

# PRESS RELEASE

## Paragon sees in 2018 with major new projects across Africa

*16 January 2018: Paragon has confirmed its standing as a leading architecture, interior design, and space-planning practice with the completion of several major projects in 2017. "These were long in the making and large in scale, and have once more provided a new perspective on our capability," according to Founding Director **Henning Rasmuss**.*

The urban quality of the Alice Lane precinct is being enjoyed by more and more people, while Sasol Place was a landmark in terms of craft and execution. In addition, Paragon closed out 2017 with the opening of the first phase of Discovery Health's new head office, where it shaped the interiors. All these projects are in the key business area of Sandton, Johannesburg.

"The Discovery Health campus was a substantial achievement for our interiors team, under the leadership of Director **Claire D'Adorante**," Rasmuss notes. On-site projects outside of South Africa at present include the new 23-storey apartment tower in Nairobi known as The Habitat, and the nearby Crystal Rivers Mall.

"Paragon still has a substantial pipeline of continental African projects, many of which need more time to mature into construction sites. Completed work secures new work, and the completion of a few projects in 2018 will bring new clients to our door," Rasmuss elaborates.

Founding Director **Anthony Orelowitz** adds that Paragon has invested substantially in team and business-skills training, with its teams functioning quite differently from a year ago. "Our willingness to invest in future skills is linked directly to our ability to attract the best future talent. We train continuously, and we give access to tools and knowledge so that our staff can continue on their personal quest to become excellent."

"A tight economy is the best time to invest in training. Architects already work hard. We need to all learn how to work better, and in a more integrated way in teams. Last year was a tough year, with little room for movement in fees negotiations, and hard business terms. However, that is the economy we are in," Rasmuss comments.

"This is a time for the larger, stronger companies to see through the tough conditions, and come out stronger on the other side. We have secured fantastic new projects for 2018, including a university campus, and are seeing more diverse projects with great design opportunities."

Such diversity is important for the sustainability of the practice going forward, Rasmuss stresses. "We have always been a generalist business, and do not want to be seen as a specialist in just one or two building types. Concentration risk is never good in a small market like South Africa. We have worked hard over the past few years to remove the perception that 'Paragon only does offices'."

Rasmuss points out that Paragon's built portfolio showcases that it is a good business partner for the design and delivery of just about any building. "Last year saw us complete retail projects, student housing, data centres and schools, for example."

In terms of local growth, Paragon has been seeding projects in Durban and Cape Town. "Cape Town especially is a small market where we are positioning ourselves as a breath of fresh air to potential clients." Rasmuss reveals that "Cape Town should have one substantial Paragon building site very early in 2018."

Paragon is also investing in large mixed-use projects in the Middle East, where its delivery and documentation systems and speed of production gives it a substantial edge. "University campus work, churches, more student housing, and a very large hotel project in Ghana are all on the cards for 2018," Rasmuss adds. "More and more, master-planning is a market we are being asked to contribute to. Joint architecture and interior design projects are also of interest to a larger number of clients."

Ongoing projects include The Modern in Cape Town, a prominent mixed-use tower, and Katherine Towers in Sandton. "We have been awarded the interiors for the new Deloitte head office in Sandton, and so 2018 opens with us being busy and confident. There are many bids out there," Rasmuss notes.

"With the South African economy underperforming, there is a larger number of smaller projects, in addition to numerous refurbishment and re-engineering projects. These cycles are normal, and we have been through them before in our 20-year history. Different clients with different mandates thrive at different times. We built this business on great refurbishments, and we are partly back in the type of work that made us visible and noticed in the first place," Rasmuss elaborates.

Opportunities include more educational and industrial work, in addition to public buildings and mixed-use projects. "Some of our more progressive clients are really becoming more interested in the spaces around their buildings. The impact of the completed Discovery Health campus will firmly establish the perception of Paragon being the top interior design business in the country," Rasmuss predicts.

"Transformation in our South African business is important, and will be challenging. Business confidence in South Africa will be a challenge. Water is a challenge. Education and the supply of skilled people into our industry is a challenge. These are the larger-picture issues that concern us," Rasmuss concludes.

## **Ends**

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### **About Paragon**

Paragon, established in October 1997, is an internationally-active design business, based in Johannesburg. We deliver commercial architecture, masterplanning, interior design, and space planning to visionary clients in all property sectors, from retail to residential and education.

We are committed to global urban development. We are able and agile. 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.

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