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## NATURE DISTILLED: UNIQUE PARK AND SQUARE DESIGNED TO BRING NEW LIFE TO CENTRAL BEIJING

11th April 2005

Contracts have been signed and work is set to begin on a major new city park and square for Central Beijing, one of the few major projects within Beijing City that will have 'premier' status in the context of the 2008 Olympics.

The work of award-winning Australian architecture firm Allen Jack+Cottier, in collaboration with landscape designer Vladimir Sitta of Terragram, CITC Square will have a value of A\$190 million and is expected to be finished by 2007. Allen Jack+Cottier and Terragram were invited by the prestigious Beijing Institute of Architectural Design to prepare concepts for the project.

CITC Square includes a 3.2-hectare 'urban' park that covers an entire city block. Situated below the park are 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail space, 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition and entertainment space, 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of car parking. The development will also include 5,000m<sup>2</sup> of dedicated office space above ground.

As a city of over 13 million people Beijing is a city of opportunity and excitement. But, as Peter Ireland, the Allen Jack+Cottier Partner responsible for the Square explains, "it also a city without a strong sense of the natural environment, and it is the natural in a city of this scale, that refreshes the spirit".

"Oriental gardens are essentially an abstracted form of nature, or a distilled nature, where all of the elements are brought together – forests, mountains, lakes – nto a miniature environment. So the miniaturisation of landscape is something that has been part of Eastern thinking for centuries, and is well understood.

"Our concept was to treat the CITC park in this abstracted naturalistic way: it is an urban park, but it takes and distils the elements of nature that relates directly to the philosophy of oriental gardens. The park contains a forest, a gorge, a valley, rocky cliffs and a plain that leads to the river. We have used a range of planting, conifers to define the edge of the park and remain

green through winter, deciduous trees and fruit trees, as well as grasses which change colour and flower with the passing of the seasons. Within the forest we have created a 'five petal' public space to cater for a range of events and gatherings.

"The response has been quite immediate, and strong – the Chinese get it straight away, and understand that we are looking at their traditions through a different set of eyes," Peter Ireland added.

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