July 22, 2015

U.S. Copyright
Orphan Works

Dear U.S. Copyright Office,

I am writing to express my opinion about the proposed “Orphan Works” legislation.

Growing up, I do not remember a time when my mother was not making art, diligently and passionately developing both her talent to a masterful level, and also a “name” for herself, finally making a living selling her works after decades of struggle, surviving on menial jobs and as an art instructor at UCLA, and the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

Nineteen years ago, at the tragically early age of 60, she was brought down by cancer, leaving behind as her only legacy to myself (and potential inheritance to her grandchildren) a body of sculptural works encompassing hundreds of pieces, many of which are circulating in collections, installed in public sites, and portrayed in published photos. Many of her works were issued in editions, which have not yet been fulfilled. It has for years been my dream to help that body of work to be seen in a formal retrospective, to develop it further, to issue the missing editions, and to help insure that her name, so tenaciously promoted, might never fade into the obscurity of a forgotten genius. As I near retirement, I am about to have the free time to devote to this dream.

Now, imagine my dismay to learn that current copyright laws protecting that legacy are being threatened. Inherent in the inventory of works is a sales value that must be protected if I am to be able to raise the necessary funds to properly market her name and creative legacy, and anything which places that property in the public domain represents literal theft of my family’s assets. This is my opinion, and I believe that this general concept applies to the works of most, if not all artists, both living, and also those deceased with living relatives who loved them and still nurture their work.

I sincerely hope that your office will hear the voices of those most directly and adversely affected by this proposed legislation, and will turn the direction back toward continued protection for artists of all types. In my lifetime, I have watched as our culture has offered less and still less cultivation of the “humanities”. If we fail to protect artists, we will only further dehumanize ourselves.

Thank you,

Morgan DeVine