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## Press Release

### Bechtler Museum of Modern Art Announces New Exhibition Celebrating Life of Walasse Ting

#### *One Cent Life Exhibition Honors Landmark 1964 Portfolio*

The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art's newest exhibition, *1 Cent Life*, presents a selection of color lithographs from the landmark 1964 print portfolio, *1 Cent Life*, written by Walasse Ting (born Ding Xionguan 丁雄泉), edited by Sam Francis, and published by E.W. Kornfeld. Developed by Anastasia James, Bechtler Museum of Modern Art Curator, the exhibition is dedicated to the life of Chinese-American visual artist and poet Walasse Ting and follows his journey from Shanghai to Paris to New York City.

On display in the Bechtler's intimate second floor gallery, the exhibition features 18 lithographs by 18 artists from the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art's signed limited edition of the *1 Cent Life Portfolio*, as well as poetry and a selection of books by Ting. Artists whose work will be on view include Andy Warhol, Joan Mitchell, Pierre Alechinsky, Kiki O.K. Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, Robert Indiana, Bram Van Velde, Asger Jorn, and Allan Kaprow. On display through February 7, 2021, *1 Cent Life* will be available for immediate viewing when the museum reopens on September 25, 2020.

Born Ding Xionguan 丁雄泉, Ting was raised in Shanghai while the city was under Japanese occupation. At the age of 17, directly following World War II, Ting fled to Hong Kong, then a safe haven for dissidents and political refugees. Six years later, he moved to Paris where he immediately anglicized his name, tacking on "sse" in emulation of the famed painter Henri Matisse. In Paris, Ting met former members of the CoBrA group, including Pierre Alechinsky, Asger Jorn, and Karel Appel. Their rebellious, intuitive, and democratic approach to artmaking would greatly influence his work. CoBrA is taken from the first letters of the cities (Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam) where the group's founding members lived.

In December 1956, bolstered by newfound success as a painter, Ting boarded the *SS Liberte* in Paris for New York City. In 1961, while living in a one-room studio near Times Square, he wrote a series of sixty-one poems. Simultaneously spiritual and secular, these poems became the genesis for what would become the now-legendary *1 Cent Life* portfolio. Communicating the wide-eyed ambition of a recent immigrant, the poems reference both the tone and metrical patterns of classical Chinese poetry and the rhythm of American Beat prose, Jazz music, and the urban environment. Each page of the portfolio radiates with a breathless immediacy that exudes a sense of the vital dynamism of New York City in the early 1960s as Ting was experiencing it.

Soon after their completion, Ting approached his close friend, the American painter, Sam Francis, with the idea of inviting a group of artists to create color lithographs in response to his poetry. In the early 1960s, color lithography was still a relatively under-explored medium by artists as it was primarily associated with commercial printing. The artists invited to participate in the project were given lithographic plates, ink, and crayons so they could experiment with the unfamiliar medium and respond to Ting's poetry in their preferred artistic style. Included in the exhibition is Andy Warhol's first published editioned lithograph which is accompanied by Ting's poem, "Jade White Butterfly." This print is also the first combination of text and image on the same page since Warhol's illustrated books of the 1950s.

The resulting portfolio printed by Maurice Beudet in Paris, France and published by E.W. Kornfeld in Bern, Switzerland contains sixty-two original lithographs by twenty-eight artists, reproductions of French, Japanese, and American advertisements, postage stamps, photographs, Chinese seals, and sixty-one letterpress poems by Ting set in multicolored inks. It is, as Ting envisioned, “as exciting as Times Square, color bright as neon light, hot as espresso.” *1 Cent Life* is a vibrant celebration of art and life that acts as a testimonial to a brief period in time when no single art movement dominated, and uninhibited experimentation reigned.

“Walasse Ting is an important Chinese-American artist and poet who became an interlocuter between the European avant-garde of the 1950s and the American Pop artists of the 1960s and while his work gained some critical traction in the late 1950s, he has since been completely written out of the larger art historical narrative” said Anastasia James, Bechtler Museum of Modern Art Curator. “It is my intention to re-center the narrative of *1 Cent Life* on Ting as the portfolio’s creator and driving force. *1 Cent Life* stemmed from Ting’s desire to capture the zeitgeist of a creative community by inviting a group of artists to respond to his poetry in the medium of color lithography in the same manner that he had approached his early catalogs where he combined poetry with reproductions of his own works.”

### **ABOUT THE BECHTLER MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

Home to Charlotte’s iconic *Firebird* sculpture by Niki de Saint Phalle, the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art is filled with works by Miro, Giacometti, Calder, Warhol, Klee, and a wealth of other 20th-century notables. The Bechtler collection juxtaposes whimsy with work of significant intellectual depth and historical significance. Cosmopolitan in nature yet intimate in scale, the museum, designed by Mario Botta, provides an experience that is inspiring and approachable. The artworks were committed to the city of Charlotte by Andreas Bechtler, who, along with his family, built the collection over 70 years. Located in the heart of Uptown, the Bechtler is a light-filled community space created to engage audiences of all ages through exhibitions, jazz and film series, interactive art activities, and family days throughout the year. Visit [bechtler.org](http://bechtler.org) for more information.

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### **Images Available Upon Request**



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