



Polarization-independent metasurface lens employing the Pancharatnam-Berry phase

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Abstract: Metasurface optical elements, optical phased arrays constructed from a dense arrangement of nanoscale antennas, are promising candidates for the next generation of flat optical components. Metasurfaces that rely on the Pancharatnam-Berry phase facilitate complete and efficient wavefront control. However, their operation typically requires control over the polarization state of the incident light to achieve a desired optical function. Here, we circumvent this inherent sensitivity to the incident polarization by multiplexing two metasurfaces that were designed to achieve the same optical function with incident light of opposite helicity. We analyze the optical performance of different multiplexing approaches, and demonstrate a subwavelength random interleaved polarization-independent metasurface lens operating in the visible spectrum, providing a diffraction-limited spot size for the shared-aperture.

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References and links

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1. Introduction

Dielectric optical nanoantennas are well-known for their ability to manipulate light at a sub-wavelength scale [1–6]. Flat optical components can be constructed from a dense arrangement of such structures in a planar arrangement and operate in a similar fashion to phased array antennas capable of reshaping the wavefront of an incident light wave [7–13]. These optical components are often called metasurfaces to emphasize that they are thin compared to the free-space wavelength of light [14]. They have enabled the realization of a range of optical functions and new physical concepts, including beam steering [9, 10, 15, 16], lenses [17–20], holograms [21, 22], thermal radiation control components [23], the optical Rashba effect [23, 24] and spin-optical devices [25, 26].

One type of metasurface is composed of antennas whose size or shape varies with position. A practical advantage of such components is that their operation can easily be rendered insensitive to the polarization state of the incident light [9, 15, 19, 27–31]. However, their phase profile tends to produce a highly dispersive performance, and it is challenging to decouple the local transmissivity and phase response as both have distinct dependencies on the antenna size and shape. The second type is based on the Pancharatnam-Berry phase (geometric phase) [32, 33] that results from a space-variant orientation of optical nanoantennas in order to control the local phase pick-up [7, 8, 12, 17, 34]. The geometric phase emerging from a surface patterned with such oriented nano-antennas is given by $\phi_g = 2\sigma\theta(x, y)$, where $\sigma = \pm 1$ denotes the incident polarization helicity photonic spin-states, right (σ_+) and left (σ_-) circular polarization; here $\theta(x, y)$ is the orientation profile. Importantly, this phase can be designed to span the full 2π range while maintaining uniform transmission amplitude, resulting in high diffraction efficiencies across broad operational bandwidths. However, achieving a desired optical function using geometric phase typically requires the use of circularly-polarized light, and distinct optical properties are obtained for incident light beams with opposing helicities. For example, a metasurface designed to focus incident light with right circular polarization, will diverge for incident left circular polarization [7, 8, 17]. This distinct response offered by such a metasurface has been exploited for chiral imaging [35] and polarimetry [36–38].

Here, we propose a polarization-independent metasurface based on the Pancharatnam-Berry phase and shared-aperture phased-array concepts [39–45]. The polarization independence results from spatial multiplexing of two metasurfaces that are designed to provide the same optical function for incident light beams of opposite helicity. Study of the spatial multiplexing technique together with the optical performance of the components is presented. In this work we demonstrate interleaved flat optical lenses that preserve the numerical aperture of the entire shared-aperture, and that offer a polarization-independent focusing of the incident light using an ultrathin lightweight optical element.

2. Polarization-independent lens based on the geometric phase

Figure 1 illustrates the design principle of a polarization-independent flat lens utilizing the geometric phase. Previously, it was demonstrated that a spherical geometric phase metasurface focuses light into a diffraction-limited focal spot in a spin-dependent manner (see Fig. 1(a) and 1(e)) [12, 17]. First a 90- μm -diameter lens with a focal length f of 100 μm is designed to focus an incident σ_- beam at wavelength λ of 550 nm. A calculation based on the Fresnel approximation shows a diffraction limited focal spot with a 0.75 μm full width at half maximum (FWHM), however incident light of opposite spin will be defocused.

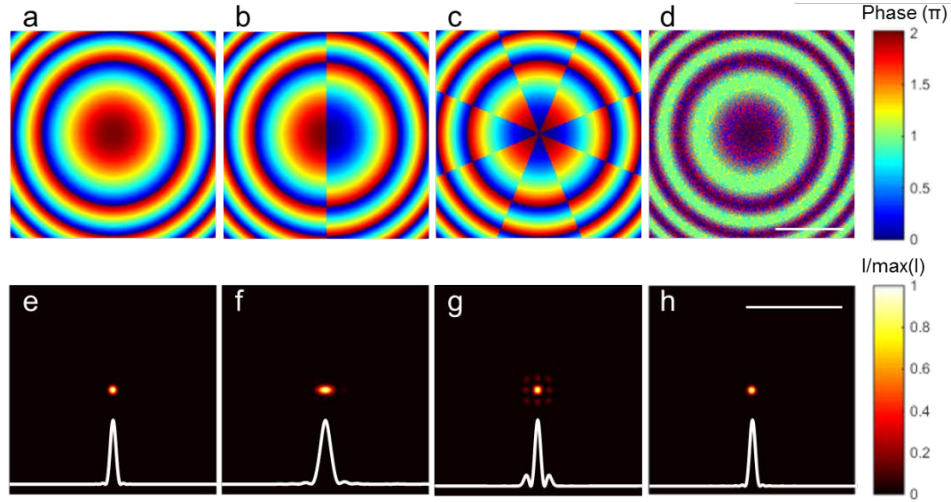


Fig. 1. Calculated phase profiles and diffraction patterns for single and spatially multiplexed flat optical lenses. The phase profiles are shown for σ . for (a) a single, 90- μm -diameter lens, (b) a multiplexed lens composed of 2-segments/half-lenses which feature reversed phase profiles to allow focusing of both σ and σ_+ , (c) a multiplexed lens composed of 8 segments, (d) a randomly interleaved lens. (e-h) The corresponding amplitude distributions for the calculated diffraction pattern at the focal plane under plane wave illumination with 550 nm circularly polarized light. The intensity distribution through the focus is shown in the inset. The amplitude is normalized to the maximum intensity for each focal spot. The length of the scale bar is 10 μm .

A simple approach to focus light of both circular polarizations is to divide the lens into two equally sized segments, with the left side the geometric mirror image of the right side. Hence, we assign a distinct orientation profile to each segment according to

$$2\theta_1(x, y) = \frac{2\pi}{\lambda} (f - \sqrt{x^2 + y^2 + f^2}), \quad 2\theta_2(x, y) = -\frac{2\pi}{\lambda} (f - \sqrt{x^2 + y^2 + f^2}).$$

Each half-lens segment focuses light of a distinct helicity onto the focal plane. Together, the two halves form a new, segmented, 90- μm -diameter lens as depicted in Fig. 1b. The calculated focal spot is elongated along the horizontal direction due to the reduced aperture of each individual sub-lens in the horizontal direction (see Fig. 1(f)). The theoretically calculated FWHM from Fig. 1(f) is of 1.3 μm and 0.72 μm along the x and y directions, respectively. Another approach is given by a multiplexed lens that uses a larger number of segments, which can be accomplished for example by creating more tangential segments, as illustrated in Fig. 1(c). Figure 1(g) shows that the resulting focal spot is indeed reduced in size and assumes a more circular shape. However, due to the periodic tangential segments, a set of undesired diffraction spots around the central focus is obtained. To avoid this imaging artifact we further interleave these conjugated lenses through spatially randomized subwavelength multiplexing. The spatial interleaving is implemented by dividing each of the distinct phase profiles into equally distributed segments, then randomly selecting the segments from the multiple distinct phase profiles to produce random spatial multiplexing. The interleaved lens is constructed from numerous segments, and maintains the diffraction-limit of the shared aperture as depicted in Fig. 1(d) and 1(h), while suppressing undesired diffraction spots. From this analysis, it is clear that one can use the random interleaving approach to effectively incorporate the optical functionality of two distinct optical elements into one spatial surface area. Note the maximum intensity (I_M) of the focal spots in Figs. 1(f)-1(h) are 0.251 I_0 , 0.252 I_0 and 0.260 I_0 respectively; where I_0 is the maximum intensity for a perfect full lens. The maximum intensity for the interleaved lens is in agreement with the theoretical prediction of

$1/N^2 = 0.25$, where the reduced energy in the focal spot is distributed to the side lobe or speckle noise. The integrated power at the focal plane in the case of Fig. 1(f)-1(h) is approximately reduced according to $1/N = I/2$, where N is the number of channels by which light is focused. This is in correlation to the effective aperture of each phase profile [43, 44]. Segmented polarization-independent lens based on geometric phase preserves the advantages of geometric phase based optical element and gives rise to additional optical functionalities, but with a reduction in its intensity.

The phase profiles are implemented with 8-discrete levels [46] using poly-crystalline Si nanobeam antennas with subwavelength spacings and space-varying orientations [12]. The antennas are 100 nm high, 120 nm wide and feature an edge-to-edge-spacing of 80 nm. We experimentally investigate the focusing performance of the lens with 2-segments first and fabricate it by electron-beam lithography (see Fig. 2(a)). To analyze the optical performance of the lens we illuminate the structure with a collimated circularly-polarized beam, at a wavelength of 550 nm from a spectrally filtered supercontinuum laser. The detail of the fabrication procedure and optical characterization can be found in our previous publication [12]. Figures 2(b) and 2(c) demonstrate the intensity distribution in the focal plane which was measured using a confocal microscope, where the FWHM of the focal spot is $1.44 \mu\text{m}$ and $0.765 \mu\text{m}$ along the x and y directions, respectively. These results are in good agreement with the theory shown in Fig. 1f. The size and shape of the focal spot at the focal plane are identical to those obtained with circularly-polarized light, demonstrating the polarization-independent performance. However, the focused light is seen to be tilted away from the optical axis and also characterized by a large FWHM along the x -direction due to the fact that only half of the metasurface lens contributes to the focus for a given circular polarization. When the lens is illuminated with linearly-polarized light, constituted from equal amounts of σ_- and σ_+ , it focuses this light onto the designed focal plane in a slightly different fashion along propagation axis (see Figs. 2(d) and 2(e)).

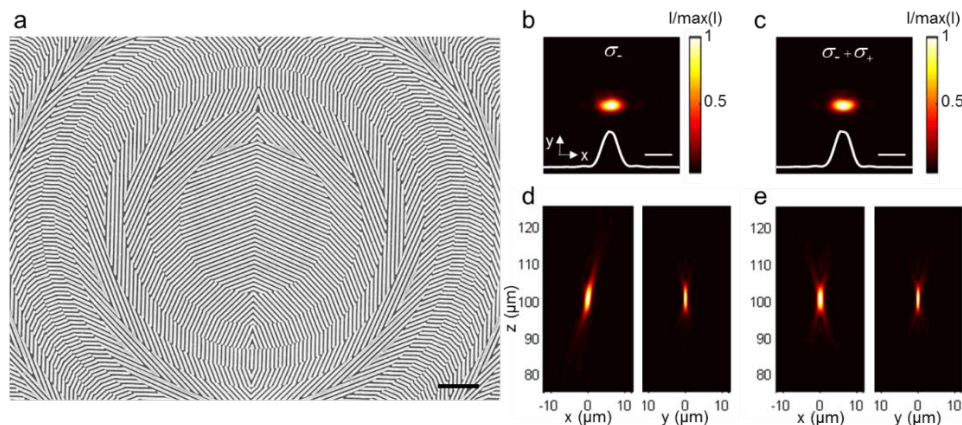


Fig. 2. (a) Scanning electron microscope image of a metasurface lens composed of 2 segments. (b and c) Measured intensity profile of the focal spot in the focal plane at $z = 100 \mu\text{m}$ upon illumination with left circularly (b) and linear (c) polarization. The inset shows the intensity distribution through the focus along the x -axis. (d and e) Measured intensity profile of the transmitted light behind the polarization-independent metasurface lens along x - z plane and y - z plane upon illumination with circularly (d) and linearly (e) polarized light. The scale bars in the panels are $2 \mu\text{m}$.

3. Polarization-independent lenses with randomly interleaved antennas

We also studied the performance of polarization-independent lenses with randomly interleaved antennas. The design starts by establishing the required geometric phase profile for a single metasurface lens that effectively focuses σ_- and σ_+ , individually (see schematic in

Fig. 3). In order to achieve a rotationally symmetric performance, we divide concentric rings in the lens into a large number of segments and then randomly assigned the phase-profile of either the σ_- or σ_+ .

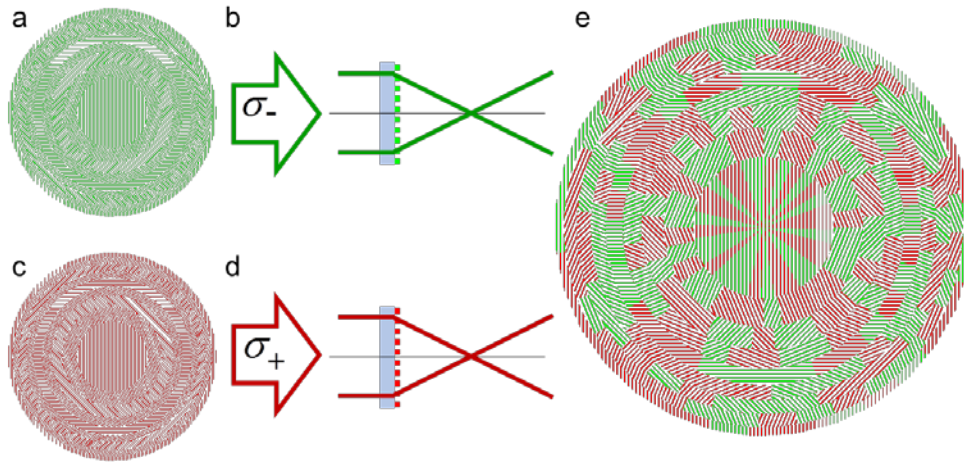


Fig. 3. Random subwavelength interleaved approach. (a-d) Nanopattern design for a single metasurface lens showing how incident σ_- (a,b) and σ_+ (c,d) is focused by the metasurface lens. (e) Design of a polarization-independent interleaved metasurface lens. Concentric rings in the lens were divided up in segments and randomly assigned the phase-profile of either the σ_+ or σ_- .

We fabricated the designed metasurface lens by electron-beam lithography as shown in Fig. 4(a), and illuminated it with a collimated 550 nm wavelength circular polarized beam as (see results in Figs. 4(b) and 4(c)). This demonstrates that both the spot size and the intensity distribution in the focal plane is the same for the two opposing helicities. A radially symmetric focal spot was measured with a FWHM of 0.85 μm , thanks to the larger effective aperture through random interleaving, which is in a good agreement with theory and much smaller than the focal spots shown in Fig. 2 (FWHM = 1.44 μm). Importantly, when the random interleaved metasurface is illuminated with linearly polarized light, the measured focal spot is equal to the measured foci for σ_- or σ_+ illumination individually as shown in Fig. 4(d). The measured optical intensity distributions of the transmitted beam along the propagation direction which are demonstrated in Figs. 4(e)-4(g), show that the intensity distributions of the focused beam along the optical axis are identical regardless of the polarization state of the incident light. The size and intensity of the measured focal spot fully agrees with the theoretical prediction, as discussed in Fig. 1h. This demonstrates that the interleaving approach allows the creation of a lens with a numerical aperture that corresponds to the shared-aperture. Note that this lens will work for unpolarized light – an incoherent superposition of σ_+ and σ_- .

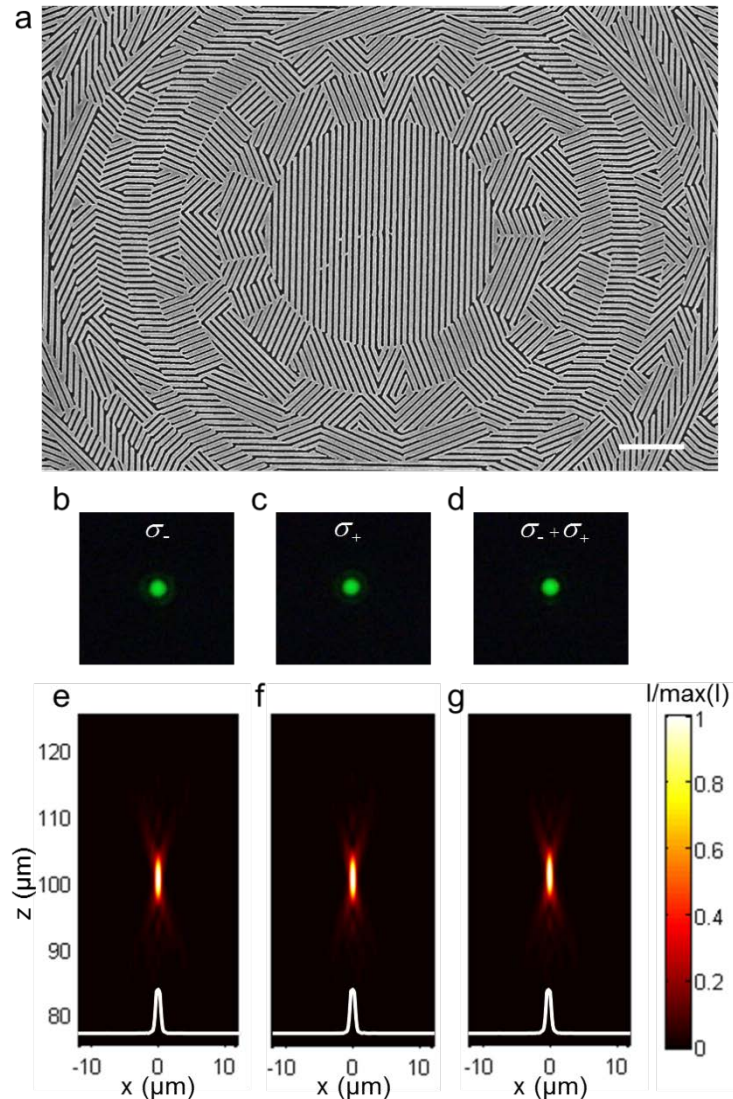


Fig. 4. (a) Scanning electron microscope image of the fabricated polarization-independent random interleaved metasurface lens. The scale bar is 2 μm . (b-d) Optical microscope images of the focal spot measured at a focal plane of $z = 100 \mu\text{m}$ upon illumination with σ_- , σ_+ and linear polarization, respectively. (e-g) Measured intensity profile in the x-z plane upon illumination with σ_- , σ_+ and linear polarized light, respectively. The inset along the x-axis shows the cross-sectional intensity profile at the focal plane, $z = 100 \mu\text{m}$.

4. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, we have demonstrated polarization-independent metasurface lenses based on the geometric phase through a multiplexing approach. The elements are constructed from nanoscale Si antennas that afford operation in the visible spectral range. We investigated the optical properties of such metasurfaces with various degrees of multiplexing. The design approach, which was demonstrated for a lens, can be easily extended to polarization-independent metasurfaces that exhibit other optical functions. This further extends the possible use of geometric phase elements for a wide range of integrated optical applications in imaging and display.

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