Designer racks up practical creations

When is a floor lamp not a floor lamp? When it's a coat rack. Sydney furniture and interior product designer Jo Philippsohn's latest creation functions as a funky lamp in summer and a coat rack in winter.

The piece, which Philippsohn (above) calls "stripped bare", comes in two sizes and reflects the young designer's belief that furniture and interior products should be beautiful as well as practical.

"It's important for me that the object answers some need as well as looks good," she says. "Stripped bare came about through looking at the Australian lifestyle and trying to design something for the climate.

"I was working on it during winter and I was trying to design something that would work as a coat stand but wouldn't sit empty for 10 months of the year when it's not being used."

Philippsohn has a degree in industrial design and, in her final year, was among a number of talented students selected to exhibit her work at a furniture fair in Milan.

"Going there exposed me to furniture and object design from around the world. It really opened my eyes," she says.

She was inspired to start her own business — called dwell by jo — when she discovered most of the companies she was interested in working for were run by one or two people. "I thought, 'If they can do it, I can do it'," she says.

Philippsohn will be exhibiting at this month's trade-only Australian International Furniture Fair at the Sydney Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour.

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