

PRESS RELEASE

Paragon sponsors UJ's Graduate School of Architecture

***17 November 2017:** The main sponsor of the Summer Show 2017 at the University of Johannesburg's (UJ's) Graduate School of Architecture (GSA) in November is leading architecture, interior design, and space-planning practice Paragon of Sandton, Johannesburg.*

Paragon has a long association with UJ's Graduate School of Architecture, the youngest school of architecture in South Africa, which has grown from 23 students in 2014 to an anticipated 115 in 2018. The group has enjoyed Visiting Professorship status, whereby experienced staff members present guest lectures, in addition to sponsoring a publication showcasing student work.

Its association is critical to the sustainability of UJ's GSA, according to Professor **Lesley Lokko**, who heads up the school. "Not only is Paragon at the cutting edge of both architecture and construction methodology, it can give our students critical insight into the relationship between contractors and developers, for example."

Professor Lokko highlights that Paragon's sponsorship will enable the school to realise ambitious future plans such as 'twinning' with other leading global schools of architecture, including the GSD (Harvard), the Princeton University, and the Bartlett (UCL, London).

The active involvement of, and sponsorship by, leading companies such as Paragon emphasises the relationship between practices and academia, which is a much closer link internationally than it is in South Africa at present. "A lot of commercial firms see themselves almost as second-class citizens in terms of the academic sphere," Professor Lokko notes.

"However, the world of commerce typically moves much faster than academia, and therefore bringing in commercial architects is really important to what we are trying to achieve. This is particularly relevant given that so many commercial firms are looking to Africa for future growth and expansion," Professor Lokko comments. She describes UJ's GSA as a "pan-African, cosmopolitan" school, which attracts students from as far afield as Ghana, Nigeria, and Namibia.

UJ's GSA plays a critical role in promoting African architecture in an international context. Born in Ghana, and educated formally in the UK, Professor Lokko elaborates: "Currently, most internationally-prominent African architects studied overseas. Very few studied on this continent. For me, the opportunity to return in order to establish a local context for African students was really important. Our message to the younger generation is that you do not have to go to London, Berlin, or New York."

Professor Lokko says that these students, upon graduation and their entry into the marketplace as professionals, will help create a continent-wide network that will benefit the entire industry. "Africa is the world's youngest continent. This is where the talent and ideas are."

Paragon has undertaken projects in 18 countries on the continent, and in Brazil, over the past seven years. Projects have been completed in eleven countries in Africa, encompassing both interior design and architecture, while six are in construction phase. These countries are Swaziland, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, and Congo-Brazzaville.

Ends

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Notes to the Editor

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About Paragon

Paragon, established in October 1997, is an internationally-active African design business, based in Johannesburg. It delivers commercial architecture, masterplanning, interior design, and space planning to visionary clients in all property sectors.

We are committed to Africa, and believe in the future of its cities. Our roots are here. We have much to offer. We are able and agile, and actively participate in the continent's urban and human development. Paragon is flexible and diverse in its approach to design. Each project is unique and not driven by style, but by lifestyle and a response to user needs. Elegant and efficient planning form the core of our designs. We understand the needs of our clients, and know how to generate ever new architectural forms in a competitive property market.

We are known for hands-on engagement with all opportunities present in the modern global building industry. The true measure of our skill is our ability to engage at all levels and with all players that make up the colourful world of construction and property development. Our buildings look forward. We embrace the future, because we will be a part of it – part of its problems and responsibilities, and part of its great freedoms and achievements.

Media Contact

Renay Tandy

NGAGE Public Relations

Phone: (011) 867 7763

Fax: 086 512 3352

Cell: 082 562 5088

Email: nomvelo@ngage.co.za

Web: www.ngage.co.za

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