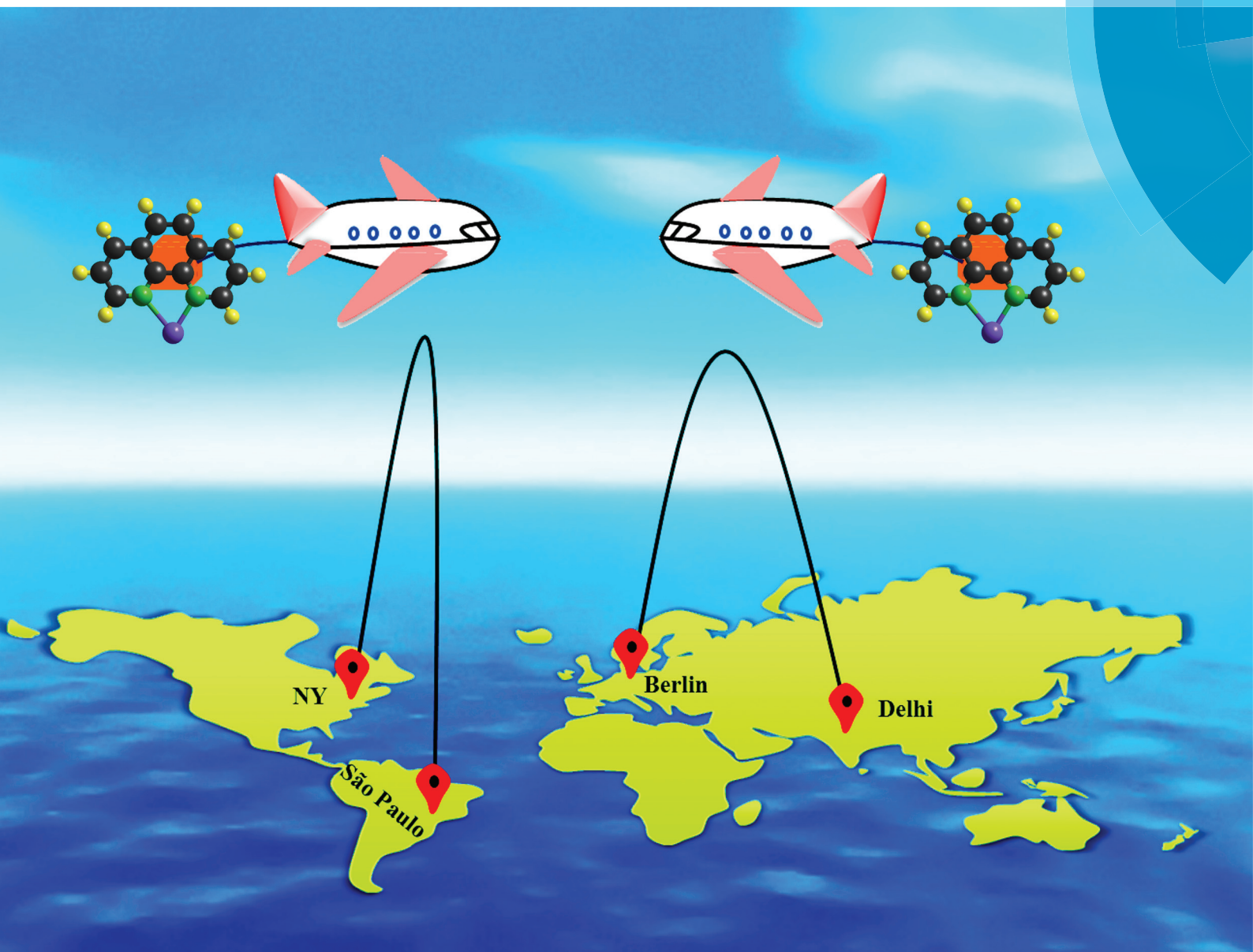


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**PAPER**

Michael Schmitt *et al.*

Reversible cargo shipping between orthogonal stations of a nanoscaffold upon redox input

## Reversible cargo shipping between orthogonal stations of a nanoscaffold upon redox input†

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## Introduction

Many enzymes use translocation processes<sup>1</sup> (ligand and metal) to initiate fascinating biological protocols. Likewise, shifting subcomponents in either supramolecular<sup>2</sup> or molecular<sup>3</sup> structures has been ingeniously utilised in fascinating abiological devices.<sup>4,5</sup> To control reversible motion in multistable devices by switching, the binding of the movable part ( $K_{\text{assoc}}$ ) has to favour a particular site over the other depending on the given input, such as chemicals,<sup>6</sup> redox equivalents<sup>7</sup> or light.<sup>8</sup>

As reported by Sauvage and coworkers,<sup>9</sup> changing the oxidation state of copper from +I to +II leads to an altered coordination preference: the copper(I) ion prefers tetracoordination, while the copper(II) ion is best accommodated in a penta- or hexacoordination. Remodeling this principle, we present here the reversible shipping of cargo between two different sites on a scaffold by applying electrochemical stimuli (Fig. 1). Our design of reversible cargo shipping relies on two heteroleptic binding algorithms developed in our group, *i.e.* the HETPHEN and HETTAP concepts,<sup>10</sup> instead of using topological constraints, as is amply done in rotaxanes and catenanes.<sup>11</sup> Our concepts are based on the use of a bulky 2,9-diaryl substituted phenanthroline (PhenAr<sub>2</sub>), *e.g.*, ligand **3** (Chart 1),<sup>12</sup> whose front-side shielding prevents the formation of the homoleptic

The sterically shielded terpyridine **5** was prepared, both as a new ligand and as part of the four-station nanoscaffold **2**. Mixing of terpyridine **5**, the parent phenanthroline **4** and the shielded phenanthroline **3** in the presence of Zn<sup>2+</sup> (1 : 1 : 1) furnished quantitatively the inverse HETTAP complex [Zn(**4**)(**5**)]<sup>2+</sup> by self-sorting, while in the presence of Cu<sup>+</sup> the HETPHEN complex [Cu(**3**)(**4**)]<sup>+</sup> was preferred (89%). Due to the akin coordination preferences of Cu<sup>2+</sup> and Zn<sup>2+</sup>, the above self-sorting was implemented for Cu<sup>+</sup>/Cu<sup>2+</sup> on nanoscaffold **2**, the latter equipped with the binding motifs of **3** (PhenAr<sub>2</sub>) and **5** (TerpyAr<sub>2</sub>). When **2** was reacted with Cu<sup>+</sup> and phenanthroline (**4**) in a 1 : 2 : 2 ratio, only the PhenAr<sub>2</sub> stations became involved in complex formation (= <sup>Cu</sup>**1**<sub>phen</sub>). In contrast, upon oxidative formation of Cu<sup>2+</sup>, ligand **4** was exclusively moved to the TerpyAr<sub>2</sub> stations (= <sup>Cu</sup>**1**<sub>terpy</sub>). Electrochemical oxidation–reduction prompted the cargo to be shipped reversibly on a subsecond time scale between the two different stations of **2**.

complex [M(**3**)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>n+</sup> with M<sup>n+</sup> = Cu<sup>+</sup>, Ag<sup>+</sup>, Zn<sup>2+</sup>. In presence of a sterically slim counterpart, like the parent phenanthroline (for HETPHEN)<sup>12a,b</sup> or terpyridine (for HETTAP),<sup>12c,d</sup> **3** and M<sup>n+</sup> will afford quantitatively the heteroleptic complex.

For the present study, structural aspects known from the HETTAP and HETPHEN protocols guided our design of the new terpyridine **5** that is sterically shielded by aryl groups (TerpyAr<sub>2</sub>). The shielding does not prevent, but slows down formation of the homoleptic complex [M(TerpyAr<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>n+</sup> thus favouring heteroleptic complexation. The new scaffold **2** arises by attaching the binding motifs of both PhenAr<sub>2</sub> and TerpyAr<sub>2</sub> sites to a zinc(II) porphyrin core. Depending on the oxidation state of the copper ions a switch in the self-sorting<sup>13</sup> should lead to cargo shuffling (cargo = copper + ligand **4**) between the PhenAr<sub>2</sub> and TerpyAr<sub>2</sub> stations on the scaffold (Fig. 1). As such, our example is a very rare case of redox initiated self-sorting<sup>14</sup> in solution.

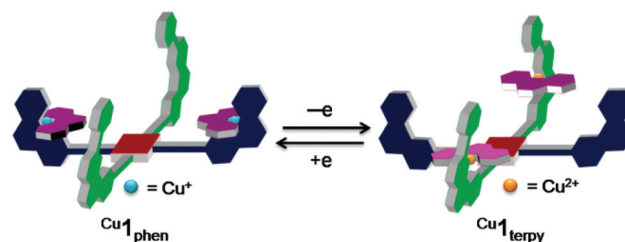


Fig. 1 Controlling cargo transport between two stations *via* self-sorting by oxidation/reduction. <sup>Cu</sup>**1**<sub>phen</sub> = [Cu<sub>2</sub>(**2**)(**4**)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>2+</sup>. <sup>Cu</sup>**1**<sub>terpy</sub> = [Cu<sub>2</sub>(**2**)(**4**)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>4+</sup>.

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† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>1</sup>H–<sup>1</sup>H COSY, <sup>13</sup>C NMR, ESI-MS, cyclic voltammograms, DOSY and DFT optimised structures. See DOI: 10.1039/c4dt00967c



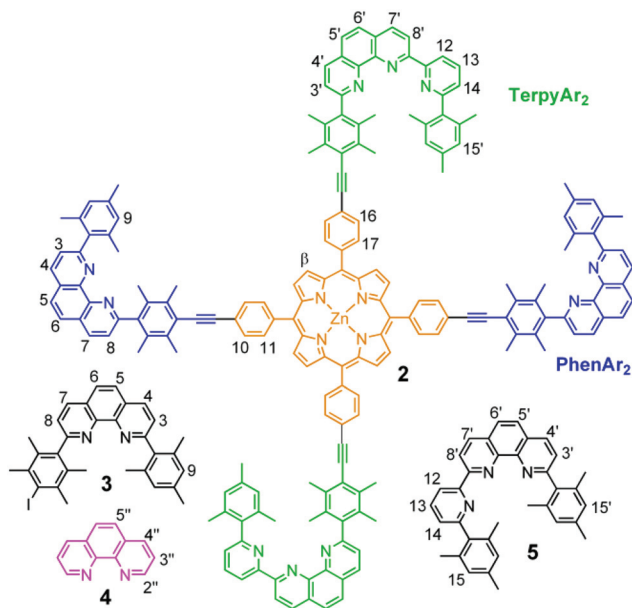


Chart 1 Scaffold 2 and ligands 3–5 used in the present study.

## Results and discussion

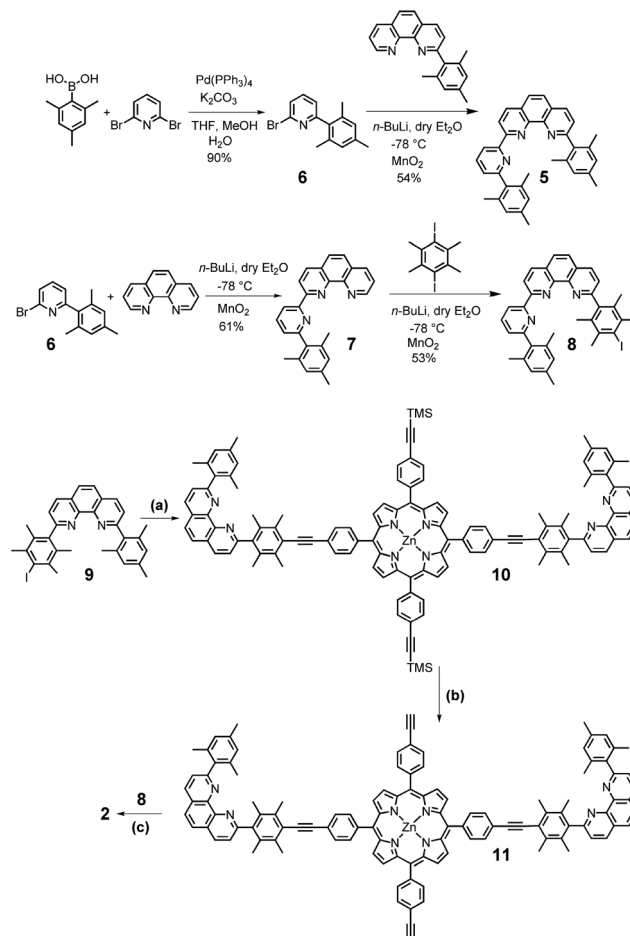
### Synthesis

The new compounds 2 and 5 (Scheme 1) were prepared *via* established protocols. First, 2,4,6-trimethylphenylboronic acid was treated with 2,6-dibromopyridine *via* Suzuki coupling to furnish compound 6, which was reacted further on with 2-(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)-[1,10]-phenanthroline to afford ligand 5.

For the preparation of scaffold 2 with two different kinds of stations, pyridine 6 was subjected to a bromo/lithium exchange and then reacted with [1,10]-phenanthroline to afford the terpyridine-analog 7. A follow-up reaction with 1,4-diiododurene/*n*-BuLi furnished 8 serving as the direct precursor for the preparation of scaffold 2. To finalise the synthesis, zinc(II)-5,15-bis(4-iodophenyl)-10,20-bis(4-trimethylsilylethynylphenyl)porphyrin was first treated with the known shielded phenanthroline **9**<sup>12d</sup> in presence of Pd(PPh<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub> to afford **10**, which after deprotection of the trimethylsilyl groups furnished **11**. In the final step, **11** was reacted with ligand 8 in a second Sonogashira coupling to provide the desired target 2 (Scheme 1). Scaffold 2 was easily and fully characterised by spectroscopic means.

### Complexation properties of 5

Insight into the binding properties of 5 was received by reacting 0.5 equiv. of [Cu(CH<sub>3</sub>CN)<sub>4</sub>]PF<sub>6</sub> with 5 in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. <sup>1</sup>H NMR and ESI-MS of the resulting yellow solution revealed formation of the homoleptic complex [Cu(5)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>+</sup> by showing two different sets of upfield shifted mesityl protons at 5.62 and 6.19 ppm (Fig. 2) and a mass peak at 1051.0 Da. Assuming a coordination number 4 for Cu<sup>+</sup>, [Cu(5)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>+</sup> may actually form in three isomeric structures, *i.e.* iso-I, iso-II & iso-III (Charts 2 and 3)



Scheme 1 Synthesis of ligands 2, 5 and 8. (a) Zinc(II)-5,15-bis(4-iodophenyl)-10,20-bis(4-trimethylsilylethynylphenyl)porphyrin, Pd(PPh<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>, NEt<sub>3</sub>, DMF, 90 °C, 12 h, 58%. (b) KOH, THF, MeOH, room temperature, 90%. (c) Pd(PPh<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>, NEt<sub>3</sub>, DMF, 90 °C, 12 h, 35%.

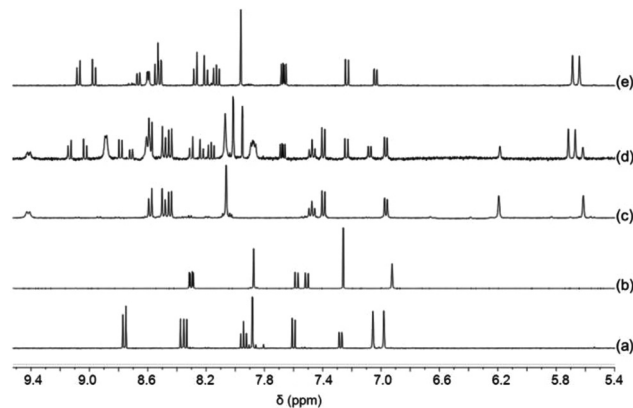
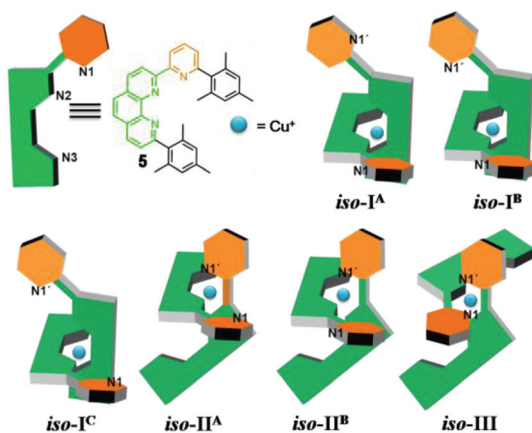


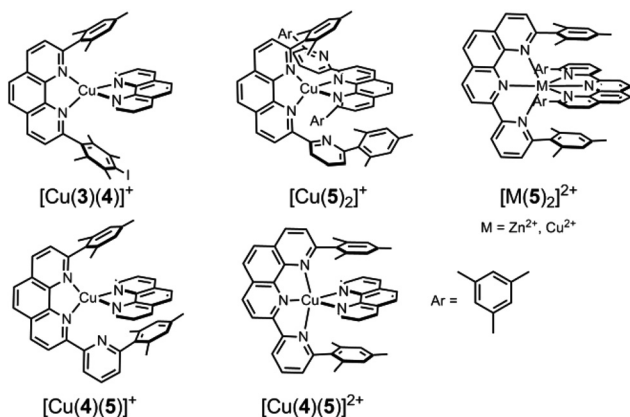
Fig. 2 Partial <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra of (a) 5 in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, (b) 3 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, (c) [Cu(5)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>+</sup>PF<sub>6</sub> in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, (d) equimolar mixture of 4, 5 and Cu<sup>+</sup> in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> and (e) equimolar mixture of 4, 5 and Zn<sup>2+</sup> (in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>-CD<sub>3</sub>CN = 3 : 1).

due to six nitrogen atoms being available from two ligands 5. In iso-I, Cu<sup>+</sup> engages exclusively with the phenanthroline nitrogen atoms (N2, N3, N2' and N3'), while the pyridyl nitrogen





**Chart 2** Cartoon representations of compound **5** and the three isomers (iso-I, iso-II & iso-III) of the homoleptic complex  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^+$ . Superscript letters A, B and C denote conformations.



**Chart 3** Possible complexes resulting from ligands **3**, **4**, **5** and the metal ions  $\text{Cu}^+$ ,  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ .

atoms (N1 and N1') remain unbound. In iso-II,  $\text{Cu}^+$  is bound to N2, N3, N2', N1' whereas N1, N3' are left uncoordinated. In contrast, iso-III deals with coordination at N2, N1, N2', N1' with nitrogens N3, N3' remaining nonbonded. The unbound pyridyl unit (N1 or N1') of **5** may undergo rotation about the single C–C bond thereby generating various conformations in iso-I and iso-II of  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^+$ . For instance, iso-I may have three major conformers – iso-I<sup>A</sup> (*out-out* = N1 and N1' directed away from  $\text{Cu}^+$  center), iso-I<sup>B</sup> (*out-in*), and iso-I<sup>C</sup> (*in-in*). Similarly iso-II may have two conformers – iso-II<sup>A</sup> (*in*) and iso-II<sup>B</sup> (*out*). Obviously, in iso-III both pyridyl units are conformationally fixed as they are involved in bonding with  $\text{Cu}^+$ . DFT<sup>15</sup> computations suggest that iso-I<sup>B</sup> has lowest energy. The relative energy of the isomers follows the order: iso-I<sup>B</sup> (0) < iso-I<sup>A</sup> (3.94) < iso-II<sup>B</sup> (4.04) < iso-II<sup>A</sup> (6.62) kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>.<sup>16</sup>

Experimental information about the coordination mode in  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^+$  was obtained from cyclic voltammetry (CV). Complex  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^+$  exhibits a high oxidation potential at  $E_{1/2} = 634$  mV<sub>SCE</sub> (quasireversible:  $\Delta E_p = 164$  mV, see ESI<sup>†</sup>) clearly excluding the possibility of penta- or hexa-coordination. Most

likely, steric crowding by the mesityl groups prevents  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  to extend its coordination number from 4 to 5/6.

### Heteroleptic complexes with ligand **5**

When a 1 : 1 : 1 mixture of **4**, **5** and copper(i) ions was reacted in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , the homoleptic complexes  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})_2]^+$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^+$  as well as the heteroleptic complex  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^+$  were observed in the ESI-MS, with the latter generating the major peak (at 745.5 Da). The <sup>1</sup>H NMR data corroborate the formation of both complexes  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^+$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^+$  (Fig. 2), with peaks at 5.63 & 5.69 ppm being diagnostic for  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^+$  and those at 5.62 and 6.19 ppm (Fig. 2) for  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^+$ . Unfortunately, characteristic signals for  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})_2]^+$  were obscured in the aromatic region.

The DFT optimised structure of  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^+$  predicts that the metal ion is engaged in coordination with both phenanthroline nitrogens (N2 and N3) of **5**, while the pyridyl nitrogen atom (N1) remains nonbonded. Strong  $\pi \cdots \pi$  interactions (C $\cdots$ C = 4.033 Å and 4.043 Å) between the two mesityl units of **5** and **4** are observed. Other isomers of  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^+$  involving N1(pyridyl)→Cu interactions were not located computationally.

When an equimolar mixture of **4**, **5** and Cu(i) was oxidised in CV, a broad wave at 540–713 mV was observed corresponding to oxidation of all three copper complexes,  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})_2]^+$ ,  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^+$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^+$ . In contrast, the cathodic scan generated a single, irreversible peak at  $E_{pc} = 251$  mV assigned to the reduction of  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+}$  exclusively. Indeed, the independently prepared complex  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+}$  (*vide infra*) showed a reduction wave at  $E_{pc} = 245$  mV. Apparently, upon oxidation, both homoleptic complexes  $[\text{Cu}(\text{5})_2]^{2+}$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})_2]^{2+}$  reorganised to  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+}$  so that each copper(II) ion would realise pentacoordination in the heteroleptic complex.

When a 1 : 1 mixture of **4** and **5** was treated with 1 equiv. of  $\text{Zn}(\text{OTf})_2$  in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ – $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3 : 1$ , the heteroleptic complex  $[\text{Zn}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+}$  formed quantitatively as documented by spectroscopic data. The ESI mass spectrum shows peaks at 370.0 Da and 888.3 Da diagnostic for the doubly charged  $[\text{Zn}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+}$  and singly charged  $[\text{Zn}(\text{4})(\text{5})](\text{OTf})^+$  after loss of two and one counteranion(s) ( $\text{OTf}^-$ ), respectively (Fig. S37, ESI<sup>†</sup>). No mass peaks of homoleptic complexes are visible. The <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum displays two diagnostic signals at 5.64 & 5.69 ppm for the heteroleptic species (Fig. 2).

Due to the similarity in its coordination behaviour to that of  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  also afforded cleanly the heteroleptic complex  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+}$ , as evidenced by ESI-MS and CV. The DFT optimised structure of  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+}$  suggests that ligand **5** is tilted toward the phenanthroline unit in a square pyramidal rather than trigonal bipyramidal geometry presumably due to the strong pyridyl→Cu binding (Cu $\cdots$ N1 = 2.27 Å). The latter interaction draws the two mesityl groups of **5** toward each other and leaves little space for ligand **4**. Upon irreversible reduction of the freshly prepared  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+}$  at  $E_{pc} = 245$  mV a follow-up reaction occurs that is visible in the reverse anodic scan: the broad waves at  $E_{pa} = 538$  & 720 mV may be assigned to the oxidation of a mixture of homo- and heteroleptic complexes (alike the complex mixture from **4**, **5** and  $\text{Cu}^+$ , *vide supra*).



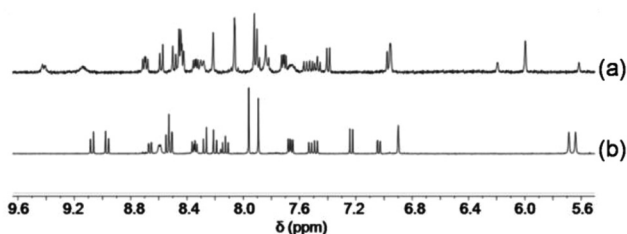


Fig. 3 Partial  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectra of equimolar mixtures (a) of **3**, **4**, **5** and  $\text{Cu}^+$  ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ) and (b) of **3**, **4**, **5** and  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$  ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ – $\text{CD}_3\text{CN}$  = 3 : 1).

### Self-sorting

To study self-sorting,<sup>17</sup> a mixture of **3**, **4**, **5** and  $\text{Cu}^+$  (1 : 1 : 1 : 1) was sonicated in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ . Although six copper(i) complexes may be expected, the ESI mass spectrum shows only two peaks at 800.3 Da and 1051.0 Da suggesting the exclusive formation of the complexes  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{4})]^+$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{5})_2]^+$ , respectively (Fig. S36, ESI $^\dagger$ ). In full agreement, the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum displays diagnostic peaks at 6.00 ppm for the heteroleptic complex  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{4})]^+$  and at 5.62 & 6.19 ppm for the homoleptic complex  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{5})_2]^+$  (Fig. 3). Two sharp singlets at 5.64 and 5.69 ppm would have been diagnostic for  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{4})(\mathbf{5})]^+$ , but those signals are absent. NMR integration suggests that complexes  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{4})]^+$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{5})_2]^+$  are present in 89% : 11% along with unused ligands **3**, **4** and **5**.

When **3**, **4**, **5** and  $\text{Zn}(\text{OTf})_2$  (1 : 1 : 1 : 1) were sonicated for 30 min in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ – $\text{CD}_3\text{CN}$  (3 : 1), quantitative formation of the heteroleptic complex  $[\text{Zn}(\mathbf{4})(\mathbf{5})]^{2+}$  was observed. The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum shows singlets at 5.64 & 5.69 ppm that are diagnostic for the heteroleptic complex along with a  $\text{CH}_{\text{Mes}}$  signal at 6.94 ppm indicative for the ligand **3** (Fig. 3). The two peaks at 370.0 and 888.3 Da in the ESI mass spectrum correspond to the doubly charged  $[\text{Zn}(\mathbf{4})(\mathbf{5})]^{2+}$  and singly charged  $[\text{Zn}(\mathbf{4})(\mathbf{5})] \cdot (\text{OTf})^+$ , respectively (Fig. S38, ESI $^\dagger$ ). Due to the analogous  $d^{10}$  configuration of  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ , similar self-sorting phenomena are expected for both metal ions suggesting quantitative complex formation of  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{4})(\mathbf{5})]^{2+}$  with **3** remaining untouched in solution.

The effect of changing the metal's oxidation state on self-sorting was studied by CV. In the anodic scan of an equimolar mixture of **3**, **4**, **5** and  $\text{Cu}^+$ , the irreversible peak at  $E_{\text{pa}} = 763$  mV is assigned to the oxidation of  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{4})]^+$ . The oxidation wave of the homoleptic complex  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{5})_2]^+$  ( $E_{\text{pa}} = 720$  mV, *vide supra*) is hardly detectable due to its small amount (11%, see NMR). In the reverse scan, the irreversible reduction wave at  $E_{\text{pc}} = 242$  mV indicates that the complex must have undergone a major reorganisation. Apparently, both  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{4})]^{2+}$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{5})_2]^{2+}$  undergo fast ligand shuffling in solution to afford exclusively the heteroleptic complex  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{4})(\mathbf{5})]^{2+}$ . After reduction of  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{4})(\mathbf{5})]^{2+}$ , the anodic back scan again shows the oxidation waves corresponding to complexes  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{4})]^+$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{5})_2]^+$  at  $E_{\text{pa}} = 763$  mV. No oxidation wave was observed corresponding to  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{4})(\mathbf{5})]^+$ . In fact, both peaks did not show reversibility at any of chosen scan rates (from 50 to 200  $\text{mV s}^{-1}$ ) at this concentration ( $c = 0.65$  mM). Randles–

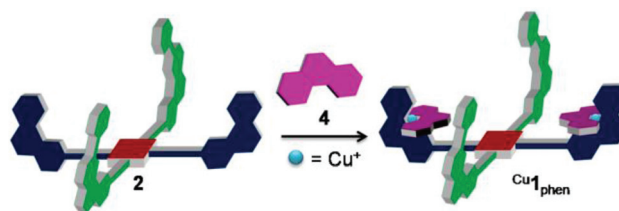


Fig. 4 Preparation of complex  $\text{Cu}_1^{\text{phen}}$ .

Sevcik plots yield a linear dependence of the anodic peak intensity  $i_{\text{pa}}$  with the square root of the scan rate ( $\nu^{1/2}$ ), thus attesting a diffusion-limited electron-transfer process. This study clearly indicates fast metal ligand reorganisation upon changing the oxidation state of copper ( $\text{Cu}^+ \rightarrow \text{Cu}^{2+} \rightarrow \text{Cu}^+$ ) or changing from copper(i) to zinc(ii) ions both resulting in a self-sorting between heteroleptic complexes.

### Self-sorting on scaffold 2

To use the redox-triggered switching of the self-sorting process for cargo shipping between two different stations, the new ligand **2** is used as a nanoscaffold. At the outset, **2**, **4** and  $\text{Cu}^+$  (1 : 2 : 2) were reacted in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$  to afford the complex  $\text{Cu}_1^{\text{phen}} = [\text{Cu}_2(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{4})_2](\text{PF}_6)_2$ , in which both PhenAr<sub>2</sub> stations of **2** are quantitatively occupied by  $[\text{Cu}(\mathbf{4})]^+$ , while the TerpyAr<sub>2</sub> stations remain unloaded (Fig. 4). The complex was characterised by  $^1\text{H}$  NMR,  $^1\text{H}$ – $^1\text{H}$  COSY and ESI-MS.  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (Fig. 5) reveals that protons 9-H are upfield shifted from 6.94 to 6.00 ppm while protons 15'-H remain unchanged at 6.97 ppm (as in compound **2**). Other protons of the PhenAr<sub>2</sub> stations also undergo major shifts due to formation of the heteroleptic complex while protons of the TerpyAr<sub>2</sub> units remain unchanged (see Table S3 $^\dagger$ ). Formation of the complex is ascertained by a peak at 1565.1 Da in the ESI mass spectrum (Fig. S40, ESI $^\dagger$ ) corresponding to the doubly charged species  $[\text{Cu}_2(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{4})_2]^{2+}$  after loss of two counteranions ( $\text{PF}_6^-$ ). Finally, the  $^1\text{H}$  DOSY trace proves that assembly  $\text{Cu}_1^{\text{phen}}$  exists in solution as a single species (Fig. S50, ESI $^\dagger$ ).

When a 1 : 2 mixture of **2** and **4** was treated with 2 equiv. of  $\text{Cu}(\text{ClO}_4)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , complex  $\text{Cu}_1^{\text{terpy}} = [\text{Cu}_2(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{4})_2](\text{ClO}_4)_4$  formed quantitatively as derived from the ESI-MS data. They (Fig. S42, ESI $^\dagger$ ) show two peaks at 782.7 Da and 1076.8 Da corresponding to the quadruply-charged  $[\text{Cu}_2(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{4})_2]^{4+}$  and triply-charged species  $[\text{Cu}_2(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{4})_2](\text{ClO}_4)^{3+}$  after loss of four and three-counter anions ( $\text{ClO}_4^-$ ), respectively. Strong paramagnetic broadening by  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  prevented us from characterising the complex by  $^1\text{H}$  NMR. However, expecting a similar coordination behaviour of zinc(ii) and copper(ii) ions (*vide supra* for the model study), we reacted  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$  with **1** and **4** (2 : 1 : 2). As a result, complex  $\text{Zn}_1^{\text{terpy}}$  was afforded, in which the  $[\text{Zn}(\mathbf{4})]^{2+}$  units quantitatively occupy the TerpyAr<sub>2</sub> stations with the PhenAr<sub>2</sub> stations remaining unloaded. Diagnostically, the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (see Fig. 5, Table S4 $^\dagger$ ) showed protons 15'-H (TerpyAr<sub>2</sub>) to be shifted upfield to 5.69 ppm while protons 9-H of both PhenAr<sub>2</sub> units remain unaltered at 6.91 ppm. A similar behaviour was observed for other protons of the PhenAr<sub>2</sub> and TerpyAr<sub>2</sub> units. In the ESI mass spectrum (Fig. S41, ESI $^\dagger$ ),  $\text{Zn}_1^{\text{terpy}}$  exhibited



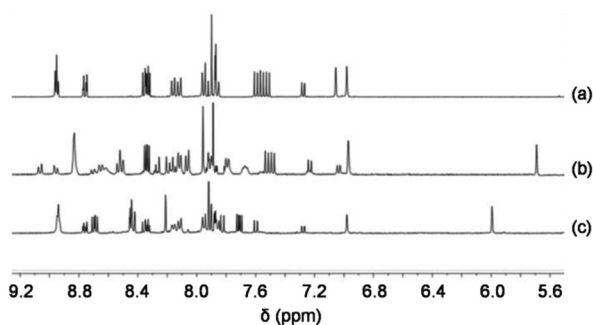


Fig. 5 Partial  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectra of (a) **2** ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ), (b)  $\text{Zn}^{\text{I}}\text{terpy}$  ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$ ) and (c)  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{phen}$  ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ).

three peaks at 783.5 Da, 1094.4 Da and 1716.1 Da that are assigned to quadruply-charged ( $[\text{Zn}_2(\text{2})(\text{4})_2]^{4+}$ ), triply-charged ( $[\text{Zn}_2(\text{2})(\text{4})_2](\text{OTf})^{3+}$ ) and doubly-charged ( $[\text{Zn}_2(\text{2})(\text{4})_2](\text{OTf})_2^{2+}$ ) species after loss of four, three and two counter anions ( $\text{OTf}^-$ ), respectively. Finally,  $^1\text{H}$  DOSY suggests that  $\text{Zn}^{\text{I}}\text{terpy}$  exists in solution as a single species (Fig. S51, ESI $^\dagger$ ).

### Electrochemical cargo shipping

Inspired by the reversible interconversion of two heteroleptic complexes *via* electrochemical means, both complexes  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{phen}$  and  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{terpy}$  were tested for cargo shipping between the two different stations (PhenAr $_2$  and TerpyAr $_2$ ) on scaffold **2**. In the CV, complex  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{terpy} = [\text{Cu}_2(\text{2})(\text{4})_2](\text{ClO}_4)_4$  (scan rate =  $100 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ ) exhibits an irreversible reduction wave at  $E_{\text{pc}} = 246 \text{ mV}$  (Fig. 6, right) that is characteristic for a pentacoordinated copper(II) complex (inverse HETTAP complex). On the reverse scan, the oxidation of the reduced species displays an irreversible peak at  $E_{\text{pa}} = 786 \text{ mV}$  that is characteristic for oxidation of a copper(I/II) HETPHEN complex (unfortunately, the peak is merged with the first reversible oxidation peak of the zinc(II) porphyrin unit with  $E_{\text{pa}} = 830 \text{ mV}$  and  $E_{1/2} = 790 \text{ mV}$ ). Shifting the cathodic switching potential towards negative potential (by  $\Delta E_1 = -100 \text{ mV}$ ) and thus increasing the time for rearrangement increases the anodic current ( $i_{\text{pa}}$ ) at  $E_{\text{pa}} = 786 \text{ mV}$  (see ESI $^\dagger$ ) clearly arguing for ligand translocation from the TerpyAr $_2$  to PhenAr $_2$  stations upon reduction of  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  to  $\text{Cu}^+$ . Anodic peak current ( $i_{\text{pa}}$ ) enhancement at  $E_{\text{pa}} = 786 \text{ mV}$  is also observed when using a 5 s delay at the first switching potential ( $E_1 = -100 \text{ mV}$ ). Moreover, both peaks show hardly any reversible behaviour in the scan rate range ( $50$  to  $1000 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ ).

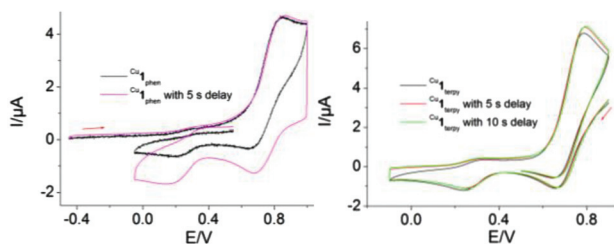


Fig. 6 Cyclic voltammogram of (left)  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{phen}$  (scan rate =  $500 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ ) and (right)  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{terpy}$  (scan rate =  $100 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ ) in dry  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ .

Similarly, when HETPHEN complex  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{phen} = [\text{Cu}_2(\text{2})(\text{4})_2](\text{PF}_6)_2$  is electrochemically oxidised at  $\nu = 500 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ , the oxidation wave is irreversible ( $E_{\text{pa}} = 844 \text{ mV}$ ). The wave overlaps with the first oxidation potential of the zinc(II) porphyrin (por/por $^{2+}$ ; Fig. 6, left). In the reverse reductive scan, an irreversible peak is observed at  $E_{\text{pc}} = 174 \text{ mV}$  that is assigned to the reduction of electrochemically produced  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{terpy}$  indicating metal and ligand translocation from PhenAr $_2$  to TerpyAr $_2$  stations. A time delay of 5 s at the first switching potential ( $E_1 = 900 \text{ mV}$ ) increases the current of the  $\text{Cu}^{2+}/\text{Cu}^+$  redox couple ( $E_{1/2} = 269 \text{ mV}$ ) at the TerpyAr $_2$  station. Hence, CV studies clearly establish the reversible interconversion between the two stable species  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{phen}$  and  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{terpy}$  through cargo transport (Fig. 1).

The CV behaviour can be understood as an EC process. Electron transfer is followed by fast translocation of both metal ion and ligand between the two different stations. Simulation of the mechanism by DigiSim $^\circ$  was possible using a simplified scheme. Due to the fact that the rate constants for both cargo transport processes are hidden in each individual CV trace, one is able to even cross-check the data. Accordingly, the best agreement for  $\text{Cu}^{2+}_{\text{PhenAr}_2} \rightarrow \text{Cu}^{2+}_{\text{TerpyAr}_2}$  was  $K = 10$  and  $k = 10 \text{ s}^{-1}$  and for  $\text{Cu}^+_{\text{TerpyAr}_2} \rightarrow \text{Cu}^+_{\text{PhenAr}_2}$  was  $K = 20$  and  $k = 5 \text{ s}^{-1}$  (Fig. S49, ESI $^\dagger$ ). Using the same rate constants, also the redox-mediated shuttling between  $[\text{Cu}(\text{3})(\text{4})]^+ + 5$  and  $[\text{Cu}(\text{4})(\text{5})]^{2+} + 3$  (Fig. S44 $^\dagger$ ) was successfully simulated, lending further credibility to the above values. Moreover, a concentration-dependent CV study of  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{phen}$  indicated negligible effects on the reversibility at  $E_{1/2} = 263 \text{ mV}$  (Fig. S48, ESI $^\dagger$ ), suggesting that dissociation is rate-limiting. A plausible mechanism for shipping is thus the rate-determining release of the labilised metal ions (after oxidation/reduction) on the sub-second time scale along with their phenanthroline cargo from a particular station followed by fast reassociation at the other station (a bimolecular process), which can be either intra- or intersupramolecular.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we have shown that two heteroleptic complexes can be interconverted by changing the oxidation state of the copper ions. Using this redox-triggered self-sorting, cargo (ligand **4** and copper) may be shipped reversibly between two different stations (PhenAr $_2$  and TerpyAr $_2$ ) on platform **2**. If the redox state at copper is +I, ligand **4** occupies quantitatively the PhenAr $_2$  stations, whereas for copper(II), the TerpyAr $_2$  stations are engaged with the cargo molecules. Electrochemical oxidation and reduction leads to reversible shipping of the cargo between the two different stations. Concentration-dependent CV studies advocate that dissociation of the cargo from the scaffold is the rate determining step.

## Experimental procedure

Commercial reagents were used without further purification. Solvents were dried with appropriate desiccants and distilled



prior to use.  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectra were recorded at 400 MHz or 600 MHz using a deuterated solvent as the lock and residual protiated solvent as internal reference. The following abbreviations are utilised to describe NMR peak patterns: s = singlet, d = doublet, t = triplet, dd = doublet of doublets. The following abbreviations are used to describe peak patterns of IR spectra: s = sharp, m = medium, w = weak. The numbering of the carbon skeleton in molecular formulae as shown in the manuscript does not comply with the IUPAC nomenclature rules; it is only used for assignments of NMR signals. Electrospray ionisation (ESI) mass spectra were recorded on a Thermo-Quest LCQ deca. Melting points were measured on a Büchi SMP-20 and are uncorrected. Infrared spectra were recorded on a Varian 1000 FT-IR instrument. Elemental analysis measurements were made using the EA 3000 CHNS. Cyclic voltammetry (CV) was measured on a Parstat 2273. CV of millimolar solutions was carried out in dry  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$  (2.0 mL) with 0.1 M *n*-Bu<sub>4</sub>NPF<sub>6</sub> as electrolyte against a Ag wire as a quasi-reference electrode and triphenylpyrylium tetrafluoroborate (TPP) as internal standard. All CV spectra are calibrated against the standard calomel electrode (SCE).

### 2-(2,4,6-Trimethylphenyl)-6-bromopyridine (6)

2,6-Dibromopyridine (2.16 g, 9.12 mmol), 2,4,6-trimethylphenylboronic acid (1.60 g, 6.10 mmol) and Pd(PPh<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub> (70.0 mg, 60.6  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were dissolved in a degassed solution of MeOH (40 mL), THF (100 mL) and aqueous K<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> (2 M, 30 mL), then the solution was refluxed for 12 h at 90 °C. The solvent was evaporated and the residue redissolved in DCM. The organic phase was washed with water thrice and then dried over anhydrous Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. The product was further purified by column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, hexane–EtOAc = 9 : 1, *R<sub>f</sub>* = 0.3) to afford a liquid. Yield: 90%,  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 400 MHz):  $\delta$  = 2.04 (s, 6 H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.31 (s, 3 H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 6.92 (s, 2 H, 15'-H), 7.18 (dd,  $^3J$  = 7.8 Hz,  $^4J$  = 0.8 Hz, 1 H, 14-H), 7.45 (dd,  $^3J$  = 7.8 Hz,  $^4J$  = 0.8 Hz, 1 H, 12-H), 7.61 (t,  $^3J$  = 7.8 Hz, 1 H, 13-H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 100 MHz):  $\delta$  = 20.1, 21.0, 123.7, 125.9, 128.3, 135.6, 136.2, 137.9, 138.5, 141.7, 161.1 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu}$  = 3944, 3690, 3055, 2986, 2306, 1571, 1425, 1265, 741 cm<sup>-1</sup>. ESI-MS: *m/z* (%) 277.1 (100) [M + H]<sup>+</sup>. Anal Calcd for C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>14</sub>BrN·0.2H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 60.10; H, 5.19; N, 5.01. Found: C, 60.06; H, 5.17; N, 5.20.

### 2-(6-(2,4,6-Trimethylphenyl)pyrid-2-yl)-9-(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)-[1,10]-phenanthroline (5)

To a solution of **6** (841 mg, 3.05 mmol) in dry diethyl ether (80 mL), 2.5 M *n*-BuLi (1.22 mL, 3.05 mmol) in hexane was added dropwise at -78 °C under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere over a period of 15 min. The reaction mixture was stirred at -40 °C for 2 h, then 2-(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)-[1,10]-phenanthroline (605 mg, 2.03 mmol) was added under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. The solution turned immediately dark violet. After stirring for another 12 h at room temperature, saturated aqueous NH<sub>4</sub>Cl (100 mL) was added. The reaction slurry was stirred for 1 h, then the solution was extracted with DCM (3 × 100 mL). After drying over anhydrous Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, the solvent was removed. The solid orange residue was dissolved in DCM (100 mL) and treated with MnO<sub>2</sub>

(2.65 g, 30.5 mmol). After stirring for 12 h at room temperature, the solution was filtered through a pad of celite. The solvent was evaporated to dryness. Finally, the compound was purified by column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, hexane–ethyl acetate = 9 : 1, *R<sub>f</sub>* = 0.4). Yield: 54%, mp: 236 °C.  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, 400 MHz):  $\delta$  = 2.10 (s, 6 H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.26 (s, 6 H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.35 (s, 3 H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.40 (s, 3 H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 6.98 (s, 2 H, [15 or 15']-H), 7.04 (s, 2 H, [15' or 15]-H), 7.25 (dd,  $^3J$  = 7.4 Hz,  $^4J$  = 1.0 Hz, 1 H, 14-H), 7.62 (d,  $^3J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1 H, 4'-H), 7.84 (s, 2 H, 5', 6'-H), 7.92 (t,  $^3J$  = 7.4 Hz, 1 H, 13-H), 8.29 (d,  $^3J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1 H, 3'-H), 8.31 (d,  $^3J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1 H, 8'-H), 8.78 (d,  $^3J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1 H, 7'-H), 8.81 (dd,  $^3J$  = 7.4 Hz,  $^4J$  = 1.0 Hz, 1 H, 12-H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, 100 MHz):  $\delta$  = 19.6, 20.7, 20.9, 21.7, 118.4, 118.8, 118.9, 127.6, 130.5, 130.8, 130.9, 131.1, 131.2, 131.7, 132.4, 132.7, 134.8, 135.6, 136.0, 136.5, 137.4, 138.9, 139.2, 142.5, 149.4, 149.7, 149.9, 160.2, 160.8 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu}$  = 3001, 2943, 2913, 1583, 1541, 1477, 1374, 1355, 1158, 1134, 909, 862, 847, 752, 637, 629 cm<sup>-1</sup>. ESI-MS: *m/z* (%) 494.4 (100) [M + H]<sup>+</sup>. Anal Calcd for C<sub>35</sub>H<sub>31</sub>N<sub>3</sub>·0.2H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 84.54; H, 6.36; N, 8.45. Found: C, 84.46; H, 6.15; N, 8.82.

### 2-(6-(2,4,6-Trimethylphenyl)pyrid-2-yl)-[1,10]-phenanthroline (7)

Under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere, 2.5 M *n*-BuLi (1.45 mL, 3.62 mmol) in hexane was added dropwise to a solution of **6** (1.00 g, 3.62 mmol) in dry diethyl ether (80 mL) at -78 °C over a period of 15 min. The reaction mixture was stirred at -40 °C for 2 h, then [1,10]-phenanthroline (489 mg, 2.72 mmol) was added under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. The solution turning immediately to a dark violet was stirred for another 12 h at room temperature. Saturated aqueous NH<sub>4</sub>Cl (100 mL) was then added and the reaction slurry was stirred for 1 h. Thereafter, the solution was extracted with DCM (3 × 100 mL). After drying over anhydrous Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, the solvent was removed. The solid orange residue was dissolved in DCM (100 mL) and treated with MnO<sub>2</sub> (3.15 g, 36.2 mmol). After stirring for 12 h at room temperature, the solution was filtered through a pad of celite. The solvent was evaporated to dryness. Finally, the compound was purified by column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, DCM–ethyl acetate = 1 : 3, *R<sub>f</sub>* = 0.25). Yield: 61%, mp: 165 °C.  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, 400 MHz):  $\delta$  = 2.01 (s, 6 H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.34 (s, 3 H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 6.91 (s, 2 H, 15-H), 7.23 (dd,  $^3J$  = 7.6 Hz,  $^4J$  = 1.2 Hz, 1 H, 14-H), 7.55 (d,  $^3J$  = 8.0 Hz, 1 H, 8'-H), 7.63 (dd,  $^3J$  = 8.0 Hz,  $^3J$  = 4.4 Hz, 1 H, 3'-H), 7.82 (d,  $^3J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1 H, [5' or 6']-H), 7.86 (d,  $^3J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1 H, [6' or 5']-H), 7.94 (t,  $^3J$  = 7.6 Hz, 1 H, 13-H), 8.28 (d,  $^3J$  = 8.0 Hz, 2 H, 4', 7'-H), 8.83 (dd,  $^3J$  = 7.6 Hz,  $^4J$  = 1.2 Hz, 1 H, 12-H), 9.21 (dd,  $^3J$  = 4.4 Hz,  $^3J$  = 1.6 Hz, 1 H, 2'-H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, 100 MHz):  $\delta$  = 19.6, 20.7, 124.8, 125.0, 127.6, 128.5, 130.5, 130.8, 130.9, 131.7, 132.6, 135.6, 135.9, 136.0, 136.0, 137.4, 137.6, 138.0, 141.4, 146.1, 146.1, 160.3, 160.9 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu}$  = 2967, 2923, 1583, 1521, 1447, 1374, 1365, 1158, 1134, 919, 856 cm<sup>-1</sup>. ESI-MS: *m/z* (%) 376.4 (100) [M + H]<sup>+</sup>. Anal Calcd for C<sub>26</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>3</sub>·CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>: C, 70.44; H, 5.04; N, 9.13. Found: C, 70.67; H, 5.15; N, 8.82.



## 2-(6-(2,4,6-Trimethylphenyl)pyrid-2-yl)-9-(4-iodo-2,3,5,6-tetramethylphenyl)-[1,10]-phenanthroline (**8**)

Over a period of 15 min, 2.5 M *n*-BuLi (0.800 mL, 2.00 mmol) in hexane was added dropwise at  $-78\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  under  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere to a solution of 1,4-diiodo-2,3,5,6-tetramethylbenzene (770 mg, 2.00 mmol) in dry diethyl ether (80 mL). The reaction mixture was stirred at  $-40\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 2 h, then **7** (500 mg, 1.33 mmol) was added under  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere. The solution turning immediately to dark violet was stirred for another 12 h at room temperature. Saturated aqueous  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  (100 mL) was then added and the reaction slurry was stirred for 1 h. Thereafter, the solution was extracted with DCM ( $3 \times 100\text{ mL}$ ). After drying over anhydrous  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ , the solvent was removed. The solid orange residue, redissolved in DCM (100 mL), was treated with  $\text{MnO}_2$  (1.72 g, 20.0 mmol) for 12 h at room temperature. After passing the solution through a pad of celite, the solvent was removed. Finally, the compound was purified by column chromatography ( $\text{SiO}_2$ , DCM-ethyl acetate = 70:30,  $R_f = 0.4$ ). Yield: 53%, mp:  $>213\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ .  $^1\text{H NMR}$  ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , 400 MHz):  $\delta = 2.09$  (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.24 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.33 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.40 (s, 3 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 6.97 (s, 2 H, 15'-H), 7.28 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6\text{ Hz}$ ,  $^4J = 0.8\text{ Hz}$ , 1 H, 14-H), 7.60 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 1 H, 4'-H), 7.87 (s, 2 H, 5', 6'-H), 7.94 (t,  $^3J = 7.6\text{ Hz}$ , 1 H, 13-H), 8.34 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 1 H, 3'-H), 8.35 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 1 H, 8'-H), 8.75 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 1 H, 7'-H), 8.77 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6\text{ Hz}$ ,  $^4J = 0.8\text{ Hz}$ , 1 H, 12-H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C NMR}$  ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , 100 MHz):  $\delta = 19.3$ , 20.7, 21.6, 21.9, 118.6, 124.6, 124.9, 127.6, 129.7, 130.5, 130.8, 130.9, 132.4, 132.9, 134.5, 135.1, 135.9, 136.2, 136.9, 137.4, 137.6, 138.5, 141.3, 142.3, 143.5, 146.1, 146.1, 160.3, 160.9 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu} = 2956$ , 2916, 1565, 1521, 1454, 1354, 1324, 1158, 1126, 919, 887  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 637.4 (100)  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ . Anal Calcd for  $\text{C}_{36}\text{H}_{32}\text{I}_2\text{N}_3 \cdot \text{CH}_3\text{CO}_2\text{C}_2\text{H}_5$ : C, 62.62; H, 6.76; N, 3.91. Found: C, 62.46; H, 6.45; N, 3.82.

## Zinc(II) porphyrin **10**

Zinc(II)-5,15-bis(4-iodophenyl)-10,20-bis(4-trimethylsilylethynylphenyl)porphyrin (250 mg, 223  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) and phenanthroline **9** (203 mg, 446  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were placed in a round-bottomed flask. Then,  $\text{Pd}(\text{PPh}_3)_4$  (25.7 mg, 22.3  $\mu\text{mol}$ ), dry  $\text{NEt}_3$  (10 mL) and dry DMF (30 mL) were added under  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere. The reaction mixture was allowed to stir at  $90\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 12 h. Then, it was evaporated to dryness, dissolved in DCM (50 mL), and washed with water ( $3 \times 50\text{ mL}$ ). After drying over anhydrous  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ , the solvent was evaporated and the residue was purified by column chromatography ( $\text{SiO}_2$ , hexane-EtOAc = 80:20,  $R_f = 0.4$ ). The compound was further purified by size exclusion chromatography over biobeads SX-3 isolating the first moving band in toluene. Yield: 58%, mp:  $>300\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ .  $^1\text{H NMR}$  (400 MHz,  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ):  $\delta = 0.38$  (s, 18 H, TMS-H), 2.04 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.12 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.31 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.54 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 6.92 (s, 4 H, 9-H), 7.52 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 7-H), 7.59 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 4-H), 7.87 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H, 11-H), 7.88 (s, 4 H, 5-, 6-H), 7.93 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H, 17-H), 8.10 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H, 10-H), 8.15 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H, 16-H), 8.36 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 8-H), 8.54 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 3-H), 8.92 (d,  $^3J = 4.0\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H,  $\beta$ -H), 8.94 (d,

$^3J = 4.8\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H,  $\beta$ -H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C NMR}$  (100 MHz,  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ):  $\delta = 0.1$ , 19.6, 20.5, 21.0, 27.6, 93.9, 94.0, 95.4, 95.5, 105.0, 111.8, 119.9, 120.6, 122.4, 124.8, 125.0, 126.1, 126.4, 127.2, 127.2, 128.4 (2C), 130.2, 131.9, 132.0, 132.0, 132.6, 134.2, 135.7, 135.8, 136.0, 136.0, 137.5, 137.6, 141.4, 142.1, 142.8, 146.0, 149.8, 149.9, 149.9, 160.2, 160.8 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu} = 2947$ , 2928, 2815, 2320, 2343, 1609, 1556, 1490, 1416, 1380, 1356, 1185, 1099, 1025, 998, 884  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 1774.5 (100)  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ . Anal Calcd for  $\text{C}_{120}\text{H}_{100}\text{N}_8\text{Si}_2\text{Zn} \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ : C, 79.55; H, 5.79; N, 6.18. Found: C, 79.92; H, 6.19; N, 6.22.

## Zinc(II) porphyrin **11**

KOH (96.0 mg, 1.71 mmol) was added to a solution of zinc(II) porphyrin **10** (310 mg, 0.175 mmol) in THF (30 mL). Then, MeOH (15 mL) and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (5 mL) were added, and the reaction mixture was stirred for 12 h at room temperature. After evaporating the solvent, the residue was redissolved in DCM and washed with water ( $3 \times 100\text{ mL}$ ). After drying over anhydrous  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ , DCM was evaporated and the compound was used without further purification. Yield: 90%, mp:  $>300\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ .  $^1\text{H NMR}$  (400 MHz,  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ):  $\delta = 2.04$  (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.14 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.33 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.53 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 3.61 (s, 2 H, ethynyl-H), 6.92 (s, 4 H, 9-H), 7.54 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 7-H), 7.58 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 4-H), 7.86 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H, 11-H), 7.90 (s, 4 H, 5-, 6-H), 7.98 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H, 17-H), 8.11 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H, 10-H), 8.19 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H, 16-H), 8.37 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 8-H), 8.56 (d,  $^3J = 8.4\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 3-H), 8.90 (d,  $^3J = 4.0\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H,  $\beta$ -H), 8.95 (d,  $^3J = 4.8\text{ Hz}$ , 4 H,  $\beta$ -H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C NMR}$  (100 MHz,  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ):  $\delta = 19.4$ , 20.7, 21.6, 27.4, 93.1, 94.0, 95.1, 95.6, 105.3, 111.1, 119.9, 120.6, 122.4, 124.8, 125.2, 126.7, 126.8, 127.2, 127.3, 128.6, 128.7, 130.5, 131.8, 132.1, 132.3, 132.6, 134.6, 135.8, 135.9, 136.2, 136.3, 137.6, 137.8, 141.4, 142.5, 142.8, 146.1, 149.8, 149.9, 150.1, 160.2, 160.8 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu} = 2998$ , 2935, 2820, 2345, 2323, 1619, 1565, 1490, 1397, 1353, 1189, 1050, 1025, 945, 895  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 1630.3 (100)  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ . Anal Calcd for  $\text{C}_{116}\text{H}_{96}\text{N}_8\text{Zn}_2$ : C, 80.48; H, 5.05; N, 6.53. Found: C, 80.67; H, 5.29; N, 6.32.

## Zinc(II) porphyrin **2**

Zinc(II) porphyrin **11** (110 mg, 67.4  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) and phenanthroline **8** (85.5 mg, 135  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were put into a round-bottomed flask. Then,  $\text{Pd}(\text{PPh}_3)_4$  (15.6 mg, 13.5  $\mu\text{mol}$ ), dry  $\text{NEt}_3$  (10 mL) and dry DMF (30 mL) were added to the reaction mixture under  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere. The reaction mixture was allowed to stir at  $90\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 12 h. The reaction mixture was evaporated to dryness, dissolved in DCM (50 mL), and washed with water ( $3 \times 50\text{ mL}$ ). After drying over anhydrous  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ , the solvent was evaporated and the residue was purified by column chromatography ( $\text{SiO}_2$ , DCM-MeOH = 99:1,  $R_f = 0.1$ ). The compound was further purified by size exclusion chromatography over biobeads SX-3 isolating the first moving band in toluene. Yield: 35%, mp:  $>300\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ .  $^1\text{H NMR}$  (400 MHz,  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ):  $\delta = 2.00$  (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.03 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.09 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.16 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.33 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.35 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.41 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.60 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 6.95 (s, 4 H, 9-H), 6.98 (s, 4 H, 15'-H), 7.28 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6\text{ Hz}$ ,  $^4J = 0.8\text{ Hz}$ , 2 H, 14-H), 7.52 (d,  $^3J = 8.0\text{ Hz}$ ,





2 H, [4 or 7]-H), 7.56 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, [7 or 4]-H), 7.60 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 4'-H), 7.86 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 4 H, [17 or 16]-H), 7.87 (s, 4 H, 5', 6'-H), 7.90 (s, 4 H, 5-, 6-H), 7.95 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 4 H, [11 or 10]-H), 7.94 (t,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz, 2 H, 13-H), 8.12 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 4 H, [10 or 11]-H), 8.16 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 4 H, [16 or 17]-H), 8.33 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, [3 or 8]-H), 8.34 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, [8 or 3]-H), 8.34 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 3'-H), 8.36 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 8'-H), 8.76 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 7'-H), 8.77 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^4J = 0.8$  Hz, 2 H, 12-H), 8.95 (d,  $^3J = 4.4$  Hz, 4 H,  $\beta$ -H), 8.96 (d,  $^3J = 4.4$  Hz, 4 H,  $\beta$ -H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (100 MHz,  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ):  $\delta = 20.0, 20.1, 20.6, 20.8, 21.5, 21.6, 28.0, 28.1, 94.4, 94.6, 97.2, 97.4, 112.5, 112.7, 120.2, 120.3, 120.9, 121.0, 122.7, 123.4, 124.0, 124.4, 124.9, 125.2, 126.3, 126.6, 126.9$  (2C), 127.0, 127.5, 127.6, 127.6, 128.8 (2C), 129.1, 129.2, 130.7, 132.4, 133.1 (2C), 134.7, 136.1, 136.2, 136.4, 136.4, 136.5, 136.6, 136.8, 138.0, 138.3, 138.4, 138.6, 138.6, 139.1 (2C), 141.5, 141.9, 141.9, 142.3, 142.3, 143.0, 146.4, 146.4, 146.6, 150.1, 150.1, 150.2, 150.6, 160.3, 160.9, 160.9 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu} = 2936, 2916, 2836, 2380, 2343, 1619, 1556, 1490, 1425, 1356, 1326, 1165, 1099$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 1322.3 (100)  $[\text{M} + 2\text{H}]^{2+}$ , 881.9 (50)  $[\text{M} + 3\text{H}]^{3+}$ , 661.7 (30)  $[\text{M} + 4\text{H}]^{4+}$ . Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{186}\text{H}_{146}\text{N}_{14}\text{Zn} \cdot 1.5\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ : C, 81.30; H, 5.42; N, 7.08. Found: C, 81.45; H, 5.19; N, 7.22.

#### Homoleptic complex $[\text{Cu}(5)_2](\text{PF}_6)$

In an NMR tube, ligand 5 (0.373 mg, 0.756  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) and  $[\text{Cu}(\text{CH}_3\text{CN})_4]\text{PF}_6$  (0.141 mg, 0.378  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were dissolved in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$  to afford the desired complex in quantitative yield. mp:  $>300$   $^\circ\text{C}$ .  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , 400 MHz):  $\delta = 0.70$  (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 0.79 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.97 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.00 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.24 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 5.61 (s, 4 H, [15 or 15']-H), 6.19 (s, 4 H, [15' or 15]-H), 6.97 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^3J = 1.2$  Hz, 2 H, 14-H), 7.40 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, 4'-H), 7.47 (t,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz, 2 H, 13-H), 8.06 (s, 4 H, 5', 6'-H), 8.44 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, 3'-H), 8.49 (d,  $^3J = 8.6$  Hz, 2 H, 8'-H), 8.58 (d,  $^3J = 8.6$  Hz, 2 H, 7'-H), 9.41 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^3J = 1.2$  Hz, 2 H, 12-H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , 100 MHz):  $\delta = 19.6, 19.8, 20.3, 21.0, 21.0, 122.5, 124.7, 126.1, 126.6, 126.9, 127.1, 127.2, 128.3, 128.4, 128.6, 130.1, 133.5, 135.6, 135.8, 136.0, 137.2, 137.3, 137.6, 137.6, 137.8, 144.1, 145.1, 153.5, 154.5, 159.7, 160.0$  ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu} = 2965, 2903, 1613, 1585, 1454, 1402, 1339, 1138, 1104, 845, 810, 759$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 1051.0 (100)  $[\text{Cu}(5)_2]^+$ . Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{70}\text{H}_{62}\text{CuF}_6\text{N}_6\text{P}$ : C, 70.31; H, 5.23; N, 7.03. Found: C, 70.36; H, 5.45; N, 7.15.

#### Heteroleptic complex $[\text{Zn}(4)(5)](\text{OTf})_2$

In an NMR tube, compound 5 (0.550 mg, 1.11  $\mu\text{mol}$ ),  $\text{Zn}(\text{OTf})_2$  (0.405 mg, 1.11  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) and 4 (0.201 mg, 1.11  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were dissolved in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$  furnishing the desired complex in quantitative yield. mp:  $>300$   $^\circ\text{C}$ .  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$ , 400 MHz):  $\delta = 0.93$  (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.00 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.82 (s, 3 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.87 (s, 3 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 5.64 (s, 2 H, [15 or 15']-H), 5.69 (s, 2 H, [15' or 15]-H), 7.04 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.2$  Hz, 1 H, 14-H), 7.23 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 1 H, 4'-H), 7.67 (dd,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 3''-H), 7.96 (s, 2 H, 5''-H), 8.13 (t,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz, 1 H, 13-H), 8.20 (d,  $^3J = 8.8$  Hz, 1 H, [5' or 6']-H), 8.27 (d,  $^3J = 8.8$  Hz, 1 H, [6' or 5']-H), 8.52 (dd,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz,  $^4J =$

1.6 Hz, 2 H, 4''-H), 8.54 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 1 H, 3'-H), 8.60 (dd,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.6$  Hz, 2 H, 2''-H), 8.66 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.2$  Hz, 1 H, 12-H), 8.97 (d,  $^3J = 8.6$  Hz, 1 H, 8'-H), 9.08 (d,  $^3J = 8.6$  Hz, 1 H, 7'-H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$ , 100 MHz):  $\delta = 19.2, 19.3, 20.2, 20.3, 121.9, 122.7, 126.5, 128.0$  (2C), 128.1 (2C), 128.3, 128.6, 128.9, 129.4, 130.0, 130.0, 134.0, 134.2, 134.8, 135.6, 135.9, 139.1, 139.2, 140.3, 140.3, 141.3, 141.4, 142.5, 149.4, 149.6, 151.1, 151.2, 161.2, 161.6 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu} = 3001, 2943, 2913, 1583, 1541, 1477, 1374, 1355, 1158, 1134, 909, 862, 847, 752, 637, 629$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 370.0 (100)  $[\text{Zn}(4)(5)]^{2+}$ , 888.3 (30)  $[\text{Zn}(4)(5)]^+$ . Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{49}\text{H}_{39}\text{F}_6\text{N}_5\text{O}_6\text{S}_2\text{Zn}$ : C, 56.73; 3.79; N, 6.75; S, 6.18. Found: C, 56.47; 3.99; N, 6.58; S, 6.43.

#### Heteroleptic complex $[\text{Cu}(4)(5)](\text{ClO}_4)_2$

Compound 5 (3.45 mg, 6.99  $\mu\text{mol}$ ),  $\text{Cu}(\text{ClO}_4)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (2.59 mg, 6.99  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) and 4 (1.26 mg, 6.99  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were dissolved in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$  furnishing the desired complex as characterised by ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 368.7 (100)  $[\text{Cu}(4)(5)]^{2+}$ , 836.8 (30)  $[\text{Cu}(4)(5)](\text{ClO}_4)^+$ .

#### Complex $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}_{\text{phen}} = [\text{Cu}_2(2)(4)]^{2+}$

In an NMR tube, platform 2 (2.42 mg, 0.916  $\mu\text{mol}$ ),  $[\text{Cu}(\text{CH}_3\text{CN})_4]\text{PF}_6$  (0.683 mg, 1.83  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) and ligand 4 (0.330 mg, 1.83  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were dissolved in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$  affording complex  $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}_{\text{phen}}$  in quantitative yield. Mp:  $>300$   $^\circ\text{C}$ .  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , 400 MHz):  $\delta = 1.53$  (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.65 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.66 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.78 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.12 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.28 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.30 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.59 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 6.00 (s, 4 H, 9-H), 6.97 (s, 4 H, 15'-H), 7.27 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.2$  Hz, 2 H, 14-H), 7.60 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 4'-H), 7.71 (dd,  $^3J = 8.2$  Hz,  $^3J = 8.2$  Hz, 4 H, 3''-H), 7.83 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, [4 or 7]-H), 7.86 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 4 H, [10 or 11]-H), 7.89 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, [7 or 4]-H), 7.91 (s, 4 H, 5', 6'-H), 7.92 (s, 4 H, 5''-H), 7.94 (t,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz, 2 H, 13-H), 7.95 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 4 H, [16 or 17]-H), 8.12 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 4 H, [17 or 16]-H), 8.16 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 4 H, [11 or 10]-H), 8.21 (s, 4 H, 5-, 6-H), 8.34 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 3'-H), 8.36 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, 8'-H), 8.42 (dd,  $^3J = 8.2$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.6$  Hz, 4 H, 4''-H), 8.45 (dd,  $^3J = 8.2$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.6$  Hz, 4 H, 2''-H), 8.69 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, [3 or 8]-H), 8.70 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, [8 or 3]-H), 8.76 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, 7'-H), 8.77 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.2$  Hz, 2 H, 12-H), 8.94 (d,  $^3J = 4.0$  Hz, 4 H,  $\beta$ -H), 8.95 (d,  $^3J = 4.0$  Hz, 4 H,  $\beta$ -H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , 100 MHz)  $\delta = 19.5, 19.6, 20.2, 20.4, 20.4, 20.6, 21.2, 21.3, 94.1, 94.2, 95.7, 95.9, 105.3, 111.5, 120.3, 120.3, 120.4, 121.0, 122.8, 124.7, 124.8, 124.9, 125.1, 125.4, 126.3, 126.3, 126.4, 126.4, 126.6, 126.7, 126.9, 127.0, 127.1, 127.3, 127.4, 128.2, 128.3, 128.6, 128.6, 128.8, 129.0, 130.4, 131.5, 132.3, 134.8, 134.9, 135.0, 135.2, 135.3, 136.1, 136.2, 136.3, 136.4, 136.5, 136.7, 137.0, 137.3, 137.7, 137.7, 137.8, 138.1, 142.6, 143.2, 143.4, 144.1, 147.8, 149.1, 150.2, 150.3, 150.3, 150.3, 151.1, 151.3, 156.6, 156.6, 159.5, 159.6$  ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu} = 2975, 2847, 2306, 2196, 1604, 1595, 1422, 1376, 1340, 1258, 1224, 1203, 1153, 1062, 1030, 850, 797$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 1565.1 (100)  $[\text{Cu}_2(2)(4)]^{2+}$ . Anal. Calcd for  $\text{C}_{210}\text{H}_{162}\text{Cu}_2\text{F}_{12}\text{N}_{18}\text{P}_2\text{Zn}$ : C, 73.75; H, 4.77; N, 7.37. Found: C, 73.49; H, 4.87; N, 7.52.



### Complex $\text{Zn}1_{\text{terpy}} = [\text{Zn}_2(2)(4)_2]^{4+}$

In an NMR tube, platform 2 (3.65 mg, 1.38  $\mu\text{mol}$ ),  $\text{Zn}(\text{OTf})_2$  (1.00 mg, 2.76  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) and ligand 4 (0.498 mg, 2.76  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were dissolved in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$  furnishing complex  $\text{Zn}1_{\text{terpy}}$  in quantitative yield. Mp:  $>300$  °C.  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$ , 400 MHz):  $\delta = 0.94$  (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.02 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.83 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.88 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.94 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.97 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.28 (s, 6 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.49 (s, 12 H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 5.69 (s, 4 H, 15'-H), 6.91 (s, 4 H, 9-H), 7.05 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.2$  Hz, 2 H, 14-H), 7.24 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 4'-H), 7.48 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, [4 or 7]-H), 7.53 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, [7 or 4]-H), 7.68 (dd,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz,  $^4J = 8.4$  Hz, 4 H, 3''-H), 7.79 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 4 H, [16 or 17]-H), 7.89 (s, 4 H, 5, 6-H), 7.91 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 4 H, [10 or 11]-H), 7.92 (s, 4 H, 5''-H), 8.06 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 4 H, [11 or 10]-H), 8.12 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 4 H, [17 or 16]-H), 8.16 (t,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz, 2 H, 13-H), 8.19 (d,  $^3J = 8.8$  Hz, 2 H, [5' or 6']-H), 8.27 (d,  $^3J = 8.8$  Hz, 2 H, [6' or 5']-H), 8.33 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, [3 or 8]-H), 8.35 (d,  $^3J = 8.0$  Hz, 2 H, [8 or 3]-H), 8.51 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 2 H, 3'-H), 8.53 (dd,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.6$  Hz, 4 H, 4''-H), 8.62 (dd,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.6$  Hz, 4 H, 2''-H), 8.69 (dd,  $^3J = 7.6$  Hz,  $^4J = 1.2$  Hz, 2 H, 12-H), 8.83 (d,  $^3J = 4.8$  Hz, 4 H,  $\beta$ -H), 8.85 (d,  $^3J = 4.8$  Hz, 4 H,  $\beta$ -H), 8.96 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 1 H, 8'-H), 9.06 (d,  $^3J = 8.4$  Hz, 1 H, 7'-H) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$ , 100 MHz)  $\delta = 18.5$ , 18.6, 19.0, 19.8, 20.4, 20.4, 20.6, 27.2, 93.4, 93.6, 96.1, 96.2, 105.0, 111.0, 119.4, 120.0, 122.0, 122.1, 122.5, 124.3, 124.5, 125.9, 126.2, 126.4, 126.5, 127.0, 127.0, 127.1, 127.4, 127.8, 128.0, 128.2 (2C), 128.7, 128.9, 129.2, 129.6, 129.9, 130.2, 131.7, 132.5, 133.6, 133.9, 134.2, 134.5, 135.6 (2C), 136.2 (2C), 136.4, 137.4, 137.5, 137.5, 137.6, 138.2, 139.4, 139.8, 140.0, 140.7, 140.8, 141.1, 141.5, 141.7, 142.3, 142.7, 143.5, 146.1, 148.1, 148.7, 149.5, 149.6, 149.7, 150.5, 160.0, 160.7, 161.3, 161.7 ppm. IR (KBr):  $\tilde{\nu} = 2921$ , 2200, 1601, 1478, 1277, 1259, 1030, 996, 797, 638  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 783.5 (50)  $[\text{Zn}_2(2)-(4)_2]^{4+}$ , 1094.4 (100)  $[\text{Zn}_2(2)(4)_2](\text{OTf})^{3+}$ , 1716.1 (20)  $[\text{Zn}_2(2)(4)_2](\text{OTf})_2^{2+}$ . Anal Calcd for  $\text{C}_{214}\text{H}_{162}\text{F}_{12}\text{N}_{18}\text{O}_{12}\text{S}_4\text{Zn}_3\cdot\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ : C, 67.69; H, 4.33; N, 6.61; S, 3.36. Found: C, 67.56; H, 4.18; N, 6.47; S, 3.56.

### Complex $\text{Cu}1_{\text{terpy}} = [\text{Cu}_2(2)(4)_2](\text{ClO}_4)_4$

Compound 2 (3.78 mg, 1.43  $\mu\text{mol}$ ),  $\text{Cu}(\text{ClO}_4)_2\cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (0.530 mg, 1.43  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) and 4 (0.258 mg, 1.43  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) were dissolved in  $\text{CD}_2\text{Cl}_2$ - $\text{CD}_3\text{CN} = 3:1$  furnishing the desired complex as characterised by ESI-MS:  $m/z$  (%) 782.7 (100)  $[\text{Cu}_2(2)(4)_2]^{4+}$ , 1076.8 (50)  $[\text{Cu}_2(2)(4)_2](\text{ClO}_4)^{3+}$ .

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- 16 In parenthesis, the relative energies are given with respect to the lowest energy structure. Structures iso-**I**<sup>C</sup> and iso-**III** could not be optimised in DFT computations due to severe steric crowding between the mesityl groups.
- 17 In another experiment when **3** and **5** were mixed with Cu<sup>+</sup> or Zn<sup>2+</sup> at a 1 : 1 : 1 ratio, there was no evidence for the formation of the heteroleptic species neither by <sup>1</sup>H NMR nor ESI-MS.

