

Glassblowers of Sanibel Island



Seeing business through Rose-Colored Glass

Jason Thiemann creates drama and beauty at Glassblowers of Sanibel Island—and so can you. Learn to create your own glass art by appointment or in a workshop.

by Jennifer Workman Lessinger

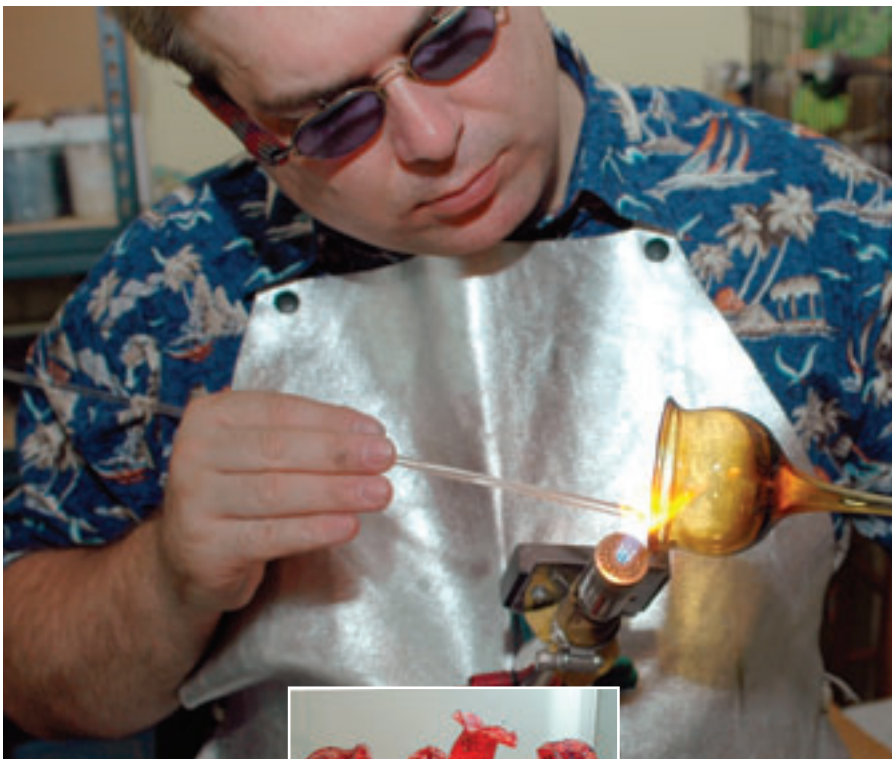
Jason Thiemann is a second-generation glassblower. He learned the basics of his craft from his parents—both are career glassblowers who became interested in the art in 1970 during a trip to Disneyland. While growing up, Thiemann shared his parents' interest in the craft and learned to develop his own style. Nevertheless, Jason originally considered his glassblowing to be nothing more than a hobby. All of that changed when he was offered a position as resident glassblower at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

During his five-year tenure with MGM Grand, Thiemann discovered Sanibel through his friend, a corporate attorney who owns a home on the island. "I came for a company meeting, and I kept coming back," he says. In 2004

Thiemann and his family decided they wanted to be on Sanibel full-time. They also decided that a glassblowing shop would fit right in with the island's eclectic business atmosphere. When he found available retail space in the Tahitian Gardens shopping center, Thiemann says that his wife Rachel and his stepsons, Tyler, 15, and Kevin, 13, encouraged him to open the shop.

Thiemann took their advice and he's never looked back—not even after hurricane Charley hit the area and shut down the island on the same day he signed his lease. "This is where I wanted to be," says Thiemann. He opened his doors just before the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of Commerce sponsored Luminary Night last December. Thiemann says that he has been pleased with business ever since. He credits much of his success to support from

PHOTOS BY KATHLEEN BLASE



One of the results of Thiemann's artistry is this elegant lamp made of steel and rose-colored glass.

friends: "Their referrals are phenomenal."

Thiemann has a work area set up in the front of the shop so customers and visitors can watch as he works. He is happy to give demonstrations to anyone who calls ahead for an appointment. Thiemann also offers lessons and workshops where customers can make their own hand-blown glass items. "People will be able to walk away with something they've made," he says.

The retail space in the shop features a variety of gifts and a line of fine leather goods along with Thiemann's glass work. His products include lamps, vases, drawer pulls, bottle stoppers, oil lamps, bowls, and jewelry. "The jewelry is extremely popular at the moment," says Thiemann, who mans the store everyday along with his lifelong pet parrot Ozzie (named for *the Wizard of Oz*).

While Thiemann produces the glass and helps the customers, he credits Rachel for keeping the business going. She is in charge of business operations, buying,

merchandising, and bookkeeping. "Rachel does everything but glass production," he says. "She basically took the concept and made it real." Tyler and Kevin also help in the store. Tyler is learning the art of glassblowing and often does demonstrations. Thiemann says that Kevin is a natural when it comes to working with customers. "Between the two of them, they're awesome in here," he says.

Thiemann's shop is quickly becoming a must-visit place on Sanibel, thanks to the glassblowing demonstrations and friendly atmosphere. Glassblowers of Sanibel Island is located in the Tahitian Gardens shopping center at 1997 Periwinkle Way and is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week. For demonstrations or lessons call 239-472-4001 or visit www.GlassblowersOfSanibelIsland.com. 🌴

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