

For The School Of The Art Institute Of Chicago, The Quality And Flexibility Of Lista's Products Are A Beautiful Thing

One of the principal objectives of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) is "to assemble a diverse body of intelligent and creative students in an environment designed to facilitate and encourage discovery and production of significant ideas and images." For over a decade, and in multiple departments, classroom tables and storage cabinets from Lista International have played a central role in the creation of this idea-stimulating environment.

Many media. One work table.

SAIC offers a complete spectrum of fine arts programs, all requiring different skills and processes. But there's one thing almost all of these programs have in common.

Said Tom Buechele, Associate Vice-President of Facilities, Operations and Planning at the School, "Most of our classroom furniture is Lista. In fact, we have Lista work tables in almost every department, including Fashion, Visual Communications, Printmaking, Ceramics, and Architecture,



Interior Architecture and Design Objects (AIADO). We've also purchased a range of Lista storage equipment, including different size cabinets that are used as student lockers, sliding door cabinets with counter tops that serve the dual purpose of storage and workspace, and the Storage Wall® System for the lithography area. I don't think there's a department that doesn't have, at minimum, a Lista cabinet."

Lista International is a leading manufacturer of modular workstations and storage solutions with headquarters in Holliston, MA. The School's attachment to Lista began in the early 90's when Buechele was looking to replace some older work stations in the School's graduate studios.

"The price point was very attractive," Buechele recalled, "but it was the sheer quality and durability of the Lista products that overwhelmed us. Schools are a very hard environment for furniture, especially where students are constantly using the table to perform different tasks."

Lista's classroom tables are designed to provide a rugged and aesthetically pleasing solution for a variety of classrooms, but are particularly well suited for art and architecture applications. The classroom tables can be custom-configured with a range of options and accessories. For example, heavy-duty casters can provide users with complete mobility for easy classroom configuration. Electrical power outlets and digital communication connections can be integrated in the table leg. And there are a variety of options for work-surfaces, including a butcher block surface that can be sanded to provide a "like-new" refinished look, even after significant use.

Flexibility is in fashion.

Recently SAIC purchased Lista classroom tables with these options for two newly built departments — the fashion department and the visual communications department — at their award-winning Sullivan Center. Michelle Maynard, Director of Facilities & Campus Services at the School, described some of the thinking behind the purchase decision.



to go with tables that were eight feet long, long enough to support large rolls of fabric. These tables all have wheels, so we can move them around if the students need to practice for a fashion show or to dress models. The tables are very heavy; without the wheels they would be a challenge to move around. With the wheels, reconfiguring the classroom is fast and easy."

Lista's 6" heavy duty swivel casters also feature wheel locks for sturdy, stationary use once the table is in place. This is particularly important for the fashion students are who often using the tables to cut detailed patterns in fabric.

The School also shifts departments around every semester, so the furniture needs to be able to stand up to being moved multiple times, and to multiple buildings in some cases.

"Being able to take the tables apart and use them in a variety of ways is so important," Maynard said. "We can't always afford a professional mover, so the tables need to be able to handle some abuse."

SAIC's Facilities team specified butcher block tops for their classroom tables. "We felt that the butcher block top is a lot more attractive," said Maynard. "Plus if it gets beaten up, it's easy to sand down and then refinish. And if you get paint on it, you can just flip it over."

Buechele also comment on the re-usability of the Lista table worksurface.

"It's a very green product," he said. "It's easy to change out the top and get maximum use out of the rest of the table. With many of our benches, we've re-used the legs two or three times."

The art of versatility.

The versatility of the Lista products is particularly impressive when you consider the wide

She said, "It's been our experience that the Lista tables are extremely strong and modular. You can get

a lot of use out of them in a classroom workspace with students moving them around, pounding on them, and even standing on them.

"For the Fashion Department, mobility, in addition to durability, was essential. We decided



range of ways they are being used at SAIC.

Maynard said, "Of course from classroom to classroom the jobs vary. But within the classroom, the activities vary greatly as well. One session you'll find students drawing, and the very next session they are using the same tables for working with power tools and making furniture. And the session after that the tables are being used for sewing. So the tables really have to be versatile."

Danny Miller is Lab Manager at the School's Printmaking Department. He talked about the range of work being done by his students on Lista tables.

"There's really no 'typical' use for the tables in our department," he said. "For example, we have a screen printing section where students are actually printing on the tables. You'll find students doing something completely different on the tables at our etching and block printing area. Then we have another area called 'Artist Books,'



Lista's Double Width and Mid Width modular drawer cabinets provide flat file storage for a wide variety of prints and paper supplies. Lista's Storage Wall® System, with its heavy

weight-bearing capacity Roller Shelves, is a safe and accessible home for storing lithography stones. And Lista drawer and shelf cabinets are home to printmaking supplies of all sizes and shapes.

"We needed a lot of storage and we needed work tables. Lista gave us a solution that combined both," Miller said.

In the School's Ceramics Department, storage cabinets are also an important element of the classroom equipment — in this case meeting the needs of faculty as well as students.

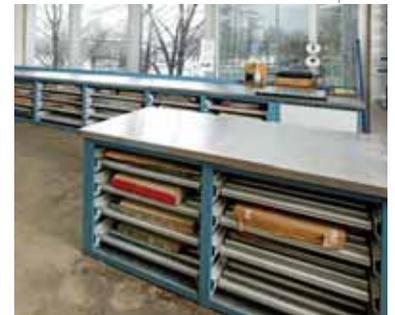
Said Matthew Groves, Studio Manager for Ceramics, "The students actually do have lockers that they can sign up for. But we don't, as a rule, have lockable storage areas for our faculty. Because space is so limited, we can offer them one of these nice big lockers under the tables. The locker/cabinets function as convenient and organized storage for small tools, books, periodicals, and some raw materials."

In the Visual Communications renovation, the tables are not only being used in a classroom environment but also at a Service Bureau which handles all campus printing. At



where the students are assembling and creating hand-made books. And finally we have a lithography area which requires entirely different techniques and activities. For this department, it is important to have stainless steel tops which are easy to clean."

In Miller's Printmaking Department, many of the classroom tables feature lockable Lista storage cabinets underneath that feature flush doors for safety and hinged lock bars for security. Also,



this location, a Lista workbench has cabinet pedestals below the worksurface and shelves for additional easy-access storage above.



the other elements of the classroom, or the work that the students are doing. This is particularly important in an art school."

Michelle Maynard agreed, saying, "In the

Function and form.

Groves went on to discuss the aesthetic value of the Lista tables, particularly important at a school like SAIC.

He said, "Of course these tables are great in terms of their sheer indestructibility. But another element that visual artists find important is the way the tables visually mesh with the classroom



environment. They have to look good as well as function well. Our overall look in the Ceramics Department combines gray tones with natural wood. The Lista tables are primarily a gray-blue color, with blue legs and the butcher block top. Everyone I speak with really loves the look of the Lista tables."

Tom Buechele also referenced the aesthetics of the Lista equipment.

"The tables work for us on multiple levels," he said. "They are mechanically sound and provide the functionality we need. And in terms of aesthetics, they have a clean and simple look. They aren't overly fussy; they don't compete with

Fashion department, the butcher block tops match the color of our bamboo floor. It's a nice rich look. Each department has a slightly different color scheme. In AIADO, it's mostly grays and blues for the tables and the environment. In Visual Communications, we went with white tables. We were a little worried at first that they were going to get dirty, but they just look really bright and great."

Maynard concluded by summing up the reason why the School of the Art Institute of Chicago finds the Lista solutions to be such a thing of beauty.

She said, "The products in a school like this have to meet three basic criteria. They have to be versatile. They have to be strong. And they have to be attractive."

For this Art School, the solution that met the all the requirements of form and function had to be Lista.

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For more information, contact:

Lista International Corporation

106 Lowland Street

Holliston, MA 01746-2094 USA

Phone: (800) 722-3020

Fax: (508) 626-0353

Internet: www.listaintl.com

E-mail: sales@listaintl.com

ISO 9001 Certified