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Finding RFID means No Lost Art

Silent Partner Technologies, Metalcraft provide complete solution for museums

CHALLENGE

Many art museums, galleries and private collectors use cameras to secure their collections. Most also have processes for taking inventory or recording the movement of art within or across locations. Some want systems that prevent the handling or movement of art and others are pained to keep inventory without visible bar codes or other identification. Still, the value or art works demands more than many art owners and custodians have invested in tracking these valuable assets, according to Silent Partner Technologies who brought their background in RFID and bar code tracking to the development of a flexible RFID solution for asset management and theft deterrence for high-value art.

SOLUTION

Silent Partner was first asked in 2007 to help an art store owner manage inventory across several galleries. RFID technology brought new approaches for the challenges faced by the art seller. "Display, storage, transfers and sales are all important events when we're talking about high value art," said Ted Kostis, president of Silent Partner Technologies. "You want to know where your artwork is at all times." The company's Web-based solution covers asset management and theft deterrence using a mix of technologies suited to the needs of the individual collection manager. In some installations, Kostis installs antennae to complete a web-based inventory automatically every few minutes. Other art-owning clients are content to complete inventory with a handheld RFID reader during periodic inventory or handling - moving from storage to display, for example. In all instances, the premise is that each piece of art is detailed in a database and assigned to an RFID tag that is attached on the back or inside of the artwork - each tag's pre-encoded number links to the data, allowing a traceable history of each piece accessible via the Web. Kostis had relied on Metalcraft for durable RFID and bar code products in other work. He asked the Iowa-based manufacturer of property identification solutions to produce small, customized RFID labels for the art tracking solution. "Metalcraft's labels come out gorgeous," said Kostis. "We get the read range we need at a size that works discretely inside and behind artwork. They're keeping our clients happy."

RESULT

RFID greatly reduces the time to locate art and removes the need to handle a piece during identification - "totally eliminating" the potential for catastrophe, such as dropping or destroying a work of art. Collection managers can identify art without moving it in a gallery or unpacking it from a shipping crate (tags read right through the crate), reducing labor, time, and potential damage. The solution gives owners and sellers improved visibility of and control over artworks, too. They can run more frequent inventory counts to get a handle on the whereabouts of the pieces of art at each location. "Many in the art world still don't know that RFID exists," said Kostis. "There's so much potential. RFID can help art sellers confidently expand. Museums and private collections get better visibility to high-value artwork with less effort. Kostis' recent testing with Metalcraft tags inventoried 93 larger paintings in a 30,000 square foot floor in a New York City high-rise in under three minutes and read 237 paintings inside a storage room under two minutes. "How could one person do that work without RFID?" asks Kostis. "It would easily take an hour, but most pieces aren't even movable alone. We've figured out how to deliver faster, better art collection management, and art owners are taking notice."

For more information about using Metalcraft tags for your application visit idplate.com or call 800-437-5283 or 641-423-9460.

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> **TED KOSTIS**
> *Silent Partner*

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