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**ARCHITECTURAL FIRM AO BOLSTERS GLOBAL DESIGN STUDIO WITH  
APPOINTMENT OF NEW PRINCIPAL, DIRECTOR**

*Building upon 2019 momentum, the firm also adds director of finance and accounting, and elevates 20 employees*

**ORANGE, Calif.** – Jan. 29, 2020 – Architectural services firm [AO](#) today announced the bolstering of its leadership team with the addition of Paolo Leon, AIA, NCARB, principal and director of AO's [Global Design studio](#) which specializes in planning and designing international and domestic retail outlets, and Lara McKissick, director of finance and accounting. AO also advanced more than a dozen team members within the thriving organization.

"It's an exciting time for AO as we continue to grow our services and nurture trusted relationships with our valued clients," said Darrel Hebenstreit, partner. "The additions of Paolo and Lara enhance our commitment to client excellence, both as our Global Design studio expands into new domestic and international markets across the Americas and Asia, and in our commitment to best-in-class financial stewardship across all 10 design studios."

**Paolo Leon** is a licensed architect with experience that spans across retail, mixed-use, residential, education and civic projects. Notably, he worked on the renovation of the Woodbridge Village Center in Irvine, Calif., modernizing and breathing new life into the outdoor retail center through place making amenities and entertainment uses. Leon sits on the board of directors of the Orange County chapter of The American Institute of Architects (AIAOC), where he also serves as director of emerging professionals.

Outside of the office, Leon has a passion for promoting positive changes in the community through education. He sits on the board of directors of Think Together, a nonprofit that works with school districts and local communities to implement and scale innovative academic solutions that address the needs of children throughout California and is co-chair of Think Together's Friends of Shalimar Committee. Leon earned his Bachelor of Architecture from University of Southern California and holds a Master of Business Administration from Chapman University.

"I'm honored to join AO, a firm that boasts a 45-year legacy of world class service," said Paolo Leon. "As director of the Global Design Studio, I look forward to contributing to AO's remarkable body of work and to the advancement of our clients' development goals."



**Lara McKissick** brings more than 15 years of architecture and engineering industry knowledge and a decade of experience managing accounting and administrative teams. McKissick will collaborate with the firm’s partnership to develop a strategic financial plan that aligns with the firm’s short-term and long-term goals and objectives. She also will work to streamline current finance and accounting processes and to enhance the ability of leadership to meet the goals and objectives set forth.

McKissick holds a Bachelor of Arts in business administration from California State University Fullerton, Mihaylo College of Business and Economics. She is a member of Southern California CFO Roundtable and the Orange County Deltek Vision User Group.

“I look forward to working alongside AO’s leadership to keep building upon the firm’s legacy of producing great buildings with beautiful design and delivering outstanding client services,” said Lara McKissick. “I’m inspired that AO is constantly seeking ways to improve, and I value its collegial approach to tackling new challenges and coming up with creative solutions.”

In addition to the two new hires, AO promoted **James Glina, Rene Boggio, Jeff Stuyvesant** and **Trevor Morales** to senior associates; AO also elevated 16 team members across its 10 design studios to the position of associate:

- **Linda Laurenzi**
- **Glenn Man**
- **Jimmy Villegas**
- **Lalaine Tanaka**
- **Thanh Trinh**
- **Alan Sandoval**
- **Bryan Tessner**
- **Mark Lausier**
- **Roger Rozelle**
- **Travis Gold**
- **Garrett Bascom**
- **Michael Connell**
- **Edward Wu**
- **Ryan Yoshimoto**
- **Ioanna Magiati**
- **Michael Mayhew**

“We are proud to recognize these employees for the excellence of their work and are grateful for their exemplary dedication to the firm and its clients,” remarked RC Alley, partner and leader of the firm’s Multifamily studio. “AO’s tagline “Better Together” is more than just words on a piece of paper to us. We truly value each of our employees and take pride in our culture of growth and development from within.”

### **About AO**

AO (formerly Architects Orange) is a relationship-focused, design-driven architectural services firm helping clients create places where people and business flourish. In its 45<sup>th</sup> year, the firm has 10 distinct areas of expertise including multifamily, retail, hospitality, mixed-use, restaurant, office, industrial, parking, landscape and global design. AO is known for its ardent collaboration with developers and owners, and deep expertise across various building types. The AO team of approximately 300 professionals operate from studios in the cities of Orange and San Diego, CA where it serves clients across the Americas, Asia, and beyond. Visit [aoarchitects.com](http://aoarchitects.com) to learn more.