





SUZHOU

## Design of Public Academy unveiled

**T**he architect has unveiled the design for a unique campus in Suzhou, which will house advanced teaching facilities for nurturing a future generation of entrepreneurs. RMJM was appointed by the Suzhou Industrial Park Education Development Investment Co Ltd to design the project.

The client's brief called for an academy located in the higher education district of Suzhou, within the city's successful industrial park that aims to be a leader in technology and R&D for high-tech industries. The design, which takes the best elements from world-class education models in the USA and UK, is contemporary, whilst also in keeping with the physical environment and social culture of Suzhou, which is celebrated for its meticulously designed walled gardens, canal-ordered townscape and traditional visual and literary arts.

The 1.29 million sq-ft campus provides education facilities for undergraduates and

graduates, a professional development centre and spaces for incubation research units. There will also be a pedestrian arcade connecting industry back to education, which symbolizes the route that it is hoped many entrepreneurs will take as they return to support and lecture students at the







establishment at which they started their path to success.

The design team found inspiration from the city's fine balance of landscape and architecture, including classical gardens, picturesque waterways, vernacular materials and scholar's objects. For example, the tools of writing such as ink stone, 'chop' and red calligraphy ink, inspire the form of the auditorium, a central space for the dissemination of knowledge.

By providing close integration between learning and practice, in a beautiful setting, the Public Academy will enhance Suzhou's economic and educational reputation.

Students, researchers and visitors to the campus will arrive on foot at the 'dawn lawn', an informal garden for relaxing. Formal entry and access to a library, auditorium and exhibition spaces is via a more urbane 'square' in the heart of the campus.

The courtyard style arrangement of the buildings reflects the traditional architecture and walled gardens of the neighboring city. The traditional grey brickwork of Suzhou inspires the stacking and interlocking of spaces, with the 'joints' providing social places for collaboration. The blocks and courtyard spaces increase in scale from south to north, paralleling the expansion of the minds of students as they progress through the Academy. Finally, a teahouse in the northern courtyard provides respite from the work-day.

The campus, which is expected to be completed in 2012, will also offer sporting and recreation facilities for the wider community, including links into a circuit of publicly accessible gardens.

