Comments regarding proposed changes to US Copyright Law. 7/20/2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been troubled to read about proposed changes to the current copyright law. I am currently a hobby artist painting nature themed artwork and do not currently sell my work for profit. However, I have aspirations to become a professional artist in the future and financially support myself from my work. In order to gain publicity and a following, I publish my artwork online and on social media, and I find it very upsetting to read that under these new proposed changes, I will have to register all of my past and future work to protect it. I post many different sketches, photographs, as well as finished drawings and paintings and it would not be practical for me to register all of these works. I take great pains to observe the copyright of other artists as I work from my own photographs and reference material, or from life.

Even more disturbing is that I would have to register this work with multiple private sector, for profit registries, incurring significant costs to do so and also divulging personal information to a corporation that does not have my best interests at heart. It is even more disturbing that under these proposed changes, anyone would be able to make only very slight changes to my work and then register the copyright for themselves. So if I didn't register my work, I would run the risk of being sued for infringement for something that I created myself.

It is very disturbing that these changes are being proposed by large corporations in an effort to trample on the rights of artists who are often not articulate or organized enough to advocate for themselves. The main function of government is the protection of private property and I find it appalling that this function is being handed over to private companies. Our current system is problematic enough as there are countless examples of large corporations (Target, Urban Outfitters, etc.) infringing on the rights of individual artists and making a profit at their expense. It is generally only through bad publicity and public shaming on social media that a company will agree to stop infringing on an artist's copyright. It is very difficult for an artist to mount a lawsuit when their copyright has been infringed due mainly to exorbitant legal fees and the fact that such a lawsuit is difficult to prove as most artists don't register their works under the current system (because of the cost and time involved). Under this new system, it will be even easier for this type of infringement to take place and much harder for an artist to make a claim and win in court against an infringer.

The consequence of enacting these proposals as law is that I will most likely not share my work on the internet, and make it strictly for my own personal pleasure instead. Therefore, the world will miss out on seeing my work because it is not practical for me to register my art in the manner being described. I also find it an intrusion of my privacy to reveal a potential client's information. Something that I once dreamed of being a livelihood will now only be a pastime that I will be secretive about for fear of a lawsuit.

I urge you to please discontinue any plans to change the copyright law from the current form, unless it is to grant more protections for artists, not less. These proposed changes would be a step in the wrong direction. The protections offered under current copyright law is a big reason why the United States is a leader in the arts, design and technology. By removing these protections for artists, the quality and volume of creative output would definitely decrease and everyone would suffer from this.

Sincerely,
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