13 July 2015

I am writing to voice my objections to proposed changes to the existing copyright law that threaten artists' ability to own copyrights of our work, to determine when and how that work is utilized and to derive income from our image inventory.

I am a 1972 honor graduate of the Communication Arts Department of Virginia Commonwealth University and have worked as a professional graphic designer and illustrator for over 40 years. I am a member of the Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators and my paintings have been utilized by corporate, advertising and editorial clients as well as publishers of fiction and children's literature. My work has been recognized by the New York Society of Illustrators, the New York Art Directors' Club, Print Magazine, the Virginia Museum and has won a gold Addy Award.

In 2010 I was diagnosed with cancer—a crippling blow to my career. During two years of treatment, the only income I had (though modest) was derived from licensing secondary usage rights to images I had previously created. I understand that you have heard testimony from lobbyists and attorneys on behalf of corporate interests looking to acquire access to artists' inventories for public use. Their argument—that once this body of work has been published it has no further commercial value—is woefully misguided, arrogantly disingenuous and grossly self-serving.

And the implications are staggering. What other personal business inventory is left unprotected by law and made available for appropriation by the general public free of charge? How can any argument be made supporting the position that I must register my 40-year body of work on a commercial database for a fee or lose ownership of it? Commercial infringement of a product that I craft for my livelihood without my knowledge, consent and reimbursement is simply theft.

In some instances I have made more on licensing secondary usage rights over time for an artwork than I made upon initial publication. It is vital that I control its use to insure its continued value. Additionally, my unpublished work with untapped income potential will be rendered vulnerable if these changes to the existing copyright law are enacted.

Even worse looms the possibility that "good faith" infringement can include alterations to my work made by others and subsequently copyrighted as their own.

A copyright law that once protected visual artists is on the verge of rendering us vulnerable and opening up new avenues of exploitation, the scope and ramifications of which will impact my livelihood and reverberate disastrously throughout our industry.

Sincerely,

Lynne Cannoy Knecht

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