



*Image: Nontsikelelo Mutiti (left) and Tinashe Mushakavanhu.  
Photo Credit: Dominique Sindayiganza.*

## Brooklyn Public Library Announces Exhibition Curated by Publishing Collective Black Chalk & Co.

*Beautiful Words Are Subversive* Shines a Spotlight on  
Zimbabwean and African Diasporic Literature

Opens October 28 at Central Library on Grand Army Plaza

BROOKLYN, NY (October 16, 2019)—**Brooklyn Public Library** (BPL) today announces *Beautiful Words Are Subversive*, a site-specific exhibition of works by **Black Chalk & Co.**, a collaborative publishing platform established by scholar **Tinashe Mushakavanhu** and interdisciplinary artist **Nontsikelelo Mutiti**. Installed across BPL's Central Library at Grand Army Plaza from **October 28, 2019 to January 5, 2020**, *Beautiful Words Are Subversive* exposes library-goers to Zimbabwean and African diasporic literatures, and more broadly to experiences from the margins of culture, incorporating community knowledge to fill gaps in the institutional record. As part of the Library's expansive programming in the visual arts, *Beautiful Words Are*

*Subversive* extends BPL's mission to provide access to educational, economic, and cultural enrichment opportunities of the highest quality to the 2.6 million individuals who make Brooklyn home.

"As part of Brooklyn Public Library's ever-evolving work to inspire our audience and ultimately strengthen critical thinking, visual arts exhibitions and workshops such as those developed by Black Chalk & Co. allow us to forge new dialogues across disciplines," said **László Jakab Orsós, Vice President of Arts and Culture at Brooklyn Public Library**. "We are pleased to partner with Black Chalk & Co. to explore our collections and archives from a new and vital perspective, and we look forward to the conversations with the public their important work will inspire."

**Mushakavanhu** and **Mutiti** are delighted with the opportunity to experiment and extend the reach of their work: "Our work breaks down language, arm wrestles with the politics of language, and employs the creative license to subvert rules and meanings. We are using this platform to develop a new lexicon of being, and of reading, or coming to terms with history and culture in a way that disregards protocol or rules but gives affirmation to our identities."

Founded in 2015, Black Chalk & Co. brings together writers, artists, designers, academics, and technologists to collaborate on new forms of publishing and creative production. Combining print, audio-visual content, and performance, *Beautiful Words Are Subversive* at BPL will explore language and inscribed meanings—creating a visual, textual, and auditory map of language, identity, and immigrant narratives that transports the viewer between Brooklyn and Harare, Zimbabwe. Drawing on BPL's collection of African literature to trace shifts in language during times of political turbulence and to identify gaps in existing historical narratives, *Beautiful Words Are Subversive* explores how words can shape and subvert meanings to engender freer expression.

The exhibition will function as a platform for publishing, discussion, and visual presentation, building on incomplete archives by drawing on a diverse, eclectic range of sources. Working between and across disciplines, *Beautiful Words Are Subversive* offers new perspectives on literature and culture. The exhibition includes interactive programs that invite the public to experience Zimbabwean and pan-African Opera, experimental film, and a book launch of Black Chalk & Co.'s recent publication *Some Writers Can Give You Two Heartbeats*.

**Public programs will include:**

**Classical Interludes: *Beautiful Words Are Subversive***

A Chamber Recital

Curated by Black Chalk & Co.

Sunday, November 3 from 4-6:00pm in the Dweck Auditorium at Central Library

Zimbabwean-born Tanyaradzwa A. Tawengwa performs a chamber recital for *Beautiful Words are Subversive* as part of BPL's long-standing *Classical Interludes* series, which supports free, professional-caliber chamber music performances at the Library. The performance will draw from the Second Chimurenga, the Zimbabwean struggle for liberation from 1965-1980. Tawengwa will be joined by pianist Gray Mitchell Jr., vocalist Makeda Hampton, and narrator Gertrude Tawengwa with readings by Tinashe Mushakavanhu and Nontsikelelo Mutiti.

**Film Screening and Book Launch by Black Chalk & Co.**

Thursday November 21 from 7–8:30 pm in the Dweck Auditorium at Central Library  
Curated by Black Chalk & Co.

Black Chalk & Co. will screen an experimental film sequence created by guest filmmakers responding to the book *Some Writers Can Give You Two Heartbeats* using the exquisite corpse format. Each filmmaker received a prompt to produce an original video piece without knowledge of what the other filmmakers were working with and all the material was then stitched together. After the screening, Tinashe Mushakavanhu and Nontsikelelo Mutiti will discuss their medium defying book and the creative process behind it. It's an invitation to join Black Chalk & Co. in asking what the book can and should be in these times, and why it's necessary to give voice to a group of people who would otherwise be silent or ignored.

*Beautiful Words Are Subversive* continues BPL's longstanding support for contemporary visual artists, including recent collaborations with the pioneering New York institution Franklin Furnace on the exhibition [Performance Is Public](#) (July 15 to October 15, 2019) and with multidisciplinary artist Kameelah Janan Rasheed on the interactive exhibition [Scoring the Stacks](#) (January 11 to April 7, 2019).

The presentation at the Brooklyn Public Library is a site-specific re-imagining of a smaller exhibition that Black Chalk & Co. first developed at Virginia Commonwealth University's Arts Research Institute in Richmond, Virginia, that will interact with Brooklyn Public Library's catalog and holdings.

For additional information on *Beautiful Words Are Subversive* and related public programs, please visit [this link](#).

Curators: Tinashe Mushakavanhu and Nontsikelelo Mutiti (Black Chalk & Co.)  
Organized by Cora Fisher, BPL Curator of Visual Arts Programming.