7/21/2015
Maria Pallente
U.S. Copyright Office
101 Independence Ave. S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20559-6000

RE: Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works

Dear Ms. Pallente,

Thank you for giving my fellow artists and me the opportunity to express our concerns over changes to the existing copyright laws.

I am a working artist currently struggling to break into the comic book industry via an online comic (webcomic). I have experience in several art related industries including illustration, music, and tattooing. I am writing to ask that you do not make the currently proposed changes to the copyright law concerning mass digitization and orphaned works.

In the comic book industry artists are often pressured to sign their rights away so that the publishing company can profit from the licensing. The artist becomes dependent on the company and subject to unfair wages, bringing them a fraction of the profits generated by the properties they create and/or contribute to building. This compels some artists, like myself, to produce creator-owned comic books, so that we can support ourselves without being exploited. The Internet now allows an artist to compete with these massive publishing houses at a fraction of the production costs, however, the cost of promoting your work, both in terms of time and money, still make success in this field an extreme long shot. The difficulties and exploitation of musicians has been well documented. And it happens, thanks in part, to legal loopholes similar to those being proposed now, which benefit any business possessing the clout to exploit the courts.

Programs like Photoshop make enforcing copyrights more difficult than ever. Again thanks to the production demands imposed by publishing houses even professional comic book artists working for the top companies are exposed for using another artist's work with slight alterations to the original piece. Now imagine the temptation for unknown artists, or those operating in an entirely different part of the world, where they don't think the work will be seen by the creator. This proposal will only serve to instigate the problem. In fact, given what we know about artist exploitation throughout the years, it's more than likely to accelerate the problem.

Let's say this legislation passes, I have to register my work, and I forget about all of the art I've created for the past 25+ years, focusing only on my current/new materials. The comic I am producing now has 12 books, 200 pages each. With this one title I'll have to register 2,400 images, and that's just one title. I simply cannot

afford the time or money to make that happen, which is what I believe some are counting on.

I often use photo reference in my work. I either collaborate with the original artist(s) or I'm forced to make extensive changes to the photo so as to not infringe on their copyright. I understand not everyone can do this, especially non-profits. But I fail to see how this legislation is a remedy. There are already massive databases of truly copyright free images. The non-profit may not have an ideal selection for what they want but the artist should be hampered to accommodate the market.

The current system has enough challenges already, such as the alleged collection of Secondary Copyright fees. I've never even heard of anyone in the States collecting on secondary copyright royalties. Any changes that further impede artistic endeavors in terms of financial gain would only serve to stifle creativity. Artists, being the independent creatures that we are, will eventually turn away from the market entirely. We will always create, but if our rights are abused or if it simply isn't financially viable we will create on our own. Some cultures already have a tradition of destroying your work after it is created. Your office claims that art is invaluable to society at large, which it is. We inspire academics, challenge cultural norms, and validate the human condition. Ultimately the best of us will be lost, and our artistic heritage will be modified reproduction after modified reproduction.