

PROTECT YOUR ART FROM THIEVES

Most of us expect museums and commercial galleries to have security systems, yet we seldom imagine that our own art collections are worth the expense or trouble of protecting in this way. Interestingly, monitoring the “perimeter” of your home (with an anti-intrusion system like ADT) is only half the story. Why? Because most art thefts are instigated by someone already inside the house and known to the owner — for example, a cleaner or a drunken pal of your teenager. Fortunately, there are several security firms out there that focus primarily on serving individual collectors without having to get an army of professional experts and installers involved.

One such innovator is Art Guard, which uses MAP (Magnetic Asset Protection) technology. Measuring 2 x 2 x 1/4 inches, its standard sensor is positioned behind or beneath a stationary artwork or other valuable asset. It triggers the desired response — be it an alarm, text, e-mail, phone call, or police visit — as soon as it detects any motion of the tiny rare earth magnet attached discreetly to the object. The unique digital ID of each sensor is pre-enrolled into the in-home control panel, to which a location-specific alert is sent once movement has occurred. Pressing one button on the mobile app arms and disarms the system from anywhere, and an individual sensor can be bypassed when its artwork is being moved or cleaned. Though this sensor system is self-contained, it can be hooked into an off-site central monitoring station for an extra fee. Art Guard’s “gold” system can manage up to 96 sensors, while the “silver” edition handles 64.

Even more straightforward is Art Guard’s Safe Hook, made of plastic with a metal backing and screwed directly into the wall. Any artwork weighing up to 75 pounds is hung on the hook, which contains a battery-powered sensor that will ring as soon as the artwork’s weight is lifted up off of it. This device is not hooked into a larger system, so you must be in hearing range to respond to the alarm, but that may be sufficient for many homes.



Art Guard’s MAP Gold System



Art Guard’s Safe Hook comes in a kit that even includes the necessary batteries.

Also worth investigating is Fortecho, a firm that relies upon RFID (radio frequency identification) technology. Its slim motion-sensing picture tags, object tags, and pressure sensors attach discreetly behind or beneath the artwork; up to 60 artworks can be connected to the touchscreen, which processes real-time alarm information as audible alarms are emitted to alert owners. A similar service is offered by GalleryGuard, which has some proprietary distinctions that make it worth considering, too.

In a world where fine art is increasingly seen by criminals as a high-value and eminently portable target, taking even simple steps like these may ultimately prove to be one of your wisest acquisitions ever. ●

Information: artguard.net, fortecho.com, galleryguard.com

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