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# Supporting Information for

### Construction of Methylene-Bridged Electron-Deficient Corona[n]arenes and

## Selective Fluoride Recognition through Anion- $\pi$ Interactions

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## 1. General Information

Reagents and solvents for synthesis were used as received. Anhydrous solvents for titrations were pre-dried by shaking with 4A molecular sieves. Acetonitrile was subsequently stirred with calcium hydride overnight, and then fractionally distilled at high reflux. Tetrahydrofuran (THF) was treated with sodium and refluxed under nitrogen for 2 - 4 hours in the presence of benzophenone as indicator. The dry solvents were kept in a glove box and used within 48 hours.

TLC analysis was performed on pre-coated, glass-backed silica gel plates and visualized with UV light. The silica gel (200-300 mesh) flash column chromatography was used. <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C, and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectra were recorded on a 400 MHz NMR spectrometer at 298 K. Chemical shifts were reported in ppm with either tetramethylsilane or the residual solvent resonance used as an internal standard. Abbreviations are used in the description of NMR data as follows: chemical shift ( $\delta$ , ppm), multiplicity (s = singlet, d = doublet, t = triplet, q = quadruplet), coupling constant (*J*, Hz). Infrared spectra were recorded using an FT-IR spectrometer with KBr pellets in the 4000-400 cm<sup>-1</sup> region. UV-vis spectra were recorded using a fluorescence spectrophotometer. Fluorescence spectra were recorded using a fluorescence spectrophotometer. Mass spectrometry was performed at the Institute of Chemistry, CAS and Molecular Scale Laboratory, Shenzhen University. Melting points were uncorrected.

## 2. Synthesis

2.1 Optimization of the one-pot reaction

Б (	λ.σ.	0.1	Solv. Temp.	Equiv. of Catalyst	Equiv. of NH <sub>2</sub> NH <sub>2</sub>	Time	Conv.	Yield [%]			
Entry	Microwave	Solv.					[%]	1	2	3	4
1	_	THF: $EtOH = 9:1$	40 °C	4	32	7 d	60	2	1	0	1
2	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	40 °C	2	16	1 d	42	2	2	0	4
3	150 W	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	40 °C	2	16	1 d	76	4	1	1	2
4	300 W	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	40 °C	2	16	1 d	59	2	2	0	1
5	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	40 °C	2	16	2 d	55	3	2	1	2
6	Standard	<b>THF : EtOH = 9 : 1</b>	<b>40</b> °C	2	16	<b>4</b> d	<b>95</b>	5	2	2	1
7	Standard	EtOH	40 °C	2	16	1 d	~0	0	0	0	1
8	Standard	2-Methoxyethanol	40 °C	2	16	1 d	14	0	0	0	2
9	Standard	THF : MTBE : $EtOH = 9 : 9 : 2$	40 °C	2	16	1 d	91	1	trace	1	Trace
10	Standard	THF : toluene : $EtOH = 9 : 9 : 2$	40 °C	2	16	1 d	69	1	2	1	Trace
11	Standard	Dioxane : EtOH = 9 : 1	40 °C	2	16	1 d	49	1	2	1	0
12	Standard	DME : EtOH = 9 : 1	40 °C	2	16	1 d	41	2	Trace	0	1
13	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	20 °C	2	16	1 d	17	1	2	<1	2
14	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	30 °C	2	16	1 d	32	1	3	1	4
15	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	50 °C	2	16	1 d	75	1	2	1	3
16	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	60 °C	2	16	1 d	80	1	1	0	2
17	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	40 °C	1	16	1 d	44	1	2	1	2
18	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	40 °C	4	16	1 d	73	1	1	1	3
19	Standard	THF : $EtOH = 9 : 1$	40 °C	2	8	1 d	23	0	1	0	3
20	Standard	THF: EtOH = 9:1	40 °C	2	32	1 d	72	0	1	0	2

 Table S1. Optimization of the one-pot reaction

### 2.2 Experimental procedures and characterization of products



Scheme S1. Synthesis of 1-4

То 35 mL microwave reaction tube a equipped with stir a bar. *p*-phenylenediacetonitrile (156.2 mg, 1.0 mmol), THF (18 mL), anhydrous ethanol (2 mL), and 3-mercaptopropionic acid (0.18 mL, 2.0 mmol) were added. This mixture was cooled to 0 °C, charged with nitrogen, and was added dropwise hydrazine hydrate (0.78 mL, 16.0 mmol). The reaction was carried out at 40 °C using a CEM Discover SP (standard mode) microwave for 4 days. After removal of solvent, ethyl ether (5 mL) was added to form a suspension. Sodium nitrite (248.4 mg, 3.6 mmol) in water (3 mL) were slowly added and followed by slow addition of acetic acid during which the solution turned violet in color and nitrogen oxide gasses evolved. (Caution! This step must be performed in a well ventilated fume hood). The suspension was stirred at room temperature for 5 hours. The resulting mixture was diluted with DCM and filtrated over celite<sup>®</sup>. The red filter cake was washed with DCM ( $5 \times 50$  mL) and the filtrate was extracted by brine  $(3 \times 100 \text{ mL})$  to remove acid. The organic phases were then combined and dried over anhydrous Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. After filtration and removal of solvent, the residue was chromatographed on a silica gel column with a mixture of DCM and ethyl acetate (v : v = DCM to 10 : 1) as the mobile phase to give pure product 1 (8.6 mg, 5%), 2 (3.3 mg, 2%), 3 (3.0 mg, 2%), 4 (1.4 mg, 1%), and unreacted *p*-phenylenediacetonitrile (8.5 mg, 5%).

**1**: red solid; m.p. 290-292 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.01 (s, 8H), 4.47 (s, 8H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 168.5, 134.9, 129.5, 40.7; IR (KBr) *v* 2919, 2849, 1421, 1373, 878 cm<sup>-1</sup>. HRMS (APCI) Calculated for **1** [M+H]<sup>+</sup>: 369.1571. Found: 369.1582.

**2**: red solid; m.p. 281 °C (decomposition); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.35 (s, 12H), 4.51 (s, 12H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  168.9, 134.6, 129.8, 40.8; IR (KBr) *v* 2920, 2849, 1645, 1426, 1380 cm<sup>-1</sup>. HRMS (APCI) Calculated for **2** [M+H]<sup>+</sup>: 553.2320. Found: 553.2329.

**3**: red solid; m.p. 263 °C (decomposition); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.29 (s, 16H), 4.56 (s, 16H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 169.0, 134.8, 129.8, 40.7; IR (KBr) *v* 2919, 2849, 1424, 1379, 750 cm<sup>-1</sup>. HRMS (ESI) Calculated for **3** [M]<sup>-</sup>: 736.3001. Found: 736.2990.

**4**: red solid; m.p. 203 - 205 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.43 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 4H), 7.29 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 4H), 4.61 (s, 4H), 3.71 (s, 4H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  169.2, 135.8, 130.2, 129.3, 128.7, 117.8, 40.9, 23.4; IR (KBr) v 2917, 2848, 2249, 1417, 1382 cm<sup>-1</sup>. HRMS (APCI) Calculated for **4** [M-H]<sup>-</sup>: 339.1364. Found: 339.1361.

### Preparation of (Kcryp)F

To a Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) vial which was dried in an oven at 120 °C, KF (8.7 mg, 0.15 mmol), cryptand[2.2.2] (75.3 mg, 0.30 mmol), and anhydrous CH<sub>3</sub>CN or CD<sub>3</sub>CN (1.5 mL) were added. The mixture was ultrasounded for 2 hours to dissolve the solid and form a pale yellow solution (c = 0.05 M). <sup>19</sup>F NMR (376 MHz, CH<sub>3</sub>CN)  $\delta$  -95.6 (s, F<sup>-</sup>), -147.2(d, J = 127.8 Hz, HF<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>).

### Preparation of (Kcryp)OH

To a vial which was dried in an oven at 120 °C, KOH (8.4 mg, 0.15 mmol), cryptand[2.2.2] (75.3 mg, 0.30 mmol), and anhydrous CH<sub>3</sub>CN (1.5 mL). The mixture was ultrasounded for 2 hours to dissolve the solid and form a pale yellow solution (c = 0.05 M).

## 3. X-ray Crystallographic Data and Molecular Structures

High-quality single crystals of methylene-connected coronarenes 1-3 were obtained by diffusing *n*-hexane or *n*-heptane vapor slowly into their CHCl<sub>3</sub>, DCM or CH<sub>3</sub>CN solution. The complex crystal of 2 @ p-phenylenediacetonitrile could be obtained by mixing the two compounds casually and evaporating *n*-hexane slowly into their CHCl<sub>3</sub> solution.





**Figure S1.** Single crystal X-ray molecular structures of **2** with A) DCM, B) CHCl<sub>3</sub>, C) CH<sub>3</sub>CN, and D) p-phenylenediacetonitrile. Disordered structures were omitted for clarity.

### 3.2 Crystallographic data

Table S2. Crystallographic Data

compound	1	2 @ DCM	<b>2</b> @ 0.25 CHCl <sub>3</sub>	2 @ CH <sub>3</sub> CN	2 @ p-phenylenediacetonitrile	3
empirical formula	$C_{20}H_{16}N_8$	$C_{31}H_{26}Cl_2N_{12} \\$	$C_{30.25}H_{24.25}Cl_{0.75}N_{12}$	$C_{32}H_{27}N_{13}$	$C_{40}H_{32}N_{14}$	$C_{40}H_{32}N_{16}$
$M_{ m r}$	368.41	637.54	582.45	593.66	708.79	736.81
crystal size[mm <sup>3</sup> ]	$0.4 \times 0.004 \times 0.004$	$0.2\times0.15\times0.1$	$0.3\times0.2\times0.04$	$0.25\times0.2\times0.1$	$0.312\times0.156\times0.135$	$0.2\times0.1\times0.05$
crystal system	triclinic	orthorhombic	monoclinic	triclinic	orthorhombic	monoclinic
space group	P-1	$Cmc2_1$	P21	P-1	Pna2 <sub>1</sub>	$P2_1/c$
a [Å]	6.3024(8)	24.4461(4)	13.5363(2)	8.8117(2)	10.96920(10)	9.1552(3)
b [Å]	8.4285(10)	37.2074(6)	10.3837(2)	13.6872(4)	22.0100(2)	33.0314(8)
c [Å]	9.2846(12)	10.1093(2)	22.0547(3)	13.7913(5)	14.5393(2)	11.9403(3)
α [deg]	67.272(12)	90	90	118.189(3)	90	90
β [deg]	89.999(10)	90	96.2010(10)	95.231(2)	90	93.094(2)
γ [deg]	77.645(10)	90	90	93.932(2)	90	90
V [Å <sup>3</sup> ]	442.49(10)	9195.2(3)	3081.80(9)	1448.09(8)	3510.25(7)	3605.59(17)
d [g/cm <sup>3</sup> ]	1.383	1.382	1.255	1.362	1.341	1.357
Z	1	12	4	2	4	4
T [K]	172.97(10)	169.99(10)	169.98(11)	169.99(12)	170.00(10)	293(2)
R1,wR2 [I>2σ(I)]	0.0558, 0.1455	0.0997, 0.2787	0.1239, 0.3253	0.0912, 0.2763	0.0431, 0.1138	0.0499, 0.1073
R1,wR2 (all data)	0.0709, 0.1581	0.1132, 0.3014	0.1422, 0.3496	0.0971, 0.2800	0.0472, 0.1259	0.0798, 0.1243
quality of fit	1.02	1.035	1.027	1.108	1.045	1.044
CCDC No.	2233693	2233697	2233698	2233699	2233700	2233701



**Figure S2.** X-ray molecular structure of **1** (CCDC 2233693). The molecular is depicted in stick-ellipsoid style at 50% probability level for all atoms.



**Figure S3.** X-ray molecular structure of **2** @ DCM (CCDC 2233697). The molecular is depicted in stick-ellipsoid style at 50% probability level for all atoms.



**Figure S4.** X-ray molecular structure of **2** @ 0.25 CHCl<sub>3</sub> (CCDC 2233698). The molecular is depicted in stick-ellipsoid style at 50% probability level for all atoms.



Figure S5. X-ray molecular structure of 2 @  $CH_3CN$  (CCDC 2233699). The molecular is depicted in stick-ellipsoid style at 50% probability level for all atoms.



**Figure S6.** X-ray molecular structure of **2** @ *p*-phenylenediacetonitrile (CCDC 2233700). The molecular is depicted in stick-ellipsoid style at 50% probability level for all atoms.



Figure S7. X-ray molecular structure of 3 (CCDC 2233701). The molecular is depicted in stick-ellipsoid style at 50% probability level for all atoms.

Table S3. Summary of the photophysical and electrochemical data						
Compound	1	2	3	4		
) ()	246(1.42)	238 (1.67)	237 (2.31)	230 (0.85)		
$\lambda_{\max}$ (nm)	240 (1.42)	268 (0.96)	268 (1.17)	268 (0.32)		
$(\epsilon,  imes 10^4  L \cdot mol^{-1} \cdot cm^{-1})$	308 (0.16)	308 (0.26)	314 (0.30)	304 (0.10)		
	524 (0.10)	546 (0.17)	544 (0.20)	546 (0.06)		
$\lambda_{ex}(nm)$	583	595	596	590		
$\lambda_{em}(nm)$	524	546	544	546		
$E_{1/2} ({ m mV})$	-1398, -1508	-1401	-1366	-1356		

# 4. The Photophysical and Electrochemical Data

# 5. UV-vis Titrations of 1 with Anions

### 5.1 UV-vis titrations of 1 with tetrabutylammonium salts of different anions



Figure S8. UV-vis titration spectra at 298 K of 1 (0.25 mM) with addition of tetrabutylammonium salts of different anions in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/THF (v:v=1:1). 1 equiv of TBAF·3H<sub>2</sub>O and 100 equiv of other guests were added, respectively.

## 5.2 UV-vis titrations of 1 with (Kcryp)F



**Figure S9.** UV-vis titration spectra at 298 K of **1** (0.25 mM) with addition of 0 - 20 equiv of (Kcryp)F in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/THF. The insets show the observed data (black points) and calculated data (red line) based on the absorbance values recorded at 370 nm (up) and the Job's plot (bottom).



**Figure S10.** UV-vis titration spectra at 298 K of **1** (0.26 mM) with addition of 0 - 18 equiv of (Kcryp)F in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/THF. The inset shows the observed data (black points) and calculated data (red line) based on the absorbance values recorded at 370 nm.



**Figure S11.** UV-vis titration spectra at 298 K of **1** (0.14 mM) with addition of 0 - 26 equiv of (Kcryp)F in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/THF. The inset shows the observed data (black points) and calculated data (red line) based on the absorbance values recorded at 370 nm.

	$K_1 \left( \mathrm{M}^{-1}  ight)$	$K_2(\mathrm{M}^{-1})$
Titration 1	172	1334
Titration 2	224	1415
Titration 3	239	1370
Average	$212\pm29$	$1373\pm33$

Table S4. Summary of UV-vis titrations of 1 with (Kcryp)F

## 5.3 Addition of water to a solution of 1 and (Kcryp)F



**Figure S12.** UV-vis titration spectra at 298 K of **1** (0.28 mM) and (Kcryp)F (0.56 mM) with addition of 0 - 2.00 equiv of water in  $CH_3CN/THF$ .

### 5.4 UV-vis titrations of 1 with (Kcryp)OH



**Figure S13.** UV-vis titration spectra at 298 K of **1** (0.28 M) with addition of 0 - 3.37 equiv of (Kcryp)OH in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/THF. The inset shows an enlarged view of spectra from 400 to 600 nm. Isosbestic points were observed at 563 nm and 518 nm. When more than 1.20 equiv of (Kcryp)OH were added, isosbestic points drifted. The refinement of binding constants could not converge with Hypspec program.





Figure S14. HRMS of 1 and (Kcryp)F.

# 7. NMR of 1 and (Kcryp)F



**Figure S15.** <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra of **1** (0.20 mM) in CD<sub>3</sub>CN/THF- $d_8$  at 298 K in the absence and presence of (Kcryp)F.



**Figure S16.** <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectra of (Kcryp)F (10 mM) in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/THF at 298 K in the absence and presence of **1** (0.25 mM).

# 8. DFT Calculations

DFT studies were performed using Gaussian  $16^1$  package. Geometry optimization and frequency calculations were carried out in gas-phase using M06-2X<sup>2</sup>-D3(0)<sup>3</sup> functional with 6-31+G(d)<sup>4</sup> basis set. Single point energies were calculated at M06-2X-D3(0)/ma-TZVP<sup>5</sup> level, using Solvation Model Based on Density (SMD) implicit solvent model<sup>6</sup>. The mixture solvent was defined by using an average permittivity, namely eps = 21.556, epsinf = 1.976. Other parameters took the value of CH<sub>3</sub>CN.

F-

Gibbs free energy: -100.007377 a.u.

F<sup>.</sup>

Gibbs free energy: -99.748527 a.u.



Gibbs free energy: -1209.341481 a.u.

# Table S5. Coordinates of 1

Ν	-3.29584000	-0.65477100	-1.18201700
Ν	-3.29588800	0.65422800	-1.18230100
Ν	-3.29725000	-0.65432000	1.18191200
Ν	-3.29724700	0.65483500	1.18162900
С	-3.20298400	1.27684800	-0.00034900
С	-3.20292700	-1.27685700	0.00020900
С	-1.40520100	2.91215200	-0.00086300
С	1.40517600	2.91216700	-0.00077700
С	-2.91483200	2.75105800	-0.00065900
С	-0.69640600	2.92503600	1.20258200
С	0.69636500	2.91936200	-1.20429000
С	-2.91478700	-2.75106700	0.00055800
С	0.69630600	2.92503600	1.20262700
С	-0.69631900	2.91934900	-1.20433300
Н	-3.35524000	3.20242200	0.89201500
Н	-3.35550000	-3.20210600	0.89325600
Н	-3.35550300	3.20214400	-0.89335200
Н	-3.35522100	-3.20249600	-0.89207900
Н	-1.23834900	2.90653300	2.14517400
Н	1.23831600	2.89633300	-2.14679000
Н	-1.23822500	2.89626700	-2.14685800
Н	1.23821600	2.90650200	2.14523400

Ν	3.29584000	0.65477200	1.18203000
Ν	3.29586200	-0.65422500	1.18230100
Ν	3.29727400	0.65434300	-1.18190100
Ν	3.29725000	-0.65481400	-1.18162800
С	3.20293700	-1.27683000	0.00034200
С	3.20297100	1.27687300	-0.00019400
С	1.40520000	-2.91216900	0.00084800
С	-1.40517500	-2.91218400	0.00078200
С	2.91482600	-2.75104800	0.00063800
С	0.69639600	-2.92490800	-1.20259500
С	-0.69635600	-2.91953100	1.20428700
С	2.91479300	2.75107500	-0.00053200
С	-0.69631300	-2.92490700	-1.20263100
С	0.69632900	-2.91951700	1.20432100
Н	3.35523600	-3.20239200	-0.89204500
Н	3.35551600	3.20213300	-0.89321600
Н	3.35551100	-3.20213900	0.89332200
Н	3.35520400	3.20250100	0.89211800
Н	1.23833400	-2.90627800	-2.14518800
Н	-1.23829900	-2.89661200	2.14679500
Н	1.23824100	-2.89654200	2.14684500
Н	-1.23823200	-2.90624300	-2.14523000

1--



Gibbs free energy: -1209.470871 a.u.

# Table S6. Coordinates of 1<sup>--</sup>

Ν	-3.26172300	-0.69289600	-1.19957800
Ν	-3.26677200	0.69173400	-1.20041200
Ν	-3.26677700	-0.69169600	1.20041600
Ν	-3.26170300	0.69293400	1.19958200
С	-3.20740900	1.26142800	-0.00022800
С	-3.20743300	-1.26139200	0.00023200
С	-1.42542500	2.92373100	-0.01165100
С	1.39373600	2.91557500	-0.02198700
С	-2.92733600	2.75181300	-0.00205000
С	-0.70535500	2.98770300	1.18446800
С	0.67849500	2.86781500	-1.22126700
С	-2.92737500	-2.75178000	0.00205200
С	0.68834700	2.98222100	1.18119000
С	-0.71420700	2.87294000	-1.21494900
Н	-3.36051500	3.20324500	0.89539900
Н	-3.37215400	-3.20156200	0.89489700
Н	-3.37210900	3.20159900	-0.89489600
Н	-3.36055800	-3.20320500	-0.89539800
Н	-1.24812600	2.98772200	2.12633600
Н	1.21732200	2.78710100	-2.16352400
Н	-1.26572900	2.77995600	-2.14706300
Н	1.23389200	2.99209500	2.12286500
Ν	3.31962600	0.66447300	1.17462200
Ν	3.32005700	-0.64506100	1.18519000
Ν	3.32002000	0.64502000	-1.18520200
Ν	3.31956900	-0.66451000	-1.17463300
С	3.20356500	-1.27861100	0.01038900
С	3.20358600	1.27857400	-0.01039200

**S19** 

С	1.39369600	-2.91559000	0.02198800
С	-1.42546600	-2.92371400	0.01165400
С	2.90359400	-2.74919300	0.02274900
С	0.68830500	-2.98226200	-1.18118600
С	-0.71424600	-2.87289800	1.21495100
С	2.90363200	2.74916000	-0.02274900
С	-0.70539600	-2.98772800	-1.18446300
С	0.67845600	-2.86778900	1.22126700
Н	3.34568400	-3.20856000	-0.86592800
Н	3.34438100	3.19250500	-0.92031900
Н	3.34433800	-3.19254200	0.92032000
Н	3.34572900	3.20851900	0.86592800
Н	1.23384900	-2.99216900	-2.12286200
Н	-1.26576700	-2.77988000	2.14706100
Н	1.21728400	-2.78705600	2.16352200
Н	-1.24816800	-2.98777000	-2.12633100

**1** +  $F^- \longrightarrow 1^{-1} + F^- \qquad \Delta G = 81.2 \text{ kcal·mol}^{-1}$ 

Scheme S2. Electron transfer from fluoride anion to 1.

## 9. References

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# 10. Copies of <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR Spectra

















