Carroll Swayze

I have been an independent artist my entire life. I started painting when I was 8 years old and I participated in my first outdoor art show when I was 14. I started my formal education in the Fine Arts Department of York University in Toronto, Ontario, after which I transferred to The Ringling School of Art & Design, in Sarasota, Florida, where I studied painting and printmaking.

I believe in original art. As artists, our solitary natures find us spending a great deal of time alone in our studios working to create new and exciting artwork while striving to maintain our own individual styles. I believe that the independent artist who actually toils to create original art in their studio is special, unique and unusual and should be protected, nurtured and supported as treasures. Artists are thinkers and dreamers and I believe their work enriches the lives of everyone who comes in contact with them. The copyright laws in this country help to protect our livelihoods which makes this issue of "ownership" of our hard work extremely important.

I have maintained my studio/gallery in Englewood, Florida for over 40 years and have developed a good reputation as a fine artist being very involved in all aspects of art in my community. I was on the steering committee, which saved, restored and created The Hermitage Artists Retreat, an international artist's retreat connected to the Greenfield Foundation, in what was my Mother's old house on the beach. I was on the board of directors of the Englewood Art Center when we raised the money to expand and build what has become one of the most vibrant community art centers in the area, now operated by the Ringling School of Art & Design. I was chosen as one of ten North American artists to participate in the first ever outdoor art festival in Japan, the Yokohama International Open Air Art Fair in Yokohama, Japan, in October of 2009 and experienced an amazing cultural exchange that enriched my life immensely. I teach art to the home schooled children of three counties and I sponsor many programs in the schools and in my studio to help keep original art alive and I am honored to have a scholarship named for me in our local high school, Lemon Bay High, sponsored by our Rotary Club.

I am currently the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Independent Artists, a trade organization whose mission is to strengthen, improve and promote the artistic, professional and economic success of artists who exhibit in art shows.

We are committed to integrity, creativity, and the pursuit of excellence and we advocate for the highest ideals and practices within all aspects of the art show environment. (www.naia-artists.org)

I am 59 years old, I am well traveled and I've raised three sons and have four grandchildren through the sales of my original artwork. I have been a working artist my entire life and after 45 years of outdoor art shows under my belt, I have an enormous amount of art experience that I am proud to share. I've experienced the ups and downs of the economy over the years and I have struggled to stay the course, maintaining good work ethics and standards along the way. I believe that art is important in every day life and I strive to continue the adventure.

Copyright law is not an abstract legal issue for artists, it is the basis on which all artists make their living. Each of our unique styles become our individual trademarks and the unique art that we create in our studios is our only source of income to support our families. Our copyrights are extremely important. Without ownership of our "work" we cannot continue to make a living and our livelihoods will suffer greatly. Each individual artist has the right to choose when and where their artwork may be reproduced, and the fees associated with that use are all an important part of our incomes. Our work does not lose value when it is published, everything we create, including published works, becomes part of our business inventory that can be sold to maintain our livelihoods. In the digital world that we live in, maintaining the rights of copyright of our work is vital to the health of our businesses. Infringing on the copyrights of an artist's life long hard work without our consent or knowledge is equal to stealing our money.

Please help to protect the lifelong work of all independent artists by maintaining strong copyright laws in the United States.

Thank you,

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