

RETAIL

Right at Home

A couple uncorks Artifactory in Corktown

GAIL AND JOHN KWIATKOWSKI NEVER PLANNED to take it easy in retirement. The couple, longtime metro Detroiters with a passion for collecting industrial and Art Deco items, decided not only to buy and refurbish a rundown building in Corktown, but to set up shop themselves.

Artifactory, a 2,000-square-foot store that, as of press time, was scheduled to open in September, is located at 2135 Michigan Ave. It showcases an ever-rotating variety of repurposed industrial items, new industrial furniture, furnishings, gifts, and jewelry. Much of the inventory is made by Michigan artisans, including many one-of-a-kind pieces.



"You'll see different inventory every time you come in," Gail says. The pieces range in price, depending on whether they're vintage or repurposed. "None of it's crazy," she adds. After buying the building in 2011, Gail says the couple didn't have a set plan and even contemplated renting it out before realizing it was perfect for them. "We thought it would be fun to continue to purchase and repurpose authentic industrial items," she says. "It just kind of happened organically."

That's not to say they got into this lightly. Gail, who owned a mortgage company for many years, mapped out a detailed business plan and now runs the store and online shop. John, who does much of the refurbishing and repurposing, spent 40 years running his own business in advertising.



WHAT'S OLD IS NEW: Gail Kwiatkowski, far left, and her husband, John, welcome shoppers to their Artifactory, above, a 2,000-square-foot store in Corktown.

They had another inspiration for opening one of the few new retail stores in Corktown in decades: Their three sons.

The couple is partners with sons David and John in Honest John's Bar and Grille; son David also owns the Sugar House in Corktown and is a partner in Wright & Co. and Café 78, in the MOCAD. He'll be opening two new restaurants in the city, as well. Son James, an artist who teaches at the College for Creative Studies, is part of the team at Artifactory, where he uses his skills as a master welder and woodworker to repurpose industrial items.

"It's just a blast. It's so much fun; we meet (new) people all the time," Gail says. detroitartifactory.com — *Ellen Piligian*