

**Electrochemical and electrocatalytic properties
of self-assembled single-walled carbon
nanotube/organo-iron hybrid systems on gold
electrodes**

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by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my promoter, Dr K. I. Ozoemena, for everything he has done.



DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis hereby submitted to the University of Pretoria for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at any other University, that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Nkosi D

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ABSTRACT

This work describes, for the first time, the electrochemical and electrocatalytic properties of self-assembled layers of single-walled carbon nanotubes (SWCNTs) intergrated with selected organo-iron complexes and Cysteamine (Cys) forming a base on gold electrodes. The organo-iron complexes selected for this study were octa(hydroxyethylthio)phthalocyaninatoiron(II) (FeOHETPc), tetraaminophthalocyninatoiron(II) (FeTAPc), tetraaminophthalocyninatocobalt(II) (CoTAPc), ferrocene monocarboxylic acid (FMCA), ferrocene dicarboxylic acid (FDCA) or a mixture of SWCNT and FMCA or FDCA. The successful fabrication of these electrodes were established using atomic force microscopy (AFM), X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), and electrochemical techniques such as cyclic voltammetry (CV), electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS), square wave voltammetry (SWV) and chronoamperometry (CA)

The Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc electrode exhibited strong dependence on the reaction of the head groups and the pH of the working electrolytes. The high electron transfer capability of the Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc electrode over other electrodes as the Au-Cys-SWCNT or the Au-Cys-FeOHETPc or the Au-FeOHETPc suggests that

SWCNT greatly improves the electronic communication between FeOHETPc and the bare gold electrode. The electron transfer rate constant (k_{app}) of Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc in pH 4.8 conditions ($\sim 1.7 \times 10^{-2} \text{ cm s}^{-1}$) over that of the electrode obtained from SWCNT integrated with tetraaminophthalocyninatocobalt(II) (Au-Cys-SWCNT-CoTAPc) ($5.1 \times 10^{-3} \text{ cm s}^{-1}$) is attributed to the possible effect of both the central metal on the phthalocyanine core and substituents on the peripheral positions of the phthalocyanine rings.

This work clearly proved that the aligned SWCNTs arrays exhibit much faster electron transfer kinetics to redox-active species in solutions compared to the randomly dispersed (drop-dried) SWCNTs. The advantageous electron transfer properties of the aligned Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc electrode, coupled with its ease of fabrication and electrochemical stability, could be found useful in electrochemical sensing and catalysis.

Thiocyanate ion was used as an analytical probe to examine the electrocatalytic properties of these modified gold electrodes. This work shows that SWCNT-FeOHETPc hybrid exhibits excellent sensitivity towards the detection of thiocyanate compared to electrodes containing SWCNT or FeTAPc or FeOHETPc only, indicating the ability of the SWCNTs to function as effective conductive nanowires for the detection of this important analyte. The electrochemical response of

the FeOHETPc based electrodes was greater than their FeTAPc-based electrode counterparts, indicative of the impact of peripheral substituents on the phthalocyanine core towards electrocatalytic behaviour of these types of hybrids. Nevertheless, the exchange of the central metal as seen with the case of CoTAPc (see chapter 3), provide useful comparative electrochemical activity of this complexes versus FeTAPc with the same chemical environment with an indication of iron being the best as metal centre.

FMCA or FDCA were covalently attached to the base Cysteamine monolayer to form the Au-Cys-FMCA and Au-Cys-FDCA, respectively. The same covalent attachment strategy was used to form the mixed SWCNTs and ferrocene-terminated layers (i.e., Au-Cys-SWCNT/FMCA and Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA). The impact of neighbouring SWCNTs on the electron transfer dynamics of the ferrocene molecular assemblies in acidic medium (0.5 M H₂SO₄) and in a solution (pH 7.2) of an outer-sphere redox probe ($[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}/[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$) was explored. The electron transfer rate constants in both solution media essentially decrease as Au-Cys-FMCA > Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA > Au-Cys-FDCA > Au-Cys-SWCNT/FMCA. This trend has been interpreted in terms of several factors such as the locations of the ferrocene species in a range of environments with a range of potentials, the proximity /interactions of the ferrocenes with one another, and electrostatic

interaction or repulsion existing between the negatively-charged redox probe and the modified electrodes.

Square wave voltammetry was used to examine the catalytic behaviour of the electrodes. Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA proved to be the best electrode, possibly due to the repulsive interactions between the negatively charged SCN^- and high number of surface $-\text{COOH}$ species at the SWCNT/FDCA. This novel study has provided some useful insights as to how CNTs co-assembled with ferrocene-terminated thiols could impact on the heterogeneous electron transfer kinetics as well as the electrocatalytic detection of the self-assembled ferrocene layers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	iii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract.....	vi
Table of contents	x
Abbreviations	xvi
List of Symbols	xviii
List of Figures.....	xxi
List of Schemes	xxxii
List of Tables.....	xxxii

SECTION A

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Overview of Thesis: Problem Statement	2
1.1.1 Self-assembly in electrode fabrication	2
1.1.2 Carbon nanotubes as electron-conducting nanowires.....	3
1.1.3 Metallophthalocyanines as electrocatalysts.....	4
1.1.4 Carboxylated ferrocenes as electrocatalysts	5
1.1.5 Aim of thesis	6
1.2 Overview of Electrochemistry	8
1.2.1 Basic concepts	8
1.2.2 The electrode-solution interface.....	9
1.2.3 Faradaic and Non-Faradaic process	10
1.2.4 Mass transport processes	11

1.3	Voltammetric techniques.....	15
1.3.1	Cyclic voltammetry	15
1.3.1.1	Reversible process	15
1.3.1.2	Irreversible process	21
1.3.1.3	Quasi-reversible process.....	23
1.3.2	Square wave voltammetry	24
1.3.3	Chronoamperometry	26
1.3.4	Linear sweep voltammetry.....	28
1.4	Chemically modified electrodes	31
1.4.1	Methods of modifying electrode surface	31
1.4.1.1	Self-Assembly/chemisorption	32
1.4.1.1.1	Characterization of SAM-modified electrodes.....	37
1.4.1.1.2	Application of SAM modified electrodes	38
1.4.1.2	Electrodeposition	39
1.4.1.3	Drop-dry method.....	39
1.4.1.4	Dip-dry coating	40
1.4.1.5	Spin coating.....	40
1.4.1.6	Vapour deposition.....	41
1.4.1.7	Langmuir-Blodgett	41
1.4.1.8	Electropolymerisation	41
1.5	Organo-iron complexes and carbon nanotubes	43
1.5.1	Metallophthalocyanine modified electrodes.....	43
1.5.2	General overview on ferrocene-derivatised self-assembled monolayers	45
1.5.3	Introduction to carbon nanotubes	47
1.6	Physico-chemical characterization of modified electrodes.....	51
1.6.1	Electrochemical Impedance Spectroscopy (EIS)	51
1.6.1.1	Basics of electrochemical impedance spectroscopy	51

1.6.1.2 Applications and data representation	54
1.6.1.3 Factors affecting rate of electron transfer	60
1.6.2 Atomic Force Microscopy	62
1.6.3 Scanning Electron Microscopy	66
1.6.4 X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy	67
1.7 Background on the studied analytes	69
1.7.1 Potassium thiocyanate	69
REFERENCES	70

CHAPTER 2

EXPERIMENTAL

2.1 Introduction.....	84
2.2 Reagents and material.....	84
2.2.1 Functionalization of carbon nanotubes	86
2.3 Instrumentation.....	87
2.4 Electrode modification procedure	90
2.4.1 Electrode pre-treatment	90
2.4.2 Self-assembling technique	91
2.4.2.1 SWCNT-phthalocyanine based electrode.....	91
2.4.2.2 SWCNT-ferrocene based electrodes	92
2.4.2.3 Nano-gold indium tin oxide electrode.....	93
REFERENCES	95

SECTION B

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SPECTROSCOPIC , MICROSCOPIC AND ELECTROCHEMICAL PROPERTIES OF IRON-PHTHALOCYANINE SINGLE-WALLED CARBON NANOTUBE BASED ELECTRODES

3.1 SAM formation strategies.....	98
3.2 Atomic force microscopy characterization.....	100
3.3 XPS characterization	103
3.4 Cyclic voltammetric characterization.....	107
3.4.1 Pretreatment of SWCNT-FeOHETPc.....	107
3.4.2 Interfacial capacitance	109
3.4.3 Surface coverage	112
3.5 Electrochemical impedimetric characterization	115
3.5.1 Electron transport behaviour of the SAMs	115
3.5.2 Impact of solution pH on electron transfer	119
3.5.3 Impact of single-walled carbon nanotubes on electron transfer.....	122
REFERENCES	130

CHAPTER 4

ELECTROCATALYTIC PROPERTIES OF IRON-PHTHALOCYANINE-SWCNT BASED ELECTRODES: THIOCYANATE AS A MODEL ANALYTE

4.1 Square wave voltammetric detection of SCN^-	136
4.2 Influence of scan rates on electrocatalysis of SCN^-	139
4.3 Rotating gold disk electrode experiments	144
4.4 Chronoamperometric investigations.....	147
4.5 Real sample analysis with smoker's saliva	152
REFERENCES	154

CHAPTER 5

MICROSCOPIC AND ELECTROCHEMICAL PROPERTIES OF FERROCENE SINGLE-WALLED CARBON NANOTUBES BASED ELECTRODES

5.1 SAM formation strategies.....	157
5.2 Atomic force microscopic characterization	160
5.3 Electron transfer dynamics in 0.5 M H_2SO_4 solution.	162
5.3.1 Cyclic voltammetric characterization	162
5.3.1.1 Surface coverage.....	166
5.3.1.2 Repetitive scanning.....	168
5.3.2 Electrochemical impedimetric characterization.....	171

5.4 Electron transfer dynamics in a redox probe, $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}$ / $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$	177
5.4.1 Cyclic voltammetric characterization	177
5.4.2 Electrochemical impedimetric characterization.....	178
REFERENCES	183

CHAPTER 6

ELECTROCATALYTIC PROPERTIES OF FERROCENE SINGLE-WALLED CARBON NANOTUBES BASED ELECTRODES: THIOCYANATE AS A MODEL ANALYTE

6.1 Square wave voltammetric detection of SCN^-	187
6.2 Influence of scan rates on electrocatalysis of SCN^-	189
6.3 Rotating gold disk electrode experiments	192
6.4 Chronoamperometric investigations.....	194
6.5 Gold nanoparticle-modified indium tin oxide electrode experiment.....	198
REFERENCES	199

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVE..... 200

APPENDIX A..... 204

Publications in peer-reviewed journals from this Thesis

APPENDIX B..... 206

List of Conference Presentations from this Thesis

ABBREVIATIONS

A	Electrode surface area (cm ²)
AFM	Atomic force microscopy
Ag	Silver wire pseudo-reference electrode
Ag AgCl	Silver/silver chloride reference electrode
CME	Chemically modified electrode
C.E.	Counter electrode
CMEs	Chemically modified electrodes
CV	Cyclic voltammetry
Cys	Cysteamine
CV	Cyclic voltammogram
D	Diffusion coefficient (cm ² s ⁻¹)
DCC	Dicyclohexylcarbodiimide
DMF	Dimethylformamide
EIS	Electrochemical impedance spectroscopy
E_p	Peak potential
E_{pa}	Anodic peak potential
E_{pc}	Cathodic peak potential
E°	Standard potential
$E^{\circ'}$ or $E_{1/2}$	Formal redox potential
F	Faraday's constant
FeOHETPc	Iron-octahydroxyethylthiophthalocyanine

$\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6^{4-}$	Hexacyanoferrate(II)
$\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6^{3-}$	Hexacyanoferrate(III)
i_{for}	Forward current
i_{rev}	Reverse current
I_{pa}	Anodic peak current
I_{pc}	Cathodic peak current
ITO	Indium tin oxide
LoD	Limit of detection
MPc	Metallophthalocyanine
MPc-SAM	Metallophthalocyanine-self assembled monolayer
Pc	Phthalocyanine
R	Gas constant
R.E.	Reference electrode
R_s	Solution resistance
SAM	Self-assembled monolayer
SEM	Scanning electron microscopy
SWCNTs	Single-walled carbon nanotubes
SWV	Square wave voltammetry
T	Temperature (K)
t	Time(s)
W.E.	Working electrode
XPS	X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy

LIST OF SYMBOLS

α	Transfer coefficient
ω	Angular velocity
ε	Extinction coefficient
Γ	Surface coverage or concentration
π	Pi bonding
λ	Wavelength
γ	kinematic viscosity
C	Molar concentration of analyte
c	Speed of light
C	Capacitance
C_{dl}	Double-layer capacitance
CPE	Constant phase electrode
C_m	Monolayer capacitance
C_{ox}	Concentration of the oxidised form of an analyte
C_{red}	Concentration of the reduced form of an analyte
D	Diameter
D	Diffusion coefficient
E_{pa}	Anodic peak potential
E_{pc}	Cathodic peak potential
E	Potential
E°	Standard potential

$E_{1/2}$	Half-wave potential
ΔE_p	Anodic-to-cathodic peak potential separation
f	Frequency
F	Faraday's constant
h	Plank's constant
Hz	Hertz
i_{pa}	Anodic peak current
i_{pc}	Cathodic peak current
k	Heterogeneous electron transfer coefficient
k_{et}	Electron transfer rate constant
k_f	Rate of forward reaction
k_r	Rate of reverse/backward reaction
k_{obs}	Observed rate constant
K	Kelvin
K	Equilibrium constant
K_a	Dissociation constant
K_{aap}	Electron transfer rate constant
n	Number of electron
N_A	Avogadro's constant
q	Electrical charge
Q	Electrical charge (C)
r	Radius of electrode

R	Universal gas constant
R_{ct}	Charge transfer resistance
R_s	Resistance of electrolyte
Sub	Substrate
Sub _(ox)	Oxidised substrate
v	Scan rate
V	Volts
Z_{im}	Imaginary impedance
Z_{re}	Real impedance
Z_w	Warburg impedance

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1:	Model of the electrode-solution double layer regions in a case of a negatively charged electrode.....	10
Figure 1.2:	The potential waveform applied to W.E in the cyclic voltammetry experiment.....	16
Figure 1.3:	Typical cyclic voltammogram for a reversible redox process.....	17
Figure 1.4:	Typical cyclic voltammogram for an irreversible process.....	22
Figure 1.5:	Square wave waveform potential sweep.....	25
Figure 1.6:	(a) Waveform of the potential step and (b) Chronoamperometric response.....	28
Figure 1.7:	Models of an organized monolayer.....	35
Figure 1.8:	Geometric structure of metallophthalocyanines.....	43

Figure 1.9: The structure of ferrocene, ferrocenemonocarboxylic acid (FMCA) and ferrocenedicarboxylic acid (FDCA).....46

Figure 1.10: Graphical representation of SWCNT and MWCNT.....48

Figure 1.11: (a) Applied voltage and (b) resulting current response.....53

Figure 1.12: Nyquist plot for the electrochemical system with diffusion and kinetics limited processes.....54

Figure 1.13: Typical Bode plots indicating the phase angle and logarithm of impedance versus frequency.....56

Figure 1.14: Randles electronic equivalent circuit (for an ideal situation).....58

Figure 1.15: Modified Randles equivalent electric circuit (for a real practical situation).....59

Figure 1.16: Illustration of the defects and the pinholes.....62

Figure 2.1: FESEM images of the nanogold modified ITO electrode (a) 1 μ m magnification and (b) 100nm magnification.....95

Figure 3.1: Typical AFM images of aligned (A) Cys, (B) Cys-SWCNT and (C) Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc modified gold surfaces.....102

Figure 3.2: Survey X-ray photoelectron spectra for the full (a) and the expanded regions for the sulphur (b), nitrogen (c) and carbon (d) for the bare Au (i), Au-Cys (ii), Au-Cys-SWCNT (iii), and Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc (iv) electrodes.....105

Figure 3.3: Cyclic voltammetric profile of the various electrodes studied compared with the bare Au in 0.5 M H₂SO₄ at the scan rate of 25 mV s⁻¹. Other scans have been excluded for clarity109

Figure 3.4: Typical cyclic voltammograms of the indicated electrodes towards the reversible couple Fe(CN)₆³⁻/ [Fe(CN)₆]⁴⁻ in 0.1 M PBS (pH 4.8). scan rate: 25 mVs⁻¹.....117

Figure 3.5: Impedance spectral responses of the indicated electrodes obtained at +0.10 V vs Ag|AgCl in $\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6^{3-}/[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}$ 0.1 M PBS (pH 4.8).....118

Figure 3.6: Bode plots, phase angle vs log f (a) and log Z vs log f (b), of the impedance spectra of the modified electrodes in redox probe ($[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}/[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$) in 0.1 M PBS solution (pH 4.8).....119

Figure 3.7: Examples of the impedimetric responses of the Au-Cys-SWCNT (a) and Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc (b) at different pH of the $\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6^{3-}/[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}$ solutions. Insets are the corresponding plots of R_{ct} vs pH.....121

Figure 3.8: Examples of comparative Nyquist (a) and circuit used (b) for the different modified electrodes in 0.1 M PBS (pH 4.8). Others have been removed for clarity but the EIS data are shown in Table 3.1.....125

Figure 3.9: Bode plots, phase angle vs log f (a) and log Z vs log f (b), of the impedance spectra of the modified electrodes in redox probe ($[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-} / [\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$) in 0.1 M PBS solution (pH 4.8). Others have been removed for clarity but the EIS data are shown in Table 3.1.....128

Figure 4.1: Typical comparative square wave voltammetric response of the various electrodes in PBS solution (pH 4.8) containing 1 mM SCN^- . Au-Cys voltammogram omitted for clarity.....138

Figure 4.2: (a) Typical examples of cyclic voltammetric evolutions At varying scan rates (50, 150, 200, 400, 600 and 800 mVs^{-1} , inner to outer; outer omitted for clarity); and (b) Plot of current function ($I_p/v^{1/2}$) versus scan rate (v) ranging from 50 to 1000 mVs^{-1} . $[\text{SCN}^-] = 1 \text{ mM}$141

Figure 4.3 Linear sweep voltammetric evolutic evolutions of the rotating disk electrode experiments obtained at Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc in PBS solution (pH 4.8) containing 1 mM SCN^- at 50 mVs^{-1} . (Inset is Koutecky-Levich plot).....146

Figure 4.4: Typical double potential step chronoamperometric transients at Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc in PBS solution (pH 4.8) following addition of SCN^- . The potential was stepped from +0.62 to +0.20 and back to +0.62 V. Other chronoamperograms obtained during same experiments are omitted here for clarity purpose. Inset is the plot of chronoamperometric current at $t = 10\text{s}$ vs $\log [\text{SCN}^-]$149

Figure 4.5: Typical Cottrell equation plots obtained from the chronoamperometric evolution at Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc in PBS solution (pH 4.8) following addition of SCN^- . (The numbers 1 to 15 correspond to 32.3, 62.5, 90.9, 118, 143, 167, 189, 211, 231, 250, 268, 286, 302, 318 and 333 μM , respectively).....151

Figure 4.6: Plots of $I_{\text{cat}}/I_{\text{buff}}$ vs $t^{1/2}$ obtained from the chronoamperometric evolution at Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc in PBS solution (pH 4.8) following addition of SCN^- . (The numbers 1 to 15 correspond to 32.3, 62.5, 90.9, 118, 143, 167, 189, 211, 231, 250, 268, 286, 302, 318 and 333 μM , respectively).....152

Figure 4.7: Typical example of chronoamperometric response of the saliva samples of a smoker and a non-smoker at the Au-Cys-SWCNT-FeOHETPc electrode in PBS solution (pH 4.8), fixed potential = 0.62 V vs Ag|AgCl.....154

Figure 5.1: Topographic images of the electrodes: (a) Au bare, (b) Au-Cys, (c) Au-Cys-SWCNT, (d) Au-Cys-FDCA and (e) Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA.....162

Figure 5.2: Comparative cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the modified gold electrode in 0.5 M H₂SO₄, Au-Cys-FCA, Au-Cys-FDCA, Au-Cys-SWCNT, Au-Cys-SWCNT/FMCA and Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA.....163

Figure 5.3: Comparative cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the modified gold electrode in 0.5 M H₂SO₄ obtained at the 1st and the 20th scans for (a) Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA, (b) Au-Cys-FDCA,(c) Au-Cys-SWCNT/FMCA and (d) Au-Cys-FMCA170

Figure 5.4: Nyquist plots (a) of the modified electrodes in the H₂SO₄ solution and (b) Equivalent circuit used in fitting figure (a).....173

Figure 5.5: Bode plots, phase angle vs log f (a) and log Z vs log f (b) of the logarithm impedance spectra versus frequency of the modified electrodes in 0.5 M H₂SO₄.....177

Figure 5.6: Comparative cyclic voltammetric evolutions of the bare and modified gold electrodes obtained in 0.1 M $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}/[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$ (PBS, pH 7.2); bare Au, Au-Cys-FDCA, Au-Cys-FMCA, Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA and Au-Cys-SWCNT/FMCA.....178

Figure 5.7: Nyquist plot (a) and the electrical equivalent circuit (b) used to fit the impedance spectra of bare Au modified electrodes obtained in 0.1 M $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}/[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$ (PBS, pH 7.2).....180

Figure 5.8: Bode plots, phase angle vs log f (a) and log Z vs log f (b) of the impedance spectra of the modified electrodes in redox probe ($[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}/[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{3-}$) PBS solution (pH7.2).....183

Figure 6.1: Comparative square wave voltammograms of the bare gold and modified gold electrodes obtained in PBS solution (pH 4.7) containing 1 mM SCN^-189

Figure 6.2: Cyclic voltammetric evolutions at varying scan rates and insert is the plot of current (I_p) versus scan rate (ν) ranging from 25 to 900 mVs^{-1} .
[SCN⁻] = 1 mM.....191

Figure 6.3: The plots of (a) peak current against the square root of the scan rate and (b) peak potential against log of scan rate for the Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA electrode in 1 mM SCN⁻.....192

Figure 6.4: Linear sweep voltammetric evolutic evolutions of the rotating disk electrode experiments obtained at Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA in PBS solution (pH 4.8) containing 1 mM SCN⁻ at 50 mVs^{-1} . (Inset is Koutečky-Levich plot).....193

Figure 6.5: Typical double potential step chronoamperometric transients at Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA in PBS solution (pH4.8) following addition of SCN⁻ Inset is the plot of chronoamperometric current at $t = 10$ sec vs [SCN⁻].....195

Figure 6.6: Typical Cottrell equation plots obtained from the chronoamperometric evolution at Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA in PBS solution (pH 4.7) following addition of SCN^-197

Figure 6.7: Plots of $I_{\text{cat}}/I_{\text{buff}}$ vs $t^{1/2}$ obtained from the chronoamperometric evolution at Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA in PBS solution (pH 4.7) following addition of SCN^-198

Figure 6.8: Chronoamperometric evolutions at ITO-nanoAu-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA electrode in PBS solution pH 4.7 containing 1 mM SCN^- . inset: Plot of peak current vs concentration obtained from chronoamperometric evolutions for the ITO- nanoAu-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA electrode.....199

LIST OF SCHEMES

Scheme 3.1: Schematic representation of the self-assembly processes of the SWCNT and SWCNT-FeOHETPc on gold electrode.....	100
Scheme 5.1: Schematic representation of the gold electrode modification routes for Au-Cys, Au-Cys-FCA and Au-Cys-FDCA.....	159
Scheme 5.2: Schematic of the gold electrode modification route for Au-Cys-SWCNT/FMCA and Au-Cys-SWCNT/FDCA.....	160

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: The diagnostic criteria for reversible, irreversible and quasi-reversible cyclic voltammetric processes.....	24
Table 2.1: List of reagents, their purity and suppliers.....	86
Table 3.1: Summary of estimated EIS parameters.....	130
Table 5.1 Summary of estimated voltammetric data obtained in 0.5 M H ₂ SO ₄	166
Table 5.2: Summary of estimated EIS parameters obtained in 0.5 M H ₂ SO ₄	175
Table 5.3: Summary of estimated EIS parameters obtained in 0.1 M [Fe(CN) ₆] ⁴⁻ / [Fe(CN) ₆] ³⁻ (PBS, pH 7.0).....	181