Dear people in charge of the Copyright Office of the USA;

My name is Amber Rajaniemi, though I prefer to go by my artist penname: Espi Kitsune.

You most likely don't know me, and that's alright. You most likely don't know me or any of my friends. That's alright, too. But there is one thing me and my friends all share in common.

We're all artists, and we make a fair share of our living off our art.

I am not the biggest artist out there; I am not the best, no. Neither are my friends even though they are SO much better than me! I've won a few contests held by other artists, but that's about it. I've had a few poems I've wrote published by my high school, but that's really it. But without my creations and being able to sell them, I wouldn't be able to get those extra 20$ a month now and then to pay for food.

I can't get a job-I'm disabled! My friends can't get a job either-They've also got disabilities! I, myself, have a full school life behind me. I finished high school up there near the top of my class. I went to college for about a year, and yes I dropped out, but it was due to the same reason I can't hold a job-Mental problems. I will not get into them, but chronic depression mixed in with autism leads to quite a bit of issues around holding a job.

So my job is being a part time artist. I've drawn since I was 3-I'm 21 now, will be 22 in August. That's nearly 20 years I've been an artist. I've accepted money as payment for my art for about 5 years now. I'm not a big enough artist to claim it as a full job yet, no. I'm lucky to get an art commission every month! But it's how I get my money.

And therein sits the issue.

This new law-Or not really a NEW law as I remember it trying to go through a few years back-Would DESTROY the livelihoods of me and many of my friends. It would CRUSH friends of mine who don't even make money off their art-They do it as a hobby, and this would make them incapable of showing off their hobby. The law would let anyone be able to grab the things we've worked our LIVES on and use them however they please, without even asking us. Right now that's considered theft!

I've dealt with people stealing my art before, I've had someone steal a character I've worked half my life on and claim it as their own. I've had to threaten people with DMCAs for taking things I've worked HARD on and selling them for a profit of real world currency.

Sit in my shoes for a few hours; How would you like if something you worked your entire life to create was taken by someone else?

You'd be mad too, right? You'd want the money they're making off YOUR idea, wouldn't you?

Now you might say “Well file for a copyright when the law goes through”, but most of us artists barely make enough money to scrape by as is. Having to spend who knows how much money to copyright every little design or character we make would break us. I, myself, have at least one hundred if not MORE creations in my folder. How much would it cost me to pay to copyright every one of them?

This proposed new law would allow the big companies out there, like Disney, or Nintendo, or Hasbro, or Viacom to look around the internet on Google, find a picture, and use the design outright without our permission. It’s stealing! It’s taking OUR money for something we’ve put our life and soul into! Why should we fight to grab the money to pay for a new copyright?

Especially considering right now we all, technically, have copyrights to them.

I use a website called Deviantart. It is a website created for artists to show and sell their work. Upon uploading anything to their website gives us a creative license to them-A simple, but effective, copyright to our work. If we choose, we can allow people to use and/or modify our work. If we don’t, then we own it 100%. I also make 3D products on a program called IMVU, and I’m working on making the same type of products on another program called Second Life. Both of these places offer a license to what we’ve made, too.

I’ve already had a friend remove all of their art and delete their account over the head of the Orphaned Works stuff. He was a great artists and he used it to help cure his depression issues. I’m worried about him now-What if he commits suicide?! I’d hate to lose a dear friend and mentor over something as silly as this!

Our licenses are our copyrights. We use them to make our money.

They are OUR creations, and with our licenses we should be allowed to pick and choose who has access to use our creations. Right now I’m in contact with an old grade school friend about getting our characters, our artist creations WE’VE made, published into a game. He’s a programmer, he’s making video games. If someone swooped in and took our characters right now, all our collaborative work would be for naught.

And that raises another point-Artists, such as myself and many of my friends-Make their own characters. Be they just an artist’s muse, or maybe for proposed comics, stories, or even video games. We make our own living, breathing worlds in our art. We play God to these beautiful worlds we’re able to do anything to. Some of us have worked our whole lives on it. They mean a lot to us-They are our babies.

Would you like it if your child was taken away from you by some money hungry cretin?

Could you put a price in dollars on your children?

Our children-Our art-Sits and grows. We can show it off to people, and get those people interested in what we do. I’ve seen people want to give me their money for an art commission based off something I posted to the internet back in 2007! Art is timeless, and people will like what they like.

I don’t see people saying the Mona Lisa isn’t valuable because it’s a few hundred years old. Doesn’t that make art more valuable the older it gets….? Sure there’s hundreds of thousands of reprints of it, but the original is still priceless, isn’t it?

Can’t the art I worked months on also be priceless if I still have the original? Sure, it might end up on every Google search from here to the next century, but wouldn’t the ORIGINAL be worth something no matter how much it’s been published….?

I’ve gone off topic. The original point of this whole letter is the fact that his new law would destroy the business, jobs, and livelihood of me and many, many others. And trust me, art is a HUGE market. I personally know an artist who, just in the last week, made a good 500$ off art commissions. That’s the average person paying them to draw something for them.

And in a few days, they won’t be able to do that anymore.

Every one of that 500$ worth of commissions is part of her business. It’ part of her portfolio- Maybe we can compare them to stocks. Every piece of art sits there and attracts more people, which brings in more people who want to buy art. Exponentially, that’d mean every piece they make grows their business. That is her profession, that is her business, that is her inventory to sell and do what she wants with as she pleases. If she had a store on the side of the road, and someone came and stole her inventory to sell for themselves, we’d throw them in jail! If someone went up and stole the Mona Lisa, we’d tar and feather them!

What’s the difference? It’s still art. Someone still put their heart and soul into it. It is still the creation of SOMEONE. It is STILL important, it STILL shows our business. And with the internet era hotter than ever, the best way for an artist to find people who’ll buy is, well, the internet! They can reach a whole WORLD that way, and find the niche people they want to sell to.

Right now, the internet is the most important source of income from ANY business!

And, as much as big name companies and small minded people don’t want to realize it, art is a business. It is a very important business.

And our creations should be our own and only our own. We shouldn’t need to pay to protect what is ours to begin with!

~ Amber Rajaniemi

Espi Kitsune