

Keeping American art out of harm's way.

The Butler Institute utilizes Axis network cameras paired with Acuity-vct's Object Protection Software to protect its vast collections of historical displays.

**Organization:**

The Butler Institute of American Art

Location:

Youngstown, OH, USA

Industry segment:

Commercial

Application:

Remote monitoring, safety and security, loss prevention

Axis partner:

Acuity-vct

Mission

Distinctly noted as the first museum in the country specifically designed and constructed to house American art, the Butler Institute of American Art operates as a pro bono facility situated in northeast Ohio. Housing both permanent and temporary collections throughout its galleries, the Butler Institute faces general damage and theft concerns of its works at all times. After an incident occurred in which a parent removed a painting from the wall in order to show their child, the museum decided to seek out an advanced security system to identify incidents before they escalated.

Solution

The Butler Institute installed over 200 cameras to perform two separate and important functions. Axis network cameras give general overviews of the space while additional cameras provide direct overhead views of all artwork within the museum's collection.

These cameras make use of the Acuity-vct Object Protection Software to place invisible protection zones around each collection piece. When the pixels in a protection zone are breached, the guest receives an audible alarm and the museum security staff is immediately notified.

Result

The Butler Institute has achieved major success in avoiding damage and theft issues after the deployment of the system. The cameras and software together proactively alert visitors of their close proximity to a piece, making them less likely to touch a piece a second time. The system also helps the guards to be more efficient by allowing them to concentrate on real threats instead of viewing gallery cameras with no activity. The forensic detail along with the video provided by the object protection cameras can provide law enforcement the necessary evidence if theft or damage were to occur.



Setting the precedent for American art

Nestled beside the campus of Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio, is the Butler Institute of American Art, a museum encompassing over 300 years of visual art of the United States across roughly 60,000 square feet of galleries and display halls. Open six days a week and offering free admission to the public, the gallery opened in 1919 and is listed today on the National Register of Historic Places.

The institute welcomes close to 100,000 guests each year to view its compilation of sculptures, prints, ceramic works and different media. With over 21,000 individual artworks on display at any given time, the museum sought out a security system to assist the guards in place in monitoring the vast amount of rooms and corridors filled with priceless works.

The Butler Institute's first installation with Axis was of 100 AXIS 210A Network Cameras, most of which are still in place today years later. "We bought 100 of those with different lenses, and as a result, I don't think we've ever had one fail," stated Ken Platt, Head of Security at the Butler Institute. "We've had tremendous success with the Axis products from a reliability standpoint."

Sculpting a contemporary system

Partnering with Acuity-vct, the integrator and software provider on the project, the institution has software set in place that provides motion-based alarming. The Acuity-vct technology, Video Surveillance and Object Protection Software, works hand-in-hand with cameras overseeing each piece of art as it detects any change to an image in a selected zone. The staff is able to define zones within each camera's view, and alarms will trigger if the system detects physical crossing of the pre-defined zone borders.

If you get too close to any piece of artwork within the museum, you will hear a tone or voice alerting you to move from that space. This helps the guards avoid confrontation, as they can instantly look at the area in question to see if the proximity was accidental or if there is an incident at hand.

This system helped solve the problem of not having guards in every gallery, as the IR illumination feature of the AXIS M1144-L Network Cameras surveying each room keep things in order at all hours. "Ideally, it would be terrific to be able to afford a guard in every gallery, but that just doesn't work for most museums that are not cash rich," noted Dr. Louis Zona, Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Butler Institute. "Consequently, this system has really made sleeping a little bit easier for those of us in charge of this place."

The forensic detail garnered by the Acuity-vct software along with the video provided by the object protection cameras can provide law enforcement the necessary evidence if theft or damage were to occur.

Monitoring the scene from within

Along with guards by the front door that keep watch of two 42-inch monitors showing general surveillance of the property, Platt also maintains four of those monitors in his office. From there, he is able to adjust the zones accordingly and be aware of any incidents in the museum, as the displays allow him to switch to pertinent camera feeds swiftly.

Utilizing an AXIS Q1604 Network Camera over a main walkway in the museum, the Butler Institute is able to capture a high resolution feed with a lot of mixed lighting coming in from glass doors in front as well as skylights above. With the Acuity-vct software, the institute also employs two dozen AXIS F44 Main Units, smaller sensors that maintain a discreet look and don't intimidate visitors while still protecting a vast collection.





AXIS P3364-V Network Cameras are also mounted throughout the galleries, withstanding any potential lighting situations that the artwork may need to consistently provide high quality views of the rooms. In addition, cameras at doorways provide crucial facial recognition along with the ability to identify license plates if necessary.

"I don't think I've ever met a museum director that says, "I want fewer guards," reasoned Dan Lazuta, Director of Sales and Marketing for Acuity-vct. "They want more guards, but often they just can't afford the number of guards that should be deployed given the value of their collection. Leveraging cameras and the object protection system helps to augment the existing staff. This allows a museum to have every collection piece watched at all times by an electronic guard."

The Butler Institute's security setup today includes over 200 cameras, and the plan is to bump that up closer to 300 in the coming months. Plans include the addition of thermal cameras to eliminate the remaining false alarms caused by shadows and other trips, and a potential wireless infrastructure throughout the facility.

"The Axis products paired with the Acuity-vct system have dramatically improved the safety of the museum. The paintings in our collection are priceless as we can't go back and get new ones. World-renowned artists like Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent are gone, however their legacy lives on in these masterpieces. It is our responsibility to protect these works for prosperity."



Axis cameras utilize the Acuity-vct Object Protection Software to place invisible protection zones around each piece in the collection.

Dr. Louis Zona, Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Butler Institute.



acuity-vct

About Axis Communications

Axis offers intelligent security solutions that enable a smarter, safer world. As the global market leader in network video, Axis is driving the industry by continually launching innovative network products based on an open platform - delivering high value to customers through a global partner network. Axis has long-term relationships with partners and provides them with knowledge and ground-breaking network products in existing and new markets.

Axis has more than 2,000 dedicated employees in more than 40 countries around the world, supported by a network of over 75,000 partners across 179 countries. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based company listed on NASDAQ Stockholm under the ticker AXIS.

For more information about Axis, please visit our website www.axis.com.