Michelle BAKER

MICHELLE BAKER DESIGN, LLC

To:
Maria Pallante
Register of Copyrights U.S. Copyright Office
101 Independence Ave. S.E.
Washington, DC 20559-6000

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

July 22, 2015

Dear Ms. Pallante & U.S. Copyright Office Staff:

As a professional graphic designer and artist with 25 years of experience, I write to you on behalf of not only professional creatives, but as a concerned United States Citizen. The changes being proposed to the ownership and exclusive rights of artists and creators over their productions is under siege by special interest groups and private corporations. This is a crisis not only for visual artists, but for American citizens who rely on the protection granted to us in the United States Constitution to retain ownership over the intellectual property and creative works that we, as individual humans, create.

Daily challenges of monetizing and licensing art currently include infringements and blatant "stealing" and republishing of our images, domestically and by entities outside of the United States. Enforcing our ownership rights over these people or companies is already difficult largely because of the financial impact and legal fees required to identify and cease the offenders and then to pursue related damages. Under current law, registering our visual works with the U.S. Copyright office is a bit cumbersome, but not really a difficult thing to do. We complete a form and send in a fee. Being able to group our works into collections helps simplify (and economize) the process. At the very least, I know that when I do this, although somebody may still "steal" my work, at no point in the future can they serve a Cease and Desist to ME on something that I created. That is not an ideal situation; I'm not being vigilantly protected by any other entity, however, I do retain certification of ownership.

It is my understanding that this may potentially change. It is frustrating to feel the need to defend the concept that visual images are intellectual property and tangible inventory rolled into one. It is critical to the credibility of any creative professional to maintain ownership over the exclusive rights of their original work in order to monetize the work, as well as to operate a sustainable business in today's global economy. With the Internet came a new world of challenges in protecting images, but it also provides us with dynamic tools to identify breaches and to catalog and document creation information. A simple "reverse image" look up on Google allows me to locate web sites using images that I own, simply based on visual recognition tools. Ease of tracking and registering ownership over visual images IS here. Today, more than ever before, we have the tools and the technology to link artists to their creations with far more ease than ever before. But to hand over the power of such registry to privately owned, for-profit companies is reckless and has the potential to basically enslave individuals to corporate exploitation that will strip individuals of their inherent rights granted to us by the founding fathers of our country. Please consider the long term cultural repercussions of such a shift in the property ownership of visual assets.

Regards,
Michelle Baker

Michelle Baker Design, LLC | P.O. Box 167 Hampstead, NH 03841
tel: 603-275-3067 | email: mb@michellebakerdesign.com | www.michellebakerdesign.com