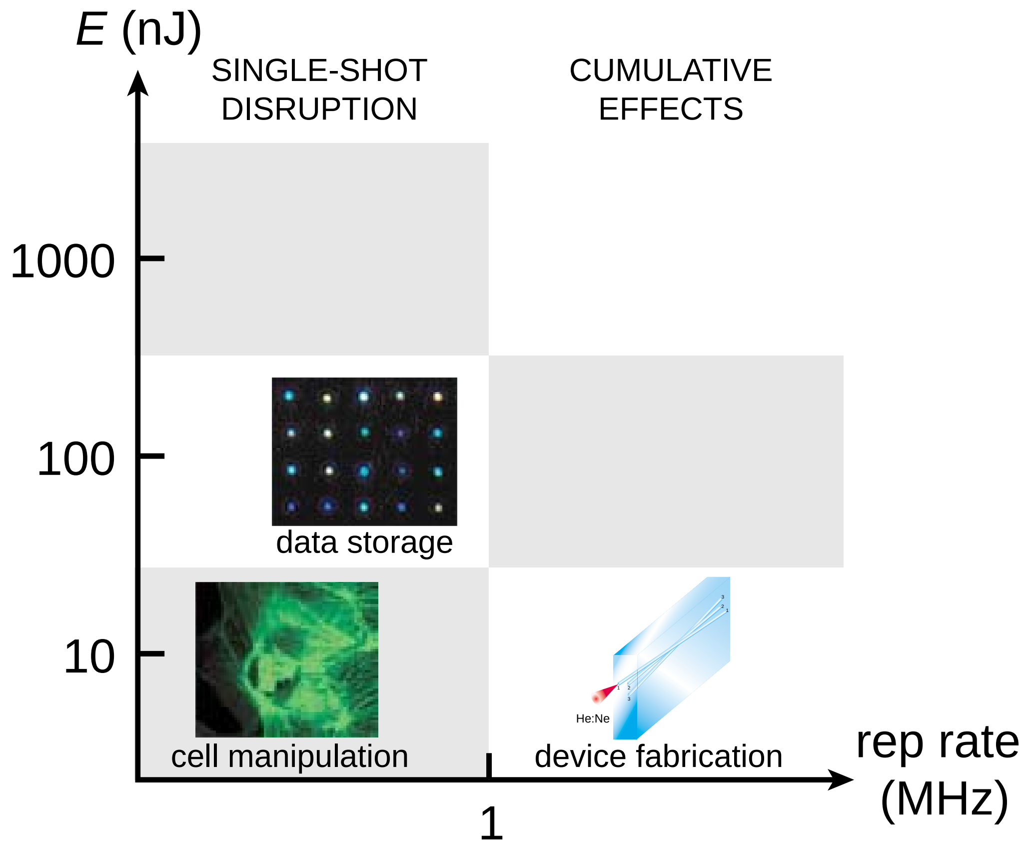

E (nJ)
SINGLE-SHOT DISRUPTION
CUMULATIVE EFFECTS
1000
100
10
cell manipulation
1
rep rate (MHz)

Summary



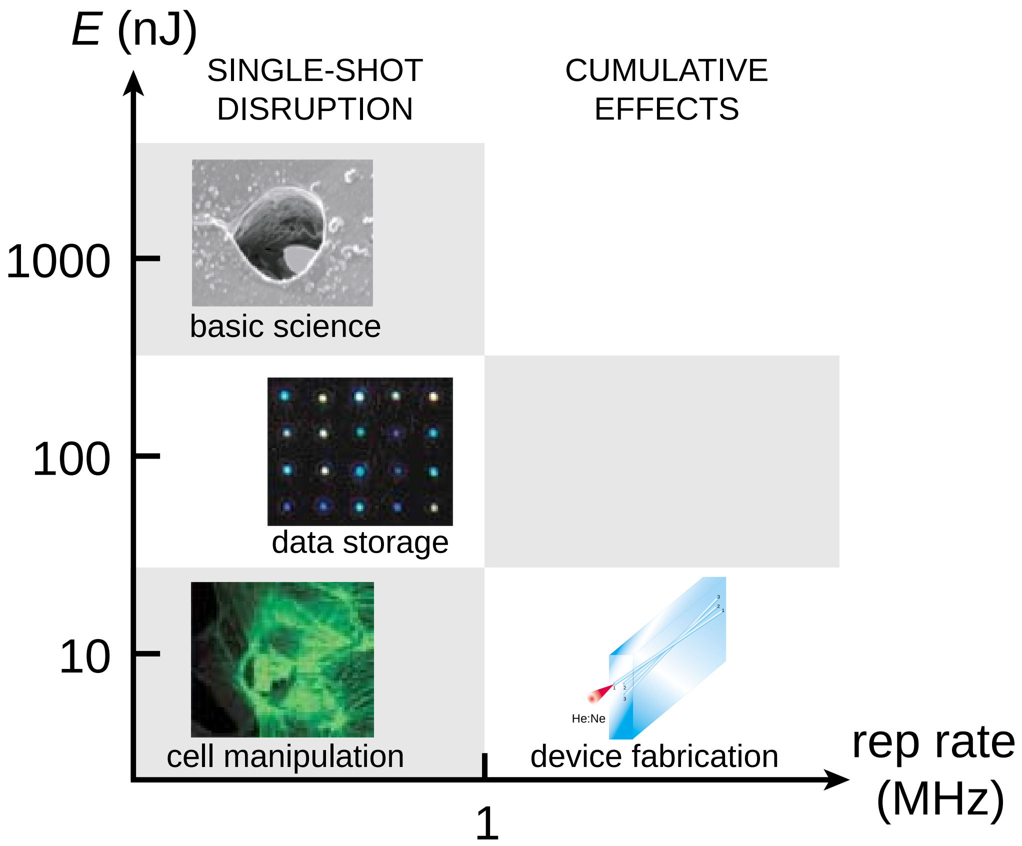
E (nJ)
SINGLE-SHOT DISRUPTION
CUMULATIVE EFFECTS
1000
100
10
cell manipulation
He:Ne
device fabrication
1
rep rate (MHz)

Summary



E (nJ)
SINGLE-SHOT DISRUPTION
CUMULATIVE EFFECTS
1000
100
10
data storage
cell manipulation
He:Ne
device fabrication
1
rep rate (MHz)

Summary



E (nJ)
SINGLE-SHOT DISRUPTION
CUMULATIVE EFFECTS
1000
100
10
basic science
data storage
cell manipulation
He:Ne
device fabrication
1
rep rate (MHz)

Conclusions

- precision micromachining
- new thermal mechanism
- exciting new applications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LABORATORY OF
APPLIED SCIENCE

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