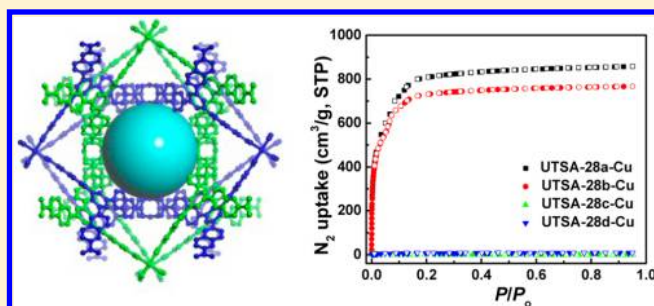


## Metastable Interwoven Mesoporous Metal–Organic Frameworks

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## S Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** Three isostructural interwoven 3,4-connected mesoporous metal–organic frameworks of pto-a topology (UTSA-28-Cu, UTSA-28-Zn, and UTSA-28-Mn) were synthesized and structurally characterized. Because of their metastable nature, their gas sorption properties are highly dependent on the metal ions and activation profiles. The most stable, UTSA-28a-Cu, exhibits promising gas storage and separation capacities.



## ■ INTRODUCTION

Metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) and/or porous coordination polymers (PCPs) are a new class of porous materials that have been widely studied not only for their fascinating structures but, more importantly, for their diverse applications in gas storage and separation, catalysis, sensing, and drug delivery.<sup>1,2</sup> The establishment of their permanent porosities is necessary for us to explore the above-mentioned properties; thus, extensive research has been pursued to stabilize the frameworks. Unlike the ionic bonds in the sophisticated zeolite porous materials, the coordination bonds to generate the MOFs are much weaker, leading to their unique structure features such as framework flexibility and metastability. Because of these, the establishment of their permanent porosities is not only dependent on their structures but also dependent on the activation profiles, particularly for those mesoporous MOFs.<sup>3</sup> In fact, a few mesoporous MOFs whose gas sorption cannot be established through conventional activation have been confirmed to take up a large amount of gas molecules through activation with supercritical carbon dioxide.<sup>4</sup> We report herein three isostructural interwoven mesoporous MOFs (UTSA-28-Cu, UTSA-28-Zn, and UTSA-28-Mn) that are assembled from the new BTN linker ( $H_3BTN = 6,6',6''$ -benzene-1,3,5-triyl-2,2',2''-trinaphthoic acid; Scheme 1) and binuclear  $M_2(CO_2)_4$  ( $M = Cu^{2+}$ ,  $Zn^{2+}$ , and  $Mn^{2+}$ ) paddlewheel secondary building

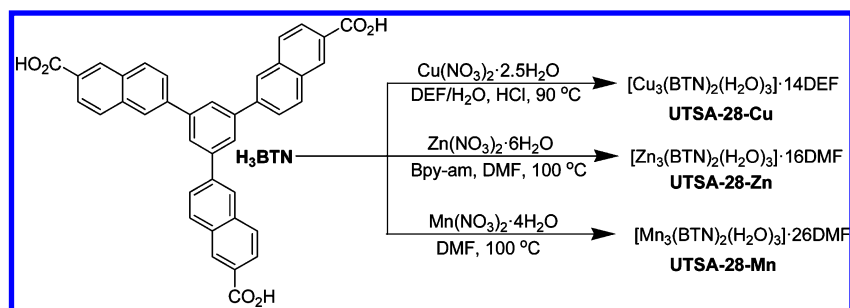
units (SBUs). This new expanded BTB ( $H_3BTB = 4,4',4''$ -benzene-1,3,5-triyltribenzoic acid) organic linker has enlarged the cages of 16.4 Å in MOF-14 [ $Cu_3(BTB)_2(H_2O)_3$ ] to those of 25.6 Å in UTSA-28. More interestingly, this series of mesoporous MOFs exhibits framework metastability attributed to their interwoven structures, so their permanent porosities are not only dependent on the metal ions but also dependent on the activation profiles. The establishment of a high porosity (Brunauer–Emmett–Teller, BET = 3179 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>−1</sup>) of UTSA-28a-Cu has enabled it to take up a large amount of CH<sub>4</sub> [total of 197.3 cm<sup>3</sup> (STP) g<sup>−1</sup> at 300 K and 46 bar] and CO<sub>2</sub> [total of 413 cm<sup>3</sup> (STP) g<sup>−1</sup> at 300 K and 28 bar].

## ■ EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

**Materials and Measurements.** All reagents and solvents were used as received from commercial suppliers without further purification. Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectra were performed on a Bruker Vector 22 spectrometer at room temperature. The elemental analyses were performed with Perkin-Elmer 240 CHN analyzers from Galbraith Laboratories, Knoxville, TN. Thermogravimetric analyses (TGA) were measured using a Shimadzu TGA-50 analyzer under a nitrogen atmosphere with a heating rate of 3 °C min<sup>−1</sup>. Powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) patterns were recorded by a

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Scheme 1. Synthesis of MOFs



Rigaku Ultima IV diffractometer operated at 40 kV and 44 mA with a scan rate of 1.0 deg min<sup>-1</sup>. A Micromeritics ASAP 2020 surface area analyzer was used to measure gas adsorption isotherms. The samples were maintained at 77 K with liquid nitrogen and at 273 K with an ice–water bath. Because the center-controlled air condition was set up at 23 °C, a water bath was used for adsorption isotherms at 296 K. High-pressure sorption isotherms were measured using a Sieverts-type apparatus.

**Single-Crystal X-ray Structure Determination.** Crystal data were collected on a Bruker SMART Apex II CCD-based X-ray diffractometer system equipped with a Mo or Cu target X-ray tube. PLATON/SQUEEZE was employed to calculate the diffraction contribution of the solvent molecules and thereby produce a set of solvent-free diffraction intensities. The structure was solved by direct methods and refined to convergence by a least-squares method on  $F^2$  using the SHELXTL software suite. The H atoms on the ligands were placed in idealized positions and refined using a riding model. CCDC 951329–951331 contain the supplementary crystallographic data for UTSA-28-Cu, UTSA-28-Zn, and UTSA-28-Mn. The data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif).

**Synthesis and Characterization of UTSA-28-Cu.** A mixture of H<sub>3</sub>BTN (8.3 mg, 14.2 μmol) and Cu(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·2.5H<sub>2</sub>O (14.5 mg, 62.3 μmol, Aldrich) was dissolved in a mixed solvent of *N,N'*-diethylformamide (DEF; 1.0 mL) and H<sub>2</sub>O (0.1 mL) in a disposable scintillation vial (20 mL). Upon the addition of 10 μL of 6 M HCl, the vial was capped and heated at 90 °C for 24 h. The polyhedral crystals were collected in 71% yield. UTSA-28-Cu was best formulated as [Cu<sub>3</sub>(BTN)<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>]·14DEF. Selected FTIR (neat, cm<sup>-1</sup>): 1653, 1616, 1614, 1482, 1439, 1400, 1398, 1379, 1363, 1309, 1263, 1261, 1216, 1214, 1109, 1107, 944, 922, 879, 822, 781, 764, 754, 705. TGA data. Calcd weight loss for 14DEF and 3H<sub>2</sub>O: 51.9. Found: 52.4. Anal. Calcd for C<sub>148</sub>H<sub>202</sub>N<sub>14</sub>O<sub>29</sub>Cu<sub>3</sub>: C, 62.77; H, 7.19; N, 6.92. Found: C, 63.01; H, 7.23; N, 6.77.

**Synthesis and Characterization of UTSA-28-Zn.** A mixture of H<sub>3</sub>BTN (14.7 mg, 25.1 μmol), *N*-(pyridin-4-yl)isonicotinamide (Bpy-am; 5.4 mg, 27.1 μmol), and Zn(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O (29.7 mg, 99.8 μmol, Aldrich) was dissolved into 1.5 mL of *N,N'*-dimethylformamide (DMF) in a disposable scintillation vial (20 mL). The vial was capped and heated at 100 °C for 24 h. The block-shaped crystals were collected by in 55% yield. UTSA-28-Zn was best formulated as [Zn<sub>3</sub>(BTN)<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>]·16DMF. Selected FTIR (neat, cm<sup>-1</sup>): 1652, 1599, 1497, 1480, 1437, 1384, 1332, 1300, 1253, 1213, 1136, 1091, 1062, 1031, 975, 920, 902, 878, 864, 824, 780, 763, 751, 702, 658. TGA data. Calcd weight loss for 16DMF and 3H<sub>2</sub>O: 47.2. Found: 46.9. Anal. Calcd for C<sub>126</sub>H<sub>160</sub>N<sub>16</sub>O<sub>31</sub>Zn<sub>3</sub>: C, 58.41; H, 6.22; N, 8.65. Found: C, 58.23; H, 6.03; N, 8.74.

**Synthesis and Characterization of UTSA-28-Mn.** A mixture of H<sub>3</sub>BTN (10.0 mg, 17.1 μmol) and Mn(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O (25.0 mg, 99.6 μmol, Alfa) was dissolved into 1.5 mL of DMF in a disposable scintillation vial (20 mL). The vial was capped and heated at 100 °C for 1 week. The cubic-shaped crystals were collected in 23% yield. UTSA-28-Mn was best formulated as [Mn<sub>3</sub>(BTN)<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>]·26DMF. Selected FTIR (neat, cm<sup>-1</sup>): 1646, 1607, 1582, 1544, 1479, 1436, 1374, 1252, 1214, 1136, 1094, 1061, 964, 918, 875, 813, 778, 748, 703, 659. TGA data. Calcd weight loss for 26DMF and 3H<sub>2</sub>O: 59.4. Found:

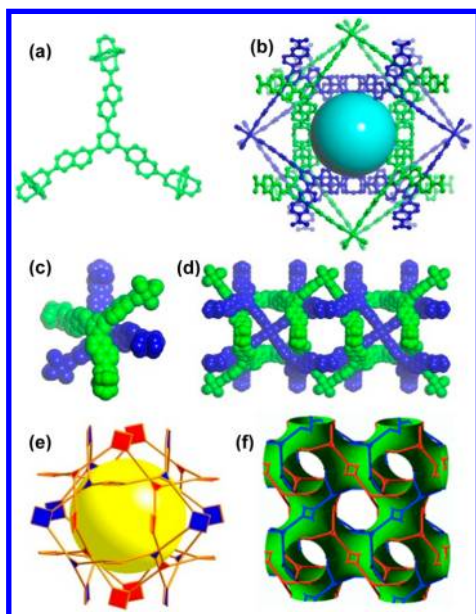
59.1. Anal. Calcd for C<sub>156</sub>H<sub>230</sub>N<sub>26</sub>O<sub>41</sub>Mn<sub>3</sub>: C, 56.94; H, 7.05; N, 11.07. Found: C, 56.50; H, 7.21; N, 10.75.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The C<sub>3</sub>-symmetric organic linker H<sub>3</sub>BTN was readily synthesized by palladium-catalyzed Suzuki cross-coupling between 1,3,5-tribromobenzene and methyl 6-(pinacolboronyl)-2-naphthoate followed by hydrolysis and acidification in good yield. Solvothermal reaction between H<sub>3</sub>BTN and Cu(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·2.5H<sub>2</sub>O in a DEF/H<sub>2</sub>O mixture under acidic conditions at 90 °C for 24 h afforded blue polyhedral-shaped single crystals of UTSA-28-Cu ([Cu<sub>3</sub>(BTN)<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>]·14DEF). UTSA-28-Zn ([Zn<sub>3</sub>(BTN)<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>]·16DMF) was obtained as colorless block-shaped crystals via a solvothermal reaction between H<sub>3</sub>BTN and Zn(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O in DMF in the presence of Bpy-am, while UTSA-28-Mn ([Mn<sub>3</sub>(BTN)<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>]·26DMF) was synthesized by a solvothermal reaction of H<sub>3</sub>BTN and Mn(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O in DMF for 1 week. Their structures were determined by single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis, and the phase purity of the bulk materials was confirmed by PXRD (Figures S1–S3 in the Supporting Information, SI). The formulas were established based on single-crystal X-ray diffraction studies, TGA (Figure S4 in the SI), and microanalysis.

Because the single-crystal X-ray studies and PXRD experiments confirmed that they are isostructural, the crystal structure of UTSA-28-Cu was representatively described. UTSA-28-Cu is an interwoven 3D framework that crystallizes in a cubic space group *Pn* $\bar{3}$ *n*. Each framework is composed of in situ formed square-planar dicopper paddlewheel SBUs that are linked by triangular BTN units to form a 3,4-connected net with pto topology (Figure 1a,b),<sup>5</sup> where the BTN unit serves as a 3-connected node and the dicopper paddlewheel SBU serves as planar 4-connected node. The naphthalene ring in the organic linker is twisted from the center benzene ring with a dihedral angle of 36.5°. A pair of frameworks are interwoven in each other. There exist weak  $\pi$ – $\pi$  interactions between the two center benzene rings from two interpenetrating networks with a center-to-center distance of about 3.9 Å (Figure 1c–f). Because BTN is larger than BTB, the cages of 25.6 Å in UTSA-28-Cu are larger than those of 16.4 Å in MOF-14.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, UTSA-28-Cu also has larger effective window sizes of about 11.1 × 11.1 Å<sup>2</sup>. The total accessible volume in UTSA-28-Cu was calculated using PLATON to be 73.86% after removal of guest solvents and coordinated H<sub>2</sub>O molecules.<sup>7</sup>

Different activation methods were used to determine the permanent porosity by N<sub>2</sub> adsorption at 77 K. The as-synthesized UTSA-28-Cu was guest-exchanged with dry acetone, dichloromethane, and methanol, respectively, followed by activation at room temperature under high vacuum

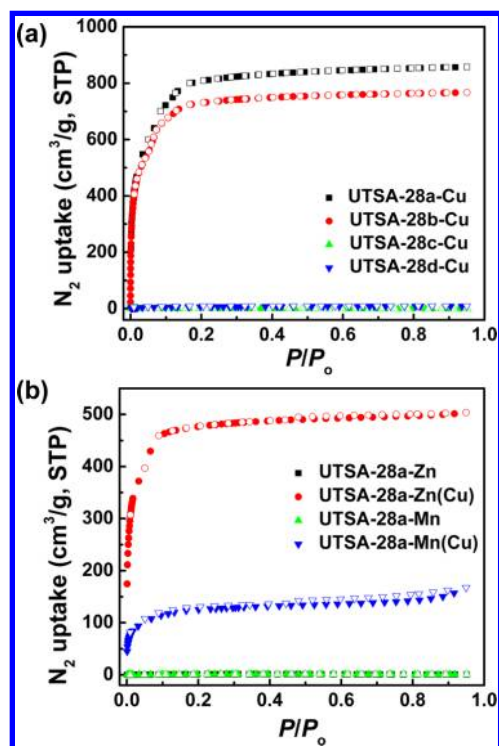


**Figure 1.** Single-crystal X-ray structure of UTSA-28-Cu indicating that square paddlewheel SBUs were linked by triangular BTN units (a) to form a pair of interwoven 3D porous frameworks (b and f) with pto-a topology (e) that are held together by numerous  $\pi$ - $\pi$  and CH- $\pi$  interactions (c and d).

overnight to get the activated UTSA-28a-Cu, UTSA-28b-Cu, and UTSA-28c-Cu, respectively. UTSA-28d-Cu was prepared through freeze-drying activation in which the freshly benzene-exchanged UTSA-28-Cu was activated at 0 °C overnight, followed by activation for 24 h at room temperature.<sup>8</sup>

The N<sub>2</sub> sorption isotherms of all activated samples are shown in Figure 2a, and the corresponding BET and Langmuir surface areas as well as pore volumes are listed in Table S1 in the SI. The significantly different N<sub>2</sub> sorption isotherms of these samples are attributed to the metastable nature of UTSA-28-Cu. The most surprising are the facts that UTSA-28c-Cu and UTSA-28d-Cu, generated from the freshly methanol- and benzene-exchanged samples, respectively, do not take up any N<sub>2</sub> molecule at all. The exact reason is not very clear; we speculate that the strong interactions between the guest methanol molecules with the framework (particularly the terminal H<sub>2</sub>O molecules) among UTSA-28c-Cu and the strong aromatic  $\pi$ - $\pi$  interactions between the guest benzene molecules with the BTN organic linkers within the framework UTSA-28d-Cu play a crucial role. Using acetone as the activation solvent produced the most porous framework: the activated UTSA-28a-Cu exhibits BET and Langmuir surface areas of 3179 and 3957 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. These values are about twice those in MOF-14. The pore volume calculated from the maximum amount of N<sub>2</sub> adsorbed is 1.33 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>.

It is understandable that UTSA-28a-Zn and UTSA-28a-Mn do not take up any N<sub>2</sub> molecule because the Zn<sub>2</sub>(CO<sub>2</sub>)<sub>4</sub> and Mn<sub>2</sub>(CO<sub>2</sub>)<sub>4</sub> SBUs are not as rigid as the Cu<sub>2</sub>(CO<sub>2</sub>)<sub>4</sub> one to stabilize the frameworks. In fact, even the HKUST-1 analogue Zn<sub>3</sub>(BTC)<sub>2</sub> is not porous at all.<sup>9</sup> Inspired by the recent reports that the Zn<sub>2</sub>(CO<sub>2</sub>)<sub>4</sub> SBUs in a MOF can be substituted by the Cu<sub>2</sub>(CO<sub>2</sub>)<sub>4</sub> ones via postsynthetic metal-ion exchange,<sup>10</sup> we prepared the Cu<sup>II</sup>-substituted UTSA-28-Zn and UTSA-28-Mn, namely, UTSA-28-Zn(Cu) and UTSA-28-Mn(Cu), respectively. When the as-synthesized UTSA-28-Zn were immersed in a 0.1 M methanol solution of Cu(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·2.5H<sub>2</sub>O at room

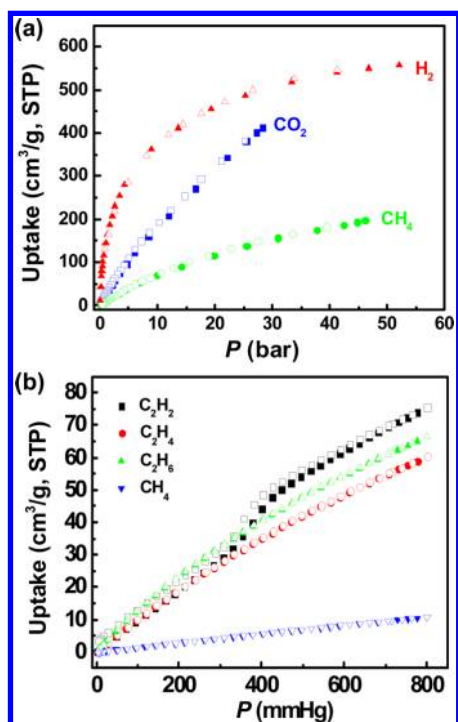


**Figure 2.** N<sub>2</sub> sorption isotherms at 77 K for (a) the activated UTSA-28a-Cu, UTSA-28b-Cu, UTSA-28c-Cu, and UTSA-28d-Cu and for (b) the activated UTSA-28a-Zn, UTSA-28a-Mn, UTSA-28a-Zn(Cu), and UTSA-28a-Mn(Cu). The solid and open symbols represent the adsorption and desorption data, respectively.

temperature for 1 week, the original colorless crystals turned to green-blue ones while maintaining their original shapes and sizes (Figure S6 in the SI), indicating a clean single-crystal-to-single-crystal transformation. Inductively coupled plasma analysis of the metal-ion-exchanged sample UTSA-28-Zn(Cu) indicates that up to 80% of Zn ions in the framework were exchanged by Cu<sup>II</sup> ions over 1 week. The PXRD studies confirmed that the framework was preserved during the metal-ion exchange process (Figure S7 in the SI). In addition, no stretching band corresponding to the nitrate anion was detected in FTIR spectra of UTSA-28-Zn(Cu), demonstrating that there was no Cu<sup>II</sup> ion absorbed in the pore channels (Figure S8 in the SI). The acetone-exchanged UTSA-28-Zn(Cu) was activated under vacuum at room temperature to investigate its porosity. Remarkably, UTSA-28a-Zn(Cu) shows significantly improved gas sorption properties compared to the original UTSA-28a-Zn (Figure 2b and Table S1 in the SI). N<sub>2</sub> uptake of UTSA-28a-Zn(Cu) reaches 504 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> at 1 atm at 77 K, corresponding to a BET surface area of 1890 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>. The permanent porosity of the activated UTSA-28a-Mn(Cu) has also been established (Figure 2b and Table S1 in the SI).

Establishment of the permanent porosity of UTSA-28a-Cu encourages us to explore its gas storage and separation capacities. Because of its high porosities, the high-pressure CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, and H<sub>2</sub> adsorptions up to 60 bar were measured at the Center for Neutron Research, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), using a computer-controlled Sieverts apparatus (Figure 3a). The H<sub>2</sub> adsorption isotherm of UTSA-28a-Cu shows a maximum excess uptake of 3.9 wt % at 33 bar and 77 K (Figure S9a in the SI). Using the N<sub>2</sub>-derived pore volume and the bulk phase density of H<sub>2</sub>, the total H<sub>2</sub> uptake at 77 K and 52 bar was calculated to be 5.0 wt





**Figure 3.** (a) Absolute high-pressure CO<sub>2</sub> (300 K), CH<sub>4</sub> (300 K), and H<sub>2</sub> (77 K) sorption isotherms of UTSA-28a-Cu. (b) C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>4</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>, and CH<sub>4</sub> sorption isotherms of UTSA-28a-Cu at 296 K. The solid and open symbols represent the adsorption and desorption data, respectively.

% (Figure S9b in the SI), which is moderate compared with the highest-capacity MOF materials.<sup>4</sup> At 35 bar and 300 K, the excess and absolute CH<sub>4</sub> uptakes of UTSA-28a-Cu reach 149.2 and 167.9 cm<sup>3</sup> (STP) g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. The total methane uptake can increase to 197.3 cm<sup>3</sup> (STP) g<sup>-1</sup> at 300 K and 46 bar (Figures 3a and S10 in the SI). The total CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacity is 81.1 wt % [413 cm<sup>3</sup> (STP) g<sup>-1</sup>] at 300 K and 28 bar (Figures 3a and S11 in the SI), which is moderately high.

We have recently paid much attention to porous MOFs for the storage and separation of small hydrocarbons because of their very important industrial applications.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, the pure-component small hydrocarbon sorption isotherms for UTSA-28a-Cu were measured. As shown in Figures 3b and S12 in the SI, all isotherms show reversible sorption behavior. Remarkably, UTSA-28a-Cu systematically takes up much more C<sub>2</sub> hydrocarbons than C<sub>1</sub> methane. At 296 K, UTSA-28a-Cu takes up a moderate amount of C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub> (87.6 mg g<sup>-1</sup>), C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>4</sub> (75.5 mg g<sup>-1</sup>), and C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub> (89.1 mg g<sup>-1</sup>), but basically a negligible amount of CH<sub>4</sub> (7.7 mg g<sup>-1</sup>) at 1 atm, indicating UTSA-28a-Cu as a promising material for the adsorptive separation of C<sub>2</sub> hydrocarbons from methane at room temperature. The preferable adsorption of C<sub>2</sub> hydrocarbons relative to C<sub>1</sub> methane is attributed to the stronger interaction of the framework with C<sub>2</sub> hydrocarbons because no molecule sieving effect exists in UTSA-28a-Cu because the size of the open channel is much bigger than that of gas molecules. The Henry's law selectivities for C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>4</sub>, and C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub> over CH<sub>4</sub> at 296 K are 9.2, 8.6, and 13.2, respectively, which are moderate compared with those of the best-performing materials FeMOF-74, CoMOF-74, and MgMOF-74.<sup>11a,12</sup> Nevertheless, the low isosteric heat of adsorption at zero coverage (16.9–25.6 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>; Table S2 in the SI), calculated by fitting experimental

isotherm data at 273 and 296 K to the virial equation, indicates the low regeneration cost. The large pore volume of UTSA-28a-Cu will also secure its large separation capacities for the small hydrocarbons. In practical applications, both separation selectivity and capacity should be balanced to optimize the separation efficiency.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, we synthesized three isostructural interwoven MOFs based on a new C<sub>3</sub>-symmetrical aromatic tricarboxylate of pto-a topology. The large pore space of 25.6 Å in the mesoporous regime and weak interactions between the two interwoven frameworks lead to their metastable structure features, so their framework stability and gas sorption properties were heavily dependent on the metal ions and activation profiles. The most stable UTSA-28a-Cu exhibits the potential for gas storage and separation. Our work thus demonstrates the significance of the activation profiles on control of the framework stability and porosity.

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information

PXRD, TGA, gas sorption isotherms, FTIR, sorption data under different activation methods, virial analysis data, crystal data and structure refinement, and CIF files. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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### Author Contributions

The manuscript was written through contributions of all authors. All authors have given approval to the final version of the manuscript.

### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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