

Visual Art & Copyright

If you are an artist creating drawings, paintings, cartoons, graphic arts, sculptures, or book illustrations, your works are subject to copyright protection.

If you are a photographer, cartographer, or architectural engineer, your images, maps, and drawings are subject to copyright protection.

If you are a textile artist, jewelry designer, glass blower, metal engraver, or toy maker, your works are subject to copyright protection.



Copyright protects many kinds of artwork and is not affected by style or form, whether representational or abstract, naturalistic or stylized. Nor does copyright depend on artistic merit or aesthetic value.

As the copyright owner of artwork, you have the right to make and sell copies of it; make new works from it; and display it publicly, including on the internet. And if you want to use someone else's artwork in these ways, you must get permission from the copyright owner.

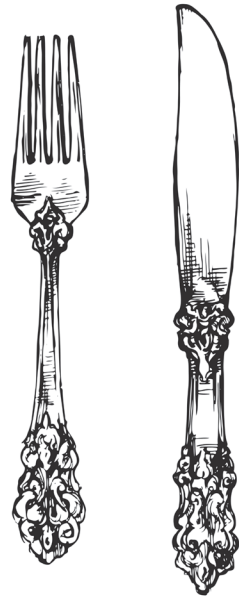
Copyright protection begins the moment a work is created in a fixed form; registration with the U.S. Copyright Office is not required. But timely registration offers important benefits, such as the ability to secure certain remedies in cases alleging copyright infringement.

Copyright

To be eligible for registration, a work must contain original pictorial, graphic, or sculptural authorship.

Copyright protection does not extend to useful or functional items, but the presence of uncopyrightable elements in a work does not prevent registration of features that are copyrightable.

For example, the designs of useful items such as chairs or silver flatware are not copyrightable, even though the designs may be artistically pleasing. But a carving on a chair back or a floral motif on silver flatware may be protected by copyright.



The Copyright Office registered 93,651 visual artworks in 2018.

If you have several new unpublished works, you can file a registration on one application with a single filing fee. You also can register group contributions to periodicals.

Visit copyright.gov for more information

◀ *Movie posters registered with the copyright office.*

If you belong to an arts group, club, or association that would benefit from a free copyright workshop from one of our visual arts experts, call (202) 707-2973 to make arrangements.