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To the U.S. Copyright Office,

I am writing concerning proposed changes to U.S. Copyright law, specifically any law which would permit creative work to be used by others once it has been published on the internet or once it has been deemed an orphan work. It is my owning the copyright to my work that comprises the very foundation of my ability as an artist to make a living. I need to publish my work on my website and on social media in order to stay viable as an artist, and if that act allows others to copy my work, what hope do I have of selling it for reasonable prices? To demand that I must register each individual work in order to retain my rights to it is to demand that I must spend much more time and effort to just maintain the status quo, to just tread water.

This is not a theoretical or abstract argument but one that affects my whole business. After spending decades wanting to be a full-time artist, I am now in my third year of doing just that. I am an oil painter but it is clear that I need to supplement my sales of original oil paintings with prints of those paintings. Having a clearly visible signature on each painting is not always feasible, especially if the image of the painting is reproduced on a small format such as a greeting card. All the painters who have historically made lots of money and serve as inspirations (Thomas Kincaid, Norman Rockwell, Maxfield Parrish) have done so with reproductions. And even those men did not start out with the secretarial and administrative wherewithal to register each work. To change the law so fundamentally and put the onus of protecting copyright on the artist rather than the federal government which was supposed to uphold the rule of law, would be to doom not only my personal professional aspirations but the quality of creativity in the United States.

Do not make this change in copyright law – please, for the sake of my own business, for the sake of all artists, and for the sake of the American ideal of a free market protected by the rule of law, do not make this change to copyright law.

Sincerely,

Helen Avalon