Cyclic(alkyl)(amino)carbene Ruthenium Complexes for *Z*-Stereoselective (Asymmetric) Olefin Metathesis

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In memory of Professor Robert H. Grubbs

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Abstract: *The first Z-stereoselective catechodithiolate ruthenium complexes containing cyclic(alkyl)(amino)carbene ligands are reported. Isolated in nearly quantitative yields or in-situ generated, these catalysts demonstrated remarkable Z selectivity (Z/E ratio up to >98/2) in ring-opening metathesis polymerization (ROMP), ring-opening-cross metathesis (ROCM) and cross-metathesis (CM). Thanks to the efficient chiral HPLC resolution of racemic CAAC-complex precursors, optically pure dithiolated complexes were also synthesized allowing to produce enantioenriched Z-ROCM products in >99/1 Z/E with good levels of enantioselectivity.*

Discovered in the mid of last century, olefin metathesis[1] has become a practical and versatile synthetic tool to efficiently produce carbon-carbon double bonds. Relevant applications were successfully disclosed in various fields such as natural product synthesis,[2] the transformation of renewable feedstocks[3] or the production of innovative materials (polymers).[4] This resounding success stems from the elaboration of well-defined, air stable and easy to handle ruthenium-arylidene complexes that proved to be highly tolerant towards many organic functionalities.[1] Obviously, the asymmetric version of this reaction was also intensively studied with either optically pure ruthenium or molybdenum catalysts, offering a straightforward access to highly valuable chiral building blocks with high enantiopurity.[5] As the *Z*-alkene moiety is ubiquitous in numerous relevant chiral molecules, special attention has been given to the design of catalysts which can control both the enantioselectivity and the *Z*-selectivity[6,7] of metathetic transformations. Nevertheless, as depicted in Figure 1, examples remain scarce.[8] For instance, chiral Mo-complex **Mo-1** bearing a monodentate BINOL-type ligand demonstrated a high enantioinduction in asymmetric ring-opening cross-metathesis (AROCM) combined with a remarkable degree of *Z*-selectivity (Figure 1, eq. 1).[8a] Stereogenic-at-ruthenium complex **Ru-1** featuring a chiral bidentate *N*-heterocyclic carbene (NHC) ligand furnished tetrahydropyran products in high ees and good to excellent *Z*:*E* ratio (Figure 1, eq. 2).[8b]

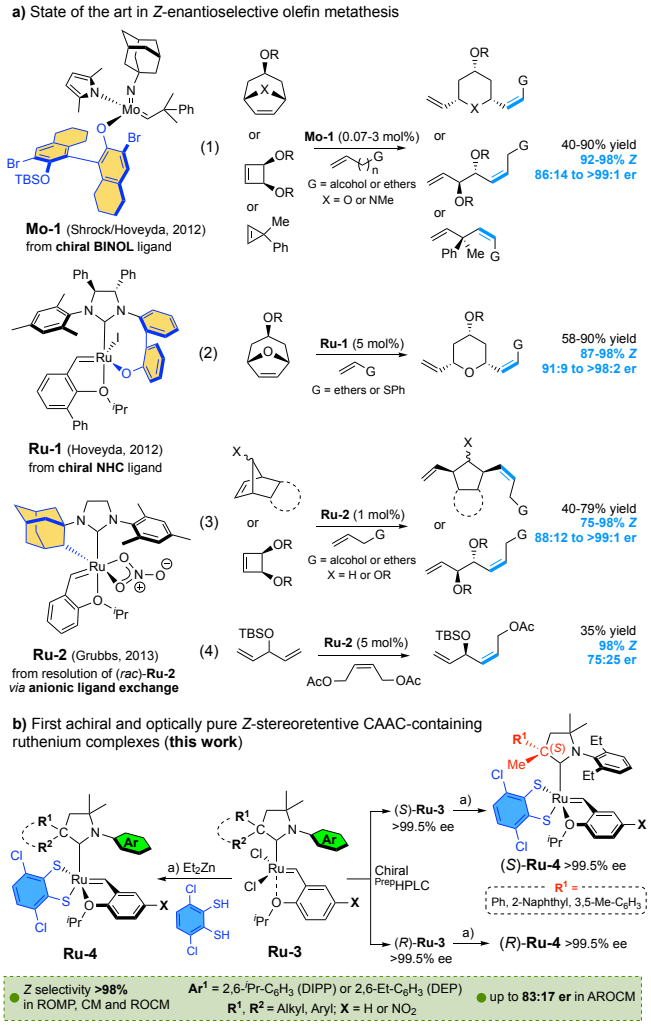
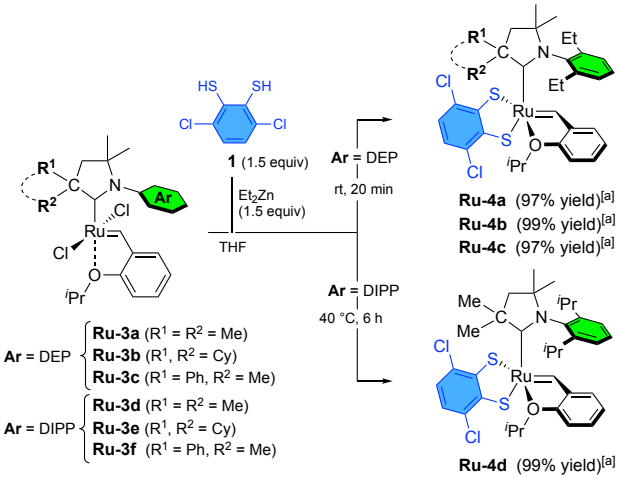


Figure 1 a) Previously described *Z*-enantioselective olefin metathesis catalysed by Mo- or Ru-complexes. b) Development of achiral and optically pure *Z*-stereoretentive CAAC-Ru complexes (**this work**).

Optically pure cyclometalated Ru-catalyst **Ru-2** has proved to be highly efficient in AROCM, affording various *Z*-alkenes with high ees (Figure 1, eq. 3).[8c] Noticeable, **Ru-2** also promoted the first *Z*-asymmetric cross-metathesis (ACM), albeit with a moderate 50% ee was observed (Figure 1, eq. 4).[8d] Despite these significant breakthroughs, the development of new chiral *Z*-selective metathesis catalysts remains a challenging objective. Recently, our groups reported an expedient access to the first optically pure **Ru-3** complexes containing cyclic(alkyl)(amino)carbene (CAAC) ligands (Figure 1, b).[9,10] The latter demonstrated excellent catalytic performances in asymmetric olefin metathesis with good enantioselectivities (up to 92%).[10a] In light of these promising results, we wished to investigate the development of their *Z*-enantioselective congeners (Figure 1, b). Herein, we focused our attention on catechodithiolate Ru-complexes,[7e,f] a class of catalysts which combine easy accessibility (one step from commercially available 2nd generation Hoveyda-type complexes)[11] and remarkable efficiency towards a wide range of *Z*-alkenes in high purity (>98% *Z*). Since, their asymmetric version has not yet been reported, *we investigated both achiral and chiral CAAC ligands and their use in Z-stereoselective ROMP, ROCM, CM and also in asymmetric ROCM.*

We initiated our study by the synthesis of catechodithiolate Ru-catalysts starting from previously reported CAAC-containing Hoveyda type complexes **Ru-3** (Scheme 1).[12] Even in the presence of the sterically congested chiral quaternary center (*i.e.* **Ru-4c**), complexes **Ru-3a-c** featuring a *N*-2,6-diethylphenyl (DEP) group afforded the expected dithiolate **Ru-4a-c** in nearly quantitative isolated yields (97-99%, within 20 min at ambient temperature). In marked contrast, **Ru-3d-f** complexes containing the bulkier *N*-2,6-diisopropylphenyl (DIPP) group appeared more challenging. In this case, **Ru-3d** required a prolonged reaction time (6 h, 40 °C) to afford the corresponding dithiolate **Ru-4d** in 99% isolated yield, whereas rapid decomposition of the corresponding dithiolate Ru-species was observed for **Ru-3e-3f**. The later, likely results from a severe steric clash between the catechol dithiolate and the DIPP moiety of the CAAC ligand leading to extremely short-lived **Ru-4e-4f** complexes.[13] According to the dissymmetry of the CAAC unit, 2 rotamers could be expected for **Ru-4** complexes. [14] However, ^{1}H and ^{13}C NMR analysis showed that only one rotamer exist in solution for **Ru-4a-d** (See Supplementary Information (SI) for details).



Scheme 1. Synthesis of catechodithiolate CAAC **Ru-4a-d**. [a] Isolated yield.

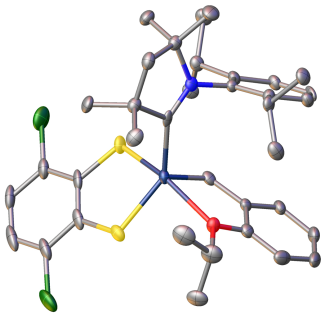
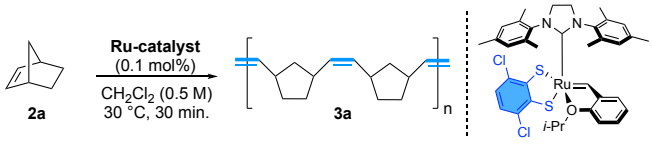


Figure 2 Solid-state structure of complex Ru-**4d** from single crystal X-ray diffraction. Displacement ellipsoids are drawn at 50% probability. Hydrogen atoms have been omitted for clarity.

Overhauser effects (nOe) between the prominent benzylidene proton and the aryl alkyl groups were observed in NOESY experiments performed in Tol-D8 at 0 °C which features the *N*-Aryl above the styrenyl-ether moiety. While we were not able to obtain suitable crystals from ^{DEP}CAAC **Ru-4a-c**, we could perform an X-ray diffraction analysis of **Ru-4d** (Figure 2), which confirm the structure of the rotamer observed in solution.[15]

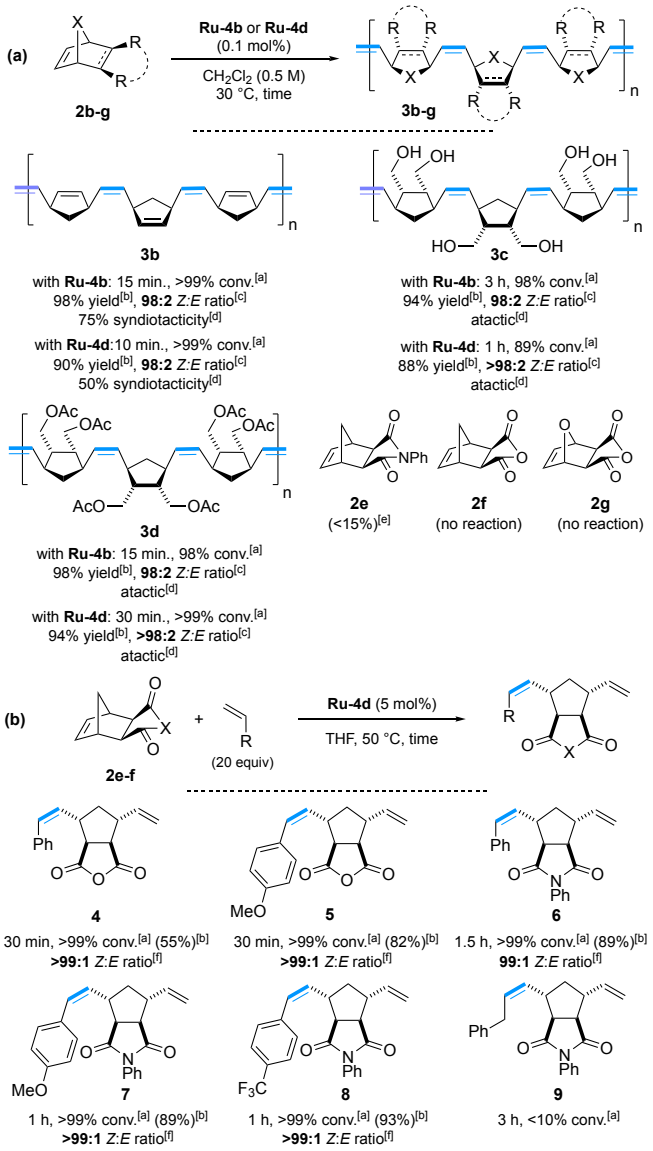
Catalytic performances of catechodithiolate CAAC **Ru-4a-d** were initially evaluated in the ROMP of norbornene **2a** (Table 1). All complexes demonstrated good reactivity at 0.1 mol%, allowing full conversion within 30 min and affording the expected polymer **3a** in 89-98% isolated yield. While an excellent >95% syndiotacticity was observed in each case, a slight difference of *Z:E* ratio occurred ranging from 92:8 (entry 3; **Ru-4c**) to >98:2 (entry 4; **Ru-4d**). It is worth noting that the NHC-containing catalyst **Z-Hov** showed similar performances, however yielding **3a** as an atactic polymer (entry 5).[16] The ROMP of norbornadiene or *exo*-norbonene derivatives **2b-g**[17] were next studied with ^{DEP}CAAC **Ru-4b** and ^{DIPP}CAAC **Ru-4d** catalysts (Scheme 2, a). Here also, excellent *Z*-selectivities (>98:2) and yields (94-98%) were reached, except for substrates **2e-g** which gave no or low conversion even under more drastic conditions (see SI for details). Of note, a prolonged reaction time (1-3 h vs 10-30 min.) was required for diol **3c**, but without any alteration of the *Z*-selectivity.[18]

Table 1. Catalytic performances of cathecodithiolate CAAC **Ru-4a-d** in ring-opening metathesis polymerization of norbornene **2a**.



Entry	Catalyst	Yield(%)[a]	*Z:E* ratio[b]	Syndiotacticity (%)[c]
1	**Ru-4a**	93	97:3	>95
2	**Ru-4b**	91	96:4	>95
3	**Ru-4c**	98	92:8	>95
4	**Ru-4d**	**89**	**>98:2**	**>95**
5	**Z-Hov**	92	>98:2	Atactic

[a] Isolated yield. [b] Molar ratio of *E* and *Z* isomers were obtained by ^{1}H NMR analysis ($CDCl_3$). [c] Determined by ^{13}C NMR spectroscopy at 60 °C ($CDCl_3$) after hydrogenation of the polymers (see SI for details).



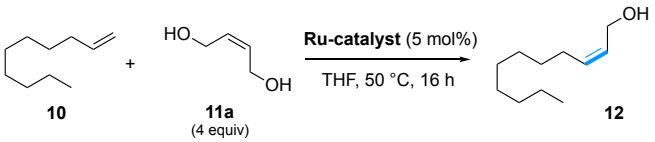
Scheme 2. Scope of ROMP (**a**) and ROCM (**b**) catalysed by catechodithiolate ^{DEP}CAAC **Ru-4b** or ^{DIPP}CAAC **Ru-4d**. [a] Conversions were determined by ^{1}H NMR spectroscopy using 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene as internal standard. [b] Isolated yield. [c] Molar ratio of *E* and *Z* isomers were monitored by ^{1}H NMR analysis ($CDCl_3$ or DMSO-d_6). [d] Determined by ^{13}C NMR spectroscopy. [e] Catalysts **Ru-4b,d** were used. [f] Determined by GC analysis.

Interestingly, polymer **3b** was formed in up to 75% syndiotacticity with ^{DEP}CAAC **Ru-4b**, surpassing the **Z-Hov** catalyst (55%).[19] The lower 50% syndioselectivity observed with ^{DIPP}CAAC **Ru-4d** could result from steric clash with the bulkier DIPP substituent.[19] On the other hand, only atactic polymers **3c,d** were obtained from ROMP of functionalized norbornenes **2c** and **2d** independent of the catalyst used, also suggesting that a significant steric clash occurred between the CAAC units and the substrates.

We next turned our investigation to ROCM transformation involving norbornenes **2e** and **2f** and various cross-olefin partners (Scheme 2, b). Here also, **Ru-4d** proved to be highly efficient, furnishing internal alkenes in moderate to high yield (55-93%) and excellent *Z*-selectivity (>98%). However, the reaction with allylbenzene leading to succinimide **9** failed.

The catechodithiolate CAAC-Ru complexes were also investigated in cross-metathesis between 1-decene **10** and *cis*-butenediol **11a** (Table 2).

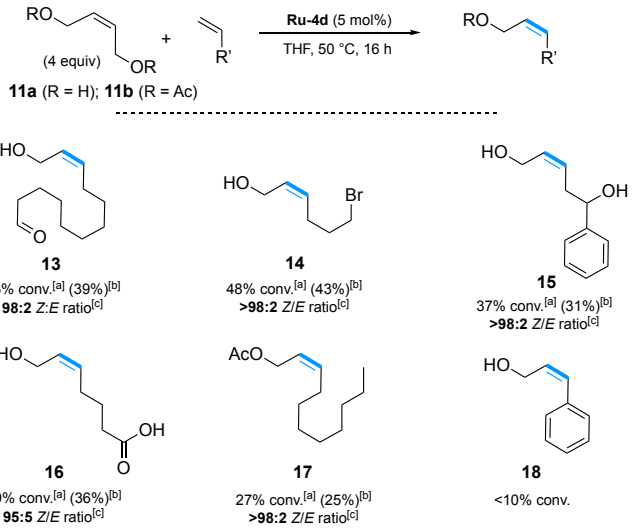
Table 2. Catalytic performances of catechodithiolate CAAC-Ru-complexes **Ru-4a-d** in cross-metathesis between 1-decene **10** and *cis*-butenediol **11a**.



Entry	catalyst	Conv. (%)[a] (yield)[b]	*Z*:*E* ratio[c]
1	**Ru-4a**	36 (32)	>98:2
2	**Ru-4b**	35 (26)	98:2
3	**Ru-4c**	40 (31)	98:2
4	**Ru-4d**	50 (**48**)	**98:2**
5[d]	**Ru-4d**	42 (36)	>98:2
6[e]	**Ru-4d**	50 (48)	98:2

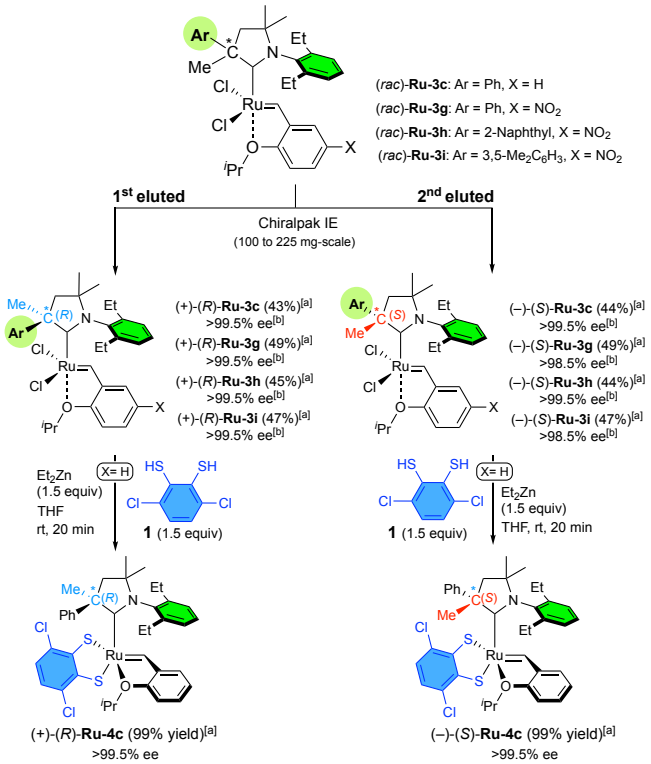
[a] Conversions were determined by ^{1}H NMR spectroscopy using 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene as internal standard. [b] Isolated yield. [c] Molar ratio of *E* and *Z* isomers were monitored by ^{1}H NMR analysis ($CDCl_3$). [d] Reaction performed at 20 °C. [e] Reaction performed at 80 °C in 2-Me-THF.

We observed excellent *Z*:*E* ratios (98:2) across of our range of catalysts, with **Ru-4d** also appearing to be the most efficient, furnishing the expected *Z*-product **12** in a moderate 48% isolated yield (entry 4). Performing the reaction at higher or lower temperature did not improve the conversion (entries 6 and 7). Since higher catalyst loading (10 mol%) or sequential addition of catalyst (4x 1.25 mol%) were also unsuccessful to improve the conversion (17%, see SI for details), we suspect self-poisoning of the active catalytic species.[10f,g] We next studied the performance of **Ru-4d** in various CM reactions. As depicted in scheme 3, high levels of *Z*-selectivity were obtained, ranging from 95% to >98%. Nevertheless, the conversion remained moderate furnishing the corresponding *Z*-products in 25-43% isolated yield. Furthermore, low conversion was observed in the case of styrene as olefin partner.



Scheme 3. Scope of cross-metathesis catalysed by catechodithiolate ^{DIPP}CAAC **Ru-4d**. [a] Conversions were determined by ^{1}H NMR spectroscopy using 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene as internal standard. [b] Isolated Yield. [c] Determined by GC.

Having showed the high Z-selectivity in ROMP, ROCM and CM, we next investigated the performance in *Z*-enantioselective ROCM of optically pure catechodithiolate ^{DEP}CAAC-Ru complexes featuring various groups at the chiral quaternary center (*i.e.* Ph, 2-napthyl, 3,5-dimethylphenyl). We also considered their nitro-Grela variant with a -NO_2 activating group on the styrenylether fragment. First, we performed the preparative HPLC resolution of ^{DEP}CAAC **Ru-3c-g,i** on a Chiralpak IE phase (Scheme 3, see SI for details),[20] affording each enantiomer in nearly quantitative yield and excellent optical purity (>98.5% ee). Note that the chiroptical properties of these optically pure Ru-complexes were obtained through Electronic Circular Dichroism (ECD) (see SI for details). We unambiguously confirmed the absolute configuration of second eluted **Ru-3g,i** complexes by X-ray diffraction study (*S*, Figure 3)[14] and attributed by analogy the same (*S*) configuration to second eluted **Ru-3c,h**. Optically pure complexes (–)-(*S*)-**Ru-3c** and (+)-(*R*)-**Ru-3c** were then converted into corresponding catechodithiolated counterparts (–)-(*S*)-**Ru-4c** and (+)-(*R*)-**Ru-4c** in 99% isolated yield (Scheme 4).



Scheme 4. Scope of optically pure ^{DEP}CAAC-Ru complexes **Ru-3c,g-i** and catechodithiolate **Ru-4c** [a] Isolated yield after preparative chiral resolution. [b] Determined by chiral-stationary phase HPLC analysis.

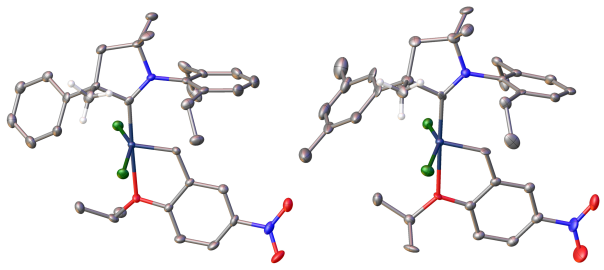
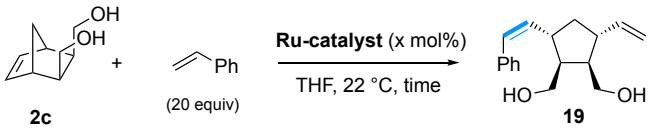


Figure 3 Solid-state structure of optically pure (–)-(*S*)-Ru-**3g** (left) and (–)-(*S*)-Ru-**3i** (right) from single crystal X-ray diffraction. Displacement ellipsoids are drawn at 50% probability. Most hydrogen atoms have been omitted for clarity.

Table 3. Evaluation of optically pure ^{DEP}CAAC Ru-complexes **Ru-3c** and catechodithiolate **Ru-4c**,**g-f** in *Z*-enantioselective ROCM of norbornene **2c**.



2c **19**

Entry	catalyst (mol%)	Time (h)	Conv. (%)[a] (yield)[b]	*Z*:*E* ratio[c]	er (*Z*)-**13** (%)[d]
1	(*R*)-**Ru-3c** (1)	2	99 (29)	65:35	76:24[e]
2	(*R*)-**Ru-4c** (5)	2	99 (26)	99:1	78:22
3[f]	IS (*R*)-**Ru-4c** (5)	2	99 (26)	99:1	77.5:22.5
4[f]	IS (*R*)-**Ru-4g** (5)	0.5	99 (20)	99:1	77.5:22.5
5[f]	IS (*R*)-**Ru-4h** (5)	0.5	**99 (44)**	**99:1**	**78.5:21.5**
6[f]	IS (*R*)-**Ru-4i** (5)	0.5	99 (31)	99:1	78:22

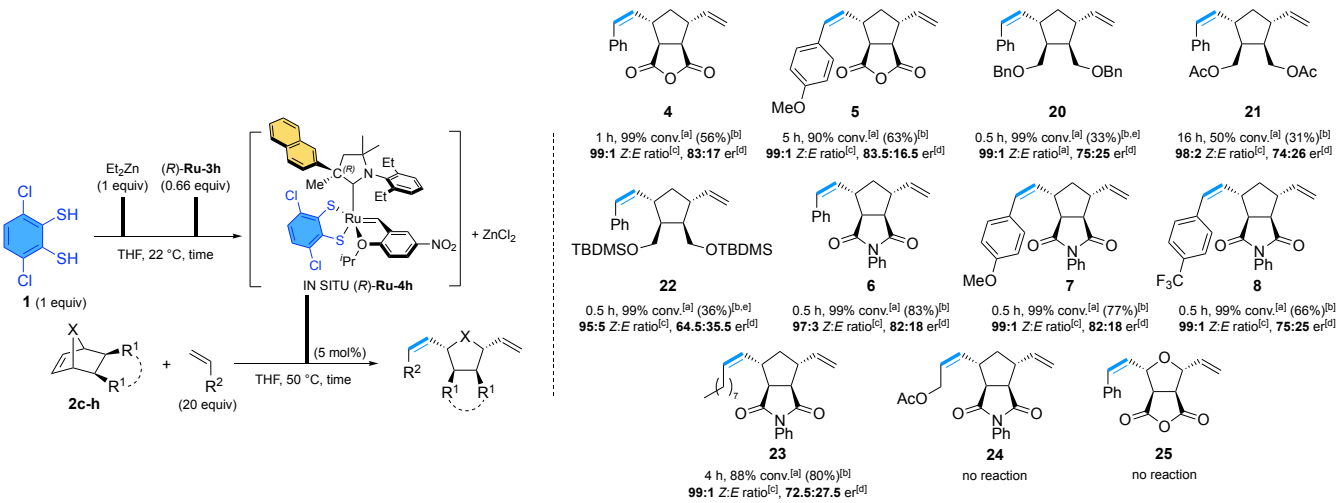
[a] Conversions were determined by ^{1}H NMR spectroscopy using 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene as internal standard. [b] Isolated yield. [c] Determined by GC analysis. [d] Determined by HPLC analysis on chiral phase. [e] er for (*E*)-**19**: 69.5:30.5. [f] The catechodithiolate catalyst was generated in situ by reacting **1** with Et_2Zn followed by the addition of respective (*R*)-**Ru-3** (see Scheme 5 and SI for details)

(+)-(*R*)-**Ru-4c** was then evaluated in *Z*-enantioselective ROCM between *exo*-norbornene **2c** and styrene to furnish enantioenriched cyclopentane **19** with 99% *Z*-selectivity and 78:22 enantiomeric ratio (Table 3, entry 2). This catalytic performance is quite similar to that of (*R*)-**Ru-3c** affording **19** in 29% isolated yield[21] and 76:24 er (entry 1). While the selectivity remained moderate, it is worth mentioning that previous AROCM involving *exo*-norbonenes are scarce and have been obtained in even lower enantioselectivities (up to 67:33 er for **19**).[22]

We next turned our attention to optically pure nitro-Grela type pre-catalysts ^{DEP}CAAC-**Ru-3g-i**. Unexpectedly, the corresponding dithiolated complexes proved to be too unstable in solution to be isolated. Gratifyingly by capitalizing on recent results from our lab,[10a] we confirmed that (*R*)-**Ru-4c** can be generated *in situ* (IS) promoting the AROCM with the same efficiency (entry 3 *vs* 2). Under similar conditions, we observed faster reactivity with nitroGrela IS (+)-(*R*)-**Ru-4g-i** affording full conversion within 30 min. In all cases, (*Z*)-**19** was exclusively formed with similar levels of enantioselectivity, meanwhile the highest isolated yield (44%, entry 5) was obtained with IS (+)-(*R*)-**Ru-4h** featuring a 2-napthyl at the chiral quaternary center.

Having identified *in situ* generated (+)-(*R*)-**Ru-4h** as the most efficient *Z*-enantioselective CAAC-Ru catalyst, we evaluated its scope across a broad range of substrates (Scheme 5). ROCM products **4-8** and **20-23** were formed in excellent *Z*-selectivity ranging from 95:5 to 99:1 *Z*/*E* ratio, except for **24** and **25** for which the starting-material was recovered despite a higher catalyst loading and/or a prolongated reaction time. The highest enantioselectivies (82:18 to 83:17 er) were reached with *exo*-norbornenes featuring an anhydride or a succinimide function, leading respectively to *trans* cyclopentanes **4-5** and **6-7** with 56-83% isolated yield. A drop in enantioselectivity was observed with protected diols reacting with styrene (**20-22**; 64.5:35.5 to 75:25 er), although these ers remain higher than in previous reports.[22] Finally, a similar level of enantioselectivity was also observed with 1-decene as cross-olefin partner (**23**; 72.5:27.5 er).

In summary, we have developed the first *Z*-stereoselective catechodithiolate ruthenium complexes containing cyclic(alkyl)(amino)carbene ligands.



Scheme 5. Scope of *Z*-enantioselective ROCM catalysed by *In Situ* (IS) generated optically pure catechodithiolate ^{DEP}CAAC-**Ru-4h**. [a] Determined by ^{1}H NMR spectroscopy using 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene as internal standard. [b] Isolated yield. [c] Determined by GC analysis. [d] Determined by GC analysis on chiral phase. [e] The corresponding polymer was also formed as by-product.

Among a selection of CAAC Ru-complexes, ^{DEP}CAAC **Ru-4b** and ^{DIPP}CAAC **Ru-4d** have proven to be the most efficient toward the formation of *Z*-internal olefins. Moderate to good yields and remarkable *Z*-selectivity (>98%) were obtained in various ROMP, CM and ROCM transformations. Notably, the resulting polymers from norbornene **2a** and norbornadiene **2b** were formed with good to excellent syndiotacticity (75 to >95%), surpassing that of NHC-based catechodithiolate Ru-catalysts. Importantly, thanks to the efficient and rapid access to optically pure CAAC Ru-complexes (>98.5% ee), the first synthesis of enantiopure catechodithiolate ^{DEP}CAAC-Ru complexes was achieved. Isolated or formed in situ, those new chiral *Z*-selective catalysts demonstrated good catalytic performances in *Z*-enantioselective ROCMs involving reluctant *exo*-norbornene derivatives (up to 99:1 *Z*:*E* ratio; and up to 83:17 er). Further works dealing with the continuous flow synthesis of enantioenriched *Z*-alkenes are underway and will be reported soon.[23]

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the CNRS, the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Chimie de Rennes, the Aix-Marseille Université and the University of California San Diego. This work was supported by the Region Bretagne (ARED 2018 “Biometa” N° 601, grant to J.M.), the Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR-19-CE07-0017 ChiCAAC) and the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science, Basic Energy Sciences, Catalysis Science Program, under Award # DE-SC0009376. The generous gift of ruthenium complexes by Umicore AG & Co is gratefully acknowledged. We are grateful to Jean-Paul Guégan, Elsa Caytan and the PRISM core facility (Biogenouest©, UMS, Biosit, Université de Rennes 1) for NMR experiences.

Keywords: Olefin metathesis • Ruthenium • CAAC • *Z*-selectivity • Enantioselectivity

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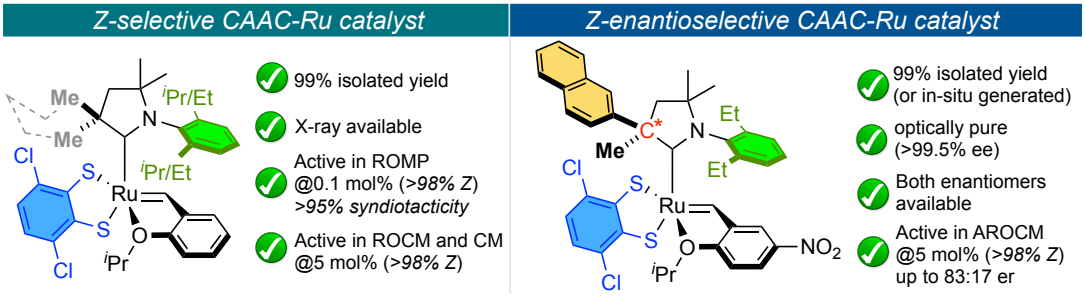

The first *Z*-stereoselective catechodithiolate ruthenium complexes containing cyclic(alkyl)(amino)carbene (CAAC) ligands are reported. Isolated in nearly quantitative yields, these catalysts demonstrate remarkable *Z* selectivity (*Z*:*E* ratio up to 99:1) in ring-opening metathesis polymerization, ring-opening cross-metathesis and cross-metathesis. Good *Z*-enantioselectivity was also obtained with optically pure catechodithiolate CAAC-Ru catalysts in asymmetric ring-opening-cross metathesis (up to 83:17 er).

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