

Michael Scarborough

New York

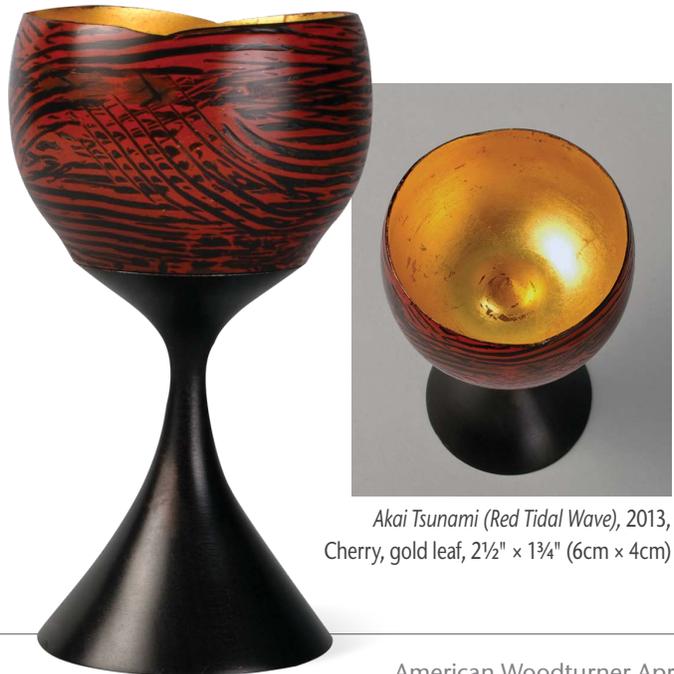
My great-grandfather was a mosaic artist from northern Italy, and my father built me my first workbench when I was five. But, undoubtedly, the strongest artistic influence on my life was my childhood spent in rural Japan surrounded by the natural beauty, the ancient architecture, and the people themselves.

My work is primarily inspired by traditional Japanese *Urushi* lacquerware. The pieces seen here were generally influenced by the iconic red and black surfaces created by the 16th c. monks at the *Negoro Dera* temple, but each has its own story. Whereas the ceremonial dipper reminds me of one I saw as a child in Yamaguchi prefecture, the golden hooves on the Boar bowl are an example of my own artistic madness. And, while the creation of *Tea at Dawn* was an unfettered flow from conception to execution, I struggled for hours to “perfect” the calligraphy in *Mu (Nothingness)*. Eventually, I gave up and, on a whim, spun the bowl with my hand, touched the brush against the surface, and *voilà!* ...or should I say, *banzai!*

Akai Tsunami was created in recognition of the Fukushima disaster. A raised cone in the bottom of the piece symbolizes the sub-oceanic volcanoes that surround Japan, while indentations in the lip represent its mountains and valleys. The gilded interior has been left with a feeling of *wabi-sabi*, intentional imperfection, to represent the scars left in Fukushima. As with all traditional lacquer pieces, the finish serves as structural support for the wall, which in this piece is similar in thickness to an eggshell, representing the fragility of our home planet.

Japan—and Asia in general—continue to provide me with an inexhaustible supply of inspirational forms and surfaces. Whether it is a trip to a museum, an antique store, or thumbing through family albums, I always come away with an urge to get into the studio and play.

For more, visit michaelscarboroughdesign.com.



Akai Tsunami (Red Tidal Wave), 2013, Cherry, gold leaf, 2½" × 1¾" (6cm × 4cm)

Ceremonial Dipper, 2011, Maple, mahogany, 6" x 17" (15cm x 43cm)

Collection of Albert and Tina LeCoff



Wild Boar with Golden Hooves, 2013, Linden, sapele, gold leaf, 7½" x 11" (19cm x 28cm)



Akebono (Tea at Dawn), 2013, Maple, gold leaf, mica powder, 12" x 9½" (30cm x 24cm)



Mu (Nothingness), 2014, Maple, 4½" x 13" (11cm x 33cm)

Collection of Steve Keeble and Karen Depew

