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Ru Complexes |*Hot Paper*|

Metalloradical Reactivity of Ru^{I} and Ru^{0} Stabilized by an Indole-Based Tripodal Tetraphosphine Ligand

Fenna F. van de Watering, Jarl Ivar van der Vlugt, Wojciech I. Dzik,* Bas de Bruin,* and Joost N. H. Reek*[a]

Abstract: The tripodal, tetradentate tris(1-(diphenylphosphanyl)-3-methyl-1*H*-indol-2-yl)phosphane PP_3-ligand **1** stabilizes Ru in the Ru^{II}, Ru^{I}, and Ru^{0} oxidation states. The octahedral $[(PP_3)Ru^{II}(Cl)_2]$ (**2**), distorted trigonal bipyramidal $[(PP_3)Ru^{I}(Cl)]$ (**3**), and trigonal bipyramidal $[(PP_3)Ru^{0}(N_2)]$ (**4**) complexes were isolated and characterized by single-crystal X-ray diffraction, NMR, EPR, IR, and ESI-MS. Both open-shell metalloradical Ru^{I} complex **3** and the closed-shell Ru^{0} complex **4** undergo facile (net) abstraction of a Cl atom from dichloromethane, resulting in formation of the corresponding Ru^{II} and Ru^{I} complexes **2** and **3**, respectively.

Metals of the 4d and 5d row of the periodic table, particularly late transition metals in low oxidation states, strongly prefer closed-shell 16 or 18 valence electron configurations. As a result, open-shell complexes of these metals are rare, and have a strong tendency to convert into closed-shell products.[1] Ru^{I} metalloradical complexes are particularly rare[2] and only two types of Ru^{I} complexes have been successfully isolated thus far. Peters and co-workers reported a five-coordinate 17-electron $[Ru^{I}N_2(SiP^{iPr}{}_3)]$ complex supported by an anionic tripodal tetradentate $(SiP^{iPr}{}_3)^-$ ligand ($SiP^{iPr}{}_3 = (2\text{-}iPr_2PC_6H_4)_3Si$). Besides Ru^{I}, this platform also stabilizes complexes in oxidation states ranging from Ru^{0} to Ru^{III}.[3] Interestingly, the Ru^{I} complex was shown to catalyze coupling of aryl azides to azoarenes.[4] Recently, the group of Grützmacher reported the remarkable 4-coordinate 15-electron complex $[Ru^{I}(tropPPh_2)_2]BF_4$ featuring two bidentate $tropPPh_2$ ligands (trop = 5*H*-dibenzo[*a,d*]cyclohepten-5-yl)). Besides Ru^{I}, this ligand scaffold stabilizes ruthenium complexes in oxidation states ranging from Ru^{0} to Ru^{II}.[5] No further reactivity with this complex has been reported to date.

Inspired by these intriguing examples, we wondered whether stable metalloradical Ru^{I} complexes could be accessed in a rigid tripodal PP_3 ligand environment for subsequent reactivity evaluation. The above-mentioned Ru^{I} complexes feature either a strongly σ-donating anionic tripodal $(SiP^{iPr}{}_3)^-$ ligand or two neutral π-accepting bidentate ($tropPPh_2$) ligands. Hence, we surmised that the use of a tripodal tetradentate ligand featuring both σ-donor and π-accepting phosphorus groups could allow for isolation and reactivity studies of well-defined Ru^{I} metalloradicals. We turned our attention to the tripodal, tetradentate tris(1-(diphenylphosphanyl)-3-methyl-1*H*-indol-2-yl)-phosphane ligand (**1**)[6,7] (Figure 1), which we previously used to stabilize the metalloradical rhodium complex $[Rh^{II}(\mathbf{1})Cl]PF_6$.[6] We further wondered whether the corresponding ruthenium(0) complex could also be accessible and if these low-valent species would display interesting reactivity.

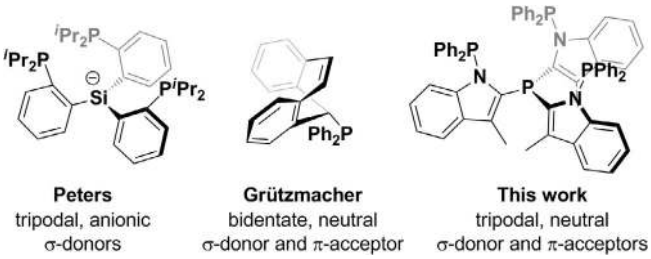


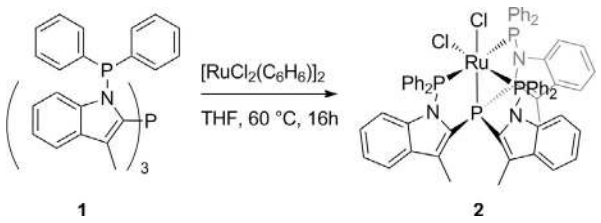
Figure 1. Ligand systems capable of stabilizing isolable Ru^{I} species.

First, we aimed at the synthesis of the Ru^{II} complex with ligand **1**, as this species could allow entry to the desired low-valent ruthenium species by subsequent selective reduction. The desired complex $[Ru(\mathbf{1})(Cl)_2]$ (**2**) was readily prepared by reacting stoichiometric amounts of **1** and $[Ru(Cl)_2(C_6H_6)]_2$ in refluxing THF in good yield (Scheme 1).

The ^{31}P NMR spectrum of complex **2** displays a triplet of doublets ($\delta = 101.0$ ppm, $J_{P\text{-}P} = 26.4$, 25.5 Hz), an apparent triplet ($\delta = 77.8$ ppm, $J_{P\text{-}P} = 26.5$ Hz), and a triplet of doublets ($\delta = 48.5$ ppm, $J_{P\text{-}P} = 27.9$, 26.9 Hz) with the integral ratio 1:2:1. The presence of three different phosphorus NMR signals points to a geometry in which two equatorial aminophosphine donors

[a] *Dr. F. F. van de Watering, Dr. Ir. J. I. van der Vlugt, Dr. W. I. Dzik, Prof. Dr. B. de Bruin, Prof. Dr. J. N. H. Reek*
Homogeneous, Supramolecular and Bio-Inspired Catalysis
Van't Hoff Institute for Molecular Sciences
University of Amsterdam
Science Park 904
1098 XH Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
E-mail: wdzik@wp.pl
B.debruin@uva.nl
J.N.H.Reek@uva.nl

Supporting information and the ORCID identification number(s) for the author(s) of this article can be found under https://doi.org/10.1002/chem.201702727.



1 2

Scheme 1. Synthesis of [Ru(**1**)$(Cl)_2$] (**2**).

are equivalent ($\delta = 77.8$ ppm), whereas the third side-arm donor P3 ($\delta = 101.0$ ppm) experiences a different coordination environment. The pivotal, axial phosphine P4 is assigned to the signal at $\delta = 48.5$ ppm. Ru^{II} complexes with tripodal tetraphosphine ligands often display five-coordination with either square pyramidal or trigonal bipyramidal geometries around the metal center,[8] however in case of complex **2**, an octahedral geometry could not be excluded. Single crystals of **2**, suitable for single crystal X-ray diffraction, were obtained by layering a dichloromethane solution with pentane. The molecular structure (Figure 2) reveals a distorted octahedral geometry, with ∡P1–Ru1–P2 of 160.04(3)° (See the Supporting Information, Table S1) for the two mutually *trans* aminophosphines in the equatorial plane. The P donors oriented *trans* to the chlorido ligands have shorter Ru–P distances (Ru1–P3 (2.2671(9) Å; Ru1–P4 (2.1932(9) Å) compared to the mutually *trans* P donors (Ru1–P1 (2.3727(9) Å; Ru1–P2 (2.3189(9) Å).[9]

To explore the capability of **1** to stabilize low oxidation states of ruthenium, we attempted to determine the Ru^{II}/Ru^{I} and Ru^{I}/Ru^{0} reduction potentials of **2**. The cyclic voltammogram of **2** in dichloromethane did not show any reduction wave within the solvent window ($E_{min} = -2.5$ vs. Fc/Fc^{+}), and the poor solubility of **2** in THF, DMF, acetonitrile, or toluene prevented determination of the reduction potentials of **2** below −2.5 V. Thus, reduction of complex **2** to the desired complex [Ru(**1**)Cl] (**3**) requires a stronger reducing agent than the previously reported Ru^{I} complexes [−1.24 V (Ru^{II}/Ru^{I}) and −2.14 V (Ru^{I}/Ru^{0}) for the SiP^{iPr}_3 system in THF; +0.4 V (Ru^{II}/Ru^{I}) and −0.3 V (Ru^{I}/Ru^{0}) for the $tropPPh_2$ complex]. Therefore, we used KC_8 to access the desired Ru^{I} and Ru^{0} species chemically (Scheme 2).

The addition of one molar equivalent of KC_8 to a yellow suspension of **2** in THF resulted in a brown solution. The product formed proved to be NMR silent, suggestive of formation of a paramagnetic Ru^{I} species formed by one-electron reduction. X-band EPR spectroscopy confirmed the presence of the metalloradical species [Ru(**1**)Cl] (**3**). The EPR spectrum reveals a rhombic (albeit almost axial) *g*-tensor, characteristic of an $S = {}^1/_2$ system (Figure 3). Hyperfine coupling interactions (HFIs) with two P atoms are resolved, in line with previous observations for tripodal tetradentate phosphine Ru^{I} complexes.[2c,e,3]

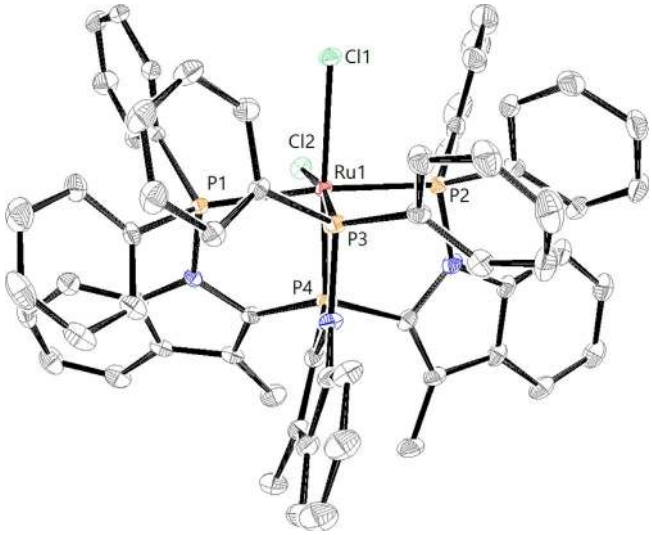


Figure 2. X-ray crystal structure of **2** (CCDC 1555408). Thermal ellipsoids are set at 50% probability. Solvent molecules and hydrogen atoms have been omitted for clarity.

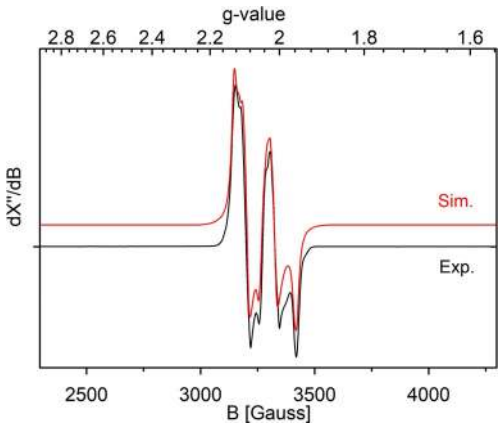
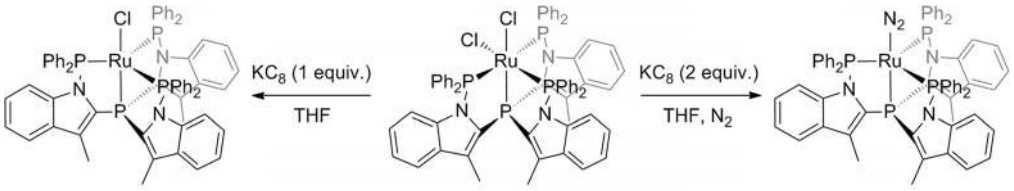


Figure 3. Experimental (black) and simulated (red) X-band EPR spectrum of **3** measured in frozen THF ($[Bu_4N][PF_6]$ was added to obtain an improved glass). Experimental conditions: Temperature 20 K, microwave power 0.063 mW, field modulation amplitude 4 G, microwave frequency 9.3646 GHz. The simulated spectrum was obtained with the parameters shown in Table S2.



3 2 4

Scheme 2. Reactivity of **2** with 1 or 2 equiv KC_8 to form **3** or **4**, respectively.

These results are in agreement with a geometry that is distorted from a trigonal bipyramidal toward a (distorted) square pyramidal Ru^{I} coordination geometry. Preference for such a Jahn–Teller distorted trigonal bipyramidal geometry has also been observed for other d^7 transition metal complexes.[10]

Simulation of the experimental EPR spectrum revealed the parameters shown in Table S2 (see also the captions of Figures 3 and 5). The geometry of **3** was optimized with DFT (Turbomole, BP86, def2-TZVP), and the EPR parameters were computed with Orca and ADF. The DFT-computed EPR parameters (Table S2) are in qualitative agreement with the experimental data. The computations reveal a mainly metal-centered spin density distribution, as evident from the singly occupied molecular orbital (SOMO) and spin density plots of **3** (Figure 4).

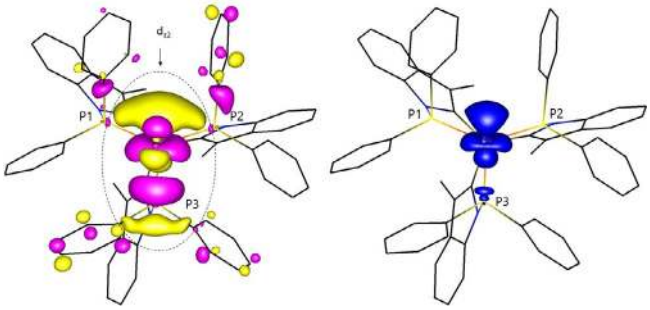


Figure 4. Singly occupied molecular orbital (SOMO; left) and spin density plot (right) of **3** (top view).

The SOMO of the metalloradical complex (spin population at Ru = 62%) is essentially the Ru d_{z^2} orbital pointing in the direction of the apical P donor (P3) of the distorted trigonal bipyramid (Figure 4, left). As a result, the spin population of the axial P donor (P3) is significant (ca. 12%; Figure 4, right), thus explaining the observed large HFIs with this donor atom. The two P donors in the distorted equatorial plane bind rather asymmetrically, leading to a larger spin population at one (8%, P2) compared to the other (5%, P1) P donor. The spin population at the connecting P donor *trans* to the chlorido ligand is small and negative (−0.8%, P4). The resolved HFIs in the experimental X-band EPR spectrum are thus well-explained by the electronic structure of **3**. The *g*-anisotropy of complex **3** is quite small for a metalloradical complex, but this is fully understandable considering the large energy separation (Turbomole, BP86, def2-TZVP) between the d_{z^2}-dominated SOMO and the filled d_{xz} and d_{yz}-dominated MOs (1.4 eV and 1.6 eV, respectively).[1d]

The small *g*-anisotropy of **3** allows for recording the isotropic EPR spectrum in THF solution at room temperature (Figure 5). Simulation reveals a g_{iso} value of 2.047 and HFIs with three equivalent P atoms ($A_P^{iso} = 143$ MHz). The measured g_{iso} value is close to the average value of the anisotropic *g*-tensor components ($g_{av} = (g_x + g_y + g_z)/3 = 2.043$). Detection of HFIs with three equivalent P atoms in solution points to rapid positional exchange of the axial and equatorial PPh_2 donors on the EPR timescale. In line with this, the measured A_P^{iso} values measured in solution are close to the averaged values of the resolved

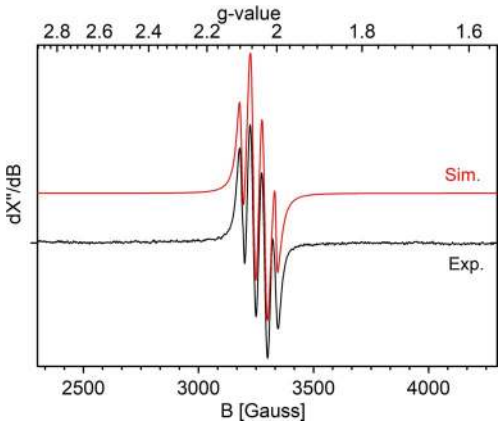


Figure 5. Experimental (black) and simulated (red) X-band EPR spectrum of **3** in isotropic solution (THF). Experimental conditions: Temperature 298 K, microwave power 2.0 mW, field modulation amplitude 4 G, microwave frequency 9.3498 GHz. The simulated spectrum was obtained with $g_{iso} = 2.0465$, $A_P^{iso} = 143$ MHz (3 equivalent P atoms), $W_{iso} = 25$ MHz.

anisotropic *A*-tensor components stemming from the PPh_2 donors measured in frozen solution ($A_P^{av} = (A_{P1}^x + A_{P1}^y + A_{P1}^z + A_{P2}^x + A_{P2}^y + A_{P2}^z)/9 = 157$ MHz).

Layering of a THF solution of **3** with pentane resulted in the formation of brown needles suitable for single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis. The molecular structure (Figure 6) is in good agreement with the EPR data and the DFT-optimized structure. The τ-value of 0.70 confirms a geometry in-between a trigonal bipyramid and a square pyramid.[11] The one-electron reduction of **2** to **3** is accompanied by the loss of one chlorido ligand and shortening of most of the Ru–P bonds (Ru–P1 = 2.2940(12); Ru–P2 = 2.2930(12) Å) and decrease of the ∡P1–Ru–P2 angle to 134.84(5)° (See the Supporting Information, Table S1).

As one-electron chemical reduction of complex **2** led to the selective formation of the stable Ru^{I} complex **3**, we also explored two-electron reduction of complex **2**. Addition of two equivalents of KC_8 to a THF suspension of **2** under N_2 atmos-

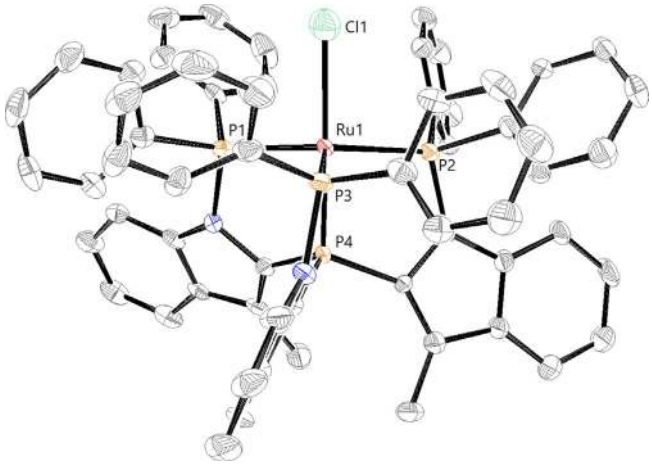


Figure 6. X-ray crystal structure of **3** (CCDC 1555409). Thermal ellipsoids are set at 50% probability. Solvent molecules and hydrogen atoms have been omitted for clarity.

phere led to formation of the Ru^0 dinitrogen complex [Ru^0(**1**)(N_2)] (**4**). IR spectroscopy reveals the presence of an absorption at $\nu_{N_2} = 2125\ cm^{-1}$, which indicates the formation of a coordinated dinitrogen ligand that is weakly activated.[12] The ^{31}P NMR spectrum shows a doublet and a quartet in a 3:1 ratio, both with a coupling constant $J_{P\text{-}P}$ of 39 Hz. This coupling is in agreement with a C_3-symmetric complex with three equivalent peripheral phosphine atoms that couple with the central P atom in the axial position.

Brick-red colored crystals of **4** suitable for X-ray diffraction were grown by diffusion of pentane into a THF solution of the filtered reaction mixture. The molecular structure confirms formation of complex **4** with dinitrogen coordinated to the ruthenium (Figure 7). Complex **4** has a trigonal bipyramidal geometry ($\tau = 0.93$) with equal Ru–$P_{equatorial}$ bond lengths (Ru–P1 = Ru1 P1 2.2747(12); Ru–P2 = 2.2752(11); Ru–P3 = 2.2774(11)), and ∡P–Ru–P angles that are close to 120°. Additionally, the P4–Ru bond (2.2133(11) Å) *trans* to N_2 is elongated relative to **2** and **3**. This is likely a result of weakening of the π backbonding between Ru and P4 attributable to competition for the same metal orbital with the π-acidic dinitrogen ligand. The general shortening of all Ru–P bonds on progressing from Ru^{II} via Ru^{I} to Ru^0 in complexes **2**, **3**, and **4** is somewhat unexpected, as a lower oxidation state of the metal center is intuitively expected to result in weaker binding of σ-donor ligands. The stronger metal–phosphorus interactions observed instead are likely the result of several contributing effects. Going from an octahedral six-coordinate species (Ru^{II}) to a distorted trigonal bipyramidal (Ru^{I}) and a trigonal bipyramidal (Ru^0) five-coordinate species lowers the steric hindrance between the phosphorus atoms and allows for better overlap of Ru and P orbitals, resulting in shortening of the Ru–P bonds. Another factor that can play a role is that the P1 and P2 phosphorus donor atoms compete strongly for the same metal orbital as they are in a *trans* arrangement in complex **2**. Binding to separate metal orbitals becomes possible upon decreasing the ∡P1–Ru–P2 angle, which is observed in going from **2** (160.04(3)°) to **4** (122.85(4)°), thus explaining the shortening of the Ru–P1 and Ru–P2 bonds. Moreover, the π-acidic character of the aminophosphines P1, P2, and P3 can become dominant over their σ-donating capacities in the electron-rich Ru^0 complex **4**.

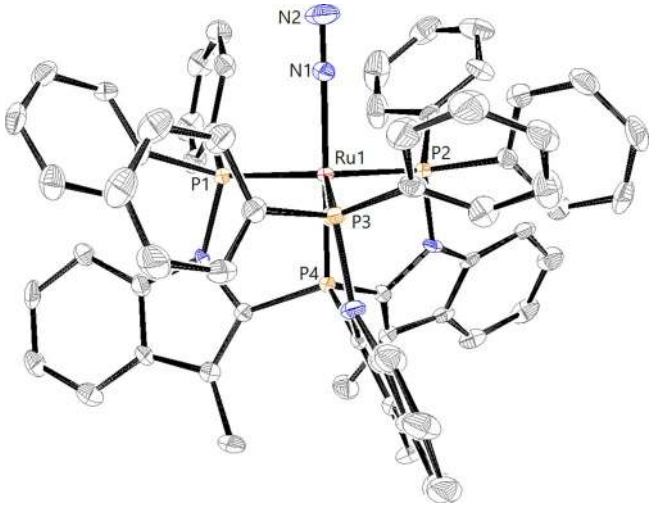


Figure 7. X-ray crystal structure of **4** (CCDC 1555410). Thermal ellipsoids are set at 50% probability. Solvent molecules and hydrogen atoms have been omitted for clarity.

With the low oxidation state ruthenium complexes **3** and **4** in hand, we decided to explore their reactivity. Both Roper and Grubbs reported the formation of dichlorido Ru^{II} carbenes upon addition of α,α-dihalide and trihalide compounds to Ru^0 complexes, where both the chloride and the carbene ligands originate from the organohalide.[13] The reaction was proposed to proceed through oxidative addition of the Cl–C bond, followed by α-chloride elimination of the Cl–R species yielding the dichlorido ruthenium carbene. However, Ru^{II} complexes are known to undergo halide atom transfer reactions with organohalides (e.g. catalyzing the Kharash reaction)[14] and thus a radical reaction between complex **3** or **4** and organohalides could not be excluded. Given our interest in the chemistry of metalloradicals and metallocarbenes,[10,15] we decided to investigate the reaction of the low-valent Ru^{I} and Ru^0 complexes with dichloromethane.

Dissolving **4** in dichloromethane resulted in the formation of **2** as evidenced by in situ ^{31}P NMR spectroscopy (see the Supporting Information). As no other complexes were detected in the ^{31}P NMR spectrum, the formation of a metallocarbene intermediate seemed unlikely. We hypothesized that the formation of **2** from **4** could proceed via a radical mechanism in which two chlorine atoms are stepwise abstracted from dichloromethane by the ruthenium complex, leading to two sequential one-electron oxidations of the metal center. This would imply that the Ru^{I} complex **3** should be an intermediate. To test this hypothesis, we added two drops of CH_2Cl_2 to a solution of **3** in [d_8]THF. This brown solution turned into a light-brown-colored suspension within 3 days and ^{31}P NMR spectroscopy indicated clean formation of **2**. No signals corresponding to residual **3** were observed by EPR spectroscopy, which indeed shows that **3** can undergo one-electron oxidation through chlorine atom transfer from dichloromethane. Complex **2** is stable in CH_2Cl_2 or $CHCl_3$. Having established that **2** can be formed by chlorine atom transfer to **3**, we investigated whether complex **3** can be formed from **4** by the same type of transformation. When 1 molar equivalent of CH_2Cl_2 was added to an in situ-generated solution of **4** in THF a strong EPR signal characteristic for formation of **3** was observed after 20 h. This observation indeed points to radical-type reactivity of the closed-shell Ru^0 complex **4**.

In conclusion, although the formation of Ru^{I} and Ru^0 compounds is rare, we found that the tripodal tetraphosphine scaffold **1** can accommodate ruthenium metal center in the oxidation states Ru^{II}, Ru^{I}, and Ru^0. These complexes are sufficiently stable to be isolated and analyzed by X-ray analysis. Initial reactivity studies show that both open-shell Ru^{I} and closed-shell Ru^0 complexes can undergo facile (net) abstraction of a Cl·atom from dichloromethane, resulting in the formation of the corresponding Ru^{II} and Ru^{I} complexes **2** and **3**. These results show that indole-based tetraphosphorus ligands provide

a useful scaffold to explore the chemistry of low-valent ruthenium species. Future studies should aim at application of these systems in catalytic atom transfer reactions.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Keywords: chloride atom abstraction · dinitrogen complexes · metalloradicals · ruthenium · tripodal ligands

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[16] CCDC 1555408 (**2**), 1555409 (**3**), and 1555410 (**4**) contain the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre.

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