Rentokil used innovative CAT technology to tackle a Belgium museum’s infestation of furniture beetles which had evaded €8 million of historic paintings.
The CAT is in the bubble

Customer Need

When a well-known Belgium museum discovered furniture beetles (Anobium punctatum) in a number of its priceless Flemish paintings, it didn’t hesitate to call in the experts. Bruges City Council contacted Rentokil and after an initial inspection it was agreed that 70 paintings created by Baroque and Renaissance artists dating from the 14-17th centuries needed treatment in order to halt an outbreak. With the infested paintings insured for over €8 million, finding a suitable treatment was of critical importance.

Rentokil’s Solution

Rentokil proposed Controlled Atmospheric Technology (CAT) to treat the paintings as it leaves no residual trace of pesticide after treatment. This solution also carries minimal risk of damage to the artwork compared with traditional heat or freezing methods.

“The process involved enclosing the items in two 40 cubic metre laminate bubbles that are impermeable to oxygen,” said Rentokil’s Team Supervisor, Erik De Bruyne. “Once the paintings were enclosed, the atmosphere inside was gradually replaced with nitrogen until the oxygen level was less than 0.2%. The applied nitrogen was also humidified to a carefully controlled 55% RH (Relative Humidity) to ensure paintings, frames and any other wooden components wouldn’t contract or expand.”

Customer Benefit

Following a treatment period of 35 days, all beetles, larvae and eggs had been killed, and the paintings were re-displayed immediately. Rentokil also provided post treatment training for the museum staff on how to spot furniture beetle outbreaks and advise them to check their paintings regularly.

Erik De Bruyne
Rentokil’s Team Supervisor

“With the problem solved and all information taken on board, museum staff now know exactly who to call if any more pests come into the frame in the future.”

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