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Iggy Sumnik and Alex Comminos, in sit-u.



Working with **Jun Kaneko** is a gig that will **surely fatten** their resumes.

Artists First, Friends Forever

Life is good when you love your work.

by Heather Heier Lane | photos by minorwhitestudios.com

Some people believe that artistic talent is born; others believe it is cultivated. While the nature versus nurture concept is nothing new, two of Omaha artist Jun Kaneko's apprentices prove that artistry is a gift. If given time and opportunity, it will grow regardless of location or lineage.

Iggy Sumnik is the son of attorneys who grew up in Detroit. Alexander Comminos is the son of artists who came to Omaha from Chicago where his parents still live and work. While Iggy grew up watching his parents with their yellow legal pads, Alexander was busy selling

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rocks he painted to his neighbors. One grew up surrounded by structure and law, the other surrounded by art and creativity. Yet regardless of their backgrounds, both moved to Omaha to work for a world-renowned artist. They both feel fortunate to have the opportunity to help a master bring his pieces to life, and at the same time hone their individual artistry.

Working with Jun Kaneko is a gig that will surely fatten their resumes. The surprise story here is that Iggy and Alexander ended up becoming true friends in the process. They seem more like brothers than co-workers. So it was a shock to learn that these two met at work and have only known each other for a couple of years. Their daily work is creative, exciting and intense—and by nature it can also be dangerous. Moving and installing pieces that weigh a ton, not a pound, and firing a kiln that is big enough to drive a small car into can be daunting. But these two are almost like twins, working in sync with each other and communicating so effectively that they never feel stressed or in harm's way. This kind of camaraderie is exactly why, when the opportunity arises, they like to show their work together.

This summer they were able to support each other in an environ-

ment outside the confines of their jobs when their work was shown at RNG Gallery, adjacent to Dixie Quicks at 1915 Leavenworth St. With varying styles—Iggy primarily works in clay, and Alexander is now creating more painted works—the pairing of their talents is a perfect match. While Alexander's art hangs on the walls, Iggy's art hangs from the ceiling or is displayed on the gallery floor. Iggy laughs and says that putting their work together is like a fish tank—Alexander's being the tank and Iggy's the fishes. They are talented guys who look forward to many more collaborations, and are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to introduce larger audiences to their craft. If you are interested in seeing their work up close and personal, you can get a glimpse of their wares when they both have pieces showcased at the 10th Annual Art Auction Preview Exhibition at the Bemis Center from September 19-November 22.

Omaha is lucky to be home to so much creative energy and artistic expression. As a city that is often considered conservative, it should be a source of pride that artists come from all over to live and work here. Just knowing that people like Alexander and Iggy are excited to be in Omaha is proof positive that this is one very cool place to live. 

