





minded friends did not recognize the potential problems the growing phenomenon of art theft could cause them. We discussed the high values of art and the possibilities for extortion, ransom, and other forms of profit a stolen work of art might suggest to an art thief.

One colleague noted that he had done numerous personal physical security surveys for corporate executives and directors and had never once questioned the value and security of the works of art in their elegant homes. Consequently, no steps were taken to provide appropriate security for these items, although in some cases, they may have been the executive's most valuable possessions.

As we discussed the problem of art theft further, my colleagues became aware that they do, in fact, have corporate collections of art under their protective jurisdiction. One man noted that there are one hundred pieces of art on each floor of his high-rise corporate headquarters, but no inventory is on file. Another security director admitted that his firm does have a collection, but that all it has the lobby are some "silly-looking pre-Columbian items" that "couldn't possibly be of any value."

For nearly a century, native objects like those "silly-looking" pre Colombian treasures have been viewed as ethnographic curiosities, not art. But now, prices for fine pre-Columbian artifacts have zoomed into the

thousands of dollars, and items have occasionally reached one million dollars each. These prices continue to rise, as the Mexican government attempts to regain possession of all pre-Columbian Mexican art.

The fact that most security directors do not recognize the importance and value of their "corporate collection" poses the first problem in corporate art security. It is essential for the security director and other executives to realize that just because they do not like or appreciate an object, it isn't worthless. As inflation plays havoc with the value of many types of assets, corporations should look at their art to see just what kind of tiger they have by the tail.

In 1970, Jasper Johns' "Two Flags" painting failed to sell at auction when priced at \$105,000. Last year it sold for one million dollars. A Jackson Pollock painting, that first sold in 1973 for \$100,000, sold last year for two million dollars. Impressionist works are also popular items in corporate offices. Auctions held last spring showed a further increase in art values, and enabled us to gauge the value of our corporate collections. Cezanne's "Paysan en blouse bleu," which sold for \$406,000 in 1958, brought \$3.9 million. A Van Gogh painting reached \$5.2 million from a \$372,000 price tag in 1958. In 1964 you could buy a Picasso or a Kandinsky quite inexpensively—and many corporations did. Now these works sell for millions.

Prints, posters, and photographs, all found in corporate collections, have



also increased in value. An Ansel Adams photograph sold this year for \$71,000. A Toulouse-Lautrec Moulin Rouge poster sold for \$52,000 this spring. American chromolithographs and hand-colored prints such as those by Currier and Ives have long been highly prized. A hand-colored Bennet print recently sold for seven thousand dollars and Audubon bird prints can bring from one thousand to twenty thousand dollars each.

Once the threat to corporate art collections is recognized, security directors must look around their corporate offices, bank lobbies, and waiting rooms to identify their collections. Someone in the company can probably help identify most of the items that were purchased to decorate the offices, and they may even be able to offer a reasonable estimate of value, depending on when the pieces were purchased.

Be alert to the various types of art in your collection. Don't think only "pictures" such as paintings, prints, lithographs, etchings, and photographs. Remember the decorative arts—vases, paperweights, sculptures, and statues. American Western art is particularly popular in corporate collections, and its value has risen dramatically in recent years. Other categories are antique furniture popular in executive offices, important historical documents, rare books, autographed items and other items of interest to collectors, as well as the oriental rugs and textile arts.

If you are unable to obtain assistance in identifying your corporate

collection by calling on in-house expertise, a number of art security consultants are available. Advice can also be sought from the security director at your nearby art museum.

A complete inventory must be made of all art in your collection, including company-owned art "on loan" to corporate executives for their homes. A file card can be kept on each object, showing the name of the artist if known, the title of the work, and its artistic category (antique chair, painting, etching, print, etc.). The file cards can be color-coded according to artistic category. Also include the date of purchase, date of inventory, and location to which it is assigned for display or storage (room 114, etc.).

This confidential inventory file should also include the appraised or purchase price and appraisal date. An inventory number should be assigned to each piece to assist in recordkeeping. Museums often use a numbering system that tells at a glance the year of purchase and the sequence of purchase. For example, 1981.4 would be the fourth item obtained in 1981. All of the above information will become important if a theft occurs or if ownership is questioned.

A corporate art collection security policy is a must. Guidelines should be written for maintaining the inventory and notifying the security director each time an item is added to or removed from the collection. Procedures for moving the art, who may move it, and under what conditions it can be moved should also be established.



When you have set up a policy and conducted an inventory, you should begin to document the collection. Start with at least one good 8X10 black and white glossy photograph of each item. The print should be suitable for publication and identification should the item disappear.

A second set of photographs should be taken with color slide film. These pictures should show front and rear "head-on" views, as well as shots of the front and rear of each painting or picture taken at a 45 degree angle. These angle shots enable you to identify the painting later by comparing paint depths, flaws, brushstrokes, surface cracks, stains, etc., should courtroom identification become necessary. The photograph of the reverse side of any picture shows similar idiosyncrasies, including any markings, numbers, etc. placed on the reverse side by you or by the previous owners.

Even though a picture is worth a thousand words, a detailed written description of each item should be made by someone with knowledge of art. Every idiosyncrasy should be noted. Once prepared, the photographs and descriptions must be guarded carefully.

Having documented the unusual marks on items in your collection will be critical to your investigation in the event of a theft. Since most valuable art is stolen to gain ransom from the owners or insurers, it is important to be sure the caller actually has the stolen item. In most major museum

thefts, as many as a hundred calls are received after the theft is announced in the press. People claim to have the missing art, and offer to return it for a fee. By maintaining your photographs of the reverse side of each item in strict confidence—even from law enforcement agencies—you will be able to question the caller regarding the marks, numbers, and other identifying features on the back of the picture. Only the true thief will know all of the details.

Photographs taken at an angle enable experts to testify in court that the painting in evidence is actually the painting that was stolen. Paint thickness, flaws, impression depth, and canvas thread-count per inch are just a few ways a picture may be identified later from photographs. In the case of prints, however, the problem of proving that the item in evidence after a recovery is actually the one stolen is compounded by the existence of other "originals" like it. For these works of art, photographic records that record minute differences in the printing job can be vital.

Photographs similar to those for recording flat artworks should also be taken of each piece of decorative art in your collection. These should show the pieces from all the angles, with careful attention paid to photographs of "signatures" in china and other distinguishing marks.

It is never recommended that non-experts mark art objects in any way. After all, the purpose of collecting art is



to preserve and protect it. If idiosyncrasies and flaws are not present to be photographed, some experts suggest that the inventory number be written lightly in pencil on the reverse of flat art or on the bottom of object. White ink is often used for china or furniture. Expert assistance should be employed in applying these numbers.

Also available commercially are colorless solutions consisting of trace elements mixed to your unique chemical code. These can be applied in minute amounts to the reverse of a painting or print for positive identification. Remember that even though these solutions are considered "safe," no one knows the effects they will have on a valuable work of art one hundred years from now. Use them sparingly!

After you have documented your corporate art collection, you must take steps to display it properly. Paintings should be affixed to the walls with screws, not hooks. One-way security screws are better than regular screws. Affixing paintings with screws prevents the "remove and run" theft in the lobby areas of commercial banks and other places of high activity where such a theft might go unnoticed. Of course, art should not be displayed in unattended areas. The more valuable art should be displayed in more secure locations or near guards or receptionists.

Works vulnerable to vandalism can often be covered by some type of plastic sheet, but experts should be

consulted so such a glazing material is used properly. Some watercolors and pastels may require glass glazing to prevent the static electricity common with polycarbon glazing from damaging pigments. Works in other media may require ultra-violet filtering glazing.

The more exotic types of alarms and devices used to protect works of art on display and in storage are best left to a future article. Several publications, including "Protecting Works of Art," compiled by Gerard Shirar and published by ASIS, can be helpful. Conversations with neighboring museum security directors or an art security consultant can also prove fruitful. A number of books are available at your public library or the library of your local art museum that will introduce you to the various types or classifications of art you may find in your collection.

And if a theft occurs from your collection, be sure to contact the security director from one of the major museums to learn how you can take advantage of several of the "hot sheets" on art. Examples are those published by the "Stolen Art Alert" and the "Art Dealers Association of America," which are circulated to dealers, law enforcement agents, and others in the field.

The corporate art collection can be a serious problem for the unprepared security director. But becoming aware of the value of the artworks under your care, recording and marking them in a manner that will help protect and



identify them, and exhibiting them with some concern for their security can help keep your company from becoming a loss statistic.

### WHAT CONSTITUTES A CORPORATE COLLECTION?

1. Art, including paintings, prints, lithographs, ceramics, statues, jewelry, etc.
2. Antiques such as furniture and collectibles.
3. Decorative arts such as vases, figurines, etc.
4. Documents or photographs including letters, autographs, stock certificates, etc.
5. Memorabilia of the company.
6. Carpets and tapestries; textile arts.
7. Rare books, newspapers.
8. Stamps, coins, etc.
9. Category materials such as sports memorabilia or political memorabilia.
10. Anything the company considers a collection!

### TIPS ON DISPLAYING WORKS OF ART WITH IMPROVED SECURITY

1. Carefully select locations. More valuable works and those subject to vandalism or damage should be

displayed in areas which are more secure and supervised.

2. Valuable works of art should be alarmed and their alarms monitored by Security.

3. Works should, when possible, be displayed under glass or Plexiglas to protect them from damage.

4. Works should never be attached to walls with "L" hooks which can be easily removed. Security screws and security flanges should be used, or devices that "lock" the works to the wall can be installed.

5. Railings or psychological barriers such as furnishings or platforms should be used to keep viewers at a distance. Psychology, such as visible cameras, is a good tool.

6. Display cases should be carefully designed and constructed to museum standards and should be alarmed.

7. Labels should be used with each work of art to identify locations where the collection should be if an object is missing.

8. Vulnerable areas, such as lobbies and locations just inside windows where smash and grab crimes can occur, should be avoided or security provided.

9. Large and heavy objects can often be used in more vulnerable places.



10. Very small items, such as paintings or prints, should be displayed behind shadow boxes or in large frames.

11. While many art thefts in the corporate environment are crimes of opportunity, don't underestimate the possibility of a planned heist. If I were targeting your art I would not break in. I'd stay behind after hours and break out.

12. Remember that art is intended to be displayed. Learn to accept the risk!

#### ELEMENTS OF A CORPORATE COLLECTION SECURITY PROGRAM

1. Know your collection. Identify the collection even if it is not officially termed a "collection."

2. Conduct an inventory or obtain a copy of the official inventory.

3. Identify items by value, importance and vulnerability. A Picasso is valuable, but a \$500 gold watch is more vulnerable from a theft by a drug user. Company memorabilia is vulnerable in a labor dispute but less so under normal circumstances.

4. Learn about each type of item in the collection. Is it fragile? Is it a hot item for thieves at this point in time? Is it politically, ethnically, or otherwise sensitive.

5. Is special "importance" attached to specific pieces? Were they selected by the Chairman of the Board or donated by the company founder?

6. Assess your threat. Is your facility vulnerable?

7. Document the collection with a complete technical description—size, medium, artist, description, etc.

8. Photograph your collection—color photos, black and white photos, front view, back view, angle view, flaws, marks, signatures. Maintain negatives in a secure location. Keep copies on hand for an instant press release in a theft.

9. Record certain details found on back of each picture, or special flaws on each object, and maintain them in a "secret" file to weed out false extortion calls when a theft occurs. Only you and the thief should know the secret.

10. Keep values and appraisals confidential. Don't let them remain in the risk management office file cabinet!

11. Establish a policy governing the accession and de-accession of objects (how they are processed and documented when received or sold), movement of objects within and out of the building, what files are to be kept on each object (accession file, description file, locator file, condition file, appraisal, etc.), the display of objects (specifically security to be notified before objects are displayed, security to have right to object to



locations chosen for display, etc.), and security involvement in the lending or borrowing of collection materials.

12. Establish internal controls such as security of records and files pertaining to the collection, access to files, etc. Maintain a back up copy of all files and photos.

13. Provide input on how and where the collection is to be displayed.

14. Provide input on where the collection is to be stored. Most collections display only a small portion of the inventory at any given time. Define access controls to storage.

15. Develop a contingency plan for theft, fire, disaster, relocation, recovery, etc.

16. Train your security staff on the importance (not the value) of the collection and its role in protecting it.

17. Work with the corporate curator to develop an employee awareness and appreciation program. Much damage is due to ignorance about the collection and its importance or value.

18. Develop a recovery plan for a theft. Security officers should treat a theft site as a crime scene. You need to have a pre-defined plan for informing the press which must include the company spokesperson, and you must have photos on hand without delay. Don't underestimate the negative impact a theft will have on your corporate security image. Know who

to call: local police, FBI, Customs, art community helping professionals such as "IFAR Reports," local museum, local dealers of similar materials, etc.

19. Develop a crisis management plan. What will you do if an extortion call comes in? Who will identify the object as authentic? How will you educate the local police when the fragile multi-million dollar Ming Dynasty vase is recovered and they want to store it until trial in their evidence locker in a cardboard box?

20. Have an internal crisis management plan. How will security answer questions of your company officials? Do your first-line shift supervisors know who to talk to and who not to talk to? Do they know that you WANT to be called at home if the painting on the Chairman of the Board's office wall is discovered missing at 5:00 AM?

21. Develop a plan for dealing with corporate collection assets off-site in satellite locations, executive residences, etc.

22. Develop a plan for securing collection materials that are in danger due to non-criminal events such as HVAC system failure, water leaks, etc.

23. Establish a liaison with fire department personnel so they are aware of the collection and its unique needs and can deal with it appropriately. Conduct a tour for fire personnel including storage areas.





24. Establish a liaison with your local museum so you can be informed of events that affect your collection or of technology changes that can help you in your mission.

Remember that the key to protecting your collection can be summarized as "Access Control," "Parcel Control," "Internal Security," and "Training and Planning." If you can control who comes and goes (good guys vs. bad guys), when they come and go (day, night), and where they go once inside (collection bearing areas, storage), and if you can control what they carry in (spray paint and razor blades) and what they carry out (your collection), and if you can hire only honest employees and keep them honest, you have resolved most of your problems. Now plan for any possible problems that may occur and train your staff to deal with them, including thefts, vandalism, extortion, fire, environmental problems, and disaster, and you'll be in great shape!