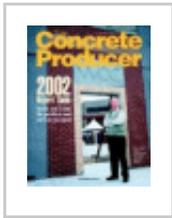




## Function and beauty: an artist casts her vision using integrally colored precast concrete. (Western Gateway Project/Susan Ferrari Rowley design)



**The Concrete Producer**

January 1, 2004 | Gale, Sarah Fister

Driving down the highway, most commuters put little thought into their daily trek. Who would, with looming sound barriers that are tall, bland, and unappealing? Engineers, as well as the public, believe concrete needs to be boring.

Thanks to an innovative producer's ability to recast a designer's approach to concrete, this is about to change in New York. On a long stretch of Interstate 490, design engineers from the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) have commissioned building a noise barrier structure that will be both visually stimulating and maintenance free.

The Western Gateway Project, a 5900-foot-long sound wall in Rochester, N.Y, will feature cinnamon brown-tinted concrete. And to further enhance the integrally colored concrete, seven of the 491 panels, which range from 11 to 13 feet across, will be elaborately decorated with three-dimensional artistic renderings of Rochester's waterways. Made from a variety of materials, the art will catch the light as the drivers pass by.

This artistic application of precast concrete is new for functional concrete structures. Producers can now use innovative mix design and process technology to create economical concrete structures--including sound walls--that are beautiful.

Pigment vs. stain

For Todd Clarke, executive vice president of Lakelands Concrete Products, a Lima,

N.Y., producer of precast and pre-stressed concrete elements, the Western Gateway Project is a victory. Lakelands and NYSDOT, working together, found that by considering integrally colored precast concrete, they could save both time and costs. Lakelands was the successful bidder for the panels and posts and Sealand Contractors Corp., Rush, N.Y., is the contractor for the project.

The NYSDOT designers originally specified gray concrete panels and posts for the sound wall that would later be stained brown in the field. Engineers quickly saw the problems such a project would create, says Clarke. The design engineers thought, for quality and consistency, the concrete panels wouldn't be stained until they were erected along the highway. This would involve scaffolding and traffic ...

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