RIDLEY’S

Ridley’s was a project by The Decorators in collaboration with Atelier Chan Chan. It was a public realm intervention that combined food and architecture, featuring a food-for-food exchange organism. Ideally located alongside a street market, Ridley’s worked within the market’s existing infrastructure to negotiate its social and economic contingencies.

Ridley’s was a collaborative project that destabilized the traditional format of the restaurant where the boundaries between “designer”, “producer” and “consumer” tore apart to give way to new roles: everyone was a maker, a fundamental cog of the food system. Creating its own alternative economy, Ridley’s demonstrated that architecture can be more than a commodity, socially engaged and influential. By expanding its tools and modes of practice and borrowing from the procedures of informal and spontaneous exchange systems.

Visitors to the restaurant became part of a cycle. £3s worth of market produce from our shopping list could be exchanged for the dish of the day at lunch or £15 provided an evening meal, with diners getting back a £5 food shopping voucher for use at the market. The produce collected at lunch was used to cook dinner, the money made at dinner was used to get ingredients for the following day’s lunch, and the voucher given with the dinner brought people back to the market long after the intervention was over. Ridley’s was a self-sufficient restaurant, co-existing with the market, the traders and its neighbours.

A line-up of local chefs created daily menus using market produce only. Dinners sat at a communal table high above the market. Meals prepared in the ground floor kitchen, the hub of exchange and production, were raised by a mechanical table up to the guests above. This scenographic journey emphasised the vertical transformation of the raw food at market level to the cooked meals at the elevated podium above. The temporary summer installation was an opportunity to imagine an alternative socio-economic programme for the public realm.

Carpentry by Sam Trice  Identity and graphic design by Guglielmo Rossi  Thanks to the photographers: Dosfotos, Rachel Ferriman, Jessie Levene.