



MLS203P11 - August 23, 2022

Item # MLS203P11 was discontinued on August 23, 2022. For informational purposes, this is a copy of the website content at that time and is valid only for the stated product.

HIGH-SPEED MOTORIZED XY SCANNING STAGES

- Ultra Fast XY Scanning Up to 250 mm/s
- Low-Profile, Compact Footprint
- Compatible with Thorlabs' Cerna[®], Nikon, Olympus, and Zeiss Microscopes

MLS203-1 Stage Shown Mounted to a Nikon Eclipse Ti-U Microscope Equipped with Thorlabs' Confocal Imaging System

MLS203-1

Shown with MLS203P2 Slide Holder. Stage Dimensions: 260 mm x 230 mm x 31 mm

OVERVIEW

Features

- Integrates with Nikon, Olympus, Zeiss, and Thorlabs' Cerna[®] Upright and Inverted Microscopes
- Range of Sample Holders Available
- Integrated Brushless DC Linear Servo Motor Actuators
- Linear Optical Encoders
- High-Quality, Precision-Engineered Linear Bearings
- High Repeatability (0.25 μm) and Position Accuracy (<3 μm)
- Compatible with Thorlabs' Kinesis[®] and APT[™] Software

Thorlabs' MLS203 stages have been designed as drop-in replacements for the manual stages found on select Nikon, Olympus, Zeiss, and Cerna[®] microscopes to provide motorized XY positioning of microscopy samples. A complete stage package consists of the stage itself, a controller, mounting brackets, and optional accessories; all of these items need to be purchased separately. The table below outlines the items that should be purchased to form a stage package compatible with a particular microscope. Alternatively, optional mounting brackets (Item # MLSA01) enable the MLS203-1 stage to be bolted to an optical table or breadboard as part of a custom-built microscope setup or for use in typical photonics applications.

Characterized by high-speed scanning capabilities and high positional accuracy, these stages are ideal for manually or automatically positioning a wide range of specimens and samples in many types of microscopy or imaging techniques and applications. Very precise manual fine positioning and control at the cellular level is easily achieved through the combination of a stable closed-loop control system and an associated joystick option. In addition, the stages can be combined with our Z-Axis Piezo Stage to form an XYZ stage ideally suited for laser scanning microscopy.

The motorized stage technology is covered by US patent 8,575,792.

Controller Option

The recommended controller for the MLS203 stage is the BBD302 Dual-Axis Brushless DC Motor Controller, which is compatible with our Kinesis and APT software suites. See below for a brief overview, or click here to view the full presentation for this controller.

Specimen Holders and Accessories

We offer a range of adapters to allow the positioning of standard microscope slides, multiwell plates, petri dishes, and mounted metallurgical specimens. Please see the details below.

Microscope ^a	Stage	Mounting Bracket	Controller	Optional Specimen Holders and Accessories
Thorlabs Cerna	MLS203-1	CSA1000		
Nikon 50i, 80i, 90i, and Ci-L	MLS203-1	MLSA06		MLS203P1: Multiwell Plate Adapter
Nikon TE2000 and Eclipse Ti	MLS203-1	MLSA03		MLS203P2: Petri Dish / Slide Holder for Inverted Microscopes C4SH01: Multi Slide Holder for Inverted Microscopes
Nikon Eclipse FN1	MLS203-1	MLSA07		MLS203P3: Blank Adapter Plate
Olympus BX41, BX43, BX51, BX53, and	MLS203-1	MLSA08	BBD302	MLS203P5: 1/4"-20 Tapped Breadboard Plate
BX61	IVILO200-1	WEOROO	000002	MLS203P4: M6-Tapped Breadboard Plate
Olympus IX51, IX71, IX73, IX81, and IX83	MLS203-1	MLSA02		MLS203P10: Multiple Slide Holder for Upright and Inverted
Olympus IX70	MLS203-1	MLSA09		Microscopes MLS203P11: Recessed Slide Holder for Upright Microscopes
Zeiss Axio Observer and Axiovert 40	MLS203-2	None Needed		MJC001: 2-Axis Joystick Controller
Optical Breadboard / Custom Configuration	MLS203-1	MLSA01		

Complete Microscope Stage Assemblies

a. If your microscope is not listed, please contact Technical Support to inquire about custom mounting adapters. We can support microscopes from Olympus, Nikon, Zeiss, and Leica.

MLS203 Stage			
Travel Range	110 mm x 75 mm (4.3" x 2.95")	Number	
Speed (Max)	250 mm/s	Drive C	
Acceleration (Max)	2000 mm/s ²	Feedba	
Bidirectional Repeatability	0.25 μm	Brushle	
Unidirectional Repeatability	0.25 µm	Output	
Backlash ^a	N/A	Brushle	
Load Capacity (Max)	1 kg (2.2 lb)	PWM Fr	
Incremental Movement (Min)	0.1 µm	Operati	
Absolute On-Axis Accuracy	<3 µm		
Percentage Accuracy (Max)	X-Axis: 0.0027% Y-Axis: 0.004%	Control	
Flatness in X Axis	±3 μm Over Full Travel , ±1 μm Over 10 mm	Velocity	
Flatness in Y Axis	±2 μm Over Full Travel , ±1 μm Over 10 mm	Position	
Home Location Accuracy	0.25 μm	Encode	
Settling Time within 1 μm (600 g Load)	0.1 s	Encode AUX Co	
Settling Time within 0.1 μm (600 g Load)	0.6 s	Front Pa	
Weight (Including Cables)	3.2 kg (7.0 lbs)	land D	
Limit Switches	X and Y as Standard	Input Po Require	
Bearing Type	Precision Linear Bearing		
Motor Type	Brushless DC Linear Motor	Dimens	
Dimensions (Mid Travel, Excluding Guards)	260.0 mm x 230.0 mm x 31.3 mm (10.24" x 9.06" x 1.23")	Mass (V	
Recommended Controller	BBD302		

BBD302 Controller				
Number of Channels	2			
Drive Connector	8 Pin DIN, Round, Female			
Feedback Connector	15-Pin D-Type, Female			
Brushless Continuous Output	2.5 A per Channel, 5.2 A Max All-Channel Total Output			
Brushless Peak Output	4.0 A per Channel, 5.2 A Max All-Channel Total Output			
PWM Frequency	40 kHz			
Operating Modes	Position and Velocity			
Control Algorithm	16-Bit Digital PID Servo Loop with Velocity and Acceleration Feedforward			
Velocity Profile Trapezoidal/S-Curve				
Position Count	32 Bit			
Position Feedback	Incremental Encoder			
Encoder Bandwidth	2.5 MHz (10 M Counts/sec)			
Encoder Supply	5 V			
AUX Control Connector	37-Pin D-Type Female (User Digital IO, 5 V O/P)			
Front Panel Display	4.3" Full-Color LCD, 480 x 272 Pixels			
Input Power Requirements	250 VA Voltage: 100 to 240 VAC Frequency: 47 to 63 Hz Fuse: 3.15 A			
Dimensions (W x D x H)	250.0 mm x 279.1 mm x 108.8 mm (9.84" x 10.99" x 4.28")			
Mass (Weight)	1.70 kg (3.75 lbs)			

a. The stage does not suffer from backlash because there is no leadscrew.



MOTION CONTROL SOFTWARE

Thorlabs offers two platforms to drive our wide range of motion controllers: our Kinesis[®] software package or the legacy APT[™] (Advanced Positioning Technology) software package. Either package can be used to control devices in the Kinesis family, which covers a wide range of motion controllers ranging from small, low-powered, single-channel drivers (such as the K-Cubes[™] and T-Cubes[™]) to high-power, multi-channel, modular 19" rack nanopositioning systems (the APT Rack System).

The Kinesis Software features .NET controls which can be used by 3rd party developers working in the latest C#, Visual Basic, LabVIEW™, or any .NET compatible languages to create custom applications. Low-level DLL libraries are included for applications not expected to use the .NET framework. A Central Sequence Manager supports integration and synchronization of all Thorlabs motion control hardware.

Our legacy APT System Software platform offers ActiveX-based controls which can be used by 3rd party developers working on C#, Visual Basic, LabVIEW™, or any Active-X compatible languages to create custom applications and includes a simulator mode to assist in developing custom applications without requiring hardware.



KII ICSIS

By providing these common software platforms, Thorlabs has ensured that users can easily mix and match any of the Kinesis and APT controllers in a single application, while only having to learn a single set of software tools. In this way, it is perfectly feasible to combine any of the controllers from single-axis to multi-axis systems and control all from a single, PC-based unified software interface.

The software packages allow two methods of usage: graphical user interface (GUI) utilities for direct interaction with and control of the controllers 'out of the box', and a set of programming interfaces that allow custom-integrated positioning and alignment solutions to be easily programmed in the development language of choice.



A range of video tutorials is available to help explain our APT system software. These tutorials

provide an overview of the software and the APT Config utility. Additionally, a tutorial video is available to explain how to select simulator mode within the software, which allows the user to experiment with the software without a controller connected. Please select the APT Tutorials tab above to view these videos.

Software	Software
Kinesis Version 1.14.35	APT Version 3.21.5
The Kinesis Software Package, which	The APT Software Pa
includes a GUI for control of Thorlabs'	includes a GUI for co

includes a GUI for control of Thorlabs' Kinesis and APT™ system controllers. The APT Software Package, which includes a GUI for control of Thorlabs' APT™ and Kinesis system controllers.

Also Available:

Communications Protocol
 Software

is Protocol	 Communications Protocol
Ð	Software

KINESIS TUTORIALS

Also Available:

Thorlabs' Kinesis[®] software features new .NET controls which can be used by third-party developers working in the latest C#, Visual Basic, LabVIEW™, or any .NET compatible languages to create custom applications.

C#

This programming language is designed to allow multiple programming paradigms, or languages, to be used, thus allowing for complex problems to be solved in an easy or efficient manner. It encompasses typing, imperative, declarative, functional, generic, object-oriented, and component-oriented programming. By providing functionality with this common software platform, Thorlabs has ensured that users can easily mix and match any of the Kinesis controllers in a single application, while only having to learn a single set of software tools. In this way, it is perfectly feasible to combine any of the controllers from the low-powered, single-axis to the high-powered, multi-axis systems and control all from a single, PC-based unified software interface.

The Kinesis System Software allows two methods of usage: graphical user interface (GUI) utilities for direct interaction and control of the controllers 'out of the box', and a set of programming interfaces that allow custom-integrated positioning and alignment solutions to be easily programmed in the development language of choice.

For a collection of example projects that can be compiled and run to demonstrate the different ways in which developers can build on the Kinesis motion control libraries, click on the links below. Please note that a separate integrated development environment (IDE) (e.g., Microsoft Visual Studio) will be required to execute the Quick Start examples. The C# example projects can be executed using the included .NET controls in the Kinesis software package (see the Kinesis Software tab for details).



Click Here for the Kinesis with C# Quick Start Guide Click Here for C# Example Projects Click Here for Quick Start Device Control Examples



LabVIEW

LabVIEW can be used to communicate with any Kinesis- or APT-based controller via .NET controls. In LabVIEW, you build a user interface, known as a front panel, with a set of tools and objects and then add code using graphical representations of functions to control the front panel objects. The LabVIEW tutorial, provided below, provides some information on using the .NET controls to create control GUIs for Kinesis- and APT-driven devices within LabVIEW. It includes an overview with basic information about using controllers in LabVIEW and explains the setup procedure that needs to be completed before using a LabVIEW GUI to operate a device.



Click Here to View the LabVIEW Guide Click Here to View the Kinesis with LabVIEW Overview Page



APT TUTORIALS

The APT video tutorials available here fall into two main groups - one group covers using the supplied APT utilities and the second group covers programming the APT System using a selection of different programming environments.

Disclaimer: The videos below were originally produced in Adobe Flash. Following the discontinuation of Flash after 2020, these tutorials were re-recorded for future use. The Flash Player controls still appear in the bottom of each video, but they are not functional.

Every APT controller is supplied with the utilities APTUser and APTConfig. APTUser provides a quick and easy way of interacting with the APT control hardware using intuitive graphical control panels. APTConfig is an 'off-line' utility that allows various system wide settings to be made such as pre-selecting mechanical stage types and associating them with specific motion controllers.

APT User Utility

The first video below gives an overview of using the APTUser Utility. The OptoDriver single channel controller products can be operated via their front panel controls in the absence of a control PC. The stored settings relating to the operation of these front panel controls can be changed using the APTUser utility. The second video illustrates this process.

APT User - Overview APT User - OptoDriver Settings

APT Config Utility

There are various APT system-wide settings that can be made using the APT Config utility, including setting up a simulated hardware configuration and associating mechanical stages with specific motor drive channels. The first video presents a brief overview of the APT Config application. More details on creating a simulated hardware configuration and making stage associations are present in the next two videos.

APT Config - Overview APT Config - Simulator Setup APT Config - Stage Association

APT Programming

The APT Software System is implemented as a collection of ActiveX Controls. ActiveX Controls are language-independant software modules that provide both a graphical user interface and a programming interface. There is an ActiveX Control type for each type of hardware unit, e.g. a Motor ActiveX Control covers operation with any type of APT motor controller (DC or stepper). Many Windows software development environments and languages directly support ActiveX Controls, and, once such a Control is embedded into a custom application, all of the functionality it contains is immediately available to the application for automated operation. The videos below illustrate the basics of using the APT ActiveX Controls with LabVIEW, Visual Basic, and Visual C++. Note that many other languages support ActiveX including LabWindows CVI, C++ Builder, VB.NET, C#.NET, Office VBA, Matlab, HPVEE etc. Although these environments are not covered specifically by the tutorial videos, many of the ideas shown will still be relevant to using these other languages.

Visual Basic

Part 1 illustrates how to get an APT ActiveX Control running within Visual Basic, and Part 2 goes on to show how to program a custom positioning sequence.

APT Programming Using Visual Basic - Part 1 APT Programming Using Visual Basic - Part 2

LabVIEW

Full Active support is provided by LabVIEW and the series of tutorial videos below illustrate the basic building blocks in creating a custom APT motion control sequence. We start by showing how to call up the Thorlabs-supplied online help during software development. Part 2 illustrates how to create an APT ActiveX Control. ActiveX Controls provide both Methods (i.e. Functions) and Properties (i.e. Value Settings). Parts 3 and 4 show how to create and wire up both the methods and properties exposed by an ActiveX Control. Finally, in Part 5, we pull everything together and show a completed LabVIEW example program that demonstrates a custom move sequence.

APT Programming Using LabVIEW -Part 1: Accessing Online Help Part 2: Creating an ActiveX Control Part 3: Create an ActiveX Method

APT Programming Using LabVIEW - APT Programming Using LabVIEW - Part 4: Create an ActiveX Property Part 5: How to Start an ActiveX Control

The following tutorial videos illustrate alternative ways of creating Method and Property nodes:

APT Programming Using LabVIEW - APT Programming Using LabVIEW - Create an ActiveX Method (Alternative) Create an ActiveX Property (Alternative)

Visual C++

Part 1 illustrates how to get an APT ActiveX Control running within Visual C++, and Part 2 goes on to show how to program a custom positioning sequence.

APT Programming with Visual C++ - Part 1 APT Programming with Visual C++ - Part 2

MATLAB

For assistance when using MATLAB and ActiveX controls with the Thorlabs APT positioners, click here.

To further assist programmers, a guide to programming the APT software in LabVIEW is also available here.

High-Speed Motorized XY Scanning Stages

These XY scanning stages are drop-in replacements for the manual stages found on select microscopes, and provide motorized XY positioning of microscopy samples. The MLS203-1 is compatible with Thorlabs' Cerna[®] microscopes, as well as inverted and upright microscopes from Nikon and Olympus (see the table in the *Overview* tab above). Adapter brackets can be purchased separately that enable the stage to be fitted to a particular microscope. Tabletop mounting brackets (Item # MLSA01) are also available that enable the stage to be bolted to an optical table or breadboard as part of a custom built microscope setup or for use in typical photonics applications (see below for more details).

Key Specifications ^a			
Travel Range 110 mm x 75 mm (4.3" x 2.95")			
Velocity (Max)	250 mm/s		
Acceleration (Max)	2000 mm/s ²		
Bidirectional Repeatability	0.25 μm		
Unidirectional Repeatability	0.25 μm		
Horizontal Load Capacity (Max)	1.0 kg (2.2 lb)		
Min. Achievable Incremental Movement	0.1 µm		
Home Location Accuracy	0.25 µm		
Absolute On-Axis Accuracy	<3 µm		

The MLS203-2 is directly compatible with Zeiss Axio Observer and Axiovert 40 microscopes. Mounting brackets are not required.

a. Please see the Specs tab for complete specifications.

Part Number	Description	Price	Availability	
MLS203-1	Fast XY Scanning Stage	\$7,719.84	7-10 Days	
MLS203-2	Fast XY Scanning Stage for Zeiss Microscopes	\$7,719.84	Lead Time	

Compatible Controller for MLS203 Stages

The BBD302 two-channel controller features Thorlabs' Kinesis[®] control and programming interface, enabling easy integration into automated microscopy applications. It is ideal for applications demanding operation at high speeds (hundreds of mm/s) and high encoder resolution (<100 nm). For greater flexibility, communication with a PC is supported using either a USB or RS232 serial interface. The controller is supplied with a software development kit (SDK) in order to support automated PC control of the stage. This is useful to system integrators and other automation specialists who need to combine operation of the stage with other microscopy automation accessories. The fully documented SDK supports all major development languages running on Windows, such as LabVIEW, C++, and MATLAB, and comes in the form of ActiveX libraries or a conventional dynamic link library (DLL).

Multiple units can be connected to a single PC via standard USB hub technology; for example, both the BBD302 controller for the MLS203 XY stage and the controller with our MZS500-E Z-axis piezo stage kit can be operated simultaneously with a single PC. Combining this feature with the user-friendly Kinesis or APT[™] software suites allows the user to program and carry out complex move sequences quickly. For more details on the BBD302 controller, please see the *Specs* tab above or the full presentation for our brushless DC controllers.

Part Number	Description	Price	Availability
BBD302	Customer Inspired! 2-Channel Benchtop 3-Phase Brushless DC Servo Controller	\$3,405.47	Today

Mounting Brackets for MLS203 Series Stages

We offer a choice of brackets to facilitate mounting the MLS203-1 stage to a range of upright and inverted microscopes from Thorlabs, Nikon, and Olympus. Please see the table below for specific compatibility. We also offer brackets that allow the MLS203-1 stage to be attached to imperial or metric breadboards for home-built microscopes or general photonics applications.



Click to Enlarge MLS203-1 Stage with MLS203P2 Slide Holder on

CSA1000 Fixed Arm for

Each bracket (with the exception of the CSA1000) comes with instructions describing how to attach the stage to the microscope. Please note that the MLS203-2 stage can be bolted directly to a Zeiss Axio Observer or Axiovert without the need for brackets.

								Attachment Microsco (All Sold S
Click Image for Details	*			0		0	Y	
Bracket Item #	CSA1000	MLSA02	MLSA09	MLSA08	MLSA03	MLSA06	MLSA07	MLSA01
Microscope Brand	Thorlabs		Olympus			Nikon		Optical Breadboard, Custom Configuration
Microscope Model	Cerna®	IX51, IX71, IX73, IX81, IX83	IX70	BX41, BX43, BX51, BX53, BX61	TE2000, Eclipse Ti	50i, 80i, 90i, Ci-L	Eclipse FN1	N/A
Microscope Type	Upright	Inverted	Inverted	Upright	Inverted	Upright	Upright	N/A



MLS203-1 Stage Attached to a Breadboard with our MLSA01 Bracket Set

We support microscopes from Olympus, Nikon, Zeiss and Leica. Please contact Technical Support to inquire about bracket availability if your microscope model is not listed above.

Part Number	Description	Price	Availability
CSA1000	Fixed Arm Holder for MLS203-1 Fast XY Scanning Stage	\$755.76	Today
MLSA02	Olympus IX51, IX71, IX73, IX81, and IX83 Mounting Brackets, 2 Pieces	\$119.78	Today
MLSA09	Olympus IX70 Mounting Brackets, 2 Pieces	\$131.58	Today
VLSA08	Olympus BX41, BX43, BX51, BX53, and BX61 Adapter	\$289.97	Today
MLSA03	Nikon TE2000 and Eclipse Ti Mounting Brackets, 2 Pieces	\$146.41	Today
VLSA06	Nikon 50i, 80i, 90i, and Ci-L Adapter	\$289.97	Today
MLSA07	Customer Inspired! Nikon Eclipse FN1 Mounting Adapter	\$395.97	Today
MLSA01	MLS203 31.5 mm Riser Plates for Breadboard Mounting, 2 Pieces	\$176.36	7-10 Days



Part Number Availability Description Price MLS203P2 Slide/Petri Dish Holder for Inverted Microscopes Today \$509.12 C4SH01 Four-Position Microscope Slide Holder \$89.84 Today Multiple Slide Holder for Upright and Inverted Microscopes MLS203P10 \$521.30 Today MLS203P11 Recessed Slide Holder for Upright Microscopes \$446.99 Lead Time



Part Number	Description	Price	Availability
MLS203P4	Metric M6 Breadboard Plate	\$226.27	Today
MLS203P1	Multiwell Plate Adapter	\$452.54	7-10 Days
MLS203P3	Blank Adapter Plate	\$169.70	7-10 Days
MLS203P5	Imperial 1/4"-20 Breadboard Plate	\$226.27	Today

2-Axis Joystick Console

- Speed Adjustment for Fast or High Precision Moves
- Speed Dial for Sensitivity Adjustment
- Ergonomic Design
- High-Quality Machined Anodized Aluminum Casing
- High-Reliability Hall Effect Joystick

The MJC001 Joystick Console has been designed for microscope users and provides intuitive, tactile, manual positioning of a stage. The console features a two-axis joystick for XY control. In most applications, the default parameter settings saved within the controller allow the joystick to be used out-of-the-box with no need for further setup. This operation mode eliminates the need for connection to a host PC and allows for true remote operation.

The MJC001 is compatible with our Benchtop Brushless Controllers, Rack-Mounted Brushless Controller, and Stepper Motor Controllers. The joystick is shipped complete with cables for use with these controllers. If you intend to use the joystick with a legacy BBD10x series unit, please contact Tech Support for a compatible cable.

Part Number	Description	Price	Availability
MJC001	2-Axis Microscopy Joystick Console	\$1,125.81	Today

