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London

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## US artist Leo Villareal wins contest to illuminate London's bridges

Man who lit up San Francisco Bay Bridge set to transform the Thames



*Leo Villareal's lighting plan for London Bridge*

YESTERDAY by: **Edwin Heathcote**

An artist who achieved acclaim with a project to illuminate the San Francisco Bay Bridge has been announced as the winner of a competition to [illuminate central London's](#) Thames bridges and embankments.

Leo Villareal, a New York-based artist, was part of a team headed by Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, the London architects, who have experience of bridge building in the capital having designed the golden jubilee footbridges (either side of the Victorian-era Hungerford railway bridge) as well as a new bridge in the Royal Victoria Dock.

The elegant and restrained winning design fended off a strong list of international entries including those from architects David Adjaye, Amanda Levete, and Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

Sadiq Khan, London mayor, said: “We saw an incredible response to this fascinating competition, showing that London continues to inspire creatives from around the globe, and is open to all. There were some spectacular ideas, and I can’t wait to see the winning design light up the Thames. Huge congratulations to Leo Villareal and Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands on this fantastic achievement.”



*A computer-generated image of how a stretch of the Thames in central London will look © Leo Villareal and Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands*

Hannah Rothschild, who chairs the Illuminated River Foundation, said: “Their scheme is beautiful, ambitious and realisable but always considerate to the environment, lighting levels and energy conservation.”

Ms Rothschild, whose foundation will be contributing £5m to the project, referred to Mr Villareal’s ability to “paint with light”. Certainly his successful transformation of the San Francisco Bay Bridge into a massive urban-scale artwork bodes well for London. Other public works by the artist can be seen in Washington DC’s National Gallery of Art and at Bleecker Street Subway Station, as well as in the more conventional context of New York’s Museum of Modern Art.



*How Leo Villareal illuminated the San Francisco Bay Bridge © James Ewing*

The project will be funded entirely from private and philanthropic sources with another £5m coming from Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing's Arcadia Fund. The team will now begin working on the realisation of the public working with a huge raft of stakeholders including the Port of London Authority, the boroughs, the mayor's office, Historic England, Transport for London, Tideway and others. Leo Villareal seems intent on creating an artwork in tune with the city's desires.



*The new bridge at the Royal Victoria Dock designed by London architects Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands © Chris Gascoigne*