

Fig. 1 Solid-state structure of $\{[\text{PhBP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}(\text{NH}_2\text{Mes})\}\{\text{Li}(12\text{-crown-4})_2\}$ (**2**) (top) and $[\text{PhBP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}(\text{NH}_2\text{Mes})$ (**3**) (bottom). Only the anion of **2** is shown. N–H hydrogens are shown in calculated positions.

We were surprised to find that these adducts are the only characterized examples of Cu^{I} -diazoalkane complexes to be reported, though Hofmann and co-workers have described a formally Cu^{III} -diazoalkane complex resulting from reduction of a chelating diazoalkane unit by a Cu^{I} precursor.¹⁰ The observed N_2CR_2 $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ chemical shifts (δ 29.5 for **5** and δ 99.3 for **6**) and CN_2 vibrational frequencies (2108 cm^{-1} for **5** and 2041 cm^{-1} for **6**) are very similar to the corresponding values for the free diazoalkanes,¹¹ indicating that the diazoalkane moieties have not been significantly perturbed upon coordination to copper. The molecular structures of **5** and **6** (Fig. 2) feature N–N distances ($1.200(8)\text{ \AA}$ for **5** and $1.1630(6)\text{ \AA}$ for **6**), N–C distances ($1.237(9)\text{ \AA}$ for **5** and $1.3188(7)\text{ \AA}$ for **6**), and N–N–C angles ($180.000(7)^\circ$ for **5** and $176.50(6)^\circ$ for **6**) that are notably similar to the corresponding parameters for the free diazoalkanes.¹¹ The Cu–N–N angle of **5** is linear ($180.000(2)^\circ$) whereas for **6** the angle drops to $156.95(5)^\circ$.[‡] For comparison, Hofmann's Cu^{III} -diazoalkane complex has severely bent Cu–N–N and N–N–C angles ($123.8(2)$ and $134.3(3)^\circ$, respectively) owing to the reduced diazoalkane ligand.¹⁰

Complex **5** is stable to 110°C in toluene solutions even in the presence of Lewis acid catalysts. Complex **6** decomposes to a complicated mixture of products when heated in hydrocarbon solutions, and though the product profile simplifies when $\text{Sm}(\text{OTf})_3$ is added as a catalyst, no stable products were isolated from these thermolysis experiments, and no evidence for $\text{Cu}=\text{CR}_2$ bond formation was detected. The diazoalkane complex $(\text{dtbpe})\text{Ni}(\eta^2\text{-N}_2\text{CPh}_2)$ has been isolated by Hillhouse and co-workers and was shown to extrude N_2 and form

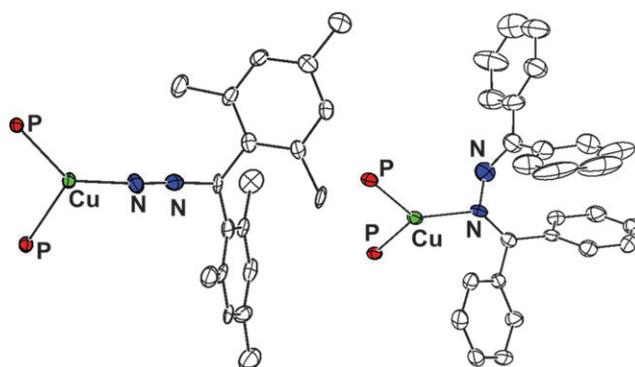


Fig. 2 Solid-state structures of $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}(\text{N}_2\text{CMes}_2)$ (**6**) (left) and $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}-\text{N}(\text{=CPh}_2)\text{NCPH}_2$ (**7**) (right). Non-phosphorus atoms of the $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]$ ligands have been omitted for clarity.

$(\text{dtbpe})\text{Ni}=\text{CPh}_2$ upon thermolysis in the presence of catalytic $\text{Sm}(\text{OTf})_3$.¹² Perhaps an important distinction to note between this Ni system and the Cu-diazoalkane adducts **5** and **6** is that N_2CPh_2 binds in an $\eta^2\text{-NN}$ mode to the L_2Ni^0 fragment, whereas $\text{N}_2\text{C}(\text{SiMe}_3)_2$ and N_2CMes_2 bind in an $\eta^1\text{-N}$ fashion to the $\text{L}_2\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}$ fragment described here.

When the less bulky diazoalkane reagent N_2CPh_2 was added to **3** or **4** at ambient temperature, N_2 release occurred spontaneously with concomitant formation of an inky blue solution and free NH_2Mes (in the case of **3**). A mixture of two Cu-containing species, ultimately assigned as $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}-\text{N}(\text{=CPh}_2)\text{NCPH}_2$ (**7**, δ 39.9) and $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}=\text{CPh}_2$ (**8**, δ 64.8), could be detected by $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (Scheme 1). Quantitative conversion to **7** exclusively was achieved by the use of 2 equiv. or more of N_2CPh_2 , and its assignment as a benzophenone azine adduct was verified by single-crystal X-ray diffraction (Fig. 2).[‡] The N–N bond distance of $1.3962(3)\text{ \AA}$ in **7** is consistent with the azine N–N single bond formulation. The Cu center in **7** is best described as trigonal planar, as the Cu–N_{distal} distance ($2.7649(3)\text{ \AA}$) is much longer than the Cu–N_{proximal} bond length of $2.0166(2)\text{ \AA}$. Complex **7** presumably forms from the reaction between the intermediate carbene species **8** and unreacted N_2CPh_2 ; such C–N bond forming reactions between isolated terminal metal carbenes and diazoalkanes have been observed for metals other than copper.¹³

Under dilute conditions, as high as 70% conversion to carbene complex **8** has been achieved. This species features an intense band at $\lambda_{\text{max}} = 583\text{ nm}$ ($\epsilon = (\text{est.}) 12\,000\text{ M}^{-1}\text{ cm}^{-1}$) that likely arises from MLCT charge transfer into the $\text{Cu}=\text{CPh}_2$ unit. Warren has observed an optical transition of similar energy and intensity in the related β -diketiminato $\text{Cu}=\text{CPh}_2$ species.⁵ To cement the assignment of **8**, solutions of $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}=\text{C}^{13}\text{Ph}_2$ (**8-¹³C**) were generated using $\text{N}_2^{13}\text{CPh}_2$ in place of unlabelled diphenyldiazomethane. A diagnostic triplet at δ 331.5 was clearly visible in the $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectrum ($^2J_{\text{PC}} = 41\text{ Hz}$) (Fig. 3), and the $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectrum of **8-¹³C** featured a corresponding sharp doublet (δ 64.8, $^2J_{\text{PC}} = 41\text{ Hz}$). A slightly larger value for $^2J_{\text{PC}}$ was observed for Hillhouse's $(\text{dtbpe})\text{Ni}=\text{CPh}_2$ species (δ 222, $^2J_{\text{PC}} = 51\text{ Hz}$).¹² Interestingly, the $\text{Cu}=\text{CPh}_2$ $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR chemical shift in **8-¹³C** is considerably further downfield than for other reported copper carbene species,^{3–5}

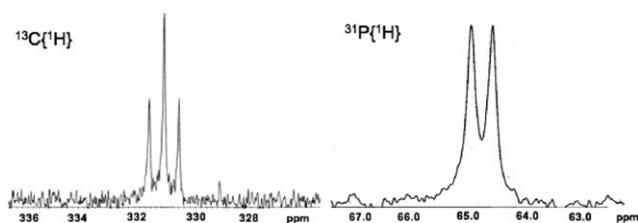


Fig. 3 $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ signal (left) and $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ signal (right) for $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}=\text{CPh}_2$ ($\delta\text{-}^{13}\text{C}$).

though it is certainly within the range typically observed for terminal metal carbene complexes.^{5,14} As further evidence for the presence of the “CPh₂” carbene functionality in **8**, we observed quantitative carbene transfer to CO to generate ketene $\text{Ph}_2\text{C}=\text{C}=\text{O}$ and $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}(\text{CO})$ upon exposure of solutions of **8** to excess carbon monoxide (Scheme 1). Carbene transfer to CO is also characteristic of the Ni and Cu carbenes of Hillhouse and Warren, respectively.^{5,12} Complex **8** did not readily transfer its carbene unit to olefins such as 1-hexene or styrene.

Whereas Warren’s β -diketiminato copper carbene complex is stable at room temperature, complex **8** loses $\text{Ph}_2\text{C}=\text{CPh}_2$ even at $-30\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. This fact has thus far precluded its crystallization from solution. The β -diketiminato $\text{Cu}=\text{CPh}_2$ species degrades similarly upon thermolysis.⁵

A computational study of **8** was undertaken to probe the Cu–C distance by DFT methods.¹⁵ A diphenylcarbene unit was attached to the $[\text{Ph}_2\text{BP}^{\text{tBu}}_2]\text{Cu}$ fragment taken from the atomic coordinates in the solid-state structure of **1**. Geometry optimization calculations using various initial Cu–C distances all gave the same optimized geometry, featuring trigonal planar geometries at both the copper center and the carbene carbon atom, with a Cu–C distance of 1.933 Å. Significantly shorter distances have been determined experimentally for the previously reported $\text{M}=\text{CR}_2$ ($\text{M} = \text{Cu}, \text{Ni}$) complexes (1.834–1.859 Å).^{5,12} It is possible that the long predicted Cu–C distance in **8** is experimentally manifested by the relatively small value for $^2J_{\text{PC}}$ and the significantly deshielded carbene carbon atom. It must however be noted that optimizing the geometry of **8** while fixing the Cu–C distance to be either 1.830 or 2.030 Å gave structures whose energies spanned a range of only 1.0 kcal mol⁻¹, indicating that the molecule’s potential energy surface is quite flat with regard to the Cu–C distance.

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Notes and references

† Details of the X-ray diffraction studies: **1**, $\text{C}_{18}\text{H}_{28}\text{BCuNP}_2$: orthorhombic, *Fdd2*, $a = 16.5848(13)$, $b = 30.917(2)$, $c = 13.3863(10)$ Å,

$V = 6863.8(9)$ Å³, $Z = 8$, $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 0.729$ mm⁻¹, 8664 total reflections, 2460 independent ($R_{\text{int}} = 0.0409$) with $I > 2\sigma(I)$; **2**, $\text{C}_{60}\text{H}_{106}\text{BCuLiNO}_8\text{P}_2$: monoclinic, *P2₁/c*, $a = 11.9146(9)$, $b = 21.3858(16)$, $c = 24.4619(18)$ Å, $\beta = 92.5560(10)^\circ$, $V = 6226.8(8)$ Å³, $Z = 8$, $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 0.905$ mm⁻¹, 72625 total reflections, 14800 independent ($R_{\text{int}} = 0.0841$) with $I > 2\sigma(I)$; **3**, $\text{C}_{39}\text{H}_{63}\text{BCuNP}_2$: monoclinic, *P2₁/c*, $a = 10.186(5)$, $b = 17.079(8)$, $c = 22.083(7)$ Å, $\beta = 98.24(4)^\circ$, $V = 3802(3)$ Å³, $Z = 4$, $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 0.685$ mm⁻¹, 31590 total reflections, 7306 independent ($R_{\text{int}} = 0.0990$) with $I > 2\sigma(I)$; **4**, $\text{C}_{34}\text{H}_{58}\text{BCuOP}_2$: orthorhombic, *Fdd2*, $a = 17.548(3)$, $b = 30.333(5)$, $c = 12.818(3)$ Å, $V = 6823(2)$ Å³, $Z = 8$, $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 0.758$ mm⁻¹, 3639 total reflections, 2005 independent ($R_{\text{int}} = 0.0385$) with $I > 2\sigma(I)$; **5**, $\text{C}_{34}\text{H}_{59}\text{BCuN}_2\text{P}_2\text{Si}_2$: trigonal, *R3c*, $a = 21.4508(13)$, $c = 47.633(3)$ Å, $V = 18981(2)$ Å³, $Z = 15$, $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 0.561$ mm⁻¹, 37667 total reflections, 3067 independent ($R_{\text{int}} = 0.0834$) with $I > 2\sigma(I)$; **6**, $\text{C}_{49}\text{H}_{72}\text{BCuN}_2\text{P}_2$: monoclinic, *P2₁/c*, $a = 11.6975(16)$, $b = 17.955(2)$, $c = 23.035(3)$ Å, $\beta = 91.707(4)^\circ$, $V = 4836.1(12)$ Å³, $Z = 4$, $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 0.550$ mm⁻¹, 22763 total reflections, 6798 independent ($R_{\text{int}} = 0.1309$) with $I > 2\sigma(I)$; **7**, $\text{C}_{56}\text{H}_{70}\text{BCuN}_2\text{P}_2$: monoclinic, *P2₁/c*, $a = 12.0749(11)$, $b = 22.347(2)$, $c = 19.2412(18)$ Å, $\beta = 104.625(2)^\circ$, $V = 5023.8(8)$ Å³, $Z = 4$, $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 0.536$ mm⁻¹, 42567 total reflections, 11402 independent ($R_{\text{int}} = 0.0617$) with $I > 2\sigma(I)$. CCDC 659790–659796. For crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/b713687k

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- B3LYP functional; LACVP** basis set for Cu atoms, 6-31G** basis set for carbene C and P atoms; MIDI! basis set for all other atoms. See ESI† for additional details.