RE: Notice of Inquiry, Copyright Office, Library of Congress
Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works (Docket No. 2015-01)

As an artist and educator I deal with issues of copyright every day. Learning of the proposed changes to copyright law is, frankly, disturbing. Being a creative who makes a noticeable portion of my income off of images and tangible artwork- the sanctity of my copyright is something I take seriously. While my students and colleagues who are more mainstream in their use of imagery in terms of "commercial work" may have more of a stake in this argument I still find it insulting that anyone's artwork could be used without permission, compensation or that the government would facilitate big business in harvesting the work of others with the heavy handed policies that have been outlined in these changes.

I am aware there is a list of questions the copyright office wishes for us to address. Honestly, I feel that it is better to just state the obvious. Being an artist is nearly impossible. On a good day we break even. Most days what we do costs us everything and in the end, the one thing we have, the one thing we own is our art. From all sides our rights, as owners of our copyright, are being violated. From over-reaching terms of service for social media to companies harvesting artists work off of websites like Flickr or Instagram and using them for financial gain. The structure of copyright is shifting to favor not the creator of the image but the end user.

Every month I have students who find that their work is being used by a company or individual without compensation. The recourse for such violations is complicated and tedious to work out and in most cases yields little, if any, compensation. Some of these proposed changes seem to promote the use of original works more freely and with complete disregard to the creator. This notion of "orphan works" is predatory at best and seems to be written with the large image consumers in mind. There will be even LESS deterrent to those who wish to harvest our images without compensation. The burden of registration and further paperwork to maintain copyright is absurd and creates more work for both the artist and the government and benefits only the corporate predator.

I could ramble for pages but I am sure some of my fellow artists and educators have done a sufficient job illuminating all the reasons that these proposed changes are borderline evil. As simple and innocent as it sounds, the government should be in the practice of protecting the rights of its citizens not perverting those rights for the sake of big business. What a person creates as an expression of themselves in the form of visual art is something sacred and the ownership and usage of that material should be something that the artist themselves decide.

Sincerely
Sam Davis
Professor of Photography