July 22, 2015

I am and have been a working visual artist for the past 30 years. I have a Bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University in Interior Design. I find it incredible that we are on the verge of having our copyrights to our art works virtually taken away and given to the public. I feel as if I am being cheated of my life's work in a stroke of a pen. I have made my living with my art and I while I am not a rich person, I have carefully never made prints or reproductions of any of my paintings, in the hope that one day it will be my legacy to my children to derive some form of inheritance from my lifetime of hard work. I have spent most of my life alone, in a studio creating my paintings and selling through galleries to make my living. I love my work process and do not regret having the solitary life, but I mainly worked every day with the knowledge that what I created I could sell and would always retain my copyright; unless I chose to sell it as well. It is of the utmost importance to me to be able to have my work in magazines, online and in other realms and at the same time maintain my copyright to my work. I feel as if my hands are being tied on this issue as the internet is a means that most of my galleries use to promote my work and with this new law they will be giving my work away to the public and I will have worked essentially for nothing. Books and Magazines that publish my work in no way diminish my right to choose who and how my work is used both now and in the future. The publication of artwork only makes the value grow as it is publicity for the artist, and allows them to reach a wider range of collectors.

All of my art work is my inventory and even after a painting is sold I try to keep up with the location of my work; and I carefully let each purchaser know they are not buying the copyright to my work,only the painting itself. I maintain a database of all of my images and intend to one day use them to make prints of my work when I can no longer physically paint. Making them public just because they are published is truly an irrational idea. It is hard enough to sell original art work in this digital era, but I have preserved and educated my buyers and collectors through the years about the value of having original art. My life will have been in vain if this passes, please do not cave in to the Lobbyists and corporate Lawyers on this issue. I beg you please do not change the copyright laws that exist to protect us artists today just to please someone who only wants to use our work for their own advantage with no regard to the artist.

I humbly beg for you ear on this issue. It is so important to my well-being.

Thank you for your time

Take care,

Cathy Hegman