

## Supporting Information

### A C<sub>60</sub>-aryne building block: Synthesis of a hybrid all-carbon nanostructure

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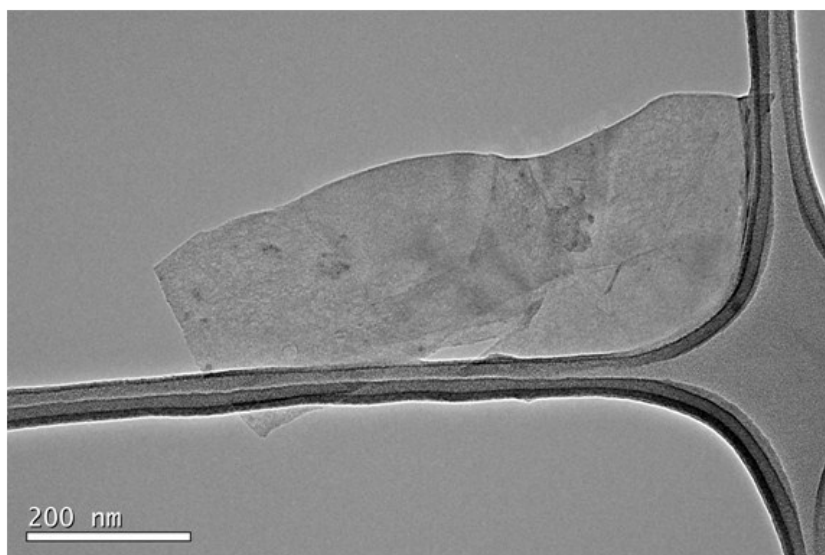
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#### Experimental Section

**Materials and Methods.** All reactions were carried out under argon using oven-dried glassware. PhCl and TMSCl were dried by distillation from CaH<sub>2</sub>, Tf<sub>2</sub>O was distilled and stored under argon and CH<sub>3</sub>CN was purified by an MBraun SPS-800 Solvent Purification System. Other solvents and reagents used in this work were purchased from commercial suppliers and used as received. Bistriflate **1** was prepared following a modification of a previously published procedure.<sup>1</sup> An anhydrous stock solution of TBAF (1M in CH<sub>3</sub>CN) was prepared as described in the literature.<sup>2</sup> TLC chromatography was performed on Merck silica gel 60 F254 plates; chromatograms were visualized with UV light (254 and 360 nm). Flash column chromatography was performed on Merck silica gel 60 (ASTM 230-400 mesh).

Graphite from TIMCAL (TIMREX SFG15,  $\rho = 2.26$  g/cc, particle size =  $8.80$   $\mu\text{m}$ , specific surface =  $9.50$   $\text{m}^2/\text{g}$ , ashes  $\leq 0.100\%$ , interlamellar distance =  $3.354\text{-}3.358$   $\text{\AA}$ ) was used for the synthesis of few layer graphene (FLG). For the exfoliation of **graphene**, graphite flakes (200 mg) were dispersed in anhydrous *o*-DCB (200 mL) and sonicated at a low-power sonication bath for 150 minutes under inert atmosphere. The dispersion was centrifuged at 500 rpm for 45 minutes, the supernatant was decanted and stored in solution.<sup>3</sup> TEM images showed FLG nanosheets of less than 5 layers stacked with smaller flakes on their surface (Fig. S1). Lateral dimensions of the nanosheets range from 100 to 500 nm. Raman spectroscopy (532 nm laser excitation wavelength) confirms the pristine graphitic structure of graphene produced from *o*-DCB and the presence of less than 5 layers (deconvolution of the 2D band in 6 Lorentzianes with FWHM =  $24$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ). The relatively low D-band intensities provide evidence of few defects on the FLG surface (Fig. S8).

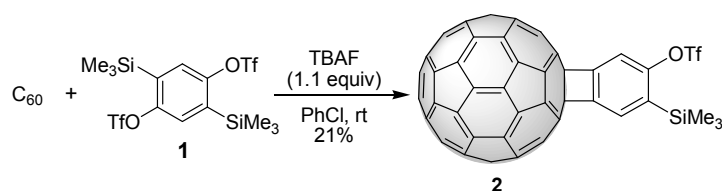


**Fig. S1** TEM image of the FLG obtained from the exfoliation of graphite flakes in *o*-DCB.

**Instruments.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectra were recorded at 300 and 75 MHz (Varian Mercury-300 instrument), 500 and 125 MHz (Varian Inova 500) or 700 and 175 MHz (Bruker AVIII 700 MHz), respectively. MALDI-TOF spectra were determined on a Bruker Autoflex instrument. TGA analyses were carried out under nitrogen in a TA-TGA-Q500 apparatus. The sample ( $\sim 0.5$  mg) was introduced inside a platinum crucible and equilibrated at  $100$   $^\circ\text{C}$  followed by a  $10$   $^\circ\text{C min}^{-1}$  ramp between  $100$  and  $1000$   $^\circ\text{C}$  followed by an isotherm of 30 minutes. FTIR spectra were carried out in a Bruker

TENSOR 27 using a spectral range was 4000-400  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , with a resolution of 1  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , and in pellets of dispersed samples of the corresponding materials in dried KBr. Raman spectra were recorded on a NT-MDT-in Via Microscope at room temperature using an exciting laser source of 532 nm. XPS analyses were carried out using a SPECS GmbH (PHOIBOS 150 9MCD) spectrometer operating in the constant analyzer energy mode. A non monochromatic aluminium X-ray source (1486.61 eV) was used with a power of 200 W and voltage of 12 kV. Pass energies of 75 and 25 eV were used for acquiring both survey and high resolution spectra, respectively. Survey data were acquired from kinetic energies of 1487 - 400 eV with an energy step of 1 eV and 100 ms dwell time per point. The high resolution scans were taken around the emission lines of interest with 0.1 eV steps and 100 ms dwell time per point. SpecsLab Version 2.48 software was used for spectrometer control and data handling. The semi-quantitative analysis were performed from the C 1s (284.3 eV) signal. The samples were introduced as pellets of 8 mm diameter. TEM micrographs were obtained using a JEOL 2100 microscope operating at 200 kV. The samples were dispersed in *o*-DCB and dropped onto a holey carbon copper grid (200 mesh), the solvent was removed in a vacuum oven during 48 h. AFM images were obtained by a Park Systems NX-10 microscope operating in True Non-Contact<sup>TM</sup> mode, with independent XY scanner (10  $\mu\text{m}$  x 10 $\mu\text{m}$ , resolution 0.05 nm) and Z scanner (resolution 0.015 nm, position detector noise 0.03 nm), using high resolution SSS-NCHR tips, with nominal radius of curvature of 2.5 nm (maximum < 5 nm). The samples were dispersed in *o*-DCB, sonicated for 150 min, centrifuged at 5000 rpm for 15 min, and the supernatant was deposited on freshly cleaved mica substrate by spin-coating; the solvent being removed by heating at 60  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  under vacuum for 48 h.

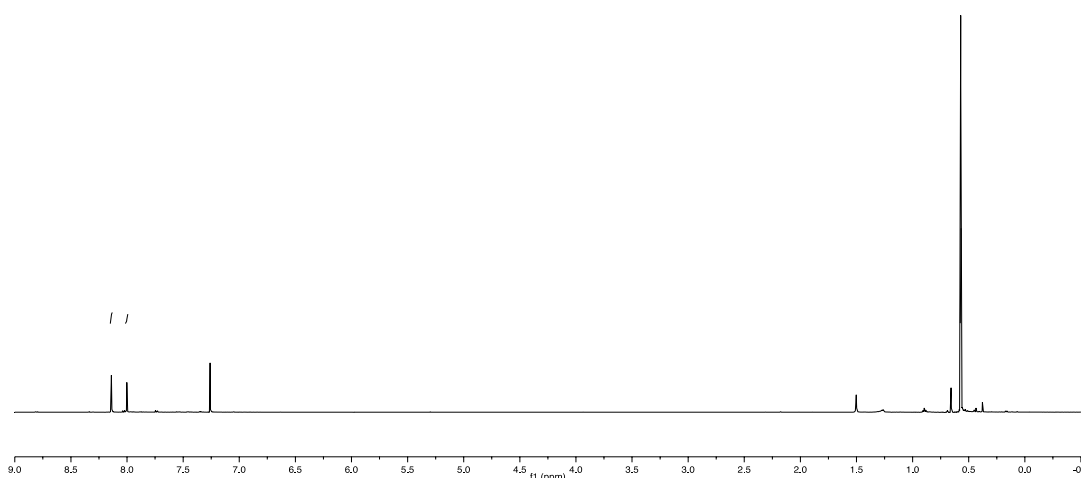
### Synthesis of *o*-(trimethylsilyl)aryl triflate 2



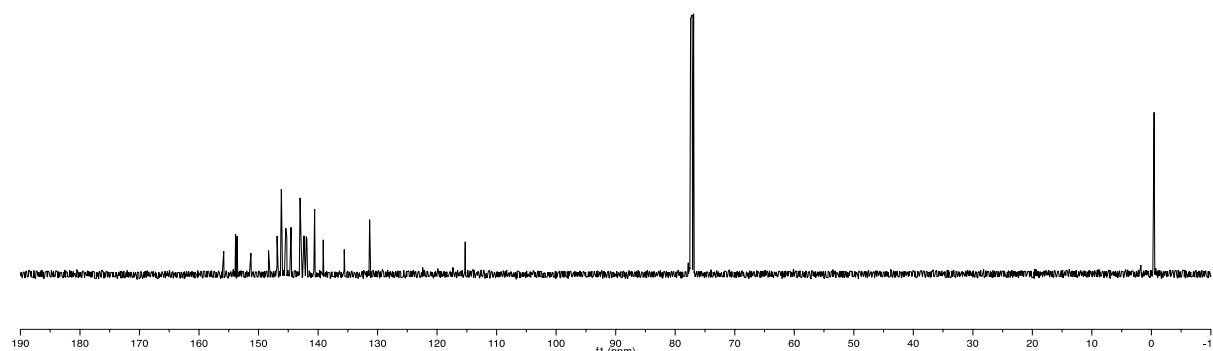
To a solution of 2,5-bis-(trimethylsilyl)-1,4-phenylene bis(trifluoromethanesulfonate) (**1**) (173 mg, 0.33 mmol) and C<sub>60</sub> (120 mg, 0.17 mmol) in PhCl (17 mL), anhydrous TBAF (1M solution in CH<sub>3</sub>CN, 330  $\mu\text{L}$ , 0.33 mmol) was dropwise added over a period of 2 h (syringe pump). The mixture was stirred at rt for 2 h. The solvent was evaporated under

reduced pressure and the resulting mixture was purified by column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, CS<sub>2</sub>) to afford *o*-(trimethylsilyl)aryl triflate **2** (35 mg, 21%) as a dark solid.

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>), δ: 8.15 (s, 1H), 7.99 (s, 1H), 0.59 (s, 9H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>), δ: 155.9, 153.9, 153.7, 151.3, 148.4, 146.9, 146.2, 146.2, 145.6, 145.5, 145.5, 145.5, 145.3, 144.6, 143.1, 143.0, 142.9, 142.9, 142.4, 142.4, 142.0, 141.9, 140.6, 139.2, 139.0, 135.7, 131.4, 118.8 (q, *J* = 325 Hz, CF<sub>3</sub>), 115.3, -0.41; EM (MALDI-TOF), *m/z* (%): 1016.015 (M<sup>+</sup>, 37), 1017.016 (M<sup>+</sup>+1, 45), 1018.015 (M<sup>+</sup>+2, 45), 720 (100); FTIR (KBr): ν = 2957, 2924, 2854, 1424, 1215, 1140, 997, 941, 890, 862, 843, 526 cm<sup>-1</sup>.



**Fig. S2** <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) of **2**.

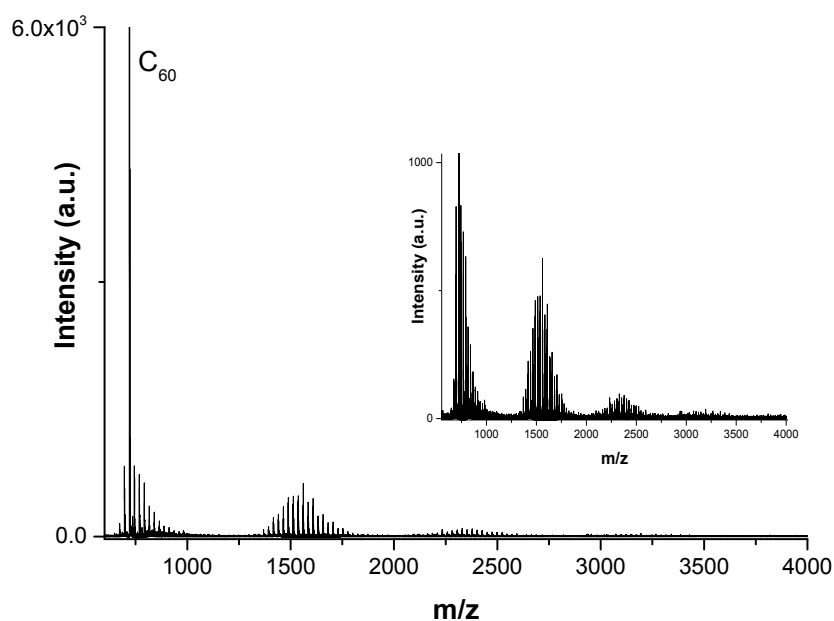


**Fig. S3** <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum (125MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) of **2**.

### Generation of fullerobenzynes **3**

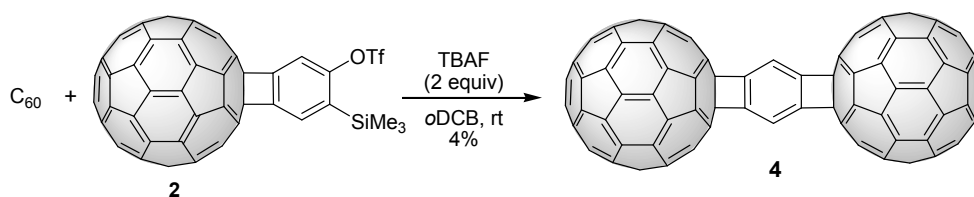
To a solution of the *o*-(trimethylsilyl)aryl triflate **2** (30 mg, 0.03 mmol) in dry *o*-DCB (20 mL), anhydrous TBAF (1M solution in CH<sub>3</sub>CN, 85 μL, 0.6 mmol) was dropwise added over a period of 2 h. The solution was stirred vigorously at rt for 2 h. After this period of time, a brown solid was obtained by filtration over a PTFE membrane (0.1

$\mu\text{m}$ ). The solid was washed in the membrane with *o*-DCB, toluene,  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , MeOH and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  to remove the excess of TBAF, since all the *o*-(trimethylsilyl)aryl triflate **2** was consumed as confirmed by TLC analysis. The obtained solid was suspended in  $\text{CS}_2$  and analyzed by MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry. A complex mixture (multiadducts and small oligomers that also contain fluorine) with molecular weights up to 3400 u was observed (Fig. S4).



**Fig. S4** EM (MALDI-TOF) of the solid obtained by reaction of *o*-(trimethylsilyl)aryl triflate **2** with TBAF in *o*-DCB.

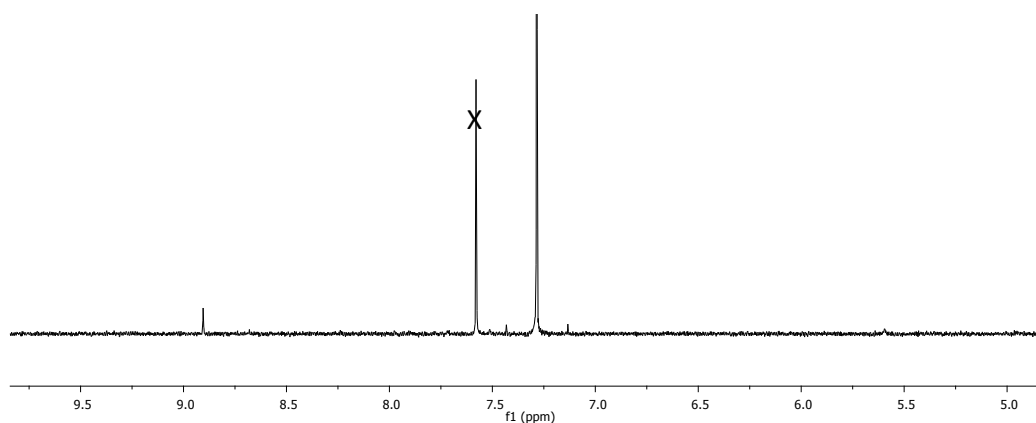
#### Generation of fullerobenzynes **3** and trapping with $\text{C}_{60}$



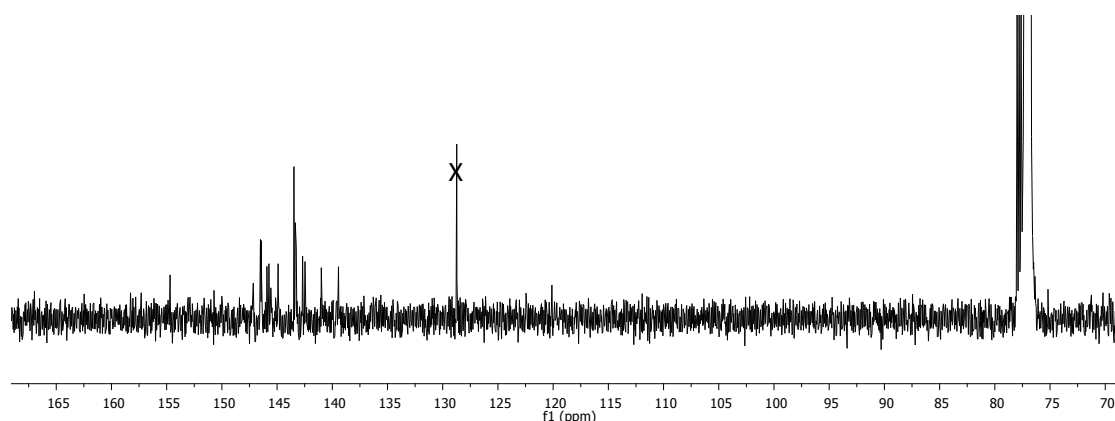
To a solution of the *o*-(trimethylsilyl)aryl triflate **2** (30 mg, 0.03 mmol) and  $\text{C}_{60}$  (84 mg, 0.46 mmol) in dry *o*-DCB (20 mL), anhydrous TBAF (1M solution in  $\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$ , 85  $\mu\text{L}$ , 0.6 mmol) was dropwise added over a period of 2 h. The solution was stirred vigorously at rt for 2 h. After this period of time, a brown solid was separated from the reaction mixture by filtration over a PTFE membrane (0.1  $\mu\text{m}$ ). The solid was washed in the membrane with *o*-DCB, toluene,  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , MeOH and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  to remove the excess of

reactants. The final solid was suspended in CS<sub>2</sub>, sonicated and centrifuged. A mixture of multiadducts was identified in the precipitated at the centrifuge tube by mass spectrometry. Product **4** remained in solution and was isolated after solvent evaporation (2 mg, 4%). Due to the extreme insolubility of dumbbell **4**, the spectroscopic characterization was achieved only with partial resolution (<sup>13</sup>C NMR).

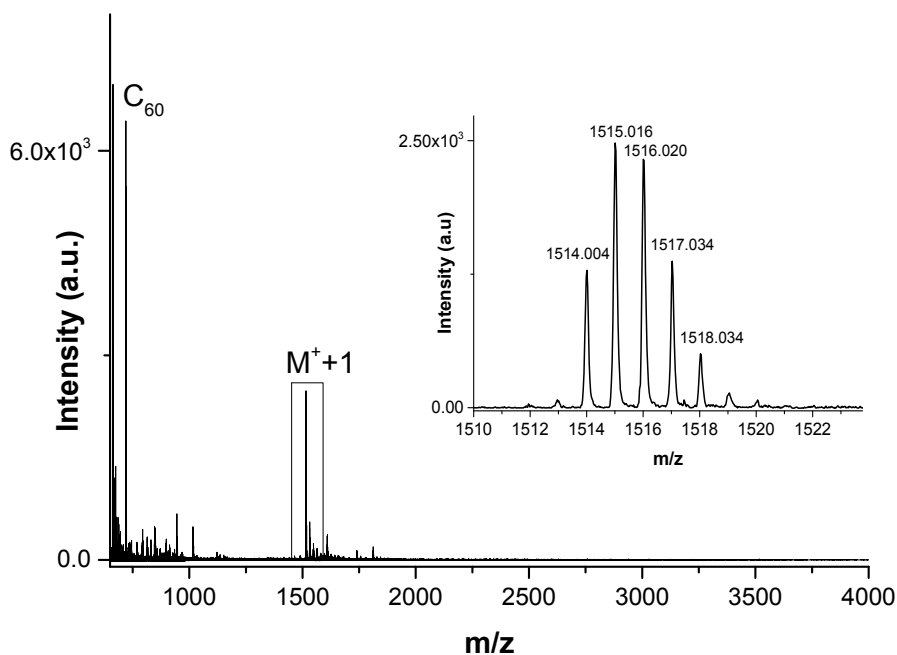
<sup>1</sup>H NMR (700 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>), δ: 8.90 (s, 2H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (175MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>), δ: 154.5, 147.1, 146.5, 146.4, 146.0, 145.9, 145.8, 145.7, 144.9, 144.8, 143.5, 143.4, 143.3, 142.7, 142.5, 141.0, 140.8, 139.4, 120.0; EM (MALDI-TOF), *m/z* (%): 1514.004 (M<sup>+</sup>, 15); 1515.016 (M<sup>+</sup>+1, 30); 1516. 020 (M<sup>+</sup>+2, 28); FTIR (KBr): ν = 2956, 2922, 2851, 1626, 1461, 1461, 1123, 1068, 1033, 874, 722, 526 cm<sup>-1</sup>.



**Fig. S5** <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum (700 MHz, CS<sub>2</sub> with CDCl<sub>3</sub> as internal reference) of **4**. Traces of benzene contained in the CS<sub>2</sub> were detected.

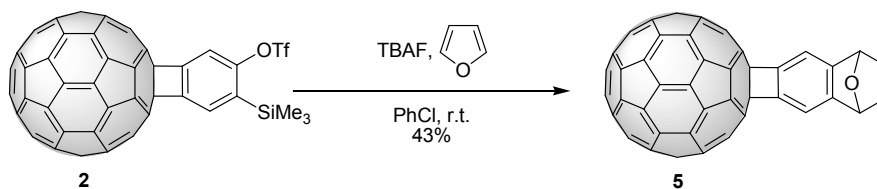


**Fig. S6** <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum (175MHz, CS<sub>2</sub> with CDCl<sub>3</sub> as internal reference) **4**. Traces of benzene contained in the CS<sub>2</sub> were detected.



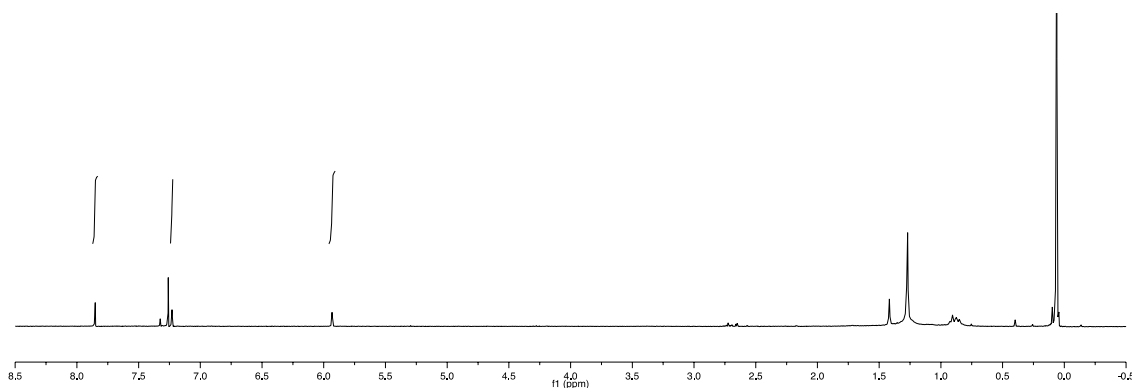
**Fig. S7** EM (MALDI-TOF) of dumbbell **4**.

#### Generation of fullerobenzynes **3** and trapping with furan



To a solution of aryne precursor **2** (120 mg, 0.12 mmol) and furan (326 mg, 4.8 mmol) in chlorobenzene (12 mL), anhydrous TBAF (1M solution in CH<sub>3</sub>CN, 240 μL, 0.24 mmol) was dropwise added over a period of 2 h (syringe pump). The mixture was stirred at rt for 2 h. The solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure and the resulting mixture was purified by column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, CS<sub>2</sub>) to afford the corresponding Diels-Alder adduct **5** (44 mg, 43%) as a scarcely soluble dark solid.

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, 313K, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ: 7.85 (s, 2H), 7.23 (s, 2H), 5.93 (s, 2H); EM (MALDI-TOF), *m/z* (%): 862.086 (M<sup>+</sup>, 100), 863.096 (M<sup>+</sup>+1, 90), 864.120 (M<sup>+</sup>+2, 66).

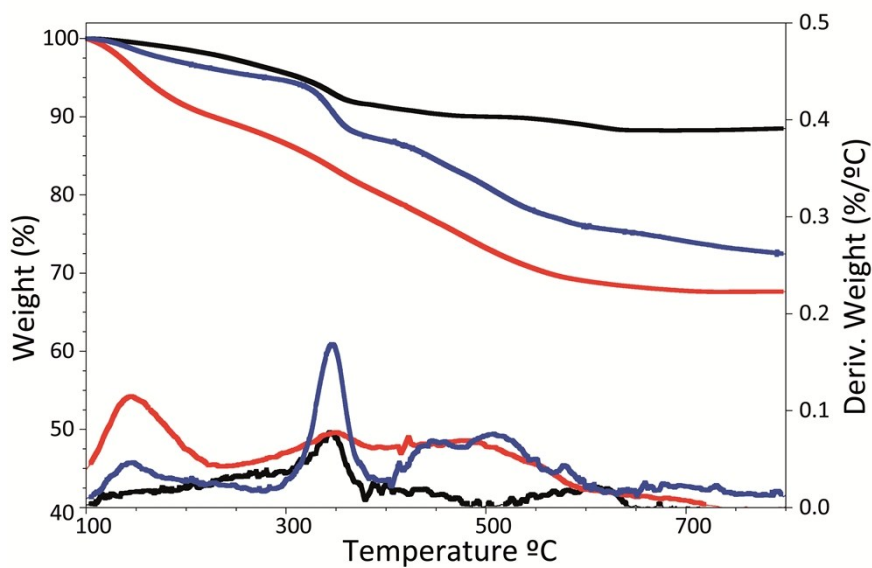


**Fig. S8**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum (500 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ) of **5**.

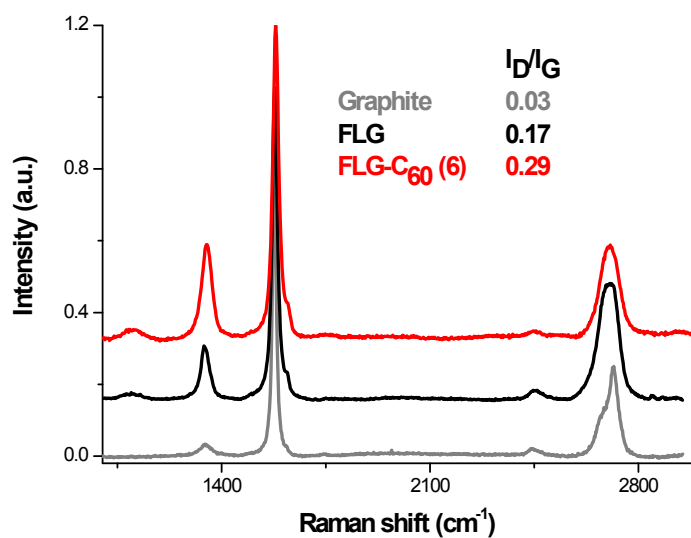
### **Generation of fullerobenzynes **3** and trapping with FLG: Synthesis of FLG- $\text{C}_{60}$ nanoconjugates**

Exfoliated graphene suspensions in dry *o*-DCB under argon were utilized as produced for further covalent modification (see Materials and Methods section). A solution 1 M of anhydrous TBAF in acetonitrile (2 equivalents, 0.142 mL) was slowly added dropwise (during 2 hours) to a solution of precursor **2** (50 mg, 1 equivalent) and FLG in dry *o*-DCB (100 mL). The solution was stirred vigorously for 12 hours at 40 °C. The final product **6** was separated from the reaction mixture by filtration over a PTFE membrane (0.2  $\mu\text{m}$ ). The black solid was purified by subsequent washing in membrane with *o*-DCB,  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , MeOH and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . 6.6 mg of the of FLG- $\text{C}_{60}$  nanoconjugates **6** were obtained. FTIR (KBr):  $\nu = 2927, 2854, 1581, 1455, 1384, 1125, 1033, 748, 525 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ; TGA: weight loss and temperature desorption (organic anchoring groups): 28.2%, 600 °C; Raman:  $I_{\text{D}}/I_{\text{G}} = 0.29$ ; XPS: % atomic: C (284.6 eV) = 86.7, O (532.6 eV) = 13.3.

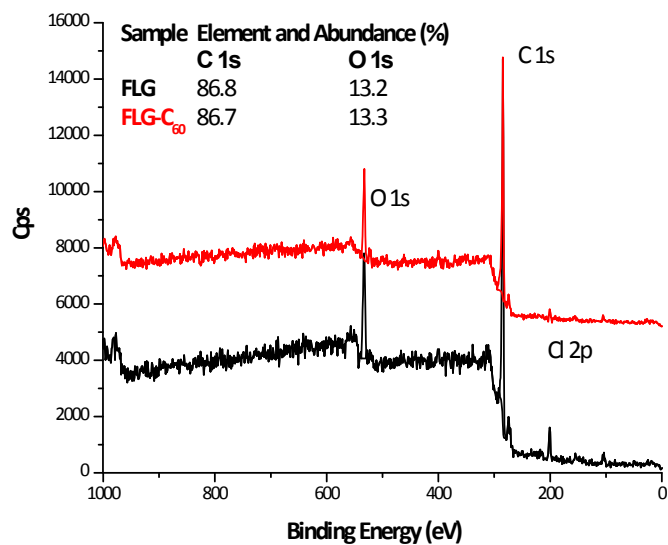




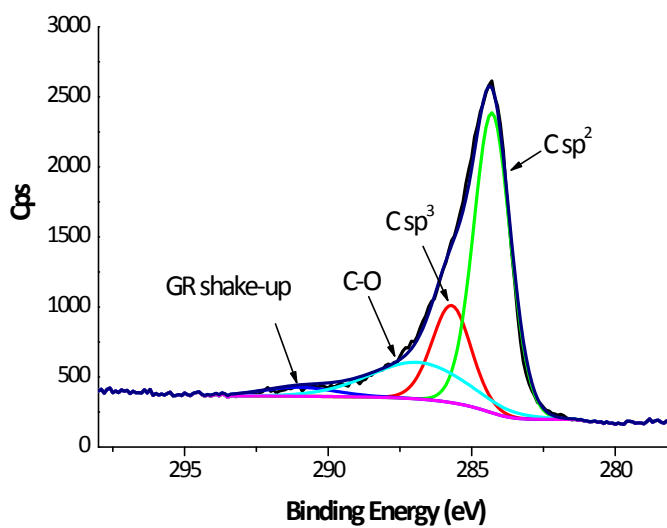
**Fig. S9** TGA spectra of FLG (black), **2** (blue) and FLG-C<sub>60</sub> nanoconjugates **6** (red) recorded under nitrogen atmosphere.



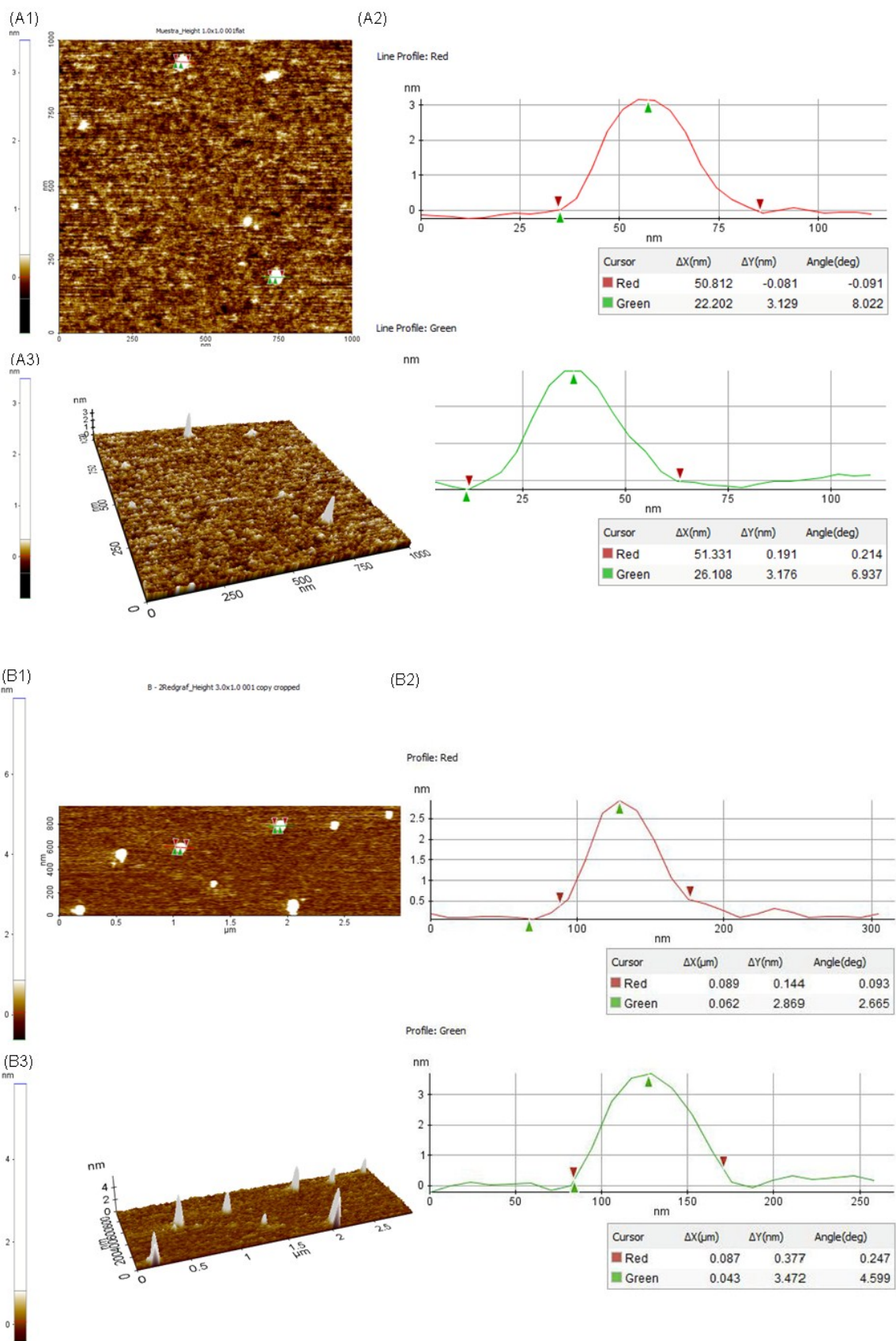
**Fig. S10** Raman spectra of graphite (gray), FLG (black), and FLG-C<sub>60</sub> nanoconjugates **6** (red) performed on a NT-MDT Raman apparatus under 532 nm excitation wavelength.



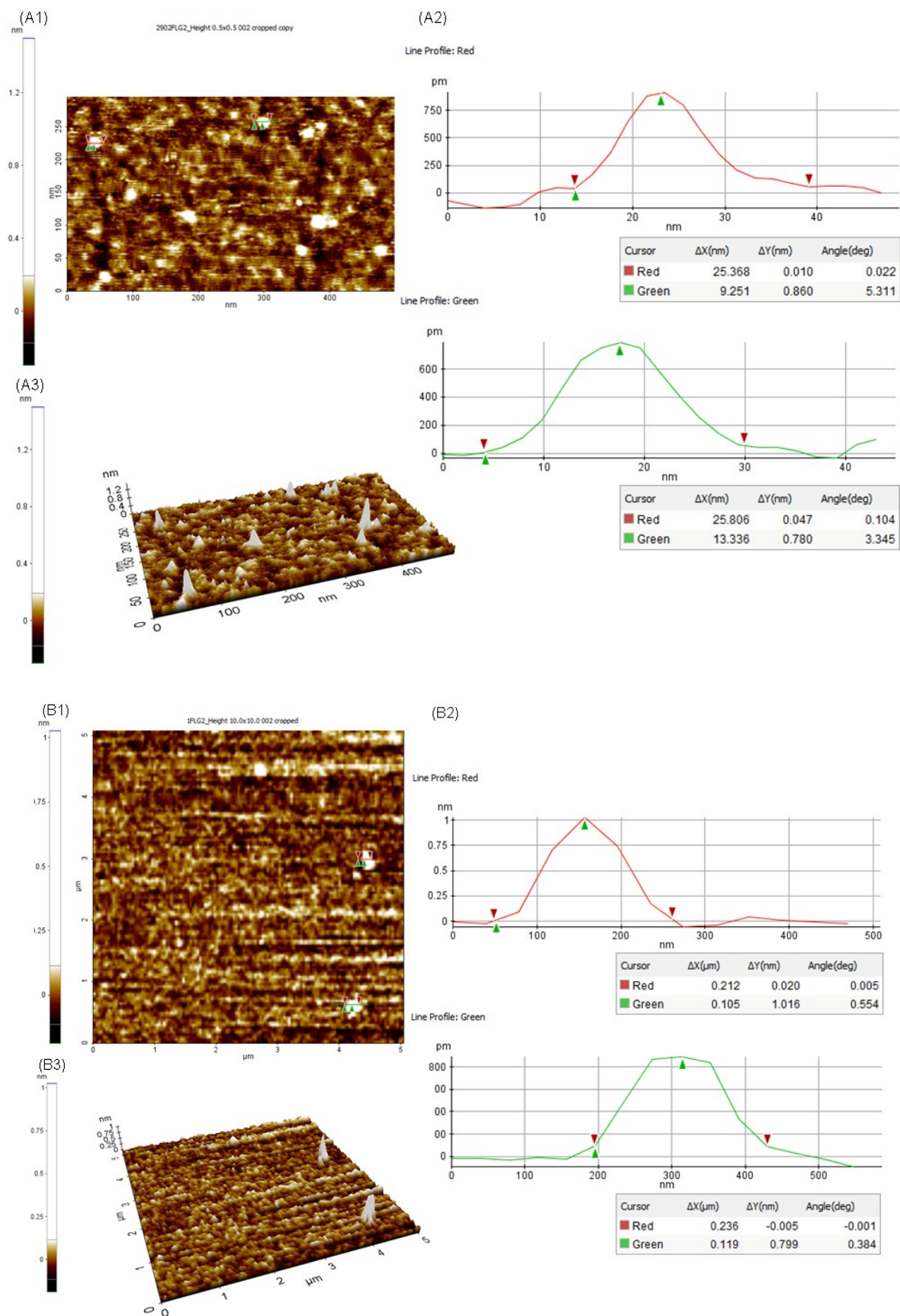
**Fig. S11** XPS survey spectra for the FLG starting material (black) and the functionalized FLG-C<sub>60</sub> nanoconjugates **6** (red).



**Fig. S12** C1s XPS analysis for the FLG starting material.



**Fig. S13** Representative AFM images of FLG-C<sub>60</sub> nanoconjugates **6**; both the 3D graphs (A3, B3) and the height profiles (A2, B2) show FLG-C<sub>60</sub> flakes with 3.0-3.4 nm height.



**Fig. S14** Representative AFM images of FLG; both the 3D graphs (A3, B3) and the height profiles (A2, B2) show FLG particles with 0.8-1.0 nm height.

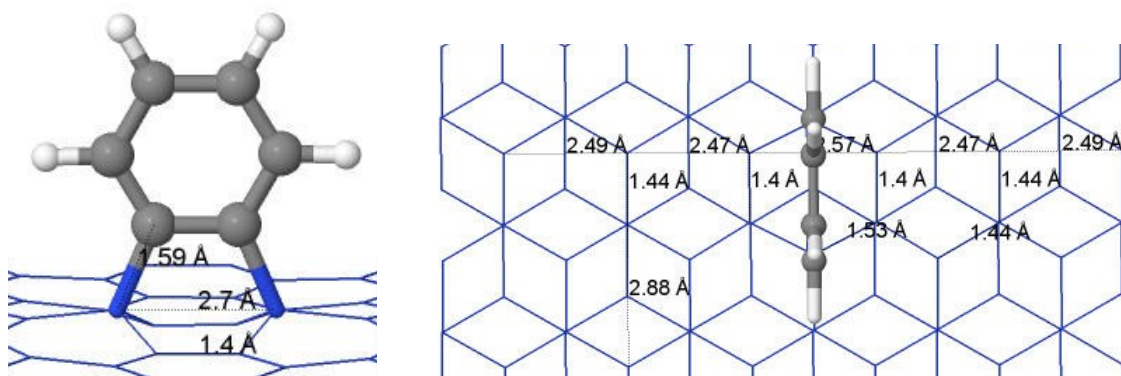
## Computational details

The SIESTA<sup>4</sup> implementation of density functional theory employing a van der Waals density functional<sup>5,6</sup> which uses the revPBE35 revised version of Perdew, Burke and Ernzerhof generalized-gradient approximation exchange correlational functional<sup>7</sup> was used to investigate the energetics of the cycloaddition of benzene on a graphene surface. The van der Waals functional used in SIESTA is a universal non local density functional applicable to arbitrary geometries<sup>8</sup>. To ensure accuracy the inter atomic forces were relaxed to optimize the geometry to a value less than 20 meV/Å using extended double zeta polarized basis sets of pseudo atomic orbitals. In calculating the binding energies basis set superposition errors were minimized by retaining ghost states as prescribed in the counterpoise method.<sup>9,10</sup>

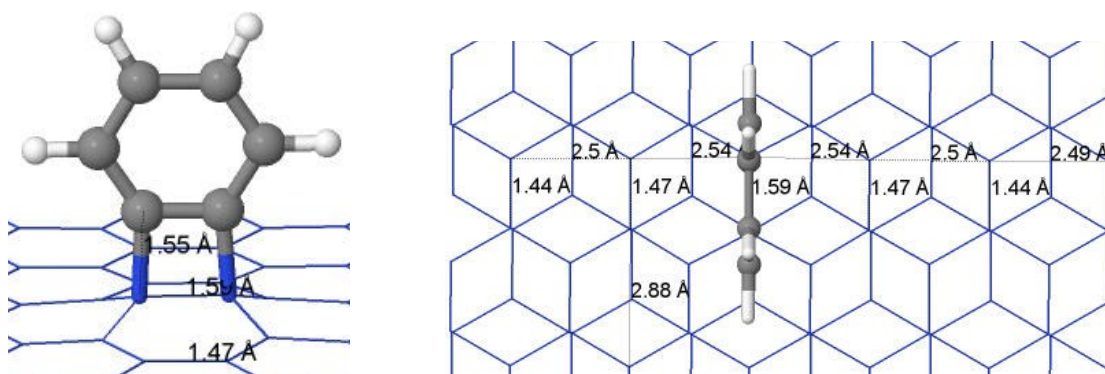
To model a few layer graphene flake (FLG) the calculations use an AB stacked bi-layer sheet of graphene of dimensions in x and y of 1.75 nm x 1.58 nm respectively giving 96 carbon atoms per sheet. Previous calculations<sup>11</sup> show that the bilayer increases the binding of poly aromatic hydrocarbons by ~ 6% when using the van der Waals functionals and further layers show no further increase. The bi-layer is periodic in both directions and to increase the fineness of the k point sampling a rectangular Monkhorst pack grid of dimensions 4 x 4 x 1 is employed. Furthermore to test the persistence of the connectivity trends two systems are considered namely FLG-benzyne and FLG-fullerobenzyne. The calculations are performed by removing the two hydrogens from a benzene ring to create the reactive benzyne derivative which bonds to the graphene surface when placed in proximity to the FLG surface. By starting the calculations at different reaction sites on or near to the [2+2] and [4+2] cycloadduct sites then the system can be allowed to relax to locate energy minima.

From Fig.S15 below the perpendicular separation of the FLG-benzyl moiety in the [4+2] cycloadduct configuration from the graphene surface is found to be 1.45 Å which can be compared to 1.55 Å for the FLG-benzyl moiety in the [2+2] cycloadduct configuration in Fig. S16.





**Fig. S15** The left and right hand figures present the relaxed geometry of the FLG-benzyl moiety in the [4+2] cycloadduct configuration. From the left hand figure the measurements from the associated FLG surface hexagon show the C-C bond length to be 1.40 Å and the distance across the diameter of the hexagon is 2.70 Å giving a perpendicular separation of the benzyl moiety from the associated FLG surface hexagon of 1.45 Å. The right hand figure shows the warping of the FLG surface due to the presence of the benzyl moiety.



**Fig. S16** The left and right hand figures present the relaxed geometry of the FLG-benzyl moiety in the [2+2] cycloadduct configuration. From the left hand figure the measurements from the associated FLG surface hexagon show the C-C bond length to be 1.59 Å with a perpendicular separation of 1.55 Å. The right hand figure shows the warping of the FLG surface due to the presence of the benzyl moiety.

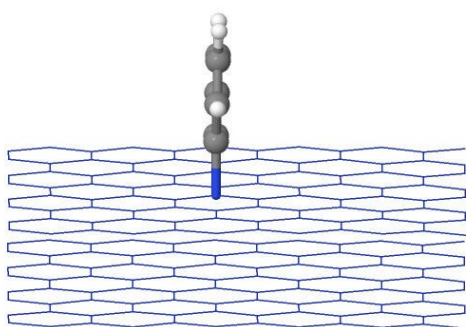
As can be seen from Figs. S15 and S16 the bond lengths associated with the FLG surface hexagons in the vicinity of the benzyl moiety are subject to warping as the moiety moves from the cycloadduct positions of [4+2] to [2+2] and to further clarify the results Fig. S13 defines the location of the benzyl moiety over the FLG surface hexagon

associated with the change in the binding energy. The images 1-4 show snapshots of the molecular dynamics and a movie of the molecular dynamics of the relaxation the benzyne sited at positions 5 or 13 close to the [4+2] cycloadduct is shown in image 3.

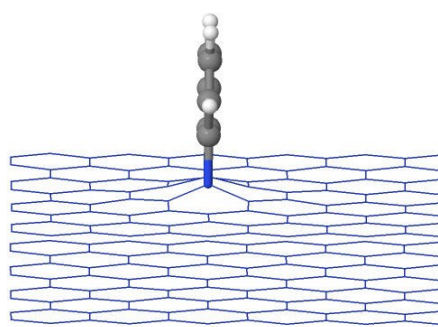
The following images are taken from snapshots of the atomic positions before (a) and (b) after relaxation to the most stable configurations of the [2+2] and [4+2] cycloadducts for FLG-benzyne. Referring to Fig. S17 defines the x axis defines the position of the benzyl moiety over an FLG surface hexagon.

1. Before relaxation the benzyne is sited at position 9 to form the [2+2] cycloadduct.

a. before relaxation



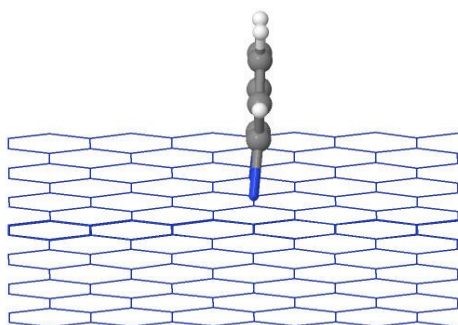
b. after relaxation



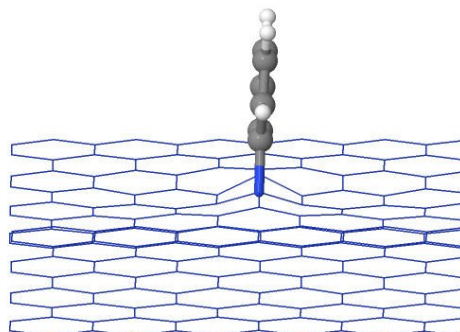
Result. The [2+2] position is stable.

2. Before relaxation the benzyne is sited at positions 2 or 16 to form the [4+2] cycloadduct.

a. before relaxation



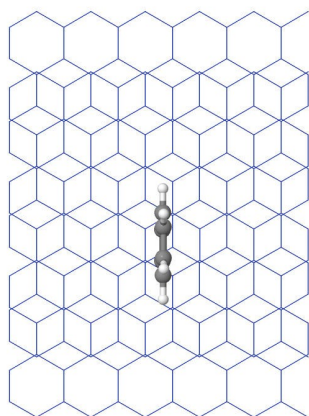
b. after relaxation



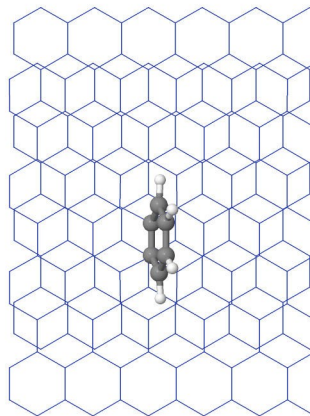
Result. The [4+2] position is stable.

3. Before relaxation the benzyne is sited at positions 5 or 13 close to the [4+2] cycloadduct.

a. before relaxation



b. after relaxation



Results. The approximate [4+2] cycloadduct geometry relaxes to the [2+2] cycloadduct geometry even though the starting configuration is closer to the [4+2] than the [2+2].

Movie of this relaxation: [4+2]to[2+2].avi.

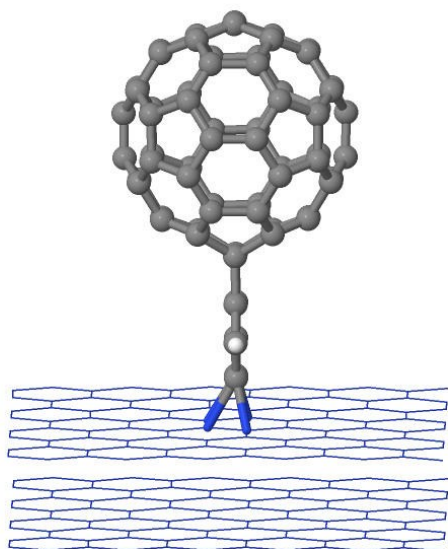


[4+2]to[2+2].avi

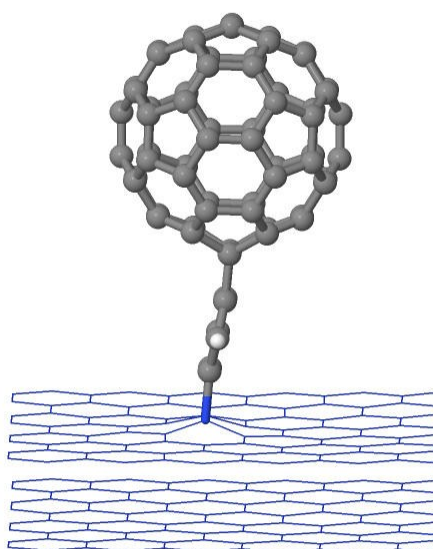
These trends are duplicated for the larger FLG-fullerobenzene complex in the following snapshots.

4. Before relaxation the benzene is sited at positions 5 or 13 close to the [4+2] cycloadduct.

a. before relaxation



b. after relaxation





Results. The approximate [4+2] geometry relaxes to the [2+2] geometry even though the starting configuration is closer to the [4+2] than the [2+2]. The perpendicular height from the basal plane of the FLG to the C<sub>60</sub> upper pentagon is 12.70 Å.

The binding energy energy ( $E^B$  eV) between the FLG and benzyne or fullerobenzyne is calculated to eliminate basis set superposition errors by using the counterpoise method of ghost states in SIESTA from:

$$E^B = E_{AB}^{TOT} - (E_{aB}^{TOT} + E_{Ab}^{TOT}) \quad (1)$$

$E_{AB}^{TOT}$  is the total energy of the system where A represents the FLG and B represents the benzyne or fullerobenzyne.  $E_{aB}^{TOT}$  is the total energy where the FLG is a ghost state and  $E_{Ab}^{TOT}$  the total energy where the benzyne or fullerobenzyne is a ghost state. All the reactions are found to be exothermic and the values of  $E^B$  shown in Eqn. 1 will be negative but to be consistent with the literature the bond energies are defined as the modulus:  $|E^B|$  eV.

The bond energies and bond lengths for the relaxed stable configurations for the [2+2] and [4+2] cycloadduct geometries are shown in Table S1 for these exothermic reactions.

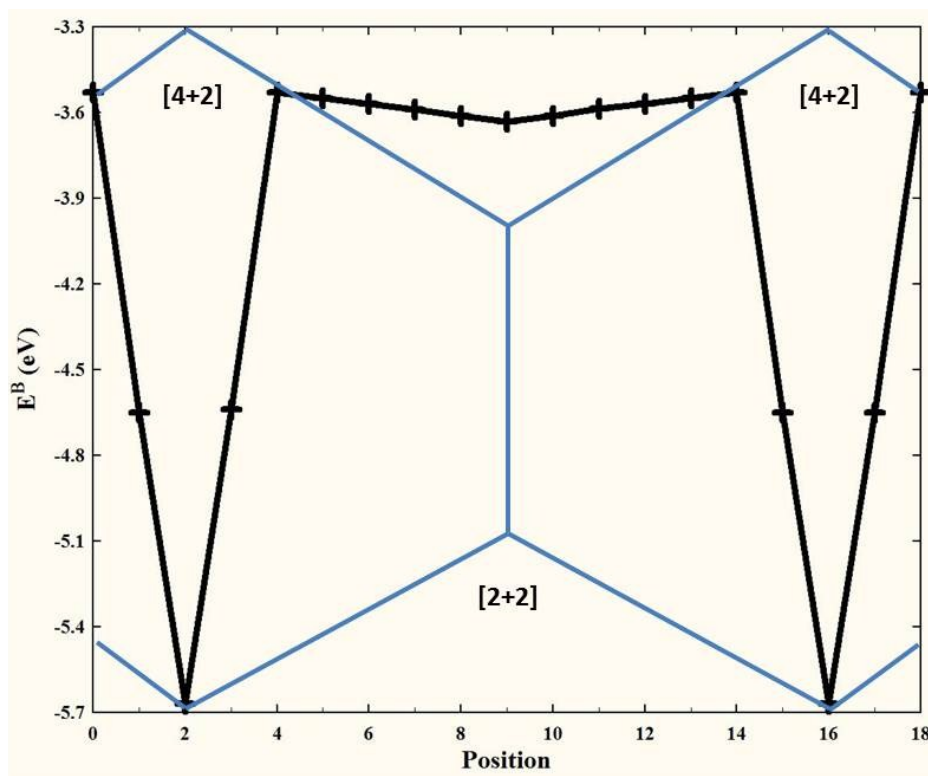
**Table S1.** Bond energies  $|E^B|$  eV, and bond lengths  $d$  (Å), for the exothermic cycloaddition reaction of FLG and benzyne derivatives.

System	$ E^B _{[2+2]}$	$ E^B _{[4+2]}$	$d$ [2+2]	$d$ [4+2]
<b>FLG-benzyne</b>	3.63	5.67	1.55	1.59
<b>FLG-fullerobenzyne</b>	3.62	5.65	1.55	1.59

Table S1 shows that the most stable configuration to be the [4+2] for both systems studied.

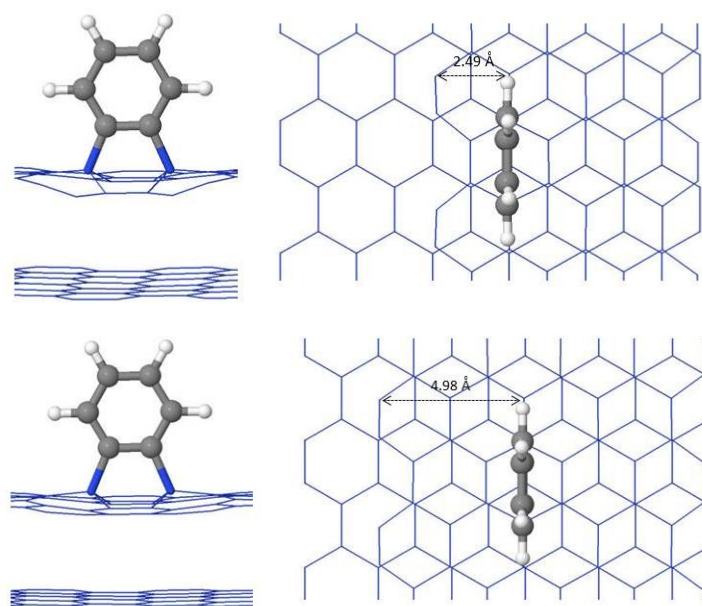
To clarify the dynamics of the bonding Fig. S17 shows the binding energy  $E^B$  eV from Eqn. 1 plotted against position of the benzyl moiety over a graphene hexagon. All the

binding energies are negative which implies an exothermic reaction. The figure shows that the [4+2] configuration is located within a steep and narrow energy minima and small deviations away from this point result in a rapid decrease in  $E^B$ , which then slowly converges towards the secondary minima located at position [2+2]. The difference in  $E^B$  between the two minima is 2.04 eV and the energy barrier to move from the minima at [2+2] to that at [4+2] is approximately 0.1 eV.



**Fig. S17** The binding energy  $E^B$  is plotted as a function of location of the benzyl moiety over a graphene hexagon shown in blue. The [4+2] cycloadduct is found at positions 2 and 16 and the [2+2] cycloadduct at position 9.

As the reaction might well take place at an impurity site on the FLG upper layers the system was modelled to form a step edge as shown in Fig. S18 below. The step edge is formed by cutting the upper graphene sheet. The upper sheet is therefore no longer periodic and the edge is unsaturated which allows for distortion which simulates the step edge impurity. Table S2 compares the results with those from Table S1 for the cycloaddition on the basal plane on FLG. The values of  $E^B$  [2+2] increase as the benzyne moiety approaches the step edge whereas the values of  $E^B$  [4+2] decrease compared to the values from Table S1.



**Fig. S18** The upper and lower hand figures present the relaxed geometry of the FLG-benzyl moiety in the [4+2] cycloadduct configuration. In the upper figure the cycloadduct is 2.49 Å from the step edge and in the lower figure at 4.98 Å from the step edge.

**Table S2.** Binding energies,  $E^B$  (eV) for the exothermic cycloaddition reaction of FLG and benzyne (FLG-benzyne).  $ds$  (Å) defines the distance from a graphene step edge and  $x$  defines the calculation of Table 1 where the location of the reaction occurs on an infinite plane of graphene with no step edge.

$E^B$ [2+2]	$E^B$ [4+2]	$ds$
4.06	5.15	2.5
4.59	5.40	5.0
3.63	5.67	x

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