

Keiko and Taku Shinomoto have filled their Southern California home with furniture by Taku and pieces by some of the artists and craftspeople whose work they also showcase at their Tortoise shops and showroom. The couple worked

with architectural designer Ken Tanaka to remodel the house, once a cramped, two-bedroom rental. A sofa and tables by Taku join Jasper Morrison's Three Sofa De Luxe sofa for Cappellini. The sliders are by Western Window Systems.

Mom

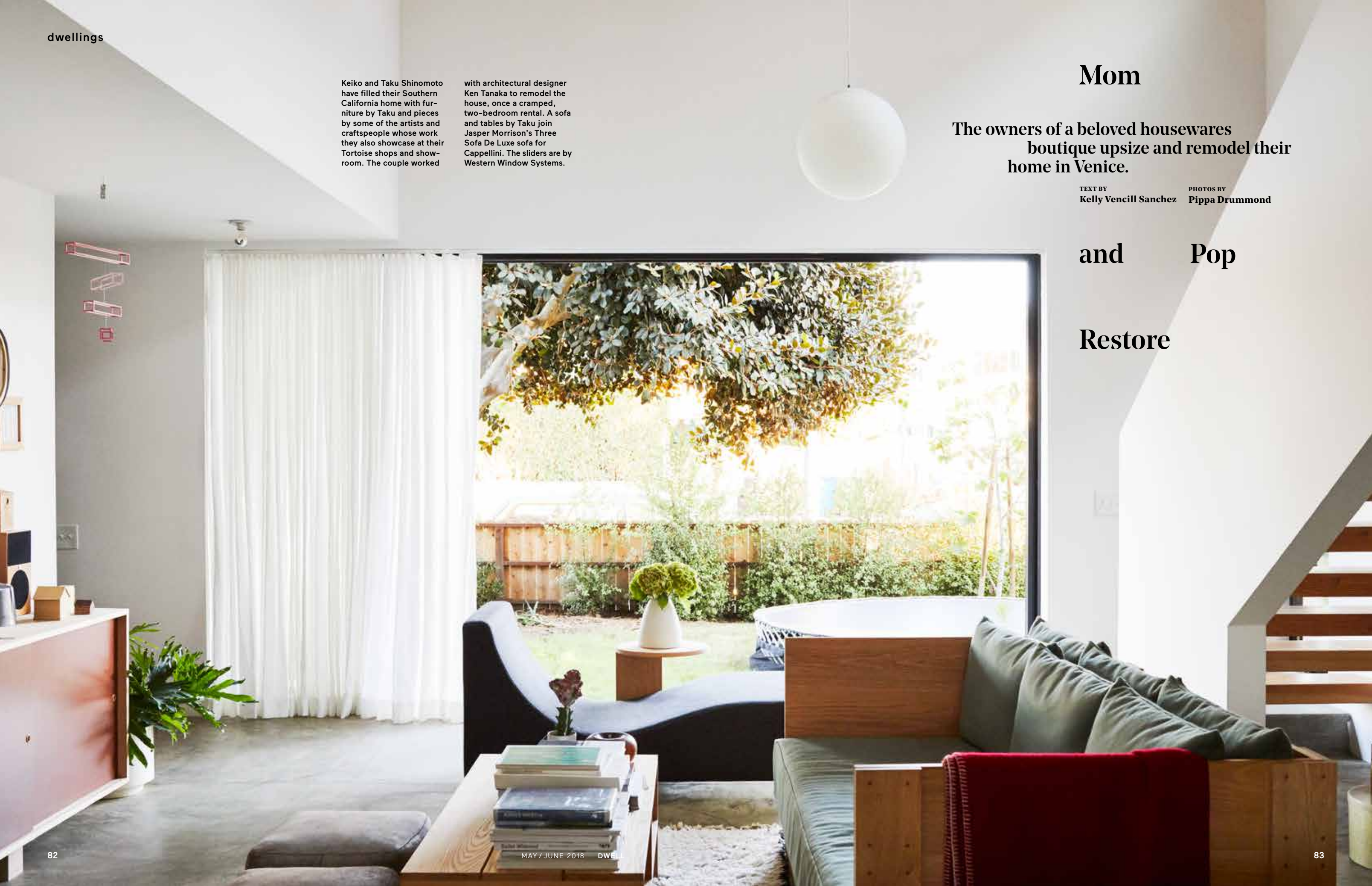
The owners of a beloved housewares boutique upsize and remodel their home in Venice.

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and Pop

Restore



Keiko and Takuhiro Shinomoto have been sharing their passion for Japanese home goods ever since they arrived in Los Angeles from Tokyo in 2003. Opened the same year, their Tortoise General Store, soon to move from Venice to Mar Vista, has grown into a destination for everything from Hasami porcelain to Japanese woodworking classes and art exhibitions.

So it's little surprise that when the couple got the chance to buy their 1940s rental home in Venice and decided to remodel, they looked to Japan for inspiration—specifically to Tokyo, to the 1935 residence of Frank Lloyd Wright apprentice Kameki Tsuchiura and to the 1970s home of Keiko's aunt and uncle. Both feature clean lines and multilevel, open-plan interiors.

The Shinomotos wanted the same heightened volume and minimalist aesthetic for their own home, so they reached out to Ken Tanaka, a Tokyo native and licensed Japanese architect who had relocated to the U.S. to work in the office of A. Quincy Jones Associates before establishing his own practice in L.A. in 1990. He had met the Shinomotos at their shop while working on stores for Patagonia, and the trio had discovered a shared design philosophy.

"We loved Ken's ideas," says Keiko. "He understood Taku's aesthetic, which is all about simplicity."

Before moving to the States, the couple had worked for Tokyo home and lifestyle brand *Idée*—Taku as an in-house furniture designer and director, and Keiko as a store manager—but the focus on consumerism left them disillusioned. They quit their jobs and traveled around Japan, exploring the country's rich folk and craft traditions. Their path, they said, was like that of a tortoise—slow and steady.

After Taku won the lottery for permanent resident status in the U.S., the couple considered settling in New York, but on a visit to L.A., they fell in love with the climate and the lifestyle. "We saw dolphins jumping at Hermosa Beach and the flowers and blue sky, and we thought, this is the place to start," Keiko recalls.

Having a place of their own meant they could realize their vision for a "timeless and modern" residence. They discussed with Tanaka how they could rework the 900-square-foot house and expand the livable space for themselves and their young son, Eugene. Tanaka considered the options for the compact site and designed a remodel that stretched the footprint >



White walls and concrete floors provide a pared-down setting for Taku's oak furniture (above and below right). The kitchen cabinets, designed by Taku and built by Osamu Hironaga, hold dishes from Taku's Hasami porcelain line (below left), which is produced in Nagasaki. Sliders open to a deck and beyond to a 1960s Airstream (opposite) once owned by sculptor Alma Allen in Joshua Tree. The couple use it for guests.



"The house has no fussy details and doesn't make a big statement."
Ken Tanaka, architectural designer





**“Our idea was a timeless design,
like a Neutra house.”**
Keiko Shinomoto, resident

A mobile by Shigeki Fujishiro floats above a sideboard by Taku (opposite). The birdcage is by Keiichi Sumi. A Peter Ivy pendant hangs over the dining table and benches, also by Taku. At one end

is a collection of candlesticks, prototypes for Tortoise that will be manufactured in Hokkaido. The simple wood treads on the open-riser staircase complement the unfinished ceiling beams.

dwelling

slightly, opened the ground floor, and added a second floor for bedrooms and a small third-floor space for traditional Japanese bathing. Rooftop solar panels handle energy needs.

The main floor is an airy, double-height expanse that contains the living/dining area and the kitchen. Floor-to-ceiling glass sliders open wide to the front and rear yards, where contractor Danny Nakao took care to preserve the existing trees. An office/guestroom, laundry, pantry, and bathroom are tucked out of view behind a sliding door. "I call it the See-Through House," Tanaka explains. "It's not big—just under 2,500 square feet—but the feeling is big. Every room is the right scale."

Taku, who cites artist Donald Judd and Sea Ranch as inspirations, was adamant that the home be modest in aesthetic as well as size. "I didn't want to use gorgeous

materials, but standard, simple, and local ones—not just from here but from the whole West Coast," he says.

Tanaka responded by incorporating no-frills materials like concrete, plywood, and pine. The cedar shingles on the exterior will weather to a silvery finish.

The spaces offer an understated backdrop for Taku's simply crafted oak furnishings—seating, tables, beds, cabinets, and built-ins—along with pieces the couple have collected over the years. There are porcelain and stoneware vessels by Shio Kusaka and Adam Silverman, paintings by Nobuko Tsuchiura and Jonas Wood, and a mobile by Shigeki Fujishiro.

An open staircase along the southwest wall leads to a bridge wide enough to double as a sitting/reading area and outfitted by Taku with a long bench and cabinets. It ends at the private quarters—a bedroom

for Eugene, where Taku designed a built-in bunk/playhouse; the master bedroom; and a bathroom in between. To bring natural light into the rooms, Tanaka added hatch windows that overlook the main space below. The third floor holds a small deck and Tanaka's version of a Japanese bath, with a place to shower before soaking in a tub with a view of the sky.

Out back, he transformed the garage into a plywood-paneled guesthouse. Next to it, a mid-1960s Airstream purchased on eBay offers additional guest quarters.

With the breeze floating through the open doors and the sound of Eugene playing with his friends upstairs, there's a feeling of great serenity contained within a limited space. "The main floor is so open and spacious that people think, 'Huge house,'" says Taku. "They imagine it's much bigger. But it's a modest place." ■

A scalloped bench by Alma Allen rests at the foot of the bed in the master bedroom (near right), which is illuminated in part by one of two hatched windows (far right) that Tanaka modeled after those he had seen in Japanese tea houses. Taku designed built-in storage for Eugene's room (opposite, top left), along with a shingled playhouse/bunkbed (opposite, top right). Pieces by Taku furnish the guest room, which Tanaka converted from the old garage, incorporating straightforward, unfinished materials like plywood (opposite, bottom right).



Shinomoto House

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER Ken Tanaka Studio LOCATION Venice, California

- A Entrance
- B Living Area
- C Dining Area
- D Kitchen
- E Office/Guestroom
- F Bathroom
- G Laundry/Storage
- H Master Bedroom
- I Sitting/Reading Area
- J Bedroom
- K Deck
- L Japanese Bath

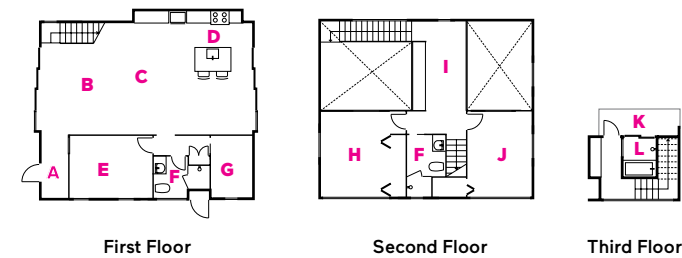


ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT



More at Dwell.com
For additional photos of the Shinomotos' Japanese-inspired home, go online: dwell.com/mom-and-pop-restore