

TampaPublicArt



Project Title:	Great Ball of Pliers
Artist:	John Rogers (American, born 1951)
Year Completed:	2003
Materials:	powder coated galvanized steel, aluminum, safety-red pliers, diachronic glass, cables
Commissioning Agency:	City of Tampa, Public Art Program
Landscape Architect/Design Professional:	Architects Design Group, Inc.
Location:	Department of Public Works and Department of Storm Water Operations Facility, 3806 E. 26th Ave. and 40th St.



Artist Concept:

Great Ball of Pliers is a three frequency geodesic sphere constructed from 270 steel struts connected by 96 red safety pliers. At 24' high & 14' in diameter, the sculpture serves as a symbolic marker placed at the corner of East 26th Ave. and 40th Street, for the Department of Public Works (DPW) yard. My objective was for the sculpture to be humorous, fun, and mysterious while implying deeper meanings.

Starting in late 2001, and ending in 2003, this project was two years in the making and included three different design phases & reviews. The initial concept was to explore ideas using equipment that the DPW uses, such as traffic cones or street barriers, and assembling them in a sculptural way.

When for various reasons these were abandoned, the search began for an image that relates the processes of the DPW and visually acknowledges their role in the interconnection between mechanical infrastructures that create the fabric of our society.

While exploring these ideas it occurred to me that the geodesic form is a perfect symbol to represent these interconnections (by connecting three different size triangles the sphere is born). I felt that using pliers as the triangle hubs was a good way to represent the hand of man. Pliers are, after all, a universal symbol of assembly and construction.

There are other visual and metaphorical layers to the *Great Ball of Pliers*. First, due to the supporting

framework, there is the illusion of movement for the drive-by viewer—as though the sphere is rotating in its cradle. The sphere is supported by a central stanchion via cables that also help to form a network of supports for triangular pieces of cyan diachromatic glass. Arranged in a circular pattern, the glass reflects moving colors created by the passing sun and makes every view different for the passers-by. I liked the idea of the sphere surrounding, protecting and supporting a material that represents illumination.

The mission of the City of Tampa, Public Art Program is to promote the involvement of artists in projects throughout the city that enhance the physical environment and celebrate Tampa's unique character and identity.