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**MARC MIMRAM**

A graduate of France's National School of Civil Engineering, with a master's degree in mathematics and a diploma of advanced studies in philosophy, Marc Mimram leads a twofold career as consultant and architect/civil engineer. He is the man behind several architectural works across the globe: the Léopold Sédar Senghor footbridge in Paris (France), the Beng Bu and Feng Hua bridges in Tianjin (China) and the Moulay Al Hassan bridge in Rabat (Morocco). He teaches at the University of Marne-la-Vallée (France) as well as at Princeton, in the United States. The originality and boldness of his project, "Living Bridges", is generating lively interest within the architectural community.

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"The Accommodating Structure" over the East River, New York (United States).



Civil engineer and architect Marc Mimram presents "Living Bridges", a study produced in partnership with Lafarge. He proposes to reinvest urban infrastructure with meaning and to "re-lay" the city .

Marc Mimram

# City between two riverbanks

**Why are you now interested in inhabited bridges?**

Marc Mimram : The need for mobility has become very evident, everywhere in the world. We also see the difficulties of creating a densely populated city with positive connotations, which thereby lends itself to promoting the idea of 'living together'. Moreover, the infrastructure that shapes a city prior to its development is often experienced as a necessary evil, a source of environmental pollution. However, it can also create a link, express meaning and, from that point, be the subject of a wealth of reinterpretation.

**Has the structure of bridges been reinterpreted here?**

M. M. : In Journey to the End of the Night, Louis-Ferdinand Céline[1] describes Manhattan as an 'upright, absolutely straight and scarily stiff' city. Our approach, our vision, has been to look at the typical infrastructure of bridges as we look at towers, as inhabitable structures that replace a vertical world with a horizontal one, taking advantage of its strength as a crossing. This urban device for crossing, which has been monofunctional for centuries, can be used to adjust or add to the 'crafting' of the city, encouraging a meeting of the riverbanks. Formerly used purely for traffic, it can be inhabited, imbued with a healing capacity, to seal a rift dividing the urban space.

**Does such a project mean redefining technical boundaries?**

M. M. : Concrete is now a high-tech material, which enables us to explore less restrictive and more ambitious structural styles than those of conventional crossings. Ductal®, the twin aspects of which – very high strength and elegance – we use to the full, is the masterpiece that underpins our building strategy. For example, Ductal® will make it possible to build the vast concrete sails of La Courneuve's 'Landscape Bridge', which weaves together two strands of landscape, one urban and the other rural, inspired by the two areas that it unites beneath the motorway. ■

1. French writer, 1894-1961.

## ONE PROJECT, FOUR EXAMPLES

**Lengthy research led to the selection of four locations, each of which embodies a new way of designing a bridge as an infrastructure with multiple functions. In Shanghai, China, the underside of the "Roof Bridge" provides a public space above the road intersection. In New York, (United States), the bridge conceived as a residential megastructure juxtaposes several functions of public representation and accommodation, and acts as a dialogue with the city. In Moscow (Russia), the "Inhabited Bridge" over the river boldly draws comparison with the legendary image of the Ponte Vecchio in Florence (Italy), offering numerous routes and walkways. Lastly, in France, La Courneuve's "Landscape Bridge" is a natural device for broadening the horizons of its inhabitants.**