



BAR NICO DOORS: CONNECTING CRAFTSMANSHIP

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You might mistake the 12-foot-tall windows at the entrance to Bar Nico in Des Moines' East Village for just another storefront. But the massive glass panes wrapped in slender steel frames also serve as doors. When opened inward, they offer easy access to the sidewalk for patrons of the taco and craft cocktails hotspot.

This custom installation is a creative collaboration between chef-restaurateur Jason Simon, architectural design team (ASK Studio), and fabricators (Factor Fabrication).

Vision

Simon envisioned doors that, when open, seamlessly connect the interior with the sidewalk, providing an al fresco ambiance. This feature gained importance when the pandemic suddenly required fresh air and social distancing.

Simon's approach to design—described as “uncompromising”—spurred a creative collaboration that made the doors more than mere functional elements. They became a statement of craft. Brent Schipper, AIA, of ASK Studio shares: “What’s fun about working with somebody like Jason is that he gets people really excited about what he’s going to do, and he appreciates design as much as craft.”

Creative Challenge

Simon wanted to retain the historic aesthetic of the existing building while gaining flexibility. Thus, doors had to convincingly appear as large windows and then transform into expansive openings when needed.

The challenge lay in the details—large openings, a narrow frame, careful proportions, and robust custom mechanized hardware.

Experimentation, tinkering, and commitment to a vision going beyond the standard kit-of-parts resulted in a mechanism for movement that is both practical and sculptural.

More Than the Sum of Their Parts

The story of Bar Nico's doors goes beyond their physical presence; it encapsulates the spirit of joyful collaboration in crafting something extraordinary. These doors transcend their practical purpose, representing the ultimate fusion of creative vision and the art of craftsmanship.



At left: Jason Simon, chef-restaurateur of Bar Nico, wanted to retain the historic aesthetic of the existing building while gaining flexibility. Thus, doors had to convincingly appear as large windows and then transform into expansive openings when needed. **Opposite:** This custom installation is a creative collaboration between Simon, architectural design team (ASK Studio), and fabricators (Factor Fabrication).

