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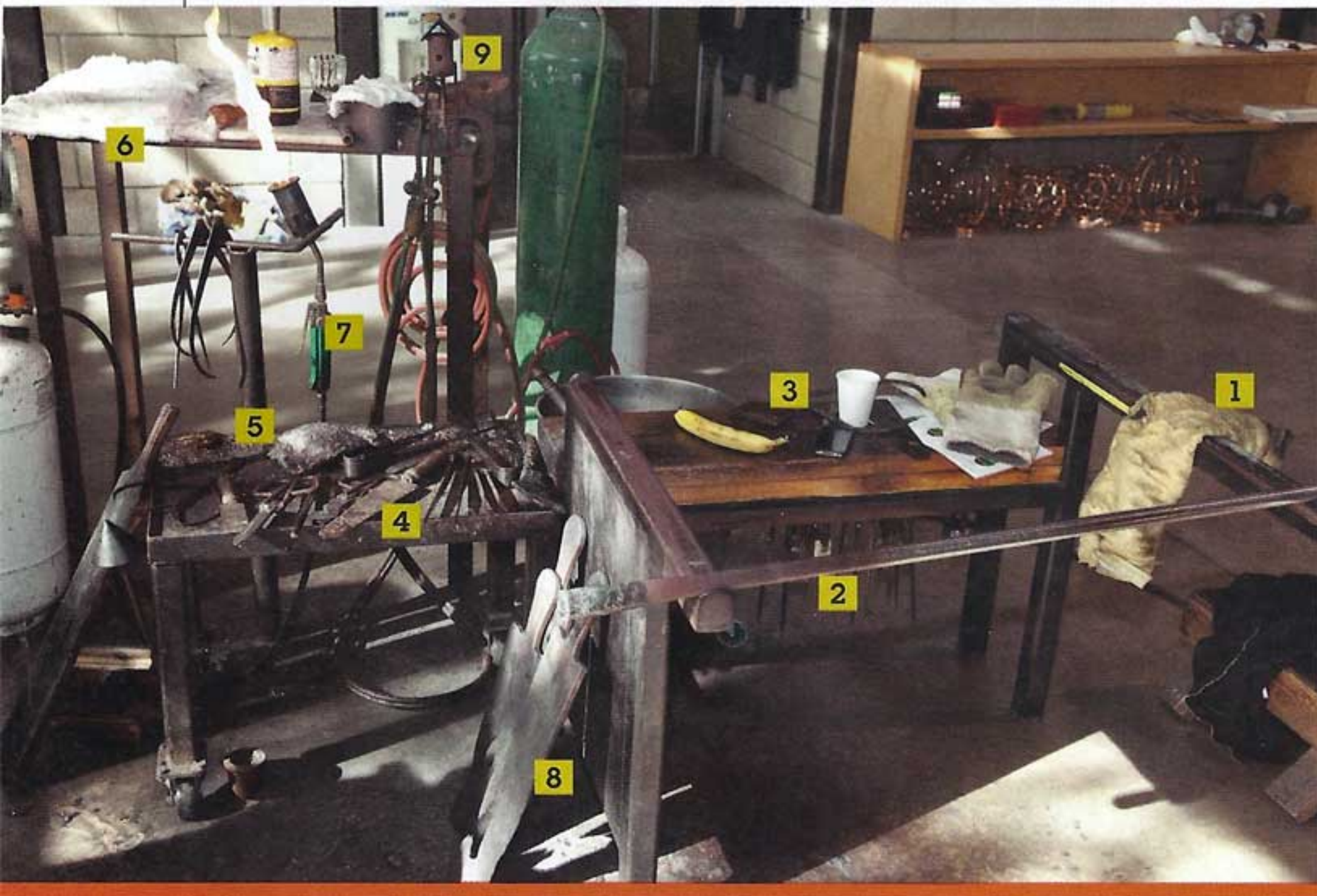
CALEB SIEMON

GLASS BLOWER AND
OWNER OF UNITED GLASS
BLOWING IN SANTA ANA



Caleb Siemon at work in
his glassblowing studio

NICK KOON/THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



Caleb Siemon studied glassblowing in Italy, then returned to Orange County and opened United Glass Blowing with his artist wife, Carmen Salazar. Since 1999, Siemon has been creating glass works of art, from small honey pots used as official White House gifts to intricate vases and bowls that are sold at museum gift shops and galleries. His desk is a handmade workbench, which he copied from his master teacher in Murano.

1. DON'T DROP IT LIKE IT'S HOT. When Siemon pulls glass from the furnace and begins the alchemy of turning a glowing blob into something beautiful, he's working with 2,000-degree hot material with this Kevlar sleeve protecting his arm. "You've got about three seconds before it burns you," he says. "The piece radiates heat into your arm." He has gloves, too, but he wears them less often because they are bulky and interfere with his work.

2. BLOWING HIS PIPE. After the furnace, blowpipes are probably the most critical tool that Siemon uses. "This is the only way you get the glass out of the furnace," he says. Blowpipes vary in thickness, from one-inch pipes to smaller pipes used for blowing goblets or thin vases.

3. FUEL UP. The glass furnaces may be fueled by gas, but the glassblowers are fueled by Zinc Cafe & Market coffee and potassium-rich bananas. Siemon and Salazar stop at Zinc every day on the way to the studio from their Laguna Beach home. Blowing glass is tiring, Siemon says, and projects can take up to two hours. "You can never stop," he says.

4. LIKE SURGICAL TOOLS BUT WITH FUNNIER NAMES. Siemon's desk/workbench is filled with tools of the trade, like "bonkers" that help him "bonk" a finished piece off the pipe; calipers to make sure that pieces are uniform; and Sophiettas that let him move a piece from a blowpipe to a "punty" rod to continue to inflate and shape it. All the tools, he says, are made in Italy.

5. WAX PATTY. This melted waxy mess began as a compact wax patty that Siemon uses to keep his tools lubricated. The residual heat soon causes the patty to melt all over the bench like a drippy candle.

6. NEWSPAPER RECYCLING. A wet, folded old newspaper acts as a mitt and lets Siemon take a cooling piece in his hand. *The Wall Street Journal* is the best, Salazar says. "More stories, more ink," she says.

7. EXTRA HEAT. The propane-fueled torch lets Siemon zero in on a small area that needs a blast of heat during shaping, like if something needs to be smoothed or stretched out.

8. TWO TOOLS IN ONE. Cherry wood paddles serve a few purposes. Siemon will use them to flatten the bottom of a piece, or he'll ask an assistant to use one as a shield between a fresh, super hot piece and his arms.

9. BIRDHOUSE OVER YOUR PILOT LIGHT. This metal birdhouse is simply a decorative cover for the torches' pilot lights. "We built it," Salazar says. "It's cooler to have a birdhouse than not to have a birdhouse."

- AMY SENK

BE BLOWN AWAY

■ **UNITED GLASS BLOWING** :: The studio is located at 3501 W. Segerstrom Ave., Santa Ana. For a list of retailers, visit the website.

888.578.9504 :: unitedglassblowing.com