Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a professional artist and have been one for 3 years. I have put a lifetime of experience and spent a lot of my money building my fine arts studio from the ground up, in order to assure myself a steady income upon retirement. I don't want to rely on government income to support myself in my elder years. This business is growing and gaining in income to the point where after only three years, I am finally starting to break even and will soon be making a decent profit.

Although I am an engineer in the aeronautics industry by day, I spend all of my evenings and most of my weekends building the art business. I have taken many workshops and have put in a lifetime of experience learning and creating. I draw, paint, and throw pottery. My artwork can be viewed on Facebook, Etsy, my studio website, and also at several galleries where I regularly show. I am also the Vice President of the Ottawa County Arts and Humanities Council in the state of Kansas, and teach classes at several arts centers in different cities.

For me, copyright law is not an abstract legal issue, but the basis on which my business rests. All artists make quite a percentage of money selling prints of their original art, and selling licenses to those who would like to use the images of originals. It is important that we retain the copyright to our original work. Why would you want to give the right to reproduce our art to those who have not worked or paid to earn that right?

My artwork does not lose its value upon publication, rather, by restricting the number of prints through licenses actually helps to keep the art values at a higher level. If you give that right to the big box stores, online photo-banking sites, or anyone other company that prints in mass quantities, our clients will not be inclined to spend on our originals or limited prints. The majority of us, as artists, are making just enough to cover the supplies and then to pay ourselves less than minimum wage for the hours that we put into our works. We are already competing with cheap canvas prints, but at least we get a license fee for selling the image in the first place.

I consider all of my images to be a part of my inventory. I, as do most visual artists, sell prints of those images directly from my websites. I am sure that someone has printed out a copy or two of some of my artwork, however, at this time I have the right to sue them for infringement if I find them doing it.

Please don't take away artists' rights to their own work. Don't make us pay others to license images that we have put years of experience, education, money, and work to make. Artists support their local communities in so many different ways through their generosity, their income taxes, and helping to make the cities in which they live a more inviting and livable area.

Thank you for your time,

Devi Wilbur

Devi Wilbur Fine Arts Studio

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