



Protecting the Priceless

Alula + Art Guard

Late at night on March 18, 1990, two thieves dressed as police officers — one of them bold enough to sport a false mustache made of wax — talked their way past security guards at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. After handcuffing the hapless guards, the pair made off with a half-billion-dollars' worth of paintings by Rembrandt, Degas, Vermeer, Manet, and other artists. The still-unsolved heist is among the largest thefts of property in world history.

The FBI refers to art theft and related crimes as a “looming criminal enterprise” that costs museums, galleries, and private collectors billions of dollars each year. The Bureau maintains a 16-member art crime team that in the past 15 years has successfully recovered more than 14,850 stolen items with a collective value that exceeds \$165 million. Although a crack squad of law enforcement agents exists to chase down and recover paintings after they've been snatched, it's better to prevent those priceless works from getting stolen in the first place. That's the job of New York-based security company Art Guard.

It's a challenge not every security professional would want, as it requires constant vigilance to stay one step ahead of highly motivated, sophisticated thieves. But it's all in a day's work for Bill Anderson, who founded Art Guard to protect the valuable collections of art museums, galleries, and private collectors worldwide. "It's all about using cutting-edge technology," Anderson described.

The company is tasked with providing museum-level protection for at least \$500 million worth of artworks and other valuables, including safeguarding the same Gardner Museum in Boston that was ransacked nearly 30 years ago (but hasn't been hit since), as well as the Minneapolis Institute of Art, San Francisco's Asian Art Museum, and other high-profile collections.

Art Guard accomplishes this with custom-made magnetic sensors and Alula's Connect+ System.

"Using Alula's system gives me the ability to provide a customer with an easily self-managed system," Anderson said. "It can be controlled with a phone kept in your pocket. That's what this particular clientele wants. They want the kind of control that equates with home automation. Art Guard uses a theft-prevention technique co-developed by Anderson called MAP, which stands for Magnetic Asset Protection. The wireless system involves placing tiny magnets on artworks or other valuables that have a sensor in close proximity. When movement is detected, MAP triggers an alert that can range from an onsite alarm or wireless siren, to a text message or phone call to the owner.

"This is a robust system with multiple means of alert and multiple backups," Anderson explained.

A system for guarding valuable objects must run independently from the premises' main security (for example, perimeter alarms) as these must be turned off and on at different times of the day, potentially leaving valuables unprotected.

Linking sensors to Alula's Connect+ System means full security for valuables is always running in the background, providing protection 24 hours a day, Anderson said. The Connect+ comes standard with battery backup so it will continue operating even if the museum loses power.

"It continues to work if other systems fail, a key attribute for art security consultants," Anderson said.

The highly configurable, mobile-first experience provides customers — whether they're protecting art museums, offices or private homes — with control and simplicity. Connect+ is a modular system, which allows Art Guard and other security professionals to choose what works best for their needs. The options include cards for cellular backup, Wi-Fi, and Z-Wave, which enables a broad range of home automation features. Paired with video from Alula, it's a perfect choice for a growing number of dealers.

Art Guard's system has been battle-tested by protecting the types of art collections that would tempt any thief, and now one of the world's top hedge funds — with more than 1,000 employees and more than \$10 billion under management — is turning to Art Guard to protect 120 valuable pieces of art displayed throughout the firm's eighth-floor offices.

Where some clients might be fine with a security truck parked outside their home while a dealer installs a new security system, an art gallery or wealthy collector with a valuable art collection must be more discreet. Prying eyes don't need to see what type of security is being deployed to keep art collections, jewelry, antiques, fine wines, and collectibles safe.

"There are all kinds of nuances to this market," Anderson said. "This isn't a business where people just stick a prominent company security sign out front."

Safeguarding valuable collections comes down to discretion, convenience and constant protection, he said, and Alula's flexible, customizable system is key to making that happen.