

# Three-Dimensional Covalent Organic Frameworks with Ultra-Large Pores for Highly Efficient Photocatalysis

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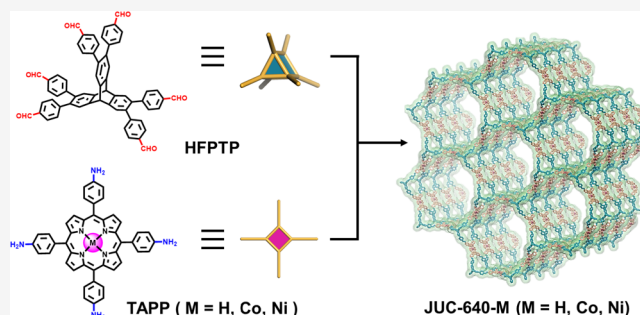


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Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** Benefiting from their unique structural merits, three-dimensional (3D) large-pore COF materials demonstrate high surface areas and interconnected large channels, which makes these materials promising in practical applications. Unfortunately, functionalization strategies and application research are still absent in these structures. To this end, a series of functional 3D **stp**-topologized COFs are designed based on porphyrin or metal-porphyrin moieties, named JUC-640-M (M = Co, Ni, or H). Interestingly, JUC-640-H exhibits a record-breaking low crystal density ( $0.106 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) among all crystalline materials, along with the largest interconnected pore size (4.6 nm) in 3D COFs, high surface area ( $2204 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ), and abundant exposed porphyrin moieties ( $0.845 \text{ mmol g}^{-1}$ ). Inspired by the unique structural characteristics and photoelectrical performance, JUC-640-Co is utilized for the photoreduction of  $\text{CO}_2$  to CO and demonstrates a high CO production rate ( $15.1 \text{ mmol g}^{-1} \text{ h}^{-1}$ ), selectivity (94.4%), and stability. It should be noted that the CO production rate of JUC-640-Co has exceeded those of all reported COF-based materials. This work not only produces a series of novel 3D COFs with large channels but also provides a new guidance for the functionalization and applications of COFs.



## INTRODUCTION

Covalent organic frameworks (COFs), extensively studied members of crystalline porous materials (CPMs), are assembled with strong covalent bonds and distinguish themselves from amorphous porous polymers in their topological designability, structural tunability, and functional predictability.<sup>1,2</sup> These materials are potential candidates for applications in gas adsorption,<sup>3–6</sup> molecular separation,<sup>7–11</sup> molecular recognition,<sup>12–16</sup> energy storage,<sup>17–20</sup> heterogeneous catalysis,<sup>21–29</sup> etc. Different from two-dimensional (2D) counterparts in which layered networks are connected via intraplane covalent bonding and further stacked via weak interactions, three-dimensional (3D) COFs possess isolated building blocks to construct nonplanar periodic networks with unique structures and properties.<sup>30,31</sup>

To date, most reported functional 3D COFs are based on tetrahedral ( $T_d$ ) building blocks with topologies such as **dia**<sup>32,33</sup> and **pts**,<sup>34–36</sup> which restrict the structural diversity and functional regulation of 3D COFs. More importantly, interpenetration as a common phenomenon in these  $T_d$ -based structures will result in the significantly decreased surface area and shrunk pore sizes, which are disadvantageous for various applications, such as adsorption and heterogeneous catalysis. As a result, non-interpenetrated structures with large channels and high surface areas are highly demanded. In previous

studies, we reported the first **stp**-topologized 3D COF, named JUC-564, on the basis of the triptycene-based block ( $D_{3h}$  symmetrized).<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, the noninterpenetrated framework exhibits a high surface area ( $3383 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ), ultra-large pore size (up to 4.3 nm), and low density ( $0.108 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ). These fascinating merits endow **stp**-based frameworks with potential in ample application fields. However, no functionalization has been realized in such COFs and applications have never been investigated up to now.

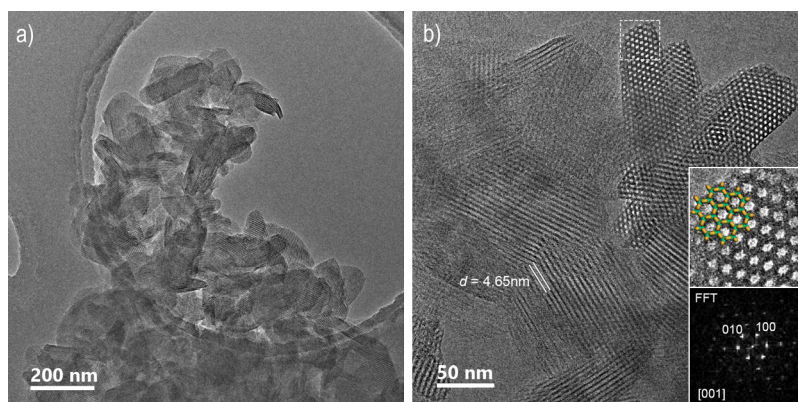
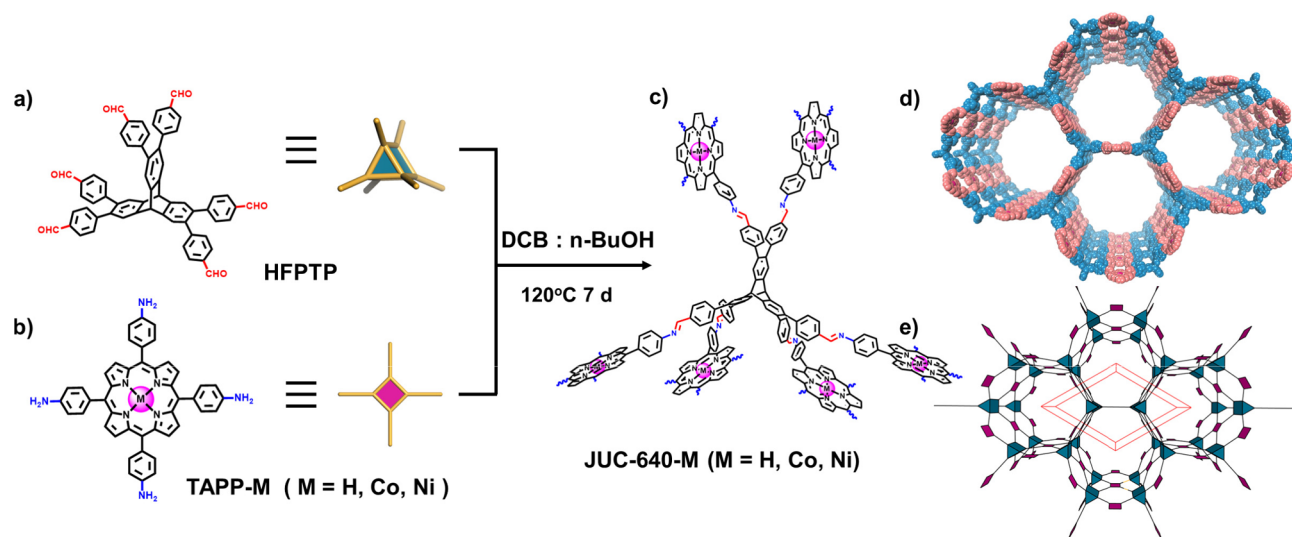
Porphyrin and its metallized derivatives, typical  $18 e^- \pi$ -conjugated macrocycles,<sup>38</sup> have been widely employed as organic catalytic centers and implanted on crystalline porous supports such as metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) and COFs.<sup>39–42</sup> Porphyrin-based frameworks have been widely explored as heterogeneous catalysts, such as photocatalytic carbon dioxide ( $\text{CO}_2$ ) reduction,<sup>43–46</sup> a particularly promising strategy to reduce the abundant emission of  $\text{CO}_2$  and transform solar energy into chemicals or fuels.

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**Scheme 1.** Molecular Structures of (a) HFPTP as a Six-Connected 3D- $D_{3h}$  Core Building Block, (b) TAPP-M as a Synergistic Four-Connected 2D- $D_{4h}$  Monomer, (c) Structures of Novel 3D COFs, JUC-640-M (M = H, Co, or Ni), Constructed from the Condensation Reaction of HFPTP and TAPP-M, and Expanded Framework for (d) JUC-640-M and e) *stp* Net



**Figure 1.** (a) TEM image and (b) high-resolution TEM image of JUC-640-H. Marked area in (b) has been cropped and scaled up in the inset with the structure model overlaid. The FFT of the cropped area has been indexed as the [001] zone axis.

Herein, inspired by the structural advantages of *stp*-topologized frameworks and the unique photoelectric properties of porphyrin moieties, a series of novel 3D porphyrin COFs (JUC-640-M, M = H, Co, or Ni) are designed and prepared based on the *stp* net. It should be noted that the extremely low crystal density ( $0.106 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) of JUC-640-H is a new record among all crystalline materials, and the interconnected channels (up to 4.6 nm) are also the largest in 3D COFs. Benefiting from the high surface area ( $2204 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ), large interpenetrated channels, and abundant exposed porphyrin moieties ( $0.845 \text{ mmol g}^{-1}$ ), these crystalline materials are explored as photocatalysts for  $\text{CO}_2$  reduction under visible light irradiation with record high activity ( $15.1 \text{ mmol g}^{-1} \text{ h}^{-1}$ ), along with good selectivity (94.4%) and stability (at least 5 cycles).

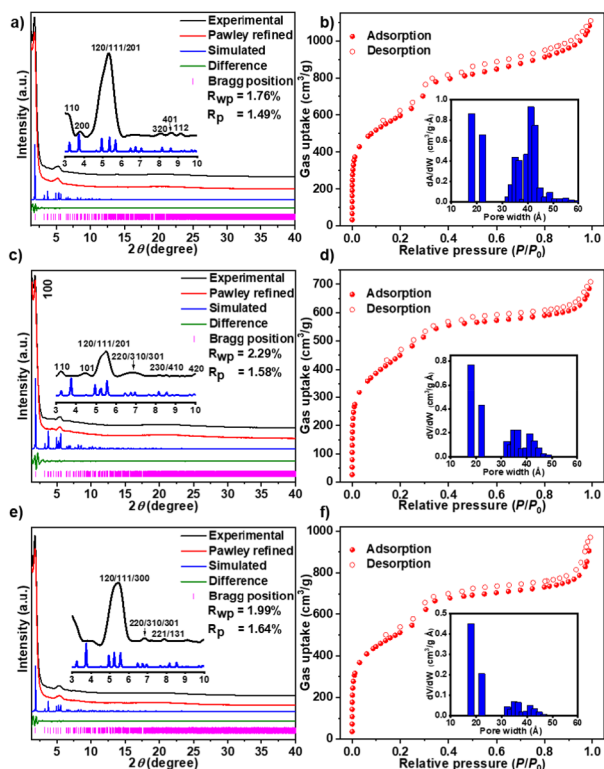
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Typically, JUC-640-M was crystallized under traditional solvothermal conditions by polymerizing the 6-connected triptycene-based building unit, 2,3,6,7,14,15-hexa(4'-formylphenyl)triptycene (HFPTP,  $D_{3h}$ -symmetrized), with the 4-connected 5,10,15,20-tetrakis(4-aminophenyl)porphyrin

(TAPP-H,  $D_{4h}$ -symmetrized) or its metallized derivatives (TAPP-Co and TAPP-Ni) (Scheme 1). Complementary characterization techniques were employed for structural definition. The formation of imine linkages could be confirmed by the new peaks (approximately  $1622 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) in the Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectra (Supporting Information, Figures S13–S15). The successful transformation could further be confirmed by the disappearance of C=O vibrations (approximately  $1699 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and N–H vibrations (approximately  $3350 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) in the FTIR spectra. Solid-state  $^{13}\text{C}$  cross-polarization/magic-angle-spinning (CP/MAS) NMR spectroscopy further verified the presence of imine groups by the peak at  $\sim 159 \text{ ppm}$  (Supporting Information, Figures S16–S18). Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM) exhibited the morphology of JUC-640-M as microcrystal aggregates. No clear nanoparticles could be observed for JUC-640-Co and JUC-640-Ni in TEM images, suggesting that the metal exists as isolated sites (Figure 1a and Supporting Information, Figures S6–S10). Subsequently, the microcrystals of JUC-640-Co and JUC-640-Ni were further analyzed by energy-dispersive X-ray (EDX) mapping, which demonstrates that metalloporphyrin sites are uniformly dispersed in the skeletons (Supporting Information,

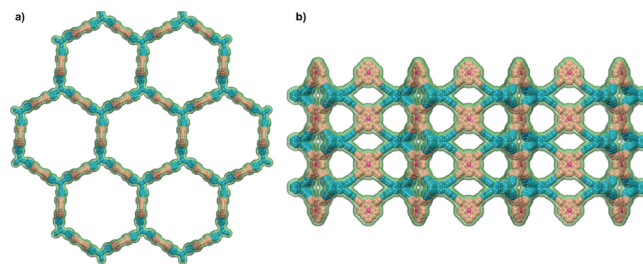
Figures S11 and S12). The metal contents were determined to be 4.87% JUC-640-Co and 4.36% for JUC-640-Ni based on inductively couple plasma-optical emission spectrometry (ICP-OES), which is basic anastomotic with the results predicted from the crystal structures. The corresponding electronic states of Co and Ni species were further investigated by X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) (Figure 4c and Supporting Information, Figures S31–S34). Notably, the binding energies sited about 780.0 and 795.2 eV in JUC-640-Co and 854.6 and 871.7 eV in JUC-640-Ni, which can be identified as +2 oxide states in the Co 2p spectra and Ni 2p spectra, respectively. Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) illustrated good thermal stability (about 400 °C) of JUC-640-M under a nitrogen atmosphere (Supporting Information, Figures S19–S21).

The crystalline structures of JUC-640-M were identified by powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) in conjugation with structural simulation on the basis of the material studio software package<sup>47</sup> (Supporting Information, Tables S2–S4). After the geometrical energy minimization based on the *stp* network, unit cell parameters were acquired ( $a = b = 54.6648$  Å,  $c = 20.6969$  Å,  $\alpha = \beta = 90^\circ$ , and  $\gamma = 120^\circ$  for JUC-640-H;  $a = b = 54.6266$  Å,  $c = 21.5251$  Å,  $\alpha = \beta = 90^\circ$ , and  $\gamma = 120^\circ$  for JUC-640-Co;  $a = b = 54.5707$  Å,  $c = 21.5094$  Å,  $\alpha = \beta = 90^\circ$ , and  $\gamma = 120^\circ$  for JUC-640-Ni), which provided well compatible predicted PXRD patterns with the experimental ones (Figure 2a,c,e). Subsequently, full profile pattern matching (Pawley) refinements were carried out and exhibited low agreement factors ( $R_p = 1.49\%$  and  $R_{wp} = 1.76\%$  for JUC-640-H;  $R_p = 1.58\%$  and  $R_{wp} = 2.29\%$  for JUC-640-Co;  $R_p = 1.64\%$  and  $R_{wp} = 1.99\%$  for JUC-640-Ni). Hexagonal-arranged channels could be clearly seen from high-resolution TEM



**Figure 2.** Experimental and refined PXRD patterns of (a) JUC-640-H, (c) JUC-640-Co, and (e) JUC-640-Ni.  $N_2$  adsorption–desorption isotherms of (b) JUC-640-H, (d) JUC-640-Co, and (f) JUC-640-Ni at 77 K (inset: pore-size distribution profiles).

images (Figure 1b). The measured *d*-spacing of 100 and 010 reflections was 4.65 nm that presented a good match of the proposed structure model. As a result, JUC-640-M were demonstrated to be 3D frameworks based on the non-interpenetrated *stp* net. Notably, JUC-640-H exhibited an extremely low crystal density ( $0.106 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ), which breaks the record in COF materials. Moreover, these materials exhibited the largest interpenetrated channels (up to 4.6 nm) among all 3D COFs as well as densely populated porphyrin sites ( $0.845 \text{ mmol g}^{-1}$ ), making JUC-640-M a perfect platform for heterogeneous catalysis. Nitrogen adsorption–desorption isotherms were carried out under 77 K to investigate the pore structures of these crystalline frameworks. As shown in Figure 2b,d,f, all JUC-640-M exhibited typical type IV isotherms, which revealed the mesoporous characteristics. The specific surface areas were calculated up to be  $2204 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  according to the Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) equation (Supporting Information, Figures S35–S37). On the basis of nonlocal density functional theory (NLDFT) calculations, JUC-640-M exhibited the pore size distribution with mesopores up to 4.3 nm, in accordance with the results predicted from the modeled crystal structures (4.6 nm) shown in Figure 3, which further

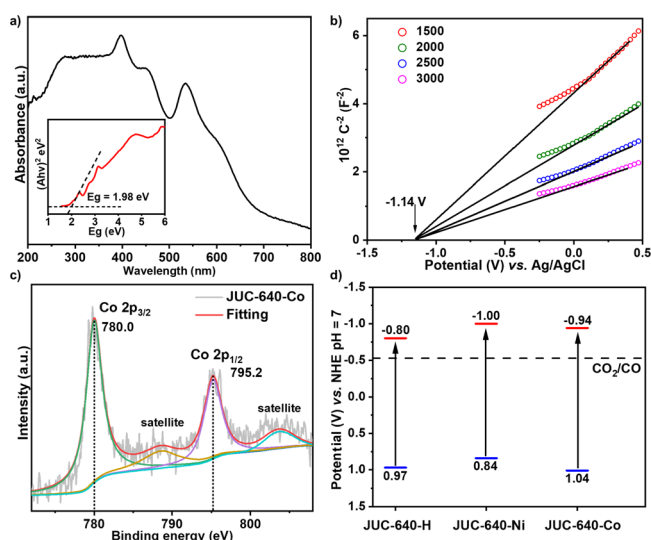


**Figure 3.** Extended structure of JUC-640-M viewed along (a) the *c* axis and (b) the *a* or *b* axis. Triptycene, green; porphyrin, burlywood; M, magenta.

confirms the noninterpenetrated structure of JUC-640-M. Subsequently, to investigate the  $\text{CO}_2$  affinity, the  $\text{CO}_2$  adsorption behaviors of these COFs were measured under 1 bar. All three *stp*-based COFs exhibited moderate  $\text{CO}_2$  capacity, which are  $52.16 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$  at 273 K and  $31.88 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$  at 298 K for JUC-640-H,  $65.78 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$  at 273 K and  $41.18 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$  at 298 K for JUC-640-Ni, and  $57.43 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$  at 273 K and  $37.83 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$  at 298 K for JUC-640-Co, suggesting their potential in  $\text{CO}_2$  uptake and conversion (Supporting Information, Figures S38–S40). Meanwhile, based on  $\text{CO}_2$  adsorption isotherms at 273 and 298 K, the isosteric heats of adsorption ( $Q_{st}$ ) for  $\text{CO}_2$  were calculated to be  $20.6 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for JUC-640-Co,  $16.2 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for JUC-640-Ni, and  $10.2 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for JUC-640-H, implying the superior  $\text{CO}_2$  affinity for JUC-640-Co compared with JUC-640-Ni and JUC-640-H (Supporting Information, Figures S41–S43).

Subsequently, photoelectrical measurements were carried out for these COFs. Solid-state UV–vis diffuse reflectance spectroscopy (DRS) showed their strong light-harvesting ability in the UV and visible light regions (Supporting Information, Figures S22, S24 and S26). Based on the Kubelka–Munk (KM) method, their band gap energies ( $E_g$ ) were acquired via the Tauc plots to be 1.98 eV for JUC-640-Co, 1.84 eV for JUC-640-Ni, and 1.77 eV for JUC-640-H, respectively (Figure 4a and Supporting Information, Figures S23, S25, and S27). Subsequently, Mott–Schottky measure-

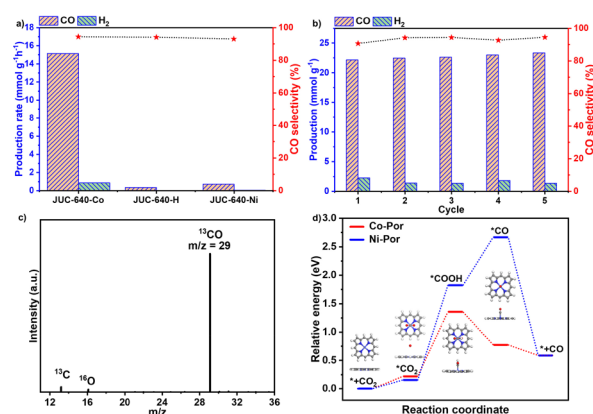




**Figure 4.** (a) UV-vis spectra and Tauc plot (inset), (b) Mott-Schottky plots, (c) XPS Co 2p spectra of JUC-640-Co, and (d) band structure diagram for JUC-640-M.

ments were performed to determine the band positions (Figure 4b and Supporting Information, Figures S28 and S29). According to the intersections with the  $x$ -axis, the flat bands (equal to lowest unoccupied molecular orbitals, LUMO) are determined as  $-0.94$ ,  $-1.00$ , and  $-0.80$  V vs normal hydrogen electrode (NHE) corresponding to JUC-640-Co, JUC-640-Ni, and JUC-640-H. In conjunction with the band gaps obtained from UV-vis DRS, the highest occupied molecular orbitals (HOMO) were calculated to be 1.04, 0.84, and 0.97 V vs NHE for JUC-640-Co, JUC-640-Ni, and JUC-640-H, respectively (Figure 4d). Significantly, all the LUMO potentials were more negative compared with those of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{H}_2$  (0 V vs NHE) and  $\text{CO}_2/\text{CO}$  (0.51 V vs NHE), implying their essential feasibility for photocatalytic  $\text{H}_2$  evolution and  $\text{CO}_2$  reduction. In the electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS), JUC-640-Co showed a smaller semicircle radius of the Nyquist plot than those of JUC-640-Ni and JUC-640-H, which implied a more rapid interfacial charge transfer in JUC-640-Co (Supporting Information, Figure S30).

Encouraged by the interpenetrated porous structures, abundant exposed porphyrin sites, and fascinating photoelectrical performance, JUC-640-M was employed for the photoreduction of  $\text{CO}_2$ . The photocatalytic experiments were performed under visible light irradiation ( $\lambda \geq 380$  nm) in the mixed solution of acetonitrile and water ( $v/v = 2/3$ ) using 1,3-dimethyl-2-phenyl-2,3-dihydro-1H-benzo[*d*]imidazole (BIH) as the sacrificial agent and  $\text{Ru}(\text{bpy})_3\text{Cl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  as the photosensitizer (Supporting Information, Figure S47). CO and  $\text{H}_2$  were identified as the major photoreduction products with negligible other gaseous or liquid products (e.g.,  $\text{CH}_4$ ,  $\text{CH}_3\text{OH}$ , and  $\text{HCOOH}$ ) (Supporting Information, Figure S48). Encouragingly, JUC-640-Co exhibited an extremely high CO production rate ( $15.1 \text{ mmol g}^{-1} \text{ h}^{-1}$ ) as well as high selectivity (94.4%, Figure 5a). It should be noted that the CO production rate of JUC-640-Co is a new record in all reported COF-based materials (Supporting Information, Table S1). Moreover, the apparent quantum efficiency (AQE) of JUC-640-Co was measured at different wavelengths, which reached up to 1.48% at 450 nm (Supporting Information, Figure S49). As a comparison, JUC-640-Ni and JUC-640-H demonstrate



**Figure 5.** (a) Comparison of the photocatalytic activity of JUC-640-M, conditions: 3 mg of COF, 5 mg of  $\text{Ru}(\text{bpy})_3\text{Cl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , 50 mg of BIH, 8 mL of MeCN, 12 mL of water, 300 W Xe lamp ( $\geq 380$  nm), 1 h, (b) durability measurements of JUC-640-Co (2 h each cycle), (c)  $^{13}\text{C}$  isotopic experiment for JUC-640-Co, and (d) free energy diagrams for  $\text{CO}_2$  reduction to CO on JUC-640-M (M = Co or Ni).

lower CO production rates under similar conditions due to the different active sites. Almost no reduction products could be observed without the existence of irradiation,  $\text{CO}_2$ , or COFs (Supporting Information, Figure S50). Moreover, JUC-640-Co exhibits high photocatalytic stability, which was evidenced by the negligibly changed CO production rates and selectivity after at least 5 cycles (Figure 5b and Supporting Information, Figures S44 and S45). To further determine the carbon origin of photocatalysis products, an isotopic experiment was performed under similar photocatalytic conditions but using  $^{13}\text{CO}_2$  as the carbon source (Figure 5c). As a result, the production of  $^{13}\text{CO}$  ( $m/z = 29$ ) could be significantly identified via gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS), suggesting that the generated CO came from  $\text{CO}_2$ .

To better understand the mechanism of  $\text{CO}_2$  photoreduction on the metalloporphyrin-derived frameworks, density functional theory (DFT) calculations were carried out with metalloporphyrin fragments as the models (Supporting Information, Figure S46). Gibbs free-energy diagrams of  $\text{CO}_2$  reduction on cobalt-porphyrin (Co-Por) and nickel-porphyrin (Ni-Por) are presented in Figure 5d. In the four-step procedures for the photoreduction of  $\text{CO}_2$ , including  $\text{CO}_2$  adsorption,  $\text{COOH}^*$  formation,  $\text{CO}^*$  generation, and CO desorption, the formations of  $\text{COOH}^*$  ( $\text{CO}_2^* + \text{H}^+ + \text{e}^- \rightarrow \text{COOH}^*$ ) were determined as the rate-determining step in both Co-Por and Ni-Por, with the highest free-energy barriers (1.23 eV for Co-Por and 1.67 eV for Ni-Por). As a result, the better  $\text{CO}_2$  reduction performance on JUC-640-Co could be put down to the significantly lower free-energy barrier of Co-Por, compared with its nickelic counterparts, which were well compatible with the previously reported metalloporphyrin-based frameworks.<sup>48</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, a series of 3D COFs (JUC-640-M) were designed and synthesized based on **stp** topology and porphyrin functionalization. Remarkably, the metal-free JUC-640-H showed a record-breaking low crystal density ( $0.106 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) among all crystalline materials reported so far, along with the largest pore size (4.6 nm) in 3D COFs, high surface area ( $2204 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ ), and abundant exposed porphyrin moieties

(0.845 mmol g<sup>-1</sup>), which made JUC-640-M a potential platform for various applications. Encouraged by the distinct photoelectrical performance of metalloporphyrin, JUC-640-M was employed for the photocatalytic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>. Fascinatingly, JUC-640-Co exhibited high CO production rates (15.1 mmol g<sup>-1</sup> h<sup>-1</sup>) as well as selectivity (94.4%), exceeding all reported COF-based catalysts. Therefore, this work broadens in favor of the diversities of COF structures and indicates that functional COF materials would be promising candidates for CO<sub>2</sub> reduction catalysts.

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### SI Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/jacs.2c13817>.

Methods and synthetic procedures; NMR spectra; PXRD, SEM, TEM, EDS, FTIR, TGA, BET plot, and UV-vis DRS patterns; Mott-Schottky plots; EIS plots; gas adsorption; stability test; DFT theoretical calculation; catalytic performance; and unit cell parameters (PDF)

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## Author Contributions

<sup>†</sup>J.D. and X.G. contributed equally to this work.

## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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