

## KAARI COAT RACK DESIGN MIKKO LAAKKONEN

Kaari is a new coat rack designed by Mikko Laakkonen for Martela. It is a minimalistic arched piece of furniture for the office that can also be used at home.

The beginnings of the project started when Martela wanted to develop a coat rack as part of the “Inspiring Meetings” concept and as being an excellent designer with an ability to focus on the smallest of details, Laakkonen and his signature style had a great fit with the Martela design philosophy.

The first concept was an elaborate New York City skyline-inspired piece called “Manhattan”. However, as the design evolved a more minimalist approach was taken, something which increased the complexity of the project. Laakkonen states that “When you begin to strip down a product to a minimal level, the ability to make it unique and stand-out becomes more challenging”. Then one evening he drew inspiration whilst watching a documentary about Eero Saarinen, the Finnish-American architect who designed the famous *Gateway Arch* in St. Louis. At this point the arch theme had started to develop strongly, and it provided him with a solution to the biggest challenge of the design process, naming the product; Kaari is the Finnish word for ‘arch’.

Laakkonen views his products as tools for interior architects; things that help them do their job. He used to work at an interior architects office so has a strong understand of his audience and the perspective they view things from, which helps him to design better products. He also admits it was challenging trying to create something quiet, minimalistic and anonymous, yet at the same time make it unique and interesting whilst incorporating his signature touches. The Kaari coat rack was designed so that it could be used individually, but also work well in unison when several are placed next to one another. Materials and colour are also used to create a stand-out effect, and Kaari is comprised of metal components, stainless steel and plastic and is available in black, white and yellow.

The classic design of Kaari combined with its high quality will ensure a long life-time for the product. Sustainability is a key part of Martela products, and Kaari holds true to the ecologically friendly approach of Martela in that this product will stand the test of time. Indeed, Kaari has also passed Laakkonen’s ultimate test for a successfully designed product; that is, when you look at the final design you should think, “Yes, this is exactly how a coat rack should look.” And that’s exactly what you think when you look at Kaari.

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