July 21, 2015

U.S. Copyright Office

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a visual artist beginning my professional career as an Illustrator. I sell my work online and at national trade shows in addition to working freelance with clients to provide digital artwork. Before focusing on my art career, I attended and graduated from law school, which has provided me with a unique view on intellectual property law and the proposed Orphan Works changes.

Automatic copyright protection is essential to me and other creators beginning their careers. Small-scale creators and students do not have the financial, and many times educational tools to register each and every work with the Copyright Office. But our claim to our own works is no less important. Publishing our work does not decrease its value. Publishing our own work is one of the most important ways small creators can grow our business and continue to make money off of those same works.

The idea of a "good faith" infringer making money off of our work simply because they could not locate the owner is tantamount to walking into a convenience store and stealing merchandise without paying because no one was at the register.

Infringement of small-scale creators is important. If we need to consider changing how artists can better protect their work proactively by putting the burden on the artist and making it easier to register works, then that's a change to consider. But putting an artist at risk of infringement and allowing someone else to profit off of their hard work is not the answer.

I'm at the beginning of my journey as an artist and I hope to have a long career in the future. But if copyright laws diminish the inherent value of visual works and no longer protect them, I fear there won't be a career to be had.

Sincerely,

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