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# RCR Arquitectes

For this architecture-focused issue, we contacted RCR Arquitectes, 2017 winner of the prestigious international Pritzker Prize. Based in Catalonia, Spain, it is acclaimed for innovative use of materials, light and color in projects tied to the landscape and context of the locale. —*Sharon King Hoge*



**R**CR derives from the initials of Rafael Aranda, Carme Pigem and Ramon Vilalta, who studied together at Barcelona's ETSAB architectural school and formed the firm in 1988 shortly after graduation. Returning to their hometown of Olot, they work out of offices in a former foundry converted to retain its industrial features, adding some new elements in contrasting materials exemplifying their adherence to both tradition and innovation.

Olot is surrounded by four volcanoes and noted for its landscapes and a proximity to nature, which RCR projects reflect in their strong sense of place and connection to the topography, customs, culture, community and seasons. Furthering aims to create "work that finds the essential and talks to people's emotions everywhere," the trio has created RCR Lab A, an open architecture laboratory devoted to research and creative transversality. Their RCR Bunka Foundation was formed in 2013 to create exhibits and events that stimulate assessment of arts and culture through study of architecture and landscape. [rcrarquitectes.es](http://rcrarquitectes.es).



**1. You work together in a former foundry. How do you relate to one another?** We are so different, but at the same time we work very well together. A critic has called us a jazz trio. Our separate skills create a new product, like a chemical alloy.

**2. The Pritzker Prize citation notes your use of materials to highlight the natural conditions of the site and pull them into the building. How is that achieved?** We like to use materials where their boundaries are blurred—looking for a fusion with air and void.

**3. What is your favorite building in the world?** Some farmhouses close to home.

**4. The bright shades of the El Petit Comte Kindergarten show your unconventional use of color. What guides your selections?** The color is related to the materials used, and the materials are related to the project and site itself.

**5. How did you juxtapose the angular edges of the Soulages Museum to harmonize with the historic church nearby?** We worked with balance, avoiding competitions, promoting an interesting dialog.

**6. Why is it important in our now globalized world for architecture to retain local character?** In the past, modern architecture fixed five gold points to build, following them you were "international." When architecture goes deeply in the essence of the space, it can communicate to the world. With the internet today, from your site, you are in the world!

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAVIER LORENZO DOMINGUES; ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOS (EXCLUDING FARMHOUSE): HISAO SUZUKI; FARMHOUSE: PEP SAU