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

July 21, 2015

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

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

I have been a visual artist as long as I can remember, and have been in the art and design business since 1979. I earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in the practice of art from Stanford University and I have been an artist every day of my life. I take the profession seriously and have taught these principles and skills to thousands of students over the course of time.

The freelance artist is not protected by salary, health insurance, retirement plans, pensions, or any corporate umbrella. The only protection the artist has is the quality of work he or she is able to produce, and the cost of acquiring this quality is high. It takes time to achieve the fine judgment required to responsibly envision and make a real contribution to the marketplace.

If anyone can look, like, and then take an artist's creation under the protection of the law, the result is the deprivation of the creator and developer of the ownership and future value of their own work. We are value creators, we stand and deliver, and building a name and identity is our only insurance for the future. If someone else wants to monetize my work, they come to me, we negotiate a license for that purpose, and life goes forward in good faith and mutual benefit. The process must be transparent. Over a lifetime we create a body of work that has integrity and unique style. Any part of this body of work must not be taken by anyone else for their own benefit; this is called stealing.

If we can be taxed on making improvements to a piece of paper, we can be protected for what we do. A prolific artist can make many pieces even in one day. To require filing individually for each piece would place undue hardship on the person who is generating the value. Copyright must be protected. It is our product. It is our only insurance and the only way we can protect our livelihoods, profits, and future, especially in the digital age, with hackers a prevalent threat.

I sincerely implore you to make sure that artists are automatically protected by copyright of their work. Personally I use Digimarc, which applies a watermark to all artwork I place on the web. It is possible to track usage with this software and go after any infringements. But for the government to even hint at sanctioning unauthorized usage or derivatives will surely cause a flood of trouble for the arts, undermine what is left of the moral fabric of this nation, and tie up the courts for years.

Sincerely,

Ann Balaam Miller