

VAN DOREN
WAXTER

ARTFORUM



Gareth Nyandoro, *Legal hustle II*, 2019, ink on paper on canvas on board, 24 x 21 1/4".

JOHANNESBURG

Gareth Nyandoro

SMAC GALLERY | JOHANNESBURG

Corner of 4th Avenue & 7th Street Parkhurst

September 14–October 19, 2019

The centerpiece of Zimbabwean artist Gareth Nyandoro's exhibition, *Musika WaBaba VaMike* (Mike's Father's Market, all works 2019), is an installation comprising a swath of hanging raw canvas with meticulously sliced paper sheets pasted onto its surface. The fabric drapes down to the floor, where the artist has placed a harvest of beans, cabbage, potatoes, and spinach alongside stacks of coal and a confetti-like scattering of offcuts from his scarred paper grounds. Although its title references street patois from Harare, the clearest signifier of Nyandoro's interest in his hometown's bustling informal economy—around eighty per cent of Zimbabwe's active workforce is self-employed—is the work's lone figural subject. Clearly delineated with blue and black inks, the street vendor's slit eyes resemble those in West African masks and resonate with artist's earliest compositions. Nyandoro's subject is at once an icon and identifiable urban type.

A distinctive crosshatching technique borrowed from printmaking informs Nyandoro's method: During his studies in the early 2000s, hyperinflation made art materials for etching unaffordable, so he improvised, using layered paper to create prints. Nyandoro's current practice of incising and inking paper evolved from this make-do technique. Dubbed "kuchekacheka" by the artist, a portmanteau that doubles the Shona word for "cut" in the style

of Harare street slang's use of repetition to emphasize a word, this method characterizes several works on view here, including *The Butcher*, *Tailor made*, and *Five star cornices*, all vibrant portraits of individual laborers (butcher, tailor, home decorator) at work. Though color has always been integral to Nyandoro's compositions, *Legal hustle I* and *II*, two monochromatic profile portraits of hatted men, are composed of only jagged lines and black ink. Hustle is a strategy for negotiating ever-present immiseration in Nyandoro's Zimbabwe, and receives its monument with *Legal hustlers*, a companion piece to his portraits that is composed of five differently colored cotton work shirts, each individually framed.

— Sean O'Toole