

## **New Bridges in a Canadian World Heritage Site – An Architect’s Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The Rideau Canal World Heritage Site is one of the most important historic settings in Canada, and a key landmark in Ottawa, the Nation’s Capital. It is the sole remaining canal system from the great North American canal-building era of the early 1800s that remains operational along its original alignment with the majority of its watercourses, dams, bridges, fortifications and lock stations still intact.

Mark Langridge has led the architectural and aesthetic design components of four new bridge crossings across the Rideau Canal (including vehicular and pedestrian/cyclist) over the past ten years. Two have been successfully implemented and won multiple design awards, with two more currently in advanced design stages. All have required an intensive, collaborative design & stakeholder engagement process.

The over-riding design challenge for all of these crossings is **how to achieve an appropriate aesthetic expression for a new bridge in a World Heritage Site context**. It is imperative that the new structure respect and not overwhelm the character of the heritage place, yet it is also important that it be an expression of its own time. The concept of **minimal intervention** is critical – the heritage character-defining elements must retain visual dominance within the setting, with new interventions presenting a secondary, understated visual expression that does not diminish the original character, and ideally over time, should actually enhance it. It is also important that the new work has a strong visual and material quality that will stand the test of time, functionally and aesthetically.

The paper will contain drawings, renderings and post-completion photos from all four projects that will clearly illustrate the delicate **design balancing act** required to successfully introduce a new crossing to an important historic setting.