Gold (Au) Etch Instructions

The CEPSR Clean Room stores Gold etchant type TFA, a pre-made product used for removing or etching away gold. This etchant is stored inside the acid or corrosive storage cabinet. The etch rate of this particular etchant at room temperature is about 28 angstroms per second. Depending on how old the bottle is and the fluctuation in lab room temperatures, the etch rate may vary. It is recommended to perform an etch rate test. Once this is done, the user can then calculate the amount of time needed for the etchant to remove away a specific thickness of gold that is desired.

*Note:* Once the bottle is empty or you find that its etch rate is almost doubled, empty any residual etchant into its waste disposal bottle (labeled Gold Etch Waste), the waste bottles are located below the wet bench. After disposal, rinse the now empty bottle with DI water THREE times. Mark with a 3X on the bottle and place on waste pickup table located next to the eye wash in the large yellow room. A clean room staff member will take it for proper disposal and will restock the corrosive case with a new, fresh bottle.

**Process**

Prior to using the wet bench, please have all materials ready: tweezers (anti-acid or Teflon), a Teflon or glass container for the liquid etchant, your PPE (Personal Protective Equipment-your correct size of orange, rubber acid gloves (w/nitrile gloves under), acid apron and face shield), timer and your Au coated sample prepared to be etched. When rinsing inside the fume hood, DO NOT use maximum pressure on the DI gun because it will then splash any contamination among the fume hood or possibly spray anyone near you. Please let it be known that you are using Au etchant to anyone inside the large yellow room.

1) Based on the product’s etch rate or your etch test, calculate the time needed for etching your specific thickness of Au.

2) Put on your PPE, first acid apron, then gloves and finally face mask. Take out the Au etch waste container and place inside the sink of the acid fume hood.

3) Place the container that will hold your wafer and the liquid etchant onto the wet bench. During handling, use your tweezers. Place your timer next to you tools for easy access.

4) Go into the corrosive storage box and take out the Gold Etchant Type TFA bottle and place on the wet bench.

5) Carefully pour enough etchant into the glass or Teflon container so that when you insert your sample, it is fully immersed in the Au etchant. Take the Gold Etchant bottle back inside the corrosive storage box.

6) Using your tweezers, fully submerge your chrome coated substrate or sample. Begin your timer.
7) As time progresses, visually, you will see a change of color on your wafer’s surface. After your calculate etch time ends, inspect your wafer. If the Au is not fully removed, fully immerse your wafer again into the etchant solution for more time. Periodically you may have to repeat this step to inspect when the metal is fully removed.

8) When done, take your sample out of the etchant and rinse with DI water then nitrogen dry your wafer and place into its carrying case.

9) Take the container that holds the used etchant and dispose of it inside the Au waste bottle. Take the bottle and place it back below the wet bench where the rest of the waste bottles are kept. (DO NOT leave waste container inside fume hood sink).

10) Your glass or Teflon container that held the etchant should then be rinsed fully with DI water, do this with gentle pressure applied on the DI water gun. Dry your container with the nitrogen gun.

11) Rinse well with DI water all your tools such as tweezers, containers and your acid gloves.

12) Remove any Tex wipes you used in this process and dispose of it in the acid contaminated waste can located near the acid fume hood. If your orange acid gloves are stained or appear over used, dispose of them in the same waste container, otherwise place them on the glove rack located above the acid storage box.

13) Clean up the wet bench after you have completed your process.