



**Net catch:** James Brearley and Luke Middleton. **Inset:** the winning design from the duo.

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# China win against the world

by Shannon Davis

A PAIR of South Melbourne architects have slayed the dragon.

Design cowboys James Brearley and Luke Middleton have snared a design contract beyond the Great Wall.

After pitting their collective wits against some of the world's leading international architectural firms, the BrearleyMiddleton (BM) outfit was handed a US\$half-billion project in the red heart of China — Xiamen.

But it was only after some delicate red tape negotiations and government delays that the small City Rd-based operation

found out it had won the monstrous development contract. And the entire development is being done on the Internet.

"A decade ago this could never have been done without an office in China," co-mastermind of the coup, James Brearley, said.

The firm has a permanent staff of six but was forced to expand to 25 to meet the tight deadlines.

"The Chinese expect what would take six months to be completed in two," he said. "We're working day and night."

The 30-something design duo were given an open brief to

launch the coastal region of Xiamen into the 21st century.

"We just incorporated the Chinese elements of water, wind, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism in a contemporary context."

The project covers an area equivalent to 1½ times the size of Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens — and will be surrounded by China's largest exhibition centre. A ferry wharf, marina, 85m viewing tower, a 1km stretch of water, public gardens and a chairlift are the key features of the precinct.

Brearley said the design married traditional Chinese beliefs with contemporary Western philosophies

