Electronic Supporting Information for:

# Isolation and structural characterisation of rhodium(III) $\eta^2$ –fluoroarene complexes: experimental verification of predicted regioselectivity

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#### 1. General experimental methods

All manipulations were performed under an atmosphere of argon (N4.8) using Schlenk and glovebox techniques unless otherwise stated. Glassware was oven dried at 150 °C overnight and flame-dried under vacuum prior to use. Molecular sieves were activated by heating at 300 °C *in vacuo* overnight. CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> was freeze-pump-thaw degassed and dried over 3 Å molecular sieves. C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub> was distilled from sodium and benzophenone and stored over 3 Å molecular sieves Fluoroarenes were pre-dried over Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, distilled from calcium hydride and dried over two successive batches of 3 Å molecular sieves. Other anhydrous solvents were purchased from Acros or Sigma-Aldrich, freeze-thaw degassed and stored over 3 Å molecular sieves. Na[B(3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sup>1</sup> CNC-Me·2HBr<sup>2</sup> and [Rh(biph)Cl(*t*Bu<sub>2</sub>PCH<sub>2</sub>P*t*Bu<sub>2</sub>)]<sup>3</sup> were prepared following literature procedures. All other reagents are commercially available and were used as supplied. Solution and solid-state NMR spectra were recorded on Bruker spectrometers at 298 K unless otherwise stated. NMR spectra in fluoroarenes were recorded using an internal capillary of C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub> and externally referenced to SiMe<sub>4</sub>. Chemical shifts are quoted in ppm and coupling constants in Hz. Crystallographic data was collected on a dual source Rigaku Oxford diffraction SuperNova diffractometer. HR ESI-MS were recorded on a Bruker MaXis mass spectrometer and microanalyses performed at the London Metropolitan University by Stephen Boyer. IR spectra were recorded in air on a Bruker Alpha Platinum ATR FT-IR spectrometer at 298 K.

# 2. Preparation of [Rh(CNC-Me)(biph)(κ<sup>1</sup>–CICH<sub>2</sub>CI)][B(3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>] 2

A suspension of Ag<sub>2</sub>O (23.5 mg, 101 µmol), CNC-Me·2HBr (40.7 mg, 101 µmol) and Na[B(3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>] (98.6 mg, 111 µmol) in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (*ca.* 2 mL) was stirred in the dark for 18 h. The solution was filtered, washing the precipitate with additional CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (3 x 1 mL) before it was discarded, and volatiles removed *in vacuo*. Solid [Rh(biph)Cl(dtbpm)] (60.9 mg, 102 µmol) and CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (*ca.* 2 mL) were added and the resulting solution stirred at RT for 18 h. Volatiles were removed *in vacuo* and the organometallic intermediate extracted into Et<sub>2</sub>O (3 x 3 mL) and the solvent removed *in vacuo*. Solid Na[B(3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>] (99.2 mg, 112 µmol) and CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (*ca.* 2 mL) were added and the resulting solution was filtered, washing the precipitate with additional CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (3 x 1 mL) before it was discarded, and the product obtained as yellow-orange blocks after successive recrystallisation from CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/hexane at RT. Yield: 117 mg (80%).

<sup>1</sup>**H NMR** (500 MHz, CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>):  $\delta$  8.33 (t, <sup>3</sup>J<sub>HH</sub> = 8.2, 1H, py), 7.68–7.81 (m, 8H, Ar<sup>F</sup>), 7.65 (d, <sup>3</sup>J<sub>HH</sub> = 2.0, 2H, NCH), 7.59 (d, <sup>3</sup>J<sub>HH</sub> = 8.2, 2H, py), 7.56 (br, 4H, Ar<sup>F</sup>), 7.54 (br, 2H, biph), 7.00 (vbr, fwhm = 20 Hz, 2H, biph), 6.92 (d, <sup>3</sup>J<sub>HH</sub> = 2.0, 2H, NCH), 6.76 (vbr, fwhm = 60 Hz, 2H, biph), 5.33 (s, 2H, free CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>), 3.21 (s, 6H, CH<sub>3</sub>). One of the biph signals is not observed, presumably as a consequence of structural dynamics. <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (126 MHz, CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>):  $\delta$  182.4 (d, <sup>1</sup>J<sub>RhC</sub> = 44, NCN), 162.3 (q, <sup>1</sup>J<sub>CB</sub> = 50, Ar<sup>F</sup>), 151.1 (s, py), 144.9 (s, py), 135.4 (s, Ar<sup>F</sup>), 129.3 (qq, <sup>1</sup>J<sub>FC</sub> = 32, <sup>1</sup>J<sub>CB</sub> = 3, Ar<sup>F</sup>), 126.5 (biph), 125.6 (s, NCH), 125.1 (q, <sup>1</sup>J<sub>FC</sub> =

272, Ar<sup>F</sup>), 123.7 (s, biph),121.4 (s, biph), 118.1 (sept,  ${}^{3}J_{FC} = 4$ , Ar<sup>F</sup>), 118.0 (s, NCH), 108.3 (s, py), 37.9 (s, CH<sub>3</sub>). Three biph signals are not observed, presumably as a consequence of structural dynamics.

**Anal**. Calcd. for C<sub>58</sub>H<sub>35</sub>BCl<sub>2</sub>F<sub>24</sub>N<sub>5</sub>Rh (1442.53 gmol<sup>-1</sup>): C, 48.29; H, 2.45; N, 4.86. Found C, 48.40; H, 2.37; N, 4.81.

HR ESI-MS (positive ion, 4 kV): 494.0852 ([M – CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>]<sup>+</sup>, calcd 494.0847) m/z.





Figure S5. ATR IR spectrum of 2.



**Figure S6.** Solid-state structure of **2**. Thermal ellipsoids at 50% probability, minor disordered component (Rh–Cl<u>CH<sub>2</sub>Cl</u>) and [B(3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sup>-</sup> anion omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (°) associated with dichloromethane coordination: Rh–Cl, 2.5932(7); *trans*-C–Rh–Cl, 174.01(7); *trans*-C-Rh, 2.017(3).

#### 3. Analysis of 2 by VT NMR spectroscopy.

Data were collected using a solution of **2** (14.4 mg, 10.0  $\mu$ mol) in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (0.5 mL) within a J. Young's valve NMR tube and a 600 MHz Bruker spectrometer. The sample was equilibrated at each temperature for at least 5 min before data acquisition (Figure S7).

The dynamics observed by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy were modelled using the four biphenyl resonances in the region 7.30 – 6.20 ppm (Table S1, Figure S8). Reference line widths and coupling constants were fixed following analysis of low temperature data (200 – 225 K). Eyring analysis (Figure S9) of the associated rate constants yielded  $\Delta H^{\ddagger} = 75 \pm 1$  kJ mol<sup>-1</sup> and  $\Delta S^{\ddagger} = +80 \pm 5$  J K<sup>-1</sup> mol<sup>-1</sup>, with  $\Delta G^{\ddagger}_{298K} = 52 \pm 3$  kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>.

<i>T  </i> K	log( <i>k</i> )	<i>k</i> / s <sup>-1</sup>	ln( <i>k/T</i> )	
240	0.3792	2.39	-4.607	
250	1.1533	14.23	-2.866	
260	1.7885	61.45	-1.443	
268	2.1846	152.97	-0.561	
273	2.5425	348.74	0.245	
298	3.7652	5823.71	2.973	
308	4.1172	13097.85	3.750	

 Table S1. Variable temperature <sup>1</sup>H NMR data for 2.





.3 7.2 7.1 7.0 6.9 6.8 6.7 6.6 6.5 6.4 6.3 6





Figure S9. Eyring plot for the dynamics observed in 2.

# 4. NMR scale reactions of 2 with fluoroarenes

Complex **2** (14.4 mg, 10.0  $\mu$ mol) and fluoroarene solvent (0.5 mL) were mixed within a J. Young's valve NMR tube and the resulting solution analysed by <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>19</sup>F{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectroscopy.

# 4.1 Arene = FC<sub>6</sub>H<sub>5</sub>

Following the general procedure, an orange solution was obtained. Analysis by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy indicated the liberation of one equivalent of CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> ( $\delta$  4.73) into solution. The <sup>19</sup>F{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum showed only signals for the [B(3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sup>-</sup> anion ( $\delta$  -62.5) and the solvent ( $\delta$  -113.3).



# 4.2 Arene = 1,2-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>

Following the general procedure, an orange solution was obtained. Analysis by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy indicated the liberation of one equivalent of CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> ( $\delta$  4.91) into solution. The <sup>19</sup>F{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum showed only signals for the [B(3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sup>-</sup> anion ( $\delta$  -63.1) and the solvent ( $\delta$  -139.6).





**Figure S13.** <sup>19</sup>F{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum recorded after **2** was dissolved in 1,2-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> (377 MHz).

#### 4.3 Arene = $1,3-F_2C_6H_4$

350

300

250

200

150

100

50

Following the general procedure, an orange solution was obtained. Analysis by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy indicated the liberation of one equivalent of CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (δ 5.01) into solution. The <sup>19</sup>F{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum showed only signals for the  $[B(3,5-(CF_3)_2C_6H_3)_4]^-$  anion ( $\delta$  -62.9) and the solvent ( $\delta$  -110.7).





-50

-100

-150

-200

-250

-300

-350

# 4.4 Arene = 1,4-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>

Following the general procedure, a suspension was obtained with an orange precipitate. Full dissolution was only obtained with warming. Analysis by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy at 298 K after initial mixing indicated the liberation of CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (*ca.* 10 equivalents per complex,  $\delta$  5.06) into solution. The <sup>19</sup>F{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum showed only signals for the [B(3,5-(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sup>-</sup> anion ( $\delta$  -62.8) and the solvent ( $\delta$  -120.3). <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra recorded at 351 K and immediately after cooling to 298 K before the onset of crystallisation are consistent with the liberation of one equivalent of CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> into solution ( $\delta$ <sub>351K</sub> 5.00;  $\delta$ <sub>298K</sub> 5.05).





Figure S18. <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum recorded after 2 was heated until dissolution in 1,4-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> (351 K, 400 MHz).



Figure S19. <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum recorded after 2 was heated until dissolution in 1,4-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> (298 K, 400 MHz).

# 5. Preparation of [Rh(CNC-Me)(biph)( $\eta^2$ -arene)][B(3,5-(CF\_3)\_2C\_6H\_3)\_4] 1

# 5.1 General procedure

A solution of **2** in the respective fluoroarene (*ca.* 2 mL) was briefly mixed before volatiles were removed *in vacuo*. The product was then recrystallised as orange bocks by layering a solution of the crude product in the respective fluoroarene with hexane and then storage at RT.

# 5.2 Arene = FC<sub>6</sub>H<sub>5</sub> (1b)

Following the general procedure using **2** (40.0 mg, 27.7 µmol) and C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>5</sub>F afforded **1b**. Yield: 29.3 mg (73%).

No absorbances attributed to bound fluoroarene could be detected on analysis by ATR IR spectroscopy. Analysis of a sample dissolved in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> by <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectroscopy indicated the liberation of one equivalent of FC<sub>6</sub>H<sub>5</sub> into solution ( $\delta_{19F}$  -113.9).

**Anal**. Calcd. for C<sub>63</sub>H<sub>38</sub>BF<sub>25</sub>N<sub>5</sub>Rh (1453.71 gmol<sup>-1</sup>): C, 52.05; H, 2.63; N, 4.82. Found C, 52.07; H, 2.65; N, 4.76.



Figure S20. ATR IR spectrum of 1b.



## 5.3 Arene = $1,2-F_2C_6H_4$ (1c)

Following the general procedure using **2** (40.0 mg, 27.7  $\mu$ mol) and 1,2-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> afforded **1c**. Yield: 25.0 mg (61%).

No absorbances attributed to bound fluoroarene could be detected on analysis by ATR IR spectroscopy. Analysis of a sample dissolved in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> by <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectroscopy indicated the liberation of one equivalent of 1,2-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> into solution ( $\delta_{19F}$  -139.4).

**Anal**. Calcd. for C<sub>63</sub>H<sub>37</sub>BF<sub>26</sub>N<sub>5</sub>Rh (1471.70 gmol<sup>-1</sup>): C, 51.42; H, 2.53; N, 4.76. Found C, 51.44; H, 2.43; N, 4.70.



# 5.4 Arene = 1,3-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> (1d)

Following the general procedure using **2** (40.0 mg, 27.7  $\mu$ mol) and 1,3-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> afforded **1d**. Yield: 31.2 mg (77%).

No absorbances attributed to bound fluoroarene could be detected on analysis by ATR IR spectroscopy. Analysis of a sample dissolved in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> by <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectroscopy indicated the liberation of one equivalent of 1,3-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> into solution ( $\delta_{19F}$  -110.8).

**Anal**. Calcd. for C<sub>63</sub>H<sub>37</sub>BF<sub>26</sub>N<sub>5</sub>Rh (1471.70 gmol<sup>-1</sup>): C, 51.42; H, 2.53; N, 4.76. Found C, 51.35; H, 2.38; N, 4.61.





# 5.5 Arene = $1,4-F_2C_6H_4$ (1e)

Following the general procedure using **2** (40.0 mg, 27.7  $\mu$ mol) and 1,4-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> afforded **1e**. Yield: 32.9 mg (81%).

No absorbances attributed to bound fluoroarene could be detected on analysis by ATR IR spectroscopy. Analysis of a sample dissolved in CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> by <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectroscopy indicated the liberation of one equivalent of 1,4-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> into solution ( $\delta_{19F}$  -120.3).

**Anal**. Calcd. for C<sub>63</sub>H<sub>37</sub>BF<sub>26</sub>N<sub>5</sub>Rh (1471.70 gmol<sup>-1</sup>): C, 51.42; H, 2.53; N, 4.76. Found C, 51.25; H, 2.32; N, 4.54.



Figure S29. ATR IR spectrum of 1e.



## 5.6 Competition experiment and preparation of 1a

A solution of **2** (40.0 mg, 27.7  $\mu$ mol) in 1,2-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> (*ca*. 2 mL) was briefly mixed before volatiles were removed *in vacuo*. The residue was dissolved in a mixture of 1,2-F<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub> (1.00 mL, 10.2 mmol) and C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub> (910  $\mu$ L, 10.2 mmol) causing a colour change from orange to yellow. After 30 min the solution was layered with excess hexane (*ca*. 50 mL) and stored at RT to afford **1a** as yellow-orange crystals. Yield: 30.7 mg (77%).

No signals attributed to bound arene could be detected on analysis by ATR IR spectroscopy. Analysis of a sample dissolved in  $CD_2Cl_2$  by <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectroscopy confirmed the absence of fluoroarene and liberation of one equivalent of  $C_6H_6$  into solution.

**Anal**. Calcd. for C<sub>63</sub>H<sub>37</sub>BF<sub>26</sub>N<sub>5</sub>Rh (1471.70 gmol<sup>-1</sup>): C, 51.42; H, 2.53; N, 4.76. Found C, 51.25; H, 2.32; N, 4.54.





# 5.7 Analysis by SS <sup>19</sup>F MAS NMR spectroscopy

All solid-state NMR experiments were recorded on a Bruker 500 WB (wide bore) spectrometer equipped with AVANCE III console and using a 1.3 mm Bruker probe in HCN configuration at 50 kHz MAS frequency. The probe was tuned to <sup>19</sup>F frequency at 470.38 MHz and sample were maintained at 288 K with active cooling using a Bruker BCU-X cooling unit (670 L/h flow). The hard 90° pulses were set to 2.5 µs at 100 kHz nutation frequency for <sup>19</sup>F. The experiments were acquired with a single 2 s recycle delay and 256 scans were collected.



# 6. Computational details

Density functional theory calculations were carried out using the ORCA 4.1.2 program,<sup>4</sup> employing Grimme's dispersion corrected ωB97X-D3 functional<sup>5</sup> and the def2-TZVP(-f) basis set on all atoms, with the associated def2-ECP effective core potential on Rh and Re.<sup>6</sup> The RIJCOSX approximation was used to reduce the computational cost of calculations (with the def2/J auxiliary basis set).<sup>7</sup> Geometries of metal cations were optimised starting from the X-ray crystallography data and are provided in XYZ format. Characterisation of stationary points as minima was verified by analytical vibrational mode analysis. Coordination of the fluoroarene moieties was investigated using the extended transition state method for energy decomposition analysis combined with the natural orbitals for chemical valence theory (ETS-NOCV) as implemented in ORCA 4.1.2.<sup>8</sup>

Compd_binding site	E	$\Delta E_{\text{bind}}$	NOCV 1	NOCV 2	NOCV 1+2	NOCV total
			(arene→M)	(M→arene)		
1a	-1581.83769205	-73.8	-31.6	-6.8	-38.4	-56.6
<b>1b_</b> 1,2	-1681.09138313	-63.8	-21.2	-2.8	-24.0	-40.2
<b>1b_</b> 2,3	-1681.09464906	-72.4	-30.2	-7.2	-37.3	-56.4
<b>1b_</b> 3,4	-1681.09383741	-70.2	-28.6	-6.0	-34.6	-52.8
<b>1c_</b> 1,2	-1780.33691113	-51.8	-9.1	-1.9	-11.0	-23.3
<b>1c_</b> 2,3	-1780.34048612	-61.2	-18.4	-3.1	-21.5	-38.3
<b>1c_</b> 3,4	-1780.34344070	-69.0	-26.6	-6.2	-32.9	-52.3
<b>1c_</b> 4,5	-1780.34294412	-67.7	-27.1	-5.7	-32.8	-51.6
<b>1d_</b> 1,2	-1780.34759673	-63.0	-21.1	-3.1	-24.2	-41.0
<b>1d_</b> 3,4	-1780.34695140	-61.3	-20.9	-2.7	-23.6	-40.2
<b>1d_</b> 4,5	-1780.34989114	-69.0	-28.3	-6.5	-34.8	-53.9
<b>1e_</b> 1,2	-1780.34534824	-60.2	-18.0	-2.5	-20.5	-37.0
<b>1e_</b> 2,3	-1780.34917565	-70.3	-29.0	-7.9	-8.8	-57.2
Benzene	-232.25317265	-	-	-	-	-
$FC_{6}H_{5}$	-331.51066553	-	-	-	-	-
$1,2-F_2C_6H_4$	-430.76074338	-	-	-	-	-
1,3-F <sub>2</sub> C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	-430.76717331	-	-	-	-	-
$1,4-F_2C_6H_4$	-430.76598094	-	-	-	-	-
[Rh(CNC-Me)(biph)]⁺	-1349.55642465	-	-	-	-	-

**Table S2.** Calculated binding energies and NOCV orbital stabilisation energies for the {Rh(CNC-Me)(biph)}<sup>+</sup>/arene fragmentation (kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>).



Figure S36. Plot showing the correlation between binding energy and total NOCV orbital stabilisation

energy.



Figure S37. Plot showing the correlation plot binding energy and the sum of the NOCV 1 (arene $\rightarrow$ M) and NOCV 2 (M $\rightarrow$ arene) orbital stabilisation energies.



 Table S3. Deformation densities associated with the {Rh(CNC-Me)(biph)}\*/arene fragmentation.

 Charge flow from red to blue.







**1d\_**1,2

 $\Delta E_{\rho 1}$  = -21.1 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>

 $v_1 = 0.225$ 





 $\Delta E_{\rho 2}$  = -2.5 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>

*v*<sub>2</sub> = 0.074

 $\Delta E_{\rho 1}$  = -18.0 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>

*v*<sub>1</sub> = 0.211



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