

## Press release

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# Christmas celebrations kick off at newly revamped Old Spitalfields Market

Old Spitalfields Market was full of festive cheer as its Christmas celebrations got underway on Thursday with Christmas Lates – a series of evenings of live music and seasonal menus served by The Kitchens every Friday from 1-15 December in the lead up to Christmas. Decked out in its festive best, the market looked resplendent with its brand-new market stalls and food units by Foster + Partners that seek to enhance the quality and reinforce the unique identity of one of London's most vibrant and long standing covered markets.

Grant Brooker, Head of Studio, Foster + Partners said: "Old Spitalfields Market is such a unique and exciting part of our city. It is a meeting place, where the life and energy of East London blends with the more structured order of the City and creates this fantastic vitality. We were fascinated by the original architecture of the old market and its industrial heritage, which has informed the design of our new market structures, revitalising and enhancing the Spitalfields' unique character."

The practice has designed, "The Kitchens", a new food island at the heart of the market that celebrates London's most exciting new culinary talent. Made with a prefabricated modular steel frame, the food units have a neutral material palette that is sympathetic to the surroundings – the glossy cracked tile interiors being reflective of the glazed Victorian bricks predominant in the Spitalfields area, and the base made from ash timber continuing the visual connection to the market stalls. The materials were carefully selected, the mesh screen, brass signage, concrete

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counter-tops and light fittings all have an industrial character that echoes the old Victorian market structure. Customers have a complete view of the food being prepared in the individual fully-equipped food units adding to the theatre of their dining experience. Counter tops incorporate stools during less busy times to further social interaction, breaking down the barrier between the customers and chefs to create a more intimate dining experience.

The design also features completely redesigned market stalls, arranged around The Kitchens. Given the variety of products on offer, following a different theme each day of the week, the challenge was to offer a sense of coherence to the market stalls. They also needed to be flexible and versatile to display the diverse merchandise in a range of layouts. Designed as modular objects, the new stalls can be orientated and combined to suit different product displays. From over-the-counter to u-shaped configurations, with multiple racks and shelving, they are customisable by each retailer and set up for their individual needs. They incorporate storage at the base, also integrating electrical connections and lighting. In the evenings, they can be easily folded up and stored elsewhere if the space is required for events, or used as partitions to create spaces or used as tables for dining.

Mike Holland, Head of Industrial Design, Foster + Partners commented: "Much of the project was about finding the right balance. We wanted to challenge the existing market layout and improve the functionality and appearance of the stalls, while being flexible enough to cater to individual retailers. It was also important to maintain the essence of Old Spitalfields Market, and the qualities which make it a unique and lively public space."

Materiality of the stalls was an important consideration, and the design of the stalls is inspired by the original architecture of the old market, and the construction tools that were used at the time. The idea was to use solid materials that will withstand the daily rigors of the market, and those that will age well, gradually acquiring a rich patina over the years. The ash timber frames

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have a light appearance which will darken over time, while the hinge details, trims, hanging rail and accessories are made in brass, which develops a beautiful dark finish as the metal oxidises.

There are four larger anchor stalls with aluminium frames that have been placed specifically along the sightlines from the entry points into the market to attract visitors into the main market space. The practice has also designed new bespoke benches and tables for the market with oak timber and a steel frame.