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The structure of a working catalyst ; from flat surfaces to nanoparticles

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The structure of a working catalyst

From flat surfaces to nanoparticles

The structure of a working catalyst

From flat surfaces to nanoparticles

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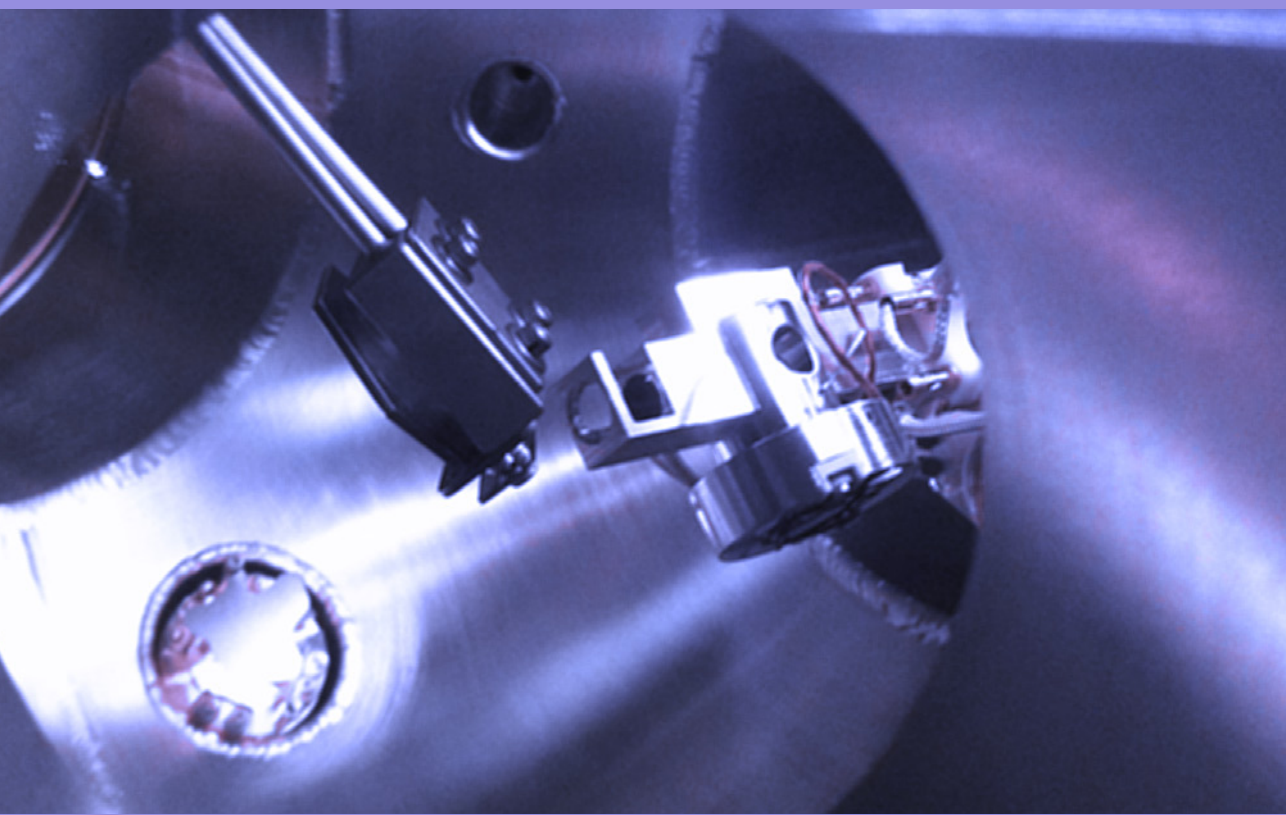
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In memory of my grandfather, dr. Kees Kruit.



About this thesis

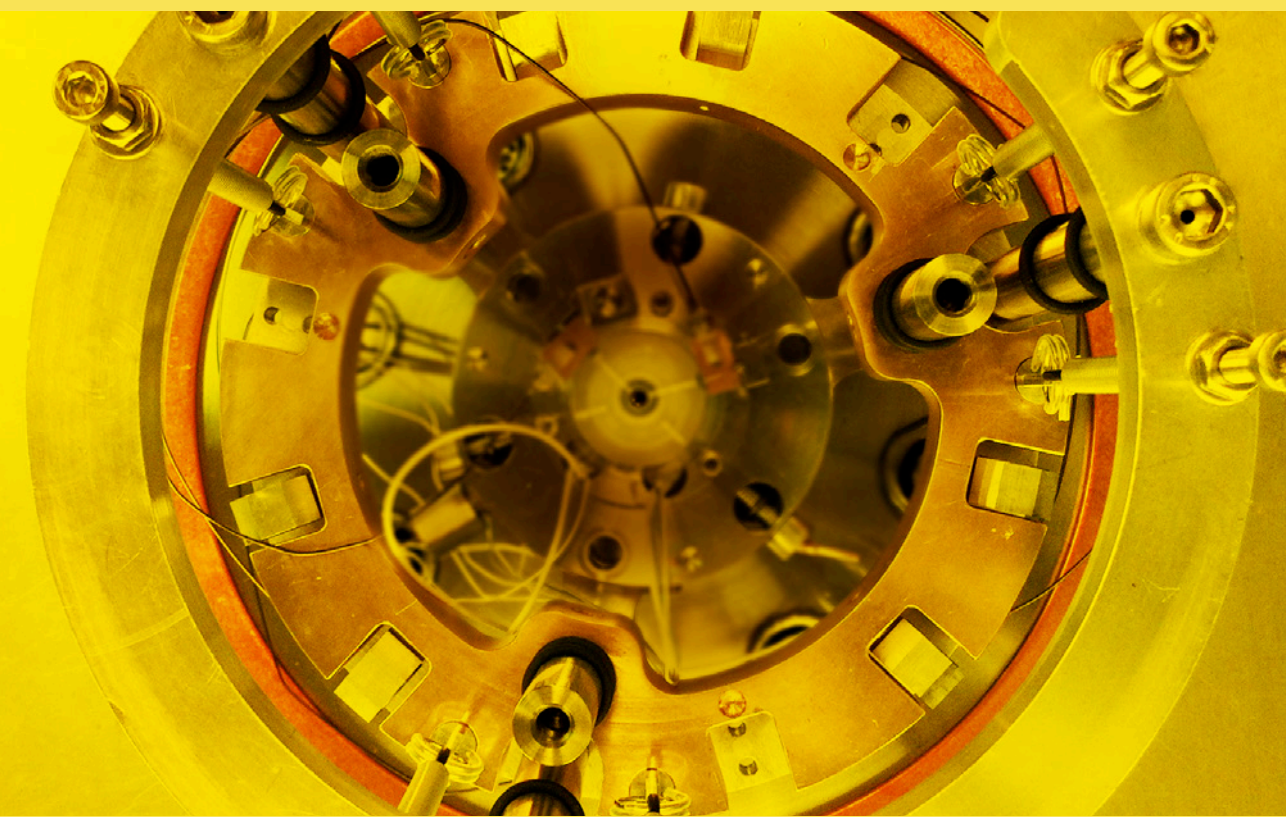
Catalysis is the working horse of the chemical industry. In many cases, it is a poorly understood process that takes place at the surfaces of nanoparticles under relatively harsh conditions, such as high pressures and high temperatures.

This thesis focuses on new approaches to acquire atomic-scale information on catalytic processes on metal nanoparticles in high-pressure, high-temperature conditions. This thesis starts with a general introduction that motivates the need for *operando* or *in-situ* observations and advocates the simultaneous use of a combination of atomic-scale measurement techniques. The body of this thesis is organised in two parts that can be read independently.

Part I takes a comprehensive approach to the development of novel instruments and methods for *in-situ* experiments on model catalysts under working conditions. It introduces the mechanical and electronic hardware of the ReactorAFM, the world's first high-pressure, high-temperature non-contact Atomic Force Microscope. In addition, it describes two software packages for the analysis of *in-situ* microscopy data, and for the analysis of surface X-ray diffraction data.

In part II we have applied our new instrument in combination with other, recently developed *in-situ* measurement techniques to study catalytic model systems at atmospheric pressures and elevated temperatures. We first describe a study of the interaction of gas mixtures of nitric oxide and hydrogen on the Pt(110) surface, using surface X-ray diffraction. This study serves as a stepping stone for the next chapter, where we exposed a Pt nanoparticle model catalyst to mixtures of nitric oxide and hydrogen in a high-pressure reaction cell in a transmission electron microscope. Finally, we have investigated spontaneous reaction oscillations on Pd nanoparticles during the catalytic oxidation of carbon monoxide. Using a combination of four *in-situ* techniques, including our new ReactorAFM, we have established the periodic formation and reduction of a thin oxide shell on the nanoparticles during the oscillations.

As will be explained in the first chapter, the differences between the idealised world of traditional surface science and the complex world of practical catalysis are commonly categorised into the *pressure gap* and the *materials gap*. The approach taken in this thesis to combine several *in-situ* measurement techniques, is necessary to bridge the *pressure gap* and at the same time take a significant step across the *materials gap*.



Contents

1	Introduction	1
I	Instruments and methods	8
2	The <i>ReactorAFM</i>: Non-Contact Atomic Force Microscope operating under high-pressure and high-temperature catalytic conditions	11
2.1	Introduction	12
2.2	Design specifications	13
2.3	Design	15
2.3.1	UHV system	15
2.3.2	Gas system	16
2.3.3	High pressure reactor with AFM scanner	16
2.3.4	Tuning fork and tip	18
2.3.5	Electronics	19
2.4	Performance	20
2.4.1	Imaging	20
2.4.2	Influence of environment on QTF	23
2.5	Conclusion and outlook	24
3	<i>Spacetime</i>: analysis software for microscopy data of dynamical processes	27
3.1	Introduction	28
3.2	Features	28
3.3	Implementation	30
3.4	Outlook	32

4	<i>BINoculars</i>: data reduction and analysis software for two-dimensional detectors in surface X-ray diffraction	35
4.1	Introduction	36
4.2	Implementation	38
4.3	Binning and error handling	41
4.4	Demonstration	43
4.5	Conclusion	47
II	High-pressure experiments	48
5	NO reduction by H₂ over Pt(110) studied by SXRD	51
5.1	Introduction	52
5.2	Methods	52
5.3	Results and discussion	54
	5.3.1 Surface reconstructions	56
	5.3.2 Faceting	58
5.4	Outlook	62
6	NO reduction by H₂ over Pt nanoparticles studied by TEM	65
6.1	Introduction	66
6.2	Methods	66
6.3	Results and discussion	69
6.4	Conclusion	73
6.5	Outlook	73
6.A	Particle shape analysis	74
7	Oxide shell formation during spontaneous oscillations in the catalytic oxidation of CO on palladium nanoparticles	77
7.1	Introduction	78
7.2	Methods	79
7.3	Results and discussion	80
	7.3.1 X-ray diffraction	80
	7.3.2 Transmission electron microscopy	83
	7.3.3 Atomic force microscopy	86
	7.3.4 Grazing incidence small angle X-ray scattering	86
7.4	Model and interpretation	89
7.5	Oscillation mechanism	92
7.6	Conclusion and outlook	93

Samenvatting	95
Acknowledgements	103
Curriculum vitae	105
List of publications	107
Bibliography	111

