Wood combined with white color dominate the two barns. Some old features like the narrow but high door remained untouched.
Ina Meijer and Matthijs van Cruijsen run the Dutch design and architecture studio „Ina & Matt“ out of two old barns located in Friesland nearby the coast.
Here they combine working and living in a rough but cozy surrounding.
We never imagined that we would end up living and working in a barn in the countryside. But then we were commissioned to restore and convert a traditional kopshals-rompboerderij (literally a ‘head-neck-body’ farmhouse) in Friesland, and this gave us the possibility of buying two old barns and a piece of land. In 2007, we bought these old barns where chickens and carts used to be kept, along with a hectare of ground, and converted them into a studio and house. It was a tough job restoring the old barns, and giving them a modern function while preserving their authentic character. The wild, bare and rugged landscape feels very earthy.

Sometimes, when the house is being battered by heavy winter storms, it feels as if we’re sitting in a boat. We close the shutters, but you can still hear the wind howling. The floor in the big barn has been lowered sixty centimetres, which means that you are literally and figuratively at ground level. Now and then, you see hares and deer running past; and sometimes you find yourself looking straight into their eyes. Working with these different levels is a common thread that runs through all of our work. Another recurring element is the way that the new windows have been placed in the building. They have the same form as the original barn windows, but they are different sizes and are placed at varying heights. The striking large window sticks out from the façade so that you can see the sun setting behind the dikes in the evening. Once darkness has fallen, the only thing you can see is a solitary little petrol station lit up, which looks like a Hopper painting.

Inside the house, you find a lot of bare wood, concrete and stone. Working with these simple materials is one of our trademarks. We enjoy incorporating irregularity and randomness in our work. This gives a signature to a project. We like to mix old loadbea-
The shutters prevent the barn from the rough climate of Zeeland which is located nearby the coast.
It was a tough job restoring the old barns, and giving them a modern function while preserving their authentic character.
ring beams with new, but we also use an assortment of old doors, selected for their colour, while the size is a secondary consideration. After restoring them, we left them bare, because then you could see how much love our friend Aldo had put into repairing them. The kitchen in the centre is on a slightly higher level than the rest. The step up to it creates the sense of a different space, making it more dynamic. It also gives you a nice step to sit on. It is the same with the bottom steps of the stairs leading to the first floor. They take the form of a separate concrete block at the foot of the wooden stairs.

On the upper floor, Ina sewed a canvas tent that is suspended from the beams like a separate object. Originally, this was intended to give an impression of how a new room would affect the space, but it has now become a permanent guest bedroom. The bedroom that looks out across the meadows to the Wadden sea dike has a freestanding clawfoot bath. After the conversion, we started work on creating a garden in the large meadow. We planted a lot of pollard willow, moved hedges to protect a flower garden, and laid out a fruit orchard. We are still working hard on planting irregular borders with wild plants and alder hedging. One area of the meadow has been set aside for the two donkeys, Abel and Olga, and the sheep Toos. They will soon be joined by three pigs from the ‘De Eerste Hollandse Worst Maatschappij’.

The walls in the small barn had become too weak to support the roof, so we built a new wooden barn inside the stone barn. The structure of the wooden barn now supports the new roof. The restored stone walls and the ‘lace ridge beam’ surround it like wallpaper. Where a section of the wall had collapsed, we placed a large window with a view of the Wadden sea dike, with a large sliding shutter that could be pulled shut. As well as our big studio, where we work with six people, it is good to have another space where you can retreat when you need to work in peace.
"It is good to have another space next to our working barn where you can retreat when you need to work in peace."