

A canvas for their dreams

Papazians open DZian Gallery on Water Street

BY JUAN PABLO LOPERA

David S. Papazian acquired his first watercolor landscape in the early 1980s. A decade later, he met his wife, Gina.

For the past 14 years, they have spent their weekends touring galleries, museums, artisan shops and trade shows, all while dreaming of opening their own art venue.

For Papazian, the desire to open a gallery can be traced to the effect his late mother had on his life. She dabbled in art, painting fashion sketches and making jewelry, but she abandoned the calling to work at her parents' fruit stand on West

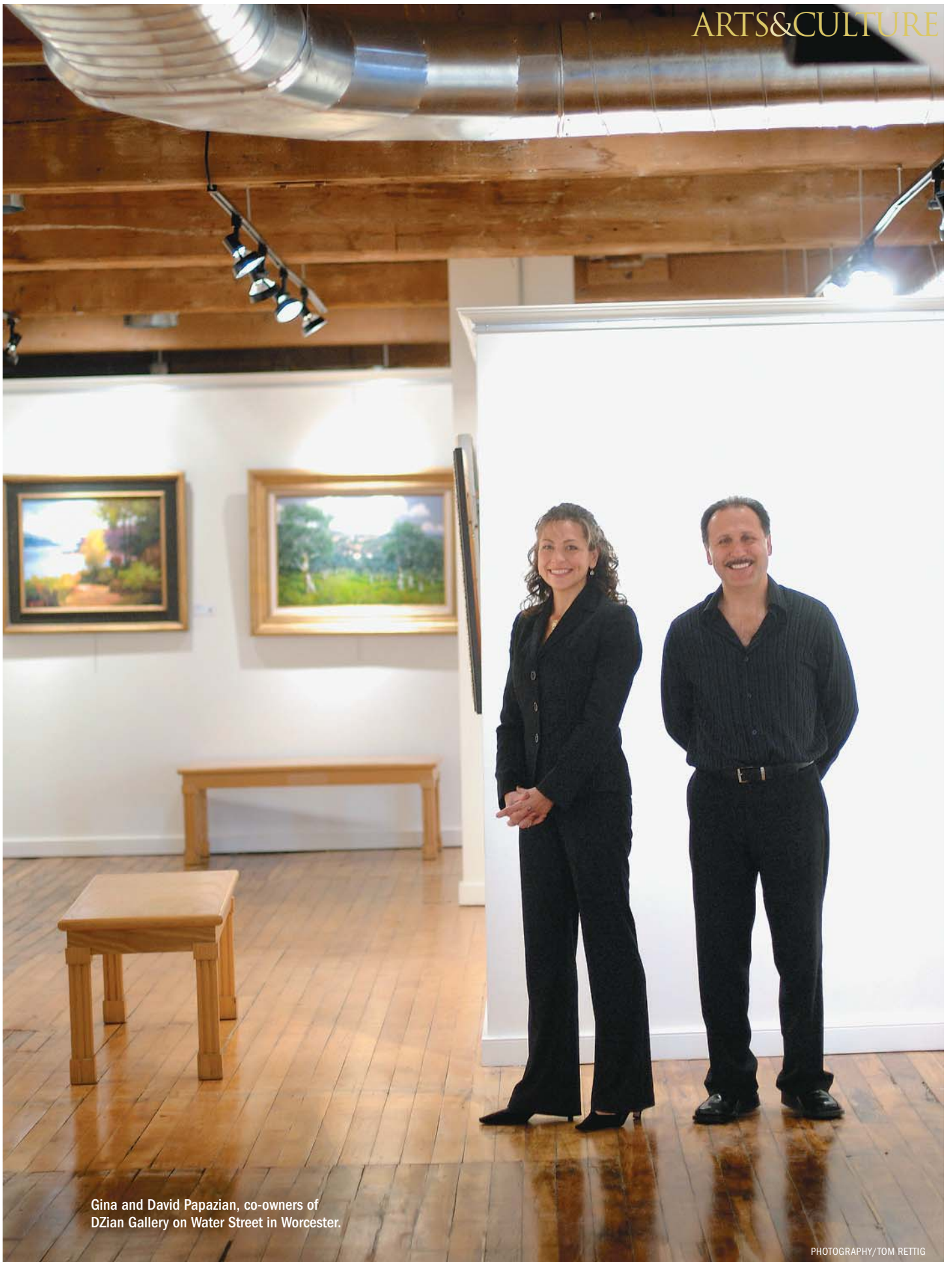
Boylston Street in Worcester during the Great Depression.

Now dreams have been realized at the 3,500-square-foot DZian Gallery at the Brickyard Place Building on Water Street.

The Papazians have ingeniously taken the raw space in the brick building and turned it into a canvas of their own, covering the walls with eclectic paintings and meticulously placing display cases showcasing modern jewelry, accessories, pottery and other one-of-a-kind items.



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Gina and David Papazian, co-owners of DZian Gallery on Water Street in Worcester.

PHOTOGRAPHY/TOM RETTIG

"We've been collecting seriously for ourselves as a couple for six years," Mrs. Papazian said. "We have to both like the pieces, because we have to live with them, and it has to be a peaceful piece. I am the romantic end of the operation. I like paintings of couples and living figures. He loves landscapes."

When it comes to jewelry and accessories, the Papazians look for high-quality pieces, most of them handmade. They treat this end of the business with as much respect as the paintings. To them, every purchase is a piece of art.

However, it's not just the gallery's content that gives it appeal. The space has proven perfect for fundraisers, fashion shows, wine tastings and monthly jazz nights, among other activities. A walk down a brief flight of stairs puts patrons on trendy Water Street where restaurants, clubs, bakeries and bars add to the gallery's draw. Clients have the opportunity to shop and precede or follow the visit with a cocktail or meal at a nearby establishment.

Looking at the gallery, it's difficult to imagine it took a chance encounter with a Boston-based artist whom the Papazians admired to jumpstart their labor of love.

"We were driving to a New Year's Eve party in Boston in 2005, and we were talking about the idea of opening a gallery. When we got to the party, we didn't know many of the people there, so we sat with a group and started a conversation about art," said Mrs. Papazian. "There was another group sitting near us talking about art as well, and I kicked Dave under the table and pointed out that there was an artist sitting there."

Her husband continues the story: "So I walked over and told the gentleman that I was opening a gallery, and I offered him a show. He looked at me and told me that he'd show at my gallery once it was open. So I opened a gallery!"

The following month, he scouted the location, and by February, work had begun at the Water Street space.

Against the odds, the Papazians opened the gallery in early May with an inventory of about 250 paintings from local, national and international artists and a number of scheduled events.

Both husband and wife have full-time occupations aside from the gallery. She is a



Artist Varoujan paints a new creation on the spot during a reception at the gallery.

kindergarten teacher in the Worcester school system; he has owned Bay State Hardware since the mid-1980s. The hardware store sits at the same location as Papazian's grandparents' fruit stand.

The Papazians get much enjoyment from the idea of contributing to the community that saw them grow up. They hope to reach out to local artists and organizations as they settle into their new role as art ambassadors.

"We are becoming more attached to the Worcester arts community. We've purchased art from various national and international accredited artists in order to have inventory, but as time goes on, we intend to incorporate more local artists and give them a place to showcase and sell their

work. There is a lot of good art in Worcester, but there aren't enough places for it to be shown and sold, which is an important part of the art industry."

So far, DZian Gallery has been well received by the arts community and the neighborhood. For the Papazians, the excitement of living their dream continues to sink in.

"I didn't realize the enormity of what was in front of me, because I just went ahead and did it. I didn't look back. It didn't seem like to an impossible task. I didn't know why it hadn't been already done. Once we opened, people kept repeating the same words upon leaving: 'Thank you for doing this!' It just made me want to cry," Papazian said. **W**



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The DZian Gallery space has proven perfect for artists' receptions, fundraisers, fashion shows, wine tastings and monthly jazz nights, among other activities. Attending a reception for the artist Varoujan are, clockwise from right, Joseph Dankwah; Lana Alekperova and Kimberly Wright; Bryan Davagian and Scott Erb.