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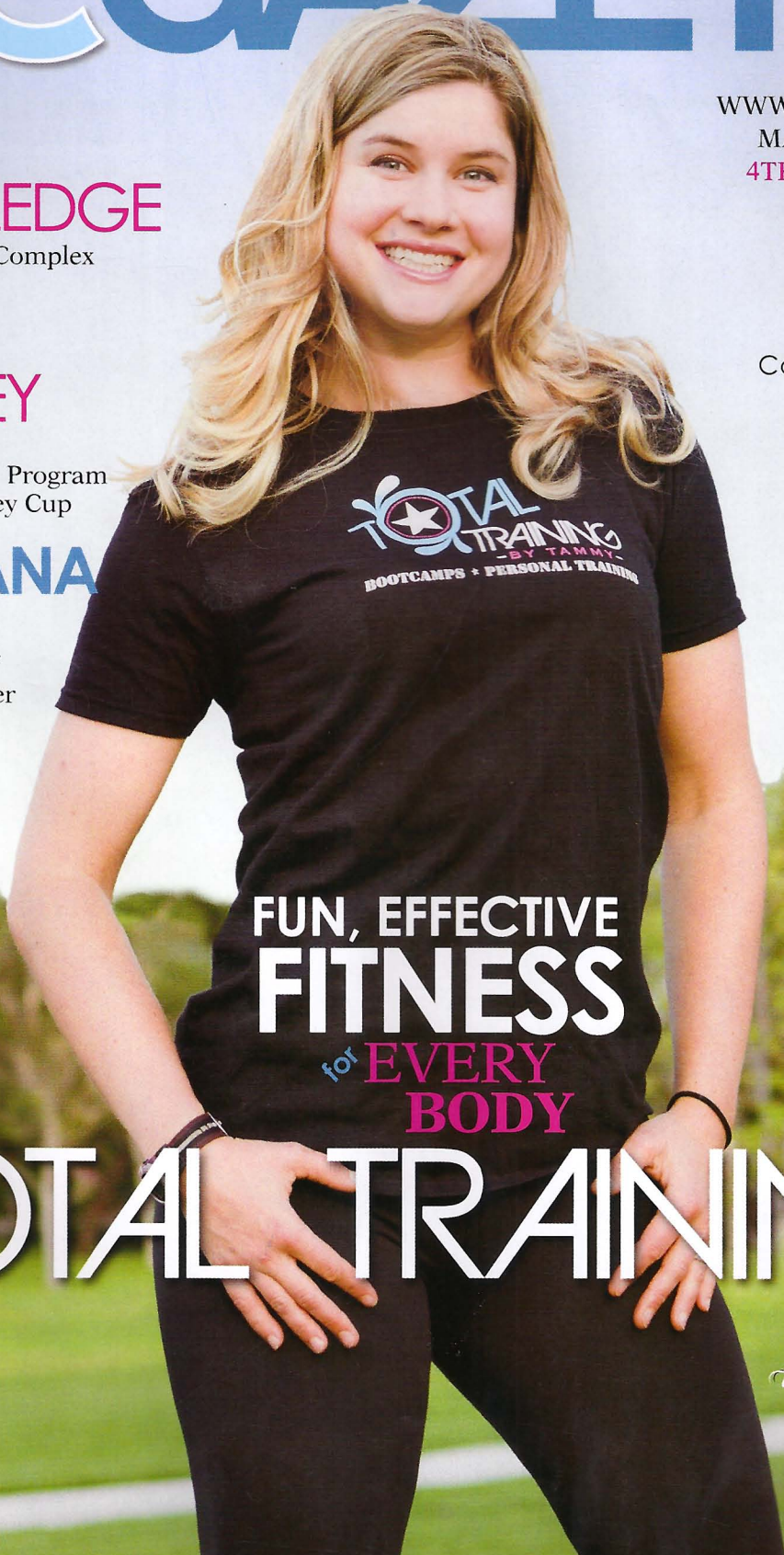
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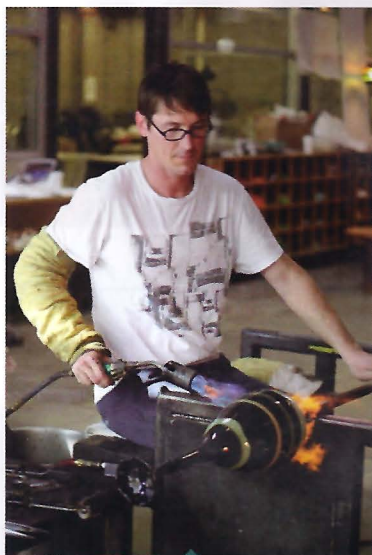
Glass

THE ART OF

BLOWING



Words by Jordan Carver



Caleb Siemon hard at work in their Santa Ana studio. Photo by Blythe Hill.



The other half of the dynamic duo: Carmen Salazar. Photo by Blythe Hill.

As I stepped through the door of Caleb Siemon's glass blowing studio, the first thing I noticed was the intense colors he was using on the vessel he was working on. Siemon's studio in Santa Ana literally burns with the heat of artistic passion. Both Caleb Siemon and his wife, Carmen Salazar, are leading the artisan charge into more colorful, creative, and even more modernistic horizons, but their vision began quite awhile back.

After high school, both Siemon and Salazar found themselves at the Rhode Island School of Design. However, after they graduated Siemon and Salazar both took very different paths. Carmen started her artisan journey in San Francisco, working in a myriad of different trades including metalwork, architecture, botany, and sculpting. While Salazar honed her skills in San Francisco, Siemon ventured off to Murano, Italy in hopes of working under the famous glassblower, Pino Signoretto. For the first month, the master glassblower ignored Siemon; but Siemon was determined, and finally found himself with a two-year apprenticeship.

After Siemon left Italy, he knew he wanted to return to the beautiful California beaches and open a shop. Orange County was where his roots were, and he was eager to return. It was 1999 when Siemon and Salazar reunited to open United Glassblowing. Back then, they were renting a cramped studio in Costa Mesa. The couple lived inside a small metal mobile home outside the shop. When Siemon's father offered to rent them a building next to his own in Santa Ana, United Glassblowing finally found

a home; the metal mobile home sits outside the new studio as a sort of monument to their beginning.

"Caleb's passion in glass blowing started with thick, clear glass vessels" says Salazar. It was only when the actor, David Schwimmer, custom ordered a piece containing ten different colors in it that Siemon began his transition into the vibrant colored ribbons that now encapsulate his work. "It's amazing how many combinations and types you can make when you are using ten colors...at certain

points you realize, 'no, the blue should actually be on top of the yellow, and then you start all over again,'" says Salazar. "What's really interesting is that each of these pieces is exactly like [following] a recipe; if the ingredients aren't put in correctly, you aren't going to have a great piece," says Siemon.

When I asked the couple about their team of glassblowers, Siemon joked saying, "I like to think we were all cursed with a love for glass...most glassblowers aren't born artists, they're born pyromaniacs. In the end it

leads to long hours, lots of patience, and a good amount of physical therapy. And of course you get the ladies [looking at his wife], but it's at a high price."

So, what's next for this creative glassblowing power couple? Siemon and Salazar plan to expand more into lighting. Coming from an architecture background, Salazar has a vision for the mixture of Siemon's art with a more modern utilization. Whether it's vessels or lights, Siemon and Salazar are a tag team of creative geniuses. It is easy to see that each of the vibrant masterpieces they create carries with it the long artisan tradition that they have committed their lives to.

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- Caleb Siemon

ARTIST HI-5

(1) Favorite OC restaurant:

Caleb: Vietnam Pearl
Carmen: La Sirena Grille

(2) Favorite Band Right Now:

Caleb: Girl Talk Radio
Carmen: Scissor Sisters

(3) Most Amazing Person You Have Ever Sold To:

Both: Michelle Obama actually commissioned a set of vessels to be given to foreign dignitaries...and she gave us each a hug.

(4) Favorite thing to read?

Carmen: *India Cookbook* from Phaidon Press.
Caleb: Any cycling magazine.

(5) Favorite thing about Orange County?

Both: Probably, the 'ocean. Although the hills are pretty amazing right now. We went to the mountains last weekend and ended the day at the beach. That sort of thing just never gets old.

Contact Caleb & Carmen:

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