July 20, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing with regards to the new US Copyright Act that is currently being considered. I am concerned that the proposed changes will negatively impact artists in a way that further threatens our livelihoods and businesses.

I am a visual artist, with an undergraduate degree in Art from Portland State University and a graduate degree in Scientific Illustration from the University of California, Santa Cruz. I work professionally as a scientific illustrator, sign painter, and designer. I have published illustrations in local weekly newspapers, books, scientific reports, and online resources.

I have been working as an artist for over 10 years. My success as an independent business relies on my control over the licensing of my work and my ability to be paid for it. It is critical to me, both as an artist and a business person, that I retain full control of the work I produce and that I choose how, when, and by whom my work is used. Copyright law is not an abstract legal issue for me. It is the basis on which my business rests. Any infringement upon my work is a threat to my business and my livelihood.

In this era of digital media, everything I produce is published on my website and various social media pages. Here, it does not lose it's value for me. Instead, this becomes part of my business inventory and serves as a portfolio and advertising to potential clients. Furthermore, when I publish a piece of work, whether online or on paper, I almost always have retained some rights to that work. That means that I can make reproductions of that work, license it for other projects, and otherwise continue to use it as an income source. Again, my ability to retain my rights to my work, published or not, is the principle on which my business rests.

On my website and social media platforms, I share sketches and project development as well as finished work, upcoming events, and other relevant information about my art work. I cannot afford for these sites to become a mine for other businesses who will profit from my work without sharing any of that profit with me.

I thank you for your careful consideration of these issues and hope that you will use that consideration to protect the rights of all artists to hold their copyrights without cumbersome commercial processes that exploit some of the most vulnerable members of the business community.

Sincerely,

Megan Gnekow
www.megangnekow.com