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Synthetic Procedures

Diethyl 4,4'-bis(phenylglyoxylate) 14

To a stirred solution of 4,4'-dibromobiphenyl **13** (10.0 g, 312.0 g/mol, 32.1 mmol) in dry THF (500 mL) at -90°C (acetone/liquid nitrogen cooling bath), a solution of *n*-butyllithium (2.5 mol/L in hexane, 51.3 mL, 128.3 mmol) was slowly added during 1h under argon. The colorless dispersion was stirred at -90°C during 1 hour and then let slowly come to room temperature over 2 hours. Then the mixture was cooled again to -90°C and diethyl oxalate (40.5 mL, 146.14 g/mol, 298.2 mmol) was quickly added. After 30 min at -90°C, the solution was let slowly come to room temperature. Aqueous hydrochloric acid (1 M, 300 mL) was added, the phases were separated, the aqueous phase was extracted with DCM, and the combined organic phases were dried with sodium sulphate and concentrated. The product was purified by column chromatography on silica in DCM and recrystallization from methanol. Yield: 7.0 g (354.4 g/mol, 19.8 mmol, 62%) of pale-yellow solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CD₂Cl₂): δ = 8.10 (d, 8Hz, 4H), 7.80 (d, 8Hz, 4H), 4.44 (q, 7Hz, 4H), 1.41 (t, 7Hz, 6H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CD₂Cl₂): δ = 186.4, 164.2, 146.1, 132.9, 131.2, 128.4, 63.1, 14.5 ppm. FD-HRMS: m/z calcd for C₂₀H₁₈O₆: 354.1103 [M⁺]; found: 354.1101. Mp.: 88-91°C.

4,4'-Bis(phenylglyoxylic acid) 6

Diethyl 4,4'-bis(phenylglyoxylate) **14** (7.0 g, 354.4 g/mol, 19.8 mmol) was suspended in ethanol (400 mL), a solution of sodium hydrogen carbonate (40 g) in water (800 mL) was added and the mixture was stirred at reflux for 4 hours. The solution was poured into aqueous hydrochloric acid (0.4 M, 2 L). A colorless solid precipitated which was washed with water and dried. Yield: 5.9 g (298.2 g/mol, 19.8 mmol, quantitative). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CD₃SOCD₃): δ = 7.90 (d, 9Hz, 4H), 7.87 (d, 9Hz, 4H) ppm (no acid proton dectected). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CD₃SOCD₃): δ = 191.4, 167.9, 143.8, 132.6, 129.9, 127.6 ppm. FD-HRMS: m/z calcd for C₁₆H₁₀O₆: 298.477 [M⁺]; found: 298.0474. Mp.: 210-215°C (decomp.).

4,4'-Bis(phenylacetic acid) 7

4,4'-Bis(phenylglyoxylic acid) **6** (2.0 g, 298.2 g/mol, 6.7 mmol) and sodium iodide (970 mg, 149.9 g/mol, 6.5 mol), were suspended in hypophosphorous acid (66.0 g/mol, 50% aqueous solution, 2.1 mL, 1.225 g/mL, 19.5 mmol) and acetic acid (25 mL). The mixture was stirred at reflux under argon for 3 days. The resulting yellow solution was slowly let cool to room temperature, whereupon the product crystallized, was filtered off, washed with water and dried. The obtained colorless solid (1.7 g, 270.3 g/mol, 6.3 mmol, 94%) was used in the next step without further purification. ¹H NMR (400MHz, CD₃SOCD₃): δ = 12.35 (broad s, 2H), 7.60 (d, 8Hz, 4H), 7.34 (d, 8Hz, 4H), 3.61 (s, 4H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CD₃SOCD₃): δ = 172.7, 138.3, 134.2, 130.0, 126.4, 40.3 ppm. Mp.: 276-281°C. (lit.:270-275°C²¹ / 282-284°C²² / 270-273°C²³)

Octaethyl [2.0.2.0.2.0.2.0]-paracyclophanetetraene-octacarboxylate 9

4,4'-Bis(phenylglyoxylic acid) **6** (500 mg, 298.2 g/mol, 1.68 mmol) and 4,4'-Bis(phenylacetic acid) **7** (453mg, 270.3 g/mol, 1.68 mmol) were dissolved in dry THF (50mL). The yellow solution was added dropwise with a motorized syringe over a period of 20 hours into a stirred refluxing solution of acetic anhydride (2.4 mL, 102.1 g/mol, 1.082 g/mL, 25 mmol) and triethylamine (2.2 mL, 101.2 g/mol, 0.726 g/mL, 16 mmol) in dry THF (500 mL). The orange-yellow solution was stirred at reflux under argon for 3 days. Ethanol (8 mL), 1,8-diazabicyclo[5.4.0]undec-7-ene (DBU, 5.5 mL) and bromoethane (5.5 mL) were then added, and the resulting solution was refluxed for 4 hours. Aqueous hydrochloric acid (0.4 M, 500 mL) was added, the mixture was extracted with DCM (2 × 100 mL) and the combined organic phases were dried with sodium sulphate and concentrated. The orange solid was purified by column chromatography on silica in DCM containing ethanol (5%), and by precipitation by adding ethanol (200 mL) to a solution in ethyl acetate (10 mL). Yield: 560 mg (1289.4 g/mol, 0.43 mmol, 52%) of a colorless glassy solid that becomes fluid around 190°C. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CD₂Cl₂): δ = 7.36 (d, 8Hz, 16H), 7.14 (d, 8Hz, 16H), 4.27 (q, 7Hz, 16H), 1.29 (t, 7Hz, 24H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CD₂Cl₂): δ = 168.5, 140.9, 138.5, 134.7, 130.9, 127.4, 126.7, 62.4, 14.4 ppm. FD-HRMS: m/z calcd for C₈₀H₇₂O₁₆: 1288.4820 [M⁺]; found: 1288.4816.

Octaethyl tetra-3,6-phenanthrylene-octacarboxylate 11

A solution of paracyclophane **9** (500 mg, 1289.4 g/mol, 0.39 mmol) and iodine (350 mg, 253.8 g/mol, 1.38 mmol) in a mixture of ethyl acetate (700 mL) and 1,4-dioxane (150 mL) was stirred for 5 days at room temperature under air in a Peschl photoreactor with irradiation from a medium-pressure 150W mercury immersion lamp inside a borosilicate immersion tube in which cooling water circulates. The final solution was concentrated, and the product was purified by column chromatography on silica in ethyl acetate, and by precipitation by adding ethanol (500 mL) to a solution in DCM (50 mL). Yield: 235 mg (1281.4 g/mol, 0.18 mmol, 47%). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 9.06 (s, 8H), 8.30 (d, 9Hz, 8H), 7.72 (d, 9Hz, 8H), 4.54 (q, 7Hz, 16H), 1.48 (t, 7Hz, 24H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 168.1, 142.8, 131.3, 130.1, 129.1, 127.6, 127.0, 122.6, 62.3, 14.4 ppm. FD-HRMS: m/z calcd for C₈₀H₆₄O₁₆: 1280.4194 [M⁺]; found: 1280.4229. Mp.: >300°C.

Octaethyl [2.2.0.2.2.0]-paracyclophanetetraene-octacarboxylate 10

4,4'-Bis(phenylglyoxylic acid) **6** (1.00 g, 298.3 g/mol, 3.35 mmol) and *p*-phenylenediacetic acid **8** (650 mg, 194.2 g/mol, 3.35 mmol) were dissolved in dry THF (50 mL). The colorless solution was added dropwise with a motorized syringe over a period of 24 hours into a stirred refluxing solution of acetic anhydride (4.8 mL, 102.1 g/mol, 1.082 g/mL, 51 mmol) and triethylamine (4.8 mL, 101.2 g/mol, 0.726 g/mL, 34 mmol) in dry THF (500 mL). The orange-yellow solution was stirred at reflux under argon for 24 hours. Ethanol (18 mL), 1,8-diazabicyclo[5.4.0]undec-7-ene (DBU, 12 mL) and bromoethane (12 mL) were then added, and the resulting solution was refluxed for 24 hours. Aqueous hydrochloric acid (0.4 M, 500 mL) was added, the mixture was extracted with DCM (2 × 100 mL) and the combined organic phases were dried with sodium sulphate and concentrated. The orange solid was purified by column chromatography on silica in DCM containing ethanol (0.5%). Yield: 400 mg (1137.2 g/mol, 0.35 mmol, 21 %) of white powder. ¹H NMR (400MHz, CD₂Cl₂): δ = 7.34 (d, 8Hz, 8H), 7.06 (d, 8Hz, 8H), 7.00 (s, 8H), 4.25 (q, 7Hz, 8H), 4.24 (q, 7Hz, 8H), 1.27 (t, 7Hz, 12H), 1.26 (t, 7Hz, 12H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100MHz, CD₂Cl₂): δ = 168.2, 167.7, 140.0, 139.8, 137.9, 135.5, 134.6, 130.9, 130.2, 126.7, 62.42, 62.38, 14.3 ppm. FD-HRMS: m/z calcd for C₆₈H₆₄O₁₆: 1136.4194 [M⁺]; found: 1136.4176. Mp.: >300°C.

Octaethyl propellicene-octacarboxylate 12

A solution of paracyclophane **10** (150 mg, 1137.2 g/mol, 0.13 mmol) and iodine (120 mg, 253.8 g/mol, 0.47 mmol) in toluene (900 mL) was stirred for 2 days at room temperature under air in the above-mentioned photoreactor. The solvent was evaporated, and the mixture was extracted with an aqueous solution of sodium thiosulphate (0.4 M, 100 mL) and DCM (2 × 100 mL). The combined organic phases were concentrated and the crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica in DCM containing ethanol (2%), followed by precipitation by adding methanol (50 mL) to a solution in chloroform (3 mL). Yield: 80 mg (1129.2 g/mol, 0.071 mmol, 54%) of pale yellow solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CD₂Cl₂): δ = 8.32 (s, 4H), 8.08 (d, 8Hz, 4H), 8.04 (d, 1Hz, 4H), 7.20 (dd, 8Hz, 1Hz, 4H), 4.59-4.46 (m, 16H, note that the helical environment may lead to four double quartets instead of two quartets for the methylene protons),²⁴ 1.47 (t, 7Hz, 12H), 1.44 (t, 7Hz, 12H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CD₂Cl₂): δ = 168.0, 167.9, 140.7, 131.1, 130.9, 130.6, 129.8, 129.1, 128.3, 127.6, 127.1, 126.8, 126.0, 63.0, 62.9, 14.6 ppm. FD-HRMS: m/z calcd for C₆₈H₅₆O₁₆: 1128.3568 [M⁺]; found: 1128.3576. Mp.: 217-221°C.

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Crystal structures

The crystallographic data were collected with a Bruker APEX II diffractometer, equipped with a graphite monochromator centred on the path of MoK_{α} radiation. Single crystals, made by slow diffusion of methanol into a chloroform solution, was coated with CargilleTM NHV immersion oil and mounted on a fiber loop, followed by data collection at 120 K. The program SAINT was used to integrate the data, which was thereafter corrected using SADABS.²⁵ The structure was solved using direct methods and refined by a full-matrix least-squares method on F² using SHELXL-2014.²⁶ All non-hydrogen atoms were refined with anisotropic displacement parameters.

For compounds **11** and **12**, despite of their decent sizes, the crystals were not diffracting at high resolution. Therefore, the data were cut at 0.9 and 1.2 angstrom as there is almost no diffraction above and Rint becomes much larger. The result is a low θ_{max} value as well as aquite poor resolution and data/parameter ratio.

For **12**, the crystal structure contains three crystallographically different macrocycles and four lattice chloroform solvent molecules with partial occupancies. One of the four chloroform molecules was found to be disordered over two positions, as well as several ethyl groups of the macrocycles. Chloroform molecules and ethyl groups were refined using DFIX, DANG SADI, and SIMU constraints/restraints as well as EADP contraints for the modelization of the disordered groups. Using the SQUEEZE procedure in PLATON was tried but does not improve the final R_1/wR_2 and GoF values.

The CIF files have been deposited at the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre as supplementary publications CCDC 1556959, 1556500 and 1556501.

Compound	10	11	12	
Formula	$C_{68}H_{64}O_{16} \cdot (CHCl_3)_2$	C ₈₀ H ₆₄ O ₁₆ ·CHCl ₃ ·CH ₄ O	$C_{68}H_{56}O_{16} \cdot (CHCl_3)_{0.55}$	
FW (g·mol ^{−1})	1375.92	1432.72	3584.33	
Crystal color	colourless	colourless	yellow	
Crystal size (mm)	0.46 x 0.18 x 0.04	0.45 x 0.20 x 0.08	0.32 x 0.30 x 0.10	
Crystal system	triclinic	triclinic	monoclinic	
Space group	P-1	P-1	$P2_1/n$	
Temperature	120 K	120 K	120 K	
<i>a</i> (Å)	13.6192(12)	14.0409(16)	19.3857(9)	
b (Å)	13.9816(12)	15.132(2)	34.8893(17)	
c (Å)	19.4394(16)	19.481(2)	29.1718(14)	
a (°)	84.693(4)	111.079(8)	90	
β (°)	87.138(4)	92.542(6)	101.784(2)	
γ(°)	66.145(4)	114.545(5)	90	
$V(\text{\AA}^3)$	3370.6(5)	3420.3(8)	19314.6(16)	
$\mathbf{d}_{\mathrm{calc}}$	1.356	1.391	1.233	
μ (mm ⁻¹)	0.322	0.209	0.153	
θ_{\min} - θ_{\max}	1.77° - 25.14°	1.15° - 23.78°	1.43° - 20.91°	
Refl. coll. / unique	221832 / 11960	223838 / 9984	462513 / 20335	
Completeness to 20	0.993	0.955	0.993	
\mathbf{R}_{int}	0.0854	0.0977	0.2183	
Refined param./restr.	837 / 0	929 / 0	2492 / 465	
${}^{\mathrm{a}}\mathbf{R}_{1}\left(I>2\sigma(I)\right)$	0.0571	0.1237	0.1416	
^b wR ₂ (all data)	0.1523	0.3713	0.4291	
Goodness of fit	1.073	1.152	1.430	

Table : crystallographic data

 ${}^{a}R_{1} = \Sigma ||F_{0}| - |F_{C}|| / \Sigma |F_{0}| \text{ and } {}^{b}wR_{2} = [\Sigma w (F_{0}{}^{2} - F_{C}{}^{2})^{2} / \Sigma w (F_{0}{}^{2})^{2}]^{1/2}$

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ORTEP-type view of **10** at 120 K with thermal ellipsoids at 50 % probability level. Hydrogen atoms on the ethyl groups and solvent molecules are omitted for clarity. C: gray, O: red.



ORTEP-type view of **11** at 120 K with thermal ellipsoids at 50 % probability level. Hydrogen atoms on the ethyl groups and solvent molecules are omitted for clarity. C: gray, O: red.



ORTEP-type view of **12** at 120 K with thermal ellipsoids at 20 % probability level. Hydrogen atoms on the ethyl groups and solvent molecules are omitted for clarity. Note that only one of the three molecules in the asymmetric unit is represented. C: gray, O: red.

Electrochemistry



Differential pulse voltammograms for **11** (left) and **12** (right). Asterisks denote first reduction and oxidation waves relevant for band gap determination.

Compound	E_{ρ}^{a1} vs. Fc+/Fc (V)	E_{ρ}^{a2} vs. Fc+/Fc (V)	E_{p}^{c1} vs. Fc+/Fc (V)	E_{ρ}^{c2} vs. Fc+/Fc (V)	Band gap
11	+1.061(7)	+1.462(3)	-2.01(1)	-2.19(2)	3.07(1)
12	+1.06(2)	+1.459(3)	-1.944(1)	-2.040(1)	3.00(2)

Differential pulse voltammograms were obtained in a three electrode cell, utilizing an Autolab PGStat20 potentiostat, driven by GPES software (General Purpose Electrochemical System, Version 4.4, EcoChemie B.V., Utrecht, the Netherlands), a platinum wire counter electrode, a 500 μ M platinum disc working electrode, and a non-aqueous reference electrode comprised of a silver wire in a 0.01 M solution of AgNO₃ and 0.1 M tetrabutylammonium perchlorate in acetonitrile. Compounds **11** and **12** (approximately 1.5 mM) were dissolved in dichloromethane supplemented with 0.1 M tetrabutylammonium hexafluorophosphate; measurements were performed under a stream of argon. Reported potentials are the average of at least three scans, and are reported vs. $E^{\circ}(Fc)$ (at -4.80 eV vs. vacuum), used as an internal standard.

NMR spectra





























