



THE BLACK
ROOSTER

*'The Props
assist the
House.'*

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PLANNING



Ceramist Anouk Kramer lives and works in 'De Zwarte Haan' or 'The Black Rooster,' a beautifully renovated farmhouse in the village of Spijkerboor, with her husband Leo and three daughters Pipilotti, Riva and Lieve.

The 1920s house sits on the banks of a canal in Noord-Holland, where they swim in summer and ice skate in winter. Behind the farm is a vast nature reserve where the family enjoys boating. Wandering around the garden are 2 ponies, 2 dogs, 3 cats, chickens, and pigeons. It appears to be in the middle of nowhere, when, in fact, Amsterdam is just a stone's throw away.

Twenty years ago, Anouk and her husband were living in Amsterdam and in search of something bigger. 'We loved working from home, but it was difficult to find something suitable in the city.' Not far from Amsterdam, there was a traditional 1920s farmhouse for sale, that had been completely renovated 50 years later in the 1970s style. 'It looked terrible.'







A traditional Noord-Holland farmhouse is made entirely of wood, but instead, there was plasterboard and brick everywhere.' Anouk and Leo wanted to strip the farm down to the bare minimum. They began collecting wood to use to return everything to its original state.

'Someone once explained to me that traditional farmhouses are built to be flexible. If you use stone, then all of the flexibility is gone. Wood moves with the building.' Anouk and Leo renovated almost everything themselves, only hiring outside help for the roof insulation. 'Do-it-yourself' is a theme that runs through their home, work, and life.

During a tour of the farm, Anouk points out a typical traditional Noord-Holland farmhouse feature: the square shape with a pyramid roof. At the front are three rooms in a row, one green, one black, and one white.

In the green room is a bookcase and a large sofa: a place to watch television and relax. The striking black room next to it is the 'upstairs room,' where visitors were once received. 'With every colour, I thought 'oh how frumpy,' until I saw a photograph of an interior in Austria, nearly as black as tar! I fell in love immediately. I mixed the paint myself with linseed oil and paint pigments from the De Kat paint mill in Zaandam. Rather than a flat black, it brings life to the wood.' The farm's name refers to this room: The Black Rooster. What catches the eye in this black room is the large grandfather clock, a relic from when Anouk and Leo dealt in Scandinavian antiques. 'We only did that for a short time, it wasn't really our thing, but we decided to keep the clock.' Their love of Scandinavian antiques, and the clock, in particular, comes from Anouk's parents. They used to sail together as a family in Scandinavia, and her parents' house is full of clocks.