Dear Copyright Office,

I'm spending my 4th of July writing to let you know about my business, how the current copyright situation is *already* harming me, and how worrisome the prospective changes in Copyright Law seem from my position as a "Creator" of art. Non-creators, AKA, "*Users*" with motives that look suspiciously like the desire to appropriate my property for their own -- should not be involved in dictating changes in law for my product.

I'm a 54 year old single mother, illustrator/ published author of children's books, and artist-entrepreneur. I've been a professional illustrator for over 30 years, and a freelancer for the last 22. My unique art "style" is my only marketable skill — a skill I spent most of my life developing in a highly competitive field.

Like most of my peers in children's illustration, my primary income as a freelancer for many years came through educational publishers -- illustrating textbooks and readers. Most of these companies insisted I sign away the rights to my work. Future use and profits belonged to them forever. I have done many "Hidden Picture" puzzle illustrations for children's magazines. (You may remember those from the dentist's office as a child.) It took me dozens of hours for one puzzle. I'd be paid $200 and the publisher is still — 20 years later, repackaging them over and over in brand new "Hidden Picture" puzzle books, in Hidden Picture Calendars, and on the Internet. So please, anyone who tries to say that published art "loses value" is only saying it because they know that an image does NOT objectively and definitively lose value and they wish to exploit that property for their own purposes without paying for new (or re-licensed) art from artists. I will determine the value for my work, or my customers will. I will sell it or I will not. That is not for anyone else to say.

Work for Hire is a terrible deal for Creators, but those of us with rent to pay and mouths to feed have had to take these jobs anyway. In the early 2000s though, most of the WFH educational work many of us relied on suddenly vanished as large American school publishers started going overseas to hire "cheaper" illustrators in Asia (who, BTW, were usually asked to mimic the styles of American artists.) With little work, I was more and more worried each month about meeting my rent. Then, exactly six years ago, a crafter who had stumbled on my illustration website contacted me out of the blue and suggested I try selling my art as something called a "digi." She told that many crafters, instead of using rubber stamps for their scrapbooking and handmade cards, were purchasing black and white "clip art" to print out, color and use as an element in their crafting. A new opportunity for artists like me was opening up where I could work for myself, and this crafter was sure that my work would be popular.

Being technically minded, and enjoying a roof over my head, I quickly opened a shop on Etsy and began selling licenses to crafters to use my digital illustrations in their hobby. Eventually I grew enough to move to a self-run eShop with my own web address. I normally work 12-16 hours a day/7 days a week to build a library of images specifically for crafters to license in their handmade projects. I've been fortunate that the interest in my particular brand: "Mo's Digital Pencil" has been great, and "digis" and "coloring pages for adults" have become a viable business. Thanks also to the crafters who showed photos of their finished projects using my images on their blogs — I've gathered fans and customers from all over the world. The ability to

sell my work digitally has been a new hope that as I age (as a longtime freelancer with no savings and no pension) — I may be able to avoid government aid as a senior by continuing to license my illustrations this way.

I charge a very small fee ($3 to $5) to individuals to license my work. They are allowed to print (for their own use) the image as many times as they like, and can even sell the handmade greeting cards they make using my illustration. As you can guess, I need to sell a lot of licenses in order to make each image I put in my shop worth the hours it took me to imagine, sketch, finish and put it for sale (and to pay for overhead like my workstation, office expenses, web shop etc.). My work most definitely is not meant to be sold once and then lose its value. My unique style (as a recognized children's book author) has its own intrinsic brand value as well. I see my crafters discussing my images all the time on Facebook and telling others "it's a Mo Manning." Each and every image I put in my shop goes there with the "hope" that enough people will buy it so I can pay my bills. My greater hope is *always* that some images will become popular enough in my shop that I will be able to license them commercially as well.

I have always been aware of the dangers of creative work being shared online, and have been careful about watermarking, and only uploading low resolution images. I started a blog to alert and educate crafters and artists about copyright law, hoping we could appeal to Users to "do the right thing." I got dozens of other stamp companies to join me in a coalition to try to protect our work. (http://stampoutstamptheft.blogspot.com/.) On the positive side, this has led to a good group of crafters who help us by letting us know about the images they find shared on social media, and the "secret" Facebook and Yahoo groups where hundreds of sneaky Crafters get together and share all their digital images — so one person buys, and many "possess." However, knowing that this is going on has led to stress and discouragement as the constant frustration of having to "accept" the violations looms overhead. Many have opted out of selling digitally, gone out of business altogether or have simply become apathetic about their rights as artists and tried to look the other way.

Over the past three years especially, as the "sharing" become so commonplace, I have become terribly concerned with the lack of options individuals like I have to get justice for even flagrant violations. A postcard on the counter of a souvenir shop is protected more vigorously by the law. Though my images continue to be very popular worldwide, the opposite is reflected in my income because of the ease of copying and redistributing digital work. I believe the great number of people who will steal an image with no concern – but who would never think of stealing from a physical store due to lack of any consequence. ***If no one ever gets in trouble for sharing – it must be okay to do.*** I am HESITANT now with each image I upload, as I can't afford to pay a lawyer and so few Users seem to understand or respect my rights. (I wasted 15 thousand dollars two years ago going after a couple of "big" violations when I had to STOP mid-pursuit because I ran out of money to continue paying my lawyers.)

Personally, I have spent hundreds of hours filing DMCA reports instead of drawing (a complete waste of time as the "sharers" face ZERO consequences for stealing our work – and the damage has been done already by the time I find the stolen images) How can a User trust us when we tell them that what they're doing is illegal — when the cheery emails they're sent from Pinterest after a takedown specifically state, "you have done nothing wrong"?

In what other field can a huge company like Pinterest collect my, and other illustrators copyrighted work, illegally duplicate them with each new "pin" and cheerfully present them to their other users in mass emails as advertisements of where to find collections of stolen images they "might like"? For me, and other illustrators trying to get paid for our product, Pinterest is a huge shopping mall of stolen images. (And these images are not all "digital" to start — a great many, if not "most" have been scanned in by Users from copyrighted books or rubber stamped images and uploaded to use in their crafts.)

https://www.pinterest.com/search/boards/?q=digi+stamps
https://www.pinterest.com/search/boards/?q=free%20digis
https://www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=coloring%20pages

Please note . . . these black and white images are Pinned not to *look* at — but for the Pinner to USE in lieu of purchasing. They are actual PRODUCT. It's as if a huge company took people's cars off the street, moved them to a gigantic parking lot and told the world; "free, please pass along to others!" Who in their right mind believes that Pinterest really trusts that their Users are only uploading things they have permission to?

In what other field can huge numbers of copyright violators hide in "secret" Facebook groups (because they know it's illegal to share) to trade copyrighted images in order not to have to purchase them . . . and where the artists whose work is being stolen need to spend thousands of dollars in lawyer's fees just to subpoena the name of the group owner, and then thousands more to file a lawsuit?

In what other field can a copyright criminal like this (see attached image or links), take my work, erase the watermark that I explicitly placed over my artwork and share it with thousands of people so that it becomes in danger of being seen as "orphaned"? Does Congress know how easy it is to use Photoshop to erase or change an image? Everyone else on the Internet does.

violation: https://www.facebook.com/SpicedHumour/photos/pb.113472922095959.-2207520000.1436047248./798589603584284/?type=3&theater
My original: http://www.mosdigitalpencil.com/products/The-Fat-Lady.html

In what other field could workers be forced to pay to "register" each product they create in order for it not to be stolen, or listed as "orphaned", or make a lawyer refuse to take your case because unregistered means no statutory damages.

My artwork is my PROPERTY. It is my life's work, my heart, my soul, my invention, my product — it would not exist without me, and no matter how many "Users" think it's not worth paying for, I beg to differ. I pay taxes like every other American and I demand respect. Copyright office — please lobby to protect us with the same other businesses are protected in this country.

There are thousands and thousands of very small businesses like mine, where an individual artist has no support, and no voice. Thank you for the opportunity for me to weigh in on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Maurie (Mo) Manning
www.mauriejmanning.net
www.mosdigitalpencil.com

PS You will not hear from the vast majority of illustrators. Most of them would speak up if they knew, but they are holed up in their studios with their noses to their drawing boards, or wrist-deep in paint, completely oblivious to the fact that their artwork is being scanned in, uploaded, shared and used all over the world without their permission. So please, let the ones you do hear from speak for our peers who are too busy working hard, to have ever even have heard about this inquiry.

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My illustration ripped from the internet,
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image – YET again after I spoke to them last
July , reported them to facebook,
and told them to stop appropriating my work.
mo's digital pencil
copyright mjm
The original "sample" image from my shop,
intentionally low-rez and watermarked so that
it Users would know it was not "free" for them
to use.
Everything starts slowing down with age, except the length of time it takes for cake and chocolate to reach your hips.
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