

# Of luck and Lost Hills at BMoA

Vintage gambling items, stylized photos unveiled

BY CAMILLE GAVIN  
Contributing writer

California's broad diversity — economically, culturally and artistically — is the focus of the new Summer Exhibitions at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

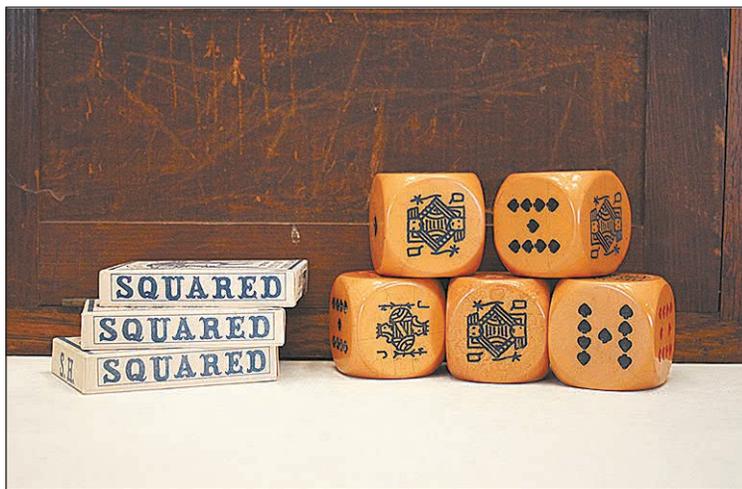
The show, which opens this evening with a reception, ranges from George Giumarra's fascinating collection of historic gambling devices to the stunning panoramic landscapes of David Ligare.

And that's not all. It also features printmaker Beth Van Hoesen's delightful drawings, lithographs and etchings of animals and "Kern at a Distance," a display that includes the work of three different artists: Sam Comen, Mary Austin-Klein and Suong Yanchareon.

In a recent phone conversation, Giumarra talked about how he became interested in collecting 19th century roulette wheels, craps tables, slot machines and other gaming devices.

"I've always had an interest in old things; starting in the 1960s I liked taking Sunday drives out in the country, going to antique shows and auctions," he said. "The first slot machine I bought came with a Time-Life book on gambling — that sparked my interest."

More than 80 pieces of his collection will be displayed in the museum's main gallery, the Cunningham. The items range in size from very large to extremely



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VIKKI CRUZ

George Giumarra collects vintage gambling devices, like the items above, which will be on display at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

## Summer Exhibitions

**Opening reception:** 6 to 8 p.m. today

**Where:** Bakersfield Museum of Art, 1930 R St.

**Admission:** \$10; free for members

**Information:** 323-7219

small, such as a pair of so-called shaved dice.

"Every game has odds; some games return only 3 or 4 percent," he explained. "The only way to increase the percentage is to cheat."

One of the methods is to shave the corners of the dice so that they flop a certain way, ensuring that a particular number will be on top. First though, the gambler must find a way to substitute the shaved dice for the pair used by

the house.

"I started collecting in the early '70s and it's still lingering today," said Giumarra, who was looking forward to attending an auction in Grass Valley. "I've gotten to know the collectors, the dealers and we've gotten to be a family — it's a real community."

Photographer Sam Comen is one of the three artists whose work is being shown in the "Kern From a Distance" exhibit in the Chevron Gallery.

Based in Los Angeles, where he was born, Comen first became aware of the Lost Hills community northwest of Bakersfield about nine years ago. Neither he nor members of his family ever lived here, so initially his perspective was that of an outsider looking in.

"I became interested in the area because of its history: with Dust Bowl refugees looking for field work here during the



Part of the "Kern from a Distance" exhibition, this photograph was taken by Los Angeles photographer Sam Comen in Lost Hills.

Depression," the photographer said in an email interview.

Comen's knowledge was enhanced by viewing the work done by photographers like Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, who documented the plight of migrants in the 1930s. At about the same time, he saw a connection between the earlier Midwest migrants and that of today's migrants from Mexico and Central America.

"When President Obama used the words 'great recession' in 2009," he said, "I knew that Kern County was where I wanted to make new photographs to engage with the echoes of history."

His work, which resulted in a series titled "Lost Hills" — soon to be published in book form — spanned a period of nearly five years, ending in December 2013.

Although he recognized that today's field workers have much

in common with Dust Bowl migrants in terms of work ethic, he also saw that there was a striking difference.

"In Lost Hills, I've come to believe that the Mexican-American and Mexican people I've met embody the bootstrapping grit and the cooperative frontier spirit of the West," he said. "But because some Lost Hills residents are undocumented immigrants, all are assumed to be, and so may be cut out of their own American dream, and denied their place in the historical record."

Comen sees his series as a documentary that presents his subjects' place in American history and portrays "them as everyday icons worthy of viewers' reverence."

Ligare's paintings are in the Ablin Gallery; Van Hoesen's pieces are in the Dezember Gallery.

# They grill and you grub at contest

Teams competing under strict barbecue rules

BY STEFANI DIAS  
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Bakersfield's Biggest Baddest BBQ aims to live up to its name this year, with the number of local competitors and a larger crowd expected to head out to the Kern County Fairgrounds this weekend.

"We had about 5,000 attendees last year and we expect many more this year," said Angie Trigueiro who, with husband Curtis, is organizing the event. "We expect 7,500. We've had a lot of people calling us and a lot of interest from the local community."

Trigueiro said that buzz has grown for the Kansas City Barbecue Society-sanctioned event,

**"Most of us are big fat showoffs. We like to talk smack to each other ..."**

— Orrie Griswold, barbecue competitor

with 25 local teams set to compete, including her husband's team, Ridge Route Boys (which will compete without him this year). Although the overall number of competitors dropped slightly to about 55, the local showing reflects the sixth annual event's draw.

"This is a very popular event on the CBBQA (California Barbecue Association). This is a really popular competition."

Trigueiro said the contest draws many returning KCBS champions, including Left Coast Q (2013 California state winners)

and Big Poppa Smokers (2012 Kansas City Royal). Teams are judged by KCBS standards, but hungry attendees need not be as discerning.

In a change this year, \$2 tastings must be purchased in addition to the \$10 admission, which previously included two samples. Tickets (\$1 each) can be used at team booths and to purchase beverages and some additional food.

Among the more than two dozen local teams vying for a prize along with bragging rights is Bakersfield Smoke, headed by Orrie Griswold. Griswold has pursued his passion for barbecue and the culinary arts for more than 30 years, cooking for the 13 children he and his wife (and teammate) Janise brought into their marriage.

"When you have a big family, you learn to cook. Barbecue is



PHOTO COURTESY OF ORRIE GRISWOLD

Orrie Griswold cuts the ribs to submit to judges at the 2013 Bakersfield's Biggest Baddest BBQ. Griswold and his team, Bakersfield Smoke, will compete again this year.

just part of it," he said Monday during a backyard call as he watched over more than 60 pounds of meat for an event for

employer Dunn-Edwards Paints.

Competing statewide for three years, Bakersfield Smoke consists

Please see **BADDEST / PAGE 30**