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Female-owned gallery Gypsy Cadillac to open in Nashville next month




Image: Gypsy Cadillac

Gypsy Cadillac owners Sandra Wallbank and Valarie Allyn Bienas.

GYPSY CADILLAC



By **Julia Masters** – Reporter, Nashville Business Journal
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Valarie Allyn Bienas had never shot a full moon before.

Sure, she's captured a few from stage when she worked as a music industry photographer for celebrities like Sugarland and Kenny Chesney. But that was much different than capturing the one hanging above the Mojave Desert this past winter.

Rather than bogging herself down by comparing her techniques and skills to others, she ran through the brush – her bare ankles getting poked along the way – to catch the moon, and snapped the photo without a tripod.



A piece from Gypsy Cadillac's "Mojave Road" show.

GYPSY CADILLAC

“I was like ‘I’m just going to do it,’ and I did it. I could critique that [the shot]. You can shoot something and you can turn around and rip it apart or you could just go, ‘That was a really great moment.’ It doesn’t need to be perfect, and you don’t need to compare yourself,” Bienas told the Business Journal.

The photograph is now hanging on the white, but warm, walls of Gypsy Cadillac, Nashville's newest art gallery and studio opening September 20.



Image: Gypsy Cadillac

Another piece featured in Gypsy Cadillac's "Mojave Road" show.

GYPSY CADILLAC

Bienas and friend and business partner Sandra Wallbank – also a photographer for artists like Charlie Puth, OneRepublic and Maddie & Tae – had the idea for a while and have spent the last several months transforming their Germantown space at 1216 Fourth Ave. Loft 110, drawing on the same attitude Bienas used to capture the full moon.

“Trust today, you can do it,” Wallbank said. “Going into it, we knew this was a new adventure for us. There’s a lot we don’t know, there’s going to be some mistakes and learning lessons.”

The first show at Gypsy Cadillac is called “Mojave Road” featuring photographs and film from Bienas and Wallbank’s trip to Joshua Tree, Death Valley and Las Vegas, along with vintage clothing collected along the way, reimaged by Franklin-based Textile Revival and other goods made by local artisans.



The show also features vintage clothing reimaged by Franklin-based Textile Revival.

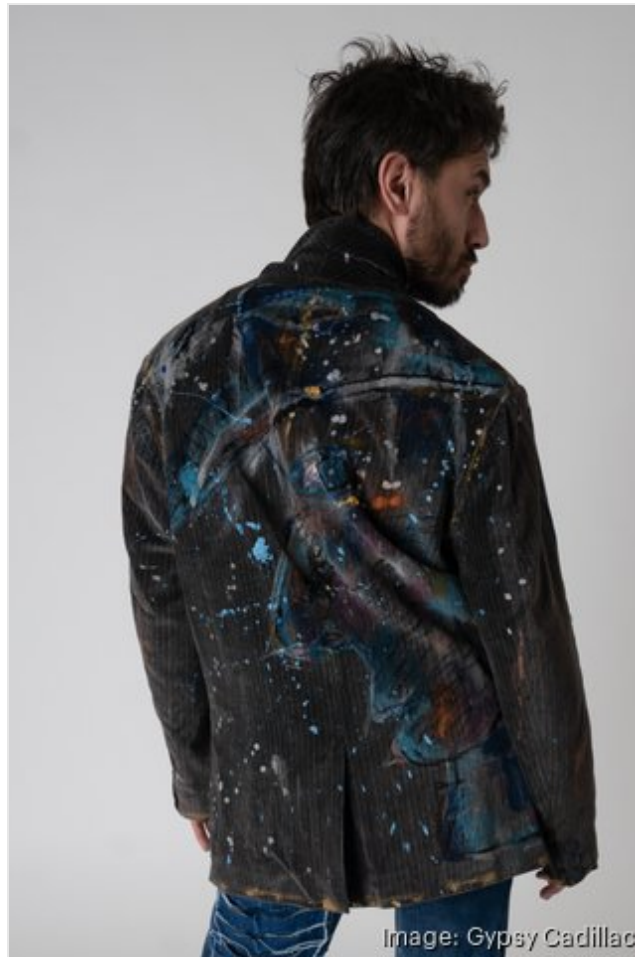
GYPSY CADILLAC

The intangibles, however, are what Bienas and Wallbank really hope guests walk away with.

For Bienas, the trip was really a healing journey and rediscovery of her craft – that she'd stepped away from after she lost her son to an accidental overdose. When people come and see the show, the photographers hope they walk away with feelings of peace and possibility.

“That’s actually what this trip did for me. It realigned me with that, ‘I can, I will and I trust.’ I trust my own voice now,” Bienas said.

Gypsy Cadillac aims to become a third space kind of like independent bookstores were when Bienas and Wallbank were growing up. They hope people stop in before or after a dinner at neighbor Henrietta Red, when they need a little inspiration or to stay updated on what’s new – they plan to keep their exhibits fresh and varied across mediums.



The clothing was picked up during the owners' Mojave Desert trip.

GYPSY CADILLAC

After opening, Gypsy Cadillac plans to have monthly events whether its showcasing independent films or hosting a wine night.

They also plan to put art-based philanthropic work at the forefront.

“I believe when you’re gifted with something like that, it’s your responsibility to lift others up and give them a shot and extend our resources,” Wallbank said.

Gypsy Cadillac is opening at a time when Nashville’s visual art’s scene is “finally happening,” and Bienes and Wallbank are excited to add to and collaborate with it.

While living in New York, Bienes loved to be able to spend weekend afternoons gallery hopping, and now you can do that in Nashville.

“That speaks to something also that I think is really important to us. There’s the music entity which obviously, we’re grateful for, it’s really built into this community, but

there's all this other stuff around that we are trying to tap into," Bienen said. "[We want to] learn about what people are doing beyond the music community and grow it and connect it...give other people a platform."

Gypsy Cadillac – the name stemming from Bienen and Wallbank's previous lifestyle as photographers and the former's son driving a 1966 Cadillac – will be open Wednesdays to Saturdays, reserving the other days for special events.

Bienen and Wallbank plan to spend the first year getting entrenched in the community and learning what resonates with guests.

"To put yourself in a position of change and challenge at the same time is awesome. It's invigorating and awesome and it's scary, this is a financial risk, but if you don't, then who will for you?" Bienen said. "To tap into what you're really wanting as a human and knowing when to take the chance, timing is pretty much everything, but then being brave enough in that moment when it catches you and you feel it, that's amazing."