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## FAR-SIGHTED

South African architects respond to the pressing need for building a sustainable environment



**AMÂNDIO CASTANHEIRA**

ALCHEMY ARCHITECTS

**What inspired you to become an architect?** Both my grandfathers, who were builders in Mozambique and South Africa.

**What kind of projects do you specialise in?** I specialise in architecture – this means any form of the built environment the client or end-user requires. We mostly undertake commercially driven architecture, no matter the scale.

**Name other architects you admire or who inspire you.** Álvaro Siza, Santiago Calatrava and Arata Isozaki, to name a few, for the simplicity and purity of the architecture they create.

**Do you incorporate green design?** I strive to incorporate green design elements into every project we undertake. I have always stood by the belief that as an architect I have a responsibility firstly to the clients we serve, but also to members of the public, who ultimately become the many users of our designs. The quality of our surroundings has a direct influence on the quality of our lives. We further strive to encourage our clients and developers to adopt these sustainable values.

**Which is your favourite building in SA?** The Palace of Justice in Pretoria, for its workmanship and detailing.

**And internationally?** Zaha Hadid's Science Centre in Wolfsburg, Germany.

**What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)?** The contrast of man-made versus natural has always appealed to me. Lots of glass and steel offset against stone and wood. Concrete is my first love, as it's an ever-changing medium.

**What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA?** In my opinion, the lack of general design knowledge within the South African population, which leads to apathy towards any form of green architecture or innovative design.

**If you had to design your dream building, what would it be?** I am designing it at the moment.



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**COBUS DU PLESSIS**

AIF DESIGN ARCHITECTS

**What inspired you to become an architect?** I always wanted to create things, and architecture seems to be the best medium.

**What kind of projects do you specialise in?** Luxury homes.

**Name other architects you admire or who inspire you?** Frank Lloyd Wright.

**Do you incorporate green design?** Yes. We had already started designing houses with cavity walls to enhance the thermal quality of the house eight years ago.

**Which is your favourite building in SA?** The Reserve Bank in Pretoria.

**And internationally?** Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater House.

**What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)?** Medium: pencil and drawing board. Building material: concrete, beams and columns.

**What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA?** Creating architecture to suit the South African climate, and coming up with original, authentic, green designs.

**If you had to design your dream building, what would it be?** My own house – with an unlimited budget.

**Awards won?** Front page of *SA Home Owner* and *Complete Home Solutions*.



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**JACOBUS NIEWOUDT**

NIEWOUDT AND ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS (NAA)

**What inspired you to become an architect?** I'm fortunate enough to pursue a God-given passion for what I do, so I guess the inspiration came naturally.

**What kind of projects do you specialise in?** Design projects vary. We therefore don't like to be typecast. However, in recent years, we spent the bulk of our time on residential and commercial projects.

**Name other architects you admire or who inspire you?** Rem Koolhaas; Sarah Calburn.

**Do you incorporate green design?** Certainly, as much as possible. One of our upcoming projects is a satellite campus and research centre for a US university that will be extremely green, and we are quite excited about this one.

**Which are your favourite buildings in SA?** It's difficult to isolate only two, but I would say in SA, a small generator room at the Miller post office junction in the Karoo. The setting and proportions are just right. Then, of course, the next project we are working on.

**And internationally?** At the moment, the new K:fem department store in Stockholm, Sweden.

**What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)?** Any cladding material to frame structures.

**What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA?** Bridging the social gaps with meaningful spaces.

**If you had to design your dream building, what would it be?** I like vibrant spaces. So anything public with a sense of community thrown in would be a pleasure.



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**ANTHONY ORELOWITZ**

PARAGON ARCHITECTS

**What inspired you to become an architect?** I did sculpture at Bill Ansley as a child; things progressed from there.

**What kind of projects do you specialise in?** Corporate Head Offices – new and refurbished.

**Name other architects you admire or who inspire you.** Renzo Piano; Herzog & de Meuron

**Do you incorporate green design?** Yes, it's becoming one of the key drivers in our work. It's being driven by the Green Star Rating System, demands from tenants and availability of materials/products in the market.

**Which is your favourite building in SA?** The Constitutional Court and the War Memorial in Saxonwold.

**And internationally?** Ronchamp du Haut; the Beijing Stadium.

**What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA?** Issues relating to skills and resources.

**If you had to design your dream building, what would it be?** A museum or a place of worship.

**Awards won?** SAPOA (SA Property Owners' Association) Merit Award 2008 for our 22 Fredman Drive refurbishment project; MOGAS competition for Head Office 'Green' Building, Kampala: First Prize: November 2007; SAPOA Merit Award 2007 for the Design Quarter Lifestyle Shopping Centre;

SAPOA Merit Award 2006 for our Discovery Health project; Fulton Awards 2006: Commendation for Excellence in the Use of Concrete, by the Concrete Society of South Africa,

for the Bowman Gilfillan Head Office project; Institute of Architects Merit Award 2003 for Sun International Head Office;

Institute of Architects Project Award 2002 (Taxi Rank Kiosk); Melrose Arch Design Competition (Land Parcel H3); Freedom Square: Second Place



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**HENNING RASMUSS**

PARAGON GROUP

**What inspired you to become an architect?** Watching the big buildings of the early '70s going up in Jo'burg's CBD when I was a little boy ... Sticking my head through holes in corrugated iron hoardings on a Saturday morning and watching all those people doing stuff. My father always told me that behind all that work by all those people was someone called an architect, who thought it all up.

**What kind of projects do you specialise in?** In the market's perception, corporate head offices. But we do not like to think of ourselves as specialists, but rather as generalists. We are also developing key skills in sports architecture through our involvement in the Green Point Stadium. But, really, we like to think that we are especially good at making buildings that work for the people who use them and the people who own them.

**Name other architects you admire or who inspire you?** Right up there is Oscar Niemeyer, then Gawie Fagan, the older work of Hans Hallen in Natal, the Pietermaritzburg Cathedral by Rozendal and Kammeyer, some of Le Corbusier, Renzo Piano, Denton Corker Marshall, Herzog & de Meuron (mostly), and a whole generation of older Brazilian architects that we are only just discovering.

**Do you incorporate green design?** Yes, where the client and the whole team also want to pursue it. We are investing in green design education and skills in our practice as a base for driving this in our work.

**Which is your favourite building in SA?** The old Standard Bank Head Office in Jo'burg, designed by Hentrich Petschnigg in the early 1970s.

**And internationally?** Currently, the Beijing Olympic Stadium by Herzog & de Meuron. We went to the Olympic opening in 2008 and it blew our remaining hair back in a big way.

**Awards won?** Paragon Architects: four SAPOA Awards for refurbishments and retail projects; Second Prize in the Klieptown Freedom Square Competition; Gauteng Institute of Architecture Merit Award for Sun International Head Office; Fulton Award Commendation 2006 for Bowman Gilfillan Head Office 2006; and Finalist in the DaimlerChrysler Award for South African Architecture 2007.



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**KUMARSEN THAMBURAN**

AN-ARCHI ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

**What inspired you to become an architect?** Knowing that it would be a certainty that I could make a positive contribution to the built environment. In doing so, I make a positive impact on people's lives at work, at home and at leisure, because architecture simply creates shelter.

**What kind of projects do you specialise in?** Commercial, retail residential and industrial – and not forgetting community-based projects.

**Name other architects you admire or who inspire you?** Glenn Murcutt, an Australian architect with incredible vision, has been an all-time inspiration.

**Do you incorporate green design?** I think designing sensibly for a specific region by default encompasses green architecture. With this approach we are halfway to creating successful green architecture.

**Which is your favourite building in SA?** I don't have a favourite building, however I think that the Constitution Hill precinct as a collection of buildings is very successful.

**And internationally?** Abroad it would have to be the Magney House by Glenn Murcutt.

**What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)?** Nothing is more rewarding than taking a blank piece of paper and a sketch-pencil and designing from scratch, be it a space, a building, or a piece of furniture. My favourite material would have to be timber used in innovative ways.

**What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA?** Trying to convince clients of the value of 'design' in ensuring a successful product.

**If you had to design your dream building, what would it be?** I do not have a dream building, but rather take the approach of designing every building successfully.



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**MARILIZE VAN DYK**

TECTONIQUE / PARAGON GROUP

**What inspired you to become an architect?** Building 'houses' in the garden with my parents' living-room furniture, and many happy hours in the Oudtshoorn town library.

**What kind of projects do you specialise in?** Corporate/commercial fit-out and coordination of services infrastructure.

**Name other architects you admire or who inspire you.** The work of Carlo Scarpa, Herzog & de Meuron, and Neutra. For interiors, Ray and Charles Eames, and Tom Dixon.

**Do you incorporate green design?** Yes, as far as the client's budget allows and further.

**Which is your favourite building in SA?** UCT Sports Centre, Cape Town, and the Baxter Theatre, Rondebosch.

**And internationally?** The Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe and the Alhambra de Granada.

**What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)?** Stone and timber.

**What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA?** Not having adequate time to design and detail a building to its full potential.

**If you had to design your dream building, what would it be?** An art gallery.



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**JEAN PAUL ZIETSMAN**

HUB ARCHITECTS / PARAGON GROUP

**What inspired you to enter the architectural field?** LEGO! Since I can remember, I've been building space stations, houses and cars with LEGO. (Although I must point out that I'm not an architect but a senior architectural technologist and director in an architectural firm.)

**What kind of projects do you specialise in?** Security estates, sectional-title housing developments and low-cost housing developments.

**Name other architects you admire or who inspire you?** Andrew Makin, Kate Otten, Henning Rasmuss and Anthony Oreowitz.

**Do you incorporate green design?** Green design is something that is always talked about, but very seldom implemented due to costing issues. I have used elements of it in a housing estate in the Breede River Valley and would love to use it as a fundamental design tool in architecture.

**Which is your favourite building internationally and in SA?** I don't have a list of favourite buildings. For me, buildings are like emotions, they keep changing. The most recent image that springs to mind is an abandoned tank in Angola that was converted into a house. The ingenuity of it astounds and inspires me. And the resource centre found on the Mafika-Lisiu Pass in Lesotho for its natural setting, grass roof, use of natural material, and amazing view.

**What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)?** Natural materials, like rock, timber, slate and thatch, or anything that speaks of the African continent's texture, colour and diversity.

**What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA?** For me the question I always ask is, 'How are we going to house the people of Africa with all our diversity without destroying the way of life and culture that is found in all our communities, and how would this housing respond to its urban context?'

**If you had to design your dream building, what would it be?** It's not so much a building, but more a city or village that is self-sustaining and unplugged from the urban grid. It creates its own power from wind and sun, recycles its waste material and reacts in a manner that is sensitive to the environment and the dwindling resources that the world is facing.



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