

LONDON'S QUALITY NEWSPAPER



Evening Standard

Tuesday 25.09.07

Incorporating The Evening News

www.standard.co.uk

50p

A fabulous East End revival

I don't normally do 'cool' but Spitalfields, with its market stalls, public art and historic buildings, is just a treasure

LIZ HOGGARD



HALF of Razorlight were there. So was Wayne Hemingway. And the production designer on the new James Bond film was busy snapping up props for "Bond 21". The new design fair, Tent, which took over Brick Lane's sprawling Truman Brewery at the weekend, is officially the coolest new event in the London calendar. Walking around three floors of furniture, lighting, graphics, textiles and digital media, it felt like a mini Venice Biennale. Charles Saatchi should get there pronto next year.

Of course, as with so many cool events, I nearly didn't go. Brick Lane is my nemesis. Faced with the hell of travelling to Aldgate East on a Saturday, I decided to stay in and wash my hair. "Don't be mad," my friend George said. "Go to Liverpool Street, cross the road and walk through the new Spitalfields Development. It's five minutes to get to Brick Lane."



Alex Segre/Reus Features

Go al fresco: cafe culture comes to a revitalised Spitalfields, where the City meets the edgier East

I felt like a tourist in my own city. Seemingly overnight a whole new section of the East End has gone up. Why had no one told me? The regeneration of Spitalfields mixes public art, landscaping and market stalls with a stylish development of shops and restaurants (Patisserie Valerie, Canteen, Giraffe). True, the cool hunters were out in force for Tent but I saw mothers and toddlers sunbathing in the square. There's live jazz, food demonstrations and even free tea dances on Fridays.

Old Spitalfields Market has always been a national treasure: the area has been the site of a busy market since 1638, when King Charles gave

a licence for flesh, fowl and roots to be sold in what was then known as Spittle Fields. But the new version really has opened the gateway to Brick Lane. It's the moment where the edgier East meets the City.

The old gems look just as wonderful in the new setting: the Hawksmoor church, all those Georgian facades and derelict industrial buildings — but now there are also sleek Norman Foster-designed glass office blocks and York stone pavements. And the shopping is terrific. If you can't face the trek to Oxford Street, there are all the usual boutiques plus the second-hand and retro shops of Brick Lane proper

— where you're guaranteed no two people get the same dress. Vintage hasn't disappeared, it's just relocated. And don't miss Jeannette Winterson's deli-style grocer, Verde and Co.

The purists in their Georgian houses were not initially thrilled about what is being tagged Spitalfields East. Imagine commoners like me coming in to shop! But now that it is established it seems the perfect blend of tradition with modern, cosmopolitan culture. It's breathed new life into their rarefied postcode.

And you never need to get the Hammersmith & City line again.

THE BEST BITS OF SPITALFIELDS EAST

Live Jazz: every Friday in Bishop's Square, E1, lunchtime 1pm-3pm. Presented by the Spitz Jazz Collective. Free.

Tea dance at Spitalfields: Last Friday of every month, in Crispin Place, off Brushfield Street, E1. Foxtrots and the chas join the Covent Garden Dance Orchestra for popular tea dance classics. Free.

Fine Food Market: every Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10am-5pm, Crispin Place off Brushfield Street, E1. Fully covered food market selling everything from air-dried hams and bacons to French cheeses and foie gras.

The Big Draw East: Sunday 30 September, 10.30am-5pm. Day of free drawing events in Bishop's Square. The festival also takes place across Hackney and Tower Hamlets. A shuttle bus will connect venues across the city. www.campaignfordrawing.org.

The Golden Hart: for refreshment, look no further than Tracey Emin and Gilbert & George's favourite pub, next to the Truman Brewery. Even the landlady, Sandra, is now a national icon.

www.spitalfields.co.uk