

*Pima Freeway Barrier, Scottsdale, AZ,  
Carolyn Braaksma, artist.*

## Drive-By Galleries: Concrete Walls as Art

A wall can be more than just vertical concrete

BY DANA SCOTT

**A**lthough sound and retaining walls are popping up every day across the U.S., there is no reason for these barriers to look “everyday.” More often than not, plain concrete and typical textures are being replaced by extraordinary creations. The result: more attractive walls for highways, neighborhoods, beaches, and parks.

Turning a plain concrete wall into a work of art usually involves a number of players. Depending on the type of project, the collaborative team may include all of the following participants: architects, engineers, government agencies (such as the Department of Transportation, council members, and public arts organizations), artists, general and concrete contractors, mold makers, and neighborhood communities.

The process typically begins with a determination that an aesthetically interesting barrier is needed. Then concept drawings are made by the design team and presented for approval. Once the design is accepted by the surrounding neighborhood and building team, the drawings evolve into sculptured creations. The sculptor can create the original work using a variety of mediums, such as clay, urethane, and wax. When the masterwork is finished, a cast is made using a synthetic liquid rubber, and from this cast, elastomeric urethane form liners are produced in the reverse image of the original.

Form liners that are used to create custom finishes in concrete are usually made of elastomeric urethane. This pliable, man-made material is strong and highly reusable. The form liners are attached to forms and concrete is placed against the liner. The liner pattern is transferred into the wet concrete. After the concrete has cured, the liner is stripped and the unique sculpture is exposed for all to see.

Form liner manufacturer, Scott System, Inc., continually strives to advance the artistic and aesthetical aspects of concrete technology. Launched in 1969 by company owner Buck Scott, Scott System employs creative graphics in enhancing concrete walls. “About 20 years

ago, we designed fairly simple images for concrete... cut-out shapes and silhouettes resting on a background texture,” Buck Scott says. “Today, we are fortunate to work with wonderfully creative artists and sculptors who are able to produce any design imaginable in concrete walls and on a grand scale, too.”

While having the ability to produce many original designs in the shop, the company also benefits by incorporating the work of artists across the United States. “A number of artists have become specialists in concrete wall ornamentation,” explains Scott. “Also, these artists have teamed up with community groups, architects, and transportation departments to create amazing applications.”

“Virtually any design can be produced in a form liner and then replicated in concrete. We’re limited only by our imagination, so the creative possibilities are truly infinite,” concludes Scott.

Examples of concrete walls are shown on the next two pages.

Selected for reader interest by the editors.

—Scott System, Inc.  
**CIRCLE 57**

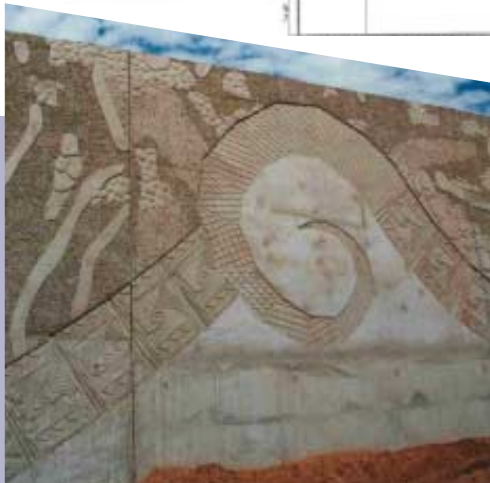
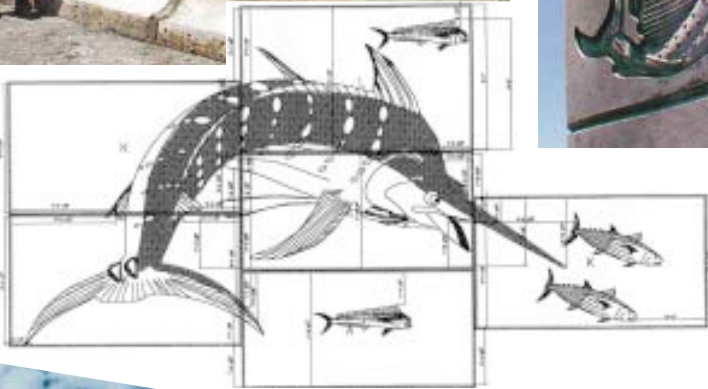


**Dana Scott** is Marketing Director for Scott System, Inc., and has grown up in the form liner and architectural concrete business that her father, Buck Scott, began in 1969. Buck Scott pioneered the development of elastomeric urethane form liners and holds more than 20 patents related to architectural concrete construction.

# Special Products & Practice Spotlight



The X-Town Interchange in Corpus Christi, TX, will display 2500 ft<sup>2</sup> (230 m<sup>2</sup>) of indigenous fish along a 2 mi (3 km) stretch of highway when completed. The project began with CAD drawings designed by Stephen Walker of the Texas DOT. Carol Jeanotilla of Big 3-D (Aurora, CO) provided action and depth by sculpting the fish in bas-relief. A form liner created from the sculpture was then attached to the highway formwork. The pair of flying marlin (8 ft wide x 16 ft tall [2 x 5 m]) is cast into a bridge pier. Construction by Rosiek and MSE (mechanically stabilized earth) walls by Reinforced Earth



In Scottsdale, AZ, an 8 mi (13 km) work of art featuring a variety of cacti, lizards, and multiple textures in mauve, sage, and tan enhances the Pima Freeway. The "Maricopa" (swirl) pattern shows some of the intricate textures prior to the color application. Denver artist Carolyn Braaksma created the images for the Pima Freeway



## Special Products & Practice Spotlight



An erosion control barrier in Virginia Beach, VA, displays breaking waves along with turtles, dolphins, and bluefish produced in relief in the cast-in-place walls. Clay molds were produced in Scott System's shop and form liners were created from the original molds. The liners were attached to forms at the project site and the artistic walls now line the beach. Artwork by Janet Austin-Henderson of Lake Forest, IL, and construction by S. B. Ballard of Virginia Beach



The Transportation Expansion Project "T-REX" in Denver, CO, is a 19 mi (30.5 highway expansion and light-rail construction project on Interstate Highways 25 and 225. T-REX's concrete walls include design elements related to Colorado, like buffalo, soaring swallows, and aerial views of the state's geography depicting farmland and city streets. The project team includes artist Carolyn Braaksma, Surface Strategy LLC, Big 3-D Productions, Steven Wilensky, Carter & Burgess, Urban Design Lead, Scott System, Inc., and Southeast Corridor Constructors. The \$1.67 billion project will take 5 years to complete