

Bar Raval

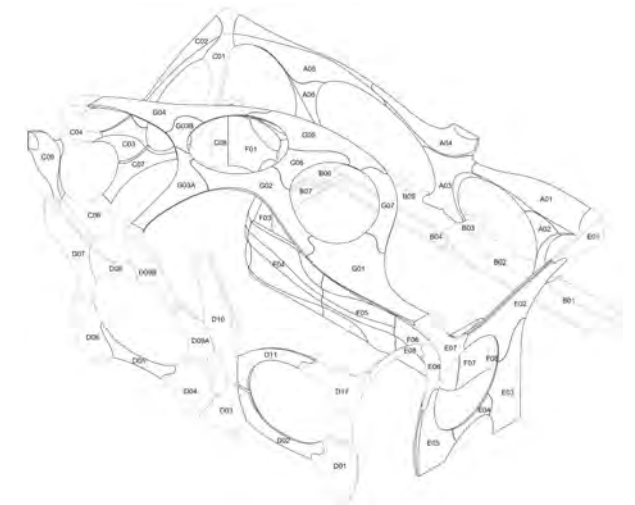
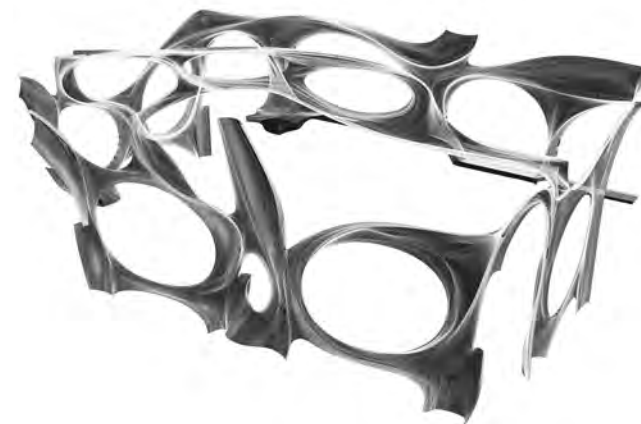
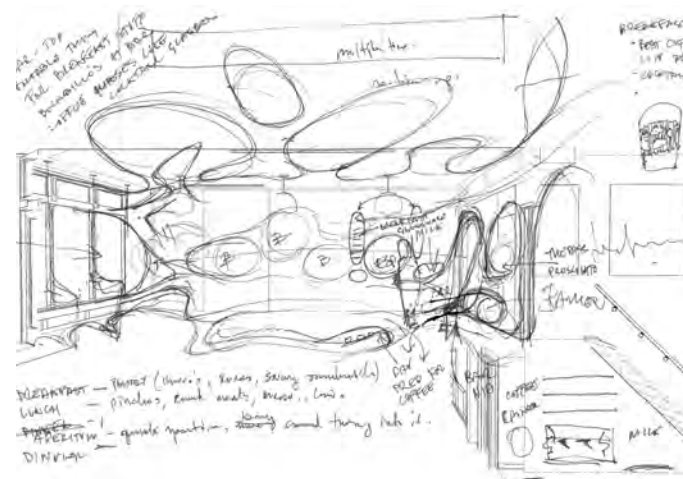
Client: Grant van Gameren, Mike Webster & Robin Goodfellow
Area: 1,980 ft² (185 m²)
Budget: Withheld
Type: Commercial, Bar/Restaurant
Location: Toronto, Canada

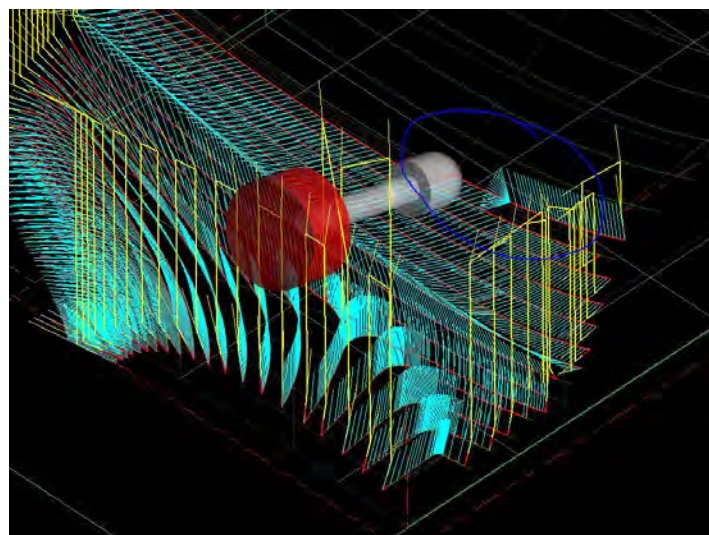
Carefully hewn from what look like Mobius strips of sinuous mahogany, Bar Raval is a 21st-century reinterpretation of Spanish Art Nouveau that introduces Toronto to the pintxo bar, a cornerstone of social and gastronomic culture in Basque Country.

The client charged us with executing an ambitious task: “create an art piece” that would become an enduring culinary and civic institution. We interpreted the directive through two aesthetic lenses: Spanish design and the physicality of the three owners who became our muses. Thus, Raval’s sculptural sentience pays direct homage to tattooed musculature in the context of Art Nouveau tropes and craftsmanship reimagined for contemporary Toronto.

The fluid smoothness of the final product belies the rigorous R&D required to achieve the vision. Ultimately, we synchronized efforts with fabricators and software engineers to rewrite software patches that would enable the customization of toolpaths to execute sculptural engravings on complex 3D surfaces. The result: 9km of serpentine engravings on 75 panels of seamlessly aligned wood.

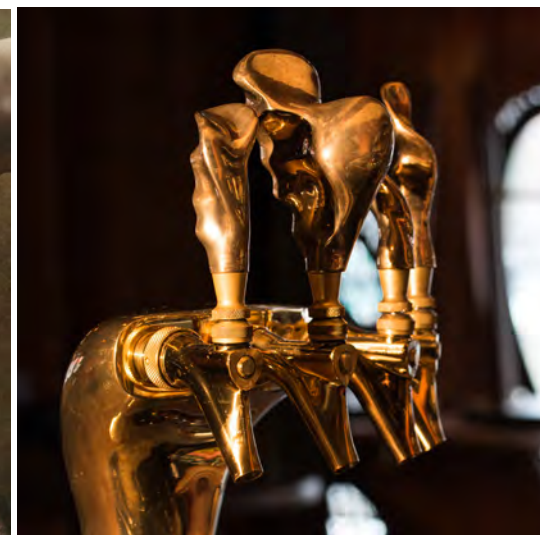
Bar Raval’s soft curves foster intimacy, fluidity, and community. A series of 3D “tattooed limbs” enfold patrons in a warm mahogany embrace, and their rippling surfaces encourage patrons to lean into and become part of the woodwork.





5-Axis CNC Toolpaths

The major R&D breakthrough born out of this intimate co-creative partnership was the development of a process that uses custom toolpaths to mill perpendicularly to complex surfaces, which was previously unachievable even with a 5-axis CNC. Experimentation with custom toolpaths is not altogether new; however, it has not hitherto been widely, let alone successfully, assayed and achieved on this scale and complexity. The reason for this is that the trial and error process is time-consuming and costly. Yet, because we had previously experimented with customization with our fabrication partners, we were able on this project, which was a similar square footage to the sauna, to halve our costs, reduce material waste, and accelerate production on even more intricate geometries without compromising the craftsmanship of the design.



Gesamtkunstwerk

With Bar Raval, we were challenged to reimagine the functional aspects of the classic bar as a stage for performance and interaction. Each workstation and vantage point was optimized for efficiency, and every back-of-bar detail was personalized, down to the custom-made back-lit drip trays and brass beer pulls, which we enlisted the owners to mould in clay with their hands. The clay positives were then 3D scanned and digitally refined, then prototyped with a 3D printer and finally cast in solid bronze.