The British Museum

Case Study: Artwork Protection at The British Museum, UK

The Museum

The British Museum, located in Bloomsbury, London, has a permanent collection of over 8 million objects dedicated to human history, art and culture, making it among the largest and most comprehensive museums in existence. It sees over 6.5 million people pass through its doors each year.

Business Challenge

The British Museum needed to secure an enormously diverse range of objects and to enable full integration with other security systems. Our involvement began with an installation in the Round Reading Room and Temporary Exhibition Gallery 35; and has since been expanded to include other galleries:

■ An extraordinarily diverse collection of objects had to be protected, requiring custom iterations of our system.

■ These included furniture in ancient, delicate mahogany and stacks of intricate jade in the Chinese Gallery.

■ At the opposite extreme, there were also vast, old, and architecturally unique spaces to be protected, including the 1651.3 m2 Round Reading Room at the centre of the museum, built in 1857.

■ Integration was required with old and new systems.

■ There was a great deal of visitor traffic and the installation had to be completely discreet.

■ Temporary exhibitions required a flexible system; these included the Sainsbury Wing's inaugural exhibition, 'Vikings: Life and Legend', and including items ranging from swords to an entire Viking longboat, some over a millennium old.

Solution

Fortecho Solutions installed flexible, fully-integrated systems to protect permanent spaces, cover temporary exhibitions, and enable staff to adapt and re-deploy our systems to cover similar exhibitions in the future.

■ Old and new display cases were fitted with wireless motion & door tamper tags.

■ 2D pictures, 3D sculptural artefacts and items of delicate furniture were protected both with vibration & tamper tags, and with pressure-sensors incorporated into plinths.

■ Tags were integrated with existing volumetric, CCTV motion-detection, and pressure-sensing technology.

■ Covert RFID reader network installed in all the spaces.

■ Our management software was fully integrated with this hardware and is used to monitor the protection of artefacts in the museum, running 24/7.

ROI

■ Enhanced security of works of art.

■ Ease of monitoring a very large number of artworks across a vast and complex building.

■ Total integration of existing security systems.

■ Gallery staff in contact with the system via pager.

■ Instant and precise location and artwork information.

■ Electronic historical log of all alarms.

■ Significant savings on security cost and expensive personnel.

■ Easily adapted to protect temporary exhibitions and artworks during a fit-out.

Customer Comments

"For over a decade, Fortecho Solutions has met and exceeded our expectations, providing a world-class service and a product that truly delivers."

■ **David Bilson, Head of Security, British Museum**

FORTECHO