

Public Art

By Joanne Milani



CRYSTAL COLLINS



DOUGLAS KOMFELD

*Douglas Komfeld's
"Face the Jury"*

Boston artist Douglas Komfeld could have been a theater director. He instinctively knows how to stage a scene and get audiences involved in a drama. Consider "Face the Jury," the thirteen-chair sculpture he created in 2006 for Pinellas County's public art program. It functions as an interactive stage set in

which everyone can participate just as everyone participates in the jury system. The thirteen cherry-red metal chairs are at the St. Petersburg Judicial Center at 545 First Avenue North. They are arranged so that a normal-sized defendant's chair faces and looks up to twelve jury chairs that are at least six-feet high and very diverse in shape. "Three years before I won the commission, I sat for two weeks as a juror on a trial. It was one of the most important and rewarding experiences of my life," said the Denver native. "Each juror I sat with was a distinct personality and had a unique interpretation of the evidence presented during the trial. When I designed the chairs, I tried to make each one a portrait of a member of the jury I sat with," said Komfeld, who remembers that the jury split seven to five on the verdict. The grouping of the Pinellas County chairs reflects that seven-to-five division. Komfeld also securely locked each chair in place with a concrete base and placed each chair on its own grassy mound that rises up as much as three feet above ground level. In spite of their heights, the chairs are magnets for energetic children and adults. "Even before we finished installing the piece, people were stopping by and wanting to climb all over them," said Komfeld, who wants folks to climb on the chairs. "It seemed that everyone who had a camera wanted to have their picture taken in one of the chairs."

The menu of public art in Tampa Bay stimulates our taste for culture. This summer, chow down on a few of these creative morsels. ■■■