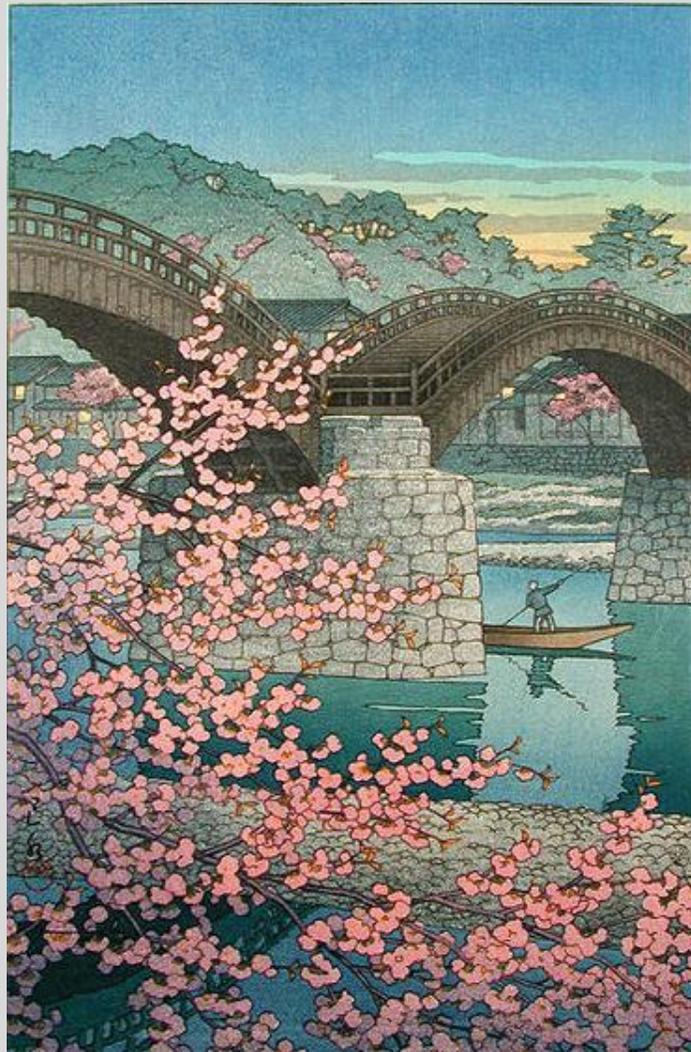




MICHAEL SCARBOROUGH  
JAPANESE-INSPIRED ART

SPRING 2017 CATALOG



Kawase Hasui – *Sakura at Kintai kyo*  
Kintai kyo is the bridge in my hometown of Iwakuni, Japan.

“Sitting quietly, doing nothing, Spring comes, and the grass grows, by itself.”

— Matsuo Bashō

**About the Artist** – Decorative arts is my second career. I tell people this, and they say, “What were you before, a stockbroker?” I say, “No, that was Paul Gauguin ... I was an opera singer.” They chuckle, assuming I’m joking. But, I’m not.

A bit of back story: I was always making things as a little boy. My great-grandfather was a mosaic artist from northern Italy, and my dad, a naval officer, built me my first workbench when I was five years old while we were living in Iwakuni, Japan in the late 1950s. Our quarters were within walking distance of the ancient Kintaikyo Bridge, the “nail-less” construction of which amazed my young western mind. I followed the building of our family boat, *Shiranami*, in which we could sail to the magical Itsukushima shrine on nearby Miyajima Island. But mostly, I was mesmerized by Japanese decorative arts, particularly lacquerware. Family lore has it that I once pointed at a piece in an antique store and stated that, “Someday I’ll make things as pretty as that!” Back in school in the States, I took shop classes, served as a carpenter’s apprentice in a boatyard and assisted my dad in the restoration of an airplane now in the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.

Despite this rich background in woodwork and craft, when time came for college, I chose music and theater, which led to 25 years of singing opera internationally. In March of 2000, I had the honor of making my solo debut at Carnegie Hall, after which I found the ambition to continue in the performing arts leaking out of me like air out of a punctured tire. I knew a life change was in order and, so, began my career in the decorative arts by restoring antique furniture. But, my love of making things from scratch soon resurfaced, as did my love for all things Japanese, and I found myself desperately wanting to make lacquerware.

Sadly, I found out the hard way that Japanese Urushi, from which traditional lacquerware is made, is as horrendously toxic as advertised. I was, however, *determined* to create pieces such as those that had transfixed me as a child. Undeterred, I embarked on a long, and at times frustrating, process to create my own formula that would replicate the look of this amazingly iconic Oriental substance. Please note that while my material itself is different, the processes I use in the creation of a piece are the same painstaking methods as those used in workshops in Japan for centuries. I have been deeply humbled to have several long-experienced Japanese lacquer artists tell me that they cannot find any visual or tactile differences between the surfaces of their work and mine.

**Decorative Techniques** – My primary inspiration is Japanese lacquerware. My passion is studying, experimenting with, and recreating the numerous techniques created by the masters, as well as creating decorative techniques of my own.

- **Wakasa Nuri** is a 17<sup>th</sup> C. finishing technique that originated in the Obama/Wakasa Bay area of Japan and reflected local artists' impressions of the mottled sea bed. Various natural elements, such as rice and leaves, are employed in the process of creating the finish.

- **Negoro Nuri** – This is a technique born from wear. As long ago as the 13<sup>th</sup> C., monks at Negoro Dera Temple began over-coating black lacquered utensils with vermillion lacquer. Over time and with repeated use, the vermillion layers were worn away revealing the black layer underneath. The monks liked this look so much that they began intentionally removing layers of vermillion when creating new pieces.

- **Kintsugi** began in the 15<sup>th</sup> C. as the art of repairing broken pottery pieces using lacquer dusted with powdered gold. The conosciuti found the resulting repairs so attractive that, according to legend, they began intentionally breaking pieces in order to have them repaired using this technique. In my pieces, I also borrow from the ancient Egyptian culture in using Encaustic wax to replicate the look of Kintsugi.

- **Jin di Sugi** is another ancient Japanese technique in which particularly resinous woods, such as cypress and pine, are scorched to remove softer grain and then burnished to reveal the pattern of the harder wood grain.



**About this Catalog** – As does life, this catalog changes frequently. So, as they say in the retail world, “Please check back often.” All pieces are numbered when begun and signed when finished. The five digit number following the title of each piece indicates the year the piece was begun and its chronological place within that year. Note: not all pieces are finished in the same year they are begun.

**Ordering information** – If you would like to order a piece from this catalog, please contact me directly ([Contact — Michael Scarborough Design](#)) to request a shipping price. (Also, if you would like additional photographs of any piece, do not hesitate to ask.) We use Square, a fully secure system, to process credit card payments.



晚照 Ban-shou  
(Tea at Sunset)



## SHIRANAMI COLLECTION

### WORKS INSPIRED BY OLD JAPAN

**Why Shiranami?** – *Shiranami* (White Wave) was the name of the sail boat my dad had built in Japan and on which many wonderful overnight trips were taken by our family around the *Seto Naikai* (The Inland Sea) in the late 1950s. It is traditional for artists in Japan to choose an *art name*; *Shiranami* was an obvious choice for me. I write it in the upper half of an enclosed circle as a nod to one of my favorite Japanese painters, *Ogata Korin*, and the *Rinpa* school of painters who were inspired by his work, as both are increasingly influencing the portions of my oeuvre which are historical in nature.





Title: *Hinode* ("Sunrise") (16-011)  
Created: November 2016  
Materials: Tiger Maple, Base: Mahogany, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 3" h X 9.5" w  
Price: \$1,850  
Note: Normally I try to achieve as thin a *wall*, or side, as possible when creating a bowl. However, once I began to get deeply into forming this piece of Tiger Maple, an amazing sort of cathedral figure began to reveal itself. This figure put me in mind of the sun rising over a calm sea. Not wanting to go any further into the wood for fear of losing this calming, naturally-occurring scene, I stopped where I was.

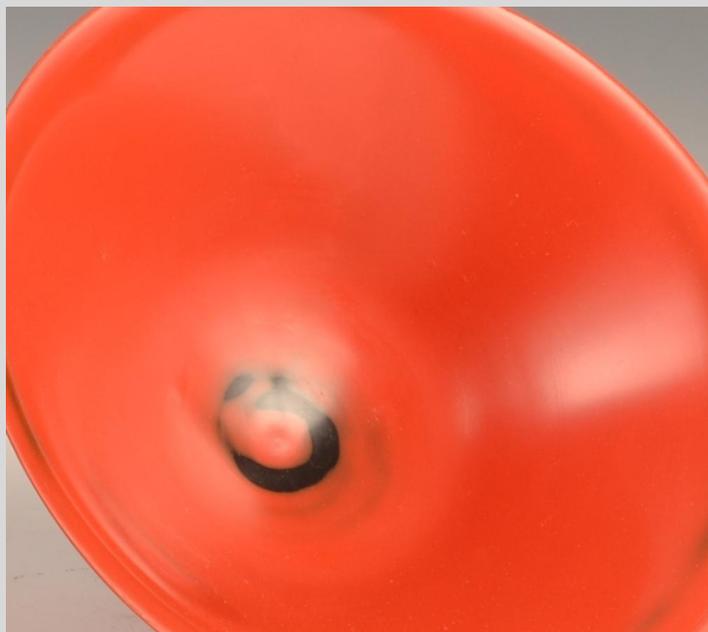




Title: Chawan (14-022)  
Created: Completed November 2016  
Materials: Cocobolo, 22k Gold powder  
Dimensions: 3.5" h X 3.75" w  
Price: \$525  
Note: Imagine my amazement when this astoundingly symmetrical and chromatically harmonized figure appeared after cutting away the exterior of this piece of Cocobolo. I took advantage of two naturally occurring clefts in the rim of the piece to create the wave-like pattern of the rim. A long-since-departed six-legged occupant had left three diminutive holes, which I chose to fill with gold powder, a detail which I repeated in the bottom of the piece.



Title: *Negoro Nuri* Style Bowl (14-026)  
Created: Completed November 2016  
Materials: Kingwood, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 3" h X 5.75" w  
Price: \$525  
Note: Rice bowl finished in the *Negoro nuri* lacquerware style.





Title: Un-lidded Bowl (16-025)

Created: November 2016

Materials: Maple, Oil paint

Dimensions: 3.25" h X 5" w

Price: \$575

Note: I agree with well-known jewelry photographer, Bob Barrett, that "Shiny, black objects are next to impossible to photograph." What appear to be splotchy areas on this gleaming black piece are merely reflections of the studio lights.





Title: *Negori Nuri* Style Sake Cup (16-020)  
Created: April 2016  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 1.5" h X 3.25" w  
Price: \$225  
Note: During the winter of 2015–2016, I made a brief foray into metal work. I was given four 6-inch discs of copper from which to make four differently shaped vessels. My teacher insisted that I draw plans for each, but I found it far easier, and more natural, to make wooden models of each. Never one to waste effort or good material, I have since finished them as these very diminutive sake cups.





Title: *Negoro Nuri Style Sake Cup (16-019)*

Created: April 2016

Materials: Maple, Oil paint

Dimensions: 2.25" h X 2.75" w

Price: \$225

Note: During the winter of 2015–2016, I made a brief foray into metal work. I was given four 6-inch discs of copper from which to make four differently shaped vessels. My teacher insisted that I draw plans for each, but I found it far easier, and more natural, to make wooden models of each. Never one to waste effort or good material, I have since finished them as these very diminutive sake cups.





Title: *Negoro Nuri* Style Sake Cup (16-018)  
Created: April 2016  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 2" h X 2.75" w  
Price: \$225  
Note: During the winter of 2015–2016, I made a brief foray into metal work. I was given four 6-inch discs of copper from which to make four differently shaped vessels. My teacher insisted that I draw plans for each, but I found it far easier, and more natural, to make wooden models of each. Never one to waste effort or good material, I have since finished them as these very diminutive sake cups.





Title: *Negoro Nuri Style Sake Cup (16-017)*  
Created: April 2016  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 1.5" h X 3.5" w  
Price: \$225  
Note: During the winter of 2015–2016, I made a brief foray into metal work. I was given four 6-inch discs of copper from which to make four differently shaped vessels. My teacher insisted that I draw plans for each, but I found it far easier, and more natural, to make wooden models of each. Never one to waste effort or good material, I have since finished them as these very diminutive sake cups.





Title: *Negoro Nuri* Style Bowl (12-020)  
Created: December 2012  
Materials: Catalpa, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 3" h X 6.5" w  
Retail Price: \$650  
Note: This bowl is finished in the style of *Negoro nuri* lacquerware in which years of use have worn away areas of the vermilion color to reveal the black underneath. Please note, as any highly- polished object is difficult to photograph, be aware that the white looking areas are merely the reflections of the lights used in the photographic process.



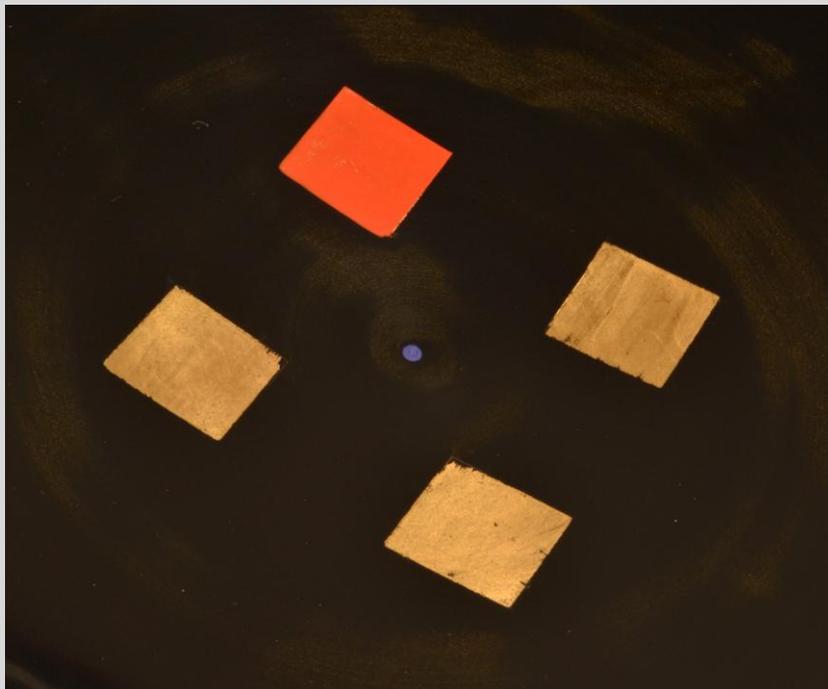


Title: *Negoro Nuri* Style Bowl (13-002)  
Created: January 2013  
Materials: Cherry, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 2.5" h X 8.25" w  
Retail Price: \$525  
Note: Numerous layers of increasingly transparent glaze were used to slowly build the surface of this piece to give it its visual depth. Please note, as any highly- polished object is difficult to photograph, be aware that the white looking areas are merely the reflections of the lights used in the photographic process.





Title: "Red Square" (16-009)  
Created: March 2016  
Materials: Poplar, Oil paint, Gold leaf, Mica Powder  
Dimensions: 4" h X 11.5" w  
Price: \$1,150  
Note: This piece evolved in-process. I suddenly had the urge to make it non-opaque, then to add four gold squares, then to make one of them red, and then an urge to add a blue dot in the center. As a child of the Cold War, the name Red Square had more *bang* than the name Blue Dot. (And I think Piet Mondrian would like the arrangement.)





Title: *Negoro Nuri* Style Chawan (14-027)  
Created: October 2014  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 4.5" h X 2.5" w  
Retail Price: \$325  
Note: A small tea bowl finished in the *Negoro nuri* lacquerware style.





Title: *Wakasa Nuri* Style Bowl (16-001)  
Created: January 2016  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 2.5" h X 4.75" w  
Price: \$650  
Note: This piece was the first in which I created a surface using cotton balls spun in the still-wet paint. The effect is intended to put one in mind of withered peony blossoms strewn in the garden.





Title: *Wakasa Nuri Style Chawan (16-004)*  
Created: March 2016  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 2.5" h X 2.75" w  
Price: \$275  
Note: Please note the size of this piece. While not quite as small as 16-005, it is quite diminutive and sits comfortably in the palm of one's hand.





Title: *Wakasa Nuri Style Sake Cup (16-005)*  
Created: March 2016  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 2" h X 2.5" w  
Price: \$250  
Note: Please note the size of this piece. It is about as diminutive a piece as I have ever made and, quite literally, sits comfortably in the palm of a delicate hand.





Title: *Wakasa Nuri* Style Bowl (13-023)  
Created: April 2013  
Materials: Linden, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 3.75" h X 11" w  
Retail Price: \$850  
Note: The interior of this piece is finished in the *Wakasa nuri* lacquerware style, a technique which uses rice grains as part of the decorative process.





Title: "Little Peasant II" (16-016)

Created: November 2016

Materials: Tiger Maple, Oil paint

Dimensions: 2.75" h X 3.25" w

Price: \$525

Note: This bowl has been finished using the *Wakasa nuri* lacquer technique. However, large areas of the wood, rescued after Hurricane Sandy, have been allowed to show through.





Title: "Peasant II" (16-015)  
Created: November 2016  
Materials: Tiger maple, Oil paint, 23k gold leaf  
Dimensions: 3.25" h X 6.5" w  
Price: \$575  
Note: This bowl has been finished using the *Wakasa nuri* lacquer technique. However, large areas of the wood, rescued after Hurricane Sandy, have been allowed to show through. A naturally occurring fissure in the wood has been filled in the manner of the *Kintsugi* technique of traditional Japanese lacquer repair.





Title: "Little Peasant" (14-031)  
Created: October 2014  
Materials: Honduran mahogany, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 4.75" h X 3" w  
Retail Price: \$525  
Note: A tea bowl finished in the *Wakasa nuri* lacquerware style and imbued with a sense of exaggerated and venerated age.





Title: Muromachi Style Footed Basin (14-012)  
Created: October 2014  
Materials: Fir, mahogany, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 5.5" h X 11" w  
Retail Price: \$1,750  
Note: A basin based on one that might have been used in Buddhist or Shinto ceremonies.



# SANDY'S CHILDREN

*The Sandy Series is comprised of pieces made with wood salvaged in our neighborhood following Hurricane Sandy in 2012.*

I wrote the following essay in the days following the storm. It was published in the American Craft Council's on-line magazine.

## FROM DEVASTATION WILL RISE BEAUTY

*It's hard for most people to believe, but, besides raccoons and possums, we also have a family of hawks living here within view of the Empire State Building, in Sunnyside Gardens, NYC. But, at the moment, the hawks are homeless.*

*It's now been two full months since the fury of Hurricane Sandy swept through our little neighborhood .... and the neighborhoods, and lives, of so many others. Even though our little haven was spared the utter devastation of places like Breezy Point, the Rockaways, and areas of Staten Island and the Jersey Shore, we, nevertheless, had an up-close and personal view of what hurricane-force winds can do.*

*I went out the morning after the main event to take some pictures, and, for once, the word "overwhelming" was not an exaggeration. But, as I began to narrow the scope of what I was seeing by focusing through the camera lens, a feeling of perseverance and determination began to creep into my over-whelmed brain. Even though the car I was looking at was totally smashed, the ginko leaf stuck to its window seemed to say, "Something good can come of this."*

*The physical damage has been widely reported, but there is a whole other level of "aesthetic damage" that has not yet been fully comprehended. Our friends, Deb and Carlos, lost a massive and magnificent Silver Maple that they referred to as "their child." A poet might have called it a fine example of arboreal splendor. It had been home to the aforementioned family of hawks, and many wonderful evening meals had been shared by neighbors under its sheltering canopy. Thankfully, no one was injured in the fall of the tree, but for Deb and Carlos, the emotional damage was great. She still cannot speak of it without crying.*

*In the weeks after the storm, I began bringing in wood from the downed trees to use in future projects. I was unloading some large chunks of maple when my UPS man, who hails from Jamaica, said, "Ah...bringing in firewood." I said, "No, these blocks will all be turned into bowls." He responded with one of those voices for the ages, "Ya see ... everyone else sees a disaaahstah, but you see a blessin', mon." Leave it to a man who claimed to know nothing of art to be able to voice exactly what I'd been thinking.*

*I try my best to use "found wood" for my work. In most cases it's simply "botanical road kill" cut by the Highway Department. I try to get to it before it goes into the chipper, and its potential for beauty is lost forever. There's usually no spectacular story to go with it. But this wood from Sandy has an entirely different feeling to it. There's maybe a subliminal malevolence to it because of the pain and suffering associated with the storm. But, maybe that malevolence can be replaced with the benevolence of turning each chunk into something beautiful and gifting those pieces to my neighbors who lost some of Sunnyside Gardens' oldest and most beautiful specimens. Perhaps they will find a beauty in them that will help ease the pain.*

*The healing and rebuilding has begun for everyone. Word is that the hawks have already found a new tree.*





Title: *Sandy's Child #8 (16-008)*  
Created: April 2016  
Materials: London Plane, Oil paint, 23k Gold leaf  
Dimensions: 9.5" h X 4.5" w  
Retail Price: \$1,125  
Note: This piece was created using wood from trees that fell in our neighborhood during Hurricane Sandy. I started the basic finish with the Wakasa nuri technique, then slowly built up the layers with increasingly thinned paint as glazes. Chain saw marks on the top were intentionally left un-sanded and then covered with gold leaf. This piece was exhibited at The Center for Art in Wood in 2016.





Title: *Sandy's Child #7 (14-004)*  
Created: Completed November 2016  
Materials: London Plane, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 7.75"h X 4.25"w  
Retail Price: \$1,125  
Note: This piece was created using wood from trees that fell in our neighborhood during Hurricane Sandy. The surface was created by slowly building multiple layers of increasingly thinned paint as glazes.



Title: *Sandy's Child #11* (14-010)

Created: Completed November 2016

Materials: London Plane, Oil paint

Dimensions: 8.25" h X 4.75" w

Retail Price: \$1,025

Note: This piece was created using wood from trees that fell in our neighborhood during Hurricane Sandy. The surface was created by impressing burlap into the still wet paint, then applying the alternate color and sanding it back. It is a variation I have developed based on the traditional *Wakasa nuri* decorative lacquerware finish.



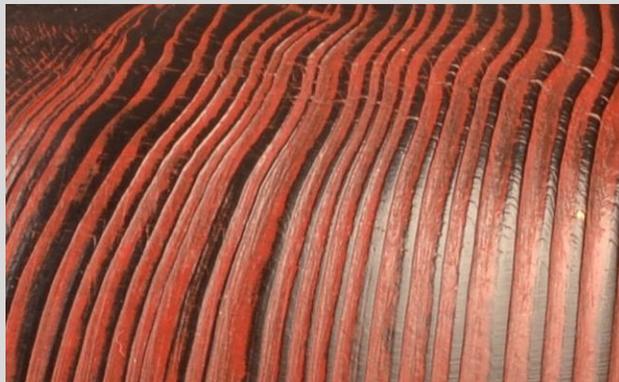
# THE CYPRESS SERIES

Pieces created using old-growth swamp cypress and incorporating the ancient Japanese finishing technique of *Jin di Sugi*. In some cases, the technique of *Kintsugi* has been used to fill fissures, but with an even more ancient Western material, Encaustic Wax.





Title: Lidded Vessel (16-021)  
Created: November 2016  
Materials: Swamp cypress, Maple, Oil paint, Encaustic wax  
Dimensions: 5.5" h X 5.25" w  
Retail Price: \$650  
Note: Old-growth swamp cypress has been treated with the ancient Japanese *Jin di sugi* technique of blow torching and wire brushing. Several layers of increasingly thinned paint are then applied, such as a glaze would be, and rubbed off. Naturally occurring fissures in the wood have been filled with encaustic wax.





Title: Lidded Vessel (16-022)  
Created: November 2016  
Materials: Cypress, Maple, Oil paint, Encaustic wax  
Dimensions: 6" h X 4.75" w  
Price: \$625  
Note: Old-growth swamp cypress has been treated with the ancient Japanese *Jin di sugi* technique of blow torching and wire brushing. Several layers of increasingly thinned paint are then applied, such as a glaze would be, and rubbed off. Naturally occurring fissures in the wood have been filled with encaustic wax.





Title: Lidded Chaire (15-004)  
Created: January 2015  
Materials: Swamp cypress, 23k gold leaf, Oil paint glaze, Tung oil, wax  
Dimensions: 4" h X 5.25" w  
Retail Price: \$575  
Note: Old-growth swamp cypress has been treated with the ancient Japanese *Jin di sugi* technique of blow torching and wire brushing.



# CANDLESTICKS





Title: "Afterglow" Candlesticks (13-022)  
Created: September 2013  
Materials: Maple, lacquer, copper leaf, iron nails,  
soil (dry Georgia red clay)  
Dimensions: 22.5" h X 5" w  
Retail Price: \$1,500  
Note: Inspired by the time of evening when the sun has set but  
there is still a subtle, russet glow in the West, this set was  
featured in the Dec. 2013 edition of *Maine Home and Design*  
magazine, and were also the subject of a feature article in  
the February 2014 issue of *Woodturning Magazine* (UK).



Title: Ceremonial Candlestick Trio (15-006)  
Created: Completed July 2015  
Materials: Mahogany, 23k gold leaf, Oil Paint  
Dimensions: 19" h X 7" w, 17" h X 6.5" w X 14" h X 5.5" w  
Retail Price: \$1,750  
Note: This type of candlestick arrangement might have originally been found on an altar at a Buddhist temple or Shinto shrine.



Title: Ceremonial Candlesticks (13-015)

Created: June 2013

Materials: Poplar, iron nails, Oil paint

Dimensions: 14" h X 5.75" w

Retail Price: \$1,500

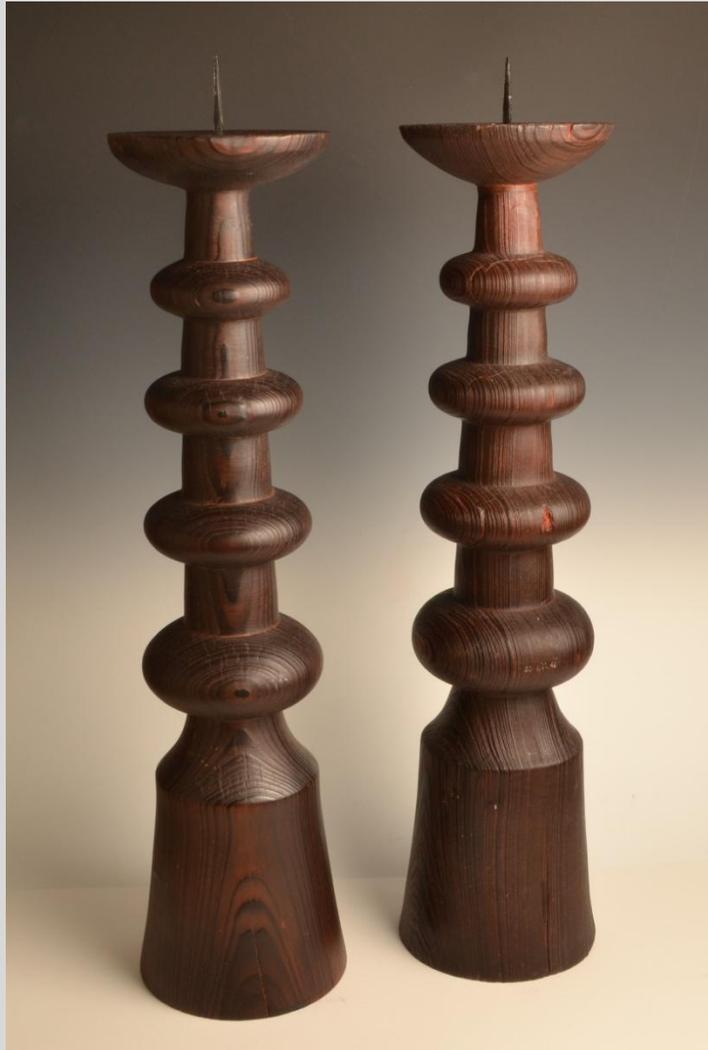
Note: This set of *Shokudai*, (candlesticks) was inspired by a set originally created in the early eighteenth century.



Title: Meiji Ceremonial Candlesticks (34")  
Created: Editioned  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint  
Dimensions: 34" h X 8" w  
Retail Price: \$3,250  
Note: These candlesticks were inspired by a Meiji period brass lamp that my parents bought in Japan and which has always fascinated me. I was delighted when TV design guru, Vern Yip, purchased a pair similar to these for his home. Please note that there is a *three week* preparation time when a set of these candlesticks is ordered.



Title: Meiji Ceremonial Candlesticks (37") (14-007)  
Created: June 2014  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint, Iron nails  
Dimensions: 37" h X 8"w  
Retail Price: \$3,500  
Note: These candlesticks were inspired by a Meiji period brass lamp that my parents bought in Japan and which has always fascinated me.



Title: Cypress Candlesticks (15-008)  
Created: January 2015  
Materials: Cypress, oil, wax  
Dimensions: 22" h X 5"w  
Retail Price: \$1,150  
Note: The Japanese technique of *Jin di sugi*, contrasted with red glaze, has been used to emphasize the grain pattern in this set of candlesticks.



# TEA SETS





Title: "Akebono" ("Tea at Dawn") (13-019)  
Created: March 2013  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint, 23k gold leaf, mica powder  
Dimensions: 12" h X 9.5" w  
Retail Price: \$3,250  
Note: Specifically, it's that sort of dawn when the sun is still well below the horizon, though beginning to turn Eastern clouds red, yet the Western sky is still dark enough for stars to be seen.

**This tea set is not functional.**





Title: "Tea at Noon" (16-024)  
Created: Completed November 2016  
Materials: Maple, Oil paint, 23k Gold leaf  
Dimensions: 10.5" h X 5.5" w  
Retail Price: \$3,250  
Note: This tea set, with its blazing vermillion color, is intended to put the viewer in mind of the time of day when the sun is at its zenith.

**This tea set is not functional.**





Title: "Copper Tea" (13-028)  
Created: June 2013  
Materials: Cherry, Oil paint, maple, pine, copper leaf,  
Dimensions: Tea pot - 6" h X 10" w X 6"d  
Retail Price: \$2,950  
Note: This piece is finished in the *Wakasa nuri* lacquer ware style, using rice grains and copper leaf as part of the process. It is meant to put the viewer in mind of a coppersy sunset.

**This tea set is not functional.**

# PIECES OTHERWISE DEFYING CATEGORIZATION





Title: Kotsuzumi - Collaboration with Harvey Fein (13-031)  
Created: September 2013  
Materials: Drum – Cherry, lacquer, oil paint, 23k gold leaf, parchment, Japanese Sumi-e ink  
Stand – Poplar, lacquer, 23k gold leaf  
Dimensions: Drum – 6.5” h X 8.5” w  
Stand – 5.5” h X 10” w  
Retail price: \$3,250  
Note: Harvey Fein, the world-renowned wood artist, handed me this piece of wood and said, “I can tell by the gleam in your eye that you know exactly what you want to do with this....go have fun.” I did and finished it as a *Kotsuzumi*, a small drum used in performances of Japanese Noh drama.

This piece was part of the exhibition, **Turning Twenty** at the *Center for Furniture Craftsmanship* in Rockport, Maine, 2013.



Title: Gentleman's Jewelry Box with Antique Hardware (11-029)

Created: December 2011

Materials: Cypress, white oak, Oil plant, Edo-period iron hardware, silk cord, Urushi lacquer paper

Dimensions: 8" h X 15" w X 9" d

Retail Price: \$1,250

Note: This box was created using a reclaimed piece of wood upon which mushrooms had been grown, a process which left it looking quite aged, and which I exaggerated. The interior is lined with red dragonfly paper, a symbol of childhood in Japan. This combination of textures supports the theory that no matter how aged a man may appear, he is eternally youthful inside.





Title: "Confluence"  
Created: July 2014  
Materials: Kingwood, Oil paint, Tung oil, wax  
Dimensions: 5" h X 12" w  
Retail Price: \$2,200  
Note: This piece is the result of my collaboration with wood artist, John Beaver. As John's work is inspired by the waves of California, and my work is, in part, inspired by sailing on our family's boat, *Shiranami* (White Wave) as a boy in Japan, *Confluence* seemed a fitting name.

