

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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MODERN FAMILY

Potter Shio Kusaka and painter Jonas Wood are taking on L.A.'s flourishing art scene. But first they have to tackle what's for dinner. The power couple invite Margaret Wappler to their Mar Vista home

Photographed by MARK MAHANEY

Kusaka and Wood in the dining room with their children, Momo (seated) and Kiki



Styling editor: Sarah Schustheim; set design: Jenni Kistina at TMG-LA.com

After making art in their shared Culver City studio all day, potter Shio Kusaka and her husband, painter Jonas Wood, are back at their airy bungalow, 15 minutes away in the Mar Vista area of Los Angeles, focusing on the biggest collaboration of their domestic lives: their

daughter, Momo, four, and son, Kiki, two. It's dinnertime, and hanging over the utilitarian table is a 2010 abstract drawing by Wood that could fetch thousands, but the kids only have eyes for their rice balls topped with dinosaur-shaped nori.

The couple, fast-rising art stars who moved to Los Angeles in 2003, have attracted attention for their ambitious work. Kusaka, 42, creates quirky pots influenced by her grandmother's tea ceremonies in her native Japan, which are collected by Richard Prince and

LIVING | Design | 277 | ELLE

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(Left) The dining room, with a table by Blu Dot beneath an abstract by Wood; (right) a kitchen counter, with ceramics by Ruby Neri and Akio Takamori



California pottery masters David Cressey and Robert Maxwell.

Hung out of the reach of little hands are two darkly colorful pieces from Mark Grotjahn, a geometric series from Brian

Cindy Sherman and which graced this year's Whitney Biennial. Lauded by *New York Times* critic Roberta Smith, Wood's vibrant portraits and still lifes are often based on photographic collage. Increasingly, their careers are intertwining, with their home and their studio each functioning as incubator and catalyst.

Married for 12 years, the two met while students at the University of Washington in Seattle in 2000. After renting for years around L.A., they bought their first home in 2012. Eschewing the home-as-gallery fuss, Kusaka says, "We're trying to have a stress-free vibe" where the kids can run around—so they turned the living room and kitchen area into one big circle. Outside, the motif repeats in a lush ring of bamboo, papyrus, and banana trees ("A jungle!" Momo says).

Enlisting the expertise of Jeff Guga, whose firm is designing the next restaurant from Animal duo Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo, they knocked out walls, installed skylights, built plywood cabinets, and kept furniture to a minimum—but not *minimalist*. Kusaka, dressed in black with her inky hair in a topknot, wrinkles her nose at the word. "When people say that," she explains, "they picture a certain thing. I like minimal things, but it's not really design. It's not a house where everything has its place."

But that doesn't mean they don't have a strong vision. Occupying the living room are little more than a bed for their cocker spaniel mix, Robot, and an L-shaped IKEA couch, along with hefty vessels by

Sharp, and in the kids' room, large dreamy prints by Wood's sister, the photographer Augusta Wood. Not only is art making in the family—collecting is as well: Wood's grandfather bought Calder's and Rauschenbergs and sold a Francis Bacon painting for more than a million dollars, which paid Wood's way through college.

Wood, 37, and Kusaka couldn't afford to collect art until their own careers took off, which happened for Wood in 2006. Soon after, he persuaded Kusaka to leave her day job assisting an artist. The gambit paid off—in 2009, she was offered a solo show in Chicago. Then, just



(Clockwise from top left) Artwork by Wood and Kusaka, respectively; the couple's shared studio space; more of Kusaka's work

as offers were rolling in from New York and London, Kusaka got pregnant. "You know how female artists are always worried that they have to do the career first and then the babies later? Well, it kept me going," she says. "Babies and the career...it just came together."

Kusaka's family and career continue to dovetail. At their Culver City studio, outfitted with an outdoor kiln and a makeshift basketball court, Kusaka sometimes paints Jurassic figures on her pots, inspired by Momo's dino obsession. Wood's still lifes frequently incorporate his wife's pots, but with changes to their shape or pattern. She, in turn, borrows motifs from his paintings. They'll be showcasing that symbiosis in January 2015 at Gagosian's Hong Kong outpost.

Kusaka's basketball pots (sports are also a theme in Wood's work) resemble something more animalistic than her husband's version—one of hers is like a tiger's head—which is a difference she enjoys but didn't plan. "I react to what I see," Kusaka says. "I don't like to dwell on the concept too much. I look and see and react." •

