Semi hydrogenation of alkynes by a novel bimetallic rhodium(I) complex

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Catalytic semi hydrogenation of alkynes to alkenes is an important process in both academia and industry. Developed in the 50's, Lindlar's catalyst $(Pd/CaCO_3/Pb(OAc)_2/quinoline)$ still remains a privileged system for Z-selective semi hydrogenation reactions. However, the system utilizes a toxic lead additive. Further drawbacks are narrow substrate scope, over hydrogenation to alkenes, Z/E isomerization and double bond migration reactions. [1]

Herein, we report a new bimetallic complex $\mathbf{2}$ bearing a $[Rh(I)]_2$ -mojety. The stabilization of the rhodium-rhodium bond, while leaving two reactive rhodium centers, was achieved by a tailored ligand with olefin/alkyne sites to anchor the two metal centers. The complex $\mathbf{2}$ was shown to be active in semi hydrogenation of alkynes under very mild conditions. In order to optimize the stability and activity of the complex, high throughput ligand- and substrate screening was performed, leading to a catalyst system able to perform semi hydrogenation reactions with up to 94 % alkene selectivity.

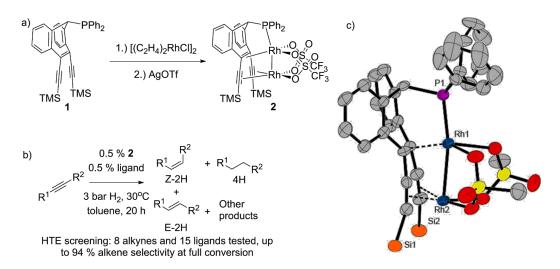


Figure 1. a) Synthesis of a dirhodium complex **2**, b) Conditions for semi hydrogenation reactions, c) crystal structure of **2**. Methyl groups and fluorine atoms omitted for clarity.

[1] A. Fedorov, H. Liu, H. Lo, C. Copéret, J. Am. Chem. Soc. 2016, 138, 16502.