

# Starting from Styrene: A Unified Protocol for Hydrotrifluoromethylation of Diversified Alkenes

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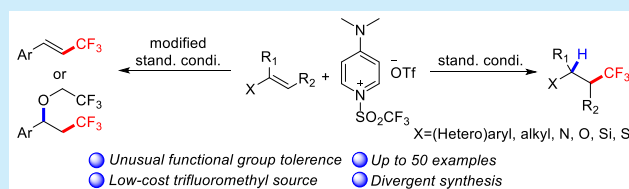


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**ABSTRACT:** In contrast with unactivated alkenes, the corresponding hydrotrifluoromethylation of styrene has remained challenging due to the strong propensity of styrene for oligomerization and polymerization. On the basis of our newly developed trifluoromethylation reagent, TFSP, herein we present a general method for the hydrotrifluoromethylation of styrene under photoredox catalysis. The substrate scope was further extended to unactivated alkenes, acrylates, acrylamides, and vinyl-heteroatom-substituted alkenes. The tunability of this method was showcased via the relevant deprotonative trifluoromethylation and trifluoromethyltrifluoroethoxylation reactions.

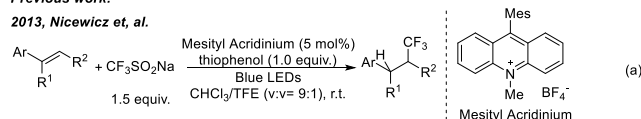


Although the existence of fluoro-containing natural products is rare, fluoro-containing moieties are ubiquitously found in pharmaceutical, agrochemical, and material science.<sup>1</sup> The vast comparison has prompted the rapid development of fluorine chemistry in recent decades. Among the fluorine-containing pharmaceuticals, trifluoromethylated pharmaceuticals are found to be the most prevalent, except for fluorinated pharmaceuticals, which urges the development of new efficient, general, and tunable methods to incorporate the trifluoromethyl moiety.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the hydrotrifluoromethylation of olefins has emerged as a powerful strategy to introduce the trifluoromethyl moiety. Whereas a variety of methodologies have been reported to realize the hydrotrifluoromethylation of unactivated alkenes,<sup>3</sup> the hydrotrifluoromethylation of styrene has lagged behind due to the myriad side reactions including oligomerization, polymerization, and nucleophilic trapping.<sup>4</sup> In 2013, Nicewicz *et al.* reported for the first time the hydrotrifluoromethylation of styrene via an organic photoredox system (Scheme 1a).<sup>4</sup> Various vicinal-disubstituted styrenes were shown to be compatible. However, only one example of terminal styrene was reported, leaving the core problem still challenging. One year later, by means of a novel 2D electride dicalcium nitride ( $[\text{Ca}_2\text{N}^+]\cdot\text{e}^-$ ), the hydrotrifluoromethylation of terminal styrene was realized (Scheme 1b).<sup>5</sup> Offering high reactivity, the active electride may at the same time result in restricted functional group tolerance. In 2016, the same transformation was smoothly conducted using 4-hydroxythiophenol as a stoichiometric hydrogen source in batch and flow (Scheme 1c).<sup>6</sup> Elegant as it is, the near-room-temperature melting point and offensive odor of the thiophenol used can reduce its practicability in certain circumstances. Meanwhile, despite the fact that several methods concerning the hydrotrifluoromethylation of acrylates,<sup>7</sup> acrylamides,<sup>8</sup> and vinyl phosphate esters<sup>9</sup> were reported,

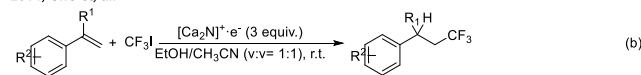
## Scheme 1. Hydrotrifluoromethylation of Styrene

Previous work:

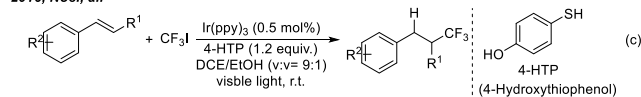
2013, Nicewicz *et al.*



2014, Cho *et al.*



2016, Noël, *al.*



This work:

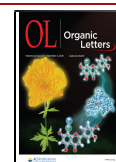


a universal protocol that can break through the limits of the previously mentioned alkenes to realize hydrotrifluoromethylation has never been realized.

Our continuing interest in developing ionic-type fluoroalkylation reagents<sup>10</sup> and the recent concern about pyridinium

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salts<sup>11</sup> have led us to the development of TFSP, a readily available trifluoromethylation reagent prepared from the common base DMAP and the bulk chemical Tf<sub>2</sub>O.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of this newly developed low-cost trifluoromethylation reagent, herein we present the hydrotrifluoromethylation of diversified olefins (Scheme 1d). The low catalyst and reactant loading rendered our protocol practical. The flexibility of our protocol was highlighted by the related deprotonative trifluoromethylation and trifluoromethyltrifluoroethoxylation reactions.

Our optimization began with 1-ethenyl-4-phenylbenzene (1-1) as a model substrate under photoredox catalysis (Table 1).

**Table 1. Optimization of Reaction Conditions<sup>a</sup>**

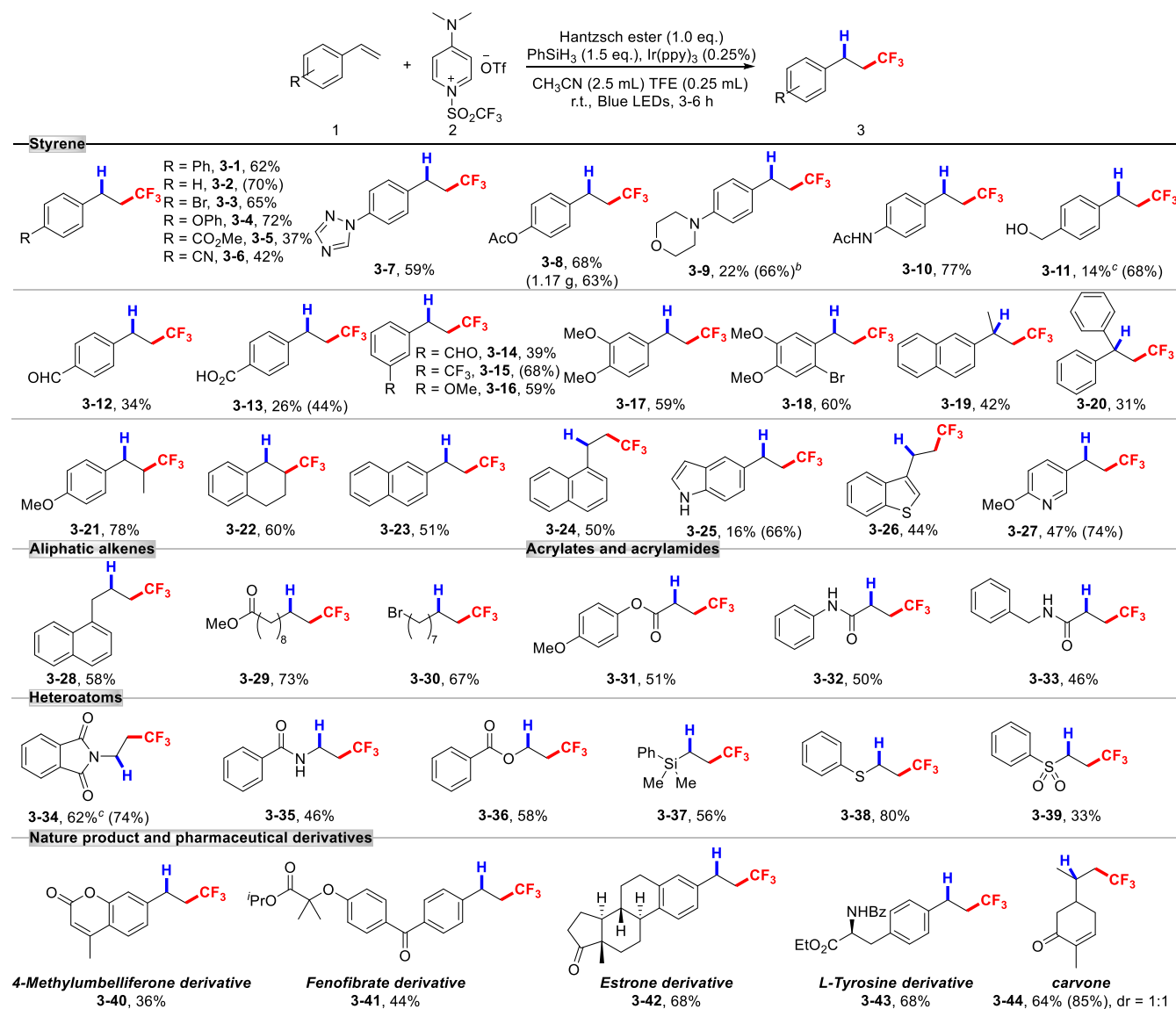
entry	[Red]	[H] source	solvent	yield (%) <sup>b</sup>
1	HEH		CH <sub>3</sub> CN	14
2	BNAH		CH <sub>3</sub> CN	trace
3	1,4-CHD		CH <sub>3</sub> CN	trace
4	HEH	Et <sub>3</sub> SiH	CH <sub>3</sub> CN	21
5	HEH	(TMS) <sub>3</sub> SiH	CH <sub>3</sub> CN	12
6	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN	56
7	HEH	Ph <sub>2</sub> SiH <sub>2</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN	41
8 <sup>c</sup>	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN	5
9	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN/MeOH	52
10	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN/ <i>i</i> -PrOH	50
11	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN/TFE	66
12	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	DCM	48
13	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	EA	42
14 <sup>d</sup>	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN/TFE	69
15 <sup>d,e</sup>	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN/TFE	n.d.
16 <sup>d,f</sup>	HEH	PhSiH <sub>3</sub>	CH <sub>3</sub> CN/TFE	n.d.

<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: Substrate 1-1 (0.2 mmol), 2 (2.0 equiv), [Red] (1.5 equiv), [H] source (1.0 equiv), and Ir(ppy)<sub>3</sub> (2.5 mol%) in solvents (1 mL) were irradiated with 11.5 W blue LEDs at r.t. for 18 h under a N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. When alcohols serving as a cosolvent were added, an additional 0.1 mL was charged. r.t., room temperature; [Red], reductant; BNAH, 1-benzyl-1,4-dihydronicotinamide; TFE, 2,2,2-trifluoroethanol; n.d., not detected; HEH, Hantzsch ester. <sup>b</sup>Yield was determined by <sup>19</sup>F NMR using PhOCF<sub>3</sub> as an internal standard. <sup>c</sup>[RuCl<sub>2</sub>(*p*-cymene)]<sub>2</sub> (5 mol %) was added. <sup>d</sup>HEH (1.0 equiv) and PhSiH<sub>3</sub> (1.5 equiv) were used instead for 3 h. <sup>e</sup>Without light irradiation. <sup>f</sup>Without Ir(ppy)<sub>3</sub>.

Several difunctional reagents serving as both a hydrogen source and a reductant were investigated (entries 1–3). However, the desired product was obtained in only 14% yield when Hantzsch ester was used. We posited that the hydrogen transfer between two relatively low concentration species, that is, benzyl radicals and oxidized Hantzsch ester radical cations, was not competitive with the unproductive oligomerization side reaction. A thorough screening of stoichiometric silanes and other representative HAT catalysts to circumvent this obstacle revealed phenylsilane to be the best choice (entries 4–8). Thiols, another family of HAT catalysts,<sup>13</sup> were neglected on purpose to eliminate the disgusting nature attached to them. Subsequent attempts to activate the Si–H bond *via* transition-metal complexes or Lewis acids failed to

improve the yield, which in one way excluded the possible radical–cation crossover mechanism (entry 8, *vide infra*, see the SI).<sup>14</sup> Alcohols, which have shown their potential in delivering a hydrogen atom, were then tested (entries 9–11).<sup>3j</sup> 2,2,2-Trifluoroethanol (TFE) emerged to fit in our protocol properly. A slight modification of loadings can give the optimized result in 3 h (entry 14). It is worth noting that the reaction can be smoothly conducted without super dry CH<sub>3</sub>CN, an inert atmosphere, or stirring or even with 10 equiv of H<sub>2</sub>O with only a slight decrease in yield. (See the SI.) Although the desired product was not observed without irradiation or a photocatalyst (entry 15–16), the reaction was insensitive to the wavelength, the power of light, and the type of photocatalysts (see the SI), which preliminarily indicated the existence of a radical chain in our platform.

With the optimized conditions in hand, we next turned our attention to evaluate the substrate scope of our protocol (Scheme 2). An unexpected broad substrate scope was found during our investigation. Common functional groups and building blocks with different electronic effects including halide, (hetero)aryl, tertiary amine, ether, ester, amide, imide, cyanide, alcohol, aldehyde, carboxylic acid, and CF<sub>3</sub>, were well tolerated. Para-, meta-, and ortho-substituted styrene and di- and tri-substituted styrenes were all compatible in our platform, indicating the relative insensitivity to the steric effect. A wide range of substrates bearing active hydrogen such as amide, alcohol, carboxylic acid, and indole were shown to be suitable, which preliminarily suggested the robustness of our protocol. High regioselectivity was observed when geminal and E- and Z-disubstituted styrene was subjected to our reaction conditions. Subsequent exploration using fused aryl- and heteroaryl-containing substrates like naphthalene, benzothio- phene, pyridine, and indole also delivered target products in moderate to good yield. Unactivated alkenes, with a reduced propensity of polymerization, reacted smoothly to deliver the desired products in high yields, further convincing us of the broad applicability of our platform. Another important kind of alkenes,  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated carboxylic acid derivatives, was then tested. The positive results given by acrylates and acrylamides again emphasize the universality of our protocol. Our curiosity regarding the location of the border of this conversion drove us to attempt  $\alpha$ -heteroatom-substituted olefins. We were pleased that common heteroatoms involving N, O, Si, and S in different oxidation states with different electronic effects were shown to be applicable. In addition, the compatibility of different oxidation states showcased by OH, CHO, COOH, S, and SO<sub>2</sub> avoided the tedious modification of oxidation states, offering a practical tool for the key intermediate synthesis and late-stage functionalization. Because of their strong quenching ability, N-containing substrates were conventionally considered incompatible under photoredox conditions. However, a variety of N-containing functional groups and heteroaryls highlighted by tertiary amine, amide, imide, pyridine, and unprotected indole fit in with our platform. We regarded this observation as another indirect evidence of the existence of a radical chain. The application of our protocol to the late-stage functionalization of various natural products and pharmaceutical derivatives also proved to be efficient. Chemoselectivity between terminal alkenes and  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated ketones was observed during our investigation. The complete consumption of substrates was observed, but low yields were obtained in some cases, probably because of the oligomerization or polymerization of the benzyl radical (Int 1 shown in the proposed mechanism). The

Scheme 2. Substrate Scope of Hydrotrifluoromethylation<sup>a</sup>

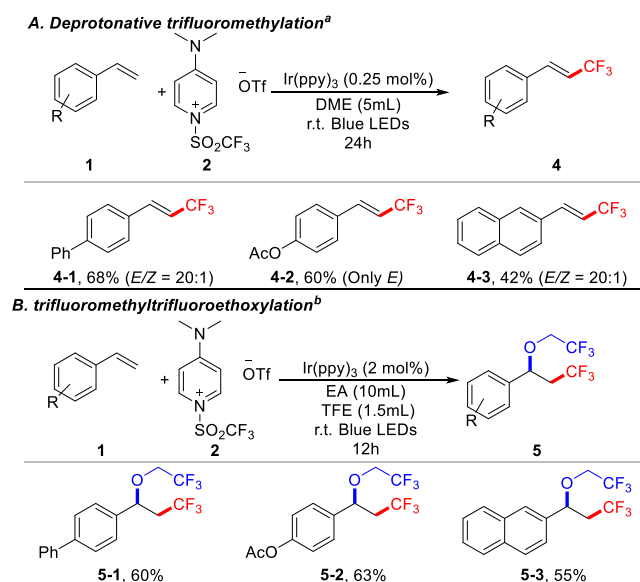
<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: Substrate 1 (0.5 mmol), 2 (2.0–2.7 equiv), HEH (1.0 equiv), PhSiH<sub>3</sub> (1.5 equiv), and Ir(ppy)<sub>3</sub> (2.5 mol%) in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/TFE (v/v 10:1, 2.75 mL) were irradiated with 11.5 W blue LEDs at r.t. for 3–6 h under a N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. Isolated yields are shown. Yields in parentheses were determined by <sup>19</sup>F NMR using PhOCF<sub>3</sub> as an internal standard. <sup>b</sup>Low isolated yield was due to the close polarity between the major product and a side product. <sup>c</sup>Reaction was performed without HEH.

reaction can be smoothly conducted in a gram scale fashion (3–8), which further demonstrated its synthetic utility.

The unusual robustness has encouraged us to explore the potential tunability of our platform. We envisioned that by simply removing the hydrogen source added in the hydrotrifluoromethylation, a deprotonative trifluoromethylation procedure would occur though the radical addition elimination pathway. Gratifyingly, just reducing the equivalent of TFSP and altering the solvent were sufficient to deliver the target products with high stereoselectivity (Scheme 3A). Although various strategies have been developed to construct trifluoromethylated alkenes from unfunctionalized alkenes, external bases were frequently required to facilitate the elimination step.<sup>3g,6,15</sup> Featuring a pyridine core, our newly developed trifluoromethylation reagent, TFSP, can serve as both a trifluoromethyl radical source and a base, offering a simplified pathway compared with others. This result preliminary

exhibited the dual-function character of TFSP. Furthermore, we wondered whether a trifluoromethyltrifluoroethoxylated product could be observed if TFE remained while other hydrogen sources (*i.e.*, PhSiH<sub>3</sub> and Hantzsch ester) were removed. We were pleased that with a slight modification, the expected products were detected in good yields (Scheme 3B). Although plenty of literature focused on the intermolecular trifluoromethylalkoxylation reaction has been reported,<sup>16</sup> there is only one example concerning this particular trifluoromethyltrifluoroethoxylation reaction,<sup>17</sup> rendering our protocol valuable and complementary. A brief screening of the substrate scope revealed the promising value of these two conversions (Scheme 3). In short, three structurally diversified products were constructed under similar reaction conditions, which can be seen as an outstanding example of divergent synthesis. In addition, the robustness and tunability of our protocol render it competent in pharmaceutical development.

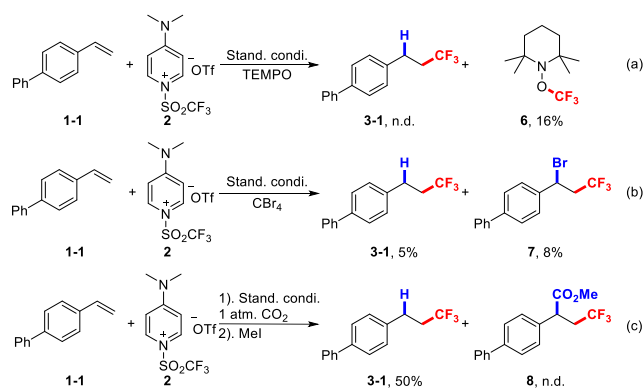
### Scheme 3. Derivatized Reaction of Hydrotrifluoromethylation



<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: Substrate **1** (0.5 mmol), **2** (1.0 equiv), and Ir(ppy)<sub>3</sub> (2.5 mol%) in DME (5 mL) were irradiated with 11.5 W blue LEDs at r.t. for 24 h under a N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. <sup>b</sup>Reaction conditions: Substrate **1** (0.5 mmol), **2** (1.0 equiv), and Ir(ppy)<sub>3</sub> (2 mol %) in EA/TFE (v/v 10:1.5, 11.5 mL) were irradiated with 11.5 W blue LEDs at r.t. for 12 h under a N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere.

To shed light on the mechanism of our protocol, we conducted several preliminary mechanistic experiments. First, a radical scavenger (*i.e.*, TEMPO) was added to the system, and a total inhibition of hydrotrifluoromethylation along with a TEMPO adduct, TEMPO–CF<sub>3</sub>, was observed (Scheme 4a).

### Scheme 4. Preliminary Mechanistic Experiments



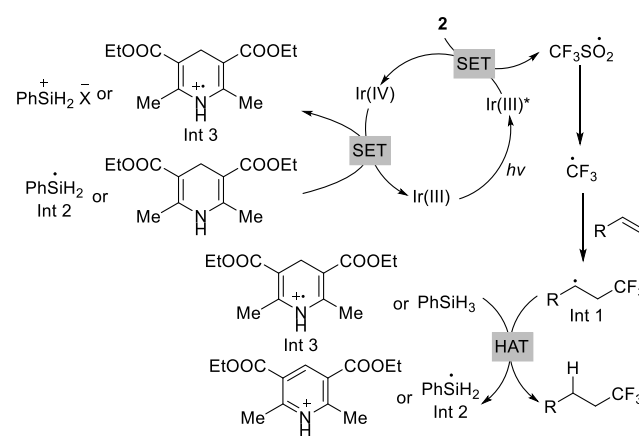
Second, a transient benzyl radical was identified based on the detected bromotrifluoromethylation product when CBr<sub>4</sub> was subjected to the reaction (Scheme 4b).<sup>18</sup> Third, when the reaction was conducted under a CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere followed by treatment with MeI, the generation of **8** was not detected, and only a slight decrease in the yield of **3–1** was observed, which preliminarily excluded the carbon anion pathway. (Scheme 4c). The combination of the evidence suggested the radical nature of our protocol.

Despite our putting in much effort, the attempt to determine the quantum yield failed due to the notorious propensity for polymerization to dominate at the beginning of the reaction.

However, a couple of pieces of evidence previously mentioned (*i.e.*, the low catalytic loading, fast reaction rate, insensitivity to the wavelength, power of light, and type of photocatalysts, and the compatibility of a variety of N-containing functional groups and the heteroaryl) still convinced us of the existence of a chain mechanism in addition to the closed catalytic cycle.<sup>19</sup>

On the basis of the above mechanistic investigation and reported literature,<sup>12,20</sup> a plausible mechanism is proposed (Scheme 5). An oxidative quench of the excited photocatalyst

### Scheme 5. Plausible Reaction Mechanism



( $E_{1/2}(\text{Ir}^{\text{IV/III}*}) = -1.73$  V vs SCE) by TFSP ( $E_p = -0.83$  V vs SCE) releases a trifluoromethyl radical, which is subsequently trapped by styrene to generate a benzyl radical intermediate (Int 1). The desired product is delivered through a HAT between PhSiH<sub>3</sub> or Int 3 and Int 1. The oxidation of Hantzsch ester ( $E_{1/2}^{\text{ox}} = +0.89$  V vs SCE)<sup>20d</sup> or Int 2 by Ir(IV) ( $E_{1/2}(\text{Ir}^{\text{IV/III}}) = +0.77$  V vs SCE) closes the photocatalytic cycle. In addition, we posit that a SET from Int 2 or Int 3 ( $E_{1/2}^{\text{ox}} = +0.76$  V vs SCE)<sup>20d</sup> to TFSP can release a trifluoromethyl radical and initiate a radical chain.

In conclusion, the divergent synthesis of three type of trifluoromethylated products was realized using our method. The potential value of our protocol in pharmaceutical development was showcased by the compatibility of a diversified structure of olefins. A preliminary mechanistic investigation indicated the existence of a radical chain.

### ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

#### Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.1c03630>.

Materials and methods, experimental procedures, optimization studies, and <sup>1</sup>H NMR, <sup>19</sup>F NMR, <sup>13</sup>C NMR, IR, and MS data (PDF)

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## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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