



WEB-EXCLUSIVE HOME TOUR

## **Tour a Totally Modernist Apartment in New York’s “Jenga Tower”**

The Tribeca home, designed by Parisian  
decorator Emma Donnersberg, features  
breathtaking views

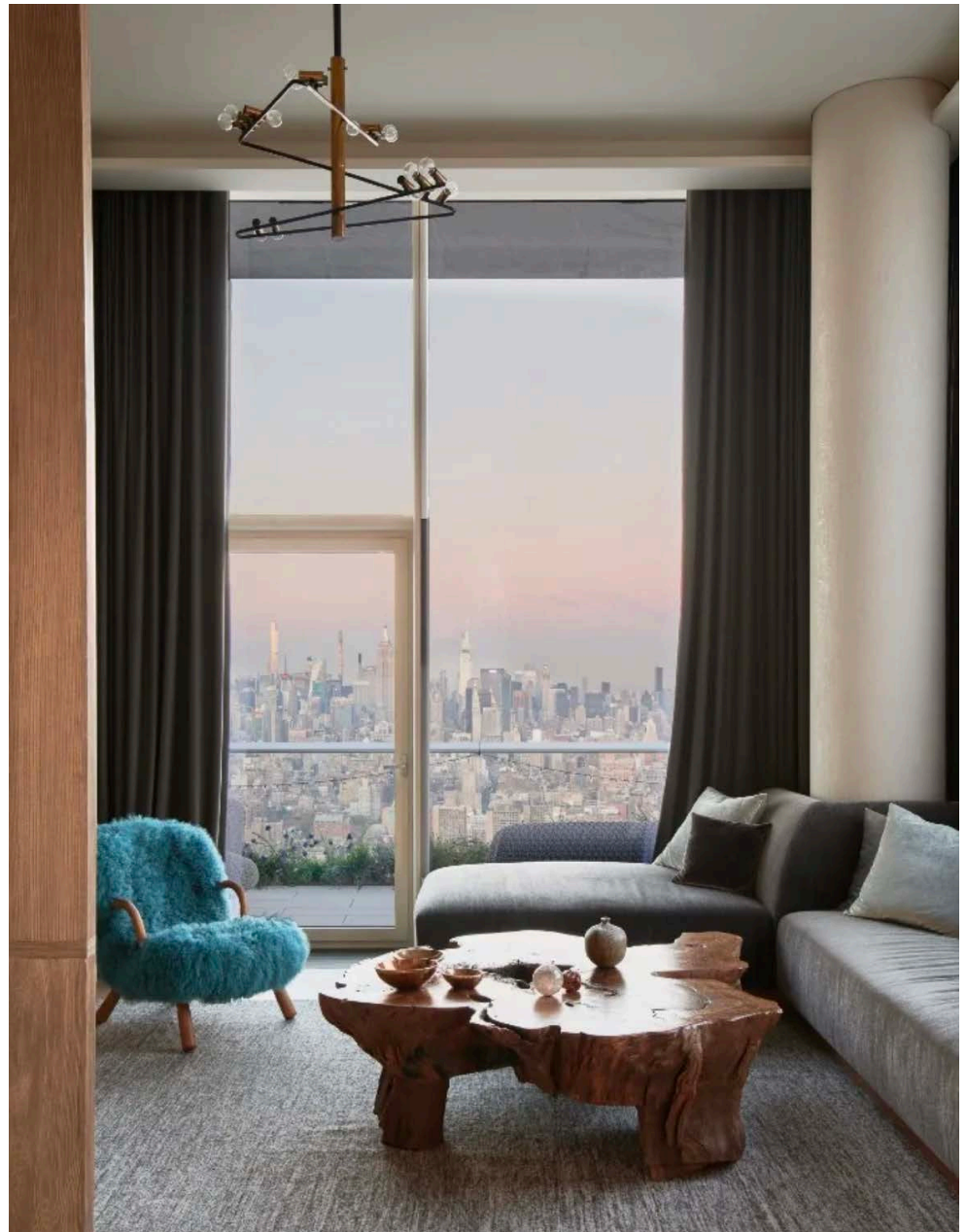
Sara James Mnookin  
Michael Mundy  
MAY 6, 2022 8:00 AM

In 2018, an Instagram follower reached out to Parisian designer Emma Donnersberg with a minor request. Could Donnersberg help the former makeup artist source a dining room table for her young family's Tribeca apartment?

The piece's size was the first indicator this was no ordinary project. "It had to be large enough to seat a dinner party for 12," Donnersberg says—practically Brobdingnagian by New York City standards.

Then came incontrovertible proof that Donnersberg was dealing with a major space: the table's future setting, a glass-sheathed penthouse in the building known as the "Jenga Tower," designed by the Pritzker Prize-winning firm Herzog and de Meuron. (Paul Reber handled the interior architecture of the apartment.)

"I knew right away it would have to be custom," Donnersberg says of the table, given the proportions of its setting. Fortunately, she had an array of options to present. Since opening her first office in New York in 2007, Donnersberg has frequented design fairs around the globe and cultivated relationships with gallerists and artisans. (She added a second office in her hometown in 2009.)



A Stilnovo light fixture presides over the library respite. Live-edge table by Andrianna Shamaris, another custom sofa and custom rug by Rosemary Hallgarten, and teal lounge chair by Philip Arctander.



The client viewed close to 500 possibilities with her before selecting a piece by Italian artist Francesco Perini. Gallery Fumi in London oversaw the commission. “[This] was one of the largest tables I had made to date,” Francesco Perini says of his Incontro marquetry work, which weds fine woods with inlays of metal and stone. “The [oak] top was meticulously cut by hand and inlaid with onyx, creating patterns that resemble the annual rings of trees.” Donnersberg’s initial collaboration went so smoothly, she was soon tasked with designing the entire 6,000-square-foot space—a dizzying prospect for a Parisian who grew up among Gothic and Beaux Arts structures easily dwarfed by the Eiffel Tower.

“We don’t have places like this in Paris,” Donnersberg says. “It just doesn’t exist. The view... it’s a dream.” It was also her only asset at first. The apartment itself held few inherent charms. “The space was a box,” Donnersberg says. “You had to bring a bit of sensuality to it.” To that end, Donnersberg introduced fluid, feminine lines, like the undulating living room sofa, clad in white wool, commissioned from a favorite French upholsterer (who keeps a little office in New York City). A sliver of banquette, also custom, and a Damien Langlois-Meurinne pendant soften an informal dining area nearby. Curved custom chairs, sofas, and sinks bend the rest of the geometric space into something far more voluptuous.



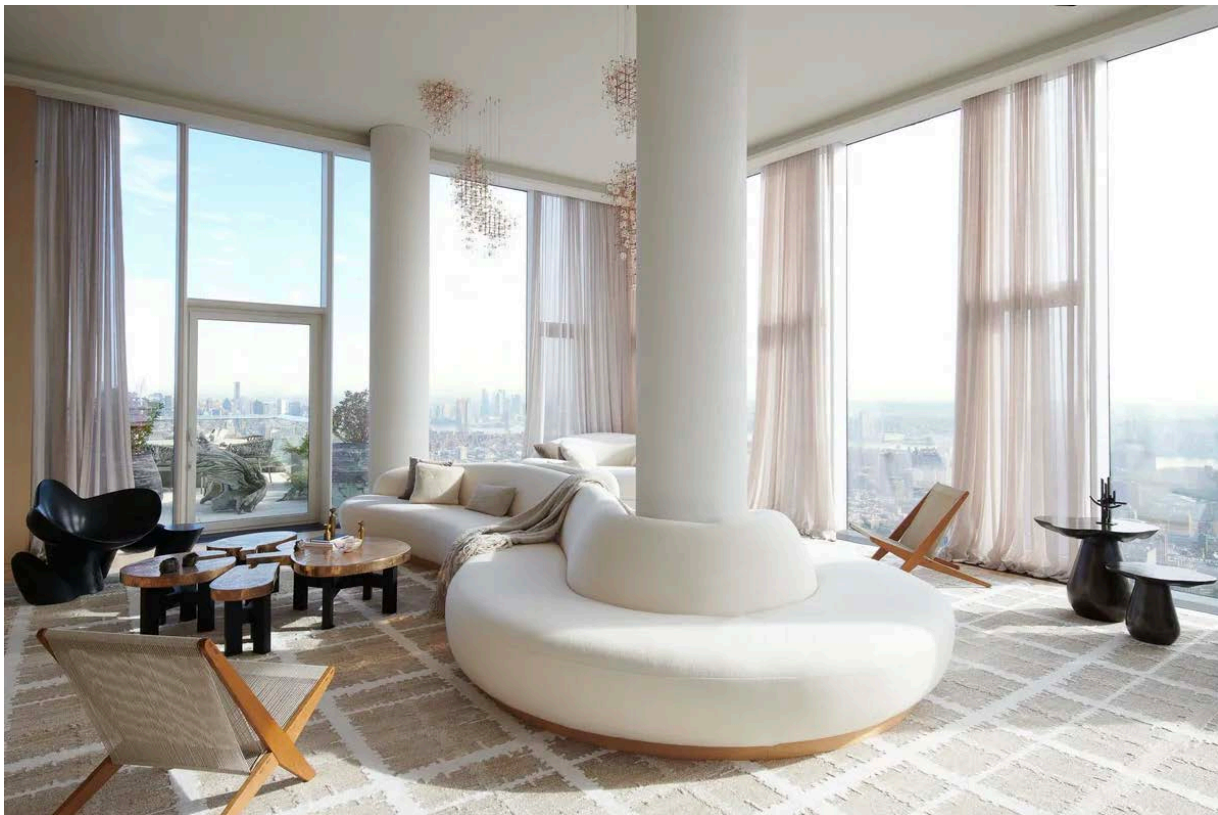
A pair of Raoul Guys chairs and a custom banquette flank a table furnished by the client. Gunnar Nylund vases, Damien Langlois-Meurinne pendant, and custom rug from Rosemary Hallgarten.

While Donnersberg, who favors neutrals, typically reaches for art to bring in dramatic accent hues, that wasn't possible here. "Because of all the glass, there aren't really walls to hang things," she says, noting that, in this residence, "Manhattan is the work of art."

At the client's request, she enveloped the abundant cityscape—panoramic tableaux that evolve with the daylight, weather, and seasons—in a dappled cloudlike palette. "I was a little worried about all the light colors at first," Donnersberg says, noting the young family now has four kids under the age of ten. "But we separated the space into two parts."

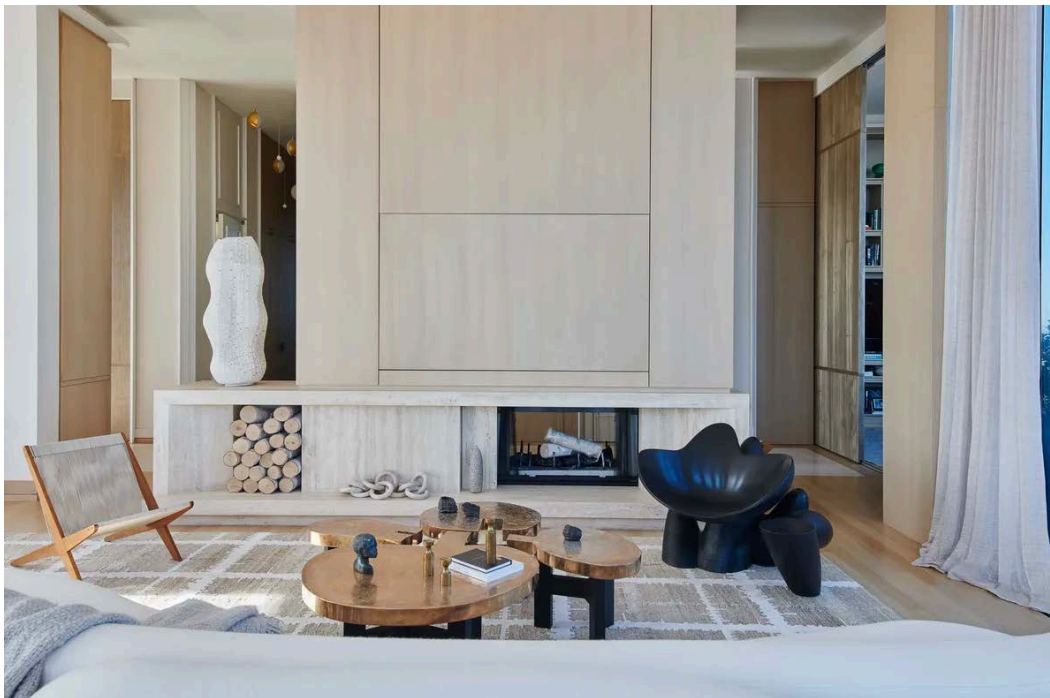
Extensive ceramics, like the Katherine Glenday vases balanced on the lip of a range hood or the Georges Pelletier totem tucked into the primary suite, keep mostly spare rooms from feeling too austere, as do amusing touches like the shaggy teal Philip Arctander chair in the library or the mushroom-inspired side tables in the living room. (The latter were crafted by Donnersberg and are available at Maison Gerard in New York.)

"I feel so lucky," she says of this stage of her career. "I get to design exactly what I want."

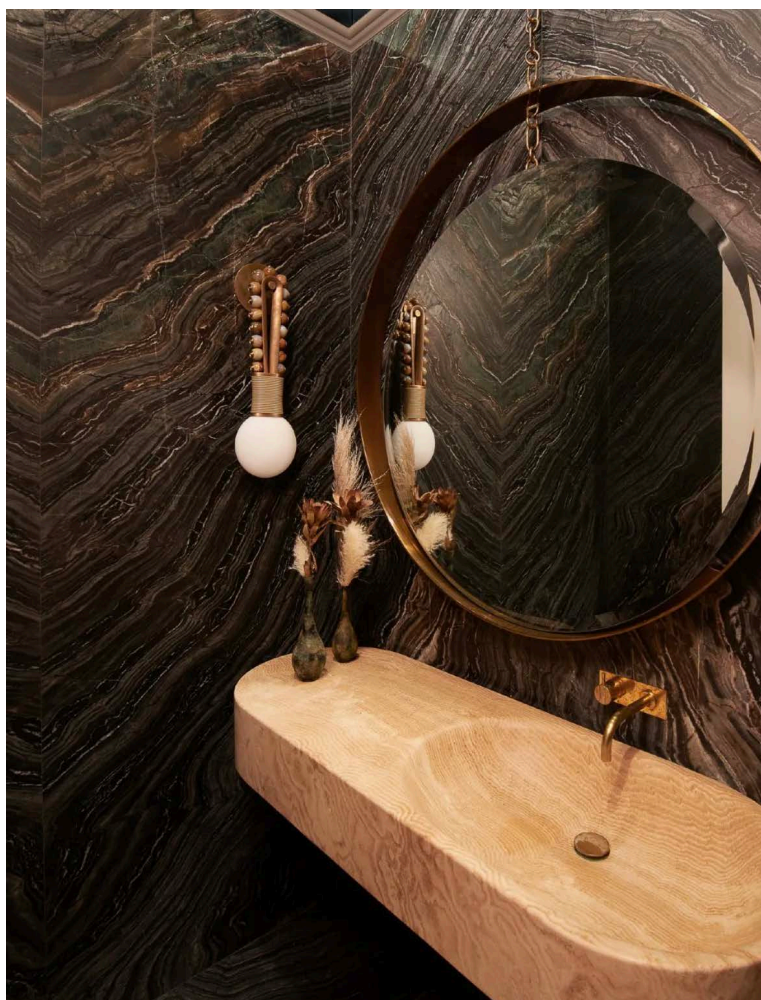


A French upholsterer fashioned a sofa snaking around structural support columns. The pair of mushroom tables are Donnersberg's own designs, available through Maison Gerard in New York. Poul Kjaerholm and Jorgen Hoj lounge chairs, custom Studio Drift light fixture, and rug by Mastour Galleries.





The living room from another vantage. Coffee table by Ado Chale, sculptural chair by Wendell Castle, Kristina Riska ceramic vase, and ombré Portée light fixtures.



In the powder room, Donnersberg paired a custom mirror and custom sink with a beaded wall sconce by Apparatus.

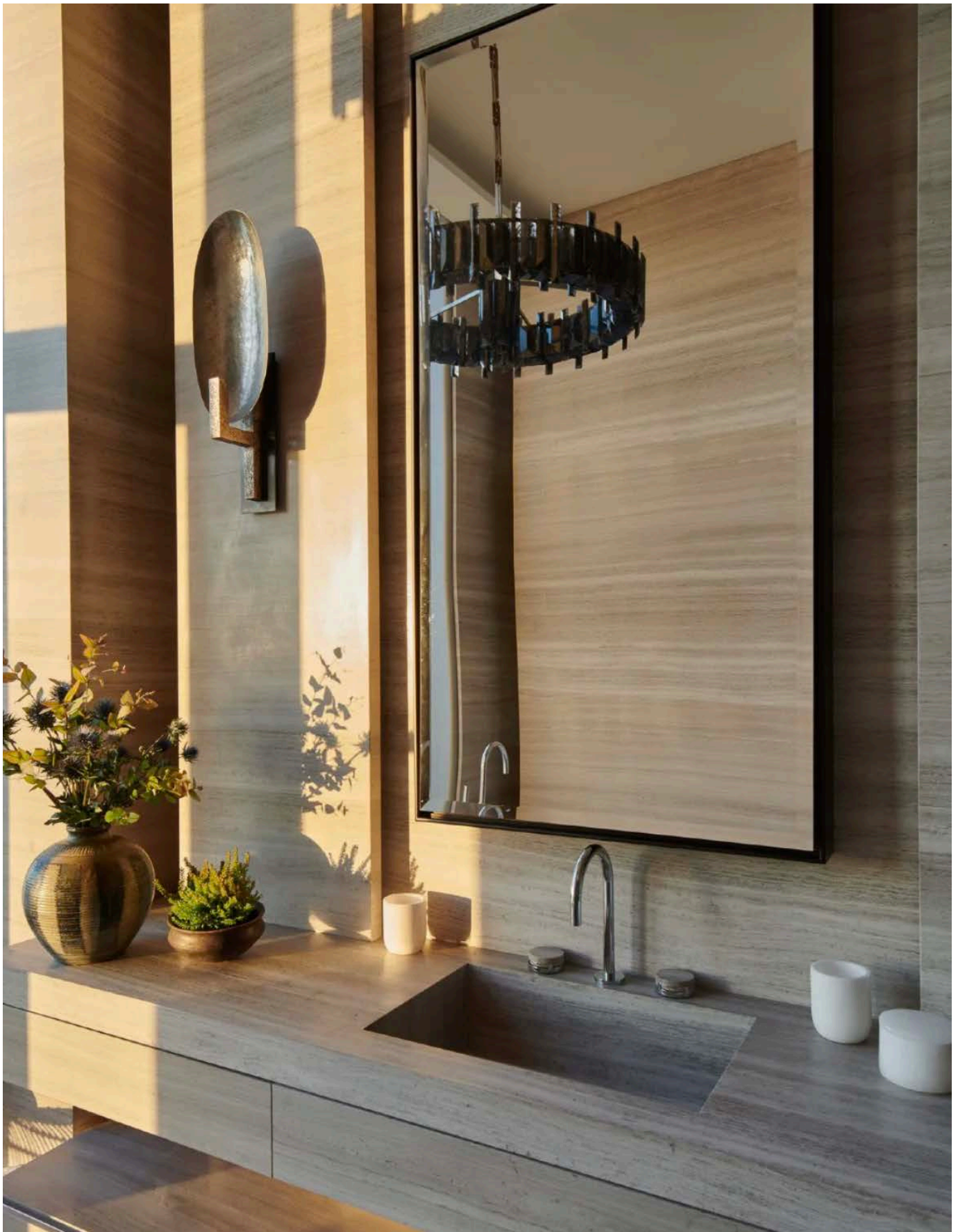


In the dining room, vintage Dorothy Schindele dining chairs surround the first piece that designer Emma Donnersberg sourced for the home: a custom Francesco Perini table of carved oak and inlaid onyx. Chandelier by Hervé van der Straeten, Karen Swami ceramic vase, candlesticks from Maison Gerard, and Mastour Galleries rug.





A collection of vases by Katherine Glenday cleverly rests on the range hood in the kitchen. Stools are vintage, from the 1950s.



Another bathroom inside the home.





In the primary bathroom, an Hervé van der Straeten sconce and a Régis Mathieu light fixture supplement the abundant natural light. The client personally selected all of the stone featured in the kitchen and bathrooms.



A 20th-century mirror by an unknown artist and a stool by Frank Lloyd Wright adorn a section of the primary bedroom. Light fixture by Noguchi, custom sofa, and vases by Per Liljegren.