



## Architects of the Year

**SELGASCANO**

José Selgas & Lucía Cano, Madrid, Spain

[www.selgascano.net](http://www.selgascano.net)



### **Jury verdict:**

Spanish architects selgascano have for years been realizing consistently high-quality projects on comparably small budgets. Their designs not only embrace current social and ecological standards but are also aesthetically of a superlative nature. Their especially sustainable and holistic way they construe relevance and function in developing a successful combination of inside and outside is thrilling and makes us look forward to their further work. Simply intelligent.

## **Selgascano**

"selgascano is a small architecture firm founded by José Salgas and Lucía Cano, comprising just the two principal architects and a supporting team of six others.

"We don't work for the critics of architecture – although they have been very nice to us," says Selgas. "Instead we work for people who really need architecture. We are driven by the social demands of our contemporary culture, and it's the modesty of our more utilitarian approach that seems to be finding a new place within these times."

Calm and humble as to where Spain stands today, a time when the rest of Europe could seemingly care less about the country's struggling economy, Selgas is at ease. "Somos lo que somos," he says – "we are what we are" – and by that he means not so rich these days.

The reality for selgascano is that they stand against the odds of a tough economic break, and surprisingly so, Selgas says: while things have not been so good in terms of overall climate, they have only grown stronger as a practice. "The budgets we have been used to have always been tight around here, and we think that's good. For us at least, we think the days of lavish architecture are no longer in demand. People and cities, our cultures, need smart architectural solutions that reflect an intelligent approach to the future. I can only speak for selgascano, but you can expect to see a less disciplinary approach, with a heightened sensibility for cultural relevance and functional needs."

Projects that embody this sort of "relevance" and functionality are those such as the Factoria Joven (Merida, Spain), a muchneeded community and recreation centre for the city, or their most recent convention centre in Cartagena (Spain), soon to be completed. A bit older, but still a marvel, is Palacio de Congresos in Badajoz (Spain) – another major convention centre completed in 2006.

Selgas confesses they have brewed slowly as a practice, but in that time (going on 17 years now) selgascano has also realised some significant work, much of it adding to the cultural and urban fabric of cities across Spain. He

refers to a consistent calibre of work, of which the local design community has begun to take notice.

“Many things are inspiring us to practise this kind of simple philosophy, found in nature, literature, theatre, sociology and urbanism,” Selgas says. “All good architecture has not only cultural context, but I think an inspired sense of relevance to the needs of a society in that specific moment in time.”

**Gregory Don Nasser**

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