

## **Responses to Press Inquiry on Friedrichshof**

### **Personal Background and Origin of the Idea**

#### **How are you personally connected to the Friedrichshof project?**

Friedrichshof is a very personal project for us. We first discovered the property – then just a simple field – back in 2016. At the time, our children were 7 and 10 years old, and as a family, we were looking for a way to regularly escape the city and spend more time in nature. Over the years, this wish grew into a more comprehensive concept.

#### **Your father is the architect – what role did your family connection play in the creation and realization of the project?**

My father is a retired architect and now over 80 years old. Although his body no longer functions as it once did, his creative spirit remains as active as ever. It was a special honor for him to support this project with his architectural knowledge and experience. His long-standing expertise was invaluable in developing and implementing our ideas.

#### **What was it like to realize such a project with your own father/son?**

Working together took our relationship to a new level. Through this shared project, we grew much closer again. It was a collaboration on equal footing, where we all had the chance to learn from one another – my wife and I from his architectural experience, and he perhaps from our ideas of a modern retreat. Of course, there were also challenging moments, as in any construction project, but our shared vision always brought us back together.

#### **What was the vision for Friedrichshof?**

From the beginning, our vision was to create a place where people could come together. A space that fosters connection – with nature, oneself, and others. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, this idea became more concrete: a modern three-sided farmhouse in the Mecklenburg Lake District, serving as a counterpoint to hectic city life while offering enough comfort and aesthetics to feel completely at ease.

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## **Architecture & Aesthetics**

#### **How did you design the architecture of Friedrichshof to reflect the character of the surroundings?**

It was important to us to honor the rich history of the region and the site. The area has a remarkable past dating back to the Bronze Age. About 3,800 years ago, nine bronze daggers – masterpieces of ancient casting – were ritually deposited here by tribal leaders. These were discovered in 1970 during drainage work and are now exhibited in the Museum of Pre- and Early History in Schwerin. This historical depth inspired us to create a place that is both contemporary and timeless – one that blends respectfully into the landscape while offering modern people a space for reflection.

### **What design principles did you follow in the planning?**

We were guided by the clarity and functionality of traditional rural architecture, interpreting these through a modern lens. Our goal was to create spacious, light-filled rooms that offer a direct connection to the surrounding nature. The use of natural materials, such as regional larch wood, adds warmth and authenticity, while the clean lines and minimalist design convey peace and clarity – qualities often missing in our fast-paced times.

### **How does Friedrichshof differ from traditional three-sided farmsteads?**

Reinterpreting the classic three-sided farmstead was a central concern for us. Historically, Friedrichshof was an outlying farmstead of the Melz estate and belonged to the von Ferber family. As early as 1857, a dairy farm with eight residents was mentioned here, and in 1936, five farmsteads were established by the Mecklenburg Settlement Association, two of which are now listed buildings.

Our Friedrichshof draws on this traditional layout but reimagines it: While classic three-sided farmsteads often had separate buildings for living, stables, and barns, we created a unified architectural concept combining different functional areas under one cohesive design. Large window openings connect the structure to the landscape – a clear contrast to the more introverted historical farms that needed to protect themselves from the elements. Friedrichshof thus merges the protective idea of a traditional courtyard with modern openness and transparency.

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## **Choice of Materials**

### **Why did you choose RHEINZINK?**

We decided early on to use zinc sheeting for the roof. My father recommended the manufacturer RHEINZINK, which is based in our home region of North Rhine-Westphalia. This regional connection to our roots was important to us. We were also convinced by the outstanding quality and long-standing expertise of the company in producing high-quality titanium zinc sheets.

### **What specific advantages does titanium zinc offer – functionally and aesthetically?**

RHEINZINK material offers several advantages: It has exceptional durability spanning decades and is 100% recyclable, aligning with our sustainability goals. Aesthetically, we especially appreciate how the pre-weathered standing seam panels give the building a defined linear structure and blend harmoniously into the landscape. The material's reduced, understated look supports the modern architectural concept without being obtrusive.

### **How did the material combination of zinc and larch wood come about?**

Both zinc and larch wood share the quality of weathering naturally over time, developing a refined patina. This living characteristic of the materials was important to us – the

building should “age” with its environment and gain character over time. The contrast between cool, elegant zinc and warm, natural larch wood also creates a compelling balance between modernity and tradition, technical precision and organic naturalness.

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## **Technical Implementation & Challenges**

### **Were there any particular construction challenges?**

One major challenge was constructing a completely waterproof basement using special concrete (WU), due to a water vein running beneath the site. Creating the upper floor with the large seminar room also presented challenges – we needed a substantial ring beam to support the generous window front.

For the roof, it was essential to unite the technical demands of a modern standing seam design with our aesthetic vision. The entire roof was clad with pre-weathered standing seam panels, each 500 mm wide and 8 meters long, fastened using fixed and sliding clips. A special feature is the ventilated ridge detail, where the seams are bent, raised, and folded in front of the ridge.

### **What aspects went particularly well or make you especially proud?**

We are especially proud of the clear, modern architecture and the precise linear structure, particularly emphasized by the zinc roof, which integrates harmoniously into the surroundings when viewed from the front. The windows, supplied by Sorpetaler Fensterbau from the Sauerland – also our home region – perfectly complement the overall concept and reinforce the quality we aimed for in every aspect.

A technical and aesthetic highlight is the concealed box gutter behind the larch cladding. The verge details made from flat sheet metal were folded into the roof area with angled seams at the top and attached with hidden clips at the bottom – resulting in indirect fastening with no visible screws, supporting the clean lines of the design.

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## **Sustainability & Durability**

### **What role did sustainability play in your material selection and construction approach?**

We see sustainability as a holistic process, from material choice and energy supply to long-term use. Concrete was used for structural elements for static reasons – a conscious decision that allows for large window surfaces and reduces the need for artificial lighting, optimizing natural light and creating a direct connection to the surrounding natural landscape.

Using regional larch wood for the façade reduced transport distances and established a natural relationship with the landscape. Across all materials, we focused on durability

and natural aging to avoid frequent replacements and the associated resource consumption.

**What potential do you see specifically in RHEINZINK titanium zinc?**

RHEINZINK titanium zinc is a prime example of sustainable construction for us. It has an extremely long lifespan of several generations, is 100% recyclable, and requires virtually no maintenance or replacement over its lifetime. The natural patina that forms over time protects the material and gives the building a character that evolves. Its ability to change naturally with weathering without losing functionality embodies a central sustainability principle for us.

**What additional steps did you take for the building's energy efficiency?**

Our holistic resource management is particularly forward-thinking: A biological small sewage treatment plant handles wastewater in an environmentally friendly way, while two 10-cubic-meter cisterns collect rainwater for garden irrigation, significantly reducing potable water use.

The combination of a brine-water heat pump (geothermal) and a generously sized 38.4 kWh photovoltaic system with battery storage enables energy self-sufficiency of over 70 percent. These systems work together to keep the ecological footprint of operations as low as possible.

The building's long lifespan and flexible layout also contribute to sustainability. A structure that can be used across generations distributes its environmental impact over a longer period, justifying the use of durable materials like concrete, which was essential for the building's architectural stability and open design.

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**Emotional Significance**

**What does Friedrichshof mean to you personally?**

Friedrichshof means far more to us than just a construction project – it is a place of family and new beginnings. Over the years, we have developed a deep connection to the region and nature here. It is a place where we could grow as a family and realize our values and vision in a tangible form.

**Is there a particular moment or memory from the planning/construction phase that stands out?**

For years, we had old GDR construction trailers on the property, which we painstakingly converted into tiny homes. We spent a lot of time there as a family, and many children from the neighborhood would hang out with us. We especially remember the summer days when we sat with my father on the handmade larchwood terrace, poring over plans and fine-tuning the house's details. These shared moments of creation and mutual inspiration were incredibly meaningful to us.

### **What does the submission for the Architects Darling Award mean to you?**

Submitting the project for the Architects Darling Award means an extraordinary amount to us, especially since my father, at his advanced age, is receiving unexpected recognition for his life's work – something no one had expected anymore. It feels like a circle closing – his final major project might now receive special acknowledgment. This fills our entire family with pride and gratitude.

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### **Future Outlook**

#### **What role will Friedrichshof play in the region and for its visitors in the future?**

The future role of Friedrichshof in the region is meant to be inclusive. We want to open our doors to neighbors and local people, refine the usage concept over time, and adapt it to the wishes of our target audience. The farm is to become a place of connection, peace, and creativity. Great care was taken in the design to allow flexible use of the space.

#### **Do you see Friedrichshof as a model for further sustainable construction projects?**

##### **Which aspects specifically?**

Our model follows many co-living concepts in the region that are committed to local suppliers and open to new target groups. We absolutely see Friedrichshof as an inspiration for other projects – not just in terms of structural sustainability, but especially in how traditional rural architectural forms can be reinterpreted and combined with contemporary use. The blend of historical awareness, craftsmanship, and forward-thinking energy concepts could serve as a model.

#### **How do you see the future of sustainability in the construction industry?**

We believe that sustainability in construction must be considered more comprehensively in the future. It's not just about operational energy efficiency, but about the entire lifecycle of a building – from raw material sourcing to usage to potential deconstruction. Durable, recyclable materials like titanium zinc will play an increasingly important role. At the same time, flexibility of use will be crucial – buildings must be able to adapt to changing needs without major structural alterations.

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### **Usage Concept: A Place of Connection and Deceleration**

Friedrichshof is a retreat and fasting farm – a place of connection, calm, and creativity. Guests can feel completely at home here. Bright and spacious rooms offer plenty of space for retreats, workshops, team events, or training. The entire estate, including seminar room, workshop studio, sauna house, and garden, is available exclusively to small groups.

The farm also regularly hosts fasting retreats. Small groups fast together with plenty of movement in the beautiful nature of the Mecklenburg Lake District. A relaxed fasting program accompanies participants individually and professionally throughout the experience. A creative program in the workshop studio, along with yoga, meditation, bodywork, and relaxing sauna sessions, plus extensive information on fasting and nutrition, complement the experience.

Friedrichshof thus combines traditional values with modern demands – an ideal retreat for people seeking deceleration, mindfulness, and a conscious approach to themselves and natural resources.

**More information and images can be found at [www.friedrichshof.org](http://www.friedrichshof.org)**