



ARCHITECTS OF THE SEASON

RCR Arquitectes

The Pritzker Architecture Prize winners 2017 work with a singular approach: To build projects that are both visually stunning and functional for the inhabitants

In an industry that demands every structure to be spellbindingly magnificent, Spanish firm RCR Arquitectes' grounded and honest work feels like a breath of fresh air. Recently awarded with the Pritzker Architecture Prize 2017, the studio is headed by Rafael Aranda, Carme Pigem and Ramon Vilalta. "We believe that buildings should have a direct impact on people's lives," explains Rafael, on a visit to Mumbai to promote Muraba Residences, a newly completed edifice by the trio in Palm Jumeirah, Dubai. "This should be the base of architecture – to be conceived for experience, and not just show." Their oeuvre ranges from private and commercial living spaces to schools and cultural venues, each harmonising with the environs it is built in. The RIBA 2012 winning studio's Soulages Museum is testament to their principles. Situated in an open park in Rodez, France the monument in weathering steel mimics the play of light depicted in the paintings of Pierre Soulage, whose art is displayed within the premises. The uneven box-like sections appear horizontal and low from one side, and high and vertical from the other. The entire structure merges with the landscape it is built on, expressing oneness with the neighbourhood. "What I have realised is that architecture has become detached from the real needs of society. It should move towards people and reality. World over, you find buildings with abstract concepts across cities, without having any relationship with the place it is based in," he avers. Ask him what it feels like having won the two highest honours in the field and pat comes the reply, "Grateful! It is a recognition of not only our efforts but also our clients, who placed their trust in us." ♦ **Tasneem Merchant**

Website www.rcrarquitectes.es

Clockwise, from Top Soulages Museum is constructed from weathering steel. The cantilevered side merges with the slope it is located on; Bell-Lloc Winery in Palamos, Spain has a descending pathway that funnels visitors into a passage and also acts as a vaulted ceiling, where gaps allow light to seep in; Facade of Muraba Residences in Palm Jumeirah, Dubai. The 50 flats in it were left open ended so that the occupants could customise it as per their taste; Rafael Aranda, Carme Pigem and Ramon Vilalta founded RCR Arquitectes in 1988. Photographs by Hisao Suzuki and Janie Airey courtesy Pritzker Architecture Prize and RCR Arquitectes

