

Supplementary Materials

ZIF-supported AuCu Nanoalloy for Ammonia Electrosynthesis from Nitrogen and Thin Air

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Experimental Section

Chemicals and materials

NaBH₄, CuCl₂·2H₂O, Zn(NO₃)₂·6(H₂O) and 2-Methylimidazole were purchased from Tianjin Guangfu Chemical Co. Other chemicals were purchased from various companies: Gold(III) chloride trihydrate (HAuCl₄·3H₂O, Beijing Huaxia Ocean Technology Co., Ltd.), sodium hydroxide (NaOH, Aladdin, 96%), sodium citrate dehydrate (C₆H₅Na₃O₇·2H₂O, Aladdin, 98%), salicylic acid (C₇H₆O₃, Aladdin, 99.5%), sodium hypochlorite solution (NaClO, Ailan (Shanghai) Chemical Technology Co., Ltd., available chlorine 14.5%), sodium nitroferricyanide dihydrate (C₅FeN₆Na₂O·2H₂O, Aladdin, 99%), hydrazine monohydrate (N₂H₄·H₂O, >98.0%, Tianjin Sanjiang Technology Co., Ltd.), para-(dimethylamino) benzaldehyde (p-C₉H₁₁NO, 99%, Tianjin Sanjiang Technology Co., Ltd.), hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂, Beijing Chemical Works, 30%), hydrochloric acid (HCl, Tianjin Buohua Chemical Reagent Co., Ltd., 36% to 37%), ammonium chloride (NH₄Cl, Beijing Chemical Works, analytical reagent grade). N₂ gas (≥99.999%) and Ar gas (≥99.99%) were obtained from Huanyu Co., Ltd. All chemicals were used as received without further purification.

Synthesis of ZIF-8

Typically, ZIF-8 was synthesized as follows. A methanolic solution (50 mL) of Zn(NO₃)₂·6H₂O (3.6 mmol) was added into a methanolic solution (50 mL) of 2-methylimidazole (28.71 mmol) and kept stirring at room temperature for four hours. The resulting white precipitate was centrifuged and washed several times with methanol before being finally dried in a vacuum at 60 °C for 6 h.

Synthesis of Au_xCu_{1-x} alloys

Au_xCu_{1-x} alloy nanoparticles with various Au/Cu molar ratios were synthesized as follows. Taking Au_{0.3}Cu_{0.7} as an example: First, 35 mL deionized water was added into an

ice-cold 100 mL three-necked round-bottomed flask and stirred under N_2 for 30 min. Second, 0.5 mL $H AuCl_4$ (0.01 g mL^{-1}) and 1.8 mL $CuCl_2$ (0.02 mol L^{-1}) were added into the above solution with continuous stirring for 4 h. Third, 3 mL ice-cold $NaBH_4$ solution (0.01 g mL^{-1}) was quickly injected into the flask with magnetic stirring for 4 h. The resultant $AuCu_{3:7}$ product was centrifuged and washed with water and ethanol three times. To obtain other Au_xCu_{1-x} alloy nanoparticles, the Au and Cu atomic ratios could be easily achieved by controlling the amounts of $H AuCl_4$ and $CuCl_2$ precursors.

Synthesis of $Au_xCu_{1-x}/ZIF-8$

$Au_{0.3}Cu_{0.7}$ nanoparticles supported on ZIF-8 substrate (denoted S3/ZIF-8) were prepared using a procedure similar to the above synthesis of Au_xCu_{1-x} alloy nanoparticles. As a difference, 100 mg of as-prepared ZIF-8 was poured into the mixed solution with magnetic stirring before the third step.

Synthesis of Au/ZIF-8 and Cu/ZIF-8

Au nanoparticles supported on a ZIF-8 substrate (denoted Au/ZIF-8) were synthesized by the similar method to the above $Au_3Cu_7/ZIF-8$ without the addition of $CuCl_2 \cdot 2H_2O$. Cu nanoparticles supported on a ZIF-8 substrate (denoted Cu/ZIF-8) were also obtained via a similar method to the above S3/ZIF-8, though in the absence of $H AuCl_4 \cdot 3H_2O$.

Characterizations

The structure and crystallinity of the as-synthesized samples were examined via powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) measurement on Rigaku D/max-2500 X-ray diffractometer using $Cu-K\alpha$ radiation and a scan step of 4° min^{-1} in the range of 5° to 90° . Transmission electron microscopy (TEM, on a JEOL JEM-2800, 200 kV) was used to observe the morphologies of prepared products. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) analysis was performed on a Thermo Scientific ESCALAB 250 Xi spectrometer equipped

with a monochromatic Al K α X-ray source (1486.6 eV). The metal mass loading of Au and Cu in the as-synthesized composites was determined via inductively coupled plasma/atomic emission spectroscopy (ICP-AES). Gaseous N₂ adsorption-desorption isotherms were recorded on a Quantachrome Nova 2000e sorption analyzer at liquid nitrogen temperature (77 K). Specific surface areas were evaluated by using the multi-point Brunauer-Emmett-Teller (BET) method and pore size distributions were determined from the adsorption branch using the non-local density functional theory (NLDFIT) method. UV-Vis absorbance data were obtained on a KU-T1810 ultraviolet-visible (UV-Vis) spectrophotometer. The electrochemical *in situ* Fourier transform infrared (*in situ* FTIR) spectroscopy was tested using a Nexus 870 spectrometer (Nicolet) equipped with a liquid-nitrogen-cooled MCT-A detector and an EverGlo IR source. *In situ* FTIR spectra were recorded by means of time-resolved FTIR spectroscopy procedures. The resulting spectra were reported as the relative change in reflectivity and calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\Delta R}{R} = \frac{R(E_S) - R(E_R)}{R(E_R)}$$

where $R(E_S)$ and $R(E_R)$ are the accumulated spectra collected at sample potential E_S and reference potential E_R , respectively.

Electrochemical measurements

Electrochemical performance measurements were carried out on a WaveDrive 20 Bipotentiostat/Galvanostat (Pine Research Instrumentation, USA) with a three-electrode system in a two-compartment cell separated by a Nafion 211 membrane. A carbon-paper electrode, loaded with catalyst, was used as the working electrode, with a graphitic rod and Ag/AgCl electrode being used as the counter and reference electrodes, respectively. All potentials in this study were calibrated to the reversible hydrogen electrode (RHE) according to the equation: $E_{vs\ RHE} = E_{vs\ Ag/AgCl} + 0.059\ pH + E_{Ag/AgCl}^o$. All tests were performed at room temperature. For N₂ reduction reaction (NRR) experiments, the

electrolyte (0.1 M HCl, 0.1 M Na₂SO₄ or 0.1 M KOH) was bubbled with N₂ for 0.5 h before measurement. The N₂ gas (≥99.999%), Ar gas (≥99.99%) and compressed air used in this experiment were pre-purified through flowing into alkaline solution (pH=13 KOH aqueous solution) and acid solution (pH=1 H₂SO₄ aqueous solution) to remove any N contamination in the N₂ before entering the electrolyte solution. The presented current densities refer to a geometric surface area of 1 × 1 cm² on carbon paper.

Determination of NH₃

Concentrations of NH₃ were spectrophotometrically determined via the indophenol blue method. Briefly, a 2 mL aliquot of the electrolyte solution was pipetted from the electrochemical reaction vessel and added into 2 mL of 1 M NaOH solution containing 5 wt% salicylic acid and 5 wt% sodium citrate. Subsequently, 1 mL of 0.05 M NaClO and 0.2 mL of 1 wt% C₅FeN₆Na₂O were also added into the above solution. After aging at room temperature for 2 h, the UV-Vis absorption spectrum was measured. The concentration of indophenol blue was determined using absorbance at a wavelength of 655 nm. The fitting curve ($y = 0.365x + 0.004$, $R^2 = 0.999$) consistently showed a strong linear relationship between the absorbance value and NH₃ concentration throughout three independent calibrations.

Determination of N₂H₄

The concentration of N₂H₄ in the electrolyte was estimated via the Watt and Chrisp method. A colored reagent was first obtained by mixing the p-C₉H₁₁NO (5.99 g), HCl (30 mL) and C₂H₅OH (300 mL). Subsequently, 5 mL of electrolyte was collected from the electrochemical reaction vessel, added into 5 mL of the as-prepared color reagent and stirred for 10 min at 25 °C. The absorbance of the resulting solution was measured at 455 nm. The fitting curve ($y = 0.563x + 0.014$, $R^2 = 0.999$) showed a strong linear relationship

between the absorbance value and N_2H_4 concentration throughout three independent calibrations.

Faradaic efficiency

The ammonia formation rate was first calculated using the equation: $v_{\text{NH}_3} = (C_{\text{NH}_3} \times V)/(t \times m)$, where C_{NH_3} is the measured NH_3 concentration, V is the volume of the HCl electrolyte, t is the reduction reaction time and m is the loading mass of the $\text{Au}_x\text{Cu}_{1-x}$ catalyst. Faradaic efficiency (FE) was calculated according to equation: $\text{FE} = 3F \times n_{\text{NH}_3}/Q$, where F is the Faraday constant and Q is the quantity of applied electricity.

Isotope Labeling Experiments

The ^{14}N and ^{15}N isotopic labeling experiments were performed using $^{14}\text{N}_2$ and $^{15}\text{N}_2$ as the feeding gases (99% enrichment of ^{15}N in $^{15}\text{N}_2$, supplied by Beijing Yinuokai Technology Co., Ltd.). Each NRR experiment was conducted at -0.2 V (vs. RHE) for 2.5 h. Then, 0.5 mL of above solution mixed with 0.05 mL of d6-DMSO was used for ^1H nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy measurement (Bruker AVANCE III 600 MHz). The corresponding absolute calibration curves were recorded by using the $^{15}\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ (99% isotopic purity, Shanghai Xinbo Chemical Technology Co., Ltd.) and $^{14}\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ aqueous solutions with a series of known concentrations as the standards.

Calculation details

This study used the Vienna *ab initio* simulation package (VASP)^{1,2} to perform periodic, self-consistent density functional theory (DFT) calculations. The generalized gradient approximation (GGA) in the form of Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE)³ was used to calculate the electronic structures. The inner cores were described by the project-augment wave

(PAW) scheme.^{4, 5} The electronic wave functions were expanded on a plane wave basis, where the kinetic cut-off energy was 400 eV.

A vacuum region of 15 Å was used to avoid the interaction between two adjacent slabs. The Brillouin-zone integrations were performed using a 3×3×1 Monkhorst-Pack grid, which was tested and found to be a reasonable choice for these calculations.⁶ During the calculations, the upper two layers and any adsorbed species were allowed to be relaxed until the residual force on each atom was smaller than 0.035 eV Å⁻¹.

The Gibbs free energy change (ΔG) at 298.15 K for each elemental step was calculated by the formula: $\Delta G = \Delta E + \Delta E_{ZPE} - T\Delta S$, where ΔE is the electronic energy difference of one given step, ΔE_{ZPE} and ΔS are the changes in zero point energies and entropy, respectively, and only vibrational entropy was considered for a surface reaction step, as seen in **Table S2** and based on the formula: $S_{vib} = R \sum_i^{\#of\ modes} \left[\frac{x_i}{e^{x_i} - 1} - \ln(1 - e^{-x_i}) \right]$, $x_i = \frac{h\nu_i}{k_B T}$.⁷

Figures and Tables

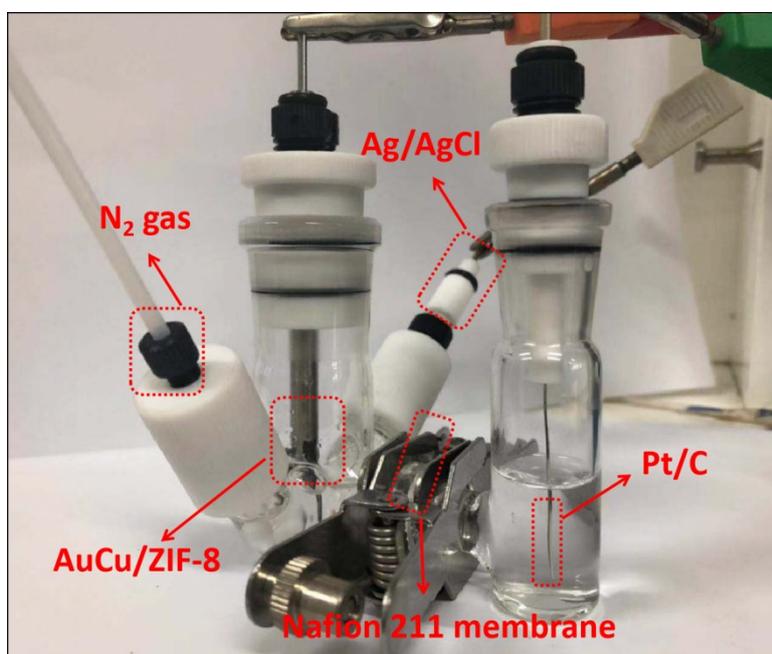


Fig. S1 Optical photograph of electrocatalytic NRR process using the three-electrode glass cell.

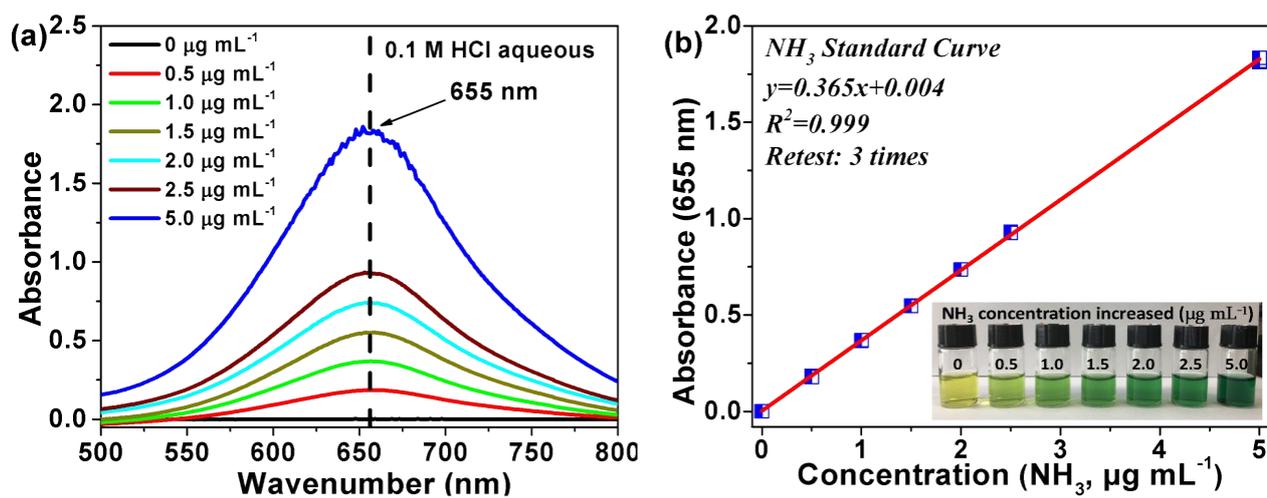


Fig. S2 (a) UV-Vis absorption curves and (b) corresponding calibration curve of indophenol assays with NH₃ at 655 nm after incubating for 2 h at room temperature in 0.1 M HCl.

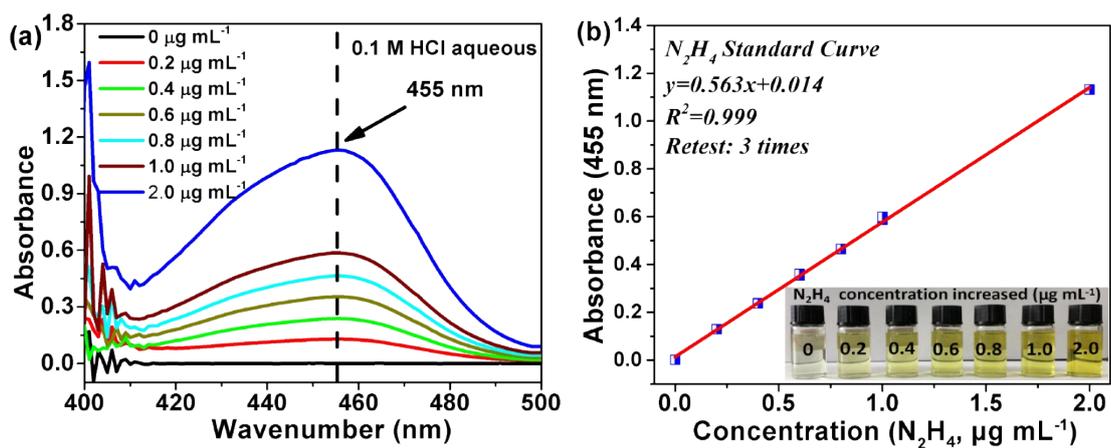


Fig. S3 (a) UV-Vis absorption curves and (b) the corresponding calibration curve of various N_2H_4 concentrations at 455 nm after incubating for 30 min at room temperature in 0.1 M HCl.

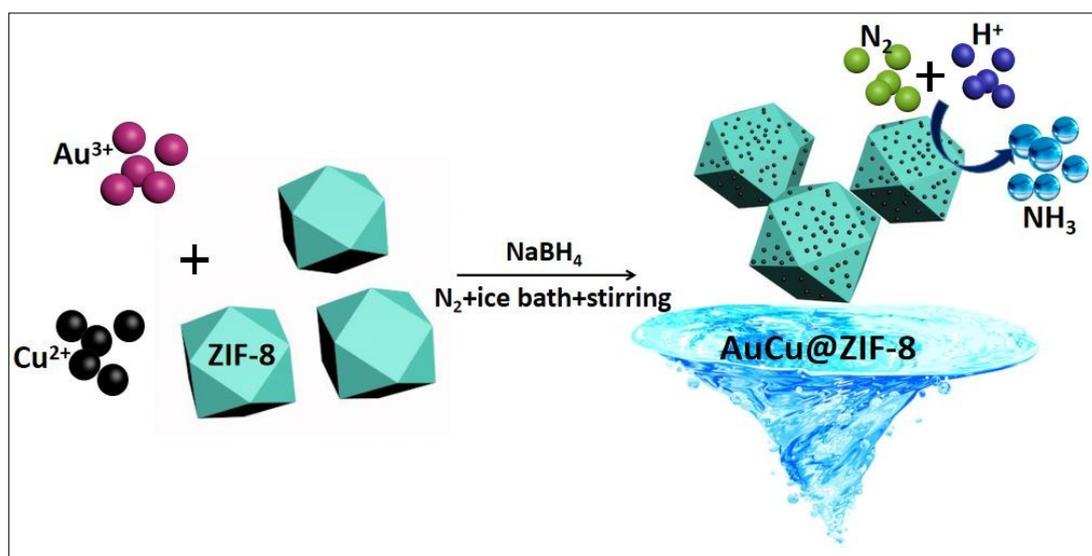


Fig. S4 Schematic illustration of the AuCu/ZIF-8 synthesis.

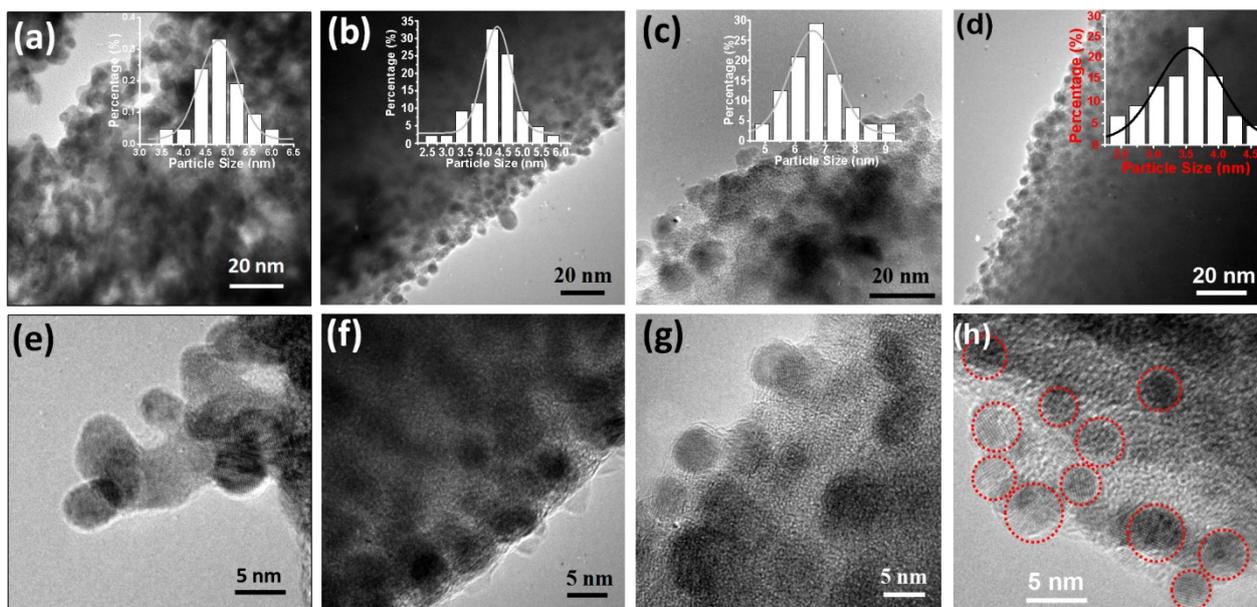


Fig. S5 TEM images of (a) and (e) S3, (b) and (f) Au/ZIF-8, (c) and (g) Cu/ZIF-8, (d) and (h) S3/ZIF-8.

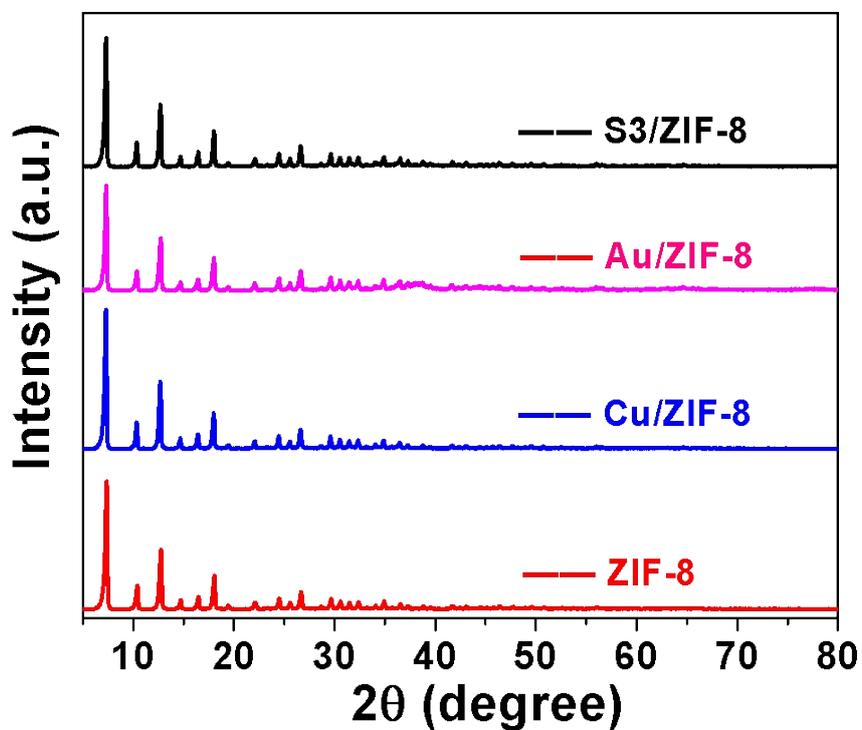


Fig. S6 XRD patterns for S3/ZIF-8, Au/ZIF-8, Cu/ZIF-8 and ZIF-8.

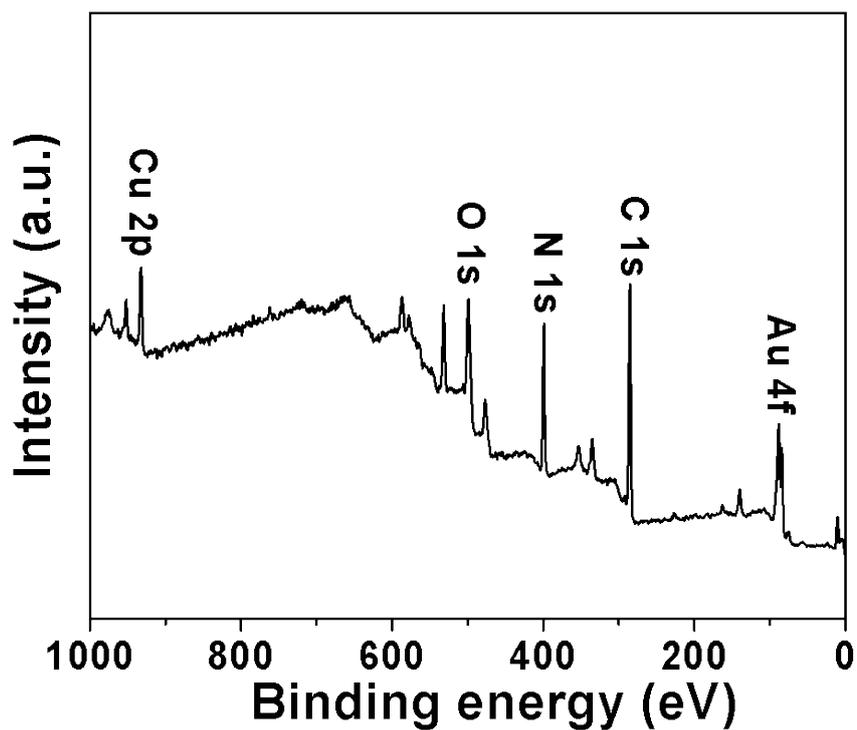


Fig. S7 XPS survey spectrum of S3/ZIF-8.

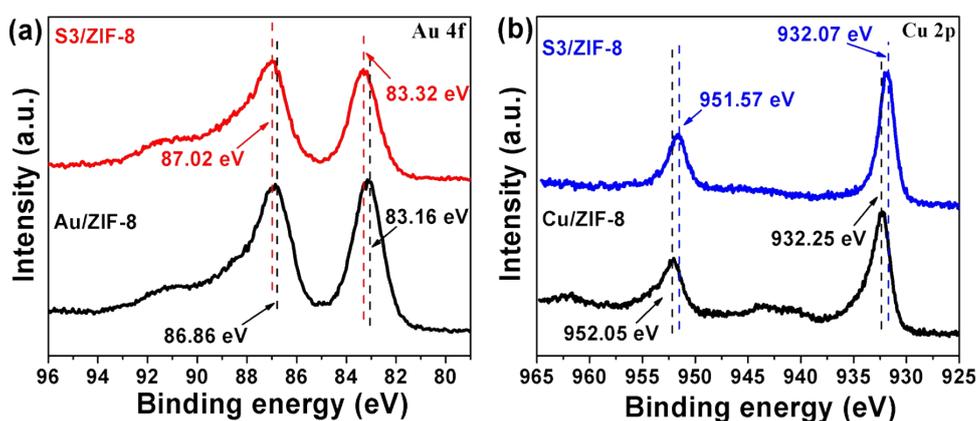


Fig. S8 High resolution XPS spectra of (a) Au 4f of S3/ZIF-8 and Au/ZIF-8, and (b) Cu 2p of S3/ZIF-8 and Cu/ZIF-8.

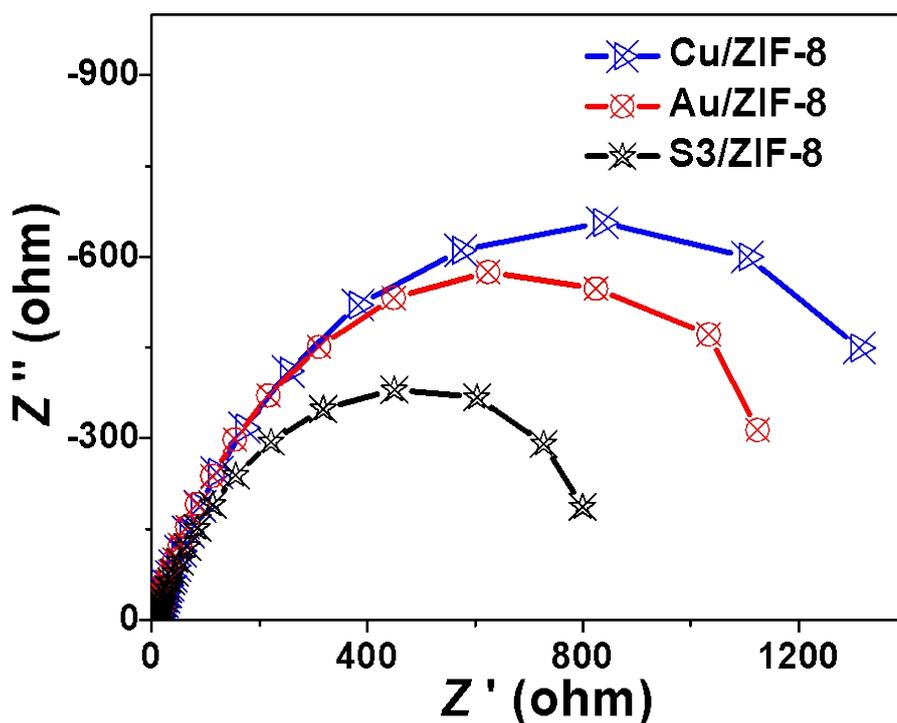


Fig. S9 Nyquist plots of S3/ZIF-8, Au/ZIF-8 and Cu/ZIF-8 on carbon paper in 0.1 M HCl.

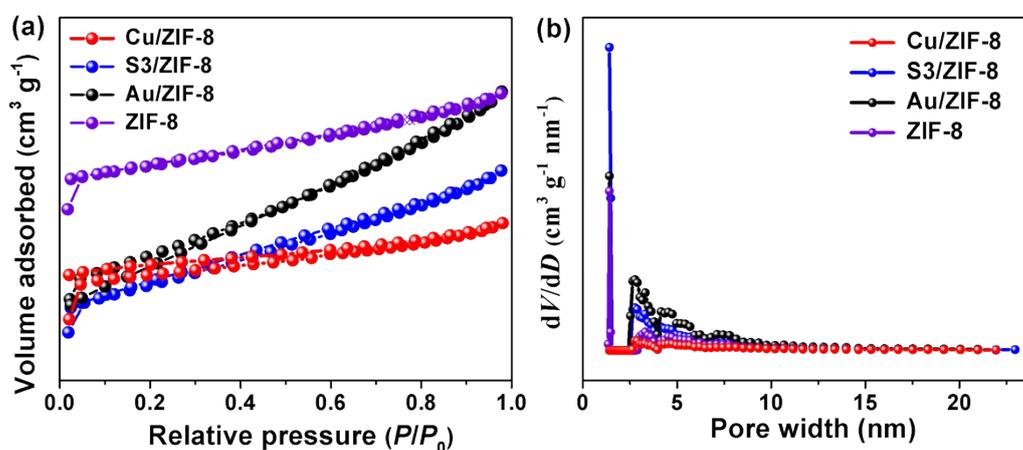


Fig. S10 (a) N_2 adsorption-desorption isotherms and (b) corresponding pore size distribution curves of ZIF-8, S3/ZIF-8, Au/ZIF-8 and Cu/ZIF-8. The specific surface area (S_{BET}) values of S3/ZIF-8, Cu/ZIF-8, Au/ZIF-8 and ZIF-8 are 946, 945, 1057 and 1313 $m^2 g^{-1}$, respectively.

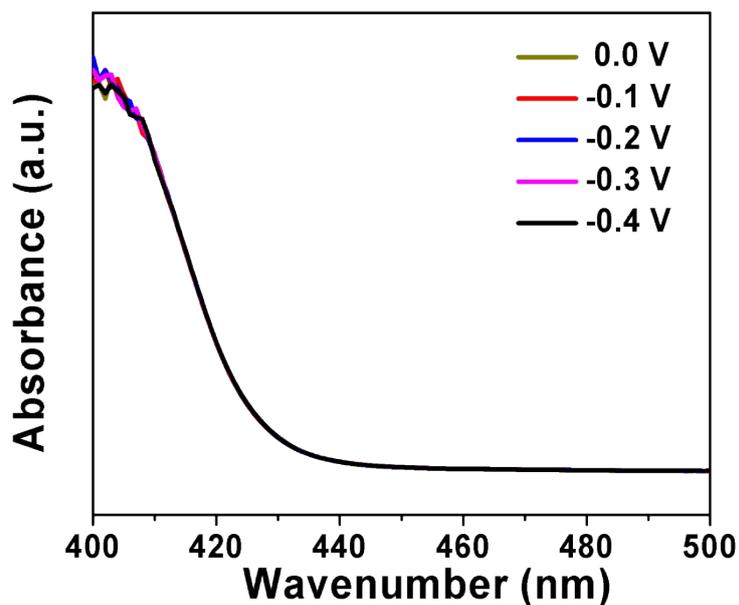


Fig. S11 UV-Vis absorption spectra of the electrolytes (0.1 M HCl) estimated by the method of Watt and Chrisp after NRR electrolysis at different potentials.

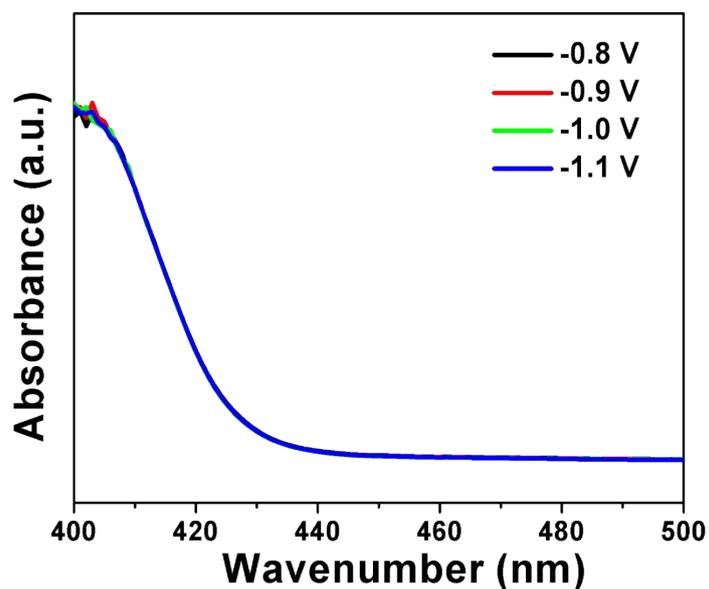


Fig. S12 UV-Vis absorption spectra of the electrolytes (0.1 M Na₂SO₄) estimated by the method of Watt and Chrisp after NRR electrolysis at different potentials.

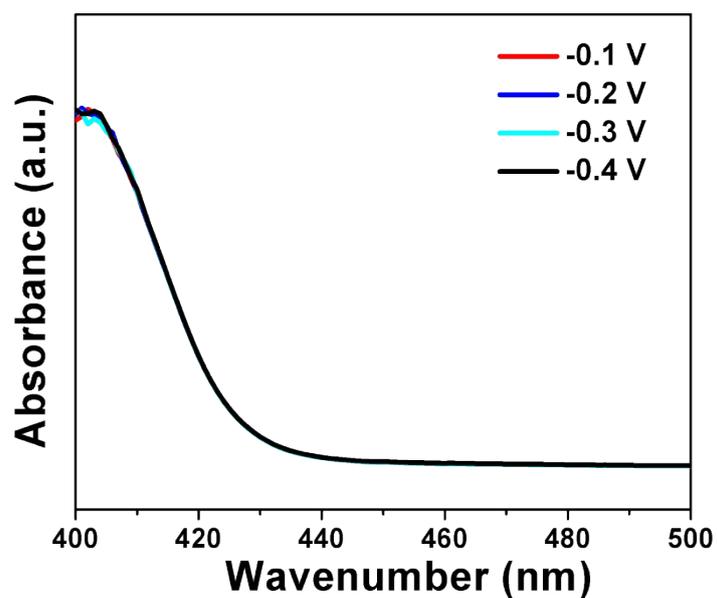


Fig. S13 UV-Vis absorption spectra of the electrolytes (0.1 M KOH) estimated by the method of Watt and Chrisp after NRR electrolysis at different potentials.

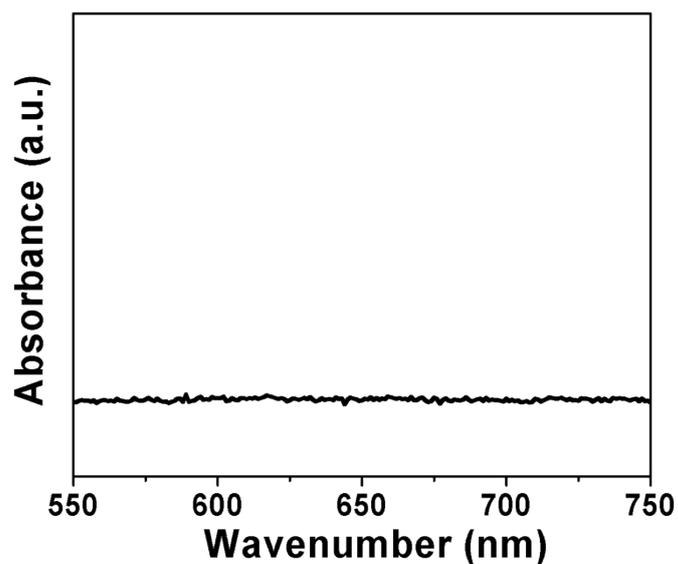


Fig. S14 UV-Vis absorption spectra of the HCl electrolyte stained with indophenol indicator after charging the S3/ZIF-8 electrode in Ar-bubbled 0.1 M HCl for 2.5 h.

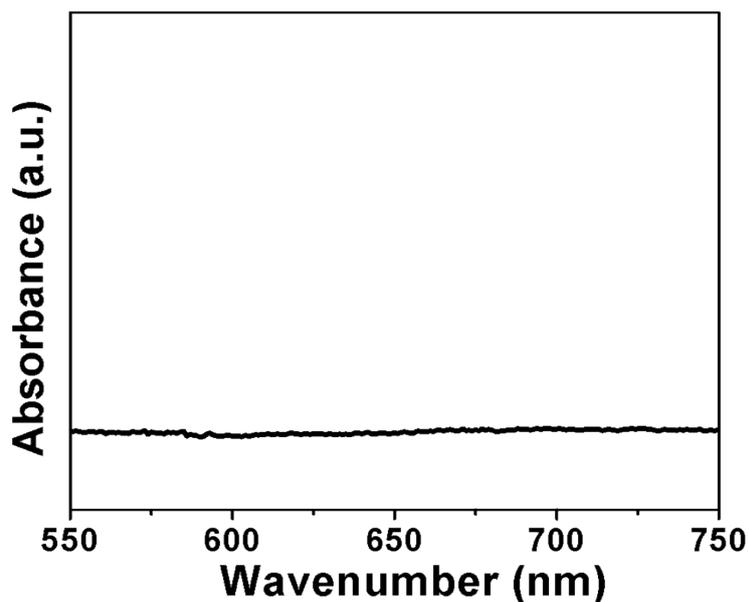


Fig. S15 UV-Vis absorption spectra of the HCl electrolyte stained with indophenol indicator after charging the S3/ZIF-8 electrode in N₂-bubbled 0.1 M HCl at open-circuit potential for 2.5 h.

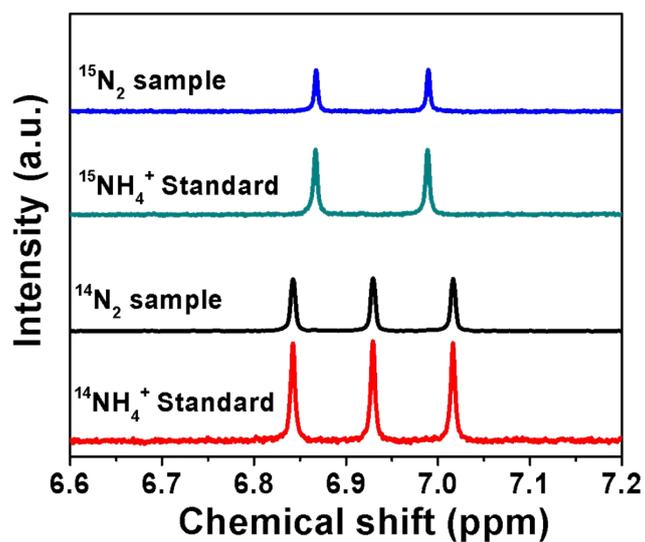


Fig. S16 ¹H NMR spectra of both ¹⁴NH₄⁺ and ¹⁵NH₄⁺ produced from the NRR reaction using ¹⁴N₂ and ¹⁵N₂ as the feeding gases for S3/ZIF-8.

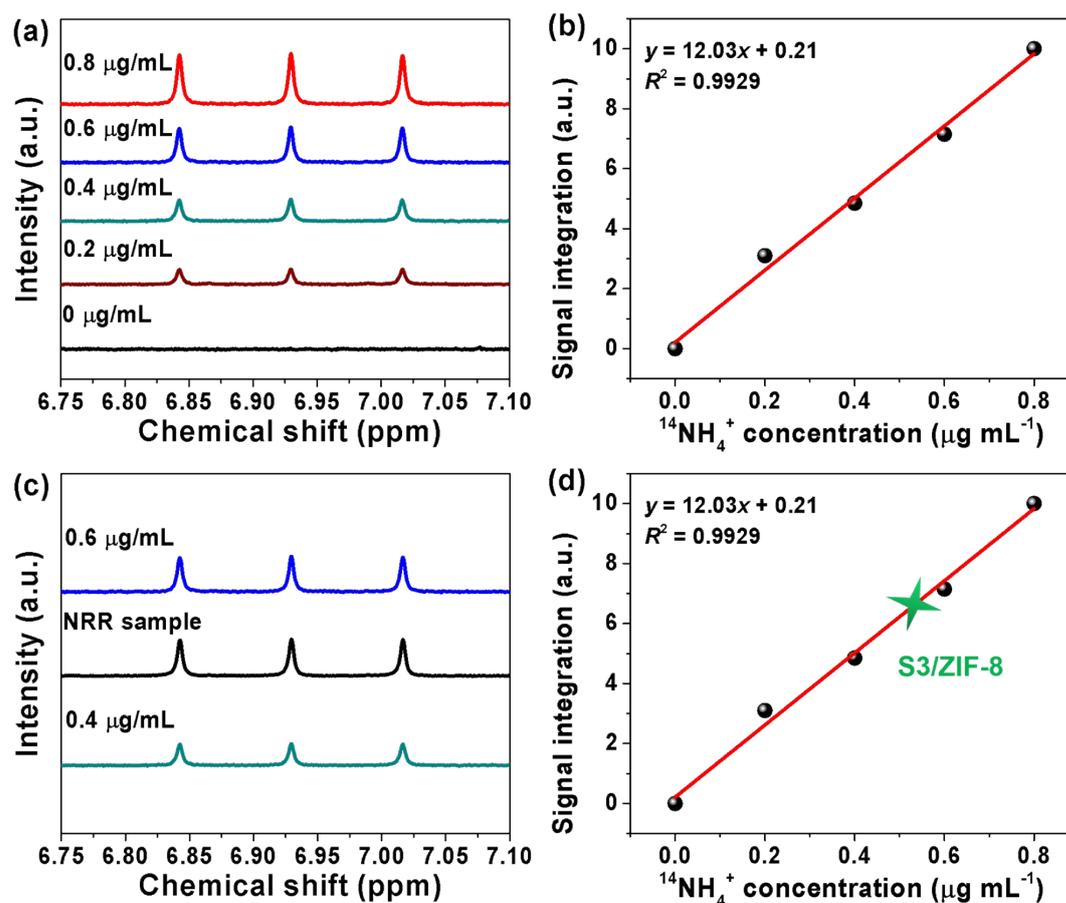


Fig. S17 (a) ^1H NMR spectra of $^{14}\text{NH}_4^+$ standard samples with different concentrations. (b) The corresponding calibration curve of $^{14}\text{NH}_4^+$ concentration vs. peak area intensity of NMR spectra. (c) ^1H NMR spectra of the electrolyte after catalyzing on S3/ZIF-8 at -0.2 V (vs. RHE) for 2.5 h (black) and $^{14}\text{NH}_4^+$ standard samples with 0.4 $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ (green) and 0.6 $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ (blue). (d) The $^{14}\text{NH}_4^+$ concentration of the electrolyte after catalyzing on S3/ZIF-8 at -0.2 V (vs. RHE) for 2.5 h (green star), quantitatively determined by the above $^{14}\text{NH}_4^+$ calibration curve.

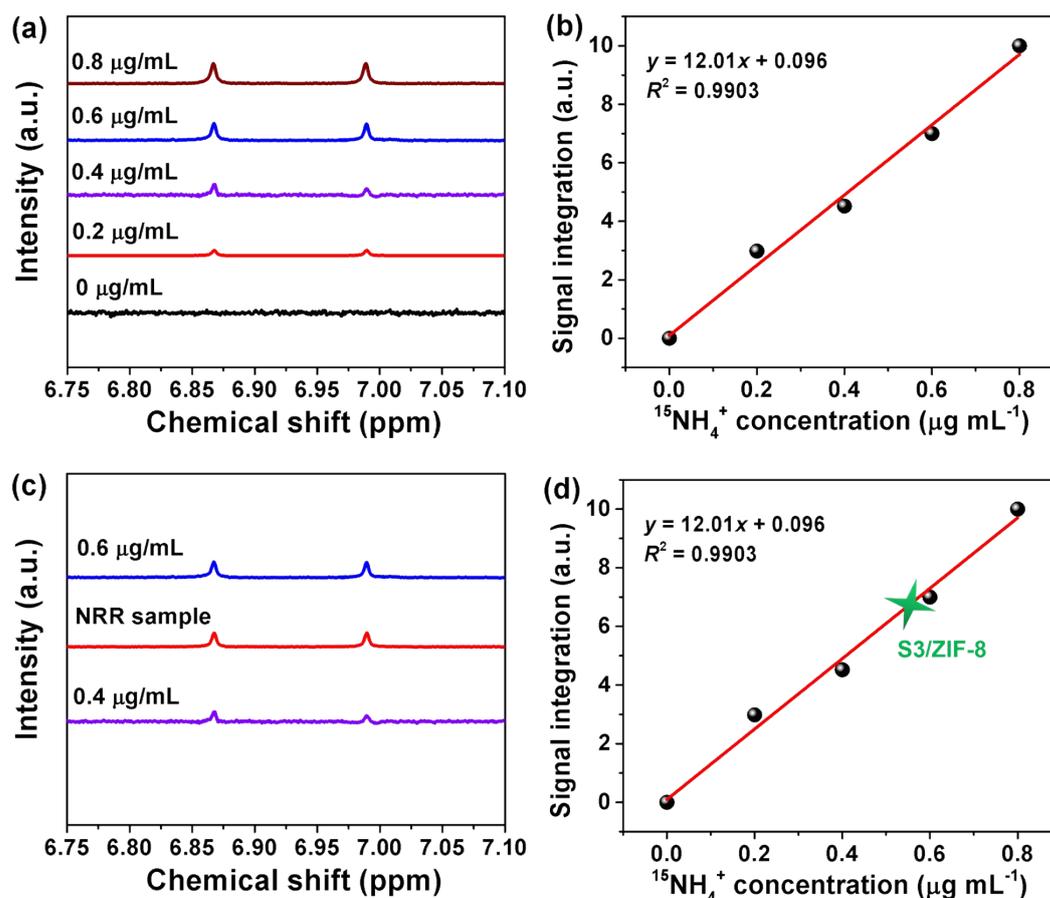


Fig. S18 (a) ^1H NMR spectra of $^{15}\text{NH}_4^+$ standard samples with different concentrations. (b) The corresponding calibration curve of $^{15}\text{NH}_4^+$ concentration vs. peak area intensity of NMR spectra. (c) NMR spectra of the electrolyte after catalyzing on S3/ZIF-8 at -0.2 V (vs. RHE) for 2.5 h (red) and $^{15}\text{NH}_4^+$ standard samples with 0.4 $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ (purple) and 0.6 $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ (blue). (d) The $^{15}\text{NH}_4^+$ concentration of the electrolyte after catalyzing on S3/ZIF-8 at -0.2 V (vs. RHE) for 2.5 h (green star), quantitatively determined by the above $^{15}\text{NH}_4^+$ calibration curve.

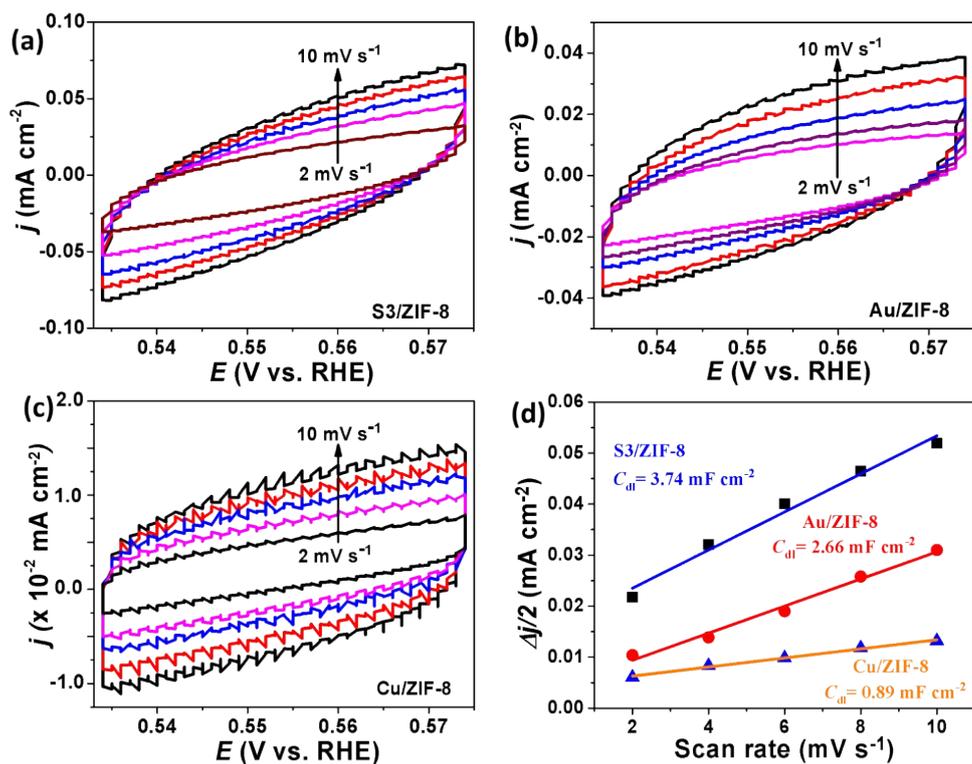


Fig. S19 Cyclic voltammograms of (a) S3/ZIF-8, (b) Au/ZIF-8 and (c) Cu/ZIF-8 on carbon paper and measured at different scan rates from 2 to 10 mV s⁻¹. (d) The corresponding plots of current density at 0.56 V versus the scan rate.

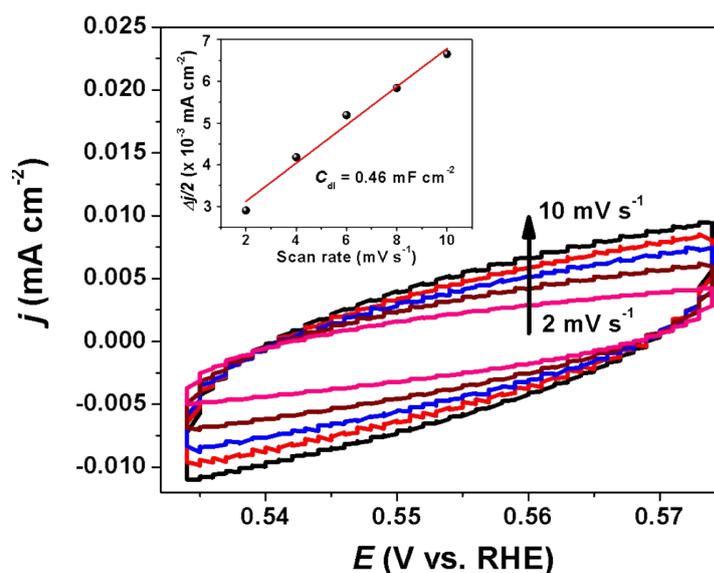


Fig. S20 Cyclic voltammograms of AuCu on carbon paper measured at different scan rates from 2 to 10 mV s^{-1} . Inset: the corresponding plot of current density at 0.56 V versus the scan rate.

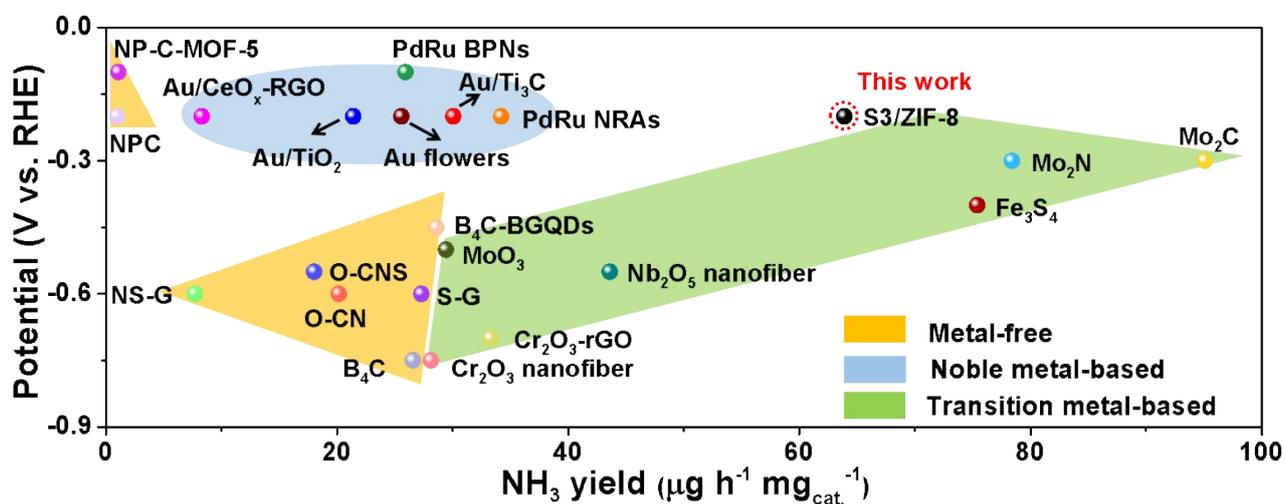


Fig. S21 Comparison of the NRR performance to state-of-the-art catalysts.

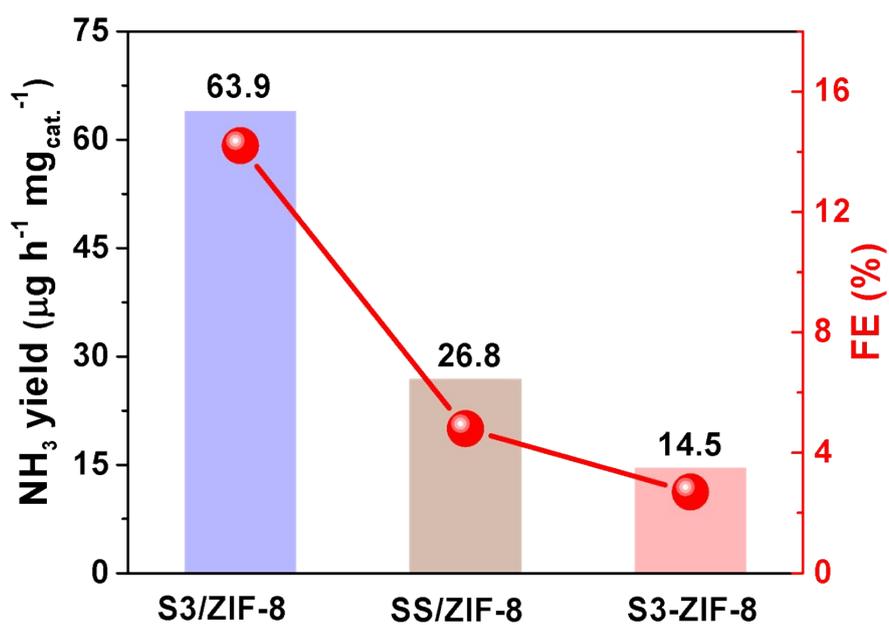


Fig. S22 Maximum NH₃ yields and FEs for S3/ZIF-8, SS/ZIF-8 and S3-ZIF-8 in 0.1 M HCl at room temperature and under ambient pressure.

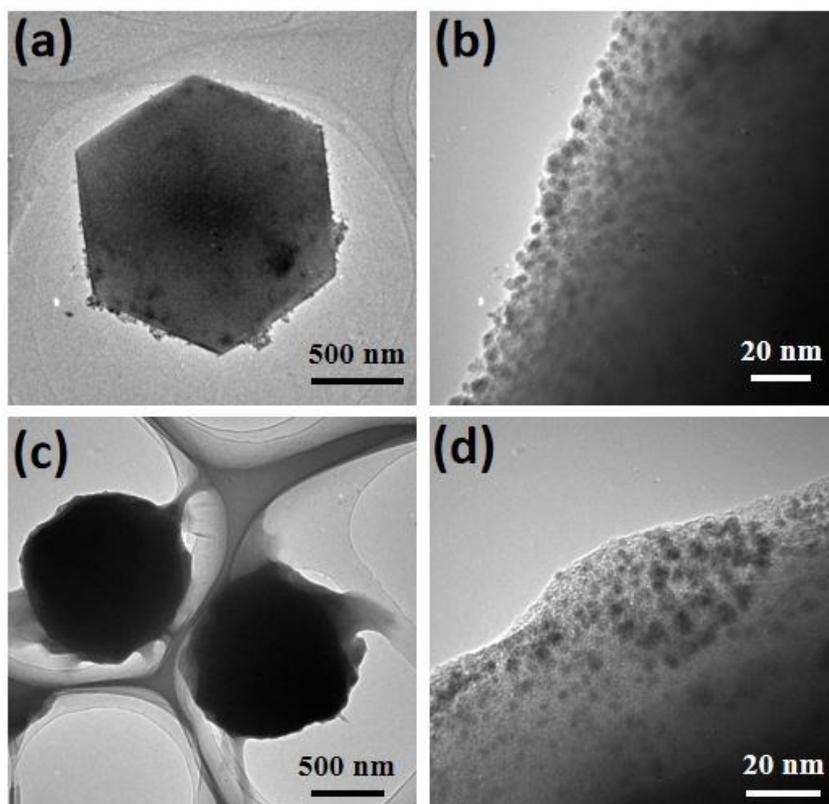


Fig. S23 TEM images of S3/ZIF-8 (a, b) before and after (c, d) NRR tests in 0.1 M HCl.

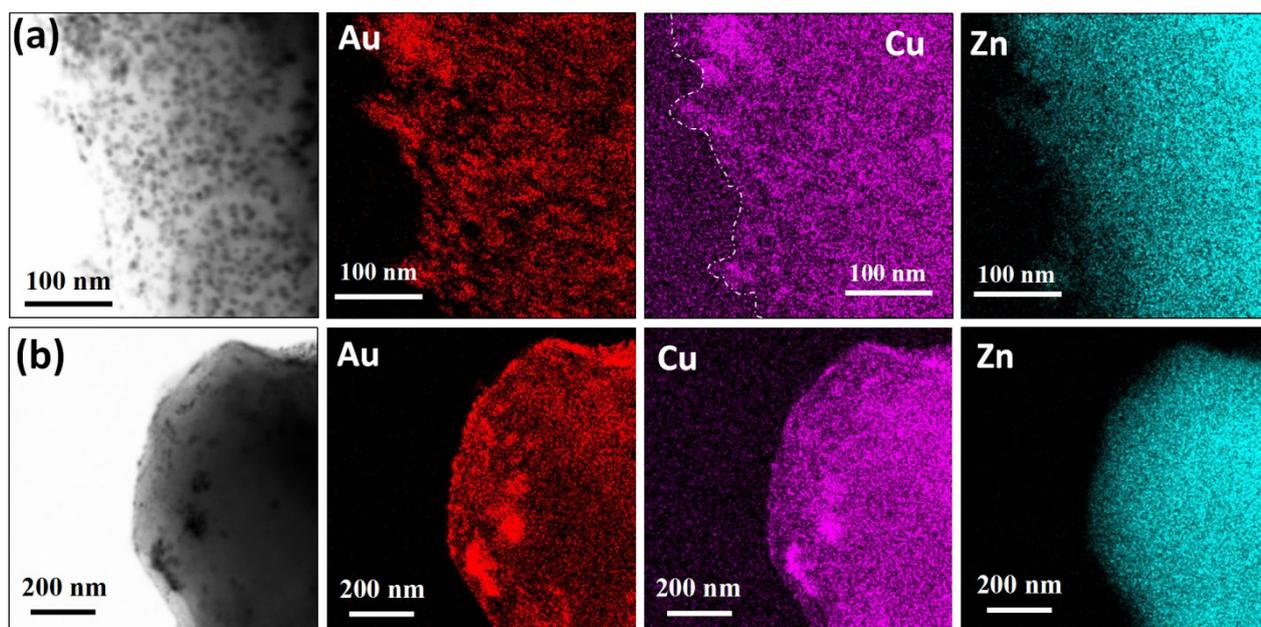


Fig. S24 STEM images and the corresponding STEM-EDX mapping images of S3/ZIF-8 before (a) and after (b) NRR tests in 0.1 M HCl.

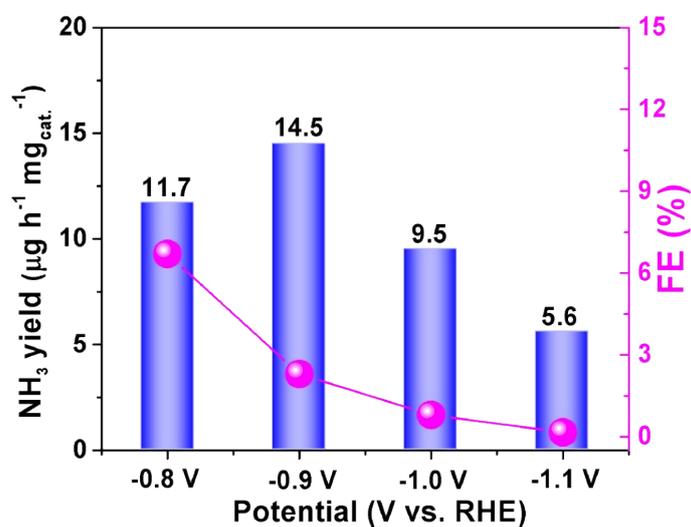


Fig. S25 NH₃ yield rates and FEs for S3/ZIF-8 under different potentials in N₂-bubbled 0.1 M Na₂SO₄.

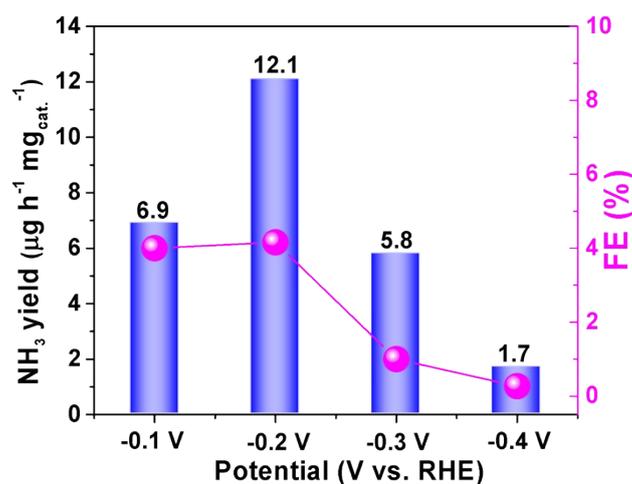


Fig. S26 NH₃ yield rates and FEs for S3/ZIF-8 under different potentials in N₂-bubbled 0.1 M KOH.

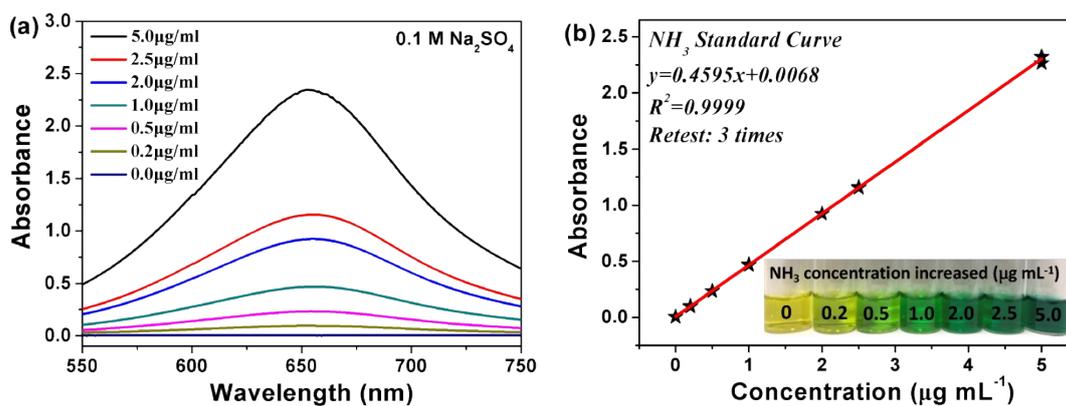


Fig. S27 (a) UV-Vis absorption curves and (b) corresponding calibration curve of indophenol assays with NH₃ after incubating for 2 h at room temperature in 0.1 M Na₂SO₄.

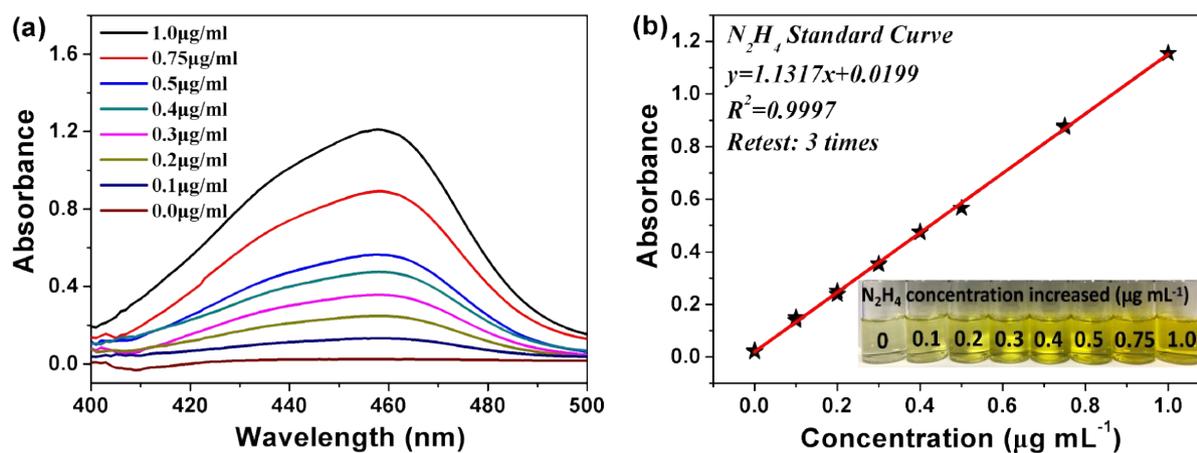


Fig. S28 (a) UV-Vis absorption curves and (b) the corresponding calibration curve of various N_2H_4 concentrations after incubating for 30 min at room temperature in 0.1 M Na_2SO_4 .

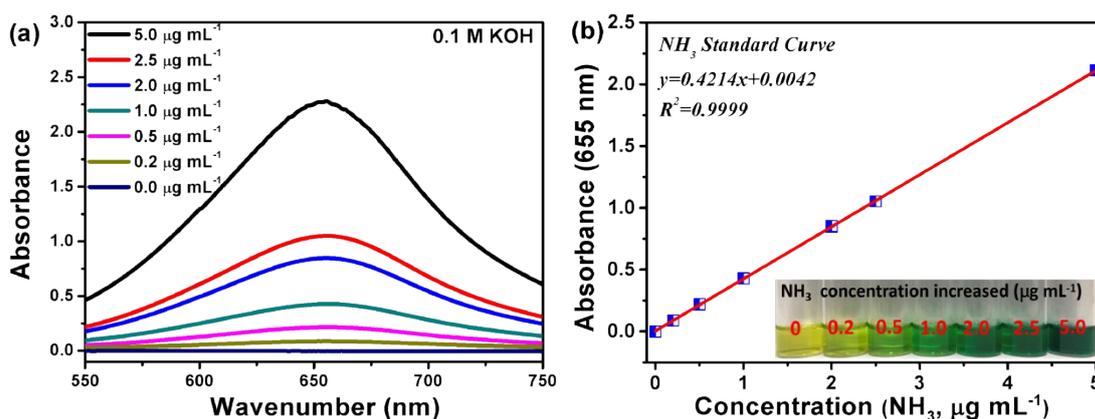


Fig. S29 (a) UV-Vis absorption curves and (b) the corresponding calibration curve of indophenol assays with NH_3 after incubating for 2 h at room temperature in 0.1 M KOH.

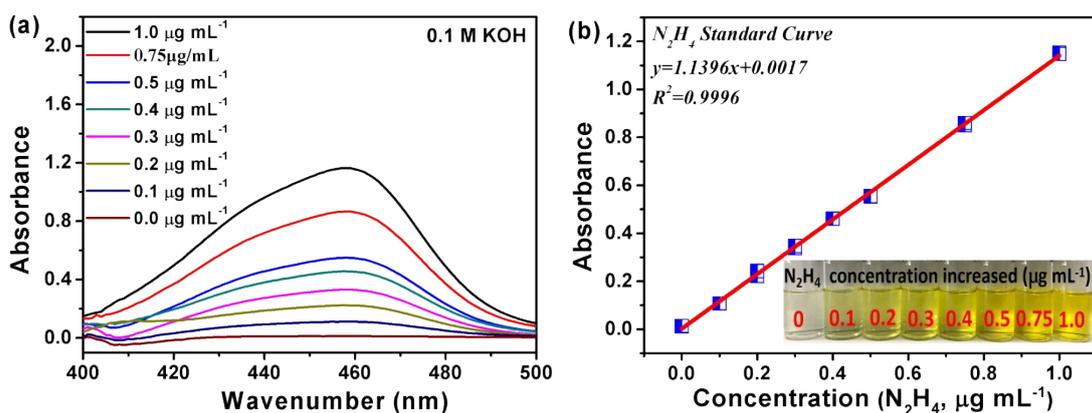


Fig. S30 (a) UV-Vis absorption curves and (b) the corresponding calibration curve of various N_2H_4 concentration after incubating for 30 min at room temperature in 0.1 M KOH.

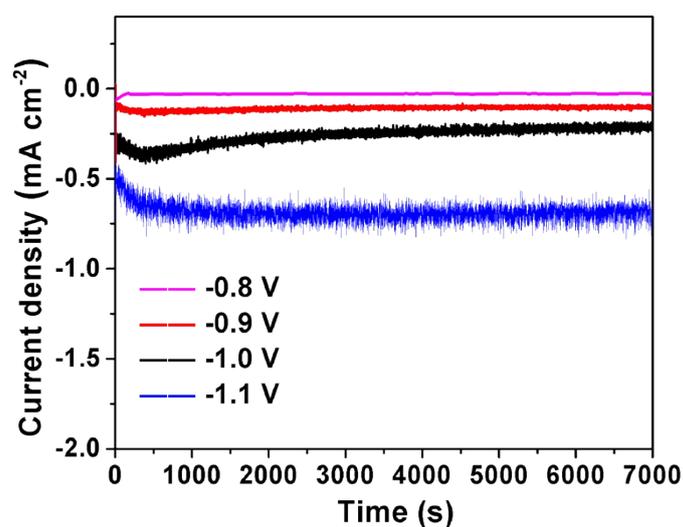


Fig. S31 Time-dependent current density curves for S3/ZIF-8 at different potentials in N_2 -bubbled 0.1 M Na_2SO_4 .

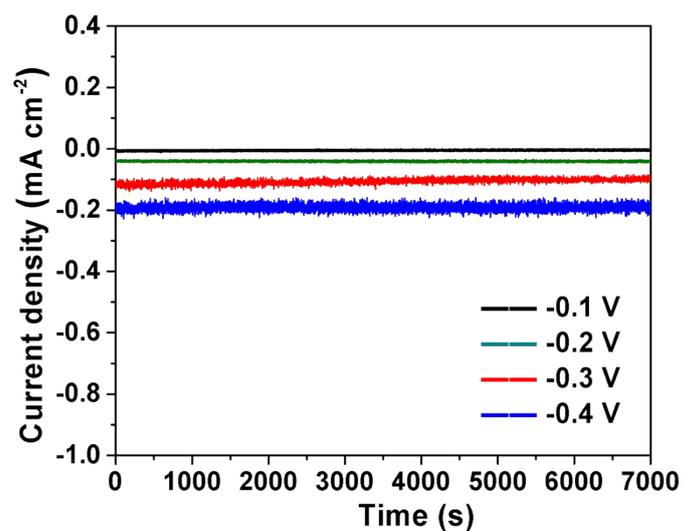


Fig. S32 Time-dependent current density curves for S3/ZIF-8 at different potentials in N_2 -bubbled 0.1 M KOH.

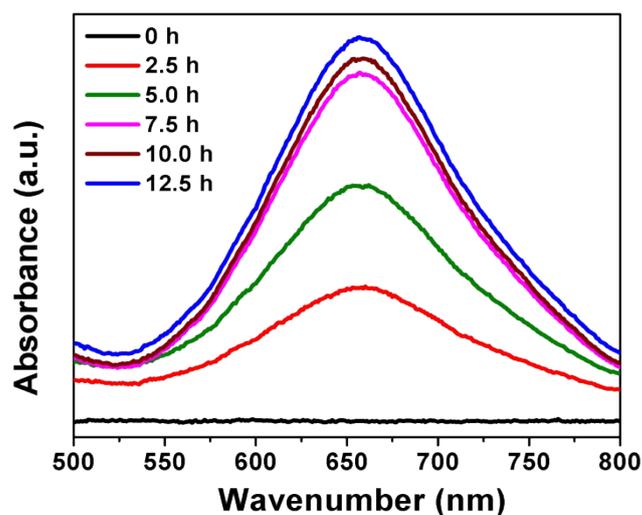


Fig. S33 UV-Vis absorption curves of S3/ZIF-8 at -0.2 V vs RHE. All experiments were performed in air-bubbled 0.1 M HCl at room temperature and under ambient pressure.

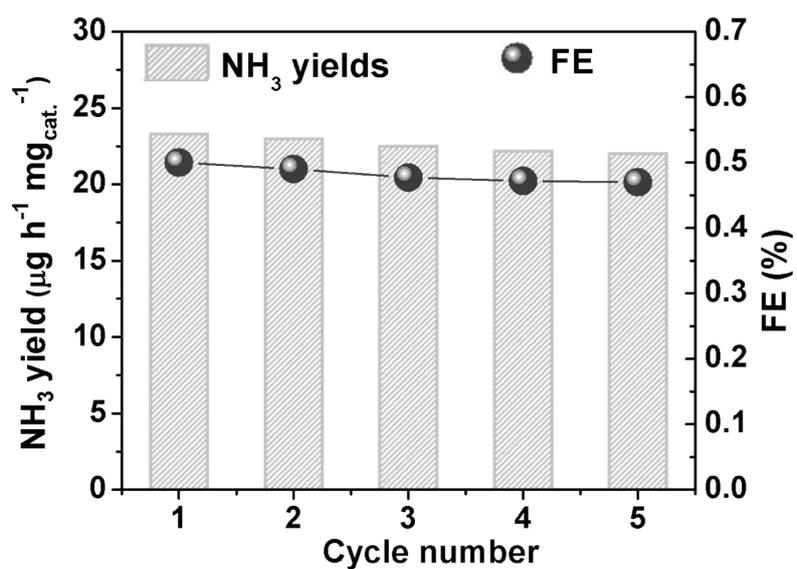


Fig. S34 Recycling tests of S3/ZIF-8 in air-bubbled 0.1 M HCl at the potential of -0.2 V vs. RHE.

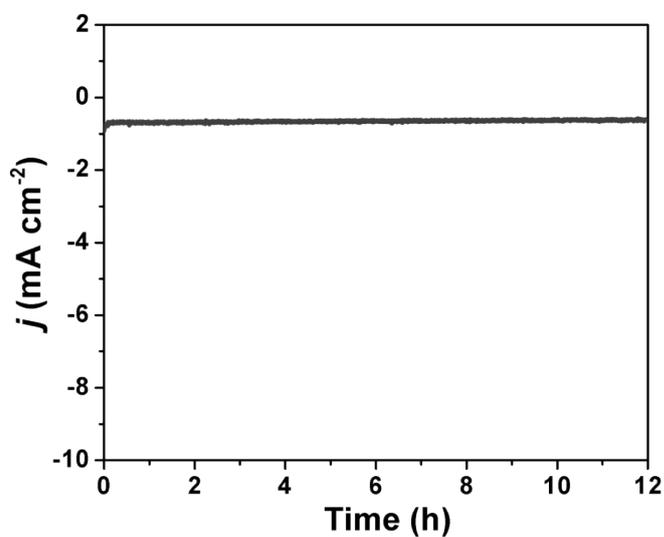


Fig. S35 Chronoamperometry curve of S3/ZIF-8 in air-bubbled 0.1 M HCl at a fixed overpotential of -0.2 V for 12 h.

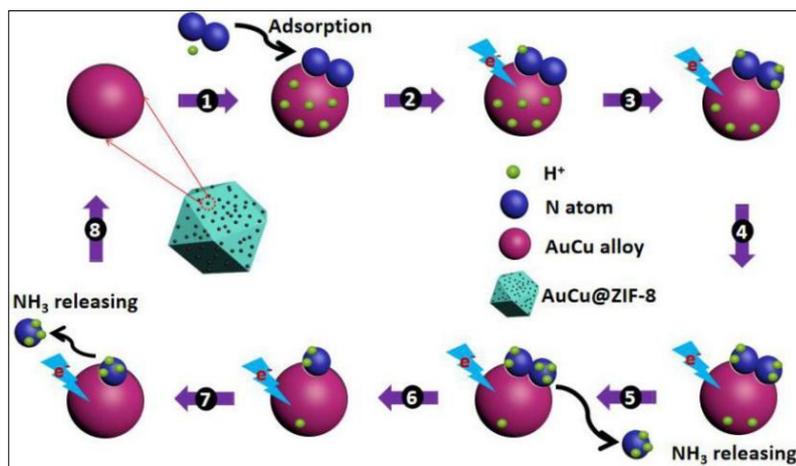


Fig. S36 The proposed pathway for the NH_3 synthesis using S3/ZIF-8 catalyst.

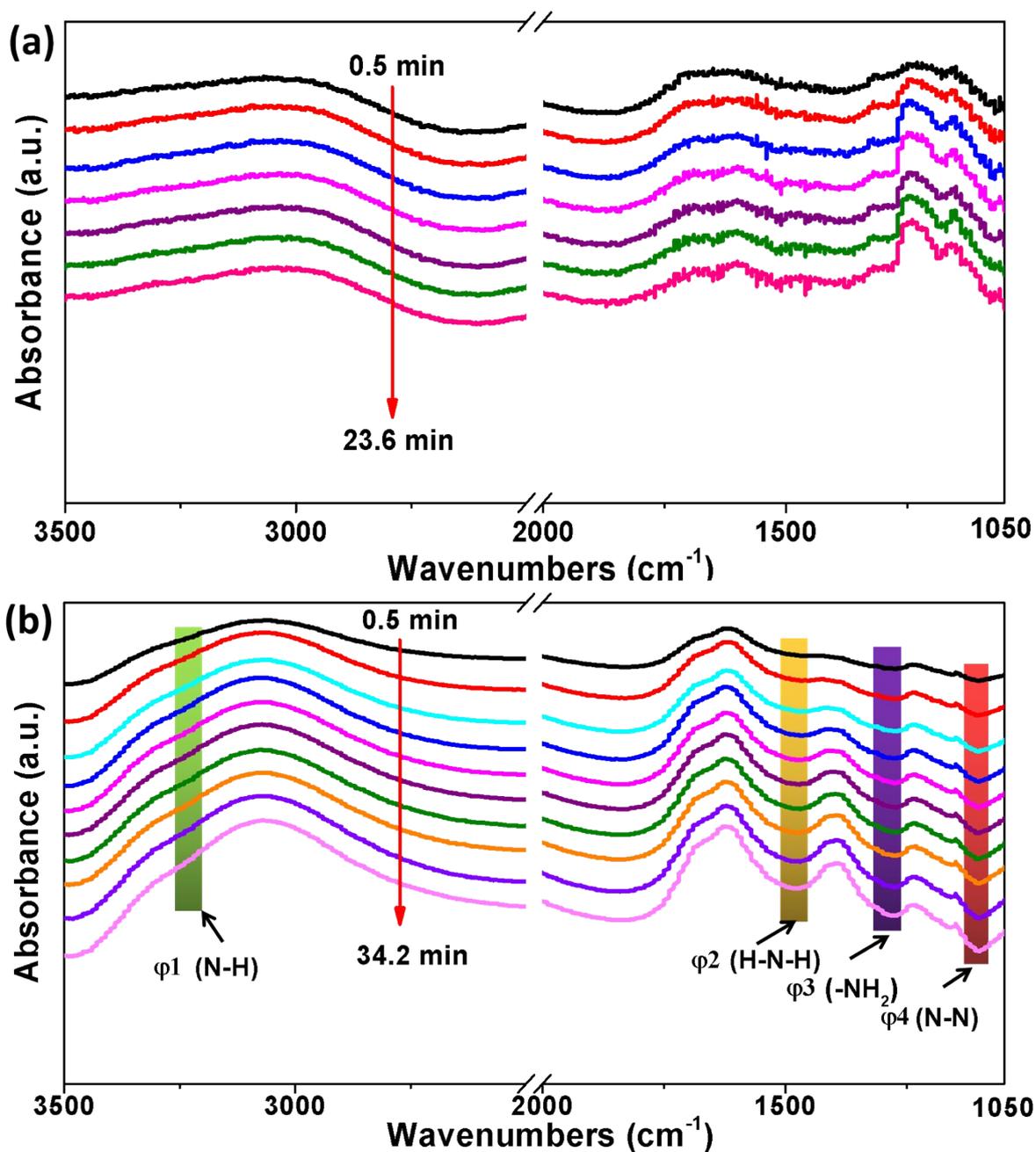


Fig. S37 Electrochemical *in situ* FTIR spectra of the NRR on the S3/ZIF-8 in (a) Ar-bubbled 0.1 M KOH and (b) N_2 -bubbled 0.1 M KOH.

Table S1. Summary of the NRR performances for some reported state-of-the-art electrocatalysts in N₂-saturated electrolytes.

| Catalyst | Electrolyte | NH ₃ yield | FE (%) | Ref. |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--------|------------|
| S3/ZIF-8 | 0.1 M HCl | 63.9 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ = $1.3 \times 10^{-9} \text{ mol s}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ | 14.2 | This work. |
| S3/ZIF-8 | 0.1 M Na ₂ SO ₄ | 14.5 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 6.7 | This work. |
| S3/ZIF-8 | 0.1 M KOH | 12.1 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 4.2 | This work. |
| Au/Ti ₃ C ₂ | 0.1 M HCl | 30.06 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 18.34 | [8] |
| Au flowers | 0.1 M HCl | 25.57 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 6.05 | [9] |
| Au/TiO ₂ | 0.1 M HCl | 21.40 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 8.11 | [10] |
| a-Au/CeO _x -RGO | 0.1 M HCl | 8.3 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 10.10 | [11] |
| PdRu BPNs | 0.1 M HCl | 25.92 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 1.53 | [12] |
| PdRu NRAs | 0.1 M HCl | 34.2 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 2.4 | [13] |
| Cr ₂ O ₃ -rGO | 0.1 M HCl | 33.3 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 7.33 | [14] |
| Nb ₂ O ₅ nanofiber | 0.1 M HCl | 43.6 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 9.26 | [15] |
| MoO ₃ nanosheets | 0.1 M HCl | 29.43 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 1.9 | [16] |
| Fe ₃ S ₄ nanosheets | 0.1 M HCl | 75.4 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 6.45 | [17] |
| Mo ₂ C nanorod | 0.1 M HCl | 95.1 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 8.13 | [18] |
| NPC | 0.1 M HCl | 0.97 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 4.2 | [19] |
| O-CN | 0.1 M HCl | 20.15 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 4.97 | [20] |
| S-G | 0.1 M HCl | 27.3 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 11.5 | [21] |
| h-BNNS | 0.1 M HCl | 22.4 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 4.7 | [22] |
| B ₄ C | 0.1 M HCl | 26.57 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 15.95 | [23] |

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|---|-------|------|
| B ₄ C-BGQDs | 0.1 M HCl | 28.6 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 16.7 | [24] |
| PCN | 0.1 M HCl | 8.09 $\mu\text{g h}^{-1} \text{mg}^{-1}_{\text{cat.}}$ | 11.59 | [25] |
| Bi NS/CF | 0.1 M HCl | $6.89 \times 10^{-11} \text{ mol s}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ | 10.26 | [26] |
| Ag nanosheet | 0.1 M HCl | $4.62 \times 10^{-11} \text{ mol s}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ | 4.8 | [27] |
| d-TiO ₂ /TM | 0.1 M HCl | $1.24 \times 10^{-10} \text{ mol s}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ | 9.17 | [28] |
| MoN NA/CC | 0.1 M HCl | $1.47 \times 10^{-10} \text{ mol s}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ | 1.15 | [29] |
| VN/CC | 0.1 M HCl | $2.48 \times 10^{-10} \text{ mol s}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ | 3.58 | [30] |

Table S2. Summary of the NRR performances for some reported state-of-the-art electrocatalysts in air-saturated electrolytes.

| Catalyst | Electrolyte | NH ₃ yield | Ref. |
|---|--|---|------------|
| S3@ZIF-8 | 0.1 M HCl | 23.3 μg h ⁻¹ mg ⁻¹ _{cat.} = 1.3 × 10 ⁻⁹ mol s ⁻¹ cm ⁻² | This work. |
| S-CNS/CP | 0.1 M Na ₂ SO ₄ | 10.82 μg h ⁻¹ mg ⁻¹ _{cat.} | [31] |
| Fe ₂ O ₃ /TiO ₂ /C | 1.0 M KOH | 5.72 × 10 ⁻¹¹ mol mg ⁻¹ s ⁻¹ | [32] |
| Pt/C | 0.001 M H ₂ SO ₄ | 1.14 × 10 ⁻⁹ mol s ⁻¹ cm ⁻² | [33] |

Table S3. Energetic data pertaining to key steps of N₂ reduction by H₂ on CuAu (111).

| Elemental step | ΔE (eV) | ΔZPE (eV) | $T\Delta S$ (eV) | ΔG (eV) |
|---|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| $N_2+^* \rightarrow N_2^*$ | -0.18 | 0.01 | -0.27 | 0.09 |
| $N_2^*+H^* \rightarrow NNH^{*+*}$ | 1.72 | 0.15 | -0.14 | 2.01 |
| $NNH^*+H^* \rightarrow NHHNH^{*+*}$ | -0.70 | 0.15 | 0.01 | -0.56 |
| $NHHNH^*+H^* \rightarrow NH_2NH^{*+*}$ | -0.80 | 0.19 | 0.07 | -0.68 |
| $NH_2NH^*+H^* \rightarrow NH_2NH_2^{*+*}$ | -1.36 | 0.16 | 0.09 | -1.29 |
| $NH_2NH_2^*+H^* \rightarrow NH_3NH_2^{*+*}$ | -0.21 | 0.11 | -0.01 | -0.10 |
| $NH_3NH_2^*+H \rightarrow 2NH_3^{*+*}$ | -2.08 | 0.04 | 0.05 | -2.09 |
| $2NH_3^* \rightarrow 2NH_3+2^*$ | 0.49 | -0.07 | 0.84 | -0.42 |
| $N_2^* \rightarrow 2N^*$ | 5.04 | 0.19 | -0.24 | 5.47 |
| $NNH^*+H^* \rightarrow NNH_2^{*+*}$ | -0.41 | 0.13 | 0.09 | -0.37 |

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